

Settlement and Daily Life

The Vikings chose the sites for their houses carefully as it was important to find a place that would be sheltered from the harsh climate. They used any suitable natural materials they could find close by to build their homes. On the Isle of Man the Vikings used stone and turf, with wooden posts propping up the roof.

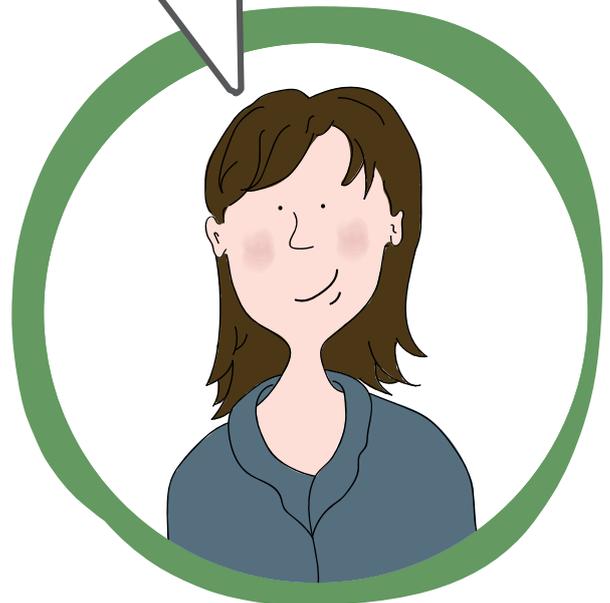


The interiors of their houses were made comfortable by using wall hangings, blankets and furs. The Vikings sometimes built their houses on sites that were previously lived on.

At the Braaid (Marown) lie the remains of a Viking farmstead. Two great Viking longhouses were built beside an Iron Age, roundhouse.

Wealthy Vikings built their homes where there was good farmland. The Manx lowlands and the plains to the North had good fertile land.

The poorer farmers sometimes lived in the upland areas where the soil was less rich.



Farming

Farms were often situated near rivers. Rivers provided water for crops and animals as well as transport by boat. Sometimes rivers were used to work corn mills and make flour. Sheltered inlets such as Peel harbour offered a safe place to moor boats and to fish. Viking farmers used the uplands of Man to graze their cattle during the summer months. During this season they lived in temporary houses or shielings made of turves (sods of earth and grass) and looked after their animals.

If these small houses fell down during the winter weather, they were simply built up again for the following grazing season. The Vikings named these summer dwellings after the word – “Eary” meaning an open outdoor place. This is where we get the names of such places today as Block Eary, on the northern slopes of Snaefell. Look for more Manx place names on the map to see if you can see a link to the Vikings!



Farming

Barley, Oats and Rye

Bread was an important food for the Vikings. Grain was grown from barley, oats and rye. The climate of the Island was similar to that in Scandinavia - cool and damp so little wheat was grown. To stop the cereal seed from sprouting, they sometimes parched the grain in special ovens called kilns. Bread was baked in ovens outside the house. Goose wings were used as brushes to clean out the ovens. Can you find samples of barley, oats and rye in your own cupboards at home?



Barley

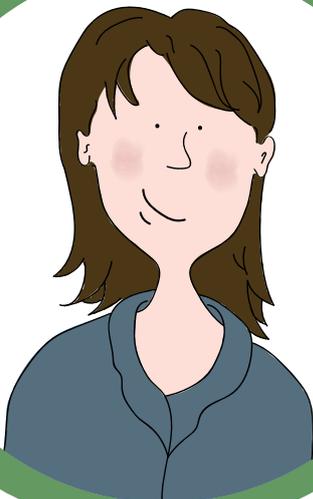


Oats



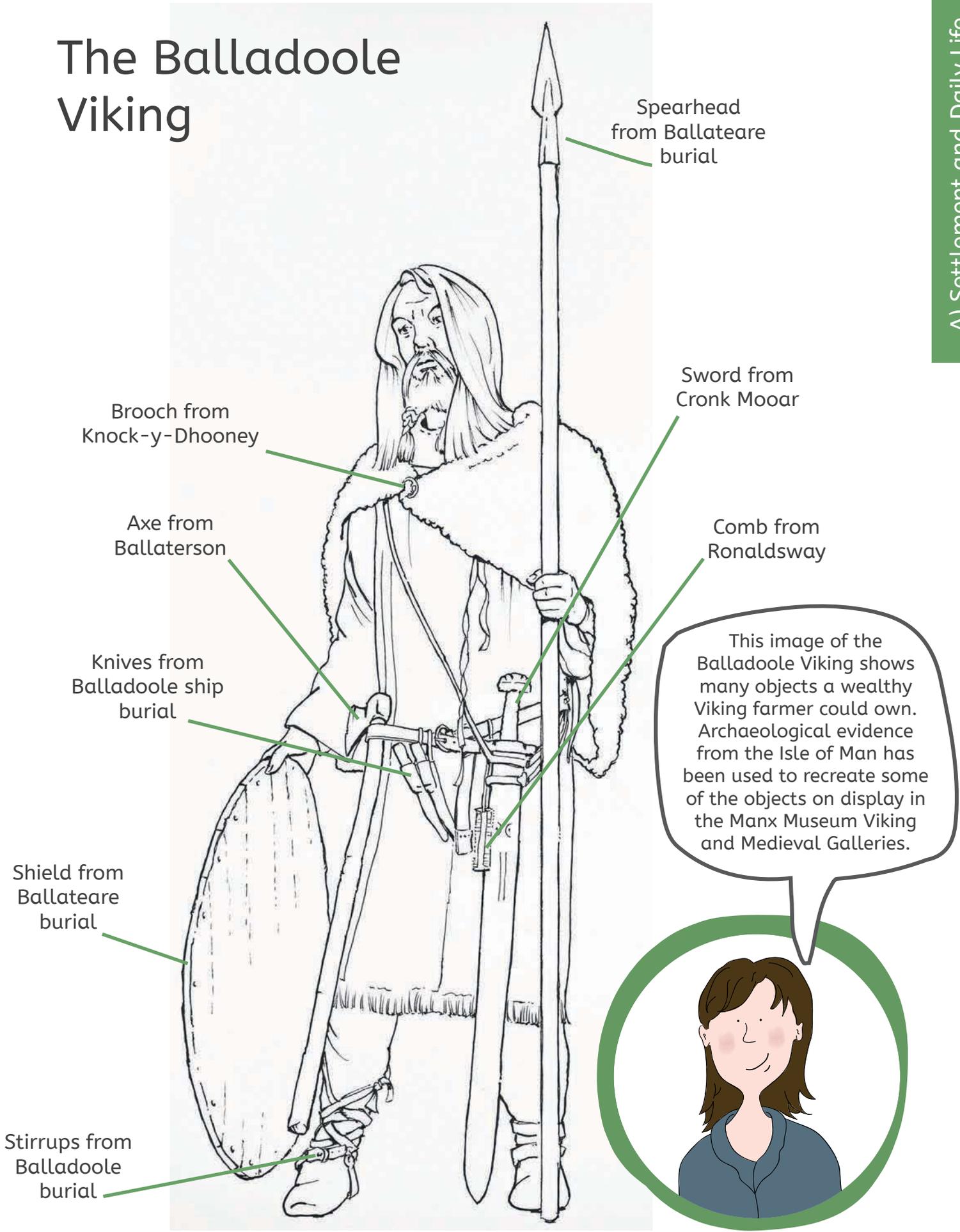
Rye

Did you know that Vikings made flour by grinding grain on a stone quern? How do you think a quern worked?



Stone Quern

The Balladoole Viking



Spearhead from Ballateare burial

Sword from Cronk Mooar

Comb from Ronaldsway

Brooch from Knock-y-Dhooney

Axe from Ballaterson

Knives from Balladoole ship burial

This image of the Balladoole Viking shows many objects a wealthy Viking farmer could own. Archaeological evidence from the Isle of Man has been used to recreate some of the objects on display in the Manx Museum Viking and Medieval Galleries.

Shield from Ballateare burial

Stirrups from Balladoole burial

