

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE CHARACTERIZATION OF TILLS IN THE EDMONTON AREA  
USING STANDARD PENETRATION TEST RESULTS

by

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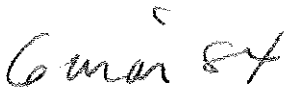
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## ABSTRACT

This study of the characteristics of the Edmonton till delineates various "soft" zones in the till. The basis of the study is the distribution, both areally and with depth, of the results of the Standard Penetration Test.

The report indicates that the Edmonton tills are more likely of a flow or melt-out origin rather than a lodgement origin. Further, a bilinear relationship between moisture contents and blow counts is suggested.

The majority of the soft zones in the Edmonton tills are found away from preglacial or postglacial valleys which suggests that these tills have undergone little consolidation due to drainage. These soft zones in the till preclude the assumption that the local till is an adequate bearing stratum.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 GEOLOGY OF THE EDMONTON AREA

The City of Edmonton is located in the east central portion of Alberta at approximately 53.5°N Latitude and 113.5°W Longitude (Figure 1 After Kathol and McPherson 1975). This physiographic region is known as the Eastern Alberta Plain (Alberta 1969).

During Cretaceous times, the Edmonton area was inundated by a large inland sea extending from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic. Erosion of the highlands area to the west produced sediments which formed the bedrock in the Edmonton area. These deposits, termed the Edmonton Group (Irish 1970), consist primarily of interbedded and intertonguing sandstones, siltstones and mudstones. The interbedding and intertonguing of the deposit is primarily due to the fluctuating nature of the shallow inland sea.

Numerous coal seams may be found throughout the local bedrock sequence which reflects the presence of vast swamp areas during the Upper Cretaceous Period. Bentonite is also present in the bedrock, both as a constituent mineral in the clastic rocks and as individual beds (May and Thomson 1978).

During the Eocene, the Laramide Orogeny caused the Cretaceous deposits to be uplifted which brought about subaerial erosion that lasted for a large part of the Tertiary Period. This long period of erosion led to the development of the mature drainage system shown in Fig.2.

The valleys of these preglacial channels were very broad with gently sloping valley walls (Carlson 1967).

Towards the end of the Tertiary, a period of continental glaciation began with the ice sheet advancing up the regional slope of the land. As a result, the rivers aggraded and deposited a sequence of sands and gravels termed the Saskatchewan Sands and Gravels. These deposits, consisting of a clean quartzitic sand with minor chert pebbles, are usually restricted to the preglacial valleys.

The only recorded continental ice to invade the Edmonton area was the Wisconsin. Westgate (1969) postulated that local advances and retreats of this ice deposited two tills which he termed the upper and lower tills. These tills were laid down on the Saskatchewan Sands and Gravels in the preglacial channels or in contact with the bedrock in the upland areas.

As the continental ice sheet retreated, numerous ice marginal glacial lakes formed. The montmorillonite rich sediments of these glacial lakes settled out to form the lacustrine deposits overlying the till. St. Onge (1972) traced the history of a series of glacial lakes along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains as the continental ice sheet retreated. The last of the series of these lakes was glacial Lake Edmonton.

This lake first drained to the southeast through the Gwynne outlet in the approximate area of present day Millwoods and finally along the North Saskatchewan River.

## 1.2 LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE QUATERNARY GEOLOGY OF THE EDMONTON AREA

May and Thomson (1978) provide a history of local contributions to the Quaternary geology of the Edmonton area. They indicate that numerous investigators, many of which were associated with the University of Alberta, studied various aspects of the stratigraphy for the area. Other later investigators presented some analytical data on glacial deposits which referred to a stratigraphy consisting of three tills with intercalated, interglacial beds.

In their study of a portion of central Edmonton, Bayrock and Berg (1969) acknowledge the presence of only one till. Westgate (1969) and Westgate et al. (1976) provide a summary of the Quaternary geology of the Edmonton area in which the presence of two tills was proposed. The present interpretation is that there is a single till sheet comprised of different types of tills (personal communication S. Thomson). These till types are discussed subsequently. Fig.3 summarizes the presently accepted stratigraphic framework. It should be noted that the sands and sandy gravels depicted between the two till layers in Fig.3 is not always present in the Edmonton area.

## 2. THE GENESIS OF TILLS

### 2.1 GLACIATION AND THE DEPOSITION OF TILLS

The movement of a glacier over a rock surface produces erosion by a combination of plucking and abrasion. Plucking is the removal and transportation of discrete blocks of rock by the glacier and abrasion is a process whereby glacial transport of these blocks over an intact rock surface produces fine particles. The grain sizes produced by the abrasion process depend primarily upon the mineralogy and structure of the source rock and the distance the source rock was transported by the glacier.

The products of glacial erosion are transported in the basal part of the glacier. Within the basal zone of transport, Boulton (1975) distinguished two subzones. First, a subzone of suspension in which the particles are relatively dispersed (concentrations less than 10% by volume) and travel at the same velocity as the moving ice, and second, a lower subzone of traction in which particles embedded in the lowest part of the glacier have a lower velocity than the ice because of frictional drag against the bed. This is the zone where much of the particle comminution during transport occurs.

Glaciers may also transport debris as medial or lateral moraines built up from debris falling onto the ice from nunataks or flanking valley sides, however these processes were not important on continental ice sheets since the

majority of the glaciation occurred away from the mountainous regions.

There are three principle modes of deposition which depend upon the position of transport of the glacial debris (Boulton and Paul 1976). First, debris transported near the glacial bed is likely to be deposited subglacially as lodgement till. Second, where the thickness of basal debris is considerable, ablation at the snout causes debris to be released and deposited on the glacier surface where it is often fluid and highly mobile thus forming flow tills. This process tends to inhibit the ablation of underlying ice. Outwash deposits on an irregular surface of stagnating ice leads to the development of an undulating kame landscape. Third, the slow melting of ice beneath flow till or outwash capping releases more debris as till, which is often quite stable. This process preserves some elements of an englacial debris fabric and has been termed melt-out till. Table 1 shows a classification of till-associated landforms and sediments (Boulton and Paul 1976).

#### 2.1.1 THE DEPOSITION OF LODGEMENT TILLS

The deposition of subglacial lodgement till occurs when the force exerted by the moving ice on particles in traction over the glacial bed is insufficient to overcome frictional resistance offered by the bed. Once subglacial lodgement is initiated, particles already lodged provide obstructions which impede other particles and create lodgement.

The principal landforms found on lodgement till include ellipsoidal drumlins elongated in the direction of ice movement, fluted moraine ridges parallel to the glacier flow direction and push moraines parallel to the glacier margin.

### 2.1.2 THE DEPOSITION OF FLOW TILLS

The deposition of flow till is initiated by the accumulation of debris on the glacier surface. The effect of this supraglacial accumulation is to preserve large masses of buried stagnant ice in areas from which the active glacier has retreated. Because of the low bulk concentration of debris in glacier ice, melt-out produces large quantities of water. Therefore, the resultant, supraglacial till has a very high water content, is extremely unstable and flows readily down the smallest slope; thus the term flow till (Boulton and Paul 1976).

Flow tills are particularly prone to flow in relatively rapid lobate flows. The middle parts of these flows are often of slurry-like consistency and because of their greater mobility they may selectively remove much of the fine fraction from the till and deposit it elsewhere leaving behind a horizon depleted of fines. As a result, surface layers of flow tills often consist of a complex sequence of flow till layers, some rich and some poor in silt and clay.

This phenomenon leads to the classification of flow tills into two groups (Boulton and Paul 1976). First an upper or allochthonous till (far travelled from its source)



subaerially derived which has undergone frequent flow and remoulding. On its surface, water released from active flows has preferentially transported away fines leaving a till depleted of fines. Streams on the surface may deposit stratified sand or gravel lenses which are subsequently covered by further till flows to produce a layered sequence of till alternating with fluvial sediments.

Second, a lower or parautochthonous till (little displaced from its source) which has accumulated basally, has not been subjected to surface processes and which retains a massive character.

### 2.1.3 THE DEPOSITION OF MELT-OUT TILLS

Melt-out tills generally accumulate as a result of the slow melting of debris-rich stagnant ice which is buried beneath a thick overburden. Therefore, some elements of englacial orientation fabrics are often preserved. These tills drain very slowly and are often under-consolidated.

## 2.2 THE EFFECT OF GEOLOGIC PROCESSES ON GEOTECHNICAL PROPERTIES OF TILLS

The geotechnical properties of sediments should be related to the sediment source, mode of transport and mode of deposition. It follows that the mineralogy and grain size distribution of glacial debris is a function of the source rock and the distance of transport.

The mode of deposition of glacial debris as till and post depositional processes also influence the geotechnical properties of a till. Depositional processes determine the bulk density of the till and its state of consolidation. They may also produce sorting in the till which can cause changes in the grain size distribution and its Atterberg limits. In turn, these changes affect the shear strength and permeability of the till.

### 2.2.1 LODGEMENT TILLS

Lodgement tills have generally been deposited under considerable ice thicknesses, however they often exhibit small preconsolidation pressures (Boulton and Paul 1976) as, when effective pressures beneath a glacier fall below a critical value, the assumed constant shear stress at the glacier sole coupled with subglacial deformation causes remoulding of the till.

The effect of subglacial deformation on an otherwise dense lodgement till was demonstrated by Boulton, Dent and Morris (1974). They made observations beneath and immediately beyond the retreating margin of the Breidamerkurjökull glacier in Iceland. These observations showed a lodgement till with a two layer structure; a dense lower layer with an average void ratio of 0.38 and a surface layer with an average void ratio of 0.68.

These authors suggest that the upper layer of the till had deformed as a result of shear stresses imposed by the

glacier and that under the small marginal effective pressures, shear failure and subsequent dilation had opened up the structure to one of higher void ratio. Coarse grained tills are particularly susceptible to dilation under shear as the abundant large particles collide.

Thus, deformation by glaciers can produce remoulding of sediments and destroy structures related to previous stresses. As a consequence, if a material is remoulded, it will not consolidate to such a high density as was present in the former more efficiently packed particle distribution.

Jointing, which is often observed in lodgement till, also appears to be related to unloading and to shearing. Boulton (1970) has shown the existence of subhorizontal joints produced by unloading during glacier retreat which led to the release of stored strain energy and dilation jointing. He also found that till often contained sub-horizontal joint surfaces which carried distinct striae in the direction of ice movement. Freezing and thawing with the resultant formation of segregated ice lenses as well as drying out of till may also produce jointing in lodgement till.

### 2.2.2 FLOW TILLS

The laminated nature of flow tills is very important in that geotechnical properties may differ strongly from those of the massive till around them. Their presence can produce a rapid and complex spatial variation in such properties.

Within a sheet of flow till, there is a density contrast between that material which has melted with little movement (parautochthonous) and that material that has been transported a considerable distance (allochthonous). Parautochthonous tills generally have higher densities than allochthonous tills. Additional density contrasts are also observed in allochthonous tills that have been transported as an unremoulded mass and those that have undergone shear during flow.

Drastic changes in grain size distribution in flow tills can occur as the result of the removal of fines by percolating water and fluctuations of natural moisture content due to changing groundwater levels. Partial saturation due to the lowering of groundwater levels leads to the development of suction pressures. These suction pressures decrease the void ratio of the till and result in overconsolidation and jointing.

### 2.2.3 MELT-OUT TILLS

When first released from glacial ice, melt-out tills possess a high void ratio, however this high void ratio can rapidly decrease under high overburden pressures (Boulton and Paul 1976). Melt-out till that is formed at depth beneath a till cover will adopt a void ratio that is controlled by the effective stress on the surface of melting. Pore water pressure at this surface is controlled by the balance between the rate of meltwater production

during thaw and the rate of meltwater expulsion as the soil consolidates under its own weight.

Morgenstern and Nixon (1971) have shown that the significant factor in this process is the thaw consolidation ratio "R", where  $R = \alpha / 2C_v$ ,  $\alpha$  = rate of advance of thaw front, and  $C_v$  = coefficient of consolidation. The excess pore pressure so generated is given by:  $u = d / (1 + 1/2R)$  where  $d$  = effective stress on a horizontal surface after dissipation of excess pore pressure.

The generation of such pore pressures may lead to the generation of slides within the flow till. Additional evidence reported by Boulton (1975) suggests that melt-out tills are most often normally consolidated and generally unjointed.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF EDMONTON TILLS

#### 3.1 GENESIS OF EDMONTON TILLS

As described previously in Section 1.1, "Geology of the Edmonton Area", Westgate (1969) postulated the presence of two till sheets which he termed the upper and lower tills. The present interpretation is that there is a single till sheet comprised of different types of tills (personal communication S. Thomson).

In general, the till in the Edmonton area consists of diamicton containing erratics derived from the Canadian Shield to the northeast (Shaw 1982). Many of the clasts are faceted and striated with the regional preferred orientation of the long axis of the clasts lying parallel to the ice flow directions. The large clasts of Upper Cretaceous bedrock and other preglacial sediments within the diamicton are evidence of glacial erosion and their preservation precludes deposition by running water or by sedimentation through a body of standing water (Shaw 1982). These large clasts of Upper Cretaceous bedrock and other preglacial sediments are rare throughout the Edmonton tills and are generally found near the lower zones of the deposit. This suggests that lodgement till is rare or is thin in the Edmonton area and that where present, it is the oldest or first deposited till.

Shaw (1982) indicated that angular clasts of sub-till sediment are ubiquitous in the Edmonton tills and that the

presence of perfectly preserved internal sedimentary structures such as cross-lamination and plane bedding precluded the deposition of much of the Edmonton tills by lodgement. He further argued that a melt-out origin better accounts for the presence of these structures.

The upper tills overriding the lower tills have reworked the upper meter or so of the lower tills as evidenced by pebble reorientation. This is a zone of intense fracturing that represents inherent weakness and a greater fracture permeability in the till. Shaw (1982) provided further evidence of faults occurring in the upper part of the lower till, the sand lenses found in the tills and the lower part of the upper till. He suggested that a possible mechanism for this faulting is subsidence as underlying stagnant ice melted out. Melting of this ice and the fine grained nature of the resultant till together with the sand overburden were probably associated with local underconsolidation and low effective pressures caused by thaw-consolidation.

The upper zone of the till often contains pockets of sand that vary from one to several meters in diameter and from several centimeters to a meter thick. These pockets may be water bearing and the water may be under pressure. Tunnels excavated through the Edmonton tills often encounter these sand lenses. Their observation clearly shows the presence of current bedding (May and Thomson 1978).

Shaw (1982) attributed the sand pockets and lenses in the till to meltwater of superglacial, englacial or basal origin and stated that sharp upper contacts of the sand or gravel pockets implied deposition in an ice tunnel, but the extensive faulting with relatively small displacements implies some settling of the sand as the ice beneath melted out. Consequently, the tunnels were englacial. Any melting along the roof of the tunnel simply caused debris to be released and sorted in the flow that caused the melting. The melt-out till beneath the sand would cause local underconsolidation for which the faults and diapiric injects of till into sand are evidence. Thus it would appear that in the case of the irregular faulted lenses and inclusions, some form of meltwater origin is quite acceptable.

### 3.2 GEOTECHNICAL DATA FOR EDMONTON TILLS

In order to obtain the information required to prepare this paper, a review of the available geotechnical data on Edmonton tills was conducted. Local geotechnical consultants as well as the Materials Testing Section of the City of Edmonton Engineering Department provided the data for this report.

The types of data collected include the location and designation of the bore hole, the ground surface elevation, the elevations of the top and bottom of the till where available, the sample elevation, insitu moisture contents, unconfined compressive strengths where available, the blow



count values and the Atterberg limits where available. A complete listing of all the data obtained for this report is included as Appendix A. Discussions of this data may be found in subsequent sections of this report.

### 3.3 GEOTECHNICAL PROPERTIES OF EDMONTON TILLS

As stated earlier, the present interpretation is a single till sheet in the Edmonton area comprised of different types of tills. These till deposits are heterogeneous and usually contain a high percentage of local bedrock material. The upper part of the till deposit has a dominant system of columnar joints in contrast to the lower part of the deposit where the joint system is rectangular.

Boulton and Paul (1976) suggested that Atterberg limits serve as good quantitative indicators of the fundamental geotechnical properties of the debris which is deposited as till. They cited Casagrande (1948) and Skempton (1970) as producing plots of plasticity index versus liquid limit for sedimentary clays of low carbonate and organic content and normally consolidated marine clays.

The resulting plots of the Casagrande "A" line and the Skempton marine clay line are shown on Fig. 4. Also shown on this plot is the "T" line proposed by Boulton and Paul (1976) for samples of till obtained from beneath and at the margins of modern glaciers in Iceland, Spitsbergen and the Alps. They suggested that the "T" line owes its position relative to Skempton's trend line to the difference in

grading between till and sedimentary clay. When depositional and post-depositional processes produce a grading which is substantially different from that of the parent englacial debris, tills move away from the "T" line.

The points shown on Fig. 4 are from the data obtained from the Edmonton tills. As this figure shows, relatively few of the data points lie close to the "T" line indicating that depositional and/or post-depositional processes have affected the gradation of the till. This tends to support the contention that the majority of the Edmonton tills are of a flow or melt-out origin rather than a lodgement origin.

Numerous authors have discussed the general geotechnical properties of Edmonton tills. Thomson and El-Nahhas (1980) produced a table of values quoted by various authors. A summary of this work is shown in Table 2.

The data of Table 2 show ranges in moisture content from 11 to 22% and ranges in blow counts (Standard Penetration Test) of 40 to 150 blows. The majority of these data points have been obtained from projects in the "downtown" core of Edmonton.

The data collected for this report comes from areas throughout Edmonton and exhibit a much wider range of values. Moisture content values range from 10 to 43% and blow counts range from 5 to 93 blows. Much higher moisture contents and much lower blow count values were obtained when samples from the greater Edmonton area were considered. This point will be discussed in subsequent sections.

#### 4. DEPENDENCY OF BLOW COUNTS ON MOISTURE CONTENT AND DEPTH

In order to determine whether the blow count values obtained from the Edmonton tills are dependent on moisture content or on depth below ground surface, various plots that examined these parameters were prepared from the data collected for this report.

The first two plots, Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, show moisture content versus blow count and blow count versus depth for all of the till data collected throughout Edmonton. Both of these plots show a very large amount of scatter, however the plot of moisture content versus blow count in Fig. 5 shows a definite trend of increasing blow counts for decreasing moisture contents. Further, if we assume the Standard Penetration Test is an indicator of till type, Fig. 6 suggests that several till types do exist because of the large range of blow count values observed at any given depth.

In order to reduce the scatter present in Fig. 5 and 6, the data points throughout the city were separated into seven areas:

- Area 1 - Millwoods
- Area 2 - West End
- Area 3 - North
- Area 4 - Northeast
- Area 5 - Downtown North
- Area 6 - Strathcona
- Area 7 - South Central

These seven areas are delineated on Fig. 37.

The plots of moisture content versus blow count for each of these seven areas are presented on Fig. 7 to 13. The plots of blow count versus depth for each of the seven areas are presented on Fig. 14 to 20.

The plots of moisture content versus blow count (Fig. 7 to 13) again show a relatively large amount of scatter, however, the overall trend of increasing blow counts for decreasing moisture contents is very evident. In addition, there is an indication that, in most cases, for moisture content values above 17 to 18%, the blow count values were relatively independent of moisture content. For moisture contents below 17 to 18%, the blow counts were sensitive to moisture content change with large increases in blow count values for small decreases in moisture content being evident. This suggests that there is evidence for a bilinear relationship between moisture content and blow counts for the Edmonton tills.

The plots of blow count versus depth (Fig. 14 to 20) still show a very large amount of scatter and do not show any discernible relationship between depth and blow counts.

A further attempt to reduce the amount of scatter in both sets of plots was undertaken by plotting only data points from boreholes with more than one blow count value. The plots of moisture content versus blow count for the multisample bore holes from each of the various areas are on Fig. 21 to 27. The plots of blow count versus depth from

each of the various areas are on Fig. 28 to 34.

When Fig. 21 to 27 are compared to Fig. 7 to 13, the degree of scatter has been reduced, but some scatter is still present. However, the bilinear relationship between moisture content and blow count is evident, as shown on Fig. 27.

A comparison of Fig. 28 to 34 with Fig. 14 to 20 shows a significant reduction in the amount of scatter. A closer examination of Fig. 28 to 34 reveals a slight trend for lower blow counts to occur near the upper and lower zones of the deposit with higher blow counts present in the central area. This trend is illustrated on Fig. 30 by dashed lines. To investigate this relationship further, plots of the general stratigraphy and blow counts were produced for a line in the downtown and Millwoods areas. The locations of these lines are shown on Fig. 37. The plot for the downtown area, shown on Fig. 35, generally supports the trend of lower blow counts occurring near the top and bottom of the till with higher blow counts being found in the middle area. The plot for the Millwoods area, shown on Fig. 36, also supports this observation.

It should be noted that when viewing the plots of moisture content and depth versus blow count, the Standard Penetration Test is an empirical test and is dependent on operator and equipment performance to achieve consistent results. These points are more fully discussed by Lanigan (1982).

Since the data of this report were obtained from various sources, it is likely that many different operators and drilling rigs were involved in deriving this data. Therefore, some scatter is inevitable purely from an operational standpoint; regardless of differences in the geology of the till deposits. In spite of this obvious drawback, no attempt has been made to correct the data for operator and equipment error. The data have been shown exactly as presented in the original reports.

## 5. SOFT ZONES IN THE EDMONTON TILLS

### 5.1 LOCATIONS OF SOFT ZONES

As discussed in Section 3.3, "Geotechnical Properties of Edmonton Tills", most of the published geotechnical data on Edmonton tills comes from projects in the "downtown" core. These data have generally described the till as having relatively high strengths and low moisture contents and as an excellent foundation material.

However, a close scrutiny of the till data obtained from projects throughout the City of Edmonton (listed in Appendix A) reveals that, in numerous locations, the till strengths are relatively low. In addition, some locations exhibit insitu moisture contents much higher than normally encountered in the Edmonton tills. All of the locations of the boreholes from which blow count values were recorded are plotted on a map of the City of Edmonton, Fig. 37.

The thalwegs of the preglacial valleys in the Edmonton area are also shown on this figure. The blow count values have been divided into 3 groups, viz;  $N < 20$ ,  $20 \leq N \leq 30$  and  $N > 30$ .

This map shows that although low and high blow count locations are distributed throughout the city, the downtown north (Area 4) and the south central (Area 7) areas have the highest concentrations of high blow count locations. The Millwoods (Area 1) and north (Area 3) areas have the highest concentrations of low blow count locations.

## 5.2 MECHANISMS FOR SOFT ZONE FORMATION

As suggested in Section 3.1, "Genesis of Edmonton Tills", numerous sand lenses and inclusions in the Edmonton tills are of a meltwater origin. This would imply that at least the upper portion of the till is of "flow" or "meltwater" origin.

Boulton (1975) discusses a model for flow tills in which he postulates a mass of stagnant ice immediately in front of an active retreating glacier. As the stagnant ice melts, debris incorporated within the ice accumulates on the surface along with large quantities of meltwater. Outwash streams from the retreating active ice mass flow across the stagnant, flow till covered ice and in doing so create channels or small lake depressions in which water washed sands can accumulate (Thomson, Martin and Eisenstein 1980).

These water-washed sands are then often covered by lobes of flow till which when combined with the retreat of the ice, bring about the abandonment of the channel. The constant shifting of these channels and the accumulation of flow till generates the sand lenses in a random manner.

It follows that the processes operating during ablation can produce the majority of the Edmonton tills and the lens shaped sand inclusions found throughout them. Further, an ablation origin for the Edmonton till also accounts for many of the relatively low blow count values observed in the data collected for this report, since the large amounts of meltwater present at the time of the till deposition would



result in weak slurry like tills at the outset.

However, the presence of many high blow count values indicates that some of the till data is at variance with the ablation origin postulated above unless following deposition, some events occurred to bring about consolidation. Various alternatives are available for the consolidation of select zones of the till including dessication, the altithermal effect, local drainage through preglacial or postglacial channels, regional changes in groundwater levels and increased overburden load by the addition of sediments from glacial Lake Edmonton. Also, some of the till may not be of flow or melt-out origin, but of lodgement origin. It is most likely that combinations of these processes contributed to the consolidation of the select till zones which now exhibit high blow counts.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Even though the majority of the available data in the Edmonton area have been collected, the map on Fig. 37 shows some areas that have relatively little data available. Although this situation is unfortunate, a brief study of the map (Fig. 37) shows that the majority of these areas are older residential areas or undeveloped areas which by their very nature tend to have a very limited amount of geotechnical data available.

In section 3.3, "Geotechnical Properties of Edmonton Tills", the conformity of the Edmonton tills to the proposed Boulton and Paul (1976) "T" line was discussed. Fig. 4 shows a plot of the Boulton "T" line and the data points from the Edmonton tills. This plot reveals that relatively few of the Edmonton till data points lie close to the "T" line. This suggests that depositional and/or post-depositional processes have affected the gradation of the till which, in turn, indicates that the majority of the Edmonton tills are of a flow or melt-out origin rather than a lodgement origin.

An investigation of the dependency of blow counts on moisture content and depth was made in Section 4.0, "Dependency of Blow Counts on Moisture Content and Depth". This showed a bilinear dependency of blow counts on moisture content. As Fig. 7 to 13 and 21 to 27 show, for moisture content values above 17 to 18%, as the moisture content values decreased, the blow count values increased. For moisture contents below 17 to 18%, the blow count values

could not be easily predicted from the moisture content values.

Since the Edmonton tills consist generally of a matrix of sand, silt and clay sizes, those tills with moisture contents above 17 to 18% may have a higher percent clay fraction than other tills. This postulated increase in clay fraction may be explained by the Boulton (1975) till formation model discussed in Section 5.2, "Mechanisms for Soft Zone Formation". The numerous outwash streams flowing across the stagnant flow till covered ice would tend to remove some of the clay sizes from the areas they flowed through and deposit them elsewhere. In addition, an increase in clay fraction may reduce the permeability of the till locally and thus increase the time required for consolidation to occur with respect to those areas where the percent clay fraction is lower.

The plots of blow counts versus depth tend to show a general trend of lower blow counts in the upper and lower zones of the till, with higher blow counts being evident in the middle area. This observation suggests that perhaps depositional and/or postdepositional processes have affected the degree of consolidation of the upper and lower till zones.

As presented in section 4.3, "Mechanisms for Soft Zone Formation", a meltwater origin for the majority of the Edmonton tills would account for many of the relatively low blow counts observed in the data collected for this report.

After a study of the map (Fig. 37) of the location of the blow count values in the Edmonton tills, it may be noted that the majority of the low blow count data points are located away from the preglacial or postglacial channels in the Edmonton area, eg., Millwoods (Area 1). Conversely, most of the high blow count data points are located near the preglacial or postglacial channels, eg., downtown north (Area 5) or south central (Area 7).

The mechanism of till consolidation by local drainage through preglacial or postglacial channels, postulated in section 5.2, "Mechanisms for Soft Zone Formation", is supported by blow count data of the Edmonton tills. The presence of the few isolated high blow count data points away from the preglacial or postglacial channels may reflect the operation of other possible till consolidation mechanisms such as desiccation, the altithermal effect, regional changes in groundwater levels and increased overburden load by the addition of sediments from glacial Lake Edmonton.

The trend of lower blow counts in the upper and lower zones of the deposit with higher blow counts in the middle area may be explained by the consideration of depositional and postdepositional processes. The low blow count values in the upper zones of the deposit may be the result of the influence of glacial Lake Edmonton. The low blow count values in the lower till zones may be due to the dilation hypothesis proposed by Boulton, Dent and Morris (1974). They

suggest that shear failure and subsequent dilation beneath an active glacier can open up the till structure to one of a higher void ratio which would in turn result in lower blow count values.

The presence of some obviously softer zones in the Edmonton till has some definite implications. As outlined by Thomson, Martin and Eisenstein (1980), the presence of a soft zone in the till at the site of a proposed 14 story building complex in downtown Edmonton resulted in the changing of the foundation system from bearing in till to bearing in the Saskatchewan Sands and Gravels to eliminate the danger of differential settlement.

The map on Fig. 37 indicates that there are numerous areas throughout Edmonton where the blow counts in the till are lower than the values generally found in the downtown core. Fortunately, the majority of the large multistory buildings in Edmonton are situated in the downtown area, however, as the city grows, the need for large multistory buildings in other areas where soft zones in the till may be present will develop.

Thus it becomes increasingly important that geotechnical engineers understand that till deposits are more complex than generally considered, both with respect to geotechnical properties and geologic origin. This reinforces the need to undertake detailed and thorough investigations at proposed construction sites in order to understand the geologic history of the deposits and to determine how this

history has affected their geotechnical properties.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the information presented in this report, the following conclusions are offered:

- 1) The departure of the Atterberg limits of Edmonton tills from the "T" line proposed by Boulton and Paul (1976) suggests the majority of the Edmonton tills have a melt-out or flow origin rather than a lodgement origin.
- 2) The relationship between moisture content and blow counts for the Edmonton tills appears to be bilinear in nature with blow counts being independent of moisture contents for moisture content values higher than 17 to 18% and dependent on moisture content for values lower than 17 to 18%.

There also appears to be some data which suggests a trend of low blow counts in the upper and lower parts of the till with higher blow counts present in the middle area. This may be due to the effect of glacial Lake Edmomton on the upper parts and the dilation effect proposed by Boulton, Dent and Morris (1974) on the lower parts.

- 3) A flow till or meltwater origin for the majority of the Edmonton tills and the general processes operating during ablation appear to account for the many relatively low blow count values observed in the data collected for this report.
- 4) The zones in the Edmonton tills with high blow counts are often found adjacent to preglacial or postglacial valleys indicating that significant consolidation of these tills may have occurred through drainage into the adjacent valleys. Other consolidation mechanisms such as desiccation, the

altithermal effect, regional changes in groundwater levels and increased overburden load by the addition of sediments from glacial Lake Edmonton may account for the presence of the high blow count till zones away from the preglacial or postglacial valleys.

5) Due to the complex nature of till deposits, it is important that geotechnical engineers understand how the geologic origin of the till can affect its geotechnical properties. The presence of numerous soft zones in the Edmonton till mapped in this report make it imperative that geotechnical engineers take care in their foundation investigations in the Edmonton area to ensure that changes in the strength properties of the till which may occur within their jobsite are recognized.



## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- 1) Conclusions 1 and 2 of this report imply that the grain size distribution is a very significant factor in both the geologic origin and geotechnical properties of the Edmonton till. Further research could be carried out on the grain size analysis of Edmonton tills to determine if the postulated melt-out or flow till origin and the bilinear relationship between moisture content and blow counts are supported by additional data. In order to proceed with this work, objective criteria for melt-out till, flow till and lodgement till must first be developed.
- 2) This report has initiated a data bank on geotechnical information on the Edmonton tills. It would be of benefit to the geotechnical community if this data bank were continually updated.
- 3) A project similar to this one undertaken on the Edmonton tills could be undertaken for all the Pleistocene deposits in the Edmonton area to build up a data bank on their extent and geotechnical properties.

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CLASSIFICATION of TILL - ASSOCIATED LANDFORMS and SEDIMENTS

Land system	Sediment association	Principle till types
(i) GLACIATED VALLEY LAND SYSTEM May be superimposed on (ii) or (iii) medial & lateral moraines kame terraces	(a) SUPRAGLACIAL SEDIMENT ASSOCIATED (may be superimposed on b.)	SUPRAGLACIAL -- (derived from supraglacial MORAINIC TILL debris source)  FLOW TILL $\begin{cases} \text{Allochthonous} \\ \text{Parautochthonous} \end{cases}$
(ii) SUPRAGLACIAL LAND SYSTEM kame moraines		MELT OUT TILL
(iii) SUBGLACIAL/PREGLACIAL LAND SYSTEM Drumlins, fluted moraines, pushed-moraines, outwash plains & terraces	(b) SUBGLACIAL/PROGLACIAL SEDIMENT ASSOCIATION	MELT OUT TILL LODGEMENT TILL LEE-SIDE TILL

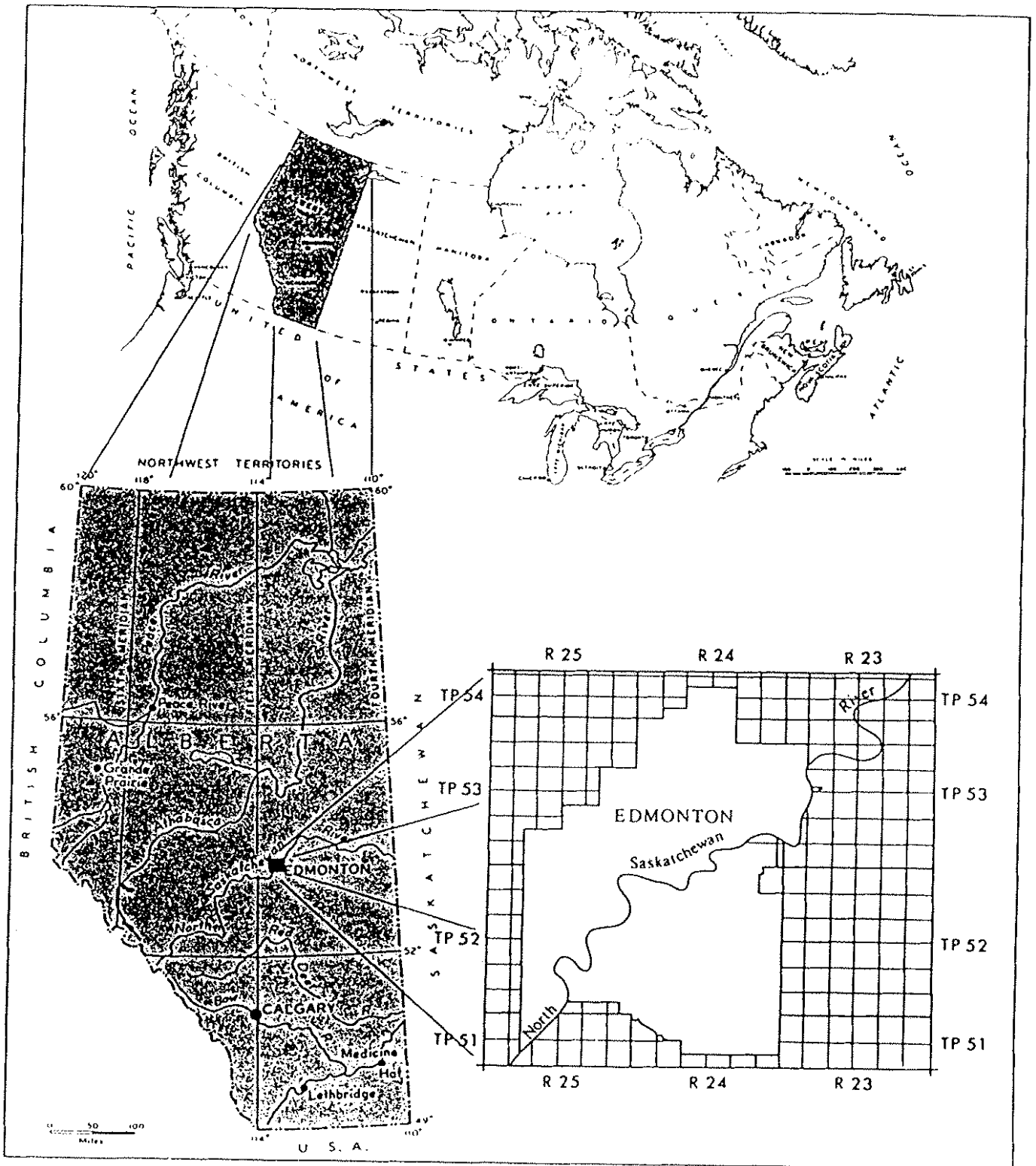
(After Boulton and Paul 1976, modified)

GEOTECHNICAL PROPERTIES OF TILL

Reference	Morgenstern and Thomson (1971)	DeJong and Harris (1971)	Thomson and Yacyshyn (1977)	El-Nahhas (1977)	Eisenstein and Thomson (1978)
Density (kN/m <sup>3</sup> )	---	19-22	---	22	20.6--21.2
Natural moisture content (%)	12-22	11-19	15	12	12-20
Liquid limit (%)	28-48	22-42	40	31	20-40
Plastic limit (%)	12-22	9-20	20	15	12-20
% clay	20-30	20	20-30	42	20-30
% silt	---	38	25-35	31	25-35
% sand	---	42	40-50	27	40-50
Void ratio	---	0.35-0.4	---	0.36	---
Degree of saturation (%)	---	75-95	---	89	---
Unconfined strength (kPa)	345-828	140-240	140-245	---	140-245
Peak angle of shearing resistance (deg)	---	---	27	---	---
Peak cohesion (kPa)	---	---	28	---	---
Standard penetration (blows/0.3m)	---	60-150	---	---	40-60 (Some > 100)

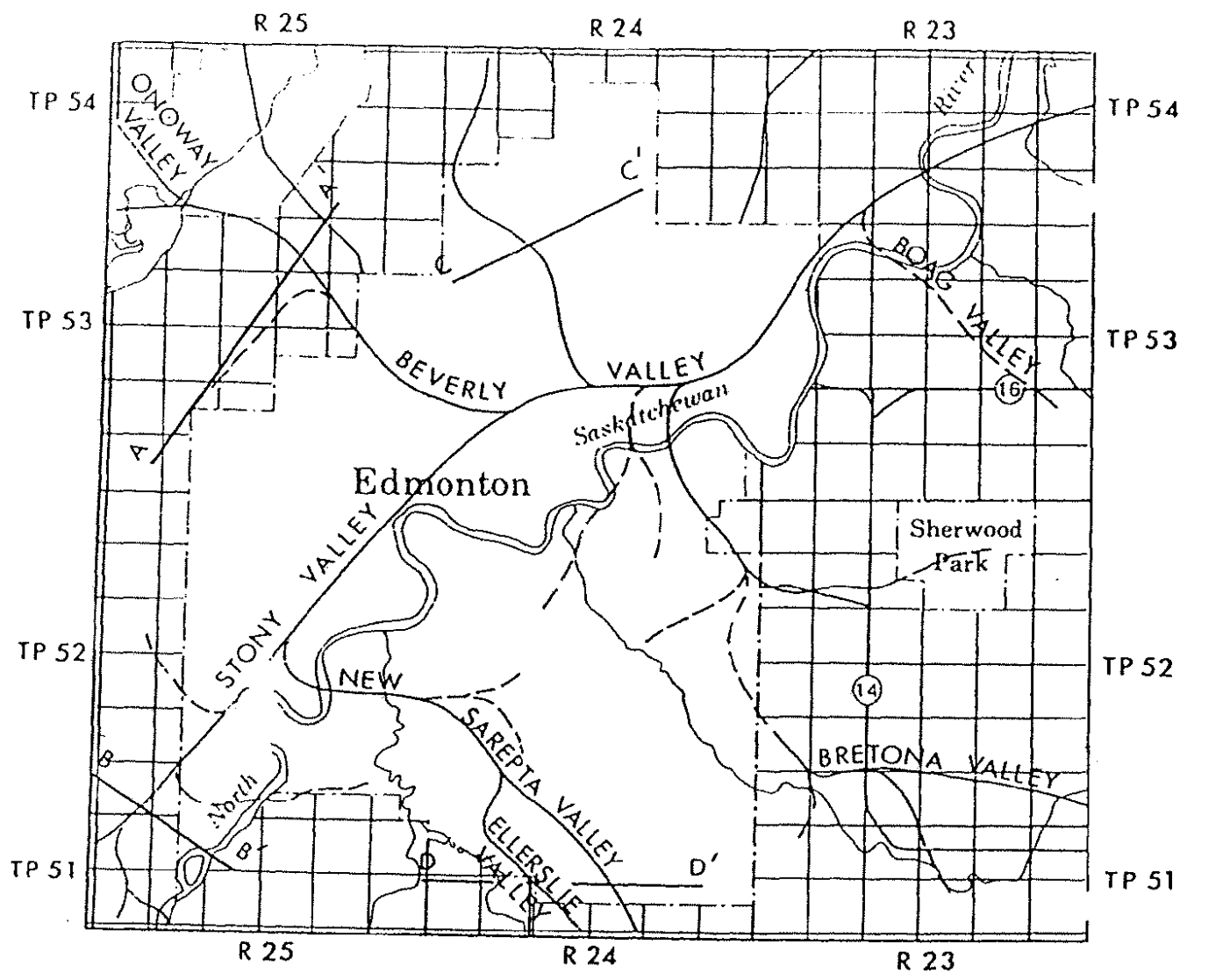
( After Thomson and El-Nahhas 1980, Modified)

TABLE 2

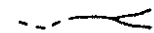



Location map of the study area.  
 (After Kothol and Mcpherson 1975, Modified)

FIGURE 1



LEGEND

Thalweg of preglacial valley   
 Profile lines in figure 22  B B'

SCALE

Miles 5 0 5 Miles  
 Kilometers 5 0 5 Kilometers

*Thalwegs of preglacial valleys in the Edmonton area.*

(After Kathol and McPherson 1975, Modified)

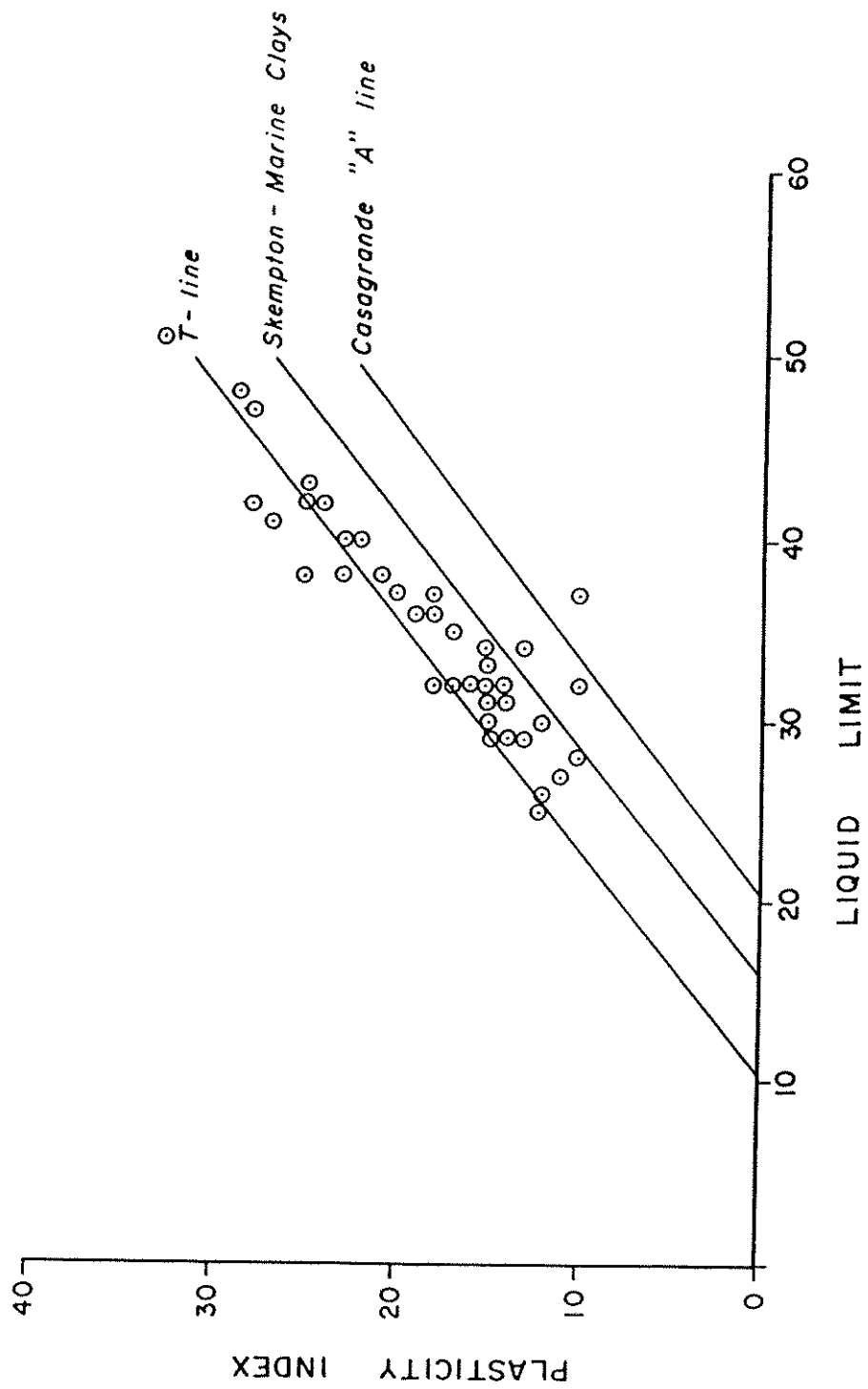
FIGURE 2

Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene	Alluvium, organic deposits, recent lake deposits
		Pleistocene	Lacustrine sand, silt and clay, organic deposits, aeolian sand and silt, river alluvium
			Till
			Sand and sandy gravels, some silt and clay (may or may not be present)
			Till
	Tertiary (undivided)	Saskatchewan gravels and sands.	

Generalized Quaternary stratigraphy of the  
Edmonton area

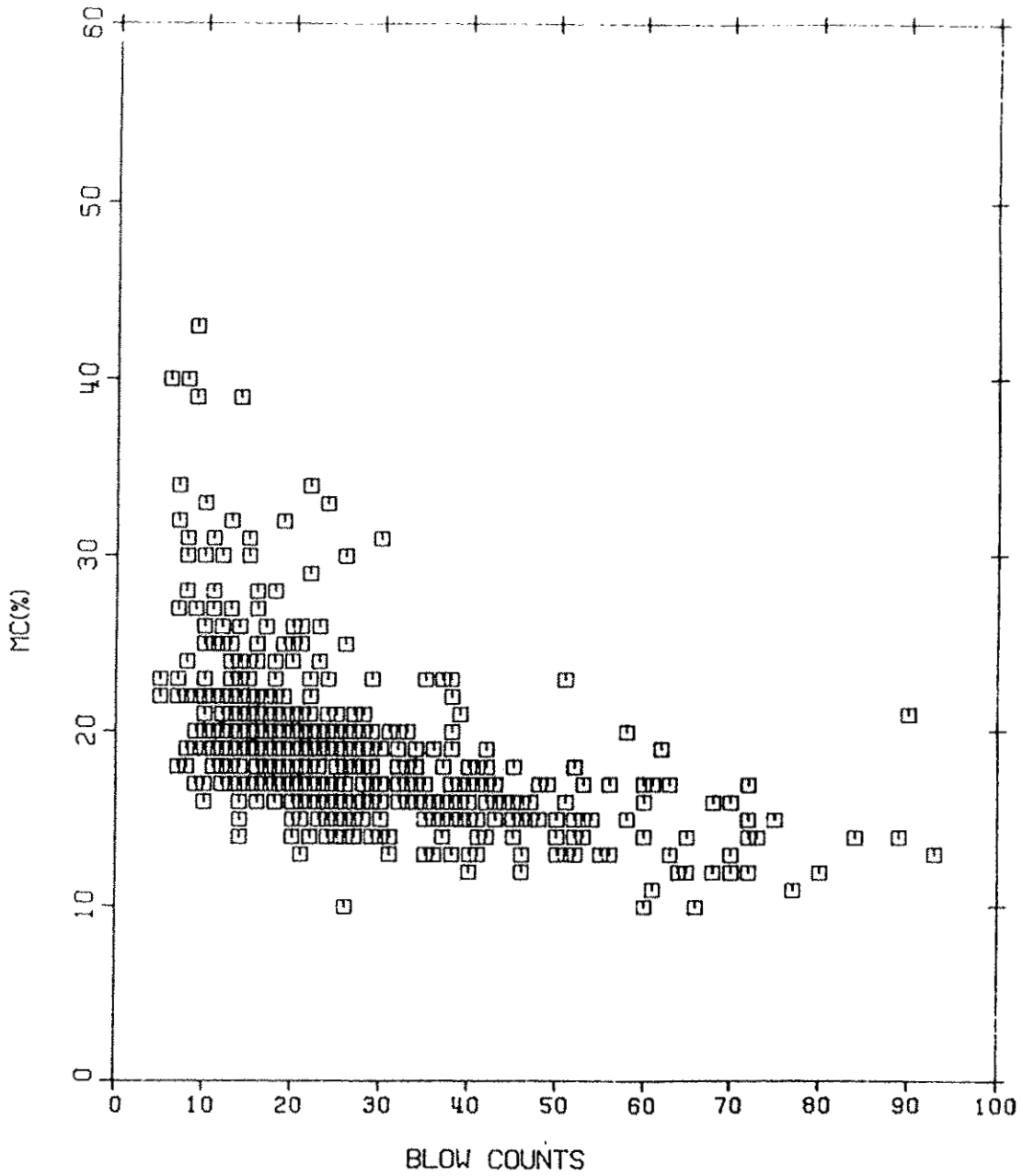
(After Westgate, 1969 Modified)





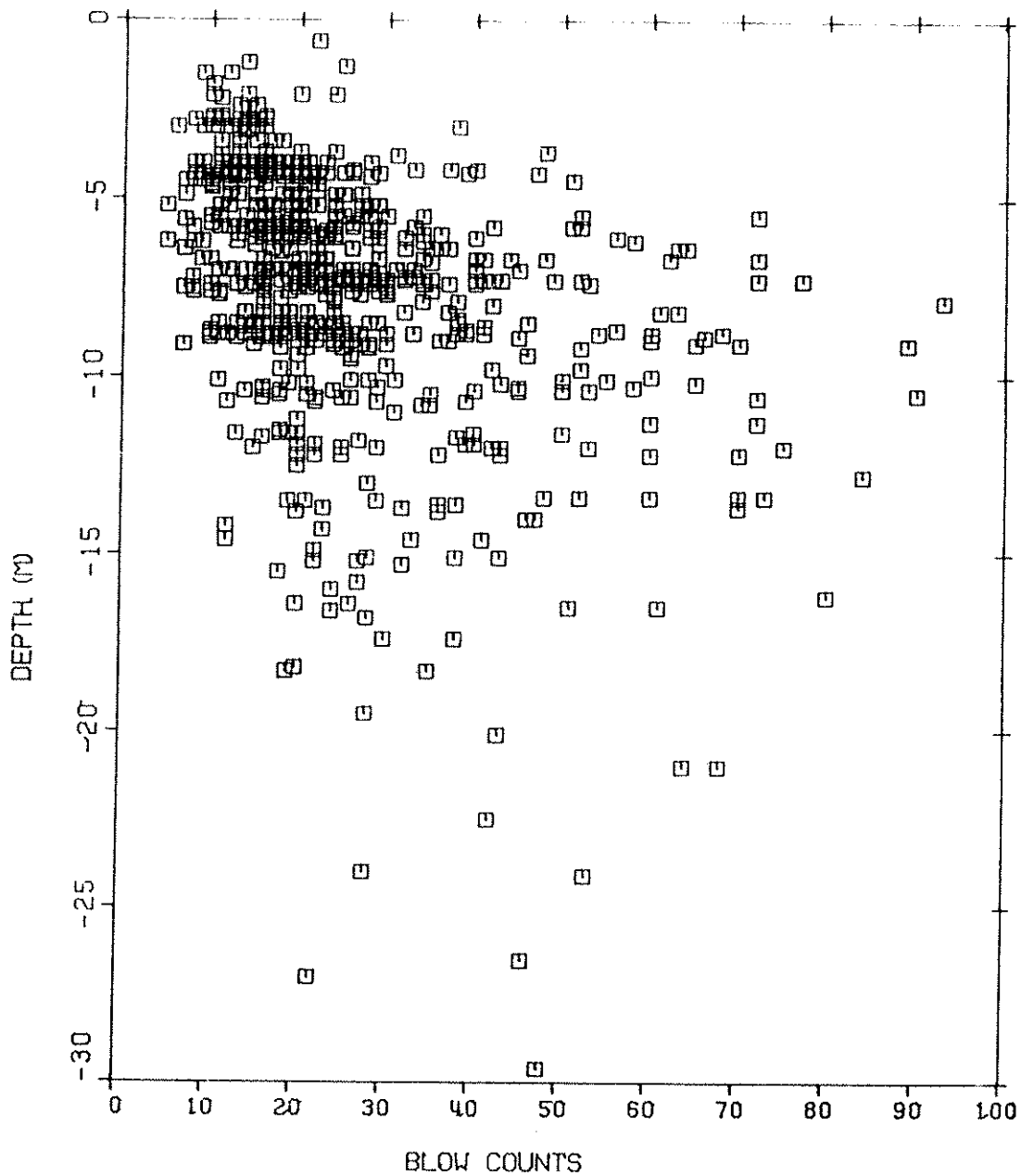
LIQUID LIMIT/ PLASTICITY INDEX PLOT for EDMONTON TILLS

FIGURE 4



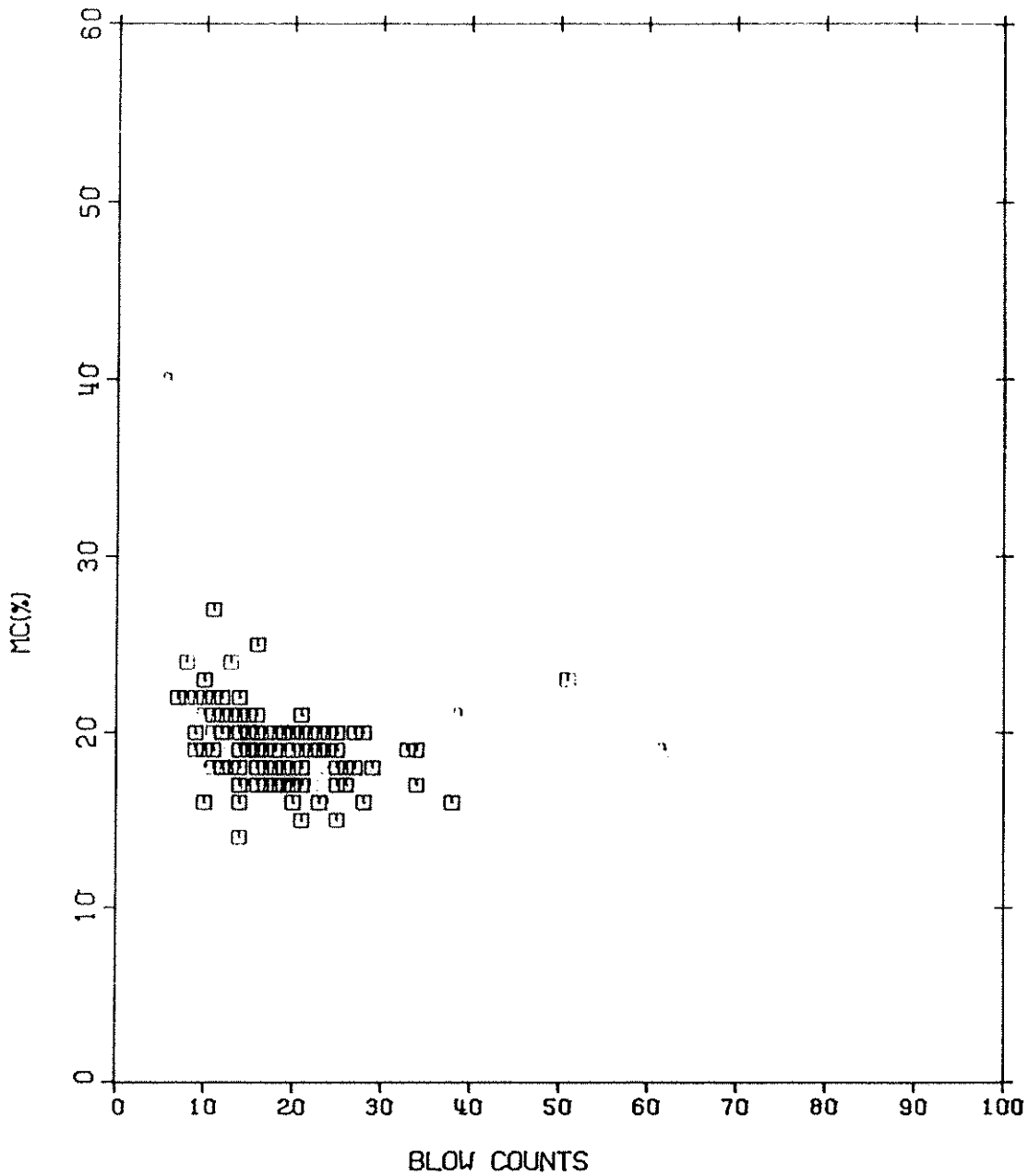
PLOT OF MOISTURE CONTENT VERSUS BLOW COUNTS(SPT)  
(ALL DATA)

FIGURE 5

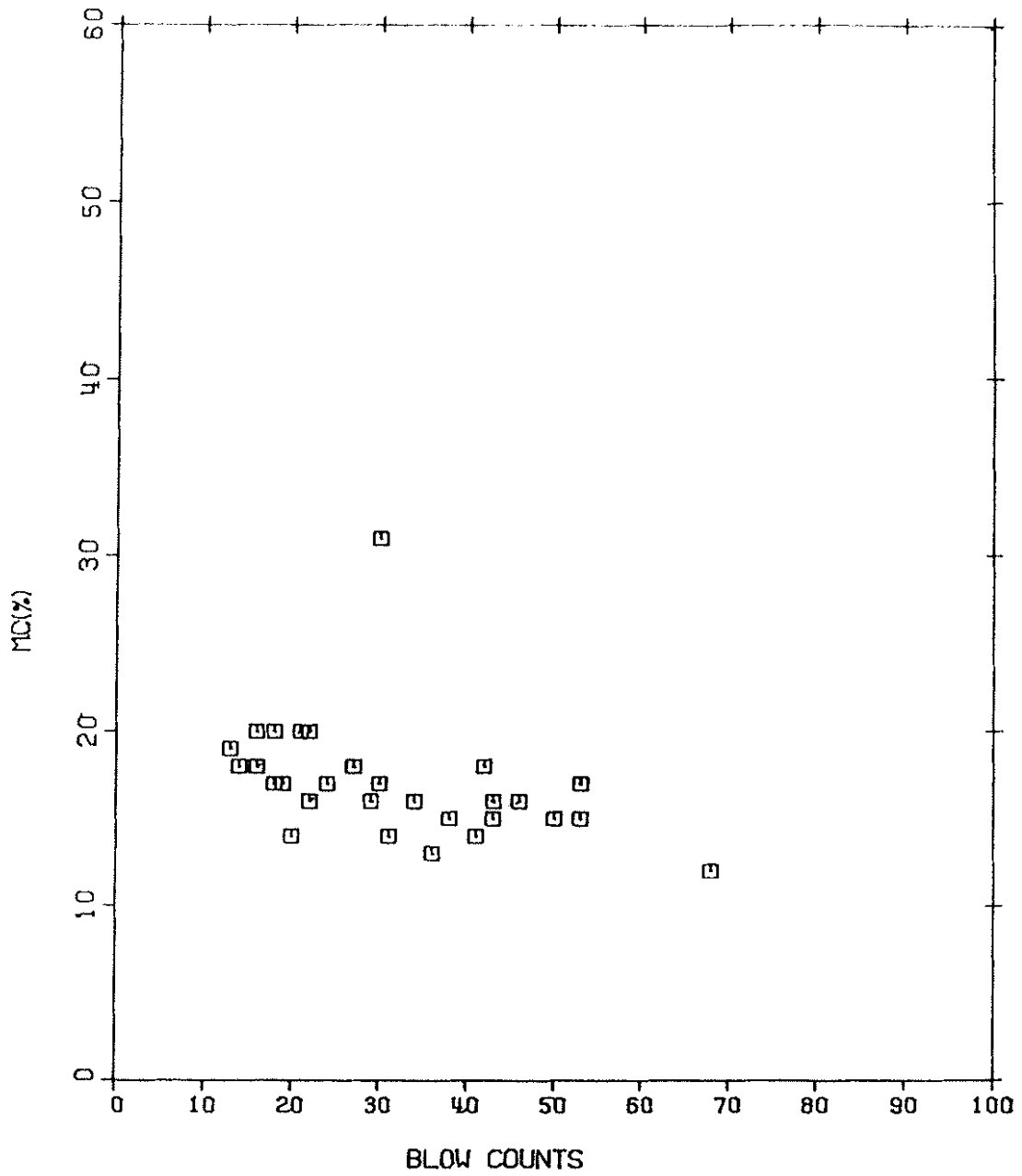


PLOT OF BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VERSUS DEPTH  
(ALL DATA)

FIGURE 6

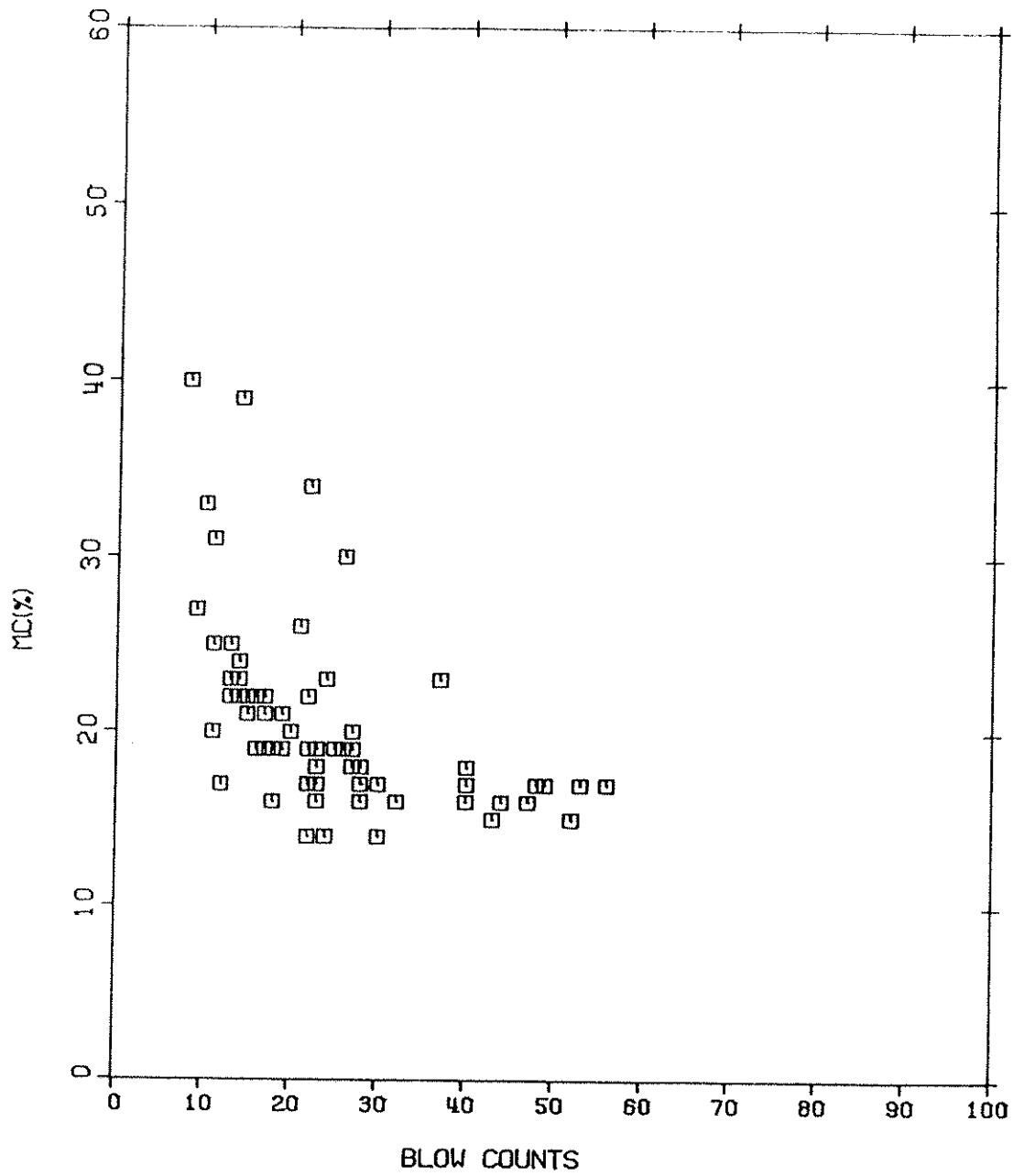


MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS (SPT) AREA 1, MILLWOODS



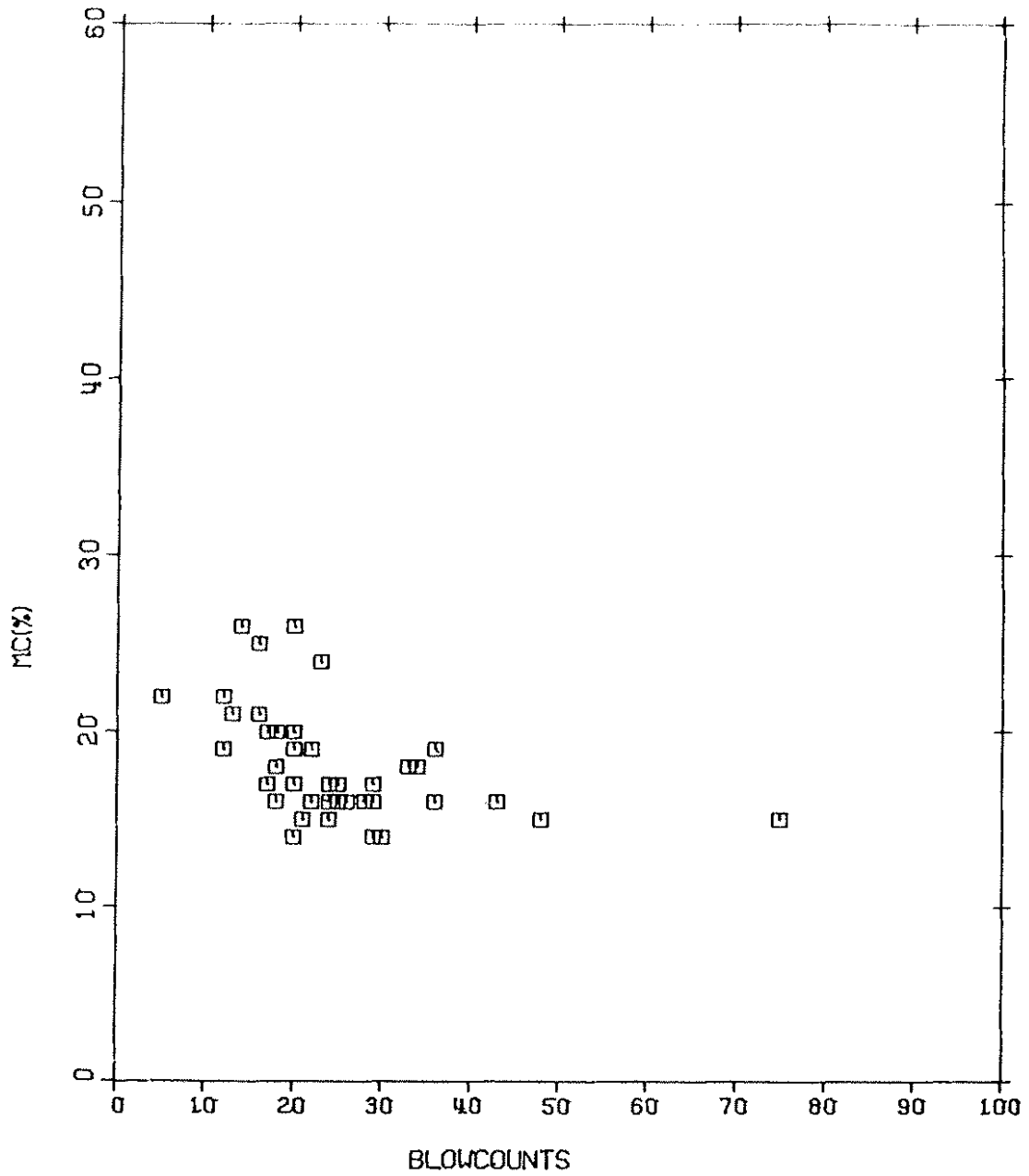
MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS (SPT) AREA 2, WEST END

FIGURE 8

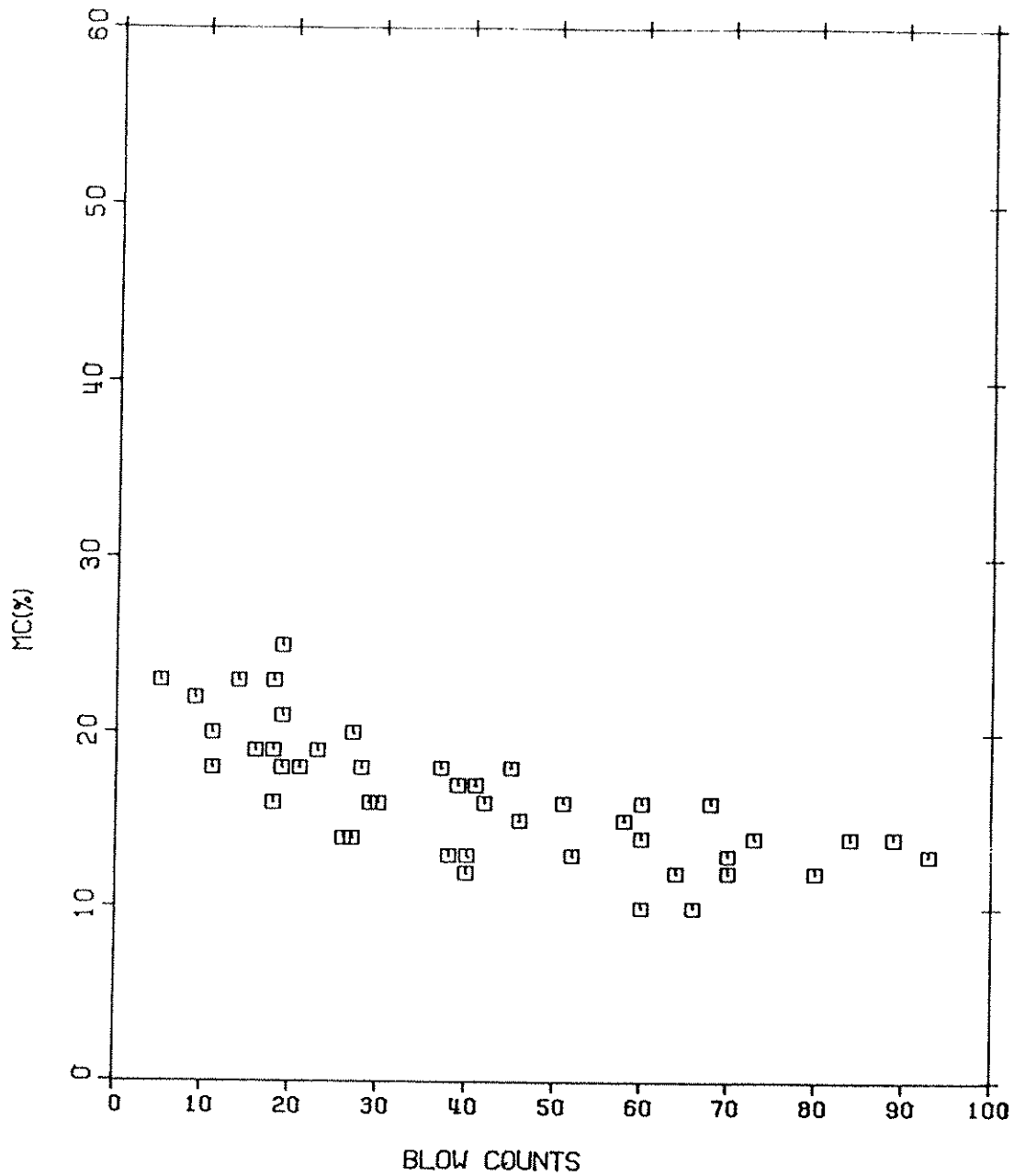


MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS (SPT) AREA 3, NORTH

FIGURE 9



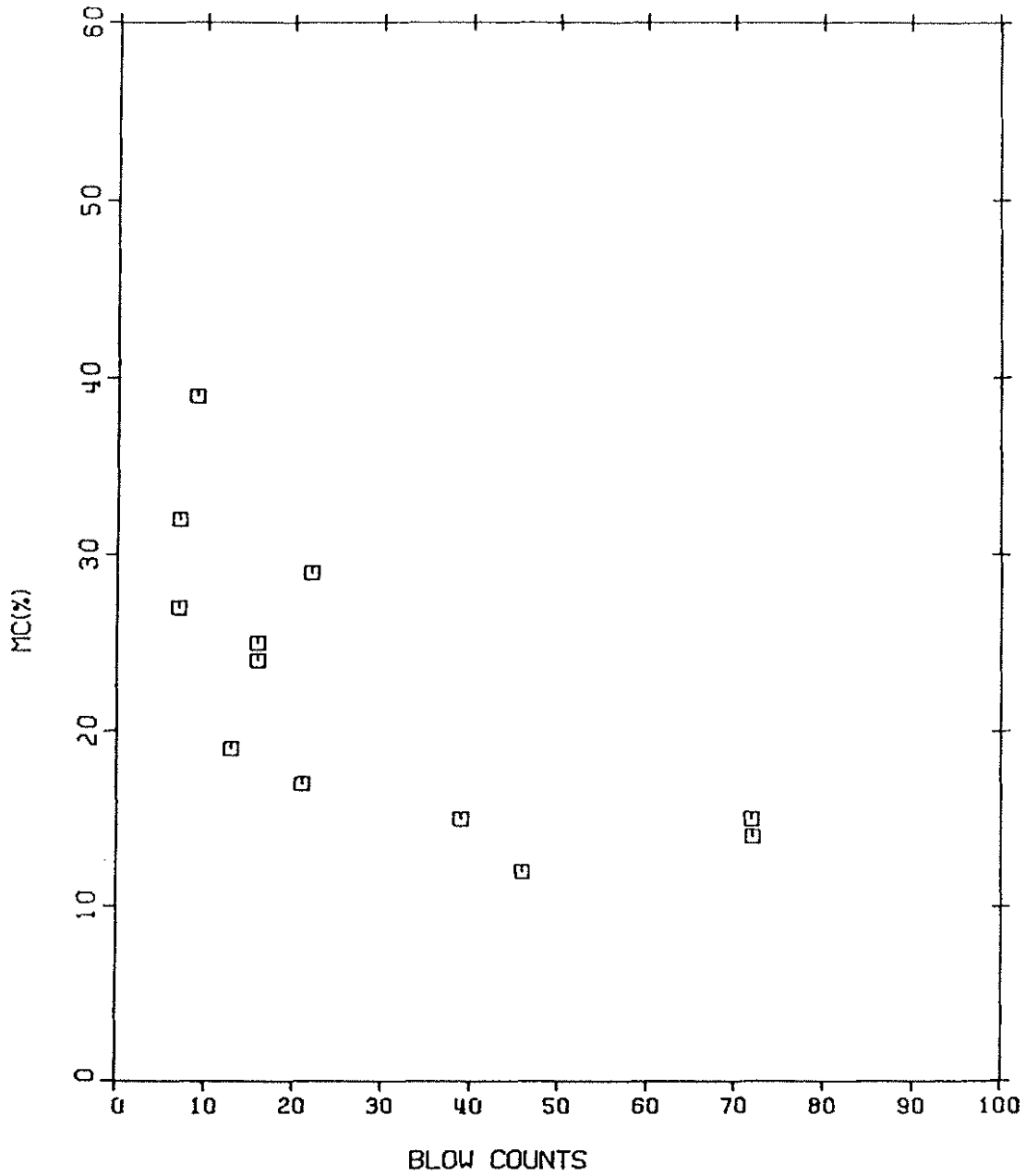
MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS (SPT) AREA 4, NORTHEAST



MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS (SPT) AREA 5, DT NORTH

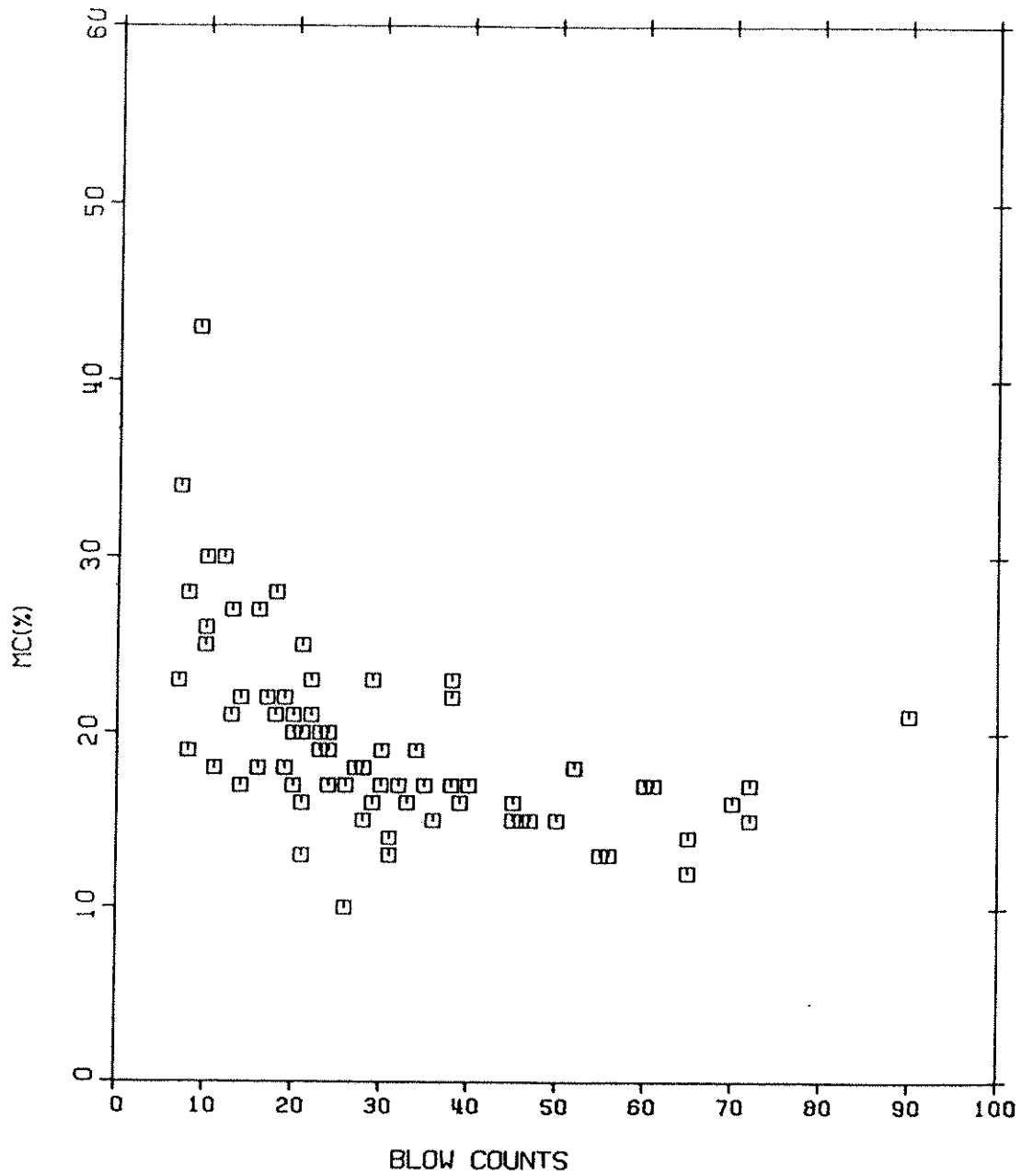
FIGURE 11





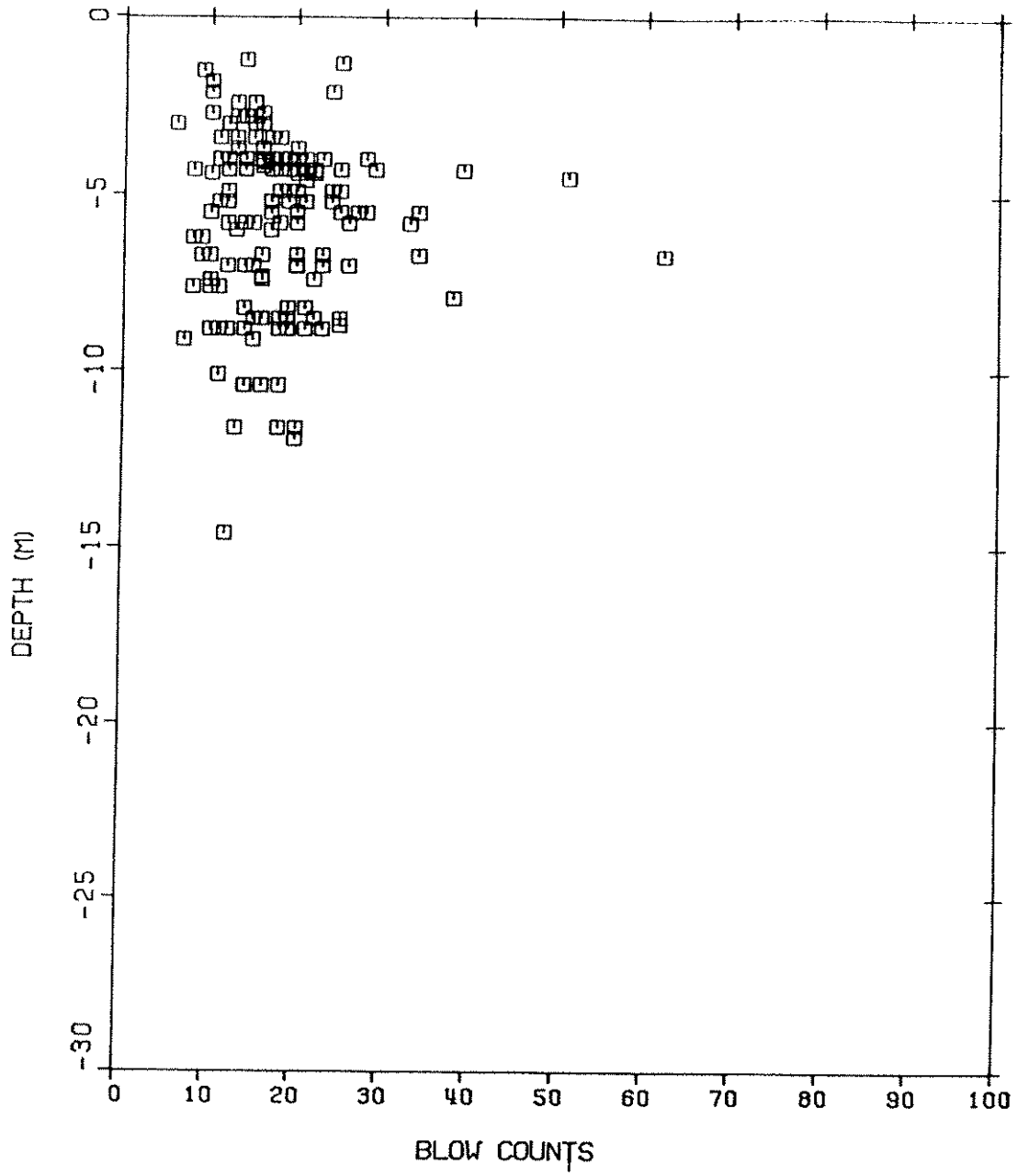
MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS(SPT) AREA 6, STRATHCONA

FIGURE 12

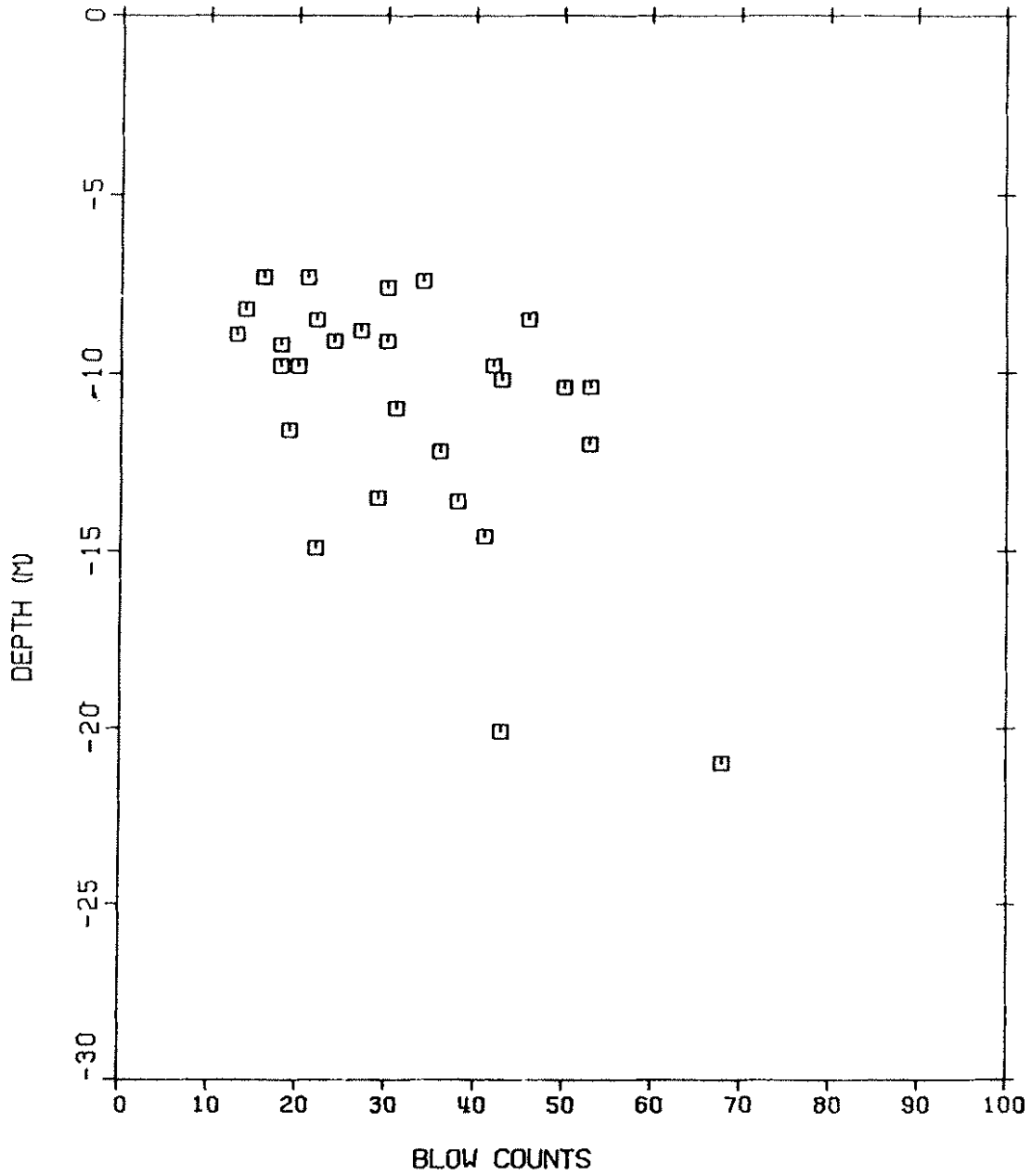


MOIST CONT VS BLOW COUNTS(SPT) AREA 7, SOUTH CENT

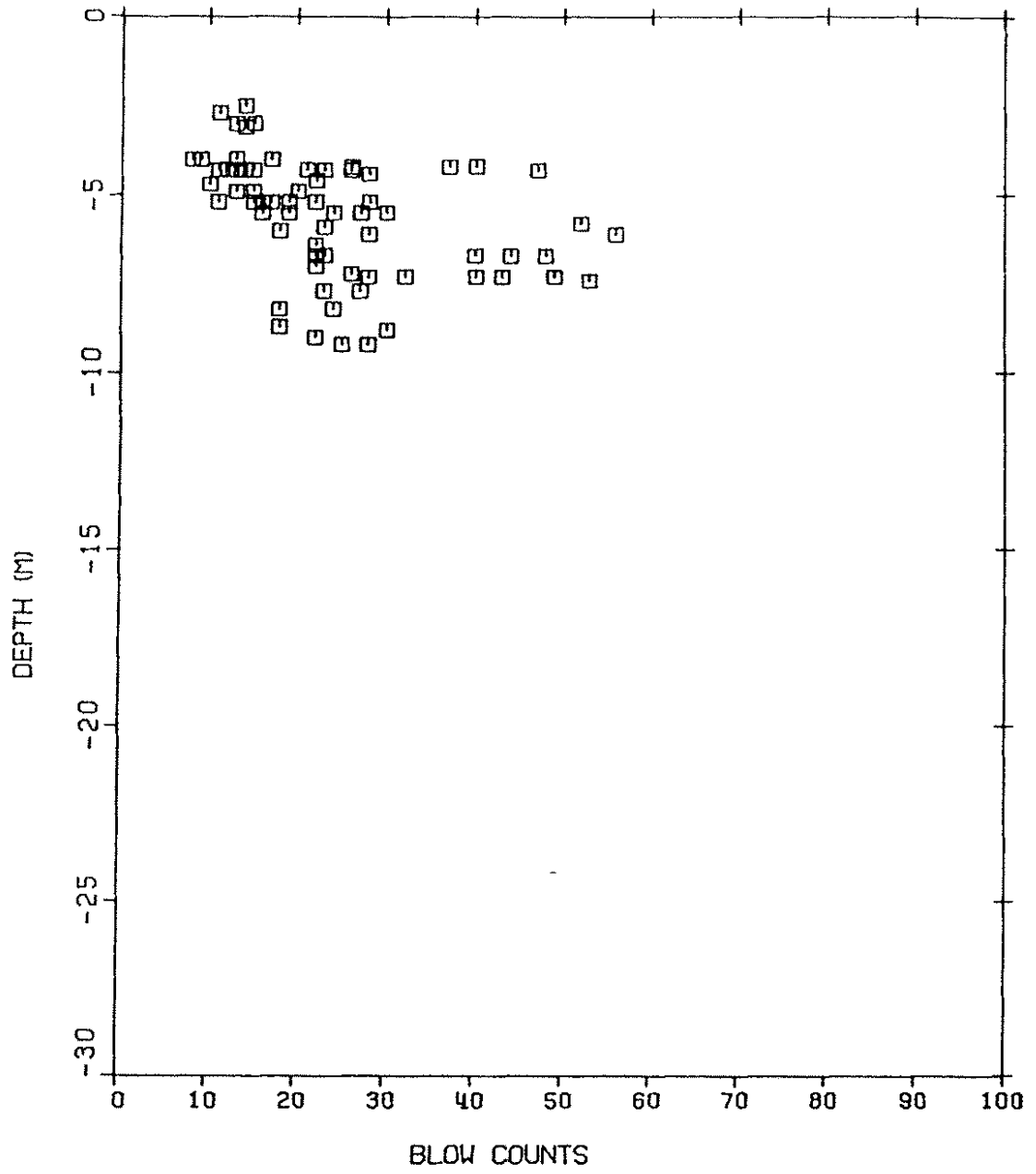
FIGURE 13



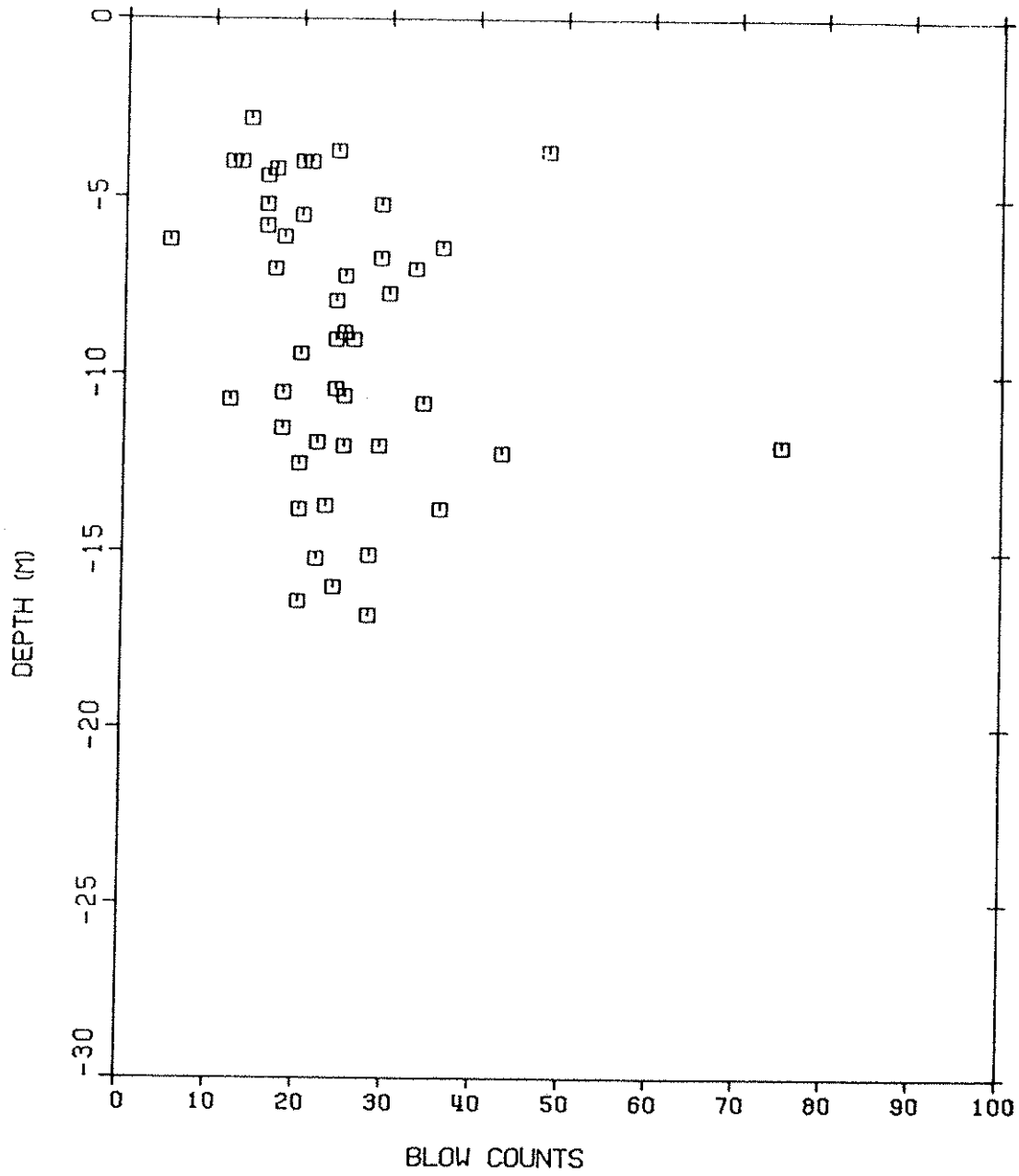
BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 1, MILLWOODS



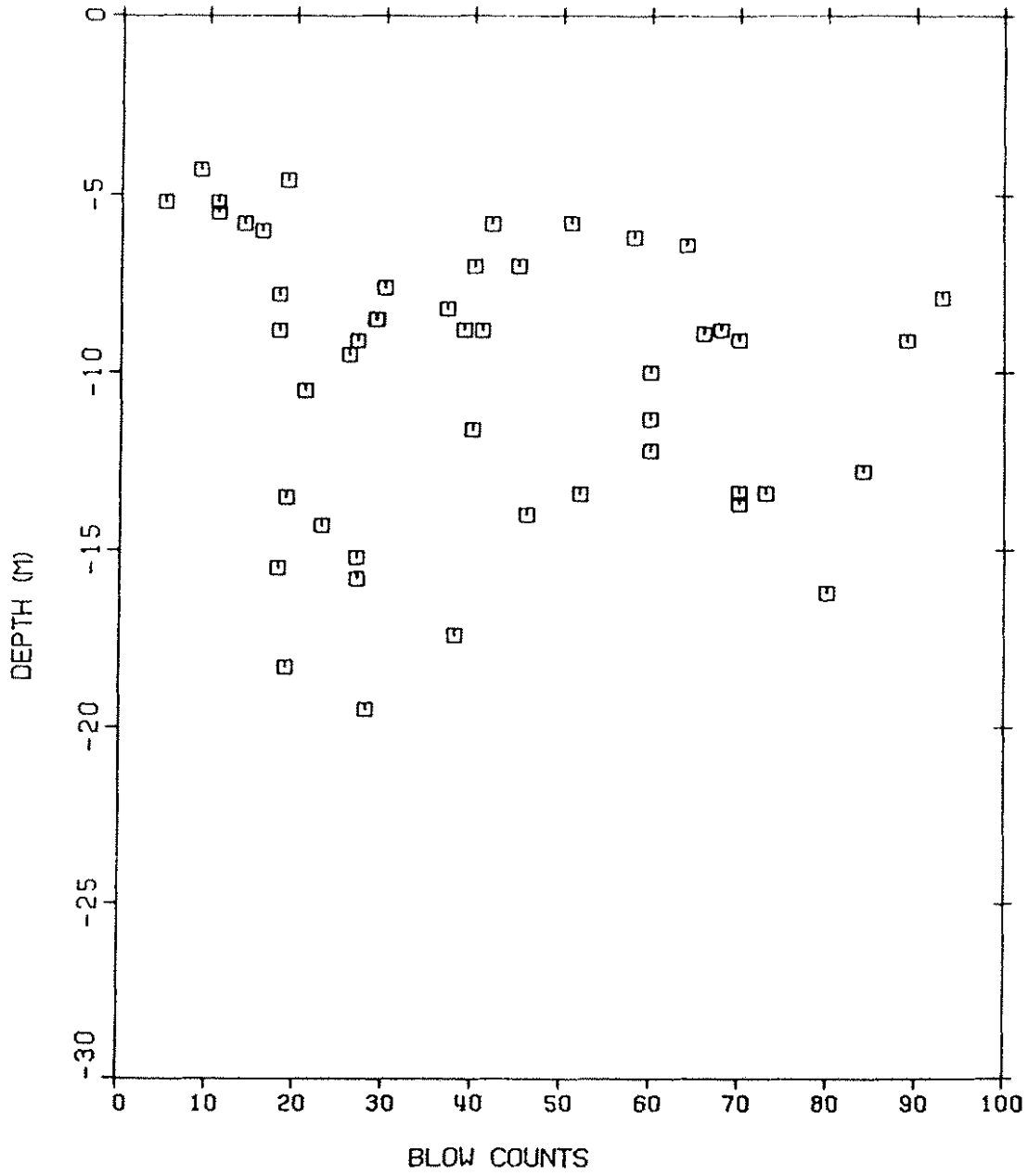
BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 2, WEST END



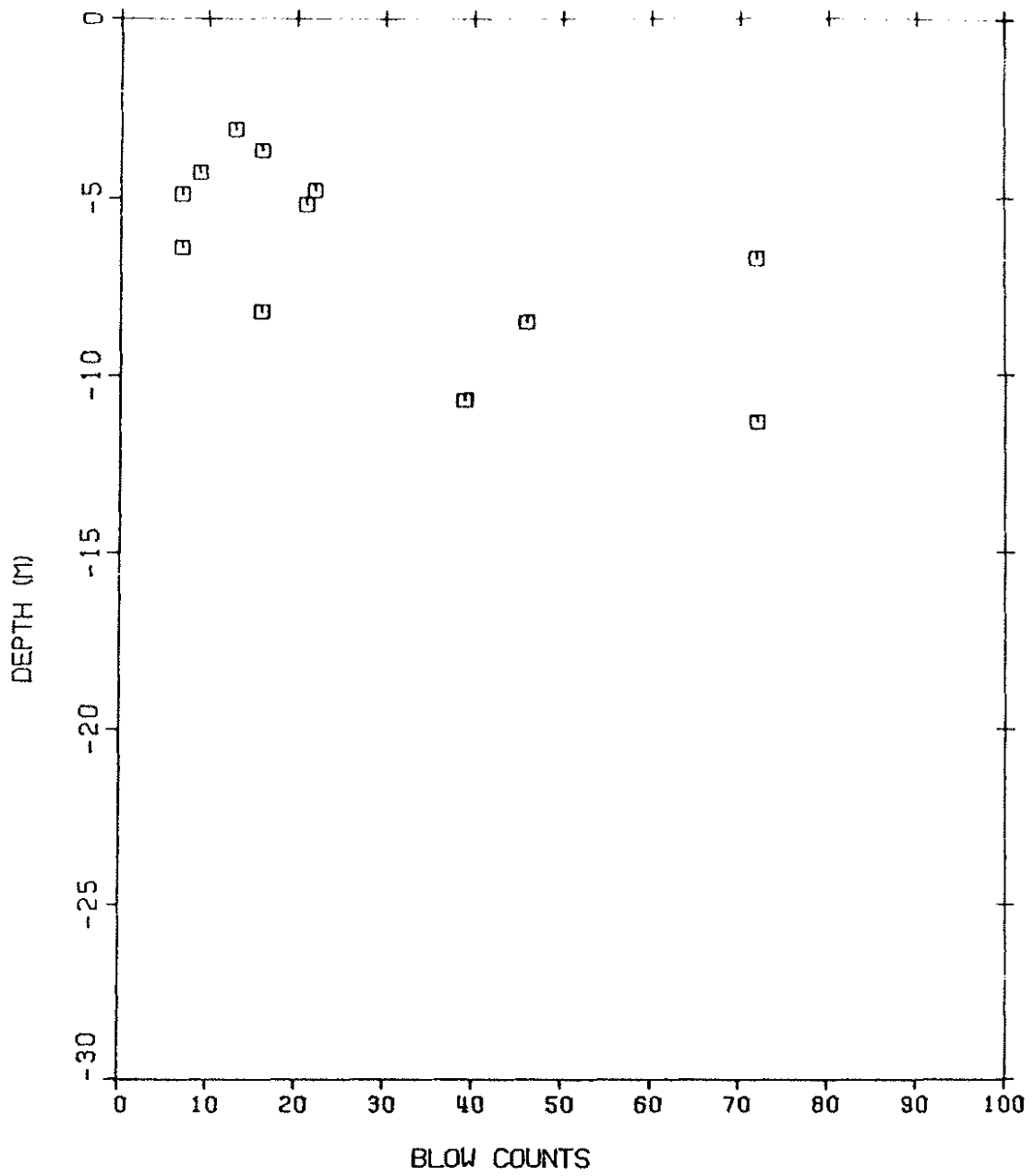
BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 3, NORTH



BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 4, NORTHEAST

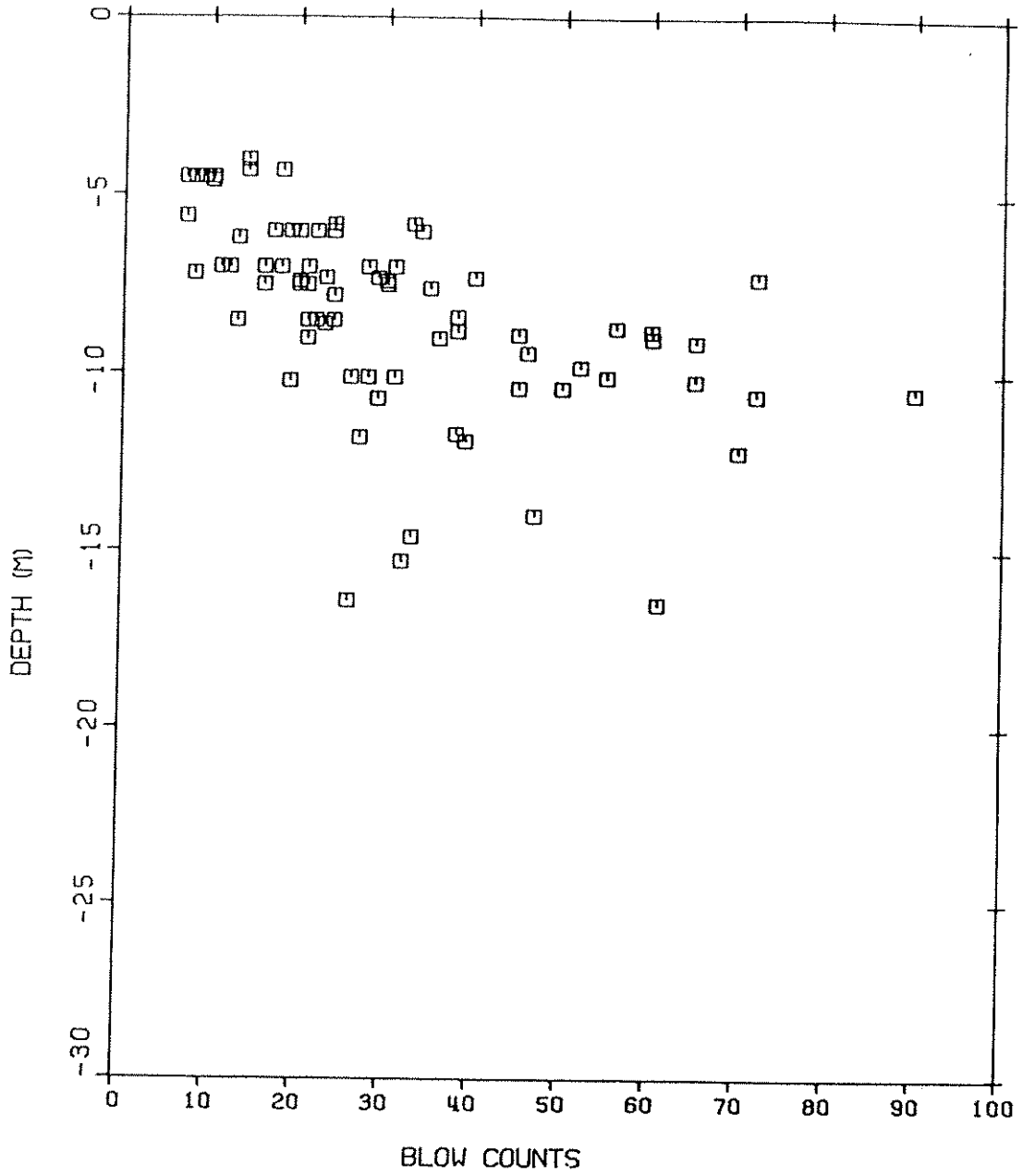


BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 5, DT NORTH

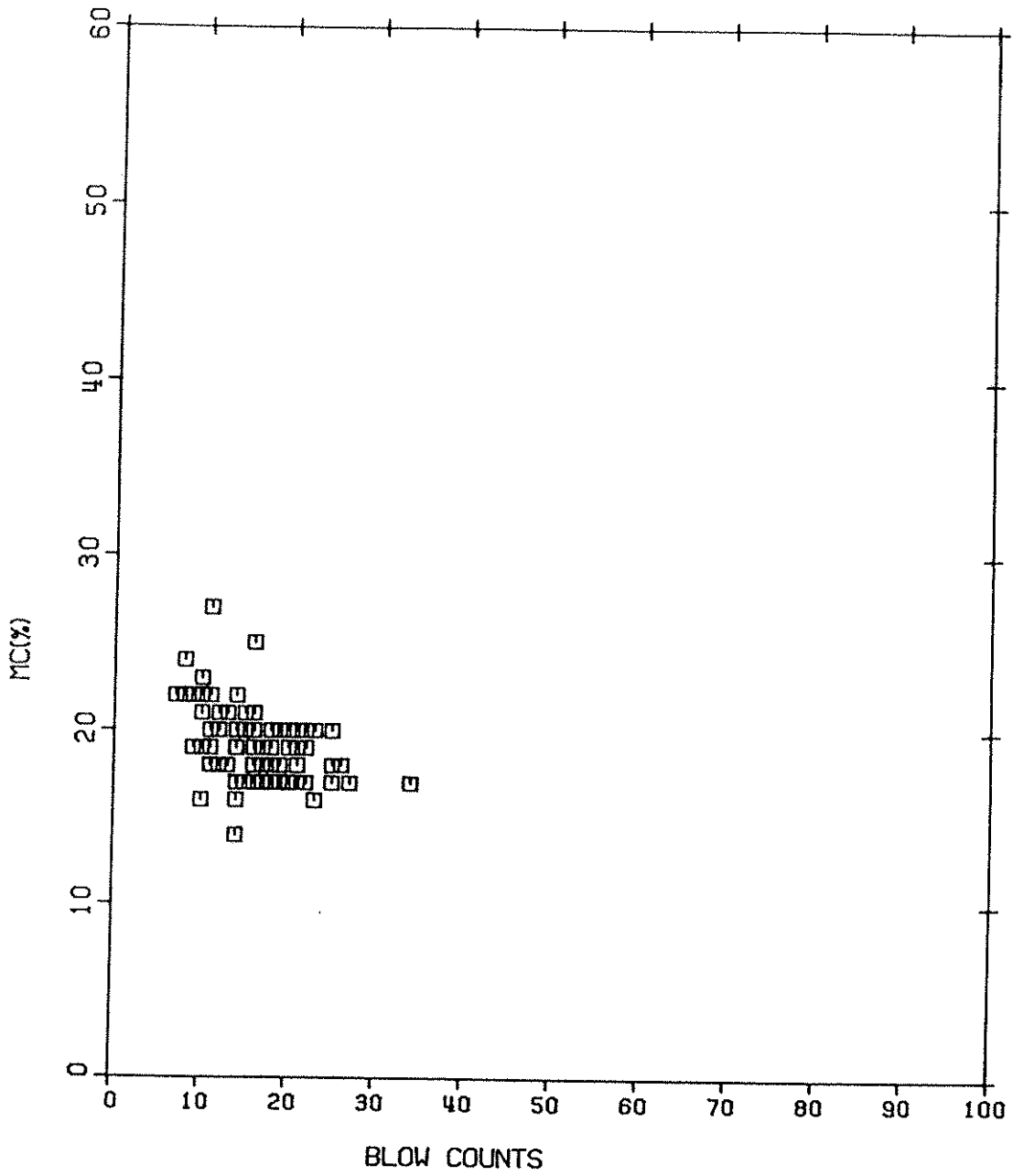


BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 6, STRATHCONA

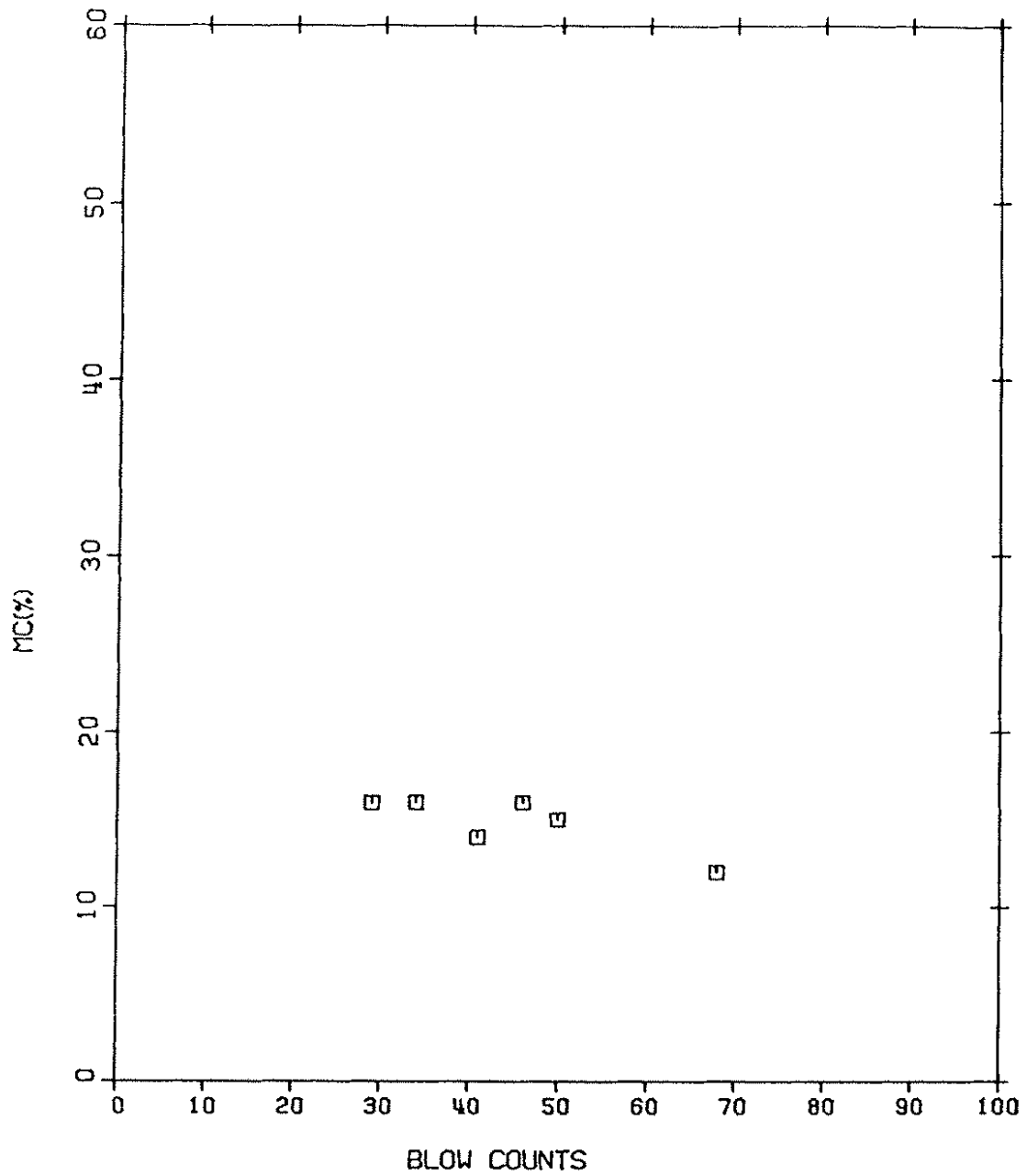




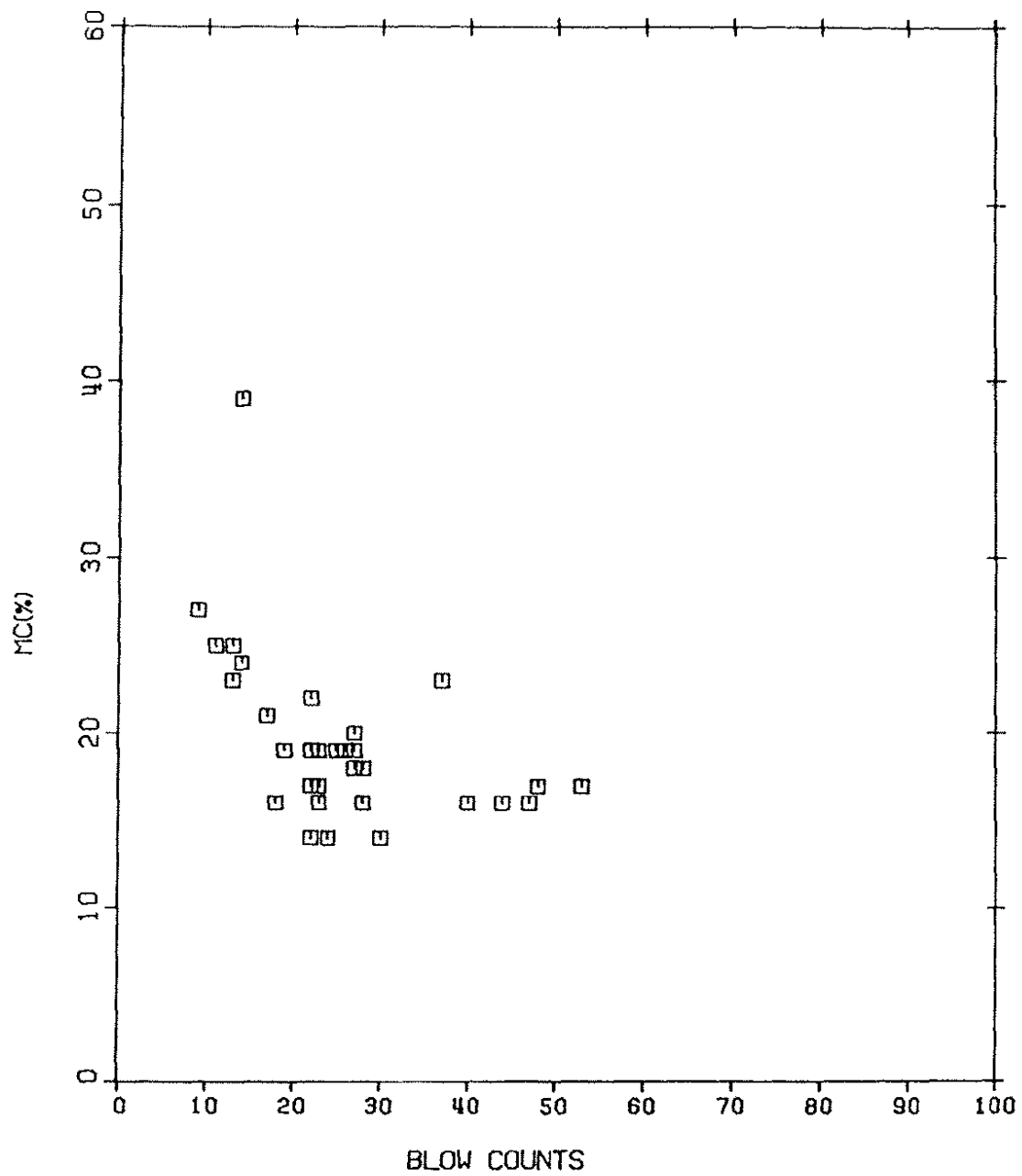
BLOW COUNTS (SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 7, SOUTH CENT



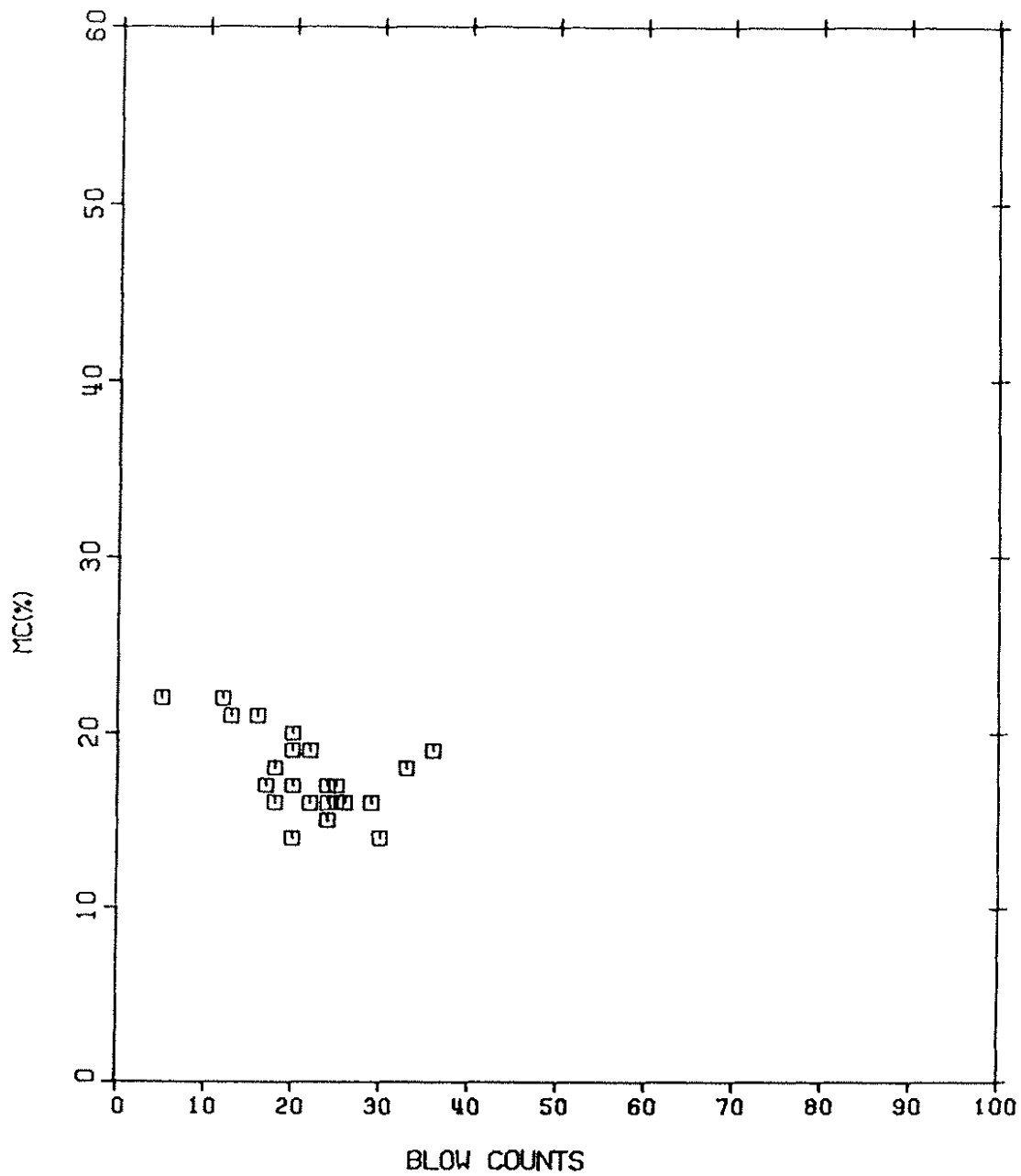
MC VS N(SPT) AREA 1 MILLWOODS MULTISAMPLE BH



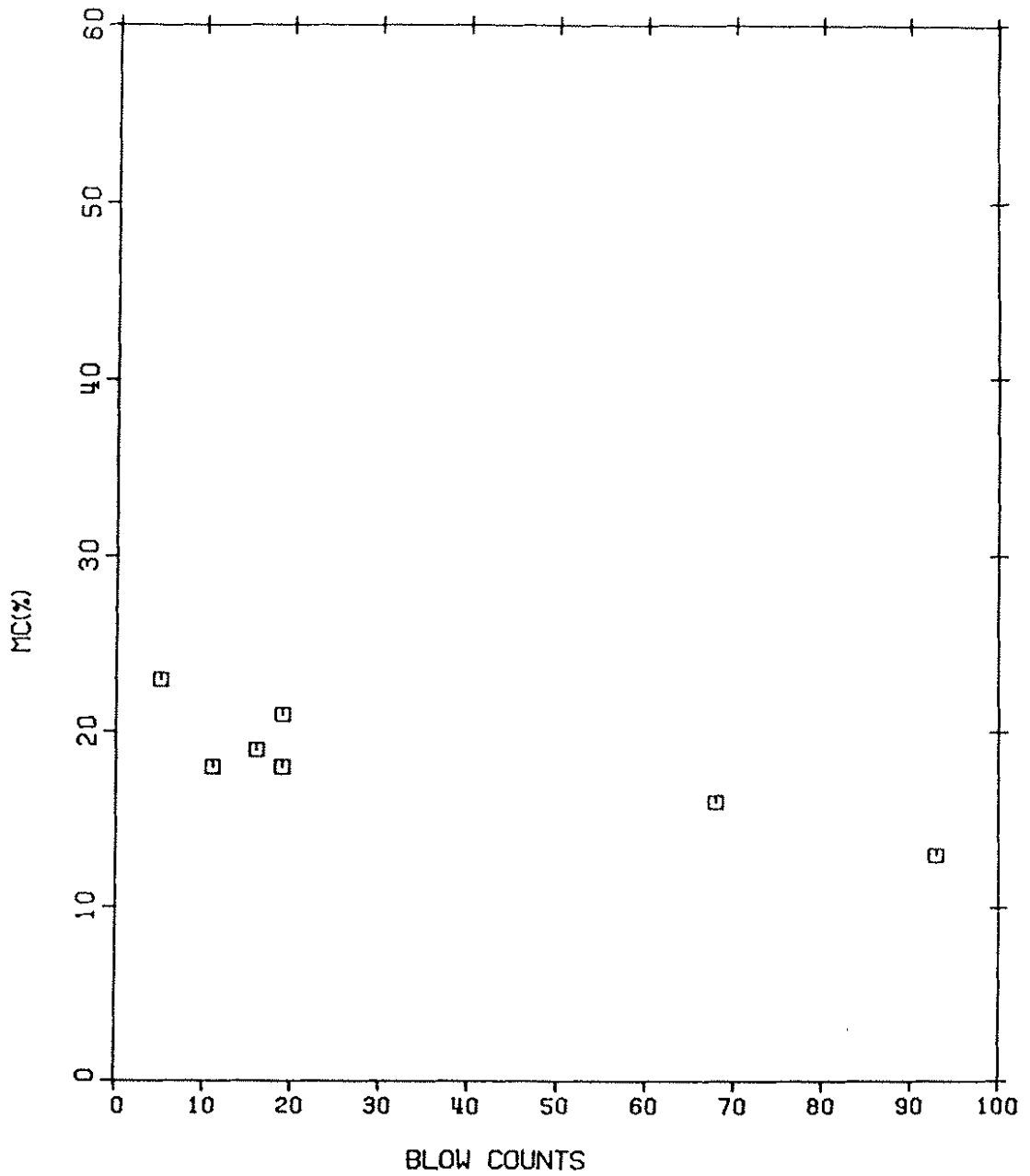
MC VS N(SPT) AREA 2 WEST END MULTISAMPLE BH



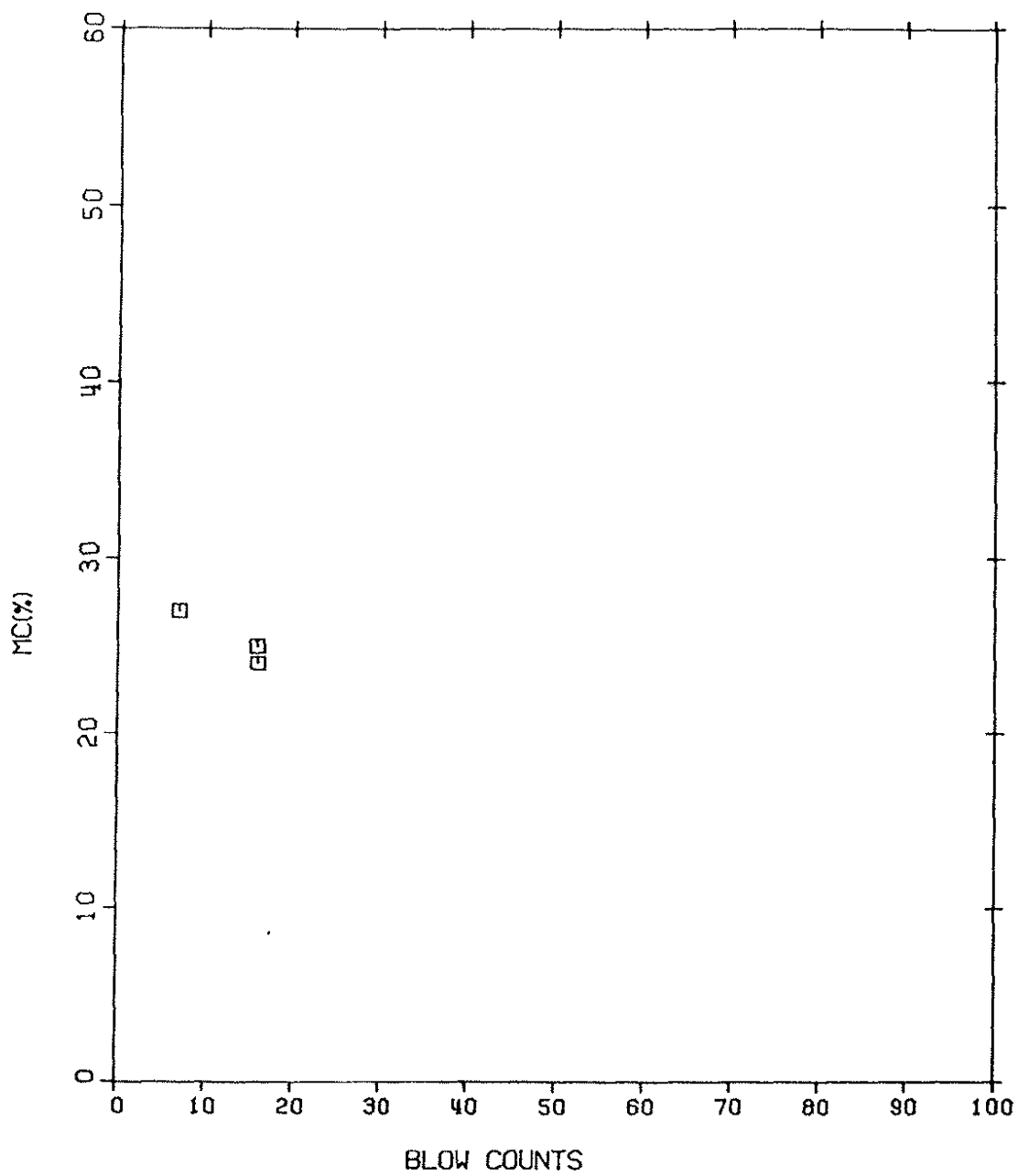
MC VS N(SPT) AREA 3 NORTH MULTISAMPLE BH



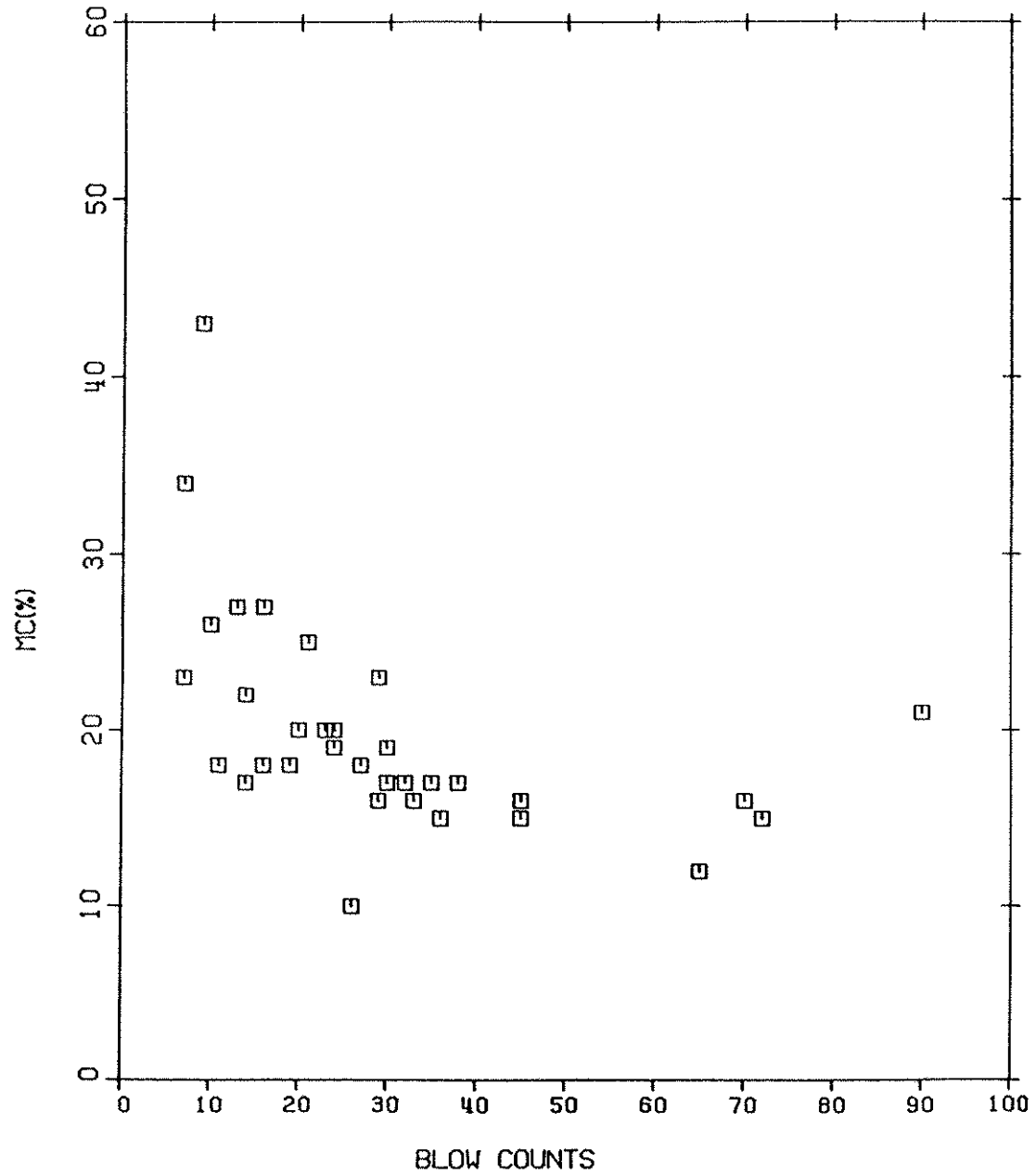
MC VS N(SPT) AREA 4 NORTHEAST MULTISAMPLE BH



MC VS N(SPT) AREA 5 DT NORTH MULTISAMPLE BH

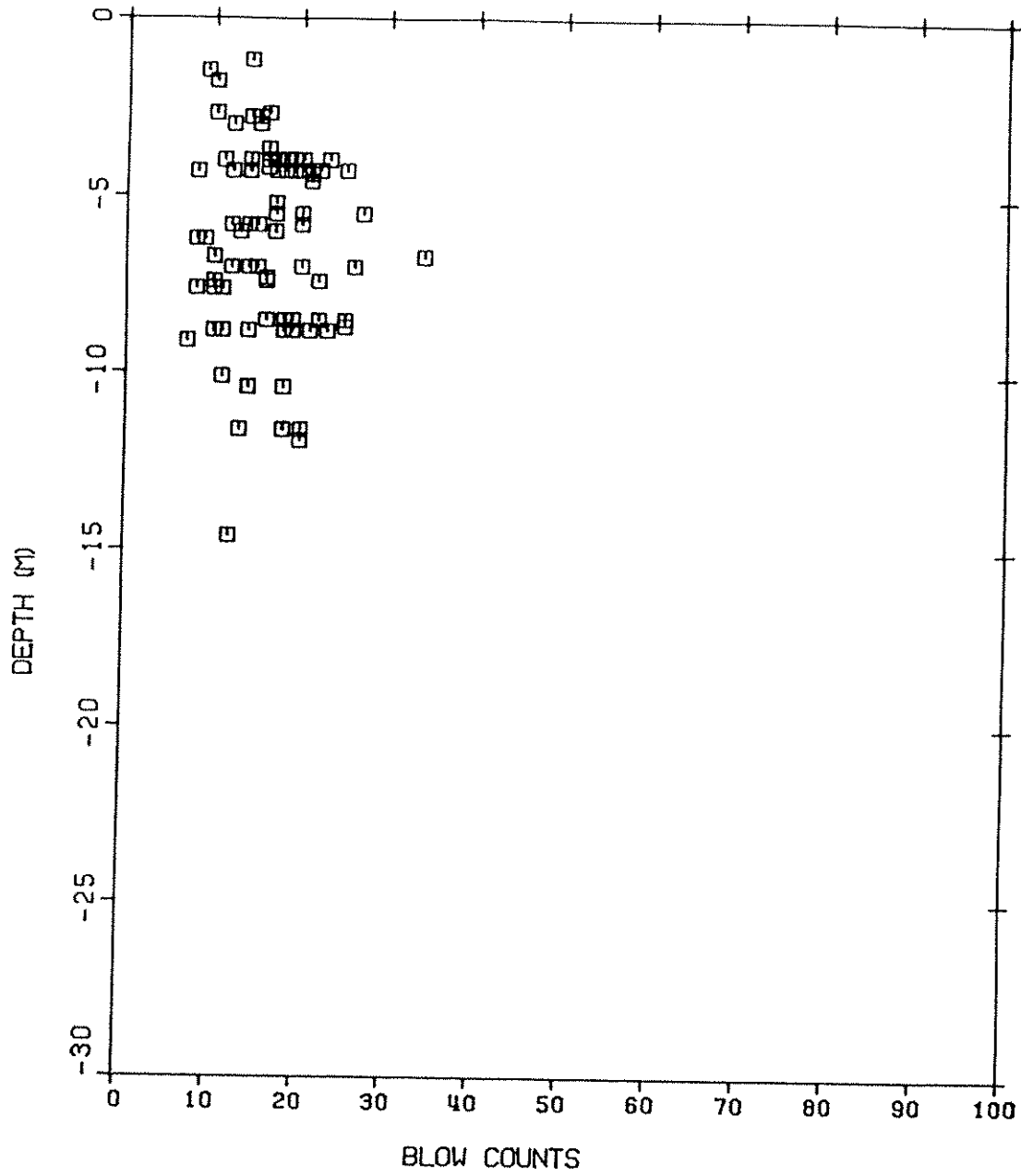


MC VS N(SPT) AREA 6 STRATHCONA MULTISAMPLE BH

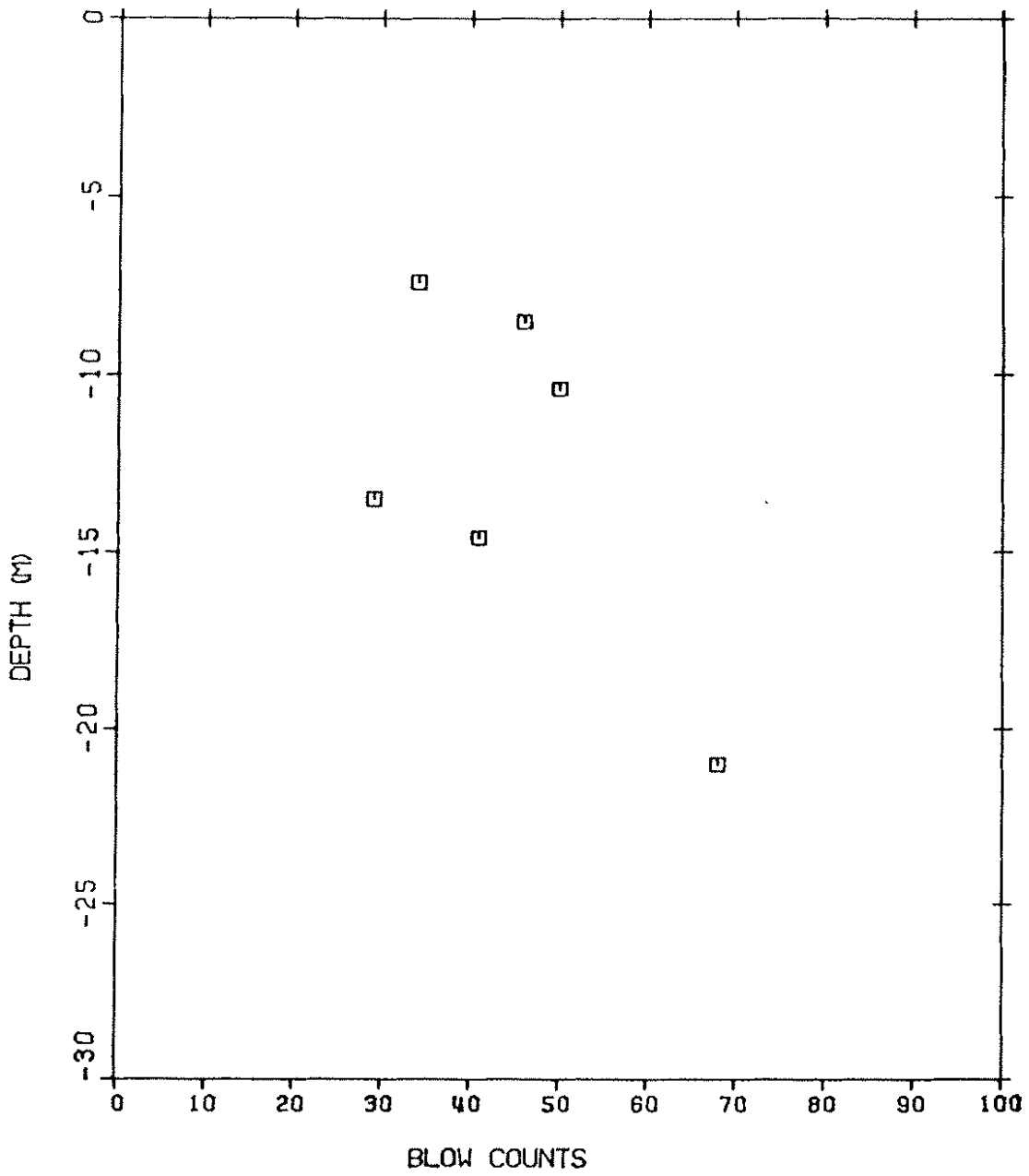


MC VS N(SPT) AREA 7 SOUTH CENT MULTISAMPLE BH

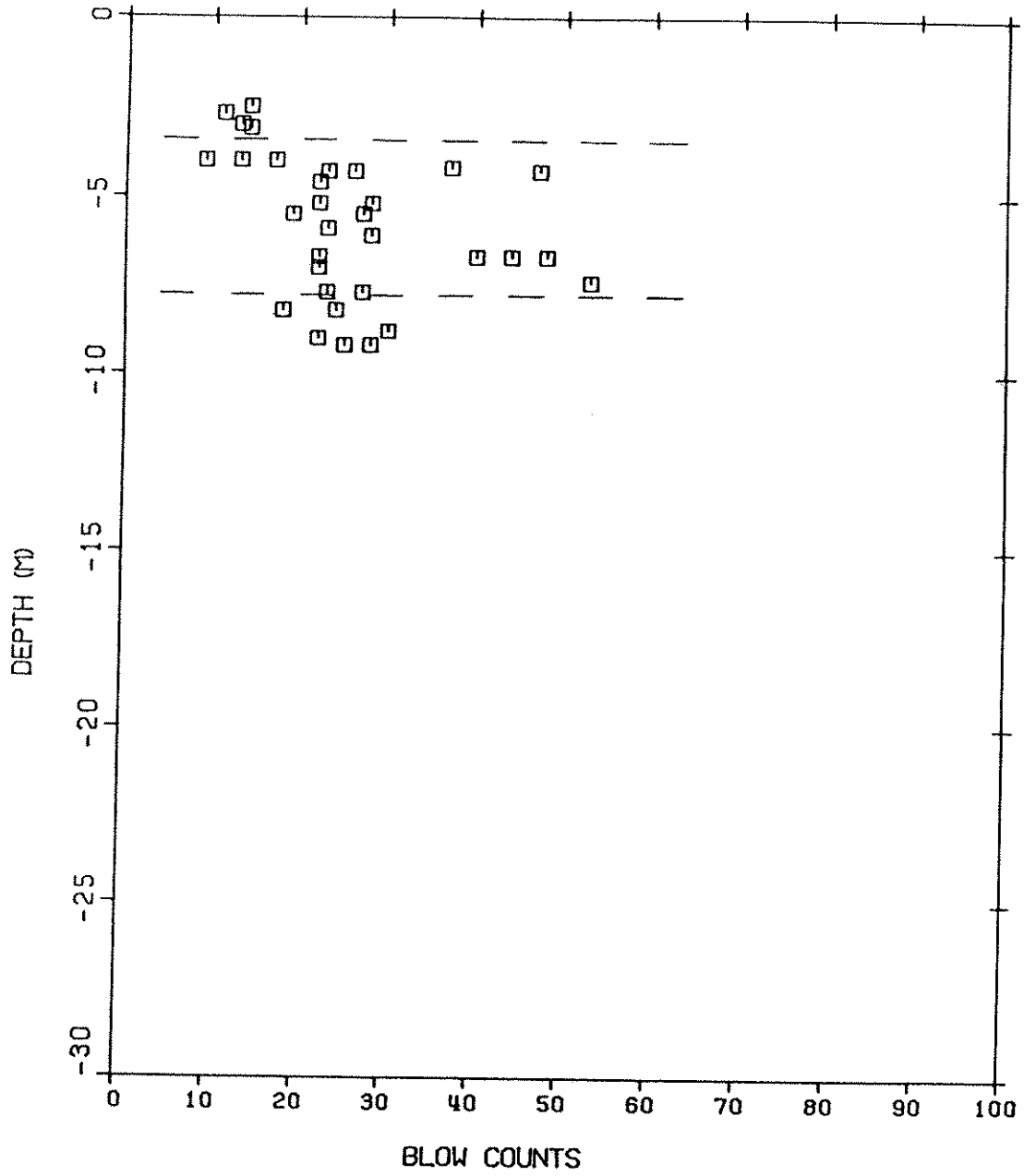




N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 1 MILLWOODS MULTISAMPLE BH

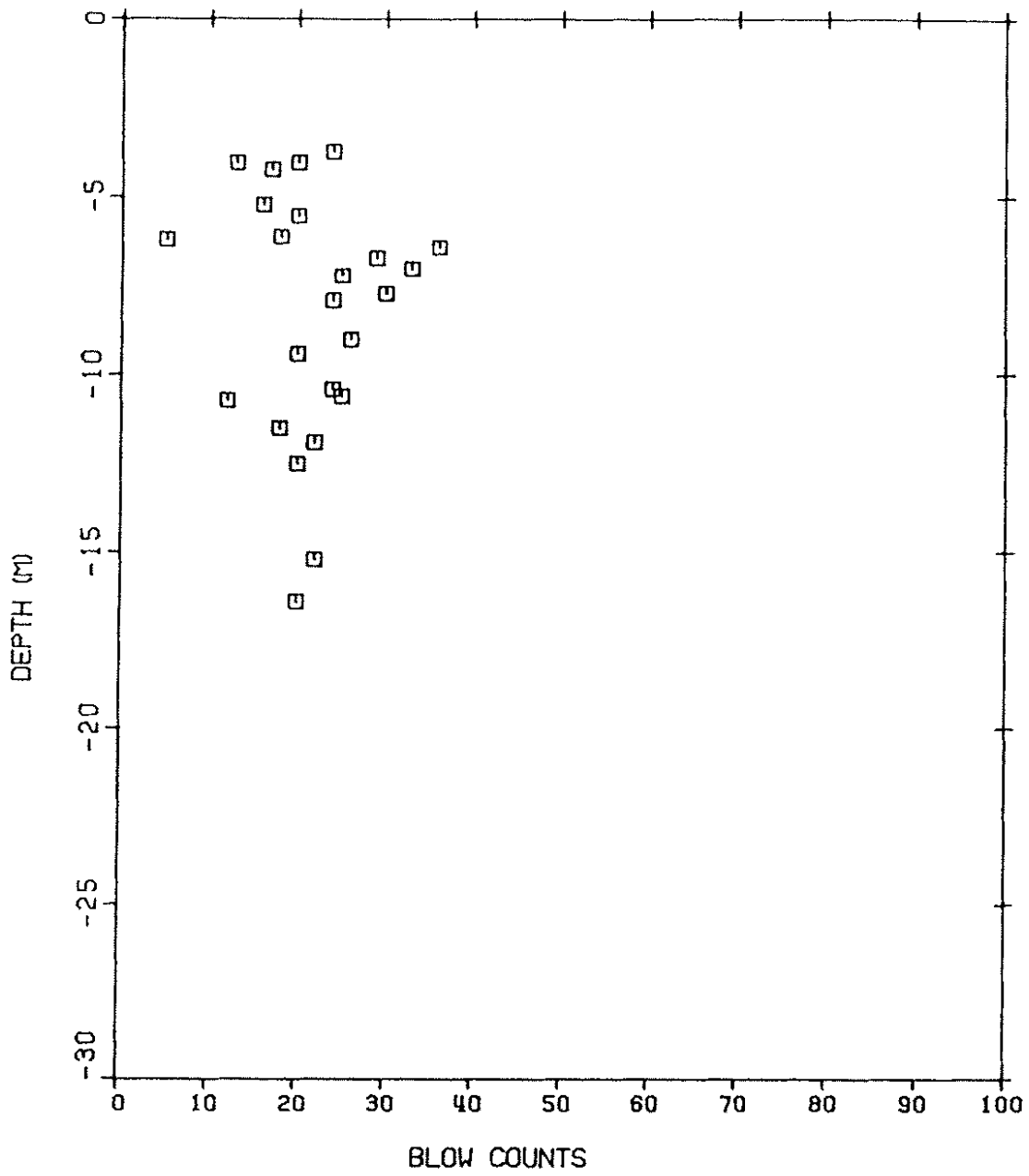


N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 2 WEST END MULTISAMPLE BH

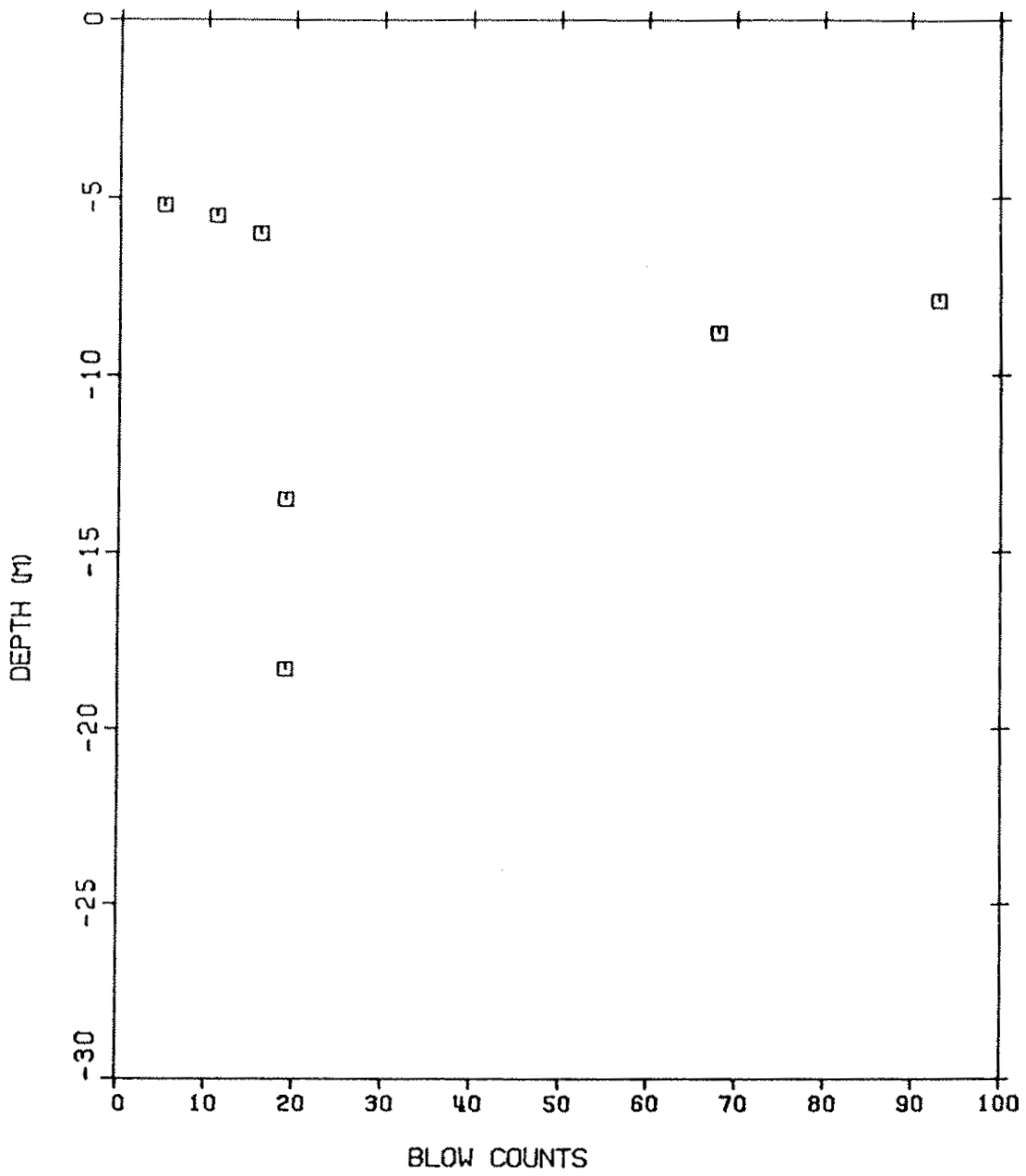


N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 3 NORTH MULTISAMPLE BH

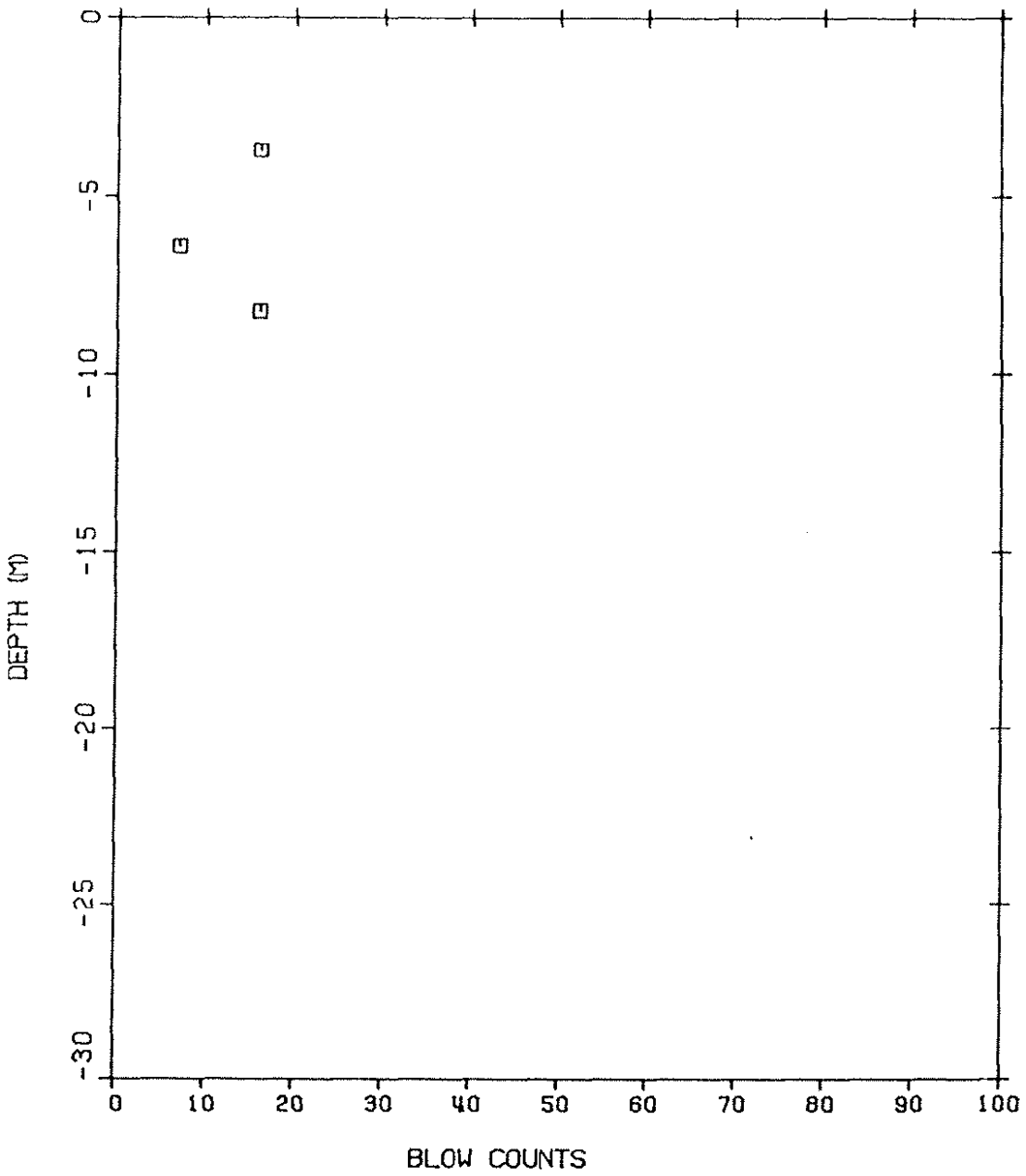
FIGURE 30



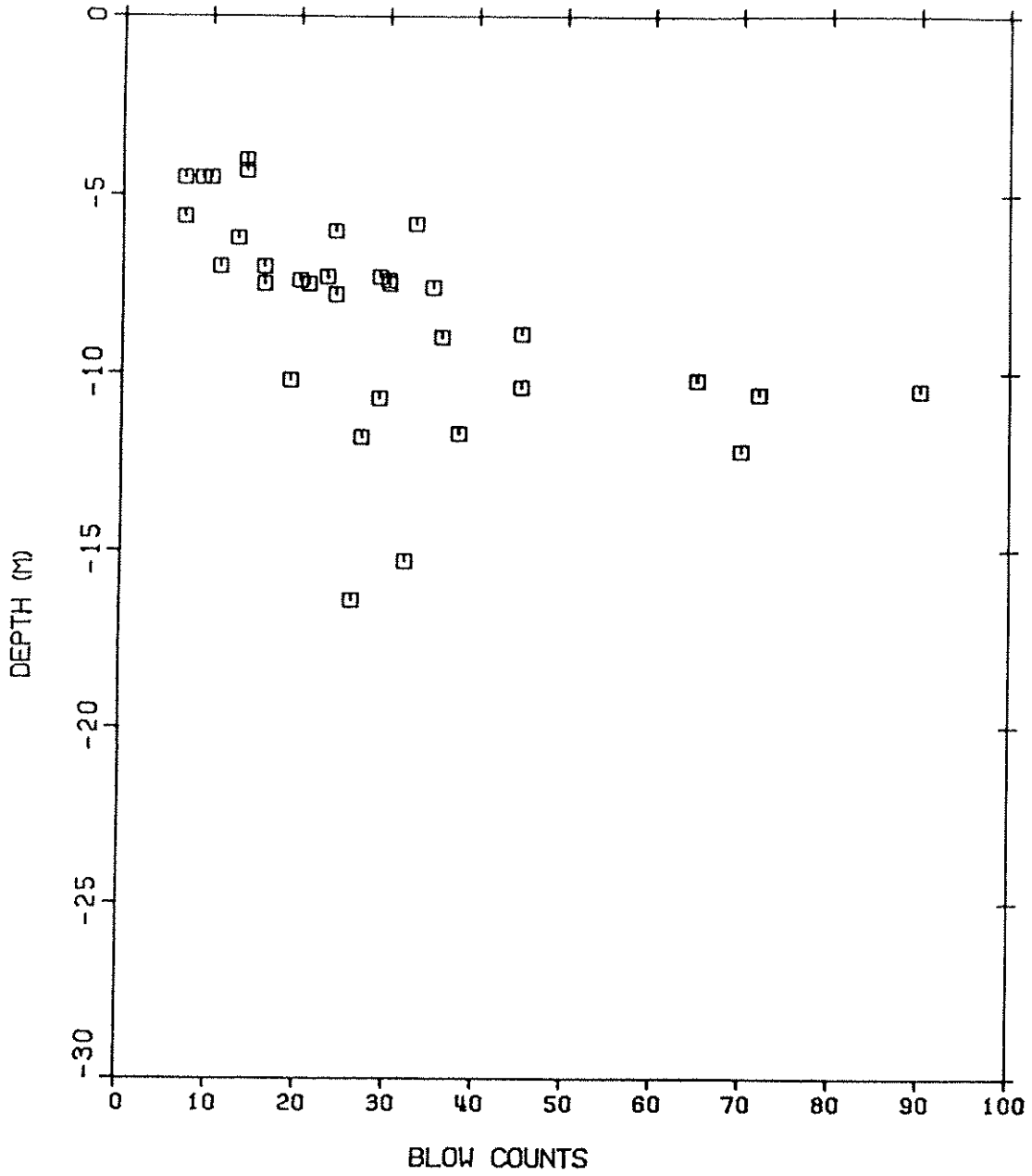
N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 4 NORTHEAST MULTISAMPLE BH



N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 5 DT NORTH MULTISAMPLE BH



N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 6 STRATHCONA MULTISAMPLE BH



N(SPT) VS DEPTH AREA 7 SOUTH CENT MULTISAMPLE BH

FIGURE 34

# DOWNTOWN - GENERAL STRATIGRAPHY

SCALE H. 1" = 200m  
V. 1" = 5m

S.W.

N.E.

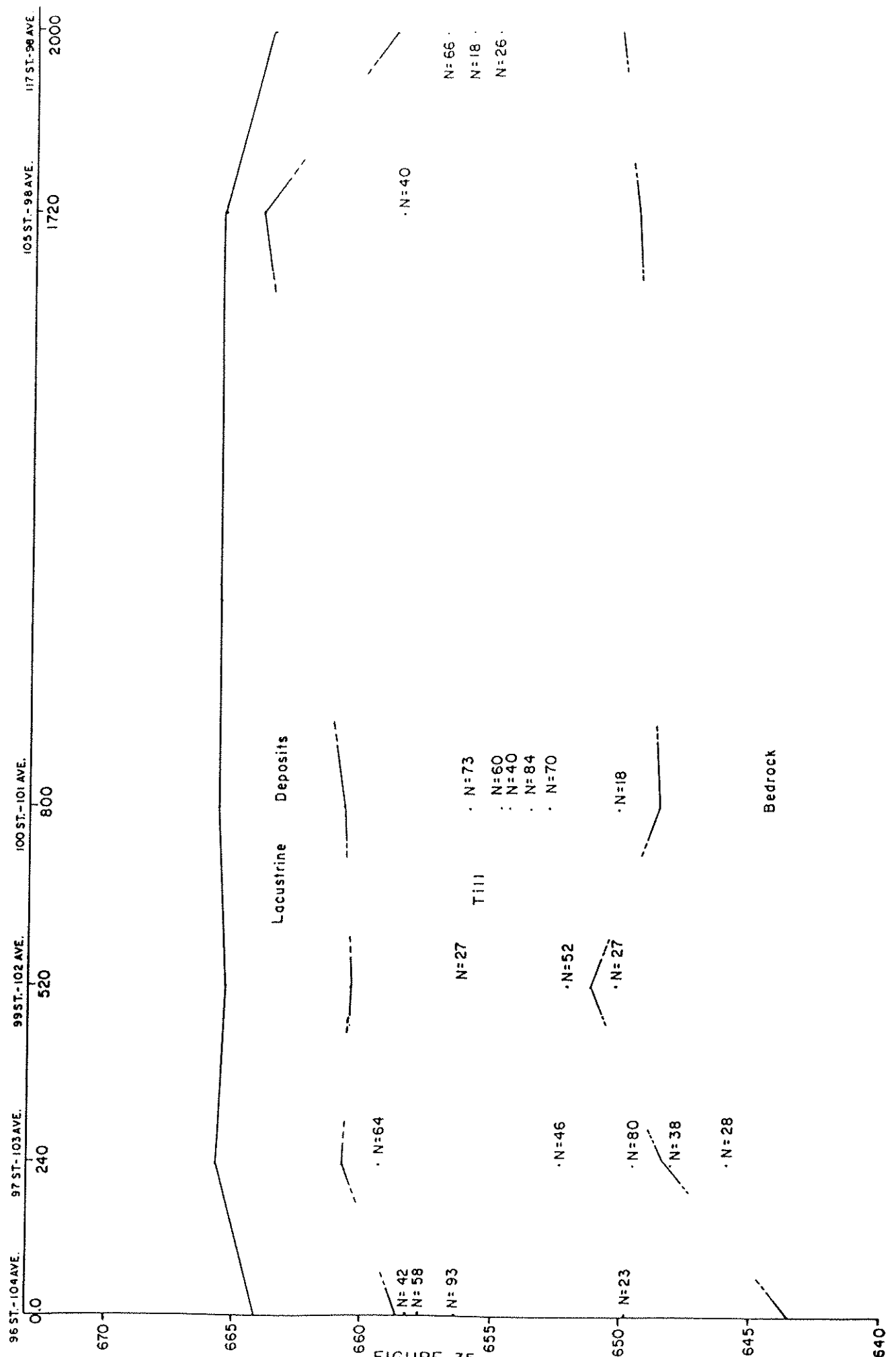


FIGURE 35



MILLWOODS - GENERAL STRATIGRAPHY

H: 1" = 400m  
 V: 1" = 5m

SCALE

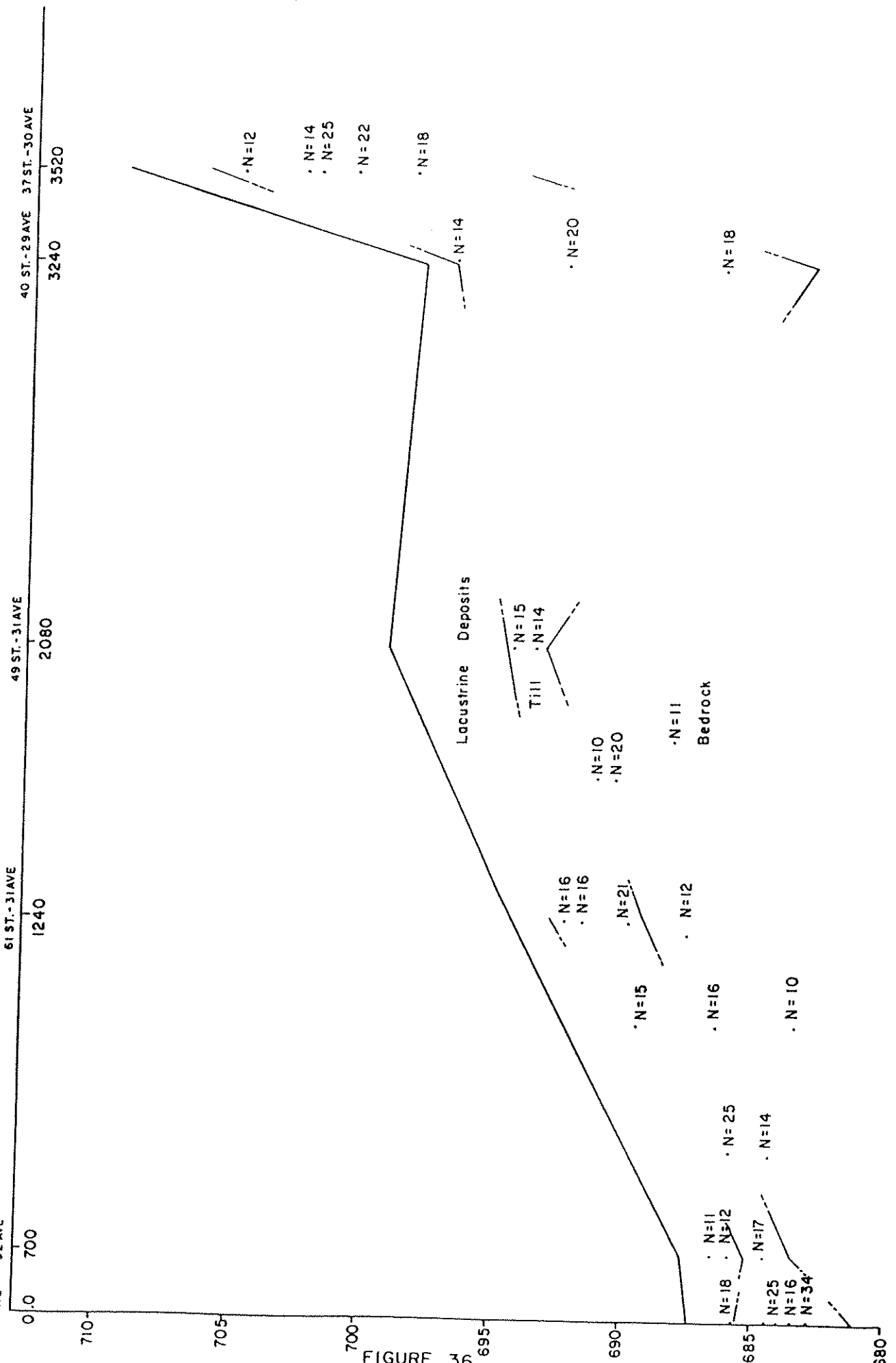


FIGURE 36



Table with columns: Line number, Address, Bore Hole, Ground Elevation, Top Till Elevation, Bot Till Elevation, Sample Elevation, MC, OU, N, LL, PL, Comments. Rows 121-180.

Table with columns: Address, Bore Hole, Ground Elevation, Top Till Elevation, Bot Till Elevation, Sample Elevation, MC, OU, N, LL, PL, Comments. Rows 171-180.

Table with columns: Line number, Address, Bore Hole, Ground Elevation, Top Till Elevation, Bot Till Elevation, Sample Elevation, MC, OU, N, LL, PL, Comments. Rows 181-220.

Table with columns: Address, Bore Hole, Ground Elevation, Top Till Elevation, Bot Till Elevation, Sample Elevation, MC, OU, N, LL, PL, Comments. Rows 221-240.









Table with columns for well ID, address, bore hole, ground elevation, top till elevation, bot till elevation, sample elevation, MC, OU, H, LL, PL, and comments. Rows 721-780.

Table with columns for well ID, address, bore hole, ground elevation, top till elevation, bot till elevation, sample elevation, MC, OU, H, LL, PL, and comments. Rows 781-855.

Table with columns for well ID, address, bore hole, ground elevation, top till elevation, bot till elevation, sample elevation, MC, OU, H, LL, PL, and comments. Rows 856-900.



841	120 ST	24 AVE	1	673 8	671 4	0 0	666 3	25	198	21	0	0	0	TH TO 666 9	####
842	120 ST	24 AVE	2	674 6	671 4	0 0	670 1	26	187	10	0	0	TH TO 666 7	####	
843	120 ST	24 AVE	2	674 6	671 4	0 0	667 1	27	148	16	0	0	TH TO 666 7	####	
844	120 ST	29 AVE	1	670 3	662 3	659 3	660 5	18	0	57	0	0		####	
845	120 ST	25 AVE	3	673 6	666 9	665 7	666 6	30	0	12	0	0		####	
846	118 ST	24 AVE	7	677 3	670 3	0 0	668 7	23	0	22	0	0	TH TO 668 6	####	
847	117 ST	28 AVE	9	674 2	667 5	665 3	667 2	21	0	18	0	0		####	
848	125 ST	28 AVE	11	669 6	662 9	0 0	661 1	21	0	13	0	0	TH TO 661 0	####	
849	124 ST	23 AVE	1	674 9	666 6	665 1	666 3	19	0	23	26	14		####	
850	114 ST	22 AVE	1	678 8	673 0	0 0	671 8	13	0	31	0	0	TH TO 666 9	####	
851	112 ST	22 AVE	3	679 1	673 6	0 0	672 1	13	0	21	0	0	TH TO 671 8	####	
852	114 ST	18 AVE	8	679 4	673 9	0 0	672 4	13	0	31	0	0	TH TO 672 2	####	
853	119 ST	18 AVE	1	678 8	674 8	666 9	670 3	20	0	21	60	21		####	

End of file