Gerhard Bersu in Scotland, and his excavations at Traprain Law in context

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Introduction

One of Gerhard Bersu's (1889–1964) less well-known excavations was his work on the great hillfort of Traprain Law in south-east Scotland, but its implications are noteworthy. Conducted over two weeks in 1947 among a whirlwind of other excavations, it was only published in 1983, long after his death. This paper considers its position within Bersu's other work in Britain and seeks to place it in the context of other research on the site, before and since.

Bersu's activities in Scotland

Bersu's development of international networks during his first stint at the *Römisch-Germanische Kommission* (RGK) is well known. A key aspect of this was the founding of the *Congrès International des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques* (CISPP) in 1931, and its first conference in London in 1932[1]. There he was able to develop links with the British archaeological establishment that would help him greatly in the difficult years to follow. He struck up strong friendships with Osbert G. S. Crawford (1886–1957), archaeological officer of the Ordnance Survey[2], and with Vere Gordon Childe (1892–1957), professor of prehistoric archaeology at Edinburgh University. When Bersu and his wife decided to leave Nazi Germany in 1938, Crawford, who had recently become president of the Prehistoric Society, invited him to run excavations on behalf of the Society at an Iron Age enclosed settlement at Little Woodbury in Wiltshire[3]. During large-scale work in 1938 and 1939, using techniques familiar from his German excavations, he built up a plan of the settlement and demonstrated the presence of substantial post-built roundhouses for the first time; this has rightly been seen as a revolution in field techniques in the British Isles[4]. In late July and August 1939 he excavated the Neolithic henge site of "King Arthur's Round Table" in Cumbria, work which has continued to prove controversial[5].

[1] Krämer 2001, 34–35.
[2] The government mapping division; Crawford 1955, 202–203; cf. in this volume the contribution by Andreas Külzer.
[3] Crawford 1955, 252–253.
[4] Bersu 1940a; Evans 1989; Krämer 2001, 64–66; see also contribution by Ch. Evans in this volume.
[5] Bersu 1940b; Bradley 1994; Simpson 1998 [2015]; Krämer 2001, 67; Leach 2019.

Bersu came to Scotland in 1939 at Gordon Childe's invitation after his work in Cumbria. Childe's security service file in the National Archives in Kew records that Bersu "accepted an invitation [from Childe] to excavate in Fife (from a professional point of view this was a poor job). At the outbreak of war he was in Glenisla [in Perthshire]"[6]. The report (dated January 1940) mentions Childe, Crawford, and a rich friend of Childe's, Wallace Thorneycroft (1864–1954) as his supporters: "I understand he [Bersu] and his wife lived at their expense in Blacklunans (Glenshee)[7]. He is now being given a grant by the Soc Antiq Scot to excavating ... his own site"[8]. It has not proved possible to confirm whether Bersu was actually excavating in this period; it seems likely these were grants promised for fieldwork that could not take place in the circumstances. He and his wife were attending the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Dundee, along with several other archaeologists, when war broke out[9]. Bersu spent the winter in Perthshire writing up the Little Woodbury excavations[10]. While visiting Edinburgh in June 1940 he was taken into custody and subsequently interned on the Isle of Man, where he was able to conduct extensive archaeological work under the aegis of the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Manx Museum[11].

At the end of the war, with an immediate return to Germany impossible, Bersu was helped by friends to find continuing work[12]. The Manx Museum supported further excavations in 1946 and 1947, but Bersu also obtained funding from a variety of sources to explore other sites. In March 1946 he dug a promontory fort at Ramsey Bay in the Isle of Man, and in the summer of that year an early medieval "rath" settlement (a circular enclosure containing a large roundhouse) at Lissue in Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland. He also spent time in Scotland, probably in September, investigating an Iron Age enclosure at Scotstarvit in Fife. In October he was invited to deliver the prestigious Dalrymple Lectures to the Glasgow Archaeological Society, on the topic of "The archaeology of the Viking Age in the lands around the Irish Sea"[13]. October and November 1946 saw him back on Man, digging a Viking and Bronze Age burial site at Ballateare. In 1947 he was in Scotland again, working in Fife for several weeks[14] and on Traprain Law for two weeks in April. He was back on Man that summer, digging medieval remains at Peel, and returned to Lissue in northern Ireland from 23 June to 15 August. Having been appointed to a professorship at the Royal Irish Academy earlier that year, he finally moved to Dublin in October.

Bersu's Scottish work was thus sandwiched between several other excavations as he shuttled around and across the Irish Sea *(fig. 1)*, but it had a considerable impact on Scottish

[6] National Archives, KV2/2148/32X 23/1/1940; the informant was Lady Gordon-Finlayson, wife of a nearby landowner.

[7] Blacklunans lies in Glenshee, on the road between it and Glenisla (some 5 km to the east) in upland Perthshire. Thorneycroft had land at nearby Dalrulzion, some 2 km to the south in Glenshee, which must have influenced this as a venue for the Bersus. We are most grateful to Ian Ralston for his notes on this topic. Maria Bersu's (1902–1987) Registration Certificate records the address as 'Dalrulzion, Blackwater, Blairgowrie' (see contribution by E. Braun-Holzinger, fig. 6, in this volume). Black Water is the river that flows past Dalrulzion through lower Glenshee.

[8] National Archives, KV2/2148/32X 23/1/1940; Ralston 2009, 72 no. 18.

[9] As recorded in the diary of archaeologist Angus Graham (1892–1979): Geddes 2016, 284.

[10] Evans 1998, 198 fn. 4; see also contribution by Ch. Evans in this volume.

[11] E. g. Bersu 1977; Cubbon 1977; Evans 1998; Krämer 2001, 69–73; Mytum 2017; see also contribution by H. Mytum in this volume.

[12] The following draws on Krämer 2001, 73–81, where references to excavation reports may be found.

[13] Mearns 2008 xix; see Mytum in this volume.

[14] The chronology of his Scotstarvit work is unclear. No dates are given in the report or survive in the excavation archive. A letter to him from one of

archaeology. In 1946 he excavated trial trenches across an enclosed settlement at Scotstarvit, revealing roundhouse remains; he exposed half of these in that year, and the remainder in the 1947 season (a total of four weeks' work[15]). A further week was spent in 1947 with the same student and volunteer team in exploring another site in Fife: a roundhouse in a rectangular enclosure at Green Craig, near Creich[16]. The work was done with the St Andrews University Branch of the League of Prehistorians[17]; Gordon Childe was heavily involved with the League in its early years, and probably facilitated the contacts. The Scotstarvit work had an immediate impact. Published rapidly after the excavation, it was pivotal to the development of settlement archaeology in Scotland: "Bersu's work has stood the test of time as a seminal paper … [as part of the] transition to a recognisably modern world in the study of Scottish roundhouses"[18]. As with his Little Woodbury excavation, and using the same methods as there and in the Manx roundhouses, both techniques and results served to inspire future work.

Scotstarvit and Green Craig fit readily within the wider theme of Bersu's British and Irish work over this period, which focussed strongly on the excavation and reconstruction of substantial roundhouses; indeed, Chris Evans has termed him "an itinerant journeyman of the round-house" and recognised a coherent research programme among his disparate excavations[19]. Bersu himself noted that his Lissue work was designed to compare it to the Manx raths, and his Scottish reports cross-reference his Manx, Irish and English work[20], although his publications offer little stated research design; one must glean this from his discussions. A clearer statement of his views of settlement archaeology (specifically concerning buildings) survives in the unpublished text of a lecture that he gave in St Andrews, probably in 1947; it is reproduced in Appendix 1. The text is interesting in a number of ways; two strands are selected for comment here.

The first is in terms of understanding Bersu's broader approach. In this talk he specified the primacy of settlement archaeology as a key recent trend, moving away from an antiquarian focus on finds. "But if we try to learn earnestly about our ancestors we should not go treasure-hunting any more. We have to excavate sites where experience has shown that only very modest finds are bound to turn up." He stressed the need to dig "typical" sites, seeing Scotstarvit as such; it is rather ironic that by the time of publication it had become "the homestead of a wealthy farmer"[21] rather than a run-of-the-mill farm. In order to achieve this aim, the identification of wooden structures was the key recent methodological innovation. Houses were valued over finds because of the conservative nature of the former, more "characteristic of an ethnical unit" than material culture. This lecture makes his concerns and approach very clear indeed.

The second strand is in terms of his approach to the roundhouses he was excavating. From the slide list, one can reconstruct the narrative to an extent. He started and finished with rectangular buildings, the first a Viking house, the last a recent parallel of a rectangular turf-roofed house from Lewis in the vernacular tradition. The bulk of the slides,

the organisers of the dig is dated October 1946, its contents implying that Bersu had not long left (National Record of the Historic Environment [NHRE] MRS MS25/2). The 1947 season took place "at a time of year when the soil was wet and the slight differences in colour showed up well" (Bersu 1948a, 244), thus either spring or autumn. Either could be accommodated in his movements that year; the latter is perhaps more likely given his 1946 work.

[15] Bersu 1948a.

[16] Bersu 1948b.

[17] Ralston 2009, 82–89.

[18] Ralston 2003, 19.

[19] Evans 1998, 195.

[20] Bersu 1948a, 253 fn. 1–2; 259; Bersu 1948c, 131.

[21] Bersu 1948a, 259.

no	site	excavated	site type
1	Little Woodbury	1938–9	enclosure
2	Llyn du Bach, Penygroes	1947–8	settlement
3	King Arthur's Round Table	1939	henge
4	Traprain Law	1947	hillfort
5	Scotstarvit	1946–7	roundhouse / enclosure
6	Green Craig	1947	roundhouse / enclosure
7	Lissue	1946–7	rath
8	Freestone Hill	1948-9	hillfort
9	Ramsey Bay	1946	promontory fort
10	Cashtal, Ballagawne, Garwick	1941	promontory fort
11	Ballacagen A	1941–2	roundhouse
11	Ballacagen B	1943	roundhouse
12	Ballanorris	1942–3	roundhouse
13	Balladoole, Chapel Hill	1944–5	Viking burial
14	Peel	1947	Medieval
15	Ballateare	1946	Viking & Bronze Age burial site
16	Cronk Moar, Jurby	1945	Viking burial

Fig. 1. Bersu's excavations in Britain and Ireland (image: Fraser Hunter).

however, concerned roundhouses. His story began with the raths of the Isle of Man, with a brief introduction before moving onto his work there, focussed on Ballacagen A[22]. He looked at technical construction details before addressing the key topic of how to reconstruct such houses, starting with Ballacagen before considering Little Woodbury. Of interest is his use of ethnographic parallels[23] from native America (a grass-thatched roundhouse of the Wichita in Kansas), northern Norway (most likely Sami conical huts clad in turf), and Scotland. His notes reference an "earth roof" on the Norwegian and Scottish examples, probably meaning a turf roof: in the published report on Scotstarvit Bersu proposed a "sod roof" and argued this also for Little Woodbury over his previous idea of thatch. The ethnographic parallels he illustrated provide some sense of the evidence he was drawing on[24].

Bersu's work on Traprain Law stands apart from his other British excavations. It was the only large hillfort he excavated in this period (though his later work on Freestone Hill in Co. Kilkenny, once he was based in Ireland, continued the hillfort theme[25]). This is a little surprising, as Bersu had a strong pedigree as an excavator of major hillforts. His long-running and influential excavations from 1911–29 at the Goldberg, in the Nördlinger Ries, Baden-Württemberg, were well-known to a contemporary British audience, though not published in his lifetime[26]; his work on the ramparts of the Breiter Berg near Striegau (today Strzegom, Lower Silesia / Poland) was published in 1930[27], while his excavations on the Wittnauer Horn (Kanton Aargau / Switzerland[28]) were summarised for an anglophone audience in 1946[29]. Simon Stoddart has commented on Bersu's influential double strategy of detailed work on the ramparts and extensive work within the interior to reconstruct layout and lifestyles[30]. Bersu's hillfort pedigree was thus clear to a British audience by the time of his arrival on the island, but it was his skills in large-scale settlement archaeology that were most desired, motivated perhaps by his friend Crawford's pioneering work on the air photographic traces of such settlements[31].

The Traprain Law excavations thus represent a rather different tack in his British and Irish work, but one for which Bersu was well-suited. His previous research would have been well known in the Scottish archaeological community: as noted, Childe, Professor of European Archaeology at Edinburgh University, was a close friend and supporter. In late 1946 Childe left for a post in London[32], but his successor, Stuart Piggott (1910–1996), had dug for Bersu at Little Woodbury, describing it as his "most valuable experience"[33], and the Scotstarvit acknowledgements show that Piggott and his wife Peggy (Margaret, née Preston, 1912–1994), a renowned archaeologist in her own right and also a Little Woodbury veteran, helped on site[34]. An unsung connection is with Robert Stevenson (1913–1992), Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in Edinburgh. Stevenson was a

[22] Site B was shown once to illustrate the wood preservation; Ballanorris was shown once as a representative of the same type but with poorer preservation.

[23] C. f. Bersu 1940a, 90. – Evans 1998, 189 commented that his Manx notebooks included notes and sketches of native American houses along with photos of an earth-lodge from Missouri and a roundhouse built by the Dinka of Sudan.

[24] Bersu 1948a, 253 fn. 1; see also Hawkes 1946, 81 f., pls V–VII.

[25] Raftery 1969; cf. in this volume the contribution by Knut Rassmann et al.

[26] See discussion in Jope 1997; for the Bronze Age and Iron Age phases, Parzinger 1998.

[27] Bersu 1930.

[28] Bersu 1945; see also contribution by H. Brem in this volume.

[29] Bersu 1946.

[30] Stoddart 2002, 52.

[31] Evans 1989, 442–443; Krämer 2001, 64–65.

[32] Ralston 2009, 66.

[33] Piggott 1983, 33.

[34] Bersu 1940a, 110–111; Bersu 1948a, 262.

student of Childe's at Edinburgh who studied at Bonn University in the mid-1930s before a period at the Institute of Archaeology in London, returning to Edinburgh to take up a post as Assistant Keeper at the Museum in 1938[35]. It is unclear if Stevenson met Bersu while in Bonn, but he certainly came to know him during his Scottish work: Stevenson coordinated specialist reports for the Scotstarvit publication (writing up the pottery himself), made the practical arrangements for the 1947 Traprain dig, and discussed the earthworks on site with Bersu[36]. Colleagues and family members remember that Robert Stevenson and Gerhard Bersu remained in close contact thereafter[37]; Bersu, it seems, had a knack of making friends[38].

Work on Traprain Law before Bersu

Traprain Law is a volcanic intrusion (221 m high) that dominates the otherwise low-lying, rolling coastal plain of East Lothian. Despite its prominence, the site saw minimal archaeological attention until the excavations of Alexander Curle (1866–1955) and James Cree (1864–1929) from 1914–15 and 1919–23, supported by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland[39]. Unusually for the time, this work tackled not the ramparts but the interior, devoting considerable efforts to excavating a significant area on the large western terrace of the hill. Unfortunately, the complexity of the archaeology and the limitations of the techniques (excavations being conducted by workmen, with Curle or Cree visiting weekly) meant that structural remains and stratification are poorly understood, and the rich assemblage of finds has little close context[40]. The most spectacular find, in 1919, was a hoard of 23 kg of Roman *Hacksilber*, but this should not outshine the rich range of other material that indicates a site used since the Mesolithic, with large numbers of diagnostic finds from the late Bronze Age and the Roman Iron Age indicating these were key periods.

The ramparts remained almost untouched in this early work yet are the most visible feature of the site today. A pre-existing quarry in the north-east corner of the hill posed an ongoing threat to the remains, and a proposal to extend this in 1938 led to the first significant set of excavations on the ramparts, by Stewart Cruden (1915–2002) on behalf of the Office of Works (the responsible government department) and, once again, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland[41]. These focussed on the inner rampart line on the northern side of the site, though curiously little of the threatened area itself was excavated. The rampart sequence remains debated, but three main circuits are clear. An inner circuit, heavily denuded, runs around the scarp of the hill's summit on the north and west sides (the east end comes to a natural point; the south is too steep to require ramparts). An outer circuit takes in a further break of slope towards the outer edges of the hill. The former encloses an area of some 8 ha, the latter 16 ha. These two circuits survive largely as earthworks; in contrast, the third and latest visible rampart on the site (the Cruden Wall, named after its first excavator) consists of stone facing walls enclosing a turf core. It runs around the outer western edge of the hill on top of the outer rampart, and then cuts up to take the line of the inner rampart *(fig. 2)*.

[35] Maxwell 1992, 1.

[36] Close-Brooks 1983, 206; Stevenson 1948; Bersu 1948b, 273 fn. 3; archive letters in the National Record of the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Scotland, Edinburgh (NRHE), MS 25/1-2.

[37] David Clarke, pers. comm.; Alice Stevenson, pers. comm.

[38] E. g. Radford 1965; Jope 1997, 230.

[39] Clarke 2022.

[40] Burley 1956, 118–120; Jobey 1976.

[41] Cruden 1940.

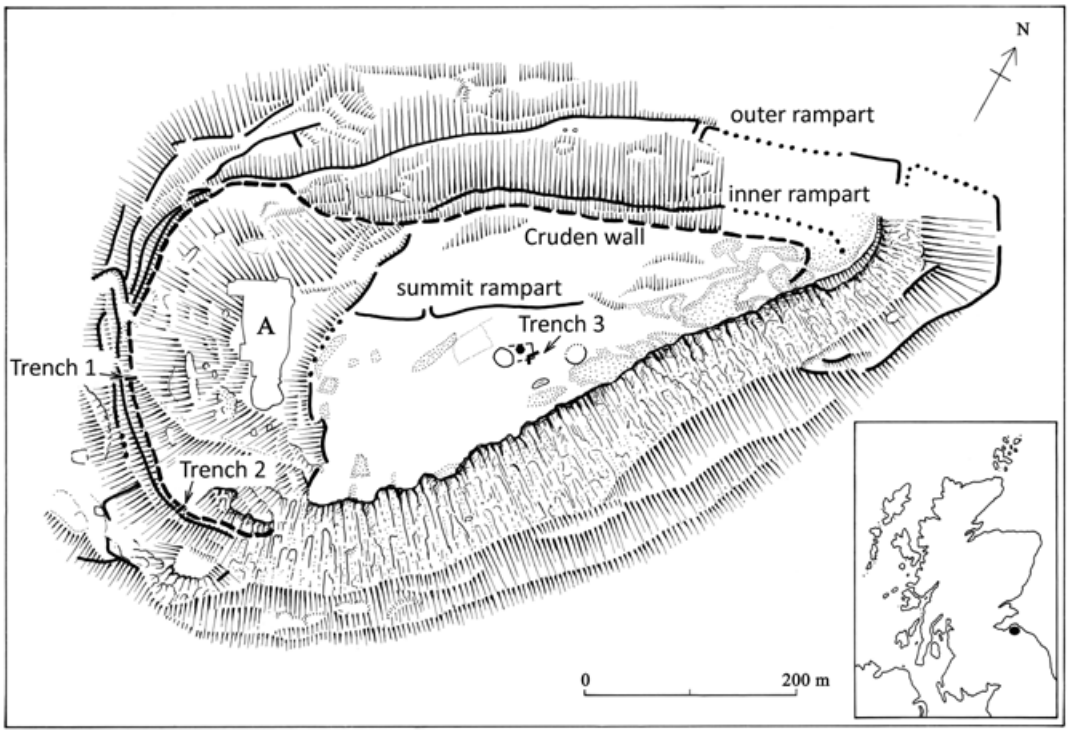

Fig. 2. Plan of Traprain Law, showing main ramparts and Bersu's three trenches; 'A' indicates the location of the main 1914–1923 excavations (drawn by M. O'Neil and F. Hunter, ©National Museums Scotland).

Bersu's excavation on Traprain Law

Bersu's excavations on the site were designed to fit within this framework of knowledge, but archive material makes clear that they also reflected his own developing interests in the site. Again the work was supported by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, who wanted a gateway in the outer rampart to be excavated as this had not previously been tackled. Correspondence between Bersu, the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland *(Appendix 2)* makes it clear that Bersu argued successfully for a broader remit; he convinced the Inspectorate that more was to be gained by digging sections of the ramparts and investigation of other features on the hill, and was given free rein to do so (Bersu was wary of the potential complexities of gateways[42]). With a team of two workmen and between one and three students[43], he dug two sections across this outer rampart on the western side that are of key importance, as they remain the only work in a well-preserved area of this earthwork *(fig. 3)*. The use of small trenches through often complex ramparts was typical of the period, as reflected in Cruden's earlier work on the site.

Bersu's notebook (which preserves sketches made on site) and his site book (neatly written up each day) show that his interest stretched far beyond the task he had initially been allocated *(fig. 4)*. He spent much time walking over the hill, observing and sketching features, and was concerned not just in the rampart sequence but its relation to potentially later routeways onto the site, the terraces on the hill within and outside the ramparts, and the remains of rectangular structures on the summit. He cut an L-shaped trench

[42] E.g. Bersu 1947, 32.

[43] Close-Brooks 1983, 210.

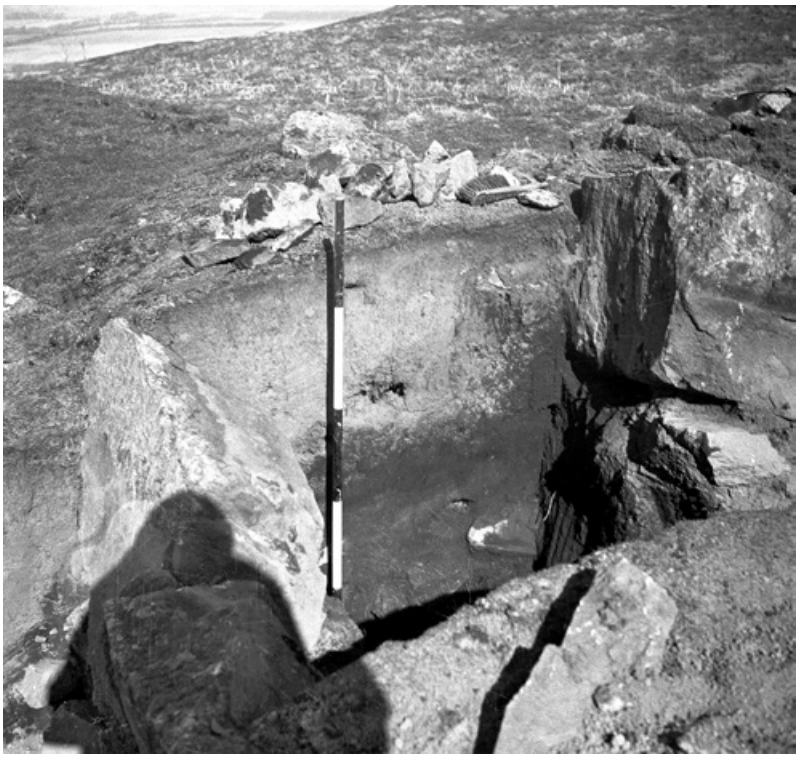

Fig. 3. Photo taken by Bersu of cutting 2 through the Cruden Wall looking north, with his shadow cast across the image (©Historic Environment Scotland, G. Bersu Collection).

across the latter and put test pits into some terraces beyond the ramparts in the south-west corner (no records survive of these beyond a note that cultural layers were present). His notes show considerable interest in the evidence of the site's sequence from the surviving earthworks and finds, including the question of different phases of Roman contact. Bersu's work attracted a number of visitors from the Scottish archaeological establishment, including Curle who had led the early excavations. A very practical touch is preserved in Bersu's notebook: a note saying, "We are further south on this terrace", clearly intended to be left out to guide visitors.

Bersu never published this work, but his surviving archive (NRHE MS 25/1[44]) includes background notes on previous work at the site, a structure for the report, wide-ranging drafts of introductory sections of text, an extended discussion of the ramparts and entrances, and suggestions for future work. These indicate an interest not just in reanalysing the older finds but in doing further fieldwork on the summit area, although this never came to pass:

[44] National Record of the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Scotland, manuscript 25/1. https://canmore.org.uk (last accessed 7.12.2021).

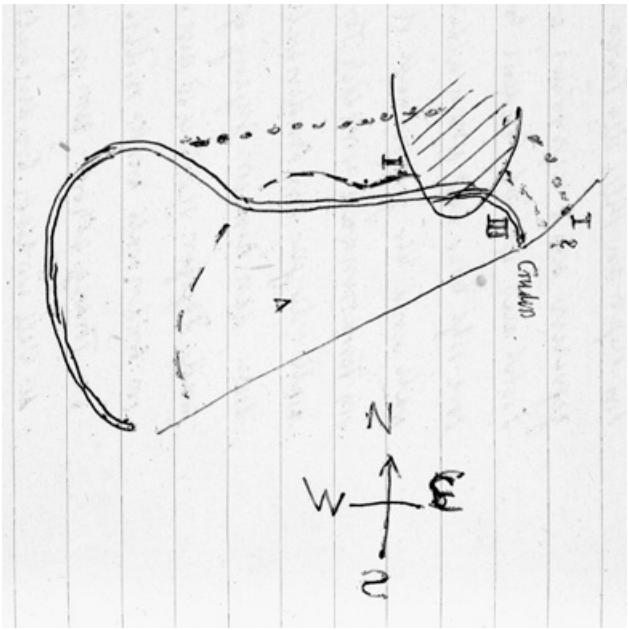

Fig. 4. Bersu's sketch of Traprain Law from his excavation notebook (©Historic Environment Scotland, G. Bersu Collection).

"Program for future work
Mapping
Working up old finds
Working up Curle plans
Concentrating top sequences. Building up evidence from youngest features. Cutting terraces. Work on terrace under summit (to the north)
Looking through sources of local history"[45]

The comments are perceptive. At the time, there was no good map of the site, nor any overview of the Curle and Cree plans (which were published annually as standalone reports for different areas), and the finds likewise had seen no synthetic study. Bersu's suggestion to work from the youngest features reflects the invisibility of obviously early structures apart from the ramparts: the most visible features of the site are post-Iron Age and remain poorly understood. So too are the terraces, which he identified as a priority to examine.

Although surviving records of his work are scanty, his broad interpretations preserved in the archive were critically analysed by Joanna Close-Brooks in publishing the excavations in 1983. She supported his essential view that the late rampart (the Cruden Wall, of late 4th / early 5th century date) overlay a large terrace bank – not a rampart itself, but material that had accumulated behind an earlier rampart downslope. (Similar reuse of an old rampart line, although with less accumulated sediment, has been recorded over the inner rampart in our more recent work on the hill[46]). Bersu recorded settlement remains

[45] G. Bersu, Traprain (site notebook of 1947 excavations). National Record of the Historic Environment, within MS25/1 archive.

[46] Armit et al. in prep.

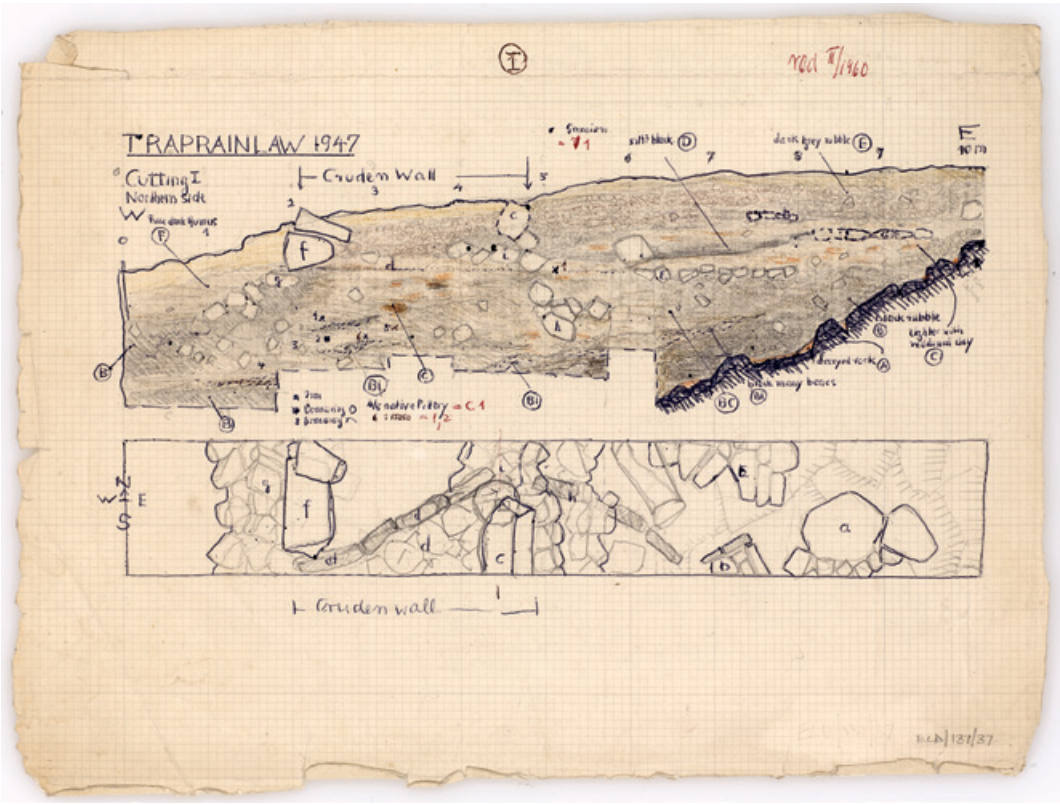

Fig. 5. Bersu's section of the north side of cutting 1 (©Historic Environment Scotland, G. Bersu Collection).

of Roman Iron Age date under the Cruden Wall, including layers with Roman pottery and a hearth with a rotary quern reused in its construction, but coherent structures could not be revealed in his small trenches. His sections record tantalising mention of "black layers with many bones" (*fig. 5*)[47], which could yield much to modern analysis, but none of this survives in the archive. All the material he removed, in places up to 2.5 m deep, overlies the older rampart; some of its facing stones are visible downslope, but its date remains a matter for conjecture (see below).

Research on Traprain Law after Bersu

Because only brief summaries of Bersu's work were available until 1983, its results could not be critically analysed, and his "cautious" preliminary statements of the results were "considerably expanded by those later writers who have attempted to synthesise the history of the site"[48]. Traprain has constantly intrigued scholars because of its sheer scale (it is one of the largest hillforts in Scotland) and the wealth of its material culture. Although the hill saw no further excavation for almost 40 years, Richard Feachem's (1914–2005) systematic topographic survey and proposed sequencing of the rampart systems was a major step forward[49]; the same year saw reappraisal of the metalwork[50]. It was a further twenty years,

[47] Close-Brooks 1983, fig. 96.
[48] Close-Brooks 1983, 213.
[49] Feachem 1956.
[50] Burley 1956.

however, before George Jobey (1918–1992), an authority on the later prehistoric archaeology of the Scottish-English borderlands, sought to summarise the site in a synthesis that remains valuable today[51].

Through all this, the quarry continued to expand; further work took place on threatened ramparts at the eastern end of the hill by Peter Strong in the 1980s[52] before, finally, the quarry was closed and the hill safeguarded – at least from that source. Other threats remained, and two grassland fires caused extensive damage. A small one south of the summit in 1996 revealed unexpected remains of a medieval building[53]. A much larger and more devastating fire in 2003 caused surface loss over 18 % of the hill, with considerable damage to the upper deposits in places. A series of surveys and excavations from 2003–06 explored the most vulnerable areas[54]; key results are discussed below. One of the few positive outcomes of this damage was that vegetation loss made the topography of the hill much more visible, and a series of features was observed for the first time. Between these two fires, in 1999 and 2000 the authors were involved in a programme of small-scale research excavations that targeted areas largely avoided by previous work: the summit of the hill within the inner rampart, where Curle and Cree had barely worked, and where Bersu had put a single trench among the enigmatic features around the hill's highest point[55]. A key aspect of the work since 1999 has been the provision of a series of radiocarbon dates, the first from the site[56]. In 2017–2019, a new topographic survey of the hill was conducted by Historic Environment Scotland under the direction of George Geddes[57]. This combined drone survey with conventional field survey to create a highly detailed and subtle view of the hill's remains.

The landscape around the hill has also seen extensive excavation in recent years, in advance of house-development and road-building[58], and in a research project focussed on the surrounding settlement landscape[59]. Combined with the final publication of a series of Iron Age settlement excavations that took place in the 1970s and 1980s[60], this has made East Lothian one of the best-researched Iron Age landscapes in Britain. Yet, among all this work around it, many aspects of Traprain's history and significance remain uncertain.

Summary of current perspectives on Traprain Law

Early activity

The early excavations recovered a very little Mesolithic material and rather more Neolithic, the latter quite a selective range: there are flints, and a surprising number of stone axe-heads, but no Neolithic pottery[61]. This does not suggest domestic activity; it indicates that the hill was already seen as a special place in the Neolithic. This is supported by some enigmatic rock art, presumed to be of Neolithic or early Bronze Age date, found (and destroyed) during quarrying of the hill's north-east end in the 1930s[62]. It includes the cups

[51] Jobey 1976.
[52] To be published in Armit et al. in prep.
[53] Rees / Hunter 2000.
[54] Armit et al. in prep.
[55] Armit et al. in prep.
[56] Armit et al. 2017.
[57] Geddes in prep.
[58] E. g. McCullagh / Haselgrove 2000; Lelong / MacGregor 2007.
[59] Haselgrove 2009.
[60] Notably Alexander / Watkins 1998; Dunwell 2007; Armit / McKenzie 2013.
[61] Jobey 1976, 192.
[62] Edwards 1935.

with concentric rings typical of the period, but also a range of unusual rectilinear designs that have defied easy parallel and overlie the curvilinear designs; they could represent a later phase of deliberate reuse of this earlier sacred spot[63].

More conventional rock art was found on the southern edge of the hill in 2004. Excavation of a terrace exposed by a grass fire revealed later prehistoric building remains; a bedrock floor within the structure carried the worn remains of cup-and-ring motifs, triangles and rosettes[64]. This accidental discovery suggests there must be more rock art on the site, currently hidden from view.

During the earlier Bronze Age the hill was also used for burial. Remains of a round cairn on the summit, underlying part of the rectilinear structure dug by Bersu, are likely to be of this date, and there was a cremation cemetery on the western terrace, set almost into the flank of the hill[65]. During both the Neolithic and early Bronze Age, it seems this was a special place rather than a settled one, marked out by rock art and used for rituals and burials.

The later Bronze Age

The nature of activity had changed dramatically by the late Bronze Age. The wealth of metalwork of this date found in Curle and Cree's excavations indicate that the hill was a major centre at the time. Finds included not just bronze tools, jewellery and occasional weaponry, but also moulds and crucibles for their manufacture[66]. Recent excavations supplemented this with an important series of radiocarbon dates on occupation levels that indicate intense activity in the period 1000–800 BC, with some activity already underway a couple of centuries earlier[67]. At this time one can talk plausibly of a dense settlement, though we can say little of its architecture or layout (only one roundhouse plan was recovered, the other remains being incoherent as published[68]). But was it enclosed? The dating of the rampart systems remains difficult. As noted above, the outer rampart has never been fully excavated; Bersu's work showed that the top layers of the thick terrace bank that built up over it were Roman Iron Age but gave no hint of the date of the rampart itself. Yet it seems intrinsically likely, given the dense late Bronze Age evidence from the western terrace and its hilltop location, that the site was enclosed at this time. For the summit area, the recent excavations offered more clues, but the evidence is not entirely conclusive. The surviving inner rampart was built over a layer that produced late Bronze Age dates; but another trench gave a single late Bronze Age *terminus ante quem* for a subtle east-west rampart line (the so-called "summit rampart"). We have too few dates to be dogmatic, but it is plausible that the hill hosted a major late Bronze Age enclosed settlement.

Fieldwork after the 2003 fire revealed an unexpected discovery of this period: a hoard of four bronze socketed axes, found in a metal-detecting survey on a difficult-of-access terrace above the steep south-western slopes of the hill *(fig. 6)*. Although axes were being made on the site, these ones were different: three of the four were exotic, from Ireland, Yorkshire, and southern England[69], revealing something of the occupants' contacts. The interpretation of such hoards remains a matter of debate, but it is noteworthy that other big hills in the region that are crowned with hillforts also have adjacent late Bronze Age hoards, such

[63] Armit et al. 2017, 30–31.
[64] Armit / McCartney 2005; Armit et al. 2017, fig. 6.
[65] Jobey 1976, 192–193.
[66] Burley 1956, 145–154.
[67] Armit et al. 2017, fig. 4.
[68] Cree 1923, fig. 3.
[69] Brendan O'Connor, pers. comm.

Fig. 6. Late Bronze Age axe hoard from the 2004 excavations (photo by D. Anderson, ©National Museums Scotland) – not to scale.

as Holyrood Park in Edinburgh and Eildon Hill North in the Borders[70]. They seem to us more plausibly linked to ritual acts of deposition rather than the hoarding of valuables for intended recovery.

The Iron Age

It has long been assumed that Traprain was predominantly an Iron Age hillfort, as these are the dominant form of Iron Age settlement in the area. In fact, one struggles to find convincing evidence of Iron Age settlement at Traprain itself, in contrast to the more typical smaller hillforts in the region. The radiocarbon dates reflect this. While conditioned by the availability of reliable samples (and thus less useful for later phases, as discussed below), there is no obvious reason why Iron Age layers should have eluded the recent excavations. Yet the dates drop off dramatically after the late Bronze Age.

Artefactual evidence is generally of little help in identifying Iron Age activity in this region. The area's rather coarse, overwhelmingly plain ceramics have so far refused to produce any good typological sequence, and diagnostic metalwork of this period is almost absent in Scotland until the later Iron Age. There are only two pieces of truly diagnostic pre-Roman Iron Age metalwork from Traprain, both rather unusual in character. An early Iron Age iron socketed axe[71] could date to the immediate aftermath of the late Bronze Age settlement, representing some continuity of use, but given its intact nature, it could as plausibly represent an offering; there are no clues from the excavation report. The

[70] E.g. Coles 1960, 115–117; 130; O'Connor / Cowie 1985.

[71] Cree / Curle 1922, 216–217; Burley 1956, 210–211.

find-circumstances of the other item strongly suggest it was a deliberate deposit: an intact ring-headed pin of 3rd–1st century BC date, placed point-downwards in a small stone setting[72]. This idea of a significant site receiving offerings is supported from recent excavations by a cache of animal teeth found in a pit dug into a terrace on the southern side of the site; this was dated to the 6th–4th centuries BC but remains an apparently isolated feature without any associated structures.

There may be little evidence of settlement at this time, but there is evidence of enclosure. Dates on the outer rampart line at its eastern end, dug by Strong, suggest some rampart-building or maintenance in the 5th–3rd centuries BC[73]. This outer rampart (whose origins, as noted, may be late Bronze Age) is striking not only for its scale but for the number of entrances, with six recorded around its circuit. One could debate whether all were ancient, but most are good candidates. This number suggests a desire to guide access rather than prevent it and resonates with the multiple entrances found on other apparently "empty" Scottish hillforts, notably the Brown Caterthun in Angus[74]. It suggests a place where people gathered rather than settled – a ceremonial or mustering point for the area, perhaps[75].

One important result of the fire was the realisation that there was more to the ramparts than had been thought. With the vegetation largely lost on the western side of the hill, it was noticed that the terraces beyond the ramparts and running parallel to them were artificial, with slight stone walls along their edges. As yet they lack independent dating evidence beyond their spatial relation to the main rampart. However, their location is suggestive, and we hypothesise that they were designed as a deliberate aggrandisement to make the hill look more spectacular for those approaching from the west.

The Roman Iron Age

As noted above, it becomes increasingly difficult to get reliable radiocarbon samples higher in the stratification. The upper levels were damaged by fire, and by rabbit disturbance; in addition, many were colluvial, with few reliable occupation or midden layers and virtually no pits or other features that might provide dating samples. We are thus still heavily reliant on artefact dating, primarily from Roman finds, for later phases. This is far from ideal, especially as few if any indigenous finds can be securely dated to the late pre-Roman Iron Age rather than the Roman Iron Age; styles of local Celtic art, for instance, span the invasion[76]. Reliance on Roman finds thus intrinsically pulls dating into the Roman period.

Nevertheless, there are indications of patterns. The Roman finds start in the Flavian period – there are no pre-Flavian finds to suggest significant contact with the Roman world before the invading army arrived[77]. This is in marked contrast to the great oppidum site of Stanwick in North Yorkshire, which saw Roman contact from the Augustan period, long before the legions arrived[78]. Indeed, pre-Flavian contact is generally very sparsely attested in Scotland. The societies of northern England (recorded in classical sources as the Brigantes) posed considerable difficulties to the Roman world; they were first set up as a client kingdom but shifting internal politics led to a need for direct Roman engagement and ultimately conquest, a process not completed until the early 70s AD. It may be that this absorbed so much military attention that there was little time for making contacts with more northern tribes, in what is now Scotland, on any significant scale.

[72] Cree / Curle 1922, 193; 215–216.
[73] Armit et al. in prep.
[74] Dunwell / Strachan 2007.
[75] Armit 2019.
[76] Hunter 2007, 288–289.
[77] Hunter 2009a; Hunter forthcoming.
[78] Haselgrove 2016.

Fig. 7. Selection of Roman finds from Traprain Law (photo by N. McLean, ©National Museums Scotland) – not to scale.

Attempts have been made to define phases in Roman contacts with the inhabitants of Traprain (a topic that Bersu's notes show he was interested in), but this is far from straightforward as different categories of imports show different patterns. Samian is overwhelmingly Antonine, for instance, but there is a lot of Flavian glass; the coin series shows a break from 160 to 250, yet there is glass and pottery of this period[79]. It suggests that import goods varied but contact itself was regular. The wealth of the site in Roman finds is remarkable *(fig. 7)*: it is many times richer than any other known Iron Age site in Scotland, in both quantity and range. This includes some unusual items such as a stone with the beginning of the alphabet surviving on it, suggesting attempts to learn Latin among some of the inhabitants[80].

In contrast to the late Bronze Age phase, we do know something of the architecture of the site in the Roman Iron Age. There were no ramparts, at least until the end of the period (see below); the great terrace bank investigated by Bersu had built up over the earlier outer rampart, and he found settlement traces on and in it (a hearth, and layers with Roman finds). Similar results were found in our work over the inner rampart, with a

[79] Reviewed in Hunter 2009a, 227.

[80] Cree / Curle 1922, 256 fig. 27 no. 1; Curle 1932, 358 fig. 42.

hearth associated with samian pottery in one of the trenches. Elsewhere, buildings which have been completely exposed in these upper levels have been sub-rectangular rather than the traditional Iron Age roundhouses, with stone foundations for turf walls. There are indications of this shift in architecture from round to rectangular at other sites in the region in the late pre-Roman Iron Age and Roman Iron Age[81]; the long-lived roundhouse tradition was changing, though it is clear that on other sites they were still being built and modified at this time (e. g. at the former hillfort site of Broxmouth where the final phase of roundhouse settlement ended around AD 145–255 at 95 % probability[82]).

While the site was not fortified, the older outer rampart was still visible in the form of the terrace bank (the inner rampart had been largely robbed of stone for building materials). This made it a hill with a visible history[83]. Given the current lack of late pre-Roman Iron Age settlement evidence, it is plausible that the stimulus for this major re-settlement of the hill was the disruptive effect of the Roman arrival on local politics, with one group claiming this most visible and significant ancestral site, taking advantage of Roman expectations of a central power or authority to deal with (as they had done with the Brigantes). Although speculative, this is a plausible model for further testing. The absence of known Roman sites in the immediate vicinity, despite ideal conditions for aerial photography, coupled with the wealth of Roman finds from the site, has been used to argue that this was a client kingdom or friendly group[84]; the nearest known Roman fort, Inveresk, is some 20 km from the site.

Late Roman Iron Age and Early Medieval activity

In the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, Traprain sat within a densely-settled farming landscape. Analysis of the distribution of Roman finds in the area at this time supports a model of redistribution from Traprain Law, whose inhabitants can be seen as controlling access to Roman finds and favour[85].

In the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, after the Roman world had given up attempts to conquer Scotland, the frontier was firmly established on Hadrian's Wall to the south. There are two particularly noteworthy features of Traprain at this time. One is the continuing contact with the Roman world; glass, pottery, coins and other metalwork of this period are found in quantity. The second is the rarity of such contacts at a wider scale; across Scotland as a whole, late Roman finds are markedly rarer than early Roman ones, and in East Lothian there are only three or four other sites with finds of this date, in contrast to 23 with early Roman ones[86]. It is also notable that rather few sites in the region have produced evidence of settlement at this period. Does it reflect an increasing centralisation of power onto Traprain Law, with little movement of prestige material off the site in contrast to earlier periods? Or does the rarity of other settlement evidence suggest more of the population moved onto the hill at this time? Certainly, these latest levels show dense settlement; wherever there is ground fit to build on there are buildings of this broad date, often utilising partly-artificial terraces to maximise the available space.

The recent excavations have only been able to sample individual buildings, but the early 20th-century work exposed a much larger area, and plausible attempts have been made to reconstruct a phase plan for the western terrace by both Alexander H. A. Hogg and Ian

[81] E. g. Lelong / MacGregor 2007, 147–198.
[82] Hamilton et al. 2013, 222.
[83] Armit et al. 2017.
[84] E. g. Breeze 1982, 57.
[85] Hunter 2009b, 150–155.
[86] Hunter 2009b, tab. 7,9.

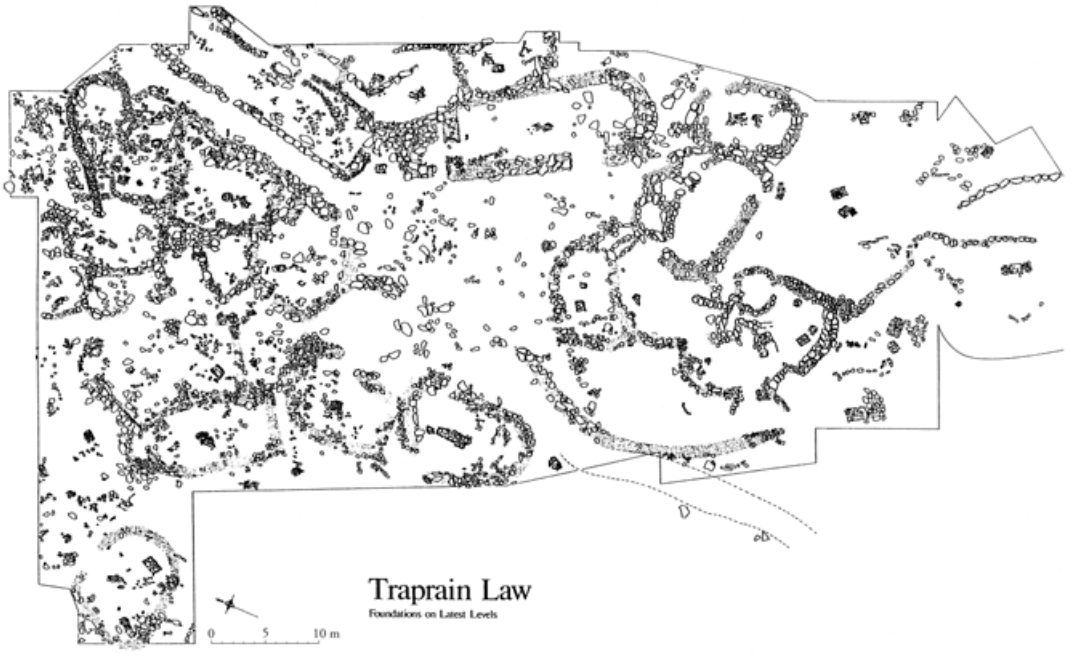

Fig. 8. Composite plan of the early excavations on the western terrace, compiled by Dr I. Smith (Smith 1990, fig. 5.3).

Smith[87]; the latter's plan is reproduced here *(fig. 8)*. It shows an open space, accessed by streets running into it from the two ends, and surrounded by a series of sub-rectangular building compounds. Smith argued for two phases within this, the later consisting of long rectilinear buildings with rounded ends[88], but the evidence is not strong enough to support this unequivocally, although random walls and misalignments make it clear that there is some time-depth to this "phase". This is the only coherent large-scale plan of a settlement area currently available from the site. The lower levels in the early excavations could not be reconstructed in the same way due to the disturbance caused by long occupation and the excavation and recording techniques of the time.

Around this period the site was refortified, with the building of the so-called Cruden Wall. The positioning of this wall was notably defensive, taking the steepest scarp edge on the western and northern sides. In contrast to the earlier, more porous enclosure line with multiple entrances, this one has only three, at the west, north-west, and east; other earlier entrances were deliberately blocked. Based on the date of underlying material, the Wall was built sometime in the 4th or early 5th century AD[89].

The most famous find of this phase in the site's history is the great *Hacksilber* hoard – over 23 kg of late Roman silver, the largest such hoard known anywhere in Europe[90]. Recent reappraisal argues that it was built up over several generations and represents the treasury of a powerful group. It may reflect continuing diplomatic efforts from the Roman

[87] Hogg 1951, 209–211 fig. 53; Smith 1990, 119–120; 124–126.
[88] Smith 1990, 115–148; Smith 1996, 26.
[89] Close-Brooks 1983, 216–217.
[90] Curle 1923; Hunter et al. 2022.

world to retain their friends in the north or arise from military payments to warbands from the hill[91].

Its value was not just as a source of disposable wealth but as a prestige raw material. Analysis of crucibles shows that silver was being recycled on the site. This was an entirely new metal for Scotland in the Roman period, and on Traprain it was reprocessed into local prestige items: from the hill come small pins, rings and plaques, as well as a spectacular massive chain weighing 1.6 kg[92]. It has been argued that silver became the key prestige material in Scotland at this period, with Roman wealth repurposed for local prestige items[93]. The chains are a particularly striking manifestation of this, representing highly visible prestige items that are very much conspicuous consumption of this Roman resource.

The Treasure was probably buried around the middle of the 5th century, but this was not the last act on the hill. The presence of a range of finds, albeit in small numbers, suggests its continuing use until the end of the 5th century or the early 6th[94]. Whether the scale of the settlement gradually downsized or dramatically changed remains unclear on current evidence, but it had been abandoned before the major political shifts reflected in the spread of Anglo-Saxon influence into the area in the 7th century.

Later activity: the central area

One of the areas of the site that saw surprisingly little attention until recently was its summit, even though this has a range of intriguing features *(fig. 9)*: a large rock-cut cistern that was a key water source for the site[95]; the early Bronze Age cairn; and two other enigmatic features, a sub-circular enclosure and the rectilinear structure trenched by Bersu.

The circular feature was ignored in earlier work, but was interpreted by Peter Hill, in a stimulating though speculative paper, as a temple structure[96]. However, a trench into it in 1999 indicated it was much more recent.

The rectilinear structure has more interest to it. Bersu recorded two wall lines on the south side, the inner standing to some height. Our excavations in the immediate vicinity of Bersu's in 1999 recovered Medieval pottery, as he did, and it seems that the feature relates to a poorly attested Medieval phase of use. Some (speculative) hints to its possible character come from the discovery of a small cist burial within our trench; any bones had been lost to the acid soils, but the form and orientation are quite characteristic. These are an early Medieval phenomenon in this area, connected to early Christianity: by the late 5th / 6th century it is plausible that people in this area would have been Christian, although burial on an active settlement would be unusual. There are sparse and unreliable records of an early church foundation on the site[97], and the hill has a saintly connection in literature: the early life of Saint Kentigern (or Mungo), first recorded from the 12th century, associated his mother with Traprain. It is tempting to link this apparently high medieval rectilinear enclosure with a church, but this remains speculative until stronger archaeological evidence is obtained. There is another Medieval structure just south of the rectilinear enclosure: a small rectangular building, constructed against a rock outcrop[98]. These later phases of the hill, which intrigued Bersu and were touched on in his work, merit further attention.

[91] Painter 2013.
[92] Edwards 1939; Youngs 2013, 406 no. 9; Blackwell et al. 2017, 69–74; 95–104.
[93] Blackwell et al. 2017, 137–148.
[94] Hunter 2013.
[95] Cree 1923, 221–222.
[96] Hill 1987.
[97] Reviewed in Rees / Hunter 2000, 437, and more critically in Fraser 2013, 17; 24 fn. 30.
[98] Rees / Hunter 2000.

Fig. 9. Features on the summit of the hill, looking north from the pond towards the rectangular terraced platform where Bersu's trench 3 lay. The modern cairn overlies a Bronze Age one; the figure on the right is standing close to Bersu's trench (photo © F. Hunter.)

Conclusions

Looking at the site over the long term, it is notable how the role of this dominant hill has fluctuated[99]. In the Neolithic, the character of the finds suggests it was a special or sacred site, with deposits of unusual material and rock art marking it out. In the early Bronze Age this special status continued, as it was a place of burial. This changed markedly in the period c. 1000–800 BC, in the later Bronze Age, when the first settlement evidence appears. At that time it was a major power centre in the local area, probably enclosed as a hillfort. During the Iron Age, it seems to have been abandoned as a settlement, but some rampart-building (or maintenance) took place, and there are suggestions it became a place to visit and gather at rather than one to settle on. It changed back to a major settlement and power centre (but not a fortified one) around the start of the Roman Iron Age, perhaps prompted by the opportunities presented by a Roman army coming into an unfamiliar area and keen to find people it could deal with. The hill's inhabitants remained a friendly power on Rome's northern frontier throughout the Roman occupation of Britain, growing rich on this favoured connection, as seen most spectacularly in the great silver hoard. At around the time of the silver hoard's burial or a little earlier, the site was enclosed once again, this time with a substantial defensive wall, pointing to times of increasing unrest. The later history is vague, though it had fallen from any major social significance by the 6th century, yet the hints of Christian activity and its presence in early hagiographies suggest a

[99] Armit et al. 2017.

role once more that was predominantly one of ritual, albeit in the service of very different beliefs.

The developing story of the hill is very different from the picture at the time of Bersu, although some aspects would have been very familiar to him, in particular the rich Roman finds. Indeed, many of the questions that his archive notes show he was interested in remain unresolved – the chronological changes in Roman contact, and the nature of the summit rectilinear structure – while the development of the ramparts and role of the terraces are only partly resolved. Much of the perspective outlined above is built on speculative foundations; the lack of large-scale modern excavated samples in different parts of the site greatly hinders our understanding of it. Indeed, the two areas of Bersu's trial excavations remain key targets for further work. A larger trench in the rectilinear summit structure would clarify its enigmatic nature and greatly improve our knowledge of the site's later use. Of most value, however, were his sections on the outer rampart, clarifying the character of the upper levels and offering tantalising hints of layers rich in environmental remains that we could now interrogate in great detail. If one were to exploit Bersu's legacy on the site, reopening and completing one of his rampart sections would be a great way forward.

Appendix 1: Text of a lecture to the League of Prehistorians in St Andrews

The typescript of this lecture is preserved in the National Record of the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Scotland, Edinburgh (NRHE MS25/2). It was presumably delivered in 1947, immediately after the second season at Scotstarvit. Orthography follows the original (the German spellings reflect the use of a British typewriter, lacking characters for ä or ö); significant deletions are given; hand-written insertions in pen or coloured pencil are italicised. Five pages of originally six are preserved; the first three serve as introduction, the fourth is a list of slides that Bersu spoke to, and the sixth is acknowledgements. The fifth was presumably a summary of the Scotstarvit results. Only the first four pages are given here, as they are a valuable indication of Bersu's wider thinking on the rationale for and value of settlement excavations. Page numbers are in square brackets. Some explanatory notes to the slides are given below.

[1] 'It is not generally realised that the actual digging is on average only a third of the work in which the archaeologist is involved by an excavation. It needs normally two third as much time to prepare and work up the material, to make the drawings for the publication, to write and to print the report on the excavation. So, I hope you will realise that it is rather a bold and in any case a premature enterprise to give you this evening an account on the work done at Scotstarvit Covert which came to an end only last Saturday. Please, accept therefore my apologies that I am neither able to produce exact drawings of the plans from those made on the site in rain and wind nor slides of these drawings and of comparative material. This cannot be a formal lecture but only a rather informal talk of the results and wider aspects of this excavation. I invite you to ask as many questions as you like after the talk. If many of the answers will be more or less negative, the reason for this is that this excavation was a kind of pioneer work. For we dug on a type of a side [sic] hitherto much neglected. Habitation sites were not long ago rather unpopular objects for an excavation. In the older times of antiquarian research it were the finds taken from the ground which interested the collector. An excavation was only worth while when it produced objects worthy to be

exhibited in showcases. This stage of archaeological activity had its merits also. The finds collected in hundred years of antiquarian research have taught us the general aspect and civilisation of those peoples who lived during the long periods of pre-literate history or in times when written records are too scanty to enlighten us satisfactorily. A relatively reliable [2] dating of these finds was built up and by the distribution of finds of similar character ethnological units could be reconstructed. But if we try to learn earnestly about our ancestors we should not go treasure-hunting any more. We have to excavate sites where experience has shown that only very modest finds are bound to turn up. This happens usually when to try to get the much needed information about the dwellings of prehistoric times and this happened in our excavation. To be fair there was an excuse that such sites were not more frequently excavated in earlier times. The technique of excavation had not been developed so far to enable the archaeologist to recognise and to interpret the faint traces which decayed wooden structures leave in the ground where normally all wood has vanished. And wood was in these parts of the world mostly used for the construction of the dwellings. This we are now able to do, and if the layers are not too much disturbed by modern activities as ploughing or afforestation we should be able under reasonable conditions to get all information that can be obtained at all. If we turn out [our] activities to habitation sites it is much more important to get information about a normal habitation site than about a special one or one of unusual dimensions. That means that we have to choose sites for exploration of which many similar examples exist and which are therefore typical. Being typical their elucidation might be expected to throw light upon a number of other sites hitherto unknown.

'The League of Prehistorians of St. Andrews has earned the thanks of those professionally interested in archaeology because it refrained intentionally from excavating an impressive object [3] of exceptional size in the hope of getting sensational results but of only limited value. *You may be able to gather from this preliminary report* broad foundations for future work by choosing *this* modest and typical site for your first investigation.

'The knowledge of the types of houses, the arrangement of the dwellings, conclusions about the economic situation are vital importance for our studies. The type of houses and dwellings characteristic of an ethnical unit is much more conservative than the material belongings of the people of a certain civilisation. New types of objects can be imported or invented without that the type of the house in which these people lived changed fundamentally. So, the knowledge of the types of houses is a very valuable means of testing if our conclusions built up on the material belongings are correct. *For example*, the germanic house, the illyrian house are quite different from the celtic house. Each type of such houses has its own pedigree which we now just start to recognise. The excavation of the habitation site at Scotstarvit Covert leads us in the complex question of the round house which is a characteristic of [deleted: pre-Roman and pre-Nordic this island] the British Isles.

'For technical reasons mentioned above I start the discussion of the results of the excavation at Scotstarvit with the demonstration of a type of house of the Iron Age about which we have now quite reliable information. *I show as first slide the ground plan of a Viking house a foreign feature in this country.*

[4] 'Liste Lichtbilder
1. Viking Haus, Ruinen rechteckig
2. Rath, Isle of Man, rund 30 000
3. Ballakeigan Phase A
4. Ballanorris Phase 2, derselbe Typus, kein Holz erhalten
5. Ballakeigan, Phase 2
6. Ballakeigan A, Wand, Zugehoerigkeit inner ring [sic]
7. Ballakeigan A, Wand, Kreuzung
8. Ballakeigan B, Erhaltungszustand Wand
9. Ballakeigan A, Phas 2, Typus Haus
10. Schnitt durch Ballakeigan A fuer Rekonstruktion
11. Rekonstruktion Schema, Traeger Dach
12. Littel [sic] Woodbury, Entwicklung des Typus, ethnologische Parallel [sic]
13. Wichita House
14. Schnitt durch Little Woodbury. Rekonstruktions Schemata.
15. Rekonstruktion Little Woodbury
16. Skandinavisches Haus mit Erddach, ethnologische Parallele fuer Einzelheiten
17. Haus in Finmark
18. Haus in Finmark, innen
19. Ballakeigan, Rekonstruktion
20. Ballinderry Crannog, dasselbe
    still existing old houses represent same house[?] traditions
21. Erdgedecktes Haus, Isle of Lewis
22. Grundriss dieses Hauses, ueberlebender Typus aelterer Haeuser im Norden

Notes
Slides 3, 5–9: Bersu used the modern placename Ballakeigan; in the final report he preferred Ballacagen as closer to the original form[100].
Slide 11: By 'Träger Dach' (truss roof), Bersu presumably meant the framing effect of rafters connected to rings of earth-fast posts, as shown in his reconstructions[101].
Slide 13: The Wichita of the American Midwest built circular lodges with a timber framework covered with grass thatch[102].
Slide 17: These are presumably the Sámi *goahti* of northern Norway, which included conical huts with turf or timber cladding[103].
Slide 20: Two crannog complexes (timber houses on artificial islands) were excavated at Ballinderry, Co Offaly, by Hugh O'Neil Hencken[104]. Neither published report includes a reconstruction drawing.
Slides 21–22: The so-called blackhouses of Lewis, with their thatched or turf-covered roofs, were widely photographed by travellers in the area in the late 19th and early 20th century[105].

[100] Bersu 1977, xii fn. 1.
[101] E. g. Bersu 1948a, 254 fig. 9; Bersu 1977, pl III.
[102] E. g. Douglas 1932.
[103] E. g. Manker / Vorren 1962, 42–46.
[104] Hencken 1936; Hencken 1942.
[105] E. g. Ferguson 2009, 126–127; 139–142.

Appendix 2: Correspondence between Bersu, the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

These two letters survive in the NRHE archive (MS25). They show how Bersu was able to change the original scope he had been given for his work to one more suitable for his developing interests.

Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, 16 April 1947

Dear Dr Bersu,
As promised, I have written Mr Graham the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and enclose a copy for your information.
I feel that you will have a very interesting and important contribution to make to the Society and one which will be an incentive to a real examination of the features on Traprain Law.

Yours sincerely,
James Richardson,
Inspector Ancient Monuments, Scotland

Inspectorate Ancient Monuments, 15 April 1947: to Angus Graham, Secretary, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Dear Sir,
On Monday 7th April I met Dr Bersu at Traprain Law and discussed with him the question of investigating the features of the two entrances of the Oppidum which are on the west side of the hill. After giving consideration to the matter it was decided that an exploration of the rampart wall to the south of the earliest of these entrances was necessary in order to find out if possible the exact nature of the construction.
I again visited the hill on the following Saturday afternoon, others present were Mr O'Neil the C. I.A. M. [Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments], Mr Cruden the Asst. I. A.M. and Mr Robert Stevenson. Dr Bersu conducted us over the hill and explained in a lucid manner his ideas regarding the main features and their approximate periods, and he described the areas formerly occupied by dwelling places.
After hearing what Dr Bersu had to say it appeared to me it was in the interest of the Society of Antiquaries to accept his opinion and guidance and to give him authority to spend his time making investigation pits at various places rather than attempt to carry out his investigation of the entrance as approved by the Council.
With regard to this particular work, no one concerned was very clear how the matter connected with the excavation of the entrances came into being. Dr Bersu thought that it was the idea of the late Sir George Macdonald.
By the time there is a Council meeting you will have received Dr Bersu's report on the archaeological features of the hill, and this letter is only to let you know the reasons why there has been a departure from the programme suggested.

Yours faithfully,
S H Cruden, Assis. I. A. M., for Inspector Ancient Monuments

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Gerhard Bersu in Scotland, and his excavations at Traprain Law in context

Zusammenfassung · Summary · Résumé

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG · In diesem Beitrag werden die von Gerhard Bersu in der befestigten Höhensiedlung von Traprain Law im Südosten Schottlands durchgeführten Grabungen sowohl im Zusammenhang mit seinen übrigen britischen und irischen Grabungen als auch im Vergleich zu anderen Arbeiten auf dem Hügel selbst beleuchtet. Die Ausgrabung in Traprain Law wich von Bersus anderen britischen Untersuchungen insofern ab, als dass sich diese mehrheitlich auf Hausbefunde bezogen, passte aber durchaus zu seiner früheren Existenz als Höhensiedlungsforscher. Aufgrund von Archivmaterial wird gezeigt, wie sich Bersu mit der Fundstelle auseinandersetzte und die vorgegebene Grabungsstrategie seinen eigenen Interessen anzupassen wusste. Eine Übersicht über die nach Bersu erfolgten Untersuchungen in Traprain stellt seine Arbeit in den übergeordneten Kontext des langlebigen Zentralorts, dessen Blütezeiten in die späte Bronze- und römische Eisenzeit datieren und der in früheren urgeschichtlichen Perioden sowie in der Eisenzeit als religiöses Zentrum oder als Versammlungsort genutzt wurde. Viele Fragen, die Bersu zu beantworten versuchte, sind bis heute noch nicht restlos geklärt. Im Anhang findet sich das Manuskript eines im Jahr 1947 gehaltenen und bisher unpublizierten Vortrags, der seine Überlegungen zum Potenzial von Siedlungsgrabungen sowie zur Interpretation von Rundhäusern etwas genauer ausführt. (S. H. / I. A.)

SUMMARY · Bersu's excavations on the hillfort of Traprain Law in south-east Scotland are reviewed in the light of his British and Irish digs and other work on the hill itself. It differs from the rest of his British excavations, which mostly focussed on houses, but is entirely in keeping with his earlier pedigree as a hillfort excavator. Archive material shows how he engaged with the site and was able to guide the pre-determined excavation strategy to his own interests. A review of work at Traprain since Bersu places his excavations in the context of this long-lived central place, which saw major peaks of settlement activity in the late Bronze Age and the Roman Iron Age, and a role as a ritual centre or gathering place in earlier prehistory and during the Iron Age. Many of the questions Bersu sought to tackle remain only partly answered today. An appendix presents the text of an unpublished lecture he gave in 1947 that reveals more of his thoughts on the value of settlement excavations and the interpretation of roundhouses.

RÉSUMÉ · Les fouilles de Bersu sur la colline fortifiée de Traprain Law dans le Sud-Est de l'Ecosse sont examinées à la lumière de ses fouilles en Grande-Bretagne et en Irlande, ainsi que d'autres travaux sur cette colline. Son travail se distingue ici des autres fouilles entreprises en Grande-Bretagne et axées principalement sur les habitations, mais correspond à ses antécédents de fouilleur de collines fortifiées. Les documents d'archives montrent comment il attaqua le site et fut capable de mener à son propre intérêt la stratégie de fouille pré-établie. Une revue du travail effectué depuis Bersu à Traprain situe ses fouilles dans le contexte de ce lieu central qui a connu des pics d'occupation au Bronze final et à l'âge du Fer romain et joué un rôle en tant que centre rituel ou lieu de rassemblement dans la préhistoire ancienne et à l'âge du Fer. Bien des questions auxquelles Bersu avait tenté de répondre n'ont reçu qu'une réponse partielle. Un appendice présente le texte d'un cours non publié qu'il donna en 1947 et qui révèle encore davantage ses idées sur la valeur des fouilles d'habitats et l'interprétation des maisons rondes. (Y. G.)

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