



The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

SAXON

President: the Duke of Grafton KG

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ROBBERS AND ROMANTICS — the earlier diggers at Sutton Hoo *notes from the lecture given at the AGM 1995* by Martin Carver



*Excavation of tumuli on Brightwell Heath near Ipswich by J. Reid-Moir
from the Journal of the Ipswich & District Field Club Vol.6 June 1921 (Photograph: Courtesy of Peter Warner)*

THE MOUND BUILDERS

Mound building is as old as civilisation. People built these large memorials to their dead in recognition of their power, in celebration of their culture and to echo the powers and the cultures of other civilisations dimly recalled or imprecisely reported. Just as one community spent their energies constructing these memorials, so many of their successors spent theirs trying to get in — as robbers or as archaeologists, consumed by curiosity.

The Neolithic people of Europe built long earth barrows; in the Bronze Age, round earth mounds covered individuals in pits or whole cemeteries. The people of Jutland, christened 'the Mound people' by their explorer P V Globb, built mounds out of solid clay which preserved the remains of the dead in their oak coffins. In Mycenae the Greeks

built their shaft-graves and *tholoi*, tunnelled into the hillsides; and in Macedonia, Alexander the Great's father Philip II was buried in bed with sacrificed horses and slaves. The Romans too built giant mounds, and the Emperor Hadrian was buried in a huge drum tomb beside the River Tiber in Rome; so large that it was later refurbished as a medieval castle — the Castel Sant' Angelo.

After the Roman Empire collapsed, a new wave of barrow-building broke over northern Europe, as the Anglo-Saxons rediscovered the barrows of their ancient predecessors and buried their dead in them. They also built their own mounds and used them to cover cremations, horse-burials and coffin-burials. In Scandinavia, mound-building continued into the Viking period where strangest of all were those which covered ships. At Sutton Hoo is a whole cemetery of such burials, thought to have been constructed to mark the beginnings of an English kingdom.

EARLY BRITISH BARROW BASHERS

Barrow *digging* was under way as early as the twelfth century, for the monks of St Alban's set out to explore barrows at nearby Redbourne reporting the discovery of the bones of St Amphibalus. In 1237, Henry II authorised the Earl of Cornwall to dig Cornish barrows and in 1324 Robert Beupel received permission to dig barrows in Devon. In 1521 Lord Curzon got permission to 'dig for wealth' in Norfolk and Suffolk.

It is from the seventeenth century that we have the first recorded excavations in England, those of Sir Thomas Browne in Norfolk, but there must have been an enormous number of casual hackings, trenchings, and levellings on other sites. In the eighteenth century, the most indefatigable barrow diggers were the men of Kent. The Reverend Bryan Fausset (1720–1776) dug 106 barrows in 11 days at Gilton, and 777 in

his lifetime. In Wiltshire, Hoare and Cunnington dug 465, and in Yorkshire John Mortimer's tally was 304. Dean Merewether opened 35 barrows in a month, including the West Kennet Long Barrow and Silbury Hill, the largest man-made mound in Europe. The skills of the archaeological recorder were very slow to penetrate the frantic world of the barrow-digger, but James Douglas (1753–1819), Fausset's successor in Kent, produced the first surviving plan of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery.

By the early nineteenth century, barrow-digging had become something of a national sport. Equipped with picnics and in agreeable company, the digging party would watch the labourers at work, waiting for the first discovery to brighten the long afternoon. Other entertainments were devised to help the gentry celebrate their hobby. 'Barrow Digging by a Barrow Knight' a eulogy for the Derbyshire barrow-digger Thomas Bateman written by his assistant S. Isaacson contains the instructive lines:

*"Hither bring my trusty scratcher,
Mongst barrow tools there's none to
match her
And tread not heavily, because it
May seriously affect deposit,
For Briton's skull so long in ground
Is very seldom perfect found;
And what we scarcely deem a less ill
You may destroy a potter's vessel,
Which formed of potter's clay, though
thick,
Can scarce withstand the blow of pick."*

In reminiscence of the 'exceedingly agreeable opening of the Shaphill Barrow in the parish of Sturminster Marshall' the Rev. Charles Wools wrote his exceedingly strange play 'The Barrow Diggers' — an excruciating imitation of Hamlet:

*"Britons rais'd an earthy mound
Whene're their chieftains died
and I am digging underground
where delvers have not tried."*

ANTIQUARIUS: Has this fellow no feeling of his business, he sings at Barrow opening?

DISCIPULUS: He knows not that he treads on hallow'd mould.

ANTIQUARIUS: Tis e'en so, the hand of Antiquarius only hath the barrow sense."

The 'barrow sense' was not without its own fancies: Mr Miles meditates at The Deverel Barrow (1826): 'On a spot so hallowed by the Wing of Time, the imagination may vividly depict the rude but solemn rites attendant on the burial; the blazing pile flinging its lurid beams around... mystic songs of bards... frantic yells... wild and piercing shrieks of expiring victims'.

The barrow-digging boom in Britain was 1840–1870. Even the accounts of systematic research excavations make the modern

archaeologist shudder: cremations not seen until they had been shovelled out; blocks of cremated bone broken open with a spade; whole pots torn out of context and the mound they came from unrecorded or forgotten;

barrows dug by ambulant parties with spades borrowed from a neighbouring farm ...and these are just the ones we know about. For all that, much has of course also survived from



the base of the Mound 14 chamber grave into a mush in which many small fragments of metalwork were trapped and lost, to be recovered by careful excavation in 1991. The mystery is that such a profligate campaign had stopped short of Mound 1. I have long been puzzled by this. For Basil Brown and Rupert Bruce-Mitford after him, the explanation was simple enough. The west

*Left: Barrow digging in Kent, with the party taking shelter in the trench.
Source: R. Jessup, Curiosities of British Archaeology (1961)*

*Below:
The nineteenth-century excavators' trench through Mound 7. Toby Simpson simulates the labourer's exit in the foreground. In the background are the Antiquary's steps.
(Photograph: Nigel MacBeth)*

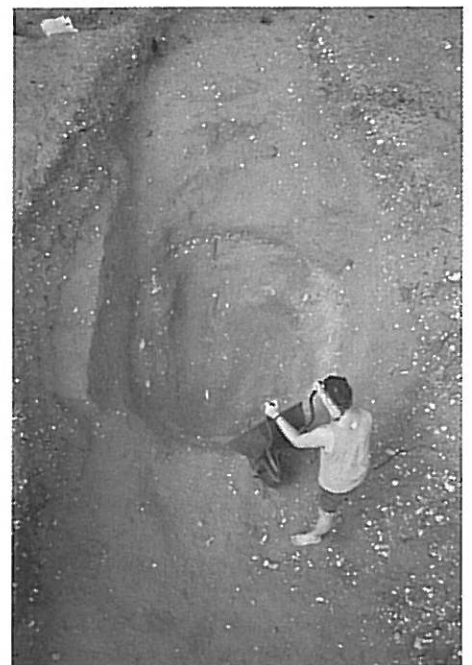
these early expeditions and they remain a quarry for information that is at once fascinating and useful. For the burials of the Anglo-Saxons, the evidence that we have is mainly of this kind and we remain dependant upon it for all our most basic ideas about England.

SUTTON HOO IN THE 1860s

The Sutton Hoo cemetery was not immune from the attentions of inquisitive landowners and their friends. Although in 1938/9 Basil Brown suspected earlier excavations, he was unable to define any of the previous intrusions. The widespread excavations that took place in the nineteenth century have only come to light during the present research campaign, in which mound after mound has been shown to have been dug before.

In Mound 2, Basil Brown's trench, being coincident with that of the nineteenth-century excavators, was largely contained by it. But it was possible in 1987 to distinguish the original shape of both. The nineteenth-century party had come in from the west and had cut steps downwards, at the same time disturbing a great many ship-rivets deriving from a ship laid across the burial pit. The same kind of western approach by the nineteenth-century excavators was noted in Mound 5, 6 and 7.

There seems little doubt that Basil encountered the diggings of the same nineteenth-century team in Mounds 3 and 4. Mound 14 too should have been visited in the same campaign, although here we late-comers had better luck. The barrow-diggers were interrupted by a severe storm which turned



side of the mound had been removed by ploughing, thus deceiving the robbers as to its central point. A robber pit, in which robbers had supposedly picnicked, was found by Basil Brown, at the centre of the extant mound, but not at the centre of the chamber. So the robbers missed, and all was saved.

But the pit found by Brown does not resemble in any way the trenches dug through the other mounds; also it was impossibly narrow for a safe descent, and would have been a suicidal place for a picnic. It resembles a post-pit rather than a robber-pit. In fact I did wonder whether such a pit might have been the foundation for a post-mill, except that its outrigger would have had to rest on the sloping barrow rather than flat ground. At least the date of this feature does

not match the other intrusions. The sherds of Bellarmine found in the pit might suggest a date in or after the sixteenth to seventeenth century. So, whether or not the pit is unsatisfactory as a robber-pit it does not seem to belong to the nineteenth-century campaign. The nineteenth-century excavators therefore appear to have disregarded Mound 1 and the reason that they did remains a mystery.

The fact that the principal campaign, involving virtually every barrow at Sutton Hoo can be dated to the nineteenth century depends not on the archaeology, but on a lucky find of another kind — a reference to the excavation in the *Ipswich Journal* for 24th Nov 1860, spotted by Hugh Moffat and published by Rosemary Hoppitt. The brief description given there which refers to 'two bushels of iron screw-bolts' makes it highly probable that the mound referred to is Mound 2, where the ship-rivets collapsing into the underground burial-chamber would have almost filled it up.

The piece also mentions that 'it is hoped, when leave is given to open the others, some more important antiquities may be discovered'. This comment implies two things. First, that Mound 2 may have already been entered; the fragments left behind by the 1860 and 1938 interventions leave no doubt that the original finds were of the greatest 'importance' and would have been so recognised by the dullest digger: a sword, a gold buckle, a silver-mounted box, drinking horns, an iron-bound bucket. One can only suppose that the whole objects from which these fragments derive had already been rendered unrecognisable. The *Ipswich Journal* mentions the barrows as lying on a farm occupied by Mr Barritt, so he has naturally become *No.1 Suspect* in the hunt for the missing finds. But the tenor of the piece suggests that he too may have been disappointed.

The second point concerns the campaign itself. Since leave is being sought to open the others, the implication is that Mound 2 was the first. And indeed in our study of the nineteenth-century excavation techniques it does seem that the digging becomes more expert as the excavators moved southwards from Mound 2. They left a great deal behind in Mound 5, precious little in Mound 6 and practically nothing in Mound 7. On the other hand Mounds 3 and 4 were relatively untidy, so the progression need not have been so neat. It might be observed that, if the excavators had moved steadily southwards, they would have encountered four cremations one after the other which do not offer generous rewards, and the team may have become disheartened and frustrated. Could this be why they stopped before Mound 1? Another possible explanation is provided by the nature of the Mound 1 burial itself. Since underneath the mound there was a ship in a trench, rather than a central pit, the usual technique of grave-finding would not have worked. An East-West trench would have missed the old ground surface, being mostly contained within the ship — in which it would have

encountered only back-fill. The picnickers' pit would then of course have to be later than the nineteenth century.... Another idea is that Mound 1 was left alone simply because it was on someone else's land. All these trails are being followed up at present, and on the face of it at least our best bet appears to lie in Sutton Hoo's most recent documentation.

WHO WERE THEY?

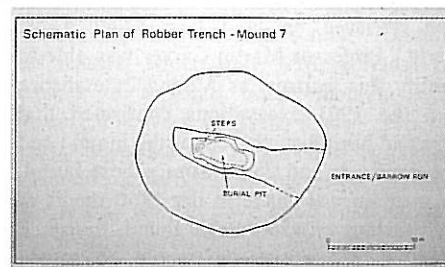
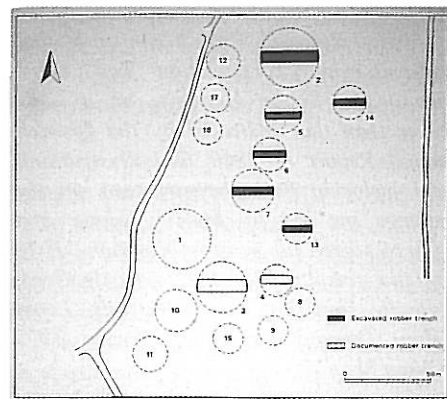
It has been surprisingly difficult to write the history of the site since the sixteenth century. Rupert Bruce-Mitford collected up the maps of the area and Peter Warner's study of the local documents reconciled them with each other. Ruth Serjeant (*see below*) has continued the hunt for the Barritt family and found that he was born in Great Glemham, farming 1000 acres at the time of 1861 census. The Barritts left their Sutton Hoo farm sometime between 1861 and 1865 and went to live in Woodbridge. It does not sound as though they had struck it rich.

My own attempts at sniffing around the documents suggested that there may have been two periods at which the Sutton Hoo barrows were particularly vulnerable. The first, in the early seventeenth century, was when John Norden surveyed and mapped the estates of Sir Michael Stanhope in 1601. Not the least interesting thing about the map of Sutton is that the 'cocked hats' which signify the mounds at Sutton Hoo continue up the banks of the Deben. Rupert Bruce-Mitford believed that this signified the natural contours of the scarp and promontories. This does not work topographically, and inspection of Norden's other maps in the album shows that they are actually meant to signify rabbit warrens. Since burial mounds provide such an adaptable structure for warrens, this has to mean that the presence of burial mounds north of Sutton Hoo should not be excluded. The next obvious step is to go and look for them; and that, with the Society's help, is exactly what we plan to do in Easter 1995. But such mounds, if they ever existed, had gone by William Haiward's map of 1629. From this tenuous evidence we might be able to perceive, if dimly, a first clearing operation.

The dig of the mid-nineteenth century would then be a second campaign and its organised character would suggest that it was not a thing done in a corner. Perhaps we should look therefore not so much to the occupier (Mr Barritt) as to the owner. The manor in which Sutton Hoo lay could have had an absentee landlord between 1848 when Sir Charles Kent died and 1885, when it is found in the possession of the Holden family. The sisters Sarah Ann Childers and Louisa Elizabeth Litchford, who inherited from Sir Charles Kent are not otherwise recorded as having land in Suffolk. Under these circumstances, the obtaining of 'leave' would be from a distant source and may have involved a locally unknown party, similar to the 'gentlemen from London' who made off with so much of the material from the

nineteenth-century excavation at Snape.

Such intruders would have belonged to a different tradition no doubt to those who called the Deben estuary their home, and their depredations are doubly to be resented.



Plan of the site showing the known extent of the nineteenth-century excavation campaign at Sutton Hoo (Martin Carver)

But even if we regret now the carelessness and selfishness that has consigned their discoveries to oblivion and robbed us who come after of so much, we can still understand the excitement which motivated them. The thought of treasure is enticing enough, but here we have the addition of strangeness, fear and the impertinence of invasion into another private world. One can imagine the small band with their tools and cart, labourers and gentry all assembled in an early morning spirit of adventure like a shooting party; as the sun comes up and strikes the mounds heavily clad in bracken, one can imagine the excitement, the bonhomie and the greetings, greetings perhaps voiced in the immortal words of the Reverend Isaacson himself:

*"Uprise ye then, my barrow-digging men
It is our opening day!
And all exclaimed, their grog while
swigging
There's naught on earth like barrow-
digging"*

Martin Carver is Professor of Archaeology at the University of York and Director of the Sutton Hoo Project. One of the interesting aspects of the excavation at Sutton Hoo has been the need to unravel the pattern of earlier excavations in order to make sense of the finds from the current excavation project

WHO WAS MR BARRITT? WHERE DID HE COME FROM— WHERE DID HE GO? by Ruth Serjeant

As Martin Carver has indicated in his lecture summarised above, excavations by the Sutton Hoo Research Project confirmed that nineteenth-century excavation had taken place at the Sutton Hoo site on a scale greater than that indicated by the *Ipswich Journal Report of 1860* (see illustration). Local historian Ruth Serjeant took up the challenge put out by Martin Carver and began to search for more information. Here are the results of her investigations, originally published in the *Suffolk Local History Council Newsletter*, Spring 1995 No.50 p.11.

Evidence from the *Ipswich Journal* 24 November 1860 indicated that 'two bushels of iron screw bolts' from 'a Roman barrow' had been retrieved on land farmed by a Mr Barritt. Professor Martin Carver was able to identify this 'barrow' as Mound 2; evidence from the 1991 excavations confirmed that there had been disturbances at the mound and that the rivets had come from a boat burial. No mention was made in the 1860 report of any previous artefacts being found, though it indicated that permission would be sought from the farmer to make future explorations. Archaeological evidence suggests that these further explorations did take place, but apart from the minimal newspaper item nothing was known about any of them. Official sources, such as antiquarian or archaeological journals were silent on the matter. No systematic search of local sources had been undertaken for any further reference to these nineteenth-century 'digs' — the 1860 newspaper item had been found quite by accident. In response to Professor Carver's appeal for help I undertook to look at three likely areas of local information:

ROMAN MOUNDS OR BARROWS.—It is not known by many that not less than five Roman Barrows, lying close to each other, may be seen on a farm occupied by Mr. Barritt, at Sutton, about 500 yards from the banks of the Deben, immediately opposite Woodbridge. One of these mounds was recently opened, when a considerable number (nearly two bushels) of iron screw bolts were found, all of which were sent to the blacksmith to be converted into horse shoes! It is hoped, when leave is granted to open the others, some more important antiquities may be discovered. These barrows were laid down in the Admiralty surveys by Captain Stanley during the stay of the Blazer, when taking the soundings of the above named river some few years since.

Ipswich Journal 24th November 1860: reference to excavations at Sutton Hoo

a) The newspapers from 1860 to 1900, in the hope that a short report might have got into the 'Local News' columns, as the 1860 report had done.

b) Research into the Barritt family who were farming the Sutton Hoo land at the time of the 1860 find, in the hope that perhaps some artefacts had been retained in the family's possession. (This had happened with the finds from the 1862 Snape excavation).

c) Personal papers of any local antiquarian/historian of the period.

Unfortunately none of these avenues of enquiry bore fruit. I now know quite a bit about Woodbridge life and entertainment, and a bit about lamb sales in Sutton parish, but nothing about any archaeological goings-on!

The Barritt family was equally elusive. Robert Barritt, born in Great Glemham in 1805, married in Sutton parish in 1834 to Mary Ann Nunn Long, when he was 29 and she was 20. He farmed in Sutton at a farm whose name is spelled variously as Hough, Howe and Hoo, and whose acreage he

increased from 286 acres in 1841 to just on a 1000 acres at the time of the 1861 census. Sometime between 1861 and 1865 the Barritts left the Hoo Farm and moved to 3, St. John's St., Woodbridge. Robert Barritt died there in 1866. His widow, Mary Ann, lived on at the same address until her own death in 1880. No wills or probate material have been traced for either of them, and neither the census returns of 1841–1861, nor the Sutton parish registers list any children of the marriage. Therefore no descendants of Robert Barritt have been traced.

The last area of research proved the most difficult to tackle, but a selection of names of local antiquarians and historians was compiled from various sources, and any personal papers deposited at the Suffolk Record Office looked for. It was really just a form of lucky dip, and though it proved fruitless this time round, there is always the possibility that something in the form of diaries, notebooks, letters may still turn up. I hope so!

BACK TO THE FUTURE by Rosemary Hoppitt

Once more I find myself writing about the future of Sutton Hoo. This time is different however, for we are no longer in such a state of great uncertainty. Negotiations have been going on during the last six months between the National Trust and the Tranmer estate which we hope will result in the National Trust becoming the owners of the Sutton Hoo site, Sutton Hoo House, and about 230 acres of surrounding land. The Committee are delighted at these developments and look forward to a successful outcome, which if funding is forthcoming, will be early in 1996.

Years of uncertainty have always meant that long-term planning for the site was difficult, sometimes impossible. Throughout we have done our best to receive visitors, on occasions incurring the criticism of those who, unaware of the constraints on us, felt the

site was not as well presented as it should have been, or not signed sufficiently well, or not provided with adequate parking. At last we hope, nearly sixty years after Basil Brown's excavations, the site will be developed properly to receive visitors.

We do not yet know the detail of the plans, but they include an interpretative centre and display with education facilities which will be located away from the burial site itself. Although unsure of the nature of the future role of the Society in all this, whatever the outcome, we shall continue with guided tours for the 1996 season as we have in the past.

At the time of writing there are also plans afoot in Woodbridge to develop the area next to the Tidemill, which lies on the opposite shore to Sutton Hoo. The site, at present a

boatyard, has been put up for sale, and a suggestion has been put forward by some local townspeople and councillors that it could be developed as some form of maritime 'heritage' centre, perhaps focusing on the Sutton Hoo ships and the general history of the Deben estuary and things maritime. Plans at present are in the very early stages, but any development would be undertaken in such a way that it complemented, rather than competed with development at Sutton Hoo. Discussion of this aspect has already taken place on an informal basis with the National Trust, and the Sutton Hoo Society has been consulted from the beginning. A steering group has been set up in Woodbridge to move the idea forward and raise funds towards the purchase of the site.

THE EASTER SURVEY by Justin Garner-Lehire

During the last two weeks of March 1995 the final fieldwork programme of the current research project was carried out at Sutton Hoo. The survey was undertaken by the University of York's field unit (Field Archaeology Specialists) which itself was created by former members of the Sutton Hoo Research Project. For the supervisors of this fieldwork, Andrew Copp and Justin Garner-Lehire, the site of Sutton Hoo was more than familiar as both had worked there in the earlier stages of the project, in Andrew's case, for almost nine years. They were ably assisted by two archaeology undergraduates from the University of York, James Brennan and Ellen Finch, who had previously volunteered to dig at Sutton Hoo when she was still at school in Framlingham.



The topographic survey in progress (Photograph: Justin Garner-Lehire)

Barring the occasional blizzard and several cold nights, the weather was kind to us, and allowed us to complete our work without serious problems. Both topographic and geophysical surveys were implemented, the objectives of which were as follows:

The aim of the topographic survey was to produce a detailed contour map of the site and its surrounding area. Although a similar survey had been undertaken in 1983 as part of the initial valuation programme, a further survey was now needed to accurately record the ground surface as it was left on completion of the excavation programme. A contour map of the surrounding area was also required to place the site in its precise topographical setting.

The geophysical survey on the other hand, was used to test for the presence of unknown burial mounds which had been ploughed flat and were no longer visible as earthworks, such as the prince's grave found and excavated in 1991. The first week was spent investigating the area immediately north of the site where aerial photographic evidence hinted at the presence of further burial mounds.

Two different geophysical instruments were used in the survey; a fluxgate gradiometer and a resistance meter. The fluxgate gradiometer is a type of magnetometer and is used to detect very slight variations in the earth's magnetic field caused by magnetically enhanced soil or buried metal. Many archaeological features contain components derived from burning, the decay of organic materials or metalworking. These components are more magnetic than subsoil and can therefore be located and mapped by magnetometers.

The resistance meter measures the resistance to an electrical current. The soil's resistance depends on its density and, more importantly, the amount of water it contains. In certain conditions, the resistance meter can map sub-surface features such as filled-in ditches and pits because their backfill will generally be less dense and contain more water than the surrounding natural subsoil.

As the survey progressed it became clear that although the gradiometer, and to some extent the resistance meter, were able to detect and map below-ground archaeological remains, nothing resembling the characteristic

features associated with burial mounds was being detected. Unfortunately, we could not be sure whether this meant that no burial mounds were present, or that our instruments were simply not capable of detecting them.

The survey was then extended south into an unexcavated area of the site to the east of Mound 2. Here a rather unexpected discovery was made. A large circular feature (8–10metre diameter) was detected which was reminiscent of a ring-ditch and contained a fairly large feature at its centre. Although this feature, which may well represent the remains of a small burial mound, is an exciting discovery in itself, it also seems to demonstrate that our geophysical equipment is capable of detecting ploughed-out mounds. This means we can have more confidence in the negative results of the rest of the geophysical survey and therefore, that the existence of further mounds immediately north of Mound 2 is unlikely.

The second week of the programme concentrated on an area situated some distance to the north of the site where early medieval artefacts had been found by fieldwalking during the East Anglian Kingdom Survey. Some of the objects, which had been brought to the surface by ploughing, were of high status, and may well indicate the presence of a settlement or cemetery roughly the same period as Sutton Hoo. It was therefore important to try to characterise this site, and in particular to understand whether it represented a continuation of the Sutton Hoo barrow cemetery, or a discrete site of a different character.

A large area was covered using both geophysical instruments and although the results were rather difficult to interpret, there were clearly no features which suggested the presence of burial mounds. The results did however suggest that the fieldwalking finds were derived from the interior of a large enclosure which contained many fairly small features. Unfortunately, we cannot be certain of the character of this site, but it is possible we have the remains of a high status settlement site which existed contemporaneously with Sutton Hoo. The Easter survey was certainly a success, but, as is often the case, it raised almost as many questions as it has answered. For me, it was a pleasure to work once more on this exciting and important site which had impressed me so much in my first few years in archaeology.

Funding for this survey was provided by the Sutton Hoo Society

SOCIETY EVENTS

Sæ Wylfing re-visits the Deben

We were delighted to be able to welcome Edwin and Joyce Gifford, Jeff Bird and Sæ Wylfing back to the Deben in June this year. The weather kept fair, and considerable interest was generated once more as people came to see the half-scale replica of the Mound 1 ship. Following the various sea trials of Sæ Wylfing over the past two years, a report has just been published in *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* (1995) 24.2 pp.121-131. A more general account will probably appear in *Mariner's Mirror* next year. For those of you living outside Suffolk and Hampshire, Edwin and Joyce hope to be taking Sæ Wylfing to the Bristol Festival of Sail (24-25th May 1996) and all being well in mid-July 1996 they will be at Bede's World in Jarrow.

The Society would like to thank Frank and Christine Knights of Knights' Boatyard, Woodbridge, for the use of the quay, and their good nature over the busy weekend

Society Visit to Norfolk by Sam Newton

CAISTOR SAINT EDMUND

Our first rendezvous was the Roman town of *Venta Icenorum* at Caistor Saint Edmund, south of Norwich, which was first laid out in the latter part of the first century AD as an attempt to bring the benefits of urban civilisation to the recently defeated British tribe, the *Iceni*. Like many planned urban developments, it appears not to have grown as intended. An extensive grid-pattern of streets was laid out but beyond the basic administrative infrastructure little significant building seems to have taken place until the second century.

Around the middle of the third century the centre was given the protection of a massive rampart and flint wall, the impressive remains of which can still be seen. The plan was military in style, with four almost straight-sided bastioned walls with rounded corners superimposed on the earlier grid-plan (thus blocking some of the older streets), and with four gates, one at the centre of each side.

From the mid fourth century, as a consequence of the Roman policy of settling barbarian tribes in Imperial territories to assist their defence, Angle and Saxon warriors became part of the garrison at *Venta Icenorum*. An abandoned suburb on the hilltop to the south-east was cleared and consecrated as a cremation cemetery for the Angles. Another cremation cemetery was sited on a little hill in a similarly disused quarter just across the River Tas to the north-west, in what is now the parish of Markshall.



Left:

Edwin, far left, explains the finer points of Saxon ships to a visitor on the quayside at Woodbridge

(Photograph: R. Hoppitt)

Right: The crowd closes in to view Sæ Wylfing as she arrives at Woodbridge Quay

(Photograph: R. Hoppitt)



Excavated by J.N.L. Myres, these cemeteries provide some of the earliest evidence for the Anglo-Saxon presence in Britain.

We perambulated the walls of *Venta Icenorum* in perfect Sunday sunshine, following the route helpfully laid out by the Norfolk Archaeological Trust.

EAST DEREHAM

After lunch we met at the churchyard of St Nicholas's Church, East Dereham to venerate the sacred well of the East Anglian princess, St Wihtburh, one of the six saintly children of King Raedwald's nephew, Anna. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to the exhumation of her uncorrupted body from this spot in AD 798, 55 years after her death. As her father had been killed by the formidable King Penda of Mercia at the Battle of Bulcamp in 654, she must have been

in her nineties at the time of her death in 743.

The *Chronicle* reports the miraculous wholeness of Wihtburh's uncorrupted body as fact, which was regarded as a mark of holiness. Her own royal pedigree would have increased the aura of her sanctity, for the Wuffing family itself was known to have descended from the gods. With divine blood in their veins, they were seen as bringers of battle-luck, good harvests and divine blessings generally, which is why their burial places were venerated. So just as the likely mound of Wihtburh's great uncle was once honoured at Sutton Hoo and the tomb of her father was venerated at Blythburgh, so the burial place of this Wuffing princess came to be regarded as holy.

Following her translation, a spring appeared where her royal and uncorrupted body had lain. Naturally the belief arose that the water from this spring, which became



Members of the Society venerate St Wihtburh's well at St Nicholas's church in East Dereham

(Photograph: R. Hoppitt)

known as Wihthburh's well, was charged with healing powers. This became a place of pilgrimage and a chapel was later built around the well.

NORTH ELMHAM

Just north of East Dereham is the 'Saxon Cathedral' site at North Elmham, which was the seat of the Bishops of East Anglia during the late Anglo-Saxon period until Herfast, the first Norman Bishop of Elmham, moved to Thetford in 1075. His successor, Bishop Herbert de Losinga, later moved the seat to the newly built Cathedral in Norwich.

With the sun still shining, we explored the surviving earthworks and ruins. These are currently thought to be mostly the remains of Bishop Herbert de Losinga's late eleventh-century episcopal church which the notorious Bishop of Norwich, Henry le Despenser converted into a double-moated castle in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

The pre-Norman cathedral on the site appears to have housed the episcopal throne of the Bishops of East Anglia from around 955, when the church was being re-established in the kingdom following its destruction during the Danish invasions of the previous century. There are also indications that there was an episcopal seat here before the Danish conquest, for it is one of the two

likely sites of East Anglia's second See, that of Helmham, founded during the reign of King Ealdwulf (c.664-713). The other is at South Elmham in Suffolk, where there is a curious ecclesiastical ruin also associated with Bishop Herbert de Losinga, which the Society visited in 1993 (see **SAXON** 19).

The question remains open as to which of the two Elmhams was the original seventh-century foundation.

The central Norfolk countryside around North Elmham was certainly settled early in the Anglo-Saxon period, as the extensive pre-Christian cemetery at nearby Spong Hill indicates. The apparent re-establishment of the East Anglian bishop at North Elmham in the tenth century would imply that it had been an episcopal centre in the pre-Danish period. The discovery in 1786 of a little copper-alloy hanging censor dated by its style to the mid ninth century, certainly suggests that this could have been an important ecclesiastical site just before the Danish invasions. South Elmham is located in what appears to be an ancient nine-parish block of territory, the Ferding of Elmham, which Norman Scarfe has suggested may represent a seventh-century endowment by the Wuffing kings to the Church. Mike Hardy's diligent fieldwalking research suggests that an important seventh-century church may have stood on the higher ground to the east of the

existing eleventh-century ruins of South Elmham Minster. The present indications would seem to point to South Elmham as the site of the seventh-century foundation, although this is not certain. Perhaps, as Norman Scarfe thought possible, North Elmham was established subsequently as a Norfolk centre for the Bishops. Or was the Bishopric of *Helmham* a twin-seat from the start, which along with the seat of *Dommoc* was intended to serve all of East Anglia? If *Dommoc* was, as present evidence suggests, within the walls of the Roman Saxon Shore fortress at Walton Castle, Felixstowe, then these three possible seventh-century episcopal seats would appear to have been evenly spaced across the kingdom (South Elmham is just over thirty miles from North Elmham and just under thirty miles from Walton Castle) which would have made them well-sited for this purpose.

These points concluded the day, so with the rain-clouds forming we re-embarked for the land of the South Folk.

Thanks to Andrew Lovejoy for organisation, to Sam for his research and presentation on the day and also to our intrepid coach driver for negotiating Norfolk's narrow and tortuous by-ways (Chairman).

SOCIETY REPORTS

Guiding and Membership 1995

by Andrew Lovejoy

The 1995 summer season at Sutton Hoo was business as usual. But not quite! The visitors, Guides and Helpers and the weather combined to make the season a memorable one. 1,320 adults and 151 children paid their entrance fees, including a former parlour maid of Mrs Pretty, a Swedish couple who, fifteen years before had become engaged on Mound 1, and other visitors from as far afield as Thailand, Japan and Prague.

Many other visitors came to the site during the weekdays on a casual basis as the Warden of the site, Peter Berry will attest. The public overall thoroughly enjoy their spells of Sutton Hoo history, which along with West Stow in West Suffolk are among a few archaeological sites in England which offer guided tours.

We also entertained a number of booked tours again this year: the group of students from Gothenburg in Sweden, some in National dress, were in particular most welcome. We also had visits from Professor Roselli and a party from Rome University; groups from the Universities of Exeter and Middlesex; Kent Archaeological Society, and a group from the Conference of Countryside Managers who took the opportunity to discuss

the plans for the future of the site.

The site is looking as it should; a royal cemetery venerated by a host of people, which is tidy and attractive, has marked graves and soon some useful interpretation.

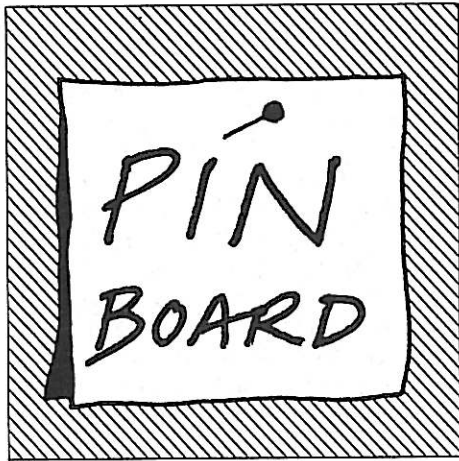
Everyone who visits the site is enthusiastic about Sutton Hoo after their visit. It is a place to learn something about Anglo-Saxon life, and satisfy a curiosity about an historic site which is now firmly fixed in the national mind.

The 1996 season will open at 2pm on Saturday 6th April. As members of the Society you are particularly welcome to visit Sutton Hoo. You must have already paid at least one visit to the site — why not visit us again and see how the site has changed and progressed. I am sure you will benefit from hearing the Sutton Hoo story related by a different speaker. The Society looks forward to welcoming you to the site in 1996.

We must thank Andrew for his tireless work during the season organising the booked tours and guiding rosta (Chairman).

Right: No — not raining! Andrew Lovejoy explaining the secrets of Mound 1 to some well-prepared summer visitors (Photograph: R. Hoppitt)





DIARY

SUTTON HOO SOCIETY AGM

The next **Annual General Meeting** will be held on **Friday 23rd February 1996** in the **Sixth Form Centre at Woodbridge School**, Burkitt Road, Woodbridge (see location map).

The business meeting will be followed by a lecture by Martin Carver, Director of the Sutton Hoo Project.

AGENDA

- Apologies
- Minutes of last AGM
- Report and Accounts
- Election of Auditors
- Election of Committee Members

COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Nominations for new committee members should be sent to the Chairman of the Society at the Society's address below. Nominees should be members, willing to stand for election, and able to attend four or five meetings a year. Please contact a member of the committee if you would like to stand for election.

SPRING LECTURE

The annual Spring lecture for Society members and friends will be given by Angela Care Evans of the British Museum. She will speak on *The Excavation and Reconstruction of the Harness from Mound 17*. The lecture will take place at the **Red Cross Centre, Theatre Street, Woodbridge on Friday 22nd March 1996 at 7.15pm**. The nearest car park to the Red Cross Centre is in Theatre Street next to the Fire Station, alternatively there is on-street parking on Burkitt Road (see location map)

Please **DO NOT** park in the Red Cross Centre car park.

1996 SEASON

The 1996 Season will open on Saturday 6th April. Guided tours will take place at approximately 2pm and 3pm on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and Bank Holiday Mondays through to and including Sunday 8th September.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

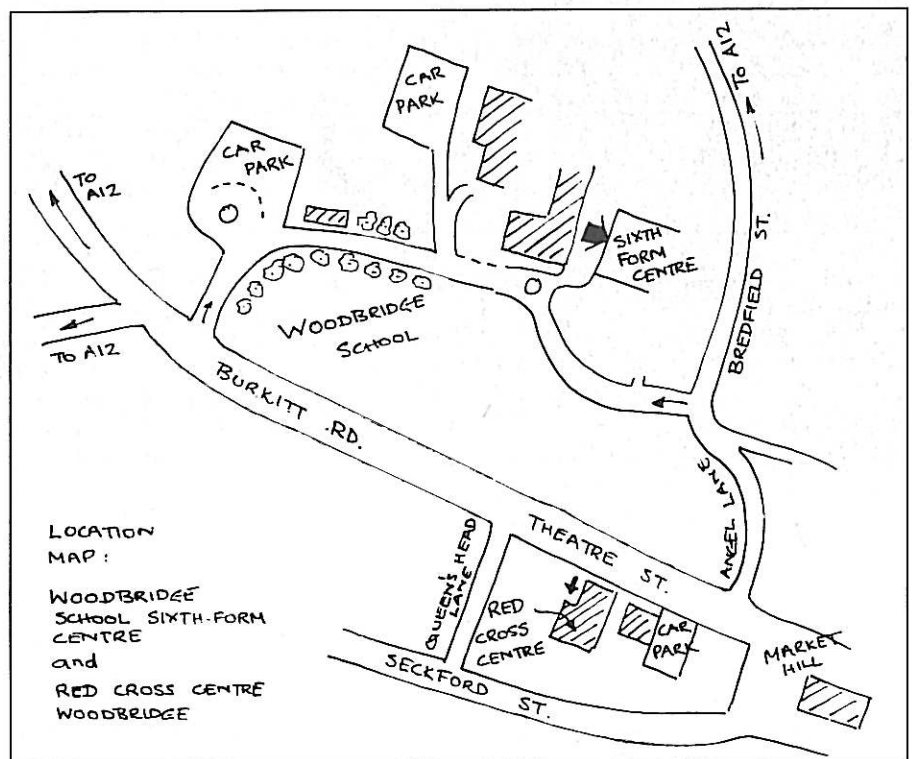
Once more we must thank our guides who have braved the searing heat of the summer to show visitors round the site.

If you would like to guide on site, or help by selling tickets and books in the ticket hut, we would be delighted to hear from you. Contact Andrew Lovejoy at the address below.

Thanks also to Peter Berry for keeping the site beautifully tidy again this year and marking out the graves around the site of Mound 5. We do our best to convey so much that isn't there, it's nice to have the odd clearly defined feature to point out during guiding.

INFORMATION BOARD

During late November we were delighted to hear that the long-awaited information board (designed and funded by Suffolk County Council) had arrived and was ready for installation. By the time you read this it should have been positioned near the entrance to the site.



Contact Addresses

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 A. A. Lovejoy, Membership and Guides Secretary, 28, Pembroke Road, Framlingham, Suffolk IP13 9HA

Who's Who — Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

Chairman: Rosemary Hoppitt Hon. Secretary: Jenny Glazebrook Hon. Treasurer: Colin Moore
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 Sue Banyard John Newman Sam Newton Pearl Simper Robert Simper Research Director: Martin Carver

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