Great Heathen Army
“The champion who comes into Odin’s dwelling does not lament his death.”
-Ragnar Lodbrok
Greetings Delegates,

Our names are Eric Vistnes and Dhruv Sanger, and we are your Directors for the WUMUNS 2015 Great Heathen Army committee. We are both extremely excited to take part in this year's WUMUNS as your Directors. Both of us are members of the class of 2018 in the School of Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, and we look forward to exploring the issues and topics that were prevalent during the time of the Great Heathen Army. If you have any questions about our background guide or the committee, feel free to contact one or both of us and we will respond as soon as possible.

This committee will represent the council of Viking leaders that were a part of the Great Heathen Army, which was formed in 865 C.E. This gathering of Vikings, the largest the world had ever seen, was commanded by Ivar the Boneless who sought revenge for the death of his father, Ragnar Lodbrok. Delegates in this committee will need to be cunning and ready for the schemes of other delegates. Crises will take advantage of the backstabbing nature of Viking alliances, so be wary of betrayal, as it will be prevalent in this committee. You should also become familiar with some of the more popular sagas of the time period, as they will help you understand the nature (morals and mindset) of Vikings during this time period.

We wish you the best of luck when preparing and we can’t wait to see the fruits of your efforts!

Sincerely,

Eric Vistnes and Dhruv Sanger
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Committee Mandate

This committee represents the council of the Viking Jarls and other Norseman of great renown that presided over the Great Heathen Army. This body is the unification of many military forces of varying sizes that each Jarl provides for the army. Together, this army is the largest gathering of Vikings ever seen on this Earth.

This body is meeting for the first time in the year 865 C.E., as the army approaches the shores of modern day England. Currently the British Isles are comprised of various nations that the Vikings will encounter during this committee. The Norse on the other hand are not part of a country or nation; they simply follow a religion and lifestyle.

This committee has the power to direct troops, engage in combat, create peace terms, and generally enact any action involving the military. Each delegate will have his/her own personal powers that extend past these limitations. You will find these elaborations in the Delegates portion of the background guide.

The overall goal of this committee is to lead the military force through the war in a manner that will lead to victory with the fewest losses. Of course, in a council with such a lack of unity, the delegates will need to solve issues of leadership, treachery, and decision-making. As such, a key factor in this committee is the ability to balance those interplaying issues with the main goal of the committee.

Committee Background

The age of the Vikings began in 793 C.E and cemented itself as a major period in European history.\(^1\) The Scandinavian region that makes up modern day Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark was home to these Norsemen and housed the largest population of Norsemen that would eventually be known as Vikings. During the Viking Age, Scandinavia largely adopted a feudal-like system comprised of Jarls, Karls and Thralls.\(^2\) The Jarls were similar to aristocrats and nobles in other western societies; they lived in vast halls and presided over land and people. These were the wealthiest of the Norsemen and generally they held hereditary titles, which were passed down to their eldest son. The Karls were the peasant class in Scandinavia, and almost every Karl worked the land. Many Karls had other occupations, such as smiting or crafting, but being a farmer was more of a lifestyle than an occupation during the Viking age. These men also served the Jarls that held domain in the area and generally raided other lands during the

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seasons when they could not plant, harvest, or otherwise do their work. The final social class was the Thralls, the slaves of the Norsemen. These slaves were either hostages taken during a raid, victims of slave trade, or even former freemen that were serving for punishment. Unlike many other slave nations, the Vikings did not abuse Thralls, in fact, most were treated well and were even able to purchase freedom if they saved enough coin.³

One Viking that became renowned throughout Europe was Ragnar Lodbrok.⁴ The man was a Viking Jarl of great fame and wealth who fathered five sons, who each became famous in their own right. The Vikings were notorious for their raids of villages on the English shores, however none more so than the Viking fleets under the command of Ragnar Lodbrok. As one of the most notorious Viking Jarls of the Viking Age, Ragnar commanded a fleet of 30 massive longships that wreaked havoc across the whole coastline of the British Isles. Amongst his crew were men who represented the most hardened Viking warriors of the time, so hardened in fact that they could have been renowned Jarls if given the chance.

Under Ragnar’s command, the coastline of Northumbria had been savaged by vicious Nordic raids for years. Villagers in the isolated coastal settlements lived in fear for their lives. On one such invasion in the winter of 864, the Ragnar was ambushed and seized by the men of King Ælla of Northumbria, who avenged the deaths of his people by throwing Ragnar into a pit of snakes.⁵

Ragnar’s five sons took umbrage at the execution of their father and joined together to lead the largest coalition of Vikings the world had ever seen. It is the council that leads this army, which is now prepared to sail to the shores of Northumbria and beyond all in the search of vengeance.

Viking honor demanded that Ragnar Lodbrok’s sons take revenge for the brutal murder of their father through an equally humiliating and painful manner, which led them to join together to exact their revenge. This gathering of Ragnar Lodbrok’s sons and the army that formed around them came to be known as the Great Heathen Army. Of their siblings, Bjorn Ironside and Halfdan Ragnarsson had earned the most fame in battle and commanded the most respect, which led to their placement as commanders of the army.

As it stands, the massive conglomerate of Vikings that numbers near 9,000 approaches the shores of East Anglia on hundreds of transport ships. East Anglia may be the landing point of the army but it is one of the smallest of the countries on the British Isles. From there, the committee must choose where to continue on their conquest. The options are: Northumbria, home of King Ælla, in the North; Wessex, a nation divided between two brothers, in the South; and Mercia, the strongest of the nations, in the center of the country. In order to travel to any other nation, the army must first travel through Mercia due to the arrangement of nations on the island.

**Viking Morals**

The aspect of Norse society that is most well known in modern times is the Viking raids. These swift and effective strikes on coastal settlements were common events from the 8th to the 11th century. The broad bottom of the Scandinavian raiding ships allowed the Vikings to move far inland through rivers and streams before striking and moving on. These guerilla tactics wreaked havoc throughout Northern Europe and even as far as Africa. The survivors of the raids spread horror stories about their ordeals and the Vikings soon gained the reputation of a savage, brutal people. Of course, the Vikings did not view their actions in the same manner as their victims. In fact, Vikings considered raids a normal and necessary act.

The Viking Sagas that illustrate the vast Norse history explain that Scandinavians view raiding as an entirely different concept than stealing. In chapter 46 of Egil’s Viking Saga Skalla-Grimssonar, the Viking warrior Egill steals a man’s treasure without the man’s knowledge. Afterwards, Egill realizes that he has stolen and returns in order to set the man’s house ablaze. While brutal, burning the house down ensured that his actions are no longer viewed as theft in the eyes of the Vikings because Egill killed for his acquisition; he is a hero taking what becomes rightfully his. The Vikings condemn pure thievery and believe that theft is an act that condemns a man to a place of torment after death.

The Viking sagas categorized many ideals and morals that, while different from modern practice, maintain order in a culture that is so often seen as uncivilized and chaotic. Apart from the lesson taught about Egill, Vikings value bravery above all else. Cowards are condemned, and the only way to Valhalla, the equivalent of Heaven for Vikings, is to die in battle. The other key to becoming a powerful Viking is prestige. Prestige and fame were gained through victory in

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battle and courage during a fight. Vikings expected to die, but to go into battle without fear was the mark of a true Viking.

Another important aspect of Viking social order, and one that was quite unusual for its time, was the mobility through social classes. The Norse believed that if the stars aligned correctly, a Thrall could become a Karl and a Karl could become a Jarl. These occurrences are far from rare in Norse history and serve to create a unique culture. While many European nations view Vikings as barbarous, the practices of the Scandinavian people were all pragmatic and with some supporting justification.

Military

The Vikings were not a people who were prone to going to war. That may come as a surprise to many who know about Viking raids but it is unconditionally true. While the Scandinavian warriors were not peaceful and enjoyed raiding along the coast of other nations, they had never partaken in a war until the Great Heathen Army was formed. Thus, certain militaristic aspects of the Great Heathen Army are wholly unsuited to a long, drawn out, war.

For example, it surprises many people that Vikings are not actually suited for naval combat even though so much of their lifestyle is based around their longships and naval transport. Viking ships were not equipped with any form of weaponry meaning that if Vikings encountered another vessel they would use bow and arrows, which most Vikings always had on their person, to attack the enemy and board the ship once close enough.9 Beyond that, the Scandinavian ships had no warfare capabilities.

A Viking’s true prowess was found in close combat using a multitude of weapons. The spear was, by far, the most common weapon used by the common Viking raider. These spears were used for both throwing and thrusting, and it is said that the deadliest of warriors could even catch a spear mid-flight and hurl it back with extreme accuracy. The battle-axe was the next most commonly used weapon among raiders. Vikings could use the axe to either hew down an enemy in close combat or as a ranged weapon. The axes that Vikings used were not large, heavy weapons but rather small and quick blades. The least common of weapons was the sword due to the difficulty of crafting them. Generally swords were symbols of status and would be decorated with inlays and elaborate hilts as well as given names. The Scandinavians did not fight in a fashion that utilized their numbers or called upon elaborate tactics, and instead fought in an individual manner. Warriors prided themselves not only on their speed and strength, but also on their mental prowess. Viking fighters were efficient and clever, and a Viking warrior would do everything necessary to win a fight from throwing away his weapon, to using nearby items, to pulling down an enemy’s trousers to slow him. Owning a weapon was a sign of being a freeman in Scandinavia, thus every fighting man had experience with his weapon, whether it is a spear, axe, sword, or bow. Each soldier had his own warrior code, unique or generic, that guided how he fought his battles. Many Vikings were cunning and would stop at nothing to win a fight while others held honor above all else. Then there were the berserkers, whose only code was that Odin had granted them with the strength of invulnerability and because of this, wore no armor into battle and paid no heed to any injuries. It was said that these berserkers would enter into a battle frenzy so intense they would die of their wounds without feeling any pain. One aspect of Viking warfare that could be detrimental to an army is that Vikings were almost completely inexperienced in siege warfare. While a Viking might know how to raid a town rapidly and move out once the town is completely sacked, they don’t generally attack a well-protected area and put it under siege for weeks on end. This may result in the Viking army having to use unconventional measures to conquer the castles and forts of the opposing nation rather than resorting to catapults, trebuchets, or battering rams as is convention throughout the rest of Europe.

Topic A: Avenging the Death of Ragnar Lodbrok

The brutal execution of Ragnar Lodbrok, a legendary Jarl renowned in the Viking kingdoms, in the winter of 864 at the hands of King Ælla of Northumbria shocked and unified the Viking forces in a quest for revenge.¹⁵

Now in the spring of 865, having just landed on the shores of Northumbria, the sons and supporters of the deceased Jarl have vowed to avenge the gruesome death of their father and leader with all the strength and ferocity of the Great Heathen Army.¹⁶ However, little is known of the current whereabouts of the King of Northumbria. Rumor has it that he is protected in one of his mighty castles far inland, cognizant of an expected backlash from Viking forces for his execution of Ragnar. The size and strength of his army is currently unknown, but his subjects are devoted to his cause and are willing to put their lives at stake to protect their king. It is not clear whether the current numbers of the Great Heathen Army are enough to mount an assault on the King’s army, given the shortcomings of Viking warfare away from coastlines. The allocation of resources and strategies of the Army are to be determined by the committee.

Starting on the shores of East Anglia, the committee must plan its ventures inland to find and capture King Ælla of Northumbria and exact revenge for his execution of Ragnar in a manner that will appease the Gods and the warriors who fought for him. The committee must figure out how to deal with obstacles such as the rough terrain; the scarcity of food, water, and shelter; and the Northumbrian warriors who are far more familiar with their own lands; among other unforeseen threats. The Vikings must also adapt to their weakness in mountain warfare by devising battle strategies to overcome their opponents.¹⁷ In an unknown, foreign land, the Great Heathen Army will be under constant threat of ambush attacks and guerrilla tactics from the Northumbrian forces, and the committee should look to devise strategies to deal with this threat.

While the sons and avid supporters of Ragnar have a great incentive to find the King of Northumbria and avenge the death of the Jarl, many of the unaffiliated members of the committee have little motivation for putting their forces at risk for this dangerous mission, and are far more interested in conquering the English kingdoms. How will the committee deal with this reluctance from certain factions of the army? Does the army have the ability to execute both the revenge mission and the conquest?

Topic B: Conquest and Survival in England

The Vikings of Scandinavia hail from sparse lands with a harsh, cold climate. The thinly scattered population lives by farming and fishing but the

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unforgiving winters do little for the people to support this way of life. As a result, the Vikings are compelled to survive through raids and conquest in the high seas. The milder climate of England, coupled with its proximity to the Viking kingdoms, makes it a productive target for raids and conquests. Thus, the Great Heathen Army has landed on the shores of Eastern England with more than just revenge in mind.18

England is currently governed by four independent kingdoms: Northumbria in the north, Mercia in its center, East Anglia to the east, and Wessex in the South. Movement between the kingdoms is not difficult, as the borders are not particularly well protected. However, all of the kingdoms are well defended by strong armies, and it is known that the southernmost kingdom, Wessex, has the strongest of all the armies, whose size outnumbers the Vikings. Rumor has it that the kingdoms of England are aware of the impending attack by the Vikings and are willing to set aside their differences and cooperate to end the threat of the Vikings.19 20 If this were to happen, it would spell great danger for the Great Heathen Army and its conquest of England. Will the Viking forces be able to cut off communications between the kingdoms in time, thereby reducing the chances of a coalition of forces between the English kingdoms? What else can the army and the leaders do to prevent this threat? While not renowned for their diplomatic skill, the Vikings may have to resort to other methods of persuasion, coercion, and negotiation to achieve their goals.

Viking warfare, despite its renowned ferocity and brutality, is curtailed by the onset of frigid weather. Food is extremely scarce, and the warriors, who already carry heavy armor and weapons, are weighed down further by the thick furs required during the harsh winters and therefore do not engage in full scale battle during the coldest months of the year.21 The committee must therefore prepare to adapt its resources and battle strategies for each season. The leaders of the Great Heathen Army must decide how to go about their conquest by deciding the routes they choose to take, which of the kingdoms to attack first and how to proceed if the first conquest is successful, and how best to rule over the lands if they have been conquered by the army. During the conquest, the army is likely to encounter villages and towns, some of which are walled. At times, open warfare is not possible and sieges may be a more effective strategy; however, some walled cities are able to withstand a siege for long periods. The committee must then decide on how else to approach the conquest of these settlements.

It is inevitable that the conquest of England will be a long, drawn out conflict spanning more than a few seasons. The Great Heathen Army lacks the supplies to survive in England for an extended period of time, and therefore the committee must use whatever means necessary to secure food and shelter from some towns and cities during the harsh winters.

Topic C: Viking Unity

The Viking population in Scandinavia is sparse and thinly scattered. The communities are isolated by the rough terrain as well as the vast North Sea. Consequently, there has been hostility between opposing Viking factions since the dawn of the Viking Age, and it has proved very difficult for Viking leaders to bring together warriors to fight for the same cause. Although the popular Jarl Ragnar Lodbrok unified the different kingdoms to a certain extent, his death has created a major leadership vacuum in the Viking kingdoms and there is very little sense of camaraderie between the troops and leaders of the Great Heathen Army. If the conquest of England is to succeed, it is crucial that the different factions of the Viking Army come together in the imminent war. There are also several smaller armies at the command of other Jarls that are not a part of the English conquest and they have yet to pledge their allegiance to any side. Will another leader be able to rise to power and unify the fragmented Viking forces?

The sons of the deceased Lodbrok all have ambitions to ascend to power in the manner that their legendary father did, but none have asserted their claim thus far. Additionally, there are numerous noblemen and chiefs in the committee who are also interested in ascending to positions of power. For a successful conquest of England, it is important for the Great Heathen Army to rally behind one man the way they did with the deceased Jarl. How this issue is resolved is the responsibility of the committee. History suggests that the chance of one clear leader emerging remains slim.

Another serious complication in bringing together factions of the Viking armies is the growth of Christianity among the “common warriors” in the armies. The fact that the Anglo-Saxons of England are Christian adds another dynamic to the planned conquest. The rest of the army, who still believe in the mythical Norse Gods, feel threatened by the growing popularity of Christianity. This is a secondary issue that members of the committee would do well to address swiftly, before it is elevated to a level that divides the entire army and compromises the great conquest.

Delegate Positions

Ivar the Boneless is the eldest son of deceased Jarl Ragnar Lodbrok, and a legendary warrior who earned his nickname for his immense flexibility. He has built a fanatical following among a small band of skilled, sword wielding warriors that are under his command, but he still does not have the widespread popular support and backing that his father did. While he understands the need to avenge his father’s death and punish the king of Northumbria, his primary goal is to conquer England and to rule over one of the English kingdoms.

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Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye

Sigurd Snake-in-the-Eye is a son of Ragnar, and another commander in the Viking Army. He is renowned for his cunning and his skill as a strategist in open warfare. He earned his nickname due to the shape of his pupil, closely resembling a snake. He aspires to become the most powerful leader in all of the Viking kingdoms and assert his authority in the army. Known for his intellect, he is a respected strategist as well as a skilled negotiator. He does not like to see unnecessary bloodshed but will do whatever needs to be done to lead his warriors to victory.

Ubba

Ubba is the youngest son of Ragnar, and another one of the commanders of the Great Heathen Army. He is said to be the son that most closely resembles his father, and for that reason he is feared by opposition in battle. It is rumored that Ubba has been blessed by the Gods with the power to communicate with his deceased father in his dreams, and for this reason he is a devout believer in the Old Norse Gods. Due to this mythical connection with his father, he believes he could be the leader his father was. He is desperate to avenge the death of his father and will stop at nothing to defeat the king of Northumbria.

Eysteinn Beli

One of the powerful Jarls of Sweden and friend of the deceased Ragnar, Eysteinn is one of the wealthiest men in all of the Viking kingdoms. He commands a significant naval fleet in the Viking Army and possesses one of the few boats capable of naval warfare. Eysteinn has built up his fortune thus far by making wise decisions and is aware that war and conflict come at a heavy price. For this reason, he values the power of diplomacy above all else.

Guthrum

A legendary warrior that is renowned among all Vikings, Guthrum is a powerful Danish Jarl, and the leader of a large, independent, Viking army. He is yet to commit his forces to the Great Heathen Army but his tactical knowledge and skill in battle is invaluable. Guthrum has under his control certain warriors that are adept with mountainous warfare and have experience with fighting far inland. Not a great supporter of Ragnar, Guthrum is interested in conquering the fertile lands of Southern England.

Bagsecg

A rising power among the Vikings of Norway, Bagsecg has risen from the status of a Thrall all the way to a Jarl. He is admired by the common warriors for his ascent to power, and he commands a significant faction of the Great Heathen Army. Bagsecg is known to despise the Viking nobility that inherited their wealth and status. His forces had no previous allegiance to Ragnar, and he has little respect for his sons. The interests of Bagsecg’s forces are with the conquest of England and do not align whatsoever with the revenge mission against the King of Northumbria.

Borhildr the Brute

Borhildr the Brute is a renowned warrior in the Great Heathen Army known for his ferocity in battle. He is notorious and feared for refusing to follow the orders of any of his commanders and forced his way into the committee of the Great Heathen Army. A giant of a man, Borhildr wears no armor into battle and wields nothing more than an enormous axe. Little is known about his agenda, but it is speculated that he enjoys nothing more than the bloodiest of battles.

Greniadr Freysteinson

Greniadr Freysteinson is a Danish Jarl and long time supporter of the Great Heathen Army. He provides ships for the naval fleet and expects to be heavily
rewarded after the conquest in the form of land in the new English territories. Greniadr and his warriors are not particularly concerned with revenge for Ragnar, but more for conquering all of the English kingdoms. Greniadr is himself not a warrior and understands that many conflicts can be solved without lifting an axe. The violent ways of the Vikings have led Greniadr to question the Norse Gods, and he has recently converted to Christianity in the hope that it can lead him to peace.

**Hardbein Mottulssen**

Hardbein Mottulssen is a famous Norwegian Jarl and a key ally of the deceased Ragnar Lodbrok. He controls his own army and naval fleet that are fiercely loyal to him and is currently independent of the Great Heathen Army. Hardbein is, however, a supporter of the conquest of England as he has orchestrated several successful raids on its shorelines. Hardbein, along with his forces, favor small-scale ambush attacks and raids as opposed to open warfare. Consequently, they are highly skilled at performing such attacks quickly and effectively.

**Oscytel**

A warrior turned priest who is a recent convert to Christianity, Oscytel has garnered a strong following of converts from a minority of warriors and represents them as their leader. He questioned his own beliefs in the Norse Gods at a very young age, and on his first raid of the English shores as a warrior, he discovered the existence of Christianity. His ambitions are to spread the word of God to the Jarls of the committee and to grow the influence of Christianity in the Great Heathen Army.

**Ricsige**

Ricsige is an Anglo-Saxon nobleman from the Southern kingdom of Wessex who has recently pledged loyalty to the Great Heathen Army in return for the Vikings sparing his kinsmen and rewarding him handsomely after the conquest. Ricsige also practices the Christian faith and is keen to spread word of the religion. He has great knowledge on the kingdoms of England and has the resources to infiltrate the communication networks of the English kingdoms. The Anglo-Saxons are currently unaware of his treason.

**Svafar Aleifirson**

Svafar Aleifirson is the Jarl of Denmark who is known as the wealthiest man in all of the Viking kingdoms. He commands a very small army that has pledged its support to the Great Heathen Army, but he is also in command of effectively the entire blacksmith industry in the Danish kingdoms, which forges weapons and armor for warriors. He expects to be heavily rewarded for his support with a large portion of one of the English kingdoms. He is therefore far more interested in using the valuable resources of the army towards the conquest of England than seeking revenge.

**Hallbjorn the Halfhand**

A powerful naval commander and fearsome warrior, Hallbjorn is the captain of the mightiest ship in the fleet that carries the most Vikings and is able to traverse the high seas far longer than any other. He is revered as a great warrior in the high seas. He earned his name after losing four fingers in one hand after a fierce battle on the shores of northern England. His forces are supremely skilled at battling on the coastlines and favor open warfare when inland.

**Arnmodr Tyrfingrson**

A Norwegian Viking Jarl, Arnmodr commands a brigade in the Great Heathen Army with legendary skill in siege warfare. Arnmodr and his man are thought to be blessed by the gods for being able to survive in the harshest of conditions,
without food and water for weeks on end. Hailing from a mountainous terrain with steep hills and cliffs, Arnmodr and his men are known to be able to scale steep and vertical surfaces with ease, making them the ideal warriors to take against any walled city.

**Vilmundrm**

Vilmundrm is a renowned warrior who has ascended from his status as one of the common folk to contest the currently vacant position of outright Leader of the Viking Army along with the sons of the deceased king. He has the popular support of many of the common warriors. His skill with a sword is legendary in all of the Viking kingdoms. He pledges to kill the King of Northumbria if chosen as leader, but maintains that the priority of the Great Heathen Army should be to conquer England.

**Bjornolf Neri**

The master of coin for the Great Heathen Army, Bjornolf relies on his connections with the Norwegian and Danish Jarls to finance the conquest. All large-scale allocation and resource management decisions pass through Bjornolf, who is respected for his wisdom and his shrewd, calculated manner. He questions the wisdom of undertaking both the revenge mission against the King of Northumbria as well as the conquest of England as he believes it would be too expensive to finance both.

**Hrolleifur Sigfastr**

Currently a Karl and a representative of the common warriors of the Great Heathen Army, Hrolleifur Sigfastr is tasked with ensuring the needs of men are addressed and handled in the committee. He is also responsible for the supply of food and for ensuring that the warriors are well fed and healthy at all times, especially during the winters. He is an influential character due to the sheer number of warriors he represents. Since he cares for the lives of these warriors, he believes that the bravest thing a Viking can do is defeat his enemy with words, not blades.

**Skialgrnan the Seer**

Skialgrnan the Seer is a Norse spiritual leader and wise elder who the Gods have blessed with the power to foresee the future. Legend says that he is able to see the outcome of future battles and advises forces to act accordingly. The warriors that seek the counsel of Skialgrnan and the blessing of the Gods have not lost a battle in many moons. However, Skialgrnan faces a growing threat to the belief in the Norse Gods and his own mythical status from the growing popularity and the recent converts to Christianity. The presence of Christian converts in the committee rankles him immensely.

**Herthalga**

One of Ragnar’s wives, Herthalga is known for her legendary skill as a tactician in warfare and raiding. Herthalga favors raiding and ambush warfare as she abides by the theory that a swift strike of the blade makes for the quickest death. It was rumored that Ragnar sought Herthalga’s counsel before any sort of conquest, and the one time he failed to do so, he was captured and executed by the King of Northumbria. The leaders of the Great Heathen Army would be wise not to make the same mistake this time around. She is greatly respected by all members of this committee.

**Fridaling**

The daughter of one of Sweden’s most powerful Jarls, Fridaling is known in all of the Viking kingdoms for her powers as a miracle healer. She is considered to possess gifts that only the Gods could have blessed her with, but her own beliefs
in Norse mythology have been challenged by Christianity more recently. Despite her gifts as a healer, she despises bloodshed and is fiercely vocal about preventing any loss of life, and she has found that the Norse Gods are too inclined toward death and brutality.

Any man that has ever witnessed Matilda in battle will know that the supposed physical superiority of men is little more than a myth. She is a male-despising warrior as fearsome and ruthless as any man in this committee, and commands a faction of all female warriors in the Great Heathen Army that are notorious for slaughtering any man and boy strong enough to hold a sword that they encounter but sparing the lives of all women. She favors open warfare, as opposed to raiding, and enjoys nothing more than the look of horror in a man’s eyes when he knows he stands no chance of defeating a woman in combat.

Eiríkr Half-Shield is known as one of the fiercest fighters in Scandinavia; a berserker who revels in the rage of battle. It is said that berserkers are Odin’s chosen warriors, and the strength that Eiríkr and his men show in battle only support this suspicion. Their divine connection to the gods, through imbibing various leads to unheard of prowess with the shield and spear, as well as dulling their senses completely of pain. The sight of Eiríkr and his warriors rushing into battle, clothed only in wolf pelts, has struck fear into the hearts of hundreds of men who have borne witness. Eiríkr’s roving band of berserkers owe loyalty to no man but the gods, and chose to fight simply for a love of battle. While those loyal to him may fit within one ship, it is undeniable that each are worth ten men in battle. However, others would be wise to be wary of Eiríkr for on many occasions he has broken the laws of god and men by massacring fellow Vikings on a raid when caught un the bloodlust.

A renowned blacksmith and currently the quartermaster of the Great Heathen Army, Vali Havardrson is responsible for the maintenance and distribution of arms throughout the army. Alongside weapons, he also cares for the horses and the armor that the men of the army will take into battle. Though Vali Havardrson is the official quartermaster, the task of distributing food lies with Hrolleifur Sigfastr. While the two are not outright hostile toward each other, Havardrson feels that he should rightfully hold Sigfastr’s job. Havardrson finds great joy in seeing his weapons being put to good use and has a great deal of pride in the quality of his work. Perhaps this stems from his belief that to honor the Norse gods, Vikings must never shy from battle. However, he is not above misusing his power as quartermaster to get what he wants from the rest of the war council.
Bibliography


