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## Sutton Hoo shipbuilder seeks donations of oak trees felled by storms to help build replica

Master shipwright Tim Kirk said the storms could be a 'silver lining' for the research project which is using traditional methods

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The builders of a modern replica of the [Sutton Hoo ship](#) have called on the public to donate oak trees felled by the recent spate of winter storms.

Tim Kirk, the master shipwright of the Sutton Hoo Ship's Company, told The Sunday

Telegraph that it could be a “silver lining” to storms, which felled numerous ancient trees.

The project is looking exclusively for oak and, in particular, bent and curved branches.



A volunteer makes initial cuts into a garboard plank which is the first off the keel | CREDIT: Jason Bye

“We’ve got enough of the long straight trunks now,” said Mr Kirk, but explained that they were lacking the wood needed to make the 26 frames in the ship, effectively the ribs running perpendicular to the keel.

The widest of the frames will be 14ft wide, meaning that each one has to be made of multiple parts. Each one will also be unique.

“It’s an awful lot of branches from trees,” said Mr Kirk, “and most trees like that, they just get cut up for firewood because the timber yards can’t get rid of them now, they’re not seen as viable timber.

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“One of the least destructive ways, obviously, to gather the timber is to use wind-thrown trees,” he added.







An oak tree felled by storm Eunice | CREDIT: Oliver Dixon

Mr Kirk urged potential donors to send pictures of their timber with a human alongside it for scale to [contact@saxonship.org](mailto:contact@saxonship.org).

[The original Sutton Hoo ship](#), which was 89ft long, [was discovered in 1939](#) and remains one of the most remarkable Anglo-Saxon archaeological discoveries in British history.

The ship had been dragged half a mile inland on the Suffolk coast and used in the burial of a warrior king, probably Rædwald of East Anglia.

The reconstruction project is an experimental archaeology effort led by Prof Martin Carver of the University of York.

### **Taken on sailing expeditions**

The idea is to learn about the challenges ancient shipwrights would have faced by using traditional methods to build the ship.

Once it is complete, probably in 2024, the vessel will then be sent on several sailing expeditions, including up the Thames and Humber rivers.

These, too, should provide archaeologists with information on how the ship would have functioned in the time of Rædwald.

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“We're really going to show how the ship was used,” said Mr Kirk, “There are lots of Saxon sites that we know of, as far as Oxfordshire, and the rivers would be the motorways of the period. And so we're going to go as far as we can up the Thames, although we may have to take her out and put her back in if we get stuck by bridges or something.”

When the ship's sailing life is up the team hopes to perform one final experiment by replicating the way in which it was dragged, likely by hand, inland for the burial. After that, it's likely to end up as a static museum display.

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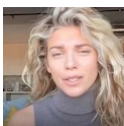
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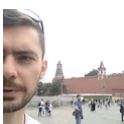
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