

Medieval Settlement Research Group

March 2020 Newsletter 2



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:

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Student members

The MSRSG would like to encourage students to become an active part of the medieval settlement research community. Students have a dedicated page on our website to showcase their research: <https://medieval-settlement.com/student-research/>

Please send bios to Paul Shaw, our Student Rep: shawhq@btinternet.com

Introduction

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2020. Here we bring you news from the committee, briefly review the Winter Seminar, provide updates on recent research grants, and highlight upcoming events. We unfortunately bring you news of the decision to cancel the Spring Conference (see page 5). In this edition, we also introduce the Medieval Village Research Group Archive which is currently being catalogued. As the newsletter develops, we will happily include news items from members so please do send them in.

Helen Fenwick, Membership Secretary

News from the committee

At the AGM in December two committee members, Andrew Rogerson and Peter Allen came to the end of their term of office. Thank you for all their contributions over the last few years. We welcomed to the committee Mark Forrest (General Editor, Dorset Record Society) and Gareth Davies (Trent and Peak Archaeology).

Membership fee increase

Members who were present at the AGM last December will be aware that a motion was passed to increase the Group's annual subscription fees. The current fees were set in 2005 and analysis of our accounts shows that expenditure is now outstripping income on an annual basis. The increase is needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Group and its ability to offer benefits to its membership. The new subscription fees are as follows:

UK Full membership: £20

UK Student membership: £10

UK Joint membership (two individuals living at the same address): £25

EU Full membership: €30

EU Student membership: €15

USA Full membership: \$35

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 12th December 2020

See pages 5-6 for a full list of up-coming events

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 our new compiler Wanda Machin 18019935@uhi.ac.uk

The changes will come into effect on 31st January 2021. Members who pay with Direct Debit via the GoCardless system will be automatically transferred to the updated payment plans. Members who pay via Standing Order must update their mandates directly with their bank. This can usually be done through online banking. Please contact the Treasurer, Andy.seaman@canterbury.ac.uk if you have any questions.

Seeking a new Editor

The MSRG is currently looking for a new Editor for its annual peer-reviewed journal *Medieval Settlement Research*, starting from December 2020 (<https://medieval-settlement.com/publications/journal/>). The new Editor will replace Dr Letty ten Harkel, who is standing down for personal reasons, but will be available to provide advice and ensure a smooth handover during the transition period.

The new Editor will also be able to call on a small, experienced team for support, including an Assistant Editor, a Reviews Editor, and a Bibliographer responsible for the Annual Bibliography.

Fluency in English, a passion for the subject, the ability to work to tight deadlines, and an eye for detail are essential; previous editorial experience in an academic context (but not necessarily for a journal) will be very useful. Following a probational period of 1 year, a minimum commitment of 3 years will be expected.

There is no financial remuneration for the post, but the journal has an excellent reputation and practically runs itself. Discussions to form a collaboration with an academic publisher are currently at an advanced stage.

Questions and informal expressions of interest can be directed towards the Editor, and nominations can be sent to the President or Secretary.

President: Dr Stuart Wrathmell (stuart.wrathmell@gmail.com)

Hon. Secretary: Dr Susan Kilby (sk565@leicester.ac.uk)

Editor: Dr Letty ten Harkel (medieval.settlement.research@gmail.com)

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 2021**

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

The John Hurst Memorial Prize comprises a competition for up to four students to present a fifteen-minute paper, during the morning session at the MSRG Winter Seminar, on any theme related to medieval landscape and settlement in the British Isles or Europe. See the open call for entries on the right.

All grant information can be found here: <https://medieval-settlement.com/grants-awards/>

Awards and grants

First, news from the grant we featured in the last newsletter. Dr Karen Milek and Ms Agni Prijatelj from Durham University, whose geoarchaeological work on Lindisfarne was funded in 2018, have advised that building on this grant, they have now secured a NERC-funded PhD project to continue the work. Further details can be found at this website:

<https://www.iapetus2.ac.uk/studentships/lindisfarne-landscapes-geoarchaeological-approaches-to-human-environment-relations/>

Congratulations to all the Lindisfarne team.

The John Hurst Prize 2020

This year's John Hurst research dissertation prize is now open for entries. It is aimed at postgraduate students at diploma, Masters or doctorate level, and the format remains the same as last year. Simply submit a 500-word summary of your work and a signed entry form. The work should relate to the study of medieval landscape and settlement, and this can be interpreted broadly. You may enter as a current student, before completion, but at a stage where definitive results are available; or after the award of your qualification, and for up to a year after your degree has been awarded.

Up to four entries will be shortlisted, and successful candidates will be expected to deliver a fifteen-minute presentation at our Winter Seminar in December, from which a winner will be selected. Bursaries are available to support attendance at the seminar. We offer a prize of £200 to the winner, but perhaps the lasting benefit of entry will be the experience of delivering a paper to a friendly audience interested in settlement and landscape. The winner will also be invited to submit a short article based on their paper for potential inclusion in our journal, *Medieval Settlement Research*.

Entries close on **30th of June 2020** and full details are available at:

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

Please contact the Hon. Secretary, Dr Susan Kilby, at sk565@le.ac.uk, if there are any queries about the eligibility of applicants or the suitability of a particular topic.

Start preparing your summary now - I can recommend the experience.

Paul Shaw

Student Representative

Report from recent grant holders

Bayvil corn dryer dating project

Dr Rhiannon Comeau

This project sought to date a corn dryer which was excavated, but not scientifically dated, in a 2014 investigation. The site is in Wales, near the north Pembrokeshire coast, and is significant because it lies in the vicinity of a pre-Norman bond tenant hamlet, known from medieval and sixteenth-century records. Archaeological evidence for this hamlet and the llys (court) that it served is lacking, although an as-yet uninvestigated linear arrangement of small enclosures has been revealed in the same field as the dryer by geophysical survey.

The corn dryer contains a rich charred grain and weed assemblage, and the primary purpose of the project was to radiocarbon date it in order to:

- (a) facilitate assessment of occupation and activity in the enclosures revealed by geophysical survey.
- (b) improve understanding of the comparative context of agricultural processes represented by the assemblage.

The results have recently been received, and they suggest an early medieval date for the corn dryer. This dating will inform a reassessment of the archaeobotanical evidence, which will take account of the data at other dryers of the same period. The existing information for medieval agriculture at this site is discussed in a chapter by the project investigator in a recent book: R. Comeau and A. Seaman (eds.) 2019, *Living off the land: agriculture in Wales c. 400 to 1600 AD*. Oxford, Windgather Press.

As part of the investigation, a list of all archaeologically identified corn dryers of medieval date and earlier in Wales is being compiled, since no comprehensive published list of Welsh corn dryers currently exists. Information is being collated from a range of sources, with some scholars generously sharing their research. Dates, location, typology, sizes and archaeobotanical assemblages of corn dryers from the late prehistoric period onwards have been recorded. A full report will appear in the journal in the near future.



Site before and after the damage



Medieval settlements in the news

The site of Withybrook in Warwickshire was reported widely in the news in February. This scheduled ancient monument was severely damaged by its landowners between 2015 and 2018. Despite a series of warnings by Historic England, the site was continually damaged and access denied to the local authorities. The work at the site completely removed evidence of the medieval hollow way at the site and damaged at least one medieval building. A legal case was brought against three individuals who have now been fined and asked to pay damages totalling £160,000.

Andy Wiseman, Historic England's General Counsel and Corporate Secretary stated 'the remains of the Withybrook settlement are of national importance and the site is protected as a scheduled monument – the highest level of heritage protection available. The site's potential to help us better understand medieval rural life and the people who lived, worked and died in this village has been immeasurably affected, as well as what it could tell us about the wider, national picture'. For more information on this story visit: <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/costly-convictions-for-damaging-historic-site-in-warwickshire/>

CANCELLED

Coastal settlement and landscape: exploring relationships between land and sea

Due to the current situation with COVID-19 virus and uncertainty of travel arrangements for our speakers and delegates we have taken the tough decision to cancel this event. We will update members in the future about plans for our conference and seminar series.

FRIDAY EVENING – a walking tour of Hull

9:30 Registration

10:00 **Dave Evans**, Beverley

Erosion, reclamation and drainage in east Yorkshire: settlement along a dynamic coast and estuary

10:40 **David Petts**, Durham University

Medieval fishing landscapes in Northumberland

11:20 Refreshments

11:40 **David Griffiths**, University of Oxford

Medieval coastal sites in sand dune areas

12:20 **Caitlin Green**, University of Cambridge

Missing Lincs: medieval settlement, drowned villages, and lost islands on the Lincolnshire coastline

13:00 Lunch

14:00 **Gillian Draper**, University of Kent

How much did it matter? The sea and settlement on the south-east coast of England

14:40 **Solenn Troadec**, University of Nottingham

Cemeteries, coastal spaces and maritime connections in the western Channel (c.650-1050 AD)

15:20 Refreshments

15:40 **Peter Brown**, Durham University

Dealing with disaster: settlements, society and natural hazards in medieval Britain

16:20 **Keynote Speaker: Tim Soens**, University of Antwerp

Villages on the move. Coastal settlement, adaptation and maladaptation to climate extremes and environmental change in late medieval Flanders

CANCELLED

Upcoming Events

Please keep up to date on all events via their respective websites

8th July: *Leeds International Medieval Congress* – Maurice Beresford Centenary Round Table; *University of Leeds*

5th September: *Lost Villages Found*, Maurice Beresford Centenary, Yorkshire Archaeological Society; *University of Hull*

12th December: *MSRG Winter Seminar and AGM*; *University of Leicester*

Leeds International Medieval Congress

The Group will play a part at this year's International Medieval Congress in Leeds. It is partnering the University's Institute for Medieval Studies to host a round-table session and reception in honour of Professor Maurice Beresford FBA (1920-2005), in the centenary year of his birth.

Maurice was a founding member of the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group, which was the precursor to the MSRG, and in the late 1940s he initiated work at the deserted village site of Wharram Percy on the Yorkshire Wolds. He did more than anyone to establish and promote the study of deserted medieval villages, and set in motion a field of inquiry that has transformed our views of the medieval countryside.

Introductory talks at the session will be given by Professor Chris Dyer, Professor David Stocker and Dr Stuart Wrathmell, and it is hoped that many in the audience will contribute their own evaluations of his work and its influence on settlement studies.

The session will be held on campus at University House, on Wednesday 8 July between 19.00 and 20.00, followed immediately by a wine reception. Members of the Group who wish to attend this event but not the rest of the conference can do so free of charge.

The session will be preceded, on the afternoon of Tuesday 7 July, by an associated visit to Wharram Percy. The organised tour will be limited to conference delegates, but of course the site is free for public access at any time.

If you have any queries, please contact Stuart Wrathmell (stuart.wrathmell@gmail.com).

Further centenary celebrations

The Yorkshire Archaeological Society is also seeking to celebrate the centenary of Maurice Beresford's birth. They are currently planning two events, one focusing on Maurice's work on the History of Leeds, and another focusing on his work on deserted medieval villages. The Leeds event is entitled 'Time and Place: Plotting the Legacy of Maurice Beresford', and will take place on the 16th May at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds. The second session is entitled 'Lost Villages Found' and will be held on Saturday 5th September at the University of Hull, with a field-trip to Wharram Percy on Sunday 6th September. Further details of both events can be found here: <https://www.yas.org.uk/Upcoming-Events/Conferences>

Winter Seminar Summary – December 2019

John Hurst Prize, AGM and New Directions in Settlement and Landscape Studies

The first session of the day was the John Hurst Memorial Prize for Students with Dóra Szábo from the University of Exeter presenting a paper on *Household archaeology of early medieval settlement in Central Europe*. Dóra's research explores the daily activities carried out by each household and those that were shared between households. The research examines the complexity of the community and how households operated across specific settlements. Her focus is on the Carpathian Basin in the 5th-6th centuries, and is part of a much larger project looking at the settlement across the region.



Packed room once again for the Winter Seminar

The Winter Seminar explored a recent review of medieval settlement research undertaken by Professor Stephen Rippon and Ben Morton on behalf of the group. The session started with **Stephen Rippon** introducing the review which covers work undertaken in England, Scotland and Wales. The review does not reference every piece of work carried out over the period 2007-16, but assesses general trends. In the past, a tendency toward fieldwork focused on deserted medieval villages in the Midlands was noted, but more recently, much fieldwork has been development-led. Long linear developments such as pipelines are allowing for the analysis of transects through landscapes, particularly in areas previously not studied in detail. There has however been a decline in field-walking activity, as it does not often fit into development-led project timelines. Other large-scale projects are also having an impact on medieval settlement studies, such as the National Mapping Programme of aerial photography and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) data. Recent projects tackling big data such as John Blair's *Building Anglo-Saxon England* and the *Roman Rural Settlement* project offer methodological examples of that could be followed when moving into the later medieval period.

Dr **Ben Jervis** then examined how the study of material culture of medieval settlements has developed over the review period. There has been a move away from producing catalogues of find types, with more emphasis on synthetic studies. He then presented his current project *Living Standards and Material Culture in English Rural Households*, which uses both documentary records and material culture from past excavations and the PAS to examine the everyday objects found in households. This project highlights issues with the standards of the recording of artefacts in some reports, the need to improve practice, and to build the capacity of finds specialists across the country. Unfortunately Professor **Naomi Sykes** was unable to attend the seminar at the last minute, and so her paper was delivered by Dr Richard Jones. This examined the human-animal-environmental aspects of medieval settlements and the results from projects specifically looking at fallow deer, hare, rabbits and chicken assemblages - all non-native species. All these species were introduced in the Iron Age or Roman period, though in the post-Roman period the populations crashed. There was then a second introduction or repopulation in the medieval period. For example, there were increases in the numbers of chickens in the 11th century across sites in both England and Germany. Dr **Duncan Wright** explored developments in the study of early medieval settlement, looking at the lasting legacy of the search for village origins. Recent work has uncovered early manifestations of villages in the 7th century such as at Cottenham and Fordham. Metal-detecting is also contributing to our understanding of the period but there is still an issue with the number of unreported finds. Also reviewed was the evidence coming from place-name work, for example the idea that 'Kingstons' are not necessarily royal villas but are found on long-distant routeways, acting as control points. Finally, the work that has resulted from the ideas of planning and power in settlement design was reviewed.

Finally, **Ben Morton** provided an overview of work on later medieval settlement. He reminded us that there is much change in the period between the 11th and 16th centuries, but that in many ways this period has been neglected in recent years. He suggested that key areas for further study should include: regional patterns, field systems, political and social change, social agency and settlement morphology, domestic housing, and seasonal settlements. The further study of these topics should be based on digital data and new scientific techniques, but old techniques such as fieldwalking and earthwork survey still have an important role. He also suggested a greater focus on interdisciplinary work. The day finished with a number of discussions concerning the future direction of the discipline. The full review will be published in November in *Medieval Settlement Research*.

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 **for this year only** are:

Full Members €19 click [here](#)

Student Members €13 click [here](#)

Or see our website here:

<https://medieval-settlement.com/membership/>

For payments from outside the EU please contact Andy Seaman
andy.seaman@canterbury.ac.uk

The MVRG Archive

The archive of our earlier Groups, the Medieval Village Research Group and the Moated Sites Research Group, has previously been held in the Historic England Archive in Swindon. A decision was taken by the committee to look for a new home for this archive to increase its accessibility and help the important material it contains to become more widely known. Part of Maurice Beresford's own collection of material on Wharram Percy and medieval taxation records is already part of the archives held at the Hull History Centre, and it was decided that this would be an ideal location for this larger Group archive. The archive contains nearly 300 box files, a card index listing over 8,000 medieval settlement sites, and a large number of aerial photographs and plans of sites. The archive began in 1952 with the creation of what was then named the Deserted Medieval Village Group, and aimed to collate information on all identified deserted medieval sites. The archive not only holds a considerable amount of data on individual sites, but also contains a wealth of information on the development of medieval settlement studies.

The archive is currently housed on the University of Hull campus as it is assessed and catalogued. It will then be moved to the Hull History Centre in Hull city centre where it will be available to be consulted by any interested party. More on the archive in future newsletters.



Professor Chris Dyer and Helen Fenwick viewing the archive in its temporary storage at the University of Hull.

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News items welcome

Next Deadline: 15th September 2020