

Murder Mystery Tour at the Viking Open-Air Museum

"Blood Mead in Skjoldheimr – A Murder Before Lindisfarne"

Historical Setting: Spring 793 AD

The Viking Age is on the brink of eruption. Just weeks remain before the infamous raid on the rich, undefended monastery of Lindisfarne — an event that will echo across the Christian world and mark the beginning of a brutal new era.

In the year 793, a significant event in European history took place: the Viking raid on the monastery of Lindisfarne, located on the northeast coast of England.

On June 8, 793, the monastery of Lindisfarne, an important center of Christianity in northern England, was attacked by Vikings. The attackers likely came from Scandinavia (probably Norway) in their longships.

- They plundered the monastery.
- Monks were killed or enslaved.
- Church treasures and relics were stolen.
- The event shocked all of Europe — it was one of the first recorded Viking raids on a Christian site.

Why is this so important?

- The raid on Lindisfarne is considered the beginning of the Viking Age in Europe.
- It showed that even holy places were not safe.
- The brutality of the attack was a shock to the Christian world.
- Contemporary chroniclers saw it as a sign of divine wrath.

A famous entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle describes it like this:

"In this year, terrible portents appeared over Northumbria, and shortly after, heathen men came with cruel raiding and slaughter to Lindisfarne."

But before swords are drawn and sails raised, a murder in the heart of a Viking village in Norway threatens to unravel everything.

Welcome to Skjoldheimr

Nestled between rugged cliffs and the windswept coastline of what is now western Norway, **Skjoldheimr** — *"Home of Shields"* — is a fortified Viking settlement built for both survival and glory — a settlement of warriors, smiths, healers, and sailors. The air smells of sea salt, woodsmoke, hot iron, and spiced mead. Fires flicker in the longhouses, and ravens cry above. Its location is strategic: perched on a natural harbor, protected by dense forests and icy fjords, it is both a place of preparation and a launchpad for conquest.

Skjoldheimr is not the largest Viking village, but it is one of the most feared. Known across the North Sea for producing iron-strong warriors and master shipbuilders, it is also a melting pot for tribal alliances, raiding bands, and council gatherings. The village thrives on tradition, strategy, and the ever-burning fire of ambition.

Skjoldheimr is ruled not by a single chieftain, but through shifting alliances and temporary pacts between rival clans. Every decision is weighed with honor, bloodline, and the approval of the gods. Warriors, farmers, artisans, and skalds live side by side, bound by duty and legacy.

Each villager is trained in survival. Children learn to hunt, sail, and fight before they are ten winters old. Women bear swords as often as they bear children. Elders are respected not for their age, but for their deeds.

The air here is thick with smoke, sea salt, and the tension of upcoming war. Songs of old heroes mingle with the clinking of armor and the laughter of mead-hall banter. But beneath the surface, rivalries boil.

Skjoldheimr is a place where loyalty is tested, secrets are whispered in the dark, and where even the gods might turn their gaze away for a moment.

Here, four of the most powerful Viking chieftains have gathered under a pact of fire and mead. Their mission: to finalize a bold plan to raid Lindisfarne and claim glory, gold, and the favor of the gods.

But on the second morning of the gathering, **tragedy strikes**. On the eve of Lindisfarne, **one murder will shake the village to its roots**. **Hroald the Cruel**, feared warrior and brutal tactician, is found **dead — headfirst, drowned in a vat of mead** in the brewery. No signs of a struggle. No blood. Only silence ... and suspicion.

The main Suspects? – The Three Remaining Chieftains

Hroald the Cruel († – the Victim)

- **Origin:** Nordfjordeid
- **Reputation:** Brutal warrior, but also very charismatic and popular among younger fighters.
- **Goal:** Wanted to take command during the raid on Lindisfarne.
- **Relationship with the other chieftains:** Very dominant, often threatened to bypass the others during planning.

Last known statement: *“If I lead the raid on Lindisfarne, the skalds will sing of me for a hundred winters.”*

1. Bjarnulf Ironhand

- **Origin:** Trondheim, Northern Norway
- **Role:** Master blacksmith, war leader, and strict traditionalist
- **Personality:** Cold, calculating, and obsessed with discipline. Believes deeply in honor and order.
- **Relationship to Hroald:** Bitter rivals. Hroald mocked Bjarnulf’s tactical plans, calling him a “theorist” and laughing in front of others. The insult struck deep and public.

MOTIVE: Wounded pride. Revenge for humiliation.

MEANS: Skilled with toxic substances from metalwork. Had direct access to Hroald’s sword for “repairs.”

OPPORTUNITY: Spent the evening in the forge, alone. Witness saw him there—up to a point. After that, no one knows where he went ...

2. Ylva the Red

- **Origin:** Jutland, Denmark
- **Role:** Fierce shieldmaiden, commander of an elite band of warrior women
- **Personality:** Proud, blunt, fiercely loyal. Protects her own with tooth and claw.

- **Relationship to Hroald:** Deep animosity. Hroald believed women had no place in war and often said so. “Women should raise children, not raid monasteries,” he once spat.

MOTIVE: To defend the honor of herself and her warriors.

MEANS: Access to sedative herbs (known as "sleep-berries") from the village kitchen.

OPPORTUNITY: Claims to have spent the entire night in the boathouse. But is that true?

3. Ketill Longship

- **Origin:** Rogaland, Southern Norway
- **Role:** Strategist, merchant, political operator
- **Personality:** Charming and clever, but dangerously deceptive. His tongue is silver—but rarely honest.
- **Relationship to Hroald:** Complicated. The two shared secrets. Ketill was secretly trading with the Christian monks of Lindisfarne—Hroald discovered this betrayal and threatened to expose him.

MOTIVE: To protect his secret trade network—and his power.

MEANS: Had access to the brewery key, and intimate knowledge of the mead storage.

OPPORTUNITY: Drank alone with Hroald in the Chieftain’s Hall the night of the murder.

You Are the Villagers – And the Investigators

The participants of this tour are no mere spectators. You are villagers of Skjoldheimr: shieldmaidens, smiths, shipbuilders, cooks, and healers. You’ve lived here all your lives. You know the sounds of the forge, the secrets whispered in the hall, and the scent of betrayal on the wind.

Now, you must become **the eyes, ears — and justice — of this village**. And don’t think you’re above suspicion — you’re as suspect as the three Chieftains themselves.

Objective of the Tour

As you walk through the village, you’ll visit the key locations tied to the crime. At each stop, you’ll uncover motives, methods, and opportunities tied to the **three remaining chieftains** — each of whom had reason to want Hroald dead. Or did others, too, thirst for Hroald’s blood?

At the end, the villagers will gather in council to debate, accuse, and judge. Who is the murderer? And why?

The Village Locations & Witnesses

1. The Chieftain’s Hall (Høvdninghallen)

The Beginning and the End

In the Chieftain’s Hall, three witnesses saw Hroald for the last time. The three “*professional*” actors in your group are to retell the scene theatrically, using their own words. Do not read it aloud! They may also add details from their own knowledge or imagination, if they wish. The others are the guests of the Murder Mystery Tour and play the role of villagers. They may comment if they like – and they can be questioned as well.

1. First Witness: *Svala the Skald*

- **Purpose of the Chieftain's Hall:** The center of power, where alliances are forged and broken over fire and mead. This grand longhouse is where leaders meet, feast, argue, and plot. Its walls are hung with shields and furs, the hearth never dies, and the high seat is reserved for the most respected chief present. This is where plans are made — like the upcoming raid on the holy isle of Lindisfarne.
- **Scene:** Hroald's final drink was taken here — with Ketill.

"I sang that night as tradition demands. Hroald and Ketill were still at the fire when all others had gone. Hroald swayed in his seat. Ketill stood — his eyes clear. I went to bed. Hroald didn't rise again."

Clue: Ketill was the last to see Hroald alive. Alone. Unwatched.

2. Second Witness: *Eldric the Rune-Warden*

- **Who was Hroald the Cruel († – the Victim)**
 - Origin: Nordfjordeid
 - Reputation: Brutal warrior, but also very charismatic and popular among younger fighters.
 - Goal: Wanted to take command during the raid on Lindisfarne.
 - Relationship with the other chieftains: Very dominant, often threatened to bypass the others during planning.

Last known statement: *"If I lead the raid on Lindisfarne, the skalds will sing of me for a hundred winters."*

3. Third Witness: *Iñigo, Spanish Slave*

- **Secret: Hroald Was Planning a Coup Against All Three Chieftains**

Hroald had secretly approached several warriors and shipwrights, offering gold and plunder in exchange for loyalty — he was planning to name himself **High Jarl** of the entire Norse coast after the Lindisfarne raid.

- **Clue:** A secret scroll with Hroald's seal is found in the Chieftain's Hall, detailing plans to discredit and exile the other three leaders after the raid. Written by a steady hand trained in ink and scripture. It looks as if Hroald wrote it only moments ago.
- **Impact:** Looks like every chieftain's got a motive now — and none of 'em smells clean.

2. 🍺 The Brewery (Bryggerskjemmet)

The Crime Scene

Hroald was found headfirst in a barrel at The Brewery. Two witnesses are under questioning — and what they have to say about **Ketill Longship** could change everything. The two "professional" actors in your group are to retell the scene theatrically, using their own words. Do not read it aloud! They may also add details from their own knowledge or imagination, if they wish. The others are the guests of the Murder Mystery Tour and play the role of villagers. They may comment if they like — and they can be questioned as well.

1. First Witness: *Snorri Kegswinger, apprentice*

- **Purpose of the Brewery:** Sacred site of mead and ale production. The lifeblood of Viking morale. Here, mead and ale are brewed using ancient recipes passed down through

generations. The brewer, usually one of the most respected artisans, guards the barrels as fiercely as any warrior guards gold. The building smells of honey, smoke, and fermented grain. Well-guarded. Only two keys exist.

- **Who is Ketill Longship?**
 - **Origin:** Rogaland, Southern Norway
 - **Role:** Strategist, merchant, political operator
 - **Personality:** Charming and clever, but dangerously deceptive. His tongue is silver — but rarely honest.
 - **Relationship to Hroald:** Complicated. The two shared secrets. Ketill was secretly trading with the Christian monks of Lindisfarne — Hroald discovered this betrayal and threatened to expose him.

2. Second Witness: *Torfi the Brewer*

- *“I lock up each night. Only Ketill and I have keys. This morning, his was hanging from the door latch — like someone wanted me to find it.”*
- **Clue:** The mead Hroald drowned in contained **sleep-berries**. No bruises, no blood — he didn’t fight. He was unconscious or dead already.

3. The Forge (Smia)

The Smith’s Domain

Bjarnulf Ironhand is alleged to have spent the entire night in **The Forge**. Two witnesses claim to support this alibi. The two “professional” actors in your group are to recreate the scene dramatically, using their own words. This is not to be read aloud! They are free to embellish the account with details drawn from their own knowledge or imagination. The remaining participants are guests on the Murder Mystery Tour and take on the role of villagers. They may comment if they wish — and they are open to questioning as well.

1. First Witness: *Einar, apprentice*

- **Purpose of the Forge:** The heart of weapon-making and war-readiness. A place of sweat, flame, and steel. A constant rhythm of hammer on iron echoes from this corner of the village. Weapons, tools, nails, and even ship rivets are born here. The blacksmith is not just a craftsman, but a creator of power. In times of war, this place works through the night.
- **Who is Bjarnulf Ironhand?**
 - **Origin:** Trondheim, Northern Norway
 - **Role:** Master blacksmith, war leader, and strict traditionalist
 - **Personality:** Cold, calculating, and obsessed with discipline. Believes deeply in honor and order.
 - **Relationship to Hroald:** Bitter rivals. Hroald mocked Bjarnulf’s tactical plans, calling him a “theorist” and laughing in front of others. The insult struck deep and public.

2. Second Witness: *Helga Hammerhands, wife of the blacksmith*

- *“Bjarnulf worked late on Hroald’s broken sword. I heard him curse — loudly. When I drifted off, he was still at the anvil. I don’t think he left.”*
- **Secret: Bjarnulf and Svala the Skald – A Forbidden Bond**

Bjarnulf, for all his coldness, is in a secret romantic relationship with Svala, the poetic Skald. He sees her as his only softness in a brutal world.

- **Clue:** A hidden verse from Svala describing “*the iron hand that guards her fire*” is found tucked under a fur cloak.
- **Twist:** Svala saw more that night than she revealed — but might lie to protect Bjarnulf.
- **Clue:** Bjarnulf had time to **tamper with the sword** — but the sword was untouched and left in the hall. He may have been angry, but he wasn’t near the brewery.

4. 🍷 The Kitchen (Kjøkkenet)

Where nourishment meets gossip

Ylva the Red was seen in **The Kitchen** that evening — by two witnesses who swear by it. The two “professional” actors in your group are to recreate the scene dramatically, using their own words. This is not to be read aloud! They are free to embellish the account with details drawn from their own knowledge or imagination. The remaining participants are guests on the Murder Mystery Tour and take on the role of villagers. They may comment if they wish — and they are open to questioning as well.

1. First Witness: *Inga the Cook*

- **Purpose:** The soul of the village. Food, healing, and conversation flow here. The kitchen is more than a place for food—it’s where gossip, stories, and secrets are exchanged. The cook manages supplies, herbs, and healing plants as well as meals. It is said that the cook knows more than the chieftain himself.
- **Ylva the Red**
 - **Origin:** Jutland, Denmark
 - **Role:** Fierce shieldmaiden, commander of an elite band of warrior women
 - **Personality:** Proud, blunt, fiercely loyal. Protects her own with tooth and claw.
 - **Relationship to Hroald:** Deep animosity. Hroald believed women had no place in war and often said so. “*Women should raise children, not raid monasteries,*” he once spat.

2. Second Witness: *Astrid Potstirrer, the Stew Maiden*

“Ylva came asking for sleep-berries. Said one of her warriors had nightmares. I didn’t question it. But now ...”

- **Clue:** The same kind of berries found in Hroald’s mead came from Inga’s stores.
BUT: No direct proof that Ylva the Red used them — only that she had access.
- **Secret: Inga the Cook – Secret Ally of Ketill Longship**
 - Inga the Cook has quietly benefited from Ketill’s secret trade with Lindisfarne — rare herbs, spices, and healing salves arrive via his ships. **Inga had a weakness for anything that drifted up from the South — herbs or trouble.**
 - **Clue:** Exotic herbs (not native to Norway) are found drying in the kitchen, clearly from across the sea. **Amidst the brittle scent of dried herbs, a broken wooden cross lay hidden, its leather cord frayed with age.**
 - **Impact:** Did Inga knowingly help poison Hroald — or was she just a pawn?

5. 🚢 The Boathouse (Båtnaustet)

Of rope, sail, and trust

Ylva the Red was later said to have spent the entire night at The Boathouse. She was reportedly preparing the ships for the raid, together with Leif the Shipwright and Knut the Ropemaker. The two “professional” actors in your group will now recreate the scene — dramatically and in their own words. This is not meant to be read aloud — it's a performance. They are encouraged to embellish the story with colorful details drawn from their own knowledge or imagination. All other participants are villagers on the Murder Mystery Tour. They may comment if they wish — and they are open to questioning as well.

1. First Witness: *Knut the Ropemaker*

- **Purpose:** Repairs, storage, and strategy for sea raids. Essential to Viking life. Situated at the edge of the fjord, the boathouse shelters longships in progress, repair, or rest. The shipbuilders of Skjoldheimr are unmatched. Here, warriors gather at dawn, ready their vessels, and whisper blessings to Njord and Aegir before they sail to raid.

“Ylva was with me. All night. We waxed rope, drank little, and spoke of raids. She never left. I swear it.”

- **Clue:** If true, Ylva has a **solid alibi**. One backed by an honest man.

2. Second Witness: *Leif the Shipwright*

- **Secret: Ketill and Ylva – Former Lovers Turned Rivals**

Ylva and Ketill were once lovers—during their early years as raiders. The affair ended when Ketill turned toward politics and profit, while Ylva remained loyal to the warrior’s path.

- **Tension:** Ylva still resents Ketill for abandoning their pact to rule together by the sword.
- **Clue:** A broken charm with both their rune marks is found in Ketill’s belongings.
- **Impact:** Could Ylva have framed Ketill out of heartbreak or revenge? Could Ketill be protecting Ylva?

Investigative Focus

At each location, ask:

- Who had a **clear motive**?
- Who had the **means** to carry out the murder?
- Who had **access** to the crime scene?
- Who had an **alibi**—and is it reliable?
- Who stood to **lose the most** if Hroald lived?

Final Revelation – In the Chieftain’s Hall

Scene: The Chieftain’s Hall. When all clues are gathered, the villagers return to the hall. The elder (or game master) calls the council. The evidence has been heard, the witnesses interrogated.

Who killed Hroald the Cruel?

- **Ylva the Red?**

MOTIVE: To defend the honor of herself and her warriors.

MEANS: Access to sedative herbs (known as "sleep-berries") from the village kitchen.

OPPORTUNITY: Claims to have spent the entire night in the boathouse.

✚ Though she procured the berries, she has a confirmed alibi. No chance to slip away.

- **Bjarnulf Ironhand?**

MOTIVE: Wounded pride. Revenge for humiliation.

MEANS: Skilled with toxic substances from metalwork. Had direct access to Hroald's sword for "repairs."

OPPORTUNITY: Spent the evening in the forge, alone. Witness saw him there — up to a point. After that, no one knows where he went ...

✚ Angry, yes. But accounted for at the time — and his style would've been direct. A blade, not berries.

- **Ketill Longship?**

Motive: Hroald threatened to expose Ketill's secret trade with Lindisfarne, which would destroy his wealth and position. To protect his secret trade network—and his power.

Means: Had access to the brewery key, and intimate knowledge of the mead storage.

Opportunity: Drank alone with Hroald in the Chieftain's Hall the night of the murder. He was the last one seen with him. Inga the Cook had quietly profited from Ketill's secret trade with Lindisfarne. Now, in return, he held the sleepberries — her end of the bargain.

✚ The Turning Point (Plot Twist)

Just as judgment is about to be passed ... a shout breaks the tense silence. A fisherman has discovered a second body — hidden beneath the planks of a small boat by the fjord. It's Ketill Longship. There are no wounds, no signs of a struggle. But his lips are stained blue. His breath carries the bitter scent of sleep-berries. The very same poison that killed Hroald.

Now, the man suspected of murder has himself been murdered.

The clues no longer point at the three chieftains. Instead, they converge — all of them — toward someone no one suspected. Someone who had access, knowledge, opportunity, and above all, a reason beyond politics or pride.

1. Unnoticed Access to Poison

- The sleep-berries that killed both men came from the kitchen. Officially, only Inga the cook had access. Only a handful of villagers had access. Among them was her quiet helper — the one who crushed herbs for salves and teas. Inga trusted the suspect, charmed by his gentleness and southern manners. Thought harmless. But in truth, the suspect had a far deeper knowledge of herbs than any in the village realized. Not only could he identify sleep-berries — he knew how to prepare, dose, and conceal them in drink without trace.
- In the kitchen, amid the bundles of dried herbs, a broken wooden cross was found lost by the suspect — wrapped in an old leather cord, its edges worn smooth from years of wear. But it did belong to someone who had once worn it every day.

2. Opportunity in Plain Sight

- The suspect served drinks in the Chieftain's Hall at the high table on the night of Hroald's death — pouring the mead himself. Later, when Ketill left the brewery key behind by accident, it was the suspect who noticed it. It would have been easy for the suspect to:
 - Poison Hroald's cup while serving.
 - Use the key to **move Hroald's unconscious body** to the mead barrel after the hall emptied.
 - Lock the door — and leave the key where it would incriminate Ketill.

3. A Forged Document

- The suspect also "discovered" the scroll detailing Hroald's supposed coup. But the scroll was too clean. The ink, too fresh. The seal was poorly faked. More importantly, the ink was traced to southern plants not native to Norway - not used by northern warriors or traders. It was planted — to turn the chiefs against each other.

4. A Pattern Emerges

- Two murders. Same method. Both victims connected to the Lindisfarne raid. One wanted to lead it. The other traded with its monks in secret. One threatened to profit from its destruction. The other stood to lose everything. Both — now dead. Just before he disappeared, Ketill told Inga the cook everything. He had started to suspect someone else, quietly asking questions. He never returned. Ketill's corpse was hidden beneath the boards. Poisoned — just like Hroald.

The Motive

- It wasn't about power.
- It wasn't about rivalry.
- It was about vengeance.

Not for betrayal among chieftains — but for **a massacre long ago**, far to the south. The real killer is no warrior, no leader. He is a man taken from a monastery — once a **herbalist monk**, now a slave. His monastery was **destroyed by Vikings** — men like Hroald. He was enslaved, taken north. And now, the same chiefs plot to raid **Lindisfarne**, another Christian holy place. This time, he would not remain silent. He could not stop the raid with words — so he chose **poison**. One by one, he would eliminate those who planned it.

To him, **stopping the Lindisfarne raid** was not strategy. It was penance. **He did not kill out of hate. He killed out of sacred duty.**

Only one suspect had:

- **The means** — The poison: He knew how to use it, herbal knowledge and access.
- **The opportunity** — He was there, always. He served the mead and found the key. The scroll was forged by a steady hand trained in ink and scripture.
- **The motive** — A vow, forged in fire and memory, to stop the next holy massacre. To stop those who would have brought death upon another monastery — Lindisfarne.

All evidence points — unmistakably — to **Iñigo, the Spanish slave**. The killer was not a Viking. He was a monk. And his weapon was not the axe — but silence, sleep, and calculated revenge.

Final Skaldic Verse – "The Blood Mead's Truth"

In halls of fire where warlords feast,
A shadow served the northmen's mead.
No axe he bore, no oath he swore,
Yet two fell still by silent deed.

From southern sun, through iron chain,
He walked in dust where saints had bled.
With monk's calm hand and healer's lore,
He brewed revenge where prayers once led.

The chiefs had steel, the chiefs had gold,
But none saw death in humble guise.
For not the fiercest helm or blade
Defends against the slave who's wise.

So mark the tale, ye shield and flame:
Not all who serve are born to yield.
And blood once spilled for Lindisfarne
Was answered — in the brewing field.