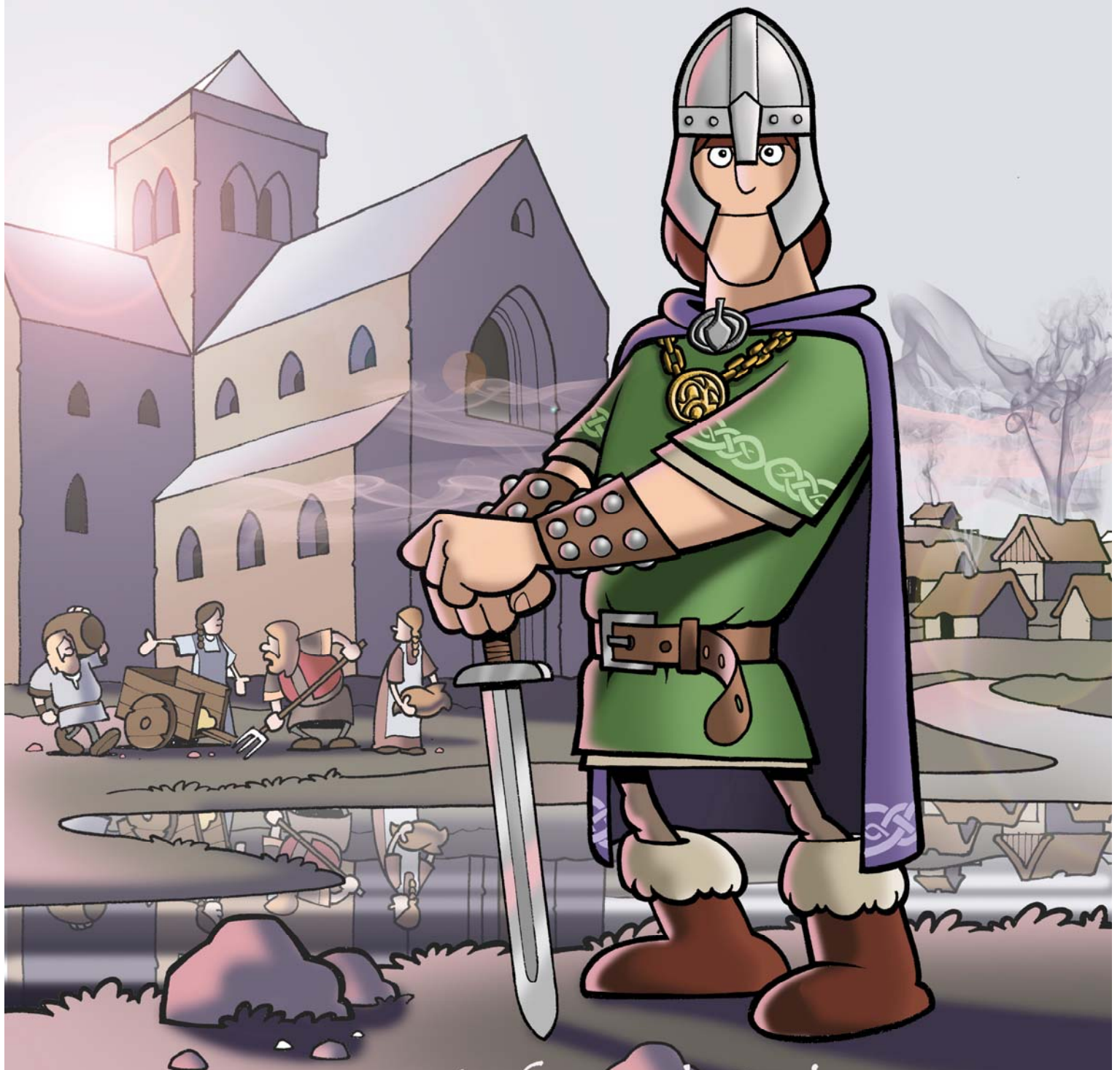


# Rognvald

Poet Warrior Saint



a pack for schools

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**ROGNVALD** 850



## Welcome to the Rognvald 850 Schools' Pack!

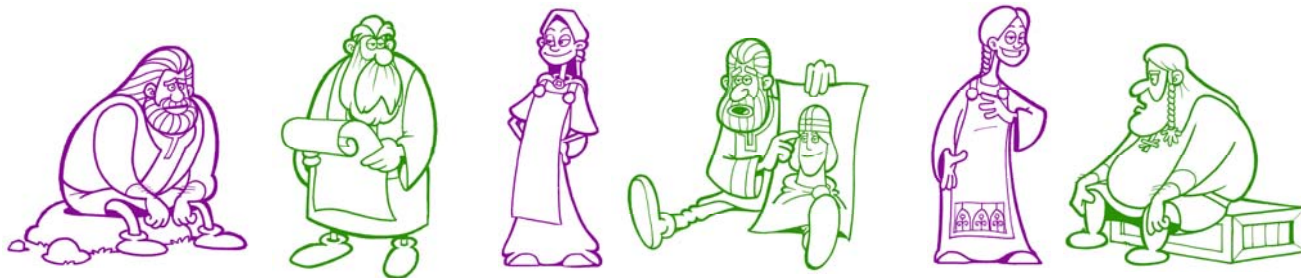
This schools' pack has been put together as 2008 marked the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St Rognvald, the Viking Earl Rognvald (Kali) Kolsson. We hope that pupils will enjoy learning with the schools' pack which tells the story of St Rognvald, his crusade, St Magnus Cathedral which he had built in honour of his uncle St Magnus, life in Viking times and Orkney language.

The activities contained in the schools' pack touch on many elements contained in A Curriculum for Excellence guidelines. All activities contained in the book are a guide but can easily be expanded on if desired. There is a useful resource section at the back of the pack to help enhance the learning experience.

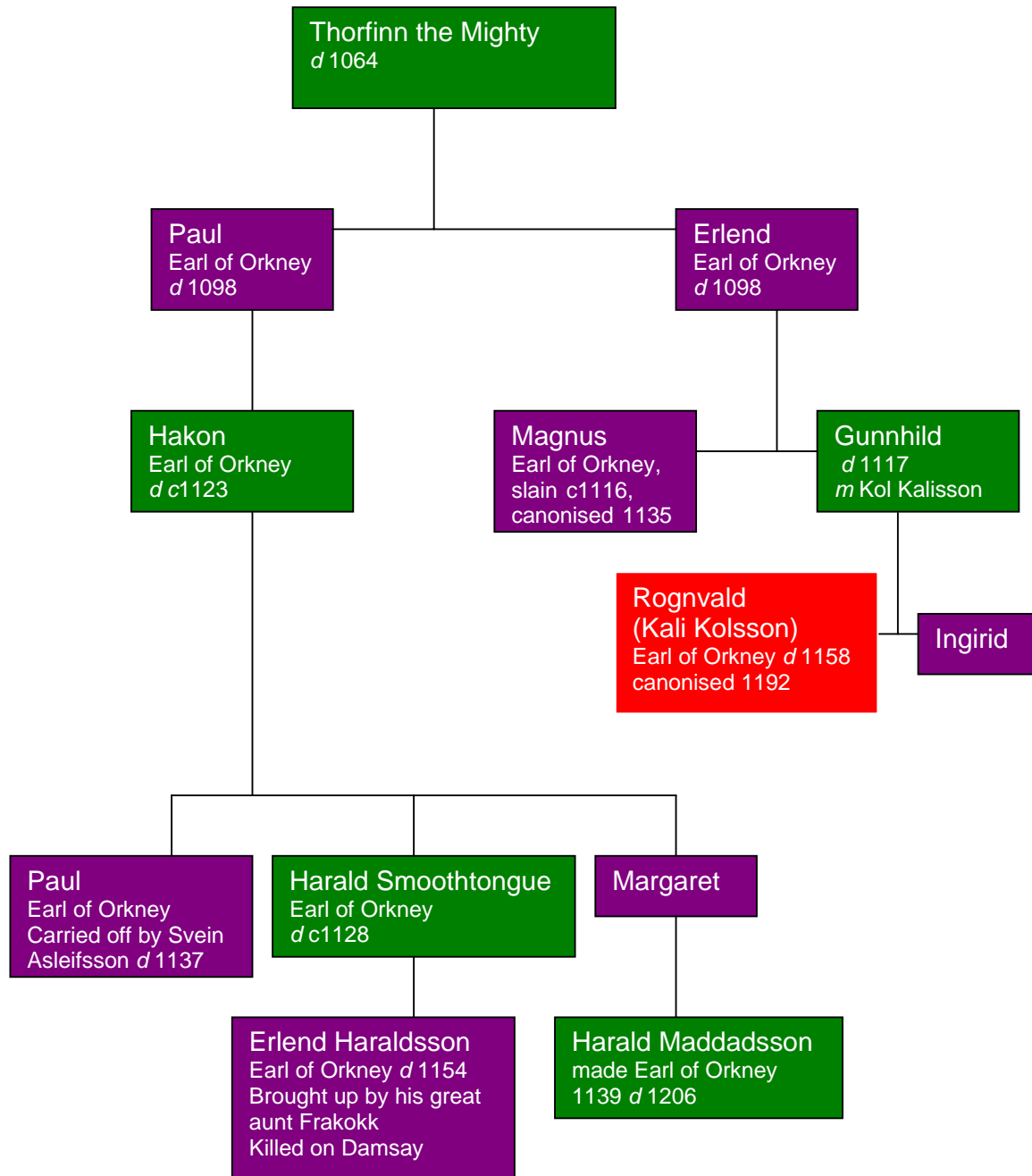
Please enjoy!

"The Rognvald schools' pack is a fantastic opportunity for every primary pupil in Orkney to learn about St Rognvald and the important part he played in the history of the County".

Celia MacInnes, Cultural Co-ordinator



# Rognvald: Family Tree

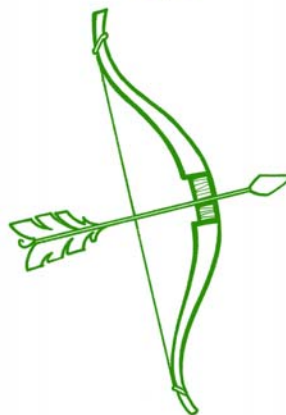
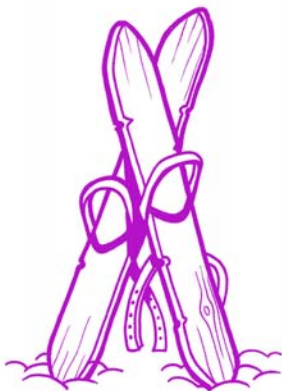
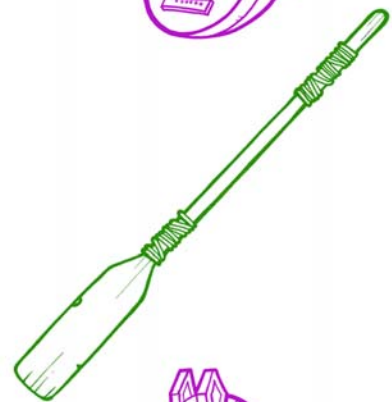


Simplified family tree showing key people in the story of Rognvald (Kali Kolsson).

## Rognvald: Earl of Orkney

**Rognvald Kali** Kolsson was the son of Kol Kalisson and Gunnhild, daughter of Earl Erlend and sister of St Magnus. It was through his mother, Gunnhild that Rognvald had a claim on the Orkney earldom. Rognvald grew up in Norway where he was known as Kali Kolsson. He also had a sister, Ingirid.

**Kali was** a fine poet and in his poem on page nine he claims to possess the nine skills of a gentleman; having mastered board games, runes, reading and writing, handicrafts such as metal work, carving and carpentry, skiing, archery, rowing, music and poetry. The sagas support this view of Kali as able and skilled.



“Kali Kolsson was of average height, well proportioned and strong limbed, and had light chestnut hair. He was very popular and a man of more than average ability.”

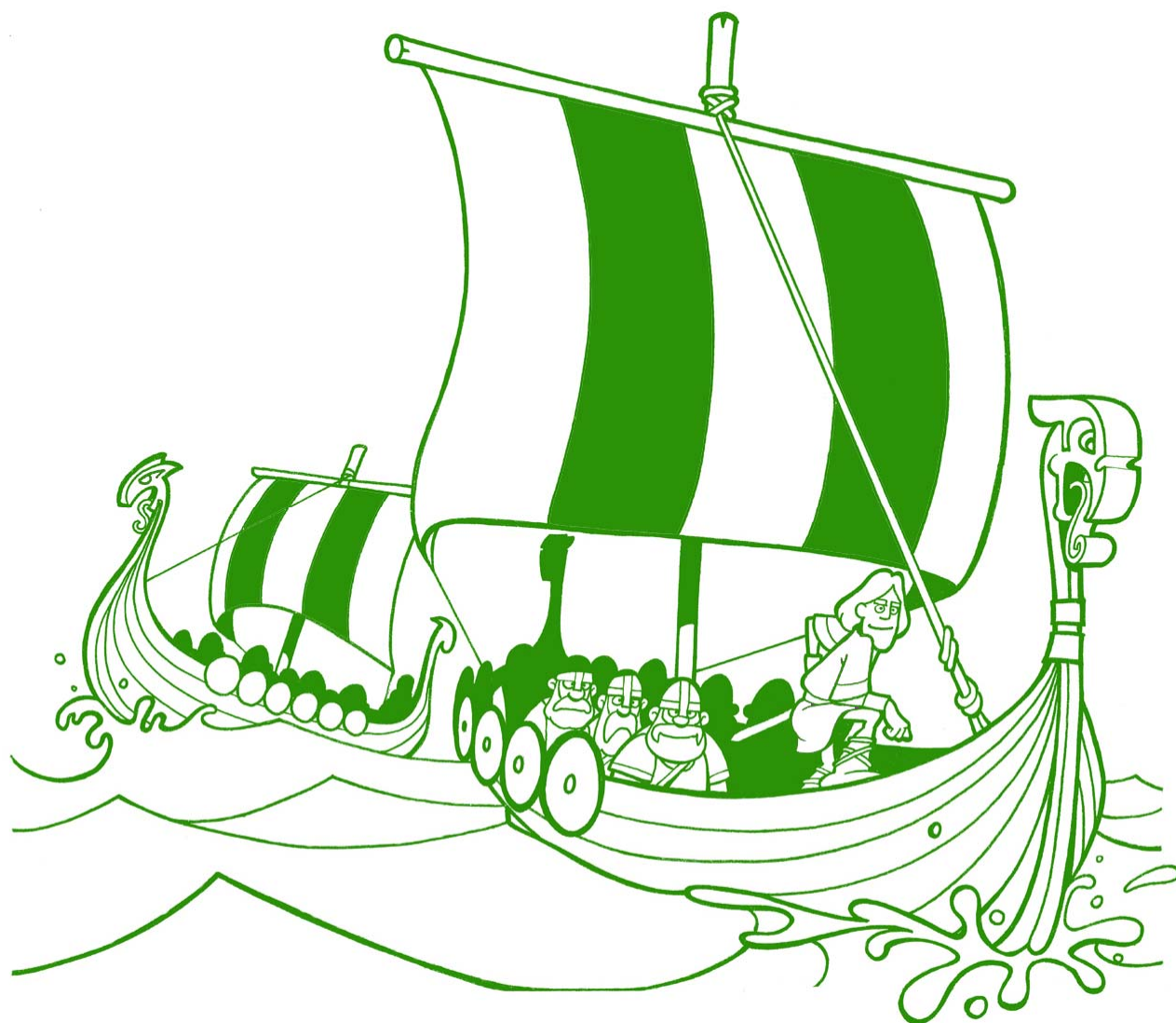
Orkneyinga Saga

**When he** became Earl, Kali was given the name Rognvald, after Earl Rognvald Brusason; the most able of all the Earls of Orkney. It was thought this name would bring Rognvald luck. However, his efforts to claim his share of Orkney did not go smoothly. Earl Paul who was Earl of Orkney at the time refused to share power with Rognvald and it was to be some years before Rognvald held power in Orkney.

**The summer** after Earl Paul's refusal to grant Rognvald his share of Orkney, Rognvald set out from Norway with five or six ships and a select band of warriors. They planned to meet an army sent from the south by their allies, Frakokk and her grandson Olvir Brawl, and together they would fight Earl Paul in Orkney, but storms forced Rognvald to shelter in Shetland. Earl Paul met Olvir Brawl's ships off Tankerness and they fought a fierce battle. Paul won this battle and then set off for Shetland to find Rognvald. Here he captured Rognvald's ships while he and his crew were ashore. Rognvald return to Norway on a cargo ship, where his expedition was not taken seriously.

**After this** Earl Paul had beacons built on Fair Isle and on the highest point of many of the islands of Orkney. These were to be lit to give him warning should Rognvald return to Orkney. Meantime in Norway, Rognvald and his father Kol mustered support for their invasion of Orkney, building up a fleet of ships and gathering an army. Rognvald needed support from within Orkney too if his plan was to succeed and this he did not have. Kol advised that he would get support if he made a vow to the one who had a rightful claim on Orkney, his late uncle St Magnus. So Rognvald vowed that if he succeeded in securing power in Orkney

he would build a magnificent minster in Kirkwall and dedicate it to Magnus. Rognvald's ships then sailed for Shetland where they were made welcome.



**Rognvald still** had to find a way of getting past Earl Paul's warning beacons if he was to have any chance of success. Kol had a plan and set out towards Orkney with a number of small ships. When they were in sight of Fair Isle he ordered the sails to be hoisted and to row backwards so that the ships moved very little. The sails were first hoisted to half-mast and then higher to make the ships look like they were moving. Soon the beacon on Fair Isle was lit, followed by the beacons on North Ronaldsay and the other islands. Earl Paul prepared for an invasion, but Kol returned to Shetland. When Rognvald did not come Earl Paul's supporters were not pleased and began to fight among themselves.

**Kol also** enlisted the help of a man called Uni who went to Fair Isle with three young companions. Uni became trusted by the islanders and soon took over looking after the beacon. Rognvald's ships sailed for Orkney and were sighted in Fair Isle, but when the islanders went to light the beacon they found the kindling too wet to light and Uni gone. Rognvald was able to sail unhindered to Westray where the people swore allegiance to him.

**With the** help of Bishop William a two-week truce was declared between Rognvald and Paul. Earl Paul went to Rousay where Svein Asleifsson of Gairsay kidnapped him. He was never to return to Orkney and when his followers discovered this they submitted to Earl Rognvald. And so in the year 1136 Earl Rognvald truly became earl of Orkney.

**As he** had vowed Earl Rognvald built a cathedral dedicated to St Magnus in Kirkwall. He made a great pilgrimage to the Holy Land and wrote many fine poems about his adventures.

**Before Rognvald** set out on this crusade he entrusted the earldom to Earl Harald, a young kinsman. Harald soon faced a challenge from Svein Asleifsson and Erlend Haraldsson and was forced to hand over his share of Orkney to Erlend. By the time Rognvald returned war was raging in Orkney and it was only after Earl Erlend was killed on Damsay that Rognvald and Harald regained control of Orkney.

**Rognvald's rule** came to an end in 1158 when he was murdered on a hunting expedition to Caithness. His body was taken home to Orkney and buried in the cathedral he had built for his uncle, Magnus. Miracles happened at Rognvald's tomb and he was declared a saint in 1192.

## Activities 1

Rognvald was a fine poet, skilled in skaldic verse. The Orkneyinga Saga contains many of his poems, which help give an insight into his life. The poem below is one of Rognvald's and shows that he had mastered the skills of a gentleman, an important achievement for a man of his standing in Norse society.

### Earl Rognvald lists the 'attributes of a gentleman'

Chess I'm eager to play,  
I know nine skills,  
I scarcely forget runes,  
Book and handicrafts are frequent,  
I know how to ski,  
I shoot and row serviceable,  
I know how to consider,  
Both harp-playing and poetry.

Read this to the class and discuss what skills might be important today. Why might our skills be different from Rognvald's skills? Can any of the class do any of the things Rognvald lists in his poem?

- Working as a class or in groups, make a list of the children's skills. Discuss the results as a class and then make a list of the nine most important skills in today's society.
- Get the children to write an 8 line verse describing their individual skills.

## Rognvald: His Crusade

**In the** spring of 1148 Earl Rognvald was invited to visit King Ingi in Norway where he met Eindridi the Younger. Eindridi had just returned from Constantinople and was full of tales of his crusade to the Holy Land. Rognvald spent a long time talking to him. Men who made such a journey were greatly respected and so Rognvald was persuaded that he should make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Many well connected men wanted to join him, including Eindridi who agreed to act as guide and Bishop William who joined the trip as interpreter.

**The preparations** for a major voyage such as this took a long time as ships had to be built and supplies gathered. So it was not until the summer of 1151 that Rognvald left Orkney with a fleet of 15 ships, bound for Jerusalem.

**They sailed** down the east coast of Scotland and England. Their journey was uneventful until they reached Narbonne in France, where they stopped for a time. Here the King had recently died and his beautiful daughter Ermingerd was now queen. Ermingerd entertained Rognvald lavishly and he wrote many fine poems for her. The townspeople wanted Rognvald to stay in Narbonne and marry Ermingerd, but he wanted to complete his journey.



**The crusaders** sailed on, stopping at Galicia in Spain for supplies and to spend Christmas. They found little food in the town as it had been raided by a band of warriors who had taken over the nearby castle. Earl Rognvald agreed to capture the castle in return for supplies, and a plan was made to set fires round the weak walls of the castle, but Bishop William made them wait until after Christmas.

**Once the** festival was over Rognvald's men piled wood round the walls of the castle and set it alight. When the walls began to crack the Vikings launched a fierce attack and soon had control of the castle, but there was no sign of Godfrey the warrior chief, and very little treasure. Eindridi was suspected of having helped Godfrey escape with most of the treasure. After this Rognvald's fleet sailed on through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea. Soon Eindridi's ship left the fleet, and with six others, sailed off to France. This was considered proof that Eindridi had betrayed Rognvald at the castle in Galicia.

**Sailing through** the Mediterranean the Norse men sighted a large merchant ship or dromond and decided to try their luck in capturing it. This was not easy as their ships were much smaller, but together they came alongside and surrounded the dromond. However the dromond towered above them and their swords would not reach the deck. Bishop William pulled away with his ship and another and began to shoot arrows at the dromond. This diversion allowed Earl Rognvald and his men to hack through the side with their axes. Soon they were able to get on board where they attacked and killed the Saracen crew. They took the leader captive and looted the ship before setting it on fire. As the hull burnt, streams of molten gold and silver poured into the sea and much treasure was lost. The captive was put ashore in his homeland of Africa but soon returned with an army for revenge. However, because Rognvald had spared his life, he decided to spare Rognvald's as long as he agreed to retreat.

Earl Rognvald wrote many poems on his crusade and the Saga account is based on these.

**Earl Rognvald** sailed on to Crete and then to Acre in the Holy Land. The Earl and his men travelled to Jerusalem, swam in the River Jordan and visited many sacred sites.



**The fleet** travelled on to Constantinople, where they arrived in great style. They were warmly welcomed by the Emperor and well entertained. They found Eindridi here too and he tried to make trouble for the Earl and his men. Eventually Rognvald set off for home, sailing to Bulgaria and on the Puglia in Italy where they got horses and rode to Rome. From Rome they followed the pilgrims route to Denmark where they got passage to Norway. They arrived home to a hero's welcome.

"This journey became very famous and everyone who made it was considered all the greater."

*Orkneyinga Saga*

## Activities 2



Rognvald's route from Orkney to the Holy Land and home.

Read the story of Rognvald's crusade and study the map to see how far he travelled. At this time, Rognvald's journey covered most of the known world so it was a bit like going on a world cruise today.

**What is a crusade?** During the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries many European Christians were involved in military expeditions to the Holy Land to regain areas captured by Muslim forces. Contemporary journeys to the Holy Land, such as Rognvald made, were also called crusades. These often involved raiding and fighting along the way.

Think about what it would have been like to make a long sea journey in a Viking galley. To help understand what was involved, do some research on Viking ships. What were they made of? How were they powered? How did Vikings navigate? What supplies would they have needed to take with them on long journeys?

- Write a report of one of the adventures on the journey for the Orkney newspapers. By sharing out the incidents in the story the class could make a newspaper account of the whole crusade.
- In groups prepare an interview with Earl Rognvald and some of his men for Radio Orkney's morning programme. You have just 5 minutes to tell the story of the Crusade. You could record this to play back to the class or do a live broadcast to the class.
- Turn the story of the crusade into a comic strip. The characters in this book will give you an idea of what they might look like. Work in small groups to prepare a comic strip of the individual incidents. These can then be joined together to make a cartoon of all the events on the trip.

## Rognvald: St Magnus Cathedral

**Earl Rognvald** did not forget his promise to built a “magnificent minster” in Kirkwall, dedicated to his uncle St Magnus. The Earl’s father, Kol, was put in charge of this huge project and Earl Rognvald himself is believed to have laid the foundation stone on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1137, Santa Lucia’s Day.

You will find the St Magnus Cathedral guidebook at the back of this pack. It contains a very good plan of the building and many excellent photographs.

**The Cathedral** was built of red and yellow sandstone. The red sandstone was quarried at the Head of Holland north of Kirkwall while the yellow stone came from the island of Eday. The stone had to be transported from the quarries by boat. At this time boats could get very close to the Cathedral site as the water of the Peedie Sea came right up to present day Broad Street. Evidence of this was uncovered in the 1970s when excavations under Tankerness House uncovered a jetty and fragments of red sandstone.

**This was** a prestigious and complex building and highly skilled tradesmen including quarrymen, masons, carpenters and blacksmiths were needed to work on it, along with many labourers. Master masons, who had worked on the building of Durham Cathedral, came to help with the building. This large workforce not only required working space, but living accommodation for themselves and their families. As a result Kirkwall, which was a fairly small settlement round the Papdale burn, expanded round the site of the Cathedral.

A stone mason still works in St Magnus Cathedral. Today his job is to carry out routine repairs and maintenance of the building’s stonework. He also winds the clock everyday.

**The building** progressed well with the choir completed within five years, but it was expensive work and Rognvald began to run out of funds. To raise more money local farmers agreed to make a one off payment, based on the size of their farm and in return they were granted the freehold rights to their land.



**Building work** continued and by 1152, when Rognvald set off to the Holy Land, the nave, crossing and transepts had been added to the choir. A temporary west front was erected and an apse built on the east end, for the shrine of St Magnus. Once this work was done St Magnus's relics, his bones in a special box called a reliquary, were moved to the building and placed in his shrine and the building was consecrated.

**St Magnus** Cathedral then became a place of worship and pilgrimage as pilgrims came from near and far to visit the shrine of St Magnus. They visited to pray for forgiveness of their sins or to be cured of illness. The pilgrims left offerings and this provided the cathedral with an income.

**At this** time the inside of the Cathedral would have looked quite different from how it does today. The ceilings, walls and pillars were plastered and painted with colourful floral patterns. Fragments of this decoration can still be seen on the ceiling in the north aisle of the nave.

**When Earl** Rognvald was killed in Caithness his body was taken home to Orkney and laid to rest in the Cathedral. However, this was not the end of the story as the cathedral continued to grow and change over the centuries, as did the town of Kirkwall.

**In the** early part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the choir was extended and the large window on the east end was added. The nave was also extended westwards and although they were never built, foundations have been found for twin towers on the west front of the building. The Cathedral as we know it was completed in the early part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The remains of St Magnus and St Rognvald still lie in the Cathedral today.

**Since then** it has survived the 1560 Reformation of the Church of Scotland, when the shrines and treasures were removed and the painted decoration covered with whitewash. In the early 1650s Cromwell's troops were billeted in the Cathedral and even stabled their horses here. In 1671 the spire was struck by lightning and destroyed.

Masons marks; each mason had his own mark, which he put on the stone he had worked. You can still see some of these in the Cathedral.

Look out for



**During the 20<sup>th</sup>** century major restoration and repairs were carried out and these have ensured the future of the building. In 1965 St Rognvald Chapel was formed in the east end of the choir, to the designs of local artist, Stanley Cursiter. To mark the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cathedral, in 1987, a new west window was commissioned. Public toilets were installed in 2005, almost 870 years after the Cathedral was built.

St Magnus Cathedral is the only cathedral in Britain with a dungeon. Known as Marwick's Hole, it was in use into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Activities 3

Think about what was involved in the construction of such a large building both today and 850 years ago.



### Some things to think about

- Have any of the children seen builders at work?
- What kind of materials do builders use today? Is this the same as the cathedral builders used?
- What kind of tools would you need to build a house today? Would the cathedral builders have had the same tools?
- What skills do builders need? Would the cathedral builders have needed different skills?

Divide the class into two groups.

Group 1 - Create a mime of working on a modern building site.

Group 2 - Create a mime of working on the building of the Cathedral.

Once the groups are happy with their mime, they should perform them to each other and see if they can identify the different tradesmen or spot differences between the two periods.

### Quick activities

- St Magnus Cathedral is built from two colours of sandstone, red and yellow. Using the guidebook for ideas, draw pillars or arches and colour them using just two colours to make patterns.
- Use building blocks to build towers and pillars. Remember to make your building strong. Try using just two colours of blocks and see what patterns you can make.

## Viking Orkney: Everyday life



**We imagine** Vikings as pirates and warlords, but the archaeological evidence shows them as farmers and traders. They lived in longhouses with one large room, which served as their kitchen, living and sleeping space. In the centre of the room would have been a fire for cooking and warmth. Nearby would have been a byre, barn and perhaps a blacksmith's workshop to make and mend tools and weapons.

**Orkney's Norse** farmers kept sheep and cattle and may also have had pigs, goats, ponies and hens. These animals provided meat and milk as well as hide, horn and wool. The ponies were small and may have been used to plough or to carry goods and were sometimes used for meat. Crops such as bere and oats were grown and ground for meal to make porridge and oatbread. Flax was introduced and this gave linseed oil and cake as well as fibre for linen cloth, which was highly valued. Fish such as cod, saithe and ling, added variety to the diet.

**There was** little difference between the everyday lives of wealthy and poor Vikings in Orkney. Most people were self-sufficient and grew their own food, made their own clothes, built their own homes and made most of the everyday things they needed. Little was wasted and the natural environment provided additional resources such as stone and turf for building, herbs for cooking and medicinal purposes, plants for dyeing cloth as well as peat, seaweed, fungi, drift wood and much more.

**At this** time there were no real roads so travel overland was difficult. The sea was the main roadway and every house would have had a boat for travel and fishing. Basic seamanship was an everyday skill and people would have regularly travelled round the islands. Many people would have gone further to Shetland, Caithness or Norway and a few, like Rognvald went on long journeys visiting most of the known world.

**Viking Children** didn't go to school, but from an early age learned everyday skills by helping their parents. They were taught history, law and religion through stories. At around 15 or 16, they were considered adults.

**Norse dress** was designed to be comfortable and practical. Both men and women liked bright colours and wore jewellery such as rings, brooches, decorative pins, and necklaces.

**Men wore** trousers, held up with a sash or drawstring, along with a straight tunic worn with a belt. In cold weather a heavy cloak was added and this was fastened with a large brooch. Shoes or ankle boots were made of leather. All free men had the right to carry weapons and even at home Viking men might carry a dagger, spear or sword with them.

**Women wore** long linen dresses, either plain or pleated. On top of the dress went a long woollen tunic, a bit like an apron. This was held in place with a pair of brooches, which were sometimes joined together with a chain or beads. A shawl or cloak fastened with a pin or brooch might be added. Women wore shoes with the fur in the inside for extra warmth. They also wore knee length wool leggings. Married women wore a tight fitting scarf over their hair and would have keys on a chain hung from a belt or brooch. These keys showed that the women had control of the household.

**Viking men** worked as farmers, craftsmen or traders and might have been all three. They would have built their own houses and boats and made their own tools and weapons. Sometimes they had to fight to protect their families or to support their earl or chief.

**Viking women** were in charge of the household and dairy and also helped on the farm. They made all the family's clothes including spinning the fibre, weaving the cloth and sewing the garments. They also looked after the children and the elderly.

**Life in** Viking times wasn't all work as many gaming pieces have been found on Norse sites. Dice and board games, such as Hnefatafl and Nine Men's Morris, were common and chess began to be played in the later Norse period. Archaeological evidence has also been found of children's toys, including wooden swords and a wooden horse as well as felt animals.

**Making riddles**, or riddling, was a popular game and many Vikings were skilled wordsmiths. Oral storytelling was also a very important tradition not only as a means of passing on history or law, but as a form of entertainment, as was composing and reciting poems.

## Activities 4

Once the class have looked at the 'Everyday Life' section, discuss how Viking life differs from how we live today.

Divide the class into three groups and give each group a person; man, woman or child. Their task is to make two lists, 'Viking' and 'Today' showing the key things in their person's life for each period. This could then be worked up into a large poster for the classroom wall with pictures of the activities.

## Viking Orkney: Language



Very little is known about the language used in Orkney before the arrival of the Norse in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, but from then on the picture is clear. By 800 the Norse were well established in Orkney and the islands remained under Norse control until 1468. During this time Norse was the language spoken in both Orkney and Shetland. Over time this developed its own form and became known as Norn. In

Orkney, Norn was spoken until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and remnants still survive in our dialect today and well over 90% of place names have Norse derivations.

Viking: 1) comes from Old Norse and means 'a pirate raider';  
 2) vik is the Norse word for bay or creek so Vikings means 'men of the creeks or bays'.

Orcadian, the dialect of Orkney, still has many words which have their roots in Norse. Many dialect words with Norse origins are associated with the traditional, rural way of life. Words connected with the weather, farming and wildlife are common as are words for everyday objects or events. Here are some examples.

Dialect word	Meaning
peedie	small, probably the most commonly used dialect word
blether	talk nonsense

kloor	scratch, particularly from a cat
swadge	sit and rest after a meal to let your food settle
puggie	child's word for stomach
hix, hickes	1) hiccup 2) weep loudly 3) laugh uncontrollably
trowie	1) sickly or ailing 2) of poor quality
breeksed	stiff from exertion
gaggle	1) make a mess 2) work clumsily or carelessly

It is not just the words that are influenced by our Norse heritage, but our pronunciation too is often more Norse than English.

When the Vikings settled here they also gave Norse names to the islands and landscape features and to their farmsteads. This naming was very straight forward, reflecting what they saw or what was there. The names of many of the Orkney isles are a good example of this; Hoy is high island; Flotta is flat island; Westray is west island; Sanday is sandy island; Rousay is Rolf's island.

The majority of Orkney place names are Norse. Here are a few examples.

Placename element	Meaning	Placename examples
ayre	gravel beach	Ayre Mills
bigging	building	Netherbigging, Biggings
buster, bister, bist	house	Kirbuster, Rennibister
ey, ay, a	island	Shapinsay, Burray, Cava
garth	enclosure	Garth, Colligarth
howe, hox	mound	Howe, Dingieshowe
kir, kirk,	church	Kirkwall, Kirbust
myre	wet meadow	Rossmire, Myres
ness	point, nose	Lyness, Westness
quoy	cattle pen	Quoyloo, Pickaquoy
seatter, setter, ster	out pasture	Grimsetter, Seatter
skail	hall, house	Skail, Langskail
ton, town	enclosure	Outertown, Herston
voe, wall	bay	Hamnavoe, Pierowall
ward, wart	beacon	Ward Hill
wick	bay	Marwick, Burwick

Even today some people give their houses Norse sounding names such as Rulinvoe and Norhaven.

Over time some Orkney place names began to be used as surnames. Marwick, Garson, Rousay, Isbister, Rendall and Linklater are just a few examples. In Earl Rognvald's time there were no surnames as we have today. Your last name was taken from your father's first name. Rognvald father was Kol so he was known as Rognvald Kolsson and his sister as Ingrid Kolsdottir. Many Orcadians also have Norse first names such as Rognvald, Magnus, Erlend, Sigurd, Swein, Thorfinn, Inga, Thora and Ingrid.

## Activities 5

### Dialect

- Do you use any dialect words? Get the class to make a list. If there are any Orcadian members of staff ask them for examples of words they use. The children could also ask older Orcadian family members or friends for suggestions. Use the Orkney Dictionary to check the meaning of your words.

### Island names

- Do you know what the name of your island or parish means? Is it Norse?
- Make a list of the islands in Orkney and see if you can find out what the names mean.

### Place names

- Look at a map of your own community and see how many Norse place names you can spot.
- Earl Paul had beacons built throughout Orkney and we can still find beacon sites today by their Ward or Fitty names. Look at a map of Orkney and see how many you can find.

### Personal Names

- Children in Earl Rognvald's time would have taken their last name from their father's first name, suffixed by either son or dottir. Get the class to work out their name using this system.

## Resources

Included in this pack is a detailed guidebook on St Magnus Cathedral and a set of the characters in this pack which can be copied and coloured in.

## Teaching Aids

Two Viking Loans boxes are available in the Teachers' Resource Centre in Kirkwall Library containing various real and replica items from Viking times. A full size replica shield and sword accompany the boxes.

## Useful books

Orkneyinga Saga; Penguin Classic

The Shorter Orkneyinga Saga; Tom Muir

The Sea Road; A Viking Voyage through Scotland; Olwyn Owen

The Orkney Dictionary; Margaret Flaws and Gregor Lamb

Scotland's Vikings; Frances and Gordon Jarvie

Viking Scotland; Anna Ritchie

## Useful websites

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/vikings](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/vikings)

[www.orkneyjar.com](http://www.orkneyjar.com)



