VOLUME 8iii FIELD REPORTS FOR THE FAR EAST SECTOR INT 39

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1. SUMMARY

Int. 39 is the easternmost area of excavation undertaken at Sutton Hoo, located to the East of Int. 32 in Zone F. The latter had proved fruitful in contacting prehistoric boundaries and early medieval burials in 1984-6 (q.v. Vol. 8ii).

By contrast, Int. 39, which occupies an area 24×16 m between the 231 and 255 eastings, proved remarkably empty of archaeological occupation, a pleasing result since Int. 39 was opened to test a suspected decrease in occupation density, suggested by the results of field-walking (Int. 19, cf. Vol. 3) and by the sparse feature density encountered in the evaluation trench, Int. 20.

Although all 84 features identified within Int. 39 were excavated, only 50 of them proved to be archaeological in origin, and, of those only a handful proved informative.

The results from Int. 39 can be summarised as follows:

- a) there are no further early medieval graves of the group 1 cemetery East of those encountered in Int. 32
- b) there is a noticeable dying out of features of all periods East of the 245 easting
- c) the sparse material recovered on the surface and in features suggests that some Bronze Age occupation took place
- d) Int. 39 offered the opportunity to dissect a tree pit and to understand better this type of feature at Sutton Hoo (cf. Section 5)
- e) though the Eastern end of Int. 39 is poor in archaeological remains, it is possible that the corner of a palisaded enclosure, which could by analogy with others be dated to the Iron Age, was clipped at the extreme SE end of the area of excavation. Some have suggested that the palisade is part of an early medieval structure, but an Iron Age date is preferred: a return could be proposed in Int. 20, making the enclosure some 45 m across (cf. Section 4).

2. STRATEGY (A.Copp)

2.1 Location and Characteristics of the Area

2.1.1

Int.39 covered an area of 16m North-South x 24m East-West (384 sq. m.), the south west co-ordination being 231/145. In 1985 this area was referred to as part of Int.32.

2.2 Aims and Objectives

2.2.1

The excavation of this area was undertaken to:-

- a) Find the limits/boundary of the Early Medieval cemetery adjacent to the eastern side of the inner scheduled area, Zone A.
- b) Investigate the nature and preservation of all archaeological features beneath the ploughsoil by their total excavation.
- c) Complete the investigation of an area cleaned and planned to second definition in 1985.
- d) Investigate the archaeological relationship between the finds recovered from fieldwalking and the distribution of subsoil features.
- 2.3 *The workforce*

The workforce was essentially the same as that employed on Int. 32 in 1985 and 1986 (see vol. 8ii, section 2.3), but under the overall supervision of AJ Copp.

2.4 *Operations Undertaken*

2.4.1

In 1985 the strategy had been to clear the area by machine and then trowel up to achieve second definition. The area was then planned on A1 permatrace at 1:10. These plans were drawn by a range of skilled and unskilled labour and consequently the plans lack continuity and style. For example, context outlines end abruptly at interface between two plans drawn by different people.

2.4.2

In 1986 the area was given its own site reference - Int.39. According to the method of excavation developed and adopted in 1984 and 1985, the 16 x 24 was divided into 4 lanes, four metres wide and twenty four metres long, these were subsequently sub-divided into lengths of eight metres for ease of excavation. Each of the $4 \times 8m$ modules were excavated by a variable number of students under the supervision of a site recorder.

2.5 Analyses Undertaken

Referred to numbered paragraphs in this Field Report

- 3.5 Map of all features identified and excavated in Int. 39
- 4 Schematic sequence map
- 5.1.1 Tree-pit F42: plan
- 5.1.2 Tree-pit F42: sections

3. METHODS AND RESULTS (A. Copp)

3.1 Pre-excavation surface and subsurface surveys

None reported.

3,2 *Procedures*

Same as those employed on Int. 20/32 (see vol. 8ii, section 3).

3.3 Removal of the Ploughsoil

The area was cleared of topsoil by a drott on 9th July 1986 under the supervision of P. Leach. Following this the MSC team were given the task of removing any remaining soil. Allowing for numerous interruptions, this took until 31st July. The MSC team had a clear guide to the depth of ploughsoil to be removed because black polythene sheeting had been laid over the area in 1985, after the second definition plans had been drawn. (For future reference - perhaps with regard to aerial photographs from this area, it should be noted that a strip of black polythene 5.5 x 16m remains at the base of the ploughsoil at 255/145). No finds were recovered from the ploughsoil since their relationship both horizontally and vertically had been disturbed by the machine backfilling from a common spoilheap in 1985.

3.4 Horizon Recording

3.4.1

Every effort was made to identify and excavate all features. Two definition levels (3rd and 4th) introduced in 1986 were aimed at promptly determining the presence and shape of any feature. These definitions were applied to each 4 x 8m module, so a series of oblique aerial photographs were taken from the `Climalite' tower recording the whole surface of a module. A series of A4 plans recorded each context/ feature outline within the module. In effect the tower photographs have replaced the rather cumbersome planning on A1 permatrace.

3.4.2

Consequently, our attention was focussed more rapidly toward each individual context/feature. These were identified by one or a combination of various characteristics against the variable subsoil e.g. colour, shape. Every effort was made to expand the repertoire of attributes used to identify features in an attempt to investigate any irregularity within the subsoil. It had been clearly shown by experienced (over 3 years) that fresh features were likely to appear on re-opening in successive seasons.

3.4.3

The third definition level was established c. 5cm below the level of the polythene sheeting. In common with all arbitrary levels the actual depth in practise varied with the height of the local subsoil, the nature of the surface being trowelled and the personal idiosyncrasies of each excavator. An exception to this general strategy was Lane 4D where features were drawn and excavated prior to third definition. These features were clearly defined after the removal of the polythene and I though that any heavier trowelling would obliterated them. However, after the features were dug we reverted back to the original strategy of two clear definition levels. The fourth definition was established between 3-5 cm below the third definition. It varied according to the confidence with which we had encountered pure subsoil. Another exception to the strategy was Lane F4. This was taken straight down to the fourth definition level for three reasons:-

- a) The expected lack of manpower in the week following 6-9-86 as people were due to leave.
- b) The need to have all the Lanes cleared of the ploughsoil before the Balloon arrived.
- c) To discover immediately the number of features to be excavated and to get them well defined so that the recorders could organise their workforce accordingly.
- 3.5. Feature Recording

3.5.1

All features (except F1 Anti-glider ditch) were dug at level D which involved three separate recording stages once the feature had been defined on the surface.

- 1 Plan at 1:10, levelled, photographed all prior to excavation
- 2 Locate a section/profile at 1:10 across the feature to recover stratigraphic and/or morphological characteristics. Excavate one half, drawn and photograph section, record the context and take a soil sample for each context.
- 3 Complete the excavation, draw a hachure plan, level and photograph the emptied feature.

3.5.2

Features which were initially thought to be graves were recorded in slightly more detail at Level E by drawing naturalistic colour plans of the contexts and recovering more soil samples horizontally against a regular vertical template. Each grave was sectioned longitudinally, each side was sampled and taken down alternately one half being no more than 10cm deep. Any stains encountered on the way down would be recorded 3-dimensionally using the Psion system.

3.5.3

At the end of the excavation subsoil samples were taken next to all the features, the great majority being removed on the adjacent northern side.

3.5.4

F42 the `Tree Pit` had been sampled intensively at 5cm intervals vertically only at the deepest part of its fill and down into the adjacent natural. In addition, samples were taken horizontally at 0.50m intervals across the surface of the upstanding sections. Two buckets, one from each context of F42 were also `floated' for organic debris which was collected and bagged.

3.5.5

All finds from the features were recorded to the nearest centimetre in three dimensions. A policy of sieving all feature fills using a 1cm mesh was enforced, these finds being located to the nearest metre square. As in previous years the labour force was generally untrained in the recognition of artifacts, particularly lithic debris. At one stage of the excavation, I did try and show everyone the salient characteristics visible on stuck pieces. Most people picked up the necessary skills and so any concentration (or lack) of finds reflects to a great degree the actual presence of finds within the features.

3.5.6

In some cases it was difficult to determine whether a feature was made or filled in by man. While excavation was in progress it was apparent there were at least two stages which each feature was interrogated to establish its integrity. The great majority of features were recognised by the colour and texture of their fill. The most obvious example in this instance was F1 (Anti-glider Ditch) which runs diagonally across the SW corner of the area and was clearly visible on the overhead photographs. Some of the features contained localised evidence of activity on the subsoil surface in the form of burning, whether of the subsoil sand or of organic material within the fills e.g. F3, F6 (postholes containing charcoal flecks), F36 (a hearth) or F50 and F84 (burning within pits). The clear (in situ) burning within some features e.g. F84, marked by colour staining within the sandy fills is one interesting aspect which must be worth of further investigation and analysis. The feature shape outlined in plan by discolouration may be an important criteria for separating features from `non-features' but in this excavation no a priori assumptions were applied., so even if a patch of discolouration looked in plan like a rabbit hole it was dug with the same excavation methods as any genuine feature.

3.5.7

Another category of features was recognised by the distribution of stones which outlined their shape e.g. F17, F23. Often the stones outlined a clear discolouration within the surface of the subsoil eg. F11, F12, F20, F21, F28, F29, F43 and F55.

3.5.8

Patches of differential drying visible on the Definition surfaces were investigated. We were quite willing to accept and investigate these as a distinct class of artificial feature - although they proved even upon initial investigation to be rather ephemeral. Obviously, the nature of this category made it imperative that only genuine drying patches were investigated, rather than patches created by our water sprays. Consequently, many of the features exhibiting differential drying e.g. F13, F16, F8, F31, F32, F47, F58, F60 and F74 were left until the fourth definition level before excavation.

3.5.9

The colour, texture and visibility (contrast) of the feature fill against the subsoil: the profile and feature morphology, and the artefactual evidence recovered are crucial attributes to record. They guide not only the identification of the feature but also the recognition of post-depositional changes to which it has been subjected. All the recorders were quite apprehensive about identifying `non-features' during the excavation.

3.5.10

Of the 84 features recorded for Int.39, at least 33 can be identified as natural, (this includes F55 which was not excavated). By natural, I mean they are non-archaeological and comprises a set of geological anomalies or natural holes, including such as tree-pits. In certain cases it may be difficult to distinguish between severely truncated features and localised undulations in the subsoil. Similarly, it is difficult to assign functional terms to genuine features which have lost at least 30cm of their shape through ploughing and other destructive processes.

3.5.11

The majority of the non-features have been identified by their shape as revealed in section and in plan after excavation.

1. The fills in many cases proved indistinguishable from the subsoil, so no genuine edges could be recognised and followed. This problem severely afflicted these `features' identified by differential drying and/or those with stone outlines. Even a few of the features defined by discolouration on pre-excavation plans proved indistinguishable from the natural upon excavation.

- 2. Some `features' proved extremely shallow and disappeared after efforts were made to define their edges e.g. F7, F11, F12, F19, F31, F47 and F49. Consequently, no post-excavation plan exists which records their shape.
- 3. There are a set of `features' which have been caused by burrowing animals F4, F30, F33, F40 and F45. These examples have been judged by their irregularity in outline both in plan, by their distinctive darker fill and by their recognition of animal activity on the subsoil surface by the recorders.
- 4. I have discounted F52 because during the excavation of the feature strips of black polythene were recovered at the base of the fill. The `feature' was extremely shallow and probably created in 1985 during backfilling by the machine tyres. There are certain parallels for this type of feature from Int.32 of which one was thought to be a grave! (as Int.32/228).
- 5. F62 is also of recent origin. This shallow, rectangular `feature' was created by ourselves working along the trench of Int.20 in 1984. I understand this area was chosen for a test just to ensure we had located subsoil. The shallow scoop created by this exercise was not recorded in 1984.
- 6. Two tree bowls were identified within Int.39, F42 and F55. Although the latter remains unexcavated (due to a lack of time), their shape, together with the distinctive fill within each feature indicated that we were dealing with silted up holes created by fallen trees. As the subsoil washes off the upturned root mantle on one side of the tree bowl the opposite side beneath the fallen tree fills up gradually with debris washed and blown in from the surrounding areas, thus creating the distinctive fills.

3.5.12

Over the area excavated one of the most striking aspects of all the features and `non-features' that were excavated was their lack of homogeneity in terms of shape and fill. If we turn and look at the archaeological features, those that have more integrity as being man made, we can identify the variety of shapes and fills even within a single morphological group. The majority of the features belong to the class of features known as postholes F3, F6, F14, F16, F22, F27, F29, F34, F35, F37, F38, F44, F51, F53, F54, F56, F63, F64, F65, F66, F67, F68, F69, F70, F71, F72, F73, F80, and F83. These features range in shape from the large, well defined and deep e.g. F56, to the more shallow and truncated F79 or narrower F37. The narrow postholes have tentatively been described as stakeholes, F75, F77, F81 and F86. All of these are very truncated. In only a few instances can postpipes be identified within these post/stake holes e.g. F37. As with all morphological groupings, there is some blurring of class identity at the extremes. For examples of the pits I have identified, some may have held posts e.g. F25, F43 and F50.

3.5.13

A further group of features difficult to assign to any morphological groups are the scoops F20, F21, F24, F46 and F85. These have been separated from the postholes or pits by their shallow character.

3.5.14

The pits F25, F10, F39, F43, F50, F61, F84 again illustrate the range of shapes and fills which can be encountered within a particular morphological group F84, a large pit on the eastern side of the area was clearly seen on the surface as an area rich in charcoal with a dark fill. As the fill was removed further contexts revealed evidence of in situ burning. However, it still remained very difficult to separate the fill from the subsoil against the eastern edge and the irregular shape of the feature certainly did not facilitate the recognition of these edges.

Once uncovered F10 was a very clear circular silty stain, clear against the orange subsoil; because of its position at the back of Lane 3D, the feature remained unexcavated for ten days. During this time, it was exposed to the elements, however, when its turn came for excavation a great deal of effort was expended in its definition although we knew exactly where it should be. Allowing areas to weather is often recommended as a means of improving feature visibility but in some cases it has the opposite effect.

The lack of homogeneity between features can be illustrated by comparing F43 to F10, both showed remarkable similarities on the surface between their size, shape and fill. Only during the excavation of F43 and F10 were the major contrasts discernable. F10 contained a fairly homogenous fill (which was totally over-excavated), in contrast a variety of distinct fills were recognised in F43, the most obvious contrast being the layer of sub-angular stones recovered in the

latter feature beneath a silty fill. Various interpretations were suggested to account for this stony layer - cobbling which had sunk into the top of a deeper, earlier feature or a stone lined soak-away. Both interpretations have their faults, I would suggest the stones represent a platform, or solid foundation for an upright timber.

3.5.15

Three ditches were discovered over the area. The o=most obvious F1 was seen in previous years work on Int.20 and 32. This we know was an Anti-glider ditch dug in 1942. Under excavation, two distinct fills were recognised, the earlier fill was interpreted as the natural sitting resulting from weathering once the ditch was open. The later fill was thought to derive from deliberately backfilling after 1945. Unfortunately, both of the remaining ditches F41 and F78 were only captured in Int.39 at their butt ends. Similar shallow trenches have been recovered at Sutton Hoo often being recorded as palisade slots. Whether F41 and F78 contained posts remains unanswered because only very short lengths were excavated.

3.5.16

One clear palisade trench, F59, was also encountered in an earlier intervention (Int.20). This years work confirmed earlier impressions that posts were set within the quarry trench. Altogether eight post-ghosts were recognised along the northern and southern sides of the east-west running trench. Another recurring aspect of the palisade-trench is the identification of separate bedding trenches along the east-west axis of the feature. No clear dating evidence was recovered, only undiagnostic prehistoric flakes. The palisade trench with timber uprights along its length probably functioned as a fenceline rather than supported a covered building because the turn of the feature does not create a right angle normally expected of a rectangular/square building; no return for this feature was recovered along the further 50m of Int.20 in 1984 (but see section 4 for a discussion of a possible return). The evidence provided by the post-ghosts indicate narrow timbers; finally it is possible to identify more parallels at Sutton Hoo for an extensive palisade network than building foundations.

3.5.17

The final feature which should be noted is the hearth, F36. Although other features already discussed provide evidence of burning, I have separated this feature because it does not belong to any group of negative cut features, rather it is an amorphous feature which has sunk into the surface of the subsoil.

3.6 Comments on the Excavation of Int. 39

3.6.1

A great deal of effort was employed in locating graves. Any sub-rectangular anomaly in the subsoil warranted investigation. The only feature that was a serious contender was F48. Our experience from Int.32 had shown that small blocks of bedded sand within the fill of sub-rectangular features was a good indicator of a grave. Although F48 did appear to contain bedded sand the excavation certainly proved the feature to be natural.

3.6.2.

Some of the features we were defining especially those identified by differential drying and stone outlines are of natural origin. Before excavating similar features, the criteria applied should be more rigorous. These features must have a combination of attributes such as a stone outline <u>and</u> a distinctive fill e.g. F43. Too often, we investigated areas of natural origin.

3.6.3

The excavation of the Tree-Pit, F42, and the recognition of F55 as a similar feature were clearly worthwhile exercises. Drawing on our experience we are now able to identify these distinctive features at an early stage. However, there must be a range of natural features, such as bush pits and immature tree pits which do not conform to such a clear pattern as the tree pits. (See J.G.Evans 1972 in G.J. Wainwright 1972, The Excavation of a Neolithic Settlement at Broome Heath, Norfolk, pps. 38, 1-98).

3.6.4

Many of the man-made features are isolated. Except for the Anti-glider ditch (F1) there is only one feature from Int.39 which reveals some form of continuity with Int. 32 to the west. F34 probably represents the north-eastern extension of the fence line with F199, F202 and F221 from Int.32 (to the graveyard?). This echoes the them of NE-SW orientated features also from Int.32 (e.g. F4, F130, F169, F213 and F219). It is possible that F41, Int.39 follows this orientation though this cannot be proved until a larger area is excavated to the north. In contrast there is no repetition of the NW-SE orientation of the palisade trenches from Int.32 (F5, F15, F133 and F158).

3.6.5

Apart from F59, the only other structure from Int.39 belongs to the series of postholes F75, F77 and F79, which together with F78 might be associated with a fenceline. The lack of spatial patterning amongst any of the remaining features especially in the centre of the intervention emphasises the archaeological sterility of this area. If we look to individual features for inspiration, I think we can pick out F59, F43 and F84 as being of particular interest in terms of internal structures.

3.6.6

The Leverhulme Trust conducted a series of chemical experiments at the third definition surface of Lane 3D. The aim of the operation was to spray the area with a cocktail of chemicals which could differentiate between features fills and variations in the natural. After the application of the spray over the lane no significant colour changes/concentrations were recorded. Although after the excavation few genuine features were recorded in this Lane, the experiments had not been rigorously controlled. For example, the interval between the application of each spray varied. Similarly the amount of pre-treatment with water varied. Much more care in the preparation of the surface together with the mixture of different concentrations of chemicals must be undertaken if we are to get any valid results. The should also be applied either to a larger area, or an area where a greater variety of features can be seen on the surface.

3.6.7

The major overhead photographs of Int.39 were taken by N. MacBeth from the hot air balloon. At the time of its arrival, the area had not been totally excavated. Indeed, some features had not been discovered, while others were in the latter stage of excavation e.g. F42. However, at the end of the season, a final set of oblique photographs were taken from the climalite tower with all the features excavated. The tower was positioned about 15m east of Int.39 and the photographs recorded the distribution of the features against those discovered in Int.32.

3.7 *The assemblage*

A summary of the finds featuring in the finds index can be found in the next section (4: "Establishing the sequence").

4. ESTABLISHING THE SEQUENCE (M.Hummler)

Considering that an area of 384m2 was fully stripped and that all 84 features identified within were fully excavated, the result is meagre, a pleasing result since one of the stated aims of Int. 39 was to identify a fall-off pattern, a dying out of the density of archaeological features, both Anglo-Saxon and prehistoric.

The decrease in occupation density is well demonstrated by the *assemblage* recovered in Int. 39, equal to about one third of the assemblage found in Int. 32, adjacent and covering an equivalent surface area. 1302 finds records feature in the Int. 39 Finds' Index, of which 117 are "non-finds" (finds' numbers allocated but which never materialised), making the total assemblage recovered <u>1185 finds</u>. Of these, 423 are soil samples taken from the subsoil 1003 and routinely from features: thus, "actual finds" number only 762, of which 449 are the ubiquitous burnt flint. This leaves a mere 258 flint (waste products and only 5 implements), a tiny amount of pottery (51 sherds in total) and 4 miscellaneous finds (a piece of stone, shell, metal and glass). The 51 sherds of pottery are mostly unidentifiable: a dozen can be assigned to Bronze Age fabrics (in tree-pit F42, also in pits F10 and F84) and a couple of sherds may belong to Iron Age fabrics.

All 84 features visible in Int. 39 were excavated. Only 50 of them turned out to be archaeological in nature - and that may be a generous estimate - the remainder being a hotch-potch of diverse discolourations in the subsoil, burrows, etc. (see section 3.5.10, this vol.).

Many of the 50 "archaeological" features revealed themselves as severely truncated scoops or postholes, not exhibiting

any obvious patterns apart from a generalised decrease in density East of the 240-245 easting. In fact, the only slightly more promising features number a paltry 7 features or feature sets. They are:

- a) a hearth in the NW of Int. 39 (F36, see section 3.5.17)
- b) two tree-pits in the centre of Int. 39, one excavated (F42, see section 5 below) and one unexcavated (F55, see section 3.6.3)
- c) three features interpreted as pits (F43, F50 and F61/84), for which a variety of functions has been suggested e.g. soakaway, cooking pit or tree-pit (see section 3.5.14)
- d) the curved edge of a palisade trench, F59 also known as F17 and F34 of the former Int. 20, and associated postholes (F64-71)(see section 3.5.16 and below).

In conclusion, no sequence can be reconstructed for Int. 39, except for highlighting some very general trends.

These are:

- a) a generalised dying out of occupation East of the 245 easting
- b) positive evidence that there are **no** further burials of the Early Medieval group 1 cemetery
- c) pottery, when identifiable, is meagre, appears to belong to Bronze Age fabrics, dies out along the 245 easting and ends up in former tree-pits (F42, possibly also F61/84)
- d) by analogy with the Iron Age palisaded enclosure of Int. 48/41/44, the palisade trench F59, which forms a corner at the 250 easting, may belong to the same phase of occupation of Sutton Hoo. If this is the case, a suitable return for the palisaded enclosure may be represented by slot F37, encountered in the 100 m long trench (Int. 20), at the 295 easting. This would make the enclosure 45 m wide, a size very similar to the 41 m wide enclosure of Int. 48/41/44.

If a putative Iron Age enclosure is acceptable, then the Iron Age period must be the exception to the dying out of occupation in the eastern fields, which seems to hold true for earlier prehistoric periods and for the Early Medieval period. This result is certainly plausible, as an eastern "Iron Age" occupation, perhaps agricultural, would fit well within the picture of increased land-exploitation exhibited by the network of boundaries visible on the 1986 CUCAP air-photograph (see Vol 8ii, section 4.3).

5. SELECTED STUDIES: THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD (M. Hummler)

No feature encountered within the area of Int. 39 warrants specialist study. This section does, however, contain some notes on the records made during the excavation of a **tree-pit**, F42, which in most respects is identical to the tree-pit F178, excavated in Int. 32 (see Vol. 8ii, section 5.3).

Tree- pit F42, located in the centre of Int. 39 at c. 244/153, was extensively excavated and recorded by John Newman (Suffolk Archaeological Unit) in August 1986, at recovery level D.

On the surface, at 32.34mAOD, it defined itself as a subcircular or D-shaped feature, occupying a surface area of 12 m2, being c. 3.50x3.30m wide, i.e. very similar in aspect and size to F178 of Int. 32 (Vol. 8ii, section 5.3) and therefore suspected to be a tree-pit. Excavation proved this to be the case, the feature being identified as "an irregular shaped area of dark-brown siltsand with a dump of redeposited natural from the root mantle on top of this at the South side of the feature" (Feature record card).

The feature was quadranted and its fills (1058, upper fill, over 1059, lower fill) extensively recorded in sections (photographs: N140/21-2, 34-5; N141/13-16, 25; N144/2, 14-15; N145/20; N150/3-5, 20-2).

The fills consist of an upper fill 1058, only present in the southern part of F42 (levels: 32.34 - 32.01mAOD) and overlying the main fill, 1059.

1058 is a yellow to light brown sand dump with some larger pebbles and with a typical Munsell value of 10YR 6/8, interpreted as natural subsoil that once adhered to the root mantle of a blown-over (or felled tree), which keeled over to the North. The S-N direction of the fall is given by the indentation visible along the northern edge of F42 and by the

greater depth of the feature in the North.

1059, the main fill, (levels: 32.34 - 31.51mAOD) is described as a dark brown silts and with occasional flecks of charcoal and some small stones, with a typical Munsell value of 10YR 3/4, interpreted as a "former organic topsoil" filling the hollow left by a former tree, thin on its South side and thicker in its northern half.

Finds, which include burnt flint, flint waste and ceramic (a total of 29 sherds, 10 of which can be ascribed to Bronze Age fabrics) were recovered in both fills, but the great majority stems from 1059. Though burnt flint fragments are abundant, they are noted as being random in their distribution. The fills were comprehensively sampled, including monoliths and one bucket from each context reserved for wet-sieving.

The irregular shaped hollow (photographs N155/7-8, 11-12; N156[balloon shots]; N157/1-10), with its two lateral lobes, deep northern half and irregular profile achieving a depth of up to 0.80 m into the surface of the subsoil, was interpreted as a tree-pit during excavation, an interpretation confirmed by Nick Balaam (then of Central Excavation Unit) on a site visit on 22 August 1986. The site notebook records (A. Copp): "[Nick Balaam] was quite confident that the geometry and fill of the feature in dictated a fallen tree". A sketch accompanies this entry, showing the 4 stages in the creation of a tree-pit:

- A. The living tree creates a hollow, c. 1m deep.
- B. The tree falls over or is felled towards North, creating a deeper hollow in the North.
- C. In the South, natural subsoil adhering to the roots washes down onto one side of the tree-hole; in the North, the gap silts up, filling with wind-blown sand and washed-in silt.
- D. The resulting archaeological feature shows a tree-bowl with a shallow southern half containing a dump of natural subsoil washed off the roots and a deep northern half filled with silt and occupation debris as well as a northern indentation left by the fallen trunk.

The excavation of F42 and its interpretation as a tree-pit has helped in identifying similar features elsewhere at Sutton Hoo, to the extent that sometimes these D-shaped features could be pronounced tree-pits without having to be excavated (e.g. F55, a few metres to the North of F42 in Int. 39).

6. SELECTED STUDIES: THE ROMAN PERIOD None undertaken.

7. SELECTED STUDIES: THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD None undertaken

8. SELECTED STUDIES: MEDIEVAL AND LATER None undertaken

END