

# Ingibjorg Jarlamóðir

William P.L. Thomson

WE are told in *Orkneyinga saga* that after the death of Earl Thorfinn his widow, Ingibjorg, married Maelcoluim son of Donnachad (Malcolm III 'Canmore') (OS: c.33). Malcolm was later married to Margaret (St Margaret) and it was from this second marriage that Edgar, Alexander I, David I and later Scottish kings were descended. His previous marriage to Ingibjorg is not well documented and it presents such difficulties of chronology that it has been proposed that Malcolm married, not Thorfinn's widow, but an otherwise unknown daughter with the same name. This paper considers that argument but suggests that the chronological difficulties can be removed by a re-appraisal of the date of Thorfinn's death. I am not the first to think that Thorfinn died earlier than the traditional date of c.1065 (Duncan 2002: 42-3: Woolf 2007: 267) but my suggestion that his death-date might be as early as c.1052-4 may seem a somewhat drastic revision. However a discrepancy of that order is not impossible. It is often difficult to establish dates from *Orkneyinga saga*: for example, the saga's confused attempt to date such an important event as the martyrdom of St Magnus involves much the same margin of error (OS: c.51).

## Ingibjorg's importance

Ingibjorg was an important person: she was a daughter of Finn Arnisson<sup>1</sup> who had been close to King Olaf (St Olaf) and she came from the first rank of Norwegian nobility. On her father's side of the family she was a first cousin of Thora, who married King Harald Sigurdsson (Hardrade)<sup>2</sup>, while through her mother she was related to King Harald himself. Ingibjorg's marriage to Thorfinn signalled a transformation of Orkney's dealings with Norway. In

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1 Ingibjorg is stated to be a daughter of Finn Arnisson in *Orkneyinga saga*, *Heimskringla* and *Fagrskinna* but *Morkinskinna* describes her as Kalf Arnisson's sister, and therefore a sister of Finn Arnisson rather than his daughter.

2 Despite the mention of a marriage in *Heimskringla* Thora seems to have been an additional wife and is sometimes described as a concubine.

contrast to the tense and often hostile relationship in the time of Earl Sigurd *digri* ('the Stout') and in the earlier part of Thorfinn's reign, the events of the Stamford Bridge expedition in 1066 show how amicable these links eventually became. We are not told, however, whether Ingibjorg was still in Orkney. *Orkneyinga saga* speaks approvingly of Ingibjorg: her sons Paul and Erlend are described as 'tall, handsome, wise and gentle, taking more after their mother's side' (OS: c.31).

Ingibjorg's marriage to Malcolm III was equally important. It may be regarded as renewing a policy which dated back to the marriage of Thorfinn's parents, Sigurd *digri* and an unnamed daughter of Máel Coluim mac Cináeda (Malcolm II) (OS: c.12). There are indications that Scottish kings had a consistent strategy of securing allies in Orkney as a means of engaging Moray on a northern front. Thorfinn's spectacular victories against Moray in the Karl Hundisson war (c.1029x1035) secured Orkney control of much of the north of Scotland and at the same time removed an immediate threat to Malcolm II (Skene 1876: 1, 400-1; Taylor, 1936/7: Crawford 1987: 71-4; Cowan 1993; Thomson 2002: 75-82; Brunnsden: 49-68).<sup>3</sup> The marriage of Malcolm and Ingibjorg was a renewal of this alliance and offered Malcolm the prospect of powerful assistance in recovering the throne from Macbeth.

But Ingibjorg's importance also exerted itself posthumously. The relevant passage in *Orkneyinga saga* reads:

[After Earl Thorfinn's death] Ingibjorg Earls'-mother married Malcolm King of Scots, nick-named *langháls*. Their son was Duncan, King of Scots, father of William the Nobleman; his son was called William the Atheling whom all the Scots wished to take as their king (OS: c.33).

This passage traces the descendants of Malcolm Canmore and Ingibjorg through their son, Duncan II, who was briefly king in 1094, to the MacWilliams whose claim to the throne was to cause so much trouble to the kings who descended from Malcolm and Margaret (McDonald 2003).

## Chronological difficulties

*Orkneyinga saga* states that Thorfinn died in the latter days of the Norwegian king, Harald Sigurdsson (Hardrade). Harald was killed at Stamford Bridge in 1066 so Thorfinn's death is usually dated to c.1065. Malcolm's second

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3 The books and papers cited here show that there is considerable scope for disagreement about the course of events and the people involved including the identity of Thorfinn's grandfather who is sometimes identified as Malcolm of Moray rather than Máel Coluim mac Cináeda (King Malcolm II).

marriage, his marriage to Margaret, is variously dated to 1067, 1068 and 1070 with the balance of probability towards the earlier dates (*ESSH* 2: 25). Taking what *Orkneyinga saga* tells us at face value, it can be seen that it is difficult to find time for Ingibjorg to mourn, re-marry and then produce children and, if A.A.M. Duncan is correct in his belief that Margaret might have been affianced to Malcolm as early as 1059, the saga's chronology becomes quite impossible (Duncan 2002: 43). In order to account for the apparent brevity of the marriage, P.A. Munch supposed that Ingibjorg must have died in childhood at the birth of Duncan, yet there are hints that there may have been other children: we know for sure of the existence of only one son (Duncan) but the *Annals of Ulster* record that in 1085 'Domnall m. Mael Coluim ri Alban .. suam uitam infeliciter finierunt' ('Donald, son of Malcolm King of Scots .. ended his life unhappily') so, if Donald was legitimate, he was probably a son of this marriage and, less certainly, there may have been yet another son, Malcolmb, who was a witness to a charter of Duncan II in 1094 (Lawrie 1905: No.xii, 242). We are not told of any daughters although that does not mean that there were none. On balance it does seem possible that Malcolm and Ingibjorg's marriage lasted several years.

Even if we suppose Thorfinn's death 'in the latter days of Harald Sigurdsson' might have been rather earlier than 1066, the seemingly short duration of Ingibjorg's marriage to Malcolm remains a problem – but it is not the only problem. The other apparent difficulty is that, if we believe what *Orkneyinga saga* tells us, Ingibjorg would have been too old to produce a second family – Joseph Anderson reckoned that she would have been old enough to be Malcolm's mother (*OS* Anderson: 46n.). Her sons by Thorfinn, Paul and Erlend, were described in 1066 as having 'survived childhood'<sup>4</sup> and they were old enough to go to war in the army of Harald Hardrade (*OS* Guðmundsson: c.31). The fact that their survival of childhood is even mentioned suggests that they were probably teenagers rather than mature adults. This means that they must have been born just before or just after Thorfinn's trip to Rome (c.1048-9). But *Orkneyinga saga* mentions Ingibjorg much earlier: it describes a dramatic and probably apocryphal incident when she and Thorfinn escaped from a burning building when attacked by Rognvald Brusisson, an incident which A.B. Taylor tentatively dated to 1046 (*OS* Taylor: c.28). Even earlier, when Ingibjorg's uncle Kalf Arnisson sought refuge in Orkney, possibly c.1038, we are told that 'Earl Thorfinn then had to wife Ingibjorg Earls'-mother' (*OS*:

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4 I take it that the phrase 'pau áttu tvá sonu, þá er ór barnæsku kómusk' implies that Paul and Erlend had just emerged from childhood. Alternatively it might mean that there were other sons who had not survived childhood, although why that would have been mentioned is not obvious.

c.25). Obviously the saga-author believed that Ingibjorg's marriage to Thorfinn lasted for about 30 years. Ingibjorg is also mentioned in *Morkinskinna* and the editors of the latest translation suggest that she was probably born about 1015 although their reason for favouring that date is not made clear (*Morkinskinna*: 103-4, 422). If correct, that would make her about 50 in 1065 which might be consistent with her Orkney family, but would rule out a second family by Malcolm III.

These difficulties were first recognised over a century ago (OS Anderson: 46n.: Dunbar 1906: 37n.) and the proposal that the problem might be solved by assuming the existence of two Ingibjorgs, mother and daughter, gained a good deal of acceptance. Gordon Donaldson expressed some irritation at historians who ignored the chronology and continued to maintain that Malcolm could have married Thorfinn's widow (Donaldson 1988: 3). Professor A.A.M. Duncan initially agreed, and in his *Edinburgh History* simply stated that Malcolm's first wife was probably a daughter of Thorfinn without finding it necessary to argue the case or voice any misgivings (Duncan 1978: 118). There are, however, entries relating to Ingibjorg at Durham which made him change his mind.

### Ingibjorg comitissa

Ingibjorg's name appears in the *Liber Vitae*, 'an excellent fine booke, verye richly covered with gold and silver' which was displayed on the high altar at Durham (*Liber Vitae* 1841: Rollason 2004), and she is also named in the Cantor's book which contains a calendar recording the dates when the community was obliged to remember the deceased in their prayers (Piper 1994: 87). The list includes members of Scottish royalty: Malcolm III, his second wife Margaret, his children (including Duncan II), Malcolm IV, Matilda (daughter of Malcolm III) and Sybilla (wife of Alexander I), Queen Matilda (wife of David I). The name 'Inguburg' appears in the *Liber Vitae* in the list of queens and abbesses as befits her status as the wife of Malcolm and the mother of Duncan II (*Liber Vitae*: 3), but in the calendar she is 'Ingeborg comitissa' (countess) which may be a more accurate record of her rank.<sup>5</sup> She was commemorated in February, but unfortunately the year of her death is not given (Piper 1994: Duncan 2002: 42-3).

These obits were not all created at the same time. The *Liber Vitae* contains the detailed 'covenant to St Cuthbert' entered into while Malcolm and Margaret were still alive whereby Malcolm III, his wife Margaret and their

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5 The erroneous listing of Ingibjorg as a queen need not cause a problem: her illustrious successor, Margaret, was listed under the heading 'kings'!

sons and daughters (but not at this stage Duncan and Ingibjorg) were named as persons to be remembered in masses and prayers (*Liber Vitae*: 73: Barrow 1994: 314). G.W.S. Barrow was no doubt right in thinking that the most likely occasion for the covenant was when Malcolm III was present in Durham and was the only layman to take part in the laying of the foundation stones of the cathedral on 11 August 1093 (Barrow 1994: Wall 1994). Malcolm was then on his way to Gloucester where William Rufus refused to see him; Malcolm returned to Scotland in high dudgeon, invaded the north of England and was killed at Alnwick in November of the same year. Margaret died a few days later.

After Malcolm III was killed his brother Donald bán ruled briefly until he was temporarily displaced by an English-backed expedition which installed Ingibjorg's son, Duncan II, as king (c.May 1094). It must have been on this northwards expedition into Scotland that Duncan II issued his only known charter, a very generous gift of lands to Durham (Lawrie 1905: no.xii: Donnelly 1989: Duncan 1999). Those for whose heavenly welfare the gift was made include Duncan himself, his father, his wife, children and his brothers but no mention is made of his mother. A.A.M. Duncan suggests that Ingibjorg might have been omitted because it was desirable that charters should record the acquiescence of those who might otherwise have an interest in inheriting the property, but it did not need to include Ingibjorg because she was long dead (Duncan 1999: 13). Yet this visit to Durham is the likely occasion when Ingibjorg was added to the list of obits. Other names must have been even later (for example Malcolm IV) but it is unlikely that Duncan and his mother would have been honoured in this way after their descendants, the MacWilliams, became implacable opponents of the kings of the Canmore line. Duncan II's northward trip is the window of opportunity for making the 'Ingeborg comitissa' entry in the *Liber Vitae*.

If 'Ingeborg comitissa' was added at the instigation of Duncan II, this must have been how he described her, and no doubt he gave his mother her correct title. Two important points follow from the entry: first, it disposes of the idea that there was a second Ingibjorg since 'countess' was the appropriate title for Thorfinn's widow but not for a supposed daughter; second, it is significant that she was described as 'comitissa' and not as 'regina' – the implication is that she was never a queen. We must therefore suppose that the marriage had ended, possibly as a result of Ingibjorg's death, before Malcolm III took the throne on 25 April 1058. This is consistent with the complete absence of any mention of Ingibjorg in Scottish records and the way Norse sources such as *Orkneyinga saga*, *the Magnus sagas*, *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* all fail to describe her as a 'queen'.

## **Was Duncan II illegitimate?**

There is another possible reason why Ingibjorg might not have been described as 'regina'. Both the *Chronicle of Melrose* (ESSH 2: 89) and Fordun (Skene 1872 2: 213) describe Duncan II as illegitimate and, if Duncan was born from an irregular relationship, Ingibjorg might not have been queen. However, these aspersions are difficult to reconcile with the way Duncan was regarded during his lifetime. When he was taken hostage at Abernethy in 1072 by William I and carried off first to England and then to Normandy his obvious value was as Malcolm III's legitimate heir. After the death of William I he was honourably treated, knighted, and promoted as Scots king with English assistance in preference to the sons of Malcolm and Margaret. His half-brother, the future king Edgar, not only supported him on his journey into Scotland but also witnessed the charter granted to Durham in which Duncan announced himself as 'Ego Dunecanus, filius regis Malcolmb, constans hereditarie rex Scotiae...' ('I, Duncan, son of King Malcolm, being by true inheritance king of Scotland...'), thus asserting his legitimacy and his right to inherit (Lawrie 1907: No.xii). Duncan's English followers were defeated but Duncan himself seems to have been acceptable to the Scots, and continued to rule for a few more months 'on condition that he never again introduced Englishmen or Frenchmen into that country' (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E 1093: 228).

There is therefore nothing to suggest that Duncan's legitimacy was seriously questioned during his lifetime, although doubts were probably later raised about the validity of his parents' marriage. It is possible, as claimed in 'The Life of Queen Margaret' (attributed to Bishop Turgot) that marriages within a forbidden degree were a concern to the queen (ESSH 2: 73) and both Alexander I and Turgot are known to have raised similar matters with the pope some eight or more years after Duncan's death (c.1113). Only the pope's replies survive, and he answered in such general terms that it is not possible to know what he had been asked (Duncan 1978: 129; Bethell 1970) but the marriage of Malcolm to his father's cousin's widow might have fallen within the general scope of these investigations. At a rather later date a pressing political purpose was no doubt the need to discredit Duncan's descendants (the MacWilliams) who had widespread support as rivals to the kings descended from Malcolm and Margaret. The important point, however, is that it seems certain that a marriage did take place and, if its validity was later questioned, that does not affect our search for its date.

## **Thorfinn's dates**

In order to decide whether Ingibjorg could have been married to Malcolm III for several years before he became king in 1058 we need to have a more

careful look at Thorfinn's dates. His father, Earl Sigurd, was killed at Clontarf in 1014, and this is a secure date because Sigurd's death is recorded, not only in Norse sources, but in the *Annals of Ulster* s.a.1014. *Orkneyinga saga* tells us that Thorfinn was then five years old and that his grandfather, the Scottish king, made him earl in Caithness and Sutherland (*OS*: c.13 and 32), which seems to imply that he was born c.1009. An earlier birth-date might be more likely since he would otherwise have been an incredibly precocious twelve-year-old in 1021 when he engaged in tricky and dangerous negotiations with King (St) Olaf (*OS* c.18). The summary panegyric which ends the account of his reign in *Orkneyinga saga* states that he was earl for seventy years (in Roman numerals lxx), *Heimskingla* gives him a reign of more than sixty years and a seventeenth-century manuscript in Stockholm gives him a reign of lxxx years (*OS* Taylor: 368n.). These respectively give death-dates of 1084, 1074+ and 1094, but in each account it is also stated that his death was in 'the latter days of Harald Sigurdsson', who was killed at Stamford Bridge in 1066. In an ingenious attempt to reconcile these statements Clouston suggested that Thorfinn was born c.999, created earl in Caithness (but not Orkney) in 1004, and continued as earl for 60 years until his death c.1064. This would make him aged 22 rather than 12 when he negotiated with King Olaf (Clouston 1932: 56). Most people, however, distrust dates based on the length of his time as earl since these involve uncertainties in the transcription of Roman numerals and also imply an inordinately long reign. It is usual to accept the apparent precision of the statement which places his death c.1065 but, given these wildly different accounts, *Orkneyinga saga's* notoriously inaccurate dating, and a suspicion that what we are told about Thorfinn is sometimes modelled on the long reign of Earl Harald Maddadsson, there is no reason why we should trust any of them.

Since there is no mention of Thorfinn in the accounts of King Harald Sigurdsson's Stamford Bridge expedition and since his sons Paul and Erlend are described as 'earls' (*OS* c.34), it does seem certain that Thorfinn was dead prior to 1066. His last dateable activities are actually in the years following 1047 when King Magnus died and was succeeded by Harald Sigurdsson. Following the new king's accession Thorfinn and Harald exchanged messages (1047/8?), then Thorfinn visited Harald en route to Rome (c.1048-9?). The journey to Rome could take about two months of unbroken travel so, allowing for further diplomatic interludes in Denmark and Germany, Thorfinn might have been absent for about a year, returning to Orkney c.1048-49 (*OS*: c.31). The saga tells us that he settled in Birsay, built Christchurch cathedral and turned his mind to making new laws, but it provides no information about the duration of this final peaceful period nor does it tell us whether his little

cathedral was complete and a bishop in residence at the time of his death. If Thorfinn died c.1052-4 his final peaceful time would have been a good deal shorter than we have come to expect – but is it impossibly short? If we can accept this timescale we create a period of four or five years before Malcolm became king in 1058 when he might have been married to Ingibjorg.

Malcolm may have had a long association with Orkney. His father, Duncan I, was killed by Macbeth near Elgin, so it has been suggested that Duncan's wife and children may have fled over the nearest available frontier to the territories controlled by Earl Thorfinn (Duncan 2002: 40). Orkney was a safe refuge: Thorfinn was a cousin of Duncan I, and his cooperation with Duncan's predecessor half a dozen years earlier in the Karl Hundisson war and their mutual hostility to the Moray dynasty made him a natural ally against Macbeth. His marriage to Ingibjorg points to a continuing Orkney connection: in 1040 Malcolm was probably still a child, but, by the 1050s when he was in his 20s, a marriage to Thorfinn's widow offered the prospect of Orkney assistance in an attempt to regain Scottish crown. This motivation – the need for Orkney support – is an additional reason for believing that the marriage was before, rather than after 1058 when Malcolm became king and Orkney help was no longer so necessary.

The saga-writer believed that Ingibjorg had a long marriage to Thorfinn stretching back to the 1030s. George Brunnsden thought that the marriage was even longer and he has recently proposed that Ingibjorg married Thorfinn in 1021 as a six year-old child-bride (Brunnsden 2009: 85-8) basing her age on the dubious birth-date of 1015 suggested by the editors of the recent edition of *Morkinskinna*. (*Morkinskinna*: 422). Brunnsden chose 1021 because it was one of the few occasions when Thorfinn was known to have been in Norway, and because a marriage to someone as important as Ingibjorg was likely to have had a context in diplomatic negotiations. However, in view of the fact that we know that Ingibjorg's grandfather cannot have been born before 995 AD and more probably a few years later, she cannot have been of an age to marry Thorfinn until the late 1040s (Woolf forthcoming). This is consistent with their known children, Paul and Erlend, who were born c.1050 (see above). It seems that Ingibjorg was a good deal younger than has usually been supposed and well capable of having children by Malcolm III in the mid-1050s. She was after all a generation younger than Finn and Kalf Arnisson. The evidence for a long marriage to Thorfinn does not stand scrutiny; it is based on only two scraps of information both from *Orkneyinga saga*: first, the romantic and probably fictional story of how she and Thorfinn escaped from Rognvald Brusisson by breaking out of a burning building (OS: c.28) and, second, a statement



(which is actually an insertion in the text) stating that she was already married to Thorfinn c.1038 when Kalf Arnisson sought refuge in Orkney (*OS*: c.25).

It was perhaps a natural assumption by the saga-author that Kalf fled to Orkney because his niece was married to Thorfinn, but it might be possible to reverse the sequence and envisage that the marriage was later, and was arranged as a consequence of Thorfinn's alliance with Kalf. If we are looking for a diplomatic context for the marriage, a more likely occasion than the youthful Thorfinn's uneasy dealings with King (St) Olaf in 1021 is the general rapprochement which followed the death of King Magnus and the succession of King Harald (1047) when everyone was pulling in the same direction to achieve a settlement. The peacemaker was Finn Arnisson (Ingibjorg's father and Kalf's brother) who persuaded the new king to restore Kalf's estates and allow him to return to Norway. At the same time Thorfinn, having failed to come to terms with King Magnus (*OS*, c.30), was willing to acknowledge Norwegian overlordship and to repair the hostile relations which had existed under previous kings. In 1021 *Orkneyinga saga* had put a rather anachronistic lecture on the feudal relationship in the mouth of St Olaf, but it may be that it was Thorfinn's peacemaking with Harald Hardrade which had greater long-term significance. In what was part of the same package Thora (Finn's niece and Ingibjorg's cousin) married King Harald (*Heimskingla*: Saga of Harald the Stern, c.33) and it may be that Thorfinn's marriage to Ingibjorg (Thora's cousin) was a further step in alliance-building. Admittedly, by 1048 Thorfinn was probably over forty and it is unlikely that he remained unmarried until that age, but it would not surprise us if there had been a previous marriage about which the *Orkneyinga saga* tells us nothing. The saga is not usually very informative on matrimonial matters.

### Ingibjorg jarlamóðir

It may be significant that the title by which Ingibjorg was usually known was neither *comitissa* nor *regina* but *jarlamóðir* (earls' mother). This is how she appears in *Orkneyinga saga* (*OS*: cc.25, 31, 34), in *Magnúss Saga Skemmri and Magnúss Saga Lengi* (*OS* Guðmundsson: 311, 337, 339), in *Heimskingla* (*Heimskringla*, 'Magnus the Good': c.35), in *Morkinskinna* (*Morkinskinna*: 104) and in the extensive genealogy of the Arnmœðlingar appended to the text of *Fagrskinna* (*Fagrskinna*: 300-2). Evidently this was the title by which she was usually known. Why? If Thorfinn's death is pushed back to the early 1050s, Paul and Erlend must have been young children. Because of Ingibjorg's close relationship with Norwegian royalty she would be able to rely on Norwegian support to ensure the succession of her sons and she may have played a significant role during their early years – her title of *jarlamóðir* suggests that

there was a significant period when she was protector and regent. The much-quoted statement that Thorfinn died in 'the latter days of Harald Sigurdsson' may well have been based on a misunderstanding: the saga-writer may have known that Paul and Erlend took the powers of adult earls c.1066 or perhaps there had been a formal inauguration ceremony when King Harald visited Orkney en route for Stamford Bridge. Writing a century and a half after the event the author seems to have assumed that Paul and Erlend had inherited immediately on the death of their father, failing to realise that there had been a lengthy period when they were minors.

### The 1058 expedition

If Ingibjorg died before Malcolm III became king (25 April 1058), and if as seems certain Paul and Erlend were still minors under her protection, her death must have been a serious cause for concern. In that year a Norwegian expedition led by Magnus, son of King Harald, visited Orkney (Woolf 2007: 266-8). Royal visits were infrequent and they were important occasions, but this expedition is not mentioned by *Orkneyinga saga*, nor is it immediately apparent what it was intended to achieve. According to the *Annals of Tigernach* Magnus's expedition aimed at the conquest of England, but better informed English sources tell how the Norwegians and their Orcadian and Hebridean allies became involved almost by chance in limited mercenary activity in aid of the Welsh king Gruffydd. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* attached no great importance to the attack, merely remarking that 'it is tedious to relate fully how things went' (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (E), 1058).

Alex Woolf, who printed the documents relating to this expedition, suggested that it was occasioned by the death of Thorfinn. He pointed out that it is difficult to see any real objectives in England so he proposed that the purpose was to enforce the allegiance of Paul and Erlend and, when that was achieved without the fighting and looting which his followers expected, the Norwegians aimed at enriching themselves by some rather aimless plundering in England (Woolf 2007: 266). The chronology which I have suggested, however, points to the cause of concern being, not the death of Thorfinn, but of Ingibjorg, and the consequent need to ensure that the young earls continued under the tutelage of guardians favourable to the Norwegian interest. Further confirmation that she died at this time is provided by her Durham obit which is found in association with the names of monks from around 1058 (*Liber Vitae*: 141; Duncan 2002: 43).<sup>6</sup> Another cause of concern must have been the activities of Malcolm and how these might adversely impinge on Orkney now that his

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6 The date which appears in Duncan 2002: 43 is 'c.1085'. It is a misprint for c.1058.

wife was dead. Malcolm was out of Orkney at the time of the Norwegian expedition: Macbeth was killed in August 1057, Lulach ruled until March 1058, and Malcolm was inaugurated as king on 25 April 1058.<sup>7</sup> One possibility is that Malcolm received Norwegian support in his campaign against Lulach (Woolf 2007: 268-269), but the expedition is unlikely to have arrived as early as March of that year, so it probably discovered a situation already resolved. If arrangements could be made to protect the interests of Paul and Erlend, the expedition was free to proceed into the Irish Sea and engage in mercenary activity in England. Apparently, providing support for Malcolm III was not a priority.

Magnus Haraldsson must have been very young at the time of the 1058 expedition, possibly much the same age as the Orkney earls, Paul and Erlend. There are plenty of instances of young boys acting as successful figureheads for military expeditions, but his captaincy suggests that the expedition was not designed for serious warfare, but rather to re-enforce Norwegian overlordship, to introduce Magnus to his Orkney relatives, and provide him with a first taste of military experience. The outcome was entirely positive. Eight years later the Stamford Bridge expedition of 1066 shows how successfully the Norwegian links had been maintained: King Harald was able to use Orkney as an advance base, the earls Paul and Erlend assisted in the campaign and Harald's queen and daughter were left in Orkney when the king sailed to England. Moreover, after Harald was killed, Olaf, his son and successor, remained in Orkney over the winter of 1066-7 before returning to Norway to be made king (*Heimskingla*: Saga of Harald the Stern, c.98) and we are told that he lived in the closest friendship with the earls (*OS*: c.34).

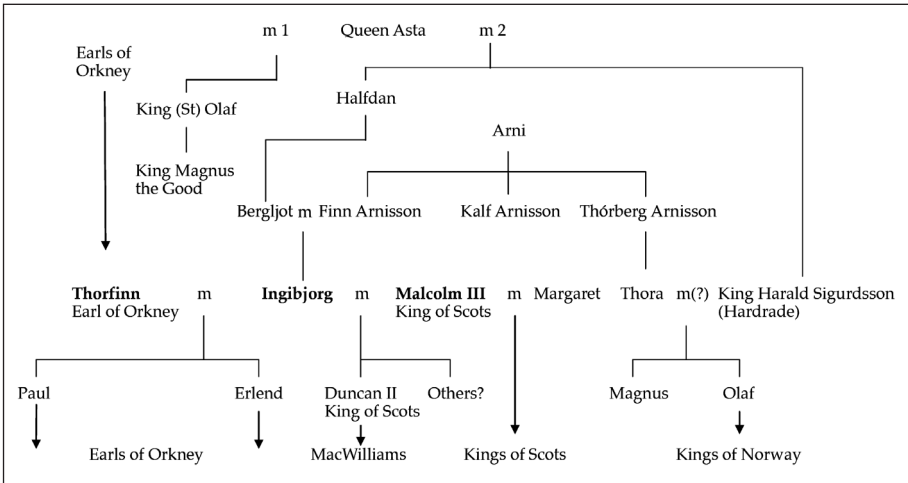
If we accept this paper's line of reasoning the most controversial conclusion is that Thorfinn's death was a dozen years or so earlier than the traditionally-accepted date of c.1065 and his final peaceful period in Birsay was much shorter than previously thought. Both Nordal and Clouston commented on the saga's lack of information about Thorfinn's final years (Clouston 1932: 42) but perhaps these supposedly 'long' final years were blank because they were actually quite short. Ingibjorg's marriage to Thorfinn had a lasting significance: it marked a significant step in the transition from a semi-autonomous Orkney to an earldom with a more regular relationship to Norway. These amicable links seem to have been promoted first by Thorfinn, then by Ingibjorg *jarlamóðir* during the minority of her sons, and eventually by Paul and Erlend (c.1066-1098). In contrast, the Scottish connections withered as a result of Ingibjorg's death, the killing of Duncan II and the supplanting

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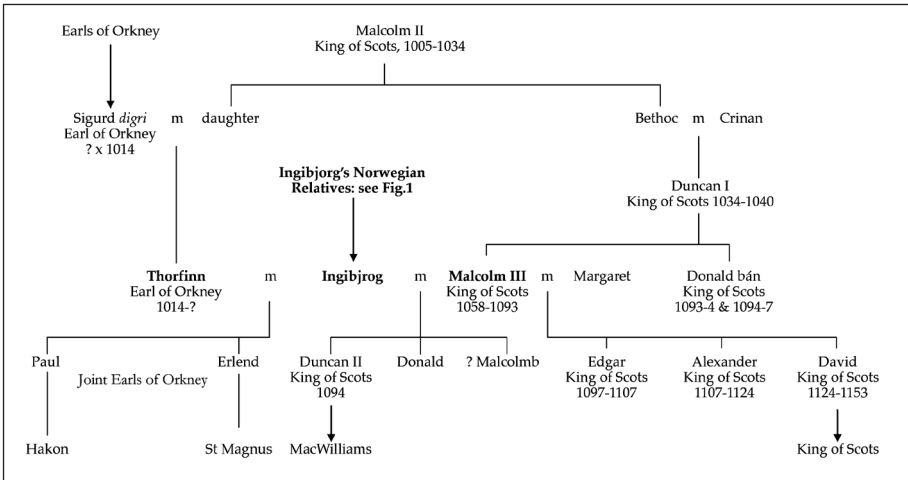
7 These dates are discussed in Duncan 2002: 49-51.

of his descendants by the children of Malcolm’s second marriage. In the long term this parting of the ways contributed to Orkney’s alignment with the rebel MacWilliam cause.

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**Fig.1. Ingibjorg’s Orcadian and Norwegian Relatives.**



**Fig.2. Ingibjorg’s Orcadian and Scottish Relatives.**

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