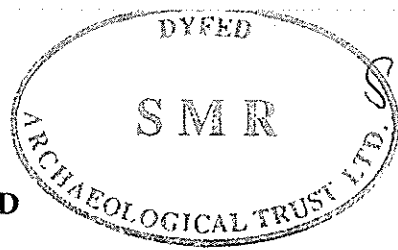


DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD



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REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND AT PARC-Y-DRAIN HIGH STREET ST CLEARS

Client: Terry Thomas & Co on behalf of the
Executive of the Estate of the late
Mrs B Price-Morgan

Evaluation Project Officer: I M Darke

Report by: I M Darke and D G Benson MA

Dated: 5th December 1993

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF LAND, PART PARC-Y-DRAIN, HIGH STREET, ST. CLEARS

Introduction

The site is subject to an outline planning application for a dwelling and garage (D4/23906/028). Following advice from the Curatorial Section, Dyfed Archaeological Trust, the Local Planning Authority, in accordance with Welsh Office Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG 16: Archaeology and Planning, November 1992) requested that the applicant secure an archaeological evaluation of the site. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide the Planning Authority with a sufficient information to assess the likely impact of the proposed development upon the archaeology of the site and to take this into account as a material consideration in the determination of the application. The Trust's Curatorial Section provided a specification for the evaluation and supplied the applicant with a list of archaeological contractors. Following this the applicant commissioned the Trust's own Field Section to carry out the work.

Site Location and Description

The site lies on the eastern side of the High St, lower St. Clears, between Ginnin House to the north and Parc-y-Drain to the south (Fig 1). The site is vacant ground part of the garden of Parc-y-Drain, and now grassed-over, with a number of young trees towards its western end. The frontage is defined by a stone wall with an angled narrow entrance to the garden (Fig 2). For the first 15m from the frontage, the site is relatively level and thereafter slopes gradually down to the eastern boundary which is marked by a slightly curving stone wall. There is a significant drop in ground level of nearly 2m on the eastern side of the wall (Fig 3: profile X-X).

Archaeological Interest

The application area lies to the north of the former defences of the mediaeval borough of St Clears and to the south of the site of the mediaeval Priory. It is likely that the mediaeval borough expanded beyond the earlier defended area (Fig 1). The application area is shown as open ground on early maps (Enclosure Map 1810 and Tithe Map 1840) and there is no evidence to suggest that it has been substantially disturbed since the Middle Ages. The width of the area (20m) is sufficient to have accommodated two burgage plots with associated frontage dwellings.

The Excavations

The site investigations took place in the week beginning the 22nd November and during the week of the 29th November. Six 2m square test pits (Fig 2) were initially excavated by machine to remove topsoil to the levels of archaeological interest. Each pit was then carefully trowelled to reveal the surface of the buried deposits. Each pit was then excavated to expose the natural subsoil - a stiff yellowish-brown clay. For pits 1-3, this involved removal of accumulated garden soil; for pits 4-6, removal of post-mediaeval deposits was also involved. Features cut into the subsoil were also emptied in each pit. Profiles (Fig 3) were taken to indicate the natural topography of the site and the depths of buried deposits in each pit.

Test Pit 1 (Fig 4; Fig 6, section 1).

This revealed some 50cms of topsoil and accumulated garden soil resting on the natural subsoil. Eleven sherds of mediaeval pottery and one 19thC sherd were recovered from the topsoil. The base of a shallow curving gully (Feature 3) was cut into the subsoil and the fill of this feature produced one sherd of 12thC pottery.

Test Pit 2 (Fig 4; Fig 6: sections 2,3)

This contained a greater depth (some 70cms) of topsoil and accumulated garden soil from which three sherds of mediaeval and six of 17th-20thC date were recovered. On the northern side was the edge of a ditch (Feature 15). This feature had an irregular base due probably to animal disturbance. Parallel to this feature was the well defined base of a ditch (Feature 18) which produced within its secondary fill (16) twelve sherds of mediaeval pottery and six of 17th-18thC date. No finds were found in the primary fill of the ditch, but it seems very likely that the feature is of mediaeval origin, as also the butt-end of another ditch (Feature 20) at a right angle to the former feature.

Test Pit 3 (Fig 4, Fig 7: sections 4,5).

Thirty-five to 45 cms of topsoil overlay a number of features. The topsoil produced 2 sherds of mediaeval pottery, six 17th-19thC sherds and a fragment of iron slag. A shallow ditch (Feature 5) running the E-W across the pit produced a piece of late Mediaeval ridge tile from North Devon. Two other features (7,11) appeared to be gullies. The earliest feature in this test pit was an irregular pit (Feature 9) containing 18 lumps of iron slag.

Test Pit 4 (Fig 5, Fig 7: section 6, Fig 8: sections 7,8)

This had a much shallower depth of topsoil - some 10cms, containing finds of 18th-20thC date, overlying a sequence of stratified deposits and features. The eastern portion of the test pit contained a substantial amount of stone possibly derived from a nearby but unidentified wall. Associated pottery included 7 sherds of mediaeval pottery and 5 of 17th-18thC date. On the northern side of the test pit was a later intrusion - the corner of a pit (Feature 25) some 80cms deep filled largely filled with mortar flecked rubble containing finds of 18th-20thC date and capped with a layer of clay. It is possible that this may be the top of an infilled well.

Test Pit 5 (Fig 5, Fig 8:section 9, Fig 9:section 10)

Finds from a shallow topsoil some 15-20cms deep were of 19th-20thC date. Beneath were two layers of mixed mortar each up to 4cms thick with patches of clay. These surfaces were associated with finds of 19th-20thC origin and may represent debris from some relatively recent building operations, or alternatively, beaten floor surfaces within some temporary structure. The surfaces were not further investigated in the northern half of the test pit. In the southern half was a small approximately circular pit (Feature 34) which had cut through the mixed mortar layers and which also produced 19th and 20thC finds.

Test Pit 6 (Fig 5, Fig 9:section 11)

Beneath some 20cms of topsoil was a layer of slate and stone fragments from which 16 finds of 19th-20thC date were recovered and 1 sherd of probable mediaeval date. In the north east quarter of the test pit this layer was removed and revealed part of a pit at least 70cms deep with a fill similar to the pit in Test Pit 4 (Feature 25). The upper levels of this pit contained 19th-20thC finds. As Feature 25 in Test Pit 4, it is possible that this may be the top of an infilled well.

Summary and Conclusions

1. Over the site as a whole, the test excavations clearly demonstrated that the area is of archaeological significance and potential. From the limited areas of investigation (representing some 1.2% of the application area) there has been a significant number of mediaeval finds - vastly exceeding previously recorded finds of this period from St Clears - though this may be a reflection on the relative lack of previous investigation within the former Borough. Nevertheless, the quantity of mediaeval material recovered in itself confirms that the application area is of considerable archaeological importance.
2. Test pits 1-3, in the western half of the site produced evidence of features - including probable tenement boundary ditches - suggesting that this area may have been occupied by burgage plots at least by the 13thC AD. In Test Pits 4-6, evidence for features or structures on the frontage in the mediaeval period was not secure, though the presence of some mediaeval pottery and some undated features, including stonework, may suggest that such features may survive though affected by post-mediaeval activity.
3. In terms of the likely impact of development of the site, it may be pointed out that the mediaeval features recorded in Test pits 1-3 in the eastern section of the area are at present protected by a minimum of 35cms and a maximum of 70cms of archaeologically insignificant soil. In the western part of application area (Test pits 4-6) this coverage is reduced to 10-20 cms. Whilst the survival of earlier, mediaeval, features in this area remains uncertain, there seems little doubt that any such features, together with the archaeological evidence for the post-mediaeval use of this area would be severely affected should the site be developed.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust
3rd December 1993

Appendix A : Finds Report by D Brennan BA

Summary

LIST OF FINDS							
TEST PIT	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL
Pottery: Med/late med	12	15	3	7	0	1	38
: Post-med	1	11	3	16	37	45	113
Total	13	26	6	23	37	46	151
Tile	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Clay pipe	0	1	2	1	0	1	5
Glass	0	0	1	4	2	5	12
Iron	0	0	0	2	1	2	5
Iron slag	0	0	19	0	0	0	19
Bone	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Shell	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	13	28	28	30	41	65	205

The medieval pottery, representing nearly a quarter of the pottery recovered from the site is a significant addition to knowledge of such material from St Clears. The pottery comprises sherds from cooking pots in the local unglazed gravel-tempered fabric (starting date probably in the 12th century) and locally made glazed jugs in the same fabric. One sherd from a late 13th century ?Llanstephan made vessel is also present (Test Pit 2). There are sherds from one, possibly two jugs imported from the late 12th-early 13th century Ham Green kilns, Bristol (Test Pits 1,4).

All other pottery dates from the 17th through to the 20th century. Gravel-tempered wares of 17th/18th century date, imported from North Devon are present. Black and brown-glazed red earthenwares (unsourced but common in 18th and 19th century deposits) and miscellaneous white wares (19th and 20th century) are all represented.

Of particular interest is one fragment of North Devon glazed ridge tile, of 15th/16th century date (Test Pit 3).

A full schedule of all the finds is deposited with the site archive.

Appendix B: Excavation Archive

Site Plans and drawings

- 1 Site Plan 1:100
- 2 sheets of plans of test pits at 1:20
- 2 sheets of sections at 1:10, and including site profile at 1:100

Photographs

20 x 35mm B & W photographs

20 x 35mm colour slides

Other records

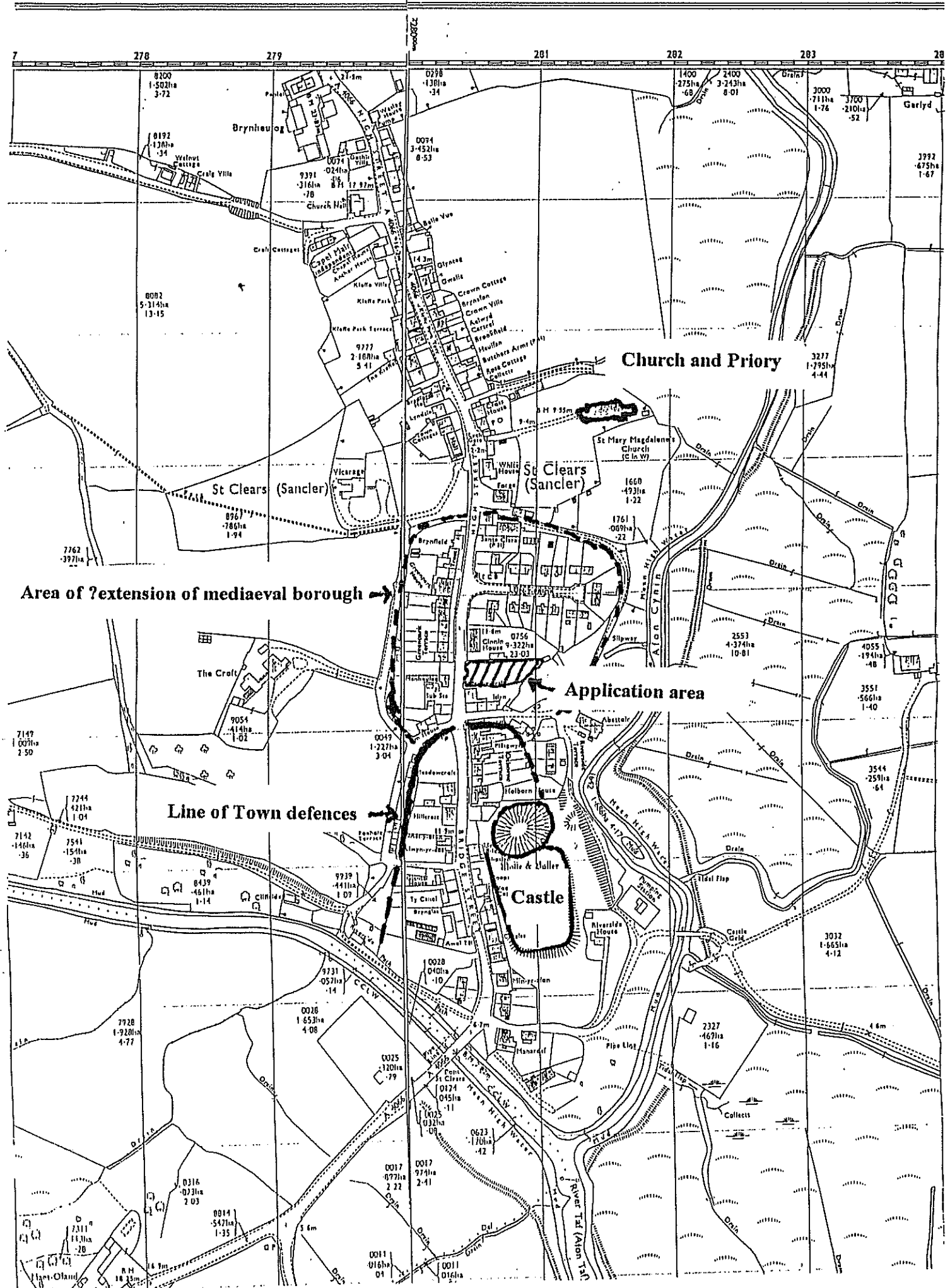
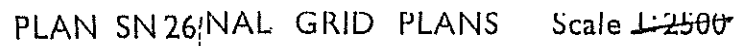
35 context records

Miscellaneous site notes

Finds

Detailed schedule and summary description of finds listed in Appendix A

The excavation archive will be deposited with Carmarthen Museum.



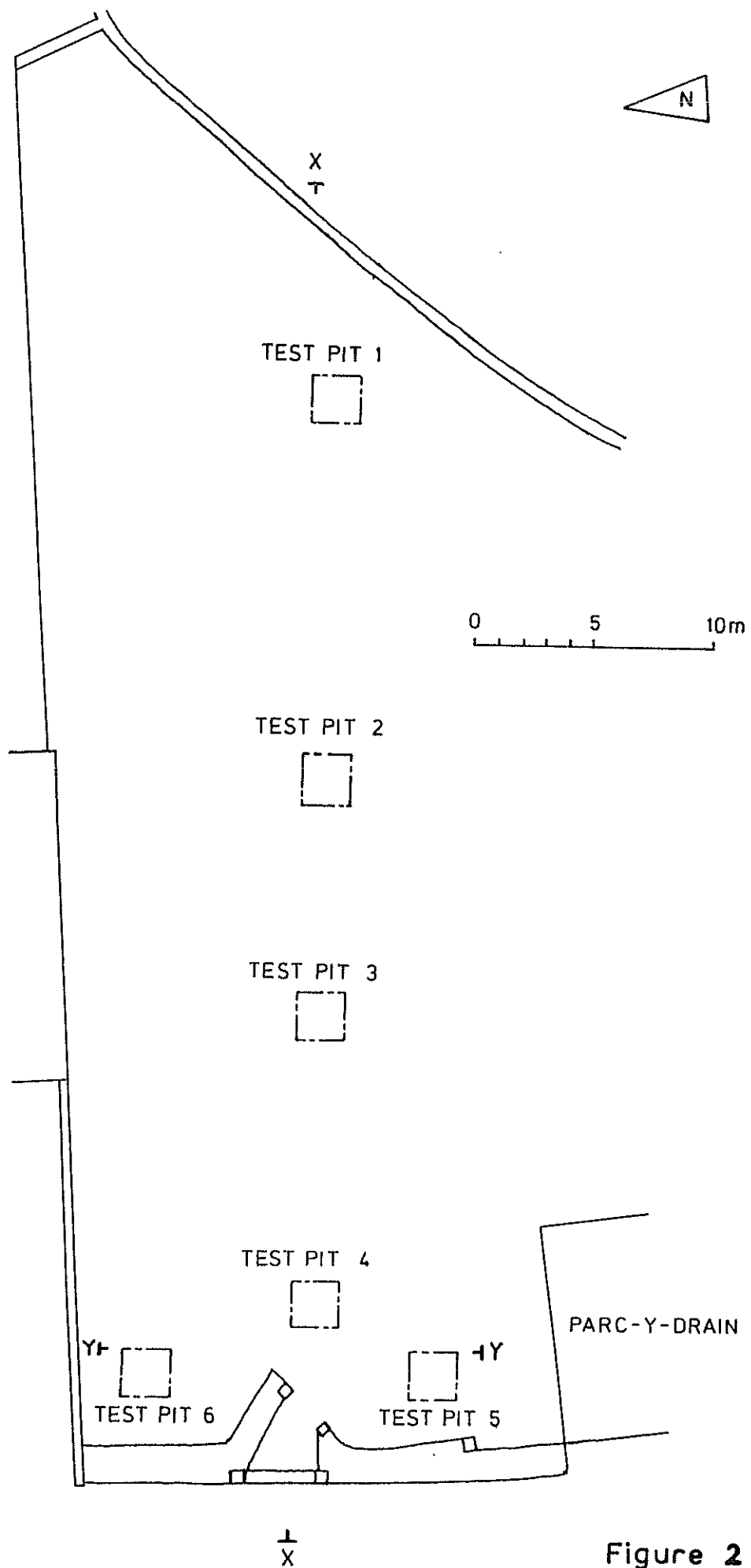


Figure 2

PROFILES showing depth of archaeological deposits

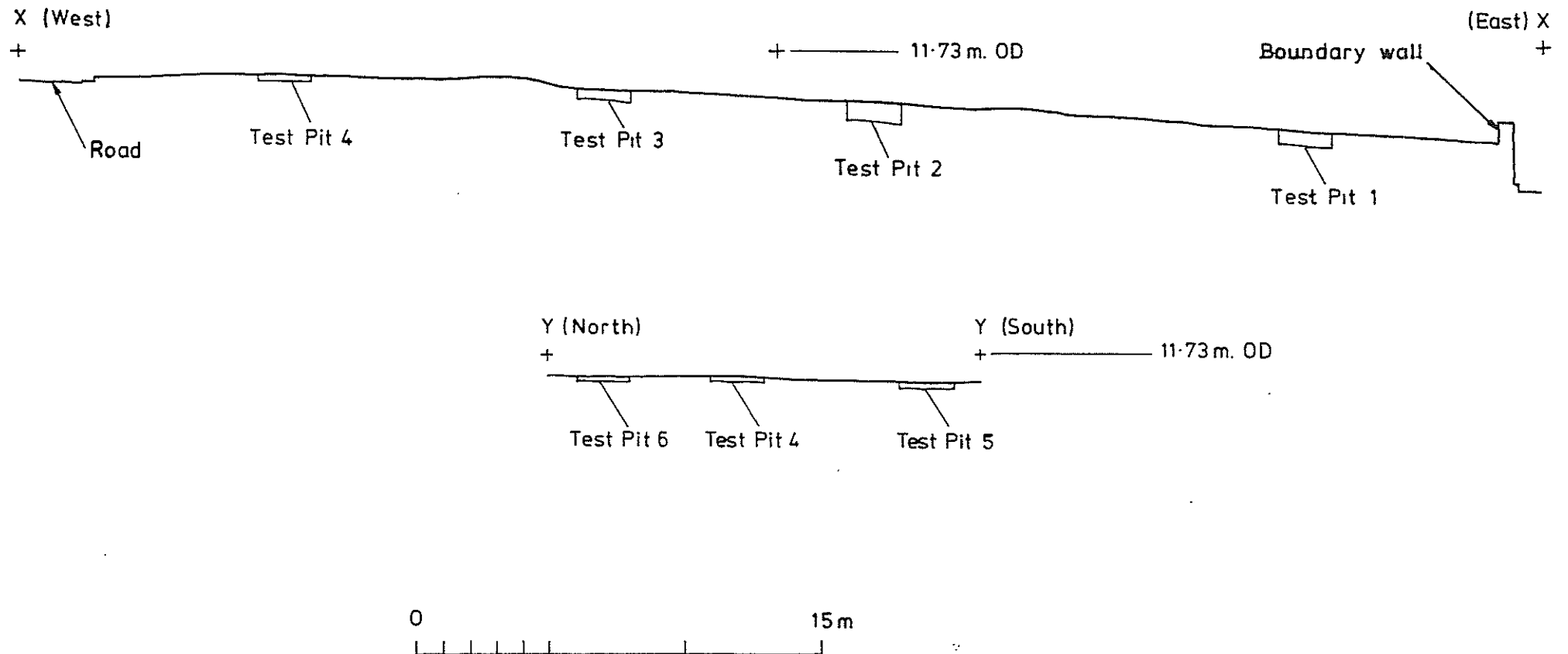
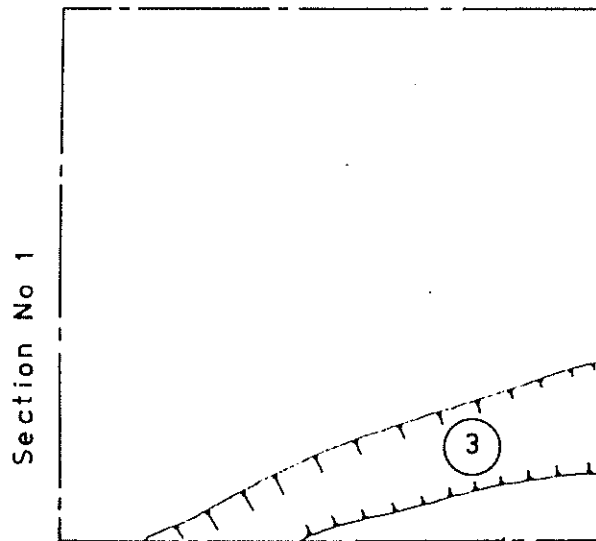
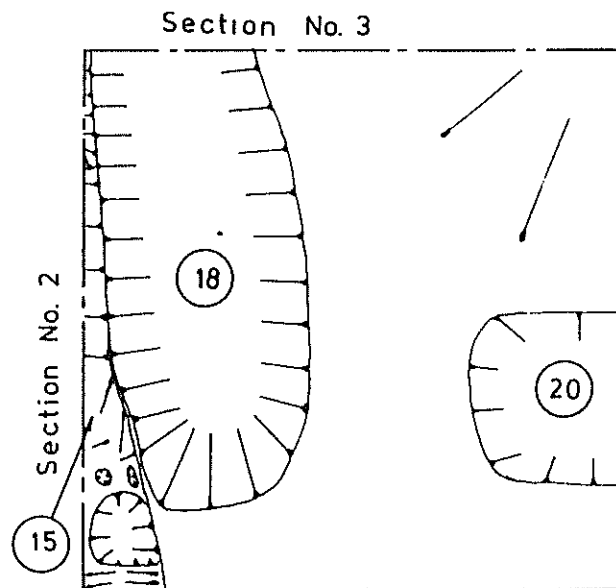


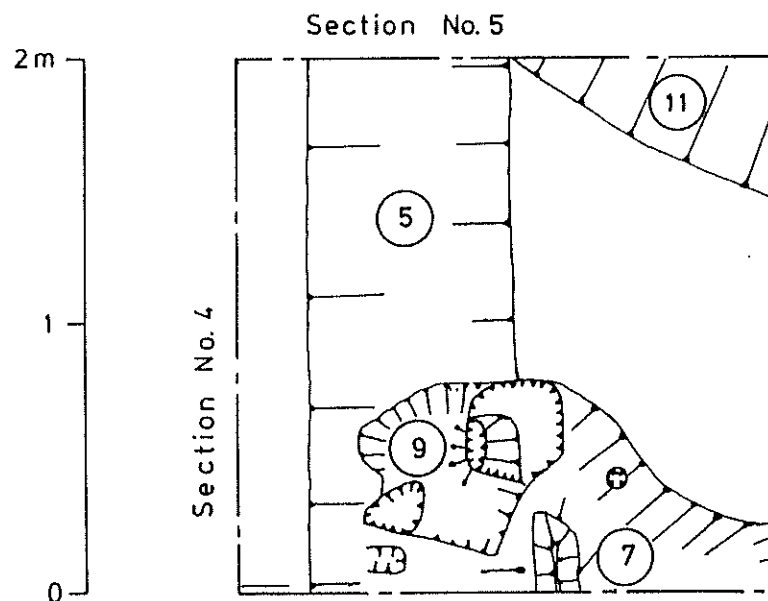
Figure 3



TEST
PIT
1



TEST
PIT
2



TEST
PIT
3

Figure 4

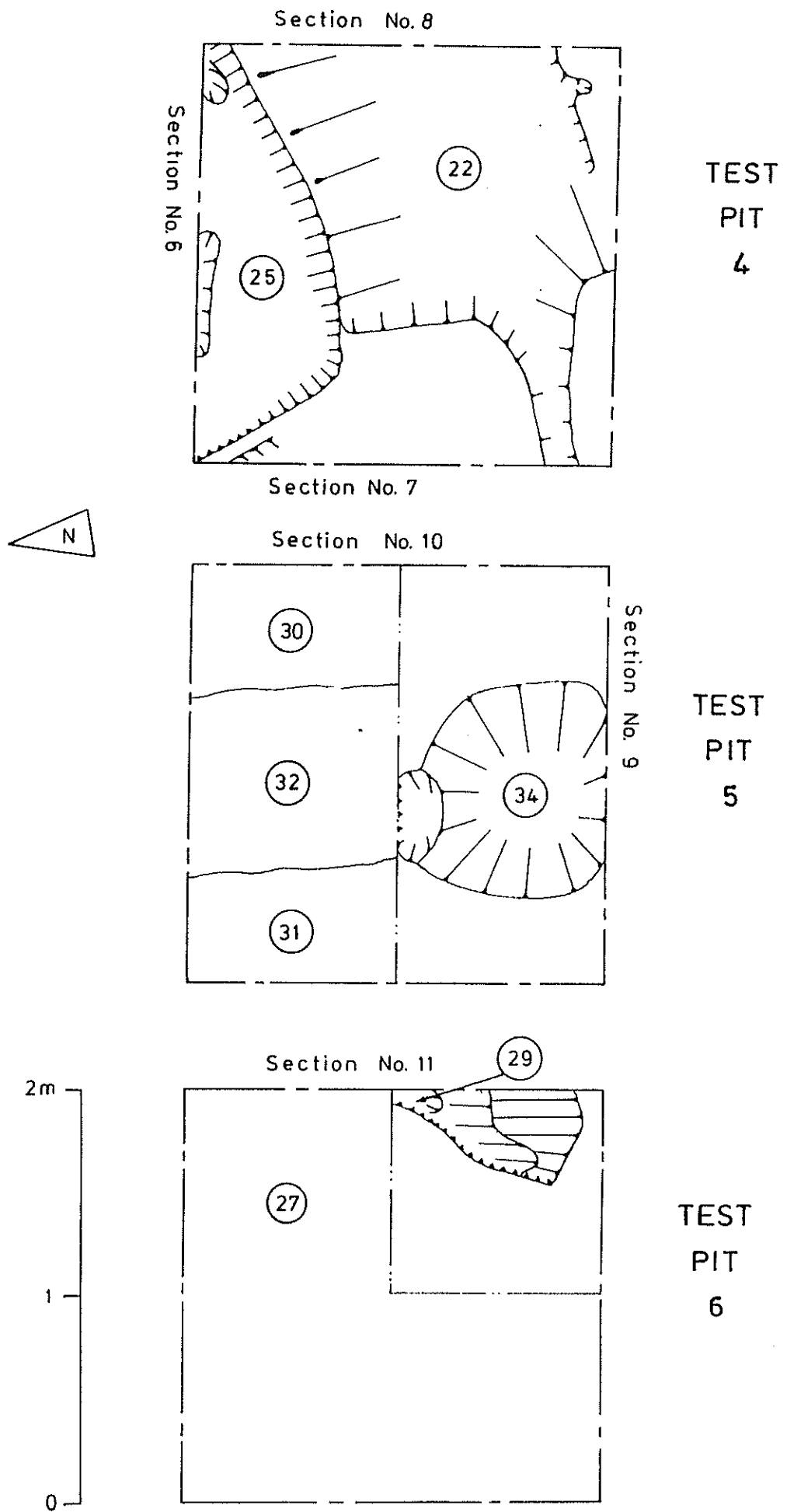


Figure 5

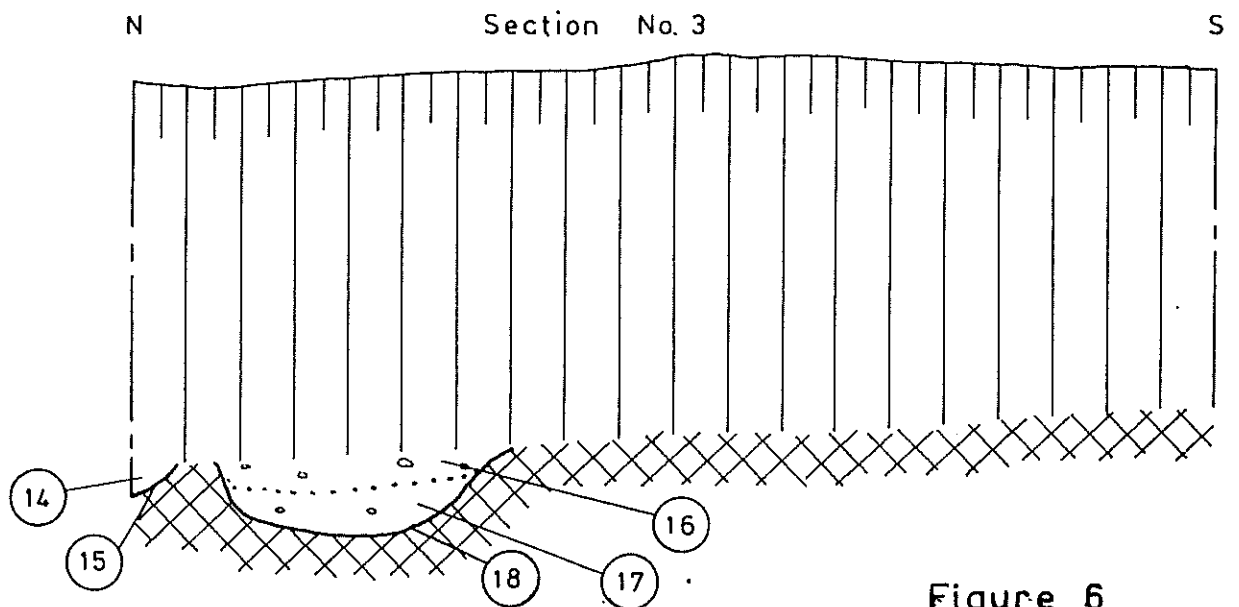
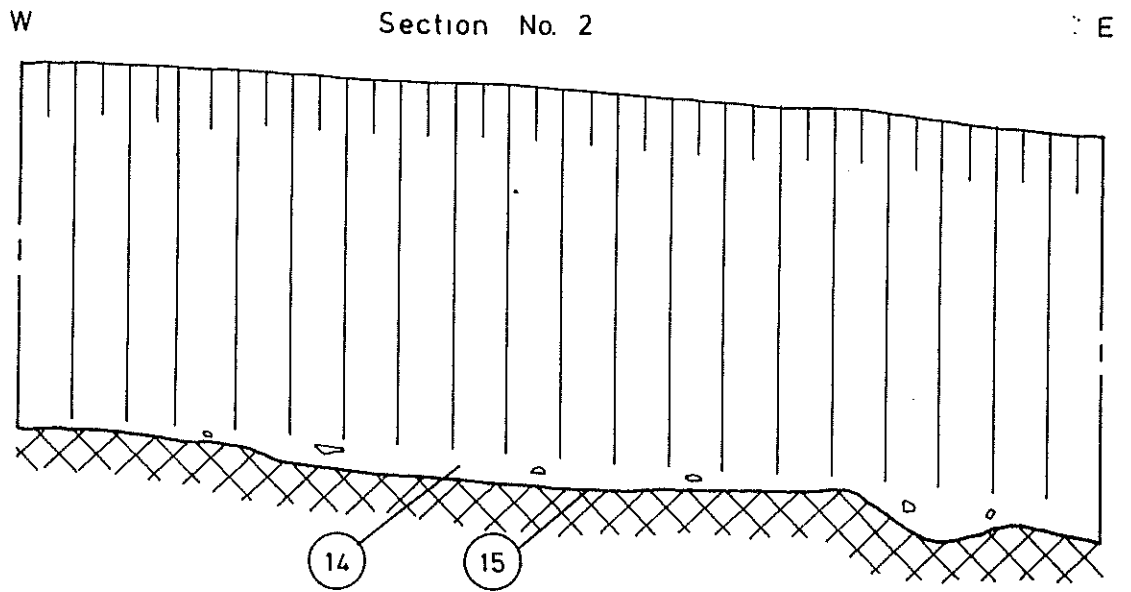
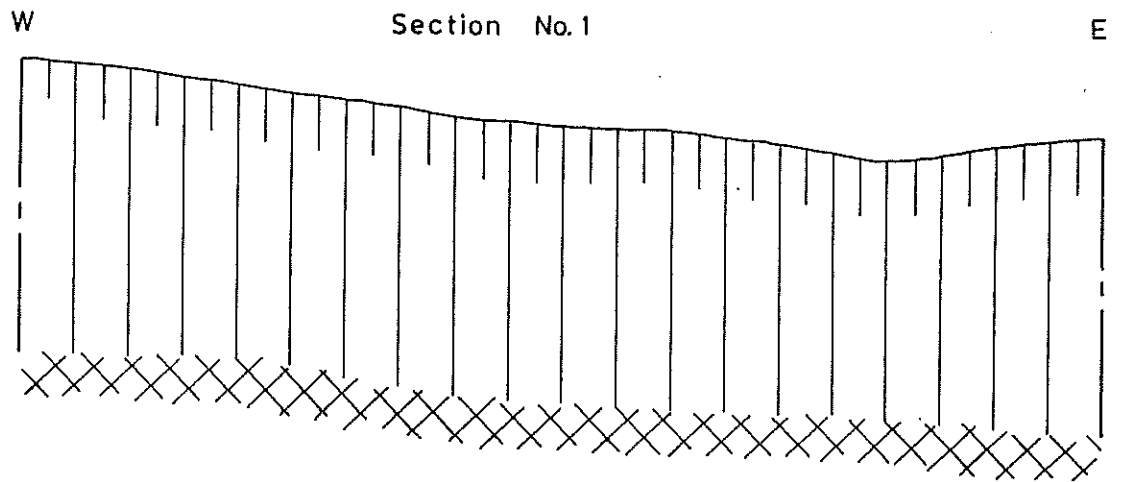
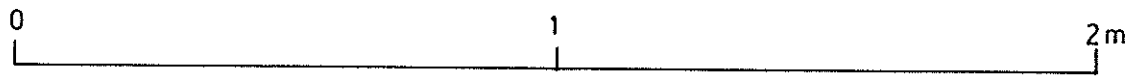


Figure 6

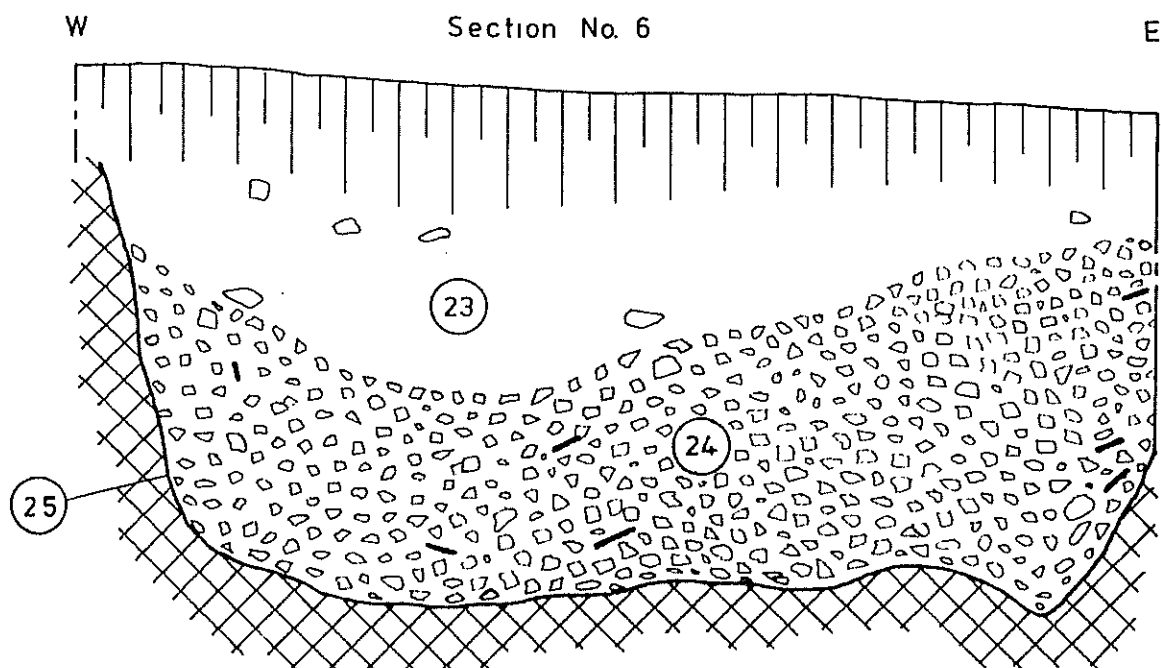
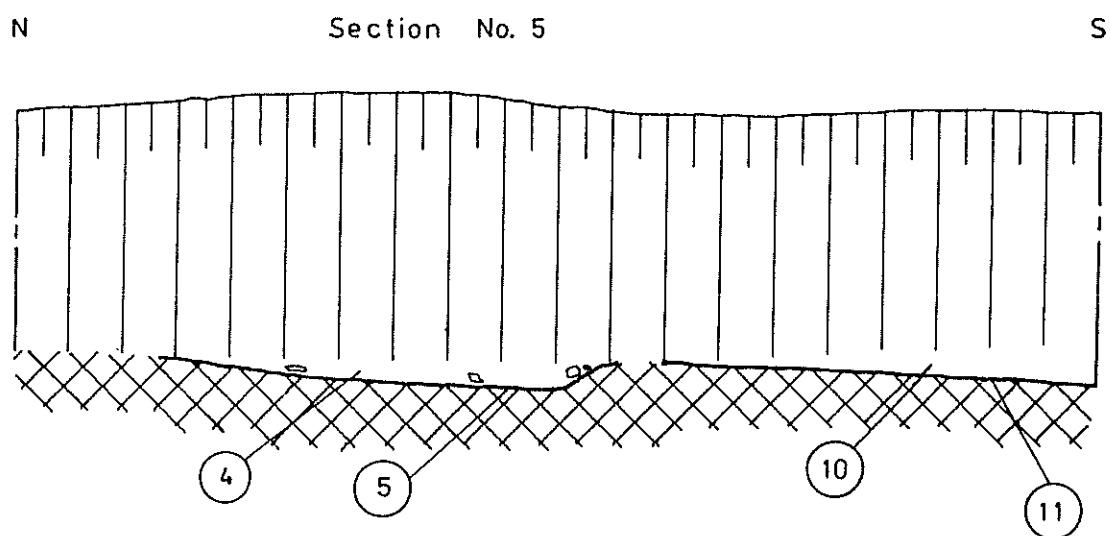
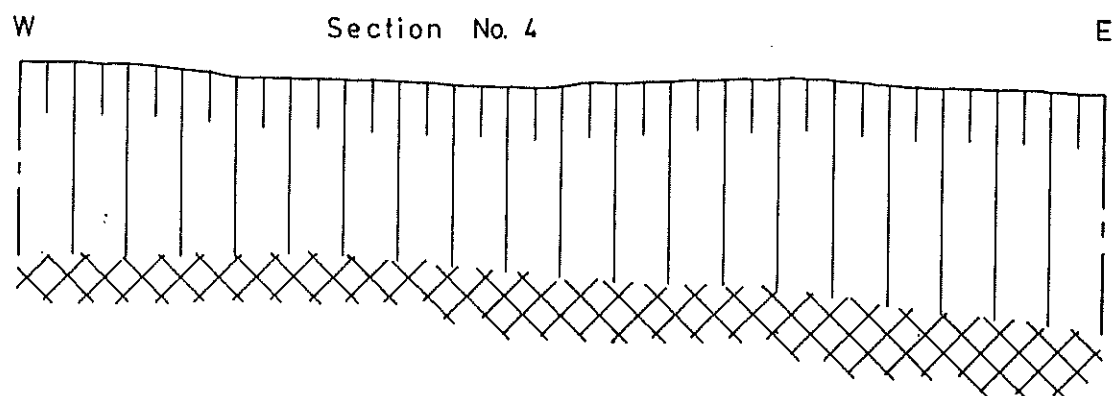


Figure 7

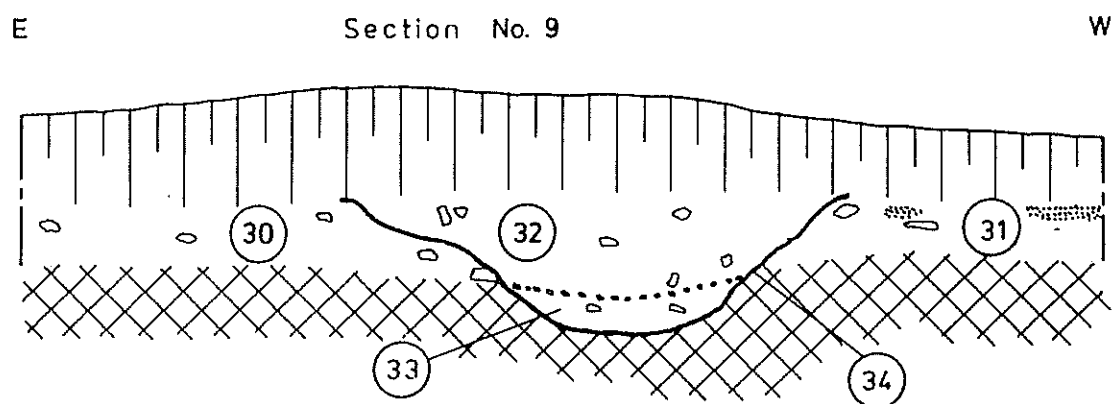
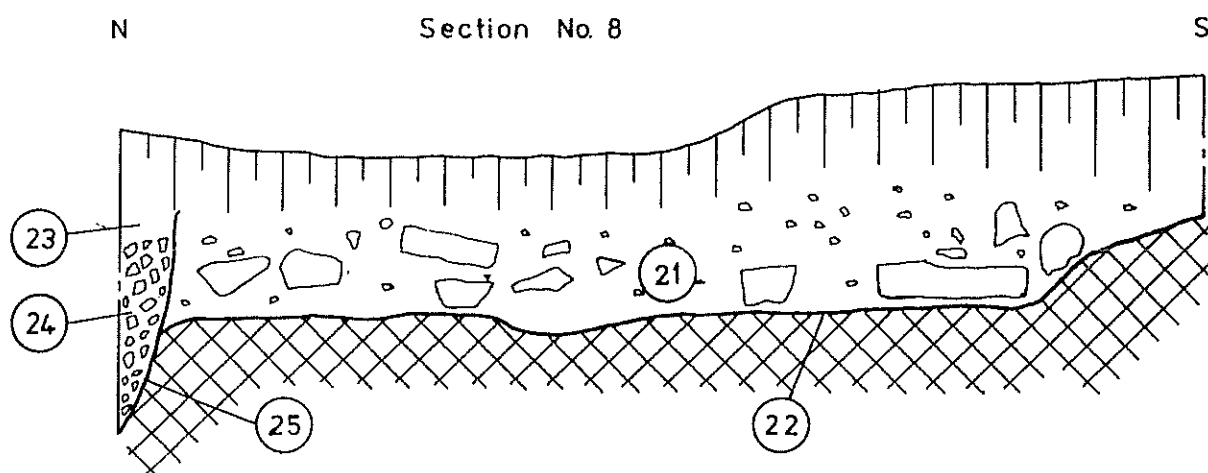
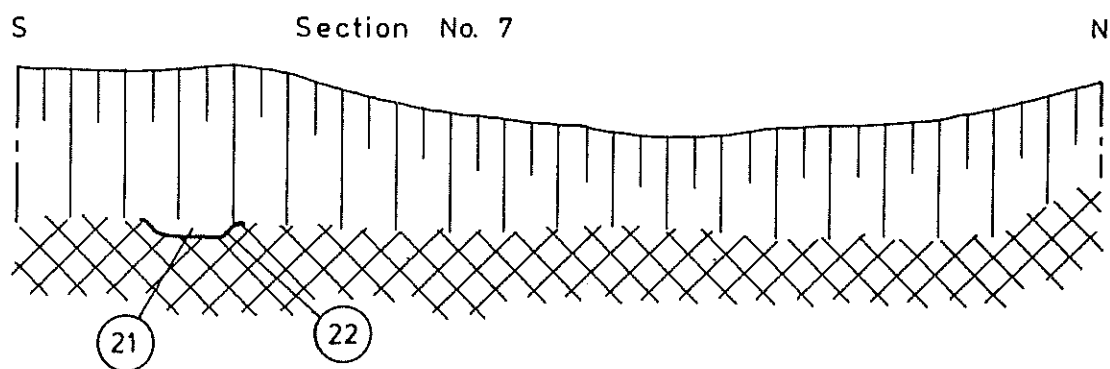
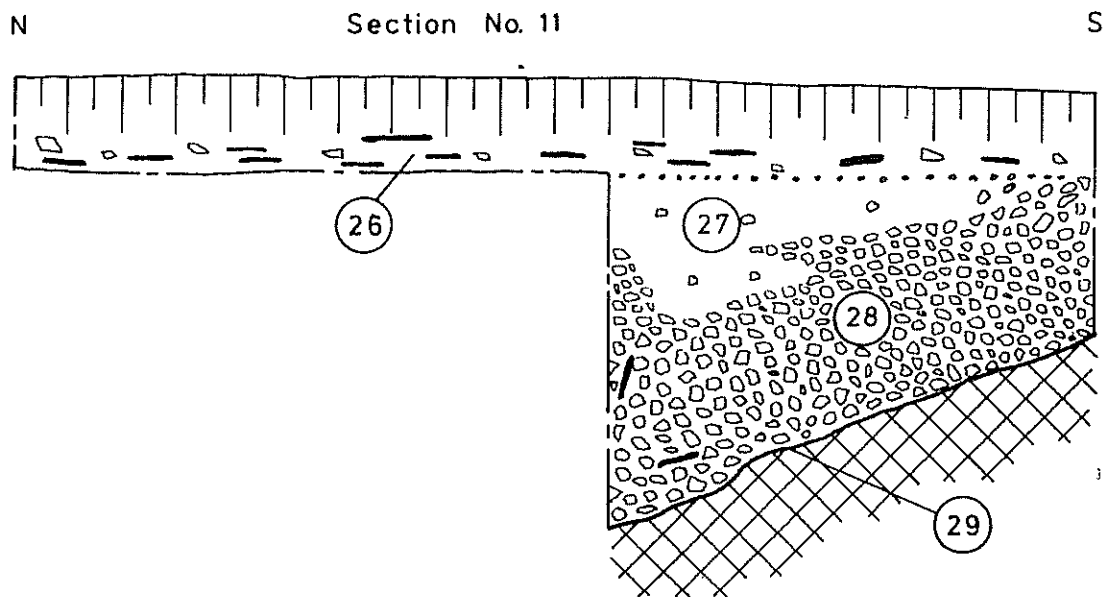
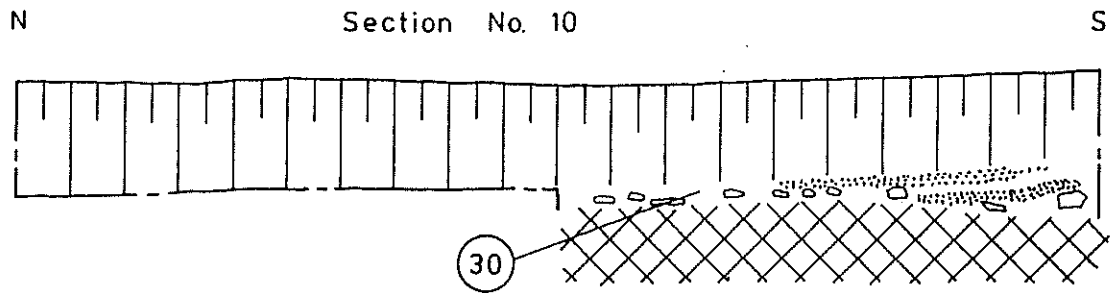
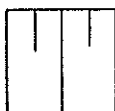


Figure 8



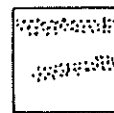
Topsoil



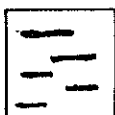
Rubble



Mortar



Slate



Subsoil

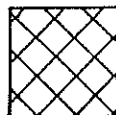


Figure 9