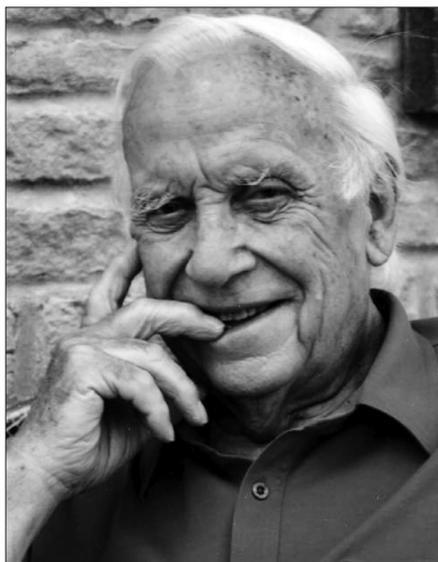


STANLEY WEST, MA, PhD, FSA  
(1930–2024)



'Stanley West, 2014 (photo: Lynn Murray)'.

STANLEY WEST grew up and spent most of his working life in Suffolk. His career in archaeology embodies the story of archaeology in England during the second half of the twentieth century, as it became more structured and professional. Stanley described that career himself in a readable and characteristically forthright memoir published in 2015.<sup>1</sup> He energetically set about improving the dysfunctional institutions he encountered, especially the practice and organisation of archaeology in East Anglia.

Stanley's interest in archaeology began when he was still at school, when he began, in his own words, to haunt Ipswich Museum; it was here that he first met and worked with Basil Brown of Sutton Hoo fame, whom he acknowledged as having had a profound influence on his subsequent career. Together they excavated Roman kilns at West Stow, the site which became the focus of much of Stanley's later work. His first job on leaving school was in Ipswich Museum. While at the Museum, he met an Inspector of Ancient Monuments, J.G. Hurst, and worked with him on the large collection of pottery from the town which led to the identification, naming and publication of Ipswich ware for the first time in 1956.<sup>2</sup> Stanley went as a mature student to Cambridge where he was surprised to discover it was possible to get a degree in archaeology without any direct experience of artefacts — or much fieldwork — and claimed some responsibility for the introduction of a practical examination. While still a student, he excavated two small Ipswich sites: one in 1957–8 in Cox Lane, adjacent to where Ipswich- and Thetford-ware kilns had been found, and the other at Shire Hall Yard, where he sectioned the town defences.

His interests lay in both medieval and Palaeolithic archaeology and after graduating he went abroad, like so many of his contemporaries in the days of Grahame Clark, spending some years as curator of the museum in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. But he returned to Suffolk in 1965

and began the work on the site of an Anglo-Saxon village at West Stow which was, when complete in 1985, to be the substance of his principal contribution to European Archaeology.<sup>3</sup>

Few such sites had been excavated on any scale before West Stow, none to modern standards of excavation, while the numerous examples discovered since always refer back to West Stow. In the late 1960s his excavation methods were up-to-date — modified open area — and his adherence to imperial measurements was still then standard. Stanley developed ideas about the reconstruction of the buildings he had excavated, especially the sunken featured structures so common on Early Saxon settlement sites. Were the pits, their most identifiable feature, the main living space or a sub floor storage space? Stanley favoured the second interpretation which was put to the test at West Stow through the reconstruction of some of the buildings, initially by a group of Cambridge students in 1973–4. There is still debate on this topic, but Stanley was undoubtedly correct to react against the view that the Anglo-Saxons lived in pit dwellings full of their own rubbish. The reconstructed village has become a successful centre for school students and the wider public to come to learn about life in early medieval England.

Stanley's interest in this period also led to his undertaking rescue excavations at Westgarth Gardens, Bury St Edmunds, unearthing mostly inhumations from an Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery in advance of housing development.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequent upon the knowledge gained from West Stow and Stanley's long-standing experience and knowledge of local museum collections, Stanley collated and published *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk*.<sup>5</sup> In recent years Stanley assembled a similar corpus for Norfolk with Andrew Rogerson, but the greatly increased quantity of metal-detected finds has made it more challenging to publish this.

Beyond his interests in the Anglo-Saxon period, Stanley took a particular interest in medieval churches and the light which the structural analysis of their fabric could throw on development and history of the buildings. One example, of which he was justly proud, was the discovery of the Iken cross shaft, a stone built in to the fabric of St Botolph's church.<sup>6</sup> He served on the local Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches for many years.

True to his own early origins as an interested amateur, Stanley was always deeply engaged in encouraging and enabling input from local people — this he developed through the formation (along with John Wymer) of the Suffolk Archaeological Field Group as a branch of the SIAH. He was instrumental in promoting the extensive fieldwalking surveys which took place in the 1980s and 90s, including his own work with Audrey McLaughlin at Walsham le Willows.<sup>7</sup> He met David Dymond through teaching a series of archaeology courses for Cambridge Extra-Mural Studies, organised by David, and the two maintained mutual respect for the other's discipline and shared their approach to working with interested amateurs. Other local historians with whom he worked included Norman Scarfe and Peter Northeast, both initial members of the Scole Committee which Stanley helped to found and thus establish a funding body for the developing County Units in the 1970s. He served on SIAH council in the 1960s and was made a vice-president in 2000. Contributions to archaeological knowledge and the progression of the professional study were acknowledged by election as Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1974.

In the 1970s Stanley was pivotal in setting up the county archaeology units in Norfolk and Suffolk and was director of the Suffolk Archaeological Unit from 1974 to 1991. In Suffolk, the archaeology unit became part of the Planning Department. Stanley will always be remembered as the creator of Suffolk County Council's professional archaeological service. He was sometimes critical of people and institutions, he had a dry sense of humour and occasionally made quiet jokes about past and present colleagues. But he had warmth and integrity as well as a depth of knowledge of the archaeology of East Anglia. He will be missed by many of us.

This Appreciation is based on that framed by Catherine Hills FSA and published in *Salon* earlier this year; this has been supplemented by Stanley's companions at the Suffolk Archaeological Unit: Bob Carr, Edward Martin, Jude Plouviez and Keith Wade.

#### NOTES

- 1 West 2015, 428–38.
- 2 Hurst 1959, 14–19.
- 3 West 1985a and West 1985b.
- 4 West 1988.
- 5 West 1998.
- 6 Scarfe and West 1984.
- 7 McLaughlin and West 1998.

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