

Chapter 2

Scandinavians in Strathclyde: multiculturalism, material culture and manufactured identities in the Viking Age

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THE British kingdom of Strathclyde appeared in written records in the late ninth century following a Viking siege of Alt Clut (Dumbarton Rock), the stronghold of Strathclyde's early medieval predecessor, the kingdom of Dumbarton. Not much is known about Scandinavian activity in Strathclyde after this attack, although the hogback monuments at Govan have been seen as a sign of continued Scandinavian presence in this region (eg Crawford 2005). With the discovery of several recent Treasure Trove finds and the excavation of a Viking Age cemetery at Midross, it is possible to explore Scandinavian involvement in Strathclyde beyond the Govan hogbacks, and determine the various contexts of contact and interaction in which those hogbacks, and other items, were created, used, and understood.

Background

The evidence for Scandinavians in Strathclyde is limited in both the established written and archaeological sources. Although there are a few historical references in the chronicles, there has been very little work done on the place-name evidence here. The archaeological studies have focused primarily on the Govan hogbacks, although some attention has been given to the burial at Boiden and the Port Glasgow hoard. The sources are now available to begin to contextualise these finds with others in the region, and in turn Scandinavians within Strathclyde.

Theoretical underpinnings

Understanding the Scandinavians in Strathclyde during the Viking Age requires an approach based on postcolonial theoretical concepts. It must be understood that contact and interaction between peoples of different cultural backgrounds will lead to fundamental changes in both groups. In order to interact meaningfully, an arena in which both groups can understand the other must be created, called the Third Space (Bhabha 2004). The contexts of contact and interaction are crucial to understanding the Third Space created, because different contexts of interaction will create different Third Spaces. Within the Third

Space, social, political, religious, gender, age and ethnic identities will be deconstructed and reconstructed to enable individuals to negotiate and succeed in the Third Space. Thus the Third Space becomes an arena that is neither one nor the other, but something new altogether, and from this new arena, new forms of material culture emerge.

Written sources

The first explicit mention to this region is found in the Annals of Ulster (AU) in 870 when Óláfr (Old Irish: Amlaíb) and Ívarr (Old Irish: Ímar) from Dublin sacked Dumbarton Rock (Ail Cluaithe): ‘Amlaíb and Ímar, two kings of the Norsemen, laid siege to [Ail Cluaithe] and at the end of four months they destroyed and plundered it’ (AU 870.6). After they successfully sacked and plundered Alt Clut, and probably the surrounding regions, Óláfr and Ívarr returned to Dublin the following year ‘with two hundred ships, bringing away with them in captivity to Ireland a great prey of Angles and Britons and Picts’ (AU 871.2). Interestingly, and perhaps very significantly, it was only after Alt Clut was sacked by Óláfr and Ívarr that the term Strathclyde appeared in the records. It was still a British kingdom and still held much of the same territory, but there must have been a reason for the name change. It has been proposed that this might have been the result of a change in location for the stronghold of the kingdom, perhaps moving farther up the Clyde towards the ecclesiastical site at Govan (Broun 2004: 111–12; Dalgligh & Driscoll 2009: 29–30). A move eastward up the river could have made the British kingdom more accessible to the interior of Scotland rather than the isles, and indeed two years after Artgal, king of the Britons of Strathclyde, was killed (AU 872.5), Halfdan, based on the River Tyne in Northumbria, is recorded to have often raided amongst Strathclyde Britons (*A-S Chron* 874). Using the waterways from the east coast to the Clyde would have been much more effective than moving overland from the Tyne valley to the Clyde valley.

This turbulent decade for the British kingdom in Strathclyde is followed by almost complete silence in the histories, broken in the tenth century by only two passing references. The first possible textual mention is an unnamed king of the Cumbrians who formed part of the northern alliance against Æthelstan of Wessex at the battle of Brunanburh in 937. In 937, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Chronicle of the Kings of Alba both record the Battle of Brunanburh, which pitted a ‘northern alliance’ against Æthelstan of Wessex (*A-S Chron* 937; *Chron Alba*, p157). In both sources, the northern alliance included Constantine, king of Alba, Óláfr Guthfrithson, the Viking king of Dublin, and an unnamed king of the Cumbrians. This is the only reference to a possible king of the Cumbrians, and it is most likely that this king was the same king of Strathclyde, whose territory in the tenth century encompassed the area south-western Scotland and north-western England down to the River Eamont (Clarkson 2010: 172). The last reference is to the raid in 945 upon Cumbria (in *A-S Chron*) or Strathclyde (in *Annal Camb*) by Edmund of Wessex, who then ceded the territory to Mael Coluim, king of Scots (*A-S Chron* 945; *Annal Camb* 946).

Place-names likewise do not offer much insight into the contacts and interactions of Scandinavians with the locals of Strathclyde. Little work has been done on Old Norse place-names in this area, and what work has been done recently has focused on the two clusters of –byr names, one in Ayrshire and the other along the Clyde (Grant 2005; Taylor 2004). However, earlier work has brought up interesting possibilities of Old Norse place-names in

Strathclyde, but there has been no modern follow-up. Some of the place-names in the Clyde region include Gorbals, thought to be from the Old Norse *gorr-balkr*, ‘built-walls’ (Bremner 1904: 377), and Eaglesham, the earliest form of which is recorded to be Egil’s ham in 1158 (Bremner 1904: 377). Thus, there is not much written evidence for peaceful interaction except for two clusters of *-byr* place-names which might indicate a tenth-century settlement by Old Norse speakers. However, the fact that Óláfr and Ívarr spent four months engaged in a siege upon Alt Clut would suggest that there was more interest in this region than just taking loot and slaves. It is probable that a force of Scandinavians or Hiberno-Scandinavians would have been left at Alt Clut to ensure it remained in Scandinavian control. Another clue that Scandinavians may have had a more permanent presence in Strathclyde after the sack of Alt Clut is the northern alliance of 937 (*Chron Alba*, p157; *A-S Chron* 937). The successors of the men engaged in resistance during the siege were now allied with each other and Alba, which is an indication that channels of communication and interaction between the Scandinavians and Strathclyde Britons were not completely hostile. Finally, Strathclyde only has two meaningful geographical concentrations of place-names and a few possible random names. This indicates that any settlement in the landscape by Old Norse speakers was not dominant, and probably much more integrated with local settlements and estates.

Archaeological sources

Like the written sources, there is not much archaeological evidence that could attest to permanent settlement and interaction by Scandinavians in this region, except for the tantalising concentration of five hogback stones at Govan. Other than these, there was a hoard found at Port Glasgow, Inverclyde, in the seventeenth century which included two silver arm-rings, one made of three silver rods twisted together and the other a lozenge-sectioned type often called ‘ring money’, and a number of (now lost) coins. Another antiquarian find, and more apt to indicate permanent presence, was the burial found at Boiden, Argyll and Bute, in the nineteenth century. In the top part of a mound were a sword, a spearhead, and a shield boss (Stewart 1854: 144). Supposedly, there was a cairn on the top of the mound, but it appears to have no longer been there when the discovery was made. The final artefacts come from the excavation of Dumbarton Rock in the 1970s where a sword pommel and two lead weights, one plain and one decorated with a glass bangle fragment, were found (Alcock & Alcock 1990: 113–15). They interpreted these as evidence of the siege, and certainly the pommel fits nicely into that scenario. The two lead weights may, however, attest to a different kind of activity occurring on the site, that of trade between a Scandinavian merchant and others. It would seem likely, then, that this probable trade occurred after the siege.

In addition to the five hogbacks at Govan, there are two others in this region that also appear in churchyards: one at Luss, Argyll and Bute, which is in close proximity to the burial at Boiden, and one up the Clyde at Dalserf, South Lanarkshire (Lang 1975: 224, 229). The hogbacks at Govan are amongst the earliest hogbacks found in Scotland, dating to the tenth century (Lang 1975: 212; Ritchie 2004: 17). Significantly, they represent the largest concentration found on a single site outside of York itself, and are the largest hogbacks found in Scotland (Lang 1975: 1994; Ritchie 2004: 1; Daglish & Driscoll 2009: 31). As in other parts of southern Scotland and northern England, hogbacks are tied to the presence of a Scandinavian population that had access to enough resources to commission such massive

stone monuments. The most common explanation for their appearance at Govan goes back to the entries regarding Óláfr and Ívarr: these hogbacks could signify a refuge for the ‘grandsons of Ívarr’ who were active in the kingdoms of Dublin and York throughout the later ninth and tenth centuries (eg Crawford 2005: 20). However, in light of new archaeological evidence within Strathclyde, a new explanation may be needed for the presence of these hogbacks.

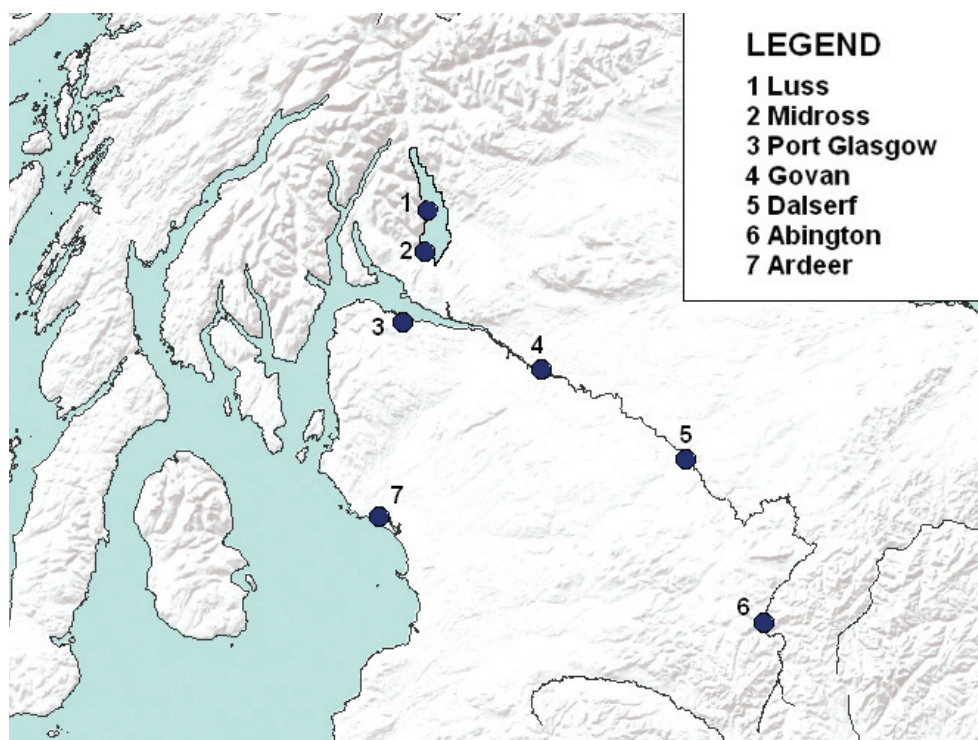


Fig 2.1 Map of the study area (© Esri 2009 with amendments by the author).

Isolated finds and new archaeological evidence

There are only a handful of Treasure Trove and isolated finds from this region. They include the Hunterston brooch, an antiquarian find from the Hunterston Estate in Ayrshire. It is a fine piece of Insular metalwork that made its way into the hands of a Norse speaker, who carved runes on the back that claim the brooch as Melbrigda's (O'Floinn 1989: 91; for further discussion on this brooch and the runes, see Grieg 1940, Olsen 1954, and Stevenson 1974). There was an axe-head and a possible wooden club found in Loch Doon, Ayrshire, and another axe-head found near Loch Long, Argyll and Bute. Also in Ayrshire, a ringed-pin was discovered in the nineteenth century during the excavation of Lochlee Crannog (Munro et al 1879: 232), and an Arabic dirhem was found through metal-detection at Stevenston Sands, Ayrshire. Finally, a sword pommel was found at Abington, Biggar, South Lanarkshire.

The most significant new evidence for understanding Scandinavian activities, and their subsequent interactions with the locals of Strathclyde, comes from Midross, Argyll and Bute. The Viking-Age cemetery at Midross that was recently excavated by GUARD (Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division) sheds new light on this region. Near the cemetery is the burial at Boiden, mentioned above. Batey (in Becket et al forthcoming) puts forward the possibility that the Boiden burial is not an isolated grave, but rather part of the burial complex from Midross. The cemetery contains 15 burials radiocarbon dated to the late ninth and tenth centuries; six of these contained grave goods (Batey in Becket et al forthcoming). Two of the graves held multiple finds, with the remaining four containing only one grave good. Grave 051190 contained a whetstone, a slotted tool, a knife blade, an iron fitting or rod, and an Anglo-Saxon coin fragment attached to the iron fitting or rod. The knife blade is most likely a kitchen blade as opposed to a weapon, and fits with the domestic nature of these finds. The whetstone is made of Eidsborg schist from the Telemark region of Norway, which demonstrates a material link between Scandinavia and this community in the ninth or tenth centuries. The other grave with multiple grave goods, grave 0510248, contained a shale arm-ring and finger-ring, a copper-alloy bracelet, and a blue glass bead. These items are all adornment and decorative items, and it is tempting to see the occupant's gender as female based on these finds; however it cannot be stated with certainty. The other four graves contained one grave good each; grave 0510270 contained a child-sized shale arm-ring; grave 0510214 contained a knife blade; grave 0511801 contained a pierced Anglo-Saxon penny; and grave 0511803 contained a knife blade. One final find from the site, although not found in a grave but probably indicating another furnished male grave, is a shield boss that was found in the ditch circling the cemetery. It is possible this item has been displaced by ploughing (Batey pers comm). Contemporary with these six furnished graves are nine unfurnished graves, which could indicate a population drawing upon Scandinavian and local traditions in their burial rites. While these graves may not indicate a biologically Scandinavian population (Batey in Becket et al forthcoming), the Scandinavian element in their burial rites is clear, and would imply such an element in their daily routines as well.

Contextualising Strathclyde

The finds by themselves do not amount to a very widespread distribution within Strathclyde, and even when mapped with the known place-names and sculptures, only a few concentrations are evident (fig 2.2 – overleaf). However, the overlaps of each strand of evidence are intriguing and more significant than may be initially evident.

The first important observation is that all of the finds are on or very near waterways. Second, almost all of the stray finds overlap with another piece of non-portable or contextualised evidence. The Arabic dirhem from Stevenston Sands is located near the cluster of six –byr place-names in Ayrshire, while in the same vicinity are the ringed-pin from Lochlee crannog and the axe-head and club from Loch Doon. At the mouth of the Clyde, the axe-head from Loch Long is near to the hoard from Port Glasgow. Further up the Clyde, the pommel from Abington is near two of the Lanarkshire –byr place-names and in the vicinity of the hogback at Dalsenf. Thus, it appears the Clyde and its tributaries were at the heart of the Scandinavian activities in Strathclyde.

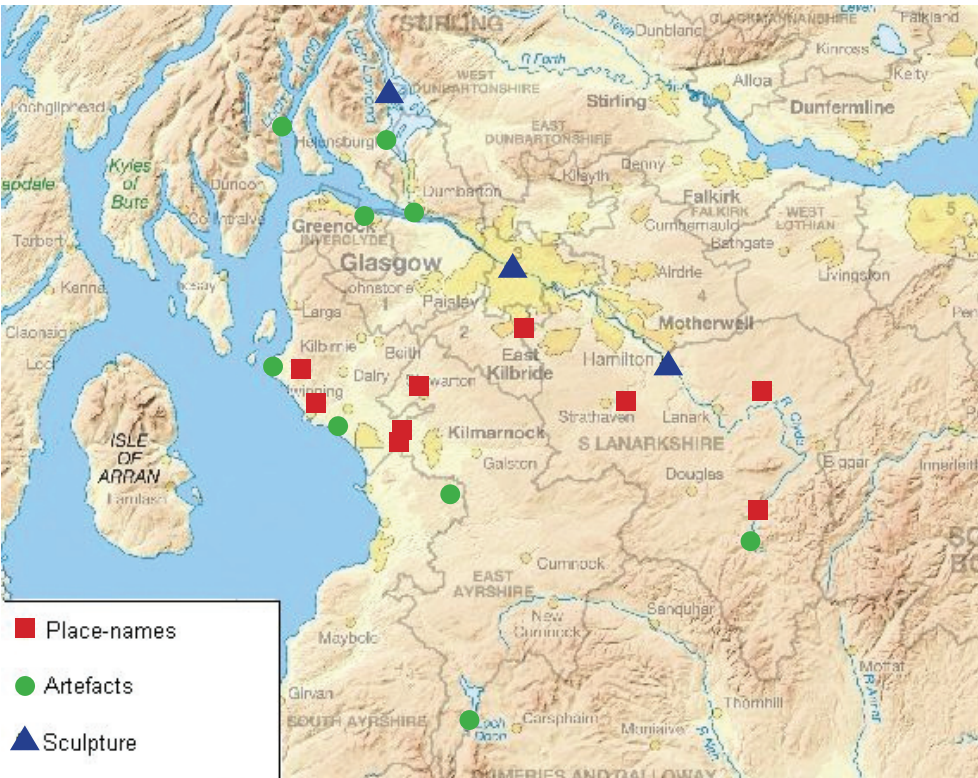


Fig 2. 2 Map of finds, place-names, and sculpture from Strathclyde (contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2011).

The River Clyde: gateway to Scotland and the east coast

The importance of the Clyde in navigating between the west and east coasts of Scotland has been cited often, almost entirely in relation to the probable portage between the Clyde and the Forth (Smyth 1984; Crawford 1987; 2005) (see fig 2.3). However, there are many other options for travel into the interior of Scotland (and even northern England) by way of the Clyde, and the distribution of the material discussed above has highlighted a few alternative routes.

The northern route

The first, and more famous, route from the Clyde to the interior of Scotland and the east coast is the northern route. From the mouth of the Clyde, one could navigate north via a short overland portage across the isthmus and over to the River Forth. The most likely overland portage along this route would be from Rutherglen along the Clyde to Blackness and Bo’ness on the Forth (fig 2.3), as later medieval Glasgow merchants were thought to use this route (Dennison 2007: 50, 53). It has been postulated that this route was mainly used for transport between Dublin and York, primarily as one route utilised by merchants between the two Viking towns. Evidence along this route includes the Port Glasgow hoard

at the mouth of the Clyde, the finds from Dumbarton Rock, the hogbacks at Govan and possibly the evidence from Boiden, Midross, and Luss. This route justifies the need to control Dumbarton Rock as a primary gateway into the Clyde, and thus the four-month-long siege of the stronghold is easily explained. Even the seemingly isolated burial at Boiden could be explained by intermittent warring activity on the Clyde and its tributaries. However, the hogbacks at Govan and Luss is more difficult to explain with this transient military and mercantile presence. Even harder to explain by this hypothesis is the cemetery at Midross. As discussed above, this cemetery is significant because it demonstrates a settled population which buried its dead following a Scandinavian tradition of inhumation with grave goods. However, it is also significant because the cemetery contains contemporary unfurnished graves and is very near the 'pagan' burial at Boiden. As Batey has suggested (in Becket et al forthcoming), Boiden and Midross are likely to be part of the same cemetery. Within this one burial complex, there is evidence of the older, overtly pagan tradition and of newer, hybridised burial rites among Scandinavian populations in Britain. This would indicate that although Scandinavians were present here, they were not alone but settled amongst Britons with whom they would have had frequent interaction.

Clearly, this northern route is more than just a trade highway used by Scandinavian merchants as the shortest water route between Dublin and York. The Clyde, its northern tributaries, and Loch Lomond were more significant than this, and settlements along the route were probably more frequent than the evidence currently suggests. Another unsatisfactory element of the old trade highway explanation is that this model does not explain the finds farther eastward along the Clyde.

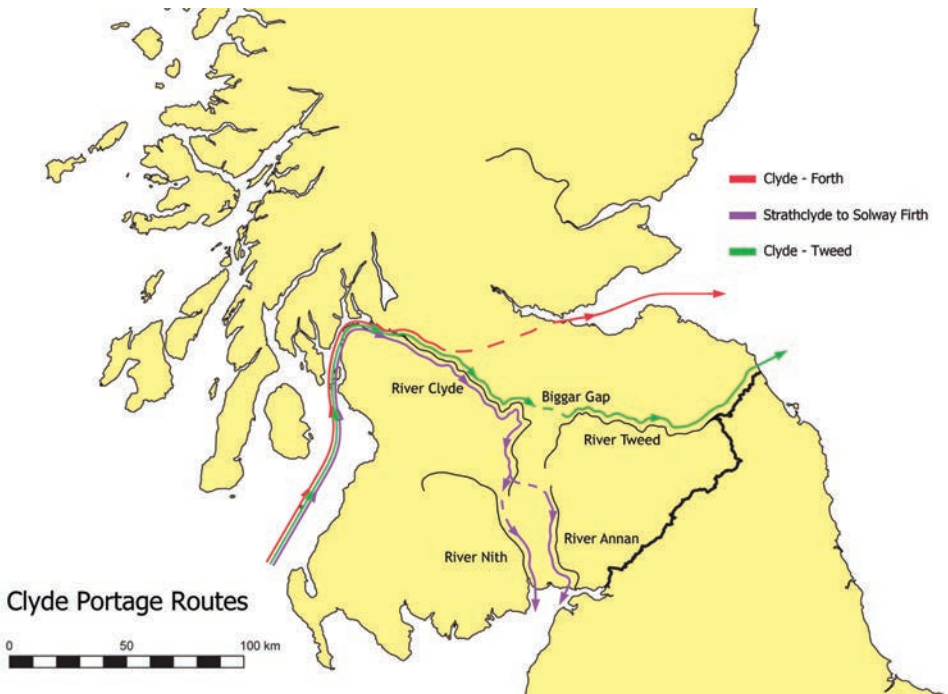


Fig 2. 3 Possible routes from the Clyde (© Crown Copyright 1999 with amendments by the author).

The southern route

Travelling farther inland up the Clyde, several opportunities for portages to other waterways, and thus other destinations, become available. The first option is another route to the east coast, but instead of connecting to the Forth, a portage at the Biggar Gap would lead to the Tweed and a route to the east coast. Along this route, the hogbacks at Govan and the hogback at Dalserf all serve as indicators of Scandinavian presence, and the sword pommel from Abington is conveniently located along the portage point at the Biggar Gap. There is also evidence along the Tweed of Scandinavian communities established there, which would no doubt make the trip from Dublin to York easier and more fruitful for merchants looking to sell their items. Included in that category are the hogbacks from Stobo, Ancrum, Bedrule (2), Nisbet (2), and Lepitlaw (Ritchie 2004: 17–9; Crawford 2005: 16). Several Treasure Trove and Portable Antiquities Scheme finds have also been recovered along the Tweed route, including a strap-end from Cornhill-on-Tweed, Northumberland; a strap-end, lead weight, and silver ingot from Maxton, Scottish Borders; a silver ingot from Sprouston, Scottish Borders; and a stone mould from Newstead, Scottish Borders. The ingot from Sprouston fits into the ingot mould from Newstead perfectly, while on another face is a mould for what is likely to be a Thor’s hammer (fig 2.4). There are also the two hoards from this region which further attest to Scandinavian presence along the Tweed. The hoard from Gordon contained a gold finger-ring, a silver arm-ring, two silver ingots, and a silver pin (Graham-Campbell 1995: 102), and the hoard from Jedburgh contained a silver ring and about 100 silver coins (Graham-Campbell 1995: 100).

The final piece of artefactual evidence for Scandinavians along the Tweed is the five coin finds from Jedburgh (Graham-Campbell 1995: 86). The concentration of the hogbacks and artefacts is remarkable in their proximity to the Tweed (fig 2.5). Given all this data, and the

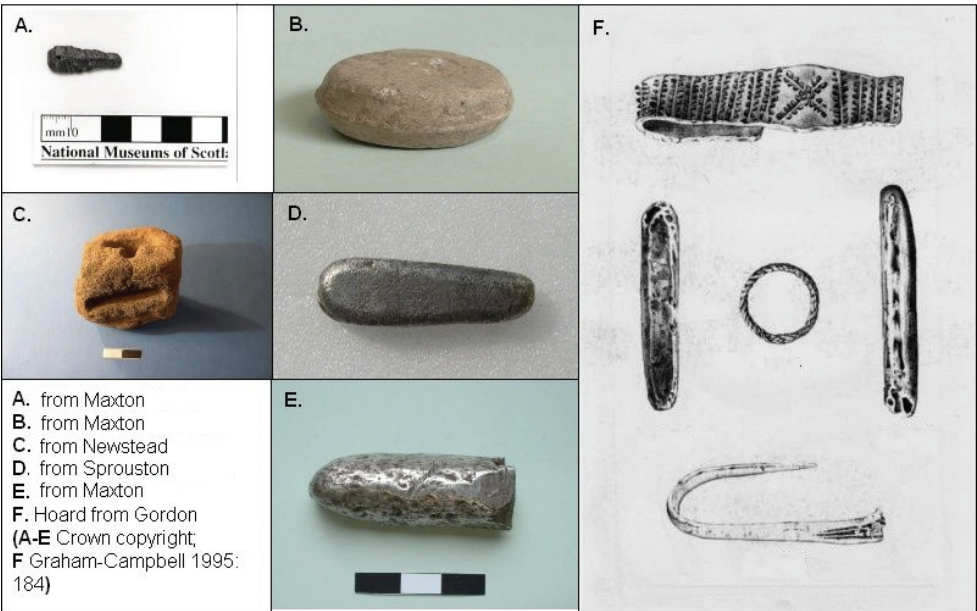


Fig 2.4 A-E: stray finds from along the Tweed; F: artefacts from Gordon hoard.

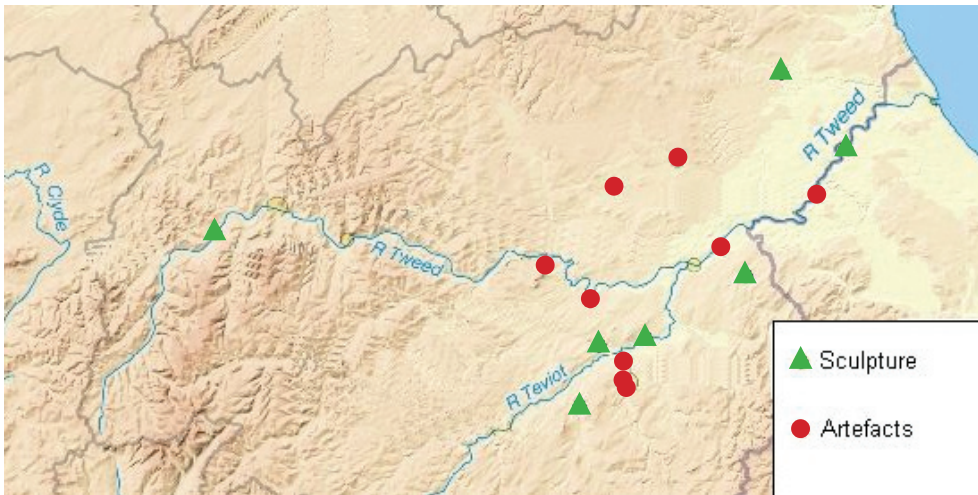


Fig 2.5 Map of artefacts and hogbacks along the Tweed.

attested route via the Biggar Gap from prehistory onwards, the Clyde-Tweed route should be seen as a major, if not primary, river route from west to east coasts in southern Scotland, which would have easily been exploited by sea-faring Scandinavians travelling between the two coasts.

A second possible southern route from the Clyde would take one into the Solway Firth region via the rivers Nith and Annan. This route would incorporate the hogbacks at Govan and Dalserf, as well as a hogback at Annan, and place-names along the Clyde and in Dumfriesshire. This would be a possible inland route to the Solway from the Clyde, but it would seem likely that this route would have been utilised to travel to Cumbria once Strathclyde incorporated it in the tenth century. There is also the sculptural link between the (non-Viking) crosses at Govan, Galloway, and Cumbria (Driscoll et al 2005: 145), which further suggests this waterway provided a means of easy transport between regions.

The Firth of Clyde: meeting place of the mainland and the Isles

Given the demonstrated importance of waterways and the relatively sparse evidence, artefactual and otherwise, from the mainland coast of the Firth of Clyde, it is necessary to look to the isles of the Clyde to understand these finds. In order to contextualise the material from the mouth of the Clyde and Ayrshire coast, it will be analysed in conjunction with the known evidence from Bute, Arran, and the Cumbraes.

From the mouth of the Clyde comes the Port Glasgow hoard, containing two silver arm-rings and silver coins, and the axe from Loch Long. On the Ayrshire coast, there is the Arabic dirhem from Stevenston Sands, the Hunterston brooch, and the ringed-pin from Lochlee crannog. The other known archaeological evidence from the Firth of Clyde consists of two burials from Arran, two isolated finds from Bute, a stone sculpture from Great Cumbrae with Anglo-Scandinavian carvings, a possible hogback from Bute, and several finds from the recent excavation at Inchmarnock. The two burials from Arran were found around Lamlash Bay, one at Millhill and the other at King's Cross Point. The burial from Millhill

contained a single-edged sword and a shield boss of Irish Sea type A (convex) (Harrison 2000: 65–8). The burial at King's Cross Point contained a whalebone plaque, a copper stycra of Archbishop Wigmund of York (837–54), and a probable wooden chest (Greig 1940: 26–7; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 96). The burial at Millhill has been interpreted as a male burial (Harrison 2000, 65), while the one at King's Cross Point has been interpreted as female (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 96). The two isolated finds from Bute are a sword hilt from Drumachloy Farm (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 97) and a decorated lead weight from Little Dunagoil, topped with a boss from a Scandinavian oval brooch (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 98). The two pieces of stone sculpture include a possible hogback from St Blanes, Kingarth in Bute (Ritchie 2004: 16), and a possible lintel stone from Millport, Great Cumbrae, with Anglo-Scandinavian aspects in its carvings (Batey 1994: 67–9).

The finds from the Inchmarnock excavation (Lowe 2008a) include a rune-inscribed cross slab (Fisher 2008: 100–3); a collection of hnefatafl boards, including three complete ones, two almost-complete ones, and at least seven fragmentary ones (Ritchie 2008: 117–19); an inscribed slate depicting four figures, three of which are mail-clad warriors and one that is not (fig 3.2) (Lowe 2008b: 151–6); a broken polyhedral-headed ringed-pin, missing its ring (Franklin 2008a: 178–9); an arrowhead and spearhead that are 'in keeping with Norse' types (Franklin 2008a: 181–3); a comb with parallels in late-Norse Scottish contexts and thirteenth-century Scandinavian contexts (Franklin 2008b: 186–8); and a rim-sherd of a steatite bowl (Franklin 2008c: 246).

These finds, when combined with those from the study area, give evidence of a small Scandinavian population active in the Firth of Clyde. The two burials found on Arran seem to represent both genders from their grave goods, which indicates that these activities were more than just militaristic. Further, there is evidence of a diverse monastic town at Inchmarnock that may be similar to Whithorn in its 'international' make-up, with a small population of Scandinavians residing in the monastic town. What is particularly striking is the steatite bowl rim-sherd from Inchmarnock, for the only other one like this known from the Irish Sea region is from Whithorn (Nicholson 1997: 464). Another possible similarity to Whithorn would be the proximity to a beach market: in the Firth of Clyde there is the one at Stevenston Sands, represented by the Arabic dirhem, and for Whithorn, there is the beach market at Luce Sands. Further evidence for trade activities in the Firth of Clyde comes from the silver hoard at Port Glasgow, as well as the decorated lead weight from Bute. Finally, the permanence of the Scandinavian population here may be evident in the possible hogback from St Blanes, Bute, and the lintel stone with Anglo-Scandinavian aspects from Millport, Great Cumbrae. This sculptural tradition is in keeping with the idea that there were links between the Firth of Clyde and the Solway Firth region.

Discussion

When combined, the evidence of artefacts, sculpture, place-names, and the histories helps contextualise the Scandinavians' activities in Strathclyde. However, it is clear that the situation in Strathclyde is different from those in other areas of Scandinavian settlement in Scotland. Whereas the Northern and Western Isles were removed from known power centres of early medieval Scotland, Strathclyde (or more properly, the Kingdom of Dumbarton) was the heart of the northern British kingdom. The Scandinavians who were active in Strathclyde

left a different mark upon it than those who were active elsewhere. Before discussing the interactions and identities of the inhabitants of Strathclyde during the Viking Age, it is first crucial to understand the Scandinavians' place within the British kingdom.

The Scandinavian element to the Kingdom of Strathclyde

The cemetery at Midross is of great significance when discussing the Scandinavians within Strathclyde. Here, finally, is evidence of a settled population that has chosen to bury their dead in a way reminiscent of Viking traditions. The close proximity to the burial at Boiden further strengthens this connection, as do the pierced Anglo-Saxon coin and the whetstone made of Norwegian schist. This settled population of Scandinavians also helps explain the finds in the region, from the hoard at Port Glasgow to the dress items and weapons found throughout Strathclyde, and it is clear that Scandinavians were active throughout this region and not isolated to one locale. More importantly, there is more evidence supporting local Scandinavian populations throughout Strathclyde, and explanations for the hogback stones no longer have to rely upon the historical references to the grandsons of Ívarr.

In regards to the importance of the five hogbacks at Govan, most explanations have sought to demonstrate an elite settlement or takeover of the British kingdom by the Dublin Norse (eg Crawford 2005). There is, however, an alternative, minimalist explanation to these hogbacks: Clarkson (2010: 164) argues that the hogbacks at Govan need not represent anything more than an artist's awareness and incorporation of Viking and Scandinavian styles and motifs into his catalogue of artistic influences, possibly with the arrival of 'friendly Hebridean Vikings'. However, this explanation is problematic as the 'Hebridean Vikings', 'Dublin Norse', and 'York Scandinavians' were not interchangeable, while hogbacks do not occur in the Hebrides and only one is known in Ireland at Castledermot, Co. Kildare (Abrams 2010: 3). They have been repeatedly demonstrated to originate in the York area. Thus, the best explanation for the hogbacks in Strathclyde is not an artistic adoption from Hebridean Vikings, but the result of a local population of Scandinavians who were familiar with, and perhaps brought with them, the carving traditions in York and northern England.

Although there are definite connections between the hogbacks of Strathclyde and those in northern England, the traditions are different. In England, as can be seen at various ecclesiastical sites in Cumbria and Lancashire, hogbacks occur alongside other monuments that sometimes display some aspect of Viking or Scandinavian culture, either through artistic styles or scenes from Old Norse religious tales. In Strathclyde, these monuments are not accompanied by other Viking-style sculptures. Indeed, although there is a great amount of contemporary sculpture from Govan, none of the pieces displays any aspect of Scandinavian influence (Driscoll et al 2005: 145). Therefore, there must be a specific reason and meaning behind these hogbacks in Strathclyde, a meaning that has been forged in a different context than that of northern England. Looking at the three sites at which the hogbacks are found, Govan, Luss, and Dalserf, each site has an apparent early dedication to a local saint. At Govan, it is dedicated to St Constantine, at Luss, to St Kessog, and at Dalserf, to St Serf. Could these hogbacks be one way in which the Scandinavian community chose to demonstrate their acknowledgement of the religion and customs of their new lands?

There is no evidence of an elite Scandinavian group supplanting local elites in this region. The -byr place-names of the Strathclyde region indicate probable Scandinavian settlement within the region at certain farms, but this settlement was probably sanctioned by a local lord and not in place of him (Taylor 2004: 135). However, it is probable that these names

indicate settlement during the late ninth and tenth centuries (Fellows-Jensen 1990: 55; Taylor 2004: 138), about the same time as Scandinavian settlement occurred in areas of northern England. This aligns well with the historical record, as settlement before the sack of Alt Clut would be highly unlikely. It is probable that the military campaign opened up Strathclyde to the possibility of settlement by Scandinavians.

The siege of Alt Clut, attested historically and demonstrated by the pommel found in the ramparts, was the major military interaction of the ninth century. It established the Dublin Norse as the enemies of the Britons, and the subsequent destroyers of Alt Clut. However, this was not the only type of military interaction between Scandinavians and Britons in Strathclyde. In the tenth century, the northern alliance against Æthelstan at the battle of Brunanburh saw a united fighting force of Scandinavians and Britons (as well as Albans). This would have been a significant interaction between these two peoples, and, although there may be little material evidence for the interactions, surely the mindset between the two groups was significantly altered. The new role of Scandinavians as ally instead of foe could have been the instigator that allowed peaceful settlement of Scandinavians in Strathclyde and the beginnings of integrations between Scandinavians and locals that are demonstrated by the placements of the hogbacks at local ecclesiastical sites. This peaceful interaction can also be seen at the tenth-century cemetery at Midross, where people were buried alongside each other by two different burial customs.

It is likely that the most frequent interaction between Scandinavians and locals in Strathclyde was through trade. The importance and significance of the waterways for trade routes between the Western Isles, the Irish Sea, and the east coast are clearly the primary reason for Scandinavian activity within Strathclyde. Local trading at certain places along the routes probably occurred, especially if there were settled Scandinavian populations there. This can be seen in the weights from Alt Clut, the coins from the Port Glasgow hoard, and the Arabic dirhem from Stevenston Sands. At the other end of the trade route, in the Tweed valley, more items of trade, such as the ingots from Sprouston and Maxton, and the lead weight from Maxton, demonstrate the trading activities on that end of the route as well.

The evidence for Scandinavian settlement within Strathclyde is demonstrated by the cemetery at Midross and the hogback sculptures. Both point to a colonisation of sorts, but rather than dominating the locals, in Strathclyde the settlers were most likely subjects to a local overlord. Clearly there was a section of the Scandinavian settlers who held enough wealth and influence to commission the hogback monuments at the important ecclesiastical and royal site at Govan, but the lack of any other Viking or Scandinavian elements to the carvings there indicates that they were only one part of the elite patrons of Govan. The multiple types of burial practices at Midross demonstrate the Scandinavians' integration with the local communities, rather than remaining separate from them. This would imply that there was not the same volume of Viking settlers in Strathclyde as in other parts of Britain, and to survive and live, they needed to integrate with the local British communities. Finally, the place-names give no indication of an elite take-over as do those in the Northern or Western Isles, but rather, they again point to small pockets of Scandinavian speakers within a mainly local, British-speaking landscape. The lack of topographical names in Strathclyde also indicates that this settlement probably occurred later than the settlements in the Northern or Western Isles, which again would support the prospect of a tenth-century date for Scandinavian settlement within Strathclyde.

Manufactured identities

Within these three contexts of contact and interaction, identity formation would have constantly occurred among both the Britons and Scandinavians. In the case of military encounters, there are two very different instances of contact and interaction that would have led to very different identities being formed. In the first instance, the siege of Alt Clut, the interactions were aggressive and non-peaceful; neither group had incentive to understand or communicate to significant degrees with the other group. Therefore, identities formed during this siege were likely to reinforce the ethnic distinctions between the two groups: Britons would have displayed a more British identity, and the Scandinavians would have displayed a more Scandinavian or Viking identity, rather than incorporating any aspects of the other group. In the second instance, the battle of Brunanburh, the Britons allied themselves with the Scandinavians against a common enemy of Æthelstan of Wessex. In this context, the two groups may not have had the incentive to differentiate themselves from each other as much as from the army of Æthelstan. Any identity formation in this campaign would probably emphasise the non-Englishness of the warriors, rather than overt attempts to reconcile the differences between Briton and Scandinavian. However, as allies, it is probable that practices and perhaps material culture would have been witnessed and exchanged on a daily basis, and, although a conscious reconstruction of identity to accommodate new practices and materials would not have ensued, an unconscious reworking of one's identity likely would have occurred. A better understanding of each others' culture and practices would have laid the foundations for more peaceful means of interaction between Scandinavians and Britons, such as trade and settlement.

During interactions of trade, identities that allowed the participants to engage advantageously were likely to have been constructed. This may have been displayed by certain items of dress a Scandinavian trader would have worn on his or her person to identify him- or herself as friendly trader and not aggressor. For instance, the ringed-pin found at Lochlee crannog could be seen as such an item, signalling the trader's origins in Viking Dublin and carrying similar items to exchange. Within local populations, identities may not have been so overtly constructed, but by choosing to trade with a Scandinavian, a Briton would have reconstructed his identity to acknowledge the Scandinavian as an ally rather than a threat. This identity formation would have been subtle, and perhaps not even displayed visibly; however, the new identity would have enabled the Briton to be more welcoming of Scandinavians as settlers.

In the settlement situations is where most evidence is found of a Third Space being created by Scandinavians and the Britons they settled amongst. The hybridisation of practice that resulted from such Third Space creation can be seen in two pieces of evidence from this case study: the runic inscription on the Hunterston brooch, and the cemetery at Midross. On the Hunterston brooch, the hybridisation of practice in one or two individuals is evident, for an Irish name is inscribed in Norse runes. Whether it was Melbrigda who inscribed the runes or a Norse speaker who presented the brooch to Melbrigda, the incorporation of two different language practices is seen in this one piece. The identity of Melbrigda would have been shaped by connections, possibly familial, with both Irish/Gaelic and Norse speaking communities, in which not only words but presumably materials, practices, and ideas were also exchanged. This identity would no longer have been Irish/Gaelic or Norse, but a hybridisation of the two, created in the Third Space in order to negotiate it.

Hybridisation of practice is seen more clearly in the cemetery at Midross. Here, there is a mixture of burial practices evident in a contemporary period of time: there is the overtly Viking warrior burial from Boiden, the six furnished graves with items that identify their owners as Scandinavians, and the remaining nine unfurnished contemporary graves. It is probable that the unfurnished graves, given their orientation, represent Christian burial rites, and the Boiden burial represents the pagan burial rite. However, the six furnished graves that are placed in and amongst the nine unfurnished ones represent this Third Space formed from the two traditions meeting each other. While it cannot be established whether the inhabitants of the furnished graves, or those who buried them, were pagan or Christian, this is clear evidence that the community was aware of both burial traditions and purposely chose a new burial rite to commemorate the dead here. The creation of a new burial rite signals the creation of a new identity, based not solely on one aspect, such as ethnicity or religion, but one that incorporates aspects, practices, and beliefs important to both ethnicities and religions. Therefore, this community at Midross was no longer ‘Scandinavian’ and ‘Briton’, but a new community with roots in each tradition which saw itself as a unified group.

Conclusions

It is clear that Strathclyde was crucial to Scandinavian activities throughout the British Isles. Although it may never have been under control of the Scandinavians, there was clearly enough Scandinavian presence in this region to allow merchants to travel through and settlers to establish themselves here. The ‘cultural highway’ that the Clyde became during the Viking Age was of course not limited solely to Scandinavian traffic, for it would have enabled travel of Britons, Northumbrians, Scots, and Albans to other parts of northern Britain. It was a highway that enabled contact and interaction between peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, languages, religions, and daily practices, which in turn resulted in new identities formed by these people. It is during this period of multicultural interaction that the histories switch from narrating the stories of ethnically-determined political units to geographically-determined political units, and it is likely that these new identities were a large part of that process.

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