



## Clatterbridge at Christmas

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# IN FOOTSTEPS OF THE VIKINGS

### Heritage trail plan for area

By **LORNA HUGHES**

**STORETON** could become the focal point of a Viking heritage trail being planned for Wirral.

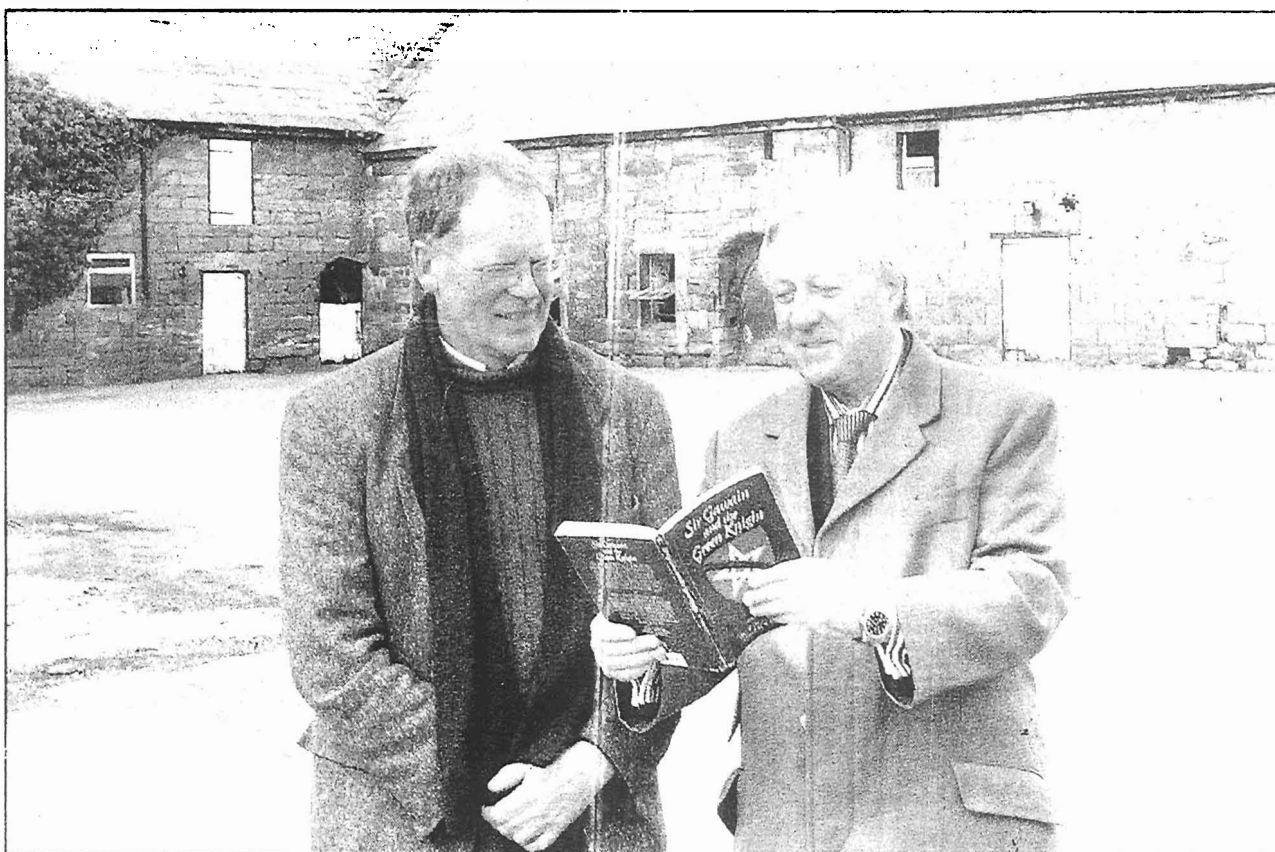
With a maritime heritage trail stretching from New Brighton to Eastham launching early next year Wirral Council is now turning its attentions to the borough's Norse links.

Bebington - thought to be the site of the famous Battle of Brunanburgh - is expected to play a key role, with Storeton identified as a central place of interest.

The council is now working with local history groups on plans for archeological digs at places of Viking interest.

Other projects include a 22-mile walk/pilgrimage between the Viking churches in West Kirby and Chester.

Bebington councillor and Wirral heritage champion, Jerry Williams, said: "From next year we'll have a maritime heritage trail and the Viking trail would obviously be a natural successor to that.



● Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding meets with Wirral South MP Ben Chapman to discuss Storeton Hall's Viking heritage and possible links with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

"We believe Storeton Hall is a place of key importance which could have regional or international significance.

"Plans are at an early stage

and we would have to look for funding but things are moving forward - there is a lot of interest within the local history groups and of course in

the local authority."

Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding recently met with Cllr Williams and Wirral South MP Ben Chap-

man to discuss the area's Viking past.

Professor Harding believes

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# Viking trail plan for Wirral

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the 14th Century poem 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' provides further evidence of Storeton's Norse links.

In the poem Sir Gawain travels through "wyldrenesse of Wyrle" to a Green Chapel and some experts have suggested this could be Storeton Hall.

He said: "The poem is remarkable not only because of its strong association with the area but because of the large number of Scandinavian dialect words in it.

"They are quite different from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, written at the same time but in the King's English.

"It indicates that a strong Norse dialect was still being spoken here hundreds of years after the initial Viking settlements.

"Storeton is itself a Viking name, meaning 'the large farmstead'."

Other Viking sites in Bebington and Bromborough include an ancient battle site at Bebington Heath and the Viking Cross at St Barnabas Church.

Ben Chapman has offered his support to any future project and said it would be "fantastic" for Wirral.