

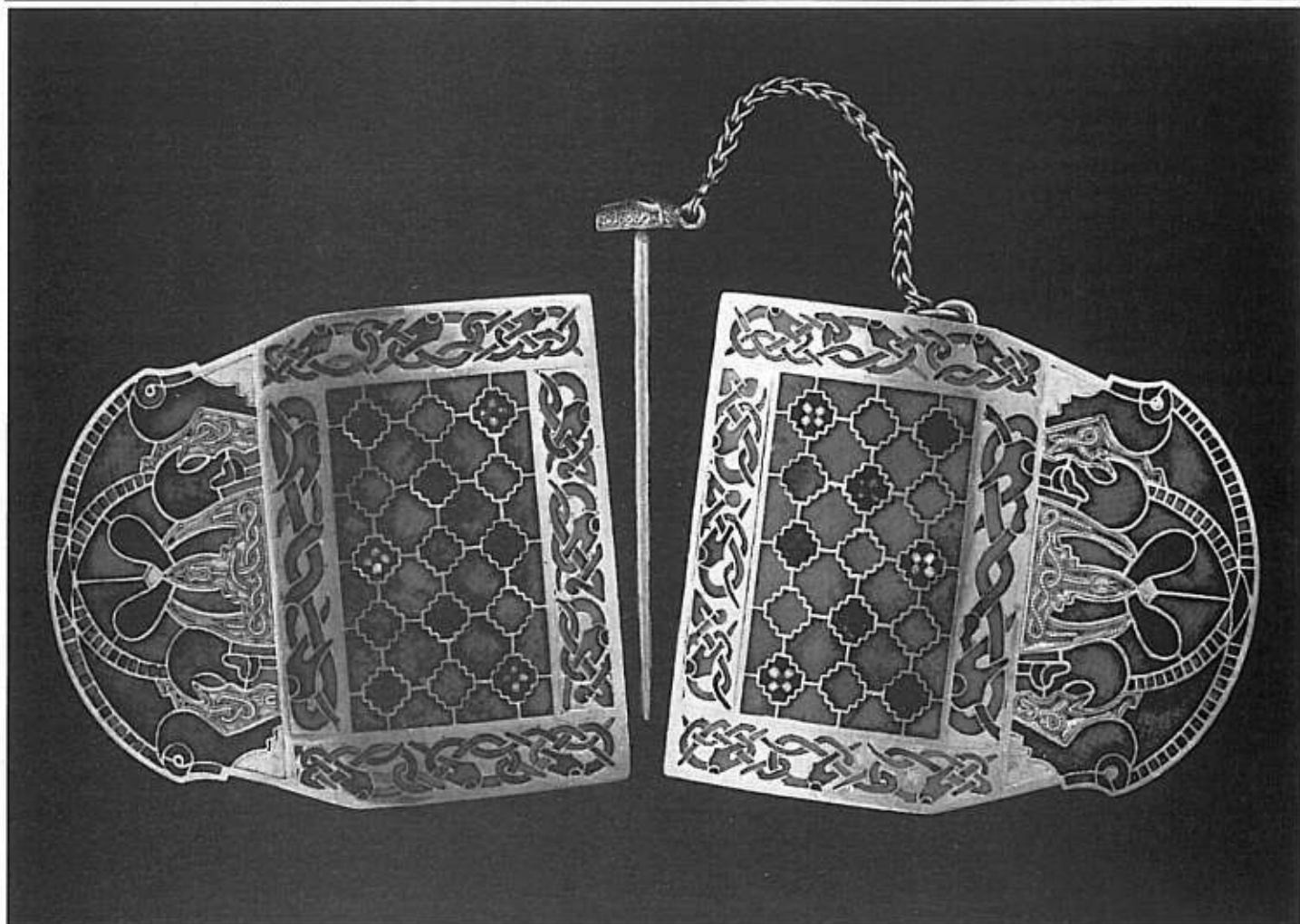


The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

# SAXON

President: The Earl of Cranbrook

No.36 / 2002



*One of the pair of shoulder clasps from Sutton Hoo. Parallels for these can be found in Roman military regalia, and may tell us something of the perceptions that the wearer wished to convey about his own relationship to the Roman Empire past and present. (British Museum)*

## Costume and Politics in the 7th and early 8th Centuries a résumé of the spring lecture by Helen Geake

What you wear tells the world what sort of person you are. This is true today, when women can wear skirts but men can't, and when blue jeans and trainers give off very different signals to a business suit and shiny black shoes or corduroy trousers and brogues. Fashion also says a great deal about society. Hemlines going up in the Sixties, and power-dressing in the Eighties, illustrate the principle – and it was just as true in early Anglo-Saxon society as it is today.

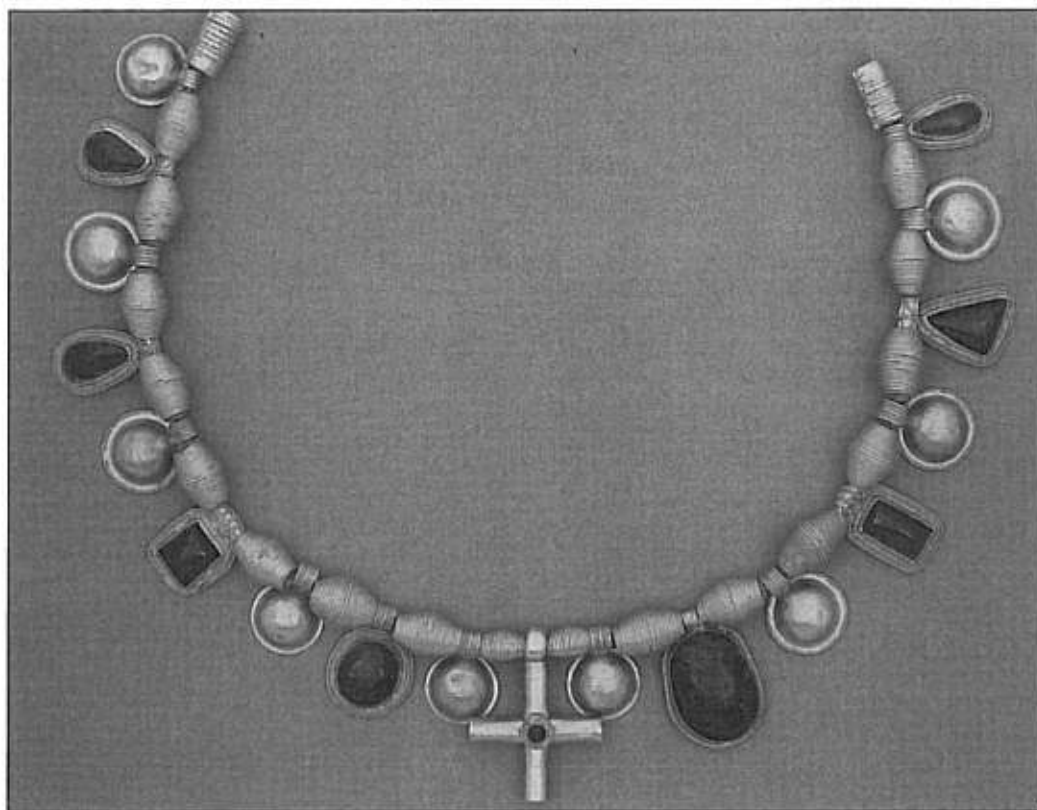
Of course, our richest source of information in the early Anglo-Saxon period comes from inhumation graves, so we can only

clearly see the costume of the dead. But when we look at the objects from these graves, we can generally see some indication of the sort of person who was buried in the grave. Weapons are almost always found in men's graves, and brooches and beads in those of women. Age is shown through costume too; weapon sets are the privilege of the adult male, and imitation keys are restricted to the adult female.

Another thing that early Anglo-Saxon costume reveals is the cultural group to which the dead person felt they belonged. This is very clear in the 6th century, and particularly in women's costume. Women buried in areas

of England that would later claim to be Anglian, such as East Anglia, Northumbria or Mercia, wore very different outfits to those buried in areas that later claimed to be Saxon, such as Essex, Wessex or Sussex.

This isn't the case earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period. In the 5th century, although grave goods look as Germanic as those in the 6th, an eclectic mix of types can be found in any cemetery. It seems as if these later cultural blocs might have been developed *within* England, rather than being genuine markers of people whose ancestors came from Angeln or Saxony. Women's grave costumes might have



*Necklace from Desborough, Northamptonshire, found by chance by workmen in 1876*

*It consists of alternating gold and cabochon garnet pendants, with a central cross.*

*Probably assembled in the second half of the 7th century, its origins lie in late antique fashions.*

*The cross is seen as an explicit Christian symbol, and seems to have been added later, indicating the adoption of Christianity by elite Anglo-Saxons.*

*(British Museum)*

developed to *create* these groups rather than to simply *reflect* them; the fashions may have had a political meaning as well as a social one.

This becomes especially obvious when we look at how female burial fashions changed at the turn of the 7th century – the age of Sutton Hoo. Big brooches, long strings of beads, and (for the Angles) wrist-clasps and girdle-hangers vanish virtually overnight. They are replaced by tiny, beautifully-worked objects – delicate annular brooches, chokers of silver wire rings and small glass beads, garnets surrounded by filigree and cut *en cabochon*. Glitzy chip-carving and animal art all but disappear; there is hardly room on the jewellery now.

Interestingly, this new female jewellery is now found across all of England. The dichotomy between the Anglian and Saxon areas completely vanishes. In archaeological jargon, we have a single ‘culture-province’ over the whole country. And what is even more remarkable is the timing; it begins at about the time that the named kingdoms of England first emerge from the really Dark Ages into some kind of light.

The big question therefore has to be – *why?* Why does the archaeology appear to completely contradict the history? We should expect Mercia, for example, to try to distinguish itself from East Anglia, Northumbria and Wessex, and to use a national costume to help, but exactly the reverse occurs. One way of trying to approach this question is to look at what the 7th-century Anglo-Saxons were trying to advertise by using the new kinds of grave goods. Where did the inspiration come from?

The traditional view is that the new grave-goods were Kentish, or Frankish. Until recently, most cemeteries with these grave-goods were found in Kent – the county nearest to

Francia – and this led to the view that the tasteful new objects were Frankish in inspiration. Unfortunately, however, contemporary Frankish jewellery looks very unlike the English material. The best parallels are actually found among earlier Romano-British and contemporary Byzantine material.

Why is this so? We know that there was no invasion or migration of Roman or Byzantine people in the 7th century. There was, however, an invasion of Roman and Byzantine *ideas*. Christianity was brought to England by Roman missionaries who also brought books and objects decorated in classical styles. But simply crediting the Church with the revival – or perhaps renaissance – of Romanesque fashions is too easy. There are chronological problems, and hints from churchyard burials that the Church liked classical-style burial costumes no more than the old Germanic-style outfits.

So we must look for something else that all the kingdoms had in common, which might lead them all to adopt these new fashions at the same time. The obvious solution is that they were all developing dynastic kingship at this time, and needed something to make their power seem a natural thing, rather than a recent invention.

The new kings perhaps looked back to the last time there was a supreme leader in Britain – the Roman period. If the kings could convince their people that they were the heirs to Roman Britain, then of course they would need rulers. We can see the kings of the 7th century using the concept of the Roman Empire in other ways too – ruling from Roman towns, using Roman-style regalia, adopting Christianity. In East Anglia they even included Caesar in the royal genealogy. But what the kingdoms appear to have done above all was to encourage the spread of neo-classical dress fashions

among women.

This doesn’t mean that the people of Anglo-Saxon England thought that they *were* Roman, any more than 18th-century gentry living in Palladian villas did. They were simply reminded that those living in this island are heirs to its traditions as Britannia, the Roman province.

So how does the story end? By the 720s it seems that the strategy had worked. The Anglo-Saxons had had kings for long enough to accept them as a necessity, and there was thus no need to continue to advertise a Roman identity – showing allegiance to the king – in the grave. Clothed burial suddenly stops all over England, resulting in far less evidence for costume. The political situation in the later 8th and 9th centuries is best reconstructed from other sources, principally documentary history and numismatics.

Costume is particularly good for analysing the politics of the middle classes. They wear enough jewellery, and there are enough of them, to provide sufficient archaeological evidence. Because of this, my topic is perhaps of limited relevance to the site of Sutton Hoo itself. But it does give a snapshot of the people that were probably ruled by those buried in the mounds, and of the tactics that the kings were using.

Helen Geake is Finds Liaison Officer for Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. A graduate of University College, London she worked at Sutton Hoo during the 1980/90s campaign. Her PhD which focused on Anglo-Saxon burial of the 7th and early 8th centuries, was awarded by the University of York.

## SOCIETY EVENTS



Above: The President of the Society, The Earl of Cranbrook addresses members at the Open Day

### Sutton Hoo Society Member's Open Day

On Saturday 9 March, four days before the official opening of the National Trust's Visitor Centre, the Sutton Hoo Society was able to host a day for members and guests. About 400 people attended on a beautiful, if blustery March day.

The exhibition was not quite complete, but it did not detract from the experience, in fact it was fascinating to see some of the final touches being put to a number of the displays by Chris Hudson the designer.

We were delighted to be able to welcome among the guests some faces from Sutton Hoo's past - Mrs Pretty and her son, (daughter-in-law and grandson respectively of Edith May Pretty, donor of the Sutton Hoo Treasure to the British Museum), Penny

Phillips (daughter of Charles Phillips, excavator in 1939), Paul and Richmal Ashbee, Angela Care Evans and Peter and Barbara Rooley, excavators from the 1960s campaign.

The event provided the National Trust with a useful practice run for the official opening later in the week, and we were able to test the restaurant and shop facilities, as well as view the exhibition and site.

The Society's president the Earl of Cranbrook gave a short address in which he highlighted the work of the Society. In particular he thanked those active in the Society: the Committee past and present, and the site guides who have kept faith with Sutton Hoo, actively promoting and maintaining interest in the site. He noted that whilst the Society is looking forward to continuing to work in partnership with the National Trust in its role of giving guided tours, it will be continuing its independent commitments to education and dissemination of information about Sutton Hoo and the East Anglian Kingdom.



Above: Chris Hudson—designer of the exhibition, adding last minute touches

Left: The Visitor Reception building and restaurant



Above: Left to Right: Richmal and Paul Ashbee, Penny Phillips and Angela Care Evans in the Exhibition Hall

Photographs: C. Hoppitt



## SOCIETY REPORTS

### Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting was held on Friday 15 February, at Woodbridge School, and attended by some 60 members.

Membership at 31 December 2001 was 379, slightly down on 2000 (385). A number of members have changed from ordinary to family membership.

During 2001 the Society hosted 108 public and 29 pre-booked tours. The total number of paying visitors was 2899, the income was £9870.

The Society has been working with the National Trust to review guiding. A new training programme has been planned, to ensure the long-term quality of guiding at Sutton Hoo.

The Society will be represented on the Sutton Hoo Archaeological Advisory Board. The Society will have a publicity board in the Visitor centre, and will be involved in the development of the Archive facility in Tran-

mer House.

Subscriptions: Current overseas subscriptions are not economic. The meeting approved the immediate increase for new overseas members £10 to £15. A general review of subscriptions will be undertaken during the next 12 months.

We are continuing to work with Bob Markham to publish his work on the story behind the 1939 excavation; we shall not unfortunately make the March deadline, but we are confident that it will appear during the 2002.

In accordance with Charity Commission requirements the Society has identified £10,000 for the Society's official reserves, based upon approximately one year's income from site tours and literature sales.

During the year, a grant of £2500 was made towards illustrations for the Sutton Hoo Research Project's Final Report. The Society has committed amounts of up to £4000 (to include £714 received from the Mound 17 Appeal to members) for display items for the

National Trust Visitor Centre exhibition and up to £2500 for further geophysical survey work at Sutton Hoo. £6000 is earmarked to cover the costs of publishing Bob Markham's book (see above), although there will be the opportunity to recover this through sales.

Site tours had realised £4485, and income from sales of books and postcards £5385. The surplus for the year was £4992. Balance at 31 December 2001: £32,397.

Peter Rooley resigned as Treasurer. Peter has been a Committee member since 1994, first as publicity officer, and then as Treasurer. His significant contribution has been the clarification of our accounting system which has enabled the Society to clearly plan on the basis of income from the site and from the Society separately. Michael Argent and Jane Wright, who have been involved with the Society for some time as guides and were co-opted onto the Committee during the year were elected to the Committee. Michael Argent was also elected Treasurer. The rest of the Committee were re-elected *en bloc*.



## DIARY Conference 2002

### Changing Beliefs: Aspects of Conversion in the Early Medieval period.

The Conference this year will take place on **Saturday 12th October** at the **Suffolk Police Force Headquarters, Martlesham Heath**, on the eastern outskirts of Ipswich (not far from the 2000 venue at BT Adastral Park).

You will, if a member, have already received details and booking form. If you have not received details then please contact Stewart Salmond (address below) or visit the web site ([www.suttonhoo.org](http://www.suttonhoo.org)) where you will find the conference programme and an application form to print out and send, or email: [conference@suttonhoo.org](mailto:conference@suttonhoo.org) and we shall send them to you.

### Sutton Hoo Opening Times

Opening times are now determined by the National Trust as follows:

#### June 1st – end of September

every day 10am – 5pm

#### October

Wednesday – Sunday 10am – 5pm

#### November – end of February

Saturdays and Sundays only 10am – 4pm

(NB in addition on certain Saturdays and Sundays the estate will be closed – please telephone in advance if you intend to visit)

It is still possible to walk down the public footpath and view the site.

Guided tours provided by the Sutton Hoo Society are available until the end of October at weekends at 11 am, 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. We are endeavouring to run guided tours midweek as well, but these are according to the availability of guides – if they are running they go at times as above.

**For ALL information about site opening and visiting please contact the National Trust and NOT the Society:**

#### National Trust Sutton Hoo:

Tel: 01394 389700

Fax: 01394 389702

Email: [asoksx@smtp.ntrust.org.uk](mailto:asoksx@smtp.ntrust.org.uk)

Web site: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

Remember that if you are not a National Trust member, your Sutton Hoo Society membership card allows one free entrance to the whole complex, although the guided tour will be extra. Subsequent visits will be at a reduced rate. For Family members two people are allowed one free entrance each. Group visits can still be made at other times, please contact the National Trust for booking. The new parking arrangements and access make it easier for disabled visitors to get the most from the site – wheelchairs and motorised buggies are available.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Royal Garden Party

During this year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, one of the Royal Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace is focusing on organisations patronised by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. As a result, The Sutton Hoo Society received an invitation for four people to go to the Garden Party in July. Following a vote in Committee, Rosemary Hoppitt (current Chairman), Robert Simper (former Chairman and current Committee member), Stewart Salmond (Guiding Secretary) and Jenny Glazebrook (former site administrator, and former Committee secretary) shall be representing the Society at the event.

### Contact Addresses

Jenny Cant, Membership Secretary, 258 The Pastures, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP 13 5RS  
Stewart Salmond, Visits and Guiding Secretary, Tailor's House, Bawdsey, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3AJ  
Email: [chairman@suttonhoo.org](mailto:chairman@suttonhoo.org) Web site: <http://www.suttonhoo.org>  
Sutton Hoo Research Project, Dept. of Archaeology, University of York, The King's Manor, York YO1 2EP  
Saxon: Email: [publications@suttonhoo.org](mailto:publications@suttonhoo.org)

### Who's Who — Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

Chairman: Rosemary Hoppitt Hon. Treasurer: Michael Argent Research Director: Martin Carver  
Membership Secretary: Jenny Cant Guiding Secretary: Stewart Salmond Guide Training Co-ordinator & Publicity: Lindsay Lee  
Publications: Rosemary Hoppitt  
Sue Banyard Brenda Brown Nigel Maslin Trish Mulholland-Middleton Pearl Simper Robert Simper Angus Wainwright Jane Wright

### CREDITS

Saxon: Editors: Rosemary Hoppitt and Trish Mulholland-Middleton  
Sub-editor: Jenny Glazebrook Original Design: Nigel MacBeth

## Guides and Volunteers needed

The Society is managing to keep up with the increased demand for guided tours, but more guides are always welcome. We have 30 new guides in training, 5 new guides have begun work this year.

If you are interested in training as a guide, please contact Lindsay Lee, Guide Training Co-ordinator, at Brambles, School Road, Tunstall, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 2JQ or email: [publicity@suttonhoo.org](mailto:publicity@suttonhoo.org) for more details.

If guiding doesn't appeal, then there are still many opportunities to work as a National Trust volunteer doing other jobs at the site – contact: **Trevor Connick, The National Trust, The Dairy House, Ickworth, Suffolk IP29 5QE** Tel. 01284 736008 or email: [avotdc@smtp.ntrust.org.uk](mailto:avotdc@smtp.ntrust.org.uk)

## COURSES

### Wuffing Education

In a new venture called **Wuffing Education**, which aims to give people an in-depth understanding of specific Anglo-Saxon themes, Sam Newton and Cliff Hoppitt are organising a series of day schools at Sutton Hoo. Autumn dates are:

**7 September 2002**, 'Beowulf and the ghost-Ships of the Wuffings', with Dr Sam Newton (an exploration of what heroic literature reveals about the royal rite of ship-funeral)

**19 October 2002**, 'The Master Workshop of the Wuffings', with Dr Stephen Plunkett (a close look at the jewels and other objects at Sutton Hoo)

**9 November 2002**, 'The Reckoning of King Raedwald', with Dr Sam Newton (Who was Raedwald and what is his place in history?).

For details and applications contact:

[www.wuffings.co.uk/education](http://www.wuffings.co.uk/education)  
or write to: Wuffing Education,  
4 Hilly Fields, Woodbridge,  
Suffolk, IP12 4DX  
or Tel. 01394 383908 or 01728 688749  
or email: [education@wuffing.co.uk](mailto:education@wuffing.co.uk).

# Record Breaking Start to Sutton Hoo

## by Kate Sussams

Sutton Hoo has exceeded all expectations since opening as the newest National Trust site in March 2002. The items on loan from the British Museum (star objects are currently the sword, great shield and the sword belt fittings) have proved to be irresistible to thousands of visitors and numbers are averaging at just under 1000 per day. Original predictions for the annual visitor total were an "optimistic" 55,000; however, as of mid July, numbers are already up to 100,000! The site has been breaking all the records for the East Anglia Region – the most visited property, the most successful shop and restaurant, the largest number of group bookings...the list goes on. This has been a challenging, exciting and sometimes frustrating time for all staff and volunteers, all of whom have worked extremely hard to maintain high standards.

Of course, the burial mounds are the very reason the National Trust is here and one of our top priorities is to ensure that the large numbers of people visiting the site do not damage the very thing we are here to protect. Access to the mounds is by joining a guided tour only and the public tours run by the Sutton Hoo Society at weekends have been extremely popular, most booking up well in advance of the tour time. We do feel that the guided tour is one of the best ways to understand the site and we are very grateful to the Society for putting together an extensive training package for new guides.

A big part of any National Trust visit is always the chance to buy some goodies in the shop and have a cup of tea and slice of cake. Sutton Hoo is no different in that respect, although we have tried hard to make the products or food reflect the site, whether it be Mound 1-inspired jewellery or Swedish meatballs. One of the big successes in the shop has been the books and, in particular, *Burial Ground of Kings* by Martin Carver and *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* by Angela Care Evans sell out fast.

The agreement we are fortunate to have with the British Museum will enable us to change the exhibition in the Treasury Room every year. A large part of my job this winter



*Left:  
The entrance to the  
Exhibition Hall at Sutton  
Hoo.*

*Photographs by Cliff  
Hoppitt*

will be to oversee the design and production of a new exhibition, together with Angus Wainwright and Angela Care Evans. So the items which are in the Treasury now will return to the BM in November and then a new exhibition will be unveiled next March. To have this kind of ongoing loan agreement with the BM is extremely rare in museum terms and will allow us to explore a wide range of important themes over the coming years.

### *Sutton Hoo opening times:*

*Exhibition, restaurant and shop open daily  
10am – 5pm until the end of September.  
October : Weds–Sun, 10am – 5pm  
1<sup>st</sup> November – mid-March : Saturday and  
Sunday 10am – 4pm.*

*Walks and burial mounds open daily  
throughout the year.*

### **Kate Sussams, Property Manager**

Tel. 01394 389700 Email [asoksx@smtp.ntrust.org.uk](mailto:asoksx@smtp.ntrust.org.uk)

*Right:*

*The footpath to the  
burial site*



*Left: National Trust archaeologist  
Angus Wainwright comes face to  
face with himself and the replica  
helmet in the press report of the  
opening.*

*Right: Sutton Hoo's own post  
box – the first collection  
left to right: Postman Paul Leech,  
Property Manager Kate Sussams,  
Site Warden Les Harvey and  
Secretary Lynette Titford.  
(Photograph: Sam Newton)*

