

8. CONCLUSION

The excavations at Winchburgh achieved their primary objective, which was to mitigate the loss of archaeological features recorded as cropmarks ahead of the housing development. It adds to the growing corpus of evidence relating to late prehistoric palisaded and ditched enclosures from Southern Scotland, while offering tentative evidence of possible alternative uses for the enclosures rather than for purely domestic purposes. The lack of evidence for long-term domestic occupation of the site leads to the possibility that the site was used periodically or seasonally. Perhaps the site was used as a seasonal meeting place to trade goods, one of which may have been the shale roughouts. In addition, the site may have been in use for a relatively short time. Evidence for this is the lack of silting of the inner ditch prior to the deposition of the stone, the lack of any evidence of recutting or upkeep of the ditches and the sterility of the site. There is also the possibility the site was deliberately abandoned shortly after its construction, suggested by the compacted nature of the stones within the terminals of the eastern entrance through the inner ditch. If the site was left to decay slowly one would expect a more sorted deposit. Deliberate abandonment may

have been precipitated by political or social upheaval at the time. Cavers et al (2012) have postulated the ephemeral use of Mar Hall, given the sterility of the site.

The horse teeth, which suggest a horse burial in the southern terminal eastern entrance of the inner ditch, point to a symbolic deposit. Animal burials have been noted at Broxmouth, Danebury, Eildon Hill North and Blewburton Hill (Collins 1953; Rideout et al 1992).

Winchburgh could have served to bind the community together. The act of digging the ditches may have helped to reinforce tribal affiliations and identities. The enclosing works would emphasise the difference between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and Banks (2000) considered that multivallation may well reflect social rank rather than practical purposes, emphasising the control of the resources required to create such a monument. The stone recovered from the ditches did not derive from the immediate drift geology and had been purposely brought to site from further afield, although the source location is unknown.

Although merely speculative, it is tempting to view Winchburgh as an important meeting place where items were traded or exchanged and tribal bonds were strengthened and reinforced.