



M.S.R.G. The Medieval Settlement Research Group in 2013-14

Across 2013 and the first half of 2014, the *Medieval Settlement Research Group* (MSRG) held two Spring conferences and a Winter Seminar and generated the latest issue of its journal (Volume 28).

For 25-26 April 2013, Graham Fairclough and Peter Herring had kindly organised, with the Landscape Research Group (LRG), a Spring meeting in Penryn-Falmouth on the theme of '*Medieval Perceptions of Landscape. How did people in medieval Cornwall perceive their environment?*' The event featured a set of very informative papers, much appreciated by the 40+ delegates who were drawn from both LRG and MSRG membership and not only from Devon and Cornwall; talks ranged from explorations of non-elite perceptions of landscape and space, to discussion of Reformation-period perceptions of coastlands, the Branscombe Project, plus medieval and post-medieval concepts of prehistory in the Cornish landscape. There was also good attendance of the Sunday excursion to Godolphin House and park, courtesy (and without charge!) of the National Trust.



The 2014 Spring Conference was held at The Hive, Worcester on 22-23 March 2014: organised by Jeremy Lake of English Heritage and held in conjunction with the Vernacular Buildings Group (VBG) the theme was '*Medieval Rural Houses, Farmsteads and their Landscapes*'. With a busy crowd of over 50 delegates, including members of the Historic Farm Buildings Group, this lively event pulled in an array of expert speakers to consider patterns of survival of buildings in their landscapes, and the questions that arise for future research, from a diverse range of areas after an overview of national issues from the longhouses of Dartmoor to the evidence for capital-based farming in the chalk downlands. These included work on dating medieval houses in the southern Midlands, the robustness of medieval settlement as a key factor in shaping new patterns of development in England and how the analysis of patterns of survival can reveal intriguing new questions about dwelling and working in medieval landscapes in Cumbria and across the West Midlands. The Sunday

excursion took in various surviving medieval farmsteads and landscapes in Worcestershire and southern Warwickshire, namely Bromesberrow (estate pictured above), Castlemorton and the Brockhampton estate.

For early December 2013, the AGM and Winter Seminar were again held at St Edmund's Hall in the University of Oxford. Organised by Jeremy Lake, the seminar talks debated aspects of the '*Futures of Medieval Settlement*', first drawing on work by English Heritage on designation, mapping the survival and historic character of traditional farmsteads, Historic Landscape Characterisation and the National Mapping Programme, and then exploring through case studies work and issues on farmsteads; bastles and shielings in the Pennines; and contrasting landscapes in Suffolk, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and SE England.

The MSRG Student Committee Member, Dr Susan Kilby has organised a student-led Winter Seminar for 2014 which will feature eight student papers plus posters on themes attached to settlement and landscape; the event will be held in the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester on Saturday 13 December. See the webpages for the programme.

The MSRG's John Hurst MA Dissertation Prize was awarded in 2013 to Anna Katerina Fotaki, whose University of York MSc dissertation had explored the theme of '*Brief Lives: The Non-adults from Two Neighbouring Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries in Norton, Cleveland*'; and in April 2014 the award went to Krissy Moore (MA in Landscape Archaeology, University of Sheffield) who had undertaken '*A Reassessment of the Archaeology of Caistor, West Lindsey, Lincs., from the 4th to the 11th Centuries*'. It is valuable to note that winners are encouraged to submit an extended summary of their work to the Group's journal –this often forming therefore the very first publication for these budding young (or sometimes mature!) academics. Relevant MA programme directors are reminded of the 31 December deadline for submission to the MSRG Secretary of entries of high quality dissertations (of maximum 20000 words) on a medieval rural or landscape theme submitted and passed in the last academic year.

MSRG membership healthily stands at c 475 members. Membership remains a very affordable £12 (and a mere £6 per annum for student membership) and includes the journal, *Medieval Settlement Research* (published in October/November each year). Please see the webpages for the Membership Form. Note that while there is open access to the archived issues of the journal (former Annual Report) via http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/msrg_2012/, the Society has hard copies of many of these earlier volumes available. If keen on purchasing back issues at minimal cost (a near full run costs just £45 including postage), please contact Dr Robin Glasscock at St John's College, Cambridge CB2 1TP. Note that any member is eligible to apply for fieldwork grants (awards of up to £500) and students can apply for the conference bursaries – see details in the journal or on the webpages.

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