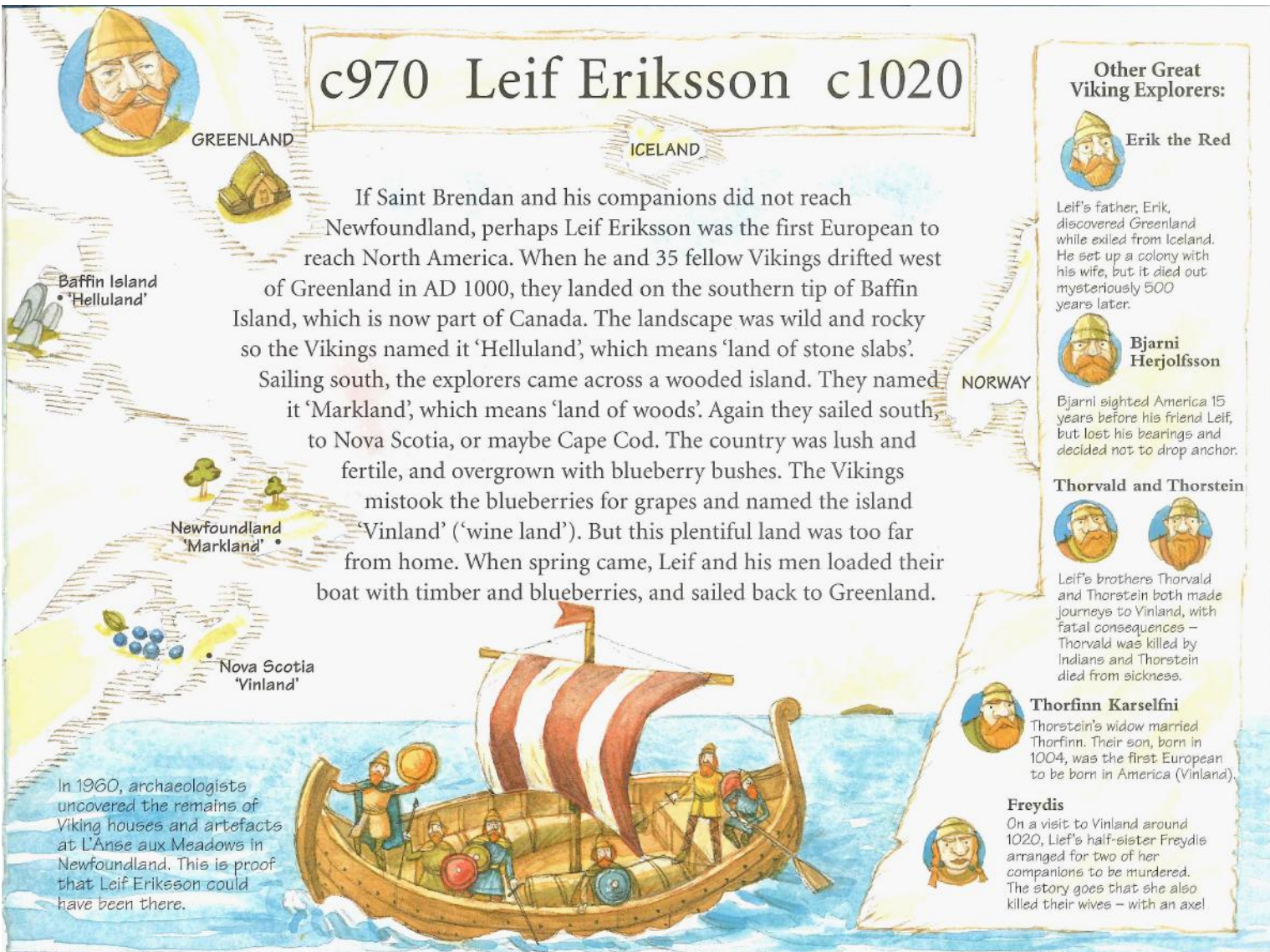


c970 Leif Eriksson c1020

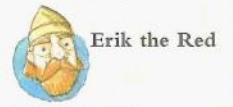


If Saint Brendan and his companions did not reach Newfoundland, perhaps Leif Eriksson was the first European to reach North America. When he and 35 fellow Vikings drifted west of Greenland in AD 1000, they landed on the southern tip of Baffin Island, which is now part of Canada. The landscape was wild and rocky so the Vikings named it 'Helluland', which means 'land of stone slabs'.

Sailing south, the explorers came across a wooded island. They named it 'Markland', which means 'land of woods'. Again they sailed south, to Nova Scotia, or maybe Cape Cod. The country was lush and fertile, and overgrown with blueberry bushes. The Vikings mistook the blueberries for grapes and named the island 'Vinland' ('wine land'). But this plentiful land was too far from home. When spring came, Leif and his men loaded their boat with timber and blueberries, and sailed back to Greenland.

In 1960, archaeologists uncovered the remains of Viking houses and artefacts at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. This is proof that Leif Eriksson could have been there.

Other Great Viking Explorers:



Erik the Red

Leif's father, Erik, discovered Greenland while exiled from Iceland. He set up a colony with his wife, but it died out mysteriously 500 years later.



Bjarni Herjolfsson

Bjarni sighted America 15 years before his friend Leif, but lost his bearings and decided not to drop anchor.

Thorvald and Thorstein



Leif's brothers Thorvald and Thorstein both made journeys to Vinland, with fatal consequences - Thorvald was killed by Indians and Thorstein died from sickness.



Thorfinn Karselfni

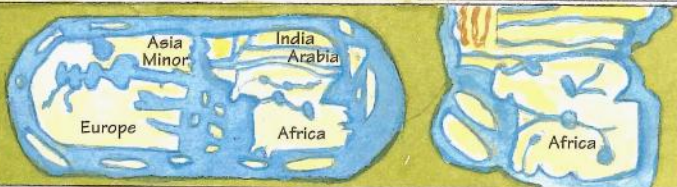
Thorstein's widow married Thorfinn. Their son, born in 1004, was the first European to be born in America (Vinland).



Freydis

On a visit to Vinland around 1020, Lief's half-sister Freydis arranged for two of her companions to be murdered. The story goes that she also killed their wives - with an axe!

OFFICIALLY, LEIF ERIKSSON WAS THE FIRST EUROPEAN TO REACH AMERICA.



700s Explorers refer to Beatus' religious but inaccurate world maps.



868 Vikings use primitive compasses made from magnetic lodestone to navigate between Norway and Iceland.