



M.S.R.G. The Medieval Settlement Research Group in 2020

As I'm sure it has been for all specialist interest groups, it has been a relatively quiet year for the MSRG due to the lockdown imposed following the rapid spread of COVID 19. This year's planned Spring Conference, due to have taken place at the University of Hull, was, like many events this year, cancelled. We fervently hope to be able to invite everyone to Hull next spring, where we will be looking at *Coastal Settlement and Landscape: Exploring Relationships between Land and Sea*, and plans are currently underway to reassemble the brilliant programme that Helen Fenwick had put together for that event. Fortunately, we were all able to meet in Leicester in December for the annual AGM and Winter Seminar. 2019's focus was a ten-year review of settlement studies, assessing the years 2007-2016 and led by Stephen Rippon. This review, following on from Mark Gardiner's 2006 evaluation of the previous period (1996-2006), will be published as a report (Rippon and Morton) in this year's edition of *Medieval Settlement Research*, due out in late autumn. In addition to Stephen, we welcomed papers from Ben Jervis, Duncan Wright and Ben Morton, whilst Richard Jones summoned up his best impression of Naomi Sykes, who was unable to attend at the last minute. A full report of the event is available in our newsletter, which can be found online: <https://medieval-settlement.com/newsletter/>. We continue to support students interested in settlement and landscape studies, and the 2019 John Hurst Prize, awarded at the Winter Seminar, was won in 2019 by Dóra Szábo from the University of Exeter, who presented a paper on *Household archaeology of early medieval settlement in Central Europe*. Congratulations to Dóra! For further information on this competition, please see our website: <https://medieval-settlement.com/grants-awards/dissertation-award/>.

Perhaps one of the best pieces of news this year is that our archive – previously held in the Historic England Archive in Swindon – has now been transferred to a temporary home at the University of Hull. We are currently in the process of cataloguing the contents, following which the archive will be delivered to its new home at the Hull History Centre, where it will feature alongside Maurice Beresford's Wharram Percy collection. It is intended that the archive, which incorporates material from our earliest days as the Medieval Village Research Group, will be much more publicly accessible, not least because for the first time there will be a valuable catalogue detailing the contents.

We continue to support settlement and landscape scholarship through our grants scheme, and this year's round was extremely competitive, with several very high quality applications being submitted. The panel had some difficult decisions to make, but it was agreed to support a pilot phase of *The Yeaving Environments Project*, an initial exploration that will underpin a three-year programme of work across 2021-2023 (Sarah Semple, Durham University); *The Evolution of a Lowland Welsh Landscape: Pollen Analysis in the Dinas Powys Environs*, a project focusing on agriculture and land use between the fifth and twelfth centuries (Stephen Rippon, University of Exeter); and finally *Understanding the Medieval Avon at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire*, an interdisciplinary project seeking to radiocarbon date a palaeochannel featured in a fourteenth-century perambulation (Richard Jones, University of Leicester). We look forward to reading more about these exciting projects in due course, both in our newsletter and journal.

We hope to return to Leicester for our Winter Seminar on 12th December, where we are scheduled to run a programme focusing on *Migration and Communication*. In these uncertain times, please do keep checking our website for updates on this event. Finally, we were delighted to welcome two new colleagues onto the committee in 2020 – Gareth Davies and Mark Forrest. Gareth is the Director of Trent & Peak Archaeology in Nottingham, and his research interests focus on early medieval settlement in the East Midlands. Mark is an experienced historian and archivist, and he edits a number of publications relating to Dorset, including the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, and the Dorset Record Society series.

Dr Susan Kilby
Hon. Secretary, MSRG