

Accessories

Besides the basic articles of clothing, common items like belts and knives, that were carried and used every day in the Viking age will also be needed when wearing a reconstruction of the fashions. This section gives descriptions of the most necessary items and their common forms. The list of suppliers should help source uncommon items and materials, though most things can still be made yourself, and other members are available to share experience and help.

Shoes

The type of shoes popularly worn in the Viking age are known as turn shoes, due to the method of construction. The shoe was cut from tanned cow or goat hide and sewn together inside out, then turned so all the seams are protected on the inside. The soles were of thicker leather and often had a triangular extension on the back of the heel to prevent wear on the seam. There is no evidence for any sort of sole reinforcement such as separate heels or hobnails. The most common styles were ankle high, and could be closed with a toggle, a leather thong or a drawstring round the top. The leather could be dyed strong colours such as black or red and decorated with stitching as well as contrasting borders, or a strip of leather in the seams called a rand.

For comfort and warmth shoes may be stuffed with rags, fleece or hay, which has the advantage of generating heat when wet. Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert* mentions preserving shoes with pig fat which would provide some measure of waterproofing.

Making your own shoes requires the right tools and techniques but is reasonably straight forward with a good pattern and some basic sewing ability. Help from other members is always available as early medieval shoes need frequent repair and replacing.



A style of shoe with a leather toggle popular at Jorvik

Inside the shoes could be worn footed trousers, foot wrappings or socks that could be cut from fabric or knitted using a single needle technique called naalbinding.



A sock from Coppergate knitted by naalbinding

Belts

Viking age tunics were worn belted around the waist, for men not to have done so would probably have been considered a state of undress or regarded as effeminate. Belts in the Viking age were narrow, typically being no wider than one inch and made of leather, or woven or braided textile. Fittings include buckles, strap keepers, strap dividers, plaques and end tips; these could be made from iron, bone, bronze or other copper alloy. Belts of the poorer classes could be made of materials such as hide, bast fibre or rope and would have usually lacked decorative fittings. Another belt of a basic form without fittings would be worn underneath to hold the trousers up. As pockets did not yet exist, many everyday items such as knives, whetstones, fire strikers, money pouches and combs were carried suspended from the belt. Simple buckles of iron or copper alloy can be easily made, and more elaborate cast replicas can be purchased from various re-enactment suppliers.



A bronze belt buckle in the Carlisle Cathedral treasury

Judging from the archaeological record and pictorial sources, women wearing Viking fashions did not usually wear belts, or at least not ones with metal fittings. However there are a few exceptions with decorative fittings found in female graves such as one from Lewis, Scotland. It is possible sashes or textile belts without fittings were worn, a fragment of dress from Hedeby (fragment 14A) has a worn patch that could be evidence of a belt.

Knives

Generally speaking, everyone in the Viking age would have carried a knife with them as an indispensable everyday tool. More than 200 were found at York, these were single edged and varied in size from 81mm to 230mm total length. Viking age knives usually had a v-shaped cross section with a comparatively thick spine, and the blades are often found worn down from use and resharpening. Handles were made of antler, bone, or woods such as birch, with a tapered tang hidden inside and cleated or riveted on the end. The knives did not have fittings such as cross guards or pommels, but small ferrules, wrapped wire decoration, and carving are well represented.

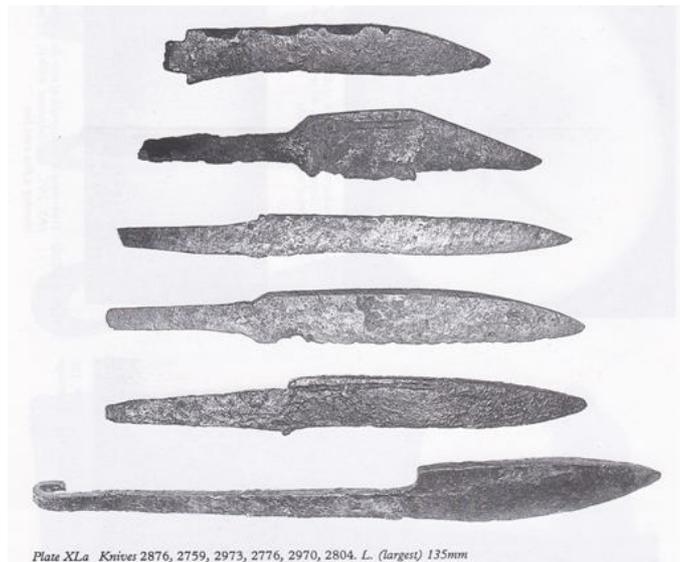


Plate XLa Knives 2876, 2759, 2973, 2776, 2970, 2804. L. (largest) 135mm

Different styles of knives from York

Sheaths were made of calf leather, folded into shape and moulded to fit the blade. They were then sewn or rivetted along the cutting edge of the blade, covering most of the handle for a secure fit. Some of the sheaths from York were intricately decorated with tooled or stamped patterns, and sheaths from other sites also have decorative bronze or occasionally silver chapes and suspension mounts. Men's sheaths would have been suspended from the belt via a strap and women wore them suspended from the brooches.



Tooled leather sheaths from York

Jewellery

Silver was much prized by the Vikings. Thousands of pounds of it left England as tribute to the Vikings, and the Viking kings of Jorvik minted their own silver pennies. The standard unit of value was a mark, which was roughly eight ounces of silver and valued in the Grey Goose as equal to four milk cows. Jewellery reflected its owner's status and was also made of copper alloy, bone, tinned iron, pewter, and gilt or solid gold. Depending on the material jewellery was often carved or embossed with simple stamped decoration, ring and dots, triangles and lines, or decorated in one of the intricate Viking art styles.

Scandinavian style ringed pins were used to fasten cloaks and often made from copper alloy. They are common all over the Viking world, and are one of the few items of jewellery commonly found in male burials. More than 130 long bone pins have been found at York, as well as disk brooches and other clothing ornaments. Other common items of jewellery were finger rings and large rings for the arm or neck, domed brooches known as tortoise shell brooches, and trilobed trefoil brooches made from Carolingian scabbard fittings. Silver jewellery was still used as currency and is found in hoards cut up to the required weight for the transaction and is known as hack silver.

Jewellery found in male graves is usually limited to hooked clothing tags, cloak pins and occasionally pendants. Pendants such as Thor's hammers or crosses and other tokens, made of bone amber or metal could be worn by both sexes. The Arab traveller Ibn Fadlan mentions the Vikings love of glass beads and these were produced at York, but large necklaces of beads were probably only worn by women.



Viking style women's Jewellery from Birka

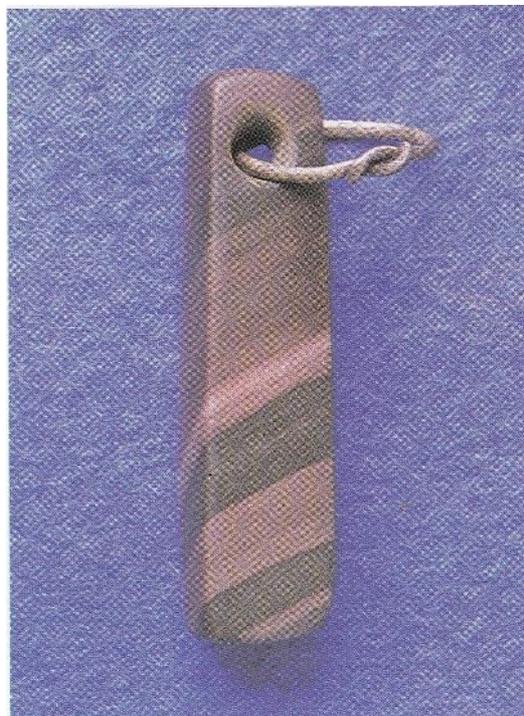
Everyday accessories

Though they did not wear belts like men, women usually carried more accessories that were suspended from chains hung from brooches. Along with knives they carried sewing paraphernalia like scissors and needle cases, and Viking women were entrusted with the keys to the household chests. In contrast with the Vikings reputation as unkempt barbarians toiletry kits of tweezers, ear spoons and combs were popular and period sources regularly comment on the Vikings cleanliness and attention to dress.



Copper alloy tweezers with a glass bead

Other everyday items carried were firestrickers, which were used with flint to light fires, small leather coin pouches and whetstones for sharpening knives or tools.



Whetstone of banded slate probably imported from Norway and found in York

Eating ware

Many examples of wooden eating ware were found at York, such as bowls and cups turned on lathes as well as evidence for their manufacture. The bowls varied in size from small for personal meals to large trenchers for food preparation and serving. Some show evidence of repair such as metal staples where they cracked or split.



Wooden eating ware from York

Mostly food would have been eaten with Spoons that could be made of wood, horn or metal. Forks used for eating were not known until the late medieval ages.

Ceramic cups were also found, as were drinking vessels made from glass or cow horn that could not stand on their base and would have to be emptied before being put down. These were probably used in ritualised drinking ceremonies and highly decorated examples are known with gold or silver rims and panels.



Glass cone beaker from Birka

Suppliers

Europa doesn't endorse any suppliers as such, but this is a list of those who understand the aims of re-enactors and produce items to a quality we require, or sell hard to find materials. If buying from any of those listed below or other suppliers, feel free to ask older members for advice as there is a lot of fantasy based stuff sold as historical replicas or made from substandard materials.

Re-enactment Gear

Mercia Sveiter

www.re-enactment.com

This is a re-enactment supplier from England, I am only listing the cast bronze section of the business as he also supplies mass produced gear not suitable for us. The prices are as cheap as you'll find for this sort of stuff and most of it is quite good. Any of the stuff listed as coming from York is particularly suitable for us.

Possum Forge

richardcoumbe@skymesh.com.au

Richard is a professional blacksmith and member of NEMAS in Armidale, he makes mainly kitchenware but orders can be commissioned for most things you need.

Awl Leather

<http://www.awlleather.com.au/>

A modern leather supplier in Bellingen that has a range of Viking style shoes. They are not strictly accurately constructed but for the price they make period style shoes easily attainable. The Coppergate and Viking shoes are the most appropriate ones.

Daegrad Tools

<http://daegrad.co.uk/>

An English supplier that focuses on the small articles, tools and equipment based on archaeological finds. Has a large range of stock including hard to find everyday equipment.

Turbow Archery

0413 747 311

<http://www.freewebs.com/whitecompany/turbow/turbows.html>

Cliff Turpin makes and supplies medieval style longbows and arrows for a lot of Australian re-enactors.

Raw Materials

Trend Timbers

15 Railway Rd North Mulgrave NSW, 2756

02 45775277

www.trendtimbers.com.au

A supplier of hardwoods and imported timbers near Windsor. The only other supplier of European timbers near Sydney is Matthews Timber in St Marys.

A&E Metals

68 Smith Street Marrickville NSW, 2204

02 85684200

<http://www.aemetal.com.au/>

Supplies stock and sheet metals such as silver and brass.

NSW Leather

707 Elizabeth Street Waterloo NSW, 2017

02 93192900

Wholesale supplier for leather hides of all types.

Birdsalls Leather

36 Chegwyn St, Botany NSW, 2019

02 93166299

www.birdsall-leather.com.au

Supplies leather working tools and accessories, also sells hides but they are expensive.

Ricky Richards

12 Park Rd Homebush NSW 2140

02 97353333

www.rickyrichards.com.au

This canvas supplier is where the club gets its canvas for tents. We use 10300 loomstate tent canvas.

Natur Tuche

<http://www.naturtuche.de/>

A German site that sells fabrics and hard to find wools that are very suitable for our period of re-enactment.