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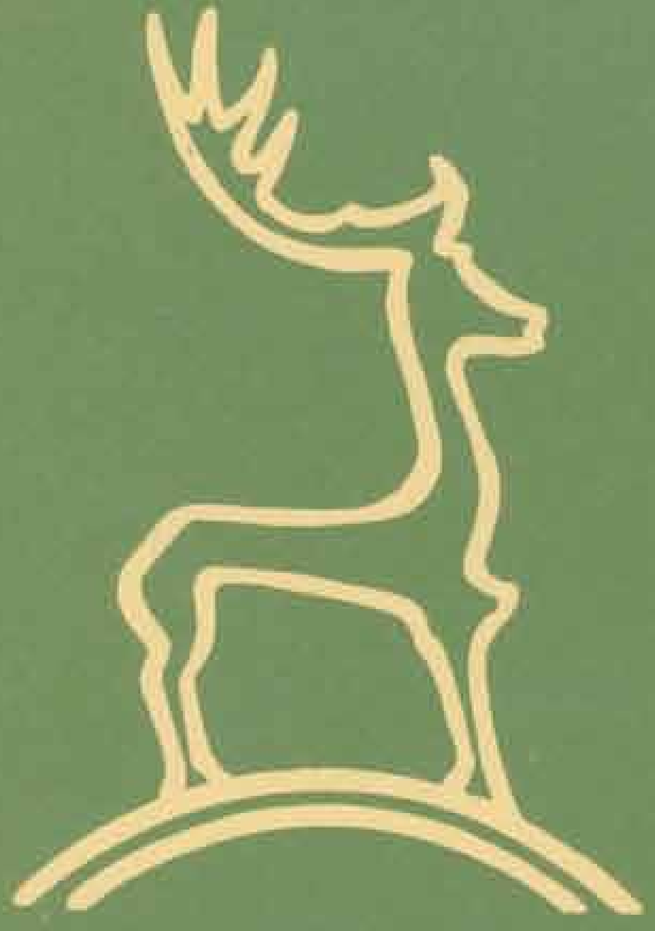
BULLETIN
OF THE
SUTTON HOO
RESEARCH COMMITTEE



No. 7 April 1990

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PREFACE

This *Bulletin* reports the excavations undertaken at Sutton Hoo in 1989, the 50th anniversary of the discovery there of the ship burial that has made the site famous. That was under Mound 1. In 1938 Basil Brown had cut trenches through Mounds 2, 3 and 4. In the present campaign we have completely excavated Mound 2, Mound 5 and Mound 20, and the 1989 season saw the commencement of Mounds 6 and 7. The existence of the badly damaged Mound 18 was also confirmed. As a result we can see that the cemetery has three groups of burial mounds; Mounds 3, 4, 5, 6 and 18 were cremations generally in bronze bowls; Mounds 1 and 2 were ship burials; and Mound 20 was the inhumation of a child.

Two groups of inhumations have also been discovered, one on the eastern edge of the burial ground, and another clustered around Mound 5. These contain examples of executions, presumed ritual. The impression that Sutton Hoo is a special 7th century cemetery reserved for a ruling pagan elite has been greatly strengthened.

The context of Sutton Hoo has also been explored: it can be seen more clearly as the ritual focus of the newly emerging kingdom of East Anglia, whose formation is paralleled by similar polities across the North Sea. These Nordic kingdoms are seen as politically opposed to the new confederation of Roman and Frankish Christianity.

The burial mounds at Sutton Hoo lie above a settlement of the Neolithic, Beaker and Iron Age periods, each phase involving the partition of the landscape with property boundaries.

The present excavation campaign was dedicated to the exposure of a cruciform transect about 1 ha in extent, roughly a quarter of the known cemetery. This work is now 75% complete. In two remaining seasons the excavation of Mounds 6 and 7 will be finished and the remaining area mapped. It is hoped that the results will be brought to publication within 5 years.

Sutton Hoo is a vulnerable site. It has already been badly damaged by medieval and later ploughing, grave-robbing, military manoeuvres, treasure-hunters, rabbits and bracken. It will require a carefully constructed management plan to secure its future.

Martin Carver

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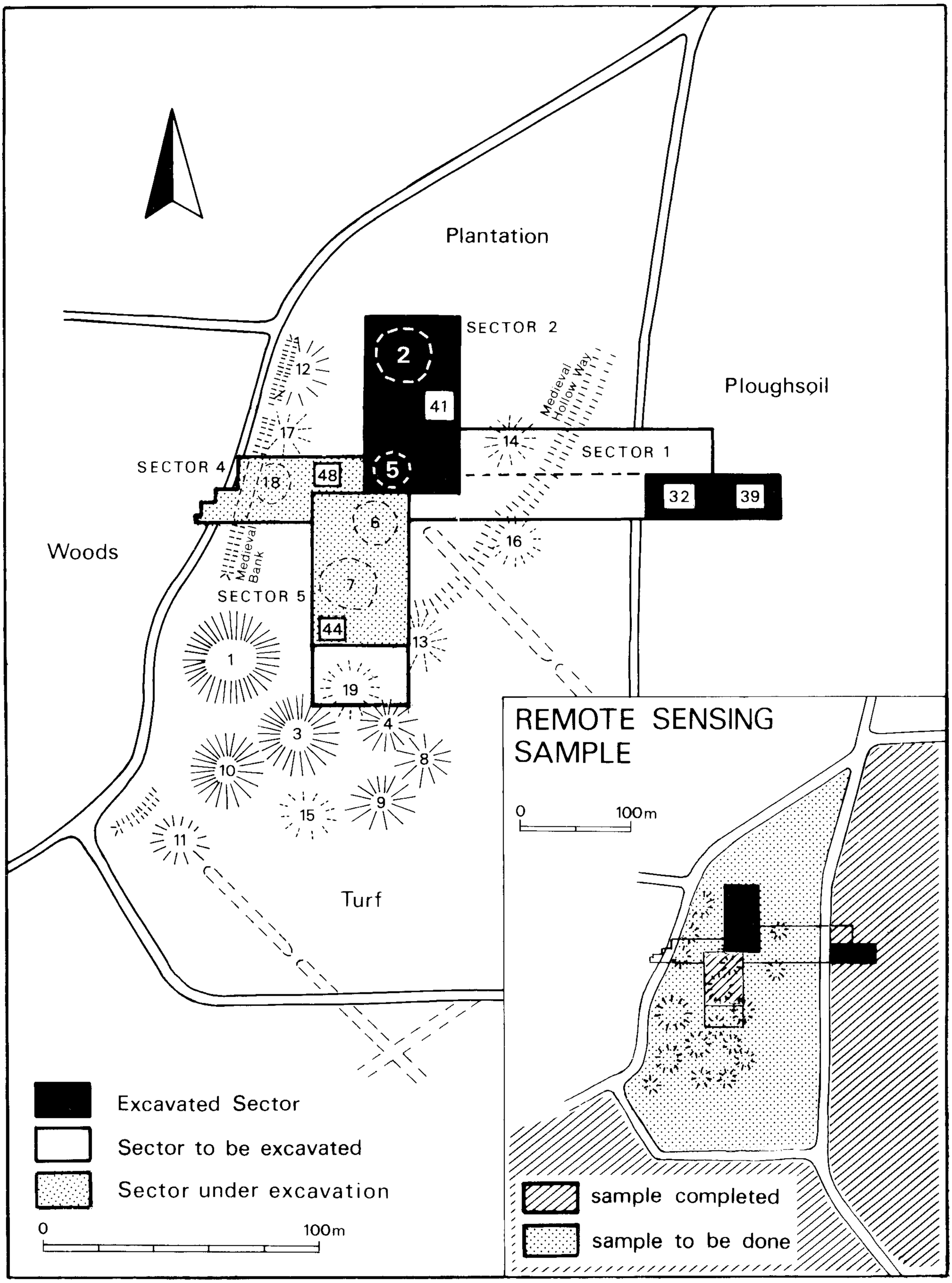

Fig. 1: Sutton Hoo: the excavation and remote sensing sample, 1989 (MacBeth, after Royle).

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TABLE 1: LIST OF INTERVENTIONS TO 1990

INT. NO	AREA	DATE	ORIGINATOR	ACTIVITY
1	(UNKNOWN)	1860	BARRITT	REMOVAL OF MOUND
2	MOUND 3	1938	BROWN	TRENCH
3	MOUND 2	1938	BROWN	TRENCH
4	MOUND 4	1938	BROWN	TRENCH
5	MOUND 1	1939	BROWN & PHILLIPS	TRENCH
6	MOUND 1	1965-67	BRUCE-MITFORD	RE-EXCAVATION
7	MOUND 1	1967-70	ASHBEE	EXCAVATION
8	MOUND 1	1971	CARNEY	TRENCH
9	MOUND 1	1971	CARNEY	TRENCH
10	MOUND 1	1971	CARNEY	TRENCH
11	AREA A	1966	LONGWORTH & KINNES	EXCAVATION
12	AREA C	1970	LONGWORTH & KINNES	EXCAVATION
13	AREA B	1968-69	LONGWORTH & KINNES	EXCAVATION
14	AREA B	1968-69	LONGWORTH & KINNES	EXCAVATION
15	AREA B	1968-69	LONGWORTH & KINNES	EXCAVATION
16	AREA B	1968-69	LONGWORTH & KINNES	EXCAVATION
17	MOUND 11	1982	WEST	ROBBER PIT
18	ZONE A	1983-84	COPP	SURFACE MAPPING
19	ZONES D,E,F	1983-84	COPP & ROYLE	FIELDWALKING
20	ZONE F	1984	CARVER	EXCAVATION
21	ZONE F	1984	CARVER	EXCAVATION
22	ZONE D	1984	CARVER	EXCAVATION
23	ZONE A	1984	CARVER	EXCAVATION
24	ZONE B	1984	CARVER	EXCAVATION
25	ZONE A	1984	CARVER	PREPARATION FOR EXCAVATION (Mound 5)
26	ZONE A	1984-85	CARVER	EXCAVATION (Mound 2)
27	ZONES A-F	1983-84	ROYLE	METAL-DETECTOR
28	ZONES A-F	1984	GORMAN	MAGNETOMETER
29	ZONES A-F	1984	GORMAN	RADAR
30	ZONE A	1983-84	BRUCE, INGRAMS, COOPER	CONTOUR
31	ZONE C	1984	CARVER	EXCAVATION
32	ZONE F	1985	CARVER	EXCAVATION
33	ZONE A	1966	HIPKIN	CONTOUR
34	ZONE A	1980	HIPKIN	CONTOUR
35	ZONE F	1984	BARTLETT	FLUXGATE
36	ZONE F	1985	WALKER	RESISTIVITY
37	ZONES D,F	1985	GURNEY	PHOSPHATE
38	ZONE F	1986	CARVER	EXCAVATION MAPPING
39	ZONE F	1986	CARVER	EXCAVATION
40	ZONE F	1986	CARVER	SIEVING
41	ZONE A	1986	CARVER	EXCAVATION (Mound 2 & 5)
42	ZONE A	1986	ROYLE	CONCRETE GRID
43	ZONE F	1986	BETHELL	SOIL SAMPLES
44	ZONE A	1988	CARVER	EXCAVATION (Mound 6 & 7)
45	ZONES A,D,F	1988	ROYLE/CLARK	MAGNETIC SUSCEPTIBILITY
46	ZONE A	1988	OCEANFIX	RADAR
47	ZONES D,F	1988	YORK UNIV	RESISTIVITY
48	ZONE A	1989	CARVER	EXCAVATION (Mound 18)
49	ZONES D,F	1989	CLARK	RESISTIVITY
50	ZONE A	1990	CARVER	EXCAVATION (Sector 1)

THE REVISED RESEARCH PROGRAMME AND EXCAVATION STRATEGY, 1989-1991

The experience of the first large scale excavation within the scheduled area, completed in 1989 (Sector 2), has prompted a reconsideration and ultimately a revision of the research programme first published in *Bulletin* 4 (Carver 1986). The Anglo-Saxon phases of this excavation revealed the true character of Mound 2 as a ship burial, if an unconventional one (Carver 1989, 4-11) and of Mound 5, as a cremation surrounded by 11 inhumations interpreted as sacrificial (Carver 1989, 7; and see below, p.7). The excavations also brought to light the high status burial of a child originally beneath a mound (Carver 1989, 7), but no other burials or features suspected of belonging to the Anglo-Saxon period. The cemetery thus appears at present as a burial ground reserved for the elite and restricted to the 7th century AD or its bracketing decades.

The seven mounds investigated since 1938, with the exception of Mound 1, have all been previously robbed or excavated, probably in recent centuries; even so, excavation methods in Sector 2 have shown that both the burial-rite and assemblage can still be known, at least in general terms. However, the whole barrow cemetery now appears to have been eroded by ploughing, again in relatively recent times; the upper structure and ultimate use of barrows now appears to be irretrievably out of reach. Mounds cut by extensive robber trenches (as Mound 6, see p.11) may have very little information to offer on their construction. The usefulness of totally removing extant burial mounds is therefore now in doubt.

The flat graves in all zones contain sand-bodies which are individually, if not eccentrically, disposed in the graves, but without grave goods. An updated evaluation therefore presents the Sutton Hoo cemetery not as a densely used folk-cemetery (Carver 1986, 45) but as a group of diverse rituals widely spread in space and restricted in time. This makes the site both richer in historical incident and harder to sample.

Matching this new perception of the character of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery to the research objectives, suggests that the projected sample is still the smallest which could give an indication of the overall geography (and thus use) of the cemetery. To chronicle the major changes in funerary practice requires not only the excavation of Sector 1, but also the interrelation of the mounds so far investigated. The projected sample almost achieves this interrelationship, since Mounds 2, 5, 18, 14, 6 and 7 have been or will be connected by contiguous interventions. However there is a risk that the newly observed practice of satellite burials (as Mound 5) will remain undetected for Mounds 6 and 7, and for Mounds 3 and 4 (where only the centre of the mounds have been investigated). The adjustment to the sample area that should, in consequence, be made is the inclusion of additional excavated space east of Mound 6 and south of Mound 7, including Mound 19 and extending as far south as Mounds 3 and 4. On the other hand the excavation of both Mounds 17 and 18 would give a measure of redundancy, and so one can be omitted. The revised sample (given in fig. 1) will provide a continuous chain of investigated mounds (1, 3, 4, 19, 7, 6, 18, 5, 2, 14) together with their surrounding aprons, where the presence of quarry ditches and satellite burials can be tested.

The *Prehistoric* phases of the site as seen in Sector 2, have suggested a still more radical revision to the excavation strategy. As was demonstrated in *Bulletin* 6 (Carver 1989, 15), the prehistoric repertoire is confined to pits, ditches, postholes and hearths, with an assemblage restricted to flint, pottery, pollen and plant macrofossils. It was also demonstrated that the structural elements (chiefly postholes) are inadequately represented outside the buried-soil platforms under mounds; here Anglo-Saxon quarrying and subsequent ploughing have partially erased comprehensible prehistoric structures (Carver 1989, 25). Analysis of surface finds from INT 41 further indicated that the superficial distribution of artefacts relates at least in quantity to post-depositional events (such as quarrying and ploughing) rather than to prehistoric activity (see below p.23). Useful diagnostic assemblages, often primary, are recovered from pits, ditches and hearths rather than postholes, and it is usually possible to locate these assemblages before excavation.

Remote mapping work in Zones A, D and F (Carver 1989, fig. 8; and Archive) has shown that major prehistoric boundaries can be mapped effectively without excavation, and it is the overall geography of these boundaries and their sequence which is going to throw most light on prehistoric land use. The available attributes of the prehistoric site therefore can very often be retrieved without total excavation, either by means of remote sensing outside the excavation sample or by horizon mapping within it. Finds recovery from the topsoil can be effectively achieved at a coarse level, where spatial distribution of a sample collected on the surface will have much the same significance as a high level of recovery in depth and area. Features mapped within the excavation area can then be excavated selectively, matching intricate chronological, spatial and structural questions to expected yield (see below, p.13, p.16).

The strategy for the *environmental* investigation has also been revised. Continuous evaluation makes it clear that only three sources of scientific data are available, namely soil structure, soil pollen and plant macrofossils. With the assistance of newly-appointed specialists, the sampling programme (see p.23 below) has been tightened and concentrated on research objectives within reach: the vegetation sequence, prehistoric to modern (from pollen analysis of extant surfaces, through buried-soils to natural deposits); mound structure, quarry ditch, boundary ditch and grave fill sequences (from micromorphology), and plant economy in the prehistoric period (from macrofossils).

The excavation and removal of Mound 7 provides a possible area of conflict between the Anglo-Saxon, prehistoric and environmental strategies. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon programme suggests the mound itself need not be removed, the prehistoric programme requires mapping of horizon 7 (beneath the buried-soil) where structures are most likely to have survived. The environmental programme requires a continuous column through mound and buried-soil. An attempt to reconcile these objectives will be made during 1990.

The reconsideration of methods and priorities within the field programme also included a critique of our use of *manpower*. There is little doubt that the initial sampling design for INT 41 could not have been successfully executed on schedule without continuous excavation throughout the year and the participation of a Manpower Services Team. However, the character of the Anglo-Saxon burials and of certain prehistoric features which are now to be targetted demand the full personal engagement of the professional team and its back-up, during intensive periods on site. The new strategy therefore requires a seasonal routine, and this took effect from July 1989. As a result of the revised rhythm of work, a fully structured post-excavation programme lasting nine months a year could be initiated (see below, p.26).

In *summary* therefore, the field programme at Sutton Hoo has been modified and shortened. The area now being excavated is as shown in fig. 1. Mound 19 is included in the sample, which extends to the fringes of Mounds 3 and 4, and Mound 17 is excluded. Sector 4 is narrower and has been moved south to omit Mound 17 and half of INT 11 (excavated by Longworth and Kinnes in 1966, 1968) and to align with Sector 1. Within the sample, all early medieval burials and features disturbing them, whether in mounds or not, will be fully excavated and recorded to the highest precision of which we are capable. All prehistoric features located at horizon 2 will be mapped but only a selected sample will be excavated. Finds from the surface (i.e. above horizon 2) will be mapped at recovery level A, using surface collection and metal detection. Environmental sampling will concentrate on soil pollen, soil structures and plant macrofossils. The remote mapping of the whole of Zone A and peripheral zones will be completed by resistivity, and the boundary systems investigated by limited excavation (in the fields) where appropriate.

The revised programme limits the remaining fieldwork to two 3-month seasons (July to September) in 1990 and 1991. The field project is therefore still due for completion in 1992, but by this time the post-excavation analysis should be 18 months ahead of the original schedule. This should allow publication of the final report on the early medieval site in 1993-5, and on the prehistoric sequence in 1995-7.

CHANGES IN PROJECT STAFF

Although not decisive, changes in the availability of staff and manpower were influential in creating the revised programme. The Manpower Services Scheme came to an end nationwide in 1988, making large-scale clearance by hand less feasible, had the study demanded it. We said goodbye to MSC Supervisors Hester Cooper-Reade and Klara Spandl, to our Finds Assistant Kathryn Dowse, and to Helen Atkinson, who participated in the environmental programme. The Leverhulme Project on Decay and Detection on Archaeological Sites, was successfully completed under its persistent supervisor, Phil Bethell; and so was the first leg of the East Anglian Kingdom survey, by John Newman. The Sutton Hoo project owes a great deal to all these colleagues for their advice, ideas, interest and hard work under often harsh and frustrating conditions.

But the team's greatest loss in 1989 was Catherine Royle, who has worked unstintingly and tirelessly for the project almost from its beginning. Many of the initial evaluation exercises were under her supervision, and she subsequently took responsibility for the remote sensing programme, for site survey, for finds management and post-excavation. She contributed logic, persistence and high standards, all of which will serve well her new career in the legal profession, as they have served us.

To the team we welcome Dr Madeleine Hummler, graduate of Bâle, Birmingham and Oxford, who assumes responsibility for the interpretation of the prehistoric site while retaining her successful role as Training Supervisor. We also welcome Linda Peacock, graduate of York, who becomes Finds Supervisor; and the specialists Dr Rob Scaife and Dr Charles French, who are to carry the environmental programme to completion.

Martin Carver

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EXCAVATIONS IN SECTOR 2 (INT 41)

The excavation of Sector 2 was completed by its supervisor (Andrew Copp) in the winter of 1988. No major changes or additions were made to the prehistoric plan (see Carver 1989, fig. 7), but the excavator was able to add some important information on Mound 5 and its associated graves (see Carver 1989, fig. 2 for the interim plan).

The final plan is shown here as fig. 2. The mound area is now ringed by 11 pits or pit-chains to the N, E and W which are identified as quarry pits for the construction of Mound 5. To the east and south, the mound was also ringed by 14 graves. 11 contained human remains, while a further three oblong features without human remains may have been unused grave pits. A number of possible cremations, the majority unurned, were recovered from beneath the buried-soil of Mound 5 and Mound 2, or incorporated (not in situ) in mound make-up. None of these cremations is stratigraphically consistent with an Anglo-Saxon date.

The inhumations are disposed radially or tangentially to Mound 5. Those discovered early in 1989 are numbered F486 and F435, the latter containing only part of a single human limb. An inventory of all the graves is given in summary in table 2, and the Mound 5 group (group 2) is the subject of a recently completed archive report by Andrew Copp. As can be seen from table 2, four bodies offered indications of death by hanging or decapitation, the most graphic example being F517, where a 'collar' of organic material survived around the neck, strongly suggesting a rope. This material has been sent for microanalysis. Three other graves contained detached human limbs, and one of these (F86) contained two bodies lying entangled.

The most crucial aspect of all this ritual behaviour is the relationship between the four graves F82, 424, 435, and 517, and the pits with which they were spatially coincident. It must be explained that the distinctions, at Sutton Hoo, between pits, graves, even bodies and the natural deposits, are dependent on slight and subtle variations in the discoloured sand. The most meticulous excavation in perfect conditions is not always sufficient to establish the stratigraphic geometry beyond doubt, and experiments with micromorphology are in progress (see above).

The relationship between the pits and the graves was especially problematic. The pits themselves would have been rather larger, at the Anglo-Saxon horizon, than as shown on the plan. The graves are placed more or less centrally to the pits, and all four graves were cut to a lower level than the average. Although none showed in the upper pit fills, in two cases (F82, 517), the graves had certainly cut pit fills lower down. In the case of F517, the grave had disturbed a group of previously deposited animal bones within the pit F129, and incorporated some of them within the grave fill. These bones included cattle and horse molars (O'Connor, pers. comm.).

On balance therefore, and as an interim statement, all the graves can be said to have been ritual deposits made in direct association with a pre-existing Mound 5. A deposit of animal remains, placed in a quarry pit, was subsequently disturbed by one of four graves in an 'outer circle' dug into partially silted quarry pits. Therefore these sacrificial graves, while not necessarily exactly contemporary with the Mound 5 burial, or with each other, were probably all made within a few years of the mound's construction.

Martin Carver and Andrew Copp

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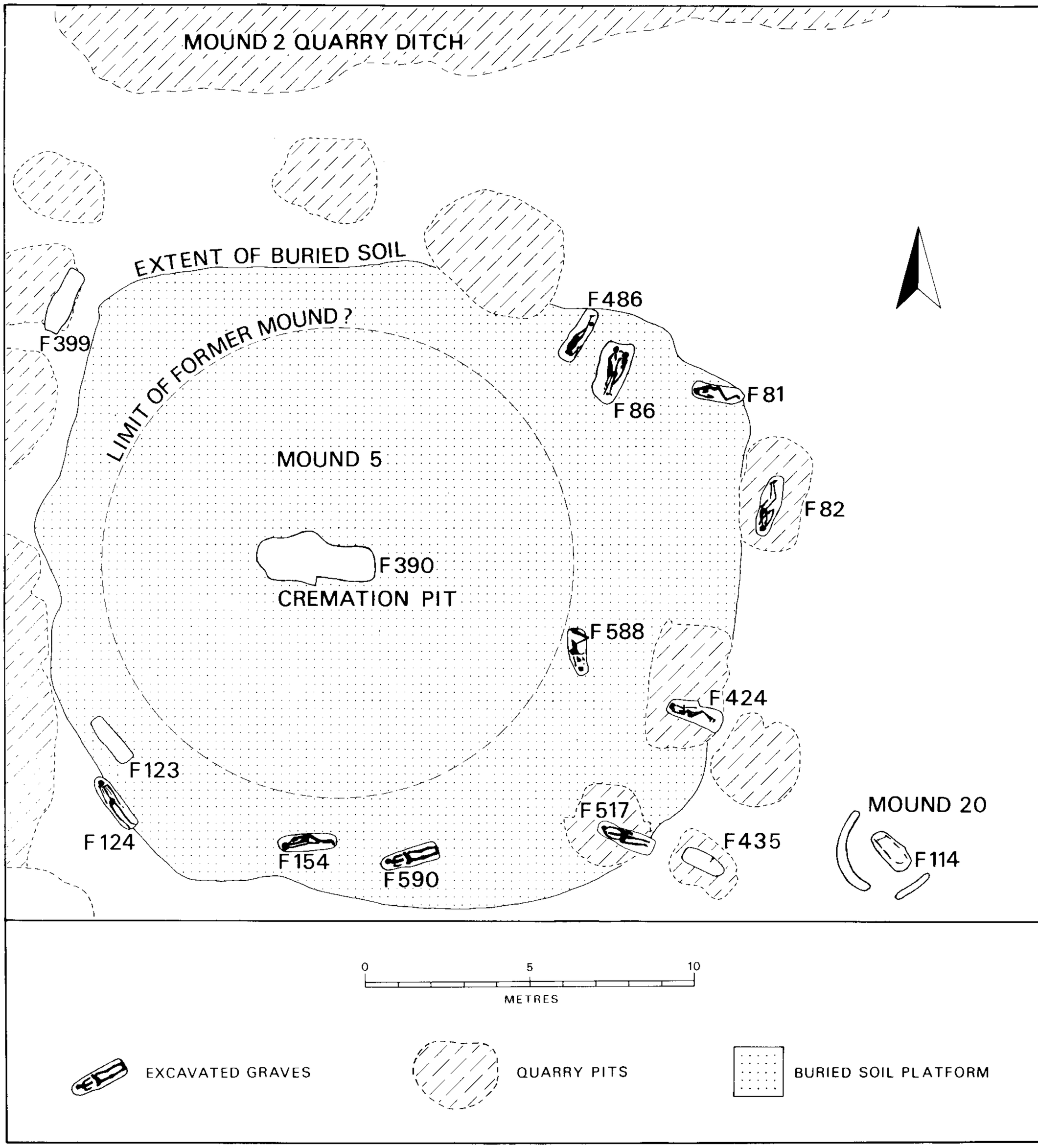

Fig. 2: Intervention 41: Burials around Mound 5 (MacBeth, after Royle).

TABLE 2: INVENTORY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL BURIALS, as at September 1989

MOUNDS, UNEXCAVATED

Mound 8, 9, 10 (robbed?), 11 (robbed?), 12, 13, 14 (to be excavated), 15, 16, 17, 19.

MOUNDS, EXCAVATED

MOUND 1: INHUMATION W-E in chamber in ship; with sword, shield, helmet, regalia, horns, buckets, cauldron etc.
INTACT Excavated 1939, 1965-71 (INT 5-10). DATED: c 625 AD (grave goods).

MOUND 2: INHUMATION W-E in chamber below ship; originally with sword, shield, belt buckle (?), silver buckle, horns, tub (?), bucket (?), cauldron (?), bronze bowl, blue glass jar, silver-mounted box, silver-mounted cup, 5 knives, textile, iron fragments.
Excavated and ROBBED 1860(?) (INT 1) Excavated 1938 (INT 3) DATED: late 6th-early 7th C (grave goods).
Excavated 1984, 86-89 (INT 26, 41).

MOUND 3: CREMATION on oak 'tray' or dugout boat; with limestone plaque, bone facings, bronze ewer-lid, francisca, comb, textile, pottery, horse (cremated). DATED: late 6th-early 7th C (grave goods).
ROBBED (19th C?) Excavated 1938 (INT 2).

MOUND 4: CREMATION in bronze bowl, with playing piece, textile, horse (cremated). DATED: late 6th-early 7th C (grave goods).
ROBBED (19th C?) Excavated 1938 (INT 4).

MOUND 5: CREMATION in bronze bowl; with composite gaming pieces, iron shears, silver-mounted cup, comb, knife in sheath, ivory fragment, glass fragments, textiles, dog? (cremated). DATED: late 6th-early 7th C (grave goods).
ROBBED, twice Excavated 1970, 1988 (INT 12, 41).

MOUND 6: CREMATION wrapped in cloth in bronze bowl; with copper alloy sword-pyramid. DATED: late 6th-early 7th C (grave goods).
Excavated and ROBBED (19th C?) Under excavation 1989 (INT 44).

MOUND 7: Reticella bead. DATED: late 6th-early 7th C.
ROBBED (19th C?) Under excavation 1989 (INT 44).

MOUND 18: CREMATION originally in bronze bowl, with textile fragments and (cremated) comb. DATED: Anglo-Saxon (comb).
PLOUGHED AWAY Excavated 1966, 1989 (INT 11, 48).

MOUND 20: (F114) INHUMATION W-E in oak coffin. 4-8 year old child, with iron spearhead, bronze belt-buckle and bronze pin.
INTACT Excavated 1987 (INT 41). DATED: Anglo-Saxon (grave goods).

BURIALS NOT UNDER MOUNDS

CREMATIONS

INT 11 (Aiii)	Un-urned cremation.	UNDATED: Bronze Age?
INT 11 (Aiv)	Cremation in pot. Young male.	DATED: 6-7th C AD (?)

INHUMATIONS

Group 1: In INT 32, eastern periphery of cemetery.

F9 (254) N-S	flexed, on back	DATED: 620±80 ad (C 14)
F39 (101, 245, 246) W-E	extended, on back, in coffin	
*F40 (102, 247) E-W	extended, prone, with hands tied behind back (?)	
F106 (248, 249) NW-SE	extended, on back, in coffin/tree-trunk with animal joint, under cairn	
*F108 (251) W-E	extended, on back: no head	
F109 (252) W-E	extended, on back; above F108, with head of F108	DATED: 750±70 ad (C 14)
*F137/1 E-W	extended, on back, with broken neck	
*F137/2	crouched, beneath F137/1	
*F146 (258) SE-NW	extended, prone, with wrists and ankles tied (?)	
F154 (259) W-E	extended, on back, over F146	
*F161 (260, 261) W-E	in 'ploughing' position, with 'plough' and rod	
*F163 (262) W-E	kneeling, top of head missing	
*F166 (263) W-E	extended on back, hands tied (?) and stretched above head	
F173 (264) W-E	extended on back, wrist over wrist	
F180	empty	
F226	empty	
F231 (237) W-E	extended	
*F227/1 (238) W-E	extended, prone	
*F227/2 (239) W-E	extended, prone, with F227/1	
F235 (240) W-E	flexed, in square coffin (chest?)	

Tally: 18 graves; 2 empty, 18 bodies, of which 10 show evidence for ritual trauma.

Group 2: In INT 41, associated with Mound 5.

F54 N-S	empty	
*F81 (152) W-E	flexed on side in 'sleeping' posture, head detached and turned upwards through 180°	
*F82 (507, 509, 510) S-N	flexed on side; with additional human limbs [cuts quarry pit F508]	
*F86/1 (148) N-S	extended on back, head detached, lying with neck up	
*F86/2 (149) N-S	extended, prone on top of 148, with additional human limbs.	DATED: late 6th-7th C (associated with Mound 5)
F123 NW-SE	empty	
F124 (542) NW-SE	extended, on back	
F154 (55) W-E	prone [= INT 12, Grave 3]	
F399	empty	
F424 (499) NW-SE	flexed, on side [This grave cuts quarry pit F130]	DATED: late 6th-7th C (associated with Mound 5)
*F435	body piece (part of long bone?) only [This grave cuts quarry pit F133]	DATED: late 6th-7th C (associated with Mound 5)
*F486 (555) S-N	slightly flexed, on side, head detached and placed by foot	
*F517 (524, 525) NW-SE	extended, on back, head wrenched (hung?), with organic collar (rope?) around neck [This grave cuts quarry pit F129, containing animal remains]	DATED: late 6th-7th C (associated with Mound 5)
F588 (INT 12, Grave 1) S-N	flexed, on side	
F590 (INT 12, Grave 2) W-E	extended, on back	

Tally: 14 graves; 3 empty, 12 bodies, of which 7 show evidence for ritual trauma.

Group 3: West.

*INT 11, Pit 1 E-W	skull only, detached, facing foot end; with glass bead and bronze fitting.	DATED: 746±80 AD (C 14)

* These graves show some evidence for ritual trauma.

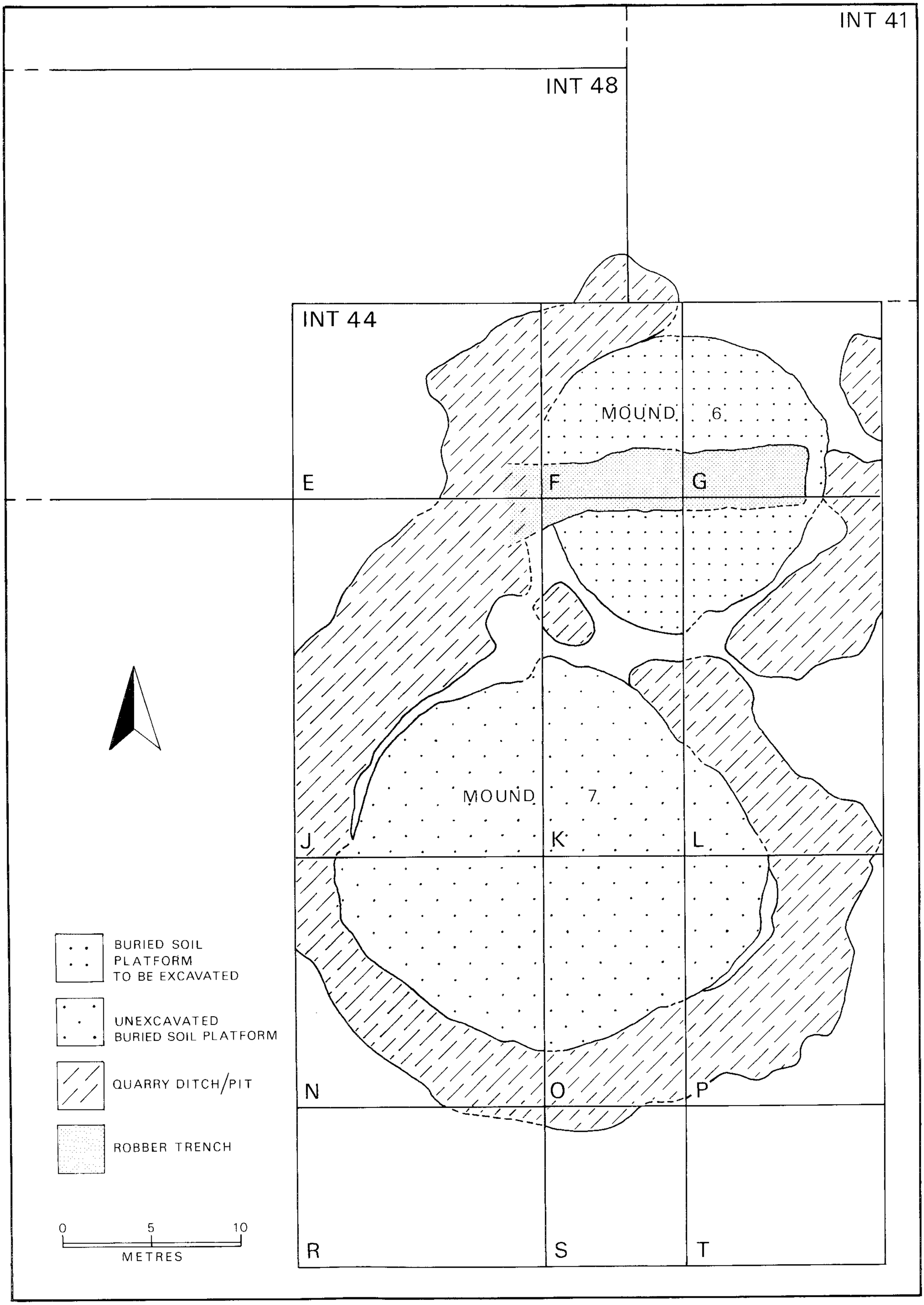

Fig. 3: Intervention 44: Work in progress on Mounds 6 and 7 (MacBeth).

EXCAVATIONS IN SECTOR 5 (INT 44)

The objectives for excavation in Sector 5 included most notably the stratigraphic relationship between Mounds 6 and 7 which dominate the sector. Previous experience in Sector 2 had suggested that both plan and section would be essential since neither could be uniquely relied upon to reveal stratigraphic interfaces. A system of quadrants was accordingly laid out over the mounds (fig. 3), and the deposits removed in horizons as in Sector 2.

The turf was cut mechanically in March 1988 and horizon 2 (the first level of feature definition) achieved during the summer of 1989. All strata to this depth (c 0.35m) had been scrambled by bracken roots and rabbits but an earlier ploughing (19th century or earlier) is now strongly suspected. Consequent on changes to the general strategy (see above), it was decided to excavate Mound 6 before Mound 7 (cf Carver 1989a, 1) to ensure completion during the summer season. The work completed in 1989 included the excavation of the quarries for Mounds 6 and 7, the dissection of Mound 6, and the initial excavation of the Mound 6 burial and its robber trench.

The *quarry ditches* followed the pattern discerned in INT 41. They were irregular scoops ranging in depth from 0.3 to 0.8m as found, and originally cut from an Anglo-Saxon ground-level some 0.35m higher. The quarry ditches were disposed in a manner which allowed no precedence between Mounds 6 and 7 to be clearly read. There was no quarry ditch between the mounds or north of Mound 6, leaving the curious but credible impression that Mounds 7, 6 and indeed 5 were constructed at the same time. Where quarry ditches touched, as on the west side, strenuous efforts were made to distinguish the precedence of cutting or filling between the quarries associated (in plan) with Mound 7 and 6, and Mound 6 and 5. In general, where a contrast was seen, (and it was of the slightest), the more northerly quarry fills followed the more southerly, and the axis of growth would therefore be towards the north. However, it is clear that even so these quarries must be very close in time. No filled pit was cut by another; all must have lain open and received an accumulation of rain-washed or wind-blown sand together. The internal geometry of the pit-chains is consistent with quarrying by small groups of individuals, working simultaneously.

It was clear that whereas the superficial topography had suggested that Mounds 6 and 7 touched, this contact was in the event provided only by merging erosion products. As with the quarry ditches, the balance is in favour of neither mound having precedence over the other and both being constructed as part of the same ceremonial event.

The construction of Mound 6 was consistent with a ploughsoil and a sand and gravel subsoil being dug out of the quarries and thrown up onto the reserved buried-soil platform in an unstructured if not completely random manner. The basic sequence offered was sandy loam (from the Anglo-Saxon topsoil) at the base of the mound, with sand, flint cobbles and lumps of bedded sandy-aggregate (typical of the natural subsoil) at the top. Stone 'rolls' discerned in both plan and section show the angle of rest on completion of quarrying, and suggest a height of 1.6m for the mound. The mound may then have been finished with a capping of topsoil, as is suggested by the 0.35m of ploughed, scrambled but relatively unsandy earth found lying on the summit and flanks. However, since it is now believed that the whole of the Sutton Hoo barrow cemetery has been extensively ploughed, the final appearance of recently constructed mounds remains in doubt. Calculations of soil volumes from quarries and top layer are being undertaken to determine whether the mounds at the north end were indeed capped with topsoil, or left as yellow sandy heaps after construction.

THE MOUND 6 BURIAL AND ITS PREVIOUS DISTURBANCE

A trench some 3.5m wide and 16m long had been cut across Mound 6 from east to west. The trench had nearly vertical sides and had cut the already filled quarry ditch on the west side. It was therefore a relatively recent event, most likely to post-date the lowering of the mound by ploughing. The trench occupied over a third of the extant mound, and splayed out to the west, while to the east was a shelf-like step about half-way down. This trench was the result of an organised excavation on a large scale, and seems to be an antiquarian investigation rather than a clandestine robbing.

The burial itself has yet to be defined, but its disturbed remains have been encountered within the robber trench backfill and spoil: 232 fragments of cremated bone, 50 fragments of bronze bowl, 3 fragments of decorated bone; and many fragments of textile, some associated with the bronze fragments and others lying free. A copper alloy sword-pyramid was also recovered from the shoulder of Mound 6 above horizon 2 (Carver 1989b, 1). These objects probably derived from a primary cremation wrapped in a cloth and placed in a bronze bowl, and in this they resemble those defined for Mounds 4 and 5.

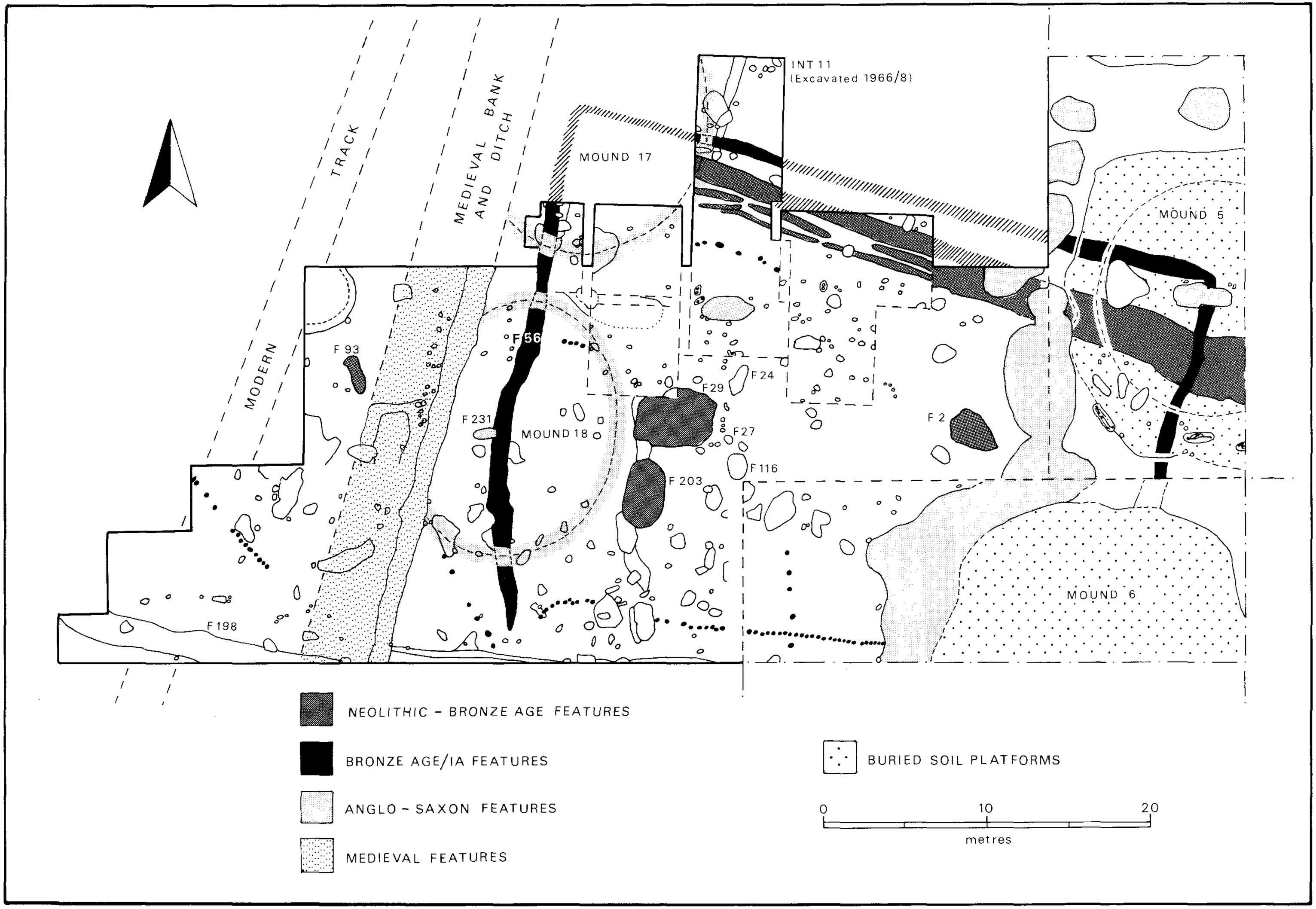

Fig. 4: Intervention 48: Mound 18 and prehistoric features (MacBeth).

In the 1990 season it is hoped to complete the definition of the original grave tableau and its subsequent disturbance.

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EXCAVATIONS IN SECTOR 4 (INT 48)

STRATEGY

'Sector 4' is the western arm of the excavation sample (fig. 1), and originally embraced the two much reduced mounds (17 and 18) which were located during the site evaluation (Carver 1989, fig. 1) as well as a length of bank bordering the mounds to the west and dated to the middle ages (Bruce-Mitford 1975, 146-8). The northern part of the sector included 'Area A' (INT 11), excavated by the British Museum team in 1966 and 1968-70 (Longworth and Kinnes 1980). INT 11 contained a major ditch system and other features of prehistoric date, as well as a pit containing an Anglo-Saxon glass bead, a bronze fragment of 7th century date and a skull radio-carbon dated to c. 750 AD (Longworth and Kinnes 1980, 11). There were also two cremations (urned and unurned) thought to be Anglo-Saxon in date. The expectation was therefore that Sector 4 would considerably amplify the prehistoric, Anglo-Saxon and medieval geography of the site, and in particular that it would contain the earliest Anglo-Saxon burial activity.

The state of survival of all periods was predicted to be poor, both from the evidence of the earlier excavations and from our experience in Sector 2. Definition of features above horizon 2 was improbable, owing to the turbulence of the upper 0.3m of topsoil and turf, caused by bracken, rabbits and, possibly, earlier cultivation. The recovery of finds from these upper levels was also re-evaluated (see below p.25) and as a result it was decided to strip the turf by machine, plough the topsoil and use surface collection and metal-detection to provide the distribution of disturbed material.

A re-evaluation of the prehistoric yield had also suggested that the most crucial information would be provided by the mapping of features, and that subsequent excavation could be selective (see above, p.6). All Anglo-Saxon features (and any that were of uncertain date) would however be excavated at level D-E.

At the southern edge of Sector 4, the ground descended into the re-entrant which separates the Sector from Mound 1. It was recognised before the excavation began that if Sector 4 was placed further south than originally planned, it would touch the re-entrant and more surely include the predicted edge of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery, expected to coincide with the break of slope. It was also recognised that the research design had not insisted on the excavation of both Mounds 17 and 18; also that it would be unnecessary (following the experience of INT 41) to re-open the well-recorded INT 11. Accordingly Sector 4 was repositioned further south, to exclude Mound 17 and half of INT 11, and to align with the axis of Sector 1 (see fig. 1). It was also reduced in size, and the western edge stepped to reach as far as possible down the slope without encountering trees in Top Hat Wood (fig. 4).

The objectives for the season were the excavation of Anglo-Saxon burials, the location of relict buried-soil platforms and the planning of features at horizon 2. The workforce was provided principally by the students attending the field school, who were responsible, under close supervision, for the selective excavation of prehistoric features. The burial from Mound 18 was excavated by our British Museum consultant, Angela Evans.

RESULTS

The clearance of turf and topsoil and the collection of surface finds proceeded as planned (see above), 411m^3 of soil being removed in 4 days with the assistance of a Drott (tracked mechanical excavator). Although the retrieval of finds by surface collection does conform to the position of former buried-soils, as predicted, it is likely that the corpus of diagnostic surface finds (e.g. 65 sherds of pottery) was inadequate even for this purpose. Given the difficulty of defining buried-soil

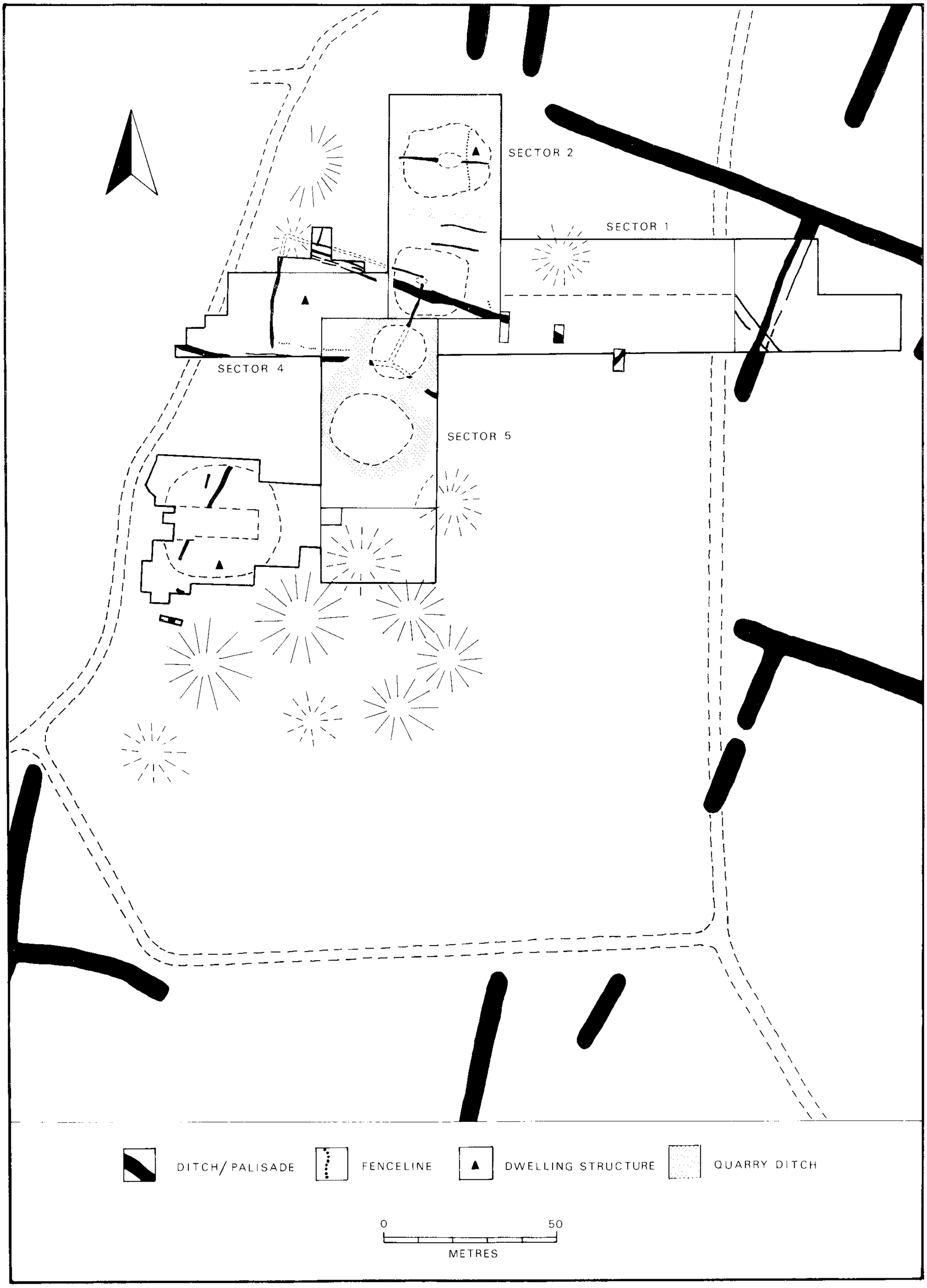

Fig. 5: Sutton Hoo: Prehistoric boundaries (MacBeth).

platforms with a machine, it will be wise in future work to add finds recovery by hand from the lowest 5 cms of disturbed strata to the overall distribution plot. Even though these strata, which lie above the buried-soil platforms or the natural sand, are generally well mixed, their excavation at level B will allow larger finds distributions and a better definition of the buried-soil platforms themselves.

In general, thin unscrambled buried-soil was defined in the western half of the site (from about the 090 easting), this reflecting the presence of Mound 18, the medieval bank and the beginning of the southern slope. However, survival was by no means uniform, and the hypothesis that much of the damage is very recent was endorsed by the survival of features cutting buried-soil beneath a spoil heap of the 1960's.

The excavated area of 1028m^2 was divided into modules each 4 x 8m, in each of which horizon 2 was achieved and recorded at level D. A principal baulk was left in position along the 154 northing and used for finds- and environmental- sampling. The parts of INT 11 which lay in the section were not reopened. 265 features were located by soil discolourations and 70 of these were excavated. All features (except plough furrows) are shown on the plan (fig. 4) where they have been provisionally divided into four main groups: medieval, Anglo-Saxon, prehistoric and natural.

MEDIEVAL FEATURES

The bank (which ran parallel to the modern track) was examined in plan and section. It consisted of a primary bank with a contemporary ditch running alongside to the east. The ditch had been colonised by roots from an ash tree standing to the north of the sector near Mound 12, giving an initial but false impression that it was a hedge. The bank had subsequently been overlaid by a lynchet apparently created by ploughing from the west, in the steep terrain now covered by Top Hat Wood. However since ploughing is now suggested to both east and west of the bank, both may form part of the same E-W cultivation system.

Ploughmarks were also recorded which ran N-S, and parallel to the bank on its eastern side. These had touched both Anglo-Saxon and prehistoric features. The various disturbances in the Sector 4 top-hamper are being presently studied from records and samples taken from the central E-W baulk.

No independent date has so far been recognised for the bank, but it overlay prehistoric features and no buried-soil associated with Mound 18 overlay its ditch. A medieval date therefore remains probable.

ANGLO-SAXON FEATURES

In view of the positions of the known mounds, and the discoveries in INT 11, the number of Anglo-Saxon features was frustratingly meagre. At the extreme east end, shallow pits and scoops belonged to the ring of quarry pits for Mound 5. The predicted Mound 18 appeared as an irregular patch of denuded and plough-marked buried-soil which was dissected at recovery level D. At approximately the predicted centre of the mound, a randomly dispersed pattern of minute carbonised flecks and fragments of cremated bone was encountered. The total fragments numbered many hundreds and were found to include splinters from a bronze bowl, fibres of textile and a tooth from a composite comb. About half of the total fragments were concentrated in a shallow oblong scoop (F231), which reached 5-10cms into the subsoil. However, this feature was almost impossible to define since it was riddled and laced with mole-holes and a rabbit-burrow, and had been gouged by a plough-share.

The painstaking capture of these fugitive traces has at least indicated what once was there: a cremation wrapped in cloth and placed in a bronze bowl with a comb, all probably buried in a shallow pit (perhaps not much deeper than the bowl itself) and then covered by a mound c.15m in diameter. No quarry pits were recognised for Mound 18. Elsewhere in INT 48, no human burials such as might have cut the subsoil have been defined.

PREHISTORIC FEATURES

The majority of features mapped and excavated are likely to be of prehistoric date, but their phasing and interpretation must await the analysis of finds and soil micromorphology. Additional limited excavation will also take place in a future season. 559 sherds of pottery were recovered from features. These are currently under analysis, but the assemblage in general compares with that recovered from INT 11 and published by Longworth and Kinnes (1980).

At this stage at least four prehistoric systems are apparent, some of which may be contemporary. These follow closely in character and date those defined by Longworth and Kinnes (1980).

1. The first system, by now familiar, is characterised by large ditches, already excavated in INT 11, 12, and 41 and now known to be part of a system of extensive rectilinear enclosures bounded

by banks and/or hedges (Carver 1989, fig. 8). This earliest boundary system contrasts with the others (see below), in that it is laid out without respect to the natural contours (cf Bradley 1978, 116). The ditch (F198) in the extreme SW part of the sector probably belongs to this system, but has yet to be excavated.

These major boundary ditches have produced primary or associated assemblages over a wide time scale, including Neolithic pottery as early as Mildenhall Ware (Longworth and Kinnes 1980, 14-16, 31), and Bronze Age pottery thought to be as late as the Ardleigh style (Longworth and Kinnes 1980, 16). This same ditch, encountered in INT 41, produced from some of its recuts a number of bronze droplets.

2. These Neolithic-to-Bronze Age assemblages are echoed in Sector 4 within the primary fills of four of the excavated pits (F2, F29, F93, F203), and in surviving buried-soil. Early to Middle Neolithic pottery, Peterborough Ware (eg in F29), and rusticated Beaker were all present. F29 in particular contained a remarkable fill sequence, including a dark 'occupation' soil (now being microanalysed for plant remains), and an unusually well preserved bone (a horse metapodial) in an upper fill. It was associated in plan with a number of postholes, two of which (F27/232 and F116) contained a similar ceramic assemblage, and it may be that a structure of some kind was here intended (see Broome Heath, Norfolk (Wainwright 1972, 12), or Eaton Heath, Norfolk (Wainwright 1973, 6) for a similar association of posts and pits of Neolithic date).

3. The shallow ditch F56 which runs parallel to the medieval bank-and-ditch (to its east) can now be seen to belong to an enclosure which post-dates the boundary system. F56 provides a rich assemblage (176 sherds from a 6m stretch) of mainly featureless prehistoric pottery. Ditches seen in INT 11, and there dated to the Iron Age (Longworth and Kinnes 1980, 16) and in INT 41, where it overlay the boundary ditch, are similar in profile to that excavated in Sector 4, and it seems reasonable to predict a square or rectangular enclosure of late Bronze Age or Iron Age date, lying on the southern slope of the re-entrant. Most of the numerous postholes contained by this enclosure have not been dated or resolved into a structure of any kind.

It can be seen that the NE corner of the enclosure lay under the centre of Mound 5, while the NW corner can be predicted beneath the centre of Mound 17. The eastern run of the enclosure suggests a further corner under Mound 6 (fig. 5). It is therefore possible that this later enclosure survived as an earthwork to provide inspiration for the siting of Anglo-Saxon burial mounds.

4. The fourth system to be defined comprises a number of postholes set close together in alignments and interpreted as fences. They are very difficult to date. One of them, excavated in INT 41 (quadrant Y), was defined with some confidence as having cut through the completely back-filled Neolithic-Bronze Age boundary ditch. Spatial associations are difficult, since nearly all linear features follow a general N-S, E-W orientation. On balance it seems probable that the fence-lines belong to a Bronze Age-Iron Age rather than Neolithic-Bronze Age horizon.

NATURAL FEATURES

A number of features recorded at horizon 2 contained strata which were naturally deposited, and in some cases these deposits seem to have been closely associated with the pleistocene sands and gravels. This presents an additional (although not insuperable) difficulty in selecting features for excavation, especially if they present an oblong 'grave-shape' (e.g. F24).

CONCLUSIONS

The 1989 excavation in Sector 4 confirmed the predictions of earlier excavations that the strata there had been much scrambled by bracken, rabbits and ploughing. Nevertheless, sufficient archaeological evidence has survived to propose settlement activity in the Neolithic-early Bronze Age (embracing the 'Beaker' period) including an extensive rectilinear boundary system, *and* a second phase of perhaps late Bronze Age-Iron Age, which comprises a rectilinear ditched enclosure and a system of boundary fences. Both sets of activity have been seen elsewhere in East Anglia. At Fengate, there are now two successive phases of organised landscape boundaries recognised, one pre-Beaker and one dating to the 2nd millennium bc which does not respect the earlier alignment, and which is not confined to the exploitation of a single ecological zone (Pryor 1980; 1988). East Anglia on the whole is fortunate in possessing a fairly rich, albeit often nebulous, corpus of settlement evidence, both for the later Neolithic (Cleal 1984, 150) and the Beaker period (Bamford 1982). Rectilinear ditched enclosures and fences are not unfamiliar for the later Bronze Age-early Iron Age (e.g. Lofts Farm, Essex (Brown 1988)). Clearly there is a chance to add to our knowledge of economy and social organisation for these periods, using the Sutton Hoo excavation sample.

Recommendations for future work must include the mapping of Sector 1, the selection and sampling of primary contexts, and their micromorphological and botanical analysis. The distribution

of these contexts is by no means dense, so there is much to be said for large scale mapping and high-recovery excavation of carefully selected features. Given the suggested association between the Bronze Age-Iron Age ditched enclosure and the late Anglo-Saxon mounds, it will be important to examine the surviving traces of the ditched enclosure under Mound 6 with extreme care (level E sampling and micromorphology).

The excavation of Sector 4 has provided an unexpected adjustment to the morphology of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery. In spite of the poor stratigraphy it seems very unlikely that there were ever any burials in the area of Sector 4, other than the much damaged Mound 18 and those located in INT 11. Although one or two suggestively-shaped features remain to be tested, it is clear that there is no cremation or inhumation cemetery preceding the barrow phase. The explanation of the barrow geography may depend to some extent on our success in understanding the prehistoric site and its survival.

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INTERIM CONCLUSIONS FOR THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

An inventory of all burials relating to the Anglo-Saxon period is given in table 2. No features of this period have yet been detected other than those relating to burial. All dates obtained from grave goods, by radio-carbon or by association, are contained within the late 6th-8th century. The excavated sample therefore remains within a Middle Saxon barrow cemetery.

The burials can be divided into those originally under mounds, and burials without mounds (fig. 6). Those for which a mound was constructed group into three by burial-rite: Mounds 3-6 and 18 celebrate *cremations*, and under four of these mounds (4, 5, 6, 18) the cremation was originally wrapped in cloth and placed in a bronze bowl. Mound 20, currently in a group of its own, covered the inhumation of a *child.* The third group, Mounds 1 and 2, were *ship burials*; the inhumation being within the ship under Mound 1, and within a chamber beneath a ship under Mound 2.

The flat graves also group into three but this time by spatial distribution. 'Group 1' is an assembly of eighteen graves on the eastern periphery which will remain isolated in the overall plan until Sector 1 is excavated. Half the group 1 burials showed evidence for ritual trauma of some kind.

The 'Group 2' burials are those beside Mound 5, with which they are clearly associated both in time and space (see above). In this group, seven of twelve bodies showed evidence for ritual execution and deposition. Four of these graves were cut into open quarry pits, one of which already contained a deposit of animal bones (horse and cattle molars).

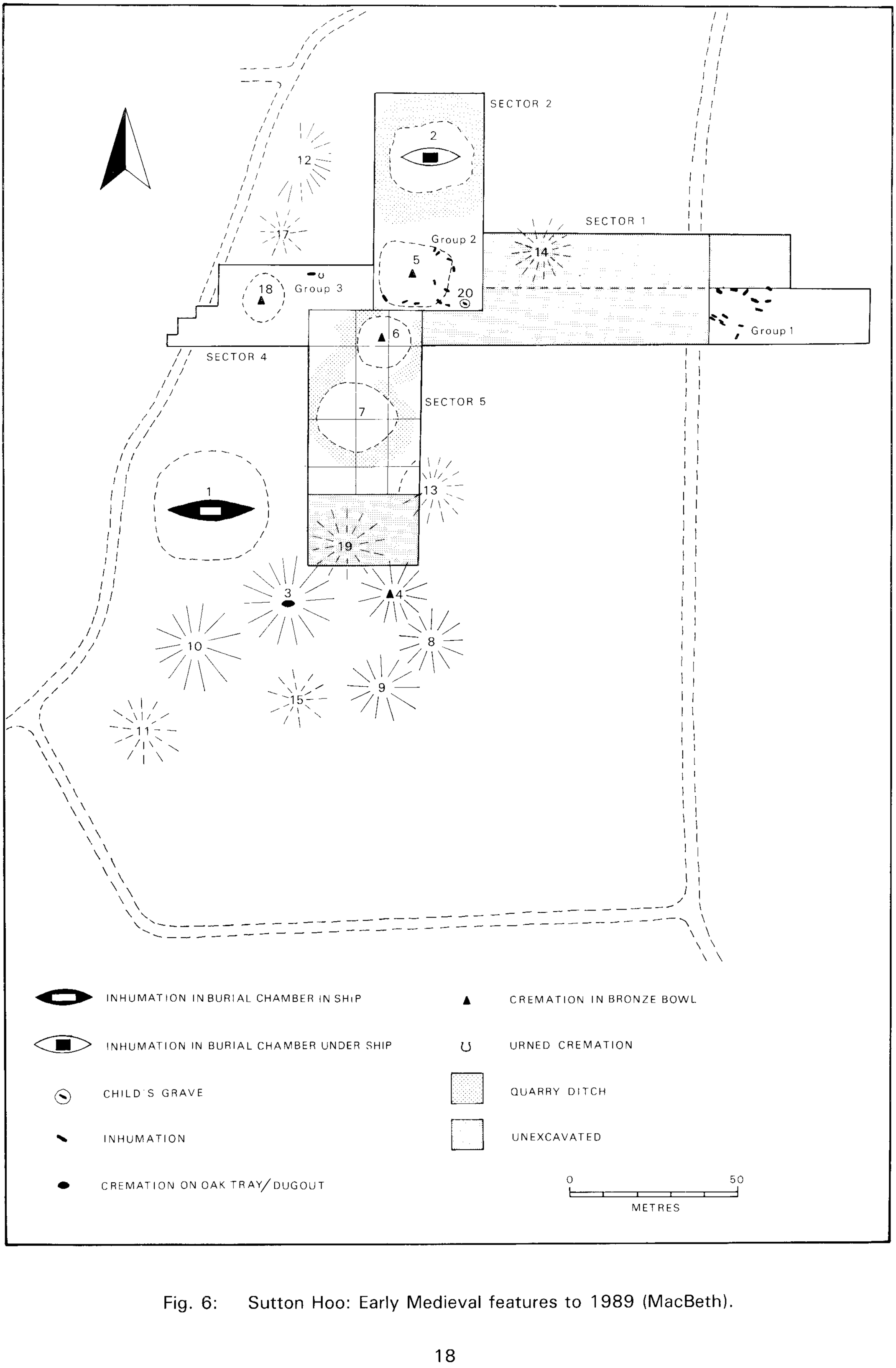

Fig. 6: Sutton Hoo: Early Medieval features to 1989 (MacBeth).

The 'Group 3' burials are anomalous, and designate three discoveries in INT 11 (Longworth and Kinnes 1980). These are a skull within a grave-shaped pit accompanied by a bead and a bronze mount fragment (all of which could be redeposited), a cremation in an urn, and an unurned cremation. The skull has been radio-carbon dated to the 8th century AD (Burleigh in Bruce-Mitford 1975, 682), but there is no clear evidence for the date of either cremation, and a possibility remains that both are prehistoric (Longworth and Kinnes 1980, 11 and 27; Bruce-Mitford 1975, 26-28, however, accepts an Anglo-Saxon date). A prehistoric date is also thought likely for the unurned cremations under Mounds 2 and 5 (see p.7).

Neither the stratigraphy, nor the grave goods, nor the radio-carbon dates is sufficiently sensitive to offer phases of use for the cemetery as currently seen. If an axis of development from west to east remains likely, a contemporary axis of development from south to north is equally possible. The discoveries in Sector 4 emphasise the importance of defining the role of extant prehistoric earthworks in determining barrow geography, while work in Sector 5 has shown that we must allow clusters of mounds (if not burials) to be contemporary. Much will now depend on the excavation of Sector 1 and the Sector 5 extension, if the essential geography of the cemetery is to be read within the projected sample.

In the longer term, it will be important to establish the character of the nearest nucleus of Middle Saxon activity to be located so far. This is indicated by the surface finds mapped in the adjacent parish of Bromeswell, which included the magnificent incised Coptic or Byzantine bucket recently published (Mundell Mango et al. 1989). Whether this nucleus represents a related settlement or an extension of the Sutton Hoo cemetery is of the greatest importance and will require investigation.

Within the Anglo-Saxon repertoire, all the Sutton Hoo burials can be designated as high status, but such status is manifested in four different styles: cremation under mound (3, 4, 6, 18), cremation under mound with satellite sacrificial burials (5), coffin under mound (the child's grave, Mound 20) and inhumation burial with ship (Mounds 1 and 2). There are currently no clues as to whether the funerary practice is evolutionary, changing with time and reflecting ritual fashion or ideological reaction, or can be attributed rather to contemporary differences in sex, status, rank or belief.

What can be said at present is that the site is a burial ground reserved for the elite, belonging to a short time scale (7-8th century) and showing a remarkably varied set of mortuary practices. Such a site, separated from the folk cemeteries of the 5-6th century, is suggestive of the recent creation of a regional power, and the dramatic signalling of its independence (Carver 1989). It can also be argued that the East Anglian process of kingdom formation echoes or pre-echoes the creation of other regional powers around the North Sea, both earlier and later. Furthermore, the Nordic associations evoked in both the Sutton Hoo grave goods and burial-rites can be seen as a deliberate statement of declared allegiance to pagan Scandinavia in the face of Merovingian Christian encroachment (Carver forthcoming a and b).

This thesis sets the challenge for the remaining fieldwork, raising the possibility that every burial can reflect a discrete political mood, and demanding a much better spatial and chronological context for each distinctive burial-rite than has so far been achieved.

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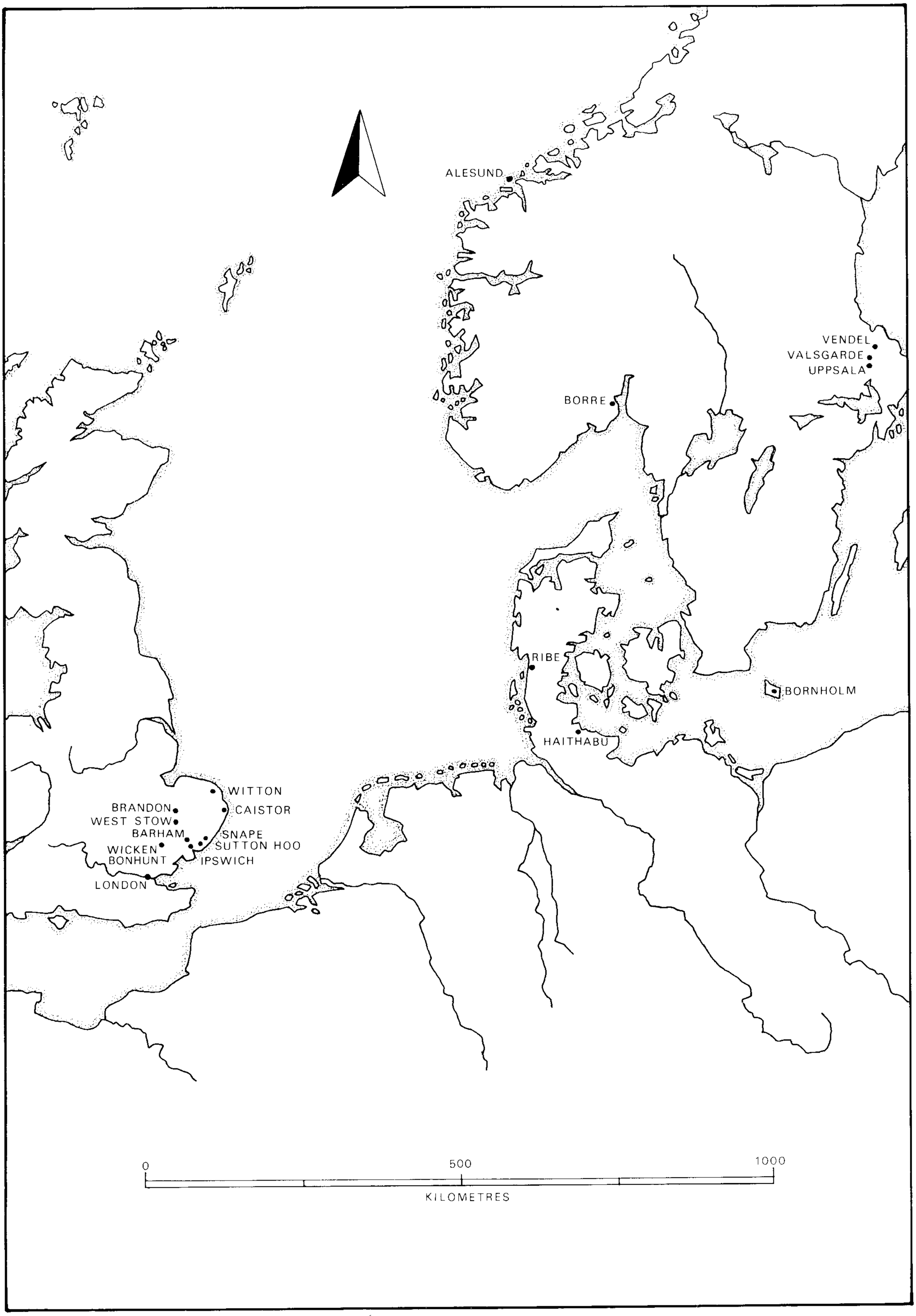

Fig. 7: Anglo-Saxon East Anglia and the North Sea (MacBeth).

REGIONAL STUDIES AND COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

The successful interpretation of Sutton Hoo as a major episode in the early history of England continues to depend on regional and comparative studies being carried out by colleagues at home and abroad.

Within East Anglia, the East Anglian Kingdom Survey continues under the general authority of the Scole Committee. The first of the six sample areas (the Deben Valley) was completed by John Newman in 1988 (Newman in Carver 1989b, 17) and it is hoped that similarly expeditious and informative results will soon emerge from the other five.

Excavations currently in progress in East Anglia continue to extend and amplify the revolutionary social changes which took place in the 7th century AD. As a result of excavation in the Buttermarket, and the discovery there of a 6-7th century furnished inhumation cemetery, the settlement at Ipswich is now seen with some confidence to have been contemporary with or earlier than the Sutton Hoo burial ground (Wade, in Martin et al 1989). It seems likely that commercial activity there was being regulated and canalised in the 7th century, a process reflected in a new set of inland trading or tribute points exemplified by Barham (Newman, forthcoming). At Snape a major evaluation is under way at the site where the presence of a highly stratified cemetery has been demonstrated, including cremation, furnished inhumation, burial mounds, boat burial and ship burial (Filmer-Sankey, in Martin et al 1989). This cemetery may reflect the social and ideological processes at work amongst the Anglo-Saxon people of the Sandlings before the achievement of regional power thought to be marked by the construction of Sutton Hoo.

Of equal importance, particularly for the ideological context of ship burial, is the post-excavation work currently in progress in the care of Ole Crumlin-Pedersen on the excavations at Slusegård on Bornholm, where some 43 boat burials were identified within a cemetery of 1400 burials. Similarly, the context of Sutton Hoo will be greatly clarified by the new campaign of research at its Norwegian sister-site of Borre, under the direction of Bjørn Myhre.

All this contemporary work and more, whether in East Anglia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, North Germany, France or the Low Countries has been presented and discussed in advance of publication during Sutton Hoo's anniversary year, at celebratory meetings (see p.27). The Sutton Hoo research project, dedicated to the elucidation of a European, as well as a local episode, has gained immensely from the dialogue.

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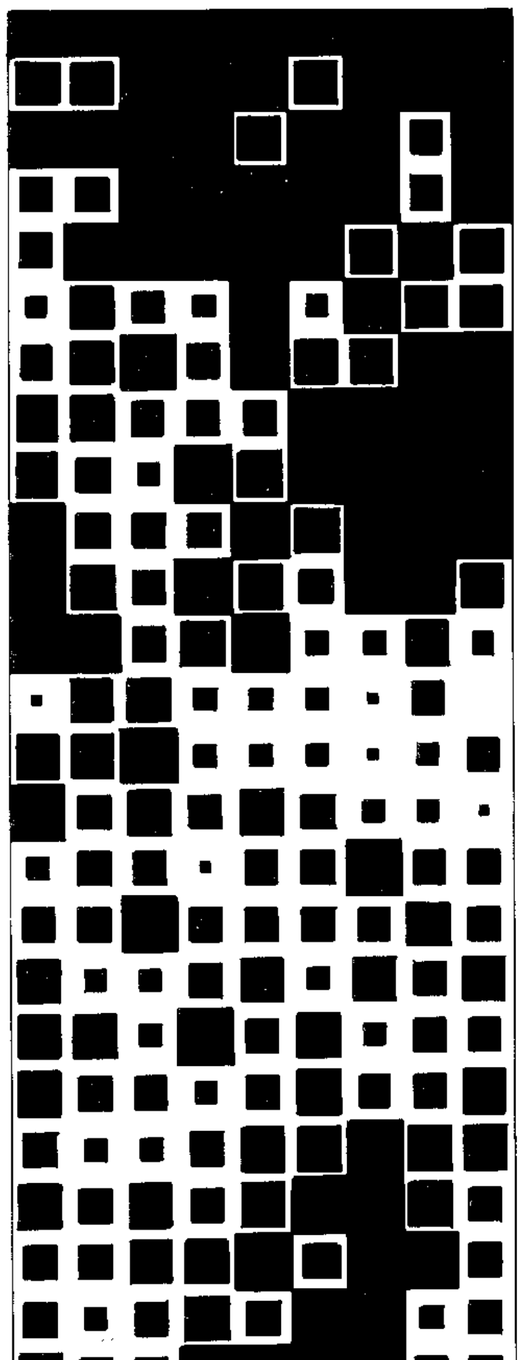

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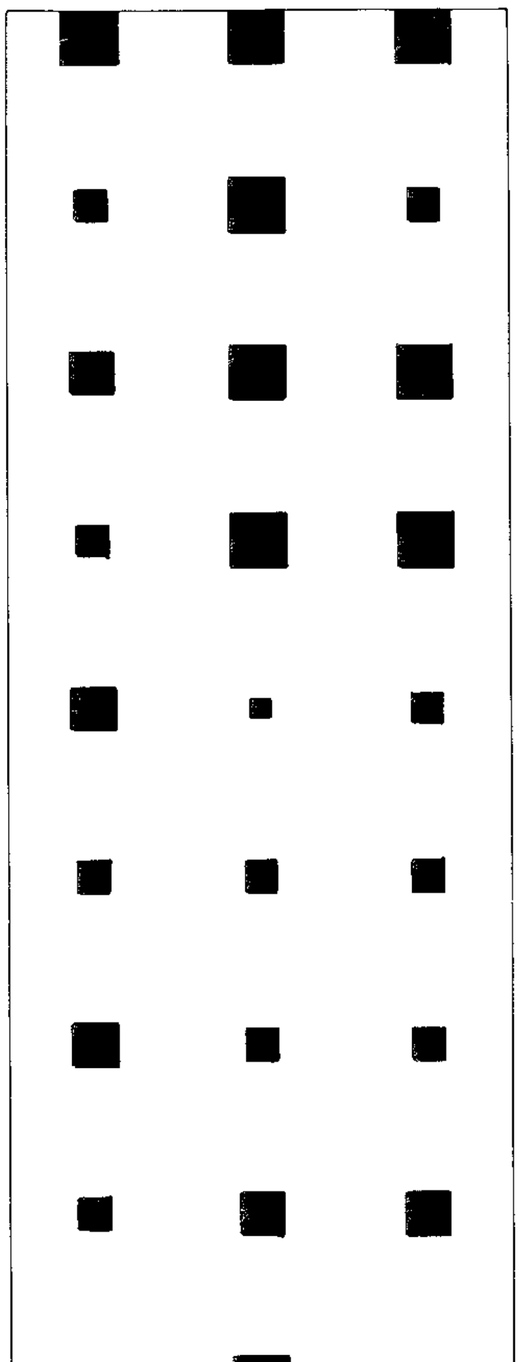
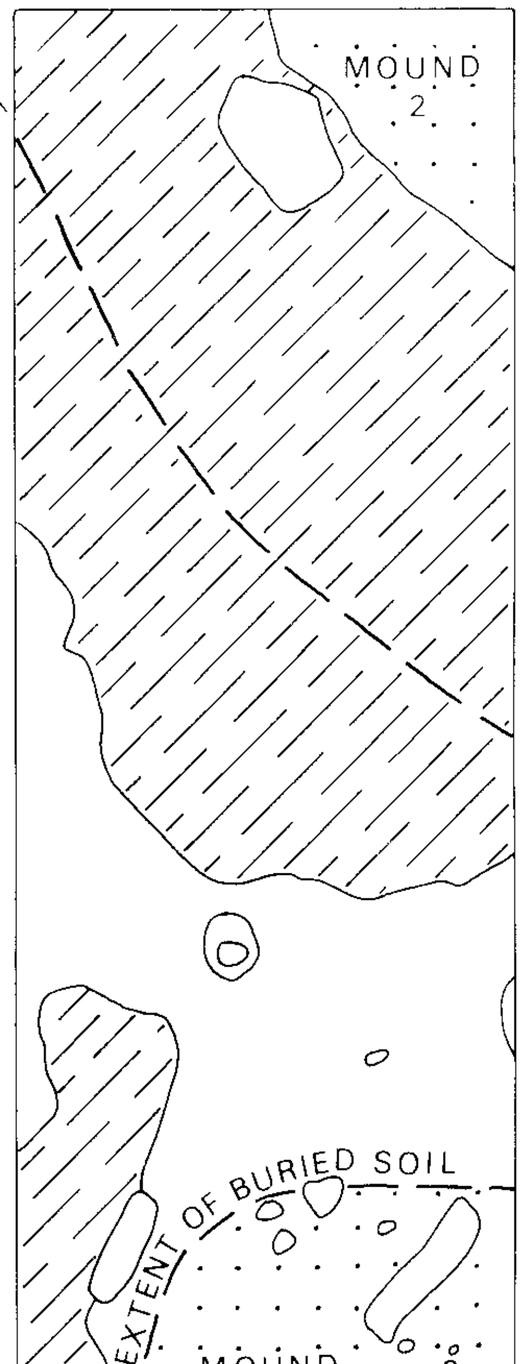


ALL FINDS
(1:9)



FEATURES

QUADRANT 'Q'
NUMBER OF FINDS PER METRE SQUARE

0 1 2-3 4-6 7-10 >11

QUARRY DITCH

BURIED SOIL

0 9
metres

Fig. 8: Finds retrieval from surface soils in quadrant Q, INT 41 as total retrieval (left) and as sieved quadrants (centre). The excavated features are shown (right) (MacBeth).