



# Free your boots

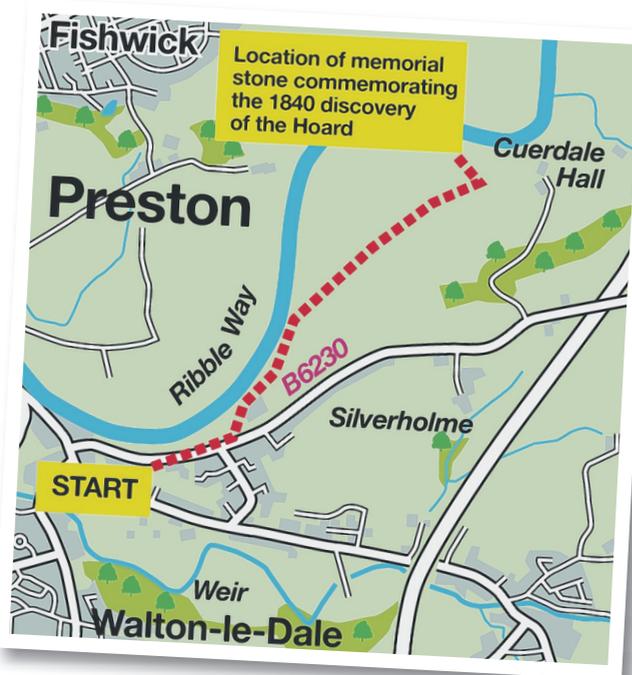
BY BOB CLARE

www.lancashirewalks.com

**S**ometime at the start of the 10th century a bunch of Vikings were rowing up the River Ribble. On board their vessel was an enormous treasure chest full of silver. For some unknown reason the Vikings decided to stop, dig a hole and bury their swag. None of them ever came back to collect it.

In 1840 (175 years ago this year) the hoard was discovered by a gang of workmen repairing the nearby bank of the river. Some attempt was made by the workmen to fill their pockets with coins from the find but following the intervention of a bailiff they were allowed to keep one piece each while the rest was taken to Cuerdale Hall where the trove covered a sitting room floor. It was the largest Viking hoard ever found in Western Europe.

The hoard was made up of 8,500 items mainly coins from Viking controlled territory. The other items were ingots with cut up broaches, chains and rings known as "hack silver". From the dates on the coins historians can tie down the burial of the hoard to a five year period between 905 and 910. Much of the hack silver has been identified as being of Irish origin giving rise to speculation as to whether there was a connection with the Viking expulsion from Dublin in 902. The Ribble would have been a natural highway between Dublin and the great Viking centre of York (Jorvick). Were these freebooters on their way to as-



sist some warlord in the north east of England?

Freebooting marauding Vikings fit into the popular notion of the Viking Age when the constant prayer was "From the fury of the Northmen deliver us O Lord." Yet the discovery of the hoard gives us another picture - one which reflects the wide international connections the Vikings had across the known world in all likelihood made not by conquest but peaceful trade. The non-Viking coins originated from the English (Anglo Saxon) Kingdoms, the Continent, Byzantium and areas of Moslem influence in the Middle East and beyond.

The Cuerdale Hoard is a national treasure and most of it is exhibited at the British Museum. However there are displays locally at the Harris Museum, the Lancashire

Museum and the South Ribble Museum. In the summer months Dr David Hunt leads a guided walk to the site of the discovery. The walk described below follows that route.

**Directions:** From the church cross the road and turn right. After 300yds bear left onto a farm drive which drops down past residences and then before farm buildings swings left and then right alongside a tall hedge. After a metal gate (where you may encounter mud so be prepared) the public footpath follows the field boundary on the right. Initially you are close to the river but the takes you away from it as you cross a large bend of the Ribble. After four fields the path reaches a metal gate alongside a wire fence. Through this the public right of way continues on an enclosed track near Cu-

erdale Hall. Safe in knowledge you have permission, once through the gate turn left and head towards the river bank. The memorial to the find - a squat stone marker is situated close to the fence.

Extension to the walk. For readers who would be irked by retracing their steps return to the public footpath and turn left and where the path divides close to the hall bear left. After passing through a gateway cross to a stile in the hedgerow ahead. From here follow the path along the riverside. This will take you onto the A59 at Brockholes Bridge. Turn left cross the bridge to join the Guild Wheel Cycle Route/Ribble Way by turning left on the far side. In 2½ miles this brings you to London Road A6. Turn left across London Road Bridge and kept ahead to Walton-le-Dale. After 700yds turn left into Cuerdale Lane.

● Walk devised by Dr David Hunt, curator of South Ribble Museum & Exhibition Centre.

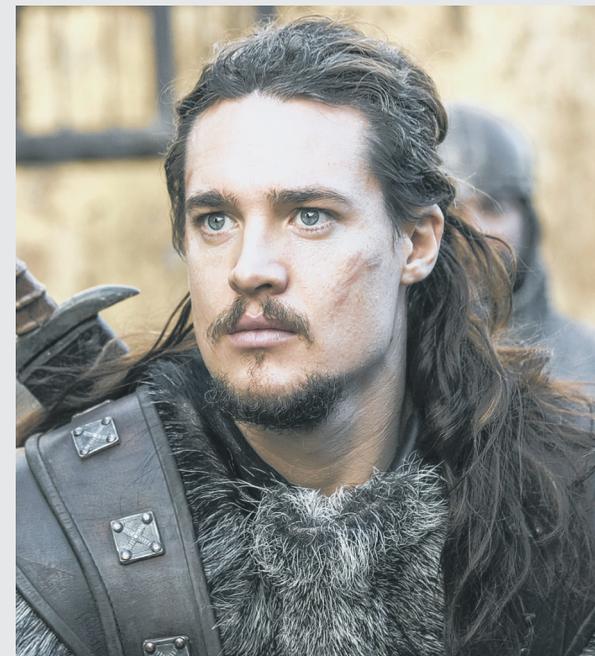
## Factfile

**START:** St Leonard's Church, Walton-le-Dale  
**DISTANCE:** 2 miles, 3k (extended walk 5 miles, 8k)  
**TIME:** 1-1½ hours (extended walk 2-2½ hours)  
**GRADE:** Easy. Please note the last part of this walk leaves the public right of way. Readers wishing to view the memorial stone should contact the farmer, Mr John Redmayne on 01772 877307  
**MAP:** OS Explorer 286 Blackpool & Preston

## Remote Control

BY PHILIP CUNNINGTON

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Alexander Dreyfuss stars as Uhtred in BBC2's *The Last Kingdom*

## MAN BUNS AND A NORSE CODE

**T**hose Vikings were a funny lot, weren't they? All being called Ragnar or Ragnarsson, or Ragnar Ragnarsson, having hipster beards and man buns before such things were invented, and killing their wives as barns burn down around them.

From what I could make out in *The Last Kingdom* (BBC2, Thursdays, 9pm), one particularly bloodthirsty Nordic pillager was called Abba. He didn't seem much of a dancing queen, but he was certainly keen on nailing people to things and dropping Saxon women from the rafters.

Anyway, these Vikings have come to Northumbria intent in taking over, and the Northumbrians are intent on stopping them. They seemed a bit lily-livered, these Dark Age Geordies, to be honest - none of this bare-chested bravado you see at St James' Park - and they fell into a Viking trap and were slaughtered.

Apart from young Uhtred, heir to one of the three lords of Northumbria, who was captured and put to work as a slave. Which

didn't seem like a bad thing, as once they'd finished slaughtering and pillaging, these Vikings liked farming and country pursuits - a bit like a hairier, dirtier Chipping Norton set.

Needless to say, this rural idyll couldn't last, and soon Uhtred's Viking protectors were being killed in awful ways, and the now grown-up Uhtred was swearing vengeance.

I've not seen *Game of Thrones* - I know, I know - but *The Last Kingdom* seemed grounded in reality, literally, given all the dirt on show.

It was a bit difficult keeping track of which Viking was which, apart from Rutger Hauer, giving it full Lurpak voice, who stole every scene he was in, even the one he was supposed to be dead in.

I think it's going to be fun following this, especially as Alfred - before he was the Great - appears soon.

Meanwhile, *The Returned* (More4, Fridays, 9pm), well, returned, and hit its stride straight away.

Although it's about people coming back from the dead, it's not a zombie thing, but it is chilly, creepy, and really, really good.