

# The Vikings in Formby

Where is this?



Why is it here?



What can we find out about The Vikings in Formby?

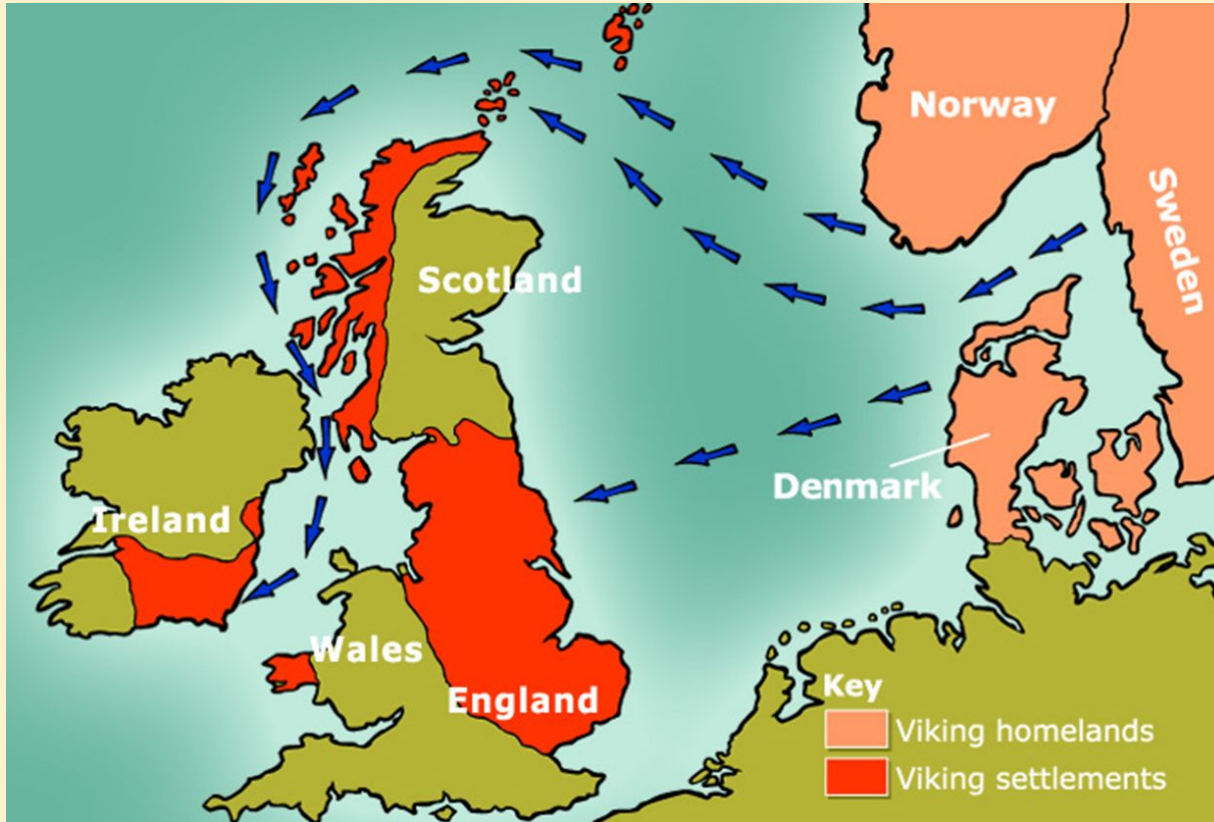
# What do we know?

- The word Formby was originally spelt 'Fornebei' translated as 'village belonging to the family Forni' (Forni was a well-known Norse family name) and was built on the plains overlooking the beautiful Irish Sea Coast.
- It is believed that About 960 AD Vikings came to the west coast of Lancashire, first trading or raiding, then settling.
- Tradition has it that the Viking invaders failed to defeat the native Anglo-Saxons on the coast of Formby so they sailed inland, up the River Alt, and took them by surprise by attacking from the rear.
- In 2018/9, outside Waterfields on Chapel Lane in Formby Village, a sculpture was sculpted by Formby's brilliant sculptor Simon Archer to celebrate our Viking past.





# Where did they come from?



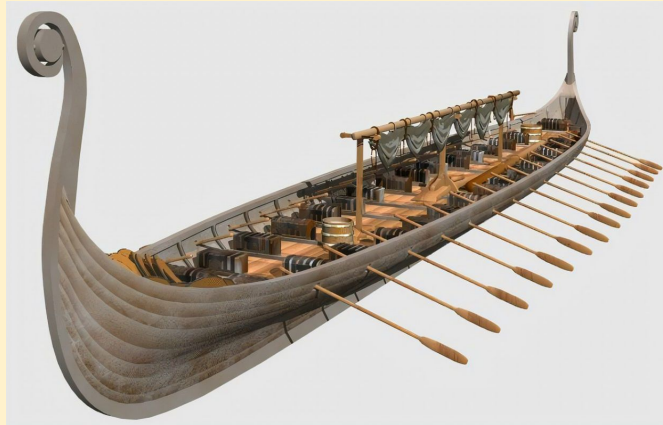
# Viking Longboats

- For Longboats, trees were felled in early winter and then the wood was chopped and planed to form planks / keels / masts. They were launched in spring.
- Early raiding Longboats were built for lightning attacks and escape: land on shore - attack - raid and steal - return to the sea.
- The ships were designed to sail close to shore and land on beaches.
- First major raid on a British Monastery - a very wealthy community - was in the N-E of England on **Lindisfarne** in 793 AD.



# Journeys on open sea

- The Vikings were able to attack the English coast because of improvements in boat building.
- Before, they could only sail down rivers, streams and lakes. They used oars.
- The early boats were not built to carry the weight of a mast and sails.
- They improved the Longboats by making a sturdier base that was strong enough to carry a Mast and Sail.
- Yet these ships were flexible and still able to be pulled up onto a beach - and even carried onto land.
- Sails shortened the time of their journeys and made it easier for the crew to manage them.





# Why did they travel to Britain?

## DIFFERENT SCANDINAVIANS - DIFFERENT REASONS

The Scandinavians had much fertile farmland, rivers and forests. They were self-sufficient. However, gradually some chieftains became more aware of silver, gold and jewels in other countries. They began to organise RAIDS to plunder this wealth from other countries.

- *At first the Danes and Norwegian Vikings raided these islands for wealth to carry home.*
- *Gradually some groups began to look for land to settle for themselves.*
- *Danes controlled the East coast and York developed into the largest community. They fought off attacks from the Anglo-Saxons and others and created their own country - the DANELAW.*
- *The Norsemen tended to sail further - into Scotland, around the coast and into Ireland and the Isle of Man. There, they fought to create settlements for themselves against the Irish people already there.*
- *Eventually, many of them were pushed out of Ireland and the Isle of Man. They then sailed across to England in search of land to settle. They soon arrived in Lancashire in a 'mass migration' and settled many places from Preston down to Merseyside and the Wirral. This included Formby.*
- *Some Viking settlers in Ireland were expelled from Dublin in 902 AD.*
- *A chieftain named Ingimund then led bands of Viking by longboat over to England and the West Lancashire/Sefton and Wirral coastline. In South West Lancashire they met another large group of Vikings .... and so they arrived in **Formby**, a very small settlement with only few people living there already.*



# How do we know about The Viking/Norsemen in Formby?

Local Historians need to look for EVIDENCE of what has happened in the past.

How can we know that Vikings came to Formby ... and lived here?

*There is very little evidence*

*We have no swords, helmets, brooches, jewellery, coins, burial sites, remains of old longboat*

*... but we do have two classic sources of evidence!*

Our Evidence - There are 2 key sources of evidence:

1. PLACE NAMES IN SEFTON

2. PEOPLE THEMSELVES WHO LIVE  
IN THIS PART OF SEFTON &  
LANCASHIRE

# 1. Place Names in Sefton

*The names and towns of villages often give us evidence*

- *Place Names are derived over a long time from the early settlements, when a community began to be established there*
- *We can tell who those earliest settlers were from the language of the place name*
- *The Vikings who settled in this region spoke a language called 'Old Norse'*
- *Old Norse name evidence includes Meols (sandhills) and Kirk (church).*
- *Byr is a homestead - Fornebei could mean Old Town or Forni's Town*
- *Ravenmeols means sandhill or sandbank belonging to Hrafn', perhaps a Norse settler or landowner*
- *Scarisbrick Altcar Litherland Ainsdale Ormskirk West Derby Birkdale*  
*Crosby Kirkdale Argameols Skelmersdale*

## Place names ending in -by

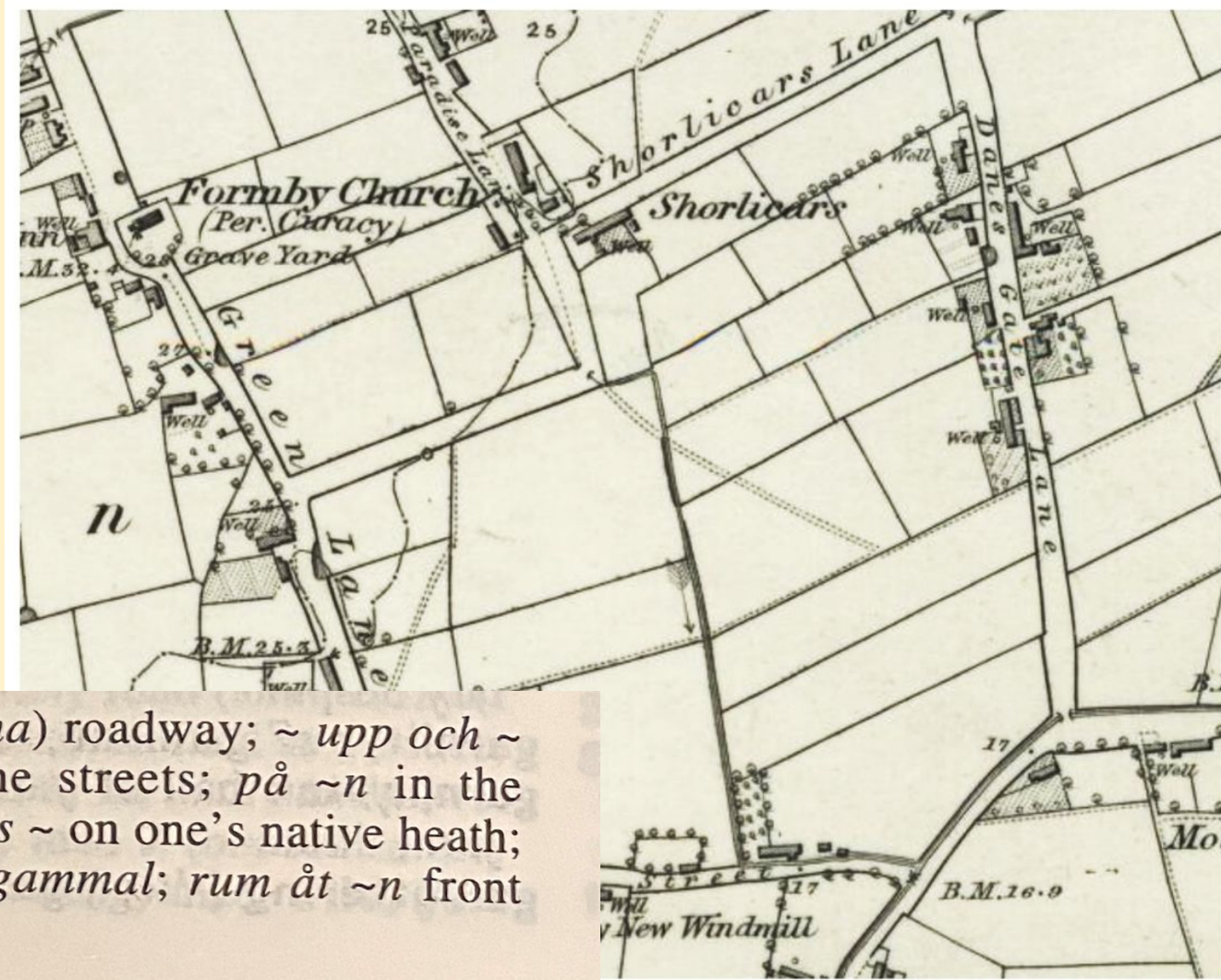
- The place-name element most people are aware of as typically Viking is the ending 'by' - which means "settlement".
- If we look at the distribution of all place-names of village and towns which can be traced to Norse, Danish or Norse-Irish roots, the evidence for significant Viking influence in Merseyside and West Lancashire is beyond dispute.
- We in Formby have been left a heritage of Vikings' culture all around us in the names of our villages and towns.



# Deansgate Lane

Deansgate Lane was originally 'Danesgate Lane'.

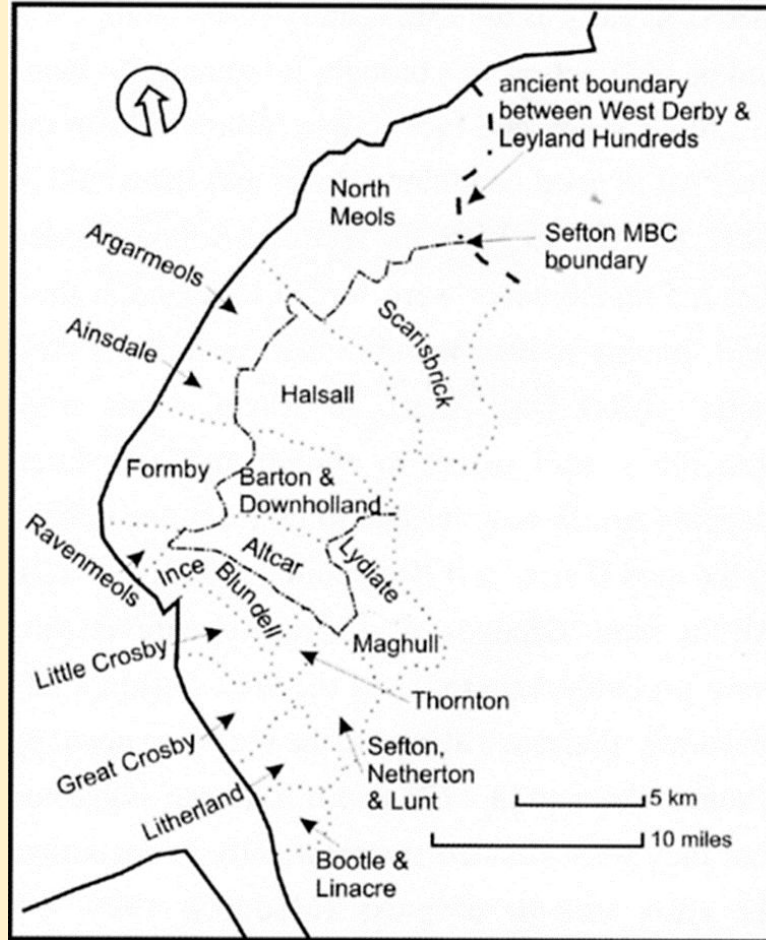
Why?



**gata** *sl* street; (*körbana*) roadway; ~ *upp och ner* up and down the streets; *på ~n* in the street; *på sin mammas ~n* on one's native heath; *gammal som ~n*, se *gammal*; *rum åt ~n* front



# Sefton Coast today



# Local place names derived from Old Norse

Sefton was "Sef-tun" / "Sedge Farmstead," or Farmstead where rushes grow.

Ainsdale was "Einulfsdalr" / "Einulf's Valley."

Birkdale was "Birkidalr," Birch-tree valley.

Little Altcar was the car (marshland) beside the River Alt.

**Formby**, was Fomisby, "Forni's village," from a Norse personal name "Forth." and the Norse "byr", or Danish "by." (Fornaby is a very common Swedish name, and Fornebu was until recently the site of the main Oslo Airport).

Crosby was Krossabyr, "The village with a cross."

Kirkby ("Kirkja byr") is "village with a church" .



# Stories and Tales - Legend of Orm

There was a legend about **Orm**, whose sisters argued over whether he should put a tower or a spire on his church. Hence Ormskirk comes from the Old Norse, "Ormres kirkja" ("Ormr's church").

The story says that Orm built both a tower and spire for the sake of peace and quiet, but if you know your history, you'll know that the spire came first. King Henry VIII closed Burscough Priory and its bells were taken away to Ormskirk parish church. However, they were too big to fit into the old spire. So - they built a Tower!



The route by which Vikings probably came in to Formby in 902.



## 2. People in the North West themselves.

We still have one more piece of evidence...

*People in the North-West themselves!*

*We can find out if any people in the area have got any 'Viking blood' in them by setting up small programmes that check their DNA. Surveys on the East coast of England showed many local people had strong Danish links.*

*Between 2002 and 2007 there was a DNA survey carried out on people living in West Lancashire and the Wirral.*

## Local DNA study

*A project team selected 100 volunteers who possessed a surname pointing to Viking links and whose male ancestors lived in the same area for as long as one could trace. The surnames included: Taylor, Forshaw, Rigby, **Rimmer**, Robinson, Oxton, Scarisbrick and Melling.*

***This local study showed that up to 50% of the blood of men in Wirral in Merseyside and West Lancashire in that Survey is linked to Scandinavian ancestry.***