**Vikings Age in the NW Podcast Transcript**

Dr Clare Downham: You are listening to Tales from the Square with me Dr Clare Downham.

In this episode we are going to find out about the app, the Viking Age in the Northwest.

When you open the app, you go to a main menu where you can discover sites by looking at a map with little waypoints that you can zoom in and out of, so you can use that to click into find more information about individual places. But there's also an alphabetical list of place names. So if there's a particular site you're looking for, and you want to find information on you can go through that way. And once you click through to the actual sites, you've then got up to three pictures of the feature or place that's been described. And then we've got little write up is just 150 to 300 words. So keeping it fairly light and accessible, just to tell you about the significance of that place in the Viking Age. And then if you want to find out more information, there's also like a little reference at the bottom to books or articles that will give you more information about it. So the idea is just to give little bite sized bits of information so that people can gain a sort of better understanding of this area in the Viking age.

So we're here in the Special Collections and Archives at the University of Liverpool. And they’ve brought this beautiful map out of the collections for us. So this is the Saxton Map. It was put together in 1579. And it's the first atlas of all the counties of England So for us, it's quite nice because it's, it's just a gorgeous representation of the region, but it also preserves early place name forms for around Merseyside, and some of these names have Scandinavian elements within them so they date right back to the Viking Age. So if we look on here on the world, we've got Thurstaston, which is the toon, the settlement of Thorsteinn. So we've got the name of one of the people who came here, possibly in the 10th century, we've got the name ness, which is Scandinavian word, meaning headland. And we've also got Meols on the north coast there, which is a name, which comes from *meir*, which is Nordic for ‘sandbank’.

And we can see that pattern of place names north of the Wirral as well. And they're quite interesting as we've got two place names that are Thingwalls north and south of the Mersey. And that is where there would have been a Viking assembly or parliament. So their Thing would be where their laws were proclaimed. If there are any disputes that needed sorting out in the community, people would bring it to this kind of public venue. So that's quite interesting because it tells us something about the political structure of Viking settlement in the area. And then we've also got place names north and south of the Mersey which Raby or Roby and that means a boundary settlement. So what that suggests is that when Viking settled the area that these were kind of little enclaves A settlement with their own assembly, the Thingwall, and then their own boundaries marked by the kind of Raby or Roby place names.

So, another one that's really nicely illustrated on here is a Toxteth deer Park which is now Sefton Park in Aigburth. We can see it marked down there with little pictures of the trees. And Toxteth is a Scandinavian name as well. So it means the Stoche or the settlement of somebody who was called Toki, who probably also came and settled this area in the 10th century. So maps are a really good source of information about the historic landscape, the peoples that lived here, the different cultures that pass through.

I'm with Paul Sherman, who's from Northwest Heritage who's brought along some finds which were recovered along the coastline north of Mersey and two sites which are mentioned in the app in particular from Formby and Crossens. So we've got a selection of fines from there. So Paul, can you tell us about some of the finds that have been recovered from Merseyside here?

Paul: Yes, we've got three groups of finds here. And on the side here, we've got some, some finds that have been recovered from excavations at Formby. And we've actually got some Baltic amber and some jet and neither these are actually found locally. So it's thought that these could have been brought here during the early mediaeval period, possibly from the Baltic. The Jets found in Yorkshire.

Clare: Okay, would they have been imported as raw material? So then be worked in the local area?

Paul: Yes, we haven't found any any work material here. But the raw material suggests it may have been brought in to work.

Clare: Very interesting, isn't it? It's showing that connection with trade routes, which the Vikings really kind of introduced to the area, this network of contacts to the rest of the Viking world

Paul: It certainly does. And bear in mind that's obviously just north of this area, and the Ribble was the main gateway between Dublin and the Kingdom of York. So it's a very busy area across the Irish Sea.

Clare: One of the stereotypes that people have about the Viking Age is that somehow everybody lived in separate ethnic groups, and there wasn't much interaction between but of course, what really characterise the Vikings was that they were very mobile, they had this superb shipping technology. And they raided and they traded and they settled across a wide area. One thing that we see from the Viking Age in the world is the way that these different groups are interacting. So Vikings who came to the world and Merseyside had come from Ireland. So they were they're a mixed group of Vikings and Irish settlers. And they came to an area which had been previously settled by British peoples and then by Anglo Saxon. So if you look at the sort of the map of the Wirral, it is a kind of cultural mosaic of different place names, but you can also sort of see the sort of dynamism of the area that I think you know, this region the Mersey has always had its doors open to the world.

Liverpool is a great port city. And it just really takes that history of the area and its interaction in sort of international trade right back to the Viking Age. The different cultures coming into Merseyside helps new local identities to develop. So one way we can see that is through Viking sculpture. We've got some really lovely collections of Viking Age sculpture from sites like Neston and West Kirby and what they show is elements of Viking influence style mixing with Anglo Saxon sculptural tradition. There's influence of Irish style in the sculpture as well. And it shows that these people with their kind of mixed heritage and contacts have come together and they've created something quite new and unique. So there is a distinctive style of sculpture in the area, which is called the Chester School, which is stretches along the Dee estuary, and shows that there was a group of Viking Age sculptors who were bringing in these different stylistic elements and creating something new from it and I do quite like that aspect of, you know, identity is something that's always changing, culture is always evolving. And it's just the way that the different components of that mix that makes something that's quite unique. And I think that even relates to you know, the history and identity of this region today. If you think of Liverpool and its distinct Scouse identity and its accent, it’s all part of the different stories of the different peoples that have come and settled in the region, and that have kind of melded together and made something new and unique.