

# 'The Dig': A charming look at one history-making moment now on Netflix



CHENNAI: The true story of an immense archaeological find in Suffolk, England, is explored through a charming narrative in Australian director Simon Stone's "The Dig," now streaming on Netflix.



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With delightful performances by Carey Mulligan and Ralph Fiennes giving it a touch of old world feel, the film follows a pair's obsession with unknown treasures buried underground, recreating the famous Sutton Hoo excavation of 1939.

Based on a novel written in 2007 by John Preston (whose aunt Margaret Piggott was involved in the excavation), the story unfolds as war with Nazi Germany looms. Mulligan's recently widowed Edith Pretty and Fiennes' Basil Brown, an expert "excavator," focus their undivided attention on the many mounds on her vast property in a bid to find something worthwhile.



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The quiet pipe-smoking Brown, with his Suffolk accent, goes about his work with devotion and diligence, and when representatives from London's British Museum arrive determined to take over the precious find, he along with Pretty stand up to the team's bullying. This not-so-subtle plot works well to reveal the class tensions of pre-war England, with Brown referring to his lack of formal education more than once and Pretty's land-owning status affording her certain sway, even over incredulous museum representatives.





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Not much time is spent on the enormity of the historical find — an Anglo-Saxon ship with a burial chamber full of riches. Instead, “The Dig” takes us on two other journeys. Scholar Stuart Piggott (Ben Chaplin) disappoints his young wife, Margaret (Lily James), and she begins to turn her attention toward Pretty’s fictional cousin, Rory (Johnny Flynn), who is all set to join the RAF. The other story arc concerns Pretty’s young son, Robert (Archie Barnes), who brings a tear to the eye with his realization that his mother is quite unwell. Fortunately, these two tales do not distract from the core plot, but offer rich, emotional additions, and a backdrop to the dig itself.

The immense significance of the Sutton Hoo excavation — which is still on show at the British Museum — and the lovely narrative style make the watch worthwhile.

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