

## Key facts:

- \* West Stow is the site of an early Anglo-Saxon village, inhabited AD420— 650.
- \* Stow is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'place'
- \* The site has not been disturbed by modern farming, and lay buried by blown sand since Medieval times (c.AD1300)
- \* Extensive excavations took place between 1965 & 1972
- \* The first reconstruction was started in 1973
- \* It is now owned by St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- \* It is unique: the only reconstruction on an original site with the finds on display

## Further Reading on West Stow

**West S.E. (1985)** "WEST STOW The Anglo Saxon Village", vols 1 and 2. East Anglian Archaeology 24.

**Crabtree P.J. (1990)** "WEST STOW: Early Anglo-Saxon Animal Husbandry" E.A.A. 47.

**West S.E.** "Understanding West Stow: a guide to the site".

**West S.E.** "Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk" E.A.A. 84.

**St Edmundsbury Borough Council/West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village Trust** "Village Guide; an introduction to West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village".

**St Edmundsbury Borough Council/West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village Trust (1995)** "THE ANGLO-SAXONS: A resource pack from West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village".

**West S.E.** "West Stow Revisited: 25 years of reconstruction".

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**WEST STOW**  
WEST STOW ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGE TRUST



St Edmundsbury  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



## Costumed work in the Anglo-Saxon Village

A guide for individuals, groups & volunteers  
Updated April 2005

This booklet aims to provide some guidelines for volunteers and costumed groups in the Anglo-Saxon Village.

**Key issues:**

- **SAFETY** Is it safe for you, the public & the village?
- **COSTUME** Is your appearance appropriate?
- **SPEECH** What messages are you giving to visitors?

*It's important you provide the public with up to date info on West Stow, so....*

**Before you begin, it is essential that you:**

**WATCH THE INTRODUCTORY VIDEO  
in the Visitor Centre**

**LOOK AT THE FINDS  
on display in the Anglo-Saxon Centre**

**CONFIRM YOU HAVE READ  
this booklet, & the fire safety instructions,  
by ticking the box in the Arrival Record**

*You may also want to read some of the publications listed on the last page of this booklet.*

*“Understanding West Stow” is particularly useful.*

*Free copies are usually given to groups, so ask your leader. Alternatively, a copy of can be borrowed from reception at the Visitor Centre.*

## FACILITIES AT WEST STOW

**TOILETS & RUNNING WATER IN THE VISITOR CENTRE DURING OPENING HOURS, & IN THE CAR PARK BLOCK AT ALL TIMES**

**USE OF FACILITIES FOR CRAFTS MUST BE AGREED WITH THE MANAGER OR RANGER/EVENTS**

**FIREWOOD IS AVAILABLE BUT STOCKS MAY BE LIMITED. PLEASE ASK WHICH PILES MAY BE USED**

### *Accuracy & authenticity*

*The type of people you portray and the information you give are likely to give visitors their lasting memories of the site. It is important that costume workers do not inadvertently give misleading or inappropriate impressions or information, so we have drawn up the following guidelines for costume work:*

- 1. Honesty is always the best policy and we do not expect you to be an expert on the West Stow site. If you are asked a question and are not confident of the answer please refer it to staff (on site or in the Visitor Centre).*
- 2. West Stow was an ordinary village of Pagan farmers and craftspeople. As far as possible we would like you to portray these ‘ordinary’ people, rather than showing the extremes of society. If an object or item of clothing would have been out of the ordinary or unlikely to have been owned by the inhabitants of West Stow, please emphasise the fact that it is unusual.*
- 3. When communicating with the public we do not expect you to remain rigidly ‘in period’. Some visitors are comfortable with this approach whilst others are not. Feel free to tailor your approach to the individual and refer forward and back in time as necessary.*

## Your Conduct in the Village

- \* Please conduct yourself in a polite and friendly manner towards visitors at all times. It can be difficult for re-enactors to remain 'fresh' for hundreds of visitors per day, and breaking off conversations with the public or with other re-enactors in order to welcome new arrivals can be awkward. Please try to welcome every visitor or group of visitors with a friendly smile and an Anglo-Saxon greeting such as 'waes hael' (good health) or 'eala' (hello), whenever appropriate.
- \* Not all visitors will wish to interact with re-enactors, but they should feel at ease to do so. Please respond positively to their comments and questions so as to encourage interaction.
- \* Should any incident or difficulty arise between yourselves & visitors, it should be reported to staff as soon as possible.
- \* During opening hours, please enter and leave the Village via the Visitor Centre, as other routes may suggest to the public ways of getting in without paying and may damage the perimeter. Please inform staff if any visitors are seen entering or leaving the site by unauthorised routes.
- \* Outside opening hours, groups may use the Village for their own activities, provided these have been agreed with the Manager or Ranger/Events. During these times groups should regard themselves as guardians of this unique site.
- \* Visitors are not allowed in the Village after 5pm, but can stay in the Park until 8pm during Summer months. Please remember that you can still be observed by the public and behave accordingly.
- \* No alcohol is to be consumed on site during opening hours.
- \* Avoid using bad language when the public are present.
- \* No dogs are allowed within the Village perimeter.
- \* Site livestock should not be fed without the permission of the Manager or Ranger/Events.
- \* If you are not sure if a particular activity is appropriate, please ask our advice.

## Working & living in the reconstructed buildings

The buildings are our biggest asset, so we wish to make best use of them whilst ensuring they are kept safe.

Please try to:

- **read & follow our 'Fire Safety Precautions' at all times.**
- **make visitors feel welcome to physically enter the buildings.** Please leave at least 1-2 metres just inside the door clear of items, including floor coverings, and allow plenty of space inside the houses themselves for people to move around. As a guideline, try to leave the entire central area free, whilst using the ends (behind the posts) for replica material.
- **keep activities within each building appropriate to the named function** (e.g. Weaving House, Hall, Living House, Farmer's House, Workshop, Craft Building).
- **call the buildings 'houses'**, instead of 'huts' (as this suggests a very primitive structure). Also, the Hall should not be referred to as a 'longhouse' (as this is a Viking concept), or the Great Hall (as ours is an ordinary hall).
- **leave the Village clean and tidy** on your departure and replace any furniture or objects to the place where you found them.
- **follow basic food hygiene** when eating and drinking in the Village. We regularly control rodent populations, but wooden surfaces may carry hazardous bacteria.
- **store and dispose of food** in a manner that will not attract rodents or other scavengers. Solid waste food should be put in black bin bags and placed in the wheelie bins behind the toilet block. For wet or liquid waste food, please dig a small hole in the area alongside the workshop, into which waste liquids (including washing-up water) can be poured. Please keep the turf, and carefully replace it before your departure, after refilling the hole. Please ask if for clarification on this if required.



## Site Security

*The Visitor Centre is usually locked at 5pm. Access after this time should only be via the black gate in the NE corner of the Village. Please take sensible precautions to ensure the gate is kept shut and locked when not in use & that members of the public are not admitted to the site after hours. Vehicles can be brought onto the site after 5pm, but must be removed again before 10am the following morning.*

*You are responsible for any belongings you bring on to the site. West Stow cannot be responsible for their loss, theft or misuse by members of the public, so please take appropriate precautions. Please ensure any potentially dangerous or particularly valuable items are supervised whenever the public are present.*

### **When you come to the Visitor Centres.....**

Please ensure your visits to the shop, café and toilets are discreet. As a guide, groups of no more than two costume workers should be away from the Village at a time.

We appreciate that re-enactors may wish to visit the shop and this can only be done during public opening hours, but please try to make your visits to the shop and café during our quieter periods. Alternatively, it may be possible to open the shop outside normal hours for a short time so your group can use it. Please ask staff if you would like to arrange this.

The shop has a range of publications on West Stow and the Anglo-Saxon period. Free copies of many of these have been given to costume groups, so please ask your group leaders if a copy is available to borrow. We will be happy to consider giving additional copies/ publications to groups if it is felt they would be particularly useful to the group members. In exchange, we politely ask that re-enactors do not read our shop copies from cover-to-cover!

To brush up on West Stow facts & figures, please feel free to visit the Anglo-Saxon Centre or come to watch the video any day between 9am & 10am. If these are yet to be unlocked/switched on, please ask a member of staff who will be happy to help.

## Keeping the Public Safe

**Please observe these simple guidelines to help keep your re-enactment activities safe for the public.**

Your cooking skills may be exemplary, but do not give food samples to the public, even if they ask for some or say they are willing to accept risks.

Replica weapons & sharp items should never be left unattended. Blunted items can be handled by the public, but only under supervision. When stored they should be out of the public's reach.

Certain areas within the buildings can be made inaccessible to visitors. Dangerous, valuable or fragile items should only be put on display in these areas.

All demonstrations which use fire to heat equipment or liquids should be considered hazardous. These activities should be made inaccessible to the public. Ropes are available to section off areas of the buildings: please ask staff. Fires lit just for warmth (no hot equipment or liquids) must be attended at all times, but do not need to be roped off.

The outdoor campfire area is available for cooking & its use is encouraged. Cooking demonstrations in this area can be easily viewed by visitors from a safe distance. Outdoor cooking also reduces damage/staining to the floorboards of the houses.

Be aware that replica items and floor coverings can be trip hazards and place them carefully & with this in mind.

When the forge and/or large bread oven are in use, visitors should be prevented from entering the craft building by using the planks to close off the area, or by placing a hurdle in the gap created when the planks are removed.