

Rendlesham revealed

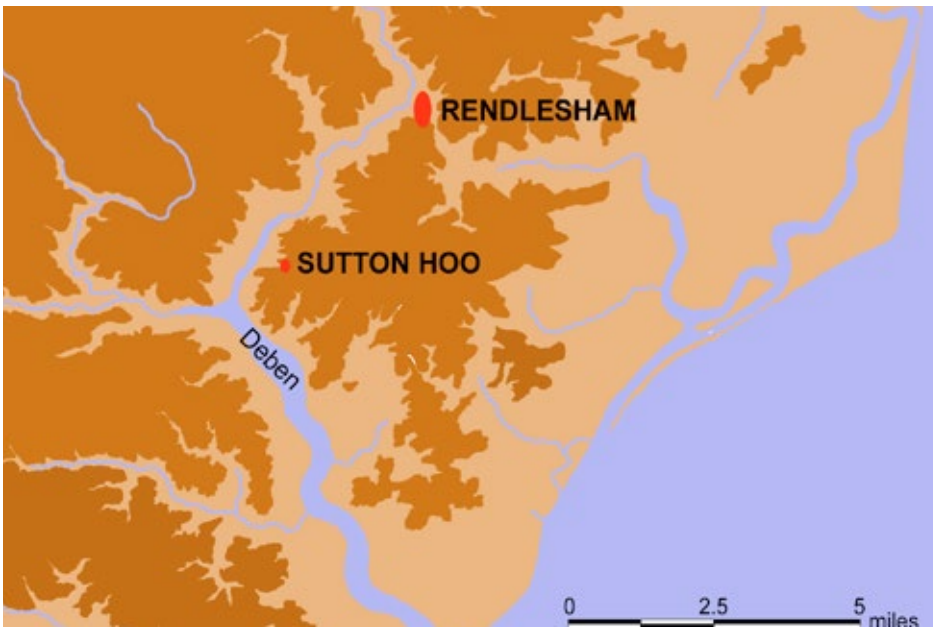


Fig. 1 Map showing locations of Sutton Hoo and Rendlesham in SE Suffolk (higher ground is above 20m OD)

This is the shortened and edited text of the lecture given by Professor CHRISTOPHER SCULL to the Annual General Meeting of the Sutton Hoo Society on 14 February 2014, 'SURVEY & EVALUATION AT RENDLESHAM, 2008-2014'.

The Sutton Hoo Society has been a generous supporter of our work at Rendlesham and so it is a pleasure to report on what the society is helping us to achieve. I am going to talk this evening about background to our fieldwork at Rendlesham, the methods we are using, some key results, and some current thoughts on interpretation.

I must stress that the project is not yet finished and that this is interim reporting. There is much that we do not yet know or cannot usefully speculate about. I am also going to concentrate on the Anglo-Saxon archaeology rather than that of other periods. None the less, I hope that you find what I have to say informative and worthwhile.

Rendlesham lies on the east bank of the River Deben, four miles north-east of the probable royal cemetery here at Sutton Hoo (Fig. 1). This fits well with what we understand of the administrative geography or geography of power in south-

east Suffolk at the time of Sutton Hoo which appears to have been focused on estuarine river valleys. Other important contemporary sites are known from archaeology in the valleys of the River Gipping and River Alde at Ipswich, Coddham, Barham and Snape. It has been suggested that this part of south-east Suffolk (the so-called 'Sandlings Province') was a core area for royal authority in the 7th century kingdom of the East Angles.

The royal status of Rendlesham was recorded by the Northumbrian monk Bede who wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (finished in AD 731) about the baptism of King Swithelm of the East Saxons between AD 655 and 664: Swithelm, the son of Seaxbald, was successor to Sigeberht. He was baptized by Cedd in East Anglia, in the royal village called Rendlesham, that is, the residence of Rendil. King Aethelwold of East Anglia, the brother of King Anna, the previous king of the East Angles, was his sponsor.

(Bede, *HE* iii 22, ed and trans Colgrave and Mynors.)

Because of Bede's mention of Rendlesham there has always been an antiquarian and historical interest in the place. This intensified after the discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship burial in 1939 but there was frustratingly little hard evidence for a major Anglo-Saxon site. There are records of cremation pottery dug up in the early 19th century and in the early 1980s limited excavation and fieldwalking found evidence suggesting an Anglo-Saxon settlement to the west and north of the parish church. However, there was nothing about the finds to suggest a site of royal status.

This changed in 2008. The landowner, Sir Michael Bunbury, was concerned that his fields were being looted at night by illegal metal-detecting. The Archaeological Service at Suffolk County Council undertook a pilot survey to establish what sort of material was being stolen. This used systematic metal-detecting and geophysics over a limited area and very quickly showed that the assemblage of artefacts in the ploughsoil was very much richer and more extensive than had previously been suspected. It was clear from the finds that this was a site of very considerable importance. A full project was therefore set up to record and study the archaeology of Rendlesham with the twin aims of understanding human settlement and activity in its landscape setting and, by better understanding the archaeological resource, developing ways of protecting it here and at other similar sites.

As a first step it was essential to establish the extent and density of the scatter of artefacts. In order to do this, the same team of four skilled detectorists who undertook the initial survey (Roy Damant, Rob Atfield, Terry Marsh and Alan Smith) worked voluntarily in an agreement with the landowner to continue systematically detecting all of the estate to give a full picture of finds of all periods. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service provided project management and infrastructure, including identification and recording of all finds.

The survey area of 160 ha forms a



Fig. 2 Map of the survey area (outlined in black) with all Anglo-Saxon finds plotted (red diamonds). (River Deben, floodplain and land over 20m coloured.)

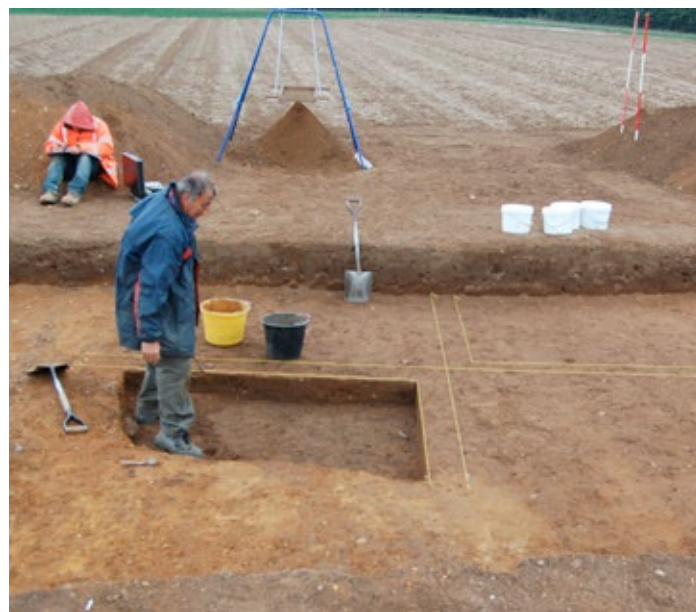


Fig. 3 Anglo-Saxon Grubenhaus under excavation in October 2013.

transect 2.25 km N-S along the east bank of the River Deben and 1.25 km E-W across the grain of the landscape from valley bottom to interfluvium (Fig. 2). This is enough to be sure that patterns of concentration, presence and absence of archaeological material are genuine, and to examine how past activity changed with terrain.

The metal-detector survey recovered material from the ploughsoil or topsoil which had either been dropped there or ploughed-up from buried archaeological features. The detectorists also looked for non-metal finds such as pottery and worked flint. The precise location of every find is recorded using a hand-held GPS device. All finds are then passed to Suffolk County Council for identification, cataloguing and visual recording. All finds information is held on an MS Access database and this is integrated with other survey data in a project GIS for ease of handling and analysis. For example, the density and distributions of different find types can easily be mapped.

As well as the metal-detecting, the project has also undertaken further geophysical survey which shows that the concentration of metal-detector finds coincides with a spread of archaeological features. Trial excavations in the autumn of 2013 confirmed that some of these are Anglo-Saxon Grubenhäuser and other settlement features (Fig. 3).

To date 3,493 finds have been recorded, representing activity from prehistory to the 21st century. Although there are shifts in the concentrations of material over time, the overall pattern points to Rendlesham as a favoured location for settlement and farming from

the late Iron Age if not earlier, with finds clustering on the more fertile soils between 10m and 30m OD. Magnetometry over 46 ha, where the concentration of finds is most dense, confirms a complex palimpsest of archaeological features from the Bronze Age to post-Medieval.

The proportion of Anglo-Saxon finds is unusually high, indicating a rich and important settlement. There is evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity from the 5th to 11th centuries but the majority of finds belong to the period of the 6th to 8th centuries. The evidence of finds and magnetometry suggests that the settlement at this time spread over an area of up to 50 ha, although within this there were different concentrations of settlement and activity areas (Fig. 2). We have evidence from both metal-detecting and trial-excavations that there was at least one cemetery associated with the settlement.

Skilled metalworkers were making dress fittings, jewellery and other items at Rendlesham in the late 6th and 7th centuries. The evidence for this comes from unfinished items at different stages of manufacture, scrap metal, manufacturing waste and lead models which were used in making the moulds for casting (Fig. 4). Most finds relating to metalworking were found in the same area, perhaps indicating the location of one or more workshops. Completed items of the same type as unfinished pieces have been found, indicating that some at least of the material made at Rendlesham was made for and used by the people who lived there.

Both Continental and Anglo-Saxon gold coins and silver pennies have been found at Rendlesham. There are also weights, which were used to check the

weight of gold coins and to weigh bullion for use as currency (Fig. 5). Coin may have changed hands in the payment of taxes or fines or as gifts by a lord or king to his followers in reward for services rendered and to secure future loyalty, and this may explain much of the earlier gold coinage. The silver coinage is more likely to have been used in commercial transactions, and it seems likely that Rendlesham was a site for markets or fairs. Foreign traders in expensive and luxury goods would have been attracted to an important settlement when the king and his retainers were in residence and where the important folk of the kingdom might gather for councils and assemblies.

There is other evidence for trade and exchange at Rendlesham as well as the coinage. Finds include mounts from hanging bowls, which were acquired from north and west Britain, and two fragments from the foot rings of Coptic bowls, acquired from the eastern Mediterranean.

Finds of high-quality metalwork indicate that Rendlesham was an élite residence. Items such as a gold-and-garnet sword pyramid (Fig. 6) were owned, worn and lost by members of the highest aristocracy or the royal kindred. Such ostentatious jewellery in precious materials was worn as a statement of rank and wealth. We see here evidence of the use in life of the sort of possessions that were buried with their dead owners at Sutton Hoo. This social élite was supported by a large population of slaves and servants, farmers, craft specialists, administrators and retainers. The diversity of skills, roles and social positions among this permanent population at Rendlesham is reflected in the range of personal items. Simple pins



Fig. 4 Evidence for metalworking: unfinished copper-alloy Anglo-Saxon pin and buckle with finished examples of each and a piece of bronze-working debris.

and buckles made of copper-alloy are the everyday equivalents of the jewellery worn by aristocrats.

There is thus clear evidence for social and economic centrality at Rendlesham and even without Bede's reference to the vicus regius (royal settlement) the archaeology would suggest that this was an important centre.

We therefore interpret the site as a residence, and a farm, and a tribute centre where the land's wealth was collected and re-directed, major administrative payments made, and important social and political events were transacted. It was at the apex of a system of surplus extraction and jurisdiction, and at the centre of the systems of consumption, redistribution and patronage that fuelled elite social and political relationships.

Kings divided their time between different establishments and so Rendlesham was probably a permanent centre for agrarian or economic administration but periodically hosted other functions (military assemblies, the transaction of justice, markets or fairs) as and when the King was in residence. The broader scatter of metalwork finds includes items such as harness and weapon fittings consistent with a high-status social milieu which might well be explained as the aggregate loss from years of periodic gatherings in the paddocks around a royal residence. We should perhaps envisage a tent village with the permanent population augmented when the King and his household were in residence and swelling further when there were assemblies or fairs.

It has been suggested that Anglo-Saxon royal or high-status sites were short-lived elements of a shifting landscape but that was



Fig. 5 Gold and silver coins and two copper-alloy weights.

not so here: Rendlesham remained a central place for at least 300 years. It is thought that there were major re-organisations of the landscape in the later 6th and 7th centuries, with smaller landholdings consolidated into complex estate structure as royal and lordly power increased. If so, then Rendlesham was a fixed element around which such changes occurred. This in turn argues for a greater continuity and stability of administrative arrangements and local power structures than has sometimes been envisaged for this period.

Rendlesham is one of the handful of high-status sites of the Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon periods which can be securely identified in contemporary documentary sources, and is the only one of this small group for which there is such abundant, sensitive and precise material culture data. Consequently there is high potential here to establish the cultural signature of a 7th-century vicus regius

and to elucidate its spatial organisation and its social and economic character and contacts. Because its status is documented there is also potential to calibrate other sites known primarily from surface finds (ploughzone assemblages or 'productive' sites) against Rendlesham as a social and economic benchmark.

Rendlesham is also something new in the archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: a long-lived central-place complex. Such sites are known in Sweden and Denmark at this time but have not yet been recognised elsewhere in England. The archaeology at Rendlesham therefore has an international as well as a national importance.

Finally, because all periods from prehistory to modern are represented in the archaeology at Rendlesham there is tremendous potential here to examine how settlement and activity here changed over time and within its immediate landscape.



Fig. 6 Gold and garnet sword fitting (width at base 20.6mm).

Acknowledgements

The Rendlesham Project is funded by Suffolk County Council, The Sutton Hoo Society, English Heritage, the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology and History and the Royal Archaeological Institute. Fieldwork has been undertaken with the kind support and encouragement of the landowners, Sir Michael and Lady Bunbury, and the farmer, Philip Westrope. Faye Minter (SCC Archaeological Service) manages finds identification, recording, cataloguing and analysis. The project is directed by Jude Plouviez (SCC Archaeological Service) and Professor Christopher Scull (Cardiff University & University College London).

Brilliant! Sae Wylfing to be based in Woodbridge

Sae Wylfing, the half-length replica of the Sutton Hoo ship, is now on semi-permanent loan to Woodbridge Riverside Trust, though it remains in the ownership of the Gifford family. The Riverside Trust is the voluntary community group representing the interests of local people in the redevelopment of the old Whisstocks boatyard on the waterfront in Woodbridge, as described on the front page of our last issue. The news that the boat will be housed at the Whisstocks site until development work begins later this year delighted visitors at a recent event, as Trust member PAUL CONSTANTINE describes below.

“Brilliant!” they said, and “Good luck with it”. “I wish you well”, and “Oh! wow, that’s amazing!” They were reacting to the news that Edwin and Joyce Gifford’s *Sae Wylfing* will be coming to Woodbridge. ‘They’ were the general public in all shapes and sizes, all ages and experiences from all over the country not just from East Anglia, as they visited the annual Weird and Wonderful Wood event at Haughley Park near Stowmarket in May this year.

They had been lured to our stand by a fascinating and irresistible object: a longship model -made of Lego. Children dragged their parents to look at it and the great majority of all-comers began by labelling it ‘Viking’. Only when the parents under child-guided instruction had absorbed the detail of the warriors on the rowing benches, did their gaze lift towards another item on display, a museum-quality replica of the Sutton Hoo helmet. Whilst the youngsters continued to count the oars and admire the shields on the Lego longboat the adults began to talk about and respond to the iconic mask. “Is it the actual one?” “Has the British Museum missed it?” “Is it heavy?” “Can I touch it?” “What amazing craftsmanship!”

Had they visited Sutton Hoo? About 30% had. Many who lived near to it had always intended to, but hadn’t quite made it. It seemed as though the nearer they lived, the smaller the chance that they had been. One couple from Cheshire told us all about the marriage of Mrs Pretty in their local Cheshire church. Some talked about the Swedish and Norwegian boat museums and one man even compared it to the Danish Viking ship burial of Ladby. A number had been to Roskilde (some with the Sutton Hoo Society) and one lady had rowed the *Dim Riv* Viking ship replica based in Lerwick Harbour, Shetland.

Reactions to the Sutton Hoo visits were mixed, ranging from those who appreciated just sitting quietly close to the mounds absorbing the ambience and giving free rein to their imaginations, to those who felt an intangible disappointment. Questioned about this

one couple said that there was no Timeline not even on paper, to set it in context.

In similar vein some asked if the burial was before or after the Romans? Many were intrigued to hear that it came before the Vikings, their universal yardstick to measure such people and events.



“Brilliant!” Dr Helen Geake tries on the Sutton Hoo helmet at Haughley Park (Photo Peter Bradbeer).

These preliminaries naturally led on to discussions about the ship. None could guess its size by pointing to objects at various distances from our position, but when they saw the picture on our flier for *Sae Wylfing* they could begin to appreciate its form. All liked the idea of the boat coming to Woodbridge and from their participation in this interchange it became clear that most of them hoped that it could be shown to schoolchildren. It was not necessary for them to see it demonstrated distantly in midstream, they would prefer to look at it close-to and be allowed to actually touch it, rather like the Lego model.

Amongst the many visitors were, of course, the élite who understood about helmets and history, digging and discoveries. Prime amongst them were the re-enactors drawn by the golden glint of the sun on the helmet. In their ranks

were volunteers eager to tell their Anglo-Saxon lifestyle stories. Those who can dress Anglo-Saxon, eat Anglo-Saxon, live and speak Anglo-Saxon are only too keen to accompany the boat if it can open the school gates. The illustrated story can be brought to life by providing memorable experiences in participation and interaction with the children. There is huge potential to be explored by making contact with young people as a preliminary to the future ship build. *Sae Wylfing* can make this possible. It will be these very children who will man the real ship and grip the oars to carry the story further afield.

Sae Wylfing was born as a testbed for technical ideas of performance under oar and sail. Now she is about to adapt to another persona. Her new role will be to shine a bright light into what has been called a dark age. She can bring a new understanding to the next generation. Her journey is about to begin anew, voyaging into a future that was understood by both Joyce and Edwin. Knowing what is written on this next page of the illuminated book has provided both of them with great satisfaction. It is an important part of their legacy.

Some children returned bringing their friends to look at the Lego longship, explaining, with some pride in their expertise as they did so, “It is an Anglo-Saxon ship.” More mature people moved away saying, “Thank you for explaining that, I really must go to Sutton Hoo (or “I really must go again”) - it’s brilliant news!”

Woodbridge Riverside Trust is putting together a volunteer team to manage *Sae Wylfing* and take it to community events and on educational visits. It is looking for sponsorship and sponsorship-in-kind, especially to help with housing and moving the boat on its purpose-built trailer. If you think you can help in any way, please contact the Trust via the interim website www.WoodbridgeWaterfront.co.uk

Woodbridge Riverside Trust’s presence at the Weird and Wonderful Wood event was due to the generosity of UK Woodland Ltd.

Joyce Gifford, 28 April 1923 – 31 March 2014

Edwin ‘Giff’ Gifford, 20 March 1921 – 16 May 2014

The former chairman of the Sutton Hoo Society, ROBERT SIMPER, remembers the indefatigable husband and wife team who created and sailed *Sae Wylfing*, and who died recently within weeks of each other.

For many decades there had been talk in Woodbridge of building a replica of the Sutton Hoo Anglo-Saxon long ship, but nothing had happened. In 1989 I heard that a half-scale replica of the 10th century Anglo-Saxon trading ship from

another keen supporter, we sailed from Snape to Aldeburgh. The die was then cast and the following spring the Giffords arrived on the River Deben with a brand new half-size replica of the Sutton Hoo Ship, the *Sae Wylfing* with their loyal crew

show boats of the Sutton Hoo period with tall square sails.

Joyce had loyally supported Edwin’s many projects, including driving to India to build a new ‘cheap to build’ fishing craft, designed by Edwin, for poor fishermen (this type is still in use) and creating a firm, based on Southampton Water, for building hovercraft. Joyce had grown up at Alresford, Essex and gave family land there to create a butterfly reserve. At University she had been a keen rower and became bow oar on the *Sae Wylfing*. She always said she was going to give up rowing when she was eighty, but according to our reckoning she went on long past that date.

Both Edwin and Joyce had a great passion for Anglo-Saxon ships and getting a Sutton Hoo replica built. There is a lot of published material about these ships, but no one had pulled it all together and analysed it. Edwin and Joyce did this and they were the only people to have actually handled replicas of them. Edwin’s practical knowledge as a designer meant that he became the authority on sailing Anglo-Saxon ships and the Sutton Hoo Society published a small booklet of his findings*.

The National Trust agreed that they would build a replica and raised money, but this proved a step too far for the Trust. When Edwin gave up sailing *Sae Wylfing* I suggested to him that they should write a longer report on his researches, if not a book, but by then he was losing energy for such a demanding project. In the last few years Joyce appears to have become Edwin’s carer, but she phoned us regularly to hear if the replica was finally being built. The Sutton Hoo story has much for which to thank this independent and resourceful couple.



Joyce Gifford (left) and Edwin Gifford (right) sailing *Sae Wylfing* (photos Robert Simper).

Graveney had been built and was going to be at the Henley-on-Thames Traditional Boat Rally. On arrival we soon found Edwin and Joyce Gifford sailing the *Ottor* up and down on the Thames. I joined them for a sail and said that I was in the Sutton Hoo Society and wondered whether they were interested in building a replica of the Sutton Hoo ship. The Giffords were extremely wary, as they had heard that the academics were arguing about the details of the Sutton Hoo ship.

In 1993 Edwin and Joyce brought the *Ottor* to Suffolk and with Sam Newton,

from the Colchester Historical Enactment Society. Under sail *Sae Wylfing* was very fast but could not go against the wind as fast as a modern yacht. This replica became very popular and heightened the profile of the Sutton Hoo story.

Over the years we became good friends with Edwin and Joyce. They wanted to prove that the Sutton Hoo ship would have had a sail and used both sail and oar, but modern thinking still could not understand that. Like the Viking ships they were rowed and then sailed in a fair wind. Rock carvings found recently in Sweden clearly



Sae Wylfing on the Deben (photo Sutton Hoo Society)

*Edwin and Joyce Gifford, ‘The sailing performance of Anglo-Saxon ships as derived from the building and trials of half-scale models of the Sutton Hoo and Graveney ship finds’, *Mariner’s Mirror* 82.2, May 1996, reprinted as *Anglo-Saxon Sailing Ships*, Creekside Publishing for Sutton Hoo Society, 1997, 2nd edn. 2002, 24pp. Available from Reception, National Trust, Sutton Hoo price 30p.

A full obituary of Dr Edwin Gifford OBE, DSc, FICE, FIStructE, FRINA can be found via www.ramboll.co.uk/news/ruk/rememering%20edwin%20gifford

Two anniversaries and a centenary



Lunch at the Riverside after the lecture. Left to right: Angela Evans, Miranda Bruce-Mitford, Myrtle Bruce-Mitford, Valerie Fenwick (text and photos Nigel Maslin)

As Martin Carver is fond of remarking, every year is the anniversary of something, and this year they come thick and fast: the 75th anniversary of Basil Brown's discovery of the great ship burial, the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Sutton Hoo Society, and the centenary of the birth of Dr Rupert Bruce-Mitford who re-excavated the ship in the mid-1960s, the 50th anniversary of which falls next year: all this against the background of the anniversaries of the outbreak of the First World War and the Normandy landings.

This year's Basil Brown Memorial Lecture - at the Riverside Theatre in Woodbridge on Saturday 14 June - was therefore devoted to considering *Sutton Hoo 75 Years On*, viewed by the former curator of the Sutton Hoo collections at the British Museum, Dr Angela Care Evans. It was followed by a family lunch organised by Rupert Bruce-Mitford's two daughters, Myrtle and Miranda, to mark their father's centenary. Absent was their brother Michael, who worked in the ship trench in the mid-'60s with Myrtle, the reconstructor of the Sutton Hoo lyre, as well as with Angela Evans and our Basil Brown lecturer of 2012, Leslie Webster, also regrettably absent.

Angela was introduced by Society chairman Michael Argent, who called for a few moments silence in memory of Joyce and Edwin Gifford (see page 5) and noted our various anniversaries. Angela saluted Dr Bruce-Mitford as "a broad thinker" and recalled his *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, a provisional guide (generally known as 'the handbook') which first appeared in 1947. It was only replaced in 1986 by Angela's own account of *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial*, which itself has just gone out of print, being replaced, she noted ruefully, by "a glitzy tourist book". It accompanies the British Museum's new gallery display of the Sutton Hoo treasures, which will clearly have to last

a generation: "that's it for the BM for the next 20 to 25 years".

The date of the lecture, 14 June, was not only Dr Bruce-Mitford's birthday, but also the very date in 1939 when Basil Brown reported to landowner Mrs Pretty that he had uncovered the first find in Mound 1: a large iron ring with what appeared to be green bronze bands and some hollow-sounding wood.

'We carefully covered the objects over with Hessian and sand as it was now dusk, and I went to report to Mrs Pretty. I saw the footman who took my message to her that I had found the burial and its condition, and I went to my lodgings very tired. I then made a drawing of the objects and noted them.' ('Basil Brown's Diary of the Excavations at Sutton Hoo in 1938-39' in Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, London, 1974, p. 163.)

Angela described how our hero was soon sidelined during the pressurised excavation of the burial chamber in only ten days, by Charles Phillips, W.F. Grimes and Stuart and Mary Piggott, and how the treasures themselves travelled to the British Museum, back to Woodbridge for the inquest, and then to Aldwych tube station for safe keeping during the war.

The formal publication of Basil Brown's great find was a daunting task which after the war fell to Rupert Bruce-Mitford as Assistant Keeper in

the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum. Many questions were left after the original excavation, and between 1965 and 1967 Dr Bruce-Mitford, by then Keeper of Medieval and Later Antiquities, re-excavated the ship trench, completing a detailed plan of every single rivet. The ship had fitted the trench so tightly that the stern had sprung when it was put in, and it had famously been damaged by tanks during the first weeks of the war, until that was finally stopped by Ted Wright, discoverer of the Ferriby Bronze Age boats. In 1967 it was decided that the remains of the great Sutton Hoo ship were not worth keeping, and it was dug through in a largely fruitless search for what might lie underneath it, though not before its rivets had been lifted and a plaster cast made of it - by Peter Van Geersdaele, who also attended the lunch with his wife Moira.

Angela recalled how Bruce-Mitford would describe waking in the middle of the night, sensing Sutton Hoo "like a black cloud at the foot of the bed". The three volumes in four huge books of *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* - published by British Museum Publications between 1975 and 1983 - comprise his lasting memorial, but the fourth volume, the interpretive synthesis, was never published.

Between 1968 and 1970, Dr Ian Longworth, a British Museum curator,



Basil Brown outside his shed, examining a piece of Roman Samian ware (Photo Sutton Hoo Society collection)



More comfortable than it looks: Rupert Bruce-Mitford's customary lunchtime seat.

had excavated the ploughed out Mound 5, revealing the first of the Sutton Hoo sand bodies, and Angela recalled excavating a scull with two articulated vertebrae. Meanwhile, Dr Paul Ashbee, known for his *Bronze Age Barrows of Great Britain*, excavated the Mound 1 barrow, including Basil Brown's spoil tips. This revealed that there was no quarry ditch surrounding Mound 1, which had been formed simply by scraping up the sand dug out of the original ship trench.

"I rebuilt Mound 1," Angela told us, describing how she had pegged out a circle "after a dubious bit of surveying", defying the "miseries of March" and the freezing cold. She placed a copy of *The Times* in a polythene bag in the mound, which was left to grass over. "It's in the wrong place!" was Rupert's immediate reaction, though in fact it was accurate to within 4 cms.

Between 1983 and 1992, Martin Carver investigated the political and social organisation of the barrow cemetery, rediscovering Ian Longworth's trenches as he revealed the execution burials around Mound 5 and further east beyond the boundary. He also re-excavated Mound 2, "broadly contemporary with Mound 1", and showed that Basil Brown had been working in a robber trench in 1938 and had missed the scar of the ship's keel and the burial beneath it. Furthermore, he uncovered Mound 17, "the only undisturbed grave on the site", thanks to the robber pit having descended between the two graves, one human and one equine: it was a horse burial comparable to

the one at Lakenheath which is due to be published next year.

As Angela's lecture progressed through time, it became increasingly clear how

of the new National Trust visitor centre, then in 2003 came the "huge surprise" of the discovery of the Prittlewell prince near Southend, which showed archaeologists a burial chamber exactly like Sutton Hoo, but with objects still hanging on the walls: "They are similar assemblages, but Sutton Hoo is a level up." That too is due to be published next year.

Now, with "the royal vill at Rendlesham uncovered", there is a new opportunity to bring Sutton Hoo to a whole community of visitors and communicate what the 7th century was about, while some of the old questions persist. "Is it Raedwald?" asked Angela: "I like to think it is, but it might not be. Thomas Kendrick, Rupert's former boss, suggested in 1940 that it might be Raedwald, and that's where we still are."

At lunch afterwards in the Riverside Restaurant, a toast was drunk to the memory of Rupert Leo Scott Bruce-Mitford, and also to his protégé, British Museum conservator Nigel Williams, the ingenious restorer of the Sutton Hoo helmet and the Portland vase. Also remembered was the leading East Anglian historian, Norman Scarfe, who died on 2 March this year, aged 90. Author of *The Shell Guide to*

Suffolk (1960) and *The Suffolk Landscape* (1972), he had been a regular visitor to the excavations at Sutton Hoo.

Dr Bruce-Mitford's obituary by Professor Rosemary Cramp (*The Independent* 23 March 1994) is online at www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-rupert-brucemitford-1431013.html



Rupert Bruce-Mitford examining the bow of the ship.

much has changed. Where Rupert had "quite rightly" looked to Scandinavia for the designs of the helmets and shields, the 2009 context-less discovery of the South Staffordshire hoard shows contemporary English styles, while Mound 1 "slots into an overall 'gold horizon' of early Anglo-Saxon England". In 2000 the Bromeswell cemetery was excavated in the footprint

The strange case of the Chianti bottle in the ship trench



Fig.1 View across the burial chamber looking NW, 27 July 1939. W.F. Grimes, Stuart Piggott, Sir John Forsdyke (British Museum Director) and T.D. Kendrick (Keeper, Department of British and Medieval Antiquities) examine the shoulder clasps, while Mrs Pretty (in basket chair) and two friends look on. (Photo Trustees of the British Museum).

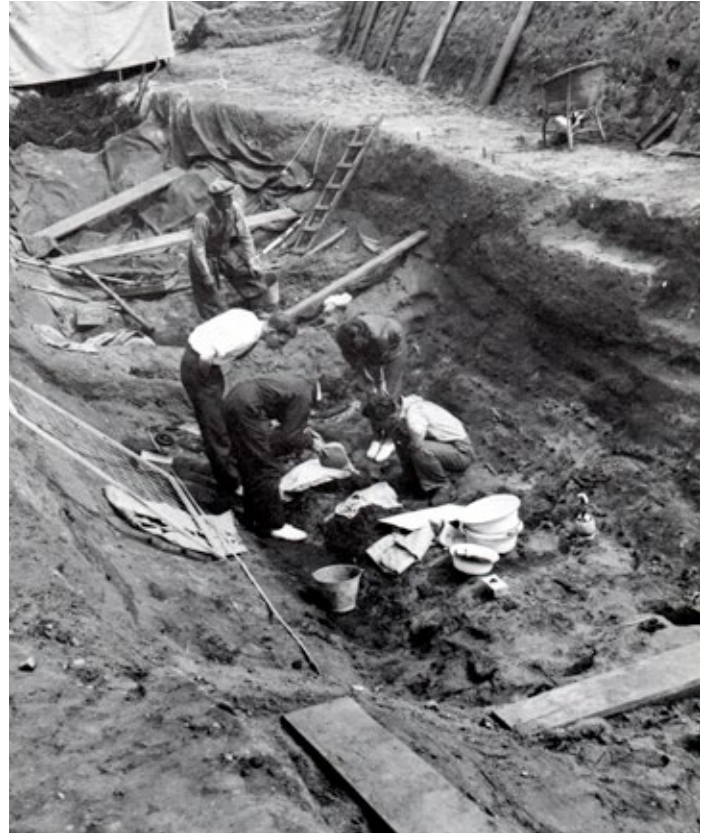


Fig.2 View across the burial chamber looking NW: Basil Brown (top), Graham Clarke (white shirt), W.F. Grimes (in dungarees, with bellows) Peggy and Stuart Piggott. Mrs Pretty's basket chair is in the background and the Chianti bottle to the right of the enamel basins (Photo Trustees of the British Museum).

One of the defining images of Sutton Hoo (Fig. 1) shows a group of archaeologists wearing jackets and ties busily concentrating upon something in front of them. Behind, up on the baulk sits Mrs Pretty between two of her friends. One cannot help wondering if the presence of the landowner and sponsor of the dig prompted the dressing up. However, conversations with friends who worked in archaeology before the war confirmed that quite often archaeologists wore more formal attire than those of the 60s and certainly those of today. In spite of this proviso, perhaps the workers in Figure 2 are more typical of the everyday attire at Sutton Hoo then, writes ERIC HOULDER.

Another very similar image shows the same scene (Fig. 2) with a group of archaeologists crowded around one point in the burial chamber of the Mound 1 Ship. Behind them is Mrs Pretty's basket chair – probably Lloyd Loom - but unoccupied. The diggers are dressed quite informally. But look again. Although taken from similar viewpoints, the two images are separated by time. The earliest is clearly the more formal one (Fig. 1), as the steps re-enforced with planks in front of the ladies have been mostly cut away in the second image (Fig. 2), to reveal more of the burial chamber.

In fact the Figure 2 diggers are actually working in an area that was still covered with sand in the previous image. They

have at least one metal bucket and three enamel bowls, one of which contains something - perhaps a small find. To the right of the bowls is a very obvious Chianti bottle still in its straw basket.

The Chianti bottle raises questions: who brought it? Was it there for refreshment, or did it simply contain water? Having dug several summer seasons at Sutton Hoo, I remember the importance of keeping the sand damp whilst excavating fragile artefacts and deep sections, but there are many more efficient ways of doing this than with a wine bottle. Therefore, it is more likely that its purpose was refreshment. Finally, what happened to it when it was empty? As it happens, the latter question was answered in August 1968.

During that season, I was in charge of the excavation of the north eastern quadrant of the ship mound, under the overall direction of Dr Bruce-Mitford and the site direction of Dr Paul Ashbee. Following the re-excavation and plaster moulding of the actual ship outlines in 1967, one of the most important tasks was to create and record both longitudinal (Fig. 3) and cross sections. The grid of squares superimposed upon the site made this a fairly simple task, though the softness and friability of the sand was a constant impediment.

After much frustration, it was found that the south-facing sections (which were in sunlight for most of the day) were best achieved by cutting the edges roughly as



Fig.3 The ship-trench from the east. At either side of the void can be seen the longitudinal sections. Scales are in feet. (Photo Eric Houlder LRPS).

the square was trowelled down, and then cutting them accurately under a thin spray of water when the square reached the Anglian Ground Surface, as we termed it. As Charles Phillips himself told me, the '30s archaeologists, like those of the '60s, noticed that as the sand dried out, its colours disappeared. As colour differences are the *raison d'être* of sections, the spraying continued (Fig. 4) until just before each section was photographed, and often during the drawing too.

It was during the process of preparing a high section (Figs. 4 & 5) to the right of and just behind where Mrs Pretty and her friends are sitting, that I had a sudden urge to put my arm into one of the rabbit holes that disfigured the section. Considering that live mortar bombs and decaying ammunition were frequently found, it was a spontaneous and foolhardy act. At arm's length something smooth and cold caused a sudden withdrawal, but as no explosion resulted, I plucked up courage and drew an unbroken Chianti bottle into view,

complete with the decomposing remnants of its straw basket.

I would like to record that the bottle was treated as a small find and duly recorded, but sadly no. As primarily a site photographer (though working as a site supervisor then), I am ashamed to state that not even a quick snapshot recorded the discovery. After being viewed by those in the vicinity, it was deposited upon the spoil heap, where in due course it would become once again part of the composition of the reconstructed Mound 1.

Why was this unique reminder of the (clearly top-drawer) 1939 excavation team treated in such a cavalier fashion? Quite simply, though everyone involved in 1968 had seen excavation reports, academic papers and magazine articles about the site, there was not the sophisticated picture awareness that is common today, and if anyone recognised the bottle, they did not say so. In mitigation, the 1939 dig was not such a long time before; several diggers could remember the original



Fig.4 The section discussed in the text. As the ranging pole is already in place, it seems that the section face is being prepared for photography. Anne Thorpe sprays whilst the writer pressurises the canister. (Photo Derek W. Thorpe).

discovery, and the Copinger Hill twins (Fig.6) had actually participated in it. Then again, I only came across the concept of historiography during my PGCE in the academic year 1968-9, and even then the importance of the bottle as part of the depositional history of Sutton Hoo only slowly dawned upon me in the following decades; hence this confession.

I hope that this short article alerts present day archaeologists to the ever-present possibility of unearthing reminders of previous archaeologists, and of recording them with the same rigour as the ancient traces. The discipline is now old enough to have a historiography of its own, and Sutton Hoo with its many 'interventions' is an ideal site to document previous work.



Fig.5 The same section. This is the official colour photograph taken from the other side of the ship-trench with a polarising filter to clarify the damp sand colours. Sadly, at this distance the writer cannot remember which rabbit hole the bottle was recovered from. (Photo Eric Houlder LRPS).



Fig.6 The eastern south-facing section on the north side of the ship-trench. The two figures are the Copinger-Hill twins Rhoisia and Bridget, who assisted Charles Phillips and Basil Brown in 1939. (Photo Eric Houlder LRPS).

A feasting hall and monastery in Kent

On our front pages, you can read about the latest from Rendlesham, according to Bede the site of Raedwald's late 6th-early 7th century hall. If it is ever discovered, and if it is not covered by later manorial building, it could look something like the contemporaneous hall uncovered at Lyminge in Kent two years ago.

On Thursday 21 August, the Director of the Lyminge Archaeological Project, Dr Gabor Thomas of the University of Reading, will show us around this fifth and final season of excavations, after we have visited the earlier and recent finds in Maidstone Museum. Ironically for a society originally founded in support of a dig, our excursion this summer will be our first to a dig in progress in all our 30 year

2002-5 excavations at Bishopstone in the Sussex downs, a complex of timber halls of the 8th-11th centuries, which was near a late 7th century minister of the South Saxon bishops (St Andrew's Church). That church/manor nucleus provided a focus for permanent settlement, contrasting the earlier Middle Saxon characteristic of 'shift' in occupation centres, exemplified by the situation of Bishopstone as

uncovering a Middle Saxon granary and threshing floor. 2009 revealed a domestic area with boundary ditches, palisades and consistently small floor plans which were seen as possible monastic cells.

The 2010 season produced four early Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured buildings (SFBs) and a timber hall. Their fills yielded high status objects like fragments from glass vessels, as well as a unique



Fig. 1 An aerial view of the 2012 Tayne Field excavation at Lyminge, showing the rectangular outlines of the feasting hall (Photo William Laing)

history (apart from Snape in 1991). *Details of the trip are on the back page.*

If you are planning to come on this thrilling visit, or even if you are not, you should visit the exemplary Lyminge Project website. It separately summarises each year's excavations from 2007 to the present, presents an annual selection of dig photos, and references all the publications, articles and media interviews. It is the epitome of a modern archaeological project, involving local communities and societies such as the Kent Archaeological Society, acting as a training dig for undergraduates and graduates, with full online publication of the finds in a database, as quickly as possible.

In **Saxon 52** we reported on the publication by the CBA of Dr Thomas's

compared with its Early Saxon site, which was at nearby Rookery Hill.

Lyminge itself was the site of one of the monasteries founded across Kent in the wake of St Augustine's mission of 597. It was a mixed community of monks and nuns under the control of a royal abbess, and its 7th century minster church was dug in the mid 19th century by the then vicar, Canon Jenkins. A pagan cemetery was revealed in the 1970s and other evidence shows that the origins of Lyminge as an Anglo-Saxon 'central place' date back, like Rendlesham, to the 5th century.

In 2005, Canterbury Archaeological Trust identified 8th-9th century occupation, and survey and test pits by the University of Reading began in 2007, with open area excavations the following year



Fig. 2 Wall plank slots, 2012 (Photo University of Reading)

7th century plough coulter. (See Gabor Thomas's article in **Saxon 53**.) Not far from the monastic centre was a Middle Saxon ironworking site, producing implements probably for sale as well as use.

Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council allowed excavation for the 2012-2014 seasons on Tayne Field in the heart of the village (Fig. 1). The star find has been the foundations of a timber 'feasting hall' measuring 21m. x 8.5m, built by the 'post-in-trench' method (Fig. 2) and dating from about 600 (see **Saxon 56**). Two SFBs and four more timber halls appeared in 2013, one rebuilt and enlarged three times till it measured 15m. x 7m. It will make a fascinating excursion to compare and contrast an actual feasting hall and royal monastic site with what we potentially have at contemporary Rendlesham. – NM.

www.lymingearchaeology.org

Gabor Thomas, 'Life before the minster: the social dynamics of monastic foundation at Anglo-Saxon Lyminge, Kent', *The Antiquaries Journal* vol. 93 (2013)

Alexandra Knox, 'Discovering an Anglo-Saxon Royal Hall', *Current Archaeology* no. 284 (Nov 2013)

Guess the weight of the Sutton Hoo ship!

Society Guide JOE STARTIN describes an interesting puzzle, and invites members to email for a copy of his spreadsheet which you can use to estimate the weight of the Sutton Hoo Ship.

On duty at the Exhibition Hall on a quiet winter's afternoon, Colin Maunder and I fell to talking about the weight of the ship – the one which was dragged up to Mound 1. I recalled seeing at least three figures, ranging from 6 to 20 tons. Could we tighten this up, and remain honest?

One approach would be to scale up from the half-length replica, *Sae Wylfing*, built by Edwin Gifford. The linear dimension scales by 2, so the volume (and thereby weight) should scale by 2 raised to the power of 3 (2^3 or $2 \times 2 \times 2$) – that is, by 8. However, the linear scaling may not have been exact in all directions. The rest of the world does not scale at the same time, notably with respect to the acceleration due to gravity. That is why insects can manage with such slender legs. Nevertheless, I have since discovered that a typical two-and-a-half year old boy is half the height of a six-foot man, and weighs two stone, so it might at least give an indication. Edwin and Joyce Gifford's book was to hand but no weights were given.

Next we considered Archimedes' Principle. I remembered the fine drawing in Angela Care Evans's *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (revised edn. 1986, pp. 26-27). Based on the survey by the Science Museum, it gives a position for the waterline (although it is careful to say this is an estimate). In principle, I could work out the volume of water the ship displaced.

Some work at home with a ruler and a spreadsheet, and I had an answer of nearly 18 cubic metres. A cubic metre of freshwater weighs a metric ton (a 'tonne', or 1000 kg, or 2205 lb). So, is 18 tons the answer?

My spread sheet made it easy to estimate the horizontal area enclosed by the water line around the ship. This is a measure of the sensitivity of the displaced volume to a small error in the vertical position of the waterline. The area is enormous and computes to almost 44 square metres. An error of about 23 mm – less than an inch – in the position of the waterline will add or lose a ton in weight. So the result is very sensitive indeed.

The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial - A Handbook by Rupert Bruce-Mitford (3rd edn. 1979, p.76), says the ship drew two feet of water 'when light'. Taken at face value, the water line would be 77 mm lower than in the drawing, and this would reduce the displacement by over three tons. Before the ship was dragged up the slope, it would obviously have been lightened in every possible way. Not wishing to understate the effort and ingenuity required, could I really tell a tour group that it weighed at least (say) 12 tons, without having to cross my fingers behind my back?

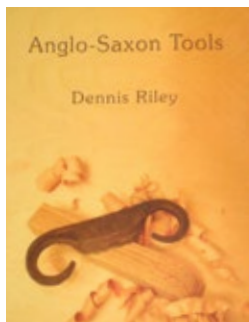
Possibly not. Roskilde Viking Ship Museum has a full-size replica of a similar ship, the *Sea Stallion*, which is a couple of metres longer, but not quite so wide. It is said to weigh just 8 tons – but its displacement is 25 tons. The plot thickens. Maybe these ships used lots of ballast. But if you wish to see or play around with my spread sheet, you can request a copy by emailing the Sutton Hoo Society at info@suttonhoo.org

New titles from Anglo Saxon Books by Pauline Moore



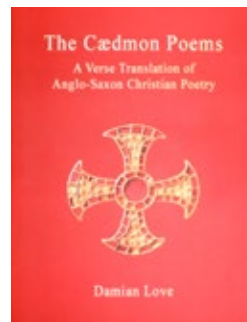
OLD ENGLISH SEA TERMS
by Katrin Thier
(ISBN 9781898 281 689) £19.95

From 'ac' (oak) – used to build ships and hence a metonym in Old Norse for a ship – to 'wunden-stefna' (what Seamus Heaney has as 'ring-whorled prow' in his version of 'Beowulf') – the author has created a well-illustrated dictionary. Yet the work is more than this, revealing in the study of the language much about the archaeology and history of ships, as well as their parts and how they were sailed. There are enlightening glossaries, a catalogue of images and finds and an extensive bibliography. The book is presented attractively, clearly and helpfully – and is very readable.



ANGLO-SAXON TOOLS
by Dennis Riley
(ISBN 9781898 281 726) £16.95

The author looks carefully at finds and at reproductions of tools used by a wide variety of craftsmen: metal-smiths, potters, workers in wood, leather, textile, bone and horn. He reveals the social significance of these skills and, wherever possible, shows how the tools are used, so that skilled modern workers using reproductions can "experience the problems and pleasures of Anglo-Saxon craftsmen" – including left-handed ones! The reader has the benefit of clear illustrations and diagrams, two appendices for further insight, and a useful bibliography.



THE CAEDMON POEMS:
A Verse Translation of Anglo-Saxon Christian Poetry by Damian Love
(ISBN 9781898 281 719) £9.95

Including Bede's account of Caedmon (with the hymn of the tongue-bound monk on p.42), Genesis A & B, Exodus, Daniel and Judith, this work proves how much more gripping is one's reading of these texts in a Modern English poetic translation. So often nuances, layers of meaning and intensity of feeling are lost in a flat, prose translation. It is advisable to read first the Introduction to understand the writer's purpose, and his wise consideration of the original texts. This Introduction, and the Notes for each of the pieces, both reinforce the creative impulse behind each one. Our understanding is enriched.

Events Diary

Friday 25 July

Reception by invitation only

Tranmer House, NT Sutton Hoo

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 July

10.30-17.00

Mrs Pretty's Garden Party

Spitfire flypast on Saturday, vintage cars on Sunday, music and entertainment
NT Sutton Hoo

Friday 8 August

Archaeology Day at Sutton Hoo

Run by Faye Minter of Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service. Have your finds identified and meet the Rendlesham detectorists. Sand sieving for children.

Thursday 21 August, 08.00-20.00

Sutton Hoo Society trip to Lyminge

To visit the current excavations of the 7th century hall and settlement and the finds on display in Maidstone Museum, courtesy of the excavator Dr Gabor Thomas, University of Reading.

Provisional timetable:

08.00 Depart Sutton Hoo

10.00 Arrive Maidstone Museum

12.30 Arrive Lyminge for picnic (BYO)

14.00 Lyminge site visit

17.00 Depart Lyminge

20.00 Arrive Sutton Hoo

Tickets £27.50 each (or £30 non-members) from Nan Waterfall, 1 Mill Lane, Marlesford, Woodbridge IP13 0AJ

Saturday 20 September, 09.30-16.30

Sutton Hoo Society Conference

University Campus Suffolk

Waterfront Building, Ipswich

Defining Kingdoms: 6th-10th centuries

Speakers include Dr Noel Adams, Dr Stuart Brookes, Dr Sam Newton, Prof. Neil Price, Dr Sarah Semple, Prof. David Gill and SHS President, Lord Cranbrook.

Tickets £30 each (or £35 non-members) from Lindsay Lee on 01728 746104

Booking closes 30 August



Wuffing Education Study Days

Saturdays, 27 Sept-13 Dec.

(not Nov 15) 10.00-16.00

The Court, NT Sutton Hoo, £36

Anglo-Saxon topics include:

27 Sept Rethinking the Anglo-Saxon Migrations, Prof. Guy Halsall, York University
11 Oct Contact between Britain, Ireland and the Near East, 550-1050, Prof. Michelle Brown, London University

11 Nov Sutton Hoo and the Ostrogoths,

Dr Sam Newton, Independent Scholar

8 Nov Barrows and Barrow Burial 400-700

Steve Pollington and Paul Mortimer

Prior Booking essential: contact Cliff 01394

386498 or www.WuffingEducation.co.uk

Friday 17 – Sunday 19 October

CBA Members' Weekend:

The Archaeology of Suffolk

Includes tours of Sutton Hoo with Martin

Carver, West Stow with Jess Tipper, St

Edmundsbury Cathedral, Moyses Hall

Museum, Troston Church and Grimes Graves.

£295 inc. buffets, but excluding

accommodation. Book online at

www.archaeologyUK.org/cba-events



BBC

The Detectorists

Towards the end of the year, watch out for a new sitcom on BBC4 about two metal detectorists who dream of finding a priceless Saxon hoard. Produced by Channel X and Lola Entertainment, the six-part series is written and directed by Mackenzie Crook (*The Office*). Himself an occasional detectorist, Crook says, "For years British television has been screaming out for an archaeology-based sit-com... hasn't it?" *The Detectorists* has been filming in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex in June and July and as we went to press the crew was seen on location in pubs and shops in Orford, Framlingham and other local towns.

Membership Matters

We are very grateful to all members who have provided their current emails, so that we can contact you quickly and more cheaply. We realise that not everyone has email, and will try to post a day or two earlier than emailing. This year our arrangements for talk/trip fell between two editions of **Saxon** and we have tried to contact you all without incurring unnecessary extra postage. This is very unusual.

We are not at all sure that we have 100% of current addresses, emails and telephone numbers, so PLEASE respond to this plea to send us your email address and any other missing details. My (Membership Secretary's) address is on the back of each **Saxon**, phone 01394 382617, or email paulinemmoore2@hotmail.co.uk (note 2 m's). Our Administrator Nan Waterfall (thesuttonhoosociety@gmail.com) manages the email groups and she joins me in making this plea.

The Lyminge trip should be interesting and enlightening, and apparently the Society's first visit to a live 'dig'. We also hope to see many of you at the Conference in September, which is already 80% booked. Please don't be shy about introducing yourselves at events - it is good to put faces to the names on our lists, and to get to know you.

Pauline Moore

The
Sutton
Hoo
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