The Viking Shield in the British Isles:

changes in use from the 8th-11th Century in England and the Isle of Man.

By Emma Boast MA

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FOREWORD

This research was created as a MA thesis when I was studying at the University of York from 2010-2012. The delay on this research getting out into the public domain is mainly a logistical and practical one. Although I have continued to live and work in York since 2010, various heritage and archaeological roles have taken precedent, not least the setting up of my own business 'Nidavellnir' in 2013.

Whilst some of the methodology and conclusions of this research could certainly be enhanced upon, even though it is 5 years later, this research is still a very concise dataset and a foundation for exploring further aspects about the Viking Age shield. This research helps show the need for a more refined typology and chronology for Viking the shield bosses, along with a discussion about how the "Viking Cultural data" gets uploaded onto HER/SMR databases for future posterity and access. One issue highlighted from this research regarding HER/SMR data is that there are probably more Viking age shield components registered under the 'mid-late Saxon' chronology with not effort, at present, taken to reassess or identify whether these are indeed Anglian or Scandinavian shields .This is certainly an area for further work.

This research also highlights the importance for the use of the inter-disciplinary approach using combined sources from the archaeological record, whether that is the iconography on stone sculpture or artistic design on artefacts themselves. The use of existing historical sources although admittedly bias, does however shed some light on the significance of the shield in Viking Age life and death.

There are many questions that this research raised and at present allot of them have not yet be answered. I feel it is appropriate to edit and submit this work into the public domain, so that I may carry on future work regarding this research. I hope that it can help inspire, enhance and inform future knowledge of this period and drive people forward who have a passion for the Viking Age in the British Isles.

ABSTRACT

This investigation into the study of the Viking shield will include analysis and interpretation of archaeological material, from England and the Isle of Man, with wider parallels being drawn upon from the Scandinavian homelands. Historical evidence from Saga's and historical accounts for this period will be used to enhance the vibrancy of the Viking shield and show the role of it as a symbolic object within Viking Society.

This is an ever evolving topic of study and it has opened up new areas for investigation as well as the potential for further cataloguing and re-evaluation of Viking age archaeology throughout the 8th-11th centuries.

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Emma 'Bruní' Boast

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NINE WORLDS OF LORE

Introduction

Plate 1. The North Atlantic landscape of Shetland.

(©2014)

The Viking shield although a very iconic object, it is an item which has not received the same kind of artefact analysis in recent years as maybe some other objects have from the Viking Age. The studies done on Viking Age combs have enabled a greater understanding on manufacture, trade and exchange (Ashby, 2009). The extensive artefact analysis of tortoise brooches and keys at Ribe, Denmark (Bencard, 1984: 37-74, 74-76) has shown the qualities of Viking age craftsman but also enabled good chronologies and distinct typologies to be developed. At Kaupang in Norway the excavation of countless cemeteries and burials has helped glimpse an idea as to social standing and burial customs of

individuals as well as the wider social groups (Skre, 2007). The extensive study of the material from Coppergate, York, England, with its large artefact assemblages of bone (O'Connor, 1989) and ironworking material (Ottaway, 1992) has shown how Scandinavians coming to the British Isles in the 8th-11th centuries lived and interacted within an urban environment, and found their own sense of combined and individual identity. The investigation of these sites and artefacts has helped immensely with the interpretation and analysis of Viking life, not only in the material culture, manufacture and distribution of everyday items. It has shown a glimpse into how these people would having been living with their families, and how their roles and understanding of the world in which they lived shaped their lives at this point in time.

Within the last 30 years Viking archaeology has thrived, but topics such as Viking warfare and raiding, have been played down (Cramp, 1982: 8-19) or even sometimes dismissed due to lack of historical and archaeological evidence (Sawyer, 1982:1).The academic arguments have shifted focus frequently, with archaeology uncovering evidence of agriculture (Ritchie, 1976) and showing the development of urban centres such as at Hedeby, Denmark (Roesdahl, 1983:70-76) and Birka, Sweden (Ambrosiani & Clarke, 1995).

However, with scholars focusing on these individual aspects of material culture, new methodological approaches to social history were sought so that all aspects of Viking culture could be encompassed based on the archaeological evidence. The inter-disciplinary approach was proven to be extremely useful when trying to gain an objective view of the Viking Age not only in Scandinavia (Myhre, 2003; Myhre 1991) but also in the wider context as well, by comparing themes such as saga mythology and stone sculpture (Andrén, 2006). This application of a comparative and contemporary study has greatly aided the understanding of historical archaeology in places like Iceland (Friðriksson, 1994). The excavations at Hofstaðir in north-eastern Iceland has shown with the combined approach of place-names evidence, historical documentation and Saga evidence a great deal can be understood from the physical archaeology (Lucas et al , 2009).

This inter-disciplinary approach will be applied to this study and the Viking shield, as it is a prime opportunity to re-evaluate the evidence for this artefact and draw new conclusions. The shield is an object that seems to have been lost

within the hectic realms of Viking studies; it certainly has a practical and symbolic significance, but it is not possible to determine the full extent of this due to there being no archaeological investigation into this particular artefact within the British Isles. This is not due to it being unviable as a topic of investigation, moreover that it has not been attempted since there are close parallels with other studies of this period (Dickinson & Härke, 1992) and it is indeed a vast subject matter to try and cover. Nevertheless, the Viking shield is from a different culture and formed in a different way, as will be seen, and although there may be many similarities with other northern European parallels, the differences will also highlight the distinctive ways in which the shield is being used by the Viking peoples at this time. In recent years the combat capabilities of the Viking shield, relating to human body movement have been investigated using experimental archaeology (Warming, 2014). These tests have certainly highlighted the shield as an active weapon, which is shown by many various indications of weaponry trauma on archaeological fragments, as will be displayed throughout this investigation.

It is paramount that when dealing with Viking Age archaeology, in regards to the shield, that there is also an approach to try and trace the human aspects of social integration of Viking craft and culture. Through this it is hoped that the extent of early Viking influence in England and further afield may be detected. The Viking shield is an object of Viking identity that can help in the search for understanding these interactions and beliefs of the Scandinavian people's that came to the British Isles in the 8^{th-} 11th century AD. It is a very human and tactile object, which not only had the ability to display individual thoughts and meaning but also a wider homogenous fusion of strength and duty. A shield was in all sense of the word, to protect and defend but also something that could represent so much more in life and death.

Aims

The aim of this particular piece of research is to better understand the Viking shield in regards to Viking society within the British Isles. Not only to recognize the shield as a practical defensive and offensive weapon, but also as a symbolic representation of the myths and beliefs of the Scandinavian peoples between

the 8th and 11th centuries. It is also important to try and understand how the shield was viewed in Viking culture, how it changed within burial customs and how changing warfare impacted on the manufacture of such an item.

A loose time frame from 800AD to around 1085 AD will be implemented as there is a lot of “Viking” activity before and after these dates. It has been created as such so as to try and encompass the earlier evidence, from around 793 AD when the first recorded Viking attack is mentioned in the Anglo Saxon Chronicles (Stenton, 2001: 238). As well as the later interpretations with the conflict for the English throne in 1066 AD and subsequent hostilities and incursions from the Danes thereafter; in particular with Canute IV of Denmark who tried to raise an invasion fleet to re-conqueror England in 1085 AD but was later murdered in the summer of 1086 AD(Stenton, 2001: 617).

Approach

To carry out this task it is necessary to collate as much archaeological evidence on the Viking shield as possible. The evidence will be collected by visiting individual regional museum collections within England and the Isle of Man, taking photographic evidence and taking measurements from artefacts to compile a dataset of evidence which can be newly analysed and interpreted.

There is no comprehensive catalogue of material for the Viking shield in the British Isles and there has been no investigation into the survival of material of this particular artefact or investigation into its role or use. This research will provide a primary dataset of all known Viking shields within mainland England and the Isle of Man with first-hand analysis and archaeological evaluation on all the material from county museums to better understand the context of the Viking shield.

This is very much a foundation stone piece of research which is setting the parameters for more data collection and investigation at a later date. This study will look at the typology of the Viking shield and how items such as shield bosses can be used to help track and trace different forms of shield through the Viking age in England. The archaeological material from the Isle of Man will give an external comparison to the English remains which is hoped to show possible

parallels and even distinctions between Norwegian and Danish influence. A chronological aspect will be entwined with the study also to try and show any trends in the deposition of shields in the burial rite, whether they are deposited around a particular date or time period, due to an event or social circumstance. The distribution and contexts of the shield evidence will be taken into consideration so as to understand the spread of the archaeological evidence and frequency of the shield in deposits throughout England and the Isle of Man.

The Isle of Man has had allot of Viking influence, not only from the Danes, but it also lies in-between the major Viking navigation, trading and raiding routes in the western realms of the British Isles, which was being highly utilised by the Norwegians at this time (Richards, 2005: 77). In recent years the Irish Sea region has been a very popular study for scholars of the early medieval period (Griffiths, 2010. Wilson, 2008) and with relatively fresh material being published, it is hoped that this investigation will give a new vibrancy to archaeological interpretation of the Viking age. This study should be seen as a fusion between the re-assessment of the old antiquarian practices of the 19th century and the modern schools of archaeological thought and methodology.

A combined archaeological approach will be used, including aspects of material culture and gender, identity studies to try and understand personal attachment to the shield. The analysis of the deposition of the shield in the burial custom, along with contemporary and comparative studies, will help to understand the belief systems and mythology of the Viking age and how these are displayed and applied onto an artefact such as the shield.

The study of the shield's use may be gained by delving into historical documents and evidence from earlier symbolism and activity. From this it may be possible to understand the impact, significance and interaction the shield went through. In understanding the form and construction, the decoration and adaptations of the shield it will give a glimpse to the practicalities of how this objected was created and used; with evidence from literary sources such as Saga's being used to back up arguments. All these different comparative studies can help to enhance the knowledge of the shield during the 8th and 11th centuries in England and Scandinavia. It is the perfect time to reassess how warfare and raiding took place and impacted on social groups by analysing the archaeological evidence for the shield in a new way.

Synopsis

The first part of this study will be an archaeological introduction, giving a brief review of archaeological literature that has been written not only about the Viking shield but also about martial culture at this time, how social circumstances and also political warfare dictates the use of the shield during the Viking age.

The following section will then outline the methodology for the present investigation, the aims and objects, and also highlight the major questions that this piece of research is intending to tackle. It is also important to bear in mind any problems which may arise from carrying out this piece of research in terms of time availability, accessibility to material etc. Afterwards, there will be a detailed account of how the data collection will take place, including data sheets with detailed notes as to why these have been created as such.

There will then be a section explaining the composition of the shield, its form and function, as well as commenting on the typological evidence for shield bosses and observation on chronology and variation in shields. This will demonstrate the level of archaeological evidence surviving for the Viking shield at present, mainly from Scandinavian contexts.

There will then be a brief overview of the historical context for the shield, and how this would have fitted into the realms of Viking society, this will be an important structure to bear in mind when later interpretation is undertaken. Literary evidence will also be commented upon also mentioning the importance of mythology and how these are displayed in regards to the shield.

It is then imperative to summarize the condition and state of Viking Age stone sculpture with a visual representation of the shield. The two areas of evidence will come from England and Sweden, this is due to there being large quantities of picture stones in Sweden and it appears that some of these thoughts and transitions came over to England and were applied on sculpture in the 10^{th}- 11^{th} centuries (Lang, 1978. Wilson & Klindt-Jensen,1966). The pictorial displays of the shield need to be understood in terms of visual iconography so that the symbolism, mythology and display of the shield can be seen and applied to

other artefacts that may depict the shield; as well as the physical remains. This will help in the understanding of the use of the shield in display. It will also show the benefit of information gained for the shield when archaeological, historical, mythological and saga analysis are combined.

A results section will then follow, displaying data tables of all the primary information collected; within this section a comment on the results will be briefly given.

After the results have been commented upon, the results of the data collection will be interpreted; offering any explanation for what may be uncovered and through a deductive approach it may be possible to answer some of the questions which had driven the main focus of this study. Within this will be a section on comparative sites from Scandinavia, with examples being drawn from Norway, Sweden and Denmark to compare and contrast the evidence for the Viking shield with what has been found from this study in England and the Isle of Man. Within this section of interpretation there will be distribution maps and comparative data tables to try and show the understanding of the findings.

Finally, there will be a conclusion as to what this new investigation has shown and how the material collected has depicted the Viking shield in mainland England and the Isle of Man, with consideration to the wider Viking context and the similarities and differences highlighted by the Scandinavian material. Within this there will be stated areas for further work and also a section to put forward any new ideas or questions that need to be addressed in terms of the Viking shield or indeed Viking Age archaeology as a whole that this research has highlighted.

Further Comments

Old Norse will also be used where applicable to show the descriptive language that the Viking Age people's used to portray parts of the shield and any historical information relevant to this study. All translations will be a combination of learnt knowledge and scholarly translation from G.T. Zoëga (2004) to add a verbal aspect to this study. All Old Norse words will be highlighted in an *italic* form.

Hopefully this investigation will be able to show from the 19th Century with the first Antiquarian recorders of Viking archaeology, such as Hjalmer Stolpe in 1871 (Ambrosiani & Clark, 1995), through to the modern day just how much of the Viking shield has been saved and preserved in museum collections; but also unfortunately how much material has been lost throughout the centuries as well.

It was hoped that an entire collection and re-evaluation of Viking shield material in Scotland and Ireland was also going to be included in this study to cover the entire British Isles. Unfortunately due to time restrictions and the amount of primary data collection involved this was unable to be achieved for this particular study. This however is an area of information which does still need to be collated and assessed in regards to any findings that this research presents. The necessary contacts have already been created with future hope of cooperation and exchange of material between colleagues in Scotland (Caroline Paterson, National Museum of Scotland and Dr James Graham-Campbell) and Ireland (Dr Stephen Harrison, University College Dublin) at some time in the near future, as this is very much ongoing research.

CHAPTER TWO

MIMIR'S WELL

Methodology

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this of research is to try and understand the Viking shield in England and the Isle of Mann, and collate as much archaeological evidence for its survival or depiction as possible. This will in turn help to understand the shield in the wider context and understand its significance in Viking culture during the 8th and 11th centuries. There will also be an integrated and comparative approach whereby historical sources and mythological representations will be used to enhance the evidence to try and aid a greater interpretation of the shield and its significance.

It is also hoped that the shields symbolic and ritualistic elements will be seen in deposits such as burials in England and the Isle of Man. This will be done by analysing the placement of the shield in the deposits, assessing the individual the shield is buried with and other associated items within the burial to build an understanding of how and why the shield was placed where it was in the grave.

Researching the survival of the shield and its components is also important not only to identify where surviving examples are kept in England but also to understand how much material may have been lost. The absence of this artefact in regional areas may also help to understand the impact of Norse and Danish belief on England at this time. This will be done by contacting all regional Historical Environment Records and Sites and Monuments Record Offices within England to consult their databases and individual expertise to try and identify the shield remains county by county (see Acknowledgements).

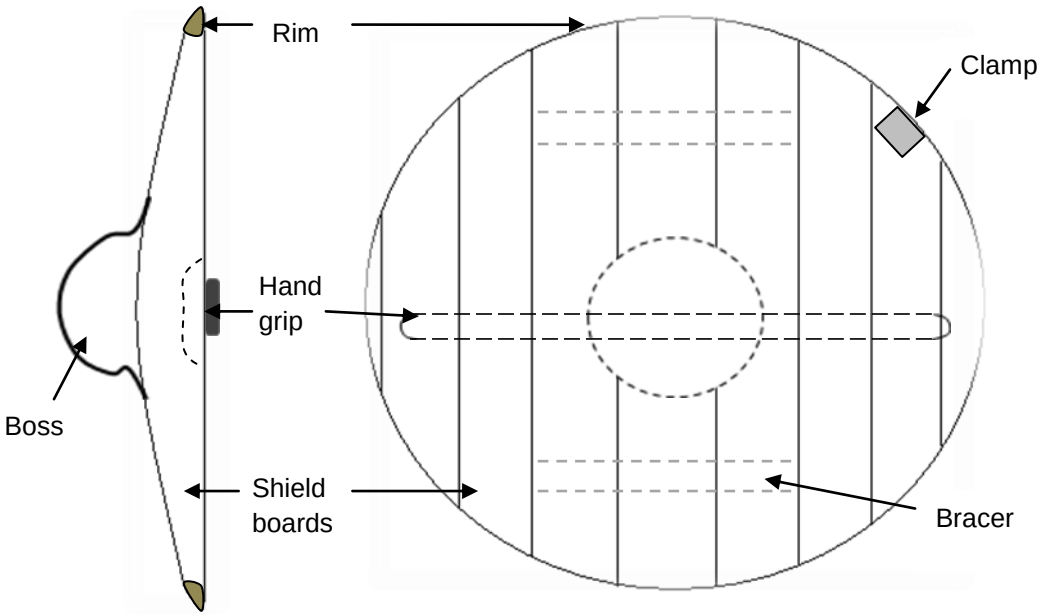


Plate 2. Side profile and rear view of the basic components of a Viking shield.

As well as the symbolic aspect of the shield the practical element will also be taken into consideration. It is important to try and understand to what extent fully functioning shields are buried or deposited against those that have been purely created for the burial rite. This will be achieved by analysing a range of archaeological material for the shield and comparing depositions, and then it will be possible to ask questions of the evidence and get closer to the importance of the shield in Viking society.

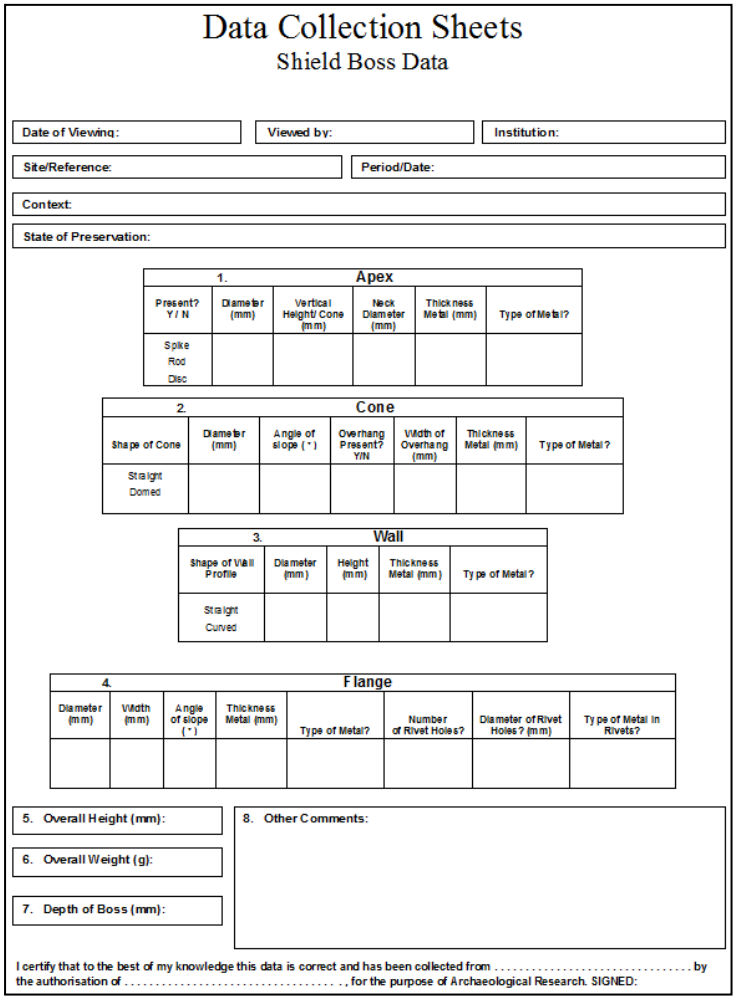
Data Collection

The collection of archaeological evidence is paramount for this particular study. In this piece of research it is the evidence for the shield in England and the Isle of Man that will be collated and analysed against Scandinavian examples. The data collection will take place by visiting museums and institutions that have evidence for the Viking shield. Remains that will be analysed and considered to be consistent with the presence of a Viking shield are artefacts such as; shield bosses, nails, handgrips, bracers, clamps and organic remains including wood, leather and linen which combined make up the shield (plate 2). Unfortunately it is very rare within archaeological contexts to find Viking age shields completely intact and preserved insitu, therefore these individual components have to be

analysed piece by piece to build up an idea about how the shield was constructed and used.

The data collection will take place in two different stages, the first section being that of a photographic record, taking the necessary photos to show the level of completeness as well as the survival and condition of the remains. This will also form the basis of a visual catalogue of remains encountered for the shield. During data collection for this visual evidence two cameras will be used simultaneously to try and minimise any blurred or poor quality pictures.

The second section of analysis will take the form of the main data collection by measuring key dimensions of the components surviving for the shield. All objects will be recorded appropriately on the composed data collection sheets that have been created for the purpose of this research. There will be data collection sheets for every component of the shield and it is at this point it is necessary to go through the method of data retrieval for each of these specific components.



Data Collection Sheets

Shield Boss Data

Date of Viewing: | Viewed by: | Institution:

Site/Reference: | Period/Date:

Context:

State of Preservation:

1. Apex

Present? Y / N	Diameter (mm)	Vertical Height/ Cone (mm)	Neck Diameter (mm)	Thickness Metal (mm)	Type of Metal?
Spike Rod Disc					

2. Cone

Shape of Cone	Diameter (mm)	Angle of slope (°)	Overhang Present? Y/N	Width of Overhang (mm)	Thickness Metal (mm)	Type of Metal?
Straight Domed						

3. Wall

Shape of Wall Profile	Diameter (mm)	Height (mm)	Thickness Metal (mm)	Type of Metal?
Straight Curved				

4. Flange

Diameter (mm)	Width (mm)	Angle of slope (°)	Thickness Metal (mm)	Type of Metal?	Number of Rivet Holes?	Diameter of Rivet Holes? (mm)	Type of Metal in Rivets?

5. Overall Height (mm):

6. Overall Weight (g):

7. Depth of Boss (mm):

8. Other Comments:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge this data is correct and has been collected from ..... by the authorisation of ....., for the purpose of Archaeological Research. SIGNED:

Plate 3. Shield boss recording sheet.

The purposes of these data sheets are to enable as much information to be collected as quickly and directly as possible when in the field. It is necessary at the start of each recording session to comment on the date the viewing took place, and who the material was viewed by and as part of which institution the data was collected (plate 3). The next important set of data forms the background of objects being analysed, the site or reference number will give a code or name by which the material will be referred too. The period or date will be a comment based on what whether the material is from the 8th, 9th, 10th or 11th centuries or whether there is more of a broad spectrum to the dating of the object i.e. 8th- 11th century. The context will be the surrounding archaeological positioning of the object and whether it had any other associated items found with it and the preservation will comment on whether the object is complete, corroded or fragmentary.

The implements being used for measuring the material are; manual digital callipers which have a variation rate of +/- 0.01 mm, a 30cm metal ruler and a protractor.

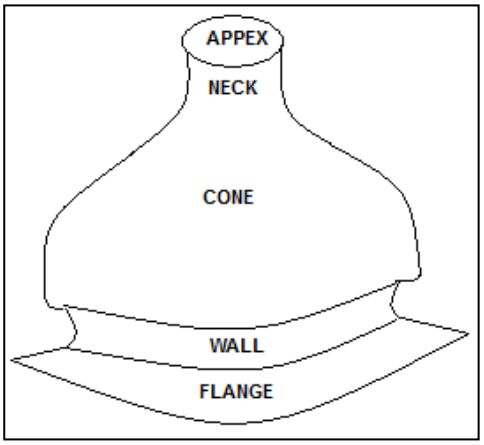


Plate 4. Schematic outline of an Anglo Saxon shield boss with a disc apex. (6th-8th Century)

The apex is sometimes a disc, spike or rod that is placed on top of the main boss itself (plate 4) and it has been included in this recording sheet as it is known that there are possible over-laps with earlier Anglo Saxon material (Dickinson & Härke, 1992: 23), which will be commented upon later. If the apex does appear present the diameter of the spike, rod or disc, needs to be measured, along with the height of the apex away from the main cone of the

boss. The neck may or may not be present but it is important to measure the diameter if there. The measured thickness of the metal will give an estimation as to the quality of manufacture, as well as the thinness or thickness of metal; the type of metal will be visually assessed to comment on whether it is iron (Fe), bronze (Cu+ Sn) or copper (Cu). With the apex however, it is not expected that this will be present on Scandinavian shield bosses from the 8th-11th century in northern Europe.

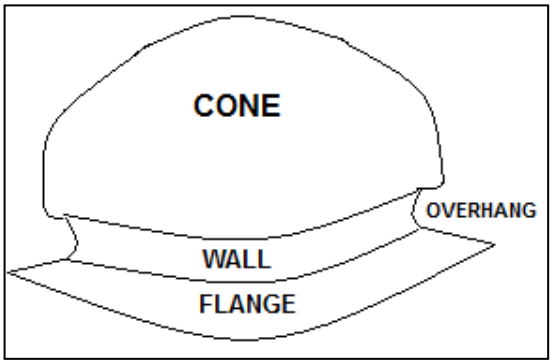


Plate 5. Schematic outline of a Scandinavian shield boss (8th-11th Century).

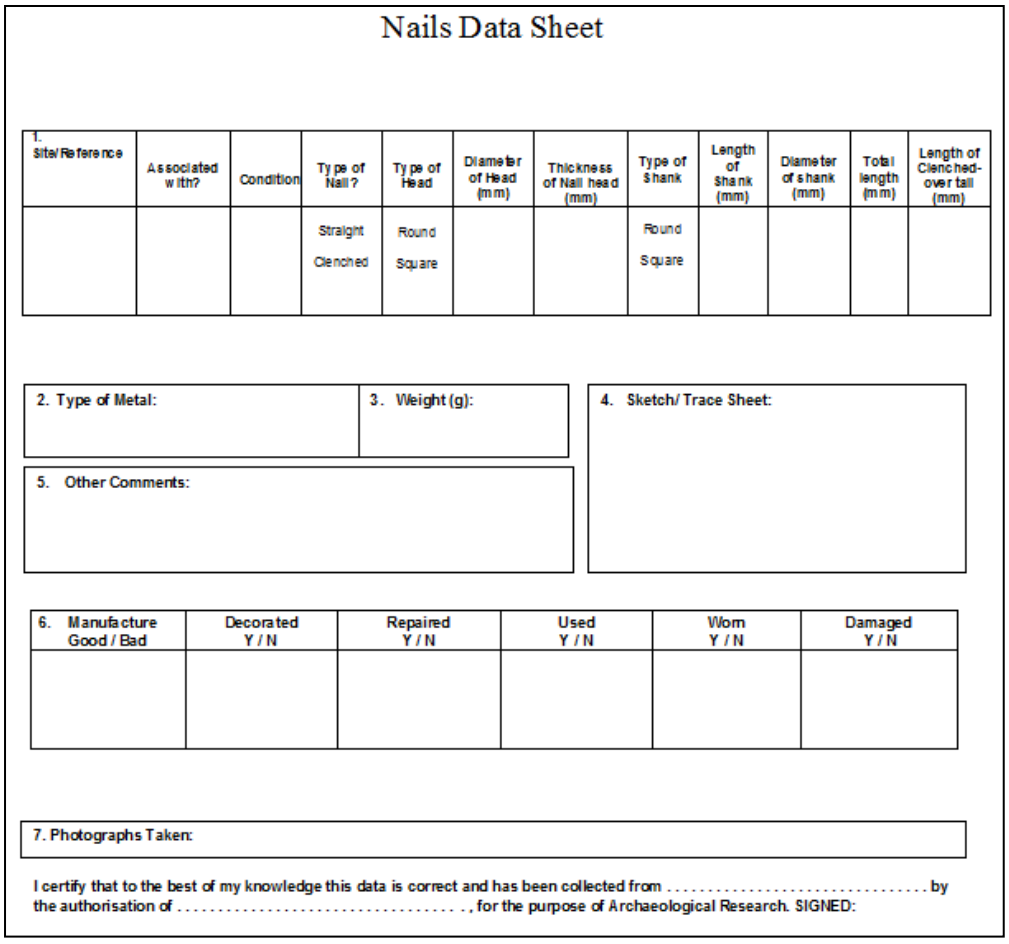
The cone is one of the major parts of the boss; it can either be a straight walled conical shape or domed (plate 5). The diameter of the cone will be taken from the widest protruding part, and the angle of slope will be estimated by using a protractor to understand the angle at which the boss has been shaped. The overhang or carination is a bulge that appears at the bottom of the cone where the wall begins; again this may be indicative of manufacture or function, which is why the width of the carination is also taken. The thickness of the metal will be taken from the top of the cone as centrally as possibly so as to understand the robustness of the main part of the boss and the metal composition for the cone will be commented upon.

The wall is the part of the shield boss that connects the cone and flange together. The diameter will be taken from around the main section of wall, along with the thickness to determine size, form, shape and type of metal used.

The flange is normally the biggest part of the boss as this is the piece by which the boss will be fixed to the main shield boards to protect the hand. The diameter will be taken so as to give an idea of size and the width will give an indication as to how much the flange would spread out onto the shield board.

The angle of slope will determine shape and the thickness of the flange will give an idea as to the method of construction. The type of metal will be commented upon but also the number of rivet holes in the flange for fixing to the shield boards. It is also important to measure the diameter of these holes to give an idea as to the size of rivet or nail being used, and a suggestion as to the metal content within the rivet/nail itself.

The overall height will be measured from the base of the object to its highest point and the overall weight will be taken by using an electronic weighing scales and placing the object directly upon them to get a reading in grams. The depth of the boss will be gathered by turning the object upside down and measuring the depth from the cone to the flange from the inside. The comments section will be used to comment on photographs taken and also used to note down any observation regarding any extra information, such as decoration, manufacture evidence, repair, wear and damage. It is import to note that all terminology for the shield boss come from previous studies concerning similar artefacts from the Anglo Saxon period in England (Dickinson and Härke, 1992: 5).



Nails Data Sheet

1. Site/Reference	Associated with?	Condition	Type of Nail?	Type of Head	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail head (mm)	Type of Shank	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter of shank (mm)	Total length (mm)	Length of Clenched-over tail (mm)
			Straight Clenched	Round Square			Round Square				

2. Type of Metal:	3. Weight (g):

4. Sketch/ Trace Sheet:

5. Other Comments:

6. Manufacture Good / Bad	Decorated Y / N	Repaired Y / N	Used Y / N	Worn Y / N	Damaged Y / N

7. Photographs Taken:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge this data is correct and has been collected from ..... by the authorisation of ....., for the purpose of Archaeological Research. SIGNED:

Plate 6. Shield nails recording sheet.

The shield nail evidence will be recorded in a similar way to that of the boss, the site or reference number will be noted (plate 6) and the ‘associated with’ box will describe the context the nails were found in and also if the material has a small finds number and/or context number. The condition of the nails will give an indication as to how many are complete and how many are fragmentary and the nails themselves are split into two categories: straight nails or tacks and clenched nails or tacks (plate 7).

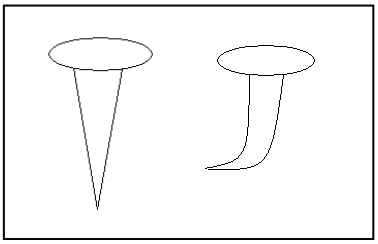
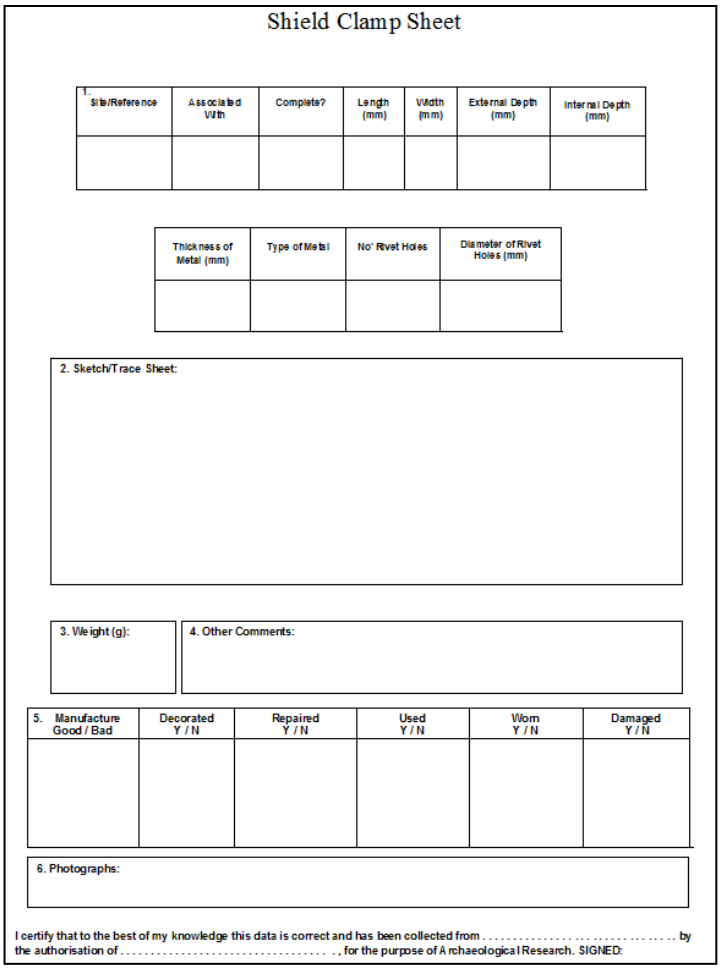


Plate 7. Schematic of a straight nail and clenched nail.

The nails will be analysed as to whether they have round or square heads, and then the diameter and dimensions of the head will be taken along with the thickness of the nail head. The type of shank will be commented upon whether it is round or square, and then the length will be measured. This measurement is vital as it could potentially help to determine the thickness of the shield boards, along with the diameter of the nail shank as well. The overall length of the nail will be a combined measurement from the shank and the thickness of the nail head; this will give the full measurement of the remains. If the nail is clenched over the internal measurement will be marked with an (I :) and the external measurement will be marked with an (E :). There will be comments on the type of metal used to create the nail and the remains will also be individually weighed. Any comments or sketches of the remains can be noted down for future reference, along with any notes on manufacture, decoration, repairs, wear, damage which can be entered into the comments box.

The shield clamps can vary in shape and size but they will be recorded in the same manner as the rest of the material evidence (plate 8). The site reference and associated context will be noted along with a statement as to the completeness of the remains. The length and width will be taken, along with the external depth which will be the measurement from the top of the clamp to the

bottom on the outside (plate 9) and the internal depth will be the measurement of the inside of the clamp which would have been fixed onto the shield itself.



Shield Clamp Sheet

1. Site/Reference	Associated With	Complete?	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	External Depth (mm)	Internal Depth (mm)

Thickness of Metal (mm)	Type of Metal	No' Rivet Holes	Diameter of Rivet Holes (mm)

2. Sketch/Trace Sheet:

3. Weight (g):

4. Other Comments:

5. Manufacture Good / Bad	Decorated Y / N	Repaired Y / N	Used Y / N	Worn Y / N	Damaged Y / N

6. Photographs:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge this data is correct and has been collected from . . . . . by the authorisation of . . . . . ., for the purpose of Archaeological Research. SIGNED:

Plate 8. Shield clamps recording sheet.

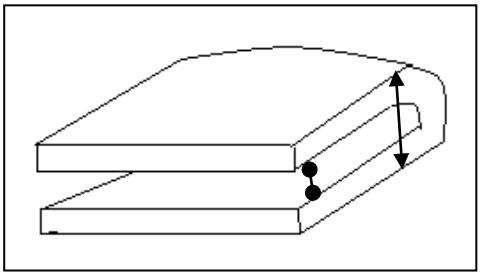
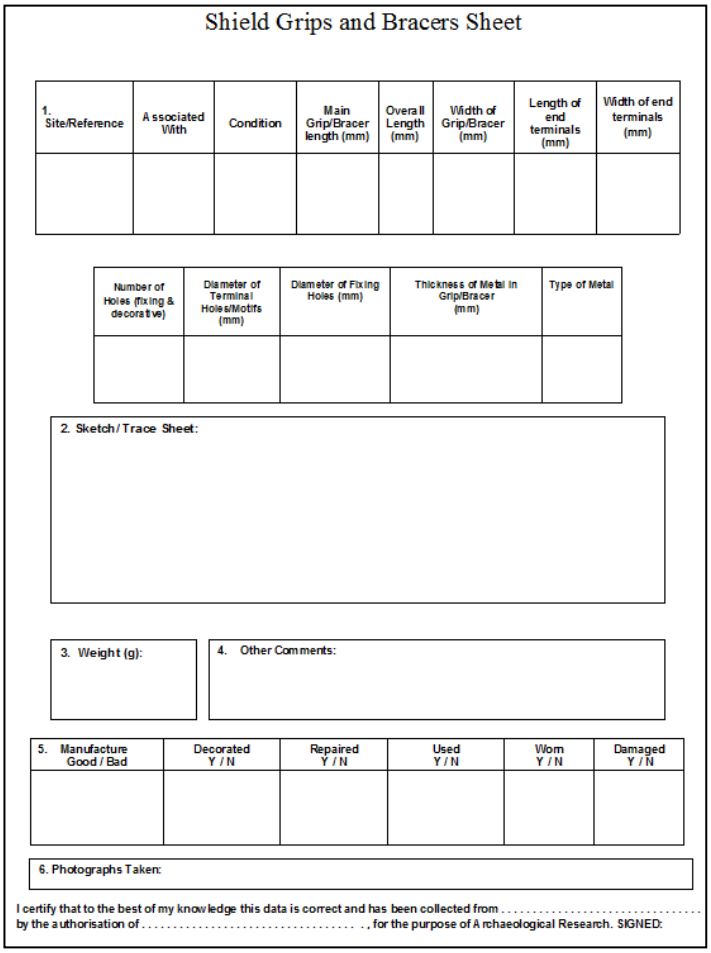


Plate 9. Schematic of shield clamp measurement. Circular ended pointer denotes internal depth measurement and arrow headed pointer denotes external depth measurement.

The thickness of the metal will give an understanding as to the manufacture of the clamp and along with the type of metal; also the amount of nail holes used to fix it to the main shield boards will be measured and a diameter given.



Shield Grips and Bracers Sheet

1. Site/Reference	Associated With	Condition	Main Grip/Bracer length (mm)	Overall Length (mm)	Width of Grip/Bracer (mm)	Length of end terminals (mm)	Width of end terminals (mm)

Number of Holes (fixing & decorative)	Diameter of Terminal Holes/Motifs (mm)	Diameter of Fixing Holes (mm)	Thickness of Metal in Grip/Bracer (mm)	Type of Metal

2. Sketch / Trace Sheet:

3. Weight (g):

4. Other Comments:

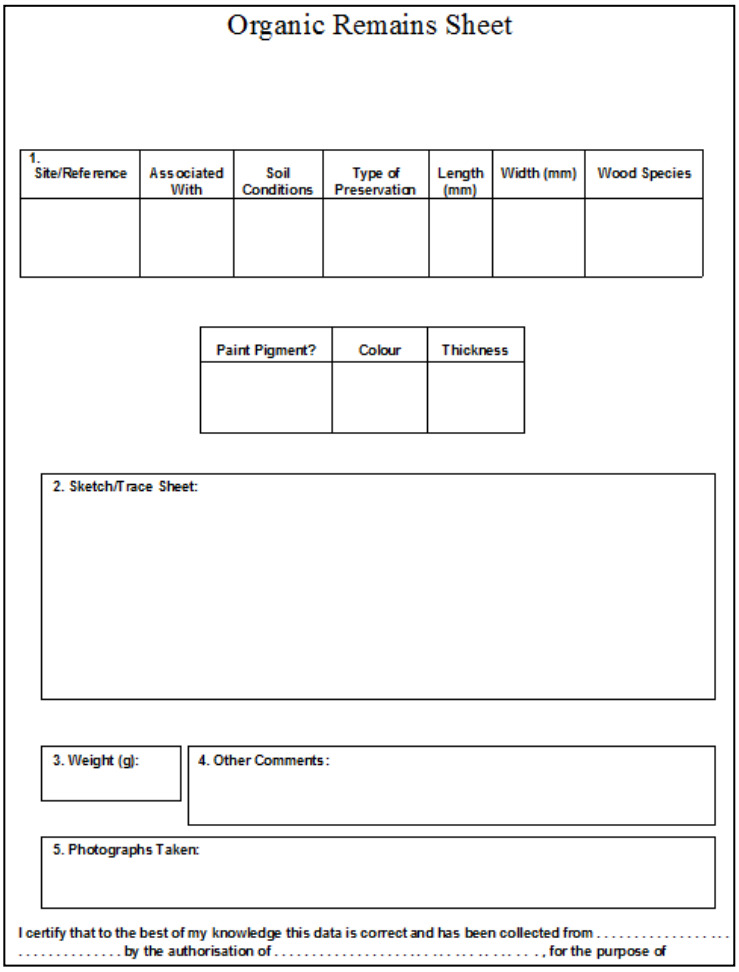
5. Manufacture Good / Bad	Decorated Y / N	Repaired Y / N	Used Y / N	Worn Y / N	Damaged Y / N

6. Photographs Taken:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge this data is correct and has been collected from ..... by the authorisation of ..... , for the purpose of Archaeological Research. SIGNED:

Plate 10. Shield grip and bracer recording sheet.

The shield grip (handle) and bracers (supporting bands) will be measured, due to the varying nature of shield grips and bracers from the early medieval period (Dickenson and Härke, 1992: 24-5). The length of the main grip area will be taken and the overall length will include any decorative end terminals or motifs (plate 10). The width of the grip will also vary so measurements will be taken from the thickest part and the thinnest part of the object. The length of the end terminals will be individually measured and recorded from left to right and this will also be carried out for the width of the end terminals. The number of fixing holes used to attach the grip or bracer will be noted and then the diameter of these holes will be measured to get an understanding of the type of nail used. The thickness of the metal measurement will be taken from a piece of the handle that is in the best condition, along with the visual analysis of what metal the handle is made from; however not all hand grips and bracers are of metal, they can also be made of wood.



Organic Remains Sheet

1. Site/Reference	Associated With	Soil Conditions	Type of Preservation	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Wood Species

Paint Pigment?	Colour	Thickness

2. Sketch/Trace Sheet:

3. Weight (g):

4. Other Comments:

5. Photographs Taken:

I certify that to the best of my knowledge this data is correct and has been collected from . . . . . by the authorisation of . . . . . , for the purpose of

Plate 11. Organic remains recording sheet.

By recording the conditions in which the organic material were found it is hoped that a better understanding of how these types of remains have been preserved. The length, width and thickness of the surviving remains will be measured to give basic dimensions, however it important to note that some leather, wood and textile may not survive even in the best of conditions, so these remains are expected to be rare. If the remains are made of wood and it is possible to identify what species of wood the object is made from that will be commented on. If there are any surviving remnants of decoration, colour or paint surviving on wood, leather or linen the colour and thickness of the residue will be measured to give as much information as possible without being too intrusive on the organic object (plate 11).

Now that the methodology for the investigation has been outlined, it is important to consider the potential problems that this study may create in terms of collating the primary data.

Issues

There are several issues which need to be considered during this investigation in terms of data collection, reliability and time management.

The project that has been suggested within this study is the complete archaeological data collection of Viking shield material within the British Isles; this unfortunately is not possible as it is too big a topic for this particular investigation. The focus on the archaeological remains for England and the Isle of Man is just part of the research that could be potentially undertaken. Time restrictions and access to Viking material in Scotland and Ireland has been difficult, as there are not only accessibility and travel issues, but also political ones with some of the Viking material, such as at Westness, Orkney (Kaland, 1989: 308-318). Therefore it was decided to keep the data collection within the realms of what is achievable for this study and purely focus on England and the Isle of Man.

In relation to carrying out the data collection it has to be commented that the emphasis on correct recording and representation of the artefacts falls entirely on the data collector. Therefore, there may be elements of biased, there may also be problems with the manual collection of measurements in terms of interpreting what has been viewed, as the majority of this study is based on visual analysis and interpretation. However it is in the best interests of this study that the information is as accurate as possible and this will be in the fore-front of the data collectors mind at all time when dealing with the archaeological material for the Viking shield.

Malfunctions in measuring equipment when in the field may prove a problem, and due to the lack of time in acquiring a suitable substitute, it is important to note that the electronic weighing scales being used only weighs material down to 1gram. Therefore any material that weighs under 1gram will be shown by <1 being entered in the appropriate box.

It is also important to consider the state of the remains that may be encountered. In many cases, if surviving, the remains will be over 1,000 years old and it is imperative that due care and attention is paid to the objects. The handling of these items will be done slowly but efficiently and protective gloves

will be worn when dealing with the archaeological material. Artefacts may also be in an extremely fragmentary state and might be too badly corroded or oxidised to identify any diagnostic features or traits for identification. The organic remains are going to be the most difficult to record by far as they may be extremely fragile and it may not be possible to measure or even view material that is sensitive to light or still undergoing conservation.

It is important where possible to gather as much background information on any remains that are associated with a Viking shield, so that if preservation does prove a major problem hopefully it would be possible to draw upon archaeological report data, photo's, sketches and other written accounts to build up a firm context for the remains if there is nothing else forthcoming.

Questions

When investigating into the Viking shield it has been quietly commented by archaeologists in general that there appears to be hardly any information for its survival, so what would the point be in trying to understand an artefact that doesn't survive very well? Indeed there is not a great deal of evidence, and allot does depend on the preservation of organic remains, but there is enough at present to gather valuable data. It is important to take a collective and comparative approach to obtain as much archaeological information as possible from England and the Isle of Man. But there are still many questions that need to be answered in terms of the Viking Age in England, and through asking them in this piece of research it is hoped the knowledge for the Viking shield will grow and spark further study.

Questions that will be at the fore-front of this study will include ones such as:

- If we find a shield in a grave that is bigger than the person it is buried with, does it mean that it is not their shield? Has it just been purely made just for burial?
- Does the shield reflect a select part of Viking society? Or is it twinned up with the mainstream beliefs of the Viking culture?

- Are their restrictions on who can hold a shield or particular type of shield?
- When shields appear in graves, what are the associations to the other objects in there? Is there an element of over-enhancing masculinity even in the burial rite?
- If a shield is made from an impractical material for combat, what was it used for?
- Are shields produced by individuals or are there “Shield-makers” plying a specialist craft? When does it shift from individual manufacture to mass production? Or is this even the case?
- Why is there an absence in Viking urban sites for the manufacture of shields? Where are the components being created?
- Are different shields created for different purposes, for combat, law disputes and decorative?
- Is it possible to distinguish between a Danish or Norwegian shield, through looking at styles, forms and designs?
- To what extent are shield “ritually killed”? Are people disassembling the shield for a higher spiritual purpose in burial deposits or are they reusing/recycling the different parts?

And with these questions fresh in mind it is now important to advance into the realm of Viking archaeology and assess the evidence for the shield as stands at present.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM THE NORTH TO THE GRAVE

Archaeology of the shield

Review

Viking archaeology in England tends to be scarce and when discovered gets categorised into the late Anglo Saxon period (800 AD – 1065 AD). Individual artefacts from the Viking period, such as the shield, have a tendency to stand in isolation. Analysis is then based upon typology and design, which is used to determine a date and place of origin (Dickinson & Härke, 1992: 23). Such as in the shield analysis from the 7th Century Sutton Hoo ship burial in Suffolk, showing its origin to be from Sweden (Carver, 2005: 180). Items such as these are deemed as Scandinavian artefacts within an English context. It then becomes a challenge to try and determine what the artefact represents within England.

The best archaeological deposit for Viking shields to be preserved tends to be Viking Age burials. There have been many excavations in Denmark (Pedersen, 1997) whereby weapons have been found in burials from this period, as well as in Norway (Skre, 2007) and Sweden (Arbman, 1943). However, it is important to look at before the historical “Viking Age” in northern Europe, to try and understand the Migration period archaeology for the shield in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, c.500-700AD, and later through the Merovingian, Vendel and Germanic era’s, c.700-800 AD (Hedeager, 1992). There are also plenty of examples and comparative material that could be used to enhance this particular study such as the Vendel period graves found at Valsgärde (Arwidsson, 1942).

The use of the shield in a raiding or warfare context is very difficult to determine, as in England many battlefield sites such as Stamford Bridge and Fulford in Yorkshire are uncertain as to where the battles location maybe. Sometimes the smaller scale raids are literally ‘hit-and-run’ attacks whereby minimal impact on the people and landscape is going to occur. Even though battlefield archaeology has become popular in recent years (Lavelle, 2010: 269), it is comparatively rare for excavations to take place for sites dating to the Viking Age. When they do occur, unfortunately it comes with many political and social upheavals which make the process of excavation rather difficult. It can also be difficult to physically access an area of land which may be protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) or even gain permission by the local landowner or the local authority. These aspects most certainly need to be in the forefront of any archaeologists mind.

Plate 12. A replica Viking shield used by a modern re-enactor.
(© June 2015)

The Viking shield (plate12) is an artefact which has its own complications when trying to interpret the evidence. The main wooden boards of the shield tend to

have decomposed in dry, sandy soil conditions, whereas in some excavated examples such as at Oseberg (Gustafson, 1904) and Gokstad in Norway (Nicolaysen, 1882), the shield fragments remained due to the waterlogged anaerobic conditions. Other factors such as natural soil compression and previous human interference can cause extreme effects on the archaeology. The Oseberg ship burial is a prime example of this as the grave had been previously ransacked in the Viking period itself. The three interred skeletons had also been disarticulated and items of high value in the burial chamber removed by those opposing the occupants in the grave (Sjøvold, 1957:10).

Form and Construction

Shield Boards:
(skjaldar -borð)

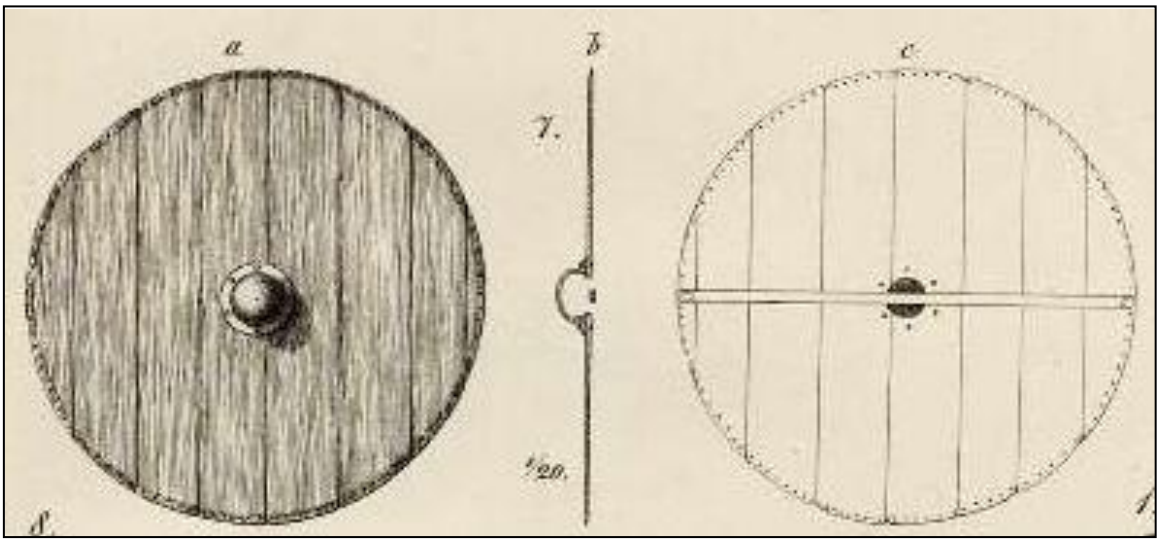


Plate 13. A Viking Shield from the Gokstad ship, Norway.
A.) front; wooden board's visible and central boss. B.) side profile; hand grip centrally behind the boss. C.) back; hole for hand and long handgrip, with holes round edge of rim (Nicolaysen, 1882: plate VIII, 62).

The Viking shield ranges in diameter from between 70cm - 109cm and is made up of wooden planks, which have been stuck together using animal or fish glue (Stephenson, 2002: 36). From contemporary studies shields of this period in England and Scandinavia are stated as being large enough to cover the user from shoulder to knee, protecting the torso (Stephenson, 2002: 38).

In archaeological contexts some shields are made up of 4 boards stuck together, others are made of 8, such as in the Gokstad ship burial, Norway (plate 13), however there is allot of variation. From the archaeological record spruce, fir, oak and pine boards have been found to be used for Viking shields, based on the wood available within different geographical and environmental locations (Dickinson & Härke, 1992:49). However there was an extensive study in 1942 by Arwidsson as to the development of arms and warfare between 500AD -800(850) AD within Northern Europe, and the types of wood species that were being used in earlier period shields (1942:35). From literary evidence lime wood and tight grain woods such as willow, poplar are thought to have been used to also construct Viking shields (Anglo Saxon Chronicle, c.937 AD);

“At Brunanburh, they split the shield-wall, slashed lime-wood shields with forged swords” (Page, 1995:136).

However, as of yet there is no evidence for this in the archaeology in regards to Viking shields, although these types of woods would be perfect at absorbing blows and locking down weapons. It would also be a natural adaptation for the Viking peoples to utilise the native species of wood available, rather than importing their own hard wood varieties from their homelands. However to what extent this may be true is difficult to ascertain due to the lack of surviving wooden remains from Viking shields. There appears to be a divide between there being archaeological evidence for oak and spruce being used; however in regards to lime and poplar, it all very much appears to be inferred from literary sources. Plate 14 demonstrates the different woods that are being used for shields. The oak and spruce are very dense and hard, however lime and poplar are very light, soft and easy to work, two very different sets of timber with both positive and negative characteristics.

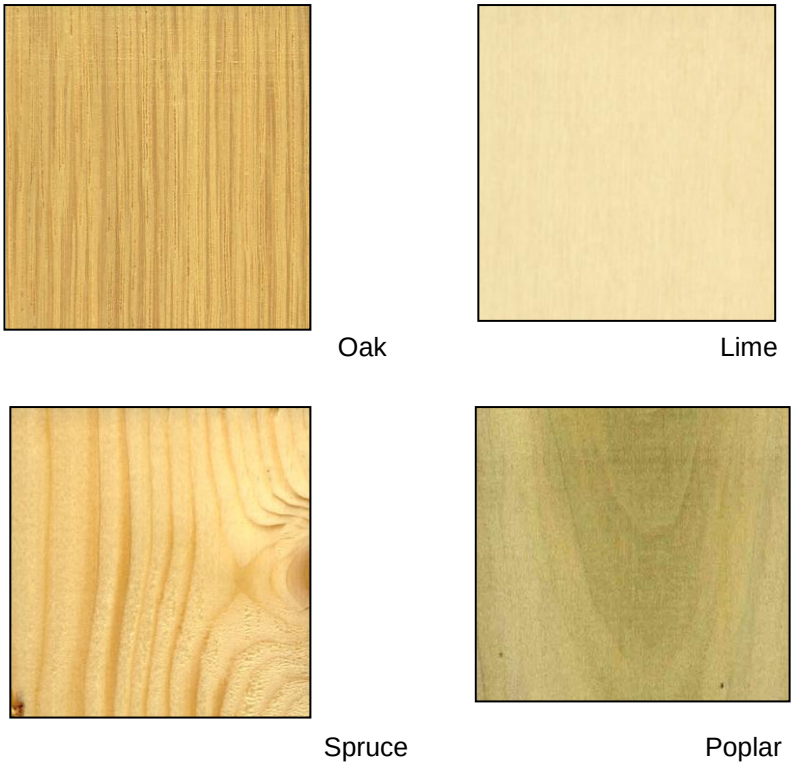


Plate 14. Woods used in shield construction.

(Sykestimber, 2010)

It may seem like an irrelevant point to comment on the species of wood being used but from experimental studies already personally undertaken, a Viking shield made from oak is not an effective defence in combat. It is too dense a timber and would shatter, splinter rather than absorb blows.

This therefore then begs the question, when we find the remains of oak shields in the archaeology what are they for if not for combat?

Shield Board Thickness:

(skjaldar –borð dýpt)

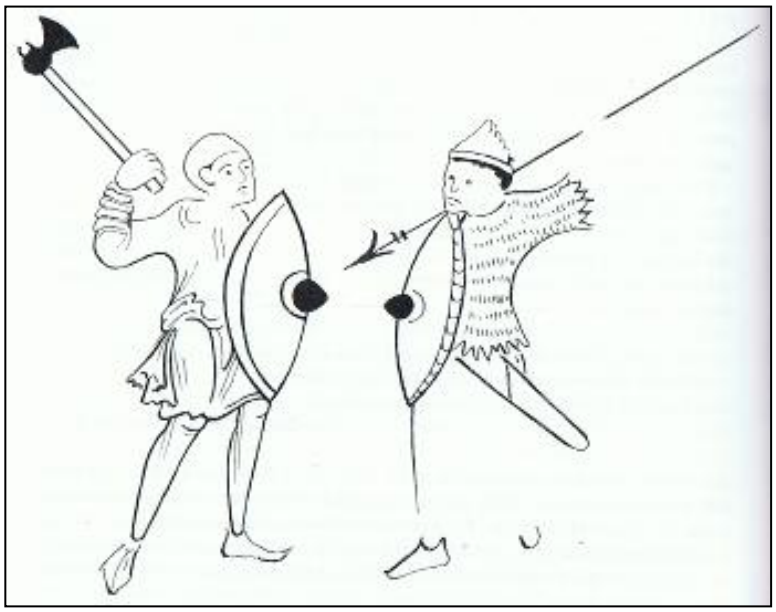


Plate 15. 11th Century manuscript illustration of the Anglo Saxon shield.
Ms .Cotton Cleopatra C VIII (Stephenson, 2007:99)

The thickness of the wooden boards range from 6mm -30mm (Short, 2009:29), and it is reasonable to suggest that the centre of the shield would have been thicker, going out to a tapered thinner edge. This is cooperated by rare 11th Century manuscript evidence (plate 15) and archaeological evidence; the Gokstad shields also demonstrate a tapered edge (plate 13).

It has been stated in recent years in regards to Viking shields that; " Unlike the Saxon round shields, they were always flat, but otherwise construction was the same" (Siddorn & Beatson, 2005: 36).This is slowly being disproved through personal research, as investigation into the archaeological record and contemporary sources are actually giving a glimpse into the Viking shield as being a very versatile object, which could potential change it shape and form depending on what its being used for; a thought that had already been touched upon and considered by Arwidsson (1942:42) and more recently stated by Dickinson and Härke (1992:44).

Plate 16. Modern re-enactment shields.

(© August 2009)

The portrayal of these “flat shields” that are shown in modern historical literature and in Viking re-enactment circles are important to consider (plate 16), as they are a modern portrayal of the Viking shield but it is a slanted view. This can lead onto wrong perceptions about how it would have been constructed and used. Modern reconstructions tend to be made of ply wood because they are lighter and cheaper to construct. The idea put forward for laminated shield boards during the early medieval period has now been dismissed as it appears to have a misinterpretation of the archaeology (Dickinson & Härke, 1992:50), and there is no archaeological evidence at present in terms of Viking Age shields to suggest that they were laminated.

The curved type of construction, illustrated in plate 15, is more practical and functional for combat, as you want any impact to be absorbed into the thicker material in the centre and to deflect blows away from the body on the outer edge; especially if it is being used for one on one contact. So it would be expected to find evidence for both flat and curved shields in the archaeological record.

Shield Rim:

(skjaldar-rönd)

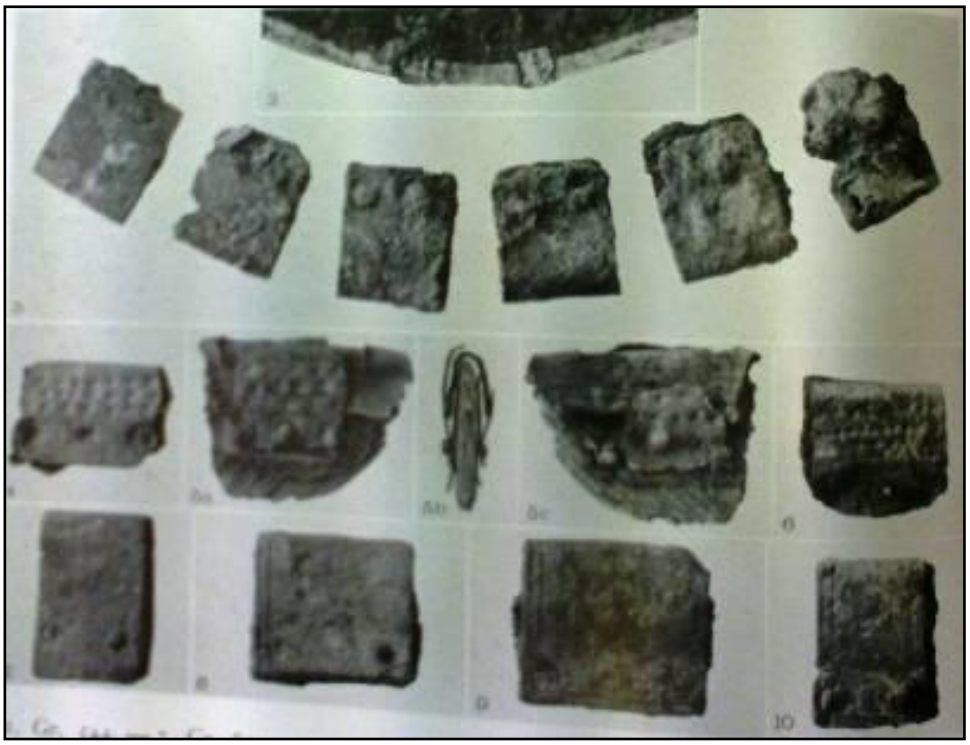


Plate 17. Shield clamps from Birka, Sweden.
(Arbman, 1943, Katalog: 18)

The edge of the shield can be bound in leather, rawhide or metal and is sometimes brought together by stitching leather through drilled holes in the wooden boards (Short, 2009: 32). In some cases decorative shield clamps (plate 17) are used to keep the outer binding flush with edge of the shield and provide some aesthetic value.

At present there is very little organic evidence for rawhide and leather on the edge of the shield rim, however iron bands appear on several surviving examples from Birka, Sweden (plate 18; top). From experimental archaeology untaken previously it has been shown that a metal rim on the edge of a shield will deflect an attack away from the main part of the shield. Yet this could mean that the attack ends up getting diverted up into the face of the defender or even down to the shins. It would be an intriguing to investigate whether skeletons from Viking Age contexts, which have been in battle with shields, actually demonstrate these deflected injuries?

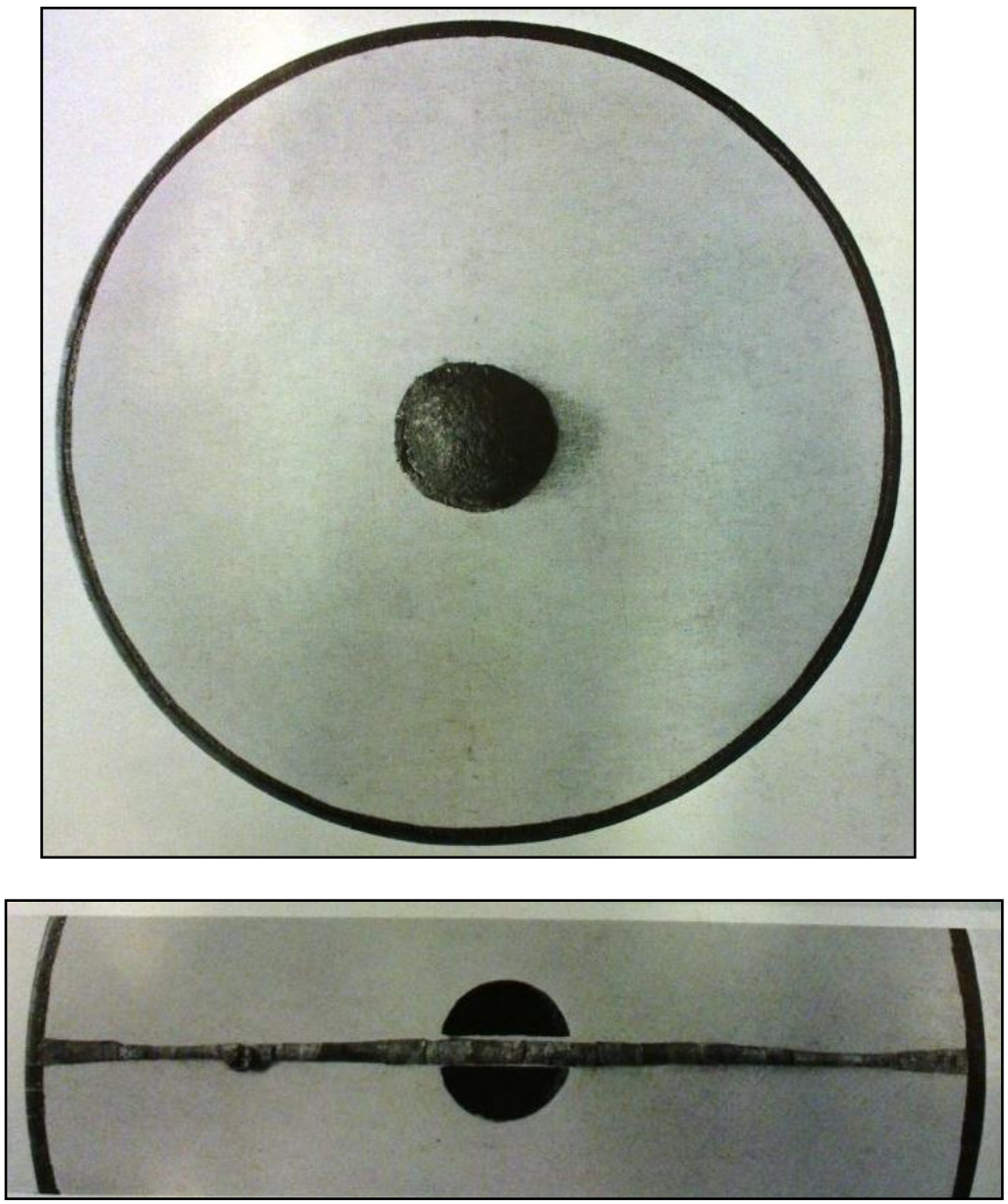


Plate 18. The iron shield rim and metal hand grip from Abb 210, Grab 736, Birka, Sweden. (Arbman, 1943, Katalog: 15)

A horizontal hand grip is placed across the back of the shield over the circular hole in the centre, which is where the user would grasp the shield. Sometimes the grip is the full length of the shield (plate 18; bottom), in other cases smaller. Sometimes there are added metal or wooden bracers placed either side of the handgrip on the back of the shield for added reinforcement. It was also considered common to have a strap across the shield for putting it across the back for carrying (Short: 2009: 34), although very little evidence survives in the archaeology for this due to the decomposition of the leather.

Shield Boss:

(skjaldar-bukl)

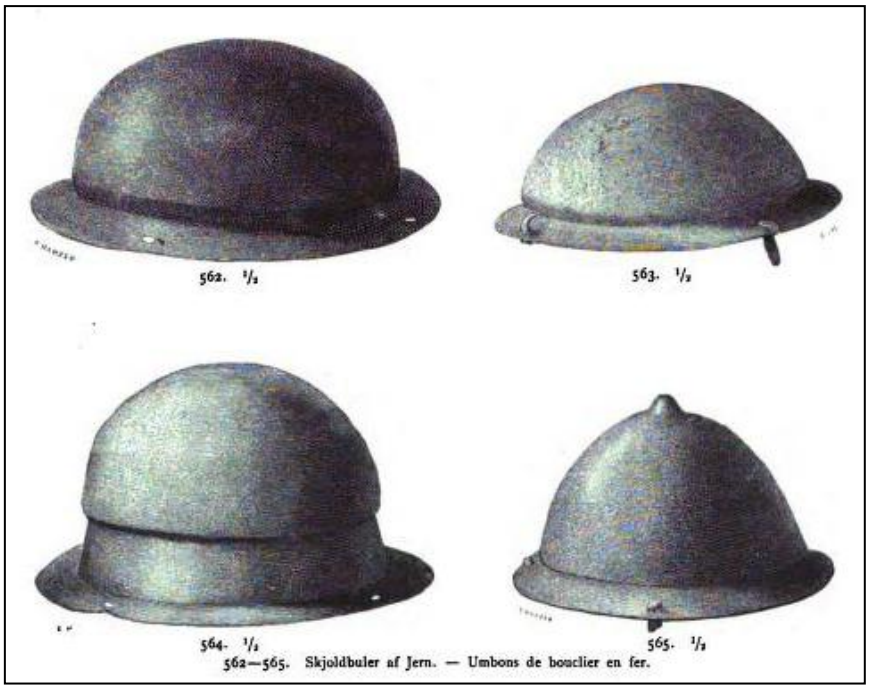


Plate 19. Viking age shield bosses.

Shield boss types 563, 565 are early Viking period bosses, Types 564, 562 Viking period bosses.

*(*Rygh, 1885, 562-565)

One of the most important components of the shield is the boss, the central metal dome that is placed in the middle of the shield to protect the carrier's hand, but it is also used as an offensive weapon in its own right. In 1885 Oluf Rygh created the Norske Oldsager Catalogue of Viking Antiquities in Norway and he identified four types of Scandinavian shield bosses based on those he had uncovered and researched.

Type 562 (plate 19: top left) is quite large and has a simple dome rising up from the flange. Rygh comments that "No. 562 is the usual form" (1885:30) of Viking shield boss and that the Gokstad shields had this form of boss. As well as a grave whereby 6 bosses were found in Fossesholm, Eker, Busk, Norway, which were all of type 562 form (1885: 23). Type 563 (plate 19: top right) was commented to have first been found in Midbø in Aabøgrænden, Vinje, Norway but that it "may come from an earlier time" (1885:30), this boss is

characteristically allot smaller. Type 564 (plate 19:bottom left) is commented on as being a “small shield boss of the same form “ (1885:30), but it is diagnostically different with having a carination or wall round the main part of the boss, raising the dome up higher away from the hand to give more protection. Type 565 (plate 19: bottom right) comes from a burial mound in Tuven, Elverum, Norway and is thought to be of a similar form to the other shield bosses uncovered. Rygh however, did not come up with a specific time frame from these bosses other than that they belonged to the Viking Age period, 8th- 11th century. Interestingly, there are also earlier representations from Rygh’s catalogue (1885: 217-221) which help to show the transition of the shield boss from Scandinavia in the “Ældre Jernalder”, the older Iron Age, from 100 AD- 800AD, and the “Yngre Jernalder”, the younger Iron Age, from 800AD-1050 AD (Rygh, 1885: 9-14).

From later research done by Haakon Shetelig and Anathon Bjørn in 1940, it revealed that there was similar variation in shield boss type and form. Type 564 bosses could have up to 6 nail holes in the flange of the boss for attaching onto the front of the shield and type 562 tended to have 4, but this would change depending of the remains found (plate 20). At present there is no chronological or typological diagram for Viking age shield bosses.

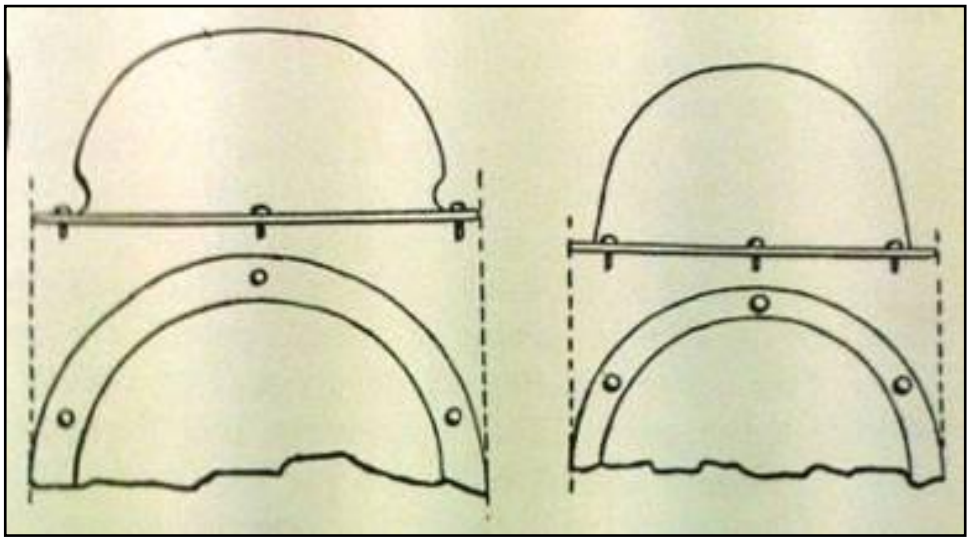


Plate 20. Shield boss types 564 (left) and 562 (right).
(Shetelig & Bjørn, 1940: 111)

There are also variations of Viking shield bosses that have been found in Ireland, the Irish Sea region and the Western Isles of Scotland which are conical in shape and form, plate 21 (Harrison, 2000).

Plate 21. Watercolour of the conical shield boss from Dublin.
(Griffiths, 2010:78)

Viking shield bosses tend to be the best pieces of surviving evidence, as they are made from iron and very rarely disintegrate as much as the other organic components. The linen and leather that can be attached to the front of the shield to cover the boards can be painted with colours and motifs (plate 16). However these tend not to survive, there are very few pieces of linen or leather from the shield face that have been found. The application of colour and design onto the shield board can either display individuality or family, regional colours for a particular group of people. The boards can also be painted straight onto but many of these colours and designs come from designs applicable to mythology; this will show the importance of iconography on the shield.

The nails that hold the different parts of the shield together can also give an idea as to the construction and eventual use of the shield. However, with nails it very much depends on the context of these to make sure for certain they were belonging to an item such as a shield and not another wooden object, so caution must be aired. The other components of the Viking shield are fairly diagnostic and it is hoped through this study that it will be known to what extent some of this material survives within England and the Isle of Man.

Although similar in material and construction, the Anglo-Saxon and Viking shield is very different (Stephenson, 2002: 16), which is why it is imperative for individual analysis of Viking type shields to be undertaken on a more in-depth level, in regards to the individual Norse, Danish and Swedish cultures of the 8th-11th century.

CHAPTER FOUR

 **DEALINGS OF FATE** 

Historical Evidence

Viking Society

For Scandinavian peoples living during this period of history life was hard, many were farmers, crafts folk living a sustainable way of life, growing what you needed to survive (Graham Campbell, 1980:61). It was all about passing the necessary life skills down through the family and with that came the essential skills of how to protect what you had. If particularly good with the skills of defence and combat a Viking Age man may well go off on seasonal raiding parties for the chance to acquire more wealth to provide for their families, such as with Svein Asleifarson in Orkneyinga saga (Pálsson & Edwards,1978:123). With the different deeds and conflicts of a raid each person could claim fame and glory, but at this time in northern Europe, “war and violence was ever present in society; with everything from private blood vengeance to large scale war (Halsall, 1989:155). It can therefore be argued that the idea of having to know how to defend and protect was more ingrained into the Viking social psyche than previously thought, each community having to defend themselves both from internal and external conflict.

Social structure was deemed in some Scandinavian regions as very loosely based on a simple four tier hierarchy. This social class system is said to have come from Rígsþula “The lay of Rígr”, this saga tells of the God Ríg walking the earth and fathering four children who would form the first of their class; Þræl, Karl, Jarl and Kon-ungr (Bellows:2010:204).

At the bottom of the social class was the *þræl*, a slave who is either an unfortunate born into the life of serfdom, a captured enemy or even a criminal. In Rígsþula it is the “great-grandfather and great-grandmother” that give birth to *þræl;* in heart he is young but in appearance he is aged and ugly beyond his years (Bellows, 2010:205). The implication is clear that when one is aged to the point of infirmity, one is little better than a slave (Lewis-Simpson, 2008:263).

The *Karls* are freemen and women, who are normally landowners, crafts folk, merchants and these people, make up the majority of Viking society. The class of *Karls* had the freedom to bear arms, have freedom of speech and from *Karl* status it was possible through the deeds in life to rise to a higher level of wealth and standing within the community. Karl in Rígsþula is said to be red haired and the son of a farmer and crafter, he has a large family and lives happy with his wife and twelve children till the end of his days (Bellows, 2010:209).

Within the local district freemen are overseen by a chosen local chieftain, a *goði*, who deals with the legal and administrative running of the area, within each class there were other groups of social peers that carried out tasks for the community (Short, 2010:32).

The nobility, born into wealth and privilege are known as *Jarls*, a *Jarl* can be a controller of a regional territory, and has the ability to hold a *Hersir*, group of warriors bound to him. Hersir was the first of the warriors of men in Rígsþula (Bellows, 2010: 213). Jarl in Rígsþula is said to have been very fair and blonde haired, coming from a fine home he learnt how to use weapons, hawks, hounds and horses and learnt how to read the runes (Bellows, 2010:214).

A Viking *konungr*, king however is someone who is able to consolidate their power, by being able to draw upon mass military force from his *jarls* and *hersir* faction, whilst still upholding law and judgement. A Viking *konungr* is expected to show wealth, generosity, resilience, be hospitable and keep company of those who are to uphold Viking traditions and customs, *skalds*; poets, storytellers and verbal archivists of the age. Kon-ungr (Kon the Young) in Rígsþula is said to be a rune reader, master of magic, speaker to birds, quencher of fires and healer of minds. With this he also has the strength of eight men, could fight with sword and shield and sail the seas (Bellows, 2010:215).

This is just one form of Viking society documented through manuscript evidence, each regional and geographical group would have their own variations on system and class structure. This is highlighted clearly by looking at the Swedish peoples during the 8th- 11th centuries, they operated on a very tribal system and in many ways were a martial culture, a militarised society whereby there are no distinctions made between martial and civilian life (Hedenstierna-Jonson, 2006:24).

When it comes to children in the Viking age, boys in particular, it has to be considered as to what extent young adolescents go through a rite of passage at this time .It is noted that in many references that boldness and self-determination were traits praised and valued at this time for children. In the Saga of Egíl Skallagrimsson, at the age of six whilst playing a ball game Egíl ended getting pushed over and ruffed up, Egíl then promptly went and retrieved an axe and embedded it into the young bullies head. When returning home, telling his mother about what had occurred; she stated “Egil had the makings of a real viking” (Pálsson & Edwards, 1976:94).

At what age it was considered that a Viking boy was adult enough to defend himself and take part in various forms of conflict very much seems to depend on the child and the skills learnt by family members or work tutors. Harald Sigurdsson “Hardraada” (1015 – 1066 AD) at the age of fifteen was at the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 AD and the following year was commanding a fleet of ships to Constantinople (Laing, 1930: 160-1). There are also extracts of young children taking revenge for killings of family members, such as in Gisli´s Saga, the two young boys Helgi and Bergr being ten and twelve years old manage to kill Þorkell Súrsson (Dasent, 1866:89). The age of twelve seems to appear quite frequently, as in the saga of Gunnlaug Wormtongue at twelve years of age he left his father and “for a year stayed studying law with Thorstein” (Jones, 1961:177-8). In the Viking law codes it is also deemed that a young man at the age of twelve can join an Althing, and become an heir to a Goðiship within the community (Du Chaillu, 1889: 526).

Due to its frequency of reference it is possible that from the age of twelve a Viking boy would be expected to be semi or wholly independent for himself. However, it is important to consider to what extent as modern people, meaning and age restrictions are being placed onto the idea of adolescent boys coming

of age in the Viking period, an idea which may never have been the case in this type of society (Larrington, 2008:151).

In the archaeology in regards to the Viking shield, the amount of variety in the diameter and form may not necessarily be down to a random array of choice but more down to training, using these different types of shields for young boys and men. When the adolescents have outgrown the shield, that's when the shield may be used for another purpose, or even kept and handed down through the family as a hereditary heirloom as is done with swords (Pierce & Oakeshott, 2002:1).

Shield Sources

The Viking shield is an object which epitomises the Viking way of life; strong and resilient, formed from the fibres of nature, with depth, meaning and an unyielding desire for courage and honour.

This is the object you would be able to look at and know a man's story. The Saga of Njal (960 AD -1020 AD) accounts "Helgi, wearing a red tunic and a helmet, and carrying a red shield decorated with a hart" (Magnusson & Pálsson, 1960: 201), this demonstrates the visual application of a warrior's deeds and attributes onto the shield.

The shield would stand strong against any foe, as in the Saga of Gisli (940 AD - 980 AD); "he throws down the axe then and draws his sword and fights with it, guarding himself with his shield" (Dent, 2001:64)

The shield is an item fit for heroes "Where hero's shields the loudest rang" (Laing, 1930:99), and an object that when you passed would still hold the same strength of meaning as it did in this world and the next, from the wondrous words of the Hávamál "If to battle. I must take old friends, chant spells beneath our shield; and in strength they go, safe into battle, safe out of battle, every time they come back safe" (Page, 1960: 214).

The use of the shield in legal dispute settlements, *Holmgangs*, is documented in many Saga's such as in Kormak's Saga; "Each man should have three shields, and when they were cut up he must get upon the hide if he had given way from

it before, and guard himself with his weapons alone thereafter" (Collingwood & Stefansson, 2008: 31)

The decorative use of the shield can also be glimpsed in the Saga of Eirik the Red, "Snorri Thorbrandsson told him, 'so let us take a white shield and put it out towards them" (Jones, 1961: 151).

There are many references of the shield in skaldic verses also and unluckily for the scholar shields can be referred to in all manner of ways, some are clearer to understand, others are cryptic. In Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda and story *Skaldskaparmal* Snorri recounts some of the names used for the shield;

"Narrow-hall, cover, hall-binder, bender, lee-edge and buckler, fight- bend, targe, storm-bright and protection, wide, pale, engraved, battle-bright and linden. Clamourer, dew-scraper and jewel-shelterer, war-lights, stony and war-shelterer, cooled and edged, soiled, boarded, protector, bordered, pure, double-boarded. Battler and roarer, ever- protector, brilliant, circle, fair-dark, carried, mid-life protector" (Fawkes, 1987: 160).

Although many of these sources were written at a later date , between the 11th-13th centuries they are an important reflection on the Viking culture of old before the Christianisation of the Scandinavian realms. However, if Christianity did not envelop the Viking world, it is quite possible that many of these stories may not have been written down. The oral culture of the Viking peoples meant that their traditions and lifestyle were kept alive through each other, the ability of the written word made it possible for others to memorialize their ancestors in paper.

These later saga's and accounts are significant and relevant to this study because of the memories they hold and the ability to tell stories and accounts within which there are always elements of truth. As long as this is born in mind, these sources can be extremely valuable to a scholar with a logical and critical mind, especially when applied to the Viking shield.

These historical documents have shed a new light on the importance of the Viking shield. They describe the personal attachments to a shield, the prowess and masculinity of the warrior wielding it, the symbolism attached to how all good men should live and die, and the way a Viking shield would be composed and decorated. Through looking at the Viking shield it may be possible to

understand to what extent Scandinavian raiders tried to enhance their own 'Vikingness' , a point which is always important to consider, when thinking of one culture trying to displace another, by making dominant their own identity and enhancing their cultural beliefs and ideologies to the maximum.

Mythology

The mythology of this period is captivating; it is an important connection to the people who were living in Scandinavia and England at this time. It is important to try and understand the relationship between individuals and the omnipotent gods, and to what extent these thoughts and understandings would have affected people's everyday lives and been applied to the shield.

It is massively important to use Saga representation to help back up literary documentation and archaeological evidence, as stated by Adolf Friðriksson (1994:16), "The role of sagas, place-names and folklore in Icelandic archaeology should not be underestimated," and this is an attitude that should be applied to all Viking Age archaeological investigation, as it can help to increase the validity of peoples movements, actions and beliefs during this period.

In Viking mythology there are many references to the shield especially when talking about *Óðin* the "All Father of the Gods". As leader of the *Aesir* Gods, *Óðin* carries the most exceptional weapons of war, his majestic spear *Gungnir* and an un-named shield (Davidson, 1964:42). In the Poetic Edda, *Völuspá* there is an account of the first battle between the *Aesir* and *Vanir* Gods with the mention of the shield being used in combat, " Óðin cast his spear hurled it into the army; this indeed was the first great battle on earth. The shield-wall of the Æsir was shattered. Foreseeing battles to come, Vanir trod the field of War," (Page, 1995: 207). The poet God *Bragi* in addition uses shields to describe *Óðin*; he calls them, "pennies of *Svölnir's* hall" and "*Hjarrandi´s* hurdles" (Abram, 2011:84), *Svölnir* and *Hjarrandi* are just two of *Oðin's* names when he visits the realms of men.

Many descriptions are also made of the glistening shields that appear on the roof of the legendary Hall of *Valhöll*, "Hall of the Slain" and how newly fallen

warriors are blinded by the beauty of these shields as they cross over the *Bifrost* in the Prose Edda, *Gylfaginning*; “Its roof was covered with gilded shields like tiles. Thiodolf of Hvinir refers thus to Val-hall being roofed with shields; on their backs they let shine, they were bombarded with stones,-Svafnir’s [Odin’s] hall- shingles [shields], those sensible men” (Fawkes, 1987:7).

The Hall of Valhöll is also the domain of the *Valkyries*, female warriors who carry out the will of *Óðin*, apportioning victory in battle and deciding which warriors must fall to be reborn as the *Einherjar*, “the dead warriors” (Zoëga, 2004:107). These mystical supernatural beings appear to dying warriors and are described in the 9th Century funeral poem *Hákonarmál*, of the Norwegian King Hakon the Good; they also carry the symbol of *Óðin*, the shield; “The Prince heard the speech of the Valkyries, Noble women, sitting on their steeds, They sat helmeted, in deep thought, Holding their shields before them” (Davidson, 1964: 92).

The accounts speak also of individual *Valkyries*, such as *Randgíðr* which translates to “shield-bearer” or “shield-truce” (Fawkes, 1987:31) and how “*Skuld* bore the shield,” (Bellows, 2004:14) before battle commenced. The shield can also be referenced as “*Hild’s* sail [shield]”, as *Hild* is another *Valkyrie* described in *Skaldskaparmal* (Faulkes, 1987:118). In Njal’s saga, the poem *Ðarraðarljóð* describes the chanting of four *Valkyries* before the battle of Clontarf in1014 AD in which they predicted the outcome of the battle and stated, “spears will shatter, shields will splinter, and swords will gnaw” (Magnusson & Pálsson, 1960: 349).

Plate 22. 9th century “Valkyrie pendant”, Wicken Market, Suffolk, England.
(Ager, 2002: 54)

Valkyries appear in the archaeological record as well (plate 22). This pendant found in Suffolk, England, shows the transition of the Old Norse beliefs from the Scandinavian countries over to England at this time and applied onto objects such as this pendant. England was heavily under Danish Viking influence during the 9th century (Stenton, 2001:257) and the depiction of a woman with a sword and shield, parallel others that have been found in Scandinavia (Margeson, 1994:31). At present the *Valkyrie* pendant (plate 22) is the only one existing in England whereby the shield is displayed in regards to a woman holding it, hence why it has been associated with the legendary *Valkyries*.

Plate 23. Valkyries on two separate pendants from Haithabu, Denmark.
(Brink & Price, 2008:81)

There are representations of the *Valkyries* with shields on pendants which were found in Haithabu (Hedeby), Denmark dating to the 10th Century which show very similar portrayals and details when compared to the pendant found in England (plate 23). There are also continuing themes between women and *Valkyries* at Birka, Björkö, Sweden (plate 24: top) as shown with the clasp, with two grasping Valkyries around a shield in the centre. A similar motif being found at Haithabu, Denmark (plate 24: bottom) and also one was found at Kaupang, Norway (Skre, 2007: pl.78).This shows that the symbolism and representation of the shield was very important and applicable to women as well as men during the Viking Age, which has not been considered before.

Plate 24. Valkyrie art styles. Valkyries on a cloak clasp holding shield in between them from Birka, Sweden (top) and Valkyries on a pendant from Haithabu, Denmark (bottom). (Brink & Price, 2008:81)

The portrayal of women during the 8th -11th centuries as *Skjaldmeyer* "shield-maidens" (Zoëga, 2005: 295), is something that is most certainly commented upon in later documentation, " Loathing a dainty style of living, they would harden body and mind with toil and endurance, rejecting the fickle pliancy of girls and compelling their womanish spirits to act with virile ruthlessness"(Jesch, 2005:176). These women who take up warfare appear in many saga's, such as *Brynhild* in Volsung Saga (Morris & Magnusson, 1888: 71), *Hervor* in Hervarar Saga (Turville-Petre, 1956:11), *Thorbjörg* in Hrólf's Saga (Pálsson & Edwards, 1972:14) and the Danish warrior women *Hed*, *Visna* and *Vebiorg* (Davidson & Fisher, 1999:234-42). In Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danes*, he makes it quite clear that there was only "one possible role for women, that of a sexual

being (and therefore), women warriors who refuse this role are further examples of the chaos and disintegration of the old heathen Denmark" (Jesch, 2005:178). A women in the Heathen world as a warrior would by all sources be considered a *Valkyrie* on earth, yet the Christian view seems to very much paint them as chaotic visions of unruly years without the guidance of the Christian faith.

There are burial examples of female warrior's surviving; two females were buried with complete weapon sets as well as shields at the Bikjholberget cemetery site, Kaupang, Norway (Skre, 2007:84). In western Norway there are also a few female gendered graves, which otherwise contain "male" artefacts, such as shields and weaponry (Skre, 2007:84). There is one grave from south-eastern Norway at Åsnes, Hedmark, which also has an interred female skeleton with a "full range of weapons" (Skre, 2007:84). As scholarly work goes there is hardly any literature or investigation that has gone into the *Valkyrie*, warrior women idea, even though there are archaeological examples surviving. This material tends to get commented upon by leading Viking Age experts but it would appear that no active attempt has been made to investigate this topic further (Dammasnes, 1991. Jesch, 2005:68).

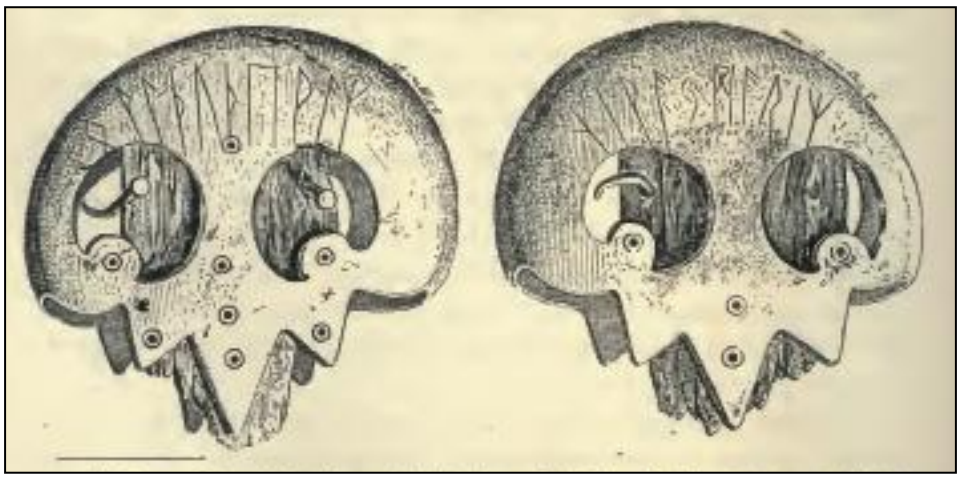


Plate 25. The Thorsberg chape, with inscription to Ullr.
(Wimmer, 1887:104)

There are two other God´s in the Norse pantheon whose symbols are the shield and that is *Oðin's* son *Viðarr* the silent God, he is "famed for his great shield" (Bellows, 2004:23) and also *Ullr*, the archer, hunter, skier, god of duels and single combat. *Ullr* was known as "the God of the Shield" (Davidson, 1964: 105) and there are many references to the shield being called *Ullr's ship* 'Ullr's shield'

and *rand –Ullr* ‘shield of Ullr’ (Davidson, 1964:106). There are very few examples of *Ullr* in the archaeology, he appears on a few stone sculptures in Sweden (Böksta Runestone) and from place name evidence such as Ulleråker, “Ullr’s field” in Uppland, Sweden and Ullarhváll “Ullr’s hill” in Oslo, Norway the significance of *Ullr’s* name is shown (Joseph & Daniels, 2010: 48), but otherwise he is quite an allusive god. There has been a runic inscription found however, dating to the 3rd Century AD in Denmark on a scabbard chape (plate 25) which bears the writing “Servant of Ullr”. This shows that *Ullr* as a god is being recognised very early on during the Roman Iron Age in Denmark.

In the historical literature of *Völuspá* there is a comment on a group of people called the *Skjöldungars*, a legendary family of Danish nobility(Faulkes, 1987: 4), the name translated means “shield-younger’s” (Zoëga, 2005:379,451). However in mythology *Skiold (Skjöld)* was another son of *Oðin* who came to the realms of men, had a son and his line passed on down the centuries in Denmark (Davidson & Fisher, 1999:15). This is a very early representation of the shield in the historical accounts, and it has been academically suggested that if *Skiold* and his *Skjöldungars* did exist they would fall into the early 3rd century AD of Danish history (Faulkes, 1987:106-7).

It can be seen through the stories and mythology how Viking age peoples would be able to relate to their gods and heroes with a shield. The symbolism is certainly strong enough at this time to invoke very passionate reactions on objects and places, so it has to be suggested that these beliefs were an integral part of Viking age life. If the gods deemed that the shield was good enough to protect themselves in their own otherworldly conflicts, no wonder a Viking person using the shield, male or female, may have felt the connection with the spiritual beliefs of their ancestors and the almighty Norse Gods.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LAY OF THRYM

Summary of the Depiction of Viking Shields on Stone Sculpture in England and Sweden

Whilst still in the realms of mythology and archaeology it is important to just briefly highlight the archaeological resource that is stone sculpture in terms of the motifs, designs and parallels where the shield is displayed. It is extremely significant to consider the mythological and historical representations on these stone carvings to enhance the knowledge of the shield in all its contexts.

Stone sculpture from the 8th- 11th century takes its form as memorials, cenotaphs, grave markers and commemorative monoliths depicting Viking mythology and personal messages. Bailey stated that, “for the historian and archaeologist the other great attraction of sculpture is its immobility” (1980: 22). It has also been stated that “many if not all pre-Norman sculptures were originally painted,” and that “We must be very careful when we judge the competence and effect of a carving, we must remember that we are looking at a sculpture, which was probably not designed to be seen in this state, we are seeing the stage before completion” (Bailey, 1980:26). These are important aspects to consider when analysing why a piece of stone sculpture is where it is and how it was meant to be viewed during the 8th-11th century. It would have created a statement of dominance and assertion on the landscape within which it was set and they would be visible to all members of the local community whether they are of Scandinavian decent or not. Individually these designs hold substantial amounts of finite detail and collectively are important to understanding the Viking shield across the northern European world.

England: Cumbria

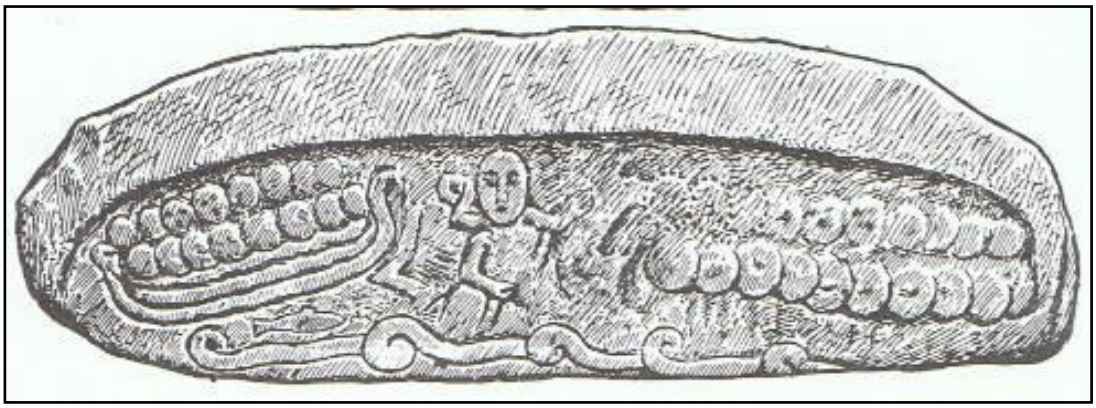


Plate 26. The Lowther Hogback, c.950 AD.

(1.59m Length x 60cm Width)

Depicting two Viking ships filled with warriors, shields adorning the outside gunwales of the ship and a female figure, possibly a Valkyrie, standing in the centre of the stone. Shield bosses are visible in the centre of the shields.

(Bailey, 1980: 88)

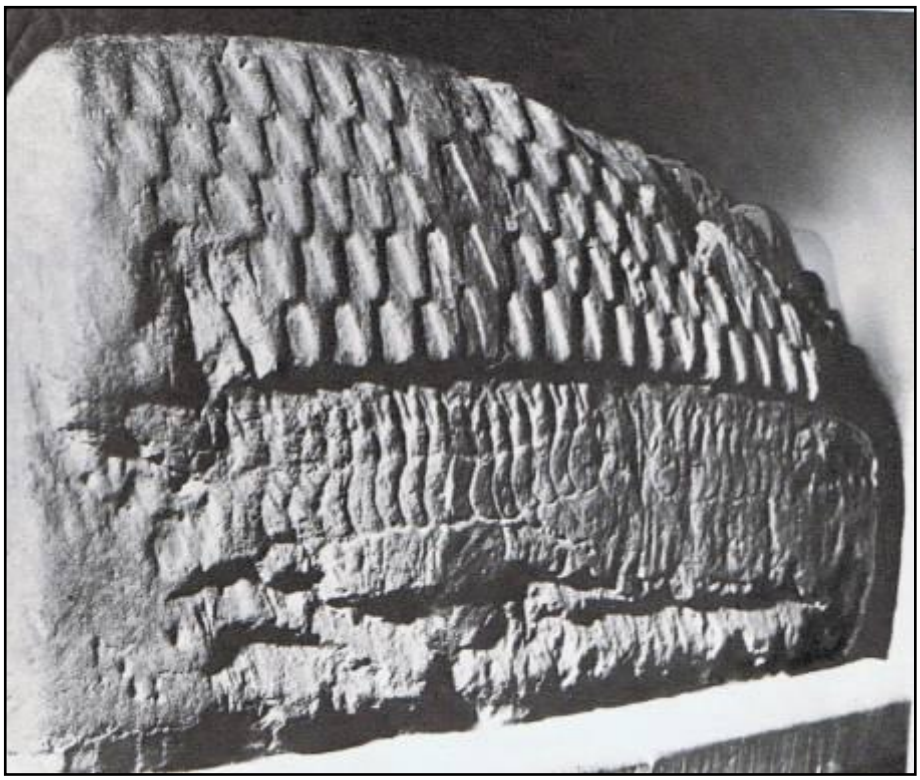


Plate 27. Gosforth Warrior Tomb, c.900-950 AD.

(1.68cm Length)

Showing a scaled roofed building with warriors marching in procession, shields held in line, possibly a representation of warriors entering Valhöll.

(Bailey, 1980: 136)

County Durham

Plate 28. Sockburn Cross, c.900-1000 AD.

(81cm Length)

Depiction of a warrior riding on horseback possibly carrying a shield, at the bottom a Valkyrie with a shield is offering a man a drink; shield boss and rim are visible.

(Bailey, 1980: 113)

Plate 29. Sockburn Warrior, c.900-1000 AD.

(68.6cm Height of Warrior)

Showing a warrior in profile, carrying a shield on his back and spear, has be created on a very large template, possible for finer detail to be painted, ability to be personal and highly decorated.

(Bailey, 1980: 243)

North Yorkshire

Plate 30. Middleton Warrior, c.850-900 AD.

(1.17m Height)

Depiction showing a warrior with spear, sword, scram, axe and shield (in the top right), boss visible in the middle, possibly be a representation of the person in the grave.

(Bailey, 1980: 65)

Derbyshire

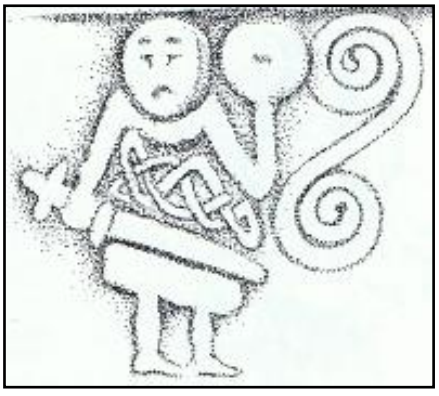


Plate 31. Brailsford Cross Warrior, c.1000 AD.

Warrior with sword and shield held aloft, boss portrayed in the middle.

(Stephenson, 2002: 31)

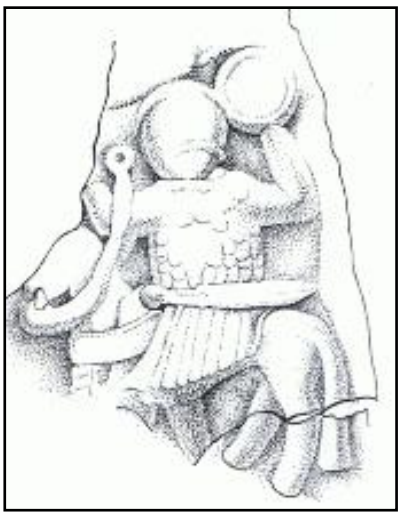


Plate 32. Repton Stone Warrior, c.780-850 AD.

Warrior on horseback with sword and shield held above the head, shield rim visible.

(Stephenson, 2002: 32)

Scandinavia: Gotland, Sweden

Plate 33. Halla Bora Stone,
c.700-800 AD.
(65cm Height)
Depiction of shields lining the outside gunwales of the ship, bosses visible in the centre.

(Stephany, 2010:14)

Plate 34. Lillbjärs Stone, c.700-800 AD.
(70cm Height)
Warrior carrying drinking horn and shield on horseback.
(Nylén & Lamm, 1988:101)

Plate 35. Lärbro Tängelgårda Stone,
c 700- 800 AD.
(2.07m Height)
Depiction of warrior riding to Valhöll, carrying shield, shield has swirl design coming out from the centre
(Stephany, 2010:11)

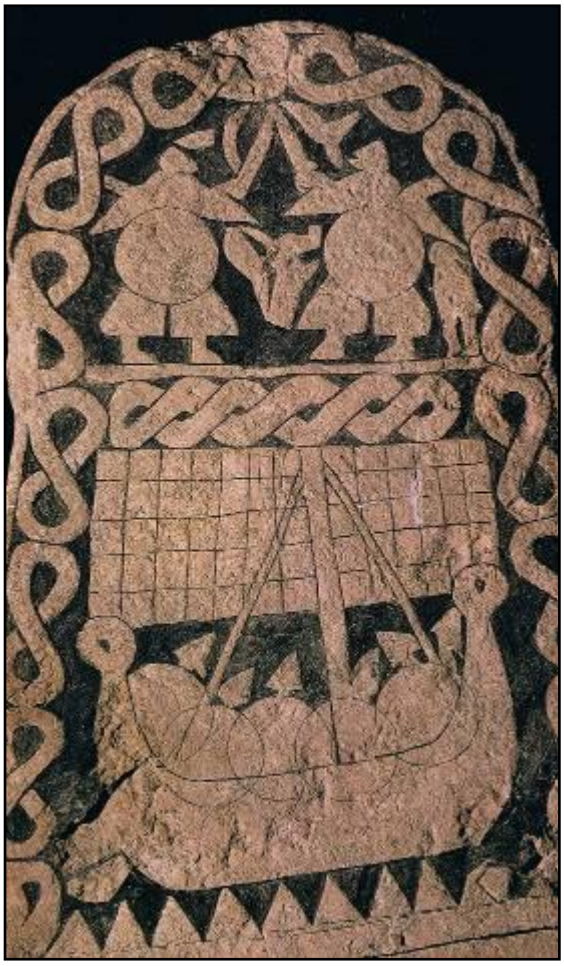


Plate 36. Smiss Stone, c.700-800 AD.

(90cm Height)

Depiction of two warriors duelling with sword and shield: possible *holmgang*, with a ship and shields lining the outside of gunwales.

(Graham-Campbell, 1980: 28)

Plate 37. Lärbro Stekyrka Lillbjärs Stone, c700-800 AD.

(3m Height)

Showing a warrior riding to Valhöll whilst carrying a shield, that has swirl designs visible.

(Graham- Campbell, 1980: 91)

Plate 38. Alskog Stone, c.700-800 AD.

(1.73m Height)

Depiction of two warriors duelling with shields and swords: possible *holmgang*.

(Stephany, 2010:23)

Plate 39. Lärbro Stora Hammars Stone, c.700-900 AD.

Depiction of a man hanging with a shield, as part of a sacrifice to Óðin: shield rim visible. Warriors with swords and shields standing nearby, shield rim and bosses visible.

(liv.ac.uk, 2007)

Plate 40. Lärbro Stora Hammars Stone, c.700-900 AD.

Showing a set of warriors in a ship holding shield and swords and warriors on land with swords and shields: with a Valkyrie figure standing in the centre

(liv.ac.uk, 2007)

Plate 41. Lärbro Stora Hammars Stone, c.700-900 AD.

A depiction of warriors in a ship with shields placed on the inside of the gunwales of the ship.

(liv.ac.uk, 2007)

Plate 42. Klinte Stone,

c.700-900 AD.

(2.95m Height)

A depiction of warrior's duelling with swords and shields, possibly a *holmgang*, a warrior on horseback with a spear and shield, and warriors in a ship holding their shields.

(arild-hauge.com, 2002)

Summary of Stone Sculpture

Individually these designs are extremely important in helping to try and understand the meaning and purpose of the shield displayed on them. What is certainly clear from these stone sculptures is that they signify a common collective thought that is being transferred over from Scandinavia and applied in England. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the Lowther hogback in England (plate 26) and the Lärbro Stora Hammars Stone, Sweden (plate 40). They both depict extremely similar scenes of warriors on the sea getting ready to face each other in battle, with a *Valkyrie* woman standing in-between them, possibly waiting to collect any fallen warriors.

Some stones appear to have been painted (plate 36 and 37), but unfortunately these are modern applications (Graham-Campbell, 1980: 28, 91). It does however give a glimpse as to the potential colour and vibrancy, especially in terms of the shield as well, there is allot of potential for colour. Especially stones such as the Sockburn Warrior (plate 29) due to the template being so large it would have enabled allot of colour and detail to be added, the amazing thought with this however, is that it could actually represent an individual and therefore it could have been painted in their image. Likewise with the Middleton Warrior (plate 30) it could even be suggested that this particular sculpture is actually a grave plan or a depiction of how a Viking warrior should be equipped for the great journey of death.

The size of the shield in the sculpture does vary, but that can be due to stylistic representation and of course space on the actual stone, but as has been seen it's not unusual to have different sizes of shields demonstrated on the stone sculpture.

When it comes to the scenes and the reoccurring themes on the stone sculptures the elements that always seem to be seen together with the Viking shield are pictures such as ships, horses, representations of *Valhöll, Oðin, Valkyries,* Warrior's and of course combat.

Plate 43 demonstrates all 17 pictorial examples used from England and Sweden and highlights the iconography that is consistent with the Viking shield. The strongest connection appears to be with those individuals whose choice of occupation is a permanent state of warfare and readiness, the Warrior. In all but one of the plates used the warrior ethos comes through in abundance. In plate 41, the detail of the picture is very difficult to see, this plate is from the same stone as plate 39 and 40, just from a different area. This illustrates a very important point that due to age, interference, weathering and erosion of different forms it is sometimes difficult to make out the designs and therefore evidence can be lacking or slanted.

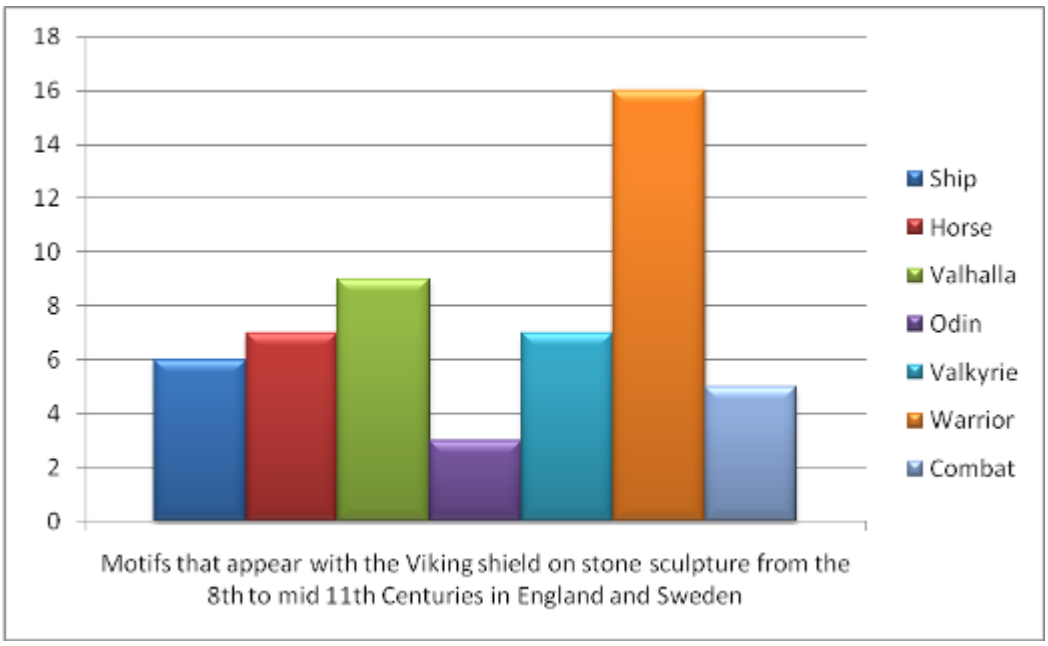


Plate 43. A collective assement of other important Viking Age motifs against that of the shield present in Scandinavian stone sculpture.

The next highly represented theme is that of the after-life and the journey, including the walk or ride to *Valhöll*. In many of the *Valhöll* scenes the deceased is carried into the realm of the Gods on horseback (plates 28, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37 and 42) where a *Valkyrie* awaits with mead for the departed warrior. However there also seems to be the rare few that could either being depicting Oðin himself or extremely significant warriors entering *Valhöll* as there are other higher status symbols appearing next to the scenes. The raven in plate 28, could symbolise the guidance and protection of Oðin whilst the Warrior seeks his way to the afterlife, out of the realms of men past the world serpant

Iormungand. In plate 35 there appears two *Valknuts*, symbols of *Oðin* for everlasting life, protection and also the power to bind and un-bind all earthly things (Davidson, 1964: 147), this depiction may actually be of *Oðin* due to the other designs on the stone itself. Plate 34 shows a hidden *Valknut* underneath the rider and horse, plate 37 also demonstrates another *Valknut* just behind the Warrior riding up to the *Valkyrie*, and plate 39 shows a sacrifice taking place in the name of *Oðin* as there is a hung-man strung from a tree who posses a shield and the *Valknut* over the sacrificial table. It is also important to state at this point that *Oðin* was also considered the "God of the hanged" (Davidson, 1964:29) and for a long time cremation was seen as a way of getting the soul to *Oðin* as quick as possible, the symbol of the *Valknut* would help this transition (Davidson, 1964:147).

The ship is also an important visual application of the important journeys in life as well as death, plates 26, 33, 40 and 42 shows Warriors in ships with their shields and swords ready for battle; it is thought that all this symbolism in some way was also played out in the theatre of the burial ceremony (Price, 2010). Such as at Lindholm Høje in Denmark, whereby in the cremation cemetery, which spans from the 8th-11 th centuries, countless deceased Scandinavians sought to get to *Valhöll* as quick as possible by out-lining their graves in the forms of ships (plate 44).

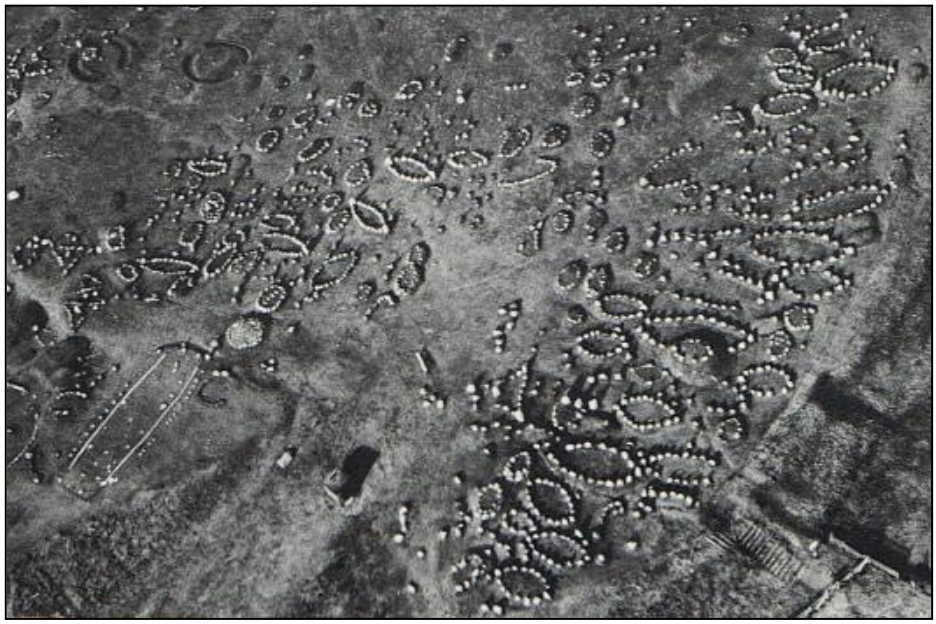


Plate 44. Aerial View of the Lindholm Høje cemetery Jutland, Denmark.
(Jones, 1984: 117)

This type of analysis shows the level of symbolism and meaning in these stone sculptures both in England and Scandinavia, symbolism that if it is being applied to death ritual and battle courage, this most certainly would have been applied visually on the shield as well.

In terms of the shields placement in the sculptures of the Viking age it is possible to obtain the visual use and display of the shield. Plate 45 shows the different situations in which the shield appears.

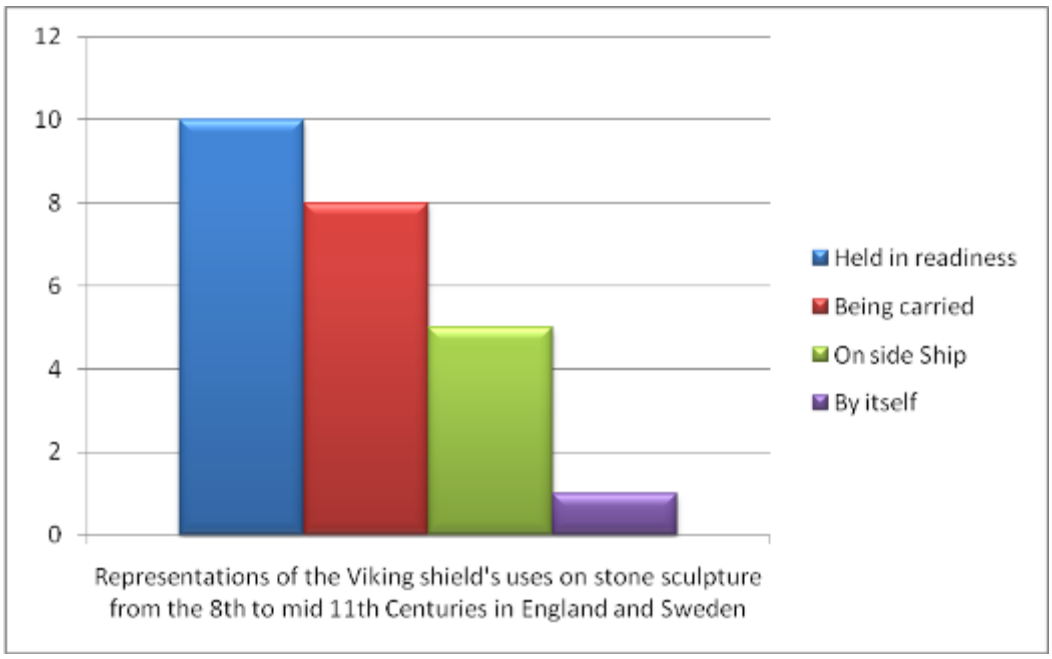


Plate 45. Placement of the shield in the stone sculpture.

In the imagery there were 10 depictions on the sculptures which showed the shield being presented ready for use in a defensive or offensive manner, either in battle or single duel such as in plate 38. On some of the stones these representations occurred more than once on the same sculpture so they have been taken into account. The shield as a mobile object is demonstrated very well in the iconography, it is either being carried in hand whilst on horseback such as in plate 37 or being carried whilst individuals are moving, such as in plate 27. This suggests that the shield is light enough to move around with in haste, if necessary. The placement of the shields on the ship is interesting as it shows the transportation of the shield across the sea, showing that this is an object a Viking person would very much want to have within them when travelling towards conflict. There is only one example of the shield in semi-

isolation is on the Middleton Warrior (plate 30), it is neither being held by the warrior nor attached physically to any other object in the picture. It stands alone because the imagery and symbolistic placement speaks for itself, the shield needed to be within the scene.

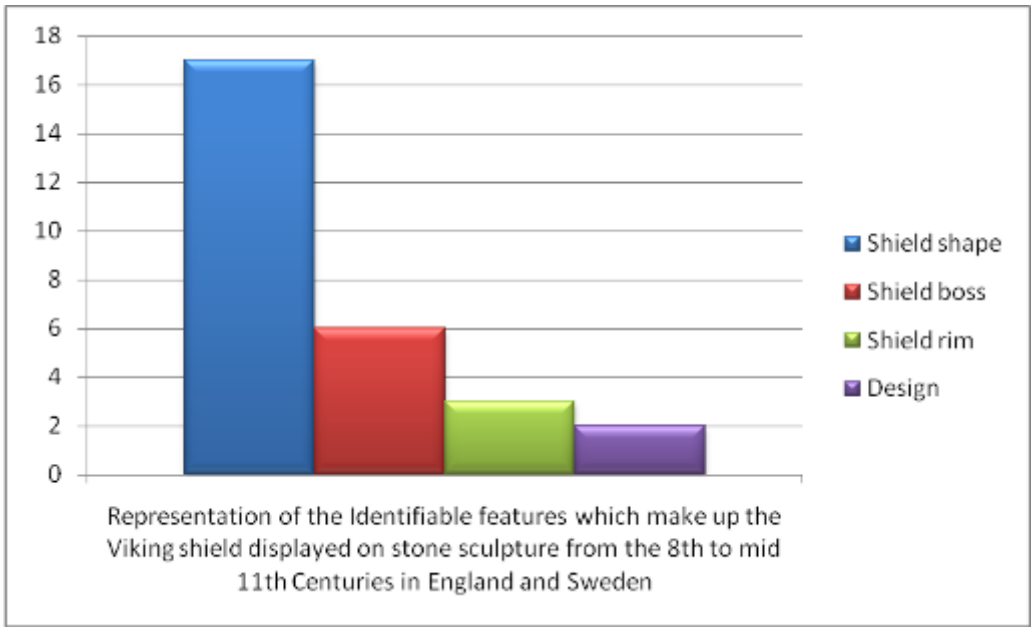


Plate 46. Identifiable features of the shield on stone sculpture.

Finally, in terms of the display of the shield on the stone sculpture it is important just to consider how the actual shield is being drawn, and what diagnostic elements are being included to identifying it as a shield. All 17 images had the basic circular shape of the shield, only 6 had indications of the shield boss present and of those that had the rim included there were only 2. In most cases with the drawing where there is no boss or rim detail the context of the object denotes it to be a shield by the way it is being portrayed in the scene (plate 40).

When it comes to the designs that are mentioned in the historical texts that appear painted on the front of the shield, it is only on plate 35 and 37 that have the spirraling designs on the shield, one with 5 divisions (plate 35) and the other with 7 (plate 37). These designs were clearly meant to represent something in terms of the individuals being portrayed, but without the colour it is impossible to suggest what this spiral motif may mean. The whorl design could be attributed to *Oðin* for some spiritual protection, as it is appears on the *Valkyrie* pendants from Haithabu, Denmark (plate 23). Intriguingly it also appears on pendants

which appear to have belonged to men and women during the Viking age (plate 47).

These ‘shield pendants’ have the whorl patten on them, however the exciting aspect is that in the graves at Birka, there were 12 of these “shield” pendants found and most of them belonged to women (Duczko, 1985: 50). Duczko when commenting on the filigree and granulation work of pendants found at Birka stated that, “these pendants can be interpreted as shields that not only have an aesthetic function but also a magical one” (1985: 50).

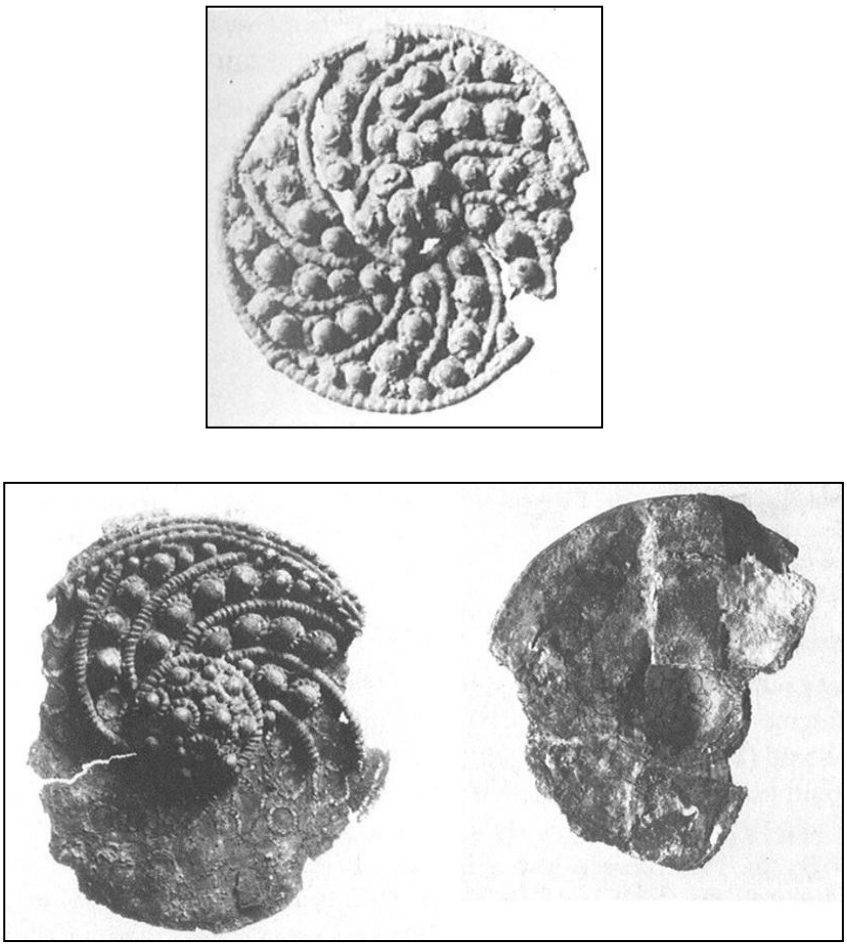


Plate 47. Shield pendants from 10th Century Birka, Björkö, Sweden.
Top: Grave Bj.660. Bottom: Grave Bj.825.
(Duczko, 1985: 49)

In the graves at Birka these ‘shield’ pendants are more evidence which links the Viking shield and its symbolism to women. Therefore it begs the question why are these women being buried with this symbol of the shield as a pendant and how frequently do these appear in the burial rite during the Viking age? Is it

possible to identify women who would possibly be shieldmaidens by looking at these pendants or does it represent the protection from her husband when he goes off to battle? this most certainly is an new idea which has not been considered before. At present there have been no investigation into this particular set of items and unfortunately it is not viable to enter into this particular object analysis in detail within this study.There are other ‘shield pendants’ which are found throughout northern Europe and even Russia, plate 48 (Duczko,1985: 50) so it shows the widespread symbolism of this shield object.

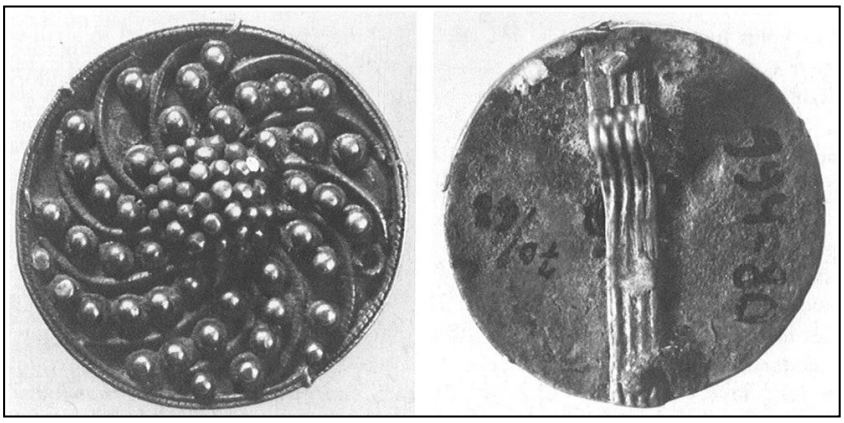


Plate 48. Shield pendant from Gnezdovo, Smolensk, Russia.
(Duczko, 1985: 49)

The brief analysis of the stone sculpture and the visual designs of the shield in England and Sweden has shown some very interesting parrallels between the thought processes, not only of the people who created them, but also possibly the thoughts of the wider Scandinavian populus during the 8th-11th century. It is also apparent that the shield is being used as a “liminal marker” between the world of the living and the afterlife, that this object can dwell in both realms and still keep it purpose and symbolism which is a very powerful thing (Parker-Pearson, 2006:22).

This brief overview of previous work has enabled the benefits of a comparative archaeological and historical study to be seen, as a great advantage when trying to understand the display of the shield within Viking society. Now that the precedent has been set and the context illustrated by previous work undertaken it is imperative to delve into the main body of new research that will hopefully enhance the knowledge that exists on the Viking shield.

CHAPTER SIX

SKOLL AND HATI

Results

Photographic Collection: Shield bosses

Site Number 1: Cronk Moar, Jurby. Isle of Man:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site Number 2: Balladoole, Arbory. Isle of Man:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site Number 3: Balladoyne (Cronk yn How), German. Isle of Man:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site Number 4: Knock y Doonee, Andreas. Isle of Man:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site Number 5: Ballateare, Jurby. Isle of Man:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site Number 6: Meols, Wirral, Merseyside. England:

(Courtesy of the Grosvenor Museum, 2011)

Site Number 7: Cumwhitton, Carlisle, Cumbria. England:

(Courtesy of the OANorth Lancaster, 2011)

Site Number 8: Hesket-in-the-Forest, Eden, Cumbria. England:

(Courtesy of the Tullie House Museum, 2011)

(Courtesy of the Tullie House Museum, 2011)

Site Number 9: Ormside, Eden, Cumbria. England:

(Courtesy of the Tullie House Museum, 2011)

Shield Nails:

Site Number 10: Heath Wood (Mound 50), Ingleby, Derbyshire. England:

SF: 105

SF: 118

SF: 120

SF: 112

SF: 104

SF: 114

SF: 145

SF: 146

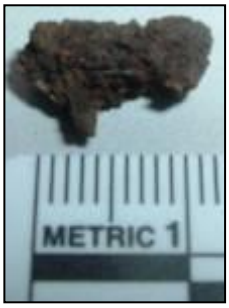
SF: 147

SF: 148

SF: 149

(Courtesy of the Derby Museum, 2011)

SF: 151



SF: 152

SF: 153

SF: 157

SF: 158

SF: 162

SF: 163

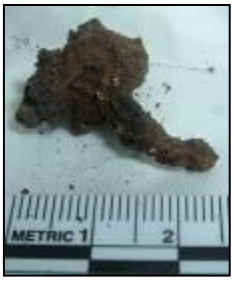
SF: 168

SF: 271

SF: 126

SF: 127

SF: 134



SF: 129

SF: 130

SF: 132

SF: 142

SF: 143

(Courtesy of the Derby Museum, 2011)

Site Number 11: Heath Wood (Mound 7), Ingleby, Derbyshire. England:

J

(Courtesy of the Derby Museum, 2011)

Shield Clamps:

Site Number 10: Heath Wood (Mound 50), Ingleby, Derbyshire. England.

SF: 150

SF: 166

SF: 167

(Courtesy of the Derby Museum, 2011)

SF: 128

SF: 135

SF: 136

SF: 137

SF: 138

SF: 139

SF: 140

SF: 144

(Courtesy of the Derby Museum, 2011)

Shield Grip and Bracers:

Site Number 2: Balladoole, Arbory. Isle of Mann:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Organics:

Site Number 1: Cronk Moar, Jurby. Isle of Mann:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site Number 5: Ballateare, Jurby. Isle of Mann:

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Sites with Viking shields surviving:

Table 1. Site Index for remains analysed

Site number	*Site Name*	*Date*	*Excavated by*	*Collections held by*
1	Cronk Moar, Jurby. Isle of Mann	850- 950 AD	Bersu 1940	Manx Museum: 1966-0374/05. Alison Fox. Curator: 2010.
2	Balladoole, Arbory. Isle of Mann	880 - 920 AD	Bersu 1940	Manx Museum: 1966-0372/02a. Alison Fox. Curator: 2010.
3	Balladoyne (Cronk yn How), German. Isle of Mann	875 - 900 AD	Megaw 1938	Manx Museum: 1954-3898c. Alison Fox. Curator: 2010.
4	Knock y Doonee, Andreas. Isle of Mann	900 - 950 AD	Kermode 1930	Manx Museum: 1954-2772/19. Alison Fox. Curator: 2010.
5	Ballateare, Jurby. Isle of Mann	850- 950 AD	Bersu 1940	Manx Museum: 1966-0373/08. Alison Fox. Curator: 2010.
6	Meols, Wirral, Merseyside. England.	900-1000 AD	1877-78 Potter	Grosvenor Museum: M2894. Elizabeth Royales. Curator: 2011.
7	Cumwhitton, Carlisle, Cumbria. England.	900 -950 AD	Oxford ArchaeologyNorth & English Heritage 2004.	OANorth Lancaster Offices: CWO4-903-19. Adam Parsons: 2011.
8	Hesket-in-the-Forest, Eden, Cumbria. England.	900-950 AD	Hodgson 1822	Tullie House Museum: 418/419: 1822. Tim Padley. Curator: 2011.
9	Ormside, Eden, Cumbria. England.	800-900 AD	Brunskill 1898	Tullie House Museum: 1898.24.2. Tim Padley. Curator: 2011.
10	Heath Wood (Mound 50), Ingleby, Derbyshire. England.	873-917 AD	Richards 1998-2000	Derby Museum: HW99. Rachel Atherton. Curator: 2011.
11	Heath Wood (Mound 7), Ingleby, Derbyshire. England.	873-917 AD	Clarke & Frazer 1948	Derby Museum: DBYMU1985-225/14. Rachel Atherton. Curator: 2011.

Data Results:

Table 2. Shield boss data

		Cone						Wall				Flange							Depth	Overall	Overall
Site number	*Context*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*Metal*	*(mm)*	*Height (mm)*	*Weight (g)*
1	Burial	domed	115.46	45°	N	/	12.00	/	/	/	/	145.71	14.21	15°	2.24	6	/	Fe	66	78	390
2	Burial	conical	112.66	50°	N	/	5.42	straight	105.13	24.95	12.01	112.87	28.22	15°	3.08	4	/	Fe	/	72.2	257
3	Burial	domed	124.6	50°	Y	8.18	2.64	straight	108.24	3.83	/	155.5	28.5	5°	3.58	4	/	Fe	61.36	89.86	469
4	Burial	domed	/	50°	N	/	2.45	straight	115.00	13.79	2.49	153.00	15.64	4°	5.27	1	/	Fe	/	57	240
5	Burial	domed	107.09	40°	N	/	5.99	/	/	/	/	144.00	13.06	10°	2.66	4	/	Fe	74.4	58	333
6	Burial	domed	114.12	59°	N	/	1.37	/	/	/	/	168.00	26	5°	3.78	5	/	Fe	/	49.20	157
7	Burial	domed	112.72	50°	Y	/	1.27	straight	112.52	8.57	7.07	137.54	12.42	5°	2.45	/	/	Fe	67.01	68.28	425
8	Burial	domed	/	50°	Y	3.51	2.06	straight	/	6.57	1.42	114.05	17.51	5°	1.95	1	1.42	Fe	/	57.50	134
9	Burial	arched	105.75	60°	N	/	3.47	/	/	/	/	117.61	33.43	5°	2.78	2	6.12	Fe	92.34	97.1	323

Key:

Cone: - *1:* Shape of cone
2: Diameter (mm)
3: Angle of slope (°)
4: Carination present?
5: Width of Carination (mm)
6: Thickness of metal (mm)

Wall: - *7:* Shape of wall
8: Diameter (mm)
9: Height (mm)
10: Thickness of metal (mm)

Flange: -*11:* Diameter (mm)
12: Width (mm)
13: Angle of slope (°)
14: Thickness of metal (mm)
15: Rivet holes present
16: Diameter rivet holes (mm)

Table 3. Nails inside the shield boss

Site Number	Nail type	Head type	Complete	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail Head (mm)	Shank type	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter Nail Shank (mm)	Total Length (mm)	Length of Clenched Tail (mm)	Metal
1	straight	circular domed	N	14.27	/	/	/	3.80	/	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	13.65	/	round	8.01	/	/	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	13.66	/	round	5.72	/	/	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	13.34	3.94	round	4.37	/	8.31	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	/	/	round	9.25	3.25	/	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	14.55	/	/	/	/	/	/	Fe
2	straight	circular domed	N	8.81	/	round	6.66	4.10	/	/	Fe
3	straight	/	N	/	/	round	5.85	4.95	/	/	Fe
4	straight	/	N	/	/	round	6.08	5.92	/	/	Fe
5	/	circular domed	N	15.34	/	/	/	/	/	/	Fe
6	straight	circular domed	N	8.71	/	square	8.95	3.66	/	/	Fe
	clenched	circular domed	Y	6.80	/	square	14.21	3.67	/	outside: 10.07 inside: 6.06	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	6.83	/	square	3.75	3.69	/	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	6.41	/	round	17.54	4.71	/	/	Fe
	straight	circular domed	N	7.80	/	square	9.84	4.69	/	/	Fe
7	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
8	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
9	straight	square	N	6.51 x6.00	4.13	round	7.00	5.18	11.13	/	Fe

Table 4. Shield nails from Site 10

Site Number	Small Find Number	Context Number	Nail type	Head type	Complete	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail Head (mm)	Shank type	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter Nail Shank (mm)	Total Length (mm)	Length of Clenched Tail (mm)	Metal	Weight (g)
10	105	410	clenched	circular domed	Y	8.11	2.42	square	11.82	5.49	14.24	O: 12.82 + I: 8.22	Fe	2
	118	410	straight	circular flat	N	11.56	2.00	/	/	/	/	/	Fe	1
	120	304	clenched	circular flat	Y	8.38	2.18	square	14.48	5.02	16.66	O: 4.08 + I: 3.51	Fe, Sn+ Pb on head	2
	112	209	clenched	square	N	11.60 x 12.89	1.78	round	20.39	7.92	22.17	O: 14.85 + I: 10.05	Fe	5
	104	304	straight	circular flat	Y	7.49	23.41	square	20.79	4.27	23.41	/	Fe	4
	114	118	straight	square	N	11.35 x 8.01	11.86	square	7.39 + 27.83	4.66	47.08	/	Fe	9
	145	308	clenched	circular domed	Y	8.34	3.11	square	7.43	5.76	10.54	O: 11.28 + I: 11.03	Fe	2
	146	308	straight	/	N	/	/	square	7.73	6.16	7.73	/	Fe	4
	147	308	straight	circular domed	Y	9.33	4.87	round	19.27	4.13	24.87	/	Fe, Sn on head	2
	148	308	straight	circular domed	Y	11.43	6.00	round	20.03	5.60	26.03	/	Fe+ plating on head?	3
	149	308	/	circular flat	N	19.75	6.46	/	/	/	/	/	Fe	1
	151	308	straight	/	N	/	/	square	9.91	3.74	9.91	/	Fe	1
	152	308	straight	/	N	/	/	square	12.54	4.71	12.54	/	Fe	1
	153	308	clenched	/	N	/	/	square	9.23	3.66	9.23	O: 4.96 + I: 1.92	Fe	1
	157	411	straight	circular flat	N	10.40	3.39	round	5.51	3.65	8.90	/	Fe	1
	158	411	clenched	circular domed	Y	9.27	2.35	round	12.04	2.67	14.39	O: 6.00 + I: 5.73	Fe	2
	162	411	clenched	circular flat	N	10.84	5.63	square	5.21	4.07	10.84	O: 3.43 + I: 4.29	Fe, Sn on head	2

Table 5. Shield nails from Site 10 continued

Site Number	Small Find Number	Context Number	Nail type	Head type	Complete	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail Head (mm)	Shank type	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter Nail Shank (mm)	Total Length (mm)	Length of Clenched Tail (mm)	Metal	Weight (g)
10	163	411	straight	/	N	/	/	square	18.12	3.06	18.12	/	Fe	1
	168	411	straight	circular domed	N	4.39	2.85	square	5.05	1.85	7.90	/	Fe + plating on head	1
	271	411	straight	circular domed	N	3.75	1.35	square	5.57	2.41	6.92	/	Fe+ Ag on Head	1
	126	415	straight	circular flat	N	11.00	/	square	24.86	/	24.86	/	Fe	3
	127	308	straight	circular flat	N	11.20	4.95	round	17.00	4.27	21.95	/	Fe	2
	134	411	straight	circular domed	Y	9.41	4.96	square	18.06	5.16	23.02	/	Fe , Sn +Cu on head	2
	129	411	clenched	circular flat	Y	9.94	8.78	square	12.47	4.34	21.25	O: 8.31 + I: 3.21	Fe	3
	130	411	clenched	circular domed	Y	12.36	2.51	round	9.00	4.44	11.51	O: 10.51 + I: 7.48	Fe + plating on head	3
	132	308	straight	circular domed	N	12.09	3.65	round	12.91	4.54	16.56	/	Fe + plating on head	2
	142	411	clenched	circular domed	Y	7.55	1.84	round	23.68	3.20	25.52	O: 7.78 + I: 5.03	Fe + plating on head	4
	143	411	straight	circular domed	N	11.73	2.70	square	7.62	5.51	10.32	/	Fe, Sn on head	2

Table 6. Shield nails from Site 11

Site Number	Nail type	Head type	Complete	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail Head (mm)	Shank type	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter Nail Shank (mm)	Total Length (mm)	Length of Clenched Tail (mm)	Metal	Weight (g)
11	clenched	circular flat	Y	9.81	1.50	square	17.42	4.55	18.92	O: 15.18 + I: 7.81	Fe	2
	clenched	circular domed	Y	8.51	1.96	round	15.97	3.89	17.93	O: 7.43 + : 5.35	Fe	2
	straight	circular domed	N	9.14	6.22	square	9.75	3.83	15.97	/	Fe	1
	clenched	circular flat	Y	11.58	3.25	square	14.45	4.32	17.70	O: 9.05 + I: 6.30	Fe	1
	straight	circular flat	N	13.24	2.03	round	15.15	4.50	17.18	/	Fe	3
	straight	circular flat	N	8.02	6.06	round	10.23	4.01	16.29	/	Fe	1
	straight	circular domed	N	7.59	4.56	round	15.96	4.56	20.42	/	Fe	1
	clenched	/	N	/	/	square	22.37	4.73	22.37	O: 6.79 + I: 4.56	Fe	1
	clenched	circular flat	Y	10.03	2.89	square	10.40	4.56	13.29	O: 7.79 + I: 5.47	Fe	1
	clenched	/	N	/	/	square	17.85	3.14	17.85	O: 9.32 + I: 5.30	Fe	1
	straight	circular domed	N	7.50	5.49	round	8.97	4.29	14.46	/	Fe	2
	straight	circular flat	N	10.83	2.37	square	11.39	4.63	13.76	/	Fe	2
	clenched	circular domed	Y	10.30	3.39	square	10.57	4.51	13.96	O: 7.92 + I: 5.33	Fe	1
	clenched	/	N	/	/	square	26.91	3.87	26.91	O: 11.11 + I: 8.09	Fe	4
	clenched	circular domed	N	9.26	4.77	square	5.54	4.33	10.31	/	Fe	2
	clenched	circular domed	N	8.64	3.89	square	8.00	3.25	11.89	O: 2.36 + I: 4.30	Fe	2
	/	circular domed	N	9.70	4.64	/	/	3.50	/	/	Fe	1
	clenched	circular domed	Y	11.00	7.52	square	13.75	3.69	21.27	O: 10.64 + I: 5.88	Fe	2
	straight	/	Y	/	/	square	18.93	3.71	18.93	/	Fe	1
	clenched	circular domed	Y	9.17	4.44	square	12.38	3.66	16.82	O:12.50 + I: 10.35	Fe	2
	clenched	circular domed	N	11.70	4.89	square	15.27	4.99	20.16	/	Fe	2

Table 7. Shield nails from Site 11 continued

Site Number	Nail type	Head type	Complete	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail Head (mm)	Shank type	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter Nail Shank (mm)	Total Length (mm)	Length of Clenched Tail (mm)	Metal	Weight (g)
	clenched	circular domed	N	7.67	3.25	square	8.61	4.65	11.86	O: 5.66 + I: 2.93	Fe	1
	straight	/	N	/	/	square	13.20	/	/	/	Fe	1
	straight	/	N	/	/	square	19.94	/	/	/	Fe	1
	straight	/	N	/	/	square	11.49	/	/	/	Fe	1
	straight	/	N	/	/	square	12.57	/	/	/	Fe	1

Table 8. Nails in shield clamps from Site 10

Site Number	Small Find Number	Context Number	Nail type	Head type	Complete	Diameter of Head (mm)	Thickness of Nail Head (mm)	Shank type	Length of Shank (mm)	Diameter Nail Shank (mm)	Total Length (mm)	Length of Clenched Tail (mm)	Metal
10	167	308	straight	circular flat	N	3.54	/	/	/	/	/	/	Fe
	135	308	straight	circular domed	N	4.01	/	round	/	3.13	/	/	Fe
	144	411	straight	circular domed	N	3.64	/	round	5.27	3.60	/	/	Fe

Table 9. Shield clamps from Site 10

Site Number	Small Find Number	Context Number	Complete	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	External Depth (mm)	Internal Depth (mm)	Thickness of Metal (mm)	Metal	Number of Rivet holes	Diameter Rivet Holes (mm)	Weight (g)
10	150	308	N	23.26	12.08	8.82	1.05	7	Fe	1	3.28	3
	166	308	N	10.30	7.47	/	/	2.06	Fe	/	/	1
	167	308	N	11.33	8.54	/	/	1.62	Fe	1	/	1
	128	308	Y	23.90	13.54	4.39	2.05	1.06	Cu Alloy	2	2.91 + 3.56	4
	135	308	Y	22.66	19.38	7.00	6.44	1.22	Fe	2	/	4
	136	308	N	21.33	7.64	6.40	/	1.37	Fe	/	/	3
	137	308	N	25.95	15.81	/	/	3.57	Fe	/	/	2
	138	308	N	9.60	7.46	/	/	0.98	Fe	/	/	1
	139	308	N	10.79	12.73	5.10	3.17	2.08	Fe	/	/	1
	140	308	N	12.02	10.94	4.26	/	1.76	Fe	1	2.80	1
	144	411	N	23.52	16.14	/	5.08	1.21	Fe	2	3.61 + 3.64	3
				9.34	8.91	/	/	2.70	Fe	/	/	1
				13.98	8.17	/	/	2.40	Fe	/	/	1

Table 10. Hand-grip from Site 2

Site Number	Length of Main Grip (mm)	Overall Length (mm)	Width of Main Grip (mm)	Length of end terminals (mm)	Width of end terminals (mm)	Number of fixing holes	Diameter of terminal holes (mm)	Diameter of fixing Holes (mm)	Length of Fixing Nail (mm)	Thickness of metal (mm)	Type of Material
2	215	316.77	Thinnest: 11.72 Thickest: 15.50	L: 68.79 R: 32.98	L: 46.59 R: 13.20	/	L: 40.09	/	/	3.59	Fe

Table 11. Organic remains

Site Number	Type of Organic	Length	Width	Thickness
1	shield board fragment	22.87	29.99	4.48
5	painted leather: red dots, black and white strips.	64.80	34.58	4.50

Table 12. Sites with Viking shields which have been lost through Antiquity

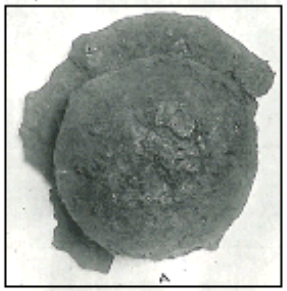
Site Name	*Date*	*Period of Remains*	*Reference*
Sandhole Wood, near Claughton Hall, Lancashire.	1822	10th century	Lancashire County Archaeology Service Monument Full Report, Accessed: 24/11/2010. SMR Number: PRN119 - MLA119. Contact: Ken Davies.
Hasty Knoll, Blackrod, Bolton, Greater Manchester.	1770	10th century	Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit Monument Full Report, Accessed: 07/12/2010. SMR Number: 501.1.0. Contact: Lesley Mitchell.
Harrold, Bedford Borough, Bedfordshire.	1950	9th century	Bedford Borough Council Monument Full Report, Accessed: 07/01/2011. SMR Number: 64 - MBD64. Contact: Vanessa Clarke.
Stoke Ferry, Wretton, Norfolk.	1913	9th - 10th century	Warburton, J.S., (1913) Some Saxon Remains found near Stoke Ferry, in Clarke, W.G. *Prehistoric Society of East Anglia: The Third part of the Proceedings of this Society*. Geological Magazine. Vol.1. No.1. Pp. 336-7 (plate LXXIV). Provided by Alice Cattermole, Norfolk HER: 31/01/2011. 
Bingham, Rushcliffe, Nottingham.	1863	9th – 11th century	Nottingham Historic Environment Record Monument Full report, Accessed: 10/01/2011. Mon No': 8873, SMR No': 1463. Contact: Virginia Baddelay.
Waterbeach, South Cambridgeshire.	1938	5th- 11th century	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record, Accessed: 12/01/2011. HER Number: 05351. Contact: Hazel White.
Bartlow, South Cambridgeshire	1853	5th- 11th century	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record, Accessed: 12/01/2011. HER Number: 06132. Contact: Hazel White.

Table 13. Sites with Viking shields which have been lost through Antiquity continued

Site Name	*Date*	*Period of Remains*	*Reference*
Location unknown, Cambridgeshire.	/	5th – 11th century	Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record, Accessed: 12/01/2011. HER Number: 09788B. Contact: Hazel White.
Clayton, West Sussex.	1824	5th – 11th century	West Sussex County Council Monument Full Report, Accessed: 18/01/2011. SMR Number: 4121 - MWS969. Contact: Rachel Salter.
Aston Rise, Remenham, Berkshire	1921	5th - 11th century	Berkshire Archaeology Monument Full Report, Accessed: 19/01/2011. HER Number: 00652.00.000 - MWK1041. Contact: Teresa Hocking.
Reading, Reading, Berkshire.	/	5th- 11th century	Berkshire Archaeology Monument Full Report, Accessed: 19/01/2011. HER Number: 01642.00.000 - MRD3657. Contact: Teresa Hocking.
Noah's Ark field, Cookham, Berkshire.	/	5th- 11th century	Berkshire Archaeology Monument Full Report, Accessed: 19/01/2011. HER Number: 00505.00.000 - MRW836. Contact: Teresa Hocking.
Park Crescent, Oxford, Oxfordshire.	1865	5th- 11th century	Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record Monument Full Report, Accessed: 01/02/2011. HER Number: 6048 - MOX9982. Contact: Susan Lisk.
Beacon Hill Barrow, Aspatria, Cumbria.	1789	8th- 11th century	Cumbria Historic Environment Record, Accessed: 29/10/2010. HER Number: 601. Contact: Jo Mackintosh.

Discussion

To begin it is important to state that all the shield boss remains came from burial contexts and that only 4 out of the 9 shield bosses were complete (Sites: 1, 3, 5 and 7) and 5 were fragmentary (Sites: 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9). The diameter of the cones varied (table 14) and it was not possible to get good measurements from the shield boss from sites 4 or 8 due to their level of fragmentation. The largest measurement is from site 3, this cone was very large but it also had quite allot of corrosion around the cone (C.i, ii, iii). The rest of the boss material falls nicely into 3 groups, sites: 9 and 5, 2 and 7, 6 and 1 (3). It is interesting to note that when it comes to the height of the wall, 4 bosses did not have a wall present in their composition at all (table 15).

Site No'	Diameter of Cone (mm)
4	0
8	0
9	105.75
5	107.09
2	112.66
7	112.72
6	114.12
1	115.46
3	124.6

Table 14.

Site No'	Height of Wall (mm)
1	0
5	0
6	0
9	0
3	3.83
8	6.57
7	8.57
4	13.79
2	24.95

Table15.

Site No'	Width of Flange (mm)
7	12.42
5	13.06
1	14.21
4	15.64
8	17.51
6	26
2	28.22
3	28.5
9	33.43

Table 16.

Site No'	Diameter of Flange (mm)
2	112.87
8	114.05
9	117.61
7	137.54
5	144
1	145.71
4	153
3	155.5
6	168

Table 17.

Site No'	Depth of Boss (mm)
2	0
4	0
6	0
8	0
3	61.36
1	66
7	67.01
5	74.4
9	92.34

Table 18.

Site No'	Overall Height (mm)
6	49.2
4	57
8	57.5
5	58
7	68.28
2	72.2
1	78
3	89.86
9	97.1

Table19.

Site No'	Overall Weight (g)
8	134
6	157
4	240
2	257
9	323
5	333
1	390
7	425
3	469

Table 20.

The diameter of the flange was dramatically different across the bosses, however those which also had a large cone, appeared to also have a large flange (sites 3 and 6: table 16). The width of the flange being large and slowly

getting smaller across the sample seems to also be indicative of the date of the boss (table 17). The depth of the boss seems to also suggest that the earlier bosses seem to have a greater exterior height and inner depth (sites 3, 7 and 9: table 18).

The bosses from sites 1, 3, 5 and 7 as well as being generally larger they also appear more robust and squatter. This is backed up by the data from the height of the bosses (table 19), except with site 2 where the height is greater due to the different form of boss type (B.i). The larger cone, rounder bosses such as sites 1, 3, 5 and 7 also demonstrate a heavier weight than those that are more slender and lighter (sites 2, 4, 8 and 9: table 20).

Therefore it would appear that there are three groups, those that are strong in form and structure, made up of denser metal such as bosses from sites 1, 3, 5 and 7. The other bosses are thinner in metal composition, taller with added walls into the structure such as sites 2, 4, 8 and 9. Then there is site 6, whereby the shield boss demonstrates qualities from each group (F.i).

Site No'	Diameter of Nail Head (mm)
1	0
	13.34
	13.65
	13.66
	14.27
	14.55
2	8.81
3	0
4	0
5	15.34
6	6.41
	6.8
	6.83
	7.8
	8.71
7	0
8	0
9	6.51 x 6.00

Table 21.

The nails that were present in the shield bosses were very badly fragmented and there was only one complete nail surviving to give good accurate data. The nail was from site 6 (F.ii) and it is a fully clenched nail from where it has been

hammered into the shield board on the reverse. There is also only one square headed nail from site 9 whereas all the others are circular and domed within the bosses. There is however good evidence to suggest grouping of the individual nails with their respective boss as demonstrated by table 21. The interesting aspect of these nails within the bosses are that in sites 1 and 6 there appear to be several nails which all appear to have very similar dimensions and then there are a couple which are allot larger (site 1 and 5); possibly suggesting these are fixing nails .

With the nails from site 10 there were 28 in total, 10 were clenched varieties, 17 were deemed straight and 1 unknown sample. However, out of the all the nails only 11 were completely intact (SF: 105, 120,104, 145, 147, 148,158,134, 129, and 130,142); although there were 23 which had the heads still present and the shank either fragmented or gone completely (table 22).

Site No'	Small Find No'	Context number	Diameter of Head (mm)
10	105	410	8.11
	118		11.56
	120	304	7.49
	104		8.38
	112	209	11.60 x 12.89
	114	118	11.35 x 8.01
	145	308	8.34
	147		9.33
	148		11.2
	149		11.43
	127		12.09
	132		19.75
	157	411	3.75
	158		4.39
	162		7.55
	168		9.27
	271		9.41
	134		9.94
	129		10.4
	130		10.84
	142		11.73
	143		12.36
	126	415	11

Table 22.

There were 12 domed headed nails, 9 flat headed and 2 square headed nails, 11 of the heads were plated with silver or tin (table 23).

Site No'	Small Find No'	Context number	Head type	Decoration
10	105	410	circular domed	
	118	410	circular flat	
	120	304	circular flat	plating on head
	104	304	circular flat	
	112	209	square	
	114	118	square	
	145	308	circular domed	
	147	308	circular domed	plating on head
	148	308	circular domed	plating on head
	149	308	circular flat	
	127	308	circular flat	
	132	308	circular domed	plating on head
	157	411	circular flat	
	158	411	circular domed	
	162	411	circular flat	plating on head
	168	411	circular domed	plating on head
	271	411	circular domed	plating on head
	134	411	circular domed	plating on head
	129	411	circular flat	
	130	411	circular domed	plating on head
	142	411	circular domed	plating on head
	143	411	circular domed	plating on head
	126	415	circular flat	

Table 23.

The nail evidence from site 10 shows that the diameter of the nail heads varies from between 7.49mm and 19.75mm (table 22). Some of the nails are the same diameter in such as in context 411 and show parallels with the nails found in the shield bosses (table 21). There are also high quantities of domed nails within contexts 308 and 411, which appear to have plating on the heads as well (table 23).

The nail evidence from site 11 shows that there were 25 nails in total, 14 were clenched nails, 11 were straight and 1 unknown. There were 8 nails which were completely intact with the heads and shanks present and 18 present whereby a head diameter could be taken (table 24).

Site No'	Diameter of Head (mm)	Head type
11	7.5	circular domed
	7.59	circular domed
	7.67	circular domed
	8.02	circular flat
	8.51	circular domed
	8.64	circular domed
	9.14	circular domed
	9.17	circular domed
	9.26	circular domed
	9.7	circular domed
	9.81	circular flat
	10.03	circular flat
	10.3	circular domed
	10.83	circular flat
	11	circular domed
	11.58	circular flat
	11.7	circular domed
	13.24	circular flat

Table 24.

The evidence from site 11 shows that the diameters of the domed nails are similar to those found in context 411 of site 10 (table 22). This shows at least these nails were probably being used for the same elements of the shield in both site 10 and site 11.

The nails in the shield clamps from site 11 only give a small piece of evidence towards the investigation, as there were only 3 fragmentary nails found within SF: 167, 135 and 144. The diameters of the heads were extremely small and there seemed to be a higher occurrence of the domed head type (table 25).

Site No'	Small Find No'	Context number	Head type	Diameter of Head (mm)
10	167	308	circular flat	3.54
	144	411	circular domed	3.64
	135	308	circular domed	4.01

Table 25.

The shield clamps from site 10 had only 2 that were complete (SF: 128 and135) from the 11 fragments and pieces that were present. Most of the clamps were from context 308, and some were larger than others but they all formed the same type of rectangular shape (table 26).

Site No'	Small Find No'	Context number	Length (mm)	Width (mm)
10	138	308	9.6	7.46
	166	308	10.3	7.47
	136	308	21.33	7.64
	167	308	11.33	8.54
	140	308	12.02	10.94
	150	308	23.26	12.08
	139	308	10.79	12.73
	128	308	23.9	13.54
	137	308	25.95	15.81
	135	308	22.66	19.38
	144	411	13.98	8.17
			9.34	8.91
			23.52	16.14

Table 26.

The shield grip from site 2 was the only example found, it was quite long at 316.77mm and tapered in an out to end disc terminals (K.ii). The metal was very thin however so this item had been finely made however the object was not in very good condition, so it was not possible to pick up and handle the shield grip. All measurements of the grip took place while the object was static on the desk, with minimal interference of the remains.

The organic remains from sites 1 and 5 are just a few fragmented pieces that have survived. They are important to help understand the species of wood that may have been used (site 1: L) and how the shield was decorated (site 5: M).

Through this process of data collecting, it was possible to see how much material evidence for the shield had been lost in England (table 12 and 13). All these references are mainly comments within the Historic Environment Records and the Sites and Monuments Record within the English shires, which state that this material did exist and is now lost or not enough information has been

passed forward for it to go on the databases. What is certain is that at present these remains are not held by any regional museums or collections and their whereabouts are unknown.

It is now imperative to interpret these remains not only to identify what the information for the shield in England and the Isle of Man means, but also to compare and contrast with some excavated remains from Scandinavia.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FIELDS OF THE FALLEN

Interpretation

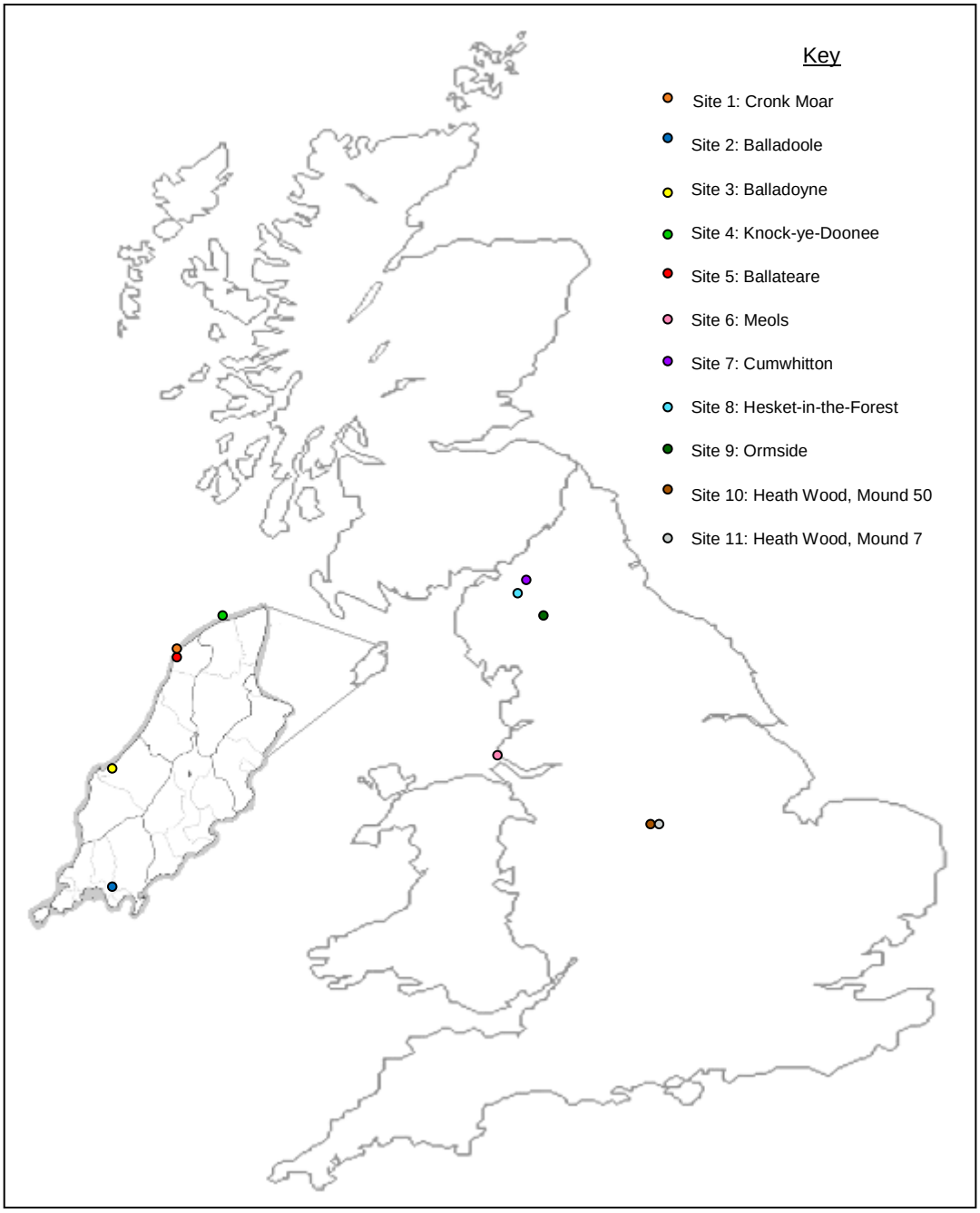


Plate 49. Distribution map of sites with shield remains surviving from England and the Isle of Man.

The material evidence gathered from England and the Isle of Man for the Viking shield has produced 11 bodies of evidence which can be analysed and interpreted in more detail (plate 49). To do this however it is best to take each component of the shield uncovered and analyse them as a group. Then once the immediate context and association is known, it will be possible to place them within a wider Scandinavian context.

Shield Bosses

The sites that had shield bosses surviving were all burials; one thing that is noticeable is that the burials were all very different. There does seem to be similarities in shape, size and form between the shield bosses when compared to each other. These traits and comparisons may be able to shed more light on the Viking shield.

Plate 50. Site 1, 5 and 6 with Rygh's shield boss type.
(Rygh, 1885, 562-565)

Shield bosses from sites 1, 5 and 6 all seem to fall into Rygh category of type 562, based on the large size of the cone and the fact that they have a higher dome (plate 50). The flange diameters are also the largest out of the data collected as well, with the largest being site 6 at 168mm, then site 1 at 145.71mm and site 5 with 144mm. The interesting aspect to note is that they all

had different amounts of nail holes in the flange. Site 1 had six, site 5 had four and site 6 had five holes, although with site 6 the flange was fragmented slightly and there is a possibility that another two holes would have been needed to attach the boss onto the boards. This variation may be down to personal preference of shield boss shape or may even be heavily dictated by the size of the person the shield is being made for.

The next groupings of bosses are from sites 3, 4, 7 and 8 these all seem to fall within Rygh's type 564 (plate 51).

Plate 51. Site 3, 4, 7 and 8 with Rygh's shield boss type 564.
(Rygh, 1885: 562-565)

These bosses are still very large but they all have the wall present around the middle of the boss. The wall measurements do vary however, as site 3 has a wall that is 3.83mm wide, site 4 is 13.79mm, site 7 is 8.57mm and site 8 is 6.57mm. This is probably partly due to the concretions on both bosses from sites 3 and 7 obscuring the ability to get a good measurement, whereas site 4 and 8 have hardly any concretions present, so this depth can be accurately determined. With Rygh's diagram (plate 51) the wall is overly exaggerated it would appear, as none of the bosses demonstrate this extent of wall or height of boss. However to prove whether there are indeed bosses that look exactly like Rygh's type 564, more data collection would need to be done around the British Isles as well as in Scandinavia.

It does appear that there are indeed variations within this type as well as site 4 and 8 are very small in shape in general, although the type and composition is the same as sites 3 and 7.

Plate 52. Site 9 the shield boss from Ormside.
(Courtesy of the Tullie House Museum)

The shield boss from site 9 (plate 52) is an object which actually does not fall into any classification by Rygh (1885:562-565). It is only by being put through comparative analysis with early Anglo Saxon material that it is possible to see parallels with Dickinson and Härkes late Saxon group 7 bosses (plate 53).

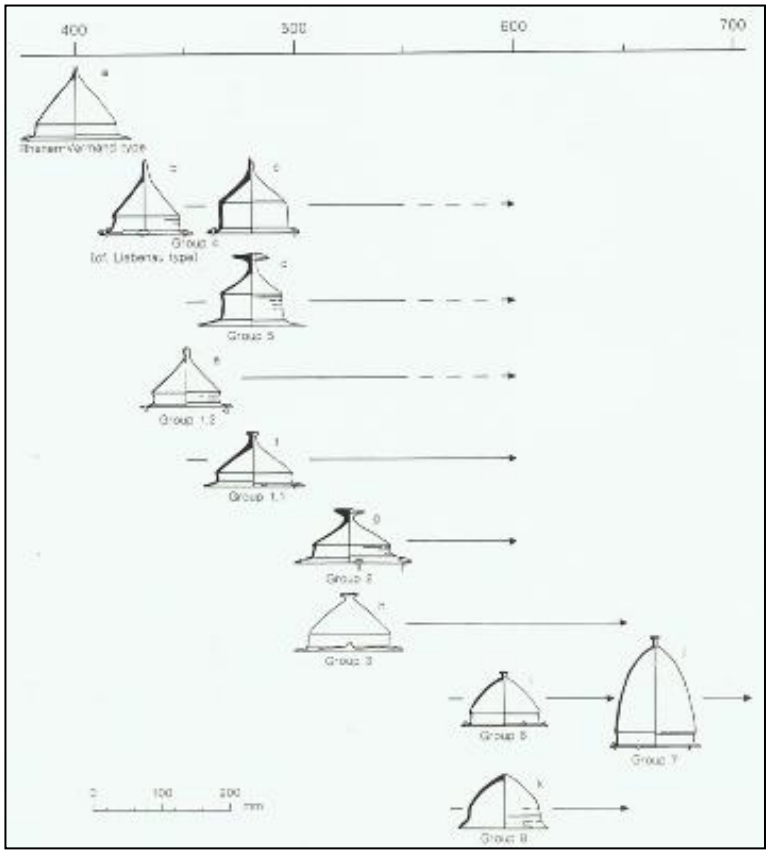


Plate 53. Early Saxon shield bosses.
(Dickinson & Härke, 1993: 23)

This form was determined by Dickinson (1992) to be dated to the second half of the 7th Century yet examples carry forward into the late Saxon period on the continent as well as in the British Isles (1992:24). This group of bosses were deemed to have been developed between 650AD to 800 AD and when compared to Evison's 'sugar loaf' shield bosses, and in particular a group mentioned as the continental Walsum type (plate 54), it suggests for these forms of boss around the 7th Century also (1963:57). The boss from site 9 is very similar to these earlier forms although there is no apex present on the Ormside boss, but the earlier parallels are striking.

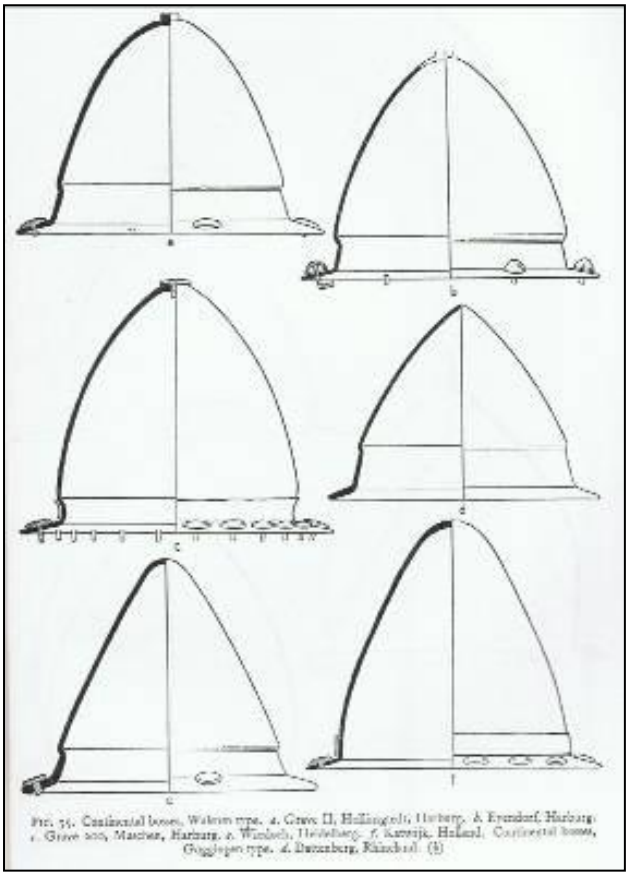


Plate 54. The early 7th century Walsum forms of Germanic boss.

(Evison, 1963:91)

Site 9 is also definitely deemed to be Viking by the other associated material found with the shield boss, such as a sword which is documented by Cowen as a pictorial reference (1934: 376). On re-assessment of this sword it is firmly placed as a type M sword, dating from 950 AD to 1050 AD, based on the Jan Petersen typology (1919:117-121) and the recent work by Oakeshott and Pierce on the re-evaluation of Petersen's typology (2002:18-9).

Plate 55 . Shield bosses from Sogn og Fjordane, Norway.
(Bruce-Mitford & Raven, 2005: 388)

Therefore it is possible that the shield boss from site 9 is actually dated from the early 7th Century but may have been handed down and re-used, hence finding its way into a later Viking burial around 950 AD to 1050 AD. It could also suggest a different type of Viking shield boss altogether which may have been related to the earlier Anglo Saxon forms (Harrison, 2000: 72-3). It is even possible that the boss was taken from an Anglo Saxon shield and re-used by the Scandinavians during the raids of the late 8th Century (2000:76). This last point is an idea that has archaeological backing due to finds such as at Sogn og Fjordane in Norway (plate 55) whereby several shield bosses have been detached from the board, collected and deposited (Bruce-Mitford & Raven, 2005: 387-391). It is clear that the early extent of Scandinavian interaction between the other peoples of Western Europe needs to be carefully re-thought and how objects such as the shield are being taken, created and used during the early 5th-8th Centuries.

The Balladoole boss site 2 is of conical form (B.i) and is very different in structure to the others that have been encountered so far. It dates to around 880-920 AD and forms part of an Irish Sea type B, as described by Harrison (2000:66). It is unfortunate that it is so badly fragmented, however there is evidence surviving of one of the nails, which is domed-headed and it appears

that the majority of the flange has been flattened out due to compression in the grave (Bersu & Wilson, 1966: 14-15).

When considering the date of the shield bosses and the four groups that they have been divided into, through analysing the dates in a typology against the chronology, it shows that some dates don't necessarily match up with the types and forms (plate 56).

Shields from the first identified group (1, 5 and 6) are split; the shield bosses from site 1 and 5 are both dated to 850-950 AD and are both very similar in shape and size. Site 6 even though of the same type of Rygh's 562 form it is dated from 900-1000 AD, this is due to the circumstances of finding the site 6 shield boss, as it was found in antiquity with other weapons on the shoreline of Meols (Hume, 1863:147-150). It has been suggested that these combinations of weapons could indicate a Viking burial, however all context has been lost and it is very difficult to accurately determine a solid date (Griffiths et al, 2007:71-76).

The next group includes bosses that demonstrate forms from Rygh's type 564 (sites 3, 4, 7 and 8). This group is definitely split in two by the size of the forms as the shield bosses from sites 3 and 7 are allot bigger and denser, whereas sites 4 and 8 are smaller with a shallower dome. The boss from site 3 was found during gravel extraction in the parish if St John's on the Isle of Man. It has only been able to be dated based on other weapon typologies with the items that were with it (Megaw, 1938:11-14) and as such it has been narrowly identified as dating between 875- 900 AD. However, the Cumwhitton site is an excavation that is relatively recent (Lupton, 2011, 2014), has shown the continuation of this form of boss right through into the mid 10th century. The bosses from site 4, Knock-ye-Doonee, (Kermode, 1930) and site 8, Hesket-in-the-Forest (Hodgson, 1832), could suggest a regional sub-type as they both date from 900-950 AD.

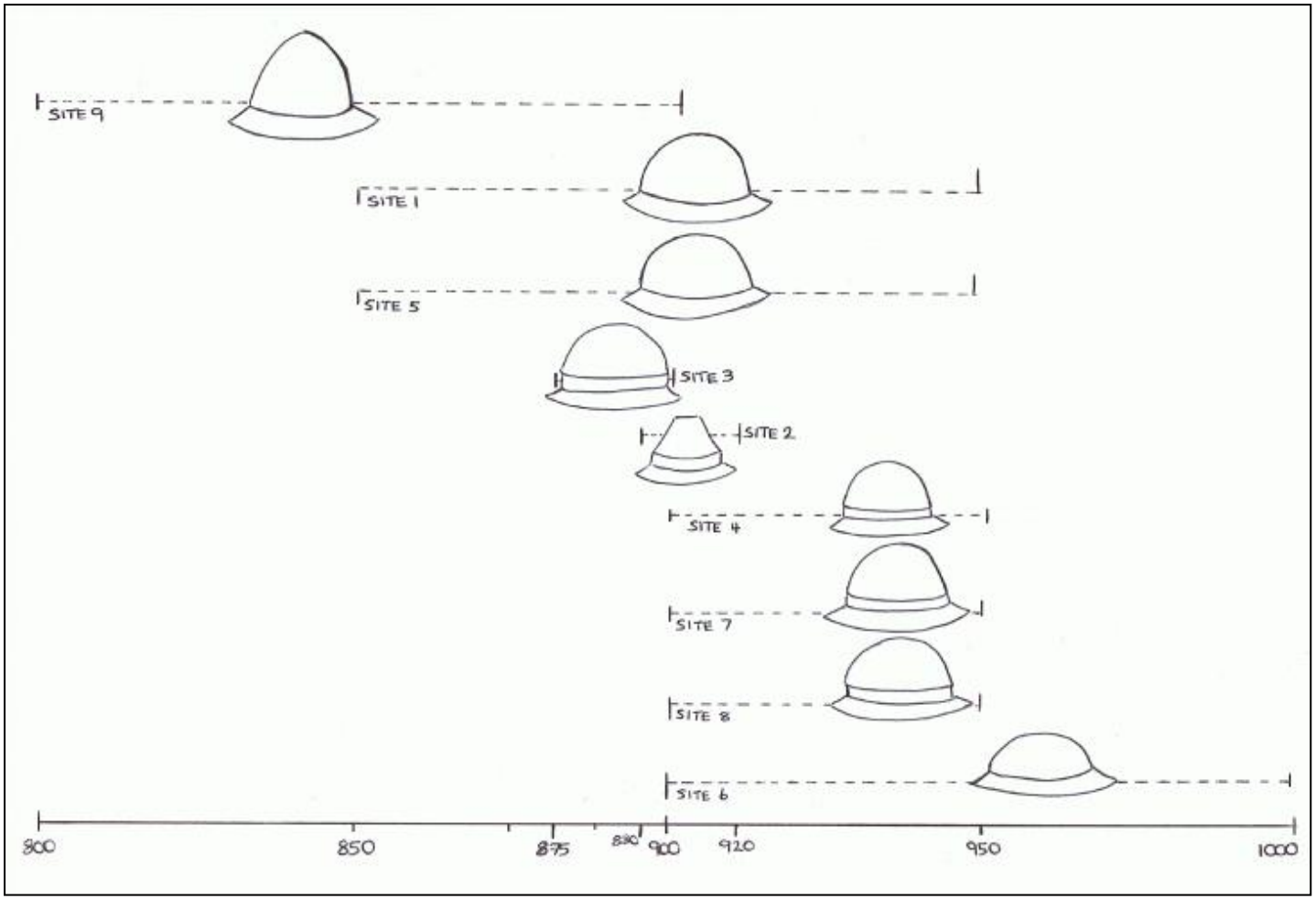


Plate 56. The chronology and typology of shield bosses from sites 1-9.

(Site 1: Cronk Moar, IOM. Site 2: Balladoole, IOM. Site 3: Balladoyne, IOM. Site 4: Knock ye Doonee, IOM. Site: 5: Ballateare, IOM. Site 6: Meols, Cheshire. Site 7: Cumwhitton, Cumbria. Site 8: Hesket-in-the-Forest, Cumbria. Site 9: Ormside, Cumbria.)

It is paramount at this stage to comment on the weapon damage that is visible on the shield bosses from sites 3 and 5 (plates 57).

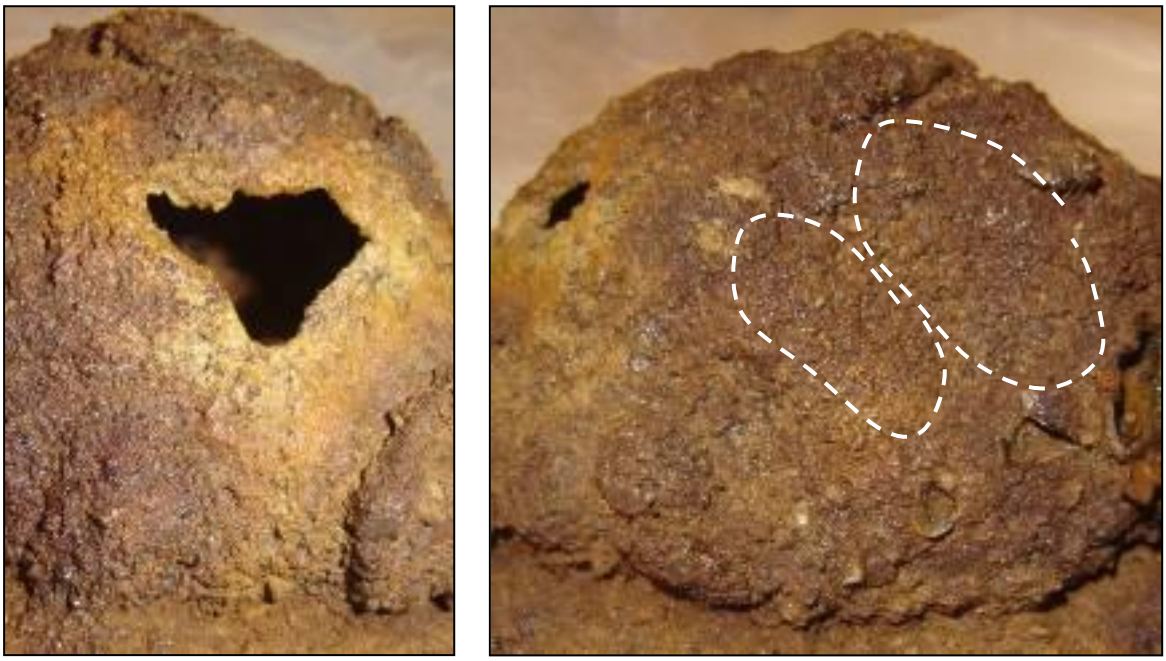


Plate 57. Shield boss with combat damage, site 3.

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Plate 58. Shield boss with combat damage site 5.

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

The shield boss from site 3: Balladoyne has a very large puncture hole straight through the top of the cone, piercing the metal and pushing the cone into itself on impact; this type of mark is diagnostic from attack by a spear thrust. It measures 30.96mm in length and is 22.48mm wide (plate 57: left). There are also two more attack marks, the largest on the far right of the boss is a sword blow being long and shallow in profile and measuring 43.10mm in length and 25.15mm in width. The second mark is a very open and long shaped dent, again possibly caused by a sword, but a little more difficult to identify for certain, it is 34.99mm long and 32.58mm wide (plate 57:right). The shield boss from site 5: Ballateare also has some very definite attack marks present on the top of the cone, both of which are certainly sword blows, the one on the top is 51.97mm long and 8.34mm wide and the lowest is 48.50mm long and 15.94mm wide(plate 58). Both these shield bosses have seen active combat in some event, which may well probably be why the burial has taken place.

Nails

In terms of nails surviving within the bosses it was only site 6, Meols that had a complete nail intact. The length of the shank can give an estimation as to the depth of the shield board, in this particular case where the boss was fixed on the centre of the shield the board depth was 14.21mm (table 3). The only other site that suggests a shield board depth is the literature from Balladoole site 2, whereby it is commented that there is a nail (which is now no longer present) in the hand grip, gives the depth of the wood at 12mm (Bersu & Wilson, 1966:16). It is also interesting to note that 90% of the nails used in fixing the shield bosses to the boards were circular domed headed nails, it was only in the case of site 9 there appeared to be a square-headed nail.

The shield nail evidence present for site 10 however was extensive and there were in total 11 complete nails with clenched over tails which could be used to demonstrate shield depth, this is demonstrated by table 27. This shows a range of measurements from the material but the largest depths 20.03mm, 20.79 and 23.68mm demonstrate that the shield would probably need larger fixing nails for the centre of the boards, especially if the nails have to attach a grip as well. The smaller depths suggest nails that are being used radiating out from the denser material in the centre, measurements between 12.04mm – 19.27mm, and finally depths such as 7.43mm and 9mm have to be near or close to the edge of the shield itself. The fact that there are a range of different

size depths, all grouping around the same marks from several different contexts goes to demonstrate that the shield in the cremation burial at Heath Wood Mound 50 had be a curved or tapered shield.

Small Finds No'	Context No'	Depth of Shield Board (mm)
105	410	11.82
120	304	14.48
104	304	20.79
145	308	7.43
147	308	19.27
148	308	20.03
130	411	9
158	411	12.04
129	411	12.47
134	411	18.06
142	411	23.68

Table 27. Depth of shield boards from site 10 shield nail evidence.

The evidence from site 11 shows similar results to that of site 10, as well as the similar range in board depth (table 28). Allot of accurate detail has been able to be gathered from the shield nails from sites 10 and 11 due to the excavation, publication and efforts of Richards (et al, 2004). The drawings, dimensions and discussions within the sites published report, has enable this material in particular to be investigated intensely.

Depth of Shield Board (mm)
10.4
10.57
12.38
13.75
14.45
15.97
17.42
18.93

Table 28. Depth of shield board from site 11 shield nail evidence.

Conversely due to the earlier excavation of Viking material from site 11 by Clarke and Fraser in 1946 and 1949, there was not the same kind of meticulous archaeological approach employed as with Richards (2004) and this showed when interpretation tried to make sense of the material. That is why there are no small finds or context numbers available for the material from Mound 7 at Ingleby and why the evidence can only be speculated upon.

It is important to note that the nails that were found at the Heath Wood sites have parallels with the material from Anglo-Scandinavian York in terms of 9th-10th Century metalworking (Ottaway, 1992: 607-614). Ottaway states that there are 125 dome-headed tacks and nails that appear in the contexts at Coppergate, York and that they are probably Roman residual from hobnail boots (1992:611). This does not have to be the case, as there is now evidence to show dome-head nails being used in the shield bosses from this study, not only as the fixing nails, but also for securing other parts of the shield together. Many of the nails within this investigation are under 20mm long, which Ottaway also dismissed as being too small for any functioning use of nail, and that these were purely used as decorative tacks (1992:611-2).

Also in the Isle of Man, domed-headed, decorative nails are being used in horse bridals and bridal mounts, such as in the Balladoole burial, site 2 (Bersu & Wilson, 1966:19-26), so there appear to be other comparisons.

It has been questioned throughout this study that in terms of making the components of the shields, especially in the 9th-10th in England, as Scandinavian economy is booming (Brink &Price, 2008:63-149), why is there no evidence present for shield components be manufactures on urban sites such as at Winchester (Biddle, 1990) and Ribe, Denmark (Bencard et al, 2004:113). Is it due to there being no manufacture of shield components within the areas of excavation, were they just not found? Maybe shields are being created elsewhere within the cities, or perhaps the evidence has been glossed over, as has been shown with the domed-head nails from Coppergate.

Shield Clamps

The evidence for the shield clamps mainly comes from site 10; unfortunately there was only one complete shield clamp in the record that gave a good estimation of depth to determine the thickness of the shield board at the edge of shield. The clamp was SF:

135 and the internal depth was 6.44mm at the widest, this is an average measurement as there are examples from Birka, in Sweden that are larger and smaller (Arwidsson, 1984). However, one thing that seems to stand out with the site 10 clamps is that they were very small and very fine, so allot of effort had been put into their creation.

Shield Grip

The shield grip from site 2 was 316.77mm long and was heavily decorated with cross-hatching design along the terminals with disc end lobes (K.i). The metal was very thin and the grip was finely made to go along with the conical Irish type shield boss, which could demonstrate trade or travelling around the Irish Sea region more prevalently than any other area (Wilson, 2008:46). The grip and the boss however appear too delicate and finely made to have been used in any actual combat scenario, but they could be actively items of prestige and made as part of the burial ceremony.

Organic Remains

The organic remains from site 1 were in the form of a piece of wood that was attached to the actual boss itself (L). From the investigations carried out by Bersu in 1940 samples of wood were taken from five specially designated areas and objects within the grave at Cronk Moar. All the sample results stated that the wood species was in-fact oak, even the sample from the shield boss (Bersu & Wilson, 1966:68). As discussed previous an oak wood shield would be too heavy and dense to be used as a combat shield. There were no other organics' present in relation to the shield in site 1, and no evidence of leather or linen covering over the shield which means the boards would be on display. This is something you do not want to advertise to your opponent as they could easily observe the grain in the wood, as well as the alignments of the glued planks, and aim to split the shield apart. Does this mean that the Cronk Moar shield has actually been made specifically for the burial rite, in reverence to ancestors and part of the ritual of passing over into the next life, rather than a usable shield? This may be supported by the hunting spear and the heavy, broken sword in the burial as both items are not typical 'roaming warrior' kit in the sense, that the spear is for hunting and the sword is very crudely made, being dense and appears to be mainly iron in form. Conversely, it could demonstrate the symbolism of a man whom did actively take part in

warfare however his social standing was lower; therefore the items chosen to take with him into the next life would have been a mixture of items that he owned or could be acquired easily and possibly cheaply.

The other surviving organic remains come from site 5, Ballateare. The surviving piece of painted leather (M) demonstrates the decoration that would have been visible on the shield (table 11).

Size of the Shield

The size of the shield is normally very difficult to determine if all the organic timbers have rotted away, however due to the placement of items like shield bosses, spreads of nails, metal grips and staining in the soil, it may be possible to identify the size.

Plate 59. Shield diameter based on site 2, Balladoole along with the boss. The decoration has been applied from site 5, Ballateare and the surviving painted leather fragment.
(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Site 2, Balladoole could give an estimation of the size of the shield based on the main individual in the grave, along with the size of the boss and length of the hand grip (table 10). The burial was greatly disturbed by rabbit burrowing so unfortunately none of the artefacts were in their original place when discovered (Bersu & Wilson, 1966: 6), but based on the nail spread and the skeletal analysis it was possible to suggest the shield was 91cm in diameter, and a reconstruction of this shield exists in the Manx Museum (plate 59). Using Trotter's (1958) method for determining height, the stature of the man in the ship burial at site 2, can also be justified at 5ft 9¼", and by re-analysing the tooth wear pattern from this skeleton it is now possible to suggest an age at death, putting the man between the ages of 33-45 when he died (Brothwell, 1981:71-72).

The other site that held enough evidence to show shield size was site 7, Cumwhitton (plate 60). This shield is estimated to be around 90cm in diameter, based on the staining in the grave, it was unfortunate that no skeletal remains were found surviving (Lupton, 2008:19, 2014: 92).

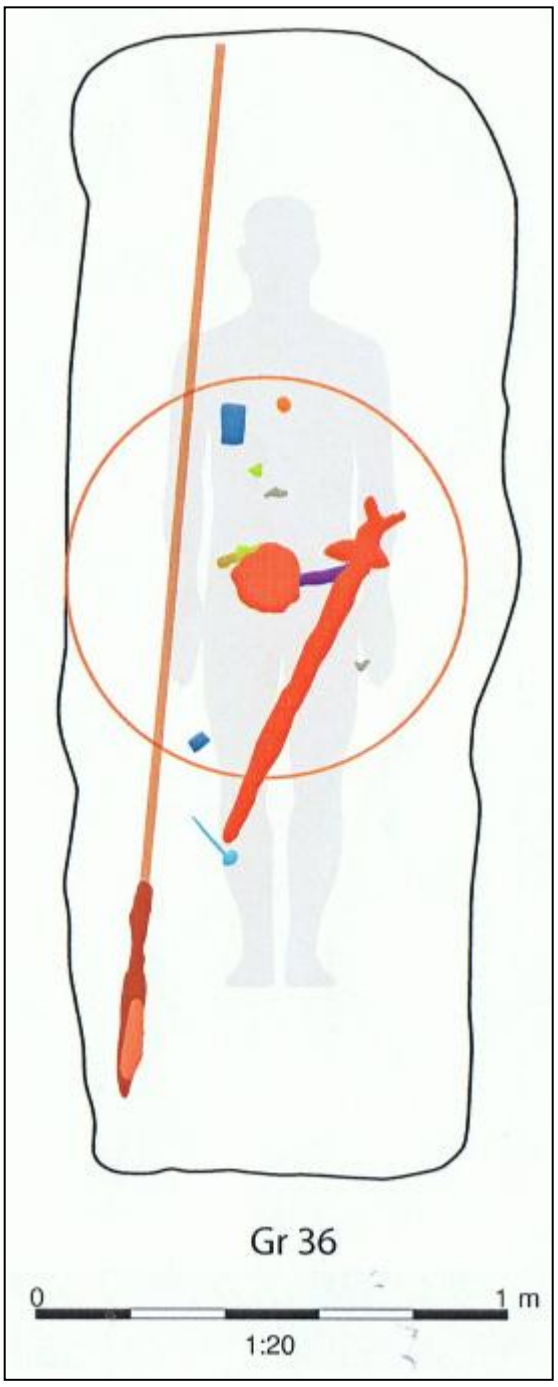


Plate 60. Grave 36 from Cumwhitton (site 7), with shield diameter demonstrated.
(Courtesy of OANorth Lancaster, 2008)

Unfortunately there is not enough evidence from the other sites, to suggest a shield size. Even with sites 10 and 11, due to the burials being cremations the nail evidence was oxidized and scattered within the mounds so actual diameters were not going to be provide from the evidence (Richards, 2004: 36-8, 54-68).

Placement of the Shield

The placement of the shield in the grave is important as it can demonstrate different beliefs based on how the deceased believes they are going to arrive into the afterlife (Davidson, 1964: 149-53).

Site No'	Burial Alignment	Placement of the Head	Placement of the shield
1	West-East	West	Above coffin, propped up near head
2	South/East-North/West	South-East	Directly on the torso
3	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
4	North/East- South/West	North-East	Directly on the torso
5	West-East	West	Above coffin, propped up near head
6	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
7	West-East	West	Directly on the torso
8	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
9	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
10	Facing North-East	Unknown	Unknown
11	Facing North-East	Unknown	Unknown

Table 29. Alignment of burial, placement of the head and placement of the shield, sites 1-11.

From the investigation it appears that the placement of the shield on the torso seems to be popular, as three sites (2, 4 and 7) demonstrate this particular trend (table 29). Two sites (1 and 5) show that the shield has been included in the burial, but externally of the main grave chamber, probably due to size. The alignment West-East seems to be worth a comment as three sites 1, 5 and 7 all date between 850-950 AD and show similarities in the burial right (Bersu & Wilson, 1966). Sites 2 and 4 however are on different alignments, more in keeping with traditional Scandinavian burial of the 9th Century (Arwidsson, 1989).

It is also important to note that sites 2 and 5 also had evidence of human sacrifice within the burials. In site 2 there were the fragmented skull remains of a young female (Wilson, 2008:38-46) and site 5 there was a sacrifice that took place after the interment on top of the mound (plate 61), these remains were again of a young woman aged between 20-30 years of age(Wilson, 2008:28-30), who had met a severely violent death (plate 62).

Plate 61. An interpretation of the Ballateare Ship burial with shield placed outside the main burial, and female sacrifice above.

(Courtesy of the Manx Museum, 2010)

Plate 62. The fatal killing blow on the back of the female skull at Ballateare.

(Wilson, 2008:30)

Wider Scandinavian Context

As has been seen from this study, the shield as an object is being deposited and used across England and the Isle of Man from the around 800 AD through to the mid 11th century. There are certainly early indications of English Anglo Saxon and continental influence on some early 8th century shield bosses that are in Scandinavian contexts, as demonstrated by Evison (1963:52-3. Plate 54) and Dickinson & Härke (1992:23. Plate 53). The shield bosses are an extremely useful way of showing change and continuity (plate 56). The bosses within this study such as the ones from sites 1, 5 and 6 in particular are the same Rygh type 562 that have been found in 9th century contexts in Norway, at Gokstad (plate 13), in Denmark with the shield remains from Ladby (plate 63) and comparative studies and analysis have already shown similar transitions with the shield bosses across Scandinavia at Birka, Sweden (Thorvildsen, 1957:82).

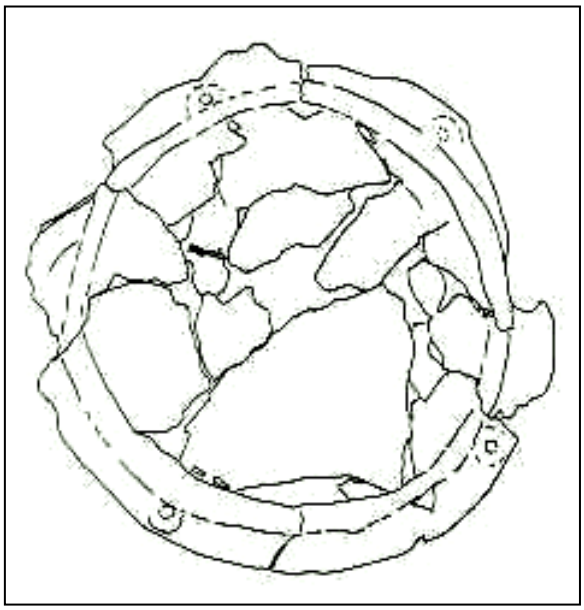


Plate 63. Shield boss from Ladby ship burial.

(Sørensen, 2001: 79)

Another fascinating aspect of Viking shields, when comparing the English and Isle of Man material to that of Scandinavia, are the ship burials at Gokstad, Oseberg and Ladby (Brøgger & Shetelig, 1971). The analysis of the ships themselves can help to provide understanding of function for the shield. In the case of Oseberg (Christensen et

al, 1992) and Ladby (Sørensen, 2001:221-2) the shield-racks on the gunwales of the ships were on the outside, so that the shields could be lined up and displayed (plate 64). Whereas with Gokstad (Sjøvold, 1957:64-5) the shield rack was on the inside, probably to aid storage, rather than display, suggesting the shields at Gokstad may well have been functional shields. It would be interesting see how many Viking Age ships have the gunwales on the inside to the outside, to understand how the shield is displayed or stored on-board a ship?

Plate 64. A replica of the Ladby ship, the shields visible in the external shield-rack.

(Sørensen, 2001:222)

The other interesting link between the shield evidence gathered in this study is that where the shield appears in the burial rite there is also an association with horses in sites 2 and 4 in particular. The abundance of very fine horse furniture in the graves such that these men were of a higher social standing (Shenk, 2002), as it was only the wealthy during the Viking age who would be able to afford the upkeep and fine horse furniture (Pedersen, 1997:123). This is something that is also demonstrated on the

Viking stone sculpture (chapter 5), whereby the use of the horse is portrayed to help show the transition into the afterlife (plates 28, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37 and 42).

The association with other types of weaponry that are linked to the shield are prevalent in Viking burials, all sites 1-9 had weapons present in the deposits, of varying size and quality. This is very much a theme that has been displayed across Scandinavia, in excavations at Kaupang (Skre, 2007) to the Warrior graves in Denmark (Pedersen, 1997) and even further into Eastern Europe and Lithuania (Bertasius & Daugnora, 2001). It seems to be very much part of the culture of Northern Europe from the 5th-11th Centuries.

The shield holds a special association within this group of cultural practice, the association with the warrior, the fighter, whether they are of lower standing or revolving in the higher echelons of society (Härke, 1990:26). It appears through the archaeology and the historical study of the shield that it is indeed the meaning and symbolism that attracts people during this period to put their faith in this object, as well as the functional defence aspect.

The shield as a defensive and offensive object is something that is not only very important in a battlefield scenario for creating shield walls (Stephenson, 2007: 31-2), but used individually it can help to demonstrate skill and be used in protective manoeuvres. From shield evidence displayed in this study, there are seven sites whereby it could be suggested that the shield present in the burials were used in combat or were to combat ready standards (sites 1, 3, 4, 5,7,10 and 11). Sites 3 and 5 have both got combat damage to the shield bosses and this is something that appears in material throughout Scandinavia (Arbman, 1943). It demonstrates the movement and the mobilisation of small groups or retinues of men who are activity seeking to gain wealth and power by small scale military organisations (Hadley, 2008:272) and the shield along with the other weapons of combat can either help to win or lose the fight.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RAGNAROK

Conclusion

This study has shown that there is more to the Viking shield than meets the eye. The representation in the archaeological record, on stone sculpture and in burials at this time shows the significance and the symbolism of the shield. It shows the beliefs of the Scandinavian peoples during the 8th-11th centuries being placed onto Viking artefacts in stylistic representations of the shield, on items such as Valkyrie pendants and shield pendants, which until this investigation studied, there was no understanding as to what their function or symbolism may be.

The archaeological evidence for female warrior's buried with shields is something that also has not been commented upon and would be a fascinating area of further work, to establish the female role of the shield (Skre, 2007:84). The historical and saga evidence has helped to build up a picture of the levels of Viking society and the vibrancy and colour of the shield in all its uses, from single duelling, to wider warfare, law disputes and as symbolic icons.

The study of the remains for the Viking shield in England and the Isle of Man has started to show the value of this type of investigation. It can show personal affiliations to the shield but also represent wider forms, which is why it was possible to construct the typological and chronological chart for the nine shield bosses uncovered (plate 56).

From sites 2, Balladoole and 7, Cumwhitton it has shown that the shields appear to be around 90cm in diameter, which is also the same for the Gokstad ship found in Norway (Sjøvold, 1957:64-5).

The shield does seem to be twinned up with 'mainstream' Viking culture, although it is not possible at this stage to suggest a strong link with any particular social group of

people during this period. The link with the wealthy and the horseman is an important trend to comment upon with the association of the shield; however this is an area that needs to be investigated in a little more detail.

It has proven very difficult to demonstrate what types of wood are being used for the shield within this study, as allot of the organic material has not survived, and the only evidence that comes for the species of wood is from Site 1, Cronk Moar, whereby Bersu and Wilson suggested oak through their analysis (1966:68).

It has shown to be extremely difficult to try and determine where Viking shields are being produced, as there could be evidence from urban excavations such as at Coppergate with the nail evidence (Ottaway, 1992:611-2), but the components are not diagnostic enough to provide reasonable answers.

It can be suggested that there are elements of individuality in certain forms of shield boss and handgrips, like in site 2 at Balladoole, and the remains of the painted leather at site 5, Ballateare, show that decoration is important in expressing your identity during the Viking age in the Isle of Man. Unfortunately none of this evidence stands out dramatically within England as there are no other surviving organic remains to compare.

It would also appear that there is no solid evidence from this study that the shield is being “ritually killed”. There is certainly evidence for it being used in combat such as in sites 3 and 5, and it has been shown that an element of re-use and collection does go on, as is demonstrated by the absence of the shield bosses in sites 10 and 11 (Richards, 2004:92). However to what degree this is actual combat as opposed to ritual killing is a very difficult thing to demonstrate.

It may be possible to distinguish between Norwegian, Danish and Swedish shields in the archaeology, if a concise catalogue of Viking shield material is created, with evidence for the shield in the whole of the British Isles and all of Scandinavia. However this is a vast undertaking, and a topic which has barely scratched the surface of this subject within this study, it would take years of dedication and combined collaboration with experts in the field of Viking archaeology to establish a good set of remains that would certainly show more transitions, trends, similarities and differences. It is hoped that through the co-operation with colleagues in Scotland (Caroline Paterson, National Museum of Scotland and Dr James Graham-Campbell) and Ireland (Dr Stephen Harrison, University College Dublin) that more research can be done into the Viking shield as there is massive amounts of potential. The success of this type of study

however is based upon the accumulation of as much primary data from the archaeological material for the Viking shield as possible.

The Viking shield has shown to be an object which was most certainly important within Viking culture in life and in death, but it is the human association to the shield that has been fascinating within this investigation. How the symbolism, more than anything rings through the centuries and beckons you to become absorbed in the Viking way of life.

The Viking shield in England and the Isle of Man during the 8th-11th centuries is a fantastic object; the evidence that does survive, although minimal, is amazing. It has been shown through comparative analysis of archaeology, iconography, art and historiography that with an open mind there are indeed wondrous things that can be learnt about the Viking shield if we are but brave enough to ask the questions.

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