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M66 MANCHESTER OUTER RING ROAD DENTON MIDDLETON SECTION

An Archaeological Assessment: Revised Report

Greater Manchester Archaeological Contracts
March 1994

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Greater Manchester Archaeological Contracts was commissioned by the Department of Transport to undertake revision work on an existing assessment which related to the archaeological implications of the proposed M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton to Middleton Section. The original assessment was dated February 1991.

1.2 The revision was necessary to include the effect of the connecting roads and all purpose road proposals which were not covered in the original assessment which was restricted to the proposed motorway route. The review also takes into account new information generated by the North West Wetlands Survey.

1.3 The revision consisted of limited documentary research, and fieldwalking of those areas already identified as containing archaeological potential.

1.4 The 1991 assessment is reproduced here, but amended to include the additional/ revised information.†

1.5 The significant additions to the original report are: the result of a biostratigraphic sampling of an exposed peat face at bridge 17A (page 4 and Appendix 2); the identification of the possible pale associated with Blackley deer park (page 20); the revision of existing entries within the gazetteer of sites (page 22, nos 4, 8, 9 and 10) and the inclusion of newly identified sites (pages 29-30, nos 116-128); the amendment of the recommendations (pages 33-34); and the provision of maps at 1:2500 indicating new and revised sites and sites included within the recommendations (Figs 5-24). These changes are highlighted in the right margin.

† **Acknowledgments**
The revised work was undertaken by Mark Fletcher, based upon the original assessment by Tom Burke and Michael Nevell.

2. The Setting

2.1 GEOLOGY

2.1.1 Solid

For almost the entire length of the route the underlying geology of the area is composed of the Lower and Middle Coal Measures. Within this area are both the Moston and the Ashton Moss Faults, which are aligned approximately north/south. A small area of Bunter Sandstone and Manchester Marls is located between the Convent of the Good Shepherd, in Blackley, and the current terminus of the M66.

2.1.2 Drift

The majority of the route is overlain by boulder clay, a dense sticky brown clay enclosing pebbles and boulders of older rocks. Between the Rivers Tame and Medlock lie the extensive peat deposits of Ashton Moss, now drained and used for market gardening and agriculture. The River Medlock has a single river terrace along its banks at this point. Approximately where Charlestown and the Blackley Golf Course are now situated once lay White Moss, a large peat deposit which has been largely reclaimed. To the north of Rochdale Road and curving round towards the M66 lies a band of sand and gravel, with a deposition of alluvium along the line of the River Irk.

2.2 TOPOGRAPHY

North of the River Tame the topography is characterized by an undulating landscape which rises from 70m to over 100m at Ashton Moss. North of the moss the land falls away steeply as the Medlock valley is encountered, a deep natural cutting descending to *c* 70m.

North of the River Medlock the land rises steeply from *c* 75m to 110m about New Bank Farm. From this point the landscape is relatively level, through Cutler Hill, Hollinwood and White Gate End, before gradually sloping down towards Alkrington at *c* 90m. Rising again to *c* 105m around the Convent of the Good Shepherd the land then descends towards the River Irk at *c* 65m.

3. Historical Background

3.1 PREHISTORIC

3.1.1 Introduction

There is little prehistoric material apparent from the line of the M66. This is partly because the motorway runs across a large area of boulder clay which was unattractive to early settlement and today is either pasture land or urban. However, three areas show some potential for prehistoric activity. The first of these is the Ashton Moss/Little Moss peatland complex; the second, the sands and gravels of the Medlock valley below Cutler Hill; the third, the area of White Moss, now drained.

3.1.2 Ashton Moss and White Moss

Ashton Moss and White Moss lie between 95m and 105m OD and form part of a group of ten to twelve raised bogs developed in basins overlying the boulder clay deposits between the Rivers Irwell, Irk and Medlock (Shimwell 1985, 304-5).

The line of the M66 is due to bisect Ashton Moss from south to north, through the central peat basin (Site 40; see Section 4, *Gazetteer of Sites*). The moss itself originally covered more than 1.5km squared, but is now much reduced in extent. It is a large inland basin moss, belonging to Shimwell's Type 2 class (*ibid*, 307). It seems likely that, as with other large inland basin mosses such as Chat Moss (B) in the Mersey catchment, Lindow Moss and Danes Moss in the catchment of the River Bollin, peat formation began in the Flandrian VIIa period, 7100-5000 BP (*ibid*, 308-9).

White Moss will be bisected from east to west and although only 243ha in size its history is probably similar to that of Ashton Moss (97).

Work in advance of the line of the M66 included the taking of a series of bore holes along the motorway line. Analysis of the 25 boreholes from Ashton Moss substantiates much of Shimwell's argument, and suggests that the original basin, within which the mire formed, was approximately 500m in diameter, with the peat perhaps originally more than 5m deep. Subsequent peat formation overflowed from this central reservoir covering most of the surrounding land to the north and west, forming the large moss known in the medieval period (see below, section 3.4.3).

The general characteristics and development of this mossland complex can be paralleled in greater detail on the western side of the county. There the Chat/Carrington Moss complex is of great antiquity, peat formation beginning in the Flandrian VIIa period, as at Ashton. Howard-Davis *et al* (1988, 23) suggest that this considerable expansion at an early date probably diminished its appeal to early groups, resulting in the complex being a barrier rather than a resource. The same may be true of Ashton. This is indicated by the pollen record from the county where little pre-elm-decline activity can be confidently interpreted within the vicinity of the mosses, although it can be argued that the early evidence may lie deeply buried in the central basins of the mosses.

The elm decline is marked at Red Moss, Bolton, by forest clearance and the appearance of pastoral-type weed *taxa*, and finds of a saddle quern and flint suggest nearby settlement. The situation at Chat Moss is similar with post-elm-decline episodes of minor forest clearance, and archaeological evidence in the form of axes and flint to support this. From Ashton Moss has come a Neolithic stone axe, from the vicinity of Back Lane on the north-western side of the morass (Higson 1859, 29-30), while the location of charcoal deposits in two of the cores (AM2 and AM6) taken by the North West Wetlands Survey may be an indication of human activity at this early date (see Appendix 1).

More Bronze Age material is known from the mosses, although its distribution, closely linked with the Mersey/Irwell river system, suggests that water-borne trade may have been important in this period. The pollen record indicates sustained, albeit low-level, pastoral-type activity and it is tempting to postulate the existence of transhumant groups who exploited the mosses as an incidental resource, but were more closely associated with the exploitation of nearby upland pasture. Such activity may be represented by the scatter of Bronze Age flints from Great Woolden Hall, Salford (Nevell 1989). A Middle to Late Bronze Age socketed bronze axe was recovered from Ashton Moss in the 19th century (Higson 1859, 29-30) and suggests continued interest in the moss during this period.

A Late Bronze Age recurrence surface at Chat Moss has been dated to *c* 675bc. Although it is broadly contemporaneous with a sustained forest clearance, cereal pollen does not occur in the record until the Late Iron Age, when it is composed of hemp/hop pollen. It is this period which sees substantial settlement evidence appear, with the site at Great Woolden Hall (Nevell 1989) no doubt being the first of many moss-side farmsteads to be located. Iron Age interest in Ashton Moss may be indicated by the discovery of a human head in the moss in the 19th century (Howard-Davis *et al* 1988, 43; Stead *et al* 1986, 184 no 25) and by the recent discovery of two subrectangular enclosures, *c* 0.25ha and *c* 0.15ha, containing internal circular features, on the north-eastern fringes of the moss (M D Nevell, pers comm).

The recent construction works related to bridge 17A (41) provided an opportunity for biostratigraphic sampling of an exposed in-situ peat face, and this work was undertaken for the GMAU by the University of Manchester Department of Geography, with funding provided by the Department of Transport. This work strongly suggested local human activity during the later prehistoric period (see Appendix 2).

3.1.3 Cutler Hill

A late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age polished stone axe, was found during the construction of a swimming pool at Cutler Hill Farm in 1982-3 (Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record, No 5765 1 0). The axe, which was located 6-7 ft below the surface, measured 106 mm long, 30 mm wide and 24 mm deep. It is 'A' shaped with two flattened edges, being polished and sharpened. There is no retouching and no sign of wear; this and its small size suggest a ceremonial or votive offering. It is composed of fine andesite lava from a quartz rich vein, and its place of origin is suggested as being Antrim.

3.2 ROMAN

Roman activity along the line of M66 is limited to roads and coin finds. The route of the motorway crosses the line of the Manchester to Castleshaw Roman road (Margary 1957, no 712), through what was the Lime Estate (66). Butterworth in his description of the landscape during the early 19th century reveals that 'the direction of the road is still perfectly visible in the adjoining township of Failsworth; and appears like an extended tumulus very near to the canal' (1823, 72).

To the north-east of the Roman road and the motorway route a Roman coin hoard was recovered during the construction of Chamber Mill, Heron Street, in 1887. Some 300 bronze coins from Antoninus to Victorinus (mid-2nd to mid-3rd century AD) are said to have been found in a box. The whereabouts of the coins is now unknown (Shotter 1990, 155). The deposition of this hoard may be a reflection of the severe inflation which took place towards the end of the 3rd century and it is probable that the coinage reforms of the emperors Probus and Aurelian devalued the currency to such an extent that this coin hoard was not worth recovering. In addition to this hoard a tetradrachm of Carus (AD 282-3) was found in Hollinwood in 1922 (*ibid*, 225) and coins of the 1st and 2nd century AD were recovered from Ashton Moss in the 19th century (Higson 1859, 29-30).

According to the late 18th century antiquarian the Reverend John Whitaker (1773, 191) a Roman road leading from Manchester through Littleborough and on to Ilkley passed through Moston; he believed it to have probably branched from the Manchester to Castleshaw road about Ancoats Lane and to have passed by Street Fold in Moston, Street Bridge in Chadderton, and Street Gate in Royton. In 1883, however, W Thompson Watkin noted that 'the most singular fact connected with this road is that no-one has ever seen or heard of the portion of it between Manchester and Blackstone Edge from Whitaker's time to the present day'. The one possible exception noted by Watkin was a discovery made in 1878...

> 'in the cutting out of the foundations for some new houses close to Lightbown Hall, Moston ... When digging out the cellars, at about two and a half feet below the surface, the workmen struck upon the pavement. The road was about four feet wide, of rather a convex surface, being highest in the middle, where the largest boulders had been placed, and there were two layers of stones upon a bed of gravel.'

Watkin believed this to be Roman but to be distinct from Whitaker's supposed Manchester to Littleborough road; 'it is more like a small road leading to a villa: its width is insufficient for anything else'(Watkin 1883, 56-7).

3.3 ANGLO-SAXON

3.3.1 Nico Ditch: Introduction

Nico Ditch is a linear earthwork encircling Manchester to the south and east. It is supposedly one of the few Anglo-Saxon sites in the county and as a linear earthwork has regional and national significance. Nico Ditch comprises a single bank with a ditch along its southern side and originally connected the marshland areas of Moorside, Urmston, in the west and Ashton Moss in the east. The M66 will cut the line of this earthwork in two places: at Audenshaw Lodge (8 or 10) and at Lumb Lane, which itself overlies and follows the course of the ditch northwards (23).

3.3.2 The name

Nico Ditch is first mentioned as 'Mykel Ditch' in Audenshaw deeds of *c* 1200 and occurs again as 'Milk Wall' in Slade deeds of 1270, as the 'Murchil Ditch' in 1322, and as the 'Nekel Dyche' and 'Miche Wall Diche' in Rusholme deeds of 1317 and 1484 respectively (Crofton 1905, 154-5; Gardner 1908, 554-5). The variants 'Milk Wall' and 'Milche Wall Diche' imply that the monument consisted of both a ditch and a bank.

The origin of the name is a matter of debate. The most widely used name in recent times is 'Nico' or 'Nicleer' Ditch which has been variously ascribed to the Anglo-Saxon 'nicor' Scandinavian 'nikker' (a malevolent water spirit), the Greek 'nike' (victory) and the Anglo-Saxon 'nicker' (to scrape) (Crofton 1885, 191). The earliest attested form, however, was 'Mykel Ditch' and this is probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'mickle' (great). The physical evidence suggests that the term 'great ditch', which appears in another early deed translated as 'magnum fossatum' (Farrer 1902, 329), refers to the length of the monument rather than to any quality as a physical obstacle.

3.3.3 The extent of the ditch

The exact westward extent of Nico Ditch is uncertain but a series of field boundaries from Urmston to Withington can be traced along its projected alignment. This alignment begins in the west with Carr Ditch, Moorside (SJ 750 952), and follows Derbyshire Lane through Stretford, before heading slightly south-eastwards through Longford Hall and Hobson's Hall towards Dog House Farm (Ordnance Survey First Edition 6" to 1 mile Lancashire Sheet 111, 1848). The Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 sheet SJ 89 SW (1981) describes a section of this alignment between the Bridgewater Canal and the Altrincham to Manchester Railway as 'Nico Ditch'. Why the ditch should follow a course immediately south of Longford Brook for much of this alignment is puzzling, but the presence of a large expanse of mossland at Moorside, Urmston, would provide a western terminus similar to Ashton Moss in the east.

To the east, Nico Ditch proper can be first traced in Platt Fields Park, Fallowfield (SJ 855 945). This section represents the best preserved stretch of the entire earthwork. There is a pronounced difference between the ground levels to the north and south of the ditch, although it is unclear whether this is due to the presence of a bank or to scarping of the ground surface. The ditch displays a broad V-profile, and survives to *c* 2.0-2.5m below the ground level to the north and *c* 0.5m below that to the south. Its maximum width is *c* 4.0-5.0m from lip to lip. There is no clear evidence of either a bank or a counterscarp, although the area to the south has been disturbed by landscaping. The best preserved portion, alongside the Unitarian Chapel, has been heavily planted with trees and shrubs, and as a result the entire area appears to be heavily disturbed.

After leaving Platt Fields the eastward course of Nico Ditch can be traced with reference to the present street plan. Its course is marked by Old Hall Lane and the unadopted roadway known as Park Grove, before it crosses the supposed Roman vicinal way from Manchester to Stockport at Midway (SJ 872 947).

Its line is continued to the east by Matthews Lane until, at Melland Playing Fields, Levenshulme, it is once again visible. At this point (SJ 883 949) it is marked by a public footpath, along the south side of which runs a steep V-profile water-filled ditch, some 4.0m in overall length and *c* 1.5m deep. The footpath has removed all traces of a bank,

although here, as elsewhere, there is a pronounced difference (of *c* 1.0-2.0m) between the ground levels to the north and south of the ditch.

Further east the ditch continues as a property boundary to the houses on the south side of Holmcroft Road, and here (SJ 890 951) coincides with the administrative boundary between the Urban Districts of Manchester and Stockport. The ditch at this point is of similar form and dimensions to that at Melland Playing Fields. Beyond the eastern end of Holmcroft Road, Nico Ditch is crossed by railway embankments and goods yards.

Further to the east there is no trace of the ditch, although its course, along the southern side of Debdale Cemetery and Cranbrook Road and the northern side of Laburnum Road, is clearly marked by its continued coincidence with the local administrative boundary.

The coincidence of Nico Ditch and the modern administrative boundary continues as far as Denton Golf Course, where the two eventually diverge. At this point (SJ 903 960) the ditch once more becomes clearly visible, although it is heavily overgrown and disturbed by landscaping for the golf course. It is clear that this area represents, after Platt Fields, the best surviving portion of the earthwork. The ditch is *c* 3.0m wide at the top and has a broad V-profile 1.0-1.5m deep. There is a very slight bank (*c* 0.3m high) at some points along its western side, although this could in places be the result of landscaping.

Further to the north-east, the Audenshaw Reservoirs have obliterated any sign of the earthwork, although its line is recorded on the Ashton Estate Plan of 1765 as following Lumb Lane, north of Audenshaw. It is usually assumed that its terminus lies at the northern end of Lumb Lane.

However, the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map of Droylsden SJ 9098 (1960) names the large drainage ditch running east of Lumb Lane along Moor Side as part of the Nico Ditch system (23). Melland (1935-6, 62) describes this eastern extension in the following manner:

> 'Under the walls of the Droylsden Rectory there is a dry ditch, four or five feet deep, which is the last sight one gets of it [Nico Ditch] before it disappears on Ashton Moss'.

This large ditch was recorded on the Ashton Estate Plan of 1765 and on subsequent maps, and was mentioned by Higson (1859, 10) as extending as far as Moor Side Farm. Its antiquity may be suggested by its use as an administrative boundary between Droylsden and Ashton townships, possibly from as early as the 15th century when it was probably referred to in a mossland dispute between the Ashtons and the Byrons: the boundary between the Byrons' moss and the Ashtons' moss followed 'streight upon the end of the overmast ditch [Nico Ditch, Lumb Lane] eastward ... towards the Lytel Mosse, to the end of the same ditch [at Moorside]' (Bowman 1960, 45). Thus the eastern end of Nico Ditch would appear to run into the western edge of Ashton Moss.

3.3.4 Previous excavations

Nico Ditch has been the subject of some small-scale excavations. In 1955 Dr J D Bu'lock of the Department of Chemistry, University of Manchester, excavated a section of it at Denton Golf Course. No records of the excavation were kept, but he recalls (pers comm)

that the ditch was *c* 8ft deep at this point and had been re-cut on numerous occasions. A clay bank was located but no dating evidence was forthcoming.

In 1979-80 Dr E B Mawer of the University of Manchester Medical School conducted a trial excavation of Nico Ditch on the site of the proposed extension to the Shackleton Engineering Company's factory at Reddish (SJ 891 951). A section through the earthwork revealed that very heavy modern disturbance had removed all trace of the bank, while the ditch, represented by an area of humic material *c* 2.5m wide, was not fully excavated. No finds earlier than the post-medieval period were recovered.

During November 1990 the GMAU undertook trial trenching and small scale excavation on the line of Nico Ditch at Kenwood Road, North Reddish, Stockport. This revealed a roughly U-shaped cut surviving to a depth of up to 1.30m and at least 3.2m in width. However, it is uncertain whether this cut retains its original profile or indeed represents the first construction of the ditch. In addition severe truncation of the site had removed any evidence for a bank or contemporary ground surface. Three phases of later recutting were identified, of which the earliest had no associated finds while the others were of either 19th or 20th century date (Fletcher 1990). In January 1992 two sections were cut across the line of Nico Ditch at Park Grove in Levenshulme. Although badly damaged by a modern culvert, which meant that the depth of the ditch was not recoverable, these sections indicated that the ditch was between 3.5m and 4m wide (Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record, No 1404 1 5).

3.3.5 Function

Although a pre-conquest origin for Nico Ditch may be inferred on typological and etymological grounds, the function of the monument is uncertain, the three most widely held interpretations being that it was for defensive, administrative or drainage purposes.

The traditional explanation of the earthwork's origin is that it was created in a single night by the Saxon inhabitants of Manchester (each man being instructed to build a bank equal in size to his own height) as protection against the Danish invaders of AD 869-70 (Crofton 1905, 155-6).

It has also been suggested that the distribution of Scandinavian place-names displays a concentration to the south of Nico Ditch (Ekwall 1922). Other place-names in the area which are of alleged significance include the 'Nicker Knoll' (reputed to be the burial mounds of the battle dead), 'Winning Hill' and 'Castle Field' all at Gorton, and the predominant place-name element 'Dane' in the Gorton and Denton areas – including Danehead Bank, The Danes, Dane Bank, Daneleys, and Denton itself. The latter group, however, derives from a local corruption of the Anglo-Saxon 'dene' – a wooded hollow (Crofton 1885, 192).

A variation of the defensive interpretation is that Nico Ditch represents part of an earlier defensive network, covering the whole of North-Western Britain, constructed by the native British population of the area to repel the invading Saxons (Melland 1935-6, 62). It is as a British earthwork that Nico Ditch appears on the Ordnance Survey Map of Britain in the Dark Ages.

Most recently a possible connection has been suggested with the repair and manning

of the burh at Manchester in 919 reported in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; if Nico Ditch is of a similar date, it would have enclosed the southern hinterland of the burh, cutting the route of three Roman roads (to Chester, Buxton and Melandra) which may well have continued in use in the post-Roman period (Fletcher 1990, 7).

The main arguments against a defensive interpretation are, firstly, the uncertainty that the earthwork was ever very massive in size, and, secondly, that the Gore Brook, half a mile to the north (except at Platt Fields where the two converge), appears to be a far more suitable site for a defensive earthwork.

The evidence for an administrative function is largely based on the coincidence of the Nico Ditch with a number of parish and estate boundaries, the early ditch and bank presumably being a convenient linear landmark (Crofton 1905, 139-42).

In the west the Carr Ditch, which may be part of the Nico Ditch alignment (see above, section 3.3.3), formed the boundary between the parish of Eccles to the south and Urmston to the north, as well as the boundary between the townships of Urmston, Flixton and Davyhulme.

In 1322 Nico Ditch formed the boundary between Manchester manor and Reddish, and in later times divided the parish of Gorton to the north from the parishes of Denton, Reddish and Levenshulme to the south. At Birch it marked the southward extent of the Slade Hall estate, and further to the west divided Levenshulme from Rusholme. Even where the parish of Rusholme straddled its course, Nico Ditch sub-divided it into discrete, recognisable areas to the north and south. For its entire length a hedgerow ran along its northern side. The point where it crossed the Manchester-Stockport road is known as 'Midway' and is supposed to mark the midway point between the two towns (Crofton 1905, 157-9). Nico Ditch still serves as an administrative boundary: for a distance of some 2.4km from Melland Playing Fields (SJ 887 960) to Denton Golf Course (SJ 902 959), it coincides with the boundary between the modern Urban Districts of Manchester and Tameside.

While its significance as an administrative boundary is undeniable, there is no evidence that this was its primary function, and the construction of an earthwork specifically for this purpose would be exceptional in the historical period.

The suggestion that Nico Ditch was constructed for the purpose of drainage (Esdaile 1892, 219) has been discredited largely on the basis that it has a variable fall (Crofton 1905, 156). This, however, may be immaterial if the purpose of the ditch was to act as a 'soak-away' from the neighbouring marshlands.

3.4 MEDIEVAL TO INDUSTRIAL

3.4.1 Introduction

The line of the M66 runs through several distinct administrative or geographical areas which in terms of their development in the medieval and later periods are best considered as discrete units. From south to north these are Audenshaw, Ashton Moss, Little Moss, Woodhouses and Waterhouses, Cutler Hill, the Lime Estate, Hollinwood, Chadderton, Moston, and finally Blackley.

3.4.2 Audenshaw

The Audenshaw division of the medieval parish, township and manor of Ashton-under-Lyne is first referred to *c* 1200. However, there is no conclusive evidence to indicate that Audenshaw was originally included in the manor before the 13th century. The division occupies the south-western part of the township.

Among the earliest references to Audenshaw is a grant of land in 'Aldenshade' made between 1190 and 1212 by a Matthew son of Edith to the Cluniac cell of Kersal (Farrer 1902, 328-9). The boundaries of this land are given as:

> 'From the syke which runs down the ridding of William son of Gamel and Chetel's Croft, going up the same to the moss, from thence to the Mykel Ditch, from thence going up to the moss and from the moss across to Osuel's leach, from thence descending to Green Brook and from Green Brook descending to the syke which runs down between the ridding of William son of Gamel and Chetel's croft'.

This grant would appear to be of a large tract of land immediately north-west of Audenshaw village and bounded in the north by Ashton Moss, in the east by Nico Ditch, in the south probably by Carrington Barn Brook (between Carrington Barn and Dick Lane Farm) and in the west probably by Gore Brook and Moss Brook. Between 1240 and 1259 part of this land was granted by the prior of Lenton, the mother house of Kersal, to Robert le Rous, for the yearly rent of 3s 4d (*ibid*, 332-3); this parcel of land, to the north-west of Dick Lane Brook, may be identified with that leased in 1588 by Robert Hobson and in 1613 by Ralph Hobson for the same rent payable to the lords of the manor of Kersal (Booker 1859, 129-33).

Other records name other tenants of Audenshaw in the medieval period. In or soon after 1205 a Robert de Aldwynshagh witnessed a grant of land by Cockersand Abbey to John de Buron in Failsworth (Bowman 1960, 129). There is record of an action taken against an Adam de Aldewainescath, by Margery de Birches and Richard de Birches on 24th October 1246 'for dower, wherein Martin, son of Adam, late husband of Margery, had endowed her in that vill [being the Taunton estate, north-east of Little Moss]' (VCH 1911, 344 n 72). In 1337 Sir John de Assheton, lord of the manor, was defendant to a number of claims, including one by a John de Audenshaw (Bowman 1960, 130). The poll-tax return for 1380-1 for the manor records 'Willus de Aldinschagh' who again appears in 1422, on the Custom and Rental roll of the manor, as holding land in Audenshaw (Butterworth 1823, 132-54; Bowman 1960, 35 & 70-9). This rental records the following people as holding land in the district at that time: Richard de Moston (free tenant) 3s 6d; William de Aldwinshagh (free tenant) 3s; Richard of Hadfield 10s; Roulin of the Wood (free tenant) 3s 6d.

Richard de Moston's holdings may be the 'manor of Moston' alluded to in a note in the account of Moston township, as held by the Hydes of Denton. Edmund Ashton of Chadderton was farmer of Moston's Audenshaw lands in 1480, George Moston giving him an acquittance for £4 9s 10d, one year's rent. In 1514 Margery, widow of Thomas Lidyard and sister and heir of George Moston, granted to her son Edward Lidyard lands in Audenshaw and Warwickshire (VCH 1911, 344-5 n 72).

John Carrington had messuages in Audenshaw in 1573, while the Reddishes of Reddish held lands of the heirs of Sir Thomas Ashton in socage by a rent of 18d (*ibid*, 346 n 101). In 1613 the rent was stated to be 2s 10d (Rylands 1880, 253). In 1618 an assessment was

raised on the parish of Ashton. Under the heading of Audenshaw 34 land owners and tenants were noted, with 44.75 acres of 'more in common' (Butterworth 1823, 156-7).

One of the most significant changes in the landscape during the 17th century occurred with the building of Red Hall, in 1672, by Ralph Stopford, an officer in Cromwell's army. Butterworth speculated that this was the result of the confiscation of the Sandiford estates during the Civil War and Interregnum, but there is no documentary evidence to prove this (*ibid*, 91). By 1771 the hall, but not necessarily the attendant estate, was in the possession of Mr Edward Hobson, in whose family it remained into the 19th century (Wilkins-Jones 1978, 65).

In 1823 Butterworth published his description of Ashton-under-Lyne, which included details of the division of Audenshaw, at that time containing 1106.5 acres. Only ten tenants and landowners were mentioned. Butterworth's description provides the fullest evidence for the buildings within the village and the surrounding area, now covered by the Audenshaw Reservoirs (12) and Denton Golf Course. The village itself he describes as consisting 'of several rows of humble cottages, branching out from both sides of the main road, but chiefly towards the south' (Butterworth 1823, 89). This layout can be seen clearly on the Ashton Estate Plan of 1765, Yates's map of Lancashire of 1786, and on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1848. Other establishments described include Red Hall, Stanfield House (an 18th century structure), High Ash (a 15th century timber building), and Red Hall Chapel (a Methodist establishment built in 1783). Not mentioned, but present on Yates's map of 1786, are Audenshaw Lodge and Mawson Hall.

As might be expected, until the 18th century the economy was based on arable agriculture, with the production of corn attested in 1650, when Miles Mayall and Anthony Audenshawe were fined at Manchester 'for sellinge wheat before the Market Bell was rung'(Wilkins-Jones 1978, 65). Turbary rights were also guarded jealously, for in 1597 William Booth, inheritor of half the lordship of Ashton, appeared as plaintiff in a dispute regarding his rights in the mosslands of Ashton. He named various parts of 'the more called Odenshaw' as having been enclosed by George Lathom (Bowman 1960, 43).

In the 18th century the Industrial Revolution began to touch the area, with Robert Thorneley leasing Red Hall to carry on there his business as a furrier and hatter (Wilkins-Jones 1978, 65). By 1848 the Ordnance Survey were able to record two hat manufacturing establishments and a brewery on the edges of the village. However, until its demise in the 1870s Audenshaw village remained predominately rural in character.

An Act of Parliament was obtained in 1875 allowing for the construction of reservoirs at Denton and Audenshaw (Bateman 1884, 172-3). Although of a relatively late date, the construction of these reservoirs enabled a considerable quantity of water to be stored within a few miles of the City of Manchester. The works were somewhat delayed in their completion because of the collapse of the clay embankment. However, this slippage was rectified by the erection of brick buttresses at suitable places. The original design was for five reservoirs at Audenshaw and two at Denton. However, Numbers 4 and 5 were never constructed. The method of construction of these earth reservoirs is typical of the period and is described by Bateman as ' one where the embankments were formed ... with slopes of three horizontal to one vertical on the inside, pitched upon the face with stone, and two to one on the outside'(*ibid*).

3.4.3 Ashton Moss (40)

During the medieval period Ashton Moss lay wholly within the manor, parish and townshipof Ashton-under-Lyne, for which there are extensive, but largely unpublished, records available. The Custom and Rental roll for the manor in 1422 indicates that turbary rights brought in £5 for the lord of the manor, a figure which represents nearly one-seventh of the lord's yearly income of £36 15s 6 3/4d. from his estate (Bowman 1960, 43). An instance of the value of the moss is the amount paid by Sir John Byron in 1422 to rent a portion of the moss, 16s, a payment equivalent to the cost of renting both corn-mills in the manor, 16s 4d (Butterworth 1823, 140-1). Despite this record there is no evidence that the manorial peat-beds had by then been allocated and shared amongst the tenantry.

About the year 1400 and again in 1425, Sir John de Assheton II and Sir John III had disputes with the Byrons regarding the 'meres' or boundaries between their respective sectors of the mosslands. In 1400 an Inquest was appointed to meet upon the moss to decide upon the boundaries, but angry words were exchanged between the two families and the meeting proved inconclusive. It was not until 1425 that the matter was settled. The final decision ran thus (Bowman 1960, 43-6):

> 'That John the Buron, his heirs and assigns, were to have for ever more in fee simple, for them an their tenantz that ben and shall be in Brylisden [Droylsden], Clayton and Sunderland [Cinderland], the mosse within thys meres, – fro the heved [head] of the lomy lach [Lumb Brook] suyng [following] by the border of the mosse towards Aldwynshagh unto the ditch that Thomas de Assheton made, soe saying that ditch unto the Hard hill that John de Assheton saies is now called Thomas' Hill of Ashton [Ashton Hill Lane?], but John the Buron say is called the Hard hill, be syde Oselache in Brilisden [Droylsden] More, and soe suying up eastward be the hard side of the hill fully ten rode, suying streight upon the end of the overmast dycth eastward that John the Buron has in Sunderland, towards the Lytel Mosse, to the end of the same ditch, except 40 rodes, and fro thence overtwart the mosse northeard even unto the utmost egge north ward, saving to John of Assheton and his heires the Intake as far as it is ditched, and fro thence suying down the egge of that mosse to the heved [head] of the lomylache. Yeelding yearely for the dower and awer, John the Buron and heirs to John de Assheton and heirs, 12s.; And John de Assheton and heirs shall have the remnant of the mosse that John the Buron claymes, fro the ditch that Thomas de Assheton made unto the Ewal, as I, John de Stanley, shall mere them with scales, holes, and other markes more redy upon the ground, by God's mercy, between this and the feast of St.Michell next coming. And deemt by me that Drye hill lye open for evermore, noght to be enprovet ne encloset; and that the parties etc. may have wayes upon that Hard Hyll to carry...turves etc. at thier lust; and that John the Buron ne his heirs sell, ne give noe leeve to deliver turves to noe persons that have bought or shall bye turfes of John de Ashton there out taken, alonly to the tenants of John the Buron and his heirs ...' Concluded upon 6th April 1425.

This is the earliest description we have of the boundaries of Ashton Moss, although it only deals with the northern part of the morass, from Droylsden to Little Moss. It is apparent that even at this date the moss was heavily used, and already partially drained.

Thus in the medieval period the extent of the moss appears to be nearly double that recorded on the Ordnance Survey Drift Geology map of 1930 (Sheet 85, Manchester) with the roads of Moorside Street and Back Lane defining its northern edge, and Slate Lane (28) and Lees Lane defining its southern boundary. The moss may have extended further south, towards the old village of Audenshaw, for in 1597 William Booth, then lord of the manor of Ashton, appeared as plaintiff in a dispute regarding his rights in

the mosslands, and named various parts of 'the moor called Odenshaw' as having been enclosed by George Lathom, the latter alleging that 'John Hunt was joint lord (with himself) of the wastes and commons of the manor' the other wastes being Luzley Moor, Mossley and Little Moss (Bowman 1960, 43). The Ashton parish assessment of 1618 (Butterworth 1823, 155) indicates that 44.75 acres of land in the division of Audenshaw was held as 'more in common', out of a total of 436.5 acres. It also seems likely that the moss extended further south-eastwards, perhaps as far as the River Tame, for in 1842 Edwin Butterworth was able to quote the finding of peat in 1833-4 'three or four feet in thickness ... in the very centre of the town' (Butterworth 1842, 120).

Sometime between 1425 and 1617 Ashton Moss was divided into rooms or allotments for rent by the tenants of the manor, and officers, such as the Bailiff, with Moss Reeves and Moor Lookers, were responsible for managing the whole area. In the early 18th century there were three of each of the latter two officials whilst special 'Pinners' or 'Pounders' were responsible for straying cattle on the moss (Bowman 1960, 46). The Court Leet records for this period provide extensive evidence for the use and abuse of the moss and its attendant rights (*ibid*, 46-8) and it is clear from these records that certain parts of the moss went under special names. There is reference to 'Shadow Moss' in 1613, and 'Linden Moss' in 1622. A 'Donome Moss' mentioned in 1617 may be associated with the place described in the 1422 rental as 'Doneam Moss', from which every tenant had to convey, yearly, ten cartloads of turves to the manor house.

In 1692 the Court Leet records noted 157 moss-rooms needing attention, whilst in April 1722 a total of 225 holders of moss-rooms were presented at Ashton court for 'neglecting to cleanse their Taile and Side Ditches to the Sesses and Eight Rood upward toward the Middle of the Moss'(*ibid*, 47-8). In 1807 the Moss Reeves were still reporting those who failed to carry out the ancient rules.

As late as 1823 James Butterworth was still able to describe Ashton Moss as 'a quagmire ... the neighbouring people venture to cross it at any season'(Butterworth 1823, 87). This implies that the morass was still an actively growing, raised moss at this period. However, recounting the state of the moss some nineteen years later Edwin Butterworth (1842, 120-1) could state that:

> 'a large peat moss extended over a space of 200 acres, partly in Ashton and Audenshaw, half-a-mile west of the town of Ashton ... The moss was a shaking bog; nevertheless, it could be crossed at any season. As it was obvious that, with proper drainage and manure, the peat might be cultivated to advantage, and, as at a depth of ten feet, a tolerable soil of loam, easily convertible into meadow, was found, operations for its reclamation were commenced in 1832, by Mr. Reed, at the cost of the Earl of Stamford. In 1839, a considerable change was manifest, and the soil had already begun to repay the owner for the great trouble and expense bestowed. The present average thickness of the moss is not more than three feet. The high lands of Boardman's-edge, Light Birches etc, are partly uncultivated.'

The Ashton manor steward's notebook of 1831 recorded that in November of that year Mr Read had indeed begun to drain and cultivate the moss, and that out of this area of 240 statute acres, 70 would be ready for cultivation of 'Wheat, Oats, Potatoes and Vetches' by the spring of 1834 (Bowman 1960, 48). By the time the Ordnance Survey published their First Edition map for the area (Lancashire Sheet 105) in 1848, virtually all the moss had been drained and turned over to nursery-gardens and allotments, for which it was still used in 1990.

There are a number of points of interest in the various accounts of the mossland in the 19th century, not least being the varying size assigned to the morass: 240 acres in 1831; 200 acres according to Butterworth in 1842; and 265 acres according to the steward's notebook of 1843 (Bowman 1960, 48). This must in part be due to the extensive peat cutting that had already taken place by the time the mossland was drained. However, the fact that there appears to have been little opposition to this scheme is probably explained by Butterworth's comment that 'Ashton Moss affords plenty of turf for fuel, were it generally burnt, but coal being now so abundant in the neighbourhood, it is seldom used except for kindling up of fires, being more easily ignitable than coal' (1823, 87-8). By 1990 some of these allotments had reduced the depth of the peat to just 1.5m. This was especially noticeable in the southern part of the moss where a number of allotments lay up to 2.0m lower than their surrounding fellows. This is the area that was laid out for 'turf rooms' in the 16th and 17th centuries (see above), and it is not impossible that some of these allotments owe their origins, and thus their depth, to these ancient parcels of land.

3.4.4 Littlemoss

Littlemoss is a small village on the northern borders of Tameside, immediately north of Ashton town, bounded on the north by the River Medlock, in the west by Droylsden township, in the east by the Hartshead Division and in the south by Ashton Moss. It was described by Edwin Butterworth (1842, 126) as 'a small rural district to the south of Waterhouses'.

The description of this area as Littlemoss or, in the early form of the name, Little Moss does not occur until 1425 (Bowman 1960, 45). Before that date the area seems to have been known as Sunderland after the hall within its bounds, but during the 17th century the name Little Moss appears to have gained preference.

In *c* 1200 Orm son of Roger gave practically all the land from above the present Droylsden railway station as far as Ash Bridge and Cinderland Hall estate in Little Moss, to Cockersand Abbey, the north-eastern boundary of this land being described as 'ascending the Medelac (Medlock) up to the stream at Sundrilond' (*ibid*, 26).

The most important, and possibly ancient, building within the district was that of Cinderland, formerly Sunderland, Hall. Stephen de Bredbury gave all his lands in Sunderland to Robert de Byron in return for a pair of white gloves at Martinmas and a payment of 2s to the chief lords, this, according to Bowman (1960, 62), being early in the 13th century. The Custom and Rental roll for Ashton records that in 1422 the majority of this estate was held by Sir Richard de Hadfield, by a rent of 2s per annum from the lord of the manor; Sir Richard de Byron held 'lond in Sunderland' for 6d per annum (Butterworth 1823, 143). There is a dubious reference from the late 15th century, in the de Trafford deeds, which may relate to the Cinderland estate. If so, it indicates that by 1473 the estate, now referred to as a manor, was held by William de Heton, directly of the Lord of Manchester by an annual rent of 12s (Harland 1866, 479).

By 1618 the Hall and its environs were in the possession of William Bell senior, who was succeeded by his son the Reverend William Bell, in residence in 1633 (Butterworth 1823, 158; Brierley 1928, 97). According to the Ashton parish survey of 1618 the estate at this time consisted of 60 acres and was by far the largest in the district (Butterworth 1823, 158). Although the Reverend William Bell did not sign the Solemn League and Covenant

in 1643 he was witness to a marriage at Ashton church in 1656 (Brierley 1928,272). When he died on March 10th in 1684 he ordered that his estate of 'Synderland' be sold in order to pay for his debts and funeral. The parish register records that a John Siddall of Sinderland Hall was in residence in 1686 and 1687 (*ibid*, 455 & 458) and the Siddalls of Sinderland occur in the registers to *c* 1720. Butterworth (1823, 81) described Clnderland Hall as 'an extensive and rather antiquated building ... adorned with a carved ceiling of genuine "oak of Britain", the old fashioned figures of the feudal times grinning in the knotty substance'. It was then owned by a Mr James Smith.

Other tenants or occupiers of land within Little Moss included the Hulton family. In 1600 Randle Hulton, heir of John Hulton of 'Synderlande', appeared as one of the freehold tenants of Ashton Manor (Bowman 1960, 62-3) whilst on 26th Jan 1625 a 'Randulphe Hulton de Synderland gent.' was buried in Ashton Parish Church (Brierley 1928, 360. His wife had been buried in the same church on 25th Jan 1609 (*ibid*, 322). It is not clear whether there is any connection between Randulphe and John and James Hulton, the latter two being mentioned in the parish survey of 1618 as holding land in Little Moss (Butterworth 1823, 156). Randulphe himself fails to get a mention, but the parish register records a 'John Hulton de Synderland gent.' in 1623 (Brierley 1928, 74) who was probably the John mentioned in 1618. A John Hulton appears on the Solemn League and Covenant document of 1643, signing his own name (Bowman 1960, 241-5), and a John Hulton of Sinderland was buried in 1659 (Brierley 1928, 401).

By comparing the lists of inhabitants from 1618 and 1643 with those recorded by Butterworth in 1823 it is possible to see a degree of continuity in landholding in the district from the early 17th to the early 19th century. Family names occurring in 1618 as landholders which reappear in 1643, on the Solemn League and Covenant document, include Hulton, Leech, Smith, Heywood, Knott, Clough, Radcliffe and Leese. Those occurring in 1643 and present in 1823 include Lees, Smith and Knott. These last three occupied farms at Well Style, Crow Hill and Hope Fold respectively. While it can not be proved that these families were the descendants of those of the 17th century it seems possible that they and their farms may date from this early period. Other possible 17th century farms include Buckley Hill, occupied by Mr Joseph Greenwood in 1823 and possibly named after Elizabeth Buckley mentioned in 1618, whilst the place name Blake Rake is referred to in the Ashton Court Leet records during the 17th century, in such a manner as to suggest the presence of a farm here at this early date (46; see below). Most of the people recorded in 1618 and 1643 can be traced in the pages of the Ashton parish register covering the period 1594-1720 (Brierley 1928). Unfortunately it was rare to give more than a general idea of their address. Many were referred to as living in either Synderland or Little Mosse, sometimes both, since the names appear to have been interchangeable.

Little Moss was described as a 'hamel' or hamlet in the Quarter Sessions records for 1622 (Bowman 1960, 369) and was linked with the hamlet at Waterhouses as being responsible for the upkeep of a foot bridge across the Medlock (Bowman 1960, 369). This is possibly the bridge shown on the 1848 Ordnance Survey First Edition (Lancashire Sheet 105) at the modern grid reference SD 917 006. It was again linked with its twin township on the opposite bank of the Medlock when in 1705 'Littlemoss-with-Waterhouses' was described as having its own Byelawmen (Bowman 1960, 583-4). However, by 1836 Little Moss had its own constables, two in number (*ibid*, 612).

Butterworth's description (1823, 83) makes it clear that the major habitations were

strung along Lumb Lane (48), the core of the hamlet being in the vicinity of New Row, 'a group of neat-built brick cottages' (51).

It is clear from the earliest records that Sunderland/Little Moss area has always been predominately rural in character. The Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 sheets SD 90 SW and SJ 99 NW for 1980 and 1983 record the presence of many of the farms noted by Butterworth in 1823; these include Buckley Hill, Willow Bank, Jaum, Hope Fold, Blake Rake (46) and Well Style.

The exploitation of Ashton Moss, on the southern side of the district, has been a constant preoccupation. A deed of 1621 suggests that part of Little Moss west of Buckley Hill Farm was already being drained to create new farmland, in this case for John Leeche Yeoman (Butterworth 1823, 33). This land was 'inclosed and Improved of or from one Comon or Wast Called Litle mosse ... by estimacon fyve Accres of Lande or thereaboute be yt more or lesse'. In 1597 George Lathom and John Hunt claimed to be joint lords of the wastes and commons of Ashton Manor, including that of Little Moss (Bowman 1823, 43). Bowman suggests that rents for summer-pasturage on the surface growth of the peat-lands may have been taken by these two in return for a payment to the manorial lord.

Blake Rake appears to have referred in the 17th century to a route (45) across Ashton Moss from above Waterhouses Brow. In 1609 it was definitely considered by the Court Leet as a highway and laid out to a width of 8yds. In 1678 the inhabitants of Little Moss came to the Court Leet in an effort to upgrade the route (*ibid*, 355):

> 'wee are informed ... that the waye after the moss side ffrom Blake racke into droylsden is noe hye waye butt onely a waye of waine and that itt hath beene stayed and turpike sett. wee doe therefore agree and Order that the inhabitants of Littlemoss may have libertie to sett a turnpike'.

However, in 1681 the Court Leet noted that 'severall persons doe Neglect ... the Hie way in blake rake of Littlemosse to the great danger of Inhabitants thereabout'. By 1753 this old way had become simply 'the Byway leading from Well Stile and ffour lane Ends Commonly Called Blake Rake on Littlemoss'.

In October 1639 Edmund Heywood, a Little Moss tanner, whose family soon afterwards built Manor House Farm in Taunton, Ashton, was ordered by the Court Leet to 'fill up a hole nenst his worke-house on the further side of the lane' (*ibid*, 519).

3.4.5 Woodhouses and Waterhouses

Woodhouses, situated in the parish of Ashton, was during the 14th and 15th centuries held by the Byron family. In the Custom and Rental roll for the manor of Ashton of 1422, Richard the Byron, Knight, for the Woodhouse, paid 1s 0d (Corry 1838, 508). According to Bowman (1950, 210) an earlier Richard de Byron (d. 1397) held Woodhouses, 20 acres of meadow, 10 buildings comprising the great house, barns and the tenant-employees' cottages, and 60 acres besides, direct from the Duchy of Lancaster.

The village of Waterhouses lies within a deep valley of the River Mersey. In 1332 a Henry de Waterhouses is named as contributing to a subsidy. The Bardesley family were the chief tenants and landowners of the valley; Gregory of Bardesley is named in the Rental

of Thomas of Assheton *c* 1415, as paying 23s for his tenement at the Waterhouses (Bowman 1960, 73). It was the Bardesley family who built 'The Waterhouse', later named Medlock Hall.

3.4.6 Cutler Hill

Cutler Hill was described by Butterworth as 'consisting of a number of mean-looking cottages, two small farms and a public house in the possession of Mr. Ryder.' He goes on to say: 'Passing through Dark Lane [57], is the farm occupied by Timothy Moorhouse: it lies a little from the road, containing about nine acres, and is a freehold belonging to Mr. Grimshaw, of Audenshaw, and subject to a *modus* ' (Butterworth, 1823, 74). This property may be the farm referred to in the Ordnance Survey 1848 map as Up Field, and on later maps as New Bank Farm (56).

3.4.7 Lime Estate

To the north of Cutler Hill lay the Lime Estate, which is now occupied by the Limeside Housing Estate (built in the late 1920s) and Hollinwood cemetery. The name 'Lime' may originate from the Roman period, when the term *limes* was used to denote 'the strip of cleared and open land in which runs the Via, the made and metalled road' (Bowman 1960, 16). Ashton-under-Lyne may well owe its name in part to its position in relation to Lime, ie below Lime, Lyme, Lyne.

At one time this area may have been open parkland. Bowman cites a plea of 1246 in which 'Robert de Alte has appealed against Roger Baletthat on Ash Wednesday ... Roger came against him in Lyme Wood'. Bowman goes on to say that these woods formed part of a 'park' or 'chase' in which deer and other beasts of the hunt were originally preserved for royal sport alone (*ibid*, 16). In 1335 Sir John de Assheton obtained from Edward III the right of free warren – hunting, hawking, or sharing at will 'in all their lands of Ashton in Com. Lanc.' (*ibid*, 17). Two years later this same Sir John obtained licence to 'impark Lyme Park in Ashton' (*ibid*). One moiety of the estate paid taxes and rates to the parish of Oldham, the other to the parish of Ashton (Butterworth 1823, 72). Lime House, the principal residence of the estate was home to the Hardmans in the 17th century. Prior to 1681 John Hardman, yeoman, sold the estate to Samuel Haward of Salford. On the death of Haward in 1705, the estate passed by will to his nephew John Jones, yeoman (Butterworth 1856, 50). Mr James Gee was the next owner of the estate; he was a prosperous hat manufacturer, whose works and warehouse were situated in Pump Street (Bickerton 1965, 12).

3.4.8 Hollinwood

Hollinwood, first recorded in 1474 in a list of mere and bounds, was still in the 17th century a sparsely populated common. A dispute between local landowners arose in 1639 respecting rights of common in Hollinwood and the destruction of trees. Mr Tetlow, one of the disputants, stated that the common had never been replenished with trees 'save some hollins at the upper end which still remain' (Bateson 1949, 52). In 1640 Hollinwood was included in a survey of the moorlands in the chapelry of Oldham and was said to to contain 66.5 acres (Shaw 1904, 85).

At the turn of the 19th century Hollinwood was still largely common land, appearing as such in a plan of 'The Commons and Wastelands, within the Township of Oldham

and Parish of Prestwich' of 1804. Prior to 1803 the only portions of the common which had been appropriated were the very considerable piece which forms the reservoir which feeds the Hollinwood branch of the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal, and a certain short length through which the canal runs, together with about 0.75 acres on which the inhabitants had erected a grammar school. In 1803 an Enclosure Act was passed which parcelled out the common amongst the landowners of Oldham. The total area of common was 142 acres, which was subsequently divided amongst 25 parties, comprising 27 or 28 different persons (Middleton 1895, 9).

Hollinwood's development as a town is due largely to its position in relation to the turnpike road and to a lesser extent by the construction of the branch arm of the canal. The number of inns (eg 74) around the junction of Manchester Road (76) and Hollins Road (71), undoubtedly evolved to serve the demands of the traffic moving between Manchester and Oldham.

During the 18th century there were several collieries in Limeside and Limehurst, the largest one being Warmbly Wood. Coal Pit Lane was once busy with the conveyance of cannell coal. The extension to the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal from the aqueduct bridge near Waterhouses to Hollinwood (53 & 58), built in 1794, was used to assist the transportation of coal. Bickerton describes a tramroad from Oak Colliery which ran parallel with Hollins Road to the canal basin at Bradley Bent (72), along which trucks transported coal (Bickerton 1965,8). The canal basin and the canal extension have since been filled in.

3.4.9 Chadderton

The eastern part of White Moss lay within the township of Chadderton in the parish of Prestwich cum Oldham. The chief landowners for much of this area have been the Radcliffes, based at Foxdenton Hall. Mulf Lane Farm, Mulf Lane, and Birch Hall (85), Long Lane (84), were both owned by the Radcliffes during the 19th century. In 1777 an auction of several estates belonging to Robert Radcliffe of Foxdenton included the following (Shaw 1905, 240):

> 'Messuage called Birch Hall and the Closes called Round Meadow, Hollow Field, Half Acre, Little Rough, Little Field, Long Close, Great Rough, situate in Turf Lane, in possession of Titus Wood'.

Also in Chadderton was The Bower estate which was centered around Birchen Bower house (83) and mill (82), Bower Lane. During the first half of the 19th century this estate was in the possession of the Robinson family. A notice informing of the burial of John Letus, a Milner, from Burchen Bower Milne, dated the 16th march 1719, is the earliest reference recovered for a mill at this site (Shaw 1904, 270). The mill was put up for sale in 1782 (Shaw 1905, 284) and was then described as:

> 'all that Messuage Dwelling House and Cotton Mill known by the name of Birchen Bower, in the township of Chadderton, consisting of two large Bays of Building, 3 stories high, on Lancashire Acre of Land, together with a Large Water Wheel, upright shaft, and all other Machinery convenient for Carding, Spinning and Manufacturing Cotton in all its various Branches, supplied by a large and constant stream of water'.

The Rochdale Canal (88) runs through the township of Chadderton. An Act to build this first trans-Pennine canal was passed in 1794 and work was completed in 1804. A branch

arm of the canal to Hollinwood had been planned, but because the Ashton Canal Company had already constructed a branch arm of their canal to Hollinwood, this scheme was shelved. The canal was closed to commercial traffic in 1937 and eventually abandoned in 1952 (Hadfield & Biddle 1970).

3.4.10 Moston

The name Moston signifies a town on or near a moss. Moston was in the 12th century part of the manor of Manchester, but during that century it came into the possession of the lord of Ashton-under-Lyne. Between 1135 and 1153 Albert Grelley senior, the second baron of Manchester, gave to Orm, son of Ailward, with his daughter Emma in marriage, one ploughland in Ashton. It has been suggested that this ploughland was in fact Moston (Farrer 1903, 57; Crofton 1907, 34; VCH 1911, 265). By a charter of 1153-1162 Albert Grelley, third baron of Manchester, confirmed his father's charter to Roger, son of Orm of Ashton (Farrer 1902, 43).

The moss from which Moston derives its name is White Moss (97). There are a number of historical references to White Moss or parts thereof. Theyle Moor, the south-east part of White Moss, was *c* 600 acres in area and is referred to as early as 1418 (Seale 1983, 30). During the 15th and 16th centuries there was much moss litigation in south-east Lancashire: in the early 15th century Ashton Moss was disputed by the Asshetons and Byrons (see above p 12); *c* 1515 Cockey Moor in Ainsworth was in dispute between Richard Assheton of Middleton and the Lords of Radcliffe; and in 1552 Hathershaw near Rochdale was the centre of a dispute between Sir John Byron and the king's tenants at Crompton (Crofton 1907, 44-5).

Theyle Moor was itself the subject of almost a century of dispute. The main protagonists were the Chethams and the Chaddertons of Nuthurst (New Moston) on the one side and the Radcliffe, Standish and Assheton families on the other. The dispute was primarily concerned with land ownership and was not resolved until 1594 when a tract of land called the Equal was divided equally between the two feuding parties.

Surviving from the time of this dispute is a map of White Moss dating from 1556. This map shows the division of the moss between the parishes of Manchester and Oldham. Some enclosure of the moss has taken place to the north-west in the vicinity of Alkrington; other parts of the moss are divided up by 'old dykes' and by 'pale stakes'. While some parts of the moss are described as pasture, the central area is described as 'a whyte mosse that nothing can goo apon'. In 1633 White Moss was so wet that it overflowed and poured down Boggart Hole Clough (Crofton 1907, 51).

The barren and sterile condition of the moss continued into the 19th century, for in 1840 Messrs Joseph Jones and Richard Gould undertook reclamation work in the Alkrington part of White Moss and also in Moston and Chadderton. During these operations it was revealed that the peat was from 4-10ft deep with a basin of rich marl over fine sand. Nearby many tree trunks and huge branches were unearthed including oaks, beeches, alders, firs and one or two yews; some were partly charred and this may suggest an earlier attempt at reclamation. To the south-west of Moss Farm was a marl and sand pit from which materials were taken for dressing the mossland during reclamation (99).

In 1858 'nearly all the moss was in tillage, and in a central situation was the farmhouse (Moss Farm), occupying a deavely (lonely) site. On the left lay a small part of the moss

in its original state' (*ibid*, 42). By the latter half of the 19th century, therefore, the majority of the White Moss was being farmed.

3.4.11 Blackley

Blackley, like Moston to the south, was part of the manor of Manchester and was an area of woodland/parkland.

The line of the pale of the Blackley deer park appears to be intersected by the proposed motorway route (122). Deer parks were a common feature of the late medieval landscape, and comprised basically a large area enclosed by a bank topped by a timber fence (the 'pale') and usually associated with a ditch, within which deer were kept for hunting purposes. Only the wealthy could afford to establish and maintain such parks, and hence they were normally the prerogative of the lord of the manor or the king. The park at Blackley is first referred to in an inquisition of 1282 (Farrer 1903, 244). A further reference, in the survey of the manor of Manchester in 1322, states:

> 'The park of Blake-ly is worth in pannage, aeries of eagles, herons and hawks, bees' honey, mineral earths, burned ashes, and other issues, 53s 4d. The vesture of oaks with the total covert is worth in gross 200 marks [£166 13s 4d] for destruction; and it comprises seven miles in circuit, with two deer-leaps, of the grant of kings' (Harland 1861, 368).

White Moss appears to have been the subject of litigation in the mid-16th century, and a related sketch plan, dated 1556 has survived (reproduced in Crofton 1907). The western boundary of the moss is described as 'An olde dyke of this length wherapon a pale hath stand as yet pale stakes be standing or remayninge'. In the late medieval period the 'Pales of Blakeley' were referred to in the inquisition post mortem of Thomas la Warre, lord of Manchester. It is possible that the later Blackley township boundary became established on the line of the park pale.

The eastern limb of this boundary is indicated on the OS First Edition plan, appearing to coincide with the line of the 'olde dyke' shown on the plan of 1556. Of this boundary Crofton (1907) relates that :

> 'in digging a deep trench on the confines of Blackley and Moston [north of Lum Farm?], the better to define the limits of the respective townships, the remains of this park fence were discovered buried deep in the moss land, which is there of considerable extent. The wood bore a close resemblance in colour and grain to the bog-oak of Ireland'.

The OS First Edition plan shows this boundary as sweeping in a great north-south arc which ran into the north end of Boggart Hole Clough, the upper slopes of which would have provided the ideal topographic siting for a park pale. Fieldwork along this line revealed, however, that although the arc was fossilized in the present landscape at several points by property boundaries and footpaths, the only probable surviving lengths of bank were located to immediate south and north of the A6104 road, with the latter location being affected by the proposed M66 motorway line (122).

The antiquarian John Leland, writing about Blackley in the mid-16th century, reveals that 'Now for lakke of woodde the blow-shoppes decay there. Wild bores, bulles, and falcons bredde in times paste at Blakele' (Smith 1910, 48). The 'blow shoppes' mentioned by Leland, probably refer to iron smelting sites. Timber from forest areas would be used

for charcoal in this industrial process which dates back to the 13th century. The deforestation of the area by Leland's time would account for the fact that these sites were disused. The iron was smelted with charcoal, producing a bloom – the lump of metal made by blowing in a furnace – whence the name bloomeries. The term blow house and bloomery may be considered as similar types of site. The method of reducing the ore in a bloomery was to mix it in alternate layers with charcoal, in a heap which was then covered with clay and stones. A draught was provided by siting the bloomery on a slope facing the prevailing wind or by the use of hand or foot bellows. The resultant mass had to be further treated by hammering and reheating to remove impurities (Ashmore 1969, 73).

The pastoral nature of Blackley persisted into the 19th century, particularly to the north and east of the town. The tithe award for Blackley describes most of the fields in this area as being meadow or pasture.

3.5 UNDATED

Earthworks are especially difficult to date if their form is not consistent with other recorded archaeological sites in the area, or there is no surviving documentary evidence to append a suitable origin. The earthwork platforms (**126 & 127**) recorded overlooking the Irk valley at Higher Blackley fall into this category, and are superficially similar to house sites recorded elsewhere in the upland region. Dating of such features is only normally possible by excavation, and could theoretically range from late prehistoric to 18th-century AD. However, within the Greater Manchester conurbation intensive land-use over the last two hundred years has produced a great diversity of modern 'archaeological' features which have left no record as to their precise origin, and the earthworks in question may fall within this category.

It is worth also noting that a short distance to the north of these features, beyond the limit of the area to be affected by motorway construction, are two linear features which appear to be positive lynchets, which probably originated during the post-medieval period under a more intensive land-use regime than present.

4. Gazetteer of Sites

The following gazetteer lists those sites identified along the M66 route by the 1991 and 1994 surveys. The abbreviations FW, M, AP refer to the method of identification, ie field walking, map research or aerial photograph analysis. All references to the 1848 map are to the Ordnance Survey First Edition 6" to 1 mile unless otherwise stated.

** indicates revised entry.*
*** indicates new entry.*

Sites identified in the 1991 assessment are shown on Figs 1-4. Sites with a revised or new entry are shown on Figs 5-24 (Maps 5-24), which also indicate the location of sites included in the recommendations (see section 6).

1) SJ 9098 9593
Pit M, FW

Now water filled. Possible extractive workings shown, but unnamed, on the 1910, 1922 and 1930 maps, and evidenced by a square-shaped pond. Too rectangular a shape to suggest clay extraction.

2) SJ 9093 9600 (linear)
Banked field boundary M, FW

Few trees remaining along its length. Represented on the 1848 and later maps.

3) SJ 9088 9619
Possible extraction pit M, FW

Rectangular in plan, shown, but unnamed, on maps from 1910 to 1931.

4) SJ 9090 9620
*Earthworks FW
Maps 5 & 6

Recorded as possible post-medieval ridge and furrow. A large, irregular wet depression here probably represents a borrow pit related to the reservoir construction.

5) SJ 9080 9626 (linear)
Causewayed road M, FW

Leads over the Audenshaw Reservoirs. Built in the 1870s.

6) SJ 9081 9632
Pond M, FW

Probably the remains of clay extraction.

7) SJ9082 9646
Earthworks FW
Maps 6 & 7

Possible post-medieval ridge and furrow.

8) SJ 9083 9642 (linear)
*?Nico Ditch M, FW
Maps 6 & 7

Recorded as Nico Ditch. A short, straight length of ditch, shallow and narrow, with a bank and level berm to the north. Seems debatable whether this or ditch 10 is Nico Ditch.

9) SJ 9085 9642
*Cropmark AP
Map 6

Recorded as circular cropmark, possibly barrow or filled pit. Almost certainly the circular golf green between ditches 8 and 10.

10) SJ 9086 9638
*Ditch M, FW
Map 6

Recorded as a ditch. Extends for some distance as a broad, deep ditch. May possibly be Nico Ditch. A clear terminal can be seen at the east end, near to the reservoir embankment.

11) SJ 9089 9640
Structure M

A building, possibly a cottage, on the south side of Corn Hill Lane. Present on the 1765, 1786 and 1848 maps. Demolished in the 1870s to make way for the Audenshaw Reservoirs.

12) SJ 910 960
Reservoirs M, FW

Audenshaw Reservoirs, Nos 1 to 3. Built in the 1870s.

13) SJ 9128 9723
Structure M, FW

Rectangular building, aligned north to south recorded on the 1848 map. Possibly a farm. By

1909 replaced by two small rectangular brick and stone buildings, related to the reservoirs.

14) SJ 9130 9725 (linear)
Audenshaw Road M

Ancient routeway between Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne. Recorded on the 1765 and 1786 maps. Became a turnpike road in the late 18th century, but superseded by Manchester Old Road turnpike in the 1820s.

15) SJ 9131 9726
Site of a hat manufactory M

Shown on the 1848 map. Site now covered by post-1920 housing.

16) SJ 9128 9728
No 328 Audenshaw Road M, FW

Much altered late Georgian/early Victorian detached house, with a pitched roof, built in stone. Has modern windows. Present on the 1848 map when it was described as 'Jasmine Cottages'.

17) SJ 9127 9728
No 330 Audenshaw Road M, FW

Late Georgian/early Victorian Chapel, with three gothic arched windows. Rectangular in plan. Now used as a dwelling. Not mentioned by Butterworth (1823) but present on the 1848 map.

18) SJ 9122 9729
Gateposts and boundary wall FW

Imposing stone gateposts and boundary wall with cast-iron gates. These may have been associated with a large building shown on the 1848 map.

19) SJ 9120 9729
Structure M

A quadrangular unnamed building recorded on the 1848 map, on the corner of Audenshaw Road and Dick Lane. Demolished by 1909. Site now landscaped.

20) SJ 9135 9725
Leather Works, Brookfield Street M

Built between 1909 and 1922 and present on all maps since. Demolished by 1990.

21) SJ 9141 9734
Zoar House Leather Works M

Present on 1848 and 1933 maps. Demolished by 1990.

22) SJ 91409737
Farm buildings M

Aligned east to west. Present on the 1765, 1848 and 1922 maps, but demolished by 1933 to make way for the expansion of the 'Zoar House Leather Works' (21).

23) SJ 9144 9738 (linear)
Nico Ditch
Lumb Lane alignment

At this point Nico Ditch (see 8 above) is overlain by an ancient roadway, Lumb Lane, which is noted on the 1765 Ashton Estate Plan. North of Manchester Road the earthwork survived as a drainage ditch, bordering the eastern edge of the lane, until the 1960s when a housing estate obliterated these remains.

24) SJ 9144 9739 (linear)
Lumb Lane M

An ancient routeway leading north from the centre of Audenshaw village to Droylsden. Defines the western edge of Ashton Moss on the 1765 map.

25) SJ 9158 9750 (linear)
Railway M

The Manchester, Ashton-under-Lyne and Sheffield Railway. Built between 1837 and 1845, this skirts the southern borders of Ashton Moss.

26) SJ 9166 9757 (linear)
Railway M, FW

A dismantled branch railway, represented by a large bank. Bridges now pulled down. A branch link between the Manchester, Ashton-under-Lyne and Sheffield Railway in the south, and the L.M.S. in the north. Built after 1848.

27) SJ 9170 9765 (linear)
Canal M, FW

Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal. Built between 1792-7, this was the first canal to be constructed in Tameside. At this point still filled with water and still navigable.

28) SJ 9180 9774
Earthwork M, FW

A mature field boundary defined by hedges and birch trees, running along the south side of Slate Lane up to the site of Hays's Farm. Present on the 1765 map and all subsequent maps.

29) SJ 9190 9776
Site of Hays's Farm, M, FW
Slate Lane Maps 8 & 9

Ancient farm, probably known as Slate Edge farm in the 17th century, when it was occupied by the Hayes family (Brierley 1928). Present on the 1765, 1786, 1848 and 1934 maps. Demolished after 1934. Site now marked by amorphous mounds of rubble, including concrete, bricks and slate.

30) SJ 9190 9777 (linear)
Slate Lane M

Ancient routeway recorded as Slade Lane in 1713 (Bowman 1960). This road skirts the southern edge of Ashton Moss, from which its name is probably derived. Present on all maps from 1765 onwards.

31) SJ 9200 9790
Ashton Moss Colliery M

Two pits sunk in 1875 and 1882 to a depth of 870m (2850 ft). 530 men were employed here in 1954. It closed in 1980. Some of the spoil heaps have since been landscaped. Remains of buildings, including the former pit-head baths, south of Manchester Road, were still standing in 1980.

32) SJ 920 981 (linear)
Manchester/Ashton Old Road M

Built across the southern edges of Ashton Moss in the 1820s as a turnpike.

33) SJ 9220 9827
Heathfield House M, FW

Late Victorian detached house built, in Gothic style, of brick with pitched roofs and two projecting bays to the front (south). Original windows, including stained glass, still present.

34) SJ 92309831
Moss Hollow Nurseries, M, FW
Manchester Road

The Nurseries stand on the site of a building recorded on the 1765 and 1848 maps.

35) SJ 9232 9833
No 66 Manchester Road M, FW

Much extended and altered brick built detached house with pitched roof. Present on the 1848 and all later maps.

36) SJ 9234 9834
Rosemount Villas, M, FW
Nos 62-4 Manchester Road

Gothic semi-detached houses built of brick, with pitched roofs and two projecting bays to the front (south). A date stone above the entrance gives the year '1873'.

37) SJ 9241 9836
Victoria Villas, M, FW
No 56 Manchester Road

Late Victorian detached house, built of brick. Present on the 1910 and 1933 maps. Demolished by 1990.

38) SJ 9245 9843 (linear)
Railway FW

L.N.E. & L.M.S. Oldham, Ashton and Guide Bridge Junction Railway. This section was built between 1857 and 1861 (Bowman 1960, 379).

39) SJ 9246 9843
Knowl Farm M
Maps 9 & 10

Present on the 1765, 1848 and 1933 maps. Partially built over by Oakdale School in the 1960s. Butterworth described the farm as having six acres of land attached to it (1823, 9).

40) SJ 920 990
Ashton Moss M
Maps 10 & 11

A basin moss of great antiquity, up to 5m deep. Recorded on all the maps from 1765 onwards, the moss is referred to as early as *c* 1200. In the 1830s it was drained and is now used for market gardens.

41) SJ 9220 9940 (linear)
Railway M

The Lancashire and North-Western Railway. Constructed in the early 1840s and opened in 1846, this line skirted the northern fringes of Ashton Moss.

42) SJ 9202 9976
Jaum Fields Farm M, FW

This farm was present on the 1765 and 1848 maps, and was mentioned by Butterworth in 1823 when the tenants were John Street and Jonathan Taylor (1823, 83). The farm buildings on this site were demolished by 1910.

43) SJ 9204 9978
Pond, Jaum Fields Farm M, FW

Present on 1910 and 1933 map and in 1980. Rectangular in plan, cut into the southern side of a small stream. Possibly a clay pit.

44) SJ 9200 9985
Earthworks M, FW

Covering the whole of field, these include several platforms and ditches, and a possible hollow way aligned north-south.

45) SJ9199 9990 (linear)
Back Lane M

An ancient routeway first recorded in 1609 when it was known as Blake Rake Lane (Bowman 1960, 355); it may have been made a turnpike in 1678.

46) SJ 9200 9994
Blake Rake Farm, Back Lane M, FW

Mentioned in 1678 (Bowman 1960, 355) but not present on the 1765 map. Present on the 1786 map where it is described as 'Black Rack'. Butterworth states that the farm was occupied by Joseph Brown in 1823 and was probably freehold, as no lease was mentioned (1823, 85). The present building on the site is a heavily renovated brick farm building of the late 18th/early 19th century with a pitched roof and modern windows.

47) SD9185 0005
Structure, Lumb Lane M, FW

Present on the 1786 and 1848 maps. A brick built farm house with a pitched roof.

48) SD 9180 0010 (linear)
Lumb Lane M,FW

An ancient routeway present on all maps since 1765.

49) SD 91870010
Oval pond, M
south side of Lumb Lane

Present on the 1765 map. Filled in by 1848.

50) SD 9180 0011
Medlock Bank Farm, M, FW
Lumb Lane

Farm present on the 1848 and 1895 maps where it comprised three buildings. Described by Butterworth (1823) as being 'occupied by Jonah Andrew, containing fifteen or sixteen acres, and is leasehold under the Lord of the Manor'. The farm house has been demolished but two brick out-buildings remain, and are used as stables.

51) SD 9187 0013
New Row, Lumb Lane M, FW

Weavers' cottages. Row of stone terraced cottages described by Butterworth as the 'habitations of the laborious and industrious artizans, most of whom are engaged in forming the delicate fabric called muslin' (1823, 80-1). Built between 1765 and 1823.

52) SD 9178 0020
Earthworks AP, FW

Ridge and furrow covering two adjacent fields. Ridges are *c* 3m to 5m apart and up to 50m in length, with curves at both ends. Probably medieval in origin.

53) SD 9175 0022 (linear)
Canal M, FW
Map 12

Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal, Hollinwood Branch. Built between 1797-1805 (Bowman 1960, 375), this section is disused but still partially filled with water.

54) SD 9167 0042 (linear)
Routeway M, FW

Trackway. Partially laid with pebbles and *c* 3m wide. Shown on 1848 map as a routeway to buildings on western side of the Medlock and south of Waterhouses; on the 1895 map these buildings are referred to as Medlock Hall.

55) SD 9151 0069
Pond M, AP, FW

Steep sided and partially overgrown, this may have been a marl pit.

56) SD 9140 0092
New Bank Farm M, AP, FW

There is no obvious dwelling at this farm; a brick built outbuilding with a slate roof *c* 1900 appears to be the earliest standing structure. The other buildings are modern. Shown on the 1848 map as Up Field; by 1895 this site is called New Bank Farm.

57) SD 9137 0102 (linear)
Dark Lane M, FW

On the 1786 and 1848 maps; by 1895 is referred to as Crime Lane. On modern maps as Ashton Road.

58) SD 9136 0109 (linear)
Canal M, AP, FW
Maps 13 & 14

Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal, Hollinwood branch (see also 53). The canal has been filled in at this point; however, the line of the waterway is clearly visible.

59) SD 9125 0134 (linear)
Routeway M, FW

Unnamed routeway passing through Cutler Hill. On the 1786, 1848 and 1895 maps; now Cutler Hill Road.

60) SD9122 0135
Site of structure M, FW

Demolished structure, to the east of Cutler Hill and on the north side of the Cutler Hill Road. Shown on the 1786, 1848, 1895 and 1931 maps. On this last map there are three detached buildings on this site. The main structure appears to have been of three phases. Site consists of a number of amorphous earthwork features; pieces of worked stone are still visible.

61) SD 9107 0155
Two cottages, M, FW
western side of Lime Lane

Two storey building, stone slate roof, central chimney, modern windows, with a rendered exterior. Shown on the 1848 map.

62) SD 9114 0161
Lower Lime Farm M, FW
Map 14

The main structure is a brick built, two storey house, which has a stone slate roof and ridge and gable chimneys. On the 1848 map which also shows 'Lords Well' immediately to its west. The 1931 shows two main groups of structures to the farm but all detached outbuildings appear to be modern.

63) SD9111 0171 (linear)
Routeway and ditch

In places their line appears to coincide with Parliamentary boundary. On the 1848 map.

64) SD908 021
Coal Pits M

Shown on the 1848 map.

65) SD9097 0213
Site of Street Farm M

Shown on the 1786 and 1848 maps; identified as Street Farm on the 1931 map where it is represented as two attached buildings. There is no evidence for this site on the ground. A gatepost on the opposite side of The Street (67) may have been associated with the farm.

66) SD 9097 0215 (linear)
The Street M, AP, FW
Map 15

This modern roadway is on the alignment identified as that of the Roman road from Manchester to Castleshaw (the 2nd ITER of Antoninus). On the 1786 map and called The Street on the 1848 map.

67) SD 9056 0248
Site of structures M

Buildings immediately to the west of the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal and south of Hollins Road. On the 1829 and 1848 maps.

68) SD 906 024
Site of structure M

Building to north of Hat Manufactory and south of Hollins Road. On the 1848 map. This building, which had a reservoir to its south, is referred to as a corn mill on the 1829 map and called Victoria Mill on the 1880 map.

69) SD 9074 0250
Withins M

House shown on the 1786, 1848 and 1880 maps.

70) SD 9073 0254
Side of Moor M

Group of buildings. On the 1786 and 1848 maps.

71) SD 9058 0250 (linear)
Hollins Road M, FW

On the 1786 and 1848 maps. This road was a tramway on the 1932 map.

72) SD 9060 0255
Canal basin M
Map 16

Site of Bradley Bent Basin on the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal. On the 1829 and 1848 maps. The basin has been infilled, and modern

landscaping has removed any clear trace of the basin.

73) SD 9056 0256
Structure FW

Small single storey building. To the rear of houses fronting Manchester Road, this brick built building has an 18th century chimney on its south side. This may have been a small workshop or smithy.

74) SD 9056 0258
Hat and Feathers, public house FW

Georgian in style, this building has a slate roof and gable chimneys. The eastern elevation has three sash windows on the first floor. The ground floor has a central doorway with a sash window on either side. Stone quoining.

75) SD 905 026
Site of structures M

Buildings at corner of Bower Lane and New Road. On the 1786 and 1848 maps.

76) SD9058 0261
New Road M, FW
(Oldham/Manchester Road)

On the 1786 and 1848 maps. This road was a tramway on the 1932 map.

77) SD 9040 0261
The Railway, public house FW

An eccentric building with an M-shaped roof with ridge and gable chimneys. A variety of window styles, including a trefoil headed window above the doorway on the west elevation.

78) SD 9048 0264 (linear)
Bower Lane M, FW

On the 1848 map.

79) SD9038 0267
Railway M, AP, FW

London, Midland and Scottish Railway, Hollinwood Branch.

80) SD 9034 0270
Site of structure M

Single unnamed building between Birchen Bower and Hollinwood. On 1848 map.

81) SD 9022 0279
Houses, Bower Street M, FW

A terrace of four houses. Shown on the 1932 map. Slate roof, four chimney stacks. The houses are two storeyed and constructed of red pressed brick. Terracotta detailing around doors and windows. These buildings may have been occupied by mill workers.

82) SD 9020 0283
Site of Birchen Bower Rope Mills M

On 1848 map. There are buildings and a pond still on this site on the 1932 map, the main building being a large elongated structure. There are now no visible remains of the mill buildings.

83) SD 9008 0282
Site of Birchen Bower M

On 1786 and 1848 maps.

84) SD 8986 0292 (linear)
Long Lane M, FW

On 1786 and 1848 maps.

85) SD 9896 0293
Site of Birch Hall M

A building is on this site on the 1786 and 1848 maps. The hall is still standing on the 1932 map and is shown as an L-shaped building within its own grounds.

86) SD 8978 0295
Canal side earthworks FW

Two parallel mounds on the east bank of the Rochdale Canal, these may represent the remains of some canal activity, ie loading bays or possibly the result of canal dredging.

87) SD 8971 0310
Stone debris FW

Includes machine mounting blocks and some worked stone. This may be a dump of material associated with the Rochdale Canal or the remains of a structure, although there is no map evidence for the latter.

88) SD 8960 0328 (linear)
Canal M, AP, FW
Maps 17 & 18

Rochdale Canal. On the 1848 map. The east bank of the canal, is lined with large stone blocks. The canal is now disused.

89) SD 8942 0329
Site of structure M

Building to the south of White Gate. On the 1848 map.

90) SD 8942 0331 (linear)
White Gate routeway M, FW

On the 1786 and 1848 maps.

91) SD 8918 0336 (linear)
Routeway M

Routeway heading north from White Gate End. On the 1848 map but not on the 1895.

92) SD 8895 0336
Routeway M

Trackway heading east from Mulf Lane. On the 1848 map but not on the 1895.

93) SD 8951 0342
White Gate Bridge M, FW

On the 1848 map.

94) SD 8885 0348
Site of structures M

Two buildings on either side of the road, to the east of the railway. On the 1786 and 1848 maps. By 1895 this site is called Mough Lane Farm.

95) SD 8878 0345 (linear)
Railway M, FW

Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (Manchester and Leeds). On the 1848 and 1895 maps.

96) SD8790 0353
Site of structures M, FW

Brick debris. Probably associated with housing estate shown on the 1952 map.

97) SD 8703 & SD 8803
White Moss M
Map 20

On the 1556, 1786 and 1848 maps. By 1895 much of this land had been enclosed and a number of scattered farmsites had emerged. The area is now covered by Blackley Golf Course and a large tip.

98) SD 8739 0398 (linear)
Routeway

Trackway across the moss. On the 1848 map but not on the 1895.

99) SD 8663 0397
Black Hall M

On the 1844 and 1848 maps but not on the 1895.

100) SD 8665 0387
Site of Crossbys Farm M

Shown on the 1848, 1895 and 1932 maps. Site now occupied by a school.

101) SD 8679 0389
Gravel pit M, FW

Shown on the 1848 and 1895 maps, to east of Crossbys. Some evidence of spoil; however, the site is largely overgrown.

102) SD 8739 0400
Sand and marl pit M

To the south-west of Moss Farm. Shown on the 1848 and 1895 maps.

103) SD 8637 0413 (linear)
Routeway M, FW

Rochdale and Manchester Trust turnpike road. On the 1848 and 1895 maps.

104) SD8617 0440
?Site of routeway M

Greater Causeway Field. To the west of Nut Brow on the 1831 map.

105) SD8615 0458
?Site of brick kiln M

Brick Kiln Field. Named on the 1831 map.

106) SD 8613 0461
Nut Bank Cottages M, FW
Maps 22 & 23

Group of three buildings. 1) Western (cross) bay: has a projecting stone slate gable roof, with a blocked gable chimney. A two storey building of hand made brick construction. First floor: a single rectangular opening on north elevation, which has been boarded up. Ground floor: single window and door in north elevation. There is a single window on east side of this projecting bay. On the west gable there is a small single storey lean-to extension, with a stone slate roof.

2) Central bay: has a stone slate roof, with a centrally placed chimney stack, there is also a small chimney pot on the east gable. A two storey building of hand made brick. First floor: three small casement windows on north and south

0.4m high. Possibly related to earlier golf-course layout.

119) SJ 90959592
****Ridge and furrow** FW
Maps 5 & 6

East-west trending ridge and furrow, probably post-medieval in origin.

120) SD 91770032
****Earthworks** FW
Map 12

Slight traces of east-west earthworks are visible on a prominent spur overlooking the valley of the River Medlock, and may be relics of post-medieval ridge and furrow. Spur is formed by a tongue of glacial sand and gravel.

121) SD 91700037
****River terrace platform and palaeo-river channel** FW
Map 12

Level area of first terrace material, well drained and elevated above the present river level. Immediately to the west is an abandoned river channel which could produce palaeo-environmental material.

122) SD 87250389 to SD 87370371 (linear)
****Blackley deer park pale?** M, FW
Maps 20 & 21

A length of south-east to north-west trending bank is visible here, following the presumed line of the park pale of the medieval Blackley deer park. The best preserved section of bank measures something less than 100m in length, and is 5m to 7m in width, and up to 1m in height. There is an obvious difference in local ground levels across the bank, which may relate to peat extraction to the east (presently the golf course) or to recent landscaping to the west when the housing estate was constructed, or a combination of both factors.

123) SD 86050470
****Ridge and furrow** FW
Map 23

Probable post-medieval ridge and furrow, trends south-east to north-west, clearly visible on golf course.

124) SD 85950478
****Ridge and furrow** FW
Map 23

Probable post-medieval ridge and furrow, trending south-west to north-east, clearly visible on golf course

125) SD 85870486
****Ridge and furrow** FW
Map 23

Probable post-medieval ridge and furrow, trending both north-south and east-west. Both groups are limited on east side by north-south positive lynchet, *c* 1m high.

126) SD 85630500
****Platform** FW
Maps 23 & 24

Small subcircular platform cut into hillslope, overlooking valley, *c* 12m in diameter, probably man-made, possibly of some antiquity

127) SD 85530501
****Platform and terrace** FW
Map 23 & 24

Small subcircular platform as above, cut back into hillside, 15m in diameter; level terrace extends across 'open' end to north Obviously an artificial feature, could be of antiquity.

128) SD 920 998 (centre)
****Little Moss, former peat moss** FW
Map 11 & 12

Area of former peat, probably extracted in medieval/post-medieval period. Possibly northern extension of Ashton Moss.

5. Conclusion

5.1 In terms of a landscape history it is clear that the area along and around the line of the M66 has been primarily rural; during the early medieval period the royal parks of Blackley and Lyme, together with the large expanses of Ashton Moss (**40**) and White Moss (**97**), would have accounted for much of the proposed route.

5.2 Before that date there is little evidence for settlement or ephemeral human activity. The scarcity of prehistoric finds is not surprising since the majority of the route is overlain either by boulder clays or peat deposits. Neither produced environments conducive to prehistoric settlement although activity along the river valleys, where there were light soils such as sand and gravels, is indicated by the Cutler Hill stone axe. Further evidence for prehistoric human activity might be expected from the fringes of Ashton and White Moss and from the band of sand and gravel north of Rochdale Road. However, since most of the line lies under grass and has not been recently ploughed it is no surprise that further remains have not come to light. The presence of charcoal in two of the cores (AM2 and AM6) from Ashton Moss may hint at such activity within the line of the route.

5.3 Similarly evidence for Roman activity is sparse, although the occurrence of Roman coins both as stray finds and hoards might suggest that settlements/farmsteads existed in the vicinity of Ashton Moss and Hollinwood. The drift geology appears to have constrained Romano-British settlement in a similar way to prehistoric activity.

5.4 The existence of Nico Ditch (**8, 10 & 23**) suggests the presence of some form of organized authority within the area of the route during the Saxon period. A proper study of the medieval landscape can only begin in the 12th and 13th centuries. From then until the 16th century the line was dominated by Blackley Park (**122**), Hollinwood Common and the Lyme Estate, with little evidence for farming communities outside of Audenshaw and Little Moss and Moston.

5.5 With the break up of Blackley and the Lyme Estate in the 16th and 17th centuries small dispersed farmsteads begin to appear along and around the route. William Yates's map of the county, drawn in 1786, reaffirms the rural aspect of the area. The medieval parks have given way to scattered farmsteads; however, Ashton Moss and White Moss appear largely undisturbed. The small community of Hollinwood is beginning to develop in a linear fashion along the Manchester to Oldham Turnpike Road (**76**), as is that of Audenshaw along the old Manchester to Ashton Turnpike Road (**14**).

5.6 Tithe maps and the First Edition Ordnance Survey maps show much of the area to be divided into rectilinear fields, with no suggestion of an earlier field system, except in Little Moss. By the turn of the 19th century both the Rochdale Canal (**88**) and the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal had been constructed (**53, 58 & 72**). Throughout the century the area remained largely unaltered, the only exceptions being the enclosure of much of Ashton Moss and White Moss and the gradual development of Hollinwood and Audenshaw and the construction of the Audenshaw Reservoirs (**12**). The sprawling urban mass of Manchester had as yet not encroached upon the study area.

5.7 During the course of the 20th century the area has partly succumbed to the demands on an urban landscape. Field divisions have broken down with the construction of the Pike Fold and Blackley Golf Courses, indeed part of Blackley Golf Course was during the 1950s a housing estate of very short duration, the site being cleared again by the 1970s. The area south of White Moss has been engulfed by urban sprawl from both Manchester in the west and Ashton in the east. Urban expansion has also engulfed the areas around White Gate End and Hollinwood. However, south of Hollinwood as far as the Medlock the landscape has remained largely rural.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The following recommendations have been revised and updated following the recent reassessment of the proposed motorway route to include the connecting and all purpose road proposals. This supplements the work already carried out on the proposed motorway route.

6.2 In view of Ashton Moss' local and regional significance it is recommended that detailed palaeoecological work should be incorporated into any future archaeological research at the site (**40**). Within the North West Wetlands Survey a general biostratigraphic survey of Ashton Moss was undertaken, reproduced here as Appendix 1.

The recent construction works related to bridge 17A (**41**) provided an opportunity for biostratigraphic sampling of an exposed in-situ peatface, and this work was undertaken for the GMAU by the University of Manchester Department of Geography, with funding provided by the Department of Transport. This work strongly suggested local human activity during the later prehistoric period. The report is reproduced here as Appendix 2.

Although the available palaeoenvironmental evidence clearly demonstrates prehistoric occupation on the margins of the moss, the presence of the thick peat cover denies the application of conventional archaeological fieldwork techniques for the comprehensive identification of such sites along the road line.

In view of the assumed significance of the archaeological deposits below the peat cover a meeting to examine the area's potential and to establish possible action should be convened between the GMAU, the Department of Transport and other interested parties, eg English Heritage.

6.3 The importance of the small basin peat deposits of White Moss (**97**) should be evaluated by a biostratigraphical programme similar to that undertaken by the North West Wetlands Survey at Ashton Moss. A watching brief undertaken on the diversion of the North West Water pipeline at White Moss could provide information with regard to location and depth of such deposits.

6.4 Little Moss (**128**) originally formed a northerly extension to Ashton Moss, although it has long since been reclaimed as pastureland. A programme of selective trial-trenching is proposed on the road line here also, between railway bridge 17A and the Hollinwood Canal Branch to the north.

6.5 A high proportion of prehistoric and Roman material in Greater Manchester has been recovered from the river terraces and particular attention should be paid to these along the motorway line. Such examples could be represented by sites **120** and **121**, in the valley of the River Medlock, and these would require evaluation work in the form of trial trenching.

6.6 The line of the Roman road from Manchester to Castleshaw (**66**) could be confirmed by trial trenching.

6.7 The surviving farmstead sites at Lower Lime (**62**) and Nut Bank (**106**) require detailed archaeological evaluation ahead of the proposed development. These evaluations could result in requests for full excavation.

6.8 The sites of Hay's Farm (**29**) and Knowl Farm (**39**) are known to date from the 18th century at the latest, and both of these should be subjected to detailed archaeological evaluation, possibly followed by full excavation.

6.9 A few other surviving buildings affected by the road line may require detailed recording. Other buildings now demolished may also be recommended for trial excavation. Further discussion on the effect of the road on these few isolated buildings or sites is required.

6.10 The enigmatic Nico Ditch has not been positively identified adjacent to the Audenshaw Reservoirs (**8** or **10**), and field survey combined with evaluation would be required to resolve this situation. The section of ditch along Lumb Lane (**23**) should also be tested by trial excavation.

6.11 The medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow encountered at several locations (**7, 119, 120, 123, 124 & 125**) should be recorded by detailed field survey.

6.12 The motorway will cut the line of the Rochdale Canal once (**88**) and that of the Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne Canal three times (**53, 58 & 72**). The canal banks should be investigated by trial trenching to fully record the original construction technique.

6.13 The earthwork platform sites overlooking the Irk valley (**126 & 127**) would require detailed field survey and trial trenching to identify their origin.

6.14 The rectangular earthwork mounds identified adjacent to the Audenshaw Reservoirs (**116, 117 & 118**) should be recorded in plan.

6.15 The bank of the Blackley deer park pale (**122**) would require initially a detailed earthwork survey and trial trenching, possibly followed by open excavation of a length of this feature, the only well-preserved section of which will be directly affected by the proposed motorway line.

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AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

a) Verticals held at the Greater Manchester Minerals and Waste Disposal Unit, Peel House, Eccles:

1946 RAF black & white verticals at a scale of 1:10,000

1984 GMC black & white verticals at a scale of 1:10,000

1989 GMC colour verticals at a scale of 1:10,000

b) Verticals held by L G Mouchel & Partners Ltd, Consulting Engineers:

1961 black & white verticals at a scale of 1:10,000

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1980 black & white verticals at a scale of 1:3000.

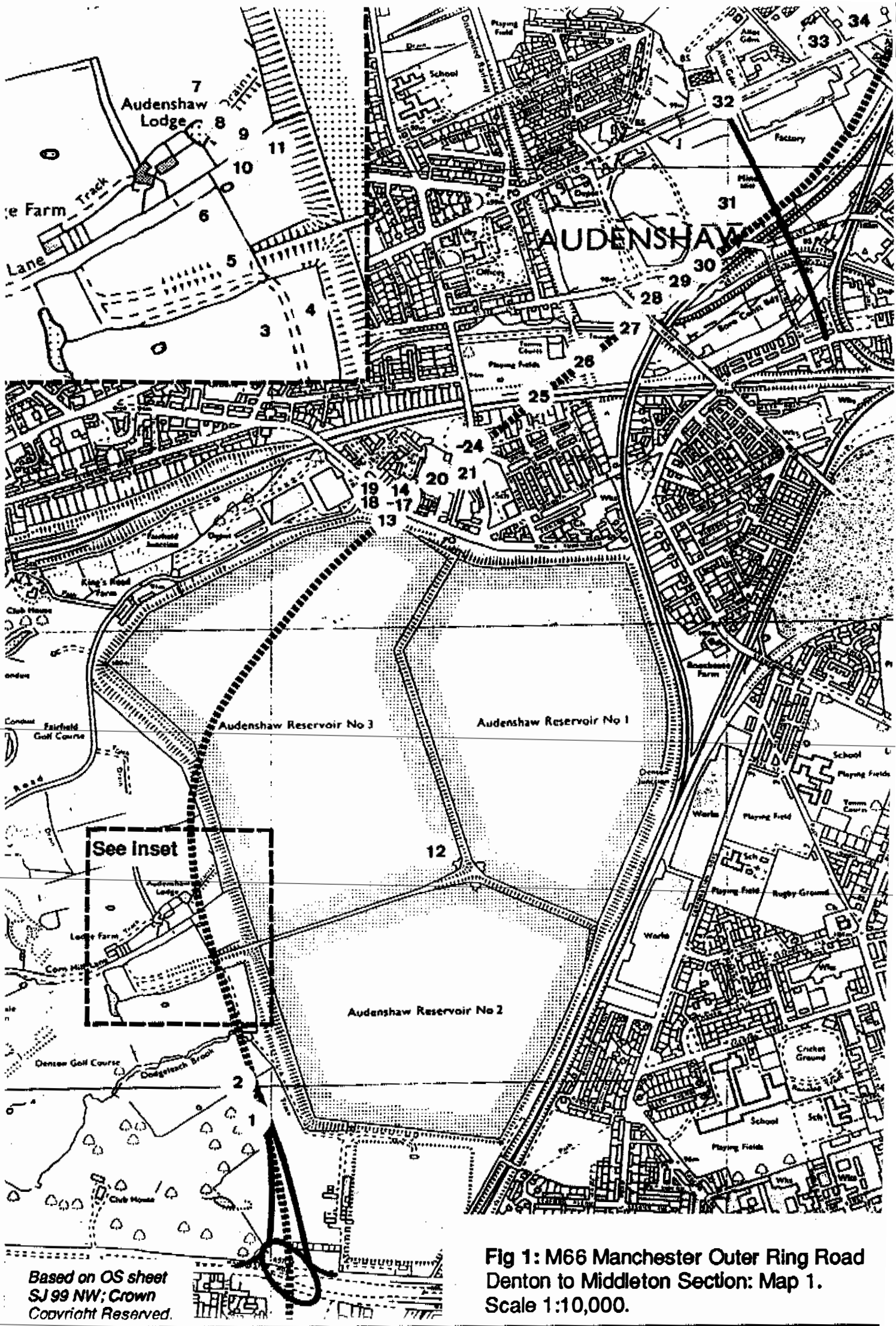

Fig 1: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton to Middleton Section: Map 1. Scale 1:10,000.

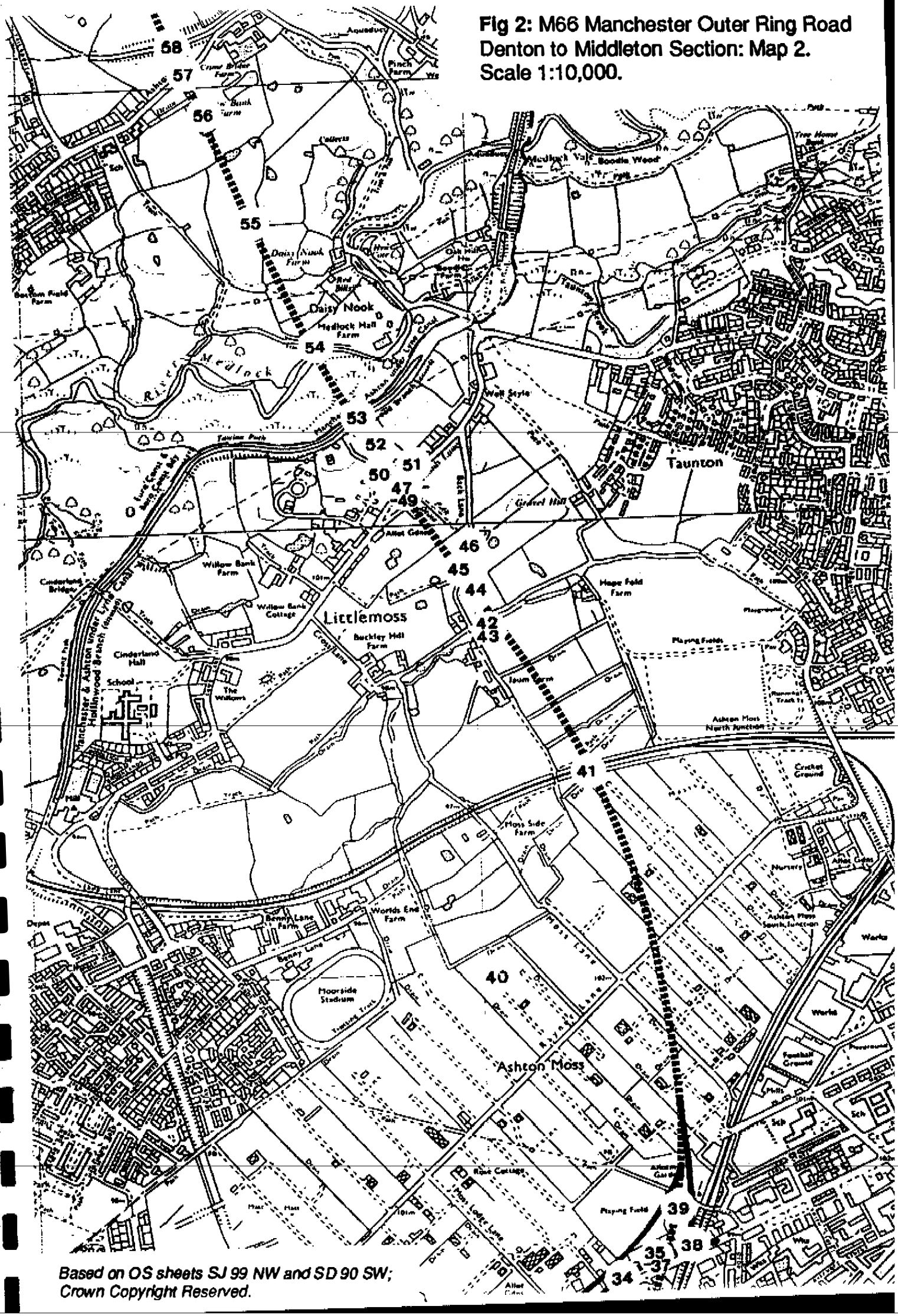

Fig 2: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton to Middleton Section: Map 2. Scale 1:10,000.

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Fig 3: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton to Middleton Section: Map 3. Scale 1:10,000.

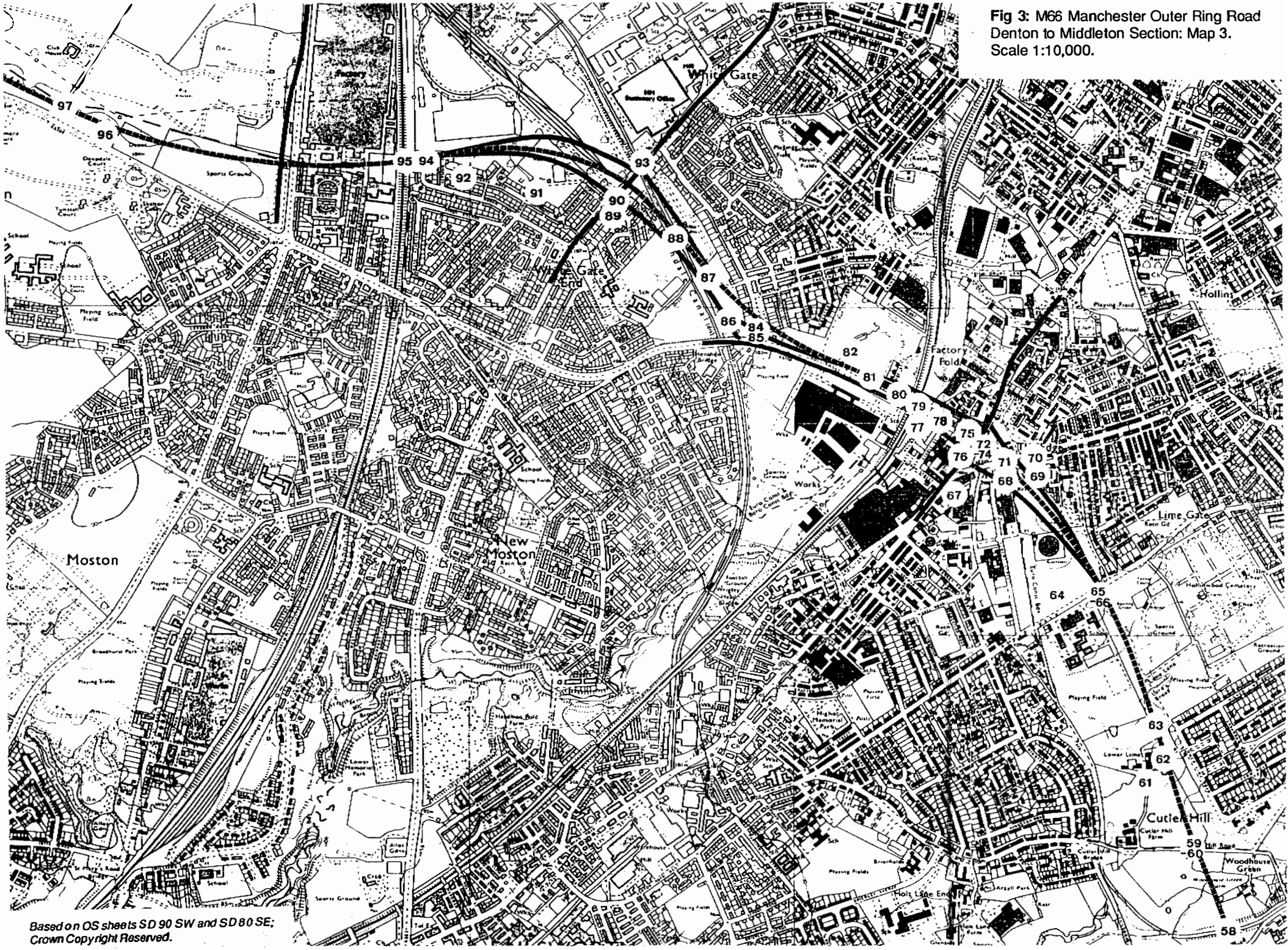

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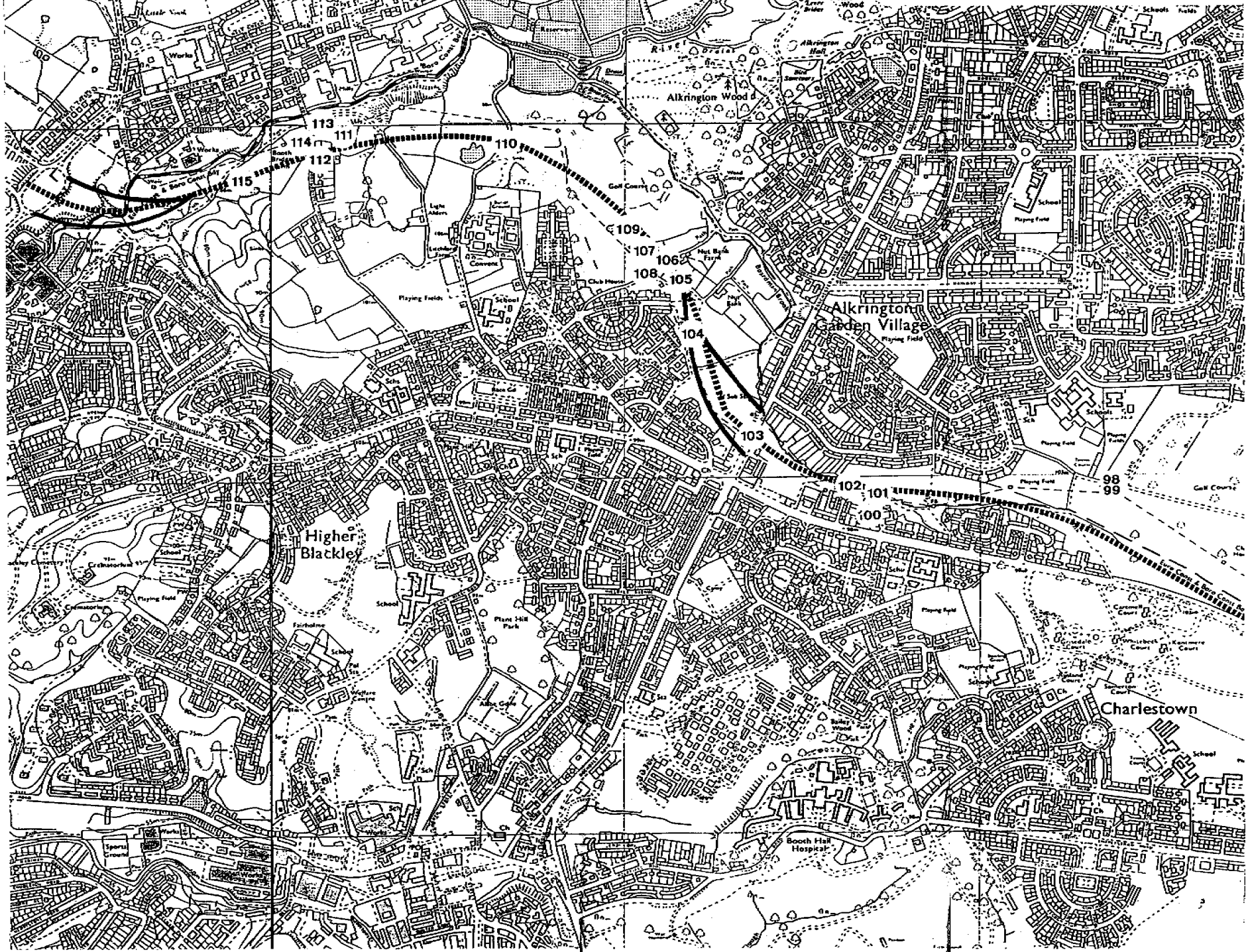
Fig 4: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road Denton to Middleton Section: Map 4. Scale 1:10,000.



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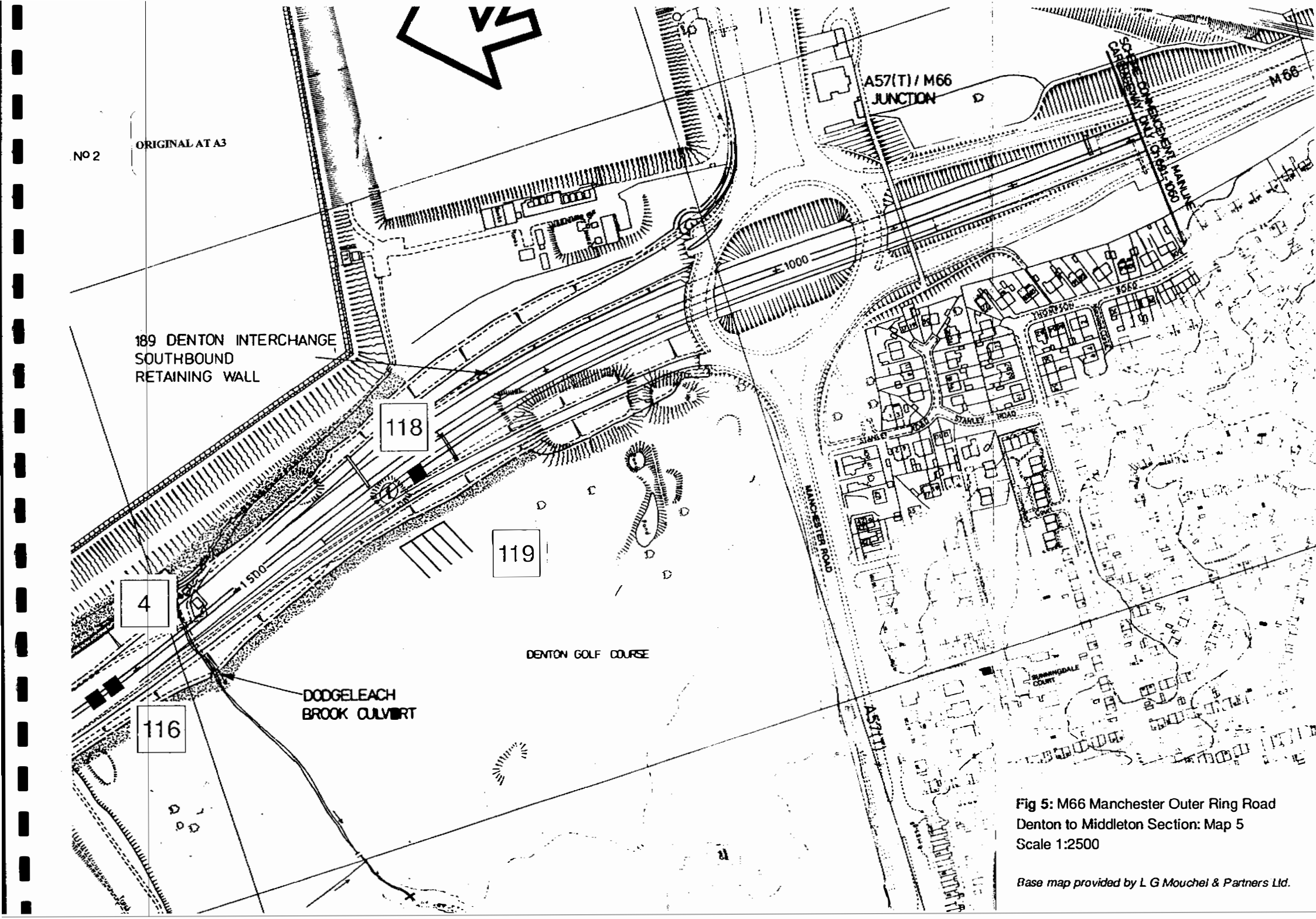

Fig 5: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road
Denton to Middleton Section: Map 5
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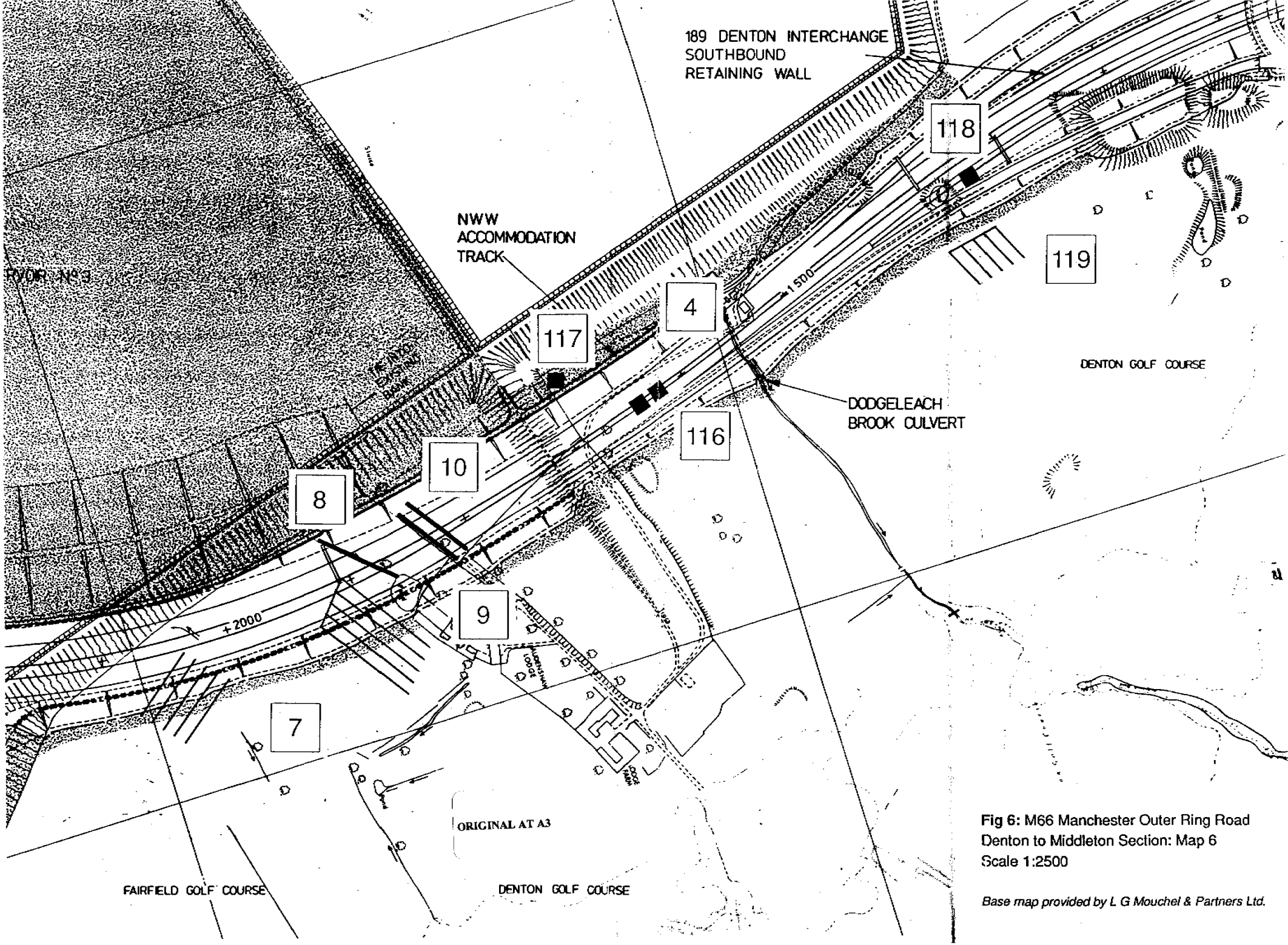

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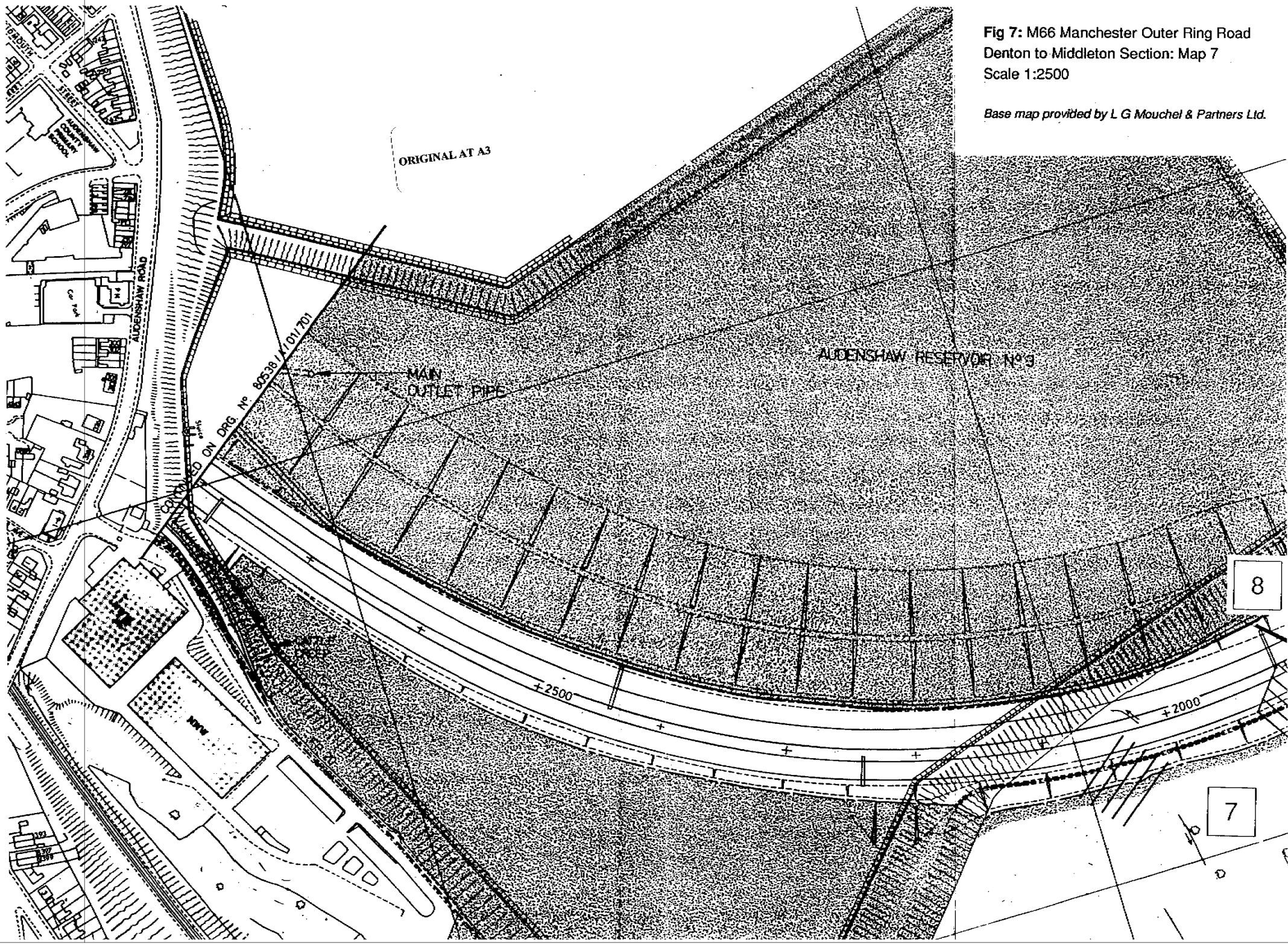

Fig 7: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road
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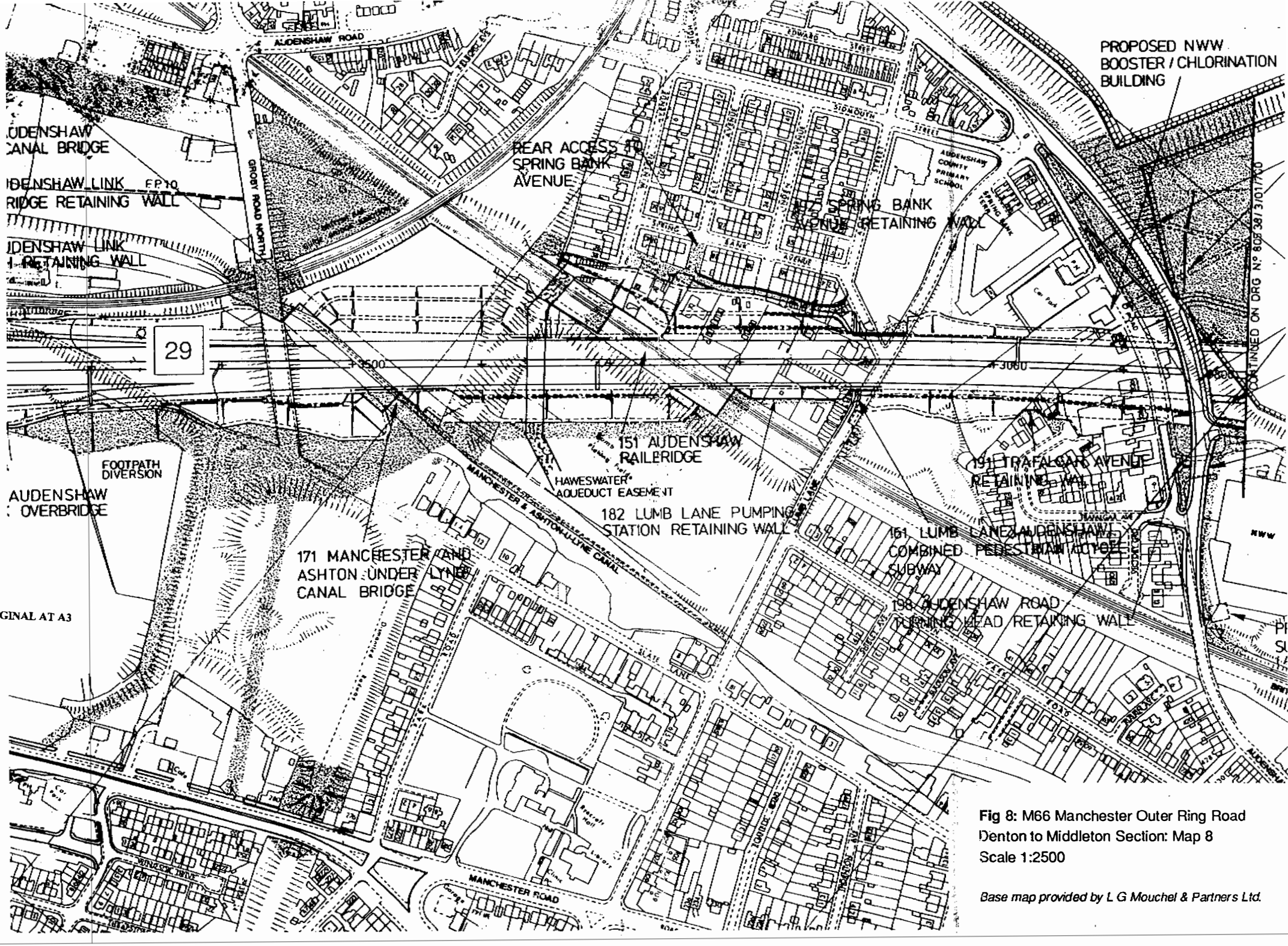

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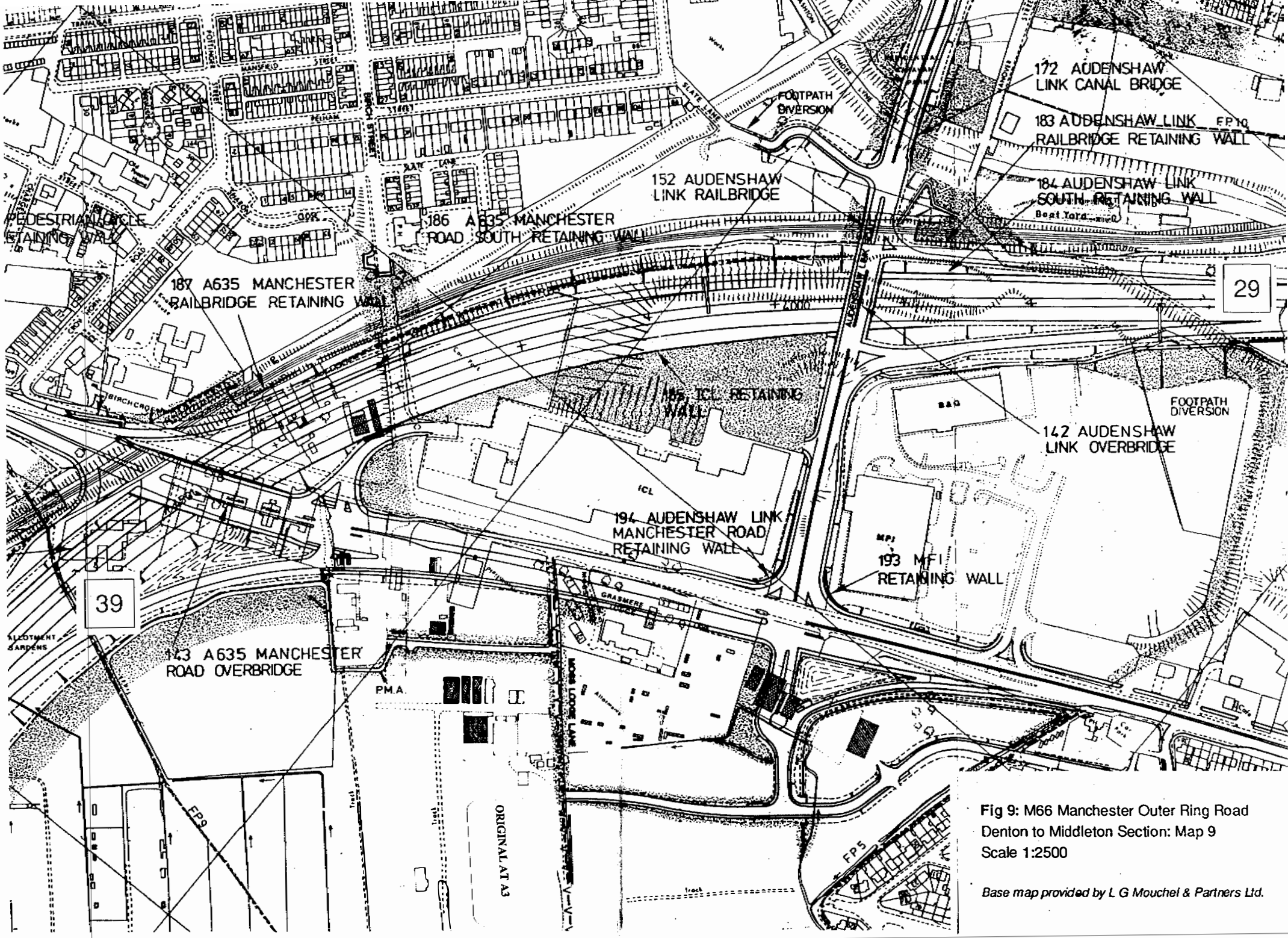

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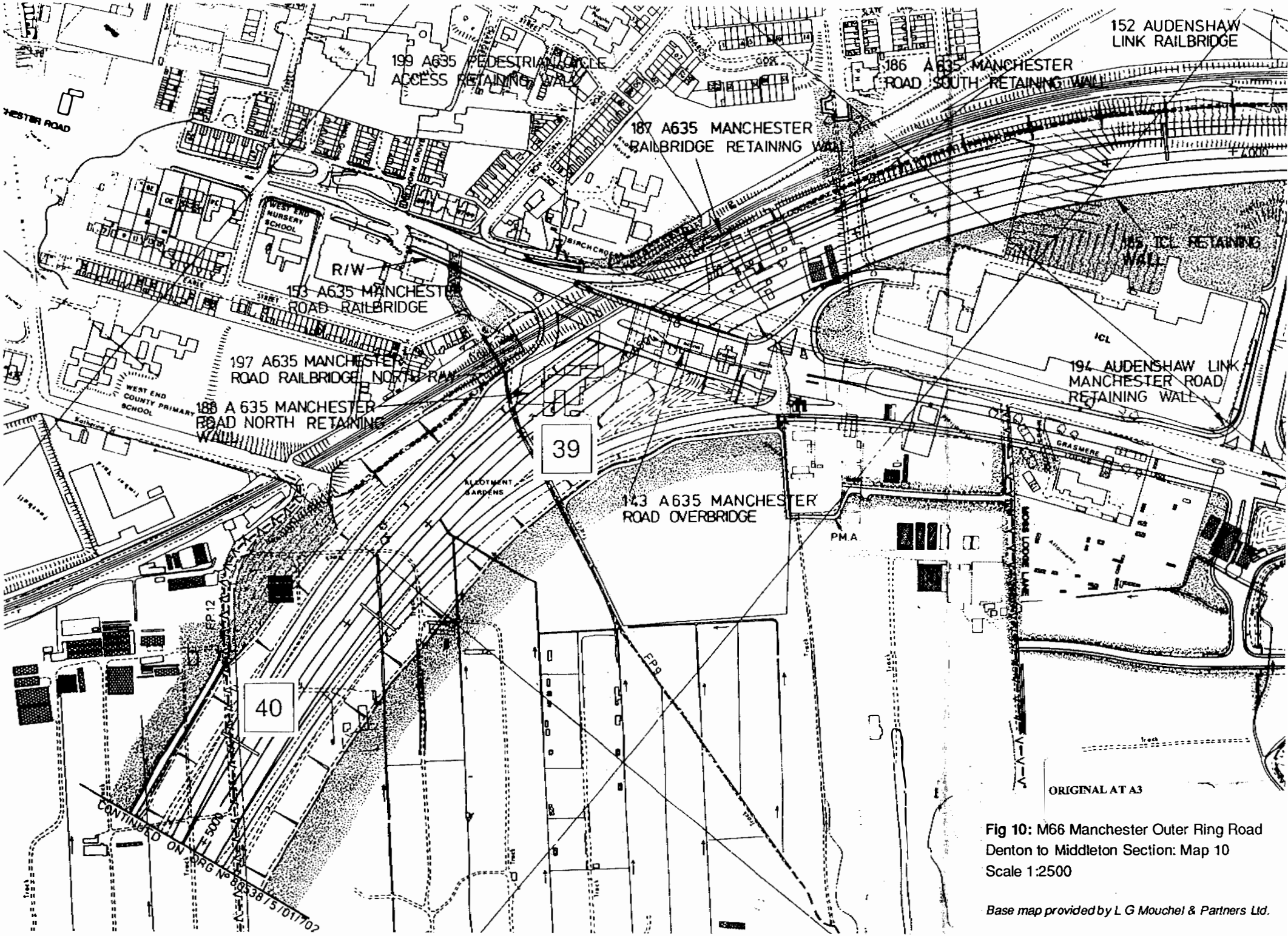

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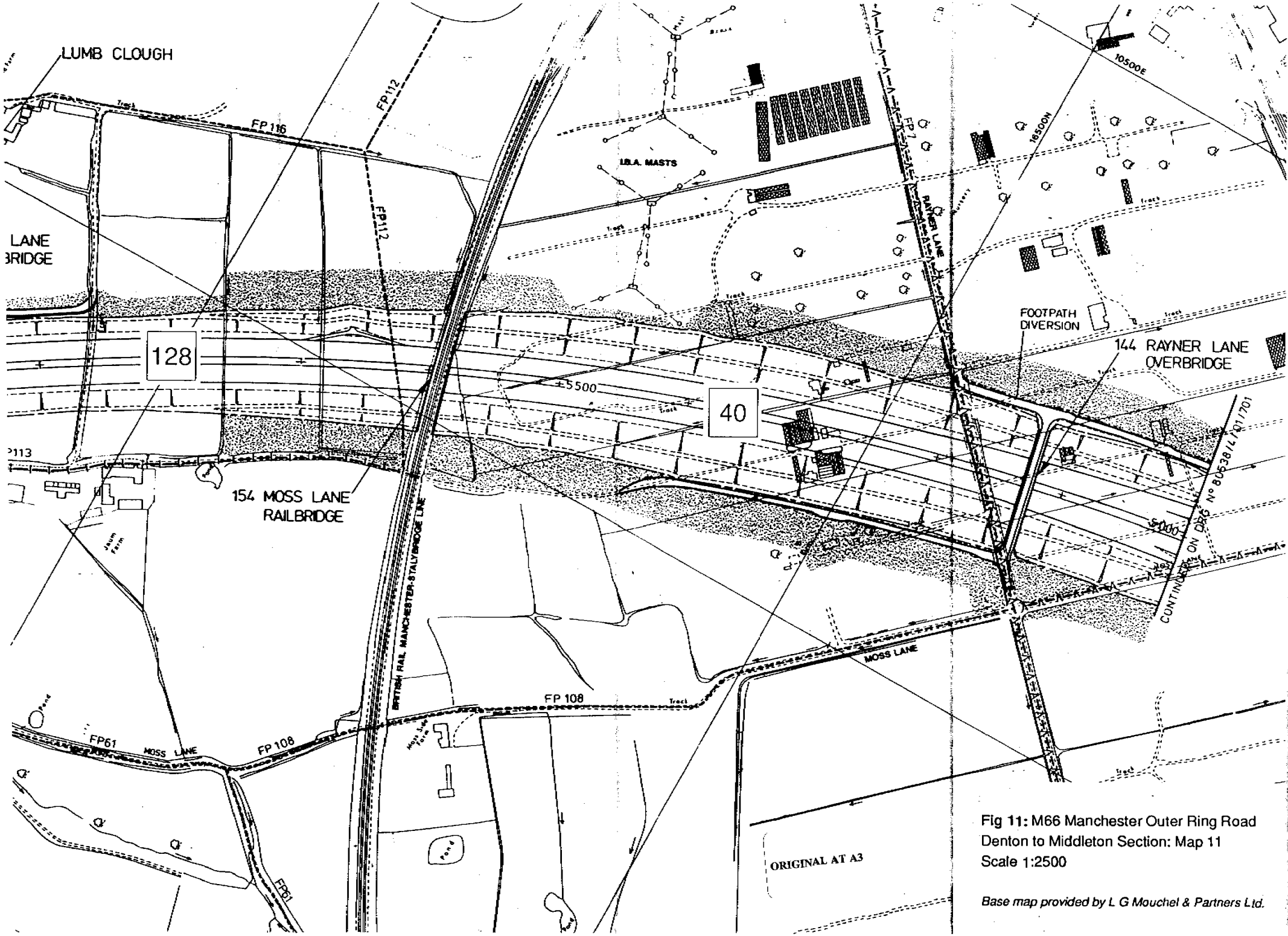

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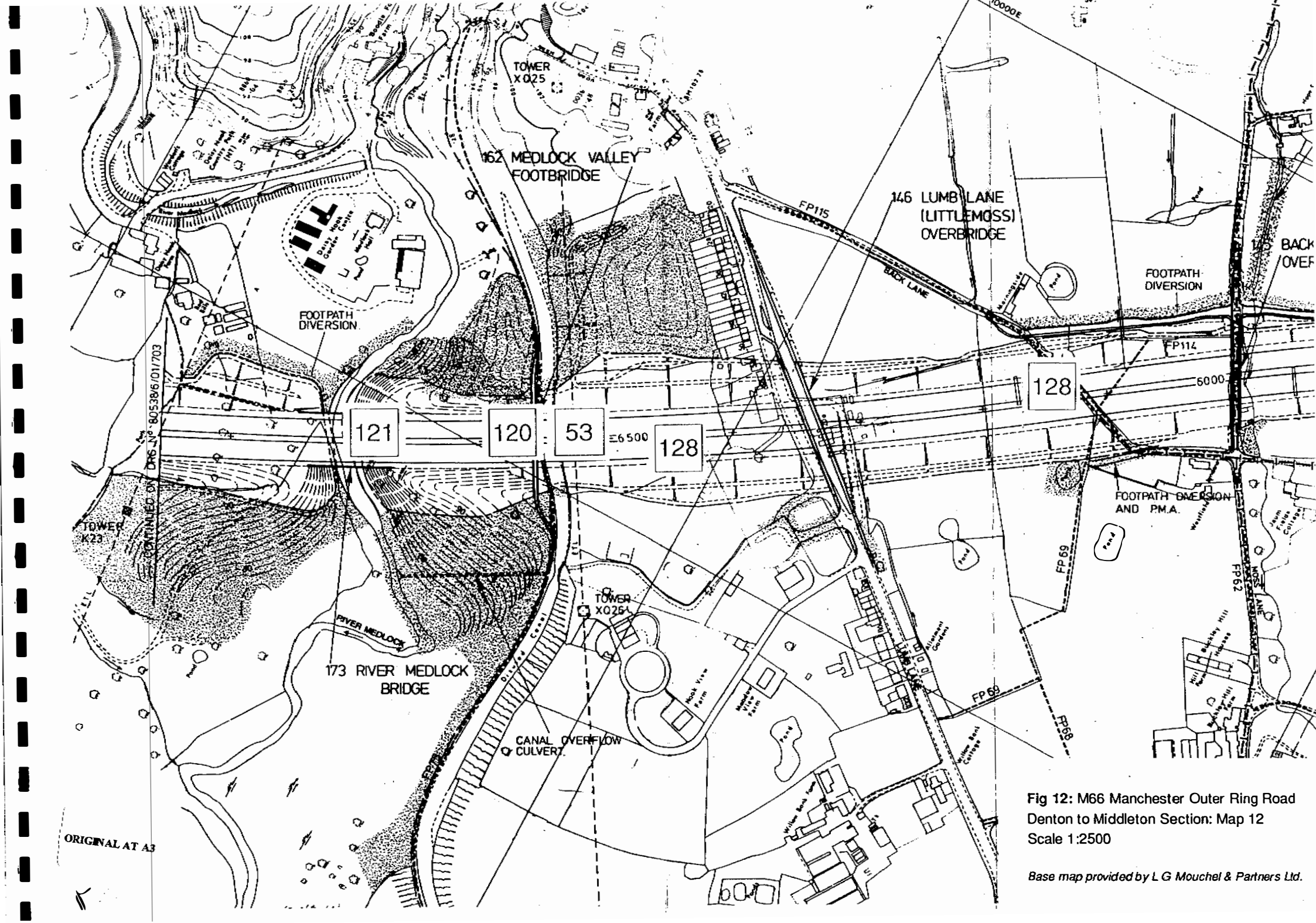

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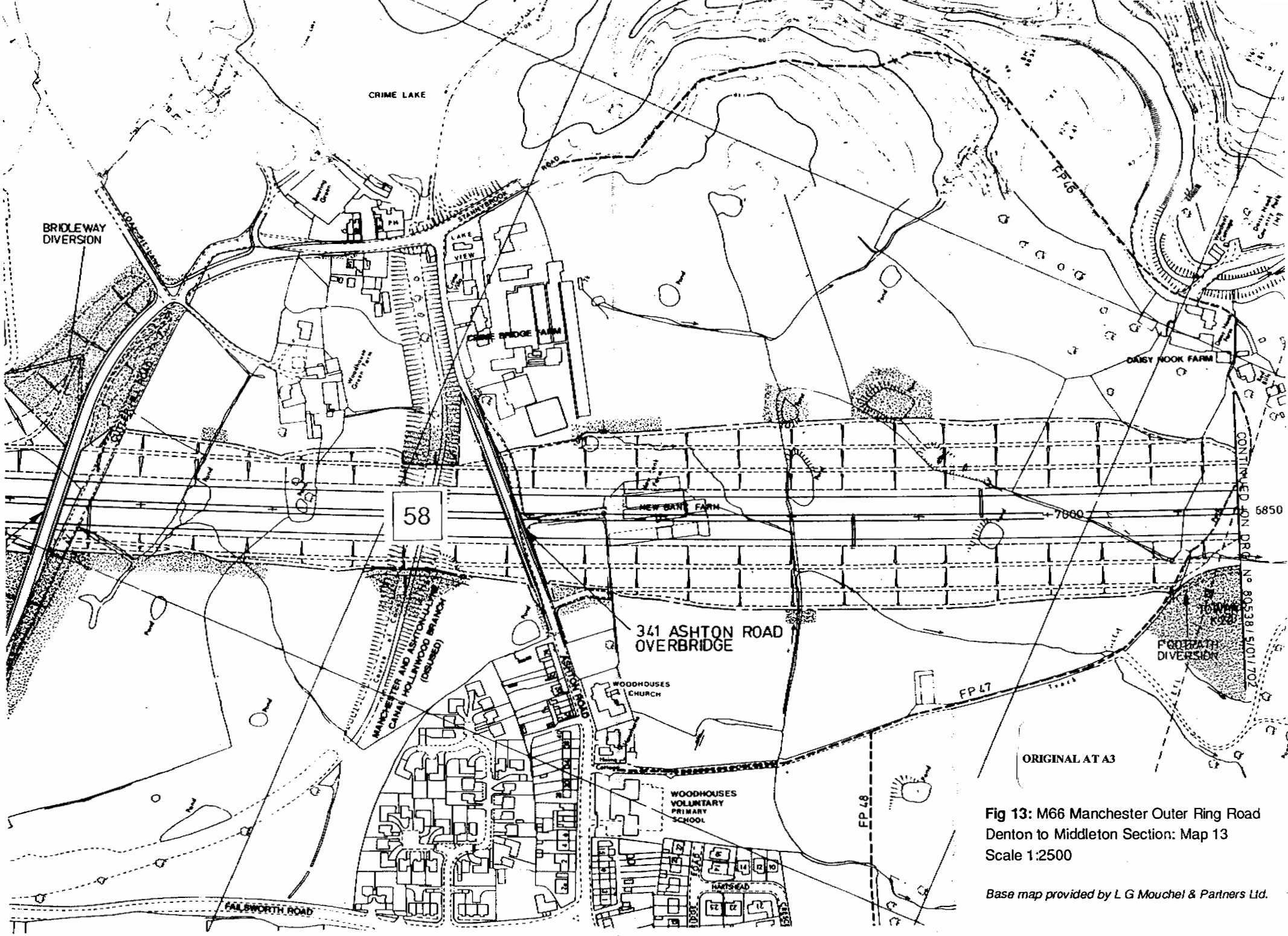

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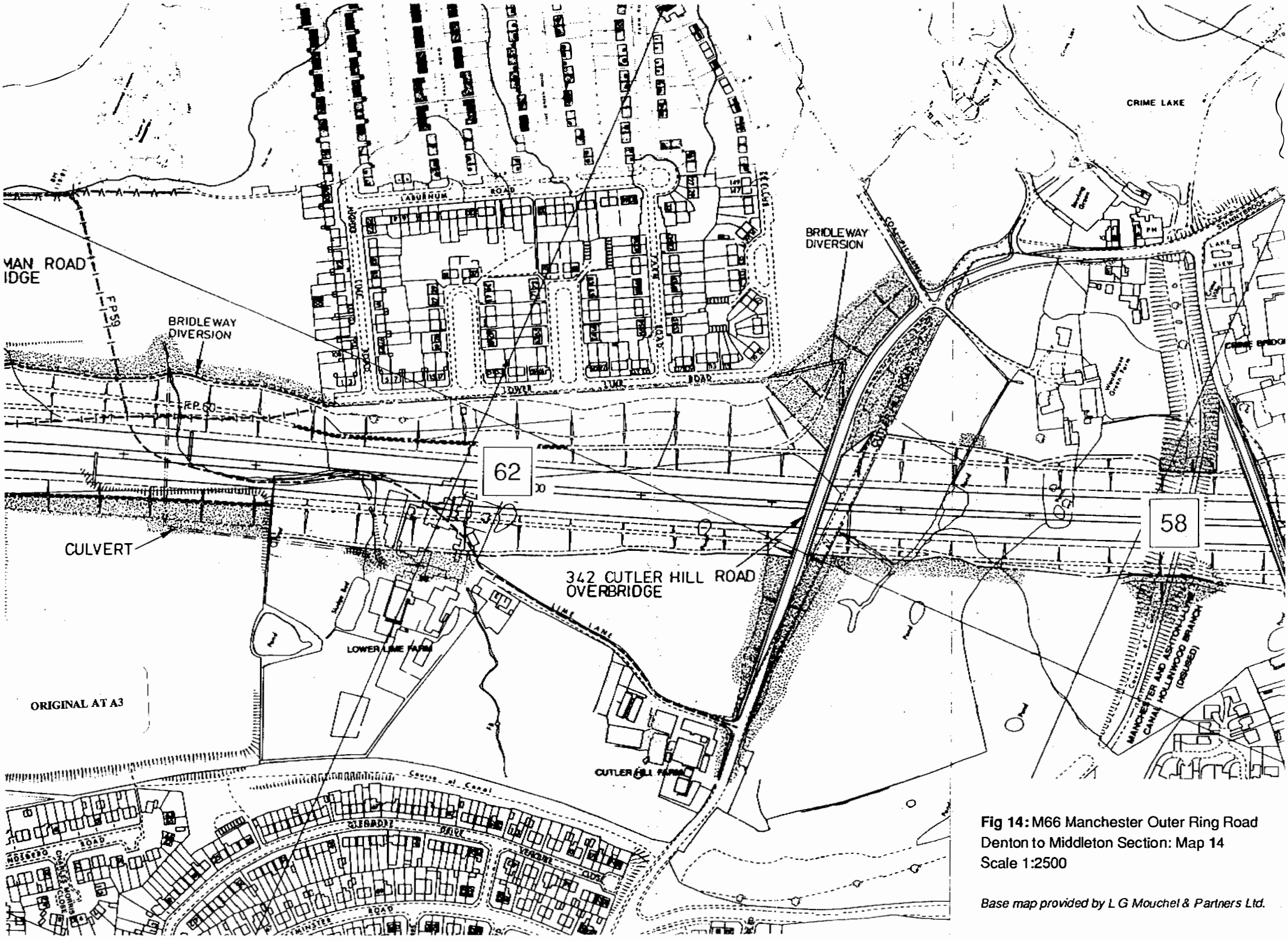

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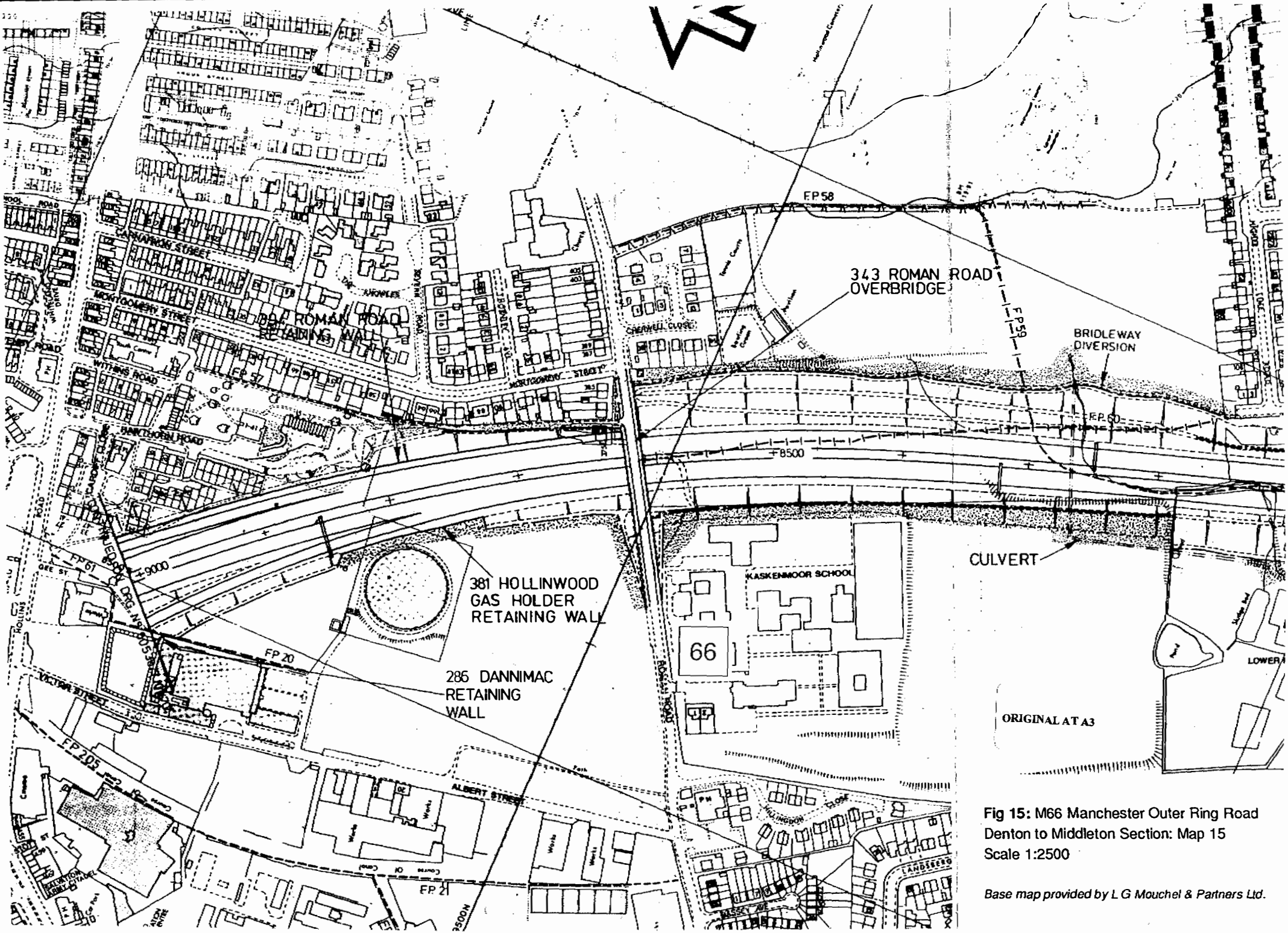

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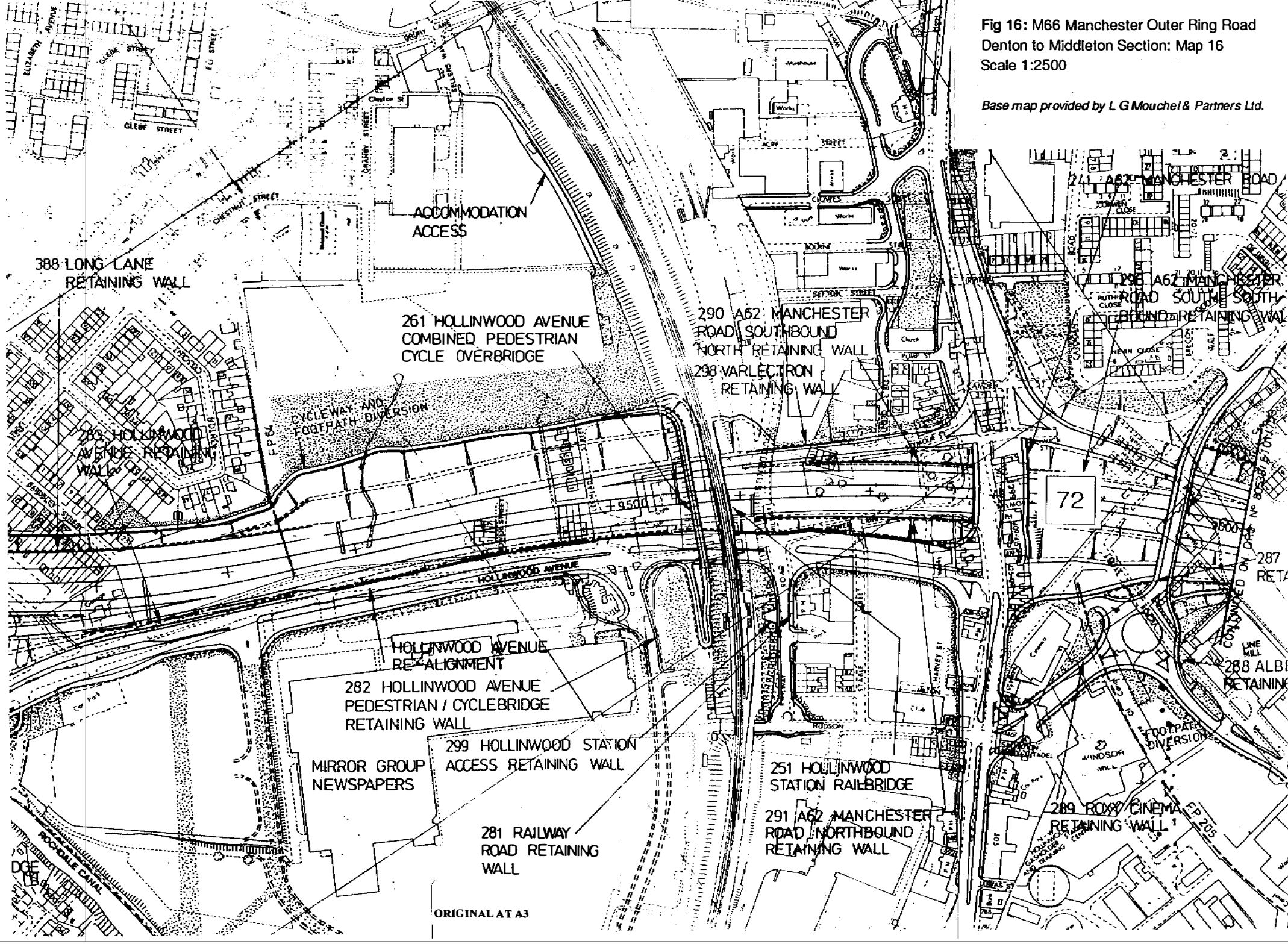

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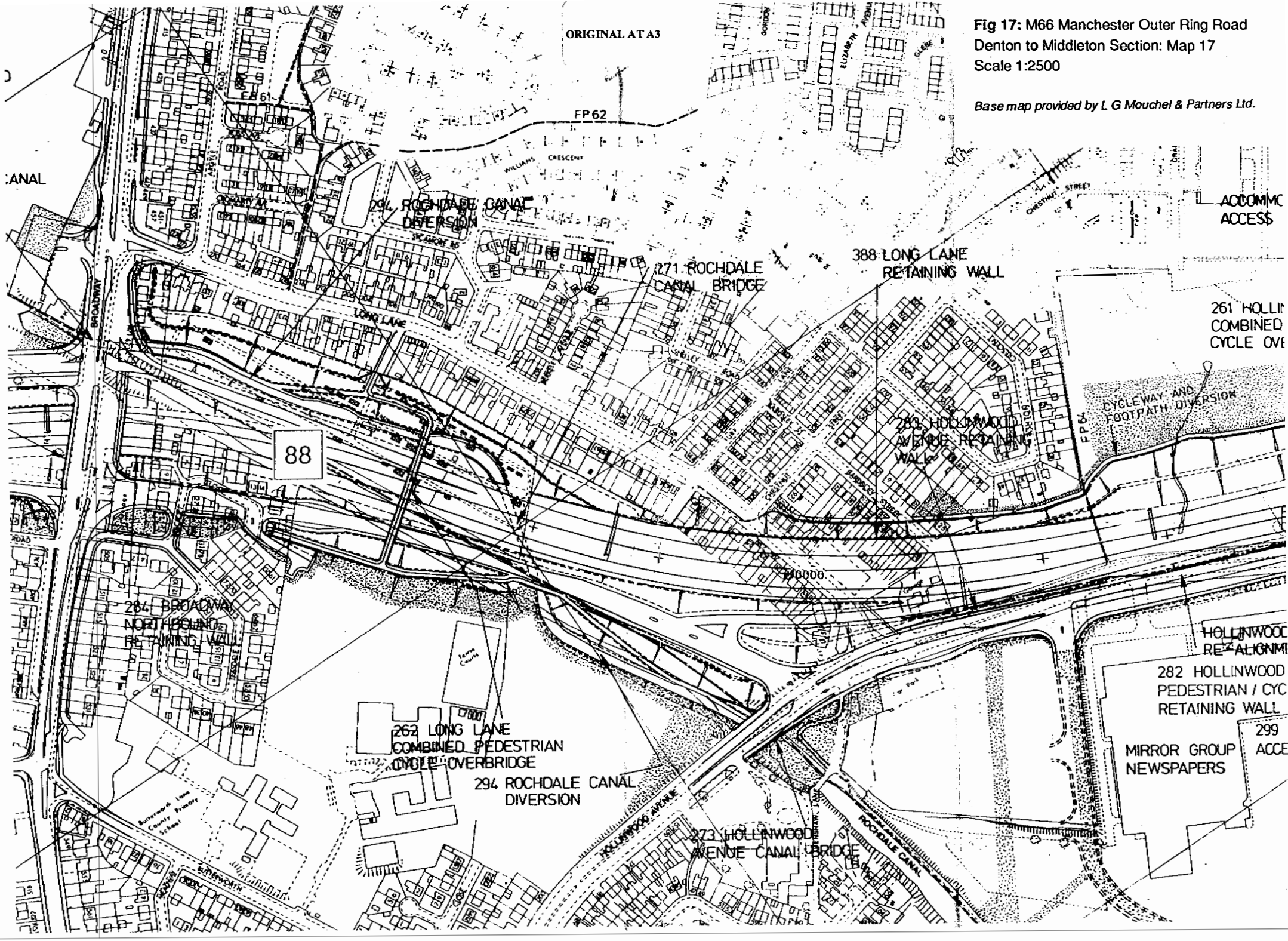

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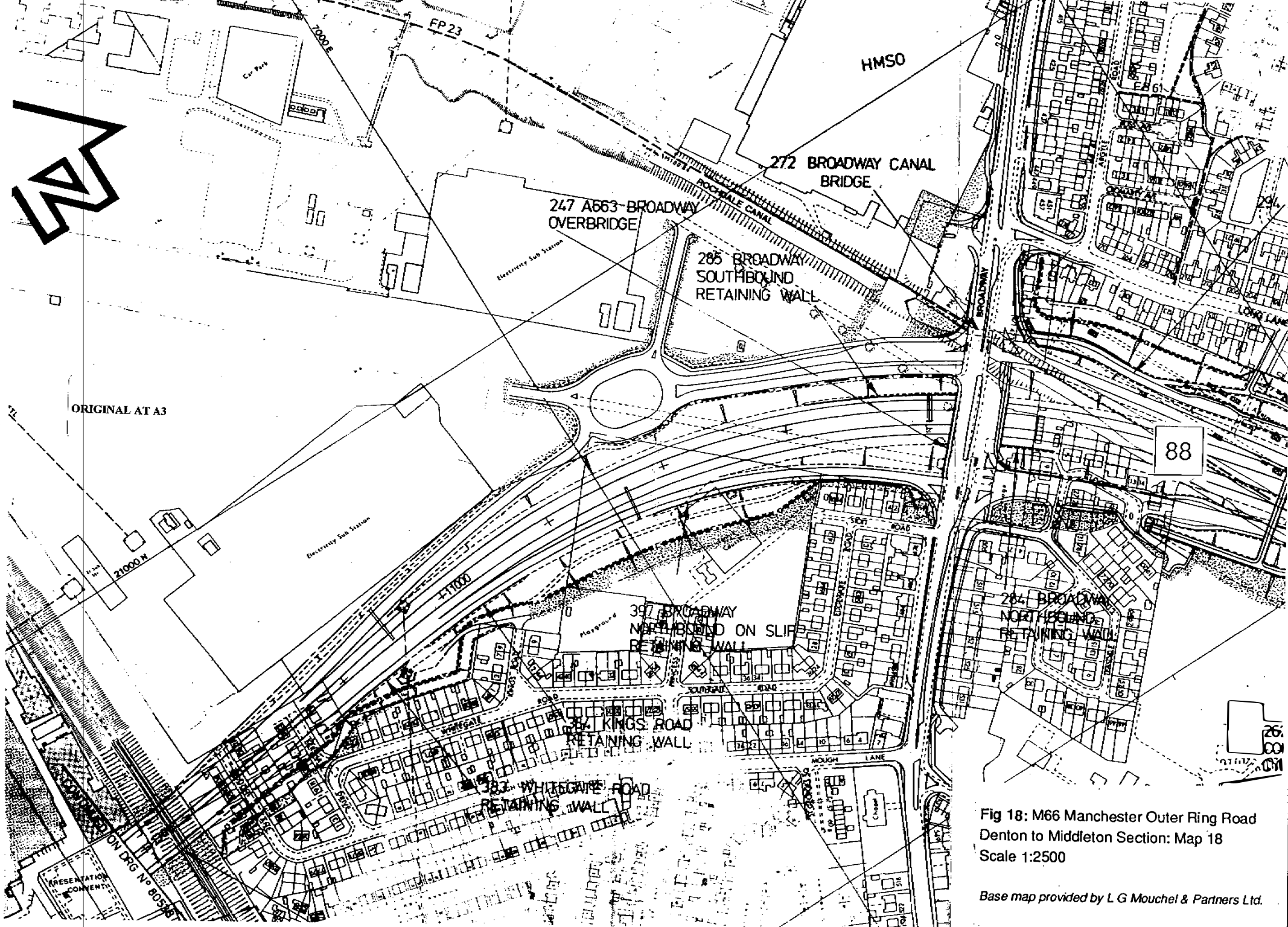

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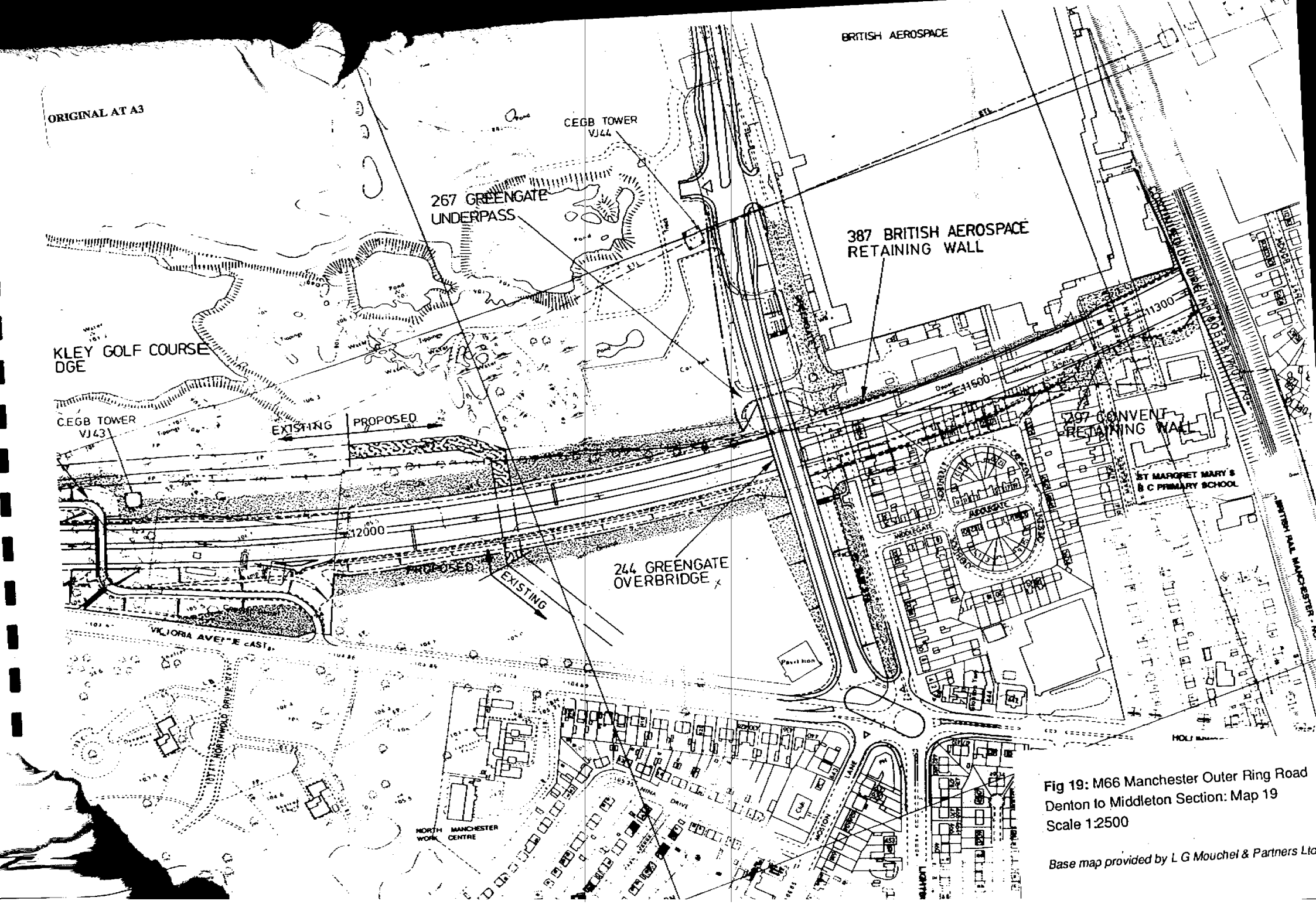

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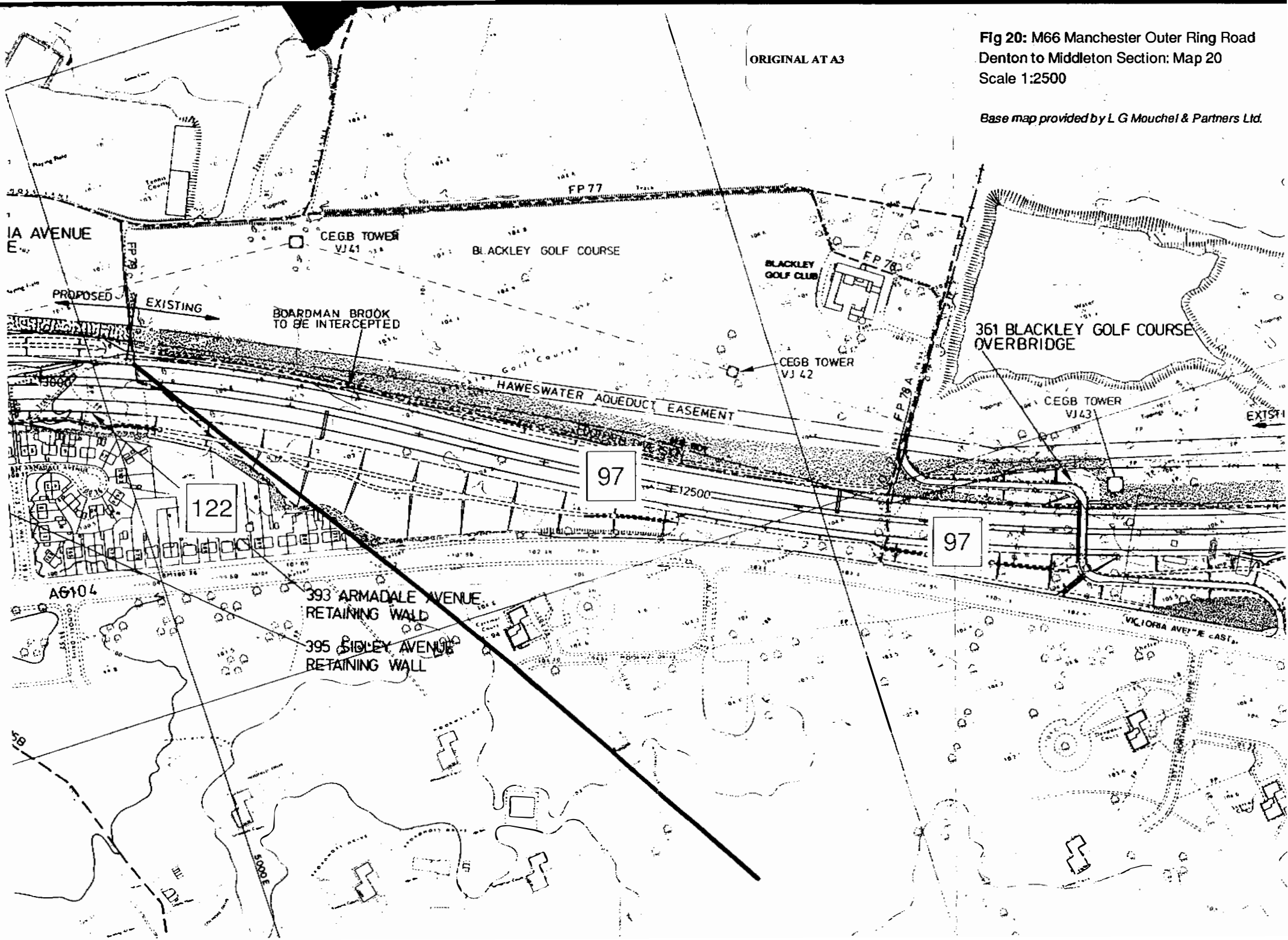

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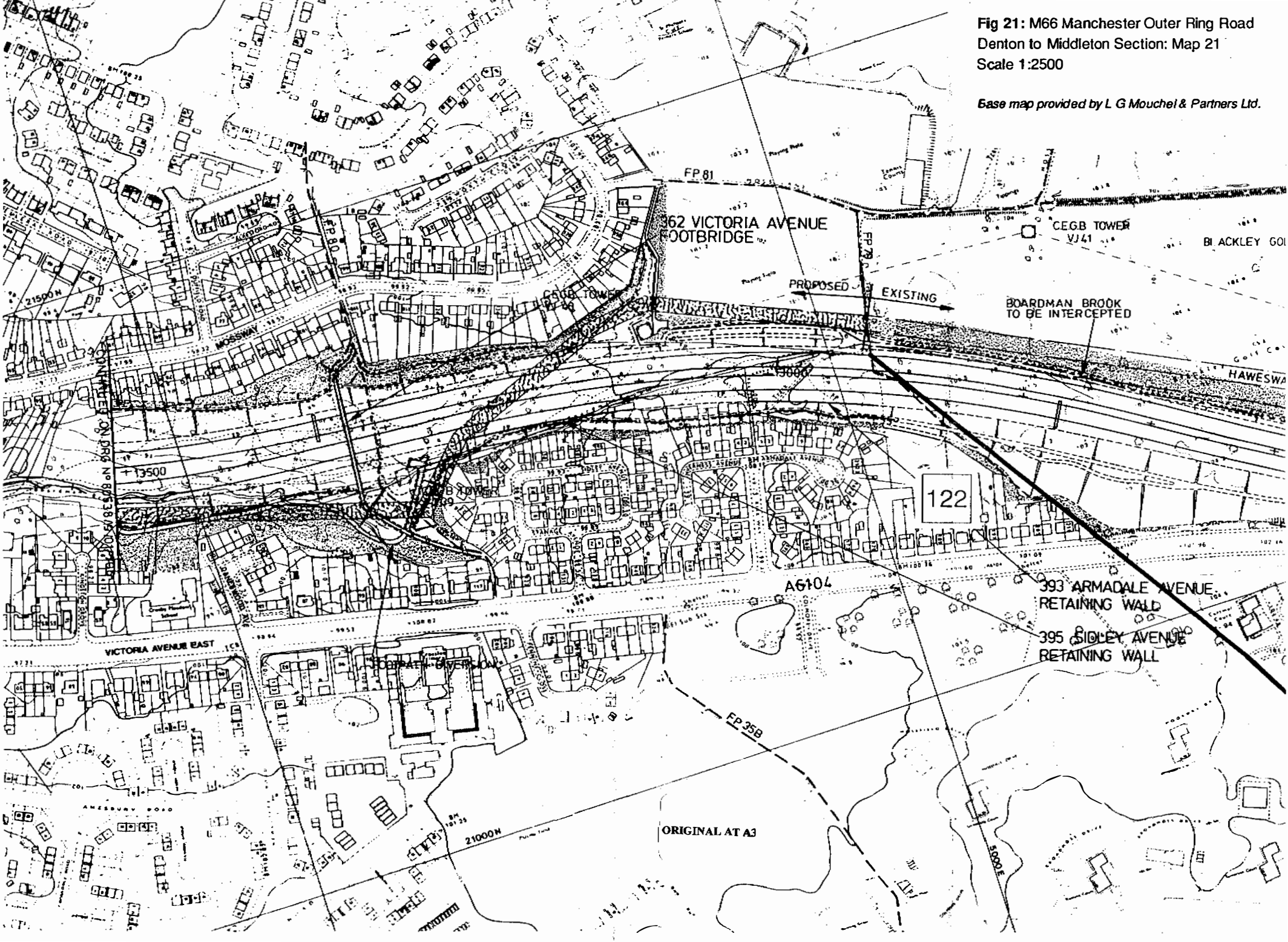

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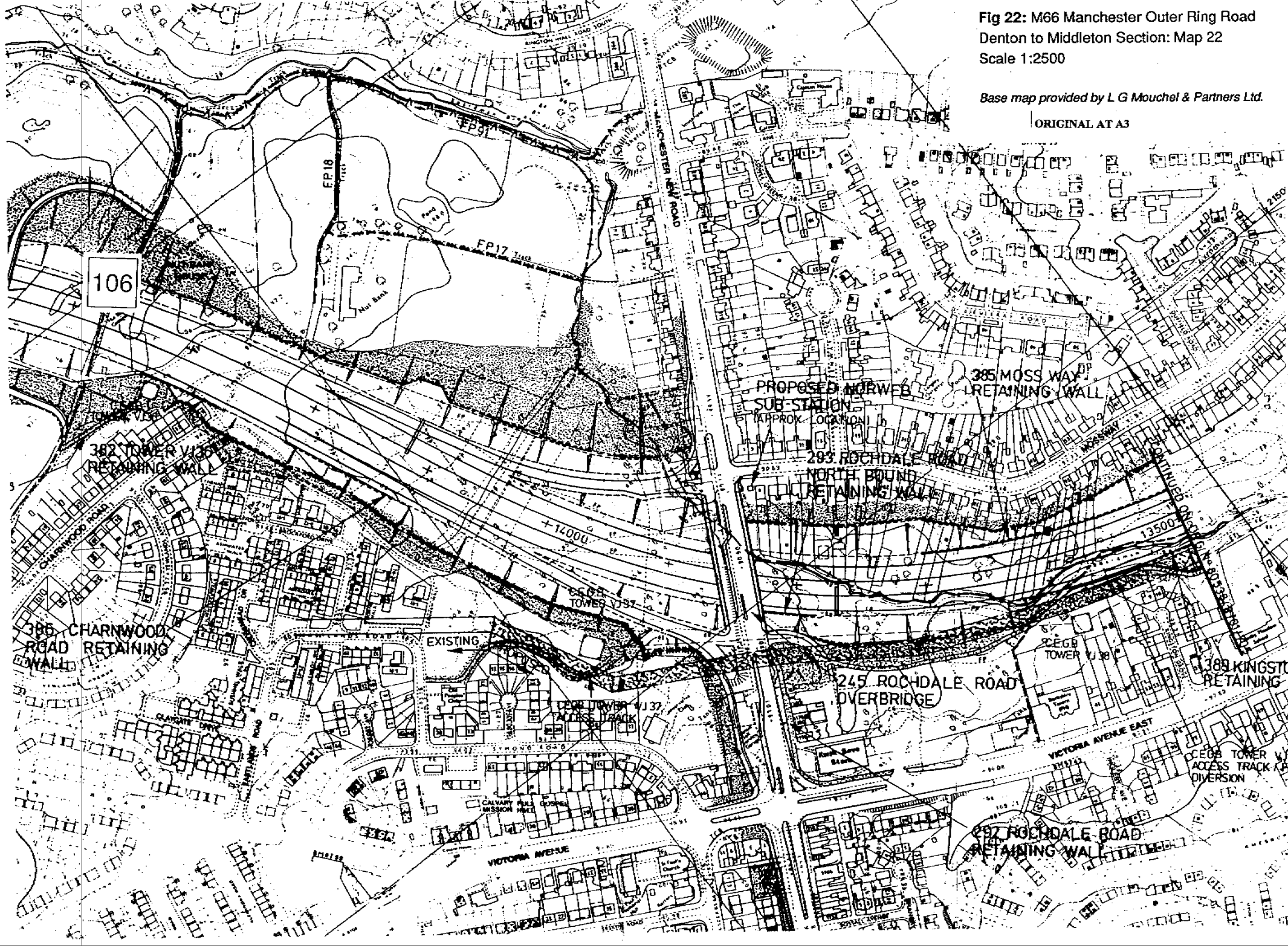

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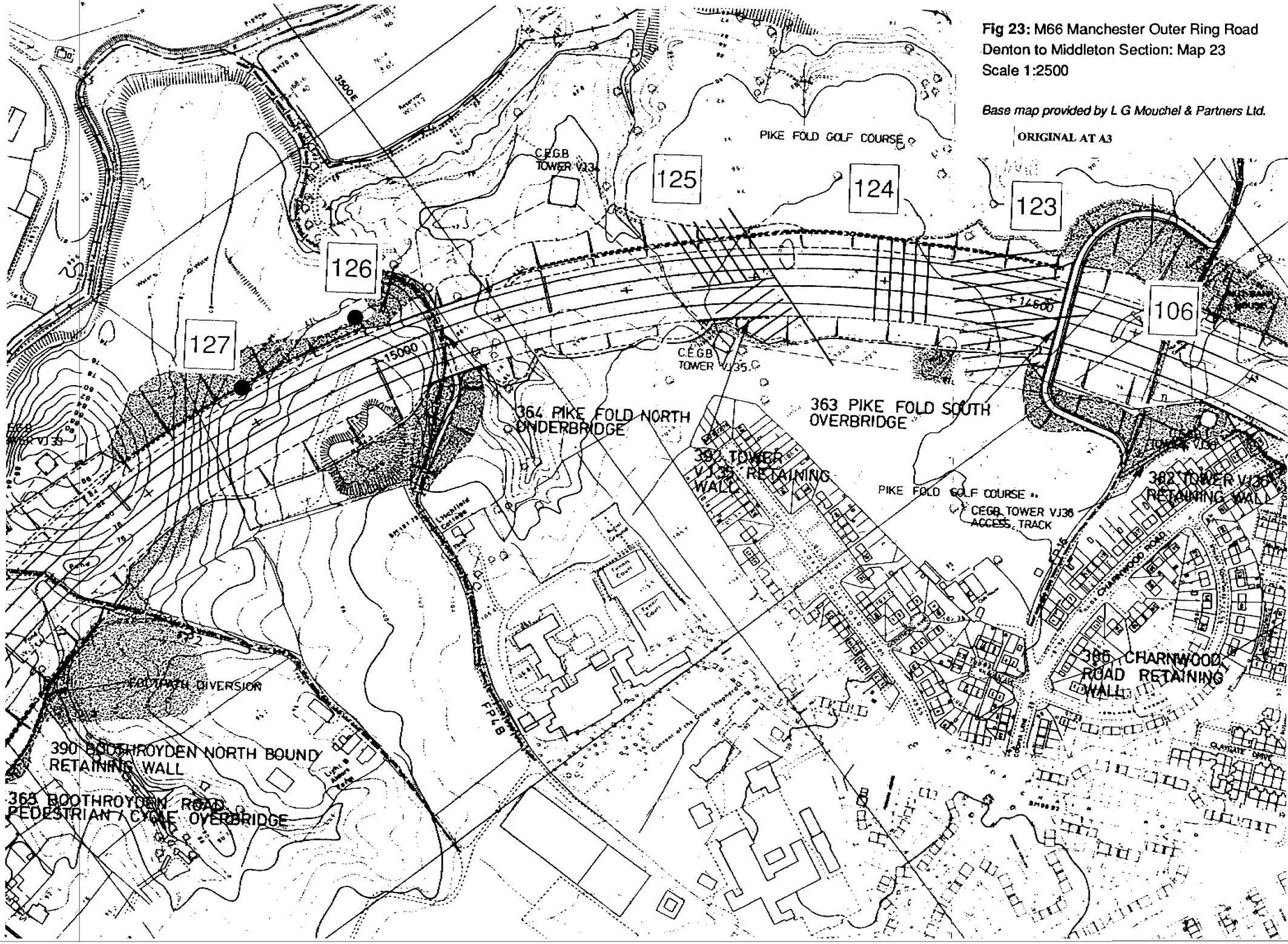

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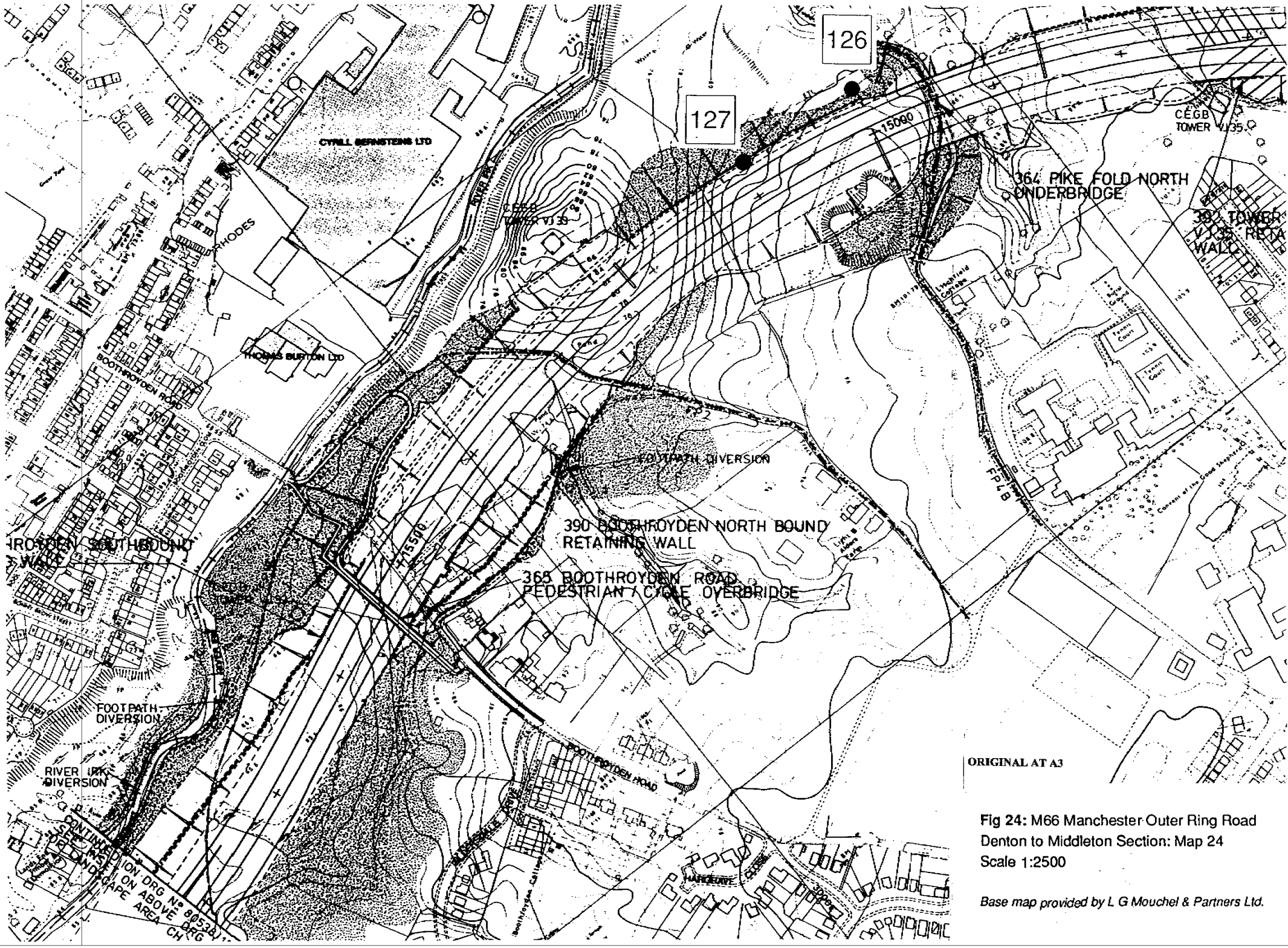

Fig 24: M66 Manchester Outer Ring Road
Denton to Middleton Section: Map 24
Scale 1:2500

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Appendix 1: The North West Wetlands Survey Biostratigraphic Survey of Ashton Moss†

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and topographical features

Ashton Moss is a reclaimed raised mire currently covering around 125ha and situated in the Tameside district of Greater Manchester, west of Ashton-under-Lyne (SJ 920 990). It forms one of a series of mires which occupy broad, shallow, hollows in boulder clays in the upper Mersey catchment within the Irwell-Irk-Medlock hinterland (Shimwell 1985). This suite of mires is situated at altitudes between 90m and 120m OD. Although parts of the margins of the moss have been lost to urban development a considerable extent of peat remains and is now under market garden cultivation.

1.2 Previous Research

To date, specific studies of Ashton Moss have been largely confined to documentary investigations of its ownership (Bowman 1960,44-8). The Soil Survey, however, includes the site in its inventory of English and Welsh lowland peat deposits. They recorded the average peat depth to be 3.7m and to consist of a broad tripartite division into *Sphagnum* peats, *Sphagnum/Eriophorum* peats and fen wood peats over boulder clay. Turbary Moor series soils were found over the site (Burton & Hodgson 1987). Shimwell (1985) provides a review of the current understanding of the distribution and origins of the lowland mosslands of North-West England, including the Greater Manchester sites. Despite these generalised works, as far as is known there has been no previous palaeoecological study specific to the site. Indeed, the mires of the Greater Manchester area, and the upper and middle Mersey catchment in general, have received hitherto relatively little attention from paleoecologists and peat stratigraphers. One exception is the large mire complex of Chat Moss which was subjected to cursory stratigraphic investigation as early as 1928 by Erdtman (Erdtman 1928). A more ambitious palynological study was undertaken more recently by Birks (1964). This provided valuable information on regional vegetation history and mire ontogeny. Chat Moss was found to contain a pollen record reaching back to the immediate post-glacial period and extending up to the historic period. The stratigraphic record indicated a sequence beginning with aquatic and fen communities occupying deep hollows within the mire basin which, after a drier interlude during which surrounding areas carried birch scrub, were succeeded by ombrotrophic communities dominated by *Sphagnum* which expanded to fill the remaining areas of the present mire basin.

Risley Moss is another scarce example of a moss in the general vicinity to have received detailed paleoecological study. Hibbert (1977) recorded a similar sequence of

† Reproduced, by kind permission, from Dr Colin Wells, *A Biostratigraphical Survey of Ashton Moss, Tameside, Greater Manchester*, 1991. Unpublished report, North West Wetlands Survey. Dr Wells is based in the Lancaster University Archaeology Unit and his work is entirely funded by English Heritage.

development to that recorded for Chat Moss with initial minerotrophic and aquatic communities being replaced by carr and eventually being succeeded by ombrotrophic communities. The latter deposits can be seen to be divided into a lower and upper assemblage suggesting an increase in wetness at the site later on in its development.

1.3 The aim of the survey

The stratigraphic reconnaissance was conducted in order to obtain a general palaeoecological overview of the organic deposits still remaining in the Ashton Moss basin and of the ontogeny of the mire. An additional intention was to assess the scale and condition (ie nature and degree of preservation) of these deposits so that the potential for detailed palaeoenvironmental work could be gauged. The survey would also provide a stratigraphic contextual framework into which any such studies could be fitted.

2. METHOD

2.1 Equipment

North West Wetlands Survey stratigraphic survey employs a 30mm bore Eijkelkamp gouge auger in order to obtain cores of peat for rapid field description. A Zeiss Ni 030 Engineers' Level and staff were used for determination of relative surface levels of core positions.

2.2 Sampling strategy

A series of four transects of cores was employed in order to obtain a three dimensional view of the stratigraphy of the peat deposits (Figs 1-9). A longitudinal transect (Transect 'A') of 13 cores was followed aligned to Rayner Lane (Fig 2). Three lateral transects positioned approximately at right angles to the axis of the longitudinal transect were followed. A north-eastern transect (Transect 'B') positioned approximately halfway between Moss Lane and the cricket ground contained 6 core positions and incorporated one of the longitudinal transect cores (Fig 4). A 'middle' transect (Transect 'C') bridging the widest part of the moss from World's End Farm to the playing fields consisted of 10 coring positions and incorporated one of the longitudinal cores (Fig 6). A south- western transect (Transect 'D') from the end of Sandy Lane to the Manchester Road entrance of Moss Crop Ltd (Fig 8) included 6 cores and one of the longitudinal cores. A supplementary core (AM36) was taken near to the approximate centre of the mire in order to obtain more information on the extent of the deepest deposits of peat.

2.3 Core positions

Core positions were required to be around 100m apart along each transect. Obvious topographic features (lane junctions, fenceposts etc) are so abundant on the moss that these were used to position and relocate cores rather than exact measurement.

2.4 Identification of plant material

Identification of the gross components of peat and other organic deposits was undertaken in the field with the use of a hand lens with x10 and x20 magnification.

Small samples were also obtained in order to verify field identification and obtain more detail in cases where field determination proved difficult.

2.5 Assessment of humification

The degree of humification of the peat was estimated in the field using a modified Von Post scale as used by the Soil Survey's lowland peat survey (Burton & Hodgson 1987).

2.6 Levelling of surface

Levelling of the surface height of the coring positions was obtained relative to a temporary bench mark situated on the gate entrance to the cricket ground.

3. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results are presented as a series of stratigraphic diagrams (Figs 2, 4, 6 & 8). Each diagram displays stratigraphic information from an individual transect. Composition of the gross components of the peat and organic deposits are indicated using symbols based on Troels-Smith (1955) with some modifications (see Fig 2 key for details). In the diagrams core position is drawn to a horizontal scale of 1:5000 (1 cm = 50m) and a vertical scale of 1:50 (1cm = 0.5m). The size of the cores is exaggerated in order to enable clear presentation of the results. Relative heights of the surface of the core positions are displayed.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Description of peat stratigraphy

Over much of the site the deposits follow a sequence of basal silty clay overlain by wood peat followed by a long sequence of *Eriophorum/Calluna* dominated peat with some *Sphagnum*, and finally overlain by fresh peats almost totally dominated by *S. imbricatum*. The degree to which this sequence is preserved varies over the moss, being heavily truncated particularly around its present margins and best represented towards the middle of the site, south of Rayner Lane, where the organic infill is deepest (cores AM6, AM7, AM26, AM27, AM36). In the deepest cores, however, the wood peat layer is absent and there are indications of fen communities having developed over the basal silty clays.

The peat surface/depth profiles (Figs 3, 5, 7 & 9) indicate that the moss occupies a shallow elongated basin with an uneven base. The longitudinal transect 'A' indicates that the depth of the clay increase to the south west, with a large basin occupying the south-western part of the site. The lateral transects show that a raised sub-surface ridge exists in the topography running parallel to the long axis of the moss, and situated approximately to the north-west of Rayner Lane. Adjacent to this a deeper channel appears to run along the north-west margin of the mire. The south-eastern margin of the moss, by contrast, appears to be rather shallower along much of its length.

5. DISCUSSION

Considering the fact that Ashton Moss is known to have been exploited for turbary since the medieval period, and extensively reclaimed and cultivated as early as the 1830s the investigation proved the survival of surprisingly well preserved, and often deep, peat

deposits. It is probable that the relatively low intensity of agricultural activity, compared to most modern farming techniques, has enabled good sections of the stratigraphic record to remain intact.

The sequence of deposits recorded suggest that aquatic and fen communities were the earliest peat forming plant communities to develop on the site, occupying a deep hollow (but not the deepest) in the clay surface slightly offset to the south-east of the approximate centre of the site. Mire vegetation in this wetter area probably persisted while the rest of the site became dominated by woodland and scrub. Edaphic conditions subsequently became wetter over the whole site allowing an *Eriophorum/Calluna* dominated peat-forming vegetation to develop over all areas. Later, even wetter conditions enabled an almost totally *S. imbricatum* dominated mire to develop. Truncation of the uppermost profile obscures the later development of the mire.

The sequence recorded is similar in broad outline to that recorded for nearby Chat Moss by Birks (1964) and also Risley Moss by Hibbert (1977). It probably reflects reaction of vegetation to changes in mire hydrology induced by regional climatic and possibly land use history. In this respect it is perhaps interesting to note the apparent presence of charcoal in some of the lower deposits (AM2, AM6) although one cannot state whether this has any anthropogenic significance at this stage.

In the absence of radio-carbon dating no attempt at an accurate chronology is possible. However, by comparison with the analogous sequence of development at Chat Moss it seems likely that the basal deposits may hold peat of immediate post-glacial age in some parts of the moss. It is extremely likely that a pollen record covering all of the prehistoric period is preserved in the peats at the site. It is also possible that a substantial portion of the post-Roman pollen record survives.

6. SUMMARY

Ashton Moss is a former active raised mire now reclaimed for agriculture. Stratigraphic survey shows that peat formation began in its irregularly contoured shallow basin, with aquatic and fen communities, and, after a period of scrub woodland domination over much of the site, ombrotrophic peat-forming vegetation became established. This later expanded to dominate the whole mire. Later on wetter conditions allowed the domination of the vegetation by *Sphagnum Imbricatum*.

The site in its present form has considerable value as a palaeoenvironmental archive, and further detailed work is recommended.

GLOSSARY

Biostratigraphy – Stratigraphy based upon changes in biological assemblages in sediment.

Calluna – Heather.

Carr – Mire type ecosystem dominated by trees (eg Alder, Birch, Willow) with a rich herb and fen undergrowth, rooted in stable peat.

Eriophorum – Cotton-Grass.

Fen – General term for minerotrophic mires.

Humification – Degree of decomposition.

Minerotrophic – Used to decribe a mire whose surface receives water from outside that mire's own limits.

Mire – Peat-producing ecosystem which develops in sites of abundant water supply.

Ombrotrophic – Literally 'fed by rain'. Used to describe a mire which receives water directly only from the atmosphere in the form of precipitation.

Ontogeny – Biological or ecological development through time.

Raised Mire – Ombrotrophic mire characterised by a very low amplitude convex profile, and usually occupying topographical situations such as level floodplains of river systems and alluvial deposits of estuaries. The ontogeny of raised mires usually indicates that ombrotrophic plant communities have developed over minerotrophic or aquatic ones, as upward growth of peat has insulated the surface from groundwater influence.

Sphagnum – Bog-moss.

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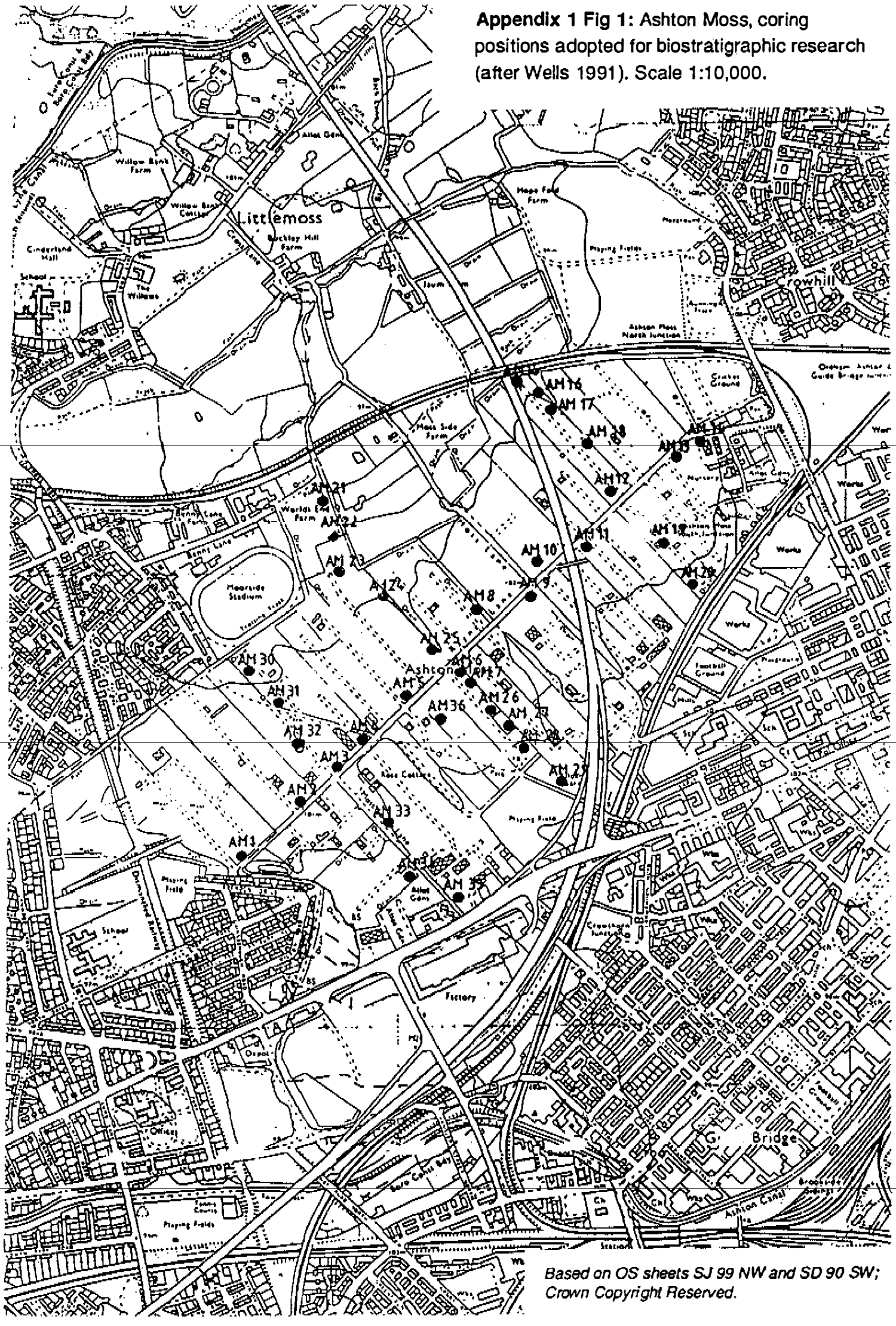
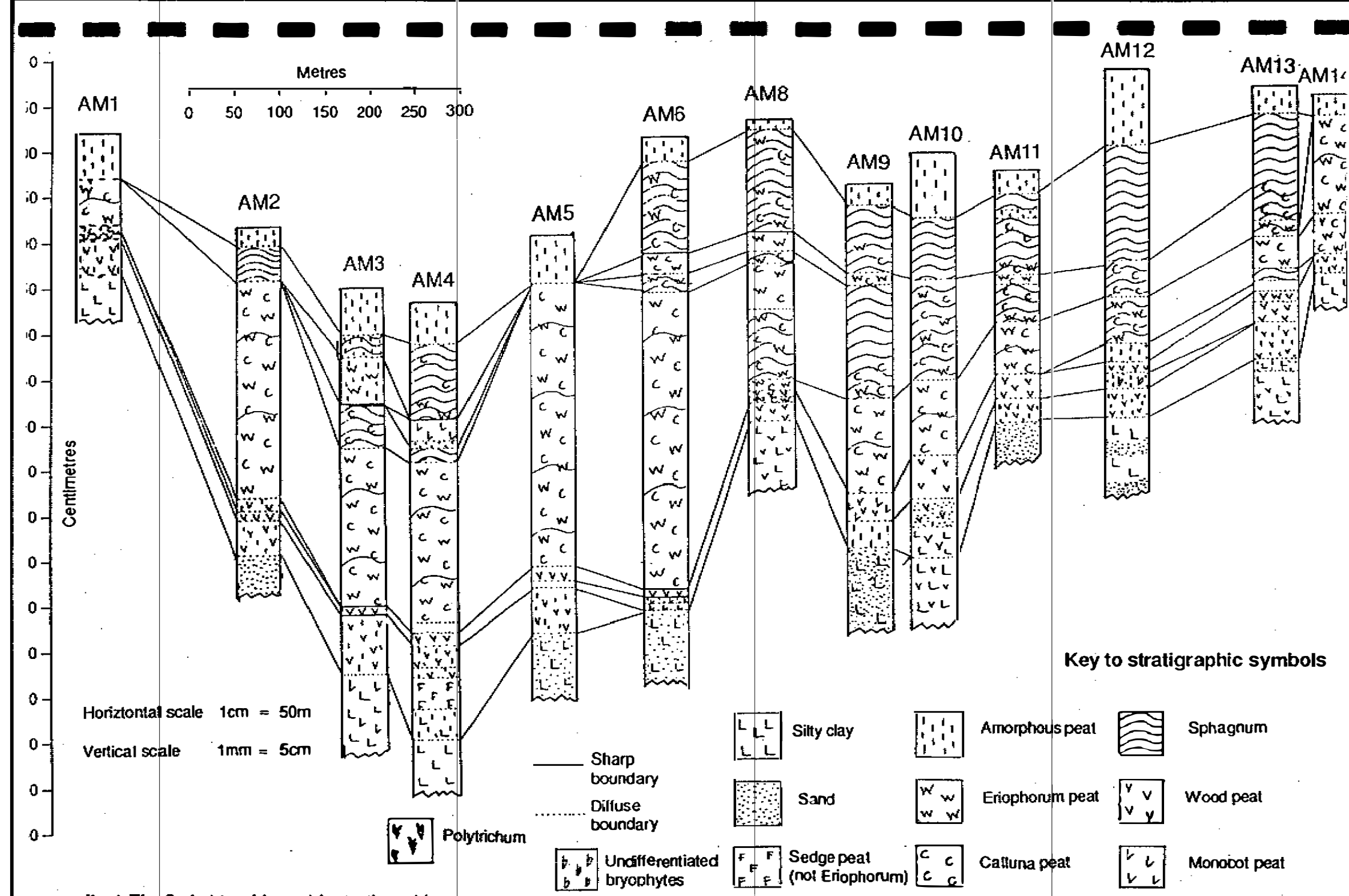
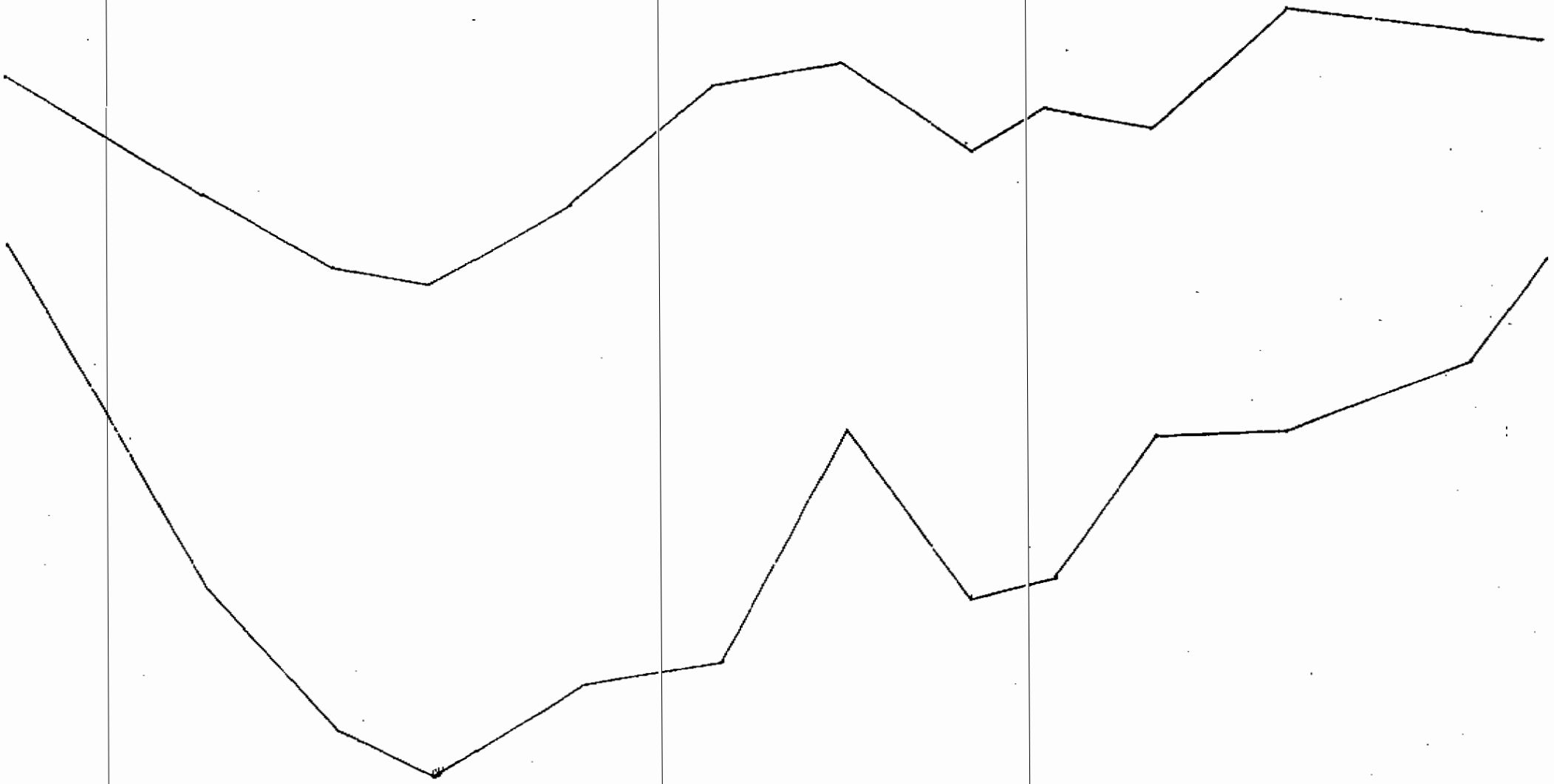


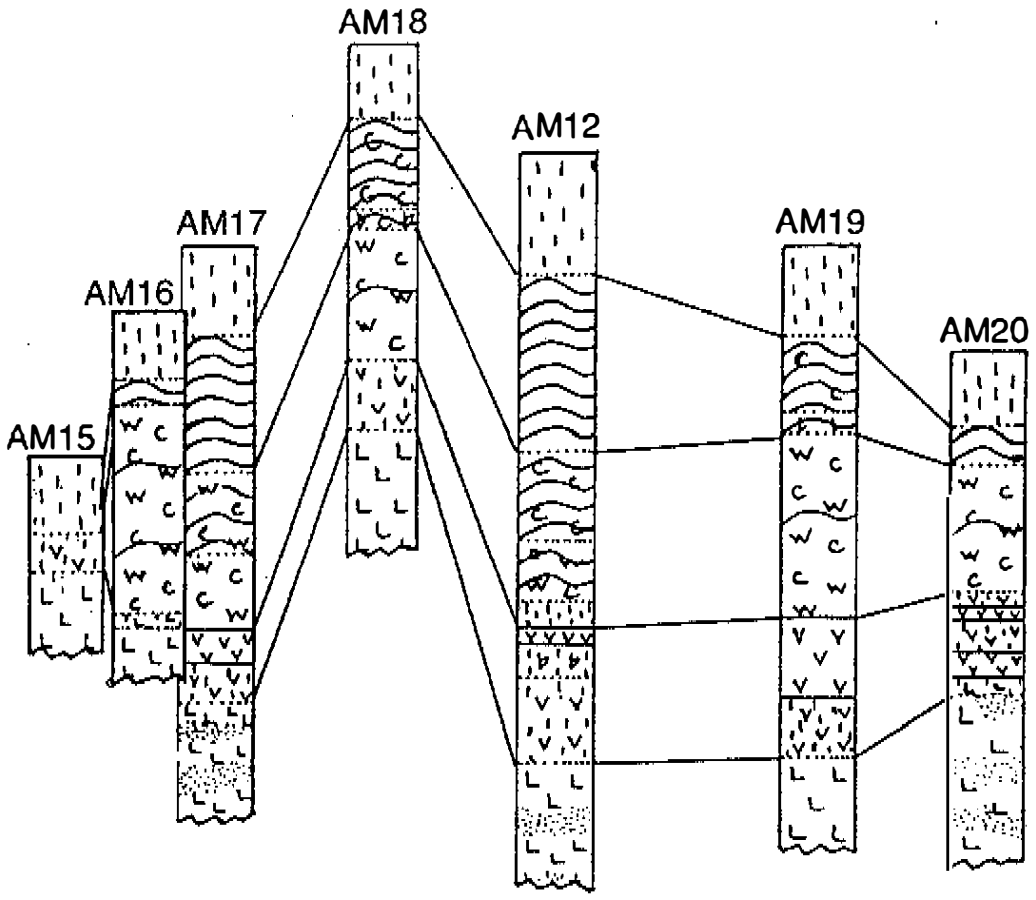
Appendix 1 Fig 1: Ashton Moss, coring positions adopted for biostratigraphic research (after Wells 1991). Scale 1:10,000.



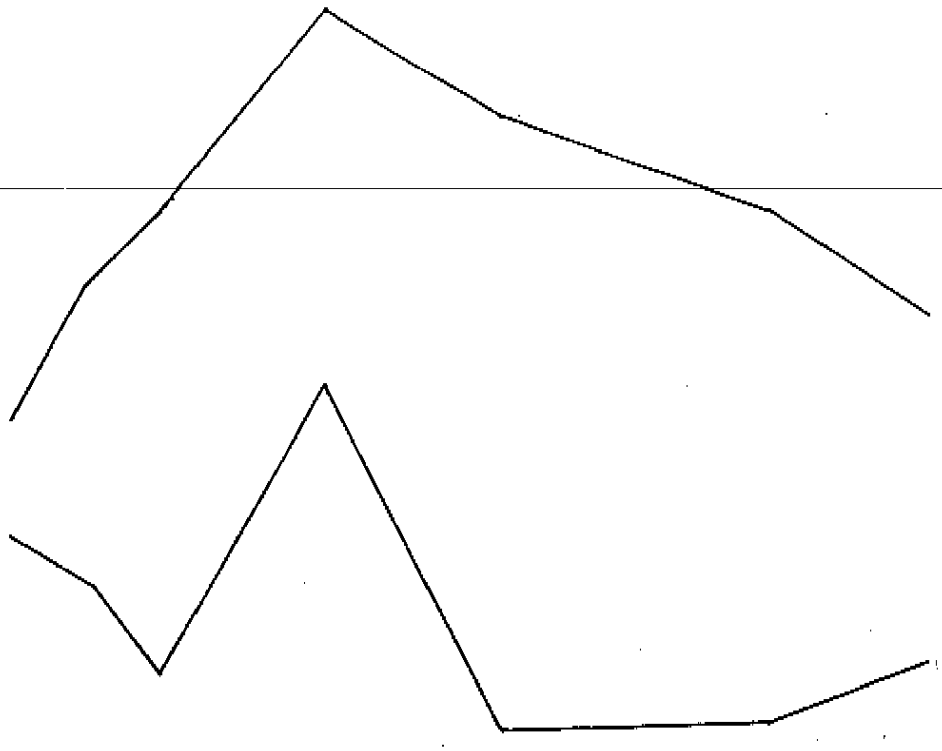
Appendix 1 Fig 2: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'A', longitudinal transect (after Wells 1991).



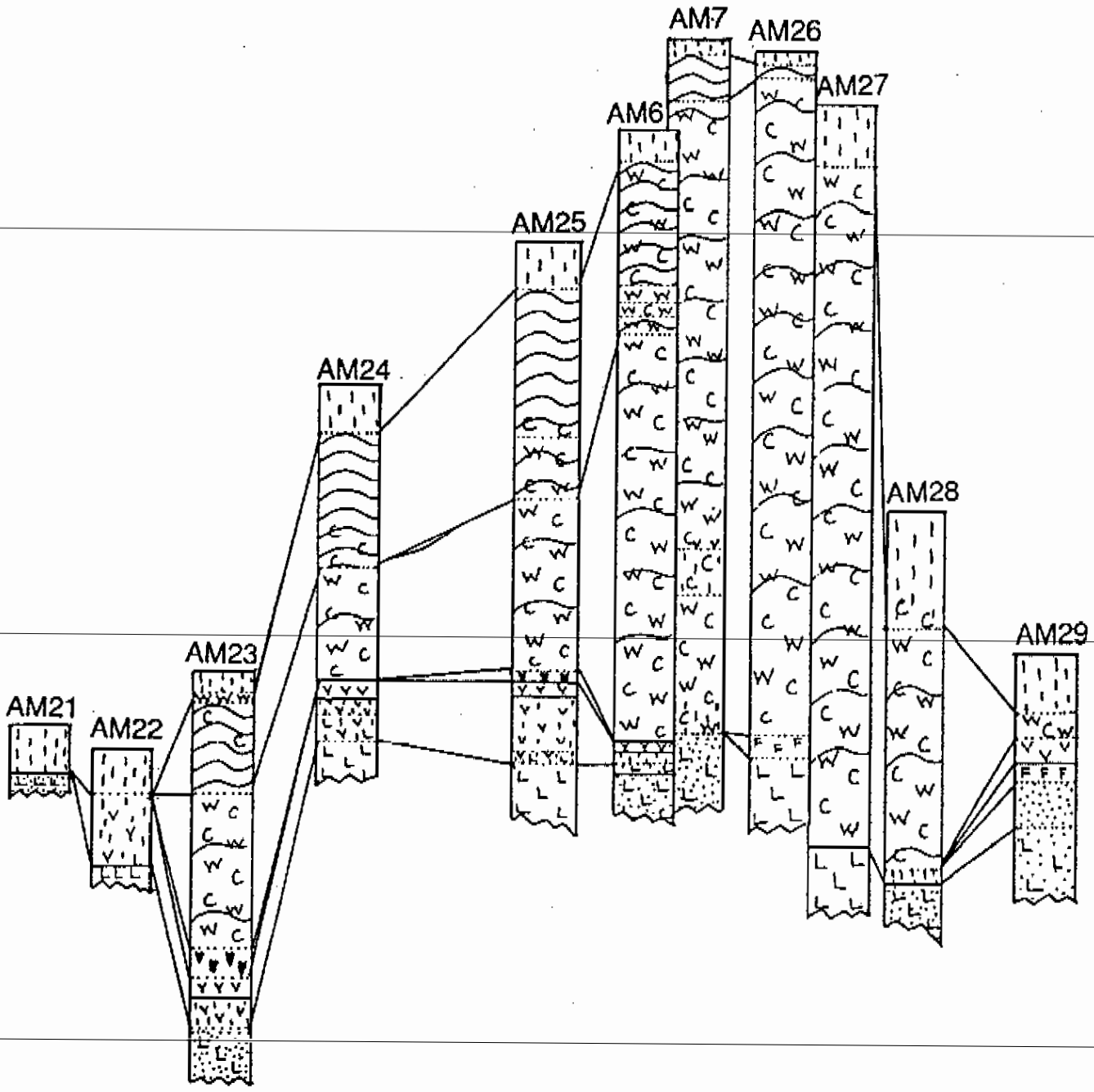
Appendix 1 Fig 3: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'A', longitudinal transect. Peat height/depth profile (after Wells 1991). Scale as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.



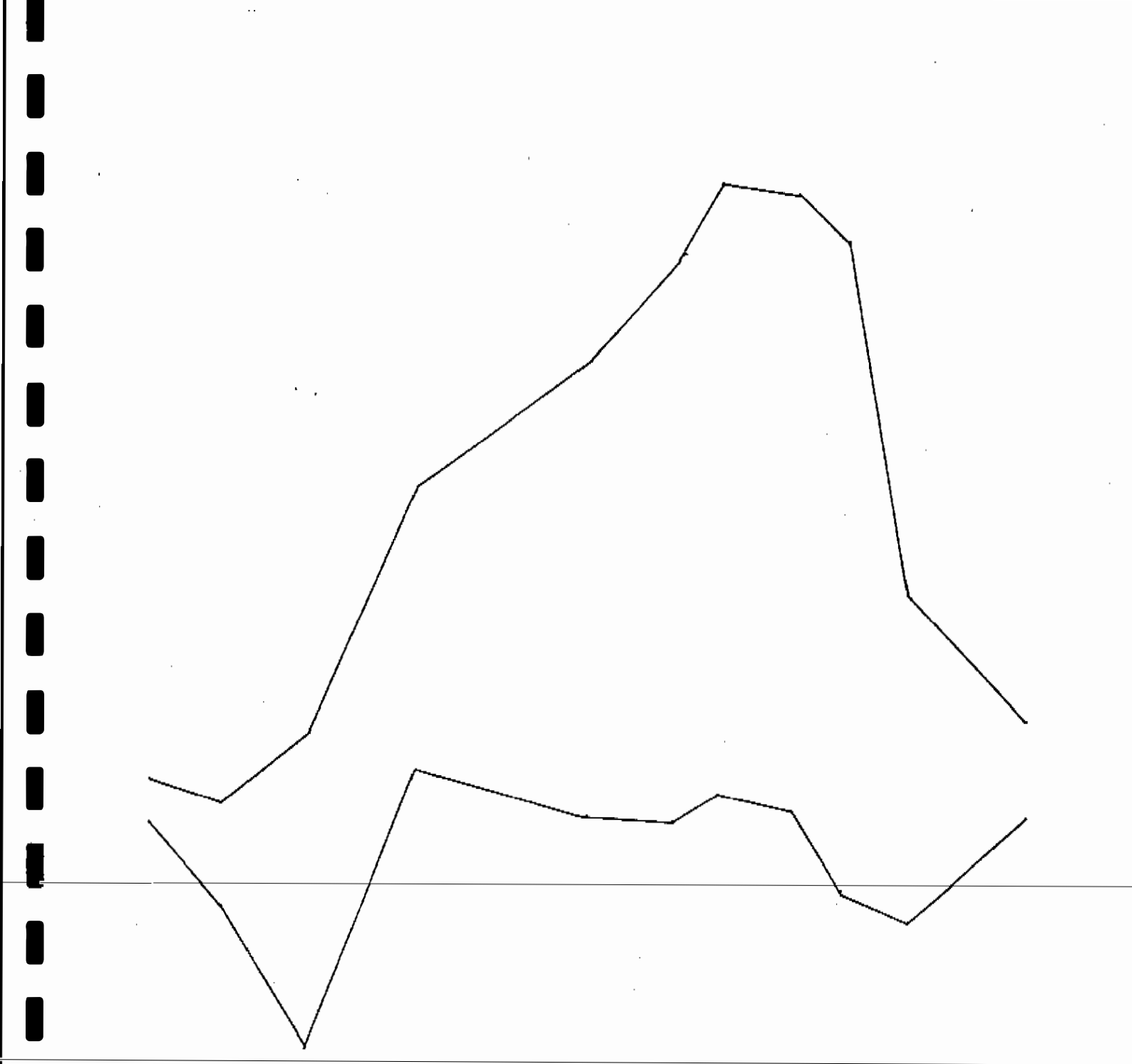
Appendix 1 Fig 4: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'B', north-east transect (after Wells 1991). Scale and key as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.



Appendix 1 Fig 5: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'B', north-east transect. Peat height/depth profile (after Wells 1991). Scale as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.

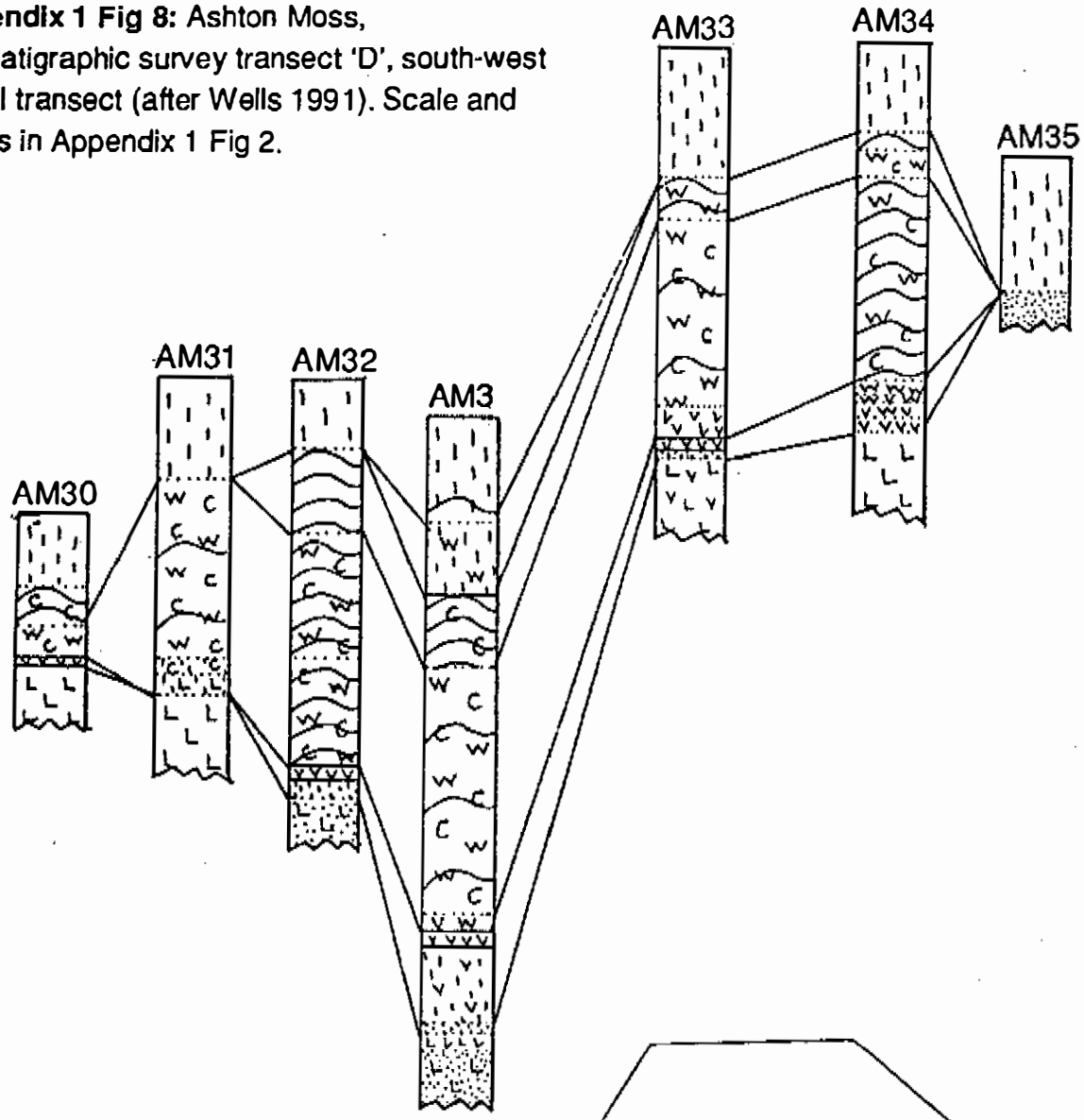


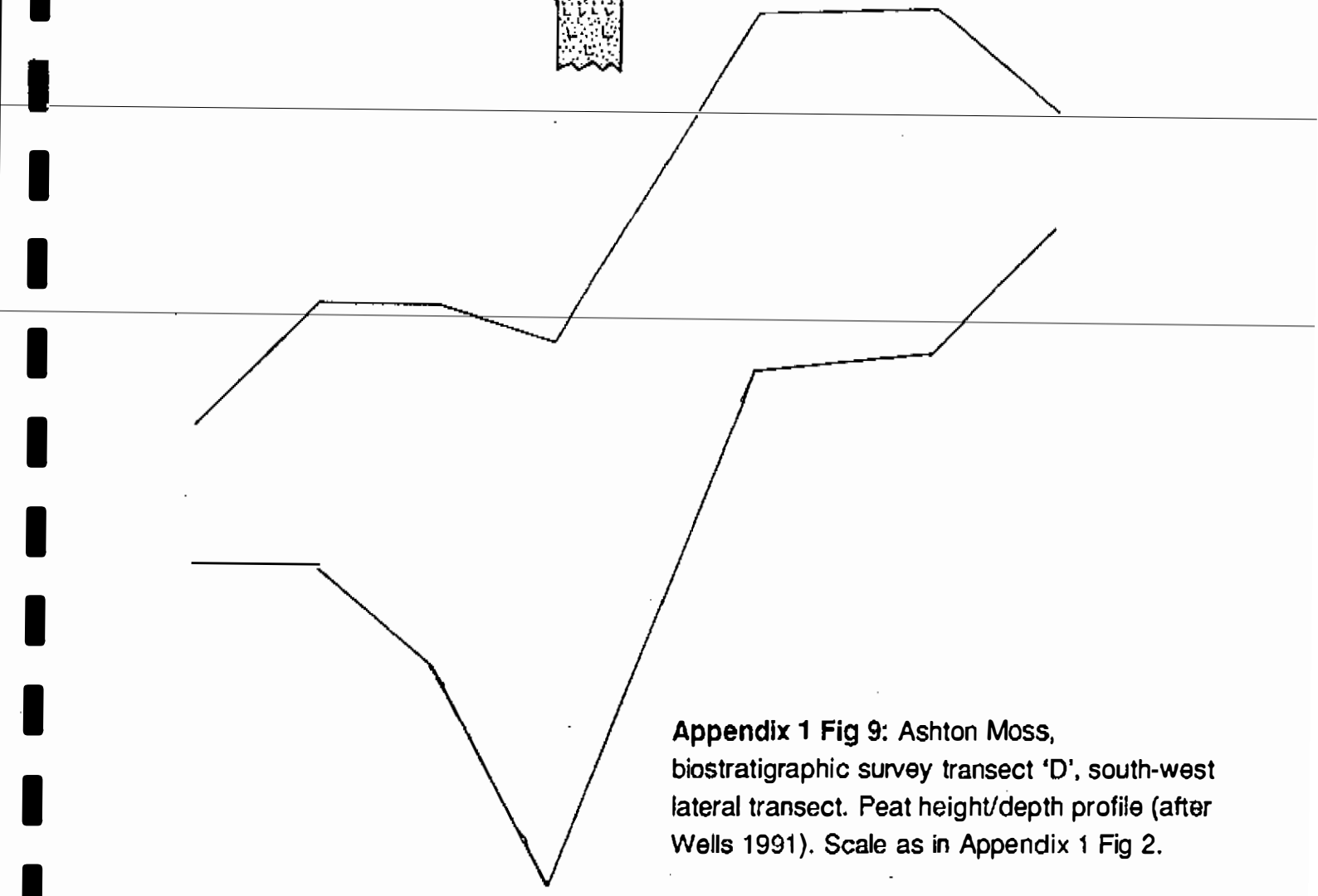
Appendix 1 Fig 6: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'C', middle lateral transect (after Wells 1991). Scale and key as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.



Appendix 1 Fig 7: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'C', middle lateral transect. Peat height/depth profile (after Wells 1991). Scale as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.

Appendix 1 Fig 8: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'D', south-west lateral transect (after Wells 1991). Scale and key as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.





Appendix 1 Fig 9: Ashton Moss, biostratigraphic survey transect 'D', south-west lateral transect. Peat height/depth profile (after Wells 1991). Scale as in Appendix 1 Fig 2.

Appendix 2:

BIOSTRATIGRAPHY AND POLLEN ANALYSIS OF A PEAT PROFILE FROM ASHTON MOSS, TAMESIDE, GREATER MANCHESTER

A Report for Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit

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December 1993

Introduction

The archaeological potential of the lowland mosslands of north-west England has been recognised in the past decade by the establishment of the North West Wetlands Survey (NWWS) in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Lancaster. The survey unit has systematically undertaken a series of biostratigraphical surveys of mosslands throughout the region, concentrating on sites where modern development such as peat extraction, tipping of domestic and industrial refuse and road construction are likely to have a major effect on the nature of the land surface. One such site is Ashton Moss, 125 ha of reclaimed raised mire located in the Tameside Metropolitan Borough of Greater Manchester, west of Ashton-under-Lyne (SJ 920990). Parts of the margins of the mossland have been lost to urban development in recent historical time and most of the moss is presently under market garden cultivation. Future developments on the moss involve the construction of an extension of the M66 motorway in an approximate north-south route across the eastern area by the Department of Transport. Work on the construction of Bridge 17A beneath the Ashton-Manchester Branch line (SJ 923994) commenced in 1992/3 and a 22m long section of peat deposit was exposed at the northern margin of the moss. As a matter of procedure, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit (GMAU) within the University of Manchester was contacted and the site sampled to determine its archaeological potential.

A basic biostratigraphical survey of Ashton Moss was undertaken in 1991 by the NWWS (Wells 1991) and a sound comparative context for the investigation was readily available. From this investigation came the recommendation "that detailed palaeoecological work should be incorporated into any future archaeological research at the site." In addition, the archaeological potential of the moss had been explored in *Tameside Before 1066*, an overview survey of the district undertaken by GMAU (1993). This latter survey had recorded the finds of a human head, most probably a bog burial, on the moss and of Neolithic flint artefacts on the northern margin of the moss in a location in close proximity to the present construction site of Bridge 17A. These finds thus recommended a detailed biostratigraphical analysis of the exposed deposits in an attempt to assess the potential of the site in terms of its environmental archaeology.

Site Investigation and Methods

The site was visited in November 1993, sample profiles cleaned and described in the field according to the methods of Troels-Smith (1955) and Wells (1991), and a complete profile column of 165cm taken back to the laboratory for macrofossil analysis. Details of the lower stratigraphical horizons were derived from consultations with the site engineer. Inorganic deposits were described using Munsell Soil Colour Charts; degree of humification of the peat was estimated using a modified von Post scale (Burton & Hodgson 1987); and the percentage of inorganic material in selected horizons was determined by measurement of loss on ignition of samples at 850°C for one hour. Details of the biostratigraphy are shown in Figures 1 and 2. The nature of the investigation precluded a full

analysis of the microfossil (pollen) stratigraphy but samples for detailed pollen analysis were taken from four horizons with the greatest potential for environmental archaeological interpretation as follows:

143cm and 139cm from inorganic/organic horizons, transitional from the basal silty clay to the overlying organic peat deposits;

110cm and 100cm, in organic peat deposits above and below a narrow silty horizon.

The four samples were subjected to the standard acetolysis preparation procedure as recommended by Faegri & Iversen (1964) and a rapid pollen count of a representative sample of >400 grains (Tallis 1964) was undertaken to allow broad interpretations of vegetation and landscape types (Figure 3). Individual samples were retained for possible radiocarbon dating at a future date.

Stratigraphy

Details of gross stratigraphy are shown in Figures 1 and 2 from which it may be seen that the profile is divisible into three major zones:

1. a zone of mixed organic and inorganic horizons affected by human activities such as cultivation and the tipping of domestic and industrial waste; the truncated nature of the profile would also suggest considerable loss of peat deposits due to the extraction of peat in turbaries;
2. a zone of undisturbed, stratified peat deposits, predominantly organic in nature;
3. a zone of undisturbed, stratified transitional and basal inorganic sediment deposits.

The overall stratigraphy is similar to profiles AM 14, 16 and 30 described by Wells (1991) from marginal areas of Ashton Moss on the east, north and north-west respectively.

The upper zone calls for little comment since its disturbed nature precludes a detailed stratigraphical interpretation of historical land use events. It is worthy of note, however, that horizon *B* is most probably contemporaneous with the construction of access tracks to the railway, completed in the period 1840-50. Horizon *C*, a disturbed organic/inorganic (30%/70%) mixture, is indicative of considerable peat extraction and mossland cultivation prior to the mid-nineteenth century.

The second zone comprises a sequence of undisturbed, stratified organic deposits comprising relatively unhumified *Sphagnum imbricatum/papillosum* peat overlying denser, more humified *Eriophorum/Calluna* peats; these deposits in turn overlie amorphous peats dominated by *Betula* brushwood, the brushwood fragments increasing in frequency with depth. This basic sequence is characteristic of Ashton Moss (Wells 1991) and of the lowland basin mires of north-west England in general (Shimwell 1985). There appears to be one significant difference in the profile from others descibed in the region, namely the presence of a thin and variable, silty horizon (*F*) composed of 80% inorganic material. This horizon varies in thickness from two to eight cm with the thicker deposits apparently accumulating in the hollows of the hummock/hollow surface

typical of most raised mires. The deposits are clearly allochthonous in origin and would suggest some major local or regional climatic or land use event. Discussion of the possible causes of the deposition of this horizon is left to a later section of the report.

The third zone comprises two transitional horizons (*I* and *J*) and a sequence of basal deposits dominated by grey silty clays with the occasional sand lens. The transitional horizons, comprising 73% and 83% inorganic material respectively, are typical of the mineral soils found *in situ* prior to the onset of peat formation, and as such, represent the horizons with the greatest potential for environmental archaeological interpretation. Both horizons were sampled for pollen analysis and the results are discussed in the following section. The underlying sequence of plastic, silty clay materials are typical for the whole of Ashton Moss and also of Type B mosslands of large inland basins developed over boulder clays and other glacial deposits of the lowlands of north-west England (Shimwell 1985). The presence of relatively large quantities of *Betula* (birch) twigs and branch fragments and of the stems and leaves of *Phragmites australis* (reed) in the upper layers of horizon *K* suggests the former existence of an original birch-reed swamp vegetation at the margins of a lake basin.

Pollen Analysis

To aid rapid interpretation the pollen diagram in Figure 3 is divided into three sections: 1. indicates the overall representation of all pollen types categorised as forest, shrub and non-arboreal herbaceous and grass (NAP) species, a presentation designed to suggest the relative proportions of forested and open lanscapes; 2. presents the relative percentages of different forest pollens to enable an interpretation of the nature of the forest canopy; 3. the percentages of various shrub and NAP types expressed as a percentage of total land pollen (TLP) to indicate, *inter alia*, the relative importance of heathland and grassland species. The relative percentages of all types at each of the four horizons are discussed in detail below.

Horizon J:143cm

The percentage of forest pollens is at its highest value (79%) for all the samples analysed. The forest canopy is dominated by *Betula* (birch) with *Alnus* (alder) as an important subsidiary component. Also present are relatively small quantities of the broadleaved species *Quercus* (oak), *Tilia* (lime) and *Ulmus* (elm). The relatively low percentage of NAP (14%) suggests closed woodland conditions, but the presence of small quantities of *Cerealia* (cereal) and weed species such as *Plantago* (plantain) indicates some clearance for agriculture.

Horizon I: 139cm

The forest pollen percentage falls to 70%, the shrub pollen doubles to 15% and the NAP value remains more or less constant. *Betula* remains the dominant tree in the canopy but there is a marked increase in *Quercus* (14%) and *Ulmus* (6%) at the expense of *Alnus* (11%) and *Betula* (67%). Shrub pollen (Coryloid) increases to 15%, through the invasion of *Corylus* (hazel), either due to natural climatic change or to the gradual closure of the forest canopy following the

abandonment of agricuture. This latter reason is suggested by the decline in *Gramineae* (grass) pollen and the absence of cereal and weed pollen.

Horizon G: 110cm
The forest pollen percentage falls to 44% with concomitant rises in shrub (30%) and NAP (26%) indicating much more open landscapes in the catchment. The canopy becomes typical of a mixed broadleaved forest with *Quercus*, *Betula* and *Alnus* in approximately equal proportions and *Tilia* present in relatively small quantities. Coryloid pollen rises to 30%, *Ericaceae* (heath) to 17% and there is a record for a single cereal pollen grain.

Horizon E: 100cm
The forest pollen percentage falls to 37% while the percentage of grass and herbaceous NAP rises to 45% due to the increase in the representation of *Gramineae* and *Ericaceae* to 19% and 13% respectively. The forest canopy is again dominated by *Betula* (46%) and *Alnus* (28%) with *Quercus* (15%) and *Ulmus* (11%) as subsidiaries. *Tilia* is absent. The presence of relatively high TLP values for *Cerealia* and weed pollen is a clear indication of local agriculture.

Discussion

The biostratigraphy of the truncated profile indicates two main features of interest:
a. that the development of vegetation at the margins of Ashton Moss did not follow the typical pattern of hydroseral succession from reedswamp through fen-carr to raised mire (Birks 1965a, Shimwell 1985); the biostratigraphical research of Wells (1991) also suggests that such development did not occur in any part of the moss;
b. that there are at least two significant horizons of value in providing information on the environmental archaeology of the area, namely, the transitional horizons (*I* and *J*) between the underlying silty clays and the overlying brushwood peats, and the silty horizon (*F*), sandwiched between two layers of *Eriophorum/Calluna* peat.
The pollen analyses enable a partial and tentative interpretation of the significance of these features.

Based upon biostratigraphic records, Shimwell (1985) recognises two major phases for the initiation of mire formation in the mosslands of large inland basins of north-west England. Type B1 mires, exemplified by Red Moss (Hibbert *et al.* 1971) and parts of Chat Moss (Birks 1965a), began to develop in the Late Devensian (late-glacial) period at around 11000 yrs bp and show the typical sequence of reedswamp/fen-carr/raised mire deposits. Type B2 mires, exemplified by more marginal areas of Chat Moss, Holcroft Moss and Lindow Moss (Birks 1965b), began to develop in the Atlantic phase of the Flandrian (post-glacial) period at around 6500 yrs bp, commencing with the formation of brushwood peats, typical of fen-carr, and passing through more humified *Eriophorum/Calluna* peats to ombrotrophic *Sphagnum* peats of raised mire origin. From the stratigraphic records of Wells (1991), it is clear that Ashton

Moss is a mire of the Type B2 category and that formation began in the deeper basins of the east-central area of the present mossland. From the basins, the mire then began to spread laterally during the late-Atlantic period at around 5200 yrs bp. The biostratigraphy of the profile under consideration suggests that the basal brushwood peat (horizon *H*) began to form at this date and that the underlying horizons (*I* and *J*) date from the period around 5500 yrs bp, the late Mesolithic/ early Neolithic period.

The pollen analyses from horizons *I* and *J* (139cm and 143cm) also indicate a similar date from the Atlantic phase. The relative paucity of *Ulmus* pollen and the presence of cereal and weed pollen in small quantities at 143cm suggests local Neolithic clearance of a forest canopy dominated by *Betula* and *Alnus*. In contrast, the increase in *Ulmus* and the absence of cereal and weed pollens at 139 cm indicates cessation of local occupation and a regrowth of a modified forest canopy in which *Quercus* assumes greater importance. The rise in the percentage of Coryloid pollen would suggest the growth of scrub at the margins of open occupation sites and closed forest. The pollen evidence is, however, quite slender and a clear and precise date for these horizons could only be obtained from a radiocarbon date of the basal brushwood peat horizon.

The second significant horizon is the thin and variable layer of silt at 101/103 (109)cm, some 36/44 cm above the the basal silty clays. This layer was not described by Wells (1991) in any of the stratigraphic profiles taken from the moss. It is possible that, because of the necessarily rapid and coarse nature of this investigation, such a narrow and variable horizon was not detected. Alternatively, the horizon may simply be a local phenomenon specific to the northern margins of the moss; but then, it should have been detected in Wells' samples AM 15-17 which were located in much the same area as the present profile. Only a detailed stratigraphical survey of the moss will show whether it is an horizon typical of the moss in general. Whether or not it is an horizon of general significance, its origin and importance in an environmental context still merits debate.

Several theories of origin, invoking a variety of climatic and land use changes at broad regional or local scale are worthy of consideration. Firstly, the horizon may be composed of tephra or volcanic dust, deposited on many mire surfaces in Scotland after the Icelandic Hekla 4 eruption, dated at c. 4000 yrs bp (Dugmore 1989). Such an horizon has recently been proven from a mire in north west Lancashire (Wells *pers comm*). Only detailed geochemical analysis of the Ashton horizon will enable the identification of a tephra layer. Secondly, the horizon may represent a phase of flooding of the mire surface due to a broad regional or local climatic or land use change. Tooley (1985) recognises marine trangressions for the coastal plain of Lancashire during the Flandrian period; these transgressions may have resulted in a general raising of the water table in more inland areas, especially those in the catchments of the tributaries of the major rivers, such as the River Mersey. Tallis (1985) provides evidence for the headward extension of streams into the peat blanket of the southern Pennines at c. 2800 yrs bp, indicating the onset of a major initial phase of erosion; such a phase may have had a manifestation in the rise in the water table and increased

sediment deposition in the catchments of the tributaries of the Mersey. Finally, a major phase of local agricultural reclamation, involving alteration of drainage patterns at the northern margins of Ashton Moss may have resulted in flooding and sediment deposition over part of the moss.

Whatever the cause of the deposition of horizon *F*, the pollen analyses of samples taken immediately above and below the silt layer (100 cm and 110 cm) indicate a transition from a landscape with scant evidence of extensive grassland vegetation and agriculture to one with clear indications of forest clearance and a local agricultural landscape. Below the silt horizon, the pollen representation indicates the existence of a scrubby *Quercus/Betula/Alnus/Corylus* forest with a relatively low percentage of grass pollen (5%) and a single cereal grain. Above the horizon, the percentage of forest pollens falls to 37%, *Corylus* from 30% to 18% and NAP values increase from 26% to 45%; *Tilia* disappears from the forest canopy, grass pollen increases from 5% to 19% and both cereal and weed pollens are well represented.

The dating of the horizon is rather problematical because of the lack of a full profile pollen analysis and radiocarbon dates. If any credence can be given to the absence of the pollen of *Tilia*, then the horizon may be tentatively dated to the time of the Lime Decline at the Sub-Boreal/Sub-Atlantic transition at c. 2800-2500 yrs bp. This suggestion is not borne out by the fact that the percentage representation of forest pollen is still high at 37%, when typical percentages for this transition period are regarded as being between 5% and 15%. Additional conflicting evidence may be derived from the biostratigraphy. It is generally agreed that the change from the formation of humified, compacted *Eriophorum/Calluna* peat to relatively unhumified, uncompacted peat in both the Pennine uplands (Tallis 1985) and the north-west lowlands (Birks 1965a,b) took place around 2800 yrs bp. Yet in the Ashton profile, this transition is to be seen at 85cm, some 15cm above silt horizon *F*. On the basis of an accumulation rate of the *Eriophorum/Calluna* peat of 2cm per 100 years, the 15cm of such peat above the silt layer represents approximately 700 years growth. By derivation, the silt layer was most probably formed at c. 3500 yrs bp, in the early Bronze Age.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From a partial pollen analysis of a single marginal profile and the general stratigraphical survey of Wells (1991) it would be unrealistic to do more than pose questions concerning the vegetational history of Ashton Moss. These preliminary studies, however, do provide strong indications that the moss is a Type B2 mire, originating at c. 6500 yrs bp, with considerable environmental archaeological potential suggested in two horizons. Speculation as to the dating of these horizons from the pollen record alone should be confirmed by a series of radiocarbon dates. The possibility of an extensive tephra deposit should be examined by further detailed stratigraphical research over the whole area of the

moss and the unusual features of the vegetation cover above this horizon should be confirmed by further pollen analyses.

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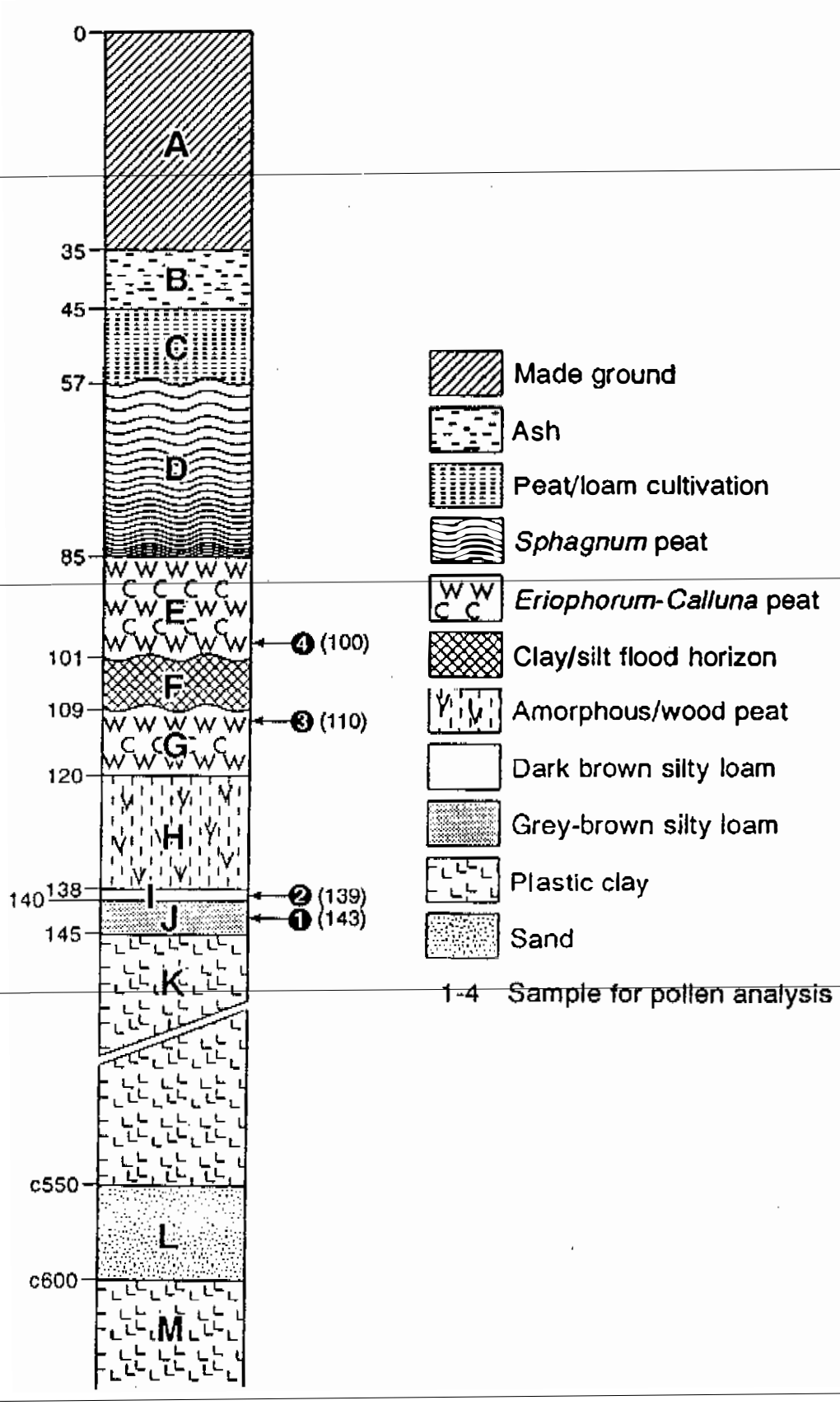
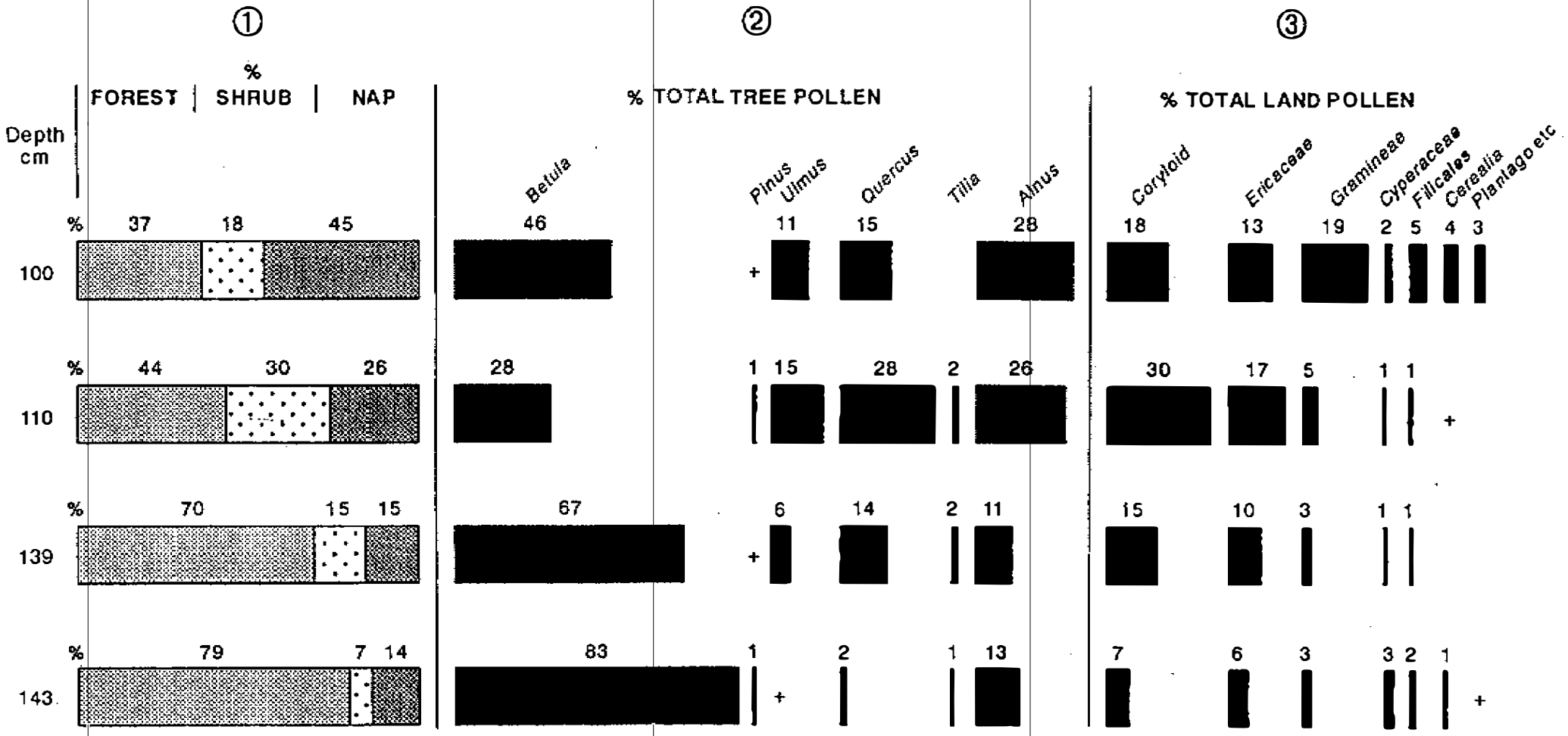
Appendix 2 Fig 1: Ashton Moss, Bridge 17A: Stratigraphical record

Depth (cm)	*Horizon*	*Description*
0-35	*A*	Landfill overburden with industrial and domestic waste.
35-45	*B*	Orange-red (2.5 YR 5/6)[1] ash horizon, possibly contemporaneous with railway construction c. 1840-50.
45-57	*C*	Disturbed horizon of former cultivation with domestic refuse and coal fragments (H 10[2], 70% inorganic material)[3].
57-85	*D*	*Sphagnum imbricatum/papillosum* peat, increasing in humification from H 3 to H 6 in lower 15 cm.
85-101	*E*	*Eriophorum vaginatum/Calluna vulgaris* peat (H 6/7).
101-103(109)	*F*	Undulating, variable grey/brown (5 YR 2/1, 80% inorganic material) silt layer, suggesting possible local or regional flood event.
(103)109-120	*G*	*Eriophorum vaginatum/Calluna vulgaris* peat (H6/7).
120-138	*H*	Amorphous peat (H8) with *Betula* brushwood, increasing in frequency with depth.
138-140	*I*	Dark brown silty loam (10 YR 3/2, 73% inorganic material) with lighter brown fine to medium crumbs (10 YR 3/3).
140-145	*J*	Grey brown silty loam (10 YR 3/3, 83% inorganic material) with fine crumb structure.
140-c.550)	*K*	Plastic, grey silty-clay (10 YR 4/1, 92% inorganic material) with organic remains of *Phragmites australis*, *Betula* wood and occasional black, carbonaceous fragments.
c.550-600[4]	*L*	Fine sand (no details).
c.600+	*M*	Firm grey clay (no details).

1. Colour details derived from standard Munsell Soil Colour Charts.
2. Humification assessed according to the method of Burton & Hodgson (1987).
3. Calculated by determination of organic material by % loss on ignition for one hour at 850°C.
4. Information from site engineer.

Appendix 2 Fig 2: Ashton Moss, Bridge 17A: Stratigraphic profile





Appendix 2 Fig 3: Ashton Moss, Bridge 17A: Pollen analysis of potential archaeological horizons