

11 Conclusions

The results of the Bruach an Druimein excavations are significant in a regional context, despite the problems caused by the rescue nature of the excavations, and the lack of modern recording and excavation techniques employed. There is some evidence to suggest a possible early prehistoric occupation of the site, in the form of burnt mound material and lithic scatters, though the lack of contemporary pottery and access to a nearby water source could mitigate against this explanation of the material. Such settlement would fit in with an emerging picture of settlement contemporary with the well-known ritual funerary monuments of the Kilmartin Glen. On the other hand, there is clear evidence for prehistoric burial, in the form of a series of previously excavated cists. The major importance of the site, however, lies in the Iron Age post-built roundhouses, a type of structure characteristic of eastern and southern Britain. These are the first such structures to be excavated in Atlantic Scotland, and provide an important clue that the characteristic hilltop drystone structures of this province may have been supplemented by timber structures in low-lying areas. Whether these are unique to the Kilmartin area, or remain to be

discovered elsewhere in the region, is a research question for future work. The evidence for hazel coppicing shown by the wattle charcoal samples is important confirmation of prehistoric woodland management. The site is also important in the Early Historic period, as a unique example of a low-lying undefended settlement. The nature of the occupation is debatable, with the long-cist burials, ogham inscription and *Kil-* placename hinting at ecclesiastic use, but the lack of a church, and clear signs of secular metalworking, perhaps point to secular use. In either case, the site adds a new type of site to a pattern of early medieval settlement in the Kilmartin Glen revealed by the recent publication of Dunadd (Lane & Campbell 2000), Loch Glashan (Campbell & Crone 2005) and Ederline crannogs (Henderson, pers comm). The small collection of medieval pottery is important in an area with very little reported medieval wares, and shows that a variety of wares were reaching this rural area from lowland Scotland and possibly the Continent. Overall, despite the problems of interpretation the site poses, the excavations at Bruach an Druimein add substantially to our understanding of settlement in Argyll over the last three millennia.