

ART. III – *Later prehistoric settlement in Matterdale and Hutton parishes: recent survey results*

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MATTERDALE and Hutton parishes are located in the north-east corner of the Lake District National Park, Cumbria (Fig. 1). Most of the survey area is between 200 and 300 m in elevation, and as with much of the National Park, there is a wide variety of topography from relatively fertile valley floors to upland hills and moors. At the present day much of the land is used for pasture of cattle and sheep, including fields given over to silage, with some small deer farms and forestry plantations. The geology of the area is complex and diverse, with all the major rock types of the region represented; carboniferous limestones in the north, giving way to more acidic volcanic rocks to the south (Fig. 2). Modern land use in part reflects this division with cattle dominating the more fertile neutral or base rich soils in the north of the study area, and mixed sheep and cattle-based “hill farms” occupying the more impoverished acidic soils in the south.

This is the fourth interim report to come out of the Matterdale Archaeological Research Project which is investigating change in landscape and society during the Bronze and Iron Age in this area of the Lake District National Park (Loney and Hoaen, 2000a, 2000b; Hoaen and Loney forthcoming a and b). This paper will therefore address those sites located by the survey which can broadly be attributed to Later Prehistory, i.e. the first and second millennium B.C., together with the Romano-British period.

Prior to this study little formal archaeological research had taken place in either parish. The SMR contains references to a number of sites, but few of these have been surveyed or examined in detail. There are also records of a number of stray finds in the vicinity of the Mell Fells, and along the A66 corridor (Annable, 1987; Richardson and Hallam, 1995). A number of Bronze Age funerary monuments and ritual monuments were known previously from the A66 corridor, whilst there are hill forts at Dunmallard and Maiden Castle, and a number of Roman camps at Troutbeck. In adjacent areas, to the north and east, the work of Higham (1986), Higham and Jones (1975), and Bewley (1994) provide comparanda, whilst further afield, work in adjacent areas of Southern Scotland, Northumbria and the Tees valley provide dated examples of similar settlement types identified during the survey (RCHAMS, 1997; Harding, 1982; Higham, 1986)

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the survey were threefold: 1) to increase the knowledge of sites within the study area through intensive pedestrian survey, 2) to further investigate and survey (with topographic and geophysical methods) sites previously identified from the SMR record that were poorly recorded and of uncertain morphology, 3) to relate the identified sites to their surrounding landscape through a combination of survey, excavation and palynological work.

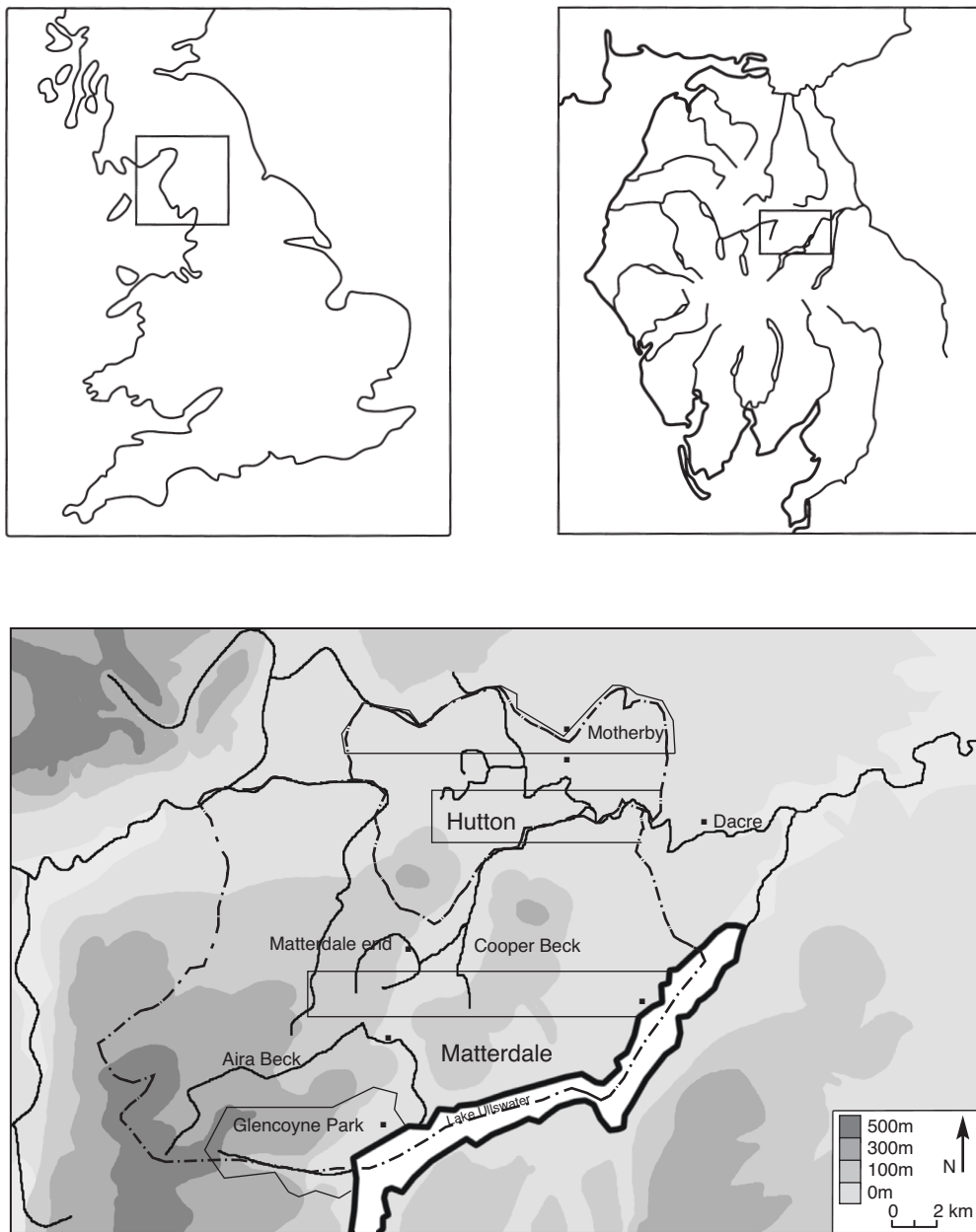


FIG. 1. Map of Hutton and Matterdale parishes showing main sites mentioned in the text and transect locations.

Methodology

In order to complete the survey within a five-year period, we have designed a stratified sampling strategy which allows us to intensively investigate a study area of large size and with the wide variety of terrain, geology, and soils present within the parishes. The study area is divided into four one kilometre wide transects, centred on the head waters of the Dacre Beck, running east-west, across the parishes (Fig. 1). These transects have enabled us to examine a sample of the archaeology from each of the main geological and topographical aspects of the study area, including high fell, the slopes of the foothills, valley bottom and lakeshore.

Our survey methodology reflects the current land use practices in our area. Because little ploughing is practised at the present day within the study area, the archaeological record consists largely of positive features, including stone banks, turf walls, and cairns that survive as upstanding monuments. Archaeological features such as wooden built structures, as well as flint and ceramic scatters, are unlikely to be visible to the methods used in this survey, and so we expect to have missed any such finds, though fields used for silage come under plough once every five years or so, and we have attempted to take advantage of that whenever possible. Our survey methodology consists of field walking using lines of four-five students or volunteers spaced approximately 5-15 m apart (depending on conditions), walking in regular transects across the survey area. Surveys have been conducted during all seasons, and though early spring is probably the optimal time for survey in terms of low vegetation and therefore high site visibility, it is also the worst time for the local farmers, as it coincides with lambing. Consequently, most of the survey has been undertaken in the summer months, after the first haymaking. Most of the survey area is on enclosed land under grass and the vegetation is kept low by grazing animals, whatever the season. To ensure the effectiveness of the survey, the results of the previous season's work are checked during the late winter/early spring to confirm that sites may be relocated and that no major details were missed on the first visit. Areas that were not walked, because of either high bracken or long grass, are also visited in the late winter.

The transects are recorded by fields: each field is given a unique record number, and each site within the field is first located onto 1:10000 OS maps, and then sketch mapped onto a pro-forma recording sheet. If it is then warranted, the sites are plotted in by total station survey. In the case of some of the more complex sites, additional investigation has been conducted using resistivity and magnetometry surveys.

In this report it is not possible to discuss in detail the results of the survey, instead it is our intention to describe the main archaeological elements identified by the survey, and provide a brief discussion of the main monument groupings. Organisationally, we have somewhat arbitrarily grouped the results of the survey into three elements: firstly a brief discussion of stray finds; secondly, those monuments which we can characterise as being of ritual/funerary origins; and finally those which we can broadly characterise as being of secular origins.

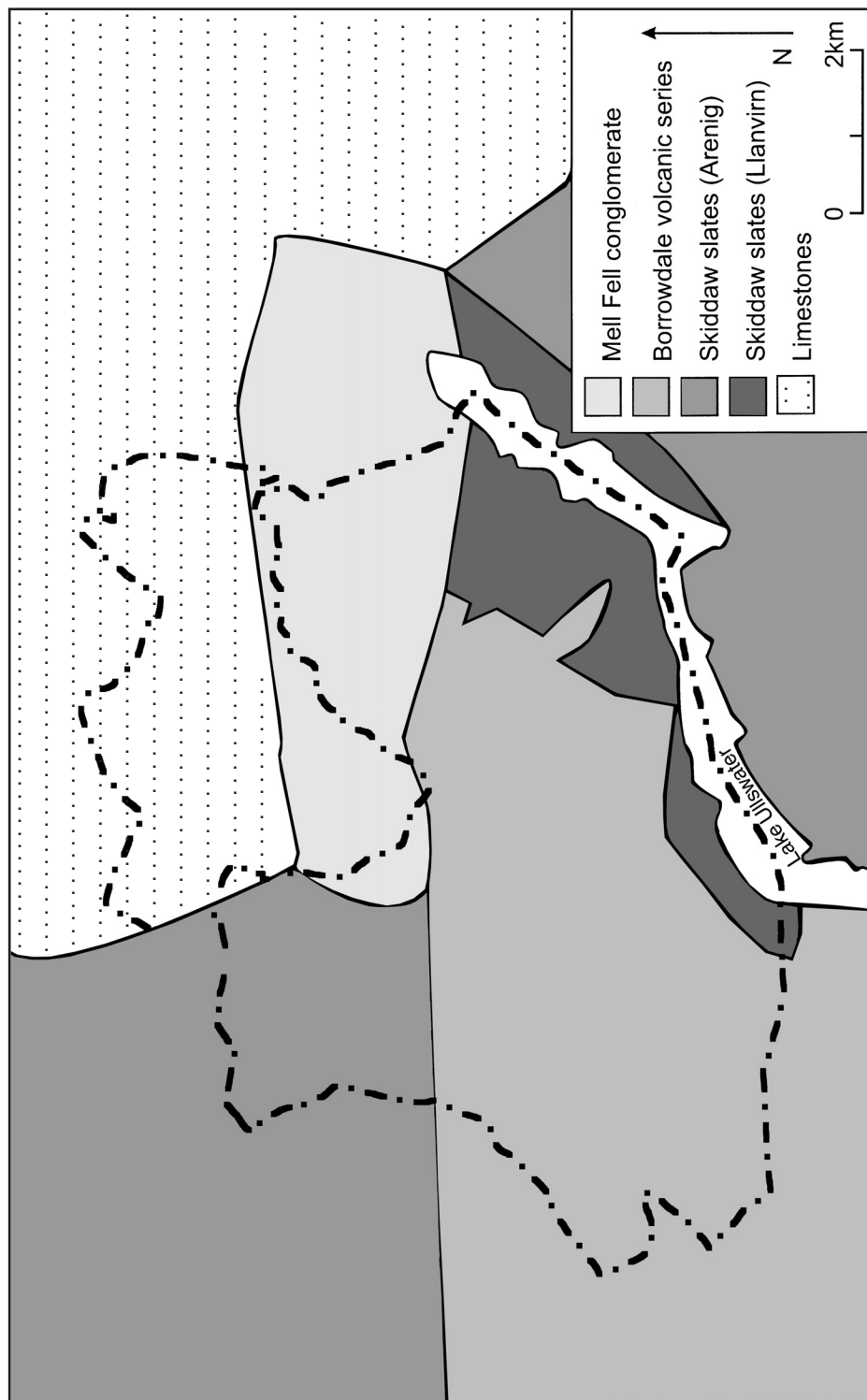


FIG. 2. Sketch of the solid geology of the Ullswater district (Based on Geological survey sheet number 29 (1875)).

Neolithic-Bronze Age

Stray finds

Most stray finds are restricted to the north of our study area, are from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, and were mainly recovered as a result of digging for drainage. The distribution of stray finds and monuments from the Matterdale and Hutton parishes is shown in Fig. 3, and is compiled predominately from the Cumbria County Council SMR, together with other sources such as Annable (1987) and these *Transactions*. The greatest concentration of stray finds comes from the vicinity of the Mell Fells, and includes a polished stone axe-hammer and winged celt (Cumbria County SMR), as well as the collared urn and copper/bronze axes found in the MBA bowl barrow on Little Mell Fell (Hudleston, 1952: 178-180), and an urn of unknown type from a cist burial at Stone Carr (Clarke, 1789: 50). Elsewhere, there are stray axe finds from the Hutton John area, to the west, and more recently, a collared urn and jet beads were discovered on Greystoke Moor (Richardson and Hallam, 1995). Few conclusions, other than general dating evidence, can be drawn from the scattered material culture of our area, as most of the artefacts are not in association with any of the known earthworks. Apart from the collared urn and axes from Little Mell Fell, none of these artefacts have come from excavation, and none have associated radiocarbon dates. Finally, as Richardson and Hallam note, Cumbria has produced very little in the way of personal adornment from the Bronze Age in comparison with northern England and Scotland (Richardson and Hallam, 1995: 50). This fact could tend to produce a picture of relative material poverty amongst the Bronze Age inhabitants of our area, but again, as Richardson and Hallam also comment, very few sites in Cumbria have been excavated, when compared to northern England and Scotland (Richardson and Hallam, *op. cit.*). As a consequence, we may be viewing a false picture of material dearth, and in any case, we lack the critical mass of material remains from which we may infer social conditions and behaviour with any certainty.

Ritual/Funerary monuments

Any comprehensive discussion of ritual or funeral monuments within the greater archaeological landscape is problematic because although ritual features such as barrows and the smaller stone circles can generally be assigned to the late third/early second millennium B.C., the associated Bronze Age secular structures have not yet been securely identified or dated. There is also some evidence that points to the use (or reuse) of barrows for burial into the Iron Age/Romano-British period, such as the discovery of a glass melon bead from Sizergh Fell (Hughes, 1912), and the close proximity of large mounds to Romano-British settlements e.g. Yanwath (Higham, 1986). Cairnfields could be either ritual or secular in nature (Jobey, 1981, Banks, 1995; Yates, 1984), but for the purposes of this article they have been grouped with secular monuments.

The tops of the Mell Fells both have bowl barrow burials. Though largely robbed out by the 18th century (Clarke, 1789: 51), when re-excavated Great Mell Fell was found to be a bowl burial distinguished by a “berm” and ditch, and Little Mell Fell produced a collared urn and a few finds (Hudleston, 1952). Our survey has

produced evidence of a further concentration of ritual monument building on and around Great Mell Fell, highlighting the importance of the area during the Early and Middle Bronze Age. The survey discovered the robbed-out remains of a possible kerb cairn on the eastern flank, not far below the main bowl barrow. Along the western foot of the Mell Fell, and just south of Troutbeck, on the lands of a recently abandoned clay pit, a cist burial and the remains of an associated linear cairn field have also been discovered (Fig. 3).

At Speddie Farm, near Motherby, the area known as Stone Carr produced a large complex of prehistoric and probably Romano/British period monuments, which were identified by both intensive field work and documentary search. At and around Speddie Farm it appears that a series of improvements in the early part of the eighteenth century led to the destruction of a stone circle/burial chamber and also a cist burial recorded by Clarke in 1789 (Clarke, 1789: 50). A plan of the stone circle site was made and discussed by the geologist J. Clifton Ward (1877) who left an accurate site plan of the monument, crucially with a stone still *in situ* (see also Waterhouse, 1985: 154). At the time of our survey, this stone seems to have been removed, but the monument is still visible as a low penannular bank. The dating of such a ruined monument as this is clearly awkward. The remains of the site suggests that it may have been either what Waterhouse terms an embanked stone circle, which is of later Neolithic date, or possibly an embanked circle, early Bronze Age date (Waterhouse, 1985: 14-16). Given the proximity of the Motherby stone circle to Neolithic monuments such as Castlerigg and Long Meg and her Daughters, it is tempting to suggest the earlier date (see also Waterhouse, 1985: 30). The site of the cist burial is also still visible as a low mound on the ground to the south, where it has been cut by an agger forming a track from the large quarry to the farm. The surrounding field boundaries appear to belong to the adjacent Late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement at Stone Carr, but care is needed as the peculiar terminal by the stone circle site suggests that this monument is respected by this field boundary/track and may indicate a more complex and possibly longer relationship than at first appears. Outside the A66 corridor, few possible mortuary structures have been identified, though there are two possible kerb cairns in Glencoyne Park, and at Ulcat Row there is a small barrow located near to a small homestead site.

Secular/settlement remains

The survey has identified a range of monuments that could be considered of domestic origin, including settlements, cairnfields and field systems.

Cairnfields occupy a troublesome position in archaeological classification schemes; are they the remains of ancient clearance activity as is often asserted (e.g. Yates, 1984), or are they the remains of ancient burial activity (Banks, 1995)? In the absence of excavation it is necessary to rely on the morphology and the context of these monuments as a guide towards their potential use, and more relevant to our discussion, their likely date. A recent discussion of the context and dating evidence of cairnfields in upland North Britain concluded that, although there were certain to be exceptions, most cairnfields probably belong to the second millennium B.C. (RCAHMS, 1997). It is also noteworthy that this is the date of the cairnfield excavated at Birrel Sike, in West Cumbria (Richardson, 1982). However, there are

known examples of cairns and cairnfields from later periods and due care should be taken of the context of the cairnfield before assigning it to one period or another.

The survival, and hence distribution, of cairnfields is likely to be influenced by past land use and by other activities, and it is probable that a number of cairns and cairnfields may have been lost due to wall building. It is therefore no coincidence that most cairns and cairnfields are found in areas where enclosure has come late or not at all.

Of the several cairnfields identified within our study area, the most extensive are those along the banks of Ullswater at Glencoyne Park, and in Glencoynedale. Associated with the cairnfields at Glencoyne Park (Loney and Hoaen, 2000b; Hoaen and Loney forthcoming a) are a lynchet, field banks, the possible remains of hut platforms and a single hut circle, together with other remains from later periods. The remains in Glencoyne Park bear a remarkable similarity to those from Town Bank, West Cumbria (Quartermaine, 1989), and therefore we tentatively assign them a second millennium B.C. context.

Other significant cairnfields were located on the flanks of Gowbarrow Fell, and to the north of the Roman fort and camps at Naddles Beck (Fig. 3). The cairnfield at Naddles Beck, near Troutbeck, consists of a concentration of cairns at the head of the beck (associated with a possible small homestead), which then continue for over a kilometre at 100-150 m intervals along the banks of the Beck, forming what appears to be a long linear boundary. Such boundaries (often taking the form of pits or discontinuous banking) are also known from North Yorkshire and the Scottish borders (e.g. Spratt, 1989). These features are difficult to date and although it would be tempting to ascribe a prehistoric origin, the most likely solution is that this particular boundary is medieval or later as this portion of Naddles Beck forms part of the parish boundary between Hutton and Mungrisedale parishes.

Iron Age/Romano-British settlement

Unenclosed settlement

Our survey identified a number of platforms, particularly in Glencoyne Park and Glencoynedale, which may either be interpreted as charcoal burners platforms or as unenclosed platform settlements of the second millennium B.C. (Jobey, 1978). However, in the absence of excavation and firm dating, it is not possible to positively state to which period these monuments belong, though again the context of the sites may provide further information. Of the platforms identified, those at Glencoynedale are large, well founded, platforms, with charcoal found in associated molehills. These platforms are also associated with medieval and post medieval remains, and most probably relate to medieval or post medieval activity. The platforms found in Glencoyne Park, however, are associated with cairns and stone banks which, coupled with the absence of any charcoal from molehills, may indicate a second millennium B.C. context (Jobey, 1978).

Two individual hut circles were located, one high on a terrace in Glencoyne Park, the other on a small terrace above the present day farm at Glencoynedale. Where excavated in Scotland, such hut circles are often found to belong to the second millennium B.C. (e.g. Arran (Barber, 1997)), and a date in the second millennium

B.C. would fit well with the evidence for cairnfields, linear banks and possible kerb cairns in Glencoyne Park. To date no settlement sites have been identified in the Stone Carr/Mell Fell region that could represent second millennium B.C. settlement.

One unenclosed prehistoric settlement has been identified at Baldhowend (first brought to our attention by Keith Clark of the Matterdale Historical and Archaeological Society) (Fig. 4). Follow up excavation by the project has produced four radiocarbon dates from between the last few centuries of the first millennium B.C. and the first two centuries of the first millennium A.D., and a single fragment of white glass armlet also dating to the second century A.D. (Loney and Hoaen, 2000a; Hoaen and Loney forthcoming b). This site is similar to that at Threlkeld and bears most resemblance to Webster's agglomerative type (Webster, 1971) while the date of the last centuries of the first millennium B.C. compares well with those for unenclosed settlement in Southern Scotland (Hill, 1982; Armit and Ralston, 1997) and Northumbria (Higham, 1986).

Enclosed settlements

This survey has to date identified or redefined a total of 12 enclosed prehistoric settlements in the two parishes (Fig. 4 and Table 1). This, when added together with the unenclosed site at Baldhowend and two sites of uncertain morphology, make a total of fifteen sites in our study area with probable origins in the late first millennium B.C. and Romano-British period. We say probable late first millennium B.C., because little is in fact known of these settlement sites in Cumbria. A lack of excavation and follow-up radiocarbon analysis has meant that the potential dating of these sites is almost entirely dependent upon typological comparison with sites from adjacent areas. In general, this almost complete absence of authenticated sites from Cumbria of late Bronze Age/Iron Age context has lead to a derivative and quite static interpretation of later prehistoric Cumbrian settlements. The ultimate result of this dearth of information is the almost universal default attribution of these settlements to the Romano-British period (Higham, 1986).

TABLE 1 Selection of sites mentioned in the text.

Site	Site type	National Grid Reference
Glencoyne Park I	Curvilinear	NY 389 199
Glencoyne Park II	Rectilinear	NY 388 196
Glencoyne Park III	Poss. curvilinear Homestead	NY 392 200
Glencoyne Park IV	Poss. curvilinear Homestead	NY 388 195
Glencoyne Park V	D-shaped rectilinear enclosure	NY 384 187
Baldhowend	Unenclosed settlement	NY 396 226
Ulcat Row	Curvilinear Homestead	NY 404 228
Brownrigg	Curvilinear settlement	NY 408 246
Hutton, Hilltop	Unclassified earthwork	NY 420 272
Stone Carr I	Curvilinear settlement	NY 420 285
Stone Carr II	Scooped curvilinear settlement	NY 419 286
Stoddahgate	D-shaped rectilinear enclosure	NY 422 266
Hutton John I	Curvilinear settlement	NY 445 274
Hutton John II	Unclassified earthwork	NY 446 275
Lofshawhill	Poss. curvilinear Homestead	NY 392 283

In our study area enclosure methods vary and may include both banks and ditches, as at Stone Carr, or stone or earthbanks, as at Brownrigg. Size also varies and may include enclosures with only one or two hut circles (in this paper termed homesteads) or may include a number of hut circles and a yard (referred here to as either curvilinear or rectilinear settlements). Settlements in enclosed farmland tend to be represented by isolated monuments; it is only in the largely unenclosed areas around the A66 and on the banks of Ullswater that one finds large and complex preserved landscapes of this period.

Curvilinear settlements

There are nine curvilinear settlements in the survey area. Four of these settlements are fairly large, approximately 30–40 m in diameter. The best preserved example is at Glencoyne Park, along Far Swan Beck, with other less well preserved examples at Brownrigg farm, Hutton John I and Stone Carr. The four smaller curvilinear enclosed settlements (c.10–20 m diameter) include one example at Ulcat Row, two in Glencoyne Park and a small curvilinear scooped settlement at Stone Carr. The site at Lofshaw Hill may also be a small curvilinear enclosed settlement, but it is damaged.

Of the larger settlements, those at Glencoyne Park, Hutton John I and Brownrigg are without adjacent field systems, whilst that at Stone Carr is attached to a field system very similar to that at Severals, near Crosby Ravensworth (RCHME, 1936). As discussed above, few of these larger curvilinear sites have been excavated despite, as Higham notes, being the most common form of upland settlement in the county (1986: 192). Excavations conducted during the 20th century at Kentmere did, however, produce Roman material, and a Romano-British date is generally agreed upon for these structures (RCHME, 1936; Higham, 1986).

The Matterdale project conducted a limited excavation at the larger curvilinear structure in Glencoyne Park in 2002, which indicated that this site at least has a long and complex history. Three phases of hut circle construction were recognised: a late, artefact free phase, a phase dating to the Roman period, and an earlier, aceramic, phase. A trench dug to investigate the boundary enclosure revealed over a metre of stratigraphy in parts of the site, and demonstrated that the enclosure wall overlies an earlier ditch. An AMS date from charcoal collected from the base of the ditch produced an AMS radiocarbon date from the beginning of the first millennium B.C. (Hoan and Loney forthcoming b). If it can be demonstrated that other similar settlements are as long lived as Glencoyne Park, then these sites may provide a bridge between the end of the Bronze Age and the Roman period.

There are a number of smaller homestead sites within the survey area, though again, little is known of sites such as those at Ulcat Row and Glencoyne Park, as few to date have been excavated. Examples in Dumfries and Galloway e.g. McNaughtons farm, are thought to date from the middle of the first millennium B.C. (Cowley, 2000), although it is likely that such sites were also in use in the Romano-British period. The small scooped settlement at Stone Carr overlies part of the earlier field system, which is similar to examples known from Annandale and Eskdale in Eastern Dumfriesshire, in particular the settlement overlying the Roman defences at Burnswark (RCHAMS, 1997).

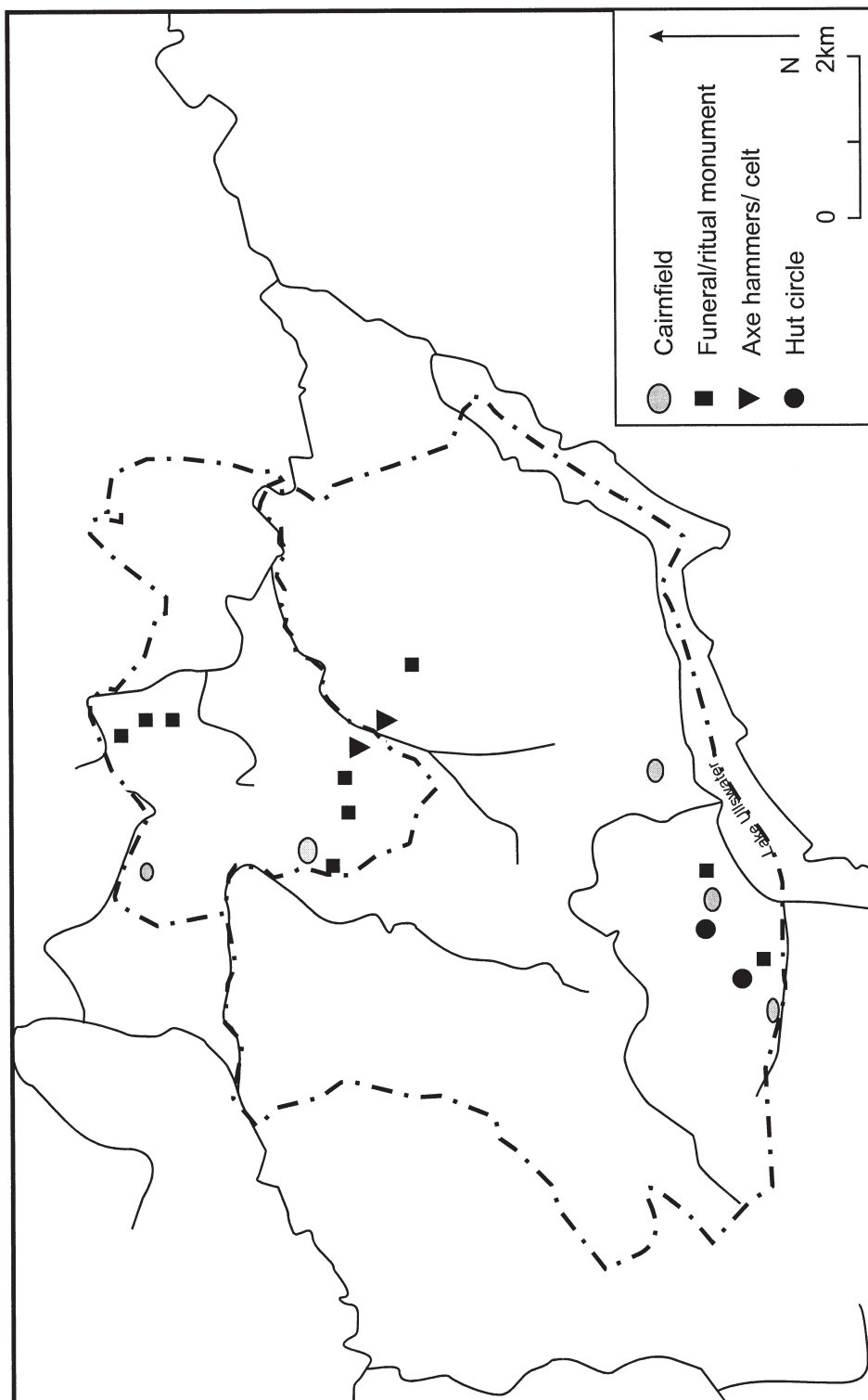


FIG. 3. Location of cairnfields, ritual/funerary monuments and stray finds of a likely millennium B.C. date within the parishes of Matterdale and Hutton.

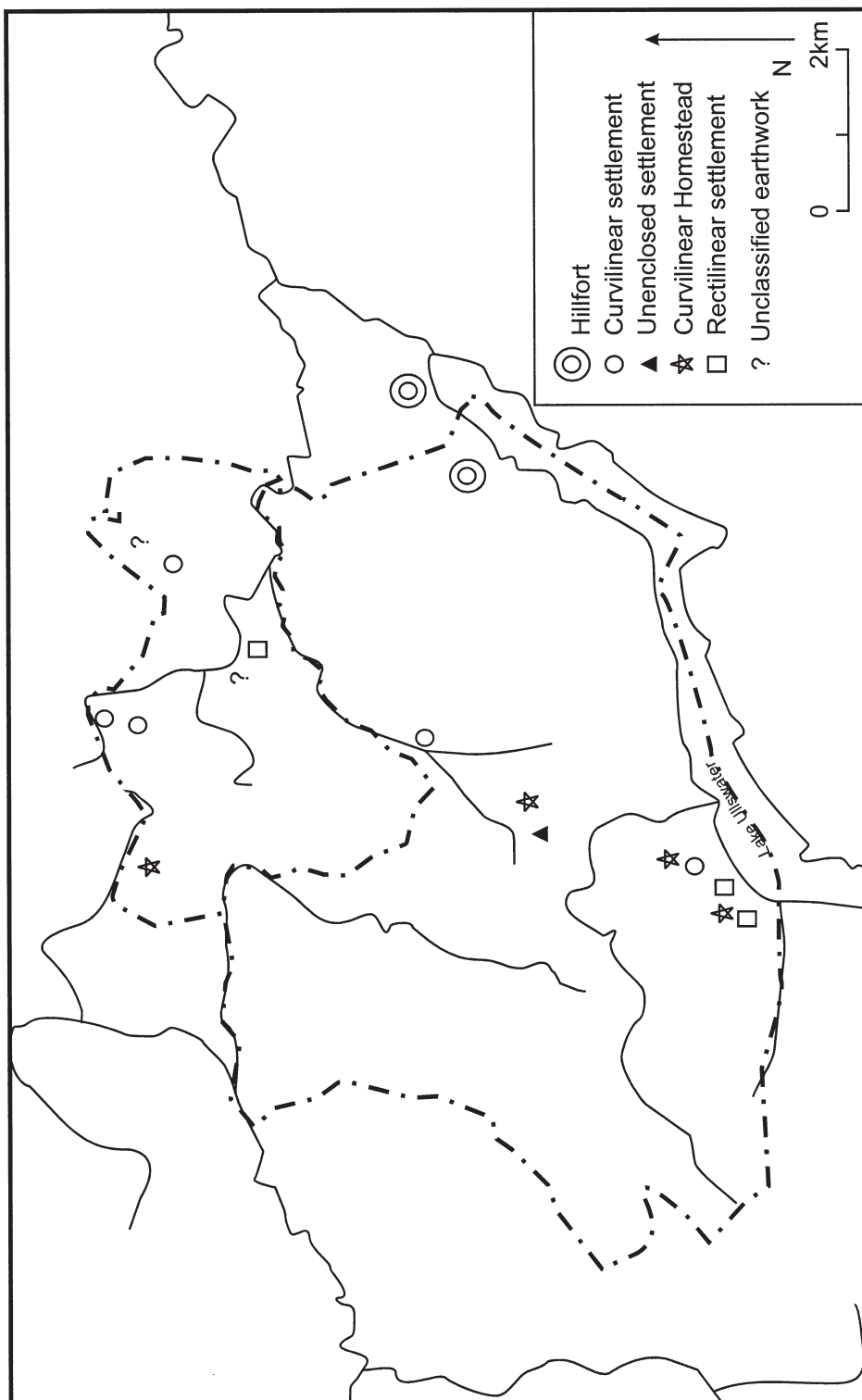


FIG. 4. Location of Iron Age/Romano-British settlement in the parishes of Hutton and Matterdale.

Rectilinear enclosures

There are three rectilinear enclosures within the survey area. The best preserved example is that at Glencoyne Park, which is a classic scooped settlement on two levels, with a yard to the front and hut stances to the back (cf. RCHAMS, 1997). Excavations at the scooped settlements at the Boonies in Dumfries and Galloway (Jobey, 1974) and at Hetha burn in Northumbria (Burgess, 1970), both indicate occupation during the Roman period, and probably in the centuries just before. The other two sites, at Stoddahgate and at Glencoynedale, are small D shaped enclosures. From the resistivity survey undertaken at Stoddahgate in 2000, the D shaped enclosure overlies an earlier unenclosed settlement (Fig. 5). This site is perhaps similar to that excavated at Penrith farm (Higham and Jones, 1983), which produced artefacts from the Roman period.

Discussion

In this paper it has been our intention to discuss the broad patterning of our data, rather than to write an overview of the later prehistoric period of our study area. It is possible that these patterns are the result of chance preservation of sites and are not therefore representative of past settlement strategies, and for some monument types this is probably true. The relatively restricted distribution of cairnfields and other

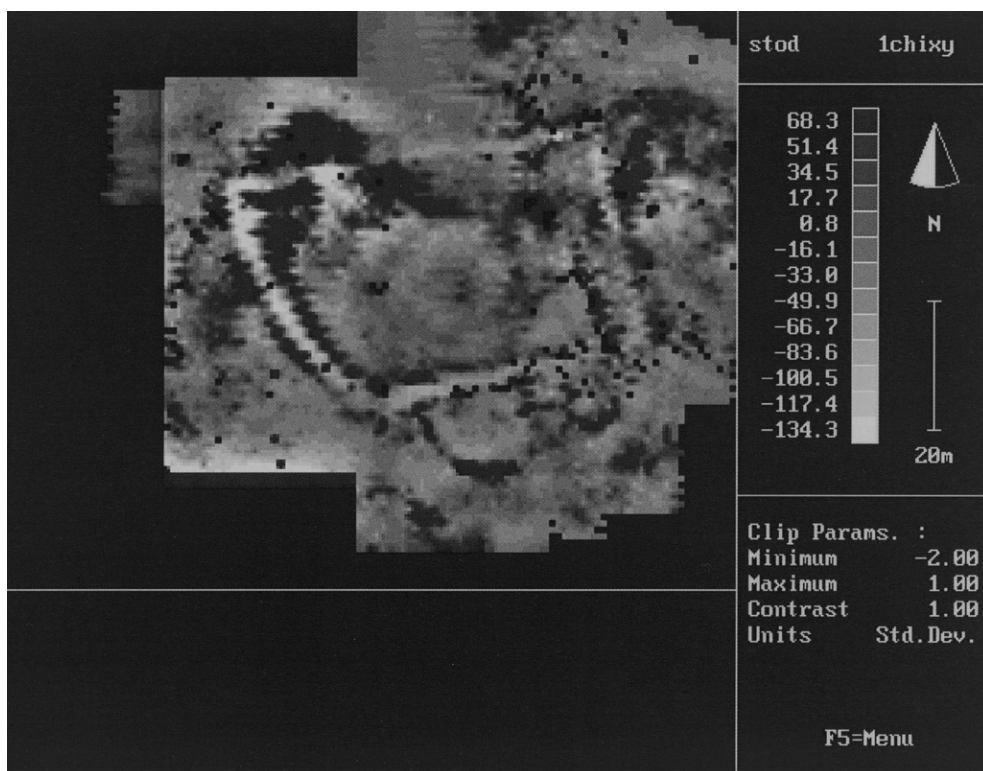


FIG. 5. Resistivity survey of the enclosure at Stoddahgate and earlier unenclosed settlement.

field boundaries to areas that are either unenclosed or were enclosed in the last century, for example, suggests that these sites have suffered from differential preservation, with those in the enclosed areas being removed for inclusion in stone walls and/or farm buildings. However, for other types of monuments, barrows, settlement sites – whilst some may have been lost, the survival of sites such as the one at Ulcat Row, which is in a heavily improved field, suggests that the majority of stone or earth constructed earthwork sites have indeed survived later agricultural activity.

For the Early and Middle Bronze Age, it appears that the northern-most region of our area is dominated by funerary and ritual activity, with one stone circle and a number of burial monuments. At Ullswater, however, the remains are more secular in nature, largely comprising field cairns, possible settlement platforms and hut circles, but with two possible kerb cairns and the caveat that cairnfields could also include burial monuments. In addition, there is a clear gap in the distribution of sites of this period south of the Mell Fells, where it appears that the headwaters of the Cooper and Aira Beck were not favoured for the construction of monuments. This patterning, whilst it may reflect later land use, or a different use of this territory that is archaeologically invisible, may also reflect a genuine difference in the way the prehistoric landscape was used and utilised during the Bronze Age. In the north on the limestones and sandstones the monument record is dominated by funerary and ritual monuments, whereas at Glencoyne on the Skiddaw slates the main monument type is the clearance cairn together with hut circles, field banks and lynchets.

The results of our survey suggest that there was little expansion into the head waters of the Cooper and Aira Beck prior to the end of the second millennium B.C. However, it does appear that either prior to the arrival of the Romans or during the Roman-British period, settlement density increases greatly from that in the Bronze Age with, for example, five settlements in Glencoyne Park in the space of 2 km and with a similar density on the limestones and sandstones of Hutton parish. In contrast, the density of sites on the less favourable geology in Matterdale is lower, where we seem to have a density of about one site every 1 km.

It is unclear as yet what factors are responsible for this expansion but similar settlement expansions on the East Coast between the Tees and Forth are known and explanations range from population expansion due to climatic improvement, technological change, or through the development of stable political forms (Armit and Ralston, 1997; Hill, 1982). Such an expansion has also been suggested on the basis of palynological evidence for intensified clearance from the middle of the first millennium B.C. in the Solway region to the north of our study area (Tipping, 1997; Dumayne-Peaty and Barber, 1998). In our area it may be a combination of all three of these factors but further work is needed to address this important issue.

Conclusions

Despite the current belief of a lack of continuity of settlement between the end of the second millennium B.C. and the first half of the first millennium B.C. in Cumbria (Higham, 1986), this project has demonstrated considerable evidence for some site continuity. In particular, areas such as Stone Carr, the area between the Mell Fells, and at Glencoyne Park, demonstrate a much higher density of

occupation during the Bronze Age through Roman periods than can be shown elsewhere in the valley. The Mell Fells, Stone Carr and Glencoyne are persistent places in the landscape, areas where people returned continuously to construct their monuments. It is likely that such persistent places offer the best opportunity of demonstrating the changes that occurred in Cumbrian society between the second millennium B.C. and the arrival of the Romans.

We have also demonstrated the likelihood that past peoples preferred to erect their monuments on certain soil types. We have found a positive correlation between the lighter limestones and Skiddaw slates, and Late Neolithic/Bronze Age activity. Further, we have found that funerary and ritual monuments are concentrated in the northern part of our area, and settlement activity in the south, along the banks of Ullswater. Finally, we have strong evidence of a move onto the heavier, acid soils of the Borrowdale Volcanics during the Iron Age/Romano-British period.

The final conclusion reached in this paper is that of the importance of the use of intensive survey methods in the valleys of the Lake District. Using intensive reconnaissance and recording techniques we have recovered sites in all of our transect areas, even from areas of improved pasture. Settlement evidence has been recovered from both unenclosed (seven sites) and enclosed (seven sites) land, which shows the value of extending intensive techniques into the infield areas, and which is broadly in line with the results of recent RCHAMS survey of Eastern Dumfriesshire, where large numbers of new sites were identified by intensive survey and old sites re-evaluated in the light of new recording methods (Cowley, 2000).

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