

# Viking Spy Adventure

This activity can be used on a phone or tablet, it will be rather unweildy if you print it.

The adventure will take you on an imaginary journey to an Anglo Saxon Town (Warwick). The places are real places, some of the people mentioned are historically documented people, but it all happened such a long time ago that our modern town has been built over the top of almost everything so you will need to use your imagination to see it all.

There is a map below showing you the 7 locations that you can visit, there are also 5 conversations to have.

For each location there is a piece of the story to be read and a decision to be made about where you should go or what you should do next. You will **not** be visiting the different locations in numerical order, you have to look through the story to find the right location or conversation to read next!

The story is given in the left-hand column and any historical information directions or explanations are given on the right.

Start by reading the introduction, looking at the map and making your first decision.

Good luck!

## **Introduction**

The old kingdoms of the Angles and Saxons (Essex, Wessex, Sussex, Mercia and Kent) were brought together by King Alfred of Wessex and, after a lots of fighting, he defeated and then made peace with the Vikings who had made kingdoms such as Northumbria in the North of Britain, giving them a large part of Mercia in the process. But in recent years Alfred's daughter, Aethelfeda, has taken a large piece of Mercia back, and is building a new fortified town right in the middle: Warwick.

You are a Viking, or rather you are Norse and you have set out viking to seek your fortune.

You set sail in a longship with a group of traders from your home in Helsingborg. You sailed and rowed

*Mercia was the Anglo Saxon Kingdom in the middle of England; the kings of Mercia lived at Offchurch on the far side of Leamington.*

*We call this Alfred "Alfred the Great".*

*Viking meant going to find your fortune: That might be by finding rich towns, attacking and taking their treasure; or*

across the North Sea and had to fight against a storm on the way which threw great white waves over your decks as you skimmed across the treacherously shallow water.

Finally, you found a wide estuary between sand banks, reed beds and marshes on the Eastern coast of the island of Britain. The old helmsman of the longship told you that the estuary led to the Ouse and then on to Jorvik, the biggest town in Danelaw. After five days of rowing upstream along a winding river you arrive.

You decided to stay in Jorvik and look for a party of other Vikings to join. So, for a month, you spent your time making new friends and working for one of the town's black smiths, helping make axes.

One morning a finely dressed group of Vikings arrive at the forge. Their helmets glint gold in the sun and you notice that their swords have precious stones set into the hilts. The blacksmith whispers to you that this is Eric Bloodaxe, who is the King of Northumbria and Norway, before rushing to get the best of his weapons to show him.

Eric Bloodaxe looks over the weapons, but after a moment he tells the blacksmith that really he is looking for a fine young Viking who isn't afraid to travel alone for a dangerous job.

The blacksmith looks over at you. He says something to the king that you can't hear, and the king steps towards you while the blacksmith starts selling his fine axes to the other men in the group.

Eric Bloodaxe, takes you to one side and explains that he wishes to attack the new Anglo-Saxon town of Warwick and restore Viking control to that part of Mercia. However he is wary because there have been reports that Aethelfreda has had great walls built around the town. He doesn't want to attack with too few Vikings; he doesn't want to fail. So he needs someone to find out more about the town of Warwick, its defences, its people and the crossing over the river Avon that it defends.

With your heart nearly leaping out of your chest in fear

*traveling to trade. You might return home after viking or you might settle in new lands.*

*The Helsingborg Maelstrom is a great area of vicious whirlpools in Denmark.*

*Ouse is the Viking word for river, and Jorvik is now called York. Danelaw was the Viking part of England.*

*Eric Bloodaxe was a real Viking king of Northumbria and Norway at the time.*

*Avon was the Anglo-Saxon word for river.*

and excitement you accept and Eric explains that you must travel South to Leicester, then follow the old Roman Street called the Fosse until you reach Offchurch and then strike West for about 6 miles.

*Street is the Anglo Saxon Name for a Roman Road: Street means straight because the Romans built straight roads.*

He counts off on his fingers the five things he needs you to find out about:

1. The size, extent and weak points of the new defences.
2. Whether the river crossing is a ford, a ferry-boat or a bridge.
3. What the people are transporting across the river.
4. What useful people there might be living in Warwick.
5. What the Anglo Saxon leaders are like.

*A ford is a place where you can wade (walk) through a river, the water would probably come up to a grown-up's chest.*

*In place names "street" is often written "Strat" so Stratford is a place where a Roman road does what?*

He says you should not let anyone know what you are doing and, if you return to Jorvik, you should seek him and he will reward you highly.

You nod your understanding and he passes you a small purse of coins and hack silver to help you on your way, then returns to his group and they leave the forge laughing.

*Hack Silver is old bits of cut up silverware. If you were viking you might not want to carry the great big silver plate you stole, so you might chop it up and use it as money.*

You say goodbye to the blacksmith, pack your things and begin your long journey South through dark hills and forests, using your silver to buy food on the way. The going is easier once you get to Leicester because, just as Eric had said, the old Roman Street is still well marked, paved and easy to follow. But you are now entering Anglo Saxon lands and you go more carefully in case you meet someone unfriendly. You leave the road to the North of Offchurch, skirt the earth dykes of Wrappenbury and, by creeping through the Forest of Arden you approach to within a mile of Warwick.

*Offchurch and Wrappenbury are real places near Leamington. Both are nice for a walk.*

You take off the helmet and firs that mark you out as a Viking and hide them with your shield deep in a patch of brambles. Then you comb your hair and part it in the middle, just like the Angles wear it, hoping to blend in with the local people. You practice some of the Anglo-Saxon phrases you've learnt. "Morgen",

"Hwa maca unc?" you say to yourself, trying to make your voice sound just like the local people you've met; you are not sure it is very good, but it'll have to do. You're ready to go.

*"Morgen": "Good morning"*  
*"Hwa maca unc": "what are you making"*

If you want to spy on the town from a distance first, sneak to  
**Location 1**

If you want to get a look at the river crossing follow the paths to  
**Location 5**

## Location 1: Spying on the Town from a Distance



Warwick sits on a low hill. By taking away some the buildings you get a better impression of the hill underneath.



Staying under the cover of trees you make your way to this small hill where you can get a clear view of the town. You can see the town is built on a low hill and surrounded by small fields with goats, sheep and crops growing in them. Muddy tracks lead through the fields to each of the three gates. You can see smoke rising gently from the small thatched rooves within new town walls. Muddy tracks lead through the fields to three gates. You can see a place, however, where there doesn't seem to be a wall.

*You'll get the best view at this location by carefully crossing the race course and climbing the little hill with the park bench on it, then looking back.*

If you want to investigate the new town walls further follow the paths straight up the hill and go right to **Location 2**

If you want to investigate the gap in the walls follow the paths straight up the hill and go left to **Location 3**

If you have found out enough about the town and wish to return to find your helmet, firs and shield; read the **Conclusion**.

## Location 2: The Town Walls

You are amazed at the work that is going on here to make these new walls! The walls are starting to look like man-made cliffs!

At home in Helsingborg all the buildings are made out of wood but here there are people actually digging into the rock. They have made a flat rocky area on the outside of the wall and they are using rock they have dug up to build the wall. Where the rock wall is not finished there is a high wooden wall.

You don't fancy climbing the rock-built wall or the wooden wall, but you think there might be a way to get in where they are replacing the wooden wall with rock.

You notice that there is a track that goes around outside the town walls.

If you want to follow the track round the walls go to **Location 3**.

If you want to get a good look at the Town from further away go to **Location 1**.

If you want to get a look at the river crossing go to **Location 5**



*You should be by the Bus Station looking behind to the modern brick building near the door that appears to open half-way up an ancient wall.*

*Theatre Street follows exactly the track around the outside of the Anglo-Saxon Walls. It still feels like you are outside a wall when you walk along it!*

### Location 3: The Town Ditch

As you approach you realise why there are no town walls here yet. A team of people are digging an enormous ditch at least the width of a longship! And it's deep too; it goes down into the into the rock. They have wooden ladders to get in and out. If you got down into the ditch you don't think you'd be able to get up the far side without a ladder.



*You should be just behind The Globe Hotel by a set of steps down to The Holloway.*

If you want to speak to the diggers read **Conversation A**

If you want to get a better look at the town walls go to **Location 2**.

If you want to get a look at the river crossing go to **Location 5**

*The Holloway may well be the remains of the Anglo-Saxon ditch. What we know for certain is that it was used as a medieval cart track to get heavy loads in and out of the town, but it is also in the right place to have been part of Anglo-Saxon defences.*

### Location 4: The Main Road Across the River

As you walk down the main road to the river you see a an Ox cart filled with small white crystals , and another carrying the sort of planks that the small thatched houses lining the road are made of.

There is a woman sitting on a large bundle of something drying her shoes, she has obviously just crossed the river.

If you want to approach her to find out more read **Conversation D**.

If you want to investigate a hammering noise you can hear in the distance go to **Location 6**.

If you want to follow the paths around the town walls go to **Location 3**.

*Walk down Mill Street, which is the road to the original river crossing. It is almost unchanged since 1789 when the new bridge was buildt. The houses aren't Anglo-Saxon, but beneath them there will be Anglo-Saxon remains. The Anglo-Saxon houses would have looked like long thin sturdy sheds made from thick planks with a hole in the roof to let the smoke out.*

## Location 5: Spying on The Bridge

You creep to the edge of the river and get a good vantage point by paddling out through the reeds and crouching down.

As you peer out of your hiding place the first thing you notice is a man with a cart and two oxen splashing through the water, the Oxen are thirsty and want to stop to drink, but the man is shouting and tugging them forward. You can't make out what is in the cart.

Then two women step into the river from the left bank carrying the most enormous bundles above their heads to prevent them getting wet.

As the man and his oxen move on they reveal two more men working on a little island near the right bank of the river. They have built a pile of stones and seem to be trying to attach wooden planks together to reach from the island to the bank; a new bridge.

Looking around you see that the river splits in two before the place where the people are crossing and a much narrower, but fast flowing, stream disappears into the reeds on the left bank crossed by a short bridge. "They have built a weir across the river and changed how the water flows, to make it easy to cross." you whisper to yourself.

Then you notice the the land on the left bank has been cleared of trees to make farmland. The crops are growing really well, the people must be using the river to water them.

Before you can see more you are disturbed by a hammering noise that starts in the distance and realise your feet are wet and cold. You decide you have seen enough.

If you are brave enough to find out about what the people are carrying across the river go to **Location 4**

If you want to investigate the hammering noise you can hear in the distance go to **Location 6**.



*You will actually need to stand on the modern day bridge (a mere 230 years old) for this Location, but imagine you have crept to this position on the river bank below.*

*Look along the river towards the castle and you will see a ruined pile of rock to the right of the centre of the river. It is an old bridge pier.*

*It is not certain whether the ancient pier in the middle of the river is of Anglo-Saxon origin, or even whether they built a bridge or just used the ford and weirs, but it is in the right place to be the Anglo Saxon river crossing.*

*Warwick means weir-farm; wick and wich being the Anglo saxon for farm.*

*A weir is a wall or mound built across the river that helps control the water. The river flows over the weir, but usually there is a second channel for the water to use as well. There is a very pretty weir under the suspension bridge in Leaminton.*

## Location 6: The Forge

You follow the sound of hammering and it gets louder and louder. After a while you smell the smoke of a hot fire and the tang of red hot iron.

By a fire in a small thatched shelter by a thin Anglo-Saxon house made of large planks of wood an enormous man wearing a leather apron is hammering out a sword blade on an anvil. You notice other tools and weapons hanging up for sale; you can see that they are well made and have sharp edges. It is a forge, and the man is the smith.

He turns to greet you with a wide smile. "Wilgeist" he says and begins to show you the swords and axes he has made.

If you want to reply to him read **Conversation B**

If you don't want to speak, you smile and shake your head and wander off. You can either:

Go to get a better look at the river crossing by follow the paths to **Location 5**.

Or, if you are brave enough, find out about what the people are carrying across the river by going to **Location 4**.

If you want to investigate the town defences more closely wind your way to **Location 3**



*You should be on Smith Street.*

*"Wilgeist" means "Welcome Guest" the W would probably be said like a V.*

*Smith street is outside the town. Why? The smiths (blacksmiths who worked with iron, but also gold smiths and silver smiths) had hot fires that might set fire the the buildings. It was safer to have them out away from where everyone else lived.*

## 7: A Local Hero

You follow the road away from to town towards Coventry and before the top of the hill you find yourself in a deep, ancient, wood land. It feels like a magical place; the lichen and moss is hanging from the trees like weird fur. At the top of the hill you see a tall man dressed in rags who is staring off into the distance as if in a trance. By now you are not sure whether you have taken the right road so you resolve to ask him the way to the Hero Guy's of Warwick's Cave by the Avon.

You walk towards him, he looks so dreadfully thin that there is not a patch of fat on him, but beneath his skin

*Stop at the junction of and the Coventry Road and Guy's Cross Park Rd.*

you can see wiry bulging muscles that tremble like a lynx waiting to pounce.

The strange man appears not to notice you until you are close enough to touch him and hear his heavy breathing. Then he suddenly turns his head to stare at you and speaks.

“Why do you disturb me, Viking?”

“I, I was going to ask whether this is the right path to Guy of Warwick’s cave,” you stammer.

“It is, but you will not find Guy of Warwick there.” His eyes, a piercing ice blue, bore into you as if he is reading your very thoughts.

“I wished to ask him whether it is true that he killed a monstrous cow with his bare hands?” You manage, though you feel he knows this already.

He looks to the sky; “All that is said of Guy of Warwick bares truth, and he treats Vikings as he treats all foul monsters.” Each word sounds out like the blows of a great axe.

You back away and stumble back down the road you came by, with your heart pounding and your head ringing and befuddled from the fearsome magic of the place.

You try to regain your wits and decide what to do next.

If you want to investigate a hammering noise you can hear in the distance go to **Location 6**.

If you have found out enough about the town and wish to return to find your helmet, firs and shield; read the **Conclusion**.

If you want to investigate the town defences more closely wind your way to **Location 3**

## Conversation A

You wave to get the attention of one of the diggers and say "Hua maca unc?"

*What are you making?*

The digger looks at you with a furrowed brow "I would have thought that was obvious," he says "digging Aethelfreda's ditch to keep out those murderous Vikings. But I haven't seen you before, stranger, where have you come from?"

If you want to reply as best you can that you are just passing through read **Conversation C**.

If you don't like his tone of voice and want to hurry away you can either:

Get a better look at the town walls; go to **Location 2**.

Get a look at the river crossing; go to **Location 5**

## Conversation B

You reply to his "Wilgeist" by saying "Morgen, Hua maca unc". But he just laughs heartily and beckons you to him.

*Good morning, what are you making?*

If you walk over to him read **Conversation E**

If you want to run away you can either:

Go to get a better look at the river crossing by follow the paths to **Location 5**.

Or, if you want are brave enough, find out about what the people are carrying across the river by going to **Location 4**.

If you want to investigate the town defences more closely wind you way to **Location 3**

## Conversation C

You say "Forpbigferende." which you think is the word for "Passing by." But the man in the ditch is looking even less friendly, the other diggers have stopped digging and are looking at you and whispering together, one is climbing up the ladder.

"I don't think you are passing by," says the man in the ditch, "I think you're going to head back North into Danelaw aren't you, Viking?"

You decide to make a run for it and sprint off down the hill to **Location 1**

*If this sends you straight back the way you have come, you can try again without walking back down the hill!*

## Conversation D

You smile at the Woman as she squeezes her shoes and she responds by saying; "Oh don't you hate getting your shoes wet, still it's better than having slimy feet, that's what I say! At least I've got a bundle of wool to have a good rest on today, last week it was a pig and you can't sit on a pig can you!"

"No!" you say smiling.

"Still," she continues, "it'll be good when they've got the bridge built, no more wet feet then, and they're expecting a lot of people to come on market days, there's going to be a market every week once the Walls are built they say! So what are you carrying then?" she says, "Not a lot? Are you in the salt trade? Going back up from Oxford to Driotwich to get another cart load I'll bet. You lucky thing travelling around so much, I've barely been five miles from where I was born. Still I don't envy you having to persuade those Oxen to pull it, real heavy it looks, all piled up in the carts, but the going is a bit easier I'll bet once you get to the fosse. Don't say much do you?"

"Mmm," you manage, smiling.

"Oh, not from round here then, I thought your voice sounded a bit funny. Looking for work building the walls I shouldn't wonder, that or felling trees out past the fields. Still, while you're here you should pay your respects to Guy our big hero, living out by the Avon in a cave he is. Saved the whole of Mercia from a ferocious wild boar they say; as big as a house it was and he tricked it into a corner and killed it. Then there was the time he strangled the Mad Cow of

Dunsmore...”

Just then a flock of sheep come skittering out of the river up the street followed by two boys and a girl who are struggling to control them. The sheep are bleating fit to burst. You wave goodbye to the woman and decide what to do next:

If you want to investigate a hammering noise you can hear in the distance go to **Location 6**.

If you want to meet the hero Guy of Warwick go to **Location 7**.

If you want to get a better look at the river crossing go to **Location 5**.

If you want to investigate the town defences more closely wind your way to **Location 3**

## **Conversation E**

He takes a step towards you as you approach, you think he might be about to grab you with those enormous hands but to your great surprise speaks quietly to you in Norse.

“You are lucky you met me,” he says, “Vikings aren’t welcome here at the moment.” He motions for you to sit with him on a bench, lifting a club hammer and tongs out of the way.

He explains that he grew up in Northumbria, in Danelaw, and then came South. He has been working in Mercia since long before Aethelfreda took the land back from the Vikings. He doesn’t want to move and his Mercian wife and children are happy here. “These fighting men come storming through; kings swap places; but it doesn’t really make much difference to we who do the real work, we just put our lives back together and carry on.” He says Aethelfreda’s changes to the town have been very good for him, there is lots of work! “Everyone needs tools and wants a beautiful sword to strut around with, I have too much work to do! Which reminds me, I could do with someone to help around the forge, and I like the look of you. If you want some work I’d pay a fair price. Have you got any metal working skills?” he asks.

You reply that you have, but you're not sure if you want to stay, and ask what the leaders are like in town.

"Well," he says, "Aethelfreda's best warriors are passing through here all the time at the moment, but," he lowers his voice here, "have you heard of our great hero, Guy? He's here all the time. He killed a huge mad cow with his bare hands! He's living in a cave by the Avon to the North of here if you want to meet him. But I'm not sure he likes visitors!" The smith laughs to himself and picks up his tools to get back to work, "Come back if you want some work," he says, "and keep your mouth shut until you can hide that Norse accent better!"

If you want to meet the hero Guy of Warwick go to **Location 7**.

If you want to get a better look at the river crossing go to **Location 5**.

Or, if you want are brave enough, you can find out about what the people are carrying across the river by going to **Location 4**.

If you want to investigate the town defences more closely wind you way to **Location 3**

If you have found out enough about the town and wish to return to find your helmet, firs and shield; read the **Conclusion**.

## Conclusion

You return to the patch of brambles where you hid your helmet, firs and shield. You have found out a lot about the town of Warwick and count off on your fingers the things that you will be able to tell Eric Bloodaxe.

You sit down on a nearby tree stump to think it all over. The defences in Warwick are being built very quickly, and look very strong. You're not sure that Eric Bloodaxe will be pleased with what he hears, or what he will do with somebody who brings him news that he doesn't like.

Perhaps you will travel back to find Eric Bloodaxe.

Or you might want to look for a Viking party to join somewhere else; Eohric perhaps?

*Eohric was the viking part of East Anglia*

You might even want to stay in Warwick and get work here, that blacksmith actually looked quite friendly!

It's up to you!

One more thing, it would be wonderful if you could look back at Eric Bloodaxe's questions and write some answers to them.

