

Runic Activity 2

Using Rune-rows A and B (see separate sheets), decipher these runes from the Lincoln cow-bone and give their roman-alphabet equivalents:

ᚷ . . . ᚠ × * | 1 | R × ' 1 | 1 ×

Some of the runes in this inscription are from Rune-row A and some from Rune-row B, while some are the same (or very similar) in both alphabets – can you identify the distinctive ones?

As the alphabet only had 16 letters, some inscriptions, like this one, are ambiguous – see overleaf for some possible interpretations.

Why and in what circumstances do you think people wrote on the rib-bone of a cow?

You can see the original object at The Collection in Lincoln.

The first word is fragmentary but might be a name, such as:

butkil

Botkell

The following word can be interpreted in two ways:

hitir (= Old Norse *hitir* 'heats')

hitir (= Old Norse *heitir* 'is called')

The third word must be:

stin (= Old Norse *steinn*)

but this could be either the word for 'stone', or a personal name Steinn.

So, take your pick!

Botkell heats the stone

Botkell is called Steinn

Botkell is called 'Stone'