

Magnus Barelegs, the War Hollow and Downpatrick

Rosemary Power

Of all the Norsemen who raided and plundered or traded and dealt in Ireland, perhaps only one is commonly known by name today. Magnus Barelegs, or Barefoot, the Manus Mór of Gaelic ballads, the idyll of romantic antiquarians and the delight of modern primary-school children, is still spoken of, although it is nearly nine hundred years since he died in a scrimmage with the Ulaid, the inhabitants of those parts of the north-east of Ireland that comprise roughly what we now call Counties Antrim and Down.

According to the greatest of his medieval biographers, the Icelandic poet, historian and politician, Snorri Sturluson, Magnus claimed that "A king is for fame, not for long-life." This is just as well as he was still only twenty-nine when he died. There is no dispute about who killed this king of Norway, nor little doubt about why; but the activities of antiquarians during the past century have ensured not only that he has been treated as a typical viking, which he was not, but that there are two places that claim to have been the scene of his death.

In 1986 I published an article in the *Scottish Historical Review* that examined the sources for Magnus's life and death.¹ Some years later, a local journalist and historian, Ernie Sandford, went looking for further information, having heard the question asked in a quiz near Portrush: "Who was killed in the War Hollow?" The War Hollow is a depression in the sand dunes on the East Strand at Portrush, and now perhaps even better known as the site of part of the golf course. The answer given by the quiz-master was 'Magnus Barefoot.' Given that Magnus was killed by the Ulaid, and, according to the *Chronicle of the Kings of Man*, buried at Downpatrick, there seemed to be a need to investigate why the War Hollow at Portrush had gained this reputation. This involved a re-examination of the sources, for which the comments of a local person who knew the terrain were invaluable.

The sources for Magnus Barelegs are many and diverse. From these a picture emerges which, while it gives us only a limited sense of his personality, is remarkably complete for the life of an early medieval Norwegian monarch. We are also told something about the movements of people in the Irish Sea area and the Hebrides during these centuries; and a little about Ireland at the time.



The War Hollow looking seawards. Photo by E. Sandford

Magnus, who was born about the end of 1073, lived substantially after what we usually regard as the Viking Age. He was the son of the Norwegian king Óláfr kyrrí, Olaf the Peaceful, who is credited with developing Bergen as a town and bringing trade and polite table-manners to Norway. Olaf's father was the Harald *hardradi*, the hard-ruler, who died at Stamford Bridge in England in 1066 in his effort to conquer that country. Harald's elder half-brother, Magnus's great-uncle, was the formidable king Olaf, in his lifetime known as the Stout, and, after his death, as the Saint who was credited with making his country Christian and is to this day Norway's patron saint. Magnus Barelegs was no pagan viking: indeed not only was he the great-nephew of a saint but one of his sons, Sigurd, was so much a mainstream medieval Christian monarch that he went on the Crusades.

Magnus came to power in Norway in 1093 after the death of his father. In 1098 he swept down upon the islands and western seaboard of Scotland, raiding, pillaging and asserting a previously tenuous Norwegian claim to authority in the Shetlands, Orkneys and Hebrides. Leaving only the holy island of Iona free from his attentions, he continued southwards and ravaged Galloway and Man, fought a battle off Anglesey with the Norman earls then engaged in the conquest of North Wales, and was only deflected from turning his attentions to Ireland by it being late in the year and his men getting nostalgic

for home. Returning through the Hebrides he seems to have made a treaty with the king of Scotland under which Norwegian authority in those islands was to be recognised. He is said to have even tried to claim Kintyre by treating it as an island, having his ship dragged over the narrows at Tarbert. Magnus then returned home, where, for the next few years, he engaged in nothing worse than a border war with Sweden.

According to the Icelander Snorri Sturluson, who wrote some one hundred and twenty years after Magnus's death, the king received his cognomen as a result of this expedition. He and his men, it is said, adopted the dress common in the 'western lands' and walked the streets of Bergen barelegged, wearing short tunics and jackets. From this the king became known as Magnús berfættr, Magnus Barelegs or Barefoot. This explanation, which does not appear in any older Norse source, may be the creation of Snorri, who spent time in Bergen in the early part of the thirteenth century. At this time the Hebrides were subject to the kingdom of Norway, and Hebrideans may have worn such dress when they came to the court of the Norwegian king. It may, of course, be a true description of the clothing worn by Magnus: as far as can be determined Gaelic aristocrats of that time wore a long tunic which they looped up for battle, while another form of male clothing was a short tunic that left the legs bare. There are, in addition, references from continental sources to the sight of barelegged Scots on their way to the First Crusade. A different explanation of Magnus's cognomen is found in the work of the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, who wrote in about 1200, before Snorri but still nearly a hundred years after the death of Magnus. Saxo states that Magnus acquired the name during the war with the Swedish king which he engaged in between his two expeditions westwards. On one occasion, we are told, Magnus was taken by surprise by his enemies, and was forced to flee unshod, for which his enemies gave him the name Barefoot in derision. Perhaps it was revenge for a poet of Magnus's court having called the Swedish king, Ingi, Broad-buttocks.

The Orkneys and Shetlands were at the time of Magnus's first expedition indisputably within the Norse world, and they were to remain a part of the kingdom of Norway until the Orkneys passed to Scotland in 1468 and the Shetlands four years later. As a result of Magnus's foray the Hebrides remained Norwegian, though open to increasing gaelicisation, until sold to Scotland under the Treaty of Perth in 1265, along with the Isle of Man, which was regarded as the most prized island in the joint kingdom of Man and the Isles. The bishopric (of Man and the Isles [the Sudreys] of current Bishop of Sodor

and Man), established in 1152 under the authority of Trondheim in Norway, did not pass to Scotland until 1472. Magnus's violence in the Isles paid off in a settlement that long outlasted him.

In 1102, or possibly in the previous year, Magnus sailed south and west again, this time not only to reassert his power in the Isles but to turn his attention to the rich pickings of Ireland.

Making for Dublin he came into contact with Dublin's over-king, Ireland's most powerful ruler and Magnus's strongest opponent to date. Muirchertach Ua Briain was of the Dál Cais dynasty, which was originally from the Limerick area. This dynasty had, in the space of four generations, moved from relative obscurity to become the ruling house of Munster, with a strong claim to the high-kingship of Ireland. Muirchertach was the great-grandson of Brian Boruma of Clontarf fame who had initiated the family rise to power. At the time of Magnus's arrival, Muirchertach was in control of most of Leinster and had acted as kingmaker in Connacht. He had only one serious rival in his attempt to create personal rule over all Ireland, Domnall MacLochlainn. Domnall was king of the northern Cenél Eógain and head of the dynasty whose heartland lay in, roughly, the area that was later to be the medieval diocese of Derry. Muirchertach was at the time of Magnus's arrival at the height of his powers. Confronted with this new challenge from the sea he did not try to destroy Magnus and his fleet, but instead made the formal 'peace of a year' with him, and exchanged hostages. This exchange has left us with a verbal record in an Icelandic saga of what were allegedly two sentences in Irish spoken when Norse hostages arrived at Muirchertach's court.²

Muirchertach had other interests in addition to his struggle to control the north. Involved in church affairs, he was in correspondence with both the archbishops Lanfranc and Anselm at Canterbury, and was indeed to hold a Synod in 1111 at Cashel, a move Anselm hoped would bring the Irish church more in line with Roman requirements. Muirchertach also had secular political interests, mainly in England, for he corresponded with Henry I and probably aided his opponents. He may have had diplomatic contacts with Scotland too, for in 1105 King Edgar sent him a camel. The reason for a camel being in Scotland and its subsequent fate in Ireland remain unknown. Rare animals of this kind were sometimes given to medieval monarchs, and it may be that an early crusader, perhaps one of those barelegged Scots whose journey to the First Crusade caused such sartorial wonderment on the Continent, had brought this cumbersome souvenir home and had presented it to Edgar.

In 1102 Muirchertach did not stop at making a year's peace with Magnus, nor even at negotiating a good deal with Magnus over the use of his ships for military action: that year the two kings married their children to each other. Magnus's son Sigurd, who had come with his father, is described in the sagas as a promising youth, and was by now, on his second foray west, some twelve years old. His bride is said to have been only five. In the same year Muirchertach married another daughter to Arnulf of Montgomery, then in open revolt against Henry I of England.

In 1098 Magnus had slain Arnulf's brother, Hugh of Shrewsbury, in a skirmish off Anglesey, a deed he seems to have regretted as soon as he knew who he had killed. There is also a chance that another of the Norman English faction, Earl Walter Giffard, visited Magnus during the years between his two expeditions. Muirchertach may well have brought his two sons-in-law together, though this contact led to nothing.

Magnus and Muirchertach are said to have raided together that year. The next year, 1103, they made an attack on the north.

Muirchertach's usual practice was to gather a force and march north in the spring to confront Domnall's force. Muirchertach was in alliance with the Ulaid, a minor tribe who chafed against the domination of the Cenél Eógain. The regular practice of the *comarb*, the abbot of Armagh, was to impose a year's peace on the two factions. In 1103 Muirchertach marched north as usual, and at Armagh his army and that of Domnall's sat facing each other for a week. Muirchertach then presented gifts to the church at Armagh and went off raiding. In the meantime, on the fourth of August, Domnall attacked and routed Muirchertach's army.

Muirchertach stayed in the north, perhaps remustering his army. It may well be, too, that the plan was that Magnus was to join him, providing sea-power. In all events, Magnus was in the area less than three weeks after the defeat. Our fullest sources, the Norse sagas, say that Magnus was on his way home and that Muirchertach was providing him with provisions for the journey. Either on Saint Bartholemew's Day, 24 August, or the day before, Magnus was on the coast of Ulaid, waiting. The provisions did not arrive when expected, and Magnus went ashore with a party of men, seeking them. They indeed found them, but on their way back to their ships they were attacked by the Ulaid. As the Annals say: "Magnus, king of the foreigners, was slain when taken unawares by the Ulaid." "Magnus, king of Norway and the Islands, and a man who contemplated the invasion of all Ireland, was slain by the Ulidians, with

a slaughter of his people around him, on a predatory excursion."³ Other sources state merely that Magnus, whom they are inclined to regard as a thug, became incautious and went inland, where he was, in their view quite rightly, slain.

It is certain that the Ulaid slew him. However, it must have seemed a disaster when they realised who he was. Magnus may have looked like yet another of the marauding Hebrideans who plundered their cattle; and like many Hebrideans he spoke what would have been to the Irish the incomprehensible Norse language. However, he was in fact the ally of the Ulaid. His relative-by-marriage, Muirchertach, with whom he was in league, was supporting them. Indeed, once they knew who he was, it must have been the Ulaid or Muirchertach who gave him burial. His name lived on as a family name among the Ulaid for some time afterwards: it was in use before 1118, indicating that those called Magnus were named after the king of Norway, and not after his cousin, Magnus of Orkney, who was slain in about that year and quickly acclaimed a saint.

On the death of his father Magnus, Sigurd abandoned his Irish child-wife and returned to Norway, where he shared the kingdom with two brothers, one of whom died a few years later. Sigurd himself gained fame when still in his teens, not in Ireland but in the east. In 1107 he led a party of Norwegians to the Crusade and was instrumental in the capture of Sidon. His name has survived in Arabic sources.

In these islands Muirchertach continued to be the most powerful king in Ireland but the rebellion in England failed. Apparently because of Muirchertach's involvement, Henry had suspended trade to Ireland, and Muirchertach, to appease him, now took back his daughter from Arnulf. The two did marry again, in Arnulf's old age, and, our source claims, he died the next day.

There remains the issue of where Magnus lies buried. The North Antrim quiz-master seemed to believe that he was killed at the War Hollow on the East Strand at Portrush. Schoolchildren in Downpatrick, and perhaps through them people living near the site, believe that he was buried at the mound outside Downpatrick now called the Grave of Magnus Barelegs.

Romantic though it is, and given its present use, preserved as it is from the enquiries of archaeologists, we may dismiss the War Hollow. There is no evidence whatsoever that Magnus was ever in the vicinity of Portrush and no known reason why he may have had any interest in the area. Moreover, the linking of Magnus's name to this site goes back only to the beginning of the present century. Since then the story has got into Portrush guide books and from them to the quiz circuit, as well as to the notice of local historians. The

originator seems to have been the local writer William Adams, a seaman by trade, whose *Dalriada: or North Antrim. A historical account of some of its old families and ancient castles* was published by the Coleraine Chronicle in 1906. Adams gives many colourful and imaginative details concerning the Norwegian king's activities in Ireland, and claims that Magnus's body was taken to Iona for burial.⁴

The name 'War Hollow' already existed in Adam's time. But there are other stories attached to it. In the early 1970's I heard from a Portrush resident how, as a child in the 1920's, she and her friends had played in the War Hollow and had found objects they had associated with the Spanish Armada. There are other accounts of battles there; and objects such as flints said to have been found in the vicinity may testify to the occupation of the area since early times.

It is unlikely, given the tendency of sand to move, that this hollow in the dunes has kept its present form since the sixteenth century, and still less that it has kept it since the death of Magnus at the beginning of the twelfth. But the place may have got its name by some other means and it may be worth the local historian's time to search them out.

The splendid mound near the old railway line outside Downpatrick is a marvellous site for a viking grave. Of human construction but not excavated, it stands on what would have been the shoreline in Magnus's day, and now looks out across the half-drained marshy land reclaimed from the River Quoile and the sea.⁵ Topped with trees, it would be a worthy setting for a re-enactment of the story of the viking Hervör, who went alone to the mound on Sámsey where her father and his berserk brothers lay among the tree-roots, buried with their weapons; there she awakened his ghost and demanded his sword as her inheritance.⁶ That story has been retold by antiquarians since the eighteenth century and has given lustre to the romanticised view of vikings. But Magnus Barelegs was not a heathen viking buried by his foes: he was a Christian king buried by his allies. While the bodies of the dead Norwegians may first have been placed in the ground where they fell, it is unlikely that they now lie among the tree roots of the mound. And the story that they do seems to be little older than the Portrush one.

The only medieval source for the place of Magnus's burial is the thirteenth-century *Chronicle of the Kings of Man*. According to this he was buried near the Church of Saint Patrick, in Down. The single surviving Latin manuscript of the *Chronicle* was published by P.A. Munch in a scholarly edition, in Christiania, now Oslo, in 1860. In 1874 it was republished, with an English



The 'Grave of Magnus Barelegs' – west side. Photo by S. Mullally



The 'Grave of Magnus Barelegs' – south side. Photo by S. Mullally

translation and copious notes for the Manx Society.⁷ One of these editions, probably the much more accessible later one, may have led local historians to search for a suitable site for his end, and vikings like Hervör and her family being more attractive than medieval monarchs, they fixed on this dramatic mound. It is some two miles from the 'Church at Down.'

There may have been a genuine tradition of Magnus's death in the Downpatrick area, created, or reinforced, by written accounts, like the *Chronicle* or works derived from it. The eighteenth century historian Walter Harris, whose work was published in 1744, tells us of Magnus's presence in Ireland, his death at the hands of the 'Irish of Ulster' and his burial near the church at Downpatrick. Harris tells us himself that his source is the *Chronicle of Man*, which he must have known in manuscript form. It is interesting that Geoffrey Keating, writing in Irish in the seventeenth century, also uses material derived ultimately from the *Chronicle*. Keating cites as his source Richard Hakluyt, who in turn follows Camden. In Hakluyt's section on Magnus, the *Chronicle* is followed, but with some errors, including a statement that Magnus was buried near the Church of Saint Patrick in Armagh. It was perhaps because Keating was doubtful of this that he omits any reference to Magnus's place of burial.⁸

One way or another the story of Magnus's burial at Down might have passed into oral tradition, or indeed might have reinforced an already existing oral tradition. This tradition seems likely to have centred on the town, or on the area in general. There is no reference to Magnus or his grave, or to the mound outside Downpatrick, in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs of the 1830's. There was a vague tradition of his burial near the cathedral among the 'lower classes' in 1856, according to a note in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* for that year, by 'Dunensis,' who was possibly the indefatigable historian Bishop Reeves.⁹

The *Chronicle* and works derived from it say that Magnus was buried near the church at Downpatrick, not in a mound outside it. Indeed, by far the most likely place for a Christian monarch to be buried by his allies is the churchyard. In all events, given the likelihood that Magnus was bringing support for Muirchertach when he died, the churchyard at Down Cathedral is an appropriate place for his grave.

There is one other source we must consider. This is the latest and most literary of the Norse sources for the life of Magnus Barelegs, and one whose significance I missed when first writing of Magnus, not then being familiar with the Downpatrick area. The source is Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, the

Norse history of the Kings of Norway, composed in Iceland during the 1220's.¹⁰ Snorri used older written Norse sources, none of which describes Magnus's death in any detail. Independent of these sources he gives an account, which, whether accurate or not in its reporting of events, contains an unusual description of what could be the bog, marsh, copse and drumlin country of South Down at a time when the drainage and land reclamation which are part of the modern landscape may already have begun. In the following translation, which has been kept as close as possible to the original Norse, a distinction is made between bogs (mýrar) and fens (fen), which may reflect an attempt by an oral informant to distinguish between fresh and salt-water wetlands, even though the words are inclined to be interchangeable in Norse. There are also references to 'dikes' (dfk, dfki). The Norse word means a water-filled trench of human construction.

On the feast day [Saint Bartholemew's Day, 24 August], when the sun came up, King Magnús went on shore with most of his following, and went up from the ships. He wanted to look for his men and the cattle for provisions. The weather was still and sunny. The pathway lay over bogs and fen, and flat stones had been laid over it. There were copses of brushwood on both sides. As they advanced they met a very high ridge. From there they saw a long way. They saw a great cloud of dust kicked up by horses inland, and discussed among themselves whether it might be the army of the Irish, but some said that it would be their men with the cattle. They stopped. Then Eyvindr Elbow spoke: 'King' he said, 'What do you think about this movement? People think you are acting incautiously. You know the Irish are treacherous. Find a good plan now for your men.' Then the king spoke: 'Draw up in battle-line, and let us be prepared if this is treachery.' They drew up. The king and Eyvindr went out in front of the battle-line. King Magnús had a helmet on his head, and a red shield, with a gold lion on it. He was girded with the sword that was called Legbiter. It had a hilt of walrus ivory, with gold wound on the hand-grip. It was the best of weapons. He had a spear in his hand. He was wearing a red silk tunic over his shirt, decorated front and back with a lion in gold silk. People said that they had not seen a more imposing or valiant man...

When the cloud of dust came near they recognised their own men, who were bringing a lot of cattle which the Irish king had sent them. He had kept his word fully to King Magnús. Then they turned back towards the ships. It was then about midday. But when they got out into the bogs, they found it slow going across the fens. Then the army of the Irish burst

out from the edges of every copse and began to attack. The Norwegians were spread out and many soon fell. Then Eyvindr Elbow spoke: 'King,' he said, 'our men are in wretched order. Let's be quick to make a plan.' The king spoke: 'Blow the call to bring all our men under the standards. Those who are here shall make a 'shieldwall', and we'll retreat out across the bogs. There will be no harm done once we get to the unbroken ground.' The Irish shot valiantly, and while many fell, there always came another in a fallen man's place. But when the king had come to the lowest dike – that was a difficult passage and there were few places to get over it – there many Norwegians fell. The king then called Thorgrímr Skinhat, one of his barons, he was from Uppland, and told him to get over the dike with his company, 'and we will protect you meanwhile' he said, 'so that you will come to no harm. Then get to that firmer patch that crops up and shoot at them while we got over the dike. You are good bowmen.' But when Thorgrímr and his men were over the dike they threw their shields on their backs and ran down to the ships. When the king saw that he said: 'You part dishonourably with your king. I was unwise when I made you a baron, and outlawed Sigurdr hound. He would never have done that.' King Magnús got a wound, a spear went through both his thighs, above the knee. He gripped the shaft between his legs and broke the hobble and said: 'This is how we break every mutton-bone, lads.' King Magnús was struck on the neck with an axe, and that was his death-wound. Those who were left fled. Vidkunnr Jóansson carried the sword Legbiter and the king's standard to the ships.

Unfortunately, even if we accept this as a description of the area near the Quoile estuary, we cannot say with any certainty whether Snorri is describing the landscape as it would have been seen by Magnus in 1103 or whether it is the post-Norman invasion country of Snorri's own day. Drainage and reclamation may have already started in the earlier period. Furthermore, the landscape we know today has been shaped by the further reclamations in the seventeenth century and since.

While the sagas have been in recent years underestimated as historical documents, it seems unlikely that the Icelanders would have preserved in oral tradition so detailed a description of the scenery of a distant country. It is true that one of Magnus's daughters married into the powerful Icelandic Oddaverja family, by whom at a later date Snorri was fostered, but I do not think that this would have increased the likelihood of a genuine oral tradition dating back to the time in question underlying this description. It is more likely that the description dates from Snorri's own time.

Snorri combined the vocation of historian and poet with an active political career which took him to the court of Norway several times and finally led to his assassination in his own home in 1241 on the orders of his former patron, King Hákon of Norway. It may be that it was during one of his sojourns in Bergen that he met the Hebrideans who gave him the information which he clearly had on their own islands. This made it possible for him, when writing of the depredations of Magnus, to rearrange the verses, said to date from Magnus's own time, which were embedded in the older literary sources. These verses had been written down by someone who did not know where the islands lay in relation to each other. Snorri must have had the help of someone who knew the Hebrides, for he changed the order of the verses, giving the Isles pillaged in the correct order going from north to south. It may have been from an informant too that he garnered details of Irish dress and the traditional Irish storytelling theme of the swift runner that he recounts elsewhere in relation to a presumed son of Magnus, Harald gilli. By the thirteenth century the Hebrides seem to have been largely bilingual. Sharing a common language and culture, at least in part, with Ireland, to say nothing of the political and other contacts, would have meant a certain amount of travel between the kingdom of Man and the Isles and Ireland. It was perhaps a wandering Hebridean who happened to know the part of Ireland where Magnus was reputed to have met his end who gave Snorri the necessary description – and perhaps a few of the details as well.

Snorri may not have remembered it all very clearly; the informant may have distinguished between inland bog lying above sea-level between the clay hills covered in light scrub; and low-lying, perhaps partly drained and reclaimed but still salty marsh. Snorri was also unclear about other, larger, aspects of Irish geography: on one occasion he has Magnus and Muirchertach, whom he wrongly calls king of Connacht, going west from Connacht into Ulaid.

There is a further reference which may provide a scrap of supporting evidence that Snorri was using a description of Ireland in his own day and not in Magnus's time. On one occasion he speaks of Magnus and Muirchertach conquering both Dublin, which in fact Muirchertach already controlled, and 'Dyflinnarskíri.' The word 'skíri' is a loan word from English, meaning 'shire,' a name that belongs to the period after the Norman Conquest.

The informant might even have been not a Hebridean but a wandering Norwegian. At some time in the thirteenth century *The King's Mirror*, a textbook on geography, good business practice and courtly manners, was

written in Old Norwegian. This work includes a description of Ireland similar to but independent of that by Giraldus Cambrensis in his *Topography of Ireland*.¹¹

The death of Magnus in Ireland can be seen to mark the end of any serious Scandinavian involvement in the island. In contrast, Norway was to experience the reigns of two kings from these parts, those of Magnus's presumed son Harald and of Harald's son Eysteinn. Neither reign was beneficent.

Harald arrived with his mother in Norway in 1128 or so, claiming to be a posthumous son of Magnus. King Sigurd, by this time reigning alone, was doubtful of the claim, but, we are told, after Harald had proved his paternity satisfactorily by walking unscathed over nine red-hot ploughshares, he was accepted, on condition he did not claim a joint right to kingship during the lifetime of Sigurd or his son. He broke this agreement after Sigurd's death and he did in fact reign for six years during the son's lifetime, but was then slain by yet another claimant to be a son of Magnus Barelegs, one Sigurd the Bad-deacon, who had also proved his paternity, by walking unscathed over seven red-hot ploughshares, but had done it in Denmark, not Norway, which led to its being discounted. He was not accepted as a monarch and was shortly afterwards captured and slain with particular violence.

Three of Harald's small sons jointly succeeded him. In 1142 another, older, son came from the west to Norway, with his mother, and was recognised as a king, apparently because Harald had left word of his existence. Harald may indeed have been married for some time to his mother: there is a tradition that a woman of the powerful Hebridean family that produced Somerled had married a king Harald of Norway. Their son, Eysteinn, was not a man of peace: his activities included a raid on the Orkneys and on the east coast of Scotland during which he sacked Aberdeen, followed by depredations in north-eastern England. These, Snorri says, he claimed were in revenge for the death of Harald *hardradi*, his presumed great-great-grandfather, at Stamford Bridge some eighty-five years previously. Back in Norway, Eysteinn was finally cornered by his enemies, and died bravely at their hands, so bravely that for a time after his death he was honoured as a saint. But no miracles are attributed to him.

The Magnus who may, or may not, lie in the dust that surrounds Downpatrick Cathedral left no other legacy in his homeland. But in the Gaelic-speaking lands of the west he is the subject of at least two ballads that survived into this century. And at the present time a certain posthumous fame is his, in that his

activities in Ireland have made him in the popular imagination, inaccurately but understandably, the archetypal viking.

Notes

1. "Magnus Barelegs' Expeditions to the West", *The Scottish Historical Review* LXV (1986), 107-32. There are various errors in the printed text, including the miswriting of *Tadg* throughout. On page 124, line 15, "Diarmait" should read "Domnall". On page 129, line 9, "last" (major Norse source) should read "other". On pages 130-131 it is wrongly stated that a set tribute of ten marks of gold is said to have been paid by each king of the Isles on accession: this should read "on the accession of each new king of Norway".
2. In the Icelandic saga of Bishop Jón we are told that one of the hostages claimed he could speak Irish, though it appears more likely that he was duped by a local person in a way that many a tourist has been since. He addressed the king: "Male diarek", which, the saga says, means: "Damn you, king." Muirchertach answered: "Olgeira ragall." It has been suggested that the first sentence is Irish "Mallacht duit, a rí." The second is more obscure still. See W.A. Craigie, "Gaelic Words and Names in the Icelandic Sagas," *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* i (1897), 439-54, esp. p. 443.
3. *Annals of Inisfallen*, ed. Seán MacAirt, Dublin, 1951; *Annals of the Four Masters*, ed. J. O'Donovan, 5 vols., Dublin, 1848-51.
4. The references are on pages 19-22 of Adams' book. Local historians who followed Adams include Rev. Hugh Forde, *Sketches of Olden Days in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, The Linenhall Press, 1923.
5. The site is shown on Ordnance Survey Sheets 37 and 224, Irish grid reference J477436. It is best approached by following the railway track from Downpatrick station for about three quarters of a mile. Steam-train lovers are responsible for reconstructing station and track – at present the track stops just short of the mound. Alternatively, take the A25 from Downpatrick (Market Street/Ballydugan Road) to Clough for about two miles until it is crossed by the old railway bridge. Turn right and walk along the embankment for about two hundred yards.
6. *Hervarar saga* or *Hervarar saga ok Heidreks* has been translated by Christopher Tolkien as *Heidreks saga Konungs ins Vítra/The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, London, Nelson's Icelandic Texts, 1960.
7. *Chronicum Regum Manniae et Insularum: The Chronicle of Man and the Sudreys*. With Historical Notes by P.A. Munch, translated by Rev. D. Goss, 2 vols., The Manx Society vols. xxii-xxiii, Douglas, 1874, pp. 60-61.

8. Walter Harris, *Antient and Present State of the County of Down*, Dublin (printed by A. Reilly), 1744, p. 29. Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages*, 8 vols., Everyman Series (Dent), London/New York, vol. 1 (1907), pp. 70-72. The relevant section is named "A Chronicle of the Kings of man, taken out of M. Camdens Chorographie."
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9. *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 3 (1855), 84 contains a query by "Senex"; the response is in 4 (1856) 100.
10. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Adalbjarnarson, 3 vols., Íslenzk Fornrit 26-28, Reykjavik, 1941-51. The passage is in vol. 3, pp. 234-6. Several translations have been made of *Heimskringla*.
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Fermanagh Links with the Continent in the Eighteenth Century

John Cunningham

Two families from County Fermanagh, the Bartons and the Caldwells, had a distinct influence on the Continent during the eighteenth century. The Caldwells were soldiers and the Bartons were premier wine merchants. Both families made use of the extensive trading and smuggling network which linked Europe and the west coast of Ireland.

These links have a strength that is seldom suspected and involve a length in time which is difficult to quantify. Some of the contacts may go back as far as the arrival of the first settlers after the last ice age some ten thousand years ago but in relatively modern times the difficulty in tracing the degree of contact arises from the dearth of evidence to be found in the usual sources of trade and commerce. However, the greatest difficulty stems from the illegal or irregular nature of a lot of the interaction. Official records are scanty and even where they do exist they are pretty meaningless.

When it was illegal to export wool to the Continent or to import brandy and silk, the West of Ireland merrily carried on such commerce. When it was illegal for Roman Catholics to send their sons to be educated for the priesthood on the Continent the west coast again was a relatively safe avenue abroad and a fairly safe route home again. There were particularly strong trading links with the port of Bordeaux as it was there that the French West Indies fleet was victualled and required enormous quantities of butter and salt beef to name just two items that Ireland could easily supply.

Ballyshannon and its environs has for long been one of the principal ports on the west coast of Ireland and chiefly so on account of its site on the Erne Estuary which gave it access to the whole River Erne network. A large hinterland was supplied with imported contraband and it, in turn, could in turn supply suitable export goods. These two families who in particular in the eighteenth century made an impact on Europe both came from the county Fermanagh hinterland of Ballyshannon viz the Bartons and the Caldwells. From the records of these families it is possible to get some insight into traffic with the Continent in the eighteenth century.

The Caldwells originally came from Scotland and circa 1670 Sir James Caldwell bought the Castle Caldwell estate which included the village of