



**Site Dynamics and Long-Term Chronologies**  
**Workshop 1 of the Early Medieval Royal Residences Network**

*25th-26th February 2016, University of Reading*

***Workshop abstracts***

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February**

**SESSION 2: Network contributors**

**David Rollason, Durham University**

**Gods and Power: Shrines, Churches, and Centres of Government**

The aim of this presentation is to examine the relationship between religious and governmental functions in pagan and Christian sites across a wide chronological period and a wide area of Europe. Starting from recent discussions of the religious aspects of rulership itself, the presentation will examine the politico-religious aspect of Christian sites such as the Palazzo dei Normanni in Palermo, the Great Palace in Constantinople, Charlemagne's palace at Aachen, and the abbeys of Westminster and Saint-Denis. It will go on to focus attention on the potential implications of these for earlier sites, notably Lejre and Lake Tissø, the Heorot of Beowulf, as well as for known pre-Conquest English regional governmental centres such as Coldingham and Hexham in Northumbria, or Lyminge and Minster-in-Thanet in the Kingdom of Kent.

**Mads Kähler Holst, Aarhus Universtiy**

**Scandinavian Ideas of Royal Residence**

In recent years, several of the known 6th to 10th century AD royal residential sites in Scandinavia have been subject to new investigations, most extensively at Old Uppsala, Lejre and Jelling. In addition, a number of contemporary elite residences have been uncovered, primarily on the Danish Isles and in Southern Sweden. This research has established that the sites concerned share similar developmental trajectories demonstrating strong connections

between regional elites who adapted traditional modes of farmstead architecture and organisation to meet their needs and aspirations. Most of these elite and royal residences endured for several centuries (some for the entire duration of the 6th-10th centuries AD), and their spatial structures and monumentality reflect these extended histories. Jelling is an exception, with a short duration and a late emergence in the 10th century. Here all buildings and monuments were erected in accordance with a strict overall plan, and in this way the site stands as an expression of new architectural ideas of royal residence current at the end of the Viking Age which seem to have emerged from local traditions rather than an imported Carolingian-Ottonian Pfalz template.

**Dagfinn Skre, University of Oslo**

### **The Avaldsnes Royal Manor Project: Charting the long-term Evolution of a Norwegian Royal Manor**

The 30 kilometres long island of Karmøy (Old Norse *Kǫrmt*, meaning 'parapet', 'barrier') is the largest of the many thousand islands, skerries, and reefs that protect the sheltered sailing route along the west coast of Norway from the rough ocean in the west. The route, from which the kingdom took its name, was called the *Norðvegr* (the northern way). In the rather fertile land in the island's northern part lies Avaldsnes (Old Norse *Ǫgvaldsnes*), according to Snorri Sturluson (c. 1220) a prominent manor for the first Norwegian kings (late 9th to early 11th centuries). The site remained an important royal manor through the heyday of the Norwegian kingdom in the mid and late 13th century and into its downfall in the late 14th.

The basis for the prominence of the Avaldsnes area for more than 3.000 years was not rich resources or fertile land, but the possibility to control the traffic on the main route along the west coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Northern *Kǫrmt* stands out in the archaeological record since c. 2000 BC, the pre-AD highlights being three deposits of flint artefacts, one of them the largest in the Scandinavian Neolithic, numerous rich Bronze Age burials, and a unique warrior grave from the pre-Roman Iron Age. Through the first millennium AD the arguably richest Scandinavian Roman-Period male grave was deposited in a huge mound, and in the 5th–6th centuries Scandinavia's tallest triangular stone setting was raised – both of these at the Avaldsnes manor. C. 2–3 kilometres further north along the sea, the two earliest Scandinavian ship graves (late 8th century) were entombed in two huge mounds.

The ongoing Avaldsnes Royal Manor Project excavated the Avaldsnes fields and farmyard in 2011–12. After initial cultivation since the early Bronze Age, agricultural production was intensified c. AD. A long-house, a hall building, a boathouse, and a production and processing area, all of them from the 3rd–6th centuries, were identified. Craft production and processing continued through the following centuries, and building remains reappeared

in the 10th century. Details of the phasing of the site, as well as on the masonry royal manor from c. 1300, will be presented in the workshop.

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February**

**SESSION 2 continued**

**Barbara Yorke, University of Winchester**

**"And another was built instead in a place called Maelmin": Shifting Royal Residences in the Written Sources**

As in the quotation in the title, there are some rare instances where written sources reveal that one royal residence was deliberately abandoned [Yeavinger] and replaced by another. In other cases we might suspect something similar when a residence seems to have been in use for only a restricted period, or appears to be replaced by another nearby. On other occasions there is a change of use (or apparent change of use). Royal sites that become ecclesiastical foundations, and vice versa are a particularly well-recorded and informative category. In discussing these types of example one has to bear in mind terminology and changes over time that are the result of significant developments in how royal power operated or major influences from outside England. Considering Anglo-Saxon patterns in the light of those from elsewhere in Britain and Ireland would also be a potentially useful form of analysis.

**Frans Theuws, Leiden University**

**Royal/aristocratic residences in northern Gaul 500-800: An archaeological problem with elite display**

Merovingian archaeology of a large part of Central and Northern Gaul has a serious problem. Up till now it has not been possible to unequivocally identify royal residential structures or even aristocratic residences. Written sources refer to towns as *sedes regiae* or mention *palatiae* but they are obviously not easy to identify. It has been suggested in the past that Merovingian kings and aristocrats used former Roman structures such as the residences of the provincial governors. This supposition has not been substantiated with sound archaeological evidence. It is moreover disturbing that, although there are regions where intensive settlement excavations took place, no elite residential sites have been identified.

Why do these sites escape archaeological scrutiny? There are several possible answers.

The easiest explanation is that there has simply not been adequate archaeological research directed at the identification of elite residential sites. The second one is that there is no 'aristocracy' or better 'elite' of high enough status present in a large part of northern Gaul which would mean that we will search in vain for elite residential sites. In other words, there is no great difference between the elite present and the rest of the rural population.

The third one is that display at elite residential sites is not to be considered a self evident phenomenon. We could ask ourselves what the rationale was behind elite display in settlements, what kind of display was considered appropriate/inappropriate, etc.

What we see in northern Gaul is a sudden boom in creating elite residences in the later eighth century under Charlemagne when the palaces of Aachen, Nijmegen, Ingelheim, and Paderborn were created. Suddenly (?) display seems to be utmost important. Others like Frankfurt followed suit. Yet other palaces, not yet excavated well, are mentioned in the written sources.

This boom came about after Charlemagne turned his attention to the Meuse and Rhine valleys rather than to the traditional palaces present in the Aisne, Oise, Marne Region, which were in the early post-Merovingian period still frequented by Charles Martel, Pippin III and Karloman. These palaces are however neither well-known archaeologically which might point to a difference in the state of archaeological research in France and Germany where the Carolingian and Ottonian Pfalzenforschung reached quite high standards. This difference might thus after all partly explain the obscurity of Merovingian palaces. This however does not yet explain the absence of elite residences in northern Gaul.

**Thomas Pickles, University of Chester**

### **Places of Early Medieval Royal Residence in the kingdom of the Deirans, 500-800**

This paper will focus on the kingdom of the Deirans, roughly coincident with the pre-1974 county of Yorkshire. It will begin by addressing the challenge of identifying places of early medieval royal residence in the kingdom of the Deirans, considering the textual, material, and linguistic evidence, as well as long term structural contexts. Armed with a potential list of places, it will consider three issues. Firstly, what hints there are of the context in which places of royal residence were established. Secondly, when and why sites were remembered in texts as places of royal residence. Thirdly, what the long-term trajectories of such places were and what factors influenced these trajectories.