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# **DAVENTRY INTERNATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT TERMINAL**

## **Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report**

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**Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal  
Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report**

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# *1 INTRODUCTION*

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- 1.1 This Interim Report has been prepared as a short record of observations made and conclusions drawn during the archaeological evaluation carried out on the proposed Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) site at Crick, Northamptonshire in November 1993 and January 1994. It does not replace the full evaluation report at present in production.
- 1.2 An evaluation of the proposal site was requested by the Archaeological Planning Officer for Northamptonshire County Council in order to provide him with information on possible archaeological deposits remaining below ground. This was to enable him to advise the Local Planning Authority, currently considering the outline planning application, on appropriate measures to safeguard any surviving deposits. It was considered that there was a potential for discoveries as Watling Street, a Roman road, runs along the eastern boundary of the site and Saxon burials have been found previously in the Roman road within the proposal area.
- 1.3 The archaeological evaluation of the site was carried out by R P S Clouston in accordance with a brief provided by the Archaeological Planning Officer for Northamptonshire County Council. The evaluation undertook the following tasks:
- a desk-top survey;
  - a topographical survey of the earthworks of Watling Street and its environs;
  - a structured metal detecting survey;
  - a geophysical survey of the whole site by magnetic susceptibility techniques, followed by magnetometry and resistivity surveys of selected areas;
  - a field-walking programme;
  - trial trenching.
- 1.4 The evaluation excavation (trial trenching), which was the culmination of the other investigative procedures, is described in this interim report.

## 2 THE EXCAVATIONS

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### *Introduction*

- 2.1 The magnetic susceptibility survey carried out by Stratascan indicated two areas of potential, one near The Lodge (the residence of the landowner) in the part of the proposal site referred to as DIRFT A, and one in the area known as DIRFT B or The Triangle. The field showing potential for archaeological remains in The Triangle site is known traditionally as Long Dole. These two areas of archaeological interest are referred to in this report as The Lodge and Long Dole (see RPS Figure 1).
- 2.2 The two areas were subjected to further geophysical survey, this time by magnetometry, and the magnetic anomalies located by this method were refined and plotted (see RPS Figures 2 and 3).
- 2.3 After discussion with the Archaeological Planning Officer, the positions of trial trenches were agreed which would examine a representative sample of the possible features and determine their extent, date, status, state of preservation and significance. Trenches 1 - 11 were located at The Lodge, with trenches 12 and 13 being added during the course of the evaluation excavation. Trenches 14 - 21 were located at Long Dole. Trench 22 was added during the excavation to provide additional information in lieu of trenches 15 and 17 which were not dug. The excavations at The Lodge took place during November 1993 and those at Long Dole during January 1994. Both excavations were monitored by the Archaeological Planning Officer who carried out site visits.

### *The Lodge*

- 2.4 The geophysical plot for The Lodge site showed a network of linear features in the upper field and circular or penannular features in the lower field. The linear features were tentatively interpreted as the ditches of a field system and appeared to be similar in appearance to known Romano-British sites. The circular features were thought to be more indicative of settlement, either enclosures or round houses or else, possibly, a barrow cemetery. These may have been iron age or bronze age in date respectively.
- 2.5 Trenches 1 - 4 were positioned to cut a variety of the linear features, both major and minor, in different parts of the upper field. Trench 5 was located across what appeared to be a double trackway leading through and away from the possible field system.
- 2.6 Trenches 6, 9, and 11 were placed across overlapping circular features in the lower field. Trench 6 passed through a central feature which it was expected might be a burial and would confirm the existence of a barrow, since ploughed out. Trench 8 was intended to locate the possible trackway again as it widened out and approached Watling Street. Trenches 7 and 10 were planned to test seemingly empty areas as shown on the geophysics plot. Trench 12 was later added to examine possible features shown indistinctly by the geophysics and Trench 13 to examine the possibility that similar features might continue into the field known as Holloway which had not been

tested by magnetometry.

- 2.7 Trenches 1 - 5 were stripped of top and subsoil by a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision and it was immediately apparent that the traces shown on the plot out existed as features cut into the natural geological deposits (sand and gravel). The relationship between the expected features and those found was remarkable in its accuracy. An occasional additional minor ditch was located and it was sometimes discovered that a larger feature was a composite ditch but in general it was possible to use the plot as a plan. Trench 5, which was expected to be a double ditch, was found to be large multiple ditches, recut many times.
- 2.8 Sections of the ditches were excavated by hand (trowel) and finds, mainly iron age and Romano-British, collected for later examination and diagnosis.
- 2.9 Trenches 6 - 12 in the lower field were also stripped in the same manner and it was found that plotted features were less easy to locate than in the upper field. Geophysical traces shown in this area, though sometimes distinct, had a tendency to be fainter, broken or incomplete. It is possible that the upper field, being a very light and well-draining sand, was ploughed less vigorously during the medieval period causing less damage to the sub-soil features whereas the lower field, a mixture of lias clays, gravels and drift deposited during the ice age, shows the evidence of pronounced ridge and furrow. Some features from the lower field were found, on excavation, to be in good condition, but others showed signs of severe truncation or could only be distinguished in the section after additional machine stripping (for example, Trench 8).
- 2.10 The central feature in Trench 6 was found to be an amorphous feature, possibly a pond, and not a burial. The material excavated from Trenches 6, 9 and 11 established that all the features discovered are iron age in date. A few small pits were uncovered within the circumference of some circles. Trench 9 was extended to check if the opposing side of the arc, which was indicated on the geophysical plot, could be located and this was confirmed. Trenches 10 and 12, excavated to test empty or uncertain areas on the geophysics plot, produced no features although a small ditch was found in Trench 7, also thought to be empty. This trench, which, unusually for the lower field, contained a sandy natural deposit, was much deeper than others and it is possible that the depth may have obscured the signals. In Trench 8 small side ditches and a shallow layer of the original buried land surface marked the position of the trackway inferred from the geophysics. Trench 13 in the adjacent field where very well preserved ridge and furrow exists, was cut through poorly draining lias clay, unattractive to prehistoric settlement, and produced no archaeological material.

### *Long Dole*

- 2.11 Trenches 14 and 15 at Long Dole were located near the previously discovered Saxon burials in the raised embankment of Watling Street. Trench 14 recovered no Saxon material or evidence of further burials. Severe weather conditions causing waterlogging prevented the excavation of Trench 15 which had been located to define the extent of the possible Saxon cemetery. It was not possible either to cut Trench 17 which aimed to examine an outlying circular geophysical trace. Trenches 18 and 21

confirmed the geophysics plot which showed them as empty. Trench 20 cut an unusual and irregular shaped anomaly. No archaeological features were encountered in this trench but water-laid gravel deposits were found at a very deep level above grey clay. The large feature indicated in Trench 19 was seen and recorded. It was thought to be possibly an earlier water course, maybe associated with the present stream which runs nearby.

- 2.12 Trench 16, which had been placed in an area of strong magnetic signals, contained ditches and the arcs of at least three intercutting circular features. These corresponded well to the geophysical plot and all produced iron age material. Although comparatively near the surface and, in one place, scored by modern ploughing, the deposits were in good condition and with the potential to provide valuable information.
- 2.13 The geophysical traces of circular features clustered on the eastern side of Long Dole and near Watling Street were plotted from strong signals and it was decided, with the agreement of the Archaeological Planning Officer, to test the reliability of these signals by placing an additional trench (22) across a small circular feature. Machine stripping established that this feature existed in the expected position, was the correct dimensions and contained the predicted interior features, possibly pits.

### 3 THE POTTERY

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- 3.1 The Romano-British and iron age pottery was submitted to recognised specialists in these periods (Mr D Jackson and Ms E MacRobert) who reported on the sherds.

#### *Romano-British*

- 3.2 A variety of material was recovered, some of it diagnostic, giving a date range from the late 1st century AD to the 4th century AD. The assemblage included grey wares, hard grogged ware, Black Burnished 1 ware, soft pink grogged ware, mica dusted sherds, Oxfordshire colour coated ware and Samian. There was little decoration except for a cross-hatched pattern on the shoulder of one pot and some painted sherds, both white painted and red.
- 3.3 Most of the groups were felt to be too small to date with confidence but it appeared that the emphasis was on the late first/early second to third centuries AD. The range of pottery is typical for west Northamptonshire.

#### *Iron age*

- 3.4 Pottery from The Lodge site dated mainly from the late pre-Belgic period (2nd or 1st centuries BC) although a few small sherds suggest that slightly earlier activity is possible. The pottery is generally coarse and there are no examples of decorated fineware. Apart from scoring the only decorated sherd is a rim with finger tip and finger nail impressions.
- 3.5 Inclusions are mainly ironstone grits rather than the more usual fossil shell used on many iron age sites in Northamptonshire but few comparable groups of pottery have been published.
- 3.6 Iron age pottery from Long Dole was difficult to date as the sherds were small and few or else badly weathered so that patterning barely survived. The material is superficially similar to that of coarse wares from the end of the iron age period. Possible surface combing on some sherds would support a date for the late 1st century BC or early 1st century AD. Equally, if the sherds are not combed, an early/middle iron age date is possible.

#### *Anglo-Saxon*

- 3.7 Sherds from a round-bottomed bowl were found in one context at The Lodge and single sherds came from two other contexts. These have been confirmed by Mr Paul Blinowe as dating from the early - middle Saxon period.

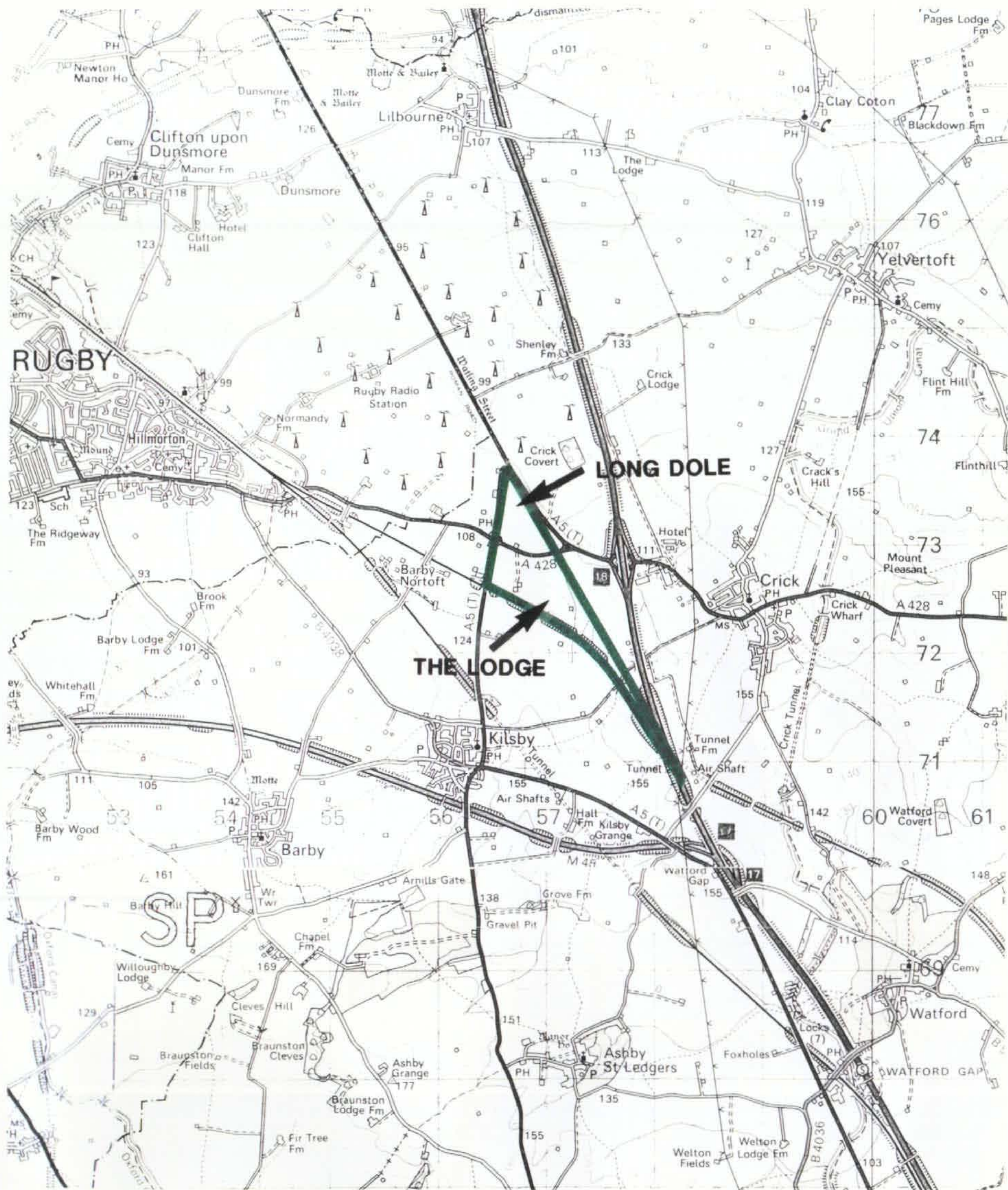


## 4 CONCLUSIONS

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- 4.1 The evidence from the trial trenches, both the excavated features and the pottery, indicates that the remains of late iron age structures and ditches exist at Long Dole and in the lower field at The Lodge. The quality of the pottery suggests fairly low status settlement. The assemblage was small and it was not possible to state whether the two sites were contemporary, but from available evidence, it cannot be discounted that the site at Long Dole may pre-date the site at The Lodge.
- 4.2 It appears that the focus of the site at The Lodge moved gradually up-hill. No Romano-British material was retrieved from any of the features in the lower field (although occasional worn sherds were recovered from the ploughsoil) but there was a high proportion of iron age material in conjunction with the Romano-British pottery in the ditches of the field system in the upper, sandy, field. Trenches 2 and 3 contained mainly Romano-British pottery, some of it high status and covering a fairly long time span, indicating perhaps that a Roman structure existed nearby. No features were excavated which could be confirmed as structural, but Trench 3 contained, in addition to the larger field boundaries, several possibly drainage ditches and small pits or soakaways, perhaps suggesting that it was the periphery of a settlement area. An obvious position for this settlement would be to the west of the large boundary ditch or trackway seen in Trench 5 on the highest part of the field. Geophysical traces here seem to indicate a greater variety of features than in the eastern part of the field. Alternatively, the trackway may have led to a possible Roman settlement which is now lost in the railway cutting.
- 4.3 The large Anglo-Saxon pot and other sherds from this period show a continuity of activity in the area although they are too far away from the Saxon burial for a direct link to be attempted.
- 4.4 The later medieval ridge and furrow, obvious in the lower fields at The Lodge and visible in the geophysical plots on the upper field at The Lodge and Long Dole, indicate that the area was under cultivation in this period. Agricultural and, in places, quarrying, has been the land use pattern since the medieval period.
- 4.5 A major element in the excavation strategy and interpretation of the site has been the confidence felt in the results of the magnetometry survey. It was rare to discover a feature which was not plotted and this usually proved to be either of only moderate archaeological importance or a natural water-borne deposit. Features shown clearly as magnetic traces were found to exist. A comparison of the geophysical plot of the iron age features at both The Lodge and Long Dole using the same parameters shows that where there has been deep ridge and furrow at The Lodge the deposits have been damaged and blurred, suggesting perhaps that the Long Dole site has a greater potential for retaining information. This was confirmed by the evaluation excavation.





project

LAND AT CRICK

title

Location of Site

project number

2133

drawing number

RPSC 1

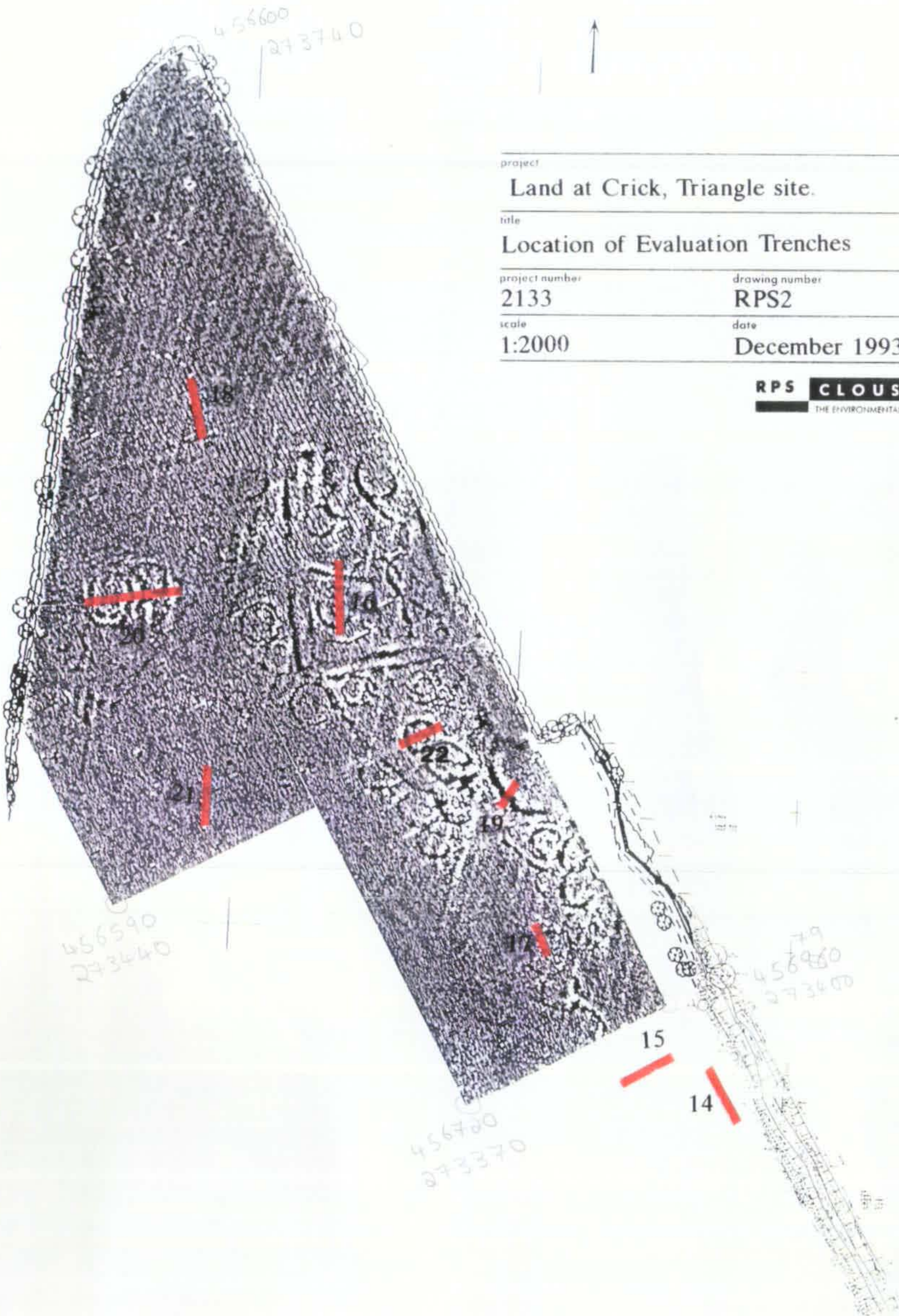
scale

1:50,000

date

September 1993





project

Land at Crick, Triangle site.

title

Location of Evaluation Trenches

project number

2133

drawing number

RPS2

scale

1:2000

date

December 1993

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- KEY
- Enclosure features
  - Barrow features
  - Modern field drainage
  - Modern animal dunal
  - Field boundary
  - Location of trial trench



project	LAND AT CRICK - THE LODGE		
title	LOCATION OF EVALUATION TRENCHES		
project number	233	drawing number	RPS3
scale	NOT TO SCALE	date	FEBRUARY 1994



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