

Unlocking secrets of our Norse code

Viking site links are cultivated

EXCLUSIVE
By LORNA HUGHES

A PIONEERING link has been established between former Viking parliament sites in Wirral and Norway.

Tingvoll and Thingwall are among a handful of similarly-named towns or villages in Europe thought to have had Viking settlements.

As the name means "assembly field", experts believe these were once seats of Viking power. Others include Tingvellir in Iceland and Tynwald in the Isle of Man. After a successful penpal project between primary schools in Tingvoll and Thingwall, a 12-strong delegation from Norway visited Wirral last week to explore the borough's Viking heritage.

Professor Stephen Harding of Nottingham University, who has been instrumental in raising awareness of Wirral's Viking ancestry, showed the group around Thingwall and other important Viking sites in Wirral.

He said: "The reason why they're special is that the 'Thing' means assembly and was where the Vikings had their parliament.

"It shows that back in Viking times there was a significant Scandinavian population and our Thingwall is one of

How Vikings made an impact on Wirral

- Vikings are thought to have arrived in North West England over a millennium ago.
- After their expulsion from Dublin in AD902 the Wirral Vikings, initially led by the Norwegian Viking Ingimund, would have landed in their boats along the North Wirral coastline. They spread as far as Chester and across the Mersey to populate south west Lancashire.
- A Viking vessel is thought to be

- buried under the car park of the Railway Inn in Meols.
- Tranmere was founded by Viking settlers as Tran-melr, meaning sandbank with the cranebirds or herons.
- A list of surnames thought to identify old Wirral families with Viking connections can be viewed at www.nottingham.ac.uk/~sczsteve/survey.htm

a number in the North Atlantic region.

"We made contact with Tingvoll and thought it would be a great idea to develop some sort of cultural link but the catalyst for this really was the schools in Thingwall and Tingvoll.

"Over the last few months children at Thingwall Primary have been exchanging letters with children at a primary school in Tingvoll. It really took off."

A genetic survey last year showed a strong Norwegian influence in the DNA of old Wirral and West Lancashire families.

Kristin Goerheim, a former mayor of Tingvoll, is leading a Norwegian project to find out more about the Thingwalls/Tingvolls.

She said: "Our government and county is supporting a programme for rural development in our country and one of the aims of the project is to get

more knowledge about more Tingvolls.

"Our Tingvoll is a village, with a population of about 3,100. We have a great church which we are very proud of."

The Norwegian delegation included representatives from Tingvoll Council, a Tingvoll school, Tingvoll Museum and the Tingvoll Society.

Their day started with a visit to Thingwall Primary School.

The itinerary also included visits to Meols, once a Viking seaport, and St Bridget's Church in West Kirby.

Caroline Davies, headteacher at Thingwall Primary, said: "The children have had their Norwegian penpals since September and it has really enriched their learning."



● Professor Stephen Harding welcomes Keith Valde and Gunnlaug Ribe from Tingvoll in Norway to Thingwall Primary School in Thingwall. Inset, the church in Tingvoll

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