

The Deserted Medieval Village Research Group

10 MAR 1973

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Third Annual Report 1955

The Deserted Medieval Village Research Group consists of :-

Officers:-

G.C. Dunning	(Chairman) Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Works.
Professor H.C. Darby	(Vice Chairman), Professor of Geography University College, London.
J.G. Hurst	(Secretary and Treasurer), Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Works.

Members:-

K. J. Allison,	W.H. Dean Research Scholar, Leeds University.
T.H. Aston	Research Fellow of Corpus Christi, Oxford.
M. W. Beresford	Reader in Economic History, Leeds University.
L. Biek,	Ancient Monuments Laboratory, Ministry of Works.
J. P. Bradford	Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford.
R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford,	Keeper of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities, British Museum.
Prof. J.G.D. Clark,	Disney Professor of Archaeology, Cambridge University.
H.M. Colvin,	Senior Research Fellow and Librarian, St. John's College, Oxford.
Dr. Margaret Davies,	Cardiff Naturalists Society.
Sir Cyril Fox,	-
J. Golson,	Lecturer in Archaeology, University College, Auckland, New Zealand.
B. Hope-Taylor,	Secretary of the Council for British Archaeology, Medieval Research Committee.
Dr. W.G. Hoskins,	Reader in Economic History, Oxford University.
Mrs. D.G. Hurst,	Archaeological Consultant, Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, Ministry of Works.
E. M. Jope,	Lecturer in Archaeology, Queen's University, Belfast.
Dr. K. St. Joseph,	Curator in Aerial Photography, Cambridge University.
C.W. Phillips,	Archaeological Officer, Ordnance Survey.
Prof. M. M. Postan	Professor of Economic History, Cambridge University.
Dr. W.A. Singleton,	Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Manchester University.
Dr. K. Sinnhuber,	Lecturer in Geography, University College, London.
J. T. Smith,	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.
Dr. . Steensberg	Keeper of the 3rd Department of the National Museum, Copenhagen.
Dr. Joan Thirsk,	Senior Research Fellow in Agrarian History, University College, Leicester.
D.G. Thornley,	Lecturer in Town and Country Planning, Manchester University.
H. Thorpe,	Reader in Geography, Birmingham University.
Dr. J.C. Trevor,	Lecturer in Physical Anthropology, Cambridge University.
G.G. Webb,	Secretary to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.
G.L. Worsley,	School of Architecture, Manchester University.

Ex-officio - representing the Council for British Archaeology:-

W.F. Grimes,

Director of the London Museum.



Resignations and Election of New Members to the Group

During the year Mr. Dauncey resigned from the group as his responsibilities in the Steel Company of Wales and other commitments in connection with management in industry made it unlikely that he would be able to play much further part in the work of the group. In his place Dr. Joan Thirsk, Senior Research Fellow in Agrarian History at University College Leicester was elected.

Dr. Margaret Davies of Cardiff has been elected as the Group's representative for South Wales. So far the Group's activities have been confined to England but it is now hoped to expand this.

I. COLLECTION OF DATA

A. Card Index.

The looking up of the 6" and 1" National Grid references of the 1350 D.M.V.'s listed by Mr. Beresford has now been completed. The references for the 300 odd new sites suggested by Local Correspondents and Dr. St. Joseph have also been looked up. The exact status of many of these sites however remains to be checked. It is proposed to issue a complete list of D.M.V's alphabetically by counties giving the 6" and National Grid references. It is proposed to widen the basis of this list by having an alphabetical and numerical classification which will show at a glance what type of site the village is.

Letters A to D for the quality of site on the ground

A for excellent
B for medium
C for poor
D for nothing to see

It is proposed to have numbers for the quality of the historical documents for 1 to 4

1 for excellent
2 for medium
3 for poor
4 for no documentary evidence.

There will be three further categories. On the historical side this should consist of the letter 'U' for sites which are not known specifically enough to be placed on the maps and by the letter 'O' for sites where the documentary evidence is not clear or precise. There will then be a separate 'X' for sites whose status is doubtful; that is to say it is not clear whether they were in fact ever a hamlet or a village but might only have been a manor estate, a farm or grange, etc.,. The letter 'M' will denote whether the site was a migration rather than a complete desertion. It is considered that some of the sites already on the list should be deleted as being on the borderland of shrunk rather than Deserted Villa ges. Villages with 6 houses or less will be included and called very shrunk villages (VS) whilst the name deserted Village will be confined to those sites with only a farm or manor house, church and rectory. It is realised that this division is quite arbitrary but it is felt that the line must be drawn somewhere or else there will never be a decision as to which villages are deserted or not. Material on shrunk sites will still continue to be collected but here again this will be divided into genuine shrunk sites (S) in which more than half the village has gone and slightly shrunk sites (SS) which consists of large villages with small gaps or extensions at either end. There is difficulty in telling the migrated village from the village which has shrunk in one direction unless the two sites were quite divided. It is therefore proposed to have a separate section of shrunk-migrations (SM) which will be included in the Master List of Deserted Villages as an appendix, since some of these sites were very extensive and very fine and should not really be ignored. This complete list will be stencilled and placed on sale to interested people. It is hoped

that this quick classification will be of great value and act as a ready guide to all sites. For the purpose of sketch maps and other items which require abbreviation, the following classification has been agreed:-

F.P.	for Fishpond
G.	for Grass
P	for Ploughed
Gr.	for Grange
RF.	for Ridge and Furrow
MAN.	for Manorial sit only
MON.	for Monastic site only
M.	for Migration.

This list will take some time to produce as it is proposed to include not only Mr. Beresford's original sites as listed in The Lost Villages of England but also all new sites suggested by Local Correspondents. These 300 sites will still take some time to check. There will also be a great deal of work in checking the exact status of many DMV sites already on the list.

B. Air Photographs

(i) St. Joseph Obliques. The air photograph situation looks much better than it did last year. Mrs. Hurst has been through all Dr. St. Joseph's lists at Cambridge and has compiled a catalogue of 1,000 photographs which he has taken of the 160 deserted village sites which appear in our general list. Dr. St. Joseph has also photographed about 70 shrunk sites and brought to our notice by photographs a further 30 sites, some of which look extremely promising as new deserted villages that we did not know about before. During the year another 288 prints have been ordered making a total of 568 St. Joseph air photographs in all. Mrs. Hurst has filed all these on cards. The complete catalogue of St. Joseph air photographs listed numerically as they were taken together with a copy of the deserted villages listed alphabetically by counties with those sites noted which have St. Joseph air photographs available, is available at Lambeth Bridge House together with the air photographs for anybody who wishes to consult them. Although Dr. St. Joseph has taken over 1,000 photographs of deserted villages these comprise only some 200 sites, so an attempt should be made next year to increase this number rather than re-photograph the sites of which we already have prints. Dr. St. Joseph has reported that he will do whatever he can. A list of sites has been provided so that he will not have to waste time by going over large tracts of country not knowing which sites are the best to photograph.

(ii) R.A.F. Verticals There has been a distinct improvement in obtaining R.A.F. vertical photographs. It is now much easier to visit the Air Photographic Library at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Secretary proposed to visit about once a month to look up sites. Meanwhile the ordering of photographs by giving the Air Ministry the National Grid reference numbers is continuing. During the year, 321 photographs have been ordered, of which 127 are still outstanding. There has also been a considerable improvement in the supply of these photographs for the average time during 1954 between ordering the photographs and their receipt was about 5 months. This time has now been reduced to about 3 months. The group now has 586 R.A.F. verticals of 432 sites. There is therefore coverage of about one third of the deserted villages of England. All the small counties are now completed and cover is needed of the larger counties such as Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Warwickshire and large parts of the North and West Ridings of Yorkshire. Mr. King of the Northampton Record Office has very kindly loaned us the maps of air cover for this county which have enabled the group to order a good many of the Northamptonshire sites, while David Clarke has offered to have looked up for the group prints of Leicestershire sites. It is hoped by further local approached to get more of this work done. The possibility of obtaining the key maps of some important sorties is being investigated as a quick way of finding out which prints are required. It was decided to go ahead on getting duplicate cover on the more important sites so that stereoscopic work can be done on them. An alphabetical list of D.M.V's by

counties has been produced showing which sites the Group have prints of. The actual prints available can then be found out by consulting a card index which has been compiled of sorties in numerical order. These lists and photographs are at Lambeth Bridge House and may be consulted by appointment.

(3) Maps prepared from Air Photographs

Through the kindness of Mr. Bradford, Mr. McCleod, late of Oxford University, has during the Summer vacation produced about 6 plans copied from the 6" map with details of sites and ridge and furrow from good R.A.F. verticals. The first attempts were done with full details on a 6" and the medieval details copied in over the top. This produced a very confusing plan but it is now proposed to delete all recent features such as hedge boundaries and modern buildings and to include only the permanent features such as streams and the Church which would have been there in medieval times. This produces a much clearer effect with just the earthworks of the main site and the associated ridge and furrow. The area of the village itself will be coloured red so that this will stand out. It was proposed that if Mr. McCleod was willing more of these maps should be produced and it was suggested that in view of the great cost in enlarging the whole area of the parish that these maps should be produced at 6" to a mile and that the area of the actual earthworks themselves, rather than the whole parish, should then be enlarged to four times 25" which is our usual scale for planning villages. With the help of these sketches one could then visit the sites and add in closer details of banks, ditches, etc., thus producing sufficient quick surveys of many sites. Mr. Phillips reports that the Ordnance Survey have surveyed a good many sites in the Midlands. He will let the group have photo copies of these.

C. New Information on Sites

(1) Local Correspondents

The response from local correspondents continues to be only mediocre. Although they have produced 200 new sites very little has been done in the way of field work. Mr. Beresford and the Secretary are still working on these 200 new sites, but it is slow work investigating them. Quite a number are genuine new sites but some are not. Some counties have produced useful correspondents who have sent in a great deal of information. Mr. Harris of Hull University has been sending in details of East Riding sites and Mr. Munby has sent in very useful details and sketches of Hertfordshire sites. In Buckinghamshire we have two historians who have promised to help not only with field work but also with documents. In Sussex we have a very useful correspondent, Mr. Holden, but unfortunately he has been ill this summer and not able to do any work. Shortt at Salisbury and Hobbs at Shrewsbury have sent in useful information.

(a) Visits to D.M.V's

The decision of the group that numbers of the group itself should visit as many sites as possible has been implemented. During the past year the Secretary, Mr. Beresford and Mrs. Hurst have visited about 230 sites and therefore produced more information than from all our correspondents put together over the past three years. These visits have not been exhaustive ones but have been very brief visits just to see (a) if the site has any earthworks and (b) if it has earthworks and ridge and furrow, to sketch these and note whether there is any likelihood of damage to them in the future. It is felt that all sites should be visited in this way in the first instance leaving more detailed surveys to come later. As a result of these visits about another 30 sites are being recommended to the Ancient Monuments Board for scheduling. In December, 1954, the Secretary visited nine sites in Warwickshire and two sites in Leicestershire in a two day trip in March, 1955, the Secretary visited 13 Lincolnshire sites on a two day trip, the first day with the kind help of Mrs. Rudkin. In April, 1955, the Secretary visited one site in Hampshire, two sites in Wiltshire and two sites in Dorset. In May, the Secretary and Mr. Beresford on a two day tour, visited 35 Yorkshire sites in the East, West and North

Ridings. In July the Secretary and Mrs. Hurst visited eleven Buckinghamshire sites and one in Hertfordshire. In August the Secretary and Mr. Beresford made a five hundred mile tour of the Midlands visiting ten sites in Warwickshire. One in Gloucestershire, nine sites in Oxfordshire, one in Berkshire, two sites in Northamptonshire, eighteen in Leicestershire, four in Rutland, and one in Derbyshire. In September the Secretary and Mrs. Beresford visited, on an intensive three day tour, thirty sites in Kent. Also in September, the Secretary and Mrs. Hurst visited seven sites in Hertfordshire, two in Cambridgeshire, eleven in Huntingdonshire, one in Northamptonshire, three in Bedfordshire. Also in October the Secretary and Mrs. Hurst made a three day tour of Northumberland visiting thirty-six sites in Northumberland, north of Newcastle. Most of the tours like those in Yorkshire and the Midlands were aimed to visit the cream of the sites in the first instance in these lightning tours. The trips to Kent, Hertfordshire, Huntingdon and Northumberland, however, were more intensive and every site in selected areas was visited.

Mr. Bradford reports that he has visited several sites in Cyprus and Greece and he will let us have more information on them in the near future. Dr. Joger Wurzburg is coming to London after Christmas and it is hoped that he will be able to give a great deal of help in bringing the German Bibliography to manageable proportions.

D. Distribution Map of D.M.V Types.

The group have decided that in view of the difficulty of obtaining funds at present and of obtaining the services of an excavator to carry out a complete excavation of a DMV as had been planned, that this project should be abandoned for the present. The trial excavations already done should be prepared for publication and the Research excavation at Wharram Percy should continue each summer on the House 10 complex (see 6B). Meanwhile the group will concentrate on a project which will only take time and not need any new funds, the production of a distribution map showing the different types of deserted village. It is aimed to produce this map by 1958 and offer it to the Ordnance Survey with a view to having it published by them as a period map after the style of Monastic or Roman Britain. As all the DMVs cannot be visited in the near future anyway, it has been decided to concentrate on this map during 1956 rather than visit large numbers of new sites. The details of the map have not yet been worked out as the idea is only in the initial planning stage at the moment.

E. Additions to the Library.

The following offprints and articles have been added to the DMVRG library during 1955:-

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| H. ALLCROFT | Earthwork of England (1908)
Typed extracts on DMVs. |
| K.J. ALLISON | The Lost Villages of Norfolk.
Offprint Norf. Arch. XXXI (1955) pp.
116-162. Presented by the author. |
| M.W. BERESFORD | Glebe Terriers and Open Field
Buckinghamshire. Offprint Rec. Bucks. XV
(1951-2) pp. 283-298 and XVI (1953-4)
pp. 5-28. Presented by the author. |
| J.P. BRISCOE | Notts. and Derbyshire Notes and Queries
II 1894. W.P.W. Phillimore, The
Deserted Villages of Notts. pp. 129, 150,
160. (Purchased). |
| DR. J.D. CHAMBERS | The Open Fields of Laxton.
Thoroton Soc. XXXII (1928) pp. 102-125.
(Purchased) |
| C.W. FOSTER AND T. LONGLEY | Extinct Villages and Forgotten Places.
Appendices I and III from Lincoln Record
Soc. 19 (1924) pp. XLVII-LXXII and
LXXXVI-LXXXVII. Typed copy. |
| W. GUSMAN | Wald-Und Siedlungsflache Sudhannovers
Offprint Quellen und Darftellungen Zur
Gefchichte Niederfachfens 36 (1928)
pp. 1-114. By exchange. |

- 6.
- W.U. GUYAN Die Fruhmittelalterliche Siedlung Von Osterfingen.
Offprint Zeitshrift Fur Schweizerische Archaeologie Und Kundst Geschichie 11 (1950) pp. 193-215. By exchange.
- W.U. GUYAN Hinweis Auf Das Fruhmittelalterliche Gachlingen.
Offprint Seitschrift Fur Schweizfrische Archaeologie Und Kinst Geschichie, 15 (1954) pp. 1-6 By exchange.
- J.G. HURST Deserted Medieval Villages
Amateur Historian 2 (Aug-Sept. 1955) pp. 193-6. Presented by the author.
- S. LEWIS Topographical Dictionary of England (5th Ed. 1842). (Purchased).
- M.D. LOBEL The History of Dean and Chalford.
Oxford Record Soc. 1935. Presented by Mr. Beresford.
- P.A. RAHTZ Moreton Mill - Chew Stoke
(Typed Interim Report).
- J. ROUS (d. 1491) Historia Regum Angliae. Ed. T. Hearne 1745 (Typed extracts).
- H. STEENBERG Medieval and Later Village Excavation in Denmark
A. N. L. 5 (1955) pp. 182-3 (Purchased).

F. Lantern Slides

During the year lantern slides of the Wharram Percy excavations and plans have been added to the collections. During 1956 it is hoped to expand the collection of slides of St. Joseph air photographs.

2. PUBLICATIONS

The following have been published during the year by members of the group:-

11. A. Steensberg - Medieval and Later Village Excavation in Denmark.
A.N.L., 5 (1955) pp. 182-3.
12. J.G. Hurst - Deserted Medieval Villages.
Amateur Historian, 2 (Aug-Sept. 1955) pp. 193-6.
13. K.J. Allison - The Lost Villages of Norfolk.
Norfolk Archaeology, XXXI (1955) pp. 116-62.
14. D.M.V.R.G. Third Annual Report for 1955, including interim reports on Wharram Percy 1953/5 and Wolfhampcote 1955.

Further copies of No. 14 are available but the other articles are not available from the D.M.V.R.G. Most correspondents of the DMVRG will already have received a copy of No. 11.

An amplified version of the lecture given to the R.A.I. in 1953, together with further information on the Wharram Percy excavations, will be published in September 1956 as a chapter in Recent Archaeology in Britian, Ed. R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, Routledge and Kegan Paul.

3. LECTURES

The Secretary has lectured to the following during 1955:-

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|--------------|---|
| June 25th | Hertfordshire Local History Course, Madingley Hall Cambridge. |
| October 11th | Student Movement house, London. |
| December 9th | Lincoln Archaeological Research Committee. |

Mrs. D.G. Hurst lectured to the Northamptonshire Natural History Society on 16th December.

4. SCHEDULING

A further 30 sites are being prepared for recommendation to the Ancient Monuments Board of the Ministry of Works for scheduling. With the new procedure in force, whereby owners have to be visited personally before scheduling takes place, this will mean a considerable delay in getting these sites before the Board.

5. ACTION TAKEN ON THREATENED SITES

Damage or threatened damage was reported on sixteen sites during 1955. The average is not really larger than in previous years as some of the damage was brought to light during visits to sites which were destroyed in previous years while at others the prospect of damage is in the future.

(1) Aston, Mulins, Buckinghamshire. When this site was visited in the summer of 1955, it was found that the entire site, which showed up as a poor quality site in aerial photographs up till about 1953, had been completely ploughed flat and levelled. As the damage had already been done, no further action was possible.

(2) Bingham, Nottinghamshire. The famous site of Crew Close to the east of Bingham was threatened during the year by the prospect of having Married Families Quarters for the Canadian Air Force built upon it. The site was scheduled as an Ancient Monument by the Ancient Monuments Board of the Ministry of Works in December, 1955, and it is hoped that the site of Crew Close will be preserved and this part of the Canadian Air Force project will be abandoned. The houses will however fill up all the remaining fields between Crew Close and the Church where the village must have extended in Medieval times. It is therefore hoped that a watching brief will be possible on these sites when sewers and house foundations are dug during 1956.

(3) Bittesby, Leicestershire. In Mr. Beresford's book, The Lost Villages of England, this site is quoted as a type example and was of very good quality, although cut in half by a railway line right up until at least 1952. When the Secretary and Mr. Beresford visited the site in the summer of 1955, they were staggered to find that the entire site on the western side of the railway had been levelled flat and it was not possible to see that there ever had been a site there. On the right side of the railway, there still remains a good series of ridge and furrow and some remains of the site itself. No action could unfortunately be taken although the site was scheduled as an Ancient Monument in 1954 as the damage had obviously been done some considerable time previously.

(4) Burgh-on-Bain, Lincolnshire. Mrs. Rudkin reported that part of this shrunken site was levelled and ploughed in the spring of 1955. Again as it had already taken place there was not much that could be done about it.

(5) North Cadeby, Lincolnshire. This site was threatened with ploughing but through the good offices of the Lincolnshire Agricultural Executive and Mr. F.T. Baker of Lincoln Museum, the Group were informed about the intended levelling and the site was scheduled as an Ancient Monument by the Ancient Monuments Board in December 1955. The Farmer agreed to leave the site of the village itself fenced off for grazing cattle and to plough the rest of the field round about.

(6) Cotes de Val, Leicestershire. This site is scheduled as an Ancient Monument by the Ministry of Works and the Group were informed through the normal channels that a barn was to be built in one corner of it. In view of the fact that this part of the site was much churned up by tractors and usually covered with haystacks, it was not felt that this building could be prevented. The building has not yet taken place and it is hoped that the Leicester Museum will be able to watch the foundations when they are dug.

(7) Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire The inside of this site has been ploughed for many years and there is not much that can be done about it. There is a fine bank however surrounding the village which has been cut into to provide soil for mushroom growing. The Ministry of Works has been able to prevent the banks from being completely levelled but has agreed to turf being removed from the banks. It cannot be prevented without paying compensation for the loss of the Farmer's livelihood.

(8) Hilderthorpe, Yorkshire. The sewer trench which was being cut through the site, as reported in the second Annual Report, was continued during the summer of 1955 after a six months' breakdown in equipment. A watching brief was carried out for a week by Mrs. Hurst and Mr. North watched the completion of the job and digging of the foundations for further houses along the edge of the site. A useful section through various crofts and through a road was drawn and pottery recovered. It is hoped to publish a note on this in the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal.

(9) Hopsford, Warwickshire. This village contains a fine sunken road going down to cross a stream. Unfortunately the Rugby Rural District Council have been dumping waste in this stream bed for the last fifteen years. Eventually the site of the ford and the sunken road will be covered up but this will be some considerable time yet and it was not felt that very much could be done to prevent it at the present time. The actual village itself is not threatened in any way.

(10) Langford, Nottinghamshire. There was a proposal to plough the north field of this site. The site was scheduled by the Ancient Monuments Board of the Ministry of Works in December, 1955, and will be preserved under grass. Two quarries by the side of the road which are a danger to cattle will however be filled in without doing any damage, it is hoped to the main site itself.

(11) Leake, Yorkshire. A proposal by the Electricity Authority to place a series of overhead cables across the site was not contested as it was felt that the small amount of ground disturbed to put in the posts would not really permanently harm the site.

(12) Ludford, Lincolnshire. Mrs. E.H. Rudkin reported that part of this shrunken site had been ploughed. Again as this had already been done it was not felt that any further action could be taken.

(13) Rudston, York shire. A series of house enclosures in this shrunken village were levelled during the year. The Ministry of Works were not able to take any action at the time and the site was watched locally and it is understood that nothing of importance was discovered.

(14) Seacourt, Berkshire. A new bypass is proposed through the middle of this site. This is not being contested and it is hoped that further excavation to expand the information obtained by Mr. Bruce Mitford in 1938 will be possible when this development takes place.

(15) Sinfin, Derbyshire When the secretary visited this site in the autumn of 1955, he found dozens of lorries dumping hundreds of tons of soil over the remains as the Farmer wanted the ground, which was low lying, levelled and a large new factory in Derby had a large amount of surplus soil from its foundations. It has not been possible to take any further action and the site is now permanently sealed under a considerable depth of soil

(16) Snarford, Lincolnshire. The levelling of part of this site was reported in the last Annual Report. The farmer has not yet levelled the rest of the site but this is threatened in the near future. The whole site was surveyed and it is not proposed to prevent the levelling though it is hoped to watch this as was possible in the previous instance.

Of the sixteen sites threatened during the year, eight were ploughed or levelled. Of these the damage had already been done in five cases, in two it was possible to have the sites scheduled and preserved and in one case although the site is not to be preserved, it is planned and the destruction will be watched. One site was threatened with

building and has been preserved. Seven other sites were threatened with damage of varying severity and two of these are to be, or have been, watched and the excavation of the third is planned; of the four others the damage has already been done or the Group does not feel that further action could legitimately be taken.

6. EXCAVATIONS

A) By the Ministry of Works.

None took place during 1955 as the three sites which were threatened with major damage, i.e. North Cadeby, Lincolnshire, and Bingham and Langford in Nottinghamshire, were saved by scheduling by the Ministry of Works. Mrs. Hurst carried out a watching brief at Hilderthorpe, Yorkshire, (see 5.8) and it is hoped to do an excavation at Seacourt, Berks., when the new by-pass is built.

(B) By the D.M.V.R.G.

During the year, the excavations were continued at Wharram Percy with the help of a generous grant from the Pilgrim Trust of £75 to buy equipment and £10 from the Yorkshire Archaeological Society and other donations from members of the Y.A.S. to help towards the running expenses of the excavation. An interim report is given below.

Trial excavations were also carried out by the group at Wolfhampcote, Warwickshire, in collaboration with the Birmingham and Coventry Museums who generously provided the funds. The results of this the first excavation by the DMVRG on a clay site, were rather disappointing and show the difficulties of these sites, as do the results from Willoughby, Nottinghamshire (see 6C). An interim report is given below.

Wharram Percy, Yorkshire - D.M.V.R.G. Excavations 1953/5.

J. G. Hurst.

The site of the deserted Medieval village of Wharram Percy is situated on the west side of a valley in the Wolds, about seven miles south-east of Malton. The village has completely disappeared and there remains only the church, now disused and in a sorry state, and three derelict 19th century gamekeepers cottages. Modern roads keep clear of the site but the medieval roadways are plainly visible as grassgrown earthworks linking the site with other villages in all directions. The tumbled wall foundations of the peasant houses show as rectangular earthworks set in rectangular tofts, or backyards, with long narrow crofts, or gardens, behind. The remains of the walls of the medieval manor may also be traced in the grass, which has been given over to sheep since the village was destroyed for this purpose in the years around 1510. (1)

Between 1950 and 1952 Mr. M.F. Beresford, of Leeds University, trial trenched four houses and obtained plans and pottery dating to the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1953 the recently formed Deserted Medieval Village Research Group decided to make this site the scene of its first excavation project, the complete excavation of a single house complex. A house site (House 10) was chosen and an area 75 feet by 45 feet was marked out over the area of the rectangular earthwork covering the supposed ruined foundations of the latest building on the site. The method chosen for excavation was that used by Dr. Axel Steensberg on similar sites in Denmark. The level of the ground was taken at $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet intervals then the turf was removed to reveal the rubble spread of the latest buildings. This was levelled again at $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. intervals and the stones were all plotted on to a plan. Finds were plotted three dimensionally both on to the plan and levelled. The whole site was

(1) The site plan of the village may be purchased from the Secretary for 2/6d. including postage.

divided into five foot squares to facilitate the recording. The idea behind this method is that the remains of the medieval peasant cote are usually very slight and also the fact that in Denmark different periods had been found in a very small depth of deposit. It is almost impossible to determine in the field the level to which finds and walls should be assigned, but with this method of recording the division into levels becomes objective rather than subjective. That is to say instead of putting all finds from an excavated level into a bag and calling it level A, it is possible after the excavation to allocate each find, which has been recorded, to its appropriate level when these have been worked out from all the facts known when the plans and finds have been fully studied. During three seasons, over five thousand objects have been recorded three dimensionally. This laborious task has proved very well worth while as will be seen.

After stripping all the turf, and recording the rubble spread, the smaller stones were removed in the expectation of uncovering the wall foundations which it was confidently expected would be found underneath. Unfortunately, however, the site was much more complicated than this as there appeared to be several small fragments of wall, aligned in different directions, making no sense at all. Indeed, even after the first two seasons' excavation, it was thought that there had never been a building on the period A alignment, and that the earthwork was the rubble bank of a cattle enclosure. Walls of period B buildings, at a lower level, running at right angles to this complex, were plainly visible at this time. It is possible that the complexity of the site might never have been disentangled but for one very fortunate fact. At the west end of the site, the fragments of remaining walls could not really be sorted out, but at the east end the various wall foundations had been built up into a raised platform above the surrounding ground. When this was dissected, it was possible to disentangle all six periods shown on the plan by superposition or by the cutting away of earlier walls by later ones. It must be emphasised that the present interpretation of six different structures is only tentative and may have to be modified when more work is done on the plans and finds. (2)

The rectangular earthwork, five feet wide, which first drew attention to this house site, is not the rubble tumble of one wall but of two (periods A1 and A2). These houses are remarkable as they show a complete change of plan and construction in little more than a generation. The latest house has a type of plan similar to the Welsh long house, as had been expected from surface indications and from Mr. Beresford's trial excavations. The A1 house is fifty feet long by eighteen feet wide with two opposing doorways towards the east end. The eastern part would presumably be used for cattle and the western part for living. The ground does in fact slope from West to east. Traces of a floor were found but no hearth. The walls, about one foot nine inches or two feet wide, were made of chalk and sandstone blocks, only one or two courses high, presumably the foundation for a timber superstructure. The two internal postholes at the corners suggest a cruck structure but the holes are rather small and corresponding ones in the southern wall were not discovered.

In period A2 the house had been of the same size but it had a door towards the west end, on the south side. The possibility of a door in the north wall was obscured by the later A1 wall cutting across this point. The construction, however, is of gable type as is shown by the two central postholes in the shorter walls. There was a hearth towards the east end. There are certain puzzling features still to be explained for instance the north wall of the A2 house apparently still stood above the A1 floor level for a good part of its length. Toft walls leaving the main building seem to be better made than the house walls themselves, possibly because they were built to a greater height in stone. Two small flimsy outhouses were found and a cart track of the latest period. The period A3 structure, set slightly awry to the other A buildings, is puzzling as it is forty one feet long by twenty four feet broad, yet the walls were very narrow and flimsy so it is hard to see how this structure could have been roofed without central supports.

(2) The plan of the six superimposed houses may be obtained from the Secretary for 2/6d. including postage.

No traces of these could be found. The two entrances are also very narrow. It is thought that this might have been some form of cattle enclosure or toft, and that there was no inhabited building on the site in this period. No turf line, or other sign of abandonment, was discovered and it is possible that the remains of this period were more substantial before the A2 and A1 buildings destroyed the evidence.

The three period B buildings are orientated north-south rather than east-west and have their long side facing the village street. All the latest houses, in this part of the village, are gable end on and it is interesting to speculate whether, in period B, all the houses were side on or whether there was not then the conformity of the later periods. This also raises the question of how permanent the toft boundaries were and whether the earthworks now visible only date from the latest period. House B1 is orientated slightly away from the period B2/3 alignment and is the best preserved structure with walls mainly of chalk standing two courses high. The period B walls hardly have any sandstone in them. The tops of the walls are flat and presumably the timber framework rested directly on this foundation. There appear to be two opposite doorways towards the southern end with an outhouse, or room, of more massive construction attached to the south-west corner of the building.

In period B2 there was a toft enclosure over most of the site but to the west corner a massive building was found with walls three foot six inches thick. The nature of this building cannot be established until it is followed further west and south. It is obviously of entirely different character than the other peasant cotes, but cannot have had a much longer life than they had unless they are squeezed into an ever shorter period of time. In period B3, resting on natural chalk there was a wall about two feet wide built of rough chalk blocks with three equally spaced postholes. So far no return to this has been identified but the central grid has not yet been fully taken down to natural chalk.

These six periods all lie in about one foot of deposit so it is going to be a very difficult task to associate the different objects with them. The use of detailed recording methods, for all finds and stones found, is clearly seen for if the pottery had been bagged in the normal way there would have been no chance of associating it with its different periods. There is now a probability that it can be shown where the different levels came and which periods shaved of earlier ones or were built on top of them. The dating has not yet been worked out but all six periods appear to fall between about 1300 and 1510, which gives each structure a short life of about thirty five years. This has very interesting social implications and appears to be similar to the rebuilding of the house in each generation which is practised by many primitive peoples today. It is remarkable that the houses were completely rebuilt on different sites and alignments rather than being patched up, and also that this activity did not build up a great thickness of deposit. The pottery in these levels is mainly 14th or 15th century; a coin of Henry VI was found to confirm the dating.

The above is by no means the full story, the most remarkable finds were yet to come. In several parts of the site natural chalk was not found but there was what appeared to be a thick layer of plough soil. One of these areas was sectioned and the bottom was not reached until eight feet of rubble had been dug out. At the bottom was found a very well built wall four feet wide with a rubble core and faced with squared chalk blocks still standing ten courses high, associated with 12th and 13th century pottery. There appear to be two other similar depressions even in the small area, seventy-five feet by forty-five, which is being excavated. It is hoped, in 1956, to discover more about this wall and the other depressions as it is very hard at present to understand the purpose of such a solid wall so deep down, nor the apparent presence of two similar features in such a small area.

Also in 1956 the two baulks, left as checks across the site, will be removed and it is hoped to check the wall lines as interpreted on the plan. It must again be emphasised that this plan is only an interim one and it may have to be revised after further excavation and work on the plans and the finds which have hardly been studied as yet.

The main object of this interim report is to show how complex a single house site on a deserted village can be and to show that such an excavation is not one to be undertaken lightly. A trial trench across such a site will not show very much as Dr. Steensberg has emphasised. Our baulk sections show hardly anything in the way of either walls or levels, it is only by complete stripping from the top that the full picture can be obtained. The plan is somewhat idealised as no facing stones remain except where there are firm lines, the dotted lines are mainly conjectural.

The group have excavated for three weeks in June and July each year since 1953 with the help of students from the Department of Geography, University College, London, and from the Department of Economics, Leeds University. The administration and catering has been nobly carried out by Mr. M.W. Beresford. A generous grant from the Pilgrim Trust has enabled the group to buy tools and other equipment. Thanks are also due to the Yorkshire Archaeological Society and many of its members for their valuable contributions towards the running expenses of the excavation. Thanks are also due to Lord Middleton, the owner and to Mr. Midgley, the farmer, who have allowed the excavations to take place on their land.

Excavations at Wolfhampcote, Warwickshire

August, 1955. Interim Report
By Mrs. D.G. Hurst.

The medieval village of Wolfhampcote is now a grass field showing only a few grassy bumps or enclosures. These mark the area of a house with its accompanying land, the toft or garden and croft or small-holding. There is no indication now visible within the enclosure (an area of 160 feet by 100 feet in the one chosen for excavation) of where the houses had stood. It seemed likely, however, that they would front onto a main street, which was plainly visible.

Trial holes 4 feet square, at regular intervals of 12 feet, were therefore dug to determine the best area. These were begun at the eastern end of the enclosure and fifteen were dug in the first week. These holes revealed a great deal of pottery ranging from the 11th to the 15th centuries, the greatest proportion being 12th and 13th century showing an earlier main occupation of the site than was expected.

More than half the holes revealed no structural features of any kind passing through about two feet of subsoil to natural clay. The other trial holes, those round the edges of the enclosure, revealed the construction of the bank round the edge of the site; one showed traces of a hearth or fire pit and three showed what appeared to be distinct occupation levels and ditches dug into the natural.

An area 24 feet by 48 feet, big enough to contain the average sized peasant house, and incorporating these three holes, was opened up. Due to a smaller number of volunteers than was expected and the hard baked cemented character of the soil, a 12 feet by 24 feet piece of this area was not explored below the humus level. The opened area did not reveal any house structures as had at first been hoped. Two areas of burning and a stone hearth, little used, were found all lying on the filling of earlier ditches. The area mainly consisted of a complicated ditch and bank system.

The earliest ditches, and the most extensive, seem from their pottery to belong to the 12th and 13th centuries. These were perhaps deliberately filled in, as little rubbish was found in them. Subsequently, in the late 13th century, people had occupied the ground above the filled in ditches and had made fires there and they had later heaped up a bank of hard yellow clay over some of this area and had dug another deeper ditch on its edge. Throughout the late 14th and early 15th centuries, this ditch became a regular dustbin. A large amount of broken pots were thrown into it and finally the dead body of a young

animal, probably a calf, the complete skeleton of which was found. Finally sometime in the 15th century this ditch must have become so foul that another layer of clay was put on the bank and extended over the top of the ditch sealing it.

This ditch system was probably draining a structure to the east of the excavated area which is not now in any enclosure. A very large amount of pottery was obtained giving a most valuable development sequence of Midland coarse wares which have not previously been known from this district. In addition a good selection of small everyday articles were found including a stone spindle whorl and a bone shuttle indicating cloth making, several iron objects such as knives and fastenings (including an example of a rare barrel padlock), whetstones and objects of lead and bronze. Some personal objects, such as buckles buttons and pins were discovered and two coins, one a Roman coin of the 4th century and the other a silver sixpence of James I in very good condition, were found.

In the last week of the excavation a narrow trench was dug across the hollow-way, the old main street of the village, in an attempt to examine its construction, as no medieval village road had been examined in this way before. The cutting revealed that the centre of the roadway was made of natural clay heaped onto the actual natural clay surface. In the hot summer this was iron hard but in wet weather there must have been a great need of the two bordering ditches for drainage. There is no sign that the road ever had a metalled surface. The ground beyond the ditches rose steeply to the enclosures on each side, and here, on both sides stones in the form of a rough wall were found. They may only have been strengthenings for the roadside banks, but as stone was so very scarce, they are more likely to have been footings for house walls. That in the smaller enclosure on the opposite side of the road might repay further investigation.

The excavation, valuable in the study of deserted medieval villages as the first major attempt to find buildings thought to be largely of timber in clay soil was made possible by the grant of funds from the Birmingham and Coventry Museums and by the hard work of some thirty volunteers who laboured in the very great heat of mid-August.

C) Private Excavations

During 1955, excavations were continued on house sites at Keighton in the grounds of Nottingham University by Mr. D. Kerridge and members of the Nottingham University Archaeological Society. The Nottingham University Archaeological Society under Mr. H. Burrows also tackled another enclosure at Willoughby, north of Newark. Unfortunately results again were largely negative and the excavation was abandoned. Also during 1955, Mr. G. Simpson and members of the Sedbergh Archaeological Society excavated at a possible deserted village site at Underbank. It is hoped to continue the excavation in 1956, and the Group has been asked to advise on possibilities.

The Group have also been asked to advise on possibilities of excavation at Stantonbury in Buckinghamshire, by the Woolverton and District Archaeological Society and at Lazenby in the West Riding of Yorkshire by the Northallerton Grammar School.

7. FUNDS

Receipts and Payments Account for the period 1st October 1954 to 30th September 1955.

A. CARD INDEX & COLLECTION OF DATA ACCOUNT

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Payments</u>	
To Cash received on Account	£20	By Air Photographs -	
£200 Grant from the Pilgrim		Air Ministry £1.11.6d.	
Trust held by Council for		University of	
British Archaeology.		Cambridge £13.13.9d.	15. 5. 3d.
		Library	4.17. 6
		Photography	5.13. 0
Cash in Hand at		Postage & Stationery	3. 8. 2
30th September 1954	£11.16. 4d.	Audit of Accounts	2.12. 6
	<u>£31.16. 4</u>		<u>£31.16. 4</u>

B. EXCAVATION FUND

To Cash received on Account		By Accommodation Equipment	16.10. 5
£75 Grant from the Pilgrim		Cooking Equipment	13.17. 8
Trust held by Council for		Excavation Tools	18. 7. 6
British Archaeology.	£60	Miscellaneous	
		(Stationery, paint,	
		pegs)	2. 1. 0
			<u>59. 1. 3</u>
		Cash in Hand at	
		30th September 1955	18. 9
	<u>£60</u>		<u>60. 0. 0.</u>

C. MISCELLANEOUS RECEIPTS

From sale of DMVRG publications	3. 6	Postage	0. 1. 0
Donation	0.10. 0	Carriage Wharram	
	<u> </u>	Equipment	0.10. 0
			<u>0.11. 0</u>
		Cash in Hand at	
		30th September 1955	2. 6
	<u>0.13. 6.</u>		<u>0.13. 6</u>