

Viking Voyages

Archaeologists¹ in northwestern England are thrilled about a rare find. The scientists unearthed a burial site of six Viking men and women. They discovered swords, spears, jewelry, and other artifacts.

The site was **excavated**, or dug up, after a metal detector user discovered two copper **brooches**² in the ground. The worker informed archaeologists, who believe the site dates back to the 10th century. It is one of only a few Viking cemeteries found in England.



DCMS/Portable Antiquities Scheme

This copper brooch belonged to one of the Vikings.

Smash and Grab

The Vikings were pirates and warriors, known for their seafaring voyages. From the late 700s to 1100, the Vikings lived in Scandinavia. That region of Europe includes the present-day countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

Viking sailors spread fear throughout Europe. They **raided**³ and conquered coastal villages in Europe and along the Mediterranean coast. During their raids, Vikings captured slaves. They also **pillaged**, or stole, treasures, such as silver and gold.

For their voyages, Viking sailors **crafted**⁴ swift, narrow **longships**⁵ that could navigate the stormiest seas. The Vikings were the master shipbuilders of their time. Vikings also worked as farmers and craftspeople. Others hunted and fished.

¹ **archaeologist**: a scientist who studies past human life as shown by fossil relics and the monuments and tools left by ancient peoples

² **brooch**: an ornamental pin or clasp worn on clothing

³ **raid**: a sudden attack

⁴ **crafted**: made by hand

⁵ **longship**: a very fast, long ship with both sails and oars used by the Vikings

Edge of the Unknown

The Vikings' claim to fame may have been their fearsome raids, but they were explorers and traders too. They were among the earliest explorers to travel across the Atlantic Ocean to North America.



Leigh Haeger

The Vikings traveled to other parts of Europe, the Mediterranean, Greenland, and North America.

One of the most famous Vikings was explorer Leif Eriksson. He reached North America almost 500 years before Columbus arrived in 1492.

Time Capsule to the Past

Over time the Viking raiders lost their power, as people learned to defend against their attacks. Today, the remains of Viking villages can be found throughout Europe and North America.

Archaeologists have been studying the burial ground in England to learn more about the life of the Vikings. Based on the objects found, they believe the site was once a Viking settlement.

Vikings were known to bury valuable items with the dead. As one historian put it, the site will allow experts to "uncover the secrets of a time capsule more than 1,000 years old."

Viking Longships: Ready to Raid

- Longships varied in size, but many were between 60 feet and 90 feet in length.
- A larger ship could carry about 50 raiders at a time.
- Strong winds allowed a longship, which had one large sail, to reach speeds of up to 17 miles an hour.
- Vikings used multiple oars to row the ship when there was no wind.
- The front end of a longship curved upward and was adorned with a wood carving of a snake's or a dragon's head.