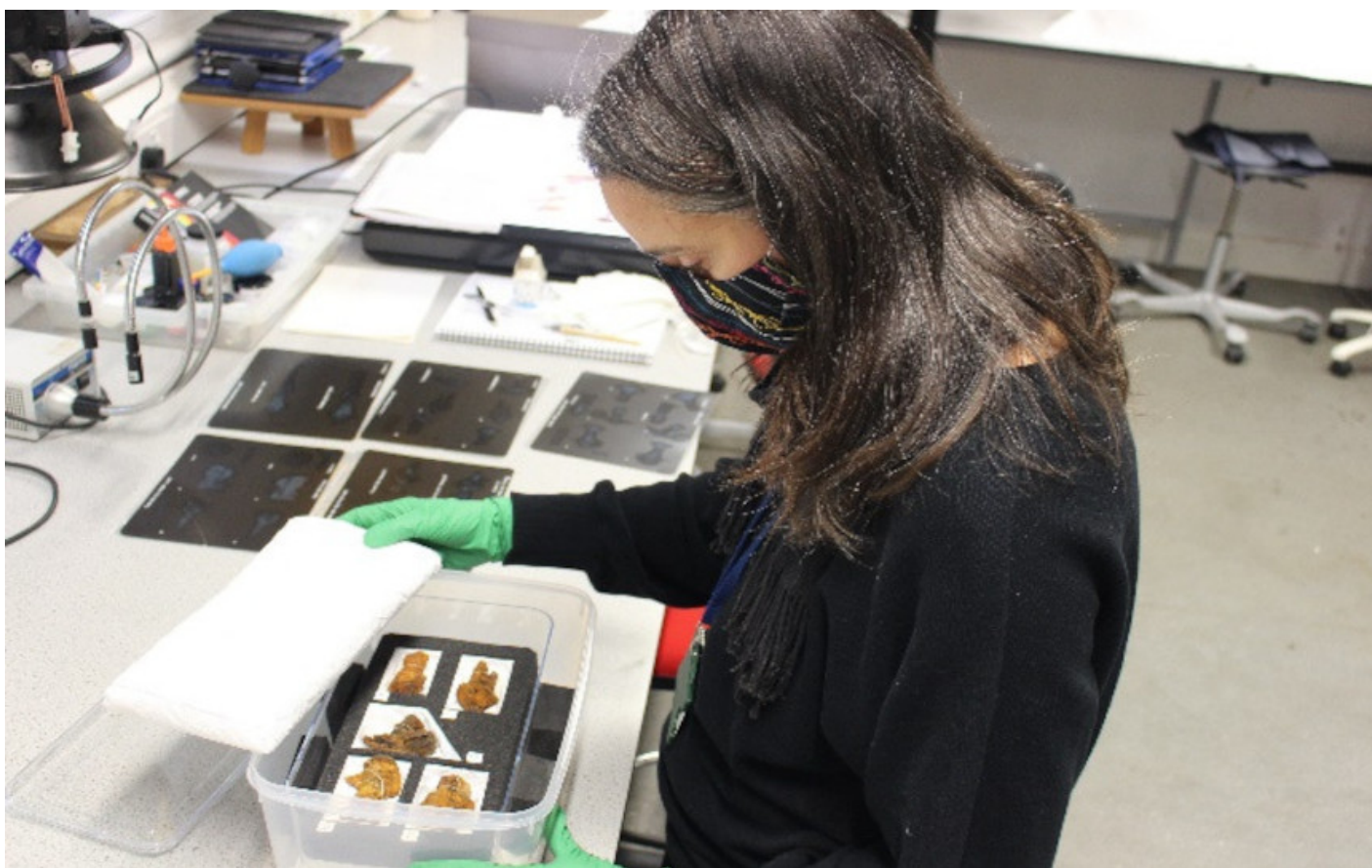


## Rivet Conservation Completed



*Fig. 1 Debbie Harris, of Norfolk and Norwich Conservation Services, completes conservation of the rivets.*

**The Sutton Hoo Society recently sent its collection of Mound One ship's rivets, a bequest by Penny Phillips daughter of archaeologist Charles Phillips, to Norwich Museum for conservation. Debbie Harris ACR, senior conservator at Norwich Museum, explains what is involved:**

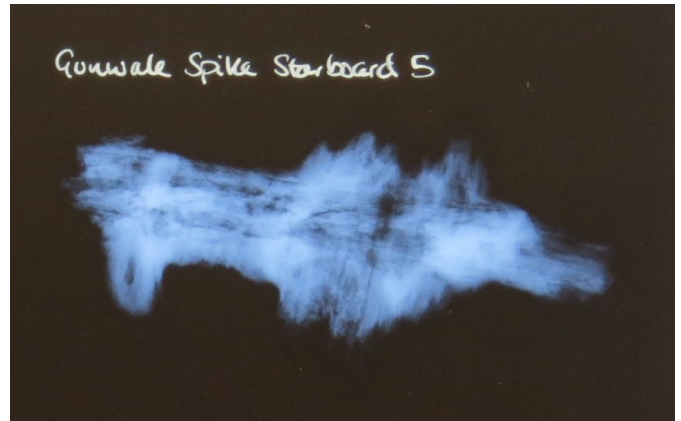
Preventive conservation is essential when ensuring the long-term stability of archaeological ironwork. Relative humidity (RH) as well as the presence of chlorides has been proven to accelerate the rate of corrosion. The extent to which an object may deteriorate is difficult to predict in advance so when dealing with ironwork,

conservators will always consider that it is at risk. Creating a localised environment that is as dry as possible is key. Post-excavation corrosion is an inevitable problem with ironwork, but by creating a suitable environment below 30% RH we endeavour to slow down the potential to deteriorate.

The voluminous appearance of the rivets is typical of iron excavated from a damp aerated site. The shape of the mass is not necessarily recognisable as a rivet. To inform the archaeological archive, radiography of ironwork is best practice. The rivet assemblage was x-radiographed for posterity and to inform any



**Fig. 2** Starboard gunwale spike no. 5, prior to conservation, with label. © The Sutton Hoo Society



**Fig. 3** The x-radiograph of starboard gunwale spike no. 5. © The Sutton Hoo Society

specialist working with the rivets of their form and function. It is evident the original surface has been retained within a thick layer of corrosion product and much of the metal core has been lost. Of great interest relating to the corrosion layers is evidence of mineral preserved organic material. This phenomenon occurs during burial, providing the environment is optimal for its occurrence. Mobile corrosion products deposit inside the organic cells of any decaying organic material in the vicinity of the iron. After the organic material has long since disappeared, a record of the organic structure and shape is retained within the corrosion product. Using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) it is possible to identify wood species and other organic material present whether deliberate or accidental. These discoveries are always exciting to detect, they are vulnerable, and require preservation by meticulous packaging.

The packing of archaeological material entirely depends on its condition, its material type, its perceived significance, and its intended purpose, as to how tailored the packaging needs to be. In this instance the rivet

packaging not only needed to serve basic best practice for stabilising ironwork but was also required to meet the specification of an 'outreach' box. An 'outreach' box not only lends itself as a sanctuary for the objects during long term storage but is a robust means of protecting objects during outreach events. It allows the objects to be visible but avoid unnecessary handling. Using materials that are inert is another consideration when in immediate contact with archaeological iron within an airtight space. Any volatile organic emissions can also harm objects by accelerating corrosion.

The rivets were nestled into appropriately sized Polystyrene boxes. Plastazote® individual cut outs were provided lined with Tyvek®. Tyvek® strips were also used to strap the rivets to prevent

movement, as well as the use of Tyvek® filled with polyester wadding to create pillows which cushion the objects during transit. Desiccation using silica gel within an airtight resealable polypropylene container is an essential requirement for the stabilisation of ironwork. The polystyrene boxes sit safely within the polypropylene resealable boxes so the silica gel can be maintained without any concern when removing the objects. Humidity indicator strips are placed within the resealable box to observe when the humidity levels have equilibrated with the external environment, which will necessitate its replacement.

The Sutton Hoo rivets are in exceptional condition given their previous burial and post excavation environment. The rivets are now housed in a permanent storage solution which will allow the objects to be safely transported and observed without handling whenever required. Their newly desiccated environment aims to slow any deterioration and preserve these significant objects for generations to come. □



**Fig. 4** The starboard gunwale spike no. 5, in final conservation packaging. © The Sutton Hoo Society

# Flagship of Early England

**At this year's AGM, Professor Martin Carver FSA, Chair of the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company in Woodbridge, gave a lecture on their progress reconstructing the Mound One ship. Martin describes how the Ship's Company have ambitious future plans, including river trials.**

Eighty-three years ago the remains of a ship were found by Basil Brown underneath Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo - and we know two things about it for sure. First, it contained an incomparable treasure, now in the British Museum, with objects of gold and silver, bronze and iron, horn, maplewood, textiles and fur. And second, that it was in a fragmentary state - the timbers had decayed to dark traces and the rivets that secured the planks of the hull to lumps of rusty iron. Other things are more conjectural: the association with the court of the East Anglian kingdom, with Raedwald, who ruled in the early 7th century - the art historical date of the objects, with his politically astute wife who may have designed the burial, and may herself lie under Mound 14. And especially that this site marked a turning point for the kingdom, menaced by rivals of both Christian and pagan persuasion, watching to see which way East Anglia would align.

So why would we want to reconstruct it – surely its cargo of exquisite objects is a sufficient legacy from that distant history?

The idea of reconstructing the Mound 1 ship was already in the mind of Angela Care Evans, who wrote it up for the British Museum - it

appeared as Chapter V in the definitive 1975 volume. It came into my mind too as we studied the site between 1983 and 1992, revisiting the evidence for Mound 1 and redefining the form of the ship heaved over the burial chamber in Mound 2. Its reconstruction was part of the design for the National Trust Visitor Centre opened by Seamus Heaney in 2001, although omitted at the last from Heritage Lottery Funding. The National Trust continued to nurse the project through the first decade of the 21st century, prompting Edwin and Joyce Gifford to produce their half scale replica *Sae Wulfing*, and me to compose a first Scope of Work for the full-sized vessel (2014). At this time the demise of Whisstocks Yard initiated a major development on the Woodbridge waterfront led by the Town Council and Woodbridge



**Fig. 2** *The Sutton Hoo mound 1 ship excavated, 1939.*  
© British Museum



**Fig. 1** *The Ships Company, left to right Andrew Fitzgerald (treasurer and vice chair), Tim Kirk (shipwright) and Jacq Barnard (project manager) at Sutton Hoo.*  
© The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company

Riverside Trust. The reconstructed ship would be part of this, and would have its own special building place - the 'Longshed', and soon its own dedicated trust: The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company, which is currently bringing the project to fruition.

But the question has still to be addressed: why were we building the Mound 1 ship – and more to the point, how and to what timetable? These questions were answered in Project Designs composed in 2021, in consultation with a new group of academics, boatbuilders and heritage

institutions brought together as our Witan on which the Sutton Hoo Society is represented. It is great to have a chance to update you here.

## Why?

The ship may have been decayed and flattened under a giant pile of earth, but its shape is rather well preserved in the shadows of the vanished wood and the lines of the rivets.



**Fig. 3** A trial piece of ornamental carving for the gunwale. © The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company

The ship was 27.1m long and 4.39m in the beam amidships. Realised in three dimensions the size alone offers a striking vision of what was possible in the 7th century, as a visit to the Longshed will confirm. All the objects in the ship had to be restored to a greater or lesser degree – but the only artefact to have never been reconstructed is the ship itself.

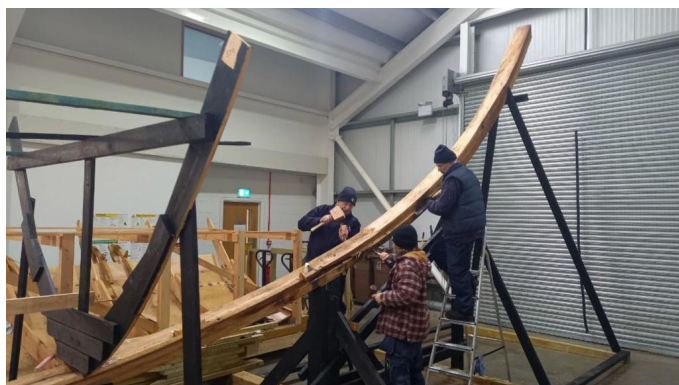
We will learn much from the process of building – the volunteers are showing us how working with green oak and using tools of the type the earliest English used is guiding them on how the timbers need to be shaped and the rivets hammered home – the ship is teaching us.

Our ship was built locally, so we believe, and at least the craftsmen who built it knew the craftsmen and women who provided the weapons, jewellery and clothes. There is every reason to expect the ship to exhibit the same quality of design and finish and art and ingenuity as the sword and shoulder clasps. We are already astonished by the finish possible on a

timber with an axe with a dose of linseed oil – smooth and golden like a piece of expensive furniture. So we will take themes from seventh century English animal art and apply them to the stem and stern posts, as did the later Vikings.

Our ship belongs to a family of boats of different traditions that floated in the North Sea, the Irish Sea, the Channel and the Atlantic. In a certain measure, Sutton Hoo 1 is the missing link between them, and especially between ships mainly driven by oars (Nydam, 4th century) and by sail (Oseberg 9th century). Sutton Hoo is two centuries later than the Saxon immigrants and two centuries earlier than the Vikings, but although they could not know the future, the people of Sutton Hoo knew a lot about the Romans and their boats and about their successors and their boats, the Byzantines. According to new thinking, Sutton Hoo warriors visited Constantinople and may have even fought in its army.

So the answer to why we are building the ship is to produce a great modern monument, with a great message from the seventh century that will startle and enlighten all who see her; to teach us about early English seafaring, to illuminate key moments in England's early history and its multiple relations with neighbours far and near; and to do this with a team embedded in the local,



**Fig.4** The stern post taking shape. © The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company



**Fig. 5** Some examples of the rivets or iron nails used to secure pairs of planks. © The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company

national and international communities of seafarers and researchers.

### The Current Programme

In June 2022, the keel has been assembled in five pieces of oak joined together with trenails (wooden pegs, ie 'treenails') making a single 'backbone' flat at the bottom and curving up 5m high at each end. Now we are ready to raise the hull, plank by plank. The lowest (garboard plank) is riveted to the keel; and more planks are riveted, edge upon edge, nine each side. The rivets are iron nails driven through a hole in the edges of each pair of planks, caulked with linen rolled in beef fat, closed with a rove over the point of the nail and hammered tight by a builder each side. The frames will be placed at regular intervals and secured with a bolt to the hull (at present plywood moulds painted black show where the frames will go). Then the gunwale will be added, topped by the 'tholes' against which the oars are pulled; and then the benches where the rowers sit. A rudder will be designed and fitted. And a figure head. All this will require experiment or trial and error as it is usually known. But by 2024 we

should be ready for the launch.

### **The Trials**

Our ship is then ready for its adventures, and our initial efforts will be dedicated to trials under oars. Why is that? First, the evidence is that this was a rowing ship and had places for up to 40 oars, 20 a side. There was no evidence that she sailed. A second reason is that, unlike most other modern experimental ship projects, the great majority of which focus on sea crossings, ours will focus on coasts and rivers. This allows us to test the main arterial routes under oars, visiting the sites already known to history and archaeology and therefore to our ship's original seventh century crews and captains. We now know quite a lot about these sites and their world so we will be recreating the larger experience, filming on set so to speak, where early English life actually happened. There are other reasons too, connected with our wish to reflect the issues of our own day – the need to respect and conserve rivers, the need to promote and extend the healthy and undamaging sport of rowing to a wider community. Our trips will be designed to provide a commentary on the world of Sutton Hoo's people: up the Thames via London into the kingdom of Wessex. Then, up the coast and westward into the Humber. Here, at the mouth of the Trent in 616 Raedwald and Edwin killed Athelfrith king of Northumbria at the Battle of the River Idle. In 632 Edwin and his son Osfrith were met and killed by Penda, king of Mercia, and Cadwallon, king of Gwynedd, in the neighbouring area of Hatfield Chase. Penda had his comeuppance not far away at the Battle of the Winwaed in 654 at the hands of Oswiu of Northumbria. This bloodstained junction between the Humber and

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

the Trent, the maritime gate of Mercia, was part of the world of the Sutton Hoo ship. The third expedition will follow the coast to the kingdom of Northumbria, visiting its famous seventh century monasteries – Hartlepool, Whitby, Jarrow the landmarks of early Christianity. Our ship was already buried with Raedwald by this time but her sisters would have carried kings and their ambassadors into the new era.

There was no evidence that she sailed, but towards the end of the trial period, having learned how our ship handles in coastal waters under oars, we will be ready to experiment with sail and different types of rigging. We already know she could sail after a fashion, as can any raft or bath tub; but our experiment will be more serious – how close was seventh century East Anglia to making the bold crossings later made famous by the Vikings?

Much can happen between now and these planned experimental journeys, but our resolve will hopefully endure: to know more about how the earliest English journeyed on the water, where and what for. The deep roots of our history lie in these travels.

### **Envoi**

As a piece of entertainment I have refashioned an excerpt from the Old English poem *The Seafarer* (from the Exeter Book) using modern words and only minor variations on its sentiments. You need to imagine these as the thoughts of a salt-encrusted old sea-captain seated at his pint:

*I'll tell you about life on the sea;  
it's grim. Many a long day I've  
suffered at the end of an oar,  
fearfully managing wind and  
wave; or at nightfall doubled up in  
the bows, peering at passing cliffs.  
With freezing feet and pangs of  
hunger, trapped in a boat, nothing*

*to hear but hail and spray, no pals  
but gannets, no laughs but the  
screech of gulls, no helping hand.  
You'd do better on land, I tell you.*

*Sitting at table, pushing out the  
wine with fellow traders, you've no  
idea what we go through. Yet when  
the cuckoo calls we're off again,  
leaving the blossom, never seeing  
the fruit, missing the glint of rings,  
the love of women, the fellowship  
of the cup, all this, to brave the sea  
and its tricky ways. But then the  
swell takes us, lifting us over the  
water, onto our bearing, pulling,  
heaving and lurching towards the  
horizon, and the heart lifts.*

*Profit and admiration are  
earned though the perils of  
seafaring; it's not without honour.  
Sure, a boat can go to the bottom;  
but life on land ends too: in illness,  
in old age, in a fight. It ends for  
earls, for kings, for emperors, no  
less than seafarers. None escapes  
life's end, white hair, pale face,  
bent body, muttering grievance,  
old friends gone before. Tip gold  
into his grave if you must - you  
won't bring him back. But at sea  
the whole ocean is there to mourn  
you. □*

The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company has eleven trustees with different professional skills, an advisory body of more than 30, a Project Manager (Jacq Barnard), Master Shipwright (Tim Kirk); second shipwright (Laurie Walker) and 80+ volunteers on the build, greeting visitors, researching parts of the ship and many other tasks.

For more details, visit the website at [saxonship.org](http://saxonship.org)

# The Bradwell Warrior

Every so often in a curator's life an exceptional find changes their perspective. This is especially true of a tiny masterpiece of early Anglo-Saxon bronze casting from Bradwell in Norfolk. Dr Angela Care Evans FSA considers a small bronze figure, found by metal detectorists in 2015.

Standing only 37mm tall, the bronze is a figurine in miniature of a mounted warrior sitting astride a stocky horse on a narrow base. Three-dimensional representations are amongst the rarest achievements of early Anglo-Saxon craftsmen. While free standing boars are familiar from the helmets from Benty Grange, Derbyshire and Woolaston, Northamptonshire, the only real comparison with this little bronze is the pot-lid from the cemetery at Spong Hill in Norfolk whose knop is in the form of a seated man.

Although not identical to the more familiar 'fallen warrior' theme on the Sutton Hoo helmet, the Bradwell find brings to life a mounted warrior whose weapons, shield and horse gear are all familiar from the finds from mounds 1 and 17 in the Sutton Hoo cemetery. The smallest details in the casting, for example the rider's sword, the knot of straps on the horse's flanks or the roundels at the horse's brow, place the Bradwell warrior at the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh centuries.

This little bronze however poses many questions about its function. Initially it was suggested that it could be a chess piece, but this is improbable as the game of chess did not arrive in Europe until the ninth century. Although board games were popular in early Anglo-Saxon England and gaming pieces are often found in medium and high-status graves, none are figural. Another possibility could be that the figurine was the knop

of a box. The Spong pot lid is the only example of a figural knop at this time, but a variety of gilt-bronze roundels that were inlaid into wood suggests that boxes, chests and perhaps even saddles were decorated with metal fittings. A further possibility is that the bronze was free-standing, perhaps a personal votive piece. If this were so, given that it differs from the 'fallen warrior' series, one interpretation of the Bradwell warrior is that he may be a representation of the Germanic god Woden/Odin.



*Fig. 1 The Bradwell Warrior (by kind permission of Rupert Wace).*

Whatever the function of this little bronze, it is a remarkable piece of three-dimensional casting in copper-alloy. The detail is astonishing in so small an object and so accurate that it gives us a rare insight into how a contemporary craftsman saw an early Anglo-Saxon mounted warrior. Although tiny, it is a must see while on display until October in the Moot Hall in Aldeburgh. □

## The dating of Beowulf: a Reassessment

**Edited by Leonard Neidorf**

**Cambridge: D S Brewer 2014, paperback edition 2016**

**Review by Dr Catherine Hills FSA**

This book is a collection of papers originally given at a seminar in 2011. The dating of Beowulf is a topic which has been contentious in academic circles since a conference in Toronto in 1980 (Chase 1981) which challenged the previous broad consensus that the poem had been composed in the seventh or eighth centuries, suggesting alternative later dates, possibly into the tenth century. As many readers of Saxon will know Sam Newton has written forcefully in favour of the early date, mainly on the basis of his analysis of the genealogies of Anglian dynasties

and the evidence from Sutton Hoo (1993). Much of the argument has focussed on the extent to which the poem can be seen to reflect a specific literary or historical background, with some contribution from archaeological evidence. It is possible to find archaeological parallels for the background of the story in both the early and later periods in England and Scandinavia: kings, warriors with mailcoats and helmets, swords with complicated decoration, cremation and ship burial, large halls and buried treasure (Hills 1997). However,

much of the story is timeless: heroes, feuds, monsters, dragons and treasure cannot be pinned down to any specific time or place.

What this collection of papers does is to focus attention firmly on the poem itself. It only survives in one manuscript, which has been written by two scribes whose handwriting dates them to around 1000AD. That gives a *terminus ante quem*, a date by which the poem must have been composed. But was this a recent composition or ancient when they copied it? The collection reviewed here comes down firmly on the side of ancient, most suggesting a date in the eighth century. The arguments deployed include a range of evidence: linguistic, historical and literary. The key point seems to be that the scribes found words and even letter forms which were unfamiliar because they were

already archaic, and that some of their “corrections” don’t make sense. Metrical analysis of early English poetry puts Beowulf relatively early. There are misspellings of names and use of words which had changed their meanings. The names of some of the actors including Beowulf himself occur in earlier but not later Anglo-Saxon sources. The brief allusions to other stories suggest other epics once existed, known to the author and his audience but now lost.

Some of the arguments are very technical but cumulatively they are persuasive, putting the composition of Beowulf significantly earlier than its one surviving manuscript and renewing confidence in the “early” date, ie probably eighth century. This has not gone without some academic disagreement but for

most readers it will suggest it is not a mistake to see the finds from Sutton Hoo as reflecting the society described in Beowulf, although we should remember that even the “early” dating of the eighth century is at least a century later than the burial of Mound 1 in the early seventh century. □

**Chase, Colin (ed.) 1981.** *The Dating of Beowulf.* Toronto Old English Series 6. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

**Hills, Catherine 1997.** *Beowulf and Archaeology.* In Bjork, R and Niles, J, *A Beowulf Handbook,* University of Nebraska press, p.291-310.

**Newton, Sam 1993.** *The Origins of Beowulf and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia.* Cambridge: D S Brewer.

# Basil Brown Memorial Lecture 2022

**On Saturday 7th May 2022 our first public lecture for three years took place at the Riverside Theatre, Woodbridge, with a terrific audience of 108 people. Our speaker was Dr Thomas Williams FSA, former curator of Early Medieval Coins at the British Museum, author of 'Viking London' and 'Viking Britain'. His subject for this year's lecture was 'The Kingdom of Essex and other stories: exploring Britain's Lost Realms'. Society Chair, Bryony Abbott FRSA, provides a summary of the lecture.**

Tom’s topic for his lecture was rooted firmly in the Anglo-Saxon period and he gave us a fresh perspective on some of the lesser known kingdoms from the formative centuries we used to call the Dark Ages.

His lecture explored the lost realm of Elmet, about which little is known except for a few place names and mentions of its likely size in much later texts. It was a small kingdom, roughly equivalent

geographically to the modern day West Riding of Yorkshire and referred to in the poetry of Ted Hughes.

By way of contrast, Tom described the development of early medieval Essex, made famous by the discovery of the Prittlewell princely burial. The latter was of great interest to those members who visited Southend Museum in 2020, just before the first pandemic lockdown.



**Fig. 1** Dr Thomas Williams and Sutton Hoo Society president Dr Angela Care Evans FSA. © Sutton Hoo Society

Society President, Angela Care Evans thanked the speaker and Chair, Bryony Abbott, thanked the audience for their support. □

# Update: Rendlesham Revealed Community Archaeology Project

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) are getting ready for the second season of archaeological fieldwork as part of the 'Rendlesham Revealed: Anglo Saxon Life in South East Suffolk' project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This year, archaeological excavations will take place in August and September with volunteers, and together they will aim to characterise and date the location of the high-status residence and surrounding activity. Project Delivery Office Alice De Leo BA MA, reports on last years activities.

Summer 2021 saw the first season of archaeological fieldwork, including excavation, fieldwalking, river valley palaeoenvironmental survey and geophysical survey. 221 individual volunteers from the general public, local primary schools, Suffolk Mind and Suffolk Family Carers, contributed to the summer's fieldwork under the guidance of a small expert team.

The season started with volunteers conducting an auger survey over 5 days in the river valley at Rendlesham, with the expertise of Professor Charles French and Dr Sean Taylor



**Fig. 1** Volunteer extracting soil samples using a hand auger. © SCCAS



**Fig. 2** Volunteer excavating a possible sunken-featured building at Rendlesham. © SCCAS

from the University of Cambridge. The boreholes revealed an area of springs emerging from the sand geology, as well as a possible meandering palaeochannel. The soil samples are currently undergoing palynological analysis and radiocarbon dating. In the meantime, a group of volunteers from Suffolk Mind visited Professor French at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at University of Cambridge where soil samples are processed and analysed as thin sections.

Throughout the summer, small-scale fieldwalking and geophysical surveys were undertaken with volunteers in various parts of the Deben valley to add to our knowledge of the wider landscape context. Special thanks to the Suffolk Archaeological Field Group for their efforts carrying out a magnetometry survey in the project area. The results of the surveys are being assessed and the

reports are expected in the spring. In August and September, the archaeological excavations took place over 6-weeks under the supervision Cotswold Archaeology (Suffolk), SCCAS and Professor Christopher Scull. This uncovered the remains of buildings and pits over a wide area indicating an extensive 5th-6th century settlement whose inhabitants were engaged in farming and craft working. Soil samples were also taken which will give evidence of crop farming and the local environment of the past.

Discoveries of other periods of history were also made, including prehistoric field boundary ditches and pits; an Iron Age settlement enclosure and a First World War training trench, probably dug by a battalion of the Territorial Force in 1914 or early 1915.

The post-excavation work is now complete thanks to the hard work of many volunteers. Most of the finds were cleaned, marked and sorted on-site by the



**Fig. 3** Volunteers on-site marking and sorting the finds. © SCCAS



**Fig. 4** Volunteers sorting the non-floating residues from the environmental samples to extract any finds or ecofacts © SCCAS

volunteers in the summer and then over the winter season the volunteers completed the first stage of the post-excavation processing at the Cotswold Archaeology warehouse; this included sieving the environmental samples, recording and packing the Registered Artefacts and quantifying the bulk finds. The material has been assessed by the relevant specialists and the final report is being prepared.

With the Covid-19 pandemic still posing some challenges during 2021, SCCAS created online materials for the public to explore from the comfort of their own homes. The Suffolk Heritage Explorer website has been updated with a new Community Fieldwork section, holding all the articles and photos of the 2021 fieldwork at Rendlesham, which will be updated each year. □

To find out more about the Rendlesham Revealed project, including a new 3-part video series illustrating Anglo-Saxon daily life, cooking and weaving, visit: [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham](http://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham)



# New geophysics survey at Sutton Hoo

**From 14th - 16th February 2022, SUMO Geophysics Ltd undertook a new geophysical survey of the Royal Burial Ground for the National Trust, funded by the Sutton Hoo Society. Bryony Abbott and Marc Brewster joined Laura Howarth (NT) on the final day.**

The survey covered 4 hectares of the site and focussed particularly on the under-explored southern end of the burial ground, around mounds 8, 9 and 10.

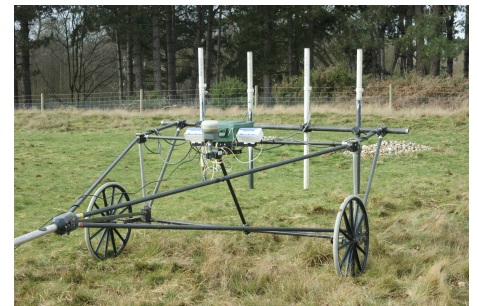
It was conducted with a custom-built 4 probe magnetometer array, towed behind an all-terrain vehicle or quad bike, which can cover up to 8 hectares per day under ideal conditions, although it was somewhat restricted by the uneven surface around the burial mounds.

Magnetometers measure changes or distortions in the earth's magnetic field caused by the presence of iron molecules. The iron may form part of a metallic object, for example a brooch, but can also be found in other substances, such as the oxides in clay; when subjected to high temperatures in excess of 700 degrees (such as in a kiln or hearth) these oxide molecules align to produce a measurable magnetic response.

The four magnetometer probes,



**Fig. 1** The magnetometer and quad bike in operation. © Sutton Hoo Society



**Fig. 2** The 4 probe magnetometer array. © Sutton Hoo Society

used in the SUMO array, were spaced 50cm apart and can detect magnetic changes up to a depth of 2m. Readings are taken at regular intervals and enriched with GPS (Global Positioning System) co-ordinates to produce a grid of responses which, when processed with specialised computer software, can reveal hot-spots of magnetic density. These hot-spots might indicate archaeological features such as metallic objects, kilns, hearths or ditches.

The survey results are currently being processed and interpreted by the team at SUMO and the results will be available later in the year. □

# Proceedings of the Sutton Hoo Society 2022

The Annual General Meeting of the Sutton Hoo Society took place on Friday 4th March 2022 in the Vista Suite at the Ufford Park Hotel, with 52 members attending in person for the first time in two years after Covid-19. Sutton Hoo Society Chair, Bryony Abbot FRSA, provides her report on the past year.

## Chair's Report: The Year in Focus

Covid restrictions meant it was a second year of stops and starts, making it difficult for the Society to plan events. We ran the Annual Basil Brown Memorial Lecture via Zoom and we were grateful to Angus Wainwright for stepping in with his lecture on the 1939 excavations. We also enjoyed talks by the Ship's Company and by Laura Howarth on the digitisation of the Mercie Lack and Barbara Wagstaffe photographs, probably by far the best record we have of the Mound One ship. The upside of Zoom is that our members are able to participate in proceedings from further afield and we are looking into this as an option.

The big event of 2021 was the opening of The Dig film in January, bringing huge interest in the story of Sutton Hoo. There was new excitement and anticipation when the site was finally able to open its doors again in July and our guides enjoyed talking to the public about fact and fiction in the film. We have an excellent guiding team, reflected in the feedback they receive from visitors and via social media.

Our Agreement with the National Trust covers tours, talks and training for new volunteers and is proving to be rewarding and productive. During lockdown, we took the opportunity to strengthen our offering at Sutton Hoo, working behind the scenes to update our training materials and

bring them up to date to reflect recent discoveries, such as at Rendlesham. Over the closed winter period, our guides continued to spread the word about the story of Sutton Hoo, delivering a well-received series of Winter Talks for National Trust volunteers and their fellow guides. Dr Rosemary Hoppitt presented three fascinating lectures on the 1980's excavations and these have been offered to members via Zoom.

We are also working closely with the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company in Woodbridge, the amazing project to build a full-sized reconstruction of the Mound One ship, chaired by Professor Martin Carver, founder of the Sutton Hoo Society. The Society is represented on the Witan, the Ship's Company advisory board set up by Professor Carver, our distinguished speaker tonight. The Society is also represented on the Rendlesham Revealed Partnership. We will be arranging a visit for our members to the excavation site this summer. We have maintained our financial resilience during the pandemic, allowing us to continue our independent role of giving grants and awards in support of Anglo-Saxon archaeology and new research at Sutton Hoo. Laura Howarth was welcomed to the meeting by the Chair. Laura is the National Trust's Archaeology and Engagement Officer at Sutton Hoo and she thanked the Society for awarding grant-funding to

enable an important new Magnetometry Project to be carried out on the Royal Burial Ground during the spring of 2022, having been delayed since 2020.

The Society has also approved funding to two local organisations: a grant awarded to the Rendlesham Revealed project for an illustrated brochure, telling the story of the excavations and picturing finds from the site, and a second award to Ipswich and Colchester Museums Service for the purchase of artefacts found at the Rendlesham excavations. The Anglo-Saxon finds are historically interesting and include a batch of 22 coins, female jewellery and male warrior gear. It is important to the Society that our grant has enabled these finds to remain in Suffolk.

The Chair thanked members of the executive committee for their contribution to the running of the Society and completed her report by acknowledging all the great work that has been done by the Society in the past, connecting people with their Anglo-Saxon heritage. As the world opens up again, there will be more opportunities for visits to local sites and museums, excursions further afield and of course Zoom talks. We will continue to keep our members involved, re-establishing our links, delivering on our remit and are well on our way to achieving our stated aim of remaining relevant and accessible to the next generation. Finally, the

Chair thanked members for their continued support.

### Reports and Accounts

Steve Cant, Sutton Hoo Society Treasurer, delivered the Financial Report and Accounts, on file and available for the perusal of members at the meeting and on the website [www.suttonhoo.org](http://www.suttonhoo.org).

A surplus was made for the year to 31st December 2021.

### Guided Tours at Sutton Hoo

Chantal Thomas, Sutton Hoo Society Guiding Secretary, presented a report demonstrating the continued popularity of our guided tours of the mounds for the public, a key part of any visit to Sutton Hoo and an important element in the annual Memorandum of Understanding between the Society and the National Trust. You can read the Guiding Report on our website.

### Elections for Office

Bryony Abbott was re-elected to serve as Chair for a further year and members of the committee indicated their willingness to continue in post and were duly elected, with the following change being noted: Dr Caryl Dane, Editor of SAXON had decided it was time for her to step away from the work of the Society and we thanked Caryl for her significant contribution.

Marc Brewster, our current Membership Secretary, offered to take over the role as SAXON Editor. Marc has worked hard over the years to streamline the membership database and it was agreed he will hand over the Membership portfolio to a new member of the committee, Gillian Carlton, who has been volunteering at Sutton Hoo for 14 years. The Society takes seriously its responsibilities under the General Data Protection

Regulations and Gill has extensive experience of data protection management and handling sensitive information while working for Suffolk County Council. Gill was elected to the committee for the first time and we welcome her as a safe pair of hands and the first point of contact for all our members.

That concluded the business of the A.G.M. and the President welcomed our Guest Speaker for the evening Professor Martin Carver FSA, Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at the University of York and Chair of the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company in Woodbridge. For details, see article on p3.

There were questions from the floor and then Angela Care Evans thanked Martin Carver for his lecture and wished him and his team every success for the future.

The Chair thanked everyone for their support and the meeting closed at 9.30pm. □

# Sutton Hoo Society visit to West Stow and Mildenhall Museum

**On Wednesday 1st June 2022, members of the society and NT volunteers visited West Stow Anglo Saxon Village and Mildenhall Museum. Sue Moss and Carole Winstanley report.**

The Sutton Hoo Society organises summer excursions for our members to sites in East Anglia and beyond. This summer we visited West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Mildenhall Museum, accompanied by Sutton Hoo volunteers, for a look behind the scenes and a talk by the Curators. At West Stow the buildings were reconstructed using archaeological evidence, showing that 1,500 years ago there may have been up to 76 buildings, including houses and a larger hall. The Museum at Mildenhall is well worth a visit because there you



*Fig. 1 West Stow Anglo Saxon village.*

can see a young warrior and horse excavated at Lakenheath. Both are similar in age and size to our own mound 17 warrior at Sutton Hoo, with his horse and gear

buried in a grave alongside him. Although the bridle and other grave goods from the Lakenheath burial site were not of the same exquisite quality, there was a complete skeleton found, which of course was not the case at Sutton Hoo, due to the acid soil conditions of the Suffolk Sandlings.

This was our first outing for two years because of lockdowns and thanks are due to Sue Moss for making these arrangements. We hope to have more visits in the coming year. □

# Events Diary

19 May - 30 October 2022

## Swords of Kingdoms: The Staffordshire Hoard at Sutton Hoo

Two of the most important early medieval archaeological discoveries to have ever been made, showcasing the very pinnacle of Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship have been reunited for Swords of Kingdoms: The Staffordshire Hoard at Sutton Hoo.

Original objects from the famous 1939 dig at Sutton Hoo, on loan from the British Museum, are on display together with items from the Staffordshire Hoard and further Anglo-Saxon finds from across East Anglia, on loan from Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery.

Timed tickets are required for the exhibition and should be booked in advance via [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/suttonhoo](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/suttonhoo).

1 April - 31 October 2022

## Bradwell Mounted Warrior

The Bradwell Mounted Warrior is on display at the Aldeburgh Museum, Moot Hall, Aldeburgh, IP15 5DS. The exhibition is open daily from 1pm to 4pm. For more information, visit [aldeburghmuseum.org.uk](http://aldeburghmuseum.org.uk) or download the paper by Catherine Hills and Steven Ashley: Horse and Rider figure from Bradwell, Norfolk: a new Early Anglo-Saxon equestrian image?

6th September 2022, 2pm

## Rendlesham Excavation

Site visit to the Rendlesham Revealed excavations. Fully booked.

Early December 2022

## Southend Museum

A second chance to visit the Prittlewell Princely Burial exhibition and take the behind the scenes tour. Details to follow.

May 2023

## Saxon Festival, Woodbridge and Sutton Hoo

In collaboration with our friends at the Ship's Company in Woodbridge and the National Trust at Sutton Hoo, this 3-day Saxon Festival will feature sunset guided tours, talks by renowned archaeologists and craft demonstrations. Further details in the January edition of SAXON.



**Wuffing Education Study Days continue online at [wuffingeducation.co.uk](http://wuffingeducation.co.uk) and members wanting to improve their knowledge of all things Sutton Hoo can also check out Dr Sam Newton's informative Wuffings website [wuffings.co.uk](http://wuffings.co.uk), which focusses on the study of the history and culture of the Wuffing Kingdom of East Anglia and beyond.**

## The Sutton Hoo Society

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

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