

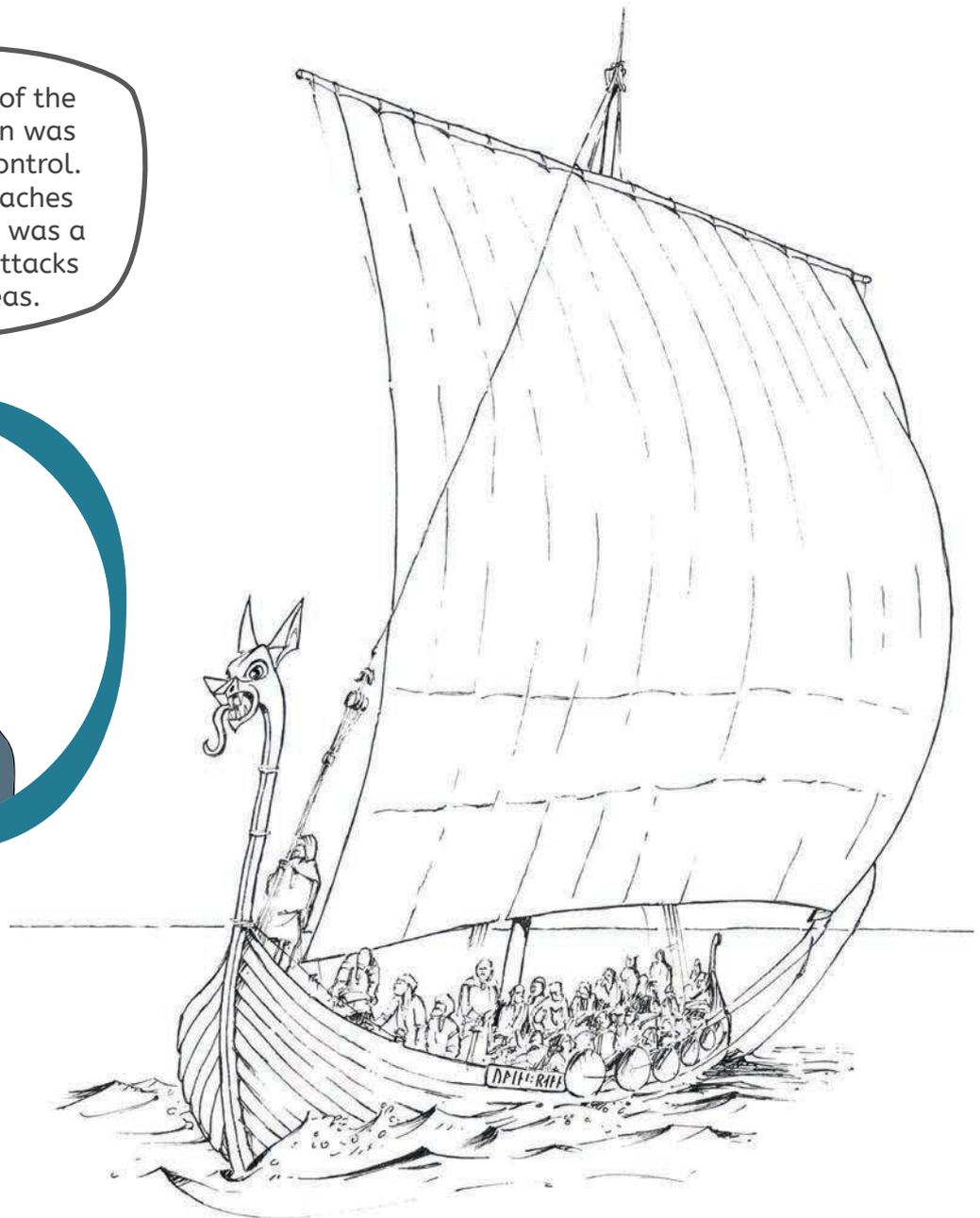
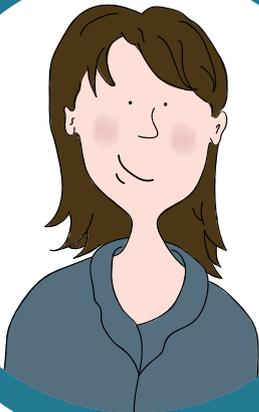
Voyages of Discovery

Longships were built for raiding and exploration. They could move as quickly backwards as forwards enabling them to get away from dangerous situations. Other types of boats called knorrs were built to carry heavy and bulky cargoes.

The Vikings conquered and settled in many parts of coastal Britain including the Scottish Isles. Some sailed west over sea colonising the Orkney, Shetland and Faroe Islands and as far as Iceland, Greenland, Spain and America!

The richness of the Isle of Man's farmland attracted the Vikings. We cannot be certain if the Vikings were accepted peacefully on the Island, but in time they intermarried with the local people and their children were a mixture of Viking and Celt.

Situated in the middle of the Irish Sea the Isle of Man was an important area to control. The Island had safe beaches and inlets for ships and was a good place to launch attacks on other coastal areas.



Trade

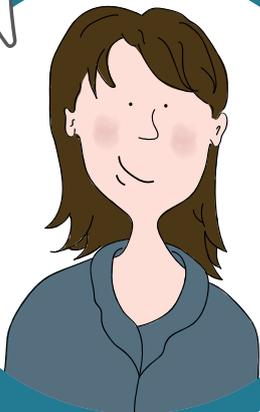
Viking Coins

These coins are replicas of Viking Age silver coins found across Europe. In Viking times, the coins' value was in their weight and how much silver they contained rather than in the markings on the coins. These coins could be cut into halves and quarters for exchanging and trading. Merchants would use small sets of scales to check the weight of the silver.

Sometimes people made false coins with cheaper metals such as lead or tin. They were able to check if the coin was real or fake by weighing it.



Some of these coins show teeth marks. They have been bitten by a Viking to test that they were real silver!



Think

The Vikings made special rings out of silver that were used as currency. Pieces of rings or coins were broken off to make up the correct weight of silver for payment. Ring money as well as coins was frequently used on the Isle of Man and elsewhere in the Viking empire. Can you design your own coin?

Trade

Longship Nails

The Norwegian Vikings came from rugged lands filled with giant creeks and bays known as fjords or viks. The easiest way to travel between towns was by boat. Vikings learned to handle boats when very young. They steered their ships in the right direction using the positions of the stars and the sun. They followed the flights of gulls and the movement of fish. When they were approaching land they threw overboard something that floated. By looking carefully at how the object moved they were able to work out the direction of the currents and how to avoid dangerous rocks. They could also use a 'sounding lead' to tell what the sea-floor was like nearer shore. Some Vikings intending to set foot in Greenland were thought to have discovered North America hundreds of years before Columbus!

Viking boats were 'clinker built' meaning that the edges of hull planks overlapped and were held together by iron nails and roves. These nails are called 'clench' nails. Over 300 nails were uncovered from the Balladoole boat burial excavated in the south of the Isle of Man.



Iron nails

Rove

Think

The picture above shows boat nails uncovered at the Balladoole ship burial.

Look very closely at the picture. Why do you think the iron nails rusted?

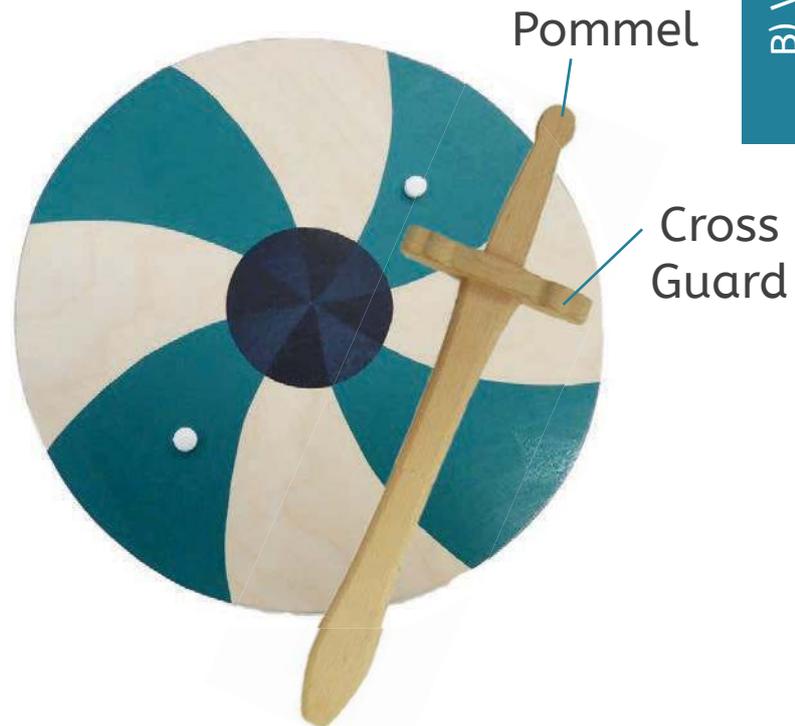
Warfare

Round Shield and Sword

Round shields were most common on the Viking battlefield. They had to be both light yet strong enough to withstand blows from bladed weapons, so their planks were made of oak, a wood that does not split easily.

A sword was a mark of great prestige in the Viking period. Only the wealthiest could possess them, as the amount of metal working involved in manufacturing swords made them very expensive. This wooden sword has a cross-guard above its handle to protect the hand and a knob at the other end of the handle to represent a pommel. The pommel could be used offensively at close quarters to strike an opponent in the nose.

Few helmets from the Viking Age have been found, but there are representations of warriors in helmets in the artwork of the period. These show men in simple, conical helmets probably made of iron, hardened leather or a mixture of the two.



Explore more

Some swords were thought to have magical powers. Sometimes their owners would give them names like Skull Splitter. Swords were nearly a metre long and were designed for slashing rather than stabbing.

Investigate further by looking online to uncover Viking swords unearthed on the Isle of Man.

There is no evidence to tell us that Vikings wore horned helmets.

That idea was created in the 19th century!

