Y Llychlynwyr

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The Ports, Past and Present Project

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It was during the ninth and tenth centuries that the Vikings (the seafarers from Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) crossed the Irish Sea from Ireland to Anglesey.

They have a reputation for being blood-thirsty warriors – but although their contact was hostile and brutal at times, they also settled as peaceful farmers, growing crops and keeping livestock.

Evidence from archaeological excavations at Llanbedrgoch has demonstrated that it was an important manufacture and trade centre during the tenth century. There have been more recent discoveries of seventh-century silver and bronze sword and scabbard fittings.

In older times, the English name 'Anglesey' (Ynys Môn) was derived from 'Ongullsey' or 'Onglisey', a Scandinavian name (possibly referring to a Viking chieftain) and 'ey' island; although the 'ongl' element may also simply describe the shape of this part of the coast.

The name Anglesey is thought to be derived from the Norse Ongullsey, or Onglisey, a Scandinavian name (possibly referring to a Viking chieftain) and ‘ey’ island; although the ‘ongl’ element may also simply describe the shape of this part of the coast.

The Skerries is another Scandinavian name. These coastal features might have been named as navigational aids in areas of particular treacherous seas.


A similar process can be seen in later years, with many places along the Anglesey coastline being renamed. A good example is Porth Swtan (Whiting Bay) which is today Church Bay. It was renamed by sailors who used the church spire as a navigational aid. It seems to have stuck!

Walking the coastal path recently I noticed that the Welsh names for the bays along the coastline have been reintroduced on way-markers above the coves. The reason for this is to give precise locations during emergencies.
Fel rhywun sy’n cerdded yr arfordir hwn, rwy’n ffeindio bod yr enwau Cymraeg yn fy nghysylltu’n dda gyda natur y tir ei hun, am eu bod nhw'n ddisgrifiadol.

As a walker, I found that these Welsh names connected me with the physicality of the coast line as many of them are descriptive of the land itself.

Our knowledge of the seafaring technology of the Vikings comes largely from the buried or sunken boats that have been found. Longboats were used in funeral ceremonies, as important Vikings were buried with their possessions. Since the boats were made of timber, often only the impression of the craft survives. There are however many examples of preserved Viking ships (Gokstad, Oseburg, Tune) discovered in tombs around the Oslo Fjord. They can be seen in the Bygdoy Museum in Oslo, Norway.

Ever since I visited this museum, I have been in awe of these longboats and feel I must include some of my own interpretations in the Flotilla.

As someone who is also drawn to the fantasy aspects of Norse Mythology, the construction and the material is, of course from the world of my imagination.
Before leaving the Vikings, I decided to look at a darker aspect of their world: slavery. It is known from historical accounts that, like many other societies from antiquity to modern times, they did capture and take a number of men, women and children when they raided the coastal towns. Some of these were integrated into their lives in Scandinavia while others were sold as slaves or servants (thraell in Old Norse).

Fe fydd hyn yn gysylltiad da a’r llongau nesa yn y Fflotila.
This will be a good connection to the next ships in the Flotilla

Useful links

- [When the Vikings invaded North Wales](#)
- [Vikings on Anglesey (National Museum Wales)](#)
- [The story of Europe from AD 300–1100 (British Museum)](#)
- [Viking Ship Museum (Oslo)](#)

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