8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Neolithic

Limited evidence for Middle Neolithic occupation on the site includes Pit 944, dated to the second half of the fourth millennium BC.

Several Middle Neolithic pits were also recorded within the adjacent part of the borrow pit (MacIver & Demay 2025), identified through radiocarbon dating.

8.2 Late Bronze Age and Iron Age structures

8.2.1 Roundhouses

A total of seven confirmed roundhouses were identified at Loak Farm, with a further two possible examples surviving only as ring ditches. Six of these survived as single post rings (Roundhouses 1–4, 6 and 7), while one survived as a post ring and ring groove (Roundhouse 5). Radiocarbon dating has confirmed Middle and Late Bronze Age dates: Roundhouse 3 has been dated to the last two centuries of the second millennium BC, and Roundhouses 4 and 6 to the first two centuries of the first millennium BC.

Due to the possible impact of plough truncation, various interpretations of the construction of the post ring houses are possible. Dunwell (2007) has suggested that post rings identified at Dryburn Bridge formed roof support frameworks within the floor space and that the outer walls had been removed by ploughing. However, uneven plough damage would be unlikely to leave the centre ring preserved and the outer ring destroyed, and it is more likely that any outer ring was a wall of wattle and daub or turf which was not load-bearing and sat beneath low eaves. An outer wall would increase the diameter of the roundhouse considerably. A similar interpretation was also given at Newmill (Watkins 1981), where a 6.6m post ring was interpreted as the inner supporting ring for a much more substantial roundhouse. In examples where the outer walls have been identified, the inner post ring generally accounted for *c* 60–67% of the overall diameter, with the outer ring adding an additional *c* 33–40% (Pope 2007: 217; Romankiewicz & Mann 2017). This was the case for Roundhouse 5, which had an internal post ring of 6.5m diameter and a ring groove of *c* 10m diameter, giving it a ratio of 65% to 35%, assuming the outer wall was placed along the ring groove.

The post rings at Loak Farm had diameters ranging from 5.6m (Roundhouse 7) up to 11.2m (Roundhouse 6), which fits well with the data from previously excavated examples, suggesting that roundhouses generally had an overall diameter of between 4m and 14m, with an average size of *c* 8m and a maximum which seldom exceeds 15m (Pope 2008: 17). Adding 33–40% to the diameters of the Loak Farm post rings would make the smallest a diameter of 9.55m to 10.67m and the largest a diameter of 16.7m to 18.7m. The north-eastern Perthshire uplands include many examples of well-preserved earthwork and stone hut circles, including double-walled forms of the Dalrulzion type (Thorneycroft 1933; Thorneycroft 1948), which are not commonly seen elsewhere; the inner rings of recorded examples measure *c* 8–11m in diameter, with the outer ring extending up to 17m. However, while a roundhouse at Culduthel Farm (Hatherley & Murray 2006) was recorded as having a diameter of 19.5m, examples of this magnitude appear very rare, and a number of structures which were recorded as very large roundhouses have now been reinterpreted as a smaller roundhouse with an external stockade around it. This was the case at Scotstarvit, which was originally interpreted as having a diameter of 19m (Bersu 1947) but has been reinterpreted as a 13m roundhouse enclosed by a stockade (Pope 2003). Watkins' (1981) interpretation of the 17.6m diameter roundhouse at Newmill should also be viewed as suspect, as it was based on a partial arc of posts around a 6.6m diameter post ring, giving a ratio of 37.5% for the inner post ring and 62.5% for the outer ring. Again, this would perhaps suggest that the outer ring was an external stockade, an argument favoured by Cressey and Anderson (2011) in relation to a 17.5m ring associated with Structure B at Seafield West. A post ring of 14m was recorded at Blackford (O'Connell & Anderson 2021), which would equate to an overall diameter which could exceed 23m, but here, the excavator interpreted it as a single post ring structure in which the post ring represented the full extent of the roundhouse. Given the apparent rarity of roundhouses which exceed 15m diameter, it is perhaps more likely that at least the larger post rings at Loak Farm would have been of the same single-ring construction.

The downward and outward forces on a single post ring must have been quite considerable, especially during the winter, when a quantity of snow could have accumulated at times on the roof of the roundhouse. This would suggest that the walls would have been considerably reinforced, especially in the case of Roundhouse 1, which had very small-diameter post holes relative to its diameter, suggesting that it was constructed from lightweight posts. Generally, it is thought that this was done using wattle to interlock the posts, but this could have been further reinforced and insulated by stacking a layer of turf around it. It has also been suggested that roof timbers overhanging the post ring may have rested on an external turf bank (Cook & Dunbar 2008), although this would potentially have removed external storage space under the eaves which would have been invaluable for items such as firewood and peat which had to be kept dry but well-ventilated in order for them to dry sufficiently to be used as fuel.

A number of other notable features relating to these roundhouses were identified. Roundhouse 5 appears to have had a fairly substantial entranceway consisting of a series of pits and trenches cut into the ring groove. Post holes representing possible entrance structures were also identified in relation to Roundhouses 6 and 7, while some larger pits adjacent to the post ring forming Roundhouse 1 may have served a similar function. All of these possible entrance structures were to the south or south-east of the post ring. A south-east facing entrance appears to be a recurring theme in relation to roundhouses, and indeed was the case for all but one of the roundhouses at Blackford, where entrances could be reconstructed (O'Connell & Anderson 2021). While various cosmological theories (Oswald 1997) have been suggested as explanations for this orientation, the most likely explanation is to allow morning light into the building while protecting the entrance from the prevailing westerly wind. Other features consisted of a possible fragmented ring ditch within Roundhouse 3, and post holes representing central posts within Roundhouses 5 and 6.

Archaeobotanical results from the roundhouses show mixed uses across the different structures. Roundhouses 3 and 4 contained the largest quantity of plant remains. Roundhouse 3 had a concentration of hazelnut shell and alder charcoal in addition to barley, emmer wheat and six-row hulled barley. Alldritt (this report) suggests that some of the pits (146, 148 and 230) and Circular Feature 216 may have been scoop hearths or fire pits for hazelnut roasting or other cooking activity. Roundhouse 4, and in particular Post Hole 160, contained mixed cereal waste from emmer wheat, spelt wheat and barley. It was found with alder charcoal, oak charcoal and burnt peat, indicating that Post Hole 160 may have been a firepit. The cereal waste/chaff found may also have been collected following cereal processing and then used in the fire as kindling (van der Veen 1989: 305). Roundhouses 1, 2, 5 and 6 all contained small and poorly preserved deposits, suggesting low levels of burning activity and low accumulation of waste, which indicates inconstant habitation or regular cleaning took place.

Roundhouses 4 and 5 also contained traces of fuel-ash slag, which could derive from a number of different types of pyrotechnic events, and a hollowed stone was recovered from topsoil about Roundhouse 4, which could have been used in metalworking.

The general layout of the roundhouses suggests they may have been arranged into two lines aligned south-west to north-east, with one line containing Roundhouses 1, 2 and 3, the other containing Roundhouses 4 and 5 along with a broad south-west to north-east trench in the pit groups and four- and six-post structures; in Area 2, Roundhouse 7 could be considered to be on a south-west to north-east line with Four-post Structures 2, 3, 5 and 6. A line of four Middle Bronze Age ring ditch roundhouses at Drumyocher, Aberdeenshire (Johnson 2017) was also aligned south-west to north-east, with their entrances facing south-east. A similar arrangement can be seen in the upland Perthshire hut circles, where hut circles can be seen strung out in linear arrangements, for example Drumturn Burn, Hill of Cally, Hill of Kingseat, Loch Benachally and others (RCAHMS 1990). It is possible that the roundhouses were largely contemporary with each other, being inhabited and used at the same time and thus indicating a large community, with these alignments perhaps relating to local topographic conditions, or they could indicate rebuilding over generations as the structural timbers rotted, with the main dwelling slightly shifting across the landscape with each generation.

8.2.2 Ring ditches

Two possible further roundhouses survived only as ring ditches (Ring Ditches 545 and 824), making any realistic interpretation of their ground plan and construction very difficult. These ring ditches are rather later than Roundhouses 1–7, with 545 being radiocarbon dated to the middle of the first millennium BC and 824 to the last two centuries BC. The size and curvature of these ring ditches would suggest that they related to fairly large roundhouses of greater than 10m diameter. Previously excavated examples suggest that ring ditches were generally internal features lying just inside the line of the outer wall (Romankiewicz & Mann 2017). However, excavations at Kintore (Cook & Dunbar 2008) identified three types of ring ditch house consisting of those with a post ring external to the ring ditch, those with a post ring internal to the ring ditch, and those, like Loak Farm, with no evidence of a post-built structure either internal or external to the ring ditch. Very similar features without any surviving post holes were identified at Macallan Distillery, Craigellachie (Dunbar 2017) and at Wardend of Durris, while a second example at the same site had a short arc of post holes curving away from one end of it (Russel-White 1995: 15). Limited evidence of surviving post holes was also identified at one of the two ring ditches at Grantown Road, Forres (Cook 2007). Cook and Dunbar (2008: 324) have interpreted ring ditches with no evidence of post holes as being of a 'wigwam' design, with inward-leaning posts set into an external turf bank converging into a single point at the apex, although the possibility cannot be precluded for post holes having been completely removed by plough truncation.

Various interpretations have been placed on the purpose of ring ditches ranging from being created by extra wear caused by overwintered cattle being tethered in one location (Jobey & Tait 1966; Reynolds 1982) through to the creation of storage space serving a similar function to a small souterrain (Kendrick 1982; Kendrick 1995). While Zimmerman (1999) has questioned the necessity of overwintering cattle indoors, this may have been done more for the human occupants than for the animals, as the heat that they produced would probably have created a much more pleasant living environment. This might simply mean that they were brought in overnight and then turned out so that they could roam more freely during the day. A deeper hollow (either worn or deliberately dug) around the periphery of the internal living space would have helped to contain urine and faecal matter, which could then have been mucked out during the day when the animals were outside. This material would presumably have been retained and once sufficiently rotted, would have been added to the fields to improve their productivity.

The possibility that these ring ditches were for storage also appears feasible, particularly in relation to Ring Ditch 545. With no evidence of a post ring (although a few apparently random shallow pits were identified), this would perhaps imply that at least 0.3m had been truncated from the site. A single post hole was identified within Ring Ditch 545, and Post Holes 938, 940, 949 and 953 located at its southern end could tentatively be interpreted as a four-post structure generally thought to be for the storage of grain.

However, while the ditches may have been used for storage, the archaeobotanical analysis on these two ring ditches does not seem to support the hypothesis of grain storage. Very little cereal grain was found in Ring Ditch 824 – only a small amount of barley. The ditch did contain a large deposit of crushed charcoal and hazelnut, which is likely to be the result of discarded domestic hearth waste. Ring Ditch 545 contained a concentration of hazel charcoal in Lower Fill 551, oak within Post Hole 953, and a small amount of oak charcoal in Post Hole 951. The charcoal found may have been discarded fuel waste, or remains of timber structures burning in situ. A perforated cobble was recovered from the fill of Ring Ditch 824, which may have had a use in craft activities.

It is also possible in some cases that the primary function of the ring ditch may have been for drainage purposes. Deeper examples would not only have kept the interior of the roundhouse drier but may also have drawn water away from the ground-set structural elements such as posts, thus extending their lifespan. It was noted that Ring Ditch 545 contained a high percentage of stone, a feature which is paralleled at quite a number of other sites, such as Dryburn Bridge (Dunwell 2007)

and Douglasmuir (Kendrick 1995), where the bases of the ditches were paved with slabs. The benefit of either lining the ditch with slabs or filling it with stone would be that it would act as a soakaway while still providing a usable space above the level of the escaping water. Even without the stones it may still have served a drainage function, albeit with the possibility of standing water at the base during periods of heavy rain.

8.2.3 Four-post and six-post structures

A total of eight four-post structures (Four-post Structures 1–8) and two six-post structures (Six-post Structures 1 and 2) were identified. The four-post structures ranged in size from *c* 2.5m by 2.5m up to *c* 4m by 4m, while the six-post structures measured *c* 3m by 3m and *c* 3.5m by 4m. Of the various interpretations given for these structures, ranging from animal pens through to exposure platforms, the most widely accepted theory is that they were raised granaries. Reconstructions of these, as at Butser Farm, generally envisage them as small, conical-roofed buildings set on low wooden pillars, although the limited surviving remains make any definitive interpretation very difficult. It is thought that each of the wooden pillars would have been topped either with a wider flat wooden disc or a flattish and preferably slippery stone to prevent vermin such as mice and rats climbing up and gaining access to the stored grain.

A distribution map originally produced by Gent in 1983 (Van der Veen 2006, after Gent 1983) shows the majority of these features in central southern Britain, with outliers extending up into the fertile areas of southern and eastern Scotland. Van der Veen (2006) suggests that the large-scale storage of grain during the Early Iron Age relates to communal feasting and that features such as four-posters and grain storage pits gradually died out in the later Iron Age as surpluses were traded for prestige Roman goods such as wine and figs. An alternative explanation for grain storage could be to preserve seed for planting the following year. Whether or not the four- and six-post structures at Loak Farm can be attributed to feasting is open to debate, but assuming that they all were granaries, they would certainly indicate that a considerable amount of grain was being produced and stored.

Experimental archaeology suggests that roundhouses had a maximum lifespan of *c* 60 years (Pope 2008: 16), although this would have varied greatly depending on factors including weather, altitude, local drainage, level of occupancy, maintenance and so on: Barbour and Crone (2001) have suggested as little as 15 years. Evidence for the re-cutting of post holes associated with Four-post Structure 3 suggests that the posts were replaced at least once during its lifespan, while possible evidence of the grain storage structures being replaced during the lifespan of the roundhouse was identified in the overlying plans of Four-post Structures 5 and 6.

The archaeobotanical remains from the four- and six-post structures were slightly sparser than from the roundhouses. Environmental samples were taken from Four-post Structures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7, which revealed trace amounts of degraded unidentifiable plant detritus and charcoal. Alldritt (this report) suggests that the amount recovered may represent material being windswept, trampled or swept into the area, and that there is certainly little evidence for burning activity in these structures. Six-post Structure 1 contained a small collection of cereal grain, which was mostly unidentifiable but contained some barley and wheat. In Six-post Structure 2 four pits were sampled and only Pit 681 returned identifiable oak charcoal remains. The remaining pits only had trace amounts of charred waste.

This lack of charred material was not altogether unexpected, with Dunwell and Ralston (2008) arguing that granaries were for the storage of surplus unprocessed grain whereas charred cereal remains generally reflected primary crop processing activities. Cook (2016) has also suggested that the lack of charred remains would perhaps be expected in a structure where the material was stored above ground. Considerable quantities of charred remains were recovered from the post holes of the six-post structures excavated at Douglasmuir, but as Kendrick (1995) has pointed out, this was the exception rather than the rule. The large quantities of carbonised remains associated with a few examples might suggest that these structures burnt down, whereas the majority would simply have contained unprocessed grain which would not have survived in the archaeological record. A trough quern was found associated with Four-post Structure 3, which may confirm its agricultural use.

8.2.4 Other structures

A further three structures were identified at Loak Farm (Structures 1–3). Structure 1 was almost certainly associated with Roundhouse 5 and may have been a small pen for livestock. The posts forming this structure are likely to have been interlocked using wattle, and it may have been either roofed or unroofed. Another possible use for a small outbuilding would have been for the storage of firewood, which would presumably have had to have been kept dry, although this perhaps would have been stored under the eaves of the roundhouse.

Structure 2 appears to have been constructed with massive timbers relative to its size suggesting that it was designed to support very heavy loads. Consisting of four massive post holes linked by post trenches, this may have been a very heavy-duty version of the four-post grain storage structures identified elsewhere on site. With the main post holes being at a similar spacing to many of the other four-posters, the implication of this is perhaps that the structure which sat on top of them was considerably larger, overhanging the footprint by a greater amount. Post holes (829, 837, 839, 841 and 865) adjacent to the sides of this structure suggest that the overhang may have been such that a degree of additional support was required. Evidence of posts being replaced suggests that this structure had a long service life and that it was of sufficient significance for repairs to have been carried out. Its proximity to Roundhouse 6 suggests that it may have been an associated structure. A large quantity of oak charcoal was recovered from Gully 849, which may be fuel waste or remains of structural timbers burnt in situ. The remaining post hole features contained unidentifiable crushed charred detritus.

Structure 3 was of a size (6.8m by 4.4m) that could just feasibly be considered a small domestic structure (possibly just falling into the category of roundhouse despite its oval plan). The size of the post holes suggests that this was a fairly lightweight structure, possibly strengthened using wattle between the posts, while the roof appears to have been supported by a single central post. The only archaeobotanical finds from the structure were two fragments of degraded hazelnut shell in Post Hole 531.

A possible Early Iron Age post-built structure was recorded in the adjacent part of the borrow pit (MacIver & Demay 2025), though its identification remains tentative. However, its radiocarbon dating within the first half of the first millennium BC, along with other Early Iron Age pits identified in that area, indicates some limited extension of the occupation in this period beyond the main concentration of settlement described in this report.

8.2.5 Pits

Pits were found to make up a significant element of the site. A notable group of larger pits was identified at the northern end of Area 1 within the vicinity of Roundhouse 6 and a large, isolated pit was identified close to Roundhouse 2. Within Area 2 there was a group of three large pits identified at its eastern end, with a further group at the central southern end of this area. Some of the pits contained possible stone anvils/rests and a perforated cobble, indicating craft activities.

As early as the mid-20th century it was hypothesised that large Iron Age pits may have been for the bulk storage of grain (Bersu 1940). Experiments carried out by Peter Reynolds (1986) at Butser Farm as early as the 1960s proved they would be suitable for this purpose despite the damp British climate; experiments showed that the best results were achieved using beehive pits, which had a narrow entrance but widened out below ground level. This design made sealing the opening to the pit with clay relatively easy, thus creating the anaerobic conditions required for the storage of grain. There is no evidence, however, that this type of feature was being used for grain storage in the archaeobotanical assemblages, or indeed could be used in this way, given the loose sand and gravel natural at Loak Farm.

Environmental sampling has shown that it is likely that some of the large pits from Pit Group 1 (390, 418) were fire pits, based on the charcoal quantities and dearth of cereal grain. The largest concentration of oak charcoal came from Pit 390. Three of these pits (390, 418 and 478) (Illus 24) showed evidence of holding large timber uprights, indicating that their purpose was something other than storage or rubbish disposal. The layout of these pits, however, would indicate that they

represented individual uprights rather than forming elements of a larger structure. These are undated, but pits containing large timber uprights are most commonly associated with the Neolithic period, notably in relation to henge monuments such as Woodhenge, Arminghall Henge and Avebury Sanctuary. Other examples of large Neolithic pits holding upright timbers are the Late Neolithic timber enclosures at Dunragit, Dumfries and Galloway (Thomas 2015) and the Late Neolithic palisaded enclosure and avenue within Trench C at Forteviot, Perth and Kinross (Brophy & Noble 2020). While there is no suggestion that the timber uprights at Loak Farm were part of a henge, cursus or other ceremonial monument, they may have been part of a wider early prehistoric ritual landscape, along with the Loak Court Hill barrow and Loak standing stone. Pits of a similar size to those at Loak Farm were identified at Dubton Farm near Brechin (Cameron 2002) alongside later prehistoric post holes and souterrains. The recovery of Impressed Ware and Carinated Bowl Ware from the Dubton Farm pits suggested a Neolithic date, but there was no evidence that these pits had ever contained timber uprights. Due to the lack of finds and an absence of material suitable for radiocarbon dating, it was not possible to date the pits at Loak Farm, and consequently their interpretation as Neolithic is a conjectural one based purely on their size, morphology and layout. Similar-sized pits were also recorded during excavation of a scheduled monument at Wellhill, Dunning, Perth and Kinross comprising a pit alignment, where an alignment of nine excavated pits has been dated to the Mesolithic and interpreted as the pits having been left open to fill with silt before being re-cut in the Early Neolithic when pottery and other waste was deposited in their upper fills (Brophy & Wright 2021); there is no evidence that they contained timber uprights.

8.3 Early medieval features

Four features consisting of two pits containing smithing slag/smithing hearth bottoms (C234 and 260), a corn-drying kiln (960) and a possible field oven (955) have been dated to the very early–early medieval period. Two of these features (234 and 260) were located in Area 1, while 955 and 960 were located in Area 2.

Pit 955 and Kiln 960 both contained significant deposits of carbonised cereal grain, charcoal and evidence for in situ burning. They contained hulled barley, naked barley and oat. This may indicate that this was an area designated for crop processing or more industrial activities, as both features contained barley.

Pits 234 and 260 dated from the 8th to 10th centuries AD and were located to the north of Roundhouse 1. Both contained evidence of smithing hearth-bottom slag, indicating early medieval ironsmithing. Pit 260 was one of the few features to have contained charred rye grain, which corresponds with its having a later date. Early medieval ironworking was recorded at Upper Gothens, Meikleour, Perth and Kinross (Barclay 2001) within an enclosure, with activity dated to the 9th–13th centuries AD; here, the smelting slag recovered was likely from a furnace bowl. Slightly earlier metalworking evidence has been recovered at Lair (Strachan et al 2019) and King's Seat, Dunkeld (Strachan & MacIver 2025).

Within the adjacent part of the borrow pit (MacIver & Demay 2025), an early medieval pit was dated to the 6th–7th centuries AD, very similar to the radiocarbon dates from Kiln 960, while two hearths in that area containing metalworking waste are also medieval in date (although at least one of these is later, being dated to the 13th–14th centuries), strengthening the evidence for reoccupation at Loak Farm during this period.

The early medieval reoccupation of the site following activity in the prehistoric period is not unknown in Scotland. Early medieval reoccupation of later prehistoric sites is a common occurrence in Perthshire. The 7th–9th century AD Pitcarmick-type longhouses commonly share upland locations with prehistoric roundhouse settlements (Carver et al 2013; Strachan et al 2019). This observation was reinforced by Bailey (2021), who described Pitcarmick-type buildings as often lying in well-preserved prehistoric landscapes. Some of the turf longhouses excavated at Lair, Glen Shee, were noted for their lack of post holes or evidence of earth-fast roof supports, suggesting that, once truncated by modern ploughing, little or no trace would be left in the archaeological record (Strachan et al 2019). This might imply that the few remaining early medieval features from

Loak Farm were the vestigial remains of a wider settlement. The excavations at Lair also recovered evidence of metalworking, where they appear to have been producing low-status metal objects for domestic use.

The reoccupation of later prehistoric structures and settlement areas within the early medieval and medieval periods, which can include evidence for later metalworking activity, has been seen at several Perthshire sites. For example, at Black Spout, Pitlochry, the site was reused around AD 890–975, although there is limited evidence for what that reuse comprised (Strachan 2013). At Bunrannoch, smelting and smithing dated to the 7th–9th centuries AD took place in a reused prehistoric roundhouse (MacGregor 2010), and possibly at Litigan around AD 1000 and Queen's View (Taylor 1990), where metalworking evidence is known but which is not diagnostically distinct or well dated: it could date from the Iron Age to the late medieval periods. Further stone roundhouses at Carn Dubh, Moulin also contained evidence for early medieval reoccupation comprising perhaps some ironworking (Rideout 1995) and similarly at Aldclune (Hingley et al 1997).

At Logierait, Perth and Kinross (Ellis et al 2021) a number of features were dated to the early medieval period, including a buried soil containing a furnace base and bloom fragment, pits and postholes possibly forming structures, one pit containing a tuyère, and ditched field boundaries, all dated to the late 7th–9th centuries AD. Elsewhere in Scotland a small metalworking workshop of the 5th–7th century AD was found at Eilean Olabhat, North Uist on the site of an Iron Age settlement dating to the middle centuries of the first millennium BC, although in this case it appears to have been producing higher-status metal items (Armit, Campbell & Dunwell 2008).

At Bertha Park Phase 2, Perth (Engl 2020), features radiocarbon dated to the late 7th–12th centuries AD were excavated, including a putative rectangular post-built structure, lines and groups of pits, and a cattle burial, amongst a palimpsest of features which also included Mid–Late Neolithic pits and a Late Bronze Age ring ditch roundhouse. At Bertha Park Phase 1 (Lowther & Wilson 2022), a pit in Area K was dated to AD 888–988, amongst a group of pits with no discernible pattern. Early historic pits were also recorded at Cliffburn Road, Arbroath, dating to AD 680–980 (Dunbar 2012), suggesting that pit groups and isolated features of this period can often comprise evidence for limited reoccupation of earlier sites (two Middle Bronze Age roundhouses, in the case of Cliffburn Road). A subrectangular trench-built building and associated pits at Newbarns, Angus were also dated to the later first millennium AD (McGill 2004).

Evidence for early medieval features such as ovens and kilns are also known in Perth and Kinross. For example, a corn-drying kiln and a probable house structure dating to AD 1043–1282 were recorded at North Scotstarvit, Fife (Macgregor 1998). A corn-drying kiln dating to AD 421–547 has been reported at Newmill West (Wilson & Clarke 2019) during the A9 dualling between Luncarty and Pass of Birnam. An early historic (AD 430–620) and a medieval (12th–14th century) corn-drying kiln and hearth were recorded at Lethangie, Kinross (Cachart 2008), the earlier feature containing hulled barley and oats while the later included rye.

Slightly further afield, at Burdiehouse, Edinburgh (MacIver & Paton 2023), structures, pits and enclosures dating from the 7th century AD to the 12th century AD included an 11th–12th-century clay-lined corn-drying kiln and a hearth within a post-hole setting dating to the 7th–9th centuries AD. These features related to rural settlement, and the authors acknowledge that sites of this period in lowland Scotland are often difficult to define. The lack of wider rural settlement evidence from this period has been argued (Dunwell & Ralston 2008) as possibly being attributable to the construction methods of associated dwellings, such as post pads, crucks and shallow trenches, which leave little in the way of cut features.

Due to the limited number of features dating to the early medieval activity at Loak Farm, there are constraints to what can be established about the activity on site during this period. The evidence in Area 1 shows that occasional ironsmithing was carried out on or near the site. The combination of food processing and ironworking activity probably indicates that there were nearby early medieval domestic structures which have left no trace in the archaeological record or have not been uncovered.