

**Shorncote Sewerage Works, Somerford Keynes
Gloucestershire**

SU 030 964

Archaeological Assessment

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
October 1990**

SHORNCOTE SEWERAGE WORKS, SOMERFORD KEYNES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

In October 1990 an archaeological assessment was carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) on behalf of Hills Aggregates Ltd at OS parcel 1600 in the parish of Somerford Keynes Gloucestershire (Fig. 1), NGR SU 030964. The assessment was requested by Gloucestershire County Council as part of the planning application.

The site lies on the First Gravel Terrace 500 m SE of the village of Shorncote, in the parish of Somerford Keynes.

SUMMARY

The assessment revealed an area of postholes which may represent later prehistoric activity. A single sherd of later prehistoric pottery was recovered from a pit. This activity might be associated with two linear ditches to the NW.

A further three linear ditches were located in the E of the assessment area and a single ditch and two pits in the S.

Preservation across the whole assessment area was very poor as a result of its recent use as a sewerage facility. There were also indications of disturbance by earlier ridge and furrow cultivation. No obvious continuation of a nearby barrow cemetery was observed in the assessment area, but the assessment strategy was not designed to locate isolated features or burials. There appeared to be no link with the Roman settlement to the SE.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 1 An assessment carried out by the Archaeology Section of Gloucestershire County Council in July and August 1989 confirmed the presence of three Bronze Age ring ditches observed in aerial photographs to the W of the assessment area. The ring ditches were excavated by the OAU in early 1990. One lay immediately to the W, one 40 m to the W and another 270 m to the NW. During a watching brief additional features were discovered associated with the southern barrow: a discrete grave, two small ring ditches of about 4.0 m in diameter and three pits.
- 2 The Gloucestershire County Council assessment identified an area of 'undated activity' 290 m to the N.
- 3 A Roman trackway went northwards around the two southern barrows (noted above) and ran into the field to the N of

the assessment area.

- 4 Aerial photographs also showed extensive cropmarks to the E of the assessment area.
- 5 Information received from the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Section indicated that an assessment had located a Romano-British settlement immediately to the SE of the assessment area. More detailed information was not available.
- 6 A trackway aligned to the N from the south-eastern Romano-British settlement was also located. This trackway was thought to be visible in the hedge line on the E of the area assessed by the OAU.
- 7 No clear cropmarks were visible in the aerial photographs in the area assessed.

SOILS AND GEOLOGY

All the layers above the gravel were of recent origin. The gravel was overlain by a very gravelly layer about 0.10 m thick forming an interface between the ploughsoil and the gravel. Recent plough marks, parallel to the modern field boundary, were visible across the entire site. There were also obvious but shallow furrows from ridge and furrow cultivation (medieval?) across the site. These were aligned in two directions, E-W in the N of the area and N-S in the southern part of the field. The furrows survived to a depth of only 0.05 m.

The modern turf overlay plough disturbed soil across most of the site but in some areas turf directly overlay the gravelly subsoil.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGY (Fig. 2)

The assessment strategy was approved by the County Archaeologist and based on a 2% sample of the area. This consisted of 23 machine-excavated trenches, 22 of which were 30 m in length and one 10-15 m; all were 1.9 m wide. The sample was supplemented by a further ten trenches 10-15 m in length and 1.9 m in width and nine trenches 10-15 m in length and 1.5 m in width, which were designed to clarify the extent and nature of the located archaeology and to investigate some possible features visible on the aerial photographs.

The trenches were machine-excavated to the top of the gravel. All potential features were hand-excavated.

FINDS

Very few finds were recovered; there were four pieces of pottery and four flints. The trackway ditch in Trench 34 contained pottery which was late prehistoric. The pit in Trench 7 contained one small sherd which is probably Iron Age. Three flints came from the ploughsoil. Only one came from a feature, the ditch in Trench 8. The flints seem to be of neolithic in date, although the sample is very small. No faunal remains were recovered.

EFFECTS OF THE SEWERAGE WORKS ON PRESERVATION (Fig. 5)

The Gloucestershire County Council assessments had noted ridge and furrow cultivation associated with a red-brown silty ploughsoil up to 0.80 m in depth. A similar soil was recognisable but it did not correspond to a ploughsoil. The field had been used until recently as part of South Cerney sewerage treatment works. The field is L-shaped and the topsoil had been moved to form filterbed embankments, creating three internal divisions to provide settling tanks for the sewerage (see Fig. 5). The area of this shallowest settling tank corresponds to that of Fig. 3. The flow of liquid was through shallow sluices and drains which did not penetrate the gravel significantly (see Fig. 2 for layout of drains). The field had then been ploughed. Modern ploughmarks were visible under even the deepest banks, suggesting that these banks are of recent origin and not medieval headlands.

No archaeological features survive above the top of the gravel. The extensive movement of topsoil and subsequent ploughing has largely truncated the archaeology. This was obviously worse in the areas of the settling tanks. It should be noted that the posthole scatters were only readily identified under the filterbed embankments.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Trenches 2, 4, 5, 29, 24, 32, 22, 21, 20, 19, 18, 17, 16, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 33, 39, 42 and 43 contained no archaeological features.

Later prehistoric activity?

Archaeological features were mainly located in the area of the shallow settling tank (Fig. 3).

Trench 1 contained a shallow gully aligned NW-SE which was also located in Trench 9. This ran at right angles to a gully in Trench 8 which was aligned NE-SW and was visible in Trench 30. The gully contained one piece of worked flint. No other linear features were discovered on this alignment. Although these features are undated they may be associated with the adjacent posthole concentration.

Trench 23, a deep ditch, was aligned N-S.

An extensive area of undated postholes, some 30 m by 100 m, lay to the S of the ditches. None of the postholes contained any finds other than burnt limestone. Burnt limestone is commonly found on sites of later prehistoric date in this area.

This area of postholes formed three concentrations in the assessment trenches. It is unclear how the density varied across the area as a whole.

- 1) Trenches 8, 36 and 37. Three undated postholes survived in Trench 8; one contained burnt limestone. Trench 36 contained four undated postholes. Trench 37 contained two undated postholes (one with burnt limestone) which had been partially disturbed by a furrow.
- 2) Trenches 27 and 38. There were three undated postholes in Trench 27. This group extended into Trench 38 where four more were excavated.
- 3) Trenches 7, 40 and 41. Trench 7 contained two undated postholes and trenches excavated to either side located more undated postholes (Trenches 40 and 41). Two postholes in Trench 41 (41/3 and 41/4) contained burnt limestone.

Trench 7 also encountered a large pit which contained a small sherd of possible Iron Age pottery.

Trench 3 contained a shallow undated pit and Trench 31 two shallow pits. There were two undated postholes in Trench 35.

OTHER FEATURES (Fig. 4)

Trench 34 was placed to locate the possible continuation of the trackway to the E of the assessment area. The trench revealed three shallow ditches (see Fig. 4). The easternmost of the ditches may represent the western trackway ditch, the other ditch being under the hedge. The ditch (34/4) contained a late prehistoric sherd in its lower fill. The other ditches may form part of the cropmark pattern associated with the Roman settlement but they are almost completely ploughed-out and were undated.

Trench 15 contained two shallow undated pits and a ditch aligned N-S (see Fig. 4).

Trench 33 was placed to locate any evidence of the Roman settlement to the SE; no archaeological deposits were discovered.

Trench 24 was placed to locate any extension of activity next to the barrows, again no archaeological features were located.

ENVIRONMENTAL

No carbonized material was noted in any of the features. None of the features was waterlogged.

TABLE 1

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

NB All dates are derived from single sherds.

TRENCH	CTX	TYPE	WIDTH	DEPTH	FINDS DATE
1	3	LAYER			RESIDUAL LBA/EIA
1	5	FURROW			
1	5	GULLY	0.48	0.14	
1	6	GULLY		0.15	
3	4	PIT	0.76	0.09	
4	1	TURF			POST MEDIEVAL
7	4	POSTHOLE?	0.3	0.38	
7	5	PIT	2.5	1.5	IRON AGE
8	4	GULLY	0.7	0.2	NEOLITHIC? FLINT
8	7	POSTHOLE	0.4	0.1	
8	9	POSTHOLE	0.48	0.27	
8	10	POSTHOLE	0.31	0.12	
9	3	FURROW			LATE MEDIEVAL
9	4	DITCH	0.5		
15	4	PIT?	0.6	0.11	
15	5	PIT	0.6	0.12	
15	6	DITCH	0.6	0.18	
23	3	DITCH	1.27	0.43	
27	4	POSTHOLE	0.30	0.09	
27	5	POSTHOLE	0.56	0.15	
27	6	POSTHOLE	0.26	0.15	
30	4	DITCH			
31	4	PIT	0.70	0.23	
31	5	PIT	0.80	0.21	
34	4	DITCH	0.75	0.29	LATE PREHISTORIC
34	5	DITCH	0.60	0.08	
34	6	DITCH	0.60	0.10	
35	4	POSTHOLE	0.44	0.19	
35	5	POSTHOLE	0.24	0.12	
36	4	POSTHOLE	0.16	0.06	
36	5	POSTHOLE	0.26	0.11	
36	6	POSTHOLE	0.33	0.16	
36	7	POSTHOLE	0.19	0.08	
37	4	POSTHOLE	0.15	0.19	
37	5	POSTHOLE	0.14	0.12	
38	3	POSTHOLE	0.29	0.07	
38	4	POSTHOLE	0.33	0.20	
38	5	POSTHOLE	0.40	0.15	
38	6	POSTHOLE	0.34	0.11	
40	3	POSTHOLE	0.33	0.13	
40	4	POSTHOLE	0.32	0.20	
41	3	POSTHOLE	0.30	0.06	
41	4	POSTHOLE	0.40	0.12	
41	5	POSTHOLE	0.35	0.09	

Oxford Archaeological Unit
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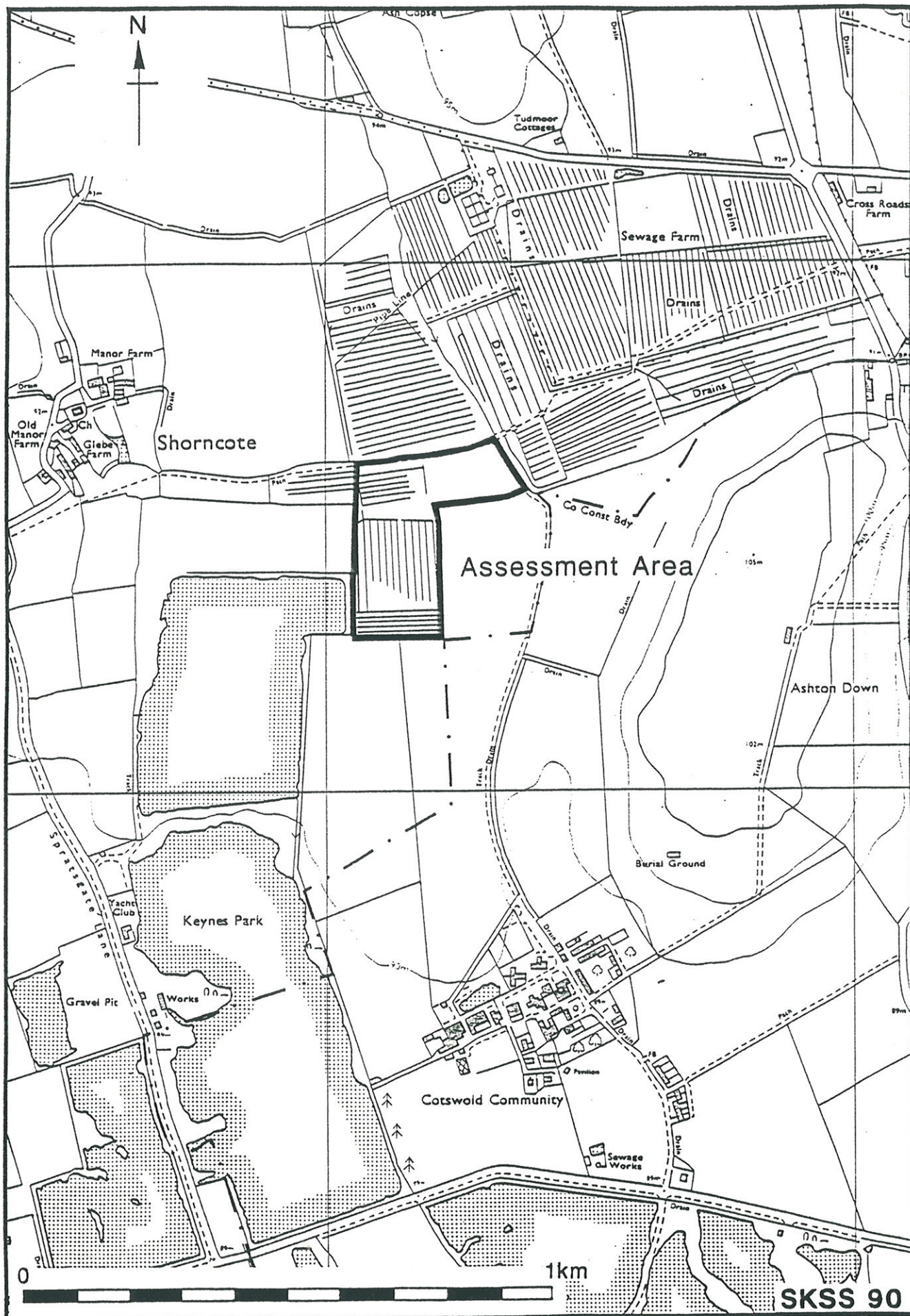


Fig. 1

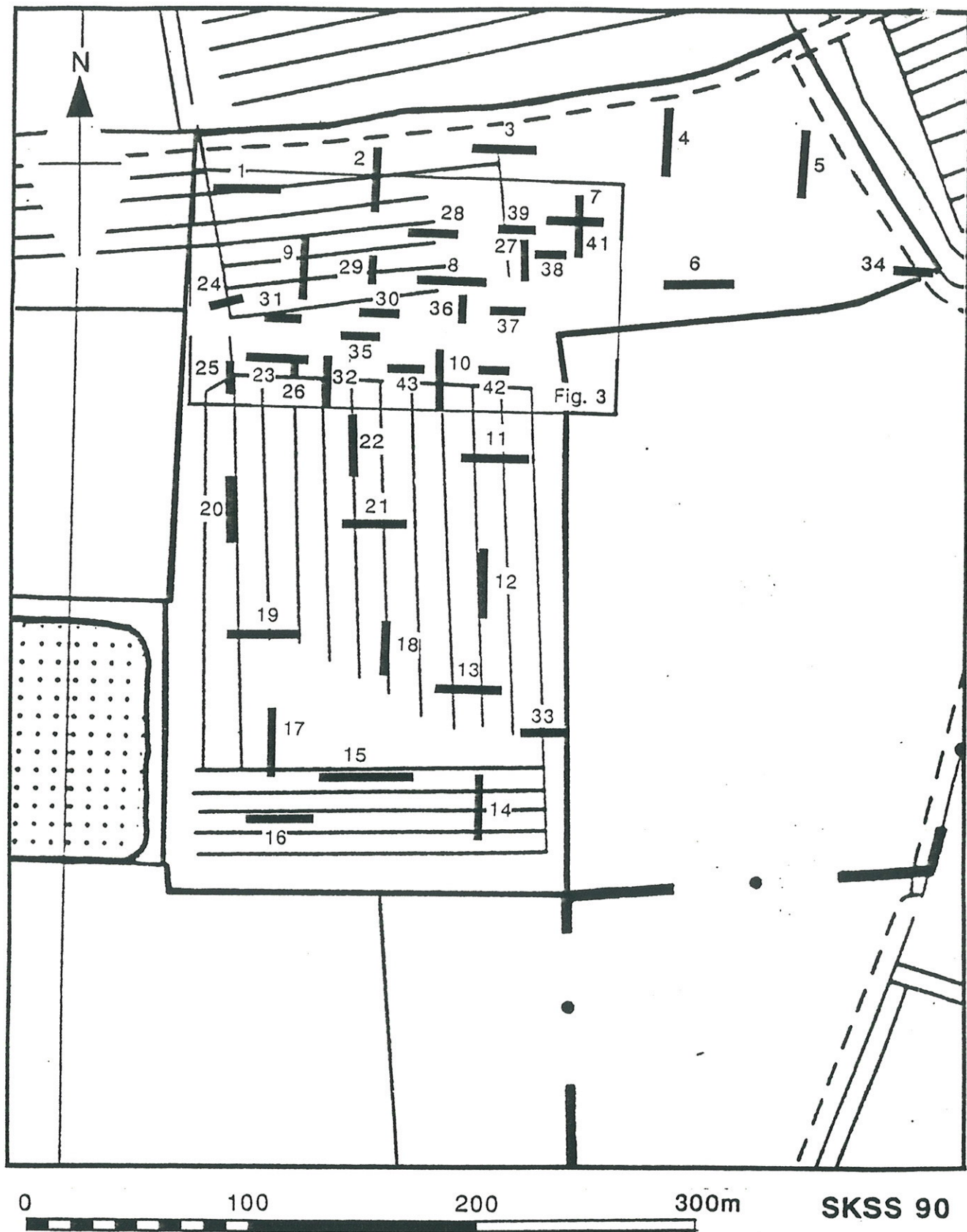


Fig. 2

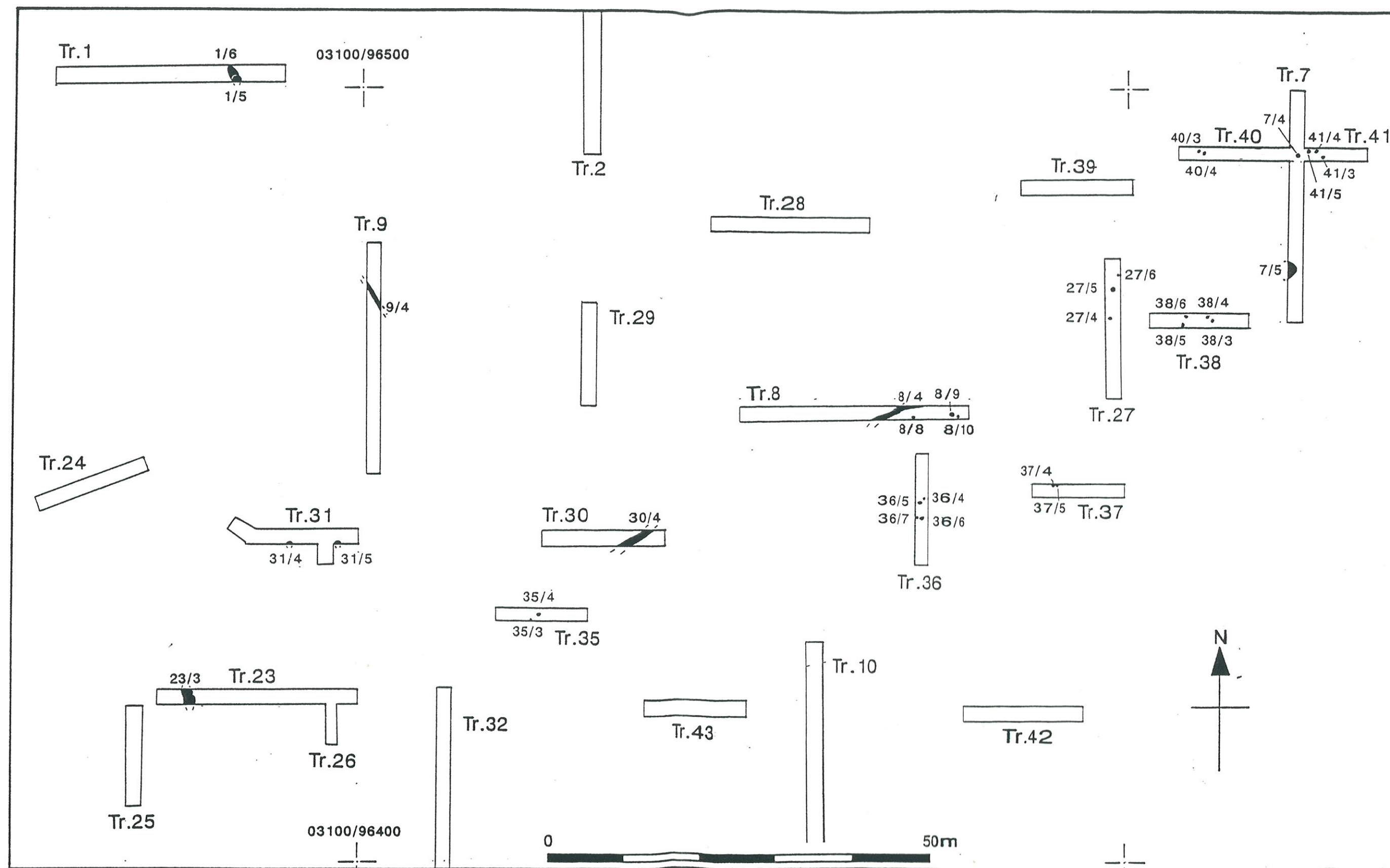
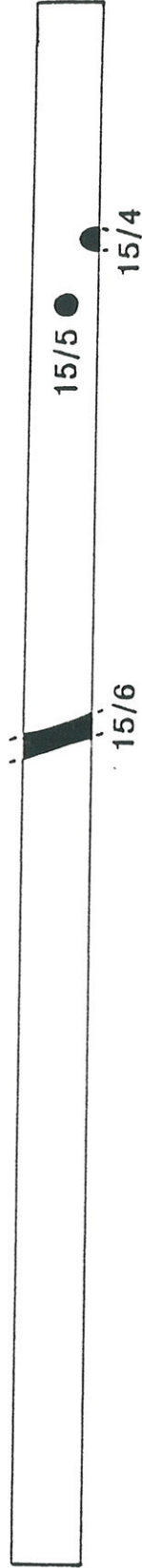


Fig. 3

Trench 15



Trench 34



SKSS 90

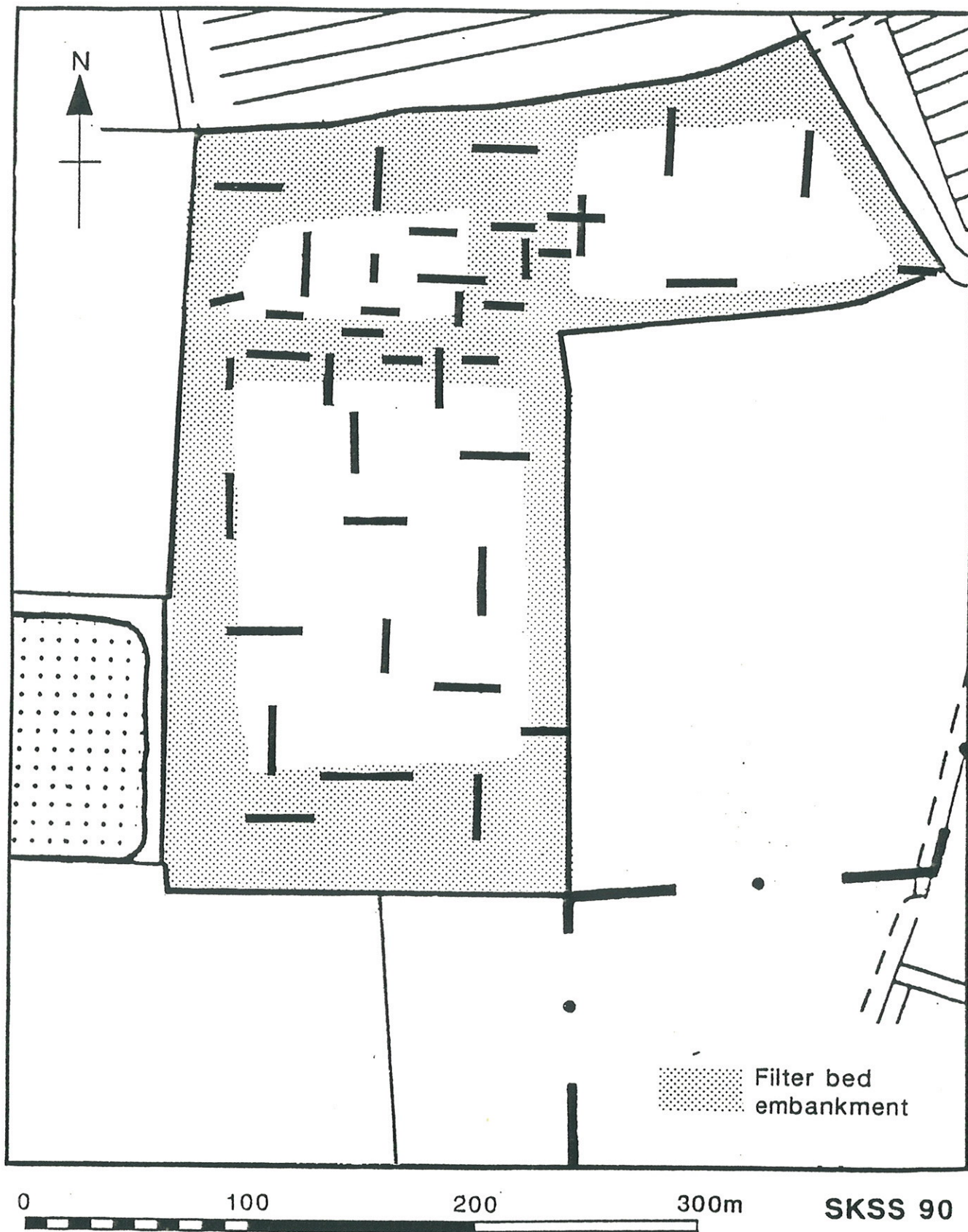


Fig. 5

