

DEAD STRANGE

Bizarre Viking boat burial of 'noble woman' on top of ANOTHER corpse and ship baffles archaeologists



The 9th Century woman was clearly someone of importance, based on the goods found scattered within her 26ft ship. She was carefully dressed in fine clothes and arrayed with gilded bronze brooches, a pearl necklace, and even a cow's head.

Her vessel was placed neatly and carefully inside the larger 33-foot boat, right on top of an 8th Century man's remains. Not much of the wood from each boat was left, and most of the human remains had rotted away.

However, some key items were left behind, including the metal studs used to build each boat, and a horde of metal weapons buried with the man.

Some skull fragments from the woman were still intact, and scientists said they plan to study the remains further to find out who she was. "Hopefully, we hope we will be able to get some DNA from the skull to provide us with more information, such as what she looked like," Mr Sauvage said.

Of particular interest was a cross-shaped brooch discovered in the woman's grave. It was made in Ireland, suggesting she was somehow involved in raids across the ocean, a key part of Viking warrior culture at the time. "It was common among the Vikings to split up decorative harness fittings and reuse them as jewellery," said Aina Heen Pettersen, a historian at NTNU. "Several fastenings on the back of this brooch were preserved, and were used to attach leather straps to the harness. "The new Norse owners attached a pin to one of the fastenings so it could be used as a brooch. "Using artefacts from Viking raids as jewellery signalled a clear difference between you and the rest of the community, because you were part of the group that took part in the voyages."

None of the man's skeleton remained, but experts were able to figure out someone was buried with the larger boat based on the grave goods. A sword, shield and spear were found in the boat, and the sword was in an 8th Century style.

Along with the fact there were two longboats, this meant the goods were unlikely to have belonged to the woman.