



The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

SAXON

President: The Earl of Cranbrook

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Right: Detail of silver spoon bowl & inscription

The Prittlewell Discovery a résumé of the Spring Lecture given by Ian Blair

The unexpected discovery of the intact early seventh century chamber grave and its princely burial in 2003, during an archaeological evaluation on the site of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Prittlewell, near Southend in Essex, was immediately recognised as a find of international importance. Because of the significance of the find and concerns about the security of the site, the excavation had to be undertaken in the utmost secrecy with a complete news blackout imposed. It was a relief therefore when news of the find was finally released to the world during a press call in February 2004. The details of the discovery were widely reported at the time – and included an article in issue 40 *Saxon* (2004).

The purpose here is to provide an update on the project and the new discoveries that have been made during ongoing stabilisation of the material by conservators at the Museum of London – work generously funded by English Heritage. Throughout the course of the excavation, the conservators, working closely with the archaeological team, were responsible for lifting dozens of fragile objects, many still in their soil blocks. By the time the excavation of the chamber was completed more than 140 objects had been removed from the grave.

The largest and heaviest blocks, lifted either in purpose-made plywood boxes or supported

with soft and hardening bandages, contained the folding stool and the great cauldron (placed one at each end of the coffin), a large wooden tub bound with iron hoops, the sword and the lyre. The smallest items were all from within the coffin and included the pair of gold foil crosses, two gold coins (both tremisses from Merovingian France), the gold belt buckle, part of a tablet-woven gold brocade from the front of a garment or tunic, and two tiny copper-alloy shoe buckles.

The corners and the lid of the coffin had originally been reinforced and secured with 14 L-shaped iron fittings held in place with nails. Interestingly, there were no brackets evident at the base of the coffin – which suggests that it was probably jointed at the sides. Organic preservation of the coffin and the body was especially poor and the only human remains to survive were a few tiny fragments of teeth, which were found during the processing of residues from the environmental samples after completion of the excavation.

The soil blocks containing the sword and the lyre were later CT-scanned out of hours at the Paul Strickland Scanner Centre in Middlesex, allowing 3-dimensional digital images of the objects to be compiled. This new technology has supplemented the more traditional X-radiography and revealed important previously hidden detail that has aided the

conservators in their work and added to the object's record. The back and front of the lyre were also laser-scanned by Plowman Craven & Associates to record its topography with the remains *in situ*. Although much of the lyre's wooden structure had long since decayed, all the external metal fittings, and some areas of wood around the fittings, were preserved in their original positions, which will allow a full reconstruction of a Saxon lyre to be made in this country for the first time. The investigative conservation work has also revealed clues about how the instrument was constructed and repaired. Recent work has revealed two of these fittings on the shoulders of the instrument, to be small circular gilded mounts with interlace ornament around a central garnet inlay. It is hoped that both the digitally scanned and conventional records will form part of the eventual display of this fragmentary but rare find to the public.

The X-radiography showed that the lyre was face down on the chamber floor – and had almost certainly been displaced, before a large unidentified iron object had fallen onto it. This corroded lump was later found to contain two spearheads and a hook, suggesting that the spears had been hung horizontally along the south wall of the chamber.

The lyre was found close to the remains of what is thought to have been a small decayed

wooden box containing a number of items. One of these proved to be a silver Byzantine spoon, probably made in the sixth century. A two-line Latin inscription on the spoon, illegible apart from the letters 'FAB.' and possibly 'RONAM', may have been added in the seventh century. The cross above the lettering may be Christian, although inscriptions of this date often start with a cross.

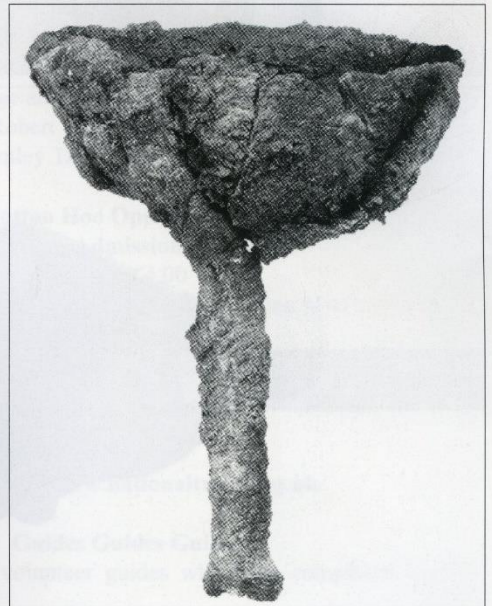
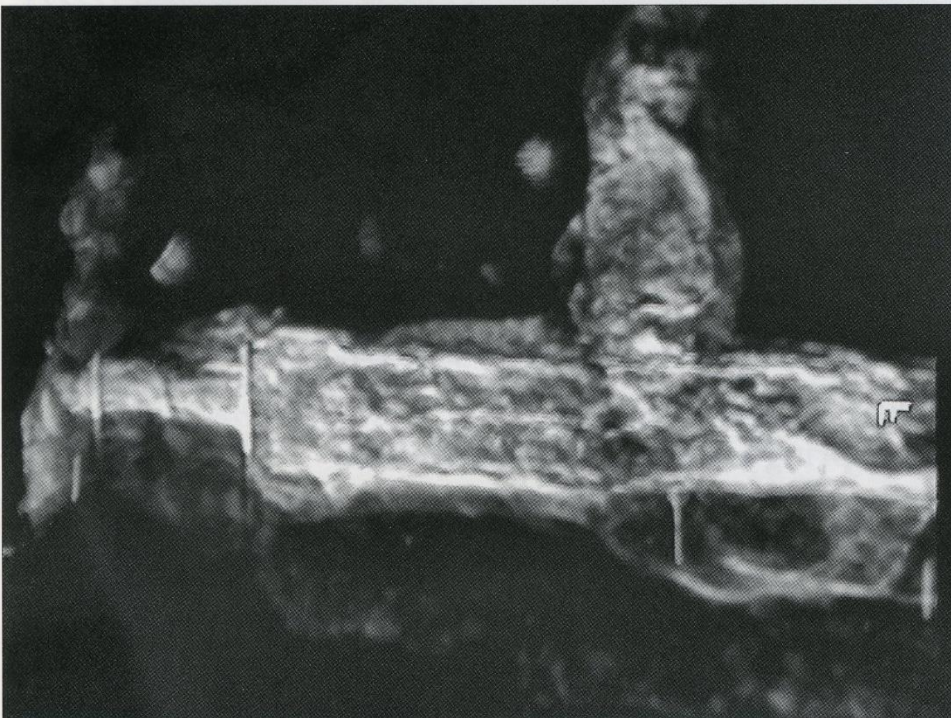
Other objects to be discovered during the conservation works include a large iron scythe blade and a small copper-alloy bowl (both found in the bottom of the wooden tub); an iron lamp with a yellowish colouration in its bowl, which may once have been beeswax, was found in the soil block containing the great cauldron. The lamp is possibly the most evocative object of all, as it is likely that it was placed on top of the coffin and was alight when the chamber was finally sealed. The

form of the lamp is very similar to a 4-legged example found in the incomplete chamber grave at Broomfield in Essex in 1894 and is unlike the squat 3-legged lamp from Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo.

Although preservation of organic material in the sandy soil was extremely poor, traces of mineralised textile have been found on the frame of the folding stool and on at least one of the coffin fittings. Grass-like plant fibres have also been found on the floor of the chamber beneath some of the drinking vessels that were arranged along the east side of the chamber and beneath the lyre on the south side. In recent weeks, the sword, still in its scabbard, has been freed from its soil block. Early indications suggest it had a wool-lined wooden scabbard and a horn handle. Such is the extent of the iron corrosion around it, however, that it will require a great deal of time-consuming and meticulous conservation

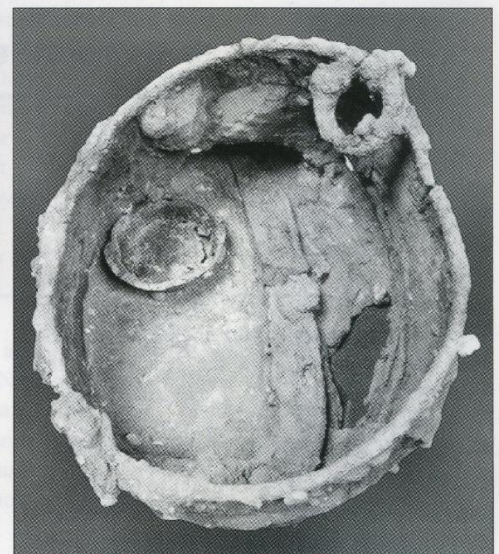
Below left: CT scan image of sword (hilt end)

Below: Prittlewell 1 iron lamp



work before it, like so many of the objects, finally gives up its secrets.

In conclusion, it is worth indicating that since the completion of the evaluation in December 2003, despite numerous talks, conference papers, assorted articles and a Time Team Special on the discovery, work has been almost entirely limited to the conservation laboratory and the initial stabilisation and recording of the objects. No detailed analytical work has been carried out on the site records, as there may yet be a further phase of archaeological work in the future. This was made more likely following the verdict of a year-long local public inquiry in March of this year which approved the proposed F5 road scheme in the area.



Above right: Wooden tub containing iron scythe & copper bowl

Bottom left: Lyre & conservator

(All photos: Museum of London Archaeological Service © MoLas)

Ian Blair is the senior archaeologist for the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The archaeological evaluation at Priory Crescent, Prittlewell, was commissioned and financed by Southend-On-Sea Borough Council.

Angela Care Evans

Honorary Degree Ceremony awarded by University of East Anglia held on 26 October 2005 at Suffolk College



Angela Care Evans is an archaeologist and academic – a world-expert in the field of Anglo-Saxon archaeology, and specifically in the study of the Anglo-Saxon ship-burial at Sutton Hoo, which discovery in 1939 changed for ever the image of the Anglo-Saxons and the period then called The Dark Ages. Beginning her archaeology in Cardiff, at the University of Wales, she succeeded, despite not *then* being an Anglo-Saxon specialist, in gaining a post at the British Museum as a research assistant working on the finds from those 1939 Sutton Hoo excavations. Her interviewers must have recognised her undoubted potential to join what was then, and still is, the élite team of the world of museum academia. Since then her life's work of research has made an unparalleled contribution to the understanding of Sutton Hoo and its context, and of the wider Anglo-Saxon cultural

landscape. She edited Volumes 2 and 3 of the monumental three-volume Report on the Sutton Hoo excavations. It stands, still, as one of the greatest pieces of archaeological reporting and interpretation — a lifetime's work, on what was the archaeological find of a lifetime. Her work on early medieval boats, including the Sutton Hoo ship, and more recently her significant role within the 10 year Sutton Hoo Research Project which culminated with her reconstruction of the pony bridle, represent stunning analysis, synthesis and reconstruction of some of the most difficult and complex archaeological evidence.

Angela's stature as an academic is great in two senses. Firstly the depth and breadth of her scholarship represent a major resource, and probably will continue to be unmatched for many years to come.

But secondly what makes her a truly great academic is her ability and willingness to share that knowledge and to make it accessible to all. In talking to friends and

colleagues, all spoke with one utterly consistent voice which I can confirm from my own experience.

Angela is a much-respected scholar: erudite, painstaking and meticulous in the research field; but equally never patronising, never superior, never aloof, and always generous with her vast treasure-hoard of knowledge; she is truly worthy of this award.

In some institutions this oration would be given in Latin – to convey the antiquity and gravity of honouring high achievement. Here, at the heart of the seventh century Kingdom of East Anglia, within view of the great international Anglo-Saxon market place on the River Gipping – Gippeswic — there is only one way to honour the high achievement of Angela Care Evans – in Old English, alliterative verse – specially composed for this occasion by Dr Sam Newton.

Dr Rosemary Hoppitt



At the reception following her award of an Honorary Doctorate. Top: Angela Care Evans and Dr Rosemary Hoppitt (orator at ceremony)

Middle: With current Chairman of The Sutton Hoo Society, Lindsay Lee
Bottom: Angela Care Evans

All photographs: Dr Noel Adams

Poem in Old and Modern English in honour of Angela Evans

by Dr Sam Newton
29 September 2005

Wæs þú Angela hál, Efanés-dohter,
Angla-wine!
*Be thou Angela, Evan's daughter,
Angles' friend, hale!*

Onlúcest þú mid ár-stafum
*Thou hast unlocked with due honour
éðel-hord Angla-máðma.
the ancestral hoard of Angles'
treasures.*

Onwriþest þú giedda wíra,
*Thou hast unravelled the riddled
threads*
wundur-smiþa ár-geweorca,
of the skilled works of wonder-smiths,
swá magon wé séon searo-gimmas,
so we may see the master-gems,
éacen-stánas æþel-cynnes.
*the spell-bound stones of a special
folk.*

Lihtest ús þú léoht-móde,
*Thou hast enlightened us with light
mood,*
déophýgdig worda, wintrum fród.
*and deep-thought words, wise in
winters.*

Brúc léana þín hwíle lengest,
*Brook thine rewards for the longest
while,*
Westan hláfdige, Ést-Súð-folces wina
lady of the West, East Suffolk's friend.

Anglo-Saxon Boat and Ship Building Techniques: were they distinctive in the early medieval period?

by Damian Goodburn



It has often been a concern of historians and archaeologists to try to give material remains ethno-historical tags such as Viking or Saxon. Whilst this has not been a primary concern of mine, it cannot entirely be avoided. Great differences in traditional boats around the southern North Sea and Channel region can be seen today, and in some cases appear to be echoing ancient regional traditions — so what was the situation in the Anglo-Saxon period as regards ship and boat building?

Rove Nails and the Sutton Hoo 'ghost ships'

Whilst the Sutton Hoo cemetery is famous for its spectacular high status small finds it is also crucially important for the two burial ship impressions or 'ghost ships'

The site sheds considerable light on early ships and how some were built. Specialists in the field of boat archaeology might simply term them forms of 'keel' type vessels—meaning they had hulls pointed at both ends which were made of planks that partially overlapped. The planks had been assembled as a hull shell before the frame timbers were inserted. The overlaps in this case were held together with a form of iron rivet or 'rove nail' Fortunately for Basil Brown and company, these nails survived as rusty concretions in lines in the sandy soil. If the ship laps had been fastened the way many other Anglo-Saxon ships were, only with wooden fastenings, then the ship impressions might never have been recognised at all!

Whilst the National Trust exhibition at Sutton Hoo and publications provide archaeologists with a lot of 'meat' for the understanding of early ship building techniques, there are significant gaps in the evidence which could do with more targeted research. These are due to the poor preservation of the actual timbers of the ships.

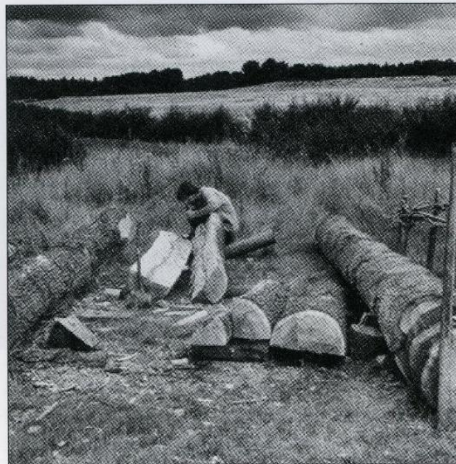
Perhaps the most important constructional detail still uncertain is how the planks were made. Other finds, such as the earlier Nydam 1 ship, had all their planks made by axe

trimming half a log to shape, whilst other ships such as the later Graveney Boat had all of their surviving planks made by radially splitting large, high quality logs. This issue is not just 'academic' If a full-size replica Sutton Hoo ship were to be built as an authentic copy, the cost implications of one method against another would be huge. I suspect the wood grain preserved in some of the Sutton Hoo ship nail corrosion masses might just still hold the answer to this question.

It should be noted that the term treewrighting was used for all large scale woodworking in Anglo-Saxon times, and the techniques and tools used for work 'on land' and for use on the water were very similar. For example, distinctive Anglo-Saxon ship nails were used in high status buildings as well as ships, as were grown timbers. In later medieval times the crafts of 'shipwright' and 'carpenter' became quite distinct.

Bits of 'smelly wood' as sherds of ships: key evidence for defining ship building traditions in Anglo-Saxon England

It will be known to all newsletter regulars that pot sherds are essential finds of most archaeological work. If we had to rely only on finding virtually complete pots to date and understand sites we would really be stuck.



The same is true of boat and ship archaeology; fragmentary finds massively outnumber relatively complete wreck or burial ship finds, particularly in England. Ships and boats were often broken up for second-hand timber in the Anglo-Saxon period. When the re-use occurs in a wet location, those remains often survive very well; for example, all the marks left by the woodworker's or 'treewright's' broad axe may still survive. In the last few years, we have learned a great deal about the details of various types and periods of ship and boat building as a result of the 'forensic' study of such traces—but that is another long and complicated story! Here we will concentrate on basic key features visible to all. For example, it has become apparent that some

ship builders in the Anglo-Saxon period used particular fastening or waterproofing materials, whilst others used quite different ones for the same purpose.

Unfortunately these remains are massively skewed towards the late Anglo-Saxon period



Above Left: Halving an oak log vertically, Saxon style (West Stow 1998)

Above: Hewing curved oak side frames for the replica Sutton Hoo burial chamber display

Below: Cleaving half logs and radials (West Stow 1998)

All photographs: Damian Goodburn

c. 800 to 1070 AD. The most complete Anglo-Saxon boat find of all is the small trading vessel of the tenth century—the 'Graveney boat' found near Faversham in north Kent in 1970 (and with a lot of luck the surviving remains may eventually be displayed there as a result of a local initiative) For more information see 'The Graveney Boat' Fenwick (1978).

This vessel had many similarities with the two ships from Sutton Hoo, although it was proportionately a little wider and heavier. The detailed study of its remains has been followed by intensive study of numerous fragments of planked ships and larger boats excavated from the 1970s to mid 1990s, very largely in London. Considerable advances in the recording and dating of the treewright's work have been made over the last two decades involving the use of targeted experimental archaeology, and tree-ring dating in particular. It should be noted that successful tree-ring dating can often also suggest a regional origin for the timber.

It has gradually become apparent that some details of ship construction at this time were distinctive to particular regions around the North Sea and Channel. However, it also appears that most craft had some common features and that there were many shared characteristics. For example, in most traditions, hull sides were made of overlapping planks which were assembled *before* the framing was inserted.

Right: Two images on coins of vessels that might be interpreted as early hulk type craft.
 A) Reverse of a denier of Louis the Pious minted in Dorestad, 9th century.
 B) Obverse of a coin of Athelstan the 1st from East Anglia, ninth century. (Both redrawn from Fenwick 1983)

For brevity I have listed below the key features which distinguish at least three main styles of planked ship building likely to be seen in the Channel and North Sea in the early medieval period.

Anglo-Saxon planked construction

Vessels were built around a central back bone timber or keel, with overlapping 'clinker' planking erected as a shell before the framing. A form of 'keel-type' construction.

- The framing was heavy and seems to have been inserted after planking up the whole hull, using few cross beams.
- The keel timbers were plank-like or shallow beams.
- The vessels' ends could be straight and sloping, or convexly curved.

Currently we have no evidence of decoration of Anglo-Saxon ships timbers.

- Two schools appear to exist within Anglo-Saxon planked boat construction and have been named after the sites where they were first found; The *New Fresh Wharf School* — where the plank laps were fastened only with treenails and the sealant ('luting') was tarred moss. The *Graveney School* where the laps were fastened with small iron rove nails driven through small wooden rawl plugs. Here the luting was tarred animal fibre rolls.

Danish (Viking) planked construction

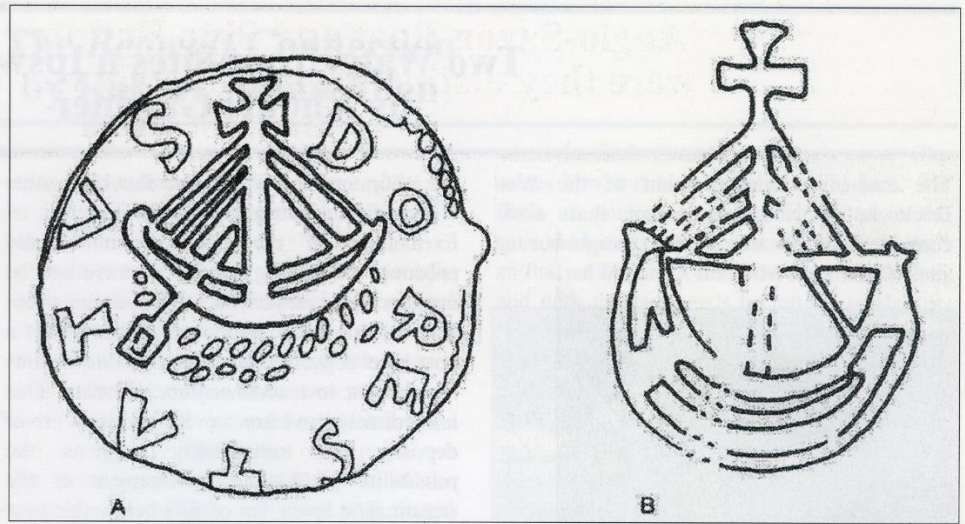
Vessels were clinker keels, but perhaps a little sharper and more lightly framed than Anglo-Saxon keels, they also used multiple cross beams called 'bitr', and framing was added *after* the lower hull was built and then on completion, rather than in one go.

- The laps of the craft were fastened with large iron rove nails without rawl plugs and luted with cords of tarred animal hair.
- Decoration in the form of mouldings was common and for very high status craft complex carvings were sometimes used.
- Stem timbers were convexly curved.

'Frisian' ship building

Larger vessels built in the Low Countries seem to have been very distinctive at this time, and currently the finds show that they had huge expanded dugout bottoms, with sides planked in a form of the clinker method.

- The framing was inserted later and was heavy
- The term 'hulk' (= hollowed out) seems to have been applied to ships of this type in England and fragments of one from the Low Countries were found in London in 1990.
- They also appear to be depicted on at least one type of East Anglian coin.
- The laps of the overlapping side planking were sealed in a very distinctive way; tarred



moss was set in the lap before fastening and then moss was also driven into a gap at the top edge of the lap and capped with a lath held in place by small iron staples known as 'sintels'

- The lap fastenings were treenails as in the *New Fresh Wharf* style of Anglo-Saxon ship building.

Other styles of construction

Carvel style from Western France.

Very recently French archaeologists have discovered the remains of a small capsized planked vessel that dates to the early medieval period but is not built with overlapping planking like the vessels built round the North Sea. The vessel from the Charente estuary (the *Porte Berteau II* wreck) has planking set edge to edge in some form of the 'carvel' style. The large iron nails used are rather like those of Romano-Celtic craft, as is the edge to edge hull planking. Whether Romano-British boat builders working in the early Saxon period continued with a related form of planked vessel construction is as yet unknown, but it seems likely. Planking laid edge to edge, usually on pre-erected framing, was not widely used until the 16th century AD in England. It is quite possible that vessels built in this style came to southern England before the Conquest, as the tree-ring dates indicate construction in AD 599–600, at roughly the same time as the larger Sutton Hoo ship.

Flat bottomed planked river vessels

A small number of shallow, flat-bottomed river craft with square ends have been found on large continental rivers or estuaries, but as yet we have no trace of such vessels in this period in Britain.

Folk boats

It has also been possible to investigate the remains of Anglo-Saxon small boats which so far, have proved to be locally varied forms of dugout boat, generally between c. 2.5–4.5m long. The vast majority of dugout boat finds in British museums date from the early medieval period, rather than prehistory as most might expect. These craft generally do not seem to have received as much attention

as the more glamorous and larger planked vessels, but they can provide a great deal of information about how ordinary, historically unrecorded, folk used the water and developed their woodworking skills. They vary greatly from area to area and from relatively crude trough-like craft to thinly and beautifully carved, relatively light 'expanded' dugout boats such as those found in the Snape cemetery and recently in Lincoln Museum archives. Anywhere in NW Europe in the early medieval period, one would have expected to see locally distinctive, small dugout boats being paddled and poled around much larger plank built boats and ships.

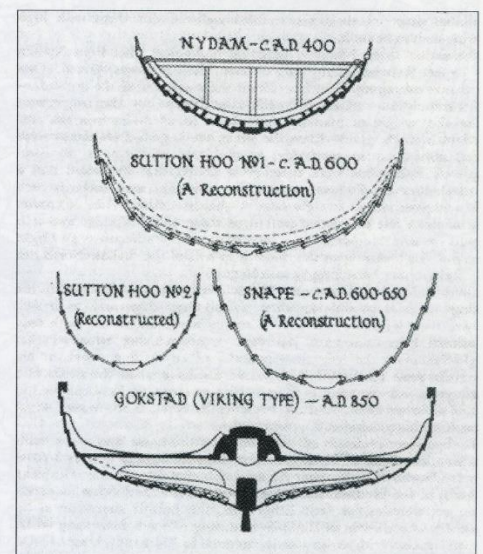
Note (ed). see *SAXON* 39 (2003) for report on *The Covehithe Log Boat*

Conclusions

Really we have to admit that we could do with more planked vessel finds from England, particularly from the early Anglo-Saxon period, to fill out a rather scant picture. But enough material has been found to isolate the key regional styles of construction and bring us closer to understanding what was meant by the account in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle of King Alfred: "ordering the building of warships neither after the 'Frisian' nor 'Danish' pattern."

Refs: V Fenwick 1978, BAR, Brit Ser. 53

Below: Some midship cross sections (C. Green, *Sutton Hoo*, London, 1963.)



Two Waterfront Sites in Ipswich

by Rhodri Gardner

The extensive redevelopment of the Wet Dock in Ipswich has meant that work continues in the area at two neighbouring sites: Cranfield's Mill and Albion Wharf.



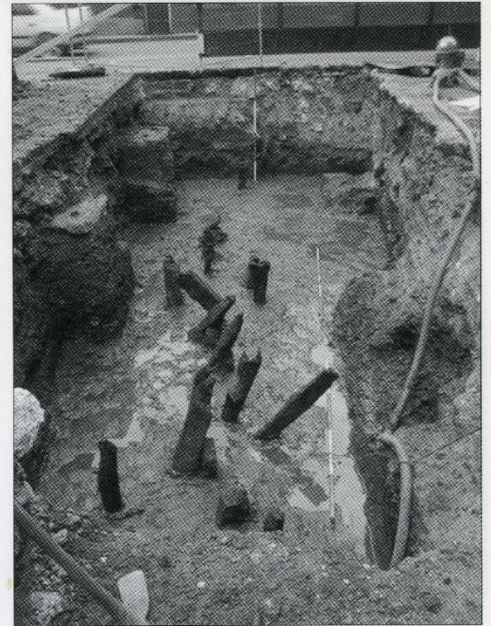
Cranfield's Mill, Ipswich

Following on from the excavation of a late medieval cellared building (see CBA East Anglia Region Newsletter, Issue 1) there was an opportunity to examine earlier river edge deposits and a buried stream channel that flowed down to the Orwell from the town. Excavation at the river edge yielded exciting results in the form of a 'boardwalk' type structure constructed of a series of driven piles. Post-excavation work is currently ongoing, so this has yet to be accurately dated, but preliminary finds evidence shows that it was sealed by substantial reclamation deposits of eleventh to thirteenth century date. Dendrochronology samples are currently in

the laboratory and it is hoped that the results will confirm a Saxon date for the structure. Excavation of the buried channel also produced interesting results. It proved to be unexpectedly substantial at almost 2m deep. One notable fill of this channel comprised a peat layer c. 0.5m thick which produced finds of late first to second century AD date. This immediately overlay a high-energy river deposit, and tantalisingly suggests the possibility of Roman management of the stream. The lower 1m of fills below this peat layer are therefore thought to be of prehistoric date, but produced no significant finds during this phase of the excavation. Demolition of existing buildings on the site is due to commence shortly and further work will take place as safe access is afforded to new areas. (Excavation funded by Wharfeside Regeneration Ltd.)

Albion Wharf, Ipswich

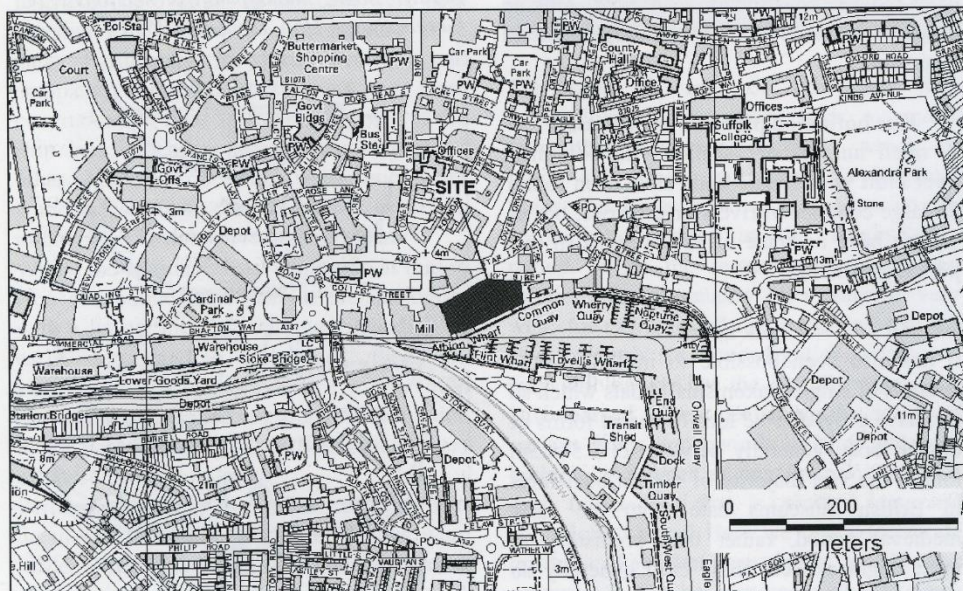
Immediately to the east of Cranfield's Mill proposed redevelopment of the former Paul's Maltings led to a trial trench evaluation. Two trenches were excavated. One revealed well-preserved late medieval deposits, including a fragment of septaria-built wall, affected only slightly by modern truncation. Excavation was halted to avoid damage to earlier deposits, as the trench had fulfilled its objective of confirming the requirement for further work. A full sequence of archaeological deposits dating back to the Saxon and possibly Roman (see Cranfield's Mill above) periods is anticipated. A second trench was opened perpendicular to the modern street frontage in order to locate any earlier quay walls. However, it became clear that this objective could not be met as unexpected evidence was revealed of a deliberately dug inlet. The deposits were at least 3m deeper than anticipated immediately



next to the modern road and a substantial driven pile structure was recorded within the area of the inlet. The limited area of exposure meant that this proved difficult to interpret but it may represent either a pier or piling for a wall. Post-excavation work is in its early stages but the structure is currently thought to be of late medieval date. Again, dendrochronology samples may confirm this. Beneath this structure a peat deposit up to a metre thick was also recorded, and although no dateable finds were recovered from it, the presence of sheep bones indicates that it is of Bronze Age or later date. (Evaluation funded by Knight Developments)

Top left: Cranfield's Mill
Top right: Albion Wharf
Left: Map of site, Ipswich

All images: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services



Dr. Rhodri Gardner is a Project Officer for Suffolk County Council Archaeological Services

The Beowulf Connection

by Robert Julian Allen

This is intended as a gentle introduction to some of the ways in which the extraordinary heroic poem known as *Beowulf* can shed light on the Sutton Hoo discoveries and their culture. Based upon some briefing notes put together for the Sutton Hoo Society's guides to the burial ground, the aim is to provide a background, to reveal some of the poem's attractions, and to suggest some further reading.



Above: 1. Appels figurehead, Belgium
Photograph. Robert Allen

The historical context

The earliest manuscript of *Beowulf*, an Anglo-Saxon epic poem of over 3000 lines, that we have is in the British Library, and is part of a 17th century collection of similar texts. It dates from about the year 1000. It appears, from simple errors of transcription, to be a copy (in the handwriting of two different scribes) of an earlier work, possibly of the 8th century. Knowledge of the poem — as of almost all literature of the pre-conquest period — was virtually drowned by the subsequent influence of French as the language of the court after 1066, and of the rapid changes in English which had taken place by the time Chaucer and Shakespeare were writing in the 15th and 16th centuries. Interest was revived by the scholars of the 19th century, and even Tennyson made a brief attempt at translation early in his career.

The language

Beowulf is written in Anglo-Saxon (or Old English) alliterative verse. The final words of each line do not rhyme, and there is no repetitive pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables, as with the majority of familiar verse. There is, nevertheless a clear pattern within each line. There are four stresses, two in each half-line, and the first, second and third stressed words begin with or include the same consonants. So, when the poet

describes the treasure buried with Beowulf's ashes, he speaks of *Gold on greote, þær hit nu gen lifað* (gold among the dust, where it now still remains).

Letters by Anglo-Saxon scribes are broadly similar to the modern alphabet, but in printed versions, there are three which will seem unfamiliar. They are the æ diagraph, known as 'æsc' (pron. 'ash'), and the two versions of the 'th' sound, þ (thorn), and ð (eth).

The story

The poem opens with a description of the heroism of the Danes, and their king, Scyld Scefing, the founder of a dynasty. Upon his death, and after a splendid ship-funeral, he is succeeded by his son, grandson, and finally by his great grandson, Hrothgar, who by his strong rule brings peace to the people. A symbol of his nobility and power is Heorot, a hall for happiness and feasting. This peace is destroyed by the attack of Grendel, a monster from the nearby marshes, who invades the hall and butchers thirty warriors. More murders follow, and Grendel haunts the hall for twelve years.

Beowulf, the nephew of the king of the Geats (Southern Swedes), comes over the sea with a small band of warriors to offer his help. Hrothgar welcomes him: he joins in the feasting in Heorot, and afterwards is left in the hall to await Grendel's attack. That night, Grendel crashes in, devours one of Beowulf's followers, and attacks Beowulf himself. A wrestling match ensues, in which Beowulf tears off Grendel's arm. Grendel flees to the marshes, to die of his wound in his desolate lair.

The following morning, Hrothgar and his court return to Heorot. There is great relief and rejoicing, and a minstrel tells the story of the valiant dragon-slayer, Sigemund, as a tribute to Beowulf. Hrothgar thanks God for their relief, and adopts Beowulf as his heart's son. Beowulf describes the fight and displays the trophy — Grendel's arm and clawed hand. Orders are given to repair the feasting hall, a feast takes place, and gifts are presented to Beowulf — a banner, a helmet, a mail suit and a sword among them — and to his companions. A minstrel tells the tale of a heroic conflict between Frisian and Dane, and Queen Wealhtheow speaks in praise of Beowulf. Further treasures are presented to him, and she commends her family and her followers to his keeping.

All retire to rest, but unknown to them, Grendel's mother, who has been brooding upon her son's death, is lurking outside. She raids the hall, seizes Grendel's arm and makes off with it, carrying away a close friend of Hrothgar to her lair. Beowulf sets off in pursuit to the haunted marshland where she lives, and finds her captive's head by a lake full of sea-dragons. Beowulf prepares for the underwater battle, arming himself thoroughly, and then plunging into the gloomy waters,

where he finds Grendel's mother's cave. She seizes him, but his chainmail saves him. He finds an ancient and magical sword in the cave, and strikes off her head with it, as well as that of her son, who lies dead beside her, and with the two heads he returns to Heorot. Hrothgar greets him with gratitude once again—though he warns him of the dangers of pride and the transitory nature of human life. More gifts are bestowed upon him, but in spite of his great affection for Hrothgar, Beowulf declares his need to return to his people, the Geats. He embraces Hrothgar, and, splendid in his gold, sets out to sea. He is received in triumph in the hall of his uncle, Hygelac. Beowulf hands his treasure to his king, who rewards him with a sword, seven thousand in money, a share in the kingdom, and princely status.

After the death of Hygelac, Beowulf rules the Geats for fifty years, wisely and well. However, many years before, a previous chieftain has hidden a great treasure in a burial mound as a memorial to his lost tribe, and a dragon has found it and used the mound as its lair. When robbers invade it, the dragon awakens and, breathing fire, begins to devastate the countryside. Beowulf with



Above: 2. 'Wulfman' Sutton Hoo purse lid
Photograph. British Museum

eleven companions, prepares to meet it. with some foreboding, Beowulf remembers his past triumphs, particularly as a peace-bringer, declaring his willingness to play this role again, whatever the consequences to himself. He and the dragon fight in the open, but Beowulf's sword fails him and all but one of his companions seek shelter. The loyal follower, Wiglaf, wounds the dragon as it sinks its teeth into Beowulf's neck. Beowulf regains strength, and with a dagger, strikes the fatal blow.

As he weakens, Beowulf reflects upon his life and sends Wiglaf to examine the dragon's treasure. Having confirmed its richness, Wiglaf returns with some items from it, to find his leader at the edge of death. Beowulf gives thanks to God for the death of the dragon and the deliverance of the treasure.

He gives orders for his burial in a mound on a headland where his people may see it from the water. He gives Wiglaf a gold torque which he received from Hrothgar, and dies.

Wiglaf and the Geats cremate his body, with some of the treasure, in the funeral pyre. They build a barrow on a headland, in which they place Beowulf's ashes, with the remaining treasure.

Two quotations from the text The funeral of Scyld Scefing

Þær æt hyðe stod hringed-stefna
Isig ond ut-fus, æþelinges fær;
Aledon þa leofne þeoden,
Beaga bryttan on bearm scipes
Mærne be mæste; þær wæs madma fela
Of feor-wegum, frætwa, gelæded.
The ship stood ready in the harbour, with
its curled prow,
Ice-shrouded and eager to set sail, a vessel
for a prince;
Then they laid out their beloved chief,
The giver of rings, in the bosom of the
ship,
The hero by the mast; many a treasure
From far away lands, rich objects, were
embarked.

Beowulf's burial

Geworhton ða Wedra leode
Hleo on hoe, se wæs heah ond brad
Weg-liðendum wide gesyne.
..Forleton eorla gestreon eorðan healdan,
Gold on greote, þær hit nu gen lifað
Eldum swa unnyt swa hit æror wæs.
Then the Geat people built for him
A shelter on a headland which was high
and broad.
Seafarers could see it from afar
They left the hero's treasure to be held
by the earth,
Gold among the dust. Now it still remains
there,
Useless to men, as it ever was.

Beowulf and Sutton Hoo Funeral customs

The committal of the body of an important person to a ship is the first and most obvious point of comparison. The funeral of Scyld Scefing with which *Beowulf* opens ascribes beauty and nobility to the ship. The king is gently laid before the mast, and a wealth of treasure from distant places is laid beside him. The difference is that this ship is moored in the harbour, and then set free to allow the sea to take it where it will and the ships at Sutton Hoo remain buried, rather, as Martin Carver says of the ship in Mound 2, as permanent monuments. While the idea of commending the dead king to the waves is noble and romantic (like the death of Arthur and the committal of his body to the charge of three Queens on a mysterious barge which disappears into the mists of the lake), Sam Newton draws very practical attention to the chance of something of an anticlimax if the next tide brings the ship back to shore. The parallel with Beowulf's own funeral is very strong. It is his request, completely met

by his followers, that he should be buried on a headland, in a barrow which could be seen by seafarers from the water. His cremated remains are buried in a 'hleo', translated variously as a 'protection' or an 'enclosure', which was finally covered with more earth — a barrow on a barrow. The point is made that both ashes and treasure were consigned permanently to the earth — powerful evidence when applied to Sutton Hoo to support the coroner's inquest treasure trove decision that the riches found in Mound 1 belonged to Mrs Pretty¹, and not to the Crown. It is also of relevance to Sutton Hoo that Beowulf's men took ten days to build their barrow. How long, one asks, for a ninety foot ship?

The elaborate nature of the preparation for both funerals in *Beowulf* also gives us some kind of a guide to the scenes which might have been witnessed at the Sutton Hoo royal burials. There is high ceremony as they bring Scyld Scefing to start his last voyage, and after they have buried Beowulf, the brave heroes ride round the mound, and the children weep and bewail their king. The people tell stories of his doings, praising his great deeds and doing him befitting honour. The setting on a headland, a 'hoo' in both poem and reality is all the more striking in this context, and all this is an affirmation of greatness, of royalty, and of power.

The concept of a voyage through death or through life to death, is a strong feature of the European tradition: one thinks of Tennyson's *Crossing the bar*, of Shakespeare's *On such a full sea are we now afloat*, and of Tolkien's *Bilbo's Last Song*.

*Day is ended, dim my eyes,
But journey long before me lies.....
.....Farewell to Middle Earth at last
I see the Star above my mast.*

(J.R.R. Tolkien, long before his fame as a novelist was a very important Anglo-Saxon scholar, responsible to a large extent for the revival in interest in *Beowulf* which took place in the 1940s.)

Sutton Hoo: a declaration of royalty

The prominence which is accorded to the funeral rites described in *Beowulf* is, in both cases, a demonstration of deeply felt personal loss by royal friends and courtiers, and also a right and proper treatment of exceptional men who have won their place as kings.

Speaking of Scyld Scefing's son, the poet says:

*Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean,
So shall a young man through good deeds
earn
Fromun feogh-giftum on fæder bearme
Rich gifts under his father's protection
Þæt he on ylde eft gewunigen
So that he long afterwards may remain with
Wil-gesipas, þonne wig cume
Dear companions when conflicts come
Leode gelæsten. Lof-dædum sceal
(and) serve the people. Great deeds shall
ensure that*

*In mægda gehwære man geþeon
In every nation people will prosper.*

The path to power is through heroic deeds: this is also to be observed in the way in which, within a dynasty, it is not necessarily the eldest who succeeds: the process is through the demonstration of the ability to wield power and the quality and amount of support available.

The other great characteristic which is valued in a king is his generosity. Scyld Scefing is called the "beaga bryttan" — the ring (or torc) giver, and the whole poem is full of occasions when the ruler distributes rich gifts: gold abounds and one is reminded of Stuart and Peggy Piggott's descriptions of the discoveries in Mound 1.² The treasures in the ship are examples of rich generosity in the opposite direction from followers to a beloved king. Scyld Scefing is laid in the bosom of his ship, under 'madma mænigo' — a multitude of treasures, and Beowulf 'Hi on beorg' (high in his barrow) is covered with 'beg ond siglu' (rings and jewels). At Sutton Hoo, of course, we have the further evidence of the variety of sources of the treasure — some, quite clearly local, but some like the Byzantine silver, from places much further away, indicating significant political standing. That grave-gifts are a token of individual affection, however, could not be illustrated better than by the bone comb found beside the coffin in Mound 17 — a last, simple and very



fig. 3
personal offering, made perhaps just before the grave was closed.³

The religious connections

While *Beowulf* is an epic poem drawn from an established Christian tradition in northern Europe, there is very little at Sutton Hoo to suggest any but the most superficial Christian connection. However, it is worth noting that the hero-culture which we see *Beowulf* is blended in much Anglo-Saxon religious verse with Christianity. Christ, for example, is seen mounting his cross like a young hero, in *the Dream of the Rood*.

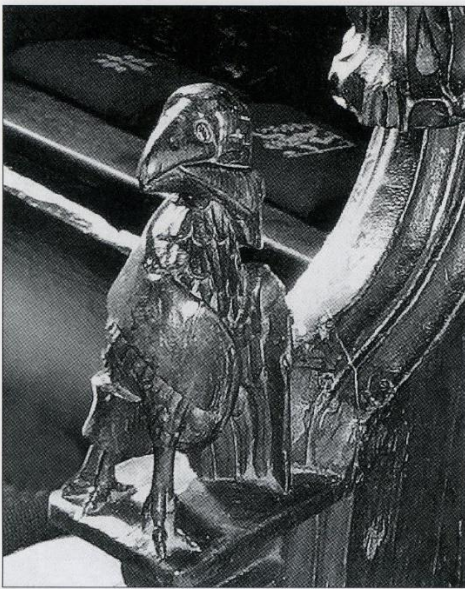


fig. 4

The civilisation

The image of the Anglo-Saxons as a crude and uncivilised people is contradicted by both *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo. The heroic way of life depicted in *Beowulf*, with rich weapons, armour and regalia, is shown to have been a reality, and as Angela Care Evans points out, there is more to it than that. Heorot — the feasting hall of Hrothgar, his ‘mead-hall— becomes even more real when we contemplate the suspension chain from Mound 1 together with its great cauldron. The length of the chain suggests the considerable height of the hall in which it hung, which could have been 7 metres. The textiles and other accoutrements also point to a prosperous, and secure community — secure in the sense that its craftsmanship has had an opportunity to develop and is already established, producing articles like the cloaks and tunic, of high quality. The feasting described in *Beowulf* at Heorot and in the court of Hygelac finds other echoes in the articles found at Sutton Hoo — the silver plate, and the richly mounted drinking horns in both Mounds 1 and 2, as well as the buckets and cauldrons which may have held beer or mead. Evidence of a civilisation which knew well how to spend his leisure time is provided by the gaming pieces from



fig. 5

Mound 1 and Mound 5, and surely the lyre from Mound 1 leads to the conclusion that the feasting included moments of high quality. In many places in Anglo-Saxon literature, the minstrel, the singer of songs and teller of tales, appears frequently, and in *Beowulf*, the narrative is suspended while the tale of a great battle of the past is told — or possibly sung.

Illustrations

Images of monsters and dragons from the time of *Beowulf* are rare. Some, like the Appels figurehead from Belgium (fig.1), and the wulfman from the purse-lid (fig. 2), obviously spring to mind.

However, throughout Suffolk there are many medieval examples of the human preoccupation with strange and savage creatures, mostly in our churches: the long-tongued dragon (fig. 3) and the cockatrice from Ufford (fig. 4), and the horned dragon



fig. 6

from Woolpit (fig. 5). Reminding us of Grendel and his mother, there are also humanoid monstrosities: the woodwose or wild man at Woolpit (fig. 6), and the extraordinary and terrifying pair of female creatures at Laxfield (fig. 7)

¹A coroner's inquest must decide the ownership of valuable items which have been found (‘treasure trove’—‘trouvé’). Essentially, if the treasure has been hidden with the intention to retrieve it (e.g. a silversmith's hoard hidden temporarily to protect it in a time of war), then it becomes the property of the Crown. If it was the intention — as is clearly the case at Sutton Hoo — that the treasure should remain in that place, then it is judged the property of the landowner.

²These were two of the archaeologists brought in by Charles Phillips to excavate the burial chamber. In their descriptions, they contrast the marks in the sand left by iron, by wood, and even by silver, with the pure brilliance of the gold items which appeared as fresh as the day they had been made.

³ M. Carver, *Sutton Hoo, Burial Ground of Kings?* British Museum, 1998.

Further reading

Beowulf, A New Translation (S. Heaney, Faber & Faber, 1999). This is lively and much more readable than some earlier translations. Although there are some inaccuracies, Heaney succeeds in reflecting the spirit and changing moods of the poem as well as the pattern of Anglo-Saxon verse.

The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial (A. Care Evans, British Museum, 1986) sets out (pp 111–115)



fig. 7

very clearly the possible connections between the poem and the burials at Sutton Hoo, and in *Sutton Hoo, Burial Ground of Kings?* (M. Carver, British Museum, 1998) discusses the reality of the burials compared with the art of *Beowulf*. Both of these books draw attention to the relevance of the poem to the coroner's inquest decision that Mrs Pretty was the owner of the treasure.

For those wishing to pursue their interest in the text further, *Beowulf* (M. Alexander, Penguin Classics, 2003) is very useful, having a very detailed glossary facing each page in the text. *The Origins of Beowulf and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia* (S. Newton, Boydell & Brewer, 1993) is a scholarly, informative and detailed examination of the poem, and its roots and connections. A more general approach to the totality of Anglo-Saxon language and literature is to be found in *An Invitation to Old English and Anglo-Saxon England* (B. Mitchell, Blackwell, 1994). This includes a basic introduction to aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture. Particularly, it contains a short anthology of prose and verse, with very useful annotation.

Facing page: 3. Long-tongued dragon Ufford Church

This page, top left: 4. Cockatrice bench-end Ufford Church

Bottom left: 5. Winged dragon bench-end Woolpit Church

Centre: 6. Woodwose or Wildman of Woolpit
Top right: 7. Female monster creatures Laxfield Church

All photographs: Robert Allen

Obituary—Stewart Salmond



*A proud day when Stewart, (far left) with Jenny Glazebrook, Rosemary Hoppitt and Robert Simper, represented the Sutton Hoo Society at the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, July 2002
(photo. official photographer)*

After a long illness and a brave battle, Stewart died on Sunday 7 August. His funeral was held at Bawdsey Church on 18 August, a perfect summers day Stewart's sister Ros and brother David presented their personal tributes followed by addresses from Barbara Grafton, Lay Reader and Sutton Hoo guide, and Lindsay Lee, Sutton Hoo Society Chairman. Stewart's family, friends and several members of the society attended the funeral service, retiring afterwards to Tranmer House for refreshments, generously hosted by the National Trust. It was good to meet Stewart's family and to hear about his life before Sutton Hoo.

Born 20 June 1931, Stewart was brought up with his younger brother and sister at the family home in Appleby Parva, Leicestershire. Their father Dr. James Readdie Salmond was the local general practitioner and their mother, Gwen, sadly died in 1939 when Stewart was eight years of age.

During the war Stewart and his brother were cared for by their aunts and then attended, as boarders, Neville Holt Preparatory School in Leicestershire and afterwards Uppingham School, Rutland.

Stewart was expected to continue the family tradition and become a doctor and after leaving school he intended to read medicine at Queen's, Belfast, but his burning ambition had always been to join the Royal Air Force and train as a fighter pilot.

He enlisted at RAF Cranwell as a regular and

commenced training, and on 14 April 1953 was commissioned in the General Duties branch as a pilot. After completing a tour of duty with No 130 Squadron at RAF Bruggen, in Germany, flying F86 Sabre jets, he retrained as a navigator. Thereafter, he trained as an Engagement Controller with the Bloodhound Mk 2 surface-to-air missile system, where he was responsible for procedures for searching and engaging hostile aircraft attacking the UK. This training took place at RAF Raynham, Norfolk, which was

the home of C Flight 85 Squadron. He was promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant on 14 October 1955.

In 1974, RAF Bawdsey closed as a radar unit and re-opened five years later as the new home for C Flight 85 Squadron. Stewart moved with the unit from Raynham and remained at Bawdsey until his retirement from the RAF on 20 June 1986. He bought a house in the same village, where he lived for the rest of his life.

Lydia Calvesbert (a Sutton Hoo Society guide) also lived in Bawdsey and in 1986 helped launch the *PENINSULAR* magazine, which covered 17 villages around the Shotley Peninsula. Stewart joined the magazine as Business Manager in 1991 and threw himself into the job with the enthusiasm that was so much a part of his character.

In 1996, he joined the Sutton Hoo Society and took over the role of Guiding Secretary His passion for local history and, in particular, Sutton Hoo, never diminished and his loyalty to the society was steadfast. His diligence and attention to detail marked him out as an invaluable member of the committee.

Stewart is sadly missed at Sutton Hoo and the society owes him a great debt of gratitude for all his work over the years.

Our condolences go to his wife Tricia, son Christopher, and family

(Thanks to David Salmond for details about Stewart's early life and to Squadron Leader Derek Rothery for information about Stewart's RAF career)

Below: Stewart guiding a tour: Mound 1, 1997

(photo. Peter Rooley)



Another Successful Anglo-Saxon Festival



The second Anglo-Saxon Festival took place on 23 and 24 July, jointly sponsored by the National Trust and the Sutton Hoo Society. While the first of the two days produced calm and pleasant sunshine, the second was a copy of the Festival day last year, with non-stop rain of the most drenching kind. This did not seem to deter the visitors, of whom there were between 800 and 900 on each day.

The Ship in the Courtyard

There was a wealth of opportunities to be interested, informed, amused – and even impressed, particularly with the star and symbol of the Festival, Edwin and Joyce Gifford's half scale replica of the Treasure Ship, *Sae Wulfing*. She arrived on Saturday morning, still wet from an early sail on the Deben to take her place in the central Courtyard.

Drama at Tranmer House

Other highlights were the presentations in Tranmer House. Sam Newton was in his usual lively and entertaining form, as he spoke on "*Beowulf and the Dream-Ship of Sutton Hoo*", making his talk all the more vivid with extracts from a variety of sources of Anglo-Saxon poetry, and by playing his harp – modelled upon those found at Prittlewell and Sutton Hoo. Peppy Barlow, the Woodbridge playwright, had produced a pair of dramatic monologues, the first a revised version of her *Mrs Pretty in Person*, with Rosemary Macvie, and the second an entirely new script focused upon Basil Brown. He was played by Brian Hewlett (Neil Carter, in *the Archers*), who



presented an utterly convincing and engaging picture of this highly skilled, yet (at the time) much undervalued archaeologist.

Blood in the Arena

Re-enactments of past ways of living imparted the Anglo-Saxon flavour to both days. The *Ynglingas* in their village, with tents and cooking fires, showed the result of careful research in their costumes, their cooking – and their weaponry, with highly convincing displays of archery and combat. The battles were so authentic that one resulted in a trip to the Accident and Emergency unit for treatment to a wound – happily more dramatic than very serious. In the spirit of early medieval verisimilitude, Raedwald, alias Paul Mortimer and friends, patrolled the Hoo, impressing not only with their overall warlike appearance but even more by the care that had gone into their costumes and equipment. Just beyond the Arena, a collection of birds of prey was on show, and those who saw them in flight witnessed a real treat. With them was a display of ferrets, who could be seen playing 'Ferret Roulette' (Don't ask what that was: we missed it. Just guess.)

Adze artistry

We were lucky that two craftsmen, skilled in the use of early metal tools, came to show us their achievement. Both Damian Goodburn, from Channel 4's *Time Team*, and Rick Lewis



worked hard throughout both days, demonstrating the ways in which timber was shaped, using authentic tools and producing amazing results in both accuracy and beauty of finish. Damian's talks and his knowledge about early techniques were enriched by his display of contemporary specimens of ship construction in the often remote past.

Music and dance

It was a matter of some disappointment that owing to a communication problem the Morris dancing teams originally planned could not perform. However, we were grateful at the last minute on the Saturday to welcome the *Westrefelda* side, who delighted and amused spectators with their enthusiasm and skill. It was a great joy that the *Early Music Consort* was represented on the first day by a

lone piper, and on the second by a group of musicians, with their ancient woodwind and percussion instruments. The atmosphere created by their quite exceptional performances contributed to the festive nature of the whole event in a way which was both rare and of high quality.

Learning by doing and by reading

Children were not left out: in fact, a marquee was given up solely to carefully supervised children's activities, like making and decorating model boats and clay pots. The demonstration of the way in which special



objects may be found among what appears to be discarded rubbish attracted a constant stream of young people to the stall organised by the Suffolk Archaeological Service manned by Faye Minter and Garbologist, Duncan Allen, who is also a Sutton Hoo Society committee member. For adults and those with special interest there were the bookstall and displays – some very extensive – of relevant literature.

The inside story

The National Trust provided the usual range of good food in its restaurant, supplemented by a hotdog stall and tea and cakes in a tent by Tranmer House. Very popular venues were the Ale Tent, offering lager and fine Suffolk beer, and the hog roast with whole hogs roasted on spits.

Top left: Raedwald, Edwin and Joyce Gifford (photo. Veronica Bennett)

Bottom left: Mrs Pretty (Rosemary Macvie) Basil Brown (Brian Hewlett) (photo. Freida Argent)

Centre: Damian Goodburn demonstrating his skills at the Sutton Hoo Festival 2005 (photo. Veronica Bennett)

Sam Newton and harp (photo. Veronica Bennett)

SUTTON HOO SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2006

Pagan Beliefs: Burial and Beyond

To be held on Saturday 14 October 2006. At the Royal Hospital School, Holbrook, Nr Ipswich

Full information and booking forms will be in the next (July) issue of *SAXON*

If you wish to book early please ring Mike Argent 01728 747 716

BOOKS AT SPECIAL PRICES

The Research Project Report and the Charles Phillips Autobiography

Thanks to the generosity of Penny Phillips, copies of Charles Phillips' autobiography, *My Life in Archaeology*, are available to Society members for £5, postage and packaged included. Contact the Society's Publications Officer, Robert Allen, on 01473 728 018, or write to him at White Gables, Thornley Drive, Rushmere St Andrew, Ipswich IP4 3LR.

Sutton Hoo Opening Times

Admission

Adult £5.00 Child £2.50 Group rate £4.00

For ALL information about site opening and visiting please contact the National Trust and NOT the Society

National Trust Sutton Hoo:

Tel: 01394 389700

Fax: 01394 389702

Email: asoksx@smtp.ntrust.org.uk

Web site: www.nationaltrust.org.uk



DIARY

Sutton Hoo Society AGM

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 17 February 2006 in Tranmer House, Sutton Hoo at 7.30pm.

Agenda

- Apologies
- Minutes of the last AGM
- Reports and accounts
- Election of Auditors
- Election of committee

The business meeting will be followed by a lecture by Martin Carver who will present 'Publishing Sutton Hoo: Past, Present and Future.'

SOCIETY EVENTS 2006

Spring Lecture

The 2006 Spring lecture will be given by Sonja Marzinzik from the British Museum in Tranmer House, Sutton Hoo at 7.30 on Wednesday 15 March 2006. The Lecture will focus on the Sutton Hoo Great Gold Buckle

ANGLO-SAXON FESTIVAL

Another extravagant event – **bigger and better than before**. To be held on Saturday 1 and Sunday 2 July 2006 10am – 5pm both days **DON'T MISS IT**. Full details will be displayed at Sutton Hoo after Easter 2006 and at www.suttonhoo.org

Guides Guides Guides

Thanks again to our volunteer guides who have completed another successful year.

Thanks also to Robert Allen who kindly deputised as Guiding Secretary during Stewart's illness. We often talk about the 'heroes' of the Sutton Hoo Story I have no hesitation in saying that the real-life ones are our society guides who regularly venture out in weather conditions most people would quake at, blistering hot days, (yes — there have been a few!) monsoon rains and the usual body-blasting east coast winds.

Yet one of the most heart-warming sights, regardless of the weather, are the happy faces and enthusiasm of the visitors and their guide on their return from a tour – it's pure magic!

Guiding is a vital part of the Sutton Hoo experience, so thank you all for your continued loyalty It is also rewarding and fun and we can never have too many For information about becoming a Sutton Hoo Guide contact Lindsay on 01394 450491

Obituary

We have sad news about John Wiffen who died suddenly on 10 October. John was a National Trust employee and Sutton Hoo Society Guide, and could usually be found behind the reception desk or working in the restaurant at Sutton Hoo. He had a great personality, a great sense of fun, and a kind and generous nature. He is greatly missed by all who knew and worked with him. Our thoughts are with his family

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Membership Secretary: Jane Wright Minutes Secretary: Brenda Brown Guiding Secretary and Publications: Robert Allen

Duncan Allen Sue Banyard Alison Booth Jenny Cant Nigel Maslin

Trish Mulholland-Middleton Angus Wainwright

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