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The Traprain Law Environs Project

Fieldwork and Excavations 2000-2004

Colin Haselgrove

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Chapter 11

Characterising the Traprain Law environs: some reflections

COLIN HASELGROVE

The preceding four chapters have reviewed the absolute dating of the TLEP sites and sought to place the enclosure types and excavated finds in a wider regional context (Chapters 7–10). In addition, there have been two major studies of the later prehistory of the region since the fieldwork was completed, the first arising from the excavations along the new A1 dual carriageway (Lelong and MacGregor 2007), the other part of a wider survey of northern Britain (Harding 2004). Although written from differing theoretical standpoints and thus sometimes at odds over the significance and interpretation of particular features of the record, these two syntheses together offer an excellent overview of later prehistoric societies in East Lothian, which it would be superfluous to repeat here.

This concluding discussion will therefore be restricted to three main areas: first, to review the extent to which the TLEP results have expanded our knowledge of later prehistoric settlement in the immediate vicinity of Traprain Law itself; second, to review some features of the individual TLEP sites which stand out as unusual or call for comment on other grounds; and last, to reflect on some lessons of the project for future research in East Lothian and outstanding issues and questions with which this could profitably engage next.

SETTLEMENT DYNAMICS IN THE TRAPRAIN LAW ENVIRONS

After a nearly a century when the Traprain Law area was more notable for the lack of excavations at other sites, the new millennium has seen a burst of activity, with no less than 13 being excavated inside the TLEP study area since 2001 (Figure 1.3 above). Eight of these were later prehistoric settlements, of which four were explored on a reasonably large scale: the enclosures at Knowes, Standingstone and Whittingehame, and the unenclosed settlement at Phantassie. Smaller evaluations were undertaken on the enclosure ditches at East Bearford, East Linton and

Foster Law, and a tiny homestead was exposed in its entirety at Biel Water (Lelong and MacGregor 2007). The A1 programme also uncovered isolated Iron Age cist burials at Pencraig Hill and Eweford West; two more later prehistoric occupation sites at South Belton and Thistly Cross; and part of another enclosed settlement at Eweford Cottages, the last four all just to the east of the formal TLEP study area.

Knowledge of later prehistoric settlement has been further expanded by the mapping programme undertaken by RCHAMS in East Lothian (Chapter 10) and by geophysical survey of 24 other cropmark sites as part of the TLEP. Most of the latter fit within the general umbrella of ditched curvilinear or rectilinear enclosures, but they included a palisaded site at Nunraw Barns; an open settlement at Tynninghame, and (less certainly) another at Preston Mains; and a large rectangular building at Sled Hill (Appendix 1, nos 14, 28–30). The latter structure is reminiscent of the well-known timber halls at Doon Hill, Dunbar (Hope Taylor 1980) and like them – and two more at Whitekirk (Brown 1983; Lelong and MacGregor 2007, 209–11) – could fit either into an early Neolithic or into an Early Historic context. And whilst there were no surface finds from the geophysical surveys, metal-detecting and fieldwalking have yielded an interesting assemblage of Roman finds from Athelstaneford and Harperdean, both within the TLEP area, and at Aberlady on the coast (Appendix 2). This latter site also yielded several Anglo-Saxon finds, suggesting that a so-called ‘productive site’ similar to those known in other coastal locations in southern Britain existed here.

Other recent advances include the final report on the influential excavations at Dryburn Bridge, 7.5km from the eastern edge of the TLEP area (Dunwell 2007), leaving nearby Broxmouth as the only one of the three major 1970s rescue excavations in East Lothian yet to be published. Meanwhile, small-scale excavation of another enclosure at West Loan, Prestonpans (Jones 2006) has brought to four the number of excavated sites near Port Seton, 10km west

of the TLEP area, the others being Saint Germain's (Alexander and Watkins 1998) and the two Fishers Road sites (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000), where a third enclosure has recently been recorded from the air (Chapter 1). Although the 'Port Seton' and 'Dunbar' clusters – the latter also including the promontory fort and later Anglian settlement at Castle Park, Dunbar (Perry 2000) – are probably too far from the TLEP sites and certainly from each other to be part of a single local community, they could well have belonged to the same regional grouping – what Hill (2006) terms a 'cluster of communities' – and participated in the same embedded social networks. Either way, therefore, these other sites provide a useful comparative resource.

Even with all the new data, no one would pretend that the settlement evidence from the Traprain Law area comes anywhere near to the resource painstakingly built up over nearly four decades for Danebury hillfort and its hinterland in southern England (e.g. Cunliffe 2000; 2008). In many respects, it never will, given the quite different depositional and soil regimes in the two areas. Nevertheless, there is now a far more substantial body of archaeological evidence with which to discuss the structure and dynamics of later prehistoric settlement in the TLEP area than was the case even a few years ago. The data are also far better than for many supposedly equivalent paramount centres elsewhere in Britain or on the continent (cf. Haselgrove *et al.* 2001) and have three additional strengths: firstly, the relevant sites all have some radiocarbon dates, aiding chronological comparison. Secondly, much of the environs data was collected by concurrent projects, applying similar methodologies to complementary aspects of the record. Whilst we must continue to beware of the possibility of taphonomically-induced differences between sites, this reduces many of the uncertainties inherent in inter-site studies (Chapter 7). Finally, two further clusters of excavated sites lie just beyond the project area, near enough to be useful for direct comparison and for analysis on a regional scale, but far enough away for purely local differences to emerge.

Chronological patterning

One of the more interesting outcomes of the TLEP was the plentiful evidence it yielded for Later Bronze Age settlement, with up to four of the enclosures being occupied at this period (Figure 11.1). Standingstone, where the Late Bronze Age hillslope enclosure proved to overlie an open or semi-enclosed settlement of late

second millennium BC date, is the best documented, but the palisade and at least one ditch circuit at East Linton are also clearly of Late Bronze Age date, whilst the Whittingehame enclosure may date to this period. The earlier of the two Foster Law enclosures is another contender, given that its successor is Earlier Iron Age. Only the two rectilinear enclosures at Knowes and East Bearford seem to be new foundations in the Later Iron Age, although this cannot be pushed too far, since Knowes yielded a radiocarbon date and flints implying that the location was periodically frequented in the Bronze Age, whilst trenching at East Bearford was confined to the exterior of the site.

The precise extent and chronology of the Later Bronze Age/Earliest Iron Age settlement on Traprain Law will undoubtedly become clearer when the results of the recent work on the summit are published (Armit *et al.* forthcoming). According to the interim reports, this occupation probably began in the later second millennium BC, but most of the radiocarbon dates fall in the tenth or ninth centuries cal BC, consistent with intensive settlement at this period (Armit *et al.* 2002; 2005; 2006). This was probably when the terraced bank defining the so-called 'summit' enclosure was built. On the western shelf, however, some occupation probably continued into the eighth or even seventh centuries BC, judging from the Hallstatt C razor and the early iron socketed axe, but for how long and what scale is quite unclear. *Contra* Coles (1960), most of the bronzes and moulds found in the earlier excavations probably belong to the Ewart Park horizon (B O'Connor pers. comm.), as does the small hoard of socketed axes found in 2004 (Armit *et al.* 2005; O'Connor forthcoming).

In general, the new excavations found little to contradict prevailing wisdom that there was limited activity on Traprain Law for most of the Iron Age, although some traces of possible Iron Age buildings were found. It still seems most likely, however, that the inner and outer ramparts were built then rather than earlier, although the inner rampart was already long abandoned when the hilltop was reoccupied in the early centuries AD (Armit *et al.* 2006). It seems, however, that we can now discount Hill's (1987) argument that Traprain Law was primarily a ceremonial centre during Roman Iron Age, since the recent work suggests the presence of a sizeable resident population, especially in the third and fourth centuries AD.

Although the detail remains to be filled in, the TLEP results imply a more complex pattern of Later Bronze Age settlement than previous discussions of the area

CHARACTERISING THE TRAPRAIN LAW ENVIRONS

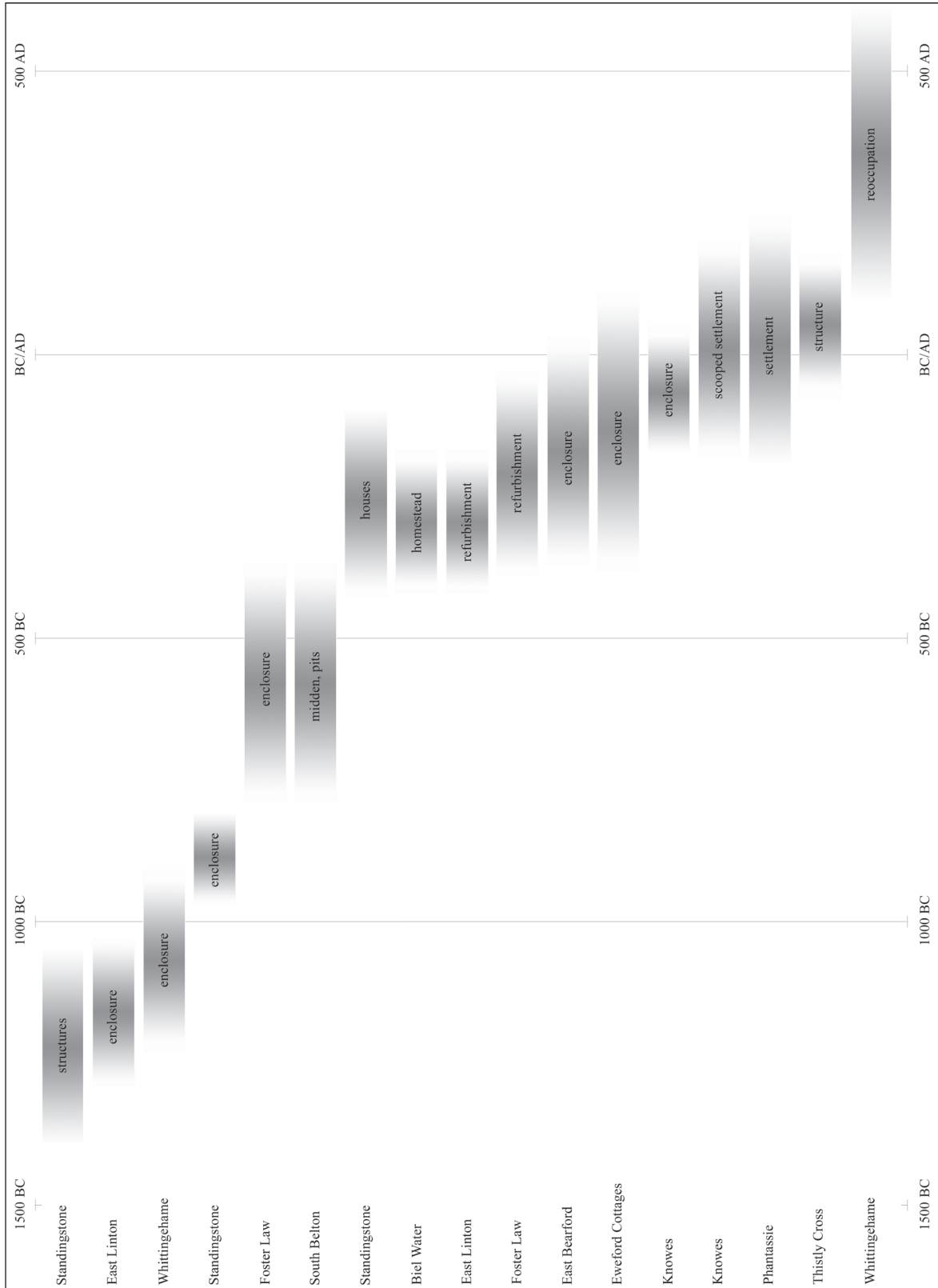


Figure 11.1

The chronological span of activity on later prehistoric settlements in the Traprain Law environs excavated as part of the TLEP and A1 investigations

have allowed. Whilst invoking terms like settlement hierarchy perhaps runs a risk of overemphasising the distinctions between sites, it is clear that by *c.* 1000 BC, a wide range of enclosure types existed in East Lothian. Leaving aside the unusually extensive and artefact-rich settlement on Traprain Law, they include both large and smaller enclosures, defined by substantial ditches and banks, not just by palisades, and in two cases, apparently subject to multiple acts of enclosure within the Bronze Age. The examples we know about so far were situated on high ground and/or at ravine edges, although this picture may change with further work; two of them at least occupy locations first frequented in the Neolithic, and, at Standingstone and Traprain Law, the act of enclosure was secondary to a phase of open settlement. Whilst it is unlikely that all these sites were inhabited at the same point in time in the Later Bronze Age – at Standingstone, the enclosed phase was quite short-lived, perhaps suggesting a significant element of mobility in the settlement pattern – they nevertheless give the impression of a reasonably high population density at this time.

If the Later Bronze Age stands out as one of the high spots in the occupation history of the TLEP sites, it is noteworthy that the exact opposite applies to the sites excavated along the A1. None of these yielded any obvious traces of Later Bronze Age settlement, and only four of over 120 radiocarbon dates are even partly within the range 1300–800 cal BC. Three are from late second millennium BC cremations at Eweford West, whilst the fourth, which falls between 900–780 cal BC (SUERC-7530), came from an outlying pit at Howmuir on the site of an earlier Bronze Age semi-enclosed settlement and/or field system, slightly earlier than, but in other respects comparable to the pre-enclosure phase at Standingstone (cf. Lelong and MacGregor 2007, 284–7).

Such a disparity between the two datasets deserves an attempt at explanation. Given that the A1 aimed to avoid known cropmark sites – and assuming that the difference is not simply due to chance – the most likely scenario appears to be that Later Bronze Age settlement was more focused on enclosure than either periods before or after. This would help account for the absence of sites in the road corridor, but begs another question: why is it that, unlike Traprain Law, neither of the Bronze Age enclosures excavated by the TLEP yielded much evidence of internal occupation? At Standingstone, this could admittedly be due to the severity of the ploughing, and at Whittingehame earlier features could have been lost when the scoop was

dug, but even so, there were fewer traces of occupation than might have been expected; for instance, there were few crop remains and even less evidence of *in situ* crop processing, although this too might have other explanations.

One plausible alternative might be to envisage the excavated enclosures not as settlements, but as enclosed spaces used for communal activities and purposes such as ritual, storage, assembly and providing defence when required for a population most or all of whom lived outside. A possible analogy is the Late Bronze Age complex at Malleville-sur-le-Bec (Eure) in northern France, where – clustered outside a ditched and palisaded enclosure of the same size as Standingstone and equally devoid of internal features – are numerous roundhouses and other settlement features, which from building replacements probably represent the remains of a community of no more than four or five households spanning a period of several generations (Carozza and Marcigny 2007, 59–62). Recent geophysical survey at Castle Hill, Wittenham (Berks), suggests a similar spatial arrangement may have existed there (R Bradley pers. comm.).

In contrast to the Later Bronze Age situation – and setting to one side the question of continuing activity on Traprain Law – there is as yet very limited evidence for Earlier Iron Age settlement in the environs area. The only significant event detected on any of the TLEP sites between the eighth and the fourth centuries BC was the construction of a new enclosure at Foster Law (its undated predecessor might also belong within this period rather than earlier). Apart from this, there is a single radiocarbon date from the upper fill of the ditch at Standingstone, which implies that the abandoned Bronze Age enclosure may occasionally have been frequented at this time. The picture from the A1 sites is similar, with signs of settlement activity restricted to two scoops at South Belton, one of which yielded midden material dated to the Earlier Iron Age (Lelong and MacGregor 2007, 125).¹

The other relevant find along the A1 was a well-built rectangular stone cist dug into the Neolithic burial mound at Eweford West (just beyond the TLEP area), containing the cremated remains of an adult of Earlier Iron Age date and a child (*ibid.*, 122–3). Ironically, given the scarcity of Iron Age burials of any period in Britain, one of the pieces of curated human bone incorporated in the later cist built on top of the infilled ditch terminal at Knowes (Chapter 5) was also apparently of Earlier Iron Age date. It is just possible therefore that the Eweford cist – which contained

lithic artefacts and beaker sherds mixed in with the human remains (although these could be residual) – is in fact a later construction, although it is true that in form, the Eweford cist is quite different from the one at Knowes, which much more closely resembles the example excavated on Pencraig Hill (Lelong and McGregor 2007, 123–4). As it happens, this contained cremated remains of Later Iron Age date and of similar age to the other curated human bone in the Knowes cist.

The low profile of Earlier Iron Age settlement in the TLEP area is consistent with the picture in many other parts of Scotland and central Britain (cf. Haselgrove *et al.* 2001; Haselgrove and Pope 2007), but it is too early to be certain whether this reflects a genuine reduction in the number of occupied sites compared to the Later Bronze Age or the Later Iron Age. As Ralston and Ashmore emphasise (2007, 231–2), when poor radiocarbon dates are excluded and only well-dated sites considered, the differences in site numbers between periods are small enough to have arisen by chance alone. Nevertheless, given the complementary coverage provided by the TLEP and the A1 investigations, it is looking increasingly likely that there were fewer Earlier Iron Age sites in this part of East Lothian than either before or after.

On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence from elsewhere on the coastal plain to suggest that the Earlier Iron Age settlement pattern was not appreciably less complex than in the Later Bronze Age, even if it involved fewer sites. At Dryburn Bridge, the palisaded enclosure, cemetery and several of the houses, although not closely dated, are all earlier than 400 cal BC (Dunwell 2007), whilst at Broxmouth, the early open settlement of large houses, the initial enclosure of the hilltop, and at least some of the burials, probably belong to this period, despite the problems with the quality of some of the radiocarbon dates (Ralston and Ashmore 2007). There are hints, too, of some Earlier Iron Age activity at Fishers Road, possibly involving enclosure, although a clear context for this is lacking (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000). In short, a wide variety of settlement types are attested in the region during the Earlier Iron Age – large and small, open and enclosed, ditched and palisaded – even if as yet there is little prospect of defining any more detailed spatial or temporal trends within the four or five centuries in question.

At Broxmouth and Dryburn Bridge, the buildings belonging to the earlier settlement phases were rebuilt several times, implying lengthy occupations

(cf. Hill 1982a). This could yet prove to be one of the fundamental distinctions between the Later Bronze Age and the Earlier Iron Age, with fewer settlements occupied in the latter period, but often for much longer. In addition, the substantial timber houses found on them could have accommodated larger households, so that despite the much smaller site numbers, the overall population densities may have been fairly similar (although this is not to say that they were). A variant of the model proposed by Cowley (1998; 1999) for later prehistoric settlement in Sutherland might well apply to the Earlier Iron Age in East Lothian, with occupation focused on long-lived sites in the most favourable areas and a decline in the number of short-lived sites particularly on the poorer soils and/or more marginal topographies, whether due to climate change or for other reasons. This would accord with the pollen evidence, since it is not until the later first millennium BC, and mostly after 350 cal BC, that we see the start of the well-documented assault on the remaining woodland across much of southern Scotland and northern England (Tipping 1994; 1997), evidently driven on by a combination of agricultural intensification and sustained settlement expansion into hitherto sparsely-occupied areas (e.g. Haselgrove 1982; Van der Veen 1992).

In the TLEP area, the resurgence in settlement numbers in the Later Iron Age was accompanied – at least to begin with – by an increased emphasis on enclosure. At both East Linton and Foster Law, the earlier circuits were refurbished (although like Broxmouth, both sites could have been continuously occupied since the Earlier Iron Age), but many were constructed anew. Sites where this can be demonstrated include the two sub-rectangular enclosures sampled by the TLEP at East Bearford and Knowes, and another at Brixwold (Crone and O’Sullivan 1997), and several of broadly curvilinear form, ranging from the small palisaded homestead at Biel Water and more substantial ditched enclosure at Eweford Cottages on the A1, to the two Port Seton sites, West Loan, St Germain’s and Craig’s Quarry, Dirleton (Piggott and Piggott 1952; Piggott 1958), in the surrounding area – although the dating evidence for the earlier phases of these two latter sites is weak.

The variation in individual site histories, exacerbated by plough truncation and/or the limited areas explored at many of them, makes it difficult as yet to offer much by way of substantive generalisation. Some Later Iron Age enclosures were apparently new foundations (Knowes, Brixwold, Fishers Road West?), whereas

others arguably developed from open or semi-enclosed settlements (St Germain's, Fishers Road East?). At some sites, the enclosure boundaries tend to become larger and more elaborate over time (Port Seton, St Germain's), but elsewhere intervention was restricted to the periodic redefinition of an existing boundary, potentially over several centuries if the dating evidence from Brixwold is accepted at face value (Crone and O'Sullivan 1997), but probably not for more than a few decades on the unstable sandy subsoil at Knowes.

On current evidence, the building of sub-rectangular enclosures seems essentially to be a Later Iron Age phenomenon, although this cannot be pushed too far, given that Maxwell (1970, 87) included the larger enclosure at East Linton – now shown to have Bronze Age beginnings – in his inventory of rectilinear sites in East Lothian, whilst accepting that it stood out from the rest of this class, particularly because of its multiple ditches. What this Later Iron Age enthusiasm for simple rectilinear enclosures might imply socially or economically, or whether it has any value as a chronological indicator within the period are not, however, questions that we can readily answer at present. As Cowley notes, in general terms it does not seem unreasonable to link their foundation to the process of settlement expansion and agricultural intensification underway at this time (Chapter 10), particularly as there are slighter linear earthworks linked to the enclosures at Knowes and East Bearford, which clearly reflect contemporary organisation of the surrounding landscape.

So far there is little to suggest that open settlement was a major component of the settlement pattern in the earlier centuries of the Later Iron Age, but initial impressions may yet prove misleading as they did in north-east England (Fitts *et al.* 1999). After a hiatus of several centuries, a settlement represented by a form of ring-ditch house was established within the vestigial Bronze Age earthwork at Standingstone, probably in the fourth or third centuries cal BC; this settlement had a duration of up to two centuries, before the site was abandoned for good. A similar development occurs at Dryburn Bridge, where a group of ring-ditch houses overlie the earlier palisade; here, however, there is a tension between certain features of the site, which imply an element of continuity between the enclosed and unenclosed phases, and other finds indicating that the site was inhabited into the Roman Iron Age, which would require a very lengthy period of continuous occupation (Dunwell 2007). On balance, it seems likely that, here too, there was a hiatus in

occupation. Finally, as already noted, the Fishers Road East and St Germain's enclosures may have begun as open settlements, but if so they were probably fairly rapidly enclosed, and in neither case is the preferred sequence totally secure (Chapter 10).

In the last two centuries BC, we see major changes in the character of occupied sites, with the enclosure circuits at more and more settlements first falling into disrepair and eventually being completely disregarded. At Knowes, occupation focused around the central scooped area continued uninterrupted for up to two centuries after the ditch had largely filled up, and paved surfaces and stone structures were built over the original enclosure boundary. Comparable changes can be seen at several other sites in the area, including Eweford Cottages, St Germain's and Broxmouth, where the occupants constructed smaller, sunken stone houses just like those at Knowes on the stances of the earlier timber buildings and over the former earthworks (Hill 1982a).

Within the TLEP area, there are hints of similar developments at Foster Law, East Linton, Gilmerton House and Chesters (Chapter 10). At Phantassie, what began in the second or first century BC as a minor settlement on a shelf above the River Tyne had by the first century AD developed into sizeable hamlet of stone-walled buildings and their associated yards, paths and ancillary structures (Lelong and MacGregor 2007). This is also when Traprain Law apparently re-emerged as a significant population centre (Armit *et al.* 2002). Given the existing bias towards cropmark sites, it could well be that many other Later Iron Age settlements which were never substantially enclosed await discovery, whether like Phantassie or like the isolated stone structure found at Thistly Cross just along the A1 (Lelong and MacGregor 2007, 129–31). Those cropmark sites that developed into unenclosed settlements may even be only the tip of the iceberg.

Whilst a certain number of sites in East Lothian seem to have been abandoned around the time the Roman incursions into Scotland started (e.g. both Fishers Road sites; Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000, 188), occupation continued uninterrupted into the Roman Iron Age at many others, as the sequences from Knowes and Phantassie show. From the widespread distribution of Roman finds, it is clear that the lowlands remained densely inhabited throughout the second century AD – although more of the Roman material is unstratified or from superficial contexts than we might wish (Chapter 7), leaving open the possibility that it reflects post-abandonment deposition. It is not yet clear, however,

whether the process of infilling and expansion which been underway since the Later Iron Age continued or was now significantly attenuated, but some sites are likely to be new foundations dating to the second century AD, notably Whittingehame where the long abandoned enclosure was re-occupied and the scoop constructed.

In the later Roman Iron Age, however, the picture changes significantly. The only sites definitely occupied after the early third century AD are Traprain Law, Whittingehame and Castle Park, Dunbar (Perry 2000), although there are hints of renewed or continued activity at a few more, including Phantassie and Fishers Road West (Chapter 7). A lack of radiocarbon dates (the sole source of dating at Whittingehame and Dunbar) and plough truncation may have depressed numbers, but the virtual absence of third and fourth century AD Roman finds is still difficult to explain given their relative abundance at Traprain Law, which shows that there was no (permanent) interruption of supply to the region (Hunter 2006). There are signs, too, of a renewed concern with enclosure on the sites that were occupied: Traprain Law was refortified, probably in the fourth century AD (Armit *et al.* 2006, 606); the middle of the three ditches at Dunbar was dug in the Roman period (Perry 2000, 28–9); whilst at Whittingehame, the remains of the main ditch would have provided a perfectly functional barrier without more than minor cleaning out and it only fell finally into disrepair in the post-Roman period.²

The thriving occupation of Traprain Law did not outlast the mid fifth century AD (Hunter 2006), leaving Whittingehame and Dunbar as the only sites with occupation dated to the fifth and sixth centuries AD – although at neither place is the nature of the continuing activity very clear. At Whittingehame, it involved deposition of quite large amounts of carbonised cereals, but this could be the result of no more than occasional use of the interior for crop processing, whilst at Dunbar, the dates are all from timber buildings (one sunken-floored) and other contexts attributed to the Anglian occupation of the site, and separated from the Roman Iron Age occupation by a sterile deposit (Perry 2000). Anglian settlement in the area is not usually thought to have begun before the seventh century AD, whereas a number of the relevant dates are earlier; if not residual or from long-lived wood, the answer, given the lack of diagnostic artefacts, might well be that the post-Roman inhabitants of the site were (initially) of native origin.

One other site worth mentioning in this context is Castle Rock, Edinburgh (Driscoll and Yeoman 1997). Up to the fourth century AD, the highs and lows of occupation on the hill appear to mirror those on Traprain Law. Thereafter, they diverge, with activity on the Rock continuing in some guise through the post-Roman period and into Early Historic times, as happened at Dunbar, but not at Traprain Law nor any of the other sites in the TLEP area (although sites such as Sled Hill or Whitekirk with timber halls resembling Doon Hill might well fill the gap, unless all such structures are Neolithic). After the sixth century AD, the only activity in evidence at the TLEP sites, apart from the later trackway at Whittingehame, was agriculture, much of it post-Improvement but including the remnants of ridge and furrow fields, which may in some cases go back to the Middle Ages and were probably responsible for the final levelling of the earthworks at several sites.

The Environs sites in long-term perspective

At both Standingstone and Whittingehame, the construction of the enclosures proved to be just one episode in a far longer history of human frequentation of the site, repeating a pattern found on many other enclosures including Broxmouth, Dryburn Bridge, St Germain's and Traprain Law itself. Between them, these two TLEP excavations provided various snapshots of domestic and funerary behaviour in the Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Age that resonate well with the patterns documented in more detail by the A1 excavations (Lelong and MacGregor 2007). The ravine edge at Whittingehame was apparently occupied in the late fourth millennium BC, whilst at Standingstone there are traces of settlement on the hillside in the early third millennium BC; this was followed by an urnfield cemetery of early second millennium BC date. At some point a ditch was dug across the area, perhaps reflecting a period of agricultural use in the Middle Bronze Age, before the hillside was again occupied for settlement; alternatively, the ditch may have been dug in the later second millennium BC to define the edge of the inhabited area. There are some slight indications that the Tyne terraces at Knowes were also frequented in the Bronze Age, although the rectilinear enclosure was the first permanent settlement on the site.

Whittingehame and Standingstone were both reoccupied (at different times) after a long period of abandonment, although there are hints that the latter

site retained some significance for the local community in the intervening centuries and was occasionally visited. It remains to be seen, however, whether these places truly retained significance in communal memories and consciousness over the centuries and even millennia, or whether their intermittent use merely reflects a society in which regular frequent shifts in settlement site within a preferred settlement territory were the norm, and thus from time to time people returned to the most advantageous locations.

Collectively, the waxing and waning of activity over four millennia at the TLEP sites spans broadly the same timescale and exhibits some of the same rhythms as occupation on Traprain Law itself. At the same time, it is now clear that the relationship between Traprain Law and its neighbours changes significantly through time and that we must look to a range of settlement models. In the Later Bronze Age (enclosed?) and in the early Roman Iron Age (unenclosed), the sizeable settlements on the hilltop were only one element of a complex regional settlement pattern. In the Roman period, there are some indications of a hierarchical relationship, with (some of) the inhabitants of Traprain Law sitting at the apex of the social and political system, whence they dispensed a selection of Roman goods to other communities through the social networks which bound all them together at regional level, although the lack of marked distinctions between sites implies a only limited degree of social differentiation at a local level (Chapter 7). A similar model might well apply to the Late Bronze Age settlement pattern, but as yet we do not have any detailed evidence, although the content of the bronze hoard found on Traprain Law in 2004 implies that hilltop community enjoyed far flung connections at this period too (O'Connor forthcoming).

At other periods, the picture appears quite different. The discovery of *in situ* rock carvings on Traprain Law (Armit *et al.* 2006) reinforces the view that the hill was an important ceremonial and ritual focus from early in the second millennium BC. In the Earlier Iron Age, the hilltop may have reverted to these roles and perhaps acquired new ones as a place of refuge and communal assembly, but there is little evidence of settlement there and not much in the environs. Traprain Law remained quiet through most of the Later Iron Age, but the surrounding landscape was increasingly densely populated; initially most settlements were enclosed, but over time their boundary earthworks lost their significance and many sites expanded over them. Finally, in the later Roman Iron Age, we encounter a

new situation: a large resident community on Traprain Law, but few signs of contemporary occupied sites elsewhere, implying that many of the local population were now living on the hilltop.

What caused the collapse and abandonment of the hilltop settlement in the fifth century AD is still unclear, but there is little sign of people returning to the environs, implying that population levels may have fallen significantly from those of the early first millennium AD (although as the Whittingehame excavations demonstrated, sites occupied in the late and post-Roman periods are inherently difficult to recognise and more may yet come to light). There are fleeting indications that Traprain Law was again used for burial in the Early Christian period (Armit *et al.* 2006, 606), but nothing to indicate that it ever again played a central role in the settlement pattern, which by the seventh century AD was evidently focused on new power centres and dwelling sites like those at Dunbar.

UNUSUAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE INDIVIDUAL TLEP SITES

Many features of the TLEP sites are readily paralleled on other excavated sites in the region, but a few are more unusual and call for brief comment here. With regard to the enclosure boundaries, they include the 'ankle-breaker' profile of the recut outer ditch at Whittingehame; the width and depth of the main ditch in relation to the size of the site as a whole; and the incomplete circuit at Standingstone. At the latter site, there is no sign of an entrance, which was presumably situated in the unditched sector on the north-west side of the site. On the other hand, the two rectangular enclosures at East Bearford and Knowes both had their main entrances on the east, echoing the situation at many other Iron Age sites in East Lothian and beyond, e.g. the two Fishers Road sites (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000). Foster Law, too, appears to have had an entrance on the east opposing the surviving west-facing entrance.

Later ploughing and other activity severely affected the survival of internal structures at Standingstone and Whittingehame, but both sites yielded hints of unusual building types. At Standingstone, possible traces of Later Bronze Age circular structures belonging to the open settlement phase were found, as well as curving sunken-floor scoops dating both to this period and to the Later Iron Age reoccupation. The Iron Age sunken-floor features with their flanking gullies are

best interpreted as the remains of houses of ring-ditch type, although given their depth on the downslope side, more of the circuits might have been expected to survive. An affinity with miniature souterrains like those from Dubton, Angus (Cameron 2002) seems unlikely, given the much greater depth of the Dubton structures. The Standingstone features bear more resemblance to a paved depression in the centre of Ednie Structure 2, near Peterhead, Aberdeenshire (Strachan and Dunwell 2003), although the Ednie feature is shallower and likely to be of Later Bronze Age date (albeit not dated directly), whilst the attribution of the Standingstone structures to the Later Iron Age appears secure. The environmental samples from their fills were amongst the richest from the site, implying that cereal processing took place close by.

The extensive cobbled scoop at Whittingehame was only partially explored, but sits within a regional tradition of large sunken-floor structures with cobble floors, of which there are examples at Brixwold (also of unknown extent; Crone and Sullivan 1997, 391–4) and Fishers Road East (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000, 107–10), the former probably and the latter certainly dated to the early centuries AD, contemporary with the Whittingehame scoop. Such structures have a long history of use in the region, as the discovery of earlier examples at South Belton and Biel Water on the A1 shows (Lelong and MacGregor 2007). Returning to Whittingehame, the adjacent stone-paved structure (SS1) also has numerous counterparts at local sites, including Dunbar (Perry 2000), Eweford Cottages, Phantassie (Lelong and MacGregor 2007) and St Germain's (Alexander and Watkins 1998), although the paving stones used at Whittingehame are rather smaller than normal. There was nothing to indicate the nature of the accompanying superstructure, if any.

Next to the Whittingehame structure was a smaller paved area, potentially the remnants of a second, ancillary structure or surface. The pairing of a larger walled structure and a smaller structure or surface is a phenomenon that recurs several times at Knowes, where both the scooped buildings (CS1–2) and some of the surfaces within the central scooped area are accompanied by smaller paved areas (or in the case of CS2, a smaller scoop). The surface belonging with CS1 appears to be secondary, and when it was laid, a new entrance was made on the north-west side to give direct access from one structure to the other. Further examples of paired house and ancillary structure are not immediately obvious in East Lothian – possible

candidates are timber structures H5 and H6 (if contemporary after all), and H1 and H4 respectively at Dryburn Bridge (Dunwell 2007) – but a looser analogy may perhaps be drawn with the occasional examples of conjoining stone-walled buildings reported north of the Firth of Forth such as Carlungie (Wainwright 1963), Ceann nan Clachan (Armit and Braby 2002) and in upland Perthshire (Harris 1984), or the cellular building configurations on the western shelf of Traprain Law (Smith 1990, chapter 5) and at Phantassie. At a more general level, the siting of the two late scooped houses at Knowes on the far edge of the central scoop from the entrance recalls the arrangement of many rectilinear and curvilinear stone-built settlements with sunken yards in the Cheviots, such as Kennel Hall Knowe, Knock Hill, Middle Hartside Hill, Riding Wood and Woolaw (e.g. Jobey 1960; 1964; 1978), some of them undoubtedly contemporary with Knowes.

Stone-walled scooped houses like those at Knowes are well-known from Broxmouth (Hill 1982a) and other East Lothian sites. A more unusual feature of CS1–2 is the way that the surface in the quadrant to the right of entrance was made of carefully laid flags, whereas the rest of the floor was made of earth or of smaller stones. The nearest parallels are from outside the region, confusingly at two sites called Hawkhill, one in Angus, the other in Fife (Dunwell and Ralston 2008, 102–4; Rees and Anderson forthcoming). At both Hawkhill sites, the scooped buildings are larger than CS1–2 and the Angus example is more oval than circular, but they are otherwise very similar. The paving in the Fife building is again to the right of the entrance, but in the Angus house it is to the left (of a south-east facing entrance). The Angus building also had a central hearth like Knowes and the paved area incorporated the upper stones of two rotary querns (those from CS1 came from the less well-made part of the floor). Dunwell and Ralston (2008) note that the rest of the floor at Hawkhill (Angus) could have been made of organic material, whilst it has been suggested that the sunken area in the Fife building might be a cellar.³

All three main excavations yielded probable instances of deliberate placing of querns or other types of object, intact and broken, in significant locations. At Knowes, the complete upper stone of one quern and part of the lower stone of another were laid on the infilled ditches midway along the western and eastern sides respectively, whilst a large rim fragment from a bucket-shaped pottery vessel was placed at

the very end of the southern entrance terminal. At Standingstone, five of only six cobble tools from the site came from the western ditch terminal, whilst two of the five found at Whittingehame came from one post-hole, cut into an earlier ditch. Many instances were observed of the reuse of old objects in buildings, such as the two quernstones (and a cobble tool) in the floor of CS1 at Knowes, or the broken saddle quern in an early post-setting at Whittingehame. Whilst it would perhaps be going too far to interpret all of these as deliberate acts of incorporation of elements of the past in the present, some undoubtedly were; a good example being the inclusion of a knocking stone made from a piece of late Neolithic rock art in a paved surface beside the entrance to the central scoop at Knowes (Chapter 7). Other symbolically charged actions include the placing of older human bone in the burial cist constructed in the southern ditch terminal, perhaps as an act of closure by the departing inhabitants, which simultaneously restated their ancestral claims to the land. Nothing was found, however, to indicate that the other cist-like structure at Knowes contained a burial, nor was there any sign of human bone in other contexts (apart from the Earlier Bronze Age graves at Standingstone) to suggest that they treated their dead in similar ways to the inhabitants of Phantassie, with its disparate scatter of burnt human remains from occupation deposits all over the settlement (Lelong and MacGregor 2007).

Apart from the grain cache buried under the bank at Standingstone, possible evidence of ritual activities connected to the agricultural cycle was restricted to the smashed Roman flagon and quern from CS2 at Knowes. One interpretation would be that these derive from ceremonies associated with communal gatherings, which required the consumption not just of the products but also of the means of production. As on the A1 and at most other later prehistoric settlements in the region, next to no evidence of animal husbandry was recovered, with only cattle, horse and sheep/goat attested for certain, although pig is probably present at Knowes. The inhabitants of all three main TLEP sites also had access to coastal resources, as the presence of shellfish at Knowes (and East Bearford) and of seaweed at Standingstone and Whittingehame shows (Chapter 8). As elsewhere, barley was easily the commonest cereal, with wheat a long way behind. There are signs that more spelt was being grown in the Later Iron Age, as at Port Seton (Huntley 2000), but emmer remained the dominant wheat into the Roman period and – one of the surprises of the TLEP – was still cultivated at

Whittingehame in the mid-first millennium AD. On the other hand, the appearance of oats there in the latest stages of occupation fits well with evidence from elsewhere suggesting that oats became more widespread in Scotland at this time, whilst the relative abundance of both cereals and seaweed in late contexts might mean that by that stage, the abandoned enclosure was being used mainly for agricultural activities and then perhaps only on a few occasions.

EAST LoTHIAN: THE NEXT PHASE?

The overarching aim of the TLEP was to investigate the date and changing character of smaller enclosed settlements in the hillfort environs, contributing to wider research on the development of later prehistoric society and economy in southern Scotland, and on the nature of Roman impact and indigenous responses. An important subsidiary aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of geomagnetic survey on the complex and supposedly unresponsive East Lothian geology. In the event, whilst the survey results were of variable quality, overall they were significantly better than expected and many of them pinpointed anomalies that were not apparent on the cropmark record but were later confirmed by excavation. There is no longer any doubt that geomagnetic survey offers future projects in East Lothian a powerful tool for investigating sites and moreover one that is capable of covering large areas relatively rapidly. Equally, as the work at Gilmerton House shows, systematic metal detecting and fieldwalking can also add an extra dimension to our knowledge of both on- and off-site activity.

That geomagnetic survey can now cover large areas quickly and effectively is largely due to advances in instrumentation, recording and processing that have place over the last 20 years (cf. Hale *et al.* 2006). Another major methodological advance from which the TLEP has benefited enormously has been the application of Bayesian statistics to radiocarbon dating. As Hamilton's modelling of the Knowes and Standingstone sequences shows (Chapter 9), this should enable us to establish with a high degree of certainty whether two settlements, or even occupation phases, were contemporary, or whether archaeological events occurred before or after a particular calendar date, for example whether a site was abandoned before the Flavian advance into southern Scotland. It should by now go without saying that comprehensive radiocarbon dating programmes should be routinely undertaken on excavated prehistoric settlements (cf.

Haselgrove *et al.* 2001) – without radiocarbon dating, the abandonment of Whittingehame would have been put in the second century AD, based on the samian ware from the latest stratified deposits – but a useful lesson from the TLEP is that excavators should as far as possible devise a radiocarbon dating strategy whilst still on site, so that key contexts are actively targeted for suitable material rather than relying on *ex post facto* recovery of suitable material from bulk environmental samples.

In 2008, a research project began at Bradford University, which will result in the final publication of Peter Hill's 1977–8 rescue excavations at Broxmouth that, along with those at Dryburn Bridge and St Germain's, did so much to shape current thinking about later prehistoric settlement in southern Scotland. If all goes to plan, along with the present volume East Lothian can now expect to see no fewer than five monographs on later prehistoric settlement excavations published in as many years, the other three being the reports on Dryburn Bridge (Dunwell 2007), the A1 (Lelong and MacGregor 2007) and the Traprain Law Summit Project (Armit *et al.* forthcoming). However, as Armit (1999, 77) noted 10 years ago, it is greatly to be hoped that this unparalleled wave of publication is not seen as an act of closure or allowed to usher in a period of neglect like the one that followed the 1970s excavations, but rather that a new generation will now come forward to begin research projects in East Lothian exploiting the foundation that the work of the last 30 years has laid.

It will be primarily for future researchers to determine the detailed content of this 'post-Broxmouth' research agenda. Nevertheless, it will do no harm to conclude this discussion by briefly highlighting some key questions which the TLEP did not address and might usefully form part of any future agenda, along with more general lacunae that remain in our understanding of later prehistoric settlement and society in the region, even after the work that has been carried out in the past few years. These fall into three main areas: (1) the wider landscape organization within which sites existed; (2) the relationships between different settlements and types of site; and, not least, (3) the perennial problem of reconstructing the social and political frameworks that bound people together at different scales and of writing more general narratives for a period of two millennia from the kind of data provided by what is still only a handful of extensive excavations.

To date, fieldwork undertaken in East Lothian has nearly all been enclosure-focused, but several of the

TLEP surveys provided glimpses of an inhabited and sub-divided landscape (of pre-first millennium BC date at Standingstone, of Later Iron Age date at Knowes and East Bearford) intimately linked to the occupation of that site, the remnants presumably of more extensive systems of linear land divisions and cord-rig fields like those that still exist at Hut Knowe or Tamshiel Rig in the uplands (Harding 2004, figs. 3.13, 3.16). At Gilmerton House, the finds all came from outside the enclosure, as is the cemetery at Broxmouth, whilst the A1 work yielded plentiful evidence of other kinds of human presence in the landscape, for instance in the form of possible short lived activity areas used for particular purposes (South Belton, Thistly Cross?), or the reuse of early monuments for burials (Eweford West, Pencraig Hill). The possibility that the Standingstone enclosure served as the focus of a more extensive open settlement like Malleville-sur-le-Bec in northern France has also been mentioned.

All this underlines the need for future fieldwork in the Traprain Law environs to look beyond visible enclosure boundaries and to examine the larger inhabited zone within which the inhabitants of individual sites played out their everyday lives (Haselgrove 1999), a task now well within the capabilities of geomagnetic survey, backed up by focused excavation. A very obvious target in an East Lothian context would be the pit-defined boundaries which occur frequently throughout the lowlands and in some cases seem to form relatively coherent systems of enclosure linked to specific groups of sites, as in The Chesters–Newmains–Kaeheughs area (Chapter 10; Harding 2004, fig. 3.14). Previous trial excavations (MacKay 1980) imply that the individual pits are often quite shallow and the parallel alignments at Newmains (Appendix 1, no 15) did not respond very clearly to geomagnetic survey, but this was one of the less informative TLEP surveys and elsewhere magnetometry proved more than capable of detecting shallow gullies that could well escape attention from the air away from the immediate vicinity of an enclosure. In the right circumstances, tracing landscape divisions around settlements should be perfectly feasible.

As I have noted previously (Haselgrove and McCullagh 2000, 186–9), a second set of key questions revolves around the high densities of enclosures on the better quality soils of the coastal plain and the frequent existence of two or more sites within a stone's throw of one another, as at The Chesters or Fishers Road, Port Seton. Do such clusters reflect socially meaningful

'neighbourhood groups' focused on a particular natural territory or resource, or are they simply palimpsests created by regular shifts in site location over the centuries? If the Fishers Road evidence provided some evidence in support of the first scenario (with the proviso that the enclosures probably had different roles some of the time; *ibid.*, 185), the TLEP results imply that the truth lies somewhere between the two, with many enclosures occupied at different periods, but also to prone to reuse over the centuries.

A possible example of a 'neighbourhood group' linked to a specific resource is provided by the concentration of sites around the Garleton Hills. Just as the proximity of the Edin's Hall broch to a copper source (Dunwell 1999) is most unlikely to be simple coincidence, the availability of good quality iron ore would provide an obvious rationale for the exceptionally high density of settlements here (including Foster Law and The Chesters), which together could easily have controlled and exploited the haematite source. On the other hand, the presence of Standingstone-type enclosures at Kilduff Mains and Sixpence Strip (Appendix 1, nos 16, 18) implies a substantial time depth to the distribution, taking it back to an era pre-dating any working of the iron. With Bayesian modelling, however, we now possess a means of establishing with reasonable certainty which settlements were contemporary and a logical strategy to pursue in East Lothian would be to privilege the excavation of further sites in the three areas (Dunbar, Port Seton and Traprain Law) where previous work has focused, whether through dedicated research projects or by differentially grasping any opportunities created by modern development. Bayesian methods also offer a framework for investigating the relationship between environmental changes documented in pollen cores and settlement developments in their catchments, although on current knowledge this is probably an unrealistic aspiration for most of the East Lothian lowlands.

There can be little doubt, however, that the most difficult challenge of all facing us in the future is how to reconstruct the higher order social, economic and political networks in which individual households and settlements participated, when only a handful of sites have been excavated in any given locality. In East Lothian, the lithology of quernstones does not unfortunately offer the potential for tracing social and economic relationships that has been so successfully exploited in, for example, north-east England (Hayes *et al.* 1980; Heslop 2008) or the south-west (Moore

2006), although it may eventually prove possible to delineate some meaningful differences in procurement patterns across the region. Scientific methods of analysis may also be able to make a greater contribution in future, as in Jay and Richards' (2007) search for dietary signatures associated with consumption of marine resources, of which we see some physical evidence at inland sites such as Whittingehame and Knowes. And as Fraser Hunter shows in Chapter 7, at a very general level, certain differences *can* be identified between settlement assemblages from across the region, which from the Later Iron Age onward are perhaps susceptible to interpretation in terms of the existence of localised social hierarchies, for example whether there is evidence of metalworking (< 25% of sites) or the inhabitants had access to Roman material (> 40% of sites).

It is above all in the realm of material culture that Traprain Law stands out from the other settlements in its environs, emphasising its primate status in the Roman Iron Age and probably in the Later Bronze Age as well. But while the TLEP has provided valuable first impressions of the evolving settlement pattern and economy of the hillfort environs over two millennia between the Later Bronze Age and the dawn of the Early Historic period, there are inevitably other questions that it cannot answer (and was not designed to do so), such as the ethnogenesis of the Votadini. Were they largely an artificial creation of Roman intervention, as seems to be the case with their neighbours, the Brigantes (Haselgrove forthcoming)? Or had the 'cluster of communities' (Hill 2006) inhabiting East Lothian in the Later Iron Age developed a shared political identity and capacity for common action, which enabled them to dominate a much larger region? If so, friendship with Rome may merely have consolidated their pre-eminence. These, too, are questions that the 'post-Broxmouth' research agenda needs to confront, but to answer them, the agenda needs to be extended to the rest of southern Scotland and the Cheviots, helping to ensure that new archaeological data collected on both sides of the border are adequate to evaluate the similarities, differences and relationships between the constituent peoples at the appropriate scales and levels of detail.

NOTES

1. The relevant radiocarbon date (SUERC-8199) appears to be misquoted in the report (Lelong and McGregor 2007, 289). The calibrated range of one of the determinations for Phantassie (SUERC-7345) is similarly at variance with the quoted date of

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2480 BP; if the latter value is correct, this might suggest some Earlier Iron Age activity here at this period, although this has to be weighed against the 54 dates which fall in the Later Iron Age and Roman periods (and three earlier prehistoric dates).

2. The middle ditch at Castle Park has a *terminus post quem* of 80–340 cal AD, whilst charred wood from deposits postdating its disuse gave a combined date of 240–390 cal AD. The outer ditch could have been dug at the same time or earlier. As discussed in Chapter
- 3, a date as late as the Roman Iron Age for the observed recutting of the main ditch at Whittingehame cannot absolutely be ruled out; alternatively, another episode of recutting might simply not have been apparent in the stratigraphy.
3. A large circular stone building excavated at Whitrighill, Mertoun (Borders), may be another candidate. This appears to be partially paved with large basalt blocks (Dent and McDonald 1997, 58, pl 12).