

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](http://www.wirralvikings.org.uk)



# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE VIKINGS

**Thurstaston, Thor's Stone & Irby**

**A tour through the ancient pathways of Wirral**

# Thurstaston

## Thor's Rock (Stone) - Truth or Myth?

Was Thor's Rock a Viking stone for making sacrifices or was it the place Thor left Mjöllnir?

The 8m high natural sandstone outcrop has all sorts of rumours associated with it. Sir James Picton, (2 December 1805-15 July 1889) the well known Liverpool architect and antiquary was the first to suggest it was a place of worship for Anglo-Saxons or Vikings (Worshipping the God Thor).

He thought Thurstaston meant Thor's-stan-tun, the settlement of Thor's Stone. In reality it was formed by quarrying and is a feature of Thurstaston Common.



Looking at the Domesday records the name derives from Porsteinn combined with the Anglo-Saxon place name -tun (farm), This shows that the pagan association is a modern invention. Picton himself said there were no local legends but his speculation snowballed into the rumours we have today and if he would have looked into the area further he would have seen it has been quarried for quite some time and was nothing more than an area of harder sandstone.

His suggestion soon led to further rumours about the rock (sandstone) being red due to the sacrifices held there. (See also Red Hill Road, Storeton) or is the place Thor left his hammer Mjöllnir.

J.A. Picton, 'The Great Stone of Thor', Notes and Queries, 5th series, 8-10 November 1877), 364-65



Images © Liverpool Museum

# Irby

Irby is the site of a Viking settlement that was previously a Roman Farm. After the site was abandoned Archaeologists found three bow-sided buildings with rounded corners. These were identified as foundation gullies that were cut into the bedrock. A later building was constructed with a rock cut foundation slot with clay packing at its base.

Finds from the site included a 'spike' lamp dated from the 10th to the 12th Century.

The four buildings represent long houses that can be seen throughout the Viking world showing that a Viking Age farm flourished on the site. The well drained easily ploughed soils locally made this an ideal site with a nearby stream and good pasture for livestock.

The name Irby is a combination of the old Norse word Iri ('Irish') and -byr ('Farm') meaning farm of the Irish. The name is recorded from the 12th Century.

R.A. Philpott and M.H. Adams, Irby, Wirral:Excavations on a Late Prehistoric Romano-British and Medieval Site 1987-9 (Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2010)

