

Abstracts

Dr Clare Downham, Department of Celtic, University of Aberdeen

‘Political interaction between Vikings and Irish: the location of Viking camps’

This paper will assess the political interaction between vikings and Irish, focussing in particular on the political considerations influencing the location of viking camps in Ireland.

Dr Colmán Etchingham, Department of History, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

‘The Sea Stallion of Glendalough; the significance of “Skuldelev 2” in the development of Viking ship technology’

Professor Judith Jesch, School of English, University of Nottingham

‘From the Minch to Man: Norse poetry and the Hebrides’

The Hebrides lie in a culturally very diverse maritime zone, with easy connections by sea to Scandinavian Scotland, Celtic Scotland, Lowland Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England. Their medieval history is particularly obscure, mainly for the lack of contemporary evidence, and the last word has by no means been said on the timescale and process by which the Gaelic language became established there. The evidence of place-names, however, shows that there was a period when the Norse language was dominant and a few runic inscriptions illustrate some of the uses of this Norse language. Recent interdisciplinary work suggests possible social contexts for a thalassocratic Norse culture. In my paper I will explore the extent to which this Norse linguistic culture was also a poetical one, considering whether or not the surviving fragments, and the broader cultural memory of the sagas of medieval Iceland, indicate a distinctive and thriving poetical culture in Norse in the Hebrides.

Dr Jan-Erik Rekdal, Institute for Linguistics and Nordic Studies, University of Oslo

‘Praising the lords vestan and austan’ - a contrastive reading of praise-poems to Hiberno-Norse and Norse’

Dr Fiona Edmonds, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge

‘Hiberno-Scandinavian influence east of the Pennines’

The west of the Northumbrian kingdom became part of the Gaelic-Scandinavian world during the tenth century. Gaelic-Scandinavian influence was less marked in eastern Northumbria, despite the fact that some of the rulers of York and Dublin were drawn from the same dynasty. Nevertheless, it is possible to trace enclaves of Gaelic-Scandinavian settlement to the east of the Pennines. In this paper, I will argue that the

settlers were closely linked to Ireland, and that the settlements lay beside route-ways between York and Dublin. I will focus on the personal names of the settlers and their descendants; this category of evidence has been somewhat neglected by scholars.

Mr Alex Woolf, Department of Medieval History, University of St Andrews
'Imagining society inside Viking Dublin?'

Most analyses of Hiberno-Norse history focus on the role played by Dublin or, more rarely, other 'viking towns', in the wider regional politics of the period. The reconstruction of daily life within the Hiberno-Norse communities has been largely left to archaeologists whose findings have greatly illuminated our understanding of the development of these settlements between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. There are limits, however, to what material culture alone can tell us about social organisation and this paper will attempt to utilise comparative textual evidence to produce an imaginative reconstruction of the socio-political structures that may have existed within the viking fortress towns of the Insular World.

Professor John Hines, School of History and Archaeology, University of Cardiff
'The Development of Navigation in and around the Bristol Channel, 9th to 11th Centuries'

The range of evidence for the development of navigation and activity in and around the Bristol Channel in the 9th to 11th centuries will be examined. This will include not just Hiberno-Norse evidence, but also Welsh, West Saxon/English and Cornish evidence.

Dr David Griffiths, Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford
'Landscape, symbolism and identity around the Viking-Age Irish Sea'

Did the Viking settlements around the Irish Sea have any common sense of ethnicity or belonging? To what extent is this reflected in their material legacy? How extensive were their original settlements in the ninth and tenth centuries? Outlining evidence for burial, stone sculpture, portable material culture, buildings and territorial structures, this paper will begin afresh to address these questions. It will be argued that, whilst traditional discipline-specific preoccupations with empirical minutiae have given us an essential grounding, a broader interdisciplinary overview of the Viking imprint on the landscape (and seascape) is also necessary. Post-processual notions of symbolism and agency will be aired as keys to unlocking some of the more opaque or obtuse aspects of the material evidence; the aim being to open and regenerate debate rather than to seek prematurely conclusive verdicts.

Dr James Barrett, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge
'Power, conversion and the Viking-Age diaspora: Orkney in its insular context'

In the Viking Age, Atlantic Scotland experienced the interplay of long-range maritime influences and distinctive local identities that is characteristic of many maritime societies. This paper addresses the ebb and flow of influences from three cultural arenas - the Irish Sea, the North Atlantic and the North Sea. It draws on the author's excavations at Quooygrew and the Brough of Deerness, Orkney, then sets this work within a broader archaeological and historical context. In particular, it addresses the relevance of the political economy and Christian practice to changing patterns of communication and shifting expressions of identity.

Professor Russell Poole, Department of English, University of Western Ontario, Canada

'Irish elements in the ideology of the early Orkney earldom'

The working hypothesis to be elaborated here is that the Norse conquest of and settlement in Orkney was attended by a shift away from what we believe to be the characteristic early Scandinavian ideologies of conquest and settlement. Where the mythic sphere is concerned such a shift has been clearly demonstrated in work by Preben Meulengracht-Sørensen and others. The contention in the present paper is that a shift also occurs in the sphere of the legendary. It takes the form of an incorporation or even cooption of ideologies from the Irish side of the linguistic divide. The key primary sources to be investigated in the paper are – from the Norse side – verses ascribed to the earl Torf-Einarr, along with his nickname and some other verses about him, and – from the Irish side – *Tochmarc Étaíne* and associated tales concerning Óengus and other legendary figures.

Dr Ralph O'Connor, Department of History, University of Aberdeen

'Transforming tradition: lustful stepmothers in Insular narrative'

The story known conventionally as the 'lustful stepmother' pattern, in which a woman tries unsuccessfully to initiate a sexual relationship with her stepson and subsequently takes revenge on him, enjoyed wide popularity right across mediaeval Europe and the Near East. Rooted in the classical legend of Phaidra and Hippolytus and the biblical anecdote of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, most stories of this kind treated the female protagonist as a two-dimensional vehicle for a moralizing message about the depravity of woman. The great exceptions to this rule are the saga literatures of Ireland and Iceland, in which lustful stepmothers played a range of more complex and interesting roles. My paper will present a comparative study of the functions of the lustful stepmother in insular narrative, demonstrating the rich variety which such an apparently conventional topos can display when put to use by different authors for different purposes. I shall also offer some suggestions as to why Irish and Icelandic treatments of the lustful stepmother (and incest generally) appear to deviate so sharply from the European mainstream.

Professor Erich Poppe, Department of Comparative Linguistics/ Celtic Studies, University of Marburg, Germany

‘The Insular versions of Dares’s *De excidio Troiae historia*: some similarities and some differences’

The account of the Trojan War attributed to Dares was very popular with medieval Insular scholars in Ireland and Scandinavia, and also in Wales, and, and it was accordingly translated and adapted in different formats. In my paper I will attempt a comparative survey of some striking similarities in the reception and use of the Latin source, as well as some significant differences (for example the manuscript transmission in Scandinavia and Wales in combination with vernacular versions of Geoffrey’s *Historia*, which is not paralleled in Ireland).

Mr Alex Woolf, Lecturer, School of History, University of St Andrews
‘Imagining society inside Viking Dublin?’

Most analyses of Hiberno-Norse history focus on the role played by Dublin or, more rarely, other ‘viking towns’, in the wider regional politics of the period. The reconstruction of daily life within the Hiberno-Norse communities has been largely left to archaeologists whose findings have greatly illuminated our understanding of the development of these settlements between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. There are limits, however, to what material culture alone can tell us about social organisation and this paper will attempt to utilise comparative textual evidence to produce an imaginative reconstruction of the socio-political structures that may have existed within the viking fortress towns of the Insular World.

Dr Terje Spurkland, Institute for Linguistics and Nordic Studies, University of Oslo
‘Rune stones in an Anglo-Saxon-Norse and Norse-Celtic perspective’

The early Viking Age seems to manifest a strong decline in rune stone activities in Scandinavia compared to the previous and following epochs. The Swedish stones from Rök in Östergötland and Sparlösa from Västergötland are exceptions in this respect. The main rune stone area in the period 700/750 – 900 is Denmark and the number of Danish rune stones dated to this period is about 20. 20 rune stones during a period of 150/200 years reflects an activity that could be taken care of by one man only. In the middle of the 8th century the custom of erecting rune stones resuscitated, first in Denmark, then spread to Norway and Sweden and culminated in Upland in the 11th century. What could be the reasons for this decline in the rune stone activities in the early Viking Age? Can the revival of the rune stone activity in Scandinavia in any way be connected to the Scandinavians’ encounter with Anglo-Saxon and Celtic literacy in the British Isles?

The total number of Viking Age rune stones erected in Norway amounts to around 50. More than half of them were raised in coastal areas from Aust-Agder up to Møre and Romsdal, with a striking concentration in the area of Jæren in Rogaland. On the Isle of Man 30 rune stones were erected supposedly by Norwegians in the 10th and 11th centuries. These stones share some distinctive features with the Norwegian Viking Age

stones from Jæren. There can be no doubt that the rune stones on Jæren and the Manx runic crosses are evidences of cross cultural contacts. But which way did the impulses go? Is the concentration of rune stones on the south west coast of Norway manifestations of impulses imported from the colonies in west, or manifestations of impulses people from this area brought with them when they settled over seas?

Dr Cathy Swift, Director of Irish Studies, Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick

‘The riddle of the runes: Ogam Lochlannach and Gallogam’

In his book *A Guide to Ogam* (Maynooth 1991), Damian McManus devotes considerable attention to the problem of the origins of the ogam alphabet and its putative connection with the development of early runic forms. In this paper, I would like to consider the nature of the scholastic ogams found on Viking age artefacts and monuments within Ireland, the parallels and contrasts with ogam inscriptions from the Northern Isles and the influence which runology may have had on the evolution of ogam in the high middle ages. The later manuscript traditions include among their various categories of Ogam the two alphabets entitled *Ogam Lochlannach* and *Gallogam* respectively: the purpose of this paper is to try and identify whether these were merely relatively obscure forms of “wertlose Spielerei” (to use Zimmer’s term) or whether they represent more widespread practices in the Atlantic archipelago.

Mr Michael Chesnutt, Rome (formerly of the Nordisk Forskningsinstitut, University of Copenhagen)

‘Caoilte in Iceland – Gaelic folklore in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*’

A brief chapter interpolated not later than 1250 into the received text of *Egils saga* describes an encounter between Egil’s son, Thorstein, and a fleet-footed Gael. This entirely fictional text is modelled on Fenian traditions and the main problem it poses is one of chronology: is it, as conventional wisdom would have it, a substratum relict from the Viking Age, or was there continued cultural intercourse between Iceland, Scotland and Ireland all the way down to the turn of the twelfth century? I have canvassed the latter view in a series of contributions written over a period of forty years, and I hope in Cambridge to convince at least one or two of you that it deserves serious consideration.

Professor Rudolf Simek, Institute for Germanic and Scandinavian Studies, University of Bonn, Germany

‘An Irish princess in Norway and her German origins’

Dr Mark A.S. Blackburn, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge

‘The impact of the Vikings on monetary circulation in Ireland and Britain’

This paper will provide a broad survey comparing the impact of the Vikings on monetary circulation in each region of Ireland and Britain that they settled. The conclusion is that their use of money was dependent on the economy that they found in each region on their arrival. In each case there is a transition from a bullion to a coin economy but it moves at

very different paces, so that in the Danelaw their production and use of coinage is strongly influenced by Anglo-Saxon practice, while in western Britain and Ireland, where there was little coin use before their arrival, the economy develops much more in line with the economy in Scandinavia.

Dr Ian Beuermann, Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters, Centre for Advanced Studies, Oslo

‘Dynasty, *tíath* and God’s grace: Manx kingship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’

How did the Guðrøðarsons, the dynasty that ruled Man and the Hebrides from 1079-1265, legitimise their kingship? On the evidence of contemporary native texts, the discussion shall focus on two controversial aspects. Firstly, do the Poem in Praise of Ragnall, King of Man, and the *Cronica Regum Mannie et Insularum*, composed for kings Rǫgnvaldr (Ragnall) Guðrøðarson (1187-1229) and Magnús Ólafsson (1252-1265) respectively, point to different, indeed contradictory bases for kingship? Secondly, should such different understandings be labelled ‘Scandinavian’, ‘Irish’, and ‘Anglo-French’? And in sum, can we therefore say that centuries of interaction blurred former boundaries between Scandinavians, Irish, and Anglo-French regarding the theory of kingship?

Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic University of Cambridge

‘Across the divide: the transformation of ‘Vikings’ in twelfth and thirteenth-century literary texts’

The depiction of Vikings in early insular sources as marauding pagans has been well documented. Their metamorphosis into Otherworld beings in post-twelfth-century Irish texts is also well known. By examining a body of material from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, specifically prose narratives such as *Cath Ruis na Ríg*, *Aided Guill meic Carbada* and early poems from *Dunaire Finn*, this paper will seek to chart and explain the Viking metamorphosis, addressing what the Vikings became, rather than what they did.