

# Festival celebrates our Viking heritage



● Mike McCartney, Stephen Harding and Ingi Thor Jonsson in Iceland

Code NA

## Preparation under way

**PREPARATIONS are under way for a forthcoming festival to celebrate the borough's Viking heritage.**

A delegation from Wirral recently visited Iceland ahead of ICE 2007, taking place at the end of the year to celebrate the borough's strong ties with the Nordic countries.

Wirral's cultural ambassador Mike McCartney and Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding were guests of former Olympic swimmer and ICE Festival organiser Ingi Thor

**By KATY WEST**

Jonsson, Iceland's Booker Prize winner Andri Snaer Magnason and author/writer Steinnun Johannesdottir.

The festival will be held in Merseyside from November 29-December 2, and will be preceded by a special event to celebrate the final publication of the results of the five-year Viking genetic survey of north west England in which Wirral features strongly.

Professor Harding said: "These are exciting times.

"ICE reignites the strong bond once built by the Victorians with the Nordic countries.

"Few today, though, in Ice-

land and Merseyside realise the strong links - West Kirby with Vestri Kirkjubaer, Meols with Melar, Thingwall with Thingvellir, Tranmere with Tranmael are just a few examples.

"There are many other examples and, with the imminent publication of the genetics, people will be very surprised to learn just how close we are.

"The population of Iceland is about the same as Wirral and the national football team is a bit like Tranmere."

Wirral's youngsters will have the chance to win a trip to Iceland with a short story competition as part of the festival and organisers are hoping to make ICE an

annual event.

Professor Harding added: "ICE 2007 would really appreciate a strong input from Wirral and anyone wanting to help please get in touch."

Contact him at [steve.harding@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:steve.harding@nottingham.ac.uk) or Ingi Thor on [ingithor@hotmail.com](mailto:ingithor@hotmail.com)

To see Mike and Andri discussing the festival on Iceland's national TV station RUV go to [www.ruv.is](http://www.ruv.is) (under Kastljós).

● Stephen Harding will be at West Kirby's "Viking" wine bar The Wro on Saturday from 3-4.30pm signing copies of the new hardback edition of *Ingimund's Saga, Norwegian Wirral*.