

VIKINGS IN MANN

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Faillt erriu!
Welcome



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Viking Arrival

The Vikings lived in the part of Europe we now call Scandinavia. Although they all had similar languages and customs, there were three groups of Vikings - Norwegians, Danes and Swedes.

In Scandinavia the climate had become milder and the harvests better. There was more food for everyone. More people were born and lived longer. In time Scandinavia became overpopulated and people had to look for new land. Some Vikings were forced to leave their homelands because they fell out with their leaders.

The Norwegian Vikings came from rugged lands filled with giant creeks and bays known as *fiords* or *viks*. The easiest way to travel between towns was by boat. Vikings learned to handle boats when very young.

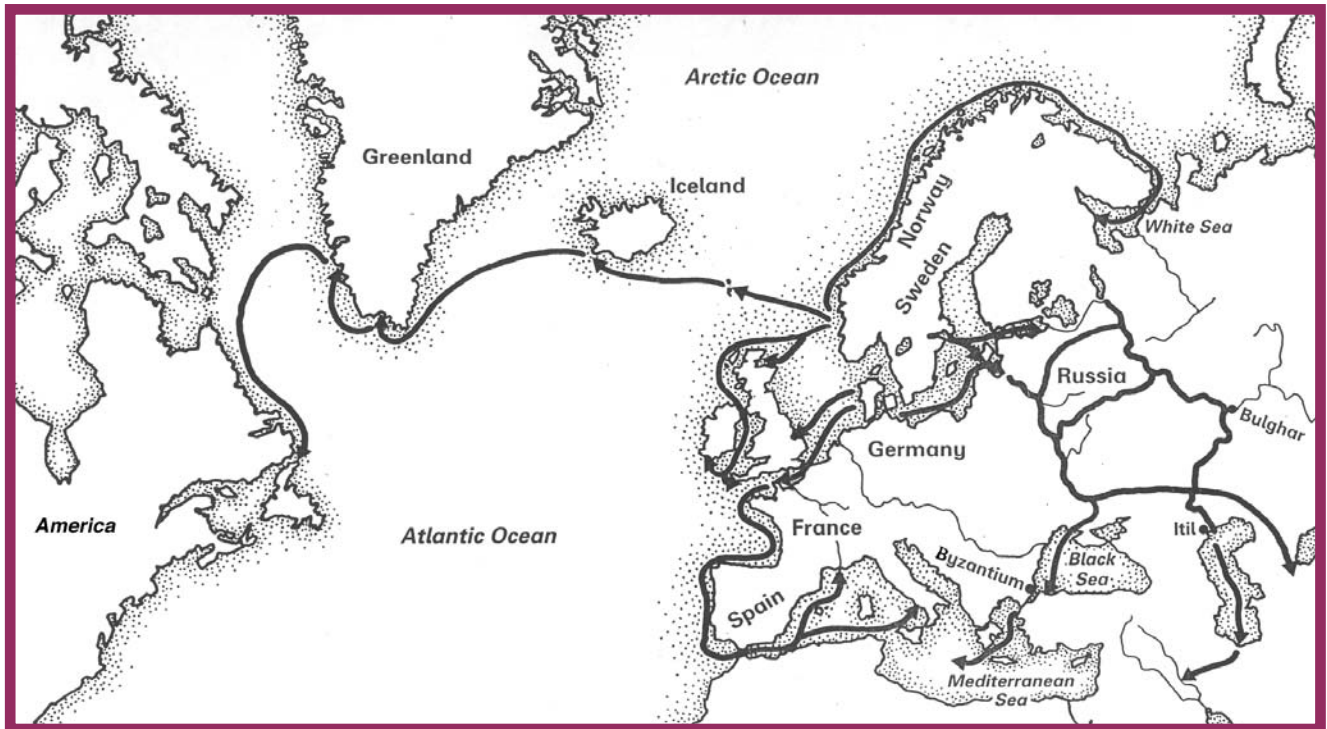
They steered their ships in the right direction using the positions of the stars and the sun. They followed the flights of gulls and the movement of fish. When they were approaching land they threw overboard something that floated. By looking carefully at how this came to the shore they were able to work out the direction of the currents and how to avoid dangerous rocks.

The Danish and Norwegian Vikings went south. They sailed across the treacherous North Sea and attacked the coasts of Britain, Ireland and France. The Swedish Vikings sailed east, travelling up great rivers and through vast forests to Russia, then further south to the great city of Constantinople on the Black Sea coast.

The Vikings left their rugged homelands to travel far across the world.



Viking Arrival



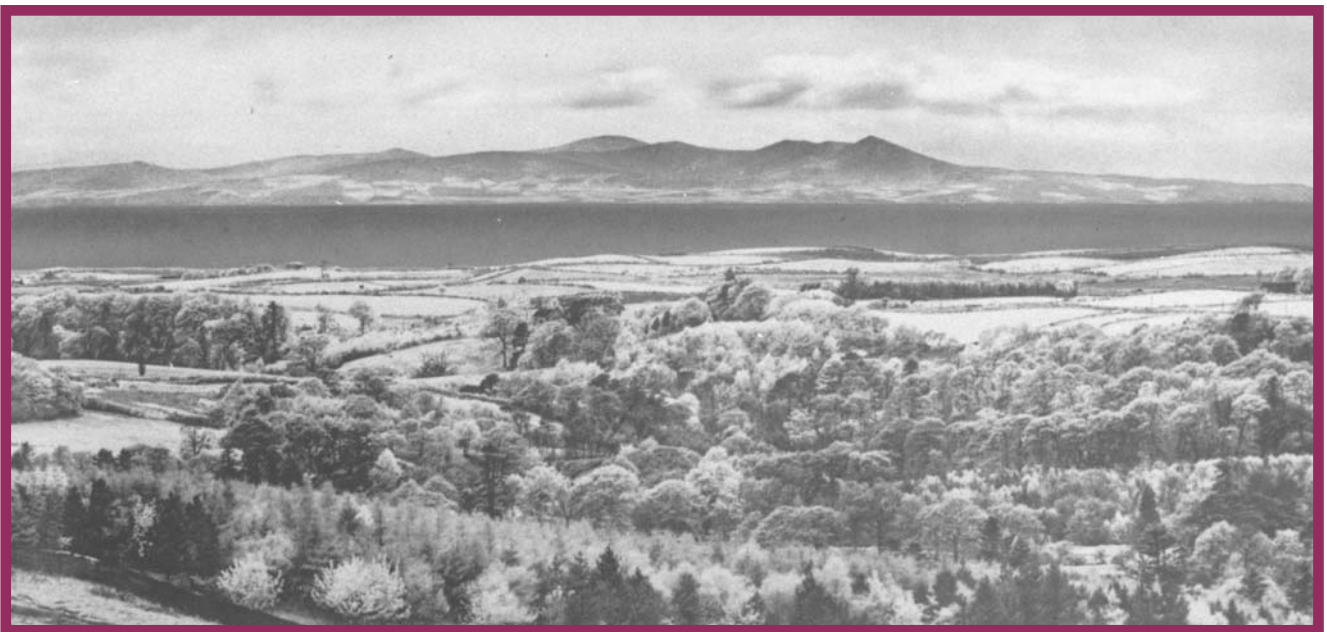
The journeys of the Vikings.

Longships were built for raiding and exploration. They could move as quickly backwards as forwards enabling them to get away from dangerous situations.

Other types of boats called *knorrs* were built to carry heavy and bulky cargoes.

The Vikings conquered and settled in

many parts of coastal Britain including the Scottish Isles. Some sailed west over sea colonising the Orkney, Shetland and Faroe Islands and as far as Iceland and Greenland. Some Vikings intending to set foot in Greenland discovered North America by accident, hundreds of years before Columbus.



*Panoramic view of the Island from the Lake District.
Mann could be seen clearly from other parts of the British Isles.*

Viking Arrival

The Isle of Man was seen clearly from parts of the British Isles. Viking ships en route to Dublin and the Hebrides would have sailed past the Island.

The richness of the Island's farmland attracted the Vikings. Situated in the middle of the Irish Sea it was an important area to control. It had safe harbours for ships and was a good place to launch attacks on other coastal areas. The Vikings settled throughout the Island and wealthy Viking warriors came to own the best farming lands.

Rich land owners had people working the farms for them. Some workers were slaves and had no freedom at all. Their owners had the power of life and death over them. However we should remember that the native people also kept slaves.

The local Celtic people had different beliefs to the Vikings. They were Christian believing in one God. They spoke Gaelic and were farmers.

The Vikings were pagan and spoke Norse. They were explorers in search of land and wealth. They believed in many *gods*. When lightning pierced the night sky they would ask Thor the god of thunder for protection.

Celtic woman and Viking man



When their crops grew well they gave thanks to Frey, the god of the harvest for their food. Their gods helped them to explain things they could not understand.

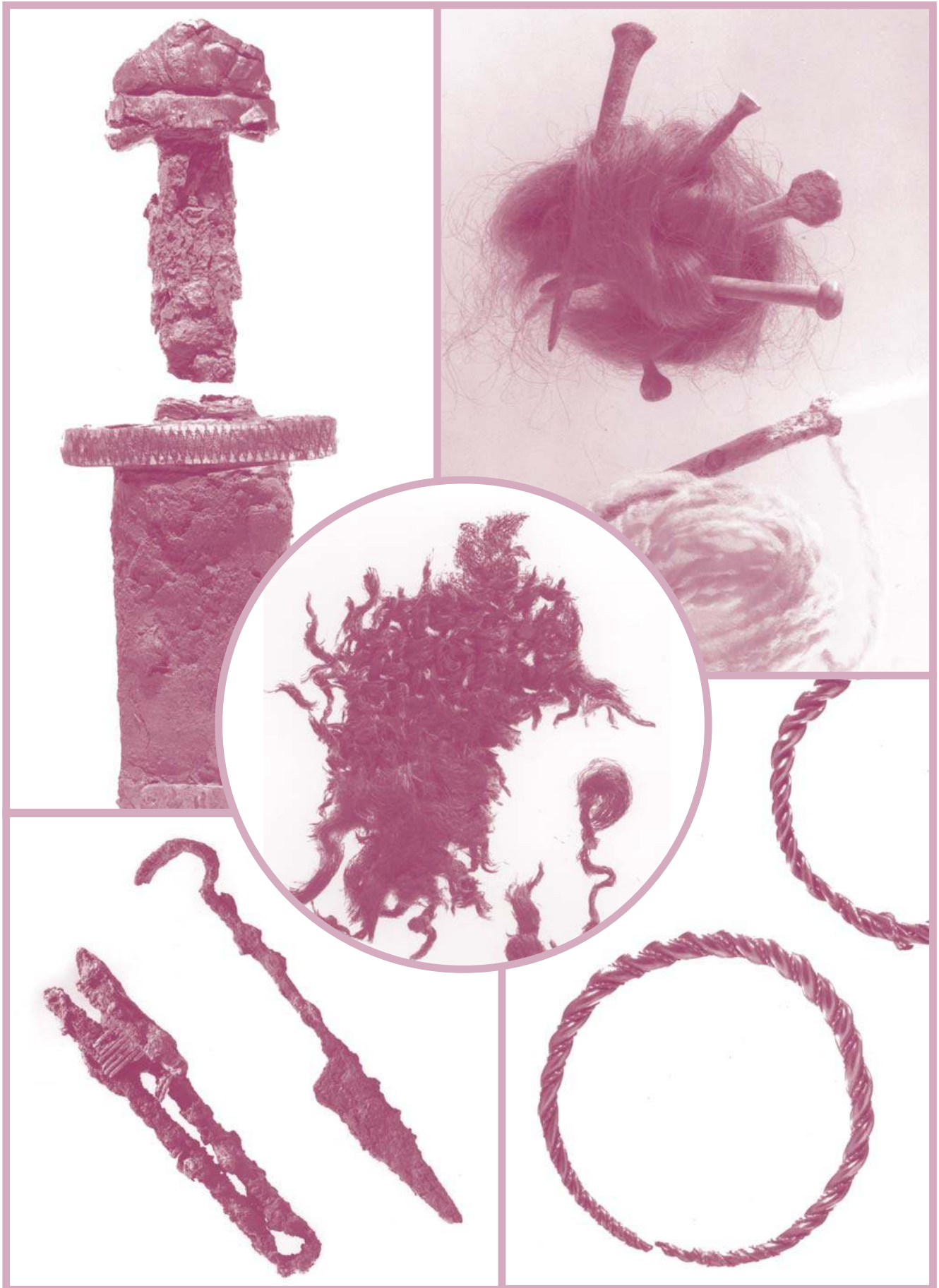
Clues have been found on the Island which show the Vikings lived here - their clothes and jewellery, the houses they built, the tools and weapons they used and the food they ate.

By the end of the tenth century A.D. the Vikings were rulers of the Island. There is no evidence that on arrival in Mann the Vikings killed and enslaved the local population. However we should remember that on arrival in other parts of the British Isles terrible things were done to the native people. We cannot be certain if the Vikings were accepted peacefully on the Island, but in time they intermarried with the local people and their children were a mixture of Viking and Celt.

VIKINGS INDEED!
WHOEVER NEXT?



The Vikings were warlike, but they also worked at building their homes, farming and fishing. They were skilled craftworkers making almost everything they needed with their own hands.



THINGS THEY LEFT BEHIND:

Top Left: Sword with silver decoration on the hilt

Top right: Bone pins and bodkins

Bottom Right: Silver wire bracelets

Bottom Left: Iron shears with remains of bone comb

Middle: Piece of fabric from Viking grave

Everyday Life

The Vikings chose the sites for their houses carefully. It was important to find a place that would be sheltered from the cold and wet. They used any material they could find close by to build their homes.

In Mann they built the walls from stone or turf or a mixture of both. The roofs were kept up by posts. Sometimes the eaves went right down to the ground. The walls did not support the roof. They were built to shelter the people from the wind and rain.

The interiors of their houses were made more comfortable with wall hangings, blankets and furs.

The Vikings sometimes built their houses on sites already chosen by the Celts. At the Braaid (Marown) lie the remains of a Viking farmstead. Two massive Viking longhouses were built beside a Celtic roundhouse.

The farm workers lived in the bow-sided dwelling. The smaller rectangular building may have been used as a stable or byre.



The remains of a Viking farmstead at the Braaid, Marown. We don't know if the local Celts were living in the roundhouse when the Vikings arrived

Longhouses were rectangular dwellings with simple interiors made often of one room. People slept on raised benches running alongside the walls.

They cooked their food using a fire in the centre of the room which also heated the entire house. This was usually placed in a stone hearth.

There was a small hole in the roof for the smoke to escape. The floor was covered with straw or reeds. They did not have windows, only small openings in the walls. These were covered with animal skins to keep out the wind and rain. Large windows would have let in the cold and wet.

The bigger houses sometimes had separate rooms where animals were kept. At night the children lay in their blankets on timber benches, raised by stone uprights. The inside of their home was smoky and smelly, lit dimly by the fire in the centre of the room.

Perhaps frightened by the wind and dark, the glowing embers gave them a little comfort. Their parents and older brothers and sisters told them fantastic stories about gods, giants and monsters.

Wealthy Vikings built their homes where there was good farmland. The Manx lowlands and the plains to the north had good fertile land. The poorer farmers sometimes lived in the upland areas.

At Doarlish Cashen near Dalby, the remains of a tiny farmhouse and outbuildings were discovered. This farmstead was very small compared with the site found at the Braaid, Marown. It was built in an area which today edges on moorland.

Longhouses were sometimes built on the site of Celtic forts. These were usually very high places where ships could be seen approaching.

The longhouse built at Cronk ny Merriu overlooks the entrance to Port Grenaugh. We know that this house had three doorways, side benches and a central hearth.



The remains of a Viking longhouse overlooking the entrance to Post Grenaugh

Farms were often situated near rivers. Rivers provided water for crops and animals as well as transport by boat. Sometimes rivers were used to work corn mills and make flour. Sheltered inlets such as Peel harbour offered a safe place to moor boats and to fish.

Viking farmers used the uplands of Mann to graze their cattle during the summer months. During this season they lived in temporary houses or sheilings made of turves (sods of earth and grass) and looked after their animals. If these small houses fell down during the winter weather, they were simply built up again for the following grazing season. The Vikings named these summer dwellings after the word - 'eary" meaning an open outdoor place. This is where we get the names of such places today as Block Eary, on the northern slopes of Snaefell.

Bread was an important food for the Vikings. Grain was grown from barley, oats

and rye. The climate of the Island was similar to that in Scandinavia - cool and damp so little wheat was grown. To stop the cereal seed from sprouting, they sometimes parched the grain in special ovens called kilns. The grain was ground into flour using a stone quern.

Bread was baked in ovens outside the house. Goose wings were used as brushes to clean out the ovens.

On St. Patrick's Isle, bones were found from animals the Vikings had eaten. These included chicken, goose, duck, rabbit, and hare.

Meat was preserved by covering it with salt. The Vikings may have imported salt or got it from sea water. Meat was roasted on a spit over a fire or boiled in a pot. Cattle also provided milk for drinking as well as butter, cheese, curds and whey.

They hunted birds such as Guillemot, Shag and Manx Shearwater. These birds provided oil for lighting lamps, meat and eggs.

Fish such as herring and cod were plentiful during the summer months.

They also ate vegetables and fruit. It is likely they had wild carrots, wild cabbage or kale and fruits such as crab apple and many types of edible berries.

The Vikings buried wealthy landowners under great mounds of earth. The bones of dog, ox, horse and sheep have been found in the mounds, so we know they kept these animals on the farms.

Few items of pottery have been found on the island from Viking times. It is likely they made most of their containers from leather and wood - materials which decayed quickly.

Tools & Weapons

The Vikings used weapons for attack and defence.

Swords were used for slashing and were sharp on both edges of the blade. They used two types of spear; a lighter one for throwing and a heavier one for thrusting. Axes were heavy and sharp and could beat a shield to pieces.

Shields were used for protection. They were made of wood and had a metal piece (the boss) in the centre to protect the hand.

In battle, Vikings wore simple conical helmets and leather tunics to protect their heads and bodies. Many people think they wore horned helmets, but this is not true.

Viking blacksmiths were expert at making weapons. To make a sword the smith would heat a bar of iron until it was so hot it turned white. This was then hammered into shape on a heavy iron block called an anvil. It was plunged into cold water to cool it quickly. This was done several times until it became hard. The skill was to make a weapon that would be sharp and hard but that would not break easily. A good smith was respected. His skills were passed on to young boys as soon as they were old enough to learn.

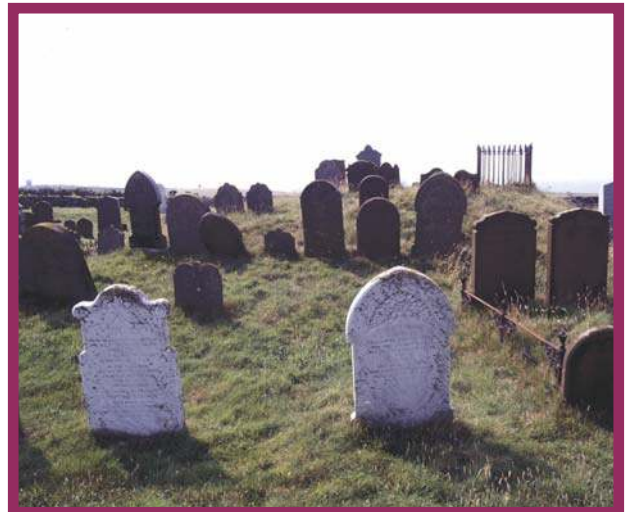
Sometimes weapons were decorated with bronze (a mixture of copper and tin) or silver.

Many Vikings were skilled craftsmen. Wood carvers made plates and bowls for eating and drinking out of. Carpenters used wood to make everything from ships to containers. Blacksmiths forged the tools needed for everyday life - knives, hammers, mallets, tongs and nails.

They made specialist tools for shipbuilding such as the *adze*, used for shaping planks and the *auger* for boring holes.

The Vikings believed that when they died they went to a magical place. Here they would meet people they knew, and use the things they needed when they were alive.

Wealthy Viking warriors were buried with the finest things they owned, for use in the afterlife. Their graves were often built into mounds placed on their own farmlands and built with soil from the lands they owned. Burial mounds like the one at Jurby Church could be seen from a long distance especially offshore.



Viking burial mound at Jurby Church

Some of the burial sites have been excavated. This skilful work is done by trained people (archaeologists), who are patient and look at everything carefully.

When a tool or weapon is unearthed it can look dull and boring - just a rusty piece of old metal! This has to be cleaned and treated by an expert, so that you can see the objects more clearly and stop them from decaying further.

Tools and Weapons

In one grave at Ballateare (Jurby), the warrior's sword was found still in its holder or scabbard. A piece of the sling used by the Viking to carry the sword was discovered also.

PIECES OF THE SLING THAT WERE FOUND

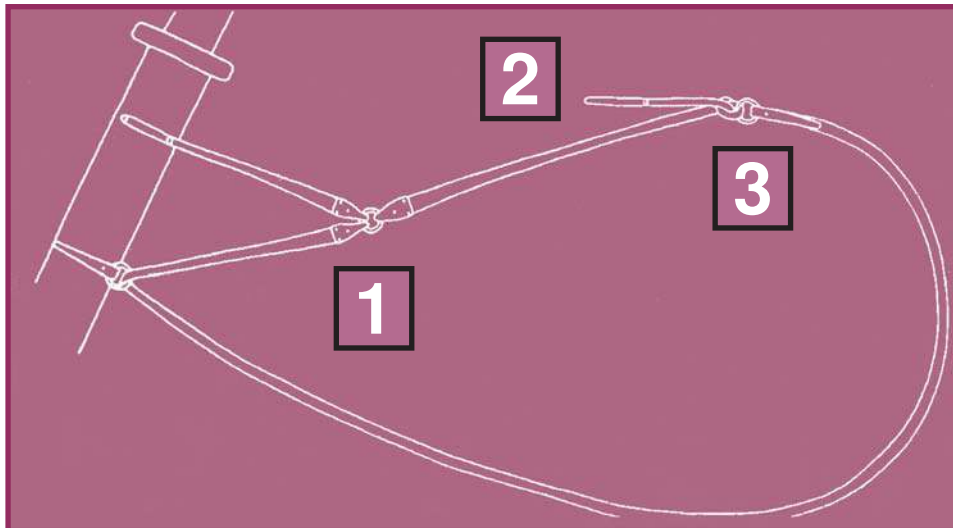
1. Strap Distributor 2. Strap and end protector 3. Buckle

Top: Suggested sling for the Ballateare sword

Bottom: Strap distributor found in a Viking grave, Ballateare, Jurby

Right: Viking sword broken before burial

Some weapons were destroyed by the Vikings on purpose before burial. Swords were broken into pieces or bent and shield bosses struck with something heavy, probably an axe. It is likely that they wanted to make the weapons useless to stop people stealing them from the grave.



At Knock y Doonee (Andreas), a Viking was buried with the tools of his trade. He may have been a blacksmith because with him were found a hammer, tongs and nails. Also buried were a spear and axe. All the wooden parts had decayed. All that was left of his shield was the boss. The hilt of his sword was patterned with tiny strands of silver wire.

At Balladoole (Arbory), a wealthy farmer was buried with all his horse trappings. Pieces of a highly decorated harness were found along with stirrups, spurs, and a whetstone he used for sharpening his knives. The harness mounts, strap ends and buckles were made with great skill. Many of the pieces had been brought to the Island from other parts of Europe.



Above: Blacksmith's tongs and hammer head

Right: Cooking spit from a Viking lady's grave

A pagan grave found during excavation at Peel Castle contained the skeleton of a woman. Buried with her were the things she needed for looking after her family. An iron cooking spit had been placed by her side. It had been wrapped in woollen cloth. Goose feathers were found on the spit. These may have come from the wings used to clean out something, possibly a bread oven or to sweep up the floor after cooking.

Other items buried with her included knives, a pair of shears used for cutting cloth, a leather and bronze pouch and 73 beautiful beads probably worn as a necklace.



Clothes & Jewellery

We don't know in detail what the Manx Vikings wore because most things made of cloth, wool or leather have decayed. However, fragments of clothing have been found in Mann and other countries where the Vikings settled. From these we can get an idea of the kinds of clothes they were and how they were made.

Men wore a tunic made from cloth or wool beneath a cloak of fur, wool or coloured cloth. The cloak was held together by a leather belt and a brooch or pin fastened near one shoulder. Some brooches were very fine like the thistle brooch found in

Douglas. Trousers were worn tight or baggy. They had long woollen socks on their legs and feet. they wore leather shoes with a seam running along the top.

Women wore long dresses (usually made of linen) called *kyrtils*. Over these were draped rectangular pieces of cloth at the front and back. These *tabards* looked like long aprons and were held together by shoulder straps. The straps were then, sometimes, fastened by two large brooches or simple pins at each shoulder. the tabards were often decorated at the top and bottom.



Clothes & Jewellery

Cloth was made by spinning fibres from flax, hemp or nettle. They dyed the fibres bright colours using the juices from plants.

They used wool from their sheep to make warm clothes. Wool was combed or *carded* to make certain the fibres ran in one direction. It was then spun into threads using hand spindles weighted by stone or wooden whorls. Threads were arranged vertically on a loom. These made the warp. The warp was held down on the loom by weights made of stone or clay. Horizontal threads - the weft were put through these, weaving the threads into cloth.

Wool was a very important material. A large chunky cloak was light for its size, warm and dry.

Brooches were useful and not just for ornament. They were used as safety pins by the Vikings to fasten clothing together. sometime women wore beads strung between their shoulder brooches. They also wore necklaces. Some beads were made from a hard black rock called *jet*. This gave a good shine when polished. They also used *amber*, a solid golden coloured resin that had oozed out of pine trees millions of years before.

The grave of a wealthy women on St. Patrick's Isle, Peel, contained 73 glass and amber beads. They were found near the head of her skeleton. The string that held her necklace together had decayed scattering the beads. She may have had two pendants; one made from two large amber beads and the other from a fossil *ammonite*. She may have worn the ammonite as a good luck charm.

Ammonites and amber are not found in Mann, She may have been the wife of a wealthy Viking who traded abroad.

The Vikings liked to make decorative things. They made pins and buckles from bronze and buttons from tiny threads of silver wire. Sometimes they made jewellery from gold. A man's ring found at Greeba was made from nine strands of gold wire.



They were experts at decorating tools, weapons and jewellery. Grooves were cut out of metal objects and pure silver wire beaten into them. This process was called *inlay*. Sometimes tiny beads of silver were melted on to another metal to make a *filigree* pattern. They could do this even on the top of a pinhead! This is enlarged in the photograph below.





Above: Necklace from a pagan woman's grave

Top Left: Man's gold finger ring

Bottom Left: Filigree decoration on top of a gold pinhead

Vikings liked to wear beautiful things for pleasure and also to show how wealthy they were. Wives were sometimes given jewellery if their husbands were successful in raiding or trading.

Clothes & Jewellery

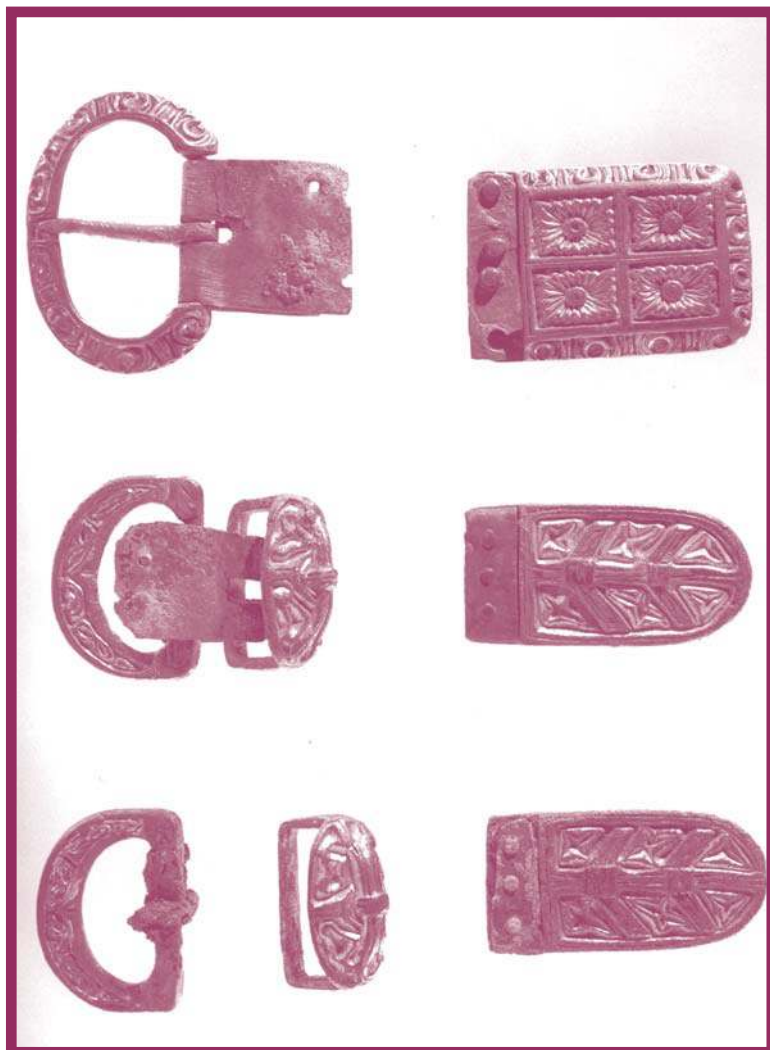
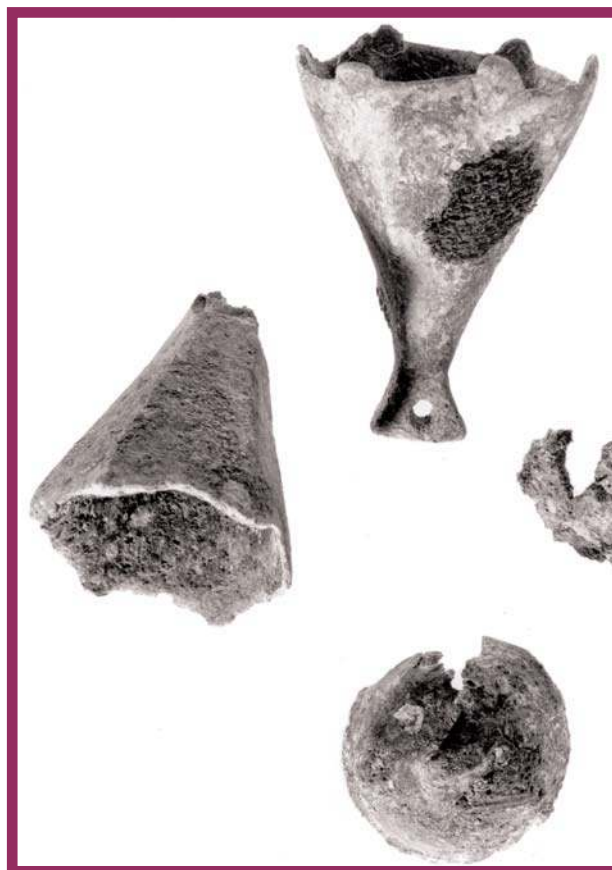
Even horses had jewellery! At Balladoole (Arbory), the farmer was buried with his complete riding outfit. The parts of the horse's bridle and harness were beautifully decorated. These items of jewellery came from different parts of the world showing us the Vikings travelled widely by sea and traded with other countries.

The Vikings often buried their dead with their favourite jewellery. Children were buried with some of their toys. A Viking grave on St. Patrick's Isle contained tiny bronze bells. One had its clapper still inside. These bells may have belonged to a child.

Top right: Bronze bells

Bottom Right: Two decorated bronze discs from the horse's bridle, found at Balladoole

Bottom Left: Buckle and strap ends from the Balladoole ship burial. The two at the bottom fastened the spurs; whilst the one at the top fastened the belt



Viking Ships

Wealthy Viking warriors were buried with their prized possessions. Some were even buried in their boats! The Vikings believed they would continue using these in the afterlife. Viking boat burials have been found at Balladoole (Arbory) and Knock y Doonee (Andreas). Little was left of the boats. Only the metal nails were found. These gave an idea of the sizes of the boats **but not** how they were built.

At Gokstad in southern Norway a Viking chief was buried with his complete ship. The Viking's body had been placed in the ship along with twelve horses, six dogs and a peacock! The remains of three rowing boats were also found.

These had all been buried under a great mound of earth. Some of the ship had been damaged by the weight of rocks and soil above but as the clay soils had kept air from the wood it did not rot. People were excited because they had discovered a nearly complete ship. By looking closely at the remains it was possible to work out how the ship was built.

The keel was the backbone of the ship. it was made from a large and straight oak tree. This gave a very strong and solid support. The front of the ship (the prow) and the back (the stern) were joined to the ends of the keel by overlapping joints. The surface of the keel was curved in certain places where extra support was needed. The boat was designed to move quickly through the water either forwards or backwards. Small grooves were cut in the keel so that the lowest planks making up the body of the ship would fit snugly in. The planks or strakes were made to overlap.

Before joining the strakes together a groove was cut in the lower ends of each one. This was filled with tarred rope or wool to give a water-tight seal, before the strakes were joined together with iron nails. A metal washer (a rove) kept the nail in place.



This way of making the hull of the ship was called *clinker building*. It meant that fairly thin and light planks could be used to make a watertight body or hull. The strakes near the waterline and those

Viking Ships

having oar holes were made thicker. These places had to withstand greater stresses. The strakes were held together by ribs and crossbeams.

The ship was steered by a rudder. This was attached to the right hand side of the stern, Because this was the side from which the ship was steered, it was called the starboard side.

The rudder was cleverly attached to the side using a willow branch as a pivot. This allowed the rudder to be twisted to turn the ship. Willow was a good material to use because it was strong and bent easily.



Strap and rudder

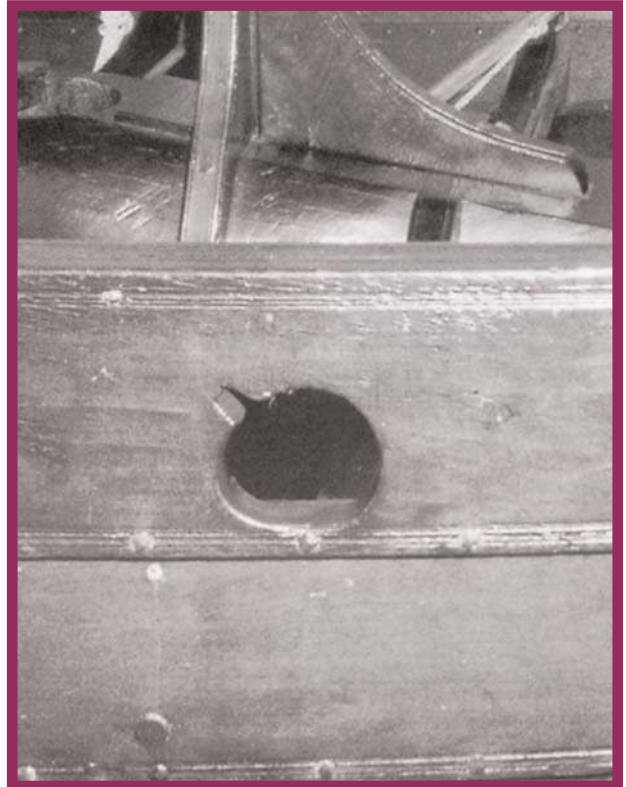
When the ship landed on a beach the rudder could be turned alongside the ship to avoid hitting the ground.

A strap near the steering handle (tiller) kept the rudder in place while the ship was in the water.



The helmsman at the rudder

The oar holes were made so that the oars could be slid through from the inside of the ship. Narrow slits allowed this to happen without having to make the holes too big. Large holes would have allowed water to get into the ship and the oars would have moved around too much. The oar holes were covered with wooden caps so that water could not enter the ship while sailing.



Oar holes

The oarsman sat upon wooden boxes when rowing. They kept their valuables in these boxes. Loose planks were laid to form the deck. Weapons and tools could be stored underneath and covered over easily with the planks.

No sails were found in the ship at Gokstad. We have to work out what the rigging was like by looking at the designs of later ships. We know that a single square sail was used. This was probably made of wool and reinforced with linen or leather. A full sail could not have always been used.

Viking Ships

The strength of the wind in open sea was too strong. They had a way of bunching together some of the sail so that a half or a quarter of it was used.

The heavy mast was held in place by a large block of oak wood called a *kerling*.

The *kerling* rested on the keel and was attached to some of the ribs. This spread the weight of the mast more evenly over the keel.

A raised platform gave further support to the mast. This was called a mast fish because of its shape.

Mast fish of Viking ship



The discovery of the Gokstad ship allowed people to learn in great detail about how a Viking boat was built.

In 1979 the Vikings had been in Mann for at least a 1000 years. The Island had been ruled by the Government (Tynwald), and was a Scandinavian institution for all that time. This was the Island's millennium year and to mark this occasion a replica, two thirds the size of the Gokstad ship was made in Norway. This boat was called

Odin's Raven. In 1979 the boat sailed some 1500 miles across the North Sea from Norway to Peel and took just over a month for the journey. People found out what handling a Viking ship at sea was really like!

The Gokstad ship was built for warfare and exploration. In ships such as these Viking warriors set sail from Mann in 1014 to fight at Clontarf in Ireland.

The Vikings also built *Knorrs* - boats built to carry heavy cargoes. These were sometimes made entirely of oak, a very hard wood.

They were wider than longboats and made stronger with extra strakes. They were designed to transport bulky loads such as timber, iron ore or grain. It was much easier to move heavy loads such as these over water.

Smaller boats were made for short journeys and for fishing. The boat found at Balladoole was clinker-built with a rising prow. It had five strakes or less on either side and was about 35 feet long.



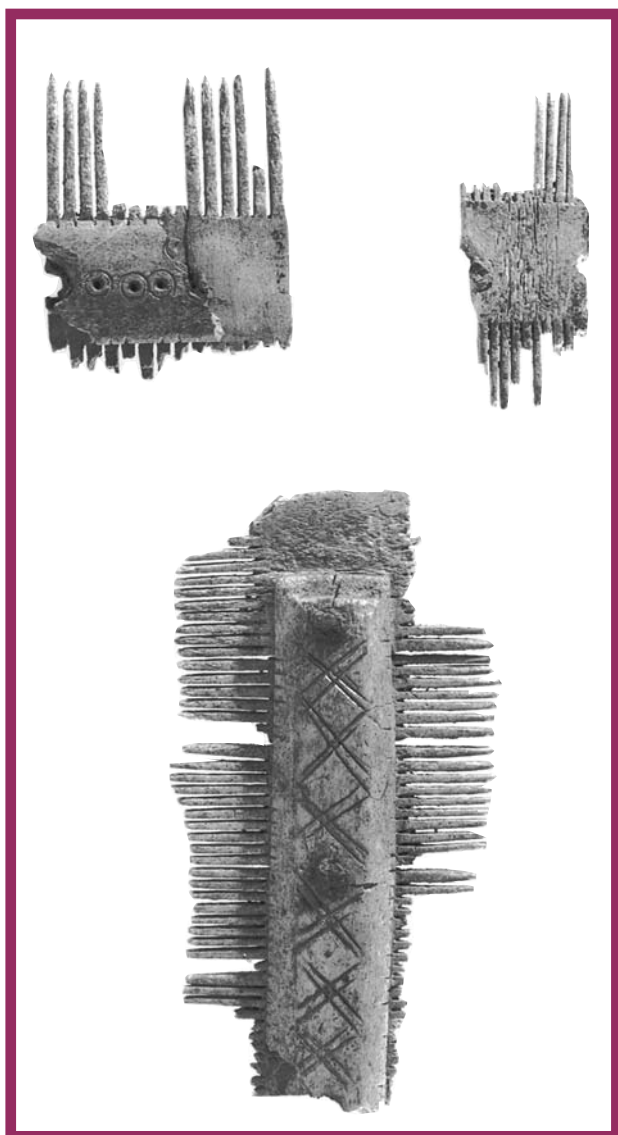
Odin's Raven at sea

Trade

The Vikings made everything by hand.

Leather working was an important craft. They made shoes and boots, harnesses for horses, belts and special leather tunics to protect themselves during fighting. Leather bags were used to hold small items. Containers for holding water were made from animal hides. When making leather clothes, or shoes, the fur was sometime left on for extra warmth.

Animal bones and tusks were used to make combs and pins. Vikings wore their hair long. They used combs to groom their hair and remove lice and fleas.



Bone combs

Viking women and girls used spindles to spin thread from wool. They were skilful at weaving fine cloth. They used bone needles to sew cloth and leather. They decorated cloth with fine embroidery.

The Vikings sold the things they made or swapped them for other goods.

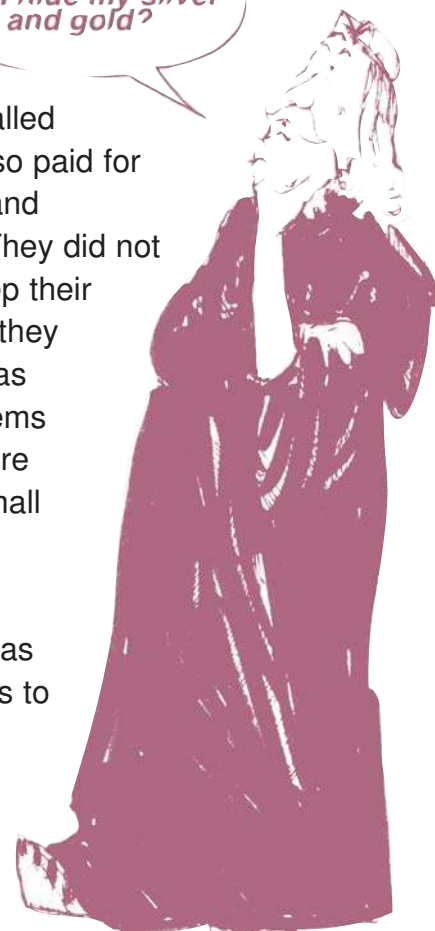
Such trading took place between the various Viking settlements around the British Isles and Europe. The Vikings traded also with their homelands in Scandinavia. Their wares were exchanged for goods they could not make locally.

How much part the Island took in this trade is not known. But being in the centre of the Irish sea the Island was in a good position to trade with other settlements around the British Isles.

Now Where
can I hide my silver
and gold?

Exchanging goods was also called bartering. They also paid for things with silver and sometimes gold. They did not have banks to keep their valuables safe so they wore their wealth as jewellery. Silver items including coins were melted down in small clay pots called *crucibles*.

The liquid metal was poured into moulds to make jewellery.





Ring money and coins found at Kirk Michael. A piece of the cloth bag used to keep them was found also

Merchant's scales



They made special rings out of silver. These were used to pay for things.

Ring money as well as coins were frequently used in Mann and the Western Isle of Scotland.

The Vikings weighed gold and silver to make sure they had the right amount. They used scales for doing this.

Pieces of rings or coins were broken off in order to make up the correct weight of silver or gold for payment.

Sometimes people made false coins with cheaper metals such as lead or tin. They were able to check if a coin was real or fake by weighing it.

Treasure was often hidden in cloth or leather bags and buried. Graveyards were a favourite place to hide treasure. There were few people about and things were less likely to be dug up.

Some people did not come back to find their valuables because something happened to them. Their wealth was left behind for us to discover centuries later. Ring money, coins, silver arm bands and brooches have been discovered as treasure hoards.

Some pieces of jewellery found in Viking graves show they were not made in Mann. We know this because the materials used were not available on the Island or the types of some pieces were like those made in other parts of the world.

Vikings used special boats for trading. These were broader and shorter than those used for exploration and raiding. They were designed to carry heavy cargoes. They also had small boats for travelling up narrow rivers and making short journeys.

Travelling by sea, river and lake meant they were able to trade in many places round the world.

From Mann they sailed westwards to Ireland. Dublin was an important and rich trading town. Some sailed eastwards to Viking settlements such as Chester or Bristol.

Others may have ventured northward to Iceland and Greenland or south to Normandy in France.

Right: Silver coins from a treasure hoard found at Kirk Michael



Beliefs & Myths

The Vikings believed that forces of nature such as thunder and lightning were caused by gods.

They would pray to their gods for protection and the things they needed to survive.

Nowadays it is easy to laugh at people believing such things. In those days folk did not have the knowledge about the world that we do today. They used their imagination to explain things they did not understand.

The Vikings made up fantastic stories about their gods. These stories or myths were filled with wonderful things such as magical swords, giants, creatures that changed their forms, and loads of treasure!

The stories were not only good tales. They also showed us the things in life the Vikings thought important - having courage, strength, and being loyal to your friends, They showed the nastier sides of people too - murder, being greedy and sneaky.

In the winter evenings on Mann all those years ago, the children lay in the flickering light of a fire and listened to the stories of the adults. When they grew up they retold the tales to their children, and so the stories were passed on.

Two gods were favourites in these stories - Thor and Odin.

Thor was the god of thunder. He wore a magic belt around his waist that gave him his enormous strength. When he wore his gloves he could grasp and shatter rocks. He carried a gigantic hammer for smashing the heads of his enemies. Thor rode across the heavens on his chariot drawn by two enormous goats. Thor was

strong, quick tempered and sometimes a little foolhardy!

One story relates to how he went fishing. He hooked a gigantic sea serpent. Thor tried so hard to pull in his monster catch that his feet went through the bottom of the boat!

However the Norse admired his strength in battle. They had a weekly feast in his honour on a special day called Thor's day - we now call this Thursday.

The most powerful of the gods was Odin. He ruled over the other Gods and was cunning, selfish and very dangerous. He decided who was saved and who died in battle. He sent his women messengers called Valkyries, to battlefields where they chose only the very best of the warriors who had died in fighting. The Valkyries took them to a heavenly place called Valhalla. Here they fought by day and feasted by night. Because Valhalla was a magic place, the warriors never died. No matter how badly wounded they were in fighting, they were fit again the next day. Even the wild boar whose flesh they feasted on, came back to life!

The Vikings thought that by killing an animal and offering it to a god (sacrifice) good things might come to them.

They believed that when people died they went to a magical place. They buried their dead with their possessions so they could use them again in the afterlife.

Wealthy Viking rulers were buried on hilly places overlooking the sea. Their graves were built up into large mounds of earth. These could be seen for miles around.



Skull of a young girl sacrificed before burial found at Ballateare, Jurby. The slash mark of the sword used to kill her is shown by the arrow.

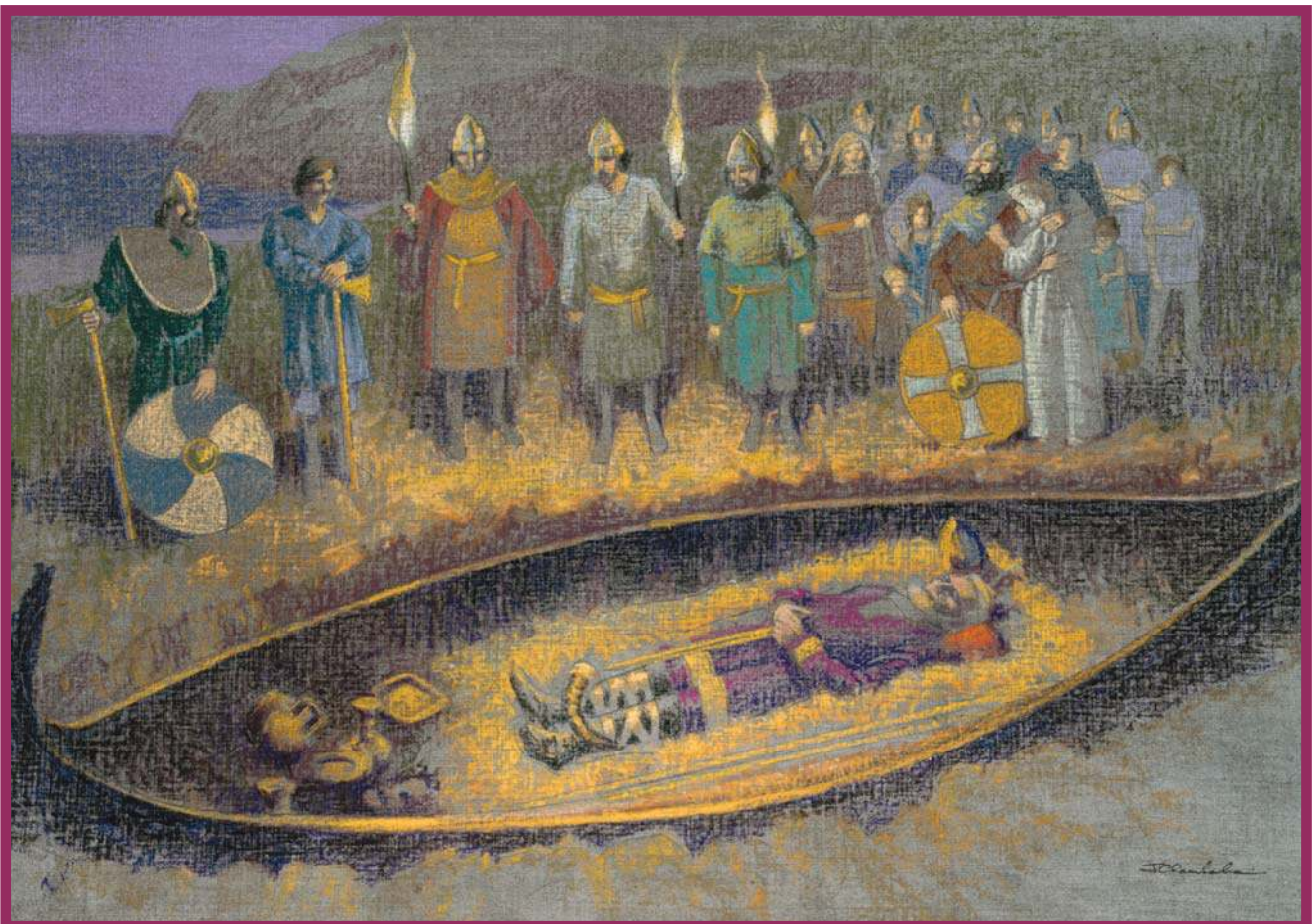
Warrior farmers were buried with their finest jewellery, tools and weapons. Sometimes slaves and animals were killed and buried with them in the belief they would continue to serve their masters after death.

At Ballateare (Jurby) the skull of a young girl was found in the grave of a Viking warrior. She had been killed by a heavy blow to her head, probably with a sword, before being buried with her owner.

By the late 10th century the Vikings were becoming Christian. We know from excavations at Peel Castle that at this time the Vikings buried their dead in Christian cemeteries. Like Christian burials they used coffins made from stone slabs (lintels) and buried the person facing east in the direction of the holy lands.

Unlike Celtic burials at this time, the Vikings continued their habit of burying people with their possessions.

Viking ship burial



Stories in the Stones

The Celtic Christians marked the graves of very wealthy people with large stone crosses. The Vikings admired the work of the Celtic stonemasons. They copied the styles and patterns of Celtic crosses.

They used their own ideas too and in time produced a unique set of Scandinavian stone cross slabs.

They used an alphabet to carve inscriptions on the crosses made from straight lines called *runes*. It was easier to carve straight lines in stone than curved ones. The Viking alphabet had sixteen letters and was called *futhark* after the first six letters.

We can learn something of the people living at this time from these short inscriptions.

The message on the Thorlief Cross from Braddan, as shown below reads:

'Thorlief Hnakki erected this cross to the memory of Fiacc his son'.

A man with a Viking name had the cross made for his son who had a Celtic name - Fiacc. Perhaps his father was Viking and his mother Celtic.

The crosses also show Viking decoration. The most famous of the cross sculptors on the Island was Gaut, son of Bjorn who had a style of ornament made with interlacing spirals and loops. Gaut Bjornson was very proud of his work. He included his own name on two different inscriptions on crosses found at Andreas and Michael. The lettering on a cross found at Kirk Michael reads:

'Mael Brigde, son of Athakan the Smith, erected this cross for his own soul and that of his brother's wife. Gaut made this and all in Man.'

The Vikings decorated their crosses with fantastic creatures such as serpents and dragons and scenes from their stories.



Runes on Thorleif's Cross, Braddan

ᚱ	ᚹ	ᚰ	ᚷ	ᚺ	ᚫ	ᚱ	ᚱ	ᚱ	ᚱ	ᚱ	ᚺ	ᚱ	
U	Th	O	R	K	H	N	I	A	S	T	B	M	L
				E									

The Runic alphabet used in Mann



Decoration on Thorleif's Cross

One of these myths tells how Sigurd, a king's son learned to be a blacksmith and was taught by an evil dwarf called Regin.

Regin planned to kill his brother, Fafnir, who guarded a hoard of treasure he had stolen from his father. To guard the treasure Fafnir had changed into a fearsome flame-throwing dragon. He would kill anyone who went near his gold.

With his wonder-horse Grani and a magical sword, Sigurd followed Regin to the dragon's lair. The cunning Regin meant to kill Sigurd as soon as the dragon was dead. He wanted all the gold for himself.

However Sigurd was helped by the god Odin and told how he could kill the dragon safely. Sigurd waited in a pit and as the monster crawled over, he thrust his sword into the dragon's heart. Regin asked Sigurd to roast the dragon's heart, so that he could eat some of the flesh. As Sigurd cooked the heart he burnt his finger on the boiling blood. Putting his finger in his mouth to ease the pain Sigurd tasted the blood and found he understood the language of the birds.

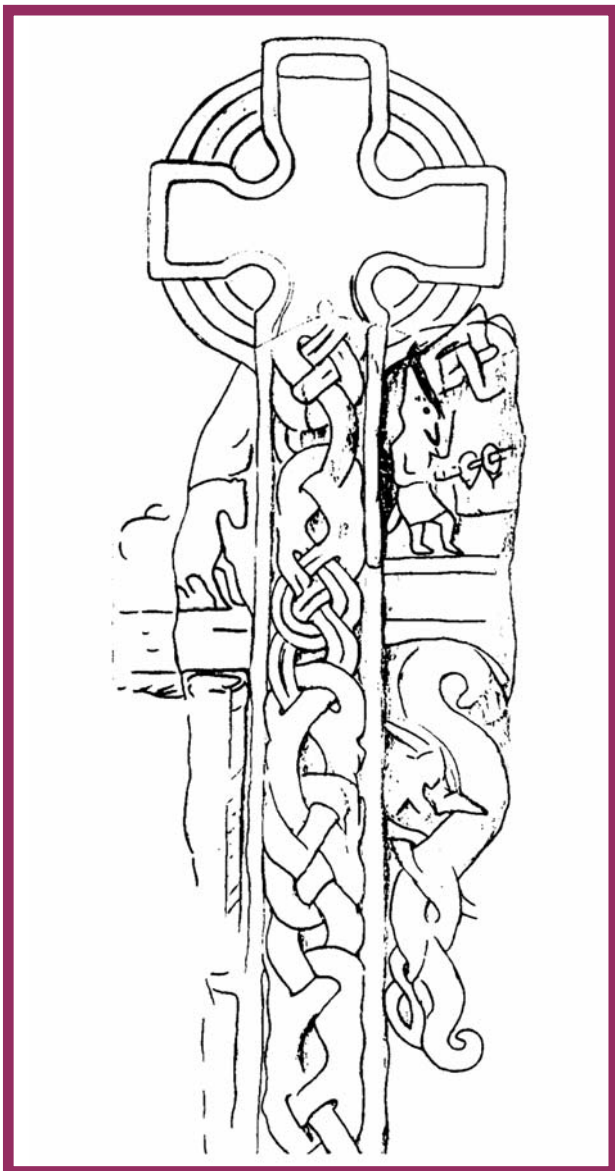
Sigurd was warned by the birds just as the evil dwarf was about to stab him in the back. He turned around swiftly and cut Regin's head from his body with Gram, his magic sword. Crosses from Malew, Maughold and Andreas show scenes from this story.

The Vikings imagined the end of the world as a final battle (Ragnarök) in which the god Odin would be devoured by Fenris the wolf. Odin's son Vidar would kill the wolf but the earth would be set on fire and every living thing, including the gods would perish.

On Thorwald's Cross (Andreas), the ruling god Odin is shown being attacked by the wolf as he tries to protect himself with his spear. The ferocious wolf Fenris is seen swallowing Odin's right foot.

In time the Vikings became Christian. The other side of Thorwald's cross appears to show that Christianity would become the main religion. We see a priest trampling on a serpent - the triumph of good over evil. He holds a book in his right hand and a cross in his left. A fish lies by his feet.

The fish, book and cross are all Christian symbols.



*Sigurd Slab, Malew
Can you see Sigurd roasting the dragon's heart?*

Stories in the Stones

The Vikings often buried their dead in Christian graveyards. This is why many of their crosses were found near ancient churches.

Over the centuries wind, rain and ice have worn down the carvings on the stones. Today they have been kept near their

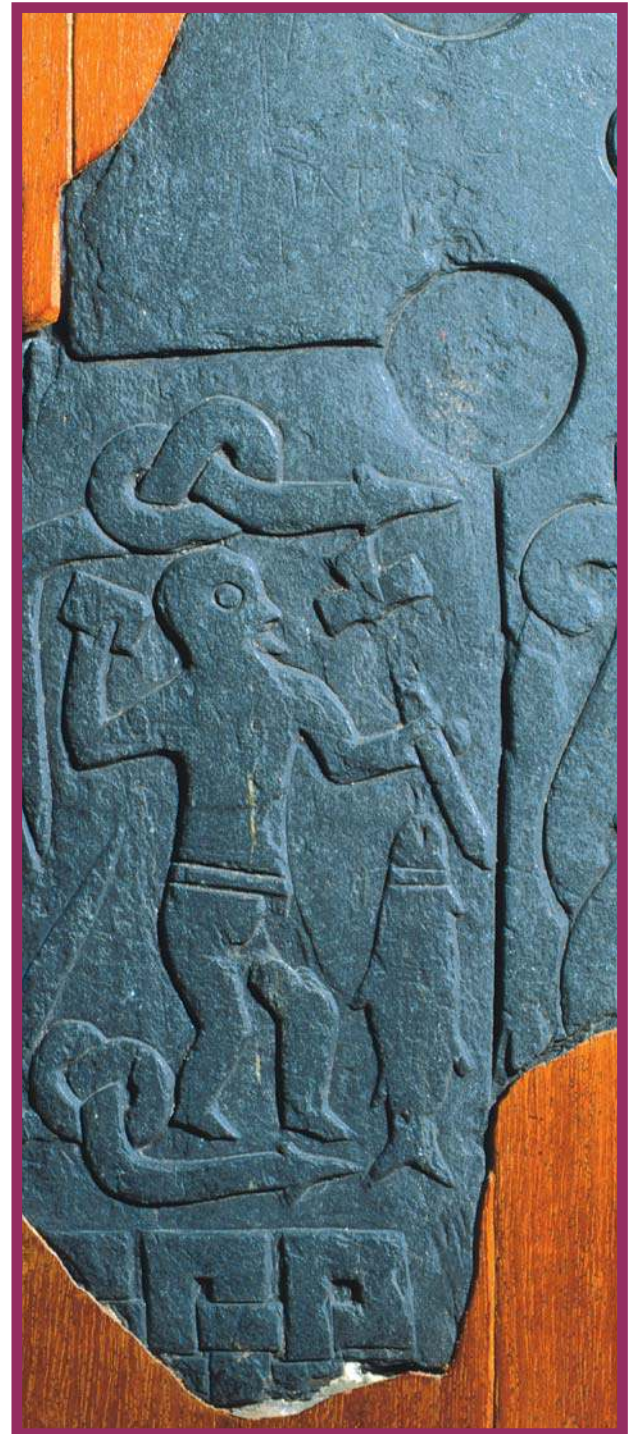
original sites and many have been put in sheltered places for protection from the weather. In this way future generations will be able to see these marvellous crosses.

The Isle of Man has one of the richest collections of Viking crosses in the world.

Go out and see them!



The god Odin is attacked by Fenris the wolf, Thorwald's cross, Andreas



The triumph of good over evil. Thorwald's cross, Andreas

Kingdom of Mann and the Isles

The Vikings appeared in the Irish Sea during the late eighth century. These were violent times and battles were fought between various Viking chiefs to gain territory, both on the island and elsewhere. In time Mann became linked with other Viking settlements on the Hebrides; the islands lying off the west coast of Scotland. This whole area was known as Mann and the Isles.

Many of the things that happened in Mann were written down by the monks. This was the first written history of the island and is known as *'The Chronicles of the Kings of Mann and the Isles'*. The Chronicle records the many violent struggles to control Mann between rulers of Norway, England and Scotland. They were not able to tell us the first part of the Viking story (850 A.D. - 1050 A.D.) but cover the period beginning with Godred Crovan in 1079 A.D., to the time when the Island was handed over to the Scottish King Alexander III in 1266 A.D.

Godred Crovan (known to the Manx as King Orry) attacked the Island twice but was defeated. The third time he was successful and how he did this was recorded in the Chronicle.

Godred landed by night with a large army at Ramsey. He hid 300 of his men in a wood on the slopes of Skyhill. At dawn battle began and as the two sides fought, Godred's men came out from their hiding place and attacked the Manx from behind. The Manx could not escape as they were caught on one side by their enemies and on the other by the tide that had filled the river bed. Godred won the fight, but he

took pity on the Manx and spared many lives. He became King of Mann ruling for 16 years.

After Godred's death there was much fighting between the Islanders themselves. During this chaos Magnus Barefoot, the King of Norway, came and took control of the Kingdom and the Isles. He was greedy for power and took lands in Galloway and Anglesey as well. He tried to do the same in Ireland but was ambushed and killed there in 1103 A.D.

Violence and bloodshed continued in Mann until Godred's youngest son Olaf came to power in 1130 A.D. Olaf I was a generous and peace loving king who ruled Mann for nearly 40 years. He was religious and gave land so that Rushen Abbey could be built. But these were treacherous times, and when he was old, Olaf was murdered by his own nephews who wanted a share of his lands. Olaf's son, then became King as Godred II. Godred fought with his own brother-in-law, Somerled, over the control of the Kingdom.

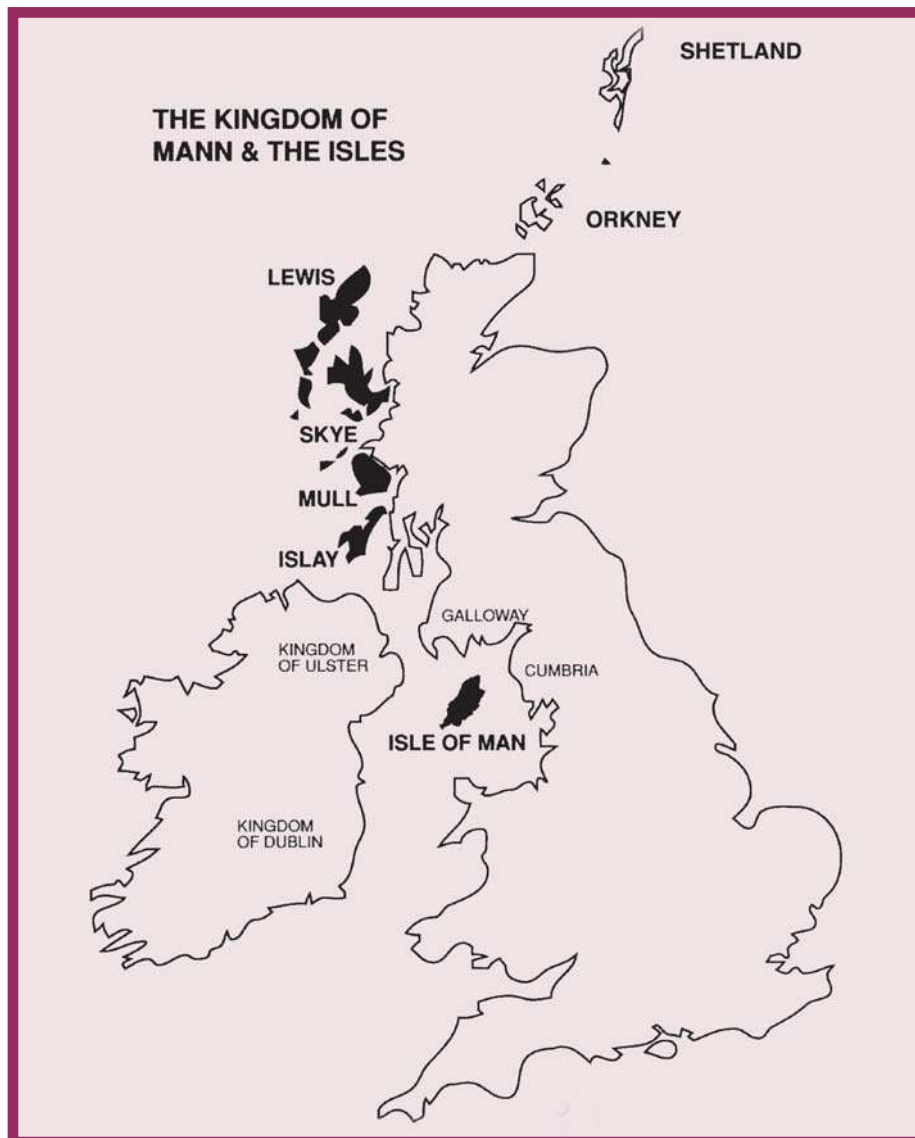
In time the Kingdom of Mann and the Isles was divided between Somerled and Godred. The monks of Rushen Abbey sadly recorded:

'thus was the Kingdom of the Isles ruined from the time the sons of Somerled got possession of it'.

After much struggle and suffering Godred II managed to remain ruler of the Island. When he died he left three sons, Reginald, Olaf and Ivar.

Reginald was made King of Mann and the

Kingdom of Mann & the Isles



Isles even though Olaf had a greater claim to the throne. The quarrels between Olaf and his brother Reginald were great. Reginald came one night to Peel and set fire to a fleet of Olaf's ships. Their fighting divided the people of the Island. Those in the north supported Olaf while the people of the south stood by Reginald. The two sides met at Tynwald in 1228 A.D. and after much fighting the southerners were defeated and Reginald killed. His brother then became King as Olaf II.

Because of war the descendants of Godred Crovan lost their hold on the control of the Island. The Kings of Norway and England began to have more say in the Island's affairs. When Olaf II died his son Harald became King of Mann.

He succeeded in keeping peace with both England and Norway. Unfortunately he was shipwrecked and drowned near the Shetland Islands.

His brother became King as Reginald II. He only reigned a few weeks before being murdered by one of his own men. The youngest son of Olaf II, Magnus, became the last King of Man and the Isles. He was forced by Alexander III, King of Scotland, to give up the Kingdom except for the Island itself. Magnus died in 1265 A.D. at the fortress of Castle Rushen. He was buried at Rushen Abbey. Following his death the Western Isles of Scotland and the Isle of Man came under the control of Scotland.

Viking Legacy

Viking times were harsh. Fights often broke out, even within families. People were sometimes injured or killed in revenge for harming others. The Vikings made rules (laws) for people to live by.

People brought before the law were made to take oaths. An oath was a special sort of promise. Breaking an oath was a very serious crime.

A fragment of a cross found at Braddan has some of the inscription left:

'...But Hrosketil betrayed in a truce his own oath - fellow...'

A Viking in Mann was thus accused of breaking an oath. We don't know what actually happened to Hrosketil, but a man who broke his oath could be outlawed and made a *nithing*. '*Nithing*' was a Viking word for someone ordered to leave his homeland.

People had the right to kill a *nithing* without being punished.

People met at special places to hear the laws and to make important decisions. If people had a quarrel both sides were heard.

They also decided if someone who was accused of a crime would be punished.

Meetings were always held out of doors where everyone could be seen clearly. Sometimes people spoke from a high place so they could be seen and heard by the crowds below.

The Vikings called an outdoor meeting place *thingvollr* which simply means *assembly field*. From this word we get the name of the Manx Government Tynwald.

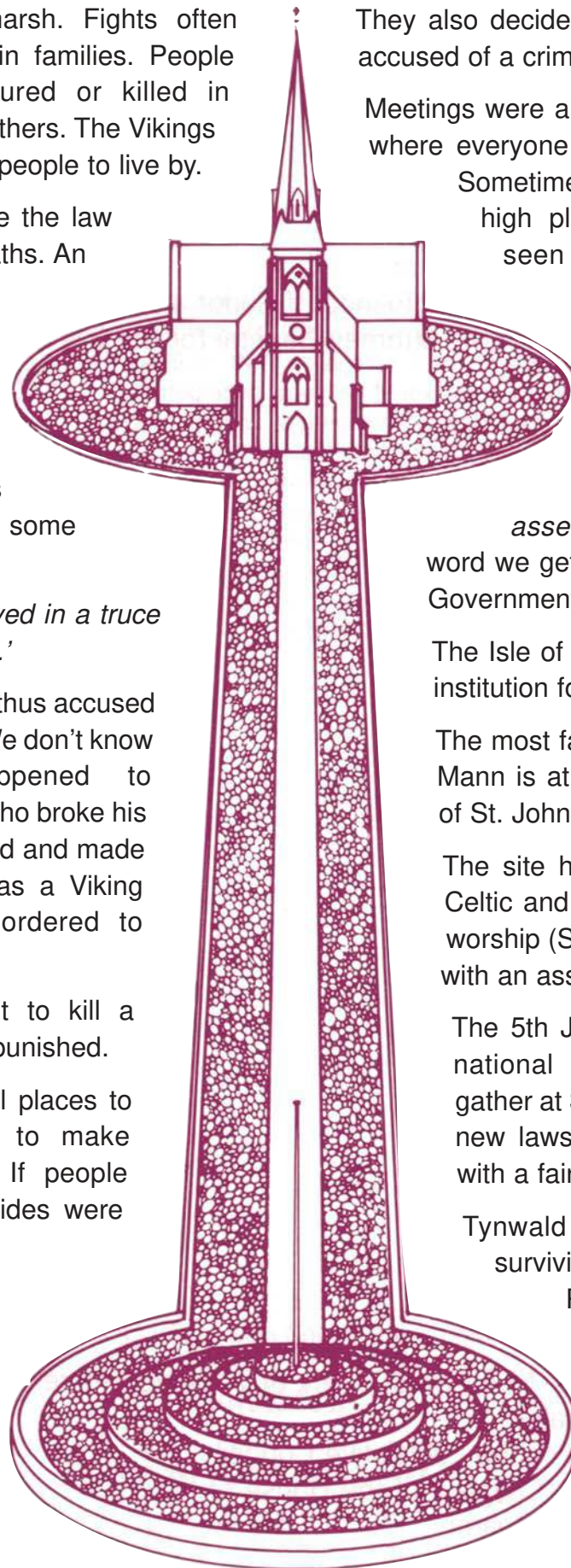
The Isle of Man has been a Viking institution for over 1000 years.

The most famous meeting place in Mann is at Cronk y Keeillown (hill of St. John's chapel).

The site has all the marks of its Celtic and Viking past; a place of worship (St. John's Chapel) linked with an assembly field.

The 5th July (Tynwald Day) is a national holiday when people gather at St. John's to learn of the new laws passed and celebrate with a fair.

Tynwald is now the oldest surviving and still continuous Parliament in the world.



During the reign of King Olaf I (1113 A.D. - 53 A.D.) the churches became organised into parishes each under the control of a priest. An ancient keeill in each territory was chosen as the parish church.

Many of the places used on the Island today come from the Viking language or Norse. The word for a church in the Norse language is *'kirkja'* and from this word came the names of villages such as Kirk Michael and Kirk Andreas.

The Norse word *'by'* meaning farm gives us the names of towns such as Sulby (Solli's farm), Colby (Colli's farm) and Kirby meaning church farm.

'Sandr' is the Norse for sand and *'wick'* the Norse for creek, so Sandwick means sandy creek. *'Dalr'* is Norse for glen or valley and *'fors'* means waterfall and so the name of the village of Foxdale means waterfall glen. *'Dalr'* is also part of the name of Dalby meaning farm in the glen or valley. Snaefell, the highest peak in Mann is named after *'Snaefjal'* which is a Norse word for snow mountain.

Many Manx surnames have Norse origins - for example Corlett comes from Thorljotr meaning *'warlike Thor'*; Cormode from Thormodr, (*Thor's Wrath*) and Corkhill from Thorketil, meaning *'Thor of the Cauldron'*.

Except for place names and surnames the Norse language has now disappeared.

The buildings remain - Castle Rushen and the round tower on St. Patrick's Isle remind us of the ever present fear of invasion during these times. The ruins of Rushen Abbey are a record of those who gave help and hope in a changing and often violent age.

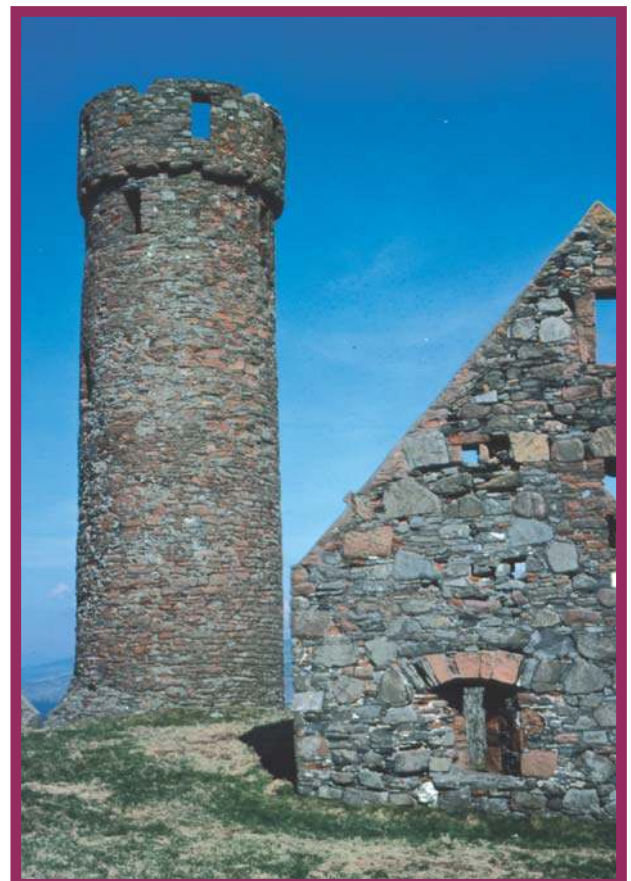


Rushen Abbey (1660)

In the ancient parishes of Mann the stone cross slabs are there for everyone to see. They tell us of the Island's past, both pagan and Christian.

The more we learn about our past the more we grow to understand what makes the Island the unique and colourful place it is today.

What's been left behind should be cherished so that those who come after us can learn to love and be thankful for their Island heritage.



The Round Tower at Peel

Viking Legacy

Ammonite: a fossilised sea creature millions of years old

Bridle: headgear for a horse from which the reins are attached

Bronze: an alloy of copper and tin

Cargo: goods carried on a ship

Celt: member of a group of people whose ancestors came from Alpine Europe and settled on the Island before the Vikings came

Colony: group of people who settle in a country far from their homeland

Constantinople: former name of Istanbul, Turkey

Cooking spit: a long pointed rod on which meat is skewered and roasted over an open fire

Curds: food made from the clotting of milk and used in the making of cheese

Embroidery: decorative needlework of pictures or patterns usually done on loosely woven cloth

Excavate: to unearth information about the past

Fort: an enclosure or building made for defence

Gaelic: language of the Celtic peoples

Grain: fruit of a cereal plant used to make flour

Harness: straps fitted to a horse so that it can pull a plough or cart

Import: buy or bring in goods to the Island from another country

Legacy: the Government, art, and place names the Vikings gave to Mann

Legend: a popular story handed down from earlier times

Longship: a Viking ship made for warfare and exploration

Loom: a wooden frame on which threads are woven into cloth

Moorland: land usually covered with heather,

coarse grass, bracken and moss

Pagan: someone who believes in many gods and spirits

Ragnarök: from Viking legend, where the final battle between the forces of good and evil took place

Roundhouse: a type of circular house that the Celts made from natural materials

Scandinavia: the parts of North western Europe from where the Vikings came from, namely Norway, Sweden and Denmark

Serpent: a snake, usually a symbol for evil in Viking legend

Slave: a person who has no freedom and was owned by another; slaves were often captured by Celts and Vikings during and after a battle

Spindle: a spinning tool used for drawing out natural fibres and making thread

Stonemason: a person who is skilled at carving on stone

Stress: a force on the wooden planks of a ship caused by something heavy

Territory: land claimed and ruled over by a chief

Tunics: a loosely fitting garment worn under a cloak usually made from linen or wool

Warp: threads of a piece of cloth running lengthways on a loom; they were either held down by heavy weights or tied to the bottom of the loom

Weave: to make cloth by interlacing weft and warp threads

Weft: threads woven in and out of the lengthwise warp threads, thus making cloth

Whey: the watery liquid that separates from the curd when milk is clotted

Whorl: the spinning part of a spindle usually made from bone, slate or wood

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