

A CIRCLE OF
CERIDWEN SAGA STORY

SIDROC
THE DANE

OCTAVIA RANDOLPH

List of Characters

Hrald, a farmer on the West Coast of Dane-mark, father to Sidroc

Gillaug, a freedwoman; serving-woman to Hrald

Jorild, a freedwoman; serving-woman to Hrald

Stenhild, a woman of Gotland

Oddi, a former thrall, now a freedman

Yrling, younger brother to Hrald, uncle to Sidroc

Ingirith, wife to Hrald

Sidroc, son of Hrald

Toki, cousin to Sidroc, nephew to Yrling

Signe, sister to Hrald, mother to Toki

Ful, husband to Signe, father to Toki

Jari, a young adventurer

Asberg, a young adventurer

Merewala, Lord of Four Stones in Lindisse

Ælfwyn of Cirenceaster, a young woman of Wessex

Ceridwen, a young woman of Mercia

Sidroc the Dane Map Year 847



SIDROE THE DANE

NORTHUMBRIA

Jorvic

Four Stones

Abbey of Beardan

LINDISSE

R. Dee

R. Trent

Ceridwen's Village

EAST

WELSH
KINGDOMS

MERCIA

ANGLICA

Cirenceaster

WESSEX

Kilton

Witanceaster

Frankland



To know the man, look to the boy. To know the boy, look to the father.

The Wheel of the Year

Candlemas - 2 February

St Gregory's Day - 12 March

St Cuthbert's Day - The Spring Equinox, about 21 March

St Elgiva's Day - 18 May

High Summer or Mid-Summer Day - 24 June

Sts Peter and Paul - 29 June

Hlafmesse (Lammas) - 1 August

St Mary's Day - 15 August

St Matthews' Day - The Fall Equinox, about 21 September

All Saints - 1 November

The month of Blót - November; the time of Offering

Martinmas (St Martin's) - 11 November

Yuletide - 25 December to Twelfthnight - 6 January

Winter's Nights - the Norse end of the year rituals, ruled by women, marked by feasting and ceremony

Anglo-Saxon Place Names, with Modern Equivalents

Æscesdun = Ashdown

Æthelinga = Athelney

Apulder = Appledore

Basingas = Basing

Beardan = Bardney

Bryeg = Bridgenorth

Caeginesham = Keynsham

Cippenham = Chippenham

Cirenceaster = Cirencester

Defenas = Devon

Englafeld = Englefield

Ethandun = Edington

Exanceaster = Exeter

Fearnhamme = Farnham

Geornaham = Irnham

Glastunburh = Glastonbury

Hamtunscir = Hampshire

Hreopedun = Repton

Jorvik (Danish name for Eoforwic) = York

Legaceaster = Chester

Limenemutha = Lymington in Hampshire

Lindisse = Lindsey

Lundenwic = London

Meredune = Marton

Middeltun = Milton

Readingas = Reading

Sceaftesburh = Shaftesbury

Snotingaham = Nottingham

Sumorsaet = Somerset

Swanawic = Swanage

Turcesig = Torksey

Wedmor = Wedmore

Witanceaster (where the Witan, the King's advisors, met) = Winchester

Frankland = France

Haithabu = Hedeby

Norse Place Names:

Aros = Aarhus, Denmark

Laaland = the island of Lolland, Denmark

Land of the Svear = Sweden

Glossary of Terms

alvar: a stretch of barren (yet often beautiful) limestone landscape, supporting rock-loving lichens and mosses.

Anskar: (also, Ansgar) Saint Anskar began as a Frankish monk, born in Amiens. He was sent to Denmark as a missionary, and had success in converting King Erik of Jutland. He was permitted to build a church and to preach in Ribe in 854, but his adherents lapsed into heathenism following his departure, and death in Bremen.

Asgard: Heavenly realm of the Gods.

brewster: the female form of brewer (and, interestingly enough, the female form of baker is *baxter*...so many common names are rooted in professions and trades...).

browis: a cereal-based stew, often made with fowl or pork.

chaff: the husks of grain after being separated from the usable kernel.

cooper: a maker of casks and barrels.

(to) **coppice:** the act of sawing a healthy tree down, and allowing a ring of straight, round shoots to spring from the trunk; these were much desired as spear shafts and strong flexible poles.

cresset: stone, bronze, or iron lamp fitted with a wick that burnt oil.

dísir: female household spirits, celebrated at Winter's Nights feasts.

ealdorman: a nobleman with jurisdiction over given lands; the rank was generally appointed by the King and not necessarily inherited from generation to generation. The modern derivative *alderman* in no way conveys the esteem and power of the Anglo-Saxon term.

fulltrúi: the Norse deity patron that one felt called to dedicate oneself to.

fylgja: a Norse guardian spirit, always female, unique to each family.

Gandr: Norse magical spell-work. Norse culture was steeped in the belief of sorcery and spell-work. *Galdr* was another form, and was performative magic, in which the spell was sung. The use of magical charms and amulets, love potions, and curses was widespread. Women were typically the practitioners of magic, and the Goddess Freyja was revered for her magical prowess. Odin too practiced magic, unusual for any male figure. *Seidr* was the deepest, most dangerous form of magic, taught by Freyja to Odin.

hackle: the splitting and combing of fibres of flax or hemp with opposing brush-like tools.

hamingja: the Norse "luck-spirit" which each person is born with.

hamr: in Norse belief, a person's outer appearance and form as it appears to human eyes.

hugr: in Norse belief, the essential nature of a person, hosted by the hamr, or outer shell. The hugr could be that of a wild and ferocious beast; an “ulfshugr” was a man with the essence of a wolf.

Jutland: the large peninsula of Denmark, joined to modern day Germany at its southern-most point. The western coast of Jutland is on the North Sea, across which lies Great Britain.

kith and kine: kin – family members – and cattle.

knorr: also knarr. A merchant ship.

lur: a horn of bronze or wood, with a long curving neck, used to summon folk, marshal forces, and call cattle, in the Viking age.

medlar: a bushy tree, part of the rose family, which gives small, brown, and delicious fruit, eaten raw or cooked down into jams or sauces. Medlars were valued as they gave their fruit in Winter, when anything fresh was scarce. The fruit needs to rest, or “blet”, so that it begins to ferment to reach its full flavour, thus it is a good keeper.

Midgard: the “Middle Earth” of men.

morgen-gyfu: literally, “morning-gift”; a gift given by a husband to his new wife the first morning they awake together.

quern: hand tool for grinding grain into flour. The domed top stone (the “handstone”) often of sandstone or limestone, sits atop the quern stone, with the kernels of grain in between. The top stone is turned by a wooden dowel inserted in a hole atop the dome. This made grinding grain possible for almost all households.

rauk: the striking sea- and wind-formed limestone towers on the coast of Gotland.

seax: the angle-bladed dagger which gave its name to the Saxons; all freemen carried one.

scop: (“shope”) a poet, saga-teller, or bard, responsible not only for entertainment but seen as a collective cultural historian. A talented scop would be greatly valued by his lord and receive land, gold and silver jewellery, costly clothing and other riches as his reward.

shingle beach: a pebbly, rather than sandy, beach.

skald: a Norse poet and singer of Saga tales, comparable to an Anglo-Saxon scop (see above).

skep: a bee hive formed of coils of plaited straw, built up into a conical shape.

skeggox: steel battle-axe favoured by the Danes.

skirrets: a sweet root vegetable similar to carrots, but cream-coloured, and having several fingers on each plant.

skogkatt: “forest cat”; the ancestor of the modern Norwegian Forest Cat, known for its large size, climbing ability, and thick and water-shedding coat.

skogsrá: “Lady of the Forest”; a womanly wood spirit who protected woodland animals, and yet guided hunters she favoured.

Skuld: the eldest of the three Norns, and she who snips the Thread of Life, signalling death. Her very name means “debt”. The Thread of Life is pulled out to length by her daughter Verdandi, and spun by her granddaughter Urd.

spotted fever: typhus.

strakes: overlapping wooden planks, running horizontally, making up a ship’s hull.

symbol: a ceremonial high occasion for the Angle-Saxons, marked by the giving of gifts, making of oaths, swearing of fidelity, and (of course) drinking ale.

tæfl or Cyningtæfl (“King’s table”): a board game of strategy.

thegn: (“thane”) a freeborn warrior-retainer of a lord; thegns were housed, fed and armed in exchange for complete fidelity to their sworn lord. Booty won in battle by a thegn was generally offered to their lord, and in return the lord was expected to bestow handsome gifts of arms, horses, arm-rings, and so on to his best champions.

thrummy: from the noun “thrum”, meaning the rough, uneven ends of the warp strings left behind on the loom when the fabric is cut free. “Thrummy hair” would then be tousled, uncombed, or uneven.

trev: a settlement of a few huts, smaller than a village.

Tyr: the God of war, law, and justice. He voluntarily forfeited his sword-hand to allow the Gods to deceive, and bind, the gigantic wolf Fenrir.

Tyr-hand: in this Saga, any left-handed person, named so in honour of Tyr’s sacrifice.

wadmal: the Norse name for the coarse and durable woven woollen fabric that was a chief export in the Viking age.

verjuice: “green juice”; an acidic juice from unripe grapes or crabapples, much used as we would vinegar.

völva: a female seer in the Norse religion, accorded much respect for her ability to predict the future. Völvás employed magical chanting and singing, the eating of herbs and potions, and the use of a scepter-like wand in their trances. (See Gandr for more on Norse magic).

woad: a free-growing herbaceous perennial plant, its leaves used for its astringent, antiseptic, and blood-staunching properties, and to produce the colour blue for fabric dying.

wither: the highest point at the top of the shoulder of a horse or deer, marked by a projecting knob.

withy: a willow or willow wand; withy-man: a figure woven from such wands.

wool-wax: (also wool-oil, wool-fat) All earlier names for lanolin. Lanolin was extracted from sheep's wool by boiling washed wool in water. When the pan was left to cool, a milky white grease would be floating on top - the sheep's waterproofing. The globules were further refined by squeezing them through linen cloths. Lanolin was invaluable as a simple remedy for chapped and roughened skin. Blended with powdered or crushed herbs, it served as a medicinal salve.

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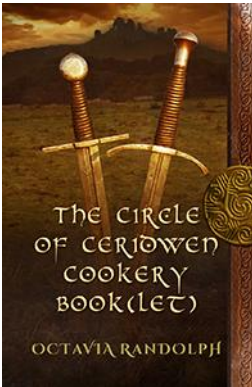
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The Glossary of Terms and other background information follow.

About the Author

Octavia Randolph has long been fascinated with the development, dominance, and decline of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. The path of her research has included disciplines as varied as the study of Anglo-Saxon and Norse runes, and learning to spin with a drop spindle. Her interests have led to extensive on-site research in England, Denmark, Sweden, and Gotland. In addition to the Circle Saga, she is the author of the novella [The Tale of Melkorka](#), taken from the Icelandic Sagas; the novella [Ride](#), a retelling of the story of Lady Godiva, first published in Narrative Magazine; and [Light, Descending](#), a biographical novel about the great John Ruskin. She has been awarded Artistic Fellowships at the Ingmar Bergman Estate on Fårö, Sweden; MacDowell Colony; Ledig House International; and Byrdcliffe.

She answers all fan mail and loves to stay in touch with her readers. Join her mailing list and read more on Anglo-Saxon and Viking life at www.octavia.net. Follow her on Facebook at Octavia Randolph Writer, and for exclusive access and content join the spirited members of The Circle of Ceridwen Saga Discussion and Idea Group on Facebook.