
13 DISCUSSION

The prehistoric archaeological remains excavated at Laigh Newton had clearly been truncated by ploughing. The effect of this had not only removed any trace of occupation surfaces that may once have been present and ensured that only the bases of the deepest sub-surface features survived, but had also removed artefacts from their original context. This was not only demonstrated by the small quantity of prehistoric pottery and lithics recovered from the overlying topsoil on the western and central excavation sites, but the inclusion of residual prehistoric material in the north-west site, stratigraphically above medieval pottery ([James forthcoming](#)). Deposited here by topsoil creep and ploughing from their most likely origin upslope at Laigh Newton West, this material, which spanned the Neolithic to the Iron Age periods, clearly demonstrates the movement of some artefacts and environmental evidence from their original prehistoric context.

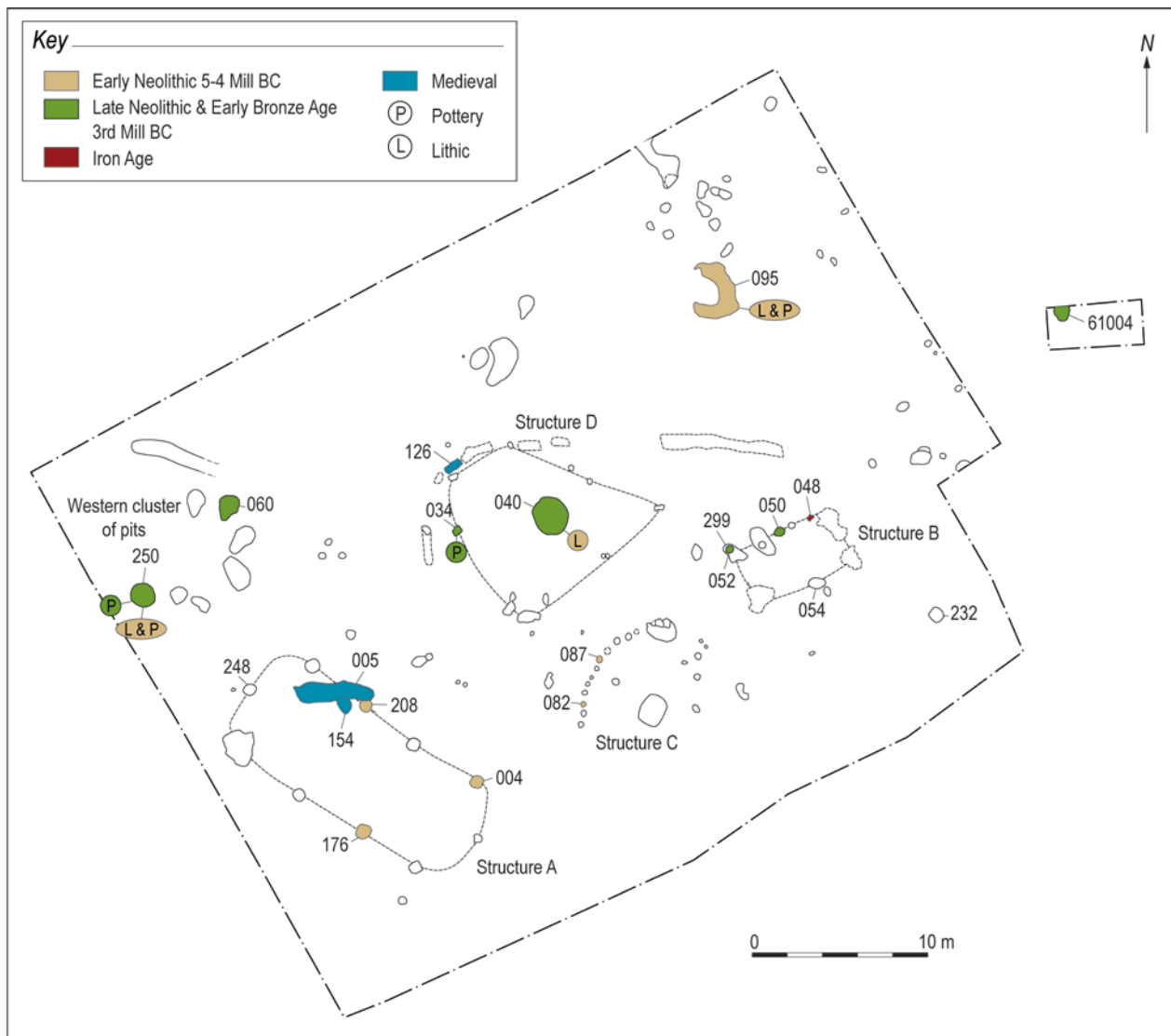
There was further good evidence for residual artefact distributions within many of the archaeological features. This is best exemplified by the evidence for Mesolithic occupation at Laigh Newton. A fragment of willow charcoal, from pit 060 within the western site, was radiocarbon dated to 6400–6240 cal BC (SUERC-22412), but the pit also contained prehistoric pottery of indeterminate date and was part of an arrangement of pits that included another that yielded substantial evidence for Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age deposition. A Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic assemblage of lithics, in fact the only chronologically coherent lithic assemblage from Laigh Newton (see [Ballin](#) above), was recovered from two pits within the eastern excavation site. Early Neolithic pottery sherds were also recovered from the same pits (see [Ballin Smith](#) above), as well as a radiocarbon date of 3770–3640 cal BC (SUERC-22432) from one of many carbonised grains of emmer wheat present (see [Ramsay](#) above). However, even this Neolithic material was residual, as medieval pottery was also recovered from the single fill deposits within these two pits (see [Somerville](#) above) and which provides the only reliable *terminus post quem* for the date of the pits ([Barker 1993](#), 224). Therefore, while there was residual Mesolithic activity evident at Laigh Newton, no specific features could be dated with certainty to the Mesolithic period.

Notwithstanding these constraints and that plough truncation had removed almost all evidence for stratigraphic relationships between individual features, it was nevertheless possible to recognise, amongst the wide scatter of features across the western and central excavation sites at Laigh

Newton, discrete coherent clusters of features associated with corresponding concentrations of artefacts and environmental evidence that can tentatively be tied into specific chronological episodes of occupation ([illus 17](#) and [18](#)).

One of the most coherent clusters of features on the western site was Structure A, defined by five pairs of matching post-holes outlining a rectilinear, NW/SE-aligned structure. Possibly associated with this structure was a parallel line of smaller post-holes and stake-holes to the NE and a single post-hole to the SW. While no artefacts were found within any of these post-holes, and only minute amounts of burnt bone considered too insignificant in quantity for analysis, there were consistently mixed charcoal assemblages of alder, birch, hazel, oak and willow, with some hazel nutshell fragments from almost all the features (see [Ramsay](#) above). The range of radiocarbon dates recovered from three separate post-holes in this structure, 4350–4220 cal BC (SUERC-22443) to 3360–3080 cal BC (SUERC-22444) and 3360–3090 cal BC (SUERC-24620), clearly indicate occupation during the Neolithic, though given the improbably long duration suggested by these dates, may indicate the incorporation of residual charcoal from an earlier Neolithic occupation of the site. There were no contemporary internal features evident within this structure, as the linear feature that cut one of Structure A's post-holes yielded a radiocarbon date of cal AD 1020–1190 (SUERC-22167) and a significant number of oat grains, not present in domesticated form in Neolithic Scotland in any case. The latter feature was itself cut by another post-hole, which also contained oat grains, and together with another linear feature to the north, which provided a similar date of cal AD 990–1160 (SUERC-22413), clearly demonstrates medieval activity here, probably related to the farmstead to the north (see [James forthcoming](#)). The presence of single oat grains in those post-holes of Structure A closest to these medieval features suggests a degree of contamination, confirmed by the radiocarbon date of cal AD 1030–1220 (SUERC-24624) from one of Structure A's post-holes, and which together with the residual charcoal debris from the early Neolithic, clearly demonstrates that the case for a chronological coherency to Structure A is far from cut and dried, but the weight of evidence seems consistent with occupation at some point during the latter centuries of the fourth millennium BC.

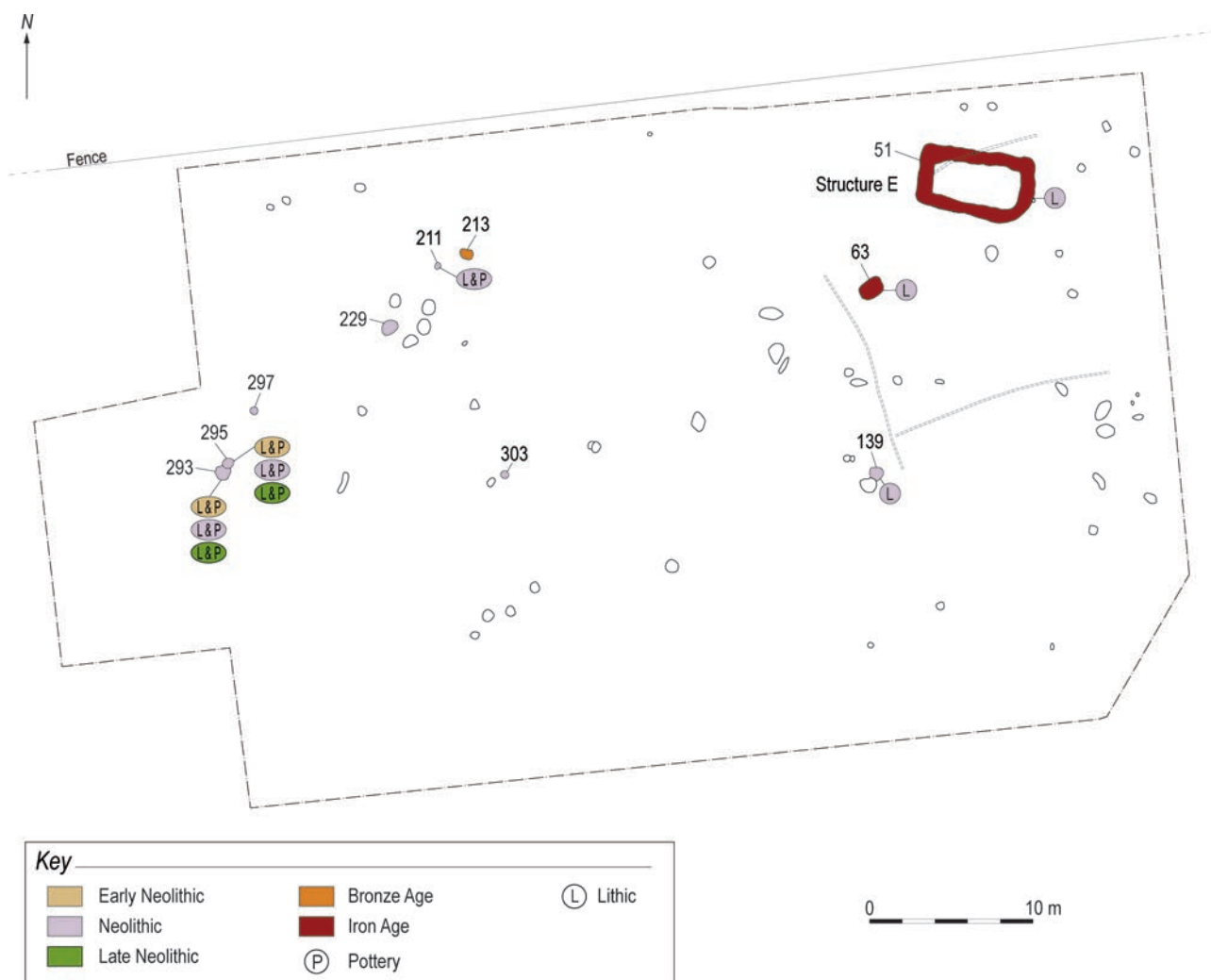
The form and dimensions of Structure A certainly fall within the parameters of other Neolithic timber rectilinear structures across Scotland, Britain and NW Europe ([Brophy 2006](#), 33; [Darvill 1996](#), 86–87; [Grogan 1996](#), 43; [Barclay et al 2002](#), 129). While



Illus 17 Laigh Newton West – dated features and finds distribution

many of those Scottish structures dated to the end of the fourth millennium BC have been interpreted as unroofed enclosures (Brophy 2006, 35–37), it seems likely that Structure A was a roofed building. The majority of the post-holes, where post-pipes were still evident, appeared to have held posts uniformly *c* 0.30m in diameter, sufficiently thick to form a load-bearing structure that might support a roof. The central space was only 6.2m wide, and the spaces between each neighbouring post ranged between 2.3m and 3.3m apart, again sufficiently close to allow the matching pairs of posts to plausibly support a roof, given comparison with other probable roofed Neolithic buildings in Scotland (Hogg 2002, 112–113), though it should be noted that similar comparisons have not prevented interpretations of unroofed enclosures being made (Barclay et al 2002, 106–111). While single or multiple inner axial posts are apparent in some Neolithic structures, there seem no exact parallels apparent amongst excavated Neolithic houses in south-west Scotland (Kirby 2011,

6–7) or elsewhere in Britain and beyond (Darvill 1996, 86–87 and 94; Grogan 1996, 45; Malone 2001, 49; Barclay et al 2002, 101–130; Brophy 2006, 33; Murray et al 2009, 30) for the matching outer axial posts at either ‘gable end’ of Structure A. The closest parallels to Structure A seem to be Schwarzen Berg in Lower Saxony and Carsie Mains in Perth and Kinross (Barclay et al 2002, 130). While the house at Schwarzen Berg was of very similar dimensions to Structure A, and had axial posts on its outer wall, it also had significant differences, such as inner axial posts, inner divisions and many more post-holes, especially at both terminal ends. The structure at Carsie Mains likewise was of similar dimensions and alignment, but again its axial terminals were defined by many more post-holes and its inner post-holes were significantly smaller and therefore less credible as load-bearers than its outer wall post-holes. Its excavators could not conclude whether it was a roofable structure (Brophy & Barclay 2004, 19). However, it seems more plausible that the



Illus 18 Laigh Newton Central – dated features and finds distribution

terminal axial posts at Laigh Newton supported not an enclosing fence but a central ridge roof beam. Furthermore, the parallel line of smaller post-holes and stake-holes corresponding to the post-holes forming the north-east line of Structure A and the single post-hole corresponding to the southernmost post-hole may represent the only surviving elements of ties or external stays perhaps created to strengthen the stability of the structure (Hogg 2002, 113).

Structure A may therefore have comprised a three-aisled roofed building 15.1m long and perhaps 12.8m wide, somewhat shorter than the largest of the Neolithic timber halls in Scotland, but relative to its length wider than most other Neolithic buildings, and, covering a potential floor space of 193m², larger than most Neolithic buildings in Britain (Topping 1996, 159). Even if the outer aisles are excluded, the central space occupies 94m², which, excluding the abnormally large buildings at Balbridie and Claish, lies at the upper limit for Neolithic rectangular houses. While the paucity of artefacts and the lack of any significant spatial differences apparent in the distribution of charcoal offers little evidence as to how Structure A was occupied, the mixed nature of the charcoal assemblage might seem consistent

with domestic occupation. As Ramsay has already noted (see above), the carbonised remains were very different from other Neolithic timber buildings in Scotland. There was no evidence to demonstrate that Structure A was built of oak. Barley or wheat grains were also not evident other than solely within the medieval features that overlay it and there was no evidence that it had been destroyed by fire. Given the number of post-pipes evident within the post-holes of Structure A, it is clearly apparent that the structural posts were allowed to decay naturally. In fact the only post-hole that showed signs of disturbance, other than that cut by the medieval linear feature, was the irregular post-hole at the north-west corner, the disturbance in this case probably caused by the displacement of packing stones through plough action. If the general mix of charcoal recovered from Structure A was incorporated into the post-holes during the life or immediate post-abandonment of the building, this might seem more consistent with general domestic occupation than perhaps the specialised role envisaged for many rectilinear timber halls in Scotland (Barclay et al 2002, 131–132; Noble 2006, 59 and 69; Brophy 2007, 92). Certainly the axial entrances at Balbridie and Claish and other Neolithic

ritual enclosures such as Balfarg, are not possible at Laigh Newton, those spaces being occupied by the two axial posts supporting the roof ridge. Given the lack of any evidence for internal screens or an upper floor for storage, apparent also at Balbridie and Claish (Barclay et al 2002, 104–106), it does not seem unreasonable to postulate a different nature of occupation for Structure A. While the absence of material culture within Structure A, similarly apparent in contemporary unroofed enclosures such as Balfarg, Littleour and Carsie Mains, might be to some suggestive of a ceremonial or ritual purpose (Barclay & Russell-White 1993, 178–182; Brophy 2006, 36–37), this absence of artefacts may not only reflect the result of plough truncation but perhaps the deliberate deposition of artefacts elsewhere. Certainly the absence of material culture from many later prehistoric roundhouses is not accepted as evidence for an essentially non-domestic nature of occupation; rather, there is growing evidence that many of these roundhouses were regularly swept clean (Toolis 2007, 300). There seems no reason why this could not have been the case for many Neolithic dwellings too. Therefore, while this absence of evidence of course is not evidence of absence, and there are similarities, owing no doubt to a sharing of the same architectural ‘vocabulary’ (Barclay et al 2002, 132), there also seem too many differences to permit the assumption that Structure A fulfilled a primarily ritual function similar to that suggested for many other contemporary rectilinear structures (Brophy 2007, 92; Thomas 2008, 79–80).

A few metres to the east of Structure A was another coherent pattern of features, Structure C, composed of a semi-circular arrangement of shallow stake-holes that defined a space c 3m wide around the north-west side of a large stone-packed pit. Radiocarbon dates of 3640–3490 cal BC (SUERC-22409) and 3500–3330 cal BC (SUERC-22410) were obtained from willow charcoal fragments from two of the stake-holes, indicating that this structure may have been more or less contemporary with Structure A. There is some evidence to suggest that this arc of stake-holes formed an oak-built fence (see Ramsay above). Together with the single sherd of prehistoric pottery with carbonised food deposits, the occasional indeterminate carbonised cereal grain and hazel nutshell recovered from some of these stake-holes may indicate domestic occupation nearby but the presence too of three carbonised oat grains hints at contamination, probably from the same medieval activity recorded above Structure A. The pit itself was devoid of artefacts or charcoal, but was filled with large angular stones that were considered in the field to have slumped into a central post-hole. If a post or stone had been set into the fill of this pit, it seems that this had been subsequently removed, not left to rot or burn in situ. While this structure defies obvious explanation, which is perhaps why the excavators postulated a ritual function, the evidence from a very similar Late Neolithic structure at Kintore in Aberdeenshire was interpreted as a windbreak pro-

tecting a working area (Cook & Dunbar 2008, 314). While structured deposition of artefacts may have accompanied the filling of the pit at Kintore (*ibid*, 54–55), as may have occurred at another similar Late Neolithic structure at Lamb’s Nursery in Midlothian (Cook 2000, 96–97), no such structure deposition was apparent at Structure C. The structured deposition at Kintore and Lamb’s Nursery may only relate to the ‘closing’ of the structure, rather than its primary role, and if this function was more prosaic, it would adhere to the evidence recovered from the majority of the Irish Neolithic settlements, for instance, for various domestic activities undertaken not within houses but elsewhere within the surrounding habitation area (Grogan 1996, 57–59).

The idea of a single Neolithic building, Structure A, surrounded by a wider habitation area, to which Structure C might belong, seems to accord with the rest of the fourth millennium BC activity apparent at Laigh Newton. Carinated and Grooved Ware pottery sherds, some with encrusted carbonised food deposits, and pitchstone and flint blades belonging to the Early Neolithic period (see Ballin Smith and Ballin above) were recovered from the secondary fill of a pit to the north-east of Structure A, but given that an Early Bronze Age Beaker vessel sherd with a radiocarbon date of 2470–2270 cal BC (SUERC-22411) were recovered from the underlying primary fill of this pit, together with another Beaker vessel sherd from the same secondary fill, this material was clearly residual and demonstrates no more than a prior general domestic occupation of the surrounding ground during the Early Neolithic. The only feature to have contained a potentially chronologically consistent assemblage of pottery and lithics at Laigh Newton West was pit 095, near the north-east corner of the excavation area. Identifiable as a tree-throw by its characteristic banana shape, the deposition of early Neolithic artefacts within its upper fill, along with birch, hazel, oak and willow charcoal and carbonised hazelnut shells, could be perceived as the remnants of structured deposition, perhaps related to the notion of tree-throws as markers or foci for camp-sites within a heavily wooded landscape (Evans et al 1999, 242–9). The two rim sherds from a carinated vessel, for instance, could derive from the deliberate selection of only these parts of the vessel. The incompleteness of this pottery vessel might also, on the other hand, merely reflect the incomplete survival of this feature (Conolly & MacSween 2003, 43). That the artefacts and bulk of the charcoal were only present in the secondary fill, the primary fill being largely clean of all but a very small amount of charcoal, suggests that deposition was not demonstrably deliberate but could equally well have accidentally accumulated within this hollow. The flint microblade might also be Late Mesolithic rather than early Neolithic (see Ballin above), and therefore indicative of residual material. Lastly, the limited number of artefacts and the abraded nature of the pottery sherds, by comparison with deposition patterns at other sites

(Cook & Dunbar 2008, 311; Pollard 1997, 85–7 and 111), imply that this is little more than accidentally accumulated domestic debris.

The diagnostically early Neolithic material recovered from several pits in the central excavation site at Laigh Newton likewise cannot be attributed to structured deposition, as Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material was also recovered from the same contexts. This evidence for residual domestic debris, again more or less contemporary with the occupation of Structure A, seems more consistent with the manuring of the surrounding land with midden material, perhaps as part of a system of intensive arable farming comparable with those recorded in Orkney (Guttman *et al* 2004, 61), which is further supported by the evidence for the processing of barley in a pit to the east (see Ramsay above) and the significant quantity of residual emmer wheat, dated to 3770–3640 cal BC (SUERC-22432), recovered from the pits at the Laigh Newton East excavation.

The evidence would therefore seem to indicate settlement at Laigh Newton from around the middle of the fourth millennium BC, related to arable agriculture and focused perhaps around a large rectangular house associated with a surrounding habitation area or unenclosed yard, at some point before the end of the millennium. It is difficult to say for how long this house was occupied but, given the evidence from the comparable settlement at Kinbeachie on the Black Isle for instance (Barclay *et al* 2001, 74; Noble 2006, 64), or the general perception that fully permanent settlements did not appear on mainland Scotland until the Bronze Age (Pollard 1997, 117; Brophy 2006, 25) and even then were rather transient (Halliday 2007, 53–55), or indeed the absence of any evidence within Structure A for replacement posts, it is doubtful that this was for more than one or two generations.

Nevertheless, however transient the occupation of Structure A might appear from our perspective, the substantial form of this house may have appeared much more permanent during its lifespan. The majority of contemporary Neolithic settlement, exemplified by sites such as Beckton in Dumfries and Galloway (Pollard 1997), Chapelfield near Stirling (Atkinson 2002) and Overhailes in East Lothian (MacGregor & Stuart 2007), appear significantly more ephemeral. Within the contemporary settlement hierarchy and economy that is beginning to emerge in the archaeological record (MacGregor 2007, 221; Murray *et al* 2009, 65; Bishop *et al* 2009, 90), Structure A at Laigh Newton belongs to that form of settlement less temporary than these slight tent-like structures, but also less imposing and ceremonial than the monumental halls such as Balbridie and Claish, perhaps analogous with the idea of a permanent farmhouse around which a small, probably kinship-based, community led a more mobile, perhaps pastoral and wild plant-based lifestyle.

A hiatus in occupation followed its abandonment

until around the middle of the third millennium BC, when a much more ephemeral form of structure occupied the area north of Structures A and C. Structure D was centred around pit 040, which contained large quantities of charcoal, consistent with domestic hearth waste (see Ramsay above), and which yielded radiocarbon dates of 2470–2280 cal BC (SUERC-22168) from its primary fill and 2290–2030 cal BC (SUERC-22414) from its uppermost fill. Although the sides of the pit were not significantly burnt, the amount of charcoal suggests this was a fire pit. The presence of hazel nutshell and a raspberry/bramble pip also indicates that food was probably being prepared or eaten here. Surrounding this fire-pit was a trapezoidal arrangement of post-holes, one of which contained a fragment of daub, perhaps indicative of a wind- and water-tight wattle structure (see Ballin Smith above). The post-holes were significantly smaller than the post-holes that defined Structure A and together with the smaller floor space of *c* 64m², Structure D seems consistent with the slight dwelling structures apparent across central and south-west Scotland around this time (Brophy 2006, 21). The radiocarbon dates obtained from two of the post-holes, though, might raise doubts as to whether these post-holes were contemporary with the fire-pit. Plough action and the proximity of the medieval linear feature overlying Structure A, however, may explain the contamination of post-hole 042 with a fragment of alder dated to cal AD 1030–1210 (SUERC-24627). The fragment of hazelnut shell from post-hole 034, which was radiocarbon dated to 4340–4060 cal BC (SUERC-24628), is consistent with residual late Mesolithic and early Neolithic material apparent in other features at Laigh Newton, especially as a Beaker vessel sherd was recovered from the same post-hole. The artefacts, which are perhaps less likely to have moved from their last place of deposition than charcoal micro fragments, were consistent with occupation during the late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age period; two small flakes of Yorkshire flint recovered from the upper fill of the fire-pit were roughly contemporary with the Beaker sherd (see Ballin above). Furthermore, a sherd from the same Beaker vessel was also found in the lower fill of pit 250 to the west of Structure D, which also contained a fragment of hazel, radiocarbon dated to 2470–2270 cal BC (SUERC-22411). In the absence of any diagnostically later artefacts from the neighbouring pits near the north-west corner of the western excavation area, it is likely that this coherent layout of pits was also contemporary with Structure D.

The mix of residual Mesolithic and Early Neolithic material within the only two pits of this group to contain artefacts, and the consistency of the charcoal from pit 250 with domestic hearth waste (see Ramsay above), strongly suggests that the accidental accumulation of domestic debris rather than structured deposition better explains the fill of these pits. The original digging of these pits, on the other hand, was clearly deliberate and structured,

and remarkably similar to several clusters of early Neolithic pits discovered at Kilverstone in Norfolk (Garrow et al 2005, 152). As in Kilverstone, where also no pit cut another, these pits were probably dug sequentially, but were probably not around a now vanished feature within the centre of the U-shaped layout, as this area seems simply too small. Drawing on the scenarios envisaged for Kilverstone (ibid, 154–155) and Newton Farm near Cambuslang (O'Brien 2009, 21), this cluster of pits at Laigh Newton probably derives from a single episode of occupation. While the purpose of these pits and their layout is not discernible from the nature of their fills, their proximity to the contemporary trapezoidal structure might suggest an associated function. If these pits were dug in order to contain organic matter, such material would leave no archaeological trace. Even though these pits only survive to a very shallow depth, almost all of them contained more than one deposit of fill, suggesting that deposits were placed in them sequentially and perhaps relatively often. The haphazard inclusion of domestic debris that had accumulated here indicates that the content of the material used to fill the pits was not important, only perhaps that soil was required to be periodically dumped into the pits. That the soil close to hand may have been rich in domestic debris is not inconceivable, given the evidence from settlements such as Durrington Walls for instance (Parker Pearson 2007, 142), where the original, midden-rich, ground surface survives. Given their location a short distance from, but not too close to, a possible domestic dwelling, these pits at Laigh Newton may have been latrines. To take an ethnographic example of the adaptation from a nomadic lifestyle to a more permanent occupation of a site, the imposition of a sedentary lifestyle upon the nomadic Mbuti Pygmies of Central Africa, where after only two months the new model villages were filthy, reeked of garbage and human excreta and had been all but abandoned (Turnbull 1983, 148–9), suggests that the management of general waste and specifically human waste disposal was probably highly significant to communities coming to terms with the occupation of fixed places for more than a few weeks. The same purpose of latrines may also explain the pits within the central excavation site, which also contained a mix of residual early Neolithic, later Neolithic and Bronze Age domestic debris. Even if these other pits did not relate directly to the occupation of Structure D, they are still likely indicators (Pollard 1997, 112) for broadly contemporary settlement along the same valley terrace.

Also possibly contemporary with this episode of occupation was Structure B, near the east side of the western excavation area. Measuring 6m long and 3.5m wide, this NE/SW-aligned post-built rectilinear structure was significantly smaller than Structure A, covering a floor space of just 21m². However, while radiocarbon dates of 2850–2470 cal BC (SUERC-24625) and 2460–2140 cal BC (SUERC-24626) were obtained from two of its post-holes, a

date of 520–370 cal BC (SUERC-22405) was obtained from another of its post-holes. In the absence of any artefactual evidence, it is therefore impossible to attribute with any certainty the date of this structure. As with Structure A, the charcoal evidence was more indicative of domestic hearth waste than structural debris (see Ramsay above) but, together with the absence of any artefacts, offered no clues as to what specific activities took place within this structure. While Structure B was small enough to have been roofed, the post-holes were very shallow and likely post diameters could not be estimated with any confidence. A rectilinear structure is of course less unusual in the third millennium than the first millennium BC, but rectilinear structures were not entirely absent from Britain during the pre-Roman Iron Age (Cunliffe 2005, 561–3). While the single fragment of charcoal radiocarbon dated to the Iron Age may be a later contaminant, and therefore unrelated to its occupation, comparable radiocarbon dates of 410–350 cal BC (SUERC-22430) from residual alder charcoal downslope on the north-west excavation site, and 400–200 cal BC (SUERC-24629) from the fill of Structure E and 380–200 cal BC (SUERC-22440) from charred barley grains in a pit, both within the central excavation site, altogether demonstrate credible evidence for occupation along this valley terrace during the mid first millennium BC. If indeed Structure B was built and occupied at this time, one might speculate if its unusual form, analogous with the broadly contemporary rectilinear ‘shrines’ recorded in southern Britain (Cunliffe 2005, 561–563) and quite distinct from the ubiquitous circular form of contemporary domestic settlement in Scotland, was related to the perceived pre-Christian religious importance of Loudoun Hill and its association with the Celtic deity Lug (MacGregor & Atkinson 2000, 65), in the direction of which the axis of Structure B is aligned (illus 5 and 17). However, the evidence is simply not clear enough to substantiate such speculation and the date of Structure B is thus indeterminate.

The focus of settlement on the western excavation site at Laigh Newton nevertheless appears to have shifted slightly to the east later in the Bronze Age, where a pit containing significant numbers of carbonised barley provided a radiocarbon date of 1690–1500 cal BC (SUERC-22433). The bulk of the prehistoric radiocarbon dates from the medieval farmstead downslope from this, on the north-west excavation site, were broadly contemporary (see table 5) and due to their final deposition here through topsoil creep and ploughing, their most likely origin lies somewhere on the eastern margin of the western excavation area.

The last phase of prehistoric occupation apparent at Laigh Newton appears to have taken place right at the end of the Iron Age. This comprised a large rectangular pit in the north-east quarter of Laigh Newton Central, which contained bundles of carbonised branches that had been burnt in situ within it. The incomplete combustion of the upper fragments,

the similar size of the roundwood pieces and the selection solely of birch and alder, together with the complete absence of food plant remains, indicates that the purpose of this burning was the production of charcoal (see Ramsay above).

A radiocarbon date of cal AD 380–540 (SUERC-22435), obtained from a fragment of alder charcoal from the lower fill of this pit, was broadly contemporary with a radiocarbon date of cal AD 240–400 (SUERC-22434) from Structure E, situated 5m to the north-east. However, radiocarbon dates of 400–200 cal BC (SUERC-24629) and cal AD 1030–1220 (SUERC-24630) were also obtained from Structure E. Other than a couple of lithic fragments, including a chip of Neolithic Yorkshire flint, the rectilinear groove that defined this feature contained no other artefacts. The rest of the carbonised remains were consistent with hearth waste rather than structural debris and included a few carbonised oat grains. Enclosing a space 5.1m long and 2.3m wide, Structure E was of different construction to Structures A and B,

with no evidence for upright posts (illus 11 and 18). The only evidence for a stake-hole within the base of the groove was recorded near the centre of its north side, but as this occurred precisely on the course of a modern field drain that cut through the groove, its pre-modern provenance is doubtful. Structure E is nonetheless broadly comparable with other rectilinear structures from the mid–late first millennium AD in southern Scotland (Smith 1982, 133; Smith 1995, 115; Ralston & Armit 1997, 218 and 229), albeit at the cusp of rectilinear houses appearing again in the archaeological record. Given that charcoal-burning requires constant vigilance for its duration, it is conceivable that Structure E may have been some form of temporary shelter for those carrying out this task. There was, however, no evidence for any substantial load-bearing structure necessary to support a roof. The range of dating evidence recovered, therefore, does not allow the date of this structure to be confidently established and the date of Structure E is therefore indeterminate.