

# Wood Quay

## Revealing the heart of Viking Dublin

Between 1974 and 1981, excavations in Dublin's historic centre revealed a vast swathe of intact archaeology spanning most of the Viking-founded town's Scandinavian occupation. Now the full findings have been published for the first time in a landmark new book. Carly Hilts takes a tour through the Viking streets.

**A**s Pat Wallace stood in the shadow of Dublin's Christ Church Cathedral in 1974, the view that lay before him was truly spectacular. It was not the soaring religious building that held his attention, though, but something a little closer to the earth. Pre-development clearance of the Irish capital's historic centre had laid bare an early medieval time capsule: waterlogged layers of well-preserved archaeology some 3m deep, containing unprecedented echoes of the town's Viking past. With over 100 houses, thousands of objects,

and a wealth of environmental evidence, the four-acre site at Wood Quay would shed light on every aspect of life in the early medieval settlement over a period of five centuries. And, at the age of just 25, Wallace had been placed in charge of the entire investigation.

The discoveries came to light because the Dublin Corporation (now Dublin City Council) had selected Wood Quay as the site of its new headquarters, and it was not a project without controversy. Pioneering work by the late Breandán Ó Ríordáin (1927-2017; Pat's predecessor both in excavating Viking Dublin, and

as Director of the National Museum of Ireland) had previously demonstrated the extent of surviving archaeology from this period in the town, and as the significance of what lay beneath the surface at Wood Quay became clear, calls to halt the development grew in volume. A campaign spearheaded by Prof. F X Martin – chairman of the Friends of Medieval Dublin – culminated

