

## From Yuletide to Nativity: Christmas in Early England

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**Start date** 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016      **Time** 10.00am – 4.45pm

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Dr Sam Newton      **Course code** 1617NDX011

**Director of Programmes** Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact** Public Programme Co-ordinator, Clare Kerr  
[clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk) or 01223 746237

**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Sam Newton was awarded his Ph.D at UEA in 1991. He published his first book, *The Origins of Beowulf and the pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia* in 1993, and his second, *The Reckoning of King Rædwald: the Story of the King linked to the Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial* followed in 2003. He has lectured widely around the country as an independent scholar and has contributed to many radio and television programmes over the years, especially *Time Team*. He is a tutor for Cambridge University's Institute of Continuing Education, an accredited NADFAS lecturer, and a Director of the Wuffing Education Study-Day Partnership at Sutton Hoo. For more information on him, see his website at [www.wuffings.co.uk](http://www.wuffings.co.uk)

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## Course programme

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9:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/ coffee	
10.00 – 11:15	Session 1	The Old English Calendar
11.15	Coffee	
11:45 – 13:00	Session 2	The Old English Yuletide Feast (1)
13:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:15	Session 3	The Old English Yuletide Feast (2)
15:15	Tea	
15:30 – 16:45	Session 4	What has Wayland to do with Christ?
16:45	Day school ends	

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

This course aims to provide participants with the documentary, artistic, and archaeological sources that enable us to understand

1. the significance of the Yuletide festival;
2. some of the ways in which it was celebrated in Anglo-Saxon England; and
3. some of the ways by which it was transformed into the festival of Nativity.

### Content:

We begin the day with a look at the Old English calendar, which reveals how the pre-Christian year was structured. We shall then consider how this calendar was transformed into the Christian year – how, for example, did *Móðra Niht*, “Mothers’ Night” become Christmas Eve?

We shall also consider some of the ways in which the feast of Yuletide and the legend of the Nativity came to be celebrated in early England, using examples from Anglo-Saxon art, such as the Franks’ Casket, and from Old English and Old Norse literature.

### Presentation of the course:

The course will be illustrated with digital images and with my editions and translations of selected Old English texts for study.

### Outcomes:

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

[a] become acquainted with the primary sources for the period, especially the Old English farming calendar;

[b] recognise the importance of Yuletide in English culture; the battle and its outcome in English history, especially in relation to the events of fifty years later with the coming of the Normans; and

[c] appreciate the usefulness of the comparative approach to the study of the culture of the early English-speaking peoples.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Alexander, M.,	<i>The First Poems in English</i>	Penguin Classics 2008
Branston, B.,	<i>The Lost Gods of England</i>	Thames & Hudson 1957, 1974
Chaney, W.A.,	<i>The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England</i>	Manchester 1970
Ellis Davidson, H.,	<i>The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe</i>	Routledge 1993
Evans, A.,	<i>The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial</i>	British Museum 1986
Sturluson, Snorri.,	<i>Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway</i> , tr. Lee M. Hollander, American-Scandinavian Foundation	Austin, Texas, 1964
Hutton, R.,	<i>The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain</i>	Oxford 1996
Lee, C.,	<i>Feasting the Dead: Food and Drink in Anglo- Saxon Burial Rituals</i>	Woodbridge 2007
Mayr-Harting, H.,	<i>The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England,</i>	Philadelphia 1991
Newton, S.,	<i>The Reckoning of King Rædwald</i>	Redbird 2003
Orchard, A.,	<i>Cassell's Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend</i>	London 1997
Turville-Petre, E.O.G.,	<i>Myth and Religion of the North – The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia</i>	London 1964

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:  
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 11 November 2016