

## Chapter 10 - The Ancient Icelandic Pedigree, the Saga Era

**Travel to Iceland:** My first exploration of places involved in my Icelandic genealogy was in North America rather than Iceland. In 2015, my wife and I were on an extended trip in Eastern Canada. We took the ferry from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland. Our intended goal was to visit L'Anse aux Meadows at the furthest northern tip of Newfoundland. When I was growing up, some thought that the story of Leif Eiriksson finding his way to North America was the stuff of myth and Columbus was the touted discoverer of the New World. But in 1960, archeologists excavating at L'Anse aux Meadows determined that this site was indeed occupied by the Norse people and many look upon it today as the mysterious "Vinland" identified in the Vinland Sagas.

It has been estimated that the L'Anse aux Meadows site had been occupied in about the year 1000. The Vinland Sagas were written some 200 years later. They describe the family of Þorfinnur Karlsefni Þordarson and his wife Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir as the first Europeans to attempt permanent settlement in the New World. While there, their son Snorri Þorfinnsson was born. After three years in North America, these pioneers returned to Iceland and settled in Glaumbaer (Skagafjordursýsla), where according to the sagas, they prospered in part by selling items acquired in the New World to Europeans.

On September 16, 2002 an article in the *Los Angeles Times* titled "Archeological find bolsters 13<sup>th</sup> century Saga" was published. The article described how a University of California at Los Angeles team of archeologists had discovered a 1000-year old Viking Age farmhouse in north Iceland that may have belonged to Snorri Þorfinnsson, the first European born in the New World and the son of the prominent figures in the Icelandic Sagas. One of the archeologists stated: "We may have found this farmhouse that's been the stuff of legends for nearly a millennium."

The family that lived here just happens to be among the many Icelanders who are my ancestors. Our trip to Iceland took place in August 2023. On this trip we would see some of the places where my ancestors had lived. We were fortunate to be able to make this trip through the Snorri Plus program. The Snorri Plus program (named after Snorri Þorfinnsson) operates a tour of Iceland designed specifically for persons from North America of Icelandic descent. The focus of the tour is on studying the history and culture of Iceland. It included instructional presentations in Icelandic history, culture, language, genealogy, and political science. On this tour we would visit many places that held importance to our ancestors. Many of whom are described in this chapter and the preceding chapter.

In Reykjavik we toured the "Settlement Exhibition." This place was where the remains of a Viking long house had been discovered when an excavation was being done for some new construction. It was most likely occupied during the Settlement Era. That being said, it can be speculated that this quite possibly could be the home that my ancestor Ingólfur Árnarson lived in, since he is considered to have been the first settler in Reykjavik.

## Traces Through World History

We visited the President of Iceland at his residence at Bessastaðir. It was located on a point of land called Alftanes. Our ancestor Ásbjörn Özurarson was the first settler on Alftanes.

We had a lunch of traditional Icelandic “meat soup” at a farm and resort called Úthlið which means in English “outer slope.” The first settler here was my ancestor Ásgeir Úlfsson.

We encountered a number of places in the Dalir region where my ancestors had lived. This was in an area that surrounded the Hvamms Fjord. This area is known as the Golden Saga Circle. It is the land of the *Laxdæla Saga*. The characters of this saga are also found in the previous chapter from the *Book of Settlements*.

We started our tour of Dalir at the place where we had our lodging at Laugar í Sælingsdalur, which means in English (hot springs in sweet or happy valley). It is also called Guðrúnarlaug í Dölum (Guðrún hot spring in Dalir). This is where my ancestor Guðrún Osvífursdóttir was born in about 965. It is now a resort with hotel, swimming pool, hot spring, restaurant and campground.

We started our tour of Dalir by going to the Center of Leif Eiriksson or Vinlandssetur. It was located in the small town of Búðardalur. This museum told the story of how Eirik the Red discovered Greenland. Also how his son Leif Eiriksson discovered North America. So now we were at the other end of the same story that we learned at L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland above. Among the characters of this story were our ancestors Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir and her husband Þorfinnur Karlsefni Þorðarson. Our next stop after that was a dairy called Erpstaðir which was about 3 miles northwest of a settlement farm called Vífilsdal. This was the farm originally settled by Vífill Ketilsson who was the grandfather of Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir which means she probably was raised in the Dalir region.

One of the Dalir regions most prominent early settlers was my ancestor Auður (the Deep Minded) Ketilsdóttir. She made her farm at Hvammur, just a few miles south of where we stayed at Laugar í Sælingsdalur. She was an early Christian in Iceland. A place by her farm was called Kross Hills, where sources state that she went to pray. A stone cross has been erected there to commemorate this. On our tour we drove right past Hvammur and Kross Hills. Ólafur "Feilan" Þorsteinsson was the grandson of Auður the Deep Minded and was raised by her.

My ancestor Dala-Kollur Grímsson was Auður’s leading and most respected man. He established his farm along the Laxárdalur River and valley that is directly east of the town of Búðardalur. Just a few miles south of Búðardalur is a point of land called Kambsnes. My ancestor Hrótur Herjólfsson established a farm called Hrótsstaðir near Kambsnes.

My ancestor Eysteinn Álfsson was connected by marriage to Auður the Deep Minded. He first settled on the east shore of Hrótafjörður. But later he moved back to Dalir.

We left Dalir and toured north to the town of Drangnes and then turned south and followed along the west shore of Hrótafjörður. By the end of that day we were in Iceland’s second largest city, Akureyri. It sits on the western shore of Eyjafjörður. This entire territory was settled and claimed by my ancestor Helgi “the Lean” Eyvindsson.

The following day, we visited the Laufás turf farm. The buildings were constructed of turf with wooden facades on the front. It was a historic church farm. First it was a Catholic establishment, but after the Reformation in 1550, it was Lutheran. Three of my ancestors were clergy who lived there. Þorkell Guðbjartsson was the Catholic Priest here from 1449 to 1483. Jón

## Traces Through World History

Finnbogason was the Catholic Priest here from 1501 to 1538 and after the Reformation he was the Lutheran Pastor here from 1552 to 1554. His grandson Jón Sigurðsson was the Lutheran Pastor here from 1559 to 1616.

A few days later we stopped at the oldest still standing stone church in Iceland called Þingeyrar. Six of my ancestors were associated with this location. Þingeyrarlaustur or Þingeyrar Monastery was founded in 1106 by the Order of Saint Benedict. My ancestor Kári Runólfsson was the Abbot (in charge of the monastery) here from 1181 to 1188. Sölvi Brandsson was the Catholic Priest at Þingeyrar parish in 1374. Jón Þorvaldsson was the Abbot here from 1500 to 1514. After the Reformation, Árni Gíslason was the Lutheran “monastery keeper” here in 1559. Þorleifur Olafsson was a Lutheran Deacon here in 1646. His biography can be found below in this chapter.

Perhaps what was most significant about Þingeyrar was that it was the place of the baptism of my Great Great Grandfather Samson Björnsson on October 17, 1815. It wasn't in this same church building (it was not established or built until 1877), but it was in the previous church building. However the baptismal font in the current church dates to 1696, so it was the actual font in which he was baptized. Two of Samson's son would migrate to North Dakota and his first name Samson would become the family's North American surname.

On the day we returned to Reykjavik, we stopped for lunch in the town of Borganes. This was the area of settlement for my ancestor Skallgrímur Kveldufsson. Skallgrímur and his son Egill are significant characters in the Icelandic Sagas.

**Nation Building:** The first settlers in Iceland had formed the nucleus for the birth of a nation. By the year 1000, the settlement era was drawing to an end. However, many more settlers would continue to trickle in from “mainland” Europe. There was still much of the Iceland island to be explored. The first settlers had been involved in the harvest of the large population of walrus that lived along the shorelines. There was a high demand in Europe for both ivory (from their tusks) and walrus leather for making ship ropes. Unfortunately it didn't take long before this resource was completely exhausted and all the walrus were gone. Then within three centuries after settlement, the Icelanders had, more or less, completely deforested the island of its native birch trees. So what was left was grazing land for sheep farming and the fisheries in the surrounding ocean. So within a generation or two, some would venture to the west resulting in the discovery and settlement of Greenland. Then others like Karlsefni and Guðríður would attempt settlement in North America.

At first the Icelanders were all by themselves and ruled by none. They were engaged in the beginnings of their primarily agricultural economy with trade connections to the European mainland. They would establish the institutions of their society. This would revolve around an institution called the Althing. It was established in 930 and has been referred to as the world's first parliament. It was a general assembly of representatives from throughout Iceland. The lowest level of government was the chieftainship or goðorð. Each goðorð had a goði or Chieftain who ruled over a fixed territory. Each goði would represent his area to the Althing. We have numerous goði among our ancestors.

The Althing seemed to function as both a legislative and judicial body. This was the place

## Traces Through World History

for civil resolution of disputes so they might not result in the violence of feuds or battles. The law of the land was recorded in an oral tradition. The person responsible for memorizing and being able to repeat the laws verbatim was called the “lawspeaker.” Recitation of the laws was done at the law rock (Logberg). In this manner the law speaker was sort of the titular head of the Icelandic government. Some of our ancestors were lawspeakers.

### **Ottar Björnsson (877 - 928)(Our 27<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Ottar Björnsson (877 - 928) was born about 877 in Norway. He was the son of Björn the Easterner Ketilsson and Gjaflaug Kjarlaksdóttir. He came to Iceland with his parents in about 880. Ottar married Gro Geirleifsdóttir, daughter of Geirleifur Eiriksson and Jora Helgadóttir. They were known to have two sons: Helgi and Björn. We descend from Helgi. Ottar made his home at the farm founded by his father at Bjarnarhofn in Snaefellsýsla. Ottar died in about 928 at Bjarnarhofn.

Ottar’s son Helgi Ottarsson (907 - 954) was a farmer from Bjarnarhöfn. In one of his Viking expeditions, he captured and married Niðbjörg Bjólansdóttir, a daughter of a king of Scotland called Bjolan and a grand daughter of Rolf the Ganger (Rollo) Rogvaldsson of Normandy. Helgi and Niðbjörg had at least two sons: Ósvífur and Einar. Helgi started a farm in about 930 at Laugar in Dalasýsla. Helgi died in about 954 at Laugar.

### **Law Speaker Hrafn Ketilsson Haengsson (879 - )(Our 29<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Hrafn Haengsson (879 – ) was born about 879 at Hofi in Rangavallasýsla. His parents were Ketil trout Thokelsson and Ingunn Thorgeirsdóttir. He lived at Hofi after his father and was elected a law speaker at the Althing for the first time it was held at Þingvellir. Hrafn was one of the main parties responsible for the unification of Iceland under the Althing and was then appointed lawspeaker at the first Althing in 930. He served in that capacity until 949. The name of his wife is not known but he was known to have a daughter Þorlaug who we descend from.

### **Asgeir (scatter-brain) Audunsson (880 - )(Our 27<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Ásgeir scatter-brain Auðunsson (880 – ) was born about 880 at Auðunarstaður, Viðidalstúnga, Vestur-Húnavatnssýsla. His parents were Audun shaft Bjarnarson and Thodis Thorgrimsdóttir. His father was the settler at Auðunarstaður in about 875.

Ásgeir is mentioned in a few places in the *Laxdæla Saga*. Despite apparently not being an influential figure in the politics of the Iceland, he appears closely linked to various family clans from the island and married three times. The name of his first wife is not known. But with her he had at least three children: Kálfur, Þuríður, and Hrefna. His second wife was Jórunn Ingimundardóttir. She was the daughter of Ingimundur the old Thorsteinsson and Vigdis Thorisdóttir. Asgeir and Jorunn had at least four children: Audun the strong, Thorsteinn, Thorbjorg, and Thorvald. We descend from Audun. The third wife was a Þórkatla, without known children.

## Traces Through World History

### **Midfjord-Skeggi Bjarnarson (880 - )(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Midfjord-Skeggi Bjarnarson (880 – ) was born about 880 at Melstadar in Hunavatnssýsla. He was the son of Fur-Björn Skeggjason. He made his farm at Reykir in Húnavatnssýsla. He married Ingibjörg Grímsdóttir and from that relationship five children were born: Hródný, Koll, Árnsteinn, Thorbjorg and Eiður. We descend from Hródný, Eiður, and Thorbjorg.

A story is told that Skeggi had been in Denmark and ravaged there off Zealand. After a bet, he broke into King Rolf Krake's burial mound and took Rolf's sword Sköfnung, Hjalte's ax and much other goods, but he did not get hold of the sword Laufe, because Bødvar set after him. It was after this that he returned to Iceland and settled in Reykir in the Midfjord.

Skeggi died at Ås in Borgarfjardar on the farm occupied by his son Eidur and his burial mound is below the farm.

### **Hrolfur Helgason (882 - )(Our 28<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Hrólfur Helgason (882 – ) was born at Kristnes in Eyjafjardar. He was the son of Helgi the Lean Eyvindsson and Thorunn Ketilsdóttir. He was given land from his father, who gave him all the land east of Eyjafjarðará south, north of Arnarhvolur, which is at the mouth of the Djúpadalsá River. He made his farm at Gnúpufell and it was said he had built a large temple there, so he probably was quick to turn away from Christianity after coming to Iceland.

He married Þórarina, daughter of Þrándur Slender-leg and Hallgríma Gílsdóttir who had been settlers on Flatey Island in Breiðafjörður. Hrolfur and Þórarina were known to have had eight children: Valthjofur, Gudlaug, Hafliði, Vidar, Grani, Bodvar, Ingjald, and Eyvind. We descend from Valthjofur and Gudlaug.

### **Goði Hoskuldur Dala-Kollsson (897 - 965)(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Hoskuldur Dala-Kollsson (897 – 965) was born about 897 at Hoskuldurssstadir in Dalasýsla. Hence the “Dala” prefix to his surname. His parents were Dala-Kollur (Koll of the Dales) “wether” Grimsson and Þorgerður Þorsteinsdóttir, daughter of Þorsteinn the Red. Dala-Kollur was the first settler at Hoskuldurssstadir.

Hoskuldur's father died when he was a child and his mother married a landowner named Herjolfur, who became the father of Hoskuldur's half-brother Hrótur Herjólfsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). Hoskuldur was enormously influential in northwestern Iceland, particularly in the Laxardal region, and is one of the main characters of the first half of *Laxdæla Saga*. Hoskuldur made his farm at Hjardarholt in Dalasýsla. He was a goði or chieftain in the region.

Hoskuldur was married to Jorunn Bjarnadóttir, daughter of Bjarni hella-shield Herfinnsson. Hoskuldur and Jorunn were known to have at least four children: Hallgerður, Þuridur, Þorleikur and Bard. We descend from Þorleikur.

Hoskuldur purchased a mute thrall-woman named Melkorka from a Russian merchant while on a trading expedition to Norway, and made her his concubine while away from his wife Jorunn Bjarnadóttir. When Hoskuld returned home to Iceland, he took the concubine with him.

## Traces Through World History

Despite Jorunn's irritation, the concubine was accepted into Hoskuldur's household, though he remained "faithful" to Jorunn while in Iceland. The following winter the concubine gave birth to a son, to whom they gave the name Olafur after Hoskuldur's uncle, Olafur Feilan, who had recently died. We descend from this Olafur Peacock. Hoskuldur also had two other children with Melkorka: Helgi, and Lambi

When Hoskuldur was on his death bed in about 965, he summoned Þorleikur and his brother Bard. He told them that they would inherit all of his property. But Hoskuldur wanted to leave something to his illegitimate son Olafur Peacock. Þorleikur was opposed to this but agreed to let his father give Olafur twelve ounces for his inheritance. But what Hoskuldur gave to Olafur was a gold arm ring which weighed a mark and a sword which was worth half a mark which were gifts that Hoskuldur had received from King Hakon. Þorleikur resented this. However, Þorleikur received the larger share of the goods and livestock. Relations between Olafur and Bard were warm, but rather cool between Olafur and Þorleikur. Olafur did, however, ease the tension by paying one-third of the communal funeral feast for Hoskuldur.

Olafur the Peacock Hoskuldsson (938–1006) was born about 938 at Hjardarholt in Dalasýsla. He was a merchant and chieftain, who was nicknamed "the Peacock" because of his proud bearing and magnificent wardrobe. He is a major character in the *Laxdæla Saga* and is mentioned in a number of other Icelandic sources. The son of a slave woman, Olafur became one of the wealthiest landowners in Iceland and played a major role in its politics and society during the latter half of the tenth century. In addition to the *Laxdæla Saga* in which he takes a leading role, Olafur also is mentioned in *Egil's Saga*, *Njáls Saga*, *Gunnlaug's Saga*, *Kormáks Saga*, *Grettirs saga* and the *Landnámabók*, among others.

Olafur was a precocious child, and could speak and walk perfectly by the age of two. One day Hoskuldur discovered Olafur's mother Melkorka speaking to her son; she was not, in fact, mute. When he confronted her she told him that she was an Irish princess named Melkorka carried off in a Viking raid, and that her father was an Irish king named "Myrkjartan" (Muirchertach). Shortly thereafter squabbling between Jorunn and Melkorka forced Hoskuldur to move his concubine and his son by her to a different farm, which thereafter was known as Melkorkustaðir.

At the age of seven, over his mother's objections, Olafur became the foster son and heir of a wealthy but childless goði named Thord, who was at the time engaged in complex litigation with the kinsmen of his ex-wife Vigdis Ingjaldsdóttir. Olafur's adoption complicated the issues in the suit and threatened to lead to a blood feud, but Hoskuldur arranged a settlement and compensated Vigdis' kinsmen with gifts. By fostering Olafur, Thord gained the protection of the powerful Hoskuldur, and Hoskuldur secured an inheritance for his illegitimate son beyond the limited amount he was permitted to leave to Olafur under Icelandic law. Olafur accompanied Thord to the Althing when he was twelve years old, and his fancy clothing earned him the admiring nickname "the Peacock."

Around 956, Olafur, at Melkorka's urging, decided to go abroad to seek his fortune. Hoskuldur was opposed and would not provide trade wares, and the property of Olafur's foster-father Thord was mostly in immobile goods and land. In part to arrange financing for his expedition, his mother Melkorka married Thorbjörn the Feeble, a farmer who had previously

## Traces Through World History

assisted her in the management of Melkorkustead. Olafur sailed to Norway with Orn, a sea-captain and hirdman of King Harald Greycloak. He gained great honor at Harald's court, and was a favorite of the king's mother Gunnhild, who had, according to Icelandic sources, been the lover of Olafur's uncle Hrutur Herjolfsson. When Olafur expressed a desire to find his mother's people in Ireland, Gunnhild financed his voyage.

Olafur set sail for Ireland with Orn to find his mother's people, taking with him tokens and gifts from Melkorka to her father and her nursemaid. During the voyage, their ship became lost in a fog. When the fog lifted, an argument arose between Orn and most of the rest of Olafur's men about the proper course to reach Ireland. When asked if the decision should be put to a vote of the majority, Olafur is supposed to have said, "I want only the shrewdest to decide; in my opinion the counsel of fools is all the more dangerous the more of them there are." With those words, the matter was accepted as settled, and Orn took charge of the navigation.

Upon arriving in Ireland they were stranded far outside the protection of the Norse–Gaelic longphorts. The ship was attacked by local Irishmen, despite the efforts of Olafur, who spoke the Gaelic, to negotiate safe passage with them.

As luck would have it, the local king arrived on the scene, and proved to be Olafur's alleged grandfather Myrkjartan. Olafur remained with Myrkjartan for a time, and the king, according to *Laxdaela Saga*, even offered to make Olafur his heir. Olafur, however, ultimately returned to Norway, afraid of provoking Myrkjartan's sons. Olafur returned to the court of King Harald, where he was greatly honored by both the king and his mother Gunnhild.

Olafur returned home to Iceland around 957 with great wealth. Upon his return, his father Hoskuldur arranged a marriage for him with Thorgerdur Egilsdóttir, the daughter of Egill Skallagrímsson. Thorgerdur was initially reluctant to marry the son of a slave, refusing to believe that Olafur's mother was a princess. However, she ultimately agreed to the match after an hours-long private conversation with Olafur. At the wedding Olafur gave Egill an ornate sword from Ireland. Olafur and Thorgerd lived happily together at Hoskuldstead for some time.

Around 962, Olafur's foster father Thord died, leaving Olafur his property and goðorð. Olafur bought land and built a new homestead at Hjardarholt. As time went on people began to settle near Olafur's hall and regarded him as their goði. Olafur's ever-increasing wealth caused jealousy from Hoskuldur's wife Jorunn. Hjardarholt was renowned for its rich decorations.

Around the same time Olafur and Thorgerdur had a daughter, Thurid. Olaf and Thorgerd had a number of children after Thurid, namely Kjartan, Thorbjorg, Bergthora, Steinthor, Thorberg, Halldor, and Hoskuldur. We descend from Thorbjorg and Steinthor.

Around 975, over his wife's objections, Olafur went on a second expedition to Norway. There he stayed with a Viking named Geirmund the Noisy and visited Haakon Jarl, the latter of whom gave him a cargo of timber to take home as a gift. On his return Olafur reluctantly brought Geirmund with him and Geirmund fell in love with Olafur's daughter Thurid. Though Olafur was opposed to the match, Geirmund bribed Thorgerdur to be his advocate, and Olafur relented. The marriage was an unhappy one, and after three years Geirmund decided to return home without leaving any money for the support of his ex-wife and daughter. Enraged, Thurid boarded his ship before he departed, stole his famous sword "Leg-Biter," and left their infant daughter Groa on the ship. Geirmund cursed the sword, and on his return to Norway he and all of his shipmates,

## Traces Through World History

including little Groa, were drowned.

During the closing years of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Olafur's kinsman and friend Gunnar became embroiled in a blood feud with several neighboring landowners. A settlement was reached whereby Gunnar would accept "lesser outlawry," a three-year exile, but after agreeing to the settlement Gunnar refused to leave Iceland. Olafur tried to protect his kinsman but was unsuccessful, and Gunnar was killed by his enemies. Olafur's favorite son Kjartan traveled abroad with his beloved foster-brother and cousin Bolli Þorleiksson. The two were very close. Ultimately, however, they grew apart when Bolli married Kjartan's lover Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir. Tensions between the cousins grew until a full-blown blood feud ended with Kjartan being killed by Bolli in 1003. Ironically, Bolli killed Kjartan with the sword "Leg-biter," which had been given to him as a gift by his cousin Thurid, Kjartan's sister. Olafur refused to prosecute Bolli for the killing, and arranged for him to pay a fine instead; by sharp contrast, he had Gudrun's brothers, who had goaded Bolli to fight his cousin, driven into exile.

Olafur died in 1006, and his widow Thorgerdur subsequently directed a number of revenge-killings herself, including that of Thorkel, a man who had witnessed Kjartan's death but been indifferent to it and had not intervened. Bolli was killed by Olafur's sons and their allies in a raid led by Thorgerdur.

### **Már Jörundarson (900 - )(Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Már Jörundarson was born about 900 at Grund in Hunavatnssýsla. He was the son of Jorundur neck Thorisson who had been the first settler at Grund. In about 920, Mar established a farm at Márstaðir in Hunavatnssýsla. He was known to have two daughters: Halla and Vedis. We descend from Vedis.

One autumn there was news that Mar had lost some sheep; they were searched for far and wide and not found. There was a good deal of talk about the disappearance of the sheep, for the valley seemed mostly settled by honest folks. One evening, when the shepherd came home, Mar asked if there was any news. He said that his sheep had been found and no harm had befallen them. He said that he had found a plot of land in the woods, and the soil is very good, and it is there that the sheep have been and they are now very fat. Mar asked if this was on his land or land claimed by another. The shepherd said that he thought the land would prove to be his, but it lies very near land belonging to the sons of Ingimundur the old Thorsteinsson (our 28<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). The farm of Ingimundur's sons was at Hof which is west across the mountains from the valley that Mar lived in. The land in question was known as Hjallaland and it was much easier to access from Mar's farm than it was from Hof. So Hjallaland was in dispute.

Mar went to Hjallaland and looked it over and thought it well to take as his own. A neighbor named Thorgrim skin-hood told Mar that he thought he and Mar could keep the land from the sons of Ingimundur.

The sons of Ingimundur were Hogni, Thordur, and Thorsteinn. (we do not descend from them, but do descend from their sisters Jorunn and Thordis) They had heard about how Thorgrim had advised Mar to take the land at Hjallaland. They resented this and commenced to threaten and harass Thorgrim. Thorgrim went to Mar and said, "The sons of Ingimundur have not



## Traces Through World History

forgotten me; I want you now to come back with me, and they will see for themselves that I am not afraid to wait for them at home.”

The sons of Ingimundur then approached Thorgrim’s farm and met up with Mar in the hayfield. They departed because Thorgrim had vanished from his home and Mar was present with plenty of men. Later Thorgrim met up with Mar again and told him that the sons of Ingimundur were on their way and they intend grim-heartedly to seize us, and we better be ready to make them regret their attack. Mar then assembled some men and told them that it was clear that the Hof men would try their luck against them. There were forty of them in all. The two sides met at Karnsnes and the battle began. The cousins of Mar fell in the fight but one of Ingimundur’s sons Hogni was also killed. Eventually men from nearby farms noticed the battle raging there and went to separate those involved. The two sides were separated; many were injured and all were exhausted.

Thorgrim said, “You, Mar, have shown great stubbornness in going against the brothers, but they are more than a match for you. My advice is that you surrender to them and offer Thorsteinn self-judgement.” Mar said that this was good advice, and they were reconciled in this way. The self-judgement by Thorsteinn resulted in Mar becoming the owner of Hjallaland, because it can only be approached from his land, but he will have to pay the sons of Ingimundur the sum of one hundred of silver.

### **Goði Þorður (Bellow) Olafsson (900 - 965)(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þórður (Bellow) Olafsson was born about 900 at Hvammur in Dalasýsla. (Bellow in Icelandic is found as Gellir) His parents were Olafur Feilan Thorsteinsson and Alfdís Konalsdóttir. His father was the first to settle at the farm Hvammur. He married Hrodney Skeggjadóttir, daughter of Midfjord-Skeggi Bjarnarson and Ingibjorg Grimsdóttir. They were known to have eight children: Yngvildur, Arnleif, Arnora, Thorarinn, Throhildur, Eyjolfur, Thorkel, and Otkatla. We descend from Yngvildur, Thorarinn, Thorhildur, and Eyjolfur.

Þórður was the owner of the Hvamm estate in the Dales, and goði in Hvamm. He appears often and widely in the old Sagas. He was the protagonist of a serious altercation with another Goði, Tongue-Oddur (our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), with the result of fatalities and that led to a bloody chain of conflicts. The Icelandic law in the 10<sup>th</sup> century stipulated that the death cases were to be treated at the local Thing (assembly) near the site of the crime, but in this case both opponents belonged to different districts and led to a conflict of jurisdiction. This caused confusion and more violence, even during the gathering of the Althing.

Þórður's presentation at the Lawrock created a more complicated situation and disorder broke out and it was difficult to contain the violence. This was in about the year 965. Þórður became the leader and prime mover in a political reform that established courts in each quarter of the country. This reorganized judicial system would allow the Icelanders to more successfully regulate feuds.

A story in the *Laxdaela Saga* provides a case example of how a feud could be cut off before it could escalate because the advocates engaged to settle the case quickly out of court. Thord Goði had an argument with his wife, the strong-willed Vigdis. The wife wanted Thord

## Traces Through World History

Goði to harbor an outlawed kinsman of hers. When Thord betrays the outlaw, Vigdis declares herself divorced. Vigdis seeks out the assistance of her kinsman Chieftain Þórður Gellir and together they plan to claim half of Thord Goði's estate. Thord Goði then seeks out the help of another powerful Chieftain in the district, Hoskuldur Dala-Kollsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> Great Grandfather). Thord Goði, realizing that Hoskuldur wants something in return for his aid, offers to pay handsomely. Once Hoskuldur is in charge of the defense, he seeks to placate the opposing chieftain with handsome gifts; at the same time he tells Þórður Gellir that Vigdis has brought no charges that would legally justify her leaving her husband. He points out that although Thord Goði's actions had aroused Vigdis's ire and scorn, they were entirely legal. Hoskuldur showed his skill through knowledge of law and an understanding of men and the case was resolved.

Goði Þórður (Bellow) Olafsson died in about 970 at Hvammur.

### **Goði Oddur (tongue) Onundarson (900 - )(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Oddur Önundarson (900 – ) better known by his nickname Tongue-Oddur, was born 900 at Breiðabólstaðir in Árnessýsla. His parents were Onundur broad beard Oddsson and Geirlaug Thormodardóttir. His father was the first settler at Breiðabólstaðir. In about 920, Oddur established a farm at Rykjadal in Arnessýsla. He was a goði or chieftain there.

Oddur married Jorunn Helgadóttir, daughter of Helgi cormorant Geirleifsson. They were known to have had at least five children: Jófríður, Þorvaldur, Þuríður, Þóroddur, and Hallgerður.

Oddur is mentioned in several Sagas. In one, he is in conflict with Þórður (Bellow) Olafsson. The case couldn't be easily resolved as the two were members of different local assemblies (Things). Their complicated case ultimately forced the Althing to declare itself incompetent in the matter and decentralized the island's judicial system in four jurisdictions.

In another case, Oddur would find himself ensnared in a dispute of greater proportions. A man named Steinar had accused Thorsteinn the white Egilsson (son of Egil Skallagrimsson and our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) of killing some of his slaves who had been driving Steinar's cattle on Thorsteinn's land. Steinar knew he would need help to prosecute his case against someone from such a powerful family. He first went to Brekka to call on a goði named Einar. But Einar told him that his support would make little difference unless other men of standing back him up.

Steinar then rode up to Rykjadal to see Tongue-Oddur, asked him for support and offered to pay him for it. Oddur took the money and promised his support in helping Steinar to secure his rights against Thorsteinn. That spring Oddur and Einar went with Steinar to Borg to announce their summons, taking a large band of men with them. Steinar summoned Thorsteinn for killing his slaves and demanded a penalty of lesser outlawry for each of them. The case was to be heard at the next spring Assembly.

Thorsteinn took a very large party to the assembly and arrived the night before everybody else. Steinar rode to the assembly with very many men. Tongue-Oddur was in charge of a large band of his own men, and Einar also brought a large party. When the cases were presented, Thorsteinn made no offer of settlement on his own behalf, and told everyone who tried to arrange one that he would wait to hear the ruling, since he set little store by Steinar's charges. He believed his actions had been righteous and was very aggressive about the whole matter.

## Traces Through World History

Before the ruling could be made, Thorsteinn's father, the powerful Egil Skallagrimsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) arrived at the assembly with eighty men, all armed for battle. Egil and Thorsteinn then went up to the Assembly Slope with all their men and sat down in their usual places. Egil then called out for Onund Sjoni, Steinar's father. Egil said to Onund, "It seems advisable to me, for as long as we live and witness their dispute, that we should take charge of the matter ourselves and settle it, without letting Tongue-Oddur and Einar pit our sons against each other like horses in a fight."

Then Oddur and Steinar conferred, and Oddur said, "I will grant you the support I promised you, Steinar, to win your rights or a settlement that you are prepared to accept. It will be largely your responsibility if Egil rules on the matter." Then Steinar handed over charge of the case to his father Onund, who was to prosecute or settle, as the law stipulated. Tongue-Oddur then said, "You and your father have decided how your case will be concluded, Steinar. Now I am free of all obligation to grant you the support I promised." Thorsteinn and Tongue-Oddur were on cold terms after this case.

### **Goði Þorsteinn (cod biter) Þorólfsson (900 - 938)(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorsteinn cod biter Þorólfsson ( 900 - 938) was born about 900 at Hofstaðir in Helgafell of Snæfellsnessýsla. He was the son of Thorolfur mostur-beard Ornlúfsson. His father was the first settler at Hofstaðir. He became the goði or chieftain of the area. He married Þóra Ólafsdóttir, daughter of Olaf Feilan and Alfdís Konaldóttir. They were known to have had at least three children: Bork, Þorgrímur and Thordis. We descend from Þorgrímur.

Þorsteinn was known to have staged a bloody confrontation during the Althing against rivals clan Kjalleklingar, as he claimed the legacy of his father and monopolized the settlement of Thorness as the spiritual center of the island.

One spring, Þorkell the wealthy Þordarson (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) traveled to the Thornes Assembly, and Thorbjörn Sur Þorkelsson's (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) two sons accompanied him (we are not descendant from them). At that time, Þorsteinn Cod Biter was living at Thornes with his wife, Thora and their children Thordis, Thorgrim, and Bork. Þorkell settled his business at the assembly, and when it was over, Þorsteinn invited him, along with Gisli and Þorkell Sursson, to his home. When they left, he gave them good gifts, and they responded by inviting Þorsteinn's sons to their assembly in the west the following spring.

As Þorsteinn's sons Bork the stout and Þorgrímur were close to full grown men, it was soon evident that the brothers intended to be the leading men of the district and enjoy greater respect. Þorsteinn saw this and, in order to avoid coming into conflict with them, declared his intention to move and set up house at Hrappsstaðir in Laxardalur. He made preparations for the journey following the Spring Assembly and had his livestock herded along the coast.

Þorsteinn and eleven others boarded a ferry ship. A strong south-westerly wind bore Þorsteinn's ship into the most dangerous of the Breidafjord currents. Their crossing was slow and difficult, mainly because the tide was ebbing and the wind was against them. The rain came in showers, with strong winds gusting when the clouds broke and then calmer spells in between.

Þorsteinn was at the helm. He had the straps to control the rudder bound round his

## Traces Through World History

shoulders as there was little room to move aboard the ship. It was loaded with chests and cases, piled high, for they were not far from land. The boat made slow progress against the strong opposing current. They ran aground on a skerry but not hard enough to break through the hull of the ship. Þorsteinn told them to strike the sail quickly, take the long forks and attempt to push the ship afloat again. They tried this but without success, because the water on both sides of the ship was so deep that the forks could not reach the bottom. The only course was to await the incoming tide.

Finally the tide began to come in. When it had reached the point where the ship was about to float free, a great storm struck which capsized the ship. Everyone aboard was drowned except one man who managed to make his way to shore holding on to a bit of wood. So in about 940, Þorsteinn drowned in Breidafjörð.

Þorsteinn's son Þorgrímur Þorsteinsson (926 - 962) is one of the main characters in the *Gísli Súrsson Saga* where he confronts his brother-in-law Gísli Súrsson. According to the saga he worshiped and officiated as a priest of Freyr, and the *Njáls Saga* mentions that he was one of the greatest warlords in Iceland.

Þorgrímur and his brother Þorkel went to the Hvöloseyri Assembly along with a party of ten men. On their arrival they met up with Þorbjörn surs Þorkelsson's sons, Gísli and Þorkel, who invited them home when the assembly was over. They went off to Gísli and Þorkel's farm and enjoyed an excellent feast there.

Þorgrímur found Þórdís, the sister of Gísli and Þorkel, very attractive and asked for her hand in marriage. Þorgrímur married Þórdís Þorbjörnsdóttir, daughter of Þorbjörn surs Þorkelsson and Thora Raudsdóttir. They had at least two sons: Þorgrímur and Snorri the Priest. We descend from Snorri the Priest.

Þórdís had a farm at Saebol in Isafjardarsýsla as her dowry, and Þorgrímur moved west to live with her. Þorgrímur now lived at Saebol, and Gísli and Þorkel moved to Hol where they built a good farmhouse. The two farms, Hol and Saebol, were next to each other and divided by a hayfield wall. Both parties lived on friendly terms. Þorgrímur became the *goði* for the district.

That summer, a ship arrived in Dyrafjörð owned by two brothers from Norway. The Norwegians were from Oslo Fjord and had been great trouble-makers in Norway and so they left to go to Iceland. The Norwegians got in a conflict with a man named Odd Orlygsson and killed him. As *goði*, Þorgrímur was responsible for the protection of the people in his district. When he heard the news, he set out for them without delay, had someone ferry him across the fjord and then pursued the Norwegians alone. Þorgrímur caught up to them and killed them.

Þorgrímur remained at his farm for the winter, and when spring arrived, he and his brother-in-law Þorkel, fitted out the ship that had belonged to the Norwegians. When the ship was fully ready, Þorgrímur and Þorkel set sail and came ashore in the north of Norway. This was in the time of Harald Grey-Cloak's rule (961-970). Soon after landing, Þorgrímur and Þorkel arrived at court where they presented themselves to the king and greeted him warmly. The king gave them a friendly welcome and they pledged themselves as his followers. They became wealthy and well established. They returned to Iceland and arrived at the Haukadal Estuary in Dyrefjörð. Gísli Súrsson, Þorkel's brother, who had been in Norway, had also arrived there the same day.

## Traces Through World History

Then something unusual happened at Hol. Vesteinn, Gisli's brother-in law, was staying at the farm. Just before daybreak, someone entered the house without a sound and walked over to where Vesteinn was lying. A spear was thrust at him and went right through his breast. Gisli had reason to suspect that Þorgrímur had committed this murder.

While playing some games against one another, Gisli and Þorgrímur were very aggressive with one another causing injuries. Þorgrímur looked towards Vesteinn's burial mound and said, "Spear screeched in his wound, sorely – I cannot be sorry." Gisli saw this as an admission of guilt. After that there was a growing coldness between Þorgrímur and Gisli.

One night, Gisli snuck into the farm house at Saebol. He discovered all inside were sleeping. He made his way to Þorgrímur and Þordis' bed chamber. He thrust a spear through Þorgrímur and killed him as he lay next to Þordis. This occurred in about 965.

### **Egill Skallagrímsson (904 - 995)(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Egill Skallagrímsson (904 – 995) was born about 904 at Borg in Myrasýsla. He was the son of Skallagrímur Kveldulfsson and Bera Yngvarsdóttir. His father had been a very early Iceland settler in about 878 at Borg. Skallagrímur settled at Borg, because that was the place where his father Kveldulf's coffin landed. Egill was a Viking-Age poet, warrior and farmer. He is known mainly as the protagonist of *Egill's Saga*. *Egill's Saga* historically narrates a period from approximately 850 to 1000 and is believed to have been written between 1220 and 1240.

Egill composed his first poem at the age of three years. He exhibited berserk behavior, and this, together with the description of his large and unattractive head, has led to the theory that he might have suffered from Paget's disease, which causes a thickening of the bones and may lead eventually to blindness.

At the age of seven, Egill was cheated in a game with local boys. Enraged, he went home and procured an axe, and returning to the boys, split the skull to the teeth of the boy who cheated him.

One day, when Egill's brother Þórólfur was at the point of setting sail for Norway, Egill went to his father and asked him to equip him to go on the journey with his brother. Skallagrímur told Egill that he should discuss it with Þórólfur. But Þórólfur was hesitant and said he was not confident about taking Egill abroad with him. Egill answered by saying, "In that case, perhaps neither of us will go." Then Egill cut the anchor ropes on Þórólfur's ship and pushed it out to sea and set it adrift. The ship was recovered and Þórólfur decided that it would be more trouble and damage if he refused to take him along and he took Egill abroad with him that summer.

They made land at Hordaland and headed north to Sognefjord. Þórólfur first went to see King Eirik Bloodaxe and then went to see Thorir. Thorir had a son named Arinbjörn, who was somewhat older than Egill. Arinbjörn was already an assertive character at an early age, and highly accomplished. Egill sought Arinbjörn's friendship and followed him around everywhere, but relations between the two brothers Þórólfur and Egill were rather strained.

Þórólfur asked Thorir what he would think if he asked for the hand of his niece Asgerdur in marriage. Thorir answered favorably and gave him his support. Þórólfur then went to Asgerdur's father Hersir (Chieftain) Björn Brynjolfsson and asked to marry her.

## Traces Through World History

Egill went with a man named Olvir on a voyage to other parts of Norway. They happened to arrive at Atloy Island in the evening and moored there. Just up from the shore was a large farm which King Eirik owned. It was run by a man called Bard, who served the king well. King Eirik and Gunnhild arrived at Atloy the same night. There was a great feast and ale was generously served. Many of the guests became very drunk, but Bard insisted on serving them more to drink. Egill took the drinking-horn that Bard had given to Olvir and finished it off. So Bard gave Egill another horn of ale. This continued on into the night. Bard then went up to the queen and told her that Egill was bringing shame on them. Egill considered this a grievous insult. Egill became increasingly violent and at one point tossed away the drinking-horn, grabbed hold of his sword and drew it. It was dark in the doorway; he thrust the sword so deep into Bard's stomach that the point came out through his back. Bard fell down dead. Egill quickly left the farm.

When King Eirik found out what happened he ordered his men to search for Egill and bring him back. But Egill went by night, heading for the place the ships were, but whenever he came to the beach, there were people. He could see an island off shore. So he leapt into the sea and swam without stopping until he reached it. It was a small island covered with low shrub called Saudoy.

A boat came to the island with men that made up the search party looking for Egill. After the searchers left the boat and went inland, Egill could see that three men remained to guard the boat. Egill killed the three men and took the boat and put out to sea.

When Olvir returned to Thorarin's home he shared the news of what happened at Atloy. Þórólfur became very upset and Arinbjörn too, They did not expect Egill to return. But in daylight the next morning, Egill was discovered lying in his bed.

In spring Þórólfur and Egill got ready a large warship and went to go raiding in the Baltic that summer. They won much wealth and had many battles. In Courland they made a peace for half a month and traded with the men of the land. When autumn arrived, Þórólfur and Egill sailed north to Norway and put in at Fjordane where they went to see Thorir and Arinbjörn. They invited them to stay but Thorir said, "I do not know what King Eirik will think about it, because after Bard was killed, he said he did not want Egill in this country."

Thorir went to King Eirik and asked him not to take offense at the fact that Egill was staying with him for the winter. The King answered favorably, but Queen Gunnhild was still bitter and absolutely opposed. King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild would spend the remainder of their lives trying to take vengeance against Egill. Seething with hatred, Gunnhild ordered her two brothers to assassinate Egill and his brother Þórólfur, who had been on good terms with her previously.

The winter came to an end and spring arrived, and Þórólfur and Egill made ready to go on Viking raids again. When they had prepared themselves they headed for the Baltic again, but on reaching Vik they sailed south past Jutland to plunder there. Afterwards they went to Frisia and stayed much of the summer there, then went back to Denmark. While there, Egill heard that Queen Gunnhild's brother Eyvind Braggart intended to ambush him. But Egill attacked first and took his ships, although Eyvind escaped. Eventually Egill would kill both of the Queen's brothers when they attempted to confront him.

Þórólfur said to Egill, "I think what you have done will not make it inadvisable for us to

## Traces Through World History

go to Norway this autumn.” So they sailed south past Saxony and Flanders, and heard that the King of England was in need of soldiers, and that there was hope of much booty there. They decided to go there with their men. In the autumn they set off and went to see King Athelstan. King Athelstan required his soldiers to be Christians, so Þórólfur and Egill took the “sign of the cross,” and joined Athelstan’s army.

Olaf Guthfrithson, King of Dublin; Constantine II, King of Scotland; and Owen, King of Strathclyde set out to invade English territory. King Athelstan took his army to confront them and this conflict would be the Battle of Brunanburh fought in 937. King Athelstan appointed Þórólfur and Egill as leaders of the army that had rallied there. They were in charge of the forces that the Vikings had brought to the king.

Athelstan sent messengers to Olaf asking that he stop raiding in his realm and proposed a date for meeting in battle one week later. On the day of the battle, Þórólfur and Egill saw the Scottish army led by Earl Hring and his brother Adils approaching southward across the moors. Þórólfur was equipped with a broad, thick shield and a tough helmet on his head and was girded with a sword which he called Long, a fine and trusty weapon. Egill was equipped like Þórólfur, girded with a sword that he called Adder.

Egill attacked Adils forces and they fought hard. Despite the considerable difference in numbers, more of Adils’ men were killed. Þórólfur began fighting so furiously that he threw his shield over his back, grabbed his spear with both hands and charged forward, hacking and thrusting to either side. He killed Earl Hring’s standard-bearer and chopped down the standard pole. Þórólfur bravely advanced so far that few of his men were in front of him, and when he least expected it, Earl Adils and his men ran out of the forest. Þórólfur was stabbed with many spears at once and died there.

Egill fought on until he came to Earl Adils. They exchanged a few blows before Adils was killed, and many men around him too, and when he died the troops he had led fled the field. Egill and his men pursued them, killing everyone they could catch.

After the battle, Egill returned to where his brother Þórólfur had fallen. He picked up his body and washed it, then dressed the corpse according to custom. Egill remained with King Athelstan for the winter after Þórólfur’s death, and earned great respect from him. For his service to King Athelstan, he received payment in silver. All the men who had been with the brothers and survived the battle stayed with him. When spring came, Egill announced to the king that he intended to leave for Norway that summer and find out about the situation of his brother’s widow Asgerdur.

Asgerdur had been staying with her kinsman Arinbjörn. She and Þórólfur had a young daughter named Thodis. Egill told Asgerdur of Þórólfur’s death and offered to provide for her. Egill consulted with Arinbjörn about the prospect of marrying Asgerdur. Arinbjörn said he would support him. Egill put his proposal to Asgerdur. She deferred to the advice of her father and Arinbjörn who were in favor. So the wedding was arranged at Arinbjörn’s house.

When Egill was ready and a favorable wind got up, he and his wife and step-daughter sailed out to sea and had an easy passage. He reached Iceland in the autumn and headed for Borgarfjord. He had been away for twelve years. His father Skallagrim was growing very old by then, and was delighted when Egill returned. Egill went to stay at Borg and spent the winter with

## Traces Through World History

Skallagrim. Egill had an enormous amount of wealth by then.

Egill's wife Ásgerður Björnsdóttir, was the daughter of Björn hersir Brynjolfsson and Thora Hroaldsdóttir. Egill and Ásgerður were known to have six children: Ásgerður, Þorgerður, Bera, Böðvar, Gunnar, and Þorsteinn. We descend from Þorgerður, Bera, and Þorsteinn.

Egill stayed with Skallagrim for several winters, and looked after the property and ran the farm just as much as Sakallagrim did. One summer when Egill had been at Borg for many years, a ship arrived in Iceland from Norway, bringing the news that his father-in-law Björn hersir Brynjolfsson had died. It was also reported that Björn's son-in-law, Berg-Onund, had taken all his wealth. Egill let the matter rest for the autumn. But at the end of winter and in early spring, Egill had the ship brought out that he owned and that had been standing in a shed at Langarfoss, equipped it to go to sea and gathered a crew. His wife Asgerdur went on the journey, but Egill's step-daughter Thordis was left behind. Egill put out to sea when he was ready, and nothing of note happened until he reached Norway.

After landing, he went straight to see Arinbjörn at first opportunity. Arinbjörn told him that his prospects for claiming some of the wealth of his deceased father-in-law did not look too promising because Berg-Onunud was unfair and greedy and King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild were giving him much support. Egill equipped a boat to sail to Berg-Onund's location. He manned the boat with a crew of almost twenty. They headed south for Hordaland, landed at Ask and went to the house of Berg-Onund.

When Egill saw that Berg-Onund was not prepared to make any settlement, he summoned him to appear and be judged by the laws of the Gula Assembly. Meanwhile, Arinbjörn went to see King Eirik to put the matter to him. The king took the matter quite badly, saying that Arinbjörn had taken Egill's side for a long time. The King said, "It is for your sake that I have allowed him to stay in this country, but that will prove more difficult if you support him whenever he encroaches on my friends."

Winter passed and the time for the Gula Assembly arrived. Arinbjörn took a large band of men with him and Egill was among them. King Eirik was also in attendance with a large band that included Berg-Onund and his brothers. Egill began his statement by demanding that the court rule in his favor against Berg-Onund. He demanded that the court rule that Asgerdur should inherit half of Björn's estate, both money and land. But Berg-Onund made his case around the fact that Asgerdur's mother was not the legitimate wife of Björn and therefore Asgerdur's birth was illegitimate. He told Egill that he had married a "slave-woman." He demanded that the court rule in his favor by declaring that Asgerdur was a king's slave-woman not entitled to an inheritance. Things got increasingly hostile and Egill spoke out and challenged Berg-Onund to a duel. He proposed that the victor will take all the property, the lands and the valuables.

Arinbjörn thought it best for he and Egill to depart the Assembly right away. He advised Egill to board a separate boat and for Egill to travel by night and lie low because the king will attempt to find you. Both ships then put to sea.

The kings' forces put to sea and were able to catch-up to Arinbjörn's ship. When the king inquired about Egill's whereabouts, Arinbjörn told him that Egill went to Steinssund. The king then ordered his men to row along the channels that were farthest inland to try to find Egill.

The following morning, Egill's guards noticed several ships rowing towards them. Egill



## Traces Through World History

told his men to row towards the king's ships. Egill's ship soon sailed right past the king's ship and Egill threw a spear and struck the helmsman, Ketil the Slayer, through the middle. The king turned his warship in pursuit catching Egill's merchant vessel and the king's men boarded it. Ten of Egill's men were killed there. Egill escaped in a small boat with a crew of eighteen. The king gave up after a short pursuit and turned south, while Egill headed north to find Arinbjörn.

That same summer, King Harald Fairhair was close to death and named Eirik Bloodaxe his successor. One of King Eirik's first acts was to declare Egill an outlaw in Norway.

Egill arrived at Arinbjörn's house where Asgerdur had stayed during the assembly. Arinbjörn then gave Egill a very seaworthy ship and had it loaded with timber for returning to Iceland. Egill prepared the ship to put out to sea, and had almost thirty men with him again.

Egill sailed out to sea at night and there was little wind. They let the ship drift before the wind for a few nights. They were still in the waters off Norway. The crew decided that they should let Egill decide where they went. So they hoisted sail and went to the fishing camp called Herdla. They moored there for the night. Egill and two men went ashore and discovered that King Eirik and Gunnhild's son Rognvald was at the farm there with his men. Egill determined that Berg-Onund and a man named Frodi were also there at a house belonging to Berg-Onund. Then Egill rowed back to his ship and told his men to get up and take their weapons.

Sensing something was up, Berg-Onund ran up to some shrubs around his place. But Egill was hiding there and when he saw Berg-Onund he drew his sword. Berg-Onund began to draw his sword, but had only pulled it half-way out of its sheath by the time Egill ran him through with his sword. Hadd and Frodi ran over to Berg-Onund and Egill engaged in a fight with them and killed both. Egill and his men then went to the farmhouse and stormed it, killing fifteen or sixteen men. They took all the valuables and destroyed what they could not take.

When Egill and his men were headed out into the fjord, Prince Rognvald and his twelve men rowed into their path in a painted warship. Egill steered his ship straight for it and rammed its side with the prow of his own boat causing the warship to take on water. Egill's men boarded the warship and killed all onboard including Rognvald.

Egill then cursed the King and Queen, setting a horse's head on a Nithing pole and saying, "Here I set up a níð-pole, and declare this níð against King Eiríkur and Queen Gunnhildur,"—he turned the horse-head to face the mainland—"I declare this níð at the land-spirits there, and the land itself, so that all will fare astray, not to hold nor find their places, not until they wreak King Eiríkur and Gunnhildur from the land." He set up the pole of níð in the cliff-face and left it standing; he faced the horse's eyes on the land, and he carved runes upon the pole, and said all the formal words of the curse.

After that, Egill went to his ship, hoisted sail and put out to sea for Iceland. They had a smooth passage and made land in Borgarfjord. By this time Skallagrim was very old and fragile, so Egill took charge of the property and maintained the farm. After Skallagrim's death, Egill inherited his father's lands and valuables, and ran the farm.

Soon afterwards, Eiríkur and Gunnhildur were forced to flee to the Kingdom of Northumbria by Prince Hákon. In Saxon England, they were set up as King and Queen of Northumbria in rivalry with King Athelstan of England.

Egill remained on the farm for at least two years after Skallagrim's death. When summer

## Traces Through World History

came, Egill announced that he was going to prepare his ship to sail abroad. He took on a crew, planning to sail to England. There were thirty men on board. This time Asgerdur remained behind. Egill planned to go to see King Athelstan and collect what he had been promised when they parted. They sailed southward along the coast of Scotland in a heavy storm and crosswinds, but managed to tack and head south of Scotland to the north of England. In the evening, when it began to get dark, the storm intensified. The ship ran aground. All the men were saved and most of their possessions, but the ship was smashed to pieces.

Egill had come ashore somewhere near York. He rode to York and arrived in the evening and went straight to a house owned by Arinbjörn. He and Arinbjörn armed themselves and marched to Eirik's court. Arinbjörn told Egill “now you must go and offer the king your head and embrace his foot. I will present your case to him.” Arinbjörn presented Egill's case and Egill composed a short drápa, reciting it with Eirik's foot in his hand, but Eirik was not impressed. He explained that Egill's wrongs to him were far too great to be forgiven so easily. Gunnhild called for the immediate execution of Egill, but Arinbjörn convinced the king not to kill him until the morning.

In Viking tradition it was deemed illegal to kill a man during the night time. Arinbjörn told Egill that he should stay up all night and compose a mighty head-ransom poem or drápa fit for such a king, a poem in praise of his enemy. In the morning Egill went before king Eirik Bloodaxe and recited the great drápa. This twenty-stanza long head-ransom poem appears in Chapter 61 of *Egill's saga*. Eirik was so surprised by the quality of the poem that he generously decided to give Egill his life, even though he had killed his own son.

Then Egill went to speak to King Athelstan and told him of his plans to go over to Norway in the summer to collect the property that King Eirik and Berg-Onund robbed him of. King Athelstan gave Egill a good merchant vessel and cargo to go with it. Egill and his crew had a smooth journey and made land in Norway at Vik in the east and headed all the way into Oslo Fjord. Egill spent the winter there.

Egill then went with Arinbjörn's kinsman Thorsteinn to see King Hakon to pursue his claim for the property he believed he was entitled to. Egill presented his case to the king along with a message and tokens from King Athelstan. Egill recounted the whole episode that had taken place at the Gula Assembly, and asked the king to grant him justice in the matter. However, the king said to Egill, “You and your kinsmen have carved too deep a breach in my family” and told him to go back to Iceland and look after your inheritance you received from your father.

Not satisfied with the king's answer, Egill went to Ask on Fenring to confront Atli the Short. He told Atli that he had come to collect the property, the lands and the money that belongs to him and his wife Asgerdur that he believed Atli was in possession of. He summoned Atli to the Gula Assembly to have a ruling made in the matter. Egill made his claim for the property, but Atli produced witnesses that claimed the said property was not in Atli's keeping. So Egill challenged Atli to a duel.

When they were ready for the duel they ran at each other by throwing spears that fell to the ground. Next they attempted to hack at each other with swords to no avail. Then Egill threw down his sword and charged at Atli and grabbed him with his hands and bit through Atli's throat killing him. Then Egill acquired all the lands he had fought over and had claimed for Asgerdur's

## Traces Through World History

inheritance from her father. He then set sail and returned to Iceland. Egill had taken great riches back with him and was now very wealthy and he ran his farm lavishly.

But once again he got the itch to return to Norway one last time. On this journey he would visit kings, join Arinbjörn on some Viking raids to Saxony and Frisia, and partake in other adventures.

Egill returned to Iceland. By the time he had returned, the district was completely settled. All the original settlers had died by then and their sons and grandsons were living in the district. Egill remained a power to be reckoned with in local politics.

Egill had lived a long life, but in his old age he grew very frail and both his hearing and sight failed. He also suffered from very stiff legs. Egill was living at Mosfell with Grim and Thordis then. Before Egill died he buried his silver treasure near Mosfellsbær. In his last act of violence he murdered the servant who helped him bury his treasure so the location would remain secret. Then in the autumn of about 995, Egill caught an illness that led to his death. Grim had his body dressed in fine clothes and taken over to Tjaldanes where a mound was made that Egill was buried in. Later, when a Christian chapel was constructed at the family homestead, Egill's body was re-exhumed by his son and re-buried near the altar.

### **Law Speaker Þorarin (ragi's brother) Oleifsson (905 - )(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorarin ragi's brother Óleifsson (905 – )was born about 905 at at Varmalæk in Borgarfjörðursýsla. His parents were Oleifur Hajlti and Thorny Ingolfsdóttir. His father had been the original settler at Varmalæk. His mother Thorny was the daughter of Iceland's first settler Ingolfur Arnarson.

Þorarin lived at Varmalæk after his father. His brothers Glúma and Ragi, lived in Laugardalur. Þorarin's married Þórdís Olafsdóttir, daughter of Ólafur Feilan Þorsteinsson and Alfdís Konalsdóttir. They were known to have a daughter named Vigdis who we descend from.

In the year 950, he became the second Law Speaker of the Iceland Althing. He took the place of Hrafn Haengsson. He served as Law Speaker until 969.

### **Þorgrímur (priest) Kjarlaksson (910 - )(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorgrímur (priest) Kjarlaksson (910 – ) was born about 910 at Bjarnarhöfn in Snæfellsnessýsla. His parents were Kjarlakur the old Björnsson and Astridur Hrolfsdóttir. He established his farm at Kjarlaksstadir in Dalasýsla.

Þorgrímur was at the head of the clan called Kjalleklings. Much of this family lived at Kjarlaksstadir. One spring at the Thorsness Assembly, Þorgrímur and his brother-in-law Asgeir of Eyr declared publically that they would no longer tolerate the arrogance of the Thorsnesings and they meant to ease themselves (possibly meaning to urinate) on the grass just as they would at any other meeting. However, the ancestor of the Thorsnesings, Thorolfur Moster-beard (our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), had declared this land sacred and dedicated to the Norse god Thor. So “easing themselves” would be looked upon as a desecration. When Thorsteinn Cod-biter heard about this he gathered his friends around him with the idea of barring the Kjalleklings from the

## Traces Through World History

Assembly Ground should they attempt to desecrate it. The confrontation began and soon the Kjalleklings were forced back from the field down to the beach. The fighting then began in earnest. There were fewer Kjalleklings, but they had all the best fighting men. Finally, the two sides drew apart, on the understanding that the Kjalleklings were not to go back to the Assembly Ground. This meant that they had to board their ship and leave the meeting. There had been many deaths on both sides, particularly the Kjalleklings, and many wounded as well.

Þórður Bellow Olafsson was asked to step in to intervene. It was agreed that Þórður would make peace between them. Þórður managed to persuade them to agree to a truce and a peace-meeting. Þórður declared that from then on, Þorgrímur was to bear half the cost of maintaining the temple, and that he and Thorsteinn Cod-biter were to share the temple dues and the support of the farmers equally between them. As part of the judgement, Þórður Bellow gave his kinswoman Thorhildur, in marriage to Þorgrímur, who from then on was known as Þorgrímur the Priest.

Þorgrímur married Thorhildur Thorkelsdóttir. They were known to have at least three children: Brandur, Killer-Styr, and Vemundur the slender. We descend from all three.

Þorgrímur also had important differences with Illugi Hallkelsson (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather) due to the dowry of his wife, Ingibjörg Ásbjörnsdóttir, which required the intervention of Snorri Goði.

### **Law Speaker Þorkell (moon) Þorsteinsson (915 - 985)(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorkell moon Þorsteinsson (915 - 985) was born about 915 at Reykjavik in Gullbringusýsla. His parents were Þorsteinn Ingolfsson and Þora Hrolfsdóttir. He was the grandson of Iceland's first settler Inglofur Arnarson. He made his farm at Reykjavik where he became a powerful Goði.

Þorkell married Þorve Þormodardóttir and they were known to have two sons: Þorsteinn and Þormodur. We descend from both of them.

Þorkell was the third Law Speaker of Iceland from 970 to 984. Þorkell died at Reykjavik in about 985. *Landnamabok* provides the following narrative:

In his last sickness he caused himself to be carried out into the sunshine, where he recommended himself to the god who had created the sun. But he also lived as pure a life as any Christian who has the purest morals.

### **Goði Þórður Freysgoði Össursson (920 - )(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þórður Freysgoði Össursson (920 – ) was born about 920 at Sandfells in East Skaftafellsýsla. His parents were Össur Asbjarnarson and Alfheidur Flosadóttir. His grandmother Thorgerdur Vethormsdóttir was the first settler at Sandfells.

Þórður made his farm at Svinafell in East Skaftafellsýsla. He was the goði in the district. He was one of the great patriarchs of the Svínfellingar family clan and priest of the Freyr cult.

Þórður first married Ingunn Þórisdóttir, daughter of Þórir Hámundsson and they had at least four children: Flosi, Steinn, Kolbeinn, and Þorgeir. We descend from Kolbeinn and

## Traces Through World History

Þorgeir. We do not however descend from Flosi Þórðarson who is a character portrayed in *Njál's Saga*.

Þórður's second marriage was to Raslaug Þorsteinsdóttir and they had two children: Starkaður and Egill.

### **Goði Þorgrimur Hallormsson (925 - )(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorgrimur Hallormsson (925 – ) was born about 925 at Kornsa in Hunavatnsysyla. His parents were Hallorma and Þordis Ingimundsdóttir, daughter of Ingimundur the old Þorsteinsson. Hallorma and Ingimundur were early settlers in the Hunavatns district. Hallorma had made his farm at Kornsa and Þorgrimur took it over when he became of age. Þorgrimur became the first goði of the district.

Þorgrimur had a child by his mistress named Nereid. Þorgrimur's wife demanded that the child be put out to die. Þorgrimur's brother-in-law Þorsteinn Ingimundarson heard of this and declared that this was a wicked thing to do. Þorsteinn went to Kornsa and found the child "scratching" at the cover over its body. Þorsteinn took it home to his farm where he placed the child in the care of a man named Thorir. Thorir brought up the boy and named him Þorkell Scratcher. Þorkell had been born about 958 at Kornsa and we descend from him.

Þorkell was three years old when his foster-father Thorir died. He then went to live with a man named Thororm. By age twelve Þorkell was both big and strong, but Þorgrimur did not acknowledge him as his son. A meeting was to be held to determine who would become the goði of the district. Þorgrimur was considered to be best suited for the goði role because of his kinship with the Vatndal people. Þorgrimur arrived early in the day and noticed Þorkell Scratcher playing on the floor with other children. Þorkell Scratcher stopped in front of Þorgrimur and gazed at him for a very long time and at the small axe that Þorgrimur held in his hand. Þorgrimur asked the boy, "What are you prepared to do, Scratcher, first in return for my giving you the axe, because I see that you like it very much; and also in return for my acknowledging kinship with you?"

Þorgrimur offered to acknowledge Scratcher as his son and give him the axe if he would do one thing for him. It seems that Þorgrimur's competition for the goðorð was a man named Þorkel Silver. Þorgrimur asked the boy Scratcher to kill Þorkel Silver. Þorkel Silver won the drawing of lots to be the goði. Þorkell Scratcher then leapt up to the seat right by him and buried the axe into Silver's head. Þorgrimur said that Scratcher had shown himself to be very much a Vatndal man and then acknowledge him as his son. Þorkell then went home with Þorgrimur to Kornsa.

Þorkell went abroad with a man named Björn. They arrived in the Orkney Islands when they were ruled by Earl Sigurd. This would be Earl Sigurd the stout Hlodversson (our 27<sup>th</sup> great grandfather in the Ancient Scottish Pedigree). The Earl offered them his hospitality. After awhile, the Earl asked Þorkell if he would like to go raiding with him. Þorkell went along in the Earl's ship. They raided far and wide that summer. Once, when they made an attack in Scotland and returned to their ships, they noticed that Þorkell was missing. The Earl ordered his men to search for him. They found Þorkell by an oak tree in a forest clearing; two men were attacking him and

## Traces Through World History

four others lay dead beside him. The Earl held Þorkell in much esteem because of that exploit.

Þorkell stayed with the Earl for two winters, but then said he wished to return to Iceland. He became one of the Earl's men, and the Earl gave him a gold-inlaid axe and fine clothing and said that he should remain his friend. The Earl gave him a trading ship along with whatever cargo he might choose. The Earl sent a gold ring weighing half a mark to Þorgrimur to pay for Nereid's freedom. As a gesture of kinship he sent to Nereid a complete and splendid woman's outfit. Þorkell then set sail and his journey went well. He brought his ship into Hunsvatnsos. Þorgrimur the Goði of Kornsa rode to the ship and greeted his son warmly and invited him to stay with him, and Þorkell accepted. Þorgrimur granted Nereid her freedom just as the Earl had requested. A little later Þorgrimur fell ill and died and, in accordance with the law, his legitimate sons inherited his estate.

One day, Þorkell volunteered to go into the mountains with the workmen to round up some stray pigs. No one searched more energetically than Þorkell. He was tireless in his efforts, and always volunteered for those tasks which other people thought were the worst. A man named Glaedir from the East Fjords heard of this and thought that the work was demeaning. He set about to ridicule Þorkell saying that the work was right and proper for a slave-woman's son. Glaedir continued with the ridicule and insults several more times. Eventually Þorkell tired of this, followed after him and hacked at Glaedir's head killing him. Glaedir's men gave chase to Þorkell. They were determined that Þorkell should not escape. But with the help of a woman named Hild, Þorkell ran through the bed-closets of the house and made his escape.

Over the winter, Þorkell was variously at Kornsa with his brothers or with other kinsmen, because everyone wanted to offer him some help. Glaedir's men planned to seek retribution at the spring assembly. They prepared a case against Þorkell. However, the prosecution of the suit was held up, and the case was delayed. Gudmund the Powerful Eyjolfsson (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) was to play the role of adjudicator. Gudmund stipulated that a hundred of silver be paid in compensation for the killing of Glaedir.

The Vatnsdal people did everything possible to honor Þorkell Scratcher. They made him goði of the district. They found him a wife named Vigdís Ólafsdóttir and she and Þorkell were known to have three children: Þorsteinn, Arnór, and Ragnheidur. We descend from Ragnheidur.

Around this time Bishop Frederick and Thorvald Kodransson came out to Iceland. They were there to share the Christian religion with the Icelanders. During autumn, they were staying with a man named Olaf who invited Þorkell and others for a visit. Þorkell was the only one to give them a decent welcome. Eventually, Þorkell was baptized, as were all the Vatnsdal people. Þorkell was a great chieftain; he had a church built on his farm and kept his faith well.

Þorkell grew old and when he lay in his final illness, he summoned his friends, kinsmen and thingmen. Þorkell said to them, "I wish to make it known to you that I have contracted a sickness, and it seems to me likely that it will result in the parting of our ways. You have had faith in my foresight and shown me respect and obedience; accept my thanks for this." He died in about 1013.

**Goði Þoroddur (the Priest) Eyvindarson (930 - 1003)(Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

## Traces Through World History

Póroddur the Priest Eyvindsson ( 930 – 1003) was born about 930 at Stórinúpur in Árnæssýsla. His parents were Eyvindur Þorgrímsson and Þorvor Þormodardóttir. He appears as a character in the *Grettir Saga*, and *Reykðæla ok Víga-Skútu Saga*. He was the goði at Hjalla in Arnæssýsla.

Póroddur was married to Rannveig Gnúpsdóttir, daughter of Gnupur Molda-Gnupsson and Arnbjorg Radormsdóttir. They were known to have had at least three children: Helga, Skapti, and Þórdís. We descend from Helga and Þórdís. Although we do not descend from him, Skapti would become Iceland's law speaker from 1004 to 1030.

Goði Póroddur the Priest Eyvindsson died in about 1003.

### **Þorleikur Hoskuldsson (930 - 1000)(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorleikur Hoskuldsson (930 – 1000) was born about 930 at Hjardarholt in Dalasýsla. His parents were Hoskuldur Dala-Kollsson and Jorunn Bjarnadóttir. Þorleikur was the eldest of their children. He was big, strong man with striking features, who spoke little and was unruly. Judging from his character as a youngster people felt he would hardly prove to be easy to get along with.

Þorleikur is a character from the *Laxdæla saga* and *Eyrbyggja saga*. He was anything but a peaceable man and was a great warrior. Before settling on a farm, Þorleikur had been a successful merchant. He consorted with many men of noble birth abroad, and was considered a man of some note. He had also gone on Viking expeditions and earned himself a good reputation as a bold fighter.

Hrut Herjolfsson had given his slave, Hrolf, his freedom. He also gave him a home-site on the border of his land with that of Þorleikur's father. Unfortunately the land was actually Hoskuldur Dala-Kollsson's property, yet the slave Hrolf prospered and soon had a great deal of wealth. Hoskuldur demanded that Hrolf pay him for the land upon which he dwelt. Acting on his father's bidding, Þorleikur went to Hrolf's farm with several men and killed him. Þorleikur claimed for himself and his father all the wealth which the freed slave had acquired there. He had killed a trespasser on the land belonging to his father.

The area on which the freed slave lived was a place called Kambsnes in Dalasýsla. His father turned over to him his share of that property and Þorleikur built a farm there where he lived for some time. He then married Gudlaug Arnbjarnadóttir, daughter of Arinbjörn Sleitu-Björnsson and Thorlaug Thordardóttir. They had a least one child, Bolli who we descend from.

When his father Hoskuldur was on his death bed, he summoned Þorleikur and his brother Bard. He told them that they would inherit all of his property. But Hoskuldur wanted to leave something to his illegitimate son Olafur Peacock. Þorleikur was opposed to this but agreed to let his father give Olafur twelve ounces for his inheritance. But what Hoskuldur gave to Olafur was a gold arm ring which weighed a mark and a sword which was worth half a mark which were gifts that Hoskuldur had received from King Hakon. Þorleikur resented this. However, Þorleikur received the larger share of the goods and livestock. Relations between Olafur and Bard were warm, but rather cool between Olafur and Þorleikur.

To make things better between them, Olafur offered to foster Þorleikur's son Bolli and raise him as his own. Þorleikur was pleased by the offer, and agreed that it did him great honor.

## Traces Through World History

Þorleikur sold his property and used the proceeds to prepare for a journey abroad. He purchased a ship which was beached at Dagverðarnes, and when it was ready to sail, he went abroad accompanied by his wife and others of his family, except Bolli stayed in Iceland with his foster family. They had a good passage and made land in Norway that summer. From there he traveled south to Denmark, as he did not feel satisfied in Norway as his friends and relatives had died or been driven out of the country. From Denmark he traveled to Gotland. He seems to have died in about 1000 in Gotland.

Bolli Þorleiksson was born about 960 at Kamnes in Dalasýsla. Bolli was three at the time that Olafur Peacock became his foster-father. Olafur and his wife Thorgerd had a son named Kjartan who was about Bolli's age. The boys were raised as brothers. Bolli grew into a large man and was the best at all skills and other accomplishments. He was strong and handsome, a top fighter, with good manners and fond of fine clothes.

Bolli and Kjartan were very close. Kjartan never went anywhere without Bolli at his side. So it went when Kjartan decided to go abroad. Bolli and ten other Icelanders went with Kjartan on his journey because they were so attached to him. They took with them goods of great value. They set about making their preparations, and as soon as a favorable wind arose they set sail from Borgarfjord out to the open sea. They had a good crossing and made land in Norway, north of Nidaros, at Agdenes.

Kjartan and his men docked their ship at Nidaros. There were a great number of prominent Icelanders in Norway at this time, and the three ships already docked there were all owned by Icelanders. It seems that King Olaf Tryggvason had forbidden all of the ships to put to sea because the owners refused to adopt the new religion (Christianity) which he had decreed. The Icelanders held counsel and agreed among themselves to refuse to adopt the new religion. So Kjartan and his men unloaded their ship and saw to their goods. Kjartan and Bolli discussed the prospect of the new religion. Bolli said, "I am not eager at all, as this religion seems very weak to me."

The next morning the king called a meeting and summoned all the Icelanders. He ordered the Icelanders to come before him and asked whether they wished to be baptized. But they replied that they did not wish to be baptized. The king said, "Leave this meeting in peace and proceed in safety, whatever course you choose; no one will force you to adopt Christianity for the time being."

The king had been building a church in town and it was completed by Christmas. Kjartan suggested to his men that they go there to observe the services held by Christian men. So the group included Kjartan, Bolli and many of the Icelanders. The king urged the listeners to convert. He spoke eloquently and at length and his speech was met with general approval. Kjartan was very impressed and thought that the Icelanders welfare depended upon their believing this God who the king supports to be the one true God. After some discussion, the Icelanders decided to be baptized.

Kjartan and Bolli were then baptized along with all their crew and many others. It took place on the second day of Christmas. The king then invited Kjartan, Bolli and the others to his Christmas feast. Kjartan and Bolli remained among the king's followers for the remainder of the winter.



## Traces Through World History

Before leaving for Norway, Kjartan had established a romantic relationship with Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir in Iceland. But Kjartan soon became involved with Ingibjörg Tryggvadóttir, the sister of King Ólafur Tryggvason. So Kjartan decided to stay in Norway awhile longer.

The king was arranging for Christian missionaries Gizur and Hjalti to go to Iceland. Bolli decided to accompany them to Iceland. They made land in time for the assembly in the Westman Islands and went from there to the mainland, where they called a meeting and spoke to their kinsmen. After that many of the people of Iceland converted to Christianity. So Bolli may have played a part in this important historical event and it may have had an effect on his behavior in the future.

Bolli stayed at home at Hjardarholt that summer and had earned himself a great deal of respect as a result of his journey. Soon Bolli spoke with his foster-father and Uncle Olafur what he thought about asking for the hand of Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir to be his wife. Olafur reminded him that there had been some affection between Kjartan and Guðrún and that could pose a problem. But Olafur said that if her father Osvif agreed, then he would support it. Bolli rode from Hjardarholt to Laugar with eleven followers. Osvif and his sons welcomed them. Osvif told Bolli that because Guðrún was a widow, she was free to choose to marry and if she choose to marry Bolli, then he would support it. Guðrún was resistant to Bolli as she preferred his foster-brother Kjartan. But she gave herself to Bolli because of a false rumor that Kjartan was engaged to Ingibjörg Tryggvadóttir in Norway.

So Bolli and Guðrún were betrothed and the date of the wedding was set for the Winter Nights. The feast at Laugar was impressive and Bolli remained there after the wedding for the remainder of the winter. After they were married Guðrún showed little affection for Bolli.

Kjartan returned to Iceland and Bolli and the Osvifssons went with Olafur to greet him. Kjartan soon learned of Bolli and Guðrún's marriage. Kjartan seemed accepting of this but soon a resentment began building inside of him.

Bolli heard that a man named Thorarin was interested in selling his farm at Sælingsdalstunga. Bolli and Guðrún met with Thorarin and thought it highly fortunate to get this piece of land close by. They reach a tentative agreement with Thorarin on the price and how the payment would be made. However the agreement was not formalized with witnesses. Kjartan heard about this and went to Thorarin making a better offer and telling him that because there were no witnesses his agreement with Bolli was null. Thorarin then chose to sell the property to Kjartan and the agreement was witnessed and formalized at once. It seems that Kjartan was taking every opportunity to aggravate and irritate Bolli.

Guðrún continued to urge Bolli to act on the offenses Kjartan was committing against him. Bolli gathered up his weapons and his followers. Bolli knew that Kjartan and his men would be returning from a journey through a narrow ravine near Svinadal. They were planning on ambushing Kjartan and his party. Kjartan and his followers caught sight of the ambushers when they reached the ravine and recognized them.

Six of the Osvifssons attacked Kjartan and An. Bolli stood back and watched, holding his sword "leg-biter." The Osvifssons and An had all been wounded, but Kjartan was still untouched. Kjartan called out to Bolli challenging him to engage in the fight. At this Bolli drew the sword leg-biter and turned toward Kjartan. With that Kjartan threw down his weapons and

## Traces Through World History

refused to defend himself further. He was only slightly injured, although exhausted from fighting. Bolli made no response to Kjartan's words, but dealt him a death blow. Bolli then took up his foster-brother's body in his arms as he died. Bolli regretted the deed immediately and declared himself the slayer.

The time soon came for the Thorsnes Assembly. The case against Bolli and the Osvifssons was presented and they were sentenced to outlawry. But Olafur Peacock refused to let the outlaw sentence against Bolli stand and pronounced instead a fine as his compensation. At Olafur's suggestion, Bolli purchased the farm at Sælingsdalstunga.

The following spring Gudrun and Bolli set up their house at Sælingsdalstunga, which soon became an impressive farm. Their children would be born there. Bolli kept a large number of servants and lived in style, for he did not lack wealth.

Many years passed while Olafur Peacock tried to keep the peace and subdue the resentment that his sons had against Bolli. They still wanted revenge in the form of Bolli's death. So they eventually formulated a plan to attack Bolli when the time was right. They found out that Bolli had sent his servants away and that Bolli was up at his shieling (corrals) up in Sælingsdal with only a few servants who were helping him to make hay there. The brothers thought that there may be no better time to confront him.

As the brothers and followers of Kjartan were stealthily approaching the shieling, Bolli's shepherd had gone out to see to the flocks up on the mountains early that morning. He caught sight of the men in the woods and their tethered horses, and suspected that anyone who moved so secretly could hardly be on a peaceful errand. He headed straight back to the shieling to tell Bolli of the men's arrival. But An Twig-belly caught up to him, lifted him and threw him forcefully to the ground breaking his spine when he fell. So Bolli was not warned of the attack.

Guðrún and Bolli were alone in the sleeping cabin when they heard the commotion. Bolli collected his weapons, placed his helmet on his head and picked up his shield and sword leg-biter. An Twig-belly was the first to enter the cabin. Bolli struck him a blow with leg-biter, cutting off the tail of the shield and splitting An right down to his shoulders and killing him immediately. Then Lambi went in; he held his shield before him, and a drawn sword in his hand. In the nick of time, Bolli pulled leg-biter out of An's wound, as he did, his shield slipped to one side so as to lay him open to attack. So Lambi made a thrust at him in the thigh, and gave Bolli a bad wound. Bolli responded and struck Lambi's shoulder, and the sword cut down along Lambi's side and he was no longer able to fight. At this point Helgi rushed at Bolli with a spear. When Bolli saw that he cast away his sword, and took his shield in both hands, and went towards the door to meet Helgi. Helgi thrust at Bolli with the spear and it went right through Bolli's shield and through him. Now Bolli leaned up against the wall, and the other men rushed in. Bolli stood still against the wall holding his cloak tightly to contain his entrails. Then Steinþor Olafson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) rushed at Bolli and struck him a blow on the neck with a large axe just above his shoulders, and it severed his head cleanly. Bolli died in about 1007.

Bolli and Guðrún were known to have had at least five children: Bolli, Thorleikur, Hoskuldur, Thorgerdur, and Surt. We descend from Bolli the immaculate. These children grew to adulthood at Holyfell, after Guðrún exchanged homes with the renowned Snorri the Goði. Guðrún constantly argued for revenge for his killing, but eventually his sons made peace with the

## Traces Through World History

sons of Ólafur and Kjartan's kinsmen at the Thorness Thing. It is not known how much money was exchanged in compensation as part of the agreement, but "both sides were thought to have gained in esteem from these affairs".

Guðrún went on to marry Þorkell Eyjolfsson and the wedding feast was held at Helgafell in Snaefellsnessýsla. They had two children: Gellir and Rjúpa. We descend from Gellir. Guðrún lived to a great age and is said to have lost her sight. She died at Helgafell in about 1060 and is buried there.

### **Law Speaker Þorgeir Þorkelsson (930 - )(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorgeir Þorkelsson was born about 930 at Oxara in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla. His parents were Þorkell havi Þorfinnsson and Þorunn Þorsteinsdóttir. His grandfather Þorfinur Moon Askelsson had been the first settler at Oxara. Þorgeir was a goði and the owner of the Ljosavatn estate in Sudur-Þingeyjarsýsla.

Þorgeir married Gudridur Þorkelsdóttir, daughter of Þorkell the black Þorisson and Gudlaug Hrolfsdóttir. They were known to have at least two children: Þorkell and Hoskuldur. We descend from both of them.

Þorgeir was a Law Speaker in Iceland's Althing from 985 to 1001. In the year 999 or 1000, Iceland's legislative assembly (Alþing) was debating which religion they should practice: Norse paganism or Christianity. This state of affairs reached a high point during the meeting. Fighting between adherents of the rival religions seemed likely until mediators intervened and the matter was submitted to arbitration. Being the Law Speaker, Þorgeir, was acceptable to both sides as mediator, being known as a moderate and reasonable man. He was appointed to make the decision as to whether or not Iceland should legally adopt Christianity. At the time, Þorgeir, himself was a pagan priest.

Þorgeir accepted responsibility for deciding whether Iceland should become Christian, with the condition that both parties abide by his decision. When this was agreed, he spent a day and a night resting under a fur blanket. After a day and a night of silent meditation he decided to make it law that all should be baptized is said to have saved the country from a lot of Parliamentary wrangling and possibly civil war.

Under the compromise, pagans could still practice their religion in private and several of the old customs were retained. After his decision, Þorgeir himself converted to Christianity. Upon returning to his farm Ljosavatn, he is said to have thrown the idols of his gods into a nearby waterfall, for which it is now known in Icelandic as Godafoss, the "waterfall of the gods."

The following day he announced that Iceland was to become Christian, with the condition that old laws concerning the exposure of infants and the eating of horseflesh would remain, and that private pagan worship be permitted. These sticking points related to long-established customs ran contrary to the laws of the Church. Horsemeat is a taboo food in many cultures, and Pope Gregory III had banned the Germanic custom of its consumption in 732. Likewise, infanticide used to be widespread around the world, and the practice of exposing "surplus" children was an established part of old Icelandic culture. Once the Church was firmly in control in Iceland, horsemeat, infanticide, and pagan rituals practiced in private were banned.

## Traces Through World History

### Osvifur (the wise) Helgason (936 - )(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)

Osvifur the wise Helgason (936 – ) was born about 936 at Laugar in Dalasýsla. His parents were Helgi Ottarsson and Nidbjorg Bjolansdóttir. Osvifur was a very wise man. He lived at the farm Laugar in Sælingsdal. The farm was located to the south of the Sælingsdalsa River, across from the farm Sælingsdalstunga.

Osvifur married Þordis Þjodolfsdóttir, daughter of Þjodolf the short. They were known to have had nine children, all sons except one daughter, Ospak, Einar, Gudrun, Vandrad, Torrad, Thorolf, Askell, Thorkell, and Helgi. We descend from Gudrun.

Osvifur had plenty of livestock and needed more land. So he purchased land from a neighbor named Thorarin. It included all the land on both sides of the valley extending from Gnupuskord pass as far up as Stakkagil. This was good, fertile grassland and Osvifur used it for a shieling. He had a fair number of servants and enjoyed great respect in the district.

One day Bolli Þorleiksson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, see above) came to Laugar accompanied by eleven followers. Osvifur and his sons welcomed them. Bolli asked to speak to Osvifur privately and brought up the question of marriage, asking for the hand of his daughter Gudrun. Osvifur replied, “As you know, Bolli, Gudrun is a widow and as such she can answer for herself, but I will give it my support.”

Osvifur went to Gudrun and told her that it was her decision to make. But Osvifur said without hesitation that if it was up to him, Bolli would not be turned down. Gudrun was reluctant to accept this proposal as she had been previously romantically involved with Kjartan Olafsson, son of Olafur Peacock and Bolli’s foster-brother. However, Kjartan was still in Norway and there were rumors that he was engaged to another. But since Osvifur was so opposed to her wishes, she did not refuse Bolli. Further, Osvifur’s sons were very eager for her to make the match and felt it an honor for them to have Bolli as their brother-in-law. So Bolli and Gudrun were married shortly thereafter.

Kjartan returned from Norway and was not engaged or married after all. He resented Bolli for having married Gudrun. He engaged in harassment and intimidation actions against Bolli and the sons of Osvifur. Despite the ill-feelings between the younger members of their families, Olafur Peacock and Osvifur remained good friends. Olafur held a feast two weeks before the beginning of winter and Osvifur had organized a similar feast for the Winter Nights. Each of them invited the other to attend with as large a following as he felt did him the greatest honor.

The animosity and hostility between Bolli and Kjartan continued to heighten. Bolli and the Osvifssons planned to ambush Kjartan. In the ambush Kjartan and many of his followers were killed or wounded. Bolli had delivered the death blow to Kjartan. After this there was open enmity between the people of Laugar and those of Hjardarholt.

To settle the feud, a case against Bolli and the Osvifsson was presented at the Thorsnes Assembly. The Osvifssons sons were sentenced to outlawry, meaning that they were exiled from Iceland. Olafur refused to have his foster-son Bolli outlawed and instead pronounced a fine.

To serve their sentence, all of Osvifur’s sons went abroad that summer and one of them never returned to Iceland. Osvifur was taken ill and died. His passing was thought a great loss, for he had been among the wisest of men. Osvifur was buried at Helgafell, where Gudrun

## Traces Through World History

previously had a church built.

### **Gestur (the wise) Oddleifsson (940 - )(Our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)**

Gestur Oddleifsson (940 – ) was born about 940 at Brjanslaekur in Barðastrandarsýsla. His parents were Oddleifur Geirleifsson and Thorgerdur Vegestsdóttir. He was a farmer at Hagi in Barðastrandarsýsla. He is a character of the *Saga of Gísli Súrsson*, the *Laxdæla Saga*, and *Njáls Saga*. He was an important chieftain and especially wise man, who could foretell many events of the future. According to the *Laxdæla Saga* he had a special gift for prophecy and dream interpretation.

From a marriage, whose wife's name is unknown, Gestur had the following children: Halla, Þórður and Þórey. We descend from Þórey.

Gestur attended the Althing every summer and generally spent the night at Hol on his way. On one occasion when he was on his way to the Althing and had stayed overnight at Hol, he was up and preparing to continue his journey. He came to the hot springs at Laugar in Sælingsdal. Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandmother) came out to meet him there. Guðrún told Gestur that she had many dreams over the winter and asked if he could interpret four of those dreams. Gestur told Gudrun that her four dreams meant that she would have four husbands in her life. Gudrun later went on to marry Thordur Injunnarson, Thorvald Halldorsson, Bolli Þorleiksson, and Thorkel Eyjolfsson. We descend from her son Bolli the immaculate who she had with Bolli Thorleiksson and also Gellir who she had with Thorkel Eyjolfsson.

On another occasion, Gestur predicted with tears what would happen between foster-brothers Kjartan Ólafsson and Bolli Þorleiksson, without knowing them. He said, “I wouldn’t be surprised if Bolli should one day stoop over Kjartan’s corpse, and in slaying him bring about his own death.” This event did indeed come to pass.

One day a young man named Ref Steinsson came to visit Gestur at Hagi. Ref was to son of Gestur’s sister Thorgerdur and his nephew. Gestur said that he would certainly shelter him and asked if he was then a master in some skill. But Ref said that was not the case at all.

Ref stayed there for some time. Gestur predicted to him that he would be a master craftsman as Gestur had witnessed him when he carved a bobbin for yarn, that it had been most adroitly done. Gestur said that he wanted to put Ref to the test and asked him to build him a boat for seal hunting.

Then Gestur had a big boat-shed built and a great deal of timber brought up. A knorr had wrecked on Gestur’s beach and he had bought all the ship’s timbers. Gestur had all this timber brought to Ref’s shed along with the ship nails. Gestur also had a supply of unwrought iron, and Ref said he wanted that brought and said he would forge ship nails for himself. Gestur had all kinds of tools brought there as well as a forge and charcoal.

One morning, Gestur sent a trusted man to take a look inside the shed. He reported to Gestur that such a seal hunting boat like that was a rare sight as it was a bigger ship that any known to come to Iceland.

Two months later, Ref came to Gestur and said that he wouldn’t do anymore on the boat until Gestur had seen it. When he arrived at the shed, there stood a thoroughly seaworthy cargo

## Traces Through World History

vessel. Gestur inspected the ship very carefully, and Ref's skill seemed all the more remarkable to him since he had never built a ship before. Gestur thanked Ref for building the ship and said that he would pay Ref for it by simply giving it to Ref for his use.

After the Yule celebrations, Ref tarred his ship and readied it further. Gestur brought him all the rigging. Ref said that he intended to sail to Greenland. Gestur said he would supply him a crew for his ship and give him the goods that he will need to have. Gestur would then work with Ref's mother to divide up things as seemed good to them. Then Ref got the ship ready and mainly farmer's sons came forward to follow him. Gestur sent him on his way to Greenland with generous gifts at their parting.

Gestur became ill and as his condition worsened, he summoned his son Þórður the Short and spoke to him, saying, "If my suspicions are correct, this illness will make an end of our life together. I wish to have my body taken to Helgafell, as it will be the most prominent seat in the district. I have also often seen brightness there."

On the second night after his death, Gestur's body was laying at Hagi, when a storm blew up with winds so strong that the ice was driven from the shore. The following day the weather was mild and calm. Þórður laid Gestur's body in a boat and that day they headed south across the bay of Breidafjord, reaching Helgafell in the evening. Þórður was well received and stayed the night there. Gestur's body was buried the following morning in the same grave as his friend Osvifur Helgason (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather).

### **Goði Síðu-Hallur Þorsteinsson (945 - 1040)(Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Síðu-Hallur Þorsteinsson (945 – 1040) was born about 945 at Hof in Sudur-Mulasýsla. His parents were Þorsteinn Böðvarsson and Þordis Ossurardóttir. Þordis Ossurardóttir was the granddaughter of Hrollaugur Rögnvaldsson, the first settler at Breiðabólstaður in Skaftafellssýsla. Þorsteinn Böðvarsson was the son of Böðvar the white Þorleifsson, the first settler at Hof in Álftafjörður.

Síðu-Hallur was an Icelandic priest and chieftain in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and one of the main leaders of Christians in the Alþing at the time of the conversion to Christianity. He lived at Hof in Álftafjörður and later at Þvottá.

Síðu-Hallur married Jóreiður Þiðrandadóttir, daughter of Þrandur Þiðrandi Ketilsson and Yngvildur Ævarsdóttir. They had a very large family of at least nine children: Egill, Þorvardur, Þorgerdur, Ljotur, Þorsteinn, Kollur, Ingvildur, Þorkell, and Groa. We descend from six of these children: Þorvardur, Þorgerdur, Ljotur, Þorsteinn, Kollur, and Ingvildur.

In about 997, King Ólafur Tryggvason sent his chaplain Þangbrand to Iceland to Christianize Icelanders. Þangbrand brought his ship into Berufjörður. Some who lived in Berunes forbade people to communicate with him, but when Síðu-Hallur heard about it, he invited Þangbrand and his men to Þvottá. Síðu-Hallur converted to Christianity and was baptized along with all his people. He then joined Þangbrand in his mission and many took the faith. At the Althing in 1000 (or 999) there were large groups of Christians and pagans and Law Speaker Þorgeir Þorkelsson (our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) was the main leader of the pagans but Síðu-Hallur went before the Christians together with Gissur the White (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) and Hjalti

## Traces Through World History

Skeggjason (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). Þangbrand then departed the country. There were fierce debates, and Christians and pagans quarreled with one another. Then Síða-Hallur and others at the Althing agreed that Þorgeir should make the decision about acceptance of the new religion. Þorgeir lay down under a fur blanket and meditated on the issue for a long time. When he came out of the coat he went to Lögberg (law rock) and said that all men should be baptized and take Christian faith. Síðu-Hallur died in about 1040 at Þvottá.

Síðu-Hallur's son Þorsteinn was born about 994 at Hof in Sudur-Mulasýsla. He would take over for his father as Goði at Þvottá. Þorsteinn married Ingveldur Bjarnadóttir and they were known to have at least two children: Gudridur and Amundi. We descend from Amundi.

Þorsteinn would be the main character in a saga written about him. His saga is only partially preserved and features a number of dreams and interpretations. It seems he had a series of adventures in the Orkney Islands, Ireland, Norway and Iceland during the early 1000s. The story also tells of Þorsteinn participating in the Battle of Clontarf in Ireland in 1014. He died in about 1050 at Þvottá.

### **Goði Arnor (hag-nose) Bjarnarson (945 - ) (Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Arnor hag-nose or Crone's nose Bjarnarson (945 – ) was born about 945 at Hofdi in Skagafjordarsýsla. His parents were Björn Thordarson and Thuridur Refsdóttir. He established a farm at Miklabæjar Í Oslandshlid in Skagafjordarsýsla. He was the Goði there.

Arnor married Thuridur Hallsdóttir and they were known to have at least one daughter, Halldora, who we descend from.

A man named Thorolf Stuck-up was married to a kinswoman of Arnor's and was the thingman of the Hjaltasons. Thorolf got into a dispute with his neighbor Thodur over his bull running loose and attacking Thodur, forcing Thodur to kill the bull. In revenge, Thorolf pierced Thodur's son Olaf with a spear, killing him. Thorolf then rode off to seek the support of Goði Arnor at Miklabæjar.

Arnor told him, "You'll go looking blindly for that in this case, as I do not value my connections with you more highly than my own honor. No protection can you expect from me."

Thorolf also sought the protection of the Hjaltasons but was first refused, but later Thorvald Hjaltason and a friend named Starri took him under their protection.

Bolli Bollason (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) took on the task of prosecuting Thorolf for the slaying of the boy Olaf. Bolli went to Arnor asking for his assistance. Arnor collected a large number of men and accompanied Bolli to the Hegrans Assembly. When the people had assembled Bolli presented the charges against Thorolf. Then Thorvald and Starri came forward with their followers, intending to block Bolli's prosecution by force of arms and numbers. Since Thorvald and Starri lacked the numbers to match Arnor and his men, they withdrew. Bolli then had Thorolf outlawed for the slaying of young Olaf. He and Arnor parted the warmest of friends.

Thorolf made arrangements to attempt to flee his sentence. Bolli caught up to him as he was attempting to board an outgoing ship. Bolli drew his sword and struck a blow right through Thorolf.

Arnor had invited Bolli to come north to Miklabæjar for a feast. Bolli had several

## Traces Through World History

invitations to attend to on his way. With a party of eighteen, Bolli arrived at Miklabæjar where Arnor received them warmly. Arnor pledged his friendship to Bolli and committed to accompany him through the district so that no harm might come to him.

Thorvald intended to confront Bolli. Thorvald began collecting men for the journey and formed a party of eighteen. They set out towards the route of Bolli and his party where they intended to wait in ambush.

Arnor spotted Thorvald and his men first. Then Thorvald and his brother saw that Bolli not only had his eighteen men, but the followers of Arnor were also present. They realized that any show of aggression on their part would put them in a bad position, so they turned back and were not able to carry out their intentions.

Bolli and his companions continued on their way. Arnor accompanied them up on to the heath and did not leave them until the route began to slope downwards to the north. Arnor then returned to his home. This was testament to what great friends Arnor was with Bolli.

### **Goði Gudmundur (the powerful) Eyjolfsson (950 - 1025)(Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Gudmundur Eyjolfsson ( 950 – 1025) was born about 950 at Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörðarsýsla. His parents were Eyjólfur Valgerðsson and Hallbera Þóroddsdóttir. His father was the grandson of Auðunn the rotten Þórólfsson, the first settler at Saurbaer in Eyjafjörðarsýsla.

He was a powerful goði at Möðruvellir who ruled Eyjafjörður in the north of the Iceland between the late 10<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has been reported that he was probably in control of two goðorðs. He is the main character in the *Ljósvetninga Saga*, and also appears in other Icelandic sagas. The saga mentions that he had hundreds of farmers under his tutelage in Eyjafjörður and also in Þingeyjarsýsla, plus a hundred cows which was something amazing at that time.

In the *Saga of Grettir* and *Njál Saga* he is referred to by the nickname of Gudmund the Mighty and a descendant of Grímur Kamban, the first Viking to colonize the Faroe Islands. His influence was so wide that he was able to force a goði to renounce his goðorð and if there was no choice, even kill him.

Gudmundur was married to Þórlaug Atladóttir. They were known to have at least four children: Þórdís, Halldor, Jodis, and Eyjólfur. We descend from Þórdís and Eyjólfur. Many of the great Icelandic families are descended from Gudmundur, inhabitants of Oddi, Hvammur, Fljót, Bishop Ketill Þorsteinsson, the Sturlungs.

Gudmundur was a leader in North Eastern Iceland and often performed the duties of a power broker in the settlement of disputes. One such dispute involved his sister's son and his nephew Glaedir. Þorkell Scratcher Þorgrimsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), had volunteered to go into the mountains with the workmen to round up some stray pigs. He was one who always volunteered for those task which other people thought were the worst. Glaedir heard of this and thought that the work was demeaning. He set about to ridicule Þorkell saying that the work was right and proper for a slave-woman's son. Glaedir continued with the ridicule and insults several more times. Eventually Þorkell tired of this, followed after him and hacked at Glaedir's head



## Traces Through World History

killing him. Glaedir's men gave chase to Þorkell.

Glaedir's men planned to seek retribution at the spring assembly. They prepared a case against Þorkell. However, the prosecution of the suit was held up, and the case was delayed. Gudmundur Eyjolfsson was to play the role of adjudicator. Glaedir's men met Gudmundur, and offered terms and monetary compensation. Gudmundur answered, "I do not know what you are willing to offer but I place much store on the fact that in this case the person who was killed had by his own words made himself no longer inviolable." Gudmundur stipulated that a hundred of silver be paid in compensation for the killing of Glaedir.

In another case, Gudmundur and Law Speaker Þorgeir Þorkelsson (our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) grossly manipulated the law to their own advantage. A pair of troublesome brothers had been outlawed for three years as punishment for their misdeeds. They went to Norway where they gained esteem with Jarl Hakon. One of the brothers, Solmund returned to Iceland after only two years of his sentence. He brings to Gudmundur and Þorgeir gifts that had been provided to him by Jarl Hakon to buy protection. Gudmundur had been known to have been a retainer for the Jarl. Þorgeir's interest in the gifts was only pecuniary. This two chieftains decided to use their legal powers to nullify the earlier court judgement.

At an Althing, Bolli Bollason (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) met with Gudmundur and the two conversed together. Gudmundur said, "I want to say, Bolli, that it's men like you that I am to count among my friends, I invite you to come north for a fortnight's feast, and will be disappointed if you fail to accept."

Gudmundur was also a close friend of Ásgrímur Elliða-Grímsson, another of the great Icelandic farmers, and both had an important role in the saga after the death of Hoskuld Thrainsson.

In the *Valla-Ljóts Saga*, Gudmundur faces another warlord, Ljótr Ljótólfsson, and events unfold in a spiral of violence common to Viking society in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Gudmundur died in about 1025 at Möðruvellir.

Gudmundur's son Eyjolfur the lame Gudmundarson was born about in 995 at Möðruvellir. He would follow his father in becoming the Goði at Möðruvellir.

Eyjolfur married Ingvildur Sidu-Hallsdóttir, daughter of Goði Sidu-Hallur Þorsteinsson and Joreidur Þidrandadóttir. They were known to have at least four children: Gudmundur, Þorey, Þorsteinn, and Ulfheidur. We descend from Gudmundur, Þorey, and Þorsteinn,

Eyjolfur got into a desperate struggle with Thorvardur the elder Hoskuldsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). One of Thorvardur's followers killed Eyjolfur's brother, and Eyjolfur prepared his case at the assembly. Each of the rival chieftains offers to pay other goði's in return for support in the case. Eyjolfur, who was very wealthy, offered his friend, the chieftain Gellir Thorkelsson (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather), an ounce of silver for each man plus half a mark for each chieftain whom Gellir can bring with him to the Hegranses Assembly. Eyjolfur also offers a gold ring to Skegg-Broddi Bjarnason (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather) for his support.

Eyjolfur died in about 1060 at Möðruvellir.

**Goði Gissur (the white) Teitsson (952 - ) (Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

## Traces Through World History

Gissur the white Teitsson (952 – ) was born about 952 at Skalhólts in Arnessýsla. His parents were Goði Teitur Ketilbjarnarson and Olof Bodvarsdóttir. Gissur was from the family that had settled at Mosfell in Arnessýsla. He was the grandson of Ketilbjörn the old Ketilsson, a settler on Mosfell. Gissur's father had his farm at Skálholt and Gissur also lived there but later in Höfði.

Gissur first married Halldora Hrolfsdóttir and they were known to have at least two daughters, Þorkatla and Vilborg, both of whom we descend from. Gissur had an unknown second wife. Gissur's third wife was Þordis Þoroddsdóttir and they had two sons: Ketil and Isleifur. We descend from Isleifur. Isleifur would become the Bishop of Skalholt.

Gissur was a Goði and one of the main leaders of Christians at the conversion to Christianity in Alþingi. He was a great leader and is widely found in ancient writings.

Some men named Skamkel and Otkel investigated and determined that Gunnar Hamundsson's wife Hallgerd had committed a theft. As Gunnar was a powerful person in their district, they hesitated to make the accusation. They assembled their evidence and soon Gunnar caught word of what was going on. Gunnar admitted that he thought it all too likely, so he sought out Otkel to settle the matter. Gunnar wanted to make a fair offer of compensation to Otkel and suggested that the best men in the district should assess the compensation. But Skamkel thought it not to be a fair offer. So Gunnar offered to pay double the amount of Otkel's losses. But Skamkel advised Otkel that it was beneath him to allow Gunnar self-judgement in the matter.

Gissur had a cousin called Geir the Priest Asgeirsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), who lived at Hlid. He and Gissur often acted together in everything. Skamkel told Otkel that he should refer his decision on whether to accept the offer to Gissur and Geir. So Otkel asked Gunnar for the time it would take to do this. Skamkel arrived at Mosfell and repeated to Gissur all the offers that had been made. Gissur said, "It seems to me, that these were generous offers. Why did Otkel not accept them?"

Gissur sent a messenger to seek out Geir. The two of them concurred that the dispute should be settled, implying that Otkel should accept the offers. But Skamkel went to Otkel and told him that it was Gissur's advice that they go and serve a summons on Gunnar for receiving stolen goods, and on Hallgerd for theft.

Otkel along with his brothers and Skamkel went to Gunnar's farm at Hlidarend to deliver the summons. Gunnar was furious. When the time came for the case to be heard at the Althing, Gunnar was accompanied by all the Sigfussons and by Njal Thorgeirsson and his sons. They went to the Dales booth to ask for advice. They were advised that Gunnar must challenge Gissur to single combat, if they do not offer him self-judgement. Gissur heard about this and decided to go at once to see Gunnar and offer self-judgement. Gunnar realized then that it wasn't Gissur's idea to serve the summons. Gissur said, "No, it was not my idea, nor Geir's either."

Because Skamkel had mis-represented Gissur's advice to Otkel, the case was settled by self-judgement, but Gissur said that he and Geir decided that Gunnar should make no payment, but they asked that Gunnar become Otkel's friend.

In another case, Otkel's son Thorgeir was killed by Gunnar. It was the responsibility of Gissur and Geir to proceed on the case. They rode to the area around Hlidarend and gave notice of the killing and cited the neighbors to attend the Althing. Gissur and Geir decided that Gissur

## Traces Through World History

would take the lead in prosecuting the case. Gissur gave notice at the Law Rock in these words:

I give notice of an action against Gunnar Hamundarson for unlawful assault, inasmuch as he made an unlawful assault on Thorgeir Otkelsson and inflicted on him an internal wound which did cause Theorgeir's death, I demand that Gunnar be sentenced to full outlawry on this charge, not to be fed nor forwarded nor helped nor harbored, I claim that his possessions be forfeit, half to me and half to those men in the Quarter who have a lawful right to received confiscated goods.

Nine neighbors went to their places as a jury and the defense was given the opportunity to make challenges to the jurymen. The jury ended up finding somewhat in Gunnar's favor and the case was then referred for arbitration. The arbitration was made and the amount of compensation determined. Furthermore Gunnar and his friend Kolskegg were to leave the country for three years and if Gunnar failed to leave, his life would be forfeit to the kinsmen of the dead.

Later, Gunnar decided that he would not leave the country and he stayed at home that autumn and winter. At the following Althing, Gissur proclaimed Gunnar a full outlaw at the Law Rock. Before the end of the Althing, Gissur summoned all of Gunnar's enemies to a meeting. As Gunnar's blatant disregard for the law could not be tolerated, Gissur proposed that they attack Gunnar and kill him.

For the time being, Gunnar went about as if he had never been outlawed. Mordur Valgarsson (our 26th great grandfather), Gissur's son-in-law (husband of Thorkatla Gissurardóttir) was assigned to keep an eye on Gunnar. Mordur sent word that Gunnar was alone at home. Gissur and Geir rode east over the rivers when they heard this, and across the sands to Hof. All those who had pledged themselves to make an attack on Gunnar met there and discussed how best to do it.

When the attackers approached the house at Hlíðarendi they were not sure whether Gunnar was at home. A man named Thorgrim climbed onto the roof in an attempt to see through a window. Gunnar struck him with a halberd and he was killed. Then Gunnar began to ward off the attackers with a shower of arrows. After a while the attackers withdrew for a rest and then attacked again. They made a third assault and kept it up for a long time; but once again they drew back. By that time, Gunnar had wounded eight men and killed two. Gunnar continued to defend himself with great courage and wounded eight more. But in the end the attackers killed him. Gissur said, "We have felled a great champion, and we have not found it easy. His last defense will be remembered for as long as this land is lived in." This event occurred in about 990.

King Ólafur Tryggvason sent a Christian Bishop Þangbrandur to Iceland as a missionary. Gissur was one of those whom Bishop Þangbrandur baptized. Hjalti Skeggjason (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), Gissur's son-in-law, also became a believer and together with Síðu-Hallur Þorsteinsson (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) they became the main leaders of the Christians. But the great majority of the chieftains were opposed to the new religion. Relations between the Christians and the heathens soon grew dangerously tense. Some of the heathens planned to kill Þangbrandur and the others who supported him. The hostilities drove Þangbrandur to Norway, where he made a report on his journey to King Olaf and added that the Icelanders would not adopt Christianity.

## Traces Through World History

Gissur and Hjalti went to Norway and stayed with King Ólafur for one winter, but he then sent them to Iceland to Christianize the Icelanders. At the Althing in the year 1000 (or 999) little was remembered that Christians and pagans had fought about the new religion. But Law Speaker Þorgeir Þorkelsson decided that Icelanders should convert to Christianity. Subsequently, Gissur had the first church built at Skálholt. Gissur sent his son Isleifur to study the new religion at the monastic school in Herford, Westphalia.

### **Goði Illugi (the black) Hallkelsson (955 - )(Our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)**

Illugi the black Hallkelsson (955 – ) was born about 955 at Hallkelsstadir in Myrasýsla. His parents were Hallkell Hrosskelsson and Þuridur Sow Thistle Gunnlaugsdóttir. He was the Goði at Hallkelsstadir. He was a very influential character and is mentioned in several of the sagas. Illugi established his farm at Gilsbakki in Myrasýsla. He was a great landowner, very strong-willed, and stood by his friends.

He was married to Ingibjörg Ásbjörnsdóttir and had four children, Hermundur, Gunnlaugur, Ketill, and Kolfinna. We descend from Hermundur.

Illugi had a quarrel with Þorgrímur Kjarlaksson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) over the dowry of his wife Ingibjörg and that required the intervention of Snorri Goði as mediator. The case was handled at the Assembly by a man named Tin-Forni. In the end, after Illugi argued the matter out with him, Tin-Forni handed over the money.

Illugi's son Gunnlaugur (not our ancestor) would be a source of great concern for him over the years. When Gunnlaugur was twelve years old, he asked his father for some wares to cover his expenses, saying that he wanted to go abroad. But, Illugi was reluctant to agree to this. But then one morning Illugi found the door to one of his outbuildings open with a dozen sacks of ware stacked outside. Gunnlaugur had done this thinking they would cover his traveling expenses. Illugi said to Gunnlaugur, “you will not undermine my authority, nor are you going anywhere until I see fit.”

Over the next few years, Gunnlaugur busied himself with seeing his romantic interest, Helga Thorsteinsdóttir at Borg. He asked for her hand in marriage. For six years, Gunnlaugur was partly living at Borg with Thorsteinn and partly at Gilsbakki with his father Illugi. By now, he was eighteen years old, and he and his father were getting on much better. So Gunnlaugur asked his father a second time for some wares, so that he could travel abroad. Illugi then decided to give him the wares and then Illugi bought Gunnlaugur a half-share in a ship from Audun Halter-dog.

Gunnlaugur had not yet become formally betrothed to Helga. It was agreed that Helga would wait only three years for Gunnlaugur to return from abroad. Gunnlaugur then departed for Norway.

Gunnlaugur did not return from abroad in the three years that was agreed upon. So Helga married Hrafn Onundarson. When Gunnlaugur eventually returned, he was greatly disappointed in the news. That summer, Illugi took his sons Gunnlaugur and Hermundur to the Althing. After the legal business was completed at the Law Rock, Gunnlaugur demanded a hearing with Hrafn in regards to his marriage to Helga. Gunnlaugur confronted Hrafn and said, “You know that you

## Traces Through World History

have married my intended and have drawn yourself into enmity with me because of it. Now, I challenge you to a duel to take place here at the Althing in three days' time on the Oxar River Island."

They met on the island. Hermundur carried his brother's shield for him. Hrafn was the first to strike a blow with his sword. He hacked off the top of Gunnlaugur's shield and in doing so the tip of the sword scratched Gunnlaugur's cheek. But Hrafn's sword promptly broke off below the hilt leaving him weaponless. At this point the father, along with several other people ran between them. Gunnlaugur claimed victory since Hrafn was now weaponless. But Hrafn claimed victory because he had wounded Gunnlaugur. Illugi told them that there should not be any more resolving for the moment. So everyone returned to their booths.

On the following day, it was laid down as law by the Law Council that all dueling should be permanently abolished. This was done by all the wisest men at the Althing. Thus the duel which Hrafn and Gunnlaugur fought was the last one ever to take place in Iceland.

After this had happened, Gunnlaugur settled down at home at Gilsbakki. One morning, Hrafn came to Gilsbakki with twelve men all armed to the teeth. Hrafn was there to propose to Gunnlaugur to suggest that they both leave Iceland that summer and travel to Norway and fight their duel over there. Gunnlaugur agreed and they both set sail on separate ships, agreeing to meet somewhere in Norway.

After meeting in Norway at a place called Gleipnisvellir. They each had followers with them. Hrafn proposed, "either we all fight, or just the two of us, but both sides must be equal."

So the fight began with each having an equal number of persons on their sides. The fight began and soon Gunnlaugur had killed two of Hrafn's men, though he was not hurt himself. Hrafn killed one of Gunnlaugur's men. Eventually it was just Hrafn and Gunnlaugur fighting. They set upon each other remorselessly with heavy blows and fearless counterattacks. Gunnlaugur hacked at Hrafn with a mighty blow, and chopped off his leg. Hrafn retreated to a tree stump, unable to keep fighting and was beginning to succumb to his fatal wound. He asked Gunnlaugur to get him some water to drink and Gunnlaugur complied. But when Gunnlaugur approached Hrafn with some water in his helmet, Hrafn struck Gunnlaugur causing a hideous wound and so the fighting began anew. Gunnlaugur finished it by overpowering Hrafn and killing him. Gunnlaugur soon succumbed to his wounds.

At the Althing the following summer, Illugi the Black spoke to Onund at the Law Rock. Illugi asked if Onund was going to compensate him for Gunnlaugur's death, since Hrafn had tricked him with the request for water. But Onund declined to offer compensation since in his opinion they both suffered equally in the deaths of their sons and that Onund would not ask for compensation for the loss of his son. Illugi remained resentful about this.

During the autumn, Illugi rode to Mosfell with thirty men and Onund and his sons rushed into the church, but Illugi captured two of Onund's kinsmen. He killed one and cut the foot off of the other. Onund sought no reprisals for this act.

Hermundur was still upset about his brother's death and thought he had not yet been properly avenged. So Hermundur rode out on his own. He caught some of Onund's kinsmen off-guard and killed one with his spear. No compensation was forthcoming for this killing, and with it the feuding between Illugi and Onund was at an end.

## Traces Through World History

### Goði Snorri (the Priest) Þorgrímsson (963 - 1031)(our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)

Snorri the Priest Þorgrímsson or Snorri Goði (963–1031) was born about 963 at Sæbol in Isafjardarsýsla. His parents were Goði Þorgrímur Þorsteinsson and Þordis Sursdóttir. Snorri's father Þorgrím was killed by his brother-in-law Gísli Súrsson, just before Snorri's birth. He was originally named Þorgrímur, but because he was a difficult child he was called Snerrir and then later Snorri, both names meaning a turbulent warlike person. His mother Þordis later married her late husband's brother Börk the Stout, and moved to his property at Helgafell.

Snorri was fostered by Þorbrandur of Álftafjörður. When he was fourteen he and his foster brothers traveled to Norway where they traded successfully. Some time after coming back, Snorri demanded his inheritance from his uncle and stepfather Börk. Börk would not divide Helgafell, and demanded sixty ounces of silver for the whole property. Börk had granted Snorri fifty ounces before his trading voyage, but presumed, due to Snorri's deceptively humble dress, that this gift had been squandered. However, Snorri was able to produce this from his trading profits, and so he bought Helgafell from Börk. Þordis also decided to divorce Börk, and Börk was required to leave Helgafell. As Snorri was now the owner of Helgafell, he was now in charge of the temple and was therefore known as Snorri the Priest.

Snorri was a prominent chieftain in Western Iceland, who featured in a number of Icelandic sagas. The main source of his life is the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, in which he is the main character, although he also figures prominently in *Njál's Saga* and the *Laxdæla Saga*. Snorri was the nephew of Gísli Súrsson, the hero of *Gísla Saga*, and son of Þorgrímur Þorsteinsson whom Gísli killed in revenge to fulfill a blood-oath.

*Eyrbyggja Saga* says of him "He was a very shrewd man with unusual foresight, a long memory and a taste for vengeance. To his friends he gave good counsel, but his enemies learned to fear the advice he gave." *Njál's Saga* says of him "Snorri was reckoned the wisest man in Iceland, not counting those who were prescient".

Illugi the black Halkelsson (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather) had obtained a judgement and settlement from Thorgrim Kjarlaksson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). Thorgrim refused to honor the settlement and made an attack on Illugi. When the fighting began in earnest, Snorri asked people to help calm things down, and managed to get a truce agreed between them. Illugi thanked Snorri for all he had done and asked him to accept a fee, but Snorri said he wanted no payment for his help.

Thorbjörn the Stout, who was married to Snorri's half sister Thurid (the daughter of Börk the Stout), accused Geirriður, the sister of Arnkell Þórólfsson of witchcraft. Arnkell was a chieftain, and like Snorri one of the most influential men in the area. In the ensuing case Snorri and Arnkell each backed their own families, and Geirridur was cleared of the charge. Thorbjörn later on accused Geirriður's son Þórarinn the Black of stealing his horses. This led to a battle in which Thorbjörn was killed. Snorri pursued the case at the local assembly and had Þórarinn exiled.

A man named Vigfus told his slave Svart the Strong that if he would kill Snorri, he would give him his freedom. Svart climbed onto the roof of Snorri's house in order to push a spear through Snorri when he came out. But Svart pushed his spear and it missed Snorri but hit Mar

## Traces Through World History

Hallvardsson instead. Svart tried to jump from the roof and scramble away, but Snorri had him before he could get back on his feet.

Snorri would have three wives and 18 children. Snorri first married Asdis the daughter of Killer-Styr Thorgrimsson and Thorbjorg Thorsteinsdóttir. This happened after helping Styr to plan the killing of two Swedish berserks who were causing trouble for Styr and his family, whilst they were living in Styr's household. Snorri and Asdis Styrsdóttir were known to have three children: Þordur, Þoroddur, and Þorsteinn. We descend from Þoroddur, and Þorsteinn.

Snorri's second wife was Þuridur Illugadóttir. They were known to have two children, Sigridur and Unn, who we descend from both.

Snorri's third wife was Hallfridur Einarsdóttir. They had a very large family of 13 children: Mani, Klyppur, Halldora, Þordis, Gudrun, Halldor, Eyjolfur, Þora, Hallbera, Olof, Þuridur, Þorleifur, and Snorri. We descend from Mani, Þordis, Gudrun, Halldor, Eyjolfur, Þora, Hallbera, and Olof.

Arnkell Þórólfsson was the son of Þórólfur Twist-foot. Some of Þórólfur's slaves attempted to set fire to a house at Ulfarshell. Arnkell and his men discovered the fire, seized the slaves and killed them for setting the fire. Þórólfur was far from pleased about Arnkell killing his slaves and demanded compensation from his son, but Arnkell refused to pay. So Þórólfur went to see Snorri at Helgafell. Snorri tried to encourage him to work it out with his son. But Þórólfur was insistent and told Snorri that he would give him some land called Krakanness which contained a great woodland. He made this offer on the condition that Snorri start proceedings against Arnkell over the killing of the slaves. Snorri thought it over and because he wanted the woodland so badly that he formally accepted ownership of the land and promised to raise a court action over the killing of the slaves. In the spring Snorri brought an action against Arnkell and the case was referred to the Thorsness Assembly. Snorri won a judgement against Arnkell who was to pay twelve ounces of silver for each slave. Snorri had kept his promise, but Þórólfur was not satisfied with the judgement.

Snorri started making use of Krakanness Wood and felled a good many trees there. Þórólfur went to Snorri and asked him to give the land back, claiming that he only leased it to him. Snorri refused and then Þórólfur went to his son Arnkell to seek his support in this. Arnkell said he was not willing to quarrel with Snorri over the woodland.

Snorri became involved in further disputes with Arnkell Þórólfsson. This included a property dispute between Arnkell and the Thorbrandssons. He and his foster brothers the Thorbrandssons attacked and killed Arnkell whilst he was working on his farm. In the ensuing court case, only one of the assailants, Thorleif Thorbrandsson, was sentenced to outlawry. This was blamed on the fact that all of Arnkell's heirs were female. This led to a change in the law that decreed that women (and men under sixteen) could not raise a manslaughter action.

Snorri later sided with the Thorbrandssons in their feud with the Thorlakssons. He took part in the battle of Alftafjord on their side, and rescued them after they were all wounded at the battle of Vigrafjord. A settlement was later reached between the two families.

Snorri also attempted to kill Björn Asbrandsson who was the lover of his sister Thurid. She was now married to Thorodd the Tribute Trader, a marriage which Snorri had helped to arrange. Björn fended off Snorri's attack, but was convinced to leave Iceland. Thurid's son

## Traces Through World History

Kjartan was suspected of being the son of Björn rather than Thorodd.

In about 1000, everyone in Iceland was baptized and Christianity was adopted by law at the Althing. It was Snorri who more than anyone else persuaded the people in the Westfjords to embrace the new faith. Soon after the assembly he started the building of a church at Helgafell.

While Snorri had lived at Helgafell, he was Osvifur the wise Helgason's (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) kinsman and friend. Through this relationship, Snorri came to admire and be a great friend to Osvif's daughter Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir. After the killing of her husband Bolli Þorleiksson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) by the Olafssons, Guðrún called for Snorri to visit her. Snorri arrived at Sælingsdalstunga with a part of sixty men. She asked Snorri if he would exchange residences with her so she wouldn't have the Hjardarholt clan in the next field to her. Snorri agreed to exchange properties so that she moved to Helgafell, and Snorri moved to Sælingsdalstunga in about 1011.

Snorri took it upon himself to watch out for Guðrún's welfare. He suggested to Thorkel Eyjolfsson (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) that he seek Guðrún's hand in marriage. Thorkel went abroad and Snorri told Guðrún that he intended for her to marry Thorkel and asked her to not marry another until he returned.

When Thorkel returned, Snorri told him to make an end to his sailing, settle down and take the wife, Guðrún, that he had spoken to him about before his departure. Snorri thought it clear that Thorkel should not be rejected. He spoke with Guðrún and her sons and Guðrún said, "We should make every effort to follow Snorri's guidance in this matter."

Snorri offered to hold the wedding feast, but it was decided that the wedding should be held at Helgafell. Snorri accompanied Thorkel to the wedding feast and their party numbered almost sixty people. The feast proceeded well, and was highly impressive. Guðrún and Thorkel grew to love one another very deeply.

The closeness between Guðrún's family and Snorri's family resulted in Guðrún's son Bolli becoming interested in Snorri's daughter Thordis. Thorkel brought up the subject with Snorri about a family alliance on Bolli's behalf by proposing his marriage to Thordis. When Snorri realized that Thordis was not opposed to a marriage with Bolli, he then agreed and the two were betrothed. The wedding feast was held at midsummer. Snorri was determined to do well by Bolli and treated him in all respects better than he treated his own children.

Bolli's brother Thorleik still held grudges against the Olafssons for killing his father. He had said briefly to Snorri that he and his brothers had been planning to attack the Olafssons. Snorri told him that more than enough hostility had already resulted in pursuing this matter. But when Snorri saw that he would not be able to change their minds, he offered to seek a settlement with the Olafssons to avoid any killing and the brothers agreed to this. Snorri was successful in arranging a peace agreement between the Olafssons and Guðrún's sons.

Snorri also took action over the killing of his father-in-law Styr. The case against the killer was dismissed at the Althing by Thorsteinn Gislason. In retaliation, Snorri later killed Thorsteinn and his son Gunnar. This led to further battles between the kinsmen and allies of the two sides. The dispute was eventually settled at the local assembly.

In his later years Snorri successfully led the fight against Ospak Kjallaksson, a farmer who had assembled a gang who had taken to attacking and robbing his neighbors. Ospak and the



## Traces Through World History

other leaders of the gang were killed, and the rest made to disperse. Ospak's son was allowed to inherit his father's farm.

At the Althing which followed the burning of Njáll Þorgeirsson, Snorri supported Njal's kinsmen. When fighting broke out, Snorri stopped the retreat of Flosi Thordarsson and the other burners. Snorri and the Law Speaker Skapti Þóroddsson, both then got their men to separate the two sides, and so stop the fighting. Afterwards Snorri was one of the men chosen to arrange a settlement between the two parties.

Snorri the Priest dwelt at Sælingsdalstunga for twenty winters. He had many who opposed him in his lifetime, but as he grew older, ill-will against him began to wane, chiefly by reason of those who bore him envy grew fewer. His friendships were greatly bettered by his knitting alliances with the greatest chiefs in Breidafjord and elsewhere.

When Snorri was taken with an illness that quickly worsened, he summoned his kinsmen and dependents. He told Bolli, his son-in-law, that he wished him to take over his farm and goðorð as his son Halldor was abroad at the time.

Snorri died in Sælingsdalstunga one winter after the fall of King Olaf the Holy. He was buried at the church he himself had built. When the graveyard there was changed, his bones were taken up and brought down to the site of the present church.

### **Finnbogi (the strong) Asbjarnarson (965 - )(Our 26<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Finnbogi (the strong) Asbjarnarson was born about 965 at Flateyjar in Sudur-Pingeyjarsýsla. His father was Asbjörn falling-beam Eyvindarson. It is said in the *Saga of Finnbogi* that he was the nephew of Law Speaker Þorgeir Þorkelsson. He is said to have lived on Flatey Island which is in the west side of Skjálfandi Bay. Finnbogi had a fondness for fighting and fearless acts, defending himself without problems against superior forces. The *Saga of the People of Vatnsdal* tells of the relationship between Finnbogi and his relative Berg the Brave and his enemies, the sons of Ingimundur Þorsteinsson.

Finnbogi moved off of Flatey Island and established himself at Lesser Borg in Hunavatnssýsla. He was friends with Berg the Bold. A man named Thorgrim who lived at Lesser Borg invited Finnbogi and Berg to his wedding feast over the Winter Nights at Skidi's farm. Skidi's farm was somewhere in the vicinity of Vididal. Thorgrim also invited the sons of Ingimundur the Old. On their way to the wedding feast, Finnbogi and Berg had to cross the Vatnsdalsa River. The river was running high. There was a channel in the middle with great chunks of ice laying along the banks. Finnbogi and Berg left their horses with a farmer who lived by the river. Berg said, "I will carry people across." In doing so he showed great strength in making the crossing. There was a hard frost and all their clothes froze on them.

When they arrived at Skidi's farm. Thorsteinn Ingimundsson and his brothers went out to meet them and the other guests. Then fires were kindled and peoples clothes were thawed out. Finnbogi went inside first and was to sit on the high seat opposite Thorsteinn; then came Berg. Berg was still in a "frozen" state feeling rather cold, so he made for the fire in an attempt to thaw out. He walked past Thorsteinn saying, "Make room for me, fellow." But he passed in such a rush that he inadvertently ran into Thorsteinn making him lose his balance and he almost fell into

## Traces Through World History

the fire.

Thorsteinn's brother Jokul saw this and was very angry. He sprang up and leaped at Berg, and struck him between the shoulders with the sword-boss (handle knob) so that he fell flat on his face. Berg sprang up and was seething with rage and took up his weapons. But the men in the room then came between them. But Berg was as unruly as could be.

Thorsteinn made an offer of compensation to satisfy Berg's honor. But Berg rejected saying that he would take care of revenge himself. At this, The owner of the place, Skidi, requested that Finnbogi and his men should leave and have nothing more to do with the people there.

Berg announced the blow from the sword-boss at the Hunavatn assembly and prepared to present his case. Berg demanded that Jokul and Thorsteinn crawl under three arches of raised turf, as was then the custom after serious offenses. Once again, Thorsteinn was conciliatory and crawled under the first arch. But Jokul refused to crawl under, saying it was not right to make the top man (Thorsteinn) of the Vatnsdal people to "stoop like a swine." Thorsteinn then refused to continue to crawl under the other two arches. At that, Finnbogi challenged Thorsteinn to a duel.

Some time after this, Finnbogi and Berg assembled their men in Vididal, and there were thirty of them in all. Finnbogi said that he was off to Vatnsdal. On the day when Finnbogi and his forces were expected from Vididal, Thorsteinn's sixty men gather at Hof.

Finnbogi knew that Thorsteinn and his men were coming from Hof to confront them. He told his men that we can either ride off to our homes with things as they stand, but said this would be a great disgrace, or we can risk a fight with them, but the odds would be against us. Finnbogi met with Thorsteinn. Thorsteinn gave Finnbogi two choices. They could either go back to Borg with matters as they stand or they could fight their duel. But Thorsteinn said that the duel would be fought by using the assistance of their helpers. Thorsteinn reminded Berg that he had shown great hostility towards Thorsteinn and his brothers. Also that Berg had trespassed by grazing his horses on Thorsteinn's meadow without offering compensation. Thorsteinn also reminded Berg that he had been offered a fair compensation for the sword-boss blow, but he refused to accept it.

After giving Thorsteinn's words some thought, Finnbogi and Berg and their followers mounted and rode away, and did not stop until they arrived back at Borg.

In the spring Finnbogi sold his land at Borg and moved north towards Trekyllisvík in Strandasýsla. He established a farm at Finnbogastadir near Reykjafjord in Northern Strandasýsla. He was married to Hallfríður Eyjólfsdóttir, daughter of Eyjólfur Einarsson and Hallbera Þoroddsdóttir. They had a son named Narfi who we descend from.

### **Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir (970 - )(our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandmother)**

Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir (970 – ) was born about 970 at Hellisvöllum in Laugarbrekka in Snaefellsnessýsla. Her parents were Þorbjörn Vífilson and Hallveig Einarsdóttir. Þorbjörn was a chieftain at Laugarbrekka. He had come to Iceland with Aud the Deep-minded as her slave but later he gained freedom.

Guðríður is probably one of the most important and interesting persons in Icelandic

## Traces Through World History

history. Her early story can be derived from *The Saga of Eirik the Red* and *The Saga of the Greenlanders*.

Guðríður also spent a lot of time as a foster daughter of Orm and Halldis of Arnastapi.

Guðríður was a very beautiful and most exceptional woman in every respect and when she was staying with her foster-parents she met a young man named Einar. Einar who asked for her hand in marriage, but because his father was a slave, Guðríður's father refused to give her hand in marriage. When it was suggested that the match would be a wise decision due to Thorbjörn's financial situation, he announced that he would rather "leave my farm than live with this loss of honor, and rather leave the country than shame my family."

Guðríður exemplifies an early transition from the pagan Norse religion to Christianity. One winter, Guðríður, her father Thorbjörn, and his companions went to a feast at the home of Thorkel, who is visited by a person who sees the future named Thorbjorg who intended to carry out several magic rites. Guðríður tells Thorbjorg that "These are the sort of actions in which I intend to take no part, because I am a Christian woman."

Guðríður and her father soon left Iceland and voyaged to Greenland to meet up with Eirik the Red who had been exiled there about a decade before. Thirty others went with them on the journey, including Guðríður's foster-parents Ormur and Halldis. They got lost at sea and suffered great hardships due to poor weather. This slowed their progress during the summer. After this setback, illness plagued the group and half of the company died, including Guðríður's foster-parents. Despite these failures, Guðríður and her father landed safely in Greenland in the winter. Thorbjörn went to Eiriks fjordur where Eirik the Red lived at Brattahlíð and Eirikur gave his friend Thorbjörn some land at Stokkanes in the same fjord.

Although it is not mentioned in *The Saga of Eirik the Red*, according to the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, at the time Guðríður was married to a Norwegian merchant named Thorir. According to this account, Leif Eirikson (henceforth named Leif the Lucky) rescued Guðríður and fifteen men from a skerry, brought them safely to Brattahlíð, and invited Thorir and Guðríður to stay there with him. That winter, Thorir died of illness. Guðríður and Thorir had no children.

According to both sagas, Guðríður then married Thorsteinn the black Eiriksson, Leif Eiriksson's younger brother and Eirik the Red's son. According to the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, Guðríður then accompanied her husband on his quest to Vinland, with the hope that he could retrieve the body of his brother Thorvaldur (the areas described as Vinland in the two Sagas have been identified as L'Anse aux Meadows, in Newfoundland, Canada). The two spent the winter in Lysufjord with a man by the name of Thorsteinn and his wife Grimhild, but illness soon struck the group and both Grimhild and Guðríður's husband Thorsteinn died. Guðríður and Thorsteinn had no children. According to this account, Thorsteinn temporarily rises from the dead to tell Guðríður that she will be married to an Icelander, and that they will have a long life together with many descendants. He stated that she would leave Greenland to go to Norway and then Iceland, and after a pilgrimage south, she would return to Iceland, where a church would be built near her farm. According to the *Saga of Eirik the Red*, Thorsteinn makes the voyage to Vinland by himself, and it is only upon his return that the two marry. According to the Saga, "Thorsteinn had a farm and livestock in the western settlement at a place called "Lysufjord" and another man by the name of Thorsteinn (whose wife in this version is named Sigrid) owned a half-share on this

## Traces Through World History

farm. The couple moved to the farm and, like in the *Saga of the Greenlanders*, Thorsteinn died and told Guðríður of her future, although in this version he focuses more on the importance of Christianity, asking Guðríður to “donate their money to a church or poor people.”

After the death of her second husband Thorsteinn Eiríksson, Guðríður moved back to Brattahlíð, where she married a merchant named Thorfinn Karlsefni Þordarson, who is described in the *Saga of Eirik the Red* as being “a man of good family and good means” and “a merchant of good repute.” According to *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, after their marriage, and at Guðríður’s urging, the two led an attempt to settle Vinland with sixty men, five women, and a cargo of various livestock (while it is implied in *The Saga of Eirik the Red* that she accompanies him, Guðríður is never actually mentioned in the account of the journey). They lived in the camp Leifur the Lucky Eiríksson had built.

During their first winter in Vinland, Thorfinn and Guðríður had a son whom they named Snorri Thorfinnsson, who is the first European reported to be born in the Western Hemisphere. After only three years in Vinland, the family left for Greenland because they didn’t get along with the Skrælings (North American indigenous people). They didn’t stay in Greenland for long and sailed to Norway. After one winter in Norway they went to Iceland. They settled in Glaumbær near Reynistaðar in Skagafjarðar. According to *The Saga of Eirik the Red*, the couple had another son named Thorbjörn. We descend from both Snorri and Thorbjörn. Although it is only mentioned in *The Saga of the Greenlanders*, Thorfinn died, leaving Guðríður to live as a widow.

Guðríður gave the farm to Snorri. Guðríður converted to Christianity and, when Snorri married, she went on a pilgrimage to Rome. While some have discussed the possibility that Guðríður spoke with the Pope on her journey, there is no proof of it. While she was away, Snorri built a church near the estate, fulfilling the prediction that Thorsteinn had made. When she came back from Rome, she became a nun and lived in the church as a hermit.

### **Goði Hjalti Skeggjason (972 - )(Our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Hjalti Skeggjason (972 – ) was born about 972 at Lækjarbotnar in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Skeggi Þorgeirsson and Þorgerður Hlifasdóttir. He was married to Vilborg Gissurardóttir, daughter of Gissur the White Teitsson and Halldora Hrolfsdóttir. Through this marriage he was befriended by the royal family in Norway and by King Olaf Tryggvason. Hjalti and Vilborg were known to have at least one daughter, Jorunn, who we descend from.

Hjalti was a chieftain and diplomat in the service of the Norwegian kings Olaf Tryggvasons and St. Olaf the Holy. He was also a driving force behind the decision of the Althing in about 1000 when Christianity was adopted in Iceland by law. Hjalti and his father-in-law Gissur, together with Síðu-Hall (our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), seem to have been the first chieftains in Iceland to take Christian baptism in connection with Þangbrand’s mission trip in the years 998-999. When the question of the status of Christianity was discussed in the Althing in 999, the pagans had a majority, which led Hjalti to publicly, probably from the Law Rock, chant a slanderous song about the ancient gods. Hjalti was then prosecuted for blasphemy by Runolfur Goði, who, however, had a hard time finding anyone who wanted to pursue the case.

## Traces Through World History

When Þangbrand returned and told King Olaf that the mission had failed, the king became so angry that he captured several Icelanders living in Norway and intended to kill them in revenge for Þangbrand's failure.

That summer, Hjalti and Gissur sailed to Norway and went directly to King Olaf and his followers. The king received them well and praised their actions and invited them to become his men, which they accepted. To save their countrymen, Hjalti and Gissur promised to return as missionaries to Iceland to speak to the people. King Olaf agreed and sent with them on the journey with a Priest named Tormod and several other clerics. But "he kept with him as a hostage the four Icelandic men who seemed to him to be the foremost: Kjartan Olafsson, Halldor Gudmundsson, Kolbein Tordsson and Sverting Runolfsson" (Runolf goði's son).

The fact that the king held the hostages in Norway may have reduced the opposition to Christianity, but the sources agree that Hjalti was a good diplomat and a great spokesman at the negotiations. Christianity became the law passed in Iceland, and in that summer all the people at the Althing were baptized. However, the pagans managed to set as a condition that the baptism should take place in the hot springs on the way home and not in the cold water at the Althing.

During the latter half of the 1010s, Hjalti served as a diplomat for the Norwegian king Olaf Haraldsson (who after his death came to be called St. Olaf the Holy) to negotiate relationships with the Swedish King.

### **Þorfinnur "karlsefni" Þórðarson (975 - )(our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorfinnur "karlsefni" Þórðarson (975 – ) was born about 975 at Reynistadar in Skagafljardarsýsla. His parents were Þordur (horse head) Snorrason and Þorunn Þorfinnsdóttir. His great grandfather Hofa-Þorur Björnsson had been the first settler at Hofdi in Skagafljardarsýsla.

Þorfinnur must have been given his nickname, Karlsefni, at an early age, since it means "promising boy." Þorfinnur became a successful trader and sea captain and reportedly had a lot of money. One summer he made his ship ready and sailed to Greenland. He came to Brattahlíð where Eiríkur the Red lived. Eiríkur invited Karlsefni and his men to stay over the winter.

Thorfinn's expeditions are documented in the *Grænlandinga saga* ("Saga of the Greenlanders") and *Eiríks saga rauða* ("Saga of Eirík the Red"), which together are referred to as "The Vinland Sagas". While in Greenland, Þorfinnur Karlsefni met Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, the widow of Thorsteinn Eiríksson and married her.

Þorfinnur Karlsefni and his wife Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir decided to go from Greenland to Vinland, that Leif Eiríksson had previously discovered in an attempt to colonize it. Leif agrees to lend the houses he built in Vinland, though unwilling to make a free gift of it. That spring, Karlsefni sailed with his wife and one hundred and sixty men to explore Vinland. Among the other settlers into Vinland was Freydis sister or half-sister of Leif Eiríksson, who may have accompanied Karlsefni's voyage or headed an expedition of her own. Guðríður bore Þorfinnur a boy in Vinland, who was named Snorri, the first child of European descent known to have been born in the New World and to whom many Icelanders can trace their roots. Þorfinnur established a trading relationship with the Indians. But the relationship ended with a big fight between the

## Traces Through World History

Europeans and the Indians. The Indians won and Karlsefni and his men escaped. The exact location of Þorfinnur's colony is unknown but is believed to potentially be the excavated Norse camp at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland.

They left Vinland for Greenland and then sailed to Norway. After one winter in Norway, they returned to Iceland and settled in Glaumbær near Reynistaðar in Skagafjarðar. Karlsefni died after 1025 in Iceland.

Þorfinnur Karlsefni and Guðríður's son Snorri was born in Vinland. There is speculation about the birth date of Snorri. Birth years such as 1005, 1009, and 1012 have been postulated, but all sources agree that he was born between 1005 and 1013. According to the Vinland sagas, when Snorri was 3 years old, his family left Vinland because of hostilities with indigenous peoples.

When Snorri's family returned to Iceland, they lived at Þorfinnur's old home at Reynistadar in Skagafjardar. They may have then purchased the estate of Glaumbær, in 1010 or so, and settled there. This is not certain. But after Þorfinnur passed away, Snorri farmed at Glaumbær. Guðríður decided to make a pilgrimage to the Pope in Rome. Snorri had a church built in his mothers absence, the first known to have stood at Glaumbær.

Snorri married Yngvildur Ulfhedinsdóttir. They were known to have had at least two children; Hallfrid and Thorgeir. We descend from Thorgeir.

In 2002, American archaeologists discovered the remains of a thousand-year-old longhouse located on Iceland's northern coast. It is believed that it was Snorri Thorfinnsson's farmhouse. The longhouse was found near the Glaumbaer Folk Museum, at the Skagafjordur Heritage Museum outside the coastal village of Sauðárkrókur. The museum was once thought to have been built on the site of Snorri's farmhouse. According to archaeologists it was "a classic Germanic fortress longhouse like the Great Hall of Beowulf.

Þorfinnur Karlsefni and Guðríður's other son was Björn Þorbjörn who was born about 1010 at Glaumbær. He would later be associated with the location at Reynistada in Skagafjardarsýsla. His wife is not known. He was known to have had at least three daughters: Thorunn, Sæunn, and Steinunn. We descend from Thorunn and Steinunn.

### **Goði Þorkell Eyjólfsson (979 - 1026) (Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorkell Eyjólfsson (979 – 1026) was born about 979 at Otrardalur in Bardastrandarsýsla. His father was Eyjólfur the gray Þordarson. Þorkell was a very rich man who owned two ships sailing between countries.

Þorkell was a renowned man of prominent family and a great friend of Snorri Goði Thorgrimsson (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather). He sailed often in his earlier years, but when he was in Iceland he generally stayed with his kinsman, Thorsteinn Kuggason. One of Þorkell's kinsmen was Eid of As. Eid's son was slain by a man named Grim. Þorkell heard of this and in the following spring, he went south to Breidafjord, where he got a horse and rode all the way to Eid at As without slowing his pace. Eid welcomed him and Þorkell told Eid that he intended to seek out the outlaw Grim.

Þorkell found Grim by a hut by a large lake. Þorkell struck a blow at Grim and soon they were wrestling one another and Grim gained the advantage. But Grim decided that he had caused

## Traces Through World History

enough misfortune already and told Þorkell that he would spare his life.

Þorkell and Grim then went to Snorri Goði at Sælingsdalstunga. Snorri gave Þorkell the following advice, "...put an end to your voyaging, settle down and get married." Þorkell asked who Snorri thought he should marry and Snorri said that it should be who is the finest possible match, namely Guðrún Osvifsdóttir.

Þorkell then sailed abroad once more, taking his new found acquaintance Grim along with him. They had good winds that summer and made land in the south of Norway. Þorkell spent the winter in Norway and was regarded as a man of importance.

While Þorkell was gone, Snorri Goði approached Guðrún Osvifsdóttir and advised her that he wished for her to marry Þorkell upon his return. Snorri had Guðrún promise that she would marry no other and would wait for Þorkell's return.

Þorkell returned and landed at Bjarnarhofn. By that time he was a man of such wealth, that he owned two knorrs making voyages to Iceland. His other ship landed at Bordeyri in Hrutafjord. Both of them were laden with timber. Snorri Goði came to greet Þorkell and told him once again that it was time for him to end his sailing, settle down and take Guðrún Osvifsdóttir as his wife.

Snorri Goði went to Guðrún and in regards to Þorkell, told her that he was a man to have the makings of a leader and that he was held in high esteem in Iceland and had much higher repute in Norway. Guðrún wished to consult her sons Þorleik and Bolli. Snorri emphasized that Þorkell should not be rejected. Guðrún and her sons decided that they should make every effort to follow Snorri's guidance in the matter. The couple was betrothed and the wedding feast would be held at Helgafell.

Þorkell was Guðrún Osvifsdóttir's fourth husband. They lived at Helgafell. Guðrún and Þorkell had one son named Gellir who was the grandfather of Ari the Learned, and a daughter named Rjúpa. We descend from Gellir.

Þorkell settled in at Helgafell and took over the running of the farm. It soon became obvious that he was no less adept at this then at merchant voyages. Guðrún and Þorkell grew to love one another deeply.

Þorkell became a prominent chieftain, and did much to make himself popular and respected. He paid particular attention to Guðrún's sons. He assisted his step-son Þorleik in his ambitions to go abroad. He purchased him a share in a ship that was beached at Dagverðarnes. Þorleik then sailed abroad that summer and his ship made land in Norway. He assisted Bolli in seeking the hand of Snorri Goði's daughter Þordis.

Þorkell decided that he wanted to build a fine church at Helgafell. He declared that he was going abroad to obtain timber for building the church. He had his ship launched and made preparations to sail to Norway. He took his young son Gellir along on the trip. They made land in the north of Norway. King Olaf was in Nidaros at the time, and Þorkell made his way directly to the king. King Olaf made a gift of timber to Þorkell.

Þorkell returned to Iceland making land at Hrutafjord which was a considerable distance from Helgafell on Breidafjord. He had his ship beached there and secured for the winter and the timber set in secure storage. He then went to Helgafell and intended to stay there for the winter.

After winter, Þorkell prepared to set out for a journey back to Hrutafjord to transport his

## Traces Through World History

timber to Helgafell. He used twenty horses to draw the timber southward to Ljæyri, through Hjardarholt in Dalasýsla where he intended to load it aboard a ship for the rest of the journey to Helgafell. He had a ferry set afloat and loaded it with the timber.

As the party of ten sailed the length of Breiðafjörður that day, the wind began to rise and turned into a great storm before it subsided again. They sailed onward until they reached Bjarney Island. But then a gust of wind filled the sail and capsized the boat. Þorkell died at Bjarney Island in Breiðafjörður along with all the men who were with him. It has been calculated that this occurred on April 7, 1026.

### **Law Speaker Gunnar (the wise) Þorgrimsson (1000 - )(Our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)**

Gunnar (the wise) Þorgrimsson (1000 – ) was born about 1000 at Otradalur in Bardastrandarsýsla. His father was Þorgrimur Eyjolfsson.

Gunnar first married Vigdis Hrafnadóttir and they had a son, Úlfhedinn, who we descend from. His second marriage was to Úlfheidur Bergsdóttir and they were known to have had at least two children: a daughter (first name unknown) and a son, Eyjolfur the gray. We descend from both of these children.

Gunnar served as Law Speaker of the Althing from 1063 to 1065 and again in 1075.

Gunnar and Vigdis' son Úlfhéðinn was born about 1035 at Otradalur. He married Ragnhildur Hallsdóttir and they had at least two children: Hrafn and Gunnar. We descend from Hrafn.

Úlfhéðinn was elected to be Law Speaker at the Althing from 1108 until his death in 1116. Úlfhéðinn divided the island into four jurisdictions, each of which had three courts to process the claims, except the north which had a fourth court, a kind of supreme court of appeals.

### **Bolli (the elegant) Bollason (1007 - )(Our 24<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Bolli the elegant Bollason was born about 985 at Sælingsdalstunga in Dalasýsla. His parents were Bolli Þorleiksson and Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir. He was born the winter after the killing of his father. He grew up in Orlygsstadir, at Helgafell on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula. He grew up with his brother Thorleik, who was four years his senior, and his mother Guðrún in Helgafell, after she exchanged homes with the renowned Snorri the Goði. He divided his time between Helgafell and Sælingsdalstunga, the home of Snorri the Goði (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather).

Bolli's mother Guðrún remarried, this time to Thorkell Eyjolfsson, who became a great chieftain in his own countryside and took over the running of the household at Helgafell. This left Bolli able to spend his time both at Helgafell and with Snorri Goði who became very fond of him. Thorkell was fond of both his stepsons, but Bolli was regarded as "being the foremost in all things". Thorleik journeyed abroad to Norway, and stayed with King Olaf II for several months.

When Bolli was eighteen years old he asked for his father's portion, as he intended to woo Thordis Snorradóttir, the daughter of Snorri Goði. He set out with his stepfather and a good many followers to Sælingsdalstunga. Snorri welcomed them, and the wedding feast took place that



## Traces Through World History

summer. Bolli chose to live at Sælingsdalstunga, and love grew between him and Thordis. The next summer, Thorleik returned in a goods-laden ship to the Hvita River, "and the brothers greeted each other joyfully."

Bolli and his brother Thorleik still believed that they needed to avenge their father's killing by the Olafssons. Snorri Goði became aware of this and when he realized that he would not be able to change their minds, he offered to seek a settlement with the Olafssons to avoid any killing and Bolli and Thorleik agreed to this. Snorri went to the Olafssons who agreed to provide compensation but insisted that it must exclude all outlawry as well as their goðorð and farm property. Snorri returned to tell Bolli and Thorleik of this agreement and said that if they failed to agree to this, he would offer them no further support.

The settlement with the Olafssons was to occur at the Thorness Assembly. Snorri accompanied the Bollasons to the site where an agreement was reached. Bolli received a handsome sword and Thorleik was given a shield, both of which were fine weapons. After the assembly "both sides were thought to have gained in esteem from these affairs."

Bolli went to Borgarfjord where he purchased a half-share in Thorleik's ship from the men who owned it. Bolli and Thorleik then went abroad together. They departed Iceland, taking "a great deal of money abroad with him," and reached Norway in the autumn. They stayed in Thrandheim for the winter, while King Olaf II was wintering in the east in Sarpsborg. Bolli soon became highly thought of in Norway, and his arrivals at the guild meeting-places were noted for being better arrayed as to raiment and weapons than other townsmen. Early in the spring the brothers prepared their ship and went east to meet the king. The king thought Bolli "a man of high mettle," "even peerless among men," and "the man of greatest mark that has ever come from Iceland."

Bolli boarded a trade-ship bound for Denmark, departing King Olaf in great friendship and with fine parting gifts. Thorleik remained behind, but Bolli wintered in Denmark and became as well regarded as he had been in Norway. Traveling next to Constantinople, he spent many years in the Varangian Guard; "and was thought to be the most valiant in all deeds that try a man, and always went next to those in the forefront." The saga also records the finery his followers received from the Roman Emperor (most likely Romanos III), and the influence he held after his return to Iceland, some time after the death of King Olaf II. It is believed that he had reached the rank of manglabites in the Eastern Roman army.

Upon his return to Iceland, Bolli rode from the ship with twelve men, and all his followers were dressed in scarlet, and rode on gilt (inlaid with gold) saddles. Bolli had on the clothes of fur which the Garth-king had given him, he had over all a scarlet cape; and he had his sword Foot-biter girt on him, the hilt of which was dressed gold, and the grip woven with gold, he had a gilded helmet on his head, and a red shield on his flank, with a knight painted on it in gold. He had a dagger in his hand, as is the custom in foreign lands; and whenever they took quarters the women paid heed to nothing but gazing at Bolli and his grandeur, and that of his followers. The right to bear a gold-hilted sword was one of the privileges of the court rank of manglabites, and is taken as an indicator that Bolli held this rank. In Iceland, his finery and recognition earned him the name "Bolli the Elegant."

Bolli's return to Thordis was joyful, and he took over the manor of Sælingsdalstunga

## Traces Through World History

when Snorri Goði died at 67 years of age. Bolli had two children with Thordis: Herdis and Ospak. We descend from Herdis.

### **Gellir Þorkelsson (1009 - 1073)(Our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)**

Gellir Þorkelsson (1008 - 1073) was born about 1009 at Helgafell in Snæfellsnessýsla. He was the Son of Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir and her fourth husband Þorkell Eyjólfsson. From a young age, Gellir was extremely promising. He grew up at Helgafell and was a very manly and well-liked lad.

When Gellir was twelve years old he went with his father Þorkell to Norway. They made land in the north of Norway and King Olaf the Saint was in Nidaros at the time. They went to the king where they were well received. At Christmas the king gave Gellir a wonderfully crafted cloak that was truly a treasure.

Upon their return to Iceland, Þorkell landed his ship at Hrutafjord and he and Gellir rode to Helgafell. Gellir did not go with Þorkell when he went to retrieve his timber and subsequently drowned when returning to Helgafell. Gellir was fourteen years of when his father drowned. He took over running the farm, together with his mother, along with Þorkell's duties as goði. It was soon clear that he had the makings of a leader of men.

Gellir married Valgerdur Þorgilsdóttir. They were known to have at least two children: Ragnheidur and Þorgils. We descend from Þorgils.

In the *Saga of the Confederates*, Gellir is identified as one of the confederates. He became embroiled in a dispute case involving Odd Ofeigsson. Odd's father Ofeig had taken on the case to defend his son. In the process, Ofeig would have a long conversation with Gellir in which he made a request for Odd to receive the hand of Gellir's daughter Ragnheidur in marriage. The saga mentions that Gellir has several daughters but they are not mentioned by name. Ofeig makes an offer of a substantial dowry and hints that if Gellir cooperates in the case, he may receive additional wealth. The case was successfully settled and Odd was married to Ragnheidur.

Gellir lived at Helgafell into his old age. He finished what his father Þorkell had intended to do with the timber he had lost by building a very fine church at Helgafell.

He decided to go abroad once more. He went first to Norway, but stayed there only briefly before leaving to travel south to Rome on a pilgrimage. His journey was a lengthy one; he returned north to Denmark where he was taken ill and, after a brief illness, received the last rites. He died in Denmark in about 1073, and was buried in Roskilde.

When the news of Gellir's death reached Iceland, his son Þorkell took over his father's estate at Helgafell. Þorkell was a practical and worthy man and was said to be among the most knowledgeable of men.

### **Halldor the Goði Snorrason (1014 - )(Our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather)**

Halldor the Goði Snorrason (1014 – ) was born about 1014 at Sælingsdalstunga in Dalasýsla. His parents were Snorri the Goði Þorgrimsson and Hallfridur Einarsdóttir. He grew up at Sælingsdalstunga with 12 full siblings and five half siblings. His father would later trade his

## Traces Through World History

farm at Sælingsdalstunga with Gudrun Osvifsdóttir for the farm at Helgafell in Snæfellsnessýsla. Halldor would eventually become the Goði at Helgafell.

Halldor was first married to Olof Þorvaldsdóttir, daughter of Þorvardur Sidu-Hallson. They had a daughter, Gudrun, who we descend from. His second marriage was to Þordis Þorvaldsdóttir. Halldor and Þordis were known to have at least four children: Þorkatla, Snorri, Birningur and Katrin. We descend from Þorkatla.

Halldor was a large, handsome man, the strongest and most courageous of men in battle. He spoke abruptly and frankly, was sharp-tempered and rough, and highly competitive in all things with anyone he had dealings with.

Halldor was known for his exploits abroad. He is the main character in *The Tale of Halldor Snorrason*. In an early trip abroad, he became a follower of King Harald Hardradi Sigurdsson (our 23<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather). Halldor joined King Harald on some of his campaigns. He had been with King Harald in Constantinople in about 1034 and may have been part of the Varangian Guard. He came west with the king from Russia to Norway. He had received much honor and respect from King Harald. He spent the winter at Kaupang with the king.

Although, Halldor was constantly engaged with King Harald, he frequently took leave to return to Iceland and his family. At one point, the king became aware that Halldor was growing ever more unhappy. So the king asked him what was on his mind. Halldor said that he longed to go to Iceland. But at that time, Halldor had little wealth and "... nothing but the clothes I am wearing."

After Halldor's long service to the king, the king said he would give him a ship and a crew. But at that time there was so much shipping business in the area that a crew could not be retained. To remedy this, the king banned all ships from leaving the country, using his conflict with the Danes as an excuse. The king said he would only allow one knorr owned by Halldor to depart for Iceland. Halldor was then able to recruit more than enough men to serve as his crew. After Halldor was prepared to leave, the king then said that the conflict with the Danes was just rumors and lies and then allowed each ship to leave the country and go wherever they wished.

Halldor went to Iceland in the summer and spent the winter at his father's farm. He went abroad again the next summer and once again became one of King Harald's followers.

While in the king's court, Halldor was associated with two other men named Bard and Thorir. The three of them were sharing a bench in the hall just as the king walked by where they were sitting and drinking. The king thought that Halldor was not drinking enough which violated some sort of "drinking etiquette." The king became somewhat abusive towards Halldor over this. It resulted in a conflict between them.

Preparations were being made for the king and his followers to make a journey. Halldor was reluctant to want to make this journey. The king told Bard to tell Halldor that he expected him to accompany him. It ended up with Halldor going, and he and the king went southwards down the coast. One night on the journey, Halldor told the helmsman to change course. The king countermanded this by telling the helmsman to stay the course. Once more, Halldor said to change course and the king corrected it. The ship ended up going aground on a skerry and they had to be carried ashore in other ships. Halldor was disgusted about this and intended to join a cargo vessel that was there.

## Traces Through World History

Bard told the king that Halldor now means to leave, and join up with a ship, and go off to Iceland in anger. Halldor complained to Bard that he did not believe that he had even got paid honestly. Bard went to the king and asked him to give Halldor his payment in pure silver. The king eventually agreed and instructed Bard to give Halldor twelve ounces of silver.

Still not being satisfied, Halldor asked that he be given a ship to command. The king then confiscated a ship from a man name Svein of Lyrgja. It went as the king wished. Halldor took over the ship. But once underway, Svein and his men had taken the ship and thrown Halldor and his men overboard. Halldor then went before the king and asked whether he was supposed to own the ship, and whether the king's word would be kept. The king then ordered six ships with triple crew to go with Halldor in pursuit of Svein. Halldor took the ship back from Svein and returned to the king.

Svein made a plea to the king and placed the whole matter under his judgement as he wanted to act in such a way that both parties would be satisfied. The king told Halldor to sell the ship to him (the king) at a reasonable price. The king then granted the ship to Svein and paid Halldor everything except for a half mark of gold. The king continued to withhold payment of the half mark well into the winter.

When spring was approaching, Halldor told the king that he wanted to go to Iceland in the summer, and stated that it would suit him if he were now paid what remained of the money for the ship. The king was evasive about the payment, but did not ban Halldor from going to Iceland. Halldor got a ship ready for the journey, but still no payment, So when he was ready, he went to the king and queens bedchamber and woke them up saying, "Halldor is here, and ready to sail with a fair wind, and it would be advisable for you to pay me the money now." He finished by saying he would not be leaving there until his errand had been completed.

After some discussion, Halldor said he would settle for the ring that the queen was wearing on her arm. The queen told King Harald, "... can't you see that he is standing over you, ready to kill you?" The queen then removed the ring and gave it to Halldor. Halldor took the ring, thanked them both for the payment and wished them a good life. He then departed their presence and told his traveling companions to run to the ship as fast as possible, as he didn't think hanging about this town was a good idea.

Halldor's crew did everything they could to get underway. As they were sailing out, there was no lack of horn-blowing in the town. The last thing they saw was three longships were afloat, and were setting off after them. They pulled ahead and reached the sea and made a good start for Iceland. The king's men turned back when they saw that Halldor had reached the open sea.

When Halldor reached Iceland, he set up a farm at Hjardarholt in Dalasýsla. A few summers later, King Harald sent him a message inviting him to join in the king's service once again. Halldor replied, "I will never go to meet King Harald from this time forth." Halldor and King Harald never met again after they parted ways in Trondheim. Halldor lived at Hjardarholt for the rest of his life.

**Law Speaker Kolbeinn valla Flosason (1015 - 1071)(Our 22<sup>nd</sup> great grandfather)**

## Traces Through World History

Kolbeinn valla Flosason (1020 – 1071) was born about 1015 at Husagardur in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Flosi the burner Brandsson and Gudrun Thorsdóttir. He was the grandson of Valla-Brandur Askelsson and his family had occupied Husagardur since settlement time.

Kolbeinn later lived at Oddi in Rangarvallasýsla. He was elected Law Speaker at the Althing in about 1066 when he was representing the area of Svinafell in Austurshaftafellsýsla. Ari the Wise says in *Íslendingabók* that he took office the year (1066) King Harald Hardrada fell in England.

Kolbeinn married Gudridur Bjarnadóttir. They were known to have at least two children: Flosi and Gudrun. We descend from both these children.

### **Law Speaker Gellir Bolverksson (1020 - 1074)(Our 22<sup>nd</sup> great grandfather)**

Gellir Bolverksson (1020 - 1074) was born about 1020 at Otradalur in Bardastrandarsýsla. His parents were Bölverkur Eyjólfsson and Isgerdur Thorsteinsdóttir.

Gellir served as Law Speaker twice, the first between 1054 and 1062 and the second between 1072 and 1074. His vocation as a jurist came from his late brother Eyjólf Bolverksson, of whom he was proud because in his opinion he was one of the three best jurists in Iceland.

Gellir was married to a wife of unknown name and they had a son, Thorsteinn, who we descend from. Gellir died on July 2, 1074, probably at Otradalur.

### **Law Speaker Markus Skeggjason (1045 - 1107)(Our 22<sup>nd</sup> great grandfather)**

Markus Skeggjason (1045 – 1107) was born about 1045 at Grof in Arnesýsla. His parents were Skeggi Bjarnason and Hallbera Grimsdóttir. He may have received church education, but does not appear to have been ordained a priest.

Markus married Járngerður Ljótsdóttir and they were known to have at least two children: Skeggi and Valgerður. We descend from Valgerður.

Back in Iceland, Markus, on the advice of Bishop Gissur Isleifsson, was elected law speaker in 1084 - an office he retained through several re-elections until his death in 1107. During his term, the first tax legislation was implemented on the island. It took place in 1096 and was a church tax, the so-called tithe. The law had been proposed by Bishop Gissur and was supported by Sæmundur the Wise (our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather) and several chiefs. Ari Thorgilsson wrote about this, that it was now "made law that all men should count and value their property and swear that it was properly valued, whether it was on land or movables, and then give tithes of it."

Markús Skeggjason was a court poet of the kings of Denmark Eiríkur Sveinsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) and Cnúte Sveinsson (our 30<sup>th</sup> great grandfather in the Anicent Scottish Pedigree) the Saint and of the king of Sweden Ingi Stenkelsson (our 25<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). So Markus probably visited the Danish and Swedish royal houses at the beginning of the 1080s. One poem was in in praise of the King Eiríkur that he composed his *Eiríksdrápa*, of which thirty-two stanzas or half-stanzas have been preserved, mainly in the *Knýtlinga Saga*. The poem focuses on

## Traces Through World History

episodes from the king's life in relation to religion: pilgrimages to Rome and the Holy Land, erection of the bishopric of Lund into an archbishopric. Another third grammatical treatise is part of a poem in honor of Christ. The context of the other surviving fragments is unknown.

Markus died October 15, 1107 at Frostastadur in Skagafjardarsýsla while he still held the office of Law Speaker.

### **Goði Hafliði Masson (1055 - 1130)(Our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather)**

Hafliði Másson (1055 – 1130) was born about 1055 at Breiðabólstaður in Hunavatnssýsla. He was the son of the goði Már Húnröðarson. Hafliði was a goði at Breiðabólstaðir. He is best known for his disputes with Þorgils Oddason (our 22<sup>nd</sup> great grandfather) and for having Iceland's law codified as the text that came to be known as Grágás.

Hafliði's first married Þuríður Þórðardóttir, who was the grand daughter of Snorri the Priest Þórgrimsson. They had a son, Þordur, who we descend from.

Hafliði's second wife was Rannveig Teitsdóttir, daughter of Catholic Priest Teitur Ísleifsson. They were known to have had three daughters: Sigridur, Jorunn, and Valgerdur. We descend from Sigridur.

In the winter of 1117-18, Hafliði became the head of a commission responsible for transcribing and codifying the laws of Iceland. The product of this process would be a written legal register was called the *Hafliðaskrá*, but a later version would be known as the *Gragas*. This process was described in *Islendingabok* as follows:

This happened the first summer that lawspeaker Bergþór Hrafnsson recited the law, as a new law was passed that the laws should be written out in a book at Hafliði Másson 's farm during the following winter according to the speech and consultation of Hafliði, Bergþór, and other wise men who were selected for the task. They were to put into the laws all the new provisions that seemed to them better than the old laws. The laws were to be said aloud the following summer in the *logretta* and would take effect if a majority did not oppose them. And that was how *Vígslóði* (the manslaughter section) and much else to the law came to be written down and read aloud in the *logretta* by clerics the following summer.

A violent and quarrelsome man by the name of Mar, a relative of Hafliði, had killed many men and Þorgils Oddason summoned him to appear before the Althing. Hafliði defended Mar, but was able to obtain only a compromise verdict, according to which Mar was to pay a heavy fine. But a feud continued between Hafliði and Þorgils. Many were killed on both sides, and in 1120 the case was again brought before the Althing and both chieftains appeared with large bands of armed followers. Hafliði attempted to drive Þorgils and his followers from the Althing, but in the armed clash which ensued Hafliði was wounded in the hand and had to abandon the attempt. For shedding blood on the consecrated ground of the Althing, Þorgils was outlawed, but he paid no attention to the decree. On returning home he gathered a large force of armed men, and defended the mountain passes so well that Hafliði, who was advancing with a large band to carry into execution the decision of the court, had to return home with nothing accomplished.

The following summer, Þorgils returned to the Althing with 800 men, but Hafliði had 1200 men with him and was looking for battle. Bishop Þorlákur Runólfsson wanted to make

## Traces Through World History

peace between them. He threatened Hafliði with being banned by the church if he did not desist from his intent. A settlement was reached so that Hafliði was given authority to determine how much money he should receive for his injuries.

Hafliði determined that he should be paid 240 marks, which was an enormous amount of money, equivalent to 5,760 man-days of the hay or 240-320 cattle. A year or so later, Þorgils would say, "Let men speak well of Hafliði, for here each of us has what we wanted." Hafliði said: "Now I see that you want our reconciliation and let us do better with disputes from now on." And they did so because they were and always on the same side of issues for the remainder of their lives. The disputes had been going on since about 1115 but the finally settlement was made in 1121.

Goði Hafliði Másson died in about 1130 at Breiðabólstaðir.

### **Law Speaker Snorri Hunbogason (1100 - 1170)(our 20<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Snorri Húnbogason (1100 – 1170) was born about 1100 at Skard in Dalasýsla. His parents were Hunbogi Thorgilsson and Ingveldur Hauksdóttir.

Snorri married Ingveldur Altdóttir. They were known to have had at least three children: Narfi, Thorgils, and Alfur. We descend from Narfi. Both Narfi and Thorigls became Priests.

Snorri was a Catholic Priest and some say a mythologist, but he was best known for having been Law Speaker from 1156 until his death in 1170.

### **Goði Hvamm-Sturla Þorðarson (1115 - 1183)(Our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather)**

Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson (1115 – 1183) was born about 1115 at Stadarfell in Dalasýsla. His parents were Goði Þórður Gilsson and Vigdís Svertingsdóttir. Sturla made his farm at Hvammur in Dalasýsla.

Sturla's first wife was Ingibjörg Þorgeirsdóttir. They were known to have had four children: Sveinn, Helga, Valgerdur, and Sigridur. We descend from Thuridur.

Sturla's second wife was Guðný Böðvarsdóttir. They were known to have had five children" Thordur, Sighvatur, Snorri, Vigdis, and Helga. We descend from all five of these children.

Sturla also had several concubines and with them at least seven children. One of them was Þuríður, who we descend from.

Sturla was a goði like his father. He was a big man and was not one to give in. He had a quarrel with Pál Sölvason, a Priest in Reykholt and the chieftain Jón Loftsson (our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) in Oddi agreed to their settlement by inviting Sturla to foster his youngest son, Snorri.

In another dispute, Sturla would come into conflict with his rival Einar Thorgilsson. The dispute would involve a farmer named Birningur Steinarsson who lived on the farm Heinaberg. Birningur divorces his wife and neglects to provide for his daughter from that marriage. This leaves the daughter Sigurdur with nothing to her name except an inheritance claim that she could make against her father. The farm Heinaberg is a place with fairly worthless land, but it includes

## Traces Through World History

two off-shore islands which are the best seal hunting spots on that stretch of coast. Einar Thorgilsson decides to buy the inheritance claim from Sigurdur in order to ultimately obtain the Heinaberg property from Birningur. Einar then accuses Birningur of contracting an unlawful second marriage.

Einar is an overbearing and sometimes violent man and he began threatening Birningur. But Birningur refuses to yield. Einar then believes that he is entitled to take some property from Birningur. Einar seizes seventy geldings (horses) from Birningur's lands and has them slaughtered. When cured, this meat will go a long way in feeding the people of Einar's large estate.

Birningur goes to Sturla for support. Sturla has an interest in checking the growth of Einar's wealth and power. Sturla does agree to help Birningur, but he arranges matters to his own advantage. In their agreement, Birningur conveys all his property to Sturla. The agreement also specifies that Birningur is to live out his life on Sturla's farm at Hvammur. This puts Sturla in a legal position of seeking redress from Einar. However, Sturla does not prosecute Einar for the robbery of the geldings as long as Einar voices no displeasure with Sturla and Birningur's agreement. The matter remains uncontested for a number of years.

Sturla died on July 23, 1183 at Hvammur. At that time Birningur was still living on his farm. Einar sees Sturla's death as an opportunity to take the farm Heinaberg by force. Birningur's second wife Gudbjorg is living at Heinaberg with her young son Thorleikur and his foster brother Snorri and some other women. Einar attempts to round up the cattle and drive them off. But the women and the boys chase after Einar and one of them succeeds in inflicting a severe wound on Einar. The boys make good their escape and go to Sturla's farm at Hvammur to take shelter.

Thorleikur and Snorri remain with Sturla's family until the case comes to trial at the Althing. The case is settled with Thorleikur and Snorri being outlawed. Rather than letting them be hunted down as outlaws, members of Sturla's family arrange passage out of the country for their young kinsmen.

Sturla's son Thordur Sturluson was a goði like his father. Þórður was the only one of among his brothers who was not killed. Thordur first married Helga, daughter of Ari Þorgilsson, a goði at Staðarfell in Dalasýsla. Thordur took over her father's goðorð priesthood and settled at Staðarfell.

Þórður divorced Helga and then married Guðrún Bjarnadóttir. They had two children: Bodvar and Halla. We descend from Halla.

Þórður's third wife was Valgerður Árnadóttir. Þórður also had many children with another wife, Þóra, and they had two children: Guttormur and Sturla the Law Speaker and historian. We descend from both of these children.

### **Goði Jon Loftsson (1124 - 1197)(Our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather)**

Jón Loftsson (1124-1197) was born about 1124 in Norway. His parents were Loftur Sæmundsson and Þóra Magnúsdóttir. His father was a goði and Catholic Priest of the Oddaverjar clan in Oddi in Rangárvallasýsla. He married Þóra Magnúsdóttir, the illegitimate daughter of the King Magnus III (Barefoot) of Norway. His paternal grandfather was Sæmundur the learned



## Traces Through World History

Sigfússon. Jón was educated at Kungahälla in Båhuslen which at that time a royal center of the Kingdom of Norway. During August 1135, Kungahälla was attacked and sacked by the Pomeranians. Shortly before that, Loftur sailed from there for Iceland. They settled at Oddi.

Jón Loftsson would be married five times and had a total of nine children. Some of these unions, like with Ragnheidur, may have been concubinage. His first marriage was to Halldora Brandsdóttir in about 1147. They had two children: Solveig and Sæmundur. We descend from both of these children.

Jón's second "marriage" was to Ragnheidur Thorhallsdóttir in about 1154 and they had three children: Bishop Pall, Ormur, and Arni. We descend from Bishop Pall.

Jón's third marriage was to Æsa Thorgeirsdóttir in about 1158 and they had a son named Thorsteinn.

Jón's fourth marriage was to Helga Thorisdóttir in about 1160 and they had a son named Einar.

Jón's fifth marriage was to a woman named Valgerdur in 1163 and they had two sons: Hallbjörn and Sigurdur.

Jón also took on Snorri Sturlason, son of Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson as a foster son.

Jón Loftsson was a member of the Oddaverjar family clan. He was one of the most popular chieftains and politician of his age in the country. In 1164, He went with Bishop Brandur Sæmundsson to attend the coronation of King Magnus Erlingsson in Norway. The poem *Nóregs konungatal* was composed for Jón Loftsson and recounts his descent from the Norwegian royal line. At a young age, the great scholar Snorri Sturluson was fostered and educated by Jón Loftsson.

Jón was a church deacon and had shown himself an energetic churchman. Nevertheless, for many years he had lived in adulterous union with Ragnheidur, Bishop Thorlak's sister.

In 1179, Jón participated and was victorious in the conflicts between Bishops of the Diocese of Skálholt and secular rulers. Known as Staðarmál, the conflict dealt principally with control over Church lands. Jón came into conflict with the Icelandic church when the Bishop of Skálholt, Thorlákur Thorhallsson, on the orders of Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson, wanted to deprive the chiefs of the right to dispose of churches and church property.

Jón was among those chieftains who owned churches on his property. He had two churches on his estate at Oddi. These two churches were destroyed in a storm. Jón then built an elaborate new church, and Bishop Thorlakur came to consecrate it. The bishop asked Jón if he knew of the new mandate from the archbishop on ownership of "church property." To which Jón answered: "I am minded to hold him at nought. I think he knows better than my forebears, Sæmundur the Wise, and his sons. Laymen should rule those churches which their forefathers gave to God, handing on their authority to their successors." The bishop then refused to consecrate the new church.

What made matter worse was that Jón was keeping the Bishop's sister, Ragnheidur as a concubine. On refusing to terminate this illicit and offensive relation the Bishop placed him under the ban of the church, but Jon revenged himself by taking position with an armed band in front of the church door at Skard, barring the Bishop from entering. Jon told the Bishop he was retaliating for placing the ban. The Bishop told him he had not yet pronounced excommunication

## Traces Through World History

as he was hoping Jon would repent. Jon said that the ban would not convert him and didn't believe he deserved such punishment. But then Jon gave way and the church was consecrated and the Bishop joined in a family banquet. In due time, by his own free will, Jon sent Ragnheidur away and was in turn freed from the excommunication.

To mitigate the ambitious chief Hvamm-Sturla Þórðarson, whom Jón Loftsson had made a judgement against at the Althing in the summer of 1181, Jón agreed to foster Sturla's two-year-old son, Snorri Sturlason. It was of great importance to Snorri's later writing that he grew up until he was twenty years old at the old educational institution Oddi, where Sæmundur the wise had founded a school. At Oddi, Snorri received an excellent education and gained his first knowledge of historical literature. Jón Loftsson was also considered one of the most learned men in Iceland.

As late as 1197 Jón was asked to judge in a difficult case. The chief tain Gudmund Dyri Þórvaldsson (our 20<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) had burned his enemy Onund Thorkelsson in his own house. The party hatred grew so violent that a general fight between the two factions at the Althing the following summer was avoided only by the influence of the aged Jón Loftsson, who was once more able to calm the angry opponents, and arrange a peaceful settlement.

After Jón died on November 1, 1197, the family at Oddi was still the most powerful family in Iceland but their power soon began to go downhill after his death. After Jon's death his first legitimate son Sæmundur inherited the family estate of Oddi.

### **Goði Sæmundur Jonsson (1154 - 1222)(Our 20<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Sæmundur Jonsson (1154 – 1222) was born about 1154 at Oddi in Rangarvallasýsla. His parents were Goði Jon Loftsson and Halldora Brandsdóttir. Upon his father's death in 1197, Sæmundur inherited the family estate at Oddi. He did not possess his father's literary interests, but he maintained a sumptuous household, and was regarded as the leading chieftain of the southern districts.

Sæmundur married Ingveldur Indrisadóttir, daughter of Catholic Priest Indridi Steingrímsson. They had five children: Vilhjalmur, Pall, Haraldur, Andres, and Filippus. We descend from Andres, and Filippus.

Sæmundur had two concubines: Valgerdur Jonsdóttir and Þorbjorg Vigfusdóttir. With Valgerdur, Sæmundur had a daughter, Solveig, who we descend from. With Þorbjorg, Sæmundur had three children: Halfdan, Björn, and Helga. We descend from Halfdan.

Sæmundur's son Pall traveled to Bergen, Norway at a young age and accidentally drowned there in 1215. When Sæmundur heard of this, he grew furious and blamed the Norwegians and especially the people of Bergen for it. Sæmundur and Thorvaldur Gissurason (our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) of Hrúni in Arnessýsla dangerously overstepped the bounds of tradition by imposing what constitute a tariff on Norwegian merchants. They seized some Bergen merchants who were lying with their ships at Eyrar (Akranes), and demanded that they should pay such a tariff or indemnity. They had to pay him 900 marks of silver. They did the same to some merchants who arrived from Greenland. In revenge, those merchants killed Sæmundur's brother Ormur. So great became the commotion of these events that Norway Duke Skuli Bardarson (our 22<sup>nd</sup> great

## Traces Through World History

grandfather), planned a military expedition to Iceland as an opportunity to subjugate the island. It just so happened that Snorri Sturluson (our 19th great grandfather) was with the duke at the time and through his influence an imminent attack on Iceland was averted. The ultimate decision was referred to King Hakon the old Hakonarson (our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather), a teenager at the time, who decided against the attack. Snorri then guaranteed the safety of Norwegian merchants in Iceland and entered into a secret agreement with the king by which he promised to use his influence to bring Iceland under the dominion of Norway in a peaceful way.

Goði Sæmundur Jonsson died on November 7, 1222 at Oddi.

### **Goði and Dr. Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (1160 - 1213)(Our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Dr. Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson (1160 – 1213) was born about 1160 at Eyri by Arnarfjörður in Isafjardarsýsla. His parents were Dr. Sveinbjörn Bardason and Steinunn Þordardóttir. His father was a goði from Selárdalur. He also was a doctor (physician) and played an important role during the Icelandic civil war.

Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson, took over the reins of the family estate, an affair that ended in a chain of tragedies and revenge that lasted for generations. He claimed the Dýrfirðingagoðorð. He later established the farm that bears his name, Hrafnseyri.

Hrafn was the most chronicled doctor (physician) in Iceland during the national era. In 1195, Hrafn captured a walrus which proved difficult to land, so he made a vow to reward St. Thomas Becket if he would help him. In fulfillment of this promise, two years later he went on a pilgrimage to the St. Thomas' shrine at Canterbury. He took the tusks of the walrus with him and left them at the shrine. Hrafn also accompanied Bishop Gudmund Arason to Norway in 1202 when he went to be consecrated. Hrafn then went south to Rome, stopped in Santiago de Compostela in Spain, traveled through France and Italy and then headed back north to Norway. He undoubtedly studied medicine during his travels and it is believed that his medical methods can be traced to the University of Salernisborg.(Salerno) in Italy.

Hrafn returned to Iceland and took over the estate at Eyri. He then married Hallkatla Einarsdóttir. They had nine children: Steinunn, Sveinbjörn, Krakur, Einar, Herdis, Grimur, Þorey, Halgerdur, and Þuridur. We descend from Steinunn, Herdis, and Þuridur.

Hrafn was extremely hospitable and popular, and it was said of his farm that "all men were allowed food there," to those who came and went, whether they wanted to stay longer or shorter. He let all the men move across Arnarfjörður, who wanted to go. He also owned a ship on Barðaströnd. All those who needed to cross Breiðafjörður could use it. And because of Hrafn's generosity, it was as if there was a bridge on each of the two fjords for anyone who wanted to go. He also provided all the medical services to those who sought it never charged for it.

Hrafn had a long dispute with Þorvaldur Snorrason Vatnsfirðing (our 18<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). Þorvaldur made three trips across the mountains to try to catch Hrafn. Finally he succeeded and he had Hrafn beheaded at Eyri on March 4, 1213.

The oldest sons, Sveinbjörn and Krákur avenged their father when they burned Þorvaldur Vatnsfirðing in 1228.

## Traces Through World History

### **Goði Þorvaldur Snorrason (1160-1228)(Our 18<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Þorvaldur Snorrason Vatnsfirðingur (1160 – 1228) was born about 1160 at Vatnsfjörður in Nordur-Isafjardarsýsla. His parents were Goði Snorri Þórðarson and Jóreiðar Oddleifsdóttir. Þorvaldur was about the same age as his cousin Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson in Eyri in Arnarfjörður. In their youth, they got along very well together. He lived in Vatnsfjörður and was the Goði of Vatnsfjörður when the Sturlung Age began.

Þorvaldur was married twice, his first wife was Kolfinna Einarsdóttir. Þorvaldur and Kolfinna had at least three children: Halldora, Einar, and Joreidur.

In 1224, Snorri Sturluson (our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) gave his daughter, Þórdís, by a woman named Oddny in marriage to Þorvaldur. Þórdís was about 45 years younger than Þorvaldur. They were known to have had two children: Kolfinna and Einar, both of whom we descend from.

Þorvaldur also had several concubines and with them several other children.

After Þorvaldur took over Vatnsfjarðargoðorði after his father died in 1194, he began to be in dispute with Hrafn Sveinbjarnarson. This had been complete in attitude and Þorvaldur hated Hrafn. Þorvaldur made three trips across the mountains to try to catch Hrafn. Finally he succeeded and he had Hrafn beheaded at Eyri on March 4, 1213.

Hrafn's eldest sons, Sveinbjörn and Krákur, were children when their father was killed, but later they sought the help of Sturla Sighvatsson and then went after Þorvaldur and burned him inside Gillastaðir in Króksfjörður on August 6, 1228.

### **Goði Sighvatur Sturluson (1170 - 1238)(Our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather)**

Sighvatur Sturluson (1170 – 1238) was born about 1170 at Hvammur in Dalasýsla. His parents were Hvamm Sturla Þórðarson and Gudney Bodvarsdóttir. He was born into the wealthy and powerful Sturlungar family. He had two brothers, Þórður Sturluson and Snorri Sturluson.

Sighvatur grew up at Hvammur and lived also at Staðarfell, Hjarðarholt and Sauðafell. He bought one-half of the estate at Staðarhol in 1185 from Einar Thorgilsson and acquired that goðorð. He likewise obtained both the Saurbæinga and all of the Reyknesinga goðorð. In 1215 he moved to Eyjafjörður, settled in Grund and became the Goði of Eyfirðingar and Þingeyingar. He was one of the Goðis at Hofsi in Hunavatnssýsla.

Sighvatur was married to Halldora Tumadóttir. They were known to have at least eight children: Sigridur, Tumi, Sturla, Kolbeinn, Markus, Þordur, Kakali, and Steinvor. We descend from Sturla and Steinvor.

By 1220 the strife being waged by rival leaders developed into a civil war, and Sighvatur and his brothers stood divided. The Snorrunga goðorð had not been granted to the oldest brother Thord, but rather it was given to Sighvatur who in turn granted it to his son Sturla. The other brothers agreed to lay claim to it in a case at the Althing. A bitter controversy now arose between Snorri, Sighvatur, and Sturla. The case was not settled at the Althing, and Snorri Sturluson seized the goðorð by force.

Guðmundur Arason was Bishop of Holar. Sighvatur's son Tumi had risen to power in

## Traces Through World History

Skagafjörður and claimed Hólar as his own. The Bishop's men murdered Tumi in 1222 and Guðmundur was forced to flee to Grímsey. Sighvatur and his son Sturla went on a campaign to Grímsey, where Bishop Guðmundur was captured. Bishop Guðmundur was sent to Norway to face the Archbishop's wrath.

In 1232, Sighvatur's son Sturla then went to Rome on behalf of his father to seek amends for Tumi's killing. On his return trip he spent some time in Norway. Sturla became aware of the civil strife in Iceland. Without hesitancy he promised King Haakon and Duke Skuli that he would subjugate Iceland to Norway and in exchange he would be made a jarl.

Upon his arrival in Iceland in 1235, Sturla, with the aid of Sighvatur began to collect military forces for an attack on Snorri Sturluson. One of Snorri's illegitimate sons began gathering a force of 720 men, but Snorri did not desire to wage war against his own relatives. With a force of 1,000 men, Sturla attacked and seized Snorri's estate at Reyholt. Snorri's force of 480 men fought back but was defeated in a bloody battle at Bær. Sturla had now almost accomplished his purpose of making himself lord of all Iceland.

An opposing force to Sturla was soon in the making. Gissur Thorvaldsson and Kolbeinn ungi Arnorson became the leaders of this force. They gathered 1,680 men and proceeded to Örlygsstaðir to engage Sturla's forces. It was here that Sighvatur and his sons became involved in Sturla's struggle with Gissur Þorvaldsson and Kolbeinn ungi Arnorson, which ended with the Battle of Örlygsstaðir on August 21, 1238. Sighvatur, who was then approaching seventy, was killed in the battle along with his son Sturla. His son Markus was gravely wounded and died at Víðivellir. Kolbeinn fled to a church in Miklabær and was taken from there and cut with an ax. Þórður Krókur would die of a fatal illness years later on October 11, 1256 in Norway.

### **Law Speaker and Historian Snorri Sturluson (1178 - 1241)(our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Snorri Sturluson was born about 1178 at Hvammur in Dalasýsla. His parents were Hvamm Sturla Þordarson and Gudney Bodvarsdóttir. He was born into the wealthy and powerful Sturlungar family. He had two older brothers, Þórður Sturluson (the oldest) and Sighvatur Sturluson. By a quirk of circumstances he would become foster-son of Goði Jón Loftsson, a relative of the Norwegian royal family, at Oddi in Rangarvallasýsla. The circumstances occurred when his father Sturla was trying to settle a lawsuit with Priest Páll Sölvason (our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather), the latter's wife lunged suddenly at him with a knife—intending, she said, to make him like his one-eyed hero Odin—but bystanders deflected the blow to his cheek instead. The resulting settlement would have beggared Páll, but Jón Loftsson intervened in the Althing to mitigate the judgment and, to compensate Sturla, offered to raise and educate Snorri. Snorri therefore received an education and made connections that he might not otherwise have made. He attended the school of Sæmundur the wise Sigfusson (our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather) at Oddi, and never returned to his parents' home at Hvammur. His father died in 1183 and his mother as guardian soon wasted Snorri's share of the inheritance.

In 1199, Snorri's two families arranged a marriage between him and Herdís Bersadóttir. From Herdis' father, Snorri inherited an estate at Borg and a chieftainship. He soon acquired more property and chieftainships. Snorri and Herdís were together for four years at Borg. They

## Traces Through World History

had at least two children, Hallbera and Jón.

The marriage succumbed to Snorri's philandering, and in 1206, he settled in Reykholt as manager of an estate there, but without Herdís. He made significant improvements to the estate, including a hot outdoor bath (Snorralaug). The bath and the buildings have been preserved to some extent. During the initial years at Reykholt he fathered three children by three different women: Guðrún Hreinsdóttir, Oddný, and Þuríður Hallsdóttir. With Gudrun he had a daughter, Ingjibjorg. With Þuríður he had a daughter Oreakja. With Oddný he had a daughter Þordis. We descend from Þordis.

Snorri quickly became known as a poet, but was also a successful lawyer. In 1215, he became Law Speaker of the Althing. In the summer of 1218, he left the Law Speaker position and sailed to Norway, by royal invitation. There he became well acquainted with the teen-aged King Hákon Hákonarson (our 21st great grandfather) and his co-regent, Jarl Skúli Bardarson (our 22nd great grandfather). He spent the winter as house-guest of the jarl. They showered gifts upon him, including the ship in which he sailed, and he in return wrote poetry about them. In the summer of 1219 he met his Swedish colleague, the Law Speaker Eskil Magnusson, and his wife, Kristina Nilsson Blake, in Skara. They were both related to royalty and probably gave Snorri an insight into the history of Sweden. Snorri was mainly interested in history and culture. The Norwegian regents, however, cultivated Snorri, made him a *skutillsvein*, a senior title roughly equivalent to knight, and received an oath of loyalty. The king hoped to extend his realm to Iceland, which he could do by a resolution of the Althing, of which Snorri had been a key member.

While in Norway, Snorri wrote the *Hattatal*, a long poem meant to honor King Hakon Hakonsson (our 21st great grandfather) and which earned him the position of being the king's favorite. Ironically, this was the same man who would later make Iceland subservient to Norway.

In 1220, Snorri returned to Iceland and by 1222 was back as Law Speaker of the Althing, which he held this time until 1232. The basis of his election was entirely his fame as a poet. Politically he was the king's spokesman, supporting union with Norway, a platform that acquired him enemies among the chiefs. Personally, in 1224, he took up residence with Hallveig Ormsdóttir, a granddaughter of Jon Loftsson, now a widow of great means, and formed a common-law relationship that lasted the rest of his life. She was a much younger woman. Although they were fond of each other they had no children together, concentrating instead on raising the children they had with others. Five of Snorri's children survived to adulthood.

Snorri Sturluson was an Icelandic historian, poet, and politician. He was elected twice as a Law Speaker at the Icelandic parliament, the Althing. He was the author of the *Prose Edda* or *Younger Edda*, which consists of *Gylfaginning* ("the fooling of Gylfi"), a narrative of Norse mythology, the *Skáldskaparmá*, a book of poetic language, and the *Háttatal*, a list of verse forms.

He was also the author of the *Heimskringla*, a history of the Norwegian kings that begins with legendary material in Ynglinga saga and moves through to early medieval Scandinavian history. For stylistic and methodological reasons, Snorri is often taken to be the author of *Egil's Saga*. As a historian and mythographer, Snorri is remarkable for proposing the hypothesis (in the *Prose Edda*) that mythological gods begin as human war leaders and kings whose funeral sites develop cults. As people call upon the dead war leader as they go to battle, or the dead king as

## Traces Through World History

they face tribal hardship, they begin to venerate the figure. Eventually, the king or warrior is remembered only as a god. He also proposed that as tribes defeat others, they explain their victory by proposing that their own gods were in battle with the gods of the others.

The Sturlung Age began in about 1233; it was a period which took its name from Snorri's own family, who had much to do with the events of the time. Eventually Snorri's own nephew turned against him and became the King's new favorite, placing Snorri in potential danger, as his nephew sought to amass wealth and power at anyone's expense.

Many of the other chiefs found his position as royal office-holder contrary to their interests, especially the other Sturlungar. Snorri's strategy was to consolidate power over them, at which point he could offer Iceland to the king. His first moves were civic. On the death in 1222 of Sæmundur (our 18<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), son of Jón Loftsson, he became a suitor for the hand of his daughter, Sólveig. Herdís' silent vote did nothing for his suit. His nephew, Sturla Sighvatson (our 20<sup>th</sup> great grandfather), Snorri's political opponent, stepped in to marry her in 1223, the year before Snorri met Hallveig. A period of clan feuding followed. Snorri perceived that only resolute, saga-like actions could achieve his objective, but he proved unwilling or incapable of carrying them out. He raised an armed party under another nephew, Böðvar Þóðarson, and another under his son, Órækja, with the intent of executing a first strike against his brother Sighvatur (our 20<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) and Sturla Sighvatson. On the eve of battle he dismissed those forces and offered terms to his brother. Sighvatur and Sturla with a force of 1000 men drove Snorri into the countryside, where he sought refuge among the other chiefs. Órækja undertook guerrilla operations in the fjords of western Iceland and the war was on. King Haakon made an effort to intervene from afar, inviting all the chiefs of Iceland to a peace conference in Norway. This maneuver was transparent to Sighvatur, who understood, as apparently Snorri did not, what could happen to the chiefs in Norway. Instead of killing his opponents he began to insist that they take the king up on his offer. This was Órækja's fate, who was captured by Sturla during an ostensible peace negotiation at Reykjaholt, and also of Þorleifur Þórðarson, a cousin of Snorri's, who came to his assistance with 800 men and was deserted by Snorri on the battlefield in a flare-up over the chain of command. In 1237, Snorri thought it best to join the king.

The reign of King Haakon was troubled by civil war relating to questions of succession and was at various times divided into quasi-independent regions under contenders. There were always plots against the king and questions of loyalty; nevertheless, he managed to build up the Norwegian state from what it had been. When Snorri arrived in Norway for the second time it was clear to the king that he was no longer a reliable agent. The conflict between Haakon and Skúli was beginning to escalate into civil war. Snorri stayed with the jarl and his son and the jarl made him a jarl hoping to command his allegiance.

In 1238, Snorri, Órækja, and Þorleifur requested permission to return home. As the king now could not predict Snorri's behavior, permission was denied. He was explicitly ordered to remain in Norway on the basis of his honorary rank. Skúli on the other hand gave permission and helped them book passage.

Snorri must have had his own ideas about the king's position and the validity of his orders, but at any rate he chose to disobey them. Snorri resumed his chieftainship and made a bid to crush Gissur by prosecuting him in court for the deaths of Sighvatur and Sturla. A meeting of

## Traces Through World History

the Althing was arranged for the summer of 1241 but Gissur and Kolbein arrived with several hundred men. Snorri and 120 men formed around a church. Gissur chose to pay fines rather than to attack.

In 1240, King Haakon sent two agents to Gissur bearing a secret letter with orders to kill or capture Snorri. Gissur was being invited now to join the unionist movement, which he could accept or refuse, just as he pleased. His initial bid to take Snorri at the Althing failed. Hallveig died of natural causes. When the family bickered over the inheritance, Hallveig's sons, Klæing and Orm, asked assistance from their uncle Gissur. Holding a meeting with them and Kolbein the Younger, Gissur brought out the letter. Orm refused. Shortly after, Snorri received a letter in cipher runes warning him of the plot, but he could not understand them.

Gissur Thorvaldsson led seventy men on a daring raid to Snorri's house, achieving complete surprise. Snorri was asleep when they began to break in, but he heard them, and ran into a cellar to hide. There Gissur Thorvaldsson and his men found and killed him. He was unarmed and helpless. Snorri Sturluson was 62 years old when he was killed on the night of September 23, 1241 in his house at Reykholt.

### **Law Speaker Sturla Þórðarson (1214 - 1284)(Our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather)**

Sturla Þórðarson (1214 – 1284) was born on July 29, 1214 at Stadarholl in Dalasýsla. His parents were Þórður Sturluson and his mistress Þóra Bjarnadóttir. He was the grandson of Hvamm Sturla Þórðarson and a nephew and pupil of the famous saga-writer Snorri Sturluson. His grandmother, Guðný Böðvarsdóttir, raised him for the first few years, in Hvammur until 1218.

Sturla was married to Helga Þórðardóttir. They were known to have at least four children: Ingibjorg, Gudney, Thordur, and Snorri. We descend from Snorri.

Sturla was a chieftain and writer of sagas and contemporary history during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. His life is chronicled in the *Sturlunga Saga*. He was a peaceful man of noble character, who loved his country, and sought as long as possible to preserve its independence.

Sturla was a participant in many major events of the Sturlung Age. He would be pulled into the conflict between his uncle Sighvatur Sturlason and Gissur Thorvaldsson and Kolbeinn ungi Arnorson. Kolbeinn had dispatched a force to Stadarholl to kill Sturla. But Sturla had been warned, and they were only able to plunder his estates. Sturla openly espoused the cause of his uncle Sighvatur's son Thord Kakali. In 1222, after Tumi Sighvatsson was beheaded, another raid was made on Sturla's home and people were killed and property destroyed throughout the district. Thord Kakali secured a fleet and a force of 220 men and left the defense of the home district to Sturla. Sturla would ultimately fight alongside his uncle Sighvatur and his sons in the Battle of Örlygsstaðir on August 21, 1238.

Sturla was appointed Law Speaker at the Althing from 1251 to 1253.

Gissur Þorvaldsson came back to Iceland in 1258, as he was appointed as a jarl and chief representative of King Haakon Haakonarson (our 21<sup>st</sup> great grandfather). He was placed in charge of the southern and northern quarters together with the Borgarfjord district. The intent was that he would function as the future royal governor of the whole island. Gissur won the friendship of



## Traces Through World History

Sturla. Gissur wanted to seek reconciliation with the Sturlungs, so as Sturla was their main leader, they agreed that Ingibjörg, Sturla's daughter, whose husband had lost his life in the bloody wedding at Flugumyr, would be given in marriage to Thord Thorvardsson of Saurbær.

Gissur placed Hrafn Oddsson (our 19<sup>th</sup> great grandfather) in charge of the Borgarfjord district. Sturla owned a number of estates in the district, so this displeased him. Sturla had a conflict with Hrafn, which ended with Sturla being driven to Norway in 1263.

Since he had always supported Iceland's independence, Sturla feared that he might be made to feel the King's displeasure. But upon his arrival in Norway, he found that King Haakon was away in Scotland and his son Magnus was ruling as viceroy. Sturla was welcomed at court and introduced as an Icelandic scald to Magnus. Sturla joined as a crew member on Magnus' ship making a voyage southward along the coast. Sturla entertained the royals with his songs, stories, and poetry. Sturla told Magnus of his conflict with Hrafn Oddsson. Magnus told him that he would allow him to remain with him in peace and friendship.

Sturla remained for many years at the court of King Magnus the Lawmender Hakonarson (our 20<sup>th</sup> great grandfather). King Magnus employed Sturla to write a history of his father's reign called *Hákonar Saga*.

Sturla went home to Iceland in 1271 with the law book *Járnsíða* and may have been involved in composing it. Sturla introduced it to the Althing for adoption. Its purpose was to abolish personal requital for injuries and put all punishment in the hands of the state. It was met with great resistance. It had to be modified along Icelandic lines.

In 1278, Sturla went back to Norway, where he was employed to write King Magnus' owned saga called *Magnusar Hakonarsonar Saga*.

In 1280, a new law book, *Jónsbók*, was brought by royal representatives to replace the *Járnsíða* introduced by Sturla.

Sturla became a lawyer from 1272 to 1282. For the last year or years, people thought he was indifferent and allowed Hrafn Oddsson and Bishop Árni to go their own way, and Þorvarður Þórarinsson wrote a letter of complaint to the king. The country was divided into two legal districts and Sturla became a lawyer in the north and west of the country and Jón Einarsson in the south and east. He had little to do in the next few years.

Like his uncle, Snorri, Sturla was a prolific poet and writer. He is best known for writing *Íslendinga Saga*, the longest saga within *Sturlunga Saga*. This work was probably done near the end of Sturla's life in 1271 to 1284. This was a period of time after the Icelanders had submitted to Norwegian overlordship. This great work would become the chief source of Icelandic history.

Many other historical works would be attributed to Sturla. Some scholars believe him to have written *Kristni Saga* and *Sturlubók*, a transcript of *Landnáma*. He is moreover listed in *Skáldatal* as the court skald of the Swedish ruler Birger Jarl.

After resigning as a lawyer in 1282, he moved to Fagurey Island in Breiðafjörður off the parish of Stykkisholmur in Snæfellsnessýsla and stayed there for the last years of his life. He died there on July 30, 1284.

### Sources:

## Traces Through World History

- *Landnámabók* or *The Book of Settlements*, Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards, University of Manitoba Press, 1972.
- *The Sagas of the Icelanders*, various authors, edited by Ornlófur Thorsson, Penguin Books, New York, 2001.
- *Medieval Iceland, Society, Sagas, and Power*, Jesse L. Byock, University of California Press, Los Angeles, CA, 1990.
- *History of Iceland*, Knut Gjerset, The MacMillan Company, New York, NY, 1924.
- Various Wikipedia articles. A few of the narratives are extractions from Wikipedia articles which I have abridged and edited.
- A Word Document labeled SamsonGenealogy(Icelandic).docx that I have in my possession. It was sent to me by a amateur genealogist named Magnus Haraldsson in Iceland. It is what I refer to as the “Ancient Icelandic Pedigree.” I have had to make some corrections in my own personal database for information found in the file that seemed erroneous. I did this by using what I believed was more reliable information found in Wikipedia or geni.com.
- Information on the above named persons can also be found in The Public Members Trees on Ancestry.com; the Geni.com database; and Wikitree.com database.
- Icelandic Roots Database at [www.icelandicroots.com](http://www.icelandicroots.com)