

50th Anniversary Special Issue



President: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

No. 10 / 1989

THE BASIL BROWN PAPERS by Peter Warner



Basil Brown at Castle Villa, Whitton, Ipswich, in 1949.
Photo, Basil Brown Archive, Suffolk County Council

Returning home from Cambridge on the 28th April 1984, I found a message hand-written on a single sheet of A4 paper stuffed under my door. Scrawled capital letters at the top said 'IMPORTANT' and it appeared to be addressed to the late Miss Elizabeth Owles, curator of the Moyses Hall Museum: 'On Wednesday I went to Lowestoft', the message ran, 'while at Lowestoft I visited an antique shop. The proprietor...claimed that he had recently acquired some material concerning the Sutton Hoo excavations...would these be of any interest?'

My brief with Martin Carver and the Sutton Hoo project was to investigate the documentary sources. The brief was necessarily wide to include any material which might shed light on the site and its local historical background. My particular interest was the medieval landscape of East Anglia and the way that historical sources, maps and place-names could be used to reconstruct even earlier landscapes. In this respect Sutton Hoo was an open book. Very little work had been done on the medieval and later historical context of the site. I was therefore enjoying the prospect of uncovering new material - medieval surveys, inventories and even nineteenth-century deeds - but I had not expected to come across new material relating to the 1938-39 excavations. This was a lead that had to be followed up.

It soon became clear that the message had stemmed from Robert Halliday (an assistant keeper at the Moyses Hall Museum) and that Miss Owles had simply passed it on to me, so I telephoned her to get the inside story. It seemed that Robert Halliday had not seen all the material but there was at least one plan of the barrows, a glass slide of the ship excavation, a letter from R L S Bruce-Mitford to Basil Brown, various pamphlets and a print illustrating the ship-burial excavation. I was given an address in Lowestoft, and a telephone number; the latter brought me in contact with Mr Ian Robb the owner of the antique shop. I made an appointment to see him the following day.

It was a cold April morning and the back streets of down-town Lowestoft were not inviting. The little shop nevertheless had several customers poring over second-hand books, shoe-boxes of old postcards and photographs. Dead gramophones and dusty piles of bric-à-brac seemed to form the bulk of the stock. Mr Robb seemed friendly enough and concerned that the Sutton Hoo material should find a good home. He said that he had purchased it from another dealer, but refused to say who, when or where. He thought it might have come from a member of Basil Brown's family or a close friend. This is possible as we know Brown parted with quite a lot of his material in later years. Such was the muddle in the shop that Robb took some time to find all the objects and even then one slide was apparently missing.

The items were unimpressive: dirty, crumpled and tattered. However, most intriguing was a yellowing scroll consisting of three sheets of stiff cartridge paper together with plans and sections of the three barrows excavated by Brown in 1938. Although these were unsigned, it was possible even in the dim light of the shop to see the underlying draughtsmanship in pencil, which had been corrected and partly rubbed out when the drawing had been completed in Indian ink. These looked very much like drawings prepared for publication in the style current before the Second World War. I was fairly certain that I had seen them in published form, but not at that scale. Later we were to learn that they were the work of H.E.P. Spencer, the geologist employed by Ipswich Museum, who had the unenviable task of presenting Basil Brown's notes and sketches in a

publishable form. They are in fact almost identical to the drawings published by Bruce Mitford in Volume One of his great work on Sutton Hoo. There they are described as Ipswich Museum drawings, and the three yellowing scrolls may well have been the originals given by Spencer to Brown, (for some of the material had clearly been in Brown's possession), the Ipswich Museum retaining traced copies.

There were nine pamphlets and off-prints from learned journals. These were of a highly specialised nature; of marginal interest even to a professional archaeologist, but nonetheless they reflect the wide ranging knowledge of Basil Brown.

There were two copies of the Journal of the Ipswich and District Natural History Society for November 1932 and December 1935, the latter having a paper on the effects of glaciation, by Reid Moir, which might well have been related to the soil conditions at Sutton Hoo. Other off-prints, sent to him by the authors R. Bruce Mitford and Binger Newman, were of a more personal nature due to inscriptions on them. Lastly there was the report of the forty-fifth Congress of Archaeological Societies for the year 1937 (1938), listing among other sites being excavated, the Roman villa at Stanton Chair, Ixworth, and the Iron Age sites at Hollesley and Burrow Hill, not far from Sutton Hoo.

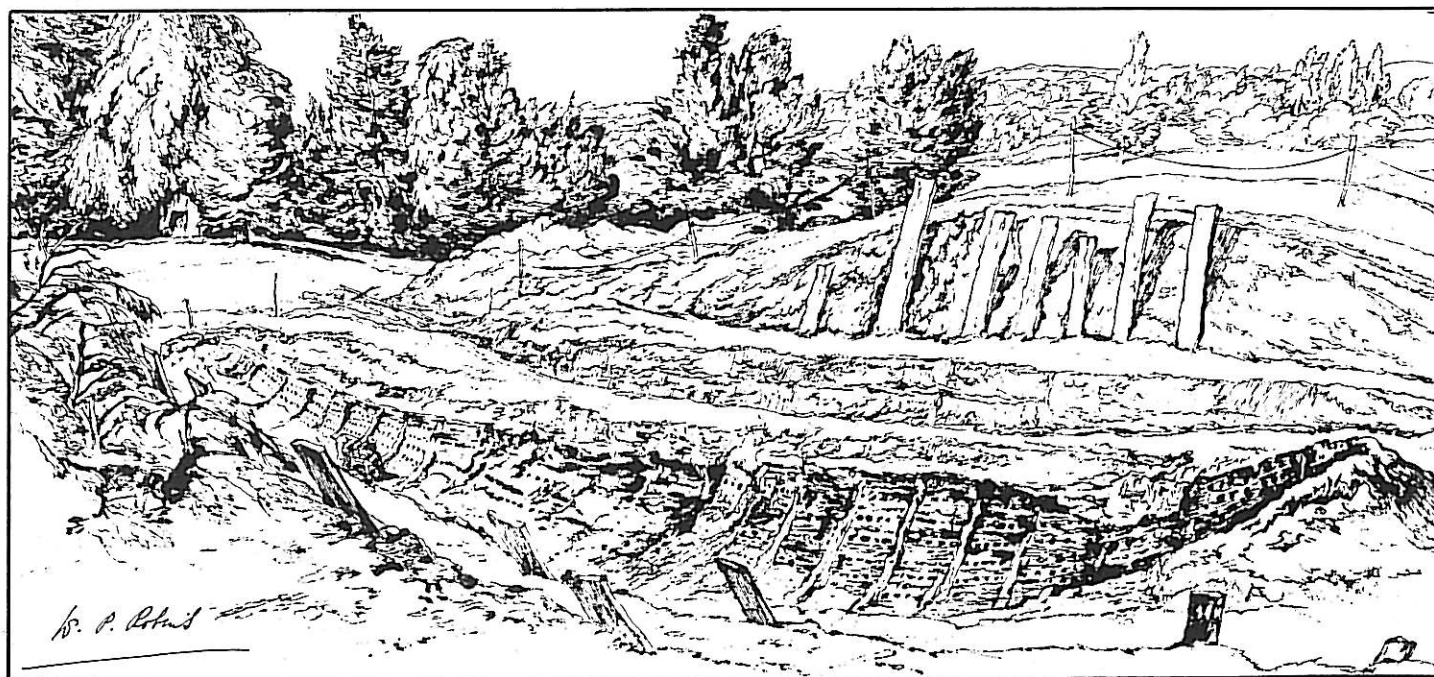
Of greater visual interest was another tightly rolled scroll of rather grubby thin hand-made paper. This was a dry-point engraving of Sutton Hoo in an impressionistic style, showing the open trench and the outlines of the ship, with a site hut and Top-hat Wood in the background. The print was signed by the artist W. P. Robins

and inscribed 'to Basil Brown'. With it was a letter from the artist to Brown, dated April 30th 1940, explaining that the engraving was identical to one then being exhibited at the Royal Academy. We know that Robins made a number of charcoal sketches on the site following the excavation, several of which survive in the possession of the Pretty family.

Mr Robb also had a glass negative (10cm x 8cm) damaged by damp and very indistinct, but marked 'Roman remains at Rickenhall'. He claimed that there was another glass slide of the ship or possibly the 'boat' shape in Mound 2, which had got lost in his 'filing system' and he promised to contact me if he found it. It seemed to me that the drawings at least should be brought into the Sutton Hoo archive. I offered Mr Robb a sum of money for the lot, and he readily accepted. I was not sorry to see him pleased; but for him this material might never have come to light.

On the 30th April, forty-four years to the day from the date of W. P. Robins' letter, I wrote to Martin Carver and told him about my acquisition. The following weekend we met on site and the plans of the 1938 excavations were handed over to become part of the Sutton Hoo archive, but not before we had both enjoyed the experience of unrolling those yellowing scrolls on the top of Mound 2, which at that very time was being considered for re-excavation.

Dr Peter Warner is Senior Lecturer in History at Homerton College, Cambridge, and was Documentary Historian for the Sutton Hoo Project in 1983-4



Dry-point etching of the ship in 1939, presented to Basil Brown by the artist, W. P. Robins.

1939 May-July: Basil Brown excavates a trench through Mound 1 and discovers traces of a ship, with an apparently intact burial chamber amidships.

July: The British Museum and Ministry of Works are contacted. Charles Phillips gathers together a team of archaeologists (Stuart Piggott, Peggy Guido, W F Grimes, O G S Crawford) who excavate the burial chamber. The treasure they discover is transported to the British Museum.

August: The ship is fully excavated, and surveyed by a team from the Science Museum, under Lieutenant-Commander J K D Hutchison.

September: The treasure is stored in a tunnel off the Aldwych Tube during war.

1944: The treasure re-emerges, and research and reconstruction begin at the British Museum.

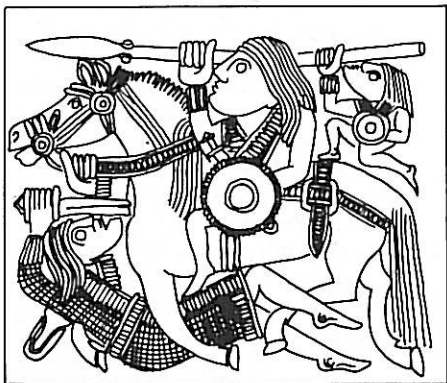
1946: Rupert Bruce-Mitford begins work on the research and publication of the great find.

1950?: Some time during the 50s a silage pit is dug west of Mound 12.

1965: BBC broadcast 'The Million Pound Grave'.

1965-1967: Rupert Bruce-Mitford carries out further investigation of Mound 1. During 3 summer seasons, the ship is re-excavated and recorded in detail. A plaster cast is made, and all the rivets are lifted for study.

1967-1970: Paul Ashbee directs the excavation of the 1939 spoil heaps and the remaining lobes of Mound 1. Areas of the site between Mounds 1 and 12, and just south-east of Mound 5 are excavated under the direction of Ian Longworth. Anglo-Saxon burials unaccompanied by coffins, grave goods or mounds are discovered, and also the remains of a much earlier (prehistoric) settlement.

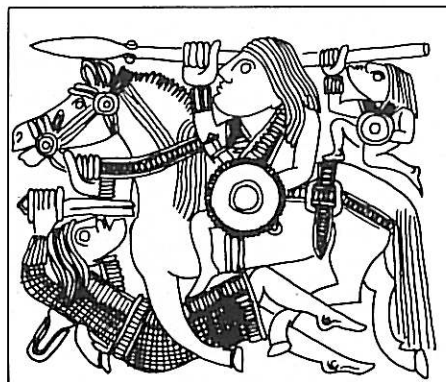


1975: Publication of 'The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial' Volume 1.

1978: Publication of 'The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial' Volume 2

Encouraged by Rupert Bruce-Mitford, Robert Pretty (who as Mrs Pretty's heir held the right of excavation at Sutton Hoo) writes to the Society of Antiquaries, urging that further archaeological investigation be carried out to put the ship-burial in context.

1979 November: At the Oxford Symposium on Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries, four eminent archaeologists suggest that excavations should begin again at Sutton Hoo. 'The Group' includes Dr. Rupert Bruce-Mitford, and Professors Rosemary Cramp, Phillip Rahtz and Barry Cunliffe of Durham, York and Oxford Universities respectively. A long period of learned debate and controversy begins.



1982 February: A pit is dug by person(s) unknown in the side of Mound 11. What (if anything) was discovered is not known.

August: The Sutton Hoo Executive Committee is formed (soon to become the 'Sutton Hoo Research Trust').

November: Martin Carver, then Director of B.U.F.A.U. (Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit), is appointed by Sutton Hoo Research Trust to direct the new Sutton Hoo project.

1983 March: Sutton Hoo exhibition opens at Woodbridge Museum.

April: Bulletin of the Sutton Hoo Research Committee No.1 is published.

July: Work begins with an evaluation of the site. The monument is cleared, mowed, and surveyed so that a detailed contour map can be plotted by computer. John Newman of Suffolk Archaeology Unit begins the Regional Survey intended to help reconstruct the Anglo-Saxon landscape. Peter Warner completes the survey of documentary evidence relating to Sutton Hoo.

1983-1984: During the winter a metal detector survey and a vegetation map of the site are completed by Andrew Copp and Cathy Royle. Intensive fieldwalking in the adjacent fields produces many prehistoric finds.

1984: Remote sensing surveys of the adjacent fields are completed by Mike Gorman, Alister Bartlett and David Gurney. Mike Gorman also undertakes a radar survey of Mound 2, and discovers a large hole in it.

Summer: 100m long 'trial' trenches are dug out into the fields away from the mounds, to locate archaeological layers, and to indicate their date and condition. Basil Brown's trench in Mound 2 is located and his 'boat-shaped pit' is revealed.

1985 Summer: Area excavation in fields to east of mounds reveals Anglo-Saxon graves - including a most peculiar example dubbed 'the ploughman', also banks and ditches of a prehistoric field system.

August: BBC 2 broadcast 'Sutton Hoo' programmes 1 and 2.

Autumn: A research programme is designed for Sutton Hoo by Martin Carver, based on the results of the site evaluation.

December: Research Design approved by the Trust and given go-ahead.

1986 July: It is published as Bulletin No.4.

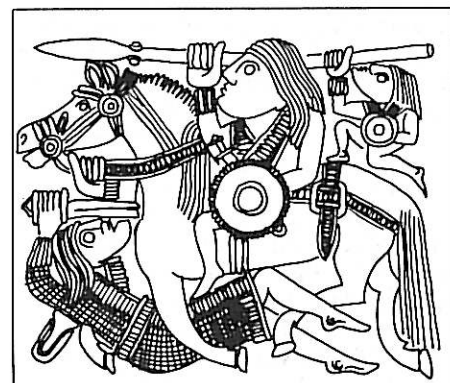
Summer: Area excavation in fields completed. Eastern limit of cemetery defined. Excavation of Mound 2 begins and continues through winter. Leverhulme Project on soil chemistry (decay and detection) commences.

September: B.M. Handbook 'The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial' by Angela Evans is published.

1987: BBC 2 broadcast 'Sutton Hoo' programme 3.

A robbed chamber grave is discovered in Mound 2, and fragments of rich grave goods. They had been covered by a 10-18m ship, which was shovelled away by the grave-robbers but detectable in the heavy scattering of ship rivets.

July: HRH the Duke of Edinburgh visits Sutton Hoo.



1988: Mound 5 is excavated, and remains of a cremation with grave goods are discovered, possibly that of a girl or woman. 11 graves are found close to Mound 5. Apart from one ring-ditch grave (i.e. a miniature mound), none contain grave goods or coffins. Some of the bodies seem to have broken necks, or are decapitated. The theory that Sutton Hoo was an elite cemetery is endorsed. Prehistoric fencelines and roundhouses are discovered under the mounds, which are dated to the 'Beaker' period, 2,000 years B.C.

The Leverhulme Project and Regional Survey are completed and reports are compiled.

1989:

Jenny Glazebrook is an archaeologist who worked on Saxon/Medieval sites in the Midlands before coming to Sutton Hoo as Project Administrator.

My feelings when I started to work on Sutton Hoo? I will try to recall the years from 1946, when I first had anything to do with Sutton Hoo, to 1949, when, after three years, I prepared a detailed report on the state of Sutton Hoo and publication prospects.

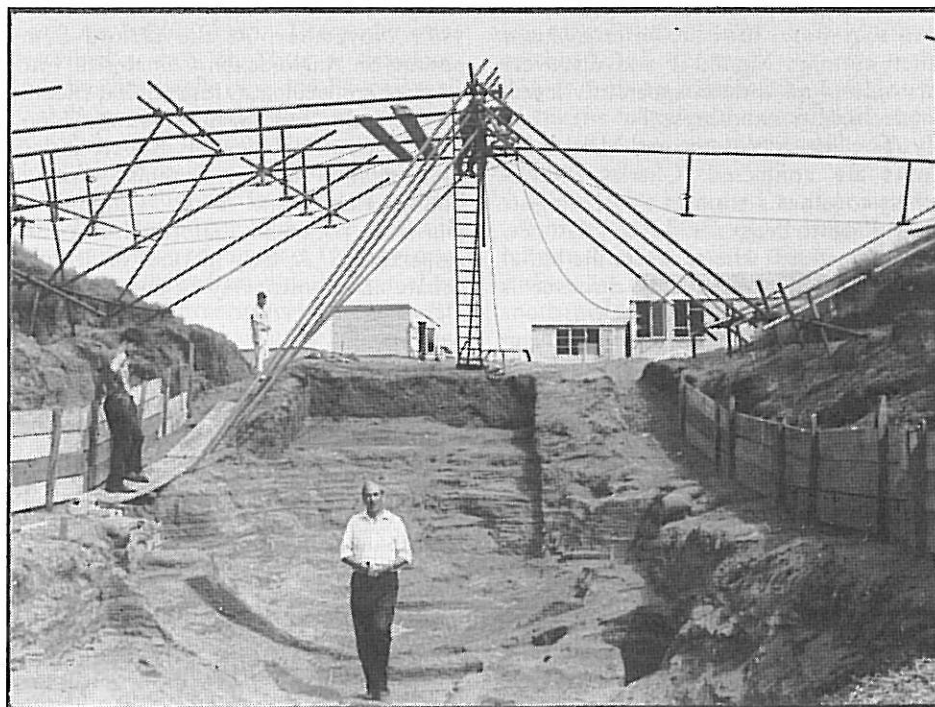
Of course I felt excited at the prospect of work on Sutton Hoo. I soon digested the accounts by various experts published in 1939 and 1940 in the *British Museum Quarterly*, *Antiquity* and *Antiquaries Journal* and made myself familiar with the field records. I knew that I was setting out to write the definitive account of an excavation I had not seen. The class of the artefacts I could see for myself. It was a constant thrill to handle the fabulous material and to examine it at leisure and at whim.

Early in 1946 I helped Tom Kendrick, a great Anglo-Saxon and Celtic scholar, to arrange the first public display of Sutton Hoo material; but from then on I got no advice or direction of any sort. I was glad of this because it gave me a free hand, with nobody breathing down my neck; but it did nothing to help my inexperience or solve the problems that faced Sutton Hoo in the long term.

In 1944, on its return to the British Museum from evacuation, the whole of Sutton Hoo, field records as well as excavated material, had gone into the Research Laboratory. The British Museum Laboratory at that time was recognised as leading the world in the application of science and conservation techniques to antiquities. Here, under Harold Plenderleith, experienced craftsmen had been working on the Sutton Hoo material for more than a year before I came on the scene. They included Herbert Maryon, FSA, retired metallurgist and sculptor, specially recruited by the Trustees in November 1944 to deal full-time with the real headaches - notably the crushed shield, helmet and drinking horns. When I began work, I was given the freedom of the laboratory, and spent many hours with the craftsmen in the workshops. I sat with Maryon while he took me through the material and with infectious enthusiasm, demonstrated what he was doing.

I was getting to know the Sutton Hoo material in detail, and preparing myself for the publication ahead. These were exciting days. Discoveries were being made all the time and astonishing pieces like the unique helmet and shield were emerging. I felt excited and privileged to be in on all this at ground level.

The international standing of Sutton Hoo was apparent from the outset. This was brought into sharper focus for me in 1947 when I visited Sweden for six weeks. I had been invited by Professor Lindqvist of Uppsala to join him in the excavation of a rich boat-grave of the Sutton Hoo period. The Swedes had been excavating boat-graves at Valsgarde since 1932 and had great experience in the restoration of crushed artifacts and in their display and



*Rupert Bruce-Mitford (centre) standing in the excavated ship trench of Mound 1.
Photo, British Museum.*

publication, at a level not seen before. As the BM was unable to finance the trip, Swedish institutions put up the money for what turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I learned critical standards of all kinds and gained insights into the material. Amongst many other things I was shown evidence which made it possible on my return, to restore the incomplete figure designs on the Sutton Hoo helmet - the single warrior in the horned headdress became dancing twins, and so on. On a return visit one of my hosts, Greta Arwidsson, was the first to identify Mound 12 on the Sutton Hoo site. It was all enormously stimulating and encouraging.

At this time I worked on the first reconstruction of the lyre, up to the level of producing a playing version - with many fascinating musicological and other spin-offs. Patches on the frame, thought to contain grey seal hairs, were proved to be beaver. What were beavers doing in the River Deben? The 'Cenotaph problem' led me into the Pathology Museum at Guy's Hospital, where I inspected all that survived from John George Haigh's tank of acid - the heels of poor Mrs. Durand-Deacon. The solution of bone and dentine in acid was what had been going on in the bottom of the Sutton Hoo ship. The identification by the Professor of Anatomy at the Royal College of Surgeons among residues from the burial chamber of part of the vault of the skull, ribs and bits of long bone from the leg, was a sensation; but these identifications did not fit the local circumstances in the deposit. The fragments were later identified at Kew Gardens as pieces of oak and horn plates from knife handles. I was learning to distrust experts, to question relentlessly, not to take anything for granted. Criticisms were already building

up of the helmet and shield reconstructions.

By the end of 1948 I felt that I had enough grasp to plan the final publication, in four volumes, in some detail. The more I learned about Sutton Hoo and its period the more important I saw it to be. I resolved that only the best would do for Sutton Hoo. Nothing that was called for should be skimmed or left undone on grounds of cost. Colour would be needed. The publication had to be at the highest level of study and exposition. It was the occasion, and our opportunity, to show the archaeological world that British archaeology could rise to this great discovery on British soil.

Gradually I felt myself possessed by a feeling which others will have felt, who have worked on this site and subject. The site itself - in those days surrounded by heath, skylarks twittering high overhead on a summer day, the Deben estuary and the Sandlings, cast a spell. My field work in the area exploring the background for the ship-burial deepened a feeling, already planted in childhood, for this part of East Anglia. I soon built up a network of contacts and friends, people who thought alike - George Arnott (*Place-Names of the Deben Valley*), Basil Brown and his friends; the Redstones, so closely associated with Woodbridge School and the Seckford Library; Rainbird Clark in Norwich; Leslie Dow, editor of the *Suffolk Institute Proceedings* and Norman Scarfe. A bright tapestry of landscapes and working friendships was built up, which made Sutton Hoo for me not merely a *Cause Celebre* but something of a love affair, never to be wholly extinguished.

Dr Rupert Bruce-Mitford was Keeper of the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum

AN HISTORIAN'S HALF CENTURY IN WUFFINGA COUNTRY

by Norman Scarfe



Norman Scarfe (left) with Martin Carver (centre) and Charles Phillips on site in 1985. Photo, Edward Morgan.

Sixteen years before Basil Brown, Charles Phillips and the others made their epic uncoveries in Mound 1, I was born into a fairly relevant landscape, a mile or two from the Saxon Shore fort that presided over the arrival of the Wuffingas at the Deben mouth. Centuries after their day, it slithered down the cliff and capitulated to the sea, as their bishop's seat at Dunwich did, not far along the coast. With so much plundered by the sea, it was a welcome turn of fortune in 1939 that presented Mound 1 intact. Apart from the hearsay of a few neighbours, I knew nothing of it until I returned from the war in 1946, to read history at Oxford.

By then, my interests were in modern military history, and I had written *Assault Division* (Collins, 1947), a history, and recollection, of the campaign of the 3rd Division from its landing on the beach on D-Day through to VE Day. That taught me much about the limitations of written records in the unravelling of what happened. But when it comes to the limitations in thinking about Sutton Hoo, there is one written record without which we should be in the Dark Ages indeed. It is interesting to imagine what kind of meaning we should have given to Mound 1 and its contents

without constant recourse to Bede's great *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. It was written 300 miles away from here, up the North Sea coast, and 100 years after the time of this mound's creation. It certainly has the most maddening limitations; one thinks, for instance, of the omission of all reference to St. Botolph, whose part in the ecclesiastical history of the Wuffinga people is more than likely to have been seminal. Yet what it includes is so circumstantial that an attentive reader continually finds in it new and constructive ideas that may help towards a more definitive understanding.

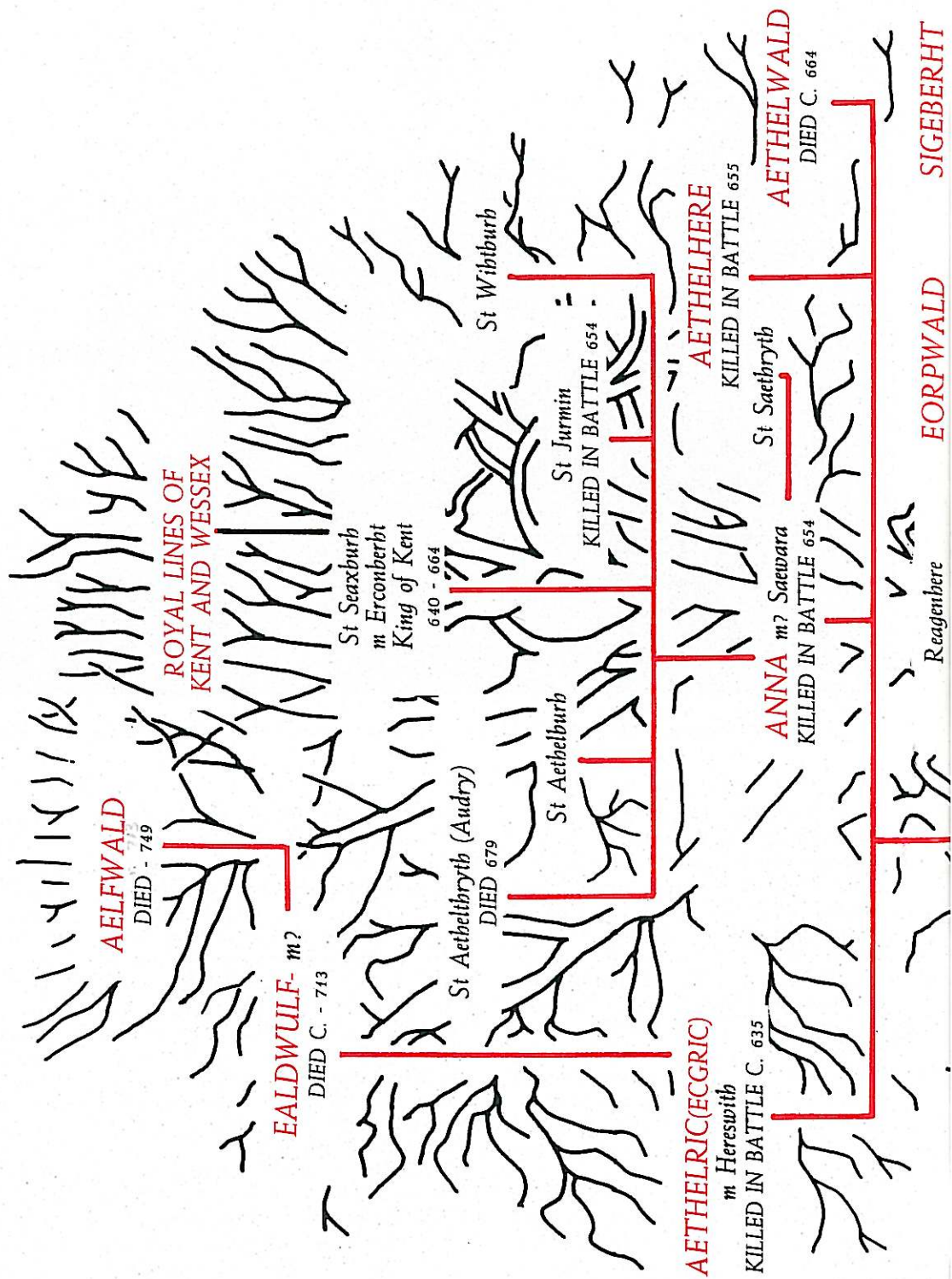
I had by no means tumbled to this when my first book appeared in 1947. But I had already read to bits my copy of the March, 1940 issue of *Antiquity*, with eight classic essays by Phillips, Kendrick, Chadwick, and the others, on the major Sutton Hoo finds and on the question 'Who was he?'. In 1947, the BM published its first Provisional Guide to Sutton Hoo, written by Rupert Bruce-Mitford, then Assistant Keeper and still at the beginning of many devoted years of Sutton Hoo studies. I devoured it, and next year, my second at Oxford, went to see the mounds for myself, thinking them disappointingly unlike the

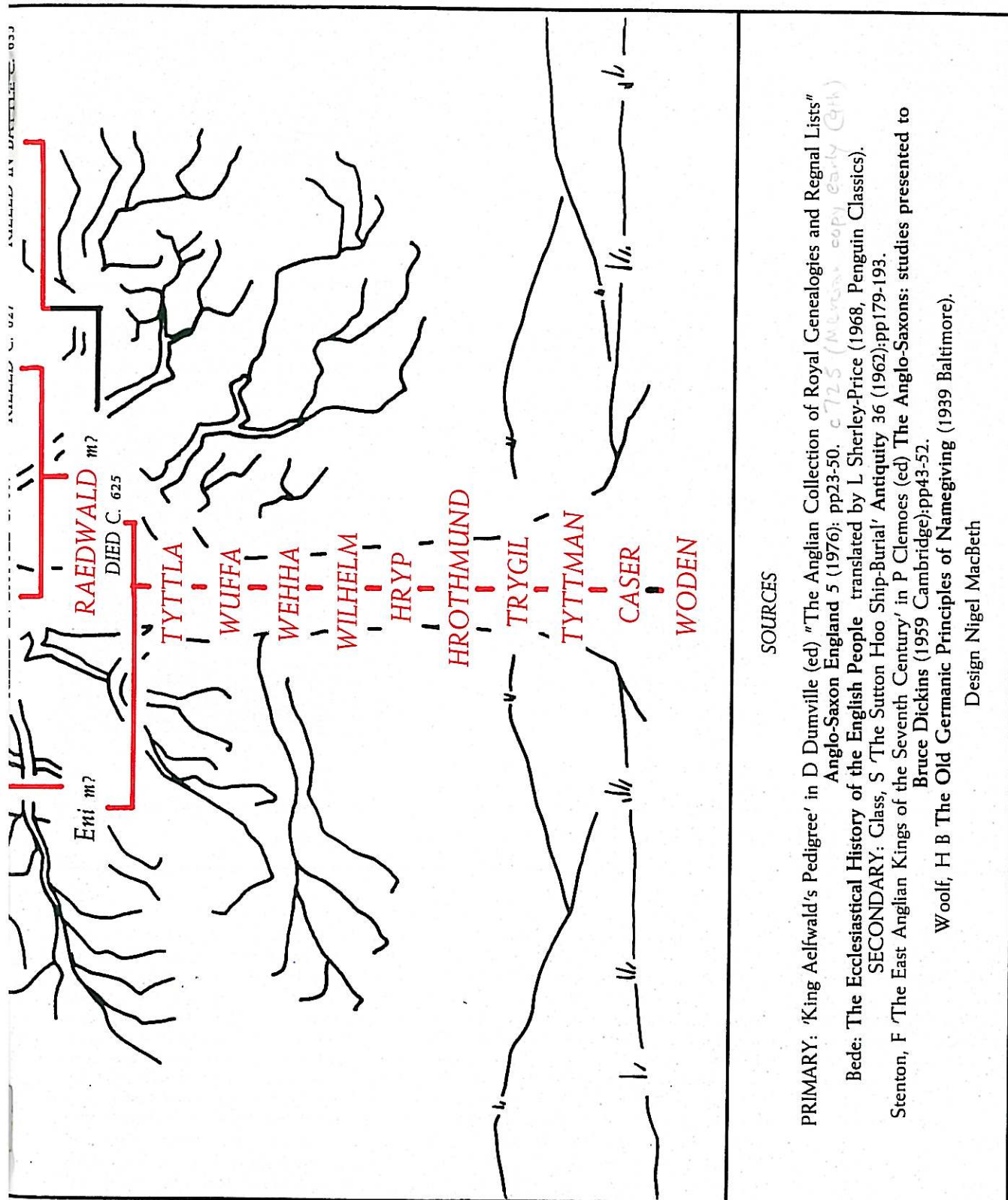
pyramids!

When I graduated and went to teach history at Leicester, my main interests were post-medieval, but my medievalist colleague humoured me by asking me to lecture on Sutton Hoo. That gave me an excuse to approach the BM's Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities. Their generosity in lending me slides led to a more regular contact; and when Rupert Bruce-Mitford re-excavated Mound 1 in 1966, he allowed me to work with trowel and soft brush on a dark streak of sand just outside the gunwale. There seemed a faint chance it might prove to be a steering-oar, but the stain was too slight. The likelihood remained that all movable equipment was discarded from the ship before the heavy haul up from the river. The disappointment was not insupportable. The experience was what counted. It made one feel part, however inexpert, of the team.

That experience led to another that still seems incredible. On a working visit to the BM's Department of Manuscripts, I took a break and went upstairs to hear how the intensive research in the labs was going. It was perhaps the point at which Rupert was concluding that the stag's head belonged not to the standard but to the whetstone.

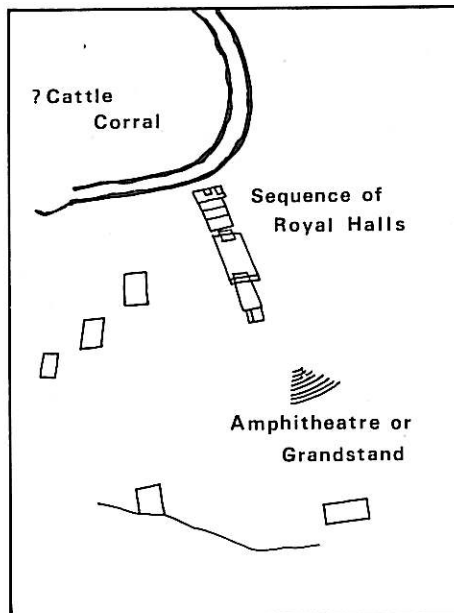
TO CELEBRATE THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE SHIP BURIAL AT SUTTON HOO







Detail of lower end of the Whetstone, showing one of the finely-carved heads. Photo, British Museum.



Yeavinger, Bernicia. Curved lines (top) may represent a cattle corral. The sequence of royal halls can be seen below, and below them the amphitheatre or grandstand. It is possible to imagine King Aethelfrith, with his whetstone-sceptre and other regalia, on a dais at the narrow end of the wedge, facing assembled priests and chiefs. (N. MacBeth after a photograph by Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography).

Marilynn asked me, casually, if I would help her bring two of the exhibits from the Edward VII gallery back to the lab. She removed the great ceremonial whetstone from its showcase, put it in my hands, and I returned, a changed man, to the lab. I had felt the real weight of Raedwald's rule - all 6¼ lbs of it - and that was reason enough

to start thinking about its more metaphorical weight. I was not surprised, in 1986, to find myself reaching an original conclusion, in my book *Suffolk in the Middle Ages*, that the whetstone, with its regally-antlered bronze Celtic stag, was the trophy marking Raedwald's decisive victory over the formidable king Aethelfrith of

Northumbria.

That battle, near Bawtry (again, a new conclusion from Bede), marked the final establishment of Raedwald's empire, his *bretwaldaship*. It enabled him to establish Edwin as his client-ruler over what Brian Hope-Taylor has - astonishingly - shown to be a Celtic kingdom. Some reviewers claim to find implausible my more elaborate explanation of the presence of those particular coins in the purse: none of them has queried my derivation of the whetstone, which still seems to me entirely convincing, fulfilling all the known conditions. Its combination of unblinking Germanic totemheads with Celtic craftsmanship fits perfectly as emblem, first, of Aethelfrith's Northumbrian power, then, after Bawtry, of Raedwald's empire. Michael Enright's suggestion that the whole whetstone may have been Celtic does not affect my thesis.

Bede still has much more to tell about the precise circumstances of the coming of Christianity to these parts. I am incorporating some of it in my forthcoming book for the Suffolk Historical Churches Trust. My earlier study of the Christian humanist Erasmus sprang out of admiration for the work of my friend the late Margaret Mann Phillips who was the leading Erasmus scholar of her day as well as the wife of the original uncoverer of Mound 1. Learning from her, some four or five years ago, of Charles' partial recovery from severe illness, I was able to prevail on her and their son to bring him over to meet and talk with Martin Carver on the site. Charles' deep pleasure in that visit is a good emblem of continuity for Sutton Hoo studies over the next five decades.

Norman Scarfe is an historian, and the author of several informative books on the landscape and history of Suffolk.

SUTTON HOO ON CELLULOID by Ray Sutcliffe

Perhaps uniquely in the history of archaeology Sutton Hoo has acquired a permanent photographic record of all its phases in its 50 years of progress, and even more astonishingly, a record captured on moving film as well as still photography. By the greatest of good fortune, the presence of two gifted school mistresses on a photographic holiday in Suffolk and carrying not only the latest Leica cameras with both colour and black and white film stock, but also - and even rarer in the 1930's - an 8mm movie camera, began that priceless record which so vividly illustrates the spectacular discoveries in Mound 1 in the summer of 1939. The work of Miss Lack and Miss Wagstaffe not only earned them Fellowships of the Royal Photographic Society but genuinely made possible all the subsequent television film recording of the site. It was their work which inspired and illuminated a programme devised by the

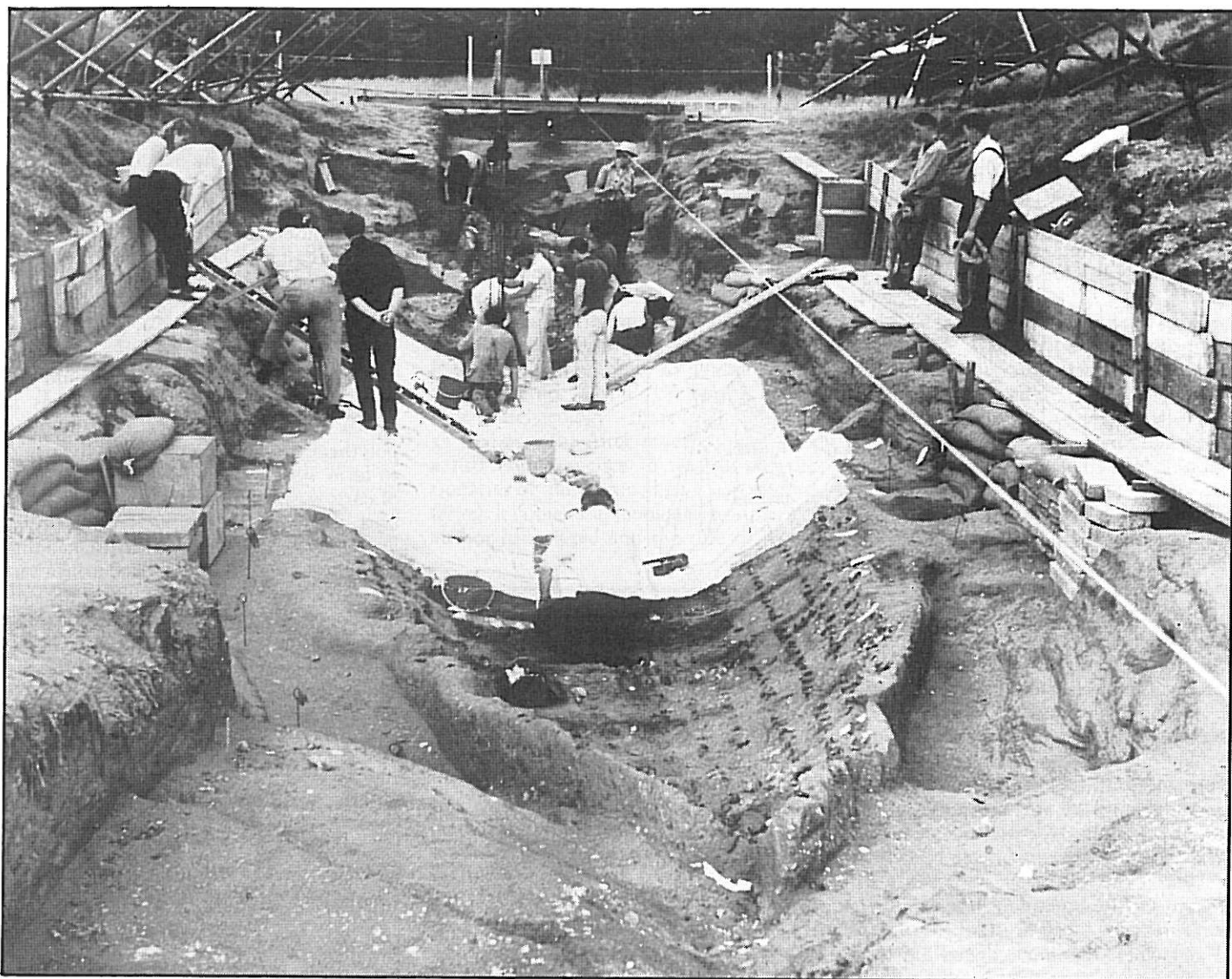
late Paul Johnstone in 1965 called "The Million Pound Grave". This programme, itself an invaluable archive of the original excavators, was remade by myself three years ago as I still believe it to be the best introduction to both the original and the new excavations.

Cause and effect seem endless in this context, for that programme gained an audience of over 10,000,000 on BBC-1, perhaps proving that the attraction of gold outshines even the black and white technology of the time. I prefer to think it was the sheer enthusiasm and intrigue of the stories of a treasure only recently emerged from its wartime safe keeping in the London Underground that gave it its attraction.

But, as a result of its success, the Controller of BBC-2, David Attenborough, allowed Paul's dream of a regular archaeology programme to come true, and "Chronicle" was started in the Spring of

1966. Here I have to declare my own interest, for this gave me my own entry into production and not surprisingly, being interested in old boats, one of my first assignments was the excavation and casting of the Sutton Hoo ship. I also recall, now pleasurably, the sight of one of our early cameramen meeting me at Woodbridge Station dressed in wellingtons and sailing gear enquiring "Where's this ship then?", only to be told he was approximately 1300 years too late. Normally one is quite dismayed by cutting archive film and usually asks how it came to be shot so uncompromisingly and cut in such an intractable way - when I came to re-cut that same film three years ago I soon realised I had only myself to blame, but remembered the encounter at Woodbridge Station.

As a result of these early encounters it seemed inevitable I should have the privilege of filming the last five years of ex-



The plaster-cast of the ship under construction in 1967. A BBC film-crew can be seen (left) filming the process, directed by Ray Sutcliffe (far left). Photo, P. Johnstone.

cavations and it has been a greatly challenging process to try to follow its progress on film. I was surprised at the outset how quickly one had forgotten that the site was next to a major U.S. airbase! Not the ideal place to try and shoot a film with sound. It has involved filming from 70 foot metal platforms in thunderstorms, filming at night with arc-lights, filming from helicopters and uncontrollable hot air balloons, and contending with the bottom of deep holes in which light never penetrates, the bottoms of which can not be stood on nor the sides for fear of their collapse. It has also involved no less than 22 of our best camera crews,

and it's no mean compliment to say their work is indistinguishable one from another.

Lastly and not least, it has involved, in an effort to capture some of the international and the very dramatic reality of the subject of Sutton Hoo, a near terminal episode in a large wooden ship which culminated in the immersion of one surprised Professor and one dismayed Producer in a very cold Norwegian fjord. This interesting episode can be seen on "Chronicle" this summer. (See also Saxon 8).

Finally - a word for posterity. It is probable that excavations at Sutton Hoo

will eventually be recorded on videotape but if a Producer wishes to use that 50 years hence I wonder if it would survive as well as the invaluable 10-minute roll of Kodak safety film which Miss Lack shot on 22nd August 1939?

For the moment, I personally will put my faith in celluloid.

Ray Sutcliffe is a BBC Producer who has been closely involved with the 'Chronicle' series from its inception, and who is now producing the 'Sutton Hoo' films for BBC 2.

SUTTON HOO IN PLASTER by Angela Evans

In 1967 I was a post-graduate student in the Department of Archaeology, University College, Cardiff - a carefree prehistorian working on Neolithic flint axes. A huge number of these were housed in the British Museum and one day I found myself incarcerated in the gloomy storage area with virtually no daylight and avenues of floor to ceiling stacks rattling with flints. At the end of my imprisonment, the Museum Assistant who had locked me in to the basement announced that the depart-

ment (British and Medieval) were advertising for research assistants. Like most final year students I was desperate for a job that would pay me enough to eat - even if it did mean living in London, and I eagerly scanned the ad. Hope dimmed - the two posts were in the Anglo-Saxon section of the Department. But one post needed an archaeologist and I thought - well why not, and filled in my first ever job application! I had little hope of being appointed and even the small, stubborn spark of optimism

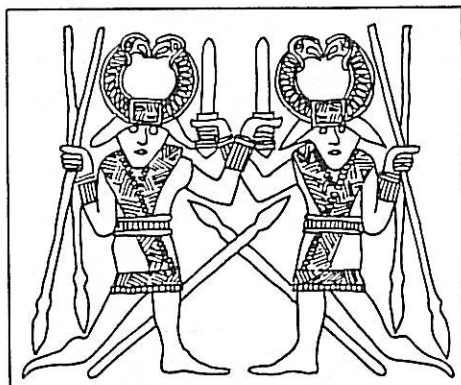
that flickered now and again, was dealt a death blow when Richard Atkinson, my supervisor, wryly said that although he would be delighted to write a reference he did feel that the Museum would probably appoint somebody who knew just a little about the Anglo-Saxons! I was interviewed - a most extraordinary experience - and then there was an interminable wait for the brown Civil Service envelope in which my fate would be sealed. Eventually it dropped through the door containing a letter so obli-

que in its meaning that it took several minutes before I realised that I had actually been appointed to the Sutton Hoo Research team. I was next summoned - in a most courteous way - to join Rupert Bruce-Mitford's excavations for a brief ten days before joining the summer season at Mycenae.

Still rather bemused, I set off for Suffolk - where I had never been - and on ar-

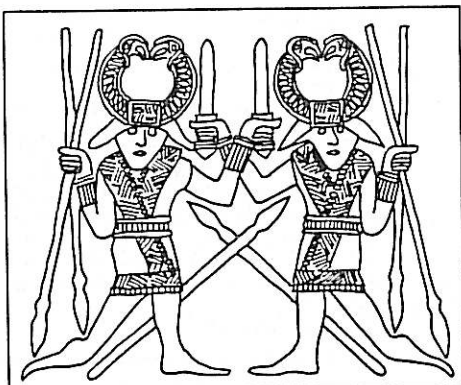
and preliminary stages of moulding the ship with plaster of Paris.

My first task was to plan the relationship of the ship to the trench. This involved creeping along on my hands and knees (a typical archaeological mode) and carefully brushing the sand away from the ship until the mixed brown fill of the trench ended against the primrose yellow of the undisturbed sand. Not, you would think,



iving in Woodbridge was taken to Melton Grange: dig H.Q. 1967. I was terrified. The reputation of the British Museum allied to what I had crammed into my head about the superb finds from the 1939 ship-burial was quite enough to make any young archaeologist quake - particularly one from the provinces rather than Oxbridge. Things began to change the next morning, one of those rare Suffolk days when the wind is still, the sky is the palest of pale blues and the skylarks sing themselves hoarse. I was driven to the site by Rupert Bruce-Mitford who possessed a truly dreadful old Vauxhall and whose driving reduced me to a quivering state that was only partially dispelled by the sight of the mounds basking in the sun. In their midst, shimmering under the sky, was the largest span of plastic roof I had ever seen. Blocking my view of what lay beneath the roof was Basil Brown's crescentic dump. We marched up it and there, stretched out in front of my amazed eyes was the Sutton Hoo ship. I simply

a particularly taxing job. But for someone whose digging experience had been entirely on chalk and clay mixed with tree roots, sand was terrifying. So soft - a single swipe of the trowel and whoops there goes half your ship trench! Whilst I was mastering my anxieties with tentative strokes of a soft-bristled hearth brush, two things happened. The first I took as an omen that my venture into Anglo-Saxon archaeology was doomed - a scaffolding shackle fell 20 ft from the roof and crashed with a muffled thud into a newly-cleaned patch of ship trench over which my head had been bent only seconds before. Did the shades of the Wuffinga dynasty object so strongly to a prehistorian? Glancing round to see if anyone had noticed my near escape, I saw that all heads were bent over a small patch of the fill. As I watched, the area was carefully covered with kichen paper to an accompaniment of serious mutterings amongst the experts. What on earth was it I wondered, my mind leaping to gold and



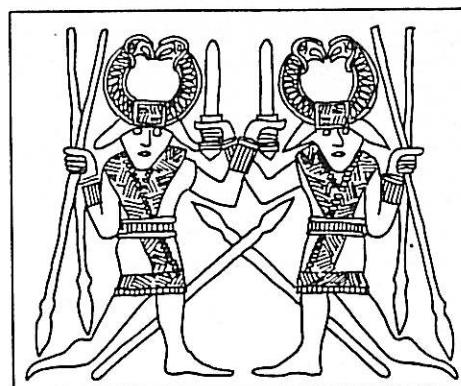
could not believe how big it was, I couldn't believe the colour of the sand. I couldn't believe anything - I simply stood and gawped. Of course I knew what the ship had looked like in 1939 and I knew how long it was but, nothing in my experience could ever have prepared me for the extraordinary impact it made.

I could only join the excavation for ten days but luckily those ten days coincided with the final stages of recording the hull

garnet jewellery with no difficulty at all. What I eventually saw was a small lumpy deposit of an almost greasy consistency. It looked horrible and was immediately christened 'Raedwald's brains'. Curiously analysis did show that the lumps were highly phosphatic but cool scholarship diagnosed the remains of a gaming set rather than adipose tissue. Referred to as Area X in Sutton Hoo Volume 1 (p. 535 and fig. 400) it will always be remembered

as 'Raedwald's brains'!

Those ten days, like recollections of childhood, were perpetually sunny, which was fortunate as they saw the experimental stages of perhaps one of the most astonishing operations that has ever taken place on the site - the making of a plaster cast of the entire ship. Quite how to make it taxed the ingenuity of many brains in the British Museum, but eventually the idea of a plaster-cast emerged as the simplest - and cheapest - method. So in those golden days an area amidships with only a few rivets, was carefully covered with damp kichen paper (the rivets were protected by 'hats' of modelling clay so that they would not become embedded in the plaster as it dried). Long thin sausages of sand-filled polythene tubing were placed on the paper to form walls and then very liquid plaster of Paris was gently poured into the casting area. It sounds simple, but the system involved a sweating human chain handing brightly-coloured buckets (filled from a vast tin bath of plaster) along the side of the ship and down into the burial chamber as quickly as possible - or the plaster would set in the bucket! It seemed an extraordinarily laborious operation, yet the technique was so successful that we used it again in 1970



to mould the hull of a 9th-century boat found at Graveney in the Kentish marshes - and fibreglass positives of both plaster moulds are on display in the National Maritime Museum to this day.

The moulding process convinced me that the British Museum in the field was unlike anything I had ever encountered. It seemed to have resources that I had never dreamed of, expertise in the most unlikely things. In 1967 I was familiar with it as an august and rather stuffy institution, yet from it to Suffolk came not just the head of the largest department, but conservators, master craftsmen, scientists and curators, all bent on unravelling problems at Sutton Hoo. I was astonished at my good fortune at being able to join them, and sometimes I still am!

Angela Evans is a member of the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum, and editor of Volume 3 of 'The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial'.

SUTTON HOO: 50 YEARS (AT LEAST) OF ARCHAEOLOGY

by Rosemary Hoppitt, Editor

There are some wonderful quotations made by politicians and historians about the major events in British history. Harold Wilson's 'a week is a long time in politics' is one of the more useful ones to paraphrase when required. I was trying to think of something of my own to say about Sutton Hoo, after all, the finds from Mound 1 still rate as the richest in British archaeology, and the results changed the then-existing view of Anglo-Saxon society. I was looking for something memorable to say that would both inspire, and stick in the reader's mind, but so many people have written about Sutton Hoo already that it is hard to come up with something unique. Basil Brown's own quote, that Sutton Hoo for him was 'the

find of a lifetime' is a good one, in fact so good that I have already used it - as an eye-catcher in the display at Woodbridge Museum. No, I'm afraid on reflection I have not the literary gifts of our former editor, Mark Mitchels, who no doubt would have come up with a staggeringly apposite contribution, so in the end I shall have to resort to plagiarism and paraphrase. The question is though, whose quote to pinch? I could go for Harold Wilson - '50 years is a short time in archaeology' - there is humour there as well as pith! After much thought, and a little submergence in the various dictionaries of quotations, I give you 'my' offering. It comes with apologies to American author John Reed and the title of his ac-

count of the October Revolution. The finds both past and present on the site represent a revolution in their own way, so - could I suggest the excavation of the burial chamber at Sutton Hoo in the summer of 1939 was 'Two weeks that rocked the Anglo-Saxon world'.

We hope that you enjoy this special extra edition of *SAXON*. We felt it proper to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Mound 1 Excavations, and that to invite contributions from a variety of people who have, for various reasons, lived with Sutton Hoo for a good part of their lives, would be at one and the same time interesting, educating and entertaining for us all. May I on behalf of the editorial team thank them all for their contributions.

THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE FRONT LINE

by Robert Simper, Chairman

Time, so the old saying goes, passes quickly when you are having fun. It also passes quickly when an organisation is running smoothly. The first five years for the Sutton Hoo Society have run very smoothly, and have also involved a great deal of hard voluntary work. Some of the committee's officers can no longer spare the time and have recently resigned. However the Society does owe them a considerable debt of gratitude.

Mac Miles was Chairman for the first five years and a great deal of our success

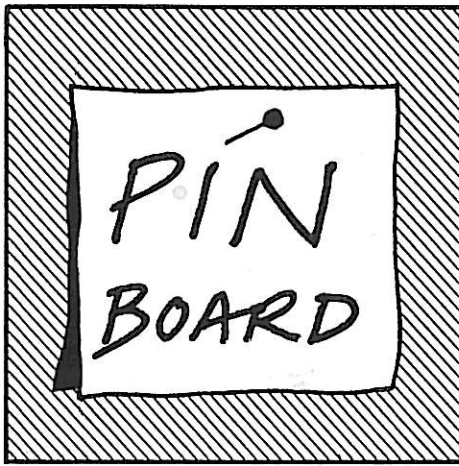
is down to his quiet ability to do the right thing at the right time: a tough act to follow. It is good that he is remaining on the committee, but Squadron Leader Robert Beardsley has stepped down both as Secretary and from the committee. Two summers of organising site guides has given him almost as many lively stories as the air battles of World War II did. A lesser man would have wavered but Bob's down-to-earth approach overcame all the difficulties. We have also lost from the committee Liz Miles (Mrs Mac Miles) who was Member-

ship Secretary. Again everything ran smoothly due to her hard work. The Miles' also took on the extra duty of doing a great deal of entertaining on the Society's behalf. The three mentioned have been doing work which has been largely unseen, but all of Mark Mitchell's work was very much on show as Editor of *Saxon*. This he did with great enthusiasm and used original ways of putting the Society's message across.

To all those who have given up their time to help promote one of England's most important historic sites, thank you.



Mac Miles and Liz Miles (right) with the Carvers at last year's Open Day.



DIARY

SUTTON HOO SOCIETY MEMBERS OPEN DAY

Society members are invited to view the excavations at Sutton Hoo on **Sunday 24 September 1989 at 12.30pm**. Sensible shoes, warm clothing and waterproofs are advisable in case of inclement weather!

SUTTON HOO SOCIETY A G M

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on **Friday 26 January 1990**. Watch this space for further details.

BRITISH MUSEUM TRIP

There will be a coach trip to the British Museum on **Saturday 28 October 1989**. Angela Evans (Department of Medieval and later Antiquities), author of the recent B M handbook, will show members round the Sutton Hoo exhibition. The cost of the trip will be c. £4. If you would like to go please contact A. Lovejoy (Membership Secretary) on Framlingham 723214 after 6pm.

VISIT THE EXCAVATIONS AT SNAPE

There will be an opportunity for members to view the excavations at Snape later this year. A site tour will be arranged for a Sunday morning during September (date to be confirmed). Please contact Pearl Simper at Sluice Cottage, Ramsholt, Woodbridge if you would like to join in.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project Team would like to thank the Society for their generous contribution towards the cost of levelling, consolidating and fencing the new access route to the site from the B1083 road. Your continued support in such practical matters is greatly appreciated.

Chris Wrigley of Stephens and Carter in Ipswich has donated some planks to the Research Project. We have found it very difficult to obtain planks second-hand and are reluctant to buy new, so we are especially grateful for this kind gift. Our thanks go to Steve Jones of Leigh in Lancashire for the archaeological cartoon. Members are invited to submit humorous material for this slot.

APPEALS

We still need 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!

GUIDES GUIDES GUIDES ... We can never have too many. Larry Gatter has taken on the job of Secretary, and would be delighted to hear from any members who feel they might like to become involved in showing the public around the site. Instruction available.

BBC TV PROGRAMME

The next Sutton Hoo programme is to be broadcast during August, within the 'Chronicle' series on BBC2.

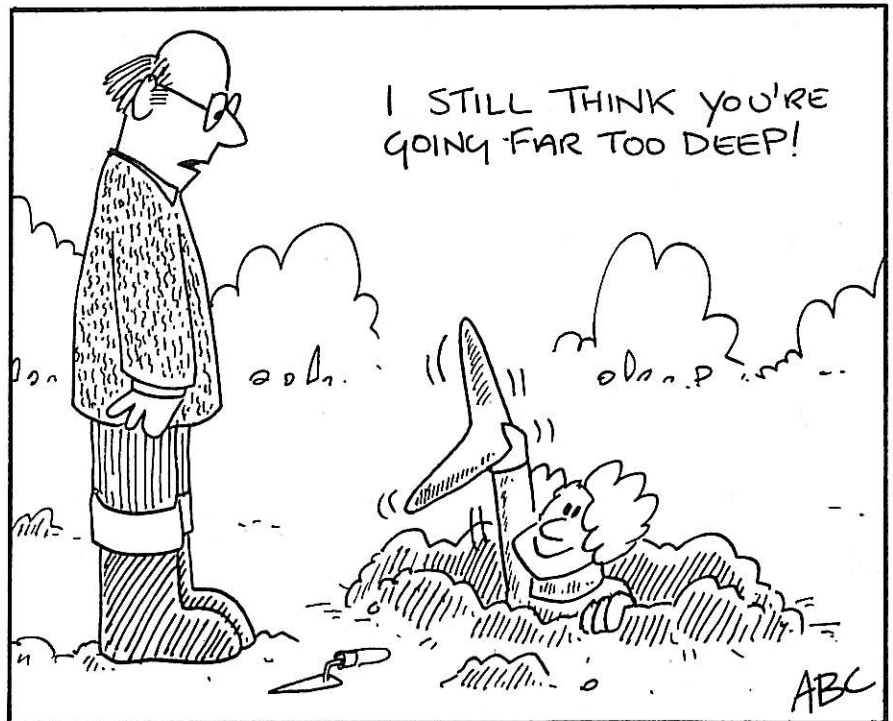
SALES

BULLETIN No.6 NOW AVAILABLE ...

Interim reports on all aspects of the current archaeological research are published annually in **Bulletin of the Sutton Hoo Research Committee** (price £2.00). You can join the Bulletin mailing list by contacting Jenny Glazebrook at the Research Project (address below).

SUTTON HOO SLIDE PACKS NOW AVAILABLE

Slides of the treasures and current excavations are now available in packs of 6, 12 and 24. Details and order forms available from the Research Project.



Contact Addresses:

Jenny Glazebrook, Sutton Hoo Research Project, Sutton Hoo, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DJ
The Sutton Hoo Society, c/o NatWest Bank plc, Cumberland Street, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1JD

Who's Who - Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

Chairman: Robert Simper, Hon. Secretary: Larry Gatter, Hon. Treasurer: John Aldridge,
Membership Secretary: Andrew Lovejoy, Research Director: Martin Carver, Publicity: Donald Brooks,
Publications: Rosemary Hoppitt,
Lord Lewin. Jenny Glazebrook, Clare Foss, John Newman, Pearl Simper

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