

Wirral Vikings have made a significant contribution to events and educational activities in Merseyside.

I have benefited from the group's collaboration with the University of Liverpool, sharing their expertise and enthusiasm at events.

The group also provided images for the 'Viking Age in the North West' iPhone app which made a big contribution to its visual effectiveness.

Clare Downham,
Institute of Irish Studies

About us

Wirral Vikings is Merseyside's leading early medieval Living History group.

Wirral Vikings focus on providing Viking & Saxon Reenactment & Living History displays of the Hiberno Norse who settled the Wirral from 902AD, but we cover all aspects of the Viking period from 793AD to 1066AD.

Wirral Vikings are renowned for their living history displays that bring everyday viking Wirral vividly to life. Learning the skills the people used to survive life 1000 years ago in the harsh Wirral landscape.



Wirral Vikings
www.wirralvikings.org.uk



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE VIKINGS

**St. Mary's and St. Helen's
Neston**

**The ancient stones of the Neston
parish**

St. Mary's & St. Helen's

St Mary and St Helen Church is a grade II listed building and active Anglican parish church in the diocese of Chester, the archdeaconry of Chester and the deanery of Wirral South.

The presence of a priest at Neston is recorded in the Domesday Book with some of the earliest written evidence of a church on the site dating from around 1170 when a church was founded by Ralph de Montalt, a baron of the court of the Earl of Chester.

It is likely built on an earlier parish church as when the floor was relaid in 1874, our carved sandstone fragments were uncovered in the foundations. A fifth had been used as a lintel of a window in the ringing chamber of the bell tower.

Geoffrey Place, a local historian contacted Dr Rodger White of Birmingham University, an expert on such stones.

Dr White confirmed that they were the remains of Hiberno Norse or Viking age grave markers dating back to 930AD.

Further study revealed they were five different grave markers.

One of the stones was laser scanned and with evidence from Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man added to a cross head from St John's church, Chester, a life size model was made approximately five feet high.

This reconstruction is painted in traditional colours as it would have been in its original condition. The fragments are believed to be of a christian style and put Christianity in Neston at least as early as 930AD. when the previous evidence was recognition of a priest in the Domesday Records.

The stones consist of:

1. Part of a shaft decorated with interlace and knotwork
2. Part of a cross head with cable moulding design.
3. Part of a cross shaft and cross head with a winged figure on one broad side and two figures fighting on the other.
4. Part of a cross shaft with the figure of a priest on a broad side and interlace patterns and step patterns on the other two faces.
5. Part of a cross shaft with a hunting scene and a pair of figures embracing on one broad side and a pair of horsemen opposing each other on the other side.

