

The Vikings in Scotland

An overview of the archaeological evidence for the Vikings and Late Norse in Scotland encompassing settlement, pagan grave, hoard and runic evidence. This builds on the entries in SCRAN and supplies a context and list of relevant links within the database, in addition to further reading suggestions.

N.B. Links to relevant records in SCRAN are referenced by the SCRAN ID no eg 000-299-997-051-C. Simply copy this number into the SCRAN Search Box and click the Search button to access the record.

Introduction

The evidence for Scandinavian presence in modern-day Scotland can be gleaned from several sources. There are no Scandinavian documentary sources of relevance to Scotland which survive from before the 12th century, although there are references for early Viking raiding activities supplied by the *Annals of Ulster* for example, telling of raids on Iona in 795AD amongst others (000-299-997-051-C). These opportunistic raids focussed on monastic centres and coastal monasteries in Northern England, most notably Lindisfarne had already been visited by the Vikings in 793. Iona was however to suffer more than many monastic houses, with repeated attacks in future years. Such information survives in the reports written down by the very clerics who were being attacked for their church wealth and manuscripts – items of loot being taken back to Scandinavia as trophies. Such apparent devastation is not so clear in the archaeological record however...

Intermittent raids were followed by phases of permanent settlement, and in Scotland this focussed on Northern Scotland, the Western Isles and South-West Scotland. Excavation and survey provides evidence for a constant re-assessment of the nature and extent of this settlement, and although most is currently known of the Scandinavian presence in Northern Scotland – Caithness, Orkney and Shetland, the lands of the Northern Earldom - the mass of wealthy pagan graves known from the Western Isles is now being supplemented by settlement evidence. In the South-West of Scotland, major excavations at Whithorn indicate a Scandinavian presence with trading and cultural links across the Irish Sea to Ireland.

Settlement evidence in the Western Isles is limited in extent. Excavations at the Udal in North Uist and at Bornais on South Uist have clearly recovered major Viking and Late Norse remains. However the only site which is published was excavated in the 1970s and focussed on a single structure. The site of Drimore was excavated prior to Ministry of Defence development and was on a limited scale.

Evidence of pagan graves is however much more extensive. Cemetery evidence has been investigated from Lewis, at the site of Kneep/Cnip, where a rich pagan female burial was discovered by chance and further investigation revealed



additional burials in the vicinity (000-100-082-978-C). On Islay, the site of Ballinaby was yielded a number of rich pagan graves, which included a number of exotic imports such as items from the Carolingian Empire and a coptic ladle! (000-000-099-750-C; 000-100-102-643-C; 000-100-102-644-C; 000-100-102-642-C and 000-000-099-717-C). The greatest concentration of graves has however been noted from the small island of Colonsay in the Inner Hebrides. The most exceptional is one from Kiloran Bay, excavated in the 1880s. This was a boat burial and contained the remains of a single male buried with all his weaponry (see *Kiloran Bay: a Viking Pack* SCRAN multi-media cd-rom) and a horse as well as items indicating he was a trader.

The presence of weighing scales in graves such as that at Kiloran Bay, which also included a set of elaborate weights with enamel decoration, reinforces the view that a barter economy was at work in this area. Several finds of silver and gold have been made in the Western Isles area, one such example is a group of silver arm rings (ring money) from Skye (000-100-043-66-C). At the Storr Rock, a group of hack silver was recovered, it had obviously been placed at a location which was memorable and would enable recovery. We can only wonder why this silver was not collected! Likewise, we can only wonder at the circumstances of the loss of the magnificent Hunterston brooch, which was lost on the Ayrshire coast but only after a runic inscription had been written on the back of this brooch which originally probably came from Ireland (000-190-001-169-C; 000-100-036-198-C; 000-190-001-174-C)

Perhaps the most famous icon of the Scandinavian era in Scotland is the Lewis chessmen, found in Uig, Lewis in 1831 (000-190-001-117-C; 000-100-001-633-C; 000-100-001-637-C). 93 pieces were found in total, representing large parts of four sets. The circumstances of deposition cannot now be known, but they are made of walrus ivory which may have originated in Greenland. It has been suggested that they were made in Trondheim in Norway. Perhaps they were a merchants hoard, placed in the sand for safe-keeping, or perhaps even the result of a ship-wreck...

Further Reading:

There are a number of general works on the Vikings in Scotland which can be consulted for detailed information on all aspects of this topic.

Crawford B E 1987

Scandinavian Scotland. Leicester University Press Particularly strong on the historical evidence combined with the archaeology

Graham-Campbell J and C E Batey 1998

Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey. Edinburgh University Press. Focuses on the archaeological evidence including recent work.

Ritchie A 1993

Viking Scotland. Batsford/Historic Scotland.



Settlement:

Crawford I A 1986

The West Highlands and Islands: A view of 50 Centuries. The Udal (N Uist) Evidence. Cambridge. Great Auk Press

Hill P 1997

Whithorn and St Ninian. The Excavation of a Monastic Town, 1984-91. Stroud, Sutton Publishing for the Whithorn Trust

Maclaren A 1974

A Norse house on Drimore Machair, South Uist. *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 3, 9-18

Graves:

Anderson J 1890

Notes on the contents of two viking graves at Islay [Ballinaby], *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 14, (1879-80), 51-69

Anderson J 1907

Notice of bronze brooches...with a description...of a ship-burial of the Viking time at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 41 (1906-07), 443-9

Hoard:

Graham-Campbell J 1995

The Viking-Age Gold and Silver of Scotland (AD 850-110). Edinburgh, National Museums of Scotland

Lewis Chessmen:

Lewis Chesspieces. Multi-media programme. NMS 1995

Stratford N 1997

The Lewis Chessmen and the Enigma of the Hoard. London, The British Museum

More Detailed Area Case Studies:**A. The Vikings in Caithness**

The presence of Scandinavian settlers in northern Scotland is essentially confined to the north east corner of Caithness, although more limited evidence does support such presence in Sutherland as well. Restricted to a pagan grave at Balnakeil, on the north Sutherland coast (000-000-152-738-C, 000-000-142-950-C; 000-000-099-77-C and 000-000-099-789-C for example) and possibly another example at Dunrobin in the south of the county (000-100-043-924-C), the only potential settlement may have been located at Achnahaird in the West



and at Sangobeg on the north coast. Further detailed survey work needs to be undertaken in this area.

Evidence for Scandinavian settlement in Caithness was initially confirmed through the presence of placenames which included Norse elements. Such elements include: *-bster*, meaning a farm or settlement, such as Lybster or Scrabster; *setr* or *saetr*, meaning an upland settlement such as Seater and the description of natural elements such as *-vik*, a bay (eg Freswick or Wick) or skerry meaning a rocky outcrop sometimes covered by the sea, as in Skarfskerry (cormorant skerry). These names are closely mirrored in Orkney which was the political centre of the Scandinavian settlers, and from where it appears that the settlers in Caithness came. The influence of Scandinavia in this apart of northern Scotland certainly continued into the 13th century and the archaeological remains cover much of the period from the initial settlement sometime in the 10th century to the 13th. The later parts of this era would be termed Late Norse rather than Viking, since the activity was settlement and politically based rather than raiding motivated in true Viking fashion.

The evidence in Caithness for the earliest phases of Scandinavian contact is available in the form of pagan graves and a single silver hoard.

Reay, to the west of Thurso, represents the largest single group of burials for this period. In the region of 5 burials have been suggested, discovered through the erosion of sand dunes at the coastal edge through a number of years into the 1940s. Both male and female burials are represented, and examples can be drawn from SCRAN:

General grouping:

000-000-099-670-C

Specific artefacts:

000-000-099-762-C; 000-000-099-755-C

000-100-043-821-C

000-100-043-820-C

000-100-043-822-C

000-000-099-740-C

These show the range of distinctive items buried in these graves (cross-ref to artefact module; grave module) and confirm the Scandinavian character of the deposits. It is difficult to tell from the surviving evidence precisely how many graves were present, since some of the graves were disturbed by erosion and finds were collected over a number of years. It is also not possible to understand how the burials were placed in the ground and whether they had mounds built over them, or where buried only in existing sand dunes, or indeed whether they had been buried in stone cists or coffins.

Another pagan burial was discovered at Westerseat near Wick, but this comprised only two oval brooches and apparently no human remains. They were



found in a stone cist in a natural gravel mound (000-000-099-742-C; 000-000-099-741-C).

In addition to the pagan burials identified here, a single oval brooch found in Thurso was probably also from a burial. It was an isolated find and may have been redeposited far from its original find spot, but it must have come from a female Viking pagan burial (000-000-099-743-C).

A single silver hoard completes the information which relates to the first stages of Scandinavian presence in Caithness. This hoard, from Kirk o'Banks on the north coast, consists of eight silver arm rings. These were found during work at a small chapel at the site and thought initially to have been coffin handles. They are however identified as ring money, a unit of currency used in the Viking weight-based economy, before coins were in common usage (000-100-043-661-C).

In the later stages of Scandinavian influence in Caithness, when Norway had placed a political representative in Thurso, links with the Norse Earldom (centred on Orkney) were of major importance. These events are touched on in *The Orkneyinga Saga*, the story of the Earls of Orkney (and of Caithness and Shetland too). Presence in the 11-12th century in Thurso of Norse speakers is supported by the discovery of runic inscriptions at St Peter's Church. One was a cross-shaped slab which included an inscription (000-000-142-978-C) naming an individual called Ingulf. This marked a Christianised Norse double grave and was found in the Churchyard. More recently another runic inscription has been located at the same site, obviously reused as a corner-stone of the tower. This included the name of a prominent female Norse settler in the area by the name of Gunnhildr and the memorial may have been erected to her by a grieving husband.

Identification of the settlers of Scandinavian origin in Caithness has been a relatively recent quest. Most of the discoveries outlined here took place prior to the 1940s. In the late 1930s and 1940s excavations of Norse remains were undertaken at Freswick Links, on the east coast of Caithness. The buildings discovered were assigned to the Viking and late Viking periods by the excavators, Alexander Curle and V Gordon Childe. The structures were discovered because of erosion caused by sand extraction for the building of Wick airfield and the associated middens or rubbish dumps were clearly visible. New excavations were undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Dr Colleen Batey and Professor Chris Morris and, although the buildings were re-examined to a small extent, the focus was on the eroding midden deposits. Detailed work revealed that the economy of the Late Norse occupants of Freswick was dominated by fishing for large fish – cod, ling and saithe – as well as farming cattle and sheep, growing crops such as barley with some oats and catching seabirds from nearby cliffs, as well as taking the birds eggs. Identification of the cereals is confirmed from the pollen record as well as from impressions and inclusions on the simple hand-made pottery at the site. The material culture



includes aspects which are familiar in a Scandinavian context, such as steatite vessels and combs which have probably been imported from Scandinavia.

There is no evidence that the early Vikings were settled at Freswick, and the Norse settlement would seem date from the 11th century onwards. However, the site was occupied in the pre-Viking period by prehistoric settlers, there was an Iron Age broch and surrounding buildings as well as a Pictish settlement which was both a farming and a fishing community.

General view:

000-000-142-988-C

Material culture:

000-100-043-928-C

000-000-142-989-C

000-100-043-887-C

000-000-142-985-C

000-100-102-646-C

Other settlements of the Late Norse period are limited to a single example at nearby Robertshaven, on the north coast of Caithness to the east of John O'Groats. This site has been investigated by Dr James Barrett and its economic focus has once more been shown to be fisheries based. A suggestion that this was part of a larger North Sea fisheries industry has been made, and Freswick Links would be part of such a network as well. The only other site which may be of this period, at Huna, was unfortunately destroyed by development before detailed archaeological work could be undertaken.

Further Reading:

J Baldwin ed 2000

The Province of Strathnaver, Scottish Society of Northern Studies

Barrett J H 1994

Robert's Haven, *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 1993*, Edinburgh: Council for Scottish Archaeology, 42-3

Barrett J H 1997

Fish trade in Norse Orkney and Caithness: a zooarchaeological approach, *Antiquity* 71, 611-38

Batey C E 1987

Freswick Links, Caithness: a reappraisal of the Late Norse Site in its Context, British Archaeological Reports British Series 179, Oxford. References therein to Kirk o'Banks, and Huna

Batey C E 1993



The Viking and Late Norse graves of Caithness and Sutherland, in Batey *et al* eds 1993, 148-64

Batey C E, J Jesch and C D Morris (eds) 1993
The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North of Scotland (Select papers from the Proceedings of the Eleventh Viking Congress, Thurso and Kirkwall, 1989), Edinburgh.

Crawford B E (ed) 1995
Scandinavian Settlement in Northern Britain, Leicester

Curle J 1914
On recent Scandinavian grave finds from the island of Oronsay, and from Reay, Caithness... *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 48 (1913-14), 292-315

Edwards A J H 1927
Excavations of graves at Ackergill and of an earth house at Freswick Links, Caithness, and a description of the discovery of a Viking grave at Reay, Caithness, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 61 (1926-7), 196-209

Gourlay, R , D Low and C E Batey 2000
The Viking grave at Balnakeil, Durness, Sutherland, in J Baldwin ed 2000, 24-34

Morris C D and D J Rackham (eds) 1992
Norse and Later Settlement and Subsistence in the North Atlantic (University of Glasgow Occasional Paper Series no 1), Glasgow

Morris C D, C E Batey and D J Rackham 1995
Freswick Links, Caithness. Excavation and Survey of the Norse Settlement. Inverness and New York: Highland Libraries in association with the North Atlantic Biocultural Organisation

Palsson H and Edwards P (trans) 1981
Orkneyinga Saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney, Harmondsworth

B. The Vikings in Shetland

The islands of Shetland have a placename record which indicates that virtually all the names are of Scandinavian origin. In addition, in common with Orkney, they also had until a hundred years or so ago, a dialect called *norn* which was closely linked to the Norse tongue. In the 1800s the norn dialect was noted in use for the speaking of the Lord's Prayer, although recognisable today as a foreign tongue, it was a combination of both Norwegian and what we would today recognise as Shetland dialect. Even the form of the Shetland fishing boat – the Ness yole (000-180-000-516-C) – mirrors closely that known from the Viking



period in Scandinavia, such as the Gokstad rowing boat, or even the small boats used for boat burials in Scotland in the Viking period, such as Scar (000-000-144-275-C; 000-000-144-269-C) or Kiloran Bay (000-000-099-812-C).

The archaeological record for the extensive Scandinavian presence in Shetland is not as rich as Orkney, although for nearly 500 years Orkney and Shetland were part of the Northern Norse Earldom. A handful of pagan burials represented at Clibberswick on Unst by a pair of oval brooches (000-000-099-739-C) found with a distinctive trefoil brooch (000-000-099-737-C) and a couple of Viking axes (Sandwick, Unst 000-000-000-208-C; Delting 000-000-000-312-C) were the main elements distinguished as grave finds. A recent find of an oval brooch in a boat grave on Fetlar is an important addition to this small body of data. The large 10th century silver brooch from Gulberwick (000-000-000-221-C) is a rare find of precious metal on Shetland, and may have been part of a hoard or even a grave.

In terms of settlement evidence, the most impressive body of information derives from the large multi-period settlement at the southern tip of Shetland – Jarlshof – at this site, evidence ranging from the Neolithic period to the Medieval can be traced. Extensive Norse structures spanning the 9th to 13th centuries are visible on the surface, when excavated before the 1950s, little would have been visible on the surface. The excavation of several super-imposed Norse buildings gives the impression of a large settlement, but it was not all occupied at the same time, and instead grew in line with family expansion and economic necessity. (*Shetland Archaeology* multi-media CD ROM, SCRAN 2001). Long rectangular buildings included in some cases space for the animals under the same roof and debris from everyday life was strewn outside. It is this debris which gives us most insight into the way of life at the site in the Viking and late Norse periods. Rare items include graffiti depicting human faces – but were they Vikings or the local Picts?

Jarlshof – the site:

Aerial views: 000-000-125-882-C; 000-000-004-337-C; 000-000-004-338-C

General Viking house: 000-000-125-925-C

Alan Sorrel reconstruction: 000-000-004-339-C

Jarlshof – the material culture:

Animal-headed pins: 000-100-042-242-C

Steatite vessels: 000-000-136-638-C

Antler combs: 000-180-001-450-C (LINK to artefact part of module)

Graffiti: 000-100-042-681-C; 000-100-042-686-C; 000-000-004-340-C

Silver pin: 000-100-038-012-C

Scored baking plate: 000-100-042-640-C

Toys: 000-100-042-639-C; 000-100-042-667-C

Catpund steatite quarry: 000-000-142-884-C (LINK to artefact part of module)



No other site in Shetland can match the evidence supplied by the site at Jarlshof, although our understanding of its economy is severely limited by the excavation techniques of the years leading up to the 1950s. Even Underhoull on Unst, excavated in the 1960s can only provide us with a limited insight into the way the local economy functioned. Although the single building which was excavated by the late Dr Alan Small produced relatively few artefacts, recent finds in the vicinity show that it was not an isolated building as perhaps had been thought initially; it seems a number of houses may have been scattered around the bay, with the find of an iron axe at Burga Sands nearby (000-000-125-830-C) and banks of eroding midden at the cliff edge downslope from the excavated house.

Underhoull - the site:

Location: 000-000-125-916-C; 000-000-125-874-C

Excavation: 000-000-125-864-C

Underhoull - the material culture:

Ladle: 000-100-033-167-C

Elsewhere on Unst, the most northerly of the Shetland islands, a number of sites have been identified as potential Viking or Late Norse settlements. However, the site of Sandwick on the east coast has been excavated and its cultural affinities confirmed as Scandinavian. On the beach, the battered remains of a stone building were excavated prior to their destruction, and a building with a number of phases of rebuilding was distinguished. Space for cattle at one end, was entered by a "cow-shaped" doorway and at the other the living room and kitchen filled the space. The excavator, Dr Gerry Bigelow, dates the final stages of occupation towards the end of the Late Norse period, into the 13-14th centuries. Several loose finds had been recorded in the sand around the site prior to excavation, and a number can be seen on SCRAN.

Sandwick- the site

The house: 000-000-000-469-C; 000-000-125-867-C

Sandwick and environs - the material culture

Antler combs: 000-000-000-138-C; 000-000-000-080-C; 000-000-000-077-C

Nail-headed pin: 000-000-000-141-C

Whetstone: 000-000-000-143-C

Square-sided ceramic vessel: 000-000-000-075-C

On the adjacent island to Unst, Fetlar also appears to be rich in Norse evidence. Discoveries of Viking artefacts during building operations at Gord, suggested the presence of earlier settlement. This has recently been confirmed by excavations carried out for the TV programme *Time Team*. The nearby steatite quarries at Houbie were clearly extensively exploited and many products of this quarry were recovered at Gord.



Gord - the material culture:

Steatite lamp: 000-000-000-321-C

Houbie - steatite quarries:

LINK to artefact part of module

Quarry: 000-000-142-897-C

Steatite bowl: 000-000-472-802-C

Further south, off the west coast of Shetland, important Late Norse settlement has been excavated at the Biggings on Papa Stour by Dr Barbara Crawford. Following the lead of a document dated 1299 which detailed financial impropriety by Thorvald Thoresson in relation to the collection of rents, the remains of a stone building with a wooden *stofa* (indicated as the meeting location in the document) were recorded. This house may well have been owned by Ragnhild Simunsdatter in 1299. This is a truly remarkable discovery, and one which indicates the nature of the close political ties that existed between Shetland and Norway into the Late Norse period.

Papa Stour:

The 1299 document: 000-000-125-820-C

Reconstruction of the *stofa*: 000-000-125-832-C

Further Reading:

Bigelow G F 1985

Sandwick, Unst and late Norse Shetland economy, in B Smith (ed) *Shetland Archaeology* (1985), 95-127

Bigelow G F 1987

Domestic architecture in Medieval Shetland, *ROSC: Review of Scottish Culture*, 3, 23-38

Crawford B E and B Ballin Smith 1999

The Biggings, Papa Stour, Shetland. The History and Excavation of a Royal Norwegian Farm. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Mon Ser No 15, Edinburgh

Graham-Campbell J and C E Batey 1998

Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey, Edinburgh University Press

Hamilton J R C 1956

Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland. Ministry of Works Archaeological Report No 1, Edinburgh

Small A 1966

Excavations at Underhoull, Unst, Shetland. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 98 (1964-66), 225-45



C. The Vikings in Orkney

Intensive investigations in the Orkney Islands over the last one hundred years or so – most particularly in the last thirty years - has resulted in an unrivalled record of Viking and Late Norse evidence. Settlements, pagan graves, silver hoards and runic inscriptions from Maes Howe in particular, supplement the rich place name record of the islands, underlining the central role these islands played in the Viking and Late Norse periods. Events portrayed in the *Orkneyinga Saga*, the saga of the Orkney Earls, largely took place in Orkney, although some events are mentioned in Shetland and the northern Scottish mainland.

The Norse Earldom, headed by famous figures such as Thorfinn the Mighty, was closely monitored by the Norwegian crown, and the wealth of the Earldom settlements is well-documented through the archaeology of several sites: Brough of Birsay, Beachview, Earls' Bu Orphir and Westness, to name a few.

Brough of Birsay (000-000-142-899-C; 000-000-110-484-C)

This tidal island at the north west corner of Mainland Orkney was a major focus of pre-Viking, Pictish settlement. Evidence for the manufacture of fine metalwork – brooches and pins (000-000-142-900-C; 000-000-110-417-C) – complements extensive settlement traces visible beneath some of the later Viking remains, and the spectacular Pictish symbol stone with its depiction of three warriors (000-2999-992-126-C). The most visible remains on the island are the small stone chapel and associated buildings which date to the Late Norse period (see also Brough of Deerness, where a similar situation has been identified by Morris (000-000-142-932-C), but there are also several rectangular buildings which lie west of the churchyard and follow the angle of the slope; this was better for drainage! In the area east of the churchyard lies "Thorfinn's Hall" – he was leader of the Northern Earldom - and the church itself has been suggested by some to be Earl Thorfinn's Christchurch as mentioned in *Orkneyinga Saga*. His power-base was in a particularly strong strategic position possibly enabling him to claim tolls from passing vessels. However in the succeeding years, Birsay became a focus of pilgrimage, following the lying there of the martyred Earl, Magnus. St Magnus, as he became, was moved to the Cathedral in Kirkwall which was to carry his name, and which was begun in c1137.

General Site:

000-299-992-189-C; 000-000-024-969-C
 000-000-004-128-C
 000-000-142-898-C
 000-000-142-899-C

Material Culture:

Olav Kyrre coin 000-100-060-079-C
 Bone needles 000-100-040-565-C; 000-000-097-241-C
 Bone toggle 000-000-110-424-C
 Ringed pin 000-100-040-626-C



Gaming piece 000-100-040-604-C
 Runic inscription 000-100-043-499-C
 Gaming board and clamp 000-000-136-630-C
 Whalebone rib chopping block 000-000-110-419-C

Beachview

The small island of the Brough of Birsay cannot be seen in isolation from the contemporary activities taking place in the vicinity. Excavations at Beachview, Red Craig and Buckquoy as well as Saevar Howe all provide information to complement that available from the island. The pre-Viking evidence recovered from Buckquoy and Red Craig nearby indicate farming activities and housing in buildings which we can now identify as being distinctively Pictish – they are cellular (000-000-110-301-C) and contrast the most of the Viking and Late Norse buildings which are rectangular. The material culture is also quite distinctive (000-000-110-314-C). Viking settlement overlying the Pictish buildings at Buckquoy (as well as a pagan Norse garve) and also excavated at Saevar Howe to the south of the modern Birsay village is somewhat fragmentary but certainly represents domestic activity. In Birsay village itself, the site of Beachview, provides evidence complementary to the Late Norse evidence on the island. This was a large dwelling, with a possible byre at the seaward end, and traces of an integral corn drying kiln – so commonly seen in deserted crofts in Orkney today, but in this case dating back to the 11-12th centuries and used for roasting oats. The building had been completely infilled by midden debris from surrounding Late Norse buildings and amongst this material was discovered a distinctive walrus ivory amulet (000-000-110-446-C) as well as pieces of distinctive antler combs and a knife chape. The economic evidence is important from this site, indicating cereal cultivation – oats and barley – as well as the keeping of animals, sheep, cows and pigs, and extensive fishing activity from the neighbouring rich waters.

Buckquoy

Pictish houses 000-000-110-300-C
 Pictish combs 000-000-110-314-C
 Pictish stone gaming board 000-000-110-339-C
 Norse grave 000-000-110-348-C; 000-000-110-436-C

Saevar Howe: 000-190-004-200-C

Beachview: amulet 000-000-110-496-C

Earls' Bu, Orphir

Events portrayed in the *Orkneyinga Saga* at this site provide a grisly image – murders and mayhem ensued from jealous fights, but these are not of course visible in the archaeology. A visit to the site today reveals a number of fragmentary buildings (000-000-97-234-C), potentially the dwellings of the Norse Earls and a magnificent but small round church (000-000-004-450-C). Although the settlement evidence is difficult to understand (mainly because it was excavated over many decades until the 1930s) it is clear that this was a



major complex of Late Norse buildings and that the small church may be interpreted as a private chapel for the Earls themselves. More recent excavations in the vicinity have revealed a horizontal watermill which was built in the Viking period and used for a few decades before becoming ruinous and infilled with midden from the nearby Late Norse buildings. A further part of the complex has been identified to the west at Lavacroon, where fieldwalking has indicated a metal-working focus in the Late Norse period (000-000-110-481-C)

Westness

Located on the island of Rousay, the Late Norse houses of Westness are overshadowed by the adjacent Viking pagan grave cemetery (see below), but they are significant indicators of the continuing significance of the area in the Late Norse period, this was described in the Orkneyinga Saga as the home of Sigurd of Westness (000-000-097-255-C).

Pagan Graves

Rich pagan graves also characterise this part of the Viking Earldom. The excavation of boat graves at Westness and Scar are notable, but other graves have been found at Pierowall (000-000-099-729-C; 000-000-099-712-C) on Westray and overlying the Broch of Gurness (000-000-097-240-C) on the Orkney Mainland.

The cemetery of Westness was excavated by Dr Sigrid Kaland following the chance discovery of rich female pagan burial in 1963. She had probably died during child birth because the full term infant was buried with her, but in terms of grave goods she was indeed very wealthy. A pair of oval brooches, a beautiful 8th century Irish brooch pin of silver, with gold filigree decoration with glass and amber settings (000-000-097-435-C), two Anglo-Saxon strap ends as well as a comb, sickle and textile implements made up the large assemblage (000-000-099-732-C). In following years, the site was identified as a large cemetery, although no surface indications survived and two boat graves were excavated in addition to other burials.

Westness burial artefacts

Steatite bowl: 000-180-001-686-C

Westness brooch: 000-100-043-906-C

Oval brooches: 000-000-099-761-C

Arrows: 000-100-103-144-C

Comb: 000-100-103-244-C

Insular mount reused as brooch: 000-000-099-675-C

Necklace: 000-100-043-920-C

Ringed pin: 000-666-601-586-C

Bill hook: 000-100-103-142-C

A single boat grave was rescued from the storms in 1991. The battered cliff edge at Scar on Sanday was exposing the rivets of a wooden boat (000-000-144-269-C; 000-000-144-275-C) which was found to contain the remains of three individuals. A man, who had died in his 30s was found with an old lady in her



70s and a boy aged about 10 years old. This is a most unusual discovery, and particularly significant because it is rare to find such an aged Viking! The grave goods were spectacular (000-000-142-938-C), including a sword (see Artefact Section above), gaming pieces, brooch (000-000-144-316-C) and a whalebone plaque used for the pressing of linen (ie an ironing board) (000-000-097-208-C; 000-000-144-235-C).

Scar Burial Artefacts

Arrows: 000-000-144-217-C
 Comb: 000-000-144-244-C; 000-000-144-288-C
 Equal- armed brooch: 000-000-144-316-C
 Shaers: 000-000-144-213-C
 Gaming pieces: 000-000-144-335-C; 000-000-144-202-C
 Lead weights: 000-000-144-311-C
 Whalebone plaque: 000-000-097-208-C; 000-000-144-235-C
 Shears: 000-000-144-280-C
 Sword: 000-000-144-285-C
 Sickle: 000-000-144-209-C

Silver Hoards

That this was a wealthy colony cannot be in doubt, see for example the massive silver hoard from Skail, Sandwick (000-190-004-107-C; 000-100-043-548-C; 000-190-001-233-C) which weighed approximately 8kgs when it was deposited in the period 950-70 AD. This hoard comprised silver Arabic coins (dirhams) from exotic mints in Samarkand, Tashkent and Baghdad, as well as a coin from Viking York and an Anglo-Saxon penny., in addition to ring money and silver brooches and hack silver (see Artefact study in Part 1) The hoard from Burray (000-190-004-097-C) in Orkney was of a different character and deposited some years after the Skail group , ring money and chopped ring money fragments formed the bulk of this find.

Runic Inscriptions - Maes Howe

This is the largest group of runic inscriptions in Scotland. 33 inscriptions were carved along the walls and lintels of the great Neolithic tomb at Maes Howe (000-000-004-413-C). They were carved in the 12th century and portray a light-hearted look at everyday life in Orkney. They comment on the desirability of certain females for example, tell of sheltering from a snow storm and note that the treasure from the mound is no longer there!

Additional Maes Howe

Aerial: 000-299-993-590-C
 Video Clip: 000-000-193-404-C
 Runes: 000-000-004-416-C

Other runic inscriptions have been noted from Orphir, Birsay, Westness and the Ring of Brodgar (000-000-097-278-C) for example.



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