



Video transcript

What do Anglo-Saxon graves tell us?

The Sutton Hoo treasure...

This is the finest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever dug up in Britain, one of the great treasures of the British Museum.

Just look at it! My legs go weak every time I see it because it is in such excellent condition.

Much of the art that survives from the Dark Ages has been battered by time, but not the Sutton Hoo treasure. In the finest pieces here, there is hardly a gram of gold bent out of place or a garnet missing.

The Sutton Hoo treasure was dug up out of the ground in East Anglia just a few weeks before the start of the Second World War in 1939, so it couldn't be investigated properly until after the war was over, and what a torture that must have been for the waiting archaeologists.

The treasure dates from around AD620 and comes from the grave of an important East Anglian king. The king was buried in a ship, his transport to the next world. And all this was buried with him to serve him in the afterlife.

These bits of sword, here, and the helmets mark him out as a mighty warrior. You wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of this man in heaven!

They found a lyre in his grave as well, so the king could listen to his favourite music in the afterlife. That's a re-creation of it.

He had to eat well so this fabulous cooking cauldron was buried with him. Look at all the intricate Celtic decoration around it.

Most important of all, the people who buried the king made sure that he'd look good in the next world by burying him with his best Anglo-Saxon ruler bling, which is where this gold comes in and those magnificent garnets.

If you have ever seen finer jewellery than this, let me know where, because I want to go there. How did they do it, these Anglo-Saxon wizards?