Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

The Traprain Law Environs Project

Fieldwork and Excavations 2000-2004

Colin Haselgrove

ISBN: 978-0-903903-46-2 (hardback) • 978-1-908332-30-1 (PDF)

Haselgrove, Colin 2009 *The Traprain Law Environs Project: Fieldwork and Excavations 2000-2004*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. https://doi.org/10.9750/9781908332301

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is a registered Scottish charity number SC 010440. Visit our website at www.socantscot.org or find us on Twitter @socantscot.

Chapter 10

The Traprain environs in a regional perspective

DAVID C COWLEY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out aspects of the detailed investigations reported on earlier in this volume in a regional context. It draws on work undertaken by the TLEP and a wider programme of archaeological mapping of East Lothian carried out by RCAHMS, as well as material held in the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS).

Although the definition of the TLEP study area is essentially arbitrary, centred on Traprain Law, and defined by modern map grid lines, it is broadly representative of the administrative area of East Lothian (Chapter 2). The gently undulating coastal plain is broken by low hills and the ground generally rises to the Lammermuir Hills and the Lothian Edge to the south. The broad pattern of land use for the last 200 years is fairly simple, with by far the greater part of the coastal plain set to arable, increasing proportions of improved pasture on the higher ground and unimproved pasture and heather moor on the hills themselves. Discrete shelterbelts and larger coniferous plantations are scattered across the plain, while built-up areas are limited in extent.

THE SURVEY RECORD IN EAST LOTHIAN – SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The impact of land use and aerial survey on the character of the archaeological record in East Lothian has been commented on in Chapter 2. The combination of predominately arable land use and a relatively dry climate have served to create an archaeological record that is dominated by plough-levelled sites recorded during aerial survey as cropmarks (Figure 10.1). The few remaining earthwork monuments survive in patches of ground that have not been improved, usually because bedrock is close to the surface (Figure 10.2). Across the

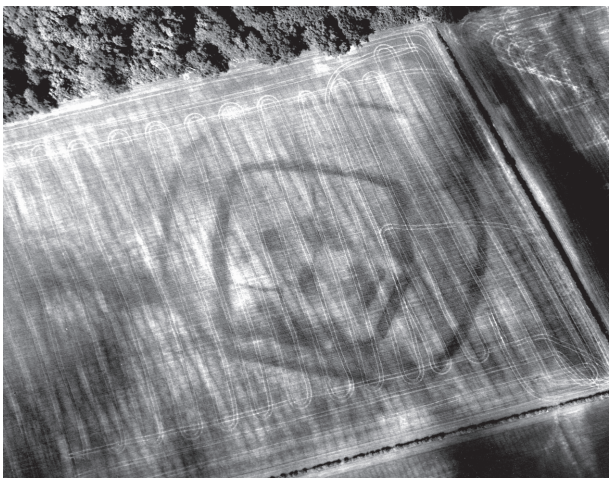

Figure 10.1
This ploughed-down settlement at Broomrig (NT46NW 6) has been recorded as cropmarkings and is a good example of the many such sites now known in East Lothian after decades of patient aerial survey (rectified version of EL4867, Crown Copyright: RCAHMS)

Figure 10.2
Oblique aerial view of The Chesters, Drem (NT57NW 1), one of the handful of earthwork monuments to survive centuries of intensive arable land use on the East Lothian plain because of its location on a rocky ridge (D76371, Crown Copyright: RCAHMS)

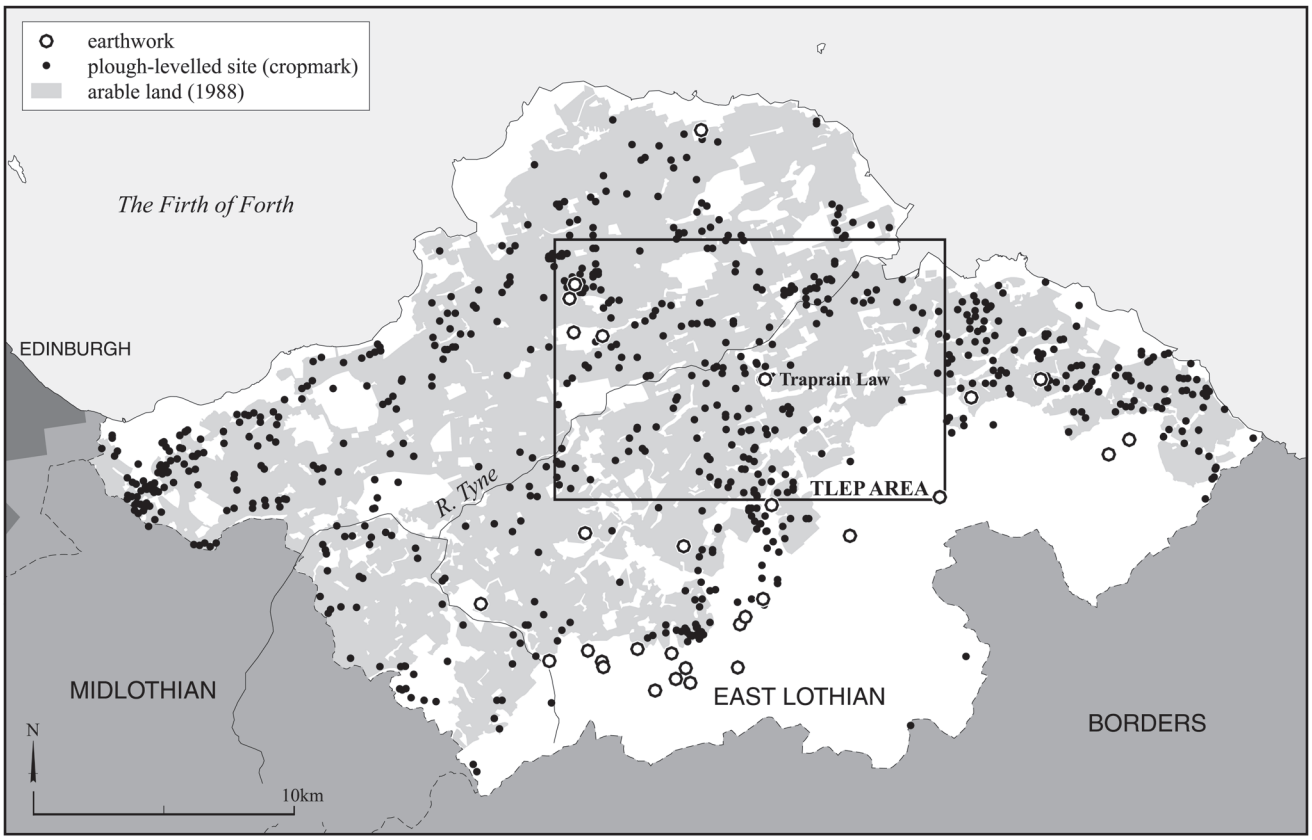

Figure 10.3
The distribution of plough-levelled monuments and earthworks of potentially later prehistoric date in East Lothian shown against the extent of arable ground (Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004478. Arable ground derived from MLURI mapping based on 1988 aerial photography)

coastal plain as a whole, ongoing aerial reconnaissance has recorded hundreds of plough-levelled sites, the broad pattern of which was established by the early 1980s. In common with the TLEP study area (Chapter 2), the distribution of sites in East Lothian as a whole (Figure 10.3) is one of dense clusters of sites on patches of well-drained soils, broken by dispersed scatters of sites and complete gaps in site distribution. Blank areas generally lie within areas set to pasture, with only intermittent arable breaks, or within imperfectly drained soils that are also characteristically deeper (Cowley and Dickson 2007; Soil Survey of Scotland 1966).

The ongoing programme of aerial survey in this area of high potential has been very productive in the numbers of new sites discovered, but it has produced a dataset that has limitations. There are evidently complex, but poorly understood, relationships between soil types, soil depth and the formation of archaeological cropmarks. Areas of deep, imperfectly drained soils have remained stubbornly blank despite repeated examination from the air. For some areas, these factors have produced a distribution that is clearly unreliable in reflecting past settlement patterns and land use, but appears in other areas to reflect these to some degree (Cowley and Dickson 2007, 47–50). Beyond spatial bias in the dataset, there is also variability in the visibility of features to the airborne surveyor. Thus, regular enclosures are easily identified, while small features, such as pits, or irregular features, such as scooped yards, which might only show as a smudgy cropmark, defy ready interpretation and are more likely to escape record. In addition, survey is undertaken within frameworks of existing knowledge: features that are familiar tend to be identified more easily than those that fall outside such frameworks (see Cowley 2002 and Brophy and Cowley 2005 for discussion of issues of bias and subjectivity in aerial survey).

Beyond these limitations, the aerial survey data is essentially coarse-grained, providing information on site location and general characteristics. Indeed, excavation has consistently shown how coarse a filter of buried features cropmarks and geophysical survey are (see Chapters 1–2). When complexity is visible in the cropmark record (or geophysical data), relative sequences between overlapping components are difficult to establish with any certainty. Thus, analysis of sites is largely dependent on relatively simple criteria and characteristics, such as morphology, distribution, landscape context and very broad dating. The following discussion is therefore structured around the sites investigated in detail by the project. Analogy, the identification of shared characteristics, and a dating framework drawn from excavated sites are fundamental to ordering this material. It is inevitable that certain classes of site are better understood than others, and it is the rag-bag of oddities, comprising small groups or one-offs, that will always be difficult to marshal in a coherent framework.

Later prehistory has suffered from a tendency to be a dustbin for all sorts of sites, generally enclosures, the contexts of which are not known on the basis of analogy with the few excavated sites. In many respects Humphrey Welfare's comments, written after the first two seasons of aerial survey by RCAHMS (Welfare 1978), are still pertinent three decades later. On the one hand, Welfare points out the enormous potential of aerial survey, but identifies that the use of frequently highly subjective typologies has left the picture fuzzy and confused; he also noted the requirement for research excavations to refine chronology in particular. To this can be added the problems of the sheer mass of data that have been collected since Welfare's observations, little of which has been marshalled in an interpretative framework. In fact, in adding material to the RCAHMS database, there has been a tradition of applying ambiguous classifications, such as 'enclosure' or 'cropmark', in order to avoid imposing incorrect interpretations on sites. Moreover, even though knowledge has increased with new discoveries and excavations, it is only in the last few years that known material has been systematically revisited to review classifications. Thus, the sites recorded in the NMRS carried ambiguous classifications that had limited utility for rationalising sites in morphological groups or robust regional settlement frameworks.

A prerequisite for such frameworks is the systematic mapping and interpretation of monuments and this has only recently been completed by RCAHMS for East Lothian. That exercise has placed the plough-levelled sites recorded as cropmarks on a sound footing from which structured analysis can be built. Most sites are now accurately located in the landscape, and have a depiction that is accurate, removing the distortions introduced by the oblique angle of the photography (which, for example, might make a circular enclosure appear oval). The basic attributes of shape, size (of interior/boundaries) and location are therefore reliable. Even such basic attributes have a ready utility, for example in characterising the investment in ramparts for display or defence or the available internal area. Over and above this, the distributions of sites can be analysed, looking at factors such as location (e.g. hilltop) and relationships with other monuments (e.g. clustered or dispersed).

Such is the nature of this record that bringing order to the mass of material is heavily dependent on typology, drawing on analogy with the few excavated sites to suggest broad chronologies. However, the excavated sites only shed light on aspects of the cropmark record, and these will be the primary focus for this chapter. While allowing for the limitations of the cropmark record, it remains the only effective means of examining large areas, recovering regional settlement and land use patterns and creating broad-brush representations of past activity in lowland areas. The challenge in using this material successfully lies in integrating the detailed 'point information' derived from excavation, with the extensive, but less detailed, broad-brush evidence from aerial (and other) survey.

SITES AND MONUMENTS: CLASSIFICATION AND CHARACTERISATION

There is considerable variation in the extent to which the cropmarked record can be usefully marshalled. Some classes of settlement, such as Later Iron Age rectilinear settlements and unenclosed scooped settlements dating to the first–third centuries AD, can be identified with some certainty, drawing on the results of over 40 years of excavation and survey in northern England and southern Scotland. A small group of forts, characterised by multiple ramparts and dominant positions, can be identified, some of which share remarkably similar forms (e.g. Kaeheughs and Hanging Craig, Figure 10.4), but these can only be dated very broadly on the basis of a few comparanda. This ambiguity is even more marked when dealing

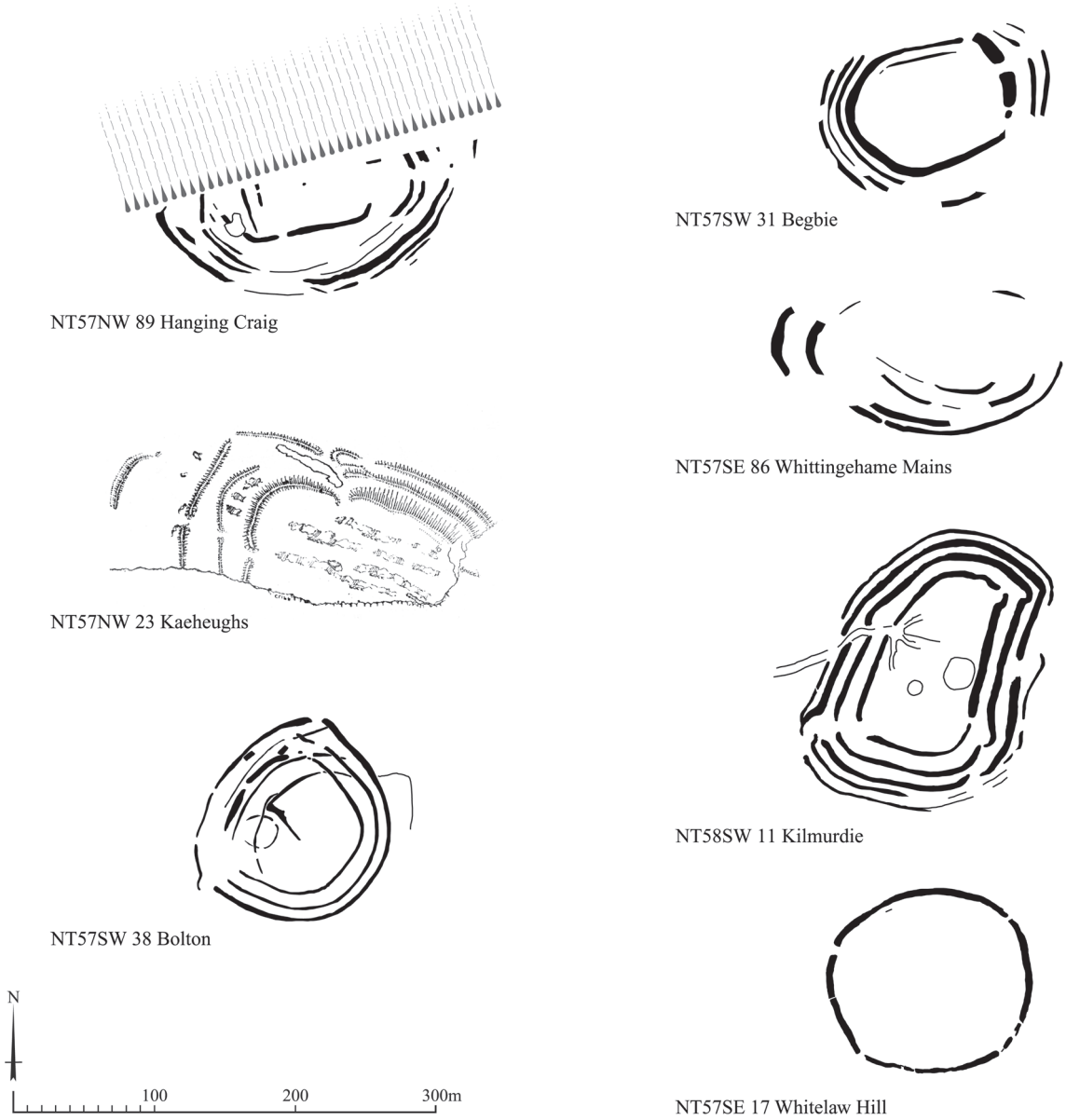

Figure 10.4
Comparative plans of selected forts in East Lothian, mostly from the TLEP study area
(Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004479)

with the mass of predominately curvilinear (circular and oval) enclosures, the potential date range and associations of which are manifold. However, even in this area, basic distinctions in size and shape can be made, though excavations will be required to place these minor groupings in a settlement framework.

There is a danger that artificial distinctions may be drawn between surviving earthworks and plough-levelled sites. This is manifest in the use of classifications. By way of illustration, earthworks with substantial ditches in elevated positions are more likely to be referred to as 'forts' than their plough-levelled equivalents. In the case of plough-levelled sites the size of ditches is not evident without accurate mapping, and significant differences in scale between a ditch 2m across and another 4m across may not be readily

appreciated from aerial photography alone. On the other hand, the scale of ditches is all too apparent when sites are excavated, and this is commented on in the report on St Germains (Alexander and Watkins 1998, 246–7). The forts at Kaeheughs and Hanging Craig (Figure 10.4) share basic morphology, location and likely chronological and social context, but they appear in the record very differently, one surviving as an earthwork, the other plough-levelled.

The TLEP was designed to explore a sample of the known settlement types in the area, and this is reflected in both the 30 sites selected for more detailed survey (Chapter 2 and Appendix 1) and those chosen for excavation. These include basic morphological types such as curvilinear, multivallate, rectilinear and unenclosed sites. The structure of this chapter will reflect these basic types, expanding discussion from the excavated sites to the broader characteristics, with brief digressions into other site types such as forts and pit-alignments not directly investigated by the TLEP, and some discussion of the 'rag-bag' of sites that at present defy easy classification.

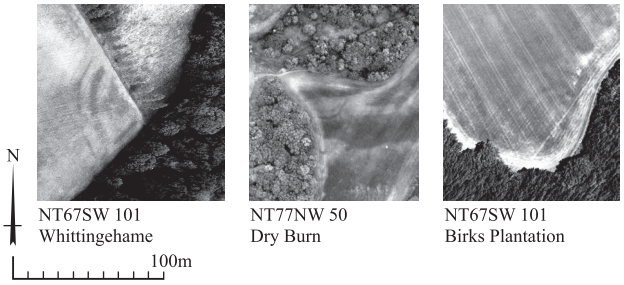

Figure 10.5
Rectified aerial photographs of Whittingehame Tower and analogous sites (Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004480)

CURVILINEAR SETTLEMENTS

The sites investigated by TLEP at Whittingehame Tower and Standingstone are part of a general grouping of curvilinear enclosures, which account for a significant proportion of the cropmarked sites. The paucity of excavated sites and the variety of basic morphological forms make it difficult to structure this material in a chronological framework. However, the broad attributes of Whittingehame and Standingstone can be identified more widely, and this section will begin with a brief summary of the main components of these two sites, with additional reference to Foster Law and East Linton (Chapter 6), St Germains (Alexander and Watkins 1998) and Fishers Road, Port Seton (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000).

Whittingehame Tower

As noted in the cropmark record, Whittingehame Tower is a bivallate enclosure, comprising two concentric arcs of ditch set against the steep slopes on the north side of Whittingehame Water. It is broadly representative of a group of enclosures that have been sited to make use of the deeply incised valleys, or deans, of East Lothian. Some 60 enclosures in East Lothian utilise a deeply incised gully, watercourse or escarpment as part of the circuit of enclosure. However, the variation in morphology within this grouping demonstrates that they are not a homogeneous class, including large (i.e. 0.6–1.1ha) heavily defended forts and smaller (i.e. less than 0.5ha), more lightly enclosed settlements, of which Whittingehame Tower is probably one (albeit with a depth of one ditch that is exceeded only by Broxmouth among other excavated prehistoric sites in the region). There are only three, or possibly four, sites in East Lothian (Figure 10.5) that bear direct comparison with Whittingehame Tower, though these are a sub-set of a loose grouping of sites that take advantage of a promontory or stream-side location. In these cases, while the adjacent watercourse and/or deeply incised gully is clearly integral to the creation of the enclosure, the significance of this is not known. Perhaps the location carried special associations, or was it merely the pragmatic exploitation of a topographic location that is a feature of parts of the county? With this imponderable in mind, in the first instance it may be more useful to focus on the attributes shared by Whittingehame Tower and the mass of other curvilinear enclosures, while recognising the variability in form and the presence of small sub-groups of sites that share distinct characteristics.

The main components of Whittingehame for the purposes of a broad comparison are the two ditch circuits visible as cropmarks, together with the palisade trenches and smaller inner ditch discovered during excavation. Due to the lack of stratigraphic relationships between features and the paucity of dateable material, the sequence of enclosures can only be guessed at. The concentricity of the ditch circuits suggests that they at the very least referenced each other and, whatever the possible sequence(s) of

construction, were extant or visible in some form throughout the life of the enclosure. Various scenarios are discussed in Chapter 3, but perhaps the most likely are that the two principal circuits represent individual remodelling episodes, or that the main ditch and bank went with the palisades, which were then replaced by an outer ditch and bank. Taken at face value, the discrepant radiocarbon dates from the ditches would favour the former, but given their secondary context, this cannot be relied on. The suggestion of a Late Bronze Age chronological context at least for the main enclosure ditch is, however, echoed elsewhere, whilst the radiocarbon date from higher up the fill would seem to confirm that there was still a significant remnant earthwork when the site was (re-)occupied in the mid-first millennium AD.

Standingstone

This site appears in the cropmark record as a ditch describing the incomplete circuit of a curvilinear enclosure. On excavation (Chapter 4) this gap was found to coincide with an area of outcropping bedrock and, while no trace of a continuation of the enclosure ditch was found, it seems likely that the original conception of the enclosure was a more complete circuit. A palisade trench, lying roughly parallel to the inner lip of the ditch and about 4m from it, may have formed a revetment at the back of a bank that has been completely removed by ploughing. Radiocarbon dating shows that both the ditch and palisade were constructed at the end of the second or beginning of the first millennium BC (Chapter 9), with Later Iron Age reuse some 300–600 years later.

Moreover, the dating evidence estimates that the construction of the enclosure ditch and palisade began in 960–850 cal BC (95% probability) and its use finished in 940–790 cal BC (95% probability), with an overall span of enclosure activity at only 1–80 years (95% probability), or 1–40 years (68% probability). There is a widespread expectation, usually implicit, that monuments that required a significant resource to construct will have been occupied for long periods of time. Standingstone challenges this assumption with an occupation that may not even have spanned a generation. This adds to the considerable body of evidence that suggests settlement at certain periods may have been typically short-lived at any given location with a tendency to move around in the landscape (e.g. Halliday 1999, 2007; Barber and Crone 2001; Cowley 2003). While this paradigm has been more readily accepted for upland areas and Bronze Age contexts, the Standingstone dating supports the evidence that would extend this pattern into lowland areas, which are often characterised as 'cores' with continuous and long-lived settlement.

From the cropmark record, a nearby site at Hedderwick (Figure 10.6) appears to be a direct analogy with Standingstone. The cropmarks describe a similar incomplete circuit of ditch, which is confirmed by the geophysical survey (Figure A1.12), though in this case an inner palisade can be seen in both aerial photographs and geophysics describing a complete circuit. Standingstone and Hedderwick share the same basic characteristics (broad ditch and internal palisade) and other analogous sites are evident, such as Sixpence Strip (Figure 10.6). Ranging slightly in size (i.e. between 0.15ha and 0.2ha in area) and including strictly circular (Standingstone, Sixpence Strip) and oval (Hedderwick) examples, these settlements generally occupy unremarkable locations in the landscape, although the hillslope location of Standingstone does give very extensive views to the west.

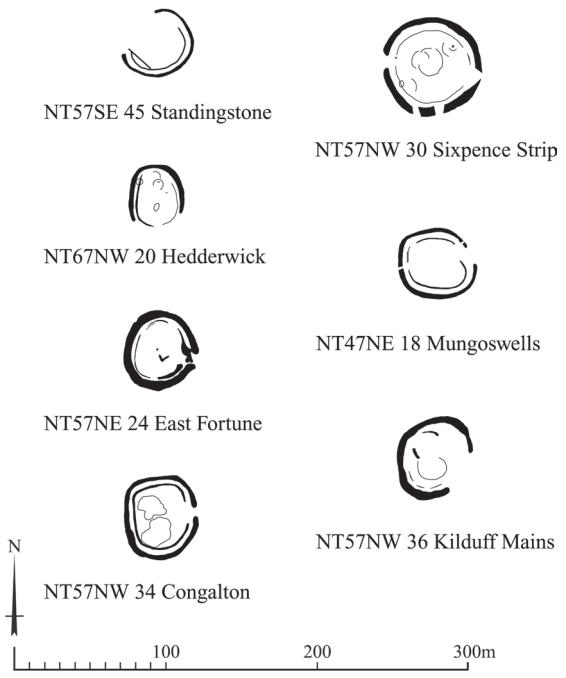

Figure 10.6
Comparative plans of Standingstone and analogous sites
(Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004481)

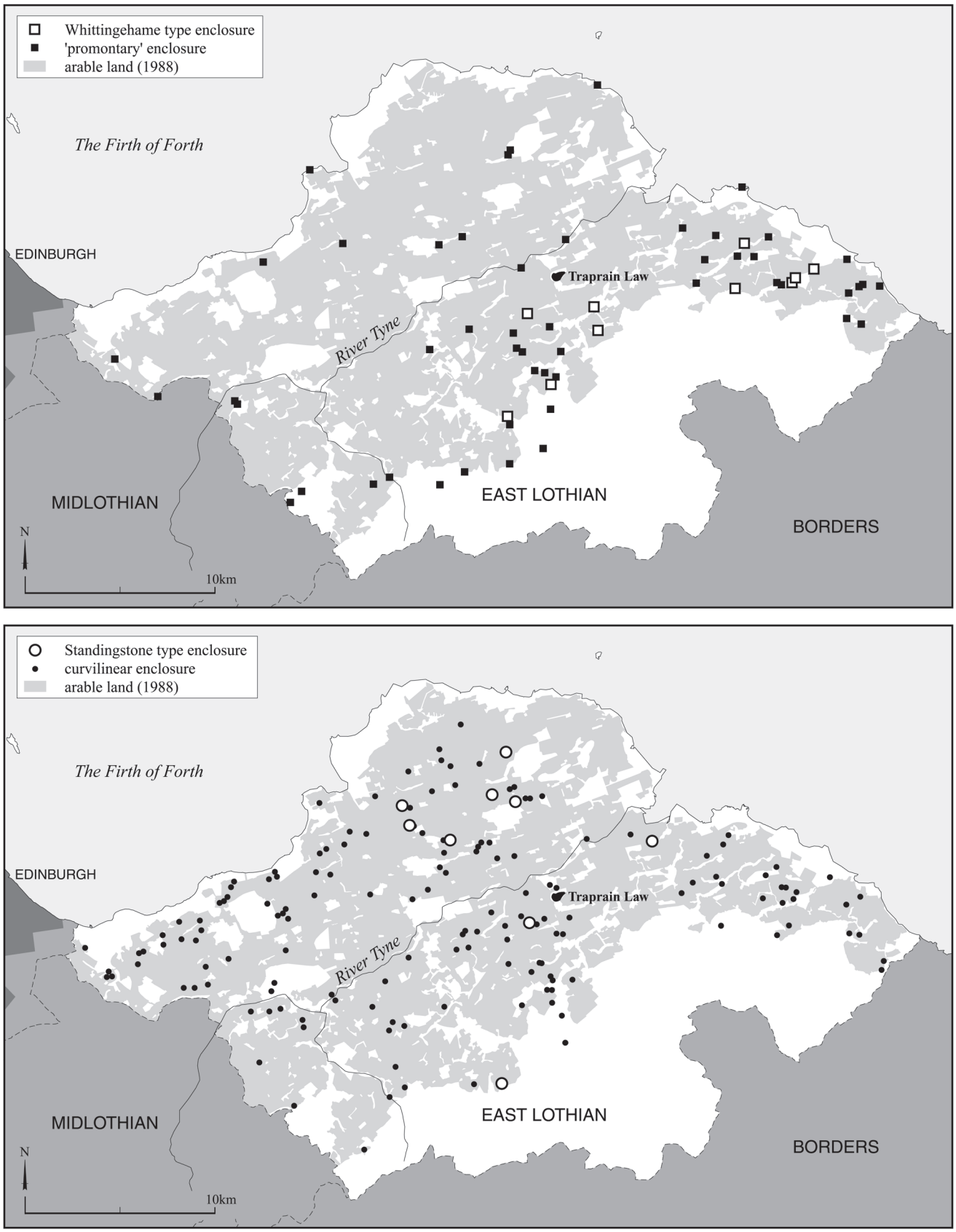

Figure 10.7
The distribution of curvilinear settlement enclosures in East Lothian with Whittingehame Tower and Standingstone and their comparable sites identified (Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004482)

The distribution of this site type across the county is difficult to judge because their identification is heavily dependent on the visibility of a palisade. The cropmark record cannot be relied on in this respect as demonstrated at Standingstone, where the palisade was only revealed during excavation. It is thus difficult to disentangle the Standingstone-type enclosures from the 'rag-bag' of curvilinear enclosures (below) that characterise a significant proportion of the later prehistoric settlement sites. For this reason, the Standingstone-type settlements are identified against the general distribution of curvilinear settlements, amongst which there may be other unidentified examples of the same type of enclosure (Figure 10.7).

Late Bronze Age enclosures

Standingstone and, more hesitantly, Whittingehame establish a Late Bronze Age context for some of the settlement enclosures that to date have tended to be assigned to the Iron Age. To these can be added the site at East Linton (Chapter 6), where the evaluation produced dating evidence at the end of the second millennium BC for a palisade with an inner ditch.

Although morphologically a very loose group (varying in size, shape and location, and only sharing the most basic of attributes – a combination of ditches and palisade), the broadly Late Bronze Age dating for all three is significant. Together with Traprain Law they establish a multiplicity of settlement forms of Late Bronze Age date in East Lothian, which could support an interpretation as representing a hierarchy or specialisation in settlement form by this date. The rock-cut multiple ditches at East Linton would have been a significant investment of resource and its position in a commanding, if not dominant location in the landscape, may suggest a more elevated status than Whittingehame Tower or Standingstone. Apart from one of the ditches, the scale of the Whittingehame earthworks do not come close to those at East Linton and, while the arrangement of the palisade suggests a deliberate elaboration of the entrance, the rather retiring location in the landscape is also worth noting. Perhaps Whittingehame aspired to status that it did not have, while Standingstone may represent another component in a putative settlement hierarchy. While the foregoing discussion is undoubtedly simplistic and capable of sustaining other explanations, it highlights the differing forms of the Late Bronze Age sites. To this can be added the dating evidence from Standingstone, which indicates the potential for occupation to have been short-lived, warning against an uncritical assumption that investment of resource in construction automatically equates to extended occupation (Cowley 2003, 81–1).

The 'rag-bag': Iron Age enclosures in East Lothian

The difficulties of bringing order to the many broadly curvilinear enclosure forms in the cropmark record have been discussed above. Working from the excavated sites, robust classes of similar sites are difficult to construct. Between St Germains (Alexander and Watkins 1998), West Loan (Jones 2006) and Fishers Road, Port Seton (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000), the excavated sites of putatively mid to later first millennium BC date exhibit a wide range of forms – in morphology, scale and details of occupation (Figure 10.8). The problems of marshalling this material are amply illustrated by Foster Law (Chapter 6) and Fishers Road West (McCullagh and Mills 2000), which bear superficial similarities. While there are a handful of potential analogies in the cropmarked sites, they all tend to exhibit subtle differences that make groupings unsatisfactory. Vast differences in size are also evident, from small enclosures (e.g. 0.05ha) that cannot have accommodated more than a single house, to sites that may have been packed full of households (1ha).

The two main characteristics of the settlement enclosures of the mid and late first millennium BC are variety in form and very individual site histories. Specialisation and variability in enclosure function is likely (e.g. Fishers Road West; McCullagh and Mills 2000, 83) and there is a wide range in settlement size.

KNOWES AND THE RECTILINEAR SETTLEMENTS OF EAST LOTHIAN

Rectilinear ditched enclosures have long been recognised as a component of the East Lothian settlement record (Maxwell 1970), extending a distribution of similar sites known in northern England (Jobey 1966; McCord and Jobey 1968). Indeed, survey has extended the distribution of such sites across much of southern Scotland (e.g. Cowley 2000, 172–3; RCAHMS 1997, 154–5). Excavations in northern England (e.g. Jobey and Jobey 1988) and in south-west Scotland (Haggarty and Haggarty 1983; Johnston 1994) have established that the origins of these settlements may lie in the middle centuries of the first millennium BC, with a *floruit* in the last two centuries BC–first two centuries AD.

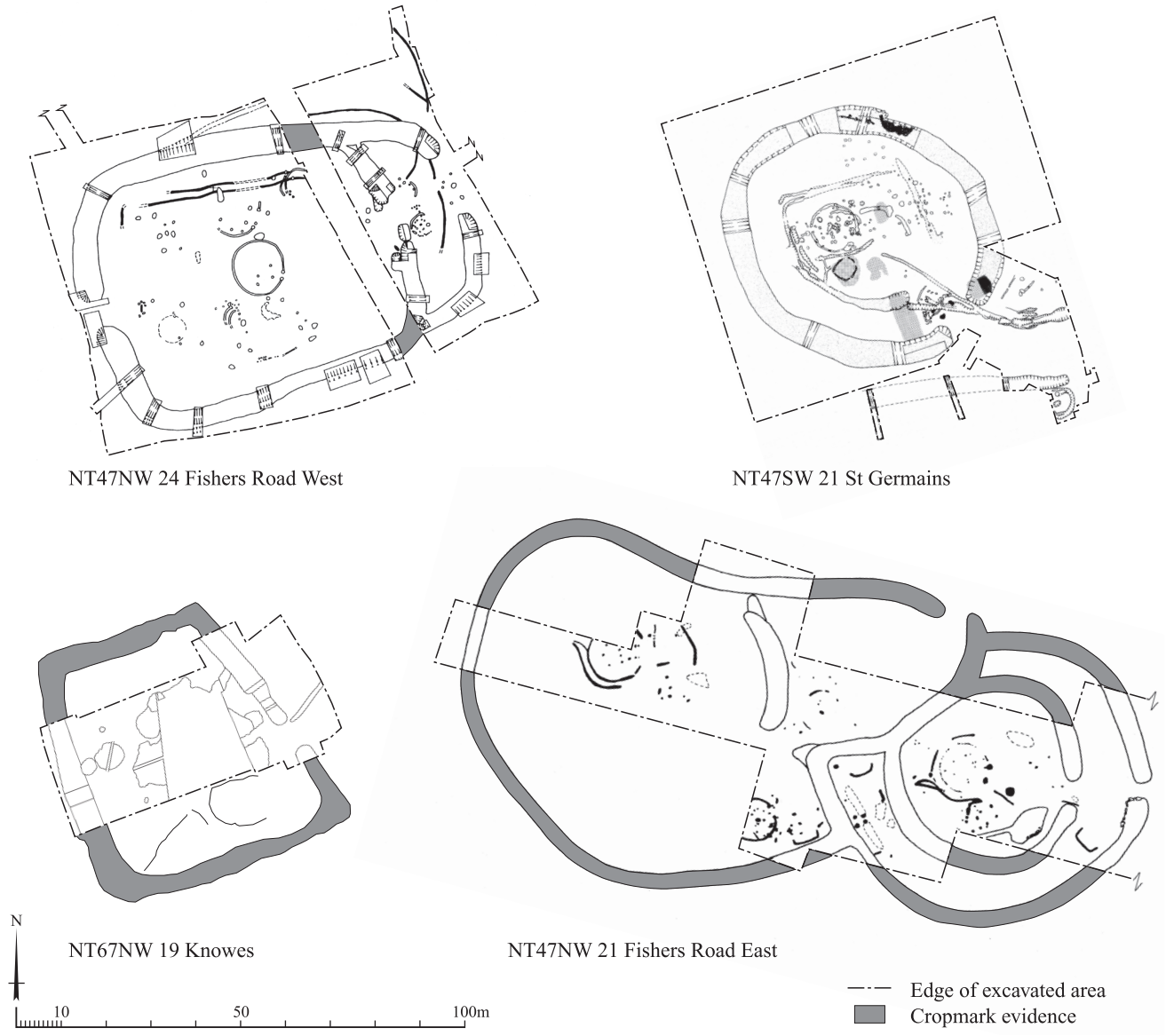

Figure 10.8
Simplified comparative plans of excavated Iron Age enclosures in East Lothian, drawn from both the TLEP and earlier campaigns (after Alexander and Watkins 1998, Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000 and RCAHMS mapping, GV004483)

There are many enclosures that have a tendency to rectilinearity, which may include defensive sites and others that may be agricultural in origin, or belong to medieval and later farmsteads, or simply of unknown context (Figure 10.9). However, the rectilinear settlement enclosures can be teased out from amongst the general grouping. They are square, rectangular or trapezoidal on plan, usually with sharply turned corners and mostly ranging from about 0.1ha to 0.5ha in internal area. Like the curvilinear sites, the rectilinear enclosures evidently housed domestic groups of varying size, but there is no evidence that they fall into discrete size categories, as has been suggested for their counterparts in north-east England (Haselgrove 1982). Their basic shared morphology is visually arresting (Figure 10.10). They tend not to

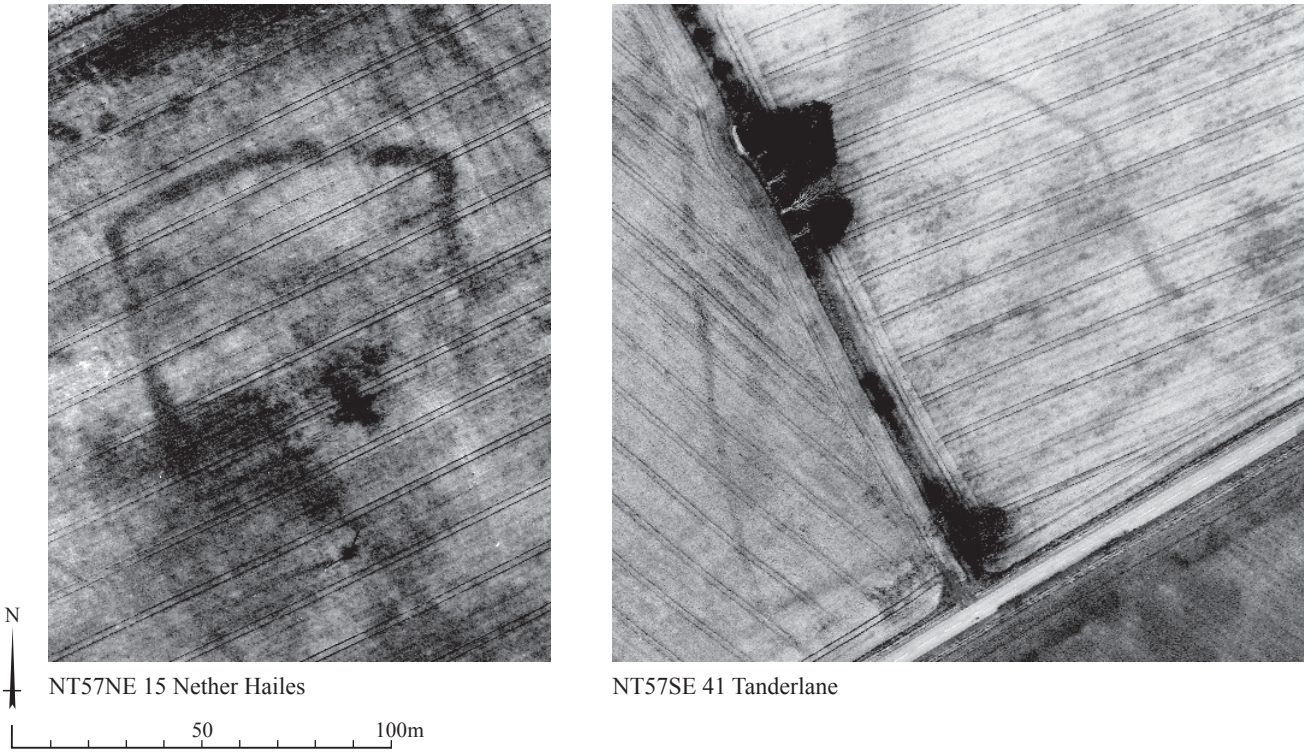

Figure 10.9
Rectified aerial photographs of Nether Hailes (NT75NE 15) and Tanderlane (NT57SE 41) illustrate the variety of rectilinear enclosures, the former perhaps a late Iron Age settlement and the latter probably not of prehistoric date at all (rectified versions of D74523 and A30450 respectively, Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004484)

occupy hilltop or dominant locations, but in some the enhancement of entrances and the digging of large ditches that often seem out of keeping with the interior space may indicate the importance of display, though water storage may also have been a factor.

At the smaller end of the rectilinear enclosure size range there are some rather irregular enclosures that invite comparison with the polygonal enclosure surrounding a single wall-trench and post-ring (ring-groove) house identified at St Germains (Figure 10.10; Alexander and Watkins 1998, 215–6). Although the St Germains polygonal enclosure was placed early in the sequence in the excavation report, this relationship is entirely inferential (D Alexander pers. comm.) and in view of the weight of dating evidence for predominantly rectilinear enclosure forms in the Later Iron Age, it may post-date the curvilinear enclosure.

Internal features are visible at many sites, most taking the form of amorphous 'blobs' which are assumed to be the scooped floors of roundhouses and yards. The excavations at Knowes (Chapter 5) have demonstrated that a settlement of scooped houses and yards overlies the rectilinear enclosure, though the enclosure ditch was still present as a feature of the site. This is a trend that can now be identified widely across East Lothian (see below). The excavated evidence (Jobey and Jobey 1988; Haggarty and Haggarty 1983; Johnstone 1994) indicates that wall-trench and post-ring houses may have been the norm within rectilinear settlements generally but, since Knowes was not fully excavated, it is not clear if this pertains in East Lothian. It seems likely, then, that the majority of macular cropmarks in the settlement enclosures may be the remains of scooped roundhouses, in a widespread pattern of essentially unenclosed settlement overlying derelict enclosures (below).

Knowes (Chapter 5) and East Bearford (Chapter 6) are good representatives of the some 50 rectilinear settlements identified to date in East Lothian (Figure

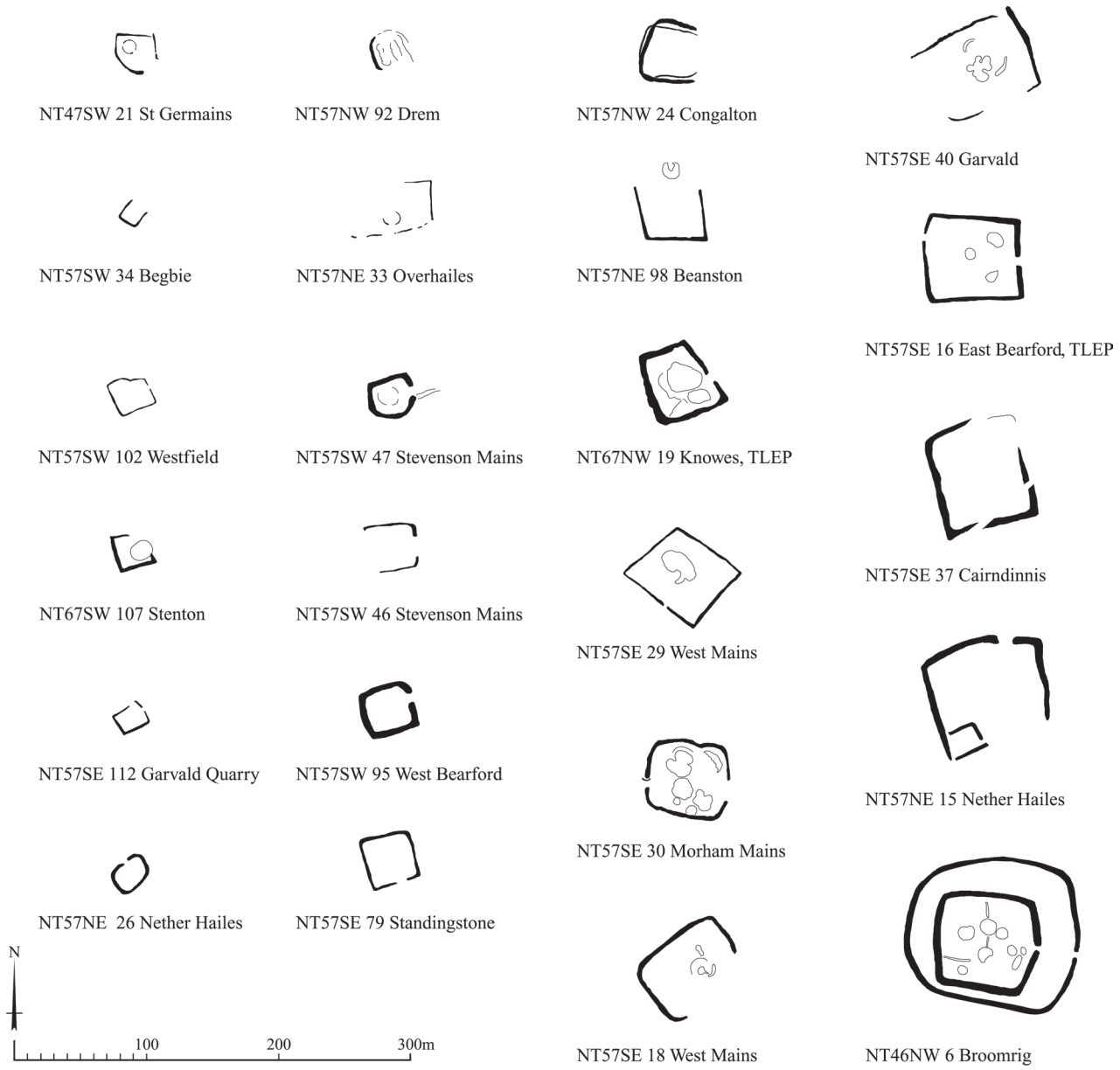

Figure 10.10
Comparative plans of selected late Iron Age rectilinear settlements, mostly from the TLEP study area (Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004485)

10.11). Evidence from both sites confirms a Later Iron Age date, which is in line with excavated sites in northern England and elsewhere in southern Scotland. At Knowes the settlement enclosure may have gone out of use somewhat earlier than comparable sites in south-west Scotland, where they may have continued into the early centuries AD (Cowley 2000). Although this may point to some regional variation in settlement pattern and trajectory in southern Scotland at this time, at Brixwold, just outside East Lothian there is some weak evidence to suggest that the ditches may have been refurbished in the first to second century AD (Crone and O'Sullivan 1997).

The apparent clustering of these sites in the vicinity of Traprain Law has become established in the literature (Armit 1997; Armit and Ralston 1997,

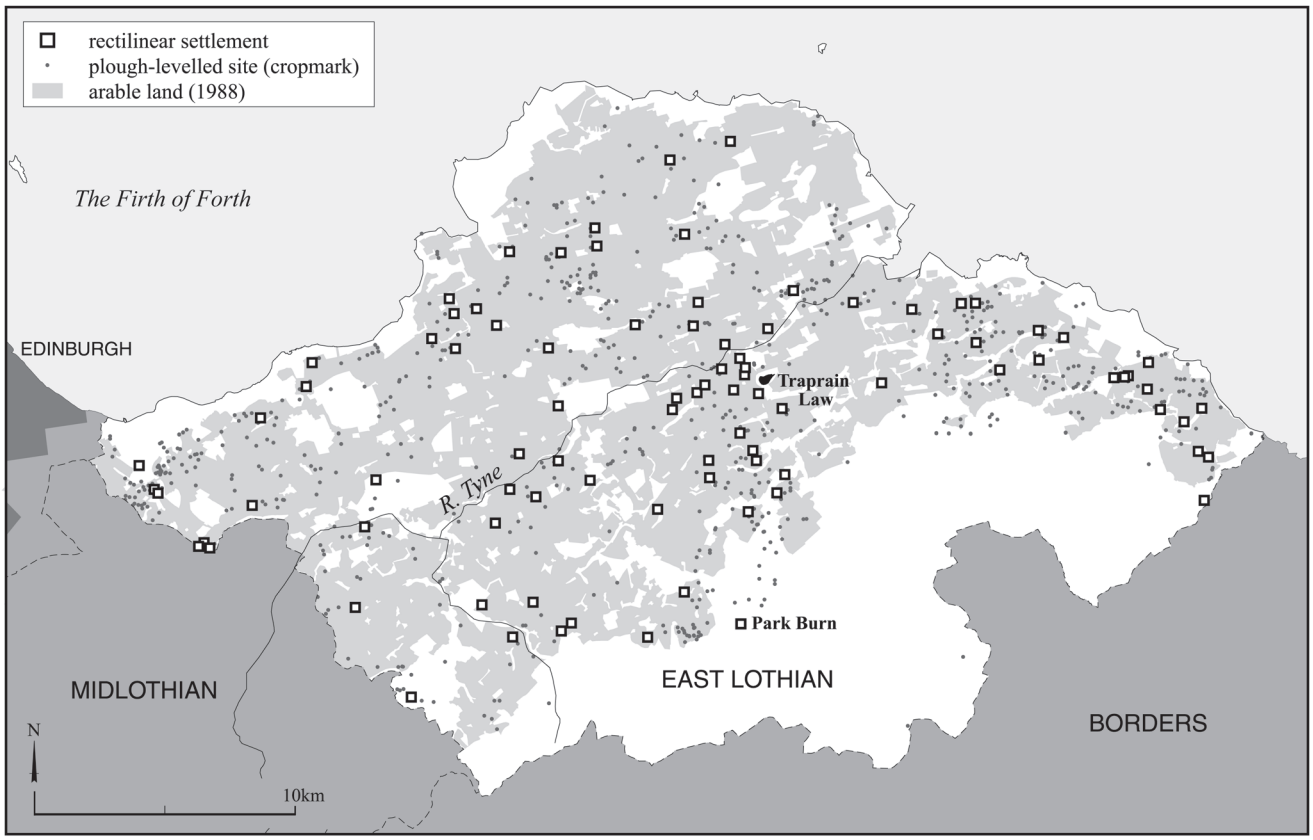

Figure 10.11
The distribution of late Iron Age rectilinear settlement enclosures in East Lothian (Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004486)

179; Macinnes 1984, 183–6), originating in the first distribution map published by Maxwell (1970). However, the distribution of sites now known from aerial survey (Figure 10.11) demonstrates that they are widely dispersed across the county. The localised clusters in their distribution, including the group near Traprain Law, reflect little more than the general clustering of cropmarked sites. Thus, the Traprain Law group is likely to reflect the responsiveness of the soils to cropmark formation and the concentration of aerial survey in an area with guaranteed returns (see Cowley 2002 for a commentary on survey bias). The more general gaps in the distribution coincide with the areas of imperfectly drained soils (Cowley and Dickson 2007; Cowley 2007), and urban development and opencast mining. The cluster around Traprain Law and the scatter of sites extending along the line of the A1 to the east illustrate how common the rectilinear settlements may have been, with a marked regularity in their disposition in the landscape. On the basis of these denser distributions they may have been disposed across the landscape at intervals of about 1km, establishing them as the basic farmsteads of the Later Iron Age. It is worth noting that this distribution has echoes in that of nineteenth-century farmsteadings and, in considering possible gaps in the distribution of rectilinear settlements, the sites occupied by medieval and later farms may be candidates, as may also be the case in parts of north-east England (Haselgrove forthcoming). In addition, the scatter of later first millennium BC dates from other types of site (see *The 'rag-bag': Iron Age enclosures in East Lothian* above) warn against an expectation that the Later Iron Age was a mono-culture of rectilinear settlements. Rather, the rectilinears are more likely a significant component of a settlement pattern comprising a multiplicity of forms, expressing both hierarchical structures and specialisation in function.

Figure 10.12
Two distinct phases of enclosure can be seen in the cropmark evidence for this rectilinear settlement at Congalton (NT58SW 24) near East Fortune (rectified version of C52622, Crown copyright: RCAHMS)

A further noteworthy element of the distribution of rectilinear enclosures is that they rarely overlie other sites. Indeed, while there is evidence for two successive phases of rectilinear enclosure at Congalton (Figure 10.12; Cowley 2007, 6–8), there are only three further sites in East Lothian where a rectilinear overlies an earlier enclosure. At the plough-levelled fort at Hanging Craig (Figure 10.4) the enclosure in the interior may be a rectilinear settlement, while at Park Burn (Figure 10.13) the only rectilinear settlement to survive as an earthwork in East Lothian has been constructed over the interior of a fort.[1] The third example is a plough-levelled site at Broomrig where a rectilinear settlement lies in the interior of a potentially earlier oval enclosure (Figure 10.1). This pattern has been identified more widely in south-west Scotland (Cowley 2000, 173) and, probably, in north-east England. For example, at Fawdon Dene, Northumberland, there is a rare example of a small round enclosure, dating perhaps to before 200 BC, which is overlain by a more sub-rectangular settlement (Oswald *et al.* 2006, 61–5). These are the exceptions, and it seems likely that many of the rectilinear sites may be new foundations in the Later Iron Age, perhaps reflecting an increase in settlement and a consequent intensification of agriculture. This possibility is in contrast to the number of rectilinears that appear to have essentially unenclosed settlements overlying their derelict remains (see below). Few of the rectilinears have any relationship to landscape features; the one exception at Congalton appears to overlie a pit-alignment (i.e. pit-defined boundary), probably of mid-first millennium BC date (Halliday 2002).

UNENCLOSED SETTLEMENT

Although settlements of unenclosed roundhouses have been recognised in East Lothian (e.g. Macinnes 1984), they have been difficult to identify with any certainty from the cropmark record, in contrast to other areas, such as Angus, Fife and Perthshire (e.g. RCAHMS 1994), and, as a consequence, have been under-represented in the record. The paucity of evidence has been compounded by a tendency to assign such unenclosed settlements to the Bronze Age. However, the Broxmouth excavations produced two distinct types of unenclosed settlement (Hill 1982a). The first predates the various phases of enclosure and comprises

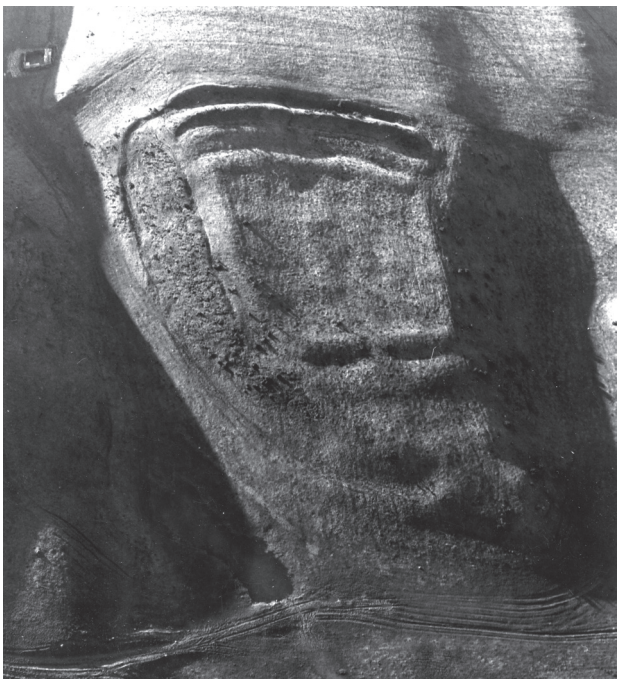

Figure 10.13
Oblique aerial view of the complex earthworks at Park Burn on the foothills of the Lammermuir Hills, showing the only known rectilinear settlement to survive as an earthwork in East Lothian overlying the interior (EL 4615, Crown Copyright, reproduced courtesy of Historic Scotland)

several ring-ditch houses, probably dating to the earlier and middle centuries of the first millennium BC. This is probably the case with the houses at Dryburn Bridge (Hill 1982b, 12–15), although it has been suggested on rather weak evidence (Dunwell 2007) that the early ring-ditch houses at the latter site may be enclosed. The second phase at Broxmouth comprises smaller, less regular roundhouses with scooped floors, and post-dates at least some of the enclosure circuits.

The TLEP has added little to the evidence from East Lothian for unenclosed settlement dating to the mid-first millennium BC. At Standingstone (Chapter 4) there are two phases of severely plough-truncated remains, apparently dating to the later first millennium BC. These may be the heavily truncated remains of ring-ditch houses but, in common with the remains of a possible unenclosed settlement at Fishers Road East (Haselgrove and Lowther 2000, 171–2), the state of preservation of these structures attaches considerable ambiguity to their interpretation. However, the TLEP excavations have produced much better information for Roman Iron Age unenclosed houses at Knowes, and these have directly helped to develop the interpretation of otherwise ambiguous cropmarked data.

Unenclosed settlement of the Roman Iron Age

The excavations at Broxmouth identified three houses with scooped floors, which have been interpreted as post-dating the various defensive enclosed phases of settlement (Hill 1982a, 169, 171–5) and are assumed to be a small unenclosed settlement.[2] All were built in scoops up to 1m in depth, indicating that sunken floors were a deliberate feature of the building, rather than simply a by-product of the levelling of a stance for the house (*ibid*., 173). More widely, Hill (1982b, 8–12) identified a pattern of unenclosed settlement across the Tyne–Forth area, often overlying derelict settlements and fortifications. A date range between the very end of the first millennium BC and the first two centuries AD is indicated. In East Lothian, excavations at St Germains produced evidence comparable to that from Broxmouth, comprising scooped floors and paved areas set within the derelict remains of an Iron Age enclosure, and possibly dating to the first to the third century AD (Alexander and Watkins 1998, 247–8).

To this evidence can now be added that from Knowes, Whittingehame Tower and Standingstone, investigated by the TLEP, and from Eweford and Phantassie, excavated in advance of the upgrading of the A1 (Lelong and Macgregor 2007). At Knowes (Chapter 5) the remains of paved areas and scooped floors of roundhouses post-date the rectilinear settlement enclosure, although the ditches may still have been actively silting when the excavated scooped features were created, or the scooped area as a whole could even be a primary feature (Chapter 9). The occupation of the scooped settlement probably spans the first century BC and first and second centuries AD. This dating compares directly with that for paved surfaces and stone-built structures that expanded out over derelict ditches at Eweford (Innes 2007, 140–2). Less comprehensible occupation evidence dating between the first to third and fourth to sixth centuries AD was excavated at Whittingehame Tower (Chapter 3). However, Whittingehame shares the scooped and paved/cobbled components identified above, lying within the derelict remains of an earlier settlement enclosure. The very complex suite of houses, yards and paved areas from Phantassie are broadly analogous and span the last two centuries BC and early centuries AD (Lelong 2007). As noted above, the features at Standingstone that post-date the Late Bronze Age enclosure are difficult to interpret due to severe plough-truncation, but they may include broadly comparable buildings; similar ambiguity attends the interpretation of the remains of a possible unenclosed settlement at Fishers Road East (Haselgrove and Lowther 2000, 171-2). Undated, but also potentially comparable, is the possible scooped house at Brixwold, Midlothian (Crone and O'Sullivan 1997, 391–4, 402). Finally, and considerably less certain, is the suggestion from the geophysical survey at East Linton that houses may have extended across the slighted ramparts (Chapter 6).

This excavation evidence can now be marshalled to sustain a compelling case for unenclosed settlements of scooped houses and yards as a widespread component of the settlement pattern in the period between the second to first centuries BC and the second or third century AD. That this might be extended slightly later is suggested at Whittingehame (Chapter 3), where the accumulation of material on the second surface in and beside the scooped feature has a first–third century AD *terminus post quem* and contains material of fourth–sixth century AD date on the top. The evidence, in particular from Broxmouth and Knowes, bears directly on the interpretation of irregular features (blobs) recorded as cropmarks on aerial photographs, both within enclosures and also in apparently unenclosed contexts. For example, at Morham Mains such blobs in the interior of the enclosure are, in places, hard

Figure 10.14
Rectified aerial photograph of Morham Mains (NT57SE 30) showing the 'blobs' in the interior hard up against the inner lip of the enclosure ditch, suggesting they belong to an overlying settlement of scooped floored houses similar to those excavated at Knowes (rectified version of EL4144, Crown copyright: RCAHMS)

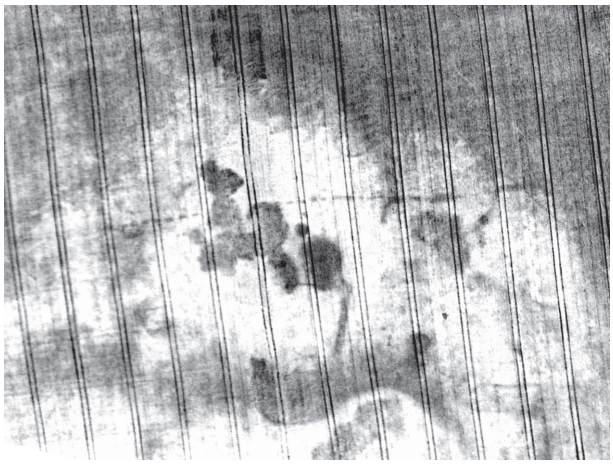

Figure 10.15
Rectified aerial photograph of the complex intercutting scooped house floors and yards recorded as cropmarks at Congalton (NT58SW 25) reflecting similar features to those excavated at Knowes (rectified version of C52622, Crown copyright: RCAHMS)

up against the inner lip of the ditch (Figure 10.14), indicating that the internal bank had been slighted or removed and that the scooped houses, which are marked by the blobs, post-date the enclosed phase of settlement. One consequence of the widespread pattern of unenclosed settlements of scooped floored houses and yards occupying derelict enclosures that has been suggested is that these later features will obscure earlier buildings, including any that might be primary to the enclosure.

Of course, there is potential for these morphologically rather diverse and poorly defined features to be confused with other features, such as quarry- and gravel-pits, but the examples overlying many of the settlement enclosures, and well-defined examples such as Congalton (Figure 10.15), form a reference collection against which less well-defined examples can be assessed. Adding to the problems of identification from the cropmark record, these features are very vulnerable to plough truncation as, for example, was the case at St Germains (Alexander and Watkins 1998). The distribution map of possible Roman Iron Age unenclosed settlements (Figure 10.16) is therefore somewhat speculative, including both excavated examples and putative sites identified on the basis of admittedly coarse cropmarked data, but does serve to illustrate the positive symbiosis between the excavation evidence and its bearing on the interpretation of cropmarks. To the cropmark evidence can be added the instances of earthwork remains of similar settlements. At The Chesters, Drem, (Figure 10.2; RCAHMS 1924, fig. 47) scooped floored houses and yards can be seen in earthwork form overlying the ramparts and extending across the interior. The small scooped houses and yards at North Berwick Law (Figure 10.17) are a further good illustration of the evidence from earthwork remains.

The variation in the locations of these unenclosed scooped settlements demonstrates a complexity to settlement foci and continuity in the Late/Roman Iron Age. In some cases, such as Knowes, there may be continuity, or perhaps a relatively short gap, in occupation between the rectilinear enclosure and the unenclosed houses. On the other hand, at Whittingehame Tower, there was probably a break of many centuries before the scooped settlement occupied the long derelict prehistoric enclosure. Both Knowes and Whittingehame share the very deliberate choice of inhabitation of a derelict enclosure. At Congalton (Figure 10.15) in contrast, the intercutting scooped house floors do not appear to overlie any

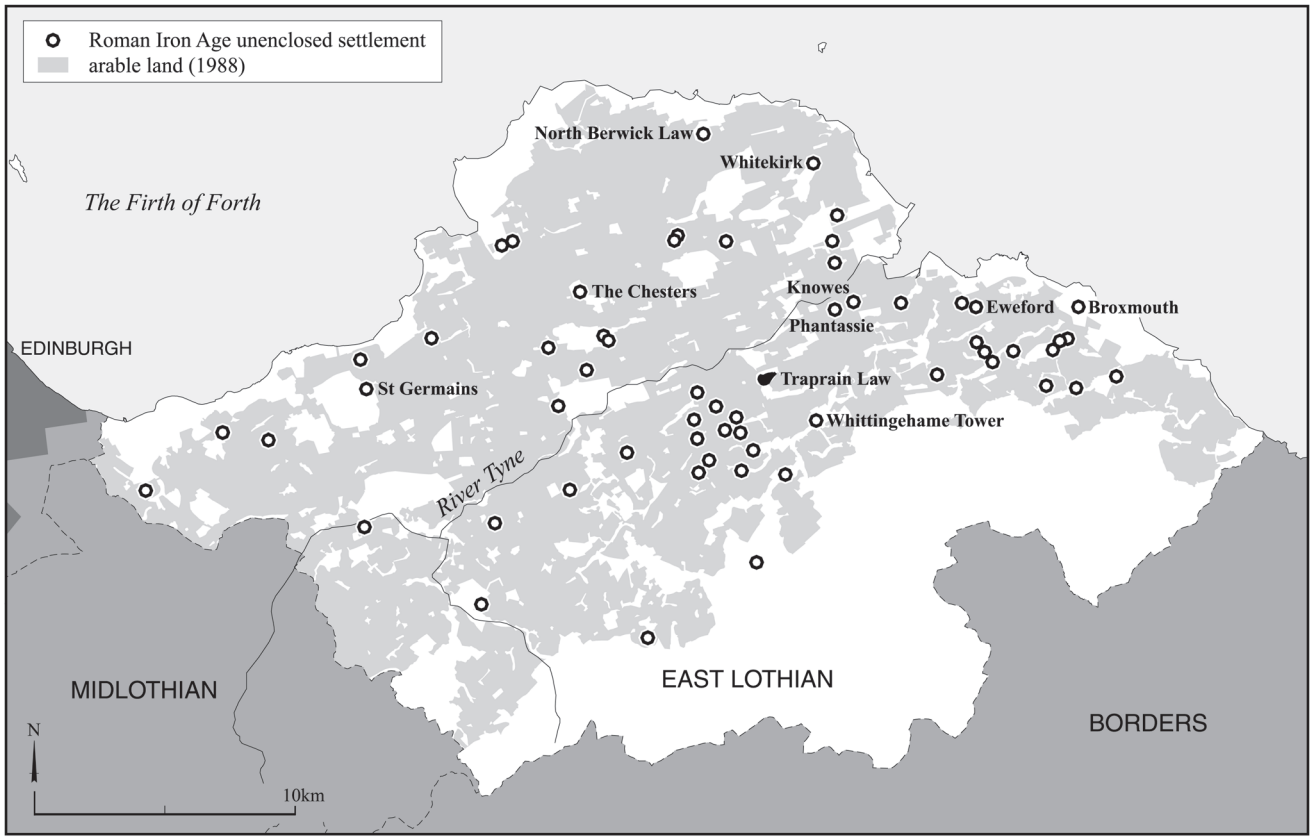

Figure 10.16
The speculative distribution of possible unenclosed settlements of Roman Iron Age date in East Lothian
(Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004487)

earlier settlement or, in turn, to be overlain by later settlement. This variation points to at least three potential trajectories in the evolution of settlement at this time: new foundations; broad continuity of occupation; or (re)occupation of long derelict sites.

The widespread 'speculative' distribution of unenclosed settlements of Roman Iron Age date suggests a dense pattern of occupation of the East Lothian plain, probably on a scale similar to that of the Later Iron Age. The mid-first millennium AD occupation at Whittingehame Tower also illustrates the potential for this material to fill a marked lacuna in settlement sequences, though the relevant features at Whittingehame would be almost impossible to identify with certainty as cropmarks. It is also worth noting that Phantassie singularly failed to register as a cropmark, probably due, amongst other factors, to the high proportion of cobbled surfaces and made ground, and the almost complete absence of negative features of any size, such as ditches.

SETTLEMENTS IN THE LATER PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE: SEEING COMPLEXITY AND CHANGE

The modern day landscape of the East Lothian plain (e.g. the lowland area) is one of extensive enclosure and arable cropping, ordered field patterns, discrete built-up areas and predominantly nineteenth century farmsteadings. There are few landscape features that are much more than two centuries old, reflecting the clean sweep of the wider landscape that is so characteristic of the agricultural improvements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While some continuity in settlement location from the medieval period, if not before (see *Knowes and the Rectilinear Settlements of East*

Lothian above), is highly likely, this is clearly not a general model of landscape that should be extended into the past (Cowley and Dickson 2007). Indeed, what emerges from the work of the TLEP, the excavations in advance of the upgrade of the A1 (Lelong and MacGregor 2007) and the survey data is of a landscape in which multiple periods of remains survive routinely in a patchwork of settlement and land use.

For example, by the mid-first millennium BC, the remains of long derelict settlements may have been common features in the landscape, in some cases inviting re-use in later periods, born out by the evidence for the recutting of earlier ditches and other activity dating to this period from three of the TLEP sites (East Linton, Foster Law and Standingstone). The differing patterns of settlement foundation, abandonment and re-use identified above suggest that later prehistoric communities occupied much more dynamic landscapes than those that characterise the recent past in Britain. Settlement may have been relatively mobile, sites being characterised by intermittent occupation and periodic abandonment, played out over perhaps one or two centuries at a time, and possibly considerably less. Thus communities may have established new settlements on virgin sites, or reoccupied long abandoned enclosures that were evidently still referenced. This dynamism can be extended beyond the boundaries of settlements into the wider landscape, which is likely to have been fragmented by woodland rough ground, poorly drained areas, and a plethora of watercourses, which have been subsequently smoothed out, in particular over the last two centuries.

Beyond this general commentary on landscape, specific elements of the settlement record are

Figure 10.17
These scooped floored houses and yards at the foot of North Berwick Law are likely to be a Roman Iron Age settlement (based on survey drawing ELD/2/3, 12 May 1954, Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004488)

considerably better understood as a result of recent work, while in other cases new possibilities have been opened up. The identification of a variety of Late Bronze Age enclosure forms, within which hierarchies of settlement may be present, is a considerable advance on our knowledge of settlement at this date, especially in lowland contexts. The early dates for these enclosures, which might otherwise have been assigned to the Iron Age on present knowledge places East Lothian in the vanguard for this development, certainly in Scotland.

The expression of hierarchy, or social scale, in the Late Bronze Age settlements may also be increasingly evident in other periods. For example, the considerable variation in the scale of the ditches in the Later Iron Age rectilinear settlement enclosures and their internal area, suggest significant variation in community size, the expression of status and potentially the functions of sites. A further manifestation of this settlement pattern may also lie behind the wider patterning in the division of the landscape by pit-defined boundaries, probably in the mid-first millennium BC.

While pit-defined boundaries have not been discussed earlier, lying outwith the main settlement-based focus of the TLEP, they are relevant to the consideration of wider patterns in the landscape. A widespread, but uneven, distribution has been recorded in the cropmarks and the contrast of the pit-alignment distribution with the general spread of other cropmark sites demonstrates that their disposition is not random, nor distorted by survey bias, but rather a real reflection of a patterning in the past (Figure 10.18). Indeed, many of the pit-alignments concentrate around major hillforts, and in a few cases form relatively coherent systems of enclosure, of which Kaeheughs, Barney Mains is an excellent example (Figure 10.19). This distribution and associations probably reflect patterns

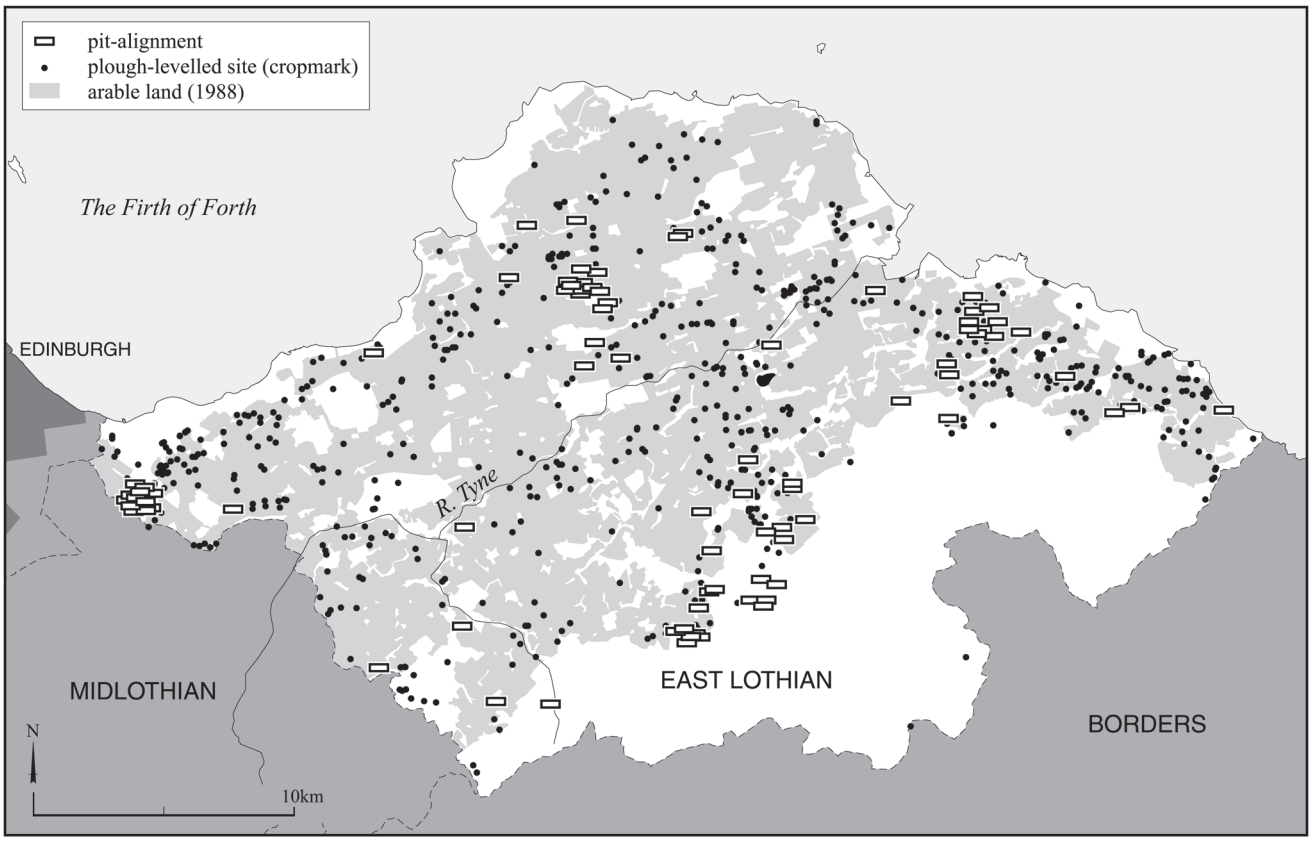

Figure 10.18
The distribution of pit-defined boundaries in East Lothian shown against the generalised extent of arable ground and all sites recorded as cropmarks (Crown copyright: RCAHMS, GV004489. Arable ground derived from MLURI mapping based on 1988 aerial photography).

Figure 10.19
The fort at Kaeheughs, Barney Mains, survives as earthworks, while the complex remains of an enclosure system and a palisaded enclosure have been recorded as cropmarks in the field below. Much of the enclosure system is made up of closely spaced pits, arranged as a string of beads and referred to as pit-alignments; these are likely to have been supplemented by an upcast bank. The enclosures may relate to stock control at a site that may have been locally pre-eminent (Copyright: D W Harding, EL/4122)

in later prehistoric economic and political structures (Cowley and Dickson 2007, 49–50), with the emergence of specialised delineated areas of landscape, perhaps associated with power centres within socially and economically differentiated settlement systems and potentially specialised forms of landuse, mixing stock and arable. The dating of the pit-alignments and the sites with which they may have been associated suggests that this pattern may have emerged by the mid-first millennium BC (Halliday 2002). A Neolithic date for pit-alignments has been suggested on the basis of the Ewart Park, Northumberland, excavations (Miket 1981) but, as this is based on Grooved Ware that may well be residual, such dating should not be sustained (Barber 1985; Halliday 2002).

The ability of survey to record certain types of remains has been a recurrent theme, and here the positive symbiosis between excavated structures, such as scooped houses, and the identification of their equivalents in the cropmark record is worth highlighting. This has allowed a distribution map, albeit speculative, of Roman Iron Age unenclosed settlements to be built (Figure 10.16), populating a previously poorly represented period of settlement. The occupation in and around the amorphous scooped feature at Whittingehame (above) is less helpful in this respect, but its identification at least provides one clue to why settlement remains of the mid-first millennium AD have proved so illusive. The recognition of a variety of more or less certainly Late Bronze Age enclosures is a development that requires a long hard look at our expectations of what are frequently assumed to be Iron Age enclosures. It is these challenges in differing sources of archaeological information speaking to each other that is the clue to effectively painting the regional pictures of settlement, where the detail and the broad-brush complement and challenge each other.

NOTES

1. The 'enclosure' at the eastern end of the East Linton site (Chapter 6) might also come into this category, but its perimeter is much slighter than these other three examples.
2. There is, however, a possibility that some of the ramparts continued in use and that a complexity of possible sequences must be allowed for, within which the interpretation of the houses as unenclosed is only one option.