



Dumbarton Rock © Hidden Heritage Project

The story of Viking activity around the Firth of Clyde begins with the siege of Dumbarton Rock in AD 870 and ends with the Battle of Largs in AD 1263. Evidence for this activity can be seen in the landscape, and in the form of small finds and grave goods. They tell us that Norse families settled here, while historic accounts of battles and invasion routes describe the Norse struggle for control of this beautiful and resource-filled landscape.



Olaus Magnus, 1555

After the death of Hakon, shortly after the Battle of Largs in 1263, Norse control in Scotland became confined to the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland. However, the lives of kings form only a small part of the story of the Vikings in Scotland, and no doubt many of the erstwhile invaders settled and mingled with other cultural groups around the Clyde, where their stories have become interwoven in the hidden history of Scotland.

For more information, visit:

www.hiddenheritage.org.uk/explore/viking-research/



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The Viking Heritage Trail



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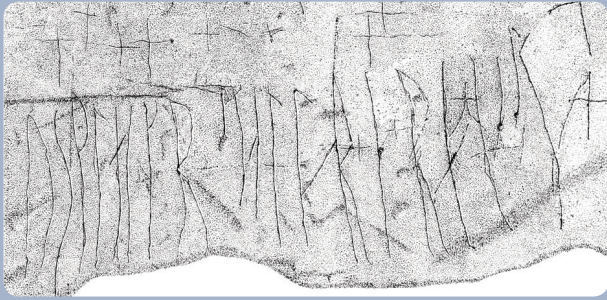
A guide to Viking sites around the Clyde



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Follow in the Vikings' footsteps . . .



1 Norse runes in St Molaise's Cave

St Molaise's Cave is on Holy Isle, just off the coast of Arran. It contains numerous carvings by pilgrims, as well as Norse runic inscriptions. One such inscription translates as "Vigleikr the marshal carved..." and was probably carved by Vigleikr Prestsson, a leader in King Hakon's fleet, who fought at the Battle of Largs in 1263.



2 Hunterston brooch

The Hunterston brooch was found at Hunterston in Ayrshire in 1830. It was made around AD 700, possibly at Dunadd, near Kilmartin, in Argyll. The brooch is made of gold, embellished with amber, with a Celtic name inscribed in runes on the back.

3 Battle of Largs

On 2 October 1263 King Hakon of Norway fought Alexander III of Scotland at the Battle of Largs for control of the Western Isles and the west of Scotland. The Norse army retreated and Hakon died soon after in Orkney. The struggle continued for 3 more years until the Norwegians ceded control of the Hebrides and Mann to Scotland in the Treaty of Perth, while retaining control of Orkney and Shetland. The Pencil Monument was built in 1912 to commemorate the battle.



4 Port Glasgow hoard

The Port Glasgow hoard, discovered around 1700, originally consisted of two silver arm-rings and "a great number of Saxon coins", which have since been lost. One arm-ring is a piece of Scottish Viking ring-money.

5 Northumbrian coins from Paisley

A collection of Northumbrian coins dating to the Viking age was found in Paisley in 1782.



6 Govan hogbacks

The Old Parish Church in Govan contains 5 hogback stones dating to as early as the mid-10th century. Hogbacks are Scandinavian sculptures

found only in Britain. Each of the Govan hogbacks is uniquely decorated with interlace designs along the bases and animal figures on the ends. All have the characteristic 'house' shape with shingle carvings covering the 'roof.' (thegovanstones.org.uk/)

7 Dumbarton Rock

In AD 870, a Viking force from Ireland laid siege to Dumbarton Rock and gained control of the stronghold after 4 months, providing the Vikings with access to the interior of the country via the River Clyde. Two lead weights and a sword pommel found here show that both raiding and trading took place in the area. The sagas tell of 200 ships carrying off slaves from the area.

8 Boiden burial

A Viking burial was discovered at Boiden near the banks of Loch Lomond during the mid-19th



century. The grave goods recovered from the burial included a spear, a damaged shield boss, and a purposely-bent sword. The burial dates to the 9th century and is a typical example of a Viking warrior's grave.

9 Arden cemetery/The Carrick

This small cemetery dating to the Early Medieval to Medieval period consisted of 15 graves, 6 of which contained grave goods, including small items of jewellery, tools, and knives. A small shale bracelet was found in a child's grave. A copper alloy bracelet, a blue glass bead, and a shale finger ring were also recovered from the site. The graves of women and children indicate the presence of a Scandinavian settlement nearby in the 10th century.

10 Luss hogback

The hogback stone in Luss churchyard dates to the 11th century. Although the stone has resided in the churchyard since 1874, it may originally have come from elsewhere in the landscape. It is smaller than the Govan hogbacks in both length and height, but the carving, resembling roof shingles, is still visible across most of the top of the stone. The design running along the base of the stone is barely discernible underneath the stone's thick coat of moss.

11 Arrochar to Tarbet portage route

The isthmus of land connecting Arrochar to Tarbet would likely have been used both before and after the Viking period, as it provided access between the interior of Scotland and the sea. Evidence for use of the route by the Vikings to move their boats between Loch Long and Loch Lomond during the Medieval period is found in Hakon's Saga, which tells of how King Hakon's forces moved up Loch Long and down into Loch Lomond to attack the many dwellings and to lay waste "these islands with fire", just before the Battle of Largs in 1263.



12 Ardentinny axe

An iron axehead was found in the 1990s on the banks of Loch Long in Ardentinny Bay. The axe is only about 14 cm long, so it is likely to have been a tool rather than a weapon.

13 Dalserf hogback

Like the hogback at Luss, the Dalserf hogback is smaller than those at Govan. Shingle-like carvings are visible on the sides, but much of the decoration has eroded away. The stone was probably originally located near the ford on the River Clyde as a marker of territory or a display of wealth and power, but now resides in the churchyard at Dalserf, after being discovered around 1897 by a gravedigger.



Luss hogback

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