

Thynghowe

Thynghowe is a Viking age assembly site hidden in the woodlands on the western edge of Sherwood Forest. Recent research has revealed features associated with Thing sites found across northern Europe. Few of these sites have survived but Thynghowe has been protected by its location within a royal hunting Forest that was later managed as part of the estates of the Dukeries.

According to Viking customs, a Thing was a meeting of the local freemen where important matters would be discussed, laws debated and disputes settled. There was a hierarchy of Things ranging from local meetings to major regional assemblies. A Thing site would include a hill or a 'law rock', a court circle and a field for an audience. Representations would be made to the Law Council which consisted of influential thegns drawn from the area. They would sit in the court circle to debate matters relating to their farms and villages or wider issues. Their decisions would be announced to the assembled crowd from a high point or from the law rock by the Law Speaker. On Thynghowe the law circle would have been on the slope to the north-east of the summit and pronouncements would have been made from the top of the hill. The acoustics of the area allow a loud clear voice to be heard distinctly up to a hundred metres away.

The Thynghowe Trail

You can follow in the footsteps of the folk attending the Viking age assemblies on Thynghowe by walking the Thynghowe Trail. You will also discover stories from over a thousand years of the past of Sherwood Forest.

More information and a guide to the trail can be downloaded from www.thynghowe.org.uk

The Friends of Thynghowe

The Friends of Thynghowe was formed in 2005 with members from the villages of Edwinstowe, Clipstone and Warsop. We are interested in discovering more about the history and ecology of the part of the Forest of Birklands centred on Hanger Hill, formerly known as Thynghowe.

So far we have identified over fifty historical features within the woodlands through the use of old maps, documents, aerial photographs, local knowledge and by poking around in the undergrowth! Heritage Lottery funding has allowed us to commission a LiDAR survey of Birklands which has revealed many features concealed by the vegetation.

Every winter we venture into the Forest to survey and record these features. Research using archive documents continues throughout the year.

We believe that it is important to share the stories covering over a thousand years of the past of Sherwood from the era of the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria up to World War II.

Want to join us? Visit our website for details.



Produced by
The Friends of Thynghowe



www.thynghowe.org.uk



VIKING SHERWOOD



Revealing the impact of the
Nottinghamshire Vikings

The Viking Age in England

The first contact with Scandinavians would have been with traders visiting settlements on the coast and rivers but everything changed with the Viking raids which began with the plunder of Lindisfarne in 793. However, it was not until 850 that the Viking raiders overwintered in England.

In 865 the Great Army of Danish Vikings invaded England led by Halfdan Ragnarsson and Ivarr the Boneless. They met serious resistance when they reached Wessex. This campaign continued into the 870s when the Danes were bought off by Alfred the Great of Wessex. By this time they had colonised the other English kingdoms of Northumbria, Anglia and Mercia, creating the Danelaw.

During the 900s the English kings of Wessex expanded the area they controlled northwards. By 920 the boundary of the Danelaw was at the Humber and by 927 all of the northern rulers had submitted to King Athelstan who could then claim to be the first king of all England. His successors generally retained the upper hand over the Vikings by either military force or payments of Danegeld.

The reign of King Ethelred saw renewed Viking attacks. In 1002 Ethelred ordered a massacre of all Danes living in England which prompted attacks by Sveyn Forkbeard, the Danish king. In 1013 Sveyn was accepted as king of England. He died shortly afterwards but his son Cnut became the English king in 1016.

By this time the royal families of England, Denmark and Normandy were becoming closely connected. This led to the Norman invasion of 1066 which brought the Viking age in England to an end although some of their customs would continue in parts of the country.

The Vikings in Sherwood

- 868 *The Danish Great Army set up winter quarters in Nottingham*
- 872-3 *Viking winter camp at Torksey on the River Trent, 16 miles from Thynghowe*
- 877 *A group from the Great Army split off from the campaign against King Alfred of Wessex to colonise Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. Danes settle in Nottingham*
- 917 *King Edward the Elder reclaims Nottinghamshire from the Danes*
- 1013 *Sveyn Forkbeard gained the English throne and organised his kingdom from Gainsborough on the River Trent, 20 miles from Thynghowe*

Lawmaking and Assemblies

When the Danish warrior farmers settled in Sherwood they would have found the poor sandy soils similar to the conditions found in much of Denmark. They governed the area according to Viking traditions with 'Thing' assemblies where matters would be discussed and disputes resolved.

These wapentakes would establish a system of government distinct from the rule of a king or a lord. Some of these traditions survived the Norman invasion through the customs of inheritance in local manors. They may even have contributed to the legends of outlaws in Sherwood Forest!

Evidence for Thynghowe and Danish Occupation of Sherwood

Thynghowe was recorded as a point on a perambulation of Sherwood Forest in 1251.

References to Thynghowe appear on maps of 1609.

Forest maps of 1791 refer to 'Gates', the Norse term for a road.

Topographical and LiDAR surveys of Thynghow reveal features typical of Thing sites across the Viking world.

There are many settlements in and around Sherwood Forest have names of Scandinavian origin indicating Danish occupation during the time of the Danelaw.

Budby, Walesby, Linby and Kirkby are names ending with 'by' which derives from farmsteads.

Names ending in 'thorpe' indicate small secondary settlements. Gleadthorpe, Perlethorpe and Bilsthorpe are local examples.

Other place names with Scandinavian origins are Eakring, Clipstone, Welbeck, Holbeck and Langwith.

