European Journal of Archaeology 17 (4) 2014, 634–655

'A River of Knives and Swords': Ritually Deposited Weapons in English Watercourses and Wetlands during the Viking Age

Ben Raffield[1,2]

[1]*Human Evolutionary Studies Program, Simon Fraser University, Canada*
[2]*Department of Archaeology, University of Aberdeen, UK*

This paper discusses the deposition of weapons in English rivers and wetlands during the Viking Age. Such finds have been extensively studied in Scandinavia but have rarely been academically discussed in Britain. It can be argued that the arrival of the Scandinavians in ninth- to eleventh-century Britain precipitated a marked increase in depositions of a 'pagan' nature. Despite deep-rooted, institutionalized Christianity having dominated England for some time, it is possible that pagan beliefs were dormant but not forgotten, with the Scandinavian arrival triggering their resurgence. Weapons form a large number of ritual depositions, with seventy deposits being mapped geographically to identify distributional patterns across the landscape. It is suggested here that 'liminal' depositions in Viking Age Scandinavia provide an interpretative model for these finds. Given the context of endemic conflict and territorial consolidation within which they may have been deposited in England, this material can shed new light on attitudes to landscapes subject to conflict and consolidation.

Keywords: Viking Age, conflict, landscape, ritual, depositions, weapons, wetlands, Anglo-Saxon England

Introduction

Pagan sacred landscapes in England, long considered as irretrievably buried beneath post-conversion writings and belief systems, are now being unravelled through analysis of pre-Christian world-views. Scholars have re-evaluated how cosmologies and belief systems shaped landscapes in Anglo-Saxon England (Carver, 2001, 2002; Turner, 2006; Hoggett, 2007; Semple, 2010; Reynolds & Semple, 2011), with these being represented in burial rites, monumentality and the numinous qualities ascribed to natural features. The relationship between the landscape, monuments, power, and belief systems is multi-faceted and complex.

This paper will examine the landscape contexts of Viking Age weapon depositions in England, suggesting that an influx of pagan Vikings and their subsequent colonization of the landscape from the late eighth century provides a convincing context for a surge in ritual depositions within wetland areas—a practice similarly observed in Viking Age Scandinavia. Whilst Wilson (1965) and

DOI 10.1179/1461957114Y.0000000066
Manuscript received 27 January 2014,
accepted 27 May 2014, revised 23 April 2014

Lund (2010) have previously suggested that such finds reflect the Viking presence in England, the consideration of landscape contexts has been highlighted as necessary in attaining wider comparative perspectives for their continued discussion (Reynolds & Semple, 2011: 46).

This paper will therefore explore the implications of these finds within their wider physical, socio-political, and ritual contexts, arguing that the identification of specific behavioural practices within specific topographic contexts positively attests to a pagan Scandinavian presence or influence within a context of conflict and territorial consolidation. Though past discussion of Viking overwintering camps, burials, and activity within major settlements of the Danelaw has highlighted the difficulties in identifying the Scandinavian presence in England (Hall, 1989, 2000: 151–52; Richards, 2004a: 203; Raffield, 2013a, 2013b), the analysis of these deposits allows the Viking impact on both landscapes and indigenous populations to be re-considered, as well as contributing to a more holistic interpretation of deposited material.

This paper derives from a PhD thesis conceived to investigate conflict within the Danelaw during the ninth and tenth centuries (Raffield, 2013a), one objective of which was to explore the construction and manipulation of sacral landscapes during times of conflict. Historical sources clearly document frequent violence in Viking Age England. The initial Viking raids, invasions and settlements of the late eighth and ninth centuries were followed by a protracted period of conflict, during which warfare likely fluctuated, as it had for much of the early medieval period, between endemic small-scale raiding and periodic large-scale violence (Halsall, 1989: 167, 2003: 19). Elites engaged in political power struggles and territorial annexation, attempting to carve kingdoms from the landscape whilst simultaneously withstanding Anglo-Saxon conquest, the latter of which was achieved by the mid tenth century. The late tenth and early eleventh centuries saw renewed Viking raids and subsequent invasions, leading to England being incorporated into Knútr's Danish empire. Identifying the archaeological evidence of conflict however, has proved problematic; we have yet, for example, to locate a single Viking Age battlefield.

Weapons recovered from wetlands, rivers, and lakes were therefore investigated in light of the obvious questions raised by the disposal of valuable tools during a protracted period of conflict. This was also inspired by discussions of Scandinavian Iron Age depositions (see Hedeager, 1999, 2002; Sanmark, 2004; Lund, 2005, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Andrén *et al.*, 2006). Weapons from English rivers feature extensively in catalogues, such as those compiled by Shetelig (1940) and Peirce (2002), yet little discussion has taken place beyond typologically categorizing finds. A small number of Viking Age deposits, such as the sword at Skerne, East Riding of Yorkshire (Webster, 1983; Richards, 2004a; Lund, 2005), and the cache of weapons from London Bridge (Lund, 2005; Ragnar Hagland & Watson, 2005) have been considered, though past studies have often placed a historic emphasis on the dating of such finds. Those from London Bridge, for example, were initially linked to attacks recorded in the tenth and eleventh centuries (Shetelig, 1940: 77). Elsewhere, Reynolds and Semple (2011) have considered social ideologies underlying deposition, though the remit of their publication did not allow topographic contexts to be investigated. In Scandinavia, Lund (2008b: 32–35) notes that in contrast with earlier Iron Age deposits, long acknowledged as ritual, Viking Age weapon depositions were similarly associated with conflict, obscuring broader, more varied and inevitably more complex interpretations (Lund, 2008b).

The use of ArcGIS as part of this study allowed data to be mapped and weapons recovered from rivers and wetlands to be discussed as a discrete finds group, with data being later integrated with selected maps from Hill's (1981) *Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*. It should be noted that weapons represent only one find type that has been recovered from rivers and wetlands, with this paper representing a defined preliminary study of a single find-type. The arguments presented here might also apply to other finds such as hoarded wealth, which has been investigated in a number of contexts both in Britain and abroad (see, for example, Graham-Campbell, 1992, 2011; Zachrisson, 1998; Graham-Campbell & Sheehan, 2009; Carlson, 2010) as well as jewellery and riding equipment, which are also demanding of investigation.

The (Pre)History of Weapon Deposition in English Wetlands

The study of prehistory has benefitted hugely from landscape analysis since the 1990s (e.g. Tilley, 1994; Bradley, 1998, 2000; Scarre, 2002), with Bradley (1990) highlighting the significance of English riverine contexts for Neolithic, Bronze Age, and Iron Age ritual depositions. The latter largely lie in hypothesized border zones 'along major rivers or in regions of contemporary wetlands' (Bradley, 1990: 179), including the Thames, the Fen Edge, and the rivers Humber, Trent and Witham, though weapons were not the only objects, nor even the only items of metalwork deposited. Wetlands continued to be perceived as sacred throughout the Roman and Saxon periods, the former being represented by evidence for religious practice on the Fen edge in Norfolk (Gurney, 1986: 92). The sixth to eighth centuries saw a decline in depositions, probably due to the abandonment of pagan practices and the rise of Christianity (Lund, 2010: 53). By the Viking Age, Christianity was firmly institutionalized in the country, legitimizing kingship and embedding monarchs within structures of religious hagiography and iconography. The governmental influence of the Church is clearly seen in the writings of Asser, which describe Ælfred of Wessex's law-making in the ninth century (Keynes & Lapidge, 1983); varying aspects of the relationship between royal elites and the Church are debated elsewhere (Chaney, 1970; Yorke, 1990; Hayward, 2011).

A long tradition of ritual deposition in watery locations is also evident in parts of Scandinavia. Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age Denmark, for example, are famously home to mass sacrifices of material associated with defeated enemies, including Hjortspring (Randsborg, 1999), Illerup (Ilkjaer 2002), Alken Enge (Skanderborg Museum, 2012), and Nydam (Bemmann & Bemmann, 1998). Scandinavia also experienced a decline in wetland deposition during the sixth century, linked in Denmark by Fabech (1994) to a decline in conflict and the stabilization of elites, with Thurston (2002) suggesting that depositional rituals correspondingly became focused on important settlements. The late eighth century, however, saw a resurgence of ritual practice in wetlands, the context of which demands further investigation, and until the eleventh century, 'weapons, jewellery, coins and tools were again deposited in lakes, bogs, rivers and the sea' (Lund, 2010: 51). The spiritual associations of wetlands, rivers, and lakes might be preserved in place-names referring to gods or spirits (Brink, 2001, 2013; Lund, 2008a: 61) such as Gudingsåkrarna on Gotland and Lake Tissø, Denmark, both of which have yielded significant numbers of Viking Age finds. The number of Norse assembly sites situated

adjacent to wetlands, river crossings or confluences (Sanmark & Semple, 2008, 2013; Sanmark, 2009) might similarly attest to a perceived significance of water. In contrast to Scandinavia, very few natural features in England possess place names relating to pagan gods or sites of worship (Cameron, 1988: 123; Lund, 2010: 57), hindering the identification of locales that might have been used for pagan rituals. As noted above, it is the identification of certain behaviours within specific topographical and geographical contexts that lends weight to the hypothesis that these deposits represent a pagan Scandinavian presence or influence within a Christianized landscape.

Though significant work has been undertaken to deconstruct the simple dichotomy between pagan and Christian belief systems in Anglo-Saxon England and elsewhere (Geake, 1997; Effros, 2003; Williams, 2010), it should be noted that this phenomenon is not limited to England but is represented in riverine and wetland contexts across the Viking world (Lund, 2005: 116). Deposited weapons are known from Ireland, Holland, France (Arbman & Nilsson, 1969; Peirce, 2002), Germany (Geisslinger, 1967), Poland (Wilke, 1999: 52), and even as far east as the Dnepr River, where five Viking swords were discovered by a ford near the island of Khortitsa, Ukraine (Androshchuk, 2002: 14).

Analysis of the Weapon Deposits

Seventy weapon deposits presented here, mapped in GIS, derive from a larger sample of 74. Several areas of high activity were identified (Figure 1) in the Rivers Thames, Rhee/Cam/Great Ouse, Witham, Lea, and Little Ouse. It is also worth noting deposits from three lakes in the Lake District. Like those in Viking Age Scandinavia, most weapons seem to have been deposited singly or as small hoards, and very rarely show signs of pre-depositional damage (Lund, 2010: 52). Possible pre-depositional alteration of weapons was encountered in only four instances, though in other cases the recovery of incomplete weapons may also suggest alteration. The most frequently identified weapons were swords and spearheads, featuring in twenty-nine and thirty deposits, whilst axes and scramasaxes featured fourteen and eight times, respectively (some deposits featured more than one weapon type).

It is necessary to recognize limitations of the data, such as a lack of detailed contextual and typological description for some finds, as well as variation in the weapons' distribution. Dredged river material is a common context for the recovery of weapons, whilst 'mudlarking' (the scavenging of objects from river mud at low tide) may also account for some finds; these objects are therefore very much 'chance finds', and have not been recovered as part of any systematic survey. Whilst the River Thames has certainly been subject to such activity on numerous occasions, this might also account for at least some finds recovered from the Rhee, Cam, and Great Ouse in Cambridgeshire. Despite this, any concentrations may also represent a truly intensive focus of deposition, as rivers have formed important communications routes, territorial, and liminal boundaries since prehistory. Other finds are located in very specific landscape contexts that parallel those outside of England, lending weight to the possibility that their distribution truly reflects ritual practice. It is likely that these deposits are currently under-represented in the archaeological record and that many have gone unrecorded or remain unrecovered in both riverine and wetland contexts.

Weapon typologies, furthermore, can only offer a *terminus post quem* for

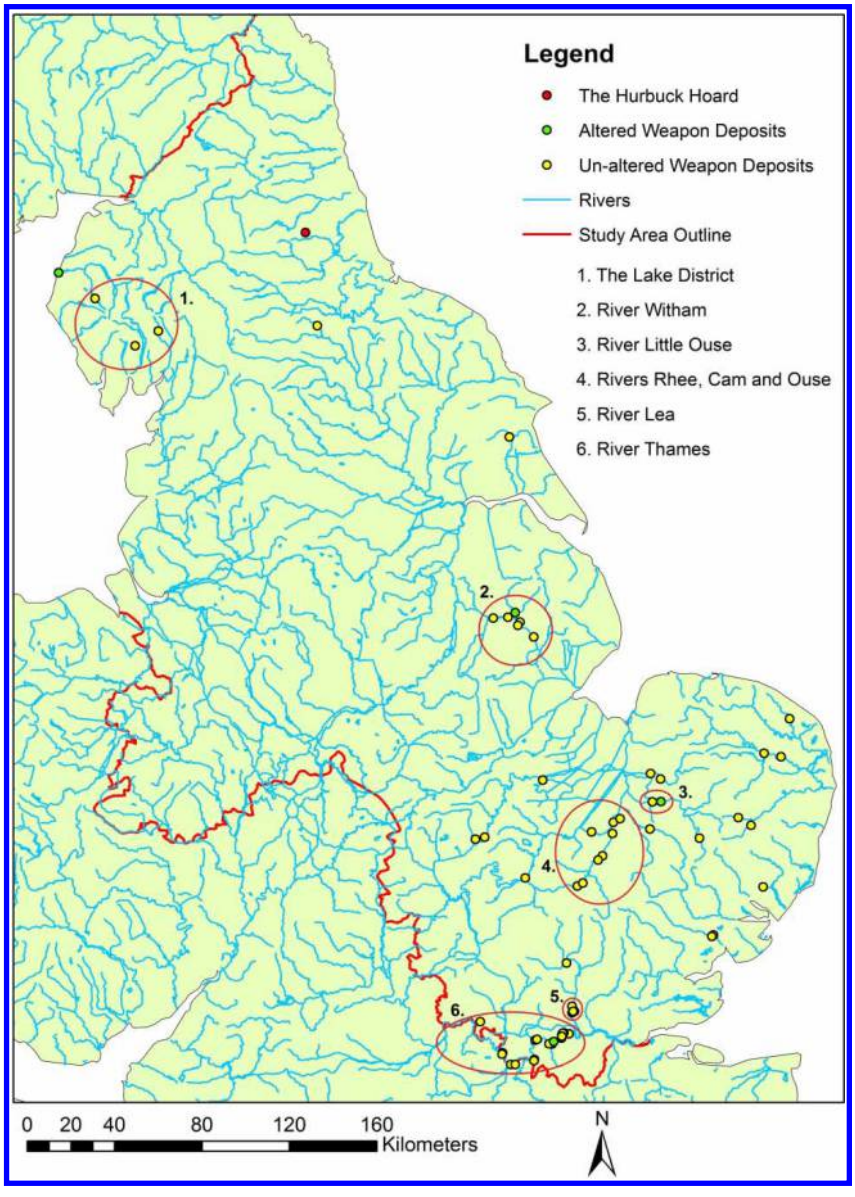

Figure 1. *Map highlighting locations and concentrations of weapons identified during the study.* Image: Ben Raffield

deposition. It is possible that weapons were used and maintained for long periods of time, being handed down through families or circulated between groups through gifting or trade (Lund, 2010: 50–51). Therefore, 'the date of manufacture of a given object cannot be assumed necessarily to correlate even broadly with the date of disposal, which highlights a fundamental caveat with regard to establishing a refined chronological view of non-funerary weapon deposition' (Reynolds & Semple, 2011: 43).

Battle Detritus and Casual Loss

Given that weapons were recovered from riverine and wetland locations with no recorded stratigraphy and few details of depositional contexts, numerous interpretations are possible. The loss of weapons during combat must firstly be considered. Battles such as the 991 Battle of Maldon are known to have taken place beside water, in this case the Blackwater Estuary, Essex, as a Viking army crossed a causeway from Northey Island to engage in combat with Anglo-Saxon forces on the mainland (Griffiths, 1991; Scragg, 1991; Cooper, 1993). Depositions in Scandinavia have also been interpreted within such contexts (Lund, 2008b: 35). Even Eddic poetry associates rivers with conflict, as can be seen in mythological poems such as *Völuspá*, *Hávamál* and *Grímnismál*, the former, for example describing a 'river of knives and swords' (Larrington, 1996: 8). Lund (2010: 52–53) suggests these metaphors not only demonstrate knowledge of real rivers filled with weapons, but also highlight their perceived role within Scandinavian cognitive landscapes as boundaries and conflict sites.

Whilst it is conceivable that at least some depositions may have resulted from violence, this interpretation cannot explain all finds. If representing battle detritus, we might expect many of these items to be heavily damaged, being used immediately prior to deposition. We might also expect larger deposits of weapons if even moderately sized groups were meeting in battle, instead of the single finds largely noted here. The 'battle detritus' hypothesis also cannot adequately explain finds such as the sword deposited whilst still in its sheath at a bridge at Nørreå, Jutland (Lund, 2005: 110).

Water routes also served as expedient 'highways' (Carver, 1990: 122) and it is possible that weapons could have become lost during travel or drowning. Whilst practical, however, 'casual loss' also cannot account for all weapon finds, not least those recovered from unnavigable rivers, streams, and bogs. Indeed, 'it defies all credibility to suppose that the pre-Conquest English habitually dropped and lost them by accident when crossing streams and rivers, or whilst wandering into bogs'; instead it seems 'inevitable that the deposition of artefacts was far from uncommon' (Halsall, 2000: 268). As initially postulated by Jankuhn (1955) and subsequently by Wilson (1965) for England, ritual deposition may provide an appropriate context for interpreting these finds.

Ritual Depositions at Liminal Features and 'Gateways' in the Landscape?

Given the decrease in watery depositions in an increasingly Christianized sixth- to eighth-century England, the arrival of pagan Vikings is postulated by Sanmark (2004: 151) and Lund (2010) to have revitalized pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon cultic practices. Viking Age Scandinavia provides a comparative ritual context for depositions with rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands being perceived as divisive liminal features (Lund, 2005: 119) separating parcels of land, political territories, or cosmological entities such as the worlds of the living and the dead. Hedeager (2002: 14) notes how cemeteries such as Møllegårdsmarken, Denmark, were separated from communities by rivers, physically manifesting the cognitive mythologized landscape whereby Midgard and the realm of the dead were separated by water. The crossing of or journeying into water is similarly argued by Heide (2011: 61–62) to have connotations with journeying to the otherworld or making contact with gods or spirits. Whilst these

might include the major Norse gods, watery locations might also have been perceived as locations where spirits such as *dísir* and *fylgjur* (associated with prosperity, protection and fate; Raudvere, 2008) might also be invoked.

Crossing points such as bridges and fords functioned as symbolic 'gateways', allowing both physically insurmountable and cosmologically important landscape boundaries to be traversed. Numerous weapons have been recovered from crossing points in Scandinavia (Lund, 2005), whilst in England pagan *blót* and the deposition of a tenth century Petersen type X sword is associated with a bridge at Skerne, East Riding of Yorkshire (Lund, 2005: 116). *Blót* was a practice associated with the sacrificial slaughter of an animal and a subsequent feast (Welinder, 2003: 512) and is described, for example, in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (DuBois, 2006: 75). Few deposits were identified in this study as being possibly associated with crossing points, though this may simply reflect the need to better identify early medieval routeways. Indeed, weapons such as the spearheads recovered at Diss, Norfolk, rely on the continuity of a crossing point there since the early medieval period. Despite this, a scramasax at Little Bealings, Suffolk, was found at the 'old ford', whilst a Petersen type K spearhead at Putney Bridge may reflect the importance of this location as a ferry crossing (the first bridge not being constructed here until the eighteenth century). Given that a motif in the journey to Hel involves crossing a stream by ferry (Lund, 2005: 119), such locations might have also attracted depositions.

In a landscape subject to conflict, however, boundaries take on additional strategic significance; rivers not only divide territories, but also armies. This can be seen in 906, when Edward the Elder concluded a peace treaty with the Vikings at a ford on the River Ouzel at Tiddingford. Fords, bridges, and islands within rivers might have been perceived as 'neutral' and liminal places, with their association with gods, spirits, and ancestral entities (Heide, 2011) possibly leading to these being been called upon to witness acts at such locations. Depositions at crossing points might also reflect 'rituals performed in relation to travelling' (Lund, 2005: 128) through contested landscapes by armed groups, with the simple act of crossing a river representing a journey into unknown and potentially hostile territory. The frequency with which armed groups traversed the landscape may have led to crossing points being imbued with spiritual power, with deposits reflecting desires to affect the outcome of conflict or to ensure safe return from campaigning.

Deposits might also possess associations with defence and security, being perceived as 'fortifying' boundaries and physically manifesting territorial claims. Stocker and Everson (2003: 283) postulate that weapons deposited within the vicinity of crossing points on the River Witham represent 'the obligatory military offering by the community's nominal war-leaders to mark their frontier'. The River Lea has possibly yielded six weapons from five deposits within a 3.2 km stretch of the river. At least two of these weapons are swords of Petersen types C and U (Figure 2), which typologically overlap at the very beginning of the tenth century. Though inevitably providing only a *terminus post quem* for deposition, that these swords were found in such a short stretch of river may represent a concern with depositing objects in the Lea during this period. Given that the river formed part of the Ælfred-Guthrum treaty boundary of 878, which divided southern England between Wessex and the East Anglian Vikings, these deposits may signify an attempt to symbolically consolidate this frontier.

Figure 2. *A ninth to tenth century, Petersen U type sword recovered from the River Lea at Edmonton.* Image: ©Trustees of the British Museum.

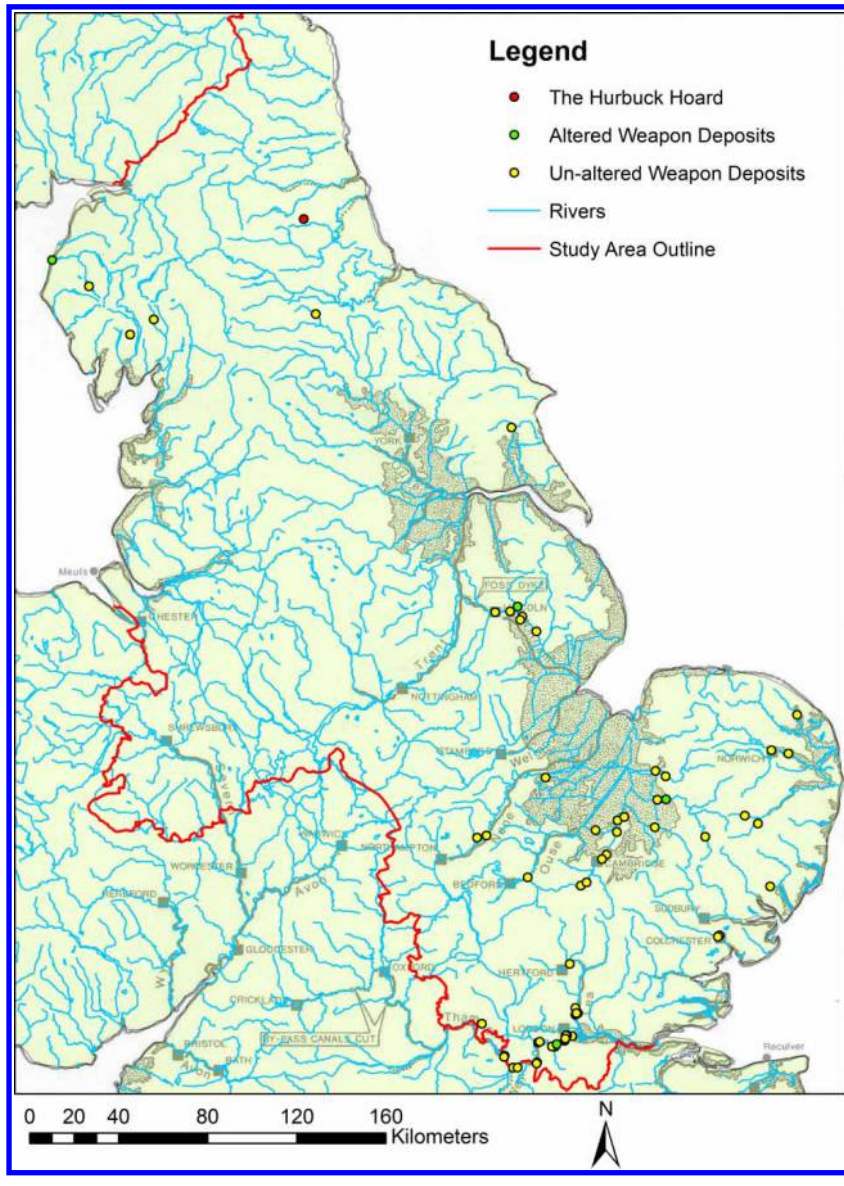

Figure 3. *Distribution of weapons finds identified in the study area. Conjectural areas of marsh and blown sand are represented by greyed area. Note the distribution of finds, many of which are situated on the edge of these topographic boundaries.*
After Hill (1981: 10).

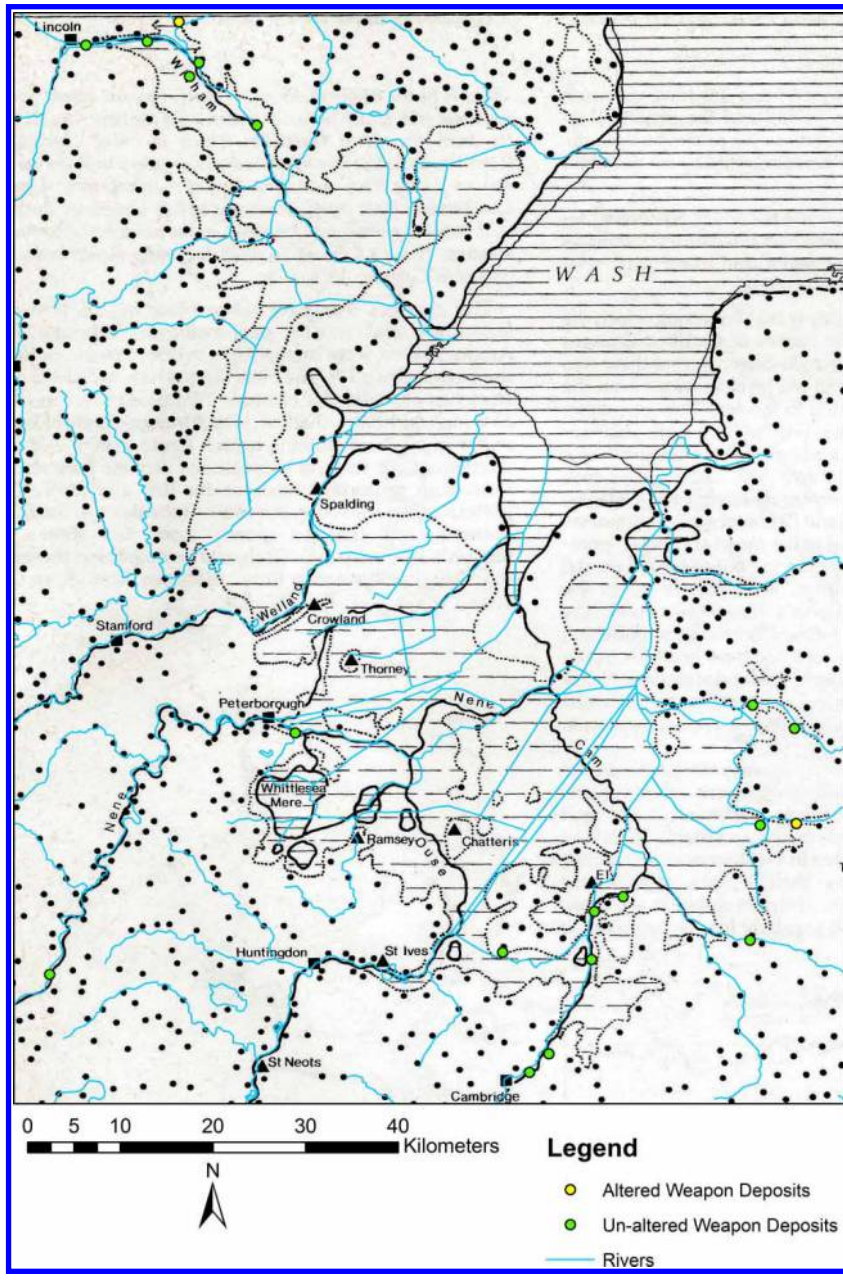

Figure 4. *Distribution of depositions in the conjectured area of The Fens (represented by dashed area). Black dots represent Domesday settlements.*
After Hill (1981: 12).

On the Edge of the Cauldron: Banks and Borders

There are of course difficulties in identifying such specific acts within riverine contexts, and a wider geographical focus might more convincingly identify ritual associations with the finds. Data were therefore combined with Hill's national map of alluvium and blown sand, and his

map displaying conjectural boundaries of the Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire Fens (Hill, 1981: 10 and 12, respectively). The results are striking (see Figures 3 and 4), suggesting that deposits were made not only in rivers but also in transitional zones where water met land at marshland peripheries, especially in the Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire Fens.

Wetland margins are acknowledged foci of ritual deposition in Scandinavia during the Viking Age. Many objects, for example, 'are found in [and] clustering around the boundaries of lakes' (Lund, 2010: 56) such as Råbelöv and Oppmanna, Skåne, as well as in and around bogs and marshes. In Scandinavia, the place-names of these locations can be associated with cauldrons, suggesting that landscape features were objectified. Lund (2008a: 65) notes that both lakes and cauldrons seem to have been categorized similarly during the Viking Age, as they both have surfaces constrained by natural limitations of what lies both inside and outside. Both the object and the lake or bog therefore represent a spatial metaphor, which may be reflected by cauldrons recovered in association with tool hoards beside or within lakes (Lund, 2008a: 62). Heide (2014: 112) suggests that lakes were perceived to be bottomless, containing a shaft linked to the otherworld, and cauldrons are noted as possessing similar associations in both Scandinavian and English sources (Green, 1998: 64). To an individual approaching the Fens, therefore, this massive expanse of marsh would have possessed obvious physical differences to the surrounding landscape. A near-contemporary description can be sought in the eighth-century *Life of St. Guthlac*, which describes the Fens as an entangled network of marshes, bogs, islands, foul waters, and winding streams overhung by fog (Colgrave, 1956: 87). It is easy to imagine how such environments might have been perceived as 'otherworldly'.

Sacred bogs, lakes, and their banks are therefore a notably 'Scandinavian' depositional context. Though Lund (2010: 58) has suggested that 'no weapons from the Anglo-Saxon period have been found in English lakes' this study identified four late Saxon or Viking Age spearheads, recovered from Esthwaite Water, Crummock Water, and Kentmere Lake in the Lake District. Despite being tantalizing evidence of a Scandinavian ritual tradition otherwise unknown in Britain, those from Esthwaite Water and Kentmere Lake have only been briefly analysed (Fell, 1956; Graham-Campbell, 1992). These weapons have therefore yet to receive recognition for their potential significance and it can be argued that they reflect an imported Scandinavian behavioural practice.

Other weapons are deposited within marshes themselves, often adjacent to islands, as at Roller's Lode, Old West River, and Braham Dock in the Cambridgeshire Fens. Islands form a special kind of liminal site and may have been perceived as "places of contact with the otherworld because in a way they are situated 'on the other side'" (Heide, 2011: 73). The tenth-century Byzantine source, *De Administrando Imperio*, for example describes Rūs Vikings performing sacrifices on the Dnepr River at St. Gregory's Island, now Khortitsa, and this should be considered in light of the Viking swords discussed by Androshchuk (2002). In England the *Life of St. Guthlac* notes spirits and demons inhabiting islands within the Fens (Colgrave, 1956; Semple, 1998: 114), suggesting an Anglo-Saxon recognition of this perception. It is perhaps notable that Braham Dock features multiple weapons, with the liminal associations of islands possibly precipitating repeated acts of deposition over time.

Reynolds & Semple (2011) suggest that weapons acquired 'social biographies' through being circulated amongst multiple owners, whilst other weapons such as the 'Beagnoth Seax' (Figure 5) incorporate lavish decoration, making them unique and memorable. Deposition can therefore perhaps be interpreted as ritually ending an object's association with humans whilst maintaining its memory through deposition in a special location (Lund, 2010: 50–51). Depositional contexts would consequently take on meaning and memory through association with such artefacts and may have acquired their own importance, attracting further ritual acts. Whilst Reynolds and Semple (2011) therefore ascribe cultural significance to weapons themselves, the relationships between these and depositional contexts were likely to be mutually strengthening. This may be demonstrated by weapons deposited at Dimmock's Cote, Cambridgeshire, which date from *c.* 800 to the eleventh century (Shetelig, 1940: 69). It must also be recognized that these might also result from a single deposition; the eleventh-century Nazeing hoard from Essex, for example, includes a possible Roman period axe and a number of spear heads dating variously from the sixth to eleventh centuries (Morris, 1983).

'Unseen' Conflict?

Given the associations of wetlands, rivers and lakes with pagan ritual practice, might these deposits represent 'invisible conflict', with the 'construction' of depositional sites signifying a process by which landscapes were ritually consolidated? The late ninth- to early tenth-century Hurbuck Hoard (Figure 6), found in the banks of a stream in County Durham, attests to this. The hoard contained agricultural and woodworking implements, a sword and scramasax, all of which were likely still functional when deposited (Morris, 1983: 37). In Viking Age Scandinavia, tool hoards are associated with metal smiths, though these often include items such as anvils and tongs which are not present in the Hurbuck Hoard. Despite this, hoards such as that from Nosaby, Skåne, are also known to lack this specific material (Lund, 2008a: 62) and given that tools are the products of metalworking, they can arguably be associated with the identity of the smith.

Like the Hurbuck Hoard, Viking Age Scandinavian tool hoards were typically deposited on the banks of lakes and rivers, representing the liminal situation of smithies in Old Norse mythology and their perceived 'place' within cognitive landscapes (Lund, 2006: 338, 2008a: 62). Contextually, therefore, the Hurbuck Hoard demonstrates a transference of Scandinavian folklore and mythology into the English landscape, replicating the cognitive landscape of Scandinavia. Sites such as the ninth-century Viking barrow cemetery at Ingleby, Derbyshire, represent a more monumental method by which this could be attempted (Richards, 2003: 394). Whilst the Viking presence in England provides a convincing context for a surge in pagan ritual activity, their settlement of the landscape in the late ninth century provides a further viable context of landscape consolidation.

Ritual deposits 'gave legitimacy to the land by becoming part of the discursive knowledge of the people who lived in these areas. Although hidden, these […] remained 'visible' for generations' (Hedeager, 2008: 14), thereby contributing to a consolidative process involving the construction of layers of meaning and memory within the landscape. Ritual practice is intrinsically interwoven, furthermore, with social power. The inclusion in, or exclusion of, individuals and groups from ritual acts provides

Figure 5. *The ninth- to tenth-century 'Beagnoth Seax', recovered from the River Thames near Battersea. This features a runic inscription and decoration along the blade.*
Image: ©Trustees of the British Museum.

those orchestrating proceedings with opportunities to manipulate social hierarchies, as the ability to control access of groups and individuals to certain locales and ritual activities represents an important facet of power and domination (Tilley, 1994: 27). Ritual acts might similarly represent an ostentatious show of power by elites seeking to establish themselves within the landscape (Lund, 2008b: 37).

The restructuring of social hierarchies likely accompanied the settlement of elites and the large-scale redistribution of land within the Danelaw (Abrams, 2001; Richards, 2004a; Ten Harkell, 2011). In Scandinavia, these groups were generally autonomous, managing their own rights of succession, inheritance and transfers of power (Karras, 1990). During the conversion process in Scandinavia the Church may have clashed with the authority of individual households, prompting various measures to overcome this and bring power within the fold of the Church (Karras, 1990: 141–42). Hadley (2006) and Ten Harkell (2011) have proposed that agreements between the Church and Scandinavian elites in England acted to

Figure 6. *Some of the contents of the Hurbuck Hoard, recovered in Co. Durham.*
Image: ©Trustees of the British Museum.

legitimize the invader's newly acquired power, whilst elites assisted in collecting dues for the Church. Though the latter may have been relatively quick to entice Scandinavian elites into reciprocal relationships and regain much of its power in certain areas, an evident concern with pagan worship is demonstrated as late as 1020–1023 when Knútr prohibited the veneration of rivers and wells, the sun, moon, fire, stones, and trees, as well as any pagan gods, presumably in response to the continuation of such practices in England (Sanmark, 2004: 151; Lund, 2010: 59). This supports suggestions that the Scandinavian settlement and colonization had triggered a resurgence of pagan ritual practice, possibly resulting in the fragmentation of the religious landscape. As a Christian king, Knútr may have desired to strengthen Christianity in England and establish a uniform level of power and ritual practice across his empire. As a foreign king, the ability to legitimize himself would have also depended on his relationship with, and the power of, the English Church.

The inevitable confrontation between paganism and Christianity is perhaps further evidenced by early Christian domination of wetland environments. 'Early monastic sites […] were often on liminal places accessed by crossing water' (Lund, 2010: 59), whilst in Ireland we see the deposition of Christian objects at and around crannogs (Fredengren, 2002: 259). It may be no coincidence that the Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire Fens were occupied by monks and ecclesiastical establishments during the middle Saxon period, whilst saints and priests in early Christian Iceland blessed or 'converted' locations used for ritual acts (Lund, 2008a: 60). Indeed, "rather than destroying individual artefacts and structures belonging to the indigenous ideologies, the success of the Christian church […] lay in its concern to appropriate and 'convert' them to serve the causes of the new religion" (Stocker & Everson, 2003: 284). In the Witham valley, draining the fens and re-constructing ancient causeways may have ensured that rituals associated with the river and pools became refocused on churches built nearby, thereby promoting 'the conversion of an entire landscape' (Stocker & Everson, 2003: 285). In the Viking Age, however, Scandinavian paganism may have contrastingly reversed Christianity's domination of the landscape. Despite there being no physical alteration to the landscape itself, the significance of ritual acts certainly would not have been lost on the Church.

We must also return to the underlying context of conflict within which depositions were taking place, with Scandinavian and Scandinavian-aligned elites consolidating and occupying fortified sites, establishing power bases and commoditizing the landscape (Richards, 2004a: 77). Given the ostentatiously pagan character of these deposits, ritual acts might have played an active part in consolidating and legitimizing the Viking presence in England. Immigrant populations were not just physically settling the landscape, but were investing ritual practices, beliefs, and objects in actively constructing a hybrid cultural, ritual, and cosmological landscape. As rituals offer opportunities to reshape power structures and social hierarchies these may not have been secretive or personal acts; the landscape became key in expressing both individual and group identity (Knapp & Ashmore, 1999: 16) and power.

This represents just one form of 'unseen conflict', with the Viking Great Army's overwintering at Repton, Derbyshire, in 873–874 providing a more overtly aggressive analogy of pagan consolidation. Whilst the overwintering represents a 'military' occupation, it seems unlikely to

be coincidental that the site was used for burial by the Mercian royal house. The excavation of a mass grave within a modified Anglo-Saxon mausoleum has been taken to suggest that members of the Great Army were interred here (Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle, 1992, 2001), though Richards (2004b: 103) argues that the burial may represent a prominent Viking leader around whom individuals disinterred during the construction of the camp were arranged. Other Viking burials at Repton are argued to utilize aspects of Christian burial rite (McLeod, 2013), with Richards (2004b: 104) suggesting that the army found it 'expedient […] to be converted to Christianity'. Despite this, at least one of these graves (G511) represents what must be considered as an ostentatiously pagan 'warrior' burial, complete with Thor's Hammer, whilst Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle (2001) argue that the mass grave bears characteristically pagan Scandinavian traits. Given the role of the Church in legitimizing kingship, it is unlikely that any group converting to Christianity in order to legitimize their rule would allow the destruction and subversion of important Christian monuments. The Viking occupation of Repton therefore represents a clear attempt to assert a militaristic pagan identity within a Christian setting, legitimizing the new elite through domination. The contemporaneous barrow burials at Ingleby, 4 kilometres to the east (Richards, 2003, 2004b), similarly demonstrate that at least some elements of the Great Army continued to express an overtly pagan identity within the Christianized landscape.

Scandinavian Intervention or Anglo-Saxon Revitalization?

The nature of cultural mobility and hybridity means that we cannot confidently ascribe all ritual depositions to Scandinavian groups. Whilst Viking colonists created distinct identities when settling empty lands such as the Faroe Islands and Iceland (Barrett, 2003: 3), contact with indigenous cultures elsewhere precipitated the formation of complex hybrid identities. These are attested to, for example, in the abundance of Hiberno-Norse metalwork recovered from hoards such as Cuerdale and Huxley (Graham-Campbell, 2011), or Anglo-Scandinavian hogback tombstones (Lang, 1975: 206).

Acculturation, however, might have been reciprocal. The failure of Anglo-Saxon elites and the Church to provide protection against pagan Viking attacks, colonization and settlement may have prompted some groups to return to earlier belief systems, especially given the possible impacts of ecclesiastical decline in the Danelaw (Abrams, 2001: 35). It is also possible that the Viking presence revived memories of past pagan practice, leading to a hybrid cultural phenomenon resulting from the fusion of different identities that had once shared a similar ideology (Lund, 2010: 60–61). Ritual actions are representative of power, and groups might adopt symbols of power from others if these can be used advantageously (Tilley, 2006: 14), though such assimilation likely varied within population groups. The large number of deposits in the River Thames, for example, reflects ritual acts in an area never subject to Scandinavian settlement, possibly suggesting the adoption of foreign ritual practices (see Blair, 1994, below) or a return to ancient belief systems. It is also possible that some of these deposits might represent Viking groups moving through the landscape.

It must be recognized that some rituals may have been undertaken within a Christian context. Whilst Stocker and Everson (2003: 282) argue that the Church supervised weapon depositions in wetland

environments prior to these largely ceasing by the fourteenth century, Reynolds and Semple (2011: 46) note that such practices might 'also be seen as a commonly understood but private undertaking independent from […] the Church'. Some weapon finds may therefore represent continuity of ritual practice within specific landscape contexts, rather than an overarching influx of pagan ritual practice (Stocker & Everson, 2003; Everson & Stocker, 2011). Despite this, it is important to note that these acts emulated a pre-Christian ritual tradition that was not fully absorbed by the Church until much later (Stocker & Everson, 2003: 282). The finds may also represent non-religious cultural transference, indicating the Anglo-Saxon adoption of Viking depositional rituals, perhaps as part of peace-making or oath-taking ceremonies (Blair, 1994: 99). Discussion of these deposits, therefore, might have much to add to future debates regarding cultural hybridity and assimilation by both immigrant and indigenous groups during the Viking Age.

This paper contends that weapon depositions must to some extent directly reflect the influx of pagan Vikings arriving in England. The characteristically Scandinavian behavioural patterns, materials, and depositional contexts identified suggest that Scandinavians or those of Scandinavian descent were undertaking ritual practices reminiscent of the Viking homelands. This might have consequently triggered an influx of paganism into the Christianized landscape during the ninth to eleventh centuries, exacerbating not only changes in ritual practice but also an inevitable clash between opposing belief systems. The number of finds (which must represent only a fraction of depositions) indicates a massive disposal of useful tools during a period of frequent conflict, reflecting a significant 'sacrifice' and corresponding desire to achieve something through ritual acts, perhaps as 'a way of handling or changing a situation' (Lund, 2008a: 66). While this paper has focused on the possibility of public and ostentatious depositions, any number of finds might represent personal and private rituals that were removed from wider contexts of 'national' conflict. A wish to permanently establish the presence of a family group within the landscape, inter-group feuding or threats to personal safety and/or prosperity might all induce depositions, with each find representing an idiosyncratic act that cannot be interpreted generically. 'The cosmological landscape of the Viking Age probably had no fixed form, as this type of orthodoxy within religion is rare in societies with such a low degree of literacy' (Lund, 2008b: 276–77). Whilst these objects can therefore be quantified and analysed, a more challenging task is to attribute them with a reasonable amount of agency in order to understand processes taking place within the landscape.

Investigating Hoards and Dry Land Ritual Deposits

Depositions in non-wetland contexts such as the Harkirk Hoard, Merseyside, must also be considered. This coin hoard was deposited on the edge of an island of boulder clay separated from the Irish Sea by a belt of blown sand. The seashore similarly represents a liminal zone between dry land and water and it is possible that despite being situated far inland, the hoard was perceived as being deposited on a large 'beach' (Raffield, 2013a: 306). The Carnforth and Silverdale hoards, located in the Morecambe Bay area, might similarly be considered in this light given the tidal sands that dominate the bay, reflecting cosmological concerns within this particular landscape context (Raffield, 2013a: 306). Both Graham-Campbell and Sheehan (2009: 77) and Kershaw (in

press) discuss gold arm and finger rings found on or near to beaches in England and Scotland, though it is currently difficult to confidently interpret these as intentional depositions. In Ireland, Graham-Campbell and Sheehan (2009) also discuss a number of hoards from watery and marginal locations, including lake shores and crannogs, and it is worth noting that the famous Cuerdale Hoard, Lancashire, was deposited near to a ford on a bend in the River Ribble. Though Graham-Campbell and Sheehan (2009: 90) highlight many practical and ritual reasons for hoard deposition, it is possible that their topographic contexts might represent a wider concern with depositing material in liminal environments.

Some weapon depositions in dry land contexts are also known. At Berg, Norway, Lund (2005: 120) notes the deposition of a Viking Age axe in a 10-cm gap between two pieces of rock that lay not only on a boundary between two properties, but also where the landscape changed from mountain to farmland. The deposition of the axe intentionally gives the impression of having cut the rock in two, and this may physically manifest both legal and topographic landscape divisions. In England, the metalworking hoard from Crayke, North Yorkshire—possibly associated with a burnt building (Sheppard, 1939)—should also be noted. Wetlands were clearly not the only focus of ritual activity.

Suggested Avenues of Future Investigation

The further study of wetland depositions is immediately viable due to the quantity of available data. This is imperative given that these deposits represent a major cultural phenomenon that has yet to be sufficiently recognized in Viking Age England. The identification of what appear to be characteristically Scandinavian behavioural patterns has many implications for understanding cultural interaction and hybridity, perceptions of the landscape and the modification of power structures. Re-investigating depositional contexts would aid further interpretation of finds, reveal any national or regional distribution patterns and allow specific ritual contexts to be analysed. An investigation of the folklore of wetlands, rivers, and lakes both in England and elsewhere might also shed light on past perceptions of landscapes.

It is also critical to acknowledge that weapons represent only one type of object recovered from rivers and wetlands; other finds include stirrups, jewellery, tools, and keys—material that is distinctly non-martial. Any object, however, might potentially hold material or symbolic value and thus might have functioned as a votive offering. Whilst smaller finds might be more likely candidates for casual loss than weapons, they may have also been deposited by individuals or groups whilst travelling through 'gateways' in the landscape, as an offering to God(s) or spirits, as an ostentatious show of power and wealth, or perhaps during oath-making ceremonies. Conflict and consolidation thus represent just two contexts that might have prompted deposition. These objects may therefore reflect any number of personal beliefs and desires whilst defining liminal areas within the cognitive, cosmological landscape that were widely held to be associated with gods or spirits (Lund, 2010). Studying a broader spectrum of finds alongside weapons will therefore provide a more complete understanding of ritual practices during the Viking Age and enable us to better contextualize similar material across the Viking world. This will allow a more holistic understanding of Scandinavian territorial consolidation and

interaction with indigenous populations, cosmologies, and landscapes.

Concluding Remarks

Given the prevailing context of conflict throughout Viking Age England, the resurgence of ritual depositional practices suggests a characteristically Scandinavian pagan ritual being utilized within the context of personal, familial, and wider contexts of conflict, consolidation, identity, and power. The finds suggest that the Vikings were actively constructing a hybrid cultural and cosmological landscape through the investment of ritual practices, beliefs, and valuable objects in making the English landscape 'recognizable'. These actions thus held deep meaning and importance despite precipitating no physical change in the landscape itself. Not all depositions would have necessarily been intended as actively anti-Christian or territorially consolidative, but instead simply as offerings to God(s) or spirits. This does not mean, however, that others would not interpret rituals as confrontational or threatening; any religious 'conflict' might well have been a (sub)conscious manifestation of the acts themselves.

Though each deposit represents an idiosyncratic and unique act, they reflect the importance of certain 'liminal' situations for ritual deposition. Whilst likely representing Scandinavians or individuals of Scandinavian descent continuing the practices of the Viking homelands, they may also physically manifest a wish for protection during warfare or signify a cosmological milestone whereby an indigenous individual or group began to undertake pagan practices alongside or *in lieu* of Christian worship. These objects therefore represent just one way by which desires and belief systems were physically manifested within landscapes. As further deposits are studied and discussed, we may be able to more confidently infer the reasons for so many weapons being rendered unusable during a time of endemic warfare and how they were considered to alter the changeable world beyond the water's edge.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Neil Price, Mark Collard and Laura Whitehouse for reading and commenting on drafts of this paper. I am also grateful for the comments of five anonymous referees. All remaining errors are my own. This work was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Simon Fraser University.

References

Abrams, L. 2001. The Conversion of the Danelaw. In: J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch & D.N. Parsons, eds. *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, pp. 31–44.

Andrén, A., Jennbert, K. & Raudvere, C. eds. 2006. *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Androshchuk, F. 2002. Har gotländska vikingar offrat vapen i Dnepr-forsarna? *Fornvännen*, 97(1):9–14.

Arbman, H. & Nilsson, N-O. 1969. Armes scandinaves de l'époque viking en France. *Meddelanden från Lunds Universitets Historiska Museum*, 1968–69:163–202.

Barrett, J.H. 2003. Introduction. In: J. H. Barrett, ed. *Contact, Continuity, and Collapse. The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 1–8.

Bemmann, G. & Bemmann, J. 1998. *Der Opfer-platz von Nydam. Die Funde aus den älteren Grabungen: Nydam-I und Nydam-II*. Neumünster: Wachholtz.

Biddle, M. & Kjølbye-Biddle, B. 1992. Repton and the Vikings. *Antiquity*, 66:36–51.

Biddle, M. & Kjølbye-Biddle, B. 2001. Repton and the 'Great Heathen Army', 873–4. In: J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch & D.N. Parsons, eds. *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*. Oxbow: Oxford, pp. 45–96.

Blair, J. 1994. *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*. Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited.

Bradley, R. 1990. *The Passage of Arms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bradley, R. 1998. *The Significance of Monuments*. London: Routledge.

Bradley, R. 2000. *An Archaeology of Natural Places*. London: Routledge.

Brink, S. 2001. Mythologizing Landscape. Place and Space of Cult and Myth. In: M. Strausberg, ed. *Kontinuitäten und Brüche in der Religionsgeschichte*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 76–112.

Brink, S. 2013. Myth and Ritual in Pre-Christian Scandinavian Landscape. In: S.W. Nordeide & S. Brink, eds. *Sacred Sites and Holy Places. Exploring the Sacralization of Landscape Through Time and Space*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 33–51.

Cameron, K. 1988. *English Place-Names*. Revised 4th edition. London: Batsford.

Carlson, D. 2010. Skatter, gårdar och landskap —vikingatidens Gotland. *Myntstudier*, 2010:6–10.

Carver, M.O.H. 1990. Pre-Viking Traffic in the North Sea. In: S. McGrail, ed. *Maritime Celts, Frisians & Saxons: Papers Presented to a Conference at Oxford in November 1988*. London: Council for British Archaeology, pp. 117–25.

Carver, M.O.H. 2001. Why That, Why There, Why Then? The Politics of Early Medieval Monumentality. In: A. Macregor & H. Hamerow, eds. *Image and Power in Early Medieval British Archaeology. Essays in Honour of Rosemary Cramp*. Oxford: Oxbow, pp. 1–22.

Carver, M.O.H. 2002. Reflections on the Meaning of Anglo-Saxon Barrows. In: S. Lucy & A. Reynolds, eds. *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales*. Society for Medieval Archaeology Monographs 17. London: Society for Medieval Archaeology, pp. 132–43.

Chaney, W.A. 1970. *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Colgrave, B. trans. & ed. 1956. *Felix's Life of St. Guthlac*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cooper, J. 1993. *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact*. London: Hambledon Continuum.

DuBois, T. 2006. Rituals, Witnesses and Sagas. In: A Andrén, K. Jennbert & C. Raudvere eds. *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, pp. 74–78.

Effros, B. 2003. *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Everson, P. & Stocker, D. 2011. *Custodians of Continuity? The Premonstratensian Abbey at Barlings and the Landscape of Ritual*. Heckington: Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire.

Fabech, C. 1994. Reading Society from the Cultural Landscape: South Scandinavia between Sacral and Political Power. In: P.O. Nielson, K. Randsborg & H. Thrane, eds. *The Archaeology of Gudme and Lundeborg*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, pp. 169–83.

Fell, C. 1956. A Viking Spearhead from Kentmere. *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 56:67–69.

Fredengren, C. 2002. *Crannogs: A Study of People's Interaction with Lakes, with Special Reference to Loch Gara in the North West of Ireland*. Bray: Wordwell.

Geake, H. 1997. *The Use of Grave-Goods in Conversion-Period England*. British Archaeological Reports British Series 261. Oxford, Archaeopress.

Geisslinger, H. 1967. *Horte als Geschichtquelle, dargestellt an den völkerwanderungs- und merowingerzeitlichen Funden des südwestlichen Ostseeraumes*. Neumünster: Wachholtz.

Graham-Campbell, J. ed. 1992. *Viking Treasure from the North West; The Cuerdale Hoard in its Context*. Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

Graham-Campbell, J. 2011. *The Cuerdale Hoard and Related Viking-Age Silver and Gold from Britain and Ireland in the British Museum*. London: British Museum.

Graham-Campbell, J. & Sheehan, J. 2009. Viking Age Gold and Silver from Irish Crannogs and Other Watery Places. *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 18:77–93.

Green, M.J. 1998. Vessels of Death: Sacred Cauldrons in Archaeology and Myth. *The Antiquaries Journal*, 78:63–84.

Griffiths, B. trans. 1991. *The Battle of Maldon: Text and Translation*. Pinner: Anglo-Saxon Books.

Gurney, D. 1986. *Settlement, Religion and Industry on the Fen-Edge: Three Romano-British Sites in Norfolk*. East Anglian Archaeology 31. Gressenhall: Norfolk Archaeology Unit.

Hadley, D. 2006. *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hall, R.A. 1989. The Five Boroughs of the Danelaw: A Review of Present Knowledge. *Anglo-Saxon England*, 18:149–206.

Hall, R.A. 2000. Scandinavian Settlement in England—The Archaeological Evidence. *Acta Archaeologica*, 71:147–57.

Halsall, G. 1989. Anthropology and the Study of Pre-Conquest War and Society: The Ritual War in Anglo-Saxon England. In: S. Chadwick Hawkes, ed. *Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, pp. 155–77.

Halsall, G. 2000. The Viking Presence in England? The Burial Evidence. In: D. Hadley & J. Richards, eds. *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp. 259–76.

Halsall, G. 2003. *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hayward, P.A. 2011. *Kingship, Childhood and Martyrdom in Anglo-Saxon England*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Hedeager, L. 1999. Sacred Topography: Depositions of Wealth in the Cultural Landscape. In: A. Gustafsson & H. Karlsson, eds. *Glyfer och arkeologiska rum. In honorem Jarl Nordbladh*. Gotarc Series A, 3. Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, pp. 229–52.

Hedeager, L. 2002. Scandinavian Central Places in a Cosmological Setting. In: B. Hardh & L. Larsson, eds. *Central Places in the Migration and Merovingian Periods: Papers from the 52nd Sachsen Symposium, Lund, August 2001*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Internat, pp. 3–18.

Hedeager, L. 2008. Scandinavia Before the Viking Age. In: S. Brink & N. Price. eds. *The Viking World*. London: Routledge, pp. 11–22.

Heide, E. 2011. Holy Islands and the Otherworld: Places Beyond Water. In: G. Jaritz & T. Jørgensen, eds. *Isolated Islands in Medieval Nature, Culture and Mind*. CEU medievalia 14, The Muhu Procedings 2. Budapest/Bergen: Central European University/Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Bergen, pp. 57–80.

Heide, E. 2014 Contradictory Cosmology in Old Norse Myth and Religion—But Still a System? *Maal og Minne*, 1:102–43.

Hill, D. 1981. *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hoggett, R. 2007. Charting Conversion: Burial as a Barometer of Belief? In: S. Semple & H. Williams, eds. *Anglo-Saxon Studies in History and Archaeology 14*. Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, pp. 28–37.

Ilkjaer, J. 2002. *Illerup Ådal—Archaeology as a Magic Mirror*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

Jankuhn, H. 1955. *Die Friihgeschichte tom Ausgang der Volkenoanderungeeit bis zum Ende der Wikinger zeit (Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins, III)*. Neumunster: Wachholtz.

Karras, R. 1990. Concubinage and Slavery in the Viking Age. *Scandinavian Studies*, 62:141–62.

Kershaw, J. in press. Scandinavian-Related Metalwork from the Southwest: New Light on the 'First Viking Age' in Wessex. In: R. Lavelle & S. Roffey, eds. *Danes in Wessex*. Oxford: Oxbow.

Keynes, S. & Lapidge, M. trans. 1983. *Alfred the Great. Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*. London: Penguin Books.

Knapp, A.B. & Ashmore, W. 1999. Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualized, Ideational. In: W. Ashmore & A.B. Knapp, eds. *Archaeologies of Landscape*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1–30.

Lang, J.T. 1975. Hogback Monuments in Scotland. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 105:206–35.

Larrington, C. trans. 1996. *The Poetic Edda*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lund, J. 2005. Thresholds and Passages: The Meanings of Bridges and Crossings in the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages. *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 1:109–35.

Lund, J. 2006. Vikingetidens værktøjskister i landskab og mytologi. *Fornvännen*, 101:323–41.

Lund, J. 2008a. Banks, Borders and Bodies of Water in a Viking Age Mentality. *Journal of Wetland Archaeology*, 8:53–72.

Lund, J. 2008b. *Åsted og vadested Deponeringer, genstandsbiografier og rumlig strukturering som kilde til vikingetidens kognitive landskaber*. PhD thesis, University of Oslo.

Lund, J. 2010. At the Water's Edge. In: M. Carver, A. Sanmark & S. Semple, eds. *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*. Oxford: Oxbow, pp. 49–66.

McLeod, S. 2013. The Acculturation of Scandinavians in England: A Consideration of the Burial Record. *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, 9:61–88.

Morris, C. 1983. A Late Saxon Hoard of Iron and Copper-Alloy Artefacts from Nazeing, Essex. (Metalworkers hoard, 11th century deposition?). *Medieval Archaeology*, 27:27–39.

Peirce, I. 2002. *Swords of the Viking Age*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

Raffield, B. 2013a. *Landscapes of Conflict and Control: Creating an Archaeological Atlas of Scandinavian Occupied England, AD 878–954*. PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen.

Raffield, B. 2013b. Antiquarians, Archaeologists and Viking Fortifications. *Journal of the North Atlantic*, 20:1–29.

Ragnar Hagland, J. & Watson, B. 2005. Fact or Folklore: The Viking Attack on London Bridge. *London Archaeologist*, 10 (12):328–33.

Randsborg, K. 1999. Into the Iron Age: A Discourse on War and Society. In: J. Carman & A. Harding, eds. *Ancient Warfare*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing, pp. 191–202.

Raudvere, C. 2008. Popular Religion in the Viking Age. In: S. Brink & N. Price, eds. *The Viking World*. London: Routledge, pp. 235–43.

Reynolds, A. & Semple, S. 2011. Anglo-Saxon Non-Funerary Weapon Depositions. In: S. Brookes, S. Harrington & A. Reynolds, eds. *Studies in Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology: Papers in Honour of Martin G. Welch*. British Archaeological Reports British Series 527. Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 40–48.

Richards, J. 2003. Pagans and Christians at a Frontier: Viking Burial in the Danelaw. In: M. Carver, ed. *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, pp. 383–96.

Richards, J. 2004a. *Viking Age England*. Stroud: Tempus.

Richards, J. 2004b. Excavations at the Viking Barrow Cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, Derbyshire. *The Antiquaries Journal*, 84:23–116.

Sanmark, A. 2004. *Power and Conversion - A Comparative Study of Christianization in Scandinavia*. Occasional Papers in Archaeology 34. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press.

Sanmark, A. 2009. Administrative Organisation and State Formation: A Case Study of Assembly Sites in Södermanland, Sweden. *Medieval Archaeology*, 53:205–41.

Sanmark, A. & Semple, S. 2008. Places of Assembly. New Discoveries in Sweden and England. *Fornvännen*, 103:245–59.

Sanmark, A. & Semple, S. 2013. Assembly in North West Europe: Collective Concerns for Early Societies? *European Journal of Archaeology*, 16(3):518–42.

Scarre, C. ed. 2002. *Monuments and Landscape in Atlantic Europe: Perception and Society During the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age*. London: Routledge.

Scragg, D. ed. 1991. *The Battle of Maldon, AD 991*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Semple, S. 1998. A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England. *World Archaeology*, 30(1):109–26.

Semple, S. 2010. In the Open Air. In: M. Carver, A. Sanmark & S. Semple, eds. *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*. Oxford: Oxbow, pp. 21–49.

Sheppard, T. 1939. Viking and Other Relics at Crayke, Yorkshire. *Yorkshire Archaeology Journal*, 34:273–81.

Shetelig, H. ed. 1940. *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain & Ireland*. Vol. 4. Oslo: H. Aschehoug.

Skanderborg Museum. 2012. Alken Enge—The Mass Grave at Lake Mossø. [online] [Accessed 14 February 2013]. Available at: <http://www.skanderborgmuseum.dk/Alken_Enge-English_version-1070.aspx>.

Stocker, D. & Everson, P. 2003. The Straight and Narrow Way: Fenland Causeways and the Conversion of the Landscape in the Witham Valley, Lincolnshire. In: M. Carver, ed. *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, pp. 271–88.

Ten Harkell, L. 2011. Land or Gold? Changing Perceptions of Landscape in Viking Age Lincolnshire. *Assemblage*, 11:15–33.

Thurston, T.L. 2002. *Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict. State Formation in the South Scandinavian Iron Age*. London: Kluwer Academic Press.

Tilley, C. 1994. *A Phenomenology of Landscape*. Oxford: Berg.

Tilley, C. 2006. Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage. *Journal of Material Culture*, 11(1–2):7–32.

Turner, S. 2006. *Making a Christian Landscape: The Countryside in Early Medieval Cornwall, Devon and Wessex*. Exeter: Exeter University Press.

Webster, L. 1983. A Viking Age Sword from Skerne, N. Humberside. *The Antiquaries Journal*, 63:387.

Welinder, S. 2003. Christianity. Politics and Ethnicity in Early Medieval Jämtland, Mid Sweden. In: M. Carver, ed. *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, pp. 509–30.

Wilke, G. 1999. Unterwasserarchäologie in polnische Flüssen und Seen. *Skyllis*, 2(1):46–57.

Williams, H. 2010. At the Funeral. In: M.O. H. Carver, A. Sanmark & S. Semple, eds. *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*. Oxford: Oxbow, pp. 67–83.

Wilson, D.M. 1965. Some Neglected Late Anglo-Saxon Swords. *Medieval Archaeology*, 9:32–54.

Yorke, B. 1990. *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England*. London: Routledge.

Zachrisson, T. 1998. *Gård, gräns, gravfält: Sammanhang kring ädelmetalldepåer och runstenar från vikingatid och tidig medeltid i Uppland och Gästrikland*. Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 15. Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet.

Biographical Note

Ben Raffield studied at the University of Birmingham prior to undertaking a PhD in archaeology at the University of Aberdeen, which he completed in 2013. He has recently become a Postdoctoral Research Assistant at Simon Fraser University and also holds the status of Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen. His research focuses largely on the Viking Age and the archaeology of power, conflict and violence. Ben is currently working on a collaborative project between Simon Fraser University and the University of Aberdeen to investigate aspects of the Viking conversion to Christianity.

Address: [email: braffield@abdn.ac.uk]

'Un fleuve de couteaux et d'épées': armes déposées rituellement dans les cours d'eau et zones humides anglais pendant l'Âge des Vikings

Cet article étudie le dépôt d'armes dans les rivières et zones humides anglais pendant l'Âge des Vikings. Ce genre de découvertes ont été l'objet d'études approfondies en Scandinavie, mais n'ont que rarement été examinées académiquement en Grande-Bretagne. On peut faire valoir qu'avec l'arrivée des Scandinaves en Grande-Bretagne du 9e au 11e siècle, le nombre des dépôts de nature 'païenne' a augmenté de façon significative. Malgré le christianisme bien enraciné et institutionnalisé qui dominait l'Angleterre depuis un certain temps, il se peut que les croyances païennes étaient certes dormantes, mais non pas oubliées; elles resurgissaient avec l'arrivée scandinave. Une grande partie des dépôts rituels sont constitués d'armes, et 70 d'entre eux ont été cartographiés afin d'identifier des schémas de distribution à travers le pays. On propose ici d'utiliser les dépôts 'liminaires' de la Scandinavie Viking comme modèles interprétatifs pour les découvertes anglaises. Vu le contexte de conflict endémique et de consolidation territoriale dans lequel ces armes ont probablement été déposées en Angleterre, ce matériel devrait permettre d'analyser les paysages sujets à conflit et consolidation sous un angle nouveau. Translation by Isabelle Gerges

Mots-clés: Âge des Vikings, conflit, paysage, rituel, dépôts, armes, zones humides, Angleterre anglo-saxonne

'Ein Fluss voll Messer und Schwerter': Rituell deponierte Waffen in Wasserläufen und Feuchtgebieten Englands während der Wikingerzeit

Dieser Beitrag diskutiert die Niederlegung von Waffen in englischen Flüssen und Feuchtgebieten während der Wikingerzeit. Derartige Funde wurden in Skandinavien intensiv untersucht, jedoch in Großbritannien bislang kaum akademisch diskutiert. Es kann angenommen werden, dass die Ankunft der Skandinavier zwischen dem 9. und 10. Jh. eine merkliche Zunahme von Deponierungen mit, heidnischem' Charakter herbeiführte. Trotz des tief verwurzelten und institutionalisierten Christentums, das England schon für einige Zeit dominiert hatte, ist es möglich, dass pagane Glaubensvorstellungen zwar schlummerten, jedoch keinesfalls vergessen waren und die Ankunft der Skandinavier ihr Wiederaufleben auslöste. Waffen bilden einen großen Anteil der rituellen Niederlegungen, wobei hier 70 Horte geographisch kartiert wurden, um Verteilungsmuster in der Landschaft zu erkennen. Es wird hier vorgeschlagen, dass, liminale' Niederlegungen im wikingerzeitlichen Skandinavien als interpretatives Modell für diese Funde dienen können. Vor dem Hintergrund lokalen Konflikts und territorialer Konsolidierung, in dem sie in England deponiert worden sein dürften, kann dieses Material neues Licht auf Einstellungen zu Landschaften werfen, die Konflikt und Konsolidierung unterworfen waren. Translation by Heiner Schwarzberg

Stichworte: Wikingerzeit, Konflikt, Landschaft, Ritual, Niederlegungen, Waffen, Feuchtgebiete, angelsächsisches England