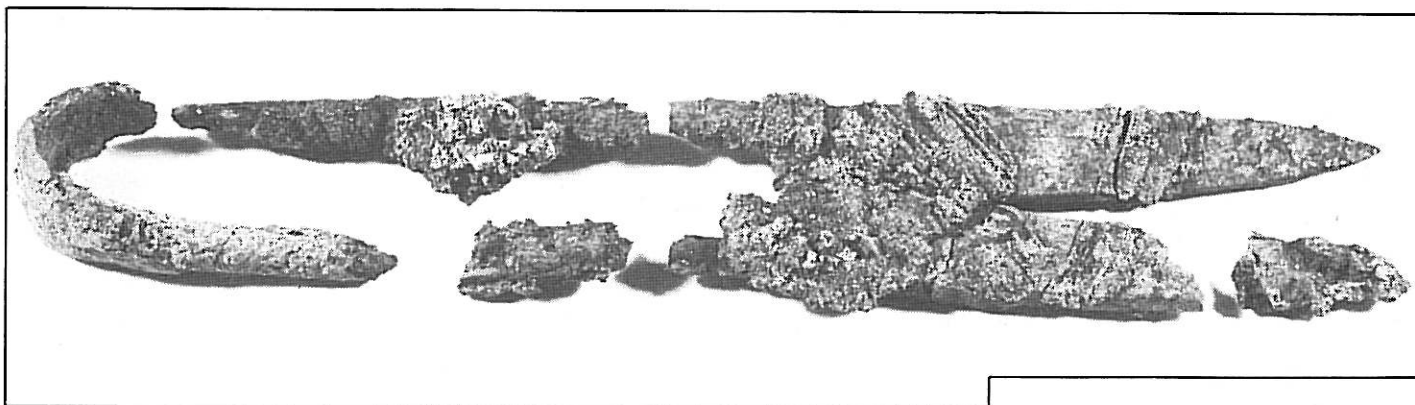




THE NEW CAMPAIGN — NEW WORK AND NEW IDEAS

by Martin Carver



Iron shears from the cremation grave under Mound 5. Fragments of textile can be seen preserved within the corroded metal.

Sutton Hoo, 'the site of the ship burial' is known throughout the world. Ever since the discoveries of Basil Brown and Charles Phillips in 1939 (see **SAXON** 10) it has been called the burial ground of kings, the earliest royal burial ground in England. And so it is. But what *was* a king in the 7th century? Why is Sutton Hoo where it is? Who else is buried there? Are there other royal cemeteries? Why did they use ship burial? What is the link between the East Angles and the people of Scandinavia, of Britain, of France? These are some of the questions that the new campaign, the campaign of the 80's, our campaign, sets out to answer. They are questions that matter. They matter to the British people anxious to write something solid in the earliest pages of the history of their nation, something comprehensible for school children to learn and school teachers to teach, and they matter for our continental friends who are trying to find out in similar ways how their own countries came into being.

DARK AGE THEATRES

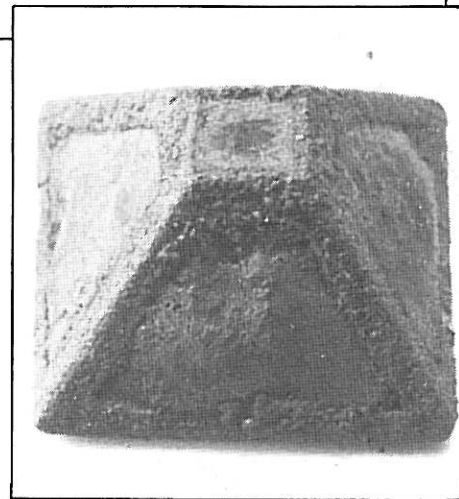
The Dark Ages is the time that modern Europe began — and we know precious little about it. A handful of opaque documents, a scatter of settlements, a dozen boats: we are often guessing. But the Dark Ages is also well-known for its great range of cemeteries, containing an astonishing variety of material and burial rites. They have been known about for a long time, and every generation has dug them up, pilfered them, collected their brooches and

mused about their meaning. But now we see them as far more than places where the dead were laid to rest. The cemeteries of the Dark Ages were the chief ideological expression of the people, in an era before books, churches and Bishops. In them we think we can see ideas and beliefs and the character of communities, as nowhere else.

Sutton Hoo is not simply a burial ground, even a royal burial ground, it is a theatre in which the hopes and fears and conceits of a people are given voice — every burial is a statement, and the great ship burial a veritable poem, as evocative and recondite as *Beowulf* itself.

A NEW SHIP BURIAL

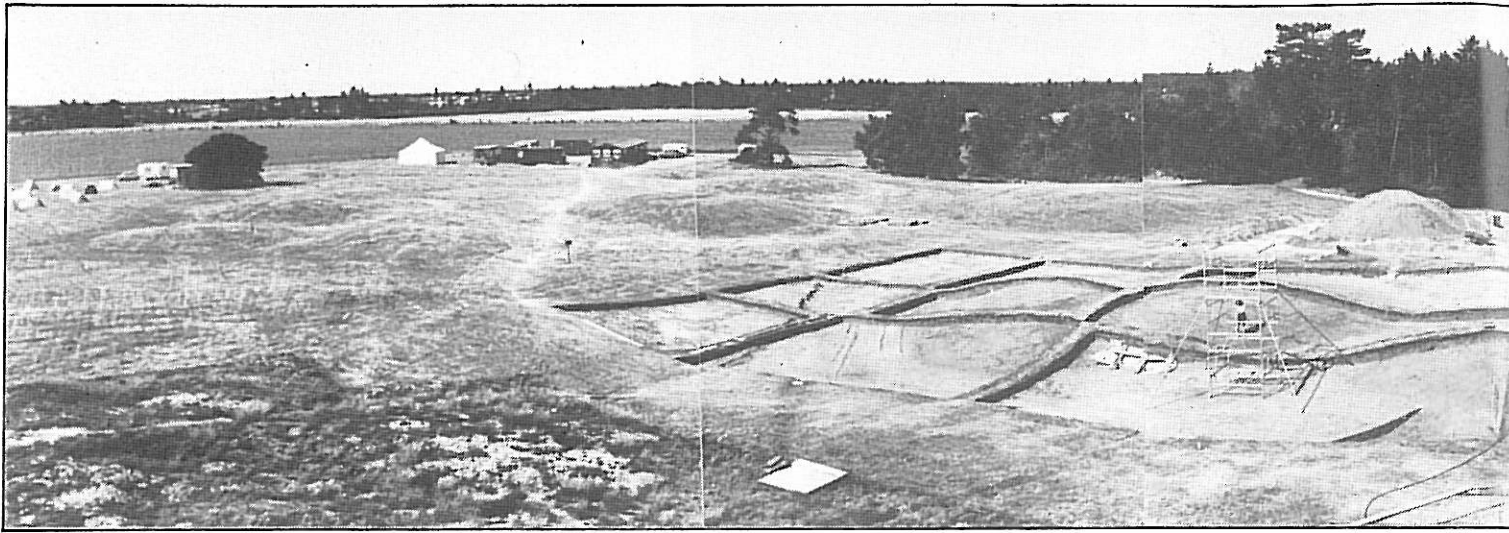
When we open the curtains at Sutton Hoo, the action presented to us is both dazzling and baffling. The great ship burial under Mound 1 continues to dominate the centre of the stage. It is still the largest ship known from the early Middle Ages and the fact that, very unusually, the burial deposit was undisturbed, puts it with the all-time great discoveries like the Oseberg ship burial of Viking times, Philip of Macedon's tomb and Tutankhamen. But we now know that the burial under Mound 2 was once just as rich. It contained a man with a sword, helmet, shield, a gold buckle, drinking horns, a tub, bucket, cauldron, bronze bowl, a beautiful blue glass jar, a silver-mounted box, a silver-mounted cup, five knives (some in sheaths) and textiles. The grave goods and body were placed in an underground burial-



Sword 'pyramid' from Mound 6, made of silver inset with garnet and glass. This would have hung by a strap from the scabbard.

chamber built of timber planks. The mound also contained a ship, a clinker-built ship about 20m long; but most surprisingly (and unusually), the ship was placed *over the top* of the underground chamber, keel-down. So both Mound 1 and Mound 2 are burials of very high status, involving ships and anticipating the practice of the Vikings some 200 years later.

The Mound 2 story comes from Basil Brown's excavations in 1938 and our own in 1984, 1986-8; from scraps found in and around the Mound, from careful dissection of disturbed layers and from chemical tests. For this was a mound that had already been excavated before Basil Brown got to it — probably in the mid 19th century, when this or another mound was opened by the landowner — as the Ipswich Journal tells us.



View of the excavations this summer. 75% of the proposed sample has been opened up: Sector 5 (left) containing Mounds 6

THE CREMATIONS: WHO AND WHY?

Nowadays we can learn a lot — even when a burial has already been visited, pilfered, excavated, overturned and dispersed — but it is that much harder and slower to do it. That's just as well, because the other three mounds we have dissected were all badly damaged — not just by robbers, but by ploughing, military exercises, burrowing rabbits, and tunnelling moles.

Each one of these mounds (Nos 5, 6 and 18) had contained a cremation, wrapped in cloth and placed in a bronze bowl. With Mound 5 there were gaming pieces, iron shears, a silver-mounted cup, a comb, a knife, and animal bone (perhaps a dog), which shared the funeral pyre. From Mound 6, so far, we have magnificent textiles and a sword 'pyramid'. The burial from Mound 18 was completely wrecked by ploughing and only detected at all by very patient and meticulous searching.

The other mounds so far excavated at Sutton Hoo (3 and 4) were also cremations: so



Angela Evans working on the Mound 18 cremation during August. The fragile traces of the burial are sprayed with water to aid definition.

we have a second 'family' of cremation burials to put beside the ship burials. Who were these people and why did they use cremation? If of lesser rank they were still rich; if earlier they are still 7th century; and it is unlikely that they



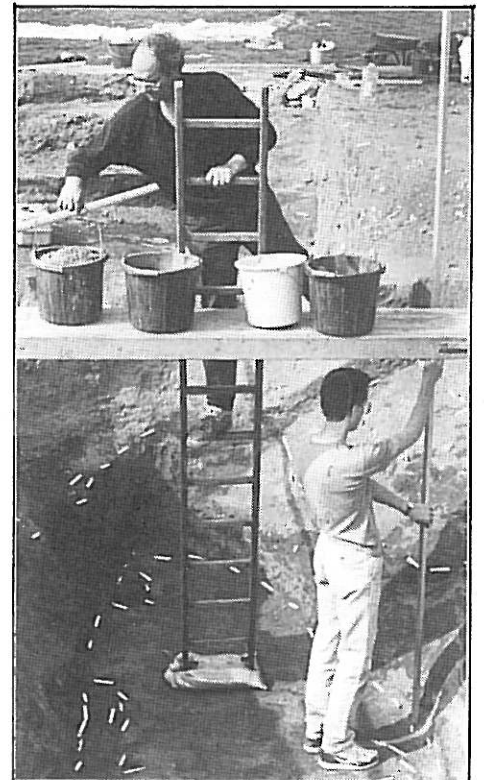
Grave cut through one of the Mound 5 quarry pits. This sandman had a ring of decayed organic material around the neck, which appeared to be broken.

are specifically women or children, since we have a throwing axe from Mound 3 and a sword pyramid from Mound 6. Are they 'locals' while the ship burials belong to exotic nobles? No, because cremation under barrows is also a Scandinavian burial rite. Are they all foreigners? Not from the bulk of the grave goods, which have good British or Anglo-Saxon ancestry.

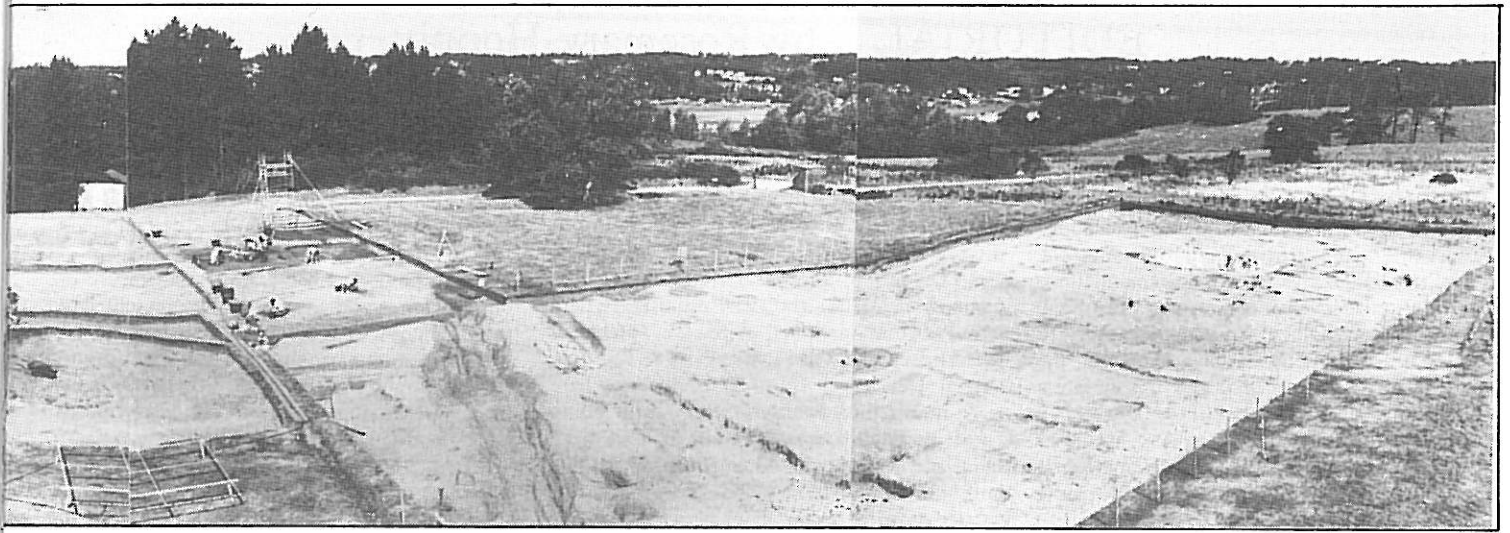
HUMAN SACRIFICE

More puzzling still are the 'flat graves',

in which the bodies are placed without grave goods. Many of these bodies have startling features: they may be laid face-down, or kneeling, or their wrists and ankles laid together as though tied, or the neck broken, or the head cut off. Sometimes two bodies are laid together in the same grave. Although the identification of age and sex is extremely uncertain, the majority appear to be young and male, and this has been endorsed by pathologists in the very few cases where the skulls survived. These peculiar burials (over half the total) must indicate violent deaths and specially arranged burial. The bodies are found in two groups, one on the eastern periphery and the other around Mound 5. Three of these graves were actually cut into the partially-filled Mound 5 quarry pits — so the mound and the 'satellite' burials must be close to each other in date.



Martin Carver at work on the burial chamber under Mound 2 during 1987. At this stage, excavation had revealed Basil Brown's 'boat-shaped pit'.



and 7, Sector 4 (centre) containing Mound 18; and Sector 2 (far right) containing Mounds 2 and 5, now completely excavated.

THE STORY SO FAR

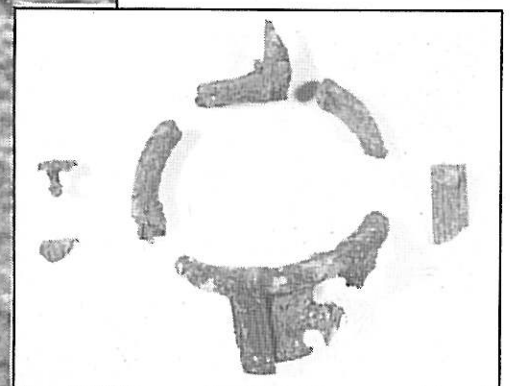
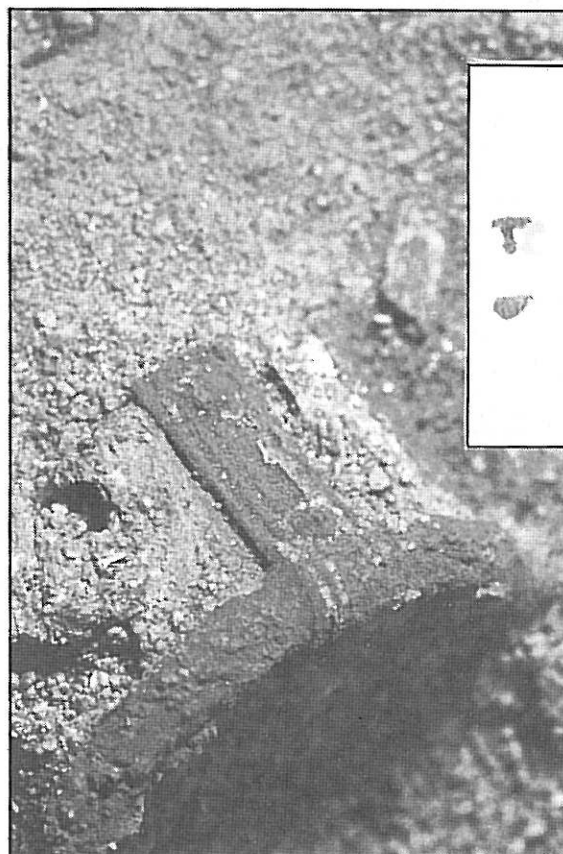
Human sacrifice is not just a possible explanation for these 'flat graves', it is also the most likely. The pagan burial rites of the Dark Ages certainly included the sacrifice of animals — horses, dogs and game birds in particular. Dark Age society also included slaves, and it is but a small step to offer human as well as animal property at the grave-side. It also indicates a drastic, and by our standards, psychopathic state of mind in the Sutton Hoo mound-builders. This need not surprise us either. The whole cemetery represents a highly extravagant signal of belief, by people who had no writing, no archives, no pictures, no sculpture and no other monuments. The message they are communicating is that they are ruthless, affluent and independent, that their aristocracy is immortal and feasts with the gods.

The language they use to communicate their message varies, I believe, with the political situation. These early leaders, by no means wholly attractive to us, were frightened people. They chose symbols from remembered or invented pagan lore, sometimes cremation, sometimes ship burial, fuelled by contacts with other aristocrats in Scandinavia, to emphasise that they, the early rulers of the new Kingdom of East Anglia were pagan, maritime and above all independent. What was it they feared? Above all else, the loss of their autonomy. The fear was brought on no doubt, by the expanding empire of Christian Europe, whose first missionaries had reached Kent and were infiltrating East Anglia. Sutton Hoo was more 'pagan' than the pagans who had gone before, because the mound-builders could see what was coming next: the end of the North Sea Anglo-Scandinavian culture and the beginning of the new Europe. And so it happened, until the Vikings reminded the East Coast English where their allegiance lay. But by that time kingship and Christianity were indissolubly linked.

That at least is the story so far. It is not solid yet and we have to add much to it. Two more years of excavation are all we have before our sample is complete and we have taken our chance to rewrite page one of English history. We are privileged to have this chance, and glad to have the help of yourselves, Sutton Hoo's own Society.



Gigi Signorelli and Giorgi Bernardi from Italy at work on Mound 6.



Silver cup-rim from Mound 5 in situ, and (Inset) after excavation.

EDITORIAL by Rosemary Hoppitt

During the summer I was fortunate to have two trips away, one to France and the other to the north of England. During those holidays I made visits to two famous historical locations — to Carnac in southern Brittany, and to the site of the 'Major Oak' near Nottingham. They are two similar and yet contrasting sites. Each has its own 'mythology' — Carnac is (at least to me, and my children), 'Asterix Country', the Major Oak we are firmly told by the signposts is in 'Robin Hood Country'.

Carnac was quiet, enigmatic, full of wonder. I was allowed to wander freely round the stones as long as I didn't climb on them (I at least could understand the notices — I can only assume the French themselves found them more difficult to comprehend!). Car parking was adequate for what for most people seemed to be a fairly short visit along the extent of the three or four main groups of alignments. At the

Carnac end I managed to find the rather modest information display, which I felt did not really do justice to this fascinating site. However it was more than compensated for in the excellent museum in Carnac Ville.

The site of the 'Major Oak', set in a Country Park, was the exact opposite. There was a huge car park and picnic area, plenty of room for coaches, and it was even served by a special service-bus from Nottingham. There were information boards at every turn telling us of the wildlife we might see (had we been quiet and without the other 500 people). The large fenced-off Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre provided a shop in which we could have bought everything and anything with a Robin Hood connection; a display all about Robin Hood; craft demonstrations; and a cafe in which to refresh ourselves after walking the marked paths through the woodland. If we then

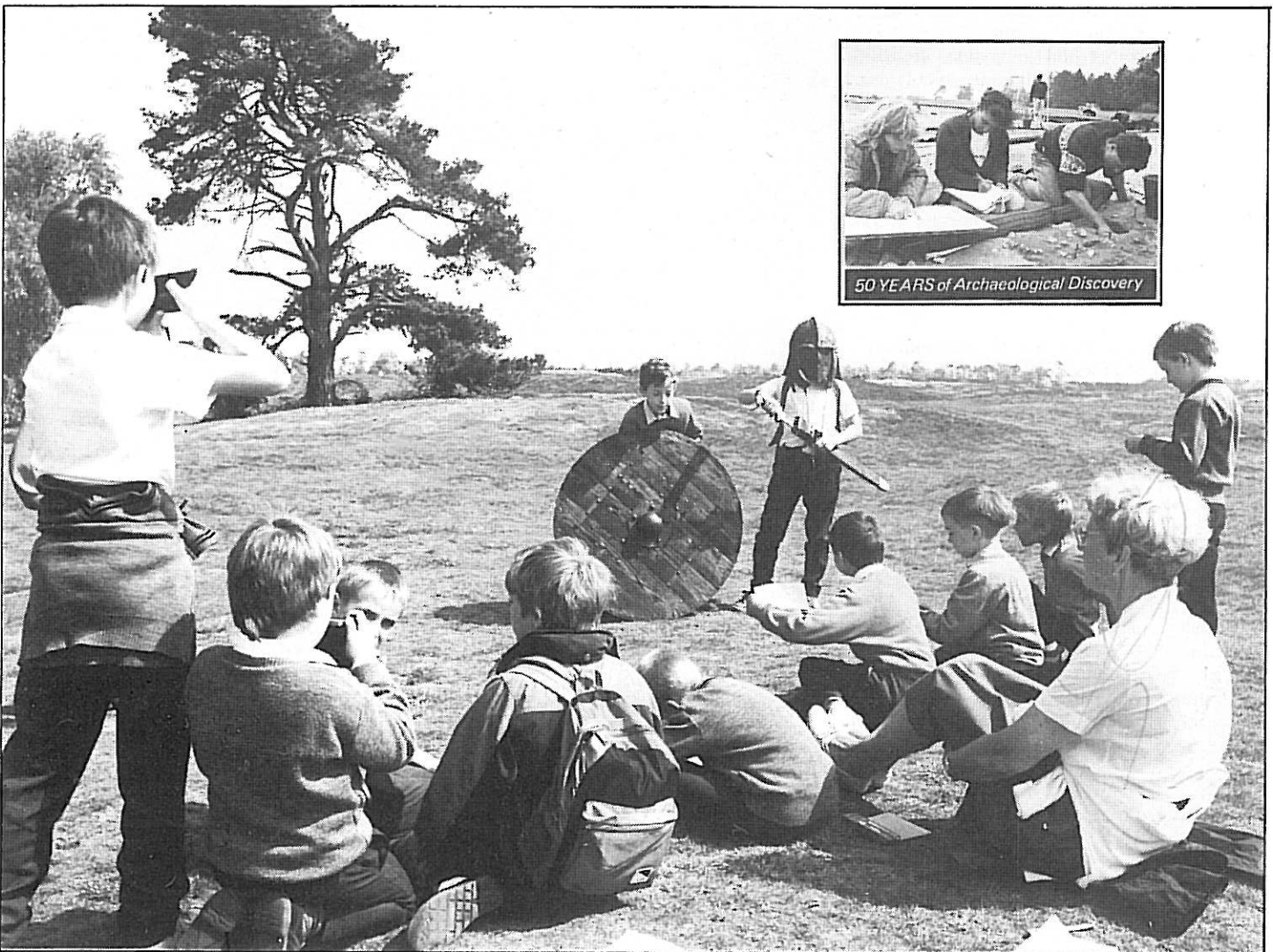
went on to Nottingham, we could have chosen to take a 'flight of adventure' to the heart of the greenwood and visit the 'Tales of Robin Hood', where (according to the publicity leaflet) 'He Lives' in 'A little Disneyland'.

The point has come where the future of Sutton Hoo, and the way it is to be presented to the public are to be decided. Which route are we to take — that of wonder, enigma, education and scholarship; or that of 'A little Disneyland' — a package tour through the past, full of tableaux, picnic sites and souvenirs.

I don't know whether the author Rosemary Sutcliff has ever visited Sutton Hoo, but in her re-telling of the Beowulf story she finishes in this way — 'And when the death song was sung, all men went away, and left Beowulf's barrow alone with the sea wind and the wheeling gulls and the distant ships that passed on the Sail-Road'.

How should we leave Sutton Hoo?

"Dragon Slayer: The Story of Beowulf" by Rosemary Sutcliff, pub. The Bodley Head.



Children from Britannia County Primary School (Ipswich), on an educational visit to Sutton Hoo in May. They were shown around by Mrs Doreen Smith, one of the Society's guides. Inset: undergraduates learning techniques of excavation and recording at the Sutton Hoo Training Excavation.

SUTTON HOO: WHAT NEXT? by Robert Simper

The open piece of ground overlooking the River Deben at Sutton Hoo has a long history of prompting the question 'what next?'

Many of the people living in the vicinity of the Sutton Hoo site hope and believe that once the Research Project team leaves, the whole idea of Sutton Hoo as a public place will be forgotten and it will become just a quiet patch of heathland again. Wishful thinking! Sutton Hoo is, after Stonehenge, the most well-known archaeological site in England. These strange burial mounds with their brutal and mysterious origins lay at the very roots of English history, and people are going to go on visiting this site for ever. However hard the archaeologists work to say there is no more treasure to be found, there will be treasure-seekers waiting in the wings to try their hand. There are a host of ways an unguarded site could be totally destroyed by people satisfying their own short-term interest.

A FUTURE PLAN?

At the moment one published idea for the site's future is that it should become an archaeological Field School. This seems an excellent idea, but perhaps it would be functional only for a short period in the summer. Access to the site should continue to be controlled all the year round so that the public can visit and enjoy Sutton Hoo without damaging it or the surrounding countryside. Frankly without a guided tour it is difficult for a first-time visitor to understand the complex past of this unique patch of the Suffolk Sandlings.

THE SOCIETY'S ROLE

The early aim of the Sutton Hoo Society was to create a great deal more for the visitor by providing a car park and a proper display area. It was never the intention to have a car park on the site. The walk across the heath or up from

the ferry is very important and contributes a great deal to giving the impression of the unique history of Sutton Hoo, possible burial ground of the Kings of East Anglia. Even with the limited parking space available now it will be possible to continue to control and encourage visitors to the site. The wooden hut with its display is also vital in enabling guides to put across the Sutton Hoo story. Part of the Society's message is to show that the strange, indeed, foreign people, of 7th century Sutton Hoo were actually the start of the culture we live in today.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The Sutton Hoo Society has the joint aim of attempting to play a useful role in safeguarding this wild lonely site and providing a way that people interested in Anglo-Saxon Suffolk and the world it belonged to can be brought together.

THE CHAIRMAN'S VIEW SUMMER 1989: by Robert Simper



Society members pause by the replica sandmen after a site tour led by Martin Carver at the Open Day in September.

The sweltering summer of 1989 has seen Larry Gatter feeling his way in as the new Secretary and devoting time, energy and management skills to making sure the guided tours, sales and many other functions ran smoothly. The previous **SAXON** Newsletter was a special edition for the 50th Anniversary of Basil Brown's 1939 discoveries and considerable effort by the editor Rosemary Hoppitt made it a collectors' item. Again the ferry has run quietly in the background. This year's ferryman, the quiet American John

Welsh, has proved one of the most reliable, and local people and visitors seem to be coming to terms with the ferry's disadvantage that it can only operate on high-tide weekends.

Just as Rome was not built in a day, so no Society is solely the creation of one person. It is the work of the long-suffering guides that is really keeping the show on the road. The public appear to thoroughly enjoy their tours.

The Society is not a profit-making organisation, cash raised helps fund the dig and provides facilities that make the site more

interesting for the public to visit. Takings from guided tours, just as in other years, have shot up after the screening of another BBC 2 'Chronicle' on Sutton Hoo in August. Around this time producer Ray Sutcliffe was in East Anglia shooting for another 'Chronicle' on Sutton Hoo. Again, Martin Carver will be the presenter, this time ably piecing together the story of Anglo-Saxon settlement in East Anglia, and viewers will be rewarded with some familiar and unfamiliar views of the River Deben.

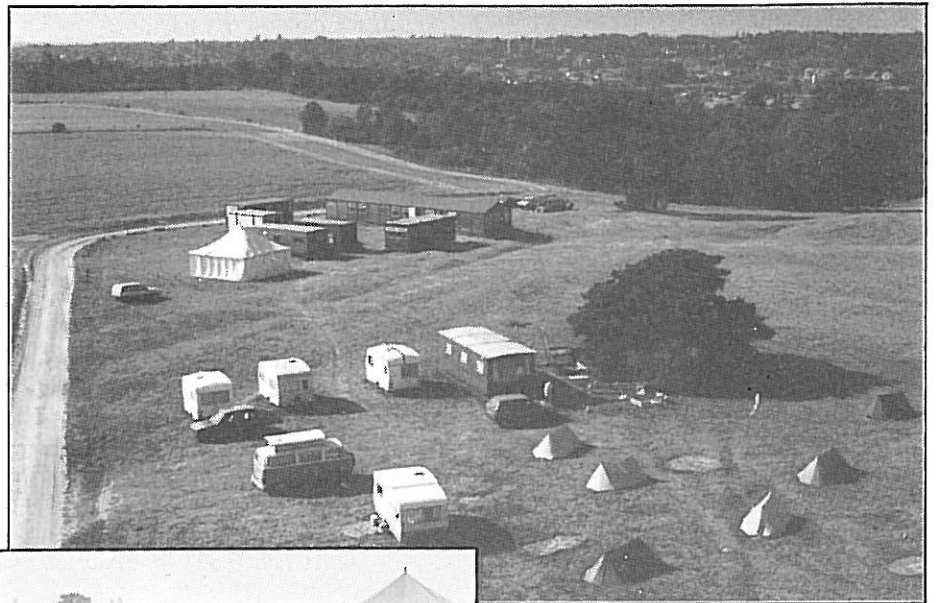
GUIDING: SUMMER 1989 by Larry Gatter, Secretary

Since taking over from Bob Beardsley I can now appreciate why he said he needed (and deserved) a good rest. It's hard work! But I am enjoying meeting so many members of the public, and working with our invaluable guides and helpers, who are the cornerstones to our whole venture.

Partly to gain experience of the operational problems that arise in the front line, and also to improve my own guiding skills, I have put in many weekend appearances this season. We have certainly had problems, some old — some new, including unauthorised cars, overgrown ferry access, need for new notices, emergency telephone, supply of liquid refreshment for the dehydrated — but these have largely been overcome, and we will know what to do next season. In the meantime, many thanks to Bob, and Jenny Glazebrook and Nigel MacBeth for the wealth of advice and guidance provided.

After an early Easter start to the 1989 season, we appeared to be repeating the fairly quiet experience of 1988. But, as you will appreciate, after the BBC Chronicle programme of 16th August, and articles in the local papers, we were besieged with visitors for the next two weekends, during which we took £1,350 at the hut. Many thanks to all of you who helped man the ramparts.

Finally, our usual plea. Although we lost the services of several guides and helpers this year, we have also gained several, but we need more — people who love coming to the site in all weathers, who like meeting the public, who are prepared to devote time and trouble to



View of the campsite, project offices and marquee. The marquee was donated by the Society, and has proved invaluable as a canteen for the site team — and as a tea-room for visitors on Open Days (Inset).

putting on a good show, and who will come occasionally at short notice to shine light for

others on the distant past. Give me a ring on Eyke 460309.

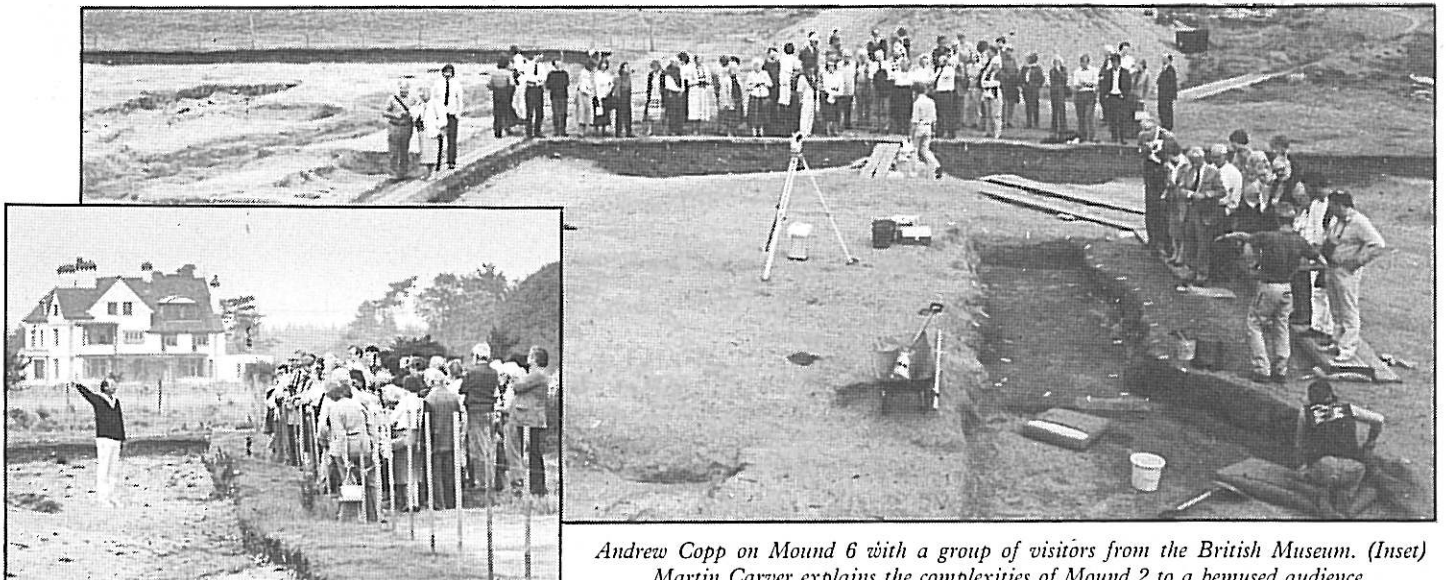
MEMBERSHIP by Andrew Lovejoy, Membership Secretary

The number of members in the Society has increased by 62 since February 1989. There are now 61 Life Members and 250 Ordinary Members. Not bad!

Members, I suspect, wonder whether they are getting value for money. It costs about £2 to produce the two copies of **SAXON** sent out every year. Then there are secretarial charges

which include postage. That leaves barely £2 to be spent on the furtherance of projects relevant to the future of Sutton Hoo as a place of archaeological endeavour. Besides all that Members have free entry to the site whenever it is open to the public during summer weekends. Members will agree that £5 annual subscription is a bargain.

Please encourage your friends to join the Society. Membership appeals to archaeologists and non-archaeologists alike. With **SAXON** in hand Members can follow step by step the progress of the professional archaeologists. Your presence at Sutton Hoo is welcome during public opening hours, when you will be able to confer with the guides for news of the latest developments.



Andrew Copp on Mound 6 with a group of visitors from the British Museum. (Inset) Martin Carver explains the complexities of Mound 2 to a bemused audience.

SOCIETY EVENTS SUMMER 1989

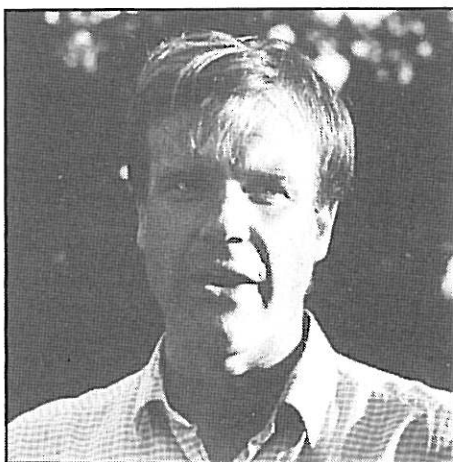
1989 OPEN DAY Sunday 24 Sept.

The Open Day provided the 70 attending members with a very enjoyable visit. Martin Carver gave an excellent tour round the excavations, explaining what had been done, and what had (to date) been concluded from the results. He also provided the company with food for thought about the future of the site — asking members to consider the alternative ways in which the site may eventually be presented to the public, once the digging is over. At the end of the tour Rosemary Halliday provided an enjoyable lunch — which this year, despite the presence of the marquee, most chose to eat al fresco; this gave the opportunity for members to chat informally with Project staff. Many thanks to all those involved in the organisation.

VISIT TO SNAPE Saturday 16th Sept.

About 25 members visited the excavations at Snape, under the guidance of William Filmer-Sankey. After a brief introduction to the site and its history — notably the excavation of the burial ship in 1862 — Mr Filmer-Sankey showed us the results of this year's digging. Trenches were being opened at various locations in the field in order to establish the extent of the cemetery, which consists of cremation burials as well as inhumations and barrow burials. We were shown the catastrophic effects of deep-ploughing on the site — the sheared off remains of a cremation urn, and also were able

to consider more recent 'archaeology' in the form of the excavated remains of large deep tyre ruts left in the more recent past, possibly by some piece of heavy farm-machinery. We were also able to see the results from the previous years' work in the small on-site display. Thanks to Pearl Simper for organising the visit, and to William for taking time out to take us round the site.



William Filmer-Sankey, Director of the excavations at Snape. The work is sponsored by Snape Historical Trust, Suffolk County Council and English Heritage.

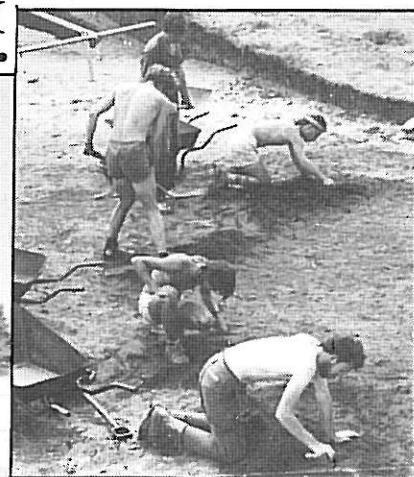
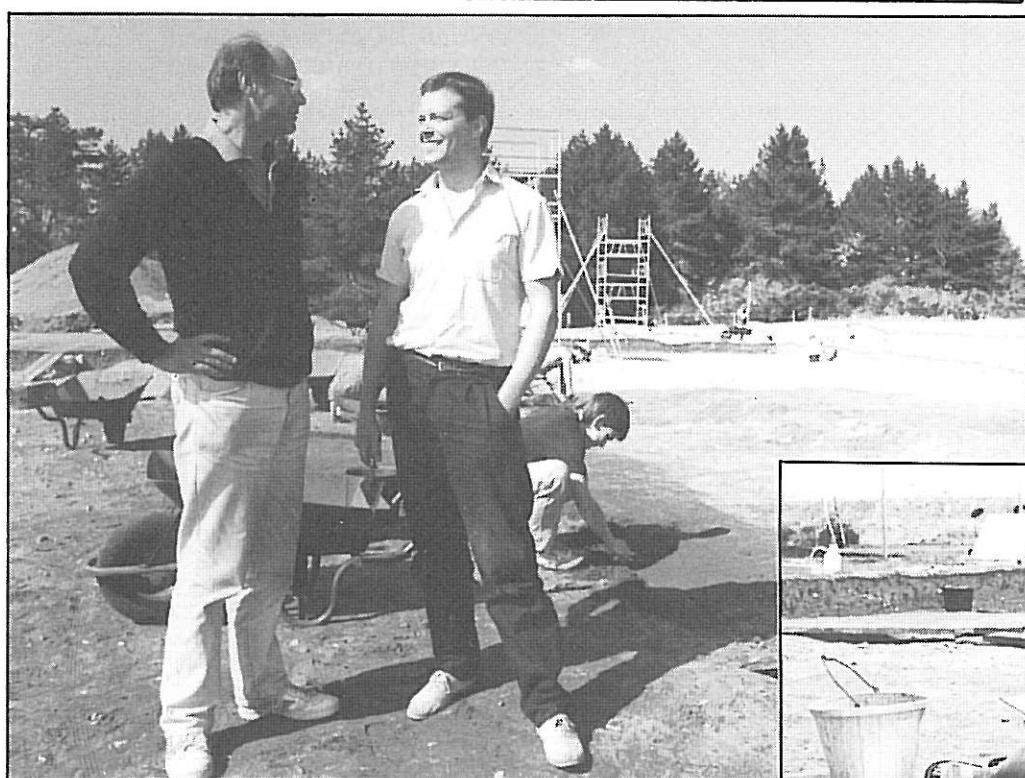
SOCIETY VISITS THE TREASURE

On October 28th some 28 members of the Sutton Hoo Society travelled by coach, organized by Andrew Lovejoy, from Woodbridge to the British Museum to once more view the Sutton Hoo treasure. The Museum seemed to be alive with people, but we were given a guided tour of the Sutton Hoo display by Angela Care Evans of the Museum's Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities. The party was split into two groups, so that Angela gave two consecutive tours, which meant that she spoke for four hours. Although most members must know the Sutton Hoo story fairly well, with expert explanations it came even more alive. Our thanks go to Andrew and Angela for an excellent trip.



Angela Evans.

OFILE PROJECT PROFILE PROJECT PROFI



40% of our site team this year came from overseas. We were joined by 10 Americans, 3 Canadians, 2 Japanese; Dr Trifonov from Russia (pictured above), 4 Czech students (Inset, top); Annette Roe and Claudia Bolognini — two of the 8 archaeologists from Italy (Inset, bottom).

APPEALS

VOLUNTEERS are needed during the spring to help the Committee and Project staff in a variety of practical ways: creosoting the kiosk, clearing the ferry footpath, building maintenance, fixing signs and fences etc etc etc. Any support you can give will be most welcome — please contact Jenny Glazebrook (Woodbridge 7673).

Help is still urgently required to keep the site mown during the summer months (particularly May and June). If any local members are willing to come up to the site periodically to drive the tractor-mower over the grass, please contact Jenny Glazebrook (Woodbridge 7673). Instruction available!

GUIDES GUIDES GUIDES . . . the present site guides are doing a marvellous job, but would be only too pleased to welcome new volunteers. Anyone who would like to get involved either with giving tours or helping out at the sales kiosk should contact Larry Gatter (Eyke 460309).

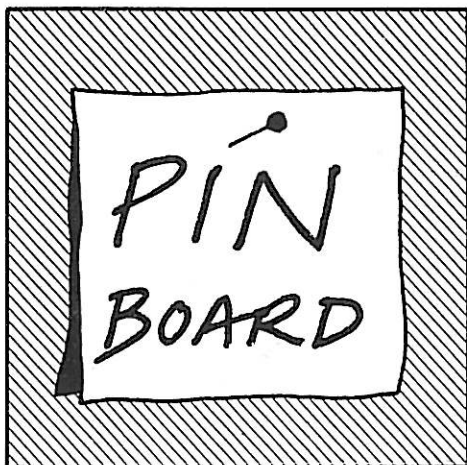
YOUR LETTERS . . . we would like to hear your views on **SAXON** and the Society, and we are particularly interested in your ideas and suggestions for future articles. Letters should be addressed to the Editor, Sutton Hoo Society (address below).

COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Any nominations for new committee members should be sent to the Chairman of the Sutton Hoo Society (address below). Nominees should be members, willing to stand for election, and able to attend three or four meetings a year.

SALES

BULLETIN No 7 DUE OUT APRIL 1990 . . . Interim report on the 1989 excavation season to be included. You can ensure you receive each new edition as it is published, by joining the **Bulletin** mailing list. For details, contact Jenny Glazebrook at the site office (address below).



DIARY

SUTTON HOO SOCIETY A G M

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on **Friday 26 January 1990 at 7.30pm**, in the Lecture Theatre at **Woodbridge School**. Society officers will present their annual reports, and the guest speaker will be Martin Carver. Any members requiring directions, please contact Larry Gatter (Eyke 460309).

SPRING LECTURE

Keith Wade of the Suffolk Archaeological Unit will give an illustrated talk entitled "Recent work on the Origins of Ipswich". The lecture is open to Members and friends, and will be held in **St John's Hall, Woodbridge, at 7.30pm on Wednesday 7 March 1990**. Don't miss it!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Project Team would like to thank the Society for their valuable support during the 1989 season. Donations include a marquee (to provide a canteen for the site team), an answerphone (for the office during the season), and many new tools (buckets, barrows, trowels, shovels and mattocks). We would also like to pass on our warmest thanks to all the guides and helpers who have looked after the public during opening hours throughout the 1989 season. Your continued assistance is most welcome and greatly appreciated.

The Project Team would also like to thank David Schuster BDS for his kind donation of dental tools. These are very useful to excavators engaged in delicate tasks such as the retrieval of fragments of crumpled 1300-year-old fabric.

Our thanks go once again to Steve Jones of Leigh in Lancashire for the archaeological cartoon. Members are reminded that the editorial team would be delighted to receive humorous material for this slot (we haven't had any yet!).



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Who's Who — Sutton Hoo Society Committee Members

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