

# Return of the Vikings

Rebuilt longboat to head for Wirral

**EXCLUSIVE**

By LORNA HUGHES

**A RECONSTRUCTION of a Viking longship claimed to be the biggest ever built will sail to Wirral on its maiden voyage.**

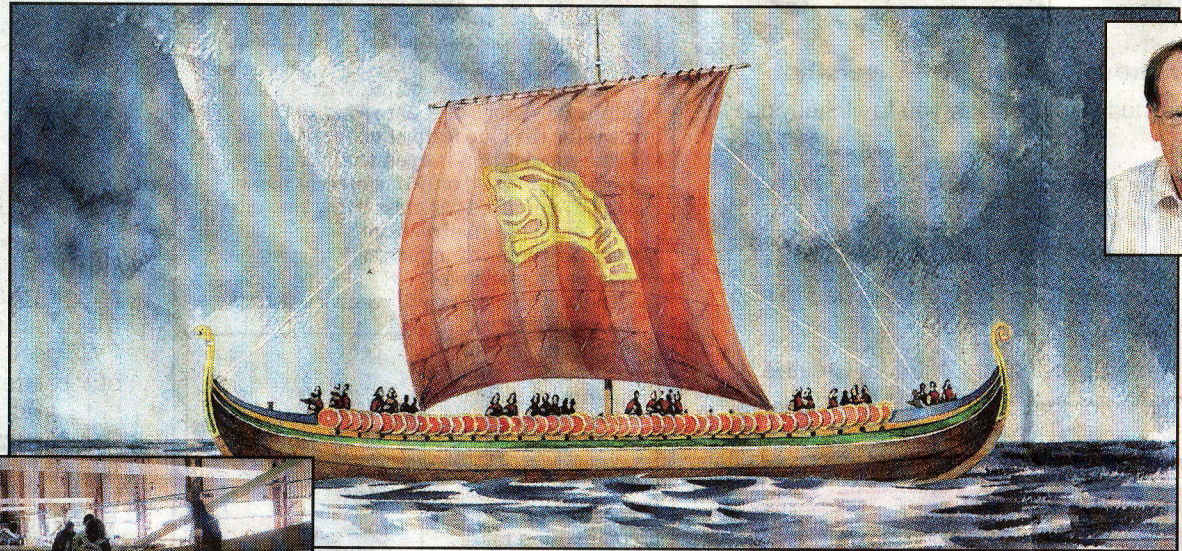
Construction work on the 35 metre Draken Harald Hårfagre – Dragon Harald Fairhair in English – started last summer in Haugesund, Norway.

After a series of test sailings it will embark on its first real voyage in summer 2013, following the path of the Vikings from Scandinavia via the British Isles to Istanbul.

Wirral will be one of the first stops and organisers are now looking for 80 volunteers who can help row the boat into harbour.

The patron of the project is Norwegian businessman Sigurd Aase.

Project manager Marit Synøve Vea said: "To construct the ship we are using the knowledge found in Norwegian boat-building traditions and supplementing this with the results of archaeological investigations and information in Old Norse literature.



● Expert Prof Stephen Harding

● An artist's impression of the finished vessel



● Building of the ship under way in Norway

"The Dragon Harald Fairhair will be the largest Viking ship built in modern times, but in the Viking age that size would have been quite typical.

She added: "This time the Vikings will come in peace!"

Vikings are thought to have arrived in North West England over a millennium ago.

After their expulsion from Dublin in AD902 the Wirral

Vikings, initially led by the Norwegian Viking Ingimund, would have landed in their boats along the North Wirral coastline.

The Dragon, made of oak, will be 35m – or 114 feet – long, with a sail made out of pure silk.

Wirral Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding, of Nottingham University, is the North West England representative for the project.

He secured an agreement that the vessel would sail to Wirral while visiting Norway for a DNA study.

Professor Harding said:

**Read our Viking blog**

Prof Harding and Dr. David Griffiths at



"Ideally we'd like it to come into Meols because that's where we believe they first came in but it may not be possible to do that because today Meols is quite different.

"It wouldn't be easy for a ship of this size so one possible site is Birkenhead Docks.

"The vessel itself is named Dragon Harald Fairhair but it doesn't mean it was his boat.

"But it is interesting because Harald the Fairhair was a contemporary of the leader of Wirral's Vikings, Ingimund.

"It's very possible that when the Vikings came into Wirral they would have arrived in something similar to this boat.

"It's going to be fantastic to have it in Wirral."

To volunteer to help row the Viking longship on its visit to Wirral, e-mail Professor Harding at [Steve.Harding@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Steve.Harding@nottingham.ac.uk)