

Wirral's VIKING Trail



Immerse yourself
in local history with
the Viking Trail

with **Professor Stephen Harding**

waiting.
Inspiration while you wait



SPECIAL PULL-OUT

Experience Wirral's wonderful Viking heritage, including some of its superbly preserved stonework and some beautiful scenery, as you tour our ancient peninsula.

Details of parking and refreshments shown in *italics*.

Important! Please do not trespass on private land, and be especially careful of traffic. People following the Trail do so at their own risk.

1 THURSTASTON VISITOR CENTRE

Station Road. Thurstaston is the site of the **Viking Thorsteinn's farmstead**, from which the place name derives. A good starting point to plan the rest of the trail, with occasional talks on the Vikings given to visiting groups. *If you have a group that would like a talk please contact steve.harding@nottingham.ac.uk. Refreshments in the Centre and at the café close by. Car parking.*

2 THURSTASTON COMMON

The highest point on Wirral with splendid views. A 10 minute walk from the car park across the common and into a hollow takes you to an impressive large outcrop of sandstone, called **Thor's Stone**. A legend in Wirral (which cannot be traced back further than the Victorians!) claims that this is from mjöllnir: Thor's hammer. It is the site of Viking style marriages (attracting enthusiasts from around the country) and of May 1st celebrations. *Pub next to the car park.*



4 NESTON PARISH CHURCH

The site of magnificent stone fragments that appear to depict events in the life of a Viking couple. The fragments of what used to be at least two **hiberno-Norse ring-headed crosses** are now beautifully displayed inside the front entrance of the church and one cross - which has the touching image of a Viking couple embracing, and what appears to be the earliest depiction of a jousting contest has been beautifully reconstructed (pictured). Another, of a priest, appears very similar to one at Urnes in Norway. *Parking and toilets in the town centre.*



5 RABY MERE

The boundary of the **original Wirral-Norse settlement**, and a beautiful lake setting. Enjoy a picnic and cross the famous and ancient stolpi stepping stones over the River Dibbin. *Parking on road.*

6 BEBINGTON HEATH

(edge of golf course or Grammar School grounds) is a favoured site by the experts for the **Battle of Brunanburh** (the old name for Bromborough is Brunanburh). *Parking on Stanton Road.*

7 STORETON HALL AND WOODS

Storeton means "the great farmstead" in Viking and also, centuries later, was the home of Sir John Stanley. Both Hall and Stanley are strongly connected with 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', the famous 14th century poem full of Norse dialect. *Parking on road. Privately owned, but you can see the site of the 14th century farm from the bottom of Red Hill Road.*

8 TRANMERE ROVERS FOOTBALL GROUND

Tran-melr or Trana-melr "sandbank with the herons or cranebirds" is unique in being the **only football team in the English league with a Norwegian Viking name**. *Go along and cheer the Norse cranebirds favourite team!*



9 WALLASEY BREKKA AND KLINT

Brekka means "slope on a hillside" and klint means "projecting rock" (now called Granny's Rock, above). It is only possible to climb safely to the top of this rock with climbing gear. *Limited parking on Millthwaite Road.*

12 ST. BRIDGETS CHURCH, WEST KIRBY

As the site of the famous **Viking hogback tombstone** (above), this is the perfect end to the Viking Trail. Other stonework attributed to the Vikings is in the superb and completely refurbished Charles Dawson Brown Museum. *Parking on roadside and in Ashton Park. West Kirby contains two further restaurants which have Viking connections: The Wro (wro meaning "corner") on Grange Road, and The Viking Pub and Bakehouse on Black Horse Hill.*

10 MEOLS or the old Viking seaport Melar

("sandbanks"). *Parking along seafront. Viking information board at Meols Park.*

11 TANSKEY or Tonsker

"tooth skerry" rocks, are just out from the West Kirby shore, south of Hilbre island. Can be approached at low tide but **please be careful of incoming tides**. *Parking on road side. Best (and safest) viewed from restaurant with a Viking name - Tanskeys.*



3 THINGWALL

(old Old Norse þing-vollr = assembly field) This is famously where **Wirral's own Norse assembly or parliament** was held. The site of the 'Thing' is believed to have been Cross Hill (opposite the reservoir). Its elevated position, in common with sites in Scandinavia and elsewhere, would have been the ideal place (Thing: slope or brekka) for the speaker to make himself heard. The hill itself is privately owned, and you cannot go on it, but you can get a good view of the approach to the law-speaker's mound from the Viking Information Board at the Bassett Hound pub and a great close-up view from Holmwood Drive. Imagine the Norse leader Ingimund addressing a meeting of the Thing: "Förum first þónarveg að þeim, og ef við náum þeim ekki með góðu, þá skulum við taka þá með valdi" ("Let us beseech and implore them first, and if we do not get them willingly in this way let us contest them by force") - the words which, according to the Irish annals he gave to the local chiefs of the Norse and Danes in AD907 as he planned his attack on Chester. *Pub Bassett Hound close by. Beware of traffic.*



Wirral's **VIKING Trail**

Before starting the trail, you'll need your own Viking name! Find out what yours is at www.waitingmagazine.co.uk/vikingname

BITTEN BY THE VIKING BUG? THEN DON'T MISS...

ST. OLAV'S VIKING WALKS from St. Bridget's Church in West Kirby to the Church of St. Mary & St. Helen in Neston, and from the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port to St. Olave's in Chester, take place every year at the end of July. *For more information visit the web address below.*



www.waitingmagazine.co.uk/vikings