

REWLEY ROAD, OXFORD (REWLEY ABBEY)
PUMPING STATION TRENCH

NGR SP 5055 0603

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

Introduction

Sub-contractors working for Knowles and Son excavated a shaft for a drainage pumping station at the Rewley Road development site, Oxford, in April 1994. The shaft lay within the area designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Oxon 80) and as such was subject to the terms of Scheduled Monument Consent granted on 11/3/94 (Ref. HSD9/2/640 pt9) which required below-ground disturbance to be the subject of an archaeological watching brief carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

The shaft was situated near the entrance to the Rewley Road site and thus lies south of the Abbey church (Fig. 1). The nearest previous excavation (Trench OXRR3) lay 10 m to the east of the shaft - it contained (probably dumped) medieval deposits and possible evidence of medieval cultivation, but no evidence of any Abbey phase structures (OAU 1993: 5,7).

Methodology

The excavated shaft was 2.8 m deep and measured c. 3 x 3 m. The OAU were not able to monitor the shaft during its excavation. The following results were therefore obtained firstly by recording the sections of the shaft from the surface, and then by recording the sections after shoring had taken place. Only small vertical strips of the sections were visible and available for cleaning during the latter operation (see Figs 2, 3).

Results

The earliest deposits cut by the shaft were of natural sandy clay (34, 33). A series of mixed clay/silt layers had then accumulated or been dumped (31 over 32, 29=39 over 30=40). Layers 31 and 32 produced a single sherd each of medieval pottery.

At the level of layer 29, an E-W aligned linear cut, 37, was observed in the trench section. The feature was 0.92 m deep and at least 0.8 m wide. The S extent of the feature had been removed by later activity. The feature was interpreted as a ditch, perhaps a former boundary. The fills of the ditch (35 over 36) contained substantial quantities of gravel, suggesting that the ditch had been deliberately backfilled. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from fill 36.

The uppermost fill of ditch 37 was covered by a general loam horizon (28), up to 0.23 m thick. This horizon has been recognised across the site and represents

the ground level which existed in 1850 prior to railway construction across the site. Layer 28 was overlain by clay layer 27, placed deliberately to level the site prior to the construction of the railway. Layer 27 was overlain by 26, a thick deposit of soil and coal ash. A make-up layer (25) of stones over 26 preceded the laying of a concrete surface (24).

A substantial brick-built structure (in construction cut 38) was in part removed by the contractors during the excavations. The structure was constructed from the level of layer 26, and is therefore of recent date.

Conclusions

The evidence from the pumping station trench has not added greatly to our knowledge of the medieval Abbey. The clay/silt layers above the natural clay may be similar to those found in Trench OXRR 3 (see above) which were tentatively interpreted as evidence of deliberate raising of the ground level, in order to make the area drier (OAU 1993: 5). This probably took place in the 14th/15th centuries, but could have been later. The ditch (37) which cut the clay/silts would seem to be a post-medieval feature.

The pumping station trench has also provided a small amount of negative evidence for Abbey phase structures south of the church, but the trench is too small for this to be regarded as conclusive.

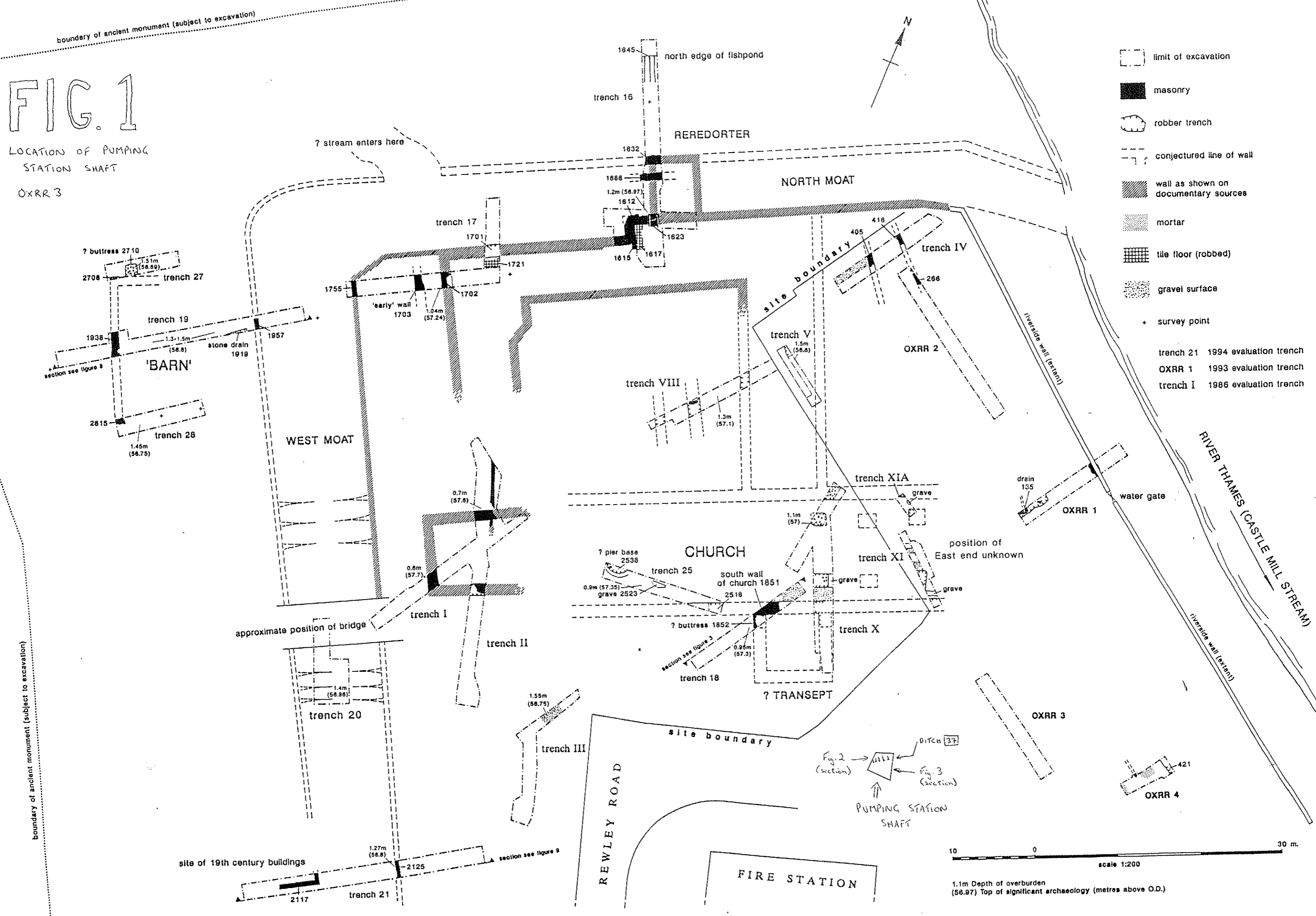
David Wilkinson OAU
10/5/95

Bibliography

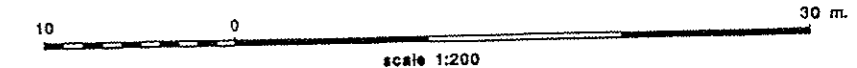
OAU 1993 *Retwley Road, Oxford: archaeological evaluation*, Oxford Archaeological Unit.

FIG. 1

LOCATION OF PUMPING STATION SHAFT
OXRR 3



- limit of excavation
- masonry
- robber trench
- conjectured line of wall
- ▨ wall as shown on documentary sources
- ▩ mortar
- ▧ tile floor (robbed)
- ▨ gravel surface
- + survey point
- trench 21 1994 evaluation trench
- OXRR 1 1993 evaluation trench
- trench I 1986 evaluation trench



1.1m Depth of overburden
(56.97) Top of significant archaeology (metres above O.D.)

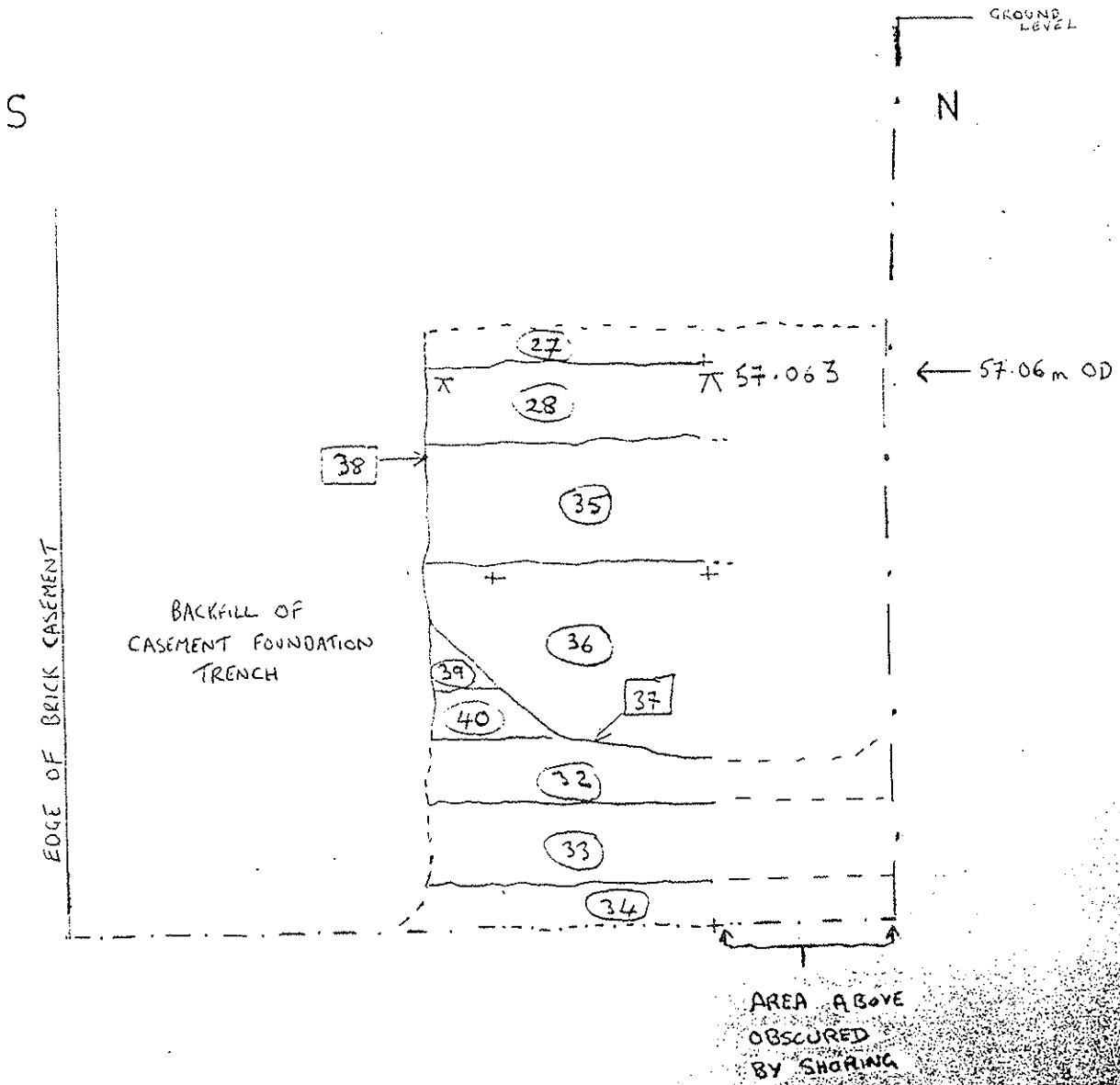


FIG. 2

WEST SECTION OF
PUMPING STATION TRENCH

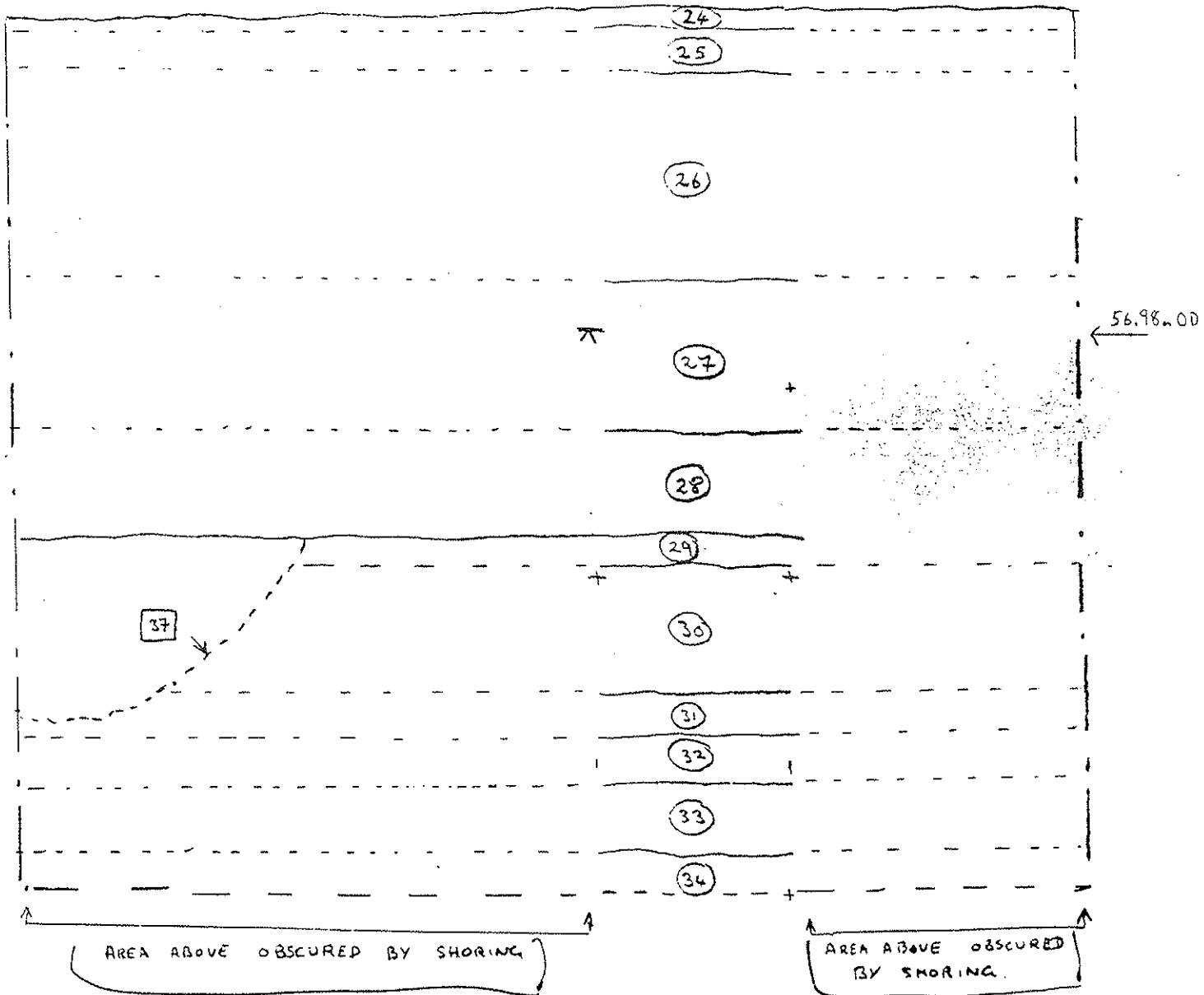
OXRR3

FIG. 3

EAST SECTION OF
PUMPING STATION SHAFT

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S



OXRR 3