

Fetlar2013

Time Team in Fetlar



In 2002, Channel 4's *Time Team* travelled to the island in order to excavate two different archaeological sites: Da Giant's Grave at Aith, reputed to be the final resting place of a Viking man, and the Gord garden at Houbie, where Viking carvings had been found.

Da Giant's Grave

Located on the south of the island near Aith's natural bay, local legend told of a Viking man who had been washed ashore during a storm.

Although his crew had all been swept overboard and the man himself was gravely injured, he had managed to retain both his vessel and treasure – and he told the inhabitants of the island that they were to bury him with his galley and gold upon his death, which they duly did.

Gord Garden

During the 1990s, the owners of Gord had been digging in their garden and uncovered various samples of stonework and carved steatite, also known as soapstone, which is quite soft and easy to carve into shape.

Having kept these items, the owners contacted *Time Team*, and told them both of the finds they had made and the legend of Da Giant's Grave.

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Time Team's Results

Digging began in August 2002 at both sites, which were explored simultaneously.

At Da Giant's Grave, an expansion of the dig site revealed a great many rivets that had been buried beneath large stones. The experts agreed that, due to their spread and positioning, this was conclusive proof of a Viking boat burial, and that the stones had been placed on top to protect the occupants against scavenging animals.

Unfortunately, as time went on it became clear that the tomb had been robbed of any goods it may once have possessed and the skeletons removed – but the team did find a beautiful bronze tortoise-shaped brooch, evidence that a Viking woman, not a man, had been buried there.

At Gord, a huge excavation revealed the outer walls and inside floor of a Viking longhouse that had been built there. The floor was paved with beautiful blue stones, and a wealth of household artefacts – such as soapstone loom weights – were uncovered. The best find of this site was a nearly complete soapstone bowl, which had been wedged in amongst the stones of the house. This find was the largest single object ever excavated by *Time Team*, and is probably the largest bowl of its kind in the UK.

Both pieces are now on display at the [Shetland Museum and Archives](#) in Lerwick.



Top left:
The Viking longhouse at Gord is slowly revealed.

Bottom right:
Digging at Da Giant's Grave.

Images provided courtesy of Fetlar Museum Trust