

**LITTLE PAXTON
QUARRY,
DIDDINGTON,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
FIELD 6 (NORTH)
FIELDWALKING 1999**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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by
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LITTLE PAXTON QUARRY, DIDDINGTON, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Field 6 (North) Fieldwalking 1999

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1.0: SUMMARY

This report describes the results of the fieldwalking of an area of approximately 3ha. (Field 6 (North)) at Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington, Cambridgeshire. The fieldwalking collection almost exclusively comprised flint. A total of 54 flint flakes, 10 cores and 2 scrapers was recovered, together with some post-medieval pottery. Compared to the collections found by fieldwalking in other adjacent areas of the quarry, the overall quantity of flint was small. Few clear trends in the distribution of the flint may be suggested.

2.0: INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of the fieldwalking of an area of approximately 3ha., comprising the northern half of Field 6 within the Phase 3 area (centred on NGR TL. 20456595, Figs. 1-2) at Little Paxton Quarry, Diddington, Cambridgeshire. The fieldwalking was undertaken by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of Bardon Aggregates Limited. The methodology adopted follows a specification prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 1999), approved by the Archaeology Office of Cambridgeshire County Council.

The aims of the fieldwalking were to attempt to define the extent of settlement and activity within the area examined, based on relative artifact density on the ploughsoil surface, and to date this activity from analysis of the artifact assemblages. Of particular interest was the identification of evidence for Bronze Age and earlier activity. The information contributed by fieldwalking was intended to assist in the formulation of a strategy for subsequent evaluation.

This fieldwork forms part of a large-scale archaeological project, begun in 1992, which aims to provide a landscape-based analysis of changes in settlement forms and agriculture within the quarry concession, and to relate these changes to the evolving river-valley environment.

The fieldwalking forms the latest stage in the examination of the Phase 3 area. Previous stages of evaluation have involved the fieldwalking of the entire Field 5 area ((Bevan 1998a) and the southern half of Field 6 (Bevan 1998b). In each case the fieldwalking was followed by trial-trenching (Dingwall and Jones 1998, Cutler and Jones 1999). The subsequent mitigation strategy involved salvage recording and archaeological watching briefs in Fields 5 and 6 (South), and two small-scale area excavations in Field 6 (South).

No previous fieldwork has been undertaken in the Field 6 (North) area. The largest discrete cropmarked feature within the area fieldwalked comprises a rectilinear

cropmarked enclosure. Other cropmarked features within the area comprise possible pit groups and irregular, possible field-boundaries.

3.0: METHODOLOGY (Fig. 3)

Following ploughing and weathering of the field surface, the area was walked, with collection of all artifacts by a team walking at approximately 5m intervals. At the time of inspection the field had not been harrowed. Collection was restricted by the high incidence of natural flint pebbles occurring in the soil as observed on previous occasions. However, it was apparent from the beginning of the exercise that very few fragments of struck flint (which tended to be of a darker grey colour than the unworked flint which was of a generally lighter brown colour with a coarser 'cherty' appearance) were present on the surface of the ploughsoil. The flint was collected in 25m squares, following the National Grid. The squares were given a unique number and letter designation. Some of the 25m square collection units adjoining the boundaries of the area walked could not be completely examined.

4.0: RESULTS

Flint (Figs. 4-8)

The flint assemblage comprised 72 items of humanly-struck flint, the majority of which (54 items) consisted of unretouched flakes. Five cores and a further five small fragments from cores were identified in the collection, as well as two scrapers and six retouched flakes. The flint and other finds are summarised by grid square below.

TABLE 1: The finds

<i>grid square</i>	<i>flake</i>	<i>core</i>	<i>scraper</i>	<i>other retouched</i>	<i>flint totals</i>	<i>other finds</i>
A1	3	3			6	
A2		1		1	2	
A3	2				2	
B1	2	1			3	tile x 1
B2	1				1	
B4	3				3	
C1	3	1	1		5	
C2	1				1	
C3	1				1	tile x 2, p-med pot x 1
C4						tile x 2.
C5						tile x 1, plough-share frag.
D1	5	1			6	
D2	3	2			5	
D3	2	1		1	4	brick frag, tile x 2, p-med pot x 1.
D4	1				1	
D5	3				3	tile x 2.
D6	2			1	3	tile x 2
E1						tile x 1.
E2	2				2	
E4			1		1	
E5						tile x 5.
E7	1				1	
F1	2				2	
F2	1				1	
F3	1				1	
F4	1				1	Gallo-Belgic platter frag.
F5	4				4	
F7	1				1	p-med pot x 2, tile x 1.
F8	1				1	plough-share frag.
G3	2				2	
G4						tile x 1.
G6	1			1	2	tile x 2.
G8	3				3	
H5	1			1	2	tile x 1.
H6				1	1	?med pot x 1, tile x 1.
I8	1				1	
	54	10	2	6	72	

Other finds (not illustrated)

Of particular interest in the collection was a fragment from a Gallo-Belgic platter (identified by Annette Hancocks) from square F4. In addition, one fragment of possible medieval pottery and five fragments of post-medieval pottery, a brick fragment and a total of 24 small fragments of tile, none of which was diagnostically datable, were recovered. Two fragments from a plough-share were also recovered.

5.0: DISCUSSION

None of the flint was chronologically-diagnostic, although a generally Neolithic to Bronze Age date appears most likely based upon scraper morphology and the broad flake (rather than narrow blade) detachments visible on the cores. The flint used was of a better quality than the unworked flint also present in the ploughsoil, although, when present, remnant cortex revealed a common pebble origin, local river gravels being the most logical source. While this small collection attests to flint-working during prehistory, and the scrapers provide some evidence for settlement, the low density of flint recovered and the absence of artifactual or debitage 'clustering' within the grid squares suggest low-level, episodic usage of the landscape rather than settlement of long duration.

Overall, the flint distribution was relatively even. A possible concentration of material was recorded towards the southwestern corner of the area walked. The distribution of flint flakes was fairly even. Retouched items were mainly found towards the northern part of the area fieldwalked, while cores were concentrated towards the southwest. Admittedly, the quantities of both retouched items and cores was relatively small, and their distributions may have little meaning.

The single Gallo-Belgic platter fragment was not found near any identified cropmarked features, and the significance of this item is presently unknown.

The post-Roman finds probably derive from manuring scatters.

6.0: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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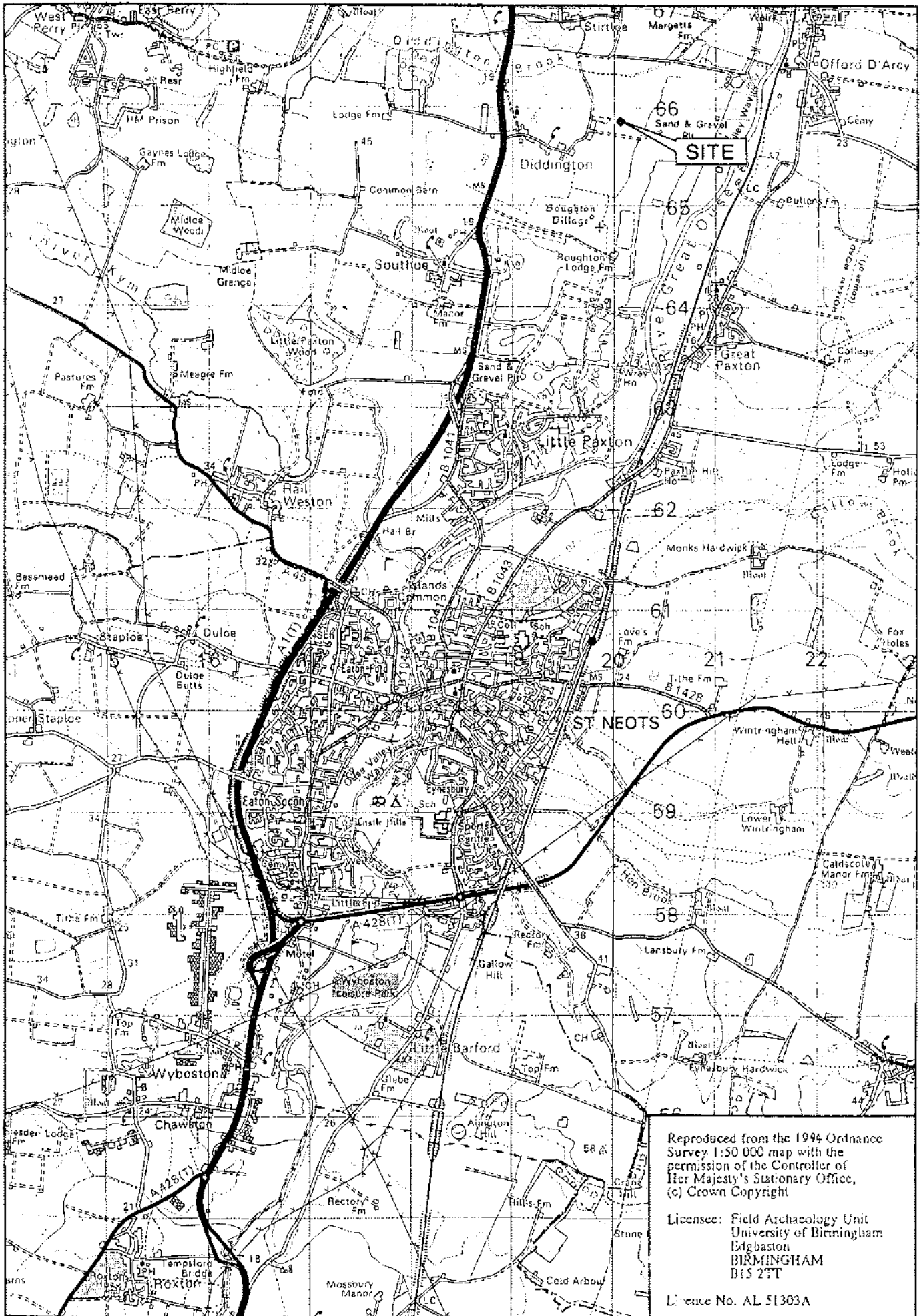


Fig. 1

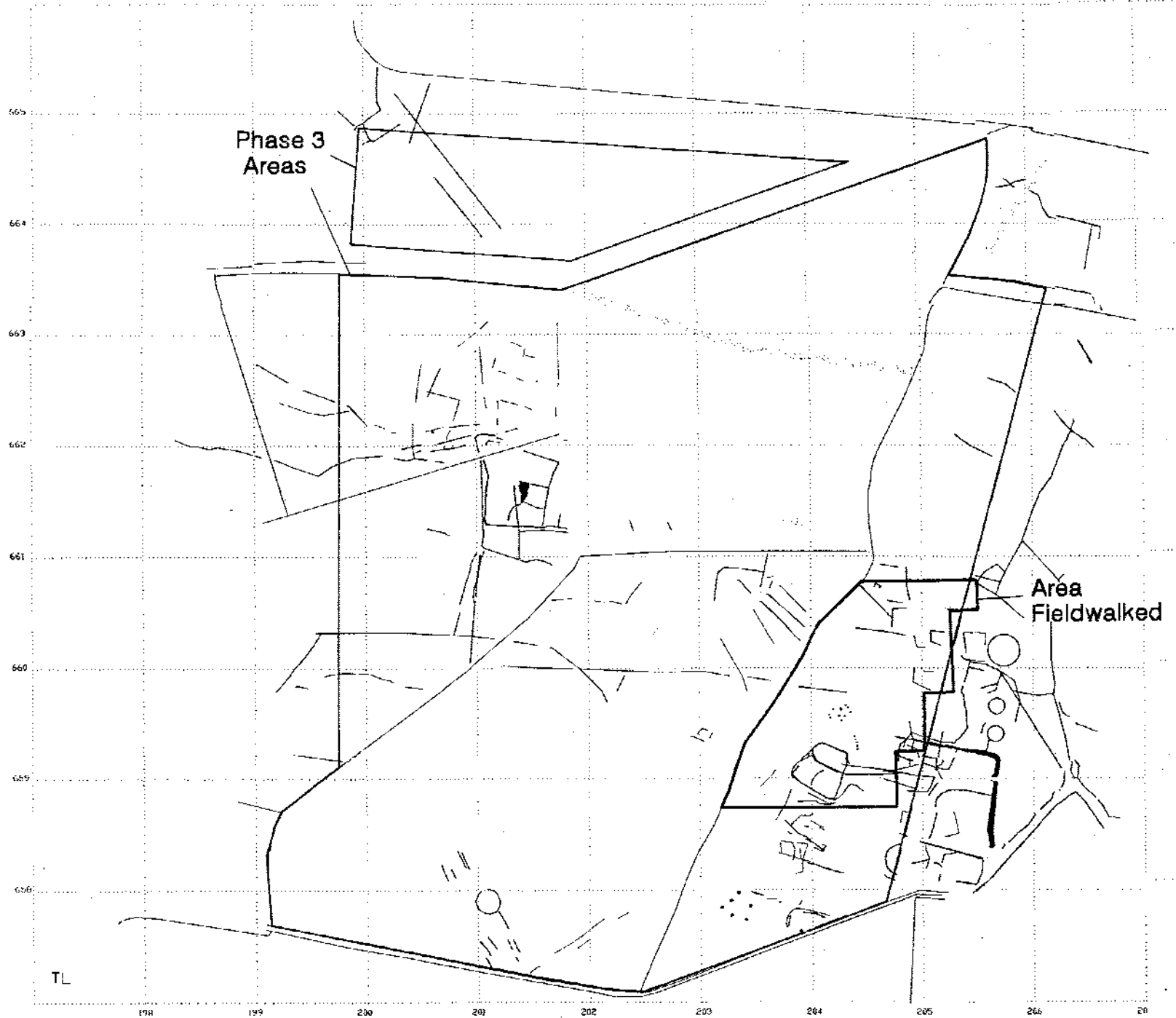


Fig. 2

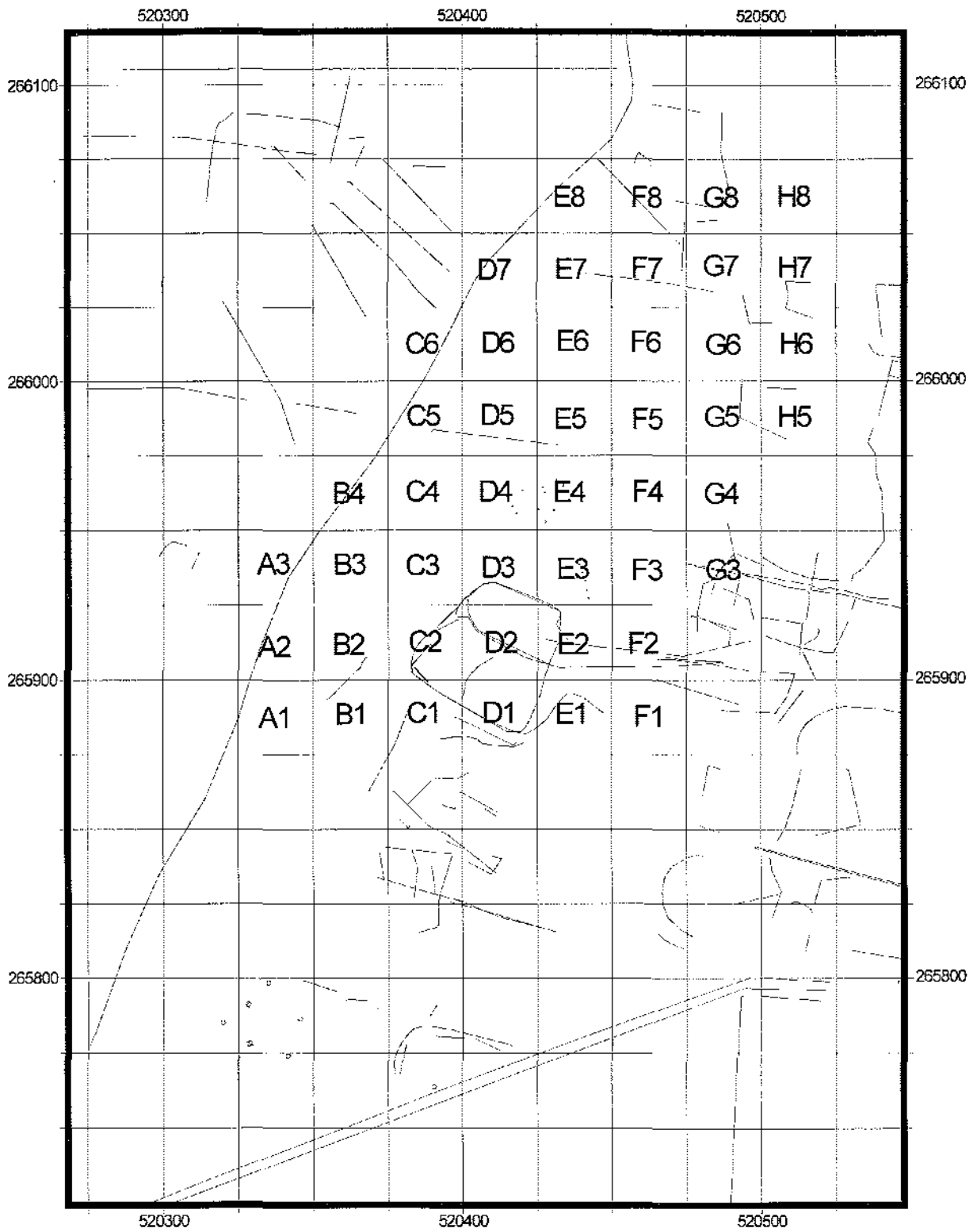


Fig. 3

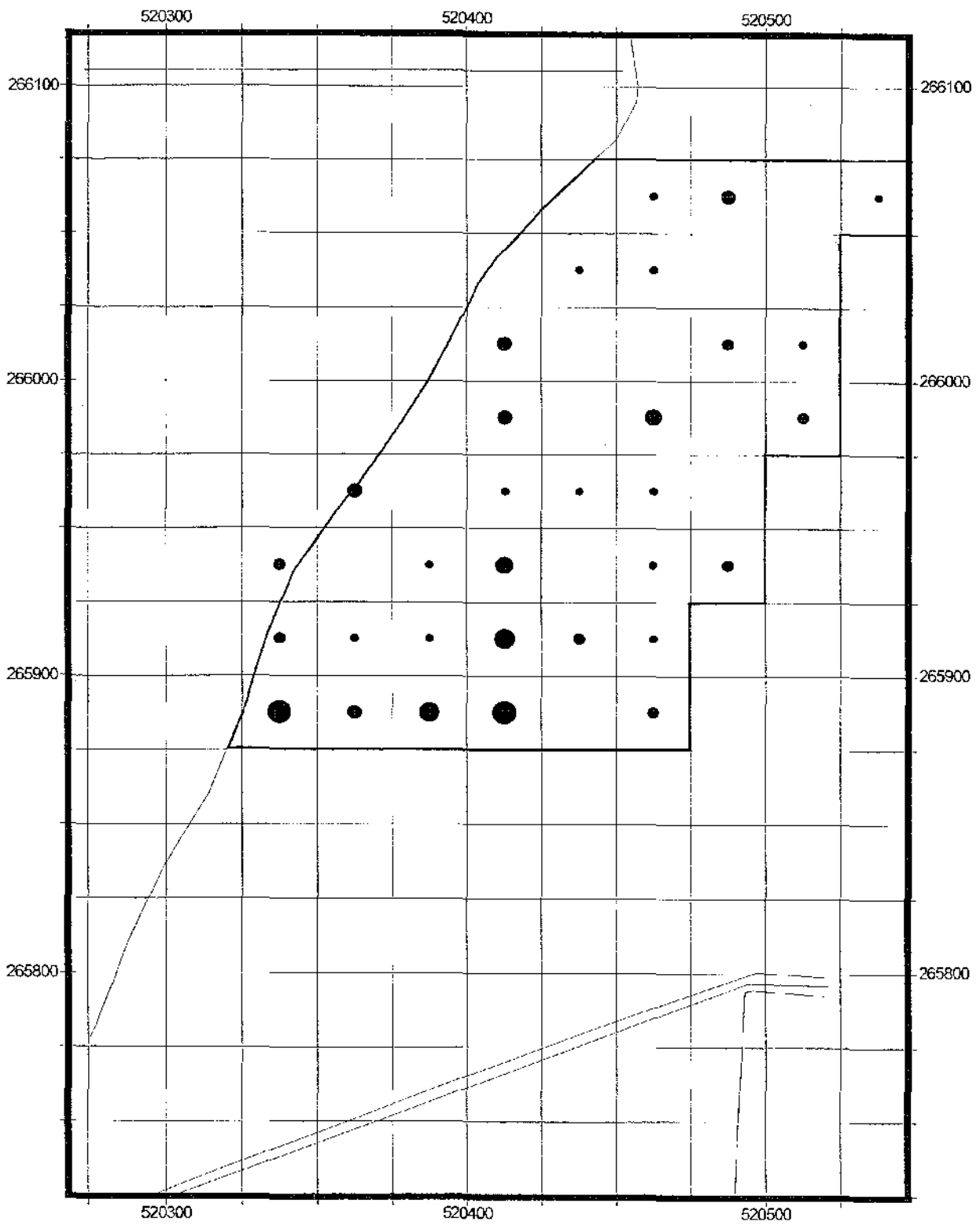


Fig. 4

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

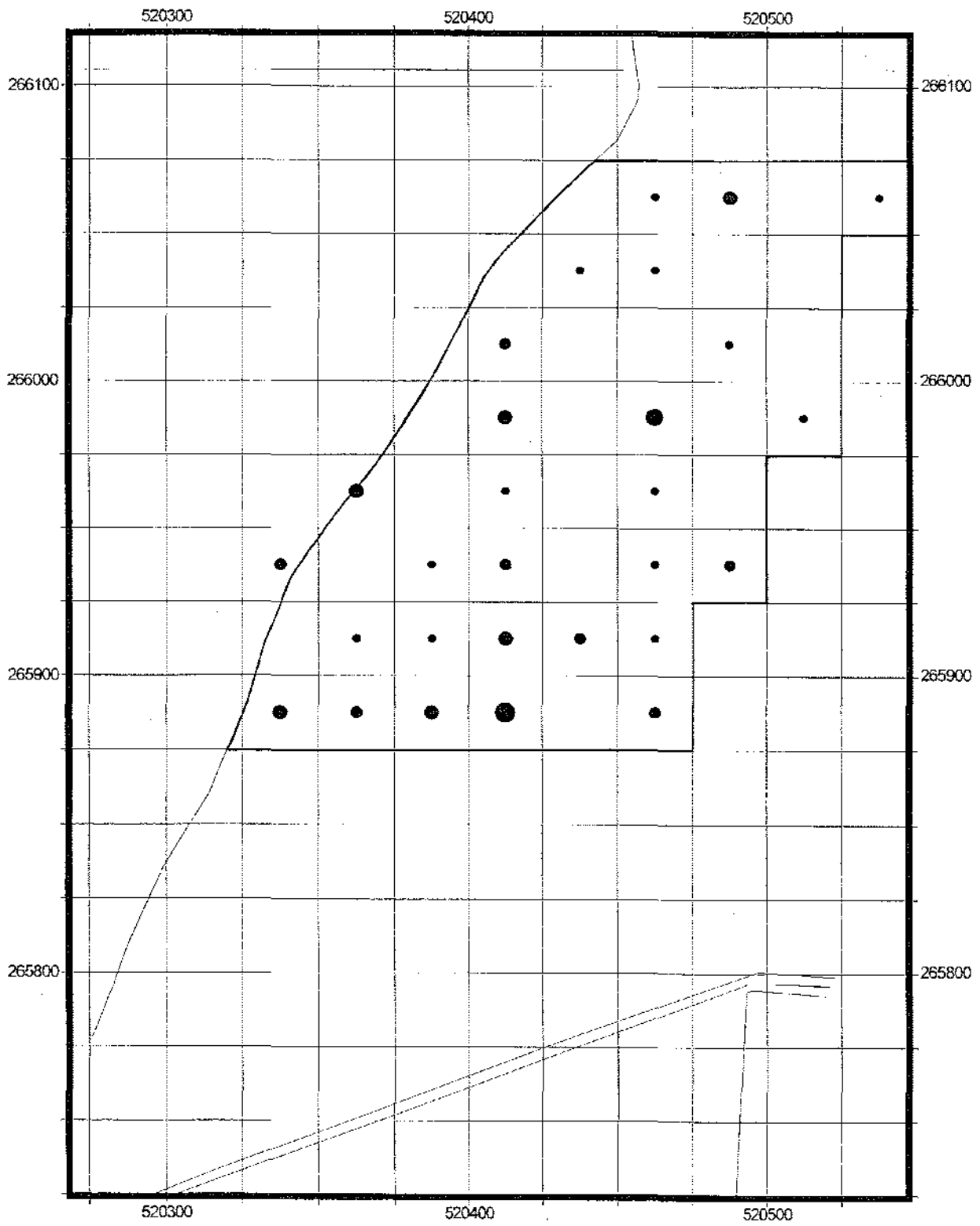


Fig. 5

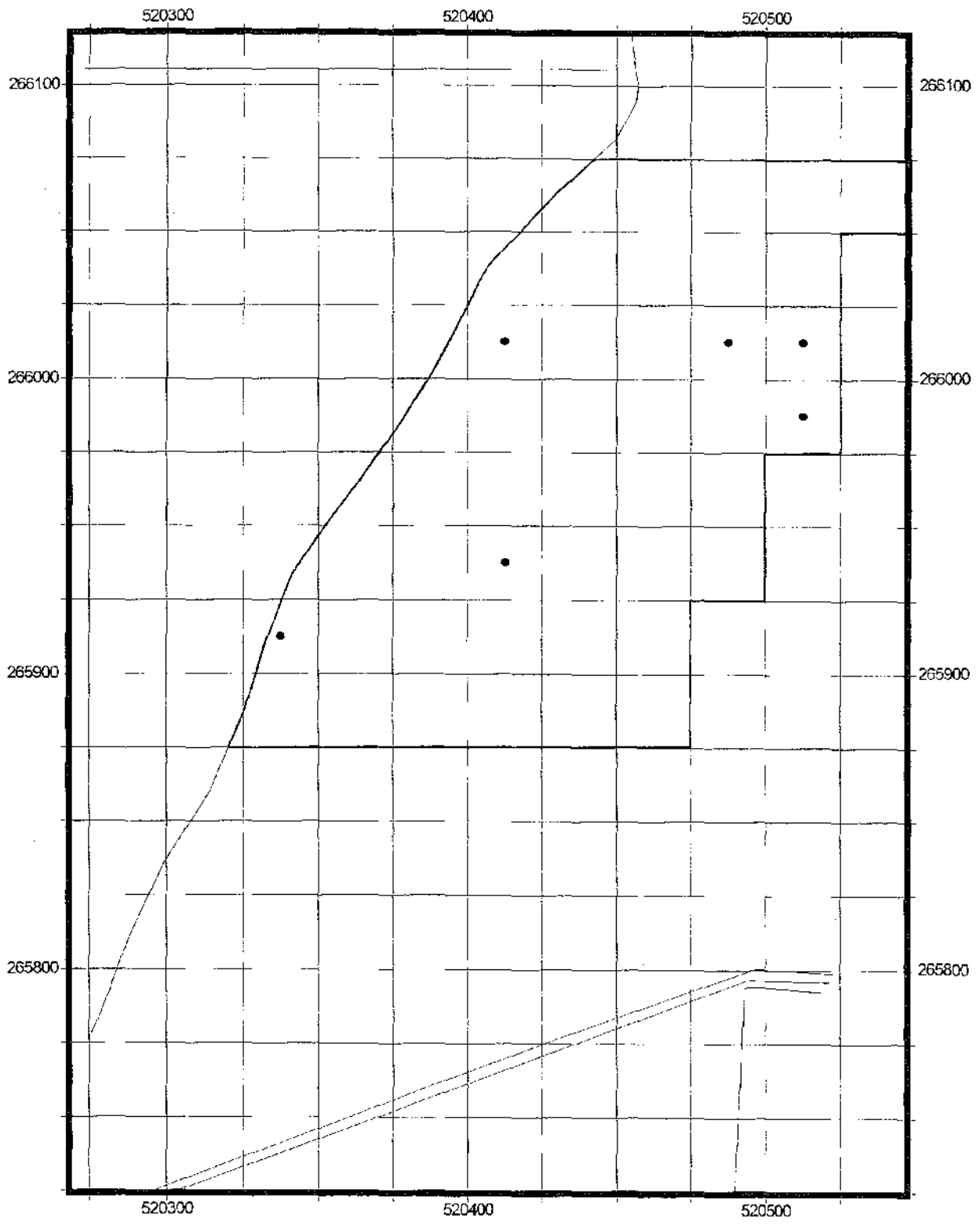


Fig. 6

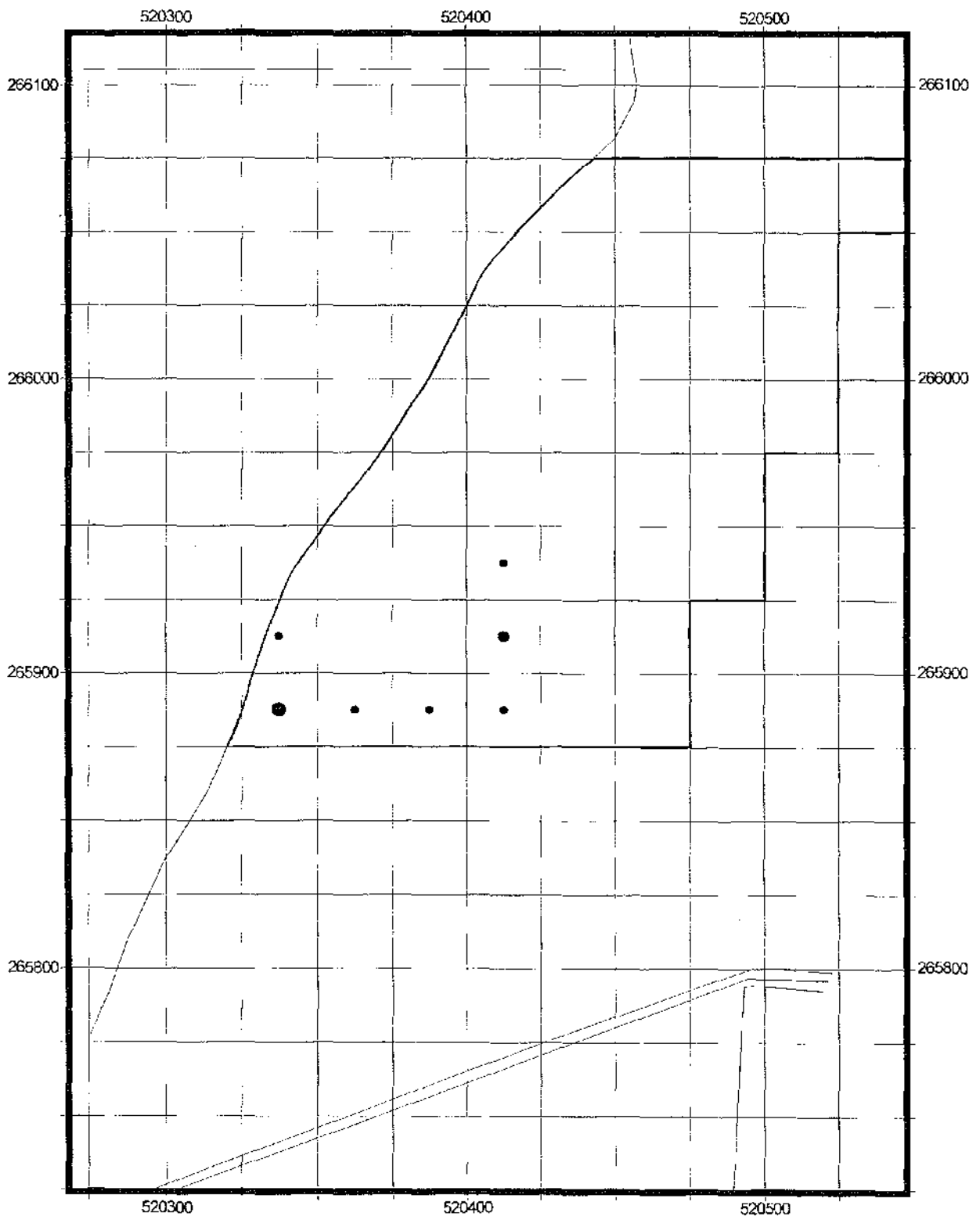


Fig. 7

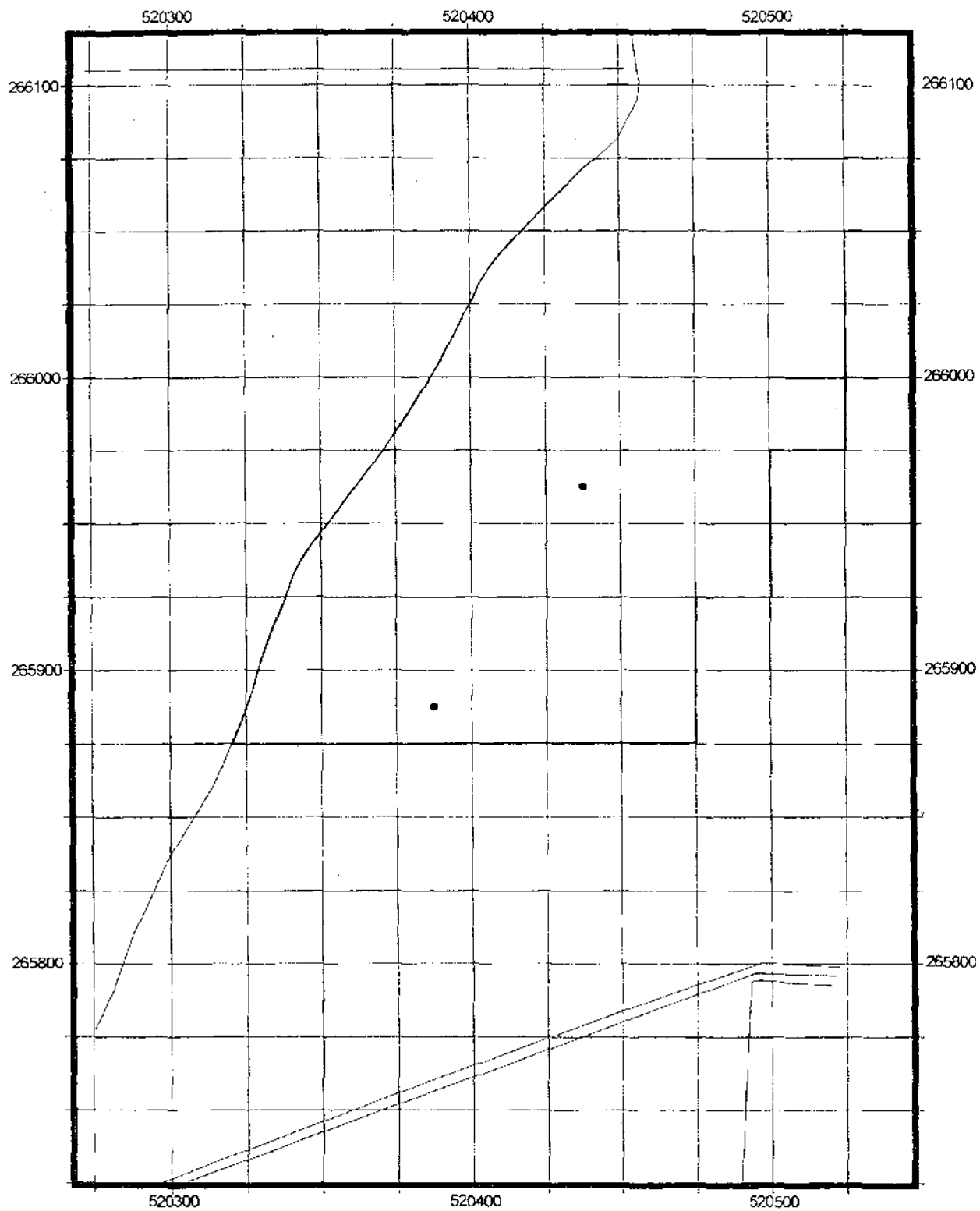


Fig. 8