

BOOK NINE



THE CIRCLE OF
CERIDWEN SAGA

TWO DRAGONS

DRAGONES
DIE AE NOCTE
PUGNAVERUNT

OCTAVIA RANDOLPH

NEQUE DORMIERUNT
NEQUE COMEDERUNT.
DIXITQUE TAM INDUSTRII
ERANT DE QUIBUS ESSET
VIDERE SI PUGNARE
IDDERENT. REG ANXIUS
ET AUXILIUM PETO
IS VICTOR

List of Characters

Ceric, son of Ceridwen and Gyric, grandson of Godwulf of Kilton

Worr, the horse-thegn of Kilton, pledged man of Ceric

Edwin, Ceric's younger brother, Lord of Kilton in Wessex

Edgyth, Lady of Kilton, widow of Godwin, mother by adoption to Edwin

Dunnere, priest of Kilton

Begu, a woman of Kilton

Eorconbeald, captain of Edwin's body-guard

Hrald, son of Ælfwyn and Sidroc, Jarl of the Danish keep of Four Stones in Lindisse

Yrling, son of Ceridwen and Sidroc

Ælfwyn, Lady of Four Stones, mother to Hrald, widowed of Yrling; marriage dissolved with Sidroc

Burginde, companion and nurse to Ælfwyn

Bork, an orphan boy, taken in by Hrald

Ealhswith, daughter to Ælfwyn

Eanflad, youngest sister to Ælfwyn

Jari, a warrior of Four Stones, chief body-guard to Hrald

Kjeld, second in command at Four Stones, and body-guard to Hrald

Sigewif, Abbess of Oundle

Bova, consecrated nun and brewster at Oundle

Asberg, brother-in-law to Ælfwyn, in command at the fortress of Turcesig

Æthelthryth, sister of Ælfwyn, wed to Asberg

Raedwulf, Bailiff of Defenas in Wessex

Æthelred, Ealdorman and Lord of Mercia, son-in-law to King Ælfred

Æthelflaed, Lady of Mercia, daughter of Ælfred and wife to Æthelred

Pega of Mercia, ward of Æthelflaed

Mealla, companion to Pega, a maid of Éireann

Haward, a young Danish war-chief

Wilgot, the priest of Four Stones

Tilbert, steward of Geornaham, under the protection of Four Stones

Dagmar, daughter of the late Guthrum, King of the Danes in Angle-land

Vigmund, a Danish warrior, former body-guard of Guthrum

Heligo, King of Dane-mark

Haesten, a war-chief of the Danes

Ceridwen, Mistress of the hall Tyrsborg on the island of Gotland, wife to Sidroc

Eirian, daughter of Ceridwen and Sidroc

Sidroc the Dane, formerly Jarl of South Lindisse

Tindr, a bow hunter, and **Šeará**, his Sámi wife

Rodiaud, youngest daughter of Ceridwen and Sidroc

Eskil, a warrior of the Svear

Gunnvor, cook at Tyrsborg, and **Helga**, serving woman

Rannveig, a brewster on Gotland, mother of Tindr

Gudfrid, cook at Rannveig's brew-house

Berse, weapon-smith on Gotland

Hrald, father of Sidroc, and **Stenhild**, his Gotlandic wife

Gwydden, a Welsh priest, correspondent of Dunnere

Dwynwen, a noble maid of Ceredigion, in Wales

Elidon, King of Ceredigion in Wales, uncle to Dwywnwen

Luned, a woman of Wales

Two Dragons Maps



TWO DRAGONS

THE YEAR 895



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 Walpurga's (Walpurgisnacht) – 30 April

St Elgiva's Day - 18 May

St Helen's Day – 21 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 for followers of the Old Religions; also time of slaughter of animals which could not be kept over the coming Winter

Martinmas (St Martin's) - 11 November

Yuletide - 25 December to Twelfthnight - 6 January

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

Liturgical Hours of the Day

The Canonical Hours – special daily prayers, as practised by Oundle and other religious foundations, are as follows:

Matins, or night-watch, about 2 a.m.

Lauds at dawn

Prime (the "first hour") about 6 a.m.

Terce (the "third hour") about 9 a.m.

Sext (the "sixth hour") about noon

None (the "ninth hour") about 3 p.m.

Vespers, the lighting of the lamps, at sunset

Compline, or retiring to sleep

Anglo-Saxon Place Names, with Modern Equivalents

Æscesdun = Ashdown

Æthelinga = Athelney

Apulder = Appledore

Basingas = Basing

Beamfleot = Benfleet

Beardan = Bardney

Bearruescir = Berkshire

Bryeg = Bridgenorth

Buttingtun = Buttington

Caeginesham = Keynsham

Cippenham = Chippenham

Cirenceaster = Cirencester

Colneceastre = Colchester

Cruland = Croyland

Defenas = Devon

Englafeld = Englefield

Ethandun = Edington

Exanceaster = Exeter

Fearnhamme = Farnham

Fullanham = Fulham

Geornaham = Irnham

Glastunburh = Glastonbury

Gleaweceaster = Gloucester

Hamtunscir = Hampshire

Headleage = Hadleigh

Hreopedun = Repton

Iglea = Leigh upon Mendip

Jorvik (Danish name for Eoforwic) = York

Legaceaster = Chester

Limenemutha = Lymington in Hampshire

Lindisse = Lindsey

Lundenwic = London

Meredune = Marton

Meresig = Mersea

Middeltun = Milton

Readingas = Reading

River Lyge = River Lea

Scaftesburh = Shaftesbury

Scireburne = Sherborne

Snotingham = Nottingham

Sumorsaet = Somerset

Swanawic = Swanage

Turcesig = Torksey

Wedmor = Wedmore

Welingaford = Wallingford

Weogornaceastre = Worcester

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

Welsh Place Names:

Cymru = Wales

Glossary of Terms

Althing, and Thing: a regular gathering of citizens to settle disputes, engage in trade, and socialize. Gotland was divided into three administrative districts, each with their own “thing” or meeting, but the great thing, the Althing, was held at Roma, in the geographical centre of the island.

alvar: nearly barren stretches of limestone rock, typically supporting only tiny lichens and moss.

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.

ceorl: (“churl”) a free man ranking directly below a thegn, able to bear arms, own property, and improve his rank.

cottar: free agricultural worker; in later eras, a peasant.

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

drekar: “dragon-ship,” a war-ship of the Danes.

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.

fey: possessing magical or supernatural powers; one belonging to the Land of Faery.

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

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

fyrð: the massed forces of Wessex, comprising thegns – professional soldiers – and ceorls, trained freeman.

hack silver: broken silver jewellery, coils of unworked silver bars, fragments of cast ingots and other silver parcelled out by weight alone during trade.

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

leech-book: compilation of healing recipes and practices for the treatment of human and animal illness and injury. Such books were a compendium of healing herbs and spiritual and magical practices. The *Leech Book of Bald*, recorded during Ælfred’s reign, is a famed, and extant, example.

lur: a vertical (or curved) sounding horn fashioned of wood or brass, dating from the Bronze Age, and used in Nordic countries to rally folk from afar.

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

nard: (also, spikenard) a rare and precious oil, highly aromatic, derived from the crushed rhizomes of a honeysuckle-like plant grown in the Himalayas, India, and China. Mary Magdalen was said to have anointed the feet of Christ with nard.

philtre: a potion to excite love or lust in another.

quern: a small hand-driven mill consisting of two grind stones, the top stone usually being domed and having a hole to insert a wooden handle for turning. The oats, wheat, or other grain is placed between the stones, and the handle turned until the desired fineness is attained.

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.

scrying: to divine the future by gazing into a looking glass, a crystal, or water.

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

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.

Skuld: the eldest of the three Norse Norns, determiners of men’s destinies. Skuld cuts with shears the thread of life. See also Urd and Verdandi.

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 “capture the King” strategy board game.

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.

treen: domestic objects fashioned of wood, especially tableware.

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.

Urd: the youngest of the three Norse Norns, determiners of men's destinies. Urd makes decision as to one's calling and station in life. See also Skuld and Verdandi.

Verdandi: the middle of the three Norse Norns, determiners of men's destinies. Verdandi draws out the thread of life to appropriate length. See also Skuld and Urd.

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

wergild: Literally, man-gold; the amount of money each man's life was valued at. The Laws of Æthelbert, a 7th century King of Kent, for example, valued the life of a nobleman at 300 shillings (equivalent to 300 oxen), and a ceorl was valued at 100 shillings. By Ælfred's time (reigned 871-899) a nobleman was held at 1200 shillings and a ceorl at 200.

Notes to Two Dragons

Chapter the Fifth

Ashild's hallowing. In the early middle ages, local heroes and wise women were often venerated, with many referred to as saints. Much of this was done outside the formal processes of canonization from Rome, a series of attribution and proofs which was ever-developing. Some of those venerated had religious vocations, as nuns, abbesses, monks, priests, bishops, hermits or anchorites; others were men and women renowned for healing, or warrior-kings for their courage and self-sacrifice. Remains of their influence can be found in many place names in Great Britain. Two useful references are *The Hallowing of England* by Fr. Andrew Phillips, Anglo-Saxon Books 1994; and *The Book of Welsh Saints* by T.D. Breverton, Glyndŵr Publishing, 2000.

Chapter the Twelfth

Heligo, King of Denmark (also recorded as Helge and Halge). The records of ninth century Denmark are appallingly slim. Without educated religious such as monks and nuns to record history, little was saved, and that sometimes only years later. Adam of Bremen in the 11th century notes a briefly-ruling late 9th century Danish King of this name. I have given this scrap of information the job of serving as the King to whom Vigmund is attached.

Chapter the Thirteenth

Ivar, King of the Svear or “King in Uppsala”. We know nothing of the 9th century Kings of Sweden. It is extraordinary but true that the King of the Svear the Gotlanders made a treaty with goes unnamed in the Gutasaga. Ivar is the name of a legendary early King, and I have repurposed this name and bestowed it on the late 9th century monarch who Eskil represents on Gotland.

The Gutasaga. This foundation story is the Saga of the Gutes – the Gotlanders. This brief document describes the history of the island from the arrival of the first man, Tjelvar, who Prometheus-like, kindled fire and thus kept Gotland from sinking beneath the waves of the Baltic each night. It mentions the deal struck with the unnamed King of Uppsala, and describes the coming of Christianity to the island. The Gutasaga was composed in the Old Gutnish dialect of Old Norse possibly between 1220 and 1285, and committed to parchment later, surviving in a single manuscript, Codex Holmensis B64, dated to about 1350. The MS is housed at the National Library of Sweden in Stockholm.

Chapter the Sixteenth

Haesten. As noted in Book Eight, *For Me Fate Wove This*, Haesten disappears from the annals of history in 894. This allows the novelist free rein in imagining a suitable end for a bedevilling foe, one in which Hrald, the young Jarl of Four Stones, comes into full play, protecting his interests and those of his folk. He settles a score for many in his act of justice.

Chapter the Seventeenth

Raedwulf's sapphire: Sapphires were exceedingly rare in 9th century England. It is not likely that any living there had ever seen a sapphire, let alone possessed one. Raedwulf's stating that he had taken it as battle-gain from a Dane he had killed underscores that only a trader/raider in contact with the flow of luxury goods along the Silk Road would have access to such a gemstone. I like to think that Raedwulf's gift eventually ended up as the real sapphire, known as St Edward's sapphire, fronting the crown of Queen Victoria, on display in the Tower of London. This is the oldest gemstone in the vast array of stones in the royal collection, and believed to have been part of Edward's coronation ring in 1042.

Chapter the Twenty-first

Trystan and Esyllt. Welsh names for the legendary, and doomed, lovers Tristan and Iseult.

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The Circle of Ceridwen Saga:

[Sidroc the Dane: A Circle of Ceridwen Saga Story](#)

[The Circle of Ceridwen: Book One](#)

[Ceridwen of Kilton: Book Two](#)

[The Claiming: Book Three](#)

[The Hall of Tyr: Book Four](#)

[Tindr: Book Five](#)

[Silver Hammer, Golden Cross: Book Six](#)

[Wildswept: Book Seven](#)

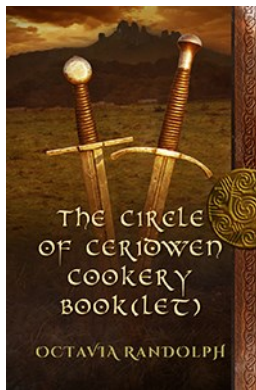
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About the Author

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; 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 Author, and for exclusive access and content join the spirited members of The Circle of Ceridwen Saga Discussion and Idea Group on Facebook.