

# Viking longship Draken Harald completes historic voyage to Mersey

**THE** largest reconstructed Viking longship arrived on Merseyside following a dramatic voyage from Norway.

After surviving fierce storms on a journey that lasted almost three weeks, the crew of the Draken Harald Harfagre are now resting in Wallasey.

Their arrival had been put in jeopardy after a huge wave snapped the 115ft long boat's mast just off the Shetland Islands last week.

The Draken Harald appeared at the Mersey yesterday as it made the short trip over from the Isle of Man, the penultimate stop on its trip.

Having lost its mast the boat had been powered for much of the journey by a back up motor, though the crew were still forced to endure difficult conditions as they sought to recreate the journey of Viking armies

hundreds of years ago.

Merseyside Viking expert Professor Steve Harding, who is from Wallasey and is a member of the team who helped secure the visit, described the ship's arrival as "fantastic".

He said: "We have learned just how perilous the journey can be and we have a better understanding of what it may have been like 1,000 years ago when Vikings operated on the Irish Sea."

A 30-strong crew travelled on board the ship, which was going to be sailed into the Mersey until the mast was destroyed. A replacement piece of wood has been sent to Wallasey from Grimsby and will be fashioned into a replacement mast.

Ged Gedge, from Liscard, who was part of that team, was woken up by the shouts of other crew members



■ The crew of the Viking ship Draken Harald Harfagre celebrate completing their journey on arrival at Liverpool Victoria rowing club in Wallasey

when the mast came crashing down and praised the captain's handling of the situation.

He said the highlight of the journey had been the support from people.

The ship will remain at Wallasey's Liverpool Victoria Rowing Club until August, and officials hope to show it off to the public on the Mersey in the coming weeks.

