

## Resource Pack

### Can you complete the King Haakon IV of Norway quest?

You may need to do a little extra research:

- Visit the SCRAN website <http://www.scran.ac.uk/> and access the relevant records using the SCRAN ID numbers provided under each resource
- Visit [places of interest](#)
- Do your own research by following [links](#)
- Investigate the CD-ROM *The Scottish People 800-1450 – People of a kingdom*, Learning and Teaching Scotland [www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk), email: [enquiries@LTScotland.com](mailto:enquiries@LTScotland.com), tel: Customer Services +44 (0)8700 100 297

#### Haakon IV (c.1204-1263)

- King of Norway from 1217-1263
- Led an expedition to the Western Isles in 1263
- Fought against Alexander III, King of Scots at the Battle of Largs
- Last Norwegian king to rule the Western Isles



King chess piece, made in the 12th century, found at Uig Bay, Lewis.

SCRAN 000-100-001-627-C

### ***Finding Facts***

1. When was the Battle of Largs?
2. In which year does Haakon IV's successor Magnus sign the *Treaty of Perth*?
3. What did Alexander II offer King Haakon IV in exchange for the possession of the Western Isles?
  - (a) A large quantity of refined silver
  - (b) Land in Orkney and Caithness
  - (c) A fleet of warships

## Looking at Evidence

4.



Map showing the route of King Haakon IV of Norway to the Battle of Largs.

[www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)



Kyleakin, Skye

A 'Kyle' is the Gaelic word for a strait separating two bits of land.

SCRAN 000-000-113-406

In 1263, it is thought King Haakon IV travelled via Orkney and then Skye, as shown on the map. Which of the following theories do you think best explain the claim that Haakon passed through Skye?

- (a) We can deduce from the name 'Kyleakin' that Haakon IV passed through Skye. The name of the village Kyleakin is derived from the 'Kyle of Haakon', the strait that his fleet passed through on the way to the Battle of Largs.
- (b) We can deduce from the name 'Kyleakin' that Haakon IV passed through Skye and it reminded him of his home back in Norway. 'Kyleakin' is derived from a Kyle or strait, 'akin' to one in Norway.
- (c) There is no evidence to support Haakon's having passed through Skye, it is merely a ploy to encourage more tourists to the island.

**5.** According to the *Orkneyinga Saga*, in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, King Malcolm III 'Canmore', agreed to give up all the islands to the west to the King of Norway which were separated from the land by water which could be navigated by a ship.

It is said that King Magnus Barelegs tried to claim the land of Kintyre by being dragged across its 'isthmus' (narrow strip of land surrounded on both sides by water) in his boat.

*Considering the evidence* is this a believable account?



(a) Replica of a Viking boat. The Vikings were skilled ship builders. Boats could be light enough to be run up onto sandy shores for surprise attacks or to be dragged over short distances.

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(b) The Kintyre Peninsula, Argyll. There is a narrow isthmus at Tarbert.

SCRAN 000-000-113-434-C

## *Interpretation*

6. In 1230, an army of Norwegians and Gaelic warriors made an attack on the stronghold of the Stewart family at Rothesay Castle on Bute. Consider why this attack was significant?
  
7. After Alexander II dies, his 6 year old son, Alexander III is made king of Scots. Alexander III's inauguration involves many Gaelic elements, including the 'Stone of Scone' ancient ceremonial stone of the kings of Scots. His bloodline is recited tracing back to Scota, the mythical founder of Scotland.

Why do you think this was a clever tactic against Norse domination?

8. The Battle of Largs in 1263 was a significant event in the history of the Western Isles. What reasons can you think of for Haakon IV's defeat? Consider the outcome of the *Treaty of Perth*.

Why do you think the Battle of Largs could be considered Norway's last stand?

## *Links*

<http://nms.ac.uk>

The National Museum of Scotland presents the history of Scotland – its land, its people and their achievements – through its rich collections built up over more than two centuries.

<http://www.scran.ac.uk/>

SCRAN is the award winning history and culture website providing instant access to images, sounds, movies and learning resources. It contains over one million records from museums, galleries and archives.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/>

On this site you'll find in-depth articles, multimedia (like games, virtual tours and animations) as well as bite-size material like timelines and short biographies of historic figures. All is designed for you to get more out of your interest in History.

<http://www.nts.org.uk/>

This site contains useful information, whether you want to know more about the National Trust for Scotland's vital conservation work or are planning to visit some of the places of interest.

<http://www.ntseducation.org.uk/>

On this site there are sections which are intended to assist teachers with various topics in the school curriculum. They provide useful background material for teachers intending to explore these topics with their students.

<http://www.nationalgalleries.org/>

Education is at the heart of the work of the National Galleries of Scotland. Each of the Galleries provides a rich and lively learning resource. Our inclusive approach offers many different ways of learning to give everyone a chance to become actively engaged with art.

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk>

Historic Scotland safeguards the nation's built heritage and promotes its understanding and enjoyment. You can find information on more than 300 properties and scheduled ancient monuments. We also have resources for schools and details on technical conservation and research.

<http://www.nls.ac.uk>

The National Library of Scotland – Scotland's largest library and the world centre for the study of Scotland and the Scots. A vast reference library, covering all subjects, from art to mountaineering, and from early times to the digital age.

<http://www.nas.gov.uk>

The National Archives of Scotland (or NAS) is the main archive for sources of the history of Scotland as a separate kingdom, her role in the British Isles and the links between Scotland and many other countries over the centuries.

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk>

Learning and Teaching Scotland is a national public body sponsored by the Scottish Executive Education Department. The Scottish Executive has charged Learning and Teaching Scotland with providing advice, support, resources and staff development that enhance the quality of educational experiences with a view to improving attainment and achievement and promoting lifelong learning.

Email: [enquiries@LTScotland.com](mailto:enquiries@LTScotland.com)

Telephone: Customer Services +44 (0)8700 100 297

### *Places of interest*

Kyelakin, Skye

St Molaise's Cave, Holy Island, Argyll

Largs, Ayrshire

## *Answers*

1. 1263
2. 1266
3. (a) A large quantity of refined silver

4. (a) We can deduce from the name 'Kyleakin' that Haakon IV passed through Skye in 1263. Kyleakin comes from 'Kyle of Haakon', the strait that his fleet passed through on the way to the Battle of Largs.

Place names are important as an indication of the linguistic and cultural history of a region. It is thought that Haakon's fleet birthed in the 'kyle' or strait that separates the Isle of Skye from the mainland. The village 'Kyleakin' derives its name from his visit, 'Kyle of Haakon' became Kyleakin.

5. Viking boats were often light enough to be run up onto sandy shores for surprise attacks. They could also be dragged over short pieces of land. The isthmus at Tarbert is narrow enough for a light Viking boat to be dragged over.

Considering the evidence, the story that King Magnus Barelegs tried to claim the land of Kintyre by being dragged across its narrow isthmus in his boat is indeed possible. However, as the source of the information is from the *Orkneyinga Saga*, it is difficult to interpret exactly what happened.

The *Orkneyinga Sagas* were written in Iceland in the 13th and 14th centuries. It is likely the stories were passed down in an oral tradition for centuries before they were recorded. The historical facts may not therefore all be accurate, but the sagas do give us a unique insight into the medieval Scandinavian world.

6. Norway had held most of the islands around Bute from the 8th century but lost control around 1200 when the Stewarts, Anglo-Norman lords under the king of Scots, took control. Rothesay Castle was the stronghold of the Stewart family. The attack on the castle showed that Norwegian power in the west was growing, and that the Norwegian king had the support of some influential Gaelic chiefs.

7. Leading nobles and magnates of the kingdom of the Scots perhaps recognised the conflict of cultures in their kingdom. To reduce the threat of the already strong Gaelic community joining forces with the Norwegians, the kingdom of the Scots drew upon all symbolic Gaelic customs in the crowning of the new king. This seems as attempt

to gain favour with the Gaelic community, and bringing together the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic communities.

8. The King of Scots had a superior army. Bad weather forced the Norwegians on shore for a land battle. They were a stronger at sea battles. Broken alliances with Gaelic leaders in the west left the Norwegian army grossly outnumbered.

Haakon IV died soon after the battle. He was the last Norwegian King to fight to maintain control of the west, and attempt to claim more land down the western seaboard.

The *Treaty of Perth* of 1266 sold sovereignty over the Western Isles and the Isle of Man to the King of Scots. The islands were finally surrendered to Scottish control.