

The Vikings are coming!



by LINDA FOO GUEST

THE first dual-language signs in England have been unveiled marking Merseyside's Viking heritage.

Four unique signposts have been installed around Thingwall, in Wirral where a large settlement, possibly a Viking parliament, is believed to have existed.

Wirral West MP Esther McVey did the honour of unveiling the new signs with schoolchildren from Thingwall Primary school dressed in Viking costumes.

The special signposts are the first non-Celtic dual language road signs in England.

United Utilities provided the £1,200 funding for the signs which are dotted around the village - at the bottom of Cross Hill, where the Viking assembly is believed to have met, and Landican roundabout, with another two on Irby Road and Pensby Road.

The idea came about after two road signs went missing in Thingwall.

This prompted Wirral Viking expert Professor Stephen Harding to seek to get them replaced and recognise the area's Viking roots.

Professor Harding, a lecturer at Nottingham University, who was born in Wirral, said: "The good



INVASION: Top, children from Thingwall primary school in Viking costume; and, above, MP Esther McVey with Mette Royden, from Liverpool's Scandinavian Seamen's Church, and the signs

Pictures: COLIN LANE

...or are they already here?

thing is that the signs were not paid for by taxpayers' money.

"I wanted the signs to show the importance of Thingwall's Viking past, as it means assembly field in old Viking Norse, and was only given to large significant settlements.

"The two missing signs led me to suggest to replace them with something significant.

"The Shetland Islands have something similar

with their Viking roots. Once funding from United Utilities was in place, which was organised by Pensby and Thingwall councillor Don McCubbin, we designed the signs.

"Thingwall Primary schoolchildren were absolutely marvellous with their Viking dress, some of their costumes were very authentic indeed.

"It was fantastic to see them take it onboard for the occasion and they were

really enthusiastic about the whole thing.

"There are only two definite Thingwall place names in England - in Wirral and Knotty Ash.

"To have them both on Merseyside makes the county great.

"Merseyside is stuffed with Viking names - Wirral has Arrowe Park, Tranmere, Pensby and Irby.

"People are starting to enjoy their Viking heritage."

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