



The Medieval Settlement Research Group in 2010

The *Medieval Settlement Research Group* (MSRG) continues its regular round of conferences and seminars to encourage the work, research and interests of its members. Below are summarised the main events and outputs of the Group in 2010.

For its Spring gathering, the MSRG was pleased to link up with the Institute of Continuing Education of the University of Cambridge for the day programme on 13th February 2010 centred on the currently very popular theme of ‘Medieval Parks’; this was well attended with some excellent papers by some of the leading lights in park studies, such as Stephen Miles, Naomi Sykes (with an archaeozoological perspective), Tom Beaumont James (on Clarendon Park) and Rob Liddiard (on the afterlives of deer parks). This was in fact just one of a set of three Historic Environment Research Conferences organised by former MSRG committee member Sue Oosthuizen for the Institute.

The Group’s 2010 Winter Seminar was held on 4th December at the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, and was organised by Neil Christie. Its theme of ‘Medieval Rivers and Bridges’ was in part a follow-up to the 2009 ‘Marshland Landscapes’ seminar. A strong audience was treated to papers exploring ways of reading watercourses and spaces alongside these at Bedford (*Matt Edgeworth*); on burhs, bridges and rivers (*Jeremy Haslam*); and medieval fortified urban bridges (*Bruce Watson*). Unfortunately illness prevented the attendance of two speakers, but we were grateful for an additional talk by Matt Edgeworth, and the summariser, David Harrison was able to offer an extended piece on medieval bridges – sources, types, studies and needs. It is hoped that a number of these papers will be published in the Group’s journal, *Medieval Settlement Research*.

The 99-page volume 24 of *Medieval Settlement Research* was published in November 2010, and featured a set of research papers exploring themes such as documents and archaeology at Caldecote (*Chris Dyer*), deserted medieval sites in Cambridgeshire (*Sue Oosthuizen*), and a French perspective on settlement and landscape in English historical studies (*Magali Watteaux*); plus results of new fieldwork at sites like Dalton in Cumbria, and in the Gower Peninsula. We are keen to expand the coverage of the journal and to encourage debate and thus especially wish to encourage potential contributors of research papers to contact the editor, Dr Sam Turner (sam.turner@ncl.ac.uk) with their ideas and proposals.

The winner of the John Hurst MA Dissertation Prize for 2010 was Susan Kilby (MA in English Local History at the University of Leicester; now underway on a PhD, also at Leicester), whose thesis explored peasant perceptions of the landscape using the case study of Elton village and manor (Cambridgeshire). A summary of the dissertation will be included in this year’s journal.

It is important to flag initiatives on the part of the Group: firstly, the MSRG has started the process of digitising past *Annual Reports* to make these available as searchable pdfs via the website; secondly, the website itself is in the process of major updating thanks to a new web-manager, Tara-Jane Sutcliffe; and thirdly, current and past Committee members have combined in a substantial volume on *Medieval Rural Settlement: Britain and Ireland, AD 800-1600*, edited by the current Secretary and President (Paul Stamper), to be published by Oxbow/Windgather in autumn 2011. In addition, a volume of papers in honour of Harold Fox, *Life in Medieval Landscapes: People and Places in the Middle Ages* edited by Sam Turner and Bob Silvester, sponsored by the Group in conjunction with the Society for Landscape Studies, is due in Summer 2011 also from Oxbow. Both publications will show not just key evidence and themes but also some of the next steps needed in our research of medieval rural settlement and landscapes.

MSRG membership stands at c. 475. It was pleasing to observe that a good number of students had taken up the £6 per annum student membership (half cost of the full membership) – a bargain to MA and PhD students pursuing work in the various fields explored by the MSRG. 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.

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