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HUGIN & MUNIN



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



FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to issue 7 of Hugin & Munin.

There can be no greater honour than to be able to write this editorial from the Snorralaug in Reykholt, West Iceland. Once the home of Snorri Sturluson, godfather of the Icelandic Sagas. The land of 'fire and ice' radiates the spirit of the Vikings and it was from here that the Norse settlers moved on westward to Greenland and then onto the final frontier of North America. In this special edition of Hugin & Munin we will break the stereotype of the Viking Age being a man's world and discover the female trailblazers that shaped the age from Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, the first Norse woman in America to Ingegerd 'the grand Princess of the Kyivian Rus'. Not forgetting the Bikra 'Shieldmaiden, who's excavation changed the way we think of the Vikings and also the stories of the 'Ice Queen' Gunnhild of Norway and Aud 'The Deep-minded' who's legacy stretched from her homeland of Norway to Scotland, Ireland and finally Iceland.

As tradition dictates, I will leave you with some words of wisdom, this time from the Norse poem 'The Prose Edda' by Snorri Sturluson.

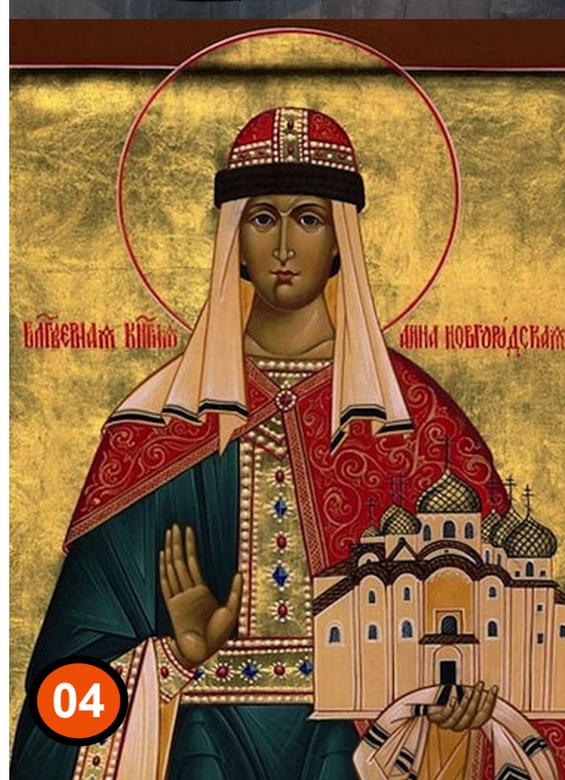
Ben Baillie

**“A sword age, a wind age, a wolf age.
No longer is there mercy among men.”**

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Editor: Ben Baillie

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ИНГЕГЕРД

Ingegerd 'Grand Princess of the Kyivian Rus' The Viking Princess who became a Saint

By Paula Wilson



In the first year of the second millennium a daughter was born to the Swedish king Olof Skötkonung and his wife Estrid. The girl was baptized by the name of Ingegerd. Olof was the first Christian king in the realm of the Swedes. He was called Skötkonung because he gave a lot of land to the church. The word *sköta* meant "give away real estate". When Ingegerd was 19 years old it was time to find her a suitable husband. To benefit his realm Olof wanted to marry Ingegerd to a mighty king. The first proposal came from the Norwegian king Olav Haraldsson. He was a young and famous Viking hero, and Ingegerd wanted to marry him, but her father said no. The two kings had fought wars against each other, and Olof hated Olav, never calling him anything else than "the fat man". When the proposal was turned down, Olav threatened Olof with war, but

he changed his mind when Olof offered Ingegerd's half-sister Ingrid to him. Olav died at the battle of Stiklastad in 1030. After his death he became Saint Olav, Norway's national saint. The next ruler to propose to Ingegerd was Jaroslav the Wise from Kyivian Rus, a kingdom founded by Viking warriors and traders in the 9th century. The Vikings who travelled east along the Russian rivers were called Rus. When they settled and took over the leadership in towns along the river Dnjepr, their realm was called Rus. In time the Kyivian Rus became a mighty kingdom with two big towns, Novgorod and Kyiv. The Viking names of these towns were *Holmgård*, meaning "The island town" and *Könugård*, meaning "Town of the King". In some sources the Rus realm is called *Hin mikla Svitjod*, which means "Big Sweden". The Vikings themselves called the country *Gårdaríke*, meaning "Realm of towns".

One of the first Scandinavian rulers of Kyivian Rus was Oleg the Wise. His Scandinavian name was Helgi, and he ruled from 879 to 912. He made Kyiv the capital of his realm and declared that "Kyiv is the mother of all towns in Rus". For good reasons this town, which nowadays is the capital of Ukraine, can be seen as the birthplace of Russia. This said, Ukraine is a sovereign country, and historical events more than a thousand years ago don't justify Russia's attempt to annex the country. In the Russian language the name of the town is spelled Kiev, but in the Ukrainian language it is spelled Kyiv. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the use of the Ukrainian form is recommended. In the year 1019 Jaroslav the Wise of Novgorod sent messengers to Olof to propose to Ingegerd. Although Jaroslav was 25 years older than Ingegerd, Olof

was happy to agree to the marriage.

Jaroslav was of Scandinavian decent. His father was Vladimir (Volodymyr) the Great of Kyiv, also called the Holy. Vladimir had converted to the Orthodox Christian faith in 988 and after that he had baptized the whole Kyivian Rus.

Ingegerd agreed to marry Jaroslav on two conditions. She wanted to have as her private property the Scandinavian trading town Aldeigjuborg and a vast land area around it. The town was situated at the southern shore of Lake Ladoga. It is nowadays called Staraja Ladoga, meaning "Old Ladoga".

Ingegerd also demanded that a Swedish noble man accompanied her to Novgorod. She got what she wanted and received the land area as morning gift. It is still today called Ingermanland.

When the marriage took place in the year 1019 Ingegerd was 19 years old. The first years the couple lived partly in Holmgård and partly in Könugård, but from 1036 on they lived only in Kyiv. After fighting many wars and concurring land from neighbouring countries, Jaroslav became the sole ruler of an enlarged Kyivian Rus, which encompassed parts of modern Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. It is

imaginable that Ingegerd settled well into Kyiv. The town was much bigger than the royal town Sigtuna in Sweden, and certainly a lot wealthier and more magnificent. The golden age of Kyivian Rus began during the reign of Jaroslav and Ingegerd (1019 - 1054). They built their capital into a big and strongly fortified town with amazing buildings. Inspired by the church architecture in Constantinople they built many monasteries and churches, including the magnificent Sophia Cathedral, "Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom". The building of the cathedral started in 1037 and was finished in 1046. The cathedral still

Below: The Golden Gate, Kyiv, Ukraine. Part of the defensive fortifications built by Ingegerd's husband Yaroslav 'the Wise' the Grand Prince of Kyiv in the 11th century





Богородица Новгородская

АННА НОВГОРОДСКАЯ

stands today.

In a sermon Jaroslav's court priest, the Metropolitan Hilarion praised Kyiv with the following words: "Behold the city, shining in splendour! See the blossoming churches! See Christianity as it prospers! Witness the glittering city, illumined with icons of saints, and scented with incense, resounding with praises and songs to the Lord!"

Hilarion also praised Ingegerd and her children saying: "Behold how they live, how they are sustained by the Lord, how they are maintaining the faith, as You had ordained! Behold how they frequent the holy churches! Behold how they glorify Christ, how



Above: Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, Ukraine

Below: 11th-century fresco in Saint Sofia representing the daughters of Ingegerd and Yaroslav I. Anna wife of Henry I of France is probably the youngest, while other daughters are Anastasia wife of Andrew I of Hungary, Elizabeth wife of Harald III of Norway, and perhaps Agatha wife of Edward the Exile,



they worship His name!" Ingegerd had at least ten children with Jaroslav, three daughters and seven sons are known. All daughters were married to European rulers and became queens. Elisabeth married the king of Norway, Anastasia the king of Hungary and Anna the French king Henry I. Ingegerd's son Vladimir became a saint like his mother. The other sons became rulers of different realms.

Ingegerd died on the 10th of February 1050 and Jaroslav in 1054. It is believed that they are buried in a sarcophagus in the Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. Ingegerd spent her last years in a monastery. When she became a nun,

she took the name Anna. Because of all her good deeds, and especially the building of magnificent monasteries and churches, she was canonised in 1439 as Saint Anna of Novgorod. Saint Anna of Novgorod is still revered within the Orthodox church in Russia. She is also remembered in Sweden, where there is a congregation called The Orthodox Church of Saint Anna. She is the national saint of Sweden's Orthodox church. Saints are not worshipped as gods, but they are seen as messengers, who can deliver one's prayers to God.

The following short hymn is sung in honour of Saint Anna in the Swedish church:

"You came as a shining heavenly star from the Vest. You adopted the Orthodox faith in which you brought a blessed fruit to the holy Russian realm, holy, righteous empress Anna. You loved Christ from all you heart and you preserved his righteousness and laws. When we today celebrate your most holy memory, we receive the forgiveness for our sins through your intercession."

Pages: 4-5 Main photo by Jim Lyngvild ©
<https://jimlyngvild.com/>



JIM LYNGVILD
DENMARK

Below: The stone sarcophagus of Yaroslav the Wise, Saint Sifia Cathedral, Kyiv, Ingegerd was buried in either Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev or Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod.





THE BIRKA SHIELDMAIDEN

The discovery that changed the stereo-type of the
Viking age

By Frida Albinsson



In 10th century early Birka, a weapon rich grave for a warrior commander was constructed. In 2017, the genomics of the interred body was confirmed: it was a woman! This was shocking and exiting news for the world. However, the biological sex was discovered many years before, but instead of headline news, the discovery was treated with a great deal of suspicion - could this really mean that the woman was a warrior?



In Birka the Viking city, on the island Björkö near Stockholm, the museum has since 2020 a new exhibit, portraying three burials, representing different periods of the Viking town. In the exhibit “Begravd på Birka” – Buried at Birka – the visitor can explore full-scale replicas of the artifacts found in the burials. One of these burials, Bj 581, is worldwide famous. Since it was discovered, it has been portrayed as a grave of a great manly warrior due to the weapons and high-status artifacts, but now with a DNA-analysis we know the individual in the grave was genetically female.

A weaponry collection for a warrior and commander

The grave was discovered in the end of the 19th century on the island and the findings were extraordinary! It was a timber chamber buried at a height with overview of the Viking town. Underneath a large boulder, covering the burial, preserved skeletons of

two horses came to the surface after the first digs. As the archaeologists continued, a preserved human skeleton appeared along with a set of shields, a sword, a seax, an axe-head, a set of fearsome sharp arrowheads in a decomposed quiver and much more. In the knee of the dead was a set of gaming pieces, just like the buried Viking chiefs in other prominent graves! This was indeed a military commander!

Only a handful of richly furnished graves has been discovered at Birka, and this was one of the richest in weapon finds. The eastern parallels found in the burial correspond to the intensified connections to the Silk Road during the 10th century, which was the dating of the grave as well. Silk fragments and silver embellishment of the decomposed outfit was collected – the pattern on the fabric had parallels with findings in Moshchevaya Balka, northern Caucasus, and Asian contemporary fashion.

An Arab silver dirham of Nasr ibn Ahmad from the reign of al-Muktadir (AD 913–933), was found in the grave which gives a narrow time span for the date of the burial. As a final act, the grave was penetrated with the tips of two great spears, that was thrown into the ground. This act could very well indeed be an example of the pagan Odinnic gesture, mentioned in the medieval sagas and Old Norse poems, when a person was sent off to the great Aesir god.

A woman buried with weapons? Preposterous!

Ever since the excavation 1878 (grave was discovered 1877) it has been regarded as a male burial. In the eyes of the head archaeologist, Hjalmar Stolpe, the rich collection of weapons was undoubtedly grave gifts for a man. Stolpe continued to excavate about 30 % of the graves surrounding the remains of the Viking town, which resulted with about 1100 graves excavated, as

well as a small surface of the town area.

What makes Birkas' archaeological material so popular, is not just the vast number of artifacts, but also the careful documentation of the graves, conducted by the head excavator Hjalmar Stolpe. He was ahead of his time due to the recording of archaeological finds on graph paper, and as well as the elaborate notes of the exterior and interior of the tombs. This detailed work is praised by archaeologists today who have also compared and analyzed the graves, but it took over 100 years until Bj 581 was re-examined again. Already in 2014, Anna Kjellström, osteologist (bone expert), presented a surprising observation made during a research project about the health of the urban citizens in early city-like settlements: the infamous warrior grave Bj 581, that was frequently addressed in academic reports as an example of a manly warrior grave from Birka was in fact biologically a female! Muttering and grunting followed: this can't be true! By that point, some scholars in the Viking Age research field world began to doubt the research value of the grave material and question the accuracy of the ambitious documentation from the 19th century. Yet the same sceptics towards the credibility of the contemporary excavation documentations of sites like Vendel, Valsgärde, Uppsala, wasn't up for debate. A rumour also claimed that there was a disorder of the Birka material in depository boxes of the Historical Museum, which had provided the wrong set of bones for the survey – a critic that was intensified with the DNA result two year later. However, these critical voices

failed to admit that all the bones had been signed with ink in the 19th century before they were brought into the museum depository. In 2016, during a new extensive DNA research project, a research team chose several Birka graves for DNA-analysis. The bones for the DNA extraction were accounted for and matched with Stolpe's documentation. Two samples from the skeleton in Bj 581, one from the left canine tooth and another from the left humerus (upper arm) yielded enough amount to confirm the biological sex – it was clearly a female.

Gender in the Viking Age society

Even with the confirmed genomics, some critical voices continue to conjure up explanations to the result, one more doubtful than the other: The man in the grave was decomposed or robbed before the excavation or the wife or slave took his place in the grave when the man died in a journey far away. Firstly, the preservation state in the grave was more than the archaeologists could hope for – why would only the male bones disappear?

Above: Jaw from the skeleton of grave Bj 581. One of the teeth was chosen for the extraction of DNA. Photo - Ola Myrin ©

Main photo:Pages 10-11
Reconstruction of the Birka
Viking shieldmaiden © Talle
Savage Photography / Birka The
Viking City





≈10cm

Above: Silver cap mount with silver embellishment for eastern steppe nomadic headwear, from grave Bj 581. Photo - Ola Myrin ©

Secondly, disturbed graves often have a plundering pit and just a scrap of bones left from the plundered body – which was not the case of Bj 581. Thirdly, why can't women be buried with weapons too? As we look back in research, just a couple of decades, the thought of women in power was preposterous. It was a common thought that the gender differences during the Viking Age were severely strict.

But for the last ten years most historians and archaeologists, all agree that women in power is highly possible and, in some cases, even unquestionable. Power structures in the Viking Age, relied heavily on family status: The family unit was essential to grow a reputation and to rise in power as well as status.

This is a repeated theme in the Old Norse literature. To be a part of a family with roots of great ancestry inaugurated respect for all the family members. Family ancestry can even matter over sex. This tight relationship with the ancestors can be found in the traces of active grave fields – the rituals performed after the burial, re-burials and re-opening of burials.

Buried under a standing stone – a Bautastein

Still, some researchers in Viking Age archaeology, find it more difficult to admit that there were female warriors in Viking culture. It is obvious that presumptions of what is considered “manly” and

“female” preclude the ability to uncover other social roles during the Viking Age. By looking into the case of Bj 581, we now know for certain that women can be buried with weapons – could this mean that other typical “manly” traits of Viking Age graves need to be re-evaluated?

Bautastenar (icelandic: bautaðarsteinn), standing stones, have always been considered markers for buried great men, but now we may have to consider this as a myth. The warrior grave at Birka was visible thanks to an immersion in the ground with a large bolder, measuring 3 m, covering the grave – maybe a standing stone. But this is not the only woman whom had been buried underneath a upraised stone: Just 1,7 miles east from Birka, on Lovö island, a grave field

with several typical Viking burial mounds was excavated. One of the burials was marked in the middle with an up-raised stone. But just like the case of Bj 581, the osteologist analysis assessed the bones to be female.

The woman buried in Lovö, in grave A69, was burned on a funeral pyre around the 6th-7th century. Her remaining grave gifts or personal artifacts consisted of a whetstone, a red glass bead and something wooden built with iron clamps – a plausible chest, coffin or boat. There were also bones of a horse, a sheep or a goat, a smaller bird, a perch, a full-grown dog and a juvenile dog (a puppy) with her on the pyre. But despite the fact that the osteologist found four indications among the fragmented human bones was biologically a female, the grave was reported by the head archaeologist as a male burial just because of the “manly” marker over the grave.

More evidence

This dismissive attitude in the case of Bj 581 in Birka and A69 in Lovö, is unfortunately not uncommon and can still preclude further discussion of the burial customs and identities of the Viking Age. Nevertheless, the Viking culture is full of women with weapons. In the Viking imagery world, there are women portrayed with weapons. There's also an eyewitness report recorded in Johannes Skylitzes manuscript: Byzantine soldiers found slayed female warriors among the dead after a battle in Bulgaria, 971 AD. There is also a reference to a female fleet commander named Inghen Ruaidh mentioned in Cogadh

Gaedhel re Gallaibn, around the 900s. In Sweden there are legends from the Viking Age about women leading armies in taking back their homelands. The first is about 'Blenda' who rallies women to participate in the battle of Brávallir, where the father of Ragnar Lothbrokk, Sigurd Ring fought valiantly. The written history is undeniably stained with legends and eyewitness accounts of women participating in war. The recurring traits are women from military or high-ranking families that pick up the axe or the sword to earn their status. These stories appear throughout history in different cultures and periods of time, the women appear as disguised soldiers serving in an army or leading one as a commander. The woman in grave Bj 581, who was she? At least we know that she

was not a local Birka villager, but born in southern Scandinavia and moved around a lot in her youth. After that we can't be sure where she travelled. She died past her 40s, perhaps older than that. Her spine shows early signs of arthritis, a payment due to an active lifestyle. Since the arthritis was in the early stage, she could have been unconscious of her condition or had some ache in the back before her death. Still the cause of death is undetermined since it's very difficult to establish that without any signs of trauma on the bones. She was buried with two horses and a great set of weapons and prestigious artifacts as you would expect to find with any prominent commander or warrior in a time when the relations with Birka and the

Below: The Legend of Blenda - she rallied women to fight in the Battle of Brávallir, c. 770. Painted by Hugo Hamilton





Above: The preserved skeleton of the Birka Viking shieldmaiden in Bj 581. Photo - Ola Myrin ©
Page 17: Redrawing of Hjalmar Stolpes sketch portraying grave Bj 581, by Evlad Hansen

east were tightened, and Christianity was interfering with the traditions of the pagan Viking city – a time when your identity was crucial to define. Her grave was impaled by two spears as a pagan burial act, and she also had a small spear amulet. With the rich furnished chamber, it was no doubt that this was indeed someone of great importance, perhaps a great cavalry commander?

Where is she now?

The burial site is marked in the landscape at Birka, for visitors that want to experience the surroundings and placement of the tomb. All bone parts except one are now stored in the National Museum of History, the state-owned umbrella organisation for six historical museums. Sometime after the gathering of the material found on Birka, the cranium disappeared and hasn't been

found ever since, but it's not entirely gone. Sadly, it's lost in one of the Eugenics collections of the 19th century, in a great mix of various craniums with no or little information of context, all labelled in a fanatic frenzy in a time when racism deeply affected the scientific theoretical work.

Where can I see the artifacts?

The museum at Birka, the Viking City has since 2020 a part of the newest exhibition dedicated to the finds of the warrior grave Bj 581. The exhibition shows full scale replicas of the grave materials. However, some of the original artefacts from the burial can be seen at the History Museum at Narvavägen: The silver cones for the head garment and one of the spear tips are exhibited in the Viking exhibit, but modestly

labelled "Bj 581" in the displays.

I want to see the material now!

Don't worry, the grave material has been photographed and uploaded in high quality, which you can explore here: <https://samlingar.shm.se/>

Just type in "Bj 581" in the search field and all the material will appear, with dimensions of the weaponry and more.

The new discoveries and alternative perspectives of the female roles in the Viking Age, remind us that there have *always* been females that cross the stereotypical border – both in the present, in history and as well in the Viking Age. Female warriors have been recorded throughout history, in different cultures, in different periods – why would the Viking culture be any different?

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3 Fot. 1 Meter.

EVALD HANSEN.

follow the vikings



Welcome to our Instagram feature. We have selected a few photos from around the Viking world for you to enjoy. We would like you, our readers, to follow us on Instagram and tag your viking-themed photos with **#followthevikings**. We will then repost and publish the best of them on our Instagram account and in future issues of the magazine.

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#followthevikings

1. Ladies of the great hall, Borre, Norway © Midgardblot
2. Viking Shieldmaiden, Gulating, Norway © David Zadig/ Gulatingnet
3. Lofotr Viking lady, Norway © Kjell Ove Storvik, Lofotr Vikingmuseum
4. Catoira Viking festival, Spain © Jose Angel Paz Gil
5. The Seer of Birka, Sweden © STRÖMMA Turism & Sjöfart AB



EDDIE OATHS MAP

Gudrid Thorbjarnardóttir "The Far-Travelled"

By Eduardo Morales Romero

Guðríðr is undoubtedly one of the most interesting female figures of the Viking Period in the Nordic countries. Guðríðr received the nickname "*viðförla*" (literally "*far traveled*" or "*wide-fared*") for having made numerous trips through-out her life that took her from her native Iceland to Greenland, to Vinland in the Americas, to Norway, to Rome ...



We know about Guðriðr thanks to well-known Icelanders, some of them bishops, her descendants, and because her travels were collected in two sagas: the "*Saga of the Greenlanders*" and the "*Saga of Eirík the Red*"). The sagas agree on most facts, although also with some divergence. Guðriðr was born around 980 A.D. in Laugarbrekka, in Snæfellsnæs, Iceland. She was the daughter of Þorbjörn Vífilsson and Hallveig Einarsdóttir according to the *Íslendingabók*,

“Perhaps to put land – or rather, the sea-between the lovers, her father sold the family farm in Iceland and emigrated with his family to Greenland.”

Vífil, Guðriðr's paternal grandfather, arrived in Iceland as an enslaved person. His master, Auð Ketillsdóttir gave him back his freedom and land. Although himself the son of a slave, Þorbjörn, Guðriðr's father, did not allow her to marry the chosen, a young man named Einar who was the son of a slave. Perhaps to put land – or rather, the sea-between the lovers, her father sold the family farm in Iceland and emigrated with his family to Greenland. According to the "*Saga of Eirík the Red*"), Guðriðr accompanied Þorbjörn, her father, when he sold his land and decided to move to Greenland; they had to overcome storms and diseases that killed half the crew. Finally, the ship arrived at Hjerjolfnæs, in the Eirík Fjord, in Greenland, where they were welcomed by a farmer named Þorkel to spend the winter with him.



Above: Statue of statue of Guðriðr Þorbjarnardóttir and her son. Laugarbrekka, Iceland

The "*Saga of the Greenlanders*" also recorded Guðriðr's voyage to Greenland. This text, however, tells that Guðriðr was accompanied by her husband, Þórir Austmanni, a merchant of Norwegian origin. The ship in which they were traveling was shipwrecked on some reefs off the coast of Greenland. Fortunately, they were sighted by Leifr Eiríksson returning to Greenland after a trip to Vinland. Leifr picked up a group of fifteen castaways and invited them to bring as many of their belongings as the ship could carry. Leifr Eiríksson took them to Brattahlíð and offered hospitality in his house to the couple and three other men; for the rest of the castaways he found lodging. It was from this event that Leifr received the nickname "the lucky". That winter, the crew of Þórir's ship was attacked by illness and some of its members died and so did Þórir, Guðriðr's husband.

We return to the "*Saga of Eirík the Red*", which relates that Guðriðr was visiting the house of a farmer named Þorkel, who called a völvu, a fortune teller named Þorbjörg. She prepared to perform the magic session, but for this she would need a woman to sing the so-called "*Varðlokur*" ("*Psalm of the Occult*"); they asked among the people on the farm, but no one knew the song, except Guðriðr. Then Guðriðr said:

“I am neither a connoisseur of magic nor a fortune teller, but in Iceland my adoptive mother, Haldis, taught me a song called "Varðlokur."

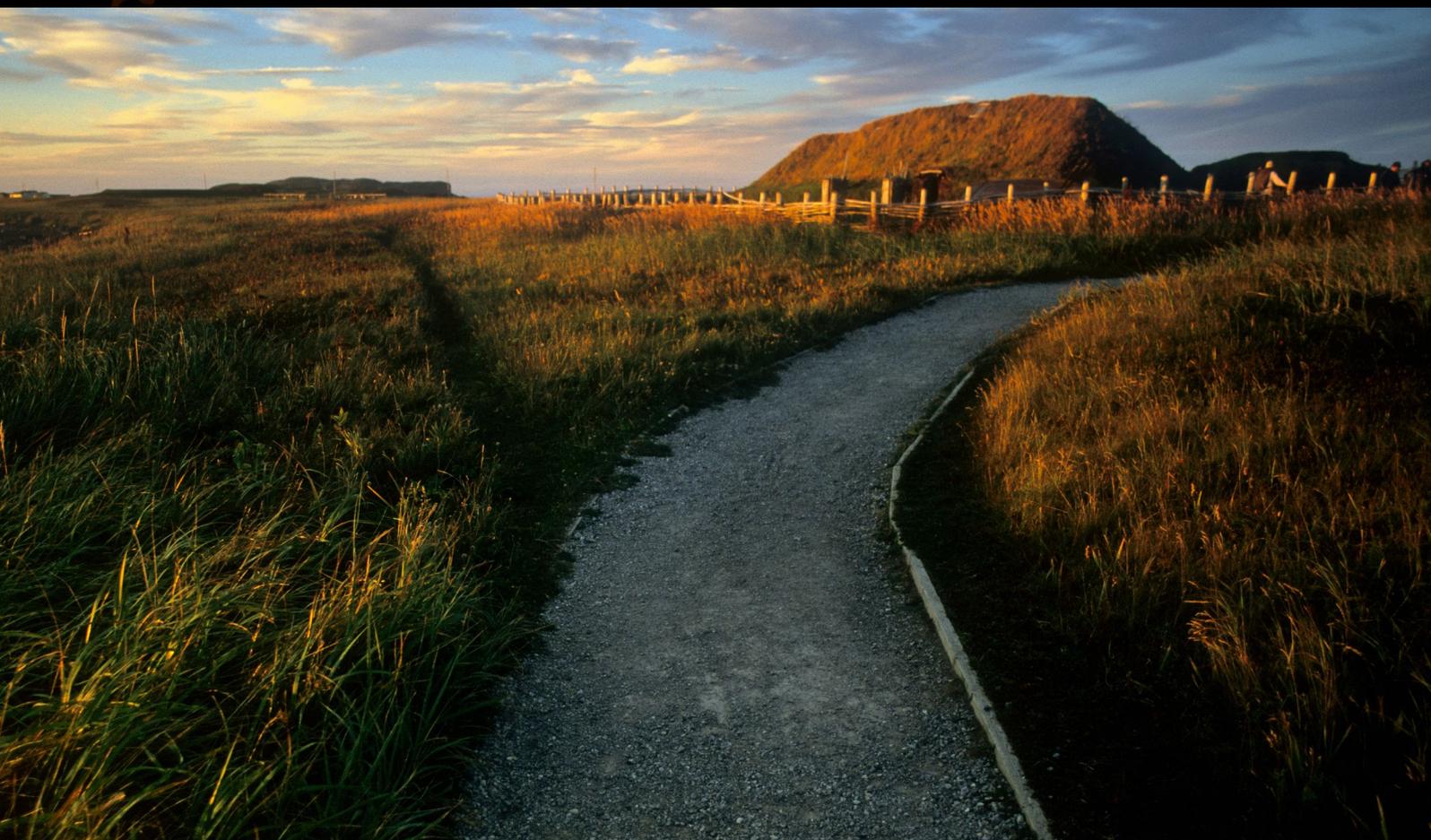
Þorkel responds, "*Well, your knowledge has come to the right place.*" And then she answered, "*This is an enterprise in which I have no intention of helping you because I am a Christian*

woman." Þorbjörg said to her: "It could be that you could help the people here by so doing, and you'd be no worse a woman for that. But I leave it up to Þorkel to procure what is necessary." Þorkel insisted and she agreed to do as asked. Then the women formed a circle around the hjalet, the elevated platform on which the völva would be seated while making her predictions. Guðriðr then sang the chant beautifully. The völva thanked Guðriðr for the song and said that the spirits had arrived and had liked her singing so well performed: "*Guðriðr, I want to reward you for the help we have received from you; now I can see your destiny completely clear. You are going to have a very honored marriage here in Greenland, although it will not be long-lasting, because your paths will take you to Iceland and from you will start a great and good lineage and, your offspring will shine such a strong*

radiance that I am not able to see exactly. May you fare well, now, my child." When the weather improved, Þorbjörn prepared his ship and they sailed to Brattahlíð, where Eirík the Red received them with joy and spent winter with him; when spring came, Eirík gave land to Þorbjörn in Stokkanæs, where he built himself a splendid farm and moved there to live. Later, we are told that Þorstein, son of Eirík the Red, asked Guðriðr in marriage; they celebrated their wedding in Brattahlíð. Þorstein owned half of a property called "Clear Fjord Farm"; the other half belonged to a farmer also named Þorstein and his wife Sigríð. Þorstein and Guðriðr spent the winter there, but an epidemic disease caused many deaths on the farm. Shortly after Þorstein Eiríksson also died. This same episode is also recorded in the "Saga of the

Greenlanders", in which it is reported that Guðriðr was grief-stricken sitting in a chair in front of the bench on which Þorstein's body had been placed. While she was comforted, Þorstein's body stood up and said, "Where is Guðriðr?"; he said it three times, but Guðriðr remained silent. Then she asked Þorstein the Black, "Should I answer him? or not." Þorstein the farmer said no. Then he sat in a chair with Guðriðr on his knees and said, "What do you want, namesake?" Then, after a short pause, the dead man said: "I want to tell Guðriðr her fate, so that she will resign herself to my death, because I have gone to a good resting place. I can tell you Guðriðr, that you will marry an Icelander and that you will have a long life and many descendants, promising, bright and magnificent, sweet and very friendly.

Below: The Norse outpost of L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site. © Parks Canada / Dale Wilson





Above :Eiríksstaðir, Dalabyggð, Iceland. Home of Eirík 'the Red' & Leif 'the Lucky' © Gunnar Freyr Gunnarsson

You will leave Greenland for Norway and from there to Iceland, where you will make your home. There you will live a long time and you will outlive your husband. You will travel abroad; you will go south on pilgrimage and return to Iceland to your farm, where a church will be built. There you will stay and take holy orders and die there."

After this, Þorstein fell backward and his body was prepared. When spring came, Guðriðr returned to the Eirík Fjord carrying the bodies of Þorstein and the others who had died and the clerics officiated the ceremonies to receive Christian burial.

As we can see, the prophecy that Þorstein made about the future of Guðriðr was very similar to that which she received from the **völva** Þorbjörg in the "Saga of Eirík the Red".

Guðriðr was invited to stay with Eirík the Red.

One autumn a wealthy Icelandic merchant named Þorfinnr Karlsefni Þorðarsson arrived in Greenland; he came from Norway and was a man of a good family and a merchant with a good reputation,

possessing a considerable fortune.

Þorfinnr commanded two ships loaded with goods and with a crew of about forty men. Eirík the Red invited Þorfinnr and his men to the Christmas feasts; shortly afterward, Þorfinnr, in the presence of Eirík, asked Guðriðr to marry him. Discussions about trips to Vinland must have been a recurring topic of conversation on the long winter nights.

Some, including his own wife Guðriðr, urged Þorfinnr to make the journey. Once determined Þorfinnr hired a crew of sixty men and five women.

During the winter, Þorfinnr prepared an expedition to Vinland accompanied by two other ships; in total, a crew of about one hundred and sixty people.

When they left, they took with them all kinds of cattle, since, if possible, the intention was to settle in those lands. And Guðriðr accompanied her husband on the expedition; the couple sailed west to reach Vinland with their crew. When they arrived, they settled in the houses Leifr had built.

They explored the lands further south and reached places that had not been reached by the

expeditions that preceded them; they arrived at a place they called Hóp, which according to a climate specialist could be the island of Manhattan, where New York is now located. Guðriðr and Þorfinnr spent three years on the American continent.

“There was born their son Snorri, the first European child born in America”

The colonization project failed and after fighting several battles against the native Indians, Þorfinnr stated that he did not want to stay any longer in Vinland and wished to return to Greenland.

They prepared for the return trip and loaded the ship with many of the country's products, including grapes, berries, and skins. When spring came, they made the return journey without incident and arrived in Eiríksfjord, in Greenland, where they stayed for the winter. Next, they travelled to Norway, where they lived one winter and returned to Iceland. Here they settled in Glaumbær, where Þorfinnr and Guðriðr had a son named Þorbjörn.

After Þorfinnr's death, Guðriðr took over the management of



Thorlak, Bishop of Skállholt in southern Iceland; Thorgeir was Ingvild's father, the mother of the first Bishop Brand; and Björn Gilsson, one of the descendants of her son Þorbjörn, he was also bishop of Hólar.

This exceptional woman, intelligent, respected, and recognized by her contemporaries, had a long and intense life. She made long and exhausting journeys, at times dangerous, reaching places so far away that very few people in her time had reach.

In Laugarbrekka, the birthplace of Guðriðr, a bronze monument stands in her memory. It was placed on 25 June 2000. The artist, the Icelandic sculptor Asmundur Sveinsson depicts Guðriðr standing on a viking ship, carrying her son Snorri on her shoulder.

the property together with her son Snorri, who had been born in Vinland. When Snorri married, Guðriðr undertook a journey abroad and made a pilgrimage south - probably to Rome - and then returned to her son Snorri's farm. Meanwhile, he had a church

built in Glaumbær. Afterwards, Guðriðr became a nun and stayed there for the rest of her days.

Snorri Þhorfinnsson, Guðriðr's son in America, had a daughter whom he named Hallfrid and a son he named Thorgeir. Hallfrid was the mother of

Top left: Guðriðr on the voyage to Rome

Below: The Arch of Constantine, Rome © Julius Silver, Pixabay.com



THE ICE QUEEN

Queen Gunnhild of Norway

By Nancy Marie Brown

“Cold, calculating, charming, and cruel: These words describe the most notorious Norse queen in medieval Icelandic literature, Gunnhild Mother-of-Kings, wife of Eirik Blood-Axe”.

Queen Gunnhild appears in eleven sagas and several histories. They portray her as proud and ambitious, lecherous and moody. They attest to her beauty and small size, her resilience, her organizational skill, her generosity, her humour, her knowledge of potions, rituals, poems, and stories, and her belief that the best way to neutralize her enemies was to adopt their children. She was good at raising children. Her own eight sons, unlike her

husband and his brothers, never turned on one another but shared the rule of Norway with each other—and with her. As *Heimskringla* reports, Gunnhild and her sons “often met to talk things over together and to decide how to rule.” The poetic “List of Norwegian Kings” calls the years from 961 to 975 “The Age of Gunnhild.” We first meet Gunnhild in *Heimskringla* as a girl “whose beauty had no equal.” She was “wise and well-educated,” “cheerful and talkative,” but

underneath it all, “the grimmest person,” uncompromising and fierce. According to the Latin *Historia Norwegiae*, her father was Gorm the Old, king of Denmark.

In *Heimskringla*, however, he’s merely a chieftain in Halogaland who traded in furs and walrus tusks. Eirik met her far, far to the north, in Finnmark itself, where she was studying witchcraft. She cast a spell on her two tutors, sprinkling them with magic dust, so that Erik’s men could kill them. Then



Gunnhild eloped. Later, she's not so impressed by Eirik. Eirik's father, Harald Fair-Hair, unified Norway. Eirik and his half-brothers parcelled it out again—until Eirik, with Gunnhild's help, killed all but one. The pair ruled Norway from 930 to 935; then Eirik's surviving half-brother, Hakon the Good, forced them to flee to England. With King Athelstan's consent, says the *Orkney Islanders' Saga*, Eirik became the Viking king of Northumbria, based at York.

The story of Eirik's reign in Norway and his flight to York is also told in *Egil's Saga*, in which Gunnhild is cast as the villain. When Egil, drunk, murdered the queen's friend, she hunted the young Icelander down—unsuccessfully. "I made a mockery of / their Majesties' majesty," Egil bragged in a poem. When King Eirik agreed to spare Egil's life, Gunnhild scoffed: "How soon you forget the evil done to you." She saw to it that Egil was outlawed from Norway and denied his wife's inheritance. He responded by killing Gunnhild's ten-year-old son. In a poem, he boasted: "I dabbled my blade, / In Blood-Axe's boy."

Queen Gunnhild plotted her revenge. Through witchcraft, the saga says, she lured Egil to York—though again, King Eirik's "forgetfulness" set the Icelander free. Egil traded a praise poem for his own ugly head. "Do you forget, king, what Egil has done?" Gunnhild erupted. "Killed your friends and your kinsmen and even your own son! ... We don't want to hear any poems of his. Lead Egil out, king, and cut off his head." But Eirik let the poet go free. Gunnhild comes into her own after King Eirik's death in 954. She evacuated her entire family—and their wealth—from a desperate situation, when Eirik and his raiders, plundering in



Above: Rey Cross is the remains of a stone cross at Stainmore, where Gunnhild's husband Erik 'Bloodaxe' was killed in 954 AD © Andrew Barclay

Britain, were cut off, far from their ships, and slaughtered. Gunnhild, in her forties, with eight children in tow, escaped to the Orkneys, taking all of King Eirik's ships and all of the warriors who would follow her, according to *The Orkney Islanders' Saga*. Adds *Heimskringla*, she also took "a great amount of money, some of which had been collected in England as taxes and some taken in plunder." Gunnhild married her only daughter to the Orkney earl's son. Then, hearing of war between Norway and Denmark, she made her next strategic move. She took her sons to Denmark

to meet King Harald Bluetooth, son of Gorm the Old. They "received a good welcome," says *Heimskringla*—not too surprising if Gunnhild was indeed Harald's sister. The king "granted them such large revenues in his kingdom that they could support themselves and their followers in style. He set Harald Eiriksson on his knee and made him his foster son." Harald Eiriksson became, with Danish help, King Harald Gray-Cloak in 960, and ruled Norway for fifteen years with his brothers by his side. The sons of Gunnhild, as they were called, valued their

mother's advice. Says *Heimskringla*, Gunnhild "had a great share with them in the government of the country." It was Gunnhild's nefarious plan that silenced the too-powerful earl of Lade, for example. And it was cold-hearted Gunnhild who sent assassins after the infant Olaf Tryggvason. "Gunnhild wants to raise him as her foster son," her men told Olaf's mother. She did not believe them, but fled with her little son "into the woods to a lake with an islet in it, covered with reeds. They could wade out to the islet. There they hid themselves in the reeds." Olaf survived to become king of Norway from 995 to 1000. *Njal's Saga* and *Laxdaela Saga* portray the powerful Gunnhild Mother-of-Kings in her fifties sending her squires to the harbor to see who sails in. When the handsome Icelander Hrut arrived—"tall and broad-shouldered and slender at the waist"—she invited him and his uncle to stay the winter. Said the uncle, "I know Gunnhild's temper: If we decide not to stay with her, she will hound us out of the country and confiscate all our goods; but if we go to her, she will show us all the honor she has promised."

When Hrut appeared before the king, Gunnhild said, "If your bodyguard had more men like this, it would be well manned."

"I believe," said Harald Gray-Cloak to Hrut, "that my mother wishes you to receive whatever title you ask for."

After Hrut became the king's liegeman, he asked, "Where should I sit?"

Said the king, "My mother will decide that."

She also decided where Hrut would sleep. "You will stay in the loft with me tonight, just the two of us."

Gunnhild showered Hrut with presents—from a luxurious robe to two fully-manned warships. When Hrut wished to return to Iceland, she asked him point-blank, "Do you have a woman out there?" "No," Hrut lied. (He was engaged to be married.) The old queen was miffed. "I wish that were true," she said. She clasped a gold ring around his arm, saying, "If I have as much power over you as I believe I do, then this will make certain that you never enjoy that woman you have in mind for yourself out in Iceland, though you'll be able to have your way with other women. So now neither of us will be happy, because you didn't trust me with the truth."

Hrut laughed—but the spell worked, according to *Njal's Saga*. Soon after they wed his wife divorced him,



Above: Queen Gunnhild © Christian Krohg illustration for *Olav Tryggvasons saga*, *Heimskringla* 1899-edition.

Below: Silver penny of Gunnhild's husband King Eirik 'Bloodaxe' minted in York, England





complaining that he was unable to consummate their marriage. Some years later, says *Laxdaela Saga*, Gunnhild met the eighteen-year-old Iclander Olaf Peacock, who believed he was the grandson of an Irish king but couldn't get to Ireland to prove it. Said Gunnhild, "I will give you what you need for this voyage, so that you can travel as splendidly as you wish." She gave him a ship

with a crew of sixty warriors. When Olaf returns, acknowledged as royal: "The king received him well, and Gunnhild even better." Her need to be loved may have led to an awful death, according to one story found in several sources. After the death of her son Harald Gray-Cloak, her enemies conspired with King Harald Bluetooth to wrest control of Norway from her. Bluetooth enticed Gunnhild to Denmark

with an offer of marriage. "It would be fitting that she in her old age marry an old king," Bluetooth wrote (they are not siblings in this story). Gunnhild agreed. "But her journey, which began in splendor, ended in disgrace," says the history of the kings of Norway known as *Ágrip*, "for when she arrived in Denmark she was taken and sunk in a bog, and, according to many, so ended her days."



Above: One of the Jelling mounds, Denmark. Erected in the reigns of King Gorm and his son Harald Bluetooth (Gunnhild's father and brother) Image by Erik Lyngsøe © pixabay.com
Below right: Nancy Marie Brown © BJARNEY LUÐVÍKSDÓTTIR/EYJAFILM

A well-preserved corpse fished from a Danish bog in 1835 was called Queen Gunnhild until 1977, when carbon-dating placed the drowned woman's death in the fifth century BCE; the bog body is now known as the Haraldskaer Woman. Like much about Gunnhild Mother-of-Kings, we simply can't say how she died, only that she was powerful and feared and the equal of kings.

Nancy Marie Brown is the author of Ivory Vikings (2015) and The Real Valkyrie (2021), in both of which Queen Gunnhild plays a part. Visit her online at:
www.nancymariebrown.com





AUD THE DEEP. MINDED

By Patrick Herbage
Dublinia Museum & Heritage Centre





In an era dominated by male characters, the character of Aud from Icelandic literature leads the way for female authority and leadership. The Irish Historical annals from the 9th century paint a different picture of the story of Aud but for the purposes of this article the emphasis will be on the Icelandic literature from the 12th century. She led a life of intrigue, mystery, adventure, and escape. Through her leadership, sheer will and determination she gained great loyalty and was sought out for wise counsel and advice. She was a perfect fit for the role of 'Queen of the Hall'. She freed slaves, divided land amongst her loyal followers and secured the future of her dynasty by arranging strategic marriages before she died. Aud's story is told to us in the sagas.

Believed to be born in 830 in Telemark, Norway to a powerful Norwegian family led by her father Ketil Flatnose, her full name was Unn, Aud Ketilsdottir (surnames being derived from her father's name.) She is portrayed as someone who, throughout her life considered, sought, and gave advice on tumultuous topics. This gained her the nickname Aud the Deep-minded. Somewhat more flattering than her father's name Ketil 'Flatnose' which most likely came from his facial appearance.

Her father Ketil fled from Norway and its tyrannical ruler and Aud and her family settled in the Scottish Hebrides. In desperate need of an alliance and support Ketil looked to Dublin. He arranged for his daughter Aud to marry Olaf the White.

According to the *Eyrbyggja* Saga:



'Ketil Flat-nose arranged the marriage of his daughter Aud to Olaf the White, the greatest warrior – king at the time in the British Isles'

Thorstein the Red (so called probably for his red hair) was born to Olaf and Aud. According to the Vinland saga:

'Olaf was killed in battle in Ireland, Aud and Thorstein went to the Hebrides. There Thorstein married Thurid. They had a number of children....Thorstein became a warrior king, throwing in his lot with Earl Sigurd the Powerful. They conquered Caithness and Sutherland, Ross and Moray and More, then half of

Scotland. Thorstein became King there until the Scots betrayed him and he was killed in battle.'

The death of her husband and a new ruler taking control of Dublin made it a dangerous time for Aud and Thorstein however this is disputed in Irish annalistic historical sources but that is beyond the scope of this article. Aud showed her leadership skills and the loyalty of her supporters when she was able to escape to the Hebrides. Her successful negotiation of Thorstein's marriage to Thordid gained an alliance and support which formed a solid foundation for her son to thrive and rise to the rank of King. Aud did not have time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of her labour in Caithness



though. Her son Thorstein was killed and Aud then devised an escape plan and had a knarr ship built in secret in a forest. When finished she made her second daring escape – this time to the Orkneys. Having a husband or son would have provided her with the security she needed but once they died, she made her own plans to ensure her survival – she was the great survivor of her time. Her role as ‘Queen of the Hall’ combined with her leadership skills, strength and determination meant she could deal with the most difficult of situations. When Aud reached the Orkney’s, she arranged the marriage of Groa, Thorstein’s daughter (her granddaughter.) This

not only secured Groa’s future but most importantly her safety. After this the *Vinland Saga* tells us that:

‘Aud set out for Iceland. On her ship she had a crew of twenty free-born men. Aud reached Iceland and spent the first winter at Bjarnahofn with her brother Bjorn.’

Again, Aud reveals her strength to us. When she visited her first brother Bjorn, he told her he could not take in all her followers but only some of them. Aud would not choose and so continued to her second brother Helgi who agreed to shelter all her followers. The following year:

‘Aud claimed all land in the Dales between Dagvendara and Skraumuhlaupsa rivers and settled at Hvamm. She used to pray on the Krossholar Hill, where she had crosses erected, for she was baptized and a devout Christian. Accompanying her on her journey to Iceland were many men of good family who had been taken prisoner by Vikings raiding around Britain and were called Bondsmen. Safety was key to her survival and safety was always found amongst your own kin. Once safety was secured Aud thrived in her role as ‘Queen of the Hall’. Her loyal followers stayed with her throughout her ordeals and would now reap the rewards for doing so: ‘One of them (bondsmen) was named Vifil. He was a man of very good family who had taken prisoner in Britain and was called a bondsmen until Aud gave him his freedom. When Aud gave her crew farm sites, Vifil asked her why she had given him one like the others. Aud replied that it made no difference (whether he owned land or not), he would be considered just as fine a man wherever he was. Aud gave him Vifilsdal and he settled there.’ The scene was now set for Aud’s last act before her death c.900. The early years of her life saw her as a political pawn in her father’s quest for alliances in Ireland. By the end of her life, she had grown into her role as ‘Queen of the Hall’ and had very much earned the title and nickname – the deep minded. It took a lot of strength and courage to rebuild her life after the death of her husband and again after the death of her son, but her final act would be a tribute to how far she had come from political pawn to ‘Queen of the Hall’ amongst her own loyal followers.

As her final act Aud decided that Olaf, Thorstein's son (her grandson) should be married. Aud was not only securing her legacy at Hvamm but securing that of her families. According to the *Laxdale Saga*:

'Unn [Aud] spent much money on this feast, for she let be bidden thereto men of high degree wide about from many parts.....Old age fell now fast upon Unn [Aud], so that she did not get up until midday, and went early to bed. No one did she allow to come to her for advice between the time she went to sleep at night and the time she was aroused and she was very angry if anyone asked how it fared with her strength'

Aud was nearing the end of her life but, as she well knew from her past, ownership of land offered security and she therefore wanted to ensure that her land passed to her family. She was on her feet to greet all the guests and for her last piece of strength was used in her final words of: 'Bjorn and Helgi, my brothers, and all my other kindred and friends, I call witness to this, that this dwelling with all its belongings that you now see before you, I give into my hands of my kinsmen, Olaf to own and to manage... After that she stood up and said she would go to the bower where she was wont to sleep, but bade everyone have for pastime whatever was most to his mind, and that all should be the cheer of the common folk...She walked at a quick step out along the hall, and people could not help saying to each other how stately the lady was yet.'

The following morning Olaf

found his grandmother dead sitting up against her pillow. She was given a high status burial being laid in a ship in a cairn and much treasure was placed beside her. Then Olaf took over the household at Hvamm and many generations followed. Aud lived a long life and rose from political pawn to 'Queen of the Hall'. She was an alliance maker, builder of ships, freer of slaves, distributor of land and leader of loyal followers. Not only was she a great woman of her generation amongst men she was the foundation stone for future strong and decisive women to stand upon.

Pages 32-33 Krosshólaborg, Iceland, Credit, Haukur Sigurðsson
© Markaðsstofa Vesturlands. Aud background image edited photo by Jim Lyngvild ©

Pages 34-35 Reconstructed Viking hall of Midgard Historical Centre, Borre, Norway © Kjetil Mobissen Moberg Gildehallen
svarthvitt20170509_125321

Page 37 Krosshólaborg, Iceland, where Aud had crosses erected.
Credit, Kristín Jónsdóttir ©
Markaðsstofa Vesturlands

Below: Illustration of the streets of Viking age Dublin. Aud would have known this city well during the reign of her husband Olaf 'The White' © Dublinia Viking Museum, Dublin, Ireland





ÁÐR DJÚPUÐGA ÞJÓ ÞYAMMI
HON HAFDI BÆNAHALD SITT Á KRÖSSHÖNUN
ÞAR LET HON REISA KRÖSSA
ÖVI AT HON VÆR SKIRD ÖR YEL TRÖUB

DESTINATION VIKING ASSOCIATION NEWS



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



Chairman's News

Dear all, The Viking route is expanding!

During the last year, we have had the pleasure of welcoming 6 additions to the Viking route and hence, 6 new members of the Destination Viking Association. The new members are in France, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Sweden (2 new members).

Our new French member is the **City of Rouen**. Situated on the banks of the River Seine, once a Viking super highway. Rouen is Normandy's vibrant, historic and cultural capital. The city has even more Viking-related attractions to offer, including the baptismal font where both Rollo and later St Olaf of Norway were baptised Christians. A full size replica of the famous Jelling stone from Denmark and also the statue and tomb of Rollo himself in the cathedral. Rollo / Göngu-Hrólfr was the Viking leader who became the Count of Rouen 'Roujarl' and founded the Duchy of Normandy 'the land of north-men' back in 911 AD. <https://en.visiterouen.com/>



Haithabu in Germany is where the Viking Age town of Hedeby was situated. The Viking Museum of Haithabu is one of the most important archaeological museums in Germany. The UNESCO nominated Viking Age trading town and the Danewerk border wall gained world cultural heritage status in 2018. Both the museum and the seven reconstructed houses located in the grounds show impressively how people lived there during the Viking Age. <https://haithabu.de>



Our first member in Italy is the organisation **Sepino nel Cuore ('Sepino in our Hearts')**. In the 11th century AD Molise County was under the control of the Norman Counts of Bojano. These original Normans were the descendants of Rollo's Vikings in Normandy, France. It is primarily the Norman heritage that is highlighted here in this part of Italy. www.sepinelcuore.it



The Midgard Centre in Norway is situated close to a site with monumental burial mounds, the Borre mounds, dating from the Merovingian and the Viking periods. The centre opened in 2000, and in 2013, a replica Viking guild hall was added after traces of possible halls were uncovered there in 2007. The centre is part of the Museums of Vestfold, a county where the famous Oseberg and Gokstad Viking ships were found. <https://vestfoldmuseene.no/midgard-vikingsenter/>



Ekerö Municipality, where the Viking Age town of Birka is situated and where many Viking excavations have taken place. Now a member alongside the reconstructed Birka settlement that has been a member since 2019. <https://www.ekero.se/>



Recently, also the **Historic Museum in Stockholm** joined us. The Museum exhibits unique Viking Age objects in its treasure chamber and has one of the finest collections of artifacts of the Viking period in the world, including the famous Helgö Buddha, found in a Viking grave in Sweden, but originally coming from modern-day Afghanistan / Pakistan. <https://historiska.se/home/>

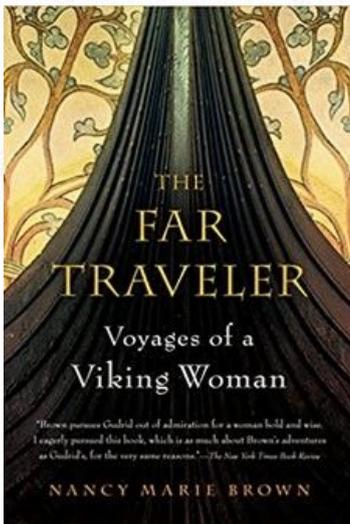




HUGIN & MUNIN

BOOK CORNER

WELCOME TO HUGIN & MUNIN'S BOOKCORNER. IN THIS ISSUE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND SOME BOOKS ABOUT THE VIKING AGE WOMEN THAT SHAPED THE WORLD AROUND THEM. AVAILABLE ONLINE OR AT YOUR NEAREST BOOK STORE

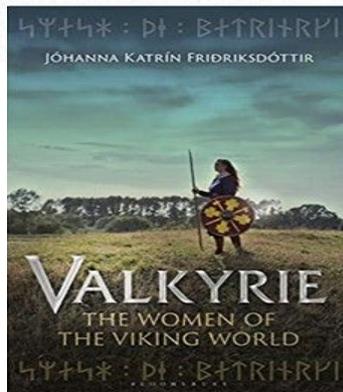


Non-fiction

The Far Traveler: Voyages of a Viking Woman

Author: Nancy Marie Brown
Paperback: October 6, 2008

Five hundred years before Columbus, a Viking woman named Gudrid sailed off the edge of the known world. She landed in the New World and lived there for three years, giving birth to a baby before sailing home. Or so the Icelandic sagas say. Even after archaeologists found a Viking longhouse in Newfoundland, no one believed that the details of Gudrid's story were true. Then, in 2001, a team of scientists discovered what may have been this pioneering woman's last house, buried under a hay field in Iceland, just where the sagas suggested it could be.

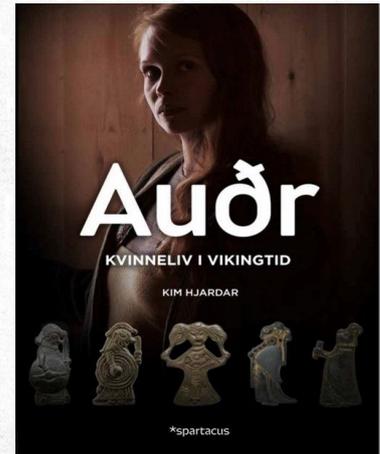


Non-fiction

Valkyrie: The Women of the Viking World

Author: Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir
Hardcover: April 2, 2020

Valkyries: the female supernatural beings that choose who dies and who lives on the battlefield. They protect some, but guide spears, arrows and sword blades into the bodies of others. Viking myths about valkyries attempt to elevate the banality of war – to make the pain and suffering, the lost limbs and deformities, the piles of lifeless bodies of young men, glorious and worthwhile. Rather than their death being futile, it is their destiny and good fortune, determined by divine beings. The women in these stories take full part in the power struggles and upheavals in their communities, for better or worse.

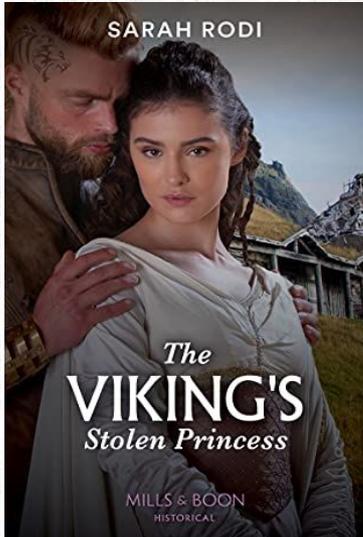


Non-fiction

Auðr – Women in the Viking Age

Author: Kim Hjarðar
Hardcover: Sept 20, 2022

In this book, we follow Aud the Deep-Minded, a rural Norwegian woman, on a 4,000 kilometre journey throughout her life, from her childhood in Norway to her adulthood in Ireland, Scotland and the Hebrides and her old age in Iceland. How can we consider the role of women and the opportunities available to them in the Viking period? Women in the Viking Age offers a journey of discovery through a history that has been overlooked. Through engaging writing and thought-provoking illustrations of both reconstructions and archaeological finds, the book provides a fascinating insight into the lives of Viking women.



fiction

The Viking's Stolen Princess

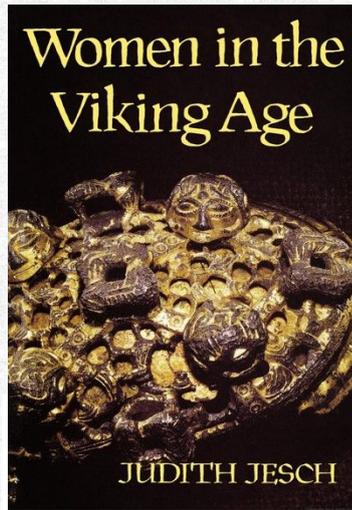
Author: Sarah Rodi
Paperback: Nov 25, 2021

A kidnapped royal...

Could be the Viking's undoing!

After Brand Ivarsson of Kald abducts Anne of Termarth on the eve of her wedding, the Viking's consumed with only one thing: revenge against her loathsome betrothed. But confronted with the stunning princess, so foreign to his world, Brand's captivated not only by her beauty, but by her spirit and her kindness. Is Anne his prisoner...or is she the one who's captured his scarred heart?

This romantic novel is part one of a two part series called 'The rise of the Ivarssons'.

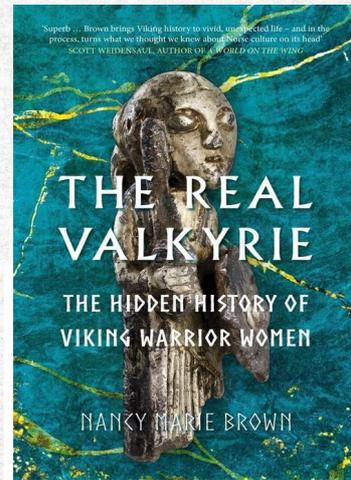


Non-fiction

Women in the Viking Age

Author: Judith Jesch
Paperback: Oct 25, 1991

This is the first book-length study in English to investigate what women did in the Viking age, both at home in Scandinavia and in the Viking colonies from Greenland to Russia. Evidence for their lives is fragmentary, but Judith Jesch assembles the clues provided by archaeology, runic inscriptions, place names and personal names, foreign historical records and Old Norse literature and mythology. These sources illuminate different aspects of women's lives in the Viking age, on the farms and in the trading centres of Scandinavia, abroad on Viking expeditions, and as settlers in places such as Iceland and the British Isles. *Women in the Viking Age* explores an unfamiliar aspect of medieval history and offers a new perspective on Viking society, very different from the traditional picture of a violent and male-dominated world.



Non-fiction

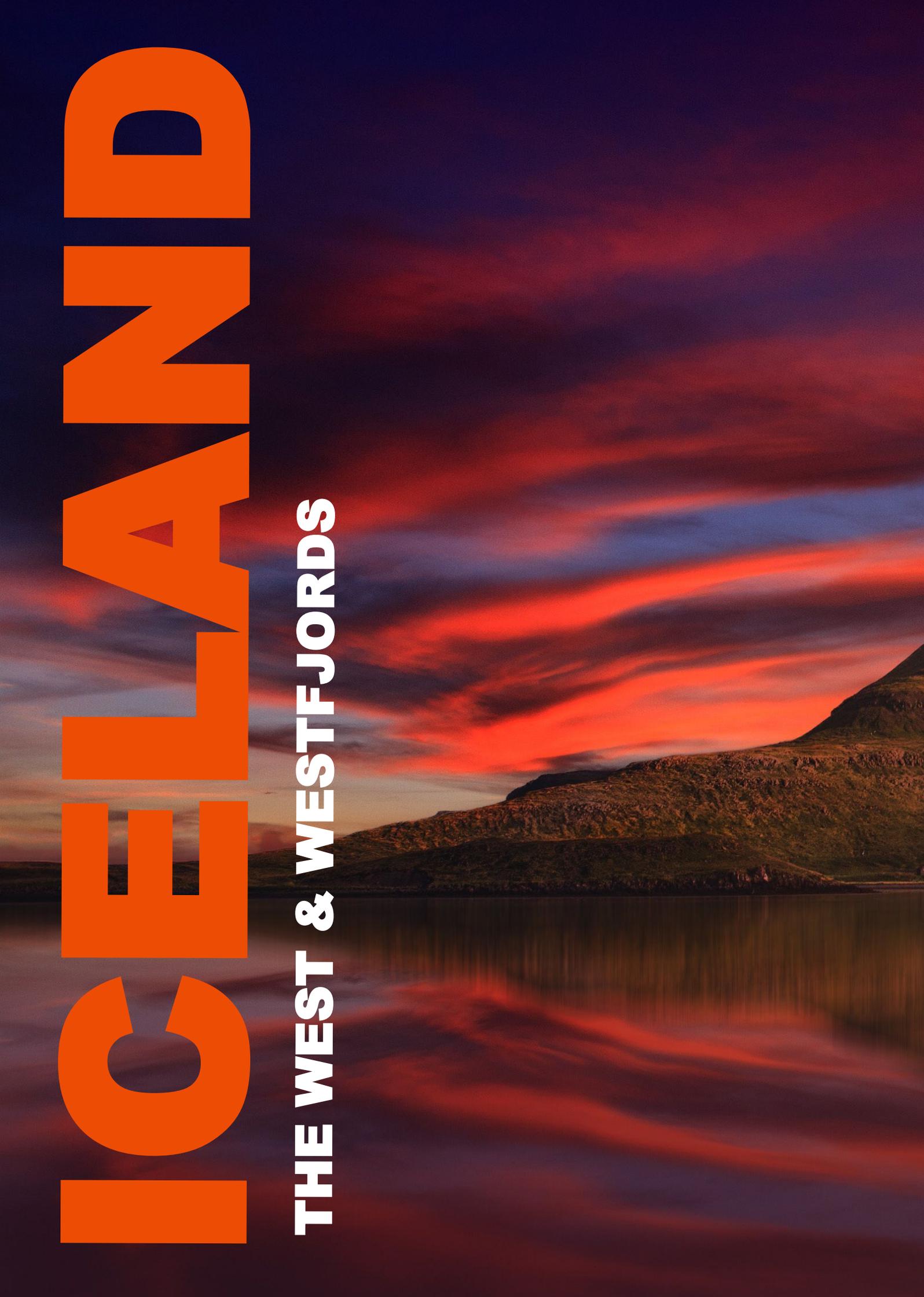
The Real Valkyrie: The Hidden History of Viking Warrior Women

Author: Nancy Marie Brown
Hardcover: Sept 17 2021

In 2017, DNA tests revealed to the collective shock of many scholars that a Viking warrior in a high-status grave in Birka, Sweden, was actually a woman. *The Real Valkyrie* weaves together archaeology, history and literature to reinvent her life and times, showing that Viking women had more power and agency than historians have imagined. Nancy Marie Brown links the Birka warrior, whom she names Hervor, to Viking trading towns and to their great trade route east to Byzantium and beyond. She imagines Hervor's adventures intersecting with larger-than-life but real women, including Queen Gunnhild Mother-of-Kings, the Viking leader known as the Red Girl, and Queen Olga of Kyiv. Hervor's short, dramatic life shows that much of what we have taken as truth about women in the Viking Age is based not on data but on nineteenth-century Victorian biases.

ICELAND

THE WEST & WESTFJORDS





VISIT THE
VIKINGS

Welcome to the visit the Vikings section of Hugin & Munin. In this issue we visit DVA member, Icelandic Saga & Heritage Association and their members in the West & Westfjords of Iceland.



Visit West Iceland

West Iceland, there's history at every footstep. Tour the Saga Trail in West Iceland and visit the sites of the Icelandic sagas and folk stories and notable historical events. Most of the Icelandic sagas were written in West Iceland, including Egil's saga, Sturlunga saga, Laxdæla saga and Eyrbyggja saga, so "Sagaland" is an apt description for the region.

www.west.is

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The Settlement Center

The Settlement Center in Borgarnes takes visitors on a magical journey through Egil's saga and the story of Iceland's settlement; The Egil's exhibition is dedicated to Egill Skallagrímsson, poet, warrior, and one of the Icelandic sagas' most colorful characters in the 10th century. The second exhibition tells the story of the Norse settlement of Iceland.

www.landnam.is

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Snorrastofa in Reykholt

Snorrastofa is a cultural and medieval center in Reykholt, and home of the poet-chieftain Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241) He was elected twice as lawspeaker of the Icelandic parliament, the Althing at Thingvellir, and is well known for compiling Prose Edda, Heimskringla (collection of sagas of the early Norwegian kings) and many of the Icelandic Sagas

www.snorrastofa.is



Eiríksstaðir

Warm yourself up by the long fire in the reconstructed longhouse in Eiríksstaðir and listen to a storyteller in Viking clothing tell about the inhabitants. Eirik The Red built a farm in Eiríksstaðir and started a family with his wife Þjóðhildur. Eirik was later the first Norseman to settle in Greenland, and Leif the Lucky, his and Þjóðhildur's son, was the first European to explore North America around the year 1000.

www.eiriksstadir.is

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The Leif Eiriksson Center

The Leif Eiriksson Center in Búðardalur in Dalir is dedicated to explorer Leif the Lucky, his father Eric the Red and Gudrid Thorbjarnardóttir "The Far-Travelled". The center, which opened in 2020, is located in the Dalir region in West Iceland (just 15 km from Eiríksstaðir), where Eric the Red and his family lived before seeking new adventures and settling in Greenland.

www.vinlandssetur.is



Skálinn – Viking Center

In the Skálinn – Viking Center, in the village of Þingeyri, you can immerse yourself in their daily lives of the original Viking settlers. Dress up in hand-stitched clothing from the Viking Age and bake bread over an open fire. In the reception hall, which has been decorated in Viking style, people have a unique opportunity to get to know the conditions and ways of life of the Icelandic Settlers, in the 9th and 10th century, through participation and also shop for quality handicrafts.

www.facebook.com/SkalinnThingeyri

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