

De-bunking the D-shaped enclosure: The Search for Winter Camps of the Viking Great Army

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Ever since Martin and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle (2001) interpreted the D-shaped enclosure they discovered at Repton as the fortified winter camp of the Viking Great Army from AD 873-4 it has dominated the hunt for the other Viking camps named in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. However, the discovery of the camp of 872-3 at Torksey (Hadley and Richards 2016), and the subsequent interpretation of the metal-detected assemblage from Aldwark as representing an undocumented camp of c. 875-6 (Williams 2020), has led to a reappraisal of the evidence from Repton. These new camps (at 55 ha and 31 ha respectively) are significantly larger than the D-shaped enclosure at Repton (0.4 ha) and also lack the massive bank and ditch seen there. Furthermore, in 2019 Cat Jarman proposed that a metal-detected assemblage from Foremark, 3 km east of Repton, and 1 km northwest of the Viking cremation cemetery at Heath Wood (Richards *et al.* 2004), should also be seen as part of the 873-74 overwintering, and may even have been the focus for the camp.

We do not claim that all Viking army camps need follow the same blueprint, but if Torksey, Aldwark, and Foremark represent the more typical camp we can now revisit the other named over-wintering sites with a fresh perspective. In this paper we will examine the evidence for the named camps in London, Reading, Nottingham and Thetford, and examine their common characteristics, what new can now be learnt about them in the light of the new evidence, and discuss how far they fit this new model. If, as we argue, the D-shaped enclosure at Repton was not constructed by the Viking Great Army, we must also consider alternative interpretations for what it actually was.

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