

1985 EXCAVATIONS AT PHILLIP'S GARDEN AND POINTE RICHE,
FORT AU CHOIX NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

M. A. P. Renouf
Department of Anthropology
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Introduction

The 1985 field season at the Fort au Choix National Historic Park took place from 8 July - 23 August, following the 1984 program of reconnaissance and survey (Renouf 1985 a; 1985 b; 1985 c). As a result of that first season twelve previously unrecorded sites were located which included three Maritime Archaic, seven Palaeoeskimo, and five historic French and English components (cf. Renouf 1985b; Fig. 1). The Dorset Palaeoeskimo site of Phillip's Garden was mapped and tested and an undisturbed Groswater Palaeoeskimo component was discovered at the easternmost area of the site. A previously undiscovered Dorset Palaeoeskimo site was found at Point Riche which was roughly one third the size of Phillip's Garden, with similar round and oval surface depressions and the same range and form of material culture.

The general objectives of the 1985 field season, based upon these results, were: 1) to excavate a house and a midden feature at Phillip's Garden, 2) to fully test Point Riche and map the surface features, 3) to excavate one depression at Point Riche, and 4) to retrieve faunal material and charcoal samples from both sites. The 1985 excavations are summarized below and are described in more detail elsewhere (Renouf 1986).

2. Phillip's Garden

2.1 Introduction

Three hundred square metres were gridded in the western area of Phillip's Garden, or the second terrace which lies between 5.75 and 8.50 metres above sea level (Figure 1). The area encompassed a small mound and two clearly visible house depressions, and a shallow depression can be seen within

the southeastern corner of the area (Figure 2). Both of the deeper depressions had a break in the wall area which was inferred to be an entranceway.

Only the western depression was excavated in 1985. Levels 1 to 3 were removed in plan so that the outline of the house remained clearly visible as excavation progressed. The interior of the house was defined as an area relatively clear of beach rocks and surrounded by a slightly raised perimeter of beach cobbles (Figure 3, Plates 1 and 2). Within the interior a central depression measured approximately four metres east-west and four metres north-south and to the rear was an elevated platform which measured four metres wide and two metres deep. At the northern end of the house was a slightly raised area four metres wide and one metre deep. The wall areas were raised 25-35 cm above the central area and the rear platform was elevated 28 - 35 cm higher. The break in the northern wall indicated on the surface map showed up as a relatively rock-free depressed area in which a number of large flat rocks and some large flat, almost board-like, pieces of worked whalebone were found.

The east and west walls of Feature 1 were fairly well defined, and show up well in Plate 1. The west wall consisted of raised beach rock which ran north-south almost in a straight line along the western excavation units (Figure 3). The edge of the east wall appeared only in some eastern units as most of the wall lay beneath unexcavated squares. Where the east wall was exposed in two units the soil was unusually peat-like, especially in and around the rocks of the wall. The extent of this peat was mapped and will be further investigated next season as there is the possibility that it represents buried sod associated with the wall. The north and south walls were less distinct, but nevertheless each could be traced as it appeared in a curve crossing several excavation units.

The tracing of the walls allowed the interior dimensions of the house to be measured as approximately four metres east-west and seven metres north-south, including the rear platform area, the central depression, and the slightly raised forward area.

Within the house a number of pit features were found (Figure 3). These varied in size and depth but all contained charcoal or charcoal staining and concentrations of faunal material. The three largest pits (Features 5, 6, and 7) were surrounded by and lined with stones both irregular and slab-like.

Whereas Features 5 and 6 were within the central depression, Feature 7 was in the platform area. Features 11 and 13 were both small shallow bone-filled pits which were also found within the platform area, and Feature 9 was another small bone-filled pit located outside the house. Numerous lithic and fewer bone artifacts were found within the house, both inside and outside the pit features.

In his 1976 publication Harp described the dimensions and characteristics of two house forms which he excavated at Phillip's Garden. House 2, inferred to be a winter dwelling, was approximately square, measuring 15 feet (4.92 metres) on a side. According to an unpublished field drawing this does not include the rear platform which lengthens the house to 8.2 metres. The interior area was cleared of limestone beach rocks which were stacked against the side to make walls, the remains of which were raised 12 -18 inches (30.48 - 45.72 cm) above the floor level; against the inner wall area there was some evidence of banked turf blocks. Four stone-lined pits, averaging 12 inches (30.48 cm) deep, ran in a rough line through the central axis of the house. At the rear of the house was a semi-circular platform raised about 10-12 inches (25.4-30.48 cm) above the main floor. Three storage pits were located within this area and Harp suggested that it was a sleeping platform (Harp 1976: 131-132).

By way of contrast, House 5, representing the summer houses at the site (Harp 1976: 130), was a shallow oval depression which measured 10 by 18 feet (3.28 by 5.91 m). The interior area was incompletely cleared of rocks and there were no wall structures or interior features.

Two charcoal-based radiocarbon dates were returned from the house (Figure 4). Feature 6 was dated at 1850 \pm 100 B.P. (Beta 15379) and Feature 4, which we had interpreted as a disturbed hearth deposited on top of a disused wall, was dated at 1250 \pm 60 B.P. (Beta 15639).

Comparing Feature 1 with Harp's descriptions of his winter and summer houses, it clearly resembles House 2 more closely than House 5 in dimensions, depth and internal features. However, it appears not to have such clearly defined walls and platform area, nor do the interior bone-filled pits line up along the long axis of the house. Intrigued by these differences I examined in the field the house features which Harp excavated where it was still pos-

sible to see the house dimensions and internal features; these had not been back-filled and re-growth had been fairly slow. In House 2 the pits did indeed line up centrally along the longitudinal axis of the house and the platform area was fairly distinct. However, although the walls were at a higher elevation than the central area they were no more distinct than the walls of Feature 1. It appeared that the difference in elevation was due less to a build-up of the walls than a result of the clearing of limestone beach rocks from the interior, thus forming a depression.

House 3 and 10, both inferred to be winter houses, were also clear enough of vegetation to be examined. House 10 measured approximately 6 m in length and 9 m in width, including a rear platform. As in House 2 and Feature 1, the walls were not well defined although they were higher than the floor. House 3 measured approximately 4.5 m in width and 5 m in depth. The walls were indistinct although they were higher than the floor and I could see no platform area.

I infer from these comparisons that House 2 was particularly well defined and because of this was to a certain extent idealized as typical of all the winter house structures. It is probable than many, perhaps most, winter houses at Phillip's Garden are more similar to Feature 1 and House 3 than to House 2.

2.3 Feature 2

Originally we had hoped that the small mound associated with Feature 1 was a midden; however, upon excavation it became clear that it was one of Harp's backdirt piles, probably from his checkerboard excavation at nearby House 16. Although we thought it likely that a midden would be found near the gridded house features, no faunal material turned up in our numerous test pits. Therefore we gridded a second area 20 m to the east of the main area, where our 1984 sampling of the site had revealed a rich midden deposit 15 - 25 cm deep. Further test pits indicated that the dark, greasy, bone and flake-laden deposit covered an area of approximately 8 m north-south and 18 m east-west. As it was clear that excavation of this rich deposit would be time-consuming only 8 m² were opened up. The backdirt was not dry sifted but was bagged, labelled, and transported to a nearby stream where it was water sifted

through a 3 mm mesh. All but the very smallest bone and flake material was recovered and the material was dried and bagged for later sorting.

A large amount of bone came from the midden and we were grateful for an unusually hot and dry summer which allowed us to wash the material and lay it outside to dry. The midden area also proved to be exceedingly rich in artifacts, many of them bone (Plates 11 and 12).

If Figure 5, the profile of one wall of a 1 m² unit in the midden shows that it consisted of at least four components. This can be seen from the repeated occurrence of Levels 1 and 2 in undisturbed context; a thin Level 3 can be seen only beneath the bone-filled mound. It appears that midden material was initially deposited and became overgrown, probably quite quickly, with the sod and peat of Level 1. Another deposit was made on top of this new surface and the process of surface regrowth was repeated. From the profile it can be seen that two more such deposits were made. Presumably more than four components make up the midden.

It had been our original aim to separate the midden components as we excavated, but it turned out that this was not possible as they were very difficult to detect. It is hoped that we will be more successful next year, with the 1985 profiles as a guide. In the field Harp identified the faunal material from the midden associated with House 4 (1976: 128). He observed that 98% of the faunal material was seal, presumably harp seal from their annual spring migration. We noticed that, although seal did predominate in the midden deposit, there was also a significant amount of caribou. We have recently begun to sort the water-sifted material in the lab and a relatively small amount of fish and bird is consistently turning up which gives a picture of a more generalized diet.

Several charcoal samples were collected from the midden (Figure 4). One returned a date of 1570 ± 70 B.P. (Beta 1538) and another, at the base of the midden, returned a date of 1920 ± 100 B.P. (Beta 15638). In the report of 1984 field activities at the Park it was suggested that this midden feature had been deposited within a disused house feature, thus obscuring any surface depressions in this area (Renouf 1985:43). The difference between the date at the base of the midden and that well within the midden deposit suggests the possibility that the older date pertains to a house feature lying below the

midden. Future work at the midden should clarify the matter.

3. Point Riche

3.1 Introduction

At Point Riche all surface depressions and test pits with cultural material in them were mapped. The resulting (Figure 6 is a simplified version) shows a total of 33 large and small depressions, 19 of which appeared to be cultural rather than natural. It is difficult to distinguish between natural and cultural depressions at Point Riche because the bedrock is shattered limestone which has many natural water associated undulations in it. This process is continuous in Port au Choix where limestone bedrock is exposed and water-filled pools and holes can be seen in many areas, for example along the Park walk from Port au Choix Cove to Phillip's Garden. Cultural depressions were designated as such if cultural material was found in them or if they were particularly large and well defined.

3.2 Feature 1

It was decided to excavate one of the possible house features which we tested in 1984. Ten square metres was gridded in 1 m² units and the feature (Feature 1) was excavated in plan.

Feature 1 first appeared as a clearly defined depression on the surface of the ground (Figure 7). As Levels 1 to 3 were excavated the central depression became increasingly difficult to see because of the obfuscating undulations of the bedrock surface which were emerging. In addition, a large number of deep holes, some nearly a metre in depth, began to turn up (Plate 3). When a few of these holes were first revealed they misleadingly followed a gentle curve in a likely wall area and thus we speculated that they were possibly postholes. However, numerous such holes began to turn up with disconcerting irregularity and it became clear that, whatever their subsequent use might have been, originally they were a natural feature of the bedrock. A number of these contained flakes, artifacts, bone material and very dark organically-stained soil. Whereas it was clear that two (Features 2 and 5) of these had been used as storage pits similar to the bone-filled pits excavated at

Phillip's Garden, in others cases the material could either have been placed there or could merely have fallen down the hole. In one hole (Feature 6) there were no organics or artifacts but the earth was stained an unusual black which was not found anywhere else.

When the gravel bedrock was fully exposed (Plate 4) it was still difficult to see the original depression. In contrast to Feature 1 at Phillip's Garden there was no evidence of any wall structures. However, the absence of recognizable wall areas may simply be a result of the nature of the dwelling which in turn is related to the particular function and season of occupation of Point Riche and to the available building material. At Phillip's Garden the sterile sub-surface is rocky beach. In order to make a comfortable living area some of the larger and sharper rocks would need to be taken away, and at the same time would provide ready building material for walls. At Point Riche, however, the sterile sub-surface is limestone bedrock which was shattered into gravel and which has a fairly even surface despite holes and undulations. In order to make the surface comfortable no clearing away would be necessary. Instead the holes could be covered by branches, skins, or something of that nature; possibly some low growing vegetation of the sort that can be seen on the present-day exposed bedrock would have served the purpose. With no clearing away of beach rocks there would be no ready supply for wall construction. If Feature 1 of Point Riche was a dwelling with a superstructure, it could have been built of more perishable material, using posts placed in any of the ready-made post-holes.

Our original interpretation of Feature 1 as a dwelling is maintained and, hopefully, further work including excavation outside the feature and distribution maps of artifacts will clarify the issue.

4. Discussion

Point Riche and Phillip's Garden are similar in a number of ways. According to the radiocarbon dates from both areas (Figure 4) they chronologically overlap from at least 1840-1466 B.P.. No doubt the actual range of overlap is much greater, but there are as yet few dates from Point Riche compared to Phillip's Garden (cf. Harp 1976: 124). It is interesting that the dates from Features 1 and 2 at Phillip's Garden extend the range of occupation

of the site as established by Harp's charcoal-based radiocarbon dates. Whereas the earliest of his charcoal-based dates was 1800±50 B.P. (House 2) and the youngest 1275±50 B.P. (House 20) (Harp 1976: 124), the base of midden Feature 2 was dated to 1920±110 B.P. and Feature 4 was dated at 1250±60 B.P.. The period of occupation at Phillip's Garden is extended as far back as 2660±70 B.P. if you include the Groswater Palaeoeskimo component at Phillip's Garden East as part of the main site.

The artefact assemblages from the two sites are very similar as can be seen from their form and range (Plates 5 - 12). Similarly, there appear to be few differences between the range and proportion of raw material used, except that at Point Riche there was a higher proportion of Ramah chert and quartz crystal (Kennett 1985). At this stage, no formal analysis of the tool assemblage has been done.

There are also differences between the two sites. They are situated in different micro environments, Phillip's Garden in a sheltered meadow underlain by a rocky limestone beach and Point Riche on an exposed point of land with a mixture of heath and grassy vegetation underlain by undulating limestone bedrock. Both areas have a good view of the sea, although from Point Riche the vista is wider. Connected to this difference in location is the fact that during the summer Phillip's Garden, which is sheltered, is infested with uncountable flies, whereas at Point Riche where there is always a stiff cold breeze the flies are relatively scarce. On this basis it is hypothesized that Point Riche and Phillip's Garden were seasonally connected. It is suggested that Phillip's Garden was a virtual year round settlement from which task groups would have left at different periods for various purposes. A likely exodus would have occurred during the summer where most, in some years perhaps all, of the group living at Phillip's Garden would have moved the short distances to Point Riche where they could spend the summer more comfortably.

If Point Riche was a summer site then the house structures would have been different from those at Phillip's Garden. Along with different building material available at Point Riche, there would not have been the same need for shelter against the winter weather. Thus it would be logical that the house features at Point Riche would not be as distinct in outline, walls, or internal features as the more clearly defined house features at Phillip's Garden.

It must be stressed, however, that at this point these are hypotheses rather than interpretations. It is hoped that more concrete results will emerge from the faunal identification and analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to the success of the 1985 field season. As before, Parks Canada arranged lab space and accommodation and various people from Parks were responsible for this and other logistical and financial matters: Charles Lindsay of Historic Resources Research, Atlantic Division; Edna Hall, Superintendent of National Historic Parks in Newfoundland; Bruce Bradbury, Superintendent of L'Anse aux Meadows and Port au Choix National Historic Parks; and George O'Keefe, General Works Manager for the Port au Choix National Historic Park. Earl Luffman, Parks Archaeologist with the Atlantic Division, worked with us in the field as a crew chief and repeatedly risked life and limb by taking photographs of Phillip's Garden from the dizzy and windy heights of the photographic tower which he designed and built. Brian Gallant, Restoration Officer with the Atlantic Division of Parks, arrived in time for one of the few days of driving mist in an otherwise glorious summer and put in the grid at Point Riche. I appreciate the intensive work effort which the crew maintained throughout the summer since this was at the root of the project's success. I would like to thank my two other crew chiefs, David Simpson and Carol Krol, and the rest of the crew, Mary Biggin, Scott Biggin, Barbara Gould, Troy Gould, Sue Kearsley, Jeanette Ryan, Katherine Scott, Michael Spence, Marianne Stopp, and Pat Wells. Mrs. Rita Offrey continued to be indispensable as our cook and Anne Douglas, secretary of Memorial's Department of Anthropology, regularly received messages from the field and responded to all requests quickly and cheerfully.

Back in St. John's Sue Kearsley, Carol Krol, and David Simpson continued to catalogue, Tip Evans drew the site maps and Doug Robbins drew the profiles. Memorial University Photographic Services photographed the artefacts and printed the maps.

REFERENCES CITED

- Harp, E.
1976 Dorset Settlement Patterns in Newfoundland and Southeastern Hudson Bay. In *Eastern Arctic Prehistory: Palaeoeskimo Problems*, edited by M. Maxwell, 119-138. Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology, 31.
- Kennett, B.
1985 A Comparative Study of Two Lithic Assemblages from Port au Choix. Term Paper submitted for Anthropology 6182, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Renouf, M.A.P.
1985a Archaeology of the Port au Choix National Historic Park: Report of the 1984 Field Activities. Unpublished report prepared for Historic Resources Research, Atlantic Division, Parks Canada.
1985b Report of the Archaeological Investigations at the Port au Choix and Point Riche Peninsulas. In Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador 1984, edited by J. Sproull Thomson and Callum Thomson, 298-321.
1985c Archaeological Research in the Port au Choix National Historic Park, Northwest Newfoundland. Polar Record: 693-697.
1986 Archaeological Investigations at Phillip's Garden and Point Riche, Port au Choix National Historic Park: Report of 1985 Field Activities published report prepared for Historic Resources Research, Atlantic Division, Parks Canada.

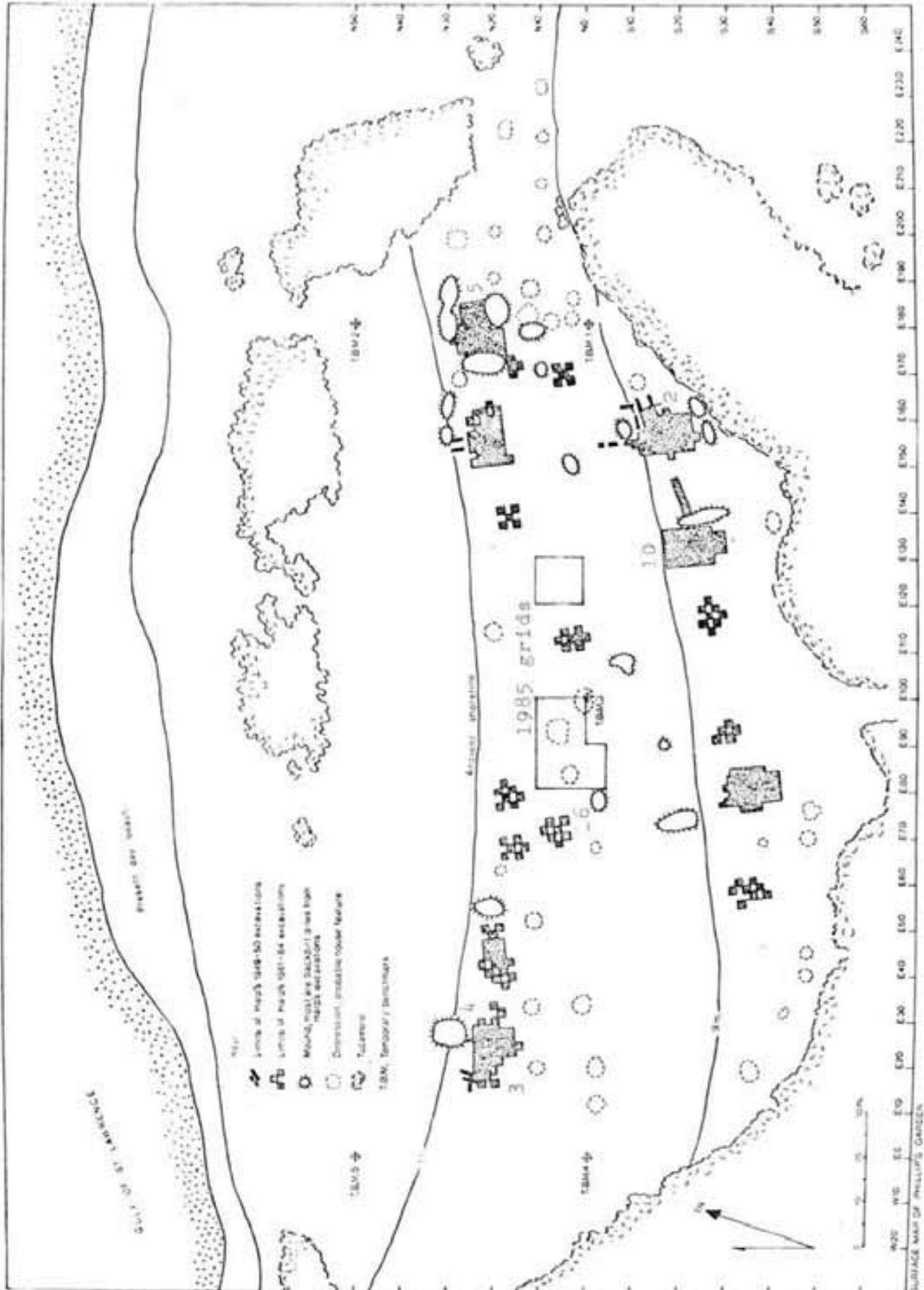
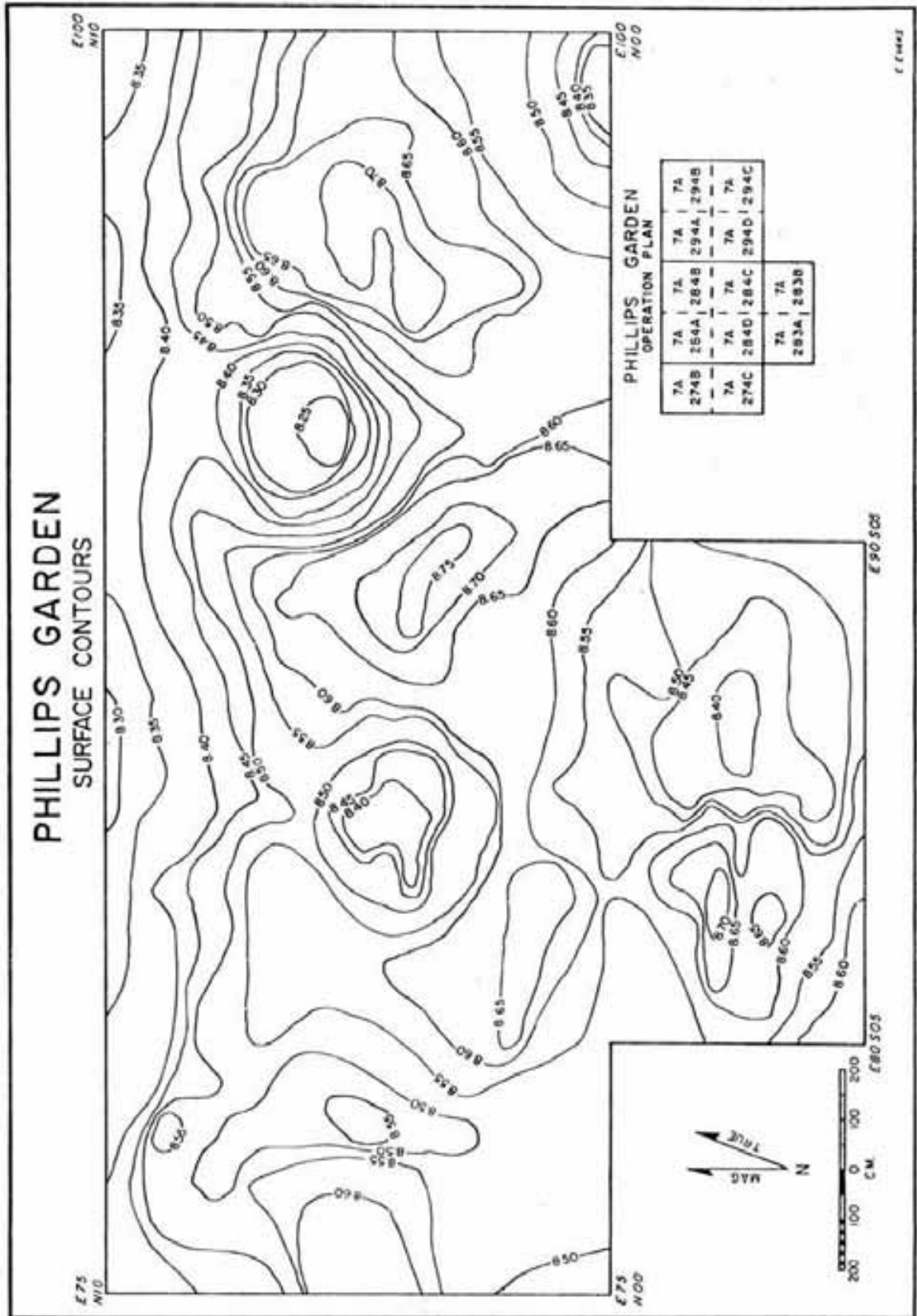


Figure 1: Surface features at Phillip's Garden.

Figure 2: Surface contours of 1985 excavation area, Phillip's Garden.



C. (1942)










EXCAVATION LIMIT	
DEPRESSION	
ELEVATION	
ROCK	
WHALE BONE	
LINE LEVEL DATUM	
FEATURE OUTLINE / DESIGNATION	
BLACK ORGANIC STAIN	
CHARCOAL / BURNED FAT	

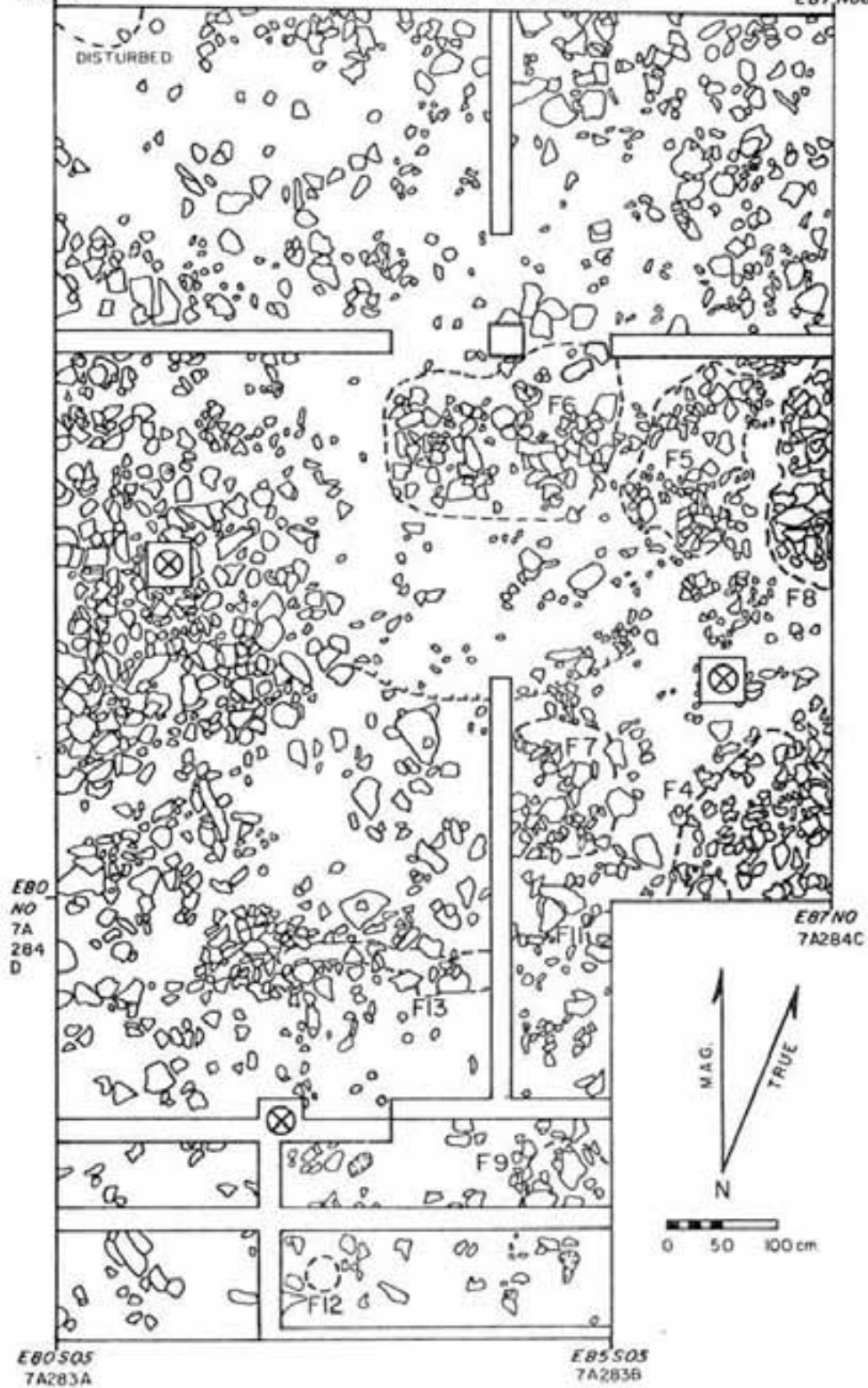
Figure 3: Feature 1 at Level 4, Phillip's Garden.

PHILLIPS GARDEN

7A284A-D & 7A283A

7A284A
EB0N08

7A284B
EB7N08



EB0
NO
7A
284
D

EB7NO
7A284C

EB0S05
7A283A

EB5S05
7A283B

List of (uncalibrated) radiocarbon dates from
Phillip's Garden and Point Riche.

<u>Site</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sample Number</u>	<u>Lab. Number</u>
Phillip's Garden	4	1250 \pm 60 B.P.	7A284C92	Beta-15639
Phillip's Garden	6	1850 \pm 100 B.P.	7A284D284	Beta-15379
Phillip's Garden	2	1570 \pm 70 B.P.	7A323A211	Beta-15381
Phillip's Garden	2	1920 \pm 110 B.P.	7A323A540	Beta-15368
Phillip's Garden E.	hearth	2660 \pm 70 B.P.	7A282B2	Beta-15375
Point Riche	1	1750 \pm 80 B.P.	7A547D380	Beta-15376
Point Riche	2	1750 \pm 90 B.P.	7A547B499	Beta-15382
Point Riche	-	1546 \pm 80 B.P.	7A525B113	Beta-15377

Figure 4

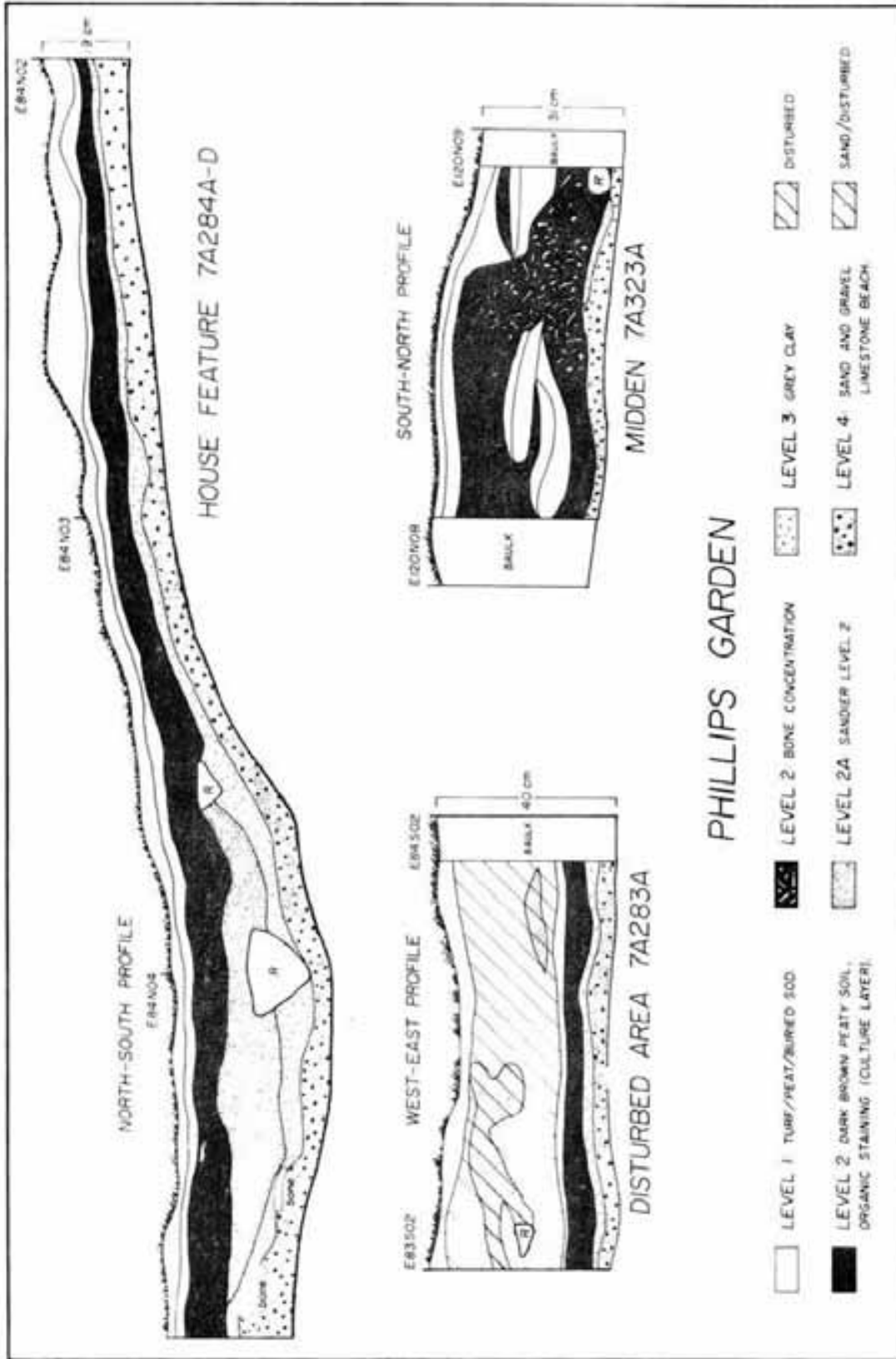
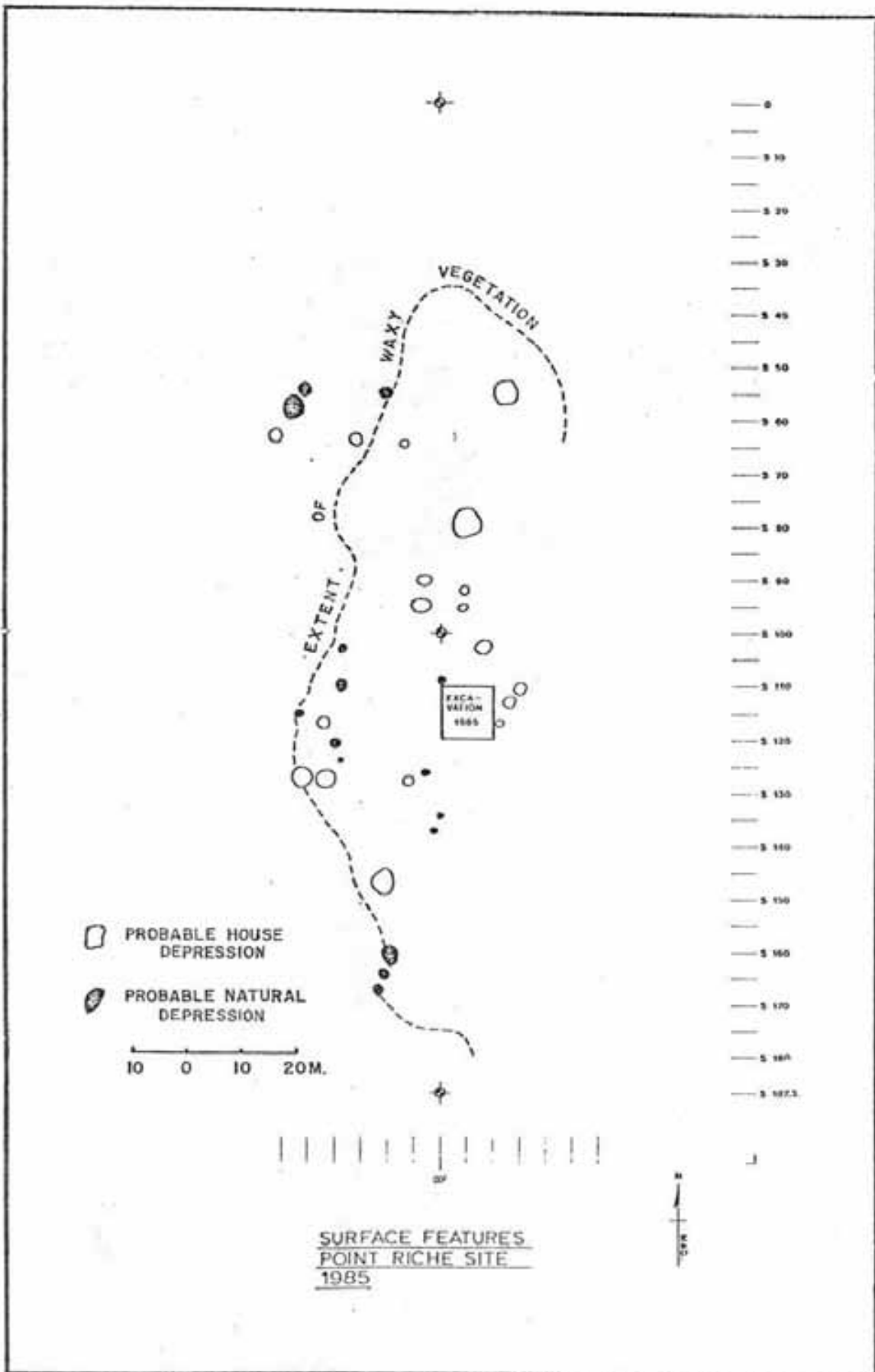


Figure 5: Profiles from Phillip's Garden



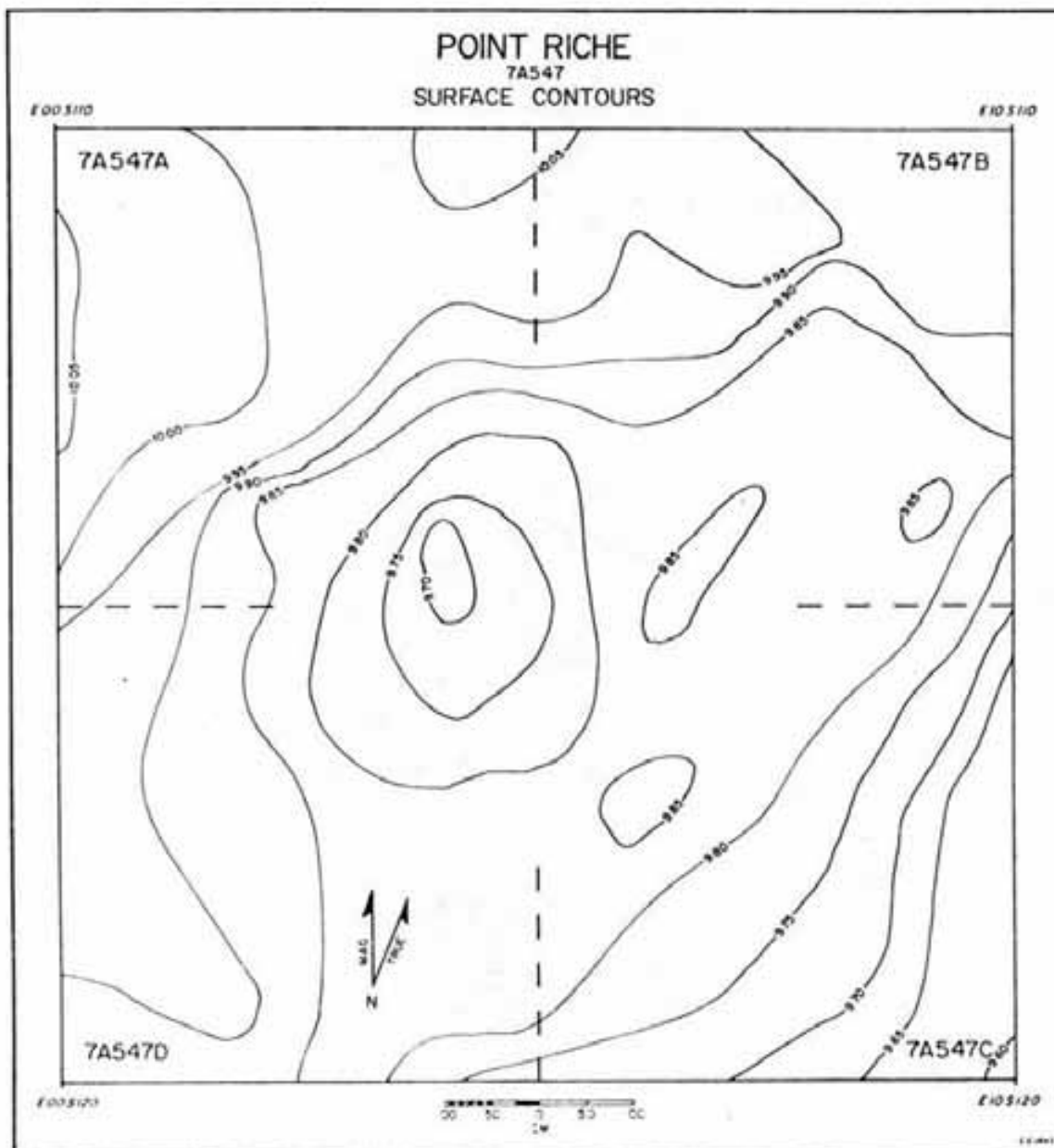




Plate 1: Feature 1 at top of Level 4, Phillip's Garden, looking north.



Plate 2: Feature 1 at top of Level 4, Phillip's Garden, looking northeast.

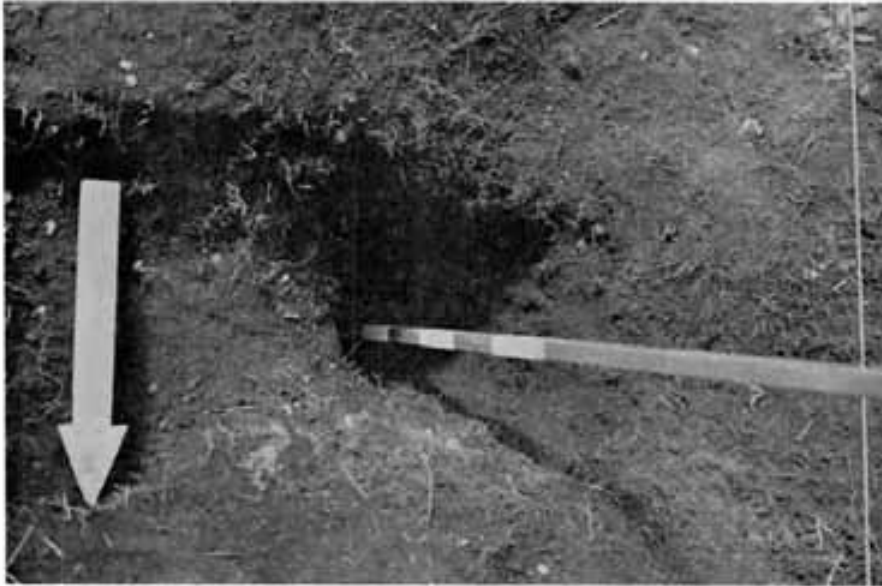


Plate 3: A deep hole, probably used as a waste pit, Point Riche.



Plate 4: Feature 1 at Point Riche, looking north.

Plate 5: Endblades and bifaces from Phillip's Garden.

A-L: Endblades.

M-O: Bifaces.

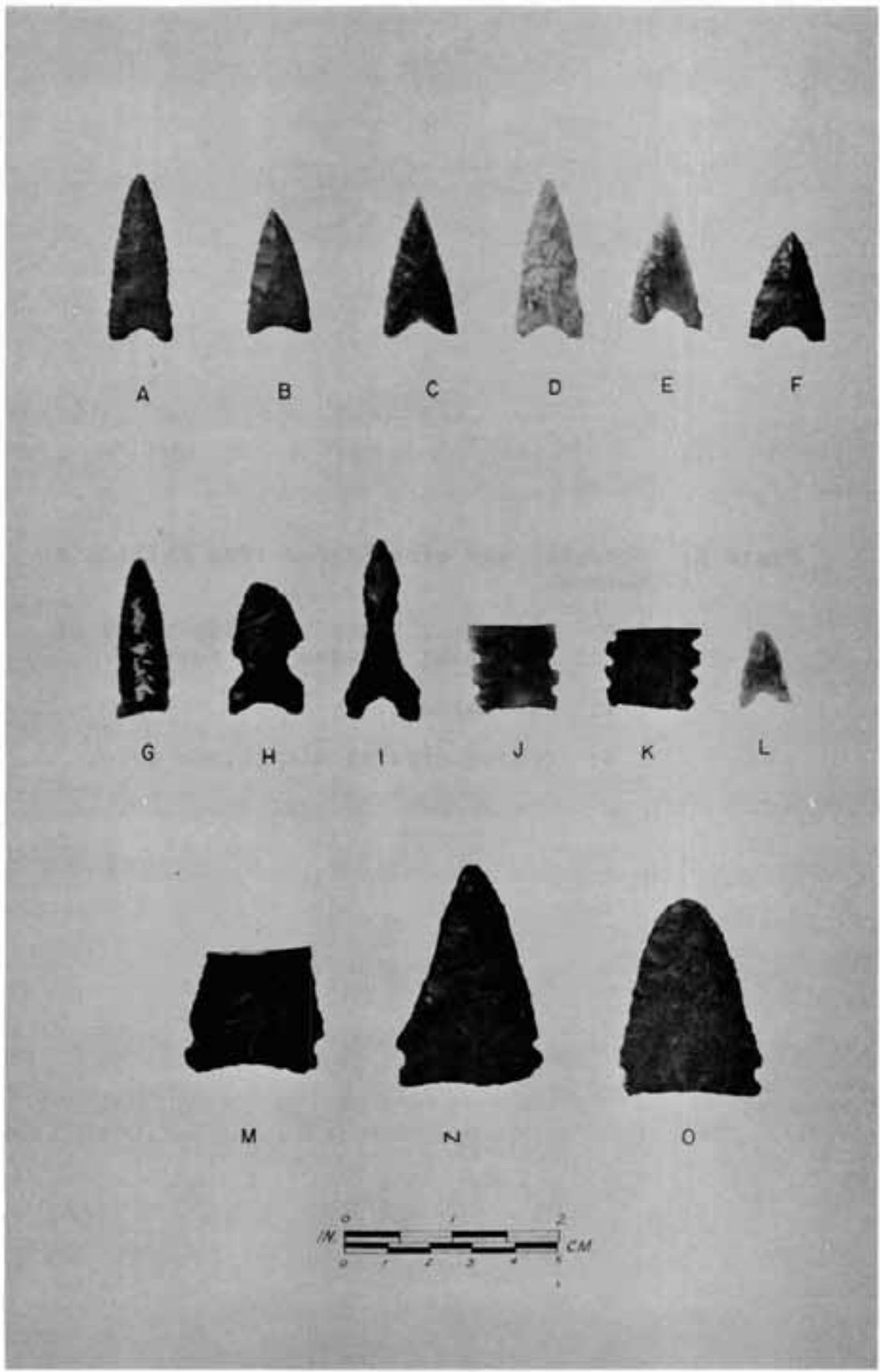


Plate 6: Scrapers and microblades from Phillip's Garden.

A-O: Scrapers. Note the wide range of variation in size and form.

P-T: Microblades.

W: Quartz crystal microblade core.

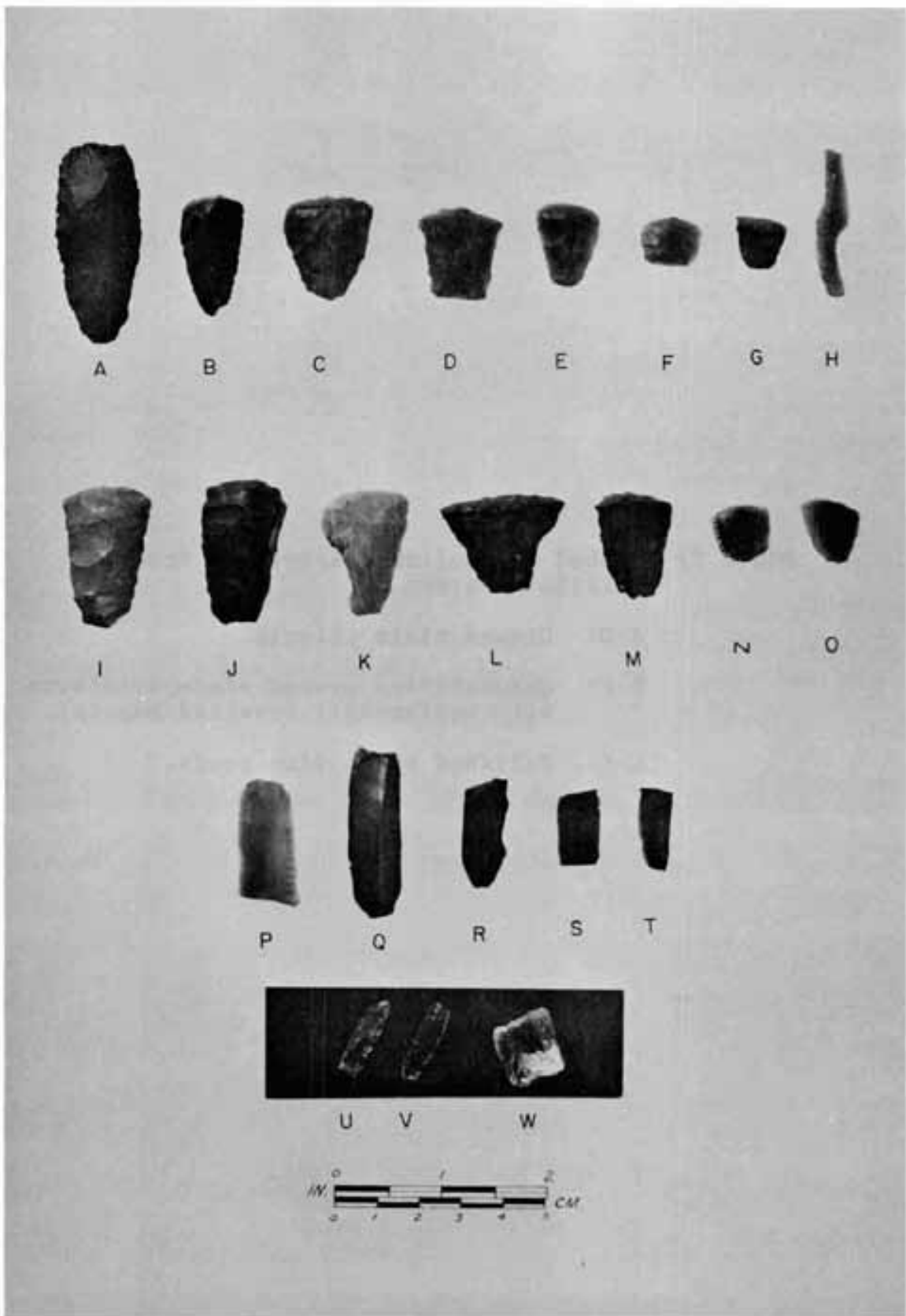


Plate 7: Ground and polished artefacts from Phillip's Garden.

A-D: Ground slate chisels.

E-F: Unidentified ground slate artefacts with unifacially bevelled edge(s).

G-K: Polished burin-like-tools.

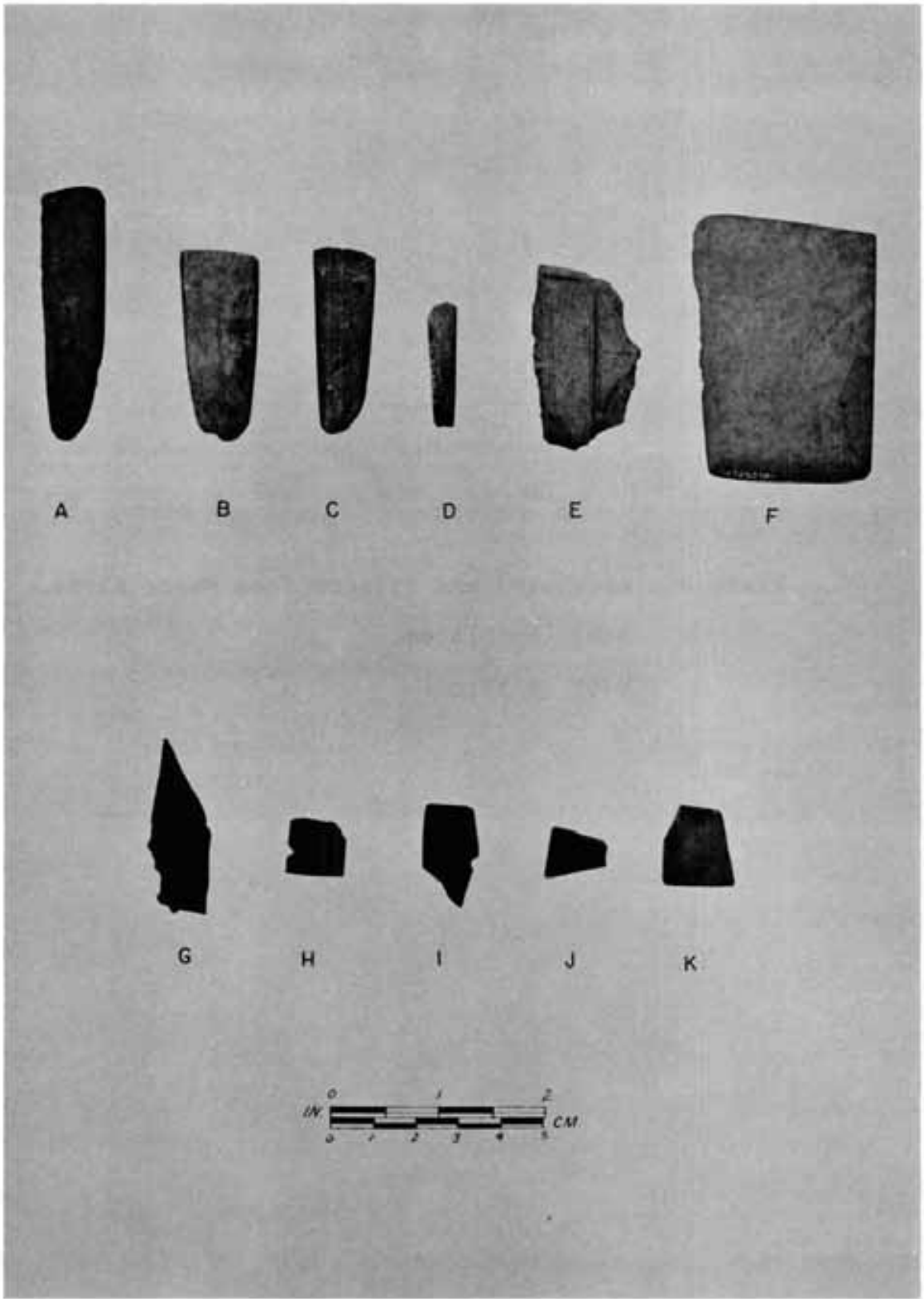


Plate 8: Endblades and bifaces from Point Riche.

A-M: Endblades.

N-Q: Bifaces.

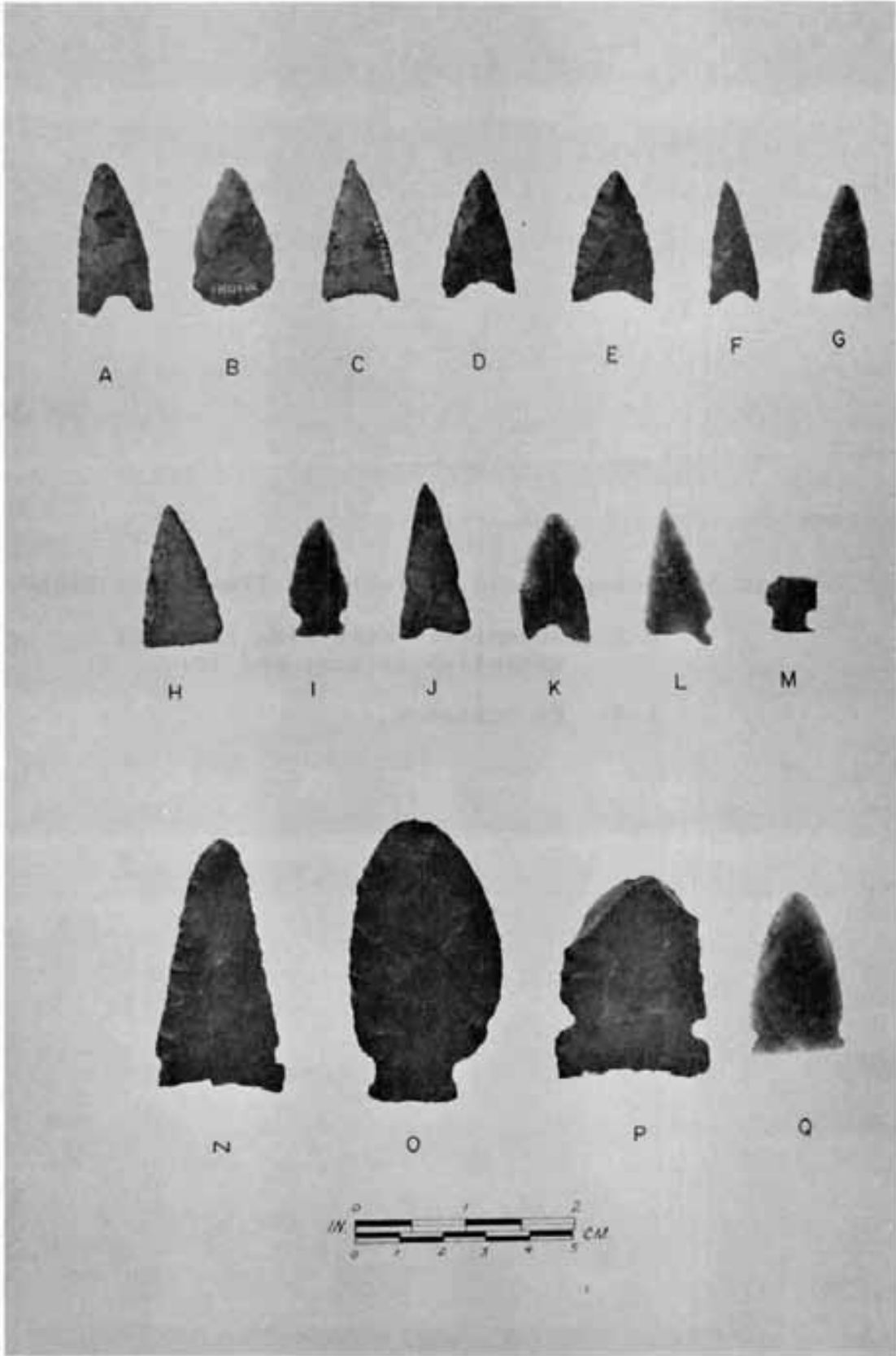


Plate 9: Scrapers and microblades from Point Riche.

A-K: Scrapers. Note wide range of variation in size and form.

L-Q: Microblades.

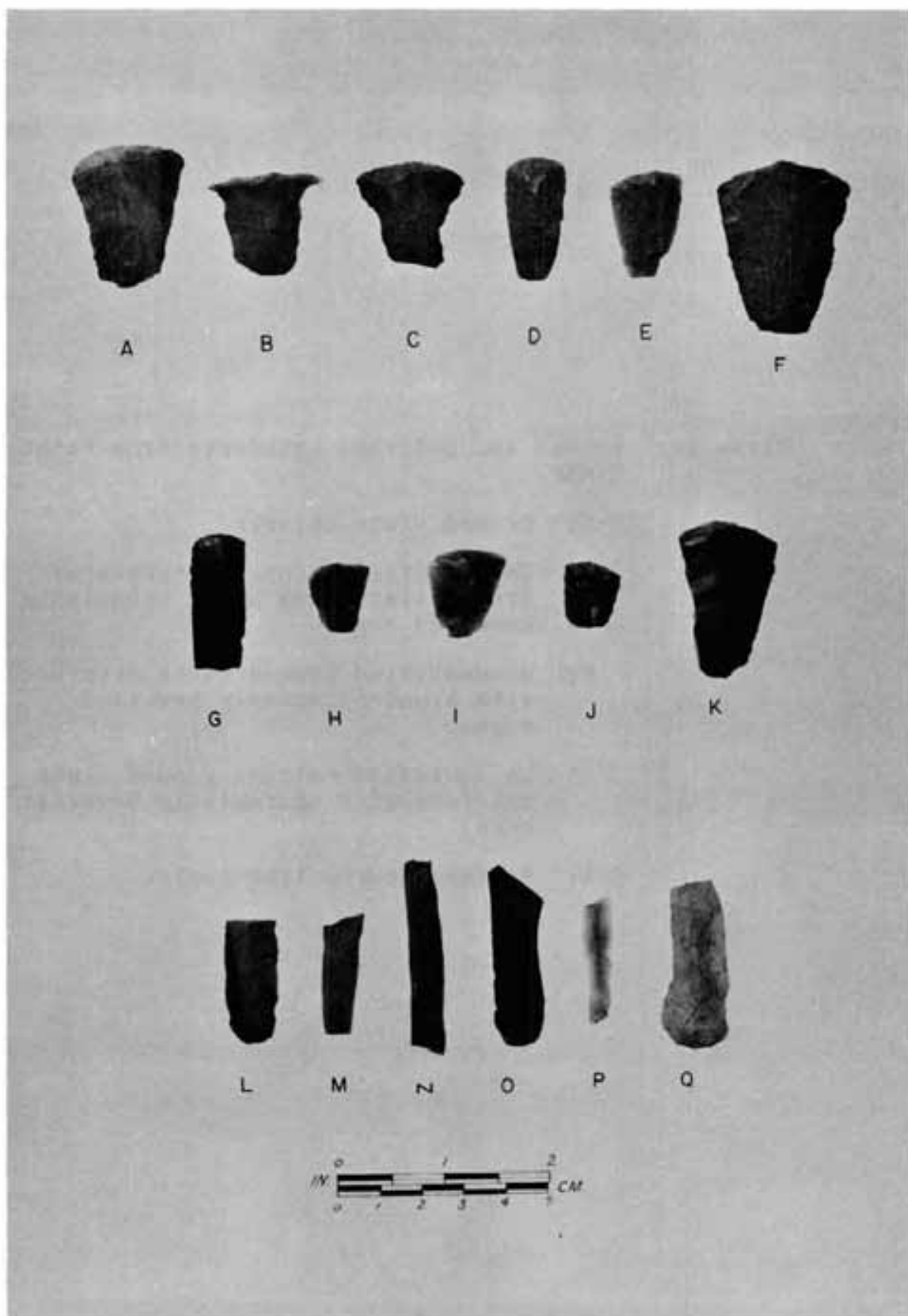


Plate 10: Ground and polished artefacts from Point Riche.

A-C: Ground slate chisels.

D: Unidentified notched artefact of ground slate with blunt bifacially bevelled edge.

E: Unidentified ground slate artefact with blunt bifacially bevelled edge.

F: Unidentified notched ground slate artefact with unifacially bevelled edge.

G-I: Polished burin-like-tools.



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I

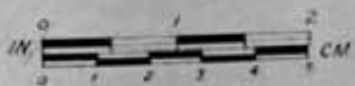


Plate 11: Bone artefacts from Phillip's Garden
and Point Riche.

- A: Scraper haft, Point Riche.
- B-C: Burin-like-tool hafts, Phillip's
Garden.
- D: Unidentified, Point Riche.
- E-F: Harpoon heads, Phillip's Garden.
- G-H: Barbed points, Phillip's Garden.
- I: Bone bead, Point Riche.
- J: Needle, Phillip's Garden.
- K: Awl, Phillip's Garden.

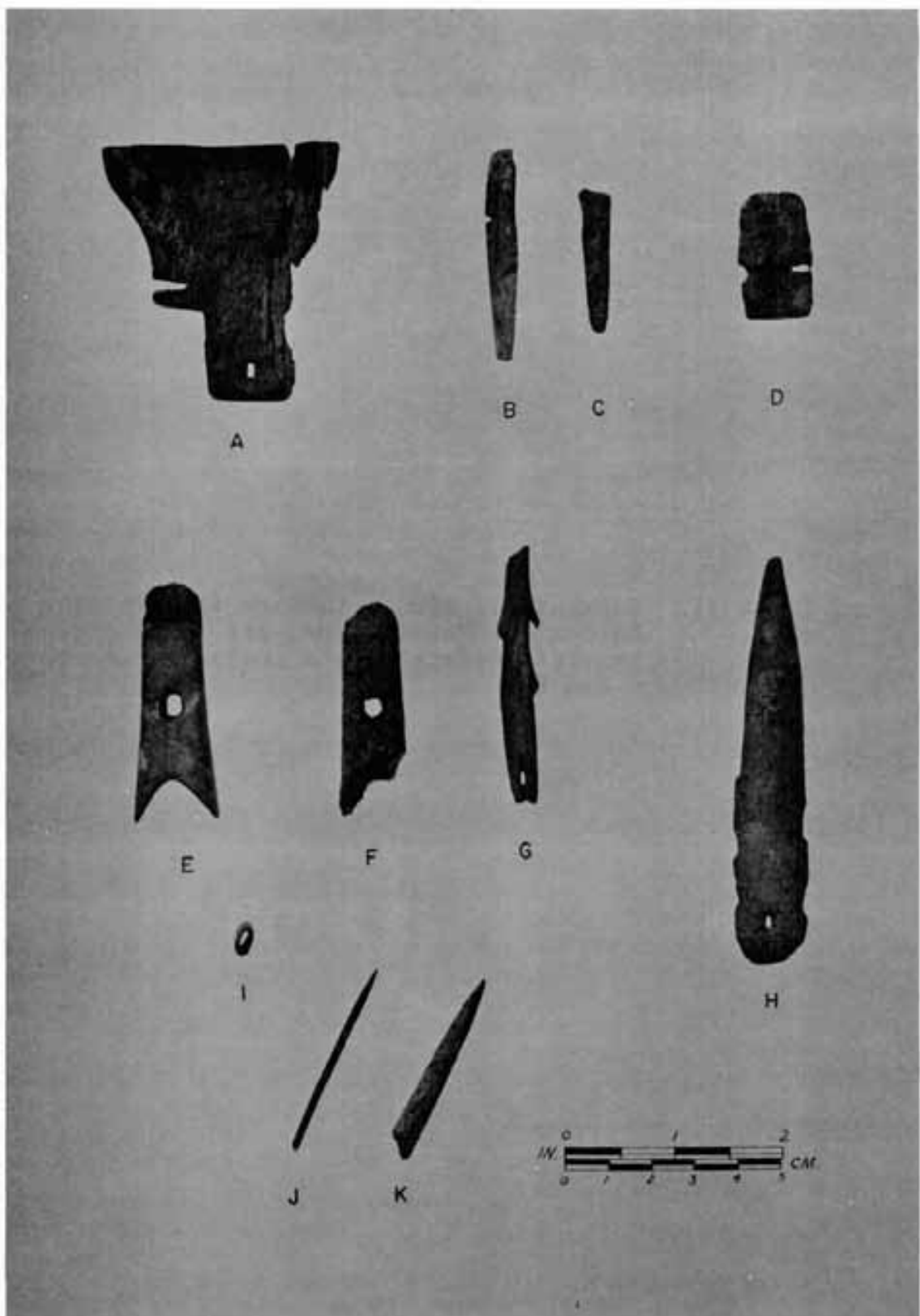


Plate 12: Segments of sledge-runners from Phillip's Garden and Point Riche, all showing ventral surface. Note incised lines on C and F.

