

## *Bryant's Gill: a Viking age shieling-farmstead and its contexts in the English Lake District*



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*Above: Spindlewhorls from Bryant's Gill*

### **Abstract**

Shielings - the earthen, turf and stone footings of many montane structures - can articulate and further our understandings of early medieval Scandinavian montane colonising and diaspora communities. In the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland the structures represented by these footings referenced key elements of those societies' farms and their associated montane landscapes. Their builders and users utilised farm outfields and more, as well as occupying significant landscape and liminal locations. These not only allowed a focus on a wide range of task, craft, domestic stock and wild game and fodder produce collection, production and consumption activities, but possibly allowed for exploration and expression of different gender identities, alongside demarcating specific territories (Borchegrevink 1977, Øye 2009, Kupiec and Milek 2015, Svensson 2015). As Daniël Postma recently pointed out, there were, (in 2019) no demonstrable archaeological examples of early medieval shielings in Britain (Postma, in Strachan *et.al.* 2019, 144-5, *contra*: Beresford 1979, 1988, (see Gent 2007), Herring 2012, Banham and Faith 2014, 149-150). It is thus conceivable that the concept, and effective practices, (Bourdieu 1992), of shieling building, occupation and use were as much an export of the Scandinavians as were their longships and 'North Atlantic' longhouses.