

6. Middleton Homestead

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While researching for his 'Eastwood District History and Heritage' in 1984, Thomas C. Welsh noted a possible homestead structure to the southwest of Middleton farm, between Neilston and Newton Mearns.

He recorded this structure as lying 'on a nearly level shoulder, between gullies, overlooking the Walton Burn'. It was 'a double walled enclosure with a single walled enclosure off-centre within.' The overall diameter is 30m to 35m enclosing a level area 19m across."

Since Dr Welsh's report some artefacts have been uncovered on the site including a knife and a bronze axe. The axe is particularly interesting as it seems to be a typical hand-axe blade from the Bronze Age, 3,000 to 4,000 years ago.

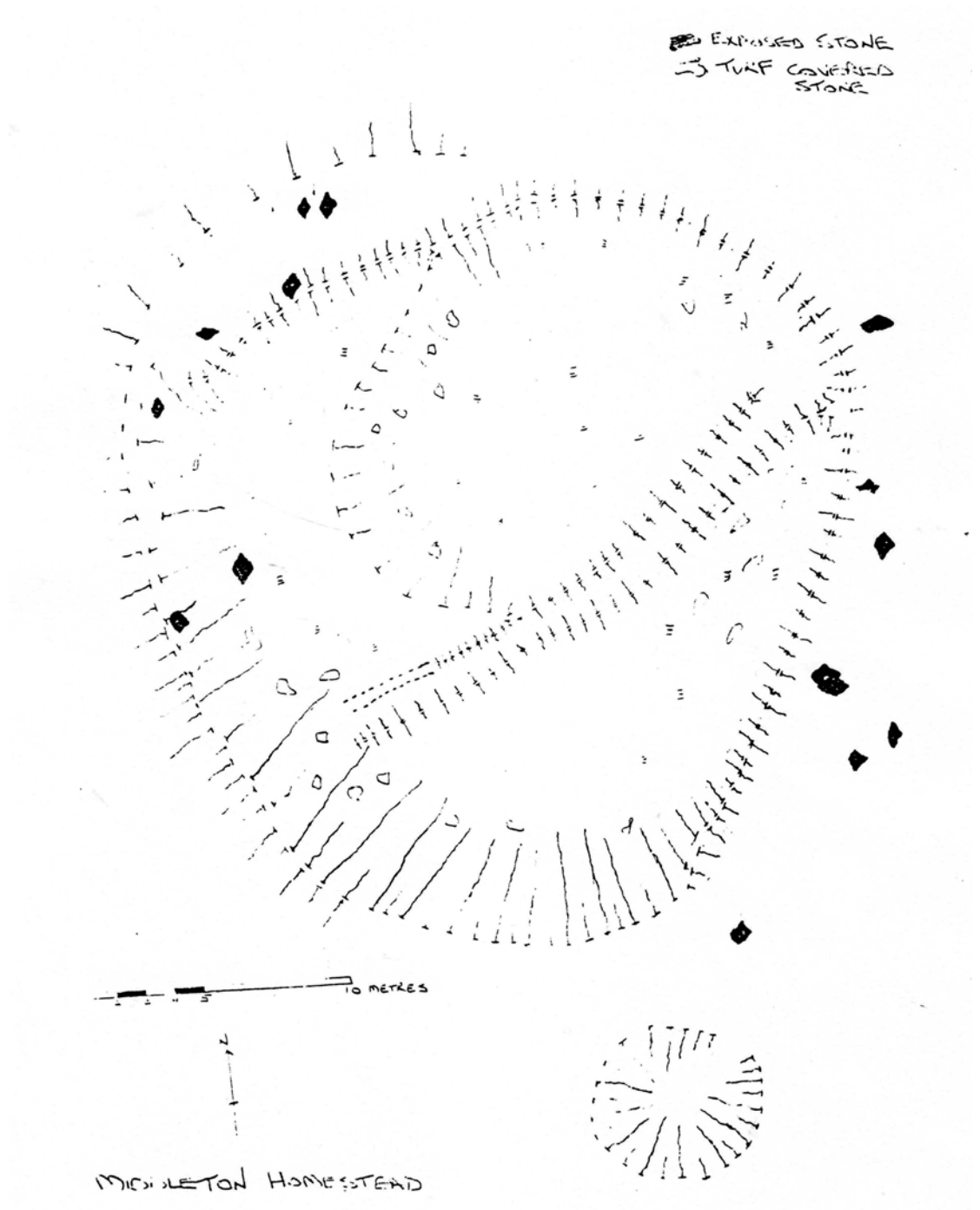
This summer a group of RLHF members carried out a more detailed survey of the site and its surrounds. A full report and plans will be lodged with the National Monuments Record for Scotland, Edinburgh. The location was confirmed above the Walton Burn between the gullies of two streams. It lies on the shoulder of a slope at about 200m (OD) above sea level. As the estate agent would say: the site commands extensive views to the north and west over surrounding farmlands to Neilston Pad and to Duncarnock Hillfort (the Craigie). On a clear day there are magnificent views of Barrhead and Glasgow.

It was difficult to reconcile the site as it now is, with Dr Welsh's description a mere eight years ago. As can be seen on the plan there is certainly a circular enclosure about 30m in diameter. The stony banks and mounds probably hide the remains of the walls. The scooped out area in the northeast quarter of the site is possibly the location of a circular hut. Without careful excavation it is impossible to be certain of the date, but the remaining structure has the appearance of an Iron Age homestead, perhaps under the protection of the hillfort on the Craigie. However the discovery of the bronze axe could indicate much earlier occupation in the Bronze Age.

As noted briefly by Dr Welsh there are many other features in the surrounding area. Immediately above the homestead lies a circular scooped out area 6m in diameter and a metre deep which is something of an enigma (see plan). Further uphill, the most prominent man-made feature is a substantial turf and stone bank. This is over a metre high and in places over 3 metres wide. It runs for over 200m with a few gaps, roughly westerly over a knoll behind the homestead: Other features more closely associated with farming activity are ancient field dykes, clearance cairns (at least 8 identified) and quarry scoops. Some of these must be associated with the same period as the homestead but there was evidence of some very recent addition to and 'robbing' from

some of the cairns. Field dykes from the 19th or even 20th centuries AD are close by.

All this gives us evidence that farming in one form or another has been carried out here for some 3,000 years and is hopefully set to continue.



Plan of Middleton Homestead