



● Stephen Harding at Thingwall, formerly the Viking parliament

Picture by Trine Andersen Code: NA

BATTLE COULD SPARK BOOM

EXCLUSIVE

By **KEVIN CORE**

THE resolution of a 150-year-old historical argument could spark a lucrative heritage tourism boom for the peninsula.

Wirral's Viking expert Stephen Harding has proved a bloody battle in 937AD outlined in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle took place on Bebington Heath, meaning Wirral can claim the second biggest battle ever to have taken place in the

Heath site of historic conflict

British Isles as its own.

The texts describes native Mercians led by Athelstan defeating a combined army of Scots, and Vikings who had sailed from Dublin.

Experts had acknowledged that the place name Brunanburh was possibly Bromborough, but references to a place called Dingsmere led to confusion.

Working with Paul Cavill, of the English Place Name Society, and Judith Jesch, of Nottingham

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Battle site confirmed as Heath

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University, Harding has proved the Dingesmere to which the defeated army fled was the marshy coastal wetland of the Dee which was closest to Thingwall, the seat of the old Viking parliament.

The theory is confirmed by an Icelandic 13th century text, Egil's Saga. It described the same battlefield as near a fort and flanked by woods and a river, which corresponds perfectly with Bromborough (meaning Bruna's fort) surrounded by Storeton Woods and the River Dibbin.

Stephen Harding said:

"Having had this hunch, I worked with the linguistics experts and it's rock solid - a missing part of the jigsaw.

"Other areas of the country have claimed the battle but this theory fits the sequence of events perfectly.

"Bebington Heath strategically has all the hallmarks of a battlefield and it's another contribution to Wirral's fantastic heritage."

Howard Moritmer, Wirral Council's head of special initiatives, said: "The solution has eluded academics for so long, and even a neutral point of view would strongly suggest this event took place in Wirral.

"This is important as part of not only educating children about their local history but also increasing our capacity for tourism."