

duced. The vessels were built a little higher aft than amidships, in order to allow the man at the helm to see well forward. In a sea-fight the sterns of the ships were lashed together, so that no ship could be attacked singly, in consequence of which the fighting was hottest forward of the bows. The sides and rigging were decorated with shields. The sail used was square, made of woollen cloth, and often striped with broad rows of color. The mast was stepped in the best place for it, and as far forward as would admit of the sail doing its work.

Several years ago two ancient vessels were found in Denmark, embedded in the sand, one of which was seventy-two feet long and nine feet wide amidships, and the other forty-two feet long, containing two eight-sided spars, twenty-four feet long.

It must be accorded to the Vikings that they possessed some nautical skill, and to some extent could calculate the course of the sun and moon, with some knowledge of measuring time by the stars. Their methods were necessarily crude, and at times must have proved very faulty. As the mariner's compass was unknown in Europe till late in the twelfth century, it could not have been used among the Scandinavians until some time later.