

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name : OBELISK**

**Lease number : PO 264**

### **Due Diligence Report (including Status Report) - Part 4**

This report and attachments results from a pre-Tenure Review assessment of the pastoral lease for the purpose of confirming land available for Tenure Review and any issues, rights or obligations attaching to it. The information is gathered from files and other sources available to the LINZ contractor.

Part of the information relates to research on the status of the land, resulting in a Status Report that is signed off by a LINZ approving officer. The remainder of the information is not analysed for relevancy or possible action until required, and LINZ does not guarantee its accuracy or completeness as presented.

The report attached is released under the Official Information Act 1982.

**July 09**



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

FROM : FCM ALEXANDRA

OUR FILE : P 264

TO : RC OTAGO

YOUR FILE :

ATTENTION : Tony Perrett

DATE : 9 July 1996

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SUBJECT : RE: Discretionary Consent Application - Obelisk Station

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My comments are as follows:

1. High altitude tree planting.

The treeless character of the landscape of this mountain range area has previously been identified as being a key landscape characteristic. A key characteristic that should be retained to maintain the landscape character and visually impressive nature of the Old Man Range. Trees of any type will change these values.

The use of Douglas fir and other spreading trees has major implications for the landscape character and ecological and botanical features of the Old Man Range in general. Long term it has major implications for the Garvie, Old Woman, etc.

Tree planting per se should be vigorously opposed above the 600m contour (possibly even lower). Below that it should be limited to non spreading species and siting would still be critical.

2. Oversowing of undeveloped areas.

Oversowing is planned for the entire property including Old Man Ecological District RAP 2/3 and above. This will irreversibly change the important botanical and ecological characteristic of this area. The question must be asked of the merits of oversowing at altitudes above approximately 900m contour. The established view is that above around 900 - 1100 metres (depending on the range) economic benefits are non existent. Therefore can <sup>the destruction of</sup> ~~destroy~~ identified ecological values be justified.

A burning permit has been applied for over a good percentage of the property. This combined with oversowing and increased stocking (presumably why 25 new dams are required) is going to see major long term changes to the existing ecosystems. At what level and above what altitude will this be sustainable?

There will be a significant effect on water harvesting. I am aware that any impact on the water holding capacity and water harvesting in this area is of concern to other properties as Obelisk contributes significantly to the catchment for valuable irrigation water. Effects beyond the property should be considered.

Otago Conservancy

Alexandra Field Centre, P.O. Box 176, 45 Centennial Avenue, Alexandra, New Zealand  
Telephone 03-448 8874, Fax 03-448 9143

My recommendation is that above the 900m contour, possibly lower on this range, oversowing should not be permitted.

3. Drainage of minor gullies.

Drainage of gullies on such a property seems a strange practice. Again there is a need for concern re water harvesting together with any potential impact on ecological values. The latter depending on altitude of drainage.

4. Firebreaks / Access Tracks

The 2 kilometre track is below this years burn and is therefore unlikely to be necessary as a firebreak with good planning. Similarly the 1 km access track is in the middle of this years burn.

The altitude of this second track and steepness of the country makes it of considerable concern in terms of siting the track without considerable negative visual impact. In short, it is probably not possible. The track appears to be at around the 1250m contour.

Summary

The proposed work for Obelisk Station is of major concern in terms of its implications for identified landscape character and ecological and botanical conservation values. I also consider it is of concern from a land use sustainability point of view. I would have grave concerns if Frank Knight approve oversowing above a certain level when the benefits or lack of benefits for doing this from a farming point of view are well recognised and the costs in terms of the loss of conservation values would be considerable and irreversible. The long term effects on water harvesting should also not be ignored.

Recommendations

Vigorously oppose tree planting. Vigorously oppose oversowing above 900m. Emphasize other concerns. Appeal to Frank Knight's sense of responsibility.

  
Mary Wallace  
Field Centre Manager

AS AT JULY 1996

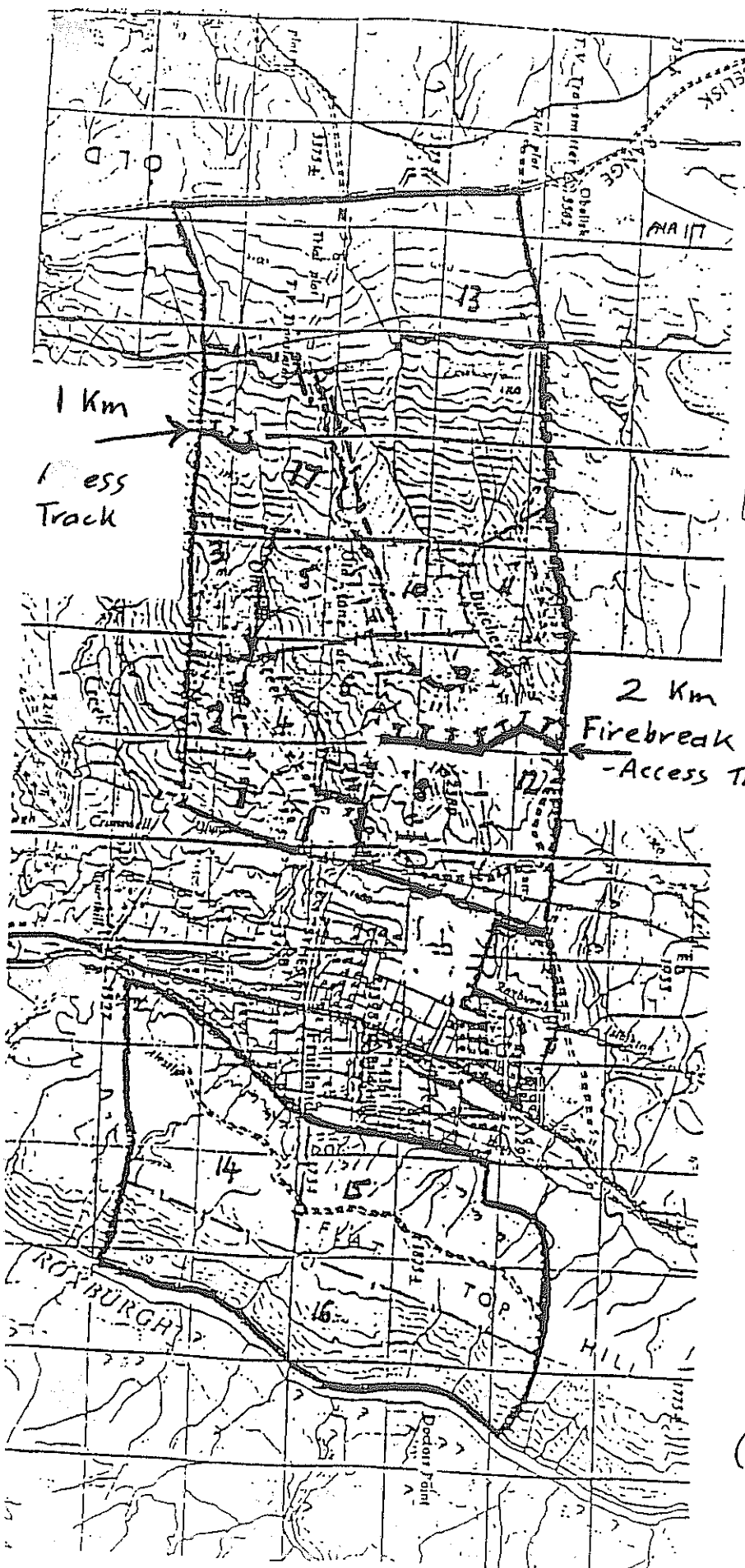
PROPOSED WORK

TTT - Firebreak/Access  
 Tracking (3 km)

Whole  
 Property - Oversowing  
 (2774 ha)

BLOCKS  
 1-12 - Stock water dams,  
 (25 Dams)

BLOCKS  
 1-12 - Drainage of minor  
 gullies



	ha
1 Holding	78
2 Acid Bottom	45
3 Acid Top	63
4 Obelisk	66
5 Top Mine	122
6 Bottom Mine	75
7 House Block	15
8 Dam	145
9 Middle Side Butchers	132
10 Top Side Butchers	75
11 Bell and Bow	136
12 Bottom Butchers	107
13 Top Block.	98
14 South Side 12 mile	267
15 North Side 12 mile	256
16 River FACE.	299
(17 Obelisk Basin BIK)	2774

FREEHOLD

185 ha



Our Ref: Po264

LAND RESOURCES DIVISION

2 July 1996

Knight Frank House  
41-43 Tarbert Street, Alexandra  
Telephone: (03) 448 6935  
Facsimile: (03) 448 9099

Regional Conservator  
Department of Conservation  
P O Box 5244  
DUNEDIN

ATTENTION: TONY PERRETT

Dear Sir

RE: DISCRETIONARY CONSENT APPLICATIONS - OBELISK STATION

The lessee of Obelisk Station has applied to the Commissioner of Crown Land for consent to complete the following works:

- Firebreak access tracking, (3 kms).
- Oversowing direct drilling (remaining undeveloped areas of the property).
- Small stock water dams (25).
- High altitude tree planting (a woodlot comprising Douglas fir and trial plantings of beech) is proposed for establishment around the 1200 metre altitude in the vicinity of Symes Road.
- Drainage of minor gullies below snowline fence (2 kms).

Your comment is sought on the above works which are also located on the attached map.

Yours faithfully

G W Heward  
for Manager, Alexandra  
KNIGHT FRANK (NZ) LIMITED

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Postal Address:

P O Box 27, ALEXANDRA

Knight Frank (NZ) Limited  
(An LPL Group Company)

INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS



ur Ref: Po264

4 July 1996

LAND RESOURCES DIVISION

Mr N M Sanders  
A C Sanders & Sons  
Obelisk Station  
Fruitlands  
4 RD  
ALEXANDRA

Knight Frank House  
41-43 Tarbert Street, Alexandra  
Telephone: (03) 448 6935  
Facsimile: (03) 448 9099

Dear Neil

Thank you for showing me around your property on Monday 10 June 1996. In your letter dated 5 October 1995 you applied for consent to complete various works including the planting of a woodlot. During recent discussions, you indicated that the tree planting would be located in the vicinity of the 1200 m.a.s.l. level adjacent to Symes Road.

Tree planting at this altitude is not often requested, and in order to facilitate processing of your application I am asking that you supply a report analysing the viability and practicalities of such a project, from a recognised expert in forestry, preferably John Edmonds, Ministry of Forestry, P O Box 5648, Dunedin, telephone (03) 477 8454. The report should cover aspects such as:

- Location and area (ha) of site and suitability for trees.
- Recommended tree species including suitability of Douglas Fir and beech.
- Suitability of species for production forestry and/or aesthetic values when planted at this altitude. (Growth rates/snow damage).
- Proposed harvesting procedures including location and placement of tracks.
- Erosion prevention, including erosion of tracks and erosion occurring between trees once the ground cover between the trees has gone due to canopy closure.
- Control of wilding trees.

If you have any questions regarding this letter please don't hesitate to contact me at home 448 9535 or at the office 448 6935.

Yours faithfully

G W Heward  
Consultant  
KNIGHT FRANK (NZ) LIMITED

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Postal Address:

P O Box 27, ALEXANDRA  
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INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

The OGELEISK  
"Fruitlands", No 4 R.D., Alexandra.  
Telephone 03-4492667.

28 May 1995

Knight Frank  
41-43 Tarbert St  
Alexandra

Dear Geoff,

I wish to apply for permission to construct a fire-break road with a bulldozer along the fence line between the Oam block and Middle Butchers and Bottom Butchers and Middle Butchers.

My reason for requesting this consent is to provide a barrier to stop any permitted fire from extending beyond where I want to burn. At present, there is no barrier to work from.

Yours faithfully

*Neil M Sanders*

Neil M Sanders

OBELISK REVISITED - AN INFORMAL  
FIELD DAY ON THE SANDERS PROPERTY,  
FRUITLANDS, ALEXANDRA

To be held on Thursday 7 April 1994

AGENDA

11 am Meet at Fruitlands Gallery, Fruitlands:

- Introduction and Presentation by Neil Sanders on behalf of the Sanders Family.
- Early lunch will be provided.

12 Noon Travel up onto Obelisk to view the 4 sites visited in May 1993:

1. 1,200 metres approximately. Inspect area adjacent to monitoring sites. This mid-altitude area was burnt in July 1993 and has had seed introduced.
2. 1,050 metres. Inspect plateau area which was burnt in September 1992. Topdressed and seed introduced. This plateau is a sheep camp.
3. 1,000 metres. Inspect the sunny face. Burnt in September 1992, topdressed and seed introduced. Stock concentrations because of its sunny aspect.



4. 850 metres. Burnt in September 1992. This area is the result of subdivision in mid-1980's. Seed was introduced and this area fertilised twice. This block is now able to be utilised.
5. If time and weather conditions permit, a walk from site 2 looking into Butchers basin.

### IN ATTENDANCE

Otago Regional Council Councillors and staff, Landcorp representative, members of High Country Trustees and Sanders family.

### 1993/94 DEVELOPMENT

In September 1993 we commenced our seed development programme for Obelisk. This comprised of flying 5 kilograms per hectare of cocksfoot, white clover, alsike clover, tahora clover and maku-lotus clover to 500 hectares of the Top Block.

The aerial oversowing has covered all the ground burnt in September 1992 and July 1993 as well as areas outside the burnt zone.

Provided weather conditions are favourable, hopefully 1994 will see the completion of the burning and seed development programme in the Top Block.

The highest range of this seeding of the block was between 1,300-1,350 metres above sea level.

The fertiliser enhancement programme undertaken in March 1993 is only now providing benefit to stock grazing in the Top Block.

In February of 1994 we subdivided the Top Block into two blocks (Obelisk Basin and Butchers Basin). The subdivision will in future provide us with more options to better compliment our management. This new fence is just on 3.5 kilometres long and creates a new block of approximately 200 hectares.

By the end of June 1994 our family will have owned the Obelisk property for 3 years. Unfortunately achievement of our vision for this land has been slower than anticipated. Development of the property can only happen with sufficient monetary injection. This investment in the land has been less than we would like. Our ability to successfully farm the land and return a profit is not in question. However outside influences are forcing us to spend valuable investment capital elsewhere. I refer to the Obelisk and more recently the Little Valley red tussock situation. The legal conflicts on both properties have diverted substantial funds away from farm development.

Nevertheless we have still provided the Obelisk property with substantial improvements in the 1993/94 year ie tracks, drainage of paddocks, seed and fencing.

The goal of John, Lindon and myself is a similar aim to that of our father and grandfather. That is to make the land better for the next generation. This has, is and will continue to be part of the Sanders family ethic for good sustainable management of our properties.

### PRODUCTION QUALITY ACHIEVEMENTS

1993 October/November wool selling auctions saw Obelisk wools achieve 2 major events for the property. The first achievement was the recognition and subsequent price paid for our product. The October sale returned Obelisk the highest priced wool to be grown from the Fruitlands District.

The second achievement was our nomination of all the merino wool produced from Obelisk in the "Clip of the Year" competition. This is a prestigious competition amongst all merino wool breeders in Otago and is recognition of our commitment to quality. Matangi and Little Valley Stations also had total clip nominations.

#### OBSERVATION ON EROSION EFFECT

Since December 1993 we have had in the Fruitlands District 18 inches of rain (the equivalent of the average annual rainfall for this area). I don't believe there is any noticeable erosion effect on our land as a consequence of the burn. This is something you should consider during the field visit.

#### THREAT OF PUBLIC DAMAGE

I believe the main threat of public damage is an out-of-season fire. This carries the threat of uncontrolled destruction to the land and to stock.

Another significant public threat to our management on Obelisk is the number of gates left open by members of the public. I would expect this to be a problem faced by all high country farmers.

We are constantly suffering the problems caused by gates left open. This practice allows stock to wander back into snow bound country, into poisoned blocks and into blocks being saved for valuable grazing.

Obelisk has had more than its share of gates being left open with ever increasing regularity.

We will demonstrate the effect of this when visiting site 4.

PURPOSE OF THE 2ND FIELD VISIT

On the field visit last year we talked about our development plans and showed you 3 areas burnt and 1 area to be burnt.

We don't consider that one visit is sufficient to understand the Obelisk management systems and effect of burning. We have therefore arranged this further visit to enable you to see the ongoing effect of our management. We consider that further future visits would also be desirable.

We will demonstrate today:

- Growth of post-burnt tussock.
- The post-burnt ground cover provided by inter-tussock species and introduced seed.

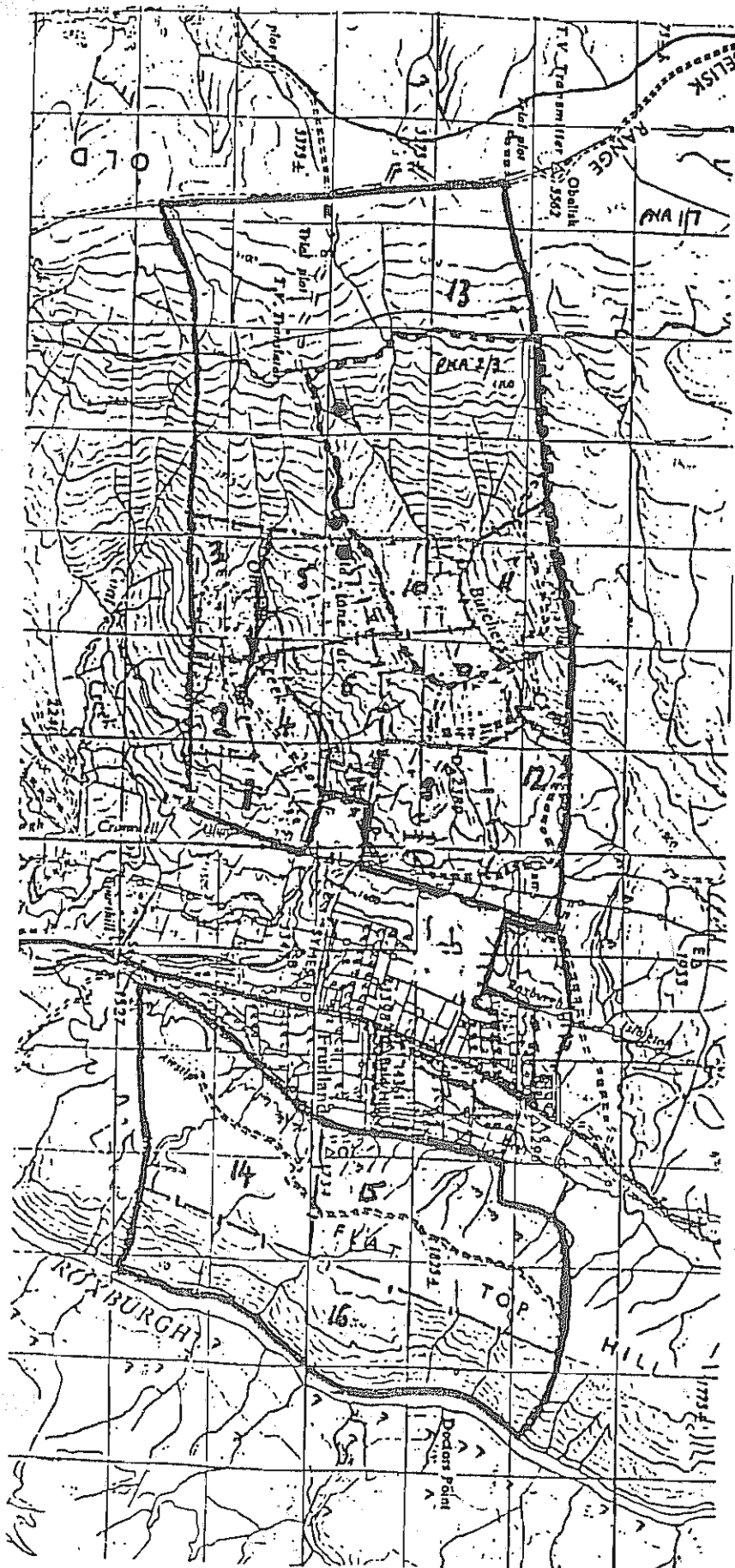
The field visit will again provide the opportunity to discuss on site the management practices and effects.

We consider that our management can combine quality production, care for the land and maintenance of the visual values of a predominantly tussock landscape.

# OBELISK

P. 264

10 May 1993



Fertiliser

New Rabbit proof  
fence's

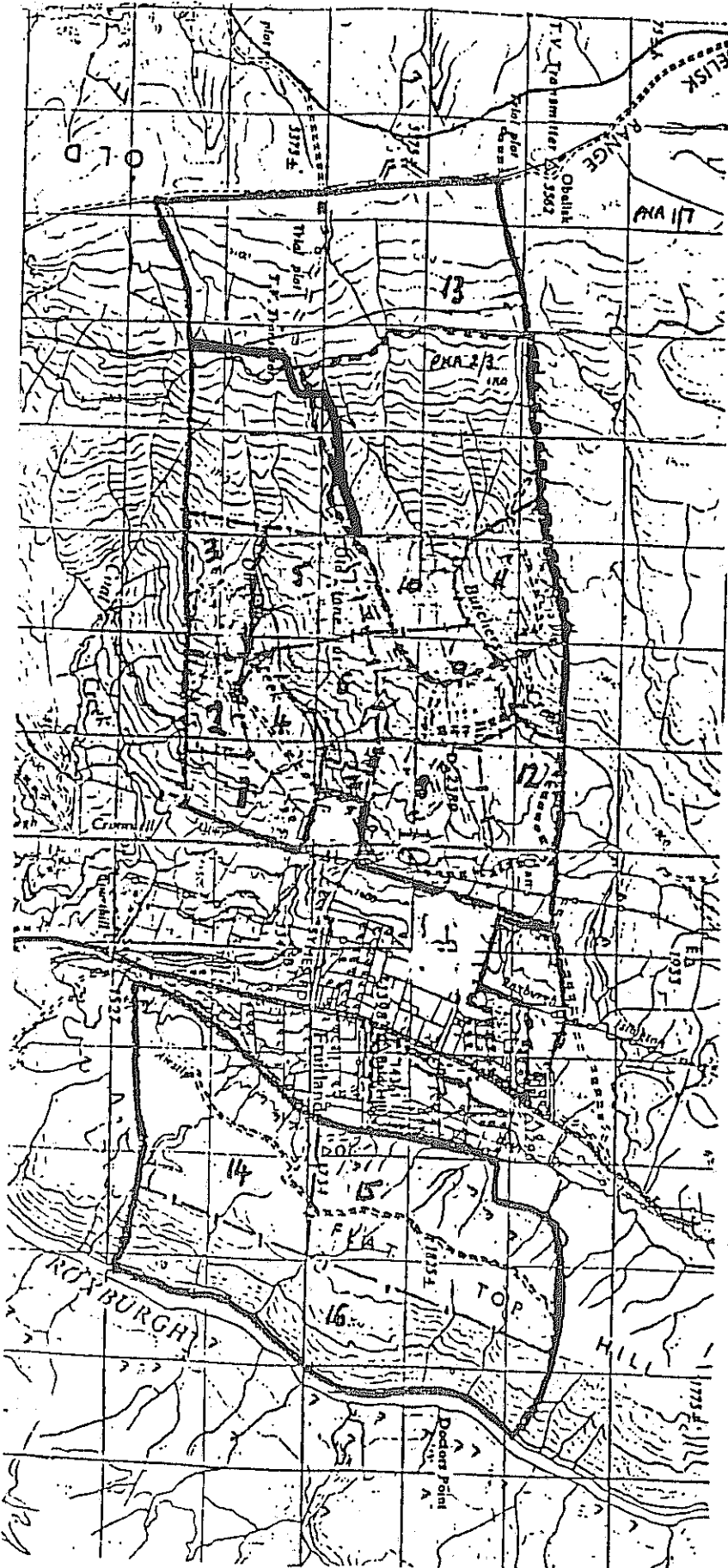
- Site 1 - 1220 m
- Site 2 - 1050 m
- Site 3 - 1000 m
- Site 4 - 850 m

R+LM Area.

Block 14, 15, 16

# OBELISK.

P. 264



Seed Development

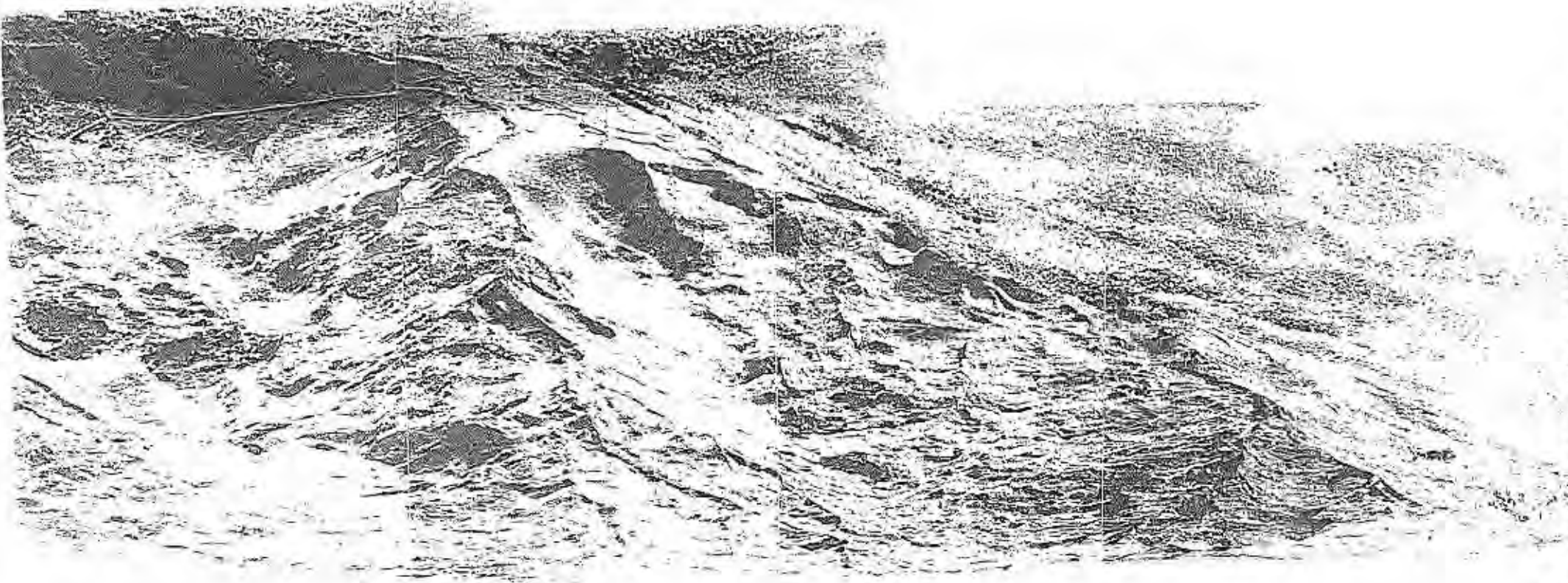
— New Fence (3.5 km)

Site 1 - 1220 m

Site 2 - 1050 m

Site 3 - 1000 m

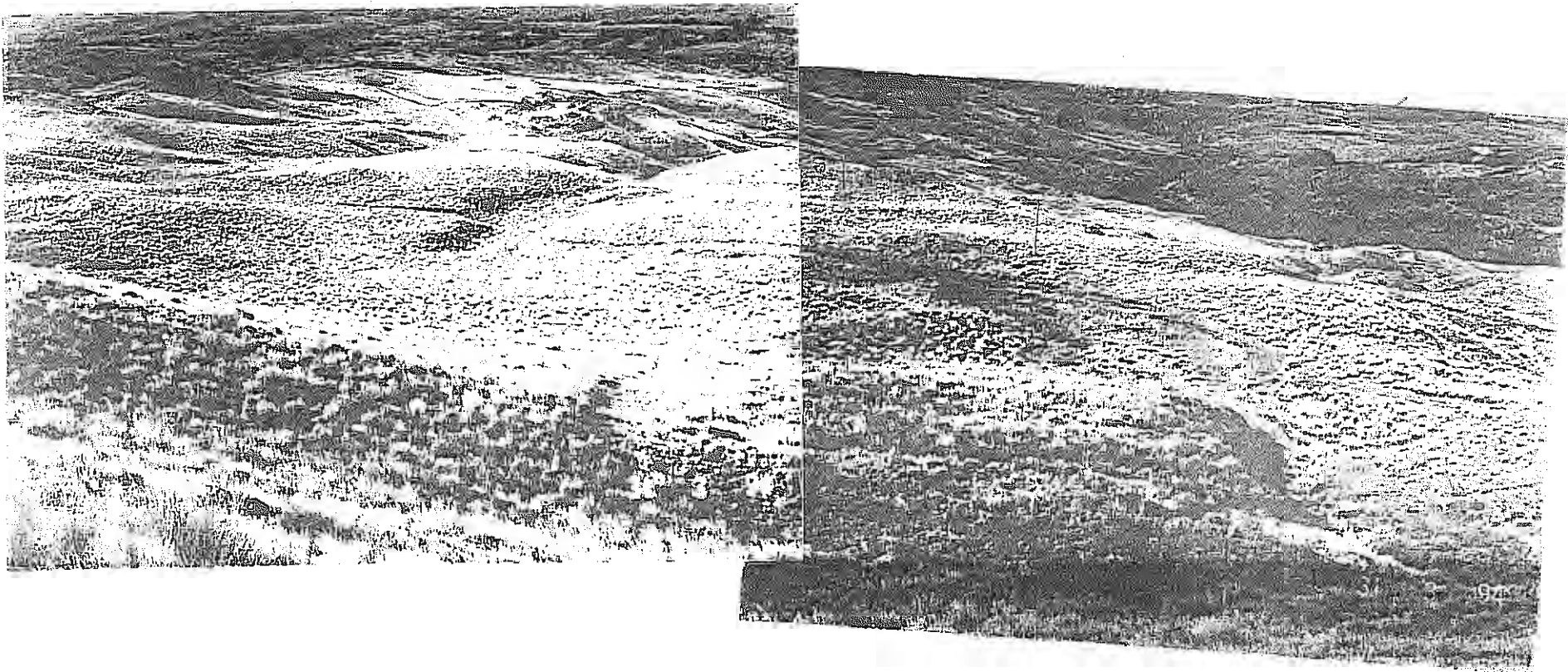
Site 4 - 850 m



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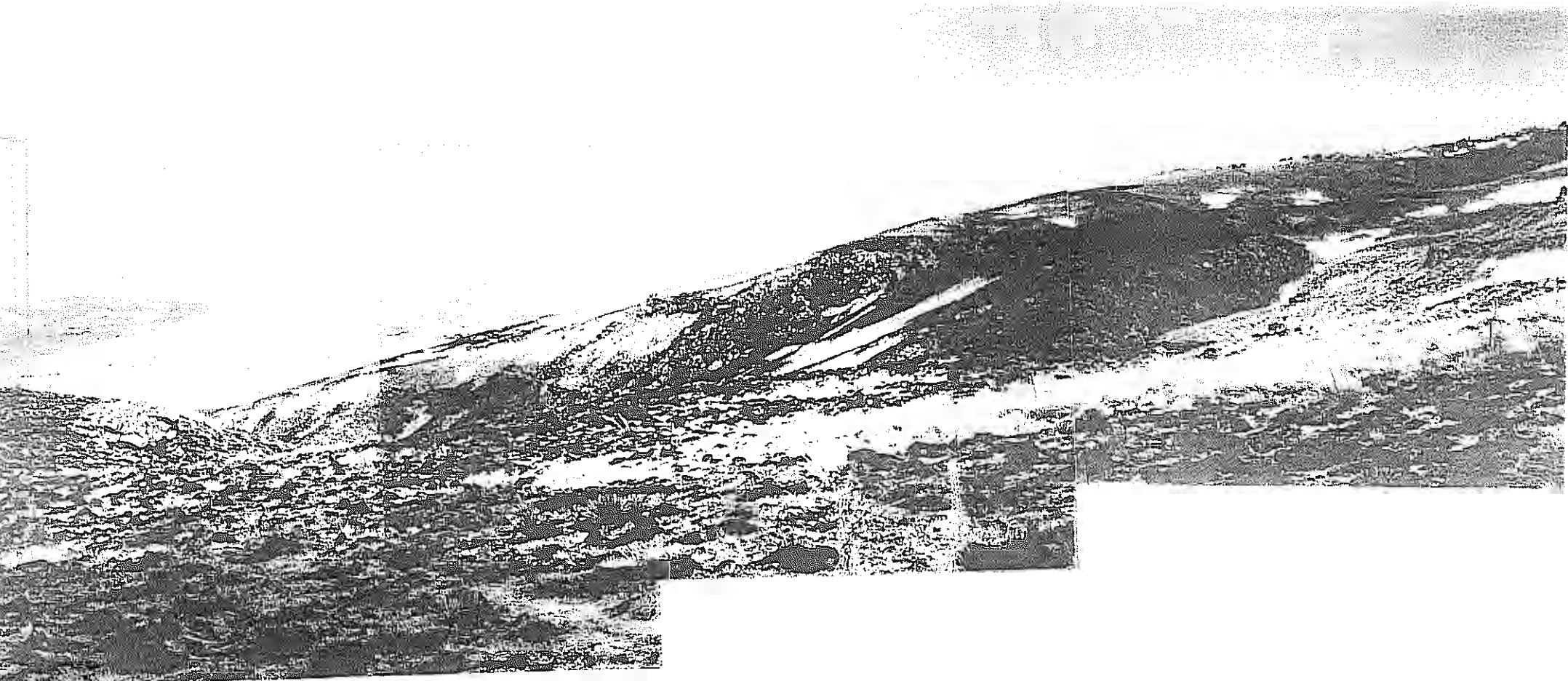


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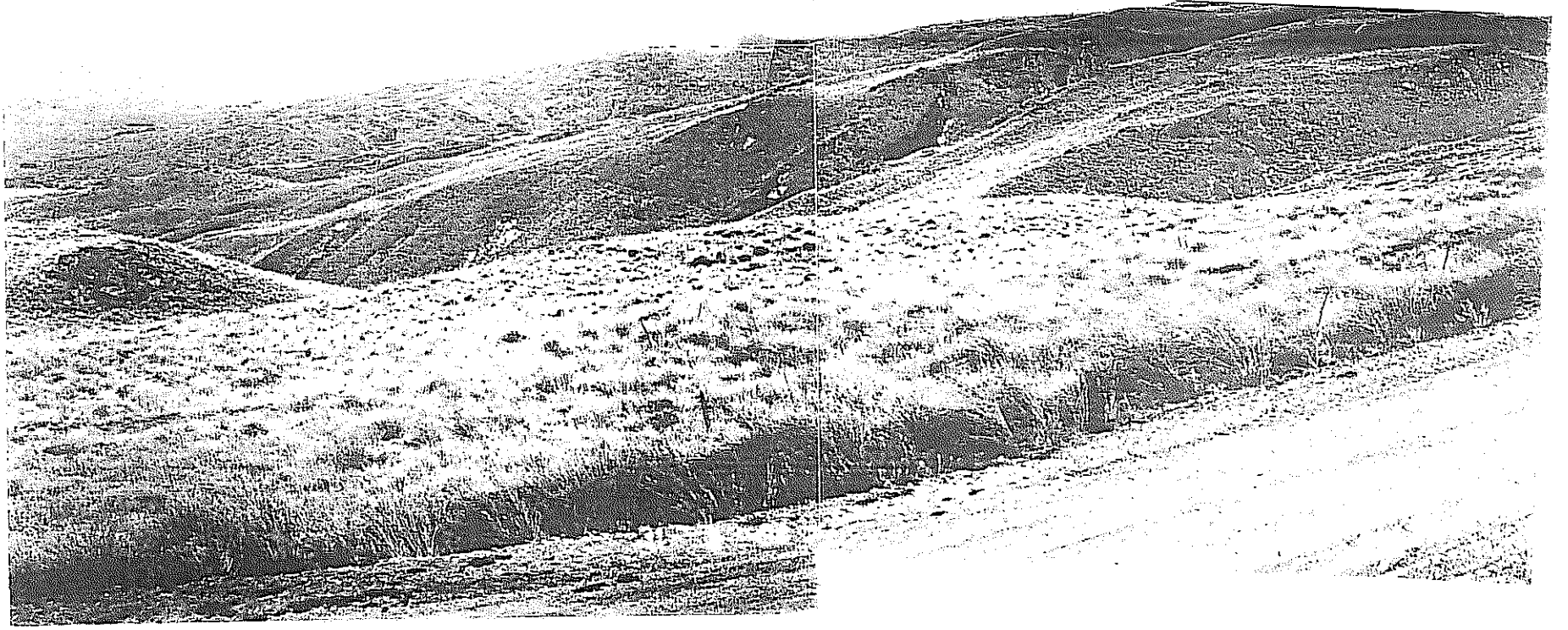
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South side of Symes Road  
Burnt 28 & 29 September 1992

Photo taken 11/10/92

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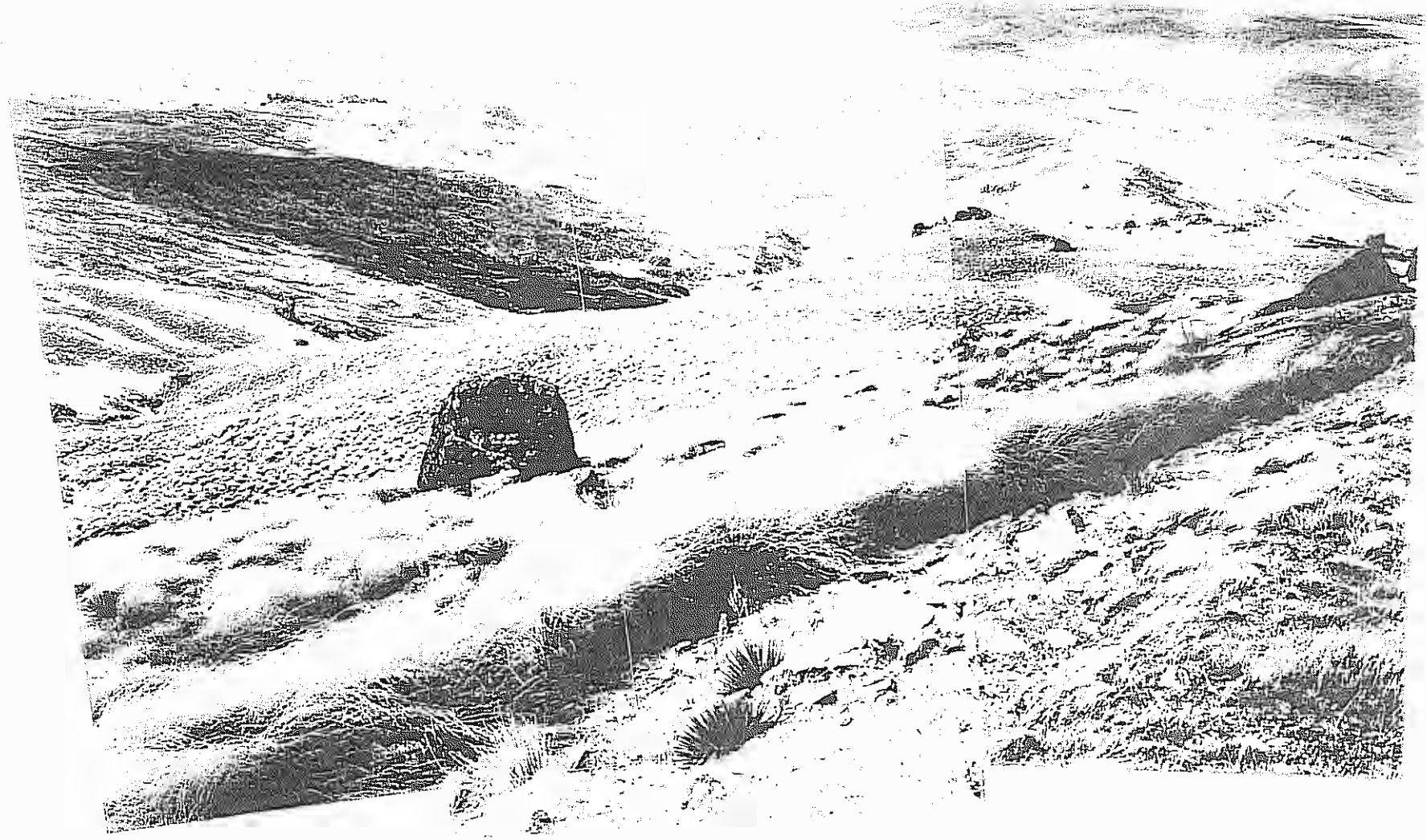
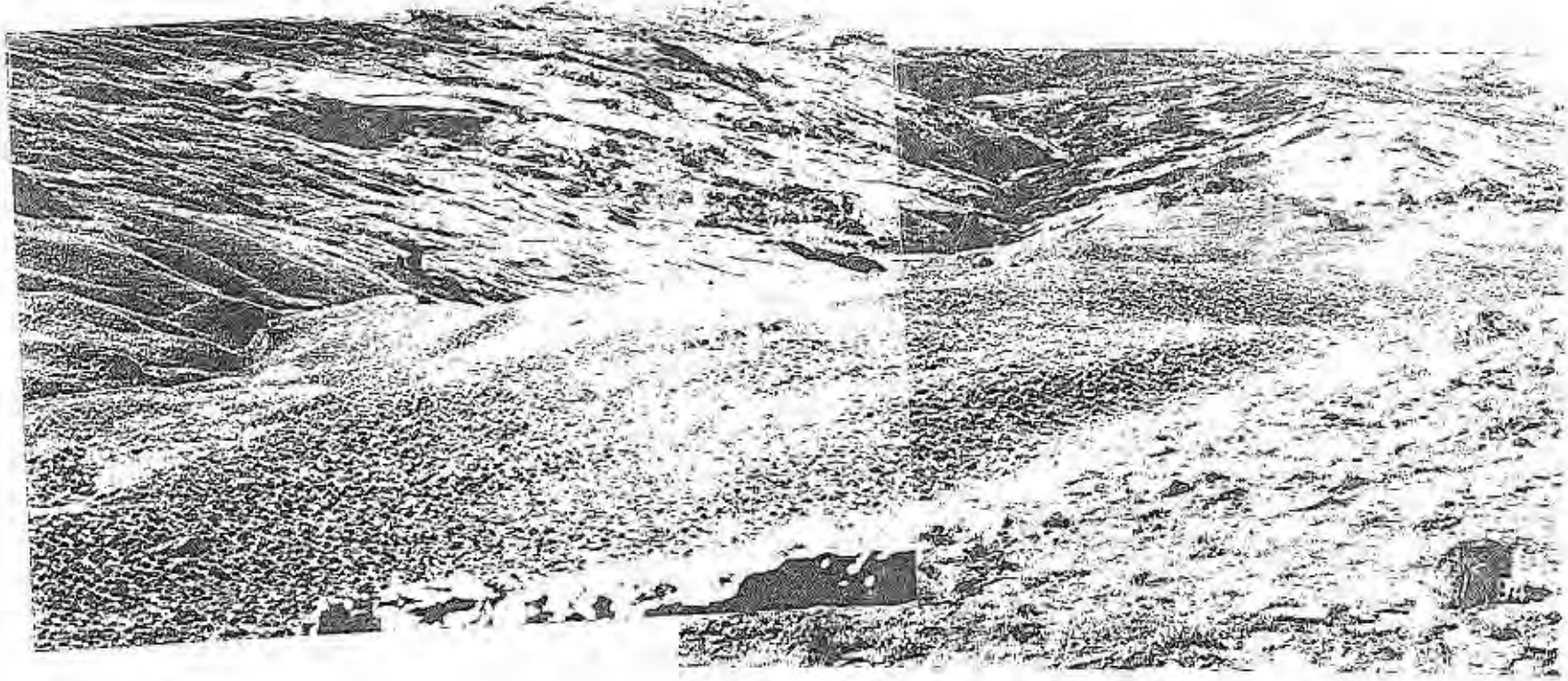


Photo taken 11/10/92

Butcher's Basin

Photographed at approx. 1,230 metres in height looking north

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file: P 201 Vol 4/6

Land - corp

## SANDERS FAMILY FIELD DAY ON THEIR OBELISK

### PROPERTY, FRUITLANDS, ALEXANDRA

To be held on Monday 10th May 1993

#### AGENDA

- 11.00 am Meet at Fruitlands Gallery, Fruitlands:
- Early lunch will be provided
  - Introduction and presentation by Neil Sanders on behalf of the Sanders family
- 12 noon Travel up onto Obelisk to view various sites, most specifically:
1. 1220 m approx. (above sea level) inspect unburnt snow tussock and relate this to farm management issues
  2. 950 m inspect plateau area which was burnt in 1992 and topdressed. This has had stock concentrations
  3. 900 m inspect sunny face which was heavy with snow tussock, subsequently burnt in 1992 and topdressed. This had stock concentrations because of its sunny aspect.
  4. 850 m burnt in 1992. The area below the fence was developed in mid 1980 being fertilised twice and having seed introduced. The area above the fence was topdressed for the first time in 1992.
- The object of the site visits is to see and discuss various aspects of burning and land management.
- 3.00 pm Return to Fruitlands Gallery for afternoon tea and discussion.
- 4.30 Finish

#### NOTE

Bring warm clothing, boots and a change of socks/footwear.

#### ATTENDEES

Otago Regional Councillors and staff, Land Corporation staff, several members of the High Country Trustees (including their advisors John Allen and John Williamson) and the Sanders family

## A C SANDERS AND SONS

### OBELISK FIELD DAY ON BURNING - 10th May 1993

#### FAMILY BACKGROUND

John, Lindon and myself are third generation farmers of Semi-Arid Central Otago High Country Land. Pastoralism for the family was started in 1923 by our Grandfather.

My parents plan since our conception has been to acquire property to enable us (John, Lindon and Neil) to eventually have our own farms. "Obelisk" and more recently "Little Valley Station" coming on the market provided the opportunity for our family to fulfill this dream of our parents.

Because Obelisk and Little Valley Station were only partially developed they provided the opportunity for our family to purchase land capable of being developed and in an area we love and understand. Properties like these only come on the market once in every two or three generations. These two properties provided an opportunity for our family to expand and extend our expertise and resources in further development and farming.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF OBELISK

Under the previous management, Obelisk was run as a fat lamb operation. Fencing maintenance had been neglected, there was poor animal health including substantial lice infestation, rabbits were on the rampage and impenetrable snow tussock and matagouri covered large tracks of the land.

We saw the potential and from our point of view, the need, to change the stock to a "fine merino" wool producing property.

We understand fine wool farming and have been achieving a top quality product. We considered this to be the most profitable venture at the time of purchase. High profitability was needed to fund the substantial upgrading required to turn the property around so that it was a sustainable farming property.

There was and is a need to implement a burning programme as part of this development.

Pastoral Lease properties are bought and sold on their grazing rights. Obelisk was purchased as a grazing proposition but because of excess of snow tussock and matagouri a large portion of the property could not be grazed. Consequently at the time of takeover approximately 40% of the property was under stress due to concentrated grazing.

- 2 -

Since taking over Obelisk we have reduced the stock numbers from 3900 to 3000 and all stock is now pure Matangi blood line merino.

The home station of Matangi sheep return 4.7 kg per head flock average of super fine wool. The merino sheep transferred from Matangi to Obelisk lost considerable wool weight.

Land condition is reflected by the wool weights produced.

In 1992 Obelisk had a 3.9 kg per head average production from the Matangi stock.

Almost 1 kg per head average has been lost in transferring the stock from Matangi.

#### BURNING ON OBELISK

A balance of summer and winter grazing land on high country properties is essential.

The Obelisk mid altitude land is critical to the grazing balance of this property as is mid altitude land to many other high country runs. This land is used for summer grazing and enables us to spell our lower winter grazing country. When we took over Obelisk a large part of this summer grazing land was too dense and provided no grazing feed. Our merino sheep would not graze this land. The consequence was that this threw the whole property out of balance.

Burning this mid altitude part of our property is an essential and integrated management and development tool to make this land accessible and useful for grazing. The burning reduces the tussock foliage and permits and promotes growth of inter-tussock species. This achieves greater feed and accessibility. This growth is further enhanced with fertiliser.

In March of this year, the first application of fertiliser by our family partnership was applied to Obelisk. This start to our enhancement of Obelisk is just one small portion of the overall development programme for the long term sustainable management of this Pastoral Lease.

Because of a major rabbit poison programme on the winter grazed blocks on the mountain side of the property, the fertiliser was flown onto three distinct areas of Fruitlands:

- 40 tonne (320 hectares) was allocated to the Top and Bottom Hogget block
- 10 tonne (80 hectares) was applied to Point Block providing total coverage of this block
- 25 tonne (200 hectares) was flown onto the burnt ground in the Top Block

- 3 -

In total 600 hectares was fertilised.

I want to point out that the cost of fertiliser for this 600 hectares was a lesser cost to us than the costs of the Regional Council consents hearing, the Planning Tribunal Appeal and the Land Corporation Appeal, excluding the indirect cost of labour associated with the hearings and appeals.

Burning is an integrated development tool of necessity on Obelisk. With the better grazing potential of inter-tussock species brought about by the fire, stock have a greater ability to maintain good body condition. This enables better wool weights on all the sheep. This also enables better health in breeding ewes which results in a higher lambing percentage. Stock numbers can be maintained rather than a forced reduction as a direct result of excessive unusable vegetation.

Stock numbers, wool weights and higher lambing percentages will provide Obelisk with better financial returns. The better the return for a property the more money which is available for sustainable farm management.

Not only is sustainable farming dependent on farm viability but communities are also dependent on viable farming. The farm related purchasing of goods and services and the flow on effect is essential for the well being of rural communities.

Investment in the land is wealth for the economy but also survival for rural communities. However this investment in land is becoming increasingly threatened by outsiders.

A number of conservation groups have become more vocal and militant in their approach to an array of issues, with the high country one of their projects.

At the end of the day, these groups do not invest their money in the land but are very positive in their attempts to undermine and disrupt investment by land users.

We and our rural communities have rights too however our rights seem to be overlooked.

### CONCLUSION

In less than two years on Obelisk we have:

- Achieved the complete change of stock to merino
- Hogget wools nominated in the "Clip of the Year" competition
- Eradicated the massive lice problem
- Implemented a burning programme
- Erected new rabbit proof boundary fences
- Maintained subdivision fences



- 4 -

- Made inroads to the spraying of broom, briar and thyme
- Reduced rabbit numbers on the Rabbit and Land Management area to the lowest levels for many years

This development is being funded from our own resources and from Matangi, Little Valley and Obelisk. This substantial investment is part of the on-going process of making Obelisk a stand alone sustainable unit that can adequately fund itself its own weed and pest control, improved stock health and fund its own development.

Professionally managed burning is a necessary part of this programme and development.

Since the end of the 1992 burning season no doubt all the Regional Council and Landcorp have been bombarded with literature from our opponents proclaiming the destruction of the high country as a consequence of lessees burning.

Our reason for this field day is to provide a balancing view and insight of the use of burning on Obelisk.

"A picture is worth a thousand words".

RJN-565

P. 264



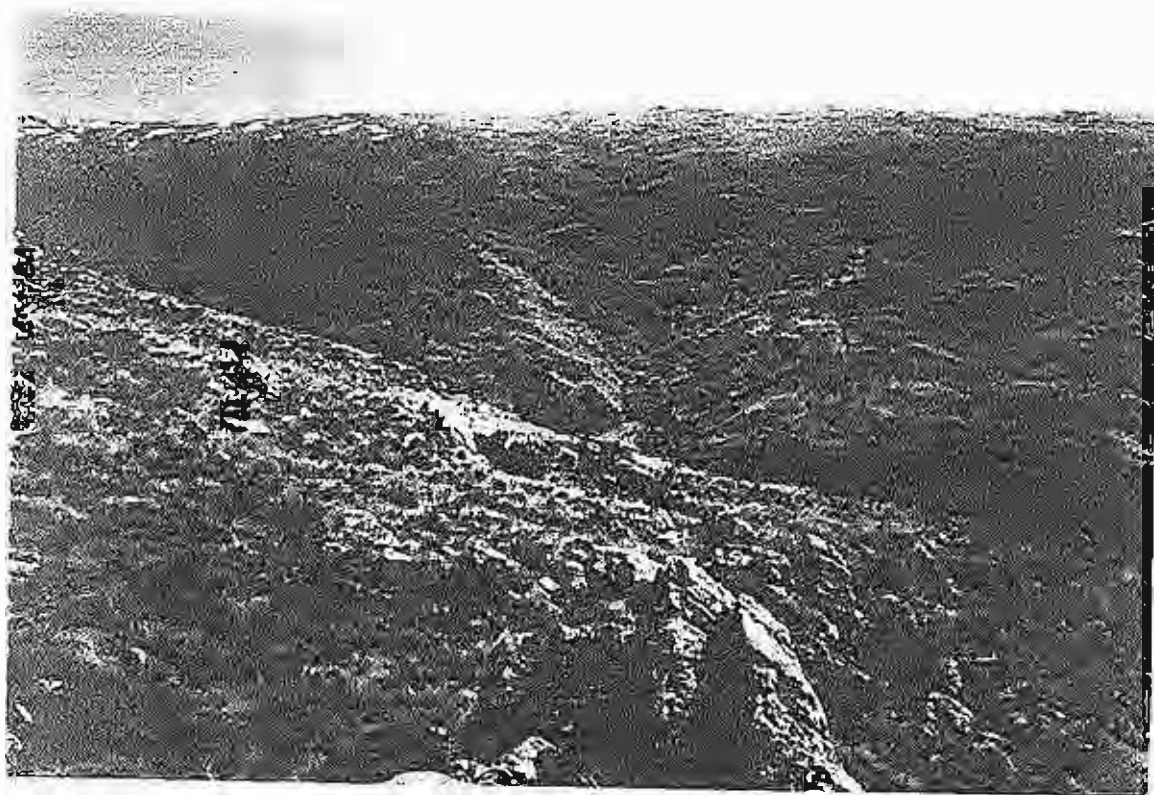
Fertiliser

New Rabbit proof fence's

- Site 1 - 1220 m
- Site 2 - 950 m
- Site 3 - 900 m
- Site 4 - 850 m

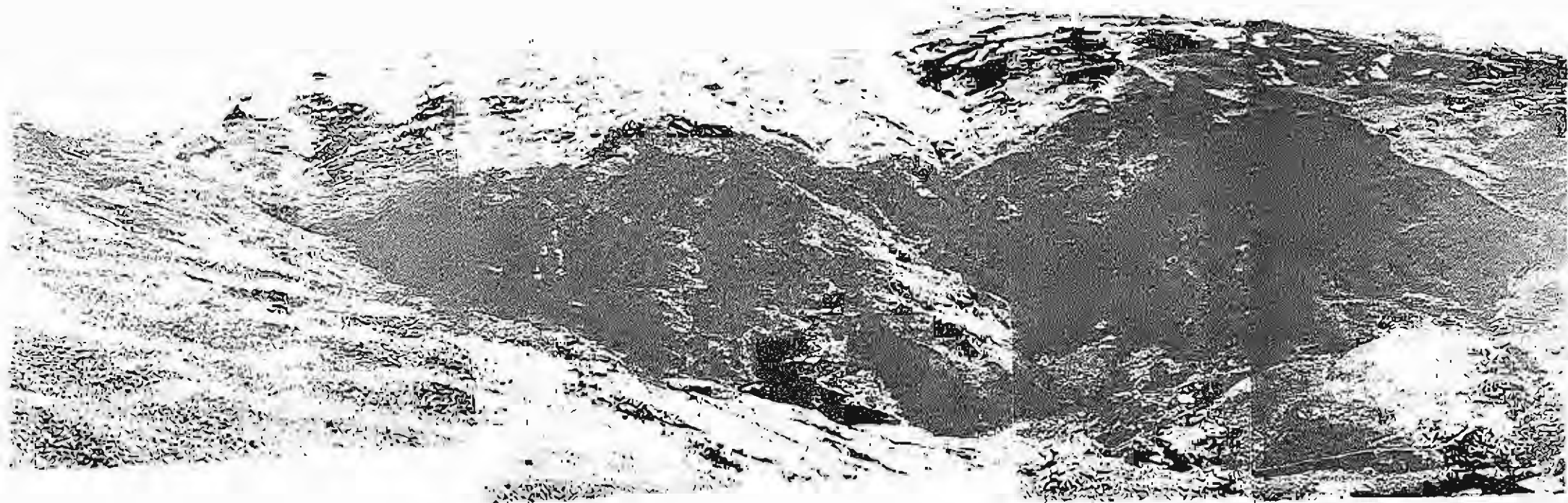
R+LM Area.

Block 14, 15, 16



Butchers Basin

Photographed 10/2/91

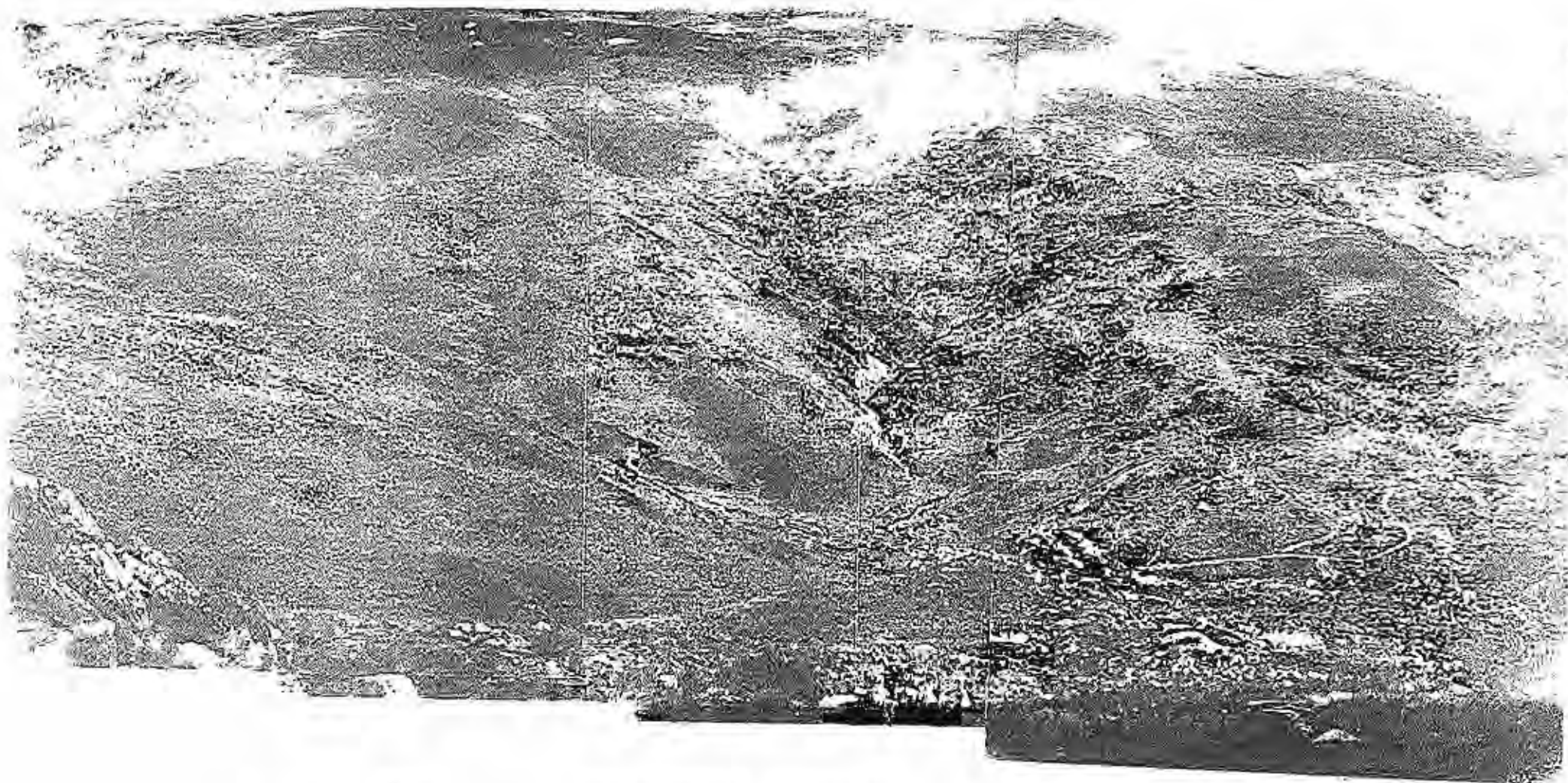


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Entsberg Pass

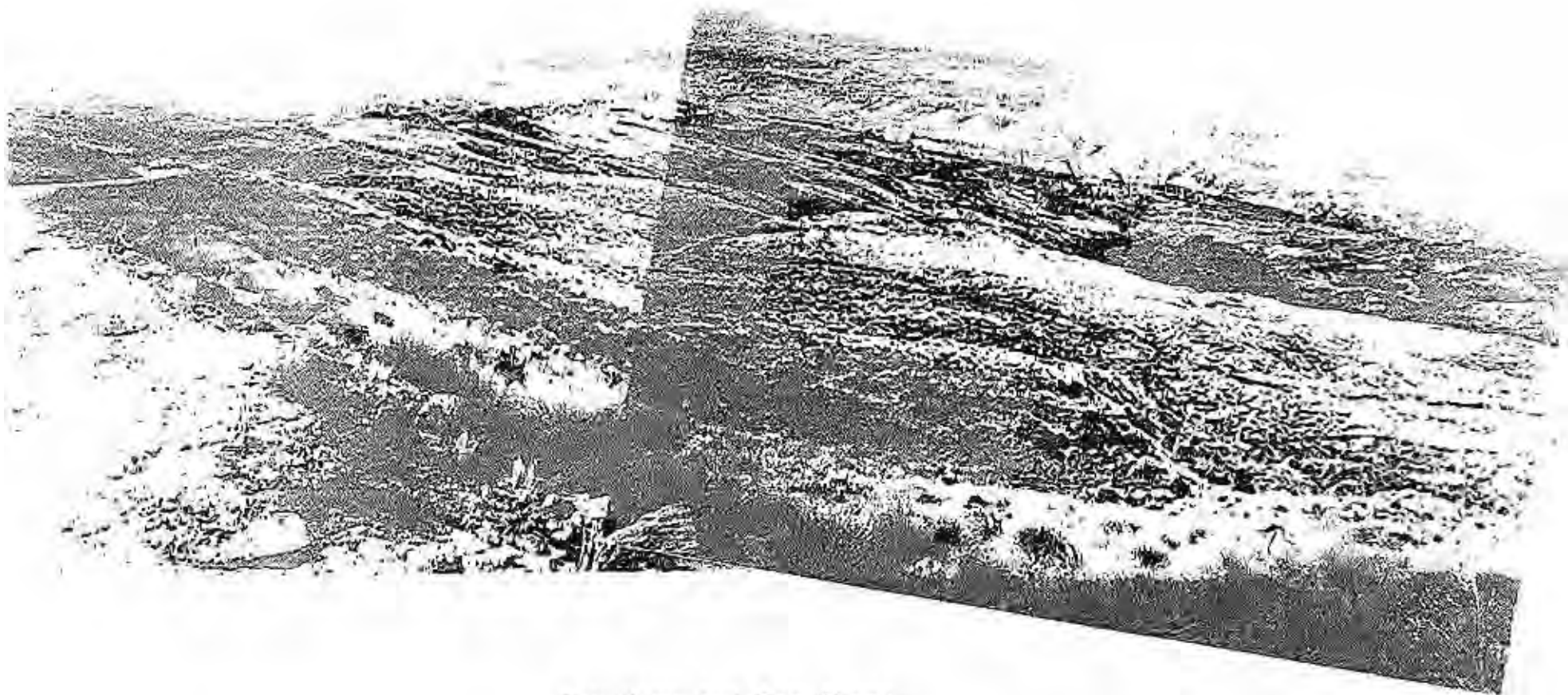
Sept 24/9/92

Photographed 11/10/92



WILSON'S Bayin

Photographed 11/13/92

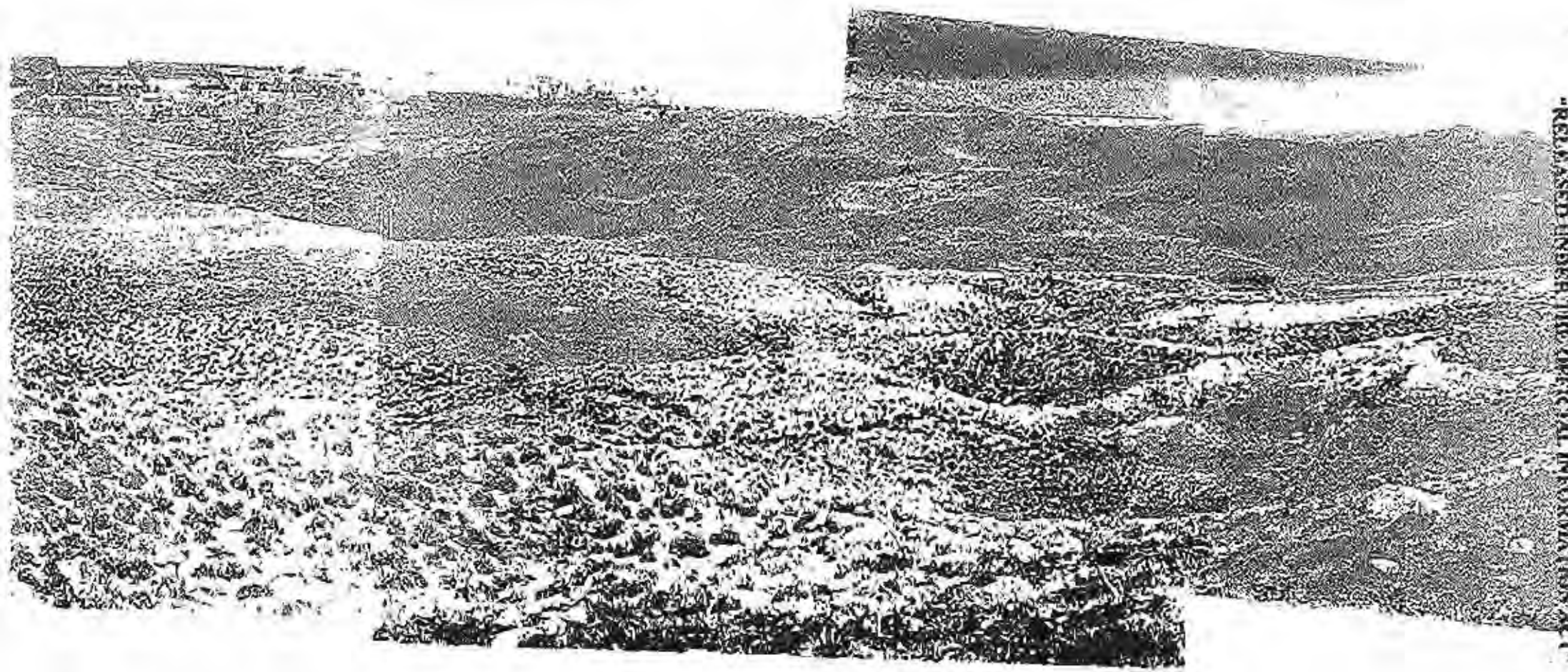


Top View and Top Block

Photomontage 2073292 850m



Tom Mine and Tom Block  
Burst 28 & 29 Sept '92  
Photocopy # 11010403 950m



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Top View and Top Block  
Photographed 11/13/62 650m