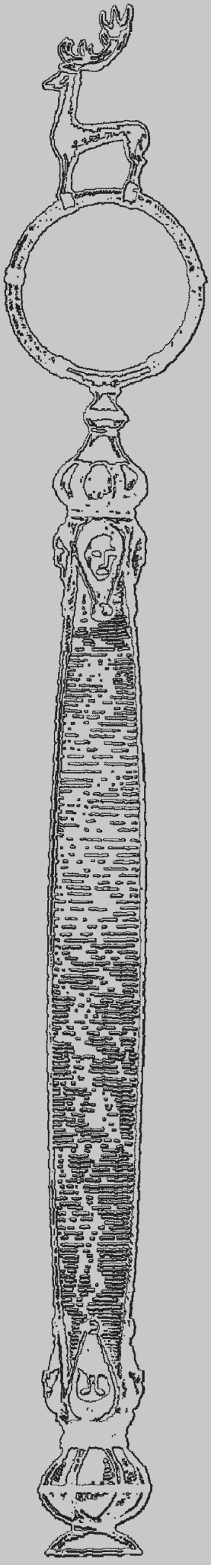


Saxon

Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society No. 50 / January 2010

(© Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery)

Hoards of Gold!

The recovery of hundreds of 7th–8th century objects from a field in Staffordshire filled the newspapers when it was announced by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) at a press conference on 24 September. Uncannily, the first piece of gold was recovered seventy years to the day after the first gold artefact was uncovered at Sutton Hoo on 21 July 1939.'The old gods are speaking again,' said Dr Kevin Leahy. Dr Leahy, who is national finds advisor on early medieval metalwork to the PAS and who catalogued the hoard, will be speaking to the SHS on 29 May (details, back page).

Current Archaeology took the hoard to mark the launch of their 'new look' when they ran ten pages of pictures in their November issue [*CA* 236] — which, incidentally, includes a two-page interview with our research director, Professor Martin Carver.

Martin tells us, "The hoard consists of 1,344 items mainly of gold and silver, although 864 of these weigh less than 3g. The recognisable parts of the hoard are dominated by military equipment — sword-fittings without the blades and parts of helmets; but there are two crosses, one pectoral like the Cuthbert cross and the other an altar-cross, bent and folded. There is also a strip with a Latin inscription from the Bible (*Numbers* 10:35) in the script known as insular uncial saying, 'Rise up, O Lord, and may thy enemies be scattered and those who hate thee be driven from thy face'. (So even this had a military flavour).

"The art is like Sutton Hoo — gold with *cloisonée* garnet and fabulous 'Style 2' animal interlace on pommels and cheek guards — but maybe a bit later in date. This and the inscription suggest an early 8th century date overall — but this will probably move about. More than six hundred photos of the objects can be seen on the PAS's Flickr website. They are of huge interest, even if they are largely broken-up and redeposited scrap — so not as informative as a ship-burial.'The context of the find is still a mystery. Metal-detectorist Terry Herbert found it in July scattered in a field near Wall on the A5, and Birmingham Archaeology has briefly explored the site — but so far we are none the wiser. The objects were not buried deep

and could be the contents of a goldsmith's bag, the harvest of a pillaged battlefield, or trophies from a raid into enemy territory (eg East Anglia). For what it's worth, I imagine them originating as a glittering collection in the cathedral treasury at Lichfield, where swords were laid on the altar to give thanks for victories. But of course that's a guess too.'

Professor Leslie Webster was widely quoted as saying,'This is going to alter our perceptions of Anglo-Saxon England in the 7th and early 8th century as radically, if not more so, as the 1939 Sutton Hoo discoveries did. It will make historians and literary scholars review what their sources tell us, and archaeologists and art-historians rethink the chronology of metalwork and manuscripts; and it will make us all think again about rising (and failing) kingdoms and the expression of regional identities in this period, the complicated transition from paganism to Christianity, the conduct of battle and the nature of fine metalwork production — to name only a few of the many huge issues it raises. Absolutely the metalwork equivalent of finding a new Lindisfarne Gospels or Book of Kells.'

The crumpled cross, a processional or altar cross which has been deliberately folded, not maliciously damaged. Finds number NLM 655 (© Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery)

The total weight of gold recovered in Staffordshire was 5kg, dwarfing the 1.66kg found at Sutton Hoo. Forty thousand people queued for up to five hours over twenty days when a selection of the finds went on display in Birmingham. Then twenty or so of the most familiar items — their filigree work still clogged with soil — went on temporary exhibition at the British Museum from 3 November until the new year, accompanied by an illustrated booklet .

On 25 November, the Treasure Valuation Committee agreed a market value of £3.285 million for the hoard. Once confirmed by the Culture Secretary, Birmingham Museum and Stoke Potteries Museum will jointly have four

The inscription from Numbers 10: 35, written in insular uncial, possibly on the arm of a cross. Finds number NLM 550 (© Daniel Buxton, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery)

A gold plate formed by two opposing Style II eagles, separated by a fish: Dr Leahy's favourite item. Finds number NLM 652, weight 61g. (© Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery)

months (technically speaking, but probably more) to raise the purchase money, which will be divided between the landowner and the finder, Terry Herbert.

An advisory committee will plan the conservation and scientific analysis of the objects, and an agenda of formal research questions has to be drawn up. And then, of course, there's television. Among a welter of proposals, only one channel has proposed making a series over a period of time to follow the research, and offered a grant to go with it, and that is National Geographic.

A packed meeting of the Society of Antiquaries in London on 12 November heard Dr Leahy describe how it had taken him and his wife fifteen days to catalogue the hoard on a database, having first numbered them with orange raffle tickets.'Don't knock raffle tickets: they are highly visible through a plastic bag, and make it impossible to duplicate the numbers in error.'

There are many objects that are not understood, such as snake-like ornaments with pins, wing-shaped mounts and L-shaped ones decorated with garnets on three sides, which could be from books, saddles or purses. Some of the items might well come from horse harness.

Less widely reported are twenty-one bags of conglomerations of soil, which we know from X-rays carried out in Liverpool contain very interesting metal fragments. Many seem to come from helmets, and specialists are identifying C-shaped strips, broader than on the leading edges of the cheek pieces of the Sutton Hoo helmet, which might alternatively have come from shield mountings.

One fragment shows a procession of warriors, with circular shields and swords. Another is very similar to the horse and rider on the Sutton Hoo helmet, with the round shield, the buckle on the harness and the horses' legs in exactly similar positions.

So many basic questions are unanswered. It is not even known whether this is a single hoard, or how it came to be there. The objects have only entered the ploughsoil recently, for there is only slight, superficial plough damage. The whole hoard could fit into a 300mm square box, which could have been lifted and scattered by a single ploughing. The field has been owned by the same farmer for 20 or 30 years, so'his plough is Exhibit A'.

Dating based on manuscript evidence suggests a 7th century date for the hoard, but epigraphical evidence puts it in the 8th or even 9th century. There is a chance of carbon dates from organic material trapped in and around the objects, and analysis of the gold should also be indicative.

The PAS stresses that we are at an extremely early stage in this investigation, and the interest of SHS members will increase as the headlines fade and the specialists develop their interpretations. Look out for a special edition of *Antiquity* sometime after Easter, by which time we shall be looking forward to welcoming Dr Leahy at the end of May.'It'll be even more exciting by the time I come and talk to the Sutton Hoo Society,' he told *Saxon*.

www.finds.org.uk
www.flickr.com/photos/finds
www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk

The First Saxon


ISSUE No 1

NOVEMBER 1984

SAXON

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SUTTON HOO SOCIETY

Dear Member,

It is hard to believe that Sunday, June 3rd 1984, the day the Sutton Hoo Society was founded, is just over four months ago. For some of us, outside Martin Carver's team of experts, it has also been the Summer of Sutton Hoo.

Regular meeting of the Executive Committee have been held and the foundations have been laid, we hope, of an active and constructive society. A constitution has been drawn up and charitable status applied for; members have been signed up and issued with cards; three thousand visitors

I hope you enjoy our first newsletter, prepared by Executive Committee members Mark Mitchels and Malcolm Miles. Thank you for your support. We look forward to seeing you on site next season.

Mike Weaver
Hon.Secretary
Sutton Hoo Society

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Last summer marked the 25th anniversary of the founding of the SHS, at an inaugural meeting at Seckford Hall Hotel on 3 June 1984, which was quickly followed by the first issue of Saxon that November. Your committee did not have these dates much in mind — which just goes to show how easy it is to forget our own history — but a drive to put back-numbers of Saxon online brought them to light. Your editor had every issue from no.7, but we could not find the first six, until their editor, MARK MITCHELS, found them in his loft and very kindly donated them. Here he recalls the earliest days of the society and its newsletter.

When the Society began, the Sutton Hoo site was still being excavated by Martin Carver who was then at Birmingham University. He attended all our meetings and gave us the news of what was going on. He loved visitors and dealt with them superbly, but groups took up a lot of his time and for that reason the first guides were appointed.

Access

There were no facilities for the public, and visitors had to walk from the main road. It is now impossible to imagine, but none of us had rights of access to the site. Every meeting of the Committee included the agenda item 'Access', but it was never resolved in my time. There was a grass-covered green metal board proclaiming that the site itself was under the care of the Ministry of Works, but the paths to the site belonged to a farmer who, to say the least, was not a paid up member of the Society. At any time it was possible to be ordered off the field and anyone who took the road past Sutton Hoo House was in even greater trouble. All this made it very difficult to encourage visitors.

Saxon was designed for these people. It provided a constant update on the excavations and advertised various fund-raising ventures. The one I remember most was a'meeting' of the Dark Age Society on the rugby club field. I thought it would be a sort of Sealed-Knot re-enaction by deeply serious people. After they had swept through Woodbridge, I knew there could be problems. They enjoyed the fighting part of the afternoon but we were just glad to get home safely.

Ferry

Another regular feature of the magazine was the ferry. Bob Simper, an absolute stalwart of the committee, managed to find a boat — *Saxon* — to take passengers from beside the Tide Mill in Woodbridge to the landing site opposite, from where they walked up to the site itself. It was a great idea, but the passengers did not always understand that the tide meant that the boat did not run to a regular time table, and the walk to the site was sometimes alarmingly close to a genuine exploration of a remote region. But it was fun for those who made it.

Snippet

As an editor I encountered that problem faced by all editors: how to fill the eight pages by the date required. Looking through my particular editions I am amused to spot just how many articles I wrote or ghosted. Every little snippet of gossip or rumour was trundled out and stretched to fill the space. It was fun at the time, but I imagine those years appear to be unfairly concerned with the petty and esoteric.

When the Duke of Edinburgh agreed to become our Patron there was tremendous excitement, but when he announced that he would be visiting us, well, there was disbelief. The day he spent with us in 1987 was marvellous, and it made a fine spread in *Saxon* no. 7. He met everyone and made a point of spreading his time between archaeologists and civilians. His name on the masthead of the magazine was a powerful incentive to join.

Whereas we were happy to receive 3,000 visitors a year, now there are almost 80,000 and that is a sure sign that the work begun many years ago was worthwhile and continues from strength to strength. Good luck for the next fifty *Saxons*!

Mark Mitchels, the first editor of Saxon

Mike Weaver, then membership secretary, wrote about the first summer in *Saxon* no. 1 and Robert Simper (then chairman) and Rosemary Hoppitt (publications) wrote about the first six years in *Saxon* no.12, which you can now read online with all the other issues, all indexed, at www.suttonhoo.org. This means we can always have in mind what the society has covered in its lectures, conferences and excursions. It is an online resource well worth browsing and a good way of marking our 50th issue.

In the steps of the East Saxons (with a dash of Art Nouveau)

The society's summer outing on Saturday 25 July visited Saxon sites in the neighbouring kingdom of the East Saxons. Our chairman MIKE ARGENT joined the trip.

A full coach of members and their guests set off on a bright and sunny morning en route to Maldon on the banks of the River Blackwater to visit the site of the Battle of Maldon, which took place on 10th August 991. We stood on the south bank of the river at the end of the promenade by the statue of Earldorman Byrhtnoth (erected in 1991 to commemorate the millennium of the battle) in sight of both Northey Island and the linking causeway. This was an unexpected bonus as it is usually under water, but on this day the tide was in our favour and allowed us to see the causeway which played a significant part in the ensuing battle. Inexplicably it seems that Byrhtnoth, who had a commanding position on the river bank, agreed to allow the Vikings, confined on Northey Island, to cross the causeway to join in battle with the Saxon force. The subsequent defeat of the Saxons ensured that Byrhtnoth achieved early recognition in that long list of heroic losers, if moral victors, in the history of English battles. Robert Allen's commentary helped us to understand events, using the full range of his dramatic and linguistic flourishes that we enjoy so much.

Chapel of St Peter

After this impressive start we moved on to the oldest venue of the day, the Chapel of St Peter at Bradwell juxta Mare, originally founded in 654 on the site of the Roman fortress of Othona, whose ancient stones formed the basis of the new structure. After a welcome stop for refreshments from the resident Othona Community, we were taken by Kevin our guide to the chapel established under the auspices of St Cedd, who was based in the area between 654 and 665. Sadly, after establishing this lasting memorial to his ministry in its dramatic location on the coast, Cedd himself moved north to Lastingham, dying subsequently of the plague.

The restored chapel, which is still in use, is now in the care of the Diocese of Essex. We were told about some of the early Saxon finds in the area, including a 'woven wood' fish trap, apparently similar to the one found in the River Deben below Sutton Hoo in 2003. (Part of that work was supported by society funds and gave a suggested date for the timber of around 590 - see *Saxon* no.38.)

The tour pauses at the foot of the statue to Earldorman Byrhtnoth at Maldon, Essex (all photos © Mike Argent)

Society members leave St Peter's Chapel at Bradwell juxta Mare

Close inspection of the wooden nave of St Andrew's Church, Greensted, reputedly the oldest wooden church in the world

Art Nouveau

We had lunch in the spacious, sunlit garden of the Sun and Anchor pub in nearby Steeple. There were real sandwiches with crusts, and tasty fillings which suited the appetites and palettes of the largely mature visitors. Some were even seen taking surplus food back to the coach, a sure sign of an enjoyable meal which was not going to be allowed to go to waste.

Our first stopping point in the afternoon was a spectacular treat, a visit to a 20th century church (built 1902–1904) decorated in the Art Nouveau style. The interior of St Mary's Church, Great Warley is a masterpiece in what has been described as the imaginatively decorative use of 'Bacofoil'. It is a spectacular and unexpected extravagance, a sylvan almost Gilbertian setting, where you might expect the fairy Queen from *Iolanthe* to appear suddenly in all her glory. The influence of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement is everywhere. Our hosts, George and Peter from the PCC, gave us an informative introduction and made it a fascinating interlude on our Saxon trail.

Wooden church

Robert, our organiser for the day, had saved a real treat for our last port of call, and one familiar to many of us. How could we have left Great Warley without feeling anticlimactic other than by visiting St Andrew's Church, Greensted. This is reportedly the oldest surviving wooden church in the world, and a fascinating reminder of the wood-working skills of the Saxons. The walls of the nave are made from split tree trunks, controversially dated by dendrochronology to around 845. Our guide David, a churchwarden, gave us a detailed history of the building, including the important part it played in the transfer of St Edmund's body from London to Bury St. Edmunds in 1013. He brought us right up to modern times with details of Sir Hugh Casson's involvement in providing items for the interior of the building, including a rather rustic font. Again this is an important part of our Saxon heritage which, like St Peter's, is still maintained and used for worship.

Everyone enjoyed a long and interesting day, and appreciated the meticulous care that Robert Allen had clearly put into its organisation. Thank you Robert, from all of us.

"To the Humble Archaeologist"

To mark the 70th anniversary of Basil Brown's excavation of the Sutton Hoo ship, the society held a celebration lunch at the Riverside Theatre in Woodbridge on the last day of October. Guest of honour was former Suffolk county archaeologist Dr Stanley West, reluctantly lured away from his Gloucestershire retirement to talk to the society about 'My Life in Archaeology'. It was a career inspired in his teens by Basil Brown, with whom he worked for several years in the 1950s, thanks to Basil's employer at Ipswich Museum, the curator Guy Maynard. Dr West recalled the 'air of eternal intrigue' at the museum in those days, the 'free for all' between east and west Suffolk museums, and the 'pretty serious problems with the archaeology', without even proper equipment. And yet they were years of 'idyllic, carefree excitement' as the young Stanley West scoured shorelines looking for bones, and walked fields. JOHN FAIRCLOUGH takes up the story.

After National Service in the RAF, Stanley returned to Ipswich Museum in 1951. The following year he published his report on the Romano-British pottery kilns on West Stow Heath: the first of several reports on that area. Stanley worked with Basil Brown on the multi-period site at Grimstone End, Pakenham.

Ipswich Ware

From 1956 to 1959 he studied at Cambridge under Glyn Daniel. While there, he published with John Hurst the defining account of Ipswich Ware pottery in an article for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. He had recognised the significance of this Middle Saxon pottery produced in Ipswich and distributed widely, so that it identifies many sites occupied in that elusive period. In 1958 and 1959 he excavated for the Ministry of Works at Cox Lane and Shire Hall Yard in Ipswich. He published in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History* a full report of both excavations, including the first study of the distribution of Ipswich Ware finds in the town and comments on the original town defences. This remains a key document for the early history of Ipswich.

The celebratory lunch at the Riverside Theatre in Woodbridge

Africa to West Stow

After Cambridge he spent five years in Africa as Director of the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam, spanning the end of the colonial period and the beginning of independence. Returning to Suffolk in 1965 he started the first of eight seasons of major excavation at West Stow for the Department of the Environment. He published the detailed results in volumes of the *East Anglian Archaeology* series, as well as writing a popular guidebook for visitors. He took his interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon village beyond the pages of the academic report by creating the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village Trust to reconstruct some of the buildings on their original sites. These have become not only valuable contributions to experimental archaeology but great educational resources for all ages from primary schools to university classes as well as being key features of a popular country park. In many ways complementary to Sutton Hoo, the village at West Stow is the result of Stanley's vision and his skill and tenacity in seeing the project through to completion.

Scole Committee

His activities were not confined to West Stow, as he created the Suffolk Archaeological Research Committee to bring together amateur groups engaged in active archaeology across the county. It has grown into the Suffolk Archaeological Field Group within the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History. He succeeded in the challenge of bringing together Norfolk and Suffolk in the Scole Committee for East Anglian Archaeology as its founding secretary. First meeting in 1971 in the inn at Scole, it aimed to co-ordinate, develop and promote archaeological activity in the region. Its major achievements were the creation of the two county archaeological units and the initiation of the series of reports called *East Anglian Archaeology*.

Dr Stanley West (left) makes a point during lunch to Dr John Blatchly, a Vice-President of the SIAH, who later proposed a toast to 'The Humble Archaeologist' (photos © Nigel Maslin)

County Unit

In 1974 he became the first Director of the Suffolk Archaeological Unit created by the new unified Suffolk County Council, although Stanley was already serving as part-time Archaeological Consultant to East and West Suffolk County Councils. He brought together a team that would undertake excavations to professional standards and co-ordinate the work of others to ensure evidence of the past is not destroyed by new developments. They monitor the archaeological implications of all planning applications as well as advising and encouraging amateur enthusiasts and keeping a central record of their work. His own records formed part of the initial Sites and Monuments Record, which has grown into the extensive database of the county's Historic Environment Record. It is a tribute to the sure foundations he laid, that after he retired in 1991 the Unit has continued to operate, with its new designation as Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, under the direction of Keith Wade, whom Stanley had appointed as urban archaeologist for Ipswich in his original team.

Iken cross

Stanley had continued his own excavations, publishing full reports in *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute* on the town defences of Bury St Edmunds and Dunwich, on the Snape Anglo-Saxon cemetery and Walton Priory. Prompt publication of such diverse sites is no small achievement. In 1977 his keen eye spotted one of his most significant discoveries, a carved Anglo-Saxon cross shaft built into the fabric of Iken church. In his lecture, Stanley called it,'the single most exciting thing that I have ever had to deal with'. He excavated within the church to explore the context of this remarkable stone. He combined publication in the Institute's *Proceedings* with papers by Norman Scarfe and Rosemary Cramp which show how his discovery strengthens the case for Iken being the Icanho where St Botolph founded his monastery in 654. More controversially he published a short paper presenting evidence in favour of placing the martyrdom of St Edmund at Bradfield St Clare near Bury St Edmunds rather than at Hoxne.

Retirement has not ended his work, as he has since published his magisterial compilation, *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk*, a fully illustrated account which is one of the most substantial volumes in the *East Anglian Archaeology* series [no. 84, 1998]. His devotion to archaeology continues, combined with a gentle humour. When he enquired what I was doing after retiring and I said'chasing Roman roads", he said "there are only two things you need to remember, John, not all Roman roads are straight and not all straight roads are Roman. Stick to that and you can't go far wrong'. I often recall those words when trying to decide the true course of certain of our Roman roads.

"The sea, the sea!"

Inspired by a recent conference, MARTIN CARVER considers the changing relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and the sea over seven centuries.

That ever-popular subject, the Anglo-Saxons and the sea, was the theme of a conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists [ISAS] at St John's, Newfoundland last July. I was lucky enough to join the assembled group of historians and literati (there were not so many archaeologists), and even luckier to stay with an old Sutton Hoo hand Toby Simpson, who has now settled in the woods outside St John's with Shannon Lewis, born and brought up in the area and a Viking expert and Navy *seal*. And I saw a moose. We are all happy to accept that the Vikings got to Newfoundland, with good archaeological evidence from the excavated site at L'Anse aux Meadows, now a popular tourist destination on the northern tip of the island. The Anglo-Saxons are another matter. They never made it to America, at least not until the Pilgrim Fathers — so what was our conference doing there?

Readers of *Saxon* will probably know that the Anglo-Saxons in general and Sutton Hoo in particular are hot topics in the universities of Canada and the United States — not in departments of history or archaeology, but in departments of English. So not unnaturally our speakers tended to focus on the sea in Old English literature, and especially the rich and varied literature of the 10th and 11th century. This spurred me to make a voyage into the later Saxon period myself, and to attempt a very brief sketch of the changing relationship between the Anglo-Saxons and the sea over some seven hundred years.

Channel crossing

In the early period, 400–600, we expect people to make intrepid crossings of the North Sea and the Channel in rowing boats of Nydam type, possibly as a result of changes in coastline. New thinking changes the picture somewhat. The surveys carried out by Chris Loveluck and Dries Tys in Flanders show that there was no change in coastline: the seaside was occupied by stable settlements from the 4th to the 17th century. Life in these tidal creeks was one of constant and so far as we know unimpeded movement up and down the coast from Denmark to Normandy. It is only a modest guess to suggest that the boats crossed into Kent and East Anglia too — and envision a busy ethnically-mixed maritime community living on all the coasts around the east end of the Channel and the south end of the North Sea. This with one splash, so to speak, answers all the problems of migration, ethnicity and invasion — they were all the same people. The Anglo-Saxons were just the ones that were living in England when the music stopped.

The Oseberg ship (c. 815–20) in the Viking Ship Museum on the Bydgøy peninsula in Oslo, which also houses the Gokstad and the Tune. (Viking ship photos © Terry Maidens)

Why did it stop? An idea put forward in the collection *The Sixth Century* was that Merovingian France became so powerful that it inhibited all traffic but its own between the Rhineland and the Channel. As a result England gradually became more terrestrial than maritime. Gone were the regular journeys across the North Sea to see relatives in Scandinavia; most traffic was now directed at the Continent, where there were treaties between Christians, and money to be made.

Ship-burial

Thus the 7th century, it could be argued, was the beginning of a long slow sentimental withdrawal from the sea. This is where ship-burial fits in: an extravagant gesture which thought to turn the tide back from the prospect of the organised and regulated Christian territories to the wild free days of the adventurous maritime communities. Ship-burial also aligns to Scandinavian thinking where the sea was still a principal arena of challenge and reward. East Anglia, where the cult was concentrated, is likely to have been the last of the kingdoms to abandon its natural yearning to be a citizen of the seas and start building a chunk of England.

East Anglia has a long coastline, and should have had many tidal creeks like Flanders, in which we should, we must, one day find boats and landing places. Meanwhile attention naturally focuses on the estuaries, where the kingdoms of Kent, Essex, Lindsey, Mercia and Northumberland all had their landing places serving coastal traffic. Some of these were monasteries and others were wics (markets), and both types of site represented a new degree of regulation. Legitimate trade must now use the kingdom's ports; those that would not began that long tradition of maritime dissidence that would emerge in later history in the person of smugglers.

Tacking

In the long run this trend affected the design of ships. It seems pretty certain that the early Saxons had the sail — why would they not? The sail was present in the Irish Sea in the Iron Age and the Romans sailed around the whole island. Rigging up a sail is not complicated. The real art is tacking — being able to go where you want without the need for large number of rowers. Although the Vikings may not have introduced the sail, it seems likely that the art of sailing near the wind was developed by their courage and seamanship in the 9th century — with massive social and commercial consequences.

Also significant for the new seafaring in the later first millennium was the dedicated all weather port — the waterfront which allows a vessel to tie up and unload rather than be beached on the tide. With this facility came another design change — the deep sea heavy bottomed cargo vessel (the cog) which carried a significant tonnage and drew a lot of water. The arguments continue over when these changes

The Nydam ship in Gottorp Castle, Schleswig, Germany. Clinker built of oak, 23m × 3m, it was pulled from a Danish bog in 1863 and has been dendro-dated to c. 310–320. (© Erik Christensen)

The Gokstad ship (c. 890) from Vestfold, Norway

Remains of the Tune ship (c.900) from Østfold, Norway

happened. Alfred's reopening of the Roman port of London after 886 was an important moment; the cog was probably in development from then until its starring role in the 10/11th century expansion of trade.

Ottar

A final anecdote shows how the late Saxon view of the sea was radically divided between the poets, bishops and aristocracy on the one hand and the now professional seafarers on the other. As so often the two worlds met — and parted — in the person of Alfred. Towards the end of the 9th century he met the long distance mariner Ottar who described a voyage round the coast of Norway into the White Sea, returning to deliver at Hedeby in North Germany a lucrative cargo of furs and walrus tusks likely to have exceeded six tons in weight. Ottar camped at night in the more southerly latitudes, but further north where the daylight was almost continuous he could keep sailing night and day. He knew his way around the White Sea, the North Sea and the Baltic; he knew who he would meet, where, from the Lapps to the Old Saxons. He was, in a salty sense, streetwise.

At about the same time, the Anglo-Saxon intelligentsia produced a map which betrayed very little knowledge of any of these maritime highways. On the contrary, the coasts of Norway, the Baltic and even the Channel are here hidden in a fog of ignorance. The map, developed from Roman original in the 9th century with many additions in the 11th, focuses on a virtual world, which puts Scythia where Norway is and itemises the territories of the twelve tribes of Israel (where they weren't). It is a mental map, proposing the geographical basis of God's plan for the planet, rather than a chart of any use to Ottar.

Why the contrast? We can decline any notion that this was just a juvenile mess: it was high art expensively produced at the court. It shows us rather a type of social split that was destined to endure: while non-literate fishermen and sailors risked their lives to feed the country and bring in the luxuries, the upper echelons of society devoted themselves to making images of a new country of England and displaying its place in the known intellectual world.

Scandinavia, a land of lakes and fjords. (© Pauline Moore)

References

This little essay is based on my paper *Travels on the Sea and in the Mind* given at St John's this summer and due to be published by ISAS. Here are a few of the recent publications that inspired me and may inspire readers too.

Barber, Peter (2006) 'Medieval Maps of the World' in P. D. A. Harvey (ed.) *The Hereford World Map. Medieval World Maps and their context* (London: British Library) 1–44

Bately, Janet and Anton Englert (eds.) (2007) *Ohthere's Voyages. A late 9th century account of voyages along the coasts of Norway and Denmark and its cultural context* (Roskilde: Maritime Cultures of the North 1)

Crumlin-Pedersen, O. (2000) 'To be or not to be a cog: the Bremen cog in perspective' *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* [*IJNA*] 29.2: 230–246

Foys, Martin K. (2007) *Virtually Anglo-Saxon: old media, new media and early medieval studies in the late age of print* (Gainsville: University of Florida)

Hodges, R. and W. Bowden (eds.) (1998) *The Sixth Century. Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden: Brill)

Loveluck, Chris and Dries Tys (2006) 'Coastal societies, exchange and identity along the Channel and southern North Sea shores of Europe, AD 600–1000' *Journal of Marine Archaeology* 1: 140–169

Seal, Jon (2003) 'Building a copy of the Gokstad Faering' *IJNA* 32.2: 238–245

Severin Tim (1978) *The Brendan Voyage* (London: Arrow Books)

Their, Katrin (2003) 'Sails in the North — New Perspectives on an Old Problem' *IJNA* 32.2: 182–190

Tilley, Alec (1994) 'Sailing to windward in the ancient Mediterranean' *IJNA* 23.4: 309–313

Westerdahl, C. (2008) 'Boats apart. Building and equipping an Iron Age and early medieval ship in Northern Europe' *IJNA* 37.1: 17–31

For more about Anglo-Saxon and Viking boats and ships and the sea, visit *Saxon* and its online index on the SHS website, especially no. 8 (the capsizing in 1988 of the *Edda*, the replica of the Oseberg ship) and no. 20 (sailing times and landing-places).

A Trip to Scandinavia

Last September nearly fifty SHS members and friends made a ten-day trip, by sea and by coach, to Denmark and Sweden. Organised and led by our guiding secretary, Robert Allen, the main objectives were Viking ship museums and famous burials, two capital cities, and renewing acquaintance with some old friends. PAULINE MOORE recounts the highlights of the journey.

The Sea Stallion, the replica of the Havhingsten fra Glendalough, that sailed to Dublin and back in 2008 (© Michele Allen)

Roskilde

Our first visit was to Roskilde on the Danish island of Sjelland, home of the *Havhingsten* (*Sea Stallion*) *fra Glendalough*. This 29.4m longship is a replica of one of five ships discovered at Skuldelev where they had been scuttled to form a barrier in the channel, late in the 11th century, to protect Roskilde, the royal seat of Denmark. Painstaking, not to say muddy, archaeology in the 1960s revealed tens of thousands of pieces of crumbly wood, kept wet until they could be treated with artificial wax. The remains of the five ships are now housed in a purpose-built museum, and suspended on metal framework, some far more complete than others.

We were greeted by Preben Rather Sørenson, participating Project Manager of the *Sea Stallion's* voyage round Britain in 2007–8, and our first guide: the excellent Anna (also a Sørenson), who showed us the finds room, where objects of all kinds are kept in a water tank (complete with goldfish), investigated, measured and recorded, ready for preservation.

The remains of the original Sea Stallion, Havhingsten fra Glendalough, in the Roskilde Ship Museum (© Pauline Moore)

She told us of a recent find — an even larger ship. Then she proved Roskilde to be more than a museum — it is a workshop where craftsmen replicate the building of ships, from the Viking Age to classics of the 20th century.

Our greatest thrill was to climb on board the *Havhingsten*, first launched in 2004. The original had been built in Glendalough and Preben described life on board on their voyages around Britain. The boat can'flex' between fore and aft by up to 1.5m in heavy seas. In bad weather they baled out twenty tons of water in a day, repaired a broken rudder-fastening in a gale in the Celtic Sea, and over-wintered the ship in Dublin before tackling the English Channel and North Sea the following summer. Pinned in Lowestoft by adverse winds for eight days, the crew visited Sutton Hoo and some of us reciprocated. With his fiancée, Preben later made a presentation at the Maritime Woodbridge weekend.

We spent the afternoon in Roskilde Cathedral — an amazing place, where for centuries members of the Danish royal family have been buried. There are too many treasures to describe here: wood carvings, gilded altar-screen, paintings, astonishing chapels with tombs and sarcophagi. There is a memorial here to Saxo Grammaticus. Again, we were led by good guides, learning much about Denmark's history.

Copenhagen

Next day we were free to roam the lovely city of Copenhagen, entranced by its stylish architecture and canals, seen to full effect in sunshine from open-top bus or canal boat. Most people went to the National Museum, and were struck by several astounding items:

An ancient boat (350–60 BC) preserved in a bog on the island of Als, long and narrow, its flat planking sewn edge to edge with bast (birch fibres). Apparently sunk, elsewhere there was a flotilla, with a small army of men who died with weapons and some chain-mail.

A female body from 1350 BC found in a barrow, where ironstone had deoxygenated the small chamber, so that body, hair and even clothing were preserved.

Inside Roskilde Ship Museum (© Pauline Moore)

Listening to John Warley on the mounds of Valsgärde, the field of the dead (© Jonathan Abson)

An introduction to the mounds at Gamla Uppsala (© Jonathan Abson)

In the Gold Room, among many hoards, are some small, square, thick plaques of gold, with garnets in cloisonné, similar to those found at Sutton Hoo.

On day 5 of the trip we crossed the Øresund by ferry, enjoying views of Elsinore Castle, and made a long journey through Sweden, past lakes, forests, rocks and fields (roadsigns warning of elk) to Stockholm. Our hotel stood beside the huge Globe arena, used for sport and pop concerts.

Stockholm and Uppsala

Next day, while our excellent driver rested, we tasted the wonders of Stockholm. It left most of us wanting to return. One museum holds the huge warship, *Vasa*, which, like Henry VIII's *Mary Rose*, sank about 400 yards from where it was launched, and for similar reasons. The first sight of her is awe-inspiring: she is splendid from lion figure-head to ornate stern. Many of us enjoyed walking around Gamla Stan, the old city, while others took boat cruises to get a wider view. There is so much more to see, including a folk museum/village.

Day 7 was a day of marvels. In a cold wind we stood on the high mounds of Valsgärde (field of the dead), about a mile from Gamla Uppsala, where the burials cover 750 years, listening to the energetic and enthusiastic John Worley, an archaeologist and weapons expert. He told us how earlier Iron Age burials were capped by Viking ship burials of various sizes, and by cremation burials. One ship on a boundary path seems to have been a territorial marker. Valsgärde was a warrior burial site. We handled an Islamic coin, showing something of the extent of trade. On the edges of the site grow oak trees, where men and beasts were sacrificed every nine years.

Nearby, three huge mounds mark what has long been thought to be the burial of three kings descended from the Aesir gods — the Ynglings. The Director of Gamla Uppsala Museum, Anna Ursling, gave us breaking news that one of these (that of a young man) might be contemporary with Valsgärde, even possibly having his remains split between the two sites, being both warrior and king. She told us how it took until the 13th century for Christianity to establish itself here, when the cathedral was built and the Pope founded the archiepiscopal see of Sweden.

Looking round the exhibition in the museum, we recognised the similarities between the finds here and those at Sutton Hoo: particularly the design and panel embellishments of the helmets; some of the strap-work and emblems on the shields, and the use of birds, dragons, boars, horses and wolves in the jewellery.

We moved on to the Gustavianum Museum in the delightful University and Cathedral town of Uppsala. We were greeted by the director before John Worley took us to see the new exhibition of finds from Valsgärde. We handled replica sword, spear and battleaxe, to the delight of our Ormsgard re-enactor.

The steep-sided Anatomical Theatre, where students used to peer down at the dissection of bodies of criminals, was a gruesome delight. Another unusual treasure is the Augsburg

Bodil Sørenson with Robert Allen (© Pauline Moore)

The burial mound over the Ladby Ship (© Pauline Moore)

casket, a monstrous cabinet, highly ornate, given to prevent the Swedes from sacking the town. We shall have to return to find out more about Anders Celsius, and the botanist, Carl Linnaeus. We could not get into the cathedral, as there was a Synod — including archbishops and royalty. That night the Globe Arena hosted Tom Jones. The strains of'Delilah' could be heard dimly from the hotel restaurant…

Ladby

We returned to Copenhagen next day, this time using the splendid Øresund Bridge, five miles long, ending in a tunnel under the sea, and rising in Copenhagen. Our last day took us back to Esjberg, for the DFDS ferry. En route we visited Ladby on the island of Fyn, by the Kerteminde fjord. Odense, its major town, means 'Odin's isle'. At Sutton Hoo last May, several of us hosted a party from the Ladby Viking Ship Museum, a lively, friendly group. Bodil Sørenson now met us, dressed in her costume, and accompanied by five colleagues. They took us to where their 22m ship lies, where it was found, so that you actually walk down into it, under its mound. Originally dragged a few hundred yards from the lapping waters of the fjord in the first half of the 10th century, it was discovered by P.H.Mikkelsen in 1935 after several graves had been found nearby. Its excavation had been led by Rosenberg, who had excavated the Iron Age ship on the island of Als mentioned above.

In 1937 a glass display case was built to house it, with an arched building of concrete over it and a large, turfed mound raised over all. The ship itself catches the breath. We could see the skeletons of eleven horses and several dogs lying in it. The chieftain's chamber had been robbed — a familiar tale — but there is evidence of clinker-built planking, rings for rigging and the original anchor and chain lie in the prow. Some of the grander finds are in Copenhagen, but Ladby has many interesting exhibits, and a good museum shop. We were toasted in mead at lunch, to which we eagerly responded, a song was sung and we were sent off to the sound of a horn.

What delightful, friendly people we met in all these places. What a companionable group we were. This was a truly memorable journey, thanks to Robert Allen's meticulous planning, and the sharing of knowledge wherever we went.

Inside the burial mound: the Ladby ship itself (© Pauline Moore)

Burying the deviants

In March, Andrew Reynolds published *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs*, the first detailed account of how society dealt with social outcasts between the Romans and the Normans. It is an expanded version of his doctoral thesis, which was supervised by Martin Carver. It includes an analysis of the Sutton Hoo execution burials, which Andrew discussed in the SHS spring lecture in 1997 (see *Saxon* no. 27). He is now reader in Medieval Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL. The book is published by Oxford University Press at £65 (ISBN 13: 9780199544554).

Dr Andrew Reynolds

A Plaque for Basil Brown

There has long been a feeling that, as a local hero, Basil Brown should have a blue plaque on his house in Botesdale, Suffolk, but until this year English Heritage has rejected the idea. Although they may now be reconsidering it, the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History (SIAH) has meanwhile commissioned a commemorative plaque for Rickinghall Church, in the village where he lived for so long.

The seventieth anniversary of the discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship burial was the perfect occasion to present it, so a service to mark the anniversary and commemorate Basil Brown (1888–1977) was held in Rickinghall Inferior Church at 3pm on Sunday 30 August 2009. SHS chairman Mike Argent, with other members, represented the society.

Revd Chris Norburn, Rector of Redgrave cum Botesdale with the Rickinghalls led Evensong. The commemoration was introduced by Edward Martin, chairman of the SIAH, and included an address by Clive Paine, the excursions secretary. In between there were readings by Sam Newton from *Beowulf* (1126–52, the royal ship burial, read in Anglo-Saxon); by Jane Carr, SIAH general secretary, from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (chapter 15, in which the East Angles accept Christianity); by National Trust archaeologist Angus Wainwright from Basil Brown's diary; as well as a personal memory from Gilbert Burroughes.

It was Gilbert Burroughes, of the SIAH's Suffolk Archaeology Field Group, who created the plaque and presented it to the rector. In imitation red Samian ware, it shows Basil in characteristic pose, right hand cradling his pipe, left hand on hip, cap on head. It bears his name and dates and describes him as a Suffolk archaeologist. An oak frame has also been commissioned for it, with an inscription commemorating him as the discoverer of the Sutton Hoo ship burial. If and when the diocese grants the necessary faculty, it will go on the north wall of Rickinghall church.

Congratulations to Gilbert Burroughes on his admission as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries on 12 November.

Left to right, Angus Wainwright, Revd Chris Norburn, Gilbert Burroughes, Edward Martin (© Mike Argent)

Basil Brown at Sutton Hoo in 1967

Rickinghall Church (© Rosemary Hoppitt)

Excavator of the Mound 1 Barrow

Dr Paul Ashbee MA, D. Litt., FSA (23 June 1918–19 August 2009)

Tributes flowed in, particularly from Kent archaeologists and barrow specialists, when Dr Paul Ashbee died last August. To SHS members, he is the excavator of mound 1 itself — the barrow which covered the Sutton Hoo ship burial. VALERIE FENWICK, assistant director of the '60s re-excavation, remembers his contribution.

Dr Paul Ashbee (© Kent Archaeology)

Paul Ashbee was already established as the country's leading barrow-wright when he was invited by his old chum, Rupert Bruce-Mitford, to undertake the excavation of the two residual parts of mound 1 and the three dumps of spoil removed from its excavation in 1939. The original intention was that this would run concurrently with the British Museum's re-excavation of the impression of the ship. In 1965 a start was made and with much help from local volunteers the entire site was shaved of vegetation. The Ordnance Survey established a permanent datum and the whole site was contour-surveyed at six-inch intervals. In this way further mounds were revealed together with some small irregular mounds which Ashbee suspected could cover Bronze Age burials. The pre-war spoil heaps and wartime anti-glider ditches were now clear to see. In the event, for practical reasons, his excavation had to be postponed until 1967 when re-excavation of the ship impression had been completed.

Just William

From the road to the east, Paul's car would arrive in a cloud of dust as he negotiated the bumpy footpath, the only access permitted by the hostile landowner, Mrs Barton. Having once been in a car crash, he sported thereafter a riding hat when driving. It was obvious that he and Rupert enjoyed each other's small eccentricities. Rupert was not a dirt archaeologist but could permit himself to relax when Paul was around. A big humorous man, Paul had a ponderous way of speaking. We were intrigued to meet his chain-smoking wife named after her aunt, author of the *Just William* books. Richmal suffered more than any of us from the absurd ban on smoking imposed by Mrs Barton, and had to puff secretly in the car.

From left: Geoffrey Ingram-Smith, Rupert Bruce-Mitford and Paul Ashbee confer at the west end of mound 1 in 1965. In the background is the first photographic 'tower' and comfortable site HQ. (© Valerie Fenwick)

The start of the excavation of the remains of mound 1 and its associated dumps in 1967. (© Valerie Fenwick)

If he felt it was something of a come-down to be asked to excavate the mutilated remnant of an Anglo-Saxon mound, Paul did not show it. Citing the re-deposited Beaker sherds found in the infill of the ship, Rupert was convincing on the potential for prehistoric remains to be found beneath it, while I described an earthwork near the site (which Mrs Barton had deliberately ploughed down as soon as we brought it to her notice). The challenge of dealing with this most difficult of soils clearly appealed and offered an opportunity to study and compare old and recent processes of site formation.

Analytical skills

Paul Ashbee is familiar to students for his synthetic *Bronze Age Round Barrow in Britain* (1960) and *Earthen Long Barrow in Britain* (1970), and publications on individual barrows. His model approach to the Sutton Hoo barrow is less easy to access, hidden as it is within the bulk of the first volume of the definitive publication and outshone by the ship described in it. [Rupert Bruce-Mitford et al., *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial* vol.1 (London 1975) chapter 4 B, pp.303–44.] This is a pity as the chapter is a fine demonstration of his analytical skills. The bottoms of serried cart ruts identified on the ground covered by the mound could have been made by a 'two-wheeled cart, with iron-shod wheels about 4ft. 6 in. apart' and these 'record the process of cutting and infilling' (p. 323). He calculated that between 17,000 and 20,000 cubic feet of material had been brought to the site, but that even when the barrow was newly built the burial chamber roof was at no great depth: 'Thus it would have been possible for a finial to have protruded above the surface, facing west towards the river' (p. 328). Our re-excavation had proved that the ship had been lowered into a close-fitting trench and not the large round-ended shape manufactured during Hutchison's survey in 1939. Paul reasoned, 'The spoil-heaps on either side of the boat-trench, assuming a walk-way on either side sufficient for the practicalities of the occasion, could, in great measure, have determined something of the character of the circumstances surrounding the deposition of the kingly assemblage within the chamber'. Prior to this the walkways had been essential for the ship-party to be able to lower it in a carefully controlled manner. 'The critical factor is that if sufficient men used enough timber and ropes in concert under adequate direction, the desired result could have been obtained' (p.327).

Paul was a 'pre-processual' archaeologist. His talents enhanced an essential stage in the evaluation of the Sutton Hoo site, a stage overshadowed by subsequent high-profile activity and barely mentioned in the museum display there. I am grateful to the Society for this opportunity to acknowledge his contribution.

What's new in Anglo-Saxon archaeology?

Apart from the Staffordshire hoard, that is. MARTIN CARVER here presents the first in a series of annual commentaries on the latest in Anglo-Saxon archaeology.

There are two kinds of 'new' in archaeology: new, as in what's just been published, and new, as in what's going the rounds of the digs and pubs. I'll try and do a bit of both.

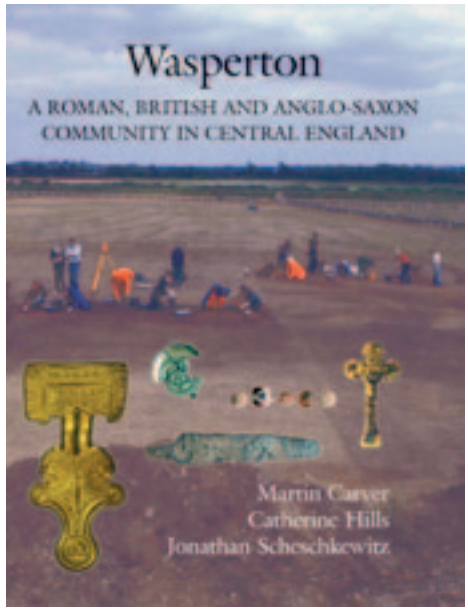
Immigrants

Were the Anglo-Saxons immigrants from north Germany and Denmark? You might be surprised that Anglo-Saxon scholars are still asking this question, which is of course all bound up with whether modern English people fancy themselves as Germans or Britons. Sober opinion sees us as mixture of both, but we still don't know the details. How many immigrants were there? Were they folk or nobles? Where did they settle? And so forth. The new weapon in the armoury is stable isotope analysis, a technique that tells you where a person was born and spent their early years — by looking at the residual isotopes of strontium and oxygen from the local groundwater that got into their teeth (and stayed there). Janet Montgomery at Bradford and Tamsin O'Connell at Cambridge are amongst those making the running.

Wasperton

Three sites show us where the argument has got to. At Wasperton (just published) we have a full sequence: people were buried in a Roman agricultural enclosure with Roman grave goods in the 4th century, their graves aligned N-S. In the 5th century, people were buried in the same enclosure, but without grave goods; some graves were lined with timber or stones — and many were aligned W-E. In the late 5th century a group of cremations in Anglo-Saxon pots joined the same cemetery, in their own little enclosure. In the 6th century most people were buried with Anglo-Saxon spears, beads or brooches and aligned S-N, but a small group occupying the SE corner went on with the British style — no grave goods and lined with stones. In the mid 6th century, the people of Wasperton suddenly got interested in the prehistoric landscape, and re-used some Bronze Age mounds. In the later 6th century, they built mounds of their own and put wealthy men and women in them. But one 7th century burial, lined with stone joined the 'British' SE enclave. Then the cemetery was abandoned — and presumably the next stop was the parish church.

The stable isotopes meanwhile relate a



fascinating sub-plot: the Romans, as you might expect, come from all over — including the Mediterranean. The 5th century population came from east, west and south. From the 6th century population was all local — except for our stone-lined 7th century burial in that SE enclave — he was from the Mediterranean. These measurements were based on samples of course, but Wasperton has the distinction of being one of only two Anglo-Saxon cemeteries to be completely excavated (Spong Hill is the other), so offers us a reasonably representative window on village life in central England. In the 4th century the mixed-race villagers worked and died on a Roman farm; people still moved about in the 5th century, after the protection of Empire was lifted. In the late 5th century a group of eastern immigrants arrived — probably from East Anglia — and from then on the community went over to the Anglo-Saxon way of death.

The other two cemeteries both nearby in Oxfordshire, and very close to each other, tell the same story, but this time there's a move of site: if we are talking grave goods, Queensford Farm is a Romano-British cemetery, and Berinsfield is Anglo-Saxon. There was once an idea that they were contemporary, thus allowing 'British' and 'Saxon' burial parties to scowl at each other across the field. Not any more. The new radiocarbon studies show that one followed the other without a gap, suggesting just one group of local people who stopped being Britons and reinvented themselves as Saxons.

Wallingford *burh*

If we now fast-forward to the 9th century, we can follow the fortunes of the later Anglo-Saxons as town builders in the 'Burh to Borough' project. Focussed on Wallingford on the Thames, this five year campaign led by Neil Christie of Leicester University is aimed at discovering the plan of the *burh* (ie fort) at Wallingford and what became of it on the Norman conquest and later. Although this is a modern town, well equipped with pubs and tea shops, Anglo-Saxon Wallingford is exceptionally well preserved, with large open spaces at Bull Croft and Kine Croft on its west side. Here you can still see the bulk of the rampart and the deep overgrown ditch of the 9th century defences originally built to keep out the Danes.

Part of the project is to bring earlier excavations on the defences and under the Norman castle to publication. Another part is to discover exactly how the Anglo-Saxons used the interior space through time. Hot tips are: a monastery and palace in the 7/8th century, joined by a tented encampment in the 9th /10th, (the *burh*), acquiring a merchant quarter in the 10/11th, all flattened by the Normans. But we shall see. The project has a strong community angle involving local helpers and posting regular updates in Wallingford Museum, as well as on their website.

The site of the burh at Wallingford

References:

Wasperton: Martin Carver, Catherine Hills and Jonathan Scheschkewitz (2009) *Wasperton. A Roman, British and Anglo-Saxon Community in Central England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press)

Queenford Farm and Berinsfield: Hills, C.M. & T.C. O'Connell (2009) 'New light on the Anglo-Saxon succession: two cemeteries and their dates', *Antiquity* 83 (published on 1 December)

Burh to Borough at Wallingford: British Archaeology 106, June 2009; www.le.ac.uk/ar/njc10/wallingford_project/

A Viking hoard from the Vale of York

For some, Athelstan, grandson of Alfred the Great, is the first king of all England. In 927 he recaptured the kingdom of Northumbria from the Vikings who had held it since 869, adding it to his dominions of Wessex and Mercia. In the unrest that followed, it seems that a wealthy Viking buried a hoard in a field near modern Harrogate, which was finally discovered in 2007 by two metal detectorists, a father and son from Leeds.

The Vale of York Hoard, jointly acquired last year by the British Museum and York Museums Trust. British Museum conservators have now cleaned the vessel and its contents, restoring them to the condition in which they were deposited in about 928. (Photos © Trustees of the British Museum)

Its richness makes it the most important Viking hoard discovered since 1840 and it has been valued at over a million pounds. A fifth of that value is attributable to the silver gilt cup which contained 617 coins and 67 other silver items like ingots and ornaments.

The British Museum has acquired the hoard jointly with York Museums Trust. Following conservation, it will be on display in Room 2 at the BM from February.

The significance of the hoard is that it reveals new facts about conditions at the time. It had been supposed that areas like modern Staffordshire and Yorkshire had already been lost by the Vikings to the Anglo-Saxons, yet the Vale of York hoard includes Viking coins made at that time in those regions. One is marked Rorivacastr, apparently from Roceter in 10th century Staffordshire, right on the border of Viking and Anglo-Saxon control. Other coins came from Scandinavia and the continent, and even Tashkent and Afghanistan. But it also contains a coin of Athlestan, which he minted after a council of northern kings that he held in 927.

The cup or bowl is mid 9th century and in modern terms comes from eastern France or western Germany. It is decorated with vine leaves, a familiar Christian symbol, and is therefore thought to have been liturgical and possibly looted from a church.

The 9th century continental bowl featured on the front cover of last November's Portable Antiquities Scheme and Treasure Annual Report 2007 www.finds.org.uk/documents/ar/Report.pdf

A short book for the non-specialist, *The Vale of York Hoard and other Viking hoards in Britain and Ireland*, has just been co-authored by two British Museum curators, Gareth Williams and Barry Ager.

A Pretty picture

In pride of place in the lounge at Tranmer House, the National Trust has displayed two paintings by the Dutch artist Cor Visser. He was living in the Ipswich area between the two World Wars on a houseboat on the River Orwell. His best known works include architecturally accurate pictures of buildings and, probably his speciality, any scene including boats, rivers and quay sides. The National Trust pictures are very different. They are two, probably specially commissioned portraits, one of Mrs Edith Pretty, the owner of Sutton Hoo when it was painted in the late 1930s, and the other of her son Robert Pretty (1930–1988) when he was eight years old.

The portraits face each other along the length of the lounge and appear in good condition, thanks firstly to their careful and skilful cleaning and conservation by Sally Woodcock — an independent art expert working for the National Trust — and secondly to the Sutton Hoo Society paying for the work.

On National Heritage Day last year (12 September) Sally was working in the lounge at Tranmer House (*see photo*), bringing Robert back to life and explaining to her stream of visitors what she was doing and why. With the simplest of materials — cotton buds and de-ionised water — she gently returned a life-like glow to the canvas, especially to the toy ship Robert is clutching in his right hand. The mould slowly disappeared, and the frame was repaired and strengthened using tools more familiar to a watch maker than a handyman.

Spoil yourself next time you are at Sutton Hoo and ask if you can see the two portraits, bright and shining, back where they belong. But, more importantly, if you get the chance in the future to watch Sally working on a picture take it, it is a real treat. *Mike Argent*

Sally Woodcock restoring Cor Visser's portrait of Mrs Pretty's eight year-old son Robert (© Mike Argent)

Street House comes to Sutton Hoo

It could be the only known royal burial ground in the north of England. Dating from 650, the site at Street House Farm, Loftus, near the cliffs at Saltburn, North Yorkshire, has been excavated since 2004 by independent archaeologist Stephen Sherlock, whose project was highly commended in the 2008 British Archaeological Awards. Stephen will be visiting Sutton Hoo in April to deliver the society's spring lecture (details, back page).

Stephen Sherlock will be delivering the SHS spring lecture on 21 April

The centre piece of the site was the burial of a woman wearing jewellery, laid on a bed in a grave under a ploughed-out low mound with a ring ditch. She wore a spectacular and unique pendant: a shield-shaped jewel, fluted like a scallop, surrounded by *cloisonné* gold and garnets. This burial (grave 42) seems to be the earliest of 109 graves, in a cemetery that was probably used for no more than fifty years. Unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon England, the graves were arranged in pairs in a square around the mound, rather than in a line, which was more usual for sites in the Yorkshire Wolds. This clearly shows a burial rite different from that of Northumbrian religious houses of the time, like St Hilda's foundation of 657 at Whitby, only ten miles away. Though some of the artefacts could be interpreted as Christian, the bed under the mound, with a sunken-featured building (SFB or *grubenhaus*) nearby, all sited within a prehistoric enclosure, all suggest a pagan site.

The gold, garnet and gemstone pendant from the bed burial (© Brian Smith)

The bones

The bones and all the other organic remains had been destroyed by the acid soil of East Cleveland, so identification is almost impossible. The most that can confidently be said is that she seems to have been a member of the local aristocracy, possibly a princess, whose adherence to the old ways could have made her the focus of a pagan cult.

In the 1980s, Stephen Sherlock had excavated another local Anglo-Saxon site at Norton near Stockton-on-Tees, but when he uncovered Street House Farm he was researching for a doctorate on iron age settlement in the region of the Tees Valley. The site had a previously excavated neolithic long cairn: his own excavations between 2004 and 2007 revealed nine iron age round houses and thirty related graves, within two ditched enclosures. But in 2005 he had begun to recover Anglo-Saxon material: one grave contained a fine single-edged sword or langseax; another, a woman's girdle hanger. The following year came the (possibly mortuary) *grubenhaus* and a further thirteen graves, including the bed burial.

The Street House Farm site in 2005 (© Stephen Sherlock)

The wooden bed

The wooden bed was 180 cms × 80 cms × 30 cms high, with an inclined headboard.and decorative iron cleats to hold it together. The grave goods included two other gemstone pendants, part of a jet hair pin and possibly the remains of a small casket. A second female burial, whether a relative or retainer, lay in grave 43 next to the bed burial. It yielded a necklace of gold wire beads with a triangular Anglo-Saxon gold pendant, which had an iron age glass bead at its centre.

As the work continued with Teesside Archaeological Society, another sixty-five graves were uncovered in 2007, with more jewellery including bracteates — thin, gold, coin-like amulets worn around the neck. Beadwork and 'Style 2' decoration invite comparison with East Anglia and Kent, while the bed burial — one of only a dozen discovered in England — might be compared to the best known example from Swallowcliffe Down in Wiltshire. With its unique cemetery layout, Martin Carver calls the site 'very odd'; Stephen Sherlock says it is 'enigmatic': we shall hear his latest thoughts in April — including news of some royal recycling in the bed, which is currently undergoing conservation at York Archaeological Trust.

www.teesarchaeology.com/new/StreetHouseGallery.html
Sherlock, Steve, and Simmons, Mark 'A seventh-century royal cemetery at Street House, north-east Yorkshire, England', *Antiquity* vol. 82 issue 316, June 2008 (http://antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/sherlock
'The Lost Royal Cult of Street House, Yorkshire', *British Archaeology* issue 100, May/June 2008 www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba100/feat2.shtml

Events Diary

Abbreviations
SHS Sutton Hoo Society
NTSH National Trust Sutton Hoo
SIAH Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History

***Medieval Seminar**
Lectures marked with an asterisk are part of the Medieval Seminar run jointly by the Institute of Archaeology and the British Museum. The convenors, Dr Andrew Reynolds (IoA) and Sonja Marzinzik (BM), are kindly inviting any SHS members who would like to attend, but to help the seating arrangements, please email Sonja in advance at smarzinzik@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

†Wuffing Education
Wuffing Education events are all Study Days, lasting from 10.00 to 16.30. They cost £38 and are held at Tranmer House, NTSH. Booking is essential: please contact Cliff Hoppitt on 01394 383908 or cliff@wuffingeducation.co.uk; the full programme is listed at www.wuffings.co.uk/education

Saturday January 16, 10.30–16.30
†Wuffing Education
The Staffordshire Hoard and the Rise and Fall of Mercia
Study Day conducted by Dr Sam Newton
Tranmer House, NTSH

Tuesday 19 January, 17.30
***Medieval Seminar**
Sutton Hoo, Scandinavia and the boat graves of Middle Sweden
Lecture by Dr John Ljungkvist
British Museum (Seminar Room, Department. of Africa, Oceania and the Americas)

Saturday January 30, 10.30–16.30
†Wuffing Education
The Reckoning of King Rædwald
Study Day conducted by Dr Sam Newton
Tranmer House, NTSH

Saturday February 6, 10.30–16.30
†Wuffing Education
Archaeological Artefacts Explored
Study Day conducted by Bob & Jane Carr
Tranmer House, NTSH

Friday February 19, 19.00 for 19.30
SHS AGM
A short AGM will be followed by a talk in which Jude Plouviez of the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service updates her account at the last AGM of her survey work at Rendlesham, as featured on the front page of the last issue of *Saxon*
Tranmer House, NTSH

Saturday February 27, 10.30–16.30
†Wuffing Education
Pre-Christian Gods of Old England in Art and Literature
Study Day conducted by Steve Pollington
Tranmer House, NTSH

Saturday March 6, 10.30–16.30
†Wuffing Education
Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Age
Study Day conducted by Professor Michelle Brown
Tranmer House, NTSH

Saturday 13 March (time TBA)
SHS Guides Annual Briefing and Lunch
NTSH, exact venue TBA

NTSH Summer Exhibition opens
Featuring the work of Victor Ambrus, illustrator for Channel 4's *Time Team*, and Basil Brown's Sutton Hoo excavation notebook, on loan from the British Museum

Wednesday 17 March, 19.30
Ipswich Numismatic Society
Finds from Coddenham, Suffolk
Talk by David Cummings, chairman of Ipswich Metal Detecting Club
Citizens Advice Bureau, 19 Tower Street, Ipswich
Further details from the honorary secretary, David Kightley david.kightley@btinternet.com (01473 728653)

Saturday March 20, 10.30–16.30
†Wuffing Education
Sutton Hoo in the Light of the Staffordshire Hoard
Study Day conducted by Dr Angela Evans & Dr Noel Adams
Tranmer House, NTSH

Saturday 27–Sunday 28 March
Archaeology in Suffolk
A celebration of 60 years of reporting Suffolk's archaeology, is a two-day conference sponsored by CBA East Anglia, Suffolk Institute of Archaeology & History, Suffolk County Council and University Campus Suffolk.

To mark the first annual listing of the county's archaeological discoveries in 1955, since published yearly by the SIAH, the conference will present an overview of the current state of knowledge of the county's heritage, period by period. From Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Dr Jess Tipper will speak on the early Anglo-Saxons, and Keith Wade on the Saxon origins of Suffolk towns. From Norwich Castle Museum, Dr Tim Pestell will discuss the early and middle Saxon ecclesiastical landscape, all on Saturday afternoon.

The venue is University Campus Suffolk Waterfront Building, Neptune Quay, Ipswich IP4 1QJ. The cost is £35 including buffet lunches and Saturday evening reception. For the full conference programme and an application form go to the SIAH website www.suffolkarch.org.uk

Wednesday 21 April, 19.30
SHS Spring Lecture
Stephen Sherlock discusses his discovery and subsequent excavation of the Northumbrian royal cemetery at Street House, Loftus, Teesside
NTSH, exact venue TBA

1 May
Main copy deadline for the summer edition of *Saxon*

Tuesday 11 May, 17.30
***Medieval Seminar**
'Heaven swallowed the smoke': similarities and variations in the Anglo-Saxon mortuary rite of cremation
Lecture by Dr Jacqui McKinley
British Museum (Seminar Room, Department. of Africa, Oceania and the Americas)

Saturday 29 May, 11.00
SHS Special Lecture
Dr Kevin Leahy, national advisor on early medieval metalwork to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, talks about the Staffordshire Hoard, which he catalogued: members £7.50, non-members £8.50
Riverside Theatre, Woodbridge

Wednesday 2 June, 17.30
***Medieval Seminar**
Fecit or Fake It? Anglo-Saxon forgeries old and new
Lecture by Professor Leslie Webster
Institute of Archaeology, 31–34 Gordon Square, WC1H 0PY (Room 612)

Saturday 12 June
Summer outing to Wychurst, Kent
The continuing construction of a 10th century manorial estate by Regia Anglorum
www.wychurst.com
http://wychurst.regia.org
http://www.regia.org
Details TBA

Monday 13–Friday 17 September
Autumn excursion to Durham; Bede's World, Jarrow; Alnwick and Lindisfarne; Hadrian's Wall, including Vindolanda and Housesteads
Details TBA

Registered Charity No 293097

Sutton Hoo Society
www.suttonhoo.org

President
The Earl of Cranbrook

Research Director
Professor Martin Carver

Chairman
Mike Argent

Treasurer
Jonathan Abson

Membership Secretary
Jane Wright
32 Mariners Way, Aldeburgh IP15 5QH

Guiding Co-ordinator
Robert Allen
White Gables, Thornley Drive
Rushmere St Andrew, Ipswich IP4 3LR
01473 728018

Minutes Secretary
Brenda Brown

Publications
Pauline Moore
69 Barton Road, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1JH
01394 382617

Website & Publicity
Robert Anderson
suttonhoo@ntlworld.com

Guides' Training
Lindsay Lee

Committee Members
Sue Banyard
Veronica Bennett

National Trust Regional Archaeologist
Angus Wainwright

Saxon
Editor Nigel Maslin
Production & Printing
Henry Ling Ltd,
The Dorset Press, Dorchester