

Tents to Towns: Torksey after the Vikings

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The impact of Scandinavian raiders and settlers on urbanisation is a major question for our understanding of the Viking contribution to the development of Anglo-Saxon England. Our work at Torksey has previously focussed on the winter camp of the Viking ‘Great Army’ of 872-3, where we analysed c.2000 metal-detected finds, and undertook geophysical and geomorphological survey to reveal extensive evidence for trade and manufacture across a c.55ha island, accommodating thousands of people. We suggested that the Army was virtually a town on the move. However, in transforming understanding of the Great Army, we raised questions about its role as a catalyst for urban development (Hadley and Richards 2016).

Torksey presents a unique opportunity to examine the contribution of Viking armies, and those following in their wake, to industrial and urban development. The Viking camp lay to the north of the modern village, but by the turn of the 11th century there was a burh to the south, with a mint, four cemeteries and at least three churches. However, the most important evidence for incipient urbanism comes from its pottery industry, which saw new manufacturing technologies introduced by continental potters, arriving in Torksey with the ‘baggage train’ of the Great Army (Perry 2016). Since Torksey was in decline by the 13th century, shrinking in size, much of the former town is unencumbered by later occupation, and in the 1960s Maurice Barley recognised the potential ‘to study by excavation the character of an urban settlement in the early middle ages’ at Torksey.

We have therefore extended our study of Torksey to focus on the Anglo-Saxon town, employing geophysical and metal-detector survey, field-walking, and excavation. This paper will report on our results and consider comparable evidence from equivalent 10th-century towns, such as Stamford and Thetford, as part of a wide-ranging study of urban development in northern and eastern England, including the new pottery industries that emerged there.

- Hadley, D.M. and Richards, J.D. 2016. ‘The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872–3, Torksey, Lincolnshire’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* **96**, 23–67.
- Perry, G. 2016. ‘Pottery production in Anglo-Scandinavian Torksey (Lincolnshire): reconstructing and contextualising the *chaîne opératoire*’, *Medieval Archaeology* **60**, 72–114.