

Thursday, February 11, 2010

Kjaere Venner,

Yes, you too can eat like a Viking. All you need is a bowl. Until about the 16<sup>th</sup> century most people, including the Vikings from an earlier period, ate out of wooden bowls.<sup>1</sup>

So what did these bowls look like?

I have made many bowls which are a sort of combination of a Scandinavian ale bowl<sup>2</sup> and Viking bowls from the Oseberg burial,<sup>3,4,5</sup> York,<sup>6,7</sup> and Greenland.<sup>8</sup>



Here are three examples of my bowls. The one at the lower right is my first bowl, and is similar to Morris's 8569,<sup>9</sup> 5" diameter, 2" high, 3/8" thick wall but with a foot like #8571. The other two show my later bowls with features not found in medieval bowls; a slightly concave lip to facilitate drinking, straight sections on the bowl contour, and a sharp angle between the bowl contour and the concave lip.

Adrienne, my friend at the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, pointed out that their bowls in the museum have a slightly different shape than my bowls, and more vertical sides, like the Ballinderry Crannog bowl in Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

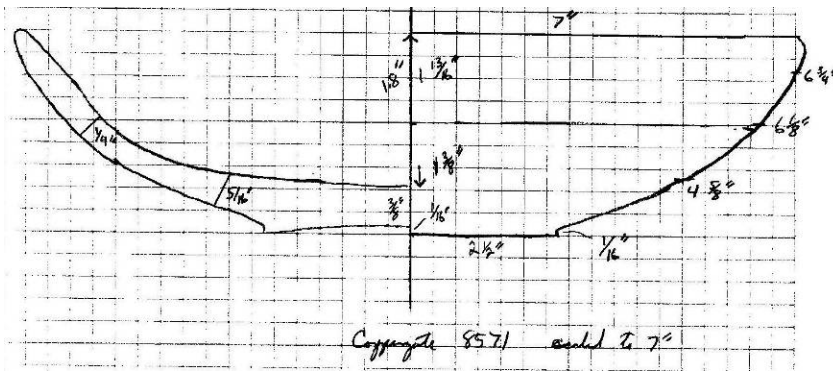
Then at Christmas I got copies of Robin Wood's "The Wooden Bowl",<sup>11</sup> and Carole Morris's "Wood and Woodworking in Anglo-Scandinavian and Medieval York",<sup>12</sup> which are fantastic references for medieval and Viking bowls. After looking at these two books,

I set out to make a replica of a medieval bowl. Elspeth picked out a Coppergate bowl for my replica, Morris's bowl number 8571, page 2171.<sup>13</sup>



I made the bowl out of Basswood (*Tilia Americana*, also known as Linden, which is a light, soft hardwood often used in Norwegian ale bowls and used for carving), and finished it in walnut oil and beeswax. Some Basswood is cream colored, like the logs I got from my cousin Lon and his wife Nancy, but this Basswood is more tan colored, in some ways similar in color to willow, coming from a tree at Polly's lake home. (The wood used in bowls and cups in York were commonly alder, maple, and birch with a few examples from several other wood species.<sup>14</sup>)

Most medieval bowls were 6" to 9" in diameter.<sup>15</sup> The original bowl 8571 in Carole Morris' book was 9" in diameter, but the Basswood log I had was slightly smaller, so I scaled the drawing to 7", including scaling Morris's profile drawing to a smaller mechanical drawing to help me replicate the shape and dimensions of the bowl, see the next figure.



I am really pleased with how this bowl turned out. Basswood dries slowly so, after turning, this bowl has continued to shrink and warp giving it now a very pleasing shape (even more so than when I took the above picture). The walnut oil brings out the beautiful grain of the wood, giving it a slight orangey-brown hue thus making the bowl quite striking.

Now that I have a Viking bowl, to eat like a Viking I should make and eat some Rommegrot. Where did I put that Rommegrot recipe?

Hilsen, Owen

*Views from the Flowage: From time to time I send emails to family and friends chronicling events on the flowage. Sometimes I relate the latest news, other times I include information (mainly for my education since I have to look up what I include), but my favorite topics are humorous in nature (well, I try to make them humorous). Recently I have been turning replicas of medieval and Viking wood items. Please reply if there is something you find interesting, or if I make a mistake, but do not feel obligated to reply. Thanks, Owen.*

<sup>1</sup> Robin Wood, "The Wooden Bowl," Stobart Davies Ltd, 2005, page 59, 129-130.

<sup>2</sup> Eivind Falk-Svensen, "Dekor paa tre," Landbruksforlaget 2002, ISBN 82-529-2628-2, page 46-56.

<sup>3</sup> R. Chartrand, K. Durham, M. Harrison, I Heath, "The Vikings, Voyagers of Discovery and Plunder," 2006 Osprey Publishing Ltd., page 32.

<sup>4</sup> James Graham-Campbell, Dafydd Kidd, "The Vikings," British Museum Publications Limited, 1980, ISBN 0 7141 1353 0 paper, page 80.

<sup>5</sup> A. Christensen, A. Ingstad, and B. Myhre, "Oseberg Dronningens Grav," Schibsted 1992, ISBN 82-516-1423-6, page 114-115.

<sup>6</sup> W. Fitzhugh and E. Ward, "Vikings, The North Atlantic Saga," Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, Figure 8.16 Wood Cup, page 136.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Hall, "The Viking Dig, The Excavations at York," The Bodley Head Ltd, 1986, Figure 82, page 76.

<sup>8</sup> W. Fitzhugh and E. Ward, "Vikings, The North Atlantic Saga," Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, Figure 22.5 Tableware, page 299.

<sup>9</sup> Carole A. Morris, "Wood and Woodworking in Anglo-Scandinavian and Medieval York," Published for the York Archaeological Trust by the Council for British Archaeology, Vol 17: The Small Finds, Fasc. 13. Craft, Industry, and Everyday Life, ISBN 1 902771 10 9, 2000, page 2171.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, page 43.

<sup>11</sup> Robin Wood, "The Wooden Bowl," Stobart Davies Ltd, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Carole A. Morris, "Wood and Woodworking in Anglo-Scandinavian and Medieval York," Published for the York Archaeological Trust by the Council for British Archaeology, Vol 17: The Small Finds, Fasc. 13. Craft, Industry, and Everyday Life, ISBN 1 902771 10 9, 2000.

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<sup>13</sup> Morris, page 2171.

<sup>14</sup> Morris, page 258.

<sup>15</sup> Wood, pages 29-30.