



# VIKING DISCOVERY CHEST

A collection of various objects, possibly artifacts or tools, arranged on a red cloth against a green background. The objects include a knife, a horn, a string of beads, a metal spoon, a small bowl, a cup, a piece of fur, a bag, and a small box. The background is a solid green color with some white scratches or lines. The objects are arranged in a somewhat haphazard manner, with some overlapping. The knife is at the top, the horn is next to it, and the string of beads is hanging from the knife. The metal spoon is on the right, and the small bowl is next to it. The cup is in the center, and the piece of fur is on the right. The bag is on the left, and the small box is at the bottom right.



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# VIKING DISCOVERY CHEST

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Also included in this pack:

- Risk Assessment for the Discovery Chest and contents
- Information sheets on the objects created by Ceolred Monger
- The Vikings in Scotland by Richard Dargie (BBC Education Scotland book)





Subject has the  
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photos by Coolred Monger

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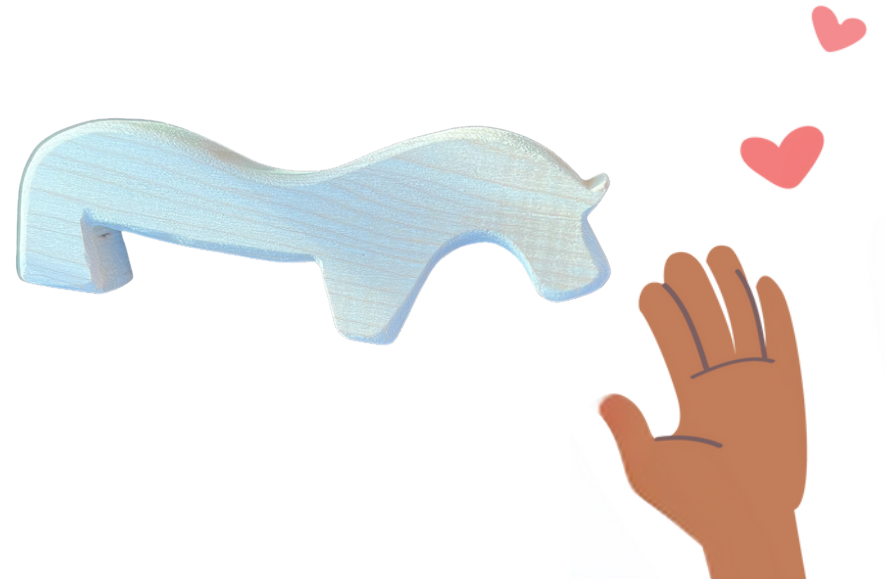
This chest can be used in a number of cross-curricular ways for different age groups. We would encourage the objects to be shared across the whole school. We have included some suggested activities on pages 6,7,8 & 9.

**If you have any queries, or would like support and advice to make the most of this Discovery Chest, please contact the The Learning Team at Archaeology Scotland. Email: [education@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:education@archaeologyscotland.org.uk)**



## HANDLING OBJECTS - REPLICAS AND RECONSTRUCTIONS

- Please remember that this box includes hand-crafted replica artefacts, some of which are fragile.
- Please handle it with care!
- Before a handling session, you may wish to examine the replica artefacts and assess any potential risks to your group members or the replica artefacts themselves.
- Handling kits must be used under supervision.
- Wash hands before and after handling sessions.
- Always hold heavy or long replica artefacts over a table and use both hands
- Avoid getting replica artefacts wet, do not expose to heat or put in contact with damaging materials such as glue or paint.
- Please ensure replica artefacts are returned safely to the box and put away securely after each session.
- Please check the box for all replica artefacts before returning.
- Please report any missing or damaged replica artefacts and do not attempt to repair them. Please return all broken pieces.





# VIKING DISCOVERY CHEST

## DISCOVERY CHEST CONTENTS:

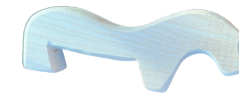
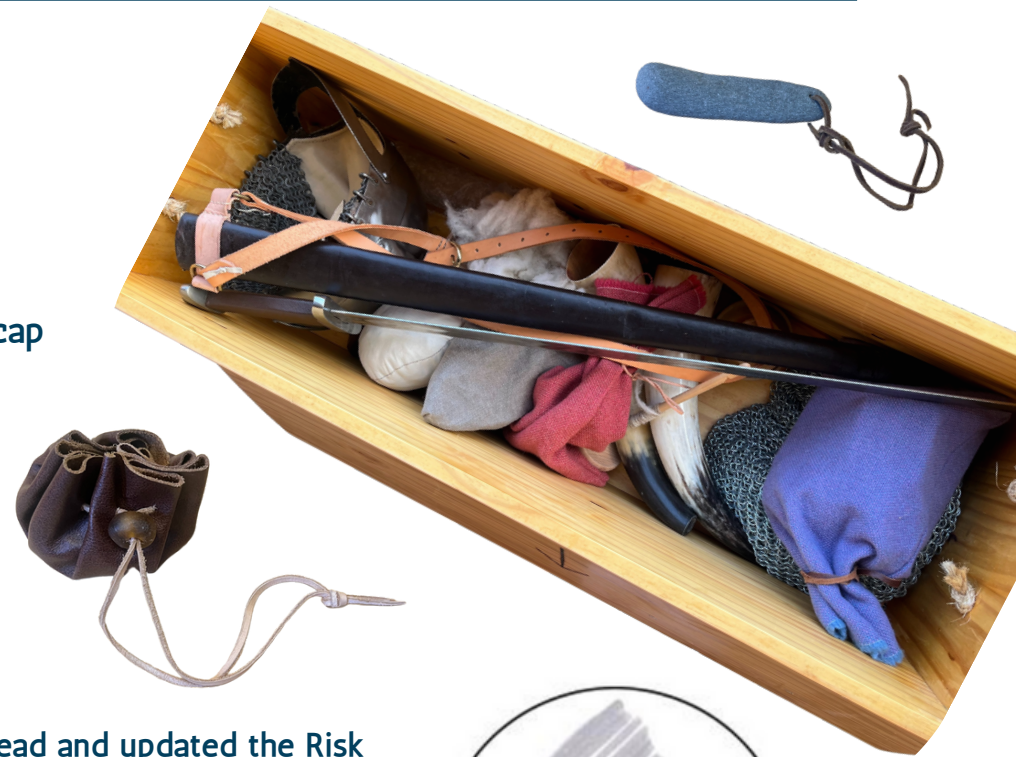
- Drinking horn and blowing horn
- Bone spoon
- Whetstone
- Bone comb
- Wooden toy horse
- Leather ball
- Spinning spindle and spindle whorl and wool fleece
- Bone weaving tablets
- Wooden plates and bowls
- Pouch of jewellery for trade goods (beads and pendants)
- Three mens' morris game
- Soay sheepskin
- Iron griddle pan
- Pottery lamp with beeswax
- Firelighting pouch

### Weapons and armour:

- Helmet and woolen lining cap
- Butted mail shirt
- Sword and scabbard



Please ensure you have read and updated the Risk Assessment as necessary prior to use. Please ensure the group has understood the Handling guidelines before handling any objects.



**This Viking Discovery Chest** was donated to Archaeology Scotland by **The Hidden Heritage Project**, a community project which aimed to involve the community in investigating and interpreting the area's heritage. The project has now ended but you can read more about the project and explore the resources on their website - <https://hiddenheritage.org.uk/project/>



## ALL ABOUT VIKING SCOTLAND

### 11 FANTASTIC FACTS

1. Viking is the Scandinavian word for **pirate**! It refers to someone who uses a ship to steal from other people.
2. **Scandinavia** is made up of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. From these three countries Vikings explored Europe, Asia and Africa.
3. The Vikings that raided in Scotland were mostly from **Norway**. The first known Scottish raid took place in **796 A.D.** in the monastery on Iona. **Monasteries** were the main targets for Vikings as they were full of gold and other valuable items.
4. The Vikings came to Scotland because they were looking for new land to **settle** in. They ended up living mostly in the North and West of the country.
5. The Vikings had **many gods** whom they worshipped. One of the most popular of these was **Thor**, the sky god. He was seen as the sender of good or bad weather which was important for seafaring and farming. He was meant to be a great fighter and was always shown carrying his hammer.
6. A lot of the information that we know about Vikings comes from their **sagas**, which are stories based around real events. One famous saga is the **Orkneyinga saga** which records the family story of the Earls of Orkney in the thirteenth century.





## ALL ABOUT VIKING SCOTLAND

### 11 FANTASTIC FACTS



7. In **1263 AD** Viking control of the Scottish mainland was lost at the **battle of Largs**. However, it was to be another 200 hundred years before they lost control of the Northern Isles.
8. Once the Vikings lost power, they did not disappear from Scotland. Many Vikings had married local people and so they remained with their families as part of the people that made up the new **kingdom of Scotland**.
9. Viking influence can still be found today in Scotland in many of the country's place-names, Skail in Orkney is a good example of this. We also use two words every week that can be traced to the Vikings. Wednesday is named after the god Odin and Thursday is named after the god Thor!
10. Vikings are famous for fighting people but they were also farmers and traders who built towns in places like **Reykjavík** in Iceland and **Dublin** in Ireland.
11. Vikings liked decorating things. Women and men wore jewellery like **brooches** and **beads**, they decorated their clothes and their weapons. **Pink** was thought to be a very manly colour.

## META-SKILLS AND STEM SKILLS

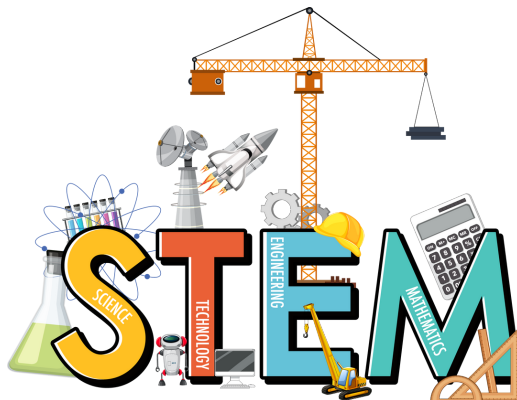
Some suggestions for activities are provided in this pack. Activities have been grouped into **Explore, Investigate, Connect and Care**. These activities employ a range of skills and we encourage discussing the skills used, gained and developed by learners and users during each activity. Some have been highlighted on the activity pages.



### META-SKILLS

Meta-skills ([Skills Development Scotland](http://SkillsDevelopmentScotland.gov.uk)) are "innate, timeless, higher-order skills that create adaptive learners and promote success in whatever context the future brings."

By making meta-skills explicitly visible, practitioners create opportunities for learners to recognise, understand and explore their meta-skills development.



### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHS (STEM) SKILLS

Archaeology involves **Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills**. STEM skills include: **Problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, curiosity, logical-mathematical skills and engineering-design skills**. The activities in this Discovery Chest support the development of these STEM skills.



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES - EXPLORE

### Mystery Objects (Literacy)

Select an object from the box and ask the learners to work out what the object is.

Asking the following can help:

- What is it made of?
- What does it feel like?
- Does it look like anything you might use today?
- Can you describe the **size, shape, colour, material, weight**?
- What was it used for?
- How was it used?
- Does it remind you of anything that you have seen or used? How could you **classify** it?
- Think about its material, age, colour, use, size

### The Life of an Artefact (Literacy)

Create a drama session around an object or write a story about its life. Ask the following questions:

- How do they think the object was made, by who and where?
- Who would have used the object and how would they have used it?
- What kind of journey has it been on? How would it eventually end up in the ground?

### Tool to Technology (Technology)

- Explore the tools in the box (e.g. the whetstone and spindle whorl)
- Use this as a starting point to investigate the technologies which the Vikings used to build, make their clothes and prepare food (Technologies)

Curiosity



Sense-making



Creativity



Critical thinking





## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES - INVESTIGATE

### Investigation (Science & Numeracy and Mathematics)

Investigate and record the following.

- Measure and weigh the objects.
- Compare objects made from different materials.
- Think about materials that survive and don't survive over time.
- Think about how you would care for the objects so they will be well preserved in the future.

### Material Investigation (Science, Materials)

- Explore the materials which the Vikings used, as represented by the objects, and where each material came from and what it was used for.
- Do we use the same objects today and are they similar?
- Which material works better; ours or the Vikings'?

### Using the objects in the box, investigate the following topics:

- Viking clothing and jewellery and what this tells us about Viking trade
- The food that Vikings would have eaten; try making up your own Viking menus. If you can, try making a Viking recipe!
- Who were the Viking Gods and what were the Viking myths?
- What did Vikings believe happened to them when they died?

**Focusing**



**Adapting**



**Initiative**





## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES - CONNECT

### Them & Us (Social Studies)

Use the artefacts to help you think about the following:

- Select some of the objects and discuss what their modern counterparts might be
- Use the objects to stimulate discussion about what life might have been like in the Viking period; how is each aspect different to current life – e.g. the wooden bowl can stimulate a discussion about what the Vikings would have eaten and how they would have made their food. This can be compared to what we eat and how we obtain food (hunting, rearing animals and growing crops versus going to the supermarket)
- Use the artefacts to recreate life in a Viking village and compare it to their own life.

### Reconstruction (Mathematics and Expressive Arts)

Get creative using the objects as inspiration.

- Design possible patterns and decorations that may have appeared on Viking pottery, then make a pot and decorate it.
- Then draw it being used. Does it remind you of any items that you use today?
- Design your own piece of Viking jewelry.
- What symbols and materials were valued by Vikings? How does this compare to today?

### Rune writer (Languages)

- Explore Viking language and investigate Viking runes. Try writing your name.
- Can you write a letter to each other using runes? Can you explore how Vikings might have sounded speaking to each other?

Communicating



Feeling



Collaborating



Leading





## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES - CARE

Archaeologists make sure each artefact we find is looked after, recorded and stored properly so that it will exist for future generations. Museums are important places that preserve, store and display artefacts.

**Our Mini Museum activity - work as a team to make a display:**

- Every object in your group's museum needs to be given an **accession number**. Start with your museum's name (you can just use initials), then the year that the object came into the museum and finally a running number for the year (For example-ASM:2024.12 for the 12th object that came into Archaeology Scotland Museum in 2024).
- Once you have your object's number, make a small label to tie onto your object or place next to it.
- Then write a description for each object and a little bit about why it's interesting – this should be easy to read and not too complicated.
- Think about which conditions are best for the artefacts in the box and why. Archaeologists write and publish detailed reports of their findings, including what they can tell us about life in that place and time.

### Tours and talks

- Share what you have found and learned about the Vikings through a school assembly or guided tours.
- Share one object in a talk to your group, class or in assembly





# VIKING DISCOVERY CHEST

## ARTEFACT RECORDING SHEET

Draw your object here

What material is the object made from?

What size is the object? (measure in cm)

What colour is the object?

What might the object be used for?

What does the object tell you about the person who once owned or used it?

Is there anything else you noticed?



# VIKING DISCOVERY CHEST

## MATERIAL INVESTIGATION

Different artefacts were made from different materials. Each material has different properties. Take a closer look at the materials each artefact is made from and complete the table.

- How do they look and feel?
- Why was this material used for this artefact?
- What are the pros and cons of each material?
- What effect would using the artefact have on each type of material?



| Put a ✓ or a ✗ in the boxes<br>If you're not sure, put a ? | hard | will be well preserved under ground | has to be imported | expensive material | recyclable | used today | a lot of work to make |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| iron (metal nail)                                          | ✓    | ✓                                   | ✗                  | ✓                  | ✓          | ✓          | ✓                     |
|                                                            |      |                                     |                    |                    |            |            |                       |
|                                                            |      |                                     |                    |                    |            |            |                       |
|                                                            |      |                                     |                    |                    |            |            |                       |
|                                                            |      |                                     |                    |                    |            |            |                       |

## ENRICH YOUR LEARNING



### Museums

- The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh has displays about the Vikings, exploring who they were and where they came from.
- Why not have a look in your local museum?

### Websites

- BBC Bitesize has great articles, videos and resources on Viking Scotland  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z939mp3>
- The Archaeology Scotland website has information on further archaeological resources available to you and links to useful sites [www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk](http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk)
- If you have enjoyed playing the Viking games in this chest, Coelred Monger have made free instructions on how to make your own. <https://history-explorer.co.uk/pouch.html>

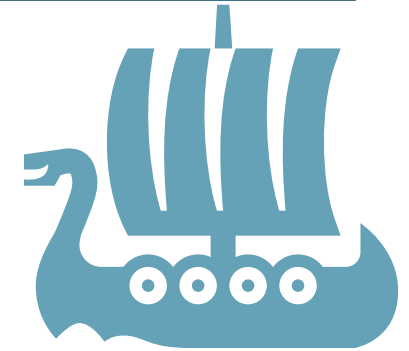
### Books

There are lots of books about Vikings. Why not try looking at some of these?

- Viking Scotland by Anna Ritchie (Historic Scotland/ Batsford, London, 1993)
- The Sea Road: a Viking voyage through Scotland by Olwyn Owen (Edinburgh, Canongate with Historic Scotland, 1999)
- The Vicious Vikings (Horrible Histories) by Terry Deary & [Control]Martin Brown (Scholastic, London, 2007)
- The Orchard Book of Viking Stories by Robert Swindells and Peter Utton (Orchard, London, 2004)



## LEARNING WITH ARCHAEOLOGY SCOTLAND



Learning is at the heart of everything we do at Archaeology Scotland, from storytelling activities for the under 5s to workshops for older adults, and everything in between.

As lead body for Aim 4 of [Scotland's Archaeology Strategy](#), we are passionate about encouraging greater engagement with Scotland's archaeological heritage. Archaeology can play an important role in formal learning, helping deliver the Curriculum for Excellence across all areas and supporting key approaches including interdisciplinary learning, outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability.

- We offer support, advice and training opportunities for teachers, youth group leaders and home educators, and provide engaging learning materials through our [Heritage Resources Portal](#) and loan kit service.
- [Explore Your Local Heritage](#) using learning resources designed to support local heritage project.
- [Heritage Hero Awards](#) give everyone an opportunity to be rewarded for their heritage learning projects.
- Through archaeology young people can develop important skills for learning, life and work. Our [Archaeology Ambassadors](#) scheme aims to inspire the next generation of archaeologists while providing careers advice for young people.

**Need more information? The Learning Team at Archaeology Scotland are always happy to help with advice and support. For updates, sign up for our learning e-newsletter [here](#).**

Contact us: [education@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:education@archaeologyscotland.org.uk)

Follow us on X [@as\\_learn](#)



## HERITAGE HERO AWARDS

The Heritage Hero Awards are a wider achievement award, designed exclusively for history, heritage, and archaeology projects. Breaking down barriers to participation in cultural heritage is something we're really proud of at Archaeology Scotland, so the Awards are free and are designed to be accessible to all, regardless of age, academic ability, or background.



| Name                          | Description                                                     | Time    |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Heritage Explorer</b>      | For <b>discovering</b> heritage                                 | 3+ hrs  |
| <b>Heritage Detective</b>     | For <b>finding out about</b> heritage                           | 8+ hrs  |
| <b>Heritage Hero - Bronze</b> | For <b>getting involved with</b> heritage                       | 15+ hrs |
| Heritage Hero - Silver        | For <b>developing your own skills and interests in</b> heritage | 30+ hrs |
| <b>Heritage Hero - Gold</b>   | For <b>leading and inspiring through</b> heritage               | 60+ hrs |

### Get creative

To achieve their Heritage Hero Awards, learners must share their findings with others; fellow learners, family members or the wider community.

This is a great opportunity for young people to get creative. They can create anything from exhibitions and leaflets to raps, animations and models.

You can find out more about Heritage Hero awards on our website.

<https://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/learning/heritage-hero-awards/>

If you'd like your pupils to get a Heritage Hero Award for their own Heritage project, please get in touch: [Awards@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:Awards@archaeologyscotland.org.uk)





# SHOW US YOUR WORK!

Have you used any of the objects or activities in this chest?  
We'd love to see what you have been up to.

Email us:

Email: [education@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:education@archaeologyscotland.org.uk)

Website: [www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk](http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk)

## OR SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA



@ArchScot



@archaeologyscotland



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## WHETSTONE REPLICA

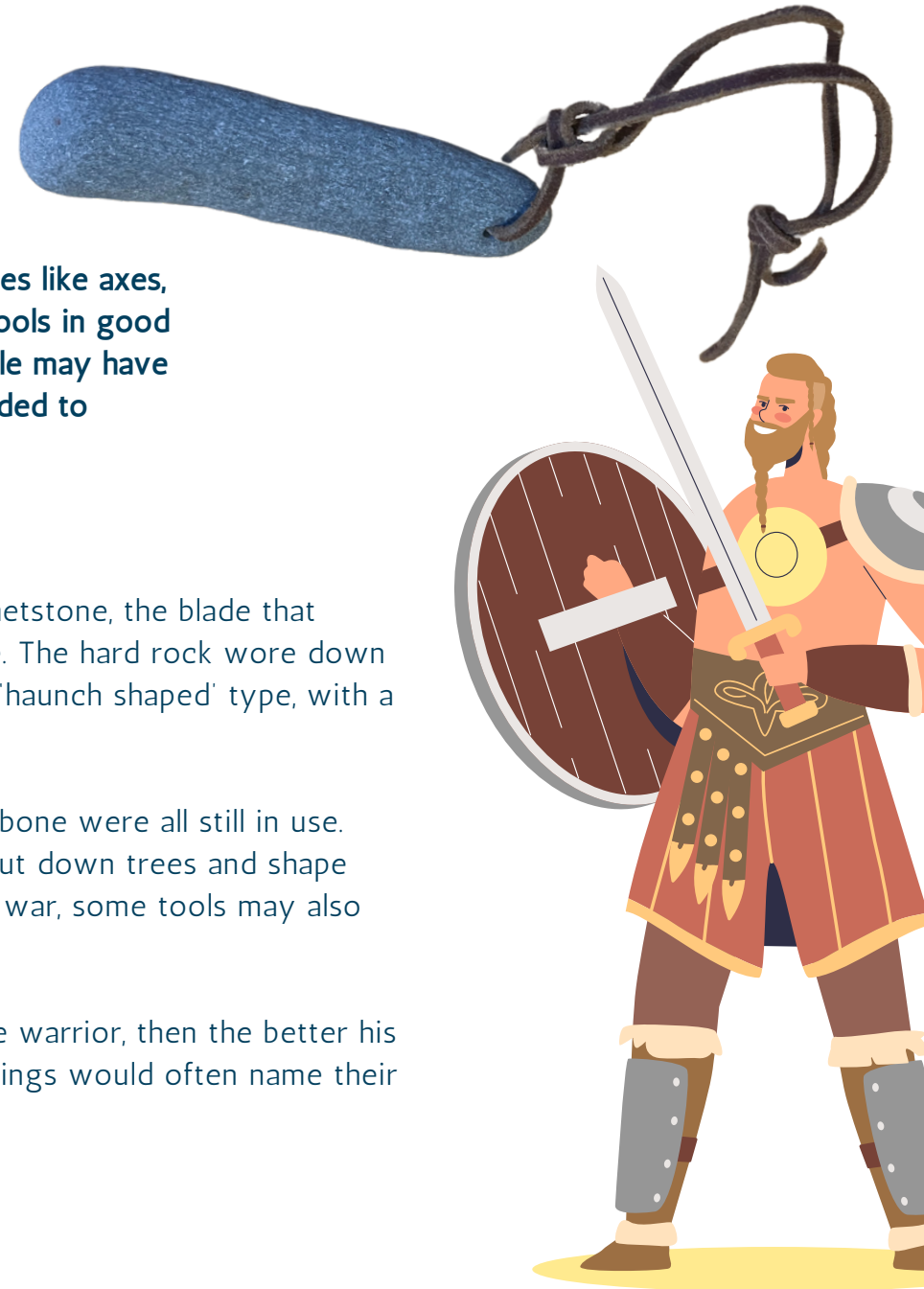
Whetstones such as this one were used to sharpen a variety of blades like axes, swords, knives, awls, sickles or chisels. It is important to keep iron tools in good condition – this means keeping them sharp! In the Viking Age, people may have worn whetstones as pendants to keep them handy in case they needed to sharpen something.

**Material:** Stone

Whetstones were made from very hard, abrasive rocks. To use a whetstone, the blade that needed sharpened was ground against the surface of the whetstone. The hard rock wore down the iron blade and created a sharp edge. This whetstone is a Viking 'haunch shaped' type, with a bulb of stone at one end to act as a handle.

Viking tools were not just made of Iron – Bronze, stone, wood and bone were all still in use. Tools were used for a wide range of purposes, axes were used to cut down trees and shape wood, ploughs for tilling the fields and many other uses. In times of war, some tools may also have been used as weapons.

The sword was one of the most important weapons. The greater the warrior, then the better his sword would be. This helped to show status and rank in society. Vikings would often name their swords.





## COMB

## REPLICA

The Vikings had two types of comb. This example is a single sided comb but there were also double sided combs. The double sided comb would have had coarse teeth on one side for getting out tangles in the hair and fine teeth on the other for getting out pests such as headlice!

**Material:** Antler

Both men and women would use the combs. Men would have had hair that was about shoulder length and so needed a comb to keep it looking good. Men and women would have used their comb every day. A comb was a personal item and so many examples have been found in graves. Men often had a case with their combs to protect the teeth. Women would have carried theirs in a pouch.

This example is made from antler but they could also be made out of bone and wood. Not many sites have been found where antler was used in Scotland so it may be that it was imported from Norway. The Vikings were some of the cleanest people in early Europe as they had a wash every Saturday!





## SPINDLE WHORL

### REPLICA

Spindle whorls or drop spindles have been used for a very long time to help when spinning wool into yarn. Viking women would often spin the wool as they were standing or walking about. This is why, when excavating a Viking house, archaeologists can find spindle whorls scattered about the floor as they have been lost or discarded.

**How was it used?** Twisted thread was used to start spinning raw wool from a sheep which would be spun into a thread by dropping and spinning the spindle whorl. The fibres from the wool would twist together and be pulled tight by the weight of the whorl (the round stone on the spindle). These threads are then wound up and added to until a ball of **yarn** has been produced. The yarn would then be used to make clothes.

On the islands of Lewis and Skye, spindle whorls were called 'Clachan Nathrach', or adderstones. It was believed that snakes crawled through the hole to shed their skin. They would also use them to cure diseases in cattle which they believed were caused by snake bites.

This belief probably started because spindle whorls were found lying on the ground by people who could see from their shape that they were not natural objects, but did not know what they had originally been used for. Some spindle whorls are decorated, often with runes. Runes were the alphabet that the Vikings used. We think runes were sometimes used in the past for magic and for trying to predict the future.

