

EXCAVATIONS AT ROCKY CLUMP, STANMER, BRIGHTON.
BRIGHTON AND HOVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
INTERIM REPORT 1996

by

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Note

This report was scanned from a Photocopied version of the report, it was not possible to reliably OCR the text. The diagrams are "as is", with some minor digital "cleaning".

A report on the excavations carried out at Rocky Clump, Stanmer, by the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society during 1996.

Introduction

The excavations at Rocky Clump during 1996 were concentrated to the north of the copse of trees in the area Trench J. An area within the tress immediatly south of the sarsen stone was also cleared, but as a result of numerous features being found in trench J, this further investigation was put on hold till a later date. The reason for the investigation south of the sarsen is that the earlier excavation in the 1950's was restricted by a tree, this has subsequently either rotted away or fallen over. The roots were found to be rotten and removed. The area is close to several of the known burials and if there is another burial, it is likely to have been beneath the tree.

Trench J had been divided into two metre square contexts during the removal of top soil in 1995. The top soil had been removed down to 50 millimetres above archaeological feature levels, contexts 149-157. The breaking down into two metre square contexts is to continue providing a spatial disposition of numerous finds in the plough soil and to collate the data for dispersion analysis. This exercise has been carried out during a previous excavation at Ounces Barn (Bedwin and Place 1995).

The area investigated in 1996 consisted of an extension of 40 squares metres to the north of trench J. The new area was ten metres west to east and 4 metres south to north. Two extensions were made to this original trench when features were found to

found to continue under the baulk. The east end was extended by two metres in extension A, later context 173 and by two metres to the west extension B later context 174. Trench J was subsequently squared up by the removal of the north corners contexts 210 and 214 and at the south east corner context 213.

Several assessment trenches were cut to the north and east to determine the extent of the archaeology. These trenches, contexts 194, 202, 209 and 205 provided archaeological material from the top soil and all but context 209 provided features. Trench 209 was cut as result of investigation by the use of divining rods, trench 209 provided an anomolous reading for several of the participants of the divining exercise.

A metal detecting machine, handled by Mr Michael Fairbrother, was used on the area to be excavated, prior to investigation, to locate metal objects. The metal detecting suggested only iron in evidence probably nails. Later finds of bronze pins and a brooch, beneath flint layers suggest a limited effectiveness in these contexts. A coin of 1775, George III was found on the upcast of the fill from the ditch surrounding the copse of trees context 143, perhaps confirming the suspicion that the ditch is of 18th century dating and not Roman.

The excavation was used as a training exercise for new members and techniques of site planning, section drawing, levelling and surveying were organised for those interested. Members now travel from as far away as Littlehampton, Eastbourne and Croyden.

One final trench was cut in the field to the east of the copse of trees after crop removal and before sowing. A line was set up and measured out from the east sarsen in an easterly direction.

Measuring the pitch of the 'shrine' post holes a further 1 metre square trench was cut at the approximate location of further post holes moving in an easterly direction. The trench, context 192 produced a post hole feature 192A in this location. The diameter of the post hole was considerably smaller than the 'shrine' post holes had been? The post hole was not sectioned. This feature was backfilled as were trench M, the area of the surrounding ditch and trench J itself. The large pit context 14 has also been backfilled. Grid pegs have been left in position for further extensions to the east and north during 1997.

The Features

Feature 14

The large pit with the step on the north west side contexts 14 and 139 have similarities to features found during excavations at Caburn where steps were also found on large pits. (Ref to be confirmed)

Feature 90

Feature 90 had been partially excavated during 1994 when it went under the baulk. Sufficient was left in the trench to conduct a section. During 1996 this feature was re-examined. The fill from the previous section was first removed, and the remaining fill taken out. The feature proved to be not a post hole but a pit.

The pit was 80 centimetres in diameter and 20 centimetres deep. It was straight sided. The fill was of chalky loam, with a large percentage of medium chalk nodules.

New feature found included several new post holes contexts 160, 164, 167, 175, 176, 187, 188, 192A, 197, 198, 200, 208, and 218. Pits were also found contexts 147, 148, 162, 163, 171, 172, 182 and 193. The flint cobbling was still very noticeable and was very well protected and preserved in area contexts 159, 162 (above a large pit), 171, 172 177 and 178. Context 210 had intensive quantities of flint above the chalk natural as this was prevalent in much of the area to the east of the line of post holes running north/south. Some traces of flint cobbling were also found in the west end of trench context 205 context 206. The ditch purported to be of Medieval origin was also found becoming deeper as it moved northwards. this ditch context 165 had faded out during the 1993 excavation as it moved northward in trench J (earlier context 53). The intervening section, about 2.5 metres had been ploughed away.

Features 160, 164, 167, 175, 176, 188, 198 and 208 were all flint packed post holes. Post hole 164 was a double post hole with a shallow step. Post hole 176 cut into post hole 198.

Several features thought to be post holes upon investigation proved to be solution hollows, notably contexts 179 and 180.

A line of 9 post holes is noted running in a northerly direction. The post holes contexts 84, 58, 74, 71, 160, 175, 188, 200 and 197 are set at a pitch of 1.3 metres. This pitch suggests either a building or enclosure, encompassing the cobbled area.

Features 187 and 218

Post holes 187 and 218 lay east and west of pit feature 167/185. These post holes were shallow and straight sided. The west post hole context 218 was the shallower of the two. The east post hole context 187 contained pottery and shell in the fill.

Features 197 and 200

A trench was cut to the north of trench J, context 194. The object of the trench was to determine how far into the ploughed field the line of post holes continued. Flint packed post holes contexts 197 and 200 were found. Moving northwards a further two metres revealed only virgin chalk.

Feature 208

A trench was cut to the east of trench J, context 205. The object of this exercise was to try and determine the east boundary of the cobbled area. This was found to peter out on the west side of this trench. A flint packed post hole feature context 208 was found a little further to the east of the cobbling within this trench.

Feature 167

A large flint packed post hole context 167 was found to cut into a large pit context 185 on the west side of trench J. A section of the pit context 185 contained a perfect section of the post.

Feature 188

A flint packed post hole, context 188 was found to cut through a pit feature 163.

Pits

Several pits of varying dimensions were revealed during the excavations.

Feature 147

Context 147 was a shallow round sided pit. There were very few finds in the fill which was a chalky loam, light soil and medium chalk nodules.

Feature 148

This shallow round sided pit was very similar to context 147. The dimensions were smaller and the fill similar consisting of chalky loam.

Feature Complex 193, 160 and 195

This pit was located close to contexts 147 and 148, but this pit produced more archaeological material. The pit context 193 was cut on the north side by the flint packed post hole context 160. On the south west side of this pit there had clearly been cut a rectangular feature resembling a beam slot. the length of the

slot ran south east to north west. The length of only 43 centimetres suggests a solitary beam only. The post hole 160 was clearly a later feature than the pit, but it was not possible to determine the chronology of the beam slot feature.

Features 163 and 188

This proved to be a complex feature. It was set up to quadrant the large pit feature. However during excavation it was found that the north section of the pit was in fact a solution pipe, cut by the pit context 163. The quadrant proved to be a section. The pit was filled with very large flint pieces. The post hole on the east side, context 188, was clearly a later addition. Excavation of the pit proved difficult due to the flint nodules of the solution pit. The feature was overcut on the north face which in turn allowed visual examination of the solution pipe continuing further into the chalk subsoil. The pit was almost straight sided with very steep angled sides and the floor was flat.

Feature 182

This pit was also a very large pit and continued under the baulk to the north. In anticipation of this extension the pit was only sectioned on the west side, with thoughts of producing a quadrant once the baulk was removed. The pit proved similar to context 163 with large flint nodules in the fill. The sides were very steep almost vertical and the pit was flat bottomed.

This context proved to be a pit of very complex construction. A stratigraphy was visible, with smaller layers overlying others. The pit was cut by a post hole context 167, which effectively cut the fill of the pit contexts 183 and 184, which were in fact the same fill. The south west section of the pit produced a simpler stratigraphy. The post hole 167 cut into a fill of medium brown soil, context 183. The finds from the post hole were more numerous than the underlying contexts. The fill context 183 produced considerable amounts of charcoal. The top layer context 185 was a small area of heavy clay and proved ephemeral. Below the medium brown layer with charcoal lay a fill of predominately chalk nodules context 207. The nodules were interspersed with light brown soil. The north eastern side of the pit produced three further upper layers contexts 186, 209 and 209A. The additional layers comprised slightly darker brown soils and were from 10 millimetres to 20 millimetres in depth. The west side of the pit cut into a solution pipe, however, the nature of the fills made the differences quite distinct. The shape of the excavated feature was similar to a boat hull. The sides were rounded and elongated south west/north east. The pit proved to be of considerable depth. On the east side of the pit there was a distinct shelf cut into the chalk and post holes context 187 and 218 lay east and west of the pit feature. The pit was quadranted and drawn. The lower chalk layers of the pit were probably erosion material from the sides or may even have been produced when the shelf was cut. The large dimensions of the pit produced surprisingly small amounts of archaeological material finds.

Feature 165

This context is the reappearing possible ancient parish boundary ditch. The ditch has been clearly eroded because of ploughing. During the earlier part of the excavation the ditch had in fact disappeared, context 53. It was during the excavation of context 157 a two metre square area to the north west of trench J that the ditch began to reappear. The ditch becomes wider and deeper as it moves northwards towards the meeting with Flint Heap down in the valley bottom. The north section of the ditch cutting into the baulk is 44 centimetres wide and thirty millimetres in depth. Finds from the ditch are bagged in context 157 as the feature was too shallow to be distinct until noticed by the director.

Feature 162

This pit was a very large pear shaped feature. The sides were very irregular and the depth was shallow. The sides were rounded. Overlying this feature was a concentrated section of cobbled flooring. The flint cobbling had been pressed into the earth fill below and was an obvious floor feature. The pit being of such a size allowed the section to be excavated in 8 separate sections allowing three sections on an east/west axis. Each area excavated was numbered I-VIII and sections drawn appropriately. The main length axis ran north east to south west. There were numerous finds of pottery and bone above the floor surface. Some of the pottery lay within the flint cobbling and pottery was found in the soil layer below the cobbling. A small find of a brooch was found under a piece of sarsen stone in context 162-VII segment.

The feature was excavated in three contexts, above the cobbling, within the cobbling and below the cobbling.

Features 159,162,177 and 178

These contexts were fragments of cobbled flooring, pressed into the natural chalk. They had survived because they were located in small depressions. Above context 178 lay the remains of a jaw bone possibly a sheep or lamb. The cobbling in the form of loose flint fragments continued in the north east corner of trench J, segment context 210. It was among the flint work of area context 210 that a small find of a bronze pin was found. Context 162 although considered a pit is important for the largest remaining in situ fragment of compressed cobbled flooring remaining over the pit. The cobbled floor resembles very much a cobbled yard observed in north Wales. Here the farm yard was surrounded by farm buildings. It was the same technique of compressing the flint nodules into the underlying ground surface.

Features 171 and 172

These features were originally observed as two separate contexts disappearing under the baulk. In an attempt to determine whether they were post holes trench J was cut back a further 2 metres to the east. It was found that the two features were in fact part of one very large pit? It was a very peculiar shape consisting of two round areas forming into one large curve on the east side, resembling a banana. The top layer contained many disturbed flint pieces probably floor covering. The fill was of

light chalky loam and there were very few finds, below the flint levels. There was a small flat chalk platform on the north side of the pit. Upon excavation the central area of contexts 171 and 172 was found to contain a small ridge forming a circular feature context 211. and below another small ridge appeared forming an even smaller post hole type feature context 212. Again there were no finds. The south end of 171 was peculiar in that a curved section of bare and smooth chalk set on a rough angle was found. The area appeared very disturbed and was thought to be similar to animal pen disturbance?

The flint cobbled floor now runs from south west of trench J to the north east corner and continues as observed in trench K and context 205. The best preserved areas being contexts 69, 159, 162, 177 and 178.

Assesement trenches

A number of assessment trenches were cut to discover the extent of the enclosure or building. Trench 205 picked up the flooring to the east and a flint packed post hole. Trench 194 revealed further post holes and a possible large pit? Trench 202 found no post holes but a possible large pit? Trench 209 as previously mentioned was opened as the result of a divining exercise and produced no features.

During the excavation there had been an opportunity to examine more aerial photographs taken during 1975 and later. While a 'Celtic' field system was noticed to the west of the Varley

Bronze Age site, examination of the fields around Rocky Clump again proved ineffective. No visible signs were found of any features. The geophysics of 1995 had suggested the site had finished, the quantity of new archaeological features proved the limited effectiveness of resistivity surveys. After the crop had been removed in the north field field walking on a random manner tended to suggest that the site was indeed coming to its northern perimeter, there were few finds of pottery bone or shell.

Small finds 1996

In addition to the finds listed in previous interim reports can be added the following:-

- 1) Small clay bead context 153, plough soil layer
- 2) Small clay bead context 157, plough soil layer
- 3) Small fragment of possible marble like material
- 4) Brooch- context 162 section VII under a sarsen stone, but above the cobbled floor.
- 5) Bronze pin-context 210, within flint cobbling.

Conclusions

The excavations at Rocky Clump during 1996 have provided further evidence for an enclosure or building north of the original 'Shrine' site. The line of post holes running north to south now number 9 in total with some located under the baulk. The pitch of these post holes is 1.3 metres suggesting a fence rather than a

building. If the post hole found in trench 205, context 208 is one of a line running parallel to the east, and if the post hole in trench 194, context 197 is the northern extremity an enclosure of 11.4 metres from west to east and 13.6 metres from south to north, covering an area of 155 square metres is suggested. The evidence for the cobbled floor lying within this area to date is conclusive. However, only further excavation will confirm this hypothesis.

The feature of the large pit context 167/185 lies north of the other very large pit 57/70 that contained the 'wall' feature and traces of burning. Although this new pit contained quantities of charcoal and burned chalk it was of a limited nature. The shelf and peculiar boat like curvature of this pit are interesting but have no known parallels as yet determined. The post hole 167 is an obvious later feature making the large pit probably of Iron Age dating? Only examination of pottery finds or perhaps carbon 14 can confirm this. A chronology can also be constructed for some of the pit post hole features. Post hole 160 cuts pit 193 and post hole 188 cuts pit 163. These features can only relate to each other, but it certainly makes the pits 163 and 193 of earlier construction. Perhaps by a process of elimination some configuration will finally be determined for each set of features? No features as yet have found to cut the 'Medieval' ditch, except in the earlier excavations where the ditch cut the burials. The large pit 162 is obviously an earlier feature than the floor enclosed by the post holes running north to south. The reason for the shape of this pear shaped pit and also the rough and disturbed area within contexts 171 and 172 can possibly be

explained as possible tree hollows (Pers. Comm. David Rudling). this would explained the peculiar shape of these features and why the floor layers had been so well preserved. Whether they had been tree hollows is not determinable, but if they had been the trees whether blown down or removed, would certainly have pre-dated the Roman phase. It is possible that they had been removed as a result of the construction of the enclosure yard or building?

The enclosure lies to the north of the 'shrine' building and is on the same orientation. The pottery and chronolgy continues to suggest an early Iron Age phase with a Romano-British continuation. The coin evidence suggests the site continued into the fourth century. The large pits to the west suggest some form of industrial activity. It is noted that the larger pits always tend to have smaller associate post posts. This can be observed in the large pit 57/70 where post holes 97 and 110 are sited either side of this pit. Post holes 84 and 100 were sited either side of pit 83 and now post holes 187 and 218 are found to be sited either side of the large pit 167/185. Whether these features are part of the usage of these pits, whether they are totally sepearte or indeed whether theyr were part of the construction devices of the larger pits is not determined, but it is observed and noted. Future large pits will certainly be scrutinised. The use of the pits has been the subject of much speculation, but any hypotheses of the pits at Rocky Clump can only be conjectural. Ideas of usage include for textile purposes and pottery production, several of the large pits at Rocky Clump cut into clay solution pits. Even loom weight production was

suggested for the disturbed area of contexts 171 and 172. It is a question to be asked, how were chalk loom weights like that found at Rocky Clump manufactured?

The line of post holes running north to south ends at context 197. Excavation further north than this feature produced only virgin chalk. There was a large pit of some kind running east to west, it was followed for two metres to the west looking for further post holes and when it was found to continue a trench was cut further east context 202. A similar large pit was found in this trench, but it had been proposed that the large fill was a possible temenos ditch. This proved not to continue for any great distance. It is unusual that the site does not have a boundary ditch, or perhaps it is still further out. An assessment ditch may be useful to determine this fact. That the site continues on the east side of the 'shrine' is concluded by the finding of the post hole, context 192A in direct alignment with the existing post holes. It may of course be pure chance, but an extension in this direction would prove very useful at a later date.

The excavations to date have complicated rather than simplified the hypotheses of the earlier excavations. The new features and enclosures are providing a deeper insight into a very complex picture. The chronology at present though tentative begins to form a picture. The new building would suggest farming activities regarding animal involvement. The cobbled floor layer provided large quantities of animal bone and pottery above the floor showing intense activity and usage in this area.

It could be argued that the cobbled area was part of the ritual area close to the shrine features, but at present there is very little archaeological evidence to support this idea.

Rocky Clump at present is a very complicated site. It is observed that possibly two buildings or enclosures occupy the north section. From evidence found there is further archaeology to the east and south east (pers comm. Mrs Edna Gorton). The field walking conducted during the early 1990's suggested that the south field contained the majority of pottery concentrations.

The excavations at Rocky Clump still have much to find. It is still a major problem as to whether industrial, agricultural or religious emphasis predominates. It is still a subject of much debate. However, certain important questions remain unanswered. One, if the site is industrial or agricultural, where are the homes and houses of the people involved. At present there is certainly no evidence for Iron Age or Romano-British round houses. Ring gullies may have been ploughed out but large post holes would survive. The second question is why is there such a dearth of coin evidence? The earlier 1950 excavation produced only 4 coins, the present excavations have produced only two coins third and fourth century. Both coins came from top soil contexts. Even with metal detecting equipment available more coins than this would have been anticipated on a site beginning in the Iron Age and lasting through to the fourth century? Religious evidence still remains very circumstantial and ephemeral. No real evidence for Roman religious contexts have been found. The excavations will hopefully continue in 1997 when trench J will be extended both to the east and the north. The

main objective of the excavations will be to confirm the dimensions and shape of the enclosure to the north of Rocky Clump. The trench inside the trees may provide a further grave which would allow some carbon 14 dating, hopefully some conclusive dating would be provided for the burials. The site was visited by Mr David Rudling who confirmed that the method of excavation had provided much needed information and had shown that removal of top soil by J.C.B. was not always the best policy. Had the top soil been removed by J.C.B. at Rocky Clump very little evidence would have survived for the cobbled floor. Trowelling proved to be immensely important. Mr Malcolm Lyne was conducting a day school at Brighton Museum on 25th January to examine the pottery of Rocky Clump and educate members of the BHAS Field Unit in pottery and diagnostic sherd identification. It is anticipated that further dating evidence from the pottery examination will be forthcoming. Further day schools are being organised to examine the flint material and bone items. Mr G. Bennett of the Brighton Environmental Services Department has granted an area of 4000 square metres centrally focused on the east sarsen stone for archaeological excavation, if required. Mr David West has given his support for our endeavours and the BHAS Field unit will back fill at the end of each season to allow that section of the field to be cultivated once again.

I would like to thank Mr Bennett of Brighton Environmental Services, Mr David West the farmer, Mr David Rudling and Mr Malcolm Lyne for their support. I wish to thank all members of the Brighton and Hove Field Unit for their hard work during the excavation and particularly to Delia Lindsey for directing the

during my absence. Finally I wish to thank Dr Andrew Woodcock, County Archaeologist for his help and support. The excavation has produced many new faces on the BHAS Field Unit from as far away as Croyden, Littlehampton and Eastbourne. Much talent in the archaeological fields of excavation, planning, sectioning and surveying have been perceived in these new members. It is hoped that these talents will continue to be utilised in the future seasons. Appreciation is expressed to all.

John Funnell 31/12/96

BRIGHTON & HOVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

ROCKY CLUMP, STANNER, EAST SUSSEX
GRID REFERENCE TQ328192

EXCAVATIONS 1996
SECTIONS 1:10 SHEET 1 OF 4 SH

FEATURE 90
E/W profile

FEATURE 139+14
profile

FEATURE 139
N profile

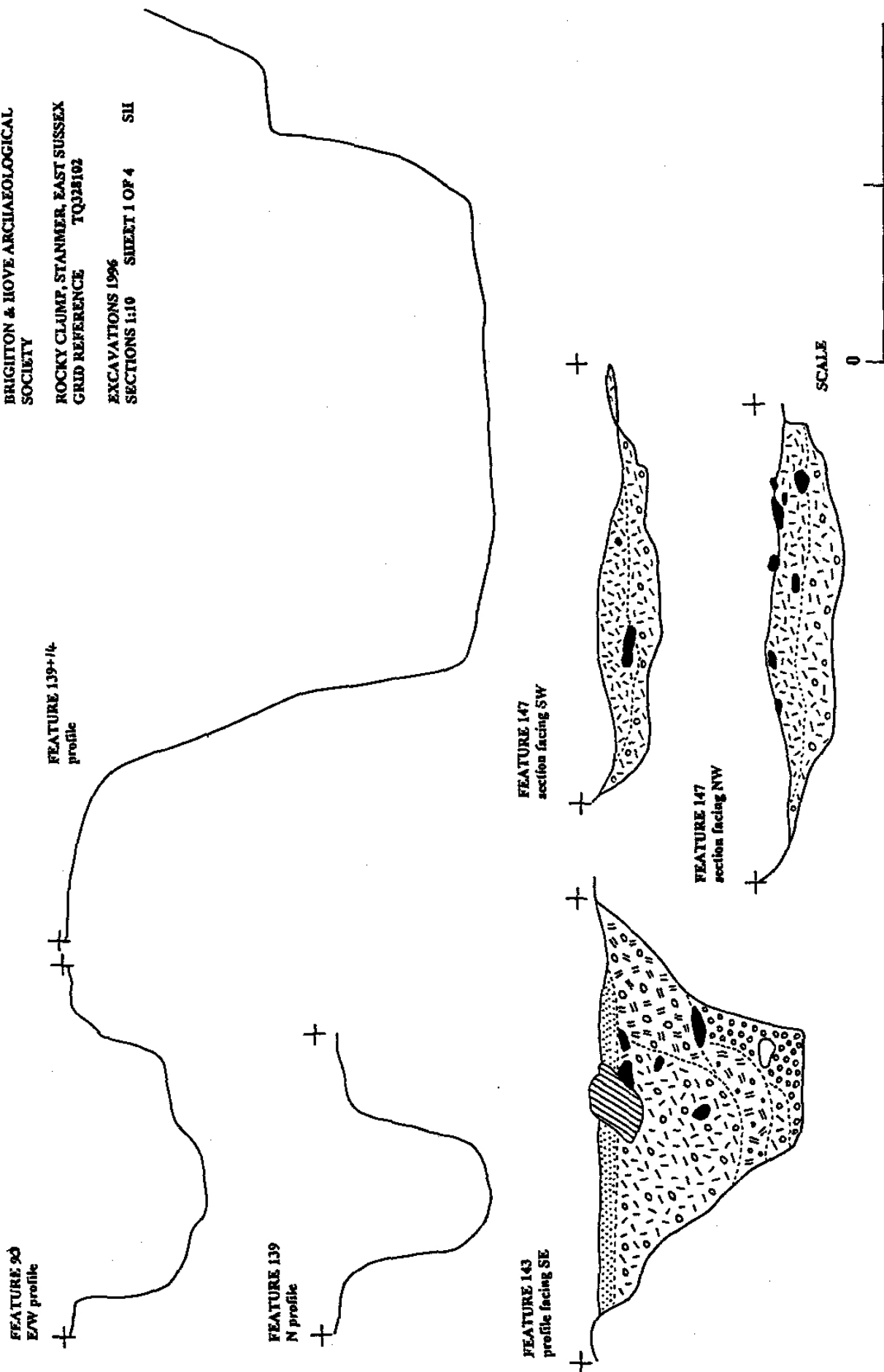
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profile facing SE

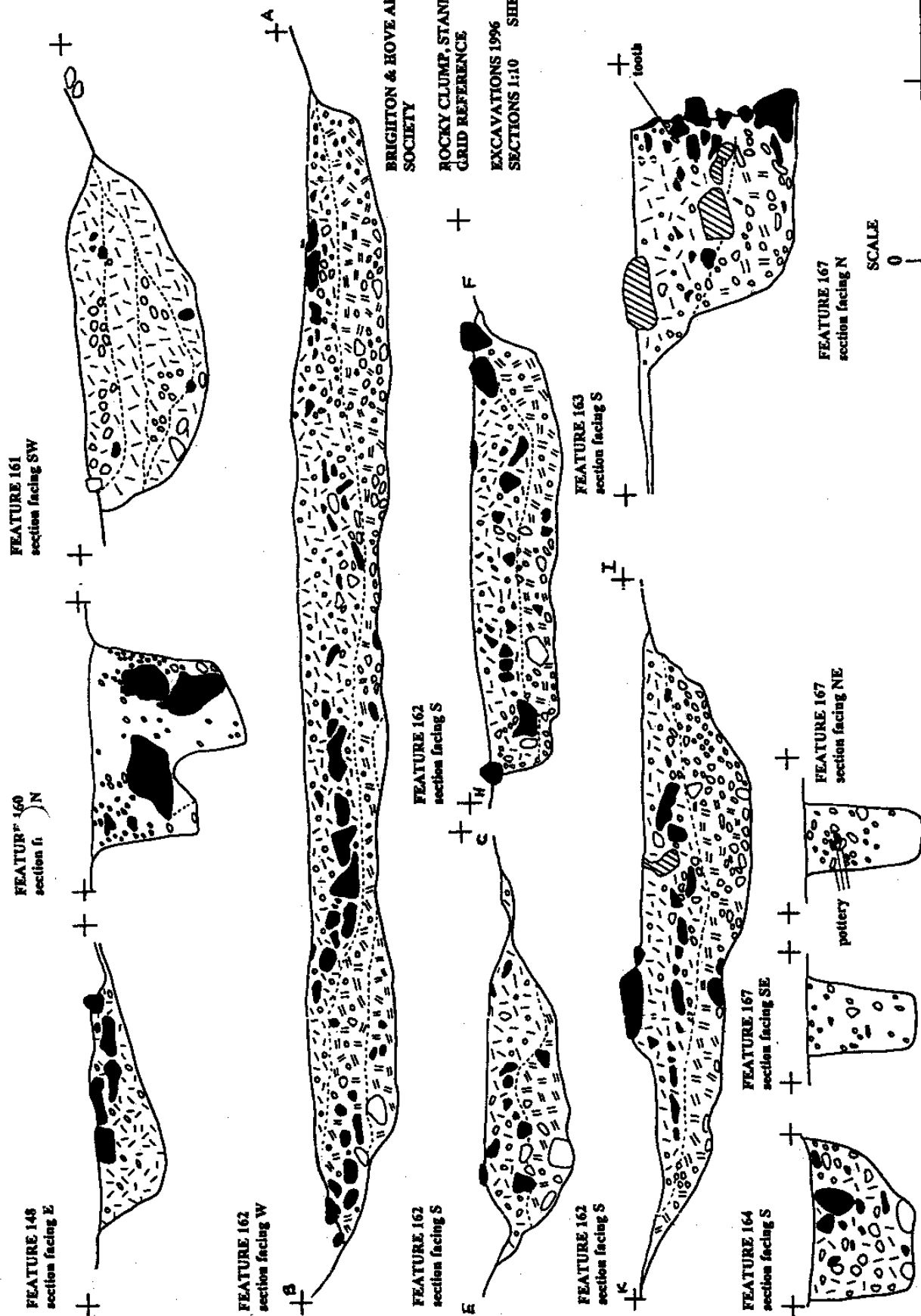
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section facing SW

FEATURE 147
section facing NW

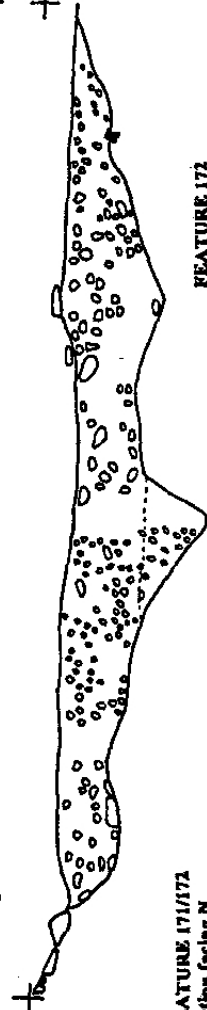
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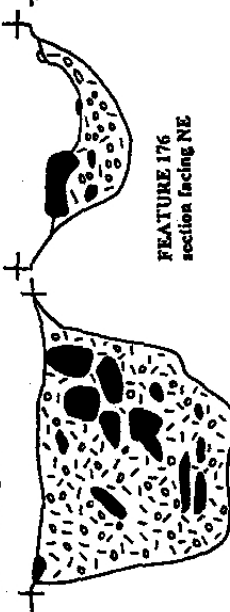
FEATURE 171/172
section facing E



FEATURE 171/172
section facing N



FEATURE 175
section facing SE



FEATURE 182
section facing S



FEATURE 176
section facing NE



FEATURE 182
section facing W

BRIGHTON & HOVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

ROCKY CLUMP, STANNER, EAST SUSSEX
GRID REFERENCE TQ328102

EXCAVATIONS 1996
SECTIONS 1:10 SHEET 3 OF 4 SH

FEATURE 171
section facing N



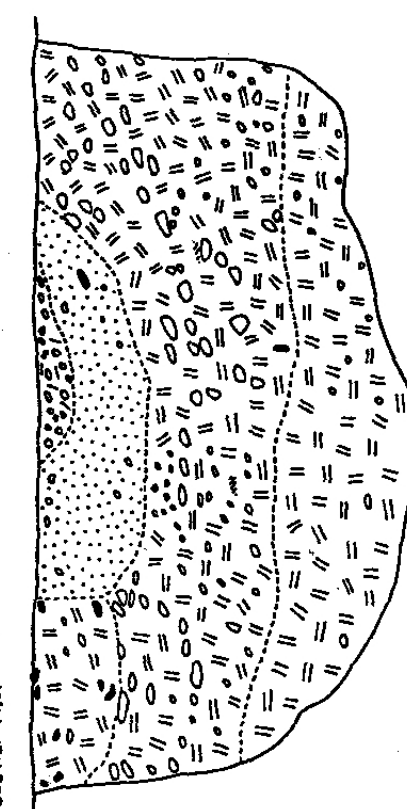
FEATURE 172
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FEATURE 177/
profile facing N

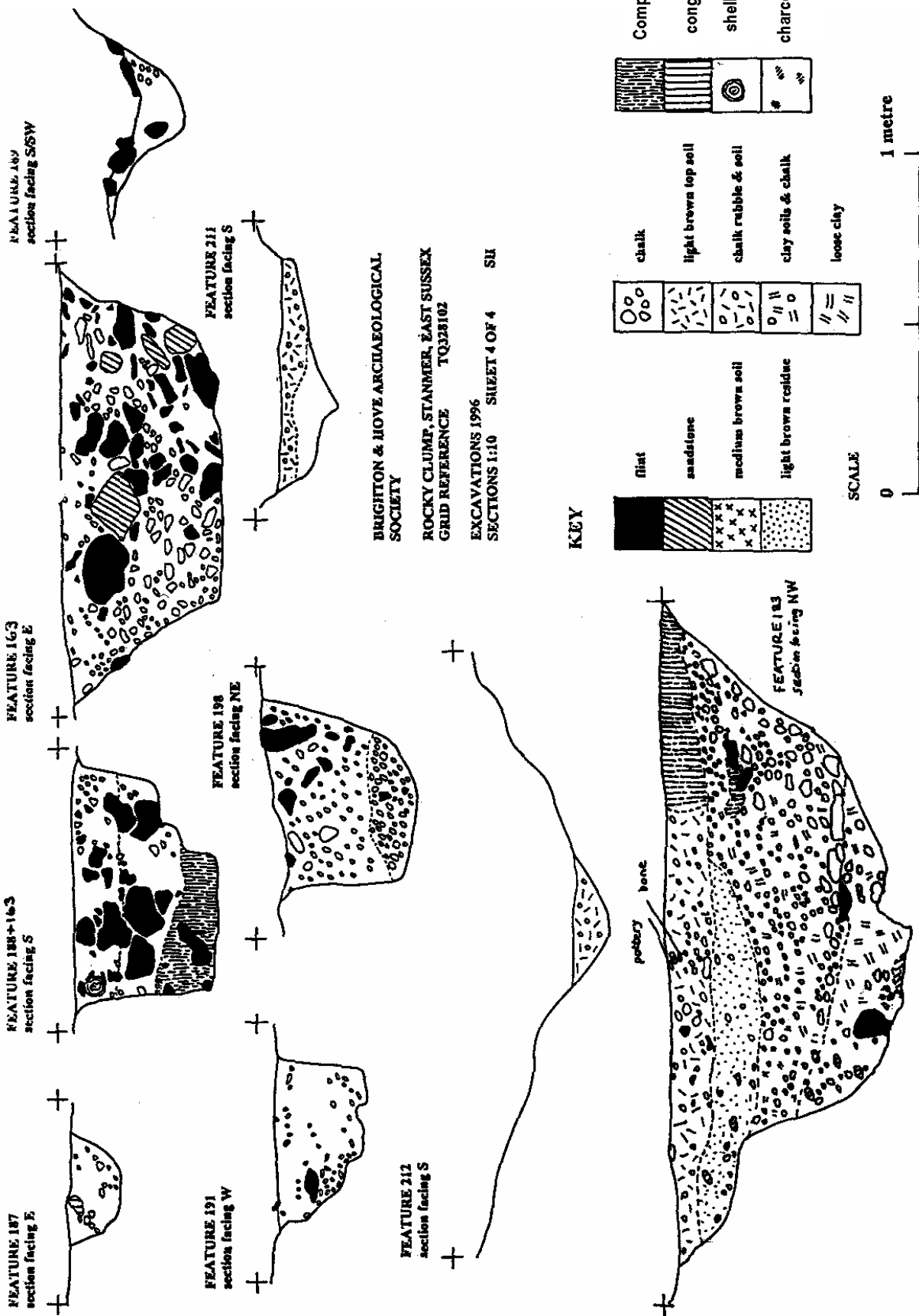


FEATURE 183
section facing SE



SCALE

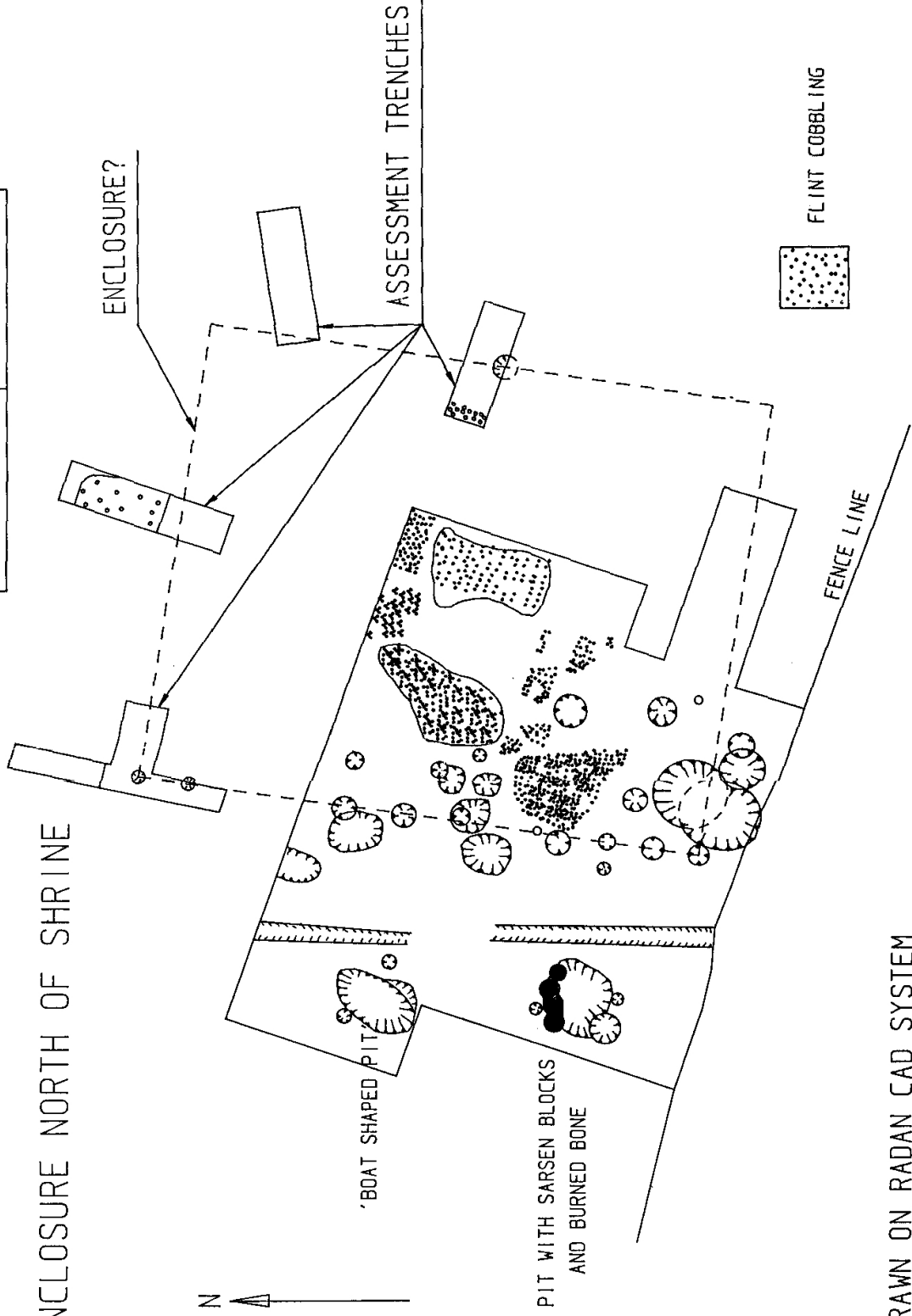




ROCKY CLUMP 1996 SITE PLAN
ENCLOSURE NORTH OF SHRINE

10 METRES

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DRAWN ON RADAN CAD SYSTEM