



The beast within? Breaching human-animal boundaries in Anglo-Saxon paganism, by Aleksander Pluskowski

Introduction

Pre-Christian religious belief and practice in early medieval northern Europe has been described as nuanced, multi-scalar and dynamic, with a degree of regional variation and change over time — indeed one could describe early medieval Christianity in a similar way (Price 2002, 63). Within this cultural mosaic it is possible to identify shared or comparable responses to the natural world. Animals feature widely in early Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian culture; both domestic and wild species are recovered in varying proportions from archaeological contexts, they appear in later literature, in personal names, and dominate indigenous art in the latter half of the first millennium AD.

The use of animals as active, rather than simply metaphorical, mediators between the natural and supernatural worlds is a characteristic of shamanic religious systems (Eliade 1989). Stephan Glösecki (1989) has argued for a shamanic view of early Anglo-Saxon society on the basis of traces of totemism and ecstatic techniques found in later Anglo-Saxon literature, whilst Howard Williams (2005) has suggested that early Anglo-Saxon society shared an 'ideology of transformation' with other groups in the North Sea, expressed through animal use and representation in 5th- and 6th-century funerary rites. More specifically, Glösecki, Williams and others have argued for an animistic pagan Anglo-Saxon society, where the spiritual was accessible through the natural.

Organising early Anglo-Saxon society with animals

There is very little direct evidence for the actual veneration of animals as deities in England, although the practice is attested in other regions of northern Europe. A letter written by Aldhelm of Sherborne (d. 709) mentions shrines which had been converted to Christian uses, where previously *ermuli cervulique* had been worshipped, perhaps referring to an image of a stag or hybrid stag-deity (Filotas 2005, 144). Such examples are exceptional. On the other hand, early Anglo-Saxon material culture shares both form and context with the way



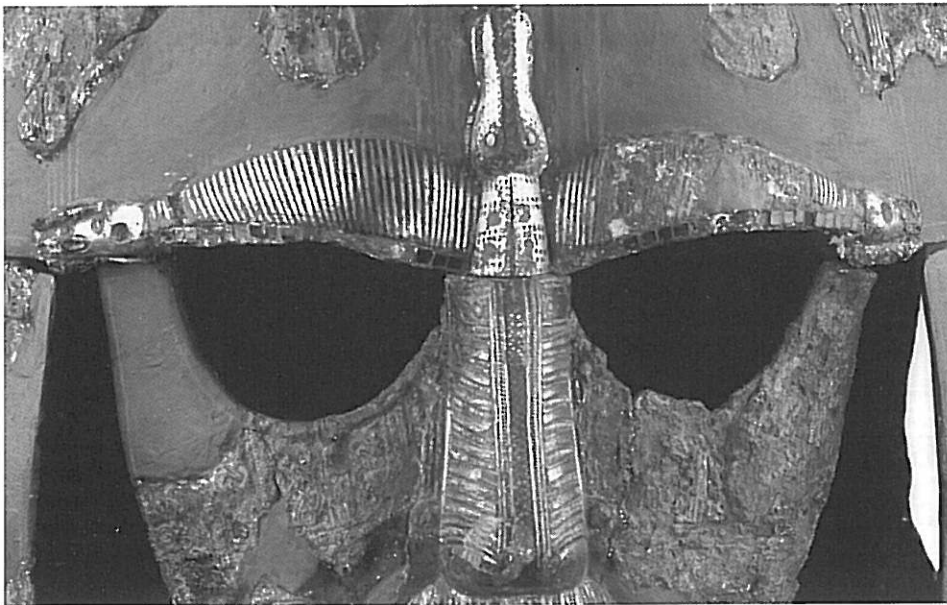
Speakers at the Sutton Hoo conference, 2006. From left to right: Aleksander Pluskowski, Tania Dickinson, Sarah Semple, Angela Care Evans, Martin Carver, Howard Williams. Photo: Nigel MacBeth

animals were symbolically deployed by pagan societies in other parts of northern Europe, particularly Scandinavia. In all of these regions, the centrality of zoomorphic ornament, the incorporation of animals into funerary rites, personal display and hints in later literature of their original totemic functions such as their use in personal names, all point to a paradigm where animals played a key role in social and cosmological organisation. Here, the conceptual boundary between human and animal was mutable, certain species were used to facilitate ecstatic connections with the otherworld, and desirable qualities expressed particularly in wild animals could be tapped, perhaps even controlled.

Deities were consistently linked with a select group of animals, and were also attributed with the ability to shape-shift and travel between worlds. In later Anglo-Saxon sources, Woden (like the Scandinavian Óðinn)

is consistently, if fragmentarily, described as a highly animalistic deity. Christian authors writing about pagan cosmologies in England, Scandinavia and elsewhere were unlikely to have had any first-hand understanding of these semiotic systems, and rigidly defined gods in relation to the familiar forms of Roman and Mediterranean culture outlined in early Christian literature. The earliest link between the god and wolves is found on an 8th-century runic inscription from Ribe, an association that may have been represented on Migration period bracteates, but one which is not elaborated upon until the 12th and 13th centuries. Taking just this one example, it is clear that Óðinn's complex relationship with wolves exemplified his role in contemporary understandings of death, particularly death in battle.

The absence of direct evidence for battle gods in pagan Anglo-Saxon society is almost certainly related to the increasing reliance on



The Sutton Hoo helmet, detail of the brow fitting. Photo: National Trust

Christ for success and protection in battle during the 7th century. During this time, and into the 8th century, the raptor and serpent continued to be used but in different settings, whilst representations of boars and stags declined in early Anglo-Saxon Christian art, perhaps because they were more distinctive and therefore less flexible symbols (Hawkes 1997, 321–326). This break with the past was not always comprehensive, for memories of the earlier world view appear to have been preserved in later literature, whilst surviving pagan practices were widely and persistently condemned (Filotas 2005).

Conceptualising predation

If animals were employed in socio-cosmological organisation, it is unsurprising to find that predatory species and the concept of predation featured prominently in the expression of rank. Through the fundamental relationship between predator and prey, consumer and consumed, people situated themselves both ecologically and cosmologically in relation to other organisms (including each other), on a physical and metaphysical level (Pluskowski 2006). In the symbolic repertoire, predatory animals were employed most of all in the defining activities of the élites: fighting (on shields), and feasting (drinking horns, musical instruments). In a society where individuals could be closely identified with certain animals through names, visual allusions, disguises or actions, the élites legitimised themselves both socially and cosmologically as predators — instigators of violence and the ‘top consumers’ in their group.

The animals which the elite identified with were wild, uncontrollable, some of them with the potential to display impressive aggression and ferocity; the sights and sounds of large carnivores hunting, killing and fighting. Zoo-archaeological evidence suggests these animals were the least experienced by early Anglo-Saxon society, and they would have been vividly contrasted with those animals under human management, particularly livestock,

experienced on a daily basis. This may have lent a disconcerting sense of otherness to those who regularly employed the symbols of the wolf, boar and eagle. Hunting these animals was both difficult and dangerous, characteristics which may have extended to the deployment of their symbolic forms. The otherness of those individuals at the conceptual ‘cutting-edge’ of mutability is perhaps echoed in an aspect of the representation of heroic dragon slayers in later ‘Germanic’ literature, where both slayer and dragon shared more affinities with each other than with the rest of humanity, and where the slayer adopted ‘dragonish’ behaviour and characteristics (Lionarons 1998, 110). So whilst pagan North Sea societies may have shared a comparable ‘ideology of transformation’, this encompassed a spectrum of participation which, in early Anglo-Saxon England, is perhaps visible in the deployment of animals in art and the mortuary theatre.

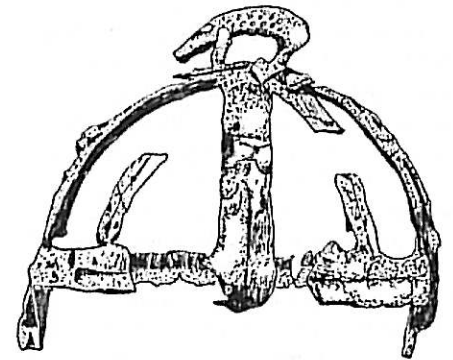
Animals in art

Amongst the identifiable animals in Anglo-Saxon art, predatory animals characterised by their stylised dentition are found in specific types of ornamentation. The raptor is one of the main distinguishing features of Style II animal ornament and features on a range of objects from the late 6th and 7th centuries, interpreted as belonging essentially to the upper strata of Anglo-Saxon society. The predatory bird is found throughout the ‘Germanic’ world, but there are significant regional differences — and the closest analogies occur in Scandinavia leading George Speake (1980, 85) to conclude that the significance of the animal in the two areas was the same. In Anglo-Saxon England and in Scandinavia, the raptor features as a decorative fitting on shields and helmets, as well as artefacts such as drinking horn terminals, lyre mounts, and a range of buckles and plate-brooches.

Predatory birds then seem to be associated with expensive items within the sphere of elite activity — feasting and fighting. The language

of predation also occurs as unique examples on obscure pieces such as the Lullingstone bowl, where a frieze of stags is complemented by a bird of prey with a fish — an old motif found across Europe. But aside from the bird of prey with victim, actual scenes of devouring are rare, as are hunting scenes — one example is found decorating an urn from Spong Hill. A pair of copper alloy shield mounts from a male grave at Bergh Apton, Norfolk are represented as confronting quadrupeds, grasping limbs in their mouths; this is a variant of predatory imagery associated with martial equipment, others include what have been interpreted as pikes — notable for their teeth. In addition to the predatory bird, the wolf features as the common animal in Style II in Anglo-Saxon England, Scandinavia and on the Continent. Wolves, raptors and boars — the three martial animals identified in Vendel iconography are represented in the material culture of early Anglo-Saxon England. The use of the boar as a crest fitting on helmets is attested in both England and Scandinavia in the 7th century; in the former region by excavated examples from Benty Grange, Northampton and Guilden Morden, whilst the ends of the brow fitting on the Sutton Hoo helmet terminate in boar heads. Several centuries later, the memory of the function of boar-helmets was preserved in *Beowulf*:

*... the weapon-smith wrought it thus,
worked it with magic
set it with swine shapes so that thereafter no
blade nor battle sword might bite through...*



The Benty Grange helmet. Image may be subject to copyright

The consistent use of the boar on helmets appears at odds with its representation on women’s bracelets, brooches and pendants, the use of boar tusks in female graves, the representation of the boar on men’s jewellery such as buckles and shoulder clasps, harness mounts and swords (Hawkes 1997, 316). A 7th-century sword blade stamped with three figures of boars was recovered from the River Lark (Davidson 1962, 49–50). A similar diversity in use is also evident in Scandinavia; what is interesting is the consistent use of the boar on personal effects, often in very similar ways in the two regions. It is likely that the multiple uses of the boar, as suggested by varied contexts, probably revolved around its flexible

association with protection, aggression, fertility and identity (Glosecki 2000, 14).

How readily could this use of animals be incorporated into visual display? A large proportion of zoomorphic art was applied to relatively small objects, such as buckles, bracelets, brooches and so on. It is arguable that their polished, shining metallic surfaces would have appeared very distinctly on the body, but would the level of detail have been visible without close scrutiny? Even shield fittings in the form of raptors do not appear to have been made to take advantage of the full widths of shields, which would have presented the best opportunities for visual display on the battlefield. Shield decoration appears at five levels of ostentation, from the most luxurious metal fittings found in mound 1 at Sutton Hoo to a complete absence of any fittings. The addition of relatively small decorative fittings would have allowed the shields of high ranking warriors to be personalised, visibility and clear identification of these fittings would have been limited, their militaristic use secondary, suggesting the symbolic use of animals functioned on personal as well as communal levels. This may have also been the case for the role of animals in the mortuary theatre, simultaneously serving living audiences and dead individuals.

Animals in the mortuary theatre

In early Anglo-Saxon England, animal inhumations are comparatively limited both in number and diversity although the cremated remains of as many as seven animals were placed together in urns at Spong Hill (Lucy 2000, 90–94, 112–3). Some, such as the horse interred under mound 17 at Sutton Hoo or the whole animals placed on pyres for cremation, were active players in the mortuary theatre, most probably killed for this particular purpose.

The limited economic exploitation of wild animals is paralleled in their representation in the mortuary theatre; they feature in a few cremations in the largest cemeteries and are represented by a small group of artefacts interred with a diverse range of people. At least one fox was recorded in cremations at both Sancton and Spong Hill, with a further probable four at the latter represented by mandibles, three of which were associated with females. These were almost certainly the remains of fox pelts with the crania left intact, whereas the Sancton animal appears to have been a whole carcass. Bear claws have been found in cremation burials from Elsham, Sancton and Spong Hill — presumably bear-skins included on the pyre. A bear metacarpus was also recovered from West Stow. They are evidence of personal possessions, almost certainly imported, and point to a comparable use of wild animal products to that found on the Continent from the Iron Age and in parts of Scandinavia, where they have been linked with specific cultic activity. In early Anglo-Saxon England, in a society where the ritualistic use of animal disguise was almost certainly practiced, pelts — alongside joints of meat and whole animals — would have played a key role in the construction of mortuary identity.

The uses of animals in early Anglo-Saxon funerary rites point to multiple roles which, in turn, can arguably be linked back to the same semiotic system employing a consistent symbolic repertoire. A bear pelt and a horse may have been incorporated into the same funerary performance for very different reasons, but both would have contributed to the construction of an individual's mortuary identity, worldly and otherworldly. But the Anglo-Saxons did not develop the elaborate burial rites nor the cosmological expressions that we see in Scandinavia. The most obvious explanation for this is that they did not get the opportunity — by the 8th century that had chosen a new religious paradigm, and with it, new foci for elite investment.

The impact of Christianity

With the widespread acceptance of Christianity, the use of animals in social and religious organisation continues, but changes in a fundamental way. Animals — as active players — vanish from the mortuary theatre although they continued to be buried in ritualistic contexts such as foundation deposits. To date, a total of four late Anglo-Saxon examples of animals interred with people in three execution cemeteries can all be interpreted as the outcome of a judicial process, most probably convictions for bestiality; at Stockbridge both man and dog buried together in grave 19 had been decapitated, suggesting that both had been perceived as mutual perpetrators (Reynolds 1998, 164–5).

But whilst the adoption of Christianity resulted in the abandonment of animal funerals, animal ornamentation remained popular, some of which was incorporated into Christian religious art, accompanied by a shift from a zoocentric to an anthropocentric iconography, and, I would argue, world-view. The range of animal iconography on Anglo-Saxon coinage from the so-called 'secondary phase' (c.710–50), breaching political and geographical boundaries, included birds on or with crosses, peacocks, hens, lions, wolves, largely inherited from Roman rather than 'Germanic' culture. By the 11th century, the new symbolic menagerie rooted in Biblical tradition was firmly in place, and the visual language of 'Germanic' animal forms was reaching its final 'native' phase in both Britain and Scandinavia in the 'Urnes' style. Nonetheless, pagan animism influenced the development of Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Meetings between pagan and Christian semiotics in material culture during the course of the 7th century are evident in other parts of the 'Germanic' world, such as Burgundy (Schutz 2001, 237). In England, perhaps the last spectacular meetings between these worlds occurred during the 9th and 10th centuries, when incoming Scandinavians would introduce, albeit briefly, animal funerals and new monumental expressions of their beliefs where the major cosmic player was the pagan wolf, rather than the Christian lion or dragon.



11th-century Urnes style Viking brooch found near Kiaby, Sweden. The animal does not represent any particular species but may show Christian influence as a symbol of the struggle between good and evil. Photo: British Museum

Conclusion: the ecology of religious conversion

When comparing Anglo-Saxon paganism with other pre-Christian cultic practices in northern Europe, particularly ones which continued to function into the second millennium, there is a sense that the acceptance of Christianity in England briefly stimulated the use the pagan symbolic repertoire in new and imaginative ways, and at the same time terminated its further development. Comparisons with other religious paradigms in northern Europe are both inevitable and problematic, but the deployment of symbols in early Anglo-Saxon England expressed an ideology shared with groups across the North Sea region. Our understanding of the cosmological role of animals in pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon society must be based on iconography and the ritualistic treatment of animal remains from the 5th to 7th centuries, with much of the surviving evidence represented by the trappings and mortuary compositions of the élite class. It is important to acknowledge the complex and dynamic contexts of this corpus of material culture, and uses of applied zoomorphic ornament into the 11th century cannot be accounted for under a single explanation. Originally, the semiotic system expressed through animal forms as it developed in the 6th and 7th centuries would have presented an opportunity for political organisation. This, in turn, was associated with a supra-regional ideology that emphasised the grave and battlefield as its fundamental inter-related theatres, and which negotiated the mutable relationship between the categories of human and animal.

But although we should expect diversity in practice and belief within early Anglo-Saxon England, as across southern Scandinavia, the corpus of material culture points to the existence of a relatively cohesive semiotic

system, with a consistently skewed relationship between ecological experience and imagination. The concepts expressed through these symbols were at first firmly rooted in a pagan world-view, but from the late 7th century onwards they became increasingly repositioned within a Christian framework. Veneration of Woden was dying out in England in the 8th century, and by the 10th century, his role in superstition had waned (North 1997, 80–3). Zoomorphic ornamentation continued to be used into the 11th century, now more widely applied to religious artefacts than martial equipment, whilst poets employed the battlefield animals to mourn rather than glorify the deeds of warriors. Scandinavian colonisation in England in the 9th and 10th centuries did provoke a popular revival of pagan semiotics, but although Scandinavian animal ornament was adopted, the cremation and interment of animals at cemeteries, as well as the use of predatory imagery on monumental sculpture in the northern counties and the Isle of Man, was localised and short-lived. The incomers quickly adopted Christianity, and when England fell under the political hegemony of Denmark in 1017, both were Christian kingdoms. The use of animals in both regions in ritual, magic and art continued, perhaps with little change in form, but there is no evidence for a devotional link to pagan deities, and the way in which animals were used to organise and explain this world and the next, had been completely transformed. Despite the occasional account of shape changing recorded in high medieval British literature, the boundary

between humans and animals, that in earlier Anglo-Saxon society may have been visibly collapsed in the mortuary theatre, in personal display and on the battlefield, was firmly established.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Lindsay Lee and the Sutton Hoo Society for inviting me to present this paper at their conference in October 2006.

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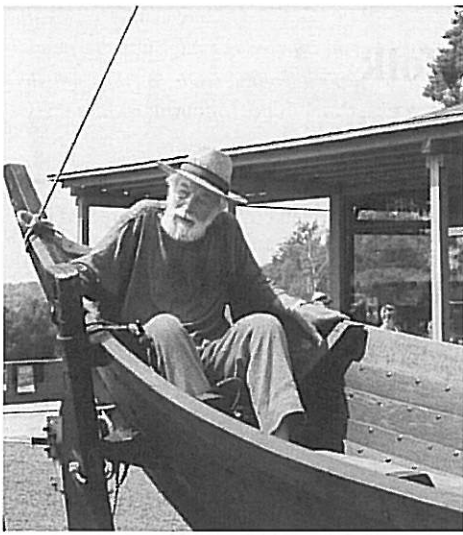
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Historic Boats at Anglo-Saxon Festival



Our third Anglo-Saxon Festival, held 1–2 July 2006, and organised by the Society and the National Trust, was in many respects even more of a success than the last two. Over 1600 people attended, and were entertained by re-enactments of early medieval battles and archery. King Rædwald was there in his regalia and entire families in Anglo-Saxon dress inhabited a lively and authentic looking village.

The great feature of this festival was the display of two historic boats. Edwin and Joyce Gifford once more brought their famous half-size replica of the Sutton Hoo ship, *Sæ Wylfing* — a dramatic sight, fully rigged, in the centre of the courtyard (where one day it is hoped that a full-size ship will be placed). Close to *Sæ Wylfing* was the 8th-century dugout boat which was found in the sea at Covehithe. Although more humble in appearance, this craft was all the more striking for being authentic and almost complete. This combination of the two vessels was moving and impressive, a triumph for the Society and the National Trust.

Stallholders offered a wide range of country crafts, including basket-making and weaving, wood-turning, coin and replica making. Damian Woodburn (of Time Team and an old friend of ours) demonstrated early shipbuilding skills, and went on later to undertake the first detailed



professional survey of the Covehithe log boat on behalf of the Society (available in future edition of *Saxon*).

Entertainment of exceptionally high quality was provided both days by the Ravenscroft Consort with their ancient woodwind, string and percussion instruments. The falconry team from Hollesley Bay put on an exciting display, and in the Main Ring, Norman Haddock was a lively and entertaining ringmaster.

In 'Meet the Experts' sessions in the Sutton Hoo exhibition centre, Dr Angela Care Evans spoke about mound 17 containing the Young Warrior and his horse; Dr Noel Adams spoke about the treasure from mound 1 in context with other artefacts from Europe and the Mediterranean; and Angus Wainwright described the mound 1 ship grave and deposit. These sessions were popular and well attended.

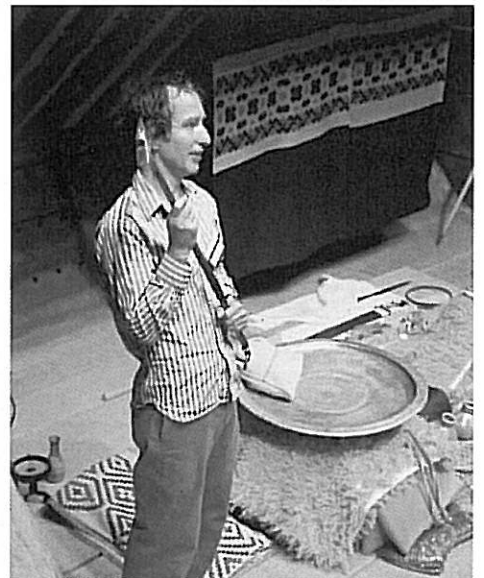


Children's activities were very much enjoyed — they were busy all weekend making replicas of shields and helmets, delving into buckets of sand to discover 'treasure' which had been brought along by the Suffolk Archaeological Service Portable Antiquities team, or listening to stories from our resident story-teller. Adults and children enjoyed generous helpings of roast pork from the Hog Roast, and in the thirsty heat the beer tent offered a welcome relief. Trusty the Hedgehog, the National Trust mascot, provided great delight as he wandered the site with his escort — though the anonymous player of this role deserved our sympathy, enclosed as he was in the warmth of his prickly costume.

The atmosphere was friendly, at times even exciting, and people were pleased to have come, saying how much they had enjoyed the experience. An enormous amount of work (and an appreciable financial investment) went into the preparation — and herein lies the problem. Although a very healthy number of people attended, it was clear that it was not significantly more than on the best weekends of the high season — at least, not as many more as would justify the investment. While we, the Sutton Hoo



Society, can happily support the Festival as fulfilling our primary objective of promoting the place and extending public knowledge about it, the National Trust's financial requirements are harder to meet. As a result, it is unlikely that the Festival will be repeated for the time being. Nevertheless, the Society's Committee is actively considering similar activities on a smaller scale, independently organised, perhaps with limited and specific themes.



(top left) Edwin Gifford in his ship *Sæ Wylfing*
 (top right) the Ravenscroft Consort
 Meet the Experts: (centre left) Angela Evans
 (centre right) Noël Adams
 (bottom right) Angus Wainwright
 (far left) Covehithe dugout, photo: Mike Argent
 (left) Anglo-Saxon warriors re-enact a battle
 (facing page) *Sæ Wylfing*
 all photos V. Bennett unless otherwise credited

A tour of Anglo-Saxon East Suffolk

Society Outing 2006, by Robert Allen



The early publicity for the 2006 Sutton Hoo Society outing for members and guides advertised it as a mystery tour. For people like us, with rich knowledge and experience, there was perhaps not much mystery in touring some of the well-known Anglo-Saxon sites along the Sandlings north and east of Sutton Hoo. Nevertheless, there was an element of discovery and revelation for almost everybody, as about 45 of us set out from the Sutton Hoo car park on 24 September in a cavalcade of cars, led by Dr Sam Newton (astride the original *Weg Wulfing*).

Our first stop was Rendlesham where Bede tells us Rædwald had his mead-hall. We gathered at the church of St Gregory. This dedication is in itself an indication that the first

church was established here in the 7th century. It is reasonable to surmise that this was the site of Rædwald's temple with two altars, the Christian one erected after his visit to Canterbury, from which he returned to incur the scorn of his pagan wife and her supporters at the idea that he might have been contaminated by Christianity. Hence, the Christian altar alongside the pagan one — hedging his bets, one might say. This is a place which has provoked much surmise, and this was easy to understand as we stood outside the church and looked down towards the river. Some of us remembered the legend of the finding of a silver crown nearby during the 17th century.

We moved on to Iken, where we stopped at the picnic site overlooking the Alde, where an

impressive wooden cross has been erected in imitation of the monumental cross found at St Botolph's church 30 years ago. It was easy from this viewpoint to see the promontory where the church stands, and to understand that this was the place where in the year of King Anna's death (653), as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records, Botolph began to build his monastery at Icanho.

We next visited the church where Sam showed us the extraordinary stone shaft of the monumental cross discovered by Stanley West in the course of his excavation in the church, made possible by the repairs necessary after the roof was destroyed by fire. It lies on its side beside the font — a humble position, one might say for one of the most extraordinary pieces of early medieval sculpture in East Anglia. We enjoyed the stunning views across the river, and met the incongruous yet dramatic highland cattle in the pasture by the church.



The party then adjourned to Snape Village Hall, where a buffet lunch awaited them. This was followed by a short illustrated talk from Dr Newton, supporting the expedition with further information about the sites visited, particularly the Snape ship and other burials, which were our next destination.

By kind permission of the landowner, Mr Michael Clarkson (who had only very recently acquired the house and its grounds), we then visited Friston Lodge. It had been a matter of some surprise to Mr Clarkson to receive our request: he had bought the house without knowing any of the historical background, and was blissfully unaware of the existence of an Anglo-Saxon high status cemetery in his garden. He very happily joined the group to hear Dr Newton describe the various excavations that had taken place on both sides





*(facing page top left) View of the River Alde from Iken
(centre) Sam Newton beside replica of Iken Cross. Photo: Terry Maiden
(bottom) Society members held in thrall by Sam Newton*

of the Aldeburgh Road since 1827. We were particularly interested in the discovery in 1863 by Septimus Davidson of a large clinker-built ship at least 14 metres in length and with a beam of 3 metres. Subsequent excavation by Nicolas Hele in 1870 had discovered, among other things, a glass claw-beaker and, above all, a magnificent onyx and gold ring. We visited the site of the ship burial, and, on the other side of the road, the graves discovered in 1986-8 by William Filmer-Sanke.

Our final port of call was Aldeburgh Moot Hall Museum, where we were able to see some of the artefacts discovered at Snape (or replicas of them), including the Snape ring.

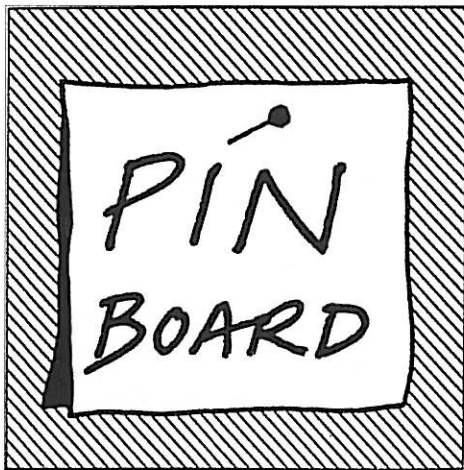
Participants generally seemed to agree that it had been a successful and enjoyable day, and we are all grateful to Sam Newton for his preparation and presentation, which were of his usual high and entertaining quality. We are considering a similar event on 20 October 2007. Although we are at a very early stage of planning, Dr Tom Williamson, of the University of East Anglia, has provisionally agreed to lead a tour of sites revealing the Anglo-Saxon landscape of East Suffolk. He is at present directing a research project on the early history of the landscape around Sutton Hoo, sponsored by the Sutton Hoo Society.

*(this page above) Iken Church
(below) Rendlesham Church*

all photos by Mike Argent unless otherwise credited



SOCIETY EVENTS 2007



Spring Lecture Wednesday 21 March at 7.30pm Tranmer House, Sutton Hoo

This year's speaker will be Robert Simper who will present *The River Deben as the Anglo-Saxons knew it*.
Entry charges (on the door) —
Society members free, non-members £4.00
Car parking in Visitor Centre car park.

Society Outing Saturday 20 October

Anglo-Saxon Landscapes led by Dr Tom Williamson. More details in next *SAXON*.

EXTERNAL EVENT 11–13 April 2007

The Landscape of Anglo-Saxon England, a conference with an impressive line-up of twenty-nine speakers at Hulme Hall, Oxford Place, Victoria Park, Manchester.
For more details contact:
Dr Martin Ryan
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DIARY

Sutton Hoo Society AGM
Friday 16 February 2007 at 7.30pm
Tranmer House, Sutton Hoo

Agenda

- Apologies
- Minutes of the last AGM
- Reports and Accounts
- Election of Auditors
- Election of Committee

The business meeting will be followed with a talk given by John Newman on the excavations carried out at the waterfront sites in Ipswich.

Sutton Hoo Summer Exhibition

Anglo-Saxon Craftsmanship featuring the mound 1 purse-lid. For more information and opening date contact the National Trust at Sutton Hoo.

Sutton Hoo Opening Times

For all information, bookings and visits please contact the National Trust at Sutton Hoo.
Tel: 01394 389700
email: suttonhoo@nationaltrust.org.uk

Sutton Hoo

A seventh-century princely burial ground and its context



Martin Carver

Member of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London No. 54

SUTTON HOO REPORT

A Seventh-Century Princely Burial Ground and its Context, by Martin Carver

The definitive report of the excavations carried out since 1983 at Sutton Hoo, available from the British Museum Press.
ISBN 0-7141-2322-6, price £95.00

Birthday Celebration at Sutton Hoo

On Saturday 8 July 2006 a celebration with a difference took place at Sutton Hoo, when 100 guests attended Martin Carver's 65th birthday party. It proved to be not only a reunion for Martin, but also for many other people who hadn't seen each other for years, some not since the excavations of the 1980s. Friends, family and colleagues came from all corners of the country, some setting up camp in the North Field (now called Garden field), whilst Martin and Madeleine enjoyed more comfortable accommodation in one of the Tranmer House holiday flats.

It was great to reminisce and catch up with the news late into the night around the campfire, and welcome a new generation of children born after 1993 to Sutton Hoo.



Martin Carver gives a site tour for guests at his birthday party, July 2006. Photo: Cliff Hoppitt

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Who's Who — Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

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