

An Anglo-Saxon Warrior is Disinterred

by [Robert Gear](#) (May 2024)



Alfred Inciting the Saxons to Repel the Danes –George Frederic Watts, 1846

Rusty the spears of the legion, unshaven its captain,/ vacant the scholar's brain/ Under his great hat –W. H. Auden. Under Sirius

My remains are stowed in a drawer in a backroom of a museum in Londinium. I sometimes hear the pecking of chickens and the loud calls of a cockerel—an ominous sound. These birds parade around the premises as though they owned the place. I hear their imprecations several times a day followed by the sound of drumming as in a descent of woodpeckers.

I was unearthed in a field in Wessex; my bones almost intact, my spear and sword rusty, my bronze helmet no longer serviceable, flesh recycled into a myriad of creatures great and small. I fell at the 'Spear Din' of Edington in Anno Domini 878. Being a man of means and respect, I was buried along with weapons, ornaments, and a prayer to Saint Cuthbert.

In Anno Domini 2025, a man with a flat hat and a metal detector came my way and picked up a signal. He dug away frantically until he unearthed my grinning skull. That gave him a shock as you can imagine. I couldn't speak of course but my eyeless orbs stared into his startled face. His two eyes almost jumped out of their spheres as your bard said, long, long after my own demise. And please forgive my inaccurate glosses; I lived well before the advent of technologies you take for granted.

Flat-hat searched long and hard hoping to unearth a treasure comparable to the justly famous Staffordshire Hoard (much of which is now housed in Brumagem Museum and Art Gallery in a permanent dedicated room). He failed to uncover the few gold ornaments placed around my battle-scarred remains. Probably his metal detector was of the old low-frequency kind that is, quite frankly, not very reliable.

He did manage to extract a couple of silver rings and a tiny cloisonné fish ornament. I'll miss that one, but it can't be helped since I was just lying supine and my sword was out of reach. As the night and the rain came on, he shoveled the damp soil back over my remains and hurried off.

The morning light broke through and three men were uncovering the loosely packed soil to expose my skeleton. I surmise now that flat-hat had gone to quaff mead in the local public house and had boasted of his discovery while sobriety had failed him.

Their dialect was strange but I understood that they were

looking for any valuables that my discoverer had overlooked. They went away empty handed; grave robbers had retrieved most of the valuables from my burial place about one thousand years before these scavengers were born.

The disgruntled villeins sloped off—back to their quaffing place no doubt. You would think that would be an end of it. And so did I, but I hadn't counted on your world's peculiarities.

Next day came three men, or perhaps three women, wearing macintoshes and wellington boots and looking for all the world like giant attercoppes (what you call 'spiders'). They squelched and poked around my remains and looked deadly serious. Turns out they were bureaucrats from a nearby local council. I knew then that I would probably end up placed in a drawer in some institute of higher learning or some such. And I was, and that is how I learned so much of your times—by listening in on such strange conversations. I'm a fast learner you understand.

But what surprised me is that they spent a long time discussing and then quarreling. About what you may ask? Well, one of the important things in your day and age is the application of the language of grammatical gender to biological facts. This was confusing since as far as I know certain words are considered masculine, some feminine and some neutral. Now apparently there are several hundred variants and rising.

These three almost came to blows about the exact usages of something called 'genderized language.' Who cares? I wished then that I could have reached my weapon and dispatched them as easily as we dispatched invaders from the Great Heathen Army under the Dane Guthrum, long ago. I myself take pride in having smitten Ivar the Clueless with my deft right arm. That was at Eðandun, now renamed Edington. Listening to some over-credentialed fools argue about the wrongs and rights of

pronoun usage was just too much. Are they so woefully frivolous? Do they know the world? Have they fought in battle?

That wasn't the end of it, by any means. Your world impinges on the past and all our traditions in grievous ways.

Soon a small army of fools came marching over the horizon, scampering around like stoats in a wood stack. I heard them as a snake hears the vibrations of country rambles. They removed the tarpaulin and stared down, half of them with a skin color rarely or never seen in these islands until the exceedingly famous Windrush Generation. And the Danes didn't look like that either. When I removed the helmet of Ivar the Clueless, I knew he hadn't been exposed to much sunlight. As you may be aware, lack of Vitamin D had rendered his brain unmanly—hence his moniker.

This crowd of hobgoblins studied my bones and debated whether I was male, female or something called intersex or transex. Yes, weird! I would have thought that my sex was obvious. I am a warrior. Okay, it is true, Cyning Alfred did recruit some maidens to wield battle-axes and to act as shield carriers. But these were few and far between because the majority couldn't pass basic training. Though they were quite good at house cleaning, baking cakes (which, as you may remember, Cyning Alfred was not) and removing the flotsmere from the crocca pot.

Then I listened to an argument among a group of such experts. Some of them had richly dyed hair, metallic face ornaments and woad tattoos; the ensemble being to protect them from enemies and make them appear more ferocious—just like our Pictish neighbors. I prefer the maidens of my own time. The women of Wessex have really declined in beauty and spirit; the men in martial vigor.

I learned some new vocabulary that day. Here are some examples: hermeneutics of intersex, literally, marginalized gender-affirming care, decolonizing farmyards and 'Treasure

Island,' literally systemic racism, polyamorous eco-sexuality, doubleplusungood pronouns, and literally others too numerous to catalog. And what in Bede's name is an N word? Is it something to do with the Climate Pronoun Crisis or Hate Science? I tried to tell them of their foolishness, nay their cowardice, by using my favorite Anglo-Saxon insults—which yet survive. But I couldn't unfreeze the words from my dead and slightly decayed jaw. And anyway, some of them seemed so fragile that my words may have shattered them.

Such malefactors should be subjected to the kind of punishments we used in my day.

What do you think, reader?

I can't tell you how many strange and ignorant serfs visited me before I was carted off to the museum showcase (latterly drawer) in Londinium. An assorted mixture including: Frankfurters, Giant Cockerels, Terf excluders, Fidel Castro's son who came all the way from Canada, and the dark-skinned Scottish First Minister amongst others (all with vacant brains under large hats). By the way, when did the Scots invade Wessex?

As my remains were lifted onto the waiting cart, I did espy in the distance some newly excavated barrow, or perhaps bunker. I thought I caught a glimpse of some lizard-men hiding and slyly peeking out, their long tongues flickering. But I couldn't be sure. And were those chickens and a large cockerel parading around and trying to get a look in? I understood that the chieftain was named 'Mo.' Their language was neither my English nor yours, nor I think from the European mainland—so I guess they were another group of invaders—heretics probably.

I am not afraid though. The madness of your world can no longer harm me.

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Robert Gear is a Contributing Editor to *New English Review* who now lives in the American Southwest. He is a retired English teacher and has co-authored with his wife several texts in the field of ESL. He is the author of [*If In a Wasted Land*](#), a politically incorrect dystopian satire.

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