

# Pilgrimage is marking historic Viking links



● Stein Thue from Norway flies the flag of his homeland to start the annual St Olav Wirral Viking Walk from St Mary's and St Helen's church, Neston to Chester

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**WALKERS** from across the country joined the annual St Olav Wirral Viking Walk from Neston to Chester.

The 13-mile trek started out from the historic St Mary's and St Helen's church, in Neston, which is famous for its Viking burial stone and finished at St Olav's church in Chester.

The pilgrimage is held each year to commemorate St Olav, the "Viking Saint" and patron saint of Scandinavia, and to celebrate Wirral's links with the Vikings.

It was led by Norway's St Olav pilgrim priest Kjell Skarterhagen and walkers included seasoned St. Olav's pilgrim Stein Thue from Trondheim.

Stein, who is author of the book "On the Pilgrim Way to Trondheim", said: "I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in this years St. Olav's walk and I feel that the connection between Wirral and Norway has been

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greatly strengthened".

This year's event heralded the start of the Viking Exhibition in Chester organised by Liz Royles from Meols, Keeper of Medieval Archaeology at the Grosvenor Museum.

Organisers Steve Harding and Dan Robinson are now considering extending next year's to two days with the first day starting off at St. Bridget's church in West Kirby - another church steeped in Viking tradition.

A recent genetic survey of men from old Wirral and old West Lancashire families has shown that up to 50% of the DNA mixture of both populations is Scandinavian in origin. The results were revealed in 2008 and a book on the findings, by Steve Harding Mark Jobling and Turi King, will be published in September.

