



THE SUTTON HOO RESEARCH TRUST

Director of Research Project:
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From the Office of: Sutton Hoo

14 Aug 85

Dear John,

Many thanks for letter of 10 August. It will have crossed with mine containing the minutes and agenda for 4 Sep, to which was attached (for Trust members only), the draft outline for my submission and research design this October. I am still in the process of compiling this dossier, which is intended both as a submission to the Trust for their approval of funding, and as an application to the Secretary of State for Scheduled Monument Consent. I will present my proposals for the area to be excavated and the additional research to be done on 4 Sep. In the meantime the following ideas might be helpful in advance of the meeting.

It was always my intention to use the first three years of the five year project to carry out a site evaluation which would determine the strategy to be followed in a major excavation (see Bulletin No.1). If the strategy is accepted by all parties immediately, then naturally the balance of two years will be put towards the major excavation programme. If there is any delay with SMC, then the major excavation can proceed in the unscheduled part of the sample.

The Anglo-Saxon cemetery is now thought to be 6.9 ha in extent, and to comprise flat graves, cremations, cremations in barrows, inhumations in barrows, and ship-burials in barrows. Assuming an annual budget of £100,000, it is possible to excavate about 2000 m² (0.2 ha) per year. Excavation of the 'whole' Anglo-Saxon cemetery (as advocated by Rupert) would therefore take, on a conservative estimate, 34 years and cost £3.4M. However I do not believe that excavation of the whole cemetery is either desirable or necessary to determine its structure. Our experiments suggest that most current questions would be answered by an excavated sample of 2.3 ha (ie approx. $\frac{1}{3}$) in combination with remote mapping of the rest. Similar considerations suggest a similar solution for the prehistoric settlement. The area I am going to

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propose for excavation contains (at least) 7 barrows (including two new ones discovered this year), three of which are thought to contain boats, and the area of deepest prehistoric stratification. The excavation of barrows would start at the same time as that of the flat zone, and the two would continue in tandem for 8 years. This is the programme that I will ask the Trust and HBMC to consider for commencement on 1 April 1986. I have a map showing the area to be excavated, and the methodology and costing etc are in preparation, but I do not want to release any plans in advance of the text which justifies them. That, I fear, would pre-empt decisions which should only be taken with all the information present.

If neither the Trust nor HBMC wish to support phase 2 of the project, I would use the balance of the five years already promised to complete the remote mapping, the archive and the final report. As you know, I do not personally believe that the main project will be feasible unless HBMC own the site. Peter Rumble and Andrew Saunders visit me on 23 August, so I should have some up-to-date news for the Trust when we meet.

I hope this is helpful. In spite of the weather we have made an excellent start - the site delights in water and the excavators reach saturation long before it does; but thanks for your commiseration. We already have four graves and numerous prehistoric features showing, and will probably extend eastwards to ensure we have located the cemetery's edge. We are carefully monitoring the man-hours required for digging, recording etc, and should be able to produce a pretty accurate estimate of cost-benefit by the season's end.

With all best wishes

George Smith
Maiden