

## 2. Loess localities of the Niederrhein area

WOLFGANG SCHIRMER

SCHIRMER, W. (2002): Loess localities of the Niederrhein area - In: IKINGER, A. & SCHIRMER, W. (eds.): Loess units and solcomplexes in the Niederrhein and Maas area. – Terra nostra, **02/1**: 24-50; Berlin 2002.

Three localities are presented here (Fig. 4): Erkelenz, Rheindahlen and Garzweiler. The brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz exhibits the most complete loess stack of the Niederrhein. The brickyard pit DREESEN in Rheindahlen exhibits a small section, the Erft Solcomplex. The former open cast mine Frimmersdorf-West showed around 1970 the Rur, Erft and Rocourt Solcomplex in great details. Its recent successor, the opencast mine Garzweiler, exhibits the oldest part of the Rhein loess sequence, the Niers Solcomplex, as well as the younger loess units starting with the Wetterau Loess.

On the Niederrhein the Ahr Interstadial Solcomplex was only visible with its basal parts in Garzweiler for a short time. The type locality, the Schwalbenberg near Remagen, is situated on the Mittelrhein and, being part of a private garden, is now going to be overgrown.

### 2.1 Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz (see Figs. 4-11)

To date this brickyard pit exhibits the most complete loess stack of the Niederrhein (Figs. 4 and 5), though some of the beds indicated in Figs. 4 and 5 meanwhile are revealed by dump in the western part of the pit. Details of the walls are given from below to above in the sections 19 (Figs. 6a-d), 19a (Figs. 7a-c), 15 (Figs. 8a-d), 18 (Fig. 9), 3 (Figs. 10a-d) and 16 (Fig. 11).

One of the most striking lines is the Mülgau Discordance (MD) in the mid level of the outcrop. It cuts nearly the whole Rur Solcomplex (Rur SC in Fig. 5) leaving behind nothing but

its banded lowermost part of the luvisols and of course a thick decalcification front descending down to the Niers Solcomplex.

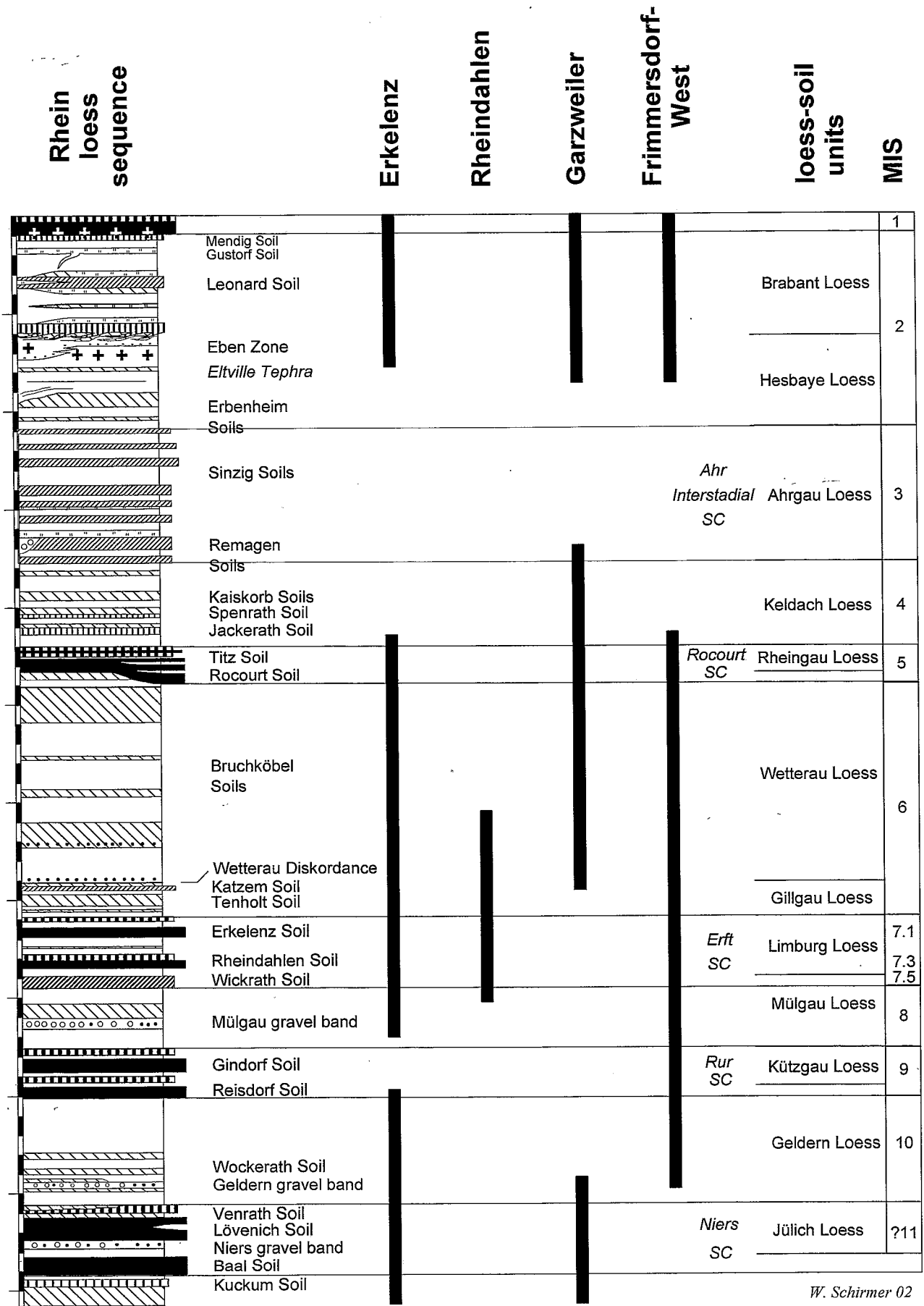
Another striking line is the Wetterau Discordance (WD) that cuts 10 m deep into the sequence molding new landscape forms. In the east part it cuts the Gillgau Loess. This is the only place so far where the Gillgau Loess was exposed. Hence it is unknown what else is hidden by the Wetterau Discordance.

In contrast to the deeply incised dales of the Wetterau Discordance the Eben Discordance (ED) is evening the rolling landscape. The recent surface is almost casting the Eben Discordance. Thus, the Wetterau Discordance was the last vivid landscape forming activity on the loess plateau between Rhein and Maas.

The units best exhibited to date are the Niers Solcomplex with the Jülich Loess, the Geldern Loess, the Mülgau Loess, the Erft Solcomplex with the Limburg Loess, the Eben Zone and the Brabant Loess.

The Wetterau Loess best exposed in the sixtieth of the last century now becomes more and more being revealed by dump from the western side.

The Brabant Loess under to the surface is interfingering by thin eolian sand layers marking the close vicinity of the outcrop to the northern loess boundary towards the large eolian sand belt of northern Central Europe.



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Fig. 4: Profiles of the Niederrhein area and their stratigraphical range.

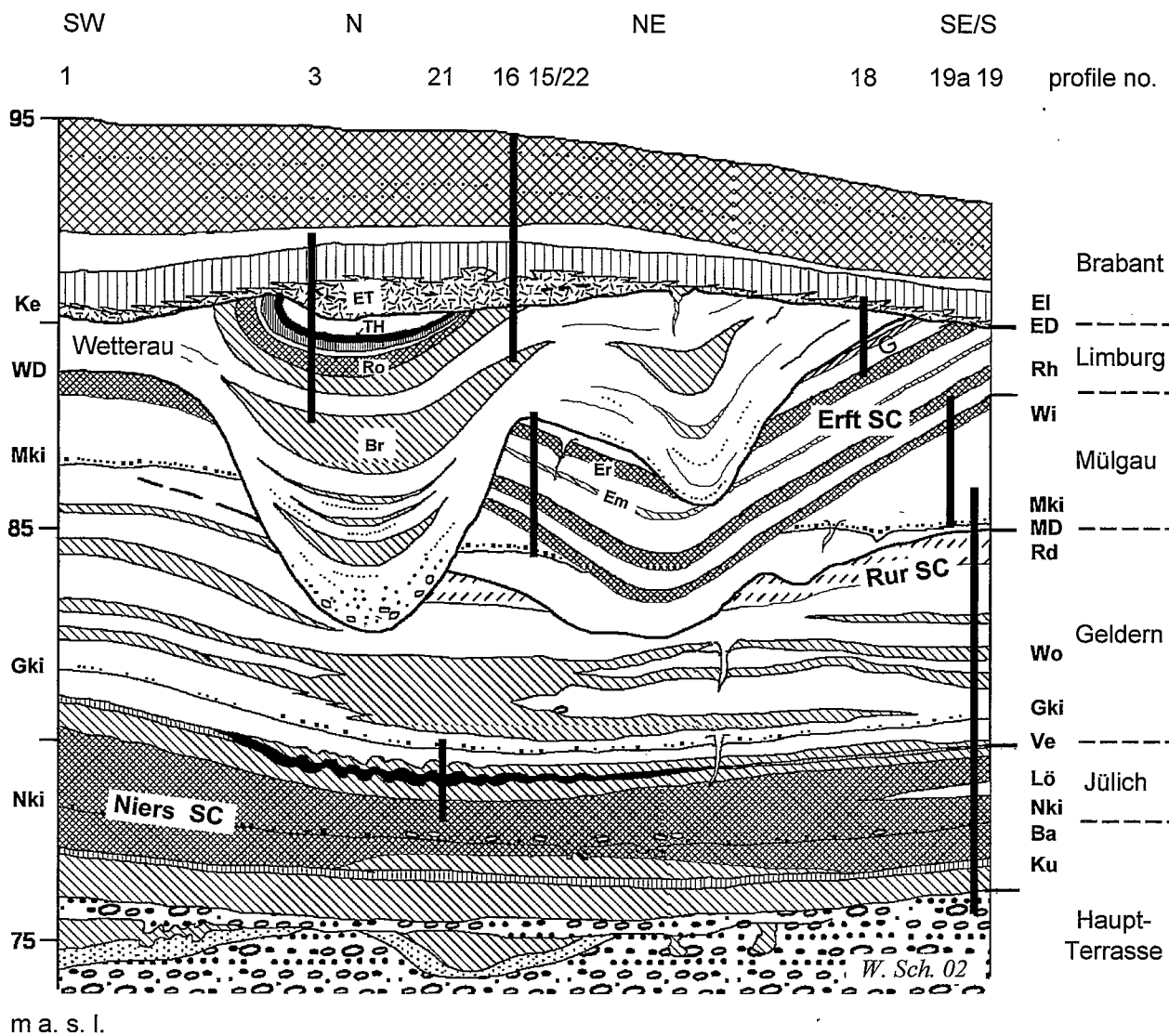


Fig. 5: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz. Schematical section of loess beds exhibited since 1966. Vertical scale exaggerated. Abbreviations: Ba = Baal Soil, Br = Bruchköbel Soils, ED = Eben Discordance, EI = Elfgen Soil, Em = Erkelenz Marker, Er = Erkelenz Soil, ET = Eltville Tephra, G = Gillgau Loess, Gki = Geldern gravel band, Ke = Kesselt Layer, Ku = Kuckum Soil, Lö = Lövenich Soil, MD = Mülgau Discordance, Mki = Mülgau gravel band, Nki = Niers gravel band, Rd = Reisdorf Soil, Rh = Rheindahlen Soil, TH = Titz Humus Zone, Wi = Wickrath Soil, Wo = Wockerath Soils. Brabant = Brabant Loess, usw.

**Profil Erkelenz 19**

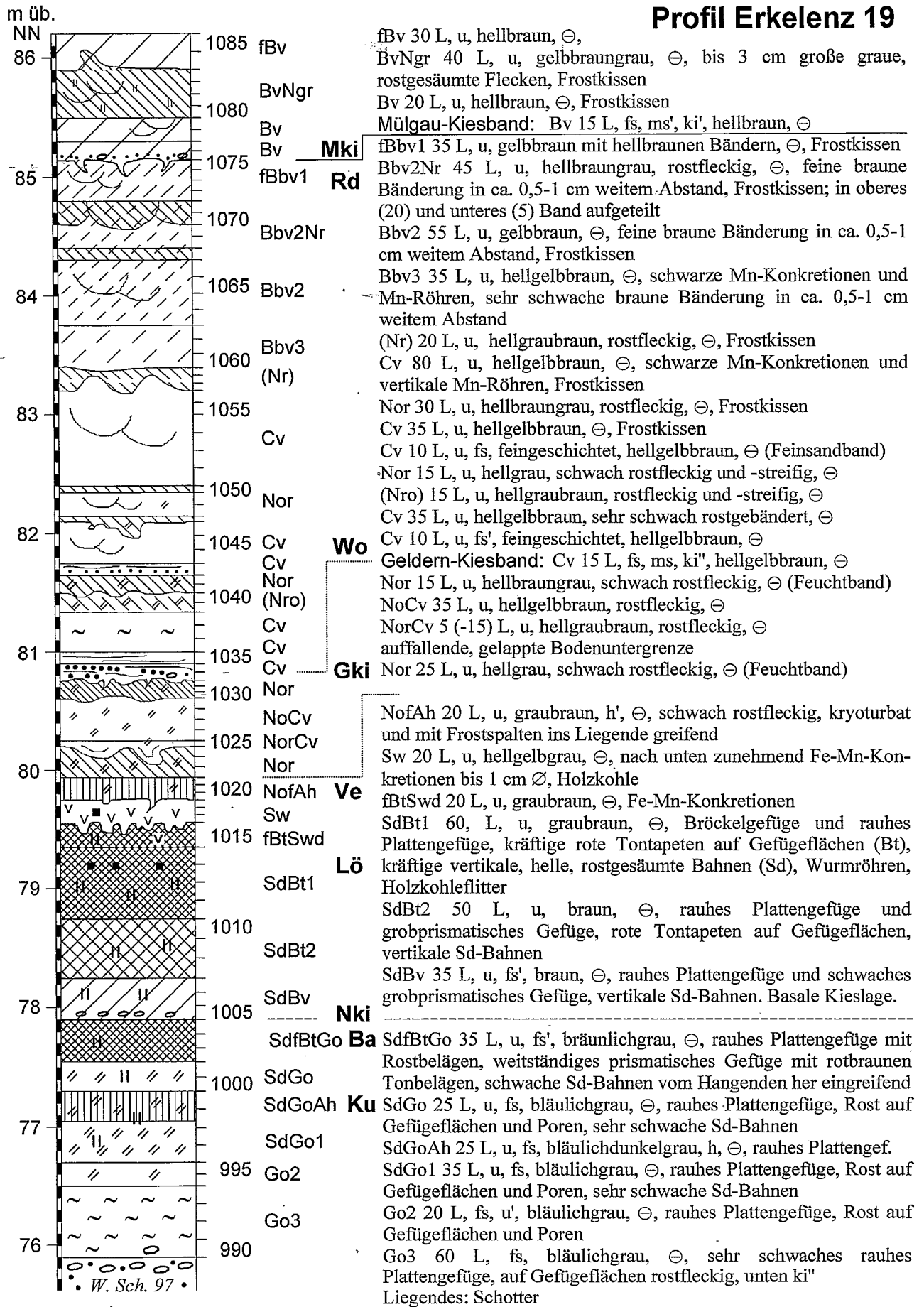


Fig. 6a: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz, profile 19: Basis, Niers Solcomplex, Jülich Loess, Geldern-Loess. Profile and description.

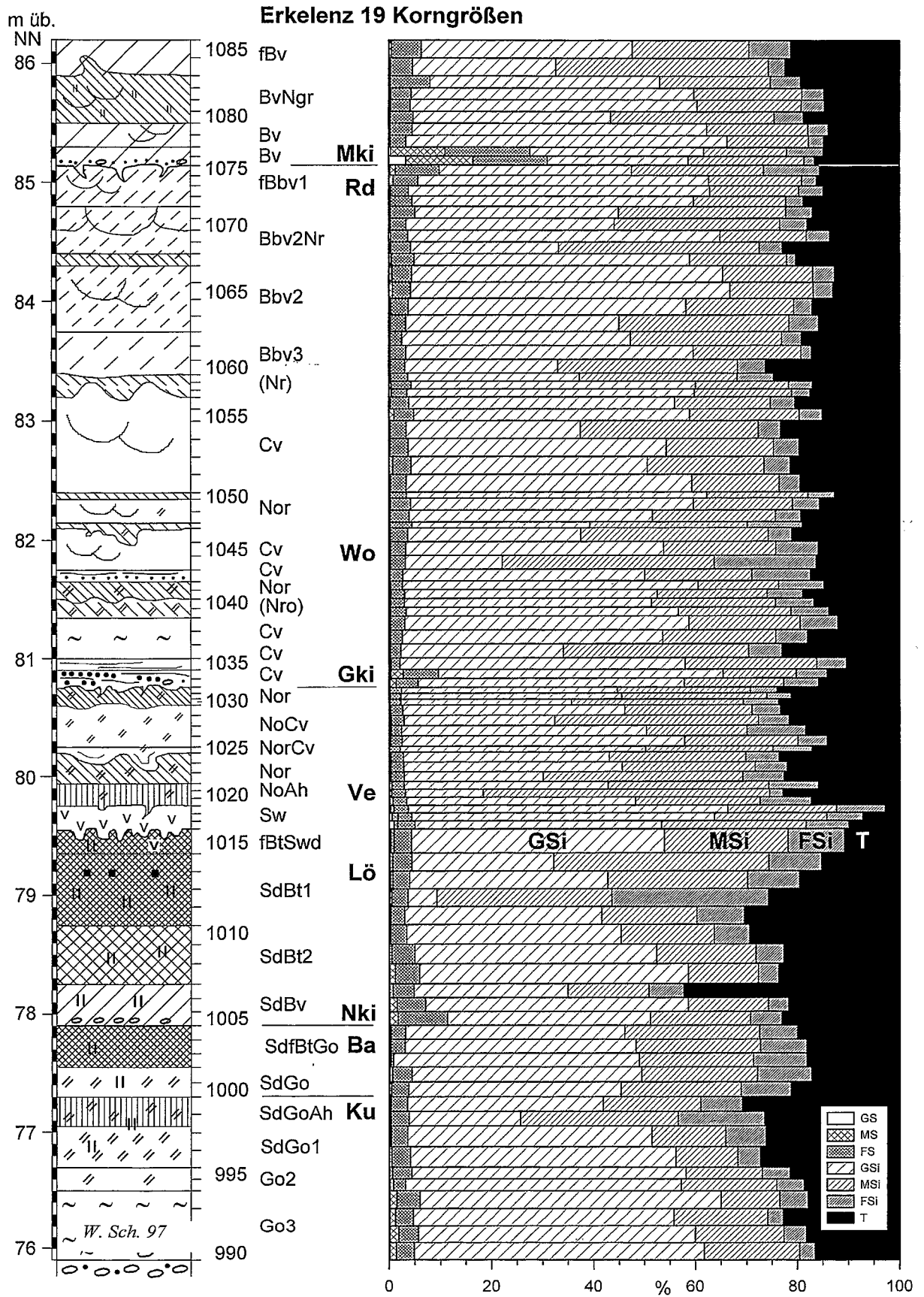


Fig. 6b: Erkelenz, profile 19: Sand and pelite content added to 100%. For grain sizes see p. 5.

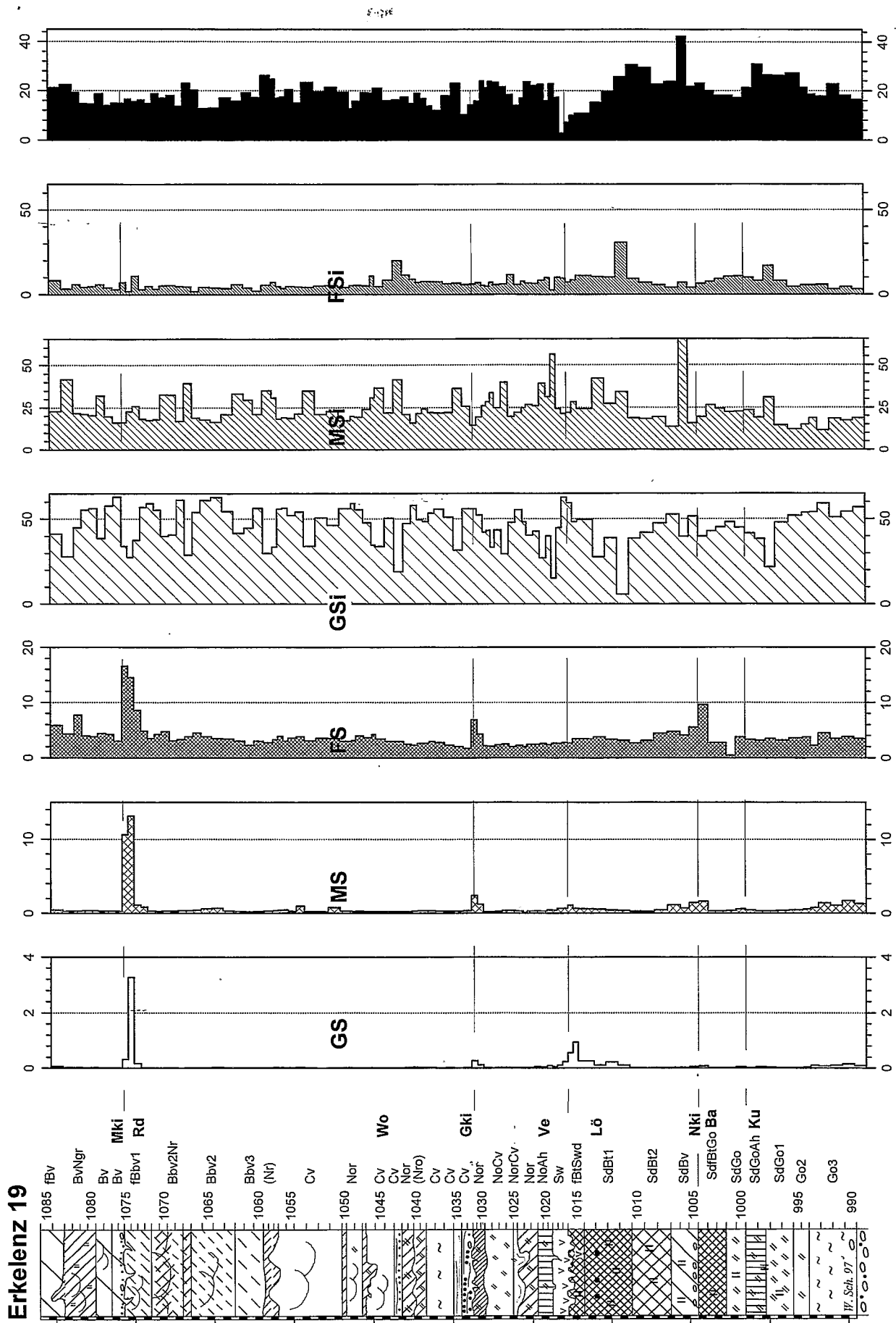


Fig. 6c: Erkelenz, profile 19: Sand and pelite content, individual curves.

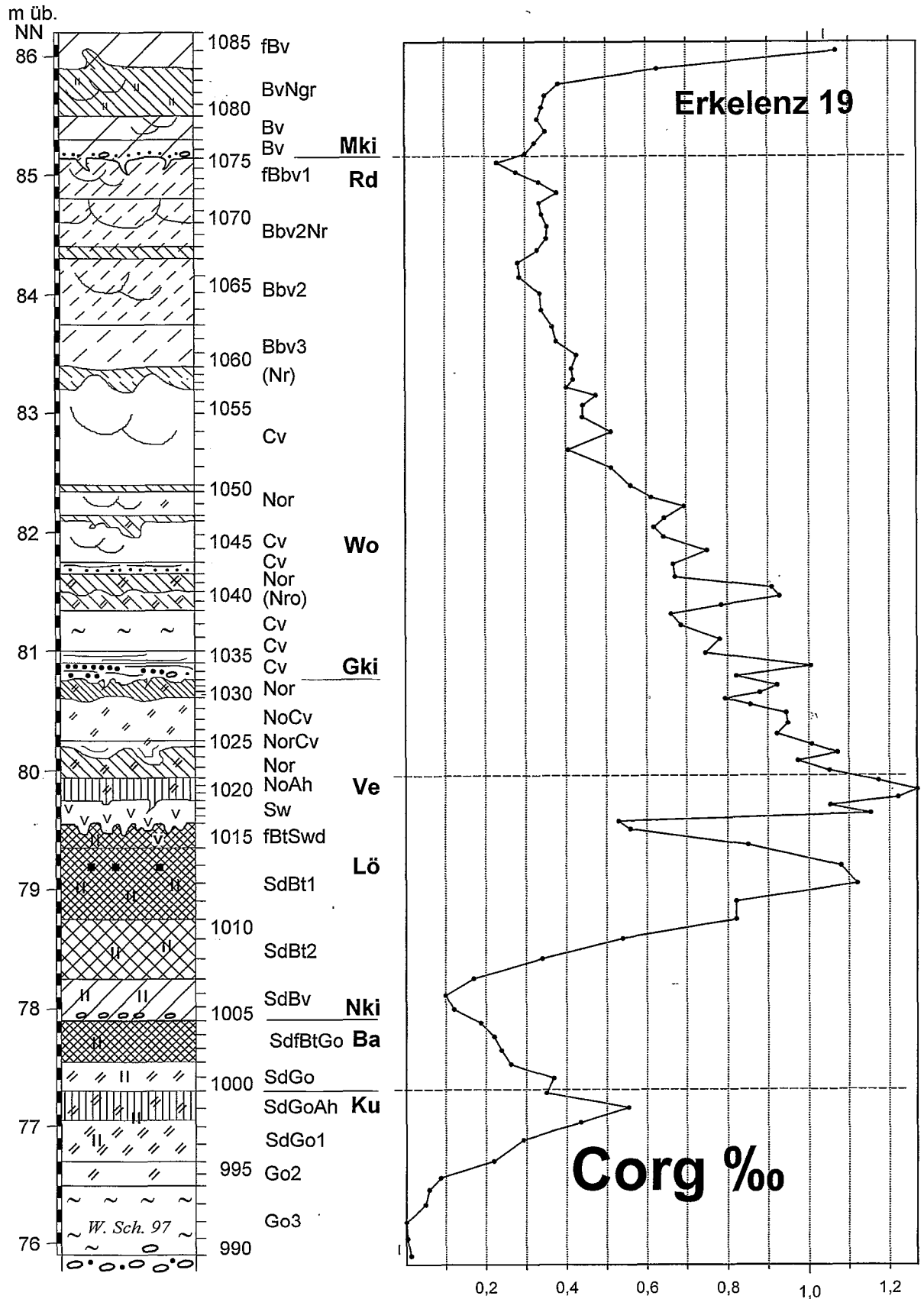


Fig. 6d: Erkelenz, profile 19: Organic carbon content.

### Erkelenz 19a

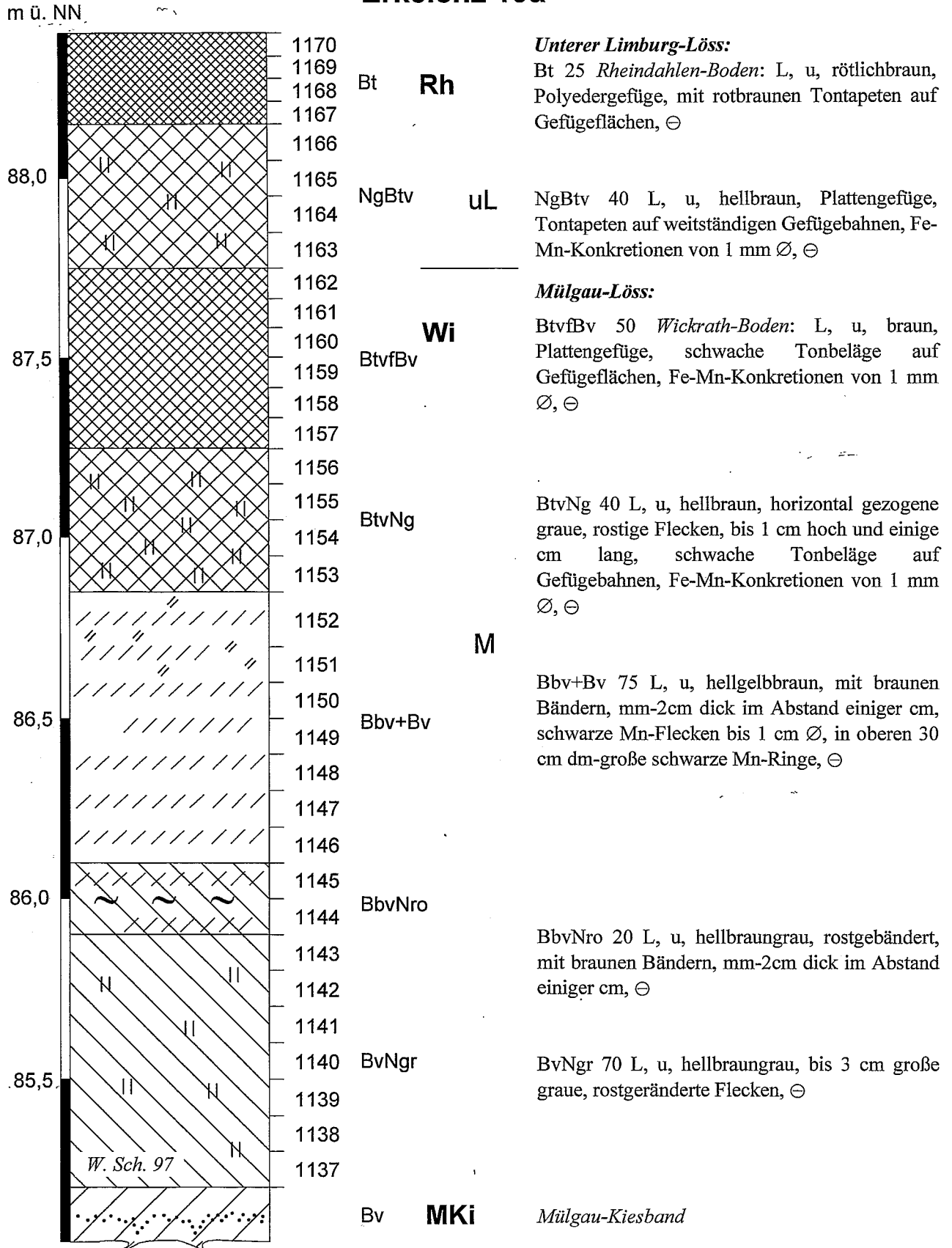


Fig. 7a: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz, profile 19a: Profile and description.



**Erkelenz 19a Korngrößen**

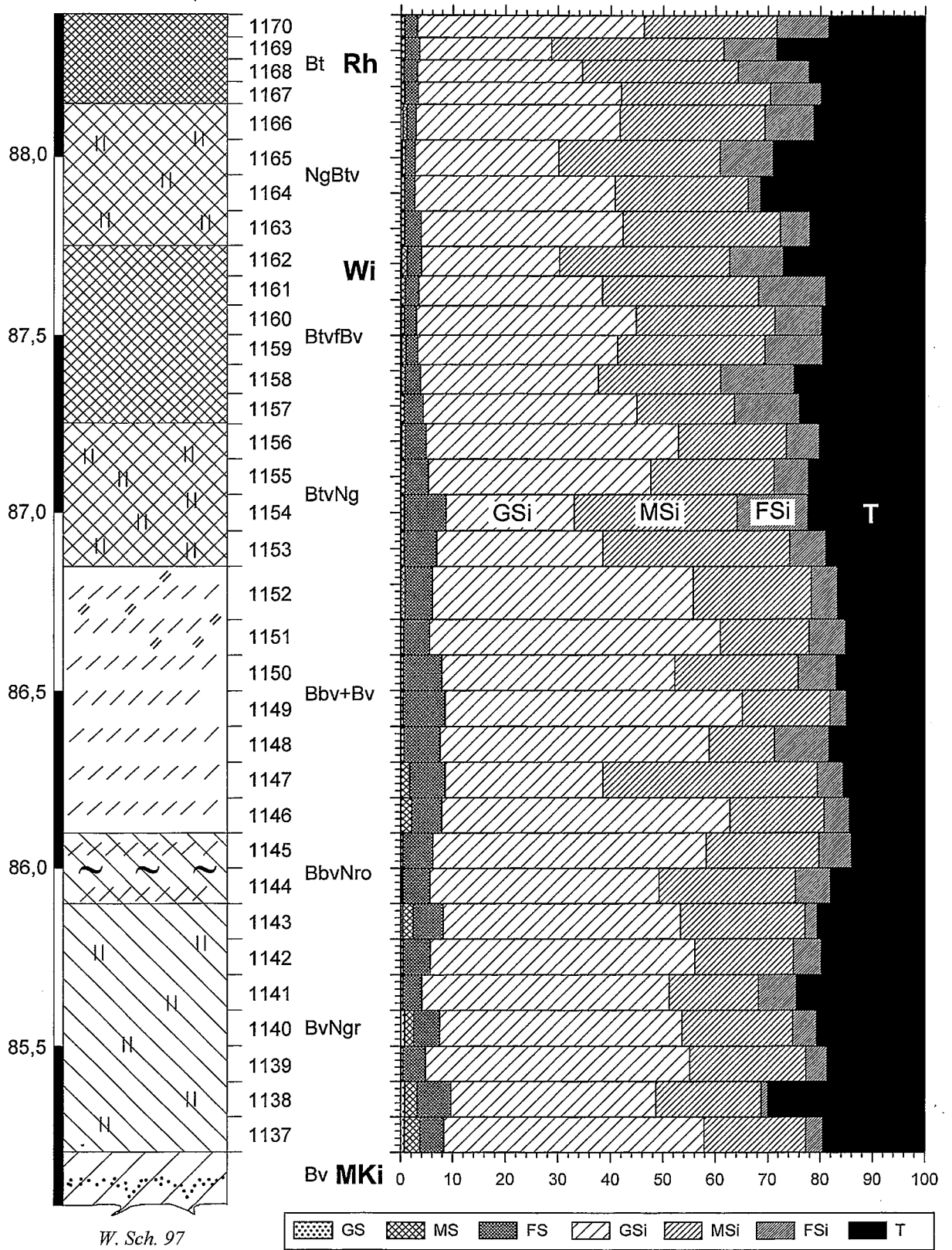


Fig. 7b: Erkelenz, profile 19a: Sand and pelite content added to 100 %. For grain sizes see p. 5.

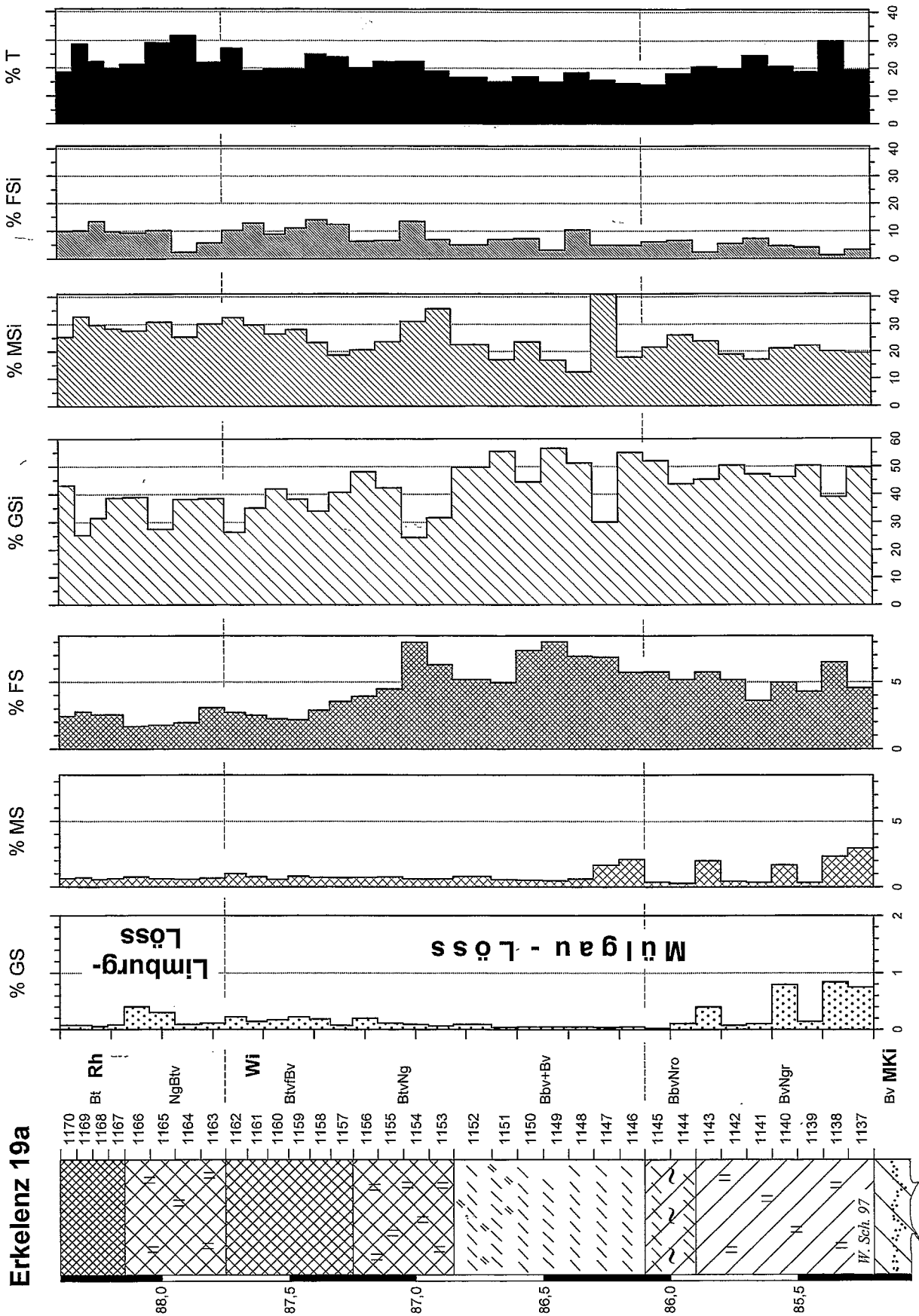


Fig. 7c: Erkelenz, profile 19a: Sand and pelite content, individual curves.

## Erkelenz 15

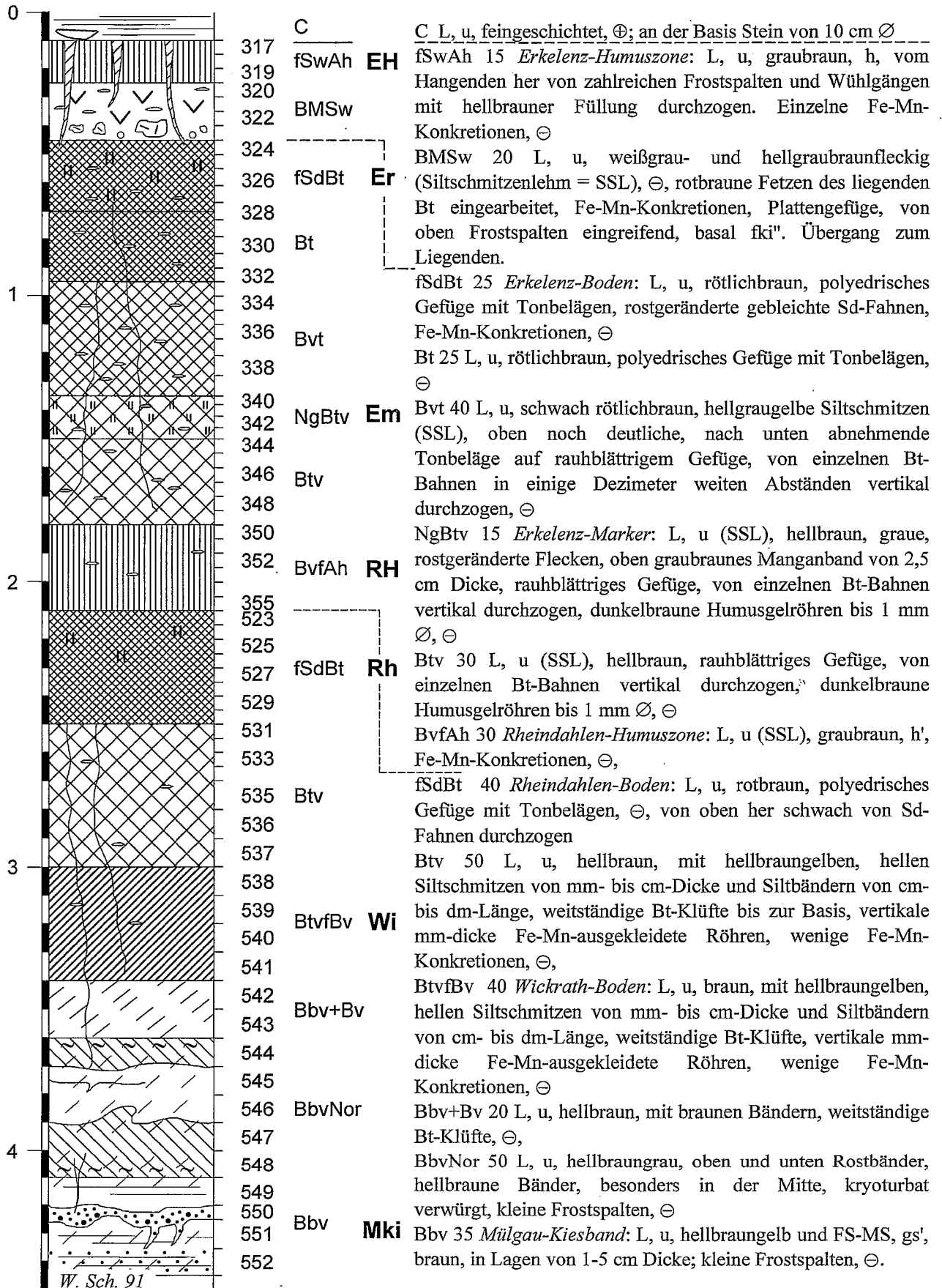


Fig. 8a: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz, profile 15: Mülgau Loess and Erft Solcomplex with Limburg Loess. - Profile and description.

# Erkelenz 15

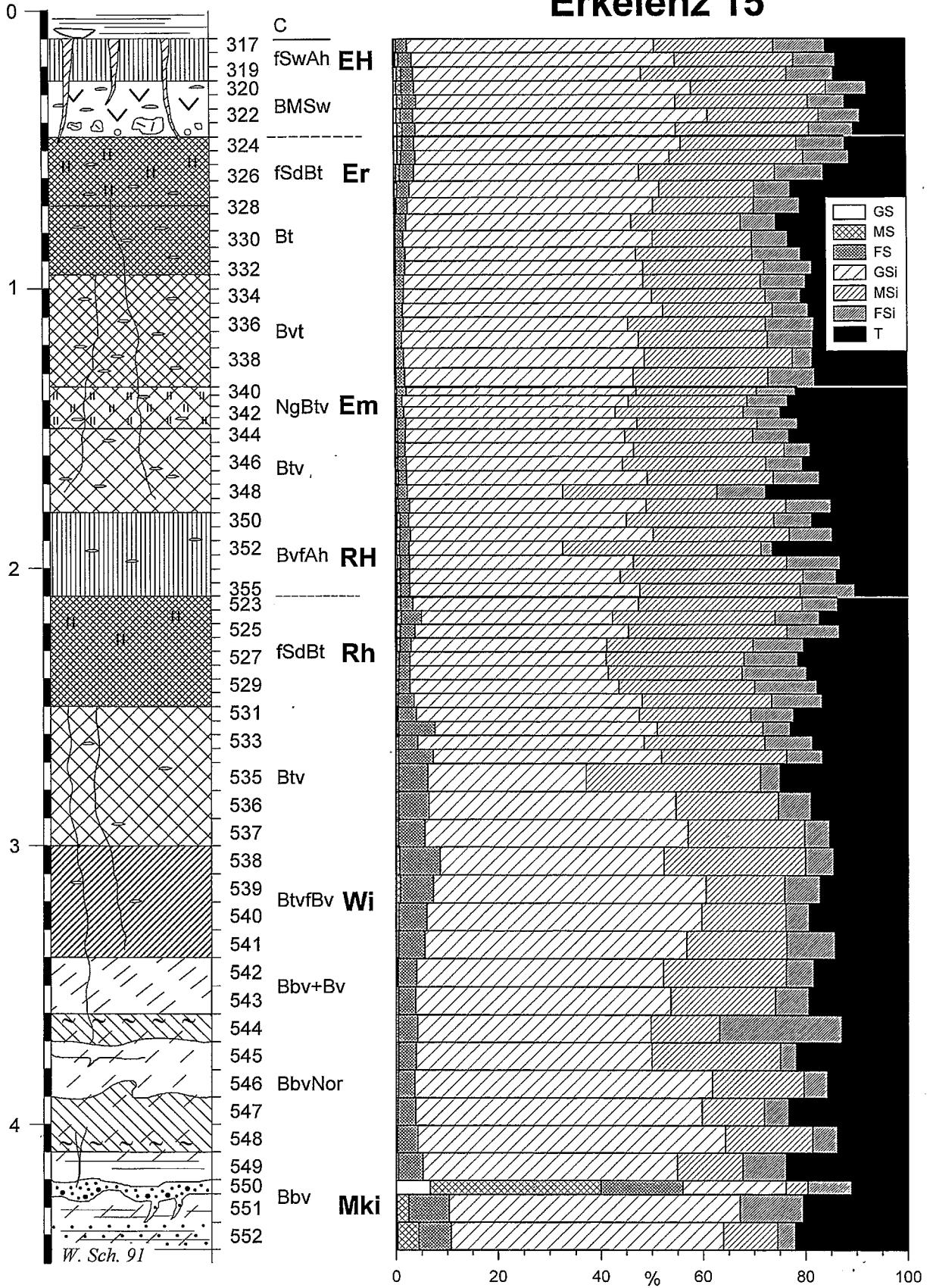


Fig. 8b: Erkelenz, profile 19a: Sand and pelite content added to 100 %. For grain sizes see p. 5.

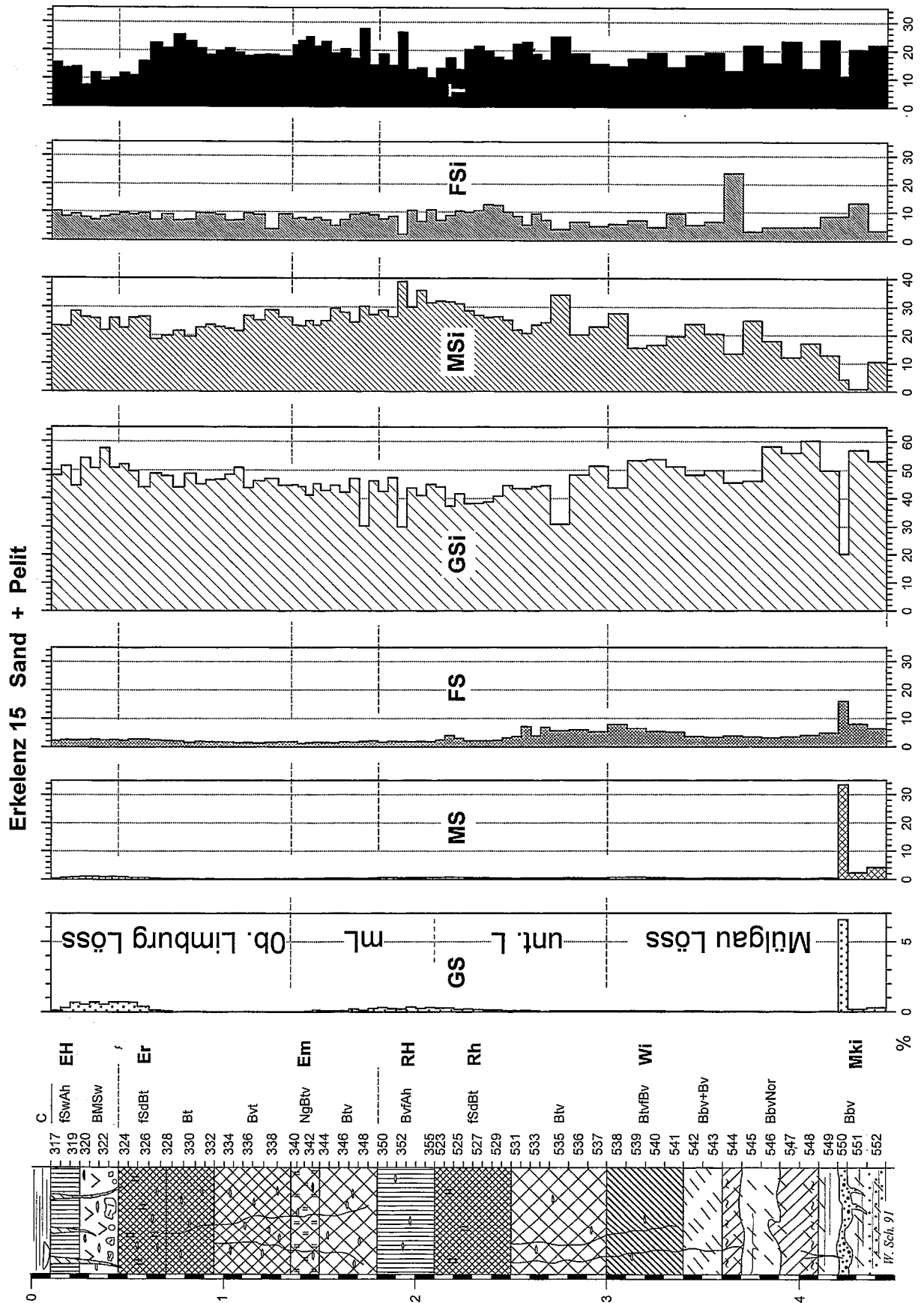


Fig. 8c: Erkelenz, profile 19a: Sand and pelite content, individual curves.

# Erkelenz 15

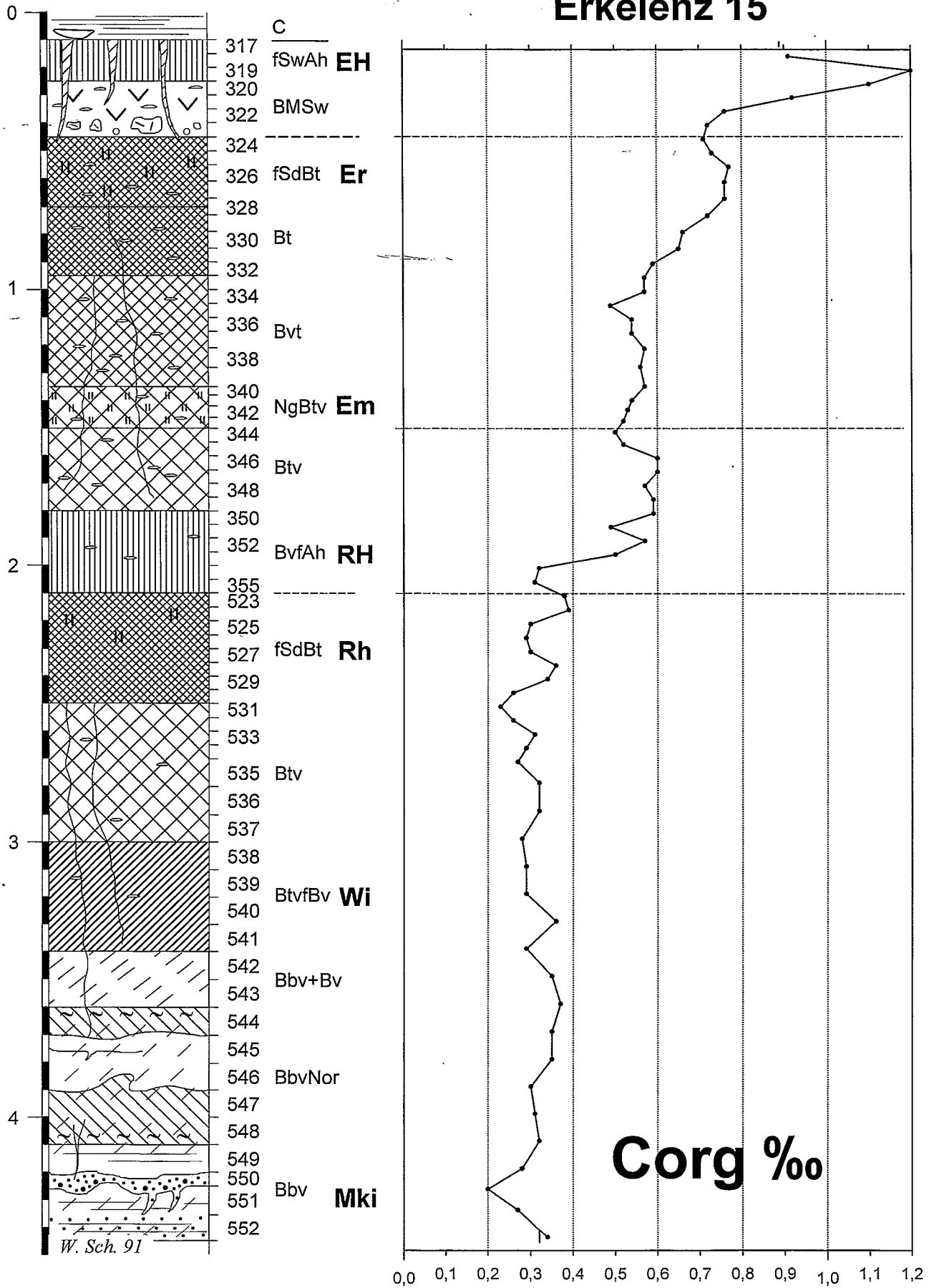


Fig. 8d: Erkelenz, profile 19a: Organic carbon content.

## Profil Erkelenz 18

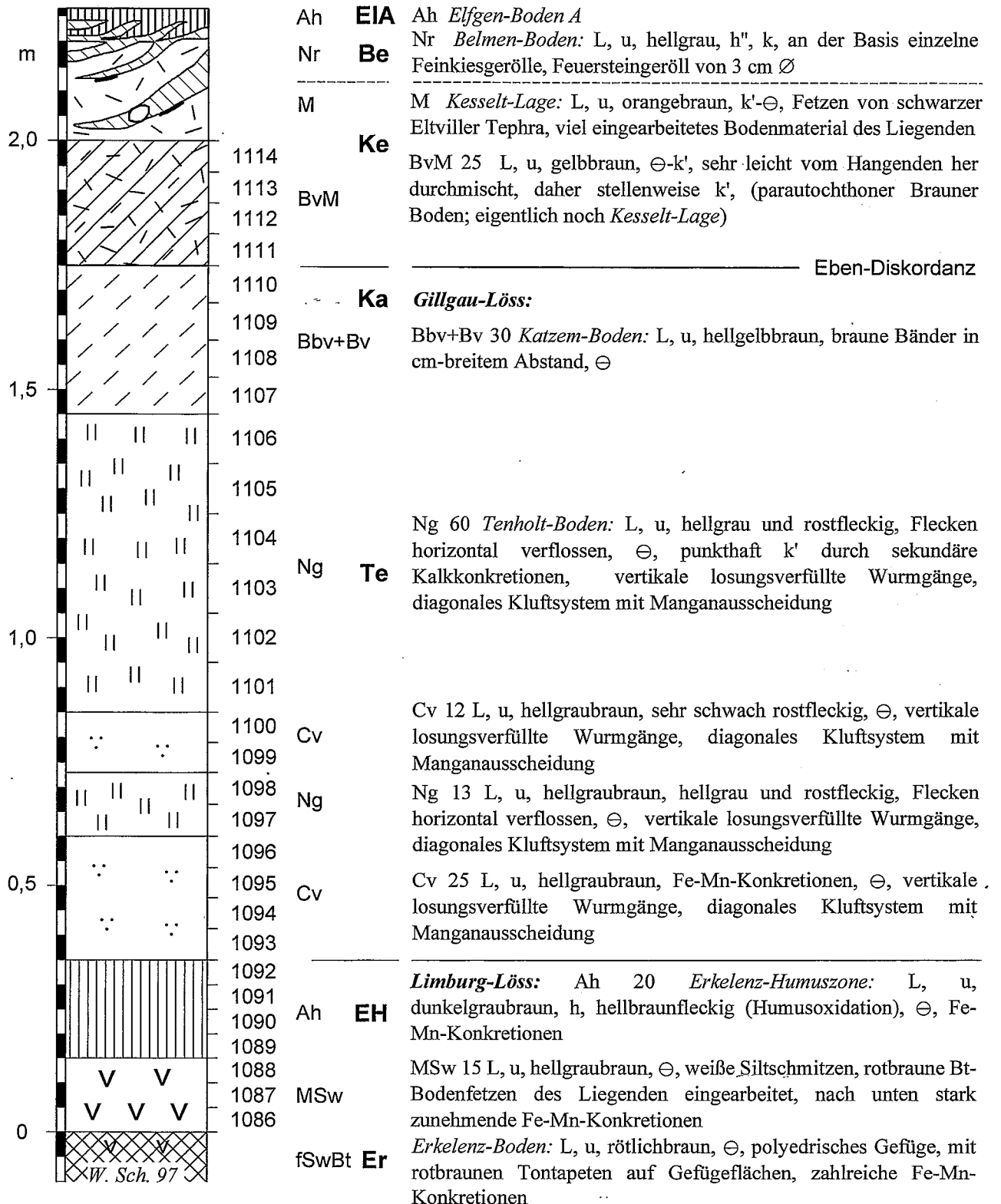


Fig. 9: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz, profile 18: uppermost Limburg Loess, Gillgau Loess, Eben Discordance and Eben Zone.

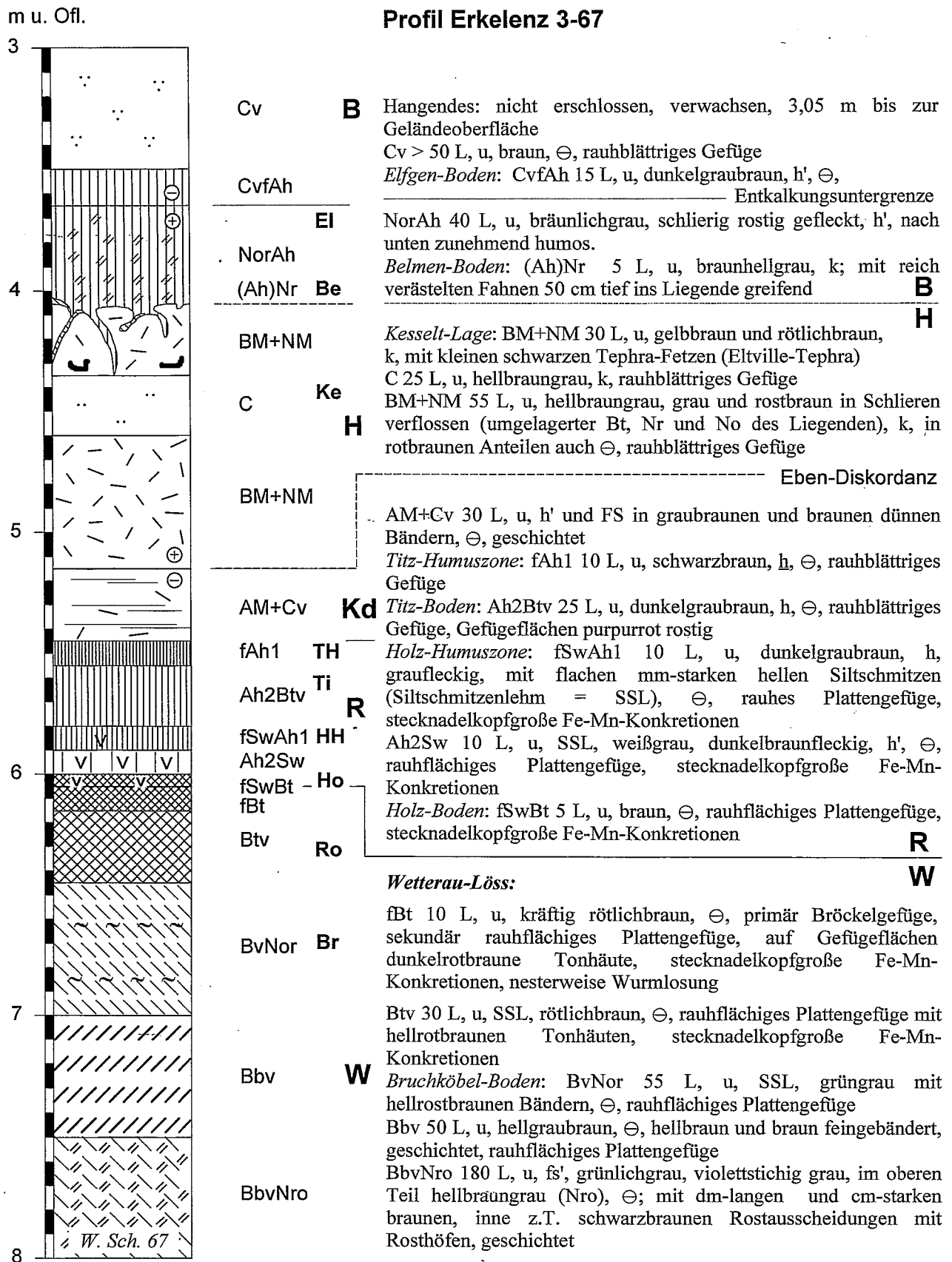


Fig. 10: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz, profile 3: Wetterau Loess, Rocourt Solcomplex, Keldach Loess (relictic), Eben Discordance and Eben Zone. - Profile and description.



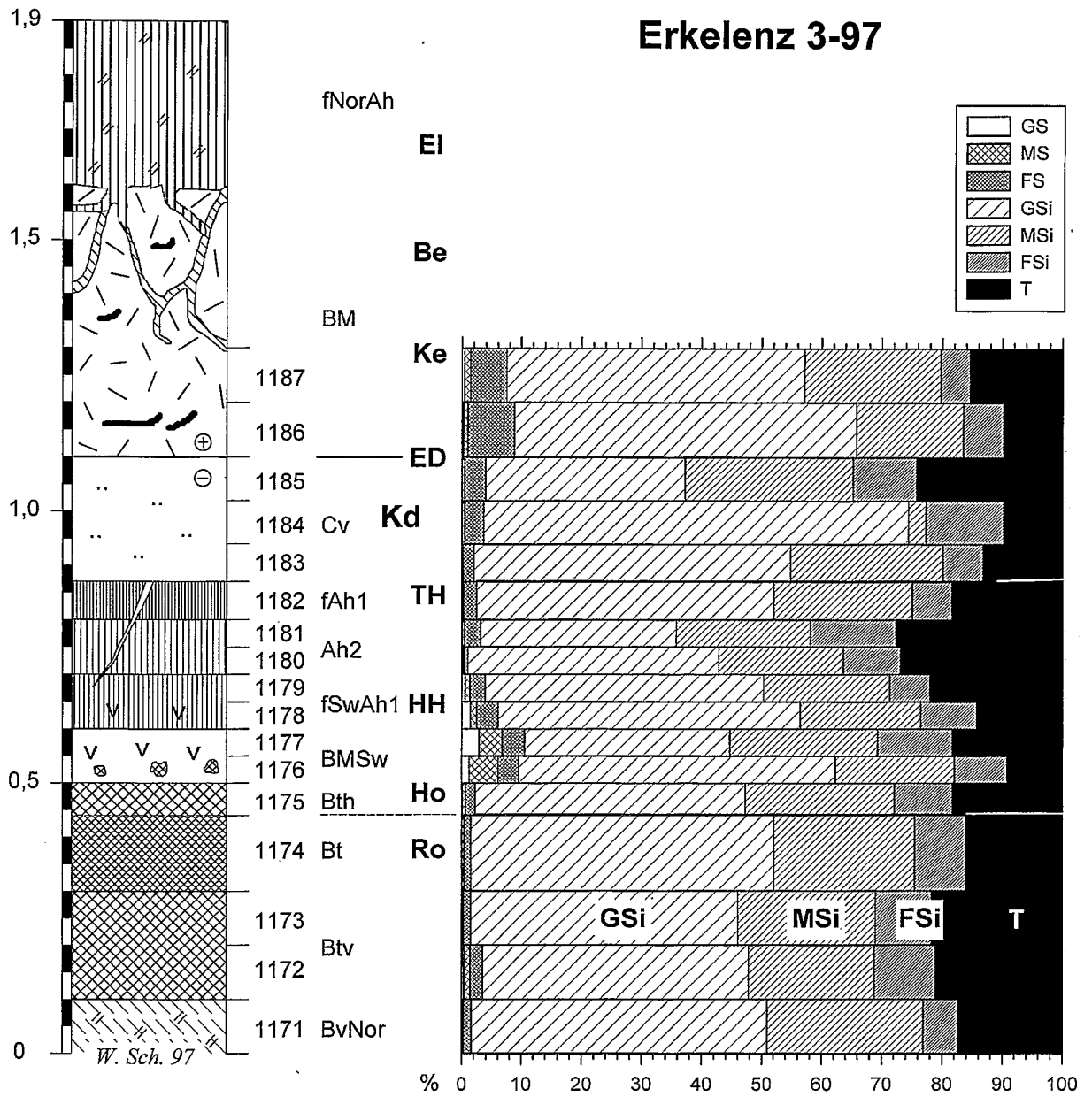


Fig. 10b: Erkelenz, profile 3: Sand and pelite content added to 100 %. For grain sizes see p. 5.

### Erkelenz 3-97

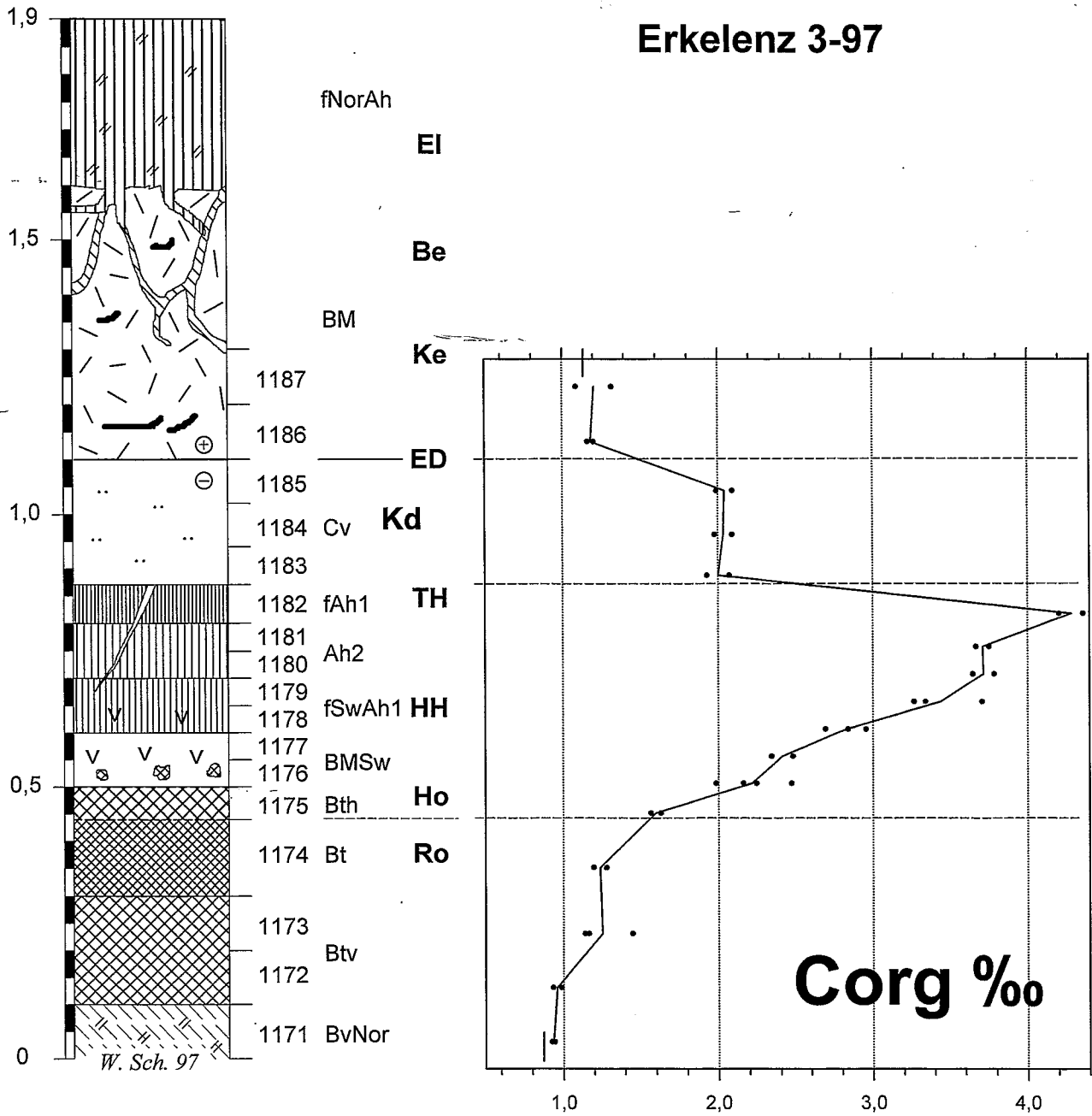


Fig. 10d: Erkelenz, profile 3: Organic carbon content.

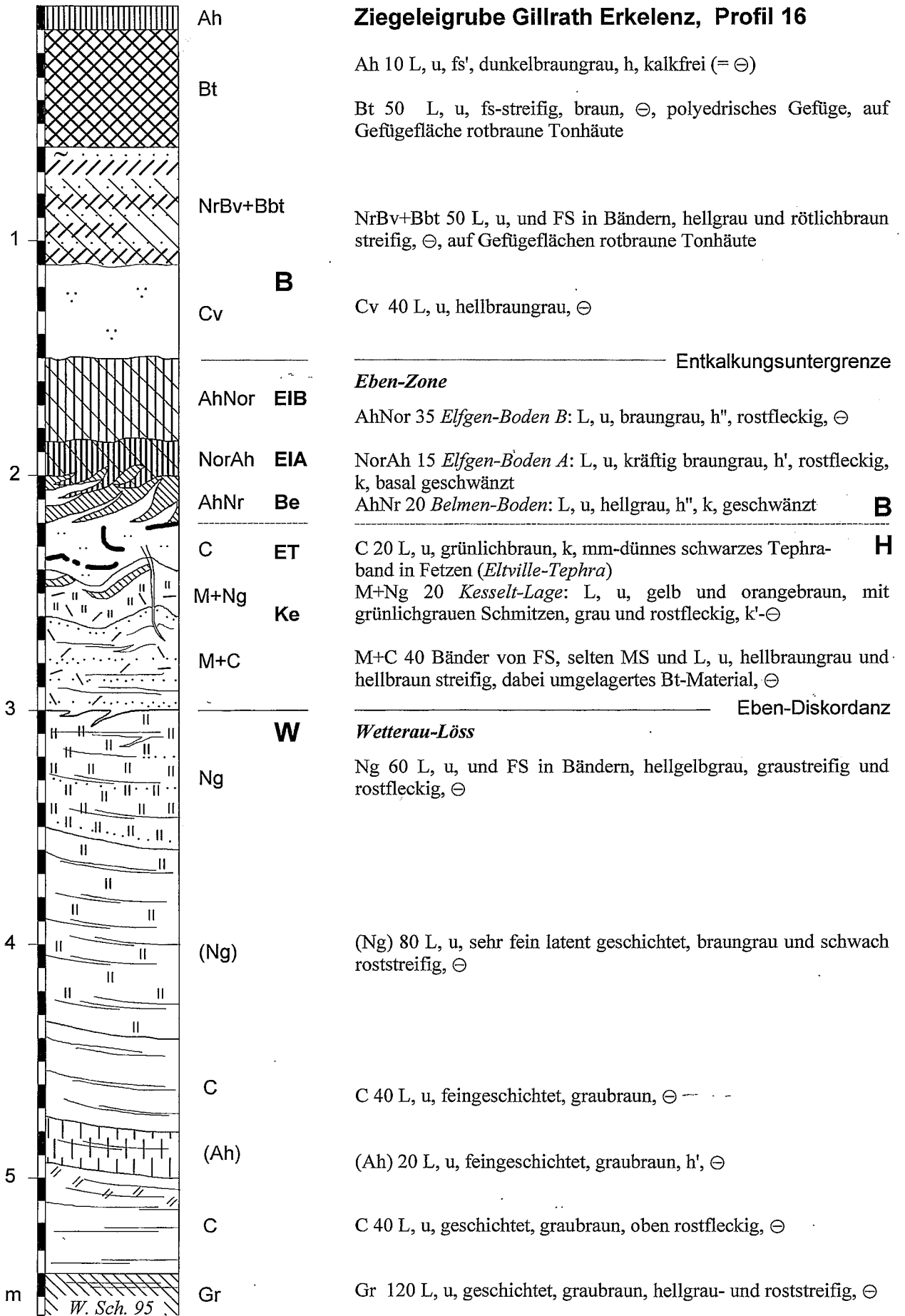


Fig. 11: Brickyard pit GILLRATH in Erkelenz, profile 16: Wetterau Loëss, Hesbaye Loëss, Eben Zone, Brabant Loëss.

## 2.2 Brickyard pit DREESEN in Rheindahlen

(see Figs. 4, 12-15)

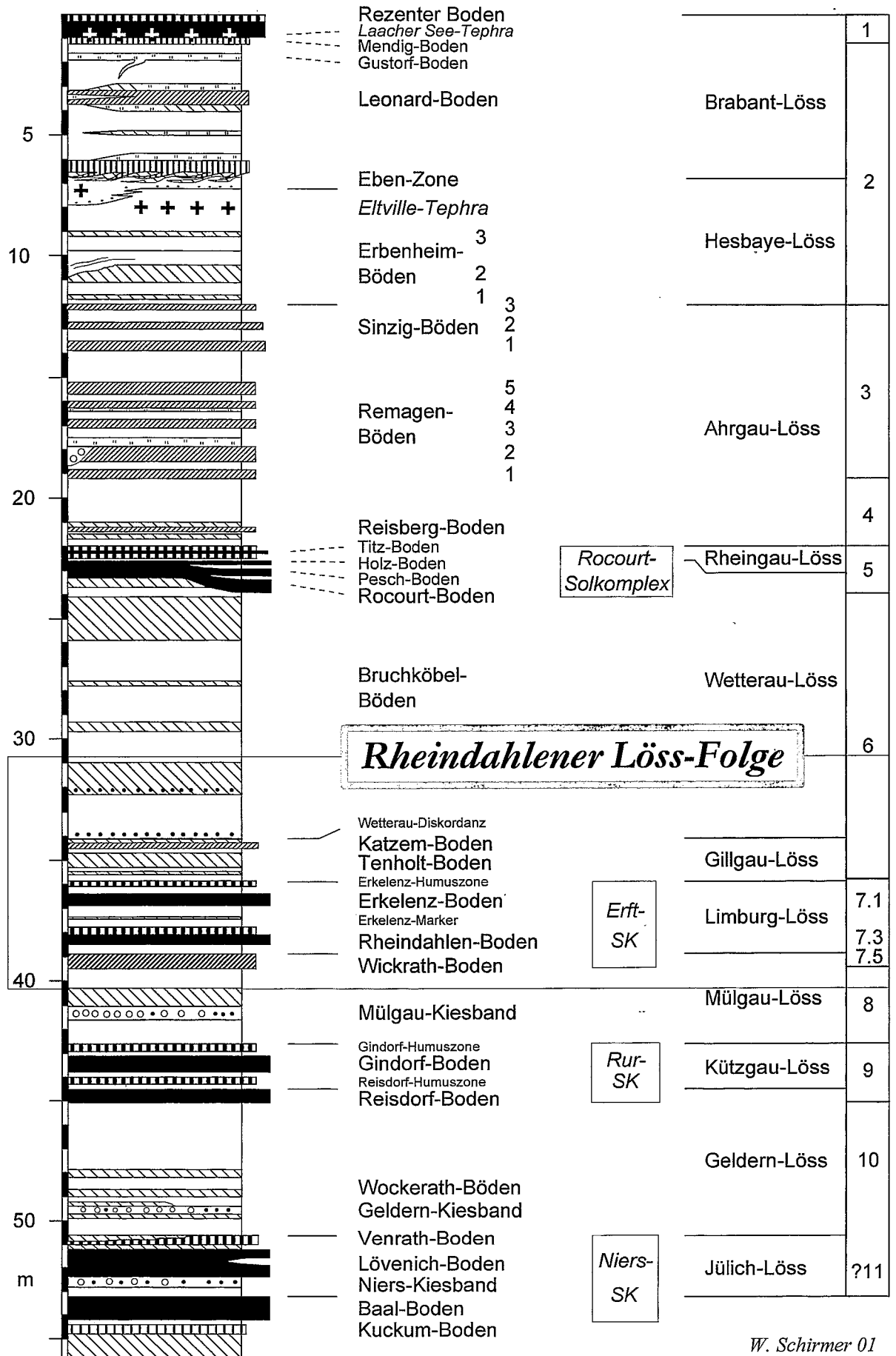
treated in detail by SCHIRMER (2002e) and E.-M. IKINGER (2002).

This pit exhibits a very small window of the big Rhein-Maas loess stack (Fig. 4 and 12). It is nearly restricted to the Erft Solcomplex except for small Gillgau and Wetterau Loess parts on top and a little section of Mülgau Loess below it. However, it is one of the best outcrops showing the Erft Solcomplex in detail and this was continuously the case since the fortieth of the last century.

Since 1912 it became famous for its Middle Paleolithic finds and the last prehistoric excavation campaign ended in October 2001. Unfortunately the loam exploitation was stopped in 1996 – a destiny that came over the most small brickyards not withstanding the big competitors.

What is outstanding here is the fact that this very northern part of the Central European loess area does not show the younger calcareous loess units. The normal case is a thick cover of Brabant Loess below the surface (Erkelenz, Frimmersdorf-West, Garzweiler, Kesselt, Eben). But here is the youngest loess loam below the surface is that of the Wetterau Loess. It is likely that the surface soil is welded together with the Rocourt Solcomplex quite below the surface.

There is a controversy on the age of the Rheindahlen beds. Until 1992 it was held that the Erkelenz Soil with the find horizons B1 and B2 was of Eemian age (MIS 5e). SCHIRMER & FELDMANN (1992) and SCHIRMER (1992) claimed that this soil and find horizons should be an interglacial period older. This was due to the unique nature of the soils of the Erft Solcomplex which cannot be confused with the younger Rocourt Solcomplex or with older solcomplexes in the Niederrhein area (SCHIRMER 1992, 2002a: 31; A. IKINGER 2002); moreover it was due to the stratigraphical position of the Erft Solcomplex as the penultimate interglacial complex of the Niederrhein loess sequence (SCHIRMER 1999a: 91 and Fig. 1). The controversy about the age of the Rheindahlen site is



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Fig. 12: Loess-soil sequence of the Niederrhein. Framed is the loess section exposed in Rheindahlen (SCHIRMER 2002d: 6)

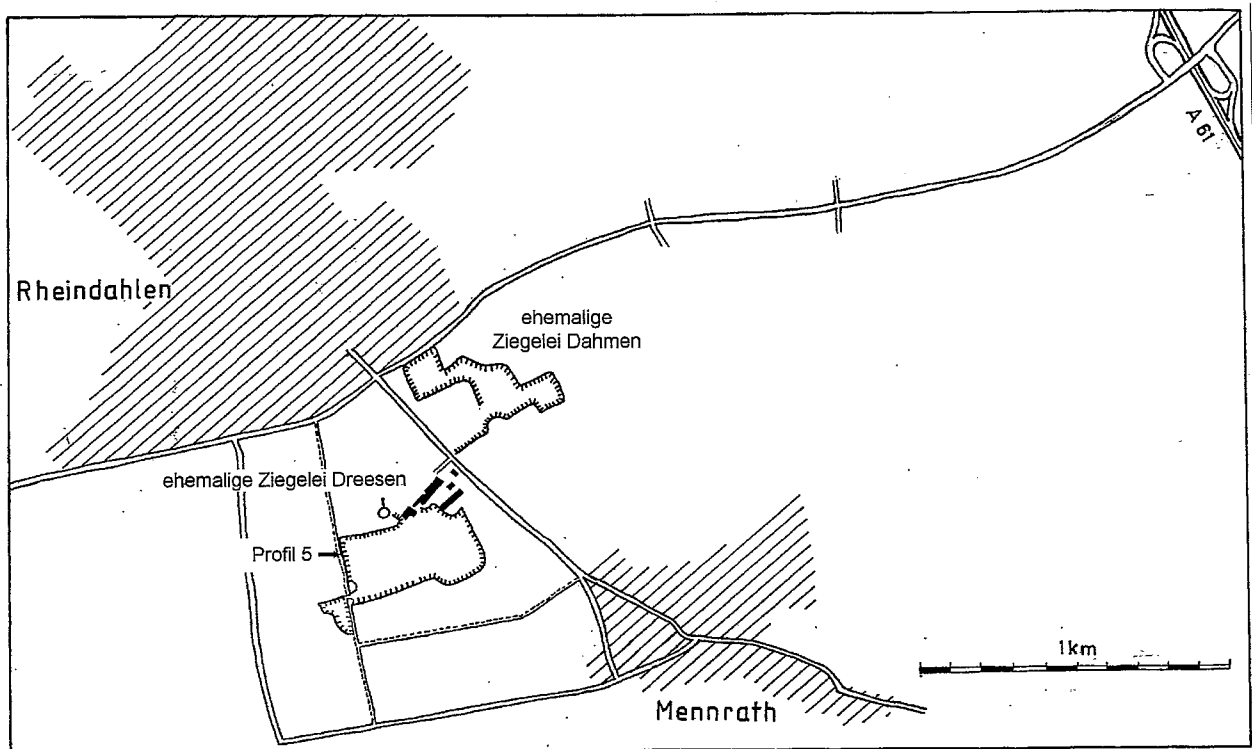


Fig. 13: Location map of the former brickyard pits in Rheindahlen.

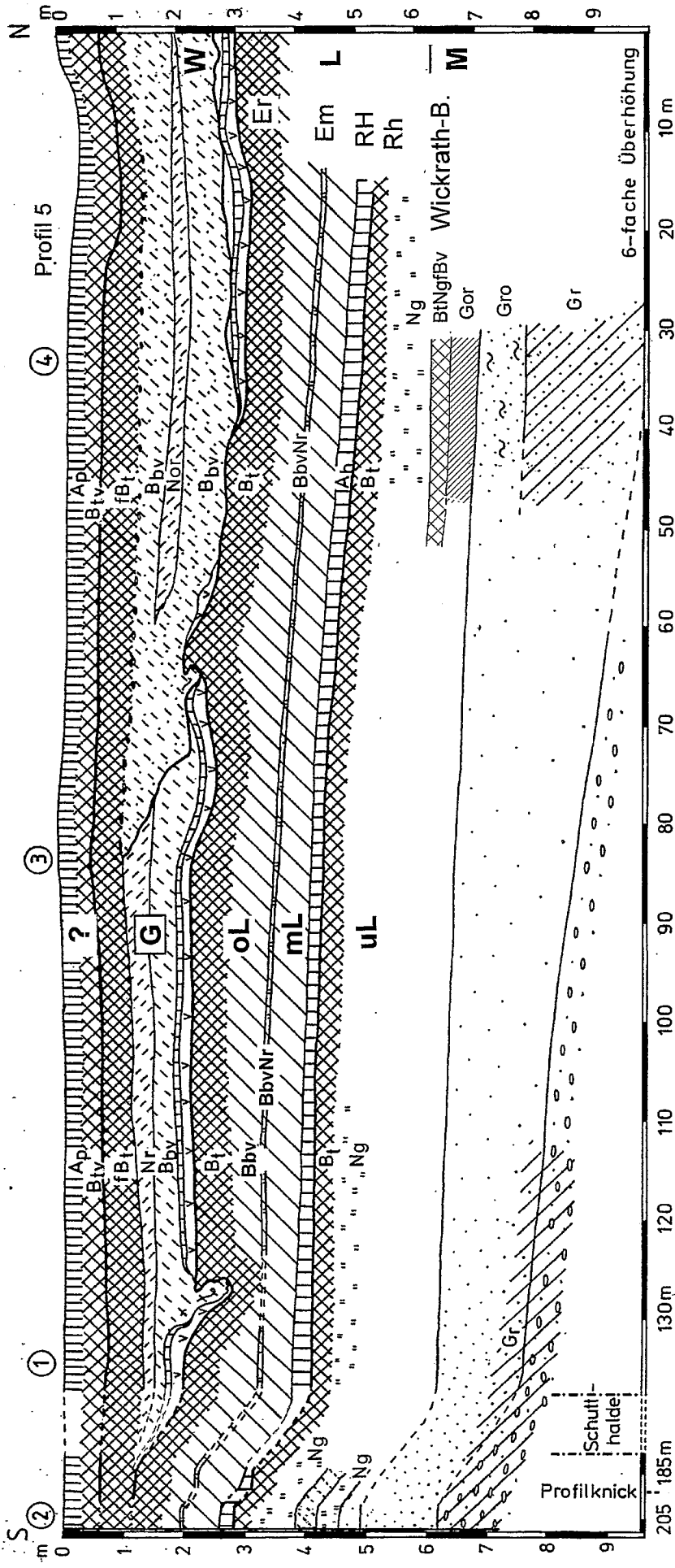


Fig. 14: Brickyard pit DREESEN in Rheindahlen, western wall (after SCHIRMER & FELDMANN 1992, modified). – Abbreviations: G = Gillgau Loess, L = Limburg Loess, oL = upper, mL = middle, uL = lower Limburg Loess, M = Mülgau Loess, W = Wetterau Loess, Er = Erkelenz Market, Er = Erkelenz Soil, RH = Rheindahlen Humus Zone, Rh = Rheindahlen Soil.

## Profil Rheindahlen 5

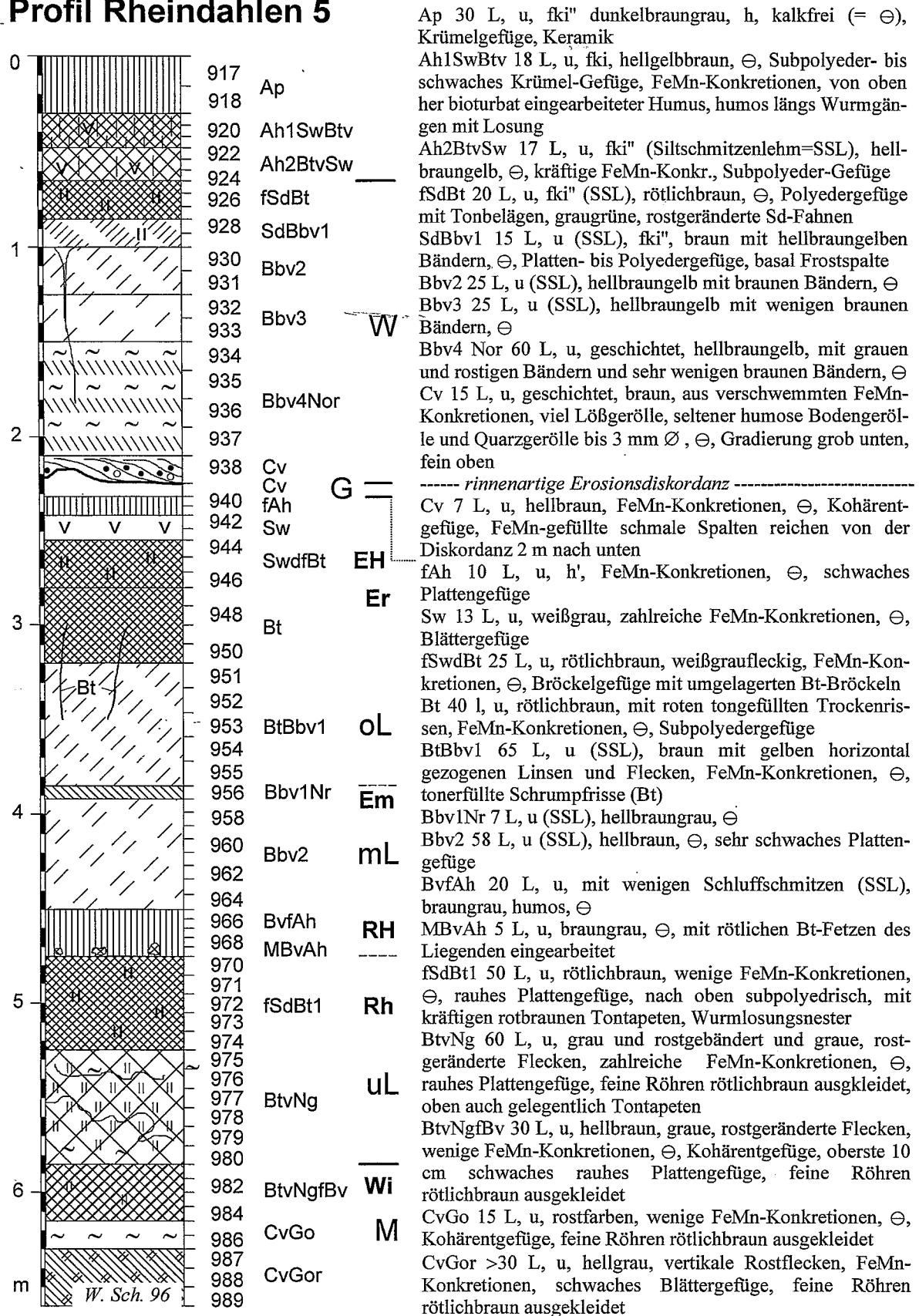


Fig. 15a: Brickyard pit DREESSEN in Rheindahlen, profile 5: upper Mülgau Loess, Erft Solcomplex, Limburg Loess, small Gillgau and Wetterau Loess. – Abbreviations: W = Wetterau Loess, G = Gillgau Loess, EH = Erkelenz Humus Zone, Er = Erkelenz Soil, oL = upper, mL = middle, uL = lower Limburg Loess, Em = Erkelenz Marker, RH = Rheindahlen Humus Zone, Rh = Rheindahlen Soil, Wi = Wickrath Soil.



### Rheindahlen 5 Korngrößen

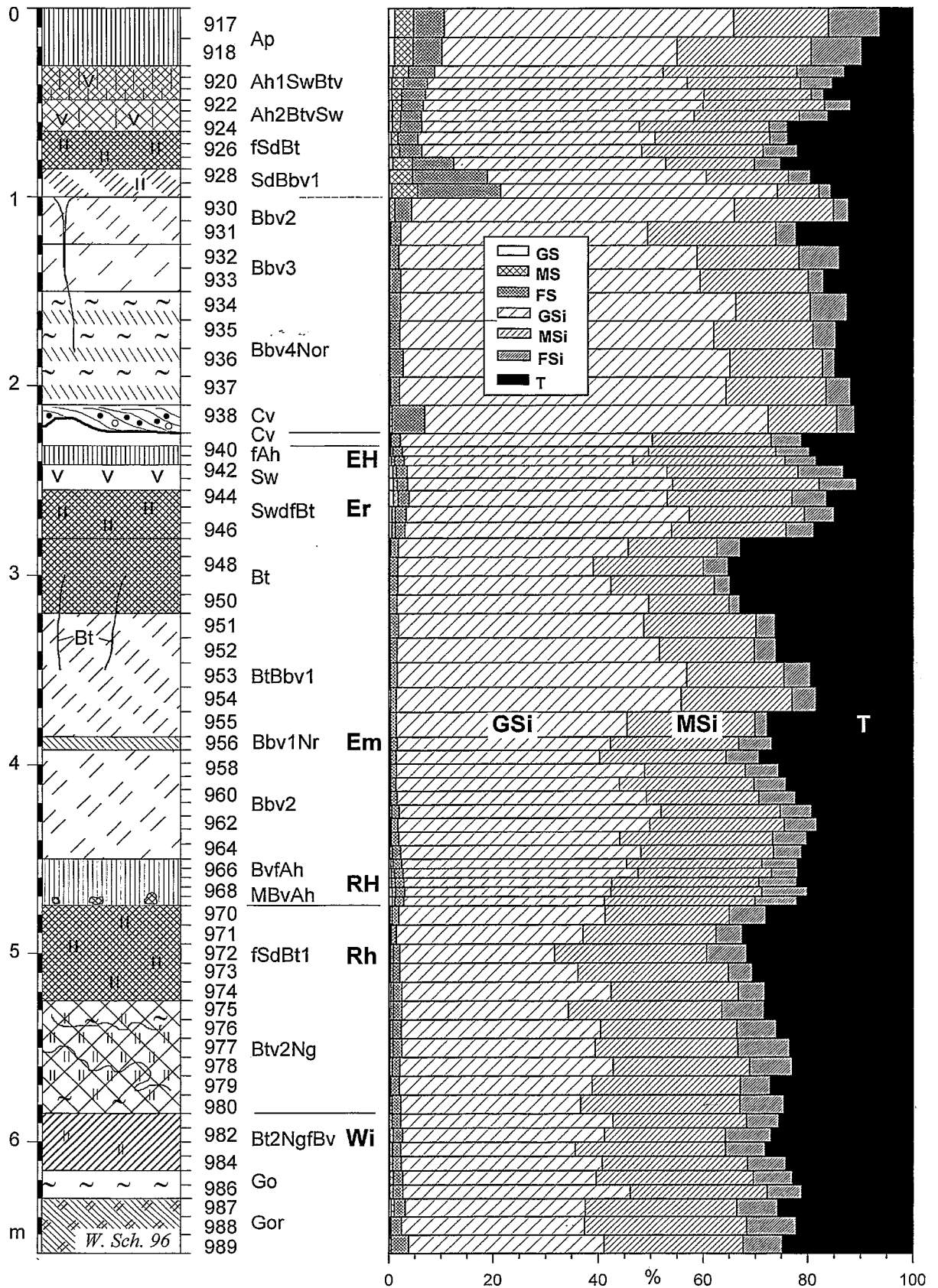


Fig. 15b: Rheindahlen, profile 5: Sand and pelite content added to 100 %. For grain sizes see p. 5.

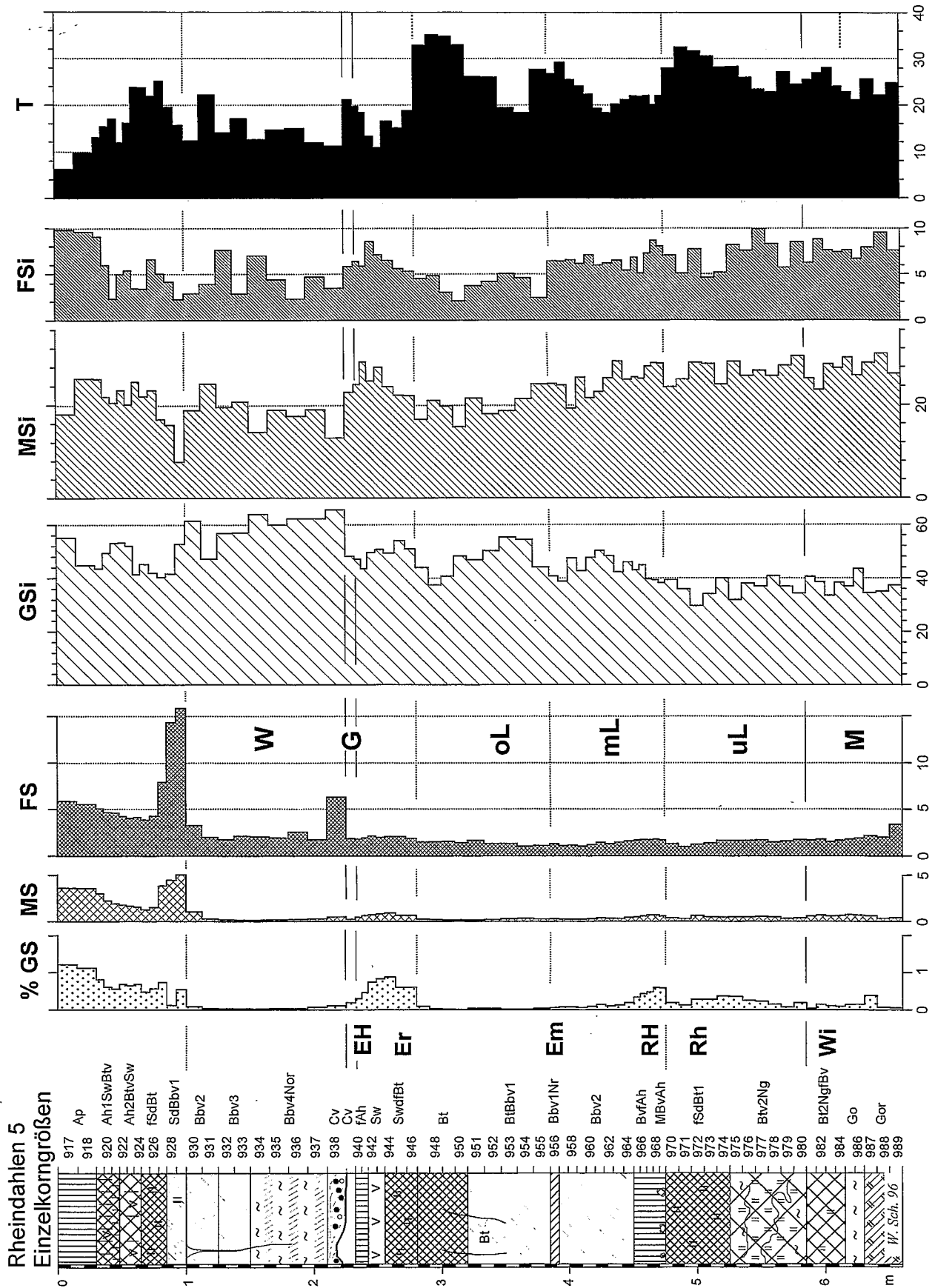


Fig. 15c: Rheindahlen, profile 5: Sand and pelite content, individual curves.

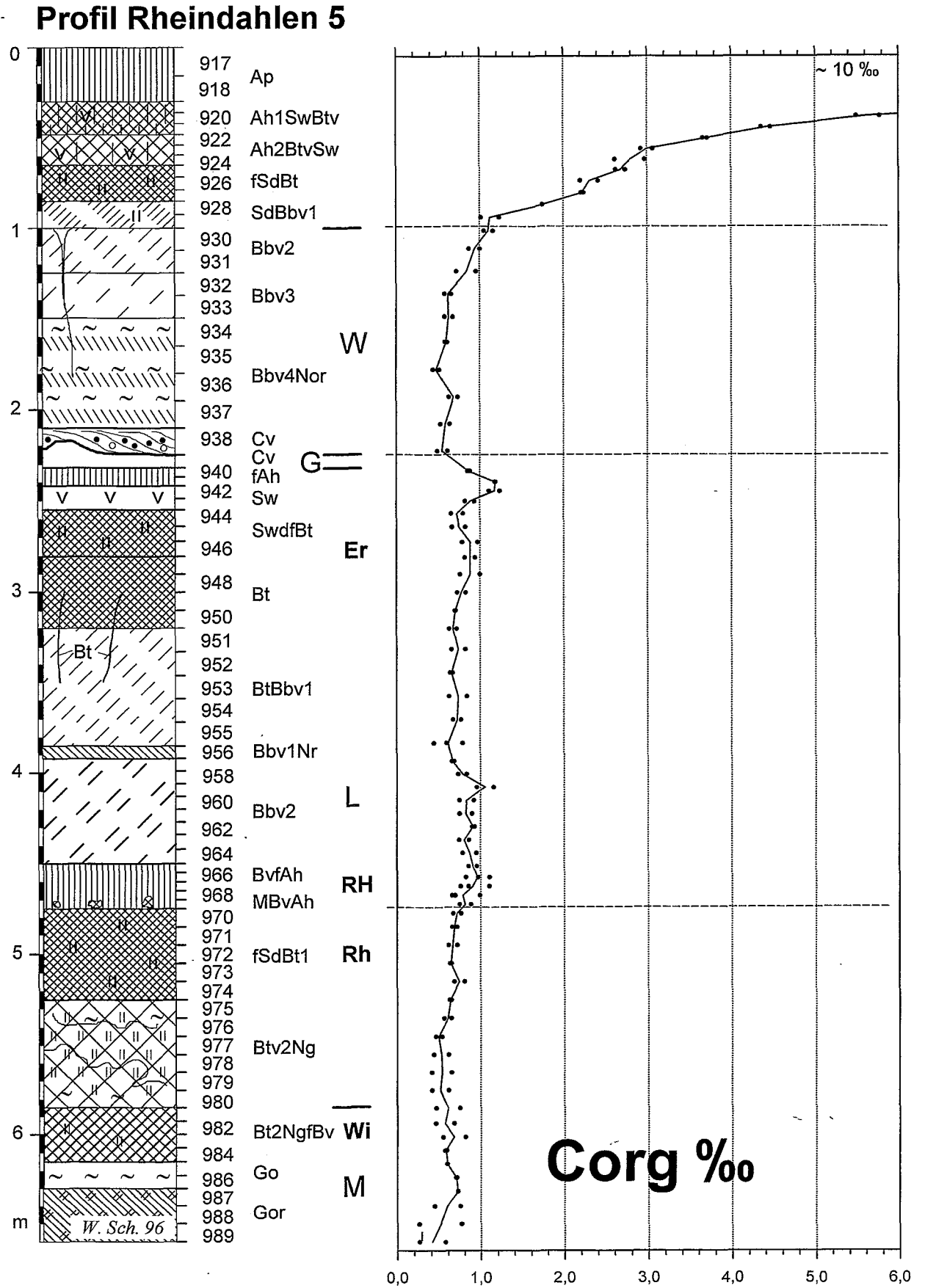


Fig. 15d: Rheindahlen, profile 5: Organic carbon content.

## 2.3 Paleomagnetic investigations in Erkelenz and Rheindahlen

LARS COFFLET & WOLFGANG SCHIRMER  
(see Figs. 16-19)

COFFLET, L. & SCHIRMER, W. (2002): Paleomagnetic investigations in Erkelenz and Rheindahlen. - In: IKINGER, A. & SCHIRMER, W. (eds.): Loess units and solcomplexes in the Niederrhein and Maas area. - *Terra nostra*, **02/1**: 51-55; Berlin 2002.

The sections Rheindahlen and Erkelenz were measured for paleomagnetic investigations parallel to the sampling of SCHIRMER. Therein the Erft Solcomplex of both localities show interesting features that can be correlated with aquatic paleomagnetic sections.

Fig. 16 and 17 show the susceptibility and NRM (natural remanent magnetisation) intensity of the Erft Solcomplex in the sections Erkelenz and Rheindahlen. Within the top of the Erft Solcomplex both susceptibility curves show conspicuous lows. These lows are due to the stagnic conditions on top of the Bt horizon of the Erkelenz Soil.

In the Erkelenz section the NRM intensity curve likewise exhibits a striking low. To verify this NRM intensity low the NRM intensity values were normalized using the susceptibility on both section. In addition in the section Rheindahlen the normalization was carried out by using the ARM method (COFFLET 2002: 72). The resulting relative paleointensities represent variations of the strength of ancient earth magnetic field. Figs. 18 and 19 show these variations. It turns out that the low of the NRM intensity curve in Erkelenz now becomes outstanding in the curves of relative paleointensity of both localities, Erkelenz and Rheindahlen. Up to now it remains open why the lows at both localities differ a little in their stratigraphic position. That of the Rheindahlen pit shows its minimum within the Erkelenz Bt horizon, that of the Erkelenz pit somewhat above the Erkelenz Bt horizon. Explanation could be

sought in not complete understanding of the acquisition of the magnetic NRM signal.

The lows of the paleointensity on top of the Erft Solcomplex are interpreted here as lows on top of MIS 7 (SCHIRMER 1999a: 91). A striking low in relative paleointensity on top of MIS 7 is known from the synthetical curve sint-800 (GUYODO & VALET 1999: 250). It is the Jamaica Event at about 190.000 ka (cf. SCHNEIDER & MELLO 1996) that may be correlated with the low figured out in Erkelenz and Rheindahlen.

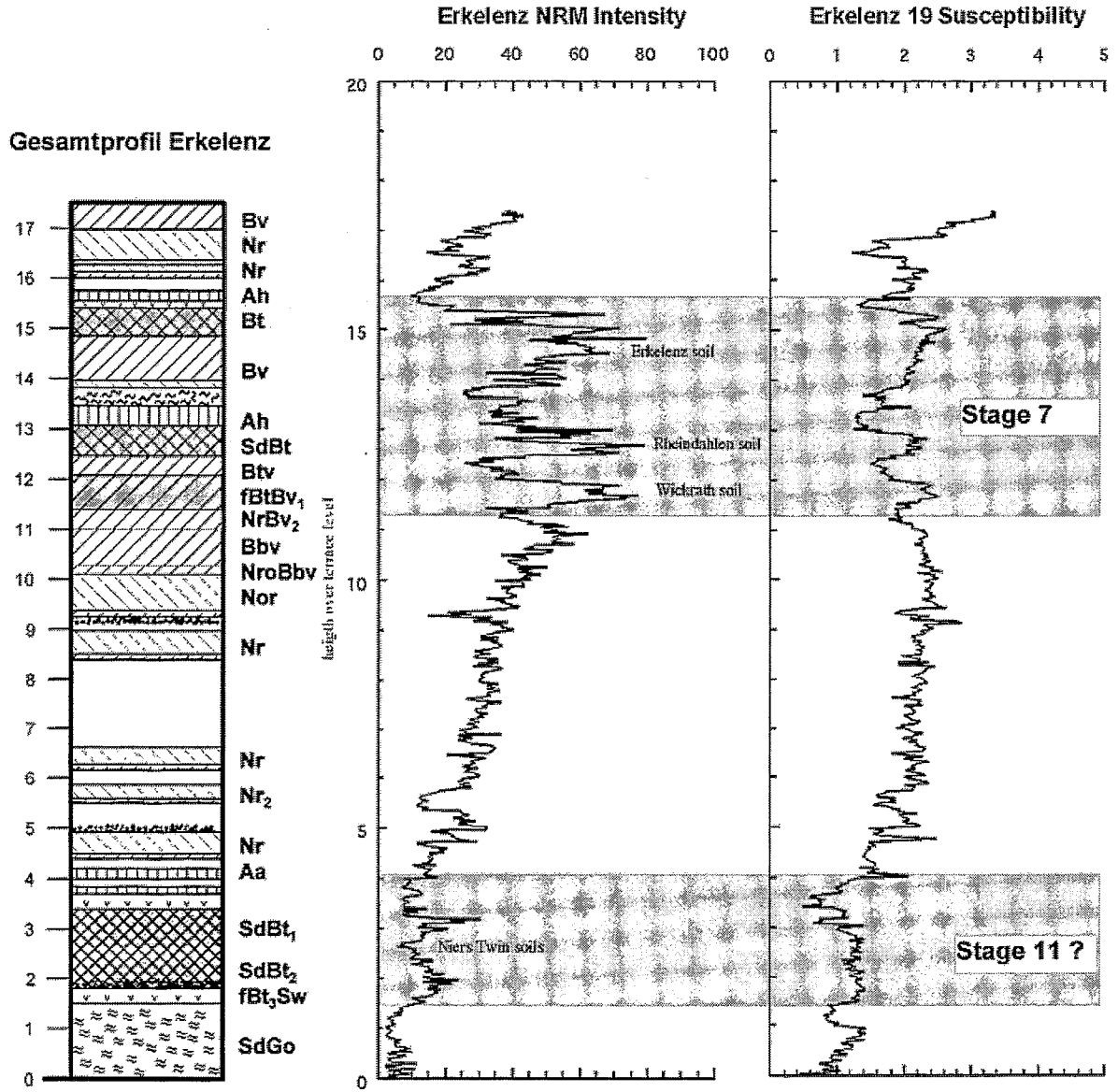


Abbildung 32: Suscentibilitäts- und NF

Fig. 16: Susceptibility and NRM intensity of the Erkelenz section. The values of the NRM intensity are  $10^{-6} \text{Am}^2 \text{kg}^{-1}$ , of the susceptibility  $10^{-8} \text{m}^3 \text{kg}^{-1}$ .

**Profil Rheindahlen**

**Susceptibility**

**NRM-intensity**

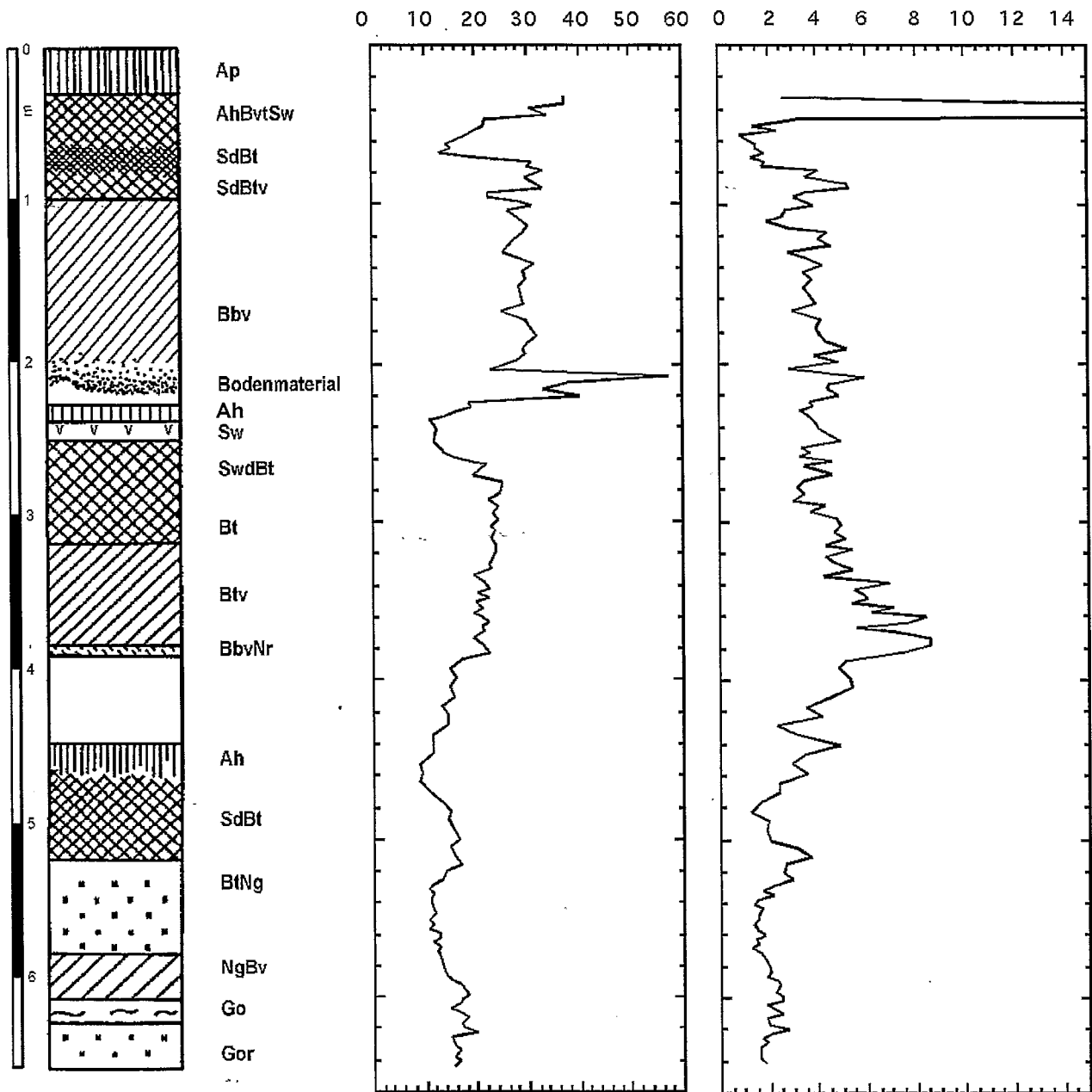


Fig. 17: Susceptibility and NRM intensity of the Rheindahlen section. The values of the NRM intensity are  $10^{-5} \text{Am}^2 \text{kg}^{-1}$ , of the susceptibility  $10^{-9} \text{m}^3 \text{kg}^{-1}$  (after COFFLET 2002: 63).

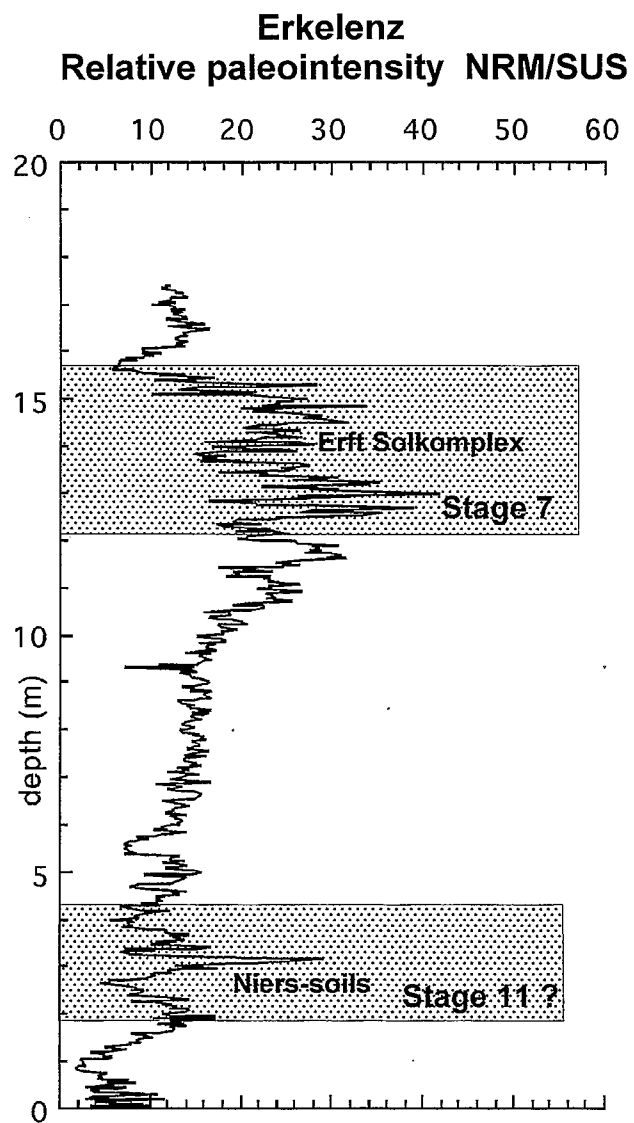


Fig. 18: Relative paleointensity in the Erkelenz section.

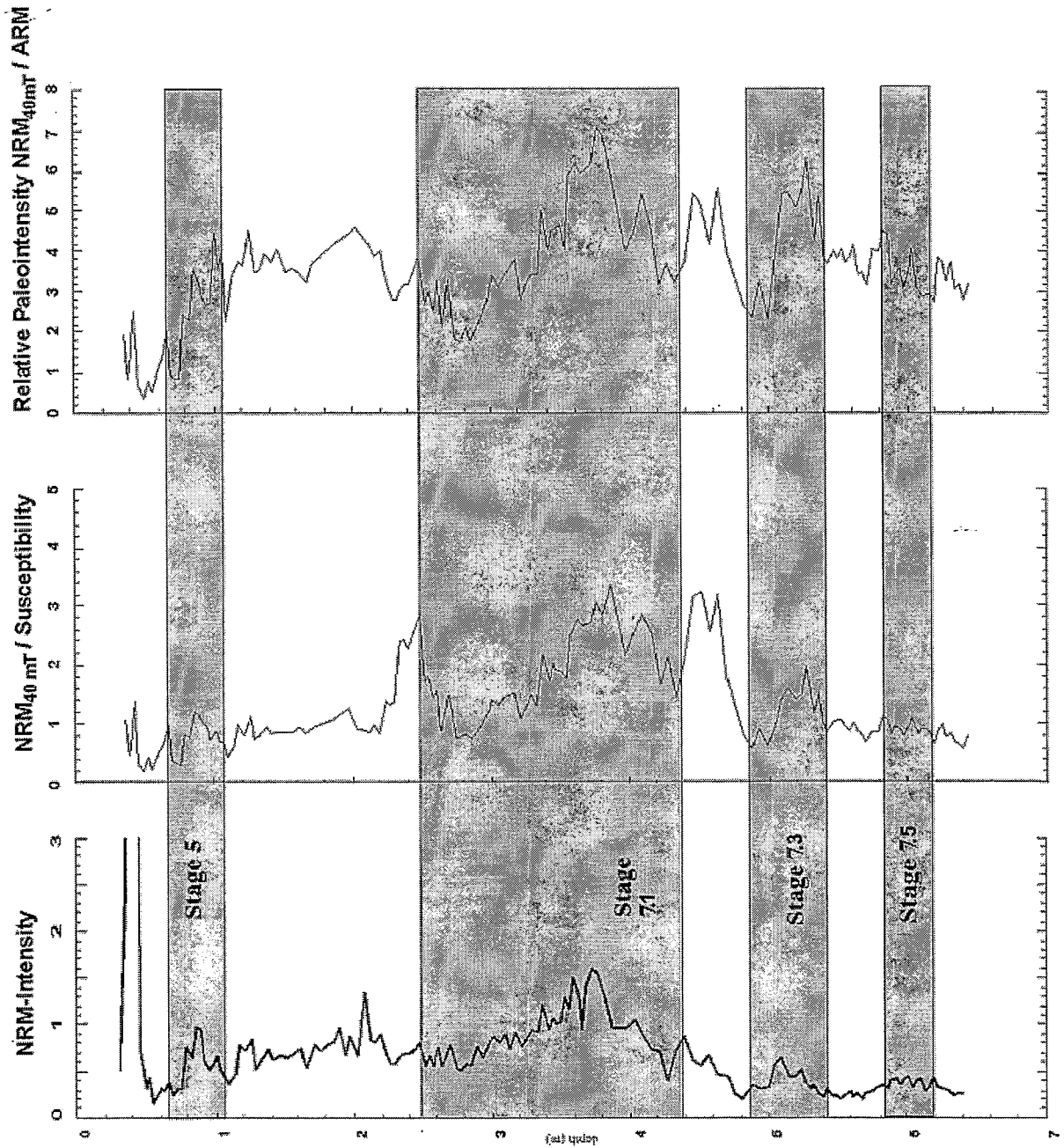


Fig. 19: Relative paleointensity in the Rheindahlen section (after COFFLET 2002: 74, modified).



### 2.4 The former browncoal opencast mine Frimmersdorf-West (see Figs. 20)

This precursor of the opencast mine Garzweiler was investigated in 1968-1973 (preliminary results see SCHIRMER 1974a, b). It cuts through the eastern rim of the Hauptterrasse down to a higher Mittelterrasse showing an exciting loess section (Figs. 4 and 20). This section provided the basis for the recent existing Rhein loess sequence. Following the 4 km long wall it turned out that at least three interglacial solcomplexes (Rocourt SC, Erft SC and Rur SC) are separated by thick loess stacks. Each solcomplex represents a long quiescence pe-

riod of landscape formation whereas during the formation of the loess stacks between the solcomplexes the landscape was completely remoulded. On the other hand each solcomplex showed that it forms a cluster of interglacial and interstadial soils separated by thin cold periods of loess accumulation.

Moreover this large outcrop showed over 4 km in length the evening role of the Eben Discordance that levelled the rolling landscape below. On top of this new surface the 4-6 m thick cover of the Brabant Loess has been piled up. Finally on its top the recent surface is nearly paralleling the Eben Discordance.

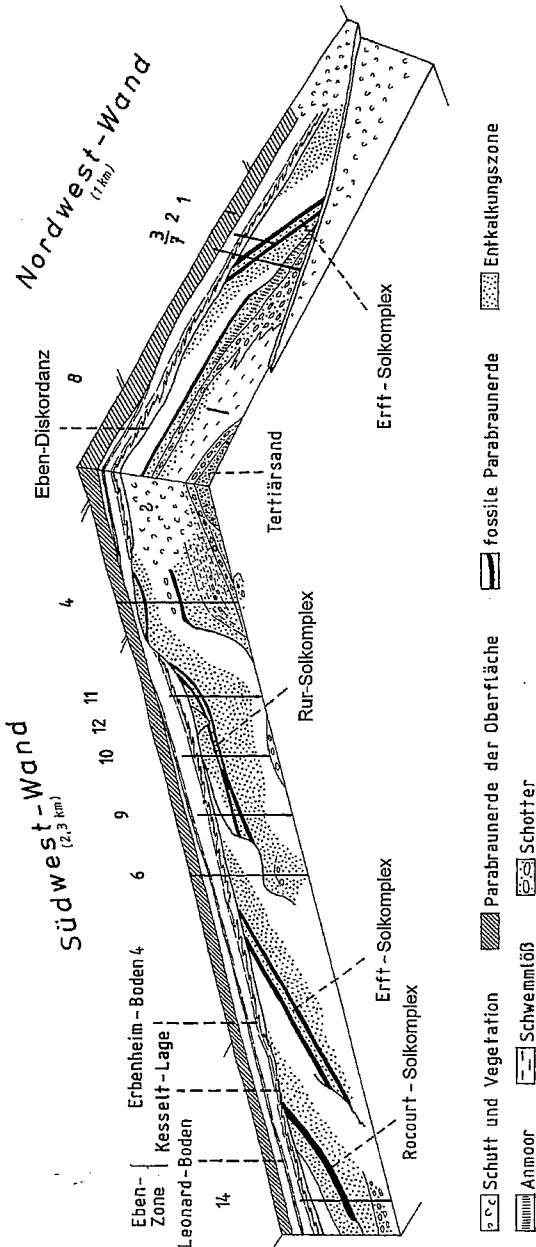


Fig. 20: Open cast mine Frimmersdorf-West., Schematic sketch of the wall of the state 1968-1973. Not to scale. 1-14: profiles. Legend: scree and vegetation / surface luvisol / fossil luvisol / decalcification zone / gleyic phaeozem / colluvial loess / gravel.

## 2.5 Browncoal opencast mine Garzweiler

WOLFGANG SCHIRMER & HOLGER KELS

(see Figs. 21-27)

SCHIRMER, W. & KELS, H. (2002): Browncoal opencast mine Garzweiler . - In: IKINGER, A. & SCHIRMER, W. (eds.): Loess units and solcomplexes in the Niederrhein and Maas area. – Terra nostra, **02/1**: 57-65; Berlin 2002.

The opencast mine Garzweiler is situated on top of the Hauptterrassen plateau. Due to the plateau position and contrasting Frimmersdorf-West the walls here expose the Rhein loess-soil units in even-layered and uniform structure. However, in both former and present depressions and dales of the plateau interesting details are found as demonstrated by BOENIGK (1990), BOENIGK, TREIBER & FARROKH (1991), BUNNIK & KALIS (1991), HENZE (1998), LOHAN (1999), SCHIRMER (1999c, 2000a,b) and A. IKINGER (2002). For accurate knowledge of the loess units the Düsseldorf group is investigating large wall sections of the open cast mine starting in 1995 with SCHIRMER, IKINGER and COFFLET and the dissertation of HENZE/LOHAN. Now the dissertation of KELS is continuing this work budgeting the loess units of the Hauptterrassen plateau.

The walls of the opencast mine are short-lived, some weeks to few months. Thus for a presentation it is a matter of chance to get distinct loess units.

The walls in Garzweiler (SCHIRMER 2002f: 29) above the Hauptterrasse mostly offer parts of the Niers Solkomplex and lowermost Geldern Loess. These beds are unconformably cut by the Wetterau Discordance which is overlain by thick Wetterau Loess. The latter terminates with the Rocourt Solcomplex which is extremely spread in a depression described in details from site Garzweiler 4 by SCHIRMER (1999c and 2000a,b). It presents a vertically spread sequence of the Rocourt, Pesch and Holz Soil with humus zones. In site Garzweiler 12 the

Titz Soil was added. The Rocourt Solcomplex is covered by Würmian loess units up to 10 m in thickness. In the lower part it comprises the Keldach Loess. The Ahrgau Loess and lower Hesbaye Loess are mostly cut by the Eben Discordance (ED) with the Kesselt Layer (Ke). Above it the Brabant Loess terminates the loess pile up to 6 m thick below the recent surface. The youngest conspicuous fossil soil within the Brabant Loess is the Leonard Soil (Le), a brown calcic cambisol. The sequence of the Kesselt Layer and the Brabant Loess in Garzweiler was investigated by HENZE (1998)/LOHAN (1999). The Eben Zone is described in detail by SCHIRMER (2002c). Micropedological investigations of the soil sequences are given by IKINGER (see below) and paleomagnetical results by COFFLET (dissertation in prep.).

The investigations in Garzweiler were mainly advanced by the collaboration with the “Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte” of the Köln University (BÖHNER & UTHMEIER 2000). This cooperation resulted in three bigger assemblages of finds consisting of artefacts and bones: one within the Rheingau Loess (Lower Würmian), a second within the Keldach Loess (lower Middle Würmian) and a third in the Kesselt Layer (Upper Würmian, ca. 20 ka).

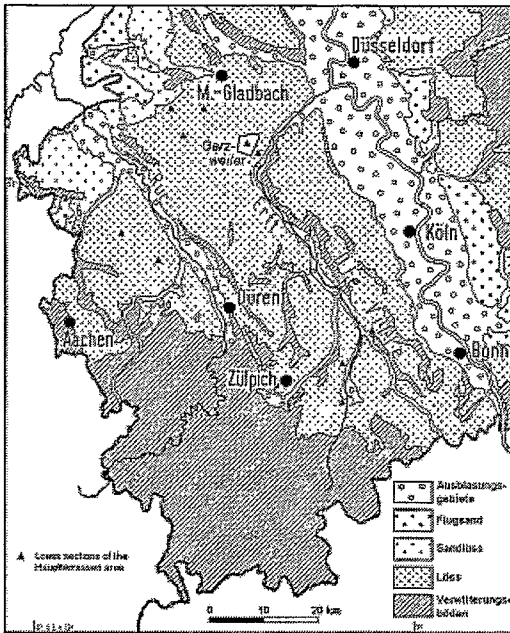


Fig. 21: Map of the loess distribution between Rhein and Maas (after MÜLLER 1959).

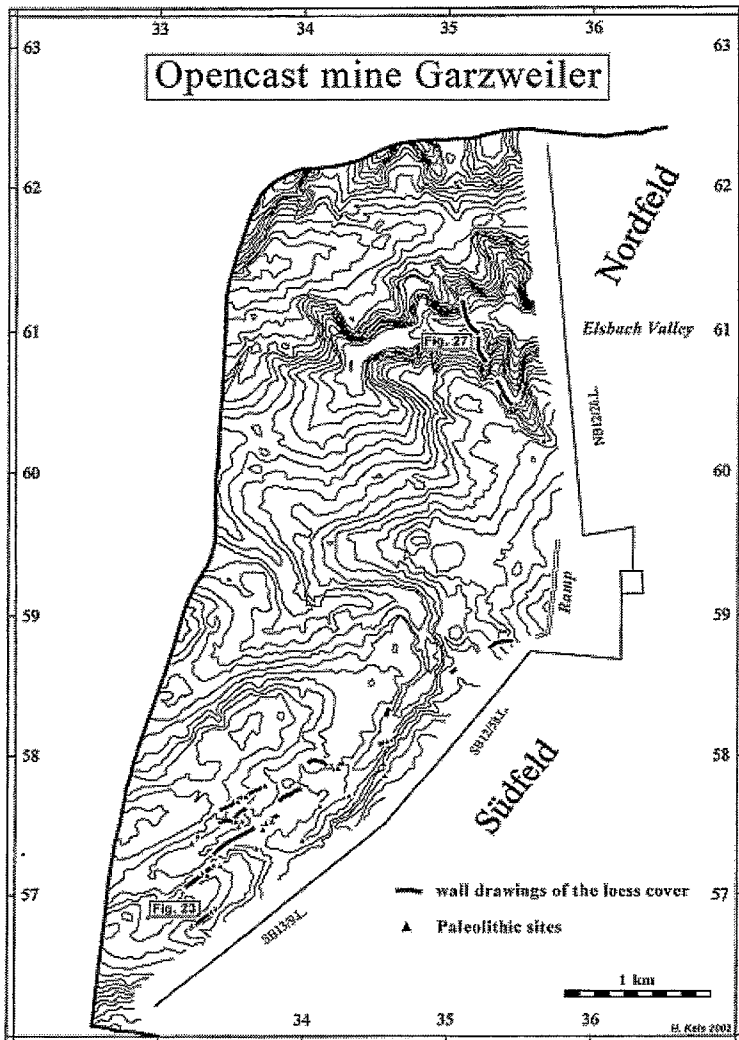


Fig. 22: Exploitation wall of the open-cast mine Garzweiler with location of wall drawings and Paleolithic sites.

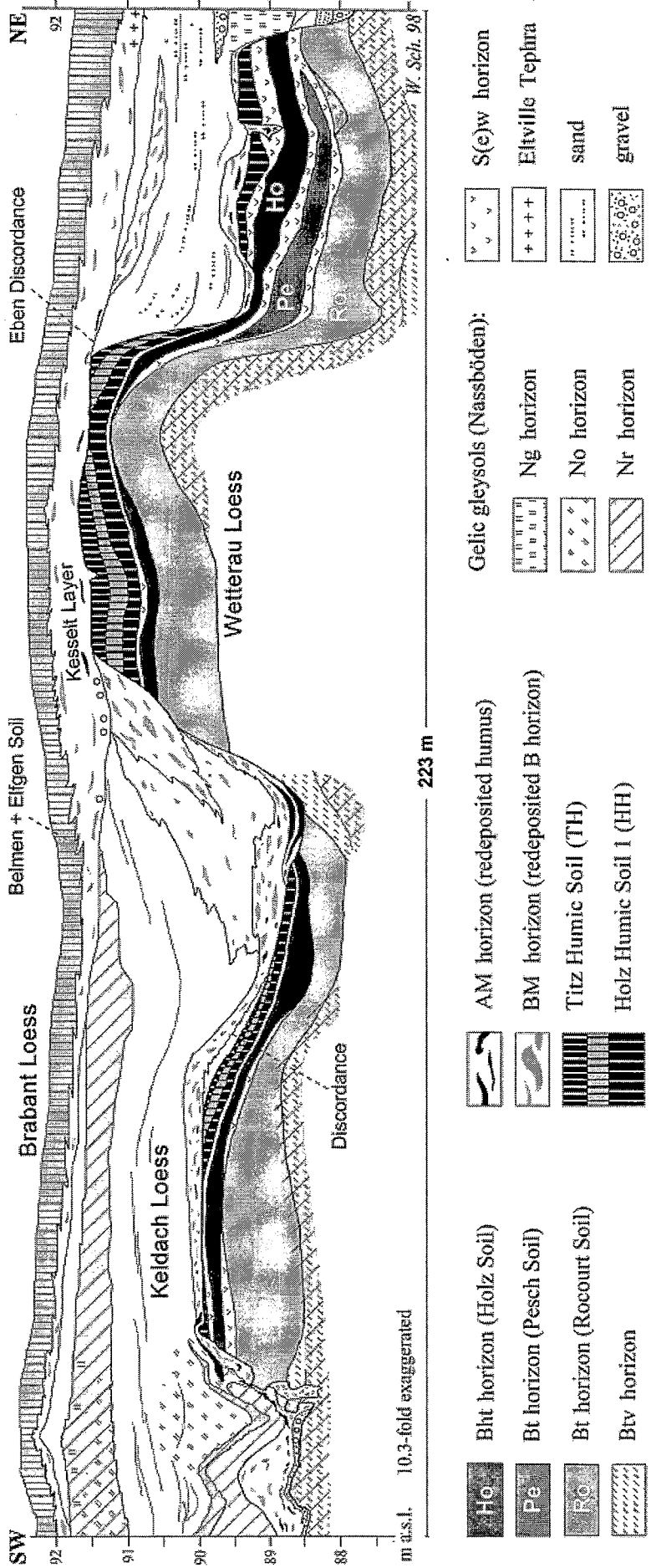


Fig. 23: The site Garzweiler 4 situated in the southern part of the opencast mine Garzweiler/Niederrhein (SCHIRMER 2000a: 317).

**Profil Tagebau Garzweiler 4-1**

m ü. NN

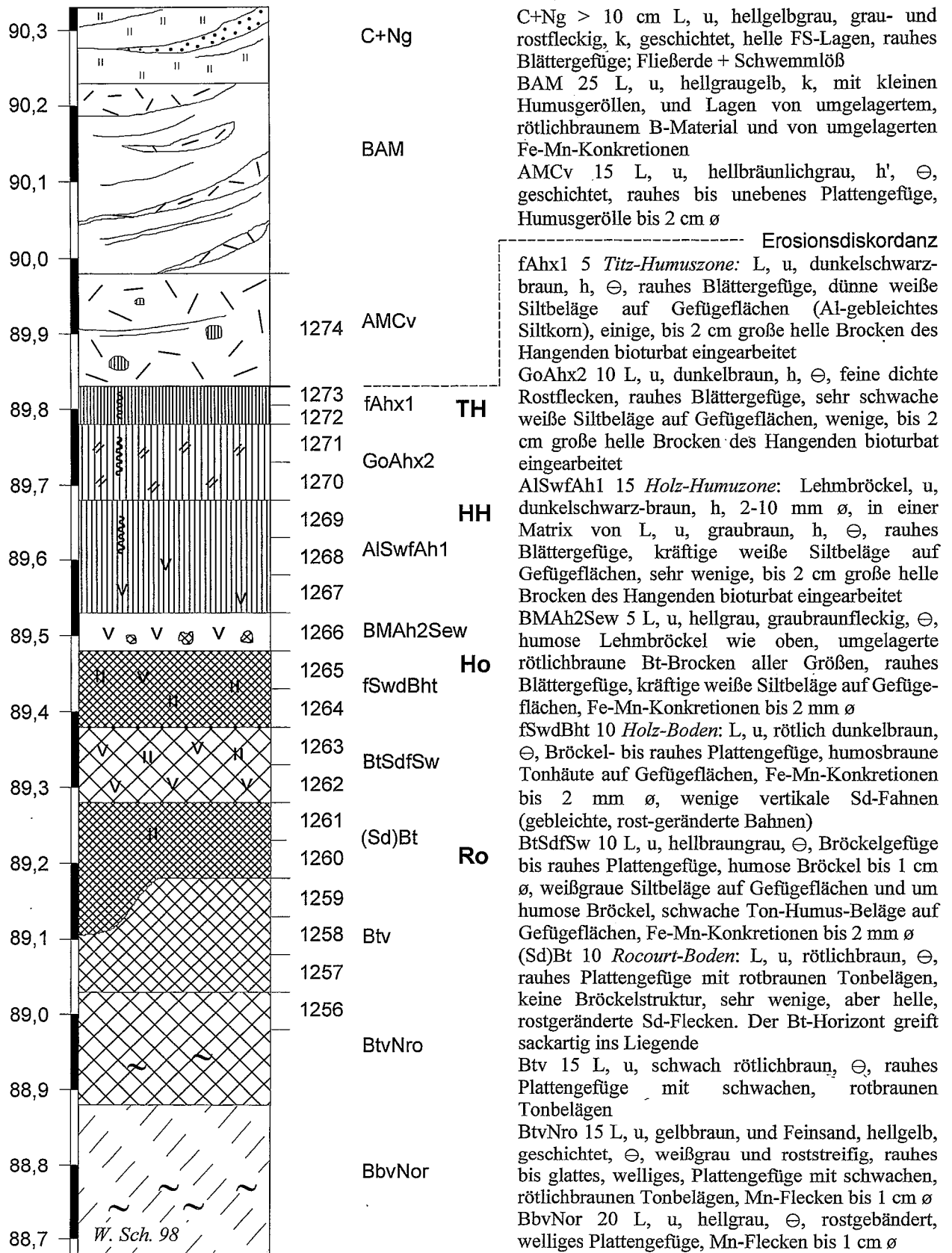


Fig. 24a: Section Garzweiler 4-1.

Garzweiler 4-1 Einzelkornkurven

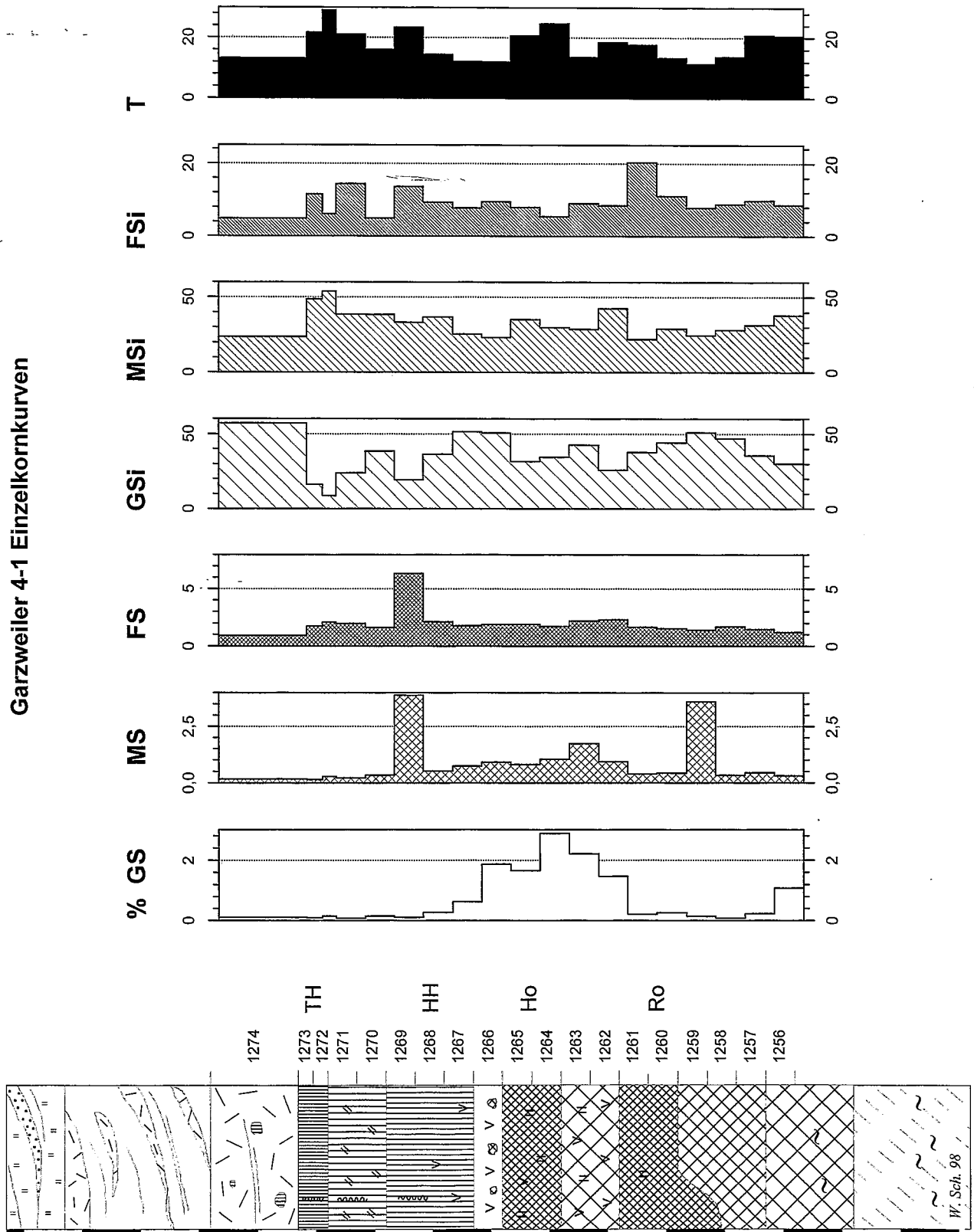


Fig. 24b: Section Garzweiler 4-1: Sand and pelite content, individual curves.

## Profil Tagebau Garzweiler 4-2

m ü. NN

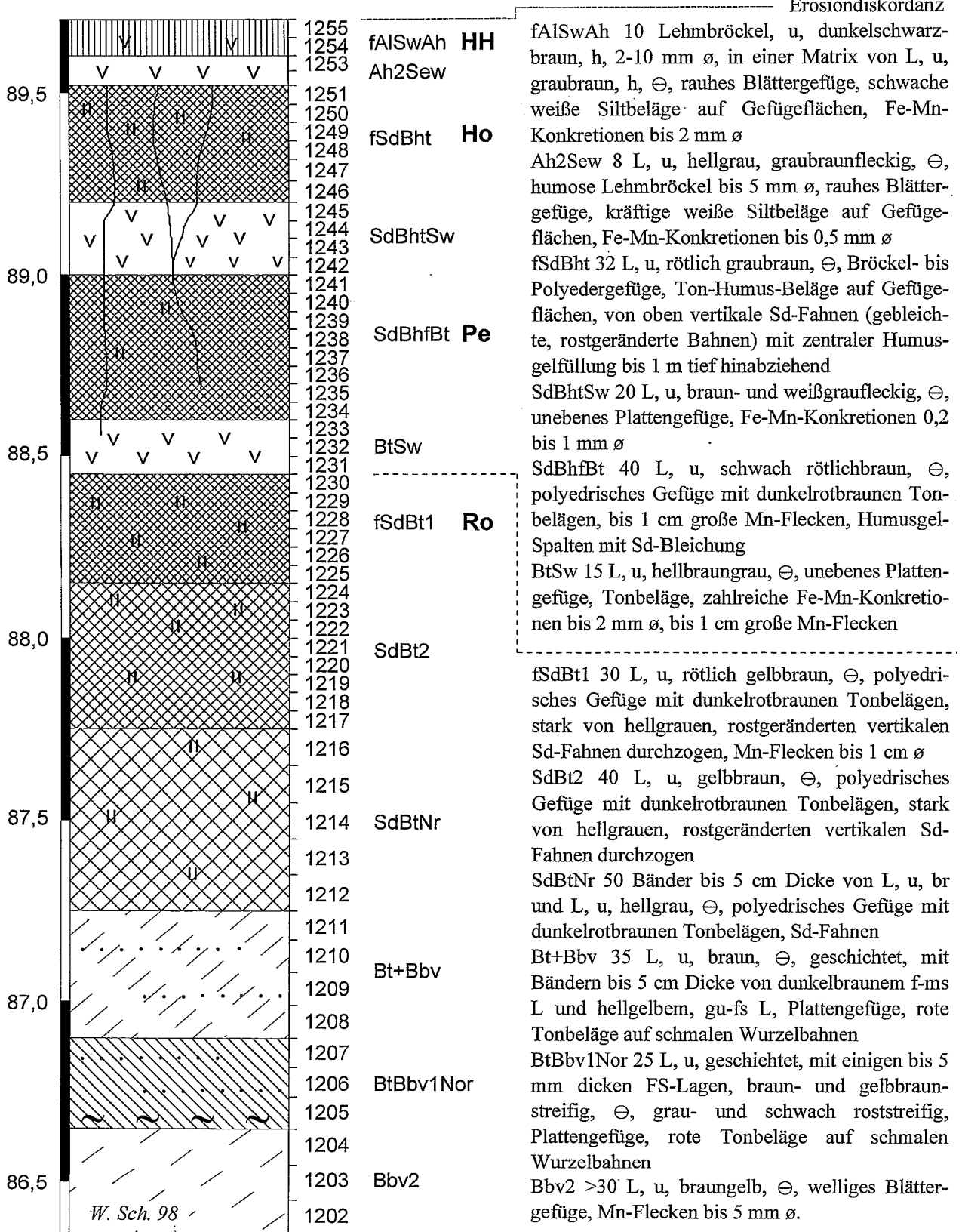


Fig. 25a: Section Garzweiler 4-2.

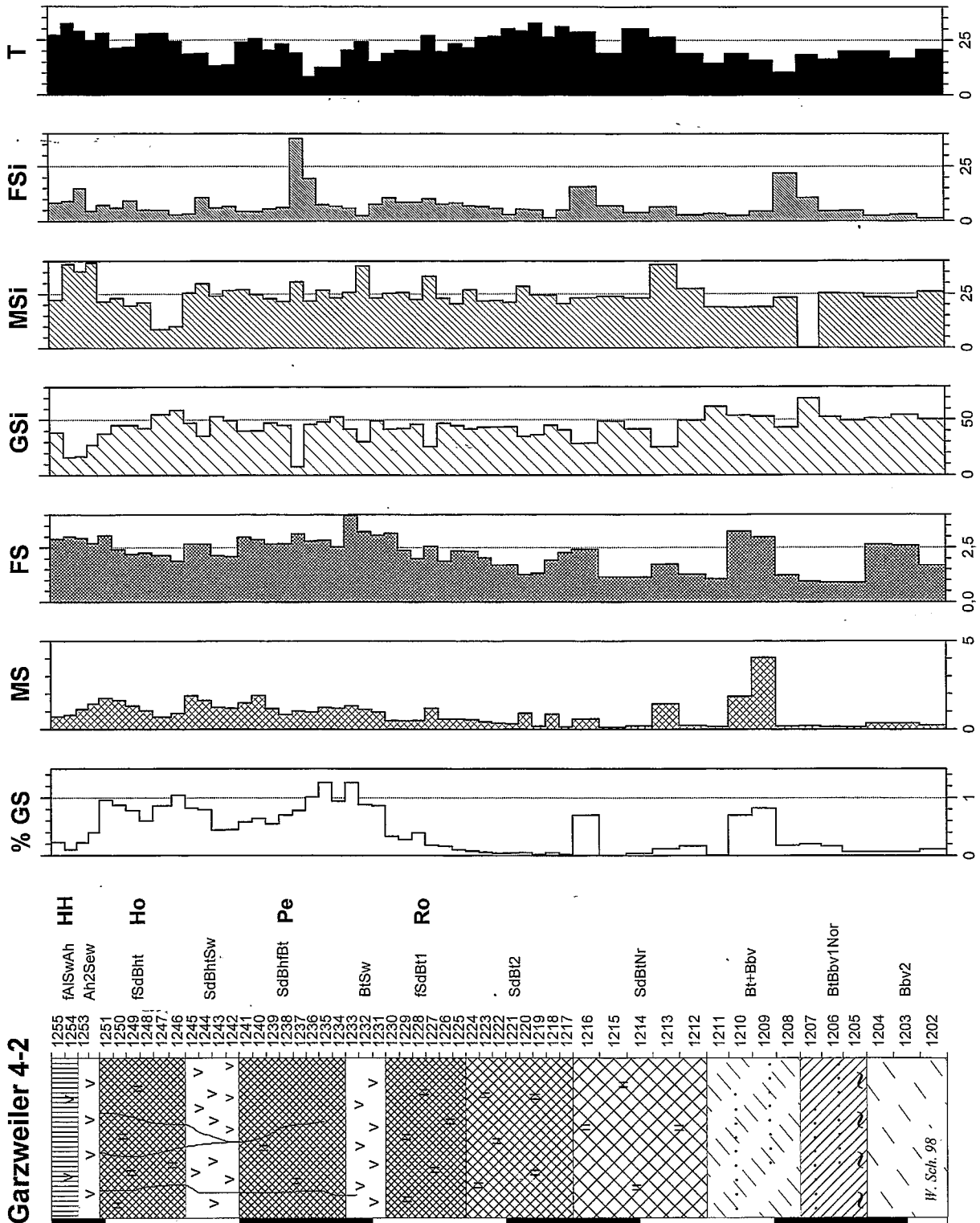


Fig. 25b: Section Garzweiler 4-2: Sand and pelite content, individual curves.



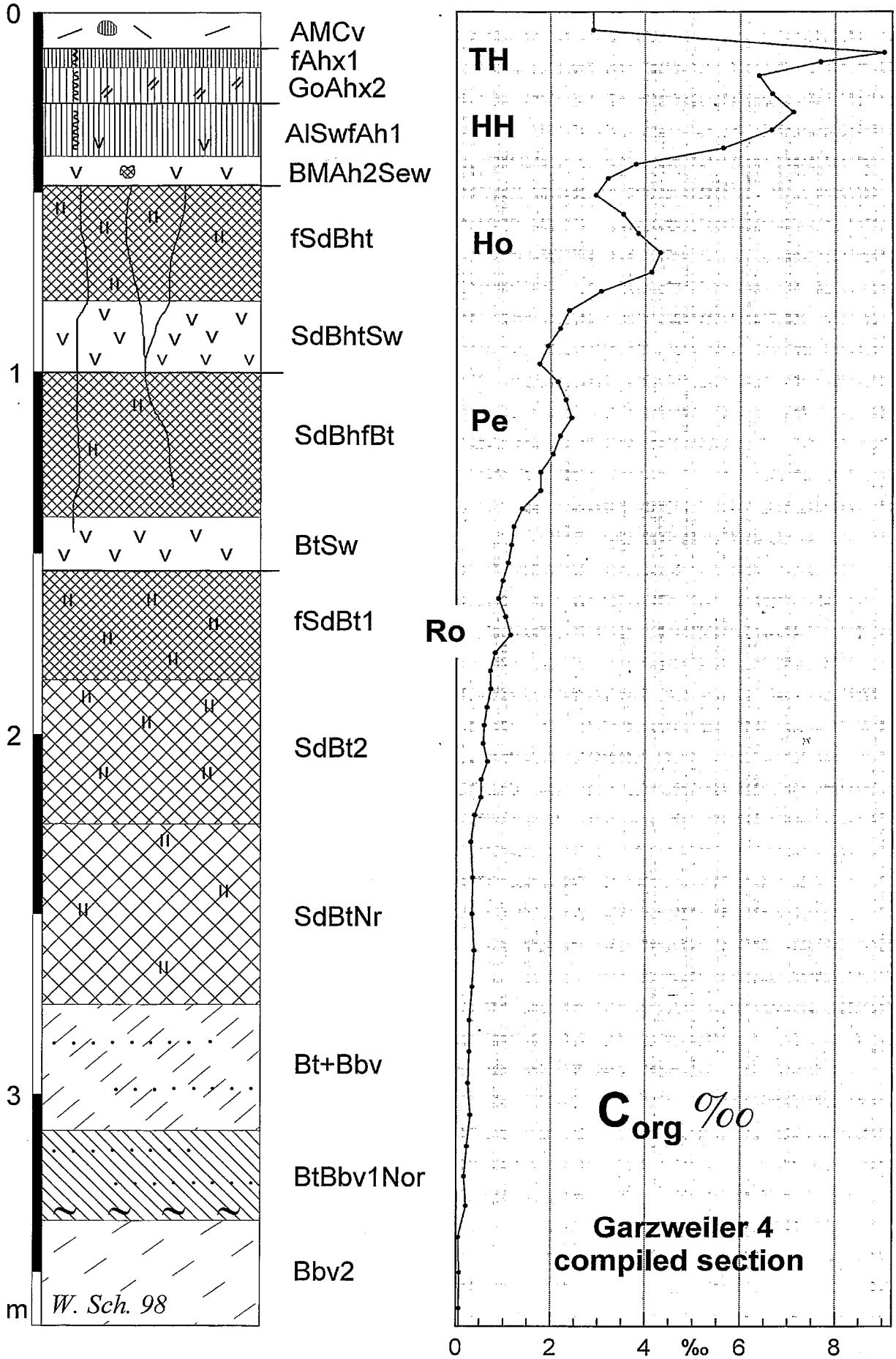


Fig. 26: Compiled section Garzweiler 4 with  $C_{org}$  content (SCHIRMER 2000a: 319).

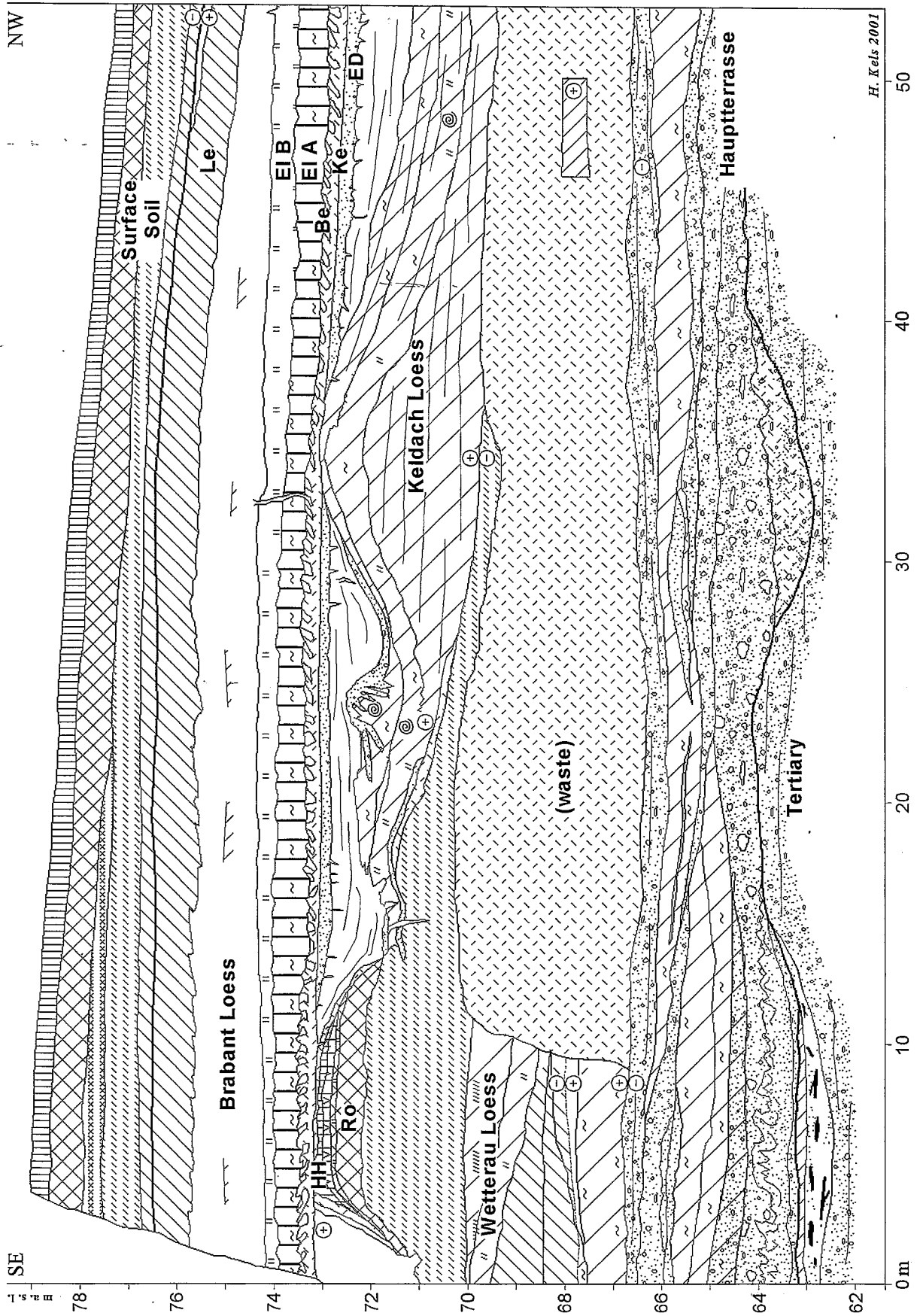


Fig. 27: Wall drawing Elsbach Valley south.

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Authors' addresses:

L. Cofflet M.A., Abt. Geologie der HHU, Universitätsstr. 1, 40225 Düsseldorf.

Prof. Dr. F. Gullentops, Institut voor Aardwetenschappen, Redingenstraat 16 bis, B-3000 Leuven.

Dr. A. Ikinger, Abt. Geologie der HHU, Universitätsstr. 1, 40225 Düsseldorf.

H. Kels M.A., Abt. Geologie der HHU, Universitätsstr. 1, 40225 Düsseldorf.

Drs. Erik, P. M. Meijs, Archeo-geolab, Veulenerbank 33, NL-6213 JR Maastricht.

Prof. Dr. W. Schirmer, Abt. Geologie der HHU, Universitätsstr. 1, 40225 Düsseldorf.