



The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

SAXON

President: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

No. 9 / 1989

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF SUTTON HOO by Jenny Glazebrook



Angela and Sarah plotting finds in the Mound 5 grave.

A cremation . . .

Mound 5 contained a central Anglo-Saxon grave which was excavated during September by Angela Evans (British Museum) and Sarah Calvert (University of York). It was found to contain many small pieces of cremated bone, and fragments of a number of grave goods. These included knives, a bone comb, mineralised textile, bone gaming pieces, the silver rim from a wooden cup; and a pair of bronze shears which indicate that the grave belonged to a woman.

. . . and more sandmen

There are several graves grouped around Mound 5, and excavation of these continued into the autumn. Some of the 'sandmen' they contain are interpreted as ritual killings, and apart from the ring-ditch grave excavated last year, none of these graves contain



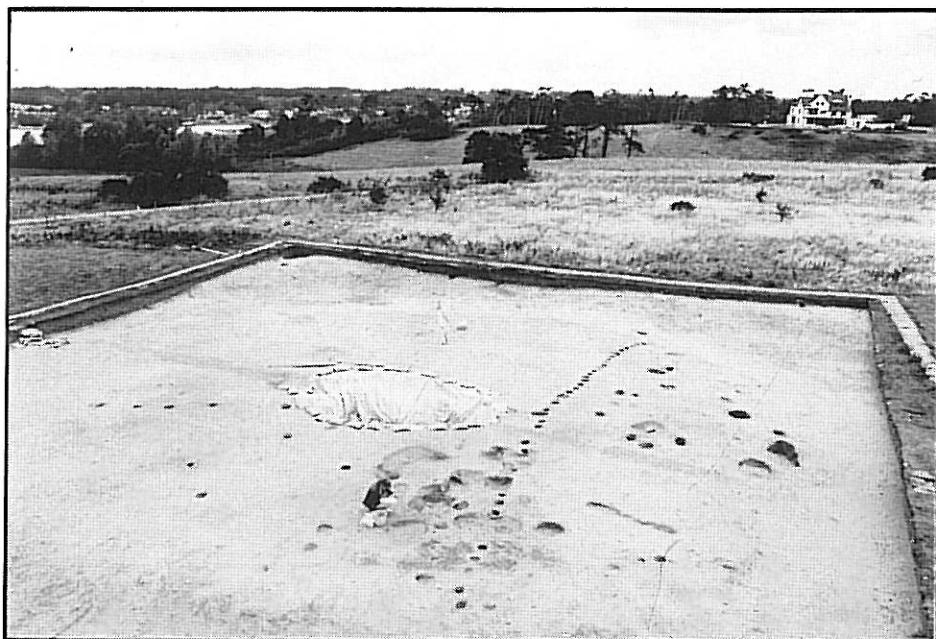
Andy Copp (Site Supervisor) putting the finishing touches to one of the recently excavated graves.

Burial 25?

grave goods. They conform to the pattern already observed at Sutton Hoo which suggests that the cemetery was 'special'; reserved for the burial mounds of the emerging aristocracy and the graves of those who were sacrificed during the elaborate surrounding ritual.

Prehistoric Landowners?

Cultivation soils, probable of the Roman period, were found beneath Mound 2 and Mound 5. Underneath these soils, evidence for prehistoric land division was revealed, in the form of banks and ditches followed by paling fences. Two round houses with hearths were sited in corners of the 'proprietary' areas. The settlement seems to date to the 'Beaker period' (late Neolithic/early Bronze Age), and



Prehistoric fenceline, post sockets and hearth under Mound 2, during excavation.



Laurence Baker and Peter Horsfall (Oceanfix International Ltd) surveying Mound 6 on a cold day

is being seen as evidence of a possible colonisation of marginal land (see 'Sutton Hoo's Ancient Ancestor' in Saxon No. 8).

Preparing Sector 5 for excavation

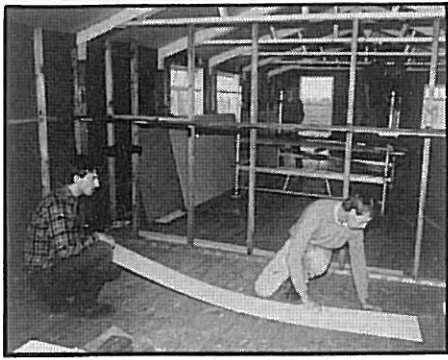
Remote sensing is very chilly work in cold weather, but Mounds 6 & 7 (Sector 5) were surveyed last January by a team from Oceanfix International Ltd using a Subsurface Interface Radar, before the turf was removed. The results of their rapid and efficient survey will be compared with the evidence duly revealed by excavation, and if consistent, this method will be used to map the burial mounds not included in the current excavation sample.

Removing turf is heavy work, popular with the team in cold weather. A mechanical turving machine was lent to the project by Fairlawn Ltd of Orford, to help strip the turf from Mounds 6 and 7 in February last year.



Deturfing made (relatively) easy, with a machine lent by Fairlawn Ltd of Orford.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMOVALS & BUILDING SERVICES INC.



Constructing the partition between Finds Office and Display Room in the new hut.

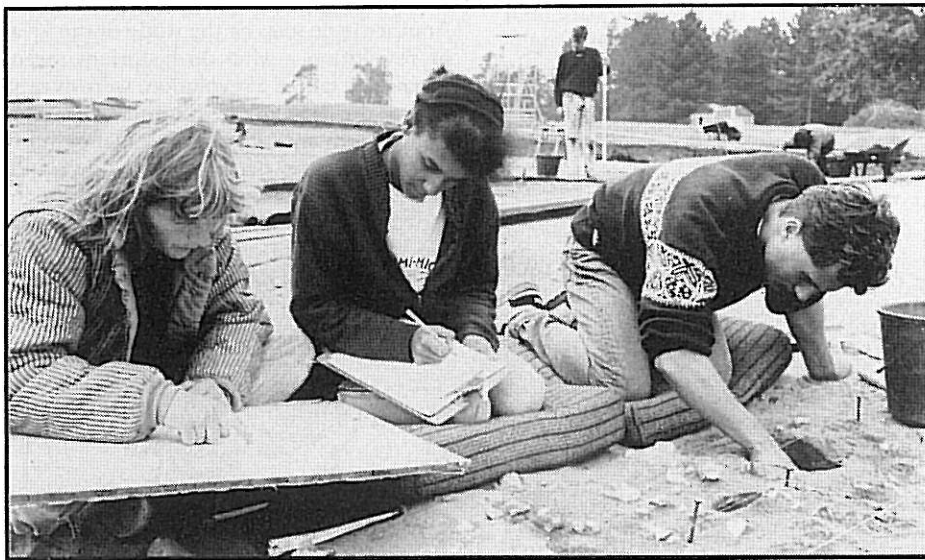


Fitting ceiling boards - Simon (left) and Stephen from the MSC team.



Insulation - very important at Sutton Hoo.

By March this year the office quarters on site were becoming rather cramped, and after the hurricane last autumn we were particularly wary about our location under the trees of Top Hat Wood. The Sutton Hoo Research Trust became owners of part of the scheduled monument in the spring, so we took the opportunity to move our offices (literally!) onto the new site, and to provide the much-needed extra space by erecting a sectional building donated to the project by CEGB. Much of this work was done during April and May by our own MSC team, supervised by Nigel MacBeth, and they were helped enormously by staff from the Scout Association HQ. Everyone on site mucked in (I celebrated my birthday in June by digging-in 400m of water-pipe - with the help of local venture scouts), and even the occasional visitor was handed a paintbrush. It pays to be versatile in Archaeology!



Madeleine Hummler instructs undergraduates in excavation and recording procedures.

By July we were able to concentrate on archaeological digging again. Students began to arrive from Universities all over Britain to take part in the Sutton Hoo Training Excavation, and learn all about practical archaeology from Dr Madeleine Hummler.

Using the additional manpower provided by students and a number of volunteers from local schools, we achieved our objectives for the summer, which were: to complete the excavation of prehistoric settlement remains under Mound 2; to excavate Mound 5; and to clean and record the surface of Mounds 6 and 7 ready for excavation the following year.

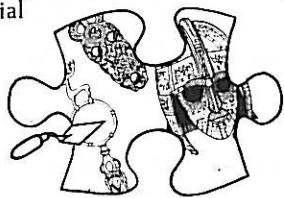
... Students acquire trowelling skills.



The Anglo-Saxons? Ah, yes, marvellous for the 8-year olds, lots of scope of imaginative written work and drawings of shields, swords, ships and so on. But for the 13 and 14-year olds? Shouldn't they be dealing with more modern issues, more recent history, more 'relevant' to their own lives?

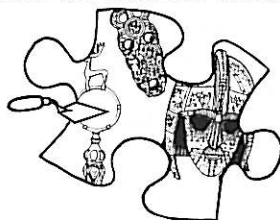
This view of what should be studied in history and whether what is studied is 'relevant' raises a multiplicity of questions and doubts. Despite ideas related to the National Curriculum and the debate about what pupils should know by a certain age, the view has become less acceptable with the development of skills-based as opposed to content-bound study.

The Sutton Hoo ship burial has been for the past 16 years a part of the Schools History Project 'What is History' for 13 and 14-year old pupils. Intended to introduce pupils to the idea that history is not simply a series of dates, kings, queens or inventions to be learned by heart, but is also a method of study, the SHP has emphasised the use of skills, whilst maintaining a wide range of content. Thus for 13 and 14 year-olds the development of an historical skill, or the understanding of an historical technique, may be taught as much through early as through modern history. The Anglo-Saxons may be studied at the age of 8 not only to learn about the life and times of the Anglo-Saxons but also to develop skills and concepts appropriate for an 8 year-old - for example beginning to understand simple chronology, to use correctly words such as 'myth', and to ask the question 'how do we know?'. Studying the Anglo-Saxons again at 13 and 14 to develop more complex skills and concepts will not necessarily be either repetitive or a waste of time. At 14 pupils will be dealing with problems such as distinguishing between fact and opinion, and recognising that evidence may not be impartial



The idea that historians are in part 'detectives' is developed in the section on Sutton Hoo in the SHP, and pupils are encouraged to do some detective work of their own. They are presented with a series of 'finds' and are at first asked simply to describe the finds. Further information (clues) about the finds then enables the pupils to make initial suggestions about what has been found. Here pupils may be asked to consider their answers to such questions as: what was the shape found in the mound? When was the hoard of treasure buried? Who was the likely owner of the treasure? The first question may be answered relatively easily (though many frequently answer - 'a Viking ship'), the second two raise other questions and are not so easily answered.

The point is quickly made that the finds alone will not give the whole picture, that they are only a part of the 'jigsaw puzzle'. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions - indeed to consider what questions they need to ask - in order to progress further, in order to decide where to go for more information, for further 'clues' about this site and its historical context. The pupils will need to consider whether clues may usefully be gained from studying similar finds in other parts of Europe; in what ways studying historical parallels - similar events or peoples - may help them to interpret the finds. At this stage they may also wish to consider the value and use of secondary evidence about similar finds. That of course raises yet more issues about evidence for the 'detective historian'.



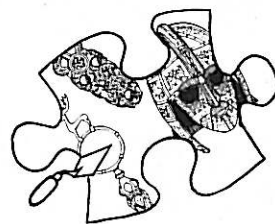
Ultimately the pupils are asked to consider who may have been buried on the site - if anyone was. For this they will base their responses on information about Anglo-Saxon kings of the period, which they can attempt to relate to the finds of the site. Inevitably their answers will be tentative, and from this part of the exercise, and from earlier work, arise important lessons about the nature of history and the work of historians - that much of our knowledge is partial, that much is opinion based on evidence available, and that opinion may change as new evidence comes to light. This final lesson of course can readily be emphasised by alluding to the modifying influences of recent research at Sutton Hoo which may necessitate the amendment of some of the information and suggestions in the unit booklet which was written 16 years ago.

The SHP is now some 16 years old, and as such may perhaps be seen as a part of history itself. What has been learned from it? To what use have the lessons been put? To start with it has provided much of the basis on which the best of GCSE history is founded. In addition to the idea that the study of history must include work directly related to sources - to allow pupils to approach and deal with primary and secondary evidence, and to realise and understand that therein lie many problems - there is, among other factors, the experience and enjoyment of pupils brought up on SHP to 'O' level and CSE. Further, the conceptual approach underlying the course is now being applied to 'A' level in the Cambridge History Project being developed in Leeds and London, and piloted this year in some 53 schools and colleges from Cornwall to Suffolk and from Kent to Cumbria.

The reform of 'A' level history is seen by many in education as important, even urgent, given the number of pupils emerg-

ing from a background of SHP and GCSE courses with their emphasis on concepts and skills as well as content, and embarking at 16+ on a traditional content-bound 'A' level with, in the majority of courses, relatively little real emphasis on aspects such as sources, evidence and methodology. Within the Cambridge History Project is a very wide range of content experience on which the methodology and historiography is based. Students may find themselves at 17 studying once again eras they studied at 8 or 10 or 12, but of course from a very different viewpoint and for a very different purpose. Thus within the CHP appear, in various work units: the Britons, the Celts, the Romans, the Greeks, the Cretans, the Saxons and the Normans, as well as the Tudors, Stuarts and Victorians. The lessons begun with Sutton Hoo at 13 will provide the basis for the concepts approached at 17, by which time students will be dealing with more abstract issues. One such may be the concept of 'power' (in history - a concept relevant to Sutton Hoo and the development of the Kingdom of East Anglia - who wielded it, how it was acquired, retained, justified and demonstrated through time).

Another issue may be the study of the idea of 'revolution' - what do historians mean when they talk of a revolution, were events seen at the time as a revolution? A further area of study may involve considering how historians have defined, developed and described trends and turning points in history, and whether it is possible to view the period from another angle and see these trends and turning points as more or less important. (For example, is 1066 a turning point in British history?).



An important part of ideas behind the changes coming in 'A' level is that students understand that much of our history is based on informed opinion and as such is not a 'truth' which can be stated without contradiction. Such a concept can begin with Sutton Hoo - the understanding that historians worked as 'time detectives' piecing together a view of the past, basing that view on the available evidence and that as further evidence accrues, that view of the past may well have to be modified, or indeed abandoned altogether.

Charlotte Evers is a member of the Leeds Working Party for the Development Study of the Cambridge History Project.

Project Director: Alan Kelly, Trinity and All Saints College, Horsforth, Leeds.

SUTTON HOO: OUT OF SCHOOL by Becky Lee, Rose Williams & Clare Pollard

We went to Sutton Hoo in 1988 for two weeks work experience, which we did through our school. We learnt about the site through a friend who works there during the summer as a volunteer, and decided that we would like to have a go at some work of this type. It was a privileged experience which we feel we got a lot out of. Our first impressions were very different to what we expected. We now realise that there is a lot of hard work involved in archaeology and it requires a lot of patience and good supervision. A lot of the work we did was trowelling the top soil from the mound in order to leave a clean surface. Most of the time we seemed to be wheeling barrows onto the spoil heap! The more skilled jobs on the site were done by the full-time staff, as any small mistake could be very crucial. Every single feature has to be marked with a tag; and every single find, however small, must be put in a bag, numbered, and a nail has to be put in its place. All these points have to be surveyed using a theodolite, and once this has been done the readings are charted which gives a clear picture of the site. Although the theodolite, which is a very technical instrument, was used only by the professionals, we all had a go at holding the staff. This became increasingly difficult in a high wind with frozen hands.

Another way of viewing the site was from the air. Once an area had been cleaned a photograph was taken of it from a scaffolding tower. In order to make features stand out more clearly the area was sprayed. On several occasions we were plucked from our trowelling in order to move the tower or the spray. We were on some occasions even needed to act as a scale in the photographs.

Apart from just cleaning the top soil away we were also looking for finds. The things we most commonly found were pieces of burnt flint and pieces of pottery. However at one point a student working beside us discovered a barbed flint arrowhead. This acted as a source of inspiration for the rest of us not-so-successful trowellers.

All the organisation of the volunteers and students was supervised by Andy Copp who was always helpful. This was for us a good way of learning how to listen to criticism and being able to make good use of it. The manual work was very rewarding and it was great to feel that you were doing a job with some responsibility.

Of course, not all the work we did was outside. We also had the chance on a few occasions to work in the finds office. Every single find is brought here and has to be cleaned, numbered and logged. Most of the

finds, pottery and flint, have to be washed. Pottery is more delicate and we used a small paint-brush on that, while on the flint we could use a toothbrush. This job was both interesting and helpful for us to be able to identify finds we might discover. We were also able to do flint marking, which meant marking in ink with a steady hand the finds number onto pieces of flint. Other less interesting jobs were tag-scraping, tag-numbering and entering data onto the computer. Although not so interesting these jobs are just as important to the smooth running of the site.

One of the jobs which everyone had to do, regarded by many as the most important job, was the making of tea and coffee. There was nothing better after working outside on a cold and miserable day than a cup of tea!

Our experiences were certainly not bad ones and we were very grateful to the staff. We all felt that we wouldn't want to pursue a career in archaeology even though we think it is very rewarding and interesting work, but we all feel we would like to go back in the near future to Sutton Hoo or another archaeological site as volunteers for a summer job.

Becky Lee, Rose Williams and Clare Pollard are 5th year pupils at Thomas Mills High School, Framlingham.



Rose brushing the site clean, with Stephen in the background. Inset: Clare (left) and Becky.

SPECIAL OFFER
see below



**Open Day 25th September 1988
by Rosemary Hoppitt**

About 70 members of the Society turned out for the Members' Open Day in less-than-perfect weather and were guided round the excavations by Martin Carver. As an experiment this year the Open Day took place over lunch-time - the tour began at 12.30 and was followed by a simple (but delicious and most welcome) ploughman's lunch. By the time we ate lunch the weather had improved sufficiently for the company to eat 'al fresco', warmed by cups of hot coffee. The experiment seems to have been a great success - our thanks go to Liz Miles and Rosemary Halliday (plus willing helpers) for an excellent lunch, and to Martin for the guided tour.



**Report by the Hon. Secretary
- R A Beardsley**

The spacious new display room in the CEGB hut proved popular with visitors, and is a convenient under-cover assembly area for those awaiting a tour - particularly during inclement weather.

Over 3,000 adults visited the site this season, accompanied by over 600 children. This represents a drop on last year's figures, which is probably due to the lack of publicity previously provided by television coverage. The next Sutton Hoo programme is due to be broadcast in the spring, and hopefully it will boost public interest for the 1989 season. There is no doubt that if the site could also be signposted on local roads, and was generally more accessible both by car and by boat, the number of visitors would increase.

There has been a disappointing response from schools, following an invitation to visit the site which was circulated last spring. Information will be sent out again in January to all schools in Suffolk and northern Essex, and perhaps this year they will be attracted to the idea of an outing to Sutton Hoo.

My grateful thanks and appreciation are due as ever to the sterling support and dedication shown by guides and helpers alike. The good image they present to the public of the Sutton Hoo Society is of prime importance, and I am confident they will continue to support the incoming Hon. Secretary as they have myself.

ORDER FORM

OPEN DAY GROUP PHOTOGRAPH 1988
10" x 8" Black & White Bordered Print With Logo
£2.50 each + 55p Post & Packing

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OBJECT PROFILE PROJECT PROFILE PROJEC



Golf Balls, Tomato Canes and Hi-Tec At Sutton Hoo
by Kate Clark

Those of you who have visited the site since the beginning of October may have noticed a lone figure slowly pacing the fields, between lines of garden twine, with what appeared to be a very ineffectual walking stick. If you had ventured closer you would have heard a series of bleeps and warbles, probably interspersed with the muttered imprecations of the stooped walker as she struggled to synchronise the operation of probe, magnetic susceptibility meter, and hand-held computer. Further

observation would have revealed neat rows of orange 'practice' golf balls suspended on tomato canes - or perhaps the surveyor, closely resembling a cinema usherette with a polystyrene tray suspended from her neck by two bent coathangers.

The execution of a geophysical survey involves an amusing mixture of high-technology and improvisation. This particular survey was concerned with measuring the magnetic susceptibility of the surface of the ploughsoil, and this is achieved by applying a small alternating current to the soil and measuring the degree of magnetisation induced in the ferrous component of the soil (the iron oxides). There are very often contrasts in susceptibility between different types of soil; for instance the fill of a prehistoric feature (e.g. ditch) will differ from the subsoil, and both will contrast with the topsoil. A feature disturbed by cultivation will retain this magnetic property in its dispersed state within the ploughsoil, and if the lateral spread is not too great it may be detected in a survey such as this.

So the apparently eccentric behaviour and paraphernalia of the surveyor has a very technical basis. The ferrule of the walking stick is in fact the probe through which the tiny current is applied gently but firmly to the soil surface. The strange 'slow motion' action occurs because the probe is zeroed to air between each ground reading. Garden twine is ideal for marking out the reading stations because it is

non-magnetic and non-elastic. The brightly coloured golf balls marking the corners of each grid are easy to spot and survive being mangled by agricultural implements. Tomato canes are again non-magnetic and are tall enough to suspend the golf balls above a growing crop. The pips and squeaks emanating from the surveyor's shoulder bag indicate that readings have been taken and accepted by the computer. The usherette's tray was a piece of forward thinking. In mild weather it is just about possible to activate the meter with one hand, wield the probe with three fingers of the other, and use the remaining thumb and forefinger to hold the computer where it can be seen - but not with gloves on! The 'ice-cream tray' prototype of computer holder narrowly won over a natty design in headwear based on an Australian bush hat with corks.

But I'm afraid there is no technical justification for the sotto voce monologue of the operator. This is just human nature, and happily without any scientific basis whatsoever! And to give you all fair warning, the next investigation is to be a resistivity survey where the unfortunate surveyor will appear to grapple unsuccessfully with an electrified and quite out-of-control walking frame.

Kate Clark is an Archaeological Science undergraduate (University of Bradford), currently doing remote sensing and survey work as part of her degree



A "Most Strange Collection"
by Stephen Keenan, one of the Community Programme Team

That's one way of describing the team members as I first saw them, waiting for the minibus to Sutton Hoo - men and women dressed in all kinds of work clothes, some ex-army, and (especially for the women) very fetching steel-toecapped boots. A rum looking bunch of mercenaries as you can imagine.

But fitting in proved very easy, and as we

trundled along the A12 to the site in the back of the bus, we got to know each other quite well. Stories of the work began to emerge - like the one about the mad supervisor who works in all weathers and prays for rain to stop his site drying up and blowing away; and wheelbarrows with twice the capacity of normal ones (or so it seemed when you went uphill). Well, my first day at Sutton Hoo was quite different to those horror stories; the staff were only slightly batty, the wheelbarrows looked quite normal, and the weather (peculiar for Sutton Hoo) behaved itself.

I started work in October 1987, the Monday morning after the hurricane. Archaeology was postponed for a week while we cleared fallen trees from Mrs Tranmer's driveway, but when I was introduced to the 'real work' going on at Sutton Hoo, I found it both fascinating and demanding.

The jobs that have to be done are quite varied - some more interesting than others but all essential. Having volunteered my help for a day during the summer, I had a vague idea of what the work involved: trowelling, shovelling, finds processing, computing . . . There were other jobs, I discovered, that most people were lucky enough to be chosen for at some stage - such as trowelling through 5cm of frosty, rock-hard soil (the best way to test the mettle(!) of trowels); or synchronised tower-moving (positioning the tower so

that Nigel can take overhead photos of each feature). This curious pastime is a sort of cross between the Royal Naval Field-gun Run and 'It's a Knockout'. Along the same lines, I have had the pleasure of pulling behind me a labour-saving de-turfing machine which won't go uphill without generous assistance; wet-seiving soil samples in the rain (another good one), spoil-heap management (a very prestigious job), and kite-flying - to take aerial shots of the site. The kite-flying sounded very nice, needing a degree of skill and strong arms. It's all well and good getting the camera and kite airborne, but bringing it down safely is another matter. This normally involves someone who can run fast across uneven ground (spoil-heaps, mounds, and sometimes pebble) while looking up into the air, and NOT treading on the excavations.

When the summer eventually arrives the big day is not the coming of the students, here to sample the delights of our training excavation, but the coming of the shorts! This can be an hilarious time, when little white legs are seen dashing about the site, and turning red before your very eyes. I for one have enjoyed my year on the MSC team, and it has taught me some very useful skills. I was lucky enough to find a job in Archaeology after my training, which I enjoy and out of which I get a great deal of satisfaction. . . . It's at Sutton Hoo!

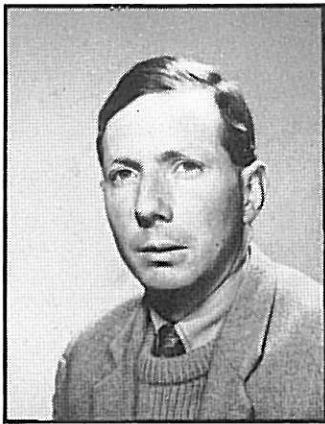
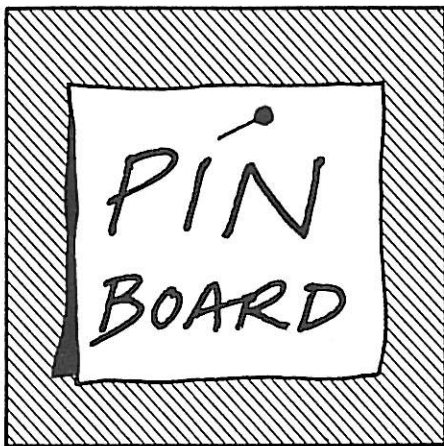


Photo by kind permission of Mrs J Pretty.

Mr R D Pretty

Mr Robert Pretty, who died last May after a brief illness, was a life member of the Society, and also a member of the Sutton Hoo Research Committee. He will be remembered for his keen interest in the Sutton Hoo site and his enthusiastic support for the current research.

Robert was born in 1930 to Mrs Edith Pretty, who at that time owned the Sutton Hoo site. Robert was nine years old when the great ship-burial was discovered, and according to the Director Charles Phillips, he and his nanny were frequent visitors to the excavation. Following an inquest, the Sutton Hoo treasure was awarded to Robert's mother, who with great generosity presented the finds to the British Museum.

Mrs Pretty died just three years later, in 1942, and the estate passed out of the family; but they did retain certain rights regarding excavation, access and ownership of finds. It was a letter from Robert Pretty to the Society of Antiquaries in 1978 which initiated serious discussion about further excavation at the site, resulting in the pre-

sent research project. Early this year, the reserved rights were conveyed to the Sutton Hoo Research Trust by Robert and his son David.

Robert and his wife, Jennifer, have been regular visitors to the site during the current excavations, and he will be missed by all of us at Sutton Hoo.

Sales

Interim reports on all aspects of the current archaeological research are published annually in the *Bulletin* (price £2.00), which can be obtained from Jenny Glazebrook at the site office (address below). Alternatively, you can join the *Bulletin* mailing list by contacting the same address.

To coincide with the 50th anniversary of archaeology at Sutton Hoo, the project is planning a commemorative poster and slide packs. These items will be on sale at the site, local bookshops and through the Society, in the near future.

Diary SUTTON HOO:

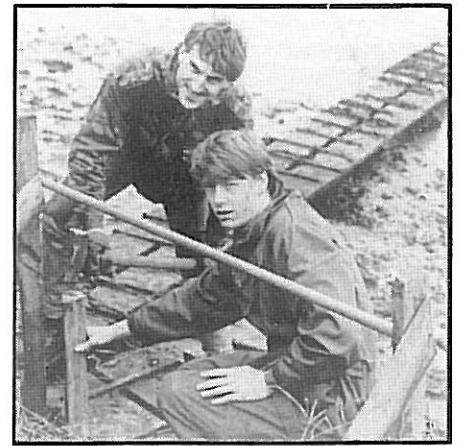
A Fiftieth Anniversary Conference

A conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial, is being organised by Sam Newton. It will be held under the auspices of the Department of Extra-mural Studies (University of Cambridge) and the Centre for East Anglian Studies (University of East Anglia), at Snape Maltings, Suffolk, on 22nd April 1989.

The programme will include the following speakers: Professor Martin Carver on recent work at Sutton Hoo, Mrs Shirley Carnegie (Suffolk Archaeological Unit) on the diaries of Mr Basil Brown, Mr Sam Newton (University of East Anglia) on the East Anglian royal family and Beowulf, Mr William Filmer-Sankey (University of Oxford) on the Snape Anglo-Saxon cemetery; Mr Keith Wade and Mr Robert Carr (Suffolk Archaeological Unit) on Anglo-Saxon Ipswich and Anglo-Saxon Brandon, respectively.

Sutton Hoo Society AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at Woodbridge School on Friday 20th January 1989, at 7.30 pm.



MSC repairing landing stage.

Appeals

Help is needed to keep the site mown during the summer months (particularly May and June). If any local members are willing to come up to the site periodically to drive the tractor-mower over the grass, please contact Jenny Glazebrook (Woodbridge 7673). Instruction available!

Can anyone help the project to acquire planks for barrow-runs and walk-ways? We are having difficulty locating used planks for use on site, and new boards are too expensive. Any help would be most welcome - please contact Jenny Glazebrook on Woodbridge 7673.



Mowing the site.

Acknowledgements

The Project Team would like to thank the Society for their valuable support in 1988. Donations include a new, more powerful generator; kitchen facilities for the new canteen (with gas cooker and fridge), and a contribution towards the cost of constructing the CEGB hut.

Your help has made living and working conditions on the site substantially more pleasant, and it is very much appreciated.

Contact Addresses:

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Who's Who - Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

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