

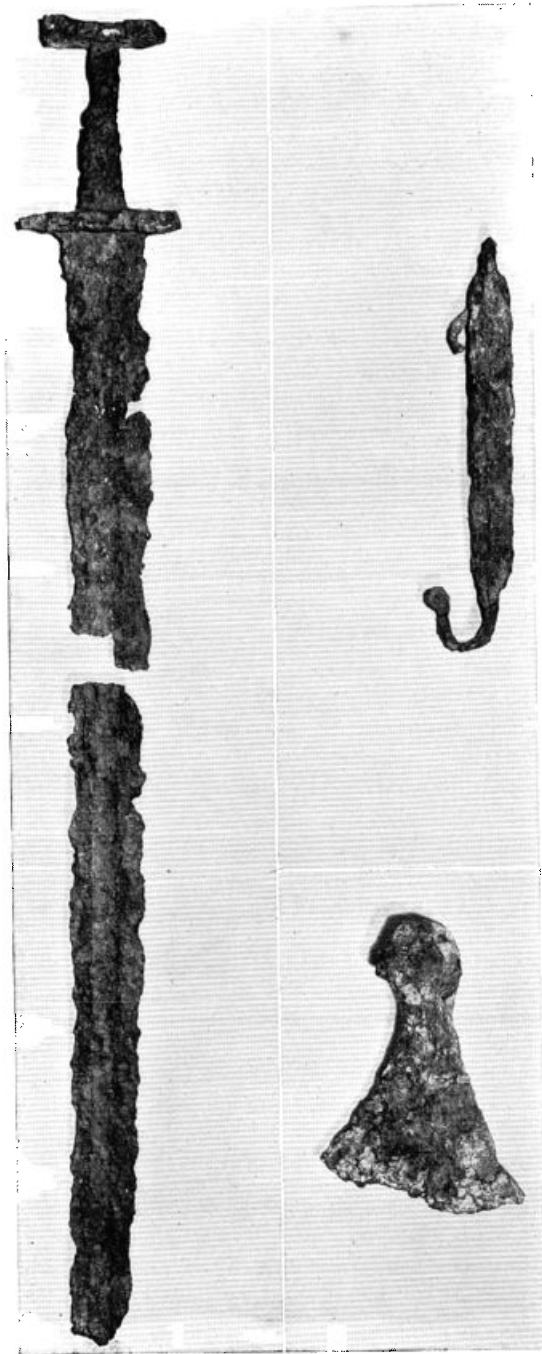
## VIKING WEAPONS FOUND NEAR BEARDMORE, ONTARIO<sup>1</sup>

ON May 24, 1930, Mr. James Edward Dodd of Port Arthur, a railroad man who spends all his spare time in prospecting, was sampling an exposed, nearly vertical, quartz vein near Beardmore, about seven miles from Lake Nipigon, in northern Ontario. At the point where the vein ran into the earth there was a clump of white birch, consisting of an old tree that had died and a group of young trees sprung from the roots. Birch is a very hard wood, and to cut through such a mass of tangled roots promised to be a serious undertaking. Consequently Mr. Dodd put in a considerable charge of dynamite and blew over the whole tangled clump. The big mass went over all together, and the rock which lay about three and a half feet below the surface was exposed. Lying on the rock were some pieces of iron. Mr. Dodd threw these out and went on with his work.

A few days later, a well-known man of the district, Mr. William Feltham, happened to visit Mr. Dodd's camp, and the two men discussed what these curious iron objects might be, and the meaning of the depth at which they had been found, and of the great mass of trees over them.

A little later, Mr. Dodd took the things to Port Arthur and showed them to Mr. Aaron Lougheed. A few days after that, Mr. John Jacob of the game and fisheries service of the province of Ontario, and a brother of the late Fred Jacob who was well known in Canadian journalism, came into Port Arthur and called on Mr. Lougheed. Mr. Jacob has been for a number of years in touch with the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology and is an extremely accurate observer of birds. Mr. Lougheed told him of the extraordinary iron that had been found and took him to Mr. Dodd's home to see it. It consisted of a sword broken in two, a very peculiar form of axe, and a bar, all of them quite seriously rusted. Mr. Dodd had no opinion as to what the objects might be, but told of the finding. After examining them very carefully, Mr. Lougheed and Mr. Jacob went to the public library, where they came to the conclusion that they were Viking weapons. Mr. Jacob then sent word to the Museum, but this was done by word of mouth and the message never reached me.

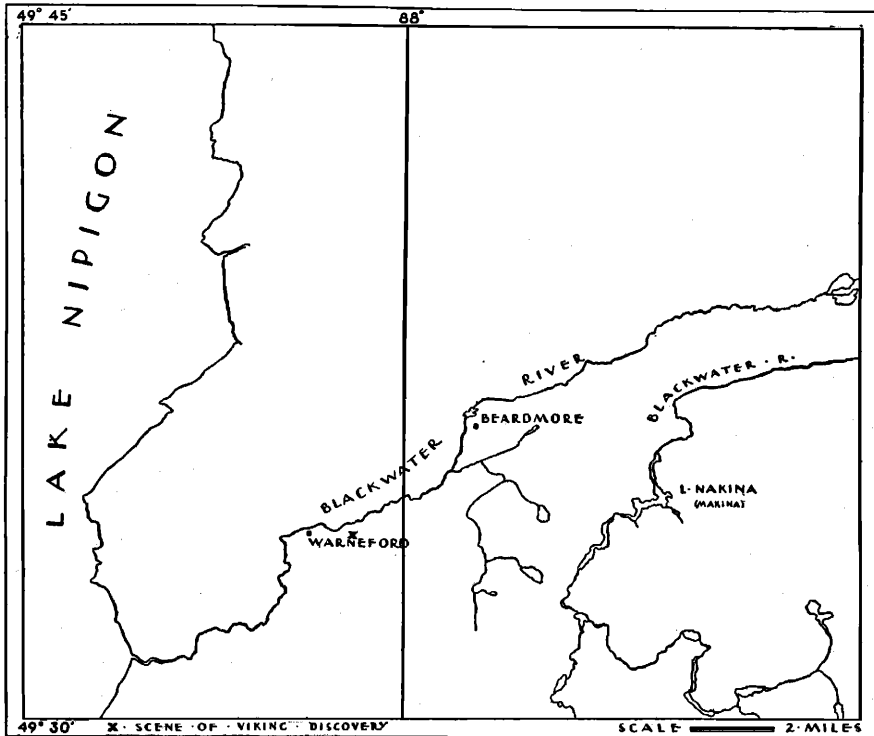
<sup>1</sup>We are indebted to Dr. C. T. Currelly, director of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, for this first authoritative statement on the Beardmore Viking pieces.  
[EDITOR]



Iron sword, axe, and grip of shield. Viking, about 1000 A.D.  
Found near Beardmore, northern Ontario.

The things lay around Mr. Dodd's house for some years and were offered for sale at a small price. Then they were thrown out into the back yard, but later Mr. Dodd took them back into the house and made another effort to sell them.

Some time later, Mr. Dodd mentioned the matter to Dr. E. M. Burwash, a geologist in the employ of the Ontario government,



who sent me word that there was a Viking sword in Port Arthur. I wrote about it but received no answer, and the whole thing seemed so utterly impossible that I did not go to Port Arthur to follow it up. Later, Mr. O. C. Elliott of the Collegiate Institute in Kingston, Ontario, saw the things and made an extremely good drawing. This he sent to me, together with an excellent description of the objects. I saw at once that they were without doubt Viking, and immediately wrote to Mr. Dodd, who brought them down to the Museum.

It was obvious to me that the weapons were a set, that is, that the axe and the sword were of the same date, which I judged

to be about 1000 A.D. I asked Mr. Dodd if he had found anything else, as I knew that there should have been another piece. He said yes, that lying over the bar of metal was something like a bowl that was rusted into little fragments. He had just shovelled them out. This bit of evidence was as it should have been, and since no one unacquainted with Viking things would have known of this iron boss that covered the hand on the Viking shield, I felt, therefore, that there was no question that these things had been found as was described. In addition to this, there was the fact that the pieces formed a set. Although I am told that a fair number of sets have been found in Scandinavia, I had never seen a set in any of the Viking finds made in England, where odd swords and odd axes are occasionally discovered. I know of no case in England of the axe and the sword being found together. As suspicion of nearly everything has to go with all archaeological work, I had been suspicious as to whether the weapons had been brought from Norway or Denmark and the Beardmore locality given to them in recent times; but the story as I have just told it dispelled this suspicion. I consequently bought the things for the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Jacob called and gave me a written statement as to his and Mr. Lougheed's part in the matter. He said that on first seeing the articles, they had seemed to him important enough to warrant his going and checking a statement or two of Mr. Dodd's, and that he accordingly went to the spot and saw that the clump of trees had been recently turned over, and that on the rock there was *a picture of the sword in ironrust*, just as it had been lying. He hunted for any impression of the axe on the rock, but evidently a little dirt had been between the axe and the rock and there was no staining from the axe. Later still, I received a written statement from Mr. Feltham, who had seen the things lying on the edge of the trench.

Professor T. F. McIlwraith of the staff of the Royal Ontario Museum went up to Beardmore as soon as possible, and Mr. Dodd took him to the site. After some hunting, a scrap of metal was found where the earth was first thrown out. This could very well be a part of the boss of the shield, and later another small scrap was found, which also could be from the thicker edge of the boss.

The weapons were treated by an electrical process as soon as we acquired them. This drives off the oxygen and so arrests rusting. Photographs of them were sent to a number of well-

known Norse archaeologists, who agreed that the sword and axe could well be of the same period, and that from 900 to 1000 would be a general statement of date. Dr. Matthias Thordarson, director of the National Museum of Iceland, illustrates a similar sword and axe in *The Vinland voyages*<sup>2</sup> and dates them 1000.

While we were getting ready to publish a statement, an article appeared in a Winnipeg paper, from a man who had heard the story in Port Arthur. Then came a statement to a reporter claiming that Mr. Dodd had not found the weapons as he had described, but that they had been found by him in a house that he had rented, in which they had been left by the owner of the house, a Norwegian. Immediately investigations were made in Port Arthur, and it was found that Mr. Dodd had not moved into that house for eighteen months after the time he had been showing the weapons to various people. Eventually the man who had told this story to the reporter said that he had meant it only as a joke, and signed a statement that he had never seen the things.

Now we are met with the seemingly incredible fact that a Viking was buried near Lake Nipigon. The Indian habit of sharing articles of value makes it inconceivable that three such unusual objects would have remained together if traded from tribe to tribe either from James bay or the Labrador shore. The idea has always been that the Viking visits, as described in the sagas, were to the Atlantic coast of America, and there have been published many papers discussing which part of the coast was reached. It does not seem to have occurred to anyone that the Vikings may have come into Hudson bay and down to James bay, and from there southward and westward to Lake Superior, as this find suggests. There is a well-known Indian trade route from James bay to Lake Nipigon. From there the most obvious route to Lake Superior is down the Nipigon river. An alternative way is up the Blackwater river to Lake Nakina, from which a portage leads to the headwaters of a stream flowing southward to Lake Superior. The Blackwater makes a tremendous loop eastward, and about seventy miles of river and rapids can be avoided by portaging from a spot a few miles above the mouth of the river to Lake Nakina, by way of a small, unnamed lake. The Viking weapons were found close to this short cut.

C. T. CURRELLY

The Royal Ontario Museum.

<sup>2</sup>American Geographical Society, research series no. 18, 1930, figs. 22 and 23.