

7. ROUTEWAYS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN UPPER CLYDESDALE

Stephen Cox

7.1 Introduction

The archaeological excavations that took place as part of the Clyde Wind Farm and Extension have made a significant contribution to the advancement of archaeological knowledge in the region (Illus 7.1). This concluding chapter looks at the implications of the discoveries made during the project and considers some of the themes that have emerged from the analysis. The practical aspects of undertaking archaeological work on such a large linear upland infrastructure project and the methodologies employed are also considered.

7.2 Upper Clydesdale Lives

The hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic were the first people to leave evidence of their activities in the valleys of Upper Clydesdale. This evidence suggests they lived mobile lives in small communities and their interactions with the landscape were fluid and undefined by boundaries. It is likely they moved

through the land guided by its linear elements – the watercourses and ridgelines – and found food in the form of animals to hunt and nuts and fruit to gather. Over long time periods they began to assign meanings to the places they visited, meanings that formed part of their social memory and were passed on through generations (Lelong & MacGregor 2008: 269).

The transition from hunting to farming in Britain has been the subject of debate for many years. In the mid-20th century, the interpretation of the evidence favoured the introduction of farming by colonists arriving from the near continent. By the late 20th century, it was thought that the local hunter-gatherers had acquired the knowledge of farming gradually (see Thomas 2013). Recent evidence, such as the analysis of British Mesolithic and Neolithic genomes (Brace et al 2019), points to an abrupt change from hunting and gathering to farming caused by the immigration of farmers (see Rowley-Conwy et al 2020). Whether this ‘swift succession’ (Mithen 2022: 65) involved the complete replacement of the Mesolithic population is arguable (Thomas 2022: 520) and the process / mechanism by which the change to farming took place is still subject to



Illus 7.1 View of topsoil stripping for access road on northern side of Camps Valley. This provides a typical view of the landscape of the wind farm. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)(© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

debate. It is beyond the scope and the evidence of this publication to determine whether the Mesolithic population of Upper Clydesdale was replaced by immigrant farmers in a sudden event or series of events or whether the transition to farming was a gradual, incremental process, but it is noted that the evidence does not support one single model. Some models that suggest a continuity in the significance of certain places in Upper Clydesdale dating from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic such as Biggar Common (Johnston 1997) and Blackhouse Burn (Lelong et al 2005) rely on a continuity of the collective social memory. The archaeological data from the wind farm, in particular the radiocarbon dates in Illus 2.5, show a significant gap between 6000 and 4000 cal BC indicating for Camps Valley at least a lack of continuity from the Mesolithic through to the Neolithic. It is likely that the special status assigned to Camps in the Neolithic began then, and not in the Mesolithic. The change in the perception of the landscape from the Mesolithic's fluid relationship to the curation and transformation of the environment in the Neolithic was a break rather than a slow transition.

It is possible to see a change in the later Neolithic and Bronze Age from the significance of particular locations to the significance of the route taken between them (Lelong & MacGregor 2008). The importance of crop and animal management, the need for fresh pasture and the seasonal movement of both animals and people saw the Neolithic lines of communication and movement through Upper Clydesdale develop into routeways. The repetition of movement through the landscape or of visiting specific locations can be seen to some extent in the periodic nature of the pits found in both the Camps and Midlock Valleys, representing repeated visits over a long timeframe.

In the 2nd millennium BC the sides of the hills were transformed by the excavation of platforms. The roundhouses built on the platforms may have been occupied only for short periods of a few years but these periods were repeated at intervals for centuries (Halliday 2007: 50). The occupation is both sporadic and continuous or more appropriately continuing. It is not known whether the occupants alternated among the clusters of platforms on one hillside or visited different hillsides in different valleys. If all the platforms in a cluster were occupied

simultaneously this density of occupation may indicate that a system of land tenure was in existence by the Middle Bronze Age. The lack of evidence for enclosed field systems around the platform settlements implies a separation in distance of stock and cultivation; the animals grazing remotely perhaps rather than in proximity to cultivated areas which would have required a form of division by bank or fence. The impression is of mobility within the landscape (ibid: 54) although still making use of the well-worn routes of Upper Clydesdale.

The change from archaeological evidence dominated by ceremonial activity in earlier prehistoric periods to archaeological evidence dominated by settlement activity does not mean that the Middle Bronze Age people were more practical or functionally minded (Lelong & MacGregor 2008: 273). The inhabitants of Midlock Valley continued ceremonial acts, potentially in a more routine and day-to-day pattern with individuals possibly being cremated and buried within sight of the settlements.

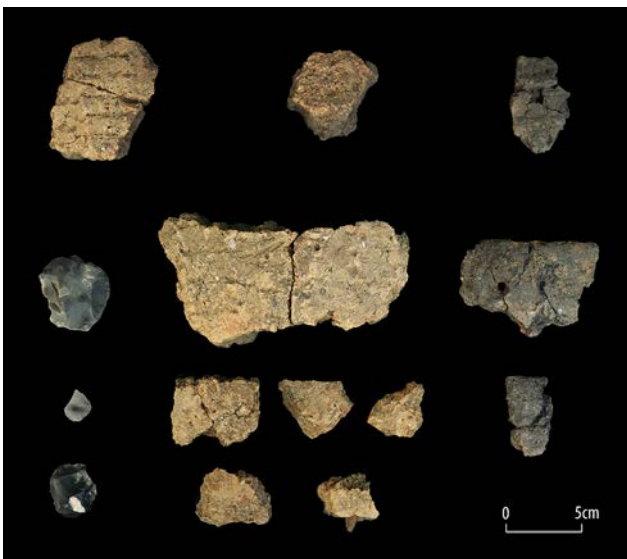
By the middle of the 1st millennium BC enclosed settlements and hillforts appeared along the banks of the Clyde Valley, belonging to larger communities bound by social and power hierarchies. The landscape was no longer curated but instead possessed. The topographical prominences chosen for the location of the hillforts and enclosures conveyed a message signifying social status, projecting power, and marking autonomy or independence. It appears that the communities who gathered at these focal points to emphasise their identities had abandoned them by the time they had to contend with the arrival of invading armies intent on colonisation and occupation who answered to the fluctuating demands of a centre of power half a continent away.

7.3 Transformations

Throughout prehistory people have actively interacted with the landscape and the materials within it, engaging, transforming, and manipulating both in various ways. Early evidence of this active interaction can be found in prehistoric pits. The debate surrounding Neolithic pits has focused on whether they were depositions of domestic waste material (Connolly & MacSween 2003: 43; Toolis 2011), ritualised structured depositions (Cook 2000 et al: 108; Pollard 2001), or somewhere on a

spectrum between the two (Brophy & Noble 2012). The debate reflects the reduction of archaeological interpretations to dualisms such as domestic versus ritual and is a product of post-enlightenment rationalist thought. If instead rituals and ritual practices are seen as fundamental parts of daily life (Brück 1999: 319), then the Neolithic pits in the Camps Valley can be interpreted as the products of habitual behaviour that are based on ritualistic beliefs and social conventions.

Very few of the Camps Valley pits contained deliberately deposited objects such as fragments of pottery or lithics. The common element to all of them was charcoal though and therefore fire. Fire was important to everyday living. It was used for warmth and to provide light but it also had transformative qualities and was very likely to have been spiritually charged with significance since it was able to transform material from one state into another, raw food to cooked and clay to pottery for example (Illus 7.2). It must have had an essential role in the activities which resulted in the pits. The fire that created the pottery may have also imbued the pots themselves with power (Lelong & MacGregor 2008: 278). The manipulation of stone to form lithic tools and later on the manipulation of cannel coal to make fasteners lacked this spiritual significance since it lacked the element of fire. Of course, those activities may also have held spiritual significance, the evidence for which is lost.



Illus 7.2 Artefacts recovered from pit C11-0003. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

The deliberate burning of Neolithic structures has been interpreted as the creation of a spectacle that formed a memory of a place or event (Noble 2006) and it may be that the act of creating fire in the Camps Valley (Illus 7.3), as well as the act of excavating the pits marked an event that created a memory and contributed to a Neolithic sense of place and placemaking (Brophy 2016: 220).

The magical element of fire continued throughout the succeeding millennia as it was used to transform the bodies of the dead through cremation in the Bronze Age and to transform metals in the casting and alloying processes (Brück 2014: 136). Its spiritual significance in everyday life appears to have decreased in later prehistory perhaps as the tools it created had more practical applications. The Iron Age metalsmiths who left the traces of their work at Woodend and Newton Plantation were either itinerant workers providing a service to those who needed it or were individuals within communities who undertook smithing as and when needed; a more mundane practical application of the transformational power of fire.

Agriculture marked the start of the transformation of the physical environment, beginning with clearance for crops. By the 3rd millennium BC, as farming started to take hold, the land was being transformed as well with the construction of large-scale monuments such as the enclosure at Blackhouse Burn (Lelong et al 2005) and the henge at Normangill (Chapter 5). The increase in the scale of the interventions in the landscape required by developing agricultural systems is reflected in the creation of large monuments and reflects a change in the world views of the monument makers (Bradley 1991).

The existence of the Normangill henge suggests a continuity in the significance of the location maintaining a link with the past and possibly legitimising the activities of its builders and users. Its architecture stresses a separation and containment – a separation of the people and activities that took place within the circle from those outside and a containment possibly of supernatural forces or ancestral energies within. Its banks may have been a recreation of the surrounding ridgelines and an analogy for the surrounding landscape (Richards 1996), a transformation of the earth into a metaphor for the valley. If the ridgelines were seen to contain



Illus 7.3 Camps Valley during the Late Neolithic. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

the practice of pit-digging within the valley then the henge with its banks represents a significant shrinking of the space available to the worshippers.

7.4 Routeways and Places

The rolling hills of the Southern Uplands have formed barriers and constraints to the movement of peoples, and throughout both prehistory and history the paths of least resistance would have been the major valley systems and rivers (Noble 2006). It was along these routes that people travelled, made contact, traded ideas and goods, and undertook pilgrimages.

Henges are often located near watercourses potentially as part of Neolithic lines of communication and movement (Harding 2003: 97; Richards 1996). The presence of henges along the Clyde Valley (for example Corbiehall, Weston, Balwaistie, and Normangill) is indicative of the importance of the route for ceremonial activities. It is possible to imagine processions of people visiting the henges over several days at certain times of year, drawing on the past to legitimise and enable their actions. With the advent of the domestication of animals and settled agriculture, life would necessarily have been more static for people, although the concept of roaming over a wide area would have remained familiar from the Early Neolithic (Bradley

1991) and the processions through the Clyde Valley and the monuments created therein reflect already established routeways.

Upland settlements have been interpreted as temporary accommodation for seasonal subsistence tasks including upland pastoralism (Halliday 1985: 234; Pope 2015: 4). The droving of animals and movement of people to their seasonal settlements would have followed a long tradition of similar routes. It is likely that for Bronze Age people, place was multi-nodal which in this case is interpreted to mean that there were different areas of settlement (presumably at least one upland and one lowland) at either end of well-worn routes linking them. The settlements would have been focal points – destinations occupied during certain times of the year (Illus 7.4). It is possible that in the Middle Bronze Age the proportions of pastoral and arable farming practiced by different communities may have varied according to their locations, and the routeways between them were maintained by social and trade networks with goods, as well as people and animals moving between permanently occupied settlements.

There is a change which takes place over millennia in the perception of the landscape from the curation of the land towards a wish to exploit and control it. This change is probably complete by the time of the Iron Age. The remains of the platform settlements



Illus 7.4 Midlock Valley during the Middle Bronze Age. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

formed part of the world of the Midlock Valley's Iron Age occupants, but they appear to have avoided the slopes as places to construct houses. They may have created their world with reference to the past but were they respecting the Bronze Age platform settlements or ignoring them? Although at Bodsberry UPS one of the platforms was reoccupied in the Iron Age (Terry 1995), the evidence of Midlock Valley suggests that by avoiding reuse of the platforms they were not using the remains of the Bronze Age inhabitants' structures to legitimise their presence in the valley.

As farming grew more intensive it required more land management and social organisation and a stronger communal identity developed (Lelong & MacGregor 2008: 247). These communal identities were expressed to outsiders, as well as to members of the community through the construction of the enclosures in certain locations. If this organised economy still required the droving of animals along ancient routeways in the Upper Clyde Valley (Mercer 2018: 198) negotiation between the different communities over access and possibly trade would have been required. The upstanding remains of hillforts and the enclosures identified through aerial photos are the most visible aspects of the Iron Age. Unenclosed Iron Age settlements such as the roundhouse in Midlock Valley are often inadvertently discovered through excavation, and the nature of the relationship between unenclosed

and enclosed is difficult to assess (Haselgrove & McCullough 2000: 77). It is possible to imagine that the occupants of the roundhouse in Midlock Valley were subservient to those who controlled access to the enclosures and hillforts of the Clyde Valley; perhaps the husbandry of livestock was their contribution to the community resource.

The Southern Upland landscape visible today contains upstanding remains on the slopes and ridgelines of the valleys that take the form of features relating to the hill farming economy, such as buchts and other sheepfolds, boundary structures such as turf banks, and cultivation areas – evidence of a recurring sequence of agricultural practices. With some exceptions (for example, Glenochar 7.7km southwest of Midlock) the medieval countryside is subsumed beneath a pattern of evidence no earlier than 18th century in date. The presumption about the extent and distribution of medieval settlement is often based on 'drawing back' evidence from the post medieval period, since the archaeological excavation of rural medieval sites is, if not rare, at least not common. The presence of medieval remains on the southern slopes of Midlock Valley is a significant discovery and shows that there is potential for such remains to exist sub-surface wherever ploughing has disturbed the upper profile of the ground (Illus 7.5).



Illus 7.5 Midlock Valley during construction of the cable access route. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

7.5 Lessons from Methodologies

The division of the project landscape into three areas of potential for unrecorded archaeological features was based on general topographic zones – the valley floors, lower slopes, and ridges / hilltops, which came to be defined by altitude. This informed different archaeological strategies requiring different levels of effort, for example evaluation and excavation for valley floors, watching briefs on lower slopes, and occasional monitoring on ridgelines. It must be admitted that there was a hint of environmental altitudinal determinism in this approach. The presence of a Mesolithic pit at an altitude of 426m in Camps Valley was unexpected, and investigations at other subsequent wind farms have noted the presence of settlement remains at high altitude (for example Griffin Wind Farm, Perthshire; Bailey 2014). In particular areas of the project the generalised zones were subject to modification, with

part of Camps Valley being redefined from Zone 2 to 1 and part of the Woodend area redefined from Zone 3 to 2, both on the basis of known heritage assets in the vicinities. The discovery of features at unexpectedly high altitudes during works for the initial wind farm construction also impacted on the defined limits of those zones for the wind farm extension.

There is little doubt that not implementing a uniform programme of direct monitoring will mean there is a risk of loss of evidence. However, on the strength of the number of features recorded at higher altitudes in the course of the project the likelihood that there have been any substantial losses is still considered small. The flexible strategy adopted for this project appears to have been broadly successful and the effort required to provide blanket monitoring must be balanced with the value of the evidence resulting from it.

In future, the parameters for defining the zones could include more than the altitude and general topographic zones, taking into account variations such as steepness of slope, proximity to watercourses, and possibly soil type, as well as the known heritage assets. Parameters could be set differently according to the individual merits of the valleys within the landscape and could be adapted as the works progress and archaeological discoveries are made. Certainly, methods which allow feedback throughout the life of a project such as this (which had a duration of over five years in terms of archaeological site works) are vital to allow a full understanding of the potential of the area being developed.

The main method of establishing the presence, extent, and character of archaeological deposits on construction projects is by trial trenching. The assessment of the trial trenching results then informs decisions regarding the resources and timescales required for the mitigation of damage to the archaeological resource through open area excavation. The sites at Woodend, Newton Plantation, and the Iron Age settlement in Midlock Valley, were all initially identified through trial trenching (though the existence of Woodend was known from aerial photographs). Trial trenching was not used on the northern slope of Midlock Valley as the proximity to the Scheduled Monument and some non-scheduled upstanding remains meant that archaeological remains were expected.

Trial trenching was used on the planned route of the access road in Camps Valley (Illus 7.6). Here it was ineffective in establishing the extent and character of the archaeology – none of the features on the upper slopes of the south side of the valley were identified during trial trenching, for example. Managing to pick up discrete pit features on an extensive hillside is something of a needle-in-a-haystack type challenge. Flexible approaches and the adaptation of existing strategies were vital in order to make a more productive use of resources and a key element in this adaptability was the role of the Archaeological Clerk of Works.

The Clyde Wind Farm was one of the first construction projects in the UK to specify the role of an Archaeological Clerk of Works in a planning condition. The role of Clerk of Works is a familiar one in the construction industry; Clerks of Works were employed by the Architects and

Engineering Departments of local authorities and among other things ensured quality of construction standards and compliance with building regulation statutes. With changes since the 1990s in the manner of construction contracts, due in part to the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering and other rationalisations, the role of Clerk of Works has become one of independent assessment of on-site works protecting the clients' interests during the construction process. The definition of the Archaeological Clerk of Works included many of the attributes expected, such as anticipating, interpreting, advising, and guiding, in order to help reduce the risk of both damage to the archaeological resource and delay to the construction programme. Clearly the archaeological advisors to the local authority were where the buck stopped for the methodology, but the responsibility for the implementation of the Archaeological Programme



Illus 7.6 A trial trench on the southern side of Camps Valley. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

of Works fell on the ACoW's shoulders, where they had to 'translate' complex archaeological issues into comprehensible language for the project designers and equally, explain complex design challenges to the archaeological advisors. The successful delivery of the archaeological element to the project is in part down to the experience and knowledge of the individuals who took on the role along with the archaeological advisors.

Infrastructure projects with linear elements, such as road schemes, pipelines, and wind farms (Illus 7.7), offer opportunities for archaeologists to approach the landscape as a whole. In particular wind farms offer the archaeologist one of only a few opportunities to monitor transects across upland valleys from ridgeline to ridgeline. These transects are determined by the construction design for the project and not by the particular (peculiar) interests of the archaeologist, and as such should be seen as a randomised sampling of the landscape. In contrast to many of the archaeological reports consulted

by the authors for this publication which are the result of excavations targeted on visible monuments, monitoring of the transects for this project has led to areas being investigated that would not normally be selected for archaeological examination. This has enabled archaeologists to test the incidence of archaeological features in the landscape. For example, one of the significant discoveries of this project was the ability to see the Neolithic pits in their landscape setting and to note their absence in other settings thanks to these transects. The upland areas favoured by wind farms may previously have been considered to be devoid of subsurface archaeology, but this project has shown that such broad generalisations are not adequate. The archaeological knowledge generated by the investigations such as this one can make a significant contribution to the history of the area.

It should be noted that the excavation (unintentionally) provided the opportunity to look at one of the common methods of installing cables



Illus 7.7 Excavating access road Zone 3. (© Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd)

in an upland context – the ploughing of cables into the ground – and the resulting impacts on buried archaeology. Following initial excavation of the platform settlement on the northern slopes of Midlock Valley to clear a route for the cable installation, the construction team installing the cables strayed outwith the marked route. Perceptions about the impact of ploughing cables into the ground might be that it causes minimal damage, with the final pipe location only resulting in a line of damage *c* 0.25m wide at the very most, and even that was not damage which would impact on the survival of the archaeology; this is certainly the case within the construction community (K Dingwall, pers comm). It was established after investigation of the extent of the damage caused by ploughing the cables into areas not previously cleared of archaeology that instead of a narrow channel of disturbance, a corridor *c* 1m wide was affected. The blades attached to the plough (which enable it to maintain a constant depth within the natural subsoil) cause vibration in any deposits above, which affects their stratigraphic integrity and make them impossible to interpret. In practice, the ploughed cables appeared as a narrow line of topsoil (where the topsoil had been pulled down from above) within

a channel of what looked like redeposited natural about 1m wide. Any features in the path of the plough were effectively erased. These observations have implications for future archaeological strategies with regard to cable ploughing.

7.6 Conclusion

People have made journeys through and to the landscapes of Upper Clydesdale for millennia and over the long periods of time the purpose of their journeys has changed. Generations of people have lived in the valleys and have had to provide food and shelter and spiritual well-being for themselves and their communities; from the mobile hunter-gatherers and early farmers who moved through the valleys and hills to hunt and camp and who viewed the hills and valleys as places of significance containing perhaps ancestral energies, to the later farmers who drove their animals through the valleys to find fresh pasture, to the armies who traversed the valleys and the locals who made accommodations with them. Modern day travellers can glimpse the towers of the turbines and spinning blades (expressions of current environmental energy concerns) on the hills as they follow in the footsteps of those who travelling at a much slower pace saw their landscape in very different ways.