

### **Wealth in the Isle of Man in the Early Tenth Century**

In recent years metal-detecting activity in the Isle of Man has added greatly to our knowledge of the wealth of its earliest Viking settlers, the nature of their economy and their increasing prosperity during the first half of the tenth century, comparable in its way to the expanding database for north-west England. These recent discoveries significantly augment the extant archaeological evidence from Man for the existence of disposable wealth during this period, as already evident in the funerary practices of the settlers and their immediate descendants, in the form of the well-furnished pagan weapon burials and the first Christian memorial stones with Norse runic inscriptions (i.e. those with Borre-style decoration).

The new Manx finds include material consistent with the existence of an otherwise unknown 'Irish Sea' beach-market in the south of the Island, requiring evaluation in the context of Meols, in Cheshire, alongside the lesser (and thus more comparable) sites likewise discussed by David Griffiths. Among these finds, which include standard copper-alloy pins and strap-ends, is a variety of hack-silver; such is also now known from elsewhere in the Island and, taken together, it includes fragments of Kufic coins, broad band arm-rings and an Irish bossed penannular brooch, with parallels among the contents of such early tenth-century hoards from north-west England as Cuerdale and Silverdale. Such finds (even if still few in number) indicate the participation of the Manx Vikings in the early tenth-century bullion economy around the Irish Sea, such as has not previously been demonstrated given the later tenth-century dates of the earliest hoards so far known from the Island.

New finds of Scandinavian artefacts include the first pair of oval brooches from the Island, associated with an 'Irish Sea' buckle. There is, however, little to sustain the hypothesis recently advanced by Dirk Steinhilber for the Viking settlement of Man having taken place before the end of the ninth century – or about AD 900 – as previously argued by David Wilson (and myself).

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