

my father, who rebuilt the Hall and has added largely to his domains by purchases in the adjoining parishes. . . .’ On a point like the rebuilding of the Hall by his father, we should expect the diarist to be authoritative. In fact, we must either accept it at its absolute face value, or else interpret his word ‘rebuild’ in the sense of ‘remodel’. In the second case, Gage’s statement might be allowed to stand, indicating the precise limits of Mills’ work. From Colvin,¹⁴ we learn that the architect employed by Mills in 1797 for the work on the Hall was Joseph Patience, junior, of Wormwood Street, Bishopsgate, London. His plan was exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1797, as ‘building’ in that year.

Both Gage and the diarist agree that Mills rebuilt the church at his own expense in 1798. Here ‘rebuild’ must certainly be qualified, for medieval porch, doorways and tower survive. The diarist further adds that Mure had spent ‘considerable sums in embellishing the grounds under the great Mr. *Capability* Brown’. These embellishments presumably include the handsome ‘temple’ and characteristic serpentine lake in the grounds.

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When Did King Redwald Die? This question touches the heart of the mystery as to which king was buried beneath the great mound at Sutton Hoo. It is nevertheless a question which has escaped discussion because all writers have been content to assume that Redwald must have been dead when his son Eorpwald came to the throne about 626-628. This is a natural, if over hasty assumption, and has been made from medieval times onwards, but we, who are contemporaries of the living ex-kings of England, Belgium, Egypt, Jordan, etc., may well pause to consider what happened to kings in the seventh century. Did they also lose their thrones at times, and yet preserve their lives?

The answer is very clearly in the affirmative, Redwald’s own step-son Sigbert abdicated in order to enter a monastery. Caedwalla of Wessex (685-688) and his successor Ina (688-725) both gave up their thrones and went off to Rome to die. In France we have amongst others, the example of Dagobert of Austrasia. His retirement was involuntary and he was only a child when it happened. Grimoald had him tonsured and sent off to a monastery in Ireland but, as Levison¹⁵ says, ‘He did not take the life of the young king but chose the more humane method of deposing him *after the fashion of that age*’ (my italics). After many years he came back to his throne.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 446.

¹⁵ Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, 1946, p. 49.

Our records of the seventh century are not so full that we can adduce very numerous instances. Nor can we be quite sure about the exact sequence of events, or of the motives which guided individuals, but it is clear that abdication was not an unusual thing. Christianity was spreading in Western Europe and the murder of Kings was beginning to be regarded as one of those things which ought not to be done.

Although, then, we had no record about the death of King Redwald, we are not obliged to infer that he was dead just because his son came to the throne. He may well have abdicated, or have been deposed, by reason of some failure in bodily or mental health, or because he had ceased to command the confidence of his people.

Having made this point we have next to ask whether there is any sufficient reason for supposing that he did actually survive until the period (say, 640-650) which the evidence of the coins in the purse seems to require. The great and overpowering reason for this supposition is the burial at Sutton Hoo. It is precisely what we should expect if a pagan king of the royal line had lived on, in retirement, into a Christian era. Nor has anyone been able to explain it in any other way. Redwald was a great man, the very greatest of East Anglian kings, but a Christian burial could not be accorded to a notorious pagan. Accordingly, they dragged his great open boat up the hill and buried it in the earth. In it they put all the relics of his greatness, his household goods, his wealth and the silver Christening spoons and other gifts which he had brought back from Kent so long before. No one knows what rites were performed but they built a great mound over the grave and there they said good-bye to paganism for ever. It was probably his nephew, the Christian King Anna (640-654) who ordered this. What else could he do?

I therefore venture to suggest that King Redwald lived on in retirement until the time of King Anna, and that this is by far the most likely and reasonable explanation of the problems of Sutton Hoo.

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