

Sutton Hoo ship burial

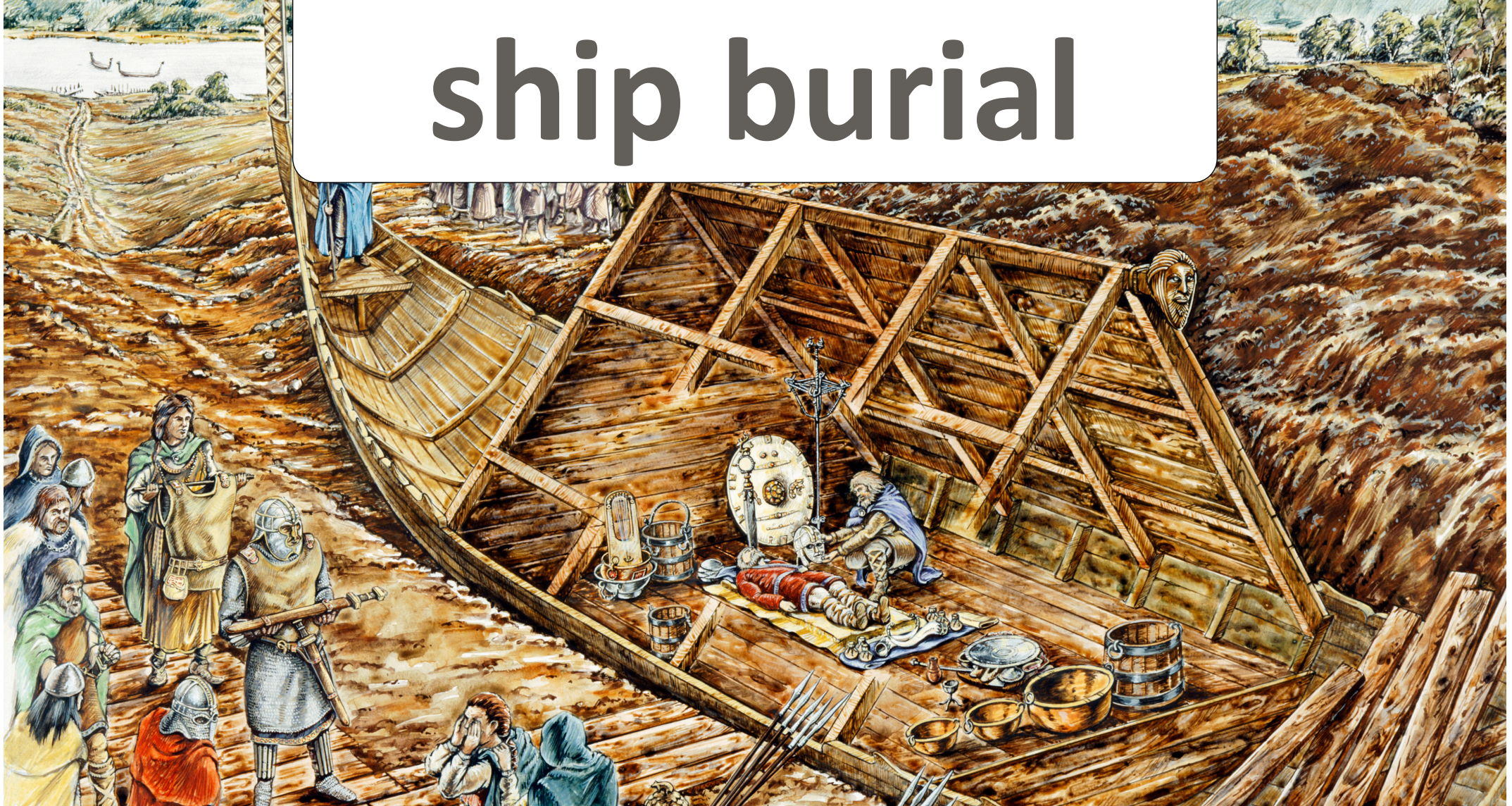
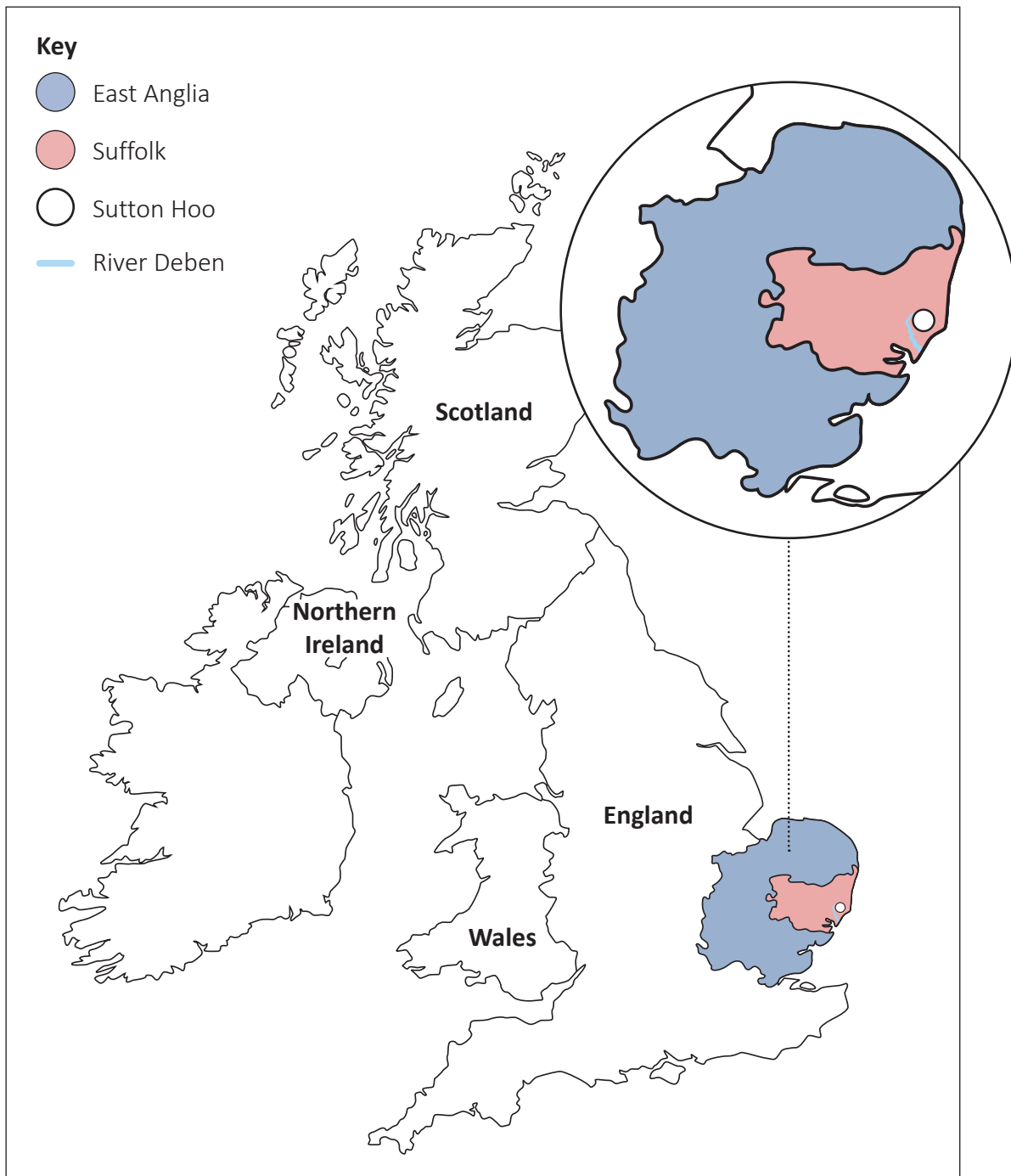


Image from: Getty Images/Heritage Images





Sutton Hoo is a royal Anglo-Saxon burial ground near the River Deben, in Suffolk. Historians believe that it was a cemetery for Anglo-Saxon kings who ruled over East Anglia. The burials date to approximately the seventh century AD.





Barrow at Sutton Hoo

Around 18 burial mounds, called barrows, are within the royal burial ground at Sutton Hoo, but many have eroded over the centuries. Archaeologists believe that, at one time, there were probably more.

Throughout history, robbers stole from most of the mounds, so only two – the **Horseman's Mound** and the **Great Ship Burial**, or **King's Mound** – remained fully intact.



Great Ship Burial, or King's Mound



Image from: The British Museum

In this barrow, archaeologists found the imprint of a decayed wooden ship. It was 27 metres long, with a burial chamber at the centre filled with a range of precious artefacts.

There was no body inside, but soil analyses and a human shaped gap among the treasures provided evidence that there was once a body in the chamber, which had dissolved in the acidic soil.

Imprint left behind in the soil by the ship





The Great Ship Burial is the richest burial ever found in northern Europe. It included weapons, armour, drinking vessels and clothes. There were gold coins from France, silver bowls from the Mediterranean, luxurious textiles from Syria and golden accessories set with Sri Lankan garnets. An iron helmet with a mask shaped like a human face was also discovered.

Reconstruction of the iron helmet found in the Great Ship Burial



These are two examples of the precious grave goods found in the burial chamber of the Great Ship Burial.



Byzantine silver bowls



Shield ornament shaped like an eagle

Image from: Getty Images/Universal History Archive

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The wide range of skilfully made objects, crafted from expensive materials and adorned with precious stones, suggested to archaeologists and historians that the man buried in the Great Ship Burial was not merely a king, but a *bretwalda*, a king of kings.

Artist's impression of the burial at Sutton Hoo

