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Name: Rachael Reader

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Abstract

Hillforts have dominated interpretations of later prehistoric society, but these have been based on an uncritical acceptance of their military or symbolic role and a 'big is best' mentality. Using the exceptional archive from Broxmouth hillfort in East Lothian, the research presented in this thesis had the unique opportunity to examine the boundaries of that site in detail. Drawing on ideas that sites should not just be seen in their final form, episodes of enclosure creation, maintenance and abandonment are examined. Constructing a biography of Broxmouth has highlighted the relative infrequency of these creation events and how social relationships were intimately tied to the enclosure boundaries. These events are not isolated and investigating the contemporary landscape has shown that the coastal plain would have been densely settled, yet the bleak hills of the Lammermuirs appear to have been avoided. Mapping old routeways and pit alignments shows that this landscape may have been a draw for the practice of transhumance, primarily for sheep and cattle as demonstrated in the Broxmouth evidence. Combining GIS analyses with more experiential approaches, shows how some sites took advantage of the topographical surroundings and were instrumental in the practice of transhumance. Creation events at other sites also appear to be infrequent and examining further excavated sites in East Lothian has allowed the formation of a broad chronology of changing enclosure patterns. Contextualising Broxmouth has documented changes in how people interacted with their landscape, how social relationships were enacted and how these changed from the late Bronze Age, through to the Roman Iron Age.