

**Covert Farm (DIRFT  
East), Crick,  
Northamptonshire:**

**an archaeological watching brief  
for Tesco Stores Limited**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit  
**Project No. 685.02**  
September 2000

**Covert Farm (DIRFT East), Crick, Northamptonshire:  
an archaeological watching brief for Tesco Stores Limited**

by  
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## **Covert Farm, (DIRFT East), Crick, Northamptonshire: an archaeological watching brief for Tesco Stores Limited**

### **1.0 Summary**

*In March 2000 a watching brief was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) on the site of a distribution centre for Tesco Stores Limited at Crick, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 572734). The watching brief monitored the topsoil strip of the site. The work followed a major programme of excavation on an extensive Iron Age settlement undertaken by BUFAU in 1997 and 1998 as part of the development of the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal. The watching brief recorded the continuation of archaeological features dating to the Iron Age beyond the limits of the previous excavation in Zone E, while medieval or later landscape features were noted elsewhere.*

### **2.0 Introduction**

The following report provides a brief outline of the results of an archaeological watching brief on the site of a distribution centre for Tesco Stores Limited at Crick, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 572734; Fig.1). The watching brief was carried out during topsoil stripping in advance of the construction of the distribution centre and was situated to the east of the excavation of an extensive Iron Age settlement at Covert Farm undertaken by BUFAU between August 1997 and September 1998 (Fig. 2). Previous archaeological work, including geophysical survey and the monitoring of topsoil stripping, had indicated that survival of archaeological features and deposits within the area covered by the watching brief was not high (RPS Clouston 1997). Accordingly, a watching brief was required as a condition of the planning permission by Northamptonshire Heritage on behalf of the Local Planning Authority. This was carried out according to a method statement approved by Northamptonshire Heritage (BUFAU 2000a).

### **3.0 Objective**

The objective of the archaeological work was to obtain a record of any archaeological deposits or finds disturbed or exposed by work associated with the development and outside of the areas already subjected to detailed excavation.

### **4.0 Method**

The initial topsoil strip was monitored by an archaeologist who, in the first instance, maintained a continuous presence. Subsequently, the frequency and timing of the monitoring visits was dependent upon the timetable and working practices of the contractors, and upon the character of the archaeological results. Any archaeological features, deposits or artefact scatters exposed by the groundworks were recorded by means of scale drawings and a full written and photographic record. The area covered by the watching brief was situated to the east of the 1997/98 excavations and to the east of a link road (Fig.3). The watching brief area was further subdivided into three zones of differing archaeological character. The labelling of these zones was made

consistent with that of a watching brief carried out on the west side of the link road by BUFAU in 1999, and therefore begins with Zone C (BUFAU 2000b).

Zone C was located in the south east corner of the watching brief area. Zone D covered the majority of the site, while Zone E was a discrete area adjacent to an outlying component of the 1997/98 excavations to the east of Field 1. Topsoil stripping took place in March 2000, with the use of several 360° mechanical excavators, large dumper trucks and bulldozers. The archaeological watching brief was maintained for a period of five days.

## **5.0 Results (Fig.3)**

### **5.1 Zone C**

The only archaeological features observed in this zone were the remnants of ridge-and-furrow that were most prominent towards the south end of the site. The ridge-and-furrow was aligned north west - south east with a 4m gap between each ridge. The ridges survived to a maximum height of approximately 0.4m.

### **5.2 Zone D**

Stripping of 0.2-0.4m of topsoil revealed a mixture of yellow-brown alluvial silt and agricultural soils, although there were patches of natural yellow gravel towards the centre of the zone. Two features were observed, the remnants of a modern field boundary that had an established hedgerow prior to its removal, and a stream channel. The stream channel was approximately 0.5m wide and continued southwards into Zone E.

### **5.3 Zone E**

The cleared ground level in this zone was between 0.7-0.8m below that of Zone D. Within Zone E was part of an area previously excavated in 1997/98 (Field 1, Cluster 18, BUFAU 1998). Flooding was extensive throughout the zone, while the lower-lying ground to the south was masked by a deposit of blue-grey alluvial silt. However, a small number of archaeological features was observed in the south west corner of Zone E in an area adjacent to the 1997/98 excavations (Fig.2). These included possible traces of curvilinear ditches (i), four small pits (ii), and a posthole set within a ring gully which may represent a structural feature (iii). A small quantity of pottery recovered from these features was Iron Age in date.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

Zones C and D provided no further information about the Iron Age settlement recorded during the 1997/98 excavations. However, medieval or later landscape features including ridge-and-furrow and a stream-channel were noted. The small number of archaeological features observed in Zone E was Iron Age in date, and they were clearly associated with Cluster 18 in Field 1 excavated in 1997/98. Their identification indicated that it was possible to record archaeological features within the parameters of the watching brief where these had survived. However, the large ditch (LD3) recorded during the 1997/98 excavations and expected to continue into Zone E was not observed (Fig. 2). This was probably due to the extent of the

waterlogging at the time that the watching brief was carried out in this part of Zone E. The intensive method of topsoil stripping, which involved large numbers of machines in use at any one time, further limited the level of archaeological recording that could be safely undertaken.

### **Acknowledgements**

John LaNiece undertook this watching brief. Sarah Watt wrote the report and the figures were drafted by Nigel Dodds. Thanks are due to Mike Ward of Tesco Stores Limited for commissioning the project and to Mr Paul Janney of Taylor Woodrow Construction, the site manager. In addition, Myk Flitcroft of Northamptonshire Heritage monitored the project on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council.

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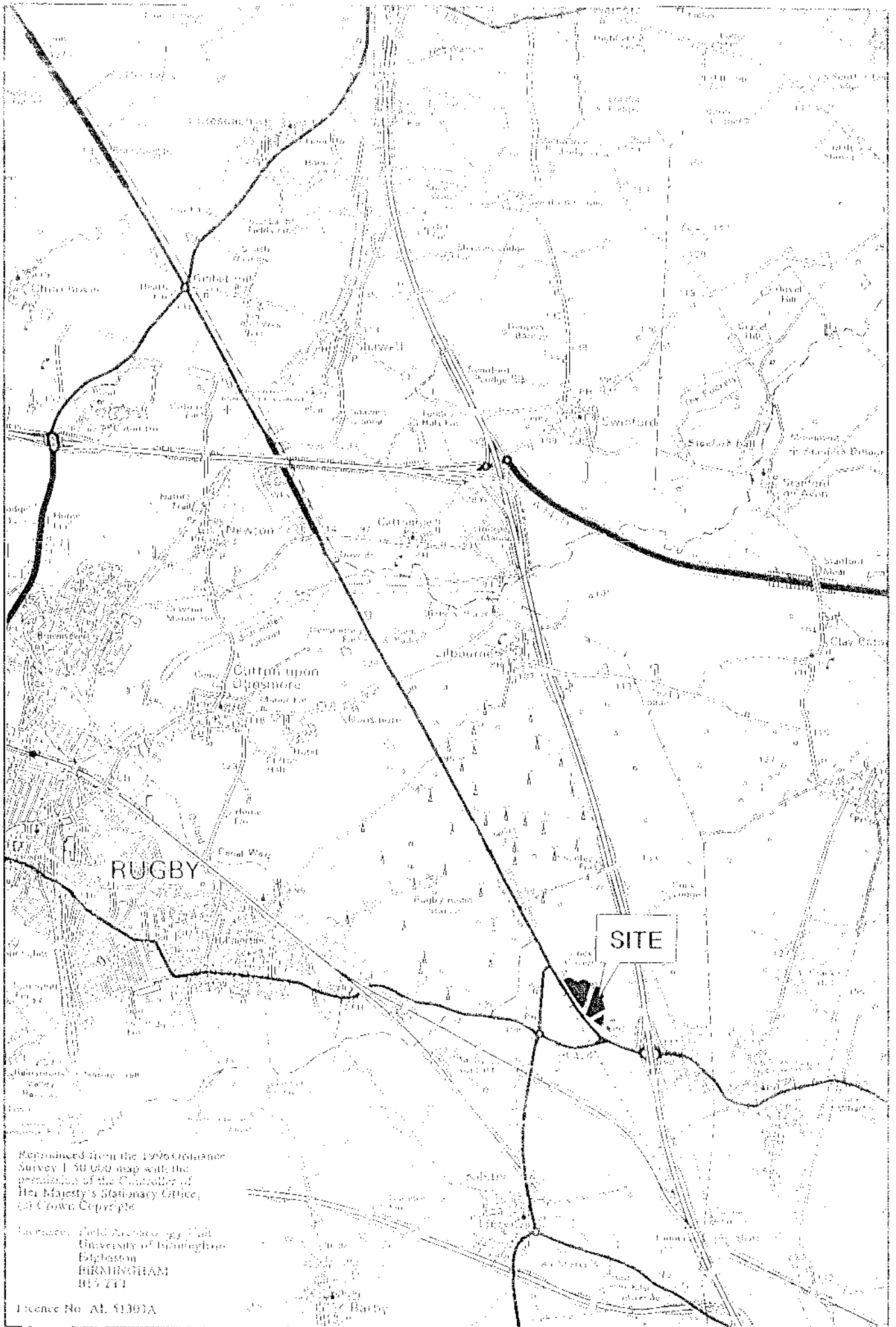


Fig 1

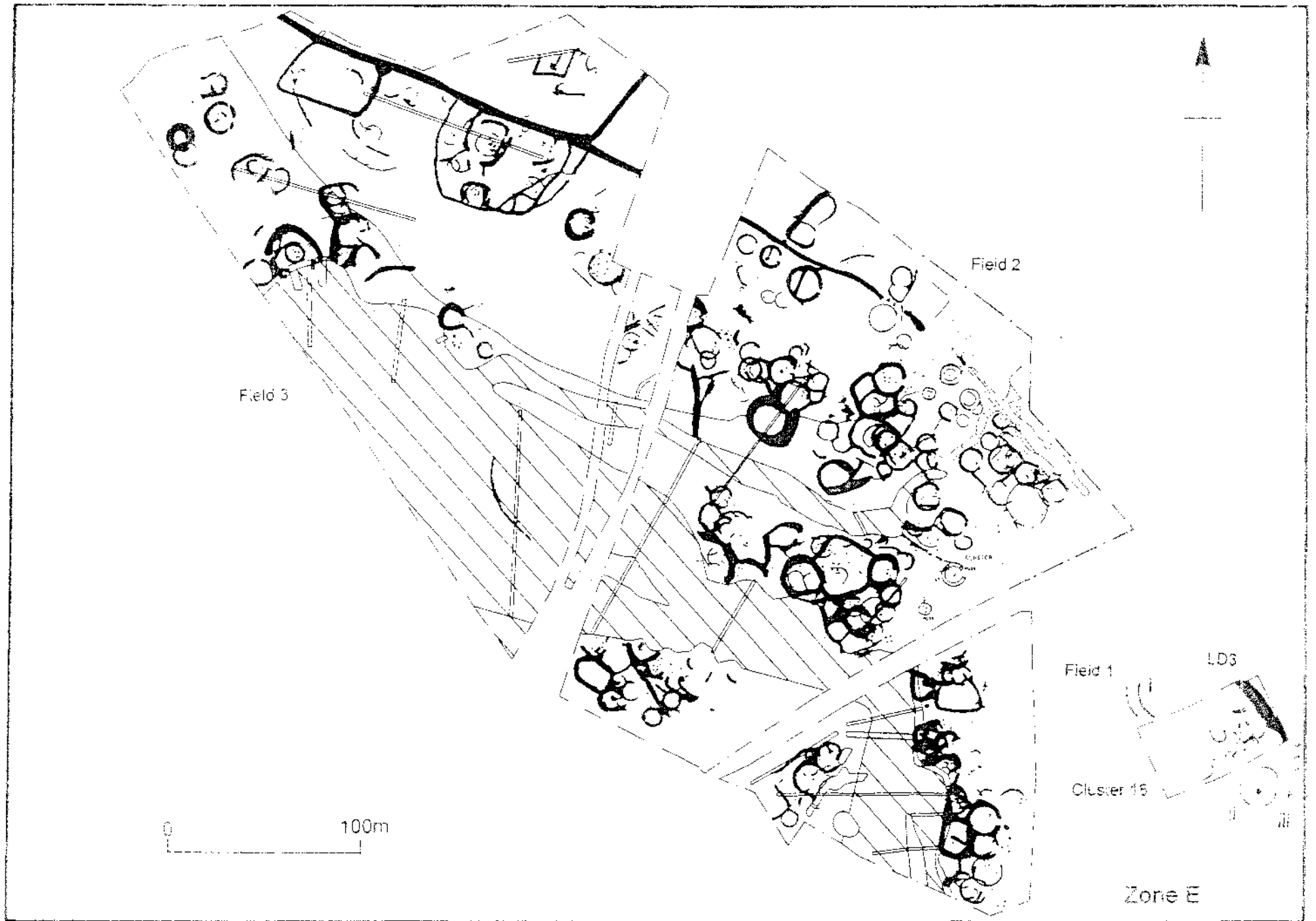


Fig.2





Fig.3