



M.S.R.G. The Medieval Settlement Research Group in 2014-15

Across late 2014 and the first half of 2015, the *Medieval Settlement Research Group* (MSRG) held a Winter Seminar and generated the latest issue of its journal (*Medieval Settlement Research* 29).

The Winter Seminar was held in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Organised by Dr Susan Kilby, the seminar talks formed the theme '*Medieval Settlement and Landscape: new work and new themes*', drawing on work by current post-graduate students from the UK, Ireland and USA. This produced a diverse range of papers exploring topics including place-names, markets and wealth, elite and peasant landscapes and architecture, and anthropological approaches to excavation data. Several posters were also displayed.

The 'Spring' seminar for 2015 took place jointly with the Society for Church Archaeology (SCA) at the University of Leicester 4-6 September. Organised by the SCA's Anne Sassin it featured a day of lectures around the theme '*Church and settlement: rural churches and the medieval landscape*' alongside field trips to local churches and Leicester cathedral. Over 90 delegates were in attendance.

The MSRG's John Hurst MA Dissertation Prize was awarded in 2015 to Lindsey Stirling, whose University of Aberdeen MSc dissertation had explored the theme of '*The land beneath the sand: contextualising the early medieval shell middens at Sands of Forvie*'. 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/MSc 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.

A single award was made for the MSRG's 2014 Research Grant, to Dr Letty ten Harkel (University of Oxford) for her project '*Special deposits of human remains in early medieval settlement contexts? A case study from Domburg, SW Netherlands*'. A summary of this research will appear in a forthcoming volume of *Medieval Settlement Research*. All members of MSRG are eligible to apply for grants to undertake relevant research up to a value of £500. Deadlines for submission to the MSRG secretary are 1 June and 31 December each year.

MSRG Committee Member Dr Paul Cavill has organised the Winter Seminar for 2015 which will feature five papers on the theme of '*Place-names and medieval settlement*'; the event will take place at the University of Nottingham on 12 December. See <http://medieval-settlement.com/winter2015/> for details.

Lastly, Professor Stephen Rippon stood down in December as President after his three-year term in the role. Stephen presided over a productive period for the Group including the availability of open access to archived issues of the journal (and former Annual Report) from 1986-2010 via http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/msrg_2012/, an ongoing project in which we hope to also digitise all of the Groups older publications. His successor, Dr Bob Silvester (Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust), was elected in December. Bob has worked extensively on medieval landscapes, including the study of medieval rural settlement in a Wales-wide programme initiated by Cadw, published in *Lost Farmsteads* (CBA, 2006). Alongside this change, Dr Neil Christie, MSRG's Secretary for the last nine years also stepped down in 2014, his replacement, Dr John Naylor, elected at the December meeting.

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 (<http://medieval-settlement.com/membership/>). Alongside research grants, students can apply for the conference bursaries – see details in the journal or on the webpages.

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