

# SAXON



*Ladies of the Society in costume (Sue, Helena, Chantel and Carole) with two wuff-ings (Steve Cant's amusing observation!). Mobile 'phone photo by Josh.*

Studies of East Anglian Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon dogs found that they were generally quite large (a withers height *c.* 60 cm\*) having roles as hunting hounds, guard dogs or used for herding. It was not until Late Anglo-Saxon times that dogs became more morphologically diverse, no doubt reflecting an increasing variety of uses.

\* Crabtree, P. J., (2015). A Note on the Role of Dogs in Anglo-Saxon Society: Evidence from East Anglia, *International Journal of Osteology*, Volume 25, Issue 6: 976-980.

In February 2020, Susanne Hakenbeck was a guest speaker at the Sutton Hoo Society AGM. This is her summary of the talk from that evening:

**How (and why) did princes appear?  
Using new archaeological methods to  
understand high-ranking burials in the early  
medieval period by Susanne Hakenbeck,  
Department of Archaeology, University of  
Cambridge**

How do we get from the burial of a high-ranking military leader – Childeric – in the late fifth century to the institution of kingship in the eighth century, as exemplified by Charlemagne, and later Alfred and others? Over the course of 300 or 400 years, early medieval societies in western Europe transformed themselves from the political fragmentation of the late Roman Empire and its aftermath to fully established social hierarchies. We see an increasing gap between rich and poor, and territorial kingdoms headed by kings and queens. In England, we have good evidence for this trajectory. The big chronological study by John Hines, Alex Bayliss and their collaborators (2013) reveals a shift towards increasing numbers of burials with no grave goods and the emergence of a small number of extremely wealthy burials in the seventh century, chiefly among them Sutton Hoo. This shows a growing disparity between rich and poor and the emergence of a distinct class of the ‘super-rich’. How did this happen?

The process of how such elites could emerge is best illustrated by a case study from another part of Europe – the Longobard migrations from Pannonia to Italy in AD568. A recent collaborative project (to which I contributed isotopic analysis) attempted to understand the nature and impact of the Longobard migration (Amorim *et al.* 2018). We compared two cemeteries, Szólád in Pannonia (modern Hungary) and Collegno in Piedmont, in northern Italy. We studied their archaeological evidence

and also carried out genomic and isotope analysis.

The headline results were that we indeed found evidence for migration. At both sites, we identified two groups with shared genetic ancestry – northern European and Mediterranean (Italian and some Iberian). The strontium isotope ratios ( $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ ) in their teeth showed that the northern European group had been more mobile than the Mediterranean group, and in some cases, individuals had moved more than once in their lives. In Collegno it was clear that the group with Italian ancestry was local, based on the isotopic evidence, while the group with northern European ancestry were migrants. What was even more exciting was that we were able to identify family groups by their genetic relatedness. Paired with strontium isotope evidence, we located the first generation of immigrants – the founders of the new community. They were clustered together in a part of the cemetery and had exceptionally rich burials. They were also privileged in other ways. The analysis of nitrogen isotope ratios ( $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ ) in their bones revealed that these wealthy individuals also had higher proportions of animal protein, probably meat, in their diet than the local Italians.

The evidence at Collegno therefore tells a story about two very different groups. The immigrant families had wealthy graves (Fig. 1) and retained that wealth over several generations, and they may have been able to eat higher quality food than the locals. Their history of migration clearly had no detrimental effect on their wealth or their ability to access food resources. The local people, on the other hand, had few or no grave goods and they ate less high-quality food, in particular meat. We can therefore imagine a scenario where elite migrants settled and were able to extract high-quality food from locals who continued farming the land, and perhaps even were in a state of servitude to the migrants.

In the early medieval period, we see socially distinct groups emerge over time. We have many examples of this in England, but other parts of continental Europe also saw the



rise of very rich burials that were set physically apart from the graves of ‘commoners’. Isotopic analysis of early eighth-century elite burials in southern Germany shows that these individuals also had privileged access to high-quality food (Czermak *et al.* 2006).

Returning to Collegno, here multiple generations of the same family were both wealthy and well-fed. This suggests that their elite status was inherited. Their ability to extract higher quality food from the locals, following their migration, may even give us a glimpse of how the ability to control land and resources began to be passed down generations. In Collegno the difference between social groups is not yet very big – after all, everyone was still buried in the same cemetery – but over time elite groups became further and further removed from common people until they were buried in churches, ships and chambers that were completely unlike ordinary burials. Are we seeing in Collegno the seed corns of a hereditary aristocracy?

### Bibliography

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*Figure 1: Wealthy burials at Collegno. Left: grave 48, late sixth century; right: grave 53, AD 600-630. Image source: Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Città Metropolitana di Torino, archivio fotografico. Permission: C. Giostra.*

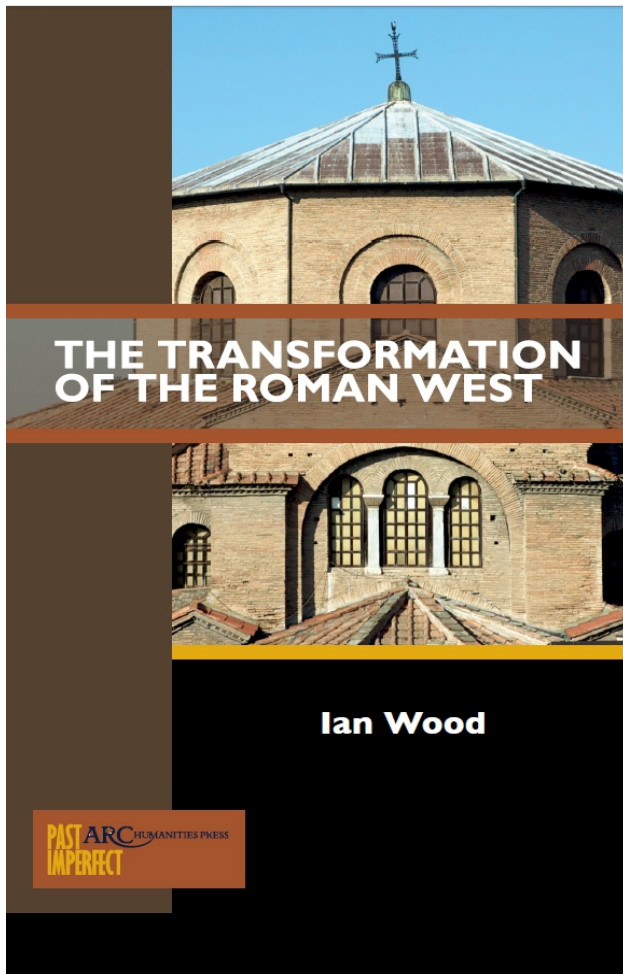
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Knipper, C., *et al.* (2015). ‘Superior in life—superior in death: dietary distinction of Central European prehistoric and medieval elites’. *Current Anthropology*, 56/4: 579-89.

A review of *The Transformation of the Roman West* by Ian Wood.  
ARC Humanities Press 2018, 170pp.



This short book apparently expands upon a 2016 Medieval Studies congressional lecture on ‘Religion and the end of the Roman West’, which is a far more accurate description than the all-embracing title of the enlarged book.

It is, in fact, the same format and size as the recent (and recently reviewed here) booklet by Susan Oosthuizen, examining the notion of Saxon migrants into Britain [SAXON 71]. The present pocket-diary-sized book is a useful prelude. With notes following each chapter, the text ends shortly after p.120. Its starting point is Gibbon, who identified the rise of ‘Barbarism’ and of Religion as two of the main factors in the collapse of the Roman West.

One strength of this survey is to point out that Gibbon lacked a hugely important tranche

of modern evidence – archaeology – but there are other matters to deal with. Ian Wood, emeritus professor at Leeds first considers ‘barbarism’ and the demands of the military. Wood contends that the barbarians were never that great in numbers and that even if there really had been 80,000 invaders, the empire should have been able to cope. The predations of

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Admittedly the demands of the army were huge. In an imperial population variously estimated at between 20 and 200 million, the army is thought to have been of Napoleonic size, anything from 400,000 to half as many again. It took the lion’s share of imperial income to maintain it. Gibbon also cited as fatal weaknesses the division of the empire into West and East (Rome and Constantinople) under two different emperors, as well as the ambitions of different generals.

A further allegation of Gibbon’s is that the emperors were distracted by doctrinal arguments in the synod at Nicaea in AD325,

Constantinople in AD381, Ephesus fifty years later and Chalcedon twenty years after that. Two or three hundred bishops attended these gatherings, and the emperors certainly had to devote a lot of time, attention, effort and resources to them. The reader of this book will find it useful to have a working knowledge of the central debates about Arianism, Donatism, Priscillianism, Pelagianism, Nestorianism and Monophysitism. Here a better guide would be the relevant chapters of *A History of Christianity*, the voluminous Penguin by the Oxford Professor of the History of the Church, Diarmaid MacCulloch, which the BBC turned into a television series a couple of years ago. Professor Wood maintains that distracting as these debates were, it is hard to see them as a factor in the downfall of the Western Empire, if only because they were most familiar in the East.

There follows the main thrust of this essay, the Church in numbers. There are several pages of numbers of clergy and monks gleaned from various sources across Europe. By 600 there were more than 100,000 of the religious in the former Roman Empire, thousands of monastics in Constantinople, and 10,000 in Jerusalem by 614. Since their role was quite different from their predecessors, Wood makes the point that they were 'a new section within society' (p.73).

Hundreds of thousands, he writes, entered the Church in the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries, so that by 600 the religious had effectively replaced the soldiery as a significant element in society. These people were, of course, literate and helped form the bureaucracy of the burgeoning medieval monarchy, particularly in the 5th-century Eastern Empire.

There follows a chapter on financing the Church, and how revenues had to support the episcopacy, the clerics, the poor and church fabric. Professor Wood concludes that while this cost is undeniable, he finds it hard to see it as irreversibly harmful to the Empire. Only in the late 6th century did it begin to impinge on the resources available to medieval rulers. Finally, Professor Wood writes that it was the rise of

Christianity and its Church, rather than the fall of Rome or the coming of the so-called barbarians, which was the central feature of the 4th to 7th centuries, the key difference between the Medieval World and the very different Classical World.

Coincidentally your reviewer has just finished reading the biography of Thomas Cromwell, again by Professor MacCulloch, which of course includes the suppression of the monasteries in the 1530s, which saw another massive transfer of ecclesiastical money and resources, albeit in the opposite direction.

**Nigel Maslin**

### Behind the Scenes: Analysing Anglo-Saxon Rendlesham – A new online series

*Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) have organised a new online series of talks about the internationally important Anglo-Saxon royal settlement at Rendlesham.*

Rendlesham is the largest and wealthiest settlement of the 5th to 8th centuries known in England and has been identified as a royal estate centre. Over the past 12 years, systematic survey and small-scale excavation have generated a huge amount of information and for the first time, the specialists who have been analysing the archaeological material are now sharing their work with the public.

This new online series of talks called *Behind the Scenes: Analysing Anglo-Saxon Rendlesham* is available to watch at [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham](http://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham)

Exploring different themes over ten talks, the specialists bring the archaeology to life and tell us even more about Rendlesham as a place and its connections with the wider Anglo-Saxon world. Christopher Scull begins the series with an overview of the Anglo-Saxon archaeology and what this can tell us about the kingdom of the East Angles. Tom Williamson then explores

how the subtleties of the wider environment can help us understand Rendlesham’s landscape context. The series then delves into the detail of the metal objects with Faye Minter, the coinage with Andrew Woods, the metal working with Eleanor Blakelock and the animal bone with Charlotte Scull. The series then looks out to the longer chronology, wider landscape and territory to which Rendlesham belongs, including the Roman occupation with Jude Plouviez, the administrative landscape with Stuart Brookes and place names with Eleanor Rye. To end the series Keith Wade explores the development of Ipswich, which became a major Anglo-Saxon international port and town as the site at Rendlesham started to decline at the end of the 7th century.



Silver gilt horse and rider brooch © Suffolk County Council

This series is a partnership between two projects: ‘Rendlesham Revealed Anglo-Saxon Life in South-East Suffolk’ funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and ‘Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia 400-800CE’ funded by the Leverhulme Trust.



Copper alloy balance beam fragment with bird design © Suffolk County Council



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You can watch the online series at [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham)

## Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Oulton, Suffolk

*A large Anglo-Saxon cemetery, dating back as early as the 6th century, has been excavated near Oulton ahead of housing development.*

Over 200 sets of remains were discovered, with some graves containing copper-alloy brooches, wrist clasps, strings of beads made of amber and glass, small iron knives and silver pennies.

The excavation of such cemeteries in their entirety is rare in England. What makes this cemetery so unusual is that the skeletons were mostly only visible as 'sand-silhouettes', a delicate form of preservation similar to that found in graves at the cemeteries of nearby Sutton Hoo and Snape.

Archaeological Solutions Ltd, who carried out the excavations, painstakingly excavated the delicate remains of 17 cremations and 191 inhumation burials. Due to the highly acidic soil the skeletons had mostly vanished and were luckily preserved as fragile shapes and shadows in the sand. These shadows also revealed traces of the wooden coffins that some of the individuals were buried in.



*Stamp decorated vessel* © Archaeological Solutions

Unusually, many graves also included fragments of pottery and in some cases complete decorated pots. Weapons were rare, with a sword in one grave, iron spear heads in three others, and at least one shield – the metal fittings of the

shield remained in place around the silhouette of the dissolved wooden boards. Many of the artefacts were so fragile they had to be block lifted for micro-excavation in the labs at Norfolk Museum Service for analysis and conservation where they were also able to recover pieces of textiles and leather.

The site appears to represent a farming community buried over several generations with male, female, child and infant burials. Interestingly, the cemetery was in continuous use during a time which saw major changes in burial practice and the conversion to Christianity. This is a nationally significant discovery and continues to evidence what a historic place Suffolk is. The site lies within the 7th-century Kingdom of the East Angles, made famous by the royal burial ground at nearby Sutton Hoo. It is important that we oversee and record this work so that we can understand the community buried here and its connections to other finds in Oulton and the nearby settlements and cemeteries at Carlton Colville and Flixton.

The work here would not have been possible without the generosity of Persimmon Homes, the expertise of Archaeological Solutions Ltd and the work of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Officers to make sure that the cemetery was recorded and excavated to the highest standards. All remains have now been fully excavated ahead of the development and are undergoing post excavation analysis. The area has been fully mapped and recorded and building work has now begun.

The finds and remains will now undergo specialist analysis, details of the site will be documented, and the entire archive will be deposited with Suffolk County Council's Archaeology Service. Once this work is complete, they will be available for researchers and local museums to borrow on loan for display to the public.

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Carefully excavating through the sand © Archaeological Solutions



Cruciform brooch © Archaeological Solutions



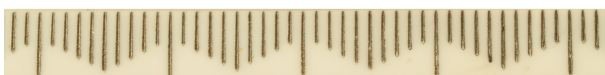
*Jacq Barnard, the Ship's Company Project Manager, sitting in the mid-section model, demonstrating how the ship may have been rowed to Jules Hudson, former archaeologist and now main presenter of the daytime television programme Escape to the Country. © The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company*



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For more information visit <https://saxonship.org/>

**The quatrefoil motif and early Anglo-Saxon enamelled artefacts  
by Caryl Dane**



*The fragment of a copper-alloy sword pommel cap found at Rendlesham © Suffolk County Council*

One of the artefact images shown in an online talk about metal-detected finds from Rendlesham [this issue, pages 5-6] was of a fragment of a copper-alloy sword pommel cap with a quatrefoil motif. Faye Minter, Senior Archaeological Officer of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, suggests that the quatrefoil motif could indicate a possibility that the pommel cap had been enamelled.

A small number of artefacts typical of the early Anglo-Saxon culture are known to have been inlaid by the *champlevé* technique with red enamel. This has prompted me to venture a few summary observations about these, drawn from my own PhD

research into enamelwork from early Anglo-Saxon contexts. It may be of interest to our readership in conveying the significance of this particular object and how it may relate to the wider corpus of similar but rare artefacts.

There does not appear to be any inlay in the recesses of the Rendlesham sword pommel cap. Nevertheless, such lenticular quatrefoils, surrounded by recesses, are *one* of the recurring motifs associated with Anglo-Saxon *champlevé* enamelled pieces. Even so, the total number of quatrefoils on Anglo-Saxon objects with undisputed enamel, to date, can still be counted on the fingers of one of Ann Boleyn's hands!

*Sixth-century AD, cast copper-alloy ?wrist-clasp/?belt-clasp with quatrefoil motif from Cambridge. Length: c. 28 mm. Photograph: C.Dane*



Many of you may remember Professor Duncan Sayer as the guest speaker at a previous Sutton Hoo Society AGM. He talked about his excavation at Oakington, Cambridgeshire, the sixth-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery with the unique burial of a woman with a cow. A gilt cruciform brooch from one of the most lavishly-furnished graves (compared to the others) had a fragment of red enamel remaining in one of the recesses surrounding a quatrefoil. Scientific qualitative analysis verified the constituents of the inlay as a type of red enamel.

A lot of evidence for enamelling is inconclusive despite access to modern scientific analysis. There could be a total loss of the inlay. And, unfavourable burial conditions can precipitate its oxidisation and deterioration, leaving little to analyse. Some recently published unresolved examples are from the Staffordshire Hoard, where several pieces have unknown, copper-rich *cloisonné* inlays that *could* be degraded red enamel (Fern *et al*, 2019).

The date range of early Anglo-Saxon artefacts with traces of simple *champlevé* enamel inlay is confined to the sixth century. Enamel is not usually associated with Anglo-Saxon objects of this early date. However, the styles of artefacts are of undoubted Anglo-Saxon design from this period.

Apart from hanging-bowl fittings, there is very little enamelwork found in post-Roman England earlier than the tenth century. The most famous and sophisticated exceptions are the ninth-century Alfred and Minster Lovell jewels, both exclusive gold *cloisonné* enamels, which are dated by the inscription about King Alfred (AD849 - 899), 'AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN' ('Alfred ordered me to be made') on the Alfred jewel. Their decoration was probably influenced by the continuance of the *cloisonné* technique of enamelling in Byzantium. Still very scarce in late Anglo-Saxon England, enamelling is limited to the end of the period where it emerges in a series of small lobed, *cloisonné*, copper-alloy disc brooches.

The rarity of the sixth-century Anglo-Saxon enamelwork seems to mark an exclusivity for a certain social sector. These were not the princely elite, with opulently furnished burials, like those from the mounds at Sutton Hoo, or of the aristocracy, but people much lower down the social stratum, the privileged minority in their own small communities.

It was once considered to be only early Anglo-Saxon female dress items that were enamelled. However, a further two enamelled sword pommel caps, one of ornate cast-gilded silver are known. Also, a plate from a belt suite, a spearhead, and some bridle-mounts have all been recognised as enamelled. These would have originally been accoutrements usually associated with men.

I can confirm from my research that the focus of Anglo-Saxon finds with traces of red enamel is around the Cambridge/Suffolk fen edge, as initially discovered by Cyril Fox (1923, 260, 294). This suggests a significant and localised phenomenon.

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*Studies in Archaeology and History 4*, Oxford, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology : 117-24.

**The Sutton Hoo Society's first-ever AGM by Zoom will be on Friday 5th March 2021 at 7 pm.**

If the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted by then the AGM will be held at the Ufford Park. However, it is more likely to be a Zoom event.

The speaker for the event will be Sarah Doig, with a talk entitled: *Basil Brown of Rickinghall: Beyond Sutton Hoo*

Basil Brown is, of course, widely known for his discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship burial. However, many of his other achievements are far less well known, as is his character beyond the usual portrayal of him as an eccentric, self-taught Suffolk yokel.

In this talk, local historian Sarah Doig will shine a light on this native of Rickinghall, identifying those who influenced the young Basil and examining his motivations, passions and local discoveries, as well as his boundless energy for enthusing others. Drawing on Basil Brown's own words and using recollections from local residents, as well as from those who worked alongside him, Sarah will present a different, rather more complete, image of the man who achieved immortality in the world of archaeology.

Sarah Doig is an independent researcher, author and speaker. She is a member of a small team of local history researchers who have, over the years, published a series of books about people, places and events across the centuries in Botesdale, Redgrave and Rickinghall. Sarah is currently working on the next book in this series which will be on Basil Brown.

The National Council of Metal Detecting's Code of Conduct video: <https://youtu.be/XRyRInuQA9s>



## Wuffing Education Online Study-Days

Wuffing Education Online offers Study-Days on the history, archaeology, landscape, languages, literature, and art of Eastern England, Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, and Europe.

### Provisional Programme Spring Term 2021

#### 16th January 2021

**A St Fursey's Day Special: The Irish Church in Eastern England** - Dr Sam Newton FSA (Director, Wuffing Education).

*16th January is the medieval festival day of the Irish mystic St Fursey, who founded a minster in East Anglia under the auspices of King Sigeberht, Rædwald's stepson, during the third decade of the seventh century. We shall reconsider the importance of St Fursey and of the Irish church in the early history of in Eastern England.*

#### 30th January 2021

**A Beginner's Guide to the Wonders of the Old English Language and Its Literature** - Steve Pollington (Author & Polyglot).

*Starting with the rudiments of the language and its written forms, we shall analyse some sample texts, not just for the excitement of reading words written so many centuries ago, for example by Alfred the Great himself, but also to unlock the beauty of the language in action.*

#### 13th February 2021

**Discover Britain's Deep Past: A History of Britain from a Million Years Ago** - Dr Nick Ashton (British Museum/UCL).

*Three talks will discuss Britain's rich history from the early footprints at Happisburgh, the quest for fire, the formation of Britain as an island, to the last Neanderthals and the macabre cannibalism by modern humans at Cheddar.*

#### 27th February 2021

**An Exploration of the History of East Anglian Landscape** - Edward Martin FSA (Retired County Archaeologist).

*Over 50 years ago W. G. Hoskins, observed that "The English landscape itself ... is the richest historical record we possess." This course will examine ways of reading the landscape, combining the evidence of geology, archaeology, and history to explore the formation of the East Anglian landscape and the ways that its inhabitants have shaped it over the thousands of years, imprinting it with their fields, greens, and settlements.*

#### 13th March 2021

*To be announced.*

#### 27th March 2021

**The Old English Eastertide Festival** - Dr Sam Newton FSA (Director, Wuffing Education).

*Rediscover the magic of the Easter festival, beginning with a look at the Old English calendar, which reveals how the month of the goddess Éostre become the festival of Eastertide. We shall also consider the 'Synod' of Whitby as well as the Cult of the Cross, using examples from early medieval archaeology, art, and literature, especially the wonder-poem known as The Dream of the Rood.*

Please book online via the Eventbrite booking service

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/wuffing-education-31003641875](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/wuffing-education-31003641875)

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