



The Unearthing Of Sutton Hoo

The year was 1939. War was breaking out in Europe. However, in one small corner of Suffolk, something very different was going on. An amazing discovery had been made on the estate of Sutton Hoo. A find that would help historians to learn more about the Anglo-Saxons and how they lived.

The dig was started by the owner of the estate, Edith Pretty. She was interested in history. She had visited ancient ruins around the world. Now she was curious about the burial mounds on her property. She employed local archaeologist Basil Brown to investigate.

The team made some impressive finds right from the start. They found iron axe heads, parts of weapons and fragments of pottery. However, the best was yet to come. It was the estate gardener who first found something unusual. It was part of a ship. The team carefully scraped the earth away. They found the imprint of an entire ship. This was surprising. Sutton Hoo was not close to the river. What was a ship doing here?

Edith Pretty called in more experts. They were astounded. The ship was large. It was crammed with precious treasure and artefacts. This had to have been the burial of someone special. After all, only important people were buried in ships. The objects within suggested that this had been a very powerful person too. There was a helmet and weapons for example. They were decorated with exotic gemstones from around the world. This meant that the person had to have been rich too. Was it a king perhaps? Luckily there were coins inside. These helped historians to find out that the burial had taken place in the 7th century. They concluded that this could be the final resting place of King Redwald of East Anglia.

The discoveries at Sutton Hoo are hugely important. They have helped us learn more about the Anglo-Saxons. People used to think that the Anglo-Saxons were a fairly primitive people. They called this period of history 'The Dark Ages'. Sutton Hoo showed that the Anglo-Saxons were skilled craftspeople and artists. It proved that they



traded with the rest of the world. It showed that they had wealthy and powerful leaders. Finally, it showed more about the Anglo-Saxon beliefs. The ship burial was a pagan tradition. However, there were also Christian symbols. This shows how the Anglo-Saxons were beginning to convert to Christianity at this time.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word means small parts or pieces of something?
2. Only an imprint of the ship was found. What does this mean?
3. What could be another word for *astounded*?
4. What is an *artefact*?
5. What word in the last paragraph means changing religion?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

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| R | When was the Sutton Hoo discovered? |
| R | Who first found the boat? |
| I | What evidence is there that Edith Petty and Basil Brush knew this was an important find? |
| R | How did the archeologists find out when the burial happened? |
| S | What made archaeologists think that the burial might be of King Redwald? |