

# HUGIN & MUNIN



Cultural Route of the  
Itinéraire Culturel du  
COUNCIL OF EUROPE



**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DESTINATION VIKING ASSOCIATION**

**ISSUE 5**

**SEPTEMBER 2016**

**"FOLLOW THE VIKINGS"  
PROJECT**



**TRELLEBORG SEMINAR  
SPECIAL**



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## Editorial



Like our Viking ancestors before us we have travelled far and wide during the first half of 2016, from the Destination Viking Association's AGM in Rollo's Duchy of Normandy to the second seminar of the "FOLLOW THE VIKINGS" project in the rugged and stunning Viking cultural stronghold of Galicia, Spain. As the 2016 raiding season is coming to an end it is perhaps befitting that we are returning to the Viking homeland of Denmark. Soon partners and delegates from around the Viking world will gather in West Zealand's Trelleborg circular fortress for the "FOLLOW THE VIKINGS" third seminar (Exhibition techniques and design). With the new Branding and marketing coming to fruition, this will be the last format of the current newsletter. Our feathery friends "Hugin and Munin" will return, but this time in the form of a professional publication. So like the phoenix out of the flames we shall return bigger and better than before. It has been a pleasure to have written and designed the last few newsletters and I hope that we have kept you informed on what the different members have been up to over the last couple of years. Finally for those of you unable to attend the seminar in Denmark we hope that you have a productive autumn and festive Christmas period.

**"bless í bili"**

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## Hugin & Munin's Saga sayings

**"A true friend whom you trust well and wish for his good will: Go to him often, exchange gifts and keep him company"**

**Hávamál "Wise words of the high one"**





## The Destination Viking Association newsletter

Welcome to the fifth and last issue of the current DVA newsletter, in conjunction with the “FOLLOW THE VIKINGS” project seminar 3 (26-28th September) in Trelleborg, Denmark, the newsletter will focus on the history and heritage of Viking Zealand in Denmark and also the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battles of Fulford, Stamford Bridge and Hastings 1066 AD, an important date in Viking, Anglo-Saxon and Norman history.

## “FOLLOW THE VIKINGS” Project news



Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union

## Seminar 2 ‘Presenting the Vikings: the European prospective’ Catoria, Galicia, Spain 24<sup>th</sup>– 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2016

Seminar 2 ‘Presenting the Vikings: the European perspective’ was hosted by the project’s most southerly partner Concello de Catoria in the Viking capital of Spain, Catoria. After the winter seminar in Foteviken, Sweden last November, project partners ventured south to the warm and rugged region of Galicia in Western Spain. This part of Spain is extremely rich in Viking culture and the delegates were taken to the “Tourres de Oeste” where a Viking raiding party was assembled to welcome them. This symbolic location was also where the Galicians built impressive fortifications to guard against Viking raiders over a millennium ago (see issue 4 for further details). The seminar brought together a host of experts from around the Viking world to discuss the impact of the Vikings culturally in Europe and beyond. During the two day seminar 16 Speakers enthralled the convention centre audience with a vast range of subjects including “Smell the Paraffin” – Horned Helmets, Up Helly Aa by DVA President Jimmy Moncrieff about Shetland’s Viking culture and traditions.



Several local speakers talked in depth about the Viking impact on Galicia including “The Viking culture and the way of St. James” by Fernando Lopez Alsina, Professor of Medieval and Contemporary History from the University of Santiago of Compostela.



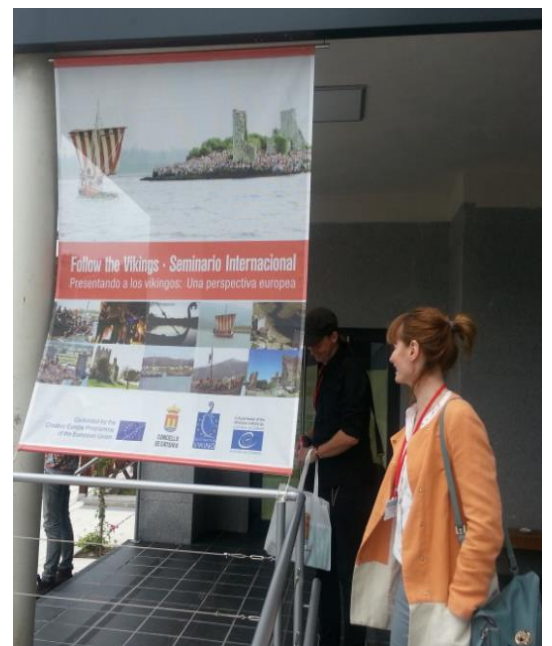
The technical visits included a guided tour to the vibrant city of Santiago de Compostela. This famous pilgrimage city in north-west Spain became a symbol in the Spanish Christians' struggle against Islam. Destroyed by the Muslims and Vikings at the end of the 10th century, it was completely rebuilt in the following century. With its Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque buildings, the Old Town of Santiago is one of the world's most beautiful urban areas. The oldest monuments are grouped around the



tomb of St James and the cathedral, which contains the remarkable Pórtico de la Gloria.

Coincidentally it was this centre of pilgrimage that attracted Viking interest in the region during the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The present day Viking delegates were extremely

well behaved and were treated impeccably by their Galician hosts who served up many a local delicacy, including Octopus during meal times.





## Alex Murzurov “Follow the Vikings” Instagram feed

Alex Mazurov is creative mind behind the Follow the Vikings Instagram feed. Alex works as a travel photographer and writer, and spends most of his time exploring northern regions and extreme destinations. Together with his wife, he writes a blog “Near the Lighthouse” and they each run their own individual Instagram feeds (141k followers for Alex and 151k for Anastasia). The couple are ambassadors for Olympus and use only this make of camera for their photography, which sees them shooting for brands such as Visit Europe, Skyscanner and Conde Nast Traveller.

Alex Mazurov: “What we really like is to create deep and thoughtful stories, where photography and text are organically merged into a complete portrait of a destination, a city or a country”.

Alex became involved with the Follow the Vikings project after meeting Jimmy Moncrieff at a Cultural Routes meeting in Spain. Part of the remit of the FTV project is to promote the Viking Cultural Route, so working together made perfect sense.



The photography style Alex employs captures the rawness of the northern landscapes, and provides iconic imagery of Viking ruins. His style works in harmony with the branding currently being developed for the Follow the Viking project.

By using Instagram, FTV can reach a new and younger audience. Indeed, the audience continues to grow, and has already passed the 5,000 mark; a great achievement in just over a month.

So far, Alex has travelled to Shetland and Finland; he is currently in Iceland and plans to visit Sweden next year. Alex will present a talk at Seminar 5 in Shetland in January. As the event coincides with Up Helly Aa, you can look forward to some amazing images appearing on the Instagram & Facebook.

April 29th 2016

## Iceland, ISTA and Promote Iceland cooperation



2016 marked the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the Icelandic Saga Trail Association. With over 100 members the association has grown from strength to strength over the past decade and is the most important network for Viking sites in Iceland. This year's association annual conference featured a number of prominent speakers who shared their insights on current tourism trends and future of history and heritage tourism in Iceland. Another important developed this year was the association's closer collaboration with Iceland's national tourist board 'Promote Iceland'. In a joint venture,



Rognvaldur Gudmundsson, ISTA chairman and Jon Ásbergsson Secretary Íslandsstofa

tourism expert Katarzyna Dygul has been hired by ISTA to promote the individual member sites together with the national tourist board. She will be working with Promote Iceland and we expect a great deal of good things from this close cooperation. Rognvaldur Gudmundsson, ISTA chairman commented: "Without a doubt this will be a successful step and splendid cooperation for tourism and Viking heritage in Iceland .

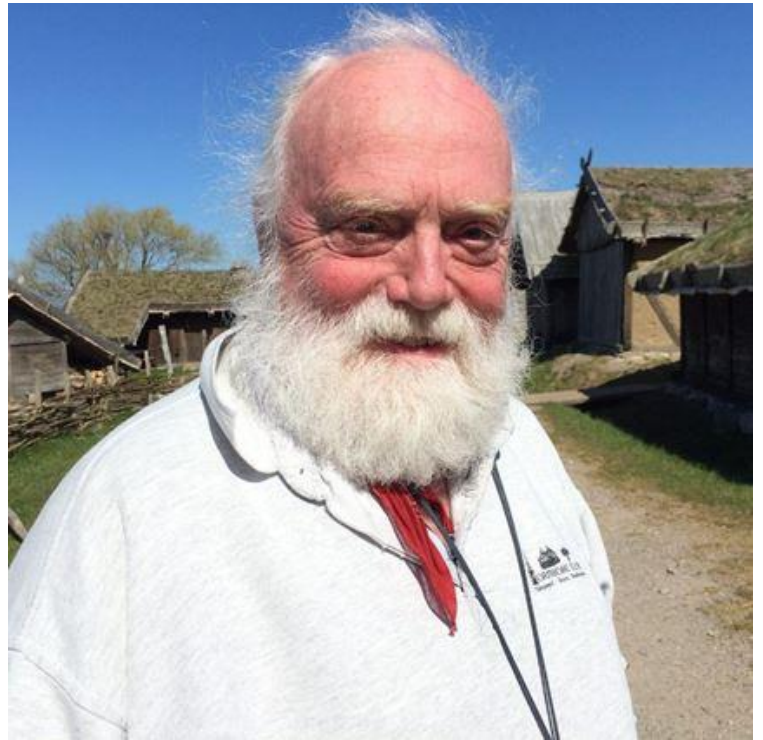


April 12th 2016

## Foteviken Museum, Sweden “Lonely Planet Guide”



Foteviken museum has been mentioned in the book Ultimate Travelodge List, which guide company Lonely Planet ranks the world's 500 best places to visit. The editors have assembled their own bucket list, a list of attractions you must visit before you die. “We are extremely proud of this. They have chosen us from so many different places in the world” says museum director Bjorn M Jakobsen. Extract from the Lonely Planet guide about Foteviken: “If you mourn the passing of big hairy men in longboats, find solace at the fascinating Foteviken Viking Reserve, an evocative ‘living’ reconstruction of a late-Viking Age village. Around 22 authentic reconstructions of houses with reed or turf roofs have been built, near the site of the Battle of Foteviken (1134). Amazingly, the reserve’s residents live as the Vikings did, eschewing most modern conveniences and adhering to old traditions, laws and religions – even after the last tourist has left.



The houses you see belong to various tradespeople, like the town’s jarl (commander of the armed forces), juror and scribe; and the chieftain, whose home has wooden floorboards, fleeces and a Battle of Foteviken tapestry. There’s even a shield-lined great hall (the Thinghöll), a lethally powerful war catapult and nifty Viking-made handicrafts to buy. Viking Week is usually held in late June, and culminates in a Viking market, complete with agile warriors in training. The Viking Reserve is located about 700m north of Höllviken”.

A big well done to King Bjorn and all the staff at Foteviken for achieving this great accolade.



22<sup>nd</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup> April 2016

## Ornavik, Normandy



From the 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> of April DVA member Ornavik hosted the Destination Viking Association AGM in Caen, Normandy, France. It was also an auspicious occasion for the Norman member who had the extra pleasure of receiving Gun Bjurberg, Ana Larssen and Magnus Stromhold from Gunnes gard in Sweden to inaugurate a reconstruction of the Saby house. Gun Bjurberg commented that: “it was very nice to see a copy of our house in another part of Europe and they have done a good job in the reconstruction”. This collaboration highlights the productive advantages of DVA membership and the achievements that can be created from working together. On Saturday the DVA delegates were taken to the UNESCO world heritage site of Bayeux to see a Norman comic strip, the famous Bayeux Tapestry. At 70 meters in length it never fails to impress even for those that have seen it before. Some of the DVA delegates remarked that even though it was created 150 years after the Viking creation of Normandy, it still had many Norse influences on the different scenes. In the afternoon there was a guided visit to the Abbey des Hommes, the final resting place of William I ‘the Conqueror’ and a state evening dinner in the spectacular setting of the Abbey aux Dames. After the annual business of the AGM on Sunday morning an excursion to the D-Day beaches of the Second World War was organised by our Norman hosts.



**DVA delegates in Bayeux during a visit to see the famous Bayeux Tapestry**



23rd<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Avaldnes, Norway



On Saturday 23rd of April the draken “Harald Hårfagre” was inaugurated with the crowning of the dragon head prow. Kept under close secrecy, the dragon's head was revealed in a ceremony at DVA member Avaldsnes, Norway. The construction of the prow was based on how the heads of the stave churches were made. The heads consist of pieces of wood that have grown more or less into the same shape as the head, and are then attached together. The dragon’s head is made from one big oak root. At 16.00 pm the silk cover was pulled off, revealing one of the most colourful and stunning prows of a reconstructed Viking ship in existence. The ceremony was followed by a few words from the Captain, the song

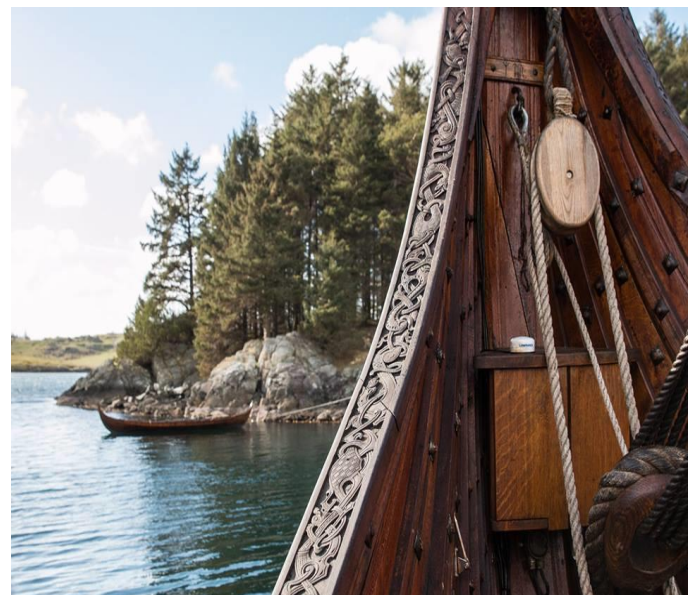
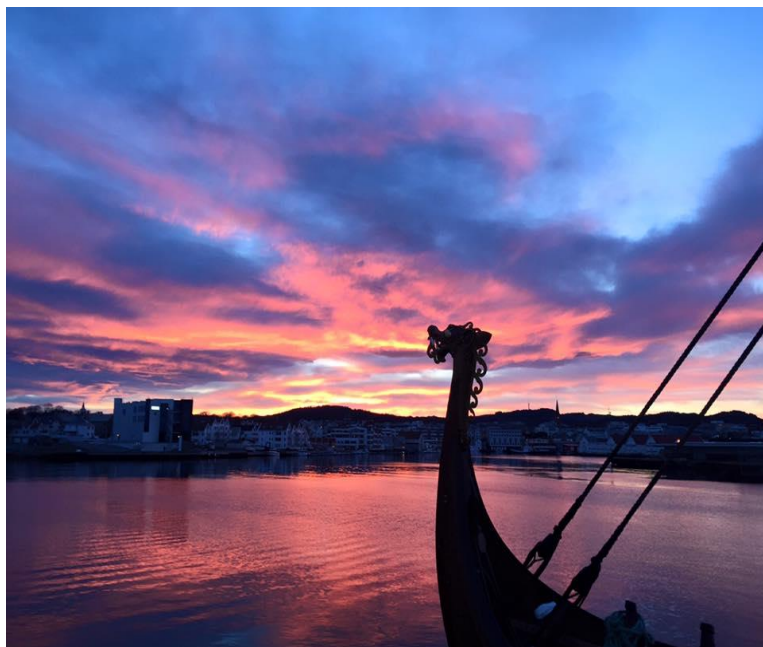


of draken and the traditional ‘drink to the ship’. Odin’s eyes and ears were firmly fixed on this auspicious occasion with the presence of two beautifully carved figures of Hugin and Munin, who

will accompany the ship on her voyage west to the New World. As the visitors left, Harald Hårfagre stood alone in the icy waters looking out towards future adventures in the backdrop of a breathtaking sunset. Although the Harald Hårfagre was due to sail directly to Iceland from Norway, the Gods decided otherwise and the ship made a surprise visit to both Shetland and Faroe.



© Jon-Terje Bjørnerud





April 30<sup>th</sup> 2016

## Aizier Municipality, Normandy

On Sunday the 30<sup>th</sup> of April our newest Norman partner (the municipality of Aizier) inaugurated its official coat of arms. The arms were designed and created by our very own DVA Newsletter Editor Ben Baillie. The arms were designed around the village's rich cultural history which stretches back to the megalithic age. In front of the village community, Ben explained how he created the arms

“Back in 2015 I proposed the idea to the village Mayor (Benoit Gatinet) and his Adjoint Christophe Foilet. They were very open to the idea and proposed that I create several designs for the village committee to verify and agree on. In creating the arms I wanted to try and incorporate as much of the village's history and legends as possible. The final design of quartered arms managed to do this perfectly; in the top left hand quarter are the arms of the Region ‘Normandy’. Top right quarter: the arms of the Abbey de Fécamp of which Aizier was a fief for over 700 years until the French Revolution. Bottom left: the arms of Saint Thomas de Beckett, the infamous Archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered by the followers of King Henry II ‘Plantagenet’. These arms represent the Chapel of Saint Thomas (built 1180 AD) which was restored in 2015. Finally the bottom right quarter symbolises Aizer and its many periods and surroundings. The trees represent the Forest of Brotonne which surrounds the village; the knot in the trees is an ancient tradition where lovers now tie knots in branches to signal eternal love. The eagle of Rome and the stone quay represents Azier's Roman past as a major port (Aysiacus, Latin). The imperial eagle sits on the ‘Trou de Homme’ Aizier's oldest monument dating back over 1600 years before the birth of Christ. Below the quay is the River Seine which gave the village its importance during ancient and medieval times. Finally the logo of a Viking long ship of the Parc Régional des boucles de la Seine Normande recounts the famous naval battle between the Vikings of Godfred and the Franks in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.”





May 4<sup>th</sup> 2016

## Trondenes, Norway: “Low threshold” smartphone historical app



In collaboration with students at the technical university in Oslo a computer program ‘app’ for a mobile phone which provides information about the history of the exact spot you're standing has been developed. It was at Trondenes in Norway where Viking chieftain Asbjørn Selsbane, nephew of ToreHund, had his seat. Trondenes is also known for its World War Two Russian prison camp and Finnmark camp. We should not forget the venerable Trondenes Church, the world's northernmost medieval church built in stone. Information about all of this, you should now be able to get on a smartphone, within the area you are standing, says department head at Trondenes museum, Tore Einar Johansen. This is an old dream come true, says the department manager. For years we have worked to convey the story through digital means. The technology we have successfully developed gives us exactly this opportunity. People passing by here can use their own cell phone and get the story told, in text, images and also in sound while they stand on the monument. Student Kristoffer Johansen explains briefly how the technology works. “There is a Bluetooth transmitter that sends out a mailing with links to content. Pressing the link that will take you to a web page with access to both images, sound and video, which tells more about where you are at. The technology is designed to be a so-called low threshold. This means that anyone with a smartphone will be able to use it.” We hope that we will now be able to provide a service also for people who do not necessarily visit the museum, says Tore Einar Johansen, adding that they are very proud of the results.



Studenter har utviklet nytt dataprogram, fra venstre: Stine Grumhede, Bente Lien Nilsen, Kristoffer Johansen, avdelingsleder ved Trondenes historiske senter, Tore Einar Johansen og Tommy Wille.

FOTO: MARTIN MORTENSEN / NRK



May 7<sup>th</sup> 2016

## Vikingagården Gunnes gård, Sweden



While many in Sweden were relaxing and enjoying the warm May sunshine, the Gunnes gård team were busy preparing hides and animal skins for the ‘Skins’ themed weekend at the Viking age farmstead. Gunnes gård is a reconstruction of a Viking age farm located 25km north of the Swedish capital, Stockholm. The farm is unique because it is the only reconstruction made of a whole farm from the Viking age. At Gunnes gård there are graves from the Iron Age and several rune stones. One of the runic stones tell " Vibjörn had the stone cut after Gunnes daughter, his wife." Gunnes gård is named after that rune stone. To bring alive the farm there are pigs, sheep, chickens and cows. The animals are not just a nice feature, but also serve to fill an important function just as they did back over 1000 years age. Visitors were actively invited and encouraged to participate in the ancient technique of turning animal hides into everyday items such as a leather pouch or belt. There was also an opportunity to make fresh bread over the fire in a traditional way, as done in Viking times.



Gunnes gård farmstead, Upplands Väsby, Sweden



May 8<sup>th</sup> 2016

## Foteviken Museum, Sweden: “International Viking day”



The 8<sup>th</sup> of May is now generally recognised as “International Viking Day” as well as coinciding with VE Day around Europe. At Foteviken museum in Sweden, Its King (Bjorn M Jakobsen) read out the annual proclamation “thousand years ago our ancestors in all likelihood considered the 8th of May to be time to get off the bedstraws, polish the swords and prepare the ships to visit friends and enemies near and far. The sun rose high in the sky bringing a longing for the warmth of the south, and wanderlust to foreign countries. The bees began their production of honey for the life giving mead. The children started running barefoot in the burgeoning grass. The Organisation Destination Viking thus enjoys everyone reading this letter to from now and for all eternity commemorate this special day. You do this by bringing alive and celebrating this day as a true Viking. Bang your shields, raise your banners and insignia, walk outside with your disciples and spread the joyful message that the Vikings have reawakened. This is the day we shed our winter clothes and again don our Viking vestments to meet the world.” With that rousing speech it was time to get stuck into some traditional food prepared in many of the reconstructed Viking houses around the settlement and listen to stories of heroes and heroines from a bygone past.



## 2016 United Kingdom “JORVIK ON TOUR”

# JORVIK ON TOUR

2016 Started with the terrible flooding of the Jorvik Viking Centre, such natural catastrophes cannot keep the Vikings down for long and Jorvik and its staff are living proof of that. In February to World famous Viking festival took place and was even bigger and better than last year’s festival. Work to restore the centre is well under way and progress has been made in leaps and bounds for the opening of the new Jorvik in 2017. Although the centre is currently closed, this did not stop Jorvik coming up with the initiative of a touring exhibition. ‘JORVIK ON TOUR’ travelled to Barnsley and DVA member Manx National Heritage (Isle of Man) with the



‘Heroes’ exhibition which featured in the last DVA newsletter. From the 8<sup>th</sup> of February – 5<sup>th</sup> of June the English border town of Shrewsbury hosted the ‘Valhalla’ exhibition. Set inside and out of the town’s Museum & Art Gallery ‘Valhalla’ exhibited artefacts from excavations in York including two Viking-age skeletons recently unearthed in the city. New pathological research conducted by York Osteoarchaeology on the two skeletons tells visitors more about the person and when they were alive. Studies of wear and tear, scarring,



breaks and other marks on bones, as well as dental remains, reveal information about the life they led, what sort of activities they were involved in and whether they were rich or poor. Sarah Maltby, Director of Attractions at York Archaeological Trust said: “This latest pathological research gives us clues about the lives that those people led. Combine this with osteological analysis, and we can tell the sex, age and height of a person, depending on how much of the skeleton was preserved in the ground. The

research can also give us clues as to how that person may have died – whether from disease, injury or from natural causes. Looking at this evidence, alongside artefacts found throughout the British Isles, helps tell a more accurate story of Viking Britain and our Viking ancestry.”



27<sup>th</sup> June- 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016

## The Caithness Viking Festival

### Caithness, Scotland



The Caithness Viking Festival 2016 organised by Caithness Horizons Museum, Thurso comprised two weeks of activity. The week of 27<sup>th</sup> June saw 600 Caithness primary school children visit the museum and a further 130 children in school benefited from Curriculum for Excellence Viking themed living history workshops led by the Glasgow Vikings schools team. The 2<sup>nd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> July saw a Viking village and a number of art and music workshops, a Viking feast and a Viking tavern. The Caithness Viking Festival took as its theme the powerful Viking Age women associated with Caithness. These women include the brooding presence of Frakokk in *Orkneyinga saga* and the giantesses Fenja and Menja grinding the sea salty in the Swelkie. The most powerful of all are the Valkyries—the twelve supernatural warrior women associated with the Norse god Óðinn.



The main Caithness Viking Festival theme was the *Darraðarljóð*—The Battle Song of the Valkyries, which is found in *Njal's saga*, the greatest Icelandic saga, written in the 13th century AD. *Darraðarljóð* took place in Caithness on Good Friday 1014 AD. This was the day of the Battle of Clontarf in Ireland at which Sigurd the Stout, Earl of Orkney was fighting. On the morning of the battle a Caithness man named Dörruður is said to have watched the Valkyries work on a loom, on which they wove the fate of the armies fighting in Ireland. The *Darraðarljóð* was explored during the course of the festival through art workshops hosted by Icelandic artist and literary scholar Kristín Ragna Gunnarsdóttir and Norwegian musician Einar Selvik. The Caithness Viking festival culminated in a battle on Thurso beach led by the Glasgow Vikings female warriors supported by the men and a boat burning.




The theme of the Caithness Viking Festival 2016 was developed for Caithness Horizons Museum by Dr Andrew Jennings, a Viking Age expert at the Centre for Nordic Studies, University of the Highlands and Islands. Over 7500 people attended the festival. Using the Association of Independent museums, economic impact data Caithness Horizons Museum has calculated from the visitor data that the Caithness Viking Festival 2016 has brought an estimated £280,000 into the local economy.

July 16<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> 2016

## Trelleborgen Viking festival

# Trelleborg

 Nationalmuseet  
National Museum of Denmark

## Trelleborg, Denmark

For a whole week in July the Trelleborgen Viking festival took place in the historic grounds of the National Museum of Denmark's Trelleborg site. In no time the large open area of the museum was filled with tents, bonfires and the smell of leather, smoke and wood.

For anyone wanting to get a feel of what Viking life was like then Trelleborg is the place to be during this annual festival. Walking through the marketplace towards the great hall, it is easy to forget what century you are in. As one of the biggest Viking events in Denmark there was an exciting full program for all ages including guided tours of the Trelleborg ring



fortress, horseback riding on Icelandic horses, storytelling from Norse mythology and the Sagas by Ove Nielsen and Susanne Clod, Falcon hunting at the longhouse and warrior training for the children. 'Follow the Vikings' contract photographer Frank Bradford attended the festival taking some stunning photos for the project which will be exhibited later this year.





# July 20<sup>TH</sup> – 21<sup>ST</sup> 2016 Jumiéges Viking festival

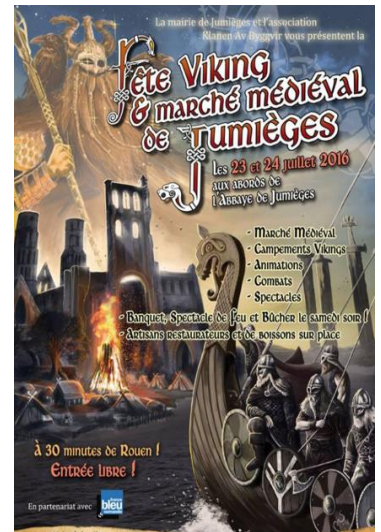
## Normandy, France

On Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of July in the small Norman village of Jumiéges, famed for its romantic Norman Abbey, the calm and tranquil atmosphere was abruptly shattered by the arrival of the men from the North wind “The Vikings”. Re-enactors from all over Normandy and beyond set up camp on the banks of the river Seine. 1000



years ago Jumiéges was raided countless times by Viking warlords such as Bjorn “Ironside”, Hastein and Asgier. It was also mentioned in the Frankish annals as a place where the raiders constructed a shipyard, so to repair their long ships using timber from the Brotonne forest on the opposite side of the riverbank. Viking traders, warriors

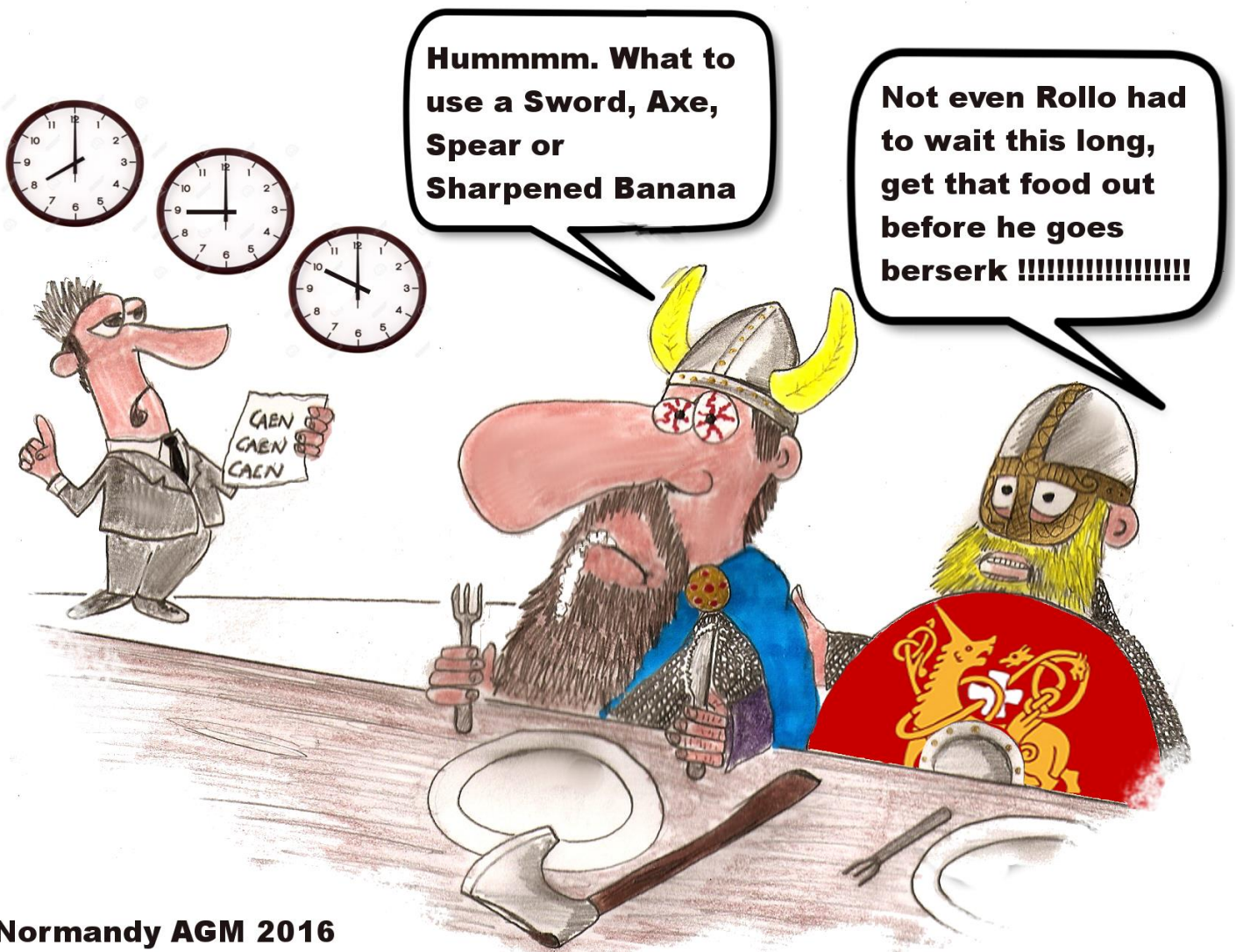
and craftsmen and women entertained the general public with demonstrations in ancient techniques of woodwork, metalwork, textiles and mock battles. Saturday evening culminated in the spectacular burning of a 10 metre high Norman Motte and Bailey themed bonfire castle. The festival has been growing over recent years and visitor numbers reached 12,000 over the weekend, once again proof of the popularity of the Vikings.



View from the Viking encampment towards the River Seine and Brotonne forest

## The DVA cartoon

Previous DVA cartoons have including Chairman Jimmy Moncrief, Norwegian Vikings from Lofoten, Vestfold and King Bjorn of Foteviken, but this time the self proclaimed Earl of Orkney and one of the founding fathers of the DVA Geir Sor Reime make's his second appearance. Those who know Geir will tell you that his calm manner and decorum are some of the key attributes of his character, but when not fed at the correct time the mask drops and reveals the hidden Viking berserker from within. During the overextended speeches at the AGM in Normandy it was noticed by eagle eyed onlookers that Geir "the Banana Splitter" was on the edge of going berserk. Only King Bjorn of Foteviken was able to calm the banana splitter down before there was a full blown massacre in Caen. Let this be a lesson to the organisers of seminar 3 in Trelleborg, Denmark, feed Geir at the appropriate designated time or risk the quiet berserker frothing at the mouth and causing carnage.





## A word from the Chairman.....

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> newsletter completed by Ben on our behalf and, as usual, it is full of interesting material. The branding Identity Guidelines for the “Follow the Vikings” project have now been approved and the next edition will appear under these new guidelines and will look and feel entirely different. The new brand identity is stylish, professional and engaging and should strengthen our image to existing and new audiences. These are exciting times for us all as the “Follow the Vikings” project outputs continue to make good solid progress. The series of seminars have been both interesting and varied and we look forward to this continuing in Trelleborg in late September. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking everybody for their hard work, support and commitment. All the best.

**DVA Chairman**  
**Jimmy Moncrieff**

## 2016 NEW MEMBERS (Sept 2016)

We would like to welcome the following new members to the association who have recently joined.

- **QUEIMAN Y POUSA S.L**  
(Spain)
- **HISTORISKA MUSEET**  
(Sweden)

## CONTACT DETAILS

If you have a story, information or an event in your part of the Viking World that you would like published in the next edition of the Hugin & Munin newsletter please contact:



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DESTINATION VIKING ASSOCIATION



**Hugin & Munin**  
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An aerial photograph of a lush green landscape. In the foreground, there is a large, circular earthwork feature, possibly a Viking ring fortification, with a central rectangular area. The surrounding area is a patchwork of green fields and forests. The sky is clear and blue.

# Trelleborg Special

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Trelleborg

Multi-Ethnic Vikings

“The Lake of Tyr”

Lake Tissø, Denmark

Largest Viking axe found in  
Denmark



# Trelleborg

By Trelleborg Museum

The Viking ring fortress of Trelleborg is located on the island of Sjælland (Zealand) in Denmark. The fortress is one of the five of its kind built in Denmark during the Viking Age by the legendary King Harald Bluetooth to strengthen royal power



## The historical background

Trelleborg, near Slagelse in West Zealand, is a part of the military power system of the Viking Age. Three other fortresses are known of, which were obviously constructed in association with Trelleborg and are based upon the same model: Aggersborg on the north side of the Limfjord, Fyrkat near Hobro and Nonnebakken in Odense. Aggersborg is the largest of these, whilst Trelleborg is by far the best preserved and the only one with a fortified outer ward.

No contemporary written sources that mention the ring fortresses are known of. The lack of direct evidence in the historical sources is somewhat surprising given the gigantic effort that must have been involved in the constructions. It is possible that the absence of written sources can be explained by the fact the fortresses were apparently only in use for a very short time, perhaps for as little as 10-15 years.



Trelleborg has been dated using dendrochronological dating of timber from its moats. The tree from which the wood came was felled between August 980 and May 981, and it is therefore certain that work was undertaken on the outer rampart around this time.

It is not unknown precisely how long the whole construction work took, but it seems likely that the dating to around 980 explains the function of the fortresses.

The political situation at this time has been the subject of much examination and, despite the opposing theories, it seems clear that the ring fortresses were associated with Harald Bluetooth's attempts to strengthen royal power in Denmark, which took place during this period. Harald proclaims on the large rune stone at Jelling that he "won for himself all of Denmark and Norway and made the Danes Christian". It would be logical to conclude that the fortresses were part of an attempt to subdue petty kings and local chieftains, especially given the fact that a strong, central royal power was clearly the only actor with sufficient resources to undertake such an exercise.



The ring fortresses testify to the animosity which Harald's efforts were met with, and it is not surprising that the gathering of the kingdom led to rebellion and civil war. The rebelling army was led by Sweyn Forkbeard, Harald's son. According to tradition, Harald was killed in battle, when a quick-witted warrior shot him in the back with an arrow as he answered a call of nature. This story is known from several written sources, in particular the Jomsvikinga Saga, which identifies Harald's killer as Palnatoke, a magnate from Funen. However, it is exceedingly doubtful that the account is true. The interpretation of the ring fortresses as an element in the power struggles over the Crown may also explain their extremely short period of use. They were obviously expensive to keep manned and were probably dismantled shortly after the civil war, when the question of the status of royal power had been resolved and there was no longer an immediate threat of rebellion.



It is not known with certainty whether the name of Trelleborg dates back to the time of the construction of the fortress, but the fact that the same name has been used for its sister construction in Scania, Sweden, suggests that this was the case. Two interpretations of the fortress' name are proposed: it may have represented an insult to the petty kings and chieftains, who were subjugated by the fortresses and therefore were forced into slavery ("trældom" in Danish) for King Harald by the fortresses ("borge"); or else the name refers to the construction itself, as "trel" or "træl" is an Old Norse name for pieces of timber, which formed part of the house structures.



## The fortress

The Trelleborg Viking Fortress covers a total area of 6 ha, which corresponds to 12 football pitches. The structure consists of an inner fortress and an outer ward. The fortress is located close to the confluence of two rivers, the River Tude and the River Vårby, which provided natural protection in three directions. The outer ward is encircled by a rampart, which stretches between the two rivers and thus delimits the whole area between the two rivers. It is thought that for the construction of Trelleborg, around half of all the oak woods on Zealand at the time were felled.

The inner fortress consists of a perfectly circular rampart, which is c. 136 m in diameter. Four gates provide access to the inner fortress and the gates are connected to one another by two wood-surfaced streets that cross in the middle, together with a narrow, wood-surfaced track along the inside of the rampart. The inner rampart is around 17 m wide and 5 m high. It contains c. 25,000 m<sup>3</sup> of earth, stone and timber.

The oak-covered circular rampart was originally almost vertical on the outer side. On top of the rampart there was originally a palisade and it also featured an external archers' walkway all the way round. Both the inner rampart and outer rampart feature an outer moat. The moat of the inner rampart is c. 17 m wide and 4 m deep. It was not filled with water, but traces of a number of posts have been found at the bottom of the moat, which may have been pointed or else are just evidence of simple planking.

## A timber bridge

In the south-east of the area was a timber bridge, which was placed midway between the two main gates to the inner fortress. This meant that attackers had to go the longest possible distance in order to reach the gates and thus were vulnerable to attack. The gates would have been covered, and the solid



stone foundations around the gate openings suggest that there were originally timber towers or gatehouses above the gates.

## The inner fortress

The inner fortress contains traces of 16 long houses, which are arranged in blocks of 4 houses positioned around a shared yard. In two of these yards, in the north-east and south-west, small, rectangular buildings were located. Near the north and west gates there were also two small, square houses. Traces of a number of other buildings have also been found in the area, but it is unclear whether any of these relate to the fortress and they may not be contemporary. There is also evidence of numerous wells and waste pits.

In the outer ward or bailey are a total of 15 long houses, placed side by side and radiating out to the outer rampart. Two of these houses are isolated: they are located at a distance of c. 30 m from the other houses. There are also traces of other, smaller house types. The outer rampart terminates to the north in a square area, which contained the burial place of the fortress, where 135 graves containing at least 157 people have been found. Most of these were single graves, but some burials contained the remains of several individuals. The grave goods that were recovered were very limited.

## The manning of the fortress

It is not known with certainty how many people were stationed at the fortress, but a number of between 500 and 800 is not unrealistic. However, it is also possible that the fortress was not fully manned in peacetime, but instead contained a smaller garrison, which could be supplemented during times of crisis. Whereas the houses of the inner fortress were primarily for habitation, the finds from the houses of the outer ward suggest that many of these were stables and workshops. Only the two southernmost long houses of the outer ward contained evidence of fireplaces. The rampart and moat of the outer ward were significantly smaller than those of the inner fortress, and no traces of associated palisades or other fortifications have been found. The outer rampart was perhaps never finally completed. The outer rampart's moat is narrower and shallower than the inner moat, and no traces of wooden stakes have been identified. Access to the outer ward was available via an opening at the western end of the rampart towards the River Vårby, using a small bridge over the moat.

## The long houses

The characteristic long houses are more or less uniform, measuring c. 29.42 m long and 7.90 m wide. The houses have curving walls, and all the long houses of the inner fortress and 9 of those in the outer ward feature a large, 18-metres-long middle room and two small gable rooms. The long houses were constructed entirely of timbers and were supported on the outside by a row of slanting posts. The roof-supporting timbers may have gone down below the ground surface to support the structure of the house.

## Discovery and excavation

The locality of Trelleborg has never been completely forgotten about. Most of its earthworks were visible right up until the site was excavated and the circular inner rampart can clearly be seen on 17th century and later maps. Trelleborg was first recognised as a Viking fortification when the National Museum commenced excavations in 1934, led by the archaeologist Poul Nørlund, who also excavated the Scandinavian cemetery at Herjolfsnes in Greenland and undertook a number of other large excavations. The excavation was initiated after a local motorbike club rented the area in 1933 and planned to convert it into a motocross track. What had been originally planned as a small-scale investigation ended up lasting for 9 years, until 1942. By this time most of the area had been investigated and the outer defences had been discovered in an aerial photograph in 1936. Up until then, the outer earthwork had not been known about, as it was no longer visible in the landscape. All the post holes were marked with cement blocks, which today still mark the location of the buildings in the landscape. In 1941-42 work began on a reconstruction of one of Trelleborg's characteristic long houses. This project was led by Poul Nørlund and the architect C.G. Schultz. The house is thought to be the world's first scientifically-based reconstruction of a prehistoric building. It was thoroughly renovated at the start of the 1980s, and despite the fact that since its construction it has been shown to be incorrect in certain respects, the house still gives a good overall impression of the appearance and construction of long houses.

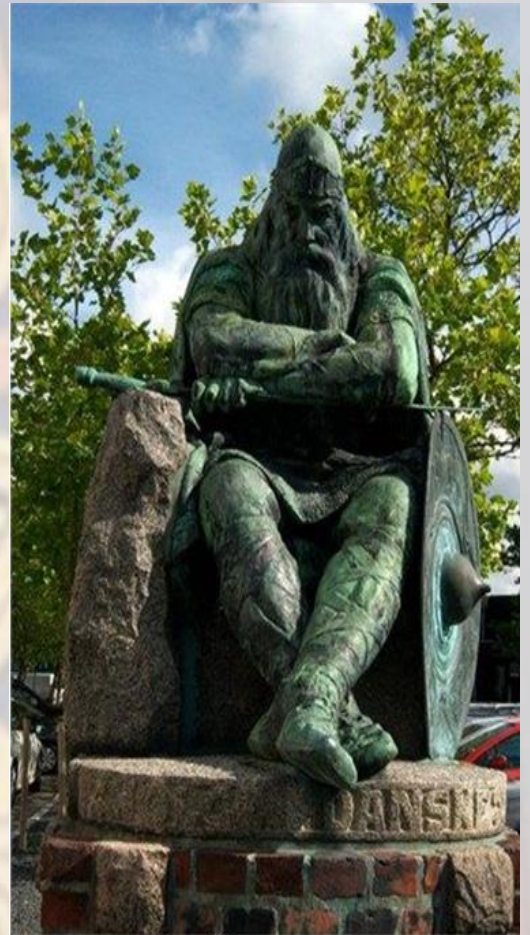


# MULTI-ETHNIC VIKINGS

BY ANNE-CHRISTINE LARSEN AND GUNVER LYSTBAEK VESTERGAARD

## “Were Slave Mercenaries the driving catalyst behind Harald Bluetooth’s unification of Denmark?”

Harald Bluetooth was a king who sought to strengthen the power of the Crown within Danish borders, and to avoid conflicts beyond them. But he was also a skilled diplomat, who understood the importance of making alliances outside of Denmark, such as with the West Slavic communities of Poland. When he decided to convert the Danes to Christianity and unify Denmark as one realm, he built a number of strategically located fortresses, known as Trelleborgene. The name derives from Trelleborg, a royal fortress west of Slagelse built in circa 980. Harald Bluetooth had forged strategic alliances through his marriage to Tove, daughter of the Slavic Obotrite Prince Mistivoj. Harald Bluetooth’s son, Sweyn Forkbeard, had married Gunhild, daughter of Mieszco of Poland. Harald Bluetooth died in the Polish town of Wolin, where he had fled after Sweyn had usurped him in the late 980s. Modern archaeology confirms that Denmark in the time of Harald Bluetooth was a multi-ethnic society, as indicated by finds of ceramics and jewellery from the Slavic countries and soapstone vessels and whetstones from Norway. Strontium analysis of skeletal material from the burial site at Trelleborg has confirmed the close contact between Denmark and these regions in the Viking Age.



STATUE OF KING HARALD BLUETOOTH

## Polish Mercenaries

It was previously believed that Harold Bluetooth’s Viking army mainly consisted of ‘native’ Danish soldiers. However, archaeologists from institutions including Aarhus University can document via analyses of skeletons found at the burial site at Trelleborg on the Danish island of Zealand that many of the soldiers – possibly more than half – were actually foreigners.

The circular fortress at Trelleborg was just one of a number of such fortifications (also called trelleborgs) built within a short space of time in different parts of Denmark in the late tenth century. They were presumably used as seats of power by Harold Bluetooth, especially during the war against his rebellious son Sweyn Forkbeard.

The team of researchers examined a total of forty-eight skeletons using a new method called strontium isotope analysis. This made it possible to determine that more than half of the skeletons did not come from Denmark. The researchers were not able to trace the precise geographical origin of the deceased,



but previous finds of artefacts such as pottery and weapons around Trelleborg indicate that many of them came from Norway or south of the Baltic Sea – i.e. what is now Poland. The results have just been published in the British journal *Antiquity*, which is one of the most prestigious archaeological journals in the world. Researchers from Aarhus University, the University of Copenhagen and the University of Wisconsin-Madison took samples of the skeletons' tooth enamel and studied their content of isotopes of the element strontium.

The composition of strontium isotopes depends on the geological formations in the area, and the element can thus be used as a geographical indicator. Strontium enters the human body via food and water, and subsequently settles in bones and tooth enamel. Here it leaves a kind of signature – just like



a barcode for goods – because the strontium isotopes accumulate differently, according to the geological environment in which people grow up. While bones change throughout life, tooth enamel is formed in childhood and subsequently undergoes minimal changes only. An analysis of the

strontium isotope composition in tooth enamel can therefore reveal whether the people buried at Trelleborg were of Danish origin or not.

Of the forty-eight skeletons analysed, thirty of which came from individual graves and the remainder from different mass graves, more than half did not come from Denmark. One of the researchers behind the sensational result is Dr Andres Siegfried Dobat, an archaeologist at the Section for Prehistoric Archaeology, Aarhus University. The new results confirm his hypothesis that foreigners influenced the formation of the national state of Denmark – not just during the time of Harold Bluetooth, but also in the centuries that followed.

He bases his theory on other sources, such as a rune stone from Egå that mentions Ketill the Norwegian. He was possibly a house-carl, i.e. a bodyguard for Harold Bluetooth. Pottery of Slavic origin has also been found in the trelleborgs in different parts of Denmark. The earliest historical sources dealing with the political situation in Denmark in the Viking Age – including Saxo Grammaticus – also mention foreigners in the armies of the early Danish kings.

In addition, a battle axe inlaid with silver and gold was found in one of the warrior graves at Trelleborg on the island of Zealand. Archaeologists presume that the warrior came from an area south of the Baltic Sea, possibly from the early Polish kingdom or from the fabled Jomsburg – a fortress thought to have been located on the south coast of the Baltic Sea. According to Dr Dobat, there are indications that the foreigners were either part of a warrior elite or regular mercenaries, even though other possible explanations cannot be excluded regarding the large number of foreigners among the troops at Trelleborg.

For Harold Bluetooth to accomplish such drastic changes, he had to depend on loyal supporters, and it was easiest for him to find them abroad. The foreigners were not expected to abide by the Viking society's rules and common law, because they were not caught up in the kinship relations that otherwise characterised the traditional Viking society. Neither were they subject to the nobility, which – according to later written sources – was in opposition to Harold Bluetooth. Other kings made use of a similar strategy, such as King David I of Scotland in the twelfth century and the Osman sultans in the fifteenth century.



# “The Lake of Tyr”

## Lake Tissø, Denmark

One of the most important Viking age sites in Denmark can be found just 25 kilometers north of Trelleborg on the banks of Lake Tissø (which probably means the lake of Tyr – one of the Viking gods of war). Over 12,000 artefacts so far have been excavated including several gold and silver hoards, jewellery, weapons and tools at the Fugledegård settlement, but who lived there in the Viking age?



This royal residence on the west bank of the lake Tissø covered an area of 500,000 square metres, and was built in the time around 550 AD. In the middle of a large palisaded enclosure lay an impressive hall building. This was built with heavy timbers and was the size of a modern sports hall. Outside the enclosure were workshop areas and a market place that was visited by craftsmen and traders on special occasions. In addition, weapons and jewellery deposited in the lake at Tissø from the period 600-1000 AD reveal that it was used for offerings.

### Holy place

The people of the Viking age constantly related to their Gods – in everyday life as well as on festive occasions. They needed the cult to keep their society in balance and sacrifices to the Gods brought them fertility, fortune of war and prosperity. The rituals were manifold. Both cult houses and sacrificial spaces under the open sky have been found by Tissø. Both here and by Halleby river, blót parties in the Kings Hall and sacrifices of weapons,

jewellery and tools have been taking place. Here were sacrificial wells filled with bones of animals – and even human beings.

## A King by Tissø ?

Men and women from the absolute elite of society lived on the west bank of Tissø for 500 years. – From 550-1050 AD. In the beginning of this period there were not only one King ruling Denmark, but there were many smaller Kings. They each ruled their own region. The magnates had different titles like Chief ( Høvding ), Earl ( Jarl ) or Gode. The highest title was konungr – king. This title was probably used by the family living by Tissø. The King by Tissø ruled a larger part of western Sjælland. In the surrounding country, i.e. by Bakkendrup, Tystrup and Sæby lived his obedient and loyal magnates. Food was not produced at the royal residence by Tissø, but was brought here from the surrounding farms. The king often toured his territory to observe, settle disputes, collect taxes and perform cult actions.



**Artifact discovered at Fugledegård**

## The Island by Tyr's lake

The Royal Residence was on the banks of Tissø, which is named after the Norse God Tyr. The Tyrnge residence located by the bank of Tissø, is named after Tyr. In Viking times these houses were on an island. In those times the water level was higher by 2 meters, and there were water and bog areas all around. It was a good strategic location for a Royal Residence because it was easy to defend and easy to get to by ship. The location was possibly also chosen because Tissø was considered a sacred lake.

## Blót festival/sacrifices

To blóte means to sacrifice. Sacrifices were made to further fertility, wealth and victory. The religion of the Viking times was more about life on earth and less about salvation in the after life. The year contained three important blóts, that would ensure success and that the balance of the world would remain. At a blót celebration



people would gather from near and far to celebrate, eat and drink together. The animals were killed and the Gods were given some of the fat and the blood. It was collected in bowls and sprinkled on the walls of the cult house and on the participants. Later the skulls and bones of the sacrificed animals were given to the Gods. On western Sjælland it was the King who would host the feast. The parties could be potlucks where everybody would bring beer and animals for sacrifice. The archaeological finds show that at times quite a lot of people were gathered here. On the location are many small huts, the so-called pit houses where people could live and

work for a brief time. At these gatherings markets emerged, where people could trade.



# Largest Viking axe discovered in Denmark

By Tom Metcalfe

Archaeologists have discovered one of the largest Viking axes ever found, in the tomb of a 10th-century "power couple" in Denmark.

Kirsten Nellemann Nielsen, an archaeologist at the Silkeborg Museum who is leading excavations at the site near the town of Haarup, said Danish axes like the one found in the tomb were the most feared weapons of the Viking Age.

"It's a bit extraordinary — it's much bigger and heavier than the other axes. It would have had a very long handle, and it took both hands to use it".

The simplicity of the mighty axe, without any decorations or inscriptions, suggests this fearsome weapon was not just for show. "It's not very luxurious," she said.

And the man in the tomb was buried with his axe alone. "He didn't have anything else buried with him, so I think you can say he identified himself as a warrior above anything else," Nielsen said. The axe was one of the artifacts recovered from the Haarup Viking tomb, or *dødehus*, which means "death house" in Danish. The tomb consisted of a wooden

palisade or roofed structure, about 13 feet (4 meters) wide and 43 feet (13 m) long, which was constructed around the two graves. One of three people found in the tomb was a wealthy Viking woman, who was buried in a wooden cart similar to this reconstruction at Silkeborg Museum. The tomb was built around A.D. 950 for the burial of a man and a woman of evident distinction, Nielsen said. The individuals were identified by their clothing and belongings, and the only human remains that survived the centuries was a single black human hair found in the woman's clothing.

The woman was buried lying in a wooden wagon, which was a tradition for women of noble birth at the time, and a pair of keys found in the tomb indicated that she was one of the leading people in the community, according to the archaeologists. Keys were a symbol of authority and distinction for women in Denmark and elsewhere in Europe in the Middle Ages, and the tradition likely dated back to an earlier time, Nielsen said. "If you are an important woman, with a lot of fine artifacts with you in the grave, then you also have a key," she said.

One of the keys was for a small wooden casket, bound with iron brackets, that was buried beside her. "She also had gold and silver threads woven into her clothing, so this is quite fine," Nielsen said.



## Viking "power couple"

Nielsen said the man and woman in the tomb may not have been husband and wife, but they were clearly the local "power couple"

"The special thing about this tomb is that these two people, each in their own grave, are put inside the same structure," she said.

"I can't say it isn't a brother and sister, or it could be [a] husband and wife relationship. But definitely, these two were the ones in charge, the



**Reconstructed grave of the Viking age lady discovered at Haarup, Denmark**

noblest people of the local area."

At some point in time, after the first man and woman were buried, a second man was buried in a grave inside a wooden structure that was added to the original tomb. This man was also buried with his ax, although it was not as large as the ax from the original burial, the researchers said. Nielsen thinks the second man could have been a relative or successor of the first man. "He was definitely a warrior," she said. "Both men had Dane axes made for fighting, and both were definitely warriors." The tomb at Haarup was unlike any other Viking tomb in Denmark and the other Viking burials uncovered at the same site, she said. "This is unique — the only one of its kind that I know of," Nielsen said. "It's a special place."

## International connections

Other finds from the tomb, and other sites in Haarup, show that the local Vikings likely had some international connections, whether through trade or travel, the archaeologists said.

The woman in the tomb was buried with a decorated ceramic cup that originated in the Baltic region, Nielsen said. Two silver coins of a Middle Eastern type called "dirhams," thought to be from an area that is now in Afghanistan, were found in the grave of another Viking woman buried nearby.

Nielsen has been working at Haarup since the site was unearthed during the construction of a motorway in 2012. As more construction goes on in the area, more archaeological discoveries are being made, including artifacts from the Iron Age and Danish medieval periods, as well as the Viking 10th century. "From the Vikings, we have only found their burials — we haven't found their houses yet, so we know them only from their graves," Nielsen said. "They most definitely lived there, but we just haven't found the place yet." Future archaeological research from Haarup will focus on the four different types of woven cloth found in the graves, the construction of the small casket in the leading woman's grave, and the single black hair found in her clothing — the only human remains that have survived, and potentially a source of DNA that could provide more clues about its owner, Nielsen said.



# Fårikål Day

## 29th September

With autumn nearly upon us why not try a traditional Norwegian, dare I say Viking dish “Fårikål”. Consisting simply of pieces of mutton (or lamb) on the bone, cabbage and whole black peppercorns cooked for several hours in a casserole. Traditionally served with potatoes, the dish is typically prepared in early autumn. Fårikål is a compounded word that literally means “sheep in cabbage”, “får i kål”.



### INGREDIENTS

**2 kg of mutton cut into 3 cm slices**

**½ kg of smoked lamb bacon**

**2 ½ kg green cabbage**

**2 ¼ cups (500ml) water**

**6 tsp whole black peppercorns**

**Salt, to taste (about 3 tsp or so)**

**1 Bay Leaf**

**3 juniper berries, crushed**

### COOKING INSTRUCTIONS



Cut the cabbage into quarters down the core and cut each quarter into 3-4 wedges (the idea is to keep part of the core on each segment, which will hold the leaves together and prevent the whole thing disintegrating while cooking). Pour the water into a large casserole pot; add crushed juniper and bay leaf. Place a layer of lamb, then a layer of cabbage into the pot, seasoning each layer with salt and some of the whole peppercorns as you go. Repeat this layering process until you have used up all the ingredients. The final layer on the top should always be cabbage. Cover tightly and bring to the boil, turn down heat and simmer over a very low heat for 2-3 hours until the lamb is really tender and falling off the bone.

# Famous Viking and Norman dates in history

In each issue of the newsletter we will bring to life a specific date in Viking / Norman history. On the following pages discover the three battles of 1066 AD that celebrate their 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

## September

### 2nd September 911 AD

Viking leader Oleg of Novgorod-Russia signs treaty with Byzantines

### 3rd September, 1189 AD

Richard I "Lionheart" is crowned in Westminster. 30 Jews are massacred after the coronation – Richard orders the perpetrators be executed.

### 9th September, 1000 AD

Battle of Svolder, Baltic Sea. King Olaf on board the Long Serpent defeated in one of the greatest naval battles of the Viking Age.

### 20th September 1066 AD

Battle of Fulford, York: King Harald III "Hardrada" of Norway defeats Northern Saxon Earls Edwin and Morcar. \*\*\*\*\*SELECTED ARTICLE OVERLEAF\*\*\*\*\*

### 25th September 1066 AD

The Battle of Stamford Bridge; an English army under King Harold Godwinson beat the invading Norwegian Vikings led by King Harald III "Hardrada" and Harold's brother Tostig, who were both killed. \*\*\*\*\*SELECTED ARTICLE OVERLEAF\*\*\*\*\*

### 28th September 1066 AD

The Norman invasion fleet under Duke William II (later the Conqueror) invades England landing at Pevensey Bay, Sussex

Battle at Tinchebrai, Normandy: English King Henry I beats his Crusading brother Robert Duke of Normandy.

## October

### 2nd October 1263 AD

The battle of Largs situated on the west coast of Scotland fought between Norwegians Vikings and Scots.

### 9th October 1000 AD

Leif Erikson discovers "Vinland" (possibly L'Anse aux Meadows, Canada) reputedly becoming one of first known Europeans to reach North America.

### 14th October 1066 AD

Battle of Hastings, Duke William of Normandy defeats the Anglo-Saxons on Senlac hill.



# 1066 AD

## “YEAR OF THE THREE BATTLES”

2016 commemorates the 950<sup>th</sup> anniversary of three battles that changed the face of Britain. Although overshadowed by the Battle of Hastings, the Battles Fulford and Stamford Bridge decided the outcome of the final confrontation on Senlac Hill.

### Four claimants, one throne

In the night time sky over the Kingdom of England Halley's Comet burned brightly. For many it was seen as a bad omen and sign of impending doom. Fear gripped the nation and could be seen in the eyes of the old King Edward “the Confessor” who was lying ill in his bed. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January Edward passed away without leaving clear instructions on who should inherit the English crown. England was not a hereditary based system and

indeed anyone who had Royal blood running through their veins or believed they would be the best man for the job could put forward a claim. The Anglo-Saxon elected council “The Witan” would then decide who to proclaim King. In 1066 there was no shortage of claimants; the strongest claim came from

**Edgar ‘the Atheling’** who was the grandson of Edmund “Ironside” and who could trace his lineage back to Alfred the Great and the House of Wessex.

The problem was that Edgar was only a boy, lacking in experience and authority. **Earl Harold Godwinson** was the most powerful nobleman in the Kingdom and had proved himself as an able commander against the Welsh during the reign of King Edward. He had married the King's sister Edith and was present when the old King died. According to Harold the King's last words were “**I commend my wife and all my Kingdom to your care.**”

Dark forces abroad also had an eye on the throne of England. The famous Viking warlord **King Harald III “Hardrada”** claimed the crown of England through an agreement made between his nephew King Magnus of Norway and King Harthacnut of Denmark and England. The treaty concluded in 1040 A.D stipulated that whoever died first would inherit the others Kingdom. When Harthacnut died in 1040 A.D Magnus became King of Denmark. Although he also claimed England, the Anglo-Saxon council “the Witan” decided to elect their preferred candidate Edward (later the Confessor) son of Æthelred II “The Unready” from the Royal line of King Alfred the Great. The fourth candidate was **Duke William II of Normandy**. William claimed that King Edward “the Confessor” had promised him the crown and that Harold Godwinsson had confirmed this by swearing on

the relics of a saint during his stay in Normandy with the Duke in 1064/65 AD. William even received a Papal banner from the Pope in Rome and was authorised to launch a campaign to press his claim the England’s throne.

In the end the Witan preferred an Anglo-Saxon candidate to a foreign head of state and offered the crown to Earl Harold Godwinsson. Their decision caused outrage from Duke William of Normandy and King III Harald “Hardrada”, who both began preparations for a full scale invasion of Anglo-Saxon England.

### **The Return of the Vikings: Hardrada’s invasion of the North**

In the cold icy homeland of the Norwegian King a colossal fleet of some 300 drakars was assembled ready to take 10,000 Viking warriors across the North Sea to conquer England. Hardrada crossed the North Sea

and landed in Shetland, picking up supplies and men in the Norse colony before continuing onto the Orkney Isles to gather further troops. The Norse fleet then sailed down the Scottish coast and joined the smaller force of the rebel Earl Tostig (Harold Godwinsson’s brother) near Tynemouth. Together they continued south and raided Cleveland. At Scarborough Harald’s Viking army came ashore and sacked the town. This was a deliberate act to terrorise the local population into submission. As the town burned and the sky filled with black smoke from the thatched houses Harald headed into the mouth of the Humber estuary and up the river Ouse. The greatest Viking invasion of England in living memory was underway; at Ricall they disembarked and headed for the capital of the north, York (Jorvik in Old Norse).





## The Battle of Fulford 20<sup>th</sup> September

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September at Fulford just outside York Hardrada's men were confronted by an Anglo-Saxon army under the command of Earl Edwin of Mercia and Earl Mocar of Northumbria. Hardrada formed up his army into battle order, the left flank resting on the river Ouse and the centre and right wing along a parallel bec. The King ordered his famous land-ravager flag to be brought forward and placed deep into English soil. The Earl's men advanced and spotted that the Norse army was weakest on their right flank. They ordered the whole Saxon army to concentrate their attack on the bec section. The fierce Saxon charge smashed straight into the Norse formation. Axe, spear

and sword were all used to deadly effect in the unrelenting hand to hand combat.

Encouraged on by their initial success, the Saxons broke through the Norse ranks. At this crucial moment, Hardrada the hero of a thousand battles entered the fray. He ordered a general charge with the land-ravager flag carried before him. His best troops and Viking berserkers pushed Edwin and Morcar's men back into the bec, where many were slain. Some Norse troops may have also outflanked the Saxon



position by crossing the marsh via the old Roman road. The battle turned into a rout and by the time the Saxons were in full retreat, the bec was so full with bodies that the Norse could cross it without getting their feet wet.

Both Edwin and Morcar escaped the carnage of Fulford, but the Norse victory caused a general panic back in York and much of Northern England. Hardrada had won a great victory which strengthened his claim to gain the English crown. He advanced to the very gates of York and received the surrender of the Northern capital. The city was spared the dreaded sack, but was ordered to send hostages to a designated rendezvous point several miles outside the city at a place called Stamford Bridge.

Heimskringla Saga:

**“Brave Harald drove along,**

**Flying but fighting the whole way.**

**At last, demoralised, they could not fight.**

**And the whole body took flight and fled”.**

# 1066 AD CAMPAIGN MAP





## The Battle of Stamford Bridge 25th September

After the submission of York, Hardrada returned to his ships at Riccall. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1066 A.D the King marched out back towards Stamford Bridge, leaving a large proportion of his army at Riccall under the command of Olaf (his son) and Eystein Orre. Overconfident and believing that the English had been utterly defeated Hardrada allowed many of his men to leave their heavy armour and mail coats with the fleet. When they arrived at Stamford Bridge they could see clouds of dust swirling up into the sky. Hardrada asked Earl Tostig who it could be and the Earl replied that it was probably English friends and allies coming to submit and join the Norse army. Tostig was completely wrong, and it became clear when they saw the “Fighting man” banner of Wessex that it was the full military might of Anglo-Saxon England under the command of King Harold Godwinsson. After the news of the invasion, King Harold II had marched north and covered the some 200 miles from London to York in lightning speed.

As the English army approached Hardrada had little choice but to stand his ground and hope to delay the battle until his main force could arrive from Riccall. He sent some messengers on horseback at full speed to gather the remainder of the Norse army to join him at Stamford Bridge. Hardrada was caught completely unaware, yet only one battle stood in his way of re-uniting the great North Sea Empire of King Cnut. He organised his outnumbered and lightly armoured troops into a circular shield wall formation with the sacred Land-Ravager flag in the centre. Then twenty riders came forward from the English position. One of them asked if Tostig was in the army. When Tostig replied that he was, the rider said that he had a message from King Harold II. The message was that if he deserted the Norse he would be re-instated as Earl of Northumbria and also given a third of the Kingdom to rule. Tostig replied what would be given to King Harald “Hardrada” for his trouble, to which the rider answered:

**“Seven foot of English soil, for he is taller than most men”**

As the English rode back to their lines Hardrada asked Tostig if he knew the man who had spoken so gallantly. Tostig said he did and it was noneother than King Harold Godwinsson himself. Harald observed to his close comrades:

**“What a little man is Harold Godwinsson,  
yet he sat up well in his stirrups”**

With the formalities at an end the Anglo-Saxons attacked and overwhelmed the Norse contingent stationed on the western side of the river. Their advance was checked by a lone Viking berserker who heroically defended the footbridge over the river Derwent. He single handedly cut down ever English soldier who challenged him.





The duel was ended when a Saxon warrior crept beneath the bridge and speared the berserker from below. As the giant Viking warrior fell to the ground the English shouted out a deafening battle cry and advanced towards the Norse position. There have been many theories as to why Harald did not defend the bridge and use it as a choke point until the arrival of the Norse reserves. As the most experienced and battle hardened warrior of his day he would have certainly have recognised this tactical advantage.

The answer to this debate may be in the actual origin of the placename of Stamford. The Germanic origin of the word “ford” meaning a shallow river crossing. The river Derwent may have been exceptionally low due to the warm and dry weather conditions of 1066 A.D, allowing the Anglo-Saxon army to cross the river in force without needing to rely on the footbridge. According to the Heimskringla Saga the English attacked on horseback. Although the Anglo-Saxons used horses like the Vikings for transport they are not known to have fought as cavalry, but if the Icelandic Saga is correct this may have been a detachment of King Harold II Godwinsson's royal huscarls. Harold had fought with Duke William of Normandy on campaign in Brittany and had been very much impressed by the Norman mounted cavalry. When he returned to England he created a unit based on the Norman mounted knight.

The English threw everything at the Norse shield wall, but each assault was repulsed and thrown back. The green Yorkshire grass turned red with blood and the field was littered with the dead and wounded from both sides. Soon the lack of armour and overwhelming English numbers began to tell. At the crucial moment just like at Fulford Hardrada bust out from behind the shield wall and charged straight into the English ranks hoping the break the deadlock and turn the battle to his favour. The King flew into a violent berserker rage and hacked down everyone in his way. No one could withstand the fury of his charge as he forced his way through the Saxons ranks in front of him. Hardrada's personal charge nearly broke the spirit of the English who were being pushed back and on the verge of fleeing the field.

Then disaster struck, Hardrada was hit by a stray arrow in the windpipe. The great warrior King was stopped dead in his tracks, dropping to the ground like a felled mighty oak tree. It was perhaps befitting that he died sword in hand “the Viking way” fighting until his last breath, the way he would have wished.





King Harold II Godwinsson offered quarter to his brother Tostig and the remaining Norse soldiers, but they refused to surrender and fought on to the last man defending Hardrada's body and the sacred land-ravager flag.

Shortly afterwards Eystein Orri arrived on the battlefield with the Norse reinforcements from Riccall. Although exhausted from the forced march they entered the bloody conflict in a furious rage. Taking charge of the raven banner they inflicted many casualties upon the English. After a short while they ditched their armour and shields in order to carry on fighting, but this made them easy targets for the English archers who decimated their numbers. As darkness fell on the battlefield the last great Viking army to assault England had been annihilated. Some of Hardrada's men managed to escape the carnage and return to Riccall with the land-ravager banner.

The victorious English King Harold made a peace treaty with Hardrada's son Olaf, allowing him and the remaining Norse to return home back to Scandinavia. Only 24 ships out of over 300 were needed to take the Norwegian survivors home. So great was the slaughter of Stamford Bridge that piles of bones still littered the battlefield well into the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Harold II Godwinsson's victory was short lived, for within a few days' riders from the south arrived in York to tell him that Duke William of Normandy had landed on the south coast.

## The Normans invade

During the spring and summer of 1066 AD William had been preparing for the invasion of England. He had even secured Papal blessing for the invasion from the Pope in Rome. Although it was extremely late in the campaigning season, William's spies brought back news that Harold was in the north and the south of the island was virtually undefended. Just at the right moment the winds changed in the Channel making it possible to launch the invasion.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1066 AD the Norman fleet carrying 7000 thousand soldiers from Normandy, Brittany, Maine, France and even Southern Italy disembarked on the shingle beaches of the Pevensey Bay. As William came ashore he fell over into the sand. Many around him thought it was a bad omen until William stood up holding two handfuls of English sand and acclaimed:

**"See, my lords, by the splendour of God, I have taken possession of England with both my hands. It is now mine, and what is mine is yours."**

The Normans set up their headquarters inside the ruins of the old Roman fort at Pevensey. William's strategy was to devastate the local towns and villages, not only to supply his army, but also to lure Harold south and bring him to battle. William could have marched on London before Harold returned south but the Hastings peninsula offered a good opportunity for him to choose the field of battle best suited towards the Norman cavalry. With access restricted to only one road in and out William could not be surprised as to which direction Harold would come. The only problem was that if Harold could contain the Normans in the peninsula and blockade their fleet, they would effectively be trapped with no hope of being re-supplied from Normandy and worst of all no escape. Harold took the Norman bait and headed south to confront the invaders. After a forced march from York he arrived in London where his brother Gyrth suggested that they destroy the land around Hastings denying the enemy the much needed provisions before risking battle. The King refused the idea of causing any more suffering to his people and decided to attack and drive the invaders into the sea. After only six days of mustering troops in London, Harold impatiently headed out to his rendezvous with destiny



## The Battle of Hastings 14<sup>th</sup> October 1066

On the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> of October Harold and the English army of 8000 men arrived at Caldbec Hill blocking off the road to London and any access out of the peninsula. The situation looked bad for the Normans when the Anglo-Saxon Fleet arrived in the bay, cutting off any hope of escape back to Normandy. For William there was no option but to fight or die. He ordered the camp to be put on full alert and prepare for battle in the morning. Many men on both sides had a sleepless night, knowing the fate of a nation would be decided by the outcome of the fore coming battle. As the sun rose on a cold October morning, William heard mass and adorned the sacred relics around his neck before ordering the army to strike camp and move out towards the Anglo-Saxon lines.

He acclaimed:

**“You shall see the name of a Duke changed into King today”**

The Normans marched down into the valley looking up at the English on the hill in front of them. It was a menacing sight as the Dragon banner of Wessex and King Harold's personal banner of the Fighting man fluttered in the wind above, the English hit their shields and let out the war cries “Out, Out, Out and “Godemite” (God Almighty).

William launched a pre-emptive strike and sent in his archers and crossbowmen to soften up in English line. The uphill trajectory and the Saxon shield wall made it extremely difficult for them to inflict heavy casualties upon the English. Next came the turn of the Norman infantry who slogged their way up the steep slope. When they were within a few meters of the English lines were met with an almighty barrage of spears, javelins, arrows, rocks and even Viking throwing axes. The whole Norman front line reeled back with men dropping like flies to the ground. When the surviving infantry reached the English lines, vicious hand to hand fighting ensued. It was a brutal struggle to the death.

Seeing his men wavering, William sent in some of the Norman elite cavalry to support the infantry. It was during this stage of the battle that Harold's brothers Gyth and Leowine were probably killed. The Saxon housecarls fought with tremendous fighting spirit chopping man and horse in two with their huge battle axes. The Knights charged in hoping to find holes in the English defence. Instead they were met with axe, spear and sword. The Saxon shield wall stood firm and unbroken. It was said that the English ranks were so dense that no even the dead could fall to the ground. The bodies of the slain were strewn all along the slope of the ridge.





On the Norman left flank the Bretons were suffering enormous casualties; they began to panic and started to flee back down the slope. The Norman centre now pulled back fearing they might be outflanked and surrounded. A rumour spread through ranks of the Normans that the Duke had been killed. Eustace De Boulogne used the Papal banner as a rallying point, pointing at the Duke. William was forced to raise his helmet showing his men that he was very much still alive.

**"Look at me; here I am; I live, and by God's help will conquer."**

He shouted out great words of encouragement and also reminded them that there was no escape. Harold had given strict orders to hold the defensive position on the hill. He had first hand experience of how dangerous the Norman cavalry could be during his time with them in Brittany. The temptation was just too much for some of the English who had lost their leaders Gyth and Leowine. In an uncontrolled frenzy they started charging down the hill after the Bretons. Had Harold ordered his entire army to commit to a frontal assault, the sheer weight of numbers and the momentum might have won the day for him. Instead he allowed William the precious time to rally his men and take the initiative. The pursuing Saxons were now at the bottom of the slope far from the safety of the Shield wall. William spotted the opportunity and counter attacked with a detachment of armoured knights. The English were massacred with only a handful managing to escape back up the hill.

**The final attack** There was a lull in the fighting with both sides recuperating and assessing the damages. William reorganised his troops ready for the final assault. At the height of the afternoon William sent in everything he had left at his disposal. The Normans had to win the battle by nightfall or all would be lost. Harold's losses were being replenished by more troops arriving from all over England. The chronicler William de Poitiers describes how the Normans used feinted flights to lure the English out of their shield wall. They would attack the English then retreat, the English would then chase after them, allowing the knights to cut





them then in the open. Holes were starting to open up along the ridge, but every time the Norman knights broke the shield wall, more Saxons filled the gaps from the rear. One Norman Knight came within distance of striking at the Dragon banner of Wessex. He was surrounded, pulled from his horse and hacked to pieces. William was also in the fray and had three horses killed from under him. The Normans combined their archers, infantry and cavalry, in a desperate attempt to force the Saxons from their hilltop position. The English fought on with desperate bravery holding their ground until disaster struck. King Harold was hit in the face by a stray arrow. As the King stumbled a group of Norman knights charged through the English ranks and finished Harold off.

It was the decisive moment of the battle. Harold's personal bodyguard refused to yield and fought on to the last man protecting the body of the King and the Sacred Dragon banner of Wessex. In the melee the "fighting man flag" was pulled down. Afterwards it was sent to the Pope in Rome as a present for his support.

The death of the King was a hammer blow for the English who were now left leaderless. Most of the survivors fled the hilltop for the safety of the forest behind them. Some Norman knights pursued the Saxons into the woods. Although beaten the English rallied in the forest at a place later called "Malfosse" bad ditch. The overconfident Knights were ambushed and butchered. The few remaining Normans led by Eustace of Boulogne started to retreat until Duke William arrived on the scene. As the Duke reprimanded the Count, a missile hit Eustace in the shoulder knocking him unconscious. William attacked the ambushers, armed only with a broken lance before returning to the battlefield.

The battle had been a close run thing indeed. Had Harold not been killed, the English would have probably been able to keep control of the ridge until nightfall. Harold died valiantly but had neglected his solemn duty of protecting the English people. Even losing the battle would not have been a total disaster for him, for he could have retreated and raised another army just as Alfred had done before him. Instead he fought bravely to the death, but left a nation leaderless at the mercy of a foreign invader who destroyed Anglo-Saxon England and change the face of Britain forever. For the first time in some 600 years England looked towards continental Europe for its culture and influence instead of Scandinavia. Traditionally 1066 AD ends the Viking age in England, but for the Northern part of Britannia and Ireland Norse influence would continue for many centuries to come.

