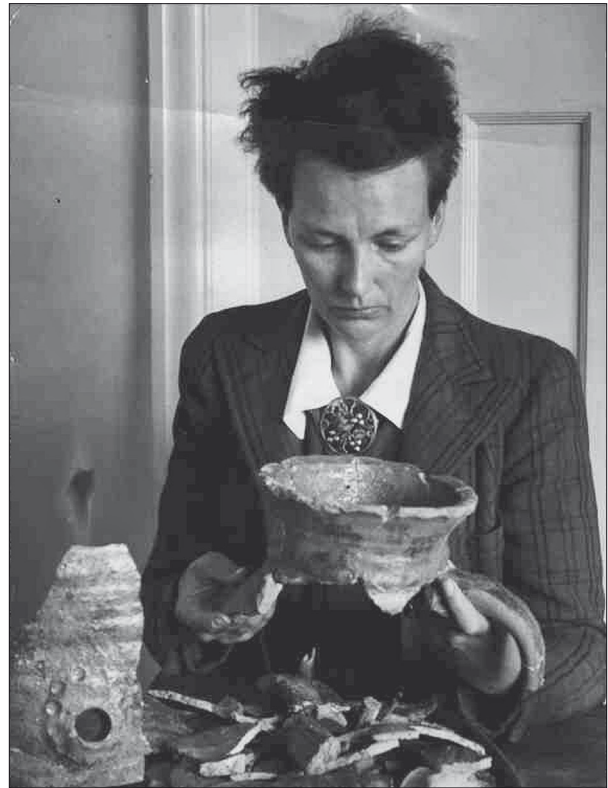


Hilda Elizabeth Jean Le Patourel (1915–2011)

By Paul Stamper

Jean Le Patourel was a long-time member of the MSRG from the early days of the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group (acting as Chairman in the early 1970s), and was also much involved with the Moated Sites Research Group. She stands among those whose contribution to the study of medieval settlement helped lay its modern foundations. Many older members of the Group will remember Jean as a teacher and active excavator, especially of medieval moated sites – *The Moated Sites of Yorkshire* (Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 5; 1973) was one of the key publications which (as we would say today) characterised that particular class of monument and brought it to wider notice. She was also one of the first specialists in medieval pottery, in which she became fascinated after her husband, John, was appointed to the Chair of Medieval History at the University of Leeds in 1945. Cistercian ware, and the medieval pottery industries of Yorkshire, were particular interests, and she discovered numerous kiln-sites some of which, such as Winksley and Brandsby, she excavated. Her obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* (31 March 2011) hailed her as a ‘pioneering woman archaeologist’; it would be more accurate simply to remember her as one of the relatively small group of scholars and fieldworkers who in the years after the Second World War established medieval archaeology as a serious, independent, subject discipline.

I well remember Jean from Wharram Percy as one of the group who gathered in the Outer Office of the excavation’s cottage HQ (with John Hurst, Maurice Beresford, and often Dick Porter the surveyor behind the closed door of the Inner Office), dispensing lemon sherberts, sherry and sympathy to the grubby and frazzled. Muddy sherds fresh out of the ground would be brought for Jean to date; firmly, but with a chuckle (and, until she was forced – with enormous regret – to give up, puffing on a French cigarette), she would order ‘Bring it back when it’s washed.’ At that time, back in the 70s and early 80s, despite the best efforts of Jean, John Hurst,



Jean Le Patourel, about 1950 (courtesy Le Patourel family).

and many others, the dating of medieval coarse pottery remained an inexact science, and often when the washed sherd was rushed back to Jean the conclusion would be reached: ‘Well, it may be thirteenth, but then again it might be fourteenth. But then again it could equally well be twelfth.’ Then, with another chuckle, the sherd would be returned to the by now slightly disappointed excavator.