

# Sutton Hoo

In 1939, the grave of an Anglo-Saxon King was discovered in Suffolk, England. The site was first excavated because a woman named Edith Perry became interested in several large mounds or small hills on her land. Edith asked a local archaeologist, Basil Brown, to excavate the site to see if anything interesting was buried there. When Basil excavated the largest mound, he found one of the most important discoveries of the 20th century.

Sutton Hoo is still one of the largest, best-preserved, and most important archaeological sites discovered, as it has told historians much about the craftsmanship, technology, and beliefs of early Anglo-Saxons. Archaeologists found a giant wooden ship buried on the site, a rarity in England, making Sutton Hoo even more remarkable. Although the boat's structure had rotted away, the impression left in the soil showed it was more than 27 metres long. Like the Vikings, the early Anglo-Saxons believed this was the best way for a powerful person to reach the afterlife upon death.

The treasures discovered by archaeologists in the burial chamber at the centre of the vessel included armour, weapons, gold-inlaid jewellery, silver tableware, musical instruments, and gold coins, which helped date the burial to 620 CE. An ornate iron helmet was one of the most iconic and spectacular items found at Sutton Hoo. Unfortunately, the helmet had broken into over 100 pieces, and it had to be carefully reconstructed and restored, which took several years. The early Anglo-Saxons buried important people and kings with these items, as they believed they would equip them with everything they needed for the afterlife.

Interestingly, Sutton Hoo also contained objects that proved the Anglo-Saxons traded with the rest of Europe. The most prominent of these objects was a large silver dish made in Byzantium (now Turkey) in about 500 CE and a set of silver bowls from the Mediterranean.

The burial chamber itself contained no trace of a body, as it had decayed away. However, Sutton Hoo is thought to be the burial site of Rewald, a powerful Saxon king who ruled East Anglia in the late 500s and early 600s CE. Rewald was the first East Anglian king to convert to Christianity - the relics and items found at the site support this, as they feature Christian and pagan items.



# Sutton Hoo Comprehension Questions

1. What was the name of the archaeologist who first excavated Sutton Hoo?  
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2. What large object was buried there?  
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3. Name three items discovered in the burial chamber.  
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4. When was the burial site created?  
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5. Why did the Anglo-Saxons bury the dead with valuable items and weapons?  
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6. Which two items proved the Anglo-Saxons traded with Europe?  
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7. Which king is thought to be buried at Sutton Hoo?  
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8. What is significant about this king?  
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# Sutton Hoo Comprehension Answers

**1. What was the name of the archaeologist who first excavated Sutton Hoo?**

Basil Brown

**2. What large object was buried there?**

A large wooden burial ship.

**3. Name three items discovered in the burial chamber.**

Any of the following - armour, weapons, gold-inlaid jewellery, silver tableware, musical instruments, and gold coins.

**4. When was the burial site created?**

620CE

**5. Why did the Anglo-Saxons bury the dead with valuable items and weapons?**

Because they believed it would provide the deceased with everything they needed for the afterlife.

**6. Which two items proved the Anglo-Saxons traded with Europe?**

A large silver dish made in Byzantium and a set of silver bowls from the Mediterranean.

**7. Which king is thought to be buried at Sutton Hoo?**

Rewald

**8. What is significant about this king?**

He was the first East Anglian king to convert to Christianity.

