

Hurstwic

(British Re-enactment group, from their webpage)

http://www.valhs.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/Demographics.htm

“When a child was born, the child was accepted into the family by means of a set of rituals. The mother accepted the child by nursing it at her breast. The father showed acceptance by taking the infant onto his knee, giving the child a name, and sprinkling water on the child (*vatni ausinn*). Once the infant was named, sprinkled, and suckled, then the Norse inheritance laws came into play, and the baby had inheritance and other rights within the family.

An infant that was not accepted for one reason or another was put to death by "exposure". The unwanted baby was put outside, exposed to the elements, until death ensued. This was usually done only in the case of birth deformity, or because of economic hardship. An archaeological study of one Norse era farming village turned up an abandoned well in which many dozens of infant skeletal remains were found.

During the Norse era, it was common for a family to give one of their children to another family to foster. It was a bond that could link a man to his social superior. Typically, a child from a superior family was raised by an inferior family. The foster parents received either payment or support from the birth parents. Fostering was not the same as adoption. It was a legal agreement, and an alliance. However, ties between foster-relations could be as strong or stronger than those between blood-relations.”

Egil's Saga - CHAPTER XL

Of Egil's and Skallagrim's games.

Skallagrim took much pleasure in trials of strength and games; he liked to talk about such. Ball-play was then a common game. Plenty of strong men there were at that time in the neighbourhood, but not one of strength to match with Skallagrim. He was now somewhat stricken in years. There was a man named Thord, son of Grani, at Granastead, who was of great promise; he was then young; very fond he was of Egil, Skallagrim's son. Egil often engaged in wrestling; he was headstrong and hot-tempered, but all had the sense to teach their sons to give way to Egil. A game of ball was held at White-river-dale in the early winter, to which was a great gathering of people from all the country-side. Thither went many of Skallagrim's household to the game. Chief among them was Thord, Grani's son. Egil asked Thord to let him go with him to the game; he was then in his seventh winter. Thord let him do so, and Egil mounted behind him. But when they came to the play-meeting, then the men made up sides for the play. Many small boys had come there too, and they made up a game for themselves. For this also sides were chosen.

Egil was matched to play against a boy named Grim, son of Hegg, of Hegg-stead. Grim was ten or eleven years old, and strong for his age. But when they played together Egil got the worst of it. And Grim made all he could of his advantage. Then Egil got angry and lifted up the bat and struck Grim, whereupon Grim seized him and threw him down with a heavy fall, and handled him rather roughly, and said he would thrash him if he did not behave. But when Egil got to his feet, he went out of the game, and the boys hooted at him.

Egil went to Thord and told him what had been done. Thord said:

'I will go with you, and we will be avenged on them.'

He gave into his hands a halberd that he had been carrying. Such weapons were then customary. They went where the boys' game was. Grim had now got the ball and was running away with it, and the other boys after him. Then Egil bounded upon Grim, and drove the axe into his head, so that it at once pierced his brain. After this Egil and Thord went away to their own people. The Myramen ran to their weapons, and so did either party. Oleif Halt, with his following, ran to help the Borgarmen, who were thus far the larger number, and they parted without doing more. But hence arose a quarrel between Oleif and Hegg. They fought at Laxfit, by Grims-river; there seven men fell, but Hegg was wounded to death, and his brother Kvig fell. But when Egil came home, Skallagrim said little about it; but Bera said Egil had in him the makings of a freebooter, and that 'twould be well, so soon as he were old enough, to give him a long-ship. Then Egil made a stave:

'Thus counselled my mother,
For me should they purchase
A galley and good oars
To go forth a-roving.
So may I high-standing,
A noble barque steering,
Hold course for the haven,
Hew down many foemen.'

When Egil was twelve years old, he was grown so big that there were but few men howso large and strong that he could not overcome in games. In his twelfth winter he was often at games. Thord Grani's son was then twenty years old; he was very strong. As the winter wore on, it often chanced that the two, Egil and Thord, were matched against Skallagrim. And once in the winter it so befell that there was ball-play at Borg, southwards in Sandvik. Thord and Egil were set against Skallagrim in the game; and he became weary before them, so that they had the best of it. But in the evening after sunset it began to go worse with Egil and his partner. Skallagrim then became so strong and he caught up Thord and dashed him down so violently that he was all bruised and at once got his bane. Then he seized Egil. Now there was a handmaid of Skallagrim's named Thorgerdr Brak, who had nursed Egil when a child; she was a big woman, strong as a man, and of magic cunning. Said Brak:

'Dost thou turn thy shape-strength, Skallagrim, against thy son?'

Whereat Skallagrim let Egil loose, but clutched at her. She broke away and took to her heels with Skallagrim after her. So went they to the utmost point of Digra-ness. Then she leapt out from the rock into the water. Skallagrim hurled after her a great stone, which struck her between the shoulders, and neither ever came up again. The water there is now called Brakar-sound. But afterwards, in the evening, when they came home to Borg, Egil was very angry. Skallagrim and everybody else were set at table, but Egil had not yet come to his place. He went into the fire-hall, and up to the man who there had the overseeing of work and the management of moneys for Skallagrim, and was most dear to him. Egil dealt him his deathblow, then went to his seat. Skallagrim spoke not a word about it then, and thenceforward the matter was kept quiet. But father and son exchanged no word good or bad, and so that winter passed.

The next summer after this Thorolf came out, as was told above. And when he had been in Iceland one winter, in the spring following he made ready his ship in Brakar-sound. But when he was quite ready, then one day Egil went to his father, and asked him to give him an outfit.

'I wish,' said he, 'to go out with Thorolf.'

Skallagrim asked if he had spoken at all on that matter with Thorolf. Egil said he had not. Skallagrim bade him do that first. But when Egil started the question with Thorolf, he said:

"Tis not likely that I shall take you abroad with me; if your father thinks he cannot manage you here in his house, I have no confidence for this, to take you with me to foreign lands; for it will not do to show there such temper as you do here.'

'Maybe,' said Egil, 'neither of us will go.'

In the night came on a furious gale, a south-wester. But when it was dark, and now flood-tide, Egil came where the ship lay. He went out on to the ship, and outside the tenting; he cut asunder the cables that were on the seaward side; then, hurrying back to land by the bridge, he at once shot out the bridge, and cut the cables that were upon land. Then the ship was driven out into the firth. But when Thorolf's men were aware that the ship was adrift, they jumped into the boat; but the wind was far too strong for them to get anything done. The ship drifted over to Duck-kyle, and on the islands there; but Egil went home to Borg.

And when people got to know of the trick that Egil had played, the more part

blamed it. Egil said he should before long do Thorolf more harm and mischief if he would not take him away. But then others mediated between them, and the end was that Thorolf took Egil, and he went out with him that summer.

When Thorolf came on shipboard, at once taking the axe which Skallagrim had given into his hands, he cast it overboard into the deep so that it nevermore came up. Thorolf went his way in the summer, and his voyage sped well, and they came out to Hordaland. He at once stood northwards to Sogn. There it had happened in the winter that Brynjolf had fallen sick and died, and his sons had shared the heritage. Thord had Aurland, the estate on which his father had dwelt. He had become a liege-man of the king, and was made a baron. Thord's daughter was named Rannveig, the mother of Thord and Helgi, this Thord being father of Ingiridr whom king Olaf had to wife. Helgi was father of Brynjolf, father of Serk, Sogn, and Svein.

From <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/egil/egil41.htm> Accessed 3/11/2010
Emphasis mine to pick out parts regarding games

Saga of the Greenlanders – Excerpt from Chapter 6

At this time Gudrid, Karlsefne's wife, brought forth a male child, and the boy was called Snorre. At the beginning of the next winter the Skralings came to meet with them, and were many more than before, and had the same wares as before. Then said Karlsefne to the women: now you shall carry out such meat, as was before most asked for, and nothing else. And when they saw it, they cast their packs in over the fence. But Gudrid sat within the door with the cradle of her son Snorre. Then fell a shadow through the door, and entered there a woman in a black narrow kirtle, rather low-built, and she had a ribbon round her head, and light brown hair, pale and large-eyed, so that nobody had seen so large eyes in any human skull. She went up there, where Gudrid sat and asked: what is thy name, says she. My name is Gudrid, but what is thy name. My name is Gudrid, says she. Then Gudrid the housewife stretched out her hand to her, that she should sit by her, but it happened in the same moment, that Gudrid heard a great crack, and was then the woman lost to sight, and at the same time one Skraling was killed by a house carle of Karlsefne's, because he would have taken their weapons. And went they now away as usual, and their clothes lay there behind, and their wares; no man had seen this woman, but Gudrid alone.

The Story of Burnt Njal
(Njal's Saga)

Part 1: Sections 1 - 20

Online Medieval and Classical Library Release #11

<http://omacl.org/Njal/>

Originally written in Icelandic, sometime in the 13th Century A.D. Author unknown.

Translation by Sir George W. DaSent (London, 1861). This edition is in the PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Excerpt from Section 8

After that men ride home from the Thing, and those brothers Hauskuld and Hrut ride west to Reykriverdale, and turned in as guests at Lund, where Thiostolf, Bjorn Gullbera's son, then dwelt. There had been much rain that day, and men got wet, so long-fires were made down the length of the hall. Thiostolf, the master of the house, sat between Hauskuld and Hrut, and two boys, of whom Thiostolf had the rearing, were playing on the floor, and a girl was playing with them. They were great chatterboxes, for they were too young to know better. So one of them said, "Now I will be Mord, and summon thee to lose thy wife because thou hast not been a good husband to her."

Then the other answered, "I will be Hrut, and I call on thee to give up all claim to thy goods, if thou darest not to fight with me."

This they said several times, and all the household burst out laughing. Then Hauskuld got wroth, and struck the boy who called himself Mord with a switch, and the blow fell on his face, and grazed the skin.

"Get out with thee," said Hauskuld to the boy, "and make no game of us;" but Hrut said, "Come hitherto me," and the boy did so. Then Hrut drew a ring from his finger and gave it to him, and said, "Go away, and try no man's temper henceforth."

Then the boy went away saying, "Thy manliness I will bear in mind all my life."

From this matter Hrut got great praise, and after that they went home; and that was the end of Mord's and Hrut's quarrel,

M.P. Richards, B.T. Fuller and T.I. Molleson. Stable isotope palaeodietary study of humans and fauna from the multi-period (Iron Age, Viking and Late Medieval) site of Newark Bay, Orkney. *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 33(1):122-131, January 2006.

We report here on stable carbon and nitrogen isotope measurements of human and faunal bone collagen from the Iron Age, Viking Age, and Late Medieval site of Newark Bay, Orkney, Scotland. We found a wide range of results for humans in both $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (-15.4‰ to -20.3‰) and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ (8.6‰ – 15.6‰) values. The enriched carbon and nitrogen values indicate the consumption of significant amounts of marine protein, which is very unusual for post-Mesolithic (e.g. 4000 cal BC) UK and European populations. Also of interest is a statistically significant difference in $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ($t = -2.48$, $p = 0.011$) and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ ($t = -2.44$, $p = 0.011$) values, and therefore diets, between adult males and females at this site, with males ($\delta^{13}\text{C} = -17.8 \pm 1.2\text{‰}$, $\delta^{15}\text{N} = 13.2 \pm 1.6\text{‰}$) having, on average, a higher proportion of marine protein than females ($\delta^{13}\text{C} = -18.9 \pm 1.1\text{‰}$, $\delta^{15}\text{N} = 11.8 \pm 1.8\text{‰}$). The weaning age of the sub-adults was difficult to interpret due to the large isotopic variation in the adult females, but nearly all individuals between birth and 1.25 years have elevated $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ values indicating that they were breastfed to some extent.

Sources for and Images of the garments from Greenland

<http://www.forest.gen.nz/Medieval/articles/garments/H44/H44.html>

<http://personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/cloth/herjol86.html>

<http://personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/cloth/herjol62.html>

Notes on how to make a Herjofsnes gown:

<http://www.mathildegirlgenius.com/Documentation/G61Directions.pdf>

Patterns for the Herjofsnes gown:

<http://www.mathildegirlgenius.com/Documentation/G61Draft.pdf>

There is a book due to be released any day now that covers how to make many of these garments. Again, while it is past the strict period of interest, it may be worth a look. Lilli Fransen, Anna Norgard, Else Ostergard, Shelly Nordstrop-Madson. Medieval Garments Reconstructed: Norse Clothing Patterns, Aarhus University Press (March 1, 2010) **ISBN-13:** 978-8779342989

Excerpts from: A J Dunwell*, T G Cowiet, M F Bruceft, T Neighbour* & A R Rees*

with contributions by B Finlayson, N Kerr, N Murray & R J Strachan

Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis, PSAS 125, pages 719-752, 1995

(bolded highlights mine – jsh)

http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_125/125_719_752.pdf

Multiple burials, including a child and two infants ~900AD Scotland

“The only artefacts likely to have been deliberately deposited with the burial are an amber bead and stone pendant found at the time of the original discovery (illus 5, nos 1 & 2).

1 Annular bead; amber; one surface is convex, while the other is flat; in good condition apart from a slight chip out of the flat surface; diameter 18.5-19 mm; thickness 7 mm; diameter of perforation 5 mm.

2 Pendant; light grey and pink fine-grained sandstone; surfaces matt, and slightly pitted in places; length 41 mm; width 10 mm; thickness 10.5 mm; diameter of perforation 2.5 mm opening to 4-5.5 mm. While superficially resembling a whetstone, the pendant shows no obvious sign of such use.”

Child B

“The remains of Burial B are those of a child of about six years of age, the gender of which could not be determined owing to the immaturity of the skeleton. A fairly reliable estimate of the age-at-death could be made because of the very good preservation of teeth *in situ* in the mandible in particular. Less reliable but confirmatory evidence of age was gained from the lengths of the femur and tibia and the general state of development of the skeleton. The concordance between dental and skeletal age points to normal growth patterns. The degree of attrition of the deciduous teeth and absence of caries suggests the diet was of an abrasive nature, with few carbohydrates. The 'good-quality' bone and well-formed tooth enamel suggest that the youngster was well nourished, enjoyed a relatively healthy childhood and did not suffer from any severe infections or debilitating illnesses. The human remains shed no light on the cause of death.”

Infant F

“A perforated amber bead located beneath the jaw represented the only *in situ* artefact discovered during the excavation of this burial. Two further beads and a decorated bone pin had been collected during the initial site inspection; their original positions are not known, although it seems likely that the beads were components of a necklace.”

“**Bone dress pin,** with a slightly curved profile and a flared head; length 113 mm, cross-section at head 5.5 mm, diameter of shaft 5 mm maximum; immediately below the head the shaft is cut into five facets for a length of 8 mm; rows of three drilled holes aligned parallel to the axis of the pin are present on four facets, with four holes on the other; the bases of the facets are defined by a continuous incised line, which is incorporated in four incised downward-pointing triangles which encircle the shaft. The pin was retrieved from the eroding face of the sand terrace prior to excavation.”

“**Disc-shaped bead**; amber, deep orange in colour; in generally good condition although many minute cracks; the drilled perforation has a slight spiralling ridge on the inside face; diameter 16 mm, thickness 3 mm, perforation diameter 3 mm. From beneath the jaw.”

“Amber beads are not uncommon finds in Viking Age funerary contexts (eg Kildonan, Eigg; Lamaness, Sanday; a further, unlocated, grave on Sanday: Greig 1940, 67, 87-8; Cruach Mhor, Islay: Gordon 1990). Of interest is the association of two different types of bead apparently with Burial F. The context of recovery of the larger bead from beneath the jaw indicates that it formed part of a necklace, from which the other beads may also have derived. On the evidence of the collected sample, any further amber beads displaced prior to excavation are likely to have disintegrated and evaded detection. The presence of corroded iron on one of the beads suggests that an undetected iron object (presumably displaced and degraded) formed part of the original assemblage of grave goods.”

Infant G

No grave goods

“Square iron rivet-head with shaft base; one corner of the rivet-head broken off; dimensions 17 mm by 16 mm, shaft diameter 8.5 mm; fragment of textile adhering to one end of the rivet-head, mostly on one side; at least two, and possibly four, layers of textile. The fibre could not be identified, but the thread was Z-spun, the weave tabby, and there are approximately 21 threads per cm. **The presence of fragments of textile adhering to the rivet-head in Burial G appears to strengthen the argument that the corpses were interred in some form of clothing, possibly a shawl or even swaddling.** However, it is not clear whether the introduction of this artefact to the grave was deliberate, possibly as an attachment to a wooden object, or accidental.

“The remains of Burial F comprised an infant of several (probably 6-9) months. Burial G was of an infant who had died at or around birth, or in the first few weeks thereafter. In neither case was there any evidence of congenital or developmental anomaly or any pathological features of processes to indicate the cause of death.”