

VIKING VIRTUAL REALITY: INSIDE THE GREAT ARMY'S WINTER CAMP

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Since 2011 Dawn Hadley and Julian Richards have been working with metal-detectorists as part of their research into the Viking Great Army, and their winter camp at Torksey (Lincolnshire, UK), of AD872-3. Over 1500 artefacts have now been catalogued, and published online for study by researchers. However, it can be difficult to present these often fragmentary objects to a wider audience, and to help them understand what the finds are able to tell us about life in the winter camp, and the wider Viking world. In 2017 we had the opportunity to work with colleagues at the Yorkshire Museum in York, and the University of York's Centre for Digital Heritage and Digital Creativity Labs to develop an immersive Virtual Reality experience based on our archaeological research. The experience presents a series of vignettes based upon metal-detected objects found in the camp, and features a soundtrack developed by York's Acoustics Lab, incorporating authentic Old Norse dialogue. Our immersive experience takes the user back in time to the banks of the River Trent in the winter of AD 872-3, where an Army of several thousand Viking warriors was camped. Viking VR featured in the British Museum/ York Museum Trust exhibition Viking: Rediscover the Legend which was at the Yorkshire Museum from May-November 2017, where it was visited by some 75,000 people, and we won the Excellence in Media Arts prize in the 2017 York Culture Awards. Our paper will illustrate how digital technologies can have a significant impact on public understanding of the past, and of the contribution of metal-detecting.

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