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The Traprain Law Environs Project

Fieldwork and Excavations 2000-2004

Colin Haselgrove

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The Traprain Law Environs Project

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COLIN HASELGROVE

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This volume is dedicated to my mother Evelyn Haselgrove, who first took me to East Lothian,
and to my father Dennis Haselgrove, who introduced me to archaeology

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The endpapers are a reconstruction of White Castle fort by David Simon, commissioned by East Lothian Archaeology Service for use on an interpretation board at White Castle, Garvald. The East Lothian plain and Traprain Law lie beyond.

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Abstract

From 2000 to 2004, a programme of excavation and fieldwork was carried out by Durham University and Dickinson College on plough-levelled sites around the fortified site of Traprain Law on the East Lothian coastal plain in south-east Scotland. The primary aim of the Traprain Law Environs Project (TLEP) was to investigate the nature and economy of smaller enclosed settlements in an area of 150km² centred on the hillfort and to establish the chronological relationship between these sites and the occupation of the hilltop. Subsidiary aims included exploring the extent of Roman influence apparent on these settlements and testing the effectiveness of geomagnetic survey in a region of complex geology. The project was funded by the British Academy, Historic Scotland and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, with additional funding and assistance from the universities and from Larry Schoenberg.

The results presented here complement the recently published investigations along the line of the A1 dual carriage-way, which runs close to Traprain Law and was routed to avoid known cropmark sites wherever possible. As part of the TLEP, geomagnetic surveys were conducted at 30 sites, mainly enclosures, but including some probable open settlements. Three enclosures within 5km of the hillfort (at Knowes, Standingstone and Whittingehame Tower) were extensively excavated, whilst smaller-scale work was carried out at another three (at East Bearford, East Linton and Foster Law). To complement the project, cropmark sites in East Lothian have been transcribed and mapped by the Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments for Scotland, enabling the excavated sites to be placed in a regional context.

All six sites have complex histories of occupation, with a combined chronological span ranging from the late fourth millennium BC to the dawn of the Historic period, although the main focus is on the period from the Late Bronze Age to the early Roman Iron Age. The ravine-edge site at Whittingehame Tower was first occupied in the Neolithic and massively enclosed in the Later Bronze Age. In the Roman Iron Age, a scooped yard was constructed in the interior, and activity continued into the fifth or sixth centuries AD. At Standingstone, a short-lived curvilinear enclosure defined by a ditch and palisade was constructed at the end of the Late Bronze Age over the remains of an earlier boundary and structures, and was reoccupied in the Later Iron Age by a settlement of ring-ditch houses. The hillside also yielded evidence of Later Neolithic occupation and of Early Bronze Age cremation burial. At Knowes, a rectilinear enclosure on a slight terrace overlooking the River Tyne was dated to the Later Iron Age. Within the enclosure was a well-preserved scooped settlement, which was inhabited well into the Roman Iron Age. Late in the occupation, a stone cist was constructed in the now disused ditch terminal beside the entrance; some of the individuals whose cremated remains were found in the cist apparently died well before the enclosure was constructed, suggesting they had been reburied.

The evaluations at the other sites focused on their enclosure circuits. The fort at East Linton was first surrounded by a ditch and palisade in the Later Bronze Age and was refurbished during the Later Iron Age. This was also the case at Foster Law, where a curvilinear enclosure built in the Earlier Iron Age proved to have succeeded an earlier ditched enclosure. At East Bearford, a second rectilinear enclosure, similar to the more extensively excavated example at Knowes, was investigated and appears to have been constructed at the same general period.

Collectively, the results of the work undertaken in the Traprain Law environs since 2000 enable the changing character of the settlement pattern to be reconstructed in some detail. During the Later Bronze Age, many sites were enclosed, but in the earlier first millennium BC, in common with many other areas, the number of occupied sites falls sharply. The Later Iron Age saw a fresh wave of enclosure, including many examples of rectilinear form. Unlike many curvilinear enclosures, these latter sites appear mostly to occupy positions with little previous history of settlement, suggesting that they reflect a process of settlement expansion and infilling. By the end of the first millennium BC, however, surrounding ditches and banks were no longer being maintained and unenclosed settlements dominated the coastal plain instead, some of them evidently extensive. This pattern seems to continue into the earlier Roman Iron Age, when Traprain Law once again became a significant settlement, after a hiatus spanning several centuries. By the later Roman Iron Age, however, these other sites

mostly disappear, just when settlement on the hilltop appears to reach its most intense, implying there may have been an influx of people from the surrounding region. Whittingehame is the only site to display significant signs of activity in the immediate post-Roman period, although this need not have been particularly long-lived.

The excavations yielded evidence of a range of activities and structures, some of them without close parallels on other sites in the region, and provided new insights into the development of crop husbandry and the exploitation of other natural resources such as seaweed. The excavation finds also provide the starting point for a reconsideration of the material culture found on various types of later prehistoric and Roman Iron Age settlements in East Lothian, complementing the detailed new study of the cropmark evidence from the region. Notwithstanding the relatively small assemblages present at most sites, some interesting differences emerge, most notably between Traprain Law itself and the other smaller settlements in region.

Also included in the volume is an assessment of the results obtained by the different survey methods, supported by a detailed comparison of the cropmark and geophysical evidence from the other 24 sites examined as part of the TLEP and a listing of surface finds of Roman Iron Age date made recently at three other sites in the area.

Résumé

De 2000 à 2004, un programme de recherches et de fouilles a été mené par l'Université de Durham et le Dickinson College sur des sites repérés par photographie aérienne dans la plaine côtière de East Lothian aux alentours du site fortifié de Trapain Law (sud-est de l'Ecosse). Le but du Projet « Environs de Trapain Law » (TLEP) était d'étudier le caractère des petits sites enclos dans une aire de 150 km² autour de ce grand site fortifié et d'établir les liens chronologiques entre ces différents sites. Les objectifs secondaires comprenaient l'étude de l'influence romaine dans la région, ainsi que de tester l'efficacité de la prospection géomagnétique dans une région à la géologie complexe. Le projet était subventionné par la British Academy, Historic Scotland et la Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, avec des ressources supplémentaires et l'aide des universités mentionnées et de Larry Schoenberg.

Les résultats complètent les fouilles récentes sur le tracé de la route nationale A1 proche de Trapain Law, qui fut détournée afin d'éviter autant que possible les sites déjà connus. Dans le cadre du TLEP, des prospections géomagnétiques furent réalisées sur 30 sites, la plupart enclos, certains probablement ouverts. Trois enclos dans un rayon de 5km autour de Trapain Law ont été fouillés de façon extensive (Knowes, Standingstone, Whittingehame Tower), tandis que des tranchées de diagnostic ont été réalisées sur trois autres sites (East Bearford, East Linton, Foster Law). Les photographies aériennes de l'ensemble des sites d'East Lothian ont été rectifiées et cartographiées par la Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments for Scotland, de sorte que les sites fouillés puissent être replacés dans un contexte régional.

Les six sites fouillés présentent une histoire complexe, s'échelonnant dans leur ensemble de la fin du 4^{ème} millénaire avant notre ère à l'aube de la période historique, bien que concernant principalement la période allant de l'Age du Bronze récent à la période romaine. Le site de Whittingehame Tower fut occupé au Néolithique; lors de l'Age du Bronze récent un grand fossé fut creusé en bordure du ravin. Durant l'époque romaine, une cour fut creusée à l'intérieur, l'activité se poursuivant aux 5^{ème} et 6^{ème} siècles de notre ère. A Standingstone, un enclos curviligne défini par un fossé et une palissade fut aménagé à l'Age du Bronze récent et réoccupé pendant le second Age du Fer par un habitat de maisons circulaires à fossés. Ce site a également fourni des indices datés du Néolithique récent, ainsi que des sépultures à incinération de l'Age du Bronze Ancien. A Knowes, un enclos rectiligne, situé sur une petite terrasse en aplomb de la rivière Tyne, a été construit pendant l'Age du Fer récent. Au sein de cet enclos se trouvait un habitat sur-creusé bien conservé, qui fut occupé lors de la période romaine. Plus tard, une ciste en pierre fut construite dans le fossé alors abandonné, à proximité de l'entrée. Certains individus dont des éléments incinérés furent trouvés dans la ciste sont apparemment décédés plusieurs siècles auparavant, ce qui suggère qu'il s'agit d'un ré-enterrément.

Les diagnostics sur les autres enclos ont principalement porté sur le tracé des enceintes. A East Linton, le site a d'abord été entouré d'un fossé et d'une palissade lors de l'Age du Bronze récent et fut réaménagé au second Age du Fer. A Foster Law un enclos curviligne du premier Age du Fer s'est avéré être précédé par un enclos fossoyé. A East Bearford, un enclos rectiligne, comparable au site de Knowes, s'avère avoir été construit pendant le second Age du Fer.

Les recherches menées depuis 2000 permettent une reconstruction de l'évolution de l'occupation du sol. Durant l'Age du Bronze récent, la plupart des sites étaient enclos. Au début du premier Age du Fer, à l'image de nombreuses autres régions, le nombre de habitats diminue fortement. Le second Age du Fer connaît une nouvelle vague de creusement d'enclos, la plupart de forme rectiligne. A la différence des enclos curvilignes, ces sites se localisent souvent dans des endroits sans traces d'occupations précédentes, ce qui suggère un processus d'expansion de l'habitat. Enfin, à la fin du premier millénaire avant notre ère, les fossés d'enclos ne sont plus entretenus et les habitats ouverts, certains assez étendus, dominent au contraire la plaine côtière. Ce modèle semble perdurer lors de la période romaine, lorsque Trapain Law redevient un centre important après un hiatus de plusieurs siècles. Lors du bas empire, alors que le site de hauteur semble être à son apogée, la plupart des habitats voisins sont abandonnés; il y eut peut-être un apport de populations depuis la région environnante vers ce site fortifié. Seul Whittingehame présente des vestiges significatifs d'activité postérieurs à la période romaine, bien que celle-ci ne fût pas de longue durée.

Ces fouilles ont mis en évidence des activités et de structures, certaines d'entre elles sans parallèles proches dans la région. Elles ont fourni de nouvelles données concernant l'agriculture et l'exploitation des ressources naturelles, telles que les algues marines. Les fouilles fournissent également le point de départ d'un réexamen de la culture matérielle découverte au sein des divers habitats protohistoriques et romains en East Lothian, qui complète la nouvelle étude des sites repérés par photographie aérienne. Malgré la taille restreinte des ensembles mis au jour, quelques tendances intéressantes sont à observer, surtout entre Traprain Law et les habitats ruraux.

Ce volume également présente une évaluation des résultats obtenus par différentes méthodes de prospection, soutenue par une comparaison des photographies aériennes et des données géophysiques des 24 autres sites étudiés dans le cadre du TLEP. Est inclus aussi un inventaire du mobilier découvert en surface pendant les prospections effectuées sur trois autres sites dans la région.

Zusammenfassung

In den Jahren 2000 bis 2004 führten die Universität Durham und das Dickinson College Prospektionen im Umfeld des befestigten Platzes von Traprain Law durch. Die durch Pflügen geebneten Fundstellen liegen in der Küstenebene von East Lothian in Südostschottland. Das Hauptaugenmerk des Traprain Law Environs Projects (TLEP) galt dem Wesen und der Wirtschaftsgrundlage kleinerer geschlossener Siedlungen in einem 150 km² messenden Bereich um die Höhenbefestigung sowie der Feststellung des chronologischen Verhältnisses zwischen den Siedlungen und der Besiedlung des Berges. Weitere Ziele waren die Analyse des Ausmaßes des römischen Einflusses in den Siedlungen und die Erprobung der Wirksamkeit geomagnetischer Prospektionen in der komplexen Geologie der Region. Das Projekt wurde finanziert von der British Academy, Historic Scotland und der Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Weitere Hilfe und finanzielle Unterstützung stellten die Universitäten sowie Larry Schoenberg zur Verfügung.

Die hier vorgestellten Ergebnisse ergänzen die jüngst veröffentlichten Untersuchungen entlang der Trasse der A1 Ausbaustrecke, die bewusst so angelegt worden war, dass bekannte, im Luftbild sichtbare Fundstellen möglichst unbeeinträchtigt blieben. In Verbindung mit TLEP wurden geomagnetische Prospektionen an 30 Fundstellen durchgeführt, hauptsächlich an geschlossenen Siedlungen, wenngleich einige vermutlich offene ebenfalls untersucht wurden. In drei geschlossenen Siedlungen, die nicht weiter als 5 km entfernt von der Höhenbefestigung liegen, fanden ausführliche Grabungen statt (Knowes, Standingstone und Whittingehame Tower), kleinere Sondagen in drei weiteren (East Bearford, East Linton und Foster Law). Darüberhinaus wurden im Luftbild sichtbare Fundstellen in East Lothian von der Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments for Scotland kartiert, um die ausgegrabenen Fundplätze in ihrem regionalen Kontext darstellen zu können.

Die Siedlungsgeschichte aller sechs Fundstellen ist komplex. Sie reichen insgesamt vom späten vierten Jahrtausend v.Chr. bis zum Anfang der historischen Zeit. Der Schwerpunkt liegt zwischen der späten Bronzezeit und der frühen römischen Eisenzeit. Die Fundstelle von Whittingehame Tower liegt am Rande einer Schlucht und wurde erstmals während des Neolithikums besiedelt, eine massive Einfriedung kam während der späteren Bronzezeit hinzu. Während der römischen Eisenzeit wurde im Innen ein eingetiefter („scooped“) Hof gebaut und die Aktivitäten dauerten bis ins 5. oder 6. Jahrhundert n.Chr. In Standingstone bestand die rundovale Einfriedung aus einem Graben und einer Palisade, die am Ende der Bronzezeit über den Resten einer früheren Einfriedung und früheren Strukturen errichtet wurde. Später, in der späteren Eisenzeit entstand hier eine Siedlung mit Häusern, die von runden Gräbern umgeben waren. Spätneolithische Siedlungsspuren sowie eine frühbronzezeitliche Brandbestattung wurden am Hang identifiziert. Eine rechteckige Einfriedung auf einer niedrigen Terrasse oberhalb des Flusses Tyne in Knowes konnte in die spätere Eisenzeit datiert werden. Innerhalb der Umfassung befand sich eine gut erhaltene „scooped“ Siedlung, die bis weit in die römische Eisenzeit hinein besiedelt wurde. Neben dem Eingang zur Siedlung war in der letzten Siedlungsphase eine Steinkiste am Ende des aufgelassenen Grabens eingebaut worden. Einige der Individuen, deren verbrannte Reste darin gefunden wurden, waren offenbar deutlich vor dem Bau der Einfriedung gestorben, so dass die Vermutung nahe liegt, dass es sich um sekundäre Bestattungen handelt.

Bei den anderen Fundstellen wurden in erster Linie die Einfriedungen untersucht. Die Befestigung in East Linton umgab in der späteren Bronzezeit zunächst ein Graben und eine Palisade, die in der späteren Eisenzeit erneuert wurden. Die Situation in Foster Law war ähnlich. Hier stellte sich heraus, dass die in der früheren Eisenzeit gebaute rundovale Umfassung auf einen früheren Graben folgte. Eine zweite, rechteckige Einfriedung wurde in East Bearford untersucht, die der ausführlicher ausgegrabenen Anlage in Knowes ähnelte und offenbar etwa in der selben Periode entstanden war.

Insgesamt ermöglichen die Ergebnisse der Untersuchungen im Umfeld von Traprain Law seit dem Jahr 2000 eine recht detaillierte Rekonstruktion des wechselnden Charakters der Besiedlung. Während der späteren Bronzezeit wurden viele Siedlungen eingefriedet, jedoch nahm die Zahl der besiedelten Plätze im frühen ersten Jahrtausend v.Chr. ab, so wie dies auch in vielen anderen Regionen beobachtet werden kann. In der späteren Eisenzeit wurden viele Siedlungen wieder eingefriedet, oft mit rechteckigen Umfassungen. Im Gegensatz zu vielen rundovalen

Einfriedungen wurden zahlreiche dieser Stätten an Plätzen angelegt, die vorher kaum genutzt worden waren, ein Hinweis darauf, dass sie einen Prozess der Expansion und Verdichtung der Besiedlung widerspiegeln. Am Ende des ersten Jahrtausends v.Chr. verfielen die Gräben und Wälle. Das Siedlungsbild in der Küstenebene prägten stattdessen offene Siedlungen, einige von ihnen offenbar recht umfangreich. Dieses Muster setzte sich bis in die frühere römische Eisenzeit fort, als Traprain Law nach einer Unterbrechung von mehreren Jahrhunderten wieder an Bedeutung gewann. In der späteren römischen Eisenzeit erreichte die Siedlung auf Traprain Law ihren Höhepunkt. Zu dieser Zeit wurden die meisten anderen Fundplätze aufgegeben, vermutlich weil sich die Einwohner der Umgebung in der Höhenbefestigung konzentrierten. Whittingehame ist die einzige nahegelegene Fundstelle, für die Spuren signifikanter Aktivität in der unmittelbar nachrömischen Zeit festgestellt werden konnten, auch wenn dies nicht besonders lange angehalten haben muss.

Die Ausgrabungen lieferten Zeugnisse für eine Reihe von Aktivitäten und Strukturen, einige von ihnen ohne enge Parallele in der Region. Auch neue Einblicke in den Ackerbau und die Ausnutzung anderer natürlicher Ressourcen wie Seetang konnten gewonnen werden. Die Funde aus den Ausgrabungen bilden den Ausgangspunkt für eine Neubewertung der materiellen Kultur von unterschiedlichen Siedlungen der späten Vorgeschichte bzw. der römischen Eisenzeit in East Lothian und ergänzen die detaillierte neue Analyse der Luftbildbefunde der Region. Trotz der relativ kleinen Fundinventare von den meisten Fundstellen sind interessante Unterschiede sichtbar, vor allem zwischen Traprain Law selbst und anderen kleineren Siedlungen in der Umgebung.

Ferner enthält der Band eine Auswertung der durch die verschiedenen Prospektionsmethoden gewonnenen Ergebnisse, einen ausführlichen Vergleich der Zeugnisse der Luftbilder und der Geophysik von 24 weiteren Fundstellen, die im Rahmen von TLEP untersucht wurden, sowie eine Liste der jüngst aufgelesenen Oberflächenfunde der römischen Eisenzeit von drei weiteren Fundstellen in der Region.

Abbreviations

ASUD	Archaeological Services University of Durham
CUCAP	Cambridge University Collection of Air Photos
DES	Discovery and Excavation in Scotland
DSR	Data Structure Report
NMRS	National Monuments Record of Scotland
OD	above Ordnance Datum
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
SUERC	Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre
TLEP	Traprain Law Environs Project