

# Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

## Data for an early Anglo-Saxon census of southern Britain released

The University College London (UCL) Early Medieval Atlas is pleased to announce the launch of *Beyond the Tribal Hidage* burial data. This is the baseline research data of the Leverhulme Trust funded project, *Beyond the Tribal Hidage: The early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of southern Britain AD 450–650*, directed by the late Dr Martin Welch at UCL Institute of Archaeology, 2006–9. The project aimed to bring together in an accessible format all the available evidence for burial and material culture in southern Britain from the 5th–7th centuries AD. Over the years Martin had compiled a meticulous card catalogue of sites

in the knowledge that only the full deployment and accessibility of the data would allow the fundamental questions of the early Anglo-Saxon period to be addressed with clarity. This ambition was realised as a digital census created by Sue Harrington and Stuart Brookes.

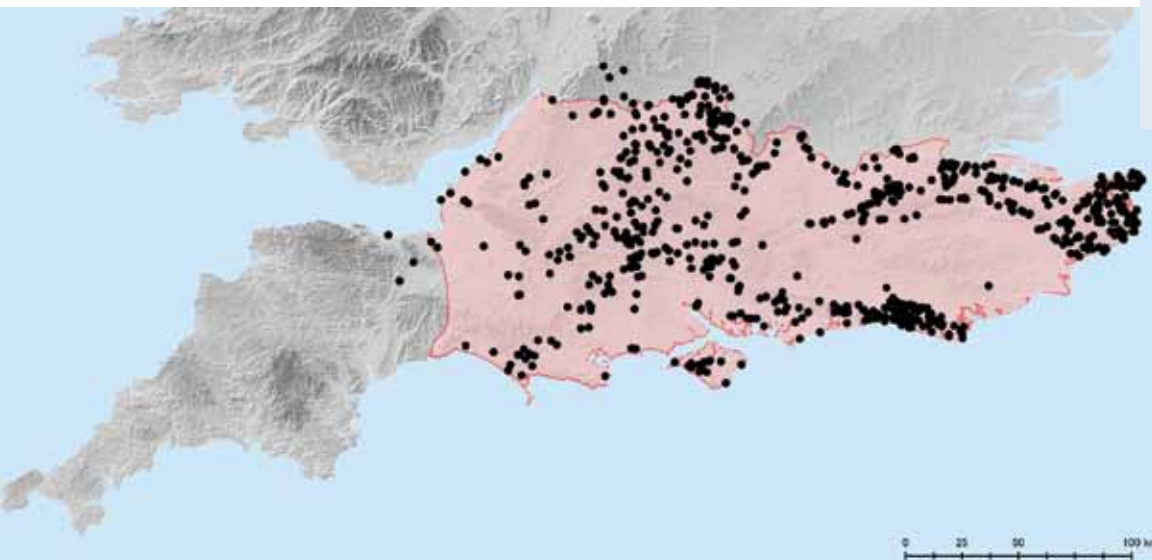
The study area extends south from the River Thames and westwards into Somerset. The process of data acquisition was one of desk-based assessment by county, followed by discrete searches to both published and unpublished grey literature and other archive material held by county archaeological societies, research libraries, national and county journals, museum day books and accession

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While preparing the Spring Newsletter, like so many others perhaps, I look out of the window as my town undertakes self-exercising and lone-walking in what is a surreal time. Yet one's mood can only improve if you listen to the medieval music of MOIRAI as prompted by our guest exhibition reviewer, Anouk Busset, who takes us on a journey into early medieval Switzerland, <https://www.moirai-ensemble.com/audio>. It reminds us there is much out there of interest, as the wider content of the current Newsletter shows.

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Left:  
Distribution of burial sites in southern England, by Stuart Brookes.

registers, as well as through various communications with local researchers. In general, it was possible by this additional level of research to add 10% to the number of sites recorded by national and county archaeological registers. Next, discrete county site lists were assembled, and museum and archive visits arranged to view the relevant objects from these national listings. Data was collected geographically in county sets working clockwise around the study region, beginning with East Sussex in November 2006 and finishing in Kent, Surrey, and Greater London in August 2008. The final iteration of the dataset also includes listings of new sites appearing between 2008 and 2017.

The downloads comprise a Sites table that lists of 834 burial sites with grid references; an Individuals table of 12,379 people for whom there are partial or complete burial records, and an Objects table noting 26,043 associated artefacts. The three tables can be downloaded freely from: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/early-medieval-atlas/map-data/beyond-tribal-hidage-data>. The data enables users to explore the nature, distribution and spatial relationships of burial sites in their landscape context.

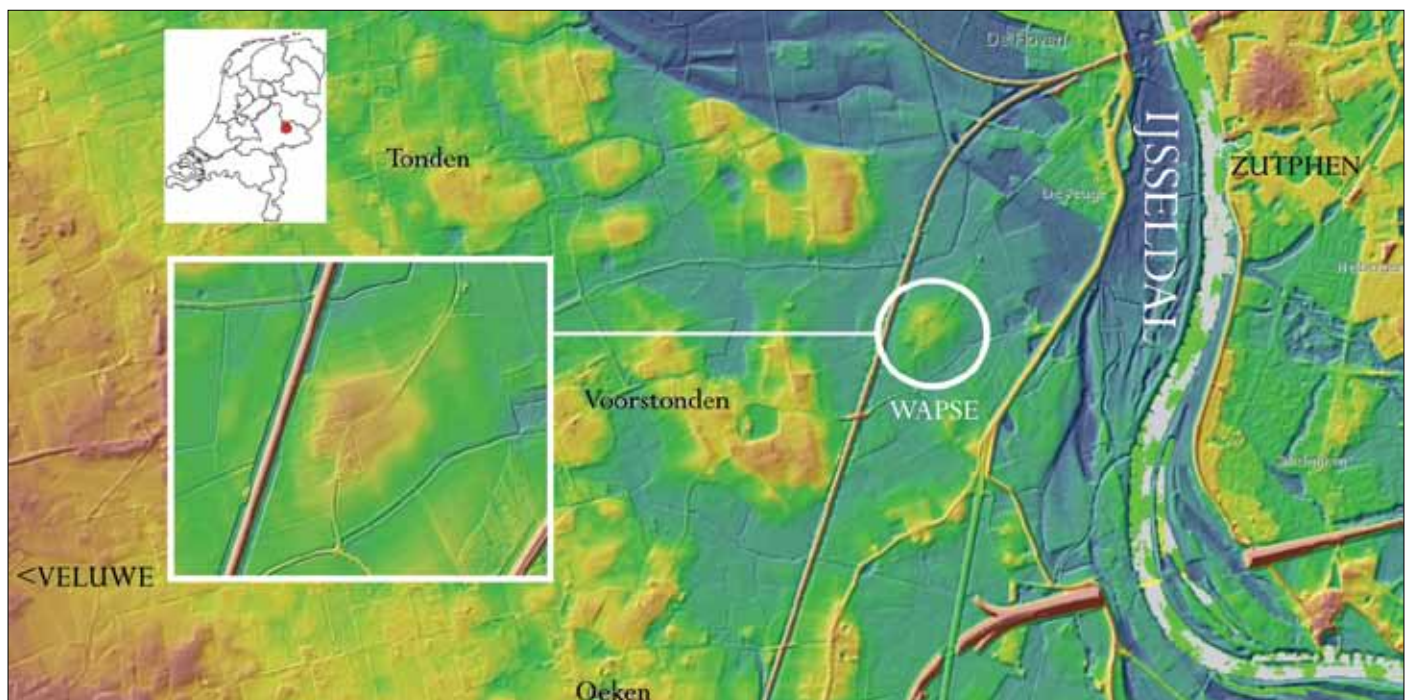
The web page gives a full list of references and suggested further readings. We are pleased to also announce that Dr Audrey Meaney has given us permission to include pdfs of her 1964 gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon burial sites.

As originally envisaged, this data is being made public in the expectation that future researchers will be able to enhance and extend its content. The conclusions of the project, as presented in the project monograph (Harrington and Welch 2014) could be tested, challenged, revised and extended as others see fit in the future, aware that what is presented there is but one assessment of the wonderfully complex and engaging material for this crucial period of early medieval studies.

If you would like further information, please contact:  
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Location of Zutphen and Wapse.

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# The Viking Great Army moves on: New evidence



Lead gaming pieces from Wapse.

In 872–873 the Viking Great Army spent the winter at Torksey (Lincolnshire), where over 2,000 early medieval artefacts provide distinctive traces of Viking activity. These include gold and silver ingots, coins from three Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, dirhams and Carolingian coins, hacksilver, evidence for metalworking, and nearly 300 lead gaming pieces (Hadley and Richards 2016). This archaeological signature has revolutionised our ability to trace the movements of the Great Army and its offshoots across northern and eastern England at over thirty sites, as it engaged in looting, foraging and trading (Hadley and Richards 2018). Now evidence for the movement of some members of the Great Army to the continent has recently been identified at Zutphen in the Netherlands. According to continental chronicles the coastal area of Flanders was invaded by a Viking army previously in England, seemingly the army that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records assembling at Fulham 878–879. However, there are now archaeological grounds for suggesting it was joined by raiders who had been based longer in England. This army moved in the same way as in England, by ships and horses, deep in the Carolingian empire, through the Rhineland, Meuse valley and Flanders, spending the winters in Nijmegen and Elsloo (Netherlands).

Excavations at the site of the new town hall in Zutphen in 1997 encountered evidence for a Viking raid probably dating to the early 880s. They revealed a burnt layer containing late 9th-century pottery, a large amount of slaughtered cattle bones, human remains and destroyed buildings comprising several houses and twelve sunken huts (Groothedde 2004; 2013). Lying on the floors of two of the sunken huts were the skeletons of a c. 12-year-old child and a female aged 30–40 years, who had clearly been violently attacked while on the ground as the female's knee had been cut away and there were sword wounds on her leg. The remains of both individuals were scattered in the huts, suggesting that after they had been killed their bodies had been disturbed, probably by scavenging animals. More human remains were found in several excavations at 's-Gravenhof square in 1946, 1995 and 1999. While there is no written account of any attack on

Zutphen, a Viking army was clearly in the area in 882, when the *Annals of Fulda* record that 'The Northmen burned the port called in the Frisian tongue Deventer ... with great loss of life'. Archaeological evidence of large areas of burning and destroyed buildings found beneath the later town rampart at Deventer has been associated with this recorded raid, which occurred just 18km from Zutphen. That the Zutphen raiders included former members of the Great Army is suggested in part by the fact that next to the skull of the child, was a copper-alloy styca of Æthelred II (c. 841–844) of a type well represented in the late styca hoards from Northumbria and at winter camps associated with the Great Army, including Torksey and Aldwark (North Yorks). A recent metal-detector survey at a site called Wapse on the opposite banks of the Ijssel, has recovered a Trewiddle style strap-end, Anglo-Saxon ansate brooch, fragment of a Scandinavian trefoil brooch, gilt belt mounts, and a Borre-style mount, some of which had been deliberately cut (Fermin forthcoming). The finds from the Wapse site may even be the first archaeological evidence of a Viking camp in the Netherlands, the location of which, although smaller in size (c. 12ha), is strikingly similar to that of the Torksey site, on an island in the river floodplain. Also recovered were four lead gaming pieces which have been found in large numbers at Torksey and other winter camps of the Great Army, including Repton (Derbyshire) and Aldwark. These are a distinctive element of the Great Army signature, and may well have been first made at Torksey (Hadley and Richards forthcoming). Andres Dobat (2017) has also identified four gaming pieces at the North German site at Füsing and three have been found at Hedeby. These rather non-descript pieces of lead demonstrate that not all members of the Army settled in England, and, along with the Northumbrian stycas found at trading places on the continent and around the Baltic, enable us to trace where former members of the Great Army may have headed next.

**Dawn Hadley, Julian Richards** (Department of Archaeology, University of York), **Michel Groothedde** and **Bert Fermin** (Gemeente Zutphen, Archeologie)

# Community Archaeological in Rural Environments – Meeting Societal Challenges

Community Archaeological in Rural Environments – Meeting Societal Challenges (CARE-MSoC) is a new three-year trans-national research project focussed on currently occupied rural settlements (CORS) of medieval date. The aim is to simultaneously throw new light on historic settlement development while also exploring the impact of the excavations on volunteers and communities.

CARE internationalises an approach that in the UK has successfully combined rural settlement research with delivering wider social benefit: research-driven public-participative test-pit excavation (Gerrard and Aston 2007; Lewis 2014; Lewis 2015; Lewis 2016; Lewis 2019). CARE introduces this approach in countries where test-pit excavation is an unfamiliar technique, and public participation in archaeological excavation almost completely unknown. Running over three years, it involves archaeologists from the universities of Amsterdam, Lincoln, Poznan and West Bohemia in training, supervising and supporting rural residents to carry out test-pit excavations in the greens and gardens of medieval villages in the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland and UK; in analysing and reporting on the results; and in working with psychologists to assess the social impact. The project is a European Commission Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) funded jointly by the four national research councils.

The central objective is to involve volunteers in advancing knowledge of the extent and character of the archaeological resource underlying currently occupied rural settlements, and advancing understanding of *longue durée* change. This is an important area of research, as most countries have seen little or no research-driven excavation in inhabited rural settlements, with excavation typically driven (if occurring at all) by the development process; and research, where it has been conducted, dominated by historical and/or cartographic analyses.

In the Netherlands, a recent study of Dutch village formation (Verspay *et al* 2017) highlighted the importance

of systematically studying the built environment of villages to understand the processes leading to village formation, but recognised that good archaeological data from CORS are generally lacking. There is interest in a ‘landscape biography’ approach to the long-term history of places, drawing on disciplines including history, archaeology, geology, historical geography, toponymy and folklore (Kolen *et al* 2015; Bleomers *et al* 2010; Van Londen 2016) and it is hoped that the CARE project will help advance this.

In the Czech Republic research into nucleated rural settlements has illuminated the post-medieval disruptions such as the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648) and 20th-century ethnic cleansing, communist collectivisation and post-1989 privatisation, but investigation within surviving medieval villages in 1990s has mostly been limited to rescue archaeology (Nováček–Vařeka 1996). This has shown that inhabited settlements can provide valuable evidence for medieval and post-medieval settlement development (Vařeka *et al* 2010).

Poland has one the highest rates of rurality in Europe and a long rich tradition of rural settlement studies (Maik 1993; Wójcik 2009), but while this has encompassed villages with different forms and included multi-period reconstructions of the same village in different periods, research has mostly involved historical data analysis and mapping of settlement spatial arrangements rather than archaeological excavation.

In summer 2019, the first year of the CARE project’s test-pit excavations took place in seven rural communities. In the Czech Republic, nine test pits were excavated in two villages in Moravia in south-eastern Czechia, involving 20-30 participants. Interest has been keen and cumulative, with volunteers’ interest in the idea of archaeology writing new stories stimulated by involvement in the excavation process. Finds of medieval and post-medieval date are currently being analysed in order to inform planning for 2020, which will continue in Moravia and start in five other villages. In the

Test pit in front of the Oude Postbaan 1 in Liempde, Netherlands, in an area thought to have become the settlement core only after the nearby village hall was built in 1787.







One of the first CARE test pits, excavated in April 2019 in Aarle, Netherlands adjacent to the 1837 chapel of St Anne on the site of a 1628 shrine which replaced a 16th-century timber chapel.

Netherlands, 31 test pits were excavated by more than 100 volunteers in four villages in the Het Groenewoud area of Brabant, close to the border with Belgium. The project has aroused great interest with soaring volunteer numbers and was shortlisted for national and regional heritage awards. Test-pit excavation in 2020 is planned to continue in these villages and start in four others. In Poland, where a more limited budget is available (under JPI terms), 12 test pits were excavated in one village in western Poland, remarkably involving 25% of all the village's inhabitants, who recovered an unexpected large assemblage of medieval pottery from the village green. In the UK, nine test pits were excavated in Old Dalby, Leicestershire, by c. 50 volunteers who recovered pottery indicating that part at least of today's settlement predated the abandonment of a nearby area of shrinkage near the church and Hospitaller preceptory.

Fieldwork will continue in 2020 and 2021 and the project is due to complete in January 2022. For updates, see: <https://archaeologyeurope.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>

**Carenza Lewis** University of Lincoln, UK; **Heleen van Londen** University of Amsterdam, Netherlands; **Pavel Vařeka** at the University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic; **Arkadiusz Marciniak** at the Fundacja Dziedzictwo and the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland.

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Neighbours excavating in the meadow next to the old timber-frame house of Piet de Vroom (Besselaar 5), in the hamlet of Besselaar in Gemonde, Netherlands, to explore its possible high medieval origins as part of the holdings of the counts of Rode.



# Society Grants

## Attendance at the 84th SAAs, Albuquerque

The Eric Fletcher Fund facilitated my attendance at the Society for American Archaeology's annual meeting, and participation in the session, 'Challenges and future directions in plant stable isotope analyses in archaeology'. My research considered the effect of charring on the isotopic signature of archaeological plant remains, in a paper entitled, 'Identifying crop rotation during the Early Medieval period in England: Charring temperature, contamination and isotopic boundaries'. I explained the problems associated with Early Medieval England lie predominantly in the high charring temperatures and the wet soils in which the botanical remains had been deposited.

The charring experiment considered rye and oat, two previously unstudied species. Problems associated with identifying the temperature to which charred plant remains have been heated were also explained. The act of charring plant remains alters the carbon and nitrogen stable isotopic ratio of the seeds. It is important to understand the temperature

to which the grain was charred. Previous work on other plant species by Nitsch *et al* (2015) showed that an isotopic offset should be applied to charred seeds if comparing them to data derived from uncharred remains. I expand on this and indicate that an isotopic charring offset should also be applied for rye and oat. Archaeological grain should also only be selected for isotopic analysis if they have been charred between 230° and 300°C; this is a slight change from the previous 215°–260°C charring window.

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## Excavation of a site at Lephin, Isle of Mull

Excavation at Lephin Isle of Mull in 2018 and 2019 by Mull Museum and Argyll Archaeology, yielded a wide range of artefacts including pottery sherds, stone, bone, iron and non-ferrous metalwork artefacts.

312 pottery sherds comprising hand-made Craggan Type Wares decorated with beading, stabbed holes or slashed lines around the rim and incised lines or ribbed decoration on the body were recovered. They mostly represent cooking vessels, while a decorated handle and possible spout may indicate jugs. There are similarities in the decoration of these vessels with examples from 12th–14th-century sites, including Baliscate, Isle of Mull, Achandun Castle, Isle of Lismore and Iona.

Two coarse stone tools comprising a Norse period whetstone and a possible pounder were also recovered. Slate is thought to be the remains of preparing or dismantling a slate roof due to the presence of iron-stained perforation and shaped edges. An unworked cobblestone coated in ironworking residue was part of the fill of a posthole. It may have previously been incorporated as the base or edge of an ironworking hearth or furnace consistent with the evidence of ironworking found in vitrified material on the site.

Vitrified material was produced during a wide range of high temperature processes from everyday hearth activity to specialist metalworking and showed evidence of smelting,

blacksmithing and the use of bog iron ore, suggesting bloomery ironworking processes on site, with contexts dated to 12th–late 14th or early 15th century.

86 iron artefacts were recovered mainly comprising small fixtures and fittings such as nails, bolts, roves, hooks, a staple, sockets, handles and also a buckle frame, small knives and a part-finished object. These are consistent with the medieval dates from the site. Working debris also indicate that blacksmithing was taking place in the vicinity.

Eight non-ferrous metal objects were recovered, including one silver Robert III groat coin from Edinburgh mint (1390–1400), two copper alloy fragments of an annular brooch and two fragments of lead; one from a casting spill, the other a folded strip possibly used or intended for use as a repair patch.

Several fragments of a decorated bone comb were also recovered, including tooth plates with iron-stained perforations from the iron rivets securing the comb, one tooth and decorated back plate fragments. Comparison suggests a broad date range of 900–1300 AD. Other decorated fragments are thought to be from a comb case rather than a comb.

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## Website

[www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk)

The website continues to improve. Send us your comments:

[medievalarchaeology@googlemail.com](mailto:medievalarchaeology@googlemail.com)

## Apply for a Grant

The Society is in the happy position of being able to offer grants for research and for travel. For information on how to apply for a Society grant/award, see our website:

[www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk)

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# Society News

## Complementary perspectives on Medieval Archaeology in France and the British Isles

At a time when many conferences are being cancelled because of COVID19, the Society is pleased to announce plans to hold a new conference in 2021 that will be a joint adventure with the Société d'Archéologie Médiévale, Moderne et Contemporaine

The conference will take place over three days in Le Havre. Two days will be devoted to presentations and the final day will include a fieldtrip.

The general theme for the conference will be Complementary perspectives on Medieval Archaeology in France and in the British Isles between the 10th and the 16th centuries.

The conference will concentrate on the later medieval period, including the beginning of the Modern Period.

The organizing committee is made up of representatives from both organizations, and past SMA president **Carenza Lewis** leads our Society's delegation.

Updates will be posted in the Newsletter and on the Society's website.



## SMA Publications Survey



We have launched an online survey to find out readers' views on the society's various publications, including the journal, newsletter, and monograph series. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete, and we very much value your feedback, as we want to know our readers' priorities as we move into a rapidly changing era for both print and online publication.

You can find the survey at: <https://forms.gle/KgMR8jt5XnTNzNam8>, or by scanning the QR code above with your phone. It will also be linked from the SMA webpage as well as the journal site at Taylor and Francis Online. Please feel free to share it on social media, as we wish to get as many responses as possible from anyone who may read the society's publications, both members and non-members. If you would prefer to complete a print version of the survey as opposed to online, please contact [medievalarchaeology@googlemail.com](mailto:medievalarchaeology@googlemail.com) to request one.





## We are delighted to announce the publication of several Society Monographs

**Monograph 40:** *Eckweek, Peasedown St John, Somerset: Survey and excavations at a shrunken medieval hamlet 1988–90*, by A Young. The monograph is based on excavations undertaken by the writer for Avon County Council at the medieval rural settlement of Eckweek. A stratified sequence of rural medieval buildings dating between the late 10th and later 14th centuries was revealed, along with a rich assemblage of finds, including structural, domestic, agricultural and personal objects. Occupation began with a large 11th-century earth-fast timber building that displayed a number of key indicators of late Saxon thegnly status, supporting its identification as the focal centre of one of two separate manors documented at Domesday. The settlement culminated in a 14th-century farmhouse that produced a very complete assemblage of structural and domestic objects whose distribution provides a clear picture of its internal organisation. Settlement abandonment coincides with documented episodes of epidemic in Somerset. The excavated building remains are significant for documenting the transition from earth-fast timber to stone building traditions in 11th–12th century England, and for illustrating a previously unrecorded rural building practice in Somerset, which incorporates elements of the Anglo-Saxon *Grubenhäuser* tradition. Environmental evidence and faunal remains show broad continuities in farming regime throughout the occupation sequence, including the insight that an open field system of agriculture was already established at Eckweek by the turn of the 11th century. Other finds, including a large assemblage of domestic pottery, iron and stone objects and personal items, detail the day-to-day lives of the inhabitants. We see a vivid portrait of Eckweek’s evolution as a manorial centre over a 400-year period, one that contributes new knowledge of continuity and change in patterns of medieval rural life both regionally and nationally.



**Monograph 41:** *Negotiating the North: Meeting-places in the Middle Ages in the North Sea Zone*, by S Semple, A Sanmark, F Iversen and N Mehler. This book brings together the cumulative results of a three-year project focused on the assemblies and administrative systems of Scandinavia, Britain and the North Atlantic islands in the 1st and 2nd millennia AD. The volume integrates a wide range of historical, cartographic, archaeological, field-based and onomastic data pertaining to early medieval and medieval administrative practices, administrative geographies and places of assembly in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Scotland and eastern England. The trans-national perspective has enabled a new understanding of the early development of power structures in early medieval northern Europe and the maturation of these systems in later centuries under royal control. In a series of richly illustrated chapters, we explore the emergence and development of mechanisms for consensus. We begin with a historiographical exploration of assembly research, which sets the intellectual agenda for the chapters that follow. We examine the emergence and development of the *thing* in Scandinavia and its export to the lands colonised by the Norse. We consider more broadly how assembly practices may have developed at a local level, yet played a significant role in the consolidation, and at times regulation, of elite power structures. Presenting a fresh perspective on the agency and power of the *thing* and cognate types of local and regional assembly, this interdisciplinary volume gives invaluable and in-depth insight to the people, places, laws and consensual structures that shaped the early medieval and medieval kingdoms of northern Europe.



**Monograph 42:** *Faxton: Excavations in a deserted Northamptonshire village 1966–68*, by L Butler (†) and C M Gerrard. The village of Faxton was only finally deserted in the second half of the 20th century. Shortly afterwards, between 1966 and 1968, its medieval crofts were investigated under the direction of archaeologist Lawrence Butler. At the time this was one of the most ambitious excavations of a deserted medieval settlement. Although the results were only published as interim reports and summaries, Butler’s observations at Faxton had significant influence on discussions of village origins and desertion and the nature of medieval peasant crofts and buildings. The ‘rescue’ excavations at Faxton were originally promoted by the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group and funded by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works after the extensive earthworks at the site came under threat from agriculture. Three areas were excavated covering seven crofts. In 1966 Croft 29 at the south-east corner of the village green revealed a single croft in detail with its barns, yards and corn driers; in 1967 four crofts were examined together in the north-west corner of the village in an area badly damaged by recent ploughing. Finally,





an area immediately east of the church was opened up in 1968. Some 4000m<sup>2</sup> were investigated in 140 days over three seasons. The post-excavation process for Faxton was beset by delay. Of the 12 chapters presented in this monograph, only two were substantially complete at the time of the director's death in 2014. The others have been pieced together from interim summaries, partial manuscripts, sound recordings, handwritten notes and on-site records. A new team of scholars re-consider the findings in order to set the excavations at Faxton into the wider context of modern research. Their texts reflect on the settlement's disputed pre-Conquest origins, probable later re-planning and expansion, the reasons behind the decline and abandonment of the village, the extraordinary story behind the destruction of its church, the development of the open fields and the enclosure process, as well as new evidence about Faxton's buildings and the finds discovered there. Once lauded, then forgotten, the excavations at Faxton now make a new contribution to our knowledge of medieval life and landscape in the East Midlands.

**Monograph 43:** *Waiting for the end of the world? New perspectives on natural disasters in medieval Europe*, edited by C M. Gerrard, P Forlin and P J Brown. This monograph addresses the archaeological, architectural, historical, and geological evidence for natural disasters in the Middle Ages between the 11th and 16th centuries. The book adopts a fresh interdisciplinary approach to explore the many ways in which environmental hazards affected European populations and, in turn, how medieval communities coped with and responded to short- and long-term consequences. Three sections, which focus on geotectonic hazards (Part I), severe storms and hydrological hazards (Part II) and biophysical hazards (Part III), draw together 18 papers of the latest research while additional detail is provided in a catalogue of the 20 most significant disasters to have affected Europe during the period. These include earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, storms, floods and outbreaks of infectious diseases. Spanning Europe from the British Isles to Italy, and from the Canary Islands to Cyprus, these contributions will be of interest to earth scientists, geographers, historians, sociologists, anthropologists and climatologists but are also relevant to students and non-specialist readers interested in medieval archaeology and history as well as those studying human geography and disaster studies. Despite a different set of beliefs relating to the natural world and protection against environmental hazards, the evidence suggests that medieval communities frequently adopted a surprisingly 'modern', well-informed and practically-minded outlook.



## In search of copies of early Monographs

The Society is looking for copies of early monographs in order to re-print them and convert them into e-books with our new publishers Routledge. If any members have copies of monographs 1 to 15 and are willing to donate them to the Society, please contact Alejandra Gutiérrez, [alejandra.gutierrez@durham.ac.uk](mailto:alejandra.gutierrez@durham.ac.uk). The books will have to have their spines removed in order to be scanned, so they will be effectively destroyed. Any offers will be gratefully received.



- 1 G Bersu and D M Wilson 1966, *Three Viking graves in the Isle of Man*
- 2 F W B Charles 1967, *Medieval cruck-building and its derivatives*
- 3 P A Rahtz 1969, *Excavations at King John's Hunting Lodge, Writtle, Essex, 1955–57*
- 4 A L Meaney and S C Hawkes 1970, *Two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire*
- 5 H E J Le Patourel 1973, *The moated sites of Yorkshire*
- 6 G T M Beresford 1975, *The medieval clay-land village: Excavations at Goltho and Barton Blount*
- 7 H Clarke and A Carter 1977, *Excavations in King's Lynn, 1963–1970*
- 8 J G Hurst (general ed.) Wharram. A study of settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, vol I: D D Andrews and G Milne (eds) 1979, *Domestic Settlement I: Areas 10 and 6*
- 9 C M Mahany, A Burchard and G Simpson 1982, *Excavations at Stamford, Lincolnshire, 1963–69*
- 10 P Mayes and K Scott 1984, *Pottery kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton*
- 11 J G Hurst and P A Rahtz (general eds) Wharram. A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, vol III: R D Bell, M W Beresford and others 1987, *The Church of St Martin*
- 12 D Austin 1989, *The deserted medieval village of Thrislington, Co. Durham: Excavations 1973–1974*
- 13 V L Yanin, E N Nosov, A S Khoroshev, A N Sorokin, E A Rybina, V L Poveikin and P G Gaidukov 1992, *The archaeology of Novgorod, Russia*
- 14 K Parfitt and B Brugmann 1997, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery on Mill Hill, Deal, Kent*
- 15 D Gaimster and P Stamper (eds) 1997, *The age of transition: The archaeology of English culture 1400–1600*

## A life remembered, Michael Thompson (1928-2019)

Mike Thompson, who has died aged 91, was one of the last survivors of the post-war golden age of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, under Arnold Taylor. Born in London, he spent his infancy in Bengal, where his father was in the Jute trade. His initial interest was in the Spanish Mesolithic, but Glyn Daniel's lectures interested him in the history of archaeology and evolutionary theory. After studying at Pembroke College, Cambridge, he learned Russian on military service and his first books were translations of Mongait's *Archaeology in the U.S.S.R.* (1961), Semenov's *Prehistoric Technology* (1964) and Rudenko's *Frozen Tombs of Siberia* (1970), along with his work on Novgorod, *Novgorod the Great* (1967). In the 1960s a Soviet archaeologist published a piece on British archaeology in *Antiquity*. Mike was described as 'liberal revisionist Thompson', to the amusement of his colleagues. He delighted in translating Russian notices in Britain even 'Do not leave your beer glasses on these steps'.

Between 1953 (formally joining the Ministry of Works in 1954) and 1958 Mike undertook nine rescue excavations for the Ministry of Works, with men recruited via the local labour exchange. As well as a number of prehistoric sites he dug moats at Epperstone (Notts.), Grantham (Lincs.) and Anlaby (Yorks ER); salterns at Whitstable (Kent) exposed by the great storm of 1953; a Cistercian grange at Anlaby (Yorks ER); part of a castle at Long Buckby; and an aisled hall at Huttons Ambo (North Yorks.). Further, less hurried, excavations on scheduled sites followed after he moved to the 'England' section of the Ministry in 1958, notably on the castles at Farnham ('Perhaps my greatest contribution to knowledge'), Kenilworth, Conisborough, Bolingbroke and Richard's Castle (the last a private project with Peter Curnow), and on monastic sites at Rufford, Bury St Edmunds and Higham Ferrers. In 1974 he succeeded Mike Apted as Head of the Ancient Monuments Branch in Wales (learning Welsh as he had earlier mastered Russian); its Edwardian castles made this a particularly happy appointment for him.

Mike's research interests were castles and nineteenth-century British archaeologists, particularly Pitt Rivers, Sir Richard Colt Hoare and John Lubbock. His 'The First Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the Field' (*JBAA* 1960) was based on Pitt Rivers' field notebooks (though strictly speaking the

first Inspector of Ancient Monuments was Prosper Merimée in France). A biography *General Pitt Rivers: Evolution and archaeology in the nineteenth century* followed (1977). Jeremy Knight drew his attention to the manuscript diaries of Colt Hoare's Tours in Wales in Cardiff Central Library and in 1983 he published a summary edition as *The journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare through Wales and England 1793-1810* (1983). His final book was *Darwin's Pupil: The place of Sir John Lubbock, Lord Avebury 1834-1913, in late Victorian and Edwardian England* (2009). He also published *The Cambridge Antiquarian Society 1840-1990* (1990). His *Decline of the castle* (1987) and *Rise of the castle* (1991) are deservedly well known. He also had a wider interest in medieval buildings, for example those of Ralph, Lord Cromwell (published in *Collectanea Historica: Essays in memory of Stuart Rigold, 1981*). He authored several blue guides for the Ministry, and in later life published *The medieval hall* (1990); *Medieval Bishops' Houses in England and Wales* (1998); and *Cloister, abbot and precinct in medieval monasteries* (2001). In 2012 he published a reflective short autobiography, *Reading, writing and archaeology*; a copy is deposited with the Historic England Archive.

Mike was never happier than when in the field, exploring the complexities of a medieval building, with colleagues or with younger inspectors. A kindly man, he took the training of new members of staff in the Inspectorate seriously, much to their benefit. His practical experience of the theory and practice of buildings conservation found expression in *Ruins: Their preservation and display* (1981) and *Ruins reused: changing attitudes to ruins since the late 18th century* (2006). On retirement in 1984 he returned to Cambridge. He married relatively late in life and had one daughter. His wife, Anne Elizabeth, predeceased him. As a *Times* obituary noted, he remained intellectually curious to the end and steady in his habits: its headline was 'Inspector of Ancient Monuments who ate a mango a day'.

He was a member of this society by 1960. He served variously as Reviews Editor, on Council, as Vice President 1986-92, and President 1993-95.

**Jeremy Knight, Sian Rees and Paul Stamper**



Mike Thompson (left) enjoying a joke with Peter Fowler at Rotherley Down (Wiltshire) in the 1970s. The obelisk was erected by Pitt Rivers to mark the site of his excavations here in 1886-87. Photo: Philip Rahtz.



# Media & Exhibition

## Displaying early medieval ‘Switzerland’ in the light of archaeology, an exhibition review

In 2019 and 2020 the history and archeology museums of Sion and Lausanne have been celebrating the early medieval archaeology and history of present-day Switzerland with a fabulous new exhibition. It is a pleasure then to turn this column over to a review of that exhibition by Glasgow University-based Swiss archaeologist, Anouk Busset.

\* \* \*

The early medieval period in Switzerland, as in several other European countries, suffered for a long time from being deemed ‘dark’, but the exhibition *Aux Sources du Moyen Âge. Des temps obscures?* and its associated catalogue *Aux Sources du Moyen Âge. Entre Alpes et Jura de 350 à l’an 1000* irrevocably shake off this belief and provide a long-awaited and necessary light onto this rich and complex period, specifically between the Alps and the Jura.

The exhibition and its catalogue are the result of the close collaboration between the *Musée d’Histoire du Valais* in Sion and the *Musée Cantonal d’Archéologie et Histoire* in Lausanne (Vaud), and follows past projects such as *Des Alpes au Léman* (2006), which traced Prehistoric sites between the mountains and Switzerland’s central plateau area. First imagined in 2015 by Patrick Elsig (Sion) and Lionel Pernet (Lausanne), the project was entrusted to the expertise of archaeologist Lucie Steiner as director, with the support of historian Justin Favrod. One of the major accomplishments of this project is the skill and appeal with which the results from the most up-to-date research is presented, including the discussion of this complex period in straightforward points and themes, allowing both specialist and wider audiences to engage deeply with the subject matter.

This review is based on the first staging of the exhibition, in Sion, from June 2019 to January 2020 (the second staging to run at the *Musée Cantonal d’Archéologie et d’Histoire*

in Lausanne). It sheds light on many aspects that made Switzerland the country it is today, discussing the different power plays during the early medieval period, as well as the development of its unique linguistic specificities. It also demonstrates the central role of this geographical area during the early medieval period, as it marks the contrasts and transition between the Romanised and the Alemannic worlds.

The exhibition starts with large maps of the area, demonstrating the constant movement of populations during the six centuries between 350 and 1000. The exhibition opens with a geographical and chronological outline, showing something of the fluctuations in settlements and populations and giving a glimpse into the tensions between the different linguistic regions and peoples. It allows the visitor to grasp the intricacies of two vastly different worlds meeting, and how this has impacted the development of the cultural and linguistic variation across the region, which are still relevant today. Also discussed are the main roadways, and how trade and the local economy developed and flourished over time. Here the focus is both on local production and imported material, demonstrating the long-distance connections that are still very much active despite the disappearance of structures in place during the Roman Empire.

The exhibition moves on to explore the coming of Christianity, arguably the most transformative aspect that these early medieval societies experienced. It explores this by first focusing on personal devotions, and how they can be read from the archaeological record. Case studies are presented of a selection of key archaeological sites, notably the monastery of St Maurice d’Agaune, which celebrated its 1500th anniversary in 2015. A selection of prodigious objects is presented, including a 6th–7th-century silver cross, found in Lausanne Cathedral, that carries the magical word ABRASAX, which became ABRACADABRA (‘protected by God’). It was inscribed to conjure the evil eye, demonstrating the incorporation of



Engraved silver cross, 6th–7th century.  
Lausanne Cathedral (VD), Cantonal Museum  
of Archeology and History, Lausanne.  
Photo: Yves André.

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Please do not embed pictures in Word/text files but do send pictures/plans as separate high quality JPEG files. The preferred format for site plans/maps is EPS, with layers clearly indicated and unlocked, and any linked files attached.

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**Spring Newsletter:** 15th February  
**Autumn Newsletter:** 15th August

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established magical practices and attitudes within newer Christian ones. The central role of the main dioceses from 380 AD is described, beginning with their development in Roman power centres such as Avenches and Martigny before being replaced in the 6th century by Lausanne, Genève and Sion (which retain their position to this day). This section is completed by a presentation and discussion on the variety of sites of religious significance as well as main burial grounds, and focuses specifically on the cult of Saints associated with specific sites.

The final theme of the exhibition encompasses daily life and funerary practices. The focus is on the material culture of everyday life, from peasants and craftsmen to warriors and noblemen, examining tools and trades as well as rich and highly decorated personal objects, brooches, jewels, games and weapons. A very rare and fascinating insight to a less frequently preserved aspect of the period is presented; namely, music. The visitor is invited to experience music through the beautiful and haunting performance of MOIRAI (<https://www.moirai-ensemble.com/audio>), which uses texts that have survived in Latin and Alemannic, and

recreates the melodies and arrangements from original documents. Major changes to burial practices were brought by Conversion, and the exhibition charts the shift from cremation to inhumation.

As a whole, *Aux Sources du Moyen Âge* demonstrates effectively the central importance of early medieval archaeology in Switzerland by presenting poignantly rich objects and sites, and by demonstrating admirably its relevance in today's world. There remain strong connections between the early medieval societies and our own, and these are ably realised in the major themes of migration, religious beliefs, arts and death.

The website is at: [www.mcah.ch](http://www.mcah.ch). The exhibition is currently closed until at least 30 April because of COVID19 restrictions but you can visit the 3D tour of the exhibition at: <https://www.archeotech.ch/fm/312>.

### Anouk Busset

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### Bibliography

Steiner, L (ed) 2019, *Aux sources du Moyen Âge. Entre Alpes et Jura de 350 à l'an 1000. Exhibition catalogue*, Goillon: Infolio.

# Conferences & Events

## — FORTHCOMING —

### 12 September 2020:

The 2020 Annual Deerhurst Lecture is due to take place at 7.30 pm in St Mary's Church, Deerhurst. Professor Francesca Tinti will present 'The cathedral community at Worcester, Odda of Deerhurst and his contemporaries: Assemblies and the written word in pre-Conquest England'. Tickets at the door, price £5 (students £3). See <https://deerhurstfriends.co.uk>



### Many events through July 2020 are cancelled due to COVID19, including:

**April:** Exeter: A place in time.

**May:** ICMS Western Michigan University.

**July:** Leeds International Medieval Congress.

**July:** SMA Annual Conference, 'Cultures of Cloth', postponed.

[Check websites for latest details](#)