

## THE ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIÉVAL SETTLEMENT RESEARCH GROUP

By CHRISTOPHER DYER<sup>1</sup>

The Medieval Settlement Research Group celebrated its 30th birthday at the winter conference and AGM held in December 2016, when the Group's inaugural meeting in November 1986 was remembered. I offered with some misgivings to talk to the 2016 meeting about the Group's origins and precursors. Talks recounting the deeds of yesteryear, which often refer to people unknown to the modern audience, and which tend to pursue a theme of self-congratulation, have limited appeal. New generations of researchers wish to make their own way in the world, and not be burdened with the baggage of the past. I will attempt to avoid tedium by setting the story against the background of an earlier age, noting some of the errors and failures as well as the positive developments, and suggesting some lessons that might help in the future. I will focus on the first six years, up to 1992.

In the background of the MSRG lay the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group, formed in 1952 around the collaboration between Maurice Beresford and John Hurst (Hurst 1987). Hurst was very aware of the way continental academics conducted their work, and the idea of a 'research group' came from European practices. His international perspective had led him, having observed the open area excavation technique in Denmark, to adopt it at Wharram Percy, and it then became a standard method on medieval sites in England. The Group was formed not in the English tradition of a learned society with membership, subscriptions and Annual General Meetings, but by inviting leading scholars to join, and also by recruiting juniors through their patronage network. Funding came from grants provided by such bodies as the British Academy, the CBA and from private benefactors. The Group produced not a journal but an *Annual Report*, type-written and duplicated according to the technology of the day.

The new Research Group brought together some very distinguished scholars, among them the historical geographer H.C. Darby, the archaeologists W.F. Grimes and G.C. Dunning, and the historian Joan Thirsk: it was interdisciplinary before the word and the concept came into common use. The work of gathering and analysing data was carried out mainly by Beresford and Hurst, with much help from young and (at that time) unknown geographers and archaeologists. They received some useful information from a network of 'local correspondents' who sent in reports on individual sites, which in an age of expanding arable farming, included a growing catalogue of destruction. The first task was to complete the gazetteer of deserted medieval villages (DMVs) that had been begun by Beresford. Much use was made of aerial photographs, and each site was assigned

a precise grid reference. The identifications had to be verified by site visits by the two principal investigators, which was important because it gave the resulting lists a validity – everyone differed in their definition of a DMV, but Beresford and Hurst applied common criteria (historical and archaeological) in all parts of the country. This gave the first version of the distribution map, completed in 1968 and published in 1971, an authenticity and consistency which has rightly led to its reproduction ever since.

The other role of the Research Group was to manage the excavation at Wharram Percy, and to encourage a wider programme of excavation elsewhere, which ranged from the hasty salvaging of information from threatened sites, often with support from the Ministry of Works (or Ministry of Public Building and Works as it became), and sometimes through research excavations on sites which were not in danger. In addition the Group pressed for the preservation of sites, by scheduling as many as possible as ancient monuments, and by persuading the Ministry to take at least a handful of sites into Guardianship.

The end of the first phase was marked by the publication in 1971 of an edited collection of studies under the title *Deserted Medieval Villages*, which contained the now-famous distribution map, with lists of DMVs for each county (Beresford and Hurst 1971). These were simplified versions of the lists circulated with annual reports through the 1950s and 1960s which had made assessments of the quality of documents and information about the state of preservation of each site. A list of excavations of rural settlements included not just the new wave that began in 1952, but also earlier ventures going back to the late nineteenth century, before the concept of the deserted village had been invented. A full bibliography included works related to the history, geography and archaeology of deserted villages. Beresford and Hurst contributed synthetic chapters on the state of knowledge, including a very valuable analysis by Hurst of peasant life and material culture, which had always been for him one of the primary aims of the whole project, and chapters on research into Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

What was the Group to do, now that the list was relatively complete and the book published? To some extent, the existing programme continued, as sites were still being discovered and visited. It was sometimes thought that the sparse distribution of deserted villages in the western and south-eastern counties could be corrected if these regions were searched more thoroughly. This view was strengthened when many sites were found in Shropshire, but these differed from those village earthworks so carefully selected in other counties by

<sup>1</sup> Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester



*Figure 1 Photograph of the contributors to the Festschrift in honour of Beresford and Hurst, with the two recipients, at Wharram Percy (July 1989). Left to right: Stuart Wrathmell, David Hall, Paul Harvey, Dave Austin, Maurice Beresford, John Hurst, Chris Dyer, Richard Hodges, Mick Aston, Philip Rahtz, Brian Roberts (crouching), Chris Taylor, and Harold Fox (five contributors were unable to attend). Photo: Dan Smith*

Beresford and Hurst, and it was gradually accepted that the scarcity of deserted villages in the western counties, or in Kent and Essex, reflected the dispersed settlement pattern outside the belt of country dominated by villages that stretched from Northumberland to Dorset. Philip Rahtz, who joined the Group and became Editor of the *Annual Report*, proposed in 1971 that the Group's name be changed to the Medieval Village Research Group, in order to include in the scope of research all types of village, surviving, partially abandoned, or completely 'lost'. The change of title also showed that the range of enquiries should include the origin and development of villages, as well as their troubled later years. It took a long time for this change of name to have a real impact. In the *Annual Reports* much of the material was still focused on deserted settlements. The *Annual Reports* served as valuable mines of information, with detailed summaries of the work on Wharram, shorter reports on other excavations, and dozens of items on local fieldwork, research projects, and plans of sites. Correspondents informed readers about research overseas. Some material related to the academic purpose of the research in the UK, with a growing number of short articles, useful reports on seminars which included short versions of papers by participants, and occasional book reviews.

In the 1970s and 1980s Wharram Percy went through a transformation. Excavation was no longer focused

on the early manor house, the peasant houses, and the church, but was dispersed over the whole settlement with a variety of sites being investigated simultaneously. Excavation and interpretation was shared among a number of supervisors, who represented a new generation with fresh perspectives. The north manor was dug in a semi-detached operation by Philip Rahtz and his colleagues from the University of York; they advocated the application of theory, though with limited influence on the whole project. Nonetheless the main research programme was open to new ideas. A succession of expert visitors came to Wharram in the short excavation season, made observations, and sometimes gave talks in a tent on site, offering their views on Wharram or the subject in general. Margaret Gelling, David Hall, Brian Roberts, Chris Taylor and other luminaries all made significant contributions, and the Wharram excavation became a testing ground for investigation of continuity between the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods, Middle Saxon settlements, minster churches and their influence on settlement, the planning of villages, the impact of the Scandinavian migration, and the role of lords (evident in the church as well as in the village). In examining the late medieval village, the accepted view that buildings were flimsily constructed was revised, and the contribution of pottery, small finds, and environmental studies was being expanded. In place



of the focus on the village site itself, the researchers stood back and looked at the fields that surrounded it, the management of the water supply (for milling for example), and the parallels and comparisons visible in villages and landscapes across the region. In the spirit of new approaches to periodization, the modern farmhouse and rectory were excavated and interpreted with the same care as the structures of the medieval period. John Hurst, who presided over these decentralised activities, played a crucial part in pulling all of the strands together. He regularly gave lectures at conferences and to learned societies about the project in which he announced ruefully each year that the interpretations had all changed in the previous season.

In the late 1980s excavations at Wharram were coming to an end: the last season was in 1990, and publication developed as a separate operation ably managed by Stuart Wrathmell. The final volume appeared in 2012, and it continued the tradition of 'the continuous seminar' as the excavation had been called in the 1980s. It summed up the earlier volumes, but advanced fresh hypotheses, and created new subjects for debate (Wrathmell 2012).

Meanwhile the Medieval Village Research Group continued to function, with its routine of annual meetings attended by invited specialists. John Hurst from 1984 had become Assistant Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (HBMC, becoming better known as English Heritage or now Historic England). His ideal was to consult with the Group about the priorities for funding of the various proposals for medieval settlement excavations. The decisions had, however, often been made already, so the comments of the Group could only hope to inform applications for the following year, if projects were still continuing, or if a new application was made. A few members of the Group felt frustration because they thought that sometimes wrong choices had been made. The issue was important, because in the days before developer funding, excavation grants from HBMC were the main source of finance for digging threatened sites. The threats were many but the grants few and small.

At MVRG meetings useful seminars were held, on pre-conquest rural buildings, for example, on documentary evidence for late medieval settlement and domestic space, and on dispersed settlement. During this period, however, the Group attracted a growing number of members and larger sums of money were being received and spent. In the early 1970s the annual income was in the region of £400–£600, but by 1985 there were many more members, income had risen to £2000 from subscriptions and sales of *Annual Reports*, and £800 came from donations and grants. The Group's Treasurer also processed an annual grant for the work at Wharram from HBMC. The *Annual Report* was the main public output of the Group, and this was reflected in its more professional appearance.

While all of these changes were happening in the Village group, a separate organization for moated site studies, with an overlapping membership, was also experiencing a combination of achievement and uncertainty. The Moated Sites Research Group had been set up in 1971, modelling itself on the DMVRG. It produced lists for each county, and surveys of selected

counties were published with various interpretative essays in 1978. The Group was much concerned with the preservation of sites, and achieved a great deal in the 1980s, publishing a document about preservation in 1985 (Le Patourel 1987). The Group was ripe for a change, as it had achieved some of its objectives and needed a new stimulus.

In 1986 the time had come for innovation. Members paid an annual subscription for an *Annual Report* and little else, but they should have been receiving more benefits from their membership. A growing number of professionals were being employed in local government, and by archaeological units. A much larger category were those drawn into the subject through adult education classes, or as members of local archaeological and local history societies. They were not paid as professionals, but they were often working as volunteers or running their own research projects. There was some rivalry within the same subject area, because the Society for Landscape Studies, for example, was catering for those with an interest in the medieval countryside. Those researching the subject needed access to an organisation with regular meetings where they could encounter colleagues, discuss common concerns, and plan collaborations.

In forming the new Group there was an element of what is now known as 'succession planning'. A world had to be envisaged without Wharram as a continuing excavation. Beresford had already retired, and medieval villages were no longer his main academic interest; Hurst would soon retire (he did so in 1987). There had to be a more collective leadership, as it was impossible to replicate the originality, commitment and chemistry of the two founders of the DMVRG. The Group had been evolving into a learned society, and that reality had to be accommodated in a new structure of membership with arrangements for the election of officers and the presentation of officers' reports at an Annual General Meeting. The Group would be registered as a charity. The constitution prevented any faction taking over the Group, as it gave considerable power and responsibilities to the President, but his or her term of office lasted for only three years. There was a similar three-year rotation for members of the committee. The author of this document was Rob Glasscock, and one strongly suspects that he was the architect of the whole transition from one Group to another. A steering committee is mentioned in the minutes of the formal inaugural meeting, but its membership and deliberations are not recorded on paper (MSRG files of Minutes and Agendas). As is so often a problem for historians, the really important decisions were taken in conversations and informal encounters. Glasscock was too subtle and discreet to have acted without firstly consulting and checking with Beresford, Hurst, Taylor and other leading figures.

An important innovation was to find an inclusive title. The earlier Groups had chosen to associate themselves under inappropriate words. 'Deserted Medieval Village Research Group' was eye catching and attractive, but it was too narrowly focused on a single episode in the history of settlements. As Mick Aston said, if you unpick the words they are misleading, as few settlements were completely deserted, they often had at least a brief modern phase, and many were not villages but hamlets or other elements in a dispersed settlement pattern.

In other words many of them were not deserted, nor medieval nor villages (Aston 1985, 57–58). It was also not consistent with normal archaeological terminology to focus on the word ‘deserted’ – Roman villa sites are no longer inhabited, but no-one would refer to ‘deserted Roman villas’. Philip Rahtz’s recommended change to ‘Medieval Village Research Group’ was a move in the right direction, but it clung to the inappropriate word ‘village’ when the majority of medieval people lived in smaller places. Medieval Settlement Research Group was the ideal solution, as it included all forms of habitation, and in particular united those working on moats with those concerned with villages, hamlets and farmsteads. Technically speaking castles, monasteries and towns are all settlements, but while they are not dogmatically excluded from the Group’s vision, and are indeed often highly relevant to the study of rural settlements, it is generally accepted that to devote a great deal of attention to such large and complex subjects would be a diversion from the central concerns of the Group. The interests of the Group were well summarised in a press release (again the work of Rob Glasscock) issued in 1986 which defined the aims of the MSRSG as ‘interdisciplinary study of all medieval rural settlements, in the broadest context of landscape and society’.

The inaugural meeting of the new group was held on 20 November 1986 in the geography department of Birkbeck College, London. Many subsequent meetings were held there, and some of us grumbled about the small and shabby room approached down a dingy back street, but Rob Glasscock, who made the booking, had found accommodation that was very cheap – he was the Treasurer after all. We were to some extent reconciled to the location when we discovered the Bricklayers’ Arms across the road. The meeting was attended by 30 people. Details of the constitution were discussed (it was eventually amended in 1988), and officers were elected: Chris Taylor was to be President, Rob Glasscock Treasurer, David Wilson of Keele (from the Moated Sites Group) became Editor, and I was to serve as Secretary (I should say that I was not involved in the preliminary planning of the transition, but was asked to serve, inevitably by Rob Glasscock, after his habitual consultations. I had done long service with the predecessor groups, acting as a Local Correspondent from about 1960, and attending my first meeting of the DMVRG in 1970). The committee members were chosen to reflect the varied membership of the Group, with archaeologists, geographers and historians, some of whom were based in universities (including in adult education), and some were employed in local government and archaeological units. The ‘amateurs’, or at least people who were not employed to do research, were included. Continuity was represented by the Vice-Presidents: Beresford and Hurst, together with Alan Aberg and Jean Le Patourel.

The Group was properly launched as an organisation engaged with matters of academic substance at a well-attended conference at Leicester in the spring of 1987. The committee met regularly through the early years, full of optimism and ideas, but we were dogged by difficult practical problems. The first *Annual Report* contained some useful articles which tended to reminisce about

past glories, but the second report was rather thin, though some space was filled with the names and addresses of all of the members, in capitals. Fortunately the ever diligent Betty Ewins, though no longer an Assistant Secretary, gathered material from the counties, so the new *Report*, like its predecessor, continued to provide useful information about excavations, discoveries and research projects. An innovation in the second *Report* was a bibliography of new publications, a feature which has continued ever since. Meanwhile the committee seemed to return constantly to perennial practical problems: what was to be done with the records of the previous Groups? Back issues of *Reports* were taking too much space, for which various solutions were proposed. How was MSRSG to deal with queries, in considerable numbers, that were addressed to the former groups (in those days letters written on paper were the main method of communication)? Should we give the *Annual Report* a more attractive title? How could contributors be persuaded to submit to the *Annual Report* more articles about the interpretation of rural settlements? Could we have an appropriate logo designed to reinforce our collective identity? Could the *Annual Reports* be delivered to the Treasurer in sufficient time for them to be distributed with the notices for the AGM in early December?

While concerned with these practical house-keeping matters, the Group was much preoccupied with issues of policy towards rural settlement. At that time the HBMC was at the centre of archaeological activity, deciding on the funding of rescue excavations, and embarking on an energised extension of the scheduling of ancient monuments, the Monuments Protection Programme (MPP). The Group believed that it could influence these decisions and policies, and could also have some effect on other conservation bodies such as the National Trust. We also took seriously our role of public education, by spreading awareness and appreciation of medieval settlements. The three sub-committees which had been formed by MVRG continued, one on excavation to discuss the selection of sites for excavation with HBMC, another on preservation to deal primarily with MPP, and a third on presentation to pursue Mick Aston’s idea of ‘a medieval Butser’, that is a working reconstructed medieval holding, or to give the public an experience of an excavated medieval settlement in the style of the Jorvik Viking Centre at York.

The Group began with high hopes, fired perhaps by the example of the pressure groups formed in the previous two decades, such as Shelter and Greenpeace. However, none of these subcommittees met with immediate success. We found that the HBMC was not anxious to receive outside advice on its choice of sites for excavation, and we shifted our attention to the archaeological units which carried out the work on sites in their localities. The Group’s interventions were not entirely welcome in that part of the archaeological world, as for example when we offered our services as advisers to a group who were working on a large landscape project in the west country. They kindly entertained us, but some of them were not overjoyed by our interest, and we left them to their own devices.

The Group’s concern for preservation also ran into difficulties. The operation of the Monuments Protection

Programme began with short documents (about 4000 words in length) called 'monument class descriptions'. We found that those prepared for deserted villages and other medieval settlements were not 'fit for purpose' and this was made clear to the HBMC. They had apparently been written by prehistorians, who were clearly experts in their field, but not in ours. The HBMC response was to suggest that we should write a new version of the deserted village document, which we did, but that was thought inadequate. Yet another version was prepared on the initiative of HBMC by an archaeologist held in high regard by them (needless to say, a prehistorian).

Some of the staff of HBMC were sympathetic to the Group's aims. John Hurst had been a friend in high places who urged his colleagues to heed our views. One example of co-operation was that the committee sometimes was able to meet (free of charge) in Fortress House, the imposing modernist headquarters of the organisation at one end of Savile Row (that has now been demolished).

The presentation subcommittee did not have to engage with the staff in Fortress House, but their project encountered difficulties because it was over-ambitious. The nearest that they came to achieving their goals was when, as a result of a local initiative, a 'Raunds Archaeological Park' was proposed near that Northamptonshire village which had seen a programme of major excavations. The plan involved reconstructing medieval buildings that would have needed an expenditure of millions.

Pursuing the rather grandiose 'policy' agenda, the MSRSG attempted to have a dialogue with the National Trust, which had many medieval settlements on its land or next to its properties, but it was feared that they did not give them a very high priority. Arranging a meeting took a number of attempts, and when it happened assurances were given but no urgent interest in the Group's concerns was shown.

This catalogue of disappointments makes for gloomy reading, but when MSRSG made good use of its own people and resources some modest achievements followed. There was a large membership, and they were willing to pay an increased subscription, leading to a doubling of income from subscriptions from £1533 in 1987 to £3293 in 1992. This revenue allowed the Group to become financially self-sufficient, and no longer needed grants from the British Academy. Nick Higham took over as Editor of the *Annual Report* and it expanded in size and developed in content, with some of those articles that we had long hoped that it would contain. The series of spring conferences that were arranged on behalf of the Group mainly by departments of adult education (which in those happy days still flourished) were well attended and academically successful. They began with the Leicester event in 1987 which looked back to the former Groups and forwards to new developments. The Bristol meeting in 1988 on dispersed settlement marked an important move from the earlier focus on villages. It brought together people who had not met before, and changed the whole tone and direction of the Group. Then followed a series of conferences with more very high-quality papers: on settlement status at Manchester (1989); forest and woodland at Oxford (1990); moats

and manors in 1991 at Birmingham; villages in the north-east in 1992; and settlements on Dartmoor in 1993. One remembers moments of revelation on field trips, such as wandering over the huge site, over-ploughed by ridge and furrow, at Sulby in Northamptonshire, or the discussion at Nether Adber in Somerset about building platforms: do they represent barns and farm buildings as well as houses? One met famous people, such as Aileen Fox walking over the site at Challacombe in Devon. Small-scale seminars were held on the day of the AGM, in London, and these dealt with important themes such as long-term research projects (which included Raunds as well as Wharram), survey work, presentation, and preservation.

Meeting at conferences in 1987 and 1988 gave an opportunity for members of the Group to make clandestine contacts to plan a volume of essays in honour of Beresford and Hurst. This was published as *Rural Settlements of Medieval England* and presented to the two founding scholars (who had no inkling that such a presentation was imminent) at a memorable party at Wharram Percy in July 1989 (Fig. 1). The essays, like the conference papers in those early days of the Group, celebrated tasks done but also signalled themes for a future agenda (Aston, Austin and Dyer 1989).

By increments the Group was gathering some of the influence over policy which had proved elusive in the first year or two. The Group's contribution on research strategy was accepted and published in the HBMC document *Developing Frameworks* (in 1990), and reappeared in *Exploring the Past* in 1991. Support was given to applications to HBMC for additional funding on two important settlement excavations (Burton Dassett in Warwickshire and Eckweek in Somerset), and the Group's advice was heeded. There must have been other examples when informal contacts and discreet lobbying helped projects to succeed. In 1991 we had a lengthy discussion with Bill Startin who was in charge of the Monuments Protection Programme, and Stuart Wrathmell was commissioned by HBMC to prepare a report on medieval settlement sites in 1992. A longer-term consequence of MPP arose from HBMC's emphasis on the concept of 'national importance' in justifying the scheduling of sites. The MSRSG and others had long argued that this was not an appropriate category, as rural settlements differed from region to region, and their importance could not be judged by a 'national' standard. This argument was accepted, on the basis that regional settlement diversity was itself a matter of national importance. This point of agreement immediately raised further questions: what were the regions? How could they be defined, and where were their boundaries? English Heritage knew of Joan Thirsk's farming regions, but members of the Group commented that while being an important and useful concept, her agrarian evidence could not be simply applied to medieval settlement patterns. Out of that discussion emerged some years later a programme of plotting the distribution of settlements from nineteenth-century maps, which was published under the authorship of Roberts and Wrathmell (2000). This gave the world of settlement and landscape studies the phrase 'central province', now part of everyday vocabulary. Nor was the Group's goal of presenting a site to the public entirely fruitless, though when action



was taken it came from local initiatives. For some years the site at Cosmeston in Glamorgan displayed excavated houses, some of which had been reconstructed. Both reconstructed and surviving medieval rural buildings, with gardens containing appropriate plants, can be seen at the Weald and Downland museum at Singleton in Sussex.

The Group's European profile had begun with John Hurst's strong international contacts in the days of the DMVRG. The number of reports from Europe published in the *Annual Report* declined in the long run, though occasional revivals increased their number. At first the Group lacked enthusiasm for the Medieval Europe conference held at York in 1992, but in the end we were represented, and did not regret the decision. Running beyond the 1992 time limit of this article, the Group made a point of giving papers at the first Leeds International Medieval Congress in 1994, and members of the Group were active at the Rurialia conferences, beginning in 1995. We went on to make a real impact as a group at Bruges in 1996 (where a new statement of academic policy was presented and distributed) and at Leeds in 1998. A constant concern was the Anglocentric character of the Group's communications within these islands. Some contacts were maintained with researchers in Wales and Scotland, but the Group on occasion lost touch with settlement studies in the latter country. Ireland, both in the North and the Republic, in the early days of the Group made no more than an intermittent appearance.

All of these developments which may have been influenced by the MSRSG were of secondary importance to the Group's essential aim, that is to conduct and foster research. From 1990 the Group offered research grants to help with the costs of field work, finds analysis, or publication, and a number of good projects benefited. The group had never, and could not, conduct research itself. Even in the case of Wharram the Group facilitated, encouraged and aided a project led by Hurst and his many collaborators. Nonetheless the Group was giving its support to a programme which demonstrated the essential features of high quality research: interdisciplinarity, varied techniques of data collection, advancing hypotheses which were changed or abandoned if the evidence did not fit, debate between scholars with different views, communication of results to the academic world and to the public beyond. As well as these general qualities, Wharram was constructing a complex synthesis of all the elements needed to understand a medieval settlement, including the legacy from earlier periods, regional economy, political and religious developments, agency in settlement change, standards of living, connections beyond the village, and the crises of the later middle ages. It was decided at an early stage that Wharram should be succeeded by another project involving analysis of varied settlement patterns, and this was an investigation, based at Birmingham University, on four East Midland counties, funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The idea was first proposed in 1990, and the Group advised on the application. At seminars and conference members heard papers about the research, and they could read interim reports in the *Annual Reports*. Their reactions and comments helped to

frame the thinking of the project, which was eventually published as a book (Lewis, Mitchell Fox and Dyer 1997).

However, the East Midland investigation was one research project among many which were proceeding in the early days of the MSRSG's existence, and with most of these there was no formal connection. The results were reported in the *Annual Report* and in conference papers, so the Group was able to enlarge the circle of those aware of the work, and to play at least an informal part in the progress of the data collection and the interpretation of the results. Projects which figure prominently in discussions at winter seminars, spring conferences, and in *Annual Reports* included Raunds, Shapwick, Burton Dassett, Eckweek, West Heslerton and the succession of sites at Milton Keynes.

This brief account shows that a small, modestly funded research group can have a limited but positive influence on public policy and research strategy, especially if the pressure is quietly and tactfully applied. The Group has played a useful part in communicating an exciting and important branch of knowledge to a wider public. It helped to keep alive the ideal of contacts between disciplines. It stimulated research directly, but also disseminated news of projects. The MSRSG was aided in achieving some of its goals by its strong reputation, which was based partly on its long tradition, but also by the willingness of some of the leading figures in settlement studies to serve as officers and committee members. If the Group continues to follow these principles, and no doubt to devise new methods and approaches as it has done throughout its development, it will be able to make a major contribution to settlement studies for many years to come.

## Bibliography

- Aston, M. 1985. *Interpreting the Landscape: landscape archaeology in local studies*. London: B.J. Batsford.
- Aston, M., Austin, D. and Dyer, C. (eds) 1989. *The Rural Settlements of Medieval England: studies dedicated to Maurice Beresford and John Hurst*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Beresford, M. and Hurst, J. G. (eds) 1971. *Deserted Medieval Villages: studies*. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Hurst, J. 1987. The work of the medieval village research group 1952–1986. *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report* 1: 8–13.
- Le Patourel, J. 1987. The moated sites research group: 1971–1986. *Medieval Settlement Research Group Annual Report* 1: 15–17.
- Lewis, C., Mitchell-Fox, P. and Dyer, C. 1997. *Village, Hamlet and Field: changing medieval settlements in Central England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Roberts, B. and Wrathmell, S. 2000. *An Atlas of Rural Settlement in England*. London: English Heritage.
- Wrathmell, S. 2012. *A History of Wharram and its Neighbours*. York University Archaeological Publications 15. York: University of York.

The main source of information for this article has been the Group's archives, or rather the files of minutes and agendas kept at present by Neil Christie at Leicester University, which it is planned to move to some more permanent depository. Also invaluable have been the *Annual Reports*, now published as *Medieval Settlement Research* and available on-line via the ADS at <https://doi.org/10.5284/1017430>.