



# ***MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT RESEARCH GROUP***

## **Call for PhD Application Midlands4Cities Collaborative Doctoral Award**

In conjunction with the Universities of Leicester and Nottingham, the MSRSG is seeking a PhD candidate for its application for an M4C collaborative doctoral award: **Dispersed Settlement in the West Midlands' Severn Valley: an Interdisciplinary Approach**. If successful, this project will start in September 2021.

### **About the project:**

This MSRSG-guided project will focus on landscapes of dispersed settlement (consisting of isolated farmsteads and hamlets) in the middle Severn valley (from Ombersley and Shrawley, Worcestershire to Morville and Claverley, Shropshire). The post-Conquest (1086-1500) settlement history of the West Midlands has been little-studied recently. Generally, medieval settlement studies have focused on areas of nucleated settlement (large villages, with houses clustered together), broadly stretching in a band from the south-west to the north-east of England through the East Midlands, so this proposed research fills both geographical and intellectual gaps in our current understanding of rural settlement formation.

### **Research questions:**

1. Which factors were more influential on patterns of dispersed settlement: physical (e.g. soils, relief) or cultural (e.g. lordship, agriculture, industry)?
2. How do patterns of dispersal compare and contrast across the region studied?
3. Is it possible to determine a chronology of development for dispersed settlement?
4. To what extent did small, isolated settlements subsequently develop?
5. To what extent did the colonization of cleared woodland generate later foundations of dispersed settlement?
6. Did the region have a distinctive social structure, with special regard to lordship, peasant status, holding size, community, parish, farming regime and industry that accounts for dispersed settlements?
7. (Two local case-studies) To what extent is it possible to determine the lived experience, outlook and culture of medieval occupants of small, dispersed settlements, and how might it have differed from that experienced by people living in larger settlements?

## Methodology:

This project will encompass methodologies from landscape archaeology, local history, historical geography, and toponomastics. The following aspects will be key:

- Multi-disciplinary literature review focusing on landscape archaeological, historical, geographical and place-name outputs relating to English medieval settlement scholarship, alongside a comparative review of writing on European settlement.
- Identification of dispersed settlement within the study area using historical documents (especially manorial surveys, court rolls and deeds), early maps, aerial photographs, and place-names.
- Review of key local published histories, including the Victoria County History series and the output of county archaeological and historical societies.
- Review of archaeological grey literature for the study area, alongside a thorough search of the data on the Historic Environment Record (HER), and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS).
- Analysis of existing place-name datasets for the study area.
- The development and population of a database for analysis of the corpus of settlement sites.
- Use of GIS to map settlement sites, in particular the distribution of hamlets and isolated farmsteads and cottages.

We are keen to hear from applicants who have completed / are close to completing an MA/MSc in either landscape archaeology, local history, historical geography or toponomastics.

To apply, please send a covering letter and two references to Dr Susan Kilby, Hon. Secretary, MSRSG by email to [sk565@le.ac.uk](mailto:sk565@le.ac.uk) by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020. We intend to hold virtual interviews for potential candidates.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Kilby', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Stuart Wrathmell, President, MSRG