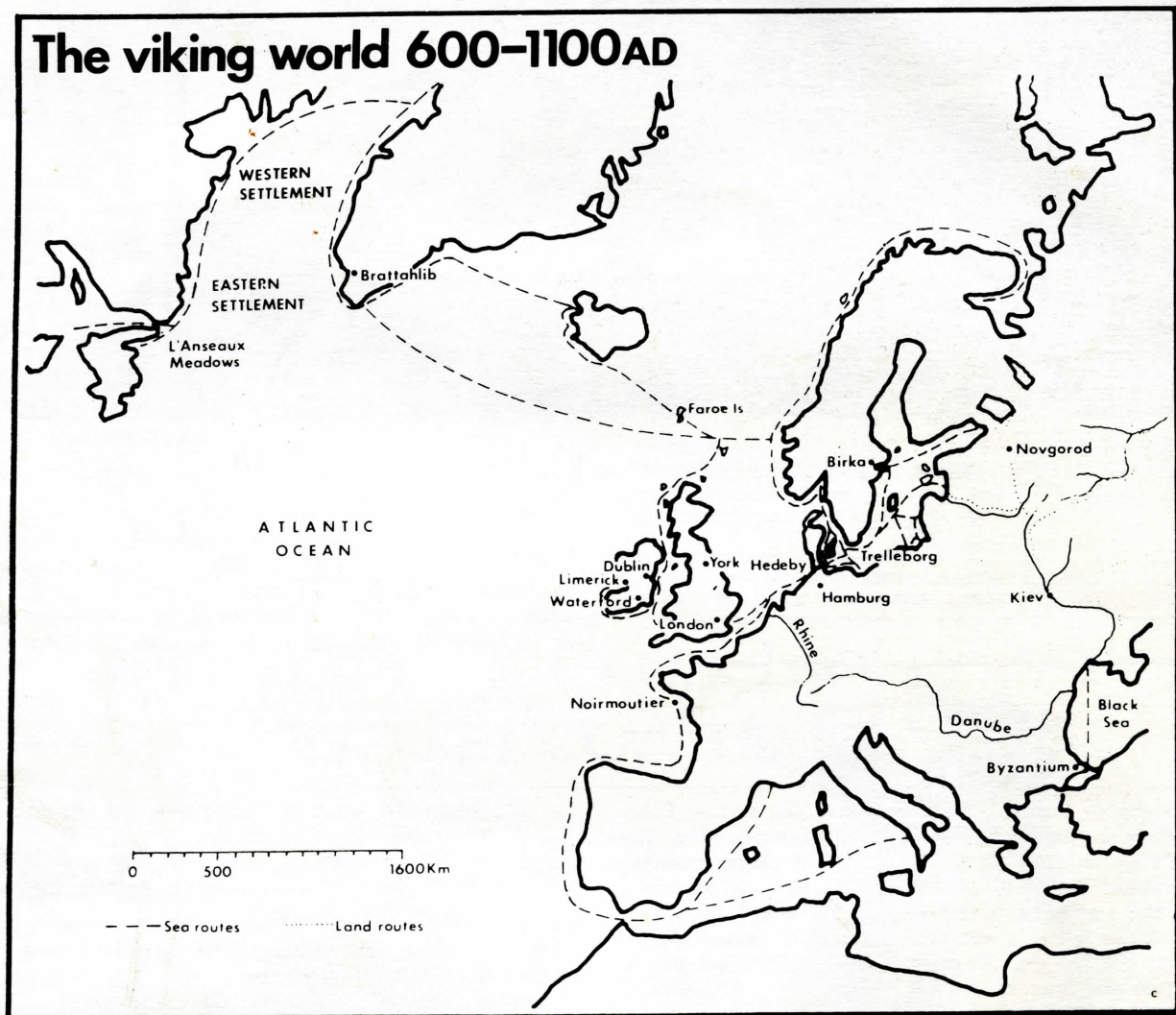




## WOOD QUAY: A EUROPEAN HERITAGE



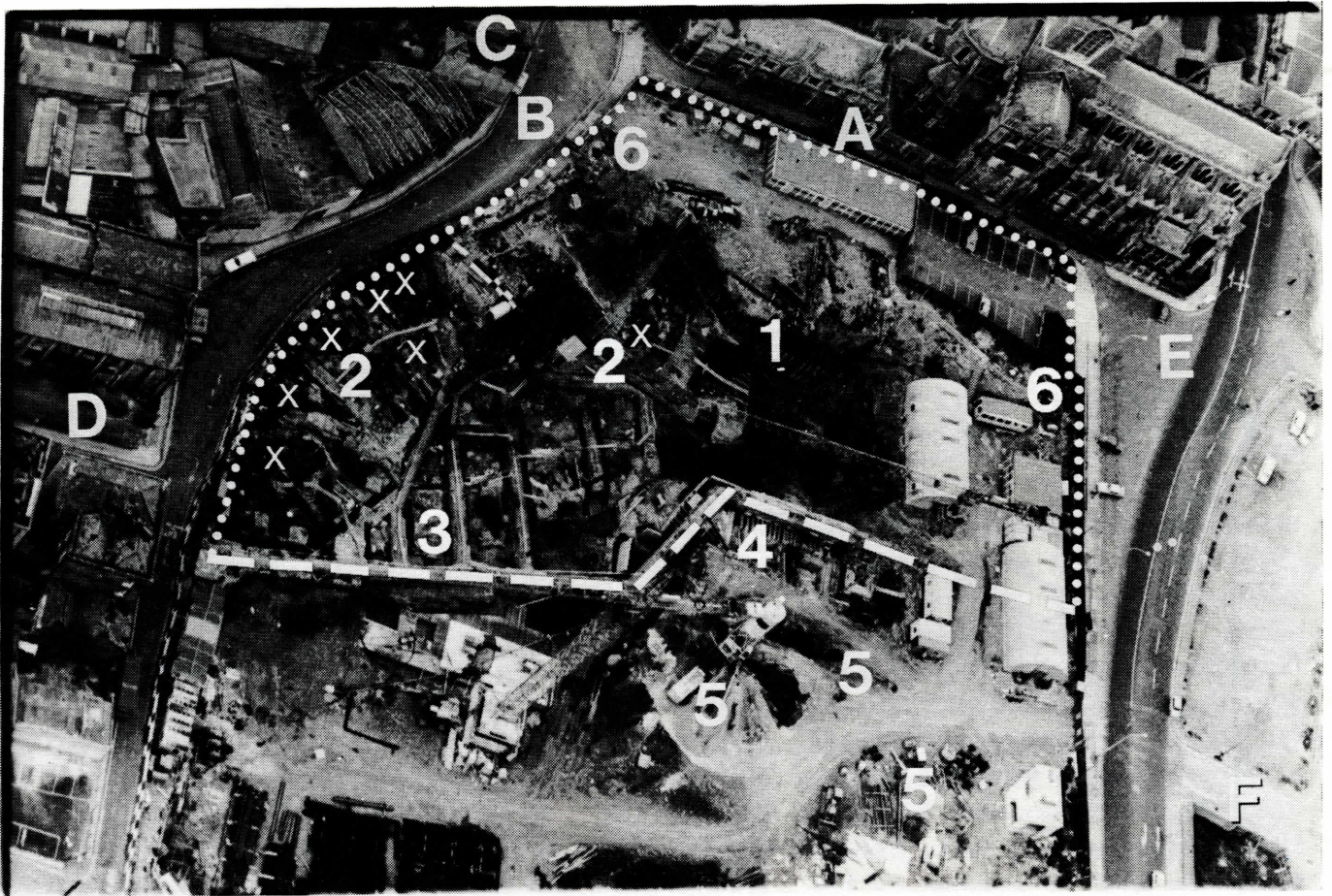
*A THOUSAND YEARS AGO DUBLIN WAS A VITAL ELEMENT IN THE VIKING WORLD.  
AT THAT TIME, DUBLIN WAS WOOD QUAY.*

*In 1979 the Council of Europe states that:*

"Wood Quay is a test case of European co-operation as much as Venice or Istanbul. Recognition of the real value of the site has come at an advanced stage in development plans and a change to a different site for Dublin city offices will be costly. There are grounds for re-evaluation without the present Dublin Corporation feeling it is losing face: on the

contrary the gesture will be warmly welcomed throughout Europe. A parallel exists in the post-war plans for the development of Stavanger which would have resulted in the destruction of the whole of the wooden house area. The Wood Quay site bears a far richer testimony of the development of European contacts and European town-planning."





Above — Aerial View (1978) of Christ Church/Wood Quay excavation:

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Builders steel coffer dam.                        | A. John's Lane East  |
| 2. Houses — 10th and 11th centuries (marked X)       | B. Fishamble Street  |
| 3. City Wall   | C. Copper Alley      |
| 4. Builders steel girders inserted through City Wall | D. Essex Street West |
| 5. Partially excavated area                          | E. Winetavern Street |
| 6. Area declared a National Monument                 | F. Cook Street       |

## What the Council of Europe says about Wood Quay

The Council of Europe represents some 330 million Europeans through the participation of 20 Governments. The Council's Committee on Culture and Education commissioned one of their members to visit Dublin and prepare a report. Mr. Aano, from Norway, visited Wood Quay, and talked to the various interested parties in Dublin during March 1979. The report prepared was submitted to the Committee and later to the full Parliamentary Assembly of the Council. As a result the following resolution was adopted on May 11th:

"The Assembly,

1. Having considered the report of its Committee on Culture and Education (Doc 4335)
2. Convinced of the European importance of the Wood Quay site in Dublin;
3. Calls on the competent authorities in Dublin Corporation and the Irish Government to:
  - a. *delay further construction until the systematic archaeological investigation of the whole of the site is completed*

- b. *Reconsider plans for developing the site for offices for Dublin City Corporation.*
- c. *consult international archaeological opinion on the best means of conserving and presenting the material discovered on the site."*

The Council pointed out that they were not taking sides in any internal (Irish) controversy but that "the site is of immense historical and archaeological importance for Dublin, Ireland and the north-west of Europe" and that "there is a great difference between superficial rescue excavation and proper archaeological study. Most of the excavated part of the Wood Quay site has been excavated under rescue conditions with all that this implies: haphazard selection of areas for excavation, detailed recording only of immediately interesting objects, lack of time for scientific analysis of the contents of the individual layers, etc."

It should be pointed out that when the Council of Europe have adopted resolutions to similar situations previously, notably with regard to Venice and Delphi, the relevant Governments have acted immediately to carry out the recommendations. Unfortunately, the Irish Government appears to be ignoring the call to them.



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# What Europe says about Wood Quay

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We are convinced that the importance of this site is sufficient to justify every effort that can be made to ensure that it is investigated as completely as possible and, if at all possible, preserved for posterity. We are the more deeply concerned about it because the significance of the finds altogether transcends national boundaries, so that the site may truly be claimed as a key one for the history of Western Europe as a whole. The loss of evidence resulting from the premature redevelopment of the site would be a cultural disaster of major proportions and a cause for widespread and lasting regret and bitterness, for which those responsible would incur censure from many quarters."

A.R. Dufty, President of the Society of Antiquaries of London – the premier antiquarian society in these islands, founded in 1707.

"It is a rare chance to find a large site with such uniformly excellent conditions for the preservation of perishable materials, and rarer still when this happens to be one of great historical importance, as in this instance. The Viking settlement uncovered at Wood Quay meets both these criteria. The discoveries are comparable in importance with those at Novgorod .... but in this instance their international importance is even greater."

John D. Evans, Director of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of London – the foremost research centre for archaeology in these islands.

"What I heard and read about the first results of excavations and the archaeological potential (at Wood Quay) is of exceptional European and international importance ... To my mind Wood Quay's areas are of high importance and one should make every effort to excavate and conserve ... such places of importance of the European past should be conserved for the future."

Prof. Winkelmann, Chairman of the Archaeological Commission of Westfalia – director of the excavations which uncovered Charlemagne's Palace at Paderborn.

"The importance of the Wood Quay excavation and of Viking Dublin is invaluable to the history of Northern Europe.... Dublin and York are at present the most important centres of Viking Archaeology in Western Europe and the responsibility for the full scientific exploitation of the inherent possibilities must rest heavily on all authorities involved."

An open letter to Dublin City Council signed by over 300 archaeologists, historians, Museum personnel, etc. from throughout the Scandinavian countries.

"The City Council of Dublin has an obligation to northern European culture to preserve it. It is not only a national monument – it is a real international monument which will draw a lot of people from Europe in coming years."

Henrik Jansen, Director of the Museum of Svendborg, Denmark.

"We are distressed and concerned to hear of the Dublin Corporation's plans to build civic offices on the part of Wood Quay where important and well preserved remains of the Viking Kingdom of Dublin are known to survive ... It would be most sad if this (good) reputation (of the Irish Govern-

ment) should be tarnished by allowing this ill-timed development to go forward".

Letter sent to Fr. F.X. Martin, signed by over 40 staff members of various Universities throughout Wales, including Dame Kathleen Kenyon who directed the world famous excavations at Jericho, and Prof. W.F. Grimes, director of the excavations which discovered the Temple of Mithras at London.

"The Wood Quay site is irreplaceable in its scientific and cultural aspects. It is of great interest to people beyond Ireland. It is part of our common European heritage. We assure you that coming to its rescue would be a great service to, and earn the gratitude of, this and future generations."

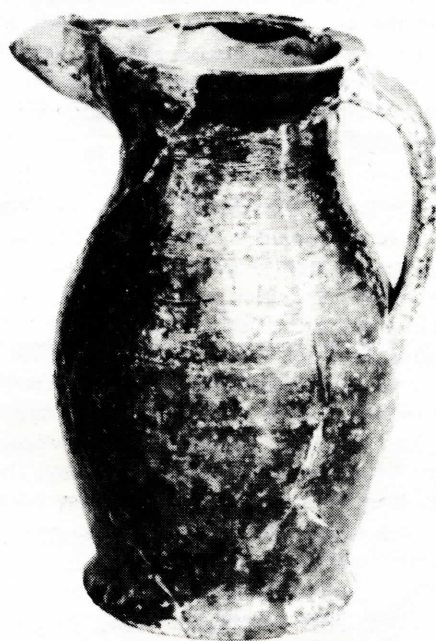
Letter to the Taoiseach Mr. Jack Lynch from Werner Stegemann, Executive Committee, Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft.

"The first Vikings came to you and to us as pirates... and it was from these very sites that Christianity was carried into Scandinavia. Dublin is of the greatest importance as the centre for the influence of Celtic culture on the Old Norse Culture area."

Detlev Ellmers, Director, German Ship Museum, Bremerhaven.

"The remains of the Viking Settlement at Wood Quay, Dublin is of such importance as to claim the attention of scholars of the entire world, and to surpass the localised interests of the City of Dublin."

Prof. de Azevedo, Prof. Orlandini, Prof.ssa Chiesa, Prof.ssa Jovino, Dott. Arslan and Dott. Chiaramonte of various Universities and Museums in Milan, Italy.



*An imported 13th century wine jug from France found at Winetavern Street. (Photo from National Museum).*

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## Bonn Civic Offices

Early in 1979 many citizens in Bonn queued to add their signatures to a public appeal requesting the Irish Government to intervene to save Wood Quay. The reason they identified so closely with the commitment of Fr. F.X. Martin can be seen in the photograph opposite—the Civic Offices in Bonn built on a site in a location similar to the Wood Quay one, in the heart of the old city. The people of Bonn are anxious that their mistake, which they now bitterly regret and are reminded of daily, will not be repeated by their fellow Europeans.

## The European media on Wood Quay

Television crews from many parts of the continent, including those from the national stations of France, Sweden, West Germany and Britain, have visited the Wood Quay site. On transmission the programmes have invariably resulted in support of the stance taken by the Friends of Medieval Dublin in their efforts to preserve the site. The BBC "World Tonight" programme has referred to Wood Quay as "...one of the finest Viking remains outside Scandinavia" — a view endorsed by other media.

In January 1979 the 'Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung' asked "Who would easily give up the memory of ones birth-place?" and went on to say that "there are few people who deliberately destroy souvenirs of their own childhood, and if they do, they do so in anger. But cities, and particularly those who are proud of their past and their achievements since their early days look after the reminders of earlier generations with great enthusiasm. Not so in Dublin". This type of article highlights the viewpoint of our fellow Europeans — and damns those who want to destroy Wood Quay. The writer of the article, Katharina Hegewisch, addresses herself to the Irish when she says "You are Europeans now, so please, prove your goodwill!"

One of the foremost continental daily papers 'Die Zeit' carried an article by Gerhard Prause in June 1979. In his concluding section Mr. Prause comments "After all, this is basic-

ally a European concern, to know how in the early Middle Ages the European non-Roman towns were built, with whom they traded and how they were organised.

Wine barrels were found on Wood Quay. Did the wine come from France, from Italy, from Greece? Amber was found: were there connections with the Baltic? ... The chance to find out the answers to these questions on Wood Quay should not be missed."

As well as newspapers, learned journals have followed the Wood Quay saga. In an editorial in 'Antiquity', July 1979, Glyn Daniel, Prof. of Archaeology at Cambridge University states: "By comparison with its paucity in historical documents, Ireland is still very rich in archaeological sites. Today powerful machines make their destruction all too easy. It is possible to forgive when such destruction is carried out on unprotected monuments in rural areas by uninformed people. It cannot be forgiven when the first deliberate destruction is carried out on a central site of international importance by a government department and a civic corporation for the basest of reasons, the interests of the entrepreneur."

The deliberate destruction Prof. Daniel refers to is the consent to demolish the National Monument at Wood Quay issued jointly by the Commissioners of Public Works (of the Department of Finance) and the Dublin Corporation, surely an action for which Ireland will never be forgiven.

**Title:** Wood Quay: A European Heritage

**Date:** 1979

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