

Context

Mrs Linda Gordon, author of the amateur website Prehistoric Wirral <https://www.prehistoricwirral.com/> has presented some stones to Liverpool Museums on two separate occasions, claiming they were prehistoric objects; these were rejected on both occasions as simply objects that had been shaped by the sea/tides. This led her to react negatively both against the Museums and against organisations/people which seemed, in her opinion, to have been treated more favourably than she had been. This included organisations/people associated with the promotion and research of Wirral's Viking/Scandinavian heritage (place names, archaeology, history, DNA etc), which she has tried to dismantle with a series of inaccurate accusations, ill-researched comments and false, libellous claims on blog pages within her web page. These are titled *Vikingisation of Wirral*, *Old English Place Names* and *True Archaeology*.

We now address every one of her comments on a point by point basis:

PW: Prehistoric Wirral

SH: Steve Harding

1. **PW:** *The director of Wirral Archaeology CIC Steve/Stephen Harding, has many other Viking companies.*

SH: Since the end of 2021 I have been a non-executive Director of Wirral Archaeology CIC, which means I don't get a vote. I am not a member of any other Viking companies. I co-run the Wirral's Viking Trail Facebook page and blog. I am Emeritus Professor in Biochemistry at the University of Nottingham on a university pension - that is all.

I have not organised any events for 2024 apart from the St Olave's day annual walks which are free to the public and which I have been organising since 2008: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lpx-kn2CVkA&list=PLN1ANYZrIU23yGR7JzY57FUT9HX6zgh-&index=2>

2. **PW:** *...who gave a video interview to Norway TV, in 2023, stating that the wood (from supposed boat) under a pub had been tested and dated to the Viking Age, when no wood had even been found never mind tested. (4) Facebook He deliberately misled the journalists and Norwegian public-as it was aired on Norway TV in September 2024.*

SH: I did not give an interview to Norwegian TV in 2023 and did not mislead journalists nor the Norwegian public. The full interview, recorded at the start of the five day Meols Boat investigation in February 2023 by Sky History was broadcast in August 2024 on the Norwegian TV channel NRK1 and can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvpul-hHh8Q>. This is what was actually said: "Behind us is an area where according to records dating back to 1938 there is a buried ancient boat. Our greatest hope of course after we've got the wood and had it tested is that it dates from the Viking Age".

3. **PW:** *He is desperate to Vikingise Wirral and claim he is a Viking expert.*

SH: I have never felt the need to ‘Vikingise’ Wirral because the evidence already existed. I was born on Wirral and am descended from a number of old Wirral families. I came across the Vikings by chance when I was a student and, like many other people, became interested in my own ancestry. I was fascinated to learn that my football team, Tranmere Rovers, had a Norwegian Viking name, later confirmed by the English Place Name Society. I have been keen to promote understanding about the Vikings on Wirral because it’s something I didn’t learn as a child and I wanted to share my new-found knowledge.

4. **PW:** *ZERO places names on Wirral are Viking-Old Norwegian words, they ARE Old English words and names. This fake history of place names and words on Wirral appears to have begun with Steve Harding.*

SH: This is nonsense. Claims about Viking place names did not start with me, nor is it true that there are no Old Norse place names and words on Wirral.

The identification of the large number of major place names with Scandinavian roots in Wirral began with JJA Worsae in 1852 and later by other scholars such as WG Collingwood, E Ekwall and, most notably, FT Wainwright, who also examined in great detail minor names (track, field, topological) of Scandinavian origin, and JM Dodgson who compiled an extensive glossary of Wirral place names in his Place Names of Cheshire Part IV. This has been reinforced by a more modern analysis of place names in conjunction with Dr. Paul Cavill of the English Place Name Society Society (<https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/>) and retired university lecturer in the literature of the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings.

See:

Cavill P, Harding SE & Jesch J (2000) Wirral and its Viking Heritage, English Place-Name Society, Nottingham

and the peer reviewed articles:

Cavill P, Harding SE & Jesch J (2004) Revisiting Dingesmere, Journal of the English Place Name Society, 36, 25-38;

Harding SE (2008) The Wirral Carrs and Holms, Journal of the English Place Name Society, 39,45-57 [NB all 50 of the carrs and 30 holms are associated with boggy/marshy areas around the north coast and the valleys of the Birket and Fender, consistent with the Scandinavian name forms, not as you suggest]

Harding SE (2016) Gamul Terrace and the Viking connection. Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society (JCAS) 86, 97–108

5. **PW:** *If, as WACIC claim, the Battle of Bruanburh was fought at Bromborough, simply because it sounds similar, the Vikings were heavily defeated in that battle by the Anglo Saxons and 937AD was the end of Vikings on Wirral, a mere 35 year period.*

SH: The battle (called *Brunanburh*) if it took place on Wirral - involved new waves of invaders (Scots, Strathclyde Welsh and Vikings from Dublin) against Mercian and Wessex English coming from the south, with both sides suffering heavy losses. By that time there is likely to have been integration within the local communities and indeed down the road, Chester was developing into a major Anglo-Scandinavian financial centre with English and Scandinavians working together. Therefore, the arrival of “foreign” armies – if the battle took place on Wirral - would have been unwelcome to all locals and it probably would have been a great relief for the area when what was left of the warring armies cleared off. The Scots-Irish Norse alliance failed in its goal to bring down Athelstan but its resistance stopped him in his ambition to become “Rex totus Britannicus and in two years he was dead”: see this piece by Neil Oliver for the BBC:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ncmh/images-multimedia/dna/bbcscotland-brunanburh.wmv>.

The influence of the strong Viking contribution to the local community continued throughout and we know that from the late Viking archaeology (the St. Bridget hogback, for example), the survival of Scandinavian place name elements in the minor names throughout the centuries and evidence for the continuation of the dialect. The strongest evidence of all is the Wirral and West Lancashire genetics project from 2002-2010, described in the following peer reviewed article:

Bowden G, Balaesque P, King T, Hansen Z, Pergl-Wilson G, Hurley E, Roberts S, Waite P, Jesch J, Jones A, Thomas M, Harding SE & Jobling M (2008) Excavating past population structures by surname-based sampling: the genetic legacy of the Vikings in northwest England. *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, 25, 301-309.

and reviewed in:

Griffiths D, Harding SE & Jobling M (2008) Looking for Vikings in north-west England. *British Archaeology*, Nov/Dec 18-25

6. **PW:** *It is illogical, that Vikings lived on Wirral with their wives and children then decided to start a full-scale war at Bromborough; taking on the might of the English army; endangering their wives, children and homes!!? What mad people do that? The point of the Battle of Brunanbruh was to seize control of York, therefore they wouldn't be on the Wirral at all, but further North. No professional historians or experts think the Battle was on Wirral...*

SH: It is not illogical because it was not the people of Wirral who were taking on the English army. It was the location where the feuding armies ended up...and the majority of professional historians or experts believe the battle took place on Wirral. Even Michael Wood, who is a personal friend by the way, and has written forewords for some of our books (such as *Viking DNA*) – concedes that he is in a minority of the Brunanburh scholars with an alternative view. However, we

respect this; the location of Brunanburh is not proven and won't be unless scientific isotope analysis can prove the presence of Scottish fighters – or their weapons – from that period, and that is the subject of ongoing work:

<https://pubs.rsc.org/en/content/articlehtml/2023/ra/d3ra06367d>

Until then both scenarios have been considered – the consequence for the Vikings on Wirral if (i) the Battle did not take place here and (ii) if it did:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGm7ukgxbvg>

7. **PW:** *In books written by true professional Viking experts and historians Wirral is never mentioned, they just weren't here.*

SH: Judith Jesch, one of the UK's leading Viking expert, and Julian D Richards and David Griffiths, who are among the country's foremost Viking archaeologists, and JM Dodgson, who compiled *The Place-Names of Cheshire. Part Four*, Cambridge University Press (1972), have all written about the Vikings in Wirral. In FT Wainwright's *Scandinavian England*, Phillimore Press, Chichester (1975) almost one third of the book is about Wirral.

Richards JD (2005) *A Short History of the*

Vikings <https://academic.oup.com/book/957>

Griffiths D (2010) *The Vikings of the Irish Sea* History Press

Cavill P, Harding SE & Jesch J (2000) *Wirral and its Viking Heritage, English Place-Name Society, Nottingham*

Wainwright FT (1975) *Scandinavian England*, Phillimore Press, Chichester

8. **PW:** *There is zero evidence the Vikings were living on Wirral. The region does not have a Viking history and heritage*

SH:

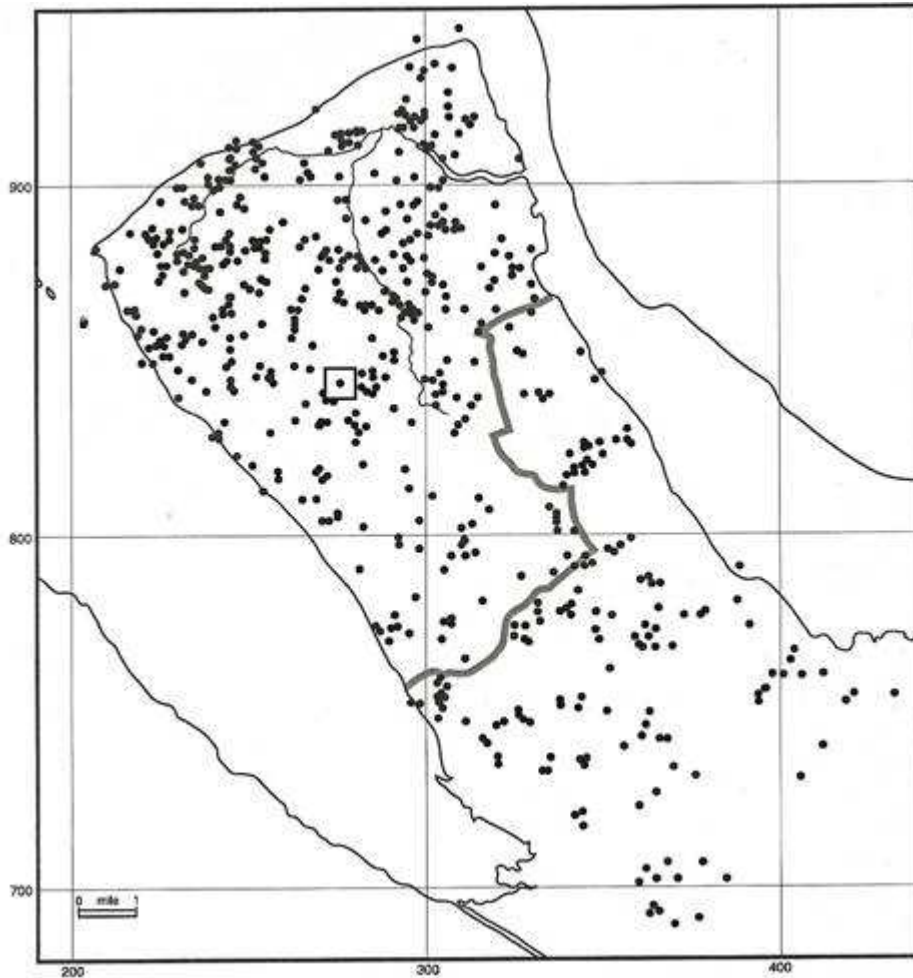
There is:

- a) Historical evidence that Ingimund arrived in or about AD 902.
- b) Archaeological evidence, including two Hiberno-Norse hogbacks, the cross fragments at Neston, the finds at Meols and Ness and all the Viking gaming pieces found at Bebington.



Examples of Norse/Hiberno-Norse archaeology on Wirral (all late tenth/eleventh centuries. (a) hogback tombstone, West Kirby (b) image of a priest on a cross fragment at Neston (left) which looks remarkably similar to that of a pilgrim at the Stave Church at Urnes Sognefjord (right); (c) replica reconstruction of cross fragment at Neston, painted with the help of schoolchildren: the lady is like the lady on the Tangvide stone at Gotland, the man on the Middleton cross N. Yorks; (d) Ringerike-style strapend or belt buckle discovered at Meols.

- c) Place-name evidence: all the -by names, with a density approaching that of Lincolnshire and the Wreake Valley in Leicestershire), plus all the minor names which show a continuing dialect spreading throughout the peninsula from the original enclave, such as the thwaites, slacks, rakes, kjarrs, holms, brecks, inntaks, haugs, there are even two “hestaskeiðs” – Heskeths (Old Norse for horse race tracks) – one at Irby and one at Thornton.



Minor names on Wirral of Norse or Hiberno-Norse origin, in relation to the original southern boundary of the enclave and the position of Thingwall (square).

- d) DNA evidence. Up to 50% of the DNA admixture from old Wirral families (those possessing surnames that were present in the area prior to 1600) appears Scandinavian in origin: Bowden G, Balaesque P, King T, Hansen Z, Pergl-Wilson G, Hurley E, Roberts S, Waite P, Jesch J, Jones A, Thomas M, Harding SE & Jobling M (2008) Excavating past population structures by surname-based sampling: the genetic legacy of the Vikings in northwest England. *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, 25, 301-309

See also *Science and the Vikings*, which is now freely available on-line <https://www.researchgate.net/search.Search.html?query=science+and+the+vikings&type=publication>

Moreover, the authorship of “Wirral and its Viking Heritage” contains the leading Viking expert in the country (Prof Judith Jesch) and the Research Fellow of the English Place Name Society (Paul Cavill):
Cavill P, Harding SE & Jesch J (2000) *Wirral and its Viking Heritage*, *English Place-Name Society, Nottingham*

- e) Personal names. This is a list of Scandinavian personal names preserved in the names of field names and places:

Thorsteinn is preserved in Thurstaston, *Franki* in Frankby and possibly *Hvíti* in Whitby. Also preserved are *Arni* or *Erni* whose burial mound is at The Arno in Oxtun, *Tóki* who appears at *Tokesford* (Wallasey Pool) in 1397, *Steinkell* in *Steyncolesdale* (Tinkers Dale) in 1298, *Ketil* in Wallasey (Kettle Well Garden 1841) and another *Ketil* at *Ketilspol* 'Ketil's creek' in 1402 (now part of Riveacre Park). We also find *Fiðill* (possibly as Fiddlestone in Burton 1817) and *Grímr* (as *Grymisgreue* in the early fourteenth century in Woodbank).

Women played a key role in this Scandinavian colony: *Sigríð(r)* had a halfland in Wallasey (1298), *Ingríðr* had a stream named after her in Capenhurst (1340) and *Sylla* is possibly preserved in the place-name/field-name of *Syllaby* in Great Saughall (1680). The Tranmere women *Ragnhild(r)* and *Gunnhild(r)*, are preserved in Raynildes Pool (1330), which is now part of the Cammell Laird shipyard; and *Gonnille* Pool (1529), now part of the Tranmere Oil terminal docks.

The Domesday Book records manor/landowners in 1066. The names below are as recorded by the DB scribe, who was presumably French, together with the Old Norse name:

Barnston: *Rauesuarm/ Rausue* (ON *Hrafnsvartr*)
Capenhurst: *Arni* (ON *Arni*)
Guilden Sutton: *Tochi* (ON *Tóki*)
Hargrave: *Osgot* (ON *Ásgautr*)
Heswall: *Ulchel, Ulchetel* (ON *Úlfke(ti)ll*)
Hooton: *Tochi* (ON *Tóki*)
Little Neston: *Osgot* (ON *Ásgautr*)
Mollington (two manors): *Gunner* (ON *Gunnarr*), *Ulf* (ON *Úlfr*)
Neston: *Arni* (ON *Arni*)
Poulton-Lancelyn: *Gamel* (ON *Gamall*)
Raby: *Arni* (ON *Arni*)
Stanney: *Ragenal* (ON *Ragnaldr*)
Thingwall: *Winterlet* (ON *Vetriliði*)
Thornton Hough: *Ulfketel* (ON *Ulfketil*)

To this list we can add the following Scandinavian moneyers:

Fargrím (recorded in Domesday as Fargrim)
Kolbeinn (Colben)
Kolbrandr (Coalbrand)
Krókr (Croc)
Húskarl (Huscarl)
Svarkollr (Sweartcol)
Svertingr (Swertinc)

Sveinn (Swegen)
Þóraldr (Thorald)
Þormóðr (Thurmod)
Hrafnsvartr (Ravenswart)
Hundolfr (Unnulf)
Raenulfr (Raenulf)
Sunnulfr (Sunoulf)
Þorbörn (Thurbern)

One of the tenth-century moneyers from the area had Irish-Norse origins with the name *Írfara* (ON ‘Ireland journeyer’) and others included *Oslac* and *Mældomen*, just three of a large number of Chester moneyers bearing Norse/Hiberno-Norse names between 910 and 1066. This is a proportion far higher than mints elsewhere in England even during the period of Scandinavian rule by King Canute (1017–1035) and his sons Harald (until 1040) and Hardacnut (1042). This coincides with the place-name and land-holding evidence for the spread of Scandinavian influence throughout the peninsula, with a corresponding appearance of Norse manorial holdings in the south of the peninsula near Chester. The twelve *iudices* of the city, mentioned in 1086 as chosen from the men of the king, bishop and earl, and obliged to attend the Chester hundred court, resembled the lawmen of the Scandinavian boroughs of the Danelaw. A significant Norse community at Handbridge was reflected in the Scandinavian term of assessment, the carucate, as a measure and not English hides. As shown by Alan Thacker, the financial gurus of the Handbridge/South Chester Norse outlier appeared to be much concerned with minting and trade links not only with English districts but also with the Norse-controlled areas of Dublin, the Isle of Man and York.¹ Clear evidence of these links has come from significant archaeological finds at Castle Esplanade and Princess Street, together with timberwork in cellared structures to the south of the Roman wall.

Two churches served this Hiberno-Norse community: St Bridget’s Church (formerly on Bridge Street), and St Olave’s Church on Lower Bridge Street; the latter was named after Norway’s patron saint (who died in 1030). The continued presence of Scandinavians is also evident from some of the street-names. Clippe Gate (near Bridgegate) and *Wolfeld’s Gate* (the old name for Newgate), preserve the personal names of the Norseman *Klyppr* and possibly the Norsewoman *Ulfhildr*. Across the road from St Olave’s is Gamul Terrace, the original home of Sir Francis Gamull (1606–54): the origin of the surname is Old Norse (*gamall* ‘old’) and *Gamall* is listed as a pre-1066 Cheshire landowner.²

¹ A. T. Thacker, ‘Scandinavian Settlements in Cheshire’, in B. E. Harris and A.T. Thacker, ed., *The Victoria History of the County of Chester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), I, 254–60.

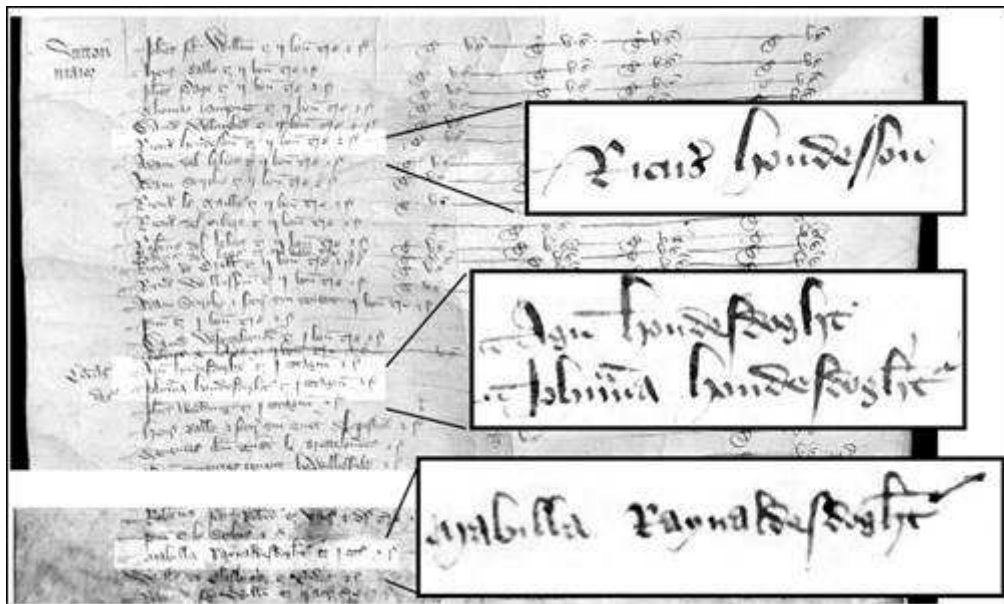
² S. E. Harding, ‘Gamul Terrace and the Viking Connection’, *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, new series 86 (2016), 97–108.

Persistence of Scandinavian personal names well after the Viking Age

Wainwright also noted that Scandinavian personal names continued in existence long after the Norman Conquest. Although no collection is available, one frequently meets Scandinavian names in medieval documents. In the Chester Chartulary are found names of men like *Anketill*, *Anschetill*, *Asschetill* (ON *Áskell*, *Ásketill*), *John Gamel* (ON *Gamall*), *Rauen* (ON *Hrafn*), *Orm* (ON *Ormr*), *Osgot* (ON *Ásgautr*), *Steinolf* (ON *Steinólfr*), *Sweinn* (ON *Sveinn*) and *Toki* (ON *Tóki*), and the women's names *Gunwara* (ON *Gunnvör*) and *Gutha*. All these names belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and they show that the Scandinavian influence on personal nomenclature was neither slight nor transient. One may also suppose that if Scandinavian names were still in use in the thirteenth century then a Scandinavian influenced language was still being spoken by the locals. Other evidence exists.

Scandinavian style son and dottir names

Other evidence for surviving customs and dialect in the area at least until the start of the fifteenth century comes for example from records of rentals, two with personal names such as *Agnes* and *Johanne Hondesdoghter* and *Richard Hondesson* recorded in Great Sutton parish for 1398 and *Mabilla Raynaldesdoghter* in Childer Thornton parish, a style of naming using the affixes meaning 'daughter/son' and the genitive (possessive form) are still present in modern day Scandinavia.



Rentals from 1398 for Great Sutton and Childer Thornton.

Furthermore, the fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, famously edited by Tolkien³, in which part of the action takes place in Wirral, is thought to have been written by someone from the area or not far away (it has been associated with Sir John Stanley (1350–1414) of Storeton Hall (chapter 8)

³ J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, ed., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952).

and then Lathom, either as the patron of the poet or the poet himself⁴; it is notable for its use of a large number (some 10% of its content) of Norse dialect words, such as *storr*, *karp*, *renk*, *gata*, rendering it very different from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, written around the same time (see Harding SE & Vaagan S (2011) *Vikingblod* (Kjeller, Norway: Genesis Forlag) pp 188-194, 273, 284 and Harding SE (2016) *Viking Wirral*, 3rd edn (Chester University Press), pp193-199)

9. **PW:** *Wirral now has 3 annual Viking Wirral Festivals and 2 Viking Wirral Trails, by 3 Viking Wirral companies-Wirral Archaeology CIC Home - Wirral Archaeology, Viking Wirral CIC Wirhalh Skip Felagr and the 'new' The Wirral Viking Festival The Wirral Viking Festival all claiming tens of thousands of pounds of public funding each, with the endorsement and promotion of the Museum of Liverpool. The 3 companies appear to comprise the same people!?*

SH: The three Wirral Viking festivals, two Viking trails and three Wirral Viking companies have absolutely nothing to do with each other.

10. **PW:** *If you include Claremont Farm CIC and Big Heritage CIC Big Heritage who claimed thousands in funding to build a Viking village in 2014, Viking village to be recreated in Wirral as top tourist attraction - Liverpool Echo that never materialised, then there are 5 Viking Wirral companies and what appears to be a bottomless pit of public funding for 'Viking' events on Wirral whether they materialise or not! Huge public funding was claimed to turn part of Claremont Farm into a Viking village and top tourist attraction to rival the Jorvik Centre at York...no village was built, nothing.*

SH: I had nothing to do with the Viking village, so can't comment.

11. **PW:** *The fact that Steve Harding, Knight of Norway, Director of Wirral Archaeology CIC, felt the need to lie to Norwegian journalists and Norwegian public on TV, telling them that he was excavating a Viking age boat on Wirral, when no boat had actually even been found, shows his desperation and willingness to just lie, in falsely claiming things on Wirral are Viking when they are not.(4) Facebook*

SH: This was addressed in Point 2.

12. **PW:** *And the Museum of Liverpool are supporting and helping him and his many Viking companies in this falseness. It's a betrayal of the people of Wirral, it's just a sham.*

SH: This was addressed in Point 1.

⁴ G. Mathew, *The Court of Richard II* (London: John Murray, 1968); E. Wilson, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Stanley Family of Stanley, Storeton, and Hooton', *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 30 (1979), 308-16; S. E. Harding, *Viking Mersey* (Birkenhead: Countywise, 2002); A. Breeze, *The Historical Arthur and the Gawain Poet: Studies on Arthurian and Other Traditions* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2023).

13. **PW:** *Rob Philpott and other professional archaeologists have stated that the lack of Viking finds on Wirral is probably due to the soil being too acidic to preserve them. However, Steve Harding and his company Wirral Archaeology CIC claim they have found one farmer's field at Clatterbridge where they have discovered thousands upon thousands, 4,000+ metal Viking age artefacts!!!...nowhere else on Wirral have Viking artefacts survived or been found, just one particular farmer's field!? And WACIC are claiming this proves the field was the site of the Battle of Brunanburh. Wherever the company got the metal artefacts from it wasn't from that field or Wirral, it is a scientific and physical impossibility for them to have survived in the acid soil of the farmers field, especially being regularly covered with manure, making the soil even more acidic.*

SH: If you are referring to the Dan Snow Podcast of 2019 and claims about the thousands of objects, that had nothing to do with me. It was before I joined Wirral Archaeology CIC. In fact, one of the reasons I was brought in (along with former Wirral Councillor David Allan) was to end the sort of speculation that was being made. The finds have now been subject to proper analysis (and I have been recorded on Radio Merseyside supporting this) – and I point to the work using isotope analysis on the limited number of finds that may relate to the early Medieval/ Viking Age period:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN1ANYZrIU0uQ_dya-elo6FM8hvxAzrt (3rd video in that series). All finds now go through proper scrutiny working with Vanessa Oakden, Heather Beaton and colleagues.

14. **PW:** *WACIC isn't short of public funding, it has claimed so much. At least £15,000+ alone this year which it is using for the analysis and preservation of artefacts, which is Steve Harding's paid employment at Nottingham and Oslo Universities!?*

SH: My previous employment (I am now Emeritus ie. retired) had nothing to do with preserving Wirral artefacts. My own personal money was used for the two GPR studies (one in 2007, the other in 2017). The GPR company also appeared in 2019 for a BBC recording - again which I paid for. We had a small sum of money to pay for the augers, which will be used for future projects. Some University funds I had secured in grants were used to pay for the tests on wood we did manage to recover (which proved to be brushwood not wood from the boat) on the basis that the methods we have been developing to preserve the Oseberg Viking ship artefacts could be used if we found any wood or artefacts at the Meols site. We also raised some money from sales of my *Science and the Vikings* book, which I donated to the project. And don't forget it was only a short, non-intrusive "blind" study using core sampling, there was no excavation and no exposure of the area. The fundraiser organised by our colleague Tim Baldock raised £1500 (including a further £500) from me. All the work was voluntary; money raised was used to pay for Chas Jones' accommodation.

15. **PW:** *WACIC are saying it definitely picked up fragments of a Viking ship!!! (In January 2023 lead archaeologist Chas Jones declared that the boat was definitely*

there and in the exact position from the drawing!!!?Did we find that Boat? In charge of the... - Wirral Archaeology CiC | Facebook

SH: What Chas was saying that, in his opinion, what was found were imprints/voids in the clay which followed a trajectory which matched the 1938 sketch and the samples were clay/wood fibre which had to be subsequently extracted very carefully for analysis, which took an inordinate amount of time.

The finds at the end of that five day investigation were recorded in broadcasts that Chas and I gave and as I said in mine:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tw8V9No2lvQ> the project proved much more challenging than we could have imagined due to the discovery of a concrete slab which appears to have been used as a base for a crane during the construction of the pub. The wood obtained we analysed for species and date – it wasn't planking wood.

Nevertheless, we plan to go down again to probe where we think from the initial investigation the keel of the boat is, which is our last chance to find surviving wood. Even if we fail, my view is that it was worth investigating as best as we could in the hope the blue clay had preserved enough wood. **And also the whole process involved the Wirral public and the whole WA CIC team and helpers putting on a great show for the public**, with information boards and the chance to chat to members of the team

No wood from the boat has been found – what does appear to have been found is evidence from its imprint in the clay where part of the boat once was (akin to the Sutton Hoo find).

16. **PW:** *When no wood and no boat had even been found. Just deliberate lies/deception. At the same time Steve Harding lead scientist gave that false interview to Norwegian TV journalists!!!...).*

SH: I have to say that refuting the same libelous allegations is getting tedious. I repeat – there are no lies/deception and it is quite clear from the interview: ancient boat which needs testing and we hoped it was Viking age. Here is the clip yet again: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvpul-hHh8Q>

17. **PW:** *The whole thing is a ridiculous enterprise. From the drawing most of the boat lies under the foundations of the pub and the boat was said to have been discovered during the building of the pub, i.e. on a building site, it was then covered over and back filled...with rubble from a building site! Therefore any ground investigations would pick up building rubble, nails, wood, concrete, etc., and it would be an impossibility for the boat to still be intact after being exposed to the air for so long in 1938 before re-burial. Testing the ground with bore hole samples in 2023 would be a set up for failure, as well as allowing air into any*

fragments of wood still surviving. But then a qualified biochemistry professor and a qualified archaeologist would both know that.

SH: Some exposure is expected with narrow core sampling but this is far less than a full excavation. We always knew there was a risk caused by the 1938 exposure and trusted the McRae report that the boat had been in waterlogged blue clay (the same material the Oslo Viking ships had been found in) and this had been carefully put back: This provides an anaerobic environment. There was no mention of builders' rubbish being put over the vessel in their report. We were more concerned about the proximity to the pub and the possible drying out of the clay. We'd discussed the risks with Rob Philpott, who himself was fighting a serious illness at the time so could not be directly involved, but we were both confident we would find something and so had a £10 bet on what the boat might be. Rob has been very close to the project and he was as disappointed as us all when we discovered the large concrete slab that was not mentioned in the 1938 report. What had happened was this slab had slowly sunk crushing the boat and, worse, had disrupted the protective waterlogged blue clay environment catalysing the decay.

However, after consultations with Rob and Chas, we all now think it is worth one final follow up targeting where we believe the keel of the boat is/was and maybe there we can at last get some wood. This is the last chance. The Wirral public needed to know one way or another. Possibly from the imprints we can get more of an idea of the original shape and dimensions of the vessel and some limited reconstruction may be a possibility (such as is now happening with the Sutton Hoo ship, where again no wood was found).

18. **PW:** *How much public money has just been wasted on this wild goose chase of a hoax over the years? Tens of thousands of pounds c.£50,000+ and still no evidence of a boat.*

SH: As a maximum, a few thousand pounds, most of it covered directly by me or from the sales of my books. To suggest it was a hoax is an insult to the McRae family.

19. **PW:** *He and WACIC have been investigating it for c.20 years!!! loads of public money spent on it, still zero evidence of a boat. However, Steve Harding has been giving talks with a plastic model of a Viking ship telling the public it is a replica of the boat under the pub at Meols.*

SH: This is not true. Very little public money has been spent on it. The wooden model of a Viking ship (a miniature of the Hedeby/ Sculdelev I transport vessel – paid for by me) was used to show the basic construction of a clinker (overlapping planks) of the type that was buried - I never once said it was a replica, so that is a libellous lie.

20. **PW:** *No boat has actually been found at Meols!!! It's part of his deceit and brainwashing of people into believing his fake history that is making himself and others a huge amount of money from public funding.*

SH: This is nonsense. I have not made any money from my Vikings work since 1999 and, in fact, have made a significant personal loss.

- a) My 1000 (approximately) trips to and from Nottingham to Wirral;
- b) Sponsoring my books – all my books are sold at less than the cost price as part of outreach;
- c) All my talks are either free or expenses only. One talk helped raise over £2000 for the Charles Dawson Brown Museum appeal;
- d) Even the Thingwall signposts were not paid for by the council – with Cllr Don McCubbin we raised the money from United Utilities

The boat project is still ongoing because unlike yourself the Wirral public want to know once and for all, the McRae family want to know.

Chas Jones and I gave a full report to the Merseyside Archaeological Society on 4th October and their responsive was overwhelmingly supportive.

21. **PW:** *Also, in February 2024, a new and third Wirral Viking Festival was set up by Steve Harding (which promoted him, his Viking companies and books) with a huge amount of tens of thousands of pounds in Arts Council Funding (4) Now that everything is accepted!!... - The Wirral Viking Festival | Facebook*

SH: This is yet another straight lie. I had nothing to do with the setting up of the Wirral Viking Festival. I agreed to give two presentations on both days of the meeting.

22. **PW:** *In 2024 alone, Steve Harding and his many Viking companies have claimed a massive amount of public money, possibly 100,000+ -Arts Council England, Wirral Council, Duchy of Lancaster and other public money, for Viking Wirral events whilst lying to the public and journalists about there being Viking artefacts and history on Wirral!!!...Making money out of nothing. There is zero evidence for any of his claims.*

SH: This point was addressed in Point 1.

23. **PW:** *True professionally qualified Viking specialists state no evidence for Viking settlement on Wirral, it's just fictional:*

VIKING SETTLEMENT IN THE WIRRAL

SH: This was addressed in Point 7. It's difficult to understand why you have included this link, which is to a page supporting the idea that Vikings settled in Wirral:

“the Norse, under the leadership of Ingimund, were allowed to settle in Mercian territory by permission of Æthelflæd, the Lady of the Mercians, who ruled Mercia from 911 until her death in 918.

According to Wainwright:

‘the sequence of events is clear: Norsemen, expelled from Ireland and beaten off from Wales, settled with Æthelflæd’s permission near Chester in Mercian territory. After a period of peaceful settlement the new colonists became aggressive.

Wainwright, F.T., (1975), “Scandinavian England”, Chichester, Phillimore”

Wainwright provides the following settlement map of Cheshire:

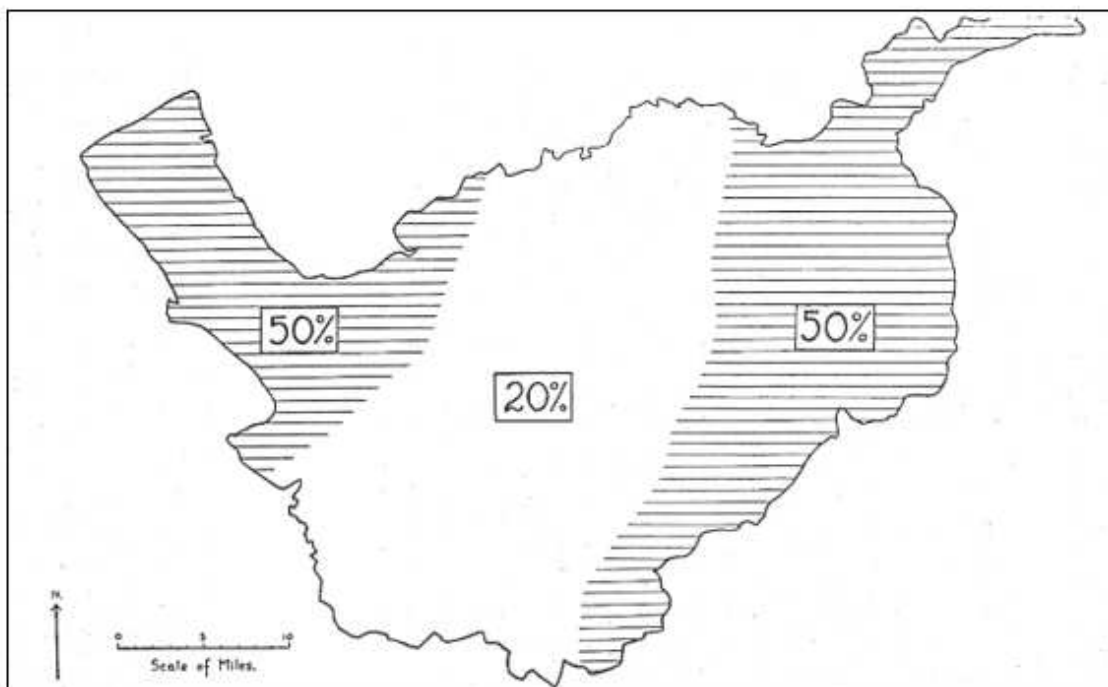


Figure 10.3. Map from Wainwright based on the proportion of Domesday manors held by people bearing Scandinavian names in Cheshire at 1086. (The Scandinavian names for the east of the county are most likely Danish). Reproduced courtesy of *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*.

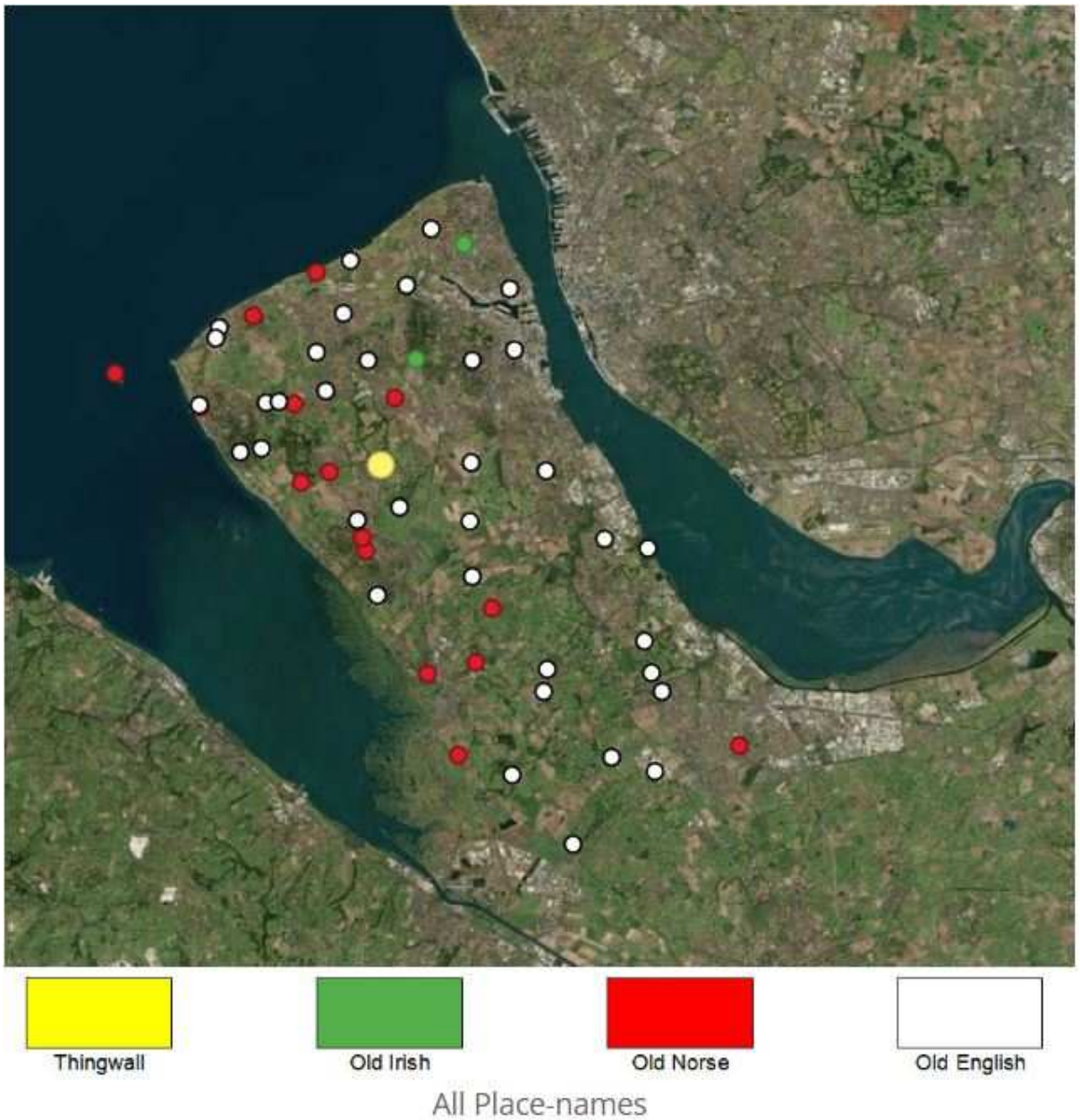
S. Matthews (quoted in the Viking Settlement in Wirral article) writes:

“Although this grant of land included the thriving beach market at Meols, David Griffiths has presented good reasons to believe that Meols lay in a political no man’s land and functioned as a tax free zone, so there would be no loss of revenue to Mercia.

(Griffiths, D. “The Maritime Economy of the Chester Region in the Anglo-Saxon Period” in Carrington, P. (ed) (1996) “Where Deva Spreads Her Wizard Stream”, p. 52.)”

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/browse/details.xhtml?recordId=3205265>

the URL site of which “Viking Settlement in the Wirral” is part was set up as a supplementary resource for students of Oxford University’s short course “Vikings: Raiders, Tracers and Settlers”! The course leader and professional archaeologist David Beard knows very well that there was Viking settlement on Wirral. This is one of the maps from the site:



As can be seen, there are many place names which are recognised as Old Norse.

The same Stephen Matthews also writes:

“The Norse invasion of the Wirral c903 and its relations with the Mercian government was not simply a matter of invasion and containment, but was based upon a policy of permitted settlement and treaty relationship”⁵

24. **PW:** *Steve Harding Director of Wirral Archaeology CIC and the 'new' and third Wirral Viking festival along with certain others including the Museum of Liverpool team, appear to want to eradicate the true history of Wirral and it's indigenous Old English/Anglo Saxon peoples, their culture and language and falsely replace it with that of the Vikings. He is an English man who was made a Knight of Norway and who openly celebrates it's national day and NOT St George's, such is his love for that country. Massive bias there.*

Bit of a second Viking invasion! The fact his warped version of Wirral's history is being taught to Wirral school children as fact, the syllabus written by Steve Harding, a chemistry professor and NOT a qualified historian or archaeologist, is very wrong. Schoolchildren are being brainwashed a fake history of Wirral. It appears to be just one man's obsessive love of Norway and Vikingising Wirral.

SH: The Vikings in Wirral web resource was first set up in 2006 as a Schools Key 2/3 site with the Wirral Learning Grid and Wirral's Cultural Heritage Champion (Mike McCartney) and me, with frequent consultation with Professor Judith Jesch, the country's leading Viking expert, so this accusation is unfounded. Wirral Learning Grid was very much aware of the requirements of the Programmes of Study for the National Curriculum. The *Vikings in Wirral* was intended as a supplementary resource to deliver the section about the Viking and Anglo-Saxon struggle for the Kingdom of England to the time of Edward the Confessor. Research on Vikings is now very much multidisciplinary, with historians, linguists, archaeologists and scientists working together.

We had absolutely no desire to eradicate the part Anglo Saxons played in the history of Wirral and, indeed, the whole country.

25. **PW:** *Anglo Saxon people had rectangular houses. Farm buildings-barns and granaries always have been and still are rectangular, saying that they are now evidence that they are Viking settlements on Wirral is pie in the sky. Desperation by Steve Harding and others, due to the huge amount of money they are making for themselves out of the fake Viking history of Wirral. There isn't a Viking bloomery on Egremont foreshore either; there isn't a Viking ship under a pub in Meols; there is zero evidence of Viking houses nor Vikings actually living on Wirral. A lot of Old English words and place names Steve and others are wrongly stating are Viking, because it makes them a lot of money! The people of Wirral are just being conned.*

There is a wealth of evidence for other periods of the history of Wirral but the

⁵ Stephen Matthews, J Chester Archaeol Soc, new ser 78, 2003 107-117

Museum of Liverpool isn't interested in that and is prepared to lose it, keep it out of the archaeological record. Even never seen before artefacts it has zero pieces of, such is it's bias. The Museum's archaeologists would rather lose priceless artefacts in favour of helping their friends claim thousands of pounds in public funding for an untrue, made up Viking history of Wirral (with zero archaeological evidence!) A sad state for the history of Wirral.

Dr Rob Philpott, who is an expert in Wirral (and other) archaeology has spoken frequently about a range of finds from Wirral:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfJc4lbuu34>

26. **PW:** *The Museum of Liverpool team have turned down, rubbished genuine artefacts in favour of made up stories. The fact that the Head of the Museum and her team are also part of the untrue history and archaeology of Wirral is horrendously wrong. But they only have eyes for their friends' companies and helping them claim massive amounts of public funding, for a warped, fake history. It's purely about the money to them. This project and the artefacts from it Liz Stewart, Head of the Museum, doesn't want that they exist because they are not those of her friends Wirral Archaeology CIC.*

SH: These claims are libellous. No further comment will be made at this stage.

27. **PW:** *Clare Downham, Professor of Medieval History Professor Clare Downham | Our people | University of Liverpool, has created a Viking North West mobile phone app Explore The Viking Age in the North West with new app - News - University of Liverpool, designed apparently to encourage tourism on Wirral. (You can visit the site of 2 hogback style stones and the site at Meols where some Viking artefacts were found in the 1800s). However, this app is based on information from Steve Harding!!!...now well known for just lying/making up the fake history of Vikings on Wirral. Therefore that app is factually incorrect, so too will Clare Downham's books be.*

SH: Professor Downham clearly has a mind of her own and has conducted much original research over the years. She does not need to rely on my information which is built on the work of earlier people in any case. I am looking forward to reading her new book, which will no doubt be meticulously accurate.

28. *The fake, untrue Viking history of Wirral will continue, especially as the Museum of Liverpool is part of it. But it needs to stop, it is particularly damaging to schoolchildren to have the fake history forced on them and told their own language and words aren't English but Old Norwegian when they are no such thing. The true history of the Wirral should be allowed not a fake plastic version.*

Schoolchildren are told about the multiple sources of the English language, including Latin, Germanic languages, Old Norse, Norman French and others. This has been addressed in Point 24.

29. **PW:** *Steve Harding and certain others are just laughing all the way to the bank at the people of Wirral and others' expense. They don't care what they say, as has been established, will just lie!*

SH: This has been addressed in Point 1. As explained, I have not made any money from what I believe in doing something for Wirral, my alma mater..

30. **PW:** *There is zero documented evidence or archaeological evidence that the Vikings ever lived on Wirral, supposedly from 902-937AD.*

SH: This was addressed in Points 4, 7 and 8. Historical evidence includes the *Three Fragments*, part of Ancient Irish Chronicles and the subject of rigorous academic scrutiny, notably by FT Wainwright and J McN Dodson (1957), which are now accepted as giving an accurate description of Norsemen settling largely peacefully in Wirral, after being expelled from Dublin and given permission by Queen Aethelflaed:

Wainwright FT (1942) North-West Mercia AD 871-924. *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 94, 3-55

Wainwright FT (1948) Ingimund's Invasion. *The English Historical Review* 247, 145-167

Wainwright FT (1975) *Scandinavian England*, Phillimore Press, Chichester (almost one third of this book is about Wirral)

Quotes

"They are incontrovertible proof that Scandinavians settled in great numbers in Wirral"

"It is abundantly clear that in Wirral we are dealing with an alien population of mass migration proportions and not with a few military conquerors who usurped the choicest sites

Dodgson J McN (1957) The background of Brunanburh. *Saga Book of the Viking Society* 14, 303-316:

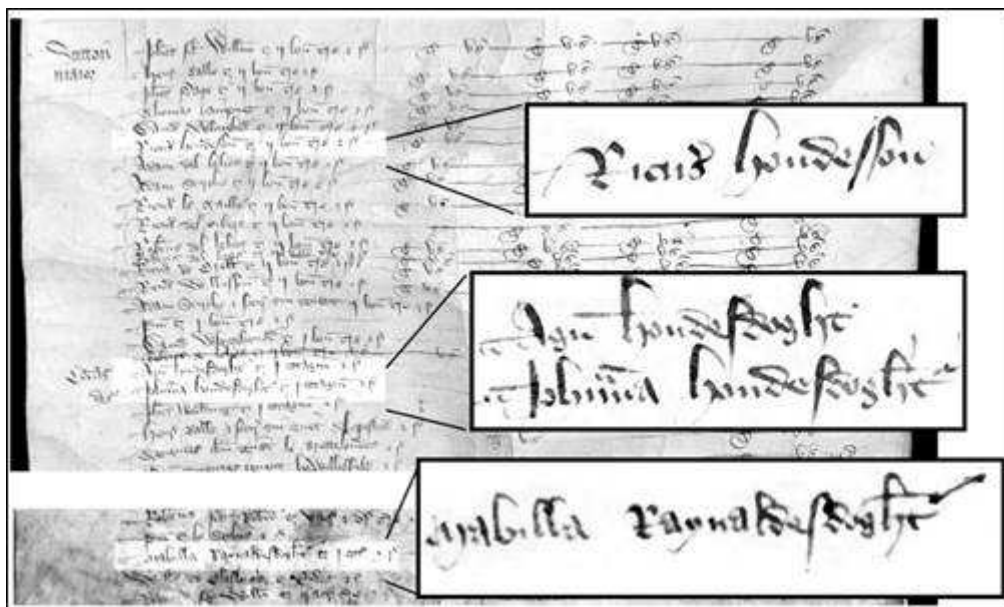
"It becomes obvious that in Wirral there was throughout the 10th and 11th centuries a recognised Norse colony, deliberately established in a definite bounded area with a conscious identity, sufficient to support and warrant a distinctive local administration"

31. **PW:** *To check the etymology (origin) of a word simply look it up in a dictionary that gives this. All quotes here are from 'Chambers Dictionary of Etymology' (of the English Language). The following words, amongst so many, certain people have falsely claimed are Old Norwegian, when they are no such thing and that they prove Vikings were living on Wirral. The words are all Old English which proves*

Ancient Britons lived on Wirral and made it their own:

'Son' and 'daughter' are Old English (O.E.) in origin from 'sunu' and 'dohtor' and NOT Viking -Old Norwegian (Old Norse):

SH: Unfortunately for amateurs, the etymology of modern English is not quite so simple as using a dictionary of etymology without considering contexts. Old English and Old Norse belong to a Germanic group of languages derived from prot-Germanic and many words have a common origin. The authority on English Place Names is the English Place Name Society. 'Son' and 'daughter' are proto-Germanic in origin. Repeating what was said in point #8 above, the endings -son and -dottir “son” and “daughter” affixed to the genitive (possessive) form of a personal name and used as “surnames” reflect specifically Scandinavian custom, which was still used in Sweden up to the 19th century and is still used even today in Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Examples can be found in parish records/ rentals^[1] in Wirral as late as the start of the fifteenth century, for personal names such as Agnes and Johanne *Hondesdoghter* and Richard *Hondesson* recorded in Great Sutton parish for 1398 and Mabilla *Raynaldesdoghter* in Childer Thornton parish. Although these people might not have identified as Scandinavian by the 15th century, their surnames indicate Scandinavian ancestry.



Rentals from 1398 for Great Sutton and Childer Thornton.

32. **PW:** 'Borough' is from the Old English word 'burh' or 'burg'.

SH: No-one is disputing that, nor that there are many Old English place names on Wirral – Bromborough, for example, is Old English. *Borough* is cognate with *borg* in Scandinavian languages and *Burg* in German. The proto-Germanic form, from which all are derived, is **burgz*.

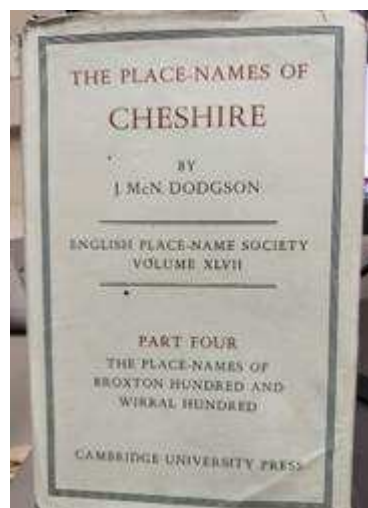
There are also some examples of “Grimston hybrids”, which are combined Scandinavian/ Old English words. Storeton for example contains the Old Norse

“stor” meaning great or large (cf the Storting parliament in Norway) and “tun” which may be either ON tún or OE tūn. In general, Norse settlers, besides founding their own settlements, would not change the name of an existing/previous Anglo-Saxon names unless they had difficulty pronouncing it, such as Gravesberie (Greasby). Grimston itself (the name of two villages in the Wreake Valley, Leicestershire, and in Lincolnshire consists of the Old Danish personal name Grimr and OE tūn (or ON/ODan tún). Examples elsewhere of where the names were changed are Whitby in Yorkshire and Derby.

33. **PW:** 'Holm' is an Old English word and NOT a Viking-Old Norwegian word

SH: *Holm* is derived from proto-Germanic **hulmaz*. It appears in Old English, but only in the later periods. It was from Old Norse *holmr*, which generally meant ‘small island/dry ground in a river/marshy area/water meadow or river meadow’. The slight differences in meaning were regional and depended on which part of Scandinavia or northern Europe the settlers came from. Therefore, a place name with a *holm* affix could have been named any time after Scandinavian settlement by speakers of Old Norse or Old English.

For this and all place names on Wirral the authoritative text is JM Dodgson’s *Place Names of Cheshire*. English Place-Name Society Volume XLVII . Pt 4: The Place Names of Broxton Hundred and Wirral Hundred, Cambridge University Press. All the *holmr* (30 of them) and the 50 *carrs* (ON *kjarr* – brushwood on a marshy area) are in marshy areas around the Birket and Fender flood plains in north Wirral. The fact that normal Old English words for these particular topographical features, elements such as *mersc* ‘marsh’ and *ēg* ‘dry ground in marsh, are almost completely absent from these areas is significant. The Norse derived words had become the normal ones in day to day language in the area when the names were given. They had become loan words.



LINGHAM (100-252910) [ˈlɪŋəm, ˈlɪŋəm], *Langholme Farm & Lane* 1831 Bry, *Lingham* 1842 TAMap, 'long marsh', v. lang, holmr, cf. *Holme Hay infra*.

Bidston 1354, *Oxholme* (*The Oxholme* 1646, *the Oxe Holme* 1644, 'marsh where oxen pasture', v. oxa, holmr); *Pike Mdw* (1644,

See also:

<https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/browse/Cheshire/Bidston/5328363fb47fc408560004e5-Lingham>

34. **PW:** 'Kirk' is an Old English and Northern English word for a 'church' and also a derivative of the Old English word for a church, 'cirice'. It is also Old Norwegian for church. However, it was in use in Britain before the Vikings invaded.

SH: Kirk is in fact the ON pronunciation of OE 'cirice' and actually demonstrates the presence of a Scandinavian-speaking community. In Old English, there was no letter K. Instead, the letter C was used. In early Old English, it seems this was always pronounced as 'k', regardless of position, but as time went on it started to be pronounced as 'ch' in some positions, while still being 'k' in others. So, for example, the word *cirice*, meaning 'church', was presumably originally pronounced something like 'kirrikeh', but later changed to something like 'chiricheh'.

It isn't a surprise that there were churches on the Wirral before the vikings, who were, in the early stages, pagan. However, they weren't called kirks before the Vikings. The forms on Wirral (including the old name for Wallasey Village) are from ON kirkja-býr or kirkju-býr.

Quotes from Dodgson, Place Names of Cheshire:

WEST KIRBY 295
'Village with a church', v. kirkju-býr. It is distinguished as 'west', v. west, and as '-in Wirral', from the other *Kirkby* in Wallasey 332 *infra* at the east side of the Wirral peninsula. For the historical and literary associations of the p.n. West Kirby, v. Sagabook xiv 307, EENS 23.

'Church-village in Wallasey', from *kirkju-býr* and the district-name Wallasey 323 *supra*, which distinguishes this place from West Kirby 294 *supra*. Orm² 11 472 notes that *Kirkeby in Waleia* or *Kyrkeby Waley* is the 'uniform designation' in the Lichfield episcopal registers down to 1487 when it is written *Walesey*. Obviously, the village of *Kirkby*, in which the parish church of Wallasey stood, has gradually taken the name of the parish.

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3. WALLASEY (township, cf. Wallasey (parish) 323 *supra*) (100-2992) [ˈwɒləsi]

Kirkeby in Waleya c.1180-1245 Chest *et freq* with variant spellings *Kirk(e)-*, *Kyrk(e)-*, *-bi(e)*, *-by(e)* and *Waley(a)*, *-ey(e)*, *-ay*, *Walley* to *Kyrkbye in Waley in the parisshe of Walezey* 1534-47 Dugd, m16 *AOMB* 397

Kirkeby 1254 Cl, 1352 BPR (p), 1523 (1571) ChRR, *Kyrkeby* c.1320 Chol, *Kirkby* 1354 Orm², *-bye* 1539-47 Dugd

Kyrkeby Waley E1 Orm², *Kirkeby-* 1208 *Add et freq* with variant

and see

also <https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/browse/Cheshire/West+Kirby/5328368eb47fc4085600208b-West+Kirby%2C+formerly+Kirkby+in+Wirral>

35. **PW:** *Thingwall on Wirral is Old English, the only part it shares with Old Norwegian is 'thing'. In both languages it was the name for 'thing, object or parliament'. The 'wall' part of Thingwall is exactly that, Old English for 'wall'. Therefore 'Thingwall' is Old English for 'parliament wall'. Thingwall or 'Tvigvelle' is first mentioned in written records from 620AD by the Anglo Saxons. Walls, stones having been used as significant markers of places since the Stone Age. After Thingwall came the 'Wirral stones' at Willaston. And of course Wirral does have it's own stonehenge stone circle, yet to be fully revealed. Thingwall has potentially been a 'parliament' since Prehistory, in fact there is evidence (that this project has) that is Thingwall's origins. In fact in places with a 'thing' name people should be looking to ancient British origins and not fake Viking. Another example is Wallsend in the North East of England, so named because it is the end of the wall, Hadrian's wall. 'Wall' is Old English for 'wall'! Both 'things' and 'walls' existed in Britain before the Vikings. Extract from 'The Continental Homelands of the Anglo Saxons', mentioning 'Tvigvelle' later Thingwall in 620AD. Thingwall or 'Tvigvelle' is Old English named by our ancient Anglo Saxon ancestors and mentioned in records since 620AD:*

SH: The earliest documentary reference to the name Thingwall in Wirral is 1086 in Domesday Book; there is no reference to Thingwall in an actual document from AD 620. There are many similar names representing ON *pingvöllr* 'meeting-place of the assembly': Tynwald in the Isle of Man, Tingwall or Law Ting Holm in the Shetlands, Tingwall in Orkney, Tiongal in the Isle of Lewis, Tinwhil in the Isle of Skye; Dingwall at the Cromarty Firth, Tinwald in Dumfriesshire. Other

possible Thing sites are in Northumberland (Dingbell Hill), Langdale (Ting Mound), Whitby (*Thingwala*) and Sherwood Forest (*Thynghowe*). These are all in Scandinavian-settled areas, and of course there are many Thing- sites in Scandinavia, including Thingvellir in Iceland.

See

also <https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/browse/Cheshire/Woodchurch/5328368eb47fc408560020a2-Thingwall%2C+Higher+Thingwall>

36. **PW:** *Tranmere On Wirral is Old English for 'across the pool' due to it's original geographical position being flanked on 3 sides by bodies of water-Birkenhead Pool, Tranmere Pool and the River Mersey. Tranmere is first mentioned in written records in 1260AD.*

[Source:The Domesday Geography of Northern Britain]. From the Latin 'tran-' meaning 'across' and Old English word 'mere' meaning 'pool or sea', Tranmere. That the first part of the word is Latin might imply that it was the Romans who first named Tranmere, however it first appears documented in records only from 1260.

Tranmere is NOT from the Old Norwegian words 'trani' meaning a crane and 'melr' meaning sandbank!!!...'A crane (bird) on a sandbank'. The tides and geography alone prove this to be impossible, the River Mersey in the Medieval Ages was a very deep and strong river with high tides, waves. There were no sandbanks at Tranmere at that time, the place being a large rocky outcrop into the river, flanked by 2 deep pools of water even when the tide was out. Tranmere Rovers football team has been mistakenly or deliberately identified with this fake Viking history. The place and their name is Old English, even their football strip colours are the blue of the woad of our brave ancient Briton warriors. They are not Viking in any factual or historical way. Again, it appears to be one man Steve Harding's obsessive love of Norway and Vikingising everything on Wirral, falsely. Tranmere is so named because it was and is by pools of water like so many other places with pools/lakes-Raby Mere, Burton Mere, Martin Mere, Ellesmere, Redesmere, Grasmere, Windermere, etc., the last 2 being in the 'Lake' District.

SH: The Latin prefix is *trans-* rather than *tran-*, so this doesn't explain Tranmere. *Trans* was mainly borrowed into English after the Norman Conquest, often through French, as the Oxford English Dictionary notes. There are dozens of spellings of Tranmere like *Tranemul*, *Tranemol*, *Tranemel* before *Tranmer*' emerges first in 1393, and infrequently then until the 19th century. So, for two hundred years before 1393, no-one thought the second element was OE *mere* 'pool'.

[Tranmere's football kit is white by the way]

See

also: <https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/browse/Cheshire/Bebington/5328368eb47fc40856001f6b-Tranmere>

37. **PW:** 'West Kirby' From the Old English words

'west'=west, 'kirk'and 'cirice'=church and 'by'='near to, which gives 'Kirby' =near to the church. Therefore, West Kirby is the place near to the church on the west of Wirral. It is NOT Viking-Old Norwegian at all. Some Old English spellings are 'Chirchebi', 'Cherchebi' and 'Kirkebi', the Old English spelling of 'by' is 'bi'.

All of the place names on Wirral with a '-by' suffix come from the Old English word 'bi' and the prefix denotes where they are near to. Hence, 'Irby' is near to the Irish (settlement) 'Frankby' is near to the Franks (settlement), etc., .

You can see from the lengthy entry in Chambers Etymology that 'by' is an important English preposition of place. And the word is still very much in usage in the English language today. As in 'near by', used to denote place e.g. the supermarket is (near) by the garage.

'By' is still used in town planning, as in 'by-pass', a road that runs 'near to' another place, to reduce traffic congestion. On Wirral we have 'Upton by-pass' which is the large road that was built running by Upton to reduce the traffic congestion through Upton village. It does not mean 'farm of the Upton road', as Steve Harding would illogically say to make out it was Viking-Old Norwegian!!! ALL of the placenames on Wirral ending in 'by' are ALL Old English words and places.

SH: There's a clue in the word 'preposition': **by** in English is positioned before the element it modifies. English names with the preposition include Byfleet, Bythorn, Byfield, Bywell. However, the compounds with the second element **-by** are different: they are restricted to areas settled by Scandinavians and the -by element is Scandinavian bý, býror bý 'farm, settlement'. Again, there are hundreds of names in Scandinavia which parallel the forms found in name like Irby, Frankby, Kirby and Pensby, with the second element derived from býr or bý. The kirk element has been addressed in Point 32. *Kirk* and *cirice* were originally homophones.

38. **PW:** St Bridget's church at West Kirby Was NOT founded by the Vikings, this is completely untrue and again originates from Steve Harding and his obsession of falsely Vikingising Wirral. A hogback style stone was found at the church in 1869 during renovation, however that does not mean the church was founded by the Vikings at all. In fact, there has been a place of worship at West Kirby since Prehistory. There is evidence of a Mesolithic seal hunter people shrine near by St Bridget's, therefore West Kirby has always been a place of worship and always a 'west kirby'. The early Celtic Christians would have founded St Bridget's as they did at Wallasey.

There is zero documentary and zero archaeological evidence that Vikings actually lived on Wirral. The Vikingising of Wirral and all of the fake Viking history of Wirral all began with Steve Harding. And there is no evidence of anything he claims.

SH: See "32" above. St Bridget of Kildare is one of the patron Saints of Ireland and the church name is likely to have been introduced into Wirral by the Norse settlers when they arrived from Dublin in about AD902. A similar instance occurs further up the coast, with St Bridget's Church at Bridekirk,

Solway:<https://www.bridekirkparish.org.uk/second-st-bridget-s-lecture> The Irish chronicles record Irish settlers along with the Norsemen in their attack on Chester AD907, and the nearby place-name Irby also indicates a significant number of Irish settlers coming over with the Norse:

See: <https://epns.nottingham.ac.uk/browse/Cheshire/Woodchurch/5328368eb47fc4085600209c-Irby%2C+Irby+Fm%2C+Irby+Hall%2C+Irby+Heath%2C+Irby+Hill%2C+Irby+Hill+Fm>

As noted above in my response to “32”, this does not exclude the possibility there may have been a church in West Kirby before the arrival of the Vikings. As discussed in the response previously, apart from names, historical, linguistic and DNA evidence, there is a good deal of archaeological evidence of Scandinavian settlement on the Wirral. The major articles on the Scandinavian styles of Wirral sculpture by J. D. Bu’lock and W. G. Collingwood are reprinted in *Wirral and its Viking Heritage*.

39. **PW:** *The Director of WACIC, and it's Lead Scientist Steve/Stephen Harding....*

SH: This was addressed in Point 1. Not true I’m afraid. I am a non-executive Director of Wirral Archaeology CIC.

40. **PW:** *The Director of WACIC, and it's Lead Scientist Steve/Stephen Harding and Lead Archaeologist Chas Jones on the day of conducting borehole samples to find the supposed boat under a pub in February 2023 BOTH claimed that day, that the boat was definitely there, "the wood had been tested and it dated to the Viking Age"...when no wood had even been found never mind tested.*

SH: Absolutely not true. See Point 2. The full interview, recorded at the start of the five day Meols Boat investigation in February 2023 and broadcast in August 2024 on NRK is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvpuL-hHh8Q>.

The TV series was broadcasted on NRK1 on Mondays at 8:00PM last year under the name “På vikingtokt til Amerika”. It is still available for streaming on the NRK website for Norwegians: (Episode 2)

41. **PW:** *It took months at great expense, of testing of the samples both at Nottingham University and Trondheim in Norway, to establish that there was in fact nothing at all there!!! Just some brushwood dating to 600 BC. Investigations, using public money have been going on for c.20 years to find the non-existent boat. Just a huge waste of public money, there is nothing to show for it all, except an enormous amount of money wasted! How has the public of Wirral benefitted from all of this? It hasn't at all, it's just a money making farce.*

SH: Not true. The costs were very small. See Point 18. A few thousand pounds from my two Universities – Nottingham and Oslo - together with money raised from sales of my Science and the Vikings book and a further £500 personal

donation by myself to cover the costs of Chas Jones' travel and accommodation at a bed and breakfast and the scientific testing. There is some cash remaining (~£1500) from funds raised through GoFundMe by co-organiser and retired policeman Tim Baldock to pay towards a follow up from this initial five day study. Earlier Ground Penetrating Radar measurements in 2007, 2017 and 2019 were also paid for by me (totalling approx £1200). Wirral Council gave a small grant to pay for the cost of a Dutch Auger for the core sampling (a tool which will be used for other projects). Enormous amount of public money? £5K max towards helping us answer a question that the Wirral Public want to know... and still does!

42. **PW:** *Stephen Harding at the same time as deceiving journalists and public alike, in 2023, claimed thousands in Arts Council Funding for a new and third annual Viking Wirral Festival....*

SH: Absolutely not true. See Points 9, 21 and 22. I have nothing to do with any annual Viking Festival, other than offer to give talks and presentations of artefacts either for free or to cover expenses only. There was no deceiving of journalists or public: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvpul-hHh8Q>, So your comments are another libellous inaccuracy.

43. **PW:** *Wirral doesn't have a Viking history or heritage, it is all just made up by Steve/Stephen Harding at the public expense, and he is raking it in financially. The more false claims he makes about Viking Wirral the more money he makes. And the people of Wirral are having a false/fake history imposed on them because certain people want to make a huge amount of money from just making things up!*

SH: This is completely untrue and flies in the face of all the great work done by people like JJA Worsae in the 19th Century and WG Collingwood, JD Bu'Lock, FT Wainwright, and J. McNeil Dodgson in the 20th Century and contemporary archaeologists such as David Griffiths, Rob Philpott, Julian Richards and many others. You are just repeating your ridiculous claims.

The idea that I make huge amounts of money from Viking Wirral is ludicrous!

Finally, the pieces appear to me to be the words of someone who is very bitter about having her finds turned down by Liverpool Museums. I have sympathy for you and hope that you have better success in future. I would, however, be grateful if you would make the appropriate adjustments to your website and social media posts by removing your libellous comments.