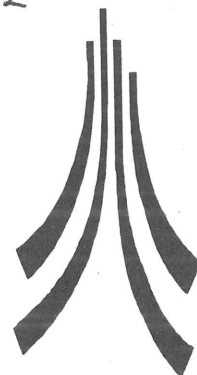


PRN #5742

LANCASTER
UNIVERSITY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
UNIT



July 1994

THINGMOUNT
Little Langdale
Cumbria

Archaeological Survey

The following project report is commissioned and funded by the
National Trust.

THINGMOUNT
Cumbria

Archaeological Survey

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July 1994

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Project Design

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been made possible by the hard work and support of many people. Thanks go to all those who took part in all aspects of the field work and post-excavation work (listed below).

Thanks go to Robert Maxwell and Adrian Marklew of the National Trust for their help with establishing the project and managing the press release.

Special thanks must go to the tenant farmer George Harryman for access and help with the survey.

Finally I must thank Clare Fell for her advice about the interpretation of the monument.

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU), at the request of the National Trust, undertook a level 3 archaeological survey (LUAU 1993) of the Thingmount at Fell Foot Farm in Little Langdale, Cumbria between 13th and 16th December 1993.

The fieldwork comprised a detailed total station survey to produce an interpretive hachure survey of the monument and other features in the locality. It also systematically captured 3 dimensional data of the mounds surface for the production of a digital terrain model. A small section of the mound exposed as a result of localised landscaping was cleaned and recorded.

The results of the survey were presented using Computer Aided Draughting (CAD) techniques within a hachure format, a contour format and also a computer generated isometric format. The production of the detailed surface model provides the most precise and objective record of the mound that is possible with modern techniques to cover the eventuality of any further disturbance to the mound. It will also facilitate the management of the mound by The National Trust.

3. INTRODUCTION

The Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) has carried out a level 3 survey (LUAU 1993) of the Thingmount, Fell Foot Farm, between 13th and 16th December 1993, at the request of The National Trust (August 24 1993, PDC/SJC). The Thingmount is an artificially terraced, rectangular mound at the head of the Little Langdale valley which has been identified as a Norse moot mound or Thingmount (Swainson Cowper 1989). The mound is scheduled (SM22557) and is in the ownership of The National Trust. The prime aim of the present survey project was to record a section that has been exposed by the recent excavation of part of the mound (outside the scheduled area) for a small car park. The secondary aim of the programme was the recording of the mound to enable the production of a management plan by The National Trust. The survey follows on from one undertaken by The National Trust in March 1984.

An LUAU project design (appendix 1) provided for the recording of the section at 1:20 and a detailed level 3 survey of the mound; the latter was to incorporate a hachure survey, a contour survey and isometric representations of the mounds surface. The results of the fieldwork were to be produced and output via a three dimensional CAD system (FastCAD 3D).

4. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The work was undertaken by two experienced archaeological surveyors using a Carl Zeiss ELTA4 total station and Husky Hunter data logger. The survey was undertaken with respect to a local control that was established to an accuracy of $\pm 0.1\text{m}$ by closed traverse; the control altitude was established with respect to Ordnance Datum using a bench mark on Fell Foot farm. For the hachure survey, the total station was used to capture detail points along all the archaeological features which were then digitally transferred to a PC based survey package. Crude site plots were generated and the archaeological detail was drawn up in the field using them. The digital survey data was transferred, via a DXF file format, into a CAD system (FastCAD) and the site edits were then drawn up onto the raw survey data. The archaeological drawings were then digitally superimposed with base topographic data digitised from OS 1:10,000 mapping. The final site plans were generated using a Hewlett Packard Draftmaster A0 plotter.

The contour and isometric representations of the site are output formats of a digital terrain model (DTM) that was produced for the mounds surface. The source data for the DTM were 1120 spot heights that were surveyed using the total station, on an approximate 3m grid across the whole mound; this also included raw data from the hachure survey. The digital data was processed using the DGM3 modelling package, which generated a DTM of the surface and output DXF files of contours at various height intervals and also isometric plots. The contour data was incorporated with the hachure survey within the CAD system.

The section exposed by landscaping was surveyed using the total station; the raw XYZ data was converted into a profile format using in-house software (profile1) and was drawn up within the CAD system.

5. HISTORY OF INVESTIGATION

The earliest documentary identification of the mound as a moot mound is in 1891 (Swainson Cowper 1891). He compares the visible earthworks of this mound with the moot mound at Tynwald, Isle of Man and examines the historic traditions of legal and judicial practices during the Norse period. The requirement for the terraces was argued as being to "preserve among the different personages of a ting, a proper distinction of rank. The central area was always occupied by the laugman, and the outer spaces by the laugrettmen, out of whom duradom was selected, the contending parties and the compurgators" (Swainson Cowper 1891, 2). He further argues that a moot mound would need to be provided with good communications and that the location of this site beside an ancient pass (the roman road over Wrynose) is evidence of its assembly function. The editors note to Swainson Cowpers article puts forward an alternative theory that the terraces were for cultivation.

Collingwood (1900 and 1932) reinforces the moot mound interpretation of the site, and argues that the adjacent topography is comparable with the Tynwald example, in that there is an area of gentle sloping ground between the mound and a stream to provide for camping, a fair/market and the watering of stock. He uses place name evidence to argue a considerable Norse occupation in the area during the latter part of the first millennium.

In 1976 the tenant farmer cut back the southern edge of the mound to provide for a concrete ramp and silage store. This was brought to public attention by a series of letters in the *Westmorland Gazette* newspaper (Rollinson 1976). As a direct response to the site disturbance the mound was scheduled by the Department of the Environment in 1977 (SM22557), however, the scheduled area was limited by the existing field boundaries, leaving part of the mound (eastern side) outside statutory protection.

6. SITE ASSESSMENT

6.1 The Site

The main feature of the site is an elevated, four tiered rectangular mound, located immediately west of the Fell Foot farmhouse. The mound is located on gentle sloped ground, on the edge of the River Brathay flood plain. To the north of the area is the prominent Castle Howe pinnacle and immediately to the north-west of the mound is a small crag which rises to 116.2m AOD (0.6m above the mound summit). The mound is considerable in size (32.0m x 28.8m) and stands up to 1.91m above its western base. The survey has shown that it has a regular quadrilateral shape and a broadly symmetrical profile; there can be little doubt that its present form is the result of considerable human intervention. Rounded cobbles are exposed along the terrace edges, which would appear to be evidence of either local consolidation or revetment. The mound has been cut back by the excavation of a passageway at the back of the farmhouse and unfortunately, as a result, there is no direct relationship evident from surface examination between the mound and the farmhouse which dates to at least the beginning of the 18th century (Swainson Cowper 1891).

There are no crags or bedrock exposed on the mound, however the base material of the mound comprises compacted angular, stone fragments (George Harryman Pers Comm). This is not characteristic of glacially deposited material and therefore the mound does not appear to be a drumlin. However, this may be insitu weathered and degraded bedrock and could be an indication that there is a small crag at the core of the mound. The presence of degraded natural near the surface would suggest that, for the most part, the Thingmount was created by cutting back a natural mound rather than by the deposition of soil imported to the site. Certainly there are no ditches or hollows in the immediate vicinity of the mound that can be attributed as a source.

Due to construction works, a 4.64m long section had been cut into the land sloping away from the boundary wall to the west of the Thingmount mound and 3.32m from the north gable of Fell Foot farmhouse. The section was orientated NE - SW, with a SE facing exposure and an incline to the east of approximately 8 degrees. A 0.16m layer of dark brown black topsoil containing small angular stone fragments lay above a 0.34m layer of orange red silty sand containing 60% small angular fragments and occasional larger cobbles. A thin, 0.10m finger of compacted grey sandy silt extended 0.80m from the west and lay above 0.27m of light grey sandy silt containing 60% angular pea gravel. Below this the lowest layer in the section was a dark red brown sand with 40% small angular gravel inclusions with occasional larger cobbles. All deposits were ill sorted and typical of hill slope deposits that have not travelled far from their source. No features of archaeological significance were noted and the section would support the view that this was an adapted natural feature.

The Thingmount would appear to be the product of a fairly large scale engineering enterprise that cut levelled terraces into a very resistant rocky medium. The planting of what are thought to be yew trees at some later date and their subsequent felling beyond maturity

would be an indication that the mound is of some antiquity. The mound profiles show a degree of rounding that perhaps belies the true age of the structure given the inherent resistance to weathering of the material.

6.2 Discussion

The detailed surface survey of the mound has provided a precise record of the monument, but has not been able to provide any significant new evidence pertaining to the function and chronology of the feature. However, it is pertinent to summarise the previously established evidence for its interpretation as a Thingmount:

- a) Its terraced form is closely comparable with the Tynwald moot mound on the Isle of Man which has a similar number of terraces but is circular (Robinson et al 1990).
- b) It is located within an area of gentle sloped ground, adjacent to a stream which is comparable to the Tynwald example; such a topography is a requirement of a thing to provide for a gathering of people (Ellwood 1893) and for a fair / camping and the watering of stock (Collingwood 1900).
- c) Communications would have been an essential requirement for a meeting place and the location of the site is well suited for communication within the Lake District. It is located adjacent to the line of the roman road, that passed over Wrynose and is in the centre of the Lake District with approaches from other parts of the Cumbrian Fells via the Blea Tarn pass and the Little Langdale valley
- d) There are many place names with Norse origins from this area which testify to Scandinavian settlement.
- e) No other interpretations have been proposed that adequately support the present evidence. The terraces are too small to have had an agricultural function and in any case would be unnecessary because the adjacent ground is gently sloped. A terraced garden, may be a possible explanation if within a large estate, but not at the head of a remote Lake District valley, within a small, upland farm holding. The trees were placed at the forward edge of part of only one of the four terraces; there is no evidence of tree disturbance elsewhere on the mound. They are only adjacent to the building and would appear to have served as a wind break.

7. GAZETTEER

Feature No: 1
Feature Type: Elevated rectangular mound (Thingmount?)
Dimensions: 32.0m x 28.8m

Description: An elevated, four tiered rectangular mound, located immediately west of the farmhouse at Fell Foot and thought to be a possible Thingmount. The mound has its long axis orientated NNW - SSE and measures 32.0m by 28.8m in its present condition, with a maximum elevation of 1.91m from the base of the well defined western edge to its summit. The mound appears to be constructed on very well compacted angular stone fragments that probably represent insitu weathered bedrock into which the Thingmount terraces have been cut. (Pers. Comm. George Harryman, Farmer Fell Foot Farm). At local spots of surface erosion and points where occasional rounded cobbles show through the vegetated surface, it would appear that some local consolidation or revetment has occurred. A detailed description of the Thingmount follows on a terrace by terrace basis with the upper terrace labelled as 1A.

Terrace 1A - Uppermost terrace with trapezium shape in plan measuring a maximum of 18.0m by 6.4m. The surface is level and the terrace slopes are most prominent to the north where there is a maximum slope elevation of 0.4m. It gradually decreases on both the western and eastern edges until on the eastern edge it merges with terrace 1B. The southern edge is defined by an oblique angled return to the west with an almost continuous slope down to the concrete hard standing 3. The northern edge is cut in two places by shallow erosion runnels. The slope angle is approximately 35 degrees with a rounded profile. The surface altitude for terrace 1A is 115.5m AOD.

Terrace 1B - The second terrace level is only partially present on the southern edge due to modern disturbance. The western edge is well defined, being 2.7m wide with a slight northerly down gradient. The terrace slope is rounded in profile with a 35 degree slope and a maximum fall of 0.5m. At the north west corner the slope is somewhat degraded and flattened before becoming well defined along the northern edge. Here the terrace width is 2.4m and the slope falls between 0.25m and 0.3m with a 45 degree slope and quite sharp profiles. The north eastern corner is ill defined and flattened with the eastern terrace climbing to the south to merge with terrace 1A. The terrace slope along eastern edge is broad and well rounded with a 30 degree angle and a maximum fall of 0.45m. At the south-eastern corner there is an acute angled turn to the west, terrace 1A and 1B have merged to give a rather pronounced slope angle of 45 degrees. A few rounded cobbles are exposed at this corner giving the impression that some form of stabilising revetment may have been emplaced.

Terrace 1C - The third terrace is not represented on the southern edge due to concrete hardstanding impinging at this point. At the south west corner the terrace slope traces an open curve with a shallow 25 degree slope and exposed cobbles on the surface suggesting stabilising revetment. Along the western edge the terrace is 2.35m wide with a 40 degree slope that falls a maximum of 0.45m and has a rounded well defined profile. A pair of parallel shallow depressions 1.7m wide possibly indicate the passage of some modern vehicular traffic. The terrace becomes very indistinct at the north west corner and can be traced only with difficulty along the northern edge as a level surface with a strong northerly

depressed gradient. Again at the north east corner the line of the terrace is difficult to trace, but appears to define the edge of a raised sub circular mound with a large earthfast boulder located in the north eastern edge. The terrace survives along the eastern edge following the line of tree stumps (2) where it attains a maximum width of 2.2m to the south, away from the disturbed areas of stump removal.

Terrace 1D - Identifiable on the western side as a 3.43m wide terrace with a well defined slope of 40 degree inclination and 0.4m fall. The south west corner has a slight easterly turn and a shallow angle. At the north-west corner the terrace slope peters out and there is no evidence for the terrace along the northern edge, At this point there is only a very shallow depression 1.35m wide and 0.15m deep running parallel to the northern edge. The terrace becomes apparent along the eastern edge following the line of tree stumps (2). It is only 1.2m wide along this edge, but may be reduced due to the presence of the substantial tree stumps. The terrace slope along this edge falls steeply away down to the retaining wall alongside the farmhouse. This fall of 1.7m probably represents a modified version of the original Thingmount profile at this point.

Condition: Damage to southern edges due to recent farming activity has made serious changes to the original form of the Thingmount. Tree planting along eastern edge has significantly altered the original profile along this edge and the subsequent stump removal has added to the damage. Some modification to the final terrace slope has occurred during the removal of boundary wall 5. All northern corners have suffered some degree of modification that now masks the true relationships of the lower terraces.

Feature No: 2
Feature Type: Line of tree stumps.
Dimensions: 24.0m x 1.6m

Description: Line of tree stumps located 5.0m to the west of the present farmhouse and orientated NNW - SSE, parallel to the farmhouse long axis. The tree stumps are positioned along the slope of the third eastern Thingmount terrace 1C. The northernmost stump is aligned with the north gable of the farmhouse with a further eleven stumps forming a continuous line extending for 24.0m in a southerly direction. A shallow depression located between the northernmost stump and the next stump to the south indicates the position of a twelfth stump that has been removed. The southernmost stump in the line lies beneath wall 4, which has been built since the trees were felled.

Condition: Felled tree stumps, probably Yew that show signs of internal rot.

Interpretation: Tree line represents planting for a possible wind break for the farmhouse at sometime after construction of the Thingmount and subsequently felled beyond maturity.

Feature No: 3
Feature Type: Concrete hard standing.
Dimensions: 11.85m x 6.15m

Description: Level platform of concrete immediately to the south of the Thingmount, giving access from the farmyard to the western fields and shippens. The platform measures 11.85m by 6.15m and cuts into the southern extremity of the Thingmount, particularly the south-western corner where an inclined non concreted ramp gives access to the fields. A silage store immediately to the south of the concrete platform may also have contributed to the

damage to the Thingmount. The worst affected areas are the south western limbs of terraces 1b, 1c, and 1d.

Condition: New

Interpretation: Concrete structure impinging on the Thingmount site, which was constructed in 1976.

Feature No: 4

Feature Type: Boundary wall

Dimensions: 9.9m x 0.78m

Description: A short section of wall located adjacent to the gated entry to the Thingmount. It runs from this position to the north-east for 7.3m in a reversed sigmoidal line until it meets the south-west corner of the present farmhouse. The wall is built over the southernmost tree stump of the tree line 2 and truncates the southerly extension of the remnants of wall 5.

Condition: Good condition, relatively late construction.

Interpretation: The wall construction post dates the felling of the southernmost tree stump of tree line 2 and the demolition of the southern extension of wall 5.

Feature No: 5

Feature Type: Boundary wall

Dimensions: length 14.8m

Description: Field boundary wall running from the north-west corner of the present farmhouse in a north-north-west direction and containing elements of the building/enclosure 6 in its eastern face. At the truncated southern end a right angled easterly return appears to be keyed in at the lower levels and runs east for 1.8m before terminating as a bridged opening to the farmhouse. It would seem that this return may have continued further east but has been truncated by the northerly farmhouse extension. The original line of field boundary 5 can be traced to the south by the occasional foundation stone protruding above the easternmost slope of the Thingmount and a short length of remnant wall at location 5A. The southern end of this wall can be traced to within 0.61m of wall 4.

Condition: Intact but modified to the north, truncated and ruined to the south.

Interpretation: A boundary wall that has undergone local modification and demolition as part of the modernisation of the present farmhouse. Some connection between the felling of the tree line and the demolition of the wall may exist.

Feature No: 6

Feature Type: Building/enclosure footprint

Dimensions: 14.0m x 7.2m

Description: Fragmentary remains of a building or enclosure located 13.5m to the north of the present farmhouse. The eastern edge of feature is defined by a discontinuous linear alignment of large foundation stones orientated north-north-west/ south-south-east. Two isolated earthfast boulders measuring approximately 0.85m by 0.65m are located to the north. The line continues to the south following an unbroken sequence of four earthfast stones that terminate in a right angled return to the west that includes one other boulder. These last five stones are slightly smaller, measuring approximately 0.6m by 0.5m with no lower courses being visible. The western edge of the structure is defined by and was integral with the present field boundary wall 5 that runs in a northerly direction from the NW corner of the present farmhouse. A right angled return that is keyed into wall 5 extends for 1.4m to the east at a point 30.0m from the truncated southern end of wall 5. There is no evidence in the field boundary wall of any eastern return above a height of 1.0m. Immediately to the

south of this return there is a recess let into the wall measuring 0.4m wide by 0.45m high by 0.3m deep that is bridged by a stone lintel and sill. The rear of this recess is infilled with stones that appear to be a later intentional blocking. A second recess is located 9.4m to the south of the first and measures 0.72m wide by 0.5m high by 0.5m deep and is also capped by a stone lintel and compound sill. The rear of this recess is blocked by a single flat slab that appears to be integral with the original construction of the recess.

A second eastern return from the boundary wall is marked by a 0.42m step out at the wall base level 2.9m from the southern recess. This gives an approximate size for the building/enclosure of 13.45m by 6.2m. No evidence for any return to the east was apparent above a height of 0.9m, this would suggest that the wall above this height may have been rebuilt. There was no evidence for any internal structures within the defined area.

Condition: Fragmentary remains only.

Interpretation: Base level remains of a building or enclosure that was probably integral with the lower levels of the field boundary wall 5 but pre-dates the upper levels of the same wall.

Feature No: 7
Feature Type: Mound
Dimensions: 11.7m x 2.3m

Description: A slightly raised rectangular mound located 27.0m to the west of the Thingmount. The mound measures 11.7m by 2.2m with a maximum elevation of 0.2m and is orientated in a west/east direction. The definition of the mound is more pronounced to the west where there is a distinct 6.2m by 2.2m outline with a raised flattened upper surface and well defined almost angular corners. To the east the mound becomes much less well defined, though a level upper surface measuring 2.4m by 1.15m with a maximum elevation of 0.07m can be discerned. A moderate quantity of earthfast cobbles of up to 0.15m diameter are visible on the surface.

Condition: Surface is subjected to disturbance from cattle giving rather a ragged edge to the majority of the feature.

Interpretation: A raised mound of unknown origin or function.

Feature No: 8
Feature Type: Mound
Dimensions: 4.6m x 1.6m

Description: A raised rectangular mound located 0.75m to the south of mound 7 and separated from it by a slight hollow with a maximum depth of 0.1m depth. The mound has its long axis orientated in a north-south direction perpendicular to mound 7. It is situated in an area of boggy ground with rush growth present; the mound is not well defined and has a maximum elevation of 0.15m.

Condition: The surface is subjected to disturbance from cattle and has a rather ragged edge around much of the feature.

Interpretation: A raised mound of unknown origin or function.

Feature No: 9
Feature type: Relict field boundary
Dimensions: 36.0m x 1.25m

Description: An earth and stone linear bank located 14.1m west of the Thingmount, running in a southerly direction from a rock outcrop situated close to the northern field boundary. The bank is very indistinct for the first 10.0m but then becomes better defined for the next 12.0m as a parallel pair of slightly raised earthen banks containing large earthfast stones.

The western component is discontinuous and marked mainly by presence of large, up to 0.75m by 0.6m, earthfast boulders in very slightly raised bank. This component cannot be traced beyond 12.0m to the south of its start point.

The eastern component is more prominent, being up to 1.25m wide with a maximum elevation of 0.17m and several rounded cobbles up to 0.15m diameter protruding to the north. Several larger stones are apparent to the south and beyond 12.0m the line of the feature can only be traced by the presence of protruding boulders measuring up to 0.45m by 0.4m in a distinctly linear alignment and surrounded by a broad scatter of earthfast cobbles up to 0.2m diameter. The total discernible length of the bank is 36.0m, beyond this the line is obscured by the deposition of modern rubbish. A truncated field boundary wall, (9A) located to the south is on the same linear alignment and the two features may be connected.

Condition: Very degraded.

Interpretation: The widely scattered remains of an early field boundary.

Feature No: 10

Feature Type: Metal tank

Dimensions: 1.9m x 1.25m

Description: Modern metal tank for fuel oil storage.

Condition:

Interpretation:

Feature No: 11

Feature Type: Cast concrete structure

Description: 2.2m x 1.5m

Description: Cast concrete structure dumped on site, modern.

Condition:

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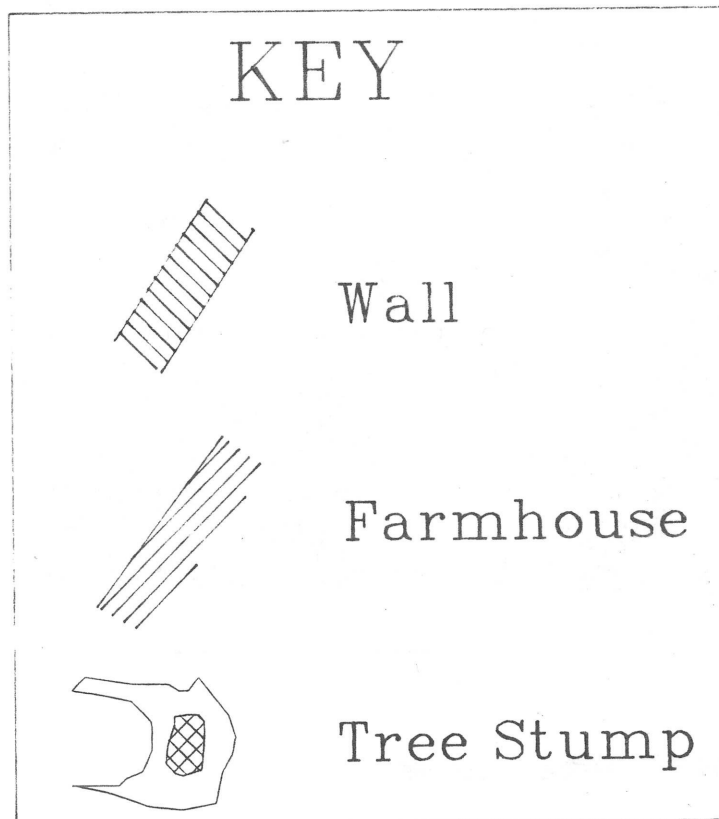
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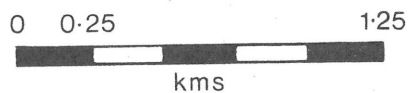
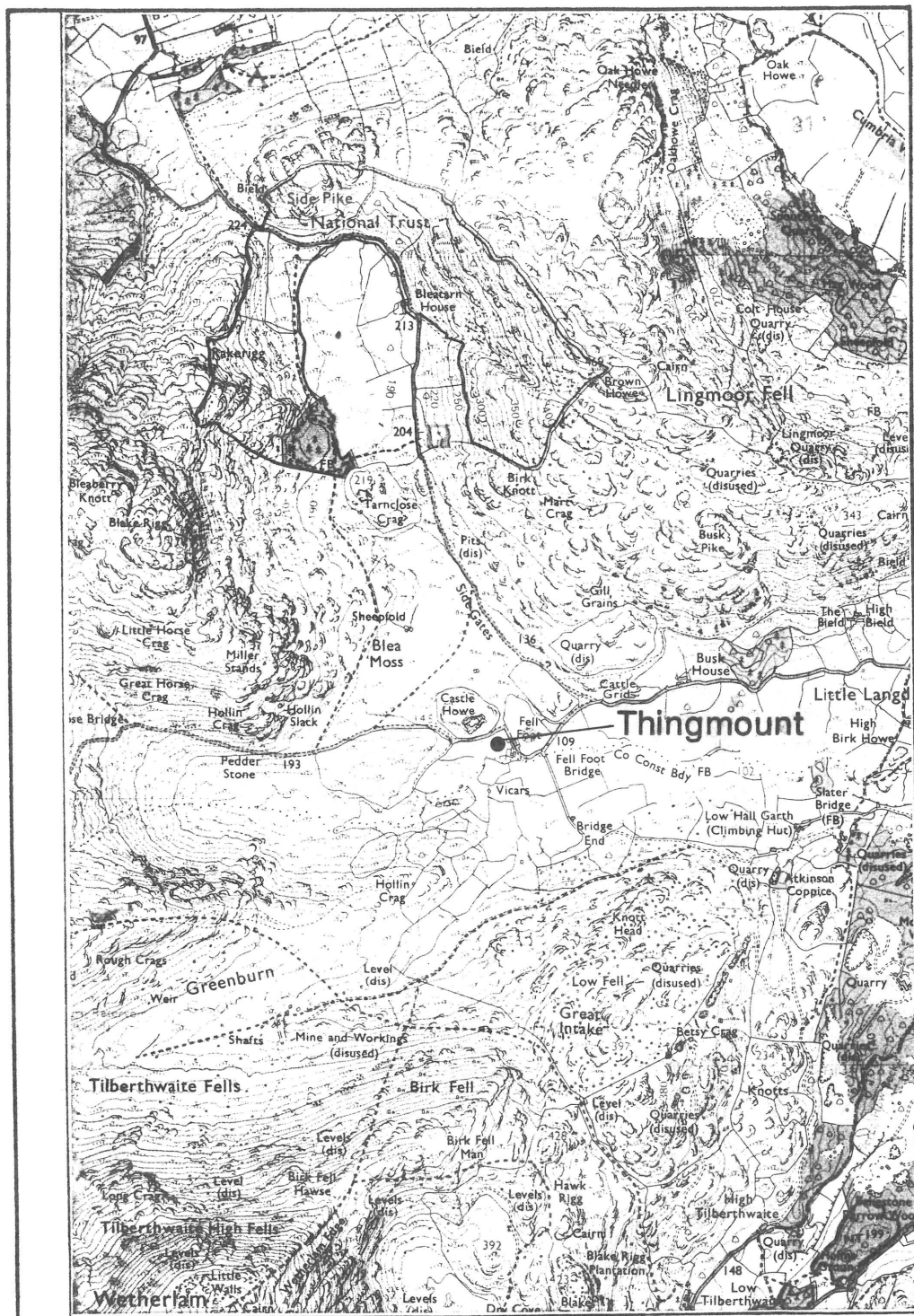
Swainson Cowper, H, 1891 Law Ting at Fell Foot, Little Langdale, Westmorland, *Trans Cumberland Westmorland Antiq Archaeol Soc*, **XI**, 1-5.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY DRAWINGS

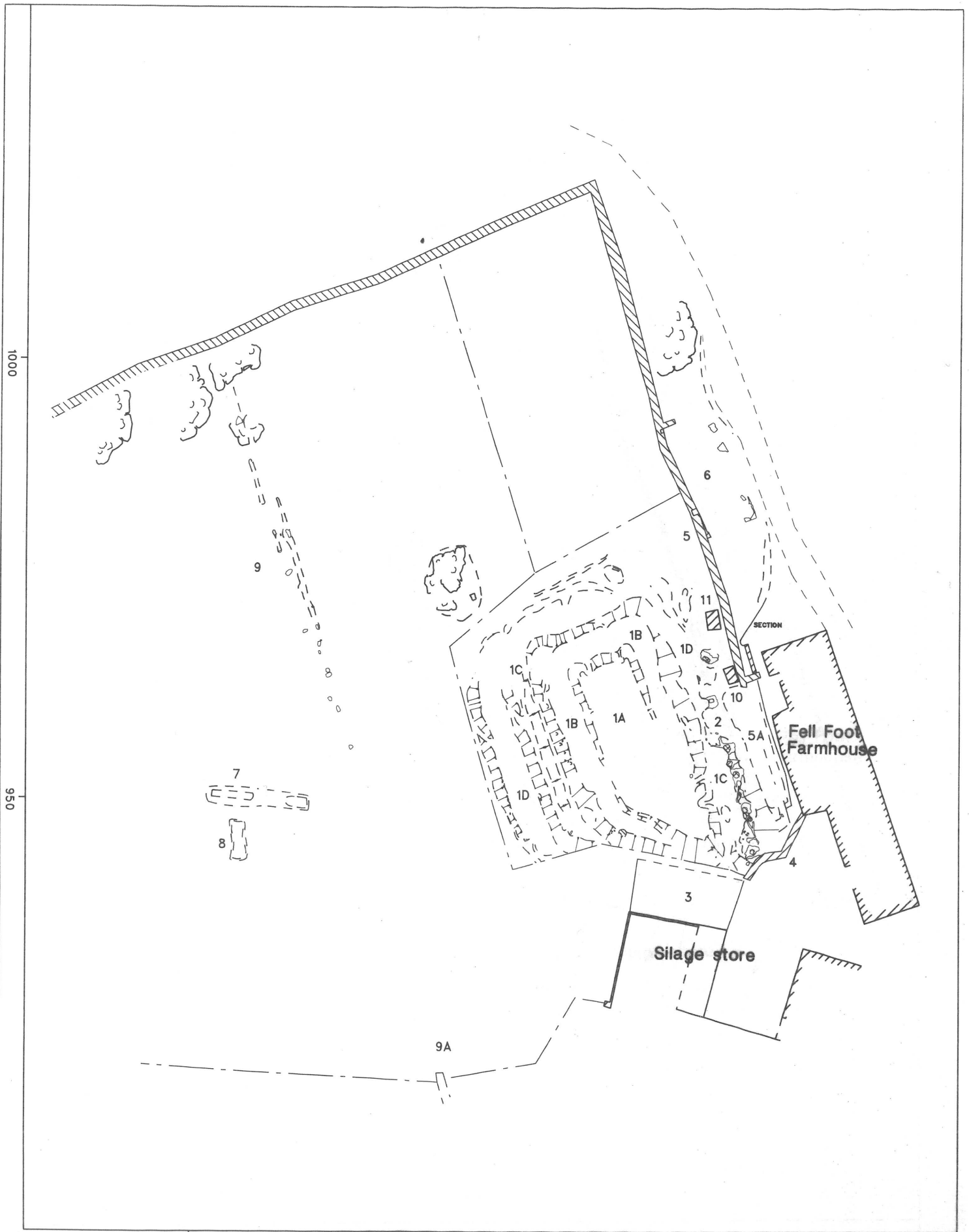
- Fig 1 Site Location Map
- Fig 2 General Plan, excluding contour information
- Fig 3 General Plan, including contour information
- Fig 4 Enlarged Hachure Map
- Fig 5 Enlarged Contour Map
- Fig 6 Isometric view of study area
- Fig 7 Isometric view of enlarged area
- Fig 8 Site Profiles
- Fig 9 South Facing Section Drawing





Based upon the Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 map
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Fig 1 Site Location Map



THINGMOUNT
Little Langdale

PLAN NAME
General Plan

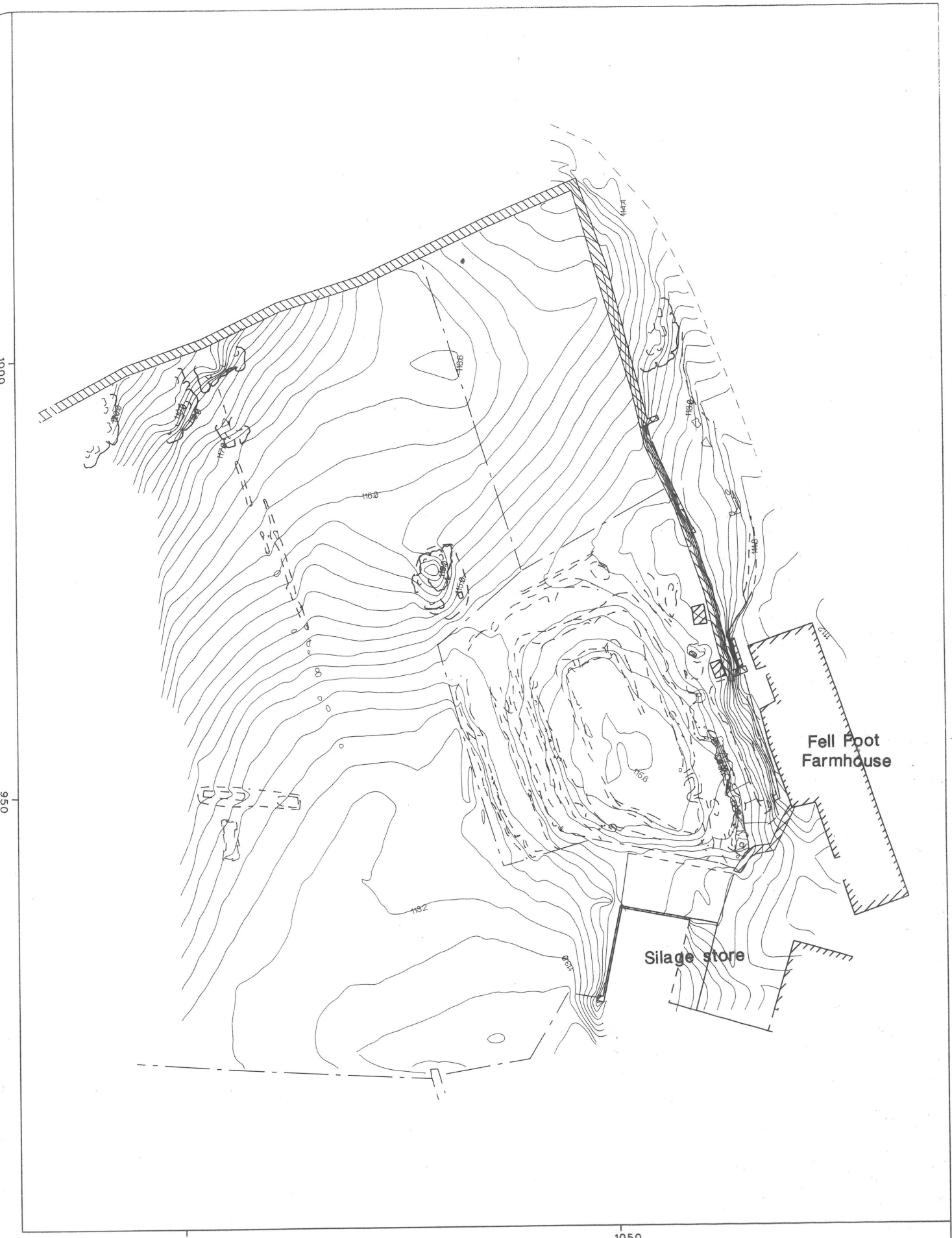


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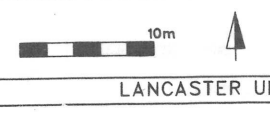
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Fig 2 General Plan, excluding contour information



THINGMOUNT
Little Langdale

PLAN NAME
General Plan



DRAWN BY **MK**
DATE **3-1994**

SCALE **1:400**
SHEET NO. **3**

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Fig 3 General Plan, including contour information

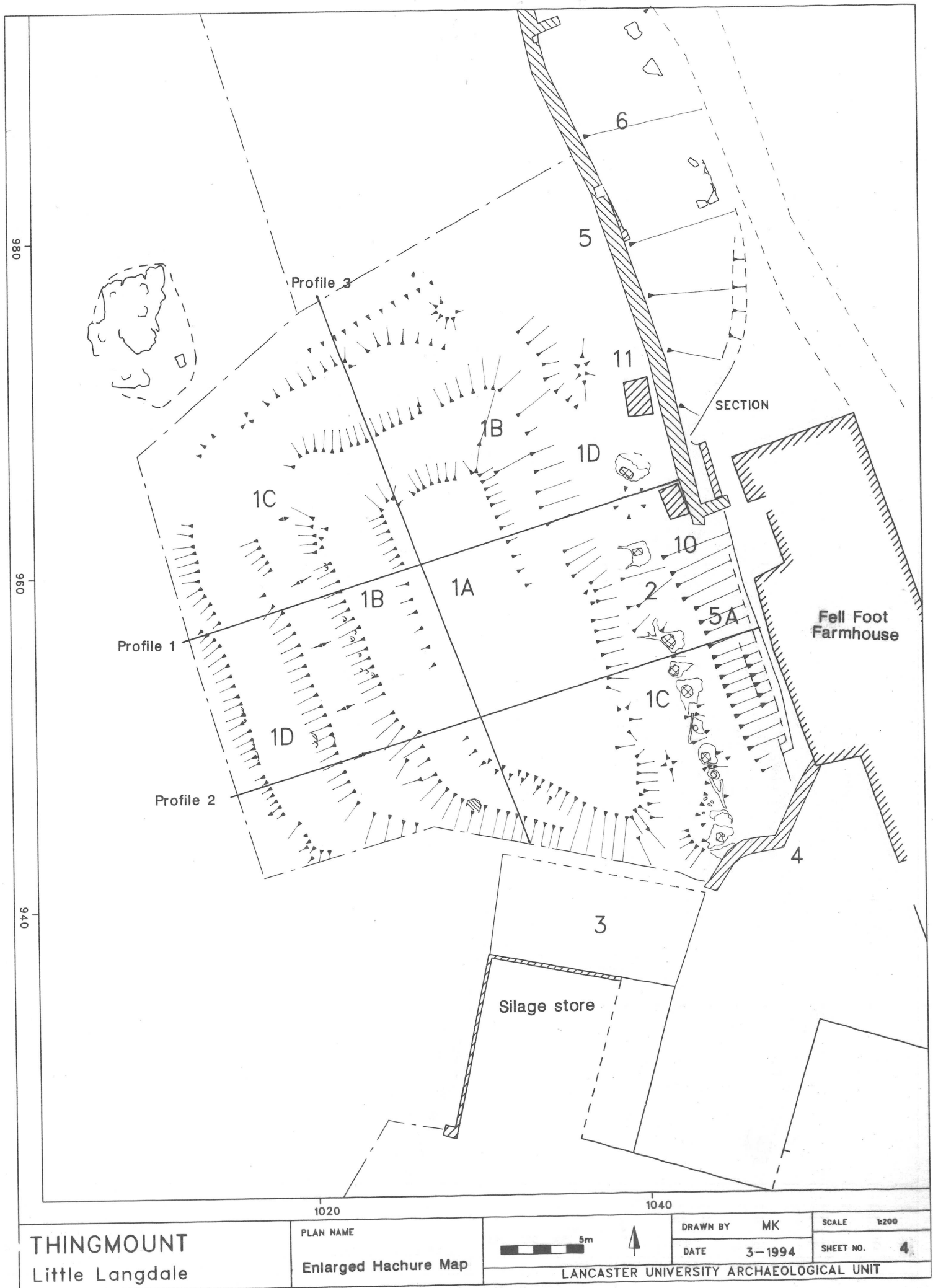
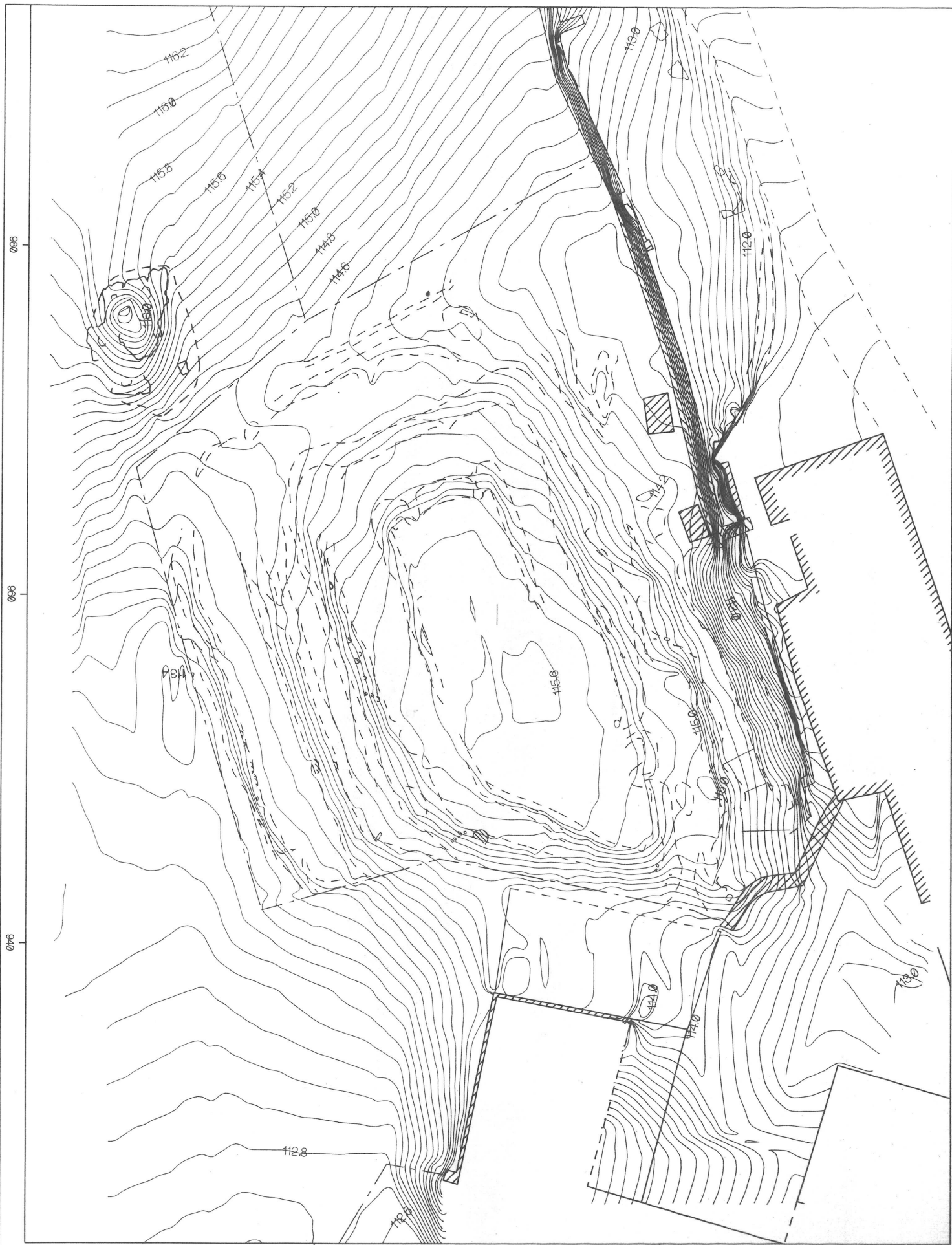


Fig 4 Enlarged Hachure Map



THINGMOUNT
Little Langdale

PLAN NAME
Enlarged Contour Map

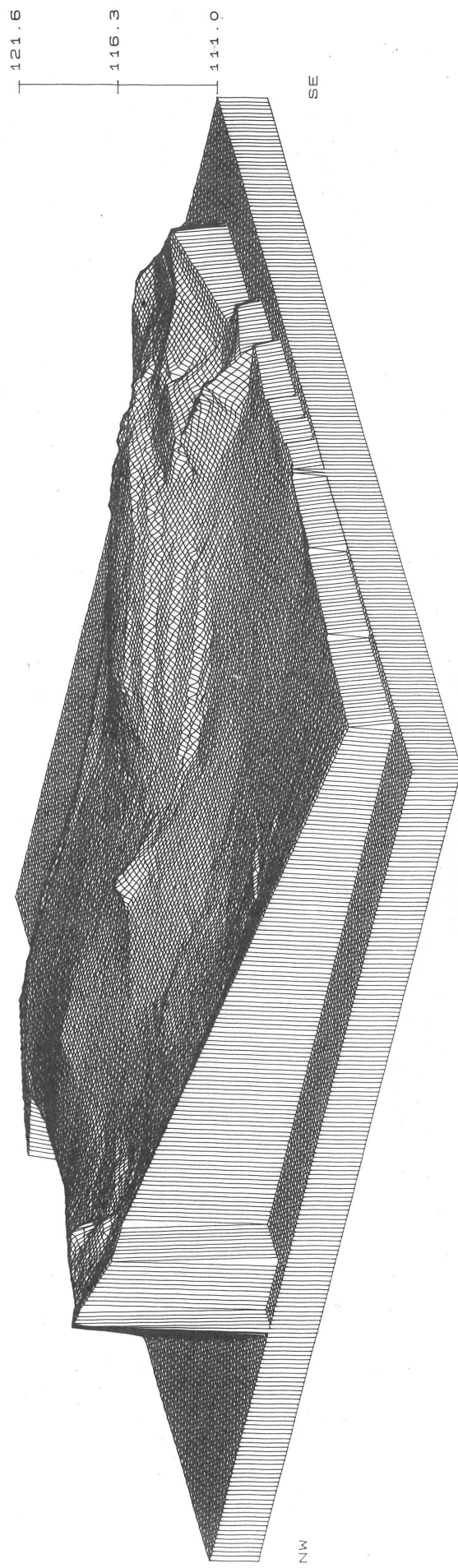


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Fig 5 Enlarged Contour Map



NW

SE

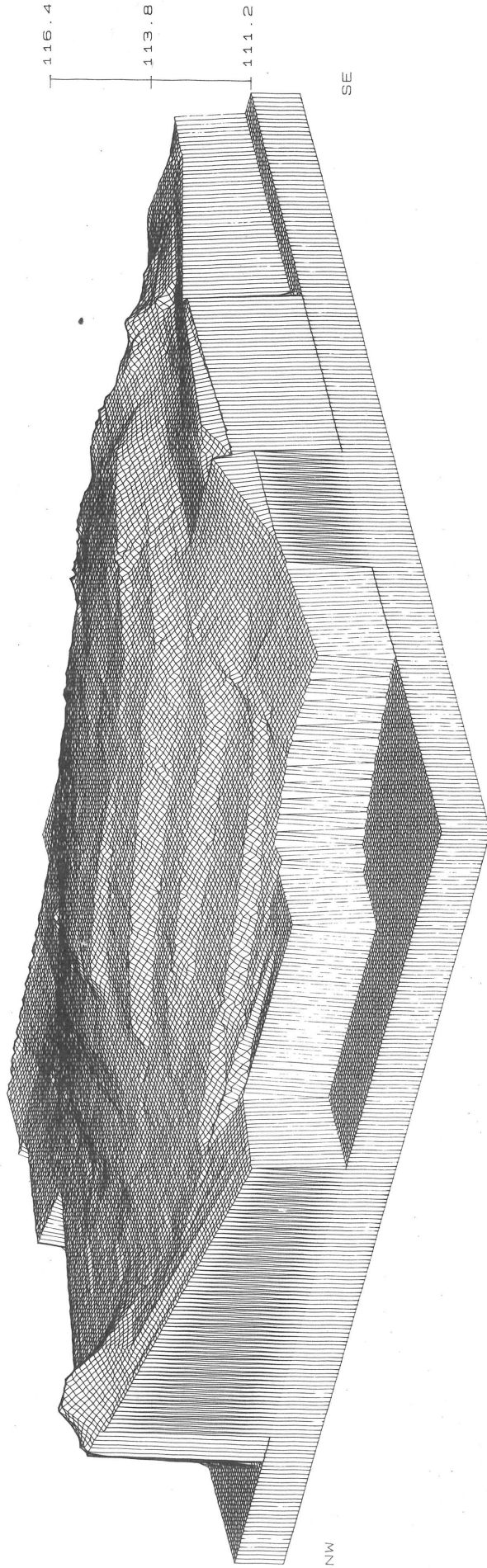
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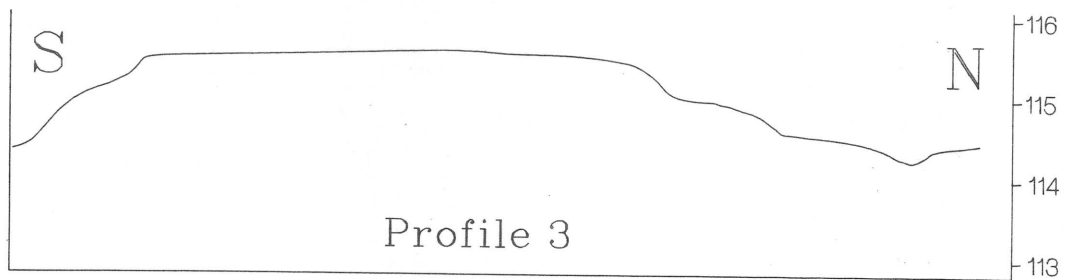
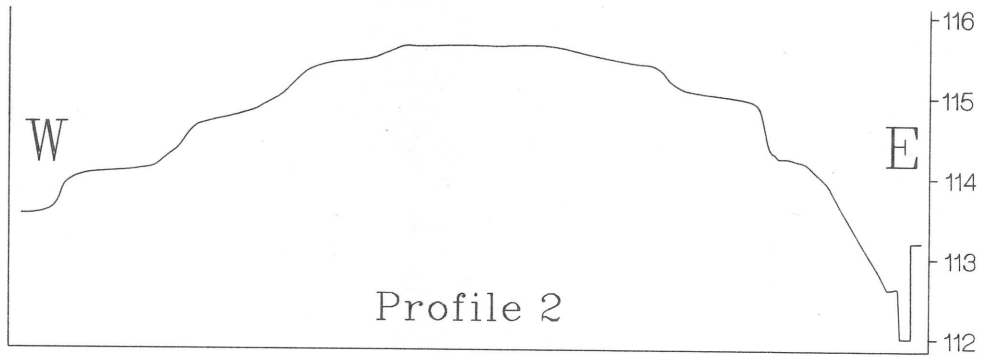
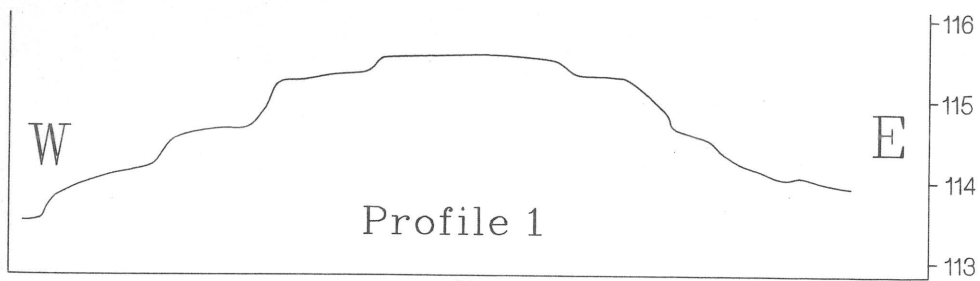
THINGMOUNT

Fig 6 Isometric view of study area



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Fig 7 Isometric view of enlarged area

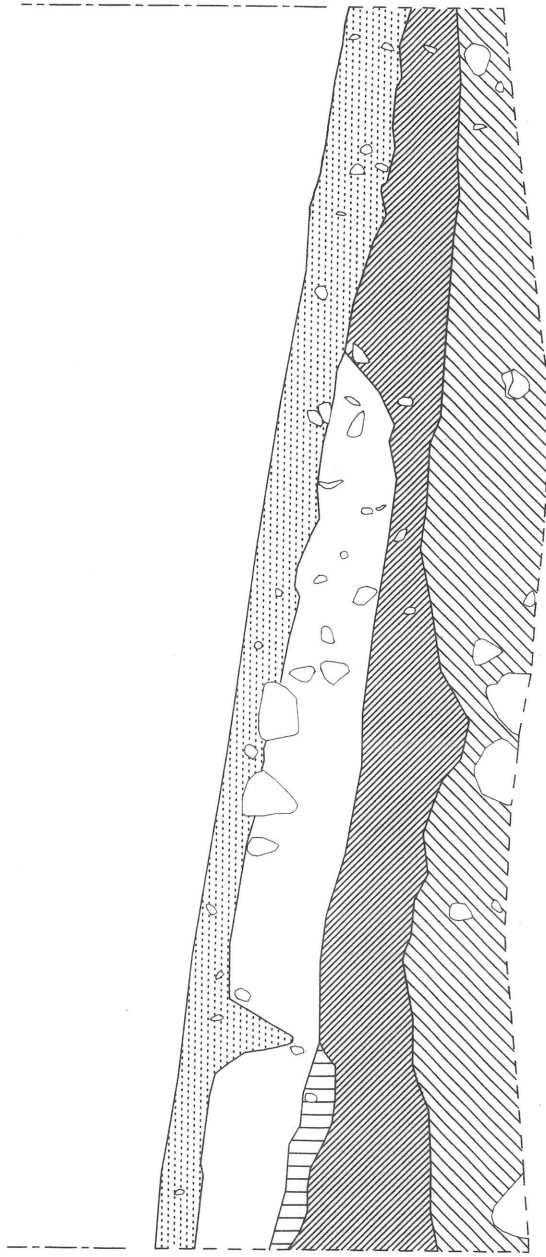


3x Exaggeration of vertical axis

Fig 8 Site Profiles

1062.932,968.204,112.710

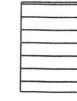
1065.404,972.126,111.030



Topsoil



Orange/Red Silty Sand
40% Gravel to 3.0cm Dia.
20% Pea Gravel



Compact Grey Sandy Silt
50% Pea Gravel



Light Grey Sand/Silt Layers
with 60% Pea gravel



Dark Red/Brown Sand
40% Gravel to 3.0cm Dia.



Individual Stones

113.00

112.00

111.00

THINGMOUNT
Little Langdale

PLAN NAME

South Facing Section

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SCALE 1:20

DATE 05:94

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Fig 9 South Facing Section Drawing