

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT BRIGHTON POLYTECHNIC,  
NORTH FIELD SITE, VARLEY HALLS, COLDEAN LANE,  
BRIGHTON**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 South-Eastern Archaeological Services were commissioned by Walter Liewellyn and Sons Ltd to conduct an archaeological evaluation the site for new student accommodation at Varley Halls, Brighton. The site is shown hatched on fig.1. The project design. was based on a brief prepared by Dr A.Woodcock, County Archaeologist, East Sussex County Council. The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence/absence,, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area concerned.
- 1.2 The underlying geology of the site is chalk and the ground slopes down from north to south.

## **2. METHOD**

- 2.1 Documentary sources in the Public Record Office (P.R.O.) and British Library (B.L.) were searched and articles by Warne (1989) and Farrant (1979) were consulted. The British, Library collection includes the Newcastle Papers, amongst which are records of the Pelham family which held the manor of Stanmer from the 18th century.
- 2.2 The Sites and Monuments Record of East Sussex County.Council was consulted, and air records held as part of the record were examined.
- 2.3 Twenty randomly spaced one—metre square test pits were dug by hand and the excavated topsoil sieved to assess its artifact content. The locations of these pits are shown as TP1, TP2 etc on fig. 2.
- 2.4 Trial trenches were excavated by machine as shown on fig. 2 numbered T1, T2 etc. Limited excavation of features revealed took place in order to recover dating evidence.
- 2.5 A resistivity survey was conducted over the area shown gridded on fig. 2, to check areas not covered by trenching.

## **3. RESULTS**

- 3.1 Documentary Research by Mark F. Gardiner BA FSA MIFA
  - 3.1.1 The site of -the proposed halls of residence lie in the area of the manor of Stanmer. Warne (1989, 196—203) has shown that the landscape of Stanmer is largely the product of the purchase of the lands of the tenantry and the demesne farmer (the leasee of the lord's land) during the mid-17th and 18th century and the subsequent creation of Stanmer Park (B.L. Add. MS. 33183).
  - 3.1.2 The site probably lies on the demesne (lord's) pasture land called Coald—downe, a name surviving in the modern Coldean. This was described in 1608 as an area, 300 acres in extent, or in another version of the survey 500 acres

(P.R.O. SC12/31/25, ff. 42r., 44r.; P.R.O. LR2/198, f. 62v.). As such, it is likely to have been rough pasture and would not have been settled or cultivated.

- 3.1.3 Few medieval records of the manor of Stanmer survive. Some court roll entries from the 14th century are transcribed in a later court book. These make no reference to Cold—downe and this negative evidence tend to confirm that it was part of the demesne then (B.L. Add. MS. 33182. The court book mostly contains records of South Mailing and Lindfield, but the tenants at Stanmer were suitors to the court in the 14th century, for example f. l3r.).
- 3.1.4 It seems probable that by the early 17th century the area of the proposed development was pasture land and there is no evidence to show that it had not been similarly used in the medieval period.

### **3.2 The Sites and Monuments Record**

- 3.2.1 The proposed development will not affect any currently known archaeological sites. However, many such sites are known in the surrounding area, shown on fig. 3 (which is a copy of the relevant S.M.R. map). The majority of these are of prehistoric or of Romano—British date, and include chance finds of small objects such as coins, human burials, linear earthworks, field systems and settlement sites.
- 3.2.2 Recent excavations at the nearby site of Downsview, in advance of the construction of the Brighton bypass, revealed a settlement site dated to the Late Bronze Age.
- 3.2.3 In view of the number of sites in the area, it therefore seems probable that archaeological evidence will be found on the site of the proposed development.

### **3.3 Test Pits**

- 3.3.1 The quantities of finds from the test pits are tabulated in Appendix 1. Mr J. Funnell of the Brighton and Hove Archeological Society recovered some finds from an engineer's borehole during geological investigations, shown as BH3 on fig. 2 and Appendix 1.
- 3.3.2 Finds from the test pits suggest occupation in the area during the prehistoric, Romano—British and post-medieval periods.

### **3.4 Trial Trenches**

- 3.4.1 The results of the trial trenching are summarised below. Trench 4 was in addition to those originally specified, and was dug to see if the concentration of features visible in Trench 3 continued to the south. Trench 3 was position slightly away from the intended line (the long axis of the proposed building) due to a setting out error discovered too late to be corrected.
- 3.4.2 Trench 1. This contained four features numbered 9,

11, 13 and 15. Feature 9 was large, possibly circular, with a grey silty clay fill. A short extension of the trench was excavated to establish its southern edge (on the downward slope). This was less well defined than the western and eastern edges. The feature was too large to excavate, but a small sondage suggested that it had a horizontal base. No dating evidence was recovered. It is possible that it represents a platform terraced into the hillside. Features 11, 13 and 15 appeared to be small holes, of uncertain function. No dating evidence was recovered.

3.4.3 Trench 2 this contained the butt end of a ditch, feature 19. a cross section was excavated, but no dating evidence was recovered.

3.4.4 Trench 3. This contained four features, no dating evidence being recovered from any of them. Feature 1 was a small hole containing a fill of dark grey silt with some charcoal. It appeared to be cut by feature 5. Feature 3 was a small round hole filled with greyish brown clay silt. Feature 5 was an irregular hole filled with brown clay with chalk fragments. It could be the result of tree root disturbance. Feature 7 was a small shallow circular hole filled by grey silt with chalk and charcoal flecks.

3.4.5 Trench 4. No features were located in Trench 4.

3.4.5 The trial trenches confirm that archaeological features are present on the site, though it was not possible to establish their date or function.

### **3.5 Resistivity Survey**

3.5.1 The results of the resistivity survey are shown on fig. 5.

3.5.2 The limited scope of the survey does not allow for detailed interpretation. There are, however, distinct areas of high resistance (dark) and low resistance (light), which are likely to represent further features similar to those located by the trial trenching.

## **4. SUMMARY**

4.1 Trial trenching indicates that there are features of archaeological importance, including a ditch and a possible terraced platform, on the site.

4.2 The resistivity survey suggests that in addition to the above there are archaeological features present elsewhere on the site.

4.3 No dating evidence was directly recovered from the features located, but finds from the topsoil suggest activity in the area during the prehistoric, Romano—British and post-medieval periods.

4.4 The documentary evidence suggests that the site has been open pasture from the medieval period.

## References

- Farrant, S. 1979 'The Building of Stanmer House and the Early Development of the Park, c. 1720 to 1750, Sussex Archaeological Collections, 117, 195-9.
- Warne, H. 1989 'Stanmer: a restructured settlement', Sussex Archaeological Collections, 127, 189—210.

### APPENDIX 1

#### Artefact Quantities - Test Pits and Borehole

Pit no.	Flint flakes	Heat-cracked flint	BA pot	IA pot	Roman pot	Med pot	Post-Med pot	Post-Med building material	Other
1	3	1							1 oyster frag.
2				1?			3	2	1 P-med glass
3	1			1 IA/Roman			4	3	
4	2	1							
5	1						1	1	
6	1			1			1	4	
7	2						1	5	
8		1							1 pipe stem
9									
10	1							1	
11	1			1			1	4	1 P-Med glass
12	2	1	1				2	5	1 pipe stem
13	2						5	1	1 oyster frag. 1 P-med glass
14	3	1						1	1 P-med glass
15							4	5	2 P-med glass
16	1						2	1	2 Fe nail
17							3	3	1 Fe nail
18					1		1		1 oyster frag.
19	2							1	1 oyster frag.
20								2	1 pipe stem
BH3	1		1 BA/IA						1 oyster frag.

#### Key

BA - Bronze Age  
 IA - Iron Age  
 Med - Medieval  
 Post-med or P-med - Post-medieval  
 frag. - fragment

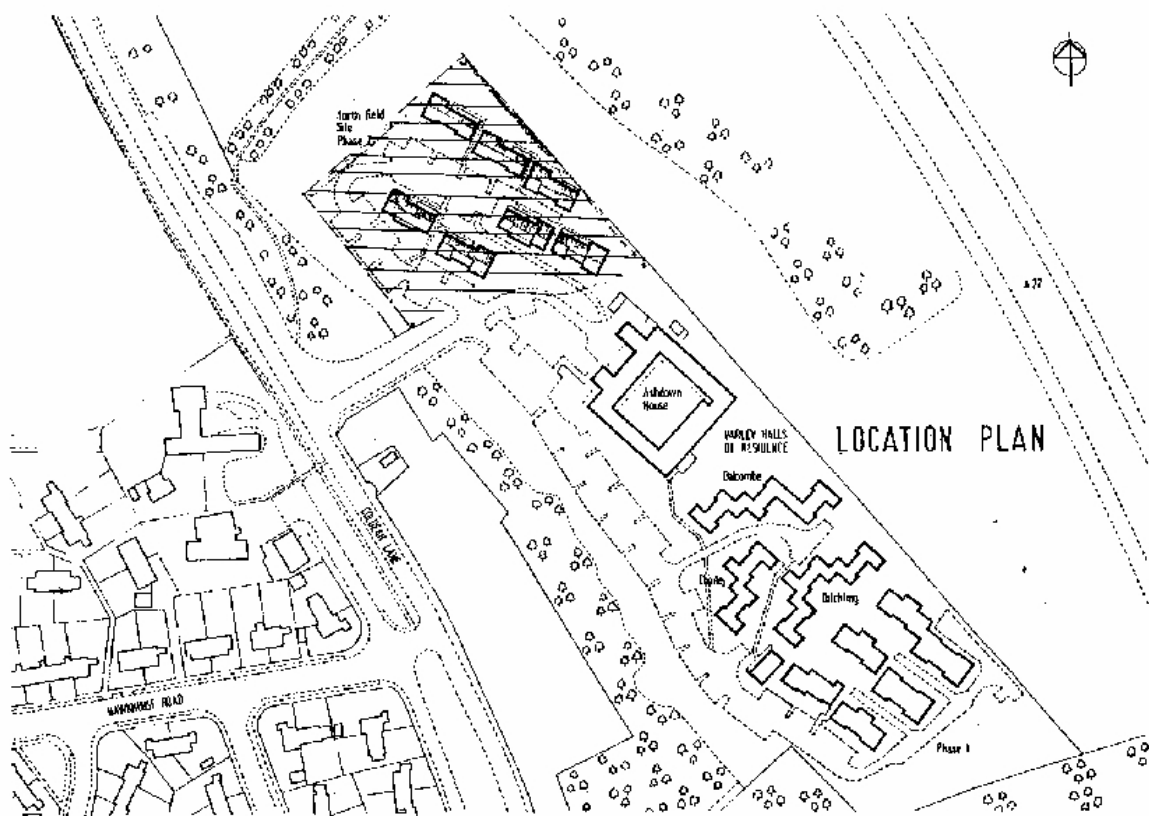
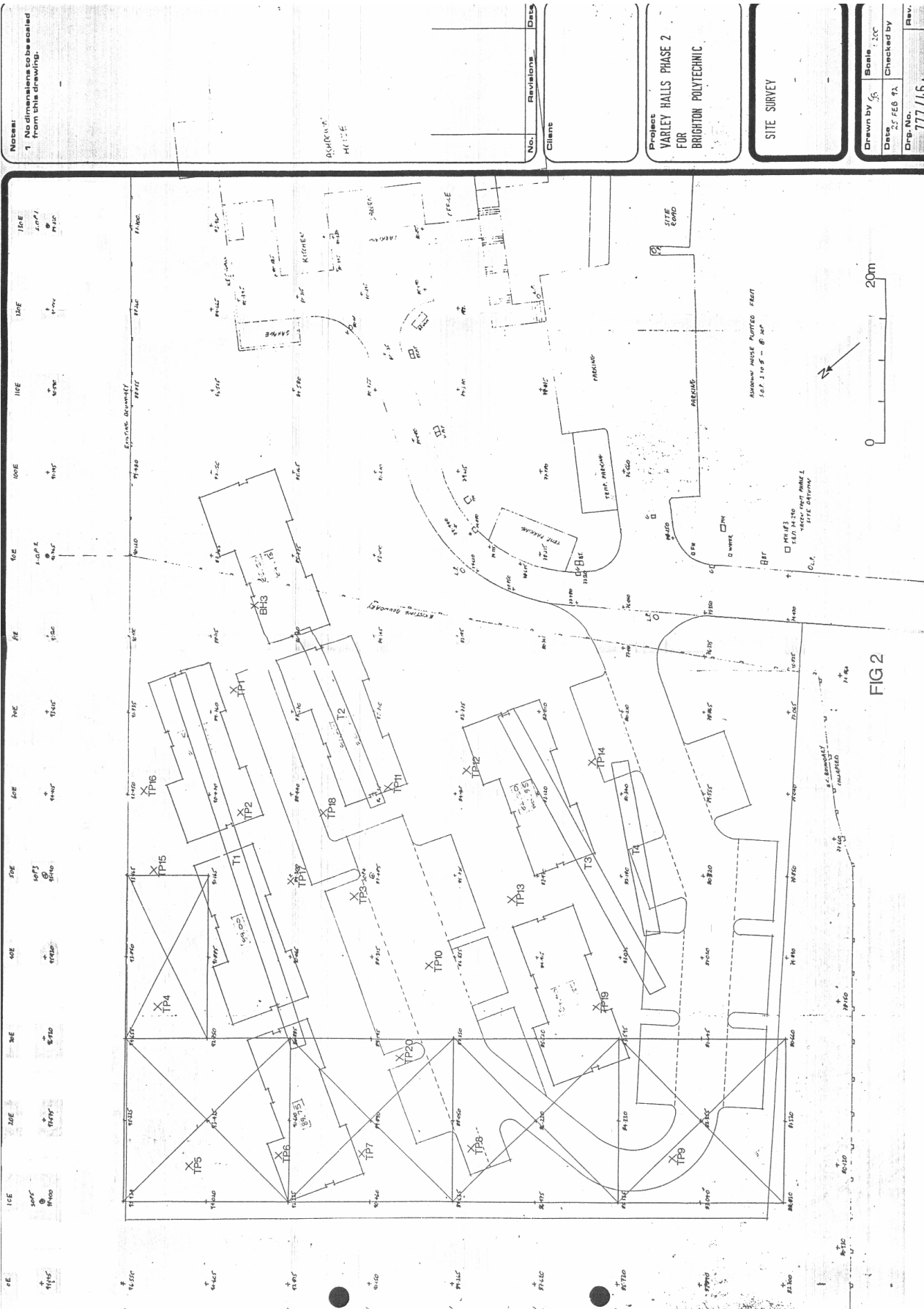


FIG 1

VARLEY HALLS PHASE 2 for  
BRIGHTON POLYTECHNIC



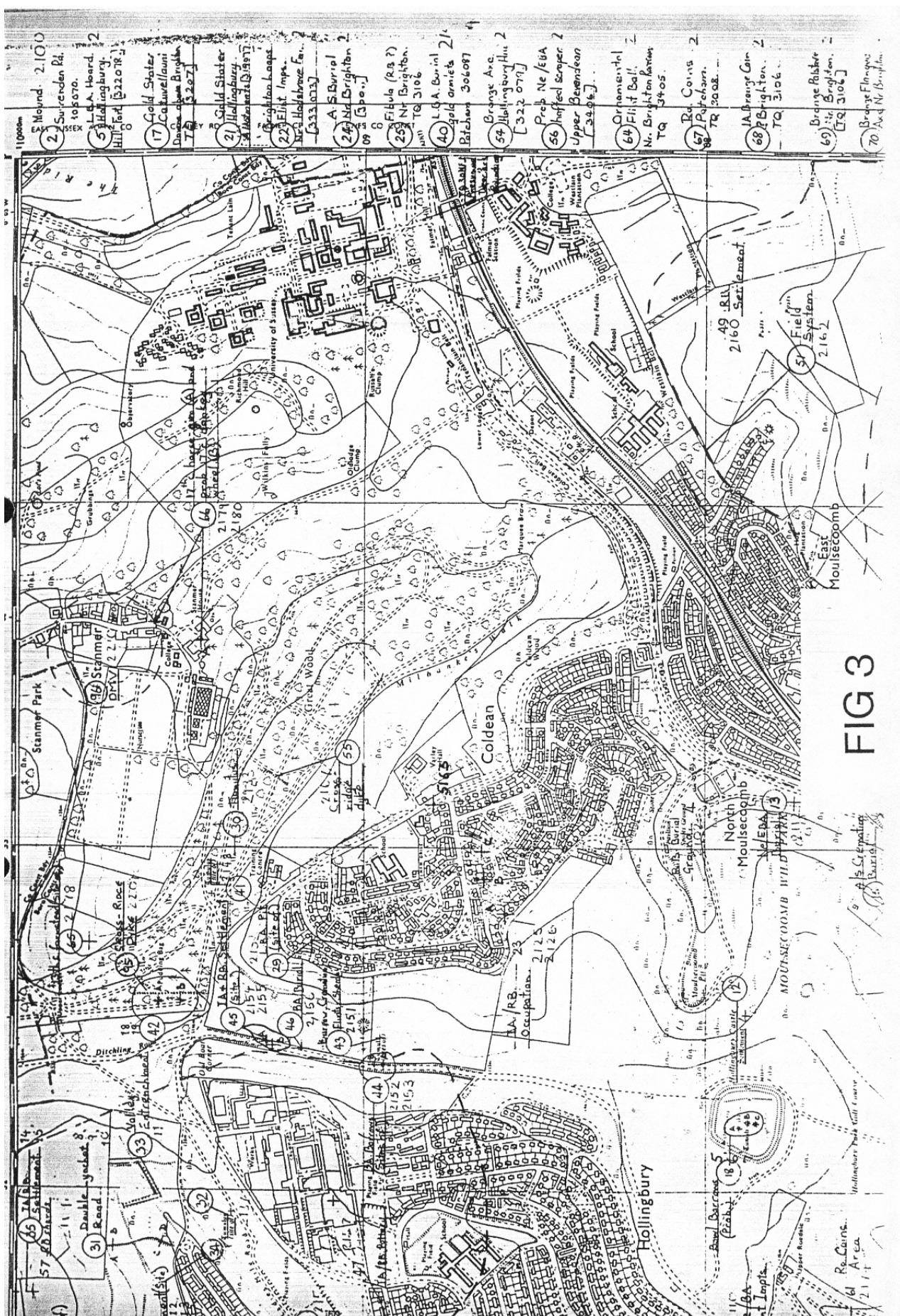


FIG 3

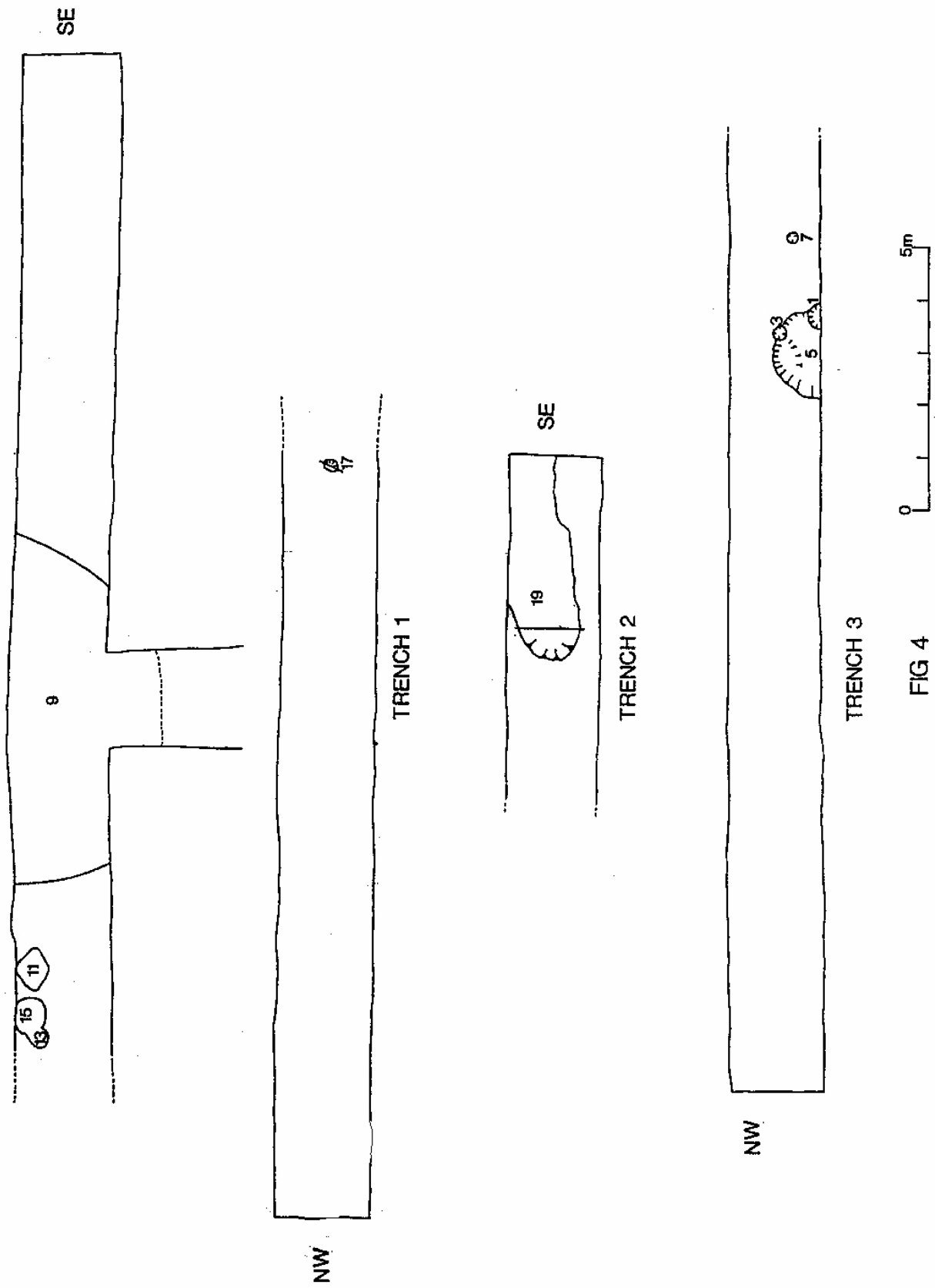




FIG 5