

IMC Mercian Sessions 2023-2026

2026

Mercian Studies I: Mercian Women and their Monasteries

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Sponsor: Mercian Network

Moderator: Jessica Hodgkinson

Session Abstract: These three papers will take a closer look at Mercian monasteries and saints' cults, with a focus on their connections to members of the Mercian aristocracy and royal family. The session will cover a wide geographical range within the kingdom of Mercia, referring to diverse types of evidence including genealogies, charters and chronicles.

Speakers:

Chris Eddington, 'Saint Mildrith and the Inclusion of Mercian Royalty in the Kentish Royal Legend Genealogy'

Brittany J. Orton, 'What's Land Got to Do with It? Mercian Elite Women Religious as Local Agents for the Seventh-Century Mercian Kingdom'

Richard Purkiss, 'The Church of Much Wenlock and the Early Mercian Frontier'

Mercian Studies II: Mercian Traces in Language and Landscape

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Sponsor: Mercian Network

Moderator: Christine Rauer

Session Abstract: This session surveys Mercian runes, place-names and Germanic dialect features across their transmission history, from production to adaptation in later times. Do they contribute to a continuing Mercian identity, before and beyond the demise of its kingdom?

Speakers:

Gaby Waxenberger, 'An Inventory of the Anglian Runic Inscriptions'

John Baker, 'Temporal Collective Identities: The Folk-names of Mercia'

Kazutomo Karasawa, 'Linguistic Traces of a Mercian Archetype of the Exeter Book'

Mercian Studies III: Mercian Art and Influence

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Sponsor: Mercian Network

Moderator: Teresa Porciani

Session Abstract: This session will assess art historical evidence and book history to trace the political influence exerted by Mercian culture, first within its own regions and, at a later stage, in the cultural productions of Wessex and post-Conquest England.

Speakers:

Jason Chess, 'The Staffordshire Hoard and Mercia's Wild West'

Raven McGovern, 'The Age of Alfred and Mercian Zoomorphic Initials'

Peter McIntosh, 'The Hereford Gospels: The Evidence for Manuscript Production in West Mercia'

Mercian Studies IV: Bishops, Kings and Coins

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Sponsor: Mercian Network

Moderator: Alex Woolf

Session Abstract: The various roles played by Mercian bishops and kings will be at the centre of this session, shedding new light on some more unusual practices which seem to push conventional boundaries. How was such behaviour perceived by outside commentators and in later times?

Speakers:

Thomas Vare, 'Wilfrid, Bishop of the Middle Angles?'

Rory Naismith, 'Means, Motives and Opportunities: The Execution of Æthelberht II of East Anglia Revisited'

Rose Varley, 'Bishops and Money in Pre-Viking Mercia'

2026 Paper Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Baker: Folk-names feature prominently in a range of sources — literary, administrative and toponymic — and have often been analysed as a means of understanding early socio-political organisation in Mercia and the other early medieval English kingdoms. Discussion of these community or collective identities tends to supplement wider archaeological or historical assessments; this paper explores the material from an onomastic perspective, considering issues of chronology, typology and structure. It aims to set out approaches that may achieve a better understanding of this group of names and their implications for the study of the early history of Mercia.

Chess: The Staffordshire Hoard includes a gold alloy strip, of uncertain function, inscribed with a text from Numbers 10:35. The script has been described as 'Insular majuscule' and connected with the great Hiberno-Saxon Gospel books. However, extant Brittonic epigraphy shows that a fully-formed, high-grade calligraphic treatment of this Insular script had also been worked up in western Britain by no later than the turn of the seventh century. Can this scrap of palaeography therefore challenge not just the 'Anglo-Saxon' homogeneity of the hoard itself but the traditional assumption that 'Insular half-uncial' was the product of late seventh-century Northumbria, and point us to Mercia's western cultural interface?

Eddington: After Augustine, Mildrith was the second most important saint in Kent. Although her mother was from the Kentish royal family her father was Mercian, Merewalh King of the Magonsæte. Mildrith's mother, Eormenburh alias Domneva, founded the abbey at Minster-in-Thanel in Kent on land given by the Kentish king Ecgberht in compensation for the killing of her brothers Æthelberht and Æthelræd. Mildrith succeeded

her mother as abbess and after her death was venerated in Kent as a holy virgin, as were elsewhere her sisters Mildburh and Mildgith. Mildrith's connections with Mercian royalty and their importance are indicated in several versions of the genealogy in the Kentish Royal Legend texts, in which the genealogy is expanded incrementally: from the naming of her father Merewalh and his identification as a son of Penda; then the addition of Wulfhere, another son of Penda and father of Mildrith's cousin St Werburh; and finally the inclusion of other Penda's other children. This paper will suggest reasons for Mildrith's importance in Kent and the inclusion of a growing number of her Mercian relatives.

Karasawa: It has been pointed out that the language used in the Exeter Book, though generally West Saxon, shows a strong influence of Anglian. This paper explores the Exeter scribe's performance and several peculiar spelling conventions found throughout the codex, and claims that there must have been an Anglian, and probably Mercian, archetype of the whole codex.

McGovern: Francis Leneghan and Amy Faulkner's recent edited collection, 'The Age of Alfred' (2024) interrogates outdated assumptions with regards to the Alfredian corpus. In particular, the supposed loss of learning as indicated by the Prose Preface to the Pastoral Care is questioned in terms of its factuality. Christine Rauer's contribution, 'Old English Literature before Alfred: The Mercian Dimension', sheds light on the pre-existing Mercian literary creativity. Considering the key role of Mercian scholars in Alfred's surrounding milieu, it is undeniable that there was a direct impact of Mercian literature upon Alfred's literary regime. This paper analyses the influence of the decorated initials within the Book of Cerne - a manuscript of Mercian origin - upon MS Hatton 20, the earliest existing copy of the Old English Pastoral Care. By teasing apart the graphically imitative nature of a specific zoomorphic style of decorated initial, I assert that the 'Age of Alfred' should be thought of as an age in which Mercian literary culture was perpetuated through not only textual means, but the illustrative aspects of book production, too.

McIntosh: It would not be unfair to say that spiritually, economically, militarily and politically Hereford was increasing in importance during the eighth century. The production of a Gospel work in these circumstances would have enhanced the prestige of the locale and if, as Furniss states, it took all the resources of the Religious House to produce one copy, this would be an investment well repaid by the raising of the status of the Guthlac and Æthelbert minster houses.

Naismith: The beheading of Æthelberht II, king of the East Angles, in 794 was one of the formative events of the late eighth century, tarnishing the reputation of his slayer, Offa of Mercia, for centuries to come. In this paper, I will re-examine the (limited) background information about this execution - one of very few recorded beheadings from Anglo-Saxon England - and consider how it should be interpreted in the context of Offa's reign as a whole. The bloody treatment meted out to Æthelberht, using a method of execution with very mixed connotations, differs sharply from Offa's treatment of other regions and rulers, suggesting exceptional circumstances rather than a king who was a habitual killer.

Orton: The second half of the seventh century in Mercia witnessed an ever-increasing religious fervour and proliferation of monastic foundation. The Mercian royal family played an integral role in this conversion, both establishing monasteries, granting lands, and joining religious communities themselves. This is particularly evident for the women of the Mercian royal family who joined and founded monasteries at a notable rate. Barbara Yorke, looking at this phenomenon, found that many of these female-led monasteries acted as both spiritual and temporal intermediaries for pre-Conquest elite families in the ecclesiastical world. These nunneries and double houses acted as religious centres of intercessory prayer, commemoration of the dead, and both as shrines and cult centres for royal saints. This paper contends that, in Mercia, there was also a secular role for these female-led monasteries. Looking at charters and brief literary mentions which document familial land grants to seventh-century Mercian elite women, this paper traces the location and topographical features of these estates and lands. As this paper is based on a larger examination, here I will focus on the lands given to Cyneburh, Mildburh, and Wærburh to illustrate the strategic placement of these lands within the wider Mercian imperium.

Purkiss: The seventh-century double monastery of Wenlock, in what is now Shropshire, is known only from fragmentary sources. It was founded on a site purchased from a king Merewalh, whose daughter Mildburh became its second abbess. Wenlock is usually associated with a Mercian dynasty descended from Penda, and hence placed firmly in a Mercian political context. It is nonetheless clear that during the seventh and eighth centuries, the house looked both east and west, enjoying connections with Wales, Kent, and East Anglia. Wenlock seems to have declined in importance thereafter, although there is no suggestion of institutional discontinuity. This paper will reconsider the circumstances of the foundation's early growth, examining how its position was affected by dynastic considerations, long-distance contacts, and a politically marginal location. It will take as its point of departure the Life of St Mildburh ascribed to Goscelin of Saint-Bertin and the 'Testament' embedded within it, which are considered to incorporate authentic traditions but remain little-examined.

Vare: Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* iv.23 describes Wilfrid (d. 710) as 'acting Bishop of the Middle Angles' when he consecrated Otfthor of the Hwicce whilst in exile in Mercia c. 691. This is the only time that Bede uses this episcopal title in the HE, and this paper examines his reasons for doing so. Bede appears to be fitting Wilfrid's unusual behaviour into a more formalised ecclesiastical structure. This paper argues that Bede knew that Wilfrid was acting as a bishop within Mercia without being *episcopus Merciorum*; he, therefore, linked Wilfrid with the Middle Angles, a semi-independent people associated with Mercia, who Bede believed could have an independent bishop.

Varley: From the mid-eighth to the early tenth century, some Mercian bishops issued inscribed episcopal coinage alongside their royal counterparts. While it is often assumed that bishops had limited influence over the scale and organisation of episcopal minting, numismatic evidence reveals their significant role in both the production and distribution of coinage. This paper examines patterns of episcopal coinage across two diocesan case studies – the archbishopric of Canterbury and the bishopric of London. The finds challenge assumptions of royal

exclusivity over coinage, indicating a shared governance of currency and highlighting bishops as key players in the economic development of England.

Waxenberger: About 45 runic inscriptions survive from southern England, including the lands that became the kingdom of Mercia. Some of these inscriptions preserve short words and phrases written in pre-Old English (c. 425–c. 600), including the earliest, a roe deer astragalus from Caistor-by-Norwich (c. AD425–75). However, findspot does not always reflect origin, and here linguistic, archaeological and art historical evidence can be informative. This paper will focus on this problem, and question how far the linguistic evidence can confirm or challenge the evidence implied by a findspot, focusing especially on finds from Mercian lands.

2025

Mercian Studies I: Bishops, Pots and High Places: Making Mercian Identities

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Moderator: Rory Naismith

Respondent: Jo Story

Session Abstract: This multidisciplinary session uses archaeological, landscape, linguistic and historical evidence to reassess the emergence and evolution of Mercia as a cultural and political entity, c. 500–800. Evidence from regions eventually brought under Mercian control (the Middle Angles, Lindsey, and the western borderlands) helps illuminate the character of Mercian hegemony.

Speakers:

Diana C. Briscoe, 'Stamped Pottery from the Mercian Region: A Reconsideration'

Abigail Lloyd, 'A tumulus by any other name? Accounting for difference in place-names within the Mercian borders'

Thomas Vare, 'The Bishopric of the Middle Angles'

Mercian Studies II: Ninth-Century Mercia and Wessex: Transition and Relations

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Moderator: Jo Story

Respondent: Christine Rauer

Session Abstract: This session focuses on the end of the Mercian kingdom and the resulting consequences for its political life and cultural production. What role did its West Saxon neighbour play in the later dissemination of Mercian texts and administrative conventions?

Speakers:

Kees Dekker, 'Encyclopaedic Learning in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: the Mercian Link'

Christine Wallis, 'From Mercian to West Saxon: The Scribes of the Old English Martyrology and the Old English Bede'

Vanessa King, 'Queen Aethelswith of Mercia: the first crowned queen in England?'

2025 Paper Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Briscoe: This paper focuses on early ceramics made in the Mercian region. It will examine the motifs that are most common in finds from Mercia, as opposed to (for example) East Anglia, the Thames Valley or the south coast, and also identify some motifs that are unique to Mercian potters. Special attention will be given to the motifs on cremation urns from Loveden Hill, Lincs, in comparison with those from Spong Hill in Suffolk.

Dekker: Of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and manuscript fragments listed in Gneuss and Lapidge's Bibliographical Handlist, some 53 contain encyclopaedic notes: short passages of prose listing or explaining factual or encyclopaedic information. Of these 53 manuscripts, 28 contain one note; the others more, from two to fifteen. The origin of this tradition is obscure. Encyclopaedic notes occur both on the Continent and in England,

where they first appear in London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian B. vi, fols. 104–109, a quire dating from the early ninth century, which has been identified as Mercian (perhaps written in Canterbury). In this paper I will explore the early manuscript tradition of encyclopaedic notes in England to investigate whether the interplay of scribes, texts, books and readers can elucidate the origin of this tradition. What do the notes tell us about the world of Mercian learning?

King: This paper focusses on the career of Æthelswith (d. 886), wife of Burgred, king of Mercia (r. 852-874) and daughter of Æthelwulf of Wessex. Her powerful connections ensured that she was a major player at the Mercian court, jointly issuing royal charters and appearing regularly in the witness lists. She was the first English queen to dispose of land in her own right and may have been the first crowned queen in England. She was also be the last queen of an independent Mercian kingdom before its subsummation within a new ‘Anglo-Saxon’ regna created by her brother Alfred.

Lloyd: A large proportion of English places are named from landscape features, using specialised and nuanced vocabulary. Such names provide a ubiquitous and unparalleled insight into historic perceptions of the landscape, its social, economic and cultural significance, as well as early medieval and medieval understandings of identity. This paper follows on from a country-wide study of three early medieval hill-terms: *berg* (OE/OScan), *crug* (OE/Brit) and *dūn* (OE). Employing an interdisciplinary approach, this research brings together linguistic analysis, field work, GIS-software, and topographic modelling, as well as archaeological, geological and historical data. The study has developed, and now demonstrates, new and powerfully visual research tools.

Vare: In 737, the diocese of Mercia was divided to create the diocese of Lichfield and a diocese in the East Midlands. It is generally assumed that the diocese in the East Midlands was directly associated with the Middle Angles. This paper argues that the relationship between the Middle Angles and Mercians and the diocese in the East Midlands was far more ambiguous and complicated than has previously been acknowledged. The pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon episcopal lists, the earliest of which (BL, Cotton MS Vespasian B VI) dates from the early ninth century, present the diocese of the East Midlands as a second bishopric of the Mercians rather than a bishopric of another people, and appear to be unsure about the relative status of the Mercian diocese and where the bishopric in the East Midlands was established.

Wallis: This paper will explore scribal behaviour in two prose works, the Old English Martyrology (OEM) and the Old English Bede (OEB). The OEM and OEB are both texts whose earliest manuscripts show a strong Anglian dialectal colouring, with later manuscripts exhibiting varying levels of translation into West Saxon. Drawing on earlier methodologies, this paper compares and contrasts the different copying strategies evident as each text was successively updated by later scribes. The OEM and OEB are substantial texts, extant in multiple witnesses; they contain the work of at least 19 scribes across 11 manuscripts. Selected scribes and manuscripts will be used to explore two main research questions: 1)

What linguistic aspects of Mercian were most (or least) likely to be translated into West Saxon forms by the scribes of the OEM and OEB? 2) Do the OEM and OEB pattern alike in the way they are translated/ updated? It is envisaged that this study will shed important light on the attitudes of (some) scribes to linguistic norms and their own copying practices in the late Anglo-Saxon period.

2024

Mercian Studies I: Cultural Standards

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Moderator: Christine Rauer

Session Abstract: Was there a distinctive Mercian cultural identity? Do the historical, literary and sculptural 'texts' reveal responses that are particular and peculiar to the English midlands? This session takes a multidisciplinary approach to evidence and investigates driving forces behind Mercian practices and cultural productivity.

Speakers:

Mathew Clear, 'The Seventh-Century Easter Controversy in Southumbria'

Luisa Ostacchini, 'Writing Mercia in the *Old English Martyrology*'

Jane Hawkes, 'Downgrading the Crisis: Studying Mercian Sculpture in Early Medieval England'

Mercian Studies II: Midland Borderland

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Moderator: John Gallagher

Session Abstract: This session focuses on Mercia as both a medial and a border territory, exploring the importance of place in the creation of polities and as a catalyst for ideas and art. Is it possible that the fluctuating limits of Mercian identity could have had a positive effect on its cultural productivity?

Speakers:

Andrew Sargent, 'Meeting the Marchers: The Power of Place in the Late Antique Midlands'

Amanda Doviak, 'Visualising Christianity in Crisis: Reconsidering the Viking-age Sculptural Iconographies of Mercia'

Christine Rauer, 'The Register of Texts and Manuscripts with a Mercian Element: Update

Mercian Studies III: Succession Crisis

Organisers: Jo Story and Christine Rauer

Moderator: Jo Story

Session Abstract: Three papers confront the question of crisis in Mercia in the long ninth century by focusing on moments of succession to the kingship, from Ecgrith in 796 to Æthelstan in 924.

Speakers:

Charles Insley and Keith Ray, 'The Succession to Offa, 796: Dynastic Crisis or Regime Change?'

Morn Capper, 'Crisis averted? Predicting and Managing Crisis in the Mercian Kingdom in the Long Ninth Century'

Michael Wood, '924: Athelstan King of the Mercians'

2024 Paper Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

Capper: Crises have provided fertile opportunity for historical thinking and, as Starn proposed, may last moments or decades, being considered as historical cause or effect. Yet in times of crisis, despite difficulties or doubts, decisions must nonetheless be made. This paper proposes that, despite a reputation for being crisis ridden, more often the crises in Mercian hegemony were predicted, forestalled, even engineered as part of wider cultural and dynastic strategies. Furthermore, in a kingdom often lamented for its lack of sources, at times, crises may appear only retrospectively or partially, in choice of language or even the lacunae in available contemporary evidence. The long ninth century was punctuated by a series of historically recognised Mercian crises – the death of Ecgrith, the failings of Mercian hegemony in the 820s, and even the violent endings and transformations of Mercian kingship and community during the Viking Age– yet comparing detail in these crisis responses with lesser-known turning-points often reveals the nuances and strengths of the Mercian community itself. This paper explores the language, decisions and strategies by which key Mercian dynastic, political and religious crises of the long ninth century were predicted and even averted, as well as acknowledged and managed.

Clear: While the issue of dating Easter in Northumbria had come to a flashpoint at the Synod of Whitby in 664, the Easter Controversy south of the Humber would only see the crisis addressed eight years later at the Council of Herford led by Archbishop Theodore. The council ratified ten canons, drawn from a certain *liber canonum*, the first of which specifically regarded the practice of Easter. Nevertheless, the language of this Canon deviates from all previously known consular canons. The exact language was tailored to address the nature of the Easter controversy in the Southumbrian kingdoms, namely the widespread practice of the Easter calculation of Victorius of Aquitaine, which had been condemned by Pope Vitalian in the later 660s. This paper will describe the distinct nature of the Easter controversy in the Southumbrian kingdoms, particularly in Mercia and its tributaries. This will include a description of the differing calculations of Easter used in the region and how Mercia experienced diversity in Easter practice caused by contrasting influences from Iona, the bishop Wilfrid, and the Frankish kingdoms. Theodore's attempts to solve the Easter Controversy will be explored, through the consular canons of Hertford and the penitentials attributed to him.

Doviak: Ecclesiastical disruption and a subsequent decline in Mercian manuscript production in the late ninth to tenth centuries is traditionally attributed to the socio-political and religious upheaval associated with recurrent Scandinavian and West Saxon military incursions into eastern and northern Mercia (e.g., Blair 2005). More recently, however, Mercia has been re-framed as a political 'borderland' (e.g., Capper 2023) between Scandinavian and West Saxon polities, a concept already recognised in art-historical scholarship, albeit in less objective terms (e.g., Kendrick 1949). Nevertheless, such 'borderland' status may have enabled the transmission of Christian theological concepts between political entities and encouraged artistic production on a monumental scale. It is evident that the Church continued to participate in the production of stone monuments during this period and may have influenced their nuanced carved iconographic programmes. This paper will analyse how the iconographic programmes of monuments in the Midlands from sites such as Hope (Derbyshire), Alstonefield or Ilam (Staffordshire) can provide

counterparts to contemporary textual sources circulating in the region by expressing visually the theological concepts established in the Apostles' Creed – belief in the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection and Judgement.

Hawkes: It has long been recognised that studying the culture of the Midlands (or Mercia) in early medieval England faces something of a challenge given the relative absence of textual sources. The lack of clear origins and therefore cultural associations, is, in large part, due to the very portability of manuscripts, metalwork and materials such as carved ivories. In clear contradistinction, the carved sculptures of the Midlands remain largely in situ. Although many are fragmentary and so incomplete, worn and weathered, built into later architectural structures that hide their 3-dimensional appearance, carved stone is heavy; it cannot be easily picked up and moved from one place to another. This primary aspect of the material means that it can be 'read'. Considered in this way, the carvings have the extraordinary potential to provide insight to the texts that informed their creation and the understandings of them anticipated by those responsible for their production. In this paper, a select number of sculptures from the western, central and eastern Midlands will be discussed in terms of their 'iconographic' (or iconological) significances to provide insights into the cultural milieux responsible for their production and those anticipated to encounter them.

Insley and Ray: Between the years' ends 795 and 796, there unfolded a succession crisis at what was supposed to be the apogee of Offa's family's rule over the Kingdom of the Mercians. The mighty King Offa died, but the smooth transfer of power envisaged for his son Ecgrith as anointed successor was disrupted by the latter's sudden death later in the same year. Or was it indeed sudden? Did those at the centre of the Mercian court know what they could not publicly convey, and did they plan for the eventuality of the (possibly already sickly) Ecgrith's death in advance? Although we have the commentary of the Northumbrian cleric Alcuin's letters to the Mercian court (from the Rhineland and Tours) both before and after the crucial events of that fateful year, only the witness lists to Mercian royal charters provide us with clues as to how the crisis was managed and overcome, with the apparently calm takeover of the reins of power by the hitherto little-known but clearly dynamic scion who became King Coenwulf. We put the case that this produced remarkably little policy change for the regime and secured the continuity of power-wielding that Offa had been so keen to ensure.

Ostacchini: The *Old English Martyrology* is one of Mercia's most accomplished and most important literary outputs, synthesising an astonishingly diverse range of sources, ideas, languages, genres and saints into a single coherent piece of encyclopedic writing. The text, which comprises more than 230 entries and details saints from all parts of the known world, has often been remarked upon for its inclusivity. This inclusivity, however, results in a relatively sparse sense of Mercia itself, with few Mercian saints represented within the collection. In this paper, I will interrogate the ways in which Mercian peoples and places were represented in the OEM's vast collection of encyclopedic material through close comparison with the OEM's Latin sources and Old English analogues, and attention to intratextuality. Moreover, I will consider the extent to which Mercian identity is overwritten by broader categories of identity such as 'English' or 'Christian', both within individual entries and in the OEM's

inclusive design. This paper constitutes part of a larger project *The World of the Old English Martyrology*, which seeks both to understand how the martyrologist portrayed the global world and to offer further evidence for the distinctiveness and Latinity of Mercian literary output.

Rauer: A British-Academy-funded research project is currently assessing the substantial body of early medieval Mercian texts and manuscripts. This talk will provide a progress report on its growing register of materials and discuss some of its most important aspects, including the role played by Mercian heartlands (as opposed to areas under Mercian control, such as Kent), and the availability of sources and resources in dominant religious and political centres, such as Worcester and Canterbury.

Sargent: By the end of the seventh century the early medieval kingdom of the Mercians shared much with other kingdoms in northwest Europe, not least a royal dynasty and a church headed by a bishop whose pastoral role relied on the constitution of a Mercian ‘people’ (gens). However, the name of that people, Mierce, hints at an earlier sense of group identity associated with a boundary of some kind. This paper draws on landscape history, topography and archaeology to propose the significance of place-based practices of group formation in the Midlands, in play by the sixth century at the latest, which only later intersected with the ethnic discourses used by early medieval churchmen. A Late Antique context for the Mercian ‘boundary’ is elucidated and broader claims are made against the utility of ‘ethnogenesis’, a model much criticised but still commonly employed in scholarly discourse.

Wood: The succession crisis of 924-5 was a crucial turning point in tenth-century English history. But what happened is still unclear. Using annals, regnal lists and charters this paper looks at the events in 924 that led to the coronation of Athelstan as king of the Anglo-Saxons on 4 September 925.

2023

Mercian Studies I: Mercian Networks, 7th-9th Centuries

Organiser: Jo Story

Moderator: Jo Story

Speakers:

Márín MacCarron, 'Queen Osthryth of Mercia in Secular and Ecclesiastical Networks'

Peter Darby, 'Torhthelm of Leicester's Letter to Boniface'

Alex Traves, 'A Wicked Queen and a Tyrannical King? Memories of Eadburh and Offa in Late Ninth-Century Wessex'

Mercian Studies II: Mercian Sculpture, 7th-9th Centuries

Organiser: Joanna Story

Moderator: Joanna Story

Speakers:

Meg Boulton, 'Flights of Angels: Sculpted Stones and Shrines in Mercia'

Teresa Porciani, 'Figural Sculpture in Mercia: Revisiting the 'Peterborough School' (in the light of Lichfield)

Jane Hawkes, 'Deck the Hall: Sculpting Church Interiors in the East Midlands'

Mercian Studies III: Collecting Mercian Materials (Round Table)

Organiser: Christine Rauer

Moderator: Rachel Burns

Participants: Jessica Hodgkinson, Jo Story, Francis Leneghan, Emily Kesling

Session Abstract: How extensive is pre-Conquest Mercian literary culture? What materials survive in terms of manuscripts, inscriptions, and Old English and Latin texts? Where do the difficulties lie in identifying relevant material? Which centres were the most or least productive ones? Is it possible to speak of a 'network' of Mercian authors or scribes? This round table is sponsored by the collaborative Literary History of Mercia project, and will focus on providing an update on the year's work on the project. We hope to explore (or problematise) the relationship between Old English and Latin in the corpus; cultural high and low points within the period; and some comparison with other kingdoms. Members of the audience will be encouraged to join in the discussion with project staff, as we hope to pick up the larger conference theme of networks and entanglements in the varied literary landscape of Mercia.