



The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

# SAXON

President: the Duke of Grafton KG

No. 24 / 1996



*Sutton Hoo from the air, showing some of the area that the National Trust may acquire during the coming year. Taken in the summer of 1985 it shows the excavation on the eastern periphery (Intervention 32) where the Project first came across the enigmatic sand-men burials. The excavation of Mound 2 is just beginning, and the black plastic sheeting, intended to kill the grass over the area of Mound 5 and reveal surface features, lies in front. In the distance is Sutton Hoo House, and to the right, in amongst the trees you can just see the edge of the Coach House which we hope will form the nucleus of the new visitor centre. Beyond the house, the field and woodland to the back left also form part of the estate. In the foreground to the left is Top Hat Wood, which may be carefully thinned to allow a view across the river. (Photo: C. Hoppitt)*

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## NATIONAL TRUST PLANS FOR SUTTON HOO

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The plans for the development of the Sutton Hoo site by the National Trust are progressing.

Those members living locally or who are NT members will have seen various reports in the local news, or in the East Anglian National Trust newsletter.

The Chairman attended a meeting in January at Sutton Hoo House, attended by representatives from the National Trust, the

Sutton Hoo Research Trust, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Executors of the Tranmer estate. At the meeting the National Trust's proposals were explained and discussed in a very positive way.

The plans (still very much in outline, and totally dependent on obtaining funding) include the whole 248 acres of the estate. There are four main components to the development. The burial site itself, which it

is anticipated will be left largely untouched, but with some low level on-site interpretation; the main house, which may be developed as a field and conference centre; the former coach house, which will be extended and developed as a display centre, cafe and shop with car parking and accommodation for permanent staff; and the land to the north of the house which will be managed for recreational use with footpath access.

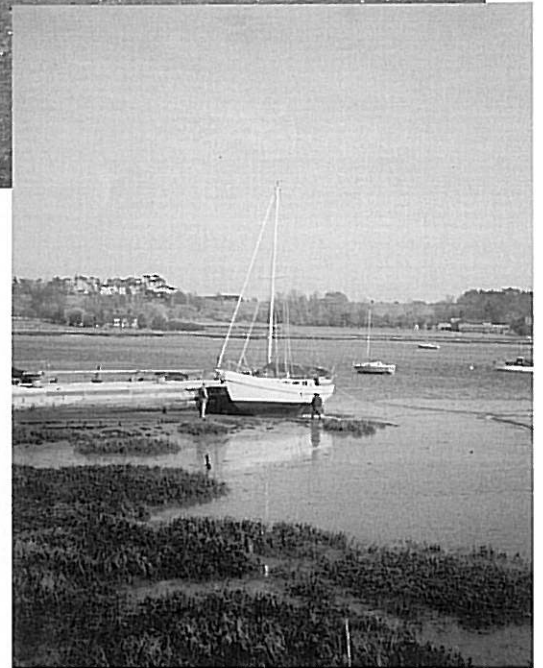
## THE NATIONAL TRUST MEETS THE SUTTON HOO SOCIETY

At the end of the AGM in February Martin Carver (Sutton Hoo Project Research Director), Angus Wainwright (National Trust Regional Archaeologist) and Rosemary Hoppitt (Sutton Hoo Society Chairman) sat as a panel to field questions from members about the future of Sutton Hoo.

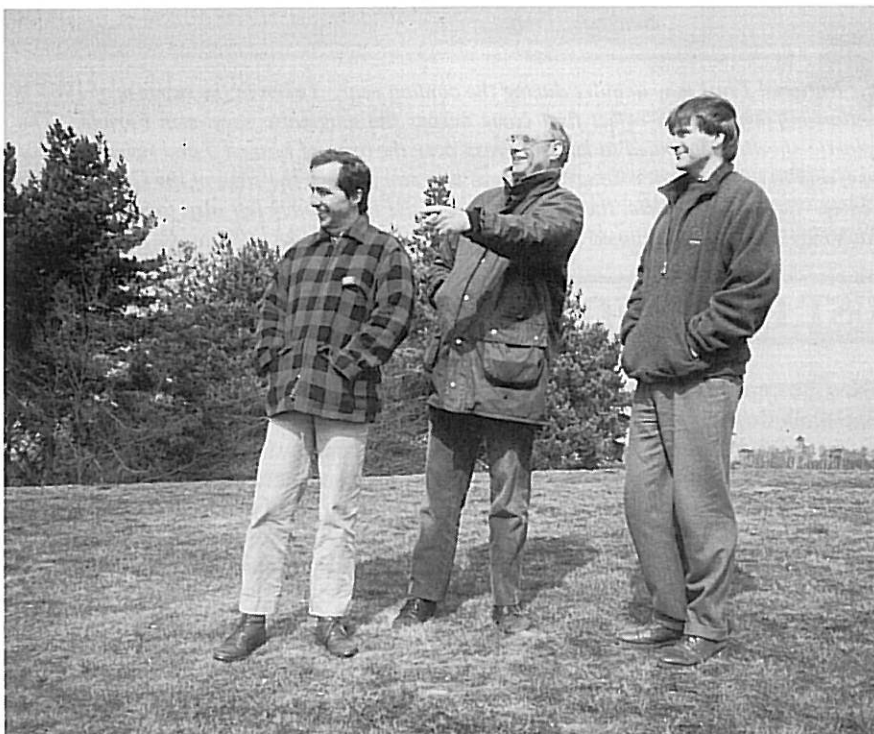
Points raised included the problem of continued car-parking in the lay-by on the main road, if there are charges for the NT car park; the 30,000 visitors anticipated by the NT — was this an over-estimate, and if not, what are the implications for the site in terms of erosion and other damage? The panel replied that probably no-one would be allowed onto the site itself, and a viewing platform at the edge was being considered. This prompted further discussion about the role of the guides and the extent of their involvement in future. This was something for the NT and the Society to negotiate. The NT were in favour of low-key presentation with very little development of the site itself, and the possibility of opening up a view across the river by removing some of the trees in Top Hat Wood. An imaginative display in the Old Coach House beside Sutton Hoo House would provide information and explanation for the visitor, perhaps with the option of a recorded commentary for use on the site. This approach met with the general approval of the meeting. On the subject of replicas, there was support for the Mound 2 reconstruction, and some members felt that a ship replica was also appropriate. In terms of the management of the site, there would be an advisory panel on which the Society, along with other interested parties, would be represented.



*(Above) Sutton Hoo House and the Old Coach House to the right from the burial site. The house may be developed into a residential field centre and conference centre providing facilities for a variety of activities which could include teaching on an academic level as well as outdoor pursuits for children.*



*(Right), Sutton Hoo House and the Mound 2 reconstruction (on the far right) viewed from across the river at Woodbridge.*



*Taking a break during an on-site meeting in early April to view the burial mounds, and consider some of the ideas for presentation are Martin Carver (centre) with National Trust Regional Archaeologist Angus Wainwright (left) and (right) David Adshead (National Trust Historic Buildings Representative)*



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## NEW ARRIVAL AT THE TICKET HUT

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After a long and patient wait the information sign has been placed in position on the corner of the site near to the ticket hut. The aim is to provide the casual visitor with a brief summary of the features they can see from the path, and some of the background history of the site.

At the outset it appeared a simple task, but the desire to make sure that the story was 'correct' led to much debate over detail. A further complication was the realisation that to erect the sign in the ideal location would involve a hole being dug, and it would have to be dug *archaeologically*, requiring permission from English Heritage. Faced with the prospect of more delays as a result of the necessary bureaucracy, and the chance that another season could go by without the sign being put up, we looked to the ever-resourceful Peter Berry to come to the rescue. This he did and with a smidgen of lateral thinking decided that the obvious solution was to place the post in a large concrete block on the surface of the site. In this way it is stable and relatively immovable, but does not damage any archaeological horizons.

Thanks Peter for once more sorting out our problems.



Visitors from Northamptonshire take advantage of the new signboard before continuing their walk along the footpath down to the River Deben.

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## SOCIETY EVENTS

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### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM held on Friday 23rd February at Woodbridge School, was attended by over 40 members. We also welcomed Angus Wainwright the National Trust's Regional Archaeologist, who gave a short address. During the business meeting the Hon Treasurer reported a surplus of £101.09p on the year, with the current balance at £5,105.23p. Visitor numbers and income were slightly increased on last year's figure, and sales of books etc. had also increased. The Society has now completed payment of the grant to the Sutton Hoo Research Project for the survey of the area north of the site completed at Easter 1995 (see **SAXON 23**). The Committee, including Stewart Salmond and Lindsey Lee (who were co-opted during the year) was elected *en bloc*. The business meeting was followed by a short talk by

Martin Carver on the final presentation of the results of the Research Project - both in book form and in displays.

Afterwards Angus Wainwright, Martin Carver and Society Chairman, Rosemary Hoppitt, fielded questions from the floor about the future of the site, and discussed suggestions with members. (See p.2 above left.)

### SPRING LECTURE

A packed house gathered in anticipation of an exciting evening. It was with great delight that we were able welcome members from as far afield as Essex, Hertfordshire and even Woodbridge — Woodbridge, *Connecticut* that is. Mr Gerard Langelier and his wife Peggy had dropped in on us while on a business trip to England. It was lovely to meet them.

*Some of the 1996 cohort of site-guides gather to hear the latest information on the interpretation of the site from Martin Carver.*

*L-R Ernie Goodway, Stewart Salmond, John Vick, Peter Rooley, Jenny Cant, Mike Weaver, Doreen Smith, Di Beattie, Sue Banyard, Lindsey Lee, Fred Bridges, David Aldred, John Le Mare and our 'leader' Andrew Lovejoy.*

Complete with two slide projectors Angela Evans stunned us all with the story of the discovery, removal from the ground and excavation in the British Museum of the bridle from Mound 17.

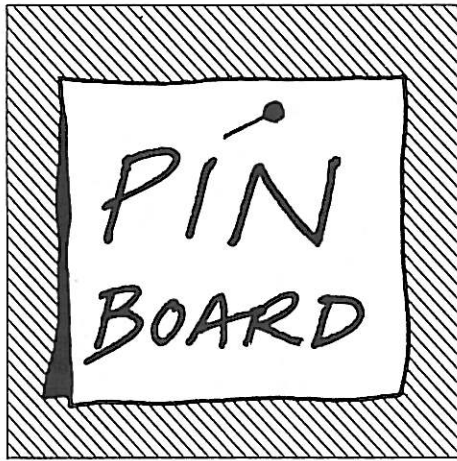
Sutton Hoo was once used as the introductory subject for a history syllabus, the idea being that history was all about piecing together puzzles like doing jigsaws. The puzzle of the bridle was how many jigsaws were there, how to recognise which pieces belonged to which jigsaw and how much of each jigsaw was missing? Then the immense problem of reconstruction — the need to understand the purpose and working of harnesses, and to look at examples from other periods and cultures. If only they had left the bridle on the pony when they buried it!

It was and continues to be a challenging task and makes a riveting story. We hope to publish a résumé of the lecture in **SAXON 25** in the winter.

### GUIDES GET-TOGETHER

A few days before Christmas the Chairman played host once more to the guides and helpers to say thank you for their hard work over the summer. We gathered on site just before Easter for an update from Martin Carver.





## DIARY

### SUTTON HOO OPENING TIMES

The Society will continue to host visitors at the site this year as we have in the past. The arrangements for visiting are exactly as they have been in previous years, and once more Andrew Lovejoy is co-ordinating the guiding rota.

The site will open on 6th April (Easter Saturday), and will continue to be open on weekend and Bank Holiday afternoons until Sunday 8th September 1996. Guided tours will begin at approximately 2pm and 3pm. We would remind you that entrance for members is free (on production of your current membership card), and that you may only visit the site as part of a guided tour.

### ANNUAL EXCURSION

This year's excursion will take place on Sunday 15th September. Once again Sam Newton has volunteered to plan the expedition, which this year will visit the

important Anglo-Saxon sites of Bury St Edmunds, Ely and Thetford. For those of you who came last year, see where Wihthurb finally came to rest. For further information and booking please contact Andrew Lovejoy (address below).

## PARTY BOOKINGS

Remember that you can book to visit Sutton Hoo as a group at any time. You even get the extra privilege (by prior arrangement) of being able to drive up to the site!

So if your society is looking for a pleasant and educational visit — what about an outing to Sutton Hoo on a balmy summer evening — perhaps followed by a meal at one of the local pubs. For party bookings — contact Andrew Lovejoy (address below).

## APPEALS

### GUIDES

We have three new guides joining this year, and would welcome more. You do not have to be an expert in Anglo-Saxon history and archaeology. What you do have to be able to do is communicate the story of the excavations to the general public in a way that brings the site to life. It is not as difficult as it sounds, and is actually quite enjoyable. We would also welcome more volunteers to take round school parties. Most of our school parties consist of children in the age-range 7 - 11, who are studying the Anglo-Saxons as part of their history syllabus. Some local schools study the site as a local history topic. Ideally we would like you to have a teaching background for this job.

### HELPERS

We need volunteers to man the ticket hut too — if you don't feel you can guide, but would be willing to take ticket money and sell

books, postcards and so on, then we would like to hear from you. If you feel you can help, then please get in touch with Andrew Lovejoy.

## LIFT TO MEETINGS REQUIRED

We have had a request from a member in Washbrook, Ipswich, who does not drive but would like to get to meetings in Woodbridge. If there is anyone out there who has to pass through or by Washbrook on the A12 and would be willing to act as chauffeur on an occasional basis please contact any member of the Committee, and we will put you in touch.

## PUBLICITY

We try to disseminate our information leaflets as widely as possible to Tourist Offices, libraries and other local attractions. If you are involved with another tourist venture locally, or spot a lack of Sutton Hoo leaflets when you next visit your library etc., then please let one of the Committee know so that we can provide you with some or if necessary replenish stocks.

## INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS

Our teachers' guide to Sutton Hoo is still available on request from Andrew Lovejoy. If you would like a copy please send 75p (to cover photocopying and postage). We did circulate all Suffolk schools with the guide last year through the County mailing system. It is amazing how many teachers don't seem to have seen them. You might like to ask your colleagues what happened to them.

The guide tells you all you need to know about booking your visit, how to incorporate Sutton Hoo into your National Curriculum teaching programme, and gives suggestions for background reading for teachers who might not be familiar with the Anglo-Saxons.

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## Contact Addresses

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