

## Llandegai A – sanctuary or settlement?

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*Recent work on a number of sites which have previously been considered to be ‘classic’ henge monuments has shown that they are Late Bronze Age or Iron Age ringworks. Llandegai Henge A (published in Archaeologia Cambrensis 150), is unusual as a Neolithic henge monument in a number of respects — notably in having an external ditch and an interior filled with a succession of later prehistoric roundhouses and four-posters. In the light of this evidence it is suggested that Llandegai Henge A may be wholly of later prehistoric date though consciously sited within a landscape which referenced earlier monuments.*

### INTRODUCTION

Iron Age radiocarbon dates from the base and from below and above the initial stabilisation layer of the ditch at Castle Dykes, North Yorkshire were unexpected for this ‘classic’ Class I henge with its single east-facing entrance, internal ditch and external bank (Gibson forthcoming). This prompted a review of similar sites initially excavated as henges but yielding Iron Age artefacts or dates such as the Iron Age sword from the base of the ditch at Ferrybridge, North Yorkshire (Roberts 2005), the Pict’s Knowe, Dumfries and Galloway (Thomas 2007) and Tytandderwen, Gwynedd (Smith *et al.* 2008) as well as other sites further afield. This also prompted the writer to consider the site at Llandegai A in Gwynedd, a site with which he has never felt comfortable, and which contains far more evidence for later prehistoric activity than it does for a Neolithic foundation.

The Llandegai cursus and henge complex was excavated by Chris Houlder in 1966–67 in advance of development (Fig. 1). An interim report was published in 1968 with some radiocarbon dates being published the following year (Houlder 1968; 1969). It was not until after Houlder’s untimely death, however, that the report was finally published by Frances Lynch and Chris Musson, both of whom had worked on site during the excavations (Lynch and Musson 2001). In their report, Lynch and Musson describe the excavation conditions, and in particular lament the lack of proper provision for post-excavation analysis. They also observe that the size of the excavation area (over 15 hectares) was, at that time, ‘unprecedented in Wales’ (Lynch and Musson 2004, 19).

Within the area excavated was a narrow Type A (round-ended) cursus monument (Loveday 2006, 23–25) (Site C), a broad ditched enclosure with single entrance to the WSW (Henge A), a double-entranced enclosure with entrances in the SW and NE (Henge B), part of a large ring-ditch (Site D), a small double-entranced enclosure orientated E–W (Site E), a double-ditched ring-ditch (Site F) and a small circular pit circle outside the entrance to Henge A. Further features were revealed during the excavation including a rectangular house of the Earlier Neolithic (House B1) lying just to the NE and outside of Henge B. This was a truly rare find at the time.

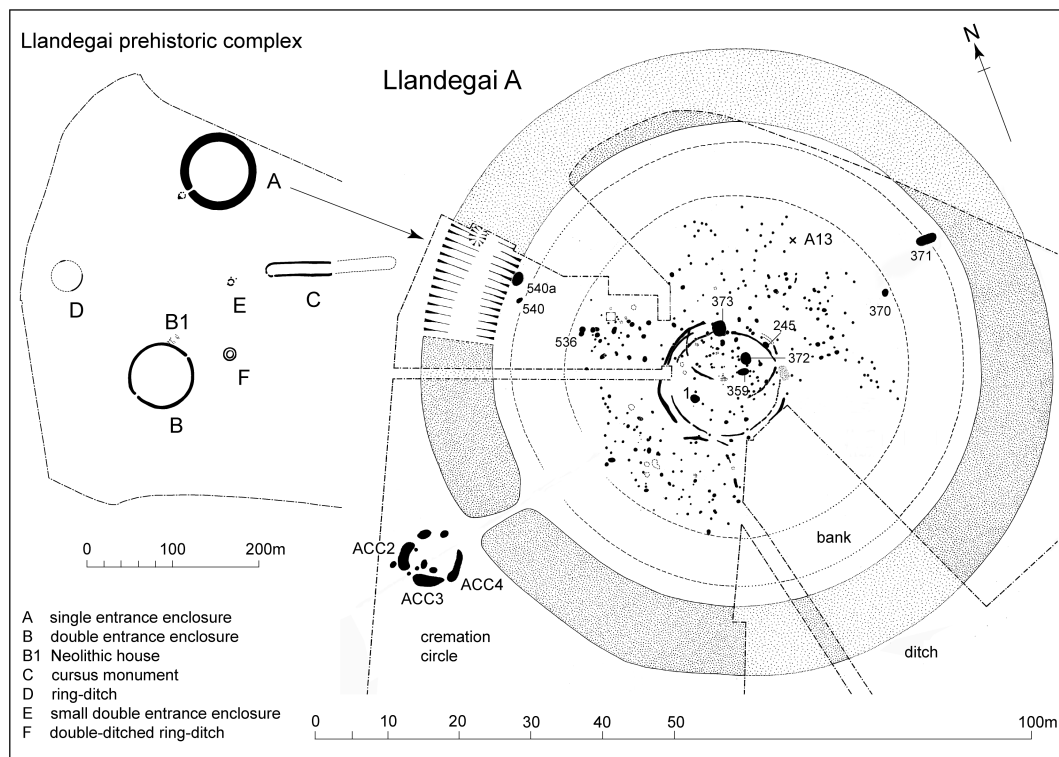


Fig. 1. Llandegai Henge A (after Lynch and Musson 2001).

## THE SEQUENCE AND A REVIEW OF THE RADIOCARBON DATES

### Mesolithic

The earliest dated feature on site was the 'fire pit' FA371 from partly below the bank in the NE quadrant of Henge A. Pine charcoal from this feature provided a Mesolithic date of 7040–6756 cal. BC (94.8% probability) and the feature was interpreted as a possible lightning strike given that only one species of charcoal was identified. Due to its chronological separation from the rest of the Llandegai sequence, this is not included in the model (Fig. 2) or discussed further.

### Neolithic

The earliest Neolithic activity is represented by the house and the associated radiocarbon dates suggest that this was constructed probably in 4243–3860 cal. BC (68.2%) and was abandoned probably between 3708–3462 cal. BC (65.6%). The start date is unacceptably early for Neolithic houses of this type and the dates are amongst the earliest for the British Neolithic (Whittle *et al.* 2011). Various authors have modelled the radiocarbon dates for the Irish house sites as starting at 3715–3680 cal. BC (68% probability) and lasting until 3635–3615 cal. BC (68% probability) (see Smyth 2014, 48, for a resumé). This has become known as the 'house horizon' lasting for roughly between 50 and 100 years but is in common with the construction of other major monuments in the Neolithic and indeed with the

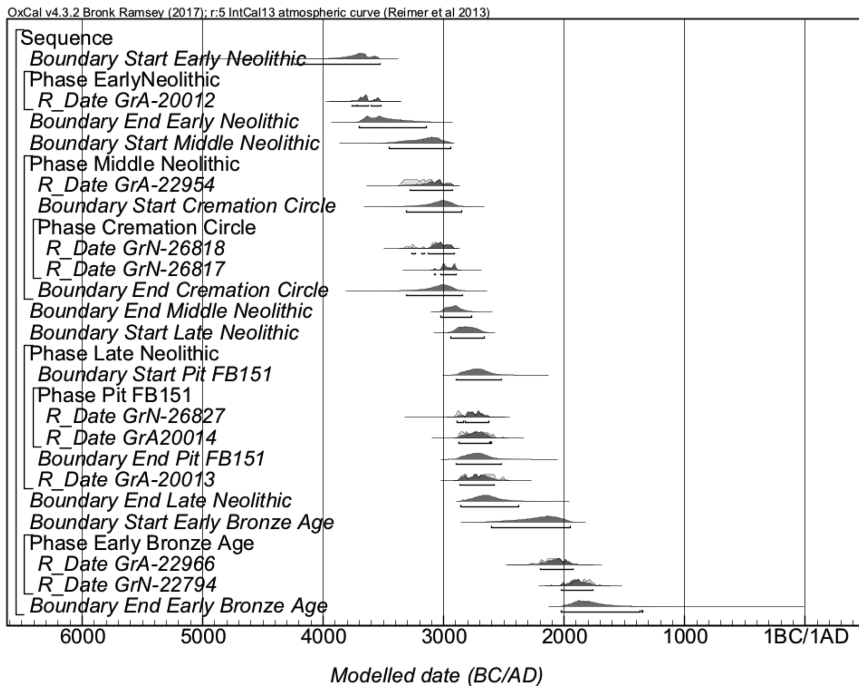


Fig. 2. Phased radiocarbon dates with good integrity from Llandegai.

western British houses (Whittle *et al.* 2011, fig. 14.180). The nearby Parc Bryn Cegin house, a post-constructed site like Llandegai, may have started slightly before this horizon or at least at the very start of it at 3760–3700 cal. BC (Kenney 2008). If the old NPL-223 date with its wide margin of error is removed from the model, then the start date can be modified to 4086–3808 cal. BC (68.2%) which is still unacceptably early when compared to similar sites elsewhere. This is undoubtedly due to the dating of mature oak from the postholes as already noted by Whittle *et al.* (2011). A more reliable date of 3765–3624 cal. BC (72.6%) for the house may be provided by GrA-20012 which was obtained from a hazelnut shell. This at once raises a problem with the other dates from Llandegai, many of which are derived from oak which was the dominant charcoal species at the site (Table 1) and for this reason a critical approach to the radiocarbon sequence is necessary.

### Middle Neolithic

The cursus probably dates to this broad period despite its late *terminus ante quem* date. The date on oak charcoal of 2704–2558 cal. BC (63.2%) from the fills of the ditch show that it was already silting before this date and current dating for cursus monuments suggests a date more in keeping with the 36th–29th centuries cal. BC for the currency of these enigmatic enclosures (Barclay and Bayliss 1999: Thomas 2007, 241). There is no reason to suggest that the Llandegai cursus should be any different and although the date range for cursus monuments is quite large, it falls undoubtedly in the Middle Neolithic.

Other features dated to this period include FA370 (containing cremated remains, a polissoir and sherds of possible Impressed Ware) and pit FA1 both of which are within the interior of Henge A. FA536, also in the interior of Henge A, may be added as it contained a Langdale axe. The other pits

Table 1. Features with radiocarbon dates and/or datable artefacts

*The dates whose lab. numbers are marked with an asterisk have poor integrity and have not been used in the model. The Mesolithic date GrN-27193 from F371 has also not been used in the model due to its chronological separation*

Feature	Location	Date BP	Lab No.	Material	Calibrated Date BC (68.2%)	Calibrated Date BC (95.4%)	Associations
<b>House B</b>							
PH9	Posthole packing	5240±150	NPL-223*	Oak charcoal	4316 (2.3%) 4299 4262 (65.1%) 3943 3854 (0.8%) 3848	4352 (95.4%) 3712	–
PH12	Core of post	5055±25	GrN-26824*	Oak charcoal	3941 (54.3%) 3856 3818 (13.9%) 3798	3948 (95.4%) 3791	–
PH2	Posthole packing	5040±30	GrN-26823*	Oak charcoal	3938 (52.0%) 3860 3813 (16.2%) 3787	3951 (94.5%) 3764 3723 (0.9%) 3716	–
PH5	Posthole packing	4860±50	GrA-20012	Hazelnut	3702 (62.3%) 3634 3552 (5.9%) 3542	3765 (72.6%) 3624 3600 (22.8%) 3524	–
<b>In region of Henge A</b>							
F371	Partly beneath bank in NE quadrant of Henge A	7965±25	GrN-27193*	Charcoal	7028 (39.4%) 6930 6921 (17.6%) 6877 6850 (11.2%) 6821	7040 (94.8%) 6756 6718 (0.6%) 6712	–
FA370	Within bank in NE sector of Henge A	4480±50	GrA-22954	Cremated bone	3334 (41.7%) 3211 3192 (12.5%) 3152 3136 (13.9%) 3093	3359 (95.4%) 3012	Polishing stone, 2 sherds of cord-impressed pottery
FA536	pit inside bank on the NW	–	–	–	–	–	Langdale axe
FA1	Pit near centre of Henge A	4740±150	NPL-220*	Oak charcoal	3695 (68.2%) 3355	3932 (1.8%) 3876 3806 (93.1%) 3089 3051 (0.5%) 3034	–
		4450±50	GrN-27192*	Oak charcoal	3327(32.6%) 3218 3176 (4.4%) 3160 3121 (31.2%) 3022	3340 (87.0%) 3004 2990 (8.4%) 2930	–
ACC3	Pit in Cremation Circle	4480±145	NPL-224*	Oak ?plank	3360 (62.8%) 3010 2980 (5.4%) 2940	3631 (2.4%) 3564 3536 (93.0%) 2876	–
ACC2	Pit in Cremation Circle	4420±40	GrN-26818	Oak charcoal	3262 (5.0%) 3247 3100 (44.3%) 3006 2989 (18.9%) 2930	3328 (19.6%) 3218 3176 (2.1%) 3159 3121 (73.7%) 2918	–
ACC4	Pit in Cremation Circle	4320±30	GrN-26817	Oak charcoal	3008 (14.0%) 2986 2934 (54.2%) 2893	3014 (95.4%) 2890	? Impressed Ware
A13	Within bank in NE quadrant of Henge A	3525±45	GrA-22794	Cremated bone	1918 (27.4%) 1864 1850 (40.8%) 1772	1974 (94.4%) 1741 1710 (1.0%) 1700	–
<b>Henge A</b>							
Layer 4	Stabilisation layer in ditch	4420±140	NPL-221*	Oak charcoal	3332 (21.4%) 3214 3188 (5.6%) 3155 3130 (41.2%) 2914	3518 (91.3%) 2850 2813 (2.8%) 2741 2730 (1.2%) 2694 2686 (0.1%) 2680	2 sherds of Impressed Ware
Layer 5	Above stabilisation layer	2600±30	GrN-26819*	Bulked charcoal	807 (68.2%) 784	826 (95.4%) 762	–

Table 1. Features with radiocarbon dates and/or datable artefacts *continued*

Feature	Location	Date BP	Lab No.	Material	Calibrated Date BC (68.2%)	Calibrated Date BC (95.4%)	Associations
<b>In region of Henge B</b>							
FB151	Pit inside ditch in NE quadrant	4210±50	GrN-26827	Mixed charcoal	2896 (22.1%) 2856 2811 (34.2%) 2747 2724 (11.9%) 2698	2910 (30.1%) 2832 2820 (65.3%) 2632	Graig Lwyd axe
		4140±50	GrA-20014	Hazelnut	2866 (12.8%) 2831 2820 (5.9%) 2804 2776 (49.5%) 2632	2878 (95.4%) 2580	
FB32	Pit outside SW quadrant	–	–	–	–	–	Grooved Ware
FB147	Pit outside NE arc of ditch	4100±50	GrA-20013	Oak and alder charcoal	2856 (15.9%) 2812 2747 (6.9%) 2725 2698 (45.4%) 2576	2872 (90.6%) 2565 2524 (4.8%) 2496	?Grooved Ware, flint flakes
FB130	Pit in southern half of the interior	3850±50	GrN-26826*	Oak charcoal	2453 (11.0%) 2419 2406 (10.3%) 2376 2350 (30.6%) 2274 2255 (16.2%) 2209	2468 (93.5%) 2198 2166 (1.9%) 2150	–
FB131	Pit in southern half of the interior	3670±30	GrN-26825*	Oak charcoal	2132 (34.6%) 2084 2054 (25.5%) 2017 1995 (8.1%) 1981	2139 (95.4%) 1956	–
FB138	Cremation near centre of henge	3700±50	GrA-22966	Cremated bone	2195 (8.2%) 2172 2146 (60.0%) 2024	2274 (1.6%) 2256 2209 (93.8%) 1944 2209 (93.8%) 1944	–
FB2	Cremation outside SW entrance	3740±145	NPL-222*	Oak charcoal	2396 (1.2%) 2386 2346 (67.0%) 1950	2568 (1.8%) 2520 2498 (93.6%) 1758	–
FB27	Pit within SW quadrant of henge	3620±50	GrN-26820*	Oak charcoal	2111 (2.1%) 2104 2036 (66.1%) 1906	2140 (94.8%) 1878 1838 (0.6%) 1828	Beaker
FB29	Pit near ditch in SW quadrant	–	–	–	–	–	Beaker
FB30	Pit near ditch in SW quadrant	–	–	–	–	–	Beaker
<b>Henge B</b>							
Ditch	Pit cutting low fills at N terminal of SW entrance	3560±40	GrN-26822*	Oak charcoal	1972 (57.3%) 1876 1840 (6.5%) 1822	2023 (72.9%) 1860 1854 (22.5%) 1772	–
Ditch	Hearth in upper 3rd of ditch fills to N of SW entrance	2890±30	GrN-26821*	Mixed charcoal	1114 (68.2%) 1019	1195 (9.7%) 1142 1133 (85.7%) 978	Pottery, animal bone
<b>Cursus Site C</b>							
Cursus Ditch	Above base	4080±35	GrN-26828*	Oak charcoal	2836 (10.1%) 2816 2670 (54.5%) 2571 2513 (3.6%) 2504	2860 (16.5%) 2808 2756 (5.8%) 2719 2704 (63.2%) 2558 2536 (9.9%) 2491	–
<b>Circle D</b>							
FD1	Pit fill	4020±40	GrN-26829*	Oak charcoal	2576 (68.2%) 2484	2833 (1.7%) 2819 2660 (0.8%) 2650 2634 (92.9%) 2465	Pottery
<b>Barrow F</b>							
	Pit outside barrow	–	–	–	–	–	Food Vessel

possibly attributed to the Neolithic by Lynch and Musson have not been dated nor have they produced datable artefacts. The cremation circle outside the entrance to Henge A may be possibly dated to the end of this phase.

The radiocarbon date from FA370 was obtained from cremated bone and may be regarded as reliable suggesting a date at the end of the 4th millennium (3359–3012 cal. BC, 95% probability) for at least part of this activity. The rest of the radiocarbon dates for this phase are once more from oak charcoal (Table 1) and the excavation report does not actually state what was dated. For example, did the sample come from the outer rings, the heartwood or sapwood? Given the problems with the dates for the house discussed above, these dates cannot be trusted to give an accurate estimation as to the date of the features with which they are associated and must be regarded as *termini post quos* dates at best. The dates for FA1 are furthermore complicated by NPL-220. This is an early date in the history of radiocarbon dating and Ashmore and colleagues (2000) have argued that these early dates are probably inaccurate and should have their margins of error doubled if not tripled. If we remove NPL-220 from the calculations then FA1 has a comparable date to FA370 (3340–3004 cal. BC, 87% probability) but once again this should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

The cremation circle also potentially suffers from the old wood effect and an old radiocarbon date (NPL-224) from a possible oak plank. Furthermore, GrN-26818 falls on a plateau in the calibration curve and gives a series of date ranges at 95.4% (3328–3218 cal. BC, 19.6%; 3176–3159 cal. BC, 2.1%; 3121–2918 cal. BC, 73.7%). When GrN-26818 and 26817 are modelled, however, then an end date for the cremation circle can be calculated as 3006–2732 cal. BC (68.2%) and this may provide a better estimation for the cemetery as a whole allowing for the old wood effect. This is substantially later than the date for FA370. Nevertheless, at the junction of the 4th and 3rd millennia, this extrapolated date for the cremation circle is broadly comparable to other Middle to Late Neolithic cremations from Wales which appear to span the 31st to 29th centuries cal. BC: Trelystan, Powys (3331–2875 cal. BC (4350±70 BP, CAR-282); Britnell 1982); Bryn Gwyn, Anglesey (3019–2886 cal. BC (4315±35 BP, SUERC-39677); Smith 2012, 27); Lower Luggy, Powys (3022–2706 cal. BC (4280±45 BP, Beta-29332); Gibson 2006, 177); Meusydd I timber circle, Powys (3017–2762 cal. BC (4280±40 BP, Beta-249072); Jones 2009, 50–1), Bryn Celli Ddu (3498–3103 cal. BC (4573±40 BP, UB-7116) and 3317–2898 cal. BC (4384±46 BP, UB-7113) (Burrow 2010, 256); and the primary deposit at Sarn-y-bryn-caled Site 2 (3013–2888 cal. BC, 4315±30 BP, SUERC-24176) (Gibson 2010a, 354).

### Late Neolithic

To this phase belongs a series of features within and around Henge B. FB151, which contained a Graig Lwyd axe, FB32 and FB147 (both containing possible Grooved Ware) FB130 (oak charcoal), and FB2 (oak charcoal). FB32 was undated and FB147 was dated from a mixed sample of oak and alder but it is not known which or if both species were used for the date. Nevertheless, the date range is acceptable for Grooved Ware, especially at the 2 sigma range. FB151 was dated from mixed charcoal (GrN-26827) and hazelnut shell (GrA-20014). Both dates are statistically similar and so can be used in the model. Circle D has been dated to 2576–2484 cal. BC (68.2%). Once again, being derived from oak charcoal, this date may also suffer from the old wood effect and must be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The reliable dates suggest that this period probably started around 2894–2749 cal. BC (68.2%) and ended around 2806–2611 cal. BC (68.2%)

It is probably to the very end of this period that Henge B belongs. The only dates for the Henge are oak-derived *termini ante quos* dates from a pit cut into the partially silted ditch (2023–1860 cal. BC, 72.9%) and a hearth (mixed charcoal) in the upper silts demonstrates that the ditch was substantially silted by 1114–1019 cal. BC (68.2%). Henge B, however, is a classic Class II henge with two opposed entrances

and current dating evidence would suggest that these monuments should date to around 2400–1800 BC (Gibson 2012b) in round terms.

### Early Bronze Age

FB27, FB29 and FB30 contained Beaker pottery and FB138 contained cremated remains, fragments of which were dated to 2146–2024 cal. BC (60%). Oak charcoal associated with the Beaker from FB27 produced a date of 2140–1878 cal. BC (94.8%) which is roughly consistent with the dates for stylistically late post-fission horizon Beakers (Needham 2005). Oak charcoal from FB131 also produced a late third to early second millennium radiocarbon date (2139–1956 cal. BC, 95.4%) providing a *terminus post quem* for this feature. Finally, fragments from a Food Vessel from a pit outside Barrow F and a cremation deposit from FA13 within Henge A completes the Neolithic and Bronze Age sequence with FA13 returning a date from cremated bone of 1974–1741 cal. BC (94.4%).

The boundary dates in the model (Fig. 3) suggests that the activity at Llandegai was not continuous. There would appear to be a clear break between the Early Neolithic and Middle Neolithic phases and similarly between the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age though the construction of Henge B, if the dating assumption is correct, may bridge this gap.

### HENGE A

From the above résumé of the radiocarbon and artefactual dating evidence, it will have been obvious that Henge A is largely missing from the discussion. The Neolithic finds from beneath the bank comprise a flint blade and a flake of Graig Lwyd rock both of which could easily be residual. Given that a relict turf-line was recorded beneath the bank, then these finds (and indeed the other Middle Neolithic features) may have considerably pre-dated the construction of the henge. Such a scenario was encountered at the henge at Dyffryn Lane, Powys, where Impressed Ware pits dating from the 33rd to 29th centuries BC were located close to the outer edge of the ditch and sealed by a turf-line below the bank which was constructed in the 26th to 25th centuries BC (Gibson 2010b). It is also obvious that there was Middle Neolithic activity in the area around Henge A and Lynch and Musson suggest that the axis of the henge was referencing this activity (2001, 36) but it may be more coincidental than real as lying immediately to the N of this axis is Mesolithic pit FA371 which is unlikely still to have been visible in the Neolithic.

The other Neolithic features comprise the following:

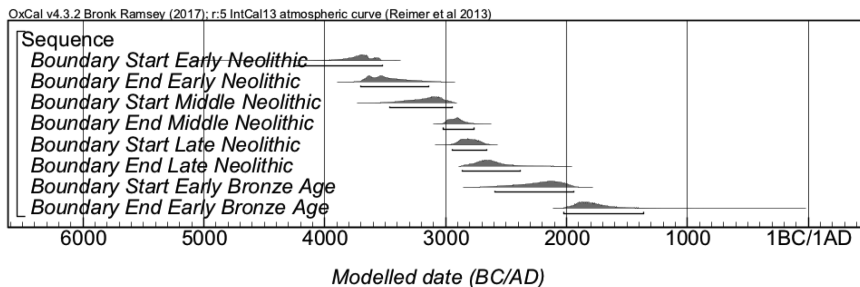


Fig. 3. Dates for the main Neolithic and Bronze Age phases at Llandegai.



- FA370 a cremation pit within the area defined by the bank in the NE sector containing the cremated remains of an adult (possibly female), a polissoir and two cord-impressed sherds.
- FA536 a pit within the area defined by the bank in the NW containing a Langdale axe.
- A13 an Early Bronze Age deposit of cremated bone (possibly adult female) within the area defined by the bank in the NE quadrant.

None of the other supposed Neolithic features (FA359, 372, 373, 245, 540 and 540a) are dated absolutely nor do they contain chronologically diagnostic artefacts. Neolithic finds are also sparse and comprise an edge-retouched knife from a later prehistoric hearth, a utilised flake and a transverse arrowhead. Returning to the main axis, pit FA1 lies just to the south of the axis line and was assumed to be contemporary with the cremation circle. This cannot be demonstrated with certainty, however, given the poor integrity of the dates. Its position may be fortuitous.

The date range for the end of the cremation circle (Fig. 1) does indeed overlap with the earliest dates for Class I henges (Gibson 2012b) but the sparse dating evidence suggests that the larger Class I sites are closer to the middle of the 3rd millennium in the 25th to 23rd centuries BC. That the henge references the cremation circle may still be plausible, however, especially if the cremation circle was covered by a mound. This mound may have been removed by subsequent ploughing and/or by the topsoil stripping at the start of the excavations. It cannot be proven but the features that constitute the cemetery are so ephemeral that it is unlikely that they would in themselves have left enduring physical traces. A mound, however, could have been lasting.

This enables us to question the dates from the stabilisation layer in the ditch of Henge A. Unfortunately the date is once again on oak charcoal and furthermore is an old NPL date with a large margin of error (140 years) that should be doubled. On face value it suggests that the rapid silts had formed roughly by 3781–2391 cal. BC (94.8%). Possible Fengate sherds might suggest a date nearer the 3500–3000 cal. BC in round terms. Unfortunately neither the radiocarbon sample nor the Impressed Ware can be relied upon as dating evidence. The radiocarbon date derives from a bulked sample of ‘scattered charcoal’ (Lynch and Musson 2004, 42) comprising ‘mature oak’ (ibid. 118). This scattered charcoal and the two small sherds undoubtedly represent washed-in material, probably derived from a Middle Neolithic feature or deposit, perhaps of a type attested elsewhere in the vicinity of Henge A.

At both henges, therefore, and not necessarily the result of the mechanical topsoil stripping, there was little in the way of stratigraphy to tie the internal and external features to the enclosures. Association of features was inferred rather than proven on the assumption that both henges were Neolithic in date. The relationship of features to the bank at Henge B was also inferred as no trace of the bank remained nor, as mentioned above, do the ditch silts positively attest the position of a bank. If we assume that the inferred position of the bank is correct, then the possible Grooved Ware from FB32 may provide a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the monument. Traces of the ploughed-out bank did survive at Henge A but the only feature sealed by the bank dated to the Mesolithic (FA370). The features on the axis of Henge A are largely undated and their distribution may be fortuitous, especially as those that are dated demonstrate a chronological disparity. The date from the rapid silts is almost certainly from residual material. The cremation circle may be a referenced phase of activity but there is nothing to suggest physical or temporal overlap with Henge A. All the evidence used to suggest a Neolithic date for Henge A is, therefore, entirely circumstantial.



## ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESIS

Henge A is almost perfectly circular and some 50m in internal diameter. The bank, which seems to have been formed from only part of the excavated ditch material, seals a Neolithic soil above which were traces of a relict turf-line ‘of sticky, greyish clay’ between the soil and the bank at least in some areas and suggesting that the henge may have been constructed at a considerable time after the soil had become sealed. It is interesting to note that ‘no pre-henge activity was noted at Henge A during excavation’ and that earlier activity was only identified after radiocarbon dates had been obtained (Lynch and Musson 2001, 39).

The outer ditch as it survived was 10–11m wide and some 3m deep and rapid primary fills stabilised at 1.2m from the base marked by a clayey deposit (layer 4, probably representing a stabilisation turf-line). These rapid silts in such a gravel environment are likely to have taken no more than 1 or 2 generations (20–40 years) to form (inf. Mike Allen) and the radiocarbon date obtained from this horizon has been dismissed above. Above this stabilisation layer, radiocarbon dates suggest a slow silting process starting around *c.* 800 cal. BC. This date may be nearer the construction of the site than is the residual pottery and charcoal from the top of the ‘rapid’ primary silts. The interior of Henge A is filled with later prehistoric features such as four-posters and at least two roundhouses and these features respect the bank and do not appear to encroach on it. The case for a later prehistoric date for Henge A seems much stronger than for a Neolithic one. The surviving potential mound covering the much earlier cremation circle may have been utilised as an extra defence element at the entrance. The external ditch is also much easier to explain in a later prehistoric context than it is in relation to henges.

## DISCUSSION

Later prehistoric reuse of henges is well known. The Late Bronze Age cremations and the early historic burials within the henge at North Mains, Perthshire, can be cited (Barclay 1983) and the use of stone circles, recumbent stone circles and Clava Cairns in Scotland can also be seen to extend into the Late Bronze Age. Indeed, Bradley has described the unexpected discovery of Iron Age roundhouses within the recumbent stone circles of Strichen and the Candle Stane as well as the Roman–Iron Age reuse of other stone monuments in Scotland suggesting the importance and visibility of these monuments in later landscapes as had been previously discussed by Hingley (Bradley and Sheridan 2005; Bradley and Nimura 2016, 124; Hingley 1999).

More difficult to explain are later prehistoric foundations that appear to mimic earlier forms. Manby (2007) has described the similarity of his type 1 Late Bronze Age eastern English ringworks to henges. The inner circuit at Thwing, for example, resembles a typical Class II henge with an internal ditch, external bank and two opposed entrances but the radiocarbon dates span the 14th–9th centuries cal. BC. The double-entranced North Rings at Mucking also bears a strong resemblance to Llandegai A with a near central posthole-defined circular structure. Slightly later than Thwing, the dates from Mucking (1020–410 cal. BC) are likely to be *termini ante quos* as they come from the secondary fills of the ditch (Evans *et al.* 2016).

In Wensleydale, the site of Castle Dykes, near Aysgarth, North Yorkshire was considered a classic Class I henge with internal ditch and external bank. Geophysical survey over the site has, as at Llandegai A, revealed two internal circular post-built structures but at Castle Dykes both had possible outer drip trenches as seen on Iron Age roundhouses. Radiocarbon dates on short-lived charcoal (hazel twigs) from the basal silts and stabilisation horizon span the 8th–5th centuries BC with the greater likelihood falling in the 6th–5th centuries (Gibson forthcoming).

Ferrybridge, West Yorkshire, had opposed entrances with an internal ditch and external bank but produced a La Tène (3rd century BC) sword scabbard from the base of the ditch (Roberts 2005, 228). There was no trace of a recut in the admittedly small area excavated and the silts above the deposit contained Roman pottery. Radiocarbon dates of 34th to 29th centuries cal. BC obtained from charred grain within the primary bank are too early for Class II henges and are not from placed deposits: as with Llandegai A, there is considerable Neolithic and Bronze Age ‘contaminating’ activity in the area.

The small ‘Class I henge’ at the Pict’s Knowe in Dumfries and Galloway enclosed an area some 22m in diameter and dates spanning the 25th–20th centuries cal. BC were regarded by the excavator as *termini post quos* for its construction with a recut representing Later Iron Age embellishment (Thomas 2007, 145–6). The pre-bank dates, however, come from peat. Thomas suggested that the henge quickly followed this Neolithic activity as there was no turf layer visible below the bank but it is possible that this had been stripped prior to the construction of the henge bank as proved to have been the case at Castle Dykes (Gibson forthcoming). Dates from waterlogged wood from the *primary* ditch fill span the 4th century BC to the 1st century cal. AD with use continuing well into the Roman Iron Age (Thomas 2007, 309–10). Once again the Neolithic and Bronze Age origins of this ‘henge’ can be seriously questioned.

Further south, the suspected henge at Hay Close, St Newlyn East, complete with internal ditch and external bank produced Iron Age and Romano-British pottery and a radiocarbon date from the ditch suggested the foundation of the site in the 8th–5th centuries cal. BC (95% probability) (Jones 2014). The ditch was further modified in the early post-Roman period. Jones subsequently identified other Cornish henge-like enclosures that can be dated to the Iron Age such as the internally ditched enclosure at Camelford dated by radiocarbon to the 1st century BC/AD.

In Wales, the possibility that both the Castell Mawr and Bayvil Farm (Pembrokeshire) enclosures represented henge monuments prompted their excavation but both proved to be Later Bronze Age in date and to be more domestic than ritual in function (Parke Pearson *et al.* 2017; 2018 – this volume). They have since been identified as Late Bronze Age ringworks and are discussed in detail elsewhere (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2018 – this volume).

We have already seen above the use and reuse of earlier sites in the later Bronze Age and Iron Age and in some cases this appears to be a clear case of continuity. In others, where sites were constructed in later prehistory, emulation seems to be the motivating factor. The Late Bronze Age and Iron Age manifestations of henges (Lugg, Co. Dublin) and timber circles (Raffin, Co. Meath; Haughey’s Fort, Co. Armagh; Knockaulin, Co. Kildare; and Navan, Co. Armagh) in Ireland have been known for some time (Gibson 1995) and a case was previously made for continuity though admittedly the late Iron Age dates at Navan and Knockaulin did stretch the argument. An hypothesis was subsequently developed for the reinvention of timber circles; a tradition that possibly survived in the oral record to be resurrected in the late Iron Age as Ireland suffered a climatic downturn and was immersed in a period of economic stress (Gibson 2000). Warner (2000) examined the Iron Age internally ditched enclosures at Navan, Tara (Co. Meath) and Knockaulin. Tara and Navan contain smaller circular monuments with either internal ditches or with ditches between internal and external banks (Newman 1997). Similarly-shaped enclosures, such as the three sites that form the Clóenfherta, are also found close by the main site at Tara though outside the main enclosure. Warner suggested that, based on a study of the classical Irish texts, the internal ditches were to contain other-world forces: they were hillforts in reverse designed to contain danger rather than repel it. There is a degree of documentary evidence to suggest that these sites may have been considered as portals to the other world and the concept is common to many world mythologies. This attractive hypothesis would explain the ditch/bank arrangement of both these royal sites and of conventional Neolithic henges but it does not explain the resurgence or reintroduction of internally ditched enclosures. Whatever the reason, and arguments are far from conclusive, there does seem to be clear evidence for the

continuity of internally ditched embanked enclosures from the Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age in Britain and Ireland (O’Sullivan *et al.* 2012) and a later resurgence of the tradition in the Iron Age.

A review of henges in Wales by the present writer also identified later prehistoric enclosures that had been previously identified as possible henges (Gibson 2012a). A penannular ditched enclosure at Tytandderwen, Gwynedd, initially interpreted as a henge, and with no trace of a bank, once again produced late 1st millennium radiocarbon dates (Smith *et al.* 2008). Castell Mawr, Dyfed, which lies close to the source of the Stonehenge Bluestones, was originally interpreted as a later prehistoric enclosure, though the site has an external bank and an internal ditch some 10–15m wide and 3m deep with two opposed entrances, and for this reason, following survey, was reinterpreted as a possible henge (Mytum and Webster 2003). Recent exploratory excavation at the site has, however, confirmed its later Bronze Age date (Parker Pearson *et al.* 2017). Despite rumours of internal stone settings, the spur-sited enclosure at Castell-Garw, Dyfed, returned first millennium radiocarbon dates from below the bank (Kirk and Williams 2000) and the small hillslope enclosure at Dan-y-coed, Dyfed also proved to date to the late and Roman Iron Ages (Williams 1984; Williams and Mytum 1998). Like Llandegai A, Castell-Garw, Dan-y-coed and Bayvil Farm had external ditches and internal banks. These examples are by no means exhaustive and other small circular later prehistoric enclosures are known in North Wales and elsewhere. In Gwynedd, Gadlys, Llanwnda, is about 75m in diameter and enclosed by a bank and probably an external ditch. Castell Gron, Llanrug, is an almost circular small hilltop enclosure with remains of a once substantial boulder-faced wall. Caer Bach is also fairly circular and defined by rampart and outer ditch and measures about 50m across. Llandegai A may well be a lowland version of these more typical upland defensive enclosures.

Landscape features often attract their own mythologies and they may even have been revered by revisiting or, conversely, avoiding. A case has been made for the deliberate slighting of Neolithic palisade enclosures by the Roman armies of occupation (Gibson 2002) and the pattern is a consistent one suggesting that these long-gone wooden enclosures still had some late Iron Age importance even if little in the way of archaeological evidence for this remains. Perhaps the sites were indeed perceived as other-worldly and inhabited by ancestral ghosts or even *genii loci*: unnamed but potentially powerful spirits. Were these forces to be considered more powerful at some locations than at others, then an element of monumental emulation may also have happened. This may be the case at Castle Dykes, Ferrybridge and Pict’s Knowe, the latter two of which occupy the sites of earlier activity. This may be a way of referencing a mythological past as has been suggested for the deposition of earlier artefacts at some Iron Age sites and that ‘Iron Age people were using locales, geographical orientation and objects to communicate with their origins’ (Hingley 2009, 157).

Conversely, and as mentioned above, the internal structures at Castle Dykes suggest a more domestic function for even some of the internally ditched sites. The Irish royal sites have been discussed above, but internal ditches are also known at other later prehistoric sites such as banjo enclosures, often considered stock pounds (McOmish 2011). The internal ditch at such sites may in fact be purely practical, perhaps to facilitate drainage and ensuring a drier interior. If the outer bank was surmounted by a hedge, then the enclosure would have been dry and protected (but not defended): this seems to be the best interpretation of Castle Dykes, where the ditch is waterlogged but the interior is dry and largely free of reeds.

It would appear that we now have two basic types of small later prehistoric enclosures: defensive ringworks with external ditches and protected sites with internal drainage ditches bearing a greater resemblance to henges. Both types have been confused with earlier henge monuments, particularly where visible earthwork evidence is lacking, and this warns against interpretation by morphological similarity alone.

Llandegai A neither represents continuity of use nor emulation of an earlier form. Its bank and ditch arrangement is ‘un-henge-like’; rather, it is typical of later prehistoric ringwork enclosures. It is doubtful

if the dating of Llandegai A will ever be resolved. Lynch and Musson have admirably wrestled with a difficult archive and far from ideal radiocarbon samples but it cannot be denied that the ‘dating’ of Henge A relies more on subjectivity than it does associations and even the site’s morphology is questionable given the internal bank (although Stonehenge I can always be invoked as a parallel). The alternative hypothesis is to see Llandegai A as a small enclosed and defended homestead of later prehistoric date set within an area of earlier ‘contaminating’ activity. Henge B, the possible mound over the cremation circle and perhaps other elements of the complex such as the cursus may well have still been visible as earthworks. They may even have been seen as ancestral with their own distinctive mythology and Henge A may have been deliberately constructed within this past landscape and have referenced the earlier monuments, but the idea of continuous landscape development cannot be upheld. When Henge A was constructed, the earlier monuments were out of use, would have been eroded and probably grassed over: none have produced evidence of later prehistoric activity. There is no need to invoke such concepts as ringworks referencing the Neolithic past. More practical concerns such as function may have been more of a driving force in guiding their architecture. Where Neolithic and later sites are found in close proximity, as at Llandegai, this may have had more to do with the quality of the land (including such considerations as ready-made clearings) than the presence of ancestors.

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