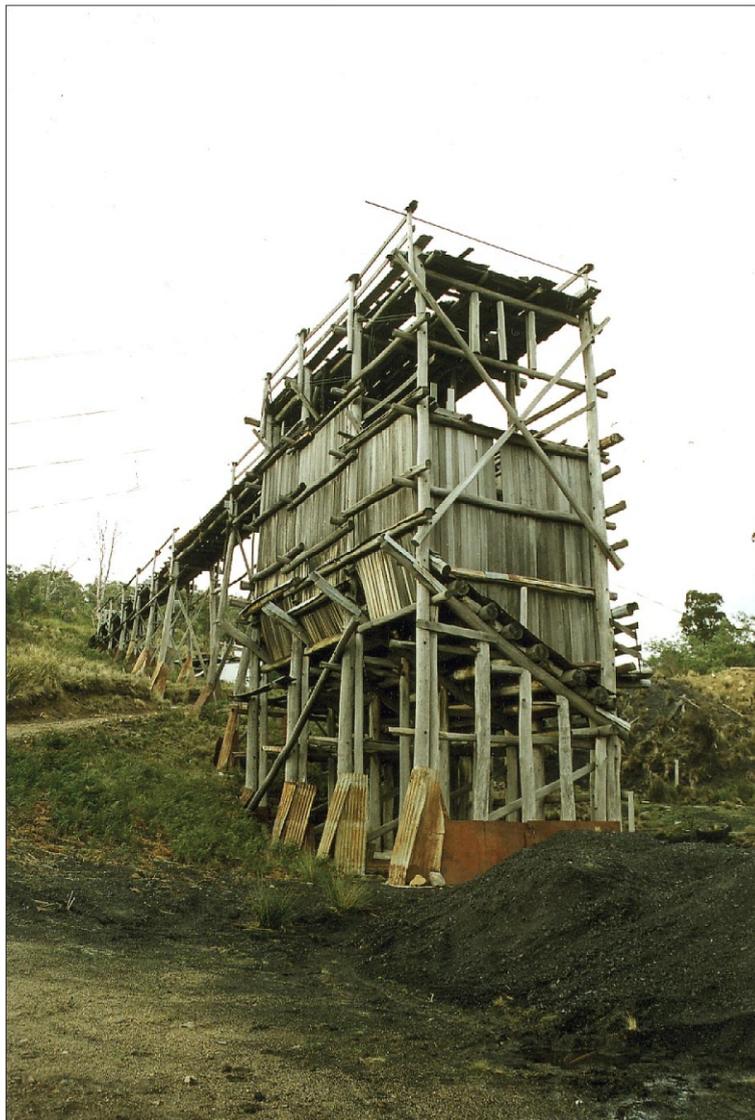


**Archaeological Survey Report  
1998/02**

**An archaeological survey  
of the  
Fenhope coal bins**

*by Parry Kostoglou*



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT 2000/02**

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## Acknowledgements

The project officer acknowledges the assistance provided by Mr Greg Dickens of the Department of Mineral Resources who valiantly remained atop the precarious coal bins during much of the field visit to this site, in addition to taking the photographs. Acknowledgement is also made of Carol Bacon’s report on the coal resources of Tasmania, which is the principal source of historic information cited in this document.

## **Introduction**

### ***Job brief***

The archaeological survey of the Fenhope coal bins precinct was commissioned by the Department of Mineral Resources in response to a proposed enlargement of the existing Stanhope colliery. The verbal brief for this assignment called for a site record to be made of the resident coal bins and any other related features deemed relevant to the heritage significance of the Fenhope colliery. The project officer was further required to make an assessment of the coal bin's significance for the purpose of its future management.

### ***Methodology***

Fieldwork was undertaken at the site during a one-day visit on 12 June 1998. All features deemed relevant to the brief were successfully recorded using drafting and photographic techniques. Additional historic information in map/plan form had been previously obtained from old Department of Mines maps prior to this field trip.

## **Statement of significance**

In some respects, the Fenhope coal bins might be considered in a dubious light when assessing their relative significance to the community and industry. For example:

- The bins are less than 20 years old, having been built some time after the operator took out his lease in 1981.
- The related Fenhope colliery was a very small and unremarkable operation of very little social or historic importance at even a local level.
- The resident coal bins here, in reflecting the scale of mining, are very modest in size compared to the bins built at other more extensive collieries throughout the State.

However, even to the initiated, the Fenhope coal bins complex is an imposing edifice on the landscape which is a compelling signpost for the extractive activities undertaken here. The bins are furthermore a remarkable example of bush engineering using traditional materials and construction techniques which would have made the structure seem contemporary a hundred years ago. These coal bins have also been constructed in a manner and configuration identical to those built at historic collieries throughout the State (see Plate 1). These bins are in effect, if not in age, an artefact from the past which is now unique because:

- All other historic coal bins at historic collieries have long since been destroyed above the ground by bushfires, salvage activities or renewed mining.
- Contemporary collieries employ more modern technology to sort coal, and do not therefore build artefacts like this any more.

In being built in recent technological times, Mr Fenton's traditional coal bins become all the more eccentric and worthy of protection. The perceived significance of these bins to the project officer is therefore further reflected in the recommendations cited below.

## **Recommendations**

As a result of this survey it is recommended that:

- The Fenhope coal bins site be protected from any damage by future expansion of nearby colliery operations or related infrastructure. For the purposes of this survey the coal bins site is defined as the coal bins, associated gantry and connecting tramway network.
- The Fenhope coal bins site be considered for nomination to the Tasmanian State Heritage register as a now unique artefact relating to the State's coal/mining industry.

## Historical overview

Coal appears to have been first discovered in the vicinity of Stanhope as early as 1864 when a Mr James Lamont found traces on the slopes of Ben Lomond. The first commercial exploitation of this find did not occur until 1882 when a Mr Stevenson and party drove a tunnel into a seam located near Storys Creek. Further workings were reported at Gipps Creek in 1901, and at Mount Christie, Greenstone Hill /Buena Vista in 1904.

Although the Buena Vista workings had proved unprofitable by the 1920s, the mines at Greenstone Creek and Mount Christie were periodically reopened between the 1920s and the 1960s. Between 1959 and 1965, a new tunnel was dug at this mine by Messrs N. and D. Fenton. The latter partner would subsequently establish another nearby colliery which is the topic of this report.

Meanwhile another prospect called the Excelsior mine had commenced spasmodic operation by 1923. In 1931 it was renamed the Stanhope and in addition to its new name the mine steadily increased production to become the major coal producer in the Mount Christie field. When production at the original or 'Old' Stanhope mine ended in 1957, a new mine 1.3 km to the northwest was located and opened the same year. This 'New' Stanhope mine operated successfully until its closure in 1973.

A final independent mine, subsequently named the 'Fenhope' was begun near the Old Stanhope mine in 1981 by Mr D. Fenton. This small colliery is still nominally operational to the present day and the standing structures described in this report were all constructed by the owner, Mr Fenton, as part of this operation. The locations of these coal mines comprising the Mount Christie field are shown in Figure 1.

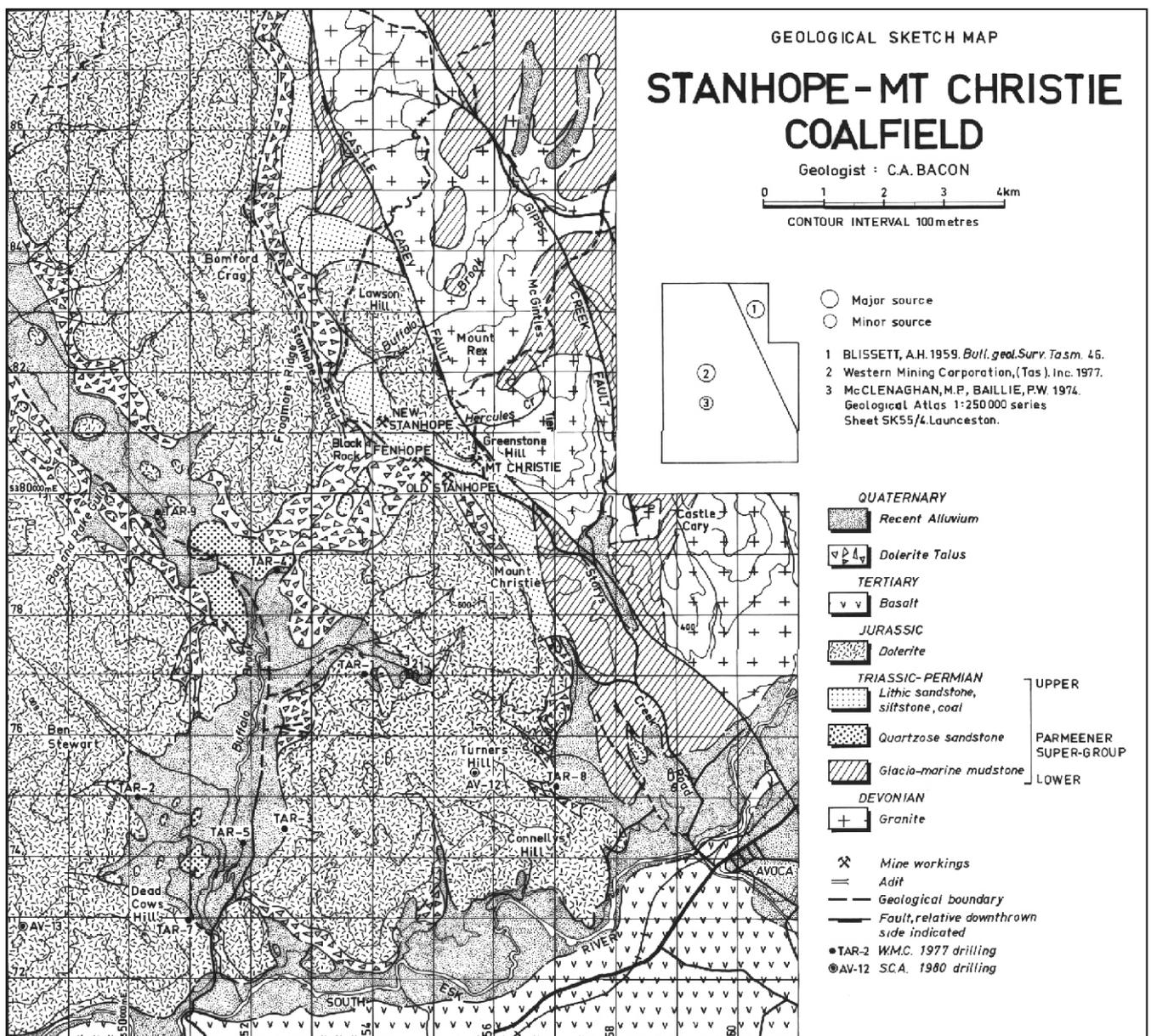
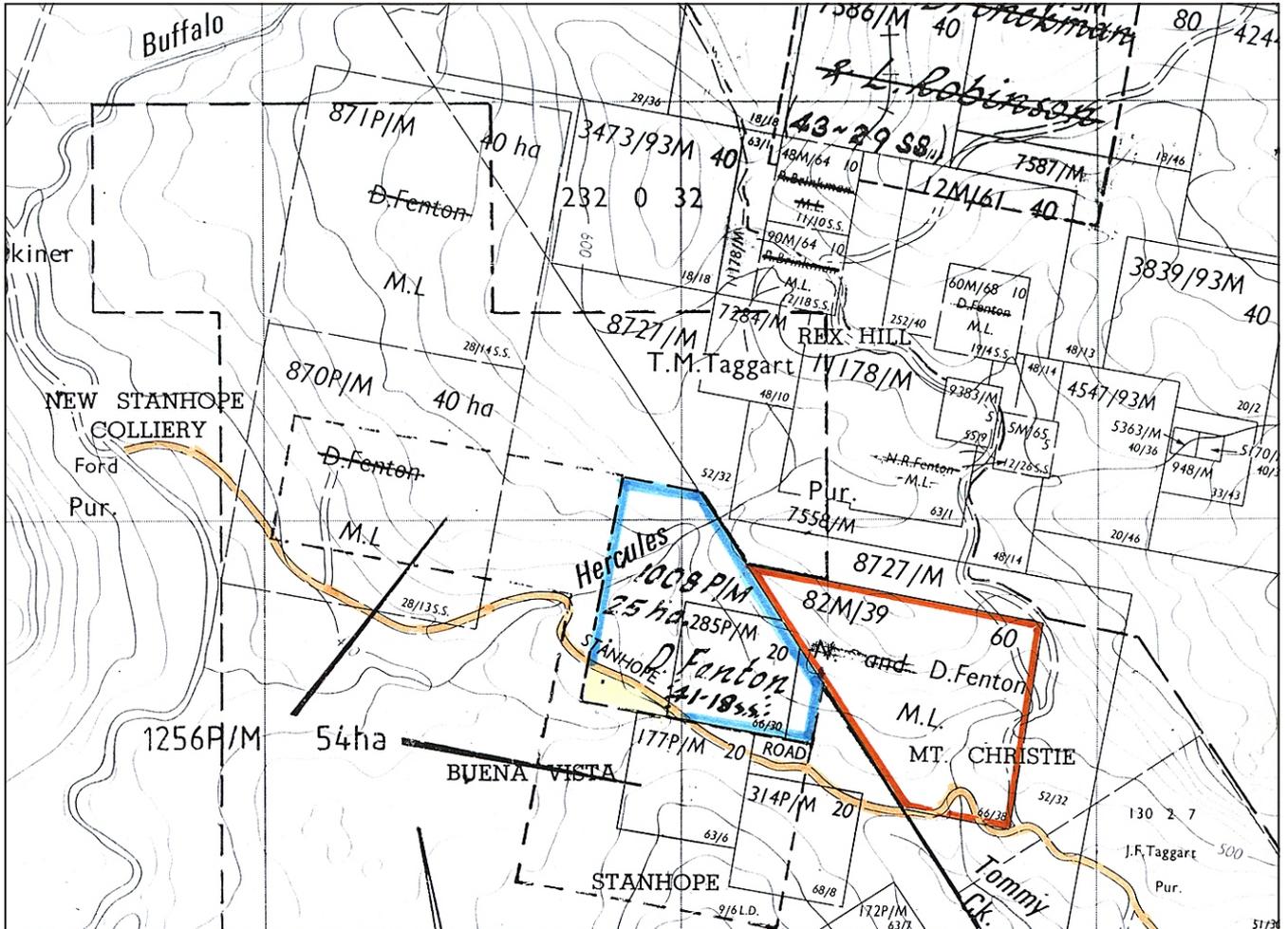


Figure 1

Map showing extent and contents of the Mount Christie/Stanhope coalfields (from Bacon, 1991)

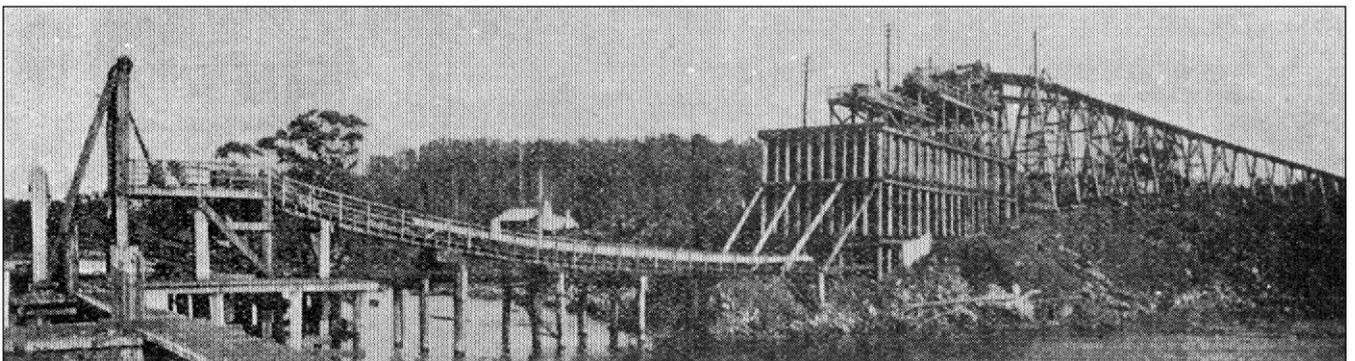
## Site Reports

The various features comprising the Fenhope colliery are situated in the southwest corner of a 25 hectare mineral lease (1008 P/M) held by Mr D. Fenton (see Figure 2). More specifically these occur on the south side of Stanhope Road some 300 m southeast of its passage over Hercules Creek. This colliery is marked as a set of three structures and a mine on the current 1:25 000 scale map sheet for the area (Stanhope), which is shown as Figure 3. A scaled plan of the Fenhope colliery (Figure 4) shows the disposition and relationships of the various features and structures described in this section of the report.



**Figure 2**

*Map showing current coal leases at Stanhope/Mount Christie*



**Plate I**

*Historic view (c.1928) of similar coal bins and wharfage at the Catamaran colliery, southeast Tasmania.*

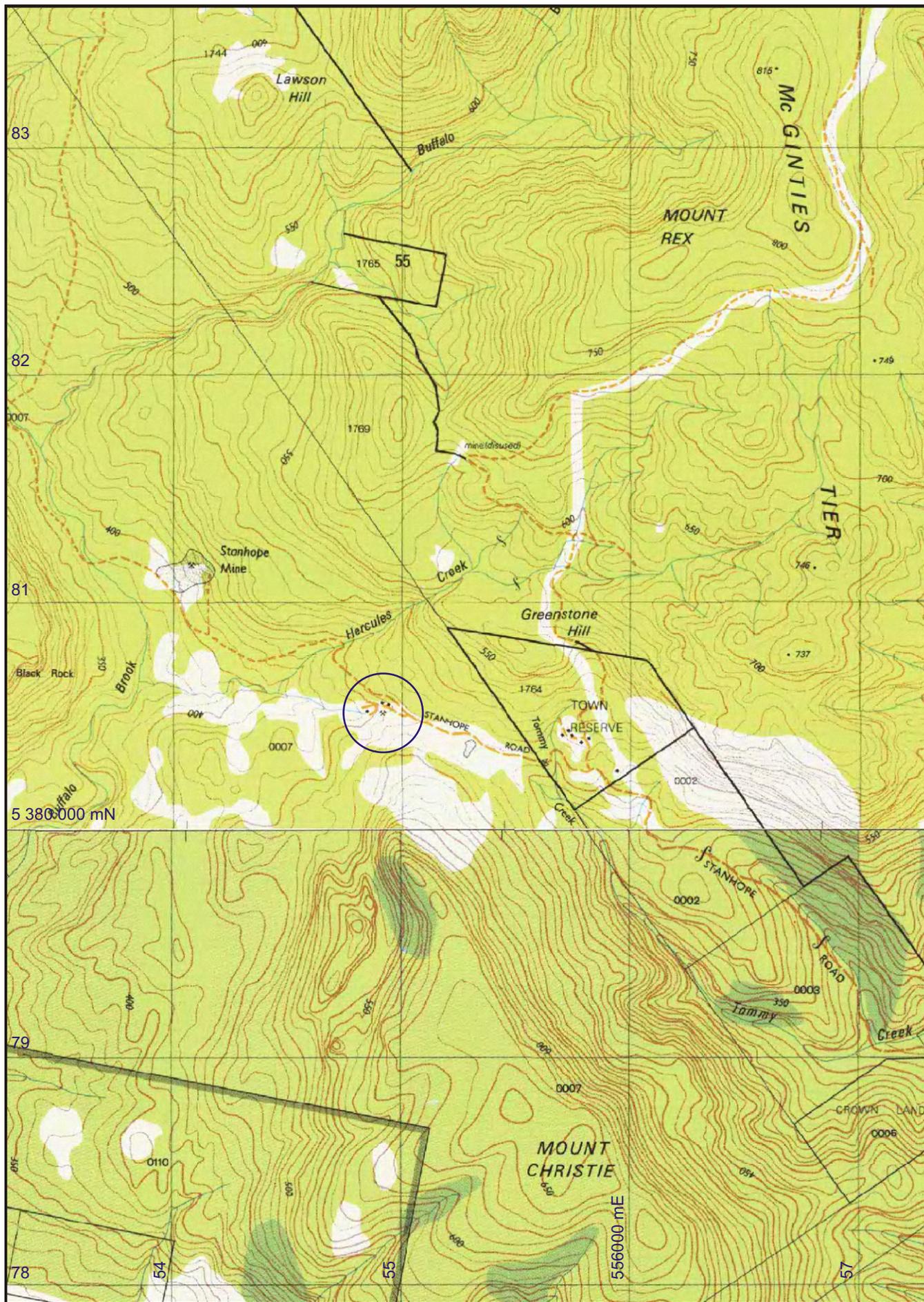


Figure 3

Enlarged 1:25 000 scale map showing location of Fenhope Colliery.

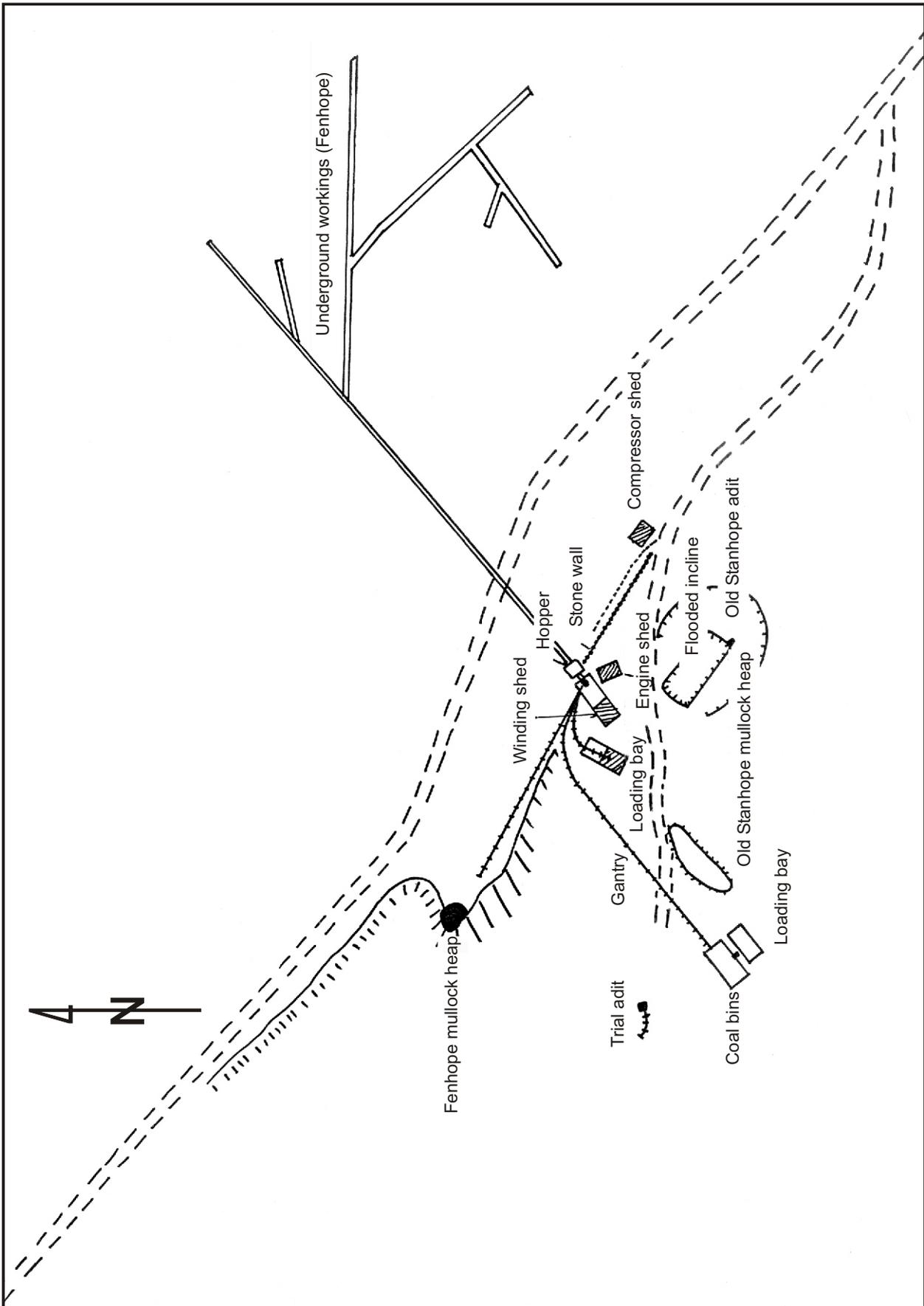


Figure 4. Current scaled plan of Fenhope colliery site and resident features.

### ■ **Fenton's adit/winding shed**

The central feature at the Fenhope colliery is the covered adit which leads to the various underground galleries comprising Mr Fenton's workings. The adit itself is shored with split timber slabs and the roof supported by unsquared spar timbers. A tramline linking the underground workings passes out through the adit entrance to the winding shed and bins beyond. The adit is protected from the elements by a two-sided roofed corrugated sheet iron structure. There is no wall on the northwestern side of the structure in order to allow the tram cars free passage out of the mine and down to the bins/mullock heaps beyond. The eastern side of the shelter is built directly onto the side of the winding shed. This structure contains the engine which retrieves the coal-laden bogies from underground by means of a continuous steel cable. The 5 x 5 metre shed was locked and its interior could not be inspected, although a diesel engine of some form could be spied through a ventilation panel. Plates 2 and 3 show views of these features.

### ■ **Unknown engine shed**

A 4 x 3 metre corrugated iron shed stands immediately southeast of the covered adit entrance and winding shed. Water from the roof is collected by a small circular water tank adjacent. This shed was also locked, although a small item of machinery (mill?) could be viewed through a loose board. Plate 4 shows a view of this structure.

### ■ **Loading bay**

A two-sided corrugated iron roofed structure standing five metres northwest of the covered adit appears to have accommodated a vehicle within for loading/unloading purposes. Plate 5 shows a view of this structure.

### ■ **Timber hopper**

A timber hopper has been excavated/recessed into the ground directly over the covered adit entrance. This three-sided structure is made of timber boards and is full of partially crushed coal. A metal chute leads from the base of this hopper down into the side of the adit. The purpose in delivering coal back into the mine is uncertain. A short vehicle track leads from the southeastern side of the hopper to the generator shed described below. This feature appears in Plate 6.

### ■ **Stone wall**

The track leading from the timber hopper to the generator shed has been consolidated on its southern downslope side by a one metre high drystone wall measuring 30 m in length. A view of this wall appears in Plate 7.

### ■ **Compressor shed**

A final corrugated iron shed stands immediately east of the southeastern end of the stone wall described above. This 5 x 4 metre structure was also locked, although a large air compressor could be seen through a ventilator panel. It is assumed that this plant provides air throughout the underground workings. Plate 8 shows a view of this structure.

### ■ **'Old Stanhope' adit**

An old mine adit, which appears to relate to the 'Old Stanhope' workings (1923–1957), lies 30 m southeast of the Fenhope adit and shed precinct. The adit entrance occurs at the very southeastern corner of a 17 x 6 metre trench or incline which is now filled with water. A coal seam up to four metres in height is evident in the profile of the eastern wall of the adit incline. A photo of this feature appears as Plate 9.

### ■ **'Old Stanhope' mullock heap**

The mullock heap to which waste rock was removed from the old adit described above lies 25 m west of the adit/incline. Measuring 25 x 15 metres in extent, this mullock heap was probably connected to the adit by a short tramline or track. Plate 10 shows a view of this feature.

### ■ **Fenhope mullock heap**

The most recent mullock generated by the Fenhope operation has been dumped 50 m northwest of the covered adit at the end of a narrow gauge tramway section which links the two features. Mullock dumped at this site has been tossed over the side of the resident slope and forms a low mound. Plate 11 shows a view of this feature.

### ■ **Coal bins gantry**

Measuring 43 m in length, 2.1 m in width and up to 13 m in height, a substantial timber gantry carried a tramway spur at an even grade from the adit precinct to the top of the coal bins. Support for the gantry is provided by a dozen trestles of increasing height to compensate for the fall in the ground below. These trestles have been made from hardwood spar logs averaging half a metre in thickness. Each trestle spar has a protective cone-shaped corrugated iron sleeve wrapped around its base to protect it from water penetration. The gantry itself consists of a continuous deck of sleeper-type timbers fastened to larger cross beams anchored to the trestle superstructure. A succession of railway sleepers then supports the narrow gauge steel tram rails above this decking. A balustrade of sorts, made of small diameter spars and measuring 1.5 metres in height, runs the length of the gantry and provides some element of safety from overbalance to the operator pushing the coal cart out to the bins. Figure 5 shows an overhead scaled plan view of the gantry. Several photographs of the gantry appear as Plates 12 to 15.

### ■ **Coal bins**

Located directly beneath the final section of the gantry stand the coal bins into which coal brought by tramcar from the mine was dumped and sorted by gravity for loading into trucks waiting at its base. The bins are made of timber palings fastened to an internal framework, but further held in place by a series of external unsquared spars bolted onto the log uprights which support the structure. The bins are further supported at their base by a foundation sequence of stout sawn logs set in two parallel rows. A timber catwalk on the southern side of the bins allows the operator to reach a control lever which opens the internal coal chute and discharges sorted coal into waiting trucks parked in a loading bay. Due to their height, the bins interior could not be viewed and their internal workings remain undocumented. Figure 5 shows a lateral plan view of the coal bins. Plates 16 to 19 show several photographic views of the bins.

### ■ **Bins loading bay**

This is merely a 20 x 10 metre patch of open ground immediately south of the coal bins where trucks were directed to park below the coal chute. The bay is demarcated by a single line of stones around its perimeter. This feature can be seen in the right hand side of Plate 17.

### ■ **Tramway**

The tramway at the Fenhope mine is a narrow gauge steel rail affair. The bulk of the tramway is presumably underground, joining the various mine galleries to the surface adit. From the adit entrance the line branches into three spurs. The shortest runs 30 m to the vehicular loading bay next to the winding shed. The medial spur runs from the adit entrance some 75 m over the gantry to the coal bins. The northernmost spur runs in a straight line some 40 m linking the adit entrance to Fenton's mullock heap. Miscellaneous portable sections of track and a turntable of sorts lie disused around the adit precinct. There is also a short abandoned section of track north of the coal bins which appears to have once sought access to a test adit, which was never dug. A general view of the tramway appears as Plate 20.

### ■ **Trial adit**

Located on the slope some 40 m northeast of the coal bins is a short section of tram track described above and a cleared 1 x 2 metre profile of the hillside, which might have been intended for development of an adit. It was never excavated and the tram spur has been disconnected. Plate 21 shows the abortive tram spur at this adit.

## **Reference**

BACON, C. A. 1991. The Coal Resources of Tasmania. *Bulletin Geological Survey Tasmania* 64.

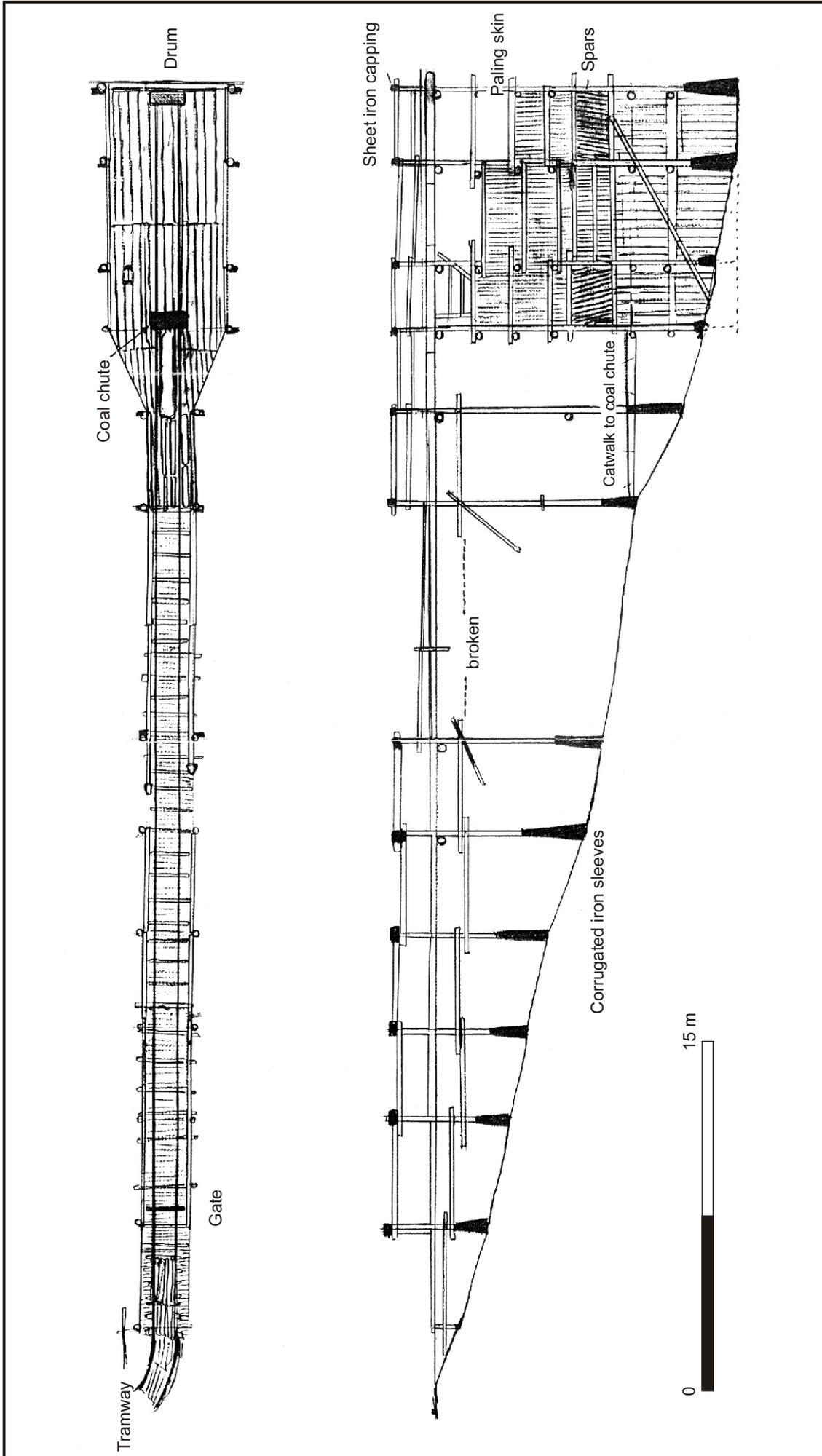


Figure 5

Current scaled plan of gantry and coal bins.

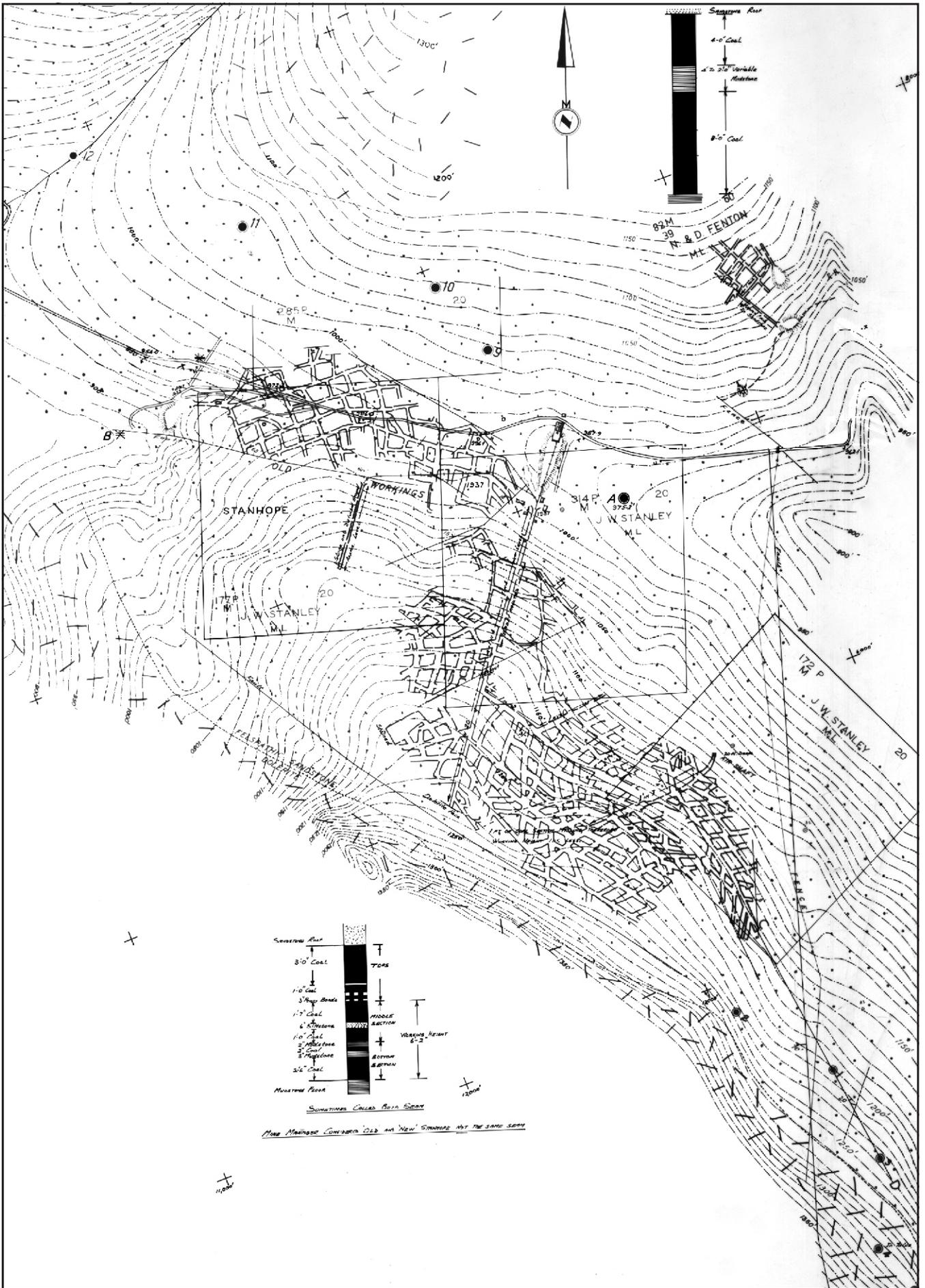


Figure 6

Part of 1971 plan of the Stanhope colliery [MRT Geological Plan 3546-48]

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Site photographs**



**Plate 2**

*Interior view of Fenhope adit.*



**Plate 3**

*Southerly view of winding shed and adjacent covered adit entrance.*



**Plate 4**

*Overhead view of unknown machinery shed adjacent to winding shed.*



**Plate 5**

*View of roadside loading bay.*



**Plate 6**

*Northerly view of timber hopper above adit entrance.*



**Plate 7**

*View of drystone wall running between hopper and compressor shed.*



**Plate 8**

*General view of Fenhope colliery. Note compressor shed at mid right.*



**Plate 9**

*Old Stanhope incline and adit. Note banded coal seam in profile.*



**Plate 10**

*Old Stanhope mullock heap.*



**Plate 11**

*Fenhope mullock heap at end of tram spur from adit.*



**Plate 12**

*View of gantry and coal bins beyond.*



**Plate 13**

*View along gantry showing tramline, decking and balustrade.*



**Plate 14**

*View of supporting trestles.*



**Plate 15**

*Another view of supporting trestles.  
Note cone-shaped sleeves for weatherproofing.*



**Plate 16**

*View of southern aspect of coal bins. Note the  
catwalk to access coal chute control lever.*



**Plate 17**

*Western aspect of bins and loading bay to right.*



**Plate 18**

*View of decking on coal bins and coal chute.*



**Plate 19**

*Coal chute at end of the catwalk.*



**Plate 20**

*General view showing triple tram spurs to loading bay, gantry and mullock heap respectively.*



**Plate 21**

*Abandoned trial adit tram section.*