



## NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

### *Artefacts from Aldeburgh Museum on loan to Sutton Hoo.*

Long before Edith Pretty hired Basil Brown to investigate the mysterious mounds of earth on her land at Sutton Hoo another local land owner was excavating in Snape. In 1862 Septimus Davidson together with three other local men, Dr Nicholas Hele, Francis Francis and a 'Mr C', unearthed the Royal Snape Ship Burial on a site which was later crossed by the A1094 just East of Snape. It is thought that this site would have been visible from the sea in the sixth century when trees would have been very sparse. The reason that this find is less well known is that, like so many burial sites, it had been robbed of nearly all its treasures long ago. However its significance should not be overlooked, and among the artefacts that remained was a Saxon Glass Claw Beaker. This very rare find along with other items from the Snape Burial is normally on display in the Aldeburgh Museum. The glass is a bubbly olive-green with wisps of rich brown in the claws. It has been dated to around 550 which implies that the Snape burial is earlier than that at Sutton Hoo. Another significant find was a number of rings that had been made on the continent. Their presence also implies that this was a high status burial site. The most magnificent was a gold signet ring with a Roman onyx gemstone. This was thought to be lost for many years, but Septimus Davidson had kept it for his family, and in 1950 his granddaughter gave it to the British Museum. Aldeburgh Museum has a replica of this ring.

The nine or ten mounds originally on the Snape site may have been robbed centuries ago, but there is an account given in the 1880's by a local man. He recalled how, when he was a boy in 1827, seven or eight gentlemen from London opened several barrows and found quantities of gold rings and broaches, chains etc. These men then moved on to investigate other sites and there is no record of what they did with their finds. We are fortunate that the group who excavated in 1862 published their records, and many of their finds are in the Aldeburgh Museum. The site was dug again in 1950, and from 1985 to 1992.

This year Aldeburgh Museum has lent the glass claw beaker and several other items to Sutton Hoo where the National Trust is mounting a new exhibition in partnership with the British Museum and Norwich Castle Museum entitled 'Life and Death of a Kingdom' which explores the birth, life and death of the Kingdom of East Anglia. The early history of our region was dynamic. It was during the Anglo-Saxon period that it first became known as East Anglia; a prize that many died trying to conquer and defend. It remained the most powerful of all the early English kingdoms until 869AD when its army was defeated and King Edmund killed by Viking invaders. The exhibition traces the often gory history of the kingdom of East Anglia using a wealth of treasures on loan from regional and national museums. The National Trust is hoping that it will generate a great deal of interest and encourage its visitors to consider whether East Anglia still has a true identity.

The Aldeburgh Museum is open from 2.30 to 5.00 at weekends until the end of April. From May to October it will be open daily. Museum staff can be contacted email at [enquiries@aldeburghmuseum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@aldeburghmuseum.org.uk). The web site is [www.aldeburghmuseum.org.uk](http://www.aldeburghmuseum.org.uk).