



## **The Medieval Settlement Research Group in 2011**

Working in reverse, the end of 2011 marked a particular high point for the *Medieval Settlement Research Group* with the publication by Windgather Press/Oxbow Books of a major survey of *Medieval Rural Settlement. Britain and Ireland, AD 800-1600*. Edited by former President Paul Stamper and the present Secretary Neil Christie, this 370 pp volume features an array of talent – past and current Committee members and MSRG researchers – who present an opening set of articles on the development of medieval rural studies as well as aspects of pre-medieval settlement and lordly landscapes (Part I of the volume), a series of regional and national surveys (Part II), and a concluding section (Part III) on how to investigate medieval rural sites. The emphasis is on English regions in Part II, but there are important papers on Wales, Ireland and Scotland too! A notable element of the Part II papers are feature boxes detailing particular sites, themes and projects.

The volume was formally launched at the AGM and Winter seminar held in the Great North Museum at Newcastle University on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2011, alongside the Harold Fox memorial volume, *Life in Medieval Landscapes: People and Places in the Middle Ages* edited by Bob Silvester and Sam Turner. The Seminar (kindly overseen by Sam Turner) took as its theme ‘Heartland to Frontier: the Tees-Forth Region in the Middle Ages’: there was a set of six well illustrated and very informative papers, ranging from *David Petts* considering Roman to early medieval cultural transformations in the Tees Valley, to *Rob Collins* exploring Recent Anglian discoveries recorded by the PAS in the North East, *Alice Blackwell* on Anglo-Saxon finds from northernmost Northumbria, and to *Chris Burgess*’ description and discussion of the battle of Flodden.



*Pendragon Castle, Mallerstang, on a sunnier day than 3.4.2011 (Photo copyright Angus Winchester)*

For the MSRG Spring Conference we were delighted to team up with Lancaster University's Centre for North-West Regional Studies for a day of papers on Saturday 2 April 2011 on the theme of 'Medieval Settlement in the North West'. Kindly hosted by Lancaster University, the papers comprised: *Richard Newman*, County Archaeologist for Cumbria, on Advancing the research agenda for medieval rural settlement in North West England; *Caron Newman* on Understanding the later medieval settlement pattern of Cumbria; *Matthew Hyde* on Medieval Cumbria: the missing bits; *Mike McCarthy* on Early medieval monastic landscapes; and *David Griffiths* on Settlement and Landscape around the Viking-Age Irish Sea, connections and contrasts. On Sunday 3 April 2011 there was a guided coach excursion, led by conference organiser Dr Angus Winchester. The itinerary was based around a transect across the western Pennines from the Lune valley to the upper Eden valley, taking in the landscape and deserted medieval settlement of Sotherscales, Chapel-le-Dale, a Wensleydale vaccary landscape, and the ruins of no less than Pendragon castle. The latter (see photo) was likely erected c.1180 by De Morville, baron of Westmorland, to close Mallerstang valley, its name (recorded by 1309) one of the cluster of Arthurian associations in the Eden valley. Enlarged c.1300 and actively garrisoned against Scots raids, it was badly damaged in 1341 and again 1541. Later it saw restorations and extensions under Lady Anne Clifford, whose diary for 1660 says: 'in June of this year my directions was also my decayed castle of Pendragon in Mallerstang... begun to be repaired, which had layne waste... ever since the time of King Edward III, when the Scots did then burn down the timber of it... and it was soe well repaired by me that on the 14<sup>th</sup> October in the year following I lay there for 3 nights together, which none of my ancestors had done since Idonea, the younger sister of Isabella de Veteripont lay in it, who died the 8<sup>th</sup> year of Edward III.' Soon after we hear of a new resident, Capt Braithwaite, Parliamentary officer, although a 1680s source tells us his wife 'in a mad-melancholick fitt left down & broke her neck & all her bones to pieces' from the castle tower. Angus Winchester reassured us that no such injuries were sustained on the 2011 fieldtrip.

The MSRG Committee's new web-manager, Tara-Jane Sutcliffe (CBA York), has overseen a major overhaul of the website – please visit <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/msrg/> and offer us any feedback and suggestions for links and projects to report on. This will shortly host an archive section, since the Group have undertaken the digitisation of all the back numbers of the MSRG's Annual Reports (since 2009 formally a journal and named *Medieval Settlement Research*) in order to have these as online searchable resources (hosted by ADS). Digitisation is planned in the near future of reports from the pre-MSRG era, in terms of the Medieval Village Research Group, the Moated Sites Group and the DMV Research Group. Members will be advised on this important archive once active, but it is intended to be accessible for all using the website.

MSRG membership stands very healthily at c. 475. We are delighted at the growing number of MA and PhD students who are taking advantage of the bargain £6 per annum student membership (half cost of the full membership), and are keen to enhance their presence further. An innovation planned for 2012 was the election of a student representative for Committee meetings. Please see the webpages for the Membership Form. Note that as well as a copy of the journal, any member is eligible to apply for fieldwork grants (awards of up to £500) and students can apply for the Beresford conference bursaries – see details in the journal of how to apply to the various awards. A final reminder also that there is an MA Dissertation Prize in honour of John Hurst (*entry date*: 31 December each year).

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