



The Newsletter of the Sutton Hoo Society

# SAXON

President: the Duke of Grafton KG

No. 26 / 1997



*Archaeological trial trenching at Sutton Hoo House in February 1997. The work was undertaken in advance of the construction of the proposed Visitor Centre by the National Trust (Photograph: Suffolk County Council)*

## MORE SURVEY WORK AT SUTTON HOO by Catherine Abbott

*Excavation work by the British Museum (1968-71) and The Sutton Hoo Research Project (1983-1991) revealed the existence of an extensive prehistoric landscape beneath the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Sutton Hoo. Away from the cemetery site itself work in advance of development has added to the picture.*

An archaeological evaluation, involving a topographical and geophysical survey by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd (FAS), University of York, and a desk-based assessment and limited excavation by the Field Projects Team of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, was carried out on land owned by the Tranmer Estate, in advance of the proposed re-development of the Coach House into a Visitors Centre for the nearby Sutton Hoo cemetery site. The evaluation was carried out in early 1997, at the pre-determination stage in the planning cycle, and was funded by The National Trust.

The highest concentration of archaeological features was recorded at the northern end of the development site. The geophysical survey identified a clear concentration of linear anomalies in this area, which excavation showed to be part of an Iron

Age field system, that may have partially continued in use into the Roman period. Evidence for a possible Iron Age round house was also recovered, although the small number of finds from the area indicate that the main settlement site was not in the immediate vicinity.

The desk-based assessment revealed little continuity in the field systems during the historic period, with the only structure identified being a large sheepfold constructed after the 1844 Tithe Map and which was shown on Ordnance Survey maps until the construction of the Coach House in c.1910. The excavation showed this to be a bank and ditch structure, which provided shelter from the prevailing wind and weather. The size of the sheepfold indicates that although the importance of sheep to the local economy had declined from a peak in the medieval period,

they still formed an important part of the traditional Sandlings agricultural regime which existed in the area into the twentieth century.

Overall, the work indicated that the landscape was highly organised during the later prehistoric period, but that it fell into disrepair from the Roman period onwards, when the region reverted to heathland. The area was gradually enclosed again from the medieval period, as part of the Sandlings agricultural regime, which involved sheep farming with limited arable cultivation; this process of enclosure continued into the nineteenth century.

*Catherine Abbott is a Project Officer with Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Projects Team.*

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## THE NATIONAL TRUST: PLANS FOR SUTTON HOO HOUSE

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*The National Trust issued the following press statement in February this year outlining its development plans for Sutton Hoo House in partnership with University College Suffolk based in Ipswich. The College is designated a University College of the University of East Anglia (Norwich).*

*At the time of writing The National Trust are awaiting a decision from the Heritage Lottery Commission on funding for the project to develop the Sutton Hoo site which includes the archaeological site of the cemetery, Sutton Hoo House, the proposed Coach House visitor centre and the wider estate.*

The National Trust has chosen University College Suffolk as its partner to develop a scheme for a centre for adult and continuing education, together with a centre for the study of Anglo-Saxon England at Sutton Hoo House, near Woodbridge, to be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of February.

The education project for Sutton Hoo

House will be complementary to the National Trust's plans to develop the Coach House and wider estate at Sutton Hoo for visitors. The plans for Sutton Hoo House will be added to the original National Trust Heritage Lottery bid for £3.79 million. It is hoped that a decision on Lottery Funding will be forthcoming at the end of May. If the Lottery bid is successful, the National Trust will acquire the 96 hectare (232 acre) Sutton Hoo Estate including Sutton Hoo House, which has been offered as a gift by the Trustees of the Tranmer Estate.

The National Trust and University College Suffolk will be working closely with Suffolk County Council Education Department, the Sutton Hoo Research Trust and the Sutton Hoo Society to develop plans for a residential education centre at Sutton Hoo House, which will provide a broad range of courses in areas such as natural history, archaeology, landscape history, ecology and Anglo-Saxon Studies. A range of day and half day courses will be developed for schools, and both the National Trust and University College Suffolk will liaise closely with West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village over schools' provision.

The centre for the study of Anglo-Saxon England will include information technology facilities which will provide a learning resource and an advanced research and information retrieval database of international importance.

Merlin Waterson, the Regional Director for the National Trust in East Anglia said 'The National Trust is delighted to have found a partner in University College Suffolk who shares its vision to provide formal and informal education opportunities for all at Sutton Hoo. We look forward to developing a successful working partnership with University College Suffolk over the coming months.'

Dr John French, the Head of Science at University College Suffolk who formulated the partnership proposal said 'Academic staff at University College Suffolk have a great respect for the cultural and historic significance of Sutton Hoo. Through working with the National Trust we will be able to create an exciting new education centre with study programmes that will benefit adults and children across the region and beyond.'

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## THE WUFFINGS — RÆDWALD'S MAJESTIC ENTRANCE

by Ivan Cutting

*Ivan Cutting is Director of the Eastern Angles Theatre Company which was founded in 1982. The company has a reputation for innovative and imaginative work which it maintains through its policy of commissioning new works. A unique feature of the company is its commitment to taking theatre into the region, where versatile design allows it to stage its productions everywhere from proper theatres to the tiniest of village halls. They are now embarking on what may be their most exiting and challenging production yet — *The Wuffings**

Fifteen years ago David Caddick walked into the first Eastern Angles shack cum office in Martlesham, near Ipswich, brandishing a photocopy of an old map that marked out our new touring area as the kingdom of the Wuffings, the Royal House of the East Angles. It was clear then that one day we would have to tell their story. It was nearly six years ago that Kevin Crossley-Holland rang me eagerly from America to say of course he wanted to be involved in the telling.

Why has it taken so long to get it on stage?

The more I learned about Sutton Hoo and Rædwald, the great warrior king buried in its wonderful treasure ship, the more I realised that to put such a man and his peers on stage special approach would be needed. There was no way the High King of Britain could enter after negotiating the benches and crammed chairs of a rural village hall and still retain his majesty.

A year ago when Charles Notcutt showed us his despatch centre at Pettistree I knew that we had found a home in which to stage this spectacular production, and from then on it started to take shape.

Some fourteen hundred years ago, Rædwald, king of the East Angles, was baptised to please Æthlebert of Kent the High King of Britain; and the royal house of East Anglia was then caught in the full roar of the developing conflict between its own pagan past and an uncertain Christian future. Rædwald is forced to choose which horse to back; two decades after his baptism he is given the most elaborate treasure-filled northern-style pagan ship burial. Was this his choice, or that of his fiercely pagan wife?

The story is not just about the political thrills which surely lie behind this great burial. It is also a story of great magic, exotic tale-telling and interwoven with northern myths of man's destiny by the three sisters of the wyrd.

It will be an unforgettable night out, make no mistake. We have tried to give full rein to our imaginations and provide a thrilling tale about choices, a tale which will chime with our own decisions in the 1990s. We expect very healthy debates about our interpretations! The performance will take place in a specially adapted 400-seat indoor arena at Notcutts Nurseries Despatch site at Pettistree adjacent to the A12 north of Woodbridge.

All bookings and enquiries:

**Eastern Angles Theatre Company**  
**Sir John Mills Theatre**  
**Gatacre Road**  
**IPSWICH IP1 2LQ**

**BOX OFFICE: Tel: 01473 211498**

**On Sunday 13th July: 'Was Rædwald the first King of England?' Come and debate this topic with knowledgeable speakers prior to the performance at 4.45pm £2 (concessions £1)**

The Sutton Hoo Society has contributed towards the funding of the educational programme being run by Eastern Angles in association with **The Wuffings**. An Education Officer has been appointed by the company to co-ordinate the programme which includes in-service drama workshops for teachers; drama workshops for children and adults and talks and workshops with the author, Kevin Crossley-Holland and director Ivan Cutting. For details of these events contact Karen Draisey, Education Co-ordinator at Eastern Angles (address above).

# SOCIETY EVENTS

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM was held at Woodbridge School on Friday 21 February, with about 50 members attending. We welcomed our new Honorary Treasurer Paul Duffy who gave his first report, which showed a surplus of £771, with the current balance at £5,977 (at 30 September 1996). Visitor numbers and income were slightly increased again on last year's figures, as were sales. The Society, as mentioned in the last edition, received a £1,000 bequest from one of our former members, and we are looking for an appropriate way of spending the lump sum. Jenny Glazebrook, our Honorary Secretary since 1993 is standing down, having completed her term, and Sue Banyard was elected to replace her. Angus Wainwright was elected by the meeting to join the committee, with existing members re-elected *en bloc*.

Two proposals were discussed at the meeting. These were to increase the subscription and to introduce a joint membership subscription. The Chairman outlined some of the reasons for the proposed increase: the present subscription has not been altered since the Society was established in 1984. Since then costs of running the Society have increased, whilst income from the site in recent years has stayed fairly steady. National Trust acquisition of the site would result in the Society losing its income from visitors. We have been able to fund a number of projects associated with the continuing work of the Research Project (for example the survey work that took place in Easter 1996), but we shall be unable to continue this role if expenditure continues to exceed income as it did in 1995/6, a fact masked by the unusual event of the bequest of £1,000 to the Society. In order to maintain the Society's support of research and education associated with Sutton Hoo and its archaeology, there is a need to generate more funds.

There was general agreement on the principal of raising the subscriptions, and introducing a form of joint subscription. However, the discussion and feeling of the meeting was that the detail of the proposals should be re-considered, particularly the level of the junior subscription, and the exact detail of the joint subscription, which it was suggested could take the form of a family membership. The matter was referred to the Committee for a decision, bearing in mind the discussion and feelings of the members present.

The business meeting was followed by a short address by Angus Wainwright of the National Trust, who up-dated us on the Trust's plans (see the Press Release on page 2).

Ivan Cutting of the Eastern Angles Theatre Company then outlined plans for the production of the play *The Wuffings*. The Society is working in partnership with Eastern Angles by contributing to the associated

education programme and by running extra pre-performance guided tours for the theatre-goers (see page 2).

Professor Martin Carver, Director of the Sutton Hoo Research project followed by outlining the continuing process of publication, and the final drawing together of thoughts on the interpretation of the excavation and research.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

Following the debate at the Annual General Meeting, the committee discussed the question of subscriptions at the committee meeting held on 8 May.

### It was resolved:

1. That from January 1998, annual subscriptions will be as follows:  
Adults: £7.50 (formerly £5),  
Life Membership: £75 (formerly £50)  
Overseas membership: £10 (formerly £7)
2. That the junior/student membership will be changed, from January 1998, to a student membership, covering individuals in full-time education (which will include mature students).
3. That from January 1998 the annual subscription for student members will be £3.00.
4. That a category of family membership will be introduced from January 1998 which will cover two adults and their children under 18 living at the same address and receiving one mailing.



*Burial 49 at Sutton Hoo, one of the group of 'satellite burials' found associated with Mound 5.*

*This burial is aligned NW-SE, and lies extended on its back. The head has been wrenched out of alignment and there is has a 'scarf' of organic material round the neck.*

*Was this person hanged? Was there a gibbet on Mound 5? See the next edition of SAXON for more on this grisly topic.*

*(Photograph: Nigel MacBeth)*

5. That from January 1998, the annual subscription for family membership will be £12.

## SPRING LECTURE

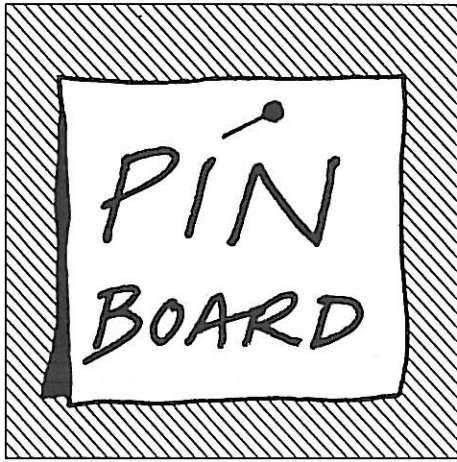
The Spring lecture proved another popular event, with an audience of about 70 people gathering to listen to Andrew Reynolds' lecture on 'Sutton Hoo and the archaeology of execution'. A somewhat grisly topic, but one which put into context the finds of the sandmen at Sutton Hoo. At one time interpreted as the victims of sacrifice, they now look more certain to have been the victims of execution, and the site itself the location of a gibbet (see photo below).

Andrew has agreed to write a résumé of the lecture for SAXON 27.

## GUIDES GET-TOGETHER

This annual Christmas event of the guides and helpers again was hosted by the Chairman in Woodbridge. It is an opportunity for the Committee to thank them for their efforts during the season.

We all met again just before Easter on the site to hear a further update on the progress of the research from Martin Carver, and to learn about the details of the forthcoming season, including the additional challenge of hosting the extra tours in conjunction with the Eastern Angles production of *The Wuffings* during July. We were able to welcome three new guides who have joined the team this year.



## DIARY

### SUTTON HOO OPENING TIMES

The Society continues to host visitors at the site. The arrangements are as before, except that Stewart Salmond has taken over as guiding secretary, and will be co-ordinating the guides roster and tour bookings.

The site opened on Easter Saturday, 29 March, and will continue to be open on weekend and Bank Holiday afternoons up to and including Sunday 14 September. Guided tours begin at approximately 2pm and 3pm. A reminder that if you come by car you need to allow yourself 20 minutes to walk along the track to the site. Entrance charges are £2 for adults, £1 for 10-18 year-olds, under 10s are free. For Sutton Hoo Society members entrance is also free (on production of your current membership card).

Remember that you can book to visit Sutton Hoo as a group. If you visit as a party, you can, by arrangement, drive onto the site with your coach or minibus.

Contact Stewart Salmond for party bookings (address below).

### ANNUAL EXCURSION

For this year's excursion we have decided to stay close to Sutton Hoo and visit south east Suffolk. Sam Newton has agreed to lead the

party once more, and examine sites such as Rendlesham, Eyke and Iken in the light of new historical and archaeological research. If you wish to join the excursion which will take place on **Sunday 21 September**, please contact Andrew Lovejoy at the address below.

## THE WUFFINGS ARE HERE!

The Eastern Angles production of this new play **The Wuffings** will begin on **Thursday 10 July**. It takes place at Notcutts Nursery site at Pettistree (just off the A12 near Wickham Market). For more details, including information about the education programme and contact address, see the article on page 2.

### WUFFINGS WEEK

Another linked event, *Wuffings Week*, takes place at Belstead House Education and Conference Centre near Ipswich from **Monday 21 July** through to **Thursday 24 July**. It comprises a series of excursions, lectures and discussions which cover the themes of Sutton Hoo and gardens, including a visit to Sutton Hoo, a performance of **The Wuffings** and the opportunity to hear from both Kevin Crossley-Holland (the author) and Ivan Cutting (the Director) about the creation of the play itself. The gardens theme includes a 'Gardener's Question Time' at the Pettistree site, a lecture on gardens of East Anglia and a tour which includes a visit to the gardens at Somerleyton in north Suffolk.

For details of the activities of *Wuffings Week*, which can be booked as a whole residential week, or as individual events, contact Janet Dann, Belstead House Education and Conference Centre, Belstead, IPSWICH IP8 3NA Tel: 01473 686321

## PUBLICATIONS

In the last edition we mentioned the article on the research, building and sailing of half-scale models of Saxon ships by Edwin and Joyce Gifford. The Society has re-published it as a booklet under the title **Anglo-Saxon Sailing**

**Ships**. It is for sale on the site, and we hope to be able to sell copies at other locations and shops. If you would like a copy, (£3.00 including postage and packing) then contact Stewart Salmond at the address below.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Andrew Lovejoy decided at the beginning of the season to step down as guiding secretary after having done the job for some four years. Only those who have done this job know the pressures it brings — and we are all extremely grateful to Andrew for his tireless work for the Society. Andrew will continue with his role as membership secretary.

Thanks must go to Stewart Salmond who has at relatively short notice taken over as guiding secretary. We hope that everyone will give Stewart plenty of support in this (fairly onerous) task.

Grateful thanks also to those guides who have left the team, their long service to the Society is much appreciated.

## APPEALS

### GUIDES

Are you enthusiastic about Sutton Hoo? Could you communicate your interest to the public? Then please consider becoming a site guide — it is a lot easier than you think, especially if you are already used to talking to small groups. Never fear — training will be given. We do need more guides *now* who are willing to help for one or two afternoons a month during the summer. We would also welcome more volunteer helpers to sell tickets, books and postcards in the hut.

If you were once a teacher, then you would also be welcome to help with school parties. Current teachers may like to know that we publish a Teacher's pack of information about the site, and how it may be used to help your history teaching, particularly at Key Stage 2.

If you are interested either in guiding, helping or the Teacher's pack, then contact Stewart Salmond for details (address below).

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## Contact Addresses

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