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**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
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**GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS**

**RECORDS 1956, No. 120**



**SEISMIC REFRACTION SURVEY**  
**AT THE**  
**MINGOOLA DAM SITE,**  
**DUMARESQ RIVER, N.S.W.**

*by*  
**E. R. SMITH, M. J. O'CONNOR and E. J. POLAK**

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## A B S T R A C T

Results are given of a geophysical survey carried out on behalf of the Border Rivers Commission (New South Wales and Queensland), over a proposed dam site near Mingoola on the Dumaresq River. The purpose of the survey was to provide information to the Commission on the depth to bedrock in the river valley. The main part of the survey was done in 1954, but some additional short traverses were surveyed in 1955. During the 1955 survey, brief investigations were also made at two alternative sites on Pikes Creek and Mole River.

The contour map showing the depth to bedrock reveals a trough in the central portion of the area surveyed in which the maximum depth to bedrock is more than 300 ft. below datum level. Upstream from this trough the maximum depth decreases gradually to a value of about 200 ft. on the northernmost traverse.

A statistical analysis of the results obtained indicates that the error in the depth estimates ranges from 78 per cent at a depth of 50 feet to 14 per cent at a depth of 250 feet.

The surveys at Pikes Creek and Mole River indicated that the overburden at both of these sites is much thinner than that at the Mingoola site.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Dumaresq River, which forms part of the border between north-eastern New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland, is a tributary of the McIntyre River. The New South Wales Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission, on behalf of the Border Rivers Commission (New South Wales and Queensland), has been investigating an area near Mingoola for a dam site. The purpose of the dam is to provide continuity of water supply downstream for irrigation. The Commission asked the Bureau of Mineral Resources to assist in determining, by geophysical methods, the depth to bedrock in the river valley. The area investigated is in a narrow part of the valley, approximately one mile downstream from Mingoola Homestead, and is about two miles long and 1,500 to 2,000 feet wide (Plate 1).

The geophysical survey was made during September and October, 1954 by a party consisting of E.R. Smith (party leader) and M.J. O'Connor (geophysicist). Preliminary results of this survey were forwarded to the Commission in December, 1954.

Additional seismic traverses were surveyed in September 1955, by a Bureau party consisting of E.J. Polak (party leader) and J.P. Piggott (field assistant). Results of both surveys are included in this report.

At the request of the Commission some traverses were surveyed near Pike's Creek and Mole River, during the 1955 survey, to ascertain whether these locations were worthy of consideration as alternative dam sites. The results of these investigations were forwarded to the Commission in May, 1956, and are included as an Appendix to this report.

The New South Wales Commission supplied assistants and undertook the topographical survey of the traverses.

It is desired to acknowledge the assistance given to the parties by members of the staff of the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission, and especially that given by Mr. H.A. Brice.

## 2. GEOLOGY.

The geology of this area has been described in a preliminary report by Mulholland and Whiting (1950).

The main rock types in the area are silicified and indurated mudstones, quartzites and greywacke of Palaeozoic age. Along the river, these formations are overlain by alluvium and scree.

The rocks that crop out along the valley and which may serve as abutments for a dam, consist of hard, dark grey mudstone, which weathers to a softer, yellow rock.

On the left bank of the river near dam sites 2 and 3 (see Plate 1), the mudstones show evidence of shearing and a cleavage has developed which strikes N 30° W and dips steeply to the north-east. The strike of the cleavage coincides approximately with the regional strike of rocks in the area.

The overburden is here defined as the alluvial deposits, scree and weathered Palaeozoic rocks, and the bedrock as unweathered Palaeozoic rocks.

### 3. METHOD AND EQUIPMENT

#### (a) General description.

The seismic refraction technique, which was used in this survey, is particularly suitable for shallow investigations such as the determination of the thickness of overburden. The method is based on the velocity contrast of elastic waves in different rock formations.

An explosion sets up a wave train in the ground and the travel times from the shot point to each of a spread of seismometers or geophones in line with the shot point are accurately recorded. From the travel time data the seismic velocities and the depth to successive formations were determined.

In seismic refraction work for engineering problems three main formations are usually distinguished, namely:-

- (i) soil
- (ii) weathered rock
- (iii) unweathered rock.

The soil thickness is seismically determined and the layer of soil is "replaced" by an equivalent thickness of weathered rock. The application of this "soil correction" reduces the three-layer problem to a two-layer problem.

Consider a wave striking the interface between two formations of velocities  $V_1$  and  $V_2$ . Snell's law of Refraction states that

$$\frac{\sin i_1}{\sin i_2} = \frac{V_1}{V_2}$$

where  $i_1$  is the angle of incidence and  $i_2$  the angle of refraction. If  $V_2 > V_1$  then  $i_2 > i_1$  and the wave is refracted away from the normal to the interface. For a certain critical angle of incidence  $i_c$ , the angle of refraction becomes  $90^\circ$ ,  $\sin i_c = \frac{V_1}{V_2}$ , and the refracted ray travels along the interface with velocity  $V_2$ . The wave is then continually refracted from the interface at the critical angle  $i_c$  into the formation of velocity  $V_1$ .

For a spread of detectors such as  $D_1, D_2$ , etc. (see Fig. 1 (a)), placed in line, up to a certain critical distance  $x_c$  from the shot point  $S_1$ , the first arrivals of energy at the detectors are the direct waves through the formation of lower velocity  $V_1$ . For distances from  $S_1$  greater than  $x_c$ , the refracted wave becomes the first arrival.

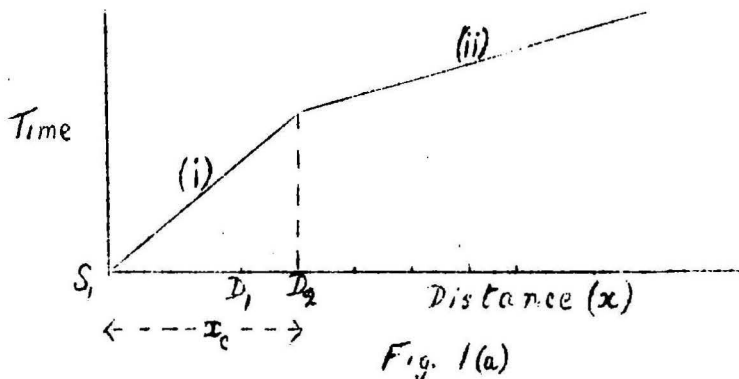


Fig. 1(a)

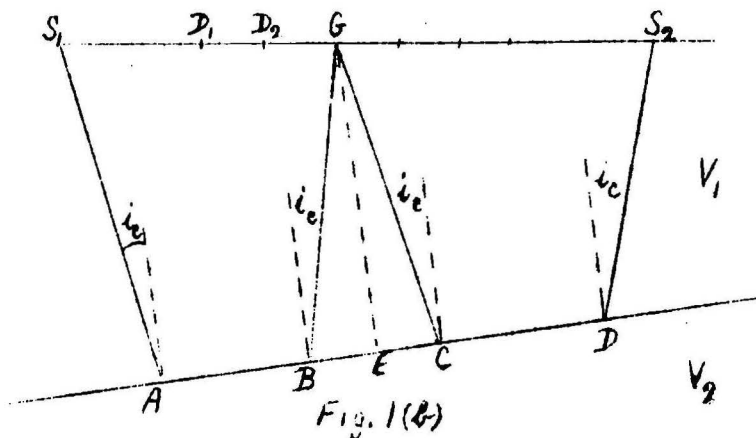


Fig. 1(b)

The shape of the time-distance curve (Fig. 1a) shows a marked change at  $x = x_c$ . The slope of the curve in part (i) is given by  $\frac{1}{V_1}$  and the slope in part (ii) by  $\frac{1}{V_2}$ .

In engineering refraction work, the "method of differences" is commonly used. In fig. 1b two formations with seismic velocities  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  are shown ( $V_2 > V_1$ ). The time from a shot at  $S_1$  is recorded at  $G$  and  $S_2$ , the reciprocal shot point of  $S_1$ ; the recorded seismic waves travel the paths  $S_1ABG$  and  $S_1ADS_2$  respectively. The time from a shot at  $S_2$  is recorded at  $G$  and  $S_1$ , the reciprocal shot point of  $S_2$ ; the seismic waves travel the paths  $S_2DCG$  and  $S_2DAS_1$  respectively. Adding the travel times for paths  $S_1ABG$  and  $S_2DCG$  and subtracting the travel time for path  $S_1ADS_2$  gives:-

$$\begin{aligned} & \left( \frac{S_1A}{V_1} + \frac{AB}{V_2} + \frac{BG}{V_1} \right) + \left( \frac{S_2D}{V_1} + \frac{DC}{V_2} + \frac{CG}{V_1} \right) - \left( \frac{S_1A}{V_1} + \frac{AD}{V_2} + \frac{S_2D}{V_1} \right) \\ &= \frac{BG}{V_1} + \frac{CG}{V_1} - \frac{BC}{V_2} \\ &= \frac{2GE}{V_1 \cos i_c} - \frac{2GE \tan i_c}{V_2} \quad \text{--- (1)} \end{aligned}$$

Substituting  $\sin i_c = \frac{V_1}{V_2}$ ,  $\cos i_c = \frac{\sqrt{V_2^2 - V_1^2}}{V_2}$  and  $\tan i_c = \frac{V_1}{\sqrt{V_2^2 - V_1^2}}$

the R.H.S. of (1) becomes

$$\frac{2GE \sqrt{V_2^2 - V_1^2}}{V_1 V_2} \quad \text{--- (2)}$$

From (2),  $GE$ , the depth of the bedrock below  $G$  can be calculated.

If  $V_2 > 3V_1$  then (2) approximates to  $\frac{2GE}{V_1}$  or  $2t_{GE}$ ,  $t_{GE}$  denoting the travel time to bedrock  $\frac{2GE}{V_1}$  at geophone G.

The product  $V_1 t_{GE}$  yields the bedrock depth at geophone G.

In this survey, travel times are corrected for surface elevations. The travel times are reduced to a local datum level of 1150 feet and hence the depths are computed from this datum level.

The velocity ( $V_1$ ) in the overburden was obtained by dividing the depth to bedrock found from drilling data by the vertical travel time measured when using the method of differences. A comparison of these values of  $V_1$  with those obtained by weathering and normal spreads appears in the section on results.

(b) Equipment and field operation.

The equipment used in the survey was a 24-channel ABEM seismograph, manufactured by the Swedish Electrical Prospecting Company. The recording equipment was mounted in a cabin on a 4-wheel-drive truck. Two geophone cables were used, each with 13 take-offs at 60-foot intervals.

Two types of geophone spread were used, namely weathering spreads with 12 geophones spaced 10 feet apart, and normal spreads with 23 geophones spaced 50 feet apart and one geophone as a reciprocal geophone. The shot distance from the extreme end of the weathering spread was 10 feet. Weathering spreads were used to obtain the thickness and velocity of the soil, and the velocity of the overburden below the soil. These weathering spreads were placed along the profiles at intervals of about 550 feet. The shot distances from the extreme ends of the normal spreads were 50 - 100 feet and 400 - 600 feet. The data obtained from the shorter shot distances were used to find the overburden velocity. The data obtained from the longer shot distances were used to find the bedrock velocity and the travel time to bedrock at each geophone.

The charge of gelignite used for the weathering spreads was  $\frac{1}{2}$  stick at 1 foot depth. For normal spreads the charge was from 1 lb (3 sticks) to 20 lbs, depending on the type of soil, depth of shot-hole (2 to 5 feet), and the distance to the reciprocal geophone. The average rate of consumption of gelignite was approximately 40 lb. per 1000 feet of traverse.

Thirteen traverses were surveyed by the seismic method in 1954. Four of these traverses, namely A, B, C and D (see Plate 1), are approximately along the centre of the river valley from No. 3 dam site in the south to No. 4 dam site in the north. Cross traverses K, F, E and M were surveyed at dam sites 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Intermediate cross traverses G, H, J, L and N were surveyed between dam sites No. 4 and No. 2.

In the 1955 survey, four additional traverses (P, Q, R and S) were surveyed and three of the earlier traverses (F, G and H) were extended. A Century 12-channel refraction equipment, Model 506 was used, the field procedure being the same as in the 1954 survey.



4. RESULTS.

The values of the velocity  $V_1$  obtained from the travel times to bedrock at the drill holes are compared in Table 1 with the values obtained from time-distance curves.

TABLE 1.

<u>Drill</u> <u>Hole</u>	<u>Station</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>Depth</u> <u>below</u> <u>1150'</u> <u>datum</u> <u>level (H)</u> <u>(ft)</u>	<u>Verti-</u> <u>cal</u> <u>travel</u> <u>time</u> <u>(T)</u> <u>(msec)</u>	$V_1 (=H/T)$ (ft/sec)	<u>Velocity from T/D curves</u>	
					<u>Normal</u> <u>spread</u> (ft/sec)	<u>Weathering</u> <u>spread</u> (ft/sec)
8	B68	221	33.5	6600	6750	6000
5	K23	35	39	5650		3300
?	B30	33	10	3500		
			11.5	2870	6600	5950
			8.5	3880		
203	A38	241	36.5	6600		5150
			42	5750		
			40.5	5950		
302	A13	238	37	6440	6600	5400
			34	7000		

It will be noted that the velocities obtained from the time-distance curves of weathering spreads are lower than the corresponding values obtained from normal spreads. As the depth penetration of the weathering spreads is much less than that of the normal spreads this indicates that the velocity of the overburden increases with depth. This is further shown by the lower values of  $H$  obtained at the drill holes where the depth to bedrock is small, e.g. D.H.5 at station K23 and the drill hole at B30. At the latter drill hole the velocities measured from time-distance curves are approximately twice those obtained from travel times to bedrock. The values of  $H$  in Table 1 are measurements of the vertical velocity  $V_1$  in the overburden, whereas the time-distance curves give the velocity in a horizontal direction. For this reason the values of  $H$  were used for the velocity  $V_1$ . An average value of the  $V_1$  velocity obtained at each of the drill holes, 8, B30, 203 and 302 was used for traverses K, G F and E respectively. For traverses A and B, the differences in the values at drill holes were smoothed out between the holes. On traverse K, near D.H.5, a correction was made to allow for the low value of  $V_1$  measured there. The value of  $V_1$  obtained from D.H.8 was used for all traverses to the north of traverse K.

Plate 2 shows the depths to bedrock along each traverse, as computed by the "method of differences", and Plate 3 shows the contours of the top of the bedrock. Table 2 gives the maximum depths to bedrock and a measure of the width of the trough in the bedrock profile.

TABLE 2.

Traverse	Maximum depth to bedrock below surface (ft).	Distance (feet) over which the depth to bedrock is		Distance between 1200' surface contours.
		> 100'	> 50'	
E	300	1300	1800	2200
J	222	800	> 1050	1700
K	227	700	> 1000	1700
L	220	700	1000	1950
M	212	700	> 1000	1950

# 5. ACCURACY OF RESULTS

The accuracy of the depth estimation ( $z$ ) depends on the velocity ( $v$ ) and the vertical travel time ( $t$ ).

$$z = vt$$

$$\Delta z = \frac{\partial(vt)}{\partial t} \Delta t + \frac{\partial(vt)}{\partial v} \Delta v$$

$$= v \Delta t + t \Delta v$$

$$\text{or } \Delta z = v \Delta t + a \Delta t = \delta_1 + \delta_2$$

$$\text{in which } a = \frac{\Delta v}{v}, \delta_1 = v \Delta t, \delta_2 = a \Delta t$$

and

$\Delta z$  = possible error in depth

$\Delta t$  = " " " vertical travel time

$\Delta v$  = " " " overburden velocity

$\delta_1$  = error in  $z$  due to erroneous travel time

$\delta_2$  = " "  $z$  due to " " overburden velocity.

$\delta_1$  is believed to be an error caused by variations in the soil thickness. Weathering spreads were shot at intervals of approximately 550 feet to measure the velocity in and thickness of the soil. The soil thickness was then corrected for, but variations of the soil thickness over the 550-foot intervals between weathering spreads could cause errors in this correction.

Table 3 shows how the percentage error in depth decreases with increase in depth. The values of  $\delta_1$  in Table 3 were obtained by considering a maximum value of 3 milliseconds for  $\Delta t$  and an average velocity of 6,000 ft/sec.

The possible error in velocity,  $\Delta v$ , increases with the distance from a control point (drill hole), and varies with the difference in velocity measured at successive drill holes. As the differences in velocity measured at the drill holes are smaller in the deeper sections of the area,  $\Delta v$  decreases as the depth increases. However, the travel time,  $t$ , increases as the depth increases.

The estimated values for  $\Delta v$ , which were used to calculate the values of  $\delta_2$  in Table 3, ranged from 400 feet/sec. at a depth of 250 feet to 2,500 feet/sec. at a depth of 50 feet.

TABLE 3.

$z$ (ft)	$\delta_1$ (ft)	$\delta_2$ (ft)	$\delta_1 + \delta_2$ (ft)	$100 \frac{(\delta_1 + \delta_2)}{z}$ (%)
50	18	21	39	78
100	18	28	46	46
150	18	22	40	27
200	18	16	34	17
250	18	16	34	14

From Table 3 it will be seen that the depths to bedrock indicated on Plate 2 may be over-estimated by more than 50 per cent in the range 0 - 100 feet.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS.

Table 2 and the sections on Plate 2 show that the depth to bedrock is less along traverses J, K, L, and M than it is along the traverse to the south of J. However, even on traverses J, K, L and M the maximum depth is more than 200 feet. The abutments on traverse K (No. 1 dam site) are not as far apart as on traverses L and M.

The depths to bedrock along traverse K are more accurate than those along traverses L and M because there are two drill holes on traverse K which were used to calculate the velocity of the overburden. The depths to bedrock in the shallower sections along L and M may therefore be less than indicated on Plate 2.

## 7. REFERENCE..

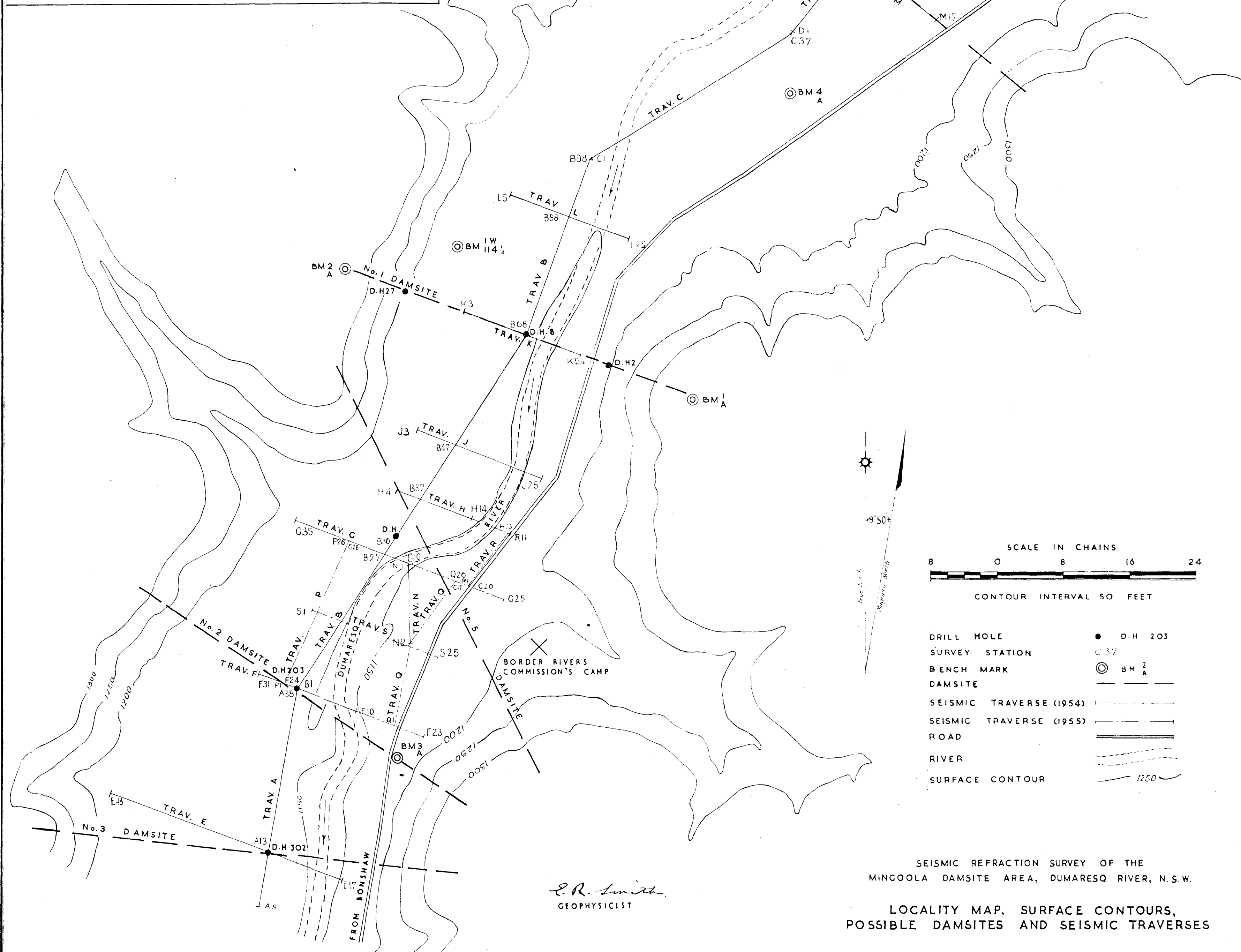
Mulholland, G. St. J and Whiting, J.W., 1950 - Preliminary report, Mingoola Dam Site, Dumaresq River, N.S.W. Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission (unpublished).

## APPENDIX

### SEISMIC INVESTIGATIONS AT PIKE'S CREEK AND MOLE RIVER

In response to an application from the New South Wales Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission, two short additional seismic investigations were made in September 1955, at Pike's Creek and Mole River, the locations of which are shown on Plate 1. These investigations were made to ascertain whether the sites are worthy of consideration as alternatives to those at Mingoola. The Century 12-channel reflection equipment, Model 506, was used, the field procedure being the same as for the main survey.

- (a) Pike's Creek. The survey was carried out about four miles from the junction of Pike's Creek and Dumaresq River. The location of the three traverses surveyed is shown on Plate 4, together with the profiles along the traverses showing depth to bedrock. Results indicate that the overburden ranges in thickness from 4 to 16 feet which is much less than at the Mingoola site. Bedrock velocity is about 15,000 feet per second.
- (b) Mole River. The survey was made about ten miles from the junction of the Mole and Dumaresq Rivers. The location of the two traverses surveyed and the profiles showing depth to bedrock are illustrated on Plate 5. The overburden ranges in thickness from 4 to 18 feet which is much less than at the Mingoola site. Bedrock velocity is about 19,000 feet per second.

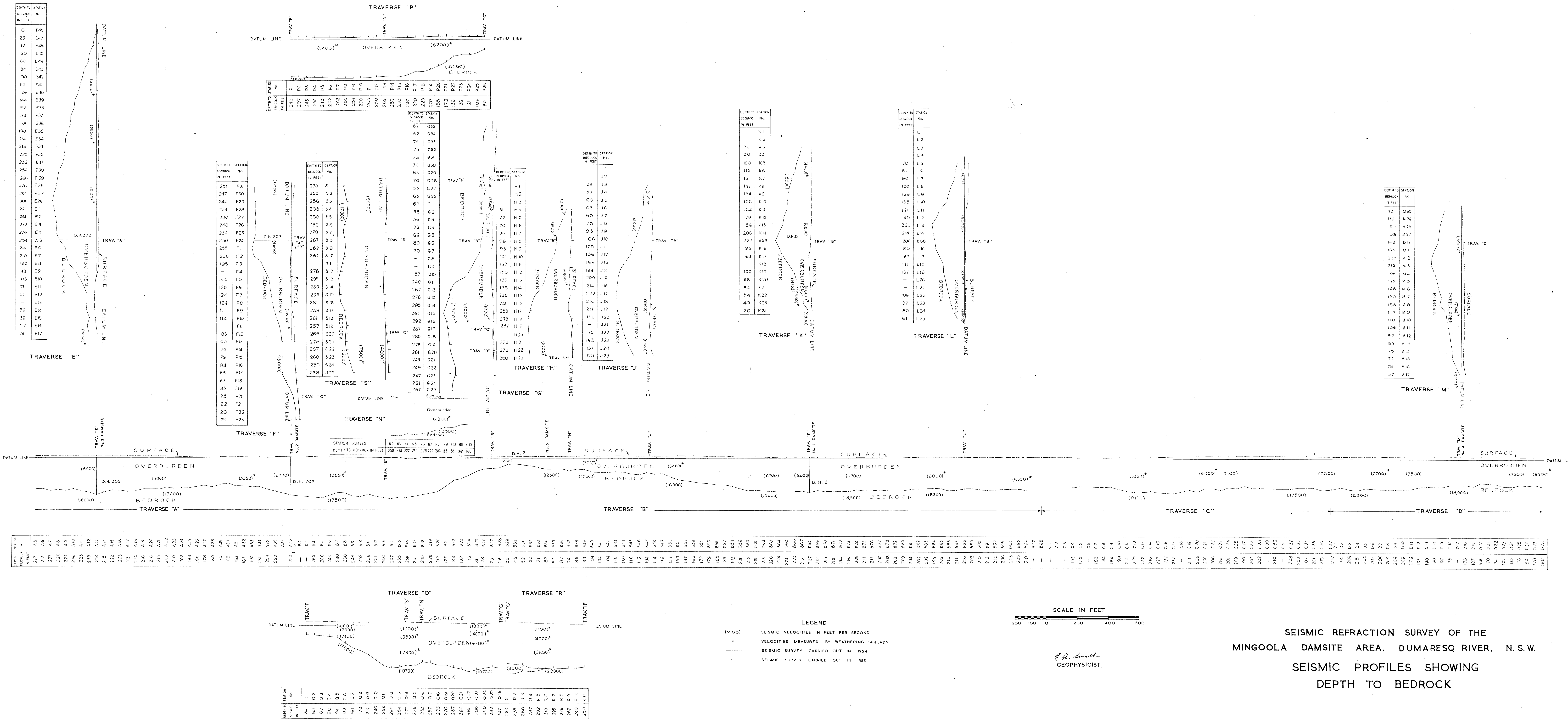


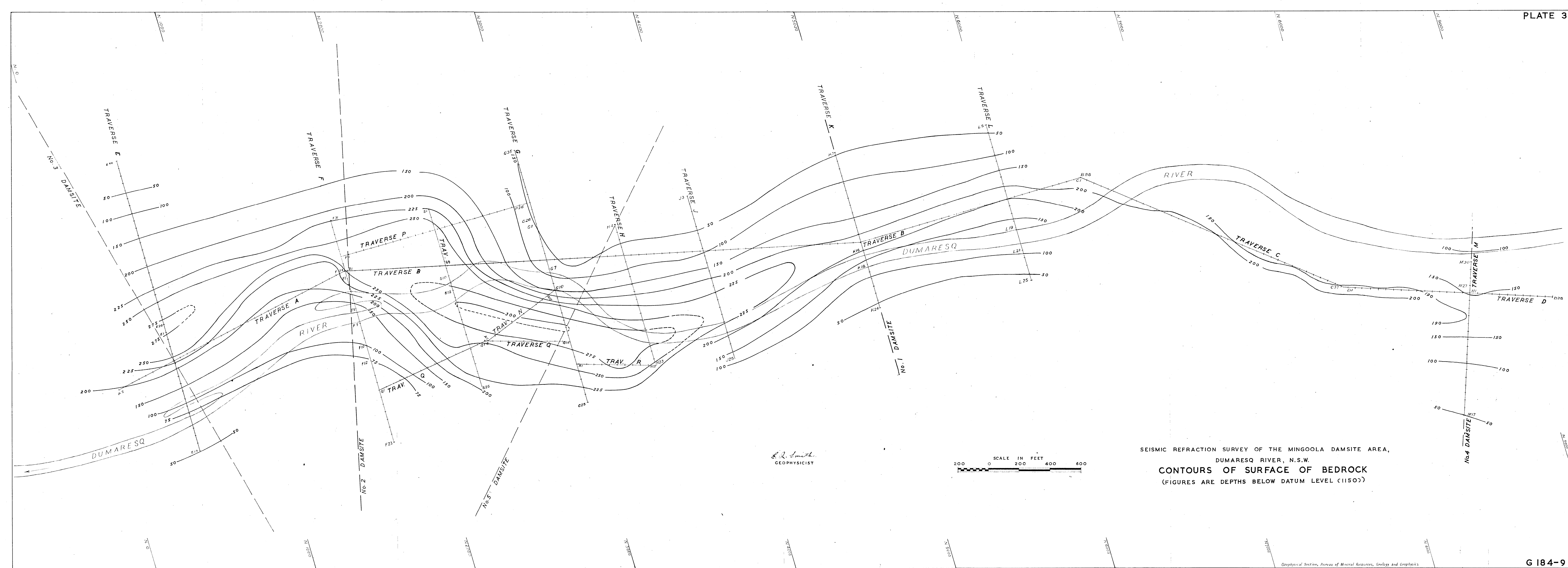
SEISMIC REFRACTION SURVEY OF THE  
MINGOOLA DAMSITE AREA, DUMARESQ RIVER, N.S.W.

LOCALITY MAP, SURFACE CONTOURS,  
POSSIBLE DAMSITES AND SEISMIC TRAVERSES

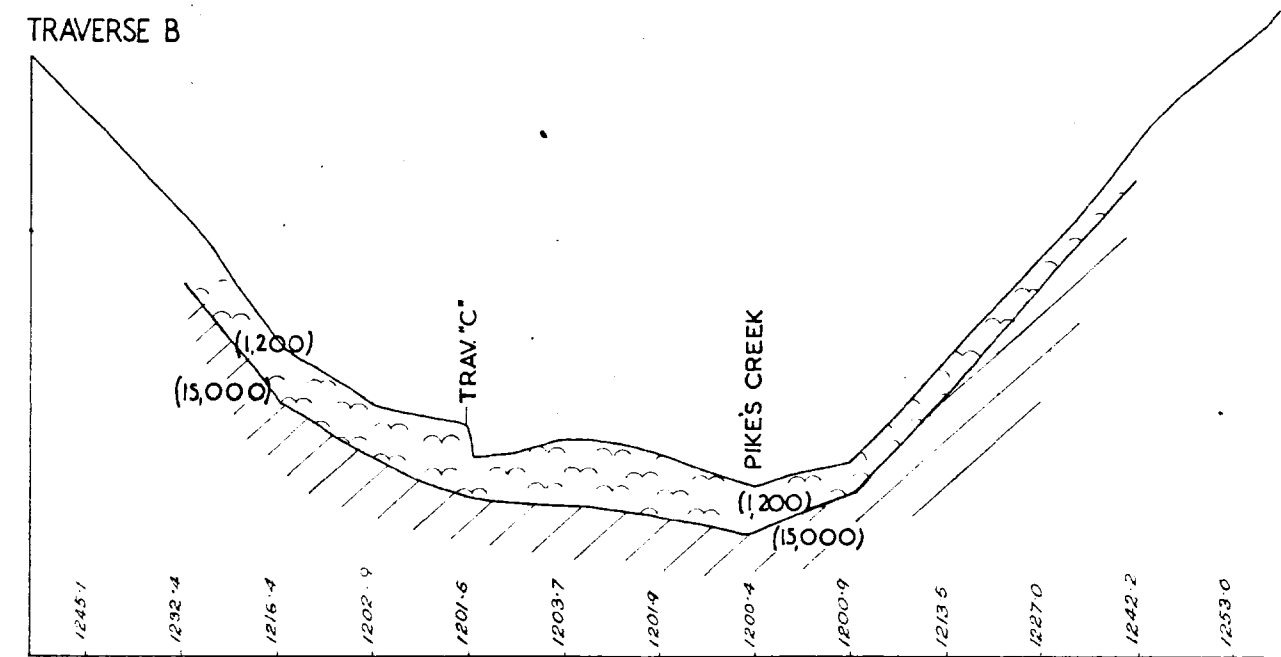
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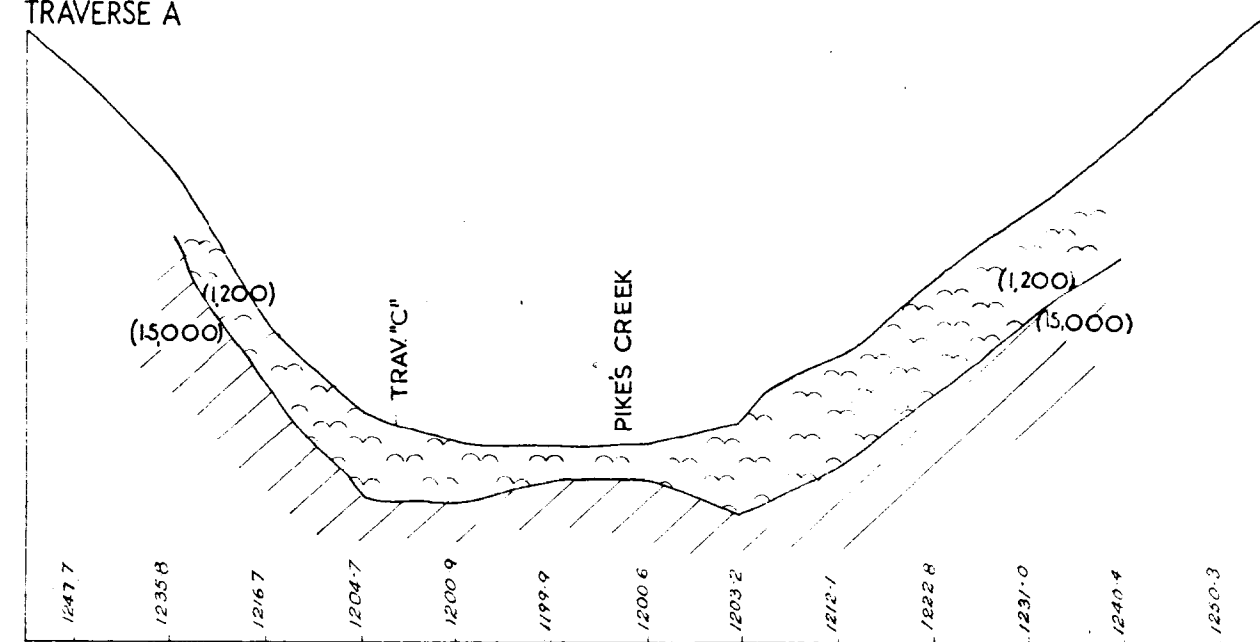


TRAVERSE B



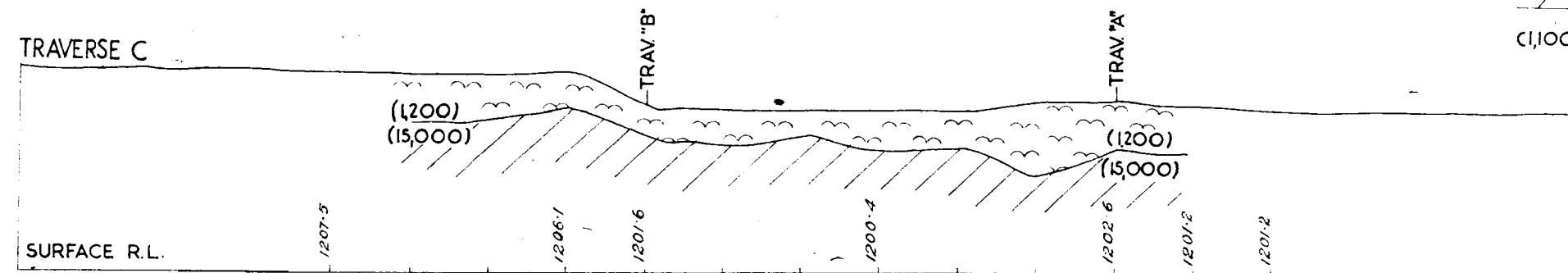
STATION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
DEPTH TO BEDROCK IN FEET	9	7	7	5	9	9	6	5	4	4	5

TRAVERSE A

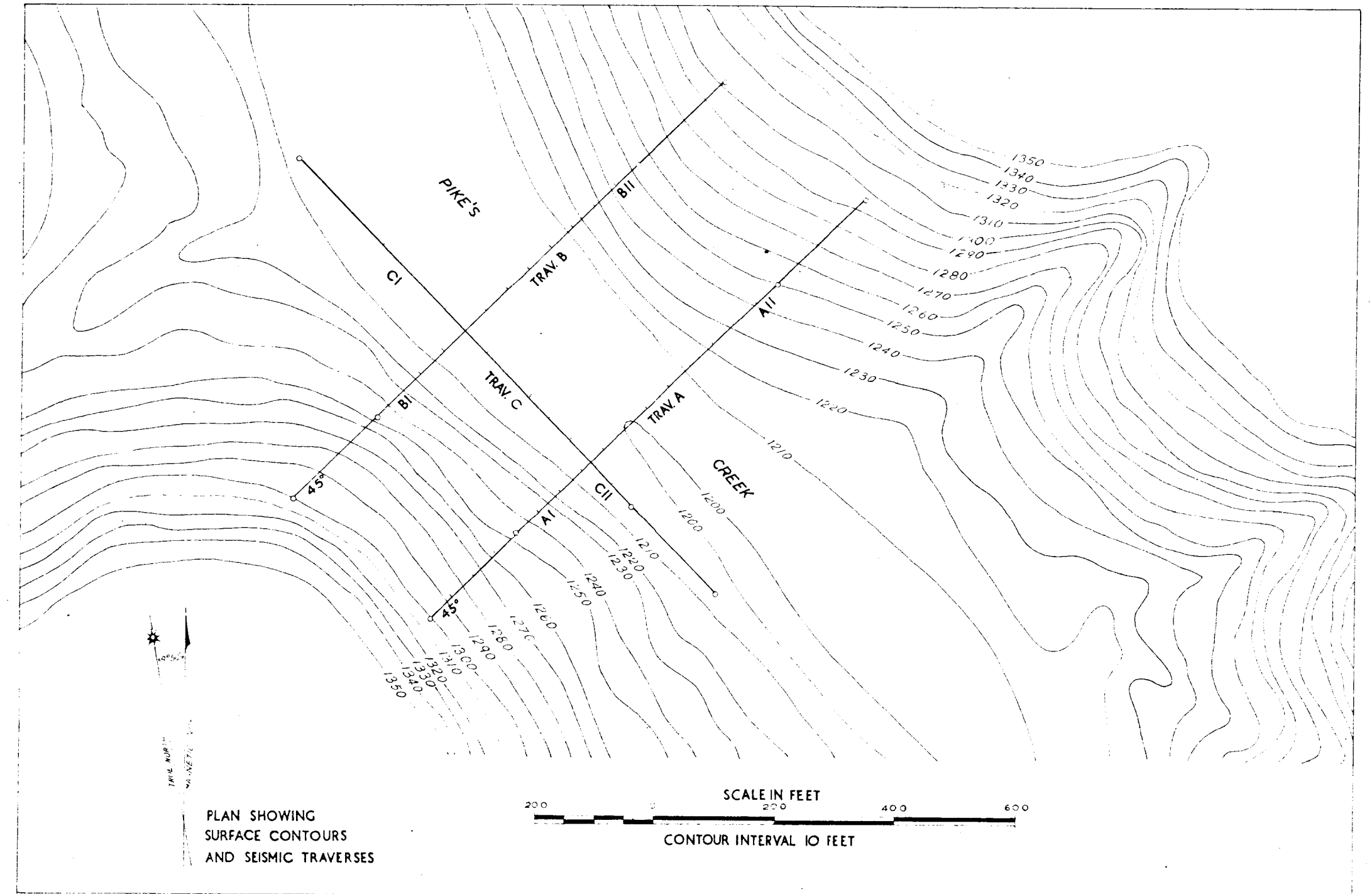


STATION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
DEPTH TO BEDROCK IN FEET	9	10	11	8	4	5	13	15	15	14	16

TRAVERSE C



STATION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
DEPTH TO BEDROCK IN FEET	8	7	6	5	6	5	6	6	11	8	7



PLAN SHOWING  
SURFACE CONTOURS  
AND SEISMIC TRAVERSES

SCALE IN FEET  
200 400 600  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET

ALLUVIUM AND ELUVIUM

BEDROCK

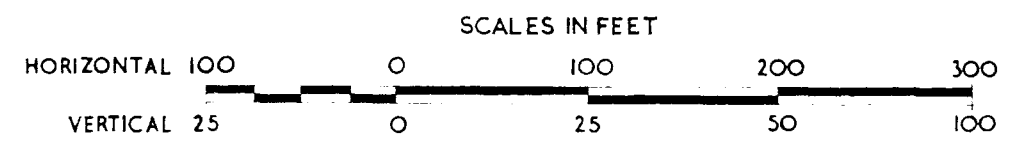
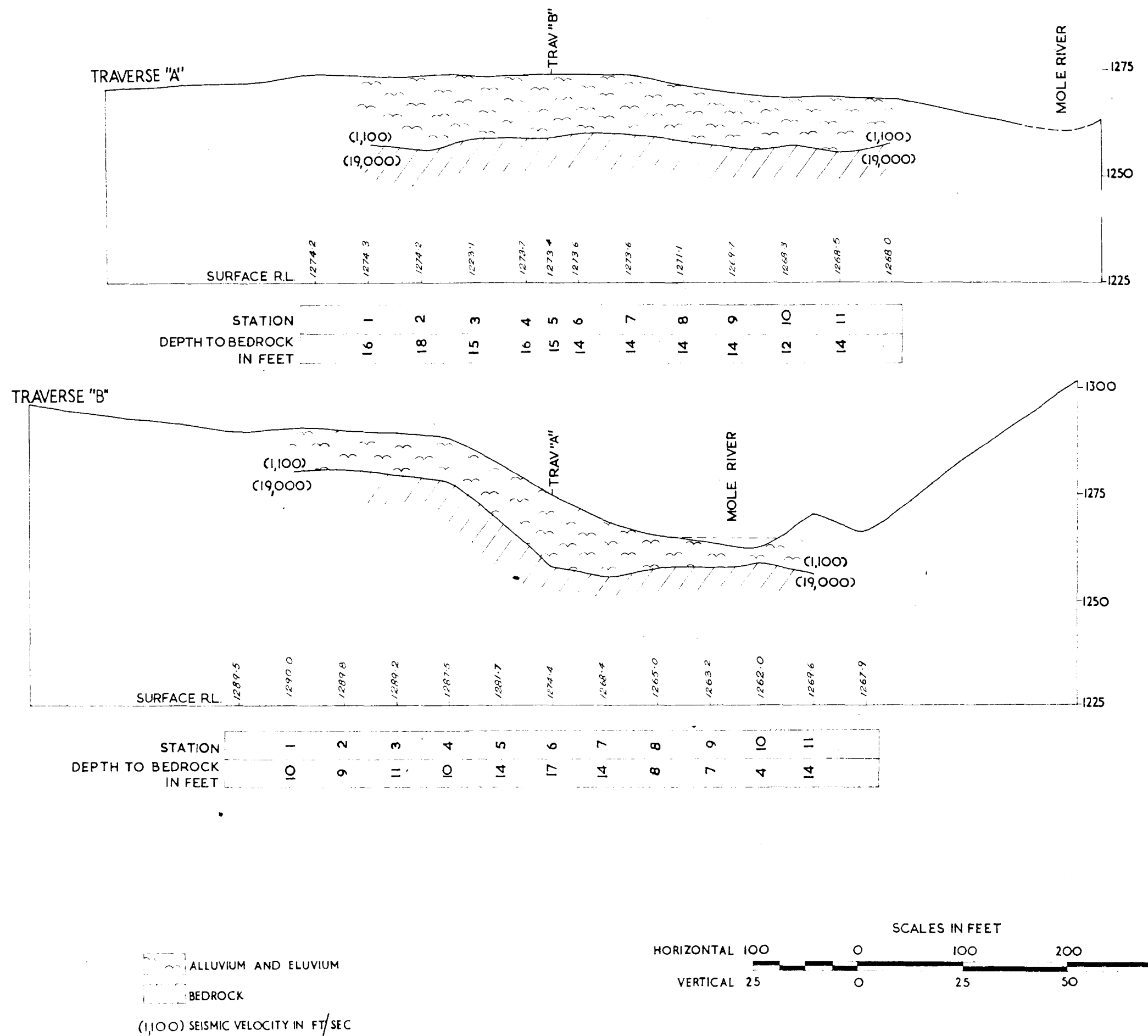
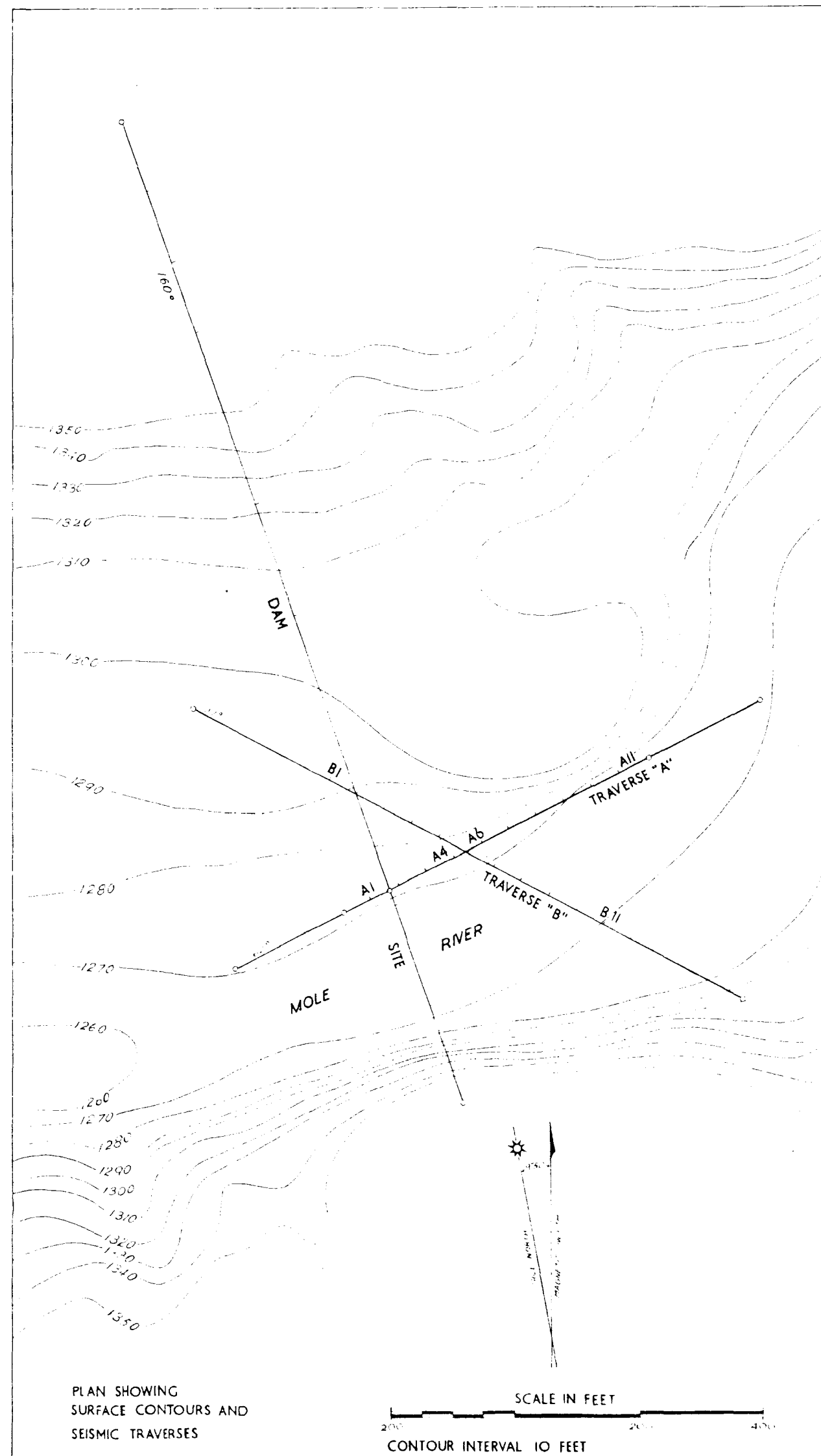
(1,000) SEISMIC VELOCITY IN FT/SEC

HORIZONTAL 100  
VERTICAL 25  
SCALES IN FEET  
0 100 200 300  
0 25 50 75

*G. Plak*  
GEOPHYSICIST

SEISMIC SURVEY AT  
PIKE'S CREEK, QUEENSLAND  
MINGOOLA PROJECT  
SEISMIC PROFILES SHOWING DEPTH TO BEDROCK





SEISMIC SURVEY AT  
MOLE RIVER, NEW SOUTH WALES  
MINGOOLA PROJECT  
SEISMIC PROFILES SHOWING DEPTH TO BEDROCK

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