

## **Wealth in Viking-Age Man after c.950: a ‘triskele’ of new hoards with Manx connections from around the Irish Sea**

With its commanding position in the middle of the Irish Sea, the Isle of Man has long maintained a certain independence, despite the ebb and flow of political and cultural influences from Britain and Ireland. Though written sources are lacking from the early Middle Ages, an array of physical and material evidence (such as keeills and promontory forts, carved stones and inscriptions, and burials—and, not least, the hoards and coin finds, metalwork and assorted bullion) points to it being at the heart of a busy crossroads, a unique position which greatly enriched the Island’s inhabitants. The economic wealth of Man in the later Viking Age is relatively well mapped out thanks to Michael Dolley’s numismatic detective work in the 1970s and James Graham-Campbell’s seminal survey in the *Ninth Viking Congress* (1983). My research, which began in the late 1990s under the aegis of Mark Blackburn, built on this, and will culminate in the long-awaited Manx Museum, Douglas volume in the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* series in Summer 2022. While mysteries remain, we have a much firmer grasp of the chronological parameters, the distribution of finds and, above all, the distinctive nature of exchange in this island hub.

Man’s Viking-Age economy was characterized by a range of coexisting currencies and ‘denominations’, comprising bullion in a variety of shapes and forms (silver, but also gold, copper-alloy and perhaps even lead) and foreign coin, which could circulate as bullion or by tale, in addition to locally produced coinage in the eleventh century. While neighbouring kingdoms controlled circulation by limiting it to a single, current coin, the very opposite was true in Man. New discoveries over the last two decades have added precious detail while reinforcing the imperative to view the Manx coin finds as counterparts to bullion in a complex dual economy.

Building on James Graham-Campbell’s update on the wealth and economic contacts in the earliest decades of the Scandinavian presence in Man, this paper turns to the heyday of economic activity, from the mid-tenth century onwards. Drawing on the Manx framework, it considers three recently discovered, as yet unpublished, coin hoards from outside Man: Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria (c.955); Llandwrog, Gwynedd, Wales (c.1025); and Carnacavill, Co. Down, Northern Ireland (c.1045/50). All in coastal locations around the Irish Sea, these finds, to varying degrees, reflect ties with the Island. To what extent are Manx parallels present, and is this significant for interpreting trade, monetary developments, and/or the movement of people, goods and ideas around the Irish Sea? What can we learn about Man — and the surrounding region — by stepping outside the Island and looking in?

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### **Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria (c.955) [2011]**

79 coins (A/S, Anglo-Viking and Arabic) + hack-silver, ingot & arm-ring.

### **Llandwrog, Gwynedd, Wales (c.1025) [2015]**

17 coins (Hiberno-Scandinavian, A/S) + four ingots.

### **Carnacavill, Co. Down, Northern Ireland (c.1045/50) [2015/18]**

17 Hiberno-Manx + metal objects.