

ABSTRACTS

Arne Kruse *Columba and Jonah – a Motif in the Dispersed Art of Iona*

The famous stone crosses and the Book of Kells are likely to have been produced on Iona about the time when the Viking attacks commenced in the late 8th century. There is a strong likelihood that the intensely creative workshops of Iona will have also produced metalwork.

- This talk argues the case that certain metal objects found in Viking graves may have such provenance.
- It is argued that the location of Iona, peripheral to the Irish heartland and under Pictish cultural influence, can explain the imagery and techniques, and Iona as the centre for the cult of St Columba can explicate the motivation behind the iconography in some objects looted by Vikings - the most likely remainders of the metalwork tradition on Iona.

Andrew Dugmore *New Perspectives on Human Ecodynamics in the North Atlantic*

Recent work has led to a fundamental re-assessment of well-publicised views of human-landscape interaction in the North Atlantic. Enhanced datasets and new conceptual insight provide a rather different view of Human Ecodynamics in the North Atlantic. In Iceland we have the apparent paradox of Norse sustainable practice and successful adaptation linked to extensive landscape degradation. In Greenland, sustainable practice, limited landscape impacts and successful adaptation to climate change on centennial time-scales were followed by an end of settlement in the mid 15th century.

- The choices made by the Norse in Greenland to intensify marine resource utilization, invest in fixed resource spaces and in social and material infrastructure increased the effectiveness of adaptation and minimized landscape impacts, but at an apparent cost of reduced resilience in the face of variation. In effect, their concentration on marine mammals for subsistence and a highly integrated communal approach to both subsistence and economic activity was effective in the short term; could be refined to cope with a degree of change over centennial time scales; but developed into a 'rigidity trap' that ultimately lacked resilience in the face of the changing 'world system' and the conjunctures of the 15th century.
- In Iceland, pastoral subsistence supplemented by fishing and associated with trade in bulk commodities (fish, wool), succeeded in terms of long-term settlement resilience, but resulted in the cost of significant landscape degradation.

Colleen Batey *The Cultural Footprint of the Norse: from whetstones to walrus*

The massive expansion of the Norse from Scandinavia is well documented and visible through many sources: historical, linguistic and archaeological.

- Defining the physical material cultural record has now moved away from the exclusively art-historical approach (although this remains a useful tool) to embrace aspects of the more mundane artefactual record.
- Detailed environmental studies in combination with large-scale excavations in the wider Norse World (focussing here on the North Atlantic region) now enable a fuller appreciation of the modifications the Norse were required to make due to the availability of natural resources and craft skills as they adjusted to their new lands.

Karen Lykke Syse *Landscapes as Material Culture in Flux: Creating Museums and Interpreting Historical Landscapes using Case Studies from Argyll, Scotland and Hordaland, Norway*

This paper explores the challenges and paradoxes of trying to recreate landscapes of the past.

- Two ways of presenting landscapes to the public will be explored; the first example is a Heathland Centre on the west coast of Norway, and the second example is Kilmartin Museum in Argyll, Scotland.
- Both landscapes are historically important with many archaeological sites; however the Norwegian museum focuses on conveying biological values while the Scottish museum mainly focuses on the archaeological sites in the area.

Ian Tait *Whatever Happened to the Skjo? And Why?*

The subsistence economies of the North Atlantic islands supported a wide range of activities in the Early Modern period.

- These practices originated from a shared Nordic past, and continued in large measure despite the political severance that saw some of the archipelagos move to British sovereignty.
- This process is perhaps better seen in Shetland than anywhere else.
- So long as islanders were impoverished, their centuries-old farming practices continued as they had done until there was an impetus to do otherwise.

The most remarkable change was the abandonment of the *skjo*, a special type of hut for drying flesh and fish.

- This was one of a wide range of humble buildings serving farmers' everyday needs, and no more or less important than other structures that Shetlanders needed.
- But the *skjo* made a very brisk decline to extinction in the early 19th century, and today they are only recalled in place-names.
- What compelled islanders to relinquish this building in an era when Shetland plebeian farming life was still a subsistence operation?

Maggie MacKay *A Pioneering Norwegian Ethnologist in Shetland: Rigmor Frimannslund Holmsen's 1951 Field Trip*

2011 sees the centenary of the birth in Norway of Rigmor Frimannslund (later Rigmor Frimannslund Holmsen).

- "The student who came before the discipline", in 1941 she became the first to earn a Norwegian university postgraduate degree as "magister" in Ethnology, a subject in which she was to be recognised as a pioneering researcher, lecturer, author and colleague.
- Her theoretical approaches and empirical studies were to influence a generation of students and others in and beyond Norway, including work carried out in the School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Her main focus was on the social organisation and related features of rural society.

- In 1951 she undertook a study visit to Britain and Ireland, including Shetland.
- Until the end of her life in 2006 she retained vivid memories of her short autumn sojourn on mainland Shetland.
- This paper introduces the findings from this stay, gathered in the year the School of Scottish Studies was founded.