



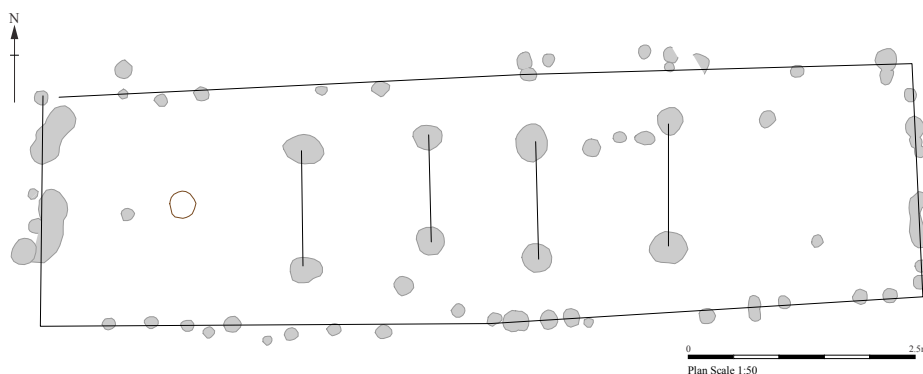
Digging the long-house, looking west (all photos © SCCAS)

Is this the first Anglo-Saxon long-house to be discovered in England?

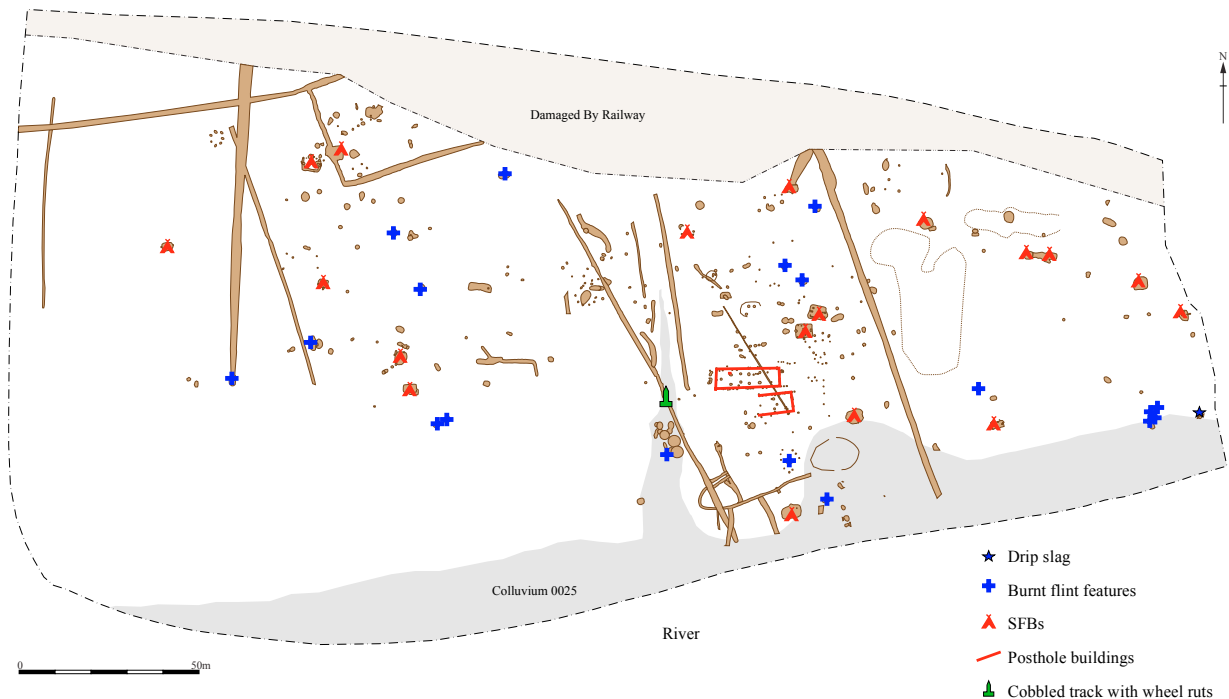
Between May and October 2007, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service uncovered a previously unknown Early Anglo-Saxon settlement lying across 12 acres (4.72ha) earmarked for new playing fields at Hartismere School in Eye. It had a continental long-house of a type hitherto unknown in England. Here JO CARUTH of the SCCAS reflects upon the results of the post-excavation assessment, while absolute dates and interpretations are still to be confirmed by detailed analysis.

The site lies less than 1km west of the medieval fortified town of Eye on a south-facing slope between 38.5 and 31m Ordnance Datum (OD) alongside a tributary of the River Dove. The Dove transects the clay plateau of north Suffolk, linking Eye with another important medieval settlement at Hoxne: its valley is a focus for settlement of all periods. Evidence from antiquarian excavations and recent metal detecting has identified wealthy early Anglo-Saxon cremation and inhumation cemeteries from the 5th century onwards, which suggest a densely occupied landscape in that period.

Excavations of early Anglo-Saxon settlements are still rare across the country. In terms of area, Hartismere School is one of the largest investigations within the East Anglian Kingdom. It is still one of only a handful of such sites to be intensively excavated in the county, and the first in north-central Suffolk.



Plan of the long-house



Site plan, showing main features

There was evidence of dispersed early Anglo-Saxon settlement across most of the excavation, consisting of two earth-fast posthole buildings and at least eighteen Sunken Featured Buildings (SFBs or *Grubenhäuser*). There were also industrial features, a gully utilised by the inhabitants, and large quantities of occupation debris. The main dating evidence comes from the Anglo-Saxon small finds and pottery, which suggest occupation from the 5th to 7th centuries, with the most intense activity in the 5th and 6th centuries.

A continental-style long-house

At the centre of the settlement is what appears to be a continental-style long-house, a type of building so far absent from the archaeological record in England at this date. It measures approx. 19.40m long x 5.4m wide and has a central aisle approx. 2.6m wide x 8.2m long, formed of eight paired posts, which does not reach the ends of the building. The posts are irregularly positioned in relation to each other, suggesting tie beams across the building rather than timbers along the aisle. The outer long walls are made up of small postholes, fourteen on the south side and another twenty on the north. The end walls were less well defined, with some features being difficult to distinguish from the natural silt hollows found across the site. A small number of postholes within the building may indicate structural elements. At the moment this is dated by its spatial relationship in the centre of the settlement and from the presence of single sherds of Early Anglo-Saxon pottery in three of the posthole fills, but we await radiocarbon dating. Assuming the

detailed analysis confirms the preliminary dating, this discovery is of international importance for studies of Anglo-Saxon archaeology and history.

Sunken Featured Buildings

Sunken Featured Buildings (SFBs) are a definitive type of small Saxon building, built over a pit, invariably back-filled with rubbish: their form and function has been the subject of much debate over many decades. At Eye the fills of the pits were largely dark homogeneous silts, containing varying quantities of finds of all categories, representing deliberate dumps that post-dated the abandonment of the building. There is little obvious evidence of deposits that may have accumulated, either during the use of the building, or immediately post-abandonment.

Preliminary analysis of the finds distribution within the pit-fills shows some differences across the site. For example, high quantities of animal bone was recovered from the buildings in the centre of the site, while there was a complete absence of ceramic building material in the two easternmost sunken features. This may indicate the zoning of specific activities. The environmental evidence identified a range of materials within the fills, derived from domestic debris and scattered refuse, as well sedges and wetland grasses. These may provide evidence for the roof material of the buildings, but given the river/stream edge location of the site, such an interpretation needs great care.

The SFBs were of varying construction, in width from 1.9m to 4.7m, and length from 2.8m to 5.7m. All were based on central ridge posts, but the number of

other postholes varied: four had internal structural slots around at least one part of the sunken feature.

The SFBs were scattered across the site, often arranged in pairs, which could mean they were contemporary but, equally, that one was a replacement for the other. These buildings seem to be distributed in two broad groups, but the dispersed arrangement of them across the site makes it difficult, at this stage, to identify any sequence or pattern of replacement. An almost universal pattern seen on other large area excavations of Early Saxon settlements is clusters of SFBs associated with a single earth-fast posthole building or halls, but that is not found here. The evidence does not seem to suggest intense occupation during the 150-200 year life of the site: at West Stow, sixty-nine SFBs and seven halls were found within an area of just 1.8ha during occupation of c.250-300 years (West, 1985).

Industry, craft and commerce

The results include evidence for industrial, craft and commercial activities. Sixteen shallow rectangular pits, with charcoal in the base below burnt flints, were scattered across the entire site, often in pairs. The carbonised wood recovered from three of the pits suggests that the flints were supported on a lattice of wattles, with the fire lit underneath them. They appear to be single-use features, as there is no evidence of flints being removed or replaced. One, which had an oval arrangement of small postholes around it, has been tentatively interpreted as a possible smoke house, but otherwise their function is unclear.

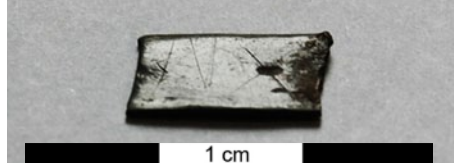
There is evidence for iron-smelting in the form of a large in situ deposit of drip



The gully under excavation, looking south, wheel ruts and surface in foreground



Drip slag, looking west



Piece of copper alloy with runic inscription



Anglo-Saxon balance of copper alloy

slag (weighing approx. 6.8kg) within a furnace pit, in the south-east corner of the site. The presence of a copper-alloy ingot, fragments of copper-alloy waste, as well as a lead-alloy model for a florid cruciform brooch, indicate non-ferrous metal-working. The presence of fragments of earlier copper-alloy objects, such as prehistoric axe fragments found across the site, may represent their collection for re-cycling.

A narrow gully bisected the centre of the site, running down towards the river (north to south). In the base of it was a cobbled surface: surface deposits rarely survive on sites of this period. Wheel ruts could be seen, and their spacing shows an axle width of approx. 6'6" for quite a substantial cart, similar to evidence from the Middle Saxon settlement at Brandon (Tester et al., forthcoming). Excavation to the north of the current site in 2011 identified primarily late Roman deposits, the latest of which were a gravel and cobbled surface and two ditches, which aligned with the trackway. Therefore the possibility that this trackway is late Roman cannot be excluded at this stage. The upper deposits filling the hollow contained mixed debris, including pottery, fired clay and large quantities of animal bone with partial articulated remains of young animals.

The finds from the site include a large assemblage of early Anglo-Saxon pottery (2.9kg), a small part of which was decorated. Over 200 Saxon small finds were recovered during the excavations. These included nineteen brooches, which is an unusually high number for a settlement, thirteen wrist clasps, as well as fragments of two rare gold objects and a silver pendant in the shape of a hand. Also significant was a rare Runic inscription on a strip of copper-alloy, including three characters which can be transliterated as *guth*, or possibly as *gub*.

Part of a balance and a scale pan are the first of their kind to be recovered

from a settlement context in this country and strongly suggest trading from this site. Fifty-eight Roman coins recovered showed an unusual concentration of late 4th century dates. This is contrary to the usual pattern seen in Britain and particularly in Suffolk, which shows a significant drop in coin usage at this time. The pattern at Eye may reflect re-use of these late coins as part of the commercial activity.

There was evidence of antler and bone-working and among the seven wood-working tools from the site was an adze head which is a relatively uncommon find in England. However, there was an unusually small number of clay loom-weights, which are normally ubiquitous on settlements of this period, although the presence of needles, pin-beaters and spindle-whorls indicate, if not weaving, other textile production on the site.

Overall the site produced a vast quantity of animal bone (approx. 475kg) which offers a great opportunity to examine the evidence for farming on and around the site and the provisioning of the settlement. In general the species ratios and mortality profiles of the animals are more like those from Carlton Colville (Lucy et al 2009) on clay soils to the north-east of Eye, than West Stow (West 1985) on sandy soils, to the south-west. Environmental samples suggest that cereal processing was not taking place on site, as only cleaned grains were identified, suggesting that the cereal was being bought in ready to use rather than grown and processed on site.

The evidence from the site has yet to be the subject of detailed analysis, but the potential for further study to contribute to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon settlement, craft, industry, settlement provisioning and the environment is significant.

In addition to the early Anglo-Saxon occupation, a small number of prehistoric

features were found, including Neolithic and Bronze Age cremations, and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age settlement. Evidence of Roman occupation on this site was restricted to stray finds and a single possible Roman feature. In contrast, excavations in 2011, also undertaken by SCCAS Field Team, on the plateau immediately north of the current site, identified evidence of late Roman field systems but no Anglo-Saxon evidence. Evidence post-dating the early Anglo-Saxon occupation is sparse. A later field system, which is largely undated, cuts across the site.



Left: Silver pendant in the shape of a hand.
Right: Folded sheet of decorated gold.

With information from Lorraine Higbee, Faye Minter, Jess Tipper and Ian Riddler

Funded by Suffolk County Council Education Playing Fields Service

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South-western approaches to the kingdom of the Angles



Listening to Sam Newton on top of Devil's Dyke (all photos © Nigel Maslin)

On one of the few summer days when it was safe to leave the umbrella at home, almost sixty members spent a glorious September Saturday among the stubble-fields edging Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. PAULINE MOORE describes the Society's annual excursion, which was led by Dr SAM NEWTON.

Strings of horses stepping across our route marked our approach to Newmarket, on our way to a coffee stop at the National Stud. A few minutes further on, our expert coach driver manoeuvred us into the car park beside Devil's Dyke. We clambered up the chalky path, through scabious, harebells and sainfoil, to listen to Sam Newton describing the construction, purpose and success of this Anglo-Saxon dyke. Such defences were known to these people in their native homelands, and the necessary skills were retained. The clay-covered chalk vallum or 'wall' is given exactly the right slope to drain rainwater without erosion. The slope is also steep enough to make climbing difficult – as our photographer unwittingly demonstrated. The deep ditch must also have been

effective against the use of horses.

The first phase of building was developed in the 5th century, and Carbon 14 dating shows some reinforcement in the late 6th or early 7th century. One of five such dykes (including the Black Ditches further up the Icknield Way, and Cavenham), the Devil's Dyke is the longest at seven miles, and up to thirty feet high; the others are the Fleam, Brent and Bran dykes/ditches, covering the ground further to the south-west. With fens or dense woodland at each end it was impossible to bypass these defences, which also mark tribal boundaries.

Only limited archaeology has been done, and it is not possible to affirm the likely use of wooden watchtowers or accommodation for any hereward guarding this hinterland behind the Granta crossing from Mercian marauders. However, these dykes served their purpose even into the Viking period. Sam Newton translated an extract from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 904-5: 'Then fared Edward king after the East Anglian Danes...and harried over all their land between Dykes and Ouse, all until [up to] the Fens to the north...'

We had the use of a nearby village hall, and sat in the shade by a quiet cricket

ground with our picnics, before moving back, down the Icknield Way to Hadstock. This pretty little place boasts a royal church. Originally a minster dedicated to St Botolph, it was built by King Cnut as a memorial both to his Danish dead and to the Saxons he had defeated at the battle of Assadun, thought to be nearby. Danish and English flags stand together in the north transept.

Perhaps the most well-known feature is the large North Door, with its wood dating from 1024. It stands within an Anglo-Saxon limestone arch, carved ornately, and is the earliest church door still in use in England. Tradition had it that a thieving and sacrilegious Dane was flayed and his skin pegged on the door on St. Brice's Day, 1002, but DNA testing has shown the skin to be from cow-hide, not tanned leather, but parchment, so a sort of vellum. Such skins would protect church doors, and maybe shield draughts.

Our enthusiastic local guide, Patricia Croxton-Smith, pointed out fascinating details about the church and archaeology in the nearby fields, which were full of Roman finds from a thriving farm. Military camps existed nearby, and would need supplies. We were equally glad to be given cups of tea.



Approaching Hadstock Church



Dr Sam Newton talking about the pre-Conquest foundation of Hadstock Church



Patricia 'Crocky' Croxton-Smith points out features in Hadstock Church

Narrow lanes led us next to Bartlow – the name signifying hills covered with birch (and we found some). Here was a Romano-British settlement of the 1st and 2nd centuries. It seems as if the communities here had successfully integrated, probably with inter-marriage. 19th century excavations revealed some interesting finds showing a degree of wealth and trade, yet in an Iron Age barrow - not a Roman necropolis.

At least four of these mounds are still visible, and it would be interesting to find out how the others were lost. Our approach to them showed how they were left, overgrown by unkempt woodland, ignored and lost to view, until rediscovered in about 1815. Now they are cared for by

the Cambridgeshire County Council. We climbed the tallest, up helpful wooden steps, to stand at least 40 feet high on a conical mound with a deep central hollow. Apparently a tree surrounded by a palisade was planted on top of each mound.

The close grouping of these barrows was somewhat reminiscent of Sutton Hoo, but their steepness and the surrounding shadowy woods felt (to me, at least) somewhat sinister. Dr. Sam explained how these were constructed of layers of chalk and turf, and, as with the dykes, the rain washes down them without causing damage.

If the soil of Sutton Hoo were not vulnerable sand, we might have a better idea of the height of the mounds built by the Wuffingas centuries later, but wind,

rain and rabbits have had an effect. At least, our treasure still exists. Alas for Bartlow, theirs was lost in a fire at the Hall, where it was housed after the Victorian excavations. We are left to muse on bronze, glass and pottery vessels, a folding chair and large wooden chests (plus some sexual objects, enjoyed by Romans) recorded with some drawings by the Victorian archaeologists: all that is left from the secretive mounds of the unknown dead.

We drove back through the golden fields, in the month the Anglo-Saxons called 'harfest' or 'halig monath' – holy month. It certainly was a time to be grateful for what enriches our lives. Thank you to all those who made this day's journey so worthwhile.



The thousand year-old door of Hadstock Church



Dwarfed by Bartlow Hills at the end of the Society's excursion

From the bogs of Schleswig-Holstein

The Angles were on the move again this summer, in their homeland of Angeln, in Schleswig-Holstein. MARC OLIVER OHM emailed from Schleswig to tell us about a re-enactment being held in Süderbrarup during the last weekend of August, commemorating the legendary expedition to Kent of a band of Angles under the brothers Hengist and Horsa in 449.



The pageant in the round on Thorsberg Moor

The two-day Thorsberger Festspiele included three performances of a pageant by Wolfgang Warwel called *The Migration of the Angles*. It told the story of Hengist and Horsa and their king, Offa, played by 'Big Harry' Schmidt, who reappeared in the evening to perform as 'Big Harry und Band', having first picked up a guitar at the age of sixteen. An Anglian Iron Age Market, craft demonstrations and a lot of dressing up completed the programme.

The site of the re-enactment was the town's Bürgerpark, just across the road from Thorsberger Moor, nowadays a tree-lined lake, but in the first half of the 5th century a centrally important sacred site for the Angles. Conrad Engelhardt began to dig the Thorsberg bog in 1858, before turning his attention about thirty miles north and slightly east to Nydam Bog, where in 1853 he recovered the Nydam boat, featured in our last issue.

Archaeologically, these two bogs are complementary, as Dr Michael Gebühr points out in the very useful booklet cited below; for what soil conditions destroyed at one site, they preserved at the other. Nydam produced about 344 spears and at least 378 lances, as well as three dozen or more axes and bows. Sensationally,

of course, it also yielded up the Nydam boat, built from timber felled around 320. Whereas Nydam bog preserved iron work, the Thorsberg bog destroyed it; but it substantially preserved unique items of clothing, such as the 'Thorsberg trousers' in a diamond wool twill, widely copied by re-enactors. There were also cloaks and a finely woven tunic, and parts of leather shoes, belts and horse harness.

Whereas the Nydam artefacts have been dated mainly to the 3rd and 4th centuries, Thorsberg also produced individual finds from the end of the 1st millennium BC and the beginning of the next. The majority of the thousands of finds have been interpreted as a representative sample of war booty, dedicated to Odin as god of war, in thanks for victory, but there are differences. The Thorsberg material from about 220-240 indicates a southern enemy in eastern Lower Saxony, while the Nydam finds of about 300 might be traced to the northeast in present day Denmark or Norway or Sweden.

Engelhardt's collection of over four thousand finds has its own history, resulting from 19th and 20th century wars. Professionally, Engelhardt was a

teacher at Flensburg High School, where he housed the Nydam ship in the attic of the courthouse. Come the 1864 war between Prussia, Austria and Denmark over the disputed duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, the Danish Engelhardt escaped to Seeland with the Flensburg collection from Thorsberg and Nydam, unsurprisingly leaving the Nydam boat behind. Schleswig was ceded to Prussia, which not only held the Nydam boat, but under the terms of the Treaty of Vienna of 1864, was entitled to the Flensburg collection, by then in Copenhagen. A number of items which, thanks to the patronage of the Danish king Frederik VII, had found their way into the royal collection, are today in the National Museum in Copenhagen. Most of the Flensburg collection, and the boat, were in Kiel by 1877 – but the First World War left its Nydam findspot in Denmark. Negotiations to return the boat failed, and during the second world war it was moved around by low-loader and lighter to escape the bombing of Kiel. Finally in 1947 the Nydam boat arrived at Schloss Gottorf in Schleswig, where it is still on display in the state archaeological museum (Archäologisches Landesmuseum).



Left to right: 'Big Harry' Schmidt as King Offa with Elvira Hein as Queen Thryd on the edge of Thorsberg Moor (all photos Thorsberg Festspiele); Performing the pageant; One of the craft demonstration tents.



Members of the Nydam Boat Guild read about themselves in the last issue of Saxon (all photos, Nydam Boat Guild)

Meanwhile, our friends in the Nydam Society in Denmark are busy building their full-size replica of the Nydam boat, as well as planning a permanent exhibition in southern Jutland devoted to the continuing finds from the Nydam bog. OLE BRIXEN SØNDERGAARD has sent us an update on recent progress.

The last rib was fitted into the hull on 4 July, after which everyone concentrated on making all the parts for the decking, the thwarts, rowlocks and oars. By removing supporting framework, they revealed the boat for the first time in its full glory on 7 September, which they felt was a great

step forwards, richly deserving a round of beers. The next task was to weigh the boat, which they did on 3 October with the help of the local traffic police, using their surprisingly small jacks for weighing lorries. Allowing for incomplete floors, the total dry weight was 3.84 tonnes. The humidity reading for the ship averaged 15%, but once it is in the water its total weight will swell to 4.4 tonnes. Lifting each end of the boat in turn, simulating the action of the waves, they also used a laser to measure how far the ship would bend: it was just 20mm, which shows a gratifying degree of strength and rigidity, due to the strong thwarts and V-shaped cross-section. Ole has turned his hand to

making a lyre, since fragments were found in the Nydam bog and more in Jyllan, and to make period costumes for the crew, a tailors' guild has been started to parallel the boat guild, as launch day on 17 August 2013 comes ever closer.

Nydam and Thorsberg – Iron Age Places of Sacrifice, Michael Güber (Verein zur Förderung des Archäologischen Landesmuseums e.V., Schloss Gottorf, Schleswig, 2001)

www.facebook.com/Museumsverein.Suederbrarup
www.schloss-gottorf.de
www.nydam.nu



Coming along nicely: the Nydam replica with half the floor fitted



Weighing the Nydam boat



Ole's workbench for making the lyre

Anglo-Saxon Portraits: King Raedwald

This is the text of a talk by Professor MARTIN CARVER, first heard on Friday 19 October on Radio 3. It is the fifth of thirty *Anglo-Saxon Portraits* in the late night slot, *The Essay*. It was made available for a year on the i-Player at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01nb0t0> and is published here by kind permission of the BBC.

In the spring of 1939, a few months before the outbreak of World War 2, Mrs Edith Pretty, Suffolk landowner and Justice of the Peace, decided to open the largest of the earth mounds she could see from her bow window. She gave instructions to her archaeologist, Basil Brown, digger extraordinary. "How about this one?" she'd said to him and he'd agreed. John Jacobs, gardener and William Spooner, gamekeeper would make up the team. Basil's method was essentially of the 19th century. "Stand on the ground at one side of the mound, dig down till you see the sand - that's the natural subsoil hereabouts, then drive your trench straight through the mound at that level; half way across you should see the dark splotch of the burial pit. Then empty it". This had always worked before. But this time there was a problem. On day two Jacobs held up a brown lump - "here's a bit of iron," he says. Basil looked at the rusty bar with a lump at each end and realised he'd seen this sort of thing before - only last year in fact - it was an iron rivet of the kind that the Saxons used to hold together a clinker-built timber ship.

Burials of ships were known in Scandinavia - where they were often well preserved - but in England they were, and are, incredibly rare. And they tend to disappear in the acid sand. But Basil was undeterred. Just because no timbers had survived, doesn't mean there wasn't a ship somewhere: the rivets will show you where. This was a stroke of genius. Every rusty rivet was dusted off and left in place. The trench went down and down as it neared the centre of the ship. Unsurprisingly, the trench fell in, but the valiant threesome

shovelled on. After four weeks they could stand and look down at the lines of a ship 27m long. Amidships was a dark rectangle of peaty woody earth - "the chamber", remarked Basil laconically to his diary, "where I expect the chief lies".

Word got out, as it always does and soon arrived at that nodal point of archaeological gossip - the Department of Archaeology coffee room at Cambridge. On 8th July, Charles Phillips, a senior prehistorian arrived at Sutton Hoo, had his first sighting of the giant ship and exclaimed, "My godfathers". It was a formidable challenge to any excavator and for the rest of the day he was heard to murmur, "Oh dear, oh dear". Other senior figures mustered - Stuart Piggott, Peggy Guido, W. F. Grimes - and began to define the chamber: wood matting, then the glint of metal; green bronze, silver in a purple haze, then gold looking as good as new, and bright red garnets. In less than ten days the team unearthed Britain's richest ever grave - 263 objects of gold, silver, bronze, iron, gems, leather, wood, textiles, feathers and fur, laid out in a wooden chamber at the centre of a buried ship. It was a sensation that attracted a police guard and an article in the *Illustrated London News*.

Among the visitors that made their way to see the discovery, was the greatest Anglo-Saxon scholar of them all, Hector Munro Chadwick, professor emeritus at Cambridge, author of *The Heroic Age* and the *Origins of the English Nation*. Nobody knew the literature better than he did. He came chugging over from his summer hideout in Wales in his Austin 7, driven by his wife at his self-imposed

speed limit of 20 mph. When he eventually arrived, he saw the lines of the ship, the dark depression of the chamber, the piles of silver bowls and the gold buckles and connectors packed in moss in tobacco tins. "It's RADWARLD", he said as he took his leave, "it's RADWARLD, I'm sure of that."

Historical interpretation

So who was RADWARLD, and what made him say it? According to the experts on Anglo-Saxon art, the beautiful decorated objects, such as the sword handle and shoulder clasps, made in gold and inlaid with garnets, could be dated to the early 7th century. Whoever was being celebrated here had been possessed of great wealth, and had died soon after 600 AD. We have only a few named players from that time, but we do have some. RADWARLD was a king of East Anglia who died in the 620s, so was a major contender. He gets some coverage from the Venerable Bede writing at Jarrow in the early 8th century, a hundred years later. Bede didn't care for him much. RADWARLD had gone to Kent after the arrival of St Augustine to look over this *Christianity thing* and could see its advantage - not least in foreign affairs and trade agreements. But when he got back to East Anglia his wife and some of his counsellors were not best pleased and made him un-convert. As a compromise he added an altar to Christ in his pagan temple at Rendelsham - a little way up the River Deben from Sutton Hoo. Bede was scornful of this rather broadminded behaviour and remarked a little huffily that it was being led astray by his wife that had blighted the king's later years.



Photos of Paul Mortimer as Raedwald © Nigel Maslin



Bede's other RADWARLD anecdote also features his wife. Edwin of Northumbria, on the run from the ferocious Aethelfrith took refuge in RADWARLD's court. In a mean move, typical of 7th century politics, Aethelfrith offered several handsome bribes to RADWARLD to murder his guest. RADWARLD, always up for what seemed like a good idea, accepted. His queen was irate and told him that it was not the way of a king to betray his friend or sacrifice his honour for gold. RADWARLD cheerfully changed his mind, raised a large army, went north and slew Aethelfrith at a great battle on the banks of the River Idle.

History and archaeology give us a little bit of a steer on these early English leaders. At first they ruled a people rather than a territory, but kingdoms were coming into being in the 7th century: Wessex, Essex, Mercia, East Anglia. Their kings held court in large timber halls, where they bonded their guests with feasts and gifts and praise for great deeds, intoned to the lyre. In return, these companions, party members in every sense, were expected to turn out for battle, and protect the borders of the new kingdoms they were building together.

Such a leader was RADWARLD, as Chadwick knew: an early 7th century pagan king of East Anglia, with a reputation for flexible politics. And here was the richest burial ever seen in England, found in East Anglia, dating to the early 7th century and full of remarkable objects rich with contending symbols - Roman, Saxon, Pagan and Christian. RADWARLD deserved to be the number one candidate.

The day of burial

The great ship burial in Sutton Hoo's Mound 1 was studied expertly and minutely by the British Museum for 45 years, and then in the last decades of the 20th century, my own team from the University of York returned to the site to answer the main question still outstanding: what was the ship burial doing there? Why that? Why there?

Why then? The Sutton Hoo story was put together using survey and large scale excavation. A cemetery serving local families had been established on the ridge overlooking the River Deben in the 6th century. Towards the end of that century these families began to put on aristocratic airs. Particular persons were cremated, their remains placed in bronze bowls and buried with animals and playing pieces. Then around 600 in quick succession came a warrior with his horse, a warrior in a chamber with a ship placed on top and a warrior in a chamber placed inside a ship - the famous Mound 1 burial discovered by Basil Brown. Thereafter, the wealthy burials petered out: a few children and adolescents and a wealthy lady with silver trappings. Sutton Hoo's royal status lasted less than seventy years. In stark contrast, from the end of the 7th century the site was commandeered for public executions. A gallows was erected on Mound 5, the earliest mound, presumably that of the original founder of the dynasty. Another gallows was erected at the east edge on the old land route northwards. The strangled victims lay dumped in pits around the rotted gallows posts. The date, the 8th-10th centuries, suggests that this was the work of the new Christian kings, who were now disposing of their dissidents in the old pagan burial ground.

So the Sutton Hoo cemetery was like a theatre, staging the drama of the early East Anglian kingdom in its struggle against enemies north, west and south, with the funerals as consecutive acts, reporting on the mood of the times.

Our investigations also showed with a greater clarity how the Mound 1 ship burial must have taken place. A huge trench was dug E-W, and the ship, 27m long and 4.5m wide amidships, was rolled in to it. A burial chamber was built in the centre of the ship - a gabled hut made of massive timbers. A wool and flax rug was laid on the floor of the chamber and placed on this, a giant tree-trunk coffin about 3m long with a flat top. The body lay inside it, and in a space at the foot end

was placed a big heap of private things: a leather garment, two pairs of shoes and a pillow; clothes, a fluted bowl containing burr wood bottles, four knives with horn handles and combs - an upmarket toilet set. Once the lid was on the coffin, it was secured with curved iron cleats. Now we move into a more public domain. A yellow cloak was thrown over the coffin at the head-end and on this was placed the regalia and parade gear: an iron helmet, a sword with gold and garnet ornament; a baldric - a kind of military harness with gold and garnet shoulder clasps and connectors and a solid gold belt buckle. Further along towards the foot end, the lid was laid like a table for a feast with maple wood bottles and drinking horns and a great silver dish. Then more stuff for feasting: a lyre for the minstrels, 3 cauldrons, one with a long iron chain, buckets, bronze bowls, silver bowls, silver spoons.

At the west end, outside the coffin and against the chamber wall, was placed an iron pole with a square cage on top with an iron bull's head at each corner. This is thought to be a standard, for carrying trophies on parade. Beside it a whetstone, as long as your arm - and as thick - was carved each end with faces, some with beards and some without. On top of it a little bronze stag of Celtic manufacture; at its foot a kind of upturned saucer that fits on the knee: this was the celebrated sceptre, so far unique in England.

For some, these things show that this is 'the typical burial of an Anglo-Saxon king' - and there's an end to it. Others say it's typically pagan, others that it can be Christian. Others see it as the reality behind *Beowulf*, that most celebrated Anglo-Saxon poem, with its scenes of feasting in the hall, its cremations, its burials under barrows and in ships, its kings and heroes and dragons. But these attempts to place everything we find into some sort of norm doesn't do justice to the contents and performance of a burial like RADWARLD's. We know that he wasn't sent off with everything he possessed - the treasury was a lot bigger than that.

These objects were selected, like words are selected from a general vocabulary; each object speaks to us, each has its own biography; the burial is not a reflection of a poem like Beowulf, it is itself a poem, a palimpsest of allusions, performed by a people expressing their hopes and fears at crucial moment in their lives.

We can imagine that such a performance took several days, a trail of salutation winding up to the edge of the ship: the eldest son, the youngest grandchild, the oldest friend, the companions in arms, the captain of the fleet, the deckhands of the Royal ship, the visiting dignitaries from Denmark and France, eager for the old or the new alliance; Edwin of Northumbria or his envoys; the diplomats of enemies discreetly come to hear the rumours; a bishop from Canterbury, a priest from Rendlesham, a cunning woman from the fenland, local farmers, huntsmen, horse traders, lovers without status. The whole cast of characters is here to say good bye and stick a stake in the future. Each registers their

attendance and places a gift, until it's time to close up the roof and then, or probably much later, build up the mound.

There is one more person who needs another mention, before we too say goodbye to RADWARLD, namely his wife. The Venerable Bede does not vouchsafe her so much as a name, but in spite of himself, he reveals her to be an astute and principled politician. She recognised the folly of a too easy slide into the Christian camp, with its consequent loss of identity, domination by France, threats to the Scandinavian alliance, and unsettling of the aristocratic landowners who were building up the East Anglian kingdom. Maybe she could sense too what was coming: loss of spiritual authority among the senior women, and their supersession by squadrons of young male fundamentalist firebrands. Her politics show her as a force for reason in an increasingly polarised world.

And there is another legacy that we could assign to this remarkable woman and that is the great ship burial itself.

Who else, if not the queen, would compose and orchestrate this event? And what a composition it was: it referred to countries far and near, and to the potential benefits of each. It saluted the ancient gods, it nodded to the self-righteous Christians. It looked to victory in battle, prominence in wealth; it hailed origins from over the sea and put roots into the land. It sent off a ship, laden with a great feast, a floating mead hall, where ancestors, dead heroes and rivals could be welcomed in and plied with drink and hear themselves praised or satirised in long incantations to the lyre. And at the centre was her man, a public figure still active in the hereafter; on display was his royal finery, but stowed down below were his washing and shaving kit and a change of warm clothing. Here was someone equipped to proclaim the independent future of the new kingdom of East Anglia, to send a message to whoever was pulling the strings of 7th century Europe. All this seamlessly combined with personal affection for a remembered husband.



Lyminge lights up

Lights blaze again in the Saxon hall on the village green at Lyminge in Kent, at the end of the 2012 excavation season. Tea lights set in the wall trenches show up the partition walls in the hall, and next to it the pit of the SFB (sunken featured building). The hall measures about 21 by 8.5 metres, big enough to hold sixty people or more for assemblies and feasts, with Beowulf-style storytelling, drinking, singing and gift-giving.

The excavator, Dr Gabor Thomas of Reading University, dates it to the late 6th or early 7th century – exactly contemporaneous with Raedwald. Shortly thereafter, the pagan site was abandoned and so was its settlement, replaced by a new village around a church, whose excavation in 2008-2010 Dr Thomas wrote about in *Saxon 53*. Archaeologically that shift is immensely helpful: both phases of occupation are complete and separate, so they can practically be compared like two sites, instead

of being confusingly and damagingly superimposed.

A prize find from last summer's dig was a gilded horse harness mount from the wall trench beneath the hall: conservation revealed an abstract Style I animal design of c.525-575. The dig also recovered the parallel rectangular slots that took the pairs of vertical timber planks with which the hall was built.

The Lyminge Archaeological Project plans further excavation of the Great Hall complex in the summers of 2013 and 2014.



Gabor Thomas, Lyminge Archaeological Project

You will be able to follow the progress on their blog on their website, which also has excavation reports from previous seasons and news of post-excavation research. There is also a link to a short article by Gabor Thomas and Alexandra Knox in the last issue of *Antiquity*: 'A window on Christianisation: transformation at Anglo-Saxon Lyminge, Kent, England' (*Antiquity* vol. 086, issue 334, December 2012)

<http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/lyminge>
www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/Lyminge/arch-lyminge.aspx

The guiding principal



Left to right: Lindsay Lee, Robert Allen and Mike Argent at the end of a long weekend festival in 2005 (photo Veronica Bennett)

Big changes in guiding were heralded in September, when after nine years, ill health suddenly caused Robert Allen to surrender the onerous task of organising around 700 tours a year. On 11 September, he wrote to guides saying, 'I am very unhappy to have to leave, but I have to go into hospital to be fitted with a heart pacemaker to correct an abnormally slow heart beat which is the source of some at least of

my problems.' Happy to relate, things went well, and Robert is currently attending Sam Newton's Wednesday sessions at Sutton Hoo.

The committee is already missing his respected language skills and knowledge of local history, which informed all the trips he used to organise for us. That was another huge task, performed for the last couple of years by our treasurer Jonathan Abson, who

was himself relieved to hand over after the recent Devil's Dyke trip to Bryony Abbot and Megan Milan, who will be organising this summer's two trips to Cambridge.

Robert's main guiding role has been taken over by Lindsay Lee, who has been running Guides' Training since she resigned as chairman in February 2009, and who also ran guiding for a couple of years (succeeding Stewart Salmond) before Robert began his stint in 2003. In his letter, Robert 'wanted to thank and congratulate so able and so effective a team', confident that their success would continue under Lindsay, who in turn wrote to the guides on 23 September 'thanking Robert for his hard work, enthusiasm and generosity during the past nine years', and also his wife Michelle for all the support she has given to helping our activities.

Though it will not be the same without Robert, there are exciting new opportunities in guiding, because after several years of experiment, a new agreement has been reached with National Trust about the best way to use the growing number of replicas of the Sutton Hoo regalia, which have been part-financed by the Society. Their fragility, and the logistical difficulties of organising exhibitions in the visitors' centre, has led to a permanent exhibition of regalia replicas in the treasury room, and a new, experimental schedule of 'Out of Case' sessions, in which guides will be able to talk about one of the items of regalia, while examining its replica with visitors.

Mint, anyone?

Reading the account in our last issue of Dr Gareth Williams's Basil Brown Memorial Lecture about the coins of Sutton Hoo, member Joe Startin was struck by his reported remark that, "...the chances of more than one [coin] in a random collection coming from the same mint would be remote, like two people in the same room sharing the same birthday." They exchanged letters, as follows.

Dear Dr Williams

The "Birthday Problem" is well known in probability theory – for a gentle introduction see <http://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/2011/05/the-birthday-problem>. You actually need surprisingly few people in a room to have a good chance of a shared birthday. This is quite counter-intuitive, and is why it attracts attention. There is a fuller description at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birthday_problem, and an amusing generator of examples at <http://betterexplained.com/articles/>

understanding-the-birthday-paradox .

It requires only 23 people in the room for the probability of at least one shared birthday to exceed 50%. For 31 people, the probability exceeds 73%. When the 'oddballs' are excluded, there were 31 tremisses from different Frankish 'mint and moneyer' mints. So for it to be an evens chance of them all being different purely by random selection, there would have to be many more mints than the 365 days in a year, even if all the mints were obligingly supplying tremisses at the same rate.

In fact, you would require at least 682 mints to reduce the probability to less than evens (I used a calculator at <http://jeff.aaron.ca/cgi-bin/birthday> to show this). I don't know if there are any credible estimates of how many mints there really were. The write-up said that the received wisdom was for the variety represented in the purse to be significant. I have always understood the 'Birthday Problem' to be the justification for it.

Regards, Joe Startin

Dear Joe

I am aware of the birthday problem in probability theory, which is why I used that example, although I am not the first to have done so with regard to the Sutton Hoo coins. Alan Stahl made the point in an article 20 years ago. Estimates of the total number of Merovingian mints vary, since not all of the coins are legible, but the minimum estimate is around 700, so over the threshold of 682 that you mention.

As I said, this is not a new approach, but I find that there is still a tendency amongst both archaeologists and historians to refer back to the interpretations of the 1970s when considering the numismatic data, hence my use of 'received wisdom'. So, it is fairly well-trodden ground in one sense, but not yet really taken on board by the wider academic community in another.

Best wishes, Gareth

**SUTTON HOO SOCIETY
NOTIFICATION
OF ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of the Sutton Hoo Society will be held on Friday 15 February 2013 at 7.30pm in the Kings River Café at Sutton Hoo.

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last AGM
3. Reports and Accounts
4. Motion to increase subscriptions
5. Election of Auditors
6. Election of Committee

Following the business meeting, Pamela Cross (Bradford University) will talk about her Horse Burial Ph.D. project.

**Michael Argent
Chairman**

Subscriptions

As announced in our last issue, a motion to increase subscriptions for ordinary members from £10 to £15 will go before the AGM on 15 February. Since, under our constitution, students pay half the ordinary rate, family members one-and-a-half, and overseas members double the ordinary rate, the same motion will effectively change all the rates.

At last year's AGM, it was explained that there is now a predictable shortfall between the Society's subscription income and its regular running expenses, including the printing and postage of Saxon. The committee is not proposing to cover the entire shortfall with a single increase, but the motion before the AGM will potentially improve the situation.

Jonathan Abson (Treasurer)

Membership Matters

I am grateful to those members who have notified me of changes of address this year. It is also helpful to know if your name/telephone number/email address has changed, so that we can keep in touch. Thank you, too, to those who have sent kind messages about Saxon and about our outings, and especially to all those Life members who have generously sent donations towards Society expenses, which is very much appreciated in these times of rising costs. My contact details as Membership Secretary are listed on the far right of this page.

Pauline Moore

Events Diary

Tuesday 22 January, 17.30
BM/IOA Medieval Seminar

Sad Sepulchral Urns: the pottery at Spong Hill
Dr Catherine Hills (Cambridge)
Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square,
London WC1H 0PY, Room 612

Later March (dates and venues TBA)
SHS Guides meeting

NT summer exhibition:

The 2000 Sutton Hoo excavation
The Treasury, NTSH

Saturday 11 May, 11.00
*Basil Brown Memorial Lecture
Tradition and Transformation in
Anglo-Saxon Art*

Leslie Webster (author, Anglo-Saxon Art,
British Museum)
Riverside Theatre, Woodbridge, Suffolk

Friday 14 June, all day
SHS trip to Cambridge

The Society will visit the recently reopened Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology for a behind-the-scenes look at the conservation laboratory and recent archaeological finds. Then we go to the Parker Library in Corpus Christi College to see their originals of the Anglo Saxon Chronicle (A) and Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica, as they feature in the Sutton Hoo story. Other MSS. on display will include the Bury Bible, not our period, but not to be missed. Please book tickets on the enclosed flyer.



Visit www.wuffingeducation.co.uk for (almost) weekly Saturday Study Days, 10.00-16.00 at NTSH, to be pre-booked on the website at £38. Lecturers include Dr Sam Newton, Dr Gareth Williams, Professor Mark Bailey and others. Also www.wuffings.co.uk for Sam's weekend lecture lunches at Sutton Hoo.

**The
Sutton
Hoo
Society**



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