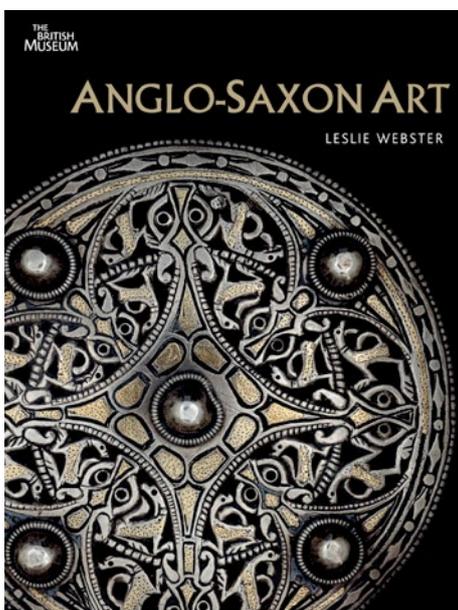




Leslie Webster on Mound 1 during the '60s reunion in March (see centre pages)



*Anglo-Saxon Art* by Leslie Webster,  
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## *I, II, buckle my shoe*

There has been no general survey of Anglo-Saxon art for more than a generation, but now LESLIE WEBSTER has related its fantastic shapes and precious metals to its wider cultural context of ideas and influences. A British Museum excavator on the Mound 1 dig in the mid 1960s, Leslie became its Keeper of the Department of Prehistory and Europe and is now an honorary professor at the Institute of Archaeology in London. This month's issue of *Current Archaeology* devotes an eight-page spread to her new book, but here she writes for us about the post-Roman origins of early Saxon art, tracing the emergence of the sometimes baffling Animal Style I and Animal Style II amid the buckles and brooches of the archaeological record.

## Animals, gods and men: the beginnings of Anglo-Saxon art

One of the great characteristics of Anglo-Saxon art is its enduring openness to external influences, and its remarkable ability to assimilate and adapt to them, making something new and distinctively its own in the course of this process. The journey of Anglo-Saxon art, from its 5th century roots in the metalwork and woodcarving of southern Scandinavia and north-western Germany to the sumptuous Christian manuscripts and imposing stone sculpture of the 8th to 11th centuries, is a complex, long and fascinating one; along the route, many kinds of influences - from Roman and late Antique art, from Byzantium, from Ireland and Pictland, from Merovingian Gaul and Carolingian Frankia, and from Viking Scandinavia - were absorbed and translated into the existing decorative traditions of the Anglo-Saxons, with wonderfully inventive (and sometimes surprising) results. The magnificent garnet-inlaid jewellery seen at Sutton Hoo, the superb variety of weapon fittings from the Staffordshire Hoard, the majestic Ruthwell cross and the Lindisfarne Gospels are all classic products of this ability to assimilate new ideas and images into the Anglo-Saxon artistic vocabulary, as is the equally magnificent art of the later Anglo-Saxon period, in the 9th to 11th centuries. But to understand the origins and the dynamics of this adaptability and inventiveness, we need to go back to the earliest settlers, and their connexions with the art of northern Europe, especially southern Scandinavia.

These first settlers arrived off the boat already familiar with two traditions which were to reverberate in their art for centuries to come - the influence of Rome and animal ornament. They were well acquainted with Roman provincial art, through Roman military metalwork, which some had perhaps even acquired through service in the late Roman army, and through access to gold coinage and imperial medals which the Romans had paid out to the barbarians in order to keep the peace on their unruly and porous northern frontier. Among the Saxons, who came from Lower Saxony in north-west Germany, a variety of 5th century brooch types show the adaptation to their own jewellery of late Roman techniques such as chip-carving and repoussé, and of motifs used in late Roman metalwork, such as geometric and scroll ornament, and the god Oceanus and his accompanying dolphins. Saxon female jewellery such as saucer and equal-armed brooches established the chip-carved technique and its ornamental vocabulary in the repertoire of the early settlers. A little further north, in southern Scandinavia, a new decorative style, named after the famous sacrificial weapon deposit at Nydam in southern Jutland, was emerging; here, those same elements from late Roman metalwork were abstracted and transformed into a distinctive ornament of animals and deities whose Roman origins soon became blurred (fig. 1). A little later, in the mid-5th century, the amuletic gold



Fig. 1 Silver-gilt sword scabbard mount with animals and human figures in the Nydam style, early 5th century, Nydam, Denmark (after Jørgensen, Storgaard and Thomsen).



Fig. 2 Gold bracteate with magical inscription and images adapted from Roman Urbs Roma coin of the Trier mint, 5th century, Undley, Suffolk (Figs. 2-7 and 9 © Trustees of the British Museum).



Fig. 4 Silver-gilt and garnet-inlaid buckle set with Style 1 animal decoration, from a male burial, early 6th century, Howletts, Kent.



Fig. 3 Silver-gilt square-headed brooch with Style 1 animal decoration, from a female burial, early 6th century, from Chessel Down, Isle of Wight.

disc-pendants known as bracteates began to be produced in the same areas of the Anglo-Saxon homelands; these reworked the images of authority seen on Roman gold coins and medals into new images carrying a different power – that of gods. The Roman emperor on his horse, for instance, was combined with that of the bust of the emperor and transformed into the head of Woden on his horse, Sleipnir, sometimes accompanied by a bird of prey representing his ravens Huginn and Muninn (fig. 2). Towards the end of the 5th century, these two strands - the Nydam style and bracteate motifs - came together to form the animal style that we now call Style 1; it was via the bracteates and Danish square-headed brooches of new settlers in Kent that the style first became naturalised in Anglo-Saxon England.

The tangled beauty of the zoomorphic jungle that is typical of this ornament can seem perplexing and strange to us; but in fact it encodes ideas about the Germanic world-view that also embodied important messages about identity and status. In a society where literacy was confined to a few short magical or ownership texts carved or stamped in runes, images were a vital part of transmitting understanding and memory of the mythic past, supporting a vigorous oral tradition, for which there is plenty of evidence. The early 6th century brooch (fig. 3), from a female burial at Chessel Down on the Kentish-controlled Isle of Wight, is a fine example of the Anglo-Saxon version of

Style 1 animal ornament; on its head-plate are two separate fields, each containing animal-men hybrids with profiled human heads attached to stylized animal bodies. Other animals, human masks and bird-heads frame and guard the outer edges of the brooch; and at the centre of the foot-plate, is a bearded face with a helmet-like cap or hair, surmounted by the heads of two birds of prey with curving beaks. Is this perhaps an image of Woden with his ravens? If so, the other creatures on the brooch may also belong to the cosmos of Germanic myth. At one level, this brooch signified wealth and power through the precious metal and craftsmanship invested in it. At another, its form and decoration would have signified particular status and identity, both social and religious; such grand brooches would have been worn on special occasions, including feasts and religious ceremonies, and the mythic world of their detailed decoration was obviously intended to be understood by wearer and viewer alike. Finally, it would have assured protection and good fortune for the wearer through powerful images of gods, and of the dangerous natural world in which man and wild creatures were at the same time enemies, yet interdependent.

The same would have been true of the equivalent male gear; fine belt-sets (fig. 4) and decorative sword and shield mounts carried the same animal ornament, with a similar set of messages. Its appearance on grand feasting vessels, drinking cups and great horns, confirms its importance

(fig. 5). In the lord's hall, bonds and alliances were sealed by drinking together from such vessels; on the Taplow horn mounts, the protective images of gods and hybrid creatures around the rim and on the terminals might proclaim a lord's connection to mythic power, and in the shared act of drinking, signal the protection a lord gives to his warrior retinue, in return for their loyalty.

Throughout the 6th century, regional variations of Style 1 developed, and it became progressively stylized – an animal may be reduced to just a head and a leg, or even just one body part. At its most extreme it can appear as an eye-teasing 'animal salad' of disconnected bits; but even in these wilder manifestations, these images held meaning to be understood, as well as to be seen. And this endured: even after the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity and the need for literacy which came with the practice of the new religion, the importance of images as a means of signalling important ideas continued to dominate Anglo-Saxon culture.

This was certainly true of the decorative style which succeeded the dismembered creatures of Style 1, and which was to dominate the art of the rising political powers of the 7th century, and indeed, the earliest metalwork, manuscripts and sculpture of the Anglo-Saxon church. The animal ornament of Style 2, which began to appear in England in the later 6th century (fig. 6), also seems to have originated in southern Scandinavia,



*Fig. 5 Detail of rim mount from one of the drinking horns, showing Style 1 masks, and hybrid creatures, early 6th century, from the princely grave at Taplow, Bucks.*



*Fig. 6 Gold and garnet-inlaid buckle with Style 2 animal ornament in filigree wire, late 6th century, Taplow, Bucks.*



*Fig. 7 Gold-sheeted clasps with interlacing Style 2 animals in filigree wire, early 7th century, from the princely grave at Taplow, Bucks.*

so that it is no surprise to see some of its most elaborate versions in the regalia at Sutton Hoo, with its Swedish connexions. The new animals are often elegant interlacing snakes (fig. 7) or quadrupeds, again with entwining limbs and jaws (fig. 8); the overall designs are usually rhythmical and symmetrical. Two main strands can be recognised in England, identified respectively as Kentish and Anglian; the former consists mainly of interlacing snake designs, frequently executed in fine gold filigree wire, while, seen in a variety of techniques, the latter strand encompasses the zoomorphic decoration of the earliest Northumbrian gospel-books, and the garnet inlaid animals seen at Sutton Hoo, and in the Staffordshire Hoard. However, this rather simple distinction may need revising, once we understand better the implications of the varieties of ornament that can be identified within the Hoard.

Like its predecessor, Style 2 also carries messages about status, power, and myth, appearing not only on buckles, drinking vessels and brooches as before, but on amulets and battle gear in visibly apotropaic contexts (fig. 9). But as the finds from Sutton Hoo and Staffordshire show, this new style is also closely associated with great cultural and political changes in the 7th century. It was the decoration of choice for the jewellery and battle gear of the new élites who were competing for power in the 7th century, but - as the processional cross from the Hoard indicates (fig. 10) - they were also ready to make use of this same ornament on Christian objects taken into battle, as part of their armoury of protection.

The adoption of Anglo-Saxon animal art, despite its ancient associations with the myths and beliefs of north Germanic tradition, into the service of Christianity, marks a bold new path which was to lead on to the great manuscripts and sculpture of later centuries; though many other influences

played their part in shaping the later course of Anglo-Saxon art, animal art remained a core element in this, continuing to adapt and develop in an unbroken tradition, right up to the Conquest. Its appearance and its message

may have changed over time, but the lively invention and vigour that it showed from its first appearances testify to the power of this tradition, and its remarkable ability to engage the viewer.



*Fig. 8 Silver-gilt helmet cheek-piece with Style 2 animals in procession, first half of 7th century, from the Staffordshire Hoard. © Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery*



*Fig. 9 Gold and garnet pendant with Style 2 bird of prey triskele symbol, first quarter of 7th century, Faversham, Kent.*



*Fig. 10 Gold cross with intertwining Style 2 animals; mid-late 7th century AD, from the Staffordshire Hoard. © Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery*

# The contents of a purse

New ideas about post-Roman Britain and recent assessments of the amount of gold and coinage in circulation have changed how we should view the contents of the Sutton Hoo purse. This was the message from DR GARETH WILLIAMS, Curator of Medieval Coins at the British Museum, when he presented the Society's annual Basil Brown Memorial Lecture at the Riverside Theatre in Woodbridge on Saturday 12 May. His title was *Coins, Hoards and Precious Metals in the Age of Sutton Hoo*. Your editor took notes.

Dr Williams put the spotlight on the contents of the Sutton Hoo purse and what it means in the light of the last thirty years of excavation and, indeed, metal detecting. Society members are familiar with the numbers: two tiny gold ingots, three coin-shaped blanks, thirty-one Frankish 'mint and moneyer' tremisses (or shillings, if you like) from different mints, as well as four pseudo-imperial tremisses from southwest France, one regal Frankish one, and an ecclesiastical one from the church of St Etienne in Bordeaux.

The received wisdom is that the variety of mints must be significant, but Dr Williams said it was no more than you would expect: the chances of more than one in a random collection coming from the same mint would be remote, like two people in the same room sharing the same birthday. Philip Grierson's picturesque idea in 1970 that there was a coin or a blank for each of the rowers on the ship, and two ingots for two steersmen, is confounded by our not knowing how many were in the crew and by the single steering oar. Nor can the collection be deemed special on the grounds that there were so few coins in circulation: recent finds have changed that picture. "We don't need elaborate theories of numbers of rowers in a ship – it's just something a wealthy man would have in his purse to show he's a wealthy man." Nor is the dating of Merovingian coins now seen as

precise, which undermines the certainty with which they point to Raedwald: the coins cannot be earlier than 595 and may range from c.610 to c.630.

Referring to the hoards of Stanchester in Wiltshire (after 406) and Patching in West Sussex (after 470), Dr Williams showed how the supply of Roman coins to pay the troops dried up, though their usage continued alongside newly minted coins. By the early middle 7th century, perhaps as a change in Byzantine policy as the empire faced up to Islam, fewer of their coins were reaching the west, where the quality of gold in the coinage was increasingly adulterated, which is helpful for dating them.

Hoards occur in Roman and Viking contexts, but not in 7th century ones: the Crondall hoard from Hampshire (c. 640) is unique. Modern analysis shows that proportionally fewer coins come from graves, and that fewer were reused in jewellery than previously thought, leaving more in circulation. Some of the Merovingian gold coins found in England have been 'adjusted', or in other words cut, to change their weight, which may be evidence that there was an emerging bullion economy, with standard weights for gold content. English tremisses are rare, and only a few examples have been found of coins minted at this time in East Anglia, including two from Coddanham and one from Eyke.



*Dr Gareth Williams*

Analysing the Staffordshire hoard for us – the military trappings and the ecclesiastical items – Dr Williams suggested that it is the visual aspect that is significant: destroy this personal jewellery and you break the link between lord and follower. If you look at the wear on the gold sword pommels, the personal bit of the swords, it is not battle damage, but caused by "years of posing". "Yesterday I was handling some of the recently cleaned finds from the Staffordshire hoard, and where they are coming apart you can see their detailed construction; I stand in awe of those craftsmen."

Unlike Staffordshire, the Sutton Hoo jewellery was found intact, and Mound 1 "still stands out as by far the finest grave assemblage of the period", but given the amount of gold now known to have been in circulation, "the assumption that Sutton Hoo is royal must be questioned - I'm quite happy with it being probably royal, just not certainly royal." And given the reassessment of the coins, not certainly Raedwald, though "Raedwald is right there at the heart of it, still a very plausible candidate."



*The busy book signing in the foyer of the Riverside Theatre.*



*Some of the gold coins in the Sutton Hoo purse. © Trustees of the British Museum (1939, 1003.2) : other photos Nigel Maslin.*

# Rebuilding the Nydam boat



*The replica of the 23 metre-long Nydam Boat under construction (all photos courtesy of the Nydam Society).*

Last November, HRH Prince Joachim of Denmark, Patron of the Society for Nydam Research, hammered home the last two iron rivets in the hull of a full-size replica of the 4th century Nydam boat that is now being 'fitted out', ahead of next year's official launch. What follows is based on notes and photographs sent to us by OLE BRIXEN SØNDERGAARD to keep us abreast of this exciting project.

Remarkably similar to the Sutton Hoo Society, the Nydam Society (to use its popular name) was founded in 1983 to support the archaeological and scientific work on Nydam Mose, or Nydam Bog, where the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen was excavating. The society's patron, Prince Joachim, was still studying agrarian economics when he first visited the site in 1991 and spent the whole day there. His mother, Queen Margrethe, has an archaeology degree, so when Prince Joachim told her about his visit, she made the same trip a few days later, spending from morning to afternoon at the site.

Nydam Bog is in Sundeved in Eastern Jutland, part of a typically rolling Ice Age landscape. A few kilometres north of Sønderborg, sailing through Alssund (Als Sound), Sandbjerg Castle marks the start of a sub-glacial trench that runs northwest for three and a half kilometres, with Nydam Bog at its centre. For about four centuries, up to 400 AD, this was a lake, but it is now a marshy meadow.

There have been a series of discoveries in Nydam Bog since Conrad Engelhardt began looking for Iron Age weapons there in 1859. He first found parts of an oak boat that had been cut into pieces, as well as a large number of weapons. Four years later he found the Nydam Boat (illustrated in **Saxon** 50, p.7) which is housed in Gottorp Castle Museum near Schleswig, now across the border in Germany. He

also found a well-preserved pine boat (Nydam B), but that was immediately lost in the second German-Danish war in 1864.

Peat digging in 1888 led to the discovery of a hundred sword sheaths with silver fittings, comprising the so-called Nydam II find. Then in 1984 the Nydam Society recovered more weapons near the surface, and excavations by the National Museum of Denmark from 1989 produced swords, spears and lances thrust vertically into the bog, constituting Nydam III. More of the same were discovered in the excavations of 1990-1 (Nydam IV): as well as spears and lances, shield parts and belts, there were thirty swords driven into the marsh. The Nydam weaponry is regarded as ritual offerings of the spoils of war, spanning 250-550 AD.

The dig in the early '90s included a successful search for the exact location of the Nydam Boat discovery, and also recovered the side rudder from the pine boat and two carved posts from the oak boat, as well as much more weaponry, this time including bows and arrows and gold fittings from shields and sword sheaths.

The long term aim of the Nydam Society is to help establish a permanent exhibition in southern Jutland devoted to the archaeology of the Nydam Bog. Meanwhile, its Nydam Boat Guild is creating a copy of the boat, using original construction techniques and materials, which will be used to test its capabilities



*A toast with drinking horns, between HRH Prince Joachim of Denmark, patron of the Nydam Society (left), and Nydam Society chairman Vincent Jessen.*



*The ribs being tied in to the strakes using twisted lime bast fibres.*

at sea. Ole Brixen Søndergaard tells us, "The hull has been completed, and work on the inboard parts – ribs, deck, seats, tholes, and oars – is well under way. In the lime bast workshop they are working hard to twist lime bast fibres into ropes of different diameters and lengths. So far they have twisted three hundred pieces, but there is still a long way to go.

"It has been very difficult to find curved grown oak of the right size to make the nineteen ribs that reinforce the hull, but recently we got permission to cut three, two hundred year-old oak trees with suitably curved trunks, but we still need more."

The society has just got permission to build a 'naust', a copy of an Iron Age boathouse excavated in Norway, as a winter home for the new boat on the shores of Alssund. Time to complete the boat is getting short, because the official launch date is fixed for 17 August 2013, one hundred and fifty years to the day since Conrad Engelhardt found the original oak boat in Nydam Bog.

## References

- The Nydam Society website is at [www.nydam.nu](http://www.nydam.nu) (dual language)
- A television news report in Danish, showing the cutting of the trees and the building of the boat, can be found at [www.tv Syd.dk/artikel/147378:Nydambaaden-genskabes](http://www.tv Syd.dk/artikel/147378:Nydambaaden-genskabes)

# Excavators of the '60s and '70s

It is getting on for fifty years since the Mound 1 ship trench was re-excavated by Rupert Bruce-Mitford for the British Museum in 1965-7, followed by the excavation of the barrow and Basil Brown's 1939 spoil tips by Paul Ashbee, and the investigation of Sutton Hoo's prehistoric levels by Ian Longworth. These were all separate digs, and the Society has embarked on a programme of recording interviews with those involved, amateurs as well as professionals. The new archive forms the 'local history' of Sutton Hoo, and is run by our treasurer Jonathan Abson: we will hear more about it in later issues.

As a 'thank you' to those who have contributed to the oral history project so far, Jonathan organised a reunion at Sutton Hoo on Tuesday 20 March. This followed supper the night before at the Sorrel Horse in Shottisham (right), where the barrow excavators had spent many evenings before seeking out their tents at nearby Wood Hall. The ship trench excavators by contrast used hotels and B&Bs in Woodbridge and Melton, and mainly did not know the volunteers from the other digs. In between coffee, lunch and tea, there were visits to the mounds and the exhibition hall, and a great deal of animated recollection.

*Right: Survivors of the 1960s excavations at Sutton Hoo gather at the Sorrel Horse in Shottisham with partners and committee members on Monday evening 19 March, before a day spent reminiscing at Sutton Hoo. Left to right: Joan Houlder, Barbara Rooley, Anne Thorpe, Derek Thorpe, Jonathan Abson (treasurer), Peter Rooley, John Lambert, Jacki Maslin, Nigel Maslin, Cliff Hoppitt, Yvonne Harvey, Rosemary Hoppitt (past chairman), Professor Paul Harvey, Valerie Fenwick, Myrtle Bruce-Mitford (Photo © Eric Houlder LRPS, all other photos Nigel Maslin).*



*Dr Rosemary Hoppitt, past chairman of the Sutton Hoo Society and a veteran of the 1983-92 excavations, welcomed everyone to the special reunion day in the King's River Café at the National Trust Sutton Hoo visitors' centre.*



*Paul Harvey, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at Durham University, with his wife Dr Yvonne Harvey, who, as Yvonne Crossman, was personal assistant to Rupert Bruce-Mitford throughout the three years of the ship re-excavation in the 1960s. This April, her meticulous catalogue of the medieval coins of Winchester was published as Winchester Studies 8, *The Winchester Mint and Coins and Related Finds from the Excavations of 1961-71* (ed. Martin Biddle).*



*Peter Van Geersdaele, the British Museum conservator who directed the making of the plaster cast of the ship, talking to Myrtle Bruce-Mitford, the cellist, who originally reconstructed the lyre from the ship burial.*



*East Anglian Daily Times reporter Steven Russell (left) looking at photographs with Derek and Anne Thorpe, who made the journey from Pontefract for their first visit to the site since 1969. The EADT ran a three-page spread on the reunion the following Saturday.*



*Vivid recollections from Valerie Fenwick, who was assistant director of the British Museum's re-excavation of the Mound 1 ship trench.*



*Andrew Beevers makes a point to Peter Rooley, both volunteers on the late '60s digs.*



*Valerie Fenwick, Dr Yvonne Harvey and Professor Paul Harvey visiting Mound 1.*



*Barbara Rooley with Eric Houlder, who rejoined the Sutton Hoo Society as a result of the reunion, and is Archaeology Editor for the Royal Photographic Society.*



*Rosemary Hoppitt leads the way to the burial mounds.*

# The ritual of horse burial – Sutton Hoo and beyond



*The horse burial from the Anglo-Saxon site at Sedgeford, Norfolk. The young male horse sustained a severe blow to the forehead and was buried centrally within the cemetery and possibly covered by a small mound. See next page for site plan. Photo courtesy of Tim Snelling, SHARP.*

As a postgraduate four years ago, PAMELA CROSS became fascinated by an unusual Anglo-Saxon site in Norfolk that combined horse with human burial. Horse burials are little researched, and they are now a Ph.D. project for Pam, significantly funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council. The Sutton Hoo Society began supporting the project two years ago, along with historical novelist Bernard Cornwell, the Museum of London and National Trust Sutton Hoo. A set of exhibitions are planned to complete the project next year. Here, Pam describes the genesis of her research and progress so far.

In 2008, I became involved in analysing a set of unusual burials in a 7th-9th century Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Sedgeford, Norfolk. The project was part of my Master's degree in Human Osteology and Palaeopathology at the University of Bradford. This degree falls within a broader category called bioarchaeology and can include archaeozoology, which I opted to pursue. The combination of both human and animal burials at Sedgeford, particularly horses, was of keen interest. The site turned out to be even more intriguing than I could have envisioned, suggesting a rich and varied ritual culture in what was originally considered to be a fairly ordinary Christian Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Practices which raised questions about the process of Christianisation in England (particularly in East Anglia), exactly what practices might be within the Anglo-Saxon idea of Christianity, and how changes in horse-related ritual might reflect interaction between Britain and other areas of North West Europe.

## The Project background

The horse is a symbol of prestige, power and warfare in many cultures and its domestication had profound effects on the development of human culture. Some of the oldest indications of human ritual in Britain, from the Mesolithic and Bronze ages, include horse material. In the Iron Age and Romano-British period, horse burials occur widely. During the Anglo-Saxon period, these are joined by a new practice in Britain, the prestigious human-horse burial rite. This mortuary tradition is associated with Anglo-Saxon warrior culture and Germanic origins and is often considered primarily an East Anglian practice. This research will test those beliefs and more closely examine some of the spectacular warrior-horse burials at Lakenheath and Sutton Hoo. Also to be investigated is an unusual Anglo-Saxon woman-horse burial which may link Iceni and Anglo-Saxon cultures. Woman-horse inhumations are especially rare, with other examples primarily in Scandinavia. This

burial appears to be the only example currently known in Britain. A comparison of British horse burial practices with other European examples will help us understand the development and origins



*Lakenheath, Suffolk. Warrior-horse burial, grave 4116, c.6th century. Photo courtesy of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Caruth et al. 2005: 8, fig.7).*

of these burial practices, particularly the relatively late occurring human-horse funerary tradition.

The first millennium AD was one of significant changes in Europe, seeing the dismantlement of the superpower Rome, the rise of new polities and social upheavals which included varying degrees of population movement and cultural change. English culture has been considered the result of post-Roman Germanic invasion. There are clear cultural connections with Europe during this period, but there is also significant evidence that this interaction occurred over a number of millennia, and continued to occur, without incidences of major invasion. Current research suggests that English identity can no longer be clearly attributed to a large population replacement. An understanding of the development of horse burial practices and those involved, particularly horse-human mortuary rites, can provide important evidence about cultural change in Britain during this period.

The research targets horse burials in England, but considers the practice in other areas of Britain, Ireland and Europe. The depositions are analysed regarding their composition, distribution and possible cultural interpretations. In addition, a detailed bioarchaeological analysis of a set of burials from approximately five sites which exhibit a variety of the practices will be completed. The sites include Sedgeford, Great Chesterford and Sutton Hoo. The emphasis here is on horse-human inhumations and recreating their life stories using bioarchaeological and forensics-derived methods. These include analyses of the bone assemblages (human and horse) to provide biographical information such as stature, health, trauma, diet, and activity.

### Types of horse burial

The work at the Sedgeford site resulted in the identification of three broad types of horse burial:

1. Horse elements (usually leg and/or head, but also includes various disarticulated or semi-articulated bone deposits)
2. Complete or nearly complete horse burials
3. Human-horse inhumations

These categories can also apply to horse material within cremations, but this project focuses primarily on inhumation burials.

Generally speaking, the practice of horse element burials appears to be both the oldest and longest practice, with examples from the Stone Age all the way up into the modern period in Britain. This category also includes material which indicates butchery, which coupled with literary evidence probably indicates

consumption, at least in some cases. Complete horse burial is less clear at this stage of the research, but may be primarily an Iron Age phenomenon in Britain. Human-horse burials seem to occur in large, multi-phase, mixed rite (inhumation and cremation) cemeteries, which often contain evidence of funerary structures (rectangular, mounds, chambers, boats) and high status burials. There is also often evidence of other animal ritual and remains of feasting. Dogs, in particular, occur quite often in context with horse burials. The majority of human-horse burials appear closely associated with warrior/male burial and seem to begin in Britain around the 4th-5th centuries, then meld into Viking period associations.

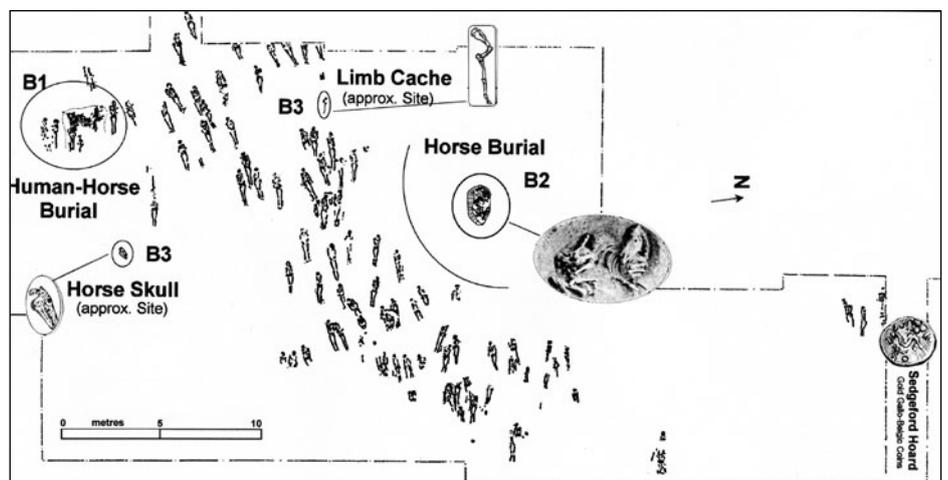
While this type of burial predominantly involves men, women-horse burials do occur. These seem more common with the cremation burials, but are also associated with inhumations. The Oseberg (Norway) ship burial includes two women, twelve horses and a wagon, sleds, saddle and other horse gear. Others occur throughout the Scandinavian and Baltic area, with Iceland appearing to include the highest percentage of women-horse burials. In Britain, I have found evidence for only four burials involving women and horses. One on the Scottish borders at Newstead Roman Fort, where a pit was excavated containing a woman (plus dog and crow skulls) and with nine complete horses buried above her (Roman or Iron Age). Possibly of similar age, but currently unanalysed, a woman-horse burial was recently uncovered in the western borders area. In Ballateare on the Isle of Man, there was a Viking burial interpreted as a warrior with cremated horse and other animals topped by a sacrificed woman (c.10th century). The last



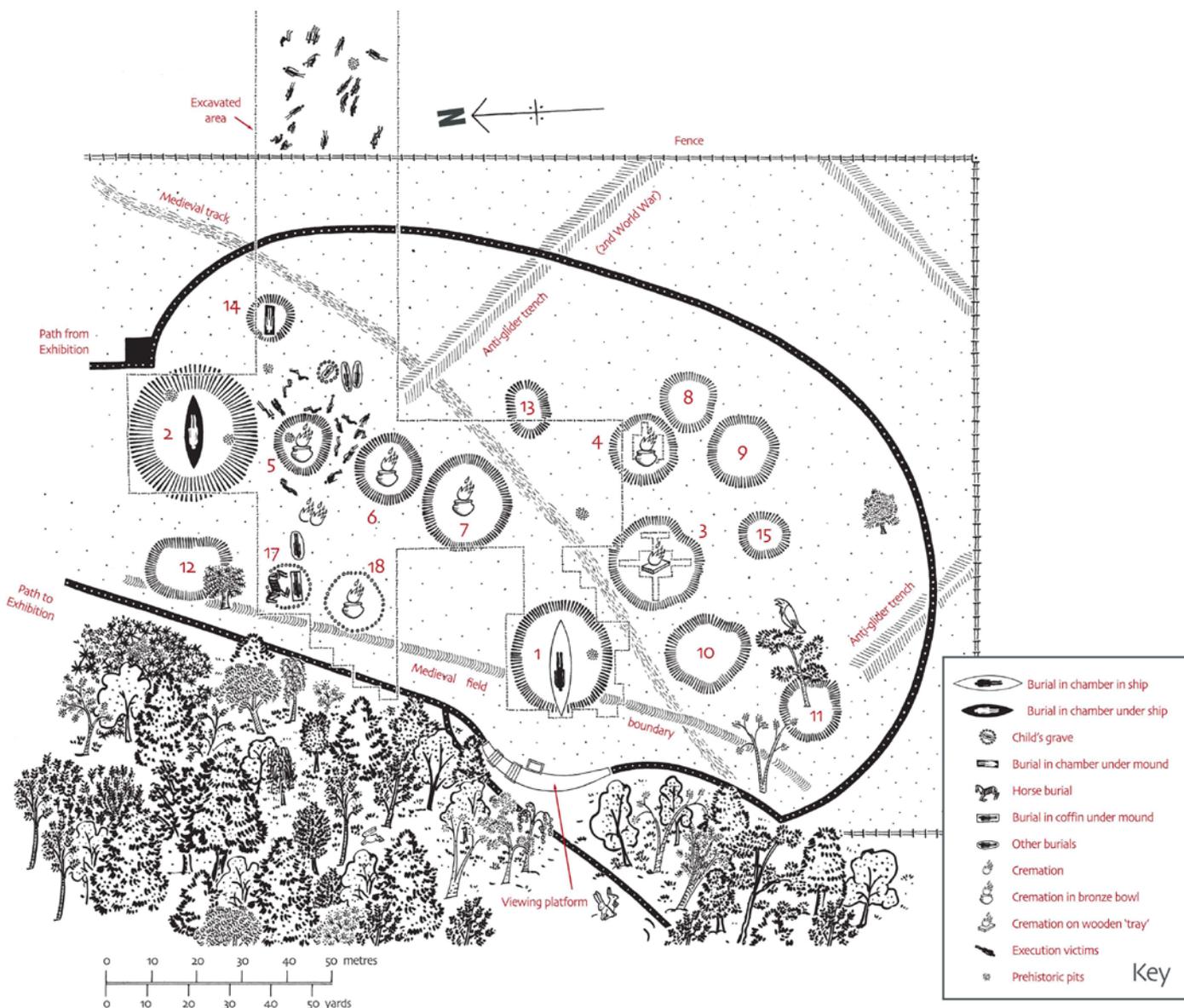
Great Chesterford, Essex. Warrior-Horse burial, grave 142, c.6th century. Photo courtesy of the Council for British Archaeology (Evison 1994: 221).

example is the 7th-9th century woman-horse burial from Sedgeford, which seems to fit into the Anglo-Saxon period human-horse burial rite.

More typical male examples of this rite are the 'prince' and horse mound burial at Sutton Hoo (7th century), the two warrior-horse burials at Great Chesterford and also at Lakenheath-Eriswell (5th-6th century). While there are common traits in these types of burials, there is also a significant degree of individuality. In some



Sedgeford 'Boneyard' site, Norfolk. The cemetery site is assessed as Anglo-Saxon (c.650-850) with some Iron Age features and material, including the Sedgeford Hoard of gold staters (c.60-50 BC) indicated at right. B1 indicates the horse-humans burials located within the area of a rectangular structure. B3 indicates the approximate locations of a horse skull and upright complete forelimb (buried near an urn – possible cremation). B2 indicates the complete horse burial, located beneath a possible mound, which the majority of burials appear to curve around. Site map by author based on SHARP publications.



The Sutton Hoo site. The 'prince' and horse burial is number 17, lower left. Man and horse (male) were buried in adjacent pits but appear to have been covered by a single mound. Plan © David Lucas [www.davidlucas.org.uk](http://www.davidlucas.org.uk)

the horse shares the same pit, in others it is nearby but separate. The horse may be beside the individual, facing towards the human or away, or may be at the head or feet. The Sedgeford woman is, so far, the only one who appears to be placed actually on the horse – her head is 'pillowed' on the horse's hip. The horses involved in these burials appear to be almost exclusively male, usually adult but relatively young.

### Why bury horses?

The behaviour behind these types of burials is complex and much of it appears to have ritual significance. Part of it probably represents feasting residue, part of it sacrificial rites probably associated with fertility and good luck. The human-horse burials certainly seem to have an aspect of status and prestige, but may also have other meanings. Within the Celtic-Northern traditions there are indications that Odin and Frey/Freya,

Epona and Rhiannon may figure in horse ritual practices. And more generally, the horse is often symbolically linked both with the sun and with boats. Some feel that the horse represents a means of journeying into the next world, some that

it is simply a valuable possession. The actual meanings are probably as multi-layered and diverse as the people involved in these practices. The project is still in its early stages and promises a wealth of fascinating information.

### Further reading:

The seminal work on horse burials in Europe is Müller-Wille's *Pferdegrab und Pferdeopfer im frühen Mittelalter* (1971) followed by Oexle's *Merowingerzeitliche Pferdebestattungen – Opfer oder Beigaben?* (1984). In English, my supervisor Julie Bond has written on animals (including horses) within cremations, and Juliet Clutton-Brock and Pam Crabtree have also investigated animals, including horses in English sites. More recently, Chris Fern (particularly interested in horse-related material culture) and Robin Bendrey (looking at pathology in archaeological horses, particularly related

to domestication and bit-use) have been broadening our understanding of the horse in past societies. See also:

CROSS, P. J.

2011 'Horse Burial in First Millennium A.D. Britain: Issues of Deposition', *European Journal of Archaeology* 14(1)

(in press) 'Transforming the Dead: Human-Horse Burial Tableaus in Iron Age and Early Medieval Europe', *Anthropozoologica*  
 p.j.cross@student.bradford.ac.uk  
<http://bradford.academia.edu/PamCross>

# Sam Newton leads Cambridgeshire trip

The ever-popular *Time Team* veteran, Dr Sam Newton, will take time off from his regular series of full-day seminars at Sutton Hoo to lead the Sutton Hoo Society's autumn trip on Saturday 9 September.

It will feature the Devil's Dyke near Newmarket, one of the frontier defences used by the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of East Anglia to fortify its south-western approaches where the Icknield Way left

it vulnerable. The dyke runs for about seven miles, most of it in a straight line, and sometimes rises to sixty feet above the bottom of its deep ditch. Sam last took the Society there in 1994, when the



*The central (left) and most northerly (right) of the remaining burial mounds known as Bartlow Hills. © David Kemp, licensed for reuse under a Creative Commons Licence.*

visit included Fleam Dyke, six miles to the southwest. Old English fleama means 'flight', and Fleam Dyke may have been the line defended by the East Angles against Penda of Mercia in 635, as Sam told us in **Saxon** 21.

This September, we shall also visit St Botolph's Church at Hadstock as well as Bartlow Hills, just as we did eighteen years ago. Once called Cadenho, Hadstock Church is a candidate for the original site of Icanho, the minster that Botolph founded in 654: an alternative possibility is Iken, near Snape. Four of the original eight barrows comprising Bartlow Hills still survive. They are billed as 'the largest burial mounds north of the Alps' and yielded 2nd century cremation burials when they were excavated in the 1820s or -30s.

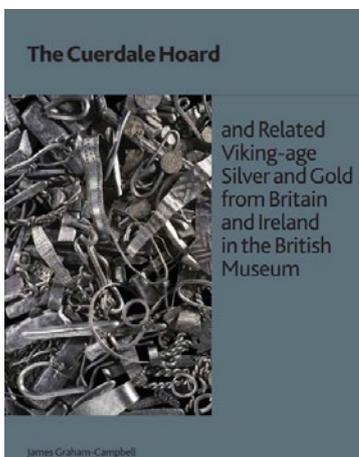
- Full details of this year's excursion are in a flyer mailed out with this issue of **Saxon**.

## The Cuerdale hoard

As Dr Gareth Williams demonstrated in his Basil Brown Memorial Lecture in March, questions about hoards revolve around ritual deposit as against deposit for safekeeping with the intention of recovery, revealing peaks in the phenomenon that are related to political conditions at the time. One such peak was the 970s and 980s during the Viking raids, so when we hear about Saxon hoards, Viking hoards are often compared; therefore no apologies for mentioning this new publication of the Cuerdale hoard.

Discovered in 1840, the hoard comprised more than eleven hundred items with an aggregate weight of 42.6 kg, but this is its first scholarly analysis. Furthermore, this catalogue by James Graham-Campbell includes the whole of the British Museum's collection of Viking gold and silver from Britain and Ireland, except for the coins.

In a separate chapter by Egon Warmers, the Halton Moor cup is compared to the Vale of York cup, though the Vale of York hoard itself, deposited c.928 and discovered in 2007, and acquired jointly by the York Museums Trust and the British Museum, is too recent to be included (see **Saxon** 50, p.14).



**The Cuerdale Hoard**

and Related Viking-age Silver and Gold from Britain and Ireland in the British Museum

James Graham-Campbell

James Graham-Campbell, *The Cuerdale Hoard and Related Viking-Age Silver and Gold from Britain and Ireland in the British Museum* (British Museum Research Publication 185) ISBN: 9780861591855.



*The Halton Moor cup, so similar to the Vale of York cup that both were probably made at the monastery of St Germain des Prés in 820-850. The cups may have been looted in a Viking raid of 861, when the monastery was plundered and burnt. © Trustees of the British Museum*

### **Subs up! (if you agree)**

**Our Treasurer JONATHAN ABSON explains the need for an increase in subscriptions.**

At our AGM last February we discussed the likely shortfall between the Society's regular running expenses, including the printing and postage of *Saxon*, and its subscription income. It appeared that subscriptions would need to rise substantially if members wished to fill the gap, but as a motion had not been tabled it was agreed to defer consideration to another meeting later in the year. Constitutionally, this can in fact only be done at an annual general meeting, so a motion to increase the subscriptions will go before the AGM next February.

The feeling of the Annual General Meeting this year was that it might not be wise to try to cover the whole of the shortfall, but that we should make some attempt to improve the situation. We have since had further increases in the postage rates which only make the situation a little worse. The Committee will therefore be proposing that the subscription rates for ordinary members be raised from £10 to £15. Under our constitution, students pay half the ordinary rate, family members one-and-a-half times the ordinary rate and overseas members twice the ordinary rate, so only one motion will be needed to change all the rates.

# Events Diary

**Saturday 8 September, 09.00-18.00**  
**SHS Autumn Outing: Southwestern approaches to East Anglia**

Led by Dr Sam Newton, this coach trip departs from National Trust Sutton Hoo (NTSH) and stops for coffee at the National Stud before visiting Devils Dyke. After lunch, we visit Hadstock Church, with its Anglo-Saxon door, and finally Bartlow Hills. Cost £20, bring your own picnic.

**Friday 15 February 2013, 19.30**  
**SHS Annual General Meeting**  
 National Trust Sutton Hoo



Wuffing Education events are study days held at National Trust Sutton Hoo (NTSH). They cost £38 and last from 10.00 to 16.30. Prior booking is essential on 01394 386498 or cliff@wuffingeducation.co.uk. For more information and the full list of events, visit [www.wuffingeducation.co.uk](http://www.wuffingeducation.co.uk)

**Saturday 22 September, 10.00-16.30**  
**Sutton Hoo: the Other Barrows and Burials**  
 Dr Sam Newton

**Saturday 29 September, 10.00-16.30**  
**'In an Angle of the World': Anglo-Saxon England and the Mediterranean World**  
 Dr Anna Gannon (Cambridge University)

**Saturday 13 October, 10.00-16.30**  
**The Monastic Landscapes of East Anglia**  
 Dr Rik Hoggett

**Saturday 20 October, 10.00-16.30**  
**Anglo-Saxon Treasure: Sutton Hoo and the Staffordshire Hoard**  
 Dr Morn Capper (British Museum)

**Saturday 1 December, 10.00-16.30**  
**Sutton Hoo and the Frankish Connection**  
 Dr Sam Newton

**Saturday 8 December, 10.00-16.30**  
**Sutton Hoo: Craftsmen in Iron and Bronze**  
 Dr Angela Evans

**Wednesdays, 19 September - 12 December, except 31 October, 10.30-13.00**  
**Sutton Hoo and the Golden Age of Old England**

Dr Sam Newton continues his series of weekly seminars at NTSH, using the Sutton Hoo treasures to explore the beginnings of East Anglia and of England. Cost £15. To enrol, email [samnewton@wuffings.co.uk](mailto:samnewton@wuffings.co.uk) or phone 01728 688749. Further details at [www.wuffings.co.uk](http://www.wuffings.co.uk)

## BM/IoA Medieval Seminar

Sonja Marzinzik, Curator of the Insular Early Medieval Collections including Sutton Hoo, has now left the British Museum where her duties have been taken over by Sue Brunning. These include, with Prof Andrew Reynolds (IoA), convening the Medieval Seminar run jointly by the British Museum and UCL's Institute of Archaeology. SHS members are welcome to attend these lectures which begin at 17.30 at the Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY [www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/calendar/events](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/calendar/events)

**Wednesday 17 October**  
**Weland, Woden and Anglo-Saxon court culture c.600-900**  
 Professor Barbara Yorke

**Tuesday 6 November**  
**Travel and communication in the landscape of early medieval Wessex**  
 Alex Langlands

**Tuesday 27 November**  
**Using domestic objects to access the middle Anglo-Saxon worldview**  
 Alexandra Knox

**Tuesday 22 January**  
**'Sad sepulchral urns': the pottery at Spong Hill**  
 Dr Catherine Hills

## McDONALD INSTITUTE for Archaeological Research

Cambridge University's archaeological research institute holds regular symposia and conferences attracting the leading specialists in the relevant topic. Details can be found on their website [www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events](http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events)



The Centre of East Anglian Studies at the University of East Anglia hold monthly term time lectures in Norwich, many of them of interest to Society members. Keep an eye on their website for details: [www.uea.ac.uk/ceas](http://www.uea.ac.uk/ceas)

## EALDFAEDER Anglo-Saxons

Ealfaeder will be performing at Sutton Hoo on the following weekends:  
 28-29 July 2012 Spear Dance theme  
 4-5 Aug 2012 Justice theme  
 25-27 Aug 2012 Runes theme  
 See [www.ealdfaeder.org](http://www.ealdfaeder.org) for details

## Sutton Hoo Opening Times & Events

Go to our website, [www.suttonhoo.org](http://www.suttonhoo.org) and click on 'Online Resources' for links to the NTSH site.

# The Sutton Hoo Society



[www.suttonhoo.org](http://www.suttonhoo.org)

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