

Medieval Settlement Research Group

May 2019 Newsletter I



Membership Fee reminder

Membership fees are due annually on **February 1st**. If you still pay by cheque please consider swapping to Direct Debit via our website <https://medieval-settlement.com/> or send your cheque to:

Dr Helen Fenwick, Department of History, University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX

h.fenwick@hull.ac.uk

Student members

The MSRSG would like to encourage students to become an active part of the medieval settlement research community. We are building a section of our website to showcase research within the field of medieval settlement undertaken by students: <https://medieval-settlement.com/student-research/>

Please send bios to Paul Shaw – our Student Rep:

shawhq@btinternet.com

Introduction

At its meeting on 6 February, the MSRSG committee agreed to introduce a newsletter which could be distributed to members, principally by email but also by post where necessary. The intention is to keep you better informed about the work of your officers and committee, work which often goes unreported except in the committee minutes. We regularly provide advice on medieval settlements and landscapes, both to researchers and to people who wish to understand better the history of their local area.

It is also a means of keeping you up to date more generally with recent and current field projects, and on post-excavation/publication work relating to past field projects. Reports of recent and current work used to be a regular feature of our old *Annual Report* series. Now that our journal *Medieval Settlement Research* is largely devoted to more substantial, peer-reviewed academic papers, we hope you will find that this newsletter is a good way of keeping in touch with current investigations and research.

Provision of advice

The MSRSG receives queries and requests for advice from a wide range of people and different bodies. In each newsletter we will try to report recent requests.

HS2 Consultation

In October 2018 one of our vice-presidents, Paul Everson, represented the Group at a consultation meeting focused on the potential impact of the proposed HS2, phase 2a project – the high-speed rail line from Lichfield to Crewe – on the historic environment. On the basis of Paul's report, the group made a formal response to HS2 Ltd, strongly recommending an initial landscape study of the parishes and townships along the whole of the route, attempting as far as possible to characterise the pre-modern landscape, its settlements, its resources and evidence for their use, through retrogressive analysis combined with relevant archaeological and historical sources.

Back Issues of *Medieval Settlement Research*

A reminder that back issues of *Medieval Settlement Research*, along with predecessor publications - the Annual Reports of: Deserted Village Research Group; Moated Site Research Group; Medieval Village Research Group; and Medieval Settlement Research Group, are all available open access through the Archaeology Data Service. See here for further details:

<https://doi.org/10.5284/1017430>

Dates for the Diary Winter Seminar and AGM

**Saturday 7th December
2019**

*New Directions in Settlement
and Landscape Studies,
University of Leicester*

Speakers include:

- Professor Stephen Rippon
- Dr Ben Morton
- Dr Ben Jervis
- Dr Duncan Wright
- Professor Naomi Sykes

Spring Conference 2020:

*Settlements and the Sea,
Hull, April 2020*

MSRG Bibliography

Every year in *Medieval Settlement Research* we provide a list of works published the previous year on the topic of medieval settlement research – if you have recently published in this area and would like it adding to the bibliography please email Andy Ford:

andyford.marlow@btinternet.com

Community Archaeology Projects training day

The East Midlands Council for British Archaeology is organising a one-day training event for the 22nd June 2019 in Nottingham aimed at preparing volunteers for doing community field archaeology projects. It will be a day of workshops and panel discussions covering field-walking, test-pitting and excavation. It has been set up as a pilot project aimed initially at residents of the East Midlands, but if successful it will form a template that can be used by CBA groups all over the country. For details go to the CBA EM website. <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbaem/>

Peter Allen, Vice-Chairman CBA East Midlands

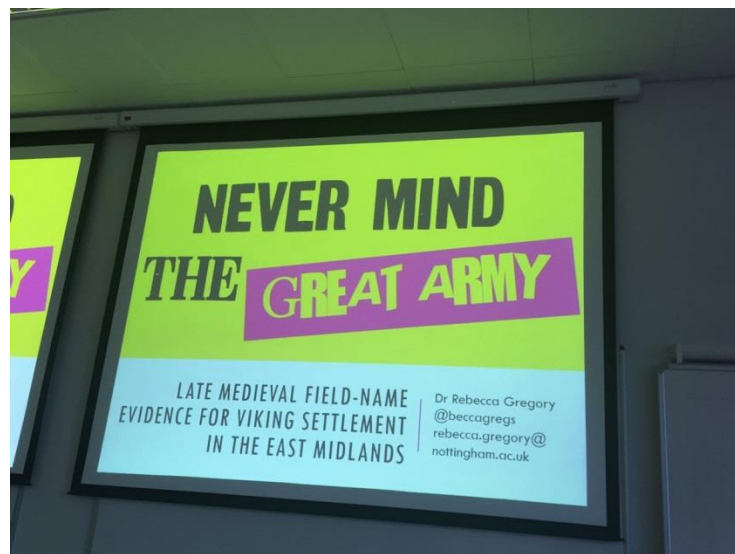
Winter Seminar – December 2018

John Hurst Prize, AGM and Settlement in the Danelaw

On December 8th 2018 a packed room came together for the Winter Seminar and AGM of the Group. However, kicking us off in the morning was the newly revised John Hurst Prize. An open call went out to post-graduate students to submit proposals for papers to be presented in a morning competition. Four students presented papers of a very high standard. Matthew Tuohy, from the University of Leicester presented a paper entitled 'The medieval landscape of the hundred of Willey: a view from an eighteenth-century road map' examining the Jeffries Map of Bedfordshire from 1765 and its value for investigating the road network and settlements of the county. Next up was Gerben Verbrugghe from Ghent University with a paper entitled 'Novum Rollarium: tracing Flemish identity through planted settlement landscapes in Wales and Flanders' investigating the presence of Flemish immigrants in South Wales from the 12th century and any impact on settlement planning. Paul Shaw from the University of Leicester presented a paper entitled 'Terroir and tradition: the role of farming choice in the Scandinavian settlement of the Leicestershire Wreake valley' where he explored this specific location as a way of challenging the idea that Scandinavian incomers settled in areas of poor agricultural potential through necessity rather than choice.

The final presentation was from Cassidy Croci from the University of Nottingham with a paper entitled 'Perceptions of routes to and from assembly sites in Viking Age Iceland, as displayed in *Brennu-Njáls saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*, and *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*'. This paper investigated the perceived nature of the landscape in the sagas as well as the cultural value placed on those features. All the presentations were of exceptionally high quality and after questions and deliberations, the judges finally awarded the prize to Gerben Verbrugge.

Following this the AGM of the Group saw reports from all the officers, the appointment of one new ordinary member – Dr Rebecca Gregory from University of Nottingham, and the creation of two new officer roles: Membership Secretary (with Dr Helen Fenwick appointed), and Community Archaeology Officer (with Peter Allen appointed).



The title slide from Rebecca Gregory's presentation from the afternoon session

The afternoon session focused on *Settlement in Danelaw* and saw four fascinating papers. The first session started with Professors Julian Richards and Dawn Hadley from the University of York examining evidence for the Viking Great Army. They showed how their earlier work at sites such as Torksey had allowed a methodology to be developed of an 'archaeological signature' for the Great Army that could now be applied to other sites. Next up was Dr Rebecca Gregory from the University of Nottingham with the excellently titled 'Never mind the Great Army: late medieval field-name evidence for Viking settlement in the East Midlands', examining evidence from the army through place-name evidence – adding more weight to the presence of Scandinavian settlement across wide areas. After the tea break the final two papers of the day focused on the impact of Scandinavian settlement in the Vale of Pickering and on the Wolds of eastern Yorkshire. Stuart Wrathmell, President of the MSRG, discussed the creation of new townships with place-names ending in -by and containing Scandinavian personal names, and how these new territorial units related to pre-existing Anglo-Saxon communities. Professor David Stocker, University of Leeds, talked about the pattern of pre-Conquest sculpture in Ryedale, and what it can tell us about landscape development: how it might explain the disintegration of the pre-Viking monastic landscape and its replacement by the ecclesiastical provision that can still be recognised today. These thought-provoking papers generated many interesting conversations throughout the day.

MSRG Grants

MSRG can make grants for the support of research by members within its field of interest. Grants can cover fieldwork and associated analysis, documentary research and other appropriate forms of assistance towards publication.

A maximum of £5,000 is available annually until 2021, and applications for sums up to this amount are invited. Deadline **31st January**

Maurice Beresford Memorial Bursaries

In memory of Maurice Beresford, the MSRG awards small student bursaries annually to help defray the expenses of attending a conference within the field of the Group's interests, including the Group's own seminars and conferences. Applications are invited throughout the year. See our website for details

John Hurst Memorial Prize for Students

John Hurst Memorial Prize comprises a competition for up to four students (postgraduate or advanced level) to present a fifteen-minute paper on any theme related to medieval landscape and settlement in the British Isles or Europe during the morning session at the MSRG Winter Seminar. The best paper will win £200 and the opportunity to publish a paper in our journal. **Deadline 1st October.**

For further details of all these awards see:

<https://medieval-settlement.com/grants-awards/>



Gerben Verbrugge, John Hurst Memorial Prize winner 2018

Awards and Grants

In December 2017 the committee responded positively to a grant request to pay for spot-dating the pottery found at the deserted medieval village site of Hanging Grimston, North Yorkshire. Excavations there are currently being carried out by the Scarborough and District Archaeological Society and the High Wolds Heritage Group. Brief reports on previous work can be found at: <https://www.sahs.org.uk/Recent-Fieldwork.html>

In 2018 a grant was awarded to Agni Prijatelj and Dr Karen Milek for a soil survey and ge archaeological assessment in the hinterland of Lindisfarne Priory – a report of this work can be found below.

In February 2019 the Group awarded funding to three projects. The first was to Dr Rhiannon Comeau, of University College London. This project seeks to improve understanding by dating a charred grain assemblage from a corn dryer adjacent to a shrunken medieval hamlet at Bayvil, 5 km from Newport, Pembrokeshire. The second was to Andrew Mayfield, Community Archaeologist, Kent County Council - *Our Manor of Randall*, north-west Kent. Funding will support post-excavation work following Heritage Lottery-funded community archaeology excavations between 2006-2015 of this exceptionally well preserved medieval manor. The third project is being finalised and will be announced in a future newsletter.

Report from recent grant holders

Soil Survey and Geoarchaeological Assessment in the Hinterland of Lindisfarne Priory

Ms. Agni Prijatelj and Dr. Karen Milek

Department of Archaeology, Durham University

MSRG Grant 2018

Investigations of on- and off-site soil and sediment archives, which have the potential to provide robust records of settlement and economic activities and their environmental contexts, have so far rarely been integrated into research on monastic landscapes in northern Britain. The present project is redressing this using soil survey and geoarchaeological analyses to contribute to the ongoing Lindisfarne Excavation project and to explore whether ancient soils are preserved in the hinterland of Lindisfarne Priory, Holy Island, and whether they have the potential to contribute to the reconstruction of former landscapes. During our research trip to Lindisfarne from September 10-14, 2018, we conducted an extensive field survey of the island, excavated and sampled a test pit in a field west of Lindisfarne village, and intensively sampled the floor of an Anglo-Saxon timber building in the priory excavation area. The soil test pit (figure 1 and 2), which targeted geophysical anomalies thought to relate to the monastic *vallum*, revealed a possible buried medieval plough soil, which we are currently radiocarbon dating and analysing using a suite of geoarchaeological methods. Designed with a strong public outreach component, our project offers a geoarchaeology lab training programme for student volunteers and members of the public. Lab analyses of the collected samples culminated in a public training event called *Lindisfarne Science Live* on April 16, 2019, which was lived-streamed broadcast on Facebook Live. This enhanced the scientific value, dissemination reach, and social impact of ongoing archaeological research at Lindisfarne. It is hoped it will also enable us, once all the analytical data is collated and interpreted, to propose further research and a soil survey strategy for the hinterland of the monastery.



Figure 1. A student volunteer from Durham University helping to excavate the soil test pit in the Glebe Field, west of Lindisfarne village (photo by Hannah Kirby).

Figure 2. Micromorphology samples (in tins) and bulk soil samples (sequence of holes on the right side) being taken from the test pit in the Glebe Field for geoarchaeological analysis (photo by Karen Milek).



Spring Conference review

30th March 2019

New Discoveries in the Cambridge Region: Medieval Settlement in the A14 Corridor and its Wider Context

University of Cambridge

It was standing room only for this conference focusing on the exciting finds being unearthed during the construction and widening of the A14 and A1 close to Cambridge. The morning session was dedicated to the teams undertaking this work, and the afternoon session reviewed this evidence in the light of wider settlement studies. The sites uncovered exciting evidence of settlements from the early medieval period through to the High Middle Ages and provided an exciting catalyst for discussions during the day. The morning session began with Richard Mortimer from CGMS discussing the excavations at Conington. This 1.4km site provided evidence of activity across all periods including a Bronze Age field system and an Iron Age settlement. A Roman structure at the site may well be a temple complex. Close to this lay the focus of the early Saxon material which included 24 SFBs (Sunken-Featured Buildings) and 2 to 5 post-built structures. During the Middle Saxon period the site underwent a number of changes and the focus shifted away from the Early Saxon core. Initially a number of tracks and ditches appear then an organised enclosure was constructed, which was then further extended. Some of the ditches of this period are deep and are not just agricultural features. The team hope that the pottery that has been retrieved will help refine typologies and chronologies of the Early to Middle Saxon periods. As part of the enclosure a number of very large post holes were uncovered. One was 2m deep suggesting a post that was possibly 4m tall – a possible beacon? The gateway to the enclosure was also protected by large gate posts.



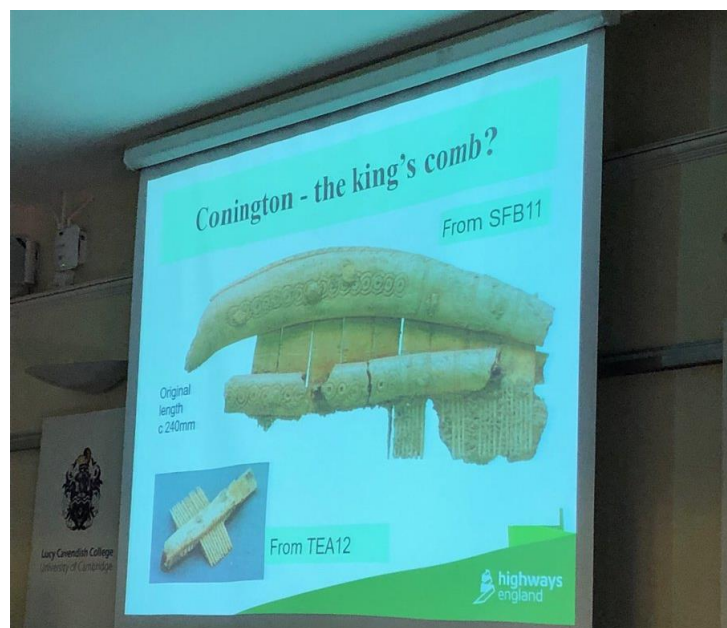
The packed room at the Spring Conference

This presentation was then followed by Emma Jeffries from Headland Archaeology on the settlements excavated close to Brampton from the Middle Saxon to post-Conquest periods. This area of the excavations was divided into a number of discrete zones – but some of the gaps in between sites may hold further information. There was evidence of Early to Middle Saxon activity across the area with a total of 34 SFBs being uncovered – sometimes isolated, in other areas forming groups. During the Middle Saxon period settlement consolidated to one site around 3.5 hectares in size. Here 38 post-built buildings and 6 SFBs were uncovered along with 20 pits/wells. To the north of area was uncovered the remains of the deserted medieval settlement of Houghton (much discussion on the day over the exact pronunciation!). The excavation covered 2.5 hectares of the settlement and this seems to include the majority of the settled area. The main feature was a trackway with a number of enclosures. Pottery from the 12th to mid 13th century was uncovered, with then a resurgence in activity in the late 14th century. It is suggested that around 12 buildings have been uncovered – but they are not clear on the ground – formed by various clusters of posts.



Emma Jeffries talking about the sites close to Brampton

The next two presentations looked at the small finds (Lyn Blackmore, MOLA) and the archaeobotanical evidence (Lara Carretero, MOLA) from across these two areas of excavation. The small finds included 359 finds from 9 different sites – and the numbers will change as more are fully recognised and dated. At Conington there was evidence for textile weaving and at Brampton plenty of evidence of dress accessories. A nice decorated double-connecting plate comb was one of the best finds from the site and is of an English tradition though examples have been found in the Netherlands. Over 1000 samples have been taken from across these sites for archaeobotanical analysis. The initial review phase has found high concentration of charcoal and charred cereal grains. There has been very little evidence of chaff suggesting that processing of the grain was happening away from the buildings or in the fields.



The comb from the excavations at Conington

The afternoon session considered the context of these finds. Professor John Blair, University of Oxford, kicked things off with his investigation into grid-planning in the early medieval landscape. Research from across the country has found a number of settlements were laid out using a grid of 4 short perches (one short perch is 15ft), particularly in eastern areas. A grid of long perch (18ft) units is also found in Wessex. There was a demonstration on how grid-planning could be applied directly to the settlements at Brampton and how it might be used to highlight possible buildings and phases of activity.

Next Dr Sam Lucy, University of Cambridge, reviewed the East Anglian context to the settlement finds. First she highlighted how there is growing evidence for continuity from the Late Roman period and that we should now view the Early Saxon period within the context of this continuation and avoid using 450 AD as a starting point. Late Roman material had been found in the same context as Early Saxon pottery at Mucking and both seem to be in contemporary use. Metal artefact chronologies have also been shown to be more complex. Roman timber buildings are now being identified, with one at Camp Ground (Cambridgeshire) dating to AD 325. An SFB has also been excavated from the Roman period in Kent. She highlighted that we should question our cultural assumptions of the early medieval period.

EU Members can now pay online

We have now set-up our online payment system so that EU members can pay through this service. Membership fees are:

Full Members €19 click [here](#)

Student Members €13 click [here](#)

Or see our website here:
<https://medieval-settlement.com/membership/>



Newsletter Editor

Dr Helen Fenwick

Department of History

University of Hull

Hull

HU6 7RX

h.fenwick@hull.ac.uk

News items welcome

Next Deadline: 1st October 2019

Professor Chris Dyer, University of Leicester, then presented the context to the deserted settlement at Houghton describing it as a hamlet in a landscape of villages. There is a single building in the area that still bears the settlement name. Occasionally the settlement was known as Wood Houghton to distinguish it from Houghton 10km to the east. There are very few documentary references to the settlement. The settlement appears to have disappeared from the record by the 15th century, although Houghton Closes and Houghton Field remain as names on later maps, and the pottery from the excavations suggests a resurgence in this period. It did not appear on the 1968 gazetteer of deserted medieval villages published by Beresford and Hurst. The settlement is located in an area characterised by nucleated villages, but is comparatively small in size, on the edge of a larger settlement so it has been called a hamlet. In the 1279 Hundred Rolls the sokemen are recorded as belonging to the hamlet of Houghton. In comparison villages in Huntingdonshire are typically large in medieval documents, with a large number of households, but this could be an administrative illusion with sub-division common with two villages or polyfocal centres.

The final presentation of the day was delivered by Professor Carenza Lewis, University of Lincoln, on the villages around the A14 route that have been investigated as part of her CORS project (Currently Occupied Rural Settlement). This project has seen the test-pitting within settlements across eastern counties and further afield. Reviewing the evidence along the A14, the settlements of Houghton and Wyton (the other Houghton), Histon and Impington, Rampton, Willingham and Cottenham have been investigated. All these settlements had produced a range of pottery from the Roman period onwards. Early Saxon material had often been recovered from close to each respective later medieval church – some then seeing a decline in the Middle Saxon period before the appearance of concentrations of material back close to the churches in the Late Saxon period. Following the information from the CORS project, it was asked whether in the future it may be possible to help predict where medieval occupation may be found.

On the whole, the day started many interesting conversations and allowed exciting and ongoing new discoveries to be placed in a wider context – the material that has come from these excavations is keeping many specialists busy at the moment – but I know the members will be waiting to see the final reports first hand.