

## EARLY RECTILINEAR ENCLOSURES IN THE LOTHIANS

Gordon Maxwell, Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments,  
Edinburgh

Recent fieldwork in Northumberland and Durham<sup>1</sup> has revealed the long history and diverse forms of rectangular- and subrectangular-shaped native settlements in those areas. In particular it has proved possible to distinguish between an upland and a lowland group, the former typified by Riding Wood, Northumberland<sup>2</sup>, with its round stone-walled houses, sunken yards and stoutly-built enclosing wall; the latter by Marden, Tynemouth,<sup>3</sup> or Burradon,<sup>4</sup> where the internal dwellings were round timber houses of different sizes and categories, and the main element of the perimeter was a ditch.

Settlements and homesteads with stone-walled houses in S. Scotland have a markedly eastern distribution, being concentrated most densely in or around the Cheviot and Lammermuir Hills and in Upper Tweeddale, but very rarely to the W. of the Clydesdale and Annandale<sup>5</sup>. Dating to a period which extends from the late first or early second century A.D. to about the sixth century, such habitation sites may have originated N. of Cheviot with the encouragement, if not under the control, of the Roman occupying power. As a class they differ from examples in Northumberland in that their plans, almost without exception<sup>6</sup>, are curvilinear, adapted to the inequalities of the ground they occupy. There are in fact very few prehistoric settlement sites of any category in S. Scotland which exhibit marked rectilinearity of plan; a small number of ridge forts in Roxburghshire<sup>7</sup> and Selkirkshire<sup>8</sup> are indeed subrectangular in outline but their plan has manifestly been influenced by the local terrain.

The discovery in Midlothian and East Lothian of at least twenty rectilinear ditched enclosures (fig. 1), superficially comparable with the timber-house sites of the Northumberland coastal plain, is therefore of some importance. All the sites referred to in this paper have been identified by means of crop marks visible on air photographs, approximately half of which were National Survey prints, while the rest were taken by Dr J.K. St Joseph for the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography<sup>9</sup>.

The sites are situated in agricultural land at altitudes which range from 70 ft. to 550 ft. O.D., the easternmost being at Doon Hill (E. Loth. No. 3) to the S. of Dunbar, the westernmost at Baberton Mains (Midloth. No. 1), immediately to the SW. of Edinburgh. In size they vary between one-quarter of an acre and two acres, but the majority cover about one acre, the average size of similar

sites in Northumberland. One site (E. Loth. No. 11) has been defended by three ditches and may perhaps more properly be classed as a fort or defensive enclosure; however most of the remaining sites have been enclosed by only a single ditch which probably served as much for drainage as protection. The plans of the settlements may vary in detail but in general they are square, rectangular or trapezoidal with sharply-turned corners; only a very few betray marked irregularity of outline or possess angles which are of such wide radius as to allow them to be confused with minor Roman works. Two sites (E. Loth. No. 1 and Midloth. No. 6) bear a close resemblance to a class which is represented by enclosures at Hartburn, Mitford Steads and Ogle in Northumberland<sup>10</sup>. The basic elements of this type of site are an inner rectangular or square ditched enclosure with an outer 'bailey' or annexe of subcircular or subrectangular plan. Two of the Northumberland examples were initially identified as Roman fortlets<sup>11</sup>, but a careful examination fails to reveal any closer affinity to Roman earthworks than their rectangular plan; excavation is badly needed to put the matter beyond doubt. If, as seems probable, the rectilinear sites of the Lothians are closely related to those of similar character in Northumberland we may expect that they are approximately contemporary; that is, although they were in use during the Roman period their first appearance may antedate the Roman occupation by several centuries. At Pathhead (Midloth. No. 7), where a rectilinear enclosure can be seen to intersect the N. end of a large Roman temporary camp<sup>12</sup>, it may be possible to demonstrate the relationship by excavation. Unfortunately, it may never prove possible, even with the aid of the most meticulous excavation techniques, to discover the relationship other than chronological, between such sites and two other important categories of ancient monument, hillforts and curvilinear ditched enclosures. Examples of this latter type are found widely distributed in the Lothians, some in close proximity to rectilinear sites, yet none has been examined by excavation; the complex site at East Field, Monkton House (Midloth. No. 6), lies no more than 150 yds. SE. of an oval enclosure and is apparently separated from it by a pit alignment<sup>13</sup>. The relationship with hillforts presents an even more intriguing problem, especially in view of the great concentration of rectilinear sites around Traprain Law, tribal capital of the Votadini, for there can be no doubt that such sites in the Lothians and Northumberland represent an important element of the Votadinian cultural makeup. Of equal interest is the possible relationship between the small cluster of rectilinear works in the valley of the Esk and the system of rectangular fields and enclosures which lies to the SE. of the Antonine fort at Inveresk<sup>14</sup>. The similarity of that field system to Romano-British types found commonly in south-eastern England<sup>15</sup>, together with the occasional discovery of Roman coins and pottery throughout the extensive area it occupies, leads to the conclusion that Inveresk in the second century A.D. was a settlement of no

small importance.

The list of rectilinear sites which follows draws on two main sources: the Cambridge University Catalogue of Air Photographs (abbreviated as CUCAP, followed by the serial numbers of the relevant prints); the survey of Marginal Land carried out by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland<sup>16</sup> (abbreviated as RCAMS, followed by the sortie and print numbers of the relevant National Survey photographs). The information in the catalogue is presented in the following order: site name, parish, height O.D., source, description, and National Grid Reference.

(a) Rectilinear Sites in East Lothian

1. Broomrig, Pencaitland c. 300 ft. RCAMS, AP: 106G/SCOT/UK 140, 5020; Antiquity, XLI (1967), p. 148, pl. XX. Single-ditched inner enclosure, approx. square, measuring c. 280 ft. across; entrance on E.; outer ditch, enclosing 'annexe', about 450 ft. by 400 ft., partly curvilinear, partly rectilinear; traces in interior of house floors and possible rectilinear internal 'pounds'; NT 426 689.
2. Congalton, Dirleton c. 70 ft. CUCAP, RF78-9. Single-ditched rectangular enclosure, partly visible, measuring at least 200 ft. square; NT 549 802.
3. Doon Hill, Dunbar c. 500 ft. RCAMS, AP: CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 3099-100. Single-ditched, rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 200 ft. by 150 ft.; broad ditch; wide entrance on W.; NT 686 755.
4. East Bearford, Haddington c. 150 ft. RCAMS, AP: CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 3125. Single-ditched, approx. square enclosure, measuring about 200 ft. along each axis; fairly broad ditch; NT 554 741.
5. Easter Broomhouse, Spott c. 150 ft. RCAMS, AP: CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 4098-9. Single-ditched, trapezoidal enclosure, measuring c. 120 ft. by 90 ft.; NT 686 765.
6. Highfield, Dirleton c. 210 ft. CUCAP, DD 39-40. Single-ditched, trapezoidal enclosure, measuring 225 ft. by 270 ft.; NT 544 831.
7. Lochhill, Aberlady c. 250 ft. RCAMS, AP: CPE/SCOT/UK 265A, 5132-3. Single-ditched, approx. rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 250 ft. by 200 ft.; NT 476 767.
8. Morham Mains, Morham c. 350 ft. CUCAP, JV 27. Single-ditched, oblong enclosure, measuring at least 350 ft. by 200 ft.; entrance on W.; NT 558 715.
9. Nether Hailes, Prestonkirk c. 160 ft. RCAMS, AP: CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 4122-3. Single-ditched enclosure, only partly visible, but probably square, measuring c. 250 ft. across; NT 571 755.
10. Over Hailes, Prestonkirk c. 225 ft. RCAMS, AP: CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 4122-3. Single-ditched rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 200 ft. by 150 ft.;

NT 565 760.

11. Pencraig, Prestonkirk c. 200 ft. RCAMS, AP:CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 4119-20; CUCAP, RF 84-6. Triple-ditched enclosure (? fort), with more or less straight sides and rounded angles, measuring internally c. 400 ft. by 200 ft. along the axes; the ditches are close-set and there is no trace of an entrance-gap; NT 585 765.
12. West Mains 1, Whittinghame c. 400 ft. CUCAP, JV 26. Part of a single-ditched enclosure, comprising two straight sides c. 300 ft. long, meeting in a right angle; apparent entrance-gap in SE. side; NT 572 726.
13. West Mains 2, Whittinghame c. 475 ft. RCAMS, AP:CPE/SCOT/UK 257, 3133-4. Single-ditched rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 250 ft. by c. 200 ft.; NT 576 719.

(b) Rectilinear Sites in Midlothian

1. Baberton Mains, Currie c. 290 ft. RCAMS, AP:106G/SCOT/UK 140, 5148-9. Single-ditched, nearly rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 220 ft. by c. 250 ft.; NT 186 696.
2. Chalkieside 1, Inveresk c. 420 ft. CUCAP, U 37-8. Single-ditched enclosure, only partly visible, measuring c. 250 ft. by at least 250 ft.; probably rectangular; NT 367 682.
3. Chalkieside 2, Inveresk c. 400 ft. CUCAP, U 37-8. Single-ditched enclosure, partly visible, measuring c. 250 ft. by 300 ft. axially; probably trapezoidal in plan; NT 364 683.
4. Easter Cowden 1, Dalkeith c. 375 ft. CUCAP, BD 48. Single-ditched rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 200 ft. by 175 ft.; SW. side has slight outward curve; NT 363 675.
5. Easter Cowden 2, Dalkeith c. 390 ft. CUCAP, BD 48. Single-ditched nearly square enclosure, measuring approx. 100 ft. across; entrance in NE. side; NT 363 674.
6. East Field, Monkton House, Inveresk c. 75 ft. RCAMS, AP:106G/SCOT/UK 119, 5119-20. Inner single-ditched rectangular enclosure, measuring c. 130 ft. by 110 ft., with semi-circular outer ditch forming D-shaped annexe, the chord of which runs along steep left bank of River Esk and measures c. 275 ft. Pit-alignment and circular annexed crop-mark site nearby; NT 346 702.
7. Pathhead, Crichton c. 550 ft. CUCAP, XH 85. Single-ditched trapezoidal enclosure, measuring c. 200 ft. along the main axes; it intersects the N. end of the small camp occupying the SE. part of 50-acre Roman temporary camp; NT 395 637.

## Footnotes

1. Jobey, G., 'Homesteads and settlements of the frontier area', in Rural Settlement in Roman Britain (C.B.A., 1966), 1-14; Archaeol. Aeliana, XLVI (1968), 51-67.
2. Archaeol. Aeliana, XXXVIII (1960), 1-18.
3. Ibid., XLI (1963), 19-35.
4. Current Archaeology, 15 (July 1969), 116-8, & Scot.Arch.Forum 1970, 77.
5. Jobey, G., op. cit., fig. 1.
6. The homesteads at Hownam Rings and Fasset Hill, Roxburghshire, are partly rectilinear in plan (RCAMS, Inventory of Roxburghshire, Nos. 301 and 678).
7. Ibid., p. 18.
8. RCAMS, Inventory of Selkirkshire, p. 18.
9. The author wishes to express his gratitude to Dr.St.Joseph for permission to refer to sites which appear solely on CUCAP air photographs.
10. Archaeol. Aeliana, XLVI (1968), 62-4.
11. J. Rom. Stud., XLI (1951), 56; cf. also Archaeol. J., CXXXV (1968), 93.
12. J. Rom. Stud., XLVIII (1958), 88.
13. Discovery and Excavation Scotland, 1957, 21.
14. J. Rom. Stud., XLI (1951), 61; cf. also U.K. Air Survey prints; CPE/SCOT/UK 269, 5124-5; CPE/SCOT/UK 276, 5442-3; 106G/SCOT/UK 119, 5120-1.
15. e.g. RCHM, Peterborough New Town, 1-36; J. Rom. Stud., LII (1962), 177.
16. I am grateful to the Commissioners for permission to use hitherto unpublished information.