

## Resource Pack

### Can you complete the Erik Bloodaxe quest?

You may need to do a little extra research:

- Visit the SCRAN website [www.scran.ac.uk](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

#### Erik Bloodaxe (d.954)

- King of Norway from 930-934
- Raided and plundered the coasts of Scotland and northern England
- Posed a serious threat to the kingdom of Alba



Representation of a Viking warrior.

SCRAN 000-000-099-796-C

### ***Finding Facts***

1. In the late 9<sup>th</sup> century, Erik Bloodaxe's father created the title of 'Earldom of Orkney'. Who was his father?
  - (a) Earl Thorfinn of Orkney
  - (b) King Harald Finehar of Norway
  - (c) King Olaf Tryggvesson of Norway
2. What is the name of the pagan god of battle, wisdom and knowledge?
3. Find out in which year Erik Bloodaxe first became the King of York.

## *Looking at Evidence*

4.



(a) Fragments of a Viking warrior's sword from a grave at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay, Inner Hebrides.

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(b) This gilt copper mount is from an object of religious importance. It was found in the west of Scotland and is probably an object of Viking looting.

SCRAN 000-100-043-837-C



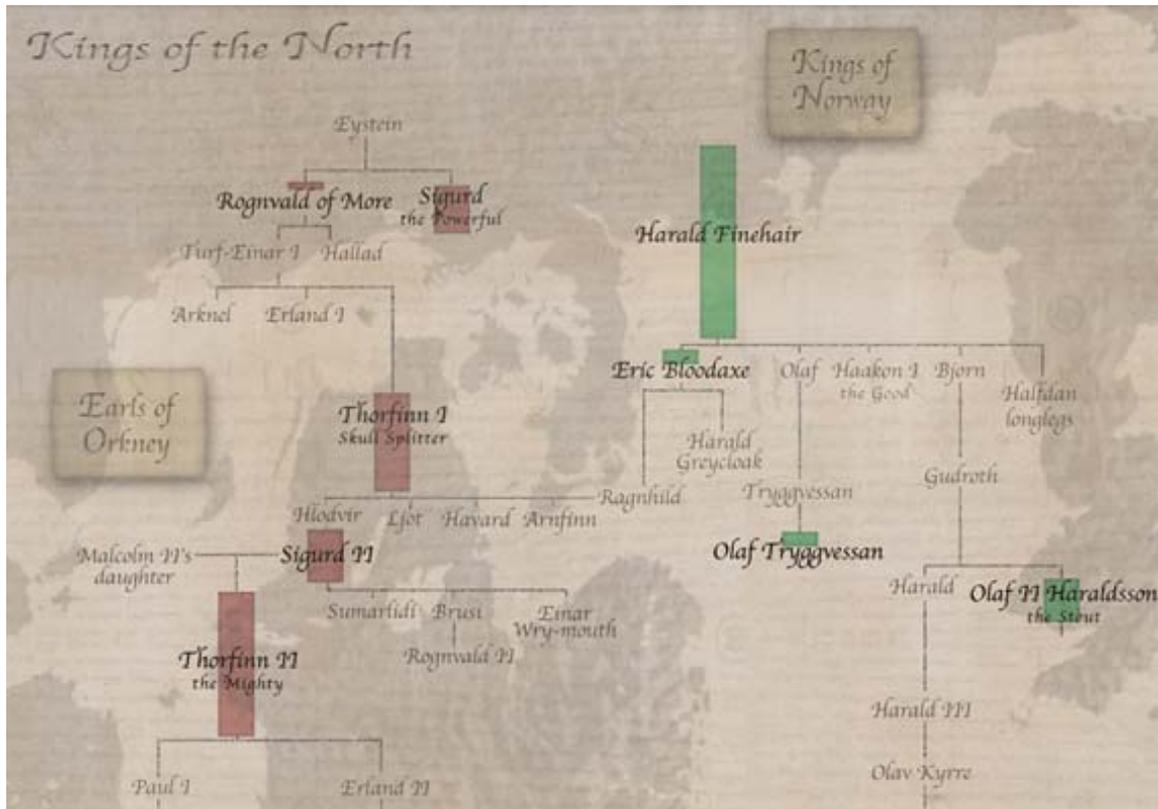
(c) These Anglo-Saxon coins are from a 10<sup>th</sup> century Viking hoard buried for safety at Iona Abbey.

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Iona was the centre of Gaelic Christianity from the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

***Looking at the evidence***, what can you deduce about the effect of Vikings on the Western Isles in the 10<sup>th</sup> century? Why do you think a religious community like Iona was particularly at risk?

5.



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**Look closely** at this family tree or 'bloodlines' of the Kings of Norway and Earls of Orkney between the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- (a) Name Erik Bloodaxe's brothers
- (a) Erlend and Arnkel were joint Earls of Orkney in Erik Bloodaxe's time. Who succeeded them?
- (b) What do you notice about the nicknames given to some of the Orkney earls? What does this suggest about Norse society in this period?

## *Interpretation*

6. Erik Bloodaxe used his authority with the earls of Orkney and joined forces with the Anglo-Danish population in Northumbria. Why was this a clever tactic in his bid to take over Alba?

7. This map shows the invasion of the territories of Erik Bloodaxe by Malcolm I, King of Scots.



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Find out what happened, who won? What happened next?

8. Stories about Erik Bloodaxe and the earls of Orkney were recounted in sagas such as the *Orkneyinga Sagas*. Would you consider these a reliable source of information?

## Links

<http://www.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***

Iona Abbey, Iona

Brough of Birsay, Orkney

## *Answers*

1. (c) King Harald Finehair of Norway
2. Odin
3. 948
  
4. The sword fragments (a) are evidence of Viking settlement in the Western Isles. Vikings were often buried with items of significance to them in life. This item may have belonged to a warrior, and suggests a culture of warfare or violence. This was a period of Viking raiding in the West of Scotland. Religious houses, such as Iona Abbey, were easy targets for Viking raiders. They were undefended and yielded many treasures. Evidence (b) is the kind of object taken as loot by invading Vikings. The Anglo-Saxon coins (c) are part of a larger hoard which may have been buried for safety from Viking raids.
  
5. (a) Olaf, Haakon I (Haakon 'the good'), Bjorn and Halfdan longlegs  
(b) Earl Thorfinn 'Skull Splitter'  
(c) The names given to them all describe fierce, courageous characters. 'The Powerful', 'the Mighty'. This is a pagan society of warriors. Respect and veneration comes from victories in battle.
  
6. The Orkney earls were under the authority of the king of Norway. They had influence within the Norse and Gaelic communities throughout the west coast of Scotland. The population in Northumbria was a mixture of English and Danish people. Erik Bloodaxe used this to his advantage, moving into lands in the north of England to effectively surround the kingdom of Alba.
  
7. Erik Bloodaxe had a strong army of united Anglo-Danish and Norse. They defeated the army of Malcolm I, King of Scots. Later, Bloodaxe led a raid into Strathclyde and was killed. The Kingdom of York was then regained by the English.
  
8. It is always difficult to separate fact from fabrication in such documents. 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 many centuries before they were written down. The historical facts may therefore not all be accurate. Characters were often

glorified to make a better story and to enhance their courage and heroism. However, sagas do give us a unique insight into the medieval Scandinavian world.