

Calligraphy and Illumination

My persona is a Viking Woman from the year 1204. I live in the seaport of Brattahildon the Eastern coast of Greenland. A sea going route had been established in 1005 with the sailing of Thorfinn Karlsefni past all of the towns that items in my display have been found. As a woman of means with a family, I have included a toy for my son, a scroll to describe



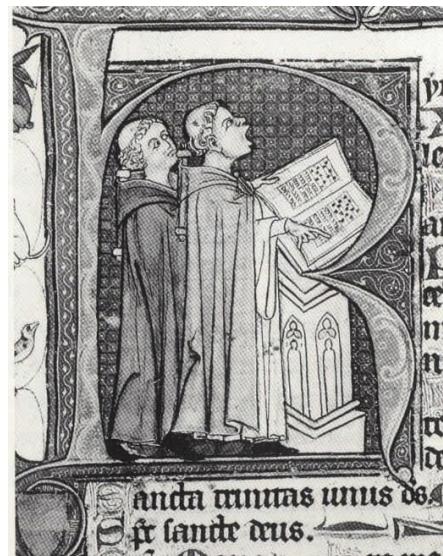
the great deeds of my kinsmen and a hood to keep me warm. I have learned a lot while researching my projects, mostly that the preconceived notions I had about late period Viking were incorrect.

Creating the scrolls was a very interesting project. I had expected to find scrolls that were written with runes. AM 28 8vo, known as Codex runicus, is a single scroll which has survived and is written in runes. It is an anachronism. The scrolls were done 300 years past the time when the Vikings were using runes. With the introduction of Christianity a Latin Alphabet took the place of runes. It is thought that "this late use of runes can only have been prompted by antiquarian interest."

I have used an acid free paper instead of calfskin vellum. A scribe would have used ground pigments, egg white or gum arabic to make paint. I have used luma dyes and a natural sponge to dye the paper the warm, mottled background color. After that I used gouache and a paintbrush to do the lettering. The Codex runicus did not have any pictures. I have included a boat for decoration, because this scroll will be used as a Baronial Champions scroll and it was a little plain.



The second scroll is more correct for a Viking scroll after the introduction of Christianity, as it is written with a Gothic hand. The capital letter is loosely based on a letter from a Psalter and Book of Hours. I have used artistic license and turned a K into an R. I have also included spaces between the words on the scroll for legibility. Otherwise the letters and pictures are Gothic and in a style that was consistent with the time period. I did not chose illuminations which were only from Viking Manuscripts because they appear to be mostly about boats and gutting fish. Subjects which are not very helpful in a Baronial Champions scroll.



Viking Doll

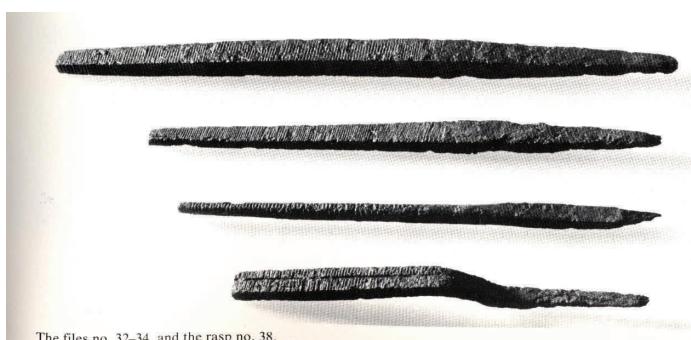


My doll is a copy of the “Bishop of Baffin.” The doll was found in a thirteenth or fourteenth century Thule Inute site on the southern Baffin Island. It “depicts an individual wearing a long split-fronted robe or tunic with edge trim that closely resembles Norse clothing of the period.” (Sutherland, p.238.) I saw the doll in the Minneapolis Science Museum with the Smithsonian’s traveling Viking Exhibit. The doll is 5.4 cm wide and made of wood. My doll is about 5 cm wide and made from poplar. He is finished with olive oil, so he can be played with. Experiments with small children indicate that they like to hold his head and chew on his feet. He also makes a very satisfying sound when he walks.



The Gotland Tool Chest was found while plowing a field in Mastermyr in October 1936. The contents have been kept intact. Scholars feel the tool chest belonged to a blacksmith who had carpentry skills. It is even possible that the owner may have been a boat-builder. The tools which interested me were the ones related to carpentry. They include 2 axes, 2 adzes (used to smooth planking), 2 saws (one of which is an unusual hand saw) a large collection of spoon-augers (used to drill holes), gouge (used with mortise and tenon joints), chisel, 2 rasps and 4 files (generally considered smithing tools), and a small whetstone. It is difficult to date the find because carpentry tools do not tend to have stylistic characteristics. “However, certain tool types and technical features in the Mastermyr find to suggest a date in the late Viking Age or possibly the early medieval period, although a later date cannot definitely be ruled out.” (Arwidsson and Berg, p.37.)

I took a roughly square block of wood and shaped it with a (band) saw. I then attacked the rough shape with files, a knife and finally my dremel tool. Once the shape had begun to take human form I used a pocket knife to do the final carving and smoothing. I did not realize that if you just use a knife to carve with it is unnecessary to use sandpaper. The next time I make a toy I will do it this way. The detailing lines were applied with a knife.



The files no. 32-34, and the rasp no. 38.

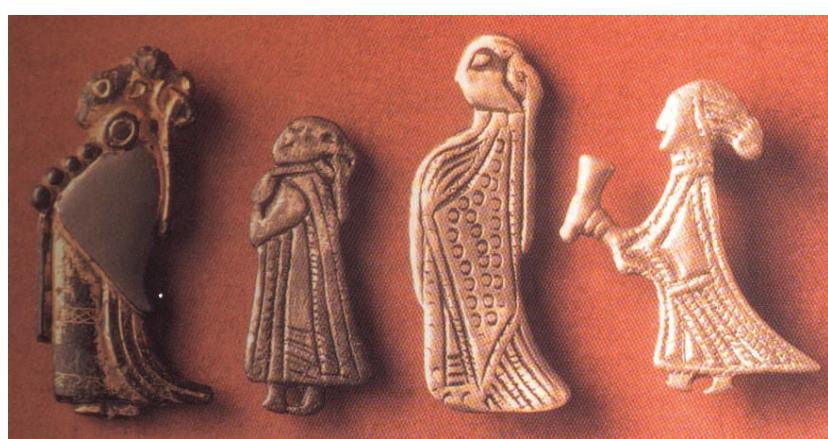
Casting



My goal was to learn casting, so I could use objects as tokens for competitions and as small favors. I started this project when I was pregnant, so I could not use a lead based pewter, as would have been done in period. I have used mostly modern methods to do my work because I was learning. Period casting has a success rate of less than 50% and I was unwilling to struggle with a new skill that had such a steep learning curve. For each step in modern casting there is a period equivalent. For example heating the metal in period would have been done over a charcoal fire with a crucible, I used a bullet pot. The end result was molten metal ready to pour

into my mold. I did not realize how hard it was to sculpt an object, which did not have any under cuts. If your object has undercuts it will not come out of the mold. I used sculpy to make my master instead of beeswax or clay.

I have learned a lot doing this project. The Thors hammer was my first piece. I think it turned out the best. Late period Vikings were mostly Christian, but a number of finds have had both Christian and Pagan religious symbols. (No point in insulting anybody's God in the afterlife.) My second piece was the Valkyrie. I do not think she was very successful, perhaps she has too much detail or I got the metal too hot when pouring. The last piece I did was the lucky ducks foot. I saw one at a Pennsic merchant, (hence the front and back pictures.) I feel that it was fairly successful, but it has been difficult to pour.

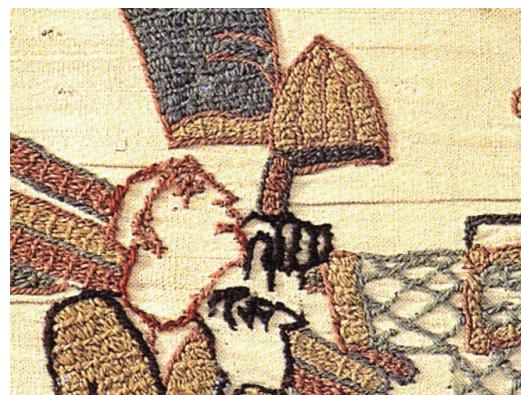


I plan on taking a period casting class this spring. I hope to learn another way to cast and sculpt.

Hood

"The churchyard in Herjolfsnes contained more than 120 burials. When excavated in 1921, well-preserved wool clothing... The hood shown here is in the same style and pattern as contemporary Europeans fashion, although the Greenland Norse were thousands of miles away and in vastly different environment." (Arneborg, p.315.) I should not have been surprised that the clothing of the Vikings was influenced by their trade routes, but I was.

I made my hood by felting a piece of coat weight wool. This should make it warmer to wear. I then embroidered the boats around the hem. I chose a simple picture of a boat from a coin. Intertwined animal or a geometric patterns are the most common motifs in the Viking ear. I decided to use a simple picture of a boat from a coin because my Barony of Tir-y-Don is a maritime province. Sagas provide us with evidence that the Vikings decorated their clothing and every day objects, but we have very few extant garments. Therefore I am taking a little artistic license with my boats. I have tried to choose colors which can be easily dyed from natural dyes (except the purple, I traded for that.) I used a split backstitch to do the embroidery, in order to give the stitch a little lift, so it did not sink into the felted wool. I was very surprised how easily the needle and wool floss glided through the felted wool. It was wonderful to stitch with. I will line my hood with silk, which is a departure from the original hood which was unlined. I have chosen a slick silk, so the hood will lay better on my shoulders. Silk would have been a cheaper fabric than linen because it could be found on regular trade routes and the growing season for linen is too short in Greenland.



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