

'Walk with the Vikings' to celebrate city's rich past

CELEBRATE Chester's Viking history by taking part in this year's St Olav's Day Viking Walk.

The walk, tomorrow (Friday) starts at the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port and participants are asked to meet at 10am for a 10.30am start.

The route will follow the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal, around Chester City Walls to St Olave's Church off Lower Bridge Street, in what used to be the Viking part of the city.

The walk has been organized by Professor Steve Harding in conjunction with the re-enactment group Viking Chester and this will be the ninth year of the walk.

Steve – co-author of the recently published book *In Search of Vikings* – said: "The idea of the walk started in 2007, the 1,100th anniversary of the Vikings coming to Chester."

"Although it didn't get off to a peaceful start they established a vibrant community to the south of the city, alongside the English, and surprising to some many were Christians. St Olave's Church on Lower Bridge Street, named after

the patron saint of Norway, St Olav Haraldsson, originated from these people."

Every year around St Olav's Day, on July 29, in Norway there is a major pilgrimage to Trondheim where he is buried, with thousands taking part.

Steve added: "We thought it would be a great idea to have a similar walk here, so every year since 2007, 50 or so hardy souls, including Norwegians, have been trudging the nine miles or so to St Olave's."

This year, as previously, the fine warriors from the Viking Chester re-enactment group will ensure the safe passage of 'pilgrims' along the way.

As they walk along the City Walls they will be joined by the Rev David Chesters, Canon of St John's.

The walk will end with a blessing (in both English and Norwegian) and a cup of tea.

Steve added: "People can come on the whole walk or just part, but in common with the main walk in Norway, people do the walk at their own risk, we just provide a guide."

To take part email steve.harding@nottingham.ac.uk.



● BBC historian Michael Wood (left) and Steve Harding outside St Olave's at the end of a previous walk

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