



Building Monuments, Constructing Communities.

**Landscapes of the first millennium
BC in the central Welsh Marches.**

**A Thesis submitted to the University of
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Volume 1

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Abstract

This research examines the archaeological sequence from the first millennium BC in the central Welsh Marches. It situates the hillforts of this region within their broader landscape context by considering the practices involved in their construction, and their position within wider networks of routine activity. In order to achieve this, a detailed historiographical account of archaeological work on these monuments is presented. This forms the basis of a series of critically informed interpretations of the later prehistory of this region.

My central thesis is that we must consider the landscape as Process if we wish to interpret the nested social relations that operated in this period. This demands that we develop a detailed understanding of the regional context of the practices associated with building and inhabiting the hillforts. As such, we need to explore the patterning and temporality of various forms of activity across the landscape, in order to comprehend how both places and objects were bound up in the reproduction of historically contingent social relations.

I will work at different scales with a variety of forms of evidence. I examine the complex human palaeoecology of the region, considering how the structure of the landscape was created and sustained by the building and reworking of these monuments. In doing so, I place the developments we associate with the building of the first hillforts within their historical context. I also address the relationship between the hillforts and other classes of monuments, and how their inhabitation articulated with the creation, use and deposition of various forms of material culture. By moving beyond previous interpretative models, I demonstrate how these monuments became an integral part of the social worlds of the first millennium BC.

For Marie-Claire

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Chapter 1

Introduction.

1.1.0 Introduction.

Hillforts are amongst the most abundant and visible prehistoric monuments in the present day landscape of the central Welsh Marches (see Fig. 1.3). Their sheer scale, together with the often striking hill top settings they occupy, means that they have usually survived the intensive agricultural activity of the past two millennia. They have long attracted the attention of antiquarians and archaeologists, and over the past 80 years have been subject to a significant number of excavations (e.g. Hughes 1994a; Kenyon 1942; Musson 1991; O'Neil 1934, 1937, 1942; Stanford 1974, 1984). Partially as a consequence of this, hillforts have come to dominate our interpretations of the first millennium BC in this region, to the extent that other site categories remained largely unconsidered until comparatively recently.

A number of factors now require us to re-evaluate our models of 'hillfort society' in the central Welsh Marches, and to reassess the preconceptions that underlie our interpretative frameworks. On morphological grounds, these monuments have traditionally been viewed in relation to those on the chalklands of southern England (especially Wessex). As a result, our interpretations of the communities that constructed the hillforts in the central Welsh Marches have often been framed by the drawing of (often negative) comparisons with those that existed to the south (see Chapter 2). Over the past decade, however, the validity of this approach has been called into question. In particular, recent research has demonstrated the regional diversity and complexity of the material evidence from this period (e.g. Bevan 1999; Champion and Collis 1996; Gwilt and Haselgrove 1997; Hill 1995a). Yet, there have been few attempts to assess what implications these challenges to the traditional view of the Iron Age have for our perception of the evidence from the central Marches. This thesis will re-evaluate archaeological understandings of the hillforts of this region by, amongst other things, considering how they relate to their broader landscape context.

1.2.0 Defining the problem.

I have already suggested that our existing understandings of the hillforts in the central Welsh Marches need revising. Furthermore I have proposed that the problem we are currently confronted with partially stems from the enthusiasm with which these monuments have been compared with those in a limited area of southern England. This has resulted in a failure to view the communities that built and inhabited the hillforts within the study area in their own terms. As a result, we have yet to explain how historically contingent sets of social relations were reproduced through the material residues that we encounter archaeologically at these monuments. Although I will return to these issues in later chapters, at this point I want to consider three interrelated problems, which I believe underlie current approaches to the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

i) A failure to deal satisfactorily with the temporality of these monuments – From the 1930s onwards, the structural sequences from hillfort ramparts were used to define regional chronological sequences. Given the methodological procedures that were employed by field workers at this time, the assumption upon which this methodology rested seemed entirely justified (see Chapter 2). For example, it was possible to view most hillforts as the product of one or more short-lived episodes of construction, spanning the last three or four centuries BC. Open area excavations of hillfort earthworks from the late 1960s onwards, together with the routine collection of multiple radiocarbon dates, have demonstrated that the sequences from some sites spanned much of the 1st millennium BC. However, it is only really over the past decade that we have begun to acknowledge that the earthworks of many hillforts are the product of complex histories of building and reworking. It is the temporality of the labour involved in these projects that has essentially been denied by traditional approaches. As a consequence, I believe we have yet to offer a satisfactory explanation of one of the most fundamental aspects of these monuments.

ii) A failure to investigate how the activities involved in the construction of hillforts related to the other practices associated with their inhabitation – Building and reworking hillfort ramparts appears to have played an important role in the reproduction of social relations in the first millennium BC (Hill 1995a, Barrett *et al.* 2000). However, we have yet to develop an adequate knowledge of how such practices related to the broader inhabitation of these monuments. Given that such

construction work probably brought together significant numbers of people, we need to explore what forms of interaction were sustained by these activities. Similarly, we need to consider how the materiality of hillfort earthworks may have been bound up with the creation and reproduction of particular forms of identity.

iii) A failure to situate the hillforts in a broader landscape context – Both of the above points have contributed to, and are also to some extent the result of, the inadequacies of current knowledge about the wider landscape setting of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches. For example, until comparatively recently these monuments were thought to have been the only class of ‘settlement site’ in this region during the later half of the first millennium BC (cf. Chitty 1937, Fox 1952, Stanford 1980). As a consequence, we have been slow to appreciate the full significance of the abundance of crop-mark sites revealed by aerial photography since the end of the Second World War. Whilst the presence of these sites is now well known, we have yet to develop a detailed understanding of how these monuments related to the larger and more conspicuous hillforts (see Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion of this point). It is for these reasons that existing knowledge of the sequence from the central Marches falls into Haselgrove *et al*’s (2001: 25) ‘unsorted’ category, as outlined in their recent regional overview of the current state of Iron Age research in Britain. They argue that such regions are characterised by the fact that, whilst a significant amount of information exists: -

“...there has generally been a failure to capitalise on the results of previous surveys or research...or to integrate the different categories of data.” (ibid: 24).

In contrast to earlier approaches to these monuments, I am concerned with the inhabited landscape of the first millennium BC. This demands that we understand hillforts within their broader material and historical context. We must also situate them within the abundance of ‘non-hillfort’ settlements and other landscape features. I will, therefore analyse the aerial photographic evidence for a number of site categories that have so far been largely ignored. I will also conduct other forms of landscape analysis, working backwards and forwards between several different scales, and with different forms of evidence, in order to explore the nested relationships through which lives unfolded in the past (see Chapters 4-7). This entails re-assessment of existing published archaeological data, in combination with analysis of unpublished developer funded excavations and other forms of SMR data.

In addition, because it enables us to generate an understanding of the character of the broader landscape, I will fully integrate palaeoenvironmental evidence into these new interpretations.

I will argue that one of the things that we can observe in this period are long term transformations in architectural traditions within the landscape. This was partially responsible for changes in the social and material conditions of the practices that people were engaged in during the first millennium BC. I contend that this also resulted in very significant transformations in the relations that existed between people and places, especially in people's senses of tenure over various parts of the landscape. By teasing apart the palimpsest of landscape features, I shall construct a series of histories of landscape inhabitation. Hillforts were places where many different paths and practices intersected; including those associated with the exchange of foodstuffs and other material items, and the reproduction of communal sense of identity (see Chapters 5 & 6). I will, therefore, explore the temporality and patterning of these routines. In the process, I shall argue that building and embellishing hillfort earthworks formed one sphere of practice through which people reproduced the networks of social relations that they were embedded within.

1.3.0 'Far in a western brookland'¹: an introduction to the study area.

For the purposes of this thesis the 'central Welsh Marches' is taken to comprise of the county of Shropshire, together with parts of northern Herefordshire, north-eastern Powys and southern Wrexham (see Fig. 1.1). This area has been chosen in order to dissolve the importance of historic administrative boundaries, which I believe have been too readily imposed upon the later prehistory of this region. The Welsh Marches are often portrayed as being a 'frontier zone' during the first millennium BC, where an uneasy relationship existed between the inhabitants of the uplands to the west and the lowlands to the east. For example, Rowley has recently commented that: -

¹ A.E Houseman *A Shropshire Lad*. Poem LV

“Politically and legally the Marches were distinct from both England and Wales, and operated as a separate buffer territory, but under Norman control. The official recognition of this separate character of the Marches confirmed a geographical and historical reality that had been apparent from at least the time of the prehistoric hillforts, which indicate that the Marches formed a border region as early as the Iron Age.” (2001: 9).

It is this projection of the origins of medieval socio-political organisation back in later prehistory that I will challenge. It is my contention that the material evidence does not support such an interpretation of the scale of political relations in the first millennium BC. However, I want to make it clear at this stage that the boundaries of the study area, as I have defined them here, are based purely upon the Ordnance Survey’s National Grid. As such, they merely provide us with a convenient unit of analysis and do not represent an attempt to describe an historic territory.

Topographically, the landscape of this region is extremely diverse. For instance, within Shropshire alone rocks belonging to eleven of the thirteen geological periods can be recognised (Toghill 1990), giving rise to a highly varied range of scenery. Areas of wetland, lush floodplain pasture and fertile arable lands all exist in close proximity to tracts of unimproved hill pasture and moorland. Although any summary of this landscape is unlikely to fully capture the subtlety of the terrain, a number of broad generalisations can be made. Formed over ‘younger’ rocks, the undulating North Shropshire Plain covers all the north and north-eastern parts of the central Marches (see Fig. 1.2). Triassic rocks belonging to the New Red Sandstone series, including Bunter sandstones and pebble beds and the overlying strata of the Keuper series (see Fig. 1.4), are found in the centre of this area (Reynolds 1979). Tilting and faulting of these strata has created a broken line of low hills, which runs south-east to north-west across northern Shropshire. The top of this sequence consists of the Rhtic shales and Jurassic mudstone that outcrops at Prees in northern Shropshire. Carboniferous limestones, grits, shales and coal measures occur around the edges of the northern plain. In the north-west rocks of this age also form the higher ground referred to as the Oswestry Hills (see Fig. 1.2).

Much of the northern half of the region is blanketed by a thick mantle of Pleistocene drift deposits that range in depth from 10 m to 100 m. The complex stratigraphy of this material is a product of the action of two ice sheets; the Irish Sea Ice which entered Cheshire and Shropshire from the north via the Irish Sea and Lancashire

Plain, and a smaller ice sheet that originated in North Wales and moved westwards via the Dee, Vrynwy and Severn valleys (Reynolds 1979). The meres and mosses of northern and central Shropshire are an integral component of this drift landscape. Although some of these sites have been severely degraded by modern intensive agriculture, many still preserve deposits that are rich in palaeoenvironmental evidence (see Chapter 4).

The North Shropshire Plain is separated from the higher ground to the south by the River Severn and its various tributaries. The Severn emerges from the hill country of Mid Wales approximately 10 km south of Welshpool, and flows northwards to be joined by the Afon Vrynwy before turning eastwards into Shropshire. Here the valley widens and the river meanders across a broad, low-lying flood plain. At this point its northern catchment boundary is defined by the Wrexham-Bar Hill Moraine that marks the southern mid-late Devensian limit of the of the Irish Sea. Two other major tributaries - the River Perry (c. 6km west of Shrewsbury) and the River Tern (c. 6km east of Shrewsbury) - join the course of the Severn in central Shropshire, before it turns southward to flow through the steep sided Ironbridge Gorge. In the eastern part of the study area the river is confined within a relatively narrow valley, which cuts through an undulating sandstone plateau (see Fig. 1.2).

To the south of the Severn lies an area of hill country known collectively as the South Shropshire Hills. Formed of a complex sequence of much older Palaeozoic and Protozoic rocks (see Fig. 1.4), the central part of this area is characterised by a series of extended ridges aligned on a south-west/ north-east axis (see Fig. 1.2). These successive ranges of hills form the fertile slopes of Long Mountain, and Wenlock Edge, as well as the gaunt windswept moorlands on the Stiperstones and the Long Mynd (see Fig 1.2). This area also contains a number of dramatic volcanic outcrops, all of which are associated with steep rocky hills with distinctive profiles (e.g. the Wrekin, the Breiddin Hills, Caer Caradoc, Earls Hill and Corndon Hill). In the south-west the intervening river valleys become narrower and more convoluted, and the land rises up to form the more extensive areas of higher ground that comprise the Kerry Ridgeway, the Clun Forest and the hills of northern Radnorshire. Formed over Silurian rocks of the Ludlow Series and 'Downton' series (Toghill 1990), these hills become progressively higher as one moves westward toward the Cambrian Massif. In contrast, in the south-east a distinctive sequence of Devonian Old Red

Sandstones capped by Carboniferous coal measures, limestones and intrusive dolerites from the Clee Hills. The three summits – Clee Burf, Abon Burf and Titterstone Clee – represent the highest points in Shropshire, and offer extensive views across much of the study area.

Beyond the South Shropshire Hills the lowlands of northern Herefordshire (see Fig. 1.2) are also underlain by Devonian Old Red Sandstones (Brandon 1989). To the east of Leominster lies a region of low, rolling hills composed of harder sandstone and mudstones. To the west of the town the plain, across which the River Lugg and Arrow meander, stretches as far as the hills on the Welsh Border near Kington.

As stated in Section 1.2.0 above, my concern in this thesis is to develop an understanding of the inhabitation of these landscapes during the first millennium BC. In particular, I will examine how the spatial and temporal components of people's day-to-day life knitted together the resources that these different areas provided, in a way that made the construction and reworking of the hillforts possible. As such, I will analyse the evidence relating to the physical form of this landscape during this period, examining how it was both shaped by, and in turn placed, a major constraint upon human social practice.

1.4.0 Definitions of the terms and conventions used in the thesis.

i) Note on radiocarbon dates – In the interests of comparability, all radiocarbon dates cited in this thesis have been calibrated by the author using the OxCal (v3.5) radiocarbon calibration programme, downloaded from the website of the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit². The details of all dates (results BP and, where possible, lab numbers) will be given, together with a calibrated (i.e. calendrical) date range at the 2 σ level of accuracy.

ii) Period divisions – Traditionally the first millennium BC has been divided into the Late Bronze Age (c 1000-700 BC) and the Iron Age (c 700 BC – AD 43). Both of these periods have been further subdivided into a series of sub-phases, largely based upon artefact typologies. For instance, the Late Bronze Age has been divided into a series of 'industrial phases' based upon analysis of finds of bronze metalwork (Burgess 1968, Megaw and Simpson 1979, Needham 1996). However, because of

² (<http://www.rlaha.ox.ac.uk/orau/index.htm>)

the limited applicability of this scheme to sites where direct associations between metalwork and other categories of material are rare, a parallel framework based upon pottery typologies has also been developed (e.g Barrett 1980). Similarly, the tripartite division of the Iron Age into an early, middle and late phase is still bound up with the pottery typologies defined by an earlier generation of prehistorians.

Over the past twenty to thirty years, however, many commentators have grown increasingly uneasy with the traditional rigidity of the boundary between these two periods, and with the sub-phases into which they are divided. There are a number of reasons for this. Perhaps most fundamentally of all, we have become wary of the nineteenth century notions of technological progress that our use of the three-age system imposes upon the prehistoric past (Gosden 1999, Shanks and Tilley 1987a). Some now deem such an isolation of particular forms of technological practice from their broader social contexts to be unacceptable. Secondly, the advent of radiocarbon dating techniques, and the gradual accumulation of an increasingly large body of data, has meant that the traditional clarity of these period boundaries has become increasingly blurred. Our vision of the Late Bronze Age, in particular, has been subject to significant revision over the past three decades, as the chronologies of certain categories of monuments and materials have been re-assessed (e.g. Barrett 1980, Barrett and Bradley 1980). In combination with the shifts that have occurred in theoretical approaches to first millennium BC, increasing emphasis has also been placed upon regional diversity and distinctiveness. We are beginning to see patterns of change and continuity in different regions, and in various aspects of social life, that defy the simplicity of earlier chronological schemes. As such, it is now difficult to speak of *the* Late Bronze Age or *the* Iron Age, as if these terms offered a neat characterisation of some past 'social totality' (Barrett 1994, Gosden 1997).

For these reasons I have endeavoured to keep the explicit use of the terms 'Late Bronze Age' and 'Iron Age' to a minimum in this thesis, favouring absolute dates wherever possible. However, where these phrases have been used they are qualified with supporting statements.

iii) Monument categories – For the purposes of this thesis I have retained the use of the term 'hillfort' when referring to the monumental earthwork enclosures that can be seen throughout the central Welsh Marches. I do so in the knowledge that this term is problematic (cf. Bowden and McOmish 1987, 1989, Hill 1995, Hingley

1990). In particular, it presupposes a location and function for these monuments that the material evidence does not fully support, and which I will take issue with later in this thesis. However, the term has become deeply embedded in the literature and has also gained a currency beyond the confines of this area of the discipline. Similarly, it has gained official sanction through agencies such as English Heritage. For these reasons alone, the definition of a meaningful alternative (e.g. ‘hilltop enclosure’ or ‘monumental earthwork enclosure’) is extremely difficult, and runs the risk of rendering the debate even more opaque to external readers. Consequently, I will continue to use this phrase, with the proviso that it is merely intended as convenient shorthand.

I will use the term ‘smaller enclosure’ to refer to enclosures of lesser magnitude that have been identified through aerial photography, or which survive as smaller extent earthwork enclosures. The reasons for this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. Again this term is intended to act as convenient shorthand, and is not intended to convey a specific interpretation of a site’s function.

I do not wish to assign more explicit definitions (i.e. morphological descriptions or size classification) to these monument categories at this stage. It is my contention that the complexity of the evidence defies the creation of such simple generalities. Instead, my concern here is with examining how historically contingent social relations were reproduced through the construction and inhabitation of these monuments. Thus I believe that it may, in actual fact, be more productive to speak of a *spectrum* of enclosure sizes and functions in the first millennium BC (see Chapter 6). In order to demonstrate why this is the case, I will provide a closer rendering of the evidence within individual chapters.

In addition to ‘hillforts’ and ‘smaller-enclosures’, the significance of a range of other monuments will be discussed at various points in the thesis. Again, the terminology used to discuss these sites will be qualified and critically assessed where appropriate.

1.5.0 Structure of the thesis.

I will now outline the structure of the rest of this thesis. I begin in Chapter 2 by examining how our current knowledge of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches has been constructed. I critique previous explanations of the landscape context of these monuments, together with interpretations of the practices associated with

building their boundaries. As such, this chapter will build the intellectual basis for the revision of our existing interpretive frameworks. This discussion stems from my belief that writing a history of the first millennium BC, in the terms I have outlined above, requires us to "...stand back and consider how archaeologists claim to reach their own understandings ..." (Barrett 1994: 6). The reflexivity that lies at the heart Chapter 2 will also spill over into later chapters, where I undertake critical analysis of the patterning in our data.

I describe the methodology that will underlie the analysis in the rest of the thesis in Chapter 3. I will address the problematic nature of current approaches to the investigation of the landscape contexts of these monuments. The alternative vision of landscape that I am going to adopt instead is discussed, before I define an analytical device that will enable me to situate the hillforts in a broader material and historic context.

In Chapter 4 I begin my investigation of the empirical evidence with an examination of the palaeoenvironmental sequence from the region. Consequently, this chapter will establish the historically contingent character of the landscape in the first millennium BC. I will question previous interpretations of its form, arguing that by the beginning of this period the landscape was already relatively open. My case will be that the construction of the first hillforts cannot be viewed as a response to climatic deterioration. Rather, I argue that this explanation denies the subtle and complex interplay of human agency and landform processes that shaped the landscape during this period.

I will analyse the evidence relating to the first half of the first millennium BC in Chapter 5. Examining a nested series of social relations, I argue that tenure over an increasingly open landscape was maintained through new forms of practice and social identity. In some places the landscape was divided up by a series of linear land boundaries. I propose that the ability to mobilise the labour necessary to construct and rework these features helped to establish the conditions that enabled the first hillforts to be built. In turn, the creation of these monuments resulted in a further reworking of social relations, permitting new forms of identity and practice to emerge.

Chapter 2

‘Culture has been left behind...’¹: a historiography of hillfort studies in the central Welsh Marches.

2.1.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I will examine how our knowledge of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches has developed over time. As I noted in Chapter 1, until very recently these monuments were given primacy in accounts of the first millennium BC in this region. Indeed, they continue to dominate the way in which we think about the communities of this period. Whilst this dominance is partially justified, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, my contention is that this results from the uncritical adoption of a set of assumptions about these monuments. In this chapter I seek to unravel these notions with reference to the history of research on the hillforts of central Marches.

Much of this chapter is unapologetically historiographical. Discussions of the ‘history of archaeology’ often take the form of an evolutionary progression, in which scholars are gradually seen to have moved from a ‘dark age’ of unenlightened speculation and description towards the modern position of ‘scientific’ enquiry (e.g. Trigger 1989). Recently, however, some commentators have sought to distance themselves from this position. Shanks and Tilley have argued that there can be no single, monolithic version of the past since “Individuals, interest groups and societies all have different perspectives on the past.”(1987b:11). As such, archaeologists, along with academics in other fields, are working within the framework of an historically constituted discipline (Clarke 1973:12). Post-structuralists such as Hides (1996) have gone further, arguing that our narratives about the past are inseparably related to and reflect the contemporary social context in which are written. This strand of postmodernist thought asserts that historians and archaeologists can never escape their embeddedness within the contemporary world, and are thus forever cut off from the past they seek to study. As a result, archaeological texts become little

¹ Chitty 1937a: 35

more than a series of discourses in the present. However, Moreland (2001) has commented that there is a dangerous relativism within such 'presentist' arguments. He contends that such arguments assign the entire human past to the scrap heap, whilst at the same time unconsciously reinforcing the structures of power and authority that prevail within our own society. Thus "...postmodernism rejects concern with the *reality* of oppression, torture and slavery in the past in favour of *playing games* with their memory." (ibid. : 114, author's emphasis). This opens the way to deny the possibility of past realities, such as the Holocaust, within our own all too recent past. In seeking to counter the claims of the postmodernists, Moreland observes that: -

"It is, of course, true that the incompleteness of the record, our 'situatedness' in the present, and our 'methodological naivety' prevent us from producing a single reading of the past. But this does not mean that *any* reading of the past is as good as any other." (ibid.: 117, author's emphasis).

He argues that our cumulative knowledge of the material remains place constraints on the readings we can make of them, providing us with the means of resisting dangerously distorted interpretations of past realities. Consequently, our understandings must be built upon a truly reflexive engagement with our material evidence, whilst always accepting that "...we can never know the past 'as it really was'" (Moreland 2001: 117)

It is such reflexivity that I wish to bring to my reading of the development of hillfort studies in the central Welsh Marches. In doing so, I will to apply some of Alan Barnard's (2000) arguments concerning the development of anthropological knowledge, which I suggest are equally applicable to archaeology. Barnard draws upon Kuhn's (1970[1962]) work on the history of the natural sciences in order to assert that anthropology paradigms are built upon a set of smaller theories. As knowledge accumulates the smaller theories may eventually fail to provide sufficient explanation of the empirical evidence. This results in a crisis that can lead to the overthrow of the paradigm itself, or its partial incorporation into a new one. Thus, over time the discipline "...goes through 'revolutions' or 'paradigm shifts'. (Barnard 2000: 8).

Gosden's (1999) point that any academic discipline represents a subtle interweaving of the ideas and the social relations that prevail between its practitioners is also of use to us here. He notes that: -

“One of the myths of academia is that it is a disinterested pursuit of truth in which it is the validity and efficacy of the ideas that is important and not the personalities, positions of power or career structures of the people putting forward the ideas.”
(ibid.: 33).

Yet, Gosden stresses that it is the complex interplay of “...methods, theories and social forces which create and maintain subject areas.” (ibid. 34). He draws on Foucault's observations regarding the dual meaning of the word ‘discipline’; although this term is usually used to denote an ordered field of study, it can equally mean a set of ways of thinking which, because of the ways in which they are taught, are hard to reject.

2.2.0 “...a campe of men of war...”²: antiquarians and the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

2.2.1 Hillforts and the Renaissance antiquarians.

The European Renaissance sparked a revival of interest in the ancient world as classical texts became increasingly accessible to secular scholars. In an atmosphere of increasing national self-awareness, certain groups within many of the nascent European nation states sought the foundations of their political institutions in the civilisations of the ancient Mediterranean world, establishing their own sets of origin myths in the process (Dennell 1996). At the same time there was also an increase in interest in the various ancient monuments to be found within these states themselves. In England this gave rise to the work of the early antiquarians, such as John Leland (1503-52) and William Camden (1551-1623), both of whom made reference to hillforts in the central Marches within their works. For example, Leland provides a description of Old Oswestry in north-western Shropshire (in Welsh ‘Hên Dinas’ - ‘old castle’) in his *Itinerary* (see Fig. 2.1): -

² Leland [1536-9] 1964: 76.

“Hene Dinas a quarter of a mile out of Oswestre north-west. The toune or castelle of Hene Dinas standith upon a rounde hillet aboute half a mile in cumpace. Ther be iii greate diches in the botom of the hillet cumpasing it, and in the toppe of the hille now be great treas of oke. The commune people say that ther was a cite withyn those diches. I think rather a campe of men of war, wheras peradventure was the campe when Penda and Oswaldes did fight.” ([1536-9] 1964:76).

Camden also mentions Old Oswestry in his *Britannia*, and refers to Leland’s interpretation of the monument: -

“Below it [Oswestry] to the north-west is an hill triple trenched called *Hen Dinas*, q. d. the *old place*, said by the neighbours to have been a city, though others think it was a camp of Penda or Oswald.” ([1586] 1974: 8, authors emphasis).

Camden describes another hillfort in Shropshire, *Caer Caradoc* near Clun (see Fig 2.1): -

“But where it [the river Clun] joins the Temd [Teme] among uncertain shallows rises a hill famous in ancient times, called *Caer Caradoc*, because about A.D. 53 *Caratacus* the renowned British king fortified it with a rampart of stone, and held it out obstinately with his subjects against Ostorius and the Roman legions, till the Romans breaking down that rude mass of stones, whose remains still subsist, forced their way in, and obliged the unarmed Britans to retreat to the heights of the mountains.” (ibid.)

Camden was the first to link this hillfort with the legendary exploits of Caratacus. Ever since, scholars have proposed this and many other hillforts as the site of his last stand as described by Tacitus in the *Annals* (XII:33) (see Chapter 7).

These extracts demonstrate that from the outset antiquarian descriptions of hillforts in the Marches, as elsewhere, revolved around their earthworks and the assumed martial character. However, Leland and Camden were inconsistent in attributing hillforts to the Ancient Britons, the people deemed to have occupied the British Isles prior to the Roman conquest. Commenting on this issue, Piggott remarked that: -

“The identification and classification of ancient bank-and-ditch enclosures, or those in rocky country with ruined stone walls, faced the early antiquarians with a problem which in the event they were unable to solve.”. (1989:117).

He argues that without the aid of modern archaeological excavation and survey techniques surface investigation of earthworks is, at best, guess work. However, this is to judge the works of these antiquarians by our own standards. As Hides (1996) has observed, to our eyes Leland’s and Camden’s accounts appear to be jumbled and

confused. For instance, Leland's ([1536-9] 1964:76) description of Old Oswestry is immediately preceded by an entry concerning the fertility of the soils around Oswestry and a description of the woods at Whittington. Similarly, Camden's ([1586] 1974:3) description of Caer Caradoc follows a brief political history of Bishops Castle and Clun. The accounts are primarily historical in their outlook with points of, what we consider, archaeological interest included almost as an afterthought (Hunter 1971). For us such observations appear to lack methodological rigour. However, the early antiquarians operated within an intellectual climate radically different to our own, prior to the emergence of modern disciplinary divisions. Following Foucault (1970), Hides argues that at this time: -

“...the process of acquiring knowledge consisted of recognising and reading the visible signs, ‘signatures’, which revealed other deeper, or invisible resemblances.”
(1996:29).

He suggests that this effectively infinite project was limited by the concept of the microcosm, whereby the visible world was representative of a much larger divine order. It was this notion, Hides argues, that underlay the Late Renaissance obsession with assembling collections of artefacts and objects considered to be rare, curious or exotic. Within such ‘Cabinets of Curiosity’ items we would now consider to be archaeological artefacts (e.g. stone tools, ancient coins, etc.) were placed alongside minerals, fossils and other rarities. Indeed, many antiquarians were themselves avid collectors of these kinds of ‘oddities’ (Piggott 1989). Hides argues that these collections were “...closely ordered according to the forms of similitude, visible or innate, which linked them, and the mirroring of Nature in Art.” (1996:31). As such each collection was considered to be a microcosm in its own right.

Within this form of understanding the book was viewed as a particularly powerful medium, since it was itself a form of microcosm in which knowledge could be fixed. The ability of literature to encompass the concept of the microcosm meant that it was the written word that antiquarians inevitably used to record their activities and express their ideas. In addition, the early antiquarians worked at a time when the written (or more usually printed) word, in the form of certain texts, was invested with almost total authority (Piggott 1989: 36, Moreland 2001). Pre-eminent amongst these was the Bible but the works of ancient Greece and Medieval Europe were also afforded similar, if lesser, authority. It was the power of these texts that led the

antiquarians to seek understanding through reference to literary sources. As Piggott notes, these "...recorded three ancient peoples in Britain as builders of fortifications, successively the Romans, the Saxons and the Danes." (1989: 117). On the basis of the extracts cited above I would add the Ancient Britons to this list. Using these texts the antiquarians ascribed later prehistoric earthworks all over Britain to these four peoples. Although we now view some of these interpretations as incorrect, they satisfied the criteria of the intellectual frameworks within which they were made.

The process of drawing parallels based on similarities and resemblances was important to the interpretation of hillforts at this time in two other respects. First, Piggott has suggested that the military purpose ascribed to hillfort earthworks from Leland and Camden's time onwards "...owed much to the martial model presented by the Roman writers concerned with the conquest of Britain." (1989:117). The early antiquarians made their observations at a time when many of the castles that had been constructed in the later medieval period retained an active military role. Given the importance attached to making comparisons, it was an obvious step to assume that the hillforts fulfilled the same function. Indeed we know that some of the medieval castles in the Welsh Marches were actually superimposed on enclosures dating to the first millennium BC. The best known example is the Norman motte on the summit of the Herefordshire Beacon, but other examples include the medieval borough town of Caus (English Heritage 2001), Whittington Castle in Shropshire (Pete Brown pres. com.) and Beeston Castle in Cheshire (Ellis 1993).

The antiquarians also used similitude to interpret the character of the communities deemed to have built the hillforts. Gosden (1999) has noted that the emergence of antiquarianism was intimately bound up with colonialism. The voyages of discovery of the late 15th and 16th centuries brought Europeans into contact with a growing range of non-western populations. He illustrates how these travels opened up lines of communication along which objects and texts flowed, providing antiquarians with access to a vast range of curios. Amongst the groups that the voyaging Europeans encountered at this time were the indigenous populations of the Americas.

Undocumented in any of the textual sources, and otherwise completely unknown to the Europeans, these peoples were to have an immense impact upon the European mind. English expeditions to the north-east coast of North America resulted in the

capture of a number of Nugumuit Indians, who were subsequently shipped back to England and publicly exhibited. Piggott (1989:73-4) comments that Camden seems to have drawn direct parallels between the body decorations of the ancient Britons described in the classical texts, and those seen on contemporary indigenous American Indians. This subsequently became common practice following the publication in 1590 of John White's drawings of the Virginian Indians encountered on Raleigh's 1585 expedition (ibid.). The image of the woad painted Ancient Briton, similar in appearance and character to some contemporary groups of North American Indians, thus became ingrained in the scholarly imagination.

2.2.2 Hillforts and antiquarians from the Restoration to the Enlightenment.

From the mid 17th century onwards, there is a discernible change in the way antiquarians operated (Hunter 1971, Piggott 1989, Hides 1996). In England the influence of the Royal Society, founded in 1660, was particularly significant. It promoted the use of the 'universal language' for the rational description and classification of the natural world, based on the observation of differential morphological characteristics (Hides 1996:33). This is reflected in the work of those antiquarians, such as John Aubrey (1626-97), Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709) and William Stukeley (1687-1765), who were members. They retained the earlier technique of ascribing various field monuments to the ancient peoples referred to in classical and early medieval texts. However, they now concentrated almost exclusively upon recording and classifying what we would consider to be archaeological, as opposed to historical, evidence (Hunter 1971: 116).

With regard to hillforts, I would argue that this paradigm focused attention upon their earthworks, as the most readily discernible surface features. In his *Momumenta Britannica* John Aubrey (1980) attributes these monuments variously to the Ancient Britons, the Romans and the Danes on the basis of the morphology of their ramparts. Using the writings of the Roman military author Polybius, he observed that Roman military earthworks were usually quadrangular in form (Piggott 1989:119). Thus, he attributed those hillforts (e.g. Danebury, Hampshire) that he felt had more regular earthworks to the Romans.

Aubrey described a significant number of hillforts in the central Marches. For example, he made several entries about *Caer Caradoc* near Clun in south Shropshire, which he continued to associate with Caratacus': -

“...it so agreeth in all points with the description of Tacitus, that nothing could be wanting: I dare bold[ly] affirm, that this is the very self same place, in which Ostorius contended with Caratacus in battle and vanquished him...” (1980:314-5).

Including an illustration copied from Sir William Dugdale's *Visitation of Shropshire* (see Fig. 2.1), Aubrey described this site in greater and more precise detail than had previously been the case: -

“An extraordinary strong and large British camp, seated on a high mountain: very steep; it hath treble works (except on the west side, which is inaccessible by reason of the steepness).

The trenches here are very deep; and yet it is hard rock: the ramparts are walled, but the walls now covered with earth: which if one remove a little one may see the stones.” (1980: 308).

Similarly, unlike Leland and Camden, he follows Dugdale in attributing Old Oswestry to the ancient Britons: -

“A rising hill every way: an oblong square, encompassed with three great works one higher than the other: the space within is about seven acres. The tradition is that this place was the last retreat of the Britons...” (1980:316-7).

Aubrey also ascribes many other hillforts in the central Welsh Marches to the Ancient Britons, or passes no comment on them beyond a brief description. However, he (1980:308-9) attributed Brandon Camp in northern Herefordshire to the Romans. Whilst a Roman military presence was detected on the site when it was excavated recently (Frere 1987), the earthworks at this site belong to a later prehistoric hillfort.

William Stukeley carried the antiquarian tradition forward into the 18th century. He travelled extensively in the years around 1710, at a time when 'the Tour' was first becoming popular (Piggott 1989:124). He recorded observations about a number of hillforts in Herefordshire on these journeys, which were published in 1724 in his *Itinerarium Curiosum*. For example: -

“This city [Hereford] is overlooked and shelter'd towards the north with a prodigious mountain of steep ascent, crowned at the top with a vast camp, which engridles its whole *apex* with works altogether inaccessible, 'tis call'd *Credon* hill, seemingly *British*...” (Stukeley 1724:67, authors italics).

Again the emphasis here is upon the ramparts. Again, however, he wasn't always consistent in ascribing these monuments to the Ancient Britons. For example, he describes the Sutton Walls c. 4km north of Hereford as "...another vast Roman camp upon a hill oertopping a beautiful vale..." (ibid.).

Antiquarianism underwent a number of subtle changes during the first half of the eighteenth century. The importance of the Royal Society as the setting for antiquarian debates waned under the presidency of Sir Isaac Newton (1703-28), during which time the institution became almost exclusively concerned with natural philosophy (Piggott 1989:129). In many ways this was symptomatic of the ebbs and flows in the long running 'Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns'. In England the 'Moderns' were represented by the members of bodies such as the Royal Society, with its tradition of empiricist investigation of artificial and natural phenomena. However, the antiquarians were more closely associated with the 'Ancients', the traditionalist scholars of the humanities, who were in ascendance in the first half of the 18th century. In France and Scotland where the 'battle' was especially bitter, this resulted in the birth of the philosophies of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis upon individualism and the unity of the human spirit (Piggott 1989, Bowler 1989).

Stukeley's later work on the Druids can be set against this shifting intellectual background. In the years following his ordination into the Church of England in 1729, he proposed that the Druids and their religion represented a form of early monotheism very similar to Christianity. For instance, in the opening to *Stonehenge*, published in 1740, Stukeley argued that the Druids had

"...a knowledge of the plurality of persons in the Deity...so extremely like Christianity, that in effect it differ'd from it only in this; they believed in a Messiah who was to come into this world, as we believe in him that is come." (cited in Piggott 1989:145).

He was particularly concerned with countering the claims of Deists such as John Toland (Piggott 1989). Toland and others had sought to push beyond the Anglican Latitudinarian orthodoxy, which asserted that divine revelation was ultimately rational and accessible, claiming that the supernatural was simply irrelevant. For them the Druids provided an opportunity to launch an attack against what they also perceived to be a well-organised priesthood.

I would suggest that both interpretations of the role of the Druids draw implicit comparisons between the social organisation of the Ancient Britons and the English of the early 18th century. At this time the past was a metaphorical device that could be used to explore contemporary socio-political issues. The Deists used the Druids as a means of expressing their complaints with the clergy. Stukeley, on the other hand, seeks to give the doctrines of the Church of England a deep and mythical ancestry. In the process, the 16th and 17th century image of the Ancient Britons as exotic and ‘other’ gradually gave way to a more familiar vision of the past.

Stukeley’s work on the druids also formed part of a growing conservative rejection to the ideas of the Enlightenment. By the later part of the 18th century this was reinforced by the reaction to the French Revolution. In England this period saw the emergence of the Romantic movement, which Trigger argues gained favour as resistance to “...French cultural domination and the literary and artistic restrictions of neo-classicism...” grew (1989:66). Piggott (1989) prefers to see this as a period of decline in the standards of antiquarian studies, and argues that little ‘progress’ was made across the course of the 18th and early 19th centuries. However, the growth of Romanticism resulted in the development of “...a strong interest in ruined abbeys, graves, and other symbols of death and decay...” (Trigger 1989: 66). Pursuing these interests provided new paradigms through which the past could be explored, which led to a growth of interest in, amongst other things, excavating barrow mounds.

2.2.3 “...dark episodes in border history...”³: early-mid 19th century antiquarian investigations of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

As suggested above, some have argued that the continuation of the antiquarian tradition into first half of the 19th century meant that few new insights about hillforts were gained (e.g. Daniel 1965: 12, Piggott 1989). However, I contend that the antiquarian work of the Reverend C. H. Hartshorne during this period greatly enhanced existing knowledge on the prehistoric monuments in the central Welsh Marches. His survey work on the hillforts of this region appears to have been extensive, as illustrated by a statement in the preface to his book *Salopia Antiqua*: -

³ Anderson 1864: 439

“With the Ordnance Survey of the districts in which they lie, with a sketch book, a compass, and a measuring tape, I have successively visited nearly every camp in Shropshire and the Welsh Borders, and through subsequently comparing them with each other, and pursuing an analogical examination of the whole, I have induced to fix their formation during the epochs under which they ranged.” (Hartshorne 1841: x).

Like his predecessors, Hartshorne’s descriptions of these monuments focused upon their earthworks. He appears to have been particularly impressed by the multivallate ramparts of Old Oswestry: -

“Even at the present day we cannot contemplate such gigantic efforts without being impressed without a feeling of astonishment, yet we behold the walls greatly depressed by the subsidence of the soil, and the ditches partly filled with matted fern, and the detritus that is incessantly slipping down from above.” (Hartshorne 1841: 79).

Hartshorne concluded from these studies that many of these monuments dated to a period between 55BC and AD 79, when in his opinion the Britons “...were struggling to maintain their independence.” (1841: x). Again, he discusses the possible location of Caratacus’ last stand, favouring the hillfort at the Breiddin in north-eastern Powys (see Fig. 2.1) over other sites. However, he also suggests that the distribution of hillforts provided a measure of intensity of the conflict in particular areas. He proposed that, in comparison to other parts of the region, the small number of large hillforts in Radnorshire (now part of Powys) indicated that it “...was not the field of any very severe contests.” (1841: 76). Those that followed Hartshorne adopted the suggestion that the distribution of hillforts along the Marches could be used to trace out the ebb and flow of conflict across the region with enthusiasm. As we shall see below, it remained an influential strand within many accounts of the hillforts along the Welsh Border until comparatively recently. I would argue that Hartshorne’s (ibid.: xi) labelling of these monuments as ‘Ante-Norman Fortresses’ is also telling, since it suggests that the history of border conflict in the Marches had a history that extended back to the pre-Roman period.

Hartshorne did not however view all of the hillforts in Shropshire as fortifications. He noted a number of burial cairns within the interior of the hillfort on Abon Burf in south Shropshire, a site which has since been greatly disturbed by quarrying. Although he was uncertain of the date of this monument, he attributed it to the

druids, and accounted for the circuit of the dry dhû (dolorite) stone ramparts by arguing that: -

“It is in exact conformity with the customs, and with the vestiges of hill worship still remaining in part, that the *High Place* on Abon Burf should be screened from observation and access by a mound of stone, which would serve at the same time to enclose and protect their sacred temples and seats of judgement.” (Hartshorne 1841: 12).

Hartshorne found similar remains on the summit of Titterstone Clee (see Fig. 2.1) and Clee Burf, both of which are also enclosed by drystone ramparts, and interpreted them in similar ways. He also viewed some of the hillforts as having different origins. On the basis of what he perceived as the regularity of their plans and the fact that their earthworks appeared to have been composed entirely of earth, he attributes a number of hillforts (e.g. Nurdy Bank, Norton Camp) in Shropshire to the Romans. Others are assigned an Anglo-Saxon date because of their association with places mentioned in early medieval documentary sources.

Hartshorne’s *Salopia Antiqua* remained one of the dominant sources of reference on the archaeology of this region for the rest of the 19th century. John Anderson quoted Hartshorne at length in numerous places in his book *Shropshire: Its Early History and Antiquities*, published in 1864, and made few changes to his interpretations. Lilly Chitty, whom I will discuss in more detail below, also appears to have used Hartshorne’s volume as the starting point in much of her work.

2.2.4 Summary.

In this section I have examined the work of several generations of antiquarians. I have argued that the study of hillforts and other prehistoric monuments in the central Welsh Marches, from the late Renaissance to the early 19th century, took place within a series of gradually changing intellectual climates. These accounts often had a tacit political message, which sought to place the root of contemporary institutions in the distant past (Dennell 1996, Hides 1996). For instance, commenting on the work of the late 17th century antiquarians, Dennell argues that: -

“Implicit in these histories is the message that the British were an ancient people with long-established traditions of freedom and independence: their leaders ruled with the consent of the people and could be both elected and deposed.” (1996:15-6).

I would argue that, whilst the antiquarians of the Royal Society need to be viewed in relation to the change in political climate that accompanied the Restoration of 1660, the works of both earlier and later scholars were no less political in their scope.

Gosden (1999) argues that the roots of archaeology lie in the emergence of colonialism. I would add that antiquarianism was also bound up with the growth of survey and mapping as a valued practice in the late 16th and 17th centuries. With its descriptions of ancient monuments geographically situated within a wider landscape, whose constituent parts could be measured and described, it was intimately connected with the emergence of this new way of ordering the world. We might note Cosgrove's comments here regarding the parallel development of landscape painting, modern theatre and descriptive geography in the Renaissance period (see Chapter 3).

“All these parallel developments suggest an attempt on the part of Europeans to clarify a new conception of space as a coherent visual structure into which the actions of human life could be inserted in a controlled and orderly fashion.” (1998: 21).

By the middle of the 19th century many of the foundations for the later study of hillforts in the central Welsh Marches had already been laid. The investigation of these monuments was increasingly based around the description and depiction of their earthwork boundaries, which were already seen as being almost exclusively defensive in character. The use of surface survey alone meant that uncertainty remained as to exactly what period, and to which historically attested group of peoples, they could be attributed. However, when dates were assigned they were entirely consistent with the methodological techniques and theoretical assumptions that were employed.

2.3.0 Culture history, the ‘invasion hypothesis’ and the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

2.3.1 Generals, hillforts and history: British hillfort studies in later 19th century.

By the later 19th century field survey and excavation played an increasingly important role in the investigation of the human past. The mid 19th century also saw a number of highly important transformations in intellectual thought, which had a profound influence upon the ways in which the communities that built hillforts were perceived. It is these changes that have led some scholars to view this as the period in which the foundations of modern archaeology were laid. It is certainly the case that a number of important new techniques were employed in the investigations of hillforts in the field during the second half of the 19th century. However, I would argue that the changes in the ways in which these monuments were interpreted were subtle, and many of the themes being addressed remained the same as before. The impact of this paradigmatic ‘revolution’ was less marked in the central Welsh Marches, than it was elsewhere. I will, however, deal with these changes in some detail because they had a significant influence upon the ways in which later generations approached these monuments.

General Pitt Rivers (1827-1900) was a key figure in the gentlemanly archaeological circles of the second half of the 19th century (Bowden 1991, Bowler 1989, Gosden 1999). His work also had a significant influence upon the work of subsequent generations. The highly influential field archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler (1890-1976), who was himself to play a pivotal role in the development of hillfort studies, adopted him as his mentor. As a result the figure of Pitt Rivers has achieved a somewhat mythical air, making it important to remain cautious of the reputation he bears. At the same time, however, that fact that Wheeler and others *did* adopt him as their mentor means that his contribution to hillfort studies is worth considering in more than passing detail.

One of Pitt Rivers’⁴ earliest, and I would argue highly significant, contributions to this subject came in a paper published in *Archaeologia* in 1869, in which he discussed the hillforts of Sussex in purely military terms. He contrasted these

⁴ Cited under his earlier title of Lane Fox in the references (i.e. Lane Fox 1869).

monuments with the existing knowledge on Roman fortifications and concluded that they must be earlier in date. He also reviewed the arguments put forward by the Reverend Edward Turner in an earlier paper on the same subject. Like Hartshorne, Turner (1850) was prepared to accept that some of the hillforts in Sussex could have been of "...Druidical origin...", and thus served as religious sanctuaries. However, he preferred to see the majority as 'military earthworks'. Turner expanded upon this argument by proposing that the hillforts of the region acted as "...places of refuge and defence against invaders..." (1850: 173). Those in the north guarded against incursions from the Weald, whilst those to the south provided a defence against attacks on the coast. On the basis of geological evidence from the river valleys, which were known to have been estuaries in the medieval and early modern period, Pitt Rivers disputed this claim. He proposed instead that the hillforts were isolated fortifications, erected by different tribes as places of refuge from hostile neighbours. According to Pitt Rivers this was "...in accordance with what we know to be the early condition of savage life in every part of the world." and with Caesar, who described the Britons as being constantly at war with each other (1869:51). In his conclusion Pitt Rivers contrasted the hillforts of Sussex with the linear earthworks of East Yorkshire, which he felt represented the "...the unmistakable traces of the landing and subsequent operations of a united people..." (ibid.:52).

From the 1870s onwards the excavation of sections through both linear earthworks and hillfort ramparts became an integral part of Pitt Rivers' field work methodology (Bowden 1991). He gained experience of archaeological excavation under Cannon Greenwell in the Yorkshire Wolds in 1867. However, Pitt Rivers appears to have been the first to appreciate the value of excavating settlement sites. He excavated hillfort earthworks as a means of obtaining material with which to date them, and in some cases, as at Cissbury in 1875, as a means of testing their relationship with other features. His work on earthworks also revealed some details of their structural histories, as illustrated by his excavations of the Wansdyke, which he excavated over three seasons from 1889-91. However, the only work Pitt Rivers appears to have carried out in the Welsh Marches was a survey of the Herefordshire Beacon, carried out whilst he was visiting some excavations that were taking place on Midsummer Hill, Herefordshire in 1879 (Stanford 1981: 10). The plan was subsequently

published as a frontispiece in the 1877-80 edition of the *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club* (see Fig. 2.2).

Pitt Rivers' interpretations of hillforts and linear earthworks betray a number of influences. Firstly, I would argue that his own martial inclinations and his experiences as a soldier provided part of the reason why he was inclined to see these monuments as fulfilling an exclusively defensive function. Pitt Rivers served as an officer in the British Army for much of his adult life and he saw active service during the Crimean War, in which trench warfare played an important role. Pitt Rivers fought in the Battle of Alma in 1854, at which British forces attacked fortified Russian positions situated on high ground, and suffered high casualties under heavy enemy fire (Bowden 1991:16). These experiences may well have influenced his interpretation of linear ditches on the Yorkshire Wolds. Similarly, he appears to have been amongst the first to present a detailed discussion of the strategies behind the layout of hillfort earthworks at individual sites. For instance, he stated that the double bank and ditches at Mount Cadburn existed "...only on the northern or weak side of the hill, from which point...a hostile attack could have been anticipated..." (Pitt Rivers 1869: 36). He went on to argue that similar 'tactical' arrangements could be seen at other hillforts, leading him to speculate that: -

"...the ramparts of these entrenchments were intended not so much to give cover to the defender or as an obstacle to the assailants, but rather to give the defenders a command over the outside of the work. It is probable that the defenders stood upon the tops of the banks and threw their darts and other missiles over a palisade..."
(ibid.)

I would argue that these interpretations of hillfort earthworks have gone almost unchallenged ever since. The existence of palisades and breast works on the tops of hillfort earthworks have been assumed in many interpretations, and appear in most reconstruction drawings (see Fig. 2.3), often on the basis of very little evidence. Likewise, Pitt Rivers' theory that hillforts operated as 'independent' fortifications quickly gained acceptance by those working in the archaeological mainstream, and has only begun to be challenged recently. Interestingly, however, it does not appear to have found favour amongst those working in the central Welsh Marches in the later 19th century.

The other element within Pitt Rivers' work on hillforts that I want to highlight here is the comparison he draws between contemporary non-western societies and the

communities thought to have constructed the hillforts. Pitt Rivers was an important member of the closely-knit Victorian intellectual establishment (Bowden 1991, Gosden 1999). He was, for instance, personally acquainted with Charles Darwin and John Lubbock, and related through marriage to Thomas Henry Huxley and Herbert Spencer. Like geology, archaeology played an integral part in the 'Darwinian revolution' of the mid 19th century (Bowler 1989). The discovery of human bones and stone tools alongside the remains of extinct animals at Brixham Cave in 1858 provided evidence of the deep antiquity of human origins. As a member of the Geological Society Pitt Rivers was probably present at many of the highly charged meetings at which the scientific establishment fought over Darwin's theories of evolution. By the 1860s John Lubbock had developed a unilinear model of social-evolution, in which "...the diversity of cultures around the world was explained by assuming that each was characteristic of a particular state of development." (Bowler 1989:33). According to this theory there was only one line of social evolution; therefore non-Western societies deemed to be of a lower stage of development could be used to gain insight into the social organisation of past European societies. It is this model that Pitt Rivers adopted in his paper on the Sussex hillforts.

By the late 1870s, however, a number of conservative scholars had begun to propagate what we would now deem to be an even more extreme and offensively racist version of social-evolutionism. For figures such as Charles Kingsley, James Hunt and Boyd Dawkins, race often formed the basic unit of analysis. As Bowler has commented: -

"This view of prehistory served as a powerful alternative to the linear progressionism adopted by the archaeologists and cultural anthropologists of the 1860s. Whereas they saw indigenous progress as the source of all technological and cultural innovations, the race theorists held that only the invasion of a new type from some external source could introduce a superior culture into a particular territory." (1989:113-4).

In his *Early Man in Britain*, published in 1880, Dawkins outlined a detailed racial interpretation of the prehistory of Britain. His thesis was built around the notion that social change occurred in the prehistoric period as a result of racial conflict, which was caused by repeated episodes of invasion of new groups bearing more advanced technologies. For instance, Dawkins argued that an Aryan population of the bronze wielding Celts drove out the earlier groups of non-Aryan Iberians, who had

established themselves in Britain during the Neolithic. These Celts were later conquered by a second wave of Celtic invaders bearing iron weapons.

As we shall see, the ‘invasion-hypothesis’ persisted as the favoured means of explaining prehistoric social change in Britain for almost a century, although the emphasis upon race faded with time. Dawkins’ work certainly appears to have had a significant influence upon those working on the hillforts of the central Marches in the late 19th century. For example, George Luff (1888: 211) argued that many of the hillforts in Shropshire were established by the Iberian ‘Neoliths’. Luff was an interested amateur who built up a large collection of Neolithic and Bronze flints, picked up whilst walking in the hills around Clun in south-west Shropshire. He corresponded with Dawkins about his finds and, as a result, became convinced that this area had been densely settled during the Neolithic. He argued that the hillforts served as a chain of fortifications for the Neoliths, which was tested by repeated waves of invaders: -

“No doubt the warlike bronze weaponed (sic) Celts assailed the position again and again. The Romans, we know, laid desperate siege to it, as evidenced by the Roman Camp on Norton hill...” (ibid.: 212).

Here Luff repeats Hartshorne’s earlier claim that Norton Camp was a Roman military site, rather than a prehistoric hillfort. Shortly afterwards he describes Bury Ditches, a large and impressive hillfort near Clun (see Fig. 3.2), as a “...formidable fortress...[which] stands like the keep of a Norman Castle, far within the outer line of defence...” (Luff 1888: 212). I would contend that this comparison is highly significant. As we shall see later in this chapter, the political geography of this region in the Norman period has provided many of those working on its hillforts with a fertile source of analogy. The presence of the hillforts, together with the notion that the Marches was one of the chief seats of resistance to the advancing Roman army, has led many to conclude that the status of the Welsh Marches as a border region has its roots in prehistory.

R. L. Kenyon (1892) later extended Dawkins’ scheme to cover the whole of Shropshire’s prehistory. He partially agreed with Luff that some of the hillforts in the county may have dated to the Neolithic. He felt that the Iberians probably survived the Celtic invasions in this region, such that by the Roman conquest they had probably “...adopted many of the Celtish customs, together with Celtish

weapons and implements, and had become more or less fused with them by marriage.” (ibid.: 275). In his discussion of the Iron Age, Kenyon drew attention to the general lack of evidence from this period. He pointed out that the hillforts of this region could have been used in more than one period. However, on the basis of the stone that could be seen within many hillfort ramparts in the county he felt that they probably dated to the Iron Age, particularly since “...the Romans and the Saxons seem to have preferred the plains for their camps...” (ibid.:284). Kenyon’s account is of more than passing interest to us here because it highlights the fact that very little fieldwork had been done in the county at the time he was writing.

Finally, the Reverend Thomas Auden (1908) also drew on Dawkin’s thesis in his account of Shropshire’s prehistory in the first volume of the *Victoria County History*. Auden’s contribution is also significant because it anticipates many of the themes that were taken up by researchers working in this region in the 1920s and 30s. He opened his contribution by outlining the topography of the county, arguing that it played an important in its prehistory.

“On the one hand, remote from the Continent, it was slow to feel European influence, but on the other hand it could not ultimately escape that influence because the only escape from it was into the mountains or the sea. So it is that *Shropshire has been the battleground of advancing civilisations from the most ancient down to the most modern times.*” (ibid. :196, my emphasis).

Again here we see the assertion that the Welsh Marches have long been a frontier zone. Auden repeated the claim that some of the hillforts in Shropshire were of Neolithic origin. He suggested, however, that they were not permanently occupied, “...but were places to which the inhabitants [of the hills] could betake themselves with their cattle...in times of danger.” (1908:198). He proposed that the hilly terrain of south Shropshire was less accessible to invading Celts. On the basis of the greater number of stone tools from the hill country in comparison to the higher numbers of bronze metalwork finds from the lower lying north, he stated that: -

“The result was that in the Celtic invasion, while the old race held its own among the hills of the south, the invading race with its more advanced civilisation took possession speedily of the northern plain, and settled down there.”.

Here Auden draws many of the same distinctions, between the more conservative populations of the higher ground and the advanced groups on the lower lying parts of

the county that Cyril Fox (1952) later made between in his Highland and Lowland Zones.

To conclude, interpretations of hillforts in the central Welsh Marches changed significantly in the later part of the 19th century. However, few of these new insights were driven by fresh discoveries in the field, but were instead the product of the application of models developed in relation to the evidence from other parts of the country. In this sense I would maintain that they set a precedent, that continued to dominate the way in which prehistorians have approached the evidence from the central Welsh Marches until very recently.

The lack of fieldwork on the hillforts of the central Marches was a situation that was to remain unchanged until 1930s. Part of the myth surrounding Pitt Rivers is the notion that his contribution to fieldwork was not matched until this time, following his death in 1900. Despite this, however, very significant developments in Iron Age studies *did* occur as a result of fieldwork conducted in other parts Britain before, and immediately after, the First World War. For instance, Hadrian Allcroft (1908) published a 700 page compendium of sites that acted as a handbook for fieldworkers for at least the next thirty years. We might note, however, that he conventionally attributed hillforts to the Bronze Age. Sir Arthur Evans (1890) viewed the material from his excavation of the Aylesford cemetery as positive evidence for the Belgic invasion mentioned by Caesar. Pitt Rivers' assistant H. St John Gray worked with A. Bullied on an immensely influential series of excavations at the Glastonbury Lake Village between 1892-1907 (Bullied and Gray 1911, 1917), and later at the Mere Lake Village (Bullied and Gray 1948, 1953) in 1910. Similarly, the Cunningtons excavated a number a number of hillforts in Wessex before the First World War (Cunnington 1908, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1917). They felt that their work at Oliver's Camp, the first of the series of sites they examined, demonstrated the usefulness of excavating sections through the earthworks of these monuments: -

“...it will probably be by the details of the work rather than in general outline that the earthworks of the different races will eventually be recognised...” (Cunnington 1908: 416).

Closer to the present study area, Willoughby Gardner (1910) conducted an excavation of part of the defences of Pen-y-Corrdyn on the Clwydian Hills of North Wales, where he excavated all three entrances and cut four trenches through the

stone reveted ramparts. On the basis of this work he concluded that this site was constructed at some point in or after the first century AD, which Wheeler (1925) was later to accept in his seminal volume *Prehistoric and Roman Wales*. Finally, as a result of his work at Hengistbury Head, J.P. Bushe-Fox (1915) was the first to link the Early Iron Age in southern Britain with the Hallstatt phase of the continental chronology. Maud Cunnington (1923) later adopted Bushe-Fox's scheme in her classic interpretation of the evidence at All Cannings Cross.

2.3.2 A "...new start...": hillfort studies in the inter-war years.

The 1920s saw a significant rise in the number of hillforts being excavated in southern England. However, the slaughter of a generation in the mud of Flanders during the First World War inevitably slowed the pace of discoveries during this period. Wheeler poignantly commented in his autobiography *Still Digging* that: -

"...the First German War had blotted us out...It is a typical instance that, of the five university students who worked together in the Wroxeter excavations of 1913, one only survived the war. It so happened that the survivor was myself."

As in other areas of life, Daniel has commented upon the "...new start..." that had to be made in "...field and museum archaeology..." as a result (1965:14). However, as Gosden (1999) has recently emphasised, the 1930s was a critical period in the history of British archaeology. During this decade a number of significant changes occurred within archaeological theory and methodological techniques. Of equal importance was the transformation of the social conditions in which the discipline existed, as it became increasingly 'professionalised' at the university level. Gosden argues that this created a "...landscape dominated by the universities as a means of training and entry into archaeology...which grew up alongside the old network of learned societies and clubs." (ibid. :34). The effect was to reduce, or at least dilute, the importance attached to the contribution of the 'gentlemanly amateurs' who had dominated archaeology at the end of the 19th century. At the same time it allowed people from different (essentially middle class) social backgrounds to establish themselves as authorities within the discipline. It is my belief that these changes, which Gosden describes as a "...double helix of ideas and institutional structures..." (1999: 34), formalised the way in which hillforts of the central Welsh Marches were conceptualised. Once established, these notions continued to dominate the way in

which prehistorians approached these monuments - indeed, I would argue that they continue to influence the way in which many think about them.

The work of one member of the new generation of archaeologists who established themselves at this time was to have a deep and lasting impact upon hillfort studies. In 1925 Christopher Hawkes (1905-1992) worked with Nowell Myres on Wheeler's excavations of a Roman fort at Breacon Gaer, whilst both were students at Oxford (Webster 1991). Using the experience they had acquired on this dig, Hawkes and Myres, together with Charles Stevens, began a series of excavations at the hillfort on St. Catherines Hill near Winchester. In the final report Hawkes *et al.* (1930) used the ceramic sequence that had been obtained from a number of sections through the ramparts to fix the political and cultural development of the site.

In a paper entitled 'Hill-forts', published in *Antiquity* in 1931, Hawkes extended this approach to cover the whole of England and Wales, based upon a synthesis of the hillfort excavations that had been undertaken to that date. He argued that these monuments were a purely Iron Age phenomenon and proposed a model for the period that was to remain dominant for at least the next thirty-five years. Hawkes proposed an 'ABC' classificatory scheme for the Iron Age, based largely upon a pottery typology derived largely from Wessex, in which hillforts were thought to have been introduced by three successive waves of war loving Celtic invaders from continental Europe (see Fig. 2.4). In other words, this model placed great emphasis upon the construction of a pseudo-historical narrative, with repeated episodes of invasion as the defining characteristic of the period. Such events were thought to result in distinct changes in material culture, as new groups introduced their own distinctive building styles and classes of artefact (i.e. styles of pottery). In this sense Hawkes was influenced by Gordon Childe's notion that cultures could be identified through "...certain types of remains – pots, implements, ornaments, burial rites and house forms – constantly recurring together." (1929: v-vi). In the case of hillforts, different cultural groups could be identified through the presence of different styles of pottery in association with particular forms of rampart construction. Thus, Hawkes argued that invasion episodes were marked by discrete horizons or phases within their defences. For instance, in the A phase they acted merely as refuges in times of upheaval. However, with the arrival Iron Age B immigrants, hillfort

building reached its peak, with many sites being permanently occupied. It is to this phase that Hawkes assigned the hillforts of the Welsh Marches.

Hawkes' paper was partially responsible for the significant increase in the excavation of hillforts in the following decade. These investigations largely consisted of cutting sections through the earthworks and clearing of entranceways. The principal aim was to establish sequences of development through the identification of the structural form of the earthwork and the classification of the associated pottery. In the central Marches this period saw Bryan H. St. John O'Neil excavating at Titterstone Clee, Shropshire in 1932; at the Breiddin, north-eastern Powys between 1933-5; and Ffridd Faldwyn between 1937-39 (O'Neil 1934, 1937, 1942 – see Fig. 2.1 for site locations). He was involved in the excavation of Old Oswestry between 1939-40 (Hughes 1994a) and also helped to oversee an unpublished series of excavations at the Roveries in south-western Shropshire. These excavations played a critical role in shaping interpretations of the hillforts of this region.

The excavation of Titterstone Clee began as a result of the enlargement of Dhû stone quarries on the summit of the hill by the British Quarry Company. At the time O'Neil was the Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales and, in an unprecedented move for the times, the Office of Works funded half of the excavation work. O'Neil worked closely with the local prehistorian Lily F Chitty, who at that time was Local Secretary for the Royal Archaeological Society and a prominent member of the Shropshire Archaeological Society. Chitty's archive contains much correspondence relating to this project and in a letter dated 30th May 1932 O'Neil confided in Chitty, asking her

“...not to say much (anything, if possible) about the office's financial contribution. We do not want this widely known because money is *very* scarce and we could *not* entertain appeals in general from archaeologists...” (SRR 6004/363/11 – author's emphasis.).

Work began as planned in June but continued well beyond the intended five-week season into late September. O'Neil cut five sections through the ramparts of the hillfort and cleared the threatened south-eastern ('main') entrance. He eventually left the site on 22nd September after nearly four months in the field, much of which was spent camping out on the windswept summit of the hill. He wrote to Chitty that

he was "...very tired of Titterstone..." and felt ill (SRR 6004/363/23). Some members of the Shropshire Archaeological Society appear to have been hostile to the Office of Works involvement in the excavations. In a letter dated 22nd Feb 1933 R.F. Simms, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wales, wrote to Chitty that

"It has happened as you expected that Colonel Windsor Clive is going to ask a question about Titterstone in Parliament. A fellow called Watkins-Pitchford from Bridgnorth wrote to him; a very silly letter, rather sniffing at our excavations." (SRR 6004/363/32)

Simms appears to have been concerned that such interest in the excavations might expose the 'irregularities' in the way in which they were financed. Following a rather tense episode of diplomacy, however, O'Neil and Simms appear to have smoothed things over and the matter was allowed to drop. O'Neil later wrote to Chitty that he had "...seen Dr. W. Pitchford's letter to the member and seldom has it been my misfortune to read one less well informed." (SRR 6004/363/34).

The excavations themselves produced very few finds, but in the final report O'Neil (1934) was able to define four distinct phases at the site, which fell entirely within the Iron Age. In particular, he proposed that in Period III the earlier (Period I) earth and timber rampart, which had become ruinous (during Period II), was rebuilt in stone. O'Neil concluded that this "...great renovation of the defences...represents the perpetration of a tribe or confederacy against the advance of the Romans." (1934: 29-30).

As a result of his work on Titterstone O'Neil appears to have established a lasting friendship with Chitty, and they co-operated closely on his next project – the excavation of part of a massive hillfort on the Breiddin in north eastern Powys. The results of this work appeared to confirm O'Neil's and Chitty's view that a late phase of re-fortification of hillforts occurred in the Welsh Marches immediately prior to the Roman conquest (O'Neil 1937). At the Breiddin O'Neil felt that this had been preceded by a period of open settlement on the summit of the hill. As a result he argued that there were two Iron Age phases to the site: -

"One witnessed the first settlement of newcomers, who possessed iron and made a type of pottery, which was new to the locality; the second is that of the construction of the defences of the hill, and from the absence of any finds attributable to this period apart from burnt daub it may be said that it was of short duration and culminated in the destruction of the defences at the Roman command." (O'Neil 1937: 94).

O'Neil thought that the pottery from the first, unenclosed (Period I) phase was related to that found on sites of the "...south western culture (Iron Age B)..." to the south (1937: 95). With this suggestion he not only tied the results of his excavation in with Hawkes' chronological framework but also identified the cultural origins of the groups thought to be responsible for constructing the hillforts of the central Marches. He felt that the movement of these groups was necessitated by the Second Belgic (Iron Age C) invasion, which "...caused considerable unrest...and gave an impetus to the building of hill-forts in the Marches." (ibid.).

Chitty (1937a) took this theme up in a paper published alongside O'Neil's excavation report. She sought to trace the route taken by the 'hill-fort' builders as they moved northwards, using the results of O'Neil's excavations and the distribution of hillforts with inturned entrances along the Marches (which she viewed as an architectural device distinctive to the Iron Age B peoples). Chitty asserted that fragments of Late Bronze Age metal work found by O'Neil at the Breiddin, which were thought to belong to the Period I phase of open settlement, indicated that "...an Ultimate Bronze Age culture survived in much of the Highland Zone till the approach of the Roman Conquest." (ibid.: 130). She felt that the sparse artefactual assemblages recovered from O'Neil's hillfort excavations indicated that Iron Age B peoples had arrived in the Welsh Marches as refugees at a late date.

"Culture has been left behind: warriors are on the march, accompanied by such camp followers as could tolerate an uncivilized existence." (1937a: 135).

Chitty argued that these groups had moved into the region from the area around the Bristol Channel, following the valleys of the Severn and its various tributaries northwards: -

"The movement probably followed up the Clun Valley...down into Clunbury, and up the gap of the Kemp stream, which is guarded by the vast fortresses of Bury Ditches and Burrow Camp, Hopesay." (ibid. : 138).

Chitty's thesis is clearly heavily influenced by her membership of what has been termed the 'geographical school' of archaeology, which emerged during the late 1920s and early 1930s under Cyril Fox, Chitty and others. Chitty first met Fox in Cambridge in 1924, following the publication of his seminal work *The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* in 1923. As a result of this meeting they agreed to collaborate on the production of new prehistory of Britain based around a detailed

set of distribution maps to be produced by Chitty (Grimes 1972). This eventually resulted in the publication of Fox's *The Personality of Britain* in 1932, which went through four editions and remained in print until 1959. Fox (and Chitty) placed the invasion hypothesis at the centre of their thesis, arguing that repeated invasions of ever more advanced cultural groups from Continental Europe dominated Britain's prehistory and early history.

“In general, the effect of the vulnerability of Britain to invasion is that she has always tended to present successive strata of culture, and a very mixed population, the latest arrivals being dominant...” (Fox 1952: 19).

He combined this with the notion that the landscape represented a surface that aided or impeded the spread of these groups across Britain. By studying the distribution of artefacts in relation to topography, soils and vegetation patterns Fox felt that he could explain the factors that allowed each group of invaders to establish themselves in a particular region. As a result of his analysis Fox divided Britain topographically into a Highland and a Lowland Zone (see Fig. 2.5). The Lowland Zone covered most of southern and central England, was thought to contain the richest soils and, because of its geographical proximity to the continent, to have been the more susceptible to invasion. In contrast, the Highland Zone incorporated Wales, northern England and all of Scotland. Because of the mountainous nature of much of this region it was thought to be less agriculturally productive and, because it generally lay further away from the Continent, was harder to invade. In terms of the relationship between the two zones Fox argued that: -

“It is easy to understand why the major physical factors should exert so powerful an influence on distribution. Lowland country, with its insignificant hills and easy contours, is more easily overrun by invaders than highland. The difficulties which mountainous country presents to an invader are well known; moreover, the highlander lives a harder life and is less easily conquered, still less easily displaced, than the lowlander.” (Fox 1952: 33).

Fox expanded his argument by proposing that in the Lowland Zone invaders tended to overrun, and thus dominate, the earlier inhabitants. By contrast, invaders tended to be ‘absorbed’ by the more resilient populations of the Highland Zone. Consequently, he suggested that the groups that occupied the Lowland were more advanced and culturally unified than those in the Highland zone, where he felt there was greater cultural continuity as a result.

Fox's thesis had a significant impact upon the work of other archaeologists working upon British prehistory, including Gordon Childe, Stuart Piggott (Barclay 2001) and also Hawkes. Fox and Chitty were essentially trying to account for the regional variation that was becoming increasingly apparent within the data. However, Fox has been criticised for playing down the differences that existed within the landscapes of the Highland and Lowland Zones (Stevenson 1975). In addition, Barclay (2001: 9) suggests that Fox failed to recognise the presence of well-drained fluvio-glacial deposits within some parts of the highland zone in Scotland, lumping them into his thinly settled clays land that were thought to have been covered by 'damp' oak woodland. I would argue that this was certainly also applies to that part of the Lowland Zone (the 'Midland Gap') that lies within the Welsh Marches, where Fox suggested that: -

“The distribution of the 'damp' oak woodland and Man's dislike for it explains many curious features in the prehistoric maps: ...[for instance] the neglect by successive vigorous cultures of the Midland Gap, between the Pennine and Cambrian barriers, which leads to the estuaries of the Dee and Mersey, and the Irish Sea.” (1952: 59).

The notion that the lower lying parts of the central Welsh Marches were essentially an uninhabited wilderness in prehistory persisted until relatively recently (cf. Carver 1991, Buteaux and Hughes 1995). As a consequence the full complexity of the prehistoric inhabitation of this region remains under-researched – a matter I will return to in later chapters (see Chapters 5 & 6). In addition, the Welsh Marches lay on the frontier between Fox's Highland and Lowland Zones. During the medieval and early-modern period this had been a region where different cultural groups had interacted and fought one another. Fox essentially naturalises the medieval geopolitics of this region by extending their origins into prehistory and suggesting that they were the product of the region's topography. He felt that the hillforts of the region were particularly indicative of the way in which new cultural groups sought to gain control of the region, since they demonstrated: -

“...how penetration of a Highland massif by Lowlanders takes place. The foothills are occupied, and the flanks of the river valleys; the blank areas of the map are the main mountain passes.” (Fox 1952: 37).

As we have already seen, these ideas gained greater currency amongst those working in the region as a consequence of the pivotal role played by Chitty. In much of her

work she sought to expand and clarify the principles that she and Fox had outlined. Certainly, as we shall see below, the interpretation of the Welsh Marches as an Iron Age frontier zone still persists in some circles today.

Returning now to the development of hillfort studies outside the Welsh Marches, Mortimer Wheeler's excavations at Maiden Castle between 1934-37 had a significant influence upon this branch of the discipline. As we have already seen, Wheeler had worked on J. P. Bushe-Fox's excavations at Wroxeter in 1913. In the inter-war years he undertook a number of important excavations and many of the figures that were later to become influential within British archaeology in their own right worked on these projects. It was also this period which saw Wheeler adopt Pitt Rivers, whose work he may have encountered whilst he was at the Royal Commission just before the First World War, as his mentor (Hawkes 1982: 81). Despite the differences in their social backgrounds and circumstances, there were a number of similarities between the personalities of Pitt Rivers and Wheeler that may have led the latter to admire and respect the former. For instance, Wheeler saw active service in the British Army in both the First and Second World Wars and, like Pitt Rivers, his work on hillforts reveals his martial inclinations.

At Maiden Castle, Wheeler (1943) sectioned the defences in a number of locations around the sites perimeter, investigated the eastern entrance and sampled a small area of the interior. In accordance with the Hawke's ABC model of the Iron Age, he argued that the hillfort was established *c.* 300 BC, long after the significance of the much earlier Neolithic monuments that he also discovered on the site had been forgotten. He suggested that the mid first century BC saw a fresh influx of new peoples, driven out of Brittany by Caesar's campaigns against the Venetic tribes. It was this group (which he termed the slingstone culture) that was held to be responsible for the construction of Maiden Castle's multivallate earthworks as a defence against sling warfare, the methods of which they had also brought with them. Finally, he suggested that the Belgae under King Cunobelin overran the hillfort in *c.* AD 25. It was this group, Wheeler argued, that were slaughtered by the advancing Roman army and that were represented in the 'war cemetery' that was found at the monument's eastern entrance.

Wheeler had a significant, if indirect, influence upon the development of work on hillforts in the Welsh Marches. In 1935 one of his assistants from his Verulamium

excavations, Thalassa Hencken, had began her own project at Breedon Hill, in Gloucestershire, which has since become the classic type site for the southern Marches. Hawkes (1982:164) comments that this was done under Wheeler's 'surveillance', and his influence can perhaps be seen in Hencken's (1938) interpretation of the human remains found within the unturned entrance passage as evidence for a massacre. In a lecture given at a meeting of the Shropshire Archaeological Society in 1934, Wheeler had expressed his opinion that the Wrekin (see Fig. 2.1) had been the pre-conquest tribal capital of the Cornovii, the Iron Age tribe thought to have occupied central and northern Shropshire and Cheshire at the time of Roman conquest (Anon 1935-6). It was this theory that Kathleen Kenyon, another of Wheeler's supervisors on his dig at *Verulamium*, set out to test in her excavations at the Wrekin in 1939, although work at this site was halted by the outbreak of the Second World War (Kenyon 1942). From the excavations she concluded that the site had two phases, and she also published the first examples of Iron Age A (now viewed as Late Bronze Age) sherds from a hillfort in this region. Those already working on the hillforts of this region appear to have felt a certain amount of enmity towards Kenyon and the 'Wheeler school' in general. In 1939 W. J. Varley, who had already excavated a number of hillforts in Cheshire, began a series of excavations at Old Oswestry, with which O'Neil was also loosely involved. In a letter he wrote to Chitty, in which he discussed his plans for the site, Varley comments: -

"Kathleen Kenyon is to do the Wrekin this year I learn. Bryan's [O'Neil] comment was that "it would be better if she had started with something less important." Still, by now she ought to know something about digging. I daresay she would have liked to do Old O. [Old Oswestry], but our joint experience of digging hillforts exceeds hers by a considerable amount and experience counts." (SRR 6004/223/17)

Despite his boasts, however, Varley never succeeded in publishing a complete account of his work at Old Oswestry. Indeed, a detailed report has only appeared relatively recently (Hughes 1994a) and many uncertainties remain about his work at this large and impressive monument (see Chapter 5). In the same letter to Chitty, Varley admitted that he was rather daunted by the task confronting him.

“I cannot say that I am exactly thrilled, a more correct adverb would be awestruck, I don’t suppose a tougher job will ever come my way, and I wouldn’t tackle it on my own, I should be too scared, but between us we’ll see what we can do.” (SRR 6004/223/17).

Elsewhere, O’Neil (1942) used the highly important results of his excavations at Ffridd Faldwyn (see Fig. 2.1), as a vehicle with which to launch a new set of interpretations for the Iron Age in Welsh Marches and Wales. He cut nine sections through the ramparts, examined a relatively large area around the southern entrance to the ‘inner camp, and excavated a small area within the interior of the ‘main camp’. These excavations revealed that the hillfort, as it exists today, is the product of an extended and complex sequence of developments. Contrary to his earlier arguments concerning the nature of the Iron Age in Wales and the Marches, this forced O’Neil to conclude that: -

“...it is no longer possible to regard the Early Iron Age in Wales as a very brief interlude before the Roman conquest, and it seems better now to allow that the culture, which in England is named Iron Age A, did indeed influence or even extended into Wales and the Marches.” (ibid.: 11).

O’Neil used this point, together with the obvious longevity of the site, to argue against Wheeler’s suggestion that the practice of building multivallate hillforts was introduced Britain after 56 BC. Following the logic of Wheeler’s argument, O’Neil suggested that if the multivallate hillforts of the Welsh Marches were ultimately the product of developments in Wessex, then they would have to date to somewhere between 56 BC and AD 50-75. Time would also have to be allowed, he maintained, for the use of the new weapon to spread northwards and for the necessary defences against them to be built. O’Neil argued, however, that the evidence from both Ffridd Faldwyn and Old Oswestry suggested that both hillforts had already undergone a series of developments by the end of the Iron Age. Consequently, he concluded that an “...earlier initial date than 56 BC for the multivallate camps of England is essential.” (1942: 17).

From the acknowledgements he publishes near the front of his report, we can see that O’Neil’s interpretations of the sequence at Ffridd Faldwyn were influenced by a number of leading prehistorians, including Fox, Hawkes and perhaps most significantly of all Gerhard Bersu. Wheeler’s name, however, is notably absent

despite O'Neil's attack upon his chronological framework. I suggested earlier that there was a certain amount of rivalry existed between O'Neil and Varley on the one hand and Wheeler and his students on the other. Bersu's visit to the site can also be seen against the "...less than amiable..." relationship he had with Wheeler (Evans 1989:444). Hawkes (1982:176) notes that Bersu was critical of Wheeler's fieldwork strategies when he visited the Maiden Castle excavations. In turn, Evans has observed that Wheeler refused to accept the full implications of Bersu's (1940) highly important excavations at Little Woodbury, which he had himself visited. Thus, in the Maiden Castle report, Wheeler (1943:52) continued to entertain the notion that some of the deep storage pits that he excavated on the site fulfilled a residential function. Similarly, Evans (1989) also notes that Wheeler made no reference to Bersu's groundbreaking work in his own autobiography *Still Digging* (1955), and openly criticised Bersu's section drawing techniques in his work on excavation methodologies *Archaeology from the Earth* (1954). The reason for this 'feud' was almost certainly partially due to a personality clash between the two men. We might imagine that the bluff, authoritarian Wheeler portrayed by Hawkes (1982) would probably not have reacted very well to personal criticisms, particularly if they were aired openly on site in earshot of his assistants. Webster (1991:227) has also noted that he may have felt some resentment towards Bersu's skills as an excavator, and it is possible that his nationality was another factor. By the early to mid 1940s, the differences in Wheeler's and Bersu's approaches were widely acknowledged. Evans neatly sums up these differences by arguing that they "...could be characterised as the 'schools' of hillfort and settlement excavation which took Wheeler and Bersu as their doyens." (1989: 445). The split between these two schools of thought continued to affect the way in which the Iron Age in the central Welsh Marches was interpreted for many years (see section 2.4.3 below).

2.3.3 Summary.

To summarise, from the late 19th century onwards the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches were viewed as the defensive fortifications of successive waves of invaders from continental Europe. Until the 1930s they were ascribed a range of dates. However, after the publication of Hawkes (1931) ABC scheme for the Iron Age they were viewed as a purely Iron Age phenomenon. In addition, Fox's and Chitty's

concepts of the Highland and Lowland Zones gave further credence to the notion that the Welsh Marches had always been a frontier zone. As a result, the main priority for those working on the hillforts of this region was to determine which group of Iron Age invaders were responsible for constructing them. The first significant excavations of hillforts in this region were conducted with this aim in mind. By establishing the details of the phases through which a monument had passed, sites could be compared with and integrated into Hawkes' chronological framework. The cutting of narrow sections across the earthworks, and the 'clearance' of entrances, remained the generally accepted means by which the historical development of a site could be established. The results of many of these excavations are still of great importance, indeed without them we would still know very little about the hillforts of the region. Many were pioneering in all senses of the word, and I do not wish to judge them by the standards of the early 21st century. Likewise, the techniques that excavators employed *did* provide answers to the research questions of the time. None-the-less, I would argue that the methodological security of this approach rested upon four critically important and interrelated assumptions: -

- Hillfort earthworks were purely functional defensive structures that were erected in response to, or in anticipation of, a direct military threat.
- As a consequence, rampart construction occurred simultaneously throughout the entire circuit of the defences.
- Thus within any given phase, the defences of a hillfort were structurally uniform throughout their course.
- Consequently, by sampling the ramparts in the appropriate places the structural history of a site could be established, since the resulting section would be representative of the rest of the site.

The complexity of hillfort entranceway sequences was recognised early on but was merely felt to provide a useful way of defining sub-phases within a site's broader structural history.

I maintain that the different elements of this approach to hillforts were mutually fulfilling and self-perpetuating. In other words, the invasion model of the Iron Age resulted in the supposition that hillfort earthworks were structurally uniform, which

in part governed the excavation techniques that were employed, the results of which appeared to confirm the validity of the initial hypothesis (see Fig. 3.6).

As a consequence, hillfort excavations remained focused upon the elucidation of the rampart and gateway sequences until the 1970s. However, as ever more detail was added to Hawkes' scheme it became increasingly elaborate and unwieldy. Culture historical and invasionist explanations of hillforts reached their peak in the decades that followed the Second World War, before they eventually crumbled in the face of the concerns that resulted from a number of disciplinary developments. It is to this period that we must now turn.

2.4.0 Hillfort studies in the central Welsh Marches in the later 20th century.

2.4.1 Hillfort studies in post-war Britain.

The Second World War and its aftermath undoubtedly stimulated dramatic changes within British archaeology, as it did within wider society as a whole. Yet, as Evans (1989:437) suggests, assessing the nature of that impact is not straightforward. With the outbreak of war, major excavation campaigns effectively ceased until the late 1940s. As mentioned above, Kathleen Kenyon, was forced to abandon her planned second season of work at the Wrekin. Similarly, Gerhard Bersu's work at Little Woodbury also ceased and, as a German national, he was interned on the Isle of Man for the duration of the war (Evans 1989, 1998a).

At the same time, however, the war did not lead to a cessation in the publication of the major British archaeological journals. Stimulated by the publication of a number of important excavation reports, debate continued between scholars working on the Iron Age. Thus, in many respects the 1940s can also be seen as a period of general reflection within British archaeology, during which many of the leading commentators produced popular works of synthesis (cf. Childe 1940, Clarke 1940, Hawkes and Hawkes 1947 etc.). It is precisely because of this, Evans (1989) suggests, that Bersu's work at (1940) Little Woodbury and Wheeler's (1943) Maiden Castle excavations were accorded such iconic status. In addition, the newly formed

Council for British Archaeology met before the end of the war, seeking to establish a programme for British archaeology.

With regard to the Welsh Marches, Varley's (1948) review paper on the hillforts of the region can be seen as one product of this period. In it he synthesised the evidence from the various excavations that had taken place in the preceding decades. Given the nature of much of this work, Varley inevitably focused upon the morphology of the earthworks, highlighting the variability which these excavations revealed: -

“Judged by any structural criteria, such as lay-out of the defences in relation to the terrain, the form of entrances, or the structure of ramparts, the series of hill-forts under consideration neither starts from a common original form, nor proceeds through uniform structural changes, nor attains a common form.” (Varley 1948: 44)

Varley sought to explain this diversity by suggesting that instead that the hillforts of the region belong to at least two distinct ‘families’ - contour works and promontory works. He argued that the contour works were “...the oldest, most widespread, and most abiding element in the structural history of Marcher hill-forts...” (1948: 45). Varley also proposed that, at many contour *and* promontory forts, evidence could be seen for a developmental sequence, whereby the ramparts had been gradually enlarged. The overarching motivation behind each of the building episodes was seen to be a continuing concern with defence. Thus, for instance, when discussing inturned entrances Varley suggested that the “...weakness of this arrangement would appear to lie in the circumstance that it would permit of infiltration along the outer ditches, which had no lateral protection.” (ibid. :48). He asserted that the ‘barbican entrance’, in which the terminals of the outlying rampart were linked up by a lateral rampart, offered the solution to this problem. By implication, hillforts were built for purely defensive purposes by a social group in permanent residence, which had continuing concerns about its own safety over prolonged periods of time. Where Varley is perhaps ahead of his time is in the suggestion that the gradual elaboration of hillfort defences “...is a trend of hillfort design: it is not a series of specific events which can be pinned down to specific dates or causes, applicable to the whole series.” (ibid. :54).

Varley (1948) also drew attention to the lack of detailed dating evidence for hillforts in the central and northern Marches. The scarcity of pottery, in particular, made it

difficult to relate the hillforts of these regions to Hawkes' ABC scheme, which had been built around pottery typologies. In emphasising this point he commented that: -

“It would be literally true to say that I have picked up more prehistoric pottery from a single afternoon's walk on the south downs than I have recovered in nine seasons on four separate hill-forts in the Welsh...” (Varley 1948: 58).

Part of the reason for this may be due to the methodological techniques employed by the excavators. Up until the late 1960s at least, most researchers placed greater emphasis upon the excavation of hillfort ramparts, as opposed to areas within the interiors. The way in which such sections were excavated, usually by hired labourers using tools such as pick axes and shovels, also mitigated against the recovery of friable, poorly fired prehistoric pottery sherds. None-the-less, similar techniques were employed on hillfort excavations in Wessex at this time, and these yielded plentiful pottery assemblages. More recent excavations have confirmed that, whilst pottery is not entirely absent from the hillforts of this region, it is present in much smaller quantities within the deposits that form their boundaries than is the case in southern England. Therefore, what Varley's statement now suggests is that the archaeological residues within the hillforts of the central Marches are structured *differently* to those in Wessex: a point which we are only now beginning to appreciate. In turn this implies that these monuments were inhabited in different ways to those in other regions.

Despite the lack of dating evidence, however, Varley (1948) still found it necessary to relate the hillforts of the region to Hawkes' ABC scheme. Following O'Neil (1942), Varley argued that the sherds of furrowed carinated bowls that he had found at Old Oswestry, together with the coarse, rock tempered pottery which was found at the Wrekin and Eddisbury, Cheshire appeared to indicate that an “...association exists in the Marches between early hillforts and the diffusion of Iron Age A culture.” (1948:56). He proposed a seriously deflated chronology for the Iron Age in the Marches. Dating the spread of Iron Age A into the region to the late late 2nd century BC. Following Hawkes (1931), he suggested that in the southern Marches this phase ended in the early 1st century BC with the arrival of a wave of peoples from Brittany. Supposedly identifiable by their stamp decorated (Iron Age B) pottery (cf. Hencken 1938, O'Neil 1937), this group was thought to have brought the tradition of building the promontory fort with them. In line with Fox's and Chitty's

theories on the ways in which the different cultural groups interacted within the Highland Zone, Varley concluded that both groups of settlers were eventually 'absorbed' by the indigenous populations of the region.

Major excavations of hillforts in the Marches began again in the late 1940s, with Kathleen Kenyon's (1954) work at Sutton Wall, Herefordshire between 1948-1951. To some extent this excavation was typical of the kind of work that was being done in other parts of Britain at this time. The earthworks of Sutton Walls encircle a low, narrow plateau of glacial gravel, the quarrying of which accelerated under relaxed wartime planning regulations. This prompted the Council for British Archaeology to press the Ministry of Works to undertake rescue excavation in the threatened areas and Kenyon's excavations were the outcome. Using a 'Wheeleresque' system of box trenches, she sampled a number of areas within the interior of the site, as well as sections of the defences and the western entrance. On the basis of the 'duck' stamp decorated pottery, which was found stratified below the main rampart (Rampart A), she argued that the site was first occupied by a group of Iron Age B settlers. Following earlier commentators, Kenyon proposed that this group "...penetrated from Cornwall up the Bristol Channel and the Severn and Wye Valleys..." in the middle of the first century BC (1954: 3). Forced to flee Caesar's campaigns in north-western Gaul, she proposed the term 'Bristol Channel B' to identify this wave of settlers. Significantly, however, Kenyon argued against the earlier suggestion that this group had eventually been absorbed by the indigenous population. She had noted that pottery with the 'degenerate' tooled "...stab and slash..." style of decoration, thought to have been indicative of this process of absorption, occurred alongside stamp decorated sherds (ibid. :30). By conducting trial excavations at a number of other hillforts in Herefordshire, Kenyon found that similar relationships between the different styles of decoration occurred elsewhere. As a result, she proposed that an Iron Age Bristol Channel B population continued to occupy Sutton Walls until the Roman Conquest. It was this group, therefore, that was viewed to have constructed the first hillfort rampart (Phase B), and to have further strengthened it (Phase C) during a tentative period of "...Belgic influence in the west..." at around c. AD 25 (ibid. :28). Kenyon's arguments concerning the pottery from the site represented a challenge to Fox's notions of cultural interaction in this part of the Highland Zone. Rather than the long-term continuity and conservatism envisaged by

Fox, she implies that, in Herefordshire at least, Iron Age society contained a dynamic mixture of different cultural groups. Later researchers in the region, especially Stanley Stanford (see below Section 2.4.3), adopted and expanded this argument by suggesting that the different elements within the Iron Age population lived alongside one another on the same sites.

By the late 1950s the weight of new discoveries led Hawkes (1959) to rework his ABC scheme. Although it had gained general acceptance, the original scheme had been criticised by Daniel (1943:38) for its failure to classify cultures either geographically or by type-site. By the end of the 1940s Wheeler (1949:66) had also suggested that the scheme needed to be updated to take account of new evidence. Hawkes was motivated by the way in which fieldworkers had elaborated upon the original scheme, as they attempted to relate it to the evidence from the regions in which they were working. This had, for instance, resulted in the creation of a range of regional Iron Age B cultures, of which Kenyon's Bristol Channel B is one example. Similar regional groupings had also been proposed for Iron Age A and Iron Age C. To update and rationalise the ABC scheme, Hawkes proposed a four fold provincial division of southern Britain based upon 'physiographical' factors – again demonstrating the continuing influence that Fox's work had had upon this generation of prehistorians. For example, the eastern boundary of his Western province, in which the Welsh Marches lie, ran "...from Mendip to the Mersey Marshes..." via the Jurassic ridge and the upper Trent valley (1959: 172). Hawkes further subdivided these provinces into a total of thirty regions, based upon 'lesser' natural boundaries in the landscape (see Fig. 2.7). He suggested that: -

"These regions seem to me at once the largest and the smallest that will contain, consistently with physiographic boundaries, an Iron Age archaeological entity in every case – *whether well attested yet or not.*" (Hawkes 1959: 174, my emphasis).

Significantly, this represented an acknowledgement of the significance of the various regional differences that were becoming increasingly obvious within the evidence. However, we might also note that the regions Hawkes proposed for Southern Region are significantly smaller and better resolved than they are in most of the other provinces. This almost certainly reflects the fact that the Iron Age sequence in this region was better understood than it was elsewhere. Likewise, Hawkes appears to suggest that within these units an Iron Age 'entity' persisted throughout the period,

with the possible exception of the period immediately before Roman Conquest, when "...some were cut up by land-grabbing." (1959: 174). Similarly, he argues that some of his regions "...may be found forming cantonal or recognized tribal areas under Roman rule." (ibid.). The two regions that cover the Welsh Marches (21 - Wye/ Cotswold and 26 - Northern Marches), for instance, relate fairly closely to the conventional understanding of the later Romano-British tribal boundaries of the Cornovii and the Dobunni (cf. Millet 1990: Fig. 16). We can only conclude, therefore, that Hawkes was essentially proposing a set of politico-cultural territories that persisted across the entire Iron Age (cf. Hodson 1960: 138), despite the various invasions which he asserts also characterised the period. Because these units were seen to exist independently even of this limited vision of social dynamics, the revised ABC scheme was, in this sense at least, deeply ahistorical.

Hawkes (1959) stressed that in his original scheme the use of the terms Iron Age A etc. were meant to relate to cultural groupings in the 'Childeian' sense, and not chronological divisions. Consequently, he proposed a chronological system for the Iron Age based upon three major periods (Iron Age 1, 2 & 3), further subdivided into nine minor phases (Iron Age 1a-b, Iron Age 2a-c & Iron Age 3a-d), running from 550 BC - A.D. 43/4. This sequence related to the Hallstatt/ La Tène phases within the Continental chronological framework. Finally, Hawkes proposed a rationalisation of the various sub-divisions for the A, B and C culture groups which had begun to emerge. He noted that some of these cultures could persist across chronological divisions (see Fig 2.8). This rendered the 'A1', A2' that had been adopted by some as problematic, since they could become confused with the chronological periods he propounded. Similarly, for the various Iron Age B cultures, which were in some ways geographically distinct, the use of numbers in this fashion (i.e. B1, B2 etc.) might become confused with the numbers Hawkes had designated to the regions he had defined. Hawkes, therefore, proposed prefixing each culture group with a provincial location and ordinal number (i.e. Western First A, Western Third B). Ultimately, then: -

"The whole array of determinable cultures..., like the hanks of an embroiderer's coloured wools or silks, has to be stitched on to the net of absolute time, which our frame of Periods and Phases holds stretched between its bars. This is the way, it seems to me, to set about presenting our Iron Age as a living pattern." (Hawkes 1959:176).

In developing this revised explanatory framework Hawkes (1959) was attempting to rationalise the huge data set, which had been generated by excavations that had taken place since the publication of *Hill Forts* in 1931. As I mentioned above, however, the whole framework still rested upon the premise that the various cultures of the British Iron Age were the product of repeated episodes of invasion from continental Europe. He was of course not alone here, since nearly all British prehistorians used the ‘invasion hypothesis’ to explain prehistoric social change at this time. Likewise, in a recent defence of Hawkes’ work, Evans made the point that without “...the absolutism of radiocarbon dating, the only way to proceed was from the known backwards to what lies behind.”(1998b: 400). It was this principle, he argues, that lay behind Hawkes’ (1954) famous ‘ladder of inference’ approach to archaeology, and it also informed his approach to the British Iron Age. Evans maintains that, as a result of the emphasis he placed upon invasions/ migrations and indigenous response, Hawkes’ produced: -

“...a dynamic social prehistory, one encompassing ethnic pluralism and the fulsome complexity of social/ cultural interrelations. Rejecting notions of unilineal cause-and-effect, his richly textured historical approach warrants a wider audience.”
(1998b: 403).

I would certainly agree that those aspects of Hawkes’ work that emphasised ethnic pluralism appeals to us, as an audience living within a multi-cultural society. Similarly, the themes of invasion and indigenous response find echoes in discussions of domination and resistance in a post-colonial context. Yet, I would argue that the ‘invasion hypothesis’, as an explanation of social change in prehistoric communities, also had some very significant problems. Proponents of this theoretical perspective effectively argued that social change resulted from conflict at two levels: between cultures (one could well substitute this for ethnic groups) and between social elites. Thus, for instance, in his discussion the Iron Age A culture in southern England Childe (1940:194) was able to talk of a ‘folk movement’ of “...colonists who replaced or absorbed the Deverul-Rimbury population...putting an end to their culture...”. This group was in turn “...harried by Marnian *chieftains* with a La Tène culture...” (ibid. :194 my emphasis). As I suggested above (see Section 2.3.2), the notion that social change results from ethnic conflict has its roots in the work of the conservative social evolutionist’s of the late 19th century (cf. Bowler 1989:113-4). Because of their implicit acceptance of the notion that social change was driven by

the elite, invasionist models are inherently conservative. Likewise, the possibility that social change was a product of an internal social dynamic (i.e. from tensions between different groups within a community) is ignored. We might also note that in his much cited 'ladder of inference' Hawkes (1954) effectively argues against one of the central tenets of orthodox Marxism; that the economic base determines the superstructure of a society. Hawkes' suggested that, whilst production techniques and subsistence practices can be relatively easily determined from the archaeological evidence, socio-political organisation and religious practices/beliefs are much harder to infer. Hawkes' gave the first version of this particular paper in a lecture at Harvard University in 1953, whilst he was a visiting lecturer at the Peabody Museum (Evans 1998b: 399). Perhaps coincidentally, this was also the period when McCarthyism was reaching a crescendo in the United States.

Like Fox (1952), Hawkes (e.g. 1959) felt that most invasive groups made landfall in southern and south-eastern England, with a secondary route up the western seaways. Again this effectively made the Iron Age archaeology of the northern and western parts of the British Isles subordinate to that of southern England. This subordination is reproduced in Hawkes' model by the fact that the ABC scheme was originally based on a pottery typology for Wessex. Similarly, within his paper he inevitably begins with the evidence from southern England before proceeding to discuss that from elsewhere.

2.4.2 Iron Age border barons?: changing approaches to the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

Hawkes' (1959) proposed revision of the ABC scheme provoked an immediate response from some scholars working on the Iron Age, initiating a series of debates that ultimately led to its rejection. Roy Hodson (1960, 1962, 1964) was amongst the first to respond and to develop a sustained critique of Hawkes' framework. He argued that the ABC scheme placed considerable intellectual constraints upon researchers, such that material had "...to fit a preconceived letter category or be forced into one, and each letter implies an automatic interpretation..." (1960: 138). Similarly, he felt that the Hawkes' provincial divisions were also restrictive, since they might obscure the unity or, conversely, the disunity that may have existed

between Iron Age groups. Hodson attacked two other aspects of the ABC scheme. He objected to the absolute chronology that Hawkes had proposed for the revised version of the model. He also pointed out that, at least at that time, “British Iron Age dates before the mid-1st century BC are extremely tentative...” and were, in essence therefore, relative. Most significantly of all, however, Hodson argued that the classification of pottery on stylistic grounds alone was a highly subjective process. He discussed a number of examples of pottery assemblages that had been assigned to one of the ABC categories, but which also demonstrated traits that would support alternative interpretations. Hodson concluded, therefore, that the grounds upon which pottery assemblages were classified as either Iron Age A or B “...in parts of Southern Britain seem almost imaginary.” (1960: 139).

Hodson’s main assertion, however, was that the classification of British Iron Age cultures ought to proceed by type sites, rather than by an arbitrary lettering scheme; an objection originally raised by Daniel (1943:38). He proposed a return to basics of Childe’s method, in which cultures were recognised through recurring groupings and associations of artefacts or architectural styles with a definable spatial distribution. Hodson (1962, 1964) later proposed a set of culture groups, which he felt better accounted for the evidence from southern England. His (1964) ‘Woodbury Culture’, for instance, was defined by the presence of three basic type fossils; permanent round houses, bone weaving combs and ring-headed pins (see Fig. 2.9). Hodson suggested that variations upon this basic culture were present over wide areas of Britain, and that it also demonstrated “...abundant evidence for direct continuity between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age...” (1964 :104). Hodson was challenging the whole notion of the ‘invasion hypothesis’ as it had been applied to the Iron Age. He viewed the tradition of building hillforts as an integral part of the Woodbury complex, proposing that it could have arisen from indigenous cultural processes, rather than having been introduced by invaders. He even suggested that examining differences in their designs might provide one means by which the Woodbury Culture could be regionally sub-divided. In Hodson’s opinion Britain was not entirely isolated from Europe, it was merely “...peripheral to, but still in touch with the main centres of development.” (ibid. :105).

In reply to Hodson's (1960) initial critique Hawkes stated that: -

"The editor has kindly shown me Mr Hodson's Note in proof, and promised me space in the next number for a brief reply. I greatly hope it may clear away some of Mr Hodson's *misconceptions*." (Hawkes 1960: 140).

Despite this promise, however, Hawkes never produced a detailed response to Hodson's criticisms.

Two years later the Cambridge prehistorian Grahame Clark launched another highly significant attack on the invasion hypothesis. Clark felt that the preoccupation with explaining change in prehistoric societies as being the product of repeated invasions was "...obsessive and even dangerous..." (1966: 173). Examining invasive explanations as they had been applied to British prehistory from the Neolithic, down to the end of the Iron Age he concluded that: -

"Invasions and minor intrusions have undoubtedly occurred, even if for (*sic.*) less often than other forms of culture contact, but their existence has to be demonstrated, not assumed." (1966: 188).

With regard to the Iron Age evidence Clark sided with Hodson. He argued that "...the correlation of hillfort construction with external menace is at best no more than a hypothesis..." (1966:186). Instead he proposed that they might result from internal contradiction and conflict between indigenous social elites. Significantly, Clark choose an ethnographic case study drawn from pre-colonial New Zealand, as opposed to drawing historical parallels (see below), to support for his point: -

"Here the construction of hillforts had...nothing whatever to do with external enemies: on the contrary the hillforts were an expression of a particular form of society in which prowess in fighting conferred status on leaders and lent spice to the lives of their followers." (1966: 186).

This form of society, Clark (1966:186) implied, was analogous to that which existed in Britain during the Iron Age. Warfare provided the means by which people gained social standing within Iron Age communities, and it was this that lead to the construction of the hillforts.

This time Hawkes (1968) did respond, launching a bitter personal attack on Clark. He castigated much of Clark's work for being "...laudably synthetic...", and, in response to a comment Clark had made in his paper, described him as "...a lifelong member of 'the younger school'..." (ibid. :298). Hawkes also asked why, if the tradition of building hillforts had merely been borrowed from the 'Continental

Celts', these monuments had not been built by the Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. He proposed that the population of Iron Age Britain shared a common Celtic language and, with it, a common heritage of which the practice of building hillforts was a component. As Harding notes, Hawkes remained "...an unreconstructed advocate of immigration." (1994:335).

Another aspect of the dominant interpretation of hillforts was also challenged in the 1960s, with specific reference to sites in Wales and the Marches. In a highly original paper Leslie Alcock questioned whether these monuments had "...played any real part in military activities." (1965:185). He argued that hillforts would have functioned poorly as strategic fortifications intended to defend particular territories, and also suggested that warfare could have taken place without the need to construct monumental fortifications. Alcock emphasised the variability within the artefactual assemblages that had been recovered from hillforts in different parts of Wales and the Marches.

"The abundance of pottery in the forts of south-east Wales and the southern March may well betoken permanent domestic occupation; but its relative scarcity or even total absence from forts elsewhere merely confirms the lack of ceramic containers in the household equipment of those areas." (1965: 186).

He suggested that such variations could indicate differences in function, such that whilst some monuments may have been permanently inhabited, others were only seasonally occupied. He adopted a crude form of site catchment analysis, arguing that the communities who built hillforts practised a mixed farming regime. In Wales and the Marches he noted that many hillforts were located in areas of upland pasture, which had traditionally been grazed in the summer months, yet were also located close enough to lower ground to allow easy access to arable land. Consequently, Alcock proposed that these sites could have acted as refuges against cattle raiding whilst the higher pastures were being exploited. He used the hillforts on the Clwydian Hills of north Wales to illustrate his argument, suggesting that these sites lay at the heart of the tribal territory of the Deceangli. As a result, Alcock concluded that: -

"At the time of the summer hostings...the bulk of the herds was well protected in the centre of the tribal territory, and had a group of large forts to retire to if threatened by raiders." (1965: 189)..

I would argue that Alcock's paper had important implications for interpretations of the nature of the Iron Age communities of the Welsh Marches. Within this model warfare was still seen as important but took place on a smaller scale than was usually thought to have been the case. In addition, transhumance was clearly deemed to have been an important aspect of the annual round for some groups within the community. Alcock's comments concerning the variation between the archaeological residues from the hillforts of this region are also extremely important, not least because he avoids judging them in relation to those from southern England. As a result, we are given the impression that, rather than being the poorer cousins of the hillfort building communities of Wessex, the material conditions that people inhabited in Wales and the Marches during the first millennium BC were significantly different to those that existed in southern England at this time. In recent years many of these proposals have begun to find greater favour amongst those involved in hillfort studies. Indeed they essentially provided one of the starting points for this thesis. At the time, however, Alcock's paper did little to change the prevailing view of the hillforts in the central Marches. Guilbert (1975a, 1976a) later argued for a non-defensive function for a number of smaller upland enclosures (i.e. the Stitt Hill enclosures and Caer Din Ring) in Shropshire, again favouring a link with pastoral activities. However, this explanation was only employed for sites that were located in positions that made little strategic sense in relation to the local topography. However, the majority of commentators continued to favour both the invasion hypothesis and martial explanations, as exemplified by many of the papers that were delivered at the CBA conference on the Iron Age in the Irish Sea Province in 1968 (Thomas (ed.) 1972).

Part of the reason why Alcock's arguments failed to find favour amongst those working in the central Marches was due the work of Stanley Stanford. Over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s Stanford conducted a series of hillfort excavations in this region. He began at Croft Ambrey, Herefordshire between 1960 and 1966, and worked at Creden Hill, Herefordshire in 1963; at Midsummer Hill, Herefordshire from 1969-1970 and finally at the Wrekin in Shropshire in 1973 (Stanford 1970, 1974, 1981, 1984). His excavation strategy involved the selective trenching of ramparts and entrances, and small-scale sampling of interiors and had much in common with Wheeler's approach to hillforts. However, due to the

difficulties he experienced in interpreting the complex sequence from the eastern gateway at Croft Ambrey, he changed his approach from box grid style trench layouts to the investigation of larger areas (1974: 66-72).

I will leave a more detailed consideration of Stanford's methodological procedures, as well as the chronological framework he proposed, until later in the thesis (see Chapter 6). I feel that both of these elements of his work continue to exert a significant influence upon the way in which the construction of these monuments is understood in the Marches. Re-evaluating these factors will, therefore, be more relevant to the arguments I will develop later. At this stage it is sufficient to note that, although Stanford accepted the early dates for hillforts that were beginning to emerge in the late 1960s (e.g. Savory 1971, Musson 1971 – see below for further comment), he still felt that there was a major horizon of hillfort building in the central Welsh Marches in the 4th or 5th century BC (Stanford 1971, 1972a, 1974). He supported this by claiming that a close correlation existed between the structural sequences for the earthworks of a number of key hillforts in the region – although, as I will demonstrate later, this argument is now open to question.

Stanford contended that the invasion hypothesis provided the best explanation for the evidence he was encountering in his excavations.

“What we are envisaging... is an incursion into the rich farmlands of Wessex and the comparably fertile areas of the Welsh Border by a group of warriors bringing the hill-fort idea and rectangular buildings some time between about 600 and 450 BC followed c. 300 BC by new adventures from the Continent who introduced the guard-roomed inturned entrance and a military organization that could maintain permanent guards.” (1972a: 33-4)

From this citation we can see that Stanford has retained Chitty's (1937a) argument that the 'guard chambers', represent a distinctive type fossil, which could be used to determine the presence of certain cultural groups. He also argued that many of these monuments were permanently inhabited, and represented the only form of settlement in the Marches at this time. This rested upon the assertion that a significant proportion of the closely spaced four posters within the interiors of the hillforts of the Welsh Marches fulfilled a domestic function. He claimed that this assertion was supported by the evidence from Croft Ambrey and the Wrekin, where some of these buildings appeared to be associated with hearths. Stanford felt that he had found no evidence for any other kinds of structures within these parts of the hillfort interiors

that he had investigated. As a result, he felt confident that this was a widespread phenomenon, dismissing the possibility that other types of structure might exist on the basis that "...no round house of the Iron Age has yet been found in Herefordshire..." (1972a: 32). Again, as I will argue in Chapter 6, this claim can now be refuted, to the extent that it now appears that Stanford's excavation techniques, and his preconceptions, conspired against him.

I would suggest, however, that one of the most compelling factors that led Stanford to argue against the presence of round houses was his desire to explain the hillfort building tradition in terms of the invasion hypothesis. He (1971:47, 1972a: 32, 1974: 235, 1981: 165) consistently argued that the presence of square and rectangular post built structures in Herefordshire hillforts, together with the apparent lack of roundhouses, indicated the presence of an 'intrusive element' within the Iron Age population. This group was thought to derive from north-western France on the basis of supposed parallels with square structures within some Breton coastal hillforts (cf. Wheeler 1938, 1943, 1957). However, Stanford argued against a mass population movement: -

"We do not have to bring the whole hill-fort population from abroad but a heavy lacing of new chieftains is surely needed to carry out this reorganisation." (1971: 48)

The four post structures are thus seen to represent a new architectural tradition, which was brought to the Marches by an invading elite and imposed upon the indigenous population. This formed part of the 'reorganisation' that Stanford referred to (the others being a fresh 'wave' of hillfort building and the introduction of Malvernian pottery styles) and which he felt marked a significant break from circular building traditions of the Bronze Age. He claimed that this process was also evident in, amongst other things, the pottery assemblages. This 'duck' stamped pottery was thought to combine elements of the earlier Iron Age A/ Late Bronze Age ceramic traditions, with decorative styles similar to those that were current in north-western France. Consequently, he argued "...that the native was not removed from the area, but was perhaps taken into the communities organized by the hill-fort warlords." (1972a: 33). Stanford maintained that his evidence provided a serious challenge to Hodson's (1964) notion of broad continuity across the course of the first millennium

BC. He also concluded that it "...disposes of the main argument against the invasion hypothesis as an explanation of the hillfort phenomenon." (Stanford 1971: 47).

For Stanford it was the medieval period, and in particular the Norman Conquest and its aftermath, that provided the most fitting source of analogy when it came to explaining the social organisation of the Iron Age hillfort building communities of the central Welsh Marches. In particular he drew direct parallels between the knightly elite of the Norman period and the 'new chieftans' of the Iron Age.

"These were the 'Border Barons' of the earlier Iron Age, taking over the land of the Border even as the Normans were to do millennium and more later." (Stanford 1972a: 34).

Again here we can see a direct mapping of the medieval socio-political organisation of this region onto the Iron Age. What we are presented with is a picture of a series of communities occupying fortified hilltop towns, in which the majority of the inhabitants were the descendants of indigenous groups. They were dominated by a small martial elite, derived ultimately from north-western France, who had brought the prevailing architectural styles and forms of pottery decoration with them. However, beyond the assertion that the indigenous population of the region had been 'absorbed' into the re-organised settlements of the new elite, we gain little impression of the social dynamics that operated in these communities. Thus, the pre-existing population appears silent and inert, whilst those at the top of the social hierarchy shape the overall history of the region.

Stanford was not the only commentator who continued to rely on direct analogies drawn from the medieval period. For instance, H.N. Savory, who excavated Dinorben in North Wales during the mid-late 1960s (1971a & b), also drew implicit parallels with the medieval history of the region. In his (1976) general discussion of the Iron Age hillforts of Wales and the Marches he divided the principality into of four geographical regions (north west, south west, south east and north east), which he proposed corresponded to cultural areas during the Iron Age. As such, he stated that his major concern was to define "...at what stage and with what intensity..." these regions, together with the Marches, were influenced

"...not only by various continental 'contacts' and 'influences' but by actual movements of people, displaced by periodical upheavals which we know took place on the Continent..." (1976: 241).

Within this interpretation the metalwork from the region was thought to be particularly indicative of these cultural ‘influences’, which he felt ultimately derived from the Continent, and in particular from Central France and Lower Normandy. Savory’s discussion of the Late Bronze Age/ earliest Iron Age hoard from Llyn Fawr, for example, neatly summarises the way in which he utilised this theory. He proposed that the hoard represented booty taken by raiders from South Wales who had plundered the various items from a “...rich settlement...” either located on the edge of the Bristol Channel or in the Welsh Marches (ibid. :253). Savory (ibid. :253) then goes on to argue: -

“As before, the horse harness and weapons hint at the presence of an immigrant warrior class. This time, however, the nature of the deposit at Llyn Fawr probably reflects the opposition to this new element in the population of the Severn Basin and the regions to the south of it...no doubt it is in this context of tribal warfare that we should see the growth of hillfort building in the Welsh Marches.” (1976: 253).

Here, yet again, we have the notion that the Welsh Marches represented a frontier zone in the first millennium BC. Similarly, the building of hillforts represented the response of an invasive elite to continued ‘opposition’ from groups in Wales. Thus these monuments are viewed as the settlements of a population dominated by an “...influential foreign element...”, and provided a means of maintaining control of a fertile hinterland (Savory 1976: 255). Savory’s suggestion that the Iron Age communities of Wales were culturally conservative also illustrates the continuing influence that Fox’s Highland/ Lowland Zones had upon those who worked in this region.

Stanford’s and Savory’s work formed part of a broader reaction to the criticisms of the invasion hypothesis, as it was applied to the Iron Age, which had been made in the 1960s. The views of those who still favoured this explanation at the end of this decade were captured by Denis Harding (1970) in an article entitled ‘The ‘New’ Iron Age’, published in *Current Archaeology*. In it Harding, who had worked closely with Hawkes, proceeded to criticise both Hodson’s and Clarke’s approach, and concluding that: -

“...recent schemes of the British Iron Age seem to have little to commend them in preference to the more widely adopted ABC system of classification.” (1970: 236).

If Harding was hoping for a return to Hawkes’ scheme he must have been dismayed by the results of a new set of hillforts excavations, which were beginning to emerge

at this time. In 1965 Alcock had criticised the prevailing approach to hillfort excavation for concentrating "...to excess on examining ramparts and entrances, which are usually poor in finds, at the expense of internal features..." (1965:185). In his excavations at Cadbury Castle he sought to remedy this imbalance (Alcock 1972, Barrett *et al.* 2000). One of the major aims of the project was to recover an extended ceramic sequence from a securely stratified series of deposits (Alcock 1980).

Alcock felt that this would allow him to review the Hawkes/ Hodson debate from an informed position, and thus resolve some of the historical problems in the Iron Age of southern England. To achieve this he conducted a series of open area excavations on the defences and the interior of the site, with the result that Cadbury Castle remains one of the best understood hillforts in Britain.

Two of Alcock's assistants at Cadbury Castle - Chris Musson and Graeme Guilbert - went on to conduct a series of open area hillfort excavations in Wales and the Marches. In regional terms it is hard to underestimate the importance of Musson's (1991) work at the Breiddin, Powys from 1969-1976, and Guilbert's (1975b, 1976b, 1977) excavations at Moel-y-Gaer, Flintshire. Together with Laurence Keen and Peter Hough's investigations at Beeston Castle, Cheshire from 1968-1985 (Ellis 1993), these excavations demonstrated that certain aspects of Stanford's invasionist model were fundamentally incorrect. Similarly, as a result of the routine collection of radio-carbon dates these sites were added to the growing list of British hillforts with Late Bronze Age origins. Thus, they conclusively demonstrated that the hillfort building tradition in the Welsh Marches, as elsewhere in Britain, spanned much of the first millennium BC. The evidence could not, therefore, be forced into the kinds of 'short' chronologies that were favoured in the culture-history explanations. These dates demonstrated that hillforts had much longer and more complex histories than had previously been imagined. Likewise, the area excavations of their ramparts revealed structural inconsistencies that invasionist interpretations had not anticipated and, ultimately, could not satisfactorily explain. Thus, it was becoming increasingly obvious that

"...in dealing with a hillfort's defences only by an extensive excavation can one hope to achieve the three principal objectives involved; namely, the full range and extent of the defences, their accurate interpretation and reconstruction, and their relationships to the structural and stratigraphical material of the enclosed settlement." (Guilbert 1975b:117)

It is my belief that the full implications these excavations have for our understandings of the first millennium BC in the central Welsh Marches are only now beginning to be recognised. Because they provide the starting points for any reappraisal of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age sequences from this region, I will return to consider them in the detail they deserve in Chapters 5 and 6.

For the time being, however, I want to note that these shifts formed part of a broader series of changes that were occurring in British archaeology at this time. Open area excavations were beginning to provide the source material that allowed researchers to ask new and more detailed questions about the socio-economic organisation of Iron Age communities. The information that such studies generated served to further discredit traditional interpretations. For instance, developments in the study of the Iron Age pottery from the Welsh Marches undermined some of the key aspects of the invasionist models for the region. David Peacock's (1968) pioneering petrographic work, which has subsequently been enhanced by Morris (1981, 1982, 1985), resulted in the definition of five Iron Age fabric groups for the region. The tempering material for these fabric groups seems to be derived from an area focused upon the Malvern Hills (hence the use of the term 'Malvernian ware'), with an outlying source in the Clee Hills in Shropshire. Peacock (1968) and Morris (1981, 1994, 1996) argued that the distribution patterns of this material reflect some form of specialist pottery production at a limited range of production centres. In other words, some groups within the region appear to have concentrated upon making pottery, which was subsequently exchanged over relatively wide areas. Whilst Stanford (1972a, 1974) accepted Peacock's suggestion that this material was the product of 'professional' potters, he continued to argue that the decorative designs that were applied to this pottery were influenced by the tastes of an invasive elite. Despite this, and regardless of how we view Peacock's work in relation to Blackmore *et al's* (1979) criticisms concerning its failure to take account of pottery decoration, it none-the-less undermined the notion that the duck stamped pottery from the Marches could be directly equated with particular cultural groups. Therefore, another of the central tenets upon which the invasionist models for this region had built was partially dismissed.

Another significant development, during the early 1970s onwards, included the application of 'central place theory' to the Iron Age. Borrowed from the New

Geography of the 1960s and pioneered in archaeology by David Clarke (1968), this approach asserted that the distribution of settlement across the landscape could be explained by mathematical modelling. This could be used to predict the size of the sphere of influence around a group of monuments, or in the case of hillforts, around individual sites. It formed one of the techniques adopted by practitioners of New Archaeology, which ultimately sought to define a series of laws and systemic theories that could be used to explain human behaviour. The approach has been described and criticised in detail elsewhere (e.g. Hodder 1990, Shanks and Tilley 1987b, Trigger 1989). Rather than rehearse the arguments for and against the general principles of New Archaeology here, I shall focus upon the ways in which central place theory was applied in Iron Age studies, particularly by those working in the Welsh Marches. Early examples of its use in relation to the hillforts of southern England include Cunliffe (1971) and Hogg (1971). Both were working with the assumption that hillforts lay at the apex of the settlement hierarchy and, consequently also at the peak of the social and economic hierarchy. Using this premise they modelled hypothetical territories around a series of sites. Later examples, again developed in relation to sites in southern England, include Collis (1977) and Grant (1986).

Stanford (1972b) attempted to apply some aspects of central place theory to the hillforts of the Marches. He argued that the territory of each site was proportional to the enclosed area and partially delimited by natural features (particularly rivers – see Fig. 2.11). Using a number of other assumptions, including his arguments concerning the function of four-posters (see above), he also sought to reconstruct hillfort populations in the Marches. Guilbert later challenged this aspect of Stanford's work, maintaining that his estimates were based on "...manifest guesswork..." and "...the daring restoration of the total internal plan of the hillfort...following an arguably inadequate sample." (1981:112).

Gent and Dean (1986) developed a slightly different model for the hillforts of the Marches, based upon a form of site catchment analysis. They began from the premise that: -

“As defended sites, hill-forts may owe their immediate sitting largely to topographical factors. There may be no relationship whatsoever between their size and the productivity of land in the immediate surroundings, which may sometimes consist largely of very steep hillsides. The hill-forts may have been constructed, maintained and provisioned by labour and produce not from the immediate vicinity, but rather from a wider catchment territory.” (1986: 29).

Gent and Dean plotted hillfort size (i.e. size of area enclosed) against catchment productivity for a range of different site catchment radii. In their analysis they only considered those sites upon which four post structures, which were by now largely accepted as being granaries (cf. Gent 1982), had been found (a total of nine sites). They examined two factors – potential catchment size and catchment productivity, which they determined using the Ordnance Survey Map of Land Classification for 1944 (see Chapter 3). Plotting these variables against one another they found that the highest correlation coefficient was obtained at a catchment radius of 5 km. Whilst acknowledging that their sample size was too small to be statistically significant, Gent and Dean asserted that this catchment size “...does not support Stanford’s supposition that the hill-forts were sometimes the only settlements.” (1986: 30). The large numbers of crop mark enclosures sites that had been discovered by the mid-1980s certainly appeared to support this assertion. As a result, Gent and Dean concluded that the “...analysis seems to indicate that the hill-forts were provisioned from as yet poorly recognised settlements which were located in the enlarged catchments of the hillforts.” (ibid). They also argued that their analysis suggested that there were no ‘internal hierarchies’ between the hillforts of the region.

Gent and Dean were certainly right to criticise Stanford’s notion that hillforts were the only type of settlement that existed in the Welsh Marches in later first millennium. We can now be fairly certain that many of the cropmark enclosure sites also date to this period (see Chapter 6 for a full discussion). However, their argument rested on four key assumptions: that hillforts are primarily defensive monuments, that they were permanently occupied; that they lay at the top of the settlement hierarchy; and that the productivity of the landscape around them had remained the same over the past two millennia. As a consequence, in their thesis hillforts appeared to lie at the centre of the socio-economic system in this region. As

we have already seen, however, Alcock (1965) had already questioned the validity of the first two points. Similarly, because of the lack of evidence from the smaller enclosures it was, at that time at least, impossible to tell whether the hillforts really did lie at the top of the settlement hierarchy. Both Morris (1994, 1996) and Hill (1995b) have criticised the notion that hillforts lay at the centre of Iron Age economic relations (see Section 2.5.2. below). On the basis of the environmental evidence, the uniformitarian assumption that the agricultural productivity of the land in the central Welsh Marches has remained unchanged over the past two and a half millennia is also open to question (see Chapter 3 & 4). We must consider whether the communities of the later first millennium shared our concepts of productive vs. marginal land and our desire to maximise agricultural production (cf. Brück 2000 for a discussion of these issues in relation to the Middle Bronze Age sequence from southern England). Likewise, Gent and Dean also fail to take account of two other highly important variables: synchronic variations between different sites, and diachronic variations in the function of each site. Thus, in many ways their argument fails to account for the subtlety of the archaeology of the first millennium BC in this region.

Arguably the single most influential model of hillfort society over the past three decades, however, is the one that has been developed by Barry Cunliffe (e.g. 1984 b, 1991, 1995, 2000). From 1969-1988 Cunliffe directed the excavation of Danebury in Hampshire, the most extensive investigation of a British hillfort to date (Cunliffe 1984 a & b, 1995, Cunliffe and Pool 1991 a & b). The earthworks boundaries of this site have been extensively sampled and a total of 57% of the interior of the site excavated using open area techniques. The sheer size of the resulting data set means that Danebury continues to dominate our perceptions of the Iron Age of southern England – and indeed much of the rest of the British Isles as well. Similarly, the speed with which Cunliffe has published the findings has meant that other researchers have had ready access to the data, thus ensuring that it is also one of the most commonly discussed sites from the first millennium BC.

This work, together with the more recent Danebury Environs Project (Cunliffe 2000), has allowed Cunliffe to develop a model of the hillfort building communities of Wessex. Until relatively recently it gained widespread acceptance amongst prehistorians, despite the persistent criticisms put forward that some commentators

(e.g. Collis 1981, Haselgrove 1986 a & b, Hill 1995b, Stopford 1988). This success was partially founded upon the two factors – the sizes of the data set and the speed of publication – already mentioned. However, I would argue that it also stems from the way in which Cunliffe brought together aspects of both the Wheeler/Hawkes and the Bersu/ Hodson/ Clark approach to the British Iron Age. For instance, Cunliffe (1984 a & b) sought to explain the economic organisation of the communities that inhabited the hillforts, and to explain their relationship with the surrounding environment. He drew heavily upon central place theory whilst, at the same time, maintaining that hillforts fulfilled a primarily defensive function. Cunliffe also used the refined ceramic chronology from the Danebury to define a series of ceramic ‘style zones’ for southern England, which he argued were related to the ethnic composition of the region. Finally, in seeking to explain the nature of the social relations that existed within the Iron Age communities he was investigating he drew upon a variety of classical and early medieval documentary sources. The result was, in effect, a quasi-feudalistic model of ‘Celtic’ Iron Age society (see Fig. 2.12).

Cunliffe (1984a) proposed that hillfort building began in Wessex in the earliest Iron Age (800-550 BC), when lightly ‘defended’ hilltop enclosures (e.g. Balkerne I, Hampshire) were used by members of the wider community in connection with pastoral activities. These monuments contrasted these with a number of much smaller “...strongly defended and intensively occupied sites...” like the Badbury enclosure (ibid. 18). He argued that these sites were occupied by members of the social elite, who controlled inter-regional exchange and the circulation of prestige goods such as bronze objects.

During the Early Iron Age (550-400 BC), Cunliffe argued that the structure of these inter-regional exchange networks collapsed, leading to a period of social crisis (1984a: 30). This forced the social elite to seek a new basis for their power in land ownership and control of agricultural production. He suggested that they attempted to legitimate this new power base through the creation of smaller but more heavily defended hilltop enclosure - the early hillforts (e.g. the early phases of Danebury). Cunliffe maintained that these new sites combined the functions served by the earlier hilltop enclosures and the elite ‘fortlets’. However, the supposed turbulence of this ‘transitional phase’ rested upon the circular argument that the burning of hillfort

entrances and ramparts resulted from violent assaults, which were themselves taken as an indication of wider social unrest (see also Section 2.5.2 below).

Cunliffe (1984a: 31) argued that this social system persisted across much of the Middle Iron Age (400-100 BC). However, during this period many of the early hillforts went out of use, whilst the more successful sites were enlarged and provided with monumental boundaries beyond what was required for defence alone. These 'developed' hillforts "...exhibit remarkable regularity in their spacing, with each fort dominating a distinct block of territory..." (ibid.: 27). Cunliffe suggested that the assemblages recovered from these sites indicate that they increasingly came to act as central places and, therefore, as the seats of those at the very top of the social hierarchy (see Fig. 2.12). Below the topmost strata (the 'kings'), existed a group of 'nobles' and 'skilled men' (i.e. crafts specialists etc.). Whilst he thought that the evidence for craft production suggested that the skilled men largely resided within the hillforts, some of the nobility may have lived beyond them: -

"...some may have occupied lesser forts such as Lockleys or Dunwood or lived within the ramparts of the earlier hillforts Balkerne and Winklebury, the defences representing a mark of status." (1984b: 561).

Below the nobility, Cunliffe argued for the existence of a 'freeman' class of farmers, who occupied the Little Woodbury type farmstead enclosures. All three levels were linked by a redistributive economy founded upon relations of clientage and patronage, in which agricultural surpluses were given in exchange for promises of loyalty and protection. However, he argued that the basis for this economy upon the arable cultivation of thin upland soils, manured by increasingly large flocks of sheep. In the long term this is suggested to have resulted in soil degradation and a fall in yield, with the 'knock on' effect of food shortages and increased social stress (e.g. Cunliffe 1995: 96, Fig. 41). Cunliffe argued that this eventually resulted in a renewed period of crisis around 100 BC, another collapse in the social system and the abandonment of the majority of the remaining hillforts.

Although based upon evidence derived from a limited area of Wessex, Cunliffe and others have extended this model to include the communities who built the hillforts in the Welsh Marches. For instance, Cunliffe argued that "...the broad sequence of development has much in common with the Wessex pattern." (1991: 364). Most

recently, Lynch *et al.* have argued that pattern of socio-economic organisation in this region consisted of

“...a redistributive economy...where agricultural surpluses were stored and exchanged, and political power was vested in dominant chiefs who exercised their authority from major hillforts.”(2000: 219).

Although Cunliffe (1995, 2000) has sought to modify some aspects of his model in recent years the key elements have remained largely unchanged. As a result they have come under sustained attack, particularly from J.D. Hill (1989, 1995a & b), whose critique I will deal with in greater detail in the next section. At this point I wish to make two points with regard to Cunliffe’s thesis. Firstly, the way in which it has been applied to the Marches denies the essential differences in the material conditions that existed in this region in the later first millennium BC. As discussed earlier in this section, these differences had been recognised by the middle of the 20th century, and in some ways had been incorporated into the culture-history models of the time. Whilst those who favoured invasionist explanations always explained these differences in relation to the sequence from southern England, they were non-the-less still present. However, Cunliffe’s model essentially denied that they existed at all (see also Chapter 6).

Secondly, Cunliffe’s model pushed the ‘medievalist view’ of the Iron Age to new extremes. The social relations that existed in this period were portrayed as being rigidly hierarchical, with the social elite occupying defended castle like settlements. As with the feudal system of the Middle Ages, the basis of power though to rest upon elite ownership of land and control of agricultural production. I wish to follow Hill (1989) here, and argue that this denies the essential *difference* of the Iron Age. Part of this difference rested upon the fact that these communities were pre-literate (with the possible exception of some regions at the very end of the first millennium BC). I do not make this point in a judgemental sense. I merely wish to point out that texts played a fundamental role in the social relations of the medieval period. As Moreland (2001) argues, text enables the existence of particular forms of social relations, particularly the keeping of records, which provide the elite with the means of extending and legitimating their control over others, *and* those with less social authority with a means of resisting that control. Consequently,

“...the very fact of documentation is an agent of transformation...A society which documents itself is of its very nature a very different form of society to one which does not” (Austin 1990:29-30 cited in Moreland 2001: 26).

Because texts were not a component of the material conditions that people inhabited in the later first millennium in the central Welsh Marches we *cannot* draw direct analogies between communities of this period and those of the medieval period. One of the principal aims of this thesis is, therefore, to consider the nature of the communities that built the hillforts once the assumption that they were similar to those of the Norman period has been removed.

2.4.3 Summary.

In this section I have discussed the nature of the changes that occurred in Iron Age studies over the course of the second half of the 20th century. In so doing I have attempted to demonstrate how a paradigm shift gradually took place within this branch of archaeology, which drew its inspiration both from other parts of the discipline and from changes in the methodological procedures that were applied in the field. Thus, for instance, in the immediate post-war period the ‘Hawkesian’ ABC framework for the British Iron Age persisted, and hillforts continued to be interpreted within a militaristic, invasionist paradigm. This view was supported by the continuing application of excavation strategies that placed an emphasis on investigating the ramparts of these monuments – a technique which had become closely linked with Wheeler (Evans 1989:444).

During the 1960s this approach was called into question. This resulted in a widening of the differences between the various factions within Iron Age and hillfort studies, which had originally emerged as a result of the differences between Wheeler’s and Bersu’s methodologies. The nature of the changes that took place in these periods were complex, and were driven by a wide range of factors. With the development of new methodologies and techniques came the emergence of new ideas and theories, such that the basic premises upon the invasionist approach to hillforts was founded were called into question. Similarly, the numbers of people entering the archaeological profession increased dramatically, as did the range of backgrounds from which they were drawn. At the same time changes occurred within the institution structures that supported the discipline at both the university and the state

level (Wainright 2000). This meant that researchers had a broader range of interests and asked a broader research related questions. At the broadest level, Britain's position on the world stage had changed greatly. With the loss of the empire and the emergence of the two new nuclear Super Powers, Britain found itself having to reinvent its sense of identity. Many of the certainties that had once existed concerning the 'rights' of certain groups to govern others had been removed. At the same time the complex interplay of both domination and resistance in shaping social relations had become more obvious. These are of course factors which require detailed consideration in their own right, which the restrictions of time and space do not permit me to undertake here.

Yet, for all the differences that emerged between the new and the traditional approaches to hillforts at this time, one can also see a number of basic similarities between the 'invasionist' and the 'palaeo-economic' approaches. Whilst both relied upon differing excavation methodologies and approaches to the building of chronologies, most of the models developed by the two schools shared a number of common denominators. For instance, both rest upon a set of deep rooted assumptions; that hill forts occupied a position at the top of the contemporary settlement hierarchy, that those who required them to be built occupied a position at the top of the social hierarchy, and that these monuments fulfilled a defensive function. In many ways, these similarities resulted from the way in which both schools explained social change within prehistoric communities. As suggested above, within the invasionist paradigm social change is seen to result from both the actions of the social elite and through cultural/ ethnic conflict. Within this model the role of internal social tension and conflict is either played down or denied. Tilley (1989) has developed a similar critique of the 'New archaeology' and its claim to offer an objective account of the past. As we have seen, the uses of central place theory and site catchment analysis are examples of the 'systems theory' advocated by David Clarke (1968), amongst others. Tilley argues that within such models of society: -

“Stability is taken to be the norm and systems are presumed to change only in order to remain stable; they are characterised as searching out and converging on desirable states...” (1989: 107)

Internal social tensions and conflicts are again down played in such explanations, because they run contrary to the requirement for social stability. As a result, Tilley argues that “Systems theory lends support to any social order”, such that “Any pre-existing state, apparently, is a state for the good” (1989: 108). Therefore, within such a hierarchical society, the lower orders were viewed as ‘inert’. They played no significant role in the social process because any resistance to the existing social order or desire for social change is inevitably seen as ‘bad’. Within such a system, those of lesser social status become so much easier to dismiss. I will return to this discussion later, with specific reference to the construction of hillforts ramparts (see Chapter 6).

Over the past decade many of the assumptions upon which Cunliffe and others built their alternative models of the Iron Age have been called into question. This has resulted in very significant changes in way in which the communities of the later first millennium are conceptualised. It is to these discussions that I must now turn.

2.5.0. Remastering the Iron Age?: some comments upon recent developments in Iron Age studies.

Writing in a rhetorical tone, J.D. Hill (1989) once labelled the British Iron Age as ‘boring’ in comparison to earlier periods of prehistory. Hill was one of a number of researchers who were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the prevailing views of the period. As a result of the critiques that have been developed these commentators over the past decade and a half, our conceptions of the period have now changed significantly. Placing the archaeologies that this paradigm shift has produced in a single, coherent (post-processual) school of thought would be a gross over simplification. Despite this, the underlying motivation behind these changes was a desire to write a different set of histories for the communities of the first millennium BC. In shaping these histories, and in our attempts to escape economic and environmental determinism, we have dwelt upon a wide set of readings drawn from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and literary criticism. The work of scholars investigating earlier periods of British prehistory has also proved influential (cf. Hill 1989, 1995a). The result is a set of archaeologies that are informed by and

cohere around a broad body of social theory. Thus, for example, some seek to explain the changes we observe within the material conditions of Iron Age communities as being the product human agency (e.g. Barrett 1989a, Barrett *et al.* 2000). Others prefer so see patterning within the archaeological material as being the product of repeated forms of behaviour, as people lived out their lives in relation to a particular set of understandings of the world (Parker Pearson and Richards 1993). As a consequence, most commentators would now accept that our vision of the period has now changed significantly. However, I would argue many of the new ways of approaching the Iron Age have largely ignored the evidence from the Welsh Marches (although see Jackson 1999). Here I will briefly assess what implications these developments have for our understandings of the hillforts of this region, although I will enter into detailed discussion of some points in later chapters.

Firstly, we now recognise that Iron Age depositional practises were very different to our own, historically situated notions regarding the treatment and disposal of portable objects (Hill 1995a). Similarly, we are, to varying degrees, prepared to accept that the organisation and inhabitation of domestic space during this period may have been guided by frames of reference that differ from our own (Evans 1997, Oswald 1997, Parker Pearson and Richards 1993). At the broader scale, we are no longer satisfied with seeing the landscape as a passive backdrop to human action. Rather, some prefer to see social practises as being partially shaped by, and as giving form to, the landscape, such that the material and social worlds become mutually constituted (Barrett 1999a, Gosden 1997). Such concerns, together with an increased awareness of the embeddedness of material culture in the production and reworking of social relations, has also resulted in a resurgence of interest in the production of regional archaeologies (Bevan 1999, Champion and Collis 1996, Gwilt and Haselgrove 1997). These have highlighted the variability that existed in the Iron Age sequences from the different parts of Britain. In so doing, we have made conscious efforts to avoid viewing the Iron Age in these areas as synonymous with, and directly comparable to, that of Wessex.

Another major focus of research in Iron Age studies over the past decade has been the active questioning of the purpose and function of the various categories of monuments attributable to the first millennium BC. This has been particularly true of hillforts. Bowden and McOmish (1987, 1989) and Hingley (1990) have suggested

that hillfort ramparts may have fulfilled a range of functions beyond mere defence. Taking Maiden Castle in Dorset as an example, Bowden and McOmish (1987:77) propose that the defences of multivallate hillforts may have been built for the purposes of display. They argue that, whilst from the outside the earthworks of Maiden Castle seem immensely imposing, from the inside this impression is deceptive. This effect is was achieved by digging extremely deep ditches and constructing ramparts "...with just enough mass to appear daunting from without." (ibid.: 77). As a result Bowden and McOmish conclude that multivallation could have fulfilled two non-utilitarian roles. Firstly, they argue the boundaries of the hillfort could of acted as a conceptual device, which acted to reinforce the social isolation of those who inhabited the hillforts interior. Secondly, they could have act to enhance the prestige of the community who inhabited the hillfort (ibid.: 77).

Bowden and McOmish (1987:79) used this argument to attack the prevailing interpretation of the martial character of hillforts. For instance, they suggest that the burning of ramparts and gateways does not provide direct evidence for attacks on these monuments. They note that a number of placed deposits have been found in association with burnt areas of hillfort defences (e.g. a decorated bronze shield from the ramparts of Moel Hirradug, Clwyd and several horse skeletons from the entrance to Blewburton Hill, Berks). Therefore, Bowden and McOmish asserted that firing of hillfort ramparts could have been a deliberate, ritualised act by the occupants of the hillforts. They also disputed the link between hoards of 'sling stones' and the defence of hillforts, arguing that it many cases these deposits occur in locations that would have made it extremely difficult to bring them into rapid use. Similarly, they note that those hoards that have been found close to hillfort entrances never appear to have been used. They argue that the lack of definitive evidence for violent conflict at hillforts stands in marked contrast to that from a number of Neolithic causewayed enclosures (e.g. Hambledon Hill, Crickley Hill etc), where the evidence for raiding is much more clear-cut.

In a subsequent paper Bowden and McOmish (1989) expand their argument concerning the non-defensive nature of hillforts. Using the hillforts of Scratchbury and Whitesheet Hill in Wiltshire as examples, they observed that the topographical locations of some hillforts make little strategic sense. The interior of both these sites were visible when standing outside the ramparts, which is normally considered to

render a site as indefensible. Yet both monuments are positioned in such a way that, when approaching their entrances, one is confronted with a number of earlier burial monuments. As a consequence, Bowden and McOmish state that: -

“At Whitesheet Hill as at Scratchbury we believe that the highly visible choice of location and the spatial arrangement of the monument points to a series of events which may have involved and dealt with the physical remains in a sequential manner, in both cases the ultimate focus being the hillfort (1989: 15).

I will return to Bowden and McOmish's (and Hingley's) arguments concerning boundaries of Iron Age sites later (see Chapter 6). We might note, however, that their criticisms of the military/ defensive interpretation of hillforts are in some respects similar to those of Alcock (1965). They certainly make it clear that the boundaries of these sites probably fulfilled a whole range of functions above and beyond defence. We might also suggest that the very size and scale of some of these monuments would have required massive numbers to defend them against a determined assailant. Yet, to some extent, Bowden and McOmish are also in danger of 'pacifying' the Iron Age (cf. Sharples 1991a). The pathology on skeletons from Danebury (Cunliffe and Pool 1991b) and also the bodies in some of the square barrow burials in East Yorkshire (Giles 2001), amongst many others, indicate that interpersonal violence was a factor in the social relations of the later first millennium BC. I would argue that in our discussions of Iron Age warfare and violence we have often failed to provide a set of convincing arguments because we have not adequately addressed the *scale* of conflict in this period. Doing so requires us to understand how violence as a form of social relations operated within these communities, given that we now perceive them to be less hierarchical than has traditionally been the case (see also Chapter 6 for more discussion on this point).

Perhaps the most influential re-evaluation of hillforts over the past decade, however, has come within Hill's corpus of work. He (1995b) adopted many of Bowden and McOmish's arguments in his devastating attack on Cunliffe's model of hillfort society in Wessex. He pointed out that Cunliffe thesis rested upon a series of key assumptions, which he terms the 'Biggest is Best' theory (ibid.: 46): -

- The largest settlements had the biggest populations.
- Thus, they lay at the top of the settlement hierarchy.
- Therefore, they must also have been at the top of the economic system.
- As a result, they also have represented the highest level of the social system.

Hill worked his way through each aspect of the model, testing each point (i.e. 'storage', 'craft production and exchange' and the 'status and scale of the population') in its own terms, on the basis of a critical evaluation of the material evidence. In each case he found Cunliffe's interpretation was open to question, and concluded that: -

“When Cunliffe's 1984 model of hillforts is 'tested' on its own terms it is found wanting. The sites of Danebury and Winklebury do not appear to have the marked differences from the supposed 'lower order' settlements in the region to be expected if they were the peak of a settlement and/or social system.” (1995b: 49)

Hill (1995b: 47) also outlined four further reasons why Cunliffe's use of documentary sources to reconstruct 'Celtic' Iron Age society in Wessex is problematic. These include the fact that this procedure is deeply ahistorical, because it ignores over a thousand years of social change. Likewise, the use of early medieval Irish sources is compromised by the fact that they do not contain any references to monuments like hillforts. In any case, he points out that these sources were written with the intention of portraying an idealised picture of what these societies ought to be. In other words they had efficacy *in the past*, and were not written with the intention of providing an objective view of early medieval society for our benefit (Moreland 2001).

Hill (1995b), therefore, seeks to produce an alternative interpretation of the nature of the hillfort building Iron Age communities of Wessex. He argues that in this region, and other areas with "...dispersed upland societies...", hillforts may have played an important role in the production of a sense of communal identity (ibid.: 54). In such areas the possibility of meeting people who were not part of the immediate kinship/household group on a day-to-day basis may have been reduced. In these circumstances, he argues that the ties of affiliation between individuals may have been weaker. Hill argues that the hillforts may have provided such communities

with a focal point where they could assemble and take part in activities that were seen as important to the continuation of the group. These might include periodic ceremonies, episodes of feasting and the maintenance the earthworks. Similarly he argues that the evidence for communal grain storage "...perhaps had more to do with integrating the community's parts..." than as a precaution against period of unrest (ibid.:54). Hill also maintains that these communities were probably less hierarchical than we have traditionally thought was the case. He suggests that the household may have the basic social unit and that ties were created between such groups through a highly competitive marriage system. In such circumstances, social authority may have been fairly fluid, since the composition of each household would have changed over time. These communities would, therefore, have been smaller in scale and less vertically hierarchical than had previously been thought, with status partly graded along lines of age and gender and the standing of the household. As a consequence, Hill concludes that: -

"...the driving force for change in these social formations [was]...essentially internal and not due to grand environmental or historical forces...These were social forms in which relationships of obligation and alliance created by corporative labour and feasting were the raw material of power and social cohesion."
(1995:55).

Hill's arguments have much to commend them, not least because they have played a vital role in generating fresh debate within Iron Age studies over the past decade. His critique of Cunliffe's model of hillfort society has been particularly useful because it highlighted the deep-rooted assumptions upon which orthodox interpretations of hillforts rested. Questioning the validity of drawing analogies between Iron Age and the early medieval societies requires us to rethink our interpretations of the nature and scale of the communities of the first millennium BC (see Chapter 6). Similarly, Hill's suggestion that internal dynamics played an important part shaping the history of these communities is also highly important.

Yet I would argue that Hill's reinterpretation of Iron Age of Wessex is not without its problems. In his rush to see the people in the Iron Age as 'other', and to colonise the study of them with ideas circulating amongst those investigating earlier periods of prehistory, I suggest that to some extent he lost sight of what precisely it is that make Iron Age communities 'different'. Hill was right to point out that people in the Iron Age lived their lives in relation to a very different set of material conditions to

those that exist today. Thus, we cannot seek the roots of our own society's traditions and institutions within this period. Yet, at the same time, neither do these material conditions constitute "... a record far richer and more suited to discuss many of the issues current in Neolithic studies." (Hill 1989:16). Indeed, the 'Neolithization' of the Iron Age is a tangible element in Hill's work. For instance, in his discussion of hillforts outlined above these monuments appear to have functioned in very similar ways to the causewayed enclosures of the third and fourth millennium BC (cf. Edmonds 1993, 1999a, Evans 1988, Thomas 1991). From Hill's interpretation we conclude that both types of monuments were locales at which dispersed, small-scale communities came together to participate in activities that played an important part in their social reproduction. We are left wondering how the patterning of social relations differed between the Neolithic and the Iron Age, and it is in this sense that the difference of the Iron Age is yet again denied. It is my contention that it is precisely because the material conditions that existed in the Iron Age were both historically constituted and dynamic, that we cannot claim to be confronted with the same 'issues' in both the Iron Age and the Neolithic. In other words, we must view the communities of the later first millennium *in their own terms*. In stating this, however, I do wish to suggest that the onset of the Iron Age represented a distinct break with what had gone before. This represented one of the founding assumptions upon which the 'Invasion Hypothesis' was built. Instead, we can now recognise that many of the material traditions of the Iron Age represent the (unforeseen) outcome of historical processes that had their roots in the first half of the first millennium BC, if not earlier.

2.6.0 Conclusions.

In this chapter I have demonstrated how hillfort studies have developed in the central Welsh Marches. In doing so I have illustrated how, at least over the past 75 years, this particular field of study can be conceived of as a discipline, in Foucault's definitions of the term. Thus we can recognise hillfort studies are a small, but ordered branch of archaeology. At the same time those working within the field have often thought about these monuments in a set way, which have proved to be very hard to overturn. We can also observe that this is a field of enquiry that has undergone several paradigm shifts, as the gradual build up of empirical observations

have caused practitioners to question the assumptions and theories they were working with. In other cases the opposite has proved to be the case, such that some practitioners have developed new theoretical tools that have allowed them to approach the material evidence in different ways. This is essentially the approach I want to take to the hillforts of the Welsh Marches in this thesis.

In my discussion, I have shown how hillfort studies, and Iron Age archaeology in general, represents a subtle interweaving of ideas, methodologies and social forces. With regard to the Welsh Marches, I have argued that those working on hillfort the area in the middle of the 20th century have provided us with a legacy that, in many ways, we are still coming to terms with. As I stated in Chapter 1, it is my contention that these interpretations do not provide a satisfactory account of the communities of the first millennium BC in this region. In this chapter I have deconstructed some aspects of these explanations. Doing so has involved teasing apart the ‘double helix’ of theories and social relations that combine together to form our current understandings of these monuments. Rebuilding the various pieces of evidence to produce a new set of interpretations is the task that I will undertake over the course of the rest of this thesis, working backwards and forwards between the material evidence and our explanatory frameworks. In some parts of Britain researchers have already progressed some way towards this goal and, where relevant, I will, consider some of this work as the discussion develops. Before doing so, however, I wish to outline in greater detail the basic aspects of my methodology.

Chapter 3

Methodology.

3.1.0 Introduction.

As we have just seen, we need to develop new understandings of the nature and scale of the changing patterns of social relations that the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches helped to sustain. This requires us to examine the historical material conditions that led different communities to construct and rework monumental earthwork enclosures over the course of the first millennium BC. To achieve this demands that we view the practices that occurred at hillforts in relation to the inhabitation of the broader landscape. In particular we need to consider the shifting spatial and temporal patterning of activities across these landscapes, thus establishing both a context for and a contrast with the evidence from hillforts. In this chapter I will develop a methodology that will enable us to achieve this aim. I will firstly consider why previous 'landscape scale' analyses of the hillforts of the Welsh Marches are problematic. I will then discuss the theoretical approach to landscape that will form the foundations for the rest of the thesis, before finally outlining the analytical procedure that will facilitate the construction of a new interpretation.

3.2.0 Previous approaches to the landscape context of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the hillforts of the Welsh Marches have long been recognised as belonging to a larger hillfort zone, stretching from the Dee Estuary and Clwydian Hills to the rolling chalk downlands of southern England. Initially the distribution of hillforts along the Marches was explained as a result of the gradual northward progression of Iron Age invaders, who ultimately originated from continental Europe (e.g. Chitty 1937, Varley 1948). However, since the 1970s a number of commentators have attempted to use the size and distribution of these monuments to reconstruct prehistoric population levels and/or social organisation (Hogg 1972, Jackson 1999, Stanford 1972b).

It is worth considering Duncan Jackson's (1999) discussion of this subject in more detail here, since it represents one of the most recent pieces of work on the hillforts of this region. On the basis of the critiques of Cunliffe's model of hillfort society (Hill 1995b, Sharples 1991b), Jackson argues that a reassessment of the hillforts of the Welsh Marches is required. His solution is a map-based analysis of the variation in the size distribution of hillforts along the Marches. Consequently, he places all of the sites classified by Hogg (1979) as hillforts, together with a small number of additional ones identified by the RCAHMW (1986), into one of four size categories – small (0.1 – 1.2 ha), medium (1.3 – 3 ha), large (3.1 – 6 ha) and very large (6.1 ha +) hillforts - based upon the Ordnance Survey's convention (the 'medium' category was added by Jackson). By examining the resulting distribution pattern (see Fig. 3.1) Jackson identifies three zones, each characterised by a particular combination of differently sized hillforts. Zone 1 covers much of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, contains considerable numbers of large (37% of the total) and very large (31% of the total) hillforts (Jackson 1999: 202). In contrast, the majority of sites in Zone 2, which covers Powys and western Shropshire, belong to the small hillforts category (78% of the total). Zone 3 consisted of a mixture of small (36%) and medium (45%) hillforts and covered Clwyd, north Cheshire and Gwent. As an additional component of his analysis Jackson compares these patterns with topography and land capability (as it existed in 1944). Thus in Zone 1 the land is predominantly of low or medium elevation and of good to medium quality (i.e. is classified as being the best *modern* arable land), in Zone 2 to it is predominately high and of poor quality, and in Zone 3 it contains a mixture of high and low land with correspondingly mixed capabilities.

In his interpretation of these patterns Jackson (1999) argues that the small hillforts in Zone 2 lay in an area where 'good land' (i.e. land deemed to be most suitable for modern cultivation) was at a premium. It is suggested that this may have given rise to competition, presumably because different social groups sought to gain control over the most fertile areas. Jackson sees the small hillforts, which often have fairly substantial earthworks and are located in prominent positions within the landscape, as small 'domestic settlements'. Their predominance in this region is thus thought to reflect the existence "...of a segmented, competitive society where organisation was focused upon the household and not the wider society." (ibid.: 207). By contrast,

Jackson argues that in Zone 1 the abundance of good quality land would have resulted in less competition, resulting in an increased emphasis on the wider community. He suggests that this ‘community-based society’ would have required foci where a number of activities important to the larger group, such as feasting, centralised storage and communal defence, could occur. This role, he argues, was fulfilled by the large and very large hillforts, at which: -

“The monumental boundaries... would have been a statement of status on a community level and also a physical and symbolic way of separating the specific activities that took place within the hillforts from those that took place outside them.” (ibid.: 209).

In Zone 3, with its mixed topography and land capability and range of different sized hillforts, Jackson suggests that society displayed a mixture of the traits visible in Zone 1 (intercommunality) and 2 (competition). Thus “Co-operation and the amalgamation of settlements into larger groups was possible, but on a scale limited by the amount of good quality land.” (Jackson 1999: 211).

It is important to acknowledge that Jackson’s model does move our understandings of the hillforts of the Marches forward. He usefully illustrates the diversity that exists between the hillforts in Zone 1. Similarly, his acceptance of Hill’s (1995b) and others suggestion that hillforts fulfilled a range of functions above and beyond defence is welcome. However, at the heart of Jackson’s analysis lies an attempt to ‘read off’ and map the extent of social relations from the distribution pattern of a single class of monuments. As we shall see in Chapter 6, there are reasons his reliance upon sites that survive only as extant earthworks is highly problematic. For our present purposes we can recognise that, whilst in this model the hillforts are no longer assumed to have a predominantly martial character, their presence in the landscape is still seen as representative of particular forms of social organisation. There is effectively little separating Jackson’s approach from those of Hogg (1972) and Stanford (1972b) or, indeed, from many of the authors I discussed in Chapter 2. As we have seen, within these models the presence of hillforts is taken to represent the existence of a pseudo-feudal society, organised around a hillfort based martial elite. However, Barrett (1999a: 256) has argued that: -

“By treating monuments as representative of a certain type of social formation those monuments are effectively disengaged from the actual reproduction and transformation of social life. Rather than being seen as part of the medium by which social practices gained their vitality, monuments are simply treated as a record of those practices.”

Within such perspectives the landscape is, therefore, seen to contain features that retain a record or *memory* of past social relations. Küchler (1993) has argued that in western thought the landscape has often been treated as a surface upon which memories are inscribed. These landscapes *of* memory can be represented in visual form, for instance as a map or a painting, allowing memory to be retrieved from them. Such modes of representation create a distance between the viewer as subject and the object (in this case the landscape) they are contemplating. Thus “Landscape is... seen as a fixed, objectified and measurable description of a surface which is not affected by the project of its representation and remembrance.” (ibid.: 104).

Küchler and others have argued that such a representation of landscape is deeply rooted within western thinking. For instance, Cosgrove (1984) has examined the historical conditions that resulted in the emergence of landscape painting in the European renaissance. He contended that the development of linear perspective in 15th century Italian art allowed painters to represent the world, at a particular moment in time, on a two dimensional surface. This way of depicting landscape essentially placed the observer outside the world, disengaging them from the landscape they were viewing. As Thomas (1993: 22) has commented, “Landscape painting is thus a representation of place which alienates land, such that it can be appropriated by the gaze which looks in from outside.”. Together with cartography, the techniques of which were also transformed during the Renaissance, landscape painting prioritises vision over the other senses. Ingold (1993: 161) has argues that form is thereby given priority over process, both in terms of the painting and the landscape.

These ‘ways of looking’ at the world emerged alongside and complemented nascent capitalism. Indeed, they were both a product of, and implicated in the creation of a new set of ontological understandings. Within the landscape paintings of early modern Europe the alienation of land occurs alongside a denial of its temporality, such that it is no longer seen as the product of human labour (Barrett 1999b). They were, therefore, political in the sense that they were involved in “...the development

of social relations which allowed land to be looked on as a commodity, disengaged from hereditary patterns of tenure, able to be bought and sold at will.” (Thomas 1993: 22). Consequently they are also historically contingent because they arose in relation to a specific set of material conditions.

Relating these points back to the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches, we can see that the form of these monuments has generally been given precedence over the processes by which they came into being. Thus whilst much attention has been devoted to defining and describing the nature of their earthworks and gateways, much less consideration has been given to the practices involved in their construction. For instance, Jackson’s (1999) approach offers us little explanation of *how* hillforts began to be constructed during the first millennium BC. Likewise, as we saw in chapter 2, our plans of these monuments usually depict them as they survive today (see Fig. 3.2), or as a series of major building phases (see Fig 3.3). Whilst I do not wish to suggest that we should abandon the use of such plans; we do need to be aware that they create a significant distance between ourselves on the one hand, and the objects of our study on the other. For instance, such forms of representation tend to compress and standardise the temporality of the labour that went into the creation of these monuments. Together with aerial photographs, such plans allow us to perceive all parts of the site at once. This represents a further denial of their temporality because, as Barrett has argued of maps in general, “...space...[is]...no longer experienced as the commitment of time...” (1999b: 22). Indeed, as Hamilton and Manley have recently argued of the hillforts in south-eastern England, visiting one of these monuments today (and undoubtedly in prehistory) usually involves a “...climb up to the enclosure...”, which in itself obviously takes time (2001: 10). Upon arrival the ways in which the architecture of these monuments works with the topography often ensures that it takes some time to understand the layout of the site. Frequently one can only see a limited proportion of the site (which, incidentally, also makes them very difficult to photograph on the ground) at any given moment, and a deliberate effort has to be made to walk around the circuit of the earthworks in order to comprehend the plan.

Size graded distribution maps have also played a key role in the interpretation of the relationship between hillforts and their broader landscapes. Again, whilst I do not wish to deny the value of distribution maps as *tools* for displaying archaeological

data (see Chapter 5, for instance), we need to be aware that they carry a number of inherent values. For instance, because Jackson's distribution map of hillforts in the Marches only displays one variable in the data (i.e. size of area enclosed), we gain little impression of the diversity and variation that exists even between sites in the same size categories. Such maps effectively standardise the particular histories of individual monuments (see also Chapter 6). Consequently, these forms of representation again deny the temporality of these sites. As such, the space depicted on Jackson's (1999) map has essentially been stripped of human agency. Tilley has referred to this as *abstract* space, "...quite literally a nothingness, a simple surface of action, lacking depth." (1994: 9). It is universal and cross-cultural; it can be objectively measured and described and it exists independently of human social relations. Tilley argues that the 'neutrality' of this space is essentially illusory, since maps allow it to be examined, monitored and controlled. It is alienated and, since it can be measured, it can also be assigned a specific form of value. However, this understanding of space is essentially a product of the social relations that constitute modern western science and is, therefore, historically situated.

I contend that in order to understand the temporality of hillforts we need to pull away from our historically situated preoccupation with their form. Instead we must think more reflexively about the processes through which they were constructed and maintained. Similarly, we must move away from viewing the patterns that our distribution maps reveal as being synonymous with a particular type of social formation. Instead we must regard them as tools that provide us with one way of interrogating the spatial patterning of particular forms of material practice, through which certain kinds of social relations were sustained. What is required is an approach to landscape which places greater emphasis on the processes that shaped it over time. In Küchler's terms we need to think of landscape *as* memory: "...a perspective which holds landscape to be implicated as a template in the process of memory-work." (1993: 86). It is to the definition of such an approach to landscape that we must now turn.

3.3.0 Hillforts as landscape process: defining a new approach to the landscapes of the first millennium BC in the central Welsh Marches.

In this section I will outline the theoretical approach to landscapes that will underlie the rest of this thesis. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, we can no longer assume that the structure of the social relations that existed in the first millennium BC were analogous to those that prevailed in Medieval Europe. Thus, within the central Welsh Marches we cannot view communities of this period as being directly comparable to those of the Norman period. By abandoning the social evolutionary models that were applied to hillforts in the 1970s and 1980s we also reject the inherent notion that they represent a stage in a unilinear progression toward ever more complex modes of social organisation. As Gosden comments: -

“Progress, then, has been made through giving up a notion of progress: we have moved towards a greater humility and away from seeing prehistory as a race towards capitalism with a single European winner and a world of pre-ordained losers.” (1997: 303).

In short the Iron Age, and indeed the preceding later Bronze Age, was *different* (cf. Hill 1989), both to what had gone before and to what was to come afterwards. The social relations that existed in these periods were non-Western and non-industrial. As a result, we need to think more critically about the material conditions that people inhabited during these periods. In contrast to earlier approaches to the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches, I am concerned with investigating how people were made socially through the process of building and inhabiting these monuments. The material and social cannot be separated from one another here. As Gosden argues “...human life depends upon the manner in which the material world is involved in creating human relations, and the way in which human relations are used to shape the material elements of the world.” (1997: 304). As such, we can recognise that, whilst people made hillforts, the monuments themselves played an important role in the socialisation of people.

The practices that occurred at the hillforts did not exist in isolation. Indeed they drew their significance from the position they held within a broader ensemble of routine activities. Ingold (1993) terms these complex and interrelated networks of actions (which he refers to as tasks) the *taskscape*. He argues that each “...task takes its meaning from its position within an ensemble of tasks, performed in series or

parallel, and usually by many people working together.” (ibid: 158). These activities have a spatial component, since they take place in particular locales in the landscape. Their performance also takes time, which those engaged in them experience “...not as spectators but as participants...” (ibid.). Time passes through people as they move around the landscape engaged in or moving between tasks. Thus, as Tilley has argued: -

“Daily passages through the landscape become biographic encounters for individuals, recalling traces of past activities and previous events and the reading of signs – a split log here, a marker stone there.” (1994: 27).

If this holds true for individuals, it must also apply to groups of people because the ‘events’ and ‘activities’ that Tilley mentions will often have involved more than one person. Consequently, the taskscape has a temporality that is socially defined because it is generated by the interaction that occurs between people.

As a result, we can recognise that the mundane tasks of which the taskscape is composed play an important part in the construction and maintenance of social relations. Indeed, routine practice can be seen as essential to the socialisation of the individual. Through his notion of *habitus*, Bourdieu (1977) has argued that the interaction that occurs during day-to-day activities plays a vital part in shaping people’s sense of themselves and the world they inhabit. The ability to perform these tasks may involve an element of formal training. However, as Barrett has stated, “...learning is [also] built out of practical experience, and depends upon the senses of touch, sight, sound and smell.” (1994: 14). We learn by observing and imitating those we work alongside. Thus, just as routine activity has tempo it also has a rhythm, since we continuously adjust “...our movements in response to this ongoing perceptual monitoring.” (Ingold 1993: 160). The understandings that arise through such engagements with the world are all the more powerful because they often remain unarticulated and non-discursive. In other words, *habitus* refers to those forms of habitual knowledge that inform us how to perform a task in a particular way, or that certain forms of action will have a particular outcome.

In my analysis of the hillforts of the central Marches I will, therefore, attend to the patterning of practices that occurred both in and around these monuments. In investigating these taskscapes we must also consider what Edmonds (in press) and Giles (2001) refer to as the *roll call* of participants. This entails taking into account

not only the spatial and temporal aspects of routine practice but also the potential social composition of the groups concerned. As we saw in Chapter 2, within the pre-literate societies that existed in the study area during the first millennium BC, face-to-face interaction was the dominant medium through which social relations were sustained. Thus the ways in which people engaged with others during the course of routine practice would have provided one of the main means by which people came to gain sense of who they were. In the absence of written records, a mass media or rapid communications, the societies that existed in the study area in the first millennium BC are likely to have remained relatively small scale (see also Chapter 6). As Edmonds suggests, under these conditions: -

“Concern with the definition of kin and non-kin and with lines of descent; of women and men; of the elders and their subordinates, and of tenure and personal renown: these are common themes that animate social life and it is around these themes that tensions arise.” (in press).

Giles (2001) has argued that if we accept that social identity is relational, in the sense that it is constantly reproduced and reworked through reflexive engagement with others, then routine practice must have played a fundamental role in shaping people’s social identities. As a result of people’s engagement with individuals that hold different positions within the networks of social relations they are embedded within, these identities are complex and multifaceted. Consequently, the differential patterning of activities across the landscape created the potential for the existence of ‘nested’ sets of social relations and identities, as people interacted with their kin group and affines and people they were less familiar with.

One of the main purposes of my analysis will be to determine what forms of social interaction were sustained through the construction and inhabitation of hillforts. The ways in which we conceive of the taskscape clearly has implications for the ways in which we understand the time scale and character of the practices associated with the building and maintenance of these monuments. The effort that was expended in their construction has to be viewed in relation to the labour demands associated with the agricultural cycle. Building episodes would, therefore, have required scheduling, particularly in relation to the procurement strategies by which the materials used in such construction projects were obtained.

We must also place the social relations that permitted, and were in turn transformed by, the construction of the hillforts within an historical context. Bender has criticised Ingold's exposition of taskscape for providing "... an ahistorical (golden) evocation of labour practices at the expense of embedded social, cultural and political relations." (1998: 37-8). This problem arises, Tilley (1994: 24) has suggested, because Ingold focuses upon whether or not practical action precedes cultural understanding. As a result, Ingold creates a divide between peoples' awareness of the world and the activities they conduct within it. In Tilley's opinion these are mutually creative and cannot be prioritised. However, within his theory of *structuration*, Giddens (1981) posits that human activity always occurs in relation to a historically contingent set of material conditions, which both enable and constrain action. People are socialised into a pre-existing world, which, as knowledgeable agents, they in turn help to reproduce by operating on the expectation that their actions will be effective and understood by others. These expectations are founded upon understandings of how the world operates. As Barrett states, "Structures are both the means by which socially recognizable actions are achieved, and their consequences." (1994: 3).

These material conditions include the things that people use in the course of their daily life and the architecture they inhabit. Consequently, the debts inflicted through the exchange of objects were one way in which relations between groups were sustained (Edmonds in press). Others include the obligations resulting from communal participation in the tasks of agricultural production (Barrett 1989a & b). To this list I would add participation in inter-communal building projects, such as those that resulted in the creation and remodelling of the hillforts. The 'nested' sets of social relations that these practices helped to sustain allowed the flow of people, knowledge and materials between different kin-groups and communities. Thus the biographies of people intermingle with those of objects and places (Brück in press, Kopytoff 1986, Tilley 1994). People would have imbued them with meanings that were embroidered and transformed as they circulated around the landscape or were inhabited over time. Because each individual was differently situated, in terms of their political interests, affiliations and obligations, their interpretations and experiences of these meanings will have varied. As a consequence, Barrett argues: -

“...conflicts over meaning and value are experiences central to human social practices. It is these conflicts over meaning which express the differences between human beings, exposing them as historically, culturally, and socially constituted, and as such it is these conflicts which become a force for historical change.” (in Barrett *et al* 2000: 45).

Yet whilst the interpretation of the meanings attached to objects and places can divide people, they also have the potential to bring them together. Cohn (1985) has argued that for much of the time people may remain unaware of the differences that exist between their understandings of such meanings, particularly if they relate to things that are a common feature of their lives. Thus, the divergence between people’s interpretations of these meanings will not necessarily prevent successful interaction. Indeed, he asserts that “...individuals can find common currency in behaviour whilst still tailoring it subjectively (and interpretively) to their *own* ends” (ibid.: 17, author’s emphasis). Cohn illustrates his argument with an example drawn from Strathern’s (1981, 1982 a & b) studies of the concept of ‘villageness’ in the Cambridgeshire village of Elmdon. He describes how the idea of the ‘village’ holds different meanings for the members of this community. For some it refers to a specific place, clear by distinguishable from the locations occupied by other communities; for others it has associations with class and kinship. The village is effectively a symbol, which, although shared by all members the community, “...renders eloquent but different meanings for its various users.” (ibid. : 18). Thus, we can recognise that the range of different significances that are ascribed to certain places or objects may be suppressed if they are accepted as commonly held symbols. Cohn (1985) proposes that this process forms a critical component in the construction of a sense of community identity. He views community as an entity smaller than a ‘society’ but larger than kinship: a unit whose members recognise that they share something in common that distinguishes them from other groups. Such senses of identity are, therefore, relational and simultaneously imply both similarity and difference. Cohn contends that the cohesiveness of a community depends upon the ability of people, who may otherwise have a widely divergent range of interests, to attach their own meanings to a commonly held body of symbols (e.g. the ‘village’). However, because the interpretation of these symbols varies across the group: -

“...the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community’s boundaries – and, therefore, of the community itself – depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment.” (ibid.: 15).

In this thesis I will show how the hillforts may have acted as symbols around which concepts of community identity were able to cohere. As I have suggested above, practices that took place at these monuments drew their significance from their position within a wider ensemble of routine activities. In themselves, these day-to-day tasks played a critical role in creating and reproducing a nested set of social relations, and it is partly through them that different interpretations of the symbols of community would have arisen. Yet as Barrett has argued, mundane activity also holds “... together human diversity by maintaining certain common principles which bounded the community from the world around it.” (in Barrett *et al.* 2000: 319). These ‘common principles’, Barrett suggests, allowed people to recognise that the routines they engage in formed part of a wider order, which amongst other things contributed toward the reproduction of a community identity. If we accept that hillforts functioned as symbols of community identity, then we must explore how the practices that occurred in and around them permitted such understanding to emerge, despite the variations in orientation that existed between the individual members of the group. This requires us to examine how these monuments allowed a community to construct a sense of a shared history and traditions. Such notions may have subsumed the divergent interests that existed between different group members, allowing them to distinguish themselves from others. There may, however, have been times when the opposite was the case, as tensions arose over the significance of different aspects of these histories and traditions. Similarly, they may also have been manipulated by certain sections of the community to secure status and authority. In other words, we need to determine how, at certain times and in certain places, people were able to emphasise one of a series of nested sets of identities.

Such notions of community were generated out of material conditions that were both historically situated and cumulatively constituted. People inhabit a world where the physical traces of the actions of their predecessors survive into the present. As a consequence, places and features within the landscape often have histories, which can sometimes be ‘read’ through the physical remains that survive at them (Barrett 1999a). The way in which history was articulated within the communities of the first

millennium BC inevitably differed from western notions of the past as a sequence of closely dated events. Gosden and Lock (1998) define how, in non-literate societies, a distinction can be drawn between myth and history. They argue that whilst history “...is an awareness that social relations are shaped by individual or collective action”, myths “...refer back to a previous state of the world.” (ibid.: 5). With such societies history is often articulated through genealogy, which combines accounts of the ties of kinship that bind people together with stories about particular individuals. Genealogical histories are reproduced through recitation and, because they are gradually embellished in the process, they are also reworked over time. As a result, they are not static and may be manipulated for political ends by those in the present. However, with each passing generation the older names and stories grow fainter until they eventually merge into broader patterns of myth. As a result, Barrett proposes that “...the community could be recognised as outliving its individual members and the principles which united it were likely to evoke a timeless quality.” (in Barrett *et al.* 2000: 319).

Like Küchler (1993), Gosden and Lock (1998: 5) suggest that genealogical history does not depend upon human memory alone, “...but works with a series of mnemonics, with the biggest memory prompt of all coming from the nature of the landscape.”. In other words, history and myth becomes woven around both topographical and humanly constructed features of the landscape. Gosden and Lock argue that the articulation of such narratives depends not only on rhetoric but also upon the work involved in maintaining and embellishing these features, which ensures that they remain socially active. Consequently, we can recognise that reiterative acts of deposition, or successive episodes of construction that involved an encounter with, and made reference to, the physical traces of the past played an important role in the construction of social memory. We can examine the resulting residues and structures archaeologically, thus establishing an understanding of the nature of people’s ongoing commitment to particular places over time. Thus, by considering the social contexts in which such practices occurred, we can begin to appreciate how memory was articulated through the repetition of the practices involved in constructing and reworking monuments over many successive generations.

We can also examine how these practices may have shaped the patterning of day-to-day activity, providing a framework around which such routines flowed. People may have encountered those features of the landscape that were invested with historical and mythological significance during the course of their daily lives, providing an opportunity for private reflection. Similarly, the architecture associated with some of these features may have structured the course of routine activity in a way that remained unarticulated and non-discursive. As such, the historical narratives associated with certain locales form part of the timeless order through which people made sense of the world around them. This brings us close to Hirsch's (1995) notion of the 'foreground' and 'background' of social life. The foreground consists of the round of activities associated with people's day-to-day existence. Behind this lies the background of people's ontological understandings, which includes origin myths and quotidian notions of the perceptual order of the world. The two 'levels' are intimately related and mutually sustaining. People's understandings of the world are constructed out of their every day engagement with it and with others. In turn these understandings act back to inform social agents 'how to go on'. The way in which people order and use routine space may be founded upon cosmological beliefs (cf. Parker-Pearson and Richards 1993), although these may not always be strictly adhered to in practice. Similarly, the structure of the taskscape may, amongst other things, be viewed as the product of the ancestors or mythical beings (Edmonds in press). Consequently, the link between these two levels is memory, with activity in the landscape acting as a form of memory work. Hirsch (1995) argues that it is the inter-relationship between these two factors that enables us to view landscape as process.

As I have already mentioned above, it is this notion of landscape that underlies my analysis of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches. I will explore how the tradition of constructing these monuments arose out of pre-existing set of historically constituted material conditions. I will, therefore, identify and define what these are in relation to the landscape of the study area (see Chapter 5). I will also argue that the creation of the hillforts effectively changed the material conditions that people inhabited in the first millennium BC. In particular, the practice of enhancing the boundaries and entrances of these monuments appears to have been a major focus of concern over much of this period. As such, I will also examine how the hillforts

were implicated in the construction of a 'past in the past'. As Barrett argues of monuments in general, their construction may have manipulated "...the meanings which were soaked into the landscape, or...focus them more directly upon contemporary concerns." (1999a: 255). The memories attached to the places in which hillforts were constructed would thus have been reproduced and reworked through the act of inhabitation, including building. As we have already seen, the participants would have occupied different positions in the networks of social relations they were embedded within. Thus I will also consider how the practices involved in the construction of these monuments created a set of relations that enabled them to act as symbols of community. From the outset, therefore, we can acknowledge that a range of experiences of these places would have existed across the communities that built and inhabited them. By the second half of the first millennium some sites already had extensive histories (see Chapter 6). The contrasting nature of people's interpretations of these narratives associated with these monuments will have shaped the way in which individual sites developed over time. As a result, I will also examine the changing ways in which the physical traces of the past, as represented by the hillfort ramparts, were manipulated over time.

So far we have considered how objects and monuments were implicated in the construction of social relations. However, the material conditions that people inhabit also include the position they occupy within a broader set of ecological relationships. Within western thought, human culture has traditionally been seen to exist separate from, and outside of, 'nature'. This dichotomy is one of a number of the inter-related dualisms (including the form: process one mentioned above) that partly underlie the division between the arts and humanities and the hard sciences. Within archaeology this has resulted in the often debilitating divide between the 'environmental' and 'social' branches of the discipline, which have each given primacy to different sides of the formulation (Barrett 1999c). Thus, environmental archaeologists have usually been concerned with investigating the ecological position that humanity occupies, and its impacts and influence upon these ecosystems. Social archaeologists, on the other hand, have traditionally focused upon social change, and the degree to which it can be seen to result from environmental change. In seeking to explain transformations in the character of the landscape over time, environmental archaeologists have generally had the upper

hand. However, a critique of environmental archaeology as it has been practiced in the past has now been established (Barrett 1999c, Butler 1995, Edmonds 1999b, Thomas 1990). One of the major criticisms that has been levelled against this branch of the discipline is its continued reliance upon a ‘systems’ approach to past social life. This has resulted in reluctance to engage in theoretical debate concerning the historically contingent ways in which humans have interacted with the landscapes they inhabited in the past, and how they perceived changes within these landscapes. For instance, Edmonds has commented that: -

“...it is probably fair to say that part of the problem stems from the way archaeologists have thought about the environment and the significance of palaeoenvironmental data. For some at least, the environment is little more than a backdrop to the stage upon which human activity is set. Most however, go a little further, seeing past environments as a series of dynamic problems posed for prehistoric communities.” (1999b: 485).

For their part, the environmental archaeologists have responded by suggesting that some social archaeologists have failed to deal satisfactorily with the environmental evidence (e.g. Chapman and Gearey 2000).

Increasingly, however, a more multidisciplinary approach is finding favour with landscape archaeologists. Some have drawn upon the phenomenology of Heidegger, who sought to dissolve the nature: culture dualism within his work. For instance, within his (1962) concept of *dwelling* people are seen as being fully immersed in the world. From this perspective people’s understandings of the world arise through embodied experience. Thus “...engagement is neither conceptualised or articulated, and...arises through *using* the world rather than through scrutiny.” (Thomas 1993: 28 author’s emphasis). However, many perceive Heidegger’s work to be flawed because of his personal associations with Nazism, for which he never apologised or gave any explanation. For example, Bender remains sceptical of his explicit use of German pastoral scenes to articulate some of his arguments, which create romantic, ahistorical image of *dwelling* rooted in the routines of rural life.

“...his famous invocation of a Black Forest farm-house [Heidegger 1972: 338] with its stress on the ‘simple oneness’ of the peasants’ self-sufficient lives smells slightly of *blut and boden*...” (1998: 37).

We must, therefore, remain cautious of such golden evocations of agrarian life, seeking instead an understanding of the historically contingent socio-political

relations upon which social life rests. None-the-less, if we take anything from the Heidegger's *dwelling* perspective it should perhaps be the notion that, as a result of their 'being-in-the-world', people are enmeshed within a wider set of ecological relations. As Ingold notes, people are inseparably bound to, and interact with, the other organisms that inhabit the landscape, together with physical processes that shape it over time.

“Thus the rhythmic pattern of human activities nests within the wider pattern of activity for all animal life, which in turn nests within the pattern of activity for all so-called living things, which nest within the life-process of the world.”. (Ingold 1993: 164).

Edmonds (1999b) and Barrett (1999c) have combined this approach with one that explores the ways in which people's inhabitation of the landscape is grounded in routine practice. This is the approach I wish to develop here, in relation to the evidence from the central Welsh Marches. In particular I want to consider how the routines associated with 'tending to the land' (Edmonds 2001) acted to change it physically, and thus rework the material conditions that people inhabited.

To summarise then, the approach to landscape I will take in this thesis is one that views it as process. In other words, I will consider how a nested series of historically contingent social relations arose through, and were reproduced by, various forms of material practice. These had a temporal and spatial component, and create residues that we can investigate archaeologically. By examining the intra and inter site patterning of these deposits we can begin to gain an appreciation of how they were implicated in the creation of social life, how they might have sustained certain forms of identity and particular understandings of the world, and how all of these were transformed over time. I will now turn to a more detailed discussion of how I will achieve this objective within the context of this thesis.

3.4.0 Through the looking glass: outlining an analytical procedure.

In this section I want to outline an analytical procedure that deals with landscape as process, which will also enable me to produce an interpretative account of the construction and inhabitation of the hillforts of the central Marches. The 'raw material' that I have to work with comprises a mixture of palaeoenvironmental evidence, aerial photographic data at various stages of interpretation, published and

unpublished excavation reports, and various specialist reports on the artefactual material. As we have seen in Chapter 2, these sources are themselves historically constituted and, as a consequence, I will necessarily draw upon and work against previous interpretive frameworks. I will work with these various data sources to produce an explanation of the foreground and background of past social life, which, together, comprise what Gosden (1997) terms the *social landscape*. In this section I want to briefly evaluate two recently developed analytical devices, which claim to offer procedures that make this interpretative jump possible.

Gosden (1997) outlined the first of these methodologies in his brief commentary on the condition of Iron Age studies in the mid-1990s. Whilst he viewed the abandonment of unilineal social-evolutionary models as a significant step forward, Gosden expressed concern that a focus upon regional distinctiveness, symbolism and ritual left too much undiscussed. In particular, he felt that the approaches that researchers were pursuing at this time made it difficult to “...draw threads from particular cases with which to weave a broader fabric.” (ibid.: 304). The approach that Gosden subsequently proposed was not intended to provide the means of constructing a single narrative of the Iron Age but was instead intended to

“...overcome the radical fragmentation of archaeological materials through the process of analysis which divides sites from the rest of the landscape, component parts of sites into features, and different classes of material from each other and the surrounding contexts.” (ibid.: 307).

Gosden focused on the social landscape as the arena in which people fashion worlds for themselves out of a pre-existing set of material and social conditions. He suggests that our ability to interpret these landscapes is limited by two factors. Firstly, just as we can never describe our own world as a totality, neither is it possible to do so for the social landscapes of the past. Therefore, Gosden (1997: 304) argues, “...all we can do is sketch bits of it which are of interest to us and available in the present through the nature of the evidence.” As indicated above, my principal concern in this thesis is to develop an understanding of how communities were constructed through building and inhabiting the hillforts of the first millennium BC.

Secondly, we can only interpret an image of a previous social landscape after it has passed through two other lenses – which Gosden terms the *depositional* and

distributional landscapes. The depositional landscape consists of archaeological residues, together with the sediments of which the landscape is composed. Both are indicative of human activity since "...the erosion and deposition of sediments under human influence is as indicative of patterns of practise as are assemblages of pottery, bone and seeds." (ibid.: 304-5). Meanwhile, the distributional landscape, which is comprised of differing densities of artefacts and sediments, is the landscape that we confront in the present. It is the location and patterning of these residues with which we are largely concerned as archaeologists. The distributional landscape is the product of both the depositional practises of people in the past, in all their spatial and temporal complexity, and the "...taphonomic shredder...", the operation of which is partly dependant upon the history of land use in any given area (ibid. :305).

Gosden proposes that only after gaining knowledge of both the depositional and the distributional landscape can we begin to interpret the social landscape. This can be partially achieved, he suggests, by allying an understanding of the landscape's geomorphological and land use history with an appreciation of the life histories of material objects.

"The social landscape is the arena for flows of materials with different life cycles of production, exchange, use and discard, wherein human biographies and the biographies of objects intermingle in mutual creation." (Gosden 1997: 306)

Gosden's approach enables us to recognise that, as archaeologists, our ability to perceive the social landscape is limited by a number of different factors. As such, we see past social landscapes through the lenses of the depositional and distributional landscapes. A consideration of these factors will certainly be important when dealing with the different sources of evidence that I will draw upon in the later chapters. Consequently, I will evaluate how the history of land use and/ or the biographies of objects has affected each of the different data sets before seeking to interpret them. In addition, I will also take into account the life histories of monuments and places and the structure of the taskscape. Combining all four factors will, I suggest, allow us to begin making inferences about the different sorts and scales of community that people were constructing in the first millennium BC in the study area. This will also allow us to examine not only how materials but also people and ideas moved around the landscape. However, because of the context in which Gosden outlined his approach, the specifics of the analytical procedure that

would enable us to move from the distributional landscape to an understanding of the social landscape remained vague.

To a certain extent the analytical device that Andrews *et al.* (2000) have pioneered at Perry Oaks, Heathrow fills this gap. This approach was developed in the face of a growing concern that developer funded excavations do not satisfactorily address the needs of researchers (see also Haselgrove *et al.* 2001). Indeed, they argue that interpretation of the meaning and significance of the evidence recovered by developer-funded projects is all too often deferred to the post-excavation stage, if it occurs at all. They contend that this is based upon the false premises that ‘preservation by record’ can, in it self, provide us with a satisfactory explanation of the past.

“The presumption that archaeology can operate simply as a descriptive and recording procedure denies the centrality of research to the discipline and removes the interpretive demand to write history.” (Andrews *et al.* 2000: 527).

The methodology that Andrews’ *et al* subsequently developed was intended to place research at the centre of a major programme of contract led archaeology. It was designed to place interpretation at the centre of the excavation process, thus enabling “...members of the excavation team to undertake historical research.” (Andrews *et al.* 2000: 526). The overall aim of the project was, therefore, to produce a history of the human inhabitation of the site *whilst* the excavation was in progress.

Consequently, Andrews *et al* were particularly concerned to establish how people, as knowledgeable agents, made a place for themselves amongst a historically situated set of material and ideological conditions. They contend that the inhabitation of these conditions made it possible to live in a certain way and, in so doing, actively rework those conditions. As a result, they also act to guide the inhabitation of the landscape, an inhabitation that also encompasses the “...the active participation of those who deployed the principles of habit, tradition, knowledge and desire, and who recognized the accepted and the enforced demands of others in their actions.” (*ibid.*: 528).

Andrews *et al* contend that, in the process of making a place for themselves in the world, people would have found that the available material conditions operated in three ways. Firstly, by acting as a guide for movement or a reference to other or

'distant' values (i.e. the 'background' to social life) that framed human activity. Secondly, they provided "...a linking mechanism, which not only allowed movement between places but also made absent values and places present..." (Andrews *et al* 2000: 528). Finally, they enabled transformation to occur, thus enabling materials to be exchanged and altered. As a consequence of these assertions they conclude that: -

"Material conditions necessarily pre-exist the human presence which enters those conditions, they facilitate the linking of that presence with other places, and they facilitate actions which result in certain material consequences which remain as residues after the event." (ibid.: 529).

As part of their methodology Andrews *et al.* developed a two tier sampling strategy. At the first level of analysis they sought to establish the general characteristics of the landscape. The second level of analysis built upon the first by investigating "...the more specific archaeology of the human presence." (Andrews *et al.* 2000: 529). Both levels of understanding were established through an examination of the material remains in relation to three interrelated key themes: -

- The architectural character of the landscape in any given period of time. This theme includes both the 'cultural' and the 'natural' components of the landscape.
- The long-term formation processes evident within the area being investigated.
- The "...strategies by which different elements within the community coped with and redesigned the conditions before them..." (ibid.)

Andrews *et al* report that these analytical procedures enabled the construction of a site narrative as excavation proceeded. Consequently, the resulting interpretation of the changing ways in which the landscape at Perry Oaks was inhabited over time has the advantage of having been constructed from the 'ground up'.

The conception of landscape that lies behind Andrews *et al*'s approach is essentially very similar to the notion of 'landscapes as process' that I outlined in section 3.3.0. Their methodology, therefore, provides part of the basis upon which analysis will proceed in the rest of the thesis. In particular I will begin my discussion of the sequence from the central Welsh Marches by firstly establishing a broad understanding of the character of the landscape during the later second and first millennium BC (Chapter 4). This will involve working with a range of different sources of environmental evidence in order to determine what kinds of ecological

conditions people inhabited during this period time. I will then proceed to a more detailed examination of the sequences from earlier (Chapter 5) and later (Chapter 6) first millennium BC and first two centuries AD (Chapter 7). As I suggested above (see section 3.3.0), my concern will be to establish an understanding of how human communities were created and transformed during the course of the first millennium. In particular, I will examine how construction and inhabitation of the hillforts enabled emphasis to be placed upon certain forms of social identity. Consequently, I will need to place them within their broader landscape context in order to discern the importance of the practices that occurred at these monuments.

I would argue, however, that Andrews *et al*'s approach was specifically designed to incorporate interpretation and research into a specific fieldwork strategy – and one which was intended to deal with a very large area (*c* 20 ha.) at that. There are, therefore limitations to the degree to which we can adapt it to a pre-existing data set. In particular, there are difficulties in applying it to excavated evidence obtained through differing methodological frameworks, which inevitably dealt with a much smaller sample of the landscape. Because of the nature of the data set, I will work with a range of different forms of evidence in order to determine both the architectural character of the landscape at any given period. Because of the nature of these sources I will firstly need to consider the depositional and distributional landscapes of the study area before I can proceed to an interpretation of the social landscape of the first millennium BC. Once I have taken these factors into account my concern will be with establishing an understanding of the nested sets of social relations that combined to make up the social landscapes of the study area. I will, therefore, work through the evidence relating to the different forms of interaction that people were engaged in the first millennium BC, considering what these tell us about the changing nature and scale of routine practice across this period. This will enable me to build up a picture of the landscape context of the hillforts. Thus when I turn to a consideration of the evidence from these monuments, I will examine how building and inhabiting them enabled people to construct different sorts and scales of community. Given that much of the excavated evidence from hillforts relates directly to their earthworks, I will pay particular attention to the materiality of these features in order to discern what they can tell us about how these monuments were constructed. By doing so I will establish an understanding of how the reworking of

hillfort earthworks enabled the communities that inhabited the study area to reconfigure 'the conditions before them'.

3.5.0 Discussion.

I began this chapter with a critique of what, in my opinion, constitutes the inadequacy of current approaches to the landscape context of the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches. I argued that this stems from that fact that we have placed too much emphasis upon trying explain the form of the landscape, rather than seeking to investigate the processes by which it was created and transformed over time. I contend that conceiving of landscape *as* process will enable us able to write a history of the inhabitation of the study area over the course of the first millennium BC. Consequently, I proceeded to outline the theoretical perspective that will enable me to establish an understanding of how the construction and inhabitation of the hillforts facilitated the reproduction of historically contingent forms of community identity. Following this I described an analytical procedure that will facilitate the analysis of the various forms of evidence available to me in order to produce just such an interpretation.

The next four discussion chapters will detail the results of this analysis. In the next chapter I begin by examining what the environmental evidence from the central Welsh Marches tells us about the changing character of the landscape. I will follow the sequence from the end of the last glaciation in order to examine how the conditions that existed in first millennium were the product of a complex interplay of human agency and geomorphological processes. As such, I will essentially be writing what Ingold (1998) has termed an 'ecology of life'. This analysis will, therefore, enable us to begin to define the architectural character of landscape during the period, and the nature of the formation processes that operated across it.

Chapter 4

A summary of the palaeoenvironmental sequence from the central Welsh Marches.

4.1.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I will examine the long-term human ecology of the landscape of the central Welsh Marches. As we saw in chapter 2, Fox (1952) argued that during prehistory a considerable part of the northern half of the study area, which fell within his Lowland Zone, was covered with 'damp oakwood'. This was thought to have developed over the thick, water retentive clay soils that were assumed to predominate across this area. As a result, he suggested that these forests were thinly inhabited, which accounted for "...the neglect by successive vigorous lowland cultures of the Midland Gap..." (ibid. :58-9). As we have seen, this proposal had a great influence upon subsequent interpretations of the prehistoric inhabitation of this region. It is reflected, for instance, in the notion, favoured by Stanford (e.g. 1972, 1980) and others, that the hillforts essentially represented the only form of settlement in this region in the later first millennium BC. In this chapter I will be principally concerned with challenging the basis of Fox's thesis on the grounds of more recent palaeoenvironmental evidence. I will argue that various strands within this data set demonstrate that, in first millennium BC, we are in fact dealing with a largely open landscape. I maintain that this landscape was the product of a highly complex interplay of human agency, geomorphological processes and ecological factors. By the beginning of the first millennium these dynamics had resulted in significant reworking of the physical character of the landscape and, in the process, fundamentally transformed the material conditions that people inhabited. Consequently, I will also challenge to notion that climatic deterioration was the causal factor behind these changes.

I must stress, however, that these transformations were gradual and incremental rather than sudden or catastrophic. The processes behind them operated on a

timescale of decades, lifetimes and generations. Without any tradition of text based records or cartography the communities of the first millennium BC could not quantify and monitor environmental change in the ways we do today. Instead people would probably have experienced them as gradual changes in soil fertility, shifts in the forest margins or an almost indiscernible increase in the frequency winter flooding. Oral tradition may have told them that things were different in their times of their forebearers but on the daily, seasonal or even annual basis little would have appeared to have changed in terms of the 'structure' of the landscape. With regard to the temporality of the processes under consideration, I will work at a broader level than in later chapters, exploring transformations that occurred over the course of many lifetimes. Firstly, however, I want to briefly discuss the types of palaeoenvironmental evidence that are available in the central Welsh Marches and the history of their study. I will then briefly examine the development of the landscape over the course of the early Holocene before turning to a more detailed consideration of the sequence relating to the later second and first millennium BC.

4.2.0 Studying the palaeoenvironment of the central Welsh Marches: sources of evidence and the history of research.

4.2.1 The sources and types of palaeoenvironmental evidence relating to the later Holocene in the central Welsh Marches.

The landscape of the central Welsh Marches contains within it a number of different deposition environments that favour the preservation of palaeoenvironmental evidence. For example, within the northern part of the study area there are a number of lowland meres and mosses. These sites form part of a much more extensive zone of wetlands that spans the gently undulating drift landscapes of the Shropshire-Cheshire Plain, from the Shrewsbury Group in central Shropshire to Knutsford Group in north eastern Cheshire. Reynolds (1979:105) argues that the morphometry of these features implies that they can be subdivided into three broad categories based upon their potential origins. These include: -

- *Vestigial meltwater lakes* - Some wetlands within the study area appear to occupy the sites of former meltwater lakes, which over spilled through pre-existing gaps in the topography that are now occupied by 'misfit streams'. These lakes appear to have become infilled with laminated lacustrine sediments leading to development of valley mire systems. Examples in Shropshire include the now completely eroded peats of the Tern valley, the Baggy Moor/ Boggy Moor/ Smithy Moor system of lowland peats, the shallow peats of the Weald Moors and possibly the large raised bog that comprises Fenn's and Whixall Moss (see Fig. 4.1). Work by Brown (1988) has demonstrated that Baggy Moor originated as a narrow post-Glacial lake, which gradually became infilled with marl deposits in the early Holocene. This led to the development of a system of drainage channels, and the beginnings of a valley mire and peat formation in the first half of the sixth millennium BC.
- *Kettle Holes* – In some areas at the end of the Devensian glaciation fragments of the retreating ice sheets appear to have become trapped and buried by ablation and outwash deposits. These relict blocks of ice eventually melted, creating "...deep crater like kettle holes separated by hummocks of moraine..." (Reynolds 1979:106). In many cases these kettle holes persist as lakes (usually termed meres) or have become infilled with peat deposits (usually called mosses). Examples, in Shropshire include the meres and mosses of the Ellesmere area (see Fig 4.1).
- *Moraine-dammed hollows* - Reynolds (1979) suggests that some of the linear basins, which do not appear to be associated with kettle holes, may result from bodies of glacial melt water trapped by successive ridges of terminal moraine. The meltwater streams that issued from these pools would have exploited existing gaps within the topography. As the ice sheets retreated further, however, these streams would have lost much of their erosive power, trapping bodies of standing water in the deeper depressions. Again, these pools persisted into the Holocene either as small expanses of open water or, if they had become sufficiently infilled with lacustrine sediments to allow peat formation, as areas of

peat bog. Reynolds suggests that the Crose Mere complex may have originated in this way, as might many of the peat filled hollows and meres in the Shrewsbury area (including the Fenemere Pools complex).

All three wetland categories provide depositional environments in which various types of organic sediments accumulate in considerable quantities, particularly plant macro and microfossils.

The results of the North West Wetlands Survey (hereafter N.W.W.S.) show that the peats associated with some of the larger valley mire and raised bog systems have been severely degraded by agricultural improvement and commercial peat extraction over that past two centuries (Leah *et al.* 1998). However, pollen cores have been obtained from a number of the smaller wetlands (see Table 4.1), demonstrating the potential these sites have for enhancing our understanding of the palaeoecology of the central Welsh Marches. Further, the N.W.W.S. found that relatively undisturbed sediments that are likely to preserve high quality palaeoenvironmental evidence survive at a significant number of sites beyond those that have been studied so far. Consequently, there remains great potential for future work on pollen sequences obtained from them.

Beyond these wetlands the various river valley systems of the Severn and its tributaries also preserve high quality palaeoenvironmental evidence. The alluvial sediments that have accumulated in these environments allow us to examine the palaeohydrology of these river systems and the evolution of their floodplains. Changes in the rivers' hydrology and the style of sedimentation also provide us with insight into the scales of human activity within a rivers drainage basin (Brown 1997). In addition, combining the analysis of pollen that has accumulated within palaeochannels with the study of these sediments yields much information about the inhabitation of the floodplain. Beyond the work that has been done in the study area to date, in the future the study of the palaeoenvironmental evidence from these settings is likely to greatly enhance our understandings of the patterning of routine activity in the second and first millennia BC within the river valleys of the central Welsh Marches.

Compared with the evidence from the lower elevations relatively few attempts have been made to study palaeoenvironmental evidence derived from the higher ground in the southern half of the study area. Consequently, the development of the landscape over the course of the Holocene is not as well understood as areas to the north. One notable exception, however, is the sequence from Buckbean Pond on the Breiddin (see Fig. 4.2). This site, located within the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age hillfort, was investigated archaeologically before being destroyed by quarrying (Musson 1991). The Breiddin Hills are composed of a complex sequence of igneous and sedimentary Ordovician rocks, with Breiddin Hill itself consisting largely of dolerite (Toghill 1990). Buckbean Pond formed within a natural, clay lined depression (70m long and 40m wide) on the surface of the bedrock. Upon excavation it proved to contain permanently waterlogged deposits that yielded a pollen sequence spanning the entire Holocene (Musson 1991). By the Middle Iron Age the pond had become largely silted up and appears to have been drying out. At this point a cistern was dug through the earlier sediments near the south western end of the pond. This feature was allowed to silt up naturally, which seems to have occurred quite rapidly. A pollen sequence was obtained from the cistern but it also acted as a pit fall trap for insects, thus enabling analysis of the site's insect fauna at this point in its history to take place (Buckland *et al.* 2001, Musson 1991). The infilling of the cistern seems to have been complete before the end of the Iron Age, after which there appears to have been a hiatus in the accumulation of deposits over the wider area of the pond until approximately the 11th century AD (Musson 1991:102).

In the future, examining the development of the blanket peat deposits that have developed at higher elevations in some parts of the study area, particularly in the hills of south western Shropshire, is likely to offer us a greater insight into the use of these areas in later prehistory. Similarly, searching for and studying sites like Buckbean Pond, which lie in close proximity to or even within the boundaries of later prehistoric monuments, is likely to greatly enhance our understanding of their inhabitation.

4.2.2 History of research.

Research into the landscape history of the central Welsh Marches through the study of palaeoenvironmental evidence has given us a detailed knowledge of the development of some parts of the study area. For instance, changes in the Holocene vegetation cover of north Shropshire is now relatively well understood, as is the palaeohydrology of the Severn basin. As outlined above, this is partially a product of the existence of particular components within these landscapes (i.e. lowland wetlands, river floodplains) that favour the preservation of extended sequences of palaeoenvironmental data. These sequences are of immense value in terms of our knowledge of the prehistoric inhabitation of this region and will form the basis of the discussion in the next part of this chapter. At the same time, however, it is important to remember there are also some significant lacunae within our current understandings, and that these are, to some extent an artefact of the history of research over the past seventy years. Here I will summarise the main developments in the study of the palaeoenvironment of the central Marches, in order to identify where both the strengths and weaknesses in our current knowledge lie.

With regard to the development of palaeoenvironmental research in this region, E. M. Hardy's seminal paper *Studies of the post-Glacial history of British vegetation. V. The Shropshire and Flint Maelor mosses*, published in 1939, has proved particularly influential. Hardy was the first to examine the peat stratigraphy and extract pollen cores from three sites in northern Shropshire; Whattal Moss, Whixall Moss and Bettisfield (see Fig. 4.2). This work demonstrated that extended pollen sequences could be obtained from the lowland wetlands of the region. Hardy also identified a distinctive horizon of pine tree stumps preserved within the peat at Whixall Moss (now termed the Hardy Pine Stump Layer), which was thought to date to the Middle Bronze Age because of its association with a bronze looped palstave that was found during peat cutting.

Subsequent work by other researchers has largely focused upon the wetlands of this area of Shropshire, together with those further to the north. For example, Whixhall Moss was one of the sites that Turner (1962, 1964) used to argue that the 'Tilia decline' that had been observed within many pollen profiles was the product of human agency, rather than climatic change. At this time an undated pollen profile

was also obtained by Slater (1972) from Wem Moss, which forms another component of the wider Fenn's/ Whixhall Moss complex. Similarly, the first fully radiometrically dated pollen sequence to be published from the region was Beale's (1980) highly important palynological and stratigraphic study of Crose Mere (see Fig. 4.2), which forms part of the same basin as Whattal Moss.

More recently, researchers have begun to target sites beyond this rather limited area. For instance, work conducted at the Palaeoecological Laboratory, University of Southampton in the later 1980s attempted to address this problem by obtaining pollen sequences from each of the meres and mosses that make up the Fenemere Pools complex (Barber and Twigger 1987, Twigger and Haslam 1991). Similarly, the palaeoenvironmental evidence from the Breiddin represents the first fully dated pollen sequence from the uplands of the central Welsh Marches. Leah *et al's* (1998) survey of the Shropshire and Staffordshire, conducted as part of the wider North West Wetland Survey (NWWWS), represents the first systematic, multidisciplinary study of the wetlands of the region as a whole.

With regard to the palaeohydrological data, a major stimulus for research within the immediate study area come from the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP) project on the Severn and Wye river basins (Gregory *et al.* 1987). Earlier work (Brown 1982, Brown and Barber 1985, Shotten 1978) in the lower Severn valley had illustrated the potential for palaeohydrological research. As a consequence of the co-ordinated nature of the multidisciplinary IGCP study, a body of detailed hydrological and palaeohydrological data now exists for the Severn basin as a whole. Consequently, recent work has focused on studying limited sections of the catchment in greater detail (Brown 1988, 1990, Lewin 1992, Taylor and Lewin 1996, 1997). As a result, a major body of data relating history and development of the Severn basin now exists, which has significant implications for the way in which we view the landscapes of the second and first millennia BC. There has been less work on the areas beyond the Severn and its immediate tributaries, making it difficult to assess how representative this sequence of the region as a whole. However, Roseff's study of the alluvial stratigraphy at Wellington Quarry, Herefordshire (see Fig. 4.2) represents an extension of these methodologies to the river valleys of the southern half of the study area (Roseff 1992, Dinn and Roseff 1992).

4.2.3 Summary.

In this section I have examined the types of locations in which evidence relating to the ecological history of the central Welsh Marches can be found. Similarly, I have briefly discussed both the factors that have influenced the survival of these residues and the history of their investigation by environmental scientists over the past three quarters of a century. It is my contention that, by considering the various strands within this evidence in relation to one another, we can begin to write a history of the human inhabitation of this region that deals with the long-term transformations in the patterning of routine activity across these landscapes. In other words, we need to combine the insights that can be gained from individual sequences if we wish to understand how the people of the first millennium BC both transformed and were transformed by their physical surroundings. It is to the writing of these long-term, histories that I will now turn. Before doing so, however, we might note that one priority for future research in this region will be to maximise the use that is made of palaeoenvironmental evidence. The richness of these residues in certain parts of the landscape offer us the potential to build up a detailed understanding of the patterning and tempo of routine practice over relatively long periods of time. This will call for integrated research designs that cross current disciplinary divisions and interdisciplinary boundaries. Whilst this will not be easy (or inexpensive) to achieve the rewards are likely to far outweigh the costs and difficulties that we will encounter along the way.

4.3.0 Pastures new - the landscapes of the central Welsh Marches before the first millennium BC.

4.3.1 Forest histories: a brief ecological history of the central Welsh Marches from the ninth to the third millennium BC.

The various pollen sequences from the Welsh Marches indicate that the landscape remained largely forested throughout the early Holocene. By 6000 BC changes in

vegetation patterns following the end of the last glaciation had led to the development of a mature forest across the region (Twigger and Haslam 1991:744). By 3000 BC the species composition of this forest had changed, with the initially dominant pine, oak and elm species giving way to more diverse conditions in which lime and alder became important. For instance, Twigger and Haslam argue that the palynological evidence from the Fenemere Pools suggests that lime may have become locally dominant by this time. Similarly, based on the various floodplain sites he has examined in the West Midlands, Brown (1988:434) has argued that after 6000 BC alder carr became the principal habitat on the lowland floodplains of midland England.

It has long been assumed that such forests comprised of a dense concentration of mature trees (e.g. Iversen 1960). The shade that the canopy generated was thought to have prevented the growth of light loving 'pioneer' species such as willow and birch and the establishment of herb cover on the forest floor. Communities of these types of vegetation were only thought to grow in clearings generated by the fall of old forest trees. In such conditions it was felt that large herbivores such as deer, aurochs and European bison must have been relatively scarce, since the shady conditions and the resulting lack of fodder meant that the forest could only support low populations of these species. Consequently the hunter-gatherers that dwelt within these forests from the ninth until at least the fourth millennium BC were assumed to have been relatively few in number, since they partly depended upon these animal species for their subsistence. This image of the temperate forests of the early Holocene has, however, been challenged recently by Vera (2000). He argues that models of vegetational succession and woodland ecology upon which this view rests are ultimately derived from modern woodlands that have, until comparatively recently, been managed for timber production. He suggests instead that we cannot discount the possibility that the primeval forests of temperate Europe had a more open, park like appearance.

"Modern pollen spectra of park-like landscapes grazed by large herbivores reveal great similarities, in terms of the diversity and relative representation, to the pollen spectra of prehistoric times..." (Vera 2000: 99).

In such forests, stands of trees would have been surrounded by a fringe of scrub species and interspersed with glades containing areas of grassland. Vera cites a number of studies in which the grazing by large wild (or domesticated) herbivores in such conditions has suppressed the flowering of grasses, making them almost invisible in palynological terms (*ibid.* 87-8). He suggests that this may well account for the lack of herb pollen within early-mid Holocene pollen spectra, particularly when the low dispersal rates from these taxa are taken into account. In support of this argument he also notes the continued presence of significant quantities of pollen from species whose growth would normally be suppressed in a dark, closed forest. Vera proposes that this constitutes evidence for the existence of extensive areas of forest fringe habitats.

Vera's thesis has clear implications for the ways in which we view human activity in these forests, which deserve a much fuller consideration than is possible here. We might note, however, that the fringe vegetation around the margins of the stands of mature trees would have had provided an immensely rich habitat, capable of supporting much higher numbers of large herbivores than has previously been thought possible (Vera 2000). Similarly, the existence of natural clearings within the forest would mean that early agricultural communities would not necessarily have had to create openings in the forest cover themselves. Management practices may have been more tightly focused upon maintaining cleared areas for a number of seasons, perhaps even decades, and suppressing growth around their margins. Overall, then, Vera's notion of a park like forest would perhaps fit better with the kinds of small scale, mobile communities that Thomas (1991) and Edmonds (1999b) envisage existed in Britain well into the third millennium BC.

Whatever the nature of the forests that covered the central Welsh Marches in the earlier Holocene, the evidence for human activity in them remains slight. Flint scatters from this period tend to be relatively small in extent, although much larger spreads of later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material are known from south western Shropshire and northern Radnorshire. These scatters tend to be composed of a mixture of 'imported' flint and material derived from the high quality flint nodules that occur in the region's drift deposits (Leah *et al.* 1998:121). Evidence for earlier Neolithic monuments is at present lacking from the region, although a variety of later

Neolithic sites have now been investigated (e.g. Britnell 1982, Warrillow *et al.* 1986, Gibson 1994, 1999). I must emphasise, however, that the apparent lack of material evidence is largely a product of the fact that the earlier prehistory of the central Welsh Marches remains under researched.

As elsewhere in Britain, the possibility that the hunter-gatherer communities who inhabited this region from the ninth-fifth millennia BC deliberately burnt or manipulated the forest vegetation cannot be ruled out (cf. Simmons 1996). However, there are stronger indications from a number of sites that some form of forest management, possibly involving small scale clearance achieved by burning the forest fringe, was occurring by the fifth to fourth millennia BC. At Crose Mere, Beales (1980:151) obtained a radiocarbon date of 5296 ± 150 B.P. (Q-1235) for the 'elm decline', which gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 4450 – 3750 cal BC. Similarly, Brown (1988:428) dated a "...weakly expressed..." decline in the elm pollen curve at Wilden Marsh in Worcestershire, just beyond the study area, to 5420 ± 50 B.P. (lab code not published). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 4360 - 4040 cal BC. Although the elm decline does not necessarily constitute evidence for Neolithic clearance activity in itself - it could, for instance, be due to the spread of an arboreal disease (Girling and Grieg 1985, Rackham 1980) - there are other indications within the environmental sequence that it was occurring, particularly towards the end of the period. For instance, at Top Moss in northern Shropshire (see Fig. 4.2) analysis demonstrated that the organic deposits post-date the elm decline (Leah *et al.* 1998:177). The pollen from the base of this sequence suggests that the open, park-like forest extended to the margins of the wetland. Evidence for cultivation and possible clearance activity within the open glades comes in levels broadly dating to the fourth millennium BC in the form of a slight rise of herbaceous pollen and the presence of some cereal grains. A small quantity of charcoal within this level also suggests periodic burning within the environs of the site. Some traces of burning were also found at the Breiddin, and although there was little evidence for clearance activity within the pollen data, it was noted that the sampling interval (c. 150 yrs.) and the abundance of alder pollen could have masked the existence of short lived clearances (Musson 1991:106). Evidence for some opening up of the forest also comes from Wellington Quarry (Rosseff 1992), where

the initiation of alluviation has been radiocarbon dated to 4990 ± 70 BP (OxA-2883). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 3950-3650 cal. BC.

In summary, the different ecosystems that existed within the wider, park-like forests that covered the floodplains, wetlands, hilltops and valley sides of the region would have provided the human communities of the early-mid Holocene with a variety of seasonally abundant resources. Inhabiting a shifting pattern of glades and small clearings linked by a network of tracks spreading out through the forest, these groups may well have covered considerable distances in the course of their seasonal rounds (Edmonds 1999b). Initially they would have been timed their movements to coincide with the availability of plant foods and migrations of the game species that thrived in the scrubby forest fringes. By the fifth and fourth millennia, however, there would have been subtle changes within the patterns of mobility, as the communities that inhabited the region moved with their stock between grazing areas and tended to temporary cultivation plots. These groups undoubtedly played an important part in maintaining the forest's park-like character. Periodic burning and clearance activity may have helped to maintain the ecological richness of the forest fringe and ensure the existence of diverse range of habitats. In addition, at particular times within these cycles of movement, or at important junctures in the lives of individuals or of the community as a whole, these groups may have congregated at the various monuments existing within the region (which were probably located within larger clearings). These would have been highly significant episodes in terms of people's social identity, generating in individuals a sense of their place within a broader community and helping to reinforce the bonds of kinship and affiliation that different groups shared.

4.3.2 Unpicking the patchwork: landscapes of the third and early second millennium in the central Welsh Marches.

The patchwork of open, park-like forest appears to have predominated across the central Welsh Marches until at least 1500 BC. However, the evidence suggests that there were subtle changes in woodland management practices, which resulted in the creation of larger clearings during the early third millennium. These seem to have

been gradually enlarged and consolidated during the following centuries, with significant clearance activity occurring within the vicinity of some of the lowland wetlands. For example, at Four Crosses in north eastern Powys (see Fig. 4.2) aerial photographs have revealed a complex of ring ditches loosely aligned along the axis of a ridge of fluvio-glacial gravels, which extends eastwards between the floodplains of the Vyrnwy and the Severn. Excavations have revealed that this barrow cemetery developed between the later third and early-mid second millennium BC (Warrilow 1986). A buried soil profile survived beneath remnant mound material at one of the sites (Site 1) and charcoal from a small patch of burning on its surface produced a radiocarbon date of 3310 ± 70 BP (CAR-667). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1750-1430 cal BC and provides a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the barrow mound. The buried soil profile also yielded a pollen profile, and although preservation of the pollen was poor, it indicated "...a largely open habitat..." existed prior to the construction of the barrow mound (Wimble 1986:7). Pollen from taxa characteristic of grazed grassland (i.e. plantains, dandelions, thistles etc) was abundant, although the presence of small quantities of cereal pollen suggests that arable plots existed within the vicinity. The indicators of grassland increased towards the top of the profile, and Wimble argued that the significant quantities of hazel pollen also indicate scrub regeneration following clearance. Alternatively, of course this may suggest that a swathe of forest fringe vegetation existed at the edges of an area of open grassland, which was maintained through grazing and occasional cultivation. High quantities of alder pollen suggest that alder carr persisted on the lower ground near the river.

Similarly, in the pollen sequence from Buckbean Pond on the Breiddin the first clear indicators of clearance activity come after c. 3000 BC, with a small but 'progressive' decline in arboreal pollen and a corresponding increase in pollen from weedy species and bracken (Musson 1991:106). These larger clearings were probably partially maintained by grazing animals. In this respect the first appearance and subsequent persistence of *Plantago lanceolata* pollen, usually taken as an indicator of intensified pastoral activity (e.g. Iversen 1973), together with insect macrofossils from species that occur in animal dung (including the dung beetle *Aphodius*) within the sequence from the Breiddin is particularly significant (Musson 1991: 100-1). This grazing

activity may well have been enough to gradually increase the size of clearings, as browsing animals removed young saplings around their margins. Certainly by the start of the second millennium BC these openings within the forest cover appear to have become larger, with grass pollen becoming more abundant.

After c. 2000 BC we also see the first significant evidence of the gradual enlargement of open areas within the forest around the wetlands of northern Shropshire. At Top Moss, for instance, there are increases in herb pollen and other taxa associated with open ground (Leah *et al.* 1998:179). Clearance at this site may have been partly achieved through the increased use of fire, since there were three peaks in the burning of the mire vegetation between 2000 - 1700 BC. Similarly, Twigger and Haslam (1991:747-8) note that there is a significant reduction of lime and oak pollen in the sequences from the Fenemere Pools, and a corresponding rise in herb and cereal pollen at some sites (Boreatton Moss in particular).

Taken together this evidence suggests that, by the later third millennium the open, park-like forest that earlier generations had inhabited was becoming increasingly fragmented and diverse. An increase in the frequency of burning episodes may well have played a significant role in the creation of larger openings in the forest. The ecological effects of this activity would have been subtle and complex. For instance, in his description of the Native American's use of fire in the temperate woodlands of southern New England, Cronon noted that controlled burning "...increased the rate at which forest nutrients were recycled into the soil..." (1983: 50). This had the effect of promoting more luxuriant growth amongst shrub and herb species on the forest fringe. It also removed the smaller trees and saplings, creating lighter conditions, which favoured the development of more extensive and diverse grasslands on the forest floor and in the open areas. Cronon also notes that the use of fire in these forests altered the species composition of the woodland.

"The soil became warmer and drier, discouraging tree species which preferred moister conditions...and favouring drier species...when burning was allowed to lapse." (ibid. :51)

Although I do not wish to draw direct parallels between early modern New England and the central Welsh Marches in the mid-Holocene, the ecological effects of the use of fire in clearance activity may well have been similar. In particular, I would

suggest that the more frequent burning would have changed the ecology of the forests of the central Welsh Marches in many ways. It probably resulted in the creation of larger clearings, and would also have promoted vigorous growth along the forest fringe. It may also have gradually altered the species composition in the stands of woodland in favour of species that prefer drier conditions such as Ash, Oak and Lime.

In some areas the larger clearings, which may well have been open for some time, witnessed the gradual creation of monument complexes such as those around the cursus Sarn-y-bryn-caled near Welshpool (Gibson 1994:60) or the timber enclosures in the Walton Basin (Gibson 1999). As Barrett (1999c:497) has recently suggested the construction of these monuments often involved substantial amounts of timber. The analysis demonstrated that the wood used in the timber circle at Sarn-y-bryn-caled and the timber enclosure in the Walton Basin was probably exclusively oak. It seems likely, therefore, that conditions that allowed the construction of such monuments were in part the product of the changes in forest composition and the enlargement of clearings that earlier clearance activity helped to generate. Although episodic, the procurement of timber for the construction of these monuments would, in turn, have resulted in a further increase in cleared land. The pollen evidence from Four Crosses suggests that the larger barrow cemeteries may well have existed in extensive open areas (Wimble 1986), created through a mixture of clearing ground to allow the construction of new monuments and the actions of grazing animals. Elsewhere the small clearings that were opened up in the later third millennium seem to have gradually expanded after c. 2000 BC.

The consequences of this were that, by c. 1500 BC, the patchwork landscape of park-like forest that had existed for several millennia had begun to unravel. Areas where extensive monument complexes had developed, which in many cases were also situated on the better-drained and more fertile soils, had been largely cleared. Elsewhere, on the higher ground and around the low lying wetlands of northern Shropshire, the smaller glades appear to have been gradually enlarged. I should emphasise that this clearance activity, when viewed from the perspective of individual generations, was sporadic and very gradual. Whilst the overall effect was a reduction in forest cover the process was incremental, as demand for grazing and

arable land gradually grew. In many cases clearings probably remained open for a few decades before reverting back to forest. At the same time new sites were cleared, whilst others may have witnessed successive phases of clearance and regeneration as they were successively used and then abandoned. This evidence, together with that from other the parts of the country, suggests that the communities who inhabited this landscape would have retained a relatively high degree of residential mobility (Barrett 1994, Brück 1999a, 2000). For instance, Brück has argued that the dearth of evidence for permanent, long-lived settlements in southern England implies that: -

“...individual households did not employ substantial domestic architecture to establish and legitimate an enduring relationship with place. It is clear that different groups shared access to certain places or parts of the landscape” (2000: 282).

She goes on to argue that tenurial rights to land were held by larger social groupings, rather than being invested in individual households. Access to the land may have been bound up with ties of kinship and affiliation. In terms of the shifting patterns of clearings and open woodland in the central Welsh Marches we can perhaps suggest that rights of tenure over both the land and the forest rested with the broader community. Individual households might secure access to particular locales for a brief period of time simply by dwelling within them or investing labour in maintaining and extending clearings. However, once the group moved on such places would have reverted to their former status, allowing other groups to appropriate them for their own use.

4.3.3 Changes in the land: landscapes of the later second millennium BC in the central Welsh Marches.

The environmental evidence indicates that there were a number of very marked changes in the landscape of the central Welsh Marches over the course of the later second millennium BC. This, in turn, implies significant differences in the ways in which people inhabited the landscape. The transformation was, however, gradual. The clearance activity that had occurred prior to this period created the conditions under which certain agricultural activities, namely the grazing of larger herds of

animals and the establishment of more extensive arable plots, became possible. As in other areas of Britain, transformations in the patterning and organisation of agricultural activities seem to characterise the later second millennium in the central Marches (cf. Barrett 1994, 1999c). At present our understandings of the archaeology of this period is rather limited. The construction of round barrows seems to have gradually ceased at this time but there appears to be little evidence for the sort of 'Celtic' fieldscapes and settlement enclosures that we know of from southern England. It is possible, however, that some of the cross ridge dykes that exist in some parts of the uplands of the Marches were constructed during this period, suggesting that the beginnings of formal land division lie in this period (see Chapter 5). In this section I will use the palaeoenvironmental evidence to explore the effects that these changes had upon the physical character of the landscape. In particular I will examine how the gradual opening up of the land resulted in a complex series of changes in the hydrology and geomorphology of the region. As we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6, these changes are particularly significant because they helped to establish the conditions that enabled the emergence of novel forms of social relations in the first millennium BC.

To begin with, the evidence indicates that there was a gradual but cumulative increase in the amount of cleared land in the central Welsh Marches. For instance, in the pollen sequences from the lowland wetland sites in northern Shropshire the onset of these changes is marked by a significant decline in lime pollen, a phenomenon known as the '*Tilia* decline' (although it is usually associated with a decline in the pollen curves of other arboreal species, particularly oak and elm). Turner (1964:85) was the first to identify this at Whixhall Moss, where it was radiocarbon dated to 3238 ± 115 BP (Q-467). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1865-1276 cal BC (see Fig. 4.3). Subsequently, *Tilia* declines have also been found at other sites in the region. For example, at Fenemere (Twigger and Haslam 1991:748) a reduction in lime and other arboreal pollen has been radiocarbon dated to 3190 ± 60 BP (SRR-2923), and at Top Moss (Leah *et al.* 1998:179) similar changes were dated to 3220 ± 50 BP (OxA-6639). These give calibrated calendrical dates (at 2 sigma) of 1620-1324 cal BC and 1620-1410 cal BC respectively (see Fig. 4.3). At both of these sites the decline in arboreal pollen is accompanied by a rise in herb pollen. At

Fenemere grass pollen frequencies rise along with pollen from plantains, docks and bracken. In addition, peaks in the pollen from grasses and bracken during this phase at Fenemere are interspersed with peaks in ash and oak pollen. Twigger and Haslam argue that this evidence suggests that clearings 100 – 200 m in extent were being opened up, used, and then abandoned and allowed to regenerate. They also suggest that around Fenemere their use may have persisted for around 100 years. Beales (1980) also found similar evidence at Crose Mere. Here the fall in pollen from the major tree species was accompanied by a decline in alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) pollen, and a corresponding rise in herb species that favour wet soils. Beales (1980:152) suggested that this was indicative of an opening up of the alder carr around the damper margins of the Crose Mere/ Whattal Moss basin. However, the radiocarbon date of 3714 ± 129 BP (Q-1234), which gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 2500 -1700 cal BC, that Beales obtained for the onset of this phase has been questioned by Twigger and Haslam (1991:749).

Clearance activity was also occurring at lower elevations elsewhere in the region. In particular the alder carr that had developed over the floodplains appears to have been significantly reduced in extent at this time. Evidence for this comes from Wilden Marsh on the floodplain of the river Stour near Stourport, Worcestershire, just beyond the immediate study area. The pollen sequence from this site indicates that there was a significant reduction in alder (*Alnus*) pollen after c. 1350 BC (Brown 1988:428). This was accompanied by a dramatic decline in oak and lime pollen, possibly as a result of increased clearance of the river terraces along the margins of the floodplain. Brown (1982, 1985, 1988) has found similar evidence for floodplain and terrace edge clearance at several sites to the south of Wilden Marsh, in the lower Severn Valley. In discussing this clearance activity he refers to the "...constrained diachroneity..." of the phenomena, since clearance of the floodplain in the middle and lower Severn valley appears to have occurred at slightly different times between c. 1400 -1000 BC (1988: 435). It seems likely that similar changes were occurring at this time in the upper Severn Valley. This floodplain clearance would probably have been fairly prolonged, taking place at different times along different parts of the Severn and its various tributaries.

We might note, however, that the river valleys containing valley mire systems probably remained wooded during the later second millennium. Certainly Brown's (1990:46) work in the Perry valley suggests that forest cover on Baggy Moor was not significantly reduced until after 600 - 770 cal AD. Burnt mounds are particularly common around these valley mires (see Chapter 5). These sites are often located on the ecotonal boundary between the damp valley bottoms and areas of higher, drier ground. It seems likely they were associated with the activities of communities who were utilising the broad variety of seasonally abundant resources that such locations must have offered. These would have included larger game animals, that would have thrived in the fringe vegetation around the margins of these areas. Cronon (1983) notes that in New England the woodlands covering such marshlands were protected from extensive fires by the presence of damper conditions and numerous watercourses. This resulted in a the growth of a much denser understorey that "...offered excellent refuge for deer, and the surrounding areas were often prime hunting places.". It seems possible, therefore, that the activities that took place at the burnt mounds were partly associated with transitory hunting activities, which were perhaps associated with episodes of feasting and consumption (see Chapter 5).

Evidence for more extensive clearance activity can also be seen at higher elevations. The pollen profile from Buckbean Pond indicates that in the later half of the second millennium BC that there was a significant reduction in oak and elm pollen (Musson 1991:106). Again, there was a corresponding rise in herb pollen frequencies, particularly grasses and plantains. Alder trees appear to have persisted around the margins of Buckbean Pond resulting in a high total tree pollen percentage. Similar clearances were almost certainly occurring in the uplands elsewhere in the region, as well as in areas immediately beyond the study area. For instance, the pollen sequences that have been obtained from the Carneddau area of mid-Wales (Walker 1993:180) indicates that the uplands around the headwaters of the Severn were becoming increasingly open over the course of the Middle Bronze Age. Prior to this point there had been little clearance activity within the alder rich woodlands that had developed in the Carneddau area by the mid Holocene. After c. 1400 BC, however, there is a significant reduction in alder, oak and hazel pollen in all but one of the five pollen cores from this area (ibid. :181). In addition, there is also a decline in lime

pollen in two of the pollen cores at this point (Carneddau 3 and 5), and an overall gradual rise in herb pollen, especially plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) pollen.

I would argue that the gradual removal of the park-like forests from many areas of the study area during the later second millennium BC set in motion a series of other changes, which had marked effects upon the character of the landscape. The ways in which these operated would have been both subtle and highly complex. In terms of the potentials and limitations they created for human activity, however, they were to have lasting consequences. For instance, the reduction of tree cover would have had a whole host of effects upon the underlying soils. Amongst other things, the removal of forest cover would have altered nutrient cycles, leading to changes in soil fertility that would have encouraged further changes in the patterning of cultivation. As we shall see in chapters 5 and 6, these transformations were one of the factors (but by no means the driving force) behind the social changes that occurred in the first millennium.

The changes in the vegetation cover would also have resulted in increased soil erosion. Again this would have been both a product of and a stimulant to changes in the patterning of agricultural practices across the landscape of the central Welsh Marches. In particular, the emergence of more permanent cultivation plots (see Chapter 5) would have resulted in changes in soil structure that would have made it more vulnerable to erosion. Similarly, the reduction in forest cover over the course of the second millennium across the region would also have increased surface run off and soil through flow. This would have resulted in accelerated soil erosion, which had certainly begun in the earlier second millennium BC. For instance, Twigger and Haslam (1991:748) suggest that the pollen and spore evidence from Boreatton Moss appears to indicate that flooding of the moss surface, which in turn initiated peat growth, was occurring by c. 1800 BC, following clearance in the vicinity of the basin. Similarly, Beales (1980:152) notes that the removal of alder carr from around the margins of Crose Mere appears to have led to increased soil erosion. By c. 1300 BC soil erosion also appears to have been occurring in the uplands, as the landscape was gradually opened up. For instance, there was a distinct change in the deposits that were accumulating in Buckbean Pond towards ones with a more clay-rich lithology (Musson 1991).

The increase in soil erosion would have resulted in larger sediment inputs entering the region's river systems, promoting changes in fluvial regimes. We begin to see indicators of major hydrological change within many of the region's systems around the turn of the first millennium. These transformations would have provided a series of new resources (e.g. seasonally abundant floodplain grazing, an increase in habitat availability for migratory wildfowl), creating the possibility for new forms of routine practice. Prior to the later second millennium BC these rivers would have had stable channel systems due to the forest cover on their floodplains (Brown 1997). Evidence for this comes from the floodplain of the Severn near Welshpool (see Fig. 4.2), where a sequence of braided palaeochannels shows up as cropmarks on aerial photographs on the surface of the oldest river terrace (Taylor and Lewin 1996). Known as the Welshpool Terrace, a minimum date for this unit is provided by a radiocarbon date of 4400 ± 40 BP (BM-2820) from the Sarn-y-bryn-caled timber circle. This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 3310 - 2900 cal BC. Some overbank flow may have occurred on a limited scale in some places as, for example, appears to have been the case at Wellington Quarry (Dinn and Roseff 1992). The geomorphological evidence from Clawdd-Coch (see Fig. 4.2) indicates that some horizontal channel migration was occurring towards the end of the third millennium BC (possibly as a result of early clearance activity in the area). However, at this location the river channel appears to have remained relatively stable until the post-medieval period (Taylor and Lewin 1997:259.).

The character of these rivers changed dramatically, however, as a consequence of the increased sediment input that resulting from clearance activity across the course of the later second millennium. At Welshpool a second morphological unit known, as the Older Floodplain, exists between the edges of the current floodplain and the base of the Welshpool Terrace (Taylor and Lewin 1996). Investigations have shown that the Older Floodplain consists of a 2m deep accumulation of fine sand and silt deposits (informally termed the 'Leighton Silts') over gravels. Despite the relatively featureless surface of this unit, Taylor and Lewin note the existence of "...some long, sinuous palaeochannels and smaller terrace remnants." (ibid.: 82). A radiocarbon date of 2850 ± 60 BP (Beta-41485) was obtained from one of the palaeochannels (W/J) near the outer edge of the Older Floodplain. This gives a calibrated calendrical

date (at 2 sigma) of 1220 - 830 cal BC (see Fig. 4.3) and provides a maximum date for the feature and for the start of alluviation. Similar evidence was also found on the lower Tannat valley at Carreghofa (Taylor and Lewin 1997) (see Fig. 4.2). Here the Middle Palaeochannel on terrace T3 produced a radiocarbon date of 2860±150 BP (Beta-56056). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1450 - 750 cal. BC (see Fig. 4.3), suggesting that this unit is of a similar date to palaeochannel W/J at Welshpool. This in turn implies a period of hydrological change and readjustment towards the close of the second millennium BC. The new sedimentary style that was established was characterised by a "...single thread channel, cut-offs, increased fine sediment load, vertical floodplain accretion..." with incision being dominant (Taylor and Lewin 1997: 260, Table 2). At Wellington Quarry in the Lugg valley in Herefordshire there was an increase in the average rate of sedimentation, from an average of 0.4 mm/ yr before 3070±70 BP (OxA-2883) to an average of 1.2 mm/ yr afterwards. This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1510-1150 cal BC (see Fig. 4.3), suggesting the onset of increased alluviation at a slightly earlier date (Roseff 1992). Taken as a whole, this evidence broadly correlates with the findings from the lower Severn valley where Brown and Barber (1985) and Shotten (1978) found similar evidence for significant increases in the rate of alluviation. Brown and Barber's (1985) results show an apparent 'lag' of 200-300 yrs in the catchment of the Ripple Brook - a minor tributary of the Severn - between the creation of a much more open lowland landscape and the increase in alluviation. Brown has suggested that this "...may be the result of sedimentary storage processes; or, more likely, it was the conversion of pasture to arable cultivation, rather than deforestation, that was responsible..." (1997:223). As explained above, a similar 'lag' period can be seen in the evidence from the central Welsh Marches.

The key point here is that these changes in hydrology and floodplain morphology resulted in a transformation in the character of the landscape of the central Welsh Marches. In the past, climatic change has been seen as the driving force behind these changes, with human communities inexorably 'responding' and 'adapting' to them. Debate within palaeohydrology continues between those who view the onset of wetter climatic conditions (e.g. Macklin 1999) the dominant variable and those who

see human action (i.e. clearance activity) as a major causal factor (e.g. Brown 1988, 1997). However, I would argue that the evidence suggests that the changes that occurred with the landscape of the central Welsh Marches represent the unforeseen consequences of a highly complex interplaying of human agency and geomorphological processes. Isolating climatic change as the single, most significant factor responsible for prompting these transformations seems too reductionist. Whilst not denying that climatic change may have played a part, Brown's comments, made in relation to his work at Wilden Marsh and elsewhere, seem particularly apposite here: -

“Climate change may have been of a minimal magnitude and can be viewed as a contributory factor although not a sufficient explanation for the increase in flooding during the late Bronze and Early Iron Age, and the increase in sediment concentration which was primarily caused by arable cultivation.” (1988:435)

In the central Welsh Marches the changes in agricultural practices in the later second millennium resulted in the gradual reduction of forest cover over a period of 400-500 years. With the clearance of the damp woodland and alder carr from the lowland floodplains, and the increased input of eroded fine sediment, the rivers of the study area underwent a period of readjustment. One characteristic of the new hydrological regimes of these rivers was that they were much more prone to flooding (Brown 1988:435). As a consequence the floodplains effectively became seasonal wetlands; waterlogged and often impassable but abundant in migratory wildfowl in the winter months when higher rainfall resulted in overbank flow, whilst in the summer months offering rich, verdant pasturelands (cf. Limbrey and Robinson 1988 and Miles 1997 for discussions of similar changes in the Thames Valley). By c. 1000BC a landscape was coming into being that enabled different forms of social action to those that had existed in the earlier second millennium. New forms of agricultural practices, for instance, became possible as more land was opened up, and this in turn facilitated new forms of social interaction (see Chapter 5). However, it is also important to recognise that this transformation was not a goal that successive generations worked towards, but the product of countless decisions taken by different individuals and communities as they went about the mundane tasks that constituted their day-to-day existence (Barrett 1999c, Edmonds 1999a).

4.3.4 Summary.

In this section I have presented a ecological history of the central Welsh Marches from the end of the last glaciation until the close of the second millennium BC. Given that the main focus of this thesis is the first millennium BC, I have avoided a detailed discussion of the sequence of the earlier and middle Holocene in favour of a closer examination of the evidence relating to the second millennium. In doing so I have identified a number of themes, which I will develop over the course of the rest of this and subsequent chapters. These include the relationship between the physical character of the landscape, and the nature and patterning of routine practices across it. I have suggested that the changes in the landscape that occurred over the course of the second millennium can be viewed as the product of a complex interplay of human agency and natural (i.e. geomorphological and hydrological etc) processes. These resulted in a subtle reworking of the material conditions that people inhabited, such that by the start of the first millennium BC, new modes of routine practice became possible. To this end the landscapes of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age were not only a product of the second millennium in terms of the monuments and anthropogenic residues they contained (cf. Barrett 1999b) but also because the distribution and composition of the other material resources (i.e. woodlands, floodplains, hill pasture etc) they offered were an artefact of earlier human activity. I now want to turn to the palaeoenvironmental evidence from the first millennium BC, in order to show how successive generations laboured upon and reshaped this landscape to their own ends.

4.4.0 Land of lost content? - Landscapes of the first millennium BC in the central Welsh Marches.

4.4.1 Landscapes of the early first millennium BC.

The palynological evidence from the central Welsh Marches suggests that early in the first millennium BC the partially cleared landscape, which had been created over the course of the later second millennium BC, gave way to much more open conditions. For instance, there appears to have been an expansion of open ground at

higher elevation areas within the region between c. 1100-900 BC. In the pollen sequence from Buckbean Pond an increase in the amount of cleared land has been radiocarbon dated to 2810 ± 60 BP (CAR-139) (Musson 1991:109). This gives a calibrated calendrical date of 1130-820 cal BC, suggesting that this clearance activity may predate the construction of the first hillfort ramparts between c. 900-850 BC. The alder carr in the area around Buckbean Pond appears to have been retained, although the pollen profile suggests that large expanses of upland grassland existed elsewhere, which persisted across the course of the first millennium BC. The palynological evidence from the Carneddau area suggests that an increase in clearance activity within upland areas may have been a widespread phenomenon (Walker 1993). The pollen sequences from this area indicate that there were further reductions in oak and alder pollen, accompanied by a rise in herbaceous pollen and grasses in particular.

For the lower lying part of the study area Twigger and Haslam (1991:749) propose a date of c. 800 BC for the onset of similar changes around Fenemere. We might note, however, that a number of uncertainties surrounded the radiocarbon dates from this site mean that it could have been slightly earlier. In the pollen profiles they examined there was a further reduction in arboreal pollen at this time. There was also a corresponding rise (to over 1%) in pollen from herb taxa, such as grasses, docks and bracken, indicative of open conditions. Pollen from herb species and cereals are also present at Top Moss across the course of the earlier first millennium BC (Leah *et al.* 1998). However, the persistence of high arboreal pollen frequencies during this period suggests that the woodland around the moss was retained. Combining the evidence from northern Shropshire Twigger and Haslam suggest that: -

“Averaged over a wide area of the lowlands, possibly a third of the tree cover was removed with up to three quarters of the woodland cleared in favoured localities such as the drier, well drained brown earth soils on the sand and gravel deposits.”
(1991:750).

Exactly what use was made of the newly cleared land remains a subject of debate. Twigger and Haslam (1991) suggest that the high frequency of grasses in all of the cores, combined with the poor representation of cereal pollen, may indicate an emphasis upon pastoral agriculture. They remain cautious, however, because cereal pollen is not easily dispersed in airstreams. We might also recall Brown's

(1997:223) argument that the onset of alluviation around the turn of the first millennium BC resulted from an expansion of arable agriculture. In addition, Barrett (1994, 1999c) has argued that such changes in other areas of Britain may be indicative of a shift from 'long fallow' to a 'short fallow' agricultural cycle. This may have resulted in the persistent use of some areas for arable cultivation (see Chapter 5). In terms of the patterning of agricultural practices, it seems likely that this period also saw an increase in the clearance of land around the meres and mosses for pasture. At the same time arable cultivation probably expanded on the freer draining soils over the gravels. The digging of the pit alignments at this time may indicate a greater concern with controlling access to areas of land that had been partially cleared for many centuries (see Chapter 5). It seems likely that the increase in clearance activity proved a contentious issue, as certain rights to these areas were pushed aside in favour of competing claims to the land. This may have required the rights of tenure over such places to be made more explicit through the creation of physical land divisions.

As we have already seen, although the evidence is not completely clear, the initiation of this increase in clearance activity may have slightly predated the construction of the first hillforts. I will discuss the processes behind the appearance of these monuments in greater detail in Chapter 5. At this point, however, I want to note that once hillforts began to be constructed, the felling of trees to provide timber for their boundaries would have acted as a further catalyst to the opening up of the landscape. I wish to make it clear that I am by no means suggesting that the construction of all of these hillforts occurred simultaneously. None-the-less, the evidence indicates that there was a more broadly defined 'horizon' of hillfort construction in the early centuries of the first millennium BC. For instance, the radiocarbon dates from the first, timber framed ramparts at the Breiddin are statistically indistinguishable from those from the first rampart at Llwyn Bryn-dinas, located in the Tannat valley c. 16 km to the northwest (Musson *et al.* 1992). Stanford (1982) has also proposed similarly early dates for the first phases of the hillfort on the Wrekin. Likewise, the origins of a number of other hillforts in the region excavated before the availability of radiometric dating techniques are also thought to lie in the early first millennium (Musson 1991:179). The form of the ramparts of these monuments seems to have

varied between sites. However, those at the Breiddin, Ffridd Faldwyn and Old Oswestry also contained large quantities of timber. At the Breiddin, for instance, 68 definite post holes and a further 12 probable post holes were associated with the c. 48 m stretch of Late Bronze Age rampart that Musson (1991) exposed. Charcoal was present in many of these postholes and appeared to represent *in situ* burning of structural timbers. Seven samples drawn from separate postholes were submitted for charcoal identification and in each case the timber involved proved to be oak. Most of the posts appear to have been 12-15 cm in diameter, although Musson (*ibid.*:25) notes that in some cases split or halved timbers appear to have been used. The approximate total length of the inner rampart at the Breiddin is 1300 m. Assuming that a Late Bronze Age timber framed rampart is present over the entire length, and using the average of 1.4 (definite) post-holes per metre present in Musson's (1991) sections, we might expect the presence of at least 1820 such post holes within the Late Bronze Age ramparts.

In his recent calculations of the volume of timber used in the construction of timber framed ramparts Manning (1999:24) made the assumption that each vertical post was made from a complete tree. The evidence from the Breiddin suggests that this may not always have been the case. Even so, very large quantities of timber were clearly involved. Manning's analysis also shows that the exclusive use of oak in these structures seems to have been a widespread phenomenon. It seems likely, therefore, that the timber that was used in the building of these monuments was carefully selected and probably drawn from a fairly wide area, perhaps by a workforce that converged on the site from many different directions. Thus the demand for timber that these construction projects created would almost certainly have been another factor that contributed towards the creation of a more open landscape. By implication, the act of building a hillfort would in itself have helped to transform the material conditions that people inhabited, not least in terms of the changes that it prompted within the wider landscape.

I would argue that the various strands of evidence must lead us to challenge the notion that the worsening climate was the causal factor behind such changes in the character of the landscape. Such a claim may appear anachronistic, given that such explanations are no longer preferred by those seeking to explain similar changes in

other regions. However, such climatically deterministic explanations continue to find favour amongst those working in Wales and the Marches, as demonstrated by Lynch *et al*'s (2000) latest synthesis of the prehistoric archaeology of Wales. They argue that in the early first millennium a down turn in the climate resulted in

“...a massive loss of exploitable land and a dramatic curtailment of agricultural potential...precipitating a protracted crisis which can only have led to an economic recession and certainly a bar to population growth if not outright demographic decline.” (ibid.: 145)

I have already argued, in relation to the evidence from the later half of the second millennium, that such models are overly reductionist (particularly since some of the supposed indicators of climatic change could also have been caused by changes in land use). Quite besides this, however, the environmental evidence I have discussed above in fact suggests that a further expansion of agricultural activity occurred in the central Welsh in the first millennium BC. This may have involved a shortening of fallow cycles (Barrett 1994, 1999c), an increasing emphasis and expansion of arable cultivation on the drier, more fertile soils, and an expansion of pastoral land in the uplands and on the wetter soils in the lowlands. Such developments seem a far cry from the downward spiral into agricultural recession argued for by Lynch *et al*. (2000). Indeed the evidence from the second half of the first millennium suggests that further changes in the pattern and structure of the landscape occurred during this period. It is to this evidence that I will now turn.

4.4.2 The landscapes of the central Welsh Marches in the middle-late first millennium BC.

The environmental sequence relating to the middle of the first millennium BC suggests that there were a number of significant changes in the character of the landscape at this time. I will argue that this period saw a number of changes in the patterning of agricultural practices, which may have involved a move away from the use of the pastures around wetlands and the adoption of tighter woodland management cycles. For instance, the pollen evidence from the Fenemere Pools (Twigger and Haslam 1991) and Crose Mere (Beales 1980) suggests that woodland regeneration was occurring in some areas between 600 and 400 BC. In the pollen sequences from the

Fenemere Pools Twigger and Haslam (1991:750) note that there was a slight drop in the grass and bracken pollen frequencies and a corresponding rise in birch, pine and alder pollen. They interpret this to mean that in the lowlands there was a shift in agricultural activity away from the fringes of the northern wetlands. In addition, Brown (1988:432) has drawn attention to a similar increase in arboreal pollen sequences from the floodplain sites that he has examined in the Severn Basin.

This evidence suggests that some of the clearances that been created in the early first millennium were allowed to revert back to woodland. As suggested above, this may imply a change in the organisation of agricultural practices at this time, particularly with regard to pastoral activities. However, oak pollen continues to decline in the pollen sequences from the Fenemere Pools (Twigger and Haslam 1991), suggesting the continued exploitation of this tree species for timber. Similarly, the carved wooden objects found within the cistern that was cut into Buckbean Pond some time around *c.* 400 BC certainly suggest that wood was used for a broad range of purposes in the middle Iron Age (Musson 1991). It seems possible, therefore, that the evidence for 'woodland regeneration' from the middle of the first millennium BC resulted from a number of changes in woodland management practices. These may have been prompted by the regeneration of woods that had been affected by the felling of trees for the construction of the early hillforts. It is possible that these woodlands were subsequently subjected to shorter coppicing cycles in order to provide timbers for a range of different uses. It is certainly noticeable that the hillfort ramparts of the later first millennium (see Chapter 6) contained considerably less timber than their earlier predecessors. This may imply that the demand for wood for other purposes prevented the procurement of large quantities of timber for such construction projects.

After *c.* 400 BC there is evidence for renewed clearance activity. This corresponds with a series of changes within the broader settlement patterns in the region, linked to the appearance of a broad range of 'smaller enclosures' (see Chapter 6). It seems likely that these changes also attended further alterations in the patterning of agricultural practices, possibly resulting from a greater emphasis upon the household retaining control of its own means of production. I will discuss the implications of these changes, especially regarding tenure and land holding in greater detail in

Chapter 6. At this point I want to explore what the environmental evidence tells us about the character of the landscape in the later first millennium, and the patterning of routine activities across it.

Twigger and Haslam (1991:751) suggest that after *c.* 400 BC the land around the Fenemere Pools was opened up to an even greater extent than it had been in the earlier first millennium. At Fenemere, for instance, pollen from herbaceous taxa and species associated with heathland increase to approximately 50 % of the total land pollen (*ibid.* :751). This is accompanied by a decline in the frequencies of arboreal pollen. Beales (1980:153) noted similar changes in the pollen sequence from Crose Mere. Cereal pollen is only present in small quantities in the pollen sequences from the Fenemere Pools (Twigger and Haslam 1991:751), again implying that arable agriculture was not occurring on the damper soils. I would argue that this evidence suggests the existence of a diverse mosaic of different landscape components.

Cultivation may again have been situated on the lighter soils, although the areas of sandiest soils may have become communal grazed heathlands by this time. The expansion of cleared land around the wetlands may imply an increase in the amount of paddocks and damp meadows, suggesting that pastoral activities were a very significant component of the agricultural cycle. The evidence for the persistence of grasslands at the Breiddin may imply that extensive hill pastures existed at this time (Musson 1991). It seems likely that individual households made use of a broad variety of these different resources. Indeed many of the smaller enclosures appear to have been located in such a way as to enable access to a range of different soils, allowing for the practice of a broader range of agricultural activities (see Chapter 6).

Although pastoral activities may have been a highly significant component of the agricultural round the evidence for ongoing soil erosion suggests arable cultivation remained important. The greater opening up of the land appears to have been accompanied by a further increase in overland flow, which resulted in hydrological change. For instance, Brown and Barber's (1985) and Shotton's (1978) work in the lower Severn valley suggests ongoing soil erosion and alluviation in the region's river valleys. As outlined above, Brown (1997) associates this with extensive arable agriculture. Analysis of the magnetic iron oxide content of sediments from Fenemere and the Berth pool allowed Twigger and Haslam (1991:752) to argue that

“...the exposure and erosion of subsoils [was occurring] in the catchments of these lakes during the Iron Age.” Similarly, Leah *et al.* (1998: 180) obtained a radiocarbon date of 2195±50 BP (OxA-6640) for changes in the vegetation growing on Top Moss that indicate that the basin became wetter at this time. This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 390-110 cal BC. The truncation of the peat above this level made the nature of this change difficult to assess, but it may imply increased overland flow into the basin. Similarly, a study of the palaeolimnology of a number of meres in Shropshire led Karr *et al.* (1990:292) to suggest that water levels may have risen significantly in the Middle Iron Age. Further, they argue that some of the “...ice-formed depressions in the area may never have held much water until this time.” (*ibid.* :292). The creation of these new areas of open water would have enhanced the diversity to the landscapes of this region, providing increased opportunities for wildfowling, fishing and the collection of sedges and reeds. The two radiocarbon dates of 2260±45 BP (Q-3050) and 2320±50 BP (Q-1246), which give calibrated calendrical dates (at 2 sigma) of 400 - 200 cal BC and 550 - 200 cal BC respectively, that Switzer (1989) obtained for the log boat from Whattal Moss certainly provides evidence for the use of these pools.

The nature of archaeological evidence relating to the Iron Age/ Romano-British transition will be discussed in Chapter 7. However, the environmental evidence suggests that the open conditions and associated agricultural regimes established in the later first millennium BC persisted until at least the second century AD. Twigger and Haslam (1991:752) argue a brief period of forest regeneration in the area around the Fenemere Pools. This appears to have started around 50 BC and lasted for 150 - 200 years. They argue that similar changes are apparent within the pollen sequences at Crose Mere (Beales 1980) and Whixhall (Turner 1964), and suggest that environmental deterioration resulted in a contraction in agricultural activity and an increase in social stress. Beales (1980:153), however, suggests an *increase* in erosion rates occurred in the area around Crose Mere at this time. It seems likely, therefore, that the evidence that Twigger and Haslam (1991:751) choose to see as indicative of episode of woodland regeneration over much of north Shropshire may, in fact related to separate, localised changes in land-use.

Similarly, the higher ground also appears to have remained relatively open across this period. The evidence from the Breiddin indicates that little change occurred from earlier period (Musson 1991). Changes are apparent elsewhere, however. In the Carneddau area the most significant clearance episode appears to have occurred in the Romano-British period, probably in the second century AD (Walker 1993:181). These episodes involved a further fall in arboreal pollen and an accompanying rise in the pollen of taxa associated with open conditions. Walker comments that: -

“...by the end of the clearance phase early in the historic period, the landscape in the Carneddau region must have closely resembled that of the present day.” .

It seems likely, therefore, that changes in the patterning of routine practice that occurred in the middle of the first millennium BC resulted in the establishment of an agricultural cycle that persisted until at least the end of the early Roman period. This would have been based around the use of a carefully husbanded landscape containing stands of managed woodland, tracts of hill pasture and floodplain grazing and areas of arable cultivation. In Chapter 6 I will use the other forms of material evidence relating to this period to further refine my interpretation of the ways in which this landscape was inhabited.

4.4.3 Summary.

In this section I have examined the palaeoenvironmental sequence relating to the landscape of the central Welsh Marches in first millennium BC. I have identified a number of highly significant changes that are apparent within these landscapes. These include: -

- An increase in the amount of open land in the early first millennium BC.
- The role that the construction of the first hillforts played in accelerating the pace of clearance.
- Changes in the nature of woodland management practices.
- The evidence for further clearance activity in the later first millennium.

- The patterning of agricultural practices across the landscape throughout the period.
- The complex, interrelated and inseparable relationship between human agency and ‘natural forces’ in producing and sustaining these transformations.

These form key themes, which I will return to later in the thesis. In particular, I will be concerned with explaining in detail what implication they have for changes in the nature of social relations during this period.

4.5.0 Conclusion.

Within this account of the palaeoenvironmental sequence from the central Welsh Marches I have demonstrated that we can no longer view the prehistoric landscapes of this region as an uninhabited, densely forested wilderness. I have also sought to move beyond the sorts of environmentally deterministic models that are often rehearsed in relation to these forms of evidence. An established critique of environmental archaeology as it has been practiced in the past now exists (Barrett 1999c, Butler 1995, Edmonds 1999a, Thomas 1990). One of the major criticisms levelled against environmental archaeology is its continued use of a ‘systems’ approach to past social life. This has resulted in reluctance to engaged in theoretical debate concerning the historically contingent ways in which humans have interacted with the landscapes they inhabited in the past, and how they perceived changes within these landscapes.

Such approaches are founded upon the separation that is presumed to exist within ‘western’ thought between human culture on the one hand and the natural world on the other (ibid.). Given that this is a historically specific ontological belief peculiar to the modern western mind (Ingold 1998), we are effectively making a cross-cultural generalisation when we impose this form of reasoning onto past human groups.

Barrett (1999c), Cronon (1983) and Edmonds (1999a) all advocate a different approach based around the writing of detailed ecological histories. These must be based around establishing an understanding of the forms of routine practices they were engaged in. Within my account of the environmental evidence I used these residues to examine the character and scale of various different forms of day-to-day activity in which people were engaged in the central Welsh Marches. Within

subsequent chapters I will return to these routines in greater detail through an engagement with the other forms of archaeological evidence that we have for them. I opened with an account of the locations from which this evidence has been drawn in order to highlight the gaps that exist within our data set. I then followed the sequence through from the end of the last glaciation to beginning of the historic period. I briefly sketched out the evidence from the early prehistoric period to demonstrate that human communities had been engaged in shaping the landscape they inhabited, through the manipulation of woodland cover, for several millennia before the increases in clearance activity in the Middle Bronze Age. However, given that my main concern is the archaeology of the first millennium BC, I have placed most emphasis upon the evidence for landscape change over this period, as well as in the later half of the second millennium BC. Between the Middle Bronze Age and the Roman conquest there was an overall reduction in forest cover, indeed the landscape was largely open by the end of this period. However, the evidence demonstrates that this was far from being a unilinear process through which cultural order was steadily imposed in on the landscape. The changes that we see occurring in the physical character of the landscape across the course of the later second and first millennium BC resulted from the interplay of a highly complex set of interrelated factors. The role played by human agency and 'natural' landscape processes in creating these changes are so enmeshed that it is hard to separate them out from one another, or give primacy to any particular one.

Chapter 5

Reading between the lines: landscapes of the early first millennium BC in the Central Welsh Marches.

5.1.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which the landscapes of the central Marches may have been inhabited in the first half of the first millennium BC. In particular, I will be concerned with developing an understanding of the material conditions that led people to construct the first hillforts. It is my contention that, as in other parts of Britain, the emergence of this ‘class’ of monuments was preceded by a phase of formal land division. I will argue that the practices associated with building these linear earthworks helped to establish the conditions that made the construction of the first hillforts possible. In order to do this it will be necessary to trace out, at a variety of scales and in relation to various categories of material evidence, the ways that people sought to reproduce the networks of social relations they were embedded within. By necessity, this will involve a consideration of how the various forms of social practices that people were engaged in across the landscapes of the central Marches were ordered both spatially and temporally.

In order to achieve this I will analyse the nested sets of relationships that enabled people to understand their place within the world, and act effectively to reproduce those understandings (see Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of this analytical device). Working outwards from the world of day-to-day routines, to the construction of broader senses of community identity, I will explore how the inhabitants of the central Marches both created, and were in turn created by, a historically situated set of social relations. All of these were nested within one another, such that practices that occurred on a daily basis (for example the use of pottery vessels), at a very localised scale, also referenced broader understandings of community.

5.2.0 The daily grind: ‘day-to-day’ social relations in the central Welsh Marches in the early first millennium BC.

5.2.1 Introduction.

In this section I will consider what the material evidence tells us about the kinds of routine interaction that people engaged in, and what sorts of social relations might have existed both within and between different ‘household’ groups. We must recognise at the outset that caution is, of course, required when using such terms (cf. Brück and Goodman 1999). The households of the first millennium have often viewed as being synonymous with the modern western nuclear family unit (e.g. Cunliffe 1995: 44, Fig. 30, Fitzpatrick 1997: 76, Fig. 9.3). However, Brück and Goodman (1999) argue that anthropological work on households demonstrates that composition is both culturally contingent and varies over time. I, therefore, take the term household to mean a group of one or more individuals who share ties of kinship, and who dwell together for a significant part of their seasonal round (see Chapter 6.2.3 for further discussion of this issue).

5.2.2 The historical context of the sequence from central Welsh Marches.

The material evidence suggests that the landscape of the central Welsh Marches underwent a number of highly important changes over the course of the second millennium BC. At certain places within the study area, particularly within the river valleys, sizeable barrow cemeteries were built over the course of the late third and early second millennium BC. Some of the groupings, for example at Four Crosses in north-eastern Powys (Warrilow *et al.* 1986) and Bromfield in south Shropshire (Stanford 1982, Hughes *et al.* 1995) (see Fig. 5.1), were aligned on a linear axis. Elsewhere, for example at Berwick and Ford, both in Shropshire, they were more ‘clustered’ (Watson 1991: 10, Fig. 4). Excavations have demonstrated that many of these monuments have extended histories of construction and re-working (Britnell 1982, Gibson 1999, Hughes and Woodward 1995, Hughes *et al.* 1995, Stanford 1982, Warrilow *et al.* 1986). However, such investigations suggest that the tradition of building round barrows came to an end in the early second millennium. In many cases a final phase of enlargement through the addition of a capping of turf and earth

is present, into which secondary burials associated with Food Vessel Urns were occasionally inserted.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the environmental sequence suggests that by the early second millennium BC, these monument complexes probably stood in quite extensive clearings. After *c* 1500 BC clearance seems to have increased, perhaps indicating that more permanent areas of cultivation and pasture were being created. Although more work is required, the evidence for north Shropshire suggests that large plots remained open for a couple of generations before being allowed to revert back to scrub and woodland, perhaps representing an intermediary stage between long and short fallow cultivation regimes (see below). Elsewhere, especially on the gravel river terraces, these plots could have remained open for longer.

These changes form part of a broader series of transformations in social organisation, evidence which has now been identified in many parts of Britain. It has long been recognised that a fundamental shift in the way that the landscape was ordered occurred in the middle of the second millennium BC (e.g. Childe 1940). After *c.* 1500 BC mortuary practices appear to have involved the fragmentation and dispersal of human remains around the landscape, and incorporation into various residential and agricultural features. At the same time, changes in the ways in which the tasks associated with the agricultural cycle were organised, both temporally and spatially, led to a transformation in the character of the landscape (Barrett 1994). Despite the widespread occurrence of this phenomenon, most interpretations of the character and nature of these changes has focused upon the evidence from the southern chalklands and the Thames Valley. There are, of course, good reasons for this – the sequence from central southern England has a much longer history of research and we, therefore, have a better understanding than we do of the evidence from many other regions. None-the-less, there is a danger that the models that have been developed in relation to Wessex have been applied too readily to the rest of Britain (see Chapter 2 and 6 for a discussion of similar issues in relation to the Iron Age). It is, therefore worth considering how applicable such explanations are to the sequence from central Marches.

Using the material evidence from the southern chalklands and the valleys of the Thames, Kennet and Stour, Barrett (1994, 1999c) has argued that a significant change occurred in the nature and organisation of agriculture practices in this region

in the middle of the second millennium BC. In order to explain this change he utilises Boserup's (1965) distinction between *long fallow* and *short fallow* cultivation, although he rejects Boserup's argument that the shift from the former to the later is driven by population pressure. On this basis, Barrett argues that the communities of the third and earlier second millennium were engaged in 'long fallow' agriculture, involving a shifting pattern of cultivation plots that required little investment in agricultural technology (Barrett 1994: 144).

The maintenance of forest 'edge' ecosystems within an open, park-like forest may have been extremely important within such agricultural regimes (see Chapter 4). Barrett (1999c) proposes that in British prehistory the importance of maintaining forest edge ecosystems extended back to the Mesolithic period. With the adoption of domesticated animals it seems likely that such areas provided important for grazing for stock, which encouraged the gradual extension of these ecosystems. As such the forest never stood in opposition to prehistoric agriculture; instead: -

"...it was partly through the inhabitation of an evolving woodland margin that agriculture, and the working practices which were demanded by that agriculture, were made possible." (ibid.: 497).

Barrett (1994) also utilises Ingold's (1986) concept of *tenure*, defined as being the way in which social groups develop ties to particular locations and the strategies by which they secure and/ or control access to particular resources. He suggests that long fallow agricultural strategies were dependent upon forms of tenure whereby the wider community held the land in trust. Thus "...place[s] of cultivation would...have become available for a short period of time, to be relinquished in the knowledge that other places could be claimed in turn." (ibid.: 144).

Barrett (1994: 151) has also suggested that the funerary practices that came into existence in the early second millennium created the potential for the emergence of fundamentally different forms of tenure. These were predicated upon new concepts of temporality, which funerary rituals associated with the creation of the barrow cemeteries of this period helped to create. Such rituals appear to have been concerned with the construction of "Lines of genealogical identity..." (ibid: 127). Each act of burial fixed the identity of particular individuals in time and space, and in relation to those that had gone before.

As a consequence, however, the generalised concept of an ancestral past, which Barrett (1994: 125) argues prevailed over the course of the fourth and third millennium, became temporally dislocated from the 'present'. The barrows marked the passing of successive generations and as living memory of them gradually faded, so 'the past' became ever more distant. With the enlargement of the barrow mounds the initial funerary deposits were rendered increasingly inaccessible, reinforcing the temporal separation of the present from the distant past.

The creation of the barrow cemeteries would have provided a new set of metaphors for understanding human existence. Barrett calls this new ontological framework *being* and proposes that, with its emergence, people developed a bounded and defined sense of place, which engendered a sense of belonging to a particular locale. This was combined with a new sense of time in which "...observers...watch[ed] the cyclical renewal of the seasons working themselves out upon that portion of the land to which they belonged." (ibid.: 147). Barrett contends that it was this conceptualisation of human existence that persisted throughout the rest of prehistory. Barrett suggests that this new understanding of the world developed as an unforeseen consequence of "...a burial rite which may have begun by simply distinguishing between those differences of rank and of person which were publicly defined by the place each took in ritual and ceremonial practice." (1994: 151). The creation of the barrow cemeteries allowed people to identify themselves with a more tightly proscribed community with its own closely defined history. The fixing of these funerary rituals in space allowed these communities to develop closer ties to particular areas of the landscape than had previously been the case. Thus, by the mid second millennium, it became increasingly possible for these groups to assert rights of tenure over particular part of the landscape. It was this "...transformation in the control of land..." which Barrett argues resulted in the creation of very different landscapes in the mid and late second millennium (ibid.: 147). The emergence of more closely defined communities bound to particular parts of the landscape resulted in the adoption of short fallow cultivation, involving the repeated and more intensive use of the same plots of land and greater investment in agricultural technology. Essential to all of this, Barrett argues, was "...the regular and frequent involvement of co-operative labour..." (ibid.: 149), which reproduced the communities' sense of tenure over their land.

There is much of use to us here. For instance, Barrett's arguments provide us with an explanation of why the construction of funerary monuments apparently ceased in the central Welsh Marches in the middle of the second millennium BC. Similarly, his arguments concerning the transformations in the organisation of agricultural practices at this time would also account for the increase in cleared land, and subsequent acceleration in soil erosion, which the environmental evidence suggest occurred after c. 1500 BC (see Chapter 4).

There are, however, limits to the extent to which we can apply this model to the evidence from the study area. During the mid-late second millennium BC, those parts of central southern England upon which Barrett bases his argument saw the emergence of 'celtic' field systems and more defined settlement foci. At present, the evidence from the central Welsh Marches is, at best, more equivocal. As I have already suggested, there were very significant changes in the physical character of the landscape in this region at this time and the emergence of formal land divisions in some areas (see Section 5.3). However, at present there is little evidence for field systems that precede these boundary systems. The one well recorded example of a 'celtic' field system in the study area – Black Knoll on the southern tip of the Long Mynd – seems to date to the later Iron Age or early Romano-British period (Ainsworth and Donachie 1995). A similar date would seem to apply to the field system on the Breiddin in northeastern Powys (O'Neil 1937, Musson 1991). This absence of evidence could be a product of the general lack of research on this period in the central Marches. Consequently, examples of field systems dating to the mid-late second millennium BC may yet be discovered, particularly at lower elevations where they will have been largely ploughed out. At the same time, however, the extensive areas of unimproved land at higher elevations seem to be devoid of such field systems suggesting that we are confronting genuine differences in the material evidence.

The fact that we do *not* at present have any evidence in the central Welsh Marches for the Deverel-Rimbury type enclosures that seem to characterise the mid-late second millennium BC in central southern England adds further support to this suggestion. Indeed, our ability to identify loci dating to this period within the study area is still extremely limited. So far all of the cropmark enclosures that have been excavated in the region have proved to be Iron Age or Romano-British (see Chapter

6). Traces of open settlement, which pre-date these enclosures, have occasionally been found during these excavations but these seem to date to the earlier first millennium BC (see Section 5.2.3).

Beyond the western limit of the study area Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has recently excavated an unenclosed round house at Glanfeinion, in the upper reaches of the Severn Valley (Britnell *et al.* 1997). Approximately 8.2m in diameter, this structure was situated on a gently sloping gravel terrace on the south side of the steep sided valley, and was discovered by accident during the laying of a gas main (see Fig. 5.2). The structure was associated with an assemblage of Middle-Late Bronze pottery and two radiocarbon dates of 2960 ± 50 BP (BM-2972) and 3040 ± 40 BP (BM-2971). These give calibrated calendrical dates (at 2 sigma) of 1370 – 1010 cal BC and 1410 -1130 cal BC respectively (see Fig. 5.3). It remains uncertain whether the building formed part of a group of similar structures but Britnell *et al.* (*ibid.*: 194) note that there was little evidence for an enclosure ditch within the area that was investigated. At present, this structure is unparalleled elsewhere in the region. However, it suggests that in the latter half of the second millennium we *might* be dealing with dispersed open settlement, demonstrating that we should remain cautious of applying models developed in relation to the sequence from southern England. Given that this site was not identified by the desk-based assessment or the field evaluation conducted *prior* to the construction of the pipeline, it also illustrates the problems we face in trying to locate sites from this period in the central Marches. At the broader level, conceptualising the nature of the shift from long to short fallow cultivation also requires caution. Brück (2000) has recently argued that many commentators, including Barrett (1994: 148-9), use the term ‘intensification’ to describe the transformations in agricultural practices that occurred in the later second millennium BC. She takes issue with the argument that the appearance of archaeologically visible field systems at this time represented a move towards more intensive forms of agricultural production, asserting that it rests upon “...an implicit evolutionist mode of thought according to which novel technologies must necessarily be more efficient and more productive than those they replace...” (*ibid.*: 276). By arguing for alternative view of these changes, she seeks to break the connection that Barrett (1994: 148-9) makes between the appearance of the Celtic field systems and an increase in the rates of soil erosion on the chalklands. Brück points out that the

geomorphological processes involved are highly complex, and suggests that the evidence is much less clear-cut than Barrett allows for. She also maintains that we cannot necessarily assume that when such changes occur they automatically indicate intensified agricultural activity. Whilst I agree with these arguments, the evidence for constrained diachronic change in the hydrology of the Severn at this time does seem to run contrary to Brück's suggestion that: -

“...many alluvial...deposits relate to *very* localised events in space and time...and it may be problematic to extrapolate to the wider landscape.” (2000: 277, my emphasis).

When we consider the evidence for alluviation in the Severn Valley towards the end of the second millennium BC *alongside* the indications of increased clearance activity, it is hard to escape the conclusion that this resulted from changes in the structuring of agricultural practices. When combined with natural landform process, this led to a gradual transformation in the character of the landscape.

Despite this, however, I would agree with Brück's (2000: 277) argument that, whilst such changes undoubtedly result from “...change in the mode and organization of production...”, they need not have been accompanied by *intensification*. As such they could have been accomplished without the generation of increased amounts of surplus or a rise in population (a mechanism that, as mentioned above, Barrett (1994: 143) also rejects). As she contends

“Social units may simply have produced the same amount from a smaller area of land, without any increase in surplus production.” (ibid.).

To summarise then, the evidence from the central Welsh Marches, whilst not as well understood as that from Wessex, does imply that very significant changes in the organisation of agricultural practices occurred in the later second millennium BC. However, these changes seem to have been differently configured to those that occurred in central southern Britain. For instance, we can perhaps envisage a slightly more drawn out progression from long to short fallow cultivation regimes than would appear to have been the case in Wessex. Yet Barrett's (1994) thesis allows us to recognise that this transformation was undoubtedly accompanied by a fundamental shift in the structuring of social relations; probably towards communities with much more closely defined rights of tenure over particular parts of the landscape. These changes were an unforeseen consequence of the gradual adoption of the agricultural

practices associated with much shorter fallow periods. As we shall see below, by the beginning of the first millennium these transformations had created a landscape that provided new resources (i.e. seasonally inundated floodplains etc), thus creating the potential for new forms of material practice.

5.2.3 The patterning of day-to-day social relations in the early first millennium BC.

Let us now turn to the evidence relating to the forms of routine activity that people engaged in the earlier first millennium BC within the central Welsh Marches. Barrett (1989) has argued that these activities would have been structured around the demands of an agricultural cycle, which had its roots in the transformations that occurred over the course of the later second millennium BC. He suggests that the labour involved in managing the land and the tasks associated with animal husbandry became a key medium through which ties between people were created. Thus, the “...reproduction of the system drew upon cycles of natural fertility, the consumption of food, and upon human biological reproduction.” (ibid: 309).

As in the later second millennium BC, our ability to identify dwellings dating to this period remains limited. However, the evidence from Sharpstones Hill Site A in central Shropshire (see Fig. 5.1) suggests that we may be dealing with dispersed ‘open’ settlement set within the boundaries of a wider field system (Barker *et al.* 1991). This site was excavated in the late 1960s in order to investigate a rectilinear crop mark enclosure, which subsequently proved to be of Iron Age – Romano-British date. However, the excavation revealed that this enclosure had been superimposed on an earlier ‘open’ settlement, which dated broadly to the early first millennium BC (see Chapter 6 for further discussion of this issue).

Although partially truncated by later activity, evidence for a cluster of two, possibly three, buildings was found at this site (Barker *et al.* 1991). The first of these was represented by a circular gully associated with a small roundhouse structure approximately 7m in diameter (marked as F6 in Fig. 5.4). A cluster of postholes on the southern side of the gully defined a possible entrance to the building. Finds included fragments of burnt daub and a rim sherd of a thin walled (Clee Hills) dolerite tempered, barrel shaped vessel. Ephemeral evidence for two further buildings lay to the north and north-east of the roundhouse. Barker *et al.* suggested

that posthole F66 could have formed part of a rectilinear structure defined by two rows of irregular postholes (see Fig. 5.4). A pit containing fire cracked stones and other burnt debris lay within the centre of the proposed building. Evidence for a third structure, associated with another large posthole containing sherds of stony (Cheshire) briquettage and a residual sherd of quartz tempered Neolithic pottery, lay approximately 25m to the east. A further four small post-holes, two rectangular postholes and two pits containing burnt debris were found nearby (see Fig 5.4). This area also contained a 'boat shaped' pit, which had a concentration of stones at its north-eastern end and contained the sooted rim and body sherds of a flared rim vessel similar to those recovered from the early phases of the hillforts on the Breiddin (Musson 1991: 122. Fig. 53, 82 & 83), and the Wrekin (Stanford 1984: 75. Fig. 8). This feature resembled the oval pit that lay outside the post-ring roundhouse at Glanfenion, which was interpreted as an oven or hearth (Britnell *et al.* 1997).

Taken together, this may represent the remains of a small cluster of buildings comprised of one, possibly two, roundhouses and an associated ancillary structure. This locale may, therefore, have been the dwelling place of an extended household or possibly two smaller such units. The bonds between the members of the group(s) that inhabited the structures would have been reproduced on a diurnal basis, as a consequence of mundane activities that took place at this locale. The preparation and sharing of food would have been of particular importance, since it facilitated the kinds of face-to-face interaction that bound households together (Barrett 1989: 310). The residues from the 'boat shaped' pit and other features suggests that cooking probably took place in and around the buildings. The presence of burnt stone is particularly important because fire heated cobbles (variously described as pot boilers and boiling stones because of their presumed function) appear to have played an important role in these practices in the later second and first millennium BC in this region (cf. Brück in press). In some parts of the study area large accumulations of such stones and other burnt debris, which broadly date to this period, have been found. Known as burnt mounds, these features suggest that cooking and consumption of food may also have occurred on a larger scale in other locations (although see section 5.4.3 for a more detailed discussion of the evidence).

The pottery vessels that were used in the preparation, and possibly the serving, of food at Sharpstones Hill Site A probably brought wider social ties to mind. All of

the pottery from this phase of activity was tempered with crushed igneous rock (Morris in Barker *et al.* 1991), a practice which appears to characterise the Middle and Late Bronze Age pottery traditions of this region (see Section 5.4.2.3). At this site most of the tempering material seems to have been derived from the Pontesford and Earl's Hill complex of pre-Cambrian Uriconian volcanics c. 10km to the south west of Sharpstones Hill (*ibid.*: 46). However, some sherds had dolerite tempering characteristic of a well know local fabric group that probably originates from the Clee Hills in south-east Shropshire (Gelling and Peacock 1969). Finally, a distinctively decorated shouldered jar, sherds of which had been deposited in a pit (see below), was tempered with crushed granite. Morris (in Barker *et al.* 1991: 46) suggested that this could have derived from an erratic within the Eskdale granite drift that occurs on Selattyn Hill, in north-west Shropshire and Wenlock Edge, in south Shropshire (she notes that a sherd from Old Oswestry hillfort had a similar fabric). It seems likely, therefore, that the dolerite and granite tempered vessels were obtained through exchange, which would in itself have helped to created wider social ties.

The various practices that took place in and around buildings at Sharpstones Hill Site A were framed by a series of linear ditches, which were components of a larger field system (Barker *et al.* 1991). The roundhouse defined by the circular gully appears to have been located immediately next to a ditch aligned on a north-south axis (marked as F9 on Fig. 5.4). This feature intersected another long, discontinuous linear ditch (marked as F50, F114 and F30 on Fig. 5.4) approximately 30m to the north. A narrow entrance through this boundary was found c. 90m to the east of this junction. This was associated with an anomalous circular feature, as well as a series of postholes that were thought to belong to "...three square timber buildings, or a palisade constructed of two rows of eighteen postholes." (*ibid.* :23). The former suggestion seems more likely and four posters dating to the earlier first millennium BC are known from the Breiddin (Musson 1991: 30). As such, these features may represent the remains of storage structures associated with the buildings I have already described. Alternatively they may have been associated with another group of dwellings located beyond the excavated area.

The evidence from Sharpstones Hill Site A is suggestive of a dispersed pattern of dwellings scattered amongst wider field systems defined by linear field boundaries. As we will see in section 5.3 below, land divisions may have been fairly widespread

throughout the study area, and the palaeoenvironmental evidence relating to the early first millennium suggests that continued clearance activity had produced a relatively open landscape (see chapter 4). It seems possible, therefore, that the household that dwelt at this site was one amongst a number such groups that were dispersed across the wider landscape. However, as Barrett has argued of inhabitants of the later Bronze Age settlement at Itford Hill in Sussex, each of these groups "...was not a self-reproducing unit, either materially or biologically." (1989: 311). Fleming (1985, 1989) has suggested that amongst the co-axial fields systems on Dartmoor, and elsewhere, such households were probably closely linked by ties of kinship and affiliation. Those that dwelt in the same general locality may have formed 'neighbourhood groups', who pooled their labour in the tasks involved in cultivating the land and managing their stock (Fleming 1989: 68). For instance, at certain times of the year the inhabitants of the round houses at Sharpstones Hill Site A combined their labour with that of their neighbours, to plough the land, and to dig and repair the surrounding land boundaries. This would have created broader ties of debt and obligation, which would have been further cemented through the exchange of material objects and marriage partners. Thus, we can recognise that the routines of the agricultural cycle played an important role in defining people's senses of identity and of their place within such groups (cf. Giles 2001).

Fleming (1985, 1989) has argued that the wider field systems that such 'neighbourhood groups' lived amongst would have been laid out by localised communities composed of several such units. Indeed, as I will argue in section 5.4.4, the labour that these groups invested in the construction of the linear boundaries undoubtedly played an important role in generating and sustaining a sense of a wider community identity. Rights of access and tenure over the land may have been held at this level (cf. Sharples 1991b). The tasks associated with working amongst and maintaining the individual plots were framed by an architecture associated with, and maintained by, the localised community. As such the boundaries of field systems may have acted to "...reduce the autonomy of the neighbourhood group..." (Fleming 1989: 68). Thus, we can recognise that, by tending to the land around the buildings at Sharpstones Hill Site A, the people who inhabited this locale not only tended to themselves and their families but also to the broader community to which they belonged.

Given that the local community may have held tenure over the land, the ways in which these people renewed and maintained their rights to dwell at this locale would have been particularly important. The placing of deposits dug close to the linear boundaries may have helped to bind the group to these places. For instance, Barker *et al.* (1991) found a discrete cluster of pits (F71/1, 2, 12 & 14) in and around the entrance way through ditch F50 (see Fig 5.4). 30m to the west another pit had been cut into this ditch. The fills of most of these pits contained sherds of rock-tempered pottery, together with fire cracked stones, charcoal and other burnt material. In addition, two of the pits contained fragments of burnt bone (in one case the pottery sherds also appear to have been burnt after they had been broken).

The fragments of burnt bone from these pits were not analysed in detail, so we cannot say whether or not they represent human remains. However, the contents of these pits are similar in many ways to the cremation deposits dating to the early first millennium BC that have been found in central Welsh Marches. For example, a flat enclosed cremation cemetery consisting of a cluster of pits containing token deposits of cremated bone, charcoal and occasionally sherds of pottery has been excavated at Sharpstones Hill Site B (Phase 2) (Barker *et al.* 1991). Set within a circular 'gully' 25m in diameter, a sample of charcoal from one of these pits produced a radiocarbon date 2770 ± 118 BP (Birm-207) (*ibid.*: 30). This gives a calibrated calendrical date of (at 2 sigma) of 1400 – 550 cal BC due to the high error factor. Similarly, at Meole Brace, c 2km to the south west of Sharpstones Hill Site A, a pit containing pieces of cremated bone, burnt pebbles and fragments of Late Bronze Age pottery had been dug approximately 14m to the west of an Early Bronze Age ring ditch (Hughes and Woodward 1995). Likewise, the pits associated with the flat open ('urnfield') cremation cemetery (C1) at Bromfield also contained 'token' deposits of cremated bone, charcoal and sherds of pottery in variable quantities (Stanford 1982). Stanford noted that two of the pits associated with this cemetery contained fragments of pottery from vessels that had been smashed and then partially burnt before burial. A radiocarbon date of 2712 ± 75 BP (Birm-62) that was obtained from charcoal from one of these deposits (*ibid.*: 304). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1050 – 760 cal BC (see Fig. 5.3).

The contents of the pits at Sharpstones Hill Site A appear to result from a set of practices that involved deposition of fragmented cremated human remains, charcoal,

(occasionally burnt) pottery sherds and burnt stone. At Bromfield and Meole Brace this occurred near to earlier funerary monuments. However, at Sharpstones Hill Site A these deposits were associated with the linear field boundaries, and the entranceway through them. Brück (1995) has argued that during this period human remains represented a symbolic resource that could be drawn upon to articulate a range of discourses. These may have included concepts of human and agricultural fertility and the definition of the community, which would have given such residues an important political and social dimension. Brück notes that where such deposits occur in relation to evidence for domestic activity they are often associated with boundaries and entrances. She suggests that:-

“...if there is a growing need to define identity and legitimate control over land, the symbolic elaboration of boundaries around settlements is a means of dividing those who do not belong to a local community from those that do.” (ibid.: 257).

Thus we can recognise that the pit deposits at Sharpstones Hill Site A probably played a role in defining the rights of the household(s) to dwell within this particular locale. By depositing materials symbolically associated with life and death with the linear boundaries around these dwellings this group would have helped to define the stories attached to this place. Given the strong possibility that these residues included the remains of their dead, they would also have bound the biographies and histories of these people to this particular part of the landscape. These acts would also have facilitated the construction of a narrative about the rights of this group to occupy this locale, which could be conveyed to others.

To summarise, at present Sharpstones Hill Site A is the only ‘non-hillfort’ settlement site dating to the earlier first millennium that has been found in the central Welsh Marches. However, the site does appear broadly comparable to those that have been found in the Thames Valley (i.e. Reading Business Park), where such field systems have been much more extensively investigated (e.g. Miles 1997, Yates 1999). It seems likely that other such sites lie beneath later enclosures elsewhere within the study area (see Chapter 6). Consequently, I would argue that the evidence from Sharpstones Hill Site A gives us some impression of the nature and scale of the relations that people were engaged in on a daily basis in the earlier first millennium BC. It suggests that people may have dwelt in small circular roundhouses scattered amongst wider field systems. For the majority of the time people’s lives probably

revolved around the households to which they belonged. Bound to their near neighbours by ties of kinship, debt and obligation these groups would have come together at certain times in the year to tend to the fields and to maintain the boundaries of their community's lands.

5.2.4 Summary.

In this section I have briefly reviewed the evidence relating to kinds of relations that people would have engaged in on a day-to-day basis in the central Welsh Marches in the earlier first millennium BC. I began by outlining the historical context of the sequence from the region, suggesting that the transformations that occurred in the later half of the second millennium brought into being new forms of existence based around the demands of the agricultural cycle, and closer ties to particular parts of the landscape. After c.1000 BC most people's lives would have turned on the seasons as they played themselves out in relation to particular parts of the landscape. At this time the household group, and the relations it shared with other such units that dwelt nearby, probably played a critical role in shaping social identity. Such bonds would have been established through ties created by labouring together in agricultural tasks, sharing in the consumption of food and through the exchange of gifts and marriage partners. However, I have also argued that these peoples' identities would have been framed by a sense of belonging to a wider community group. It was at this level that tenure probably rested, and these senses of identity may have been reproduced through the activities associated with bounding the land. It is to a more detailed consideration of the evidence relating to these practices that we must now turn.

5.3.0 Constructing communities: later prehistoric land division in the Central Welsh Marches.

5.3.1 Introduction.

Let us now consider the evidence relating to later prehistoric land division in the central Welsh Marches, since this provides us with a means of examining how communities reproduced their tenure over particular areas. This subject has largely gone undiscussed in the archaeological literature relating to this region. Guilbert (1975a) tentatively suggested a prehistoric date for the earthworks on Ratlinghope

and Stitt Hill in Shropshire, based upon the similarities between the landscape setting of these monuments and the more widely known earthworks on the southern chalklands. Similarly, Watson and Musson noted the presence of a number of “...substantial linear earth banks...”, that appear to divide up blocks of narrow cultivation ridges, on Stapeley Hill in south-western Shropshire (1993: 23). Beyond this, however, little further work has been done despite Guilbert’s assertion that there “...is clearly great scope for future fieldwork.” (1975a: 372).

Perhaps one of the main reasons why this is the case is the existence of the early medieval frontier work known as Offa’s Dyke. In his major work on the Dyke, which still stands as the authoritative text on the monument, Fox (1955) presented a list of seventeen ‘Short Dykes’ from the Central and Southern Marches (see Fig. 5.5). From his survey work on these monuments he concluded that: -

“I am disposed to suggest, *a working hypothesis*, that the Short Ditches...represent the military activities of the Mercians (in their defensive aspect) in the pre-Offan period when the tide of English conquest ebbed and flowed on the frontier, and when the lowlanders had reached the limits of their power to advance and consolidate, Offa’s Dyke formed an agreed boundary (not a defensive barrier) across the debatable land.” (ibid.: 114, My emphasis).

We can now recognise, however, that Fox’s argument rest upon two premises. Firstly, he relies upon an evolutionary scheme of dyke building and development. Since all of the dykes are assumed to be early medieval in date, the smaller examples must, if we follow Fox’s logic, represent the precursors to Offa’s Dyke. As such the short dykes are portrayed as a frontier system that developed piecemeal, as a number of small polities sought to defend their own lands. With the consolidation of the Mercian state under Offa came a greater level of socio-political organisation, capable of imposing, and coordinating the construction of, a more coherent boundary. In Fox’s implicitly evolutionist argument Offa’s Dyke effectively represents a more advanced and efficient form of boundary marking technology.

Secondly, Fox’s thesis is framed by his (1952) notion of the division between the Highland and Lowland Zones (see Chapter 2 for a critique of these concepts). The short dykes only make sense as ‘frontier works’, at least in the sense that Fox (1955) envisages, if we assume that the culturally advanced (i.e. Anglo-Saxon) lowlanders were attempting to keep the innately conservation inhabitant of the Highland Zone

(i.e. the Welsh) out of their territory. If we abandon these concepts and the ethnocentric overtones they carry, as I have already argued we should do, then we remove the need to see all of the short dykes as early medieval.

Despite this, however, this Fox's 'working hypothesis' has become so embedded in the literature that it is often taken as fact (cf. Rowley 2001, Stanford 1991). In what follows I will build an alternative interpretation of the Short Dykes of the central Welsh Marches. Based upon my analysis of their landscape settings, I propose that these monuments belong to a later prehistoric tradition of land division.

5.3.2. Cross Ridge Dykes.

5.3.2.1 A brief consideration of the factors effecting the survival of cross ridge dykes in the central Welsh Marches.

Cross ridge dykes (that is to say Fox's Short Dykes) are relatively rare in the region (14 examples - see Table 5.1). Taking western Britain as a whole, they appear to mark the eastern limit of a distribution centred on the hills of mid-Wales. Within the study area itself, we can define three spatially separate groups (henceforth termed the Long Mynd Group, the Kerry Ridgeway Group and the Stapeley Hill Group – see Fig 5.6) and one outlier (Earl's Hill, central Shropshire) within the distribution pattern. As part of my analysis of these monuments I examined the altitude at which each monument occurs, in relation to four predetermined categories (for definitions see Table 5.2). This demonstrated that all of the cross ridge dykes in this region are situated on higher ground above 201m OD (see Table 5.2). In addition, most lie within tracts of unimproved hill pasture and moorland, which means that they have largely escaped the ploughing that has levelled most of the prehistoric monuments in the lower lying parts of the study area (see also Chapter 6.2.2).

It seems likely that linear earthworks of this kind have been destroyed where areas of improved pasture and arable land exist at higher elevations (e.g. within the large areas of late parliamentary enclosure on the hills of the Clun Forest, southwest Shropshire). Two monuments in particular serve to remind us of the damage that can occur to linear boundaries that lie within such areas. Firstly, where the northern end of the High Park Cottage cross ridge dyke (see table Table 5.2 for details of location) is overlain by a modern field boundary it has been significantly reduced in height.

Secondly, the Wallop Hall cropmark pit alignment, situated on Long Mountain in western Shropshire, occurs in a very similar location to the cross ridge dykes (see Table 5.2 for details of height and topographical situation and Fig 5.8). Although this is currently the only example of a pit alignment occurring at this altitude within the study area, it should alert us to the fact that similar monuments probably exist elsewhere in the region.

In a small number of cases some cross ridge dykes may simply have been misidentified. For instance, the Earls Hill cross ridge dyke was only recognised as such last year as the results of a field visit by a surveyor working for English Heritage's Monuments Protection Programme (English Heritage 2001b). Prior to this it was thought to form part of the hillfort that occupies the summit of the hill (Forde-Johnston 1962).

We can recognise, therefore, that cross ridge dykes, whilst never present in huge numbers, may once have been more numerous in the study area than they are at present. Those that do exist probably represent fortunate survivals, whilst other yet unrecognised examples may await rediscovery.

5.3.2.2 Dating Evidence.

Fleming (1987, 1989) and Bradley *et al.* (1994) have discussed the difficulty of dating the linear earthwork boundary systems that have been found in various parts of the British Isles. Fleming suggests that relationships with other landscape features can provide broad relative dates but that absolute dates are rare. At present the only firm dating evidence for the cross ridge dykes in the Central Welsh Marches comes from the Devil's Mouth linear on the Long Mynd (see Fig. 5.1). The opportunity was taken to sample this earthwork, where it had been truncated by a modern car park, during a programme of repairs conducted by the National Trust (Milln pers. com.). Within the excavated area deposits relating to the bank were severely truncated (Dinn pers. com.). However, the ditch on the western side of the monument, separated from the remains of the bank by a narrow berm, was located. In addition, Limbrey (1994) identified a very small area of a pre-bank ground surface beneath the surviving bank deposits. This work revealed that a thin brown podzolic soil had developed over the red Palaeozoic mudstones that form the underlying

bedrock. In addition, she noted that small, sharp stone fragments had been introduced into the surface of this soil, and fragments of charcoal deposited on its surface, prior to its burial during the construction of the bank. Although it must again be stressed that the area examined was small, it seems possible that this was the result of ground clearance and levelling activities that took place in advance of the construction of the earthwork. Two radiocarbon dates of 3155 ± 45 BP (OxA-5082) and 3105 ± 45 BP (OxA-5083) were obtained a single piece of charcoal from this surface (Dinn pers com). These give calibrated calendrical dates (at 2 sigma) of 1530-1310 cal BC and 1500-1210 cal BC respectively (see Fig. 5.3), providing a *terminus post quem* for the construction of this monument.

At present the other cross ridge dykes within the study are less securely dated, although a number of factors provide very broad relative dates. Firstly, the way in which the other cross ridge dykes in the Long Mynd Group are situated in relation to topography and drainage is very similar to the Devil's Mouth earthwork (see Table 5.2 and below). Similarly, none of these earthworks are completely straight but instead follow slightly sinuous courses, especially near the point at which they appear to terminate (see Fig 5.7). This may be indicative of gang building or the avoidance of particularly intractable pieces of ground.

Both the Upper and the Lower Short Ditches on the Kerry Ridgeway in south-west Shropshire were sectioned by David Hill and Margaret Worthington as part of their extensive study of Offa's Dyke. No dating evidence was recovered (Worthington pers. com) and details of this work remain unpublished. However, the way in which both of these monuments relate to the topography and drainage of this area is significantly different to Offa's Dyke. For instance, Offa's Dyke often cuts across the grain of the topography and the overriding concern appears to have been to construct a boundary that was visible for some distance when viewed from the west (Bapty 2001). However, the Upper and Lower Short Ditches form part of a larger group of cross ridge dykes on the Kerry Ridgeway, the majority of which lie outside the present study area. Many of these boundaries run between the heads of steep stream filled ravines, across narrow saddles of land between the higher summits of the ridge (see Table 5.4 and below). This means that they are less visible from a distance, perhaps suggesting that they were concerned with dividing the higher ground on the ridgeway up into a series of land blocks.

Again, only very broad dating evidence is available for the linear earthworks on Stapeley Hill on the basis of their landscape stratigraphy. Most of Stapeley Hill remains as unenclosed common land and the presence of a number of pillow mounds suggests it was used as such in the Middle Ages, which implies that these linears do not date to this period. In addition, Stapeley Hill 1 is cut by a modern trackway and is overlain at various points by feature associated with 19th century mining activity. Similarly, Stapeley Hill 3 is partially overlain by boundaries associated with post-medieval squatter enclosure, whilst the eastern end of Stapeley Hill 5 appears to be truncated by another area of squatter enclosure. This evidence suggests that these boundaries were almost certainly constructed before the mid 19th century.

Taken together all of these factors imply that the cross ridge dykes within the central Welsh Marches do not date to the early medieval period, as Fox (1955) argued. Instead, I would suggest that they can probably all be assigned to the later prehistoric period and, given the dates from the Devil's Mouth, most probably to the late second or very early first millennium BC.

5.3.2.3 Analysis of the relationship between cross ridge dykes, drainage and topography.

The aim of my analysis of the cross ridge dykes within the present study area was to examine whether a consistent set of relationships existed in the ways in which these boundaries worked in the landscape. The analysis of such relationships in other parts of Britain has greatly enhanced our understandings of these monuments. For instance, Vyner has drawn attention to the "...specific location [and] restricted distribution..." of the cross ridge dykes dating broadly to the later second millennium BC on the Cleveland Hills of northeast England (1994: 29). These boundaries often cut off spurs and promontories, or run across the spines of ridges between the heads of streams, marshy areas or sharp breaks in slope. The aim, he suggests, was to

"...confirm the definition of small areas, the boundaries of which were already at least partially visible in the contours of the land..." (ibid.: 36).

In order to systematically analyse the way in which the cross ridge dykes in the central Welsh Marches relate to topography and drainage I classified each monument

in relation to a set of potential relationships (see Table 5.2 for details of these categories).

The results of my analysis demonstrates that there is a considerable degree of consistency in the landscape settings of cross ridge dykes within the Central Welsh Marches (see Table 5.2). To begin with, all of the monuments run across the watershed/ axis of the ridge upon which they are situated. For example, the Devil's Mouth cross dyke (see Fig. 5.9) on the Long Mynd runs across a col on a spur that projects eastwards between two deeply incised valley systems, reducing its visibility in the wider landscape. In contrast, the Lower Short Ditch (see Fig. 5.10) runs over the watershed of the Kerry Rideway, from the head of a very steep sided valley in the north to the edge of Ditch Dingle in the south. Again this monument consists of a single bank with a ditch on its western side. Beyond this ditch the land slopes upwards towards higher ground, which means the dyke makes little practical sense as a defensive barrier. Similar relations to the topography can be seen at a number of the other cross dykes in the Kerry Ridgeway Group, suggesting that they were intended to divide up the ridge into a series of land blocks.

In addition, there was a strong concern with orienting cross dykes on the heads of valleys, many of which contain springs and water courses. For instance, the Upper Short Ditch on the Kerry Ridgeway consists of a linear bank with a ditch on the western side, which runs over a coll between the heads of two stream valleys (see Fig 5.11). In most other cases at least one end of the earthwork appears to be oriented upon a valley head. For instance, an outlying cross dyke on Earl's Hill in central Shropshire, runs away from the head of a deeply incised valley between Earl's Hill and Pontesford Hill in a north easterly direction, thus enhancing the natural division between these two conjoined hills. Only one earthwork (Stapley Hill 5) breaks with this pattern. In this case the earthwork appears to run across the head of a valley, as if to deny its use as a route onto or away from the higher ground on Stapeley Hill.

Overall, the ways in which each group of boundaries relate to the landscape is broadly consistent. At the same time, however, clear differences can also be seen in terms of the ways in which they work together to divide up the landscape. This may

be a reflection the ways in which different communities sought to resolve their rights of tenure in relation to topographically distinct areas of the landscape. For example, the linears on the Kerry Ridgeway and Stapeley Hill appear to be concerned with dividing up the main ridge itself into a series of blocks of land (see Fig. 5.12). It seems possible that these boundaries defined areas of land that were used by different groups within the communities that dwelt within the valley systems around their edges. This would have given them access to a range of resources, including pastures on the higher ground. Significantly, the historic townships in this area appear to demonstrate similar concerns. In many cases the boundaries follow the course of the ravines up onto the Kerry Ridgeway, where they then take the shortest route to the next valley system. Bradley *et al.* (1994) make similar observations regarding the linear boundaries on Salisbury Plain, where a pattern of land division dating to early first millennium BC finds echoes in the organisation of the historical parishes in the region. They argue that this reflects a long term concern with ensuring an equitable division of the resources provided by the different topographical zones on the valleys, slopes and summits of the chalk downland.

In contrast, cross ridge dykes on the Long Mynd, appear to cut off the ends of spurs that project from the edges of this deeply dissected plateau. As such, they appear to be concerned with areas along the edges of this area of higher ground, rather than dividing up the main ridge itself. These boundaries may well have prevented movement along the spurs, which form natural routeways down into the lower lying ground that surround the Long Mynd.

Similar differences between separate groups of linear boundaries located in topographically different areas have been recognised elsewhere in Britain. For instance, Bradley (1971) has noted that clear differences can be seen between the linear ‘ranch’ boundaries on Salisbury Plain and the cross dykes on the South Downs, commenting that: -

“...their distributions are adjacent and almost mutually exclusive but that the differences *are ones simply of terrain...*” (ibid. 11, my emphasis).

As such, Bradley suggests that these monuments share a number of affinities which indicates that they closely related.

Likewise, I contend that the differences between the three groups of cross ridge dykes in the central Marches are essentially topographical. As we have seen, there

are close similarities between the ways in which these monuments are set out in relation to the topography and drainage. Like the boundaries discussed by Bradley (1971), this implies that a consistent set of aims lay behind the construction of these monuments, namely a strategic redefinition of the rights of access to particular parts of the landscape. For instance, all of the linears in the central Marches appear to utilise and enhance natural divisions within the landscape (i.e. streams, deep valleys etc.). Their construction may have represented a physical demarcation of pre-existing conceptual boundaries. However, their creation would also have transformed these earlier rights of access to land by closing off the possibility of particular forms of movement. For example, the cross dykes that ran across the axis of Kerry Ridgeway would have made movement along the ridgeway much more difficult than it had been previously, thus emphasising movement from the lower ground to the north up onto the high ground on the ridge..

Yet, most of these boundaries do not appear to have been located in positions that would have rendered them highly visible within the wider landscape. Often located within cols on the extended ridges or spurs, the way in which they made use of the topography was very subtle. Unlike Offa's Dyke, they were not intended to be highly visible within the landscape when viewed from a particular direction (i.e. when looking eastwards when positioned to the west of the monument). As such, they were not overt statements of control, writ large on the landscape and rendered visible to those who dwelt *outside* the area being defined. Rather, they would have been encountered during the act of moving around the landscape, closing off certain routes whilst enabling others. In particular they may have acted to regulate movement between the areas in which individual communities resided (the valleys), and areas held in common by several groups (the plateau/ridge). In this way they may have been directed 'inwards' as well as outwards, defining the limits of a community's rights over certain areas. In this respect they may have been broadly similar to the linear earthworks on Salisbury Plain, where Bradley *et al.* have remarked that: -

"Broadly stated, the central significance of the boundary earthworks to communities living in and around [this region]... seems to have been the opposing principles of interaction and independence. Though these earthworks divided separate territories, their meaning appears to have been directed inwards" (1994: 141).

5.3.3.0 Pit Alignments.

5.3.3.1 An assessment of the variables affecting the visibility of pit alignments within the central Welsh Marches.

In an early discussion of the distribution of pit alignments in Britain, Wilson (1978) identified the upper Severn Valley as one of the areas in which aerial photography had revealed a significant concentration of these monuments. His (ibid.4, Fig1.1) distribution map was based upon aerial photographs taken up to and including 1974. Since then many more such monuments have been discovered and 87 examples are now known in the study area (Table 5.3). Despite this, our knowledge of the pit alignments in this region lags behind our understanding of those in other parts of Britain. To date Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust's (hereafter CPAT) investigations of various aspects of the Four Crosses complex in north eastern Powys (see Fig 5.13) provides us with the only excavated examples of pit alignments in the central Marches (Owen and Britnell 1989). Thus, whilst debate over the purpose of pit alignments is ongoing, basic questions concerning the probable date and function of the pit alignments in the study area have yet to be addressed. In the following discussion I will tackle some of these issues.

At present 87 pit alignments have been identified in the central Welsh Marches. In each case they only survive as cropmarks and have a distribution pattern that is focused upon the upper Severn Valley (see Fig. 5.6). We can recognise five notable clusters within this concentration, although isolated alignments occur beyond these areas. For the purposes of my analysis I have, therefore, placed the pit alignments into six groups. They are: -

1. The Llanymynech Group
2. The Knockin Heath Group
3. The War Brook Group
4. The River Tern/ Roden Group
5. The River Worfe Group
6. Isolated Alignments

We must acknowledge that, to a certain extent, this clustering may be an artefact of the way in which aerial coverage of the region has built up over time. The factors affecting the visibility of cropmarks are well known (e.g. Riley 1982, Wilson 1983), and have been discussed in relation to a large part of the study area elsewhere (Whimster 1989). Consequently, I do not intend to rehearse these in detail here. However, in order to gain a critical understanding of how representative the current number of these monuments is likely to be, I have examined the following three variables as part of my analysis (see Table 5.2): -

- The height at which these features occur (using the same categories that were used for the cross ridge dykes – see Table 5.1).
- The number of modern fields within which each pit alignment is visible.
- The format in which plots of the cropmark evidence is currently available.

My analysis has revealed that 82 (94%) of the 87 pit alignments within the study area are situated between 50-100m OD, a further 4 (5%) are situated at between 100-150m OD. This further confirms Whimster's (1989: 16) point that, in this region, pit alignments are features that will only be visible under optimum conditions, generally at heights of less than 150m OD. Only 1 example – the Wallop Hall pit alignment on Long Mountain in western Shropshire (see Fig. 5.8 & Table 5.3) - fell within the fourth height category (>200m OD). It runs over a small col between the heads of two valleys, and in this respect, closely resembles the cross ridge dykes discussed above. Although pit alignments are rare at higher elevations some examples have been found in other parts of Britain (e.g. the Gardom's Edge alignment in Derbyshire and the Easington Moor alignments in North Yorkshire) making it likely that other examples remain undetected on higher ground elsewhere in the Central Marches. Similarly, the existence of isolated alignments beyond the main clusters on the lower ground hints at a wider distribution beyond the Severn Valley. This may well prove to be the case in the river valleys of northern Herefordshire, where their absence probably reflects the fact the aerial survey has been much less intensive.

None-the-less, these factors do not explain away the clustering that is apparent within the distribution pattern of pit alignments in this region. I believe that my analysis of the ways in which each of these monuments relates to topography and drainage demonstrates that they do indeed represent coherent groups (see section 5.3.3.3

below). This assertion is perhaps lent support by the fact that similar ‘clustering’ of later prehistoric land divisions has been noted in other parts of Britain. For instance, Yates (1999) has identified a number of spatially discrete groups of linear ditch systems on the gravels of the middle Thames Valley. Similarly, Taylor (forthcoming) has noted that distinct concentrations of pit alignments can be seen in the East Midlands. I will return to this point in much more detail below.

My analysis of the number of modern fields that each pit alignment is visible within suggests that in most cases these monuments probably covered much greater distances than the crop marks initially suggest. For instance, 66 (76%) of the 87 pit alignments were only visible in one modern field. 15 (17%) were visible in two modern fields, whilst 6 (7%) were visible in three modern fields. In most cases at least one end of any given alignment stops abruptly at a modern field boundary, suggesting that they were rendered invisible in neighbouring fields by differential conditions. This point is borne out by the evidence from Four Crosses where intensive aerial survey over many years has revealed an extensive pit alignment complex (see Fig. 5.13). By contrast many of the other examples in the study area have only been photographed on a few occasions.

As the final part of my assessment of the reliability of the evidence relating to pit alignments within the study area, I examined what format the plots of the cropmarks currently exist in. This revealed that only 45 (52%) of the total of 87 pit alignments known from the study area have been planned as rectified crop mark plots, although these exist in a variety of formats and scales. 12 (14%) were plotted by the former Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England at 1:10,000 scale as part of the National Mapping Programme. A further 17 (16%) were plotted by Whimster at 1:10,560 scale during his assessment of the cropmarks in part of the study area (Whimster 1989). Of the remaining 16 rectified plots, 14 (16%) derive from Owen and Britnell’s (1989) report on the excavations that CPAT conducted at Four Crosses and 2 (2%) are derived from Arnold Baker’s work on his own aerial photographs. Transcriptions of the remaining 43 (48%) examples are only available, at present, as sketch plots on SMR 1:10,560 base maps. Unfortunately, time constraints did not permit me to produce rectified transcriptions for these features. However, in order to conduct my analysis I resolved all of the data to a common format (1:10,000 plots), which would enable further analysis to be conducted. The general accuracy of all of

the sketch plots was checked by eye and, where necessary, amendments were made. Thus, despite the variability in the sources I have taken every precaution to ensure that my data set is as accurate as possible.

5.3.3.2 Dating evidence.

Absolute dates have yet to be recovered from a pit alignment within the central Welsh Marches. None of the pits excavated during CPAT's work on various elements the Four Crosses complex (see Fig. 5.14 for plans of the three excavation trenches) produced any diagnostic finds (Owen and Britnell 1989). They contained gravel fills that appeared to have been the product of an initial rapid accumulation of sediments eroded from the sides of the pits, followed by slower secondary silting. There was no evidence to suggest that they had ever held posts, and Owen and Britnell proposed that they were dug as quarries to provide material for a bank (*ibid.*: 36). Isolated fragments of charcoal were found in the pit fills but not in sufficient quantities for submission for radiocarbon dating.

In an attempt to date the Four Crosses complex, Owen and Britnell (1989) examined the relationship between the pit alignments and modern landscape features. Elements of the complex appear to be cut by the both the Shropshire Union Canal and a disused railway line. They also noted that the modern field pattern is very similar to that illustrated on an estate map of the area from 1780, implying that the pit alignments were dug before the late 18th century. However, they observe that a number of the pit alignments at Four Crosses appear to share the same alignment as the modern field boundaries, commenting that it seems unlikely that the two field systems "...were set out independently from the local topography..." (*ibid.*: 38). Consequently, they proposed that the modern field boundaries represent the surviving sub-divisions of a series of land parcels defined by the pit alignments, and that pit alignments could, therefore, be late medieval or post-medieval in date.

In order to test this hypothesis I examined how the rest of the pit alignments within the central Marches relate to modern field boundaries (see Table 5.5). This revealed that only 29 (33%) of the 87 known examples run parallel to modern field boundaries, 8 (9%) of which belong to the Four Crosses complex. A further 8 (9%) pit alignments run parallel to modern field boundaries for part of their length.

However, the remaining 50 (58%) pit alignments in the Welsh Marches are oriented obliquely to modern field boundaries. It seems likely, therefore, that the correlation between the pit alignments and the modern field boundaries at Four Crosses is a coincidence. The correspondence between the two boundary systems is not absolute; four of the pit alignments (Four Crosses 11, 12, 13 & 14) are oriented obliquely to the modern field pattern. However, it remains possible that some do preserve the line of much earlier boundaries, as has been noted elsewhere in Britain (Fleming 1988: 28, Fig. 14, Williamson 1987). Morphologically, the pits at Four Crosses also appear to be earlier in date than Owen and Britnell (1989) allow for. In all three excavation trenches they were closely spaced and distinctly ovoid or sub rectangular shape in shape (see Fig. 5.14). Together with the pattern of infilling, they fulfilled all of the criteria that Waddington (1997: 30, Table 1) has recently identified as being distinctive features for pit alignments dating to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age across Britain.

In order to find further evidence to support the assertion that the pit alignments in the central Welsh Marches date to the later second or early first millennium BC, we must examine the ways in which they relate to other categories of cropmark. To begin with the pit alignments at Isombridge in eastern Shropshire (Isombridge 1-3) appear to underlie cropmark ridge and furrow (see Fig. 5.15). All of three pit alignments are oriented obliquely to the main axis of the medieval field strips and bear no relation to the modern field boundaries. Enclosure was generally completed by the early post-medieval period in this part of Shropshire (Kettle 1989), this suggests that the pit alignments at Isombridge are significantly earlier in date.

The ways in which a number of examples relate to cropmark ring ditches are particularly informative of date, particularly at Four Crosses. As we saw in Chapter 4, excavation demonstrated that a dispersed barrow cemetery had developed over the course of the late third and early second millennium BC (Warrillow *et al.* 1986) (see Fig. 5.13). In the early-mid second millennium a number of large turf mounds were constructed, and the main axis of the pit alignment appears to have been laid out in relation to one of the most prominent examples. Located at one of the highest points on the gravel ridge, this monument comprised a large earthen mound, which covered a series of concentric stake circles set within a ring ditch measuring *c.* 24m in diameter. A large posthole at the centre of the ring ditch, suggested that a substantial

timber post once projected from the top of the mound. A radiocarbon date of 3420 ± 65 BP (CAR-666) was obtained for charcoal from this post-setting, and another sample from beneath the remnant mound material produced a date of 3310 ± 70 BP (CAR-667). These give calibrated calendrical dates (at 2 sigma) of 1890-1529 cal BC and 1750-1430 cal BC respectively (see Fig. 5.3).

The Four Crosses Site 1 mound persisted as a prominent feature within the landscape, attracting attention into the later second millennium BC. A scatter of sherds from two mid-late Bronze Age urns was recovered from this site (Warrilow *et al.* 1986: 73). The axis of the pit alignment complex (Four Crosses 2) was aligned on Four Crosses Site 1, running for approximately 500m from the head of a slight declivity in the east on a line oriented on the mound in the west. Thus, the pit alignments must be at least contemporary with or, as seems more likely, later than the barrow mound

There are two other examples where highly important relationships exist between pit alignments and ring ditches. The Moss Plantation pit alignment in central Shropshire appears to pass over a ring ditch as it climbs the side of the shallow valley, changing direction slightly as it crosses this feature (see Fig. 5.16). Similarly, at Cotsbrook Farm in south-eastern Shropshire a pit alignment appears to run through a small cluster of ring ditches, as it crosses the head of a narrow valley above the floodplain of the River Worfe (see Fig 5.17). The exact nature of these features remains unclear, but the pit alignment does seem to pass over two of the ring ditches as it climbs northwards out of the depression, appearing to change direction as it intersects these features.

Taken together these examples suggest that some of the pit alignments within the study area were set out in relation to earlier barrow mounds, which implies that they survived as upstanding features at the time they were laid out. The fact that the Moss Plantation and the Cotsbrook Farm alignments change direction as they cross ring ditches suggests that some barrow mounds formed nodal points in wider boundary systems. However, since the pit alignments appear to pass over the ring ditches, the barrows were probably slighted during their construction, again implying that the pit alignments are later than the ring ditches. As I mentioned earlier, these relationships have yet to be tested through excavation. However, we might note that the linear

ditches dating to the early first millennium BC at Sharpstones Hill Site A were dug through the remains of two barrows (see Fig. 5.4).

Close relationships between linear boundary systems dating to the later second and early first millennium BC and round barrows have been noted in a number of the regions. For instance, Bradley *et al.* (1994) reiterate the point that many of the well-known linear boundaries on Salisbury Plain are aligned on barrow mounds. Their work suggested that these relationships were complex and subtle: -

“In many instances, linear ditches do run up to individual, prominently sited barrows, and there are even examples of ditch junctions that are marked by a barrow mound. However, there are also frequent instances where linear ditches avoid the most conspicuous landmarks and approach barrows that are much less prominent.” (ibid.: 141).

They tentatively suggest that this may indicate that the barrows represented more than just convenient sighting points for the laying out of these boundary systems. Similar relationships have also been noted between linear boundary systems and round barrows in East Yorkshire (Bevan 1997, Fenton-Thomas 1999, Giles 2001). Excavation has shown that in many cases these boundaries were originally dug as pit alignments, with later episodes of recutting of the boundaries producing more continuous ditches. Significantly, Giles (2001) has identified a number of instances where such boundaries were cut through earlier barrow mounds.

Returning to the central Welsh Marches, there are a number of instances where relationships exist between pit alignments and cropmark enclosures that probably date to the later first millennium BC (see Chapter 6). Burrow (1978: 65) argued that three pit alignments in the study area ran across cropmark enclosures (Cranmoor Gorse, Stapleton, Dollyfers 1 – see Table 5.3). However, my examination of the evidence suggests that is not the case. Rowan Whimster’s plot of the Stapleton pit alignment indicates that a cropmark ditch either crosses or abuts this linear (see Fig. 5.18), although features could represent field ditches rather than an enclosure boundary. Although a curvilinear cropmark enclosure does lie to the west of the Cranmoor Gorse alignment, neither the SMR base maps nor aerial photographs of this site suggest that the pit alignment crosses this feature (see Fig 5.16). Similarly, Whimster’s plot of the Dollyfers 1 alignment we can see that that the pit alignment appears to miss the corner of complex rectilinear cropmark enclosure, rather than running across it (see Fig. 5.19). Burrow (1978: 65) also noted that the Sansaw

Heath alignment in central Shropshire appears to skirt a rectilinear cropmark enclosure, implying that the pit alignment is later in date. However, this alignment appears to run up the side of a noticeable depression in the valley side, changing alignment as it crosses the shoulder of the slope. Consequently, it seems equally possible that the enclosure could have been built against a pre-existing boundary.

In addition, very short lengths of pit alignment are visible in the vicinity of two large multivallate curvilinear cropmark enclosures. At Osbaston, in north-west Shropshire a very short length of pit alignment (not included within the present analysis) is visible between the two outermost entrance ditches of a multivallate cropmark enclosure. This feature does not continue beyond either of these enclosure ditches and appears to run on a different alignment to the axis to the enclosure entrance, which suggest that it was obscured by later ditches and earthworks. Similarly, the Moels Meadow Plantation pit alignment in central Shropshire appears to underlie or adjoin a large multivallate cropmark enclosure. Significantly, there is a noticeable 'kink' in the third ditch circuit immediately to the south of the pit alignment, perhaps suggesting that a pre-existing feature influenced its course (see Fig. 5.18). In turn this would imply that at least some of the pit alignments within the study area pre-date the smaller enclosures of the later first millennium.

To summarise, it seems implausible that the alignments at Four Crosses date to the medieval or post-medieval period, particularly given the cropmark evidence from Isombridge (see Fig. 5.15). It seems more likely that the pit alignments of the central Welsh Marches date to the later second or early first millennium BC, since some examples appear to post date the round barrows of the earlier second millennium BC and pre-date the smaller enclosures of the later first millennium BC.

5.3.3.3 Analysis of the relationship between pit alignments, topography and drainage.

As the final part of my analysis of the pit alignments I examined how each alignment relates to topography and drainage (see Table 5.3). The purpose of this study was threefold. Firstly, to investigate whether a similar set of relationships could be seen to exist across the study area, thus providing further support to my argument that all the pit alignments are of a similar date. Secondly, if such relationships did exist, were they similar in any way to those that existed amongst the cross ridge dykes, thus implying that the two classes of monuments might have addressed a similar set of concerns? Consequently, I applied the same criteria that I used in the analysis of the cross-ridge dykes discussed in section 5.3.2.3 above (see Table 5.1 for details). Finally, I wanted to examine how pit alignments might have functioned as boundaries, and what this might tell us about forms of tenure that existed amongst the communities that constructed these monuments.

My analysis identifies an interconnected set of principles regarding the ways in which these monuments were set out in relation to the topography and drainage (see Table 5.5). For instance, the majority of pit alignments run way from watersheds, at either a perpendicular (28 examples or 32%), or an oblique angle to the contours (18 examples or 21%), whilst a further 12 examples (14%) run over watersheds. However, a significant number (21 examples or 24%) run parallel to the contours, whilst a further 7 examples (8%) run along watersheds. In addition, 23 (26%) examples were aligned upon the heads of valleys and a further 6 (7%) ran between the heads of valleys. Even when an alignment is not orientated towards the heads of minor stream valleys, or natural depressions, there is often a strong relationship with watercourses. Thus, 25 (28%) of the pit alignments approach a watercourse at a perpendicular angle, whilst a further 11 (13%) ran parallel to river/ streams. Each group contains a range of examples of these different relationships (see Table 5.5), suggesting that the majority of the pit alignments are of a similar date.

In a number of examples the alignment upon valley heads recalls the ways in which the cross ridge dykes relate to the topography. I have already cited the isolated Wallop Hall alignment on Long Mountain (see Fig. 5.18) and other examples can be found at lower elevations. For instance, the Highway Farm pit alignment in north-eastern Shropshire runs for a distance of nearly 650m on an east west axis across a

low ridge between the valleys of the Rotherford Brook and the River Tern (see Fig. 5.20). It appears to be aligned between the head of small valley occupied by a minor tributary of the Rotherford Brook and the head of a small valley, now occupied by a modern road, which runs down onto the floodplain of the Tern.

Exactly how functionally effective pit alignments were as land boundaries is a subject that has been much debated in recent years (see Waddington 1997 for a review of the arguments). Rare evidence from the Iron Age pit alignment at St. Ives, Cambridgeshire suggests that some alignments may have been associated with hedgerows (Pollard 1996). However, the effectiveness of pit alignments themselves as barriers to stock has been questioned (Barnatt *et al.* 2001, Pollard 1996).

Consequently, pit alignments may have been as much symbolic as practical boundaries. Barnatt *et al.* (2001:17) draw attention to the highly unusual clay lining to the pits on Gardom's Edge, which, since they would probably have retained water anyway, indicates a considerable interest with water. As such, the presence of water within the pits may have symbolically enhanced the potency of the boundary.

Within the central Marches the relationships between some pit alignments and watercourses suggests that they may have addressed similar concerns. As we have seen, many examples approach watercourses at right angles. It seem possible that, at their lower points, such alignments may well have held water, especially during the winter when the water table was generally higher. Similarly, a significant number are oriented towards the heads of valleys containing springs and minor watercourses, thus drawing attention to these sources of water and guiding movement toward and between them.

Alignments were also intended to divide up some parts of the landscape into separate land blocks. The best example of this is Four Crosses complex, where an axial alignment (Four Crosses 2) runs along the line of a gravel ridge, whilst a series of pit alignments run at a perpendicular angle (see Fig. 5.13). The resulting land parcels run down off the better drained brown earth on the ridge onto the wetter soils on the floodplains of the Severn and the Vyrnwy, providing access to a range of different soil types and resources.

We can recognise subtle variations in the way in which division of the landscape was achieved within each group of pit alignments. For instances, both the Llanymynech

group (which includes the Four Crosses complex) and the Tern/ Roden Group were dug across gently sloping gravel river terraces. Many of them run for considerable distances, and some appear to continue as (or have been re-dug to form) linear cropmark ditches. As the example from Four Crosses demonstrates, the result is the definition of extensive blocks of land, on an axis perpendicular to that of the main watercourses. It seems likely that each contained a variety of different resources, ranging from the well-drained, easily cultivated soils on the gravel terraces to the damper soils supporting richer pastures. Consequently, the pit alignments within these groups appear to represent a strategic redefinition of the rights of access to the land.

The way in which the pit alignments of the River Worfe Group relate to the topography is slightly different. The area is dominated by a series of shallow, steep sided gorges that separate sandstone plateau lands and hills. Gullies and coombs give the edges of these gorges a serrated quality, whilst the poorly drained floodplains of the Worfe and its various tributaries occupy their floors. The pit alignments within this group seem to be concerned with dividing up areas of higher ground. For example, a number of the alignments within this group (6 examples) ran over the watershed/ axis of the ridges upon which they were situated (e.g. both of the Cranmere alignments). Within this group many (11 examples) of the alignments also appear to be oriented on (or run between) the heads of coombs (see Table 5.5). These features form natural route ways that run down into the gorges, and many are occupied today by the roads and other rights of way. Before modern water extraction lowered the water table in this area many of these features probably contained springs and seasonal streamlets. In addition, a small number of pit alignments, such as the Cotsbrook Farm (see Fig. 5.17) and the Crowgreaves alignment, run across the heads of coombs. Thus, it seems that the alignments were concerned with dividing up the areas of more easily worked soils and controlling rights of access to the pastures in the river gorges. In other words, they address a similar set of concerns (e.g. the strategic redefinition of rights of access to the land) to the alignments in the Llanymynech and the Tern/ Roden Groups, but in a way that was intimately related to the details of the local topography.

The pit alignments in each of the other groups operate in similar ways, defining access to a spectrum of resources in ways that reflect local patterns of topography

and drainage. Bradley *et al.* have made similar remarks about the much more extensive boundary systems on Salisbury Plain, which they argue "...emphasize the alignment of the main ridges and watersheds." (1994: 141). As with many of the pit alignments in the Welsh Marches, these boundaries often run down the contours and approach watercourses at right angles. Again, this may well reflect a concern with maintaining and controlling access to a range of different resources.

As we have seen, within the central Welsh Marches pit alignments appear to make subtle use of the local topography. As such, they appear to address the needs of the communities who inhabited these areas (or at least sections of those communities), rather than acting as overt statements of territoriality directed at those living beyond the boundaries. Similarly, the ways in which the alignments within each of the separate groups guided movement around the landscape would have been slightly different. For those living within their bounds they may have helped to generate a sense of a 'right' way to moving around the local landscape, which jarred with those that existed in other areas. Thus it seems possible that they helped to generate localised community identities rooted in specific places and particular patterns of tenure.

5.3.4.0 General Discussion.

I have now discussed the evidence relating to two separate 'classes' of linear boundaries, arguing in the process that they closely related to one another. Let us now turn to a more general consideration of what the implications are, in terms of our understandings of the communities that inhabited this region in the late second / early first millennium BC, if we accept that these monuments date to this period.

To begin with, I have argued that we can recognise a consistent set of relationships concerning the ways in which such linear boundaries were set out in relation to topography and drainage. At the same time, however, when we examine how they worked together to divide up the land, a number of differences also become apparent. In other words, it appears as if a set of conventions and ideas regarding the ways in which linears should be set out were being adapted to suit the conditions that prevailed in different parts of the study area. Thus, we appear to be dealing with a

number of different sets of boundaries, each of which is intimately related to the lie of the land in the areas in which they are located.

Although we should avoid drawing close analogies with the ‘terrain oblivious’ co-axial field patterns on Dartmoor, a number of the points that Fleming (1985, 1988, 1989) makes in his discussions of these features seem pertinent to the present discussion. The Dartmoor Reaves appear to date to the mid-late second millennium BC, and Fleming argued that their apparent coherence demonstrates that they “...did not develop in piecemeal fashion by individual farmers and their neighbours feeling their way towards closer control of the land.” (1989: 74). Rather, he views them as an expression of a powerful sense of communality, which stressed the essential unity of a territory. As such, he argues that the co-axial reave systems on Dartmoor represent

“...a response to the problems of management and control which arose among communities where individual ownership of land was weakly developed or entirely absent, and where land was held by the community as a whole for distribution amongst its members.” (ibid: 68).

As we shall see, Fleming’s arguments concerning the coherence of these boundary systems are somewhat problematic. None-the-less, his arguments that the Reaves were a product of communal labour and a collective level of landscape organisation are important, as is his suggestion that they probably counteracted the ‘fissile tendencies’ inherent in the neighbourhood groups (see Section 5.2.3).

We must acknowledge that the construction of cross ridge dykes and pit alignments within the study area involved inter-communal labour. Although the excavated evidence is limited, there are a number of factors that appear to indicate that this was case. For instance, Fox (1955: 114) noted that a number of minor changes are visible in the alignment of the cross dykes on the Kerry Ridgeway. As I suggested earlier, a similar situation can be seen on the Long Mynd, where a number of the cross ridge dykes have a slightly sinuous quality (e.g. the High Park Cottage linear – see Fig. 5.7). It seems possible that such deviations are the result of gang working. This may also account for the cluster of six noticeably smaller pits that Owen and Britnell (1989) found between two much larger examples during the excavations at Site 11 on the Four Crosses pit alignment (see Fig. 5.13). Similar evidence for gang working has been found beyond the study area. For instance, Giles (2001) has recently drawn

attention to the gang-dug sections that have been found along some of the linear earthworks in East Yorkshire.

As we saw in section 5.2.3., inter-communal labour involving the members of several different household units was probably a feature of the agricultural practices that emerged over the course of the later second millennium BC. This may have led to the emergence of Fleming's 'neighbourhood groups'; units whose sense of identity was based upon shared locality and close kinship ties (1985, 1989). As Barrett reminds us, co-operation in agricultural tasks would have "...reproduced tenurial control over particular areas of land." (1994: 150). However, it seems likely that the construction of the pit alignments and cross ridge dykes brought together people from several different 'neighbourhood groups'. Participation in such projects would have created reciprocal ties between the members of these different social units. Thus, by labouring to build the linear boundaries a sense of localised community identity may have emerged (Giles 2001). Similarly, this work would have reproduced these communities rights of tenure over wider areas of the landscape, as well as drawing more localised distinctions.

Once established, these boundaries would have also emphasised communal control of the land in other areas of practice. I have argued above that both the cross ridge dykes and the pit alignments created a set of distinctions between different areas of the landscape and the resources they offered. The relationship between the boundaries and the topography and drainage of the areas in which they are situated also suggests that some of these linears (e.g. those in the River Worfe Group) may have emphasised natural route ways. As such, they probably formalised long established rights of access to certain parts of the landscape. Giles (2001) suggested that the 'wear' patterns along some of the linears in East Yorkshire may indicate that they acted as trackways. As such she contends that these boundaries monumentalised a set of long-standing patterns of movement around the landscape, which placed certain patterns of tenurial control beyond casual negotiation. It seems likely that the linear boundaries within the central Marches fulfilled a similar role, structuring movement around the landscape during the course of routine activities. However, the distinctions between the different groups of cross ridge dykes and pit alignments implies that the patterning of these tasks varied slightly across the region. Constructed through communal labour, at a scale that encompassed larger areas than

those occupied by the neighbourhood groups, these boundaries probably helped to reproduce localised sense of community identity on a day-to-day basis.

The temporality of these localised communal identities would also have another, perhaps more important, dimension. In seeking to explain the widespread appearance of land divisions in the late second and early first millennium, Barrett has argued that: -

“There will always have been a need to delimit arable plots and to control the movement of stock; what is significant about the development of land division... is that they appear to be about the long-term control of resources by particular communities, and the means by which that control was passed from one generation to the next.” (1999c: 497).

Linear boundaries gave communities the ability strategically to redefine their long-term control over land and resources, by enabling them to place certain rights of access beyond verbal negotiation. These forms of tenure were partially a product of the ways in which the pit alignments and cross ridge dykes were constructed. Whilst I have argued that in the central Welsh Marches such boundaries probably date to the late second or early first millennium BC, I wish to emphasize that it is unlikely that they were all constructed at the same time. Again we find ourselves at odds with Fleming’s (1985, 1988, 1989) arguments concerning the coaxial reave systems on Dartmoor, which he viewed as a largely synchronic phenomenon. Thus, he talks of them being the product of a single decision taken by the whole of the community.

“...the decision to lay out a coaxial field system is a very radical one...because of the interdependence of such boundaries, and indeed the economic activities carried out within them, they would have to come into operation as simultaneously as possible.” (1989: 74-5)

Excavations of the linear boundary systems on both Salisbury Plain and in East Yorkshire have demonstrated that the apparent coherence when viewed from the air is deceptive (Bradley *et al.* 1994, Giles 2001). Instead the various boundaries that make up these ‘networks’ have extended histories of building and reworking. In this sense at least, the Dartmoor Reaves now appear to represent something of an anomaly (Bradley *et al.* 1994:12).

Given the sensitivity that pit alignments and cross ridge dykes show for the terrain, and the differences which exist between the different groups, it seems likely that these boundaries also have protracted histories. Maintaining and reworking them

may well have taken place on an annual basis, which probably played an important role in reproducing the rights of tenure and senses of communal identity. As a result, such identities would have had a temporality that operated on an annual and generational scale. Thus, as Barrett (1999c) argues, the practices associated with constructing these boundaries would have provided a medium through which different community histories were sustained.

We can recognise that the construction and maintenance of pit alignments also had a political dimension. By strategically redefining the tenure that different communities held over particular parts of the landscape, the construction of these features significantly transformed the material conditions that people inhabited. As Bradley *et al.* (1994: 141) have argued of the linear boundaries on Salisbury Plain, the relationships between these boundaries and topography appear to make statements about the similarities and differences that existed between the groups who inhabited separate parts of the landscape. In addition, whilst it does not necessarily follow that any single group or individual directed such projects, the creation of linear boundaries almost certainly favoured the rights of some over others. They may have closed off conduits of movement that had been open to the members of a more generalised community in the earlier second millennium BC (Barrett 1994). Similarly, Giles (2001) suggests that the use, and occasionally the destruction, of ancient monuments during the laying out of the boundary systems in East Yorkshire reiterated the claims of particular groups to certain areas. Again, we find instances where this appears to apply in the central Welsh Marches. Likewise, the ability to articulate the need for, and influence the course of, a particular boundary may well have spoken about the standing of particular elements within a community. Thus, the very act of building these boundaries may have enabled the emergence of novel forms of social authority, by providing individuals and groups with an opportunity to direct the labour force amongst other things.

To conclude, it would appear that we can identify a number of areas in the Central Welsh Marches where different 'localised community' groups may have resided. The identities of these units would have been partly based around shared locality, and reproduced through the construction and maintenance of the linear land divisions. By regulating access to the land in these areas such features played a central role in the social relations that held these groups together. In order to

understand how broader ties were created between these different groups, I will now examine the various forms of evidence that come from the areas beyond the ‘clusters’ of linear land boundaries.

5.4.0 Out of bounds: the creation and maintenance of social relations between communities in the early first millennium.

5.4.1 Introduction.

In regions where linear land divisions dating to the late second and early first millennium BC have been identified, more open tracts of landscape often appear to separate distinct ‘clusters’ of boundaries. A number of commentators have now suggested that tenure over these unbounded areas may have been held in common by a number of different communities. For example, Bradley *et al.* (1994) have argued that the open country beyond the linear ditch systems on Salisbury Plain contained resources (e.g. flint sources, grazing land) that were utilised by more than one community. The character of the archaeological evidence in these areas is notably different to that within the boundary systems. For instance, scatters of Late Bronze Age pottery were very scarce, which led Bradley *et al.* to suggest that “...Late Bronze Age settlement on any scale seems highly unlikely.” (ibid.: 142). However, in some places large concentrations of burnt flint were found. Although not associated with ‘domestic’ activity, the extent of some of these deposits suggests extended use was made of certain locales by large numbers of people. In one instance, extensive areas of burnt flint coincided with a good quality flint source, perhaps indicating that they may have been associated with the activities surrounding the procurement of stone. Bradley *et al.* also note that some of the open areas beyond the linear boundaries have produced evidence for bronze working, in the form of stone mould pieces, and deposits of metalwork. As a result they suggest that

“...a range of activities, including raw material procurement and bronze working, seem to take place outside the territories in an area that lay beyond the control of any one community.” (ibid: 142).

Elsewhere, Giles (2001) has argued that the linear ditches in East Yorkshire facilitated the driving of stock up to extensive areas of open pasture on the High Wolds. Similarly, Taylor (forthcoming) has observed that the ‘clusters’ of pit alignments that occur in the river valleys of the East Midlands appear to be separated

by areas of unbounded land. He argues that these areas may have contained resources held in common by the communities that inhabited the 'core areas' of settlement associated with the pit alignments.

If we examine the evidence in the central Welsh Marches similar patterns begin to emerge. When we consider the clusters of linears in relation to the distribution of Bronze Age metal work and burnt mounds, we can see that the latter occur almost exclusively in the areas between the main groups of boundaries (see Fig. 5.21).

Thus, for instance, the distribution patterns linear boundaries and Middle and Late Bronze Age metal work appears to be mutually exclusive. In some cases groups of pit alignments (i.e. the Knockin Heath and the River Perry/ Roden groups) almost appear to be surrounded by finds of later Bronze Age metal work. Similarly, the vast majority of burnt mounds are found in areas where pit alignments do not occur.

We must, of course, acknowledge that a range of different factors undoubtedly biases these distribution patterns. These will be explored in greater detail below. However, the contrasts between these distributions are striking and suggest that they indicate that different forms of practice were taking place in different parts of the landscape. In this section I will explore the evidence behind these patterns in detail. I will argue that the members of a number of distinct communities held the areas between the different groups of linear boundaries in common. As such, I will be concerned with examining the ways in which social relations were created and maintained *between* the different localised communities discussed in section 5.3.

5.4.2 Metalwork, pots and people.

5.4.2.1 Introduction.

I will begin by examining the practices associated with the production, circulation and deposition of bronze metalwork and pottery. This involves analysing a series of depositional patterns, which in themselves cannot be directly related to patterns of production or exchange. In other words, deposits of bronze metalwork or pottery do not provide a direct index of how much of this material was being produced, or was in circulation, at any given time. As Barrett (1989: 313) argues, however, it is possible to "...isolate depositional processes for analysis without losing sight of the fact that production, exchange and deposition are a unified cycle." He contends that

this is possible because objects derive their significance from the social contexts in which they are used, rather than from innate meanings. This, in turn, allows a distinction to be maintained between the symbolism that makes it appropriate to use an object in a given situation, and the relationships that are sustained through its use. As such, it is possible to recognise how the deposition of objects was entangled in the reproduction of social relations between people, even though we cannot recover the exact meanings that were attached to them. Thus, we can infer how the deposition articulated with various other aspects of an object's 'biography', since these too would have been enmeshed in the reproduction of social relations between people (e.g. Kopytoff 1986, Gosden and Marshall 1999 – see also Chapter 3 and below).

5.4.2.2 A farewell to arms: the circulation and deposition of later Bronze Age metal work in the central Welsh Marches.

The patterns of bronze metalwork deposition in the late second and early first millennia BC in the central Welsh Marches allow us to explore these themes in detail (see Table 5.4 and 5.5 for details of the finds). The majority of the metalwork from the northern half of the study area seems to derive from the areas between the main clusters of linear land divisions (see Fig. 5.21). As elsewhere in Britain and North Western Europe (Bradley 1998), this material derives from four basic kinds of locations: -

- 'Watery' locations - mosses and marshes.
 - river channels.
- Dry land locations - the slopes and summits of prominent hills.
 - other dry locations.

In addition, the finds from these areas can be subdivided into hoards (see Table 5.4) and single finds (see Table 5.5).

We must acknowledge that there are difficulties and lacunae in our evidence. Much of the bronze metalwork from the region represents chance discoveries over the past two centuries, found as a result of agricultural (especially drainage improvements)

and quarrying activities. Consequently, like the bronze metalwork from the Thames Valley and the Fenland, "...differential patterns of recovery will almost certainly have affected the distribution of finds..." (Thomas 1999: 117). The apparently greater quantities of metal work from Shropshire partially reflects the efforts of the local prehistorian Lily Chitty (see Chapter 2), who devoted a great deal of effort to recording the details of find spots. Likewise, because of the circumstances and date at which some of the objects were discovered it is not always possible to tie down the exact location where they were found. It is largely for these reasons that we must remain wary of making statements about the quantities of metalwork in circulation during the periods in question.

None-the-less, there are a number of factors that suggest that these distribution patterns do provide us with a valid picture of the kinds of locations in which metalwork was deposited. For instance, it is immediately apparent when we examine the data (see Table 5.4 & Table 5.5) that the quantity of metalwork being deposited in the central Marches increased steadily across the course of the late second and early first millennia BC. A total of 41 Middle Bronze Age objects has been recovered, compared to 304 Late Bronze Age pieces, 241 (79 %) of which come from hoards. Yet, there appears to have been broad continuity in the kinds of locations in which this metalwork was being deposited (see Fig. 5.21). Secondly, these distribution patterns have built up in an essentially random and piecemeal fashion over the past two hundred years. Even if the factors influencing the discovery of this material were biased towards certain kinds of locations, one would still expect to find 'background noise' (i.e. a scattering of discoveries) away from such places. This does not appear to be the case, suggesting that we are not dealing with a random distribution pattern but one that reflects the kinds of locales in which people were depositing metalwork.

If we consider the nature of the deposits from each of the four types of locations outlined above, a number of additional patterns can be discerned. Firstly, many of the largest hoards of late Bronze Age metalwork from the central Marches have been recovered from mosses or marshes (e.g. Broadward and Willow Moor Hoards – see Table 5.4). Early interpretations of these deposits often favoured utilitarian explanations. For instance, Hartshorne (1841) suggested that the three spearhead hoards from Willow Moor, a marshy hollow below the Wrekin in eastern Shropshire,

were buried after a battle had been fought in the area. Chitty (1928) later endorsed this argument, adding that Willow Moor may have lain on a strategically important north-south route way. Taking the distribution of Late Bronze Age weaponry deposits together, she (1937) subsequently favoured a historical explanation, arguing that this material could be used to map out the course a conflict between the ‘hillfort builders’ and the indigenous inhabitants of the region (see also Chapter 2).

“The impression is given that bronze-equipped warriors of Powys were actively opposing an enemy approaching from the south, i.e. along the very line which... was that which brought the hill-fort builders northwards.” (ibid. :132).

Over the past three or four decades British prehistorians have come to accept that hoards from marshes and bogs probably represent votive deposits. It seems unlikely that objects were placed in such locations with the intention of recovering them in the future, and the metalwork often seems to be accompanied by offerings of food and other items (Bradley 1998). Similarly, many hoards contain a restricted range of objects, which often appear to have been deliberately damaged or broken prior to deposition. Consequently, many now agree that bronze metalwork from ‘wet’ locations, such as marshes and rivers, probably represent votive offerings to the gods or the ancestors (Burgess *et al.* 1972: 228, Barrett 1985, Bradley 1998). Such acts may have sought the favour of such supernatural beings for agreements and alliances that had been made between members of the human community.

The Broadward Hoard from the Herefordshire-Shropshire border illustrates these points well. Found in 1867 during the drainage of a low-lying, marshy field, the site lies on the floodplain on the River Clun, close to the point where a small tributary stream joins the river (see Fig. 5.1). Drawing upon the original account of its the discovery (Rocke and Barnwell 1872), Burgess *et al.* noted that the contents of the hoard lay “...in a ‘confused heap’...” and were in a corroded and oxidised state when recovered (1972: 212). They also observe that: -

“The implements were found about 5-6 feet down, together with great quantities of animal bones, including whole skulls. It was noted that animal bones could be dug up in almost every part of the field.” (ibid.: 212).

The hoard mainly consisted of fragmentary and complete spearheads (47 recorded examples), including a large number of a distinctive barbed examples. However, it also included fragments of Ewart Park swords (11), spear shaft ferrules (5), and a

small number of other miscellaneous objects (see table 5.4). Together with the Willow Moor hoards it is viewed as one of the classic spearhead hoards from the region and was used by Chitty (1937: 131-2) to support her historical explanation of such deposits (1937: 131-2). However, I would argue that it is much more likely that the Broadward hoard represents a votive deposit. To begin with Burgess *et al.* argued that the barded spearheads from the such deposits would have been extremely difficult to use as hunting or fighting weapons, and may have had a ceremonial or decorative function (1972: 229). However, they insisted that "...spearhead hoards... must be classed as warrior hoards..." whose distribution across western and southern England reflects "...a wide area over which spear warriors were dominant" (*ibid.*: 229). Bradley has suggested that the apparent emphasis upon weaponry which can be seen across much of north-western Europe at this time might be linked an increase in warfare and competition for land (1998). He points to the emergence of the early hillforts, which he views as centralised food stores (for a full discussion of this model see Section 5.4 below). However, this interpretation does not satisfactorily explain why the spearhead hoards in the central Welsh Marches contain such large quantities of ceremonial/decorative weapons.

In addressing the issue of 'warrior hoards', Barrett suggested that the dominance assigned to weaponry in archaeological accounts undoubtedly reflects the fact that it has survived in greater quantities. The importance that has been attached to this material by prehistorians may, therefore, be out of proportion to the roles they fulfilled in the networks of social relations that existed at the time they were deposited. Barrett suggests instead that weapons may have structured relationships of authority within certain sections of a community, which implies that the form of an object may have been as important as its function. Thus he argued that the unfinished axes, which are often found in Late Bronze Age hoards, may have *circulated* as axes rather than being *used* as axes (*ibid.* 314). We can make the same point for the barbed spearheads; they could have circulated as spearheads rather than actually being used as such. Their status as weapons – 'decorative' or otherwise – may have made the spearheads particularly potent symbols within the small-scale societies of the early first millennium BC. As Giles (2001) has suggested of the Iron Age swords from the square barrow burials in East Yorkshire, such objects had the potential to bring about death, and thus transform relations among the living.

Spearheads and other weapons may, therefore, have been symbolically associated with death and transformation, making them suitable for use in mediations with the supernatural, as well for creating and sustaining relations amongst the living.

The other factor which indicates that the Broadward hoard probably represents a votive deposit are the large quantities of animal bones that were found in association with the metalwork. Although this site clearly requires further investigation, Rocke and Barnwell's (1872) description of the faunal remains recalls similar discoveries at Flag Fen, where the deposition of bronze metalwork and animal bones occurred over an extended period of time (Pryor 1992). It seems possible, therefore, that the material from Broadward represents a series of depositional episodes rather than from a single 'hoarding event', which suggests that people made numerous offerings at the site over an extended period of time. The same may well be true of the other spearhead hoards, particularly at Willow Moor where three apparently separate deposits of metalwork have been recovered at different times from the same general locale. Given their size, it seems possible that the members of a number of different communities took part in these events (Bradley 1984: 122). The deposition of elaborate ceremonial items of metalwork suggests that these occasions involved display. Such events may also have involved the preparation and consumption of significant quantities of food (and deposition of the resulting debris). Each would also have played an important part in reproducing relations between the members of different communities.

Finds of single items of Middle and Late Bronze Age metalwork (see Table 5.5) from around the margins of other wetlands in the central Marches appear to support this argument. Such objects used to be seen as the result of casual discard or accidental loss, as opposed to intentional deposition of hoards. However, Barrett (1985: 95) has rejected this distinction, pointing to the similarities between the types of objects recovered from both kinds of deposits. He argues that in most cases we can regard single finds as having been purposefully deposited for similar reasons to hoards, although their exact significance would have depended upon the social context in which such episodes occurred.

The significant number of single finds of Late Bronze Age metalwork from around the valley mires of north-western Shropshire provide us with examples of such deposits (see Fig. 5.21). For instance, a Late Bronze Age 'Yetholm' type shield

(Stanton 1865) and two Ewart Park swords have been found at separate locations on or around Baggy Moor (items 1512, 1075 & 1078 respectively on Table 5.5). Ehrenberg (1991) has argued that this is an area of Grade 1 agricultural land, reflected today in its use for intensive arable cultivation. As we saw in Chapter 4, however, Brown's (1990) work in the Perry Valley suggests that Baggy Moor remained wooded until the early medieval period, and it is only the extended history of post-medieval drainage that has made it suitable for arable cultivation (Leah *et al.* 1998). In later prehistory this area was probably covered by damp woodland, providing a contrast with the open ground on the surrounding gravel ridges. Consequently, it would have provided a diverse range of resources, which may have included rich pastures in the edge habitats around the margins of the forest as well as timber and abundant game reserves in the woods. The distribution of pit alignments in this area (see Fig. 5.6) suggests that this may have been one of the areas held in common by a number of different communities, where people grazed their stock in the summer months and collected timber or hunted in the autumn and winter (see also Section 5.4.3.2). Consequently, these may well have been places where people would have expected to encounter strangers and more distant kin; encounters that would have been structured around tightly proscribed rights of access that required periodic re-negotiation. A vital part in such practices may have been the exchange of items of material culture and marriage partners, both of which may have included the giving and receiving of items of bronze metalwork (Brück *in press*, Edmonds 1995: 157, Wager 2002).

In addition, Ehrenburg (1991) has drawn attention to the apparent overlap in the distribution of Middle and Late Bronze Age metalwork finds and burnt mounds in this part of the study area (see Fig. 5.21). I will discuss the evidence from this 'class' of monuments below (see Section 5.4.3). However, it seems that these sites were connected with a range of 'non-domestic' practices, including episodic feasting involving large numbers of people. Bradley (1998) has linked the deposition of metalwork with feasting, and in this sense we can perhaps see another connection between the single finds from such areas and the large spearhead hoard from Broadward.

Viewed against this background the deposition of metalwork in and around the fringes of the valley mires, perhaps offered another way of manipulating the

networks of relations that existed between the people who used these places. Depositing such objects may have been intended to secure favour for the groups who used these areas, or to insure the future availability of the resources they provided. In addition, they would have also have addressed more local and immediate concerns amongst the living. Either way, depositing items of metalwork would have reproduced social relations that existed between the communities who used these places.

There is a small but significant group of metalwork finds from the River Severn between Buildwas and Quatford in Eastern Shropshire (see Fig. 5.21). This includes two Late Bronze Age swords and a socketed axe, recovered close to the point where the river enters the Iron Bridge Gorge (items no.'s 1062 & 1087 and 864 respectively on Table 5.5) and another sword (1086 on Table 5.5) from downstream at Quatford. The practice of depositing bronze objects in rivers has long been recognised in other areas of Britain, especially the lower reaches of the River Thames and the Fenland (Thomas 1999). A variety of practical explanations have been put forward for finds from rivers in the past, including casual losses by traders from boats, battles at fords or crossing points and erosion from riverside settlements (Bradley 1998). In most cases such explanations can be dismissed; in the case of the lower Thames and the Fens the sheer quantity of finds suggests that casual loss or discard is highly unlikely. Again the emphasis appears to be upon weapons, as opposed to tools or ornaments, suggesting a link with hoards. Likewise, the riverside settlements in these areas rarely produce objects in the same numbers or of the same quality or condition to those from the watercourses themselves. Bradley (1998) argues that the practice of placing objects in rivers has a long history extending from the Neolithic to the Iron Age and beyond, and also appears to be related to the deposition of human remains in watercourses.

Returning to the Central Marches, the items of metalwork from along the Iron Bridge Gorge may reflect the fact that the river was extensively disturbed in this area during industrial activity in the 18th and early 19th centuries. None-the-less, similar quantities of metalwork have not been recovered from the river where it passes through Shrewsbury, which also had extensive areas of riverside wharfs. Bradley (2000) has noted that studies of the finds from other rivers (especially the Thames) have demonstrated that different forms of deposits were placed at different points

along their length. Therefore, I would suggest that we view the finds of metalwork from the Ironbridge Gorge as votive offerings. The Late Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age flat axe was recovered from the river channel at Iron Bridge and the four Middle Bronze Age palstaves from Buildwas (see Table 5.5), suggest that deposition along this stretch of the river had an extended history. We can also observe that the Ironbridge Gorge appears to have lain between a number of areas of linear land divisions (see Fig. 5.6). At this point the Severn is confined within a steep sided, and at present heavily wooded, ravine that was carved out by melt waters at the end of the Devensian glaciations (Toghill 1990: 176). In order to reach the river people had to descend into the gorge, removing themselves as they did so from the day-to-day world. Thus the gorge might have been a liminal place, betwixt and between the different territories of a number of different communities, which may explain why the metalwork finds come from the points where the river enters and leaves the ravine (see Fig. 5.21). People from a number of different communities may well have congregated at this locale at particular times of the year, or on particularly important occasions in order to place offerings in the river. As with the hoards and single finds from the other 'watery' locations, these may well have been events that involved an element of competitive display, and instances of exchange, designed to inflict debts and obligation on the members of other groups.

Turning now to the metalwork from 'dry' locations in the central Welsh Marches, we can split these finds into two groups: those from slopes and summits of prominent hills and those from 'other' locations (see Tables 5.4 & 5.5). Again, a distinction has been drawn between hoards from these sorts of locations and those from wet places (Levy 1982), such that their deposition is usually thought to have occurred for utilitarian reasons. Analysis of such deposits has traditionally been based upon content, resulting in the definition of 'personal', 'craftsman's' and 'industrial' hoards (Bradley 1998). Of most relevance to the present discussion are industrial hoards, which can be subdivided into 'merchants' hoards containing unused and unsharpened items, and 'founders' (metal smiths) hoards consisting of tools, ingots, 'scrap' (i.e. fragmentary objects) and metal working debris. However, over the past two decades, a number of commentators challenged the straightforward, utilitarian explanation of these deposits. For instance, Barrett and Needham (1988: 136-8) note that some of the objects found on contemporary settlement sites appear to have been excluded

from these deposits. Like hoards from wet locations, this suggests that a set of 'conventions' guided what could and could not be included. Bradley (1990: 26) has also pointed out that melted and heat altered bronze objects have occasionally been recovered from rivers and cremation deposits, which means that not all collections of fragmentary or damaged bronzes relate to the activities of metalworkers. Likewise, Brück (in press) has noted that the different kinds objects included in industrial hoards are often broken in different ways, and that only certain parts of these objects seem to have been deposited.

The Guilsfield Hoard is often cited as a prime example of founder's hoard from the Welsh Marches and provides us with a good example of the various explanations put forward for such deposits (e.g. Davies 1967, Lynch *et al.* 2000, Savory 1958, 1965). Found in 1862 by labourers digging a field drain, an early report states that the contents were found tightly packed together, as though they had been placed in the ground in a box or other container (Savory 1965). The site of the hoard lies *c.* 100m south of Crowther's Camp 'hillfort', near Welshpool in eastern Powys, on the east facing slope overlooking the Severn floodplain (see Fig.5.1). It, therefore, falls into our category of hoards and finds from 'other' dry locations. Typology places the 120 items of metalwork from the hoard late in the Wilburton tradition, which suggests that they date to the late second millennium BC (Needham 1996). A significant number of the objects were in a fragmentary state, particularly the swords (at least two of which are represented), and show evidence of having been deliberately broken. In addition, a number of the other objects seem to have been deliberately damaged by being forced into the sockets of other artefacts (Savory 1965: 181). Also included were fragments of copper cakes, plate scrap, a casting jet and a miscast spearhead (see Table 5.4).

I would argue that this hoard is not as straightforward as it might at first appear, although there is little doubt that the contents seem to be directly connected with metalworking. Care appears to have been taken to deposit objects indicative of all stages in the metalworking process. For instance, the bronze cake and scrap (plate scrap and broken objects) are melted, cast (represented by the casting jet) into objects (sometimes unsuccessfully as represented by the miscast spearhead), which then become damaged and are broken up and re-melted (see Fig. 5.22). Alternatively, then, we can suggest that all stages in the biography of Late Bronze Age artefacts are

represented, from their birth to their eventual death. Brück (in press) has noted that in many societies metalworking is seen as dangerous and magical, because it involves acts of transformation. She argues that during the Bronze Age metalworking could have been symbolically associated with change and rebirth, which lent the materials and products associated with it a range of powerful significances. Broken artefacts intended for recycling metalworking debris may have been symbolic of transformation in general, such that ‘scrap’ could have been used “...as a means of metaphorically marking out liminal states, or points of transformation in space and time...” (Ibid.). It seems possible, therefore, that the deposition of the Guilsfield hoard was intended to mark an occasion, perhaps emphasising an important rite of passage or boundary. However, little other evidence from the location itself to suggest what this may have been and on morphological grounds Crowther’s Camp would appear to date to the later first millennium BC (see Chapter 6). None-the-less, given that the hoard appears to represent a single deposition event, it would have removed a considerable quantity of metalwork from the exchange networks in this area, perhaps making powerful statements about the authority and standing of the groups or individuals concerned.

Turning now to the single finds from dry locations in the central Marches region, we can recognise that at least some of these objects were probably deliberately deposited for non-utilitarian reasons (Bradley 1998). For instance, the diminutive Middle Bronze Age side-looped spearhead found during the excavation of two round barrows at Trelystan, on Long Mountain could have been deposited to mark the continuing significance of these burial mounds (Britnell 1982). Again this implies that such monuments remained important landscape features well into the later second millennium BC and beyond (see Section 5.3).

Elsewhere, single finds of Middle and Late Bronze Age metalwork have been discovered on the slopes and summits of a number of a particularly prominent hills. Isolated finds of Late Bronze Age metal work are known from the summit of the Wrekin (fragments of a socketed axe and a spearhead [item no. 932 & 1343 respectively on Table 5.5]) and from Coxall Knoll (pegged spearhead [1218 on Table 5.5]) on the Shropshire/ Herefordshire border, although this material may relate to the inhabitation of the hillforts at these locations (see Section 5.4.4). Indeed, these items have parallels within the metalwork assemblage from the Breiddin (Musson

1991: 136, Fig. 56). However, the Middle Bronze Age metalwork that has been found in similar locations is less easily accounted for, since it predates the development of the hillforts in the early first millennium BC. A Middle Bronze Age unlooped palstave was found on the summit of the Titterstone Clee, and two unlooped palstaves are known from the slopes and summit of the Wrekin (item no. 255, 435 & 446 respectively on Table 5.5). Elsewhere, a fragment of a Middle Bronze Age dirk was discovered in 'a rock crevice' near the entrance to Caer Caradoc (Church Stretton) hillfort (Chitty 1937b: i), and a Middle Bronze Age rapier was discovered on the slopes of Corndon Hill close to the Shropshire/ Powys border (item no. 1007 & 1006 respectively on Table 5.5.). The small hoard of two Early Bronze Age flat axes, found together with boar tusks and teeth between basalt blocks, on the southern slopes of Titterstone Clee may suggest that there was a long-lived tradition of depositing items of metalwork in such locations in this region. Finds of metalwork from the summits of hills and rock formations have been noted elsewhere. Bradley (1998: 10, 2000: 54) has drawn attention to the work of European scholars on finds from hilltops and rock fissures, which would appear to represent votive offerings intended to mark the significance of such places. Although little work has been done on the British material from such locations, a number of finds of Middle and Late Bronze Age metalwork are known from mountain passes and hill tops in Wales (Wager pers. com.).

There are a number of other factors that suggest that these hills had symbolic, possibly even totemic, significance in the later second and early first millennium BC. All form dominant local landmarks within the present day landscape due to their height and distinctive profiles. Geologically, all are composed of igneous rock formations, which are often exposed as rocky crags on their slopes and summits. As with the other areas in which metalwork was being deposited, it seems possible a range of different communities visited these hills. The palaeoenvironmental evidence from the Breiddin suggests that clearance activity had created areas of open grassland on some hilltops by this time, providing important additional grazing lands (Musson 1991). Even before the construction of the early hillforts, it seems possible that people visited these places with their stock during the summer months in order to take advantage of the hill pastures, and perhaps also to procure stone for potting tempers (see Section 5.4.2.3). Consequently, as with the areas that I have suggested

may have been held in common, these were perhaps places in which people expected to encounter members of other communities. Again, rights of access may have required periodic negotiation, in which the exchange of metalwork may have played a part. It is possible that the use of these areas together with their prominence in the local landscape led people and communities to form a sense of attachment to them. As a result they may have become associated with the identities of the groups of communities that used them.

To summarise, in this section I have argued that the exchange and deposition of metalwork probably played an important role in the reproduction of social relations during the later second and early first millennium BC. In particular, I have suggested that the circulation of such objects created networks of debt and obligation between the members of the different communities. In addition, much of this metalwork appears to have been deposited as votive offerings in areas that may have been held in common by a number of these groups. These practices probably served a variety of purposes and may well have meant different things to different people, depending upon their social positions. However, I have suggested that they addressed two basic concerns. Firstly, such deposits were perhaps intended to mark the sacred or symbolic significance of particular locales (e.g. a particular stretch of a river, areas of bog or parts of significant hills). These acts would have helped to renew group ties to such places, reproducing and legitimating their rights of tenure over these parts of the landscape. Secondly, depositional events may have involved aspects of ritualised display, which again helped to renew the ties of debt and obligations that bound different groups both to each other and to these locales. I will examine what a number of other forms of evidence tell us about how these areas were used.

5.4.2.3 Early first millennium pottery traditions in the central Welsh Marches.

In this section I will develop my argument that some of the prominent hills with distinctive geologies may have had an important symbolic significance during the period under consideration. As I noted in Section 5.2.3, petrological analysis has demonstrated that the pottery assemblages of the later second and early first millennium BC in this region are characterised by the use of crushed igneous rock as a tempering agent. As we have seen, this trait can be seen in the ceramics from

Sharpstones Hill, Four Crosses, Meole Brace and Bromfield (see Fig. 5.1). Larger assemblages of Late Bronze Age pottery were also recovered from the hillforts on the Breiddin (Musson 1991) and the Wrekin (Stanford 1984).

Because of the geological diversity that exists within the Welsh Marches a range of different tempering sources can be identified, each of which happens to be a locally prominent hill. The use of temper can be explained in functionalist terms, since it improves the physical properties of pottery vessels by increasing their resistance to thermal shock. However, in his discussion of the Middle-Late Bronze Age pottery from the Glanfeinon roundhouse, Gibson (in Britnell *et al.* 1997) noted that crushed rhyolite and dolerite tempers were present in ceramics made from non-igneous clays. He argued that this demonstrated two things. Firstly, and most obviously, the use of rock inclusions as temper was deliberate. Secondly, Glanfeinon is situated at some distance from the nearest outcrop of rhyolite, which "...suggests that the rock had a special significance." (ibid. :191). Thus the practice of including crushed igneous rocks as a tempering agent may have been done for both practical and non-utilitarian reasons. Gibson calls attention to the use of igneous rock sources in the production of stone axes and battle-axes, and suggests that the use of such rocks as temper may have given "...the pots physical as well as symbolic strength." (ibid.).

That particular rock formations may have had a range of symbolic significances to prehistoric communities is illustrated by Tilley's (1995, 1996) work on the distinctive granite tors that characterise Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. He (1995) argues that the groups who inhabited this region during prehistory may have invested the tors with supernatural qualities, and proposes that attempts to control and appropriate these important symbolic resources varied over time. For instance, the later third and early second millennia saw the development of a number of permanently occupied settlements on the moor. These appear to have avoided the tors, whose significance was referenced through a range of other monuments including cairns and stone circles. In the Late Bronze Age the landscape was transformed through the construction of a series of linear boundaries across the moors. These frequently incorporated the cairns and the tors within the blocks of land they defined, such that access to them became "...increasingly controlled and formalised." (ibid.: 50).

Like the tors on Bodmin Moor, I propose that igneous rock outcrops in the central Welsh Marches may well have been invested with supernatural qualities during later prehistory. As we have seen, it is possible that the significance of these formations was referenced through the deposition of metalwork. I will also argue later that their incorporation into the line of the ramparts of the first hillforts may have been another way in which the communities sought to capture and control the power that such outcrops possessed. What I propose is that their use as pottery tempering agents was intended to invest ceramic vessels with these qualities. It is not clear whether this stone was obtained through quarrying or from surface collection. However, ethnographic accounts suggest that stone procurement within small-scale non-Western societies is often bound by closely proscribed social conventions (Burton 1984, McBryde 1984, Taçon 1991). Edmonds (1995, 2000) has suggested that similar factors may have attended the quarrying of stone for the production of stone axes in the British Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, with distinct rights of access probably defining who could work particular stone sources. Together with the symbolism that was attached to the rock formations from which such items were derived, this probably lent these axes a range of significances.

I suggested earlier, the hills upon which the tempering sources occur could have been areas that were held in common by several communities. People may well have visited these areas during the summer months, when they moved their stock to graze them on the hill pastures. During the course of these activities certain individuals may well have taken the opportunity to gather stone for use as a tempering agent in pottery. Given that the rock in these areas may have been invested with a range of symbolic qualities, access to them may have been tightly proscribed, such that certain people held rights to gather stone from particular areas or to work certain outcrops. The subsequent incorporation of this stone into ceramic vessels, that were used on a routine basis would have worked the symbolism attached to these places through into day-to-day life.

In addition, I contend that the petrological analysis of these ceramics suggests that different communities were associated with distinctive pottery fabrics. The majority of vessels seem to have circulated amongst the groups that made them. Yet, the evidence also suggests that some vessels were exchanged over wider distances. The dolerite and granite tempered sherds that were found at Sharpstones Hill Site A have

already been mentioned (Barker *et al.* 1991). At the Breiddin hillfort a small number of sherds had a distinctive mix of rhyolite and dolorite temper, very similar to the fabric of the majority of the vessels from the early hillfort at Beeston Castle, Cheshire (Woodward in Hughes and Woodward 1995:15). At Beeston Castle itself a limited number of sherds were petrologically identical to those found at the Wrekin (Royle and Woodward in Ellis 1993:66).

Given the scale at which pottery appears to have circulated within and between these communities, the majority of the vessels that people used routinely was probably made by the household or neighbourhood group to which they belonged. Potting probably occurred during the summer or early autumn, once rock for temper had been obtained after the stock had been taken to graze the higher pastures. The gathering and preparation of clay, the crushing of the temper and the fashioning of pots would have provided an opportunity to relate the stories about the significances of the stone sources to the younger members of the community. Consequently, we can recognise that pottery production may in itself have played a part in the reproduction of tenure over certain parts of the landscape.

The distinctive fabrics of these pottery assemblages are, however, belied by the broad similarities in ceramic forms. For instance, all of assemblages datable to the first millennium from the study area contain examples of slack shouldered, bucket and barrel shaped jars, together with a smaller number of bowls from the Breiddin (see Fig. 5.23). In most cases, only superficial attempts were made to decorate these vessels, although some sherds had an iron rich exterior coating. Stylistically they fall within the post-Deverel-Rimbury plain ware ceramic tradition present across much of southern Britain from approximately 1200 – 700 cal BC (Needham 1996).

We can also recognise similarities in the production techniques that were used at different sites. For example, Royal and Woodward (in Ellis 1993: 66) note that the under-surfaces of some base sherds at Beeston Castle were encrusted with crushed angular rock fragments, which suggest that they were stood on piles of temper whilst still soft. They were coil built and some vessels had slight 'feet' produced by irregular pitching at the base of the pots. Both rock encrustation on the undersides of base sherds and pinched feet were noted in the pottery assemblage from the Breiddin (Musson 1991: 119). These points recall Raymonds' analysis of the pottery assemblage derived from the linear ditches on Salisbury Plain, where: -

“The distinctive quality of the pottery used by the occupants of the Northern Core Territory was reinforced by, and reinforced, the bounded landscape that surrounded their settlements. The topographical location of the linear ditches was such that they emphasised visibility from within the territories... This inwards focus of space was paralleled by the singular articulation of common attributes. At the same time, the impression that the boundaries were not designed as barriers is strengthened by the way in which ideas about technology and style moved freely across their limits.” (in Bradley *et al.* 1994: 87).

I would argue that some principles could be broadly applied to the Late Bronze Age pottery from the study area, such that each the distinctive pottery fabrics were associated with the communities that lived amongst the different groups of linears.

5.4.3.0 The role of burnt mounds in the construction of links between different communities.

5.4.3.1 Introduction.

Burnt mounds have been identified in many other parts of Britain. They usually consist of an approximately circular or kidney shaped accumulation of burnt stone and black, charcoal rich soil ranging from 10-20m in diameter. Where they have escaped ploughing they often survive up to a height of 1.5m, and in most cases are located close to a source of water. Excavations usually reveal a wood, stone or clay lined trough or pit, although artefacts are usually scarce. The radiocarbon dates that have been obtained from excavated examples range from the third to the early first millennium, although the majority fall between 1500 and 500 cal BC (Leah *et al.* 1998: 122). Some sites may have had extended histories of use, as suggested, for example, by the radiocarbon dates from the burnt mound at Graeanog in Gwynedd, which indicate that the site originated in the late third millennium but was reused in the early first millennium BC (Kelly 1992).

Until recently, archaeological discussions of burnt mounds centred upon their presumed function. The most widely accepted explanation is that they represent cooking places, at which heated stones were placed in a water filled trough in order to boil joints of meat (O’Drisceoil 1988). However, others have suggested that they may have been associated with the preparation of sheep fleeces (Limbrey 1987: 264)

or the fulling of cloth (Jeffery 1991). The discovery of a piece of slag at a burnt mound on Anglesey has led some to suggest that they were associated with metalworking (White 1977), although Lynch *et al.* (2000: 90) comment that the link is tenuous. In addition, Barfield and Hodder (1987) have suggested that they may have been saunas/ sweat lodges, possibly used in association with ritual activity. However, Ray (1990) has argued that the narrow focus upon function has limited our interpretations of these monuments and meant that other factors have gone largely unconsidered. Prior to the 1990s few attempts had been made to place burnt mounds in a wider landscape context or consider them in relation to other contemporary forms of evidence, although current research is beginning to redress the balance. For instance, within the river valleys of the East Midlands four burnt mounds and their environs have recently been excavated in advance of gravel quarrying (Beamish and Ripper 2000). Three proved to be Bronze Age (the other was Late Neolithic), and all were located directly next to palaeochannels. A double row of oak posts and a significant assemblage of butchered animal bones were found during the excavation of the channel immediately adjacent to a burnt mound at Birstal in Leicestershire (*ibid.*). Deposits of human bone, which have been radiocarbon dated to the early first millennium, were also found at different points along the same palaeochannel. Similar deposits of animal bone were also recovered from the palaeochannel next to another burnt mound at Castle Donnington, Leicester (*ibid.*).

Bradley's (1984: 163) observation that in many areas the distribution of burnt mounds appears to coincide with deposits of metalwork is also beginning to receive attention. Field survey on the Sussex Coastal Plain survey has now demonstrated that deposits of later Bronze Age metalwork often occur in close proximity to burnt mounds (Dunkin 2001). A constant set of associations appears to be emerging, with burnt mounds often located next to streams and close to evidence for Late Bronze Age settlement. Dunkin (*ibid.*: 262) comments that: -

“The fieldwork shows that the burnt mound occupies an ‘edge’ location in the landscape, defined by the watercourse. The metalwork lays (*sic*) close by, separating the ‘burnt’ area from the associated settlement.”.

My commentary on the burnt mounds within the central Welsh Marches will also place these monuments within a wider landscape context and consider them in relation to other categories of evidence.

5.4.3.2 *The location and character of burnt mounds in the central Welsh Marches.*

To date 71 burnt mounds have been identified within the central Welsh Marches (see Table 5.6 for details), the majority (40 examples or 56%) of which were discovered in the mid 1990s by the NWWS¹ team (Leah *et al.* 1998). The distribution of this class of monuments across the region is uneven. They are particularly common around the Baggy Moor and Weald Moor valley mire systems, although examples have been identified beyond these areas (see Fig. 5.6). This probably indicates that they have a wider distribution than the present number of known sites suggests. For instance, two sites on higher ground (the Botley Stones and the Cwms Cottage burnt mounds) also suggest that burnt mounds may well exist in similar locations elsewhere. Thus it seems certain that the current concentration of sites in northern Shropshire results from the early surveys conducted by T C Cantrill (1915-6) around the Weald Moors, and later work by the NWWS. However, as a consequence of their systematic surveys of the wetlands in north Shropshire, Leah *et al.* were able to conclude that: -

“...the evidence from around many of the region’s smaller mosses...strongly suggests that burnt mounds, as opposed to occasional pieces of burnt stone, are not associated with this class of wetland. Rather it is streams and river valleys that appear to have determined the location of these sites.” (1998: 112).

Consequently, I would suggest that the apparent concentration of burnt mounds around the two large valley mire systems, and in a number of river valleys does provide a representative picture of the occurrence of these sites in the northern half of the study area.

Around the fringes of the valley mires the NWWS demonstrated that the burnt mounds usually occur near the interface between the mineral soils on the gravel ridges, and the wasted peats in the valley bottoms (Leah *et al.* 1998). Whilst some sites appear to exist in isolation, others occur in distinct clusters. On fringes of Baggy Moor, for instance, Leah *et al.* (1998: 43) noted distinct concentrations of sites to the north and east of the disused airfield at Rednall (Gravel Pits Wood 1-3 on Table 5.6) Other concentrations occur elsewhere around the margins of this valley mire and similar patterns can also be seen on the Weald Moors.

¹ North West Wetlands Survey – see Chapter 4.

Away from the valley mires, we can also recognise distinct clusters of burnt mounds along some of the minor tributary streams that flow into the Tern and the Roden (see Fig. 5.6). For instance, two sites (Rough Marl 1 & 2 on Table 5.6) are situated *c* 200m apart occur along the banks of a small stream that flows southward from High Ercall into the Roden. Likewise, a group of three burnt mounds (Burcotgate and Orelton Park 1 & 2 on Table 5.6) occurs in the winding valley of a stream that flows northwards from the slopes of the Wrekin into the Weald Moors.

Shropshire County Council's recent excavation of one of the burnt mounds (Rodway 5 – see Table 5.6) on the edge of Weald Moors provides us with evidence for the character of these monuments (Hannaford 1999). Although the NWS team had identified the locations of a number of such sites within the vicinity, Rodway 5 was only discovered during topsoil stripping along the course of a new water main. The site was located in a similar way to the other examples discussed above, "...at the very bottom edge of higher ground looking southwards over the flat, low-lying former marshes of Cherrington Moor and the River Strine." (*ibid.*: 68). The excavation revealed traces of all of the features usually associated with a burnt mound. The mound itself comprised of a core of black soil and burnt stone *c* 12.4m in diameter and up to 0.20m thick in the centre (see Fig. 5.24). Surrounding and overlying the edges of this material was a spread of burnt stone in a less sooty matrix, which may once have covered the entire mound. On the northern side of the site this deposit sealed a pit 3.2m long, 2.5m wide and 0.65m deep at the base of which was a deposit of damp brown deposit that was covered with successive interlayered bands of yellow and dark grey sand and deposits of burnt stones and soil. A possible interleaving band of grey clay, which extended part of the way up the sides of the pit, may have represented a relining of the feature. The only find from the site – a rubbing stone of fine-grained grey sandstone – was found embedded in the southern side of this deposit. This stratigraphy, together with that of the mound material, provides clear evidence that this site is the product of more than one phase of activity. Indeed, the infilling of the pit or tank may be indicative of repeated episodes of burning followed by hiatuses during which silting occurred, which implies that people visited this site on a number of different occasions, perhaps over a number of different seasons. A radiocarbon date of 2994±38 BP (UB-4290) was obtained from a sample of the sooty deposits at the base of the

mound (Hannaford 1999). This gave a calibrated calendrical date of 1390–1080 cal BC (see Fig. 5.3), which falls within the main date range of burnt mounds from elsewhere in Britain. Whilst this is the only excavated example of a burnt mound from the study area, the excavated features are similar to those that have been found elsewhere in the West Midlands (Hannaford 1999: 73)

5.4.3.3 Discussion.

On the basis of the evidence discussed above we can recognise that burnt mounds occur in two types of location in the northern half of the central Welsh Marches.

- The fringes of the larger valley mire systems
- Along the banks of rivers and streams

Those that lay at the margins of the larger valley mire systems are usually located near the bottom of slopes, at the interface between the mineral soils and the peats. Since both of these areas probably remained wooded throughout later prehistory, the location of the burnt mounds suggests that they were situated in the ecologically rich forest ‘edge’ habitats that occurred around the fringes of these areas. They also appear to be sited on the threshold between the bounded parts of the landscape, over which individual communities held tenure, and some of the areas that I have argued were held in common by a number of different groups. As such they may have been located in places where people came into contact with ‘strangers’. In addition, given the ecological conditions that existed in such areas, these locations would probably have provided rich grazing.

Burnt mounds also occur along the banks of minor streams. In the valleys of the Tern and Roden, for instance, they appear to be located along the sides of minor tributary streams at the points where they emerge onto the floodplain of the main river channels. In a number of places the gravel terraces between these streams appear to have been divided up by pit alignments, and the relationships between these features and topography and drainage suggests that such watercourses may themselves have been recognised as boundaries. At the same time they also appear to emphasize the role that such valleys may have played as routeways.

Consequently, the burnt mounds in the Tern/ Roden valley may have been located

along some of the pathways that led away from the more heavily bounded parts of the landscape down onto the floodplains. The alluvial soils that had begun to accumulate on the floodplains during the later second millennium BC probably supported rich pastures during the spring and summer months (see Chapter 4). Both factors suggest that the burnt mounds were located on the threshold between the bounded landscapes on the gravel terraces and the open areas that existed in the floodplain corridor, in places where people from different communities came into contact with one another.

There are similarities between the landscape context of burnt mounds in both types of location. Again this recalls the evidence from Salisbury Plain, where fairly extensive scatters of burnt flint have been found in close proximity to one another in some of the areas that lay beyond the main concentration of linear boundaries (Bradley *et al.* 1994). The burnt mounds within the central Welsh Marches may have been located in places where people would have encountered the members of other groups. They also appear to be located on ecotonal boundaries of areas that probably provided a glut of resources in the late spring and summer. These may have been places that people visited on a seasonal basis, probably in order to fatten their stock on the rich pastures they provided. The fringes of the valley mires would also have provided rich browse for game animals, making it likely that the activities that took place in these areas included hunting. The resources that these areas supported would probably have been at their richest and most abundant in the early summer, which would have corresponded with the 'hungry gap' in the agricultural cycle. At this time of the year the produce from the previous harvest would have been almost exhausted, requiring people to gather together to exploit alternative sources of food. This may well have brought the members of different communities into contact with one another in the areas beyond the bounded parts of the landscape. In these circumstances the provision and acceptance of gifts of food would have played an important role in the reproduction of ties of obligation and affiliation between such groups. These activities probably also involved the exchange and deposition of metalwork.

The exact nature of the practices that took place at burnt mounds remains unclear. Bradley (1978: 83) has argued that it seems likely that a variety of activities occurred at these sites, including the exchange of items of material culture and feasting. If this

was indeed the case we need to explain the absence of faunal assemblages from these sites. The butchered animal bones from river channels adjacent to burnt mounds at Birstal and Castle Donnington in Leicestershire certainly suggests feasting debris may have been *deposited* beyond the areas normally examined during excavations of these monuments (Beamish and Ripper 2000). If the activity taking place at these sites did involve cooking using fire heated stones, then the symbolic associations that this practice carried may well account for such depositional practices. Brück (in press) has noted that in southern England fire heated flints seem to have been used for cooking. She argues that the physical resemblance between burnt flint and cremated bone could have led to the two materials becoming conceptually linked. As such, the practice of cooking with fired heated stones could have been metaphorically linked with cremation. Within the central Marches fire cracked stones and cobbles were often included in cremation deposits suggesting that similar metaphorical links were drawn between cooking and cremation in this region (see Section 5.2.3). It seems possible, therefore, that the cooking and butchery 'waste' generated at burnt mounds had metaphorical links with human remains, thus providing an important symbolic resource that was carefully deposited away from the burnt mounds themselves. For example, at Birstal in Leicestershire the butchered animal bones from the palaeochannel near the burnt mound were accompanied by deposits of human remains (Beamish and Ripper 2000).

To summarise, whatever the exact nature of the practices that occurred at these sites, burnt mounds had a significance that probably went beyond individual households. Given the similarities between the different structural components of Rodway 5 and burnt mounds elsewhere in Britain, it seems likely that this site is broadly representative of the other sites in this region. This evidence also suggests that these monuments were the product of repeated episodes of activity that took place over a number of years. The clustering of these monuments may indicate that these were locales to which fairly large numbers of people returned on numerous occasions. Since they lay in areas that were probably held in common by a number of communities, the activities that took place at these sites could have involved people from different social groups. As such the episodic nature of the practices that occurred at burnt mounds may have played an important role in structuring relations between communities and, by implication, in the reproduction of social identity. The

careful treatment of the debris that was generated at burnt mounds may also account for their form. The heaping up of burnt stone and soil, ash and charcoal may have recalled the barrows of earlier periods, and they probably stood as ‘monuments’ to activities that bound the groups that used these places together.

5.4.4.0 Blue remembered hills: the emergence of the first hillforts in the central Welsh Marches.

5.4.4.1 Introduction.

In the final part of this chapter I will consider the evidence relating to the first hillforts, which emerged in this region during the first half of the first millennium BC. I will suggest that they represent the outcome and the convergence of the various historical processes that have been discussed above. Their creation effectively brought two previously disparate forms of social practice together in one location; those associated with the periodic episodes of consumption and deposition that occurred at burnt mounds, and those connected with the building of monumental linear boundaries. Consequently, we can recognise that the first hillforts were not the product of a crisis precipitated by the arrival of invaders or deteriorating climatic conditions (see also Chapter 2), but arose out of the internal dynamics that were operating within and between the communities of this period. They may well have represented an attempt to resolve conflict and contradictions within these social relations, just as they were also the result of ties of affiliation that developed between different groups over many successive generations (cf. Sharples 1991a).

At the same time the early hillforts do appear to represent a significant departure from what had gone before. The practice of building and reworking the boundaries of these monuments came to the fore in the first millennium BC, and like the linear land divisions that preceded them, their construction effectively modified the material conditions through which people lived out their lives. As such, they created the potential for new forms of social practice. From the first the evidence suggests that there was structural variability between sites, which cannot be resolved as purely a function of chronology. I will argue instead that this reflects the subtle difference in the social relations that existed between the different communities that built these monuments, and that the practices associated with their construction played a vital

role in the creation and reproduction of these bonds. In what follows I wish to consider these themes in more detail by working through the evidence associated with the various different aspects of these monuments.

5.4.4.2 The historical context of the early hillforts in Britain..

There has been little detailed consideration of the wider landscape context of the early hillforts in the central Welsh Marches. To a certain extent this is a product of the limitations of the dataset. As we saw in Chapter 2, however, within the culture-history model of the British Iron Age the hillforts of this region were assumed to be later in date to those in Wessex. However, the routine application of radiocarbon dating techniques during the 1970s demonstrated that this premise was incorrect and the dates for the early phases of the hillforts at the Breiddin and Moel-y-Gaer and Dinorben on the Clwydian Hills of North Wales, demonstrated that these sites were contemporary with, if not earlier than, similar developments in Wessex. (Guilbert 1975b, 1976b, 1980; Musson 1976, 1991)

Lynch *et al.* have recently restated the view that the emergence of these sites was the result of “...an environmental crisis of the greatest magnitude...” that resulted in an increase in social stress due to the shortage of agricultural land (2000: 145). In this explanation, the decision to locate the first hillforts on some of the highest and most prominent hills merely reflects a desire for security. The question of why such exposed locations should be chosen when the climate was becoming wetter and colder and when, in the medieval period, strong defensive locations could be found at lower elevations is seldom considered. I argued in Chapter 4, that evidence for ‘climatic determination’ from this region can be read in other ways. Given the evidence for the linear land boundaries, it seems unlikely the period immediately prior to the emergence of the first hillforts was characterised by sudden loss of agricultural potential. Indeed, the ‘environmental crisis’ model demonstrates how the assumptions that have been made about the nature of hillforts have dominated our interpretations of the evidence (see also Chapter 2). If hillforts are viewed as primarily defensive monuments, and the impetus for their construction seen to rest with a martial elite, then their appearance in the landscape must signal either the arrival of that elite, or some form of major social crisis. If we reject the invasion

hypothesis, as many did in the mid-1970s, then the latter must hold true, in which case evidence for the cause of such a situation is required. The apparent emphasis upon weaponry that can be seen in Late Bronze Age metalwork hoards (assumed to equal increased warfare) and a supposedly deteriorating climate appears to offer an answer. However, this evidence is neither as straightforward or clear-cut as proponents of this model would have us believe. Searching for an alternative requires us to evaluate the interpretative frameworks that have been developed in relation to the hillforts in other parts of Britain, comparing and contrasting them with the evidence from our region. Inevitably this means examining the models for Wessex, and southern England in general.

Many of the explanations put forward since the mid-1970s have focused their economic role as central places (see Chapter 2). From Hawkes' (1940) work at Quarley Hill and Cunliffe's (1984) excavations at Danebury, amongst others, it was recognised that many of the early hillforts in Wessex appeared to overlie junctions in the linear boundary systems. On the basis of the evidence for four-post granaries at some of these sites Cunliffe (1976, 1984) proposed that they could have acted as defended food stores and centres for redistribution. Bradley (1984) expanded upon these suggestions, again emphasising the evidence for storage structures and the apparent relationship between their size and the amount of high quality modern agricultural land within a 7.5km radius of each site. He concluded that

“...some early hillforts or hill settlements might have played a role in centralised storage and could have had a larger sphere of influence than other sites.” (1984: 119)

This is suggested to have made these sites increasingly self-sufficient. By the Early Iron Age he argues that their role was confirmed by the social upheaval caused by a disruption of the long distance exchange networks along which bronze metalwork flowed, and the subsequent adoption of iron.

Sharples (1991b) has criticised both of these models. He notes that there is little evidence to support the kinds of elite redistribution of goods that Cunliffe envisages, whilst Bradley fails to explain why the disruption of exchange relations should result in conflict. Sharples also dismisses Bowden and McOmish's (1987) suggestion that hillfort ramparts did not fulfil a primarily defensive function (I will discuss Bowden and McOmish's arguments in greater detail in Chapter 6). He argues that the first

hillforts in Dorset may have been linked to a redefinition of the arena for social competition, following the collapse of long distance exchange networks through which prestige goods could be acquired. This resulted in an increased emphasis upon the control of agricultural production as a means of ‘aggressively’ competing with other groups (1991b: 257). The positioning of hillforts over linear land divisions at the points where they crossed ecological boundaries would have allowed these communities to maximise their control over different resources (e.g. arable land, pasture etc). Sharples states that his model is not deterministic, since there is no environmental reason why these communities should fight over the means of agricultural production.

“Control of these resources was desirable and worth fighting for, only because it allowed communities to expand and thereby gave them the basis to control larger areas and other communities.” (ibid.)

I would argue that the strength of this argument lies in the emphasis it places upon the role of the community as a whole, rather than upon a small martial elite. However, despite his claims to the contrary, Sharples’ model is deterministic in the sense that the driving force behind these changes is the assumed desire of these groups had to maximise economic production, such that that power and authority is seen to rest solely upon the ability to maximise output, and thereby compete for further gains. Sharples’ model also has limited relevance to central Welsh Marches because the first hillforts seem to appear well before the collapse in the bronze metalworking industries (see also below for further chronological details).

In their work on Salisbury Plain Bradley *et al.* (1994) have developed a more detailed understanding of the ways in which the early hillforts in this region relate to the linear boundaries and the wider landscape as a whole. As well as overlying junctions in these boundary systems, they note that three of the early hillforts occupy prominent positions within the local landscape. The presence of barrow cemeteries in most of these locations suggest that the significances that were attached to such places extend back at least as far as the early second millennium BC. Given the associations with transformation and liminality that the linear ditches may have had (Brück in press), the construction of the linear ditches that converged on these hilltops would have reworked these significances (see also Section 5.3.3.3) We can recognise that the histories of these places would have been transformed through

further acts of boundary construction in the earlier first millennium BC. For instance, Bradley *et al.* (1994: 144) note that the evidence suggests that some of the linear ditches in these locations were selectively re-cut and enlarged at the expense of those elsewhere during the Late Bronze Age. They argue that this would have further enhanced the importance of these particular hilltops – a process that culminated in the construction of the first hillforts.

These monuments appear to lie on the edges of several different territories and were probably places where the members of different communities came into contact with one another. The reworking of the linear boundaries that converged on these places would have been one way in which relations between these groups were sustained and extended, with the construction of the early hillforts representing the playing out of this interaction. Setting out and building the boundaries of these sites would probably have brought much larger groups together, and would also have created a monument to the social ties that bound them together. It would also have established a series of locales where such groups could gather together on the margins of their territories.

The social importance of the activities that took place in such locations is emphasised by ‘monumental middens’ such as East Chisenbury, which also sit over junctions in linear boundary systems (McOmish 1995). However, the slight enclosure earthworks at this location are associated with a massive accumulation of midden material, containing large quantities of fine and coarse ware ceramics, animal and human bone set within a greasy, dark matrix. Situated on the end of a prominent spur, with west facing views over the valley of the River Avon and parts of Salisbury Plain, McOmish comments that the mound was “...placed in a carefully chosen location...[and]designed to be conspicuous landscape feature.” (ibid.: 74). Such monuments have been found in similar locations elsewhere in Wessex, including Potterne (Lawson 2000). They probably result from repeated and spectacular episodes of consumption. McOmish argues that: -

“The creation of these sites suggests that the transformations witnessed during the early first millennium BC on Salisbury Plain were part of an on-going process of change, related directly to the fertility of the land and the success of the agricultural cycle.” (1995: 75).

Such acts of conspicuous consumption and the careful curation of the resulting debris were clearly highly important social practices at this time. Brück has argued that such deposits may have "...symbolised the vitality and productivity of the social group." (in press). Perhaps more importantly, we can recognise that these residues were created during events involving considerable numbers of people, almost certainly drawn from more than one community. Feasting, the production and circulation of items of material culture and the exchange of marriage partners would all have played a part in the creation and manipulation of networks of debt and obligation between such groups.

Recent work on the early hillforts of south eastern England indicate that many sites in this region were also constructed in topographically prominent positions on the fringes of the settled landscape (Hamilton and Manley 1997, 2001). They appear to consist of two distinct groups of sites – large univallate sites over 10ha and smaller, more substantial enclosures ranging from 1-5ha. Hamilton and Manley (2001: 13) note that timber revetted and dump ramparts occur, although "...both have the appearance of being delimitators rather than substantial barriers.". Like the hillforts of Wessex, some of the early sites on the South Downs appear to incorporate linear land boundaries within their circuits (ibid.: 25). The entrances are often simple and may have been intended to direct people and stock across and through the monument. They often command extensive views and Hamilton and Manley suggest "...the location of these sites indicate that inter-visibility was highly significant." (2001: 13). For instance, in Sussex: -

"The...sites as a whole...seem to function best in terms of 'looking out', perhaps to enable to co-ordination and planning of activities in the landscape that is being exploited around these sites (e.g. stock and people watching)." (Hamilton and Manley 1997: 101).

Limited excavations within the interiors of some of these hillforts have revealed only sparse amounts of features and finds, suggesting only occasional or sporadic occupation (Hamilton and Manley 2001: 21). Some evidence for structured deposits, including the human remains from a pit at Chanctonbury Ring and two gold penannular rings from a ditch terminal at the entrance of Harting Beacon, has been found (ibid.: 21). Taking all of the evidence together, Hamilton and Manley (2001: 25) conclude that: -

“The sites cannot be seen as central places, but as marginal locales which connected places and resources. With their far-reaching views, they provide vantage points to otherwise hidden information. Part of the validation and recognition of their special locations may have been enactment of occasional acts of propitiation.”

These arguments are useful because they highlight the role the early hillforts may have played in structuring relations between different communities in the earlier first millennium. As I have suggested, Bradley’s work on the hillforts on Salisbury Plain also highlights the importance that acts of construction may have played in the reproduction of these ties.

5.4.4.3 The character and landscape context of the early hillforts in the central Welsh Marches.

It would appear that as number of hillforts in the central Welsh Marches date to the early first millennium BC. For instance, a series of radiocarbon dates places the first phase of activity at the Breiddin and Llyn Bryn-dinas in the upper Tannat valley to the 9th or 10th centuries BC (Musson 1991, Musson *et al.* 1992) (see Fig. 5.1 & 5.3). Late Bronze Age ceramics have also been recovered from the Wrekin (Kenyon 1942, Stanford 1984) and early phases of enclosure are now suspected at Ffridd Faldwyn, Powys (O’Neil 1942, Guilbert 1981), at Old Oswestry (Varley 1948, Huges 1994) and possibly at Titterstone Clee (O’Neil 1934) (see Fig. 5.1). Significant variation exists between these sites. For instance, the enclosed areas within the inner rampart at the Breiddin and at Titterstone Clee are both *c* 28ha. At the Wrekin the outer rampart, thought to represent the earliest phase of enclosure, encloses an area of 6ha, which is similar to that enclosed by the suspected pre-rampart palisade at Old Oswestry (Hughes 1994a). At Ffridd Faldwyn the inner area enclosed by the inner rampart, which is again thought to represent the earliest phase of enclosure, was only 1.2ha.

Topographically, they appear to fall into 2 distinct groups. Firstly, the Breiddin, Llyn Bryn-dinas, the Wrekin and Titterstone Clee all occur on the kinds of strikingly prominent hills with distinctive geologies discussed earlier. Within the increasingly open landscape of the early first millennium these hills would have been visible over large distances, whilst at the same time providing excellent vantage points for

looking out over the bounded landscapes that surrounded them. They are also intervisible, suggesting that they were also places that they allowed people to see the monuments that other groups had constructed. Two other hillforts – Earls Hill and Caer Caradoc, both in central Shropshire – also occupy similar settings, and appear to have extended histories, making it possible that their first phases date to the earlier first millennium BC.

In contrast, both Old Oswestry and Ffridd Faldwyn are located at lower elevations. Old Oswestry occupies a low gravel hill at a transitional point within the local landscape. To the west the land gradually rises up towards the Oswestry Hills, whilst to the east the ground falls away towards the marshy, low-lying valley of the River Perry. It seems possible that movement between these two areas was formalised by the double opposed entrances aligned on an east/ west axis. Similarly, Ffridd Faldwyn is situated on the northern edge of a block of hills, overlooking the lower lying Vale of Montgomery. From the first it appears to have had two directly opposed north/ south entrances, suggesting that it may also have been a place that people passed through when they moved between the higher and lower ground.

Unlike the hillforts of Wessex and South East England, they do not appear to incorporate earlier linear boundaries. However, the Wrekin appears to have lain at the margins of a number of areas that had been divided up by linear land boundaries, and the Breiddin may well have occupied a similar position in the landscape. I argued earlier that these may have been areas held in common by a number of different communities and that the deposition of metalwork on such prominent hills in the late second millennium may have been intended to mark the significance of these locations. In addition, these were also places where stone was gathered for use as a tempering agent in pottery production – a tradition that appears to pre-date the construction of the hillforts. Therefore, like the nodal points on the linear ditch systems of Wessex, these were probably areas in which a number of different communities came into contact and/or where the existence of others was more readily acknowledged. The construction and inhabitation of the first hillforts may have given more structure to these encounters. Rather than coming across one another largely by chance whilst grazing their stock, people would now have come together to participate in acts of construction or to take part in the festivals that may well have occurred within their interiors. I will consider the means by which such

bonds were created in greater detail below. However, we can also recognise that the appearance of the first hillforts transformed the meanings and histories attached to these places.

Like some of the hillforts in Wessex, these histories appear to extend back into the early second and third millennia BC. For instance, Neolithic pottery, flint work and fragments polished axes have been recovered from Ffridd Faldwyn (O'Neil 1942) and the Roveries in south-west Shropshire. Arnold (1987) has argued that some aspects of the boundaries at Ffridd Faldwyn *might* date to the Neolithic (see below). Similarly, the SMR entry states that traces of an 'unfinished' causewayed ditch were found during Nicholas Thomas' excavations at the Roveries in the early 1960s.

Although the evidence is not decisive, the hillfort ramparts at these sites may pick up the line of much earlier enclosures. Such 'overlaps' are well known at a number of hillforts in southern England (Oswald *et al.* 2001). Elsewhere, the ramparts of Titterstone Clee incorporate a number of large cairns. More ephemeral traces of fourth to early second millennium BC activity were also found at a number of the other hillforts mentioned above. The construction of hillforts in these places probably represented a deliberate attempt to rework their significances, as different communities redefined and appropriated those meanings for themselves. By doing so they may have been making very deliberate, political statements about the nature and origins of the social ties that bound them together. Thus, we can perhaps recognise that the first hillforts were very closely associated with the emergence of a more closely defined series of broader community identities. Having now considered the topographical settings of the early hillforts, I now want to consider the evidence relating to their ramparts and the residues in their interiors.

5.4.4.4 Constructing early hillfort ramparts in the central Welsh Marches.

Building these monuments almost certainly required considerable numbers of people. It seems likely that the conditions that enabled such groups to assemble and labour together on these boundary building projects were established by the creation of the linear earthwork boundaries. In this sense, the construction of the first hillforts was made possible by, and emerged out of, the tradition of building linear land boundaries. Indeed some of the early hillfort boundaries were set out in ways to that

recall cross dykes and pit alignments. For instance, the earliest ramparts at the Breiddin may well be present beneath the entire length of the inner rampart. Before quarrying destroyed the southern end, this ran southward for over 1km from the head of a precipitous ravine known as Faulsey Gutter in the north to the crags known Craig y Breiddin in the south (see Fig. 5.25).

The labour forces that built the first hillforts were probably composed of the members of several different communities. These construction episodes would have been dramatic occasions, during which people probably worked alongside strangers as well as close kin, leading to the creation of new ties. Consequently, the very acts of constructing these monuments may well have resulted in the emergence of new forms of social identity associated with a more coherent sense of a broader community. Part of the means by which such groups signalled these identities may have been through the construction of structurally distinctive ramparts. Cunliffe (1991) has noted that, whilst broad similarities exist between early hillfort boundaries across Britain, considerable structural variations can also be seen between contemporary sites in close proximity to one another. The evidence suggests that this was the case in the central Welsh Marches. At the Breiddin, for example, evidence for an early timber framed rampart was found buried beneath the substantial Iron Age dry-stone bank (Musson 1991) (see Fig. 5.26). Within the excavated area this structure was composed of three elements: -

- A double row of postholes set 0.8m apart (centre to centre) and spaced at an average interval 1.1-1.4m. These appear to have contained timber uprights 0.12-0.15m in diameter.
- A rampart core composed of a mixture of stones and soil.
- A low stone kerb at the rear of the rampart.

Musson (1991: 27) notes that it was difficult to discern a front facing between the timber uprights. Overall, however, it appears to have been approximately 3m wide and 0.8m – 1.3m high at the front (*ibid.*: 176). It was, therefore, not a particularly imposing structure and Cunliffe has argued that similar sized ramparts at sites in Wessex “...are hardly of defensive quality...” (1991: 346). Evidence for repair or re-working to the rampart was represented by a row of postholes and a foundation gully immediately in front of the paired posts. Much of the rampart appears to have

been burnt and many of the postholes contained charcoal from the post settings, which produced radiocarbon dates centred on the 9th and 10th centuries cal BC (see Fig. 5.3).

Evidence for early hillforts with a timber component have been found elsewhere in the study area. At Ffridd Faldwyn (see Fig. 5.27) evidence existed for an early palisade composed of a double row of postholes, c 0.18 – 0.23 m in diameter (O’Neil 1942). Following the ‘back-dating’ of early hillforts that occurred in the 1970s, Guilbert (1981: 22) tentatively suggested that this structure might date to the Late Bronze Age, although Arnold (1987) has suggested that these features may belong to a Neolithic phase of enclosure. The double palisade was eventually replaced in O’Neil’s Period III by stone revetted, timber laced ‘box’ rampart, which was accompanied by a flat-bottomed rock cut ditch. Again this appears to be early and probably dates to the earlier first millennium BC. At Old Oswestry a possible palisade was located by Varley in one of the trenches he cut through the ramparts (Hughes 1994a: 81) (see Fig. 5.28). This was followed, possibly at some point in the 7th or 8th century, by a new rampart built on a foundation of boulders and revetted front and rear with stones bonded into a clay core. This structure appears to have been approximately 3.5m wide and survived to a height of 0.8m, and was probably accompanied by a ditch and a counterscarp bank dug approximately 9m down slope. Finally, at Titterstone Clee O’Neil (1934) revealed a timber and dry stone revetted rampart that could belong to the early first millennium. Traces of this structure were found in four of O’Neils rampart sections but the evidence was clearest in the trench he opened up over the south-eastern (‘main’) entrance. The exact dimensions of the rampart are hard to deduce from O’Neil’s account, although in places the revetment survived to a height of 1.37m.

The ramparts at Llyn Bryn-dinas and the Wrekin provide a contrast with these structures. At Llyn Bryn-dinas a single earthwork, in places associated with a rock cut ditch, enclosed an area of c 3.2ha on the summit of a prominent hill in the centre of the upper Tannat Valley (Musson *et al.* 1992) (see Fig. 5.29). The rampart was constructed over an initial levelling layer composed of a thin deposit of soil and stone chips, containing fragments of animal teeth and charcoal, a sample of which gave a radiocarbon date of 2710±60 BP (CAR-802). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1000-790 cal BC (see Fig. 5.3). The rampart itself

consisted of dumps of freshly quarried stone, gravel and soil retained at the front by a dry stone revetment that survived to a height of 1.2m. No traces of a rear revetment or a timber superstructure were found, although this may have been due to the narrow width of the excavation trench. In its finished state the rampart appears to have been approximately 3m high and 6m wide in the excavated area, although it was traversing a hollow between two slightly higher rock outcrops (Musson *et al.* 1992:267). None-the-less, it was clearly a more substantial structure than the rampart at the Breiddin. At the Wrekin traces of an early rampart were found beneath later ramparts of the outer camp (Kenyon 1942, Stanford 1984). This consisted of simple dumps of soil and turf behind a rough, dry stone revetment of rhyolite boulders (Stanford 1984). Despite being located on steep slopes this earthwork would not have been particularly imposing. Stanford's section drawing, for instance, suggests that it may only have been around 3m wide and he comments that it was probably little more than "...simply a level walk..." (ibid. : 63-4 Fig. 2).

Despite these structural differences we can identify a number of common themes. For instance, at some of the sites located on prominent hills the early phases of the ramparts appear to run between rock outcrops. This can be seen at the Wrekin and to a certain extent at Llyn Bryn-dinas and the Breiddin, where several prominent outcrops were incorporated into the earthworks. Rocks outcrops occur at various points in the earthwork circuits on the summits of Earls Hill, whilst at Caer Caradoc a number of dramatic crags on the eastern side of the hill were incorporated into the line of the ramparts. If, as suggested above, these rock outcrops were perceived to hold particular 'powers', then some importance may have been attached to their inclusion in the line of the ramparts.

Assembling the resources and labour to build the early hillfort boundaries would have played a significant part in transforming the social relations that existed between the groups concerned. For instance, the construction of the wooden component of these ramparts would clearly have consumed considerable quantities of timber (Manning 2000). As I mentioned in Chapter 4, over its entire length the early rampart at the Breiddin may have incorporated something in the region of 1820 oak posts. The slopes and summit of the hill appeared to have been cleared up to a century or so before its construction. This would imply that this timber was carefully selected from managed stands of woodland located elsewhere in the landscape and

brought to the site by the groups who constructed the boundary. The labour involved in this building work must have been carefully scheduled, both in relation to the agricultural cycle, since these groups could not afford to leave their fields and flocks for long, and to cycles of woodland management. It seems possible that this work took place during the slacker times of the year, perhaps during the summer months when the flocks could be brought up to the higher pastures and the timber was at its driest. The transformation of these materials, through intercommunal labour, into enclosure boundaries may have symbolised the other bonds that these projects helped to create and strengthen. Indeed the building work itself may have occurred alongside other festivals and celebrations, which would have provided important opportunities to participate in exchange. In many ways then the construction of these boundaries transformed the material conditions that these communities inhabited, helping to establish a more open landscape (see Chapter 2) and also creating a series of spaces framed by a new set of architectural devices.

The diversity in the form of early hillfort boundaries may, therefore, have arisen out of different decisions taken by these communities. They may also have been associated with attempts to signal the broader community identities that were created through their construction. As I suggested earlier, the incorporation of the physical traces of earlier monuments may have legitimated these identities by conferring a history or ancestry upon them. This discourse may well have extended to the materiality of the ramparts themselves. The incorporation of prominent outcrops in these structures would have reworked the symbolic significances they were invested with. It may also account for the seemingly deliberate incorporation of ‘occupation soil’ or midden in some ramparts. At the Breiddin, for instance, the early rampart core produced a significant quantities of Late Bronze Age pottery, two fragments of saddle quern, part of a shale object, two small metal pins, fragments of both burnt and unburned animal bone and a badly degraded piece of human facial bone (Musson 1991: 24). Musson argues that this material may have been derived from quarry scooping within interior of the site and constitutes evidence for a pre-enclosure phase of activity. I would add that the inclusion of this material into the ramparts could have occurred for non-utilitarian reasons. Brück (in press) has noted that ‘rubbish’ was sometimes incorporated into the boundaries of sites in southern England. She argues that the incorporation of midden, with its potential associations

with fertility and transformation, could have been intended to highlight boundaries as points of transition in space. As such, the inclusion of such fecund residues in the ramparts at the Breiddin may have enhanced the symbolism of the new boundary, deliberately 'ageing' it and legitimacy on the social relations it symbolised..

Consequently, we can recognise that the construction and maintenance of these ramparts represented political as well as symbolic statements about the identities of the groups that built them. Such acts may have been highly controversial, since they would have cross cut more established senses of community. This may explain why the ramparts of many of the early hillforts appear to have been deliberately slighted, which is usually treated *de rigueur* as evidence for a military assaults on hillforts. Within the study area the early ramparts at both Ffridd Faldwyn and the Breiddin appear to have been deliberately burnt. On the basis of the evidence for *in situ* burning at the Breiddin, Musson concluded that: -

“This fire could have been accidental but such widespread burning at least *hints* at an attack upon the hillfort, or at deliberate destruction once the site had been captured by some other means.” (1991: 117, Author’s emphasis).

Taking the evidence from Britain as a whole, however, Bowden and McOmish (1987) have noted that no other signs of violence have been found in association with the slighting of hillfort earthworks. Unlike the evidence from some Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Crickley Hill, there are no spreads of arrowheads or other missiles around the entranceways (Dixon 1988). Neither is there any unequivocal evidence for bodies associated with an assault on an early hillfort, like those that were found beneath the collapsed banks of the causewayed enclosure on Hambledon Hill (Mercer 1980). As a result Bowden and McOmish suggest “...that it seems quite possible that this deliberate destruction [of early hillfort ramparts] marks the ritualised abandonment of the site.” (1987: 79).

The evidence from the Breiddin and Ffridd Faldwyn does suggest that in both cases the firing of the ramparts was followed by a significant hiatus. Burning a hillfort rampart would have required a carefully set fire. Traces of such a pyre may be evident at the Breiddin, where Musson (1991: 27) found patches of charcoal along the front face of the rampart that were difficult to explain as structural timbers. Given that the boundaries of the early hillforts may have symbolised the life and

vigour of the communities that built them, it seems possible that their destruction by such means could have become metaphorically linked with cremation. Just as funerary rituals "...control both the transition of death and the reproduction of the obligations and status amongst the living..." (Barrett 1994: 50), so the firing of the hillfort ramparts may have represented a realignment of the social relations created through their construction and maintenance. Due to the prominence of these monuments, such acts of 'closure' would have been highly visible. Thus it seems possible that their ritualistic destruction marked the disintegration of ties that bound different communities to these places and each other. They could have also signified an attempt by particular elements within the wider community group to establish their authority over others by deliberately breaking with tradition.

5.4.4.5 A consideration of the evidence relating to the inhabitation of the first hillforts in the central Welsh Marches.

Although the evidence is at present rather limited, the activities that occurred within the early hillforts in the central Welsh Marches appear to have involved considerable numbers of people. The best sequence comes from the Breiddin, although even these deposits were truncated and blurred by later activity. Some evidence has also been found at Old Oswestry and the Wrekin, although this is less informative.

At the Breiddin an accumulation of 'occupation soil' up to 0.45cm thick was identified immediately to the rear of the first rampart. These residues lapped over the kerb of the Late Bronze Age rampart, suggesting that they formed after its construction (Musson 1991). However, they were sealed beneath the later Iron Age rampart, beyond which they had been largely destroyed by later activity (see also Chapter 6). The occupation soil was generally dark brown in colour, becoming progressively lighter with depth until it merged with the underlying subsoil (Musson 1991 microfiche supplement). Fragments of charcoal and occasional pieces of burnt bone were found throughout and in some places distinct lenses of darker soil and concentrations of charcoal (Musson 1991: 30). A scatter of Late Bronze Age pottery and metalwork (belonging to the Broadward tradition) was recovered (Musson 1991). However, evidence for structures was confined to three possible four posters, two areas of cobbling and a possible metalworking furnace (see Fig. 5.26). Sherds

from a least five pottery vessels were found in the dense spread of charcoal that covered the last of these features, including two different coarse barrel-shaped or globular jars, a possible open bowl, a thin walled vessel with a fairly fine fabric and a rare example of small thin wall carinated vessel. This small assemblage, therefore, appears to contain a set of vessels that could have been used in both the preparation and serving of food.

Evidence for a small number of additional structures was found within the interior of the site (Musson 1991). For instance, a concentration of hearths, furnaces and working hollows were found in association with a possible post-ring roundhouse (marked R6 on Fig. 5.30) in the northern part of excavation trench B3-4-5. These features produced microscopic pieces of slag and a spread of crucible and mould fragments. Immediately to the north of R6 was an oval pit (marked 61 on Fig. 5.30) which produced a large quantity of Late Bronze Age pottery sherds (one sherd of a distinctive rhyolite/ dolorite tempered ware), five mould fragments and two pieces of briquetage salt container. It seems possible that the deposition of pottery in pits may have been an act that accompanied the abandonment of a roundhouse structures, effectively symbolising the end of the buildings 'life' (Brück in press). A further two bowl hearths lay c 20m to the south-west of pit 61 and a deposit of midden material covering an area of 10 x 5.5m lay a further c 10m to the south-west (Musson 1991). This feature had diffuse outlines and produced scattered fragments of charcoal and burnt bone, together with numerous Late Bronze Age pottery sherds. Musson (*ibid.*) interpreted this material as domestic midden that had been "...deposited on the natural hill slope or in a barely detectable hollow, and perhaps spread downwards from its original focus by natural erosion." (*ibid.*: 61). Excavations in the vicinity of Buckbean Pond (excavation trench B7) produced another thin scatter of Late Bronze Age pottery, and with traces of three possible six-posters (Musson 1991:76-7).

Musson (1991: 177) does not commit himself to a firm interpretation of the nature of the activities taking place at the site. I would argue that there is evidence for a range of practices, including metalworking and possibly feasting. Evidence for storage structures was found but, at least within the excavated areas, not in the quantities that would suggest that the Breiddin acted as a central food store. Even given the truncated nature of the Late Bronze Age deposits, there is also little to suggest that people lived at the site on a permanent basis.

Without the benefit of detailed soil micro-morphology it is difficult to know whether the 'occupation' soil behind the first rampart represents an *in situ* deposit or the accumulation of hill wash. Musson (*ibid.*:61) suggested that the midden deposit within the interior could have been eroded. Some of the context descriptions relating to the occupation soil behind the rampart make it clear that pottery and charcoal were more abundant in areas of "...darker soil and gentler slopes..." (Musson 1991, microfiche supplement: 10). This could indicate that activities that generated these residues were focused in these areas. Alternatively, the flatter ground immediately behind the early rampart could have acted as a sediment trap. In some respects, however, the practices that resulted in the creation of these deposits resemble those that occurred at the large midden sites in southern England (cf. McOmish 1996). They were, for instance, probably generated during the periodic gatherings of significant numbers of people drawn from a number of different communities, who engaged in feasting and acts of production, exchange and rampart construction. However, the potential size of the Late Bronze Age enclosure at the Breiddin, together with the soil processes operating in this exposed hilltop location, would have mitigated against the development of a huge midden mound like those at East Chissenbury or Potterne.

The evidence from Old Oswestry and Wrekin adds only a little to this picture. However, these sequences do suggest that the activities that occurred varied between sites. At the Wrekin Stanford (1984) excavated a number of repeatedly rebuilt four post-holes, located on a slight terrace dug into the steep hillslope close to the northern entrance to the inner camp. Charcoal from grain found in the final post socket of one of these structures gave a radiocarbon date of 2470 ± 180 BP (Birm 531). This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 1000-100 cal BC due to the high error factor. However, a sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery was also found in one of these post-holes, suggesting that some of these buildings dated to the first half of the first millennium.

At Old Oswestry a number of postholes in one of the trenches may have been contemporary with the Period I palisaded enclosure (Hughes 1994a). These features were associated with a hearth, either below or above which (Varley's notes were unclear on the matter) was found a small conoidal crucible. No other dating evidence was recovered, although Hughes (*ibid.*:83) has suggested that these features

might have been associated with a post-ring roundhouse. After a hiatus, these features were followed in Period II by possible traces of three stone kerbed round houses. However, Hughes notes that structures have not been seen elsewhere in this region, and suggests instead that the ‘kerbs’ “...relate to stone packing around the bases of wattle and daub walls...” (ibid.: 84). Several sherds of furrowed and carinated fine ware bowls were supposedly found in association with these structures in Trenches A & G, although this assemblage is without parallel in the central or northern Welsh Marches. Typologically it dates to the 7th century and petrological examination has demonstrated it originated in southern England (Morris in Hughes 1994a: 68-9). Hughes drew attention to a number of inconsistencies in the locations in which it was reportedly found, noting that “...these sherds appear to be the only fragments of pottery from the site for which he [Varley] provides a confident context...” (ibid.: 85). Given these discrepancies, we must remain cautious of the Period II evidence from Old Oswestry. Pending further work all that we can conclude is that Period II *might* have involved more permanent occupation, *possibly* associated with ‘exotic’ pottery obtained through extensive exchange networks.

To summarise, the early hillforts may have been places where large groups of people, probably drawn from a number of different communities, assembled on a periodic basis. These events probably involved feasting, episodes of exchange and craft production and the maintenance of the boundaries of the monuments. These practices would have played an important part in the lives of the participants, renewing and reworking the networks of social relations between different communities. They also sustained a more lucid sense of a broader community identity, which probably cross cut the earlier notions of localised communities. Episodic, perhaps seasonal, the early hillforts may well have been deserted after their completion.

5.4.4.6 Discussion

In this section I argued that the creation of the first hillforts probably played a highly important role in transforming the material conditions and networks of social relations that people inhabited during the early first millennium BC. Out of the construction and inhabitation of these sites more coherent senses of a broader community identities emerged. Some of the early hillforts were situated in

peripheral settings that may have been held in common by several different groups, in other cases the architecture formalised paths of movement between different parts of the landscape. Constructing these monuments would also have re-worked and re-appropriated the histories of these locations, thus playing a vital role in the articulation of social memory amongst the communities involved.

Gatherings at these sites would have been carefully scheduled to coincide with 'lulls' in the agricultural cycle. They may have been seasonal or episodic, and would have resonated with the activities of daily life. At the same time, however, these events would have played an important role in establishing relations of debt and affiliation between different communities.

Just as these were spectacular occasions in the 'lives' of these monuments, so too were the practices that signalled their 'death'. The ritualistic firing of their ramparts would have been highly visible within the surrounding landscape, dramatically reworking the significances attached to these places, and the social relations they sustained. Perhaps no longer visited by many, the heat shattered ruins remained for future generations to appropriate for their own ends (see Chapter 6).

5.5.0 Conclusion.

In this chapter I have worked through the various lines of evidence from the central Welsh Marches relating to the communities of the late second and early first millennium BC. I have examined the structure, temporality and patterning of different practices across the landscape. As such, I have argued that different parts of the landscape may have been inhabited in different ways, reproducing a nested set of social relations and identities.

I contend that the period in question is characterised by a significant transformation in the discourses through which these different senses of identity were reproduced. Initially, the practices associated with the construction of the linear land boundaries may have enabled the construction of localised community identities, which framed the day-to-day lives of the people who dwelt amongst them in dispersed open settlements. The households to which they belonged were probably linked by close ties of kinship and affiliation to the other groups who lived close by, combining their labour with them at key points in the agricultural cycle. In turn, these neighbourhood

groups probably came together with other such units in order to construct and maintain the land boundaries, and in the process renew rights of access to the land.

Surrounding the bounded landscape lay areas held in common, in which different practices took place. These were places where people could encounter strangers, and the activities that structured these occurrences appear to have grown in importance over the course of the very late second and early first millennium BC. The construction of the first hillforts appears to mark the culmination of these historical trajectories. Building and inhabiting these monuments brought together large numbers of people from a range of different communities. The new forms of identity that these practices appear to have generated marked a significant transformation in the patterning of social relations, such that the construction and maintenance of enclosure boundaries seems to have become one of the dominant media through which these groups defined themselves. It was this discourse that came to dominate the later half of the first millennium BC, as evidenced by the proliferation of different kinds of enclosures. It is to the evidence from this period that we must now turn.

Chapter 6

Rooted to the spot: the later first millennium in the central Welsh Marches.

6.1.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I will build an interpretative model of the changing ways in which the landscapes of the central Welsh Marches were inhabited during the latter half of the first millennium BC (approximately 500 BC – mid 1st century AD). Within the study area this period is usually referred to as the later Iron Age, although it is occasionally further subdivided into a Middle and Late Iron Age. I will consider the ways in which people continued to build and rework hillforts, together with a variety of other forms of enclosure. Again, I am concerned within investigating how the practices associated with the construction and elaboration of these monuments played an important role in the creation of people's social identity. I will also attend to the ways in which these identities were reproduced through routine activity, sketching out the nature, scale and structure of these practices.

As in Chapter 5, I will establish an understanding of how a range of different scales of community were generated and maintained through the inhabitation of the landscape. Firstly, I examine how the smaller enclosure sites represented an architectural device that framed a 'household' level of social relations. I will then demonstrate how, at the same time, the activities associated with creating and maintaining these enclosures helped to generate a sense of 'local community' scale of relations, such that the household and local community were both mutually sustaining. Finally, I will attempt to demonstrate how the hillforts continued to play a role in sustaining broader community identities.

6.2.0 Digging in: 'household' and local community in the later second millennium.

6.2.1 Going against the grain: source criticism and smaller enclosures.

'Non-hillfort' enclosures were a highly significant component of the landscapes of the later first millennium BC, although the application of terms such as 'farmstead' or 'hillfort' to these monuments is problematic for a number of reasons. Smaller enclosures survive as extant earthworks in a number of places within the study area, especially on the higher ground and in some low lying wetland locations (the prime example being the Berth in north Shropshire) where they have survived ploughing (see Fig. 6.2). As a consequence, these monuments have attracted the attention of antiquarians and archaeologists for much longer than similar sites that only survive as cropmarks. Some commentators (Jackson 1999, Spurgeon 1972) have noted that they exist in greater numbers on the western side of the study area (Jackson terms them 'small hillforts' of <1.2ha), where there are fewer larger hillforts (see Fig. 3.1). However, I would contend that similar arguments to those that have already been rehearsed in Chapter 5 with regard to cross-ridge dykes can be seen to apply here. Even in the uplands, for instance, a survey of the enclosure sites in northern Powys also revealed that complex, multi-ditched sites may be under represented at present (Silvester and Britnell 1993). Thus the distribution pattern of the smaller earthwork enclosures is a product of the different agricultural histories of different parts of the region. In the west pastoral regimes have traditionally been more important, whilst arable agriculture was practiced to a much greater extent on the lower lying ground to the east especially in the Severn Valley and northern Herefordshire. Although dairy farming became increasingly important in north and north-western Shropshire in the nineteenth century, the extent of ploughing in the late medieval and post-medieval periods in these area has erased, or at best smudged, the remains of earlier monuments.

Against this background it is hard to underestimate the role that aerial recognisance has played in transforming our perceptions of the prehistory of the central Welsh Marches (Barker 1992, Whimster 1989). Some sites have been discovered as a result of soil marks and parch marks, although the vast majority are known from cropmarks. Within the parts of Shropshire and Powys that Rowan Whimster

examined, a total of 661 new archaeological sites were discovered between 1945 and 1979 as a consequence of aerial photography. The greatest number of new sites (324) was found between 1974 and 1979, after Chris Musson began to systematically cover the region on behalf of Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. The majority of these were 'settlement' enclosures (449 or 67%), some of which, because of their size and complexity, would be classed as hillforts if they survived as earthworks on higher ground (see Fig. 6.2). Whimster only included photographs taken up to and including 1981, although he (*ibid.*: 12) commented that "...the total [of cropmark sites] could easily double as a result of a further decade of systematic reconnaissance.". Unfortunately a comparative survey of the sites discovered in the 1980s and 1990s has yet to be conducted. However, the author's personal experience of processing a backlog of Musson's photographs taken between 1993-1996 held in the Shropshire S.M.R., suggests that significant numbers continue to come to light. Similarly, as yet no attempts have been made to analyse the crop mark data from Herefordshire in this way, although a considerable number of sites have now been discovered (Rebecca Roseff pers. com.).

As we have seen already in Chapter 5, a range of factors affects the visibility of cropmarks, with two of the most significant being topography, which we have already touched upon, and local soil type. With regard to soil types, Whimster (1989: 16) notes that within the central Welsh Marches the fairly widely distributed allied brown earths (class 541) and the more restricted brown sands (class 551) have proved to be the most 'responsive' in terms of the production of cropmarks. He also notes that Chris Musson has photographed significant numbers of cropmark sites on the cambic stagnogleys (class 713) that are present over wide areas in north-western Shropshire.

I would also contend that other biases can also be identified through further consideration of Whimster's distribution maps (*esp.* Figures 5 & 6). For example, my analysis of the numbers of sites (including enclosures) that lie within 5km of a selection of eight well known Roman sites (including the civilian settlements at Wroxeter and Leintwardine, military sites at Forden Gaer, Craven Arms, Bromfield and Brompton) reveals that, of the 69 sites discovered between 1945 and 1959, 75% (52) lie within 5km of a Roman monument (see Fig. 6.3). Similarly, of the 174 sites

discovered between 1960 and 1969, 53% (92) lie within 5km of known Roman sites. With the start of Musson's more systematic flying in the mid 1970s, the percentage of sites within 5km of one of the above Roman sites falls to 26% (107 out of 418). In addition, if we examine the small number of sites (33 or 5% of the total of 661) that have been photographed 6-10 times between 1945 and 1979, we find that 76% (25) lie within 5km of one of the aforementioned Roman sites (see Fig. 6.4). Similarly, all of the sites that have been photographed more than 10 times (2% or 13 of the total of 661 sites) lie within 5km of one of the eight Roman sites.

Consequently, we can see that a significant proportion of cropmark sites photographed between 1945 and 1969 lie within 5km of a known Roman site. I would suggest that, in combination with the fact these sites often happen to have been the most frequently photographed, suggests the Roman sites were being deliberately targeted in the early days of aerial reconnaissance with other sites emerging by coincident. Only with Musson's more systematic flights over the region did new sites begin to appear in other areas. In broader terms lacuna in the coverage of the study area still exist in some areas. Northern Herefordshire, for instance, has generally received much less attention than Shropshire and the upper Severn Valley in particular (Chris Musson pers com).

Some have used the density of enclosures between the Wrekin and Wroxeter to argue that this area may have been "...the core territory of the Cornovii..." in the Iron Age (e.g. Ellis 1995: 108). However, new enclosure sites continue to be discovered away from the main distribution. For instance, between 1993 and 1996 Musson recorded a number of new enclosures on the lower lying ground between Lydham and Norbury in south Shropshire, an area in which is blank on Whimster's (1989: 48, Fig. 29) distribution map of enclosure sites. Taking into account the factors discussed above, I suggest that we should remain cautious in attempting to 'read off' patterns of socio-political organisation from the known distribution of enclosure sites, which may in itself reflect biases in archaeological research. Such comments apply equally to those models where cropmark sites have been excluded from the analysis of the distribution of enclosure sites within the Welsh Marches. For instance, whilst Jackson (1999) acknowledged that "...there must necessarily be some discussion of their presence and their relationship to the hillforts of the region...", he deliberately

excluded them from his analysis. As has been suggested above, many of the larger cropmark enclosures would, if they survived as earthworks at higher altitude, be classed as hillforts. This suggestion is also reinforced Silvester and Britnell's observation that in northern Powys a "...combined study of the earthwork and aerial photographic evidence reveals considerable variation in enclosure type."(1993: 2).

I would argue that, had Jackson included cropmark sites in his consideration of the distribution of hillforts within the Marches then, at least within the central Marches, the boundary between his Zone 1 (where the 'emphasis' is upon large and very large hillforts) and Zone 2 (where there small hillforts predominate and large/ very large hillforts are rare) would dissolve (see Fig. 3.1). In its place we would see that the number of larger hillforts gradually diminishes the further westwards one goes towards the Cambrian massif. As Musson (1991: 190) states: -

"What we appear to have here is a pattern of enclosed settlements [i.e. hillforts and smaller enclosures] which represent land-use systems and economic structures which rely upon both pastoral and arable cultivation, and which therefore find a readier home in the broken landscape of the Borderland proper than in the genuine uplands to the west or the lower land of the Midlands Plain to the east."

One further category of site for which conclusive evidence has yet to be found are unenclosed ('open') settlements dating to the later first millennium. However, their presence cannot be ruled out and the same problems that limit our ability to detect settlement and pit alignments in the early first millennium apply here (see Chapter 5). As a result, Whimster concluded that: -

"...present only a partial picture of the archaeological content of the landscape in question; a picture that provides a reliable representation of one level of information [i.e. the enclosures], but conceals another." (ibid.: 16).

Excavation at the cropmark enclosures at Collfryn (Britnell 1989) and both Sharpstone Hill Site A and E (Barker *et al.* 1991), for example, revealed internal features that were not revealed as cropmarks on aerial photographs of the sites (see Fig. 6.1). Open settlements where deeply cut features are not present will be extremely difficult to detect. Possible candidates include two anomalous compact groups of tiny enclosures (PAR 2447 & PAR 3647) on the gravel river terraces in the upper Severn Valley near Llandrinio in north eastern Powys (see Fig. 6.5), and a row of small ring ditches (SA 04404) aligned on an east west axis below the summit of a ridge, c 3km north-west of Bishops Castle in south Shropshire. However, the date of

these sites remains speculative and must await the results of further archaeological investigation. An earthwork survey of a 'Celtic' field system on the end of the Long Mynd in south Shropshire produced evidence for a previously unrecorded open settlement (Ainsworth and Donachie 1995). This was suggested to be of Romano-British date, although an earlier origin cannot be ruled out at present. Thus, until more work has been conducted upon these sorts of site, the question of whether open settlement existed in the central Welsh Marches in the second half of the first millennium BC will remain unanswered.

To summarise, I maintain that a distinction based upon differential states of survival has all too often been drawn between cropmark enclosures on the one hand and earthwork enclosures on the other. This division is often made explicit by the terms we use to describe them: the former are often referred to as farmsteads whilst the later are often termed hillforts. In attempting to think our way around these distinctions a way forward is perhaps offered by Carver (1991: 4), who talks in terms of a 'spectrum' of enclosure sizes that reflects "...a chronological, functional or social hierarchy of a most complex kind.". I would argue that an understanding of this complexity will not come from developing an increasingly refined typological framework for these monuments, although it must be acknowledged that the scheme proposed by Whimster does provide us with a clearly defined vocabulary with which to discuss these sites (see Fig. 6.6). Instead, I wish to suggest that we will only begin to tease apart the dense tangle which these monuments present us with if we consider how people lived within the spaces they provided, how they went about constructing and maintaining their boundaries, and how this work was made possible by the way in which people tended to the land around them.

6.2.2 Coldcomfort farm: a critical review of the interpretation of Iron Age enclosures.

Before turning to a discussion of how we might understand the inhabitation of the smaller enclosure sites, I want to briefly examine the ways in which we have conceptualised these monuments. Since Gerhard Bersu's (1940) work at Little Woodbury in the late 1930s, the smaller enclosure site has always been seen as distinct from the hillforts. At this time the attention of many within Iron Age studies

was focused almost exclusively upon the hillforts, since it was felt that they held the key to the major historical events of the Iron Age (see Chapter 2). Bersu was the first to interpret pits for storage on a British Iron Age site and provided detailed evidence for timber round houses, and presented prehistorians with a new type-site (the Little Woodbury type ditched enclosure). With it came the notion of an agricultural Iron Age, and it was this view of the period that Hodson (1961) used to attack the prevailing 'Hawkesian' scheme of the Iron Age. Similarly, others argued that the similar traits seen at a number of enclosure sites in Wessex had their basis in shared economic circumstance, namely a self-sufficient mixed agricultural regime. As McOmish (1989: 99) has observed, by "...inference the notion of the independent farmer in later prehistory was born.". Acceptance of such approaches was not, however, immediate and the invasion hypothesis remained influential within Iron Age studies well into the 1960s, after which analysis of economic factors increasingly came to the fore within hillfort studies (at least amongst those working in Wessex).

Within the central Welsh Marches, however, prehistorians have been slow to appreciate the full significance of the smaller enclosures, particularly the cropmark sites. Forde-Johnston (1962) noted that significant a number of smaller enclosures within the region are located close to larger hillforts. He proposed that such sites represented 'outposts' that formed an integral part of the overall defensive strategies employed by those who occupied the hillforts. However, little firm evidence existed to support Forde-Johnston's hypothesis, particularly with regard to the chronology of the sites in question, and consequently it was never to gain wide acceptance. Spurgeon (1972) noted the presence of both earthwork and cropmark enclosures in the upper Severn Valley, and followed Alcock (1965) in arguing that their inhabitants were engaged in mixed agriculture. He accepted that many of the smaller enclosures were only weakly defended and occupied by small communities and, in some cases, a single 'family'.

Apart from the excavations that were carried out on the two cropmark enclosures at Sharpstones Hill in the mid 1960s, which were not fully published until comparatively recently (Barker *et al.* 1991), the cropmark sites remained uninvestigated until the 1980s. On the strength of the evidence from the sites on

Sharpstones Hill Webster (1991: 17) argued that during the Iron Age there may have been a "...considerable scatter..." of farmsteads on the more easily worked soils to the south of the River Severn. Consequently, he contended that: -

"One thing is certain; that although only the local lord, his family, retainers and war bands lived in the hillforts under normal conditions, there were many more people cultivating the land and engaged in a pastoral economy in the hills, or hunting and fishing in the forests, lakes and swamps." (ibid.)

In line with his interpretation of the hillforts Stanford (1980) preferred to see them as a product of the forced resettlement of the hillfort populations in the lowlands during the Roman period (see Chapter 7).

Excavations over the past two decades have, however, demonstrated that enclosures were being constructed from about the 4th and 5th centuries BC until well into the Romano-British period. Some sites show signs of activity throughout this time frame, allowing Carver (1991: 4) to talk of a 'seamless' transition between the two periods. Musson (1991: 191) has suggested that the smaller enclosures on the lower ground represent a phase of agricultural expansion, in the wake of a period of environmental deterioration at the end of the second millennium. This created competition for grazing land within a predominantly pastoral economy, resulting in the construction of the first hillforts. The establishment of the enclosures in the later first millennium occurred as a result of a gradual process of "...land-allotment and the extension of arable cultivation within and dependent upon major hillfort territories, though often beyond the limits of direct control from mother-settlements..." (ibid.). Musson argues that the more elaborate double and multiple-ditched enclosures could represent 'pioneer' settlements. Those with less obviously 'defensive' aspects may have been founded later "...when systems of land ownership would have become more developed, and when the proportion of settled land would have increased." (ibid.).

A similar model has been proposed by Cunliffe (1991: 398), who suggests that "...the hillforts should be seen as central places providing storage and redistribution facilities for the larger community, the majority of whom lived in small enclosed farmsteads in the vicinity." Thus, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, he argues that the communities who inhabited these monuments within the Welsh Marches are directly analogous, in terms of their social organisation, to those within Wessex.

Following Cunliffe's (1984) model, the smaller enclosures thus become the seats of 'freeman farmers' and vassals of a hillfort based social elite.

There are problems with both of these models. Musson (1991: 191) qualifies his argument with the proviso that the "...number of smaller enclosures which have been investigated is still too few to provide reliable dating or stratigraphic evidence...". More evidence has, of course, come to light since he made this statement, largely as a result of developer funded work. I have already questioned the notion of climatic deterioration in the late second millennium (see Chapter 4 & 5). For the smaller enclosures to be 'pioneering settlements' they would have had to have been established in uninhabited wilderness. However, as we saw in Chapter 5, complex forms of 'land allotment', in the form of linear land boundaries, appear to pre-date the smaller enclosures on the lower ground by up to half a millennium or more. Thus the emergence of the enclosures almost certainly reflects subtle shifts in tenurial rights to land as opposed to the wholesale appropriation of virgin territory.

Cunliffe's (1991) re-assertion of Webster's (1991) point that the majority of people probably resided in the smaller enclosures is valuable. It forces us to recognise that the population of this region during the later first millennium may have been fairly high. In turn this requires us to develop an understanding of how the smaller enclosures related to the hillforts. However, I also see a dangerous circularity in Cunliffe's argument. Whilst he acknowledges the 'coarse-grained' nature of the evidence from the Marches, he insists on imposing models developed in relation to other regions (i.e. Wessex) upon it. By implication, the communities that inhabited the central Marches in the later first millennium can be understood by examining the evidence from better-researched areas of the country. This effectively reduces the (urgent) need to conduct research in the region itself, thus ensuring that our understanding of it remains coarse-grained. It also flies in the face of the evidence for distinctive regional traditions (Gwilt and Haselgrove 1997, Bevan 1999).

Few attempts have been made to synthesise the evidence from those sites that have been investigated over the past decade, or to tackle the full complexity of the sequence from the later first millennium in this region. As Musson (1991: 191) argues: -

“If some concerted thematic study is not mounted, however, within both rescue and research criteria, understanding of the settlement pattern in the north-central Borderland will proceed only slowly, as unrelated pieces of information emerge from excavations undertaken for individual local reasons, rather than for the contribution they could make to the overall scheme.”

These issues lie at the centre of recent debates within Iron Age studies concerning regionalism, and the primacy that Wessex has been given within our accounts (Gwilt and Haselgrove 1997, Bevan 1999). Paradoxically, however, I maintain that in order to move the debate forward we must also examine the ways in which superficially analogous smaller enclosures have been dealt with elsewhere. Yet we *must* also be sensitive to the distinctive qualities of the evidence from the study area.

Hingley’s (1984) highly influential analysis of Iron Age settlement patterns in the Oxfordshire Uplands and Oxford Clay Vale in the Upper Thames Valley provides us with a convenient starting point. Drawing upon the work of a number of Marxist anthropologists, he suggested that, within the pre-Capitalist societies of the British Iron Age, various ties of kinship played a major role in structuring the social relations of production. Adopting the premise that social relations are symbolised in the organisation of space, Hingley set out to examine how kinship was organised within the upper Thames valley through an examination of spatial relations. Boundaries are of critical importance to his argument, since he maintained that they could symbolise the division of one group from another. Consequently, a narrow spatial boundary produces and sustains close social relations, whilst the reverse is the case where the boundary is wide. Within this formulation the enclosure of a settlement “...may result from and be a symbol of the isolation of a local social group.” (ibid: 79). These assertions led Hingley to model a series ‘idealised settlement landscapes’ that could be applied to the archaeological evidence. The first of these sees closely spaced unenclosed settlements, in which individual social groups are bound together into a wider society by their physical proximity to one another and the ‘open’ nature of the settlements (see Fig. 6.7). Secondly, he (ibid.: 80) envisages a situation in which enclosed settlements are widely spaced, resulting in social groups that are “...clearly defined and corporate in nature.” A third (widely spaced unenclosed settlements) and fourth (closely spaced enclosed settlements) settlement landscape are also proposed, although not discussed in any depth because their “...potential significance seems less clear.” (ibid.).

In applying these models to the settlement patterns within his study area, Hingley (1984) argued for a contrast between the social relations that prevailed in the Oxfordshire Uplands and the Oxfordshire Clay Vale. For instance, he suggested that the pattern of dispersed ditched enclosures in the Oxfordshire Uplands was indicative of: -

“...social relations of production which involved the control and exploitation of territory by the social group resident within the individual settlement.” (ibid.: 82).

Hingley acknowledged that variation that existed between these enclosures in terms of their size and the scale of their earthwork boundaries, paying special attention to the ‘banjo’ enclosures in the process. He linked these differences to variability in the size of the resident group, which might, in turn, also relate to the group’s social status. Thus the larger enclosures might have accommodated larger groups, which, as a result of their size, might also have had a higher social status. Alongside size social status might also have been symbolised through enclosure morphology, with banjo enclosures representing high status sites. In the case of the smaller enclosures the reverse was the case; smaller size and morphological simplicity reflected lower social status. Hingley (ibid.: 82), therefore, acknowledges that these differences reflect the participation of the resident groups within “...larger-scale systems of interaction.”, at which point he concedes that his idealised model of settlement landscapes begins to crumble. Based upon analogies drawn from early medieval Ireland, he proposes that this interaction revolved around the possession and exchange of cattle. Within such networks a ‘patron’ might grant cattle to a ‘client’ in return for an annual levy of produce and a pledge of allegiance. Hingley maintains that this social system remained relatively uncentralised, although he concedes that the Grims Ditch in northern Oxfordshire *could* represent a Late Iron Age territorial oppidum. If this was the case, it might constitute “...evidence for the appropriation of labour at a scale above that of the individual group.”(ibid.). However, he also noted that although dating evidence for the earthwork remains tentative, in parts it appears to relate to a number of Roman villas suggesting that it may date to the Romano-British period.

By contrast, in the Oxford Clay Vale Hingley (1984) argued that it was possible to identify larger-social groupings within the distribution of unenclosed settlements. Each of these groups (he maintained that two could be identified within his study

area) controlled access to a territory that contained areas of arable and pastureland. Thus, the unenclosed settlements on the gravel terraces were situated in areas of arable cultivation, whilst those on the floodplain were only occupied on a seasonal basis when the surrounding pastures were being exploited. Hingley argued that movement down onto the floodplain accompanied the droving of stock away from the cultivated areas in the spring. Once the harvest was in the animals were driven back up onto the terraces to browse off the stubble, manuring the soil in the process. As a consequence, he speculates that these groups were integrated into a wider-scale community. Hingley concluded that the "...division of arable and pastoral territory is drawn at the scale of the community (rather than at the level of the settlement [as in the Oxfordshire Uplands])..." (ibid.: 84).

Given the time at which it was written, Hingley's paper represented a valuable contribution to Iron Age studies, and it contains a number of points that are of value to the present discussion. Although he drew analogies between a number of different 'Celtic' societies, his (ibid.: 76) contention that Iron Age society lacked "...a strong political/ administrative elite..." is helpful. Along with the corresponding assertion that social relations were principally structured through ties of kinship, he provides us with one means of challenging the orthodoxy of Cunliffe's (1984) model (see Chapter 2). In addition, Hingley's comments relating to the unenclosed settlements in the Oxford Clay Vale give us a brief glimpse of an Iron Age taskscape, in which the role call of residential groups changes with the passing of the seasons and the ebb and flow of the agricultural round. Thus in the winter we might envisage larger groups gathered within the open terrace settlements, attending to animals browsing a short distance away in the arable fields. With the arrival of spring some members of these groups became more dispersed, as some members accompanied the herds down onto the floodplain. Finally, I would suggest that Hingley's contention that individual resident groups occupied the smaller enclosures of the Oxfordshire uplands is a useful one, which will be explored in greater detail below. Within the central Welsh Marches the exploitation of seasonally abundant resources probably continued into the later first millennium BC (see Chapter 4). Therefore, we must examine what the evidence can tell us about the spatial and temporal patterning of these practices.

This said Hingley's (1984) argument is not without its problems. Firstly, the settlement pattern within the central Welsh Marches is very different to that which prevails within Hingley's study area. In the central Marches the density of enclosures in some areas of lower lying ground presents us with something not dissimilar to Hingley's third idealised settlement landscape (densely distributed enclosed settlement – see Fig. 6.7). On the higher ground of south and south-western Shropshire and north eastern Powys the distribution of smaller enclosures could be seen to be similar to the Oxfordshire Uplands. However, when the presence of the larger hillforts is considered the picture becomes much more complex. Again, this underlines the regional variability that we now acknowledge to have existed in the later first millennium BC.

I would also suggest that Hingley fails to develop a sense of an internal dynamic within the communities he discusses. Thus, whilst he deems a consideration of the histories of these societies to be important when seeking to explain their origins, they are themselves abstracted from the processes of historical change. We gain little sense of the tensions that might have arisen amongst communities inhabiting the Oxfordshire Uplands as a consequence of the participation of individual residence groups in wider social networks. This ahistoricism partially arises out of the lack of attention that Hingley gives to chronological considerations, such that the ways in which enclosure forms and settlement patterns varied over time is given little consideration. This is compounded by the way in which he deals with the organisation of social space, which he views as a direct reflection of social organisation. As Giles (2001) has argued, Hingley's model borrows from structuralism here in the sense that the organisation of space is seen to hold the key to an underlying social order (i.e. enclosed settlement: closed social groups, closely spaced settlements: closely integrated social groups etc). Because of the lack of chronological control all of the settlements are treated as being contemporary and, as a consequence, the social order they reflect appears immutable.

As suggested above, Hingley's (1984) work has been extremely influential within Iron Age studies and many have taken up the themes he developed within their own work. Bowden and McOmish (1987) elaborated upon the notion of earthworks as symbolic boundaries in relation to both hillforts and 'non-defensive' enclosures in

Wessex. We will return to their work on hillforts below but, with regard to the enclosures, they point out that the boundary ditches of some site's (e.g. Little Woodbury and Gussage-All-Saints) appear to have been allowed to infill rapidly. They noted that this is also a feature of some later Bronze Age enclosure ditches in southern England, such as South Lodge and Down Farm, some of which appear to have contained placed deposits of artefacts. Deposition of 'domestic refuse' at Little Woodbury and pottery, burnt flint, charcoal and other objects at Gussage-All-Saints could, they suggested, have occurred for similar reasons. Consequently, Bowden and McOmish (*ibid.*: 82) asserted that the "...non-functional nature of these enclosure ditches, and of the deposits within them, require explanations beyond the creation of a physical barrier.". For them, the explanation lay in the desire of the resident group to symbolically isolate themselves from the wider community and to demonstrate their prestige. Thus the increasingly elaborate enclosure forms (i.e. banjo and spectacle enclosures) of the later Iron Age in Wessex "...owe[s] less to the demands of physical defensive capability than to the desire for increased prestige and isolation."(*ibid.* :83)

In a later paper Hingley (1990) asserted that, even if enclosure boundaries did fulfil a functional purpose, this does not preclude the possibility that they also had symbolic significance. This significance, he suggested, could be threefold. Firstly, it might symbolise the social exclusion of the resident group. Secondly, enclosure boundaries may have indicated the social standing of this group, such that "...as in medieval British society, the enclosure boundary became linked with the concept of high status..." (*ibid.*: 96). The process of enclosure building might, he suggested, be a cyclical one, with boundaries being created at times of increased competition within the wider community. A settlement might oscillate between open and enclosed phases as members of the resident group attempted to symbolically isolate or reintegrate themselves into the broader community. In these circumstances the creation or eradication of an enclosure boundary might be a significant event, marked by the ritual deposition of materials intended to mark the occasion. He notes that deposits of feasting debris, human remains and items of metalwork (including currency bars) are known from many Iron Age sites in southern England. Consequently, Hingley contends that enclosure boundaries might also have a ritual significance, which was enhanced by the placing of such deposits.

Again, these two related arguments also contain useful points. For reasons I will elaborate upon below, functional explanations do not provide a satisfactory explanation for enclosure boundaries in the central Welsh Marches. Bowden and McOmish's and Hingley's work allows us to recognise that the earthworks of these monuments may have had a symbolic as well as a practical function. This symbolism was probably reinforced through the placing of objects within them. Much of the time the symbolism attached to them would have lain in the background, undiscussed and taken for granted as people attended to their daily rounds of routine tasks. At others, such as their creation or reworking, and possibly at significant points within the life of the resident group, their significance probably came to the fore, requiring appropriate acts of propitiation.

This said, however, I would contend that both Bowden and McOmish's and Hingley's arguments focus upon *form* rather than *process* (see Chapter 3). The presence of an enclosure boundary is thus taken to signal the isolation of the resident group from the wider group – meaning resides in, and can thus be 'read off' from, form. There is little mention of the practices associated with the creation of these boundaries, how these might affect their symbolism and how they articulated with other activities that constitute the taskscape. Underlying this is the assumption that enclosures, where they do not constitute a feature of a larger unenclosed site, are basically permanently occupied farmsteads. Thus, for instance, Hingley argues that his model "...does not specify that storage and rubbish pits should not be dug outside the enclosed boundary of the settlement, merely that the enclosure marks the limit of domestic occupation..." (1990: 98). Consequently, whilst variability in site morphology is accepted, differences in the patterning of inhabitation between sites are denied.

Similar criticism can be levelled at Hill's (1995b) highly influential arguments concerning smaller enclosure sites in Wessex. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, Hill's work has been immensely important in helping to challenge the dominance of Cunliffe's models of 'hillfort society' (see Chapter 2). He demonstrates that considerable variability existed even between neighbouring hillforts in Wessex, which undermines the simplistic interpretations that have been offered of these sites in the past (see Section 6.3.2). However, in Hill's (ibid.: 50) opinion

“Non-hillfort settlements may offer a level of similarity and homogeneity lacking with hillforts. In contrast with hillforts, with their major changes of form and episodes of abandonment, non-hillfort settlements appear to have been characterised by long continuity and stability... They also seem to share greater similarities in terms of the basic agricultural and craft activities that took place on them.”

He draws upon both Hingley's and Bowden and McOmish's arguments concerning enclosure boundaries in order to suggest that individual *households* were symbolising their independence from the wider community. These groups may have controlled their own means of production, each managing their own land and resources. Within this system communal resources such as grazing lands remained important but “...these probably only complemented a household's production.”(ibid.: 51). At the same time, however, the need for biological and social reproduction meant that each group also had to participate in a wider network of social relations. Further ties would also have been created through reciprocal participation in agricultural activities, exchange and marriage relations and the maintenance of communal resources. Consequently, the autonomy of the each household was more illusory than real. The discourse of household independence stemmed from “...a dominant set of ideas, in part...a denial of economic and social realities, yet also a powerful ideal of what society should be.”(ibid.: 52). Thus, Hill argued, the wider community did not take the form of an ‘organic whole’, structured through ties of kinship, but was instead based upon bonds of affiliation established through shared locality. As a result, he presents an alternative explanation of Iron Age social organisation to that proposed by Hingley (1984). Hill suggests that it is possible that marriage alliances were *not* structured by rigid social conventions during the later first millennium BC, meaning that such relations could be rapidly formed and reworked in the face of high social competition. In a system where the household formed the basic productive ‘unit’, Hill proposes that “...the individual success of the household is hard to maintain through time, because a single household is ultimately short lived.”(1995b: 52). The essential instability of these networks of social relations insured that, whilst at any one time real differences might exist in the status of particular households and individuals, permanent elites did not emerge. Thus, the “...success of any household could not have been easily

maintained or increased through successive generations and there were not...spirals of growth and increased wealth/hierarchy....” (ibid.).

There is much here of value to the present discussion. For instance, I would contend that Hill’s adoption of the household as the social unit of analysis and the explicit linkage between this unit and the non-hillfort enclosures is useful. In adopting this term he stresses in a footnote that he is aware that household form is culturally contingent, and that it should not be viewed as a step on a social evolutionary ladder. The argument that Hill develops concerning the changing fortunes of a household over time is, I would suggest, particularly helpful. It comes close to Brück and Goodman’s (1999: 6, see also Brück in press) concept of the ‘life-cycle’ of a household, in which its composition changes “...as members are born, mature and die...”, and as socio-economic conditions take effect. This essentially provides us with a mechanism for historical change, without recourse to a unilinear, social-evolutionary approach. It also allows us to see, as Hill suggests, how differences in social standing might exist without envisaging a permanent aristocratic elite. Blood feuding between households would also allow us to acknowledge that warfare was endemic (cf. Sharples 1991a). In addition it would also allow us to see conflict within and between the communities of the early first millennium as carefully graded rather than as ‘total war’, and that it was as much a social as an economic (i.e. concerned with the acquisition of land and resources) phenomenon.

The other useful point that I see in Hill’s argument concerns the essential interdependence of household units. He argues that households would have been linked to one another through ties of marriage, and through their mutual co-operation in agricultural tasks, cycles of exchange and the building and maintenance of enclosures. The activities involved in maintaining communal resources such as managed woodlands and pastures would also have required inter-household collaboration. Thus, Hill asserts, the independence and isolation of the household from the wider community, which is perhaps suggested by enclosure boundaries is essentially illusory. For him, the stress upon defining the household in this manner is linked to “...a powerful ideal of what society ought to be.” (Hill 1995: 52). In other words enclosures bring the ‘background’ of social life to the fore in such a way that it becomes an integral part of daily life (see Chapter 3).

Hill's argument is not, however, without its problems. As Gwilt (1996: 702) has noted, he draws a fairly rigid distinction between hillforts and non-hillfort (or 'non-farmstead' and 'farmstead') enclosures. We gain an impression that Hill is uneasy about precisely where the 'boundary' between these two types of monument lies, hence his suggestion that mathematical modelling of rank size curves might provide an answer (e.g. 1995b: 50). The reason why he appears to draw this dichotomous distinction draws in two further and related criticisms. Firstly, Hill seems intent on arguing that farmstead enclosures were comprised of a homogenous set of attributes. These consist of the domestic residences of the household, storage facilities for agricultural produce and craft and agricultural activity areas. Thus non-hillfort enclosures appear to be characterised by a set of ethnocentric assumptions about the practices that constitute a settlement and farmstead (Brück and Goodman 1999). Secondly, whilst Hill (1995: 52) very usefully acknowledges that households would have co-operated to perform routine agricultural activities and to maintain communal resources, we gain little sense of how these various practices articulated with one another temporally or spatially. Thus, as Gwilt (1996: 702) also contends, we gain little sense of how the enclosures, and indeed the hillforts, formed components of a landscape, "...which was lived in and moved through, and also containing (*sic*) many other kinds of...locales.". In short we lack a sense of how the enclosures fitted into people's taskscapes. This feeds back into the lack of attention that Hill, like Hingley and Bowden and McOmish, gives to the practices associated with actual defining and reworking of enclosure boundaries. Whilst he acknowledges that the activities associated with constructing hillfort earthworks may have been socially significant, helping to establish "...networks of debt and obligation...", he does not extend this interest in practice to the non-hillfort enclosures (1995b: 54).

The results of the Danebury Environs Programme show, however, that non-hillfort enclosures within the same general area may have been inhabited in different ways - even in the part of Wessex that Hill uses for his key case studies (Cunliffe 2000). Essentially intended to test the veracity of Cunliffe's model of Iron Age social organisation in the vicinity of Danebury, four enclosures (Houghton Down, New Buildings, Suddern Farm and Nettlebank Copse - see Fig. 6.8) were excavated as part of this initiative. Analysis of the ceramics, based upon the ceramic phasing (cp) developed for Danebury, was of critical importance in dating activity at these sites.

This work revealed what was, for the most part, a complex discontinuous sequence spanning the later first millennium. To briefly summarise, in combination with the findings from other sites in the region the tradition of constructing enclosures seems to have emerged out of a Late Bronze Age tradition of rectangular ditched enclosures. A number of the excavated sites (including New Buildings and possibly Suddern Farm) appear to have been inhabited before the 5th century BC (in cp 1 & 2). In addition, a series of new enclosures (including Houghton Down and Nettlebank Copse) were probably established during the 5th century (cp 3). Once in existence these sites appear to have been occupied through into the 4th century, and in a small number of cases until a later date.

In the early 3rd century, however, Cunliffe argues that a major episode of reconstruction of the hillfort occurred at Danebury (2000: 180). At the same time, many of the surrounding enclosure sites appear to have been abandoned. Pottery belonging to cp 7 is absent, although the ceramics from the site at New Buildings suggest that activity may have ended a little earlier, in cp 4-5. In addition, the evidence suggests that activity ceased at several other hillforts in the region (i.e. Figsbury and Quarley), while some that had been long abandoned (e.g. Bury Hill) were also refurbished. Within Danebury itself excavation has provided evidence for intensive occupation during this period, suggesting that the site was the primary focus of settlement in the area. This pattern appears to have persisted for around two hundred years. After 100 BC, however, the evidence suggests that there was another significant change in settlement within the Danebury area. The remaining hillforts were probably abandoned at this stage. At the same time the evidence indicates renewed activity at many of the earlier enclosure sites, where new boundary ditches were dug. The ceramic evidence (cp 8 & 9 onwards) from these sites suggests that occupation continued through into the Romano-British period.

As I see it, the most valuable aspect of the Danebury Environs Programme in terms of the present discussion is the analysis of the botanical and the faunal remains (Campbell in Cunliffe 2000, Hamilton in Cunliffe 2000). Both Campbell and Hamilton give detailed consideration to Hill's (1989, 1995 a & b) arguments that the botanical and faunal remains recovered Iron Age sites do not represent a

straightforward record of the Iron Age sub economy (Chapter 2). As a result, Hill contends that: -

“...such deposits...were not a result of the daily disposal of refuse, but were made during irregular rituals which engraved a cosmology into the physical setting and daily lives of Iron Age peoples.” (Hill 1995a: 126).

He demonstrates that such ‘structured deposits’ do not provide representative samples of the populations from which they are drawn, and cannot, therefore, be used to reconstruct those populations. Campbell acknowledges that the deposition charred plant materials within pits could have been structured by patterns of belief. However, as a result of her analysis of the Danebury Environs Project assemblages, she also argued that the material within such deposits was derived from “...activities taking place close to those features.” (Campbell in Cunliffe 2000: 53). Similarly, Hamilton accepted that many elements with the faunal assemblages she worked on were derived from ‘special deposits’, which she acknowledges presents specialists within her field with a very pressing set of problems. Rather than trying to reconstruct the exact importance of each animal species within the economy, Hamilton uses the evidence to examine what sorts of activities were taking place at different sites. By extension “Evidence for a particular activity, tied into its place in the seasonal activity cycle, is taken as evidence that the site was occupied at that time.” (Hamilton in Cunliffe 2000: 62). She is careful to stress, however, that a lack of evidence for such practices does not equate to a lack of occupation. It merely demonstrates that it did not occur at the site in question, does not survive or was not represented in the sample.

By using these more subtle approaches Campbell and Hamilton were able to demonstrate that the four enclosure sites were inhabited in different ways. Drawing upon this evidence, in combination with a model of how the various practices fitted together temporally (see Fig. 6.9), they were able illustrate how one particular Iron Age taskscape changed over time. For instance, Campbell was able to demonstrate that the early stages of crop processing (winnowing and threshing), evidence for which was absent from Danebury, took place at all four enclosure sites during the Early - Middle Iron Age. However, all produced evidence for post-bulk storage processing (parching and drying of grain and pounding to release the chaff). At Sudden Farm, Houghton Down and Nettlebank Copse the evidence for both phases

of processing were found within the interiors of the site. This suggested to Campbell (ibid.: 54) that their inhabitants "...threshed and winnowed their own crops possibly sending some threshed crops to Danebury for bulk storage and/or further processing.". At New Buildings, however, there was a clear separation of the evidence for the two different phases of crop processing. Evidence for the early stages was found close to the boundary ditch, whilst that relating to the later phases was concentrated in features within the interior. Campbell took this to indicate that the majority of the grain that was processed at this site was removed to nearby Danebury for bulk storage, with only small quantities undergoing further processing at the site. When these sites were abandoned during cp 7 the initial stages of crop processing appear to have taken place in the fields, since neither Danebury nor Bury Hill produced evidence for winnowing or threshing. In the Late Iron Age, when some of the enclosures were re-occupied, the evidence suggests that all stages of crop processing were again occurring within them.

In addition, Campbell (in Cunliffe 2000) was also able to define changes in the methods of cultivation over time. Six-row barley and spelt wheat persisted as the main cereal crop across the course of the later first millennium. However, whilst in the earlier Iron Age these two crops seem to have been grown together as a mixture or 'maslin', in the later Iron Age a gradual increase in the purity of stored crop samples suggest that two cereals were grown separately as monocrops. Campbell argues that this probably coincided with a change from autumn sowing of a maslin to autumn sown wheat and spring sown barley.

Hamilton (in Cunliffe 2000) was able to add further colour to this model of the inhabitation of the broader landscape around Danebury. She argues for a model of Iron Age farming in which

"Animal management is...seen as involving considerable movement about the landscape, with the populations of animals and herders sometimes dispersed (e.g. summer pastures), and sometimes gathered together (e.g. for the birth season)."
(ibid.: 61).

Using these arguments to interpret the faunal remains from the four enclosure sites she demonstrated that significant differences existed between the practices that were conducted at each site. For example, at New Buildings the lack of neonatal sheep remains suggests that lambing did not take place in the vicinity of the enclosure. The

larger than normal proportion of cattle bones could indicate that it played a special role in the management of this type of stock, and the proximity of the site to well watered valley meadows may support this. Hamilton concluded that there was only evidence for a restricted range of practices at the site and that, whilst this could reflect seasonal occupation, it is likely that different activities took place at this location at different times of the year. In contrast the evidence from the early phase of the Nettlebank Copse enclosure suggested that most stock husbandry practices occurred there. Following a hiatus in cp 7, a banjo enclosure was constructed and the animal bone assemblage implies that a more restricted range of practices took place there. These appear to have involved the "...herding and culling of cattle, sheep and pigs, particularly in autumn and winter..." (Hamilton in Cunliffe 2000:66). Evidence for spring and summer activities was much slimmer. Different again was the Houghton Down enclosure where there was evidence for most activities in both the early and late phases. In the later Iron Age there may have been a greater emphasis upon the wool and/or sheep milk and the killing of cattle, presumably for meat, at a younger age. The high proportion of cattle bones in both the early and late phases of the enclosure at Suddern Farm, together with the high winter mortality of sheep, suggested that it had greater access to meat. Together with a number of other factors, such as the greater number of 'special deposits', this may indicate that those who dwelt at the site had a higher social status.

All of this led Hamilton to conclude that there was "...large scale organisation of the landscape...", and that the activities which took place at the different enclosures represent participation within a wider agricultural system (ibid.: 70). The point is well made, since it calls into question Hill's notion of 'homogenous' farmstead enclosures. I also feel that it is may be more widely applicable, forcing us to consider the fact that the smaller enclosures within the central Welsh Marches could have acted as fluctuating nodal points in broader production systems. As I suggested earlier, this requires examine how these sites functioned as locales in broader taskscapes. Campbell and Hamilton's general model of the Iron Age farming cycle provides us with a tool with which to begin this analysis, since it ought to have relevance beyond the Danebury Environs area. In this sense, it is the *spatial* structuring of routine practice that is likely to have differed markedly in the central Marches. The wider spectrum of resources in this region would almost certainly

have favoured more varied rounds of routine tasks than on the chalk downlands of Hampshire.

To summarise, in this section I have examined the existing models of the smaller cropmark and earthwork enclosures within the central Welsh Marches and found them to be wanting. Consequently, I propose that we need to rethink our interpretations. Some of the basic elements of Hingley's (1984, 1990), Bowden and McOmish's (1987) and Hill's (1995b) arguments may well apply in the Marches. Thus we can recognise that the smaller enclosures in this region probably represented the dwelling places of individual households composed of extended family groups of varying sizes. Similarly, their boundaries were probably as much symbolic as functional, although, as I will demonstrate below, that symbolism partially arose through the way in which such earthworks were constructed. Although the household may have retained control of its own means of production, each household would have closely integrated into the local community. These groups may have competed with one another for status and authority, such that the social authority of each household may have varied over time. It is also my contention that these communities engaged in an agricultural cycle that was very similar to the model proposed by Campbell and Hamilton (see Section 6.2.4).

6.2.4 Entrenchment: the 'smaller enclosures' of the central Welsh Marches.

Over the past four decades an increasing number of smaller enclosure sites have been investigated in the central Welsh Marches. Whilst the scale of these excavations varies considerably, a number of patterns are beginning to emerge. In this section I will consider the evidence that this work has produced in order to examine the sorts and scales of social relations that the people who inhabited these enclosures were engaged in.

I would argue that the appearance of the smaller enclosures within the landscape of the central Welsh Marches resulted from, and in turn helped to sustain, significant changes in patterns of land tenure. In a number of places it would appear that enclosures were 'slotted' into pre-existing field systems. For instance, at Sharpstones Hill Site A a small rectilinear enclosure was constructed over the point at which the earlier linear boundaries intersected (Barker *et al.* 1991). The enclosure

does not appear to have been positioned randomly, since the northern side of the enclosure ditch appears to follow, and thus obliterated, part of the earlier ditch (see Fig. 5.4). This suggests that these linear boundaries were still active, perhaps preserved by the course of hedgerows, when the enclosure was laid out.

Ditches, best interpreted as field boundaries, which were cut by a later enclosure boundary have also been excavated at Bromfield, in south Shropshire and Hay Farm in eastern Shropshire (Hunn 2000, Stanford 1995). At Bromfield the evidence consisted of two relatively short lengths of ditch, one of which (F32 on Fig. 6.10) was cut by the southern section of the later enclosure boundary (Stanford 1995: 102). A third ditch (F142 on Fig. 6.10) which abutted the south-western corner of the enclosure may have been dug on the alignment of an earlier boundary, upon which the southern side of the enclosure may have been aligned. However, Stanford also notes that the fill of this feature suggests that the ditch was open after the enclosure ditch itself had partially silted up, implying that it was later in date. Elsewhere, a complex sequence of ditches was found within the vicinity of the main enclosure ditch at Hay Farm. At least three of these (Ditch 518, 526 & 657) definitely predated the main enclosure. Of particular importance, however, was Ditch 657, which ran on a north-south axis and seems to have been associated with a 'palisade' slot that ran parallel with it. Although only a short section of this ditch was revealed within the excavated area, the western side of the main enclosure ditch overlay it. As a consequence Hunn (2000: 126) concluded that "...there appears to have been a conscious decision to lay out the enclosure within a pre-existing boundary system."

In the previous chapter I argued that in the earlier first millennium BC local communities held tenure over certain parts of the landscape collectively. Smaller social units may have renewed their rights to the places where they dwelt through acts of deposition; access to the land around these locales was probably shared with others within the local community. The appearance of enclosures within these fieldscapes in the late first millennium would have resulted from significant transformations in these patterns of tenure.

Following Hill (1995), I would argue that in the central Welsh Marches during the later first millennium BC the household, as a social unit, became more closely prescribed. As I have already suggested, there is very considerable variability in

enclosure size and morphology, making the definition of a typological scheme very difficult. At the same time, however, evidence for single or small groups of round houses have been found at several of the enclosures that have been excavated in the region. For instance, at Sharpstones Hill Site A a circular gully, probably indicative of a single round house c 10m in diameter, was found within the interior of enclosure (Barker *et al.* 1991) (see Fig. 5.4). Four postholes within the interior of the structure may belong to a four-post structure, or part of the superstructure of the round house. At the nearby Sharpstones Hill Site E a circular gully indicates that a round house approximately 12m in diameter stood within the centre of the bivallate rectilinear enclosure (see Fig. 6.12), although others may have existed beyond the excavated area (*ibid.*). Iron Age and Romano-British pottery was present within the earliest fills in the enclosure ditch and within features in the interior, suggesting that this site may have been constructed, or at least significantly reworked, in the first centuries BC/AD. .

Elsewhere, Hannaford (1993) exposed part of the gully from a roundhouse within the interior of a small, irregular enclosure at Tycoch Farm near Llanymynech in north west Shropshire (see Fig. 6.1 & Fig. 6.13). The small section that was cut across the enclosure ditch produced a sherd of Iron Age Malvernian coarse ware pottery, fragments of briquetage, charcoal and crushed burnt stone that may have represented the residues of metalworking. None of these features produced Romano-British pottery, although abraded sherds were found together with medieval pottery in the well developed plough soil that sealed the site. This probably suggests that the enclosure was abandoned before the 1st century AD.

More ephemeral traces of circular buildings have also been found at two other sites. At Bromfield the interior of the small rectilinear enclosure contained numerous pits and post-holes that appeared to date to the later first millennium (Stanford 1995) (see Fig. 6.1 & Fig. 6.10). For reasons I will discuss in greater detail below, Stanford argued that two four-posters represented the only buildings, one of which he viewed as a dwelling. However, it seems more likely that a cluster of post-holes in the western corner of the enclosure was associated with a multiphase roundhouse, and that the four-posters were storage buildings (Graeme Guilbert pers. com.). The enclosure ditch produced a variety of Middle-Late Iron Age finds, including

Malvernian pottery, briquetage, ash and slag, suggesting that people did dwell at the site at some point in its history. The only two sherds of abraded Romano-British pottery were recovered from the uppermost fills of the enclosure ditch, which implies that the function of the enclosure had changed well before the mid 1st century AD. Elsewhere, at Hay Farm the nature of the soils made it difficult to achieve a full understanding of the site's stratigraphy (Hunn 2000). However, a shallow, semi-circular gully associated with a small group of postholes was found on the southern side of the enclosure interior. Hunn (*ibid.* :132) suggested these could have been associated with a circular structure *c* 7m in diameter, which was probably of Iron Age date given the lack of finds.

The large multivallate hill-slope enclosure at Collfryn in north-eastern Powys provides an interesting contrast to the examples that have been discussed so far (see Fig. 6.1). On the eastern side of the interior a total of nine different roundhouses and fifteen four-posters were revealed (see Fig. 6.14). The evidence again consisted of circular gullies associated with paired post settings, which together provided evidence for circular buildings ranging from 7.5 – 13m in diameter. It was clear that five of these structures had been rebuilt on one or more occasions in almost exactly the same position. Britnell proposes that "...the nine roundhouses between them appear to represent between 15 and 20 different constructions, but it seems likely that more than three buildings were standing at any one time." (*ibid.* :95). A series of radiocarbon dates, which fall between the 4th and 1st centuries BC, was obtained from features associated with the round houses. The four-posters that belong to this phase also appear to have been repeatedly rebuilt in much the same position, although less than ten appear to have been standing at any one time. Overall, one gains the impression of a remarkable longevity in the positioning of buildings at Collfryn, such that the 'site plan' remained much the same for approximately three centuries.

Assigning functions to the structures at these different sites is fraught with difficulty, particularly given the truncated nature of the deposits. Clarke's (1972) attempt to produce a model of spatial organisation for the Glastonbury Lake Village, has been roundly criticised by Barrett (1987). Clarke used the distribution of finds and features across this site to map the locations at which a range of gender-specific

activities took place. However, Barrett argues that this model is based upon an unquestioning acceptance of the excavator's account of the site. By placing the excavation in its historical context and applying current knowledge of the formation processes that operate on wetland sites, he demonstrated that it is possible to arrive at a very different reading of the archaeological residues. More recently Parker Pearson (1996) has attempted to develop a structuralist model of the organisation of space in Iron Age round house. Drawing upon research into the sunward orientation of roundhouse doorways (Oswald 1997) he proposes that the use of space within these buildings was structured by a concerns relating to binary oppositions such as light: dark, public: private, male: female and clean: impure. Thus, for instance, the dark side of the house was seen as the locus of female activities. However, Brück and Goodman (1999) have pointed out that we need to remain aware of our own culturally contingent notions of the factors that define a house, and domestic activity in general. They argue that: -

“The assumption that a discrete set of ‘domestic practices’ located in ‘houses’ is a universal characteristic of settlements leads to the expectation that both houses and domestic activities should be easily identifiable archaeologically. However, the structure and elaboration of the house in modern Western society is closely related to a specific ideological construct, the ‘home’, and depends on ideals of possession and permanence that may be absent in other cultural contexts...” (ibid.: 3).

Brück and Goodman accept that structuralist interpretations like Parker-Pearson's stem from a concern with developing contextually informed interpretations of social space. Yet they also suggest that such explanations risk imposing contemporary Western cultural meanings on the past, because they are based on the unreflective use of assumed universal binary oppositions. As a consequence, they argue that the use of more neutral terms, such as ‘dwelling’, when describing residential buildings might help us to avoid prejudging the material evidence.

It is certainly possible that the ‘roundhouses’ that have been found within enclosures in the central Welsh Marches fulfilled a variety of different functions, and that the different enclosures could have been inhabited in a variety of ways (cf. Hamilton in Cunliffe 2000). The nature of the practices that occurred at them may have changed with the seasons, and over longer periods of time. The diversity of the landscape in the central Marches and the variability in enclosure morphology suggests that this was probably the case within the study area as well. For instance, the Hay Farm

enclosure was located near the edge of a gravel terrace close to a narrow gully leading down onto the floodplain itself, which is still occupied by a trackway today. The entrance of the enclosure itself was oriented on the head of this topographical feature. Given the elaborate arrangement of ditches at the entrance to the enclosure, it seems possible that the site was used for managing stock. As such it may not represent a 'farmstead'. The circular building could have been an animal byre or a storage building rather than a dwelling – indeed it could have combined elements of all three. Similarly, this site could also have been used on a seasonal basis when the herds were being grazed nearby, or when they were rounded up for culling.

The evidence from other sites, such as the Collfryn enclosure, is suggestive of more permanent occupation. Again the site appears to have been positioned to take advantage of the topography. The enclosure is located near the head of a small valley that leads down onto the floodplain of the Vrynwy to the west. The entrance way faces down this valley giving ready access to the pastures that probably existed in these areas. A small assemblage of animal bones, in which the remains of cattle predominated, was recovered from various parts of the sites, although the best-preserved material came from the ditch terminals at the entranceway (Jones 1989). Whilst these remains may result from deposition intended to symbolically enhance the entrance way, they also suggests that various types of animals were killed and butchered at the site. Botanical remains from the site give us some impression of the other agricultural activities that the inhabitants engaged in. Examples of glume wheats (both spelt and emmer), barley and oats were found, and the weed species that were present suggested that these could have been autumn sown (Jones and Milles 1989). Evidence for both stages of cereal crop processing (threshing and winnowing) are represented within these samples. Together with the four posters, this seems to indicate that crops were processed and stored at the site. When we also take into account the faunal remains, we gain a sense of a locale that lay at the juncture of many different paths of movement around the landscape. The site lies on an ecotonal boundary between the heavier stagnoglays of the valley floor and freer draining brown earth soils on the higher ground to the east, which are better suited to arable cultivation. People would have left the enclosure on a daily basis to tend to their fields and their animals. Because it lay on a natural routeway between the valley pastures and the arable land, at certain times of the year animals were

probably moved backwards and forwards past the site. For instance, once the harvest was in, animals were probably brought up past the enclosure to graze off the stubble and to manure the land. The positioning of the enclosure would also have helped to bring sick or lame animals in for attention, to separate off those that were to be culled or to bring the herd or flock in for shelter

The evidence from Collfryn also suggests that other activities took place at the enclosure. Pieces of slag and furnace lining, fragments of crucibles and a number of possible mould fragments were recovered from three discrete areas of the site, including the gullies associated with round houses 7 & 9 (see Fig. 6.14). This material indicates that both bronze and iron working took place at the enclosure. The site produced very little Middle Iron Age pottery, although this may reflect the fact that only a very small proportion of the enclosure ditches were excavated. However, a significant number of fragments from briquetage salt containers were recovered.

I would argue that whilst occupation at Collfryn was more permanent it was also seasonally variable. Admittedly, it is still difficult to pin down the way in which the different circular structures were used. However, the fact that three appear to have been standing at any one time could indicate that they represent the dwellings of an extended household. It also seems possible that the different buildings at this site were very closely associated with particular members of this group, and that their death required the structures to be rebuilt (cf. Brück in press). In this sense the renewal of these structures may have been implicated in the construction of genealogical histories, which legitimated the rights of a household to dwell within the enclosure.

Overall, the evidence from these sites gives some indication of the differing ways in which the smaller enclosure sites could have been inhabited. Some may have been used to manage stock, whilst others seem to have been inhabited by individual households on a more permanent basis, although the size and composition of these groups would have varied. Indeed, the size of some of the larger enclosures, such as the Castle Farm enclosure near Shifnal in eastern Shropshire (Roe 1991), makes it possible that more than one household occupied some sites. As Hingley (1984, 1990) and others have suggested the banks and ditches of the enclosures do, at first glance, appear to indicate the independence of these social units from a wider

community. At those sites which appear to have been ‘inserted’ into pre-existing field systems cited above, we gain a sense of households marking out their rights of tenure over very particular parts of the landscape. Although the evidence is still equivocal, it seems that the larger land divisions were no longer fully maintained, and that later field boundaries were oriented on the enclosures themselves.

It is my contention that the appearance of the smaller enclosures in the 5th and 4th centuries BC represented a move away from the earlier tradition of defining the area in which the localised community dwelt, towards a physical definition of the rights of the household itself. At the same time, however, the very nature of the enclosure boundaries indicates that the independence of the household from the local community was illusory. For example, many of the enclosure ditches that have been excavated appear to have been dug in sections. At Bromfield Stanford noted that

“The enclosure is not quite square and there are eight changes of alignment [in the boundary ditch]...Allowing for three more in the unexcavated leg, the work of eleven gangs might be deduced.” (1995: 105).

At Collfryn a much smaller proportion of the enclosure boundaries were investigated (Britnell 1989), although enough was excavated to suggest that the enclosure was initially triple ditched (comprising Enclosure Ditch 1, 2 & 4 – see Fig. 6.14). Radiocarbon dates from the primary fills of Enclosure Ditch 1 and 2 suggest that they were dug at some point in the late 4th or early 3rd century BC. Two narrow ridges of clay had been left across the base of northern terminal of Enclosure Ditch 1, giving it a ‘cellular’ quality. In addition, steps were observed in bottom of Enclosure Ditch 2, with the result that its depth varied from 2.5 – 3.2m. Britnell felt that this could represent evidence for gang work, although he was unable to rule out the possibility that they “...resulted from a digging technique designed to keep the working area free from flooding.” (ibid.: 107). However, similar evidence was found at the large, possibly unfinished bivallate enclosure at Castle Farm in eastern Shropshire (Roe 1991). At this site a number of discontinuities were observed along the base of one length of the inner boundary ditch, between which lay elongated, ‘lozenge-shaped slots’ (see Fig. 6.15). Again this was suggested to result from gang working. As a final example, evidence for gang working was also found during the partial excavation of another small univallate enclosure at Calcott Farm in central Shropshire (Jones 1994). This site was essentially polygonal in shape, and localised

deepening of the v-shaped enclosure ditch was noted at the points where it changed alignment.

Britnell (1989: 110) observes that the creation of the first phase of the Collfryn enclosure boundaries would have required an "...effort disproportionate to the resources of manpower available within the settlement itself.". It seems likely that the boundaries of even relatively small sites, like the Calcott Farm enclosure, represent a considerable investment of labour. I would argue that larger workforces, composed of members of a broader local community and divided up into gangs, were assembled to undertake such projects. Moreover, the evidence from several of the excavated sites suggests that their boundaries were reworked on more than one occasion. At its simplest this took the form of a cleaning out of the ditches. A pronounced widening of the bottoms of enclosure ditches, variously described as an 'ankle breaker' or 'cleaning slot', was found at during excavations at both Bromfield and the Duncott Farm enclosure in central Shropshire (Jones 1994b). These probably result from the practices associated with clearing them out on an episodic basis, work that could probably be accomplished by a small number of individuals. At both sites, this activity appears to have been short lived and in most cases the boundaries were simply allowed to silt up naturally, necessitating a more concerted effort by a larger workforce to redefine them. Evidence for the re-cutting of enclosure boundaries on one or more occasions has also been found at several sites. At Duncott Farm, for instance, the ditch of this relatively small, rectilinear enclosure appears to have been redug on at least three occasions. Similar evidence was found at the Tycoch Farm enclosure (Hannaford 1993), where both the inner and the outer enclosure ditches appear to have been recut on at least one occasion. At Collfryn, however, the redefinition of the enclosure boundaries took a slightly different form. At this site the ditches appear to have been left to silt up gradually, perhaps because they were felt to be large enough in size and scale not to require re-digging. However, the boundaries of the site do appear to have been re-defined in the 1st century BC through the redigging of the inner ditch (Enclosure Ditch 4) and the excavation of new ditch (Enclosure Ditch 3) just beyond it (see Fig. 6.14). Whilst the interior area remained the same and the outer two boundaries probably survived as prominent earthworks, Britnell argues that this second phase of the enclosure saw "...dramatic reduction in [the overall] area enclosed." (1989: 110).

I would contend that the very components of these sites that have been taken to symbolise the independence of the household as a social unit actually demonstrate how *interdependent* such groups would have been. The repeated redefinition of the enclosure boundaries at some enclosures suggests that the labour forces required to build these sites were assembled on an episodic basis, and it seems likely that this represented one way in which reciprocal ties affiliation were created between the members of the local community. Further, I would argue that, rather than representing a declaration by a household of its tenure over a particular piece of land, the creation of these sites effectively represented an acknowledgement by the wider community of a group's rights to dwell on and husband a particular part of the landscape. Thus the creation and reproduction of community and household were dialectically linked; the community effectively defines the household and, at the same time, the household defines the nature of the community through the way in which it interacts with other households.

In addition, the repeated redefinition of the boundaries of these enclosures suggests that they persisted as locales in the landscape for considerable periods of time. Others have noted the longevity of Iron Age sites within the landscape in Cheshire (Rob Philpot pers. com.) and the southern Marches (Moore forthcoming). I propose that the evidence from the central Marches indicates that the biographies of particular households became closely bound up with closely defined parts of the landscape. Redefining and tending to the boundaries of enclosures was one way in which people renewed their kin group's ties to particular pieces of land over many generations. This attachment to place, or *topophilia*, may also explain why the roundhouse structures at Collfryn were repeatedly rebuilt in the same locations: the act of rebuilding would have renewed the household's ancestral ties to this place. These linkages would have engendered in individuals and households a sense of *belonging* to particular locales. This is important because, as the anthropologist Nadia Lovell has recently argued,

“Accounts of how such loyalties are created, perpetuated and modified are of relevance to an understanding of identity at individual and, more importantly, collective levels, since belonging and locality as markers of identity often extend beyond individual experiences and nostalgic longing for place. Belonging may thus become seen as a way of remembering...instrumental in the construction of collective memory surrounding place...” (2001: 1)

This returns us to the conception of landscape *as* memory and process that I argued for in Chapter 3. The practices involved in building and redefining the enclosures effectively represented ‘memory work’, since it involved a remembrance of the genealogical ties that bound people to their land.

These bonds would also have been reinforced through the tasks involved in ‘tending to the land’ (Edmonds 1999a & b, 2001). As suggested above, the evidence indicates that arable cultivation may have been largely confined to the lighter more easily worked soils. At the same time the extensive areas of floodplain grasslands and hill pasture, which the environmental evidence suggests existed at this time, probably resulted in the movement of people and stock around the landscape. In addition, the co-operation between households in certain agricultural tasks (ploughing the land, the harvesting of crops etc.) would have been a further way in which ties of debt and obligation were created between groups. Indeed, it seems possible that the labour necessary to build the enclosures was in part procured by making commitments to help other groups with these activities.

Labour might also have been secured through making gifts of the products of the agricultural cycle in the form of food. Feasting may well have played a role in these activities, since it seems likely that the creation or reworking of an enclosure would have been an important juncture in the lifecycle of a household. The establishment or redefinition of a site may well have cemented marriage alliances between different groups, or marked other significant points in the lives of the members of a household.

Similarly, these might also have been occasions at which the gift exchange of other kinds of items occurred. This may have included pottery (and possibly the contents of the vessels), finds of which are scarce but not unknown on smaller enclosure sites. As we saw in Chapter 2, petrography has demonstrated that this material tends to be

made from a restricted range of fabric groups derived from a limited number of sources (Morris 1981, 1982, Peacock 1969). The northern limit of the distribution of this 'Malvernian type' pottery appears to run across the middle of the study area, although this may simply reflect the fact that very few enclosure sites have been investigated in northern Shropshire. Morris (1994, 1996) has shown that there is no evidence to suggest that the production or distribution of this material was controlled by the hillforts. Instead, she argues that: -

“...down the line exchange systems were likely to have been the major mechanisms in action at the time, which probably utilised kinship alliances for this distribution and, most significantly, the distribution of these wares is not affected by the form or size of site where used but rather by distance from source.” (Morris 1994: 378).

Distance from source may have added to the prestige of the vessel, perhaps explaining why regionally rather than locally produced wares dominate the assemblages of the second half of the first millennium. Making gifts of these vessels would recall the participant's position within a wider network of social relations. Similarly, the use of particular pottery derived from particular sources may well represent a development of the patterns of ceramic use in the early first millennium (see Chapter 5). The vessels may have carried stories about the places they came from and the other people who had owned them, and their use in both gift exchange and routine activity may well have recalled these.

The most ubiquitous type of ceramic material found on later Iron Age sites in this region are, however, the briquetage containers. These crudely made, conical shaped vessels again have distinctive fabrics, and Morris (1985) has shown that this material was probably distributed from two sources: Droitwich in Worcestershire and the Nantwich/ Middlewich area of Cheshire. Briquetage has been found in direct association with features associated with Iron Age salt production in Droitwich, making it likely that these vessels were used to produce and transport salt cakes away from the brine springs (Morris 1985, Woodiwiss 1992). Salt would have been used for a variety of purposes in the Iron Age, including the curing of meat, altering the flavour of food and in the production of cheese (Serjeantson forthcoming). Its use in the preparation of food may have made it a suitable gift of exchange during enclosure building episodes. In metaphorical terms, the preservative qualities of salt

may also have made it a suitable substance with which to create and strengthen ties with other households.

I would argue that the ability to procure the labour necessary to build an enclosure might well have been one way in which others assessed the social standing of a household. The larger the workforce was the higher the status of the group that had brought it together, and ultimately the larger the resulting enclosure could be. In turn, the ability to muster a workforce may have been dependent upon the household's ability to produce and acquire food and items to give away as gifts. Similarly, if labour was itself seen as a gift, as Sharples (forthcoming) has recently suggested, the ability of a household to command and coordinate labour may itself have been a statement of its authority. Thus very real differences in social status almost certainly did exist. Yet a household's standing may have been fairly transitory, since social authority was bound up with success in the agricultural and exchange spheres. Such an interpretation might, for instance, explain the difference in the scale of the earthworks at sites such as Collfryn. The standing of the group that built the initial enclosure may have been quite high. However, by the time the enclosure was reworked their standing may have waned, to the extent that it was not possible to redefine all of the initial boundaries. The remains of the earlier phase persisted, serving as a reminder of the group's former standing and of its genealogical ties to the land.

6.2.4 Summary

In this section I have examined the character of the evidence relating to the smaller enclosures in the central Welsh Marches. In doing so, I have argued that if we wish to understand these monuments we need to write archaeologies of inhabitation, rather than continually trying to refine our typologies of them. In developing a new interpretive framework for the enclosures within the study area I critically examined the explanations that have been offered in relation to those in other regions. This suggested that a consideration of the ways in which the enclosures related to broader patterns of tenure and routine practice is of critical importance to establishing an understanding of these monuments. Consequently, I argue that the smaller enclosures of the central Welsh Marches helped to transform the patterns of land

tenure that had been established in the first half of the first millennium. By considering the nature of the evidence from their interiors, and the ways in which their boundaries were constructed I was able to sketch out the types and scales of social relations that their inhabitants were engaged in. In doing so I also touched upon of cycles of routine agricultural practices and the wider exchange networks that these people were engaged in. So far, however, I have made little mention of the larger enclosures – the hillforts – that have so dominated our perceptions of these communities in the past. It is to a consideration of these monuments that I now wish to turn.

6.3.0 Building remembrance: hillforts in the landscape of the later first millennium.

6.3.1 Introduction.

In this section I want to trace how the tradition of building and inhabiting monumental hillfort enclosures developed over the course of the later first millennium. These sites occupy the upper end of the ‘spectrum’ of enclosure sizes discussed above, and have traditionally been referred to as hillforts. I have already dealt with some of the issues surrounding the history of interpretation of these monuments, and the nature of the communities that inhabited them in Chapter 2. However, in this section I want to discuss some of the issues that are of direct relevance to our current understandings of how hillforts operated in the central Welsh Marches after about the 6th century BC.

6.3.2 Event horizon?: some critical comments on previous methodological approaches to the Iron Age hillforts of the central Welsh Marches.

In Chapter 2 we saw how Hawkes’ ABC framework for the Iron Age fostered a circular approach to the investigation of hillforts. As a consequence, hillfort excavations remained focused upon the elucidation of the rampart and gateway sequences until the 1970s. Although the validity of this approach was brought into question by open area excavations of these monuments, in the Welsh Marches Stanley Stanford continued to work in the invasionist paradigm. Although I have

already discussed Stanford's work in passing, I want to deal with his chronological framework and treatment of the evidence in a little more detail here, since I believe they raise a number of interpretative problems.

Stanford (1971, 1972a, 1974) was prepared to accept that the origins of some hillforts in North Wales and in the northern and north-central Welsh Marches lay in the earlier first millennium BC. Citing the dates that Musson (1971, 1991) had obtained from the Breiddin, he argued that hillforts with timber 'box ramparts', such as the early phases of Ffridd Faldwyn, dated to end 9th century BC. However, based on the apparent lack of timbers within the earliest phases of the ramparts at Croft Ambrey (i.e. the Plateau Camp – see Fig. 6.16) and at other sites in Herefordshire, he maintained that the first hillforts in this county belonged to the 6th Century BC. However, Stanford also insisted that many of the sites in the central Welsh Marches were considerably enlarged in the early 4th century BC. At Croft Ambrey he maintained that that ramparts of the Main Camp dated to this period (see Fig. 6.16), whilst large hillforts were also established at Midsummer Hill, Creden Hill and Sutton Walls. He proposed that this 'horizon' of hillfort construction and reworking could be conflated with: -

“...with a period of Celtic expansion in central Europe in the early fourth century B.C. when Celts moved southwards over the Alps to storm Rome in 390 B.C. By this reasoning a date of *c.* 390 B.C. becomes a fixed point from which the dating of other structures may proceed...” (1974: 223, my emphasis).

The other chronological marker used by Stanford was the Roman conquest of *c.* AD 48, after which he suggested that the hillforts were abandoned (see Chapter 7). Between 390 BC and this date he argued that occupation at both Croft Ambrey and Midsummer Hill, and by implication the other hillforts in the central Marches, was continuous. He felt that that hillfort horizon was confirmed by the radio-carbon dates he obtained from his excavations at Croft Ambrey and Midsummer Hill if the original Libbey half-life of 5568 years for carbon-14 was used (Stanford 1974). As a consequence, Stanford was he later forced to push the initiation of this phase to 470 BC (Stanford 1981). The other vital component of Stanford's chronological scheme was the assertion that synchronous developments were occurring at the different hillforts he investigated. For instance, he identified 15 phases within the sequence from the south-western entrance at Croft Ambrey and 17 phases for the southern

entrance to Midsummer Camp. Stanford believed that the reworking of these entranceways was occurring synchronously, such that it "...becomes an unnecessary elaboration to suggest that these sequences are anything but parallel..." (1971: 44). Detailed revision of the chronological sequences from individual sites such as Croft Ambrey lies beyond the remit of this study, although there is clearly great scope for the kind of 'audit' advocated by Haselgrove *et al.* (2001). However, I would argue that a number of elements of Stanford's chronological framework are now open to question, and a series of more general points can be made that undermine the coherence of the scheme. A recent piece of salvage recording at Ivington Camp in northern Herefordshire revealed that the inner rampart of this hillfort did in fact contain a timber component (Dalwood *et al.* 1997) (see Fig. 6.17). A longitudinal section of part of this earthwork revealed that a series of 36 posts, set 0.6 – 1.2m apart, had been placed in holes that had been cut through a pre-rampart ground surface (see Fig. 6.18). Around them a series of dumps of soil had been deposited, and capped with a layer of stonier material. The only dating was a sherd of possible Bronze Age pottery that was discovered beneath the rampart and a sherd of 'pre-Iron Age briquetage' from one of the initial soil dumps. However, Dalwood *et al.* (*ibid.* 9) still favoured a broadly Iron Age date from the rampart. This evidence does not, therefore, directly contradict the putatively 6th or 7th century date that Stanford proposed for the site; indeed I would suggest that this is quite possible. In this sense it is unfortunate that Dalwood *et al.* were unable to investigate the accompanying ditch, beyond confirming its presence. What this evidence does suggest, however, is that Herefordshire's hillforts are probably more varied than Stanford's interpretations allow for. By extension, it may well be imprudent to rule out the possibility that some of these monuments had their origins in the earlier part of the first millennium. English Heritage's recent survey work on Midsummer Hill lends some support to such a suggestion (Field and Brown 2000). They found that at one location, part of the Shire Ditch, a linear earthwork traditionally ascribed to the medieval period, appears to underlie the hillfort rampart. Drawing analogies with the relationship between linear boundaries and hillforts in Wessex (see Chapter 5), Field and Brown proposed that the site *could* have had Late Bronze Age origins.

As we saw in Chapter 2, another important aspect of Stanford's approach was his belief that the interiors of these hillforts contained dense concentrations of four-post structures that fulfilled a domestic function. These arguments were, of course, put forward before the publication of Gent's (1983) highly influential paper on four-poster structures, as a result of which they have become widely accepted as granaries. Guilbert (1975c, 1981) wasted little time in attacking Stanford's stance on this matter, on the basis that he was reconstructing whole settlement plans for an inadequate sample of the interiors of the sites in question. Guilbert's work at Moel y Gaer and other hillforts in North Wales demonstrated that distinct 'zoning' of structures exists within the interiors of some hillforts in this region. In addition, with the central Marches evidence for circular roundhouse has now been found at Brandon Camp (Frere 1987), the Breiddin (Musson 1991), Burrow Hill (Toller 1978), Llanymynech (Owen 1999) and within the interior of the large 'hillfort type' enclosure at Wall Camp, Kynnersley (Bond 1991), and possible at Ffridd Faldwyn (O'Neil 1942, Fig. 9). Indeed, Ray (2001) has suggested that circular structures *were* in fact excavated by Stanford at Croft Ambrey but not recognised as such because of the techniques he was using. He proposes that some of the features in the trenches that were cut across the large quarry ditch, for instance within Stanford's Area A, may represent the traces of a circular buildings. It may have been the fact that Stanford concentrated his trenches within the plateau camp, where four post structures may well have been concentrated, that led him to conclude that the site was entirely covered with these kinds of buildings.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to Stanford's interpretations of these monuments comes from the open area excavations of hillfort ramparts at the Breiddin and elsewhere. The detailed structural information that has been obtained as a result of such work demonstrates that the earthworks of these sites were not structurally uniform, but contained localised anomalies in the way they were constructed. Together with the results from more recent hillfort excavations in southern England (e.g. Lock and Gosden 1997, Sharples 1991 b & c), this suggests that the sections revealed within the earlier narrow excavation trenches do not provide a complete picture of the structural histories of these monuments. For instance, it is now apparent that narrow trenches favour the definition of major building episodes at the expense of smaller scale, perhaps more routine reworking and repair. However, the

results of open area hillfort excavations make it difficult to sustain the notion that there were distinct ‘horizons’ of hillfort building activity in the Welsh Marches and elsewhere. As the growing number of multiple radiocarbon dates also demonstrates, it now appears that the development of these monuments is far more complex than we had previously thought. As a result we can now recognise that even sites in close geographical proximity to one another are the products of differing and particular histories.

6.3.3 Hillforts in the landscapes of the central Welsh Marches in the later first millennium BC.

6.3.3.1 Constructing hillforts in the later 1st millennium BC.

By their very nature the hillforts, or ‘larger enclosures’ of the central Welsh Marches have largely escaped the ploughing that has erased so many of the smaller sites from the present day landscape of this region. Thus we can have some confidence that our current knowledge of the distribution of what Jackson (1999) terms medium (1.3 – 3 ha), large (3.1 – 6ha) and very large (6.1ha+) hillforts is almost complete (see Fig. 3.1), although some new sites have emerged relatively recently. We can also recognise that the hillforts of the central Welsh Marches occupy a variety of topographic settings; ranging from the craggy summits of hills like the Breiddin and the Wrekin, through the lower sandstone eminences of northern Shropshire and northern Herefordshire, to the subtle topography of the land around the ‘marsh fort’ at Wall in the centre of the Weald Moors. In the last part of this chapter I want to consider how we might understand the building and inhabitation of hillforts in the later first millennium BC. I have already explored how the construction of the smaller enclosures played a part in the establishment and reworking of ties between different household groups. I want to expand upon this theme here, in order to examine how the construction of hillforts may have played a role in the maintenance of a broader community identity.

The construction of hillfort ramparts has usually been seen as relatively unproblematic. Until recently the presumption that hillforts were primarily defensive monuments made it possible to view their ramparts in functional terms alone; they were erected purely to provide protection. Although acknowledged to be the product

of a considerable labour force, responsibility for the construction and refurbishment of these monuments was seen to rest with the social elite. Similarly, changes in the structural morphology of the ramparts were thought to result from changes in the nature of warfare. Thus, for example, Wheeler (1938, 1943) was able to suggest that the development of multivallate hillforts at Maiden Castle, Dorset and elsewhere represented a response to the introduction of the sling. Those who did discuss the actual building of hillforts in greater detail argued for the existence of a set of middle-ranking hillfort engineers or architects who designed and oversaw the construction of these monuments. Avery (1993:10) contends that through empirical observation, members of this group assembled a rudimentary pool of knowledge about soil mechanics, which enabled them to adapt their designs to the terrain. Beyond this, however, he argued that "...there is very little evidence as to how manufacture was organised socially, and I doubt if it is yet profitable to discuss this." (ibid.: 1).

Despite the reaction against the purely defensive interpretation of hillforts that has occurred over the past decade, few have tackled the issue of how these monuments were actually constructed. Thus, whilst many would now accept that hillfort earthworks fulfilled a symbolic as well as a functional role, little has been said about how the actual construction of these boundaries affected the meanings that were attached to them (although see Sharples 1991a & b). Perhaps the closest we come is Hill's suggestion that: -

"The participation of large numbers of people in building, maintaining and modifying 'hillforts' was itself an important activity which may have created a greater sense of unity amongst those involved, creating networks of debt and obligation." (1995: 54).

I believe that we must achieve a greater understanding of the practices associated with constructing hillfort ramparts if we wish to understand the communities that built them. *Contra* Avery, I propose that the results of open area excavations *do* provide us with some evidence relating to the organisation of the labour forces that built them. Examining this evidence will enhance our knowledge of the inhabitation of these sites and provide us with information relating to their wider landscape context.

Musson's (1991) work at the Breiddin provides us with an obvious starting point. The trenches he cut across the inner rampart revealed that at some point during the late 5th or early 4th century BC a dry-stone rampart was built directly over the denuded remains of the Late Bronze Age timber, stone and earth bank (see Chapter 5). Unlike its predecessor this structure was a fairly substantial affair. It appears to have been between 5 – 6m wide and Musson estimates that its front face may have stood to a height of between 1.4 and 2.2m high, depending upon the steepness of the slope (see Fig. 6.19). The excavations were detailed enough to allow the chain of operations involved in its construction to be discerned. Firstly a basal course of large boulders, seemingly gathered from the slopes of the hill itself, were laid to demarcate the front face of the rampart. Once these were in place a lower core of soil and stones was heaped up against them. Clear tip lines that sloped upwards towards the front facing were observed within this deposit, suggest that it had been placed in position from within the hillfort. As the lower core accumulated extra courses of drystone walling were added to the front revetment. At the same time a facing of larger stones was added to the rear of the rampart. In some places this was keyed into a deposit of stones and darker charcoaly soil between 1 and 1.5m wide, which partially overlay the yellower soil and stones of the lower core. Finally, the lower core and the darker deposit was covered with an upper core of loose scree. Musson (*ibid.*:34) comments that the: -

“...increase in the depth of the scree towards the front of the rampart, and its clear integration with the stones of the front facing (below), suggests that the bulk of the upper core was obtained, or at least placed in position, from outside the hillfort.”

He also stressed the variability in the depth of both the lower and upper cores within the areas that were investigated. The lower core, in particular, “...varied considerably in depth and profile, with projecting stones and irregular hollows...” (*ibid.*: 35). However, because Musson was able to examine how each of the different components of the rampart related to one another over a fairly extensive area, he felt confident in proposing that the earthwork was the product of a single phase of construction.

In addition to these details, distinct ‘sub-divisions’ at intervals of 2.2 – 2.4m were observed within the stonework of the rear facing, which Musson (1991: 180) interpreted as evidence for gang working (see Fig. 6.19). Similar evidence for

hillfort ramparts with a distinctly ‘cellular’ appearance have been found elsewhere in the Marches and North Wales where open area excavations have been conducted. For example, at Moel y Gaer, Flintshire Guilbert (1975b) recognised a series of sharp perpendicular breaks within the gravel core of Rampart A, which appears to date between the late 8th and early 6th centuries BC. These breaks occurred at regular intervals of 1.3 to 2.0m and could be traced throughout the full depth of the core material. He concluded that these discontinuities represented “...the former positions of wooden partitions...” within the timber, stone and gravel earthwork (ibid.: 111). At Beeston Castle in Cheshire the remains of a succession of hillfort ramparts were found beneath the line of later defences of the medieval and post-medieval castle (Ellis 1993). During Phase 3B, dated broadly to the Middle/ Late Iron Age, the ramparts appears to have had a similar structure to those at the Breiddin. The greatest difference was a series of massive posts that ran along the line of the rampart, which may have been associated with a timber superstructure. Despite evidence for extensive burning of the rampart within the areas that were investigated, Ellis notes that “...it was clear that the main body of the bank was formed of different construction zones each around 3m long.”(ibid.: 29).

I would argue that the evidence from the Breiddin and elsewhere provides further confirmation that the construction of hillforts involved substantial numbers of people. The evidence for gang working suggests that this workforce was organised into units or ‘teams’, each of which was responsible for constructing a particular stretch of the earthwork. In many ways this parallels the evidence from the ditches of the smaller enclosures, which I have already suggested may represent the work of different households. It seems possible that the hillfort ramparts represented a ‘scaling up’ of this process, such that each gang break delimited the area within which the members of a particular household worked.

Whilst the structural evidence from the Breiddin suggests that the Iron Age rampart is the product of a single phase of construction, the evidence from other sites in the Marches suggests that the earthworks we see today are the product of multiple episodes of building and reworking. At Croft Ambrey, Stanford (1974) argued that the single bank and ditch of the ‘Plateau Camp’ were the first earthworks to be constructed at the site (Phases I-III), perhaps at some point in the 6th or 7th century

BC (see Fig. 6.16). The rampart was around 8m wide, and although much degraded appears to have been of simple dump construction. According to Stanford these earthworks were superseded in the late 4th or 5th century BC (Period IV) by the construction of the massive glacis style main rampart and inner ditch. Again, it appears to be of simple dump construction and was eventually 15.8m wide and at least 4.9m high (see Fig. 6.20). He argued that it was "...essentially of one build...", and was constructed from material derived from a large internal quarry ditch (*ibid.*: 38). Immediately in front of the rampart lay the inner ditch, which in this phase had a V-shaped profile and was approximately 8.5m wide and 3.7m deep. This arrangement is suggested to have remained unchanged (between Period IV – VI) until *c* 100BC (*ibid.* 224, Fig. 103). Stanford proposed that only the gateways were altered during this time, with the sequence from the south-western entrance taken to be representative of the whole (see Fig. 6.21). Initially, during Periods IV, this appears to have consisted of a relatively simple double gateway situated at the end of a slightly inturned entrance passage. During both Periods V & VI, however, the design of the entranceway was elaborated. In Period V the length of the entrance passage was extended, reveted in stone and twin 'guard-rooms' added. It was remodelled on at least three occasions, the third of which was necessitated by a conflagration that appears to have consumed the original Period V gateway. Finally, in Period VI the guard-rooms were removed, creating a longer stone revetted entrance passage with a simple single gateway at the end. To complicate matters, this arrangement also appears to have been reworked on at least six occasions, although the overall design was retained.

During Period VII, however, Stanford (1974) argued that the ramparts of the camp were modified. The main rampart itself may have been "...tidied and possibly retopped..." (*ibid.*: 43). In addition the inner ditch appears to have been re-cut to a greater depth. Stanford argued that the material derived from this ditch was used to construct a counterscarp bank (the medial bank). In front of this earthwork a second outer ditch, 5.9m wide and 2.1m deep, was excavated and the spoil deposited on its outer lip to form a second, slighter counterscarp bank. Again the south-western entrance was reworked (Periods VIIA- VIID), retaining the same type of elongated entrance passage that had been adopted in Period VI but with the addition of what may have been a bridge in front of the single gateways.

Again, I would emphasise that Stanford's work at Croft Ambrey between 1960-66 was for its time an accomplished set of excavations. However, I contend that there are a number of problems with the evidence that require us to carefully reassess his interpretations of the site. Firstly, Stanford's main trench (T1) across the main rampart was only 2.4m wide. Working within it was clearly a risky business - he comments that "Because of collapse in the rampart section...[it] was not completed..."(ibid.: 38). As a result the 'natural' was not reached and it remains unclear whether or not the main body of the rampart overlay earlier structures (see Fig. 6.20). He did partially excavate a second trench (T2) across the main rampart, although again stone fall forced the closure of this trench. He (ibid.: 39) did acknowledge that "...the contrast between T1 and T2 is remarkable", but these differences were largely ignored and the sequence from T1 assumed to be representative of the boundaries as a whole (ibid.: 39).

Stanford's argument that the main rampart is the product of one build, with minor additions in Period VII, is also problematic. He argues that this rampart was constructed whilst the earthworks of the plateau camp were still in use.

Consequently, he does allow that: -

"The whole of the rampart need not have gone up at one time within a short period...[since] it was constructed outside the Plateau Camp defences, a procedure which would have removed the necessity for hasty construction." (Stanford 1974:38)

Stanford felt that this explanation was sufficient to account for a number of anomalies he encountered within the body of the rampart. Two spreads of black soil were, for instance, observed within the stone dumps at the rear of the rampart, close to the base of the structure. He (1974: 38) stresses that, whilst these may represent "...stand-still lines...", in his opinion they did not appear to represent turf lines. Stanford also encountered two stone revetments at different heights within the front face of the rampart. He remained sceptical about his identification of the uppermost example, but the lower revetment appears to have been reasonably substantial and a significant discontinuity in its course was visible within the part that he revealed (see Fig. 6.20). Yet Stanford essentially dismisses both features by proposing that they: -

"...were not intended to be final exposed walls to carry a vertical front to the upper part of the rampart, but rather temporary stages put in by the builders to hold the spoil they were receiving from within."

I would argue that Stanford's section drawings of the main rampart make it clear that this earthwork was a highly complex structure (see Fig. 6.20). Making sense of this sequence, however, is not aided by the inconsistencies visible on two different representations of it (Stanford 1974: Fig. 10 and Fig. 11). The narrow width of the sections clearly hindered the development of a fuller understanding of its structural history. However, it is possible that at this site we see evidence for something similar to Sharples' (1991a & c) recent re-interpretation of the ramparts of Maiden Castle, Dorset. He argued that rather than being the product of discrete set of phases, as Wheeler (1943) proposed, the massively impressive earthworks of this site result from a near continuous building process that persisted for nearly three centuries during the later half of the first millennium. More recently, Lock and Gosden (1997) have put forward a similar explanation for the ramparts of Segsbury Camp in Oxfordshire. They argue that the evidence from the first chalk and turf revetted rampart suggests "...a series of additions and minor changes [were made] to the original structure perhaps associated with regular ritual activity..." (ibid.). Applying such explanations to the Main Rampart at Croft Ambrey would enable us to account for the structural anomalies within Stanford's section, and remove the need to see it as the product of a single build. Seeing the earthworks of this site as the product of a more continuous construction process is perhaps supported by the evidence from the south-western gateway. The sequence of major reconstructions interspersed with more numerous series of episodes of reworking may be indicative of a wider series of construction 'projects' at the site.

We might reasonably extend this suggestion to include many of the other large and highly complex hillforts (e.g. Bury Ditches, Bury Walls, Ffridd Faldwyn, Old Oswestry etc.) within the central Welsh Marches. This proposal has a number of important implications. To begin with, if the construction work at some of the hillforts in this region was essentially ongoing, then fairly significant numbers of people would have had to come together on a relatively frequent basis. Indeed, Sharples (1991c: 260) has suggested that at Maiden Castle such work may have occurred on an annual basis, perhaps in slack times in the agricultural cycle. It seems reasonable to assume that the roll-call of the work force at each site varied over time, depending upon the scale of the work being undertaken. A major new project, such as the construction of the drystone rampart at the Breiddin, may well have require the

labour of a greater proportion of the community than more minor episodes of refurbishment or repair. None-the-less, as Hill (1995b: 54) suggests, participation in these building projects would have played an important role in establishing and reworking social relations with others. As I argued in Chapter 5, however, the construction of hillfort boundaries may have given people a sense of a broader community identity, since labouring on these projects would probably have involved encountering both close kin and affines as well as people from less familiar groups. If, as suggested above, the household unit played an important role in the way in which the labour force was organised, then we can speculate that such events provided an opportunity to forge relations with people from beyond the local community.

Sharples (1991b) has suggested that the labour that was expended upon the construction of hillfort ramparts would have generated a cycle of interaction, which once in motion would have been hard to withdraw from. He notes that provisioning the workforce would have required large quantities of food, which he suggests might account for the large grain storage capacity of some hillforts. Together with the labour for the building work, he argues that these foodstuffs would have been extracted as a levy from 'client settlements' and proposes that: -

“...after initial coercion, it would be impossible for a community to withdraw from this cycle, because the proportion of grain or animals removed from them was such that they could not support themselves, unless a large proportion went to the hillfort.” (ibid. : 260).

Consequently, Sharples proposes that the construction of hillfort ramparts would have emphasised the status of the community, since they would have stood as testimony to the agricultural success of the group. In addition, they would also have acted as a means of controlling individuals within the community by binding them into systems of debt and obligation.

Sharples (forthcoming) has recently put forward a revised version of this model. He suggests that the labour that was expended upon the construction of hillfort boundaries could be seen as a form of gift exchange. He notes that intensification in the construction of hillforts in the first half of the first millennium came at a time when the networks of long distance exchange within which bronze metalwork circulated were beginning to break down. The offering of one's labour in the

construction of a hillfort boundary may have been one way in which localised networks were maintained, since such gifts would have required future reciprocation. This would in turn have created cycles of debt and obligation that may have been self-perpetuating. In addition, such exchange networks would have provided a medium for competition between groups, allowing social authority to be claimed over others.

I would suggest that there is much of use to us here. In particular, Sharples' notion of how the boundaries of a hillfort could come to symbolise the prowess of the broader community is particularly useful. This is, of course, a theme that others have explored (e.g. Bowden and McOmish 1987). Similarly, his suggestion that participating in the construction of hillfort boundaries may have bound people into cycles of reciprocity, from which it was extremely difficult to withdraw is also helpful.

Yet I would contend that Sharples does not fully capture the way in which hillfort boundaries as 'objects', for want of a better term, were interwoven with the identities of the individuals and communities that constructed them. The very materiality of some hillfort boundaries may have expressed the networks of social relations within which the members of the broader community were embedded. In Chapter 5 I observed that the timber used in the construction of first rampart at the Breiddin may have been drawn from a fairly wide area, such that its procurement drew on a range of social networks. Similar comments could be made of the use of 'non-local' stone in rampart revetments in the later first millennium. At Croft Ambrey, for example, Stanford notes that the revetments of the south-western gateway during the initial phase of Period V included a foundation of sandstone blocks, which were "...brought to the site from the glacial deposits below." (1974: 49). This appears to have been a 'one off' event as both earlier and later revetments were built of limestone quarried from the slopes and/ or summit of the hill itself. Stanford does note, however, that some of the sandstone blocks were reused in later revetments. Kenyon also commented upon the use of sandstone in the revetments of the first phase south-western entrance to the Wrekin hillfort, which "...must have been brought from a distance of several miles" (1943: 103). Beyond the boundaries of the study area Stanford (1981) noted the use of stone derived from two different sources on

opposite sides of the hill in revetments at Midsummer Hill. Likewise, Gosden (pers. com.) has observed similar usage of non-local stone in the ramparts of hillforts on the Oxfordshire Ridgeway in southern England.

Acquiring stone for hillfort ramparts may have required rights of access to particular stone sources, which may have restricted its procurement to particular households or groups within the broader community (see Chapter 5). Quarrying, transporting and utilising this stone in a particular construction project may have been another way in which some groups inflicted debt and obligation upon others. If this stone was identified with certain sections of the community, then its incorporation into particular parts of a boundary have resulted in it becoming closely associated with the group in question. If, as suggested earlier, certain sections of a rampart were the responsibility of individual households, then the provision of such materials may have been one way of visibly marking the labour that these groups had invested in a particular project. What effectively amounts to the ‘structured deposition’ of stone along these earthworks may have been conceptually linked to deposition of other objects within hillfort boundaries. As both Hill (1995a & b) and Hingley (1990) have pointed out, the placing of animal bones and human remains, currency bars and other artefacts in ramparts in other parts of England would have enhanced the symbolism attached to them. This symbolism would have related to the physical demarcation of spaces and places intimately associated with particular communities. I would add that these practices represented another way in which identities of several different scales of community became bound up with these particular types of monument.

6.3.3.2 Hillforts and the construction of social memory.

Due to the manner in which they were constructed, and their involvement in the creation of both personal and communal identities, hillfort ramparts probably played a role in the creation and reproduction of historical narratives. Creation of ‘pasts in the past’ has become a subject of considerable interest to prehistorians over the last decade (e.g. Barrett 1999a, Bradley 1987, 1993, Gosden and Lock 1998, Hingley 1999). I want to emphasise again Gosden and Lock’s (1998:5) point that features of the landscape in prehistoric Britain were “...the manifestation of social

relationships...". These relations were, they argue, maintained both through rhetoric and the physical labour involved in their creation and repair. The repetition of both over time was thus implicated in the construction of memory and consequently a sense of the past.

Gosden and Lock apply these arguments to boundary systems of the late second and first millennium BC, proposing that the acts of working and reworking these boundaries was one way in which connections with the past were actively maintained. Using the sequence from the Berkshire Downs as a case study, they argue that first millennium saw significant shifts in the kinds of histories that people were constructing for themselves. In the first half of this period they suggest that people were working at the limits of a long genealogical history, with narratives of descent that stretched back many generations into the second millennium BC. These narratives were not fixed but subject to manipulation by those in the present to their own end. Similarly, as the names and stories connected with more distant kin faded they became part of a distant mythical time. They argue that the linear boundaries and sporadically occupied early hillforts of this period were involved in the construction of these sorts of histories: -

"Not only were people able to divide up the landscape on a large scale through ditches, but they were able to connect up the significance of places over many generations." (ibid.: 8).

During the later half of the first millennium, however, Gosden and Lock (1998) argue that people began to construct shorter genealogical histories, which allowed for a greater emphasis upon mythical history. This is illustrated, they suggest, by shorter but more intensive occupation of sites such as Segsbury in the early and middle Iron Age, where the residues generated at the sites themselves were manipulated and deposited. Such activity "...would have fallen within a relatively brief genealogical compass..." with few connections to the past other than the layout of the enclosure itself (ibid: 9). Concern with a distant mythical past is also illustrated, Gosden and Lock suggest, by the manipulation of the remains of earlier monuments on White Horse Hill.

Trying to reconcile these two different forms of history with the evidence from the later first millennium BC in the central Welsh Marches is extremely difficult. For instance, many of the smaller enclosures appear to emphasise links with the past

through the incorporation of earlier boundaries. Similarly, many hillfort ramparts have the same alignments throughout their history, with additional circuits gradually being added over time. For instance, at the Breiddin we could view the construction of the Middle Iron Age drystone bank on top of the remains of earlier timber and stone earthwork as a deliberate attempt to create links with the past.

At Ffridd Faldwyn O'Neil (1942) noted that during his Period IV a new earthwork, composed of dumps of shale and soil revetted front and rear with drystone walling, was constructed over the remains of an earlier Period III (probably Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age) rampart (see Fig. 5.27 & Fig. 6.22). On the basis of the parallels with the Breiddin, it seems likely that the Period IV rampart belongs to the later half of the first millennium BC. Caution is required however, because the rampart sequence revealed within O'Neil's narrow trenches is immensely complex and firm dating evidence is at present lacking. None-the-less, the Period IV phase of Rampart III is noteworthy for two other reasons. Firstly, pieces of the bright red 'clinker', which had been produced by the burning of the later Bronze Age (Period III) earthworks, were incorporated into the revetments and rampart core (*ibid.*: 24). Links with the earlier enclosure were being created and emphasised not only through the superimposition of the new ramparts upon the old but also through the reuse of the material derived directly from the earlier earthworks. Secondly, both animal bones and human remains appear to have been deliberately incorporated into the fabric of the Period IV phase of Rampart III. O'Neil (*ibid.*) comments that in Section A he found "...a large deposit of big shale debris..." within Ditch IIIB, which "...had no doubt fallen from Rampart III.". Mixed in with this material was a significant quantity of fragments of animal bones and a human molar. In Section B he found fragments of a human jaw within the rampart core, perhaps suggesting that the remains of members of the community were incorporated into the rampart as it was being constructed. This practice does not appear to have been restricted to this phase. During Period V Rampart III was enlarged by the addition of complex series of dumps of shale. Human remains, including fragments of a skull were found in these deposits in Section A, whilst parts of a (?) female skeleton were found in a layer of tumble in Ditch IIIB in Section B. O'Neil (*ibid.*: 20) proposes that this construction "...work was clearly carried out hastily, as is shown by the fact that even human bodies appear to have been used as part of the filling of the rampart."

However, the incorporation of human remains into hillfort boundaries is a phenomenon that has been noted elsewhere in Britain (e.g. Hingley 1990: 100, Whimster 1981). At Ffridd Faldwyn the evidence suggests that it may have been a long-lived practice connected with the construction of a community's genealogical histories through the medium of hillfort boundaries.

We can see other forms of evidence for this discourse. At Ffridd Faldwyn, Croft Ambrey and other hillforts in the central Welsh Marches the earthworks we see today are a coagulation of the labour of many successive generations. Work may have been sporadic, as at the Breiddin, or perhaps more continuous as I have argued was the case at Croft Ambrey. It seems possible that, by the latter half of the first millennium, the materiality of hillfort boundaries enabled individuals to 'read' the history of their household and community. In this sense hillfort boundaries had biographies that were bound up with the lives of those who laboured to create them, and working upon them would have renewed and reworked people's sense of their own past. In this sense the hillfort boundaries acted as a link with the past, encapsulating different kinds of temporality – the biography of the individuals that laboured upon them, the genealogy of the households to which they belonged and the more timeless life of the broader community of which they were part.

By extension, we can see that construction of hillfort boundaries

“...involved strategies of appropriation by which the values previously immanent to the world as a whole came to be revealed or enunciated by certain actions and in such a way that those very acts and their participants became the essential media for the transmission of that which had previously been given.” (Barrett 1999a: 255-6)

In other words, the practices associated with building hillfort earthworks were held to be vital to the continuance of the community, whilst at the same time actually playing a key role in holding together these social relations. This dialectic gives us another insight into why individuals and groups found it difficult to withdraw from construction projects once they had become involved, since doing so would have been to risk disrupting the underlying order of the world. It also illustrates how the construction and reworking of hillfort boundaries was essentially a “...transformative process...[because] certain signifiers were appropriated to create a new set of material conditions which life was then faced with accommodating.” (Barrett 1999a :

257). Thus we can see that labouring to build hillfort boundaries may have been an act that reproduced the social order in a way that conformed to the expectations of those involved, and at the same time reworked the material conditions that people inhabited thus creating the potential for transformation of that order. It is in this sense that the construction of hillfort boundaries provided the conditions within which new forms of social authority could emerge. The abilities of these households to propose, organise and direct a building program may have helped to reproduce their authority. At the same time it provided an opportunity for other groups to gain prestige, through the provisioning of labour, supplying building materials or simply subverting or resisting the authority of those directing the work. It is in this sense that I see hillfort earthworks as providing a medium for internal competition within communities.

On the basis of these suggestions the construction of longer genealogical histories did not disappear in the later first millennium, at least not within the central Welsh Marches. Rather it may have been the construction and reworking of enclosure boundaries of various sizes that became the dominant medium through which these narratives were reproduced. At the same time, however, that hillforts were also implicated in the reproduction of mythical histories, since they were clearly places where the physical remains of a distant past could be encountered and manipulated. As we saw in Chapter 5, a number of these sites incorporated the remains of much earlier monuments. In addition, we also have evidence for the manipulation of the relics from these distant pasts. At the Breiddin Musson reports finding the tip of a late Bronze Age leaf-shaped sword and a fragment of a socketed spearhead deliberately deposited in successive, intersecting post holes belonging to two different Iron Age four post structures (1991:134). That the inhabitants of this site were familiar with the forms of Late Bronze Age metalwork is also illustrated by the wooden sword recovered from Buckbean Pond in the interior of the site (see Fig. 6.23). Although found within a feature dated securely to the Iron Age, and therefore presumably of Iron Age date, Britnell and Earwood note that its blade was leaf-shaped and that: -

“The extent to which the Breiddin sword attempted to copy a contemporary weapon is open to doubt, however: it bears little resemblance to the main series of iron long swords of a date comparable with the radiocarbon evidence for the deposition of the Breiddin sword...” (in Musson 1991: 164).

The hilt of the sword was too small to accommodate an adult’s hand, which leads them to speculate that it may have been either a child’s toy or ‘votive model’. The manner in which this object was deposited is certainly reminiscent of ways in which items of Late Bronze Age metalwork was deposited, since it appears to have been “...smashed *in situ* by forcing it down through the cistern deposits.” (ibid.: 165). Whatever the purpose of this wooden sword it seems likely that the way in which it was used and deposited recalled a mythical past, which the metal swords that it was based upon were associated with.

Other locales in the landscape beyond the hillforts and enclosures also appear to have been implicated in the construction of people’s sense of a mythical past. The traces of some earlier monuments in particular appear to have attracted attention at this time. At Sarn-y-bryn-caled fragments for bronze casting waste were found within the charcoal stained upper fills of the central pit of the Late Neolithic timber circle (Gibson 1994). A radiocarbon date of 2160 ± 60 BP (BM – 2830) was obtained from oak charcoal from this context. This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 380 – 50 BC. Gibson concluded that the “...hollow of the filled up central pit had therefore been used for metallurgical activities...” (ibid.: 156). The choice of this locale appears to have been more than coincidental and it seems that people in the Iron Age were able to identify the ephemeral traces of these monuments. Warrilow *et al.* found an Iron Age hearth within the ring-ditch at Four Crosses Site 2, suggesting that it may have been cut into the side of the barrow mound (1986: 53). This feature consisted of two circular pits that were partially lined with fire cracked siltstone slabs. A scatter of fragments of triangular bronze smelting crucibles and a possible piece of slag were found nearby and a radiocarbon date of 2130 ± 60 BP (CAR-766) was obtained from a dense concentration of charcoal in the upper fill of the hearth. This gives a calibrated calendrical date (at 2 sigma) of 370 BC – AD 10. Evidence for physical intervention in a Bronze Age barrow mound of a different kind was found at Bromfield. Here an inhumation burial was found within the centre of an earlier burial mound (Hughes 1995). The evidence indicates that this person was

buried with an iron bracelet, a bronze pendant and an item of woollen clothing fastened with a La Tène I style brooch.

Barrett (1999a: 258) argues that the monuments of earlier periods “...remained a crucial and integrated component of the Iron Age landscape” and may have been associated with a distant mythical past. Perhaps the reworking of these remains in the Iron Age represented some of the differing ways in which this past was manipulated to serve contemporary concerns. For instance, contemporary metalworking evidence has been found on enclosure sites and hillforts in the area around the confluence of the Severn and the Vrynwy. However, the objects that were made at Sary-y-bryn-caled and Four Crosses may have been lent a particular symbolic importance by the places in which they were produced. The insertion of the individual into the burial mound may have represented an Iron Age community’s attempts to link itself directly with the mythical past, perhaps legitimating that community’s tenure over a particular part of the landscape in the process. Hillforts were, therefore, just one of a number of locales around which mythical histories were woven, and at which the physical relics of a distant time could be encountered. However, both Barrett (1999a) and Gosden and Lock (1998) argue that this mythical past was held at a distance during the later first millennium. It formed part of the ‘background’ to daily life, part of a seemingly timeless order against which the ‘foregrounded’ routines of daily life made sense.

6.3.3.3 Hillforts and taskscapes in the later first millennium BC.

In considering the role that hillforts played in reproducing these different forms of temporality in the later first millennium, we must also situate the labour that was expended upon their construction within the wider round of routine practices that people engaged in. As we saw earlier, during this period most people’s lives were structured around the tasks of an agricultural cycle that demanded the movement of people and stock around the landscape, as communities tended to the fertility of their land and sought out seasonally abundant pastures for their animals (see Fig. 6.8). The vast majority of the population could not disengage themselves from these routines for long. Yet there were ‘slack periods’ within the agricultural cycle that created the potential for seasonal gatherings of the broader community. As we have

already seen, both Sharples (1991 a & b) and Hill (1995) have suggested that such gatherings may have occurred on an annual basis, perhaps in the summer months, and involved episodes of construction and reworking of the earthworks. I propose that the labour that was invested in building and modifying hillfort boundaries in the Welsh Marches was scheduled in a similar way.

This argument has a number of implications for the way in which we view the occupation sequences from the interiors of hillforts within the study area. The evidence from Wessex suggests that there was considerable variation in the way in which different sites were inhabited, and the way in which individual sites were occupied over time. Although only a small number of hillfort interiors have been subject to excavation in the central Welsh Marches, the evidence that we do have suggests that there was also considerable variation between the ways in which these monuments were inhabited in this region. We can use four examples to illustrate this point.

At the Breiddin Musson (1991) found the remains of thirteen stake built circular 'roundhouse' structures and thirty-three four-post structures that could be attributed to the later first millennium BC. The circular buildings ranged from 5 –7m in diameter and the remains of hearths were found within three of them (see Fig. 6.19). Several of these buildings also appear to have been rebuilt on several occasions. Both types of buildings were associated with a spread of 'occupation debris' that included a thin scatter of Malvernian pottery sherds, as well as fragments of briquetage salt containers and metal objects. There was also some evidence that suggested that iron and bronze metalworking may have occurred on a limited scale at the site. A midden deposit associated with two of the roundhouses (R3 and R4) produced a significant quantity of charred emmer and spelt wheat. Analysis demonstrated that this assemblage resulted from the later stages of crop processing (Hillman 1991), suggesting that it could have been brought to the site from elsewhere. The multiple radiocarbon dates from the site suggest that this activity spanned a period in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, after which time the site was abandoned.

Musson acknowledged that his excavation trenches only covered a tiny proportion of the interior of this massive hillfort. None-the-less, he argued that where the rocky

interior permitted, similar structures probably existed over much of the rest of the site such that the hillfort "...may indeed have been a thriving 'hill-town'..." (Musson 1991: 184). A new study of the insect fauna trapped within the Iron Age cistern that was cut into Buckbean Pond suggests, however, that this may not have been the case (Buckland *et al.* 2001). This assemblage contained very few examples of the kinds of strongly synanthropic beetle species one would expect to find on a densely occupied site with closely set timber buildings. Buckland *et al.* (*ibid.*: 68) concluded instead that "...both the flora and insect faunas suggest a quiet natural pond with little disturbance, other than casual grazing animals.". This in turn implies that the occupation of the hilltop was much less intensive, or more localised, than Musson allows for. Thus, whilst Musson is correct to assert that areas of this site were inhabitable his use of an urban analogy now seems wrong. It remains possible that occupation of the hilltop had a seasonal aspect, which involved the construction and maintenance of the ramparts. Movement up to the Breiddin Hills may well have occurred in the late spring and summer, when stock was moved up to higher ground to graze off the hill pastures. It seems possible that many of the other hillforts, such as Caer Caradoc, Church Stretton and The Wrekin, which occupy the summits of high, exposed hills like the Breiddin were inhabited in this way.

Some of the hillforts at lower elevations may have been inhabited more permanently, although evidence for variability also exists. At Croft Ambrey, for instance, many of the four posters that Stanford found within the interior of the Plateau Camp had been repeatedly rebuilt in the same positions. As at Collfryn, this hints at longevity in the layout of this site. Some of the four-posters were clearly imposing structures as Stanford noted that in one case timbers measuring 0.8m in diameter had been sunk to a depth of 0.75m (*ibid.*:104). In contrast the trenches that were excavated across the quarry ditch at the rear of the Main Rampart (see Fig. 6.16) revealed a series of deeply stratified Iron Age deposits that reached a depth of 2m in some places. The quarry ditch appears to have been open for an extended period during the later first millennium and most of the finds from the site come from these layers, including an important faunal assemblage, a large quantity of pottery and a considerable number of iron objects. Jackson (1999: 210) has noted that a marked increase in the deposition of artefacts during Stanford's Period IV, perhaps indicating "...some kind of change in the use of the site..." occurred at this time. As noted earlier, at least one

area (Area A) may have contained the remains of circular buildings, although it is difficult to apply this explanation to all of the evidence from the quarry ditch. In Area J, for instance, Stanford found a sequence of sixteen hearths that had been superimposed upon one another next to a stone lined gully or drain. Over time various deposits appear to have been placed in shallow pits around these hearths (see Fig. 6.24). In Stanford's Phase iv part of a sheep's leg was buried in a shallow scoop on the south-western side of the hearth, whilst in Phase xvi a whole disarticulated goat skeleton was buried in a pit on the north-western side of the hearth. The hearths were also surrounded by various lenses of dark soil and charcoal and spreads of clean stone chippings. Although this evidence is difficult to interpret, in some ways it resembles the large midden deposits of the early first millennium. This might suggest that, whilst buildings occupied some parts of the quarry ditch, others may have been used for ritualised episodes of consumption and deposition.

The faunal remains give some insight into the nature of the inhabitation of this site (Whitehouse and Whitehouse in Stanford 1974). As with the other finds, the vast majority of the animal bone assemblage comes from the quarry ditch. The bones of cattle, sheep and pigs were present in similar proportions, although sheep bones were present in slightly larger quantities. Whitehouse and Whitehouse's analysis revealed that c. 50% of the specimens within their sample belonged to animals that were over two years old, suggesting that they had been overwintered at least once (ibid. 217). In addition, they found that 14 – 28% of the assemblage represented animals that had been killed when they were between three and six months old, or during their first summer, and there was also a high occurrence of foetal and neonatal bones. However, the remains of animals aged between 9 and 12 months old, which corresponds to a lamb's first winter, were rare. Whitehouse and Whitehouse (ibid.: 217) are careful to point out that this is a pattern which appears to persist across much of Stanford's Periods IV – VII. Following Hamilton's (in Cunliffe 2000) work on the faunal assemblage produced by the Danebury Environs Programme, the sheep bones from Croft Ambrey suggest that flocks of sheep were present in and/ or around the site from the spring until the late summer. There was little evidence for an autumn cull in preparation for winter, and during this time the flocks appear to have been absent. This evidence *might* indicate that Croft Ambrey was occupied on a seasonal basis, or at least that its population was significantly swelled during the

Spring as people came together for the birthing season. They may well have stayed on into the summer months, during which the earthworks of the site were built and modified, and episodes of feasting and the deposition the residues and other debris in the quarry ditch occurred. Activity at this site may well have culminated with the storage of the grain crop within the monumental four post storage structures in the Plateau Camp.

The evidence from recent excavations within the interiors of two other hillforts that lie below 200m OD provides hints of further variation. At Ivington Camp a pipe trench was cut across the interior of site at the same time that the inner rampart was investigated (Dalwood *et al.* 1997) (see Fig. 6.17). Although only 0.4m wide, this cutting effectively provided a random transect across part of the site, which demonstrated that Iron Age deposits survive beneath a modern plough soil. Within the trench itself five post holes were found, although it was not possible to determine what sort of structures they might belong to. In addition, a number of wide shallow features were revealed and in two places spreads of sandstone slabs up to 0.3m across and 0.02m thick were found. Both spreads were around 2.5m wide and up to 0.25m thick. Dalwood *et al.* commented that these were "...clearly fragments of fairly substantial deposits and are interpreted as forming part of a structure or structures." (ibid.: 9). Both spreads were associated with finds of briquetage salt containers and sherds of Malvernian pottery suggesting that the site was inhabited in the later first millennium BC, perhaps from the 4th century onwards. Overall, however, the distribution of features along the line of the pipe trench was not particularly dense, and Dalwood *et al.* note that the stone spreads are without parallel at the hillforts in Herefordshire.

Within the interior of the massive hillfort at Llanymnech, near Four Crosses, a number of small areas have been investigated prior to various works associated with the golf course that occupies much of the hill-top (see Fig. 6.25). In 1981 a hearth, a bowl-hearth, a pit containing debris and a number of extensive charcoal layers were revealed in section in the side of a service pipe trench (Musson and Northover 1989). A number of pieces of bronze metal working debris were recovered from both the pit and the bowl-hearth. A radiocarbon date of 2020±70 BP (CAR-534) was recovered from a charcoal twig in the bowl hearth, whilst a date of 2170±70 BP (CAR-535)

was obtained from charcoal recovered from the pit (*ibid.*). These give calibrated calendrical dates (at the 2 sigma confidence level) of 210 BC – AD 140 and 390 – 40 BC respectively. In 1995 further isolated fragments of charcoal, briquetage, slag, and vitrified material associated with Iron Age bronze metalworking were found in evaluation trenches dug prior to building work in a different area of the interior (Thomas 1995). This material was not, however, associated with any features and appeared to lie in a general occupation soil or on an old ground surface. A further episode of salvage recording revealed an isolated extended inhumation burial of an infant of perhaps 7 years of age (Owen 1997). A radiocarbon date of 2375±55 BP (OxA-6824) was obtained from this individual, which gives a calibrated calendrical date (at the 2 sigma confidence level) of 800-350 BC. A number of other shallow pits were observed in section in the general vicinity of the burial, although these were not examined in detail. Finally, an evaluation trench dug in advance of the reconstruction of the 13th golf green revealed the remains of a circular structure, perhaps *c.* 13m in diameter (Owen 1999). This was defined by a circular gully 0.46m wide and between 0.16 – 0.3m deep. The lowest of the three fills within this feature contained considerable quantities of charcoal and animal bones, together with fragments of furnace lining and metal working debris. Two pits were identified within the interior of the gully, and these proved to contain abundant quantities of stones within their fills. A third pit was also found to extend beyond the north-western limits of the excavation, and this feature was cut by a steep sided gully, 1.54m wide and 0.3m deep. The fill contained abundant quantities of charcoal, animal bone, fragmented quern and more metal working debris.

Although this evidence is far from conclusive, it would appear that activity at this site during the later first millennium was associated with the exploitation of the copper ore source that occurs within the carboniferous limestone on which the hill is formed. Although the results from the analysis of the animal bone assemblage from the roundhouse gully were not available at the time of writing, it seems that these practices could have been of a seasonal nature.

6.3.4 Summary.

In this section I have argued that we need to view hillfort boundaries as the product of complex histories of building and reworking. The labour that was expended upon their construction probably chimed with wider demands that the agricultural cycle placed upon the individual and the household. The practices associated with their creation and modification played an active part in the reproduction of social relations between individuals and household groups during the later first millennium. In addition, these acts also helped to forge a broader sense of community identity, and that these communities may have been able to trace their own histories within the boundaries themselves. As such, hillfort boundaries may have symbolised the prowess and vitality of such, speaking of their rights of tenure over certain parts of the landscape. Building projects may also have provided the opportunity to reinforce existing patterns of social authority, and they may also have provided the means by which new ones could emerge. Thus, as ‘objects’ with distinct biographies, I maintained that hillfort boundaries played a role in the construction of social identities.

This has clear implications for the way we interpret the boundaries of these sites. I maintain that individual hillforts are the product of many separate decisions taken over many successive generations. As such the development of these sites over time does not represent the gradual execution of a single planned design. Rather, as Barrett (1994: 24) has argued of the much earlier monument at Durrington Walls, hillfort ramparts were: -

“...created in the tradition of *bricolage*...the reworking of the available resources by those with a competent and inventive understanding of particular orders of spatial practice.”.

Thus, we need to recognise that every hillfort is the product of a particular history; not only because our methodological procedures are beginning to tell us that this was the case but also *because people conceived of them in this way in the past*. Out of the distinctiveness of these sites was woven the fabric of separate and distinctive genealogical histories.

This variation between sites extends to the differing ways in which their interiors were inhabited, reflecting the ways in which different communities used the

monuments they had laboured to create. The evidence from some sites suggests that they may have been occupied seasonally, perhaps during the course of the exploitation of communal spring and summer pastures or the working of mineral resources. Their occupation may have coincided with festivals and celebrations, which partially involved the maintenance or rebuilding of their ramparts. Others may have seen their populations swelled on an annual or episodic basis, as outlying members of the broader community converged upon them. The inhabitation of these sites thus formed part of a wider cycle of movement around the landscape, which linked them with the smaller enclosure sites and the wider agricultural landscape of field systems and pasture lands.

6.4.0 Conclusion.

In this chapter I have argued that in the later first millennium communities in the central Welsh Marches were characterised by what amounts to obsession with the construction and reworking of enclosure boundaries. This discourse linked the largest hillfort with the smallest enclosure. It was historically contingent and appears to have emerged out of the earlier tradition of linear boundary construction. Thus, as Barrett (1999a: 154) suggests, "...the Iron Age could only have arisen in the way in which it did as an interpretation or as a physical manifestation of its own landscape heritage."

Some of the smaller enclosures within this region appear to have been slotted into the pre-existing field systems that grew up over the course of the earlier first millennium (see Chapter 5). As such, they acknowledge earlier forms of landscape organisation, which may have acted to legitimate the rights of households to dwell at these places. At the same time, however, the construction and inhabitation of these monuments also actively transformed these earlier forms of tenure, such that the smaller enclosures became integral to the renewal of people's claims to certain locales. Through these practices individuals gained a sense of belonging to certain places that was reiterated through their engagement in the mundane tasks of daily life. As such, we must view the smaller enclosures were locales within wider agricultural taskscapes. The activities that took place at them were seasonally adjusted, changing with the ebb and flow of people around the landscape. Their inhabitation also varied over longer periods of time as the fortunes of individual households. Acknowledging

these factors allows us to move beyond the form of these monuments and view them as landscape *process*.

These practices were writ large through the ongoing aggrandisement of the hillforts. We can dismiss earlier claims that the reworking of these monuments marked the arrival of new populations or elites, or that they chart the evolution of new levels of social complexity. Instead their embellishment actively reworked the material conditions that people inhabited in the later first millennium, enabling both the reproduction and transformation of a nested series of social relations. They provided a medium through which communities and individuals could define themselves. It is a development of this discourse that we see evidence for in the later first millennium, as the enclosure changed from a symbol of community identity alone, to one of household *and* community identity. This provided the opportunity for the emergence of new forms of social authority, based on membership of particular households. Differences in social status that arose as a result may not have been fixed but changed with the passing of different generations, with ability to manipulate exchange networks, and with agricultural success. This suggests that the 'motor' of historical change in the later first millennium was not the arrival of successive waves of elite groups from continental Europe, but the playing out of networks of debt and obligation embedded within daily routines that turned on the demands of the agricultural cycle.