

THE MODELLING AND OPTIMISATION OF AGGREGATE PLANTS,
AND THE USE OF THE APOLLO COMPUTER PROGRAM

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A project report submitted to the Faculty of Engineering, University
of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Engineering.

Johannesburg, 1986

ABSTRACT

This report is concerned, in general, with the mathematical modelling and optimisation of aggregate plants. In particular, the report describes the use and application of a computer-based model, Apollo, which can aid in determining the most cost-effective way of operating an aggregate plant. To provide the necessary background for the reader to consider the Apollo model in perspective, various mathematical models of the two main components of aggregate processing circuits, namely crushers and screens, are described in detail, and a general linear model of a circuit is developed from first principles. The optimisation of aggregate plants using linear programming is also discussed, this being the technique used in the Apollo model. The report provides a detailed description and explanation of the steps that are taken to set up an Apollo model of a plant, and examples and a case study, illustrating the application of the model, are given. In describing the steps taken in applying the Apollo model and what can be done with it, attention is given to the managerial, engineering and cost-accounting problems that are encountered in implementing such mathematical models in an industrial environment, and much of what is described in this regard may be of value to persons using other process models.

DECLARATION

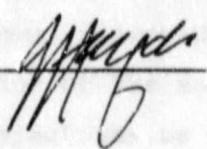
PREFACE

The Apollo model, which is essentially a simplified model of a rocket engine, is being considered as the first step in the development of a more sophisticated model. The model is a hydraulic one, with a central chamber and two side chambers. The model is being used to study the flow of gas through the engine. The model is being used to study the flow of gas through the engine. The model is being used to study the flow of gas through the engine.

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I declare that this project report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Science in Engineering in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.



21st day of October 1986

PREFACE

The Apollo model, which is essentially what this report is all about, is not my creation. It was originally conceived in 1975 by David Bon of Holderbank Management and Consulting Limited (Switzerland), who considered that an aggregate circuit was mathematically similar to an hydraulic one, with material "flowing" along different paths between connecting "nodes". The person responsible for setting up the model, and for writing the source code of the original computer program, is Dr Hans-Jakob Tobler, an outside consultant to Holderbank. My first contact with the program was in 1982, when an early version of the program was acquired by the company for which I worked, Hippo Quarries Limited (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Anglo-Alpha Limited, Holderbank being the major shareholder of Anglo-Alpha).

I was given the project of co-ordinating the implementation of the program at the 21 Hippo plants, and to this end was involved in the setting up and running of a number of one-day seminars to train the plant managers, and others, in the use of Apollo. By the end of 1984, the Apollo program had been implemented at most of the larger Hippo plants, the modeller in most cases being myself.

The version acquired by Hippo was written in Fortran and ran on a Siemens BS2000 mainframe computer. It was not user-friendly, a problem complicated by the fact that no user manual had ever been written for the program (one of my first tasks when Hippo acquired the program was to learn how to use the program and to write such a manual).

In mid 1984, I was seconded to Switzerland to assist with re-writing the program to run on an IBM PC personal computer. The source code of the new, improved version was written in Pascal, again by Dr Tobler, the author of the source code of the original version. My role in this project was as follows:

- design of the user interface (design of the control menus and design of the input-data screen formats)
- ensuring user-friendliness and simplicity of operation
- program testing and de-bugging
- writing of the DOS set-up routines and driver programs
- writing of the instruction manuals for Apollo (essentially an expanded update of the manual that I wrote in 1982 when Hippo acquired the program, incorporating all the experience and knowledge that I had gained in the subsequent two years)

The instruction manuals that I wrote in Switzerland make up a sizeable part of this report: Chapters 7 and 8 are based on the Apollo Modelling Manual, which describes how to model an aggregate plant using Apollo; and the Appendix is an almost word-for-word copy of the Apollo Operating Manual, which describes how to run the Apollo program on the IBM PC personal computer.

Chapter 9, which is a detailed case-study illustrating a typical application of Apollo, is a condensed account of an actual study that I undertook for Hippo Quarries in 1985.

The report also includes, in some detail, an extract from my undergraduate research project (1980), which was concerned with an investigation into the parameters that influence the output of a crusher and the development of a mathematical description of an aggregate-processing circuit. In retrospect, the circuit model was somewhat clumsy, but the empirical relationships that I developed to describe the output of a crusher are useful, in that they provide valuable insights about the crushing event, and have accordingly been included in this report, albeit in somewhat revised form (Section 3.2).

For similar reasons, I have taken the liberty of including a detailed description of Whiten's (1972) model of a cone crusher (Section 3.3). In this regard it should be noted that the illustrated example and the graphic representatives of Whiten's relationships were developed by myself.

Needless to say, this report reflects the ideas and philosophies of a number of people who have influenced me and whom I wish to acknowledge and thank:

- Mr Andy Kok, who was my superior in the Hippo Management Services Department, where I worked until the beginning of 1985, and who provided me with so much guidance and support.
- Mr Peter Kessler, of Holderbank, who, together with Andy Kok and myself, co-presented a paper on Apollo at the Fifth Holderbank Stone and Readymix Conference, in Lucerne, Switzerland, in 1983, and who originally introduced me to the Apollo model when it was acquired by Hippo.
- Mr Frank Fiore, of Anglo-Alpha, whose philosophy regarding the implementation of process models and the interaction of 'models and managers' is reflected in this report.
- Mr David Bon of Holderbank, who originally conceived the program.
- Dr Hans-Jakob Tobler, for whom no programming task on the IBM PC was too difficult, and who is such a master of the machine that he could, if asked, probably make it fly!

Other people that I wish to thank:

- Miss Donne Gebhard, who typed this report, and who remained unruffled through all my revisions and Oscar Wilde impersonations ("this morning I put in a comma and this afternoon I took it out again!").

- My wife, Dawn, especially, who gave me so much support and encouragement and who proof-read each chapter and provided valuable advice and criticism regarding the content and style of the report.

- My supervisor, Professor John Bicheno, head of the Industrial Engineering Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, for always being available for consultation and guidance (and, especially, for his patience!).

In closing, I could not resist adding the following quotation, which, although somewhat cynical, is probably worth keeping in mind:

"A theory has only the alternative of being right or wrong. A model has a third possibility--it may be right, but irrelevant".

Manfred Eigen, German Scientist.

2.1 HISTORICAL MODELS OF CONTROL 13

2.1.1 The Apollo control model 13

2.1.2 A statistical model of a control 24

2.2.1 Normal operations 25

2.2.2 Error-factored operations 26

2.3 Driver's model of a control 29

2.3.1 The knowledge model 29

2.3.2 The driver's control model 31

3.1 HISTORICAL MODELS OF CONTROL 38

3.1 Perfect operations 38

3.2 Probabilistic model of a control system 39

4. LINEAR MODELLING OF ADVANCED PROCESSING CIRCUITS 44

5. OPTIMISATION OF AIRCRAFT AND CIRCUIT PROGRAMMING 49

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
DECLARATION	ii
PREFACE	iii
CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. FUNDAMENTALS OF AGGREGATE PROCESS MODELLING	11
2.1 Size reduction as a function of energy consumed	11
2.2 Representing the size distribution of broken material	13
2.2.1 Continuous functions	14
2.2.2 Statistical functions	16
2.2.3 Discontinuous functions	17
3. MATHEMATICAL MODELS OF CRUSHERS	19
3.1 The Apollo crusher model	24
3.2 A statistical model of a crusher	26
3.2.1 Normal component $f_1(x)$	29
3.2.2 Fines-function component $f_2(x)$	32
3.3 Whiten's model of a cone crusher	37
3.3.1 The breakage matrix B	39
3.3.2 The classification matrix C	41
4. MATHEMATICAL MODELS OF SCREENS	46
4.1 Perfect separation	48
4.2 Probabilistic model of a vibrating screen	50
5. LINEAR MODELLING OF AGGREGATE PROCESSING CIRCUITS	53
6. OPTIMISATION OF AGGREGATE PLANTS USING LINEAR PROGRAMMING	64

CONTENTS (CONT.)

	Page
7. THE APOLLO MODEL	72
7.1 Introduction	72
7.2 Model elements	73
7.2.1 Primary scalper	74
7.2.2 Crushers	75
7.2.3 Screens: effective mesh sizes	78
7.2.4 Screens: screening lines	80
7.2.5 Silos, stockpiles	83
7.2.6 Apollo flow diagram	84
7.2.7 Model size	84
7.3 Model structure	87
7.3.1 Constraints	87
7.3.2 Objective function	88
7.4 Information required to set up an Apollo model	89
7.4.1 Plant flow diagram	90
7.4.2 Crusher product-gradings and capacities	90
7.4.3 Screen mesh-sizes and screen capacities	91
7.4.4 Screen efficiencies	92
7.4.5 Raw-material grading and maximum rate-of-supply	93
7.4.6 Production hours available and production rate	95
7.4.7 Costs	95
7.4.8 Market demand for each product	96
7.5 Data input	98
7.6 Printout and interpretation	105
7.7 Uses of Apollo	112
7.7.1 Optimizing the performance of existing plants	112
7.7.2 Plant modifications	113
7.7.3 Plant design	114
7.7.4 Training	114
7.8 Application of Apollo at Masepa Quarries Ltd	114
7.9 Conclusions	118

CONTENTS (CONT.)	Page
8. MORE ADVANCED APOLLO MODELLING TECHNIQUES	121
8.1 Screening-line capacities	121
8.2 Build-up of recirculating loads	123
8.3 Flop gates and flow choices	124
8.4 Silos with continuous-grade product	128
8.5 Flakiness and slotted screens	130
8.5.1 Method 1: Introduce an artificial crusher and screening-line	131
8.5.2 Method 2: Introduce an additional level	132
8.6 Oversize and undersize	133
8.6.1 Introducing the concepts	133
8.6.2 Calculating oversize and undersize for splitter screens	137
9. CASE STUDY: INCREASING 13.2MM PRODUCTION AT EIKENHOF	141
9.1 Introduction	141
9.2 Objective of investigation	141
9.3 Alternative configurations identified	141
9.4 Input data required	142
9.4.1 Apollo flow diagram	143
9.4.2 Market demand	144
9.4.3 Crusher gradings and capacities	144
9.4.4 Production hours available	145
9.4.5 Capacities of screens	145
9.4.6 Costs	145
9.4.7 Flakiness	146
9.4.8 Undersize and oversize in the final products	146
9.5 Preparation of input forms	147
9.6 Apollo model of existing mode of operation (Base Run)	147
9.7 Apollo model with adjusted Shorthead settings	148
9.8 Apollo model with adjusted 48" GD crusher setting	149
9.9 Recommendations	150
LIST OF REFERENCES	161
APPENDIX: IBM PC VERSION OPERATION MANUAL	168

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1 Flow diagram of Eikenhof	5
2.1 Representing the size distribution of an aggregate sample	14
2.2 Example of a single size representing several size-distributions	15
2.3 Example of how a vector is formed to represent a size distribution	18
3.1 Sectional diagrams showing main components jaw and cone crushers	21
3.2 Example of manufacturer's curves relating crushing selling to predicted output-grading	22
3.3 Typical normal-distribution pdf and CDF	27
3.4 Observable characteristics of crusher-output size-distributions	28
3.5 Empirical relationship between crusher gap and standard deviation for a laboratory crusher	30
3.6 'Folding' the normal curve about the y-axis	31
3.7 Effect of feed rate (relative frequency of occurrence vs size)	34
3.8 Effect of feed rate (cumulative percent passing vs size)	35
3.9 Effect of crusher gap setting on size distribution	36
3.10 Symbolic representation of a cone crusher	37
3.11 Example of breakage matrix B_1	40
3.12 Example of breakage matrix B_2	42
3.13 Example of classification matrix C	43
3.14 Example of transformation matrix Z such that $p = Z.f$	44
3.15 Parameters determined by Whiten for the Mount Isa Mine cone crusher, Australia	45

LIST OF FIGURES (CONT.)

	Page
4.1 Diagramatic representation of a single-deck screen	46
4.2 Diagramatic representation of a double-deck screen	48
4.3 Efficiency curves obtained using Whiten's probability model	51
5.1 Example plant-circuit diagram	55
5.2 Simple circuit used in numeric example	60
7.1 Symbol for primary crusher	74
7.2 'Artificial scalper'	74
7.3 Symbols for crushers	75
7.4 Crusher feed-grading should always be to the right of the product grading	76
7.5 Limiting case of feed grading being tangential to product grading	77
7.6 Gradings of products over and through a screen of physical mesh-size of 16 mm	79
7.7 Symbol for screening-line	81
7.8 Screening-line representation for a double-deck screen	81
7.9 Combining two screens into one screening-line	82
7.10 Two screens that cannot be combined into one screening-line	83
7.11 Symbols for silos and stockpiles	83
7.12 Typical flow diagram and its Apollo equivalent	85
7.13 Apollo flow diagram for Eikenhof	86
7.14 Determining the grading and proportion of the bypass material	93
7.15 Bypass material and primary-crusher product routed to same conveyor belt	94
7.16 Extracting normal sizes off a screening-line	97

LIST OF FIGURES (CONT.)

	Page	
7.17	Flow diagram and Apollo diagram for Holderbank Crushers	100
7.18	Crusher gradings for Holderbank Crushers	101
7.19	Mask 1 - plant size, raw-material, and scalper details for Holderbank Crushers	101
7.20	Mask Type 2 - Crusher details for Holderbank Crushers	102
7.21	Mask Type 3 - Screening-line details for Holderbank Crushers	103
7.22	Mask 4 - Market-demand details and available production hours for Holderbank Crushers	103
7.23	Apollo diagram with mass-flow rates extracted from printout	105
8.1	Modelling artificial sieves as having virtually infinite capacities	122
8.2	Correct modelling of screening-line capacities	123
8.3	Build-up of recirculation load in a circuit	124
8.4	A flop gate in a physical circuit	125
8.5	A flop gate in an Apollo flow diagram	126
8.6	More direct representation of a flop gate	126
8.7	Resultant mass-flows if the flop gate is modelled incorrectly	127
8.8	Representing a flop gate using an 'artificial' parallel screen	127
8.9	Incorrect modelling of crusher-run production	128
8.10	Correct modelling of crusher-run production	129
8.11	Unsuitable model to remove flaky material	130
8.12	Removing flaky material using an artificial crusher and screening-line	132
8.13	Removing flaky material by introducing an additional level	132
8.14	Extracting 13.2-19.0 mm material to Silo 5	134

LIST OF FIGURES (CONT.)

	Page	
7.17	Flow diagram and Apollo diagram for Holderbank Crushers	100
7.18	Crusher gradings for Holderbank Crushers	101
7.19	Mask 1 - plant size, raw-material, and scalper details for Holderbank Crushers	101
7.20	Mask Type 2 - Crusher details for Holderbank Crushers	102
7.21	Mask Type 3 - Screening-line details for Holderbank Crushers	103
7.22	Mask 4 - Market-demand details and available production hours for Holderbank Crushers	103
7.23	Apollo diagram with mass-flow rates extracted from printout	105
8.1	Modelling artificial sieves as having virtually infinite capacities	122
8.2	Correct modelling of screening-line capacities	123
8.3	Build-up of recirculation load in a circuit	124
8.4	A flop gate in a physical circuit	125
8.5	A flop gate in an Apollo flow diagram	126
8.6	More direct representation of a flop gate	126
8.7	Resultant mass-flows if the flop gate is modelled incorrectly	127
8.8	Representing a flop gate using an 'artificial' parallel screen	127
8.9	Incorrect modelling of crusher-run production	128
8.10	Correct modelling of crusher-run production	129
8.11	Unsuitable model to remove flaky material	130
8.12	Removing flaky material using an artificial crusher and screening-line	132
8.13	Removing flaky material by introducing an additional level	132
8.14	Extracting 13.2-19.0 mm material to Silo 5	134

LIST OF FIGURES (CONT.)

	Page	
8.15	Size analysis of silo material showing inclusion of oversize and undersize	134
8.16	Specifying oversize and undersize on an input form	136
8.17	A splitter screen	137
8.18	Size analysis of the products of a splitter screen	138
8.19	Specifying oversize and undersize for a splitter screen	140
9.1	Apollo flow diagram for Eikenhof	151
9.2	Graphic form of crusher grading for Base-Run model of Eikenhof	153
9.3	Estimate of gradings and capacities at altered crusher settings	153
9.4	Determination of Apollo over and undersize for selected products	154
9.5	Input forms for screens: Eikenhof Base-Run	155
9.6	Base-Run solution	157
9.7	Effects of increasing settings on Shorthead crushers	158
9.8	Effects of increasing setting on 48" GD crusher	159

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1 Crusher types used and typical ranges of application	20
3.2 Mass balance for a breakage zone	38
4.1 Elements of vector C , assuming perfect separation	49
4.2 Product gradings, assuming perfect separation	50
5.1 Equations to model the circuit shown in Figure 5.1	51
5.2 Modified equations to model the circuit shown in Figure 5.1	62
5.3 Equations and solution for the circuit shown in Figure 5.2	63
6.1 Linear programming tableau to determine optimum mode(s) of operation in an aggregate plant	67
6.2 Equations and solutions for the Ferro plant	69
7.1 Determining 'crusher physics' situations	77
7.2 Nominal-size grading-envelopes for stone used in concrete	98
7.3 Solution printout for Holderbank Crushers	107
7.4 Apollo equations to model Holderbank Crushers	110
9.1 Market demand for Eikenhof: 1 April to 31 December 1985	144
9.2 Crusher gradings and capacities for Base-Run model of Eikenhof	152
9.3 Summary of results	160

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Aggregate plants produce the vast quantities of crushed stone used each year for concrete and road-making in the construction industry. In many countries of the world, gravel pits exist where alluvial stones of various sizes can be dug. These then only require some crushing and sorting into correct sizes. However, very few acceptable gravel pits exist in this country, and stone is generally quarried from large open-cast pits, the rock then being crushed and screened into various product sizes.

Crushing plants thus consist primarily of an ordered array of crushers, screens and stockpiles, linked by means of conveyor belts and chutes. The flow diagram of a typical plant, including primary, secondary and tertiary crushers, as well as a sand plant, is shown in Figure 1.1, located at the end of the chapter. The plant, Eikenhof, is one of a number of rock quarries operated by Anglo Alpha Ltd through its subsidiary Hippo Quarries Ltd, the largest producer of aggregates in South Africa.

The primary objective in any operation is to satisfy market demand in the most economic manner. The objective can be expressed in monetary terms as the maximisation of **marginal income**, that is, **sales revenues**, less the sum of the following costs:

- costs of **raw material**
- costs of processing (**crushing and screening**)
- costs due to imbalances between production and sales, i.e.:
 - ° costs due to **dumping** of surplus products
 - ° costs due to **running short** of saleable products.

The cost components of the objective indicate the importance of running the plant in a manner that best balances production and demand. An imbalance means costly surpluses of unsaleable sizes and/or shortages of popular products.

There are, of course, a large number of factors which affect the output of a plant and its operating costs, and an experienced operator will readily recognise the significance in the process of the following variables which are under his direct control:

- raw-material size-grading (determined by quarry blasting parameters)
- crusher settings (affecting product size-distributions and crusher capacities)
- screen apertures
- choices regarding how material should be routed in the plant.

Determining the optimum combination of these variables does, however, present an almost impossible task, as even on an average-size plant there exist a large number of choices. And, as with most complex processing systems, optimising any single part does not necessarily optimise the overall system and may, in fact, work to its detriment.

A scientific analysis of material flows, in order to determine the optimum plant-configuration, is usually avoided because of the complex and time-consuming calculations required. Management tends to rely on experience, gut, and just plain trial and error, with the result that the operational configuration of an aggregate plant is often far from the economic optimum.

What was needed, then, was a tool which could:

- calculate the tonnages of material flowing through a given plant circuit, and the amounts of each product produced

- given flexibility in the plant circuit, determine the best routing of material through the circuit, in order to satisfy demand most economically.

Motivated by this need, the computer program, 'Kies', was developed in 1975 by Holderbank Management and Consulting Ltd of Switzerland, the major shareholder in Anglo Alpha Ltd. The program was somewhat crude in application: it was designed as a typical batch program, with data entered by a card reader, and it had to be re-developed for each aggregate plant under consideration.

The latest, completely redesigned version of the program is known as 'Apollo', the name being a loose acronym of **Aggregate Plant Optimisation**. It was developed jointly by Dr H Tobler, an outside consultant to Holderbank, and myself. The program runs on an IBM PC personal computer and was made commercially available in 1984. Its design reflects a high level of user-friendliness and flexibility - the program can model almost any aggregate-processing plant. At the date of writing, it represents the state of the art as a "fully-operational computerised static model of an aggregate plant" (Pfohl, 1984).

The remaining chapters are not only concerned with Apollo, however. Apollo is presented against the background of two broad themes, namely, the mathematical **modelling** and **optimisation** of aggregate plants. In other words, before dealing with Apollo, a number of chapters are devoted to these two general themes, in order to allow the reader to consider Apollo in perspective.

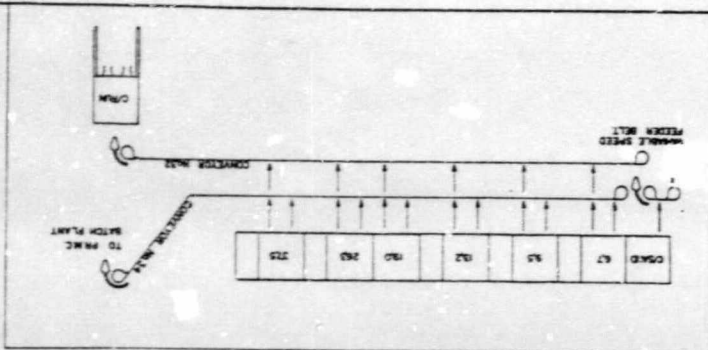
Firstly, the mathematical modelling of aggregate circuits is dealt with: In Chapter 2, the reader is introduced to the fundamentals of plant modelling, and in the next two chapters, various mathematical models of the two main components of aggregate circuits, namely, crushers and screens, are discussed. In Chapter 5, these components are incorporated into a general model of a circuit. Using this model, the tonnages flowing in any given circuit, and the amounts of each product made, can be calculated.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the second theme, namely, the economic optimisation of aggregate plants, the aim being to satisfy market demand in the most economic manner.

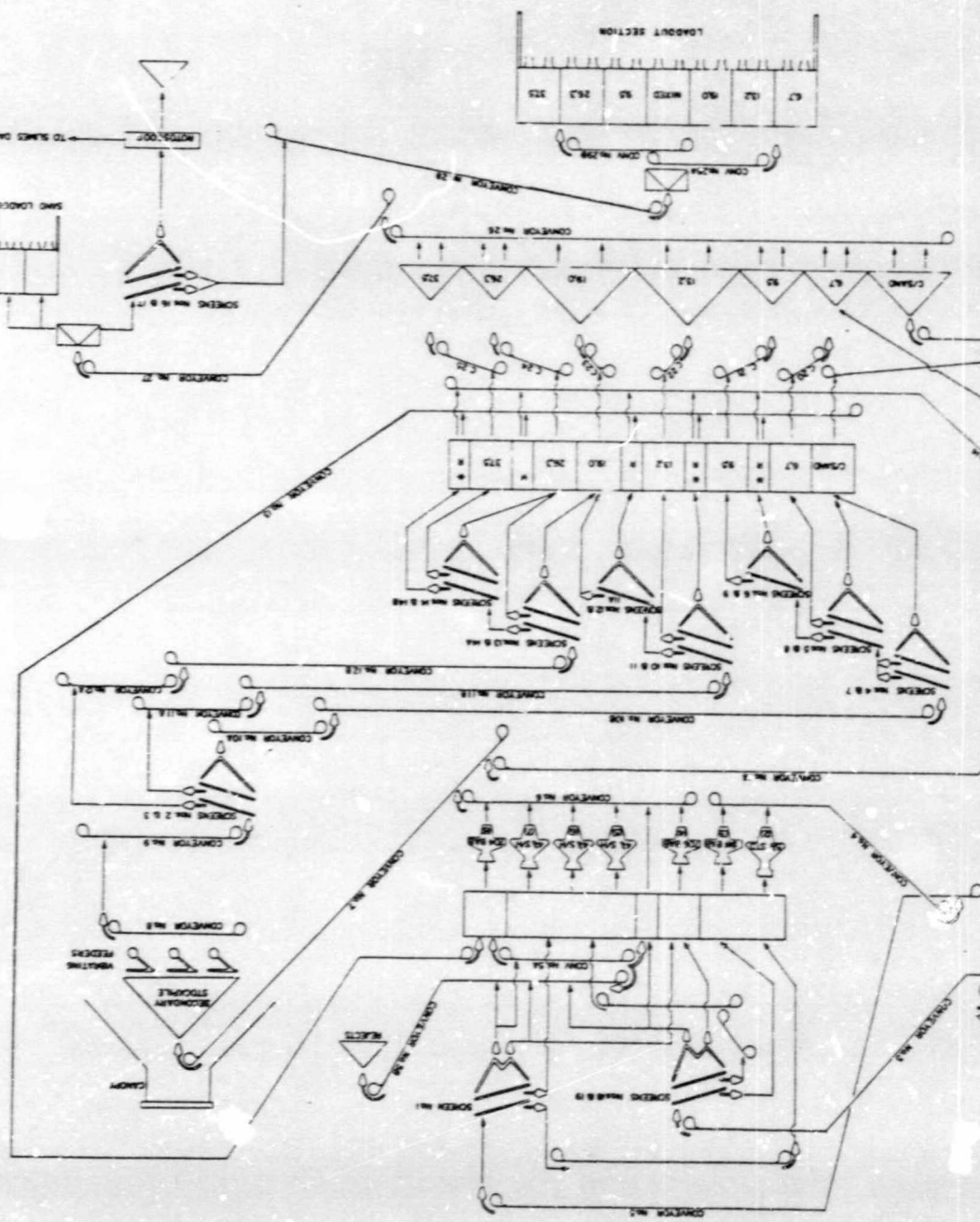
The Apollo model, which incorporates both these themes into one model, is discussed in detail in Chapter 7, and more advanced Apollo-modelling techniques are described in Chapter 8. A case study of an Apollo application at Eikenhof is given in Chapter 9.

Complete instructions for operating the Apollo computer program on the IBM PC personal computer are given in the Appendix.

A series of photographs showing various aspects of aggregate processing are included in pages 6 to 10. These photographs, which may be of use to the reader who is unfamiliar with aggregate processing, were taken at the Jukskei Quarry, situated north of Johannesburg.

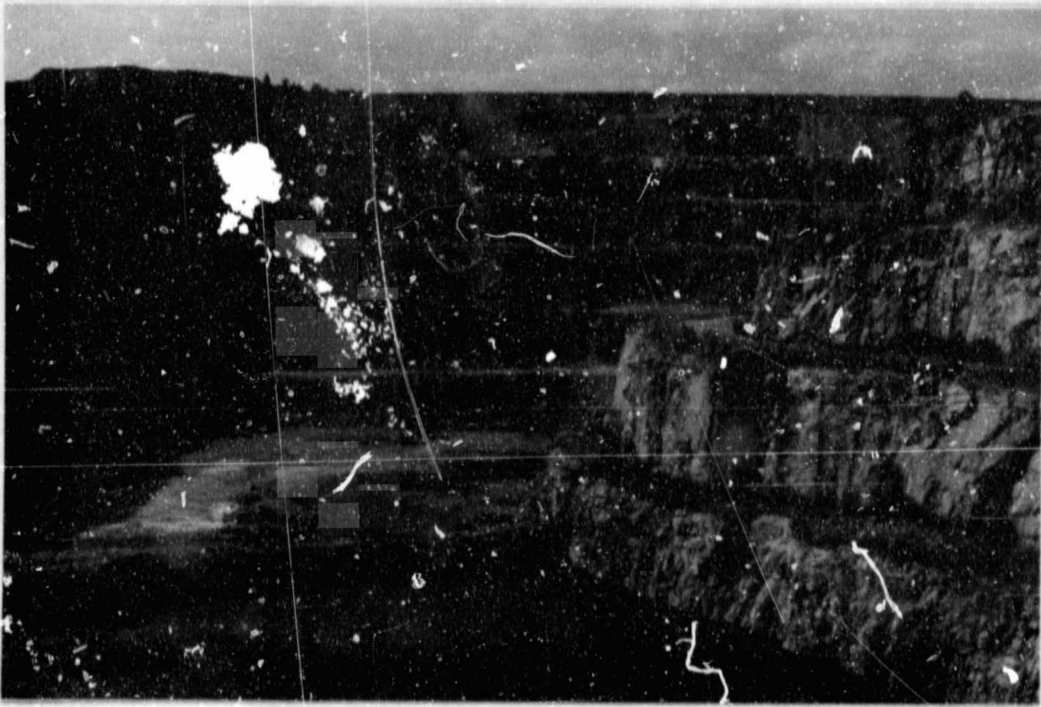


1- All components complete as shown
 2- All rollers and bearings are
 3- Lubricated and adjusted
 4- All parts are in place
 5- All parts are tested and
 6- All parts are ready for
 7- All parts are ready for
 8- All parts are ready for
 9- All parts are ready for
 10- All parts are ready for



DATE - 04/21/52
 DRAWN - EIKENHOF

Figure 1.1 Flow diagram of Eikenhof



Above: General view of the Jukskei Quarry. Each bench is about fifteen metres high

Below: Two of the pneumatic drill rigs which are used at Jukskei for drilling the 64 mm diameter holes into which explosive is inserted prior to blasting



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