

Subsistence Practices in Western and Northern Europe



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Abstract and Keywords

Early agriculture in north-west Europe was highly diverse. Sometimes it spread rapidly, at other times it scarcely advanced at all, and in southern Scandinavia it retreated after its initial advance. Linearbandkeramik (LBK) farmers occupied small clearings on loess soils, concentrating on cattle and cereals and hardly exploiting the surrounding forest at all. After more than a millennium agriculture spread into southern Scandinavia; after an initial period in which some settlements contained many wild animals, by the middle Neolithic agriculture was ubiquitous. It did not spread into southern Norway until the late Neolithic, and in the badlands between the loess soils of central Europe and the glacial moraine of southern Scandinavia hunting remained important throughout the Neolithic. In Britain, most regions saw cultivation and domestic animals rapidly come to predominate the economy, but north-western Scotland may have continued hunting, fishing, and gathering until later in the Neolithic.

Keywords: Neolithic, cultivation, agriculture, domestic animals, crops, north-west Europe, Linearbandkeramik (LBK), Southern Scandinavia, Britain

Introduction

THIS chapter considers domestic animals and plants in the Neolithic of western and northern Europe. Perhaps no other region on the planet has seen research as intensive and as long term, but despite this the nature and significance of early agriculture is still keenly debated. There is little agreement even on many of the basic issues: how rapidly was agriculture established as the dominant way of life in the various parts of the region? In what proportions did immigrant farmers and indigenous foragers contribute their genes to Europe's later population? Were any of the major plants or animals locally domesticated? Our information often remains patchy and sometimes contradictory, but current work is transforming our understanding of these issues.

We start with the northern and western parts of the Linearbandkeramik (LBK). This farming culture originated in the Hungarian Plain c. 5700 BC, and spread west to the Paris Basin in a couple of centuries (Schier, this volume). This parallels the very rapid near-contemporary Cardial farming spread round the central and western Mediterranean coasts (Bogaard and Halstead, this volume). West of the Alps, the two axes slowed and converged, and farming reached the Biscayan coast of France by c. 5000 BC. To the north of the LBK, the spread of farming stopped for 1,500 years, after which it again spread remarkably rapidly at c. 4000 BC, reaching Ireland, Scotland, and Scandinavia as far north as Oslo and Stockholm.

(p. 430) Energetics

Hunter-gatherers are often (but not always) mobile, exploiting seasonal resources in different places. Large-scale food storage is rare. Farming systems imposed quite different needs. Neolithic farmers made their living mainly from their domestic animals and plants, and these involved much smaller areas of land. Cereals were grown in small fields cleared of vegetation, no doubt initially assisted by rooting domestic pigs. The domestic animals were closely managed. Food storage was the key to the growth and dispersal of the Neolithic way of life. The farmers would have stored substantial amounts of cereals and processed milk products. This imposed a largely sedentary life, with people tied to their fields and food stores. Farming thus brought about profound social change.

Neolithic farming could extract much more energy from a given area than foraging. Hunter-gatherers usually gain about 10–15 times more food energy than they expend obtaining it. Traditional farmers do better, gaining 20–40 times the energy they expend (Leach 1976). One Neolithic family could satisfy their food needs from the cultivation of just a couple of hectares. A hypothetical farming village of 100 people would utilize perhaps 150–200ha, though grazing would use additional land. The population density of farmers on suitable land would clearly be very much higher than that of hunter-gatherers.

Farming thus brought about a profound change in population density. Most hunter-gatherers have low population densities, due to the constraints of lean seasons (Rowley-Conwy and Layton 2011). The situation has been quite different in farming societies. Sedentary groups can wean children much earlier, because stored cereals and milk products provide ideal weaning foods; in consequence each woman could have multiple births. The parish records of British villages reveal that only a century or two ago families of 10, 12, or even more children were quite common. Once farming was firmly established, there was no return to earlier ways.

Methods and Interpretations

Neolithic agriculture is studied through the remains of the animals and plants themselves. Preservation and recovery of these is problematic: animal bones often preserve fairly well unless soil conditions are too acidic, whilst plant tissues normally decay rapid-

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ly. On most European farming settlements we only see plant remains that have been exposed to fire and which survive by charring, a taphonomic window that it is vital we bear in mind.

The differential size of bone fragments means that excavated samples may be biased: excavators using trowels will find most cattle bones, but fewer sheep and even fewer chicken bones. A sieving regime is thus a vital ingredient of any excavation strategy (Legge and Hacker 2010). This should include sub-sampling with a smaller mesh to (p. 431) find very small bones; only a 1mm sieve mesh will recover small fish such as herring in the proper proportion (Enghoff 2011, table 41).

Charred plant remains are more difficult to recover systematically. A burnt cereal store is usually visible during excavation, but lower-density samples such as those in middens or back-filled pits are not. Hazelnut shell fragments are more visible than cereal grains. Such factors are clearly likely to lead to bias. A systematic approach to recovery by flotation is therefore essential, preferably done on a large scale during the excavation itself. Various kinds of recovery unit are employed (Jarman et al. 1972). A consistent regime such as sampling 10% of all contexts should be the norm (van der Veen and Fieller 1982).

Even optimally recovered samples must be interpreted—these data do not ‘speak for themselves’. We must always remember that Neolithic farmers did not deliberately create an archaeological record for our benefit. The animal bones are the discarded waste products from successful human utilization of animal products. Plant remains may survive accidentally—the accidental burning of a cereal store—or incidentally—the discard of waste products (weeds, chaff, nutshell) into a fire. Samples of 1,000 animal bones and 1,000 charred plant fragments tell very different kinds of story: the animal bones probably accumulated over a period of time, as individual animals were slaughtered and consumed, whilst the plant fragments may have been burnt in an episode taking only moments. The animal bones from a site therefore present an averaged picture of the economy, whilst numerous plant samples from the same site each present a snapshot of economic activity.

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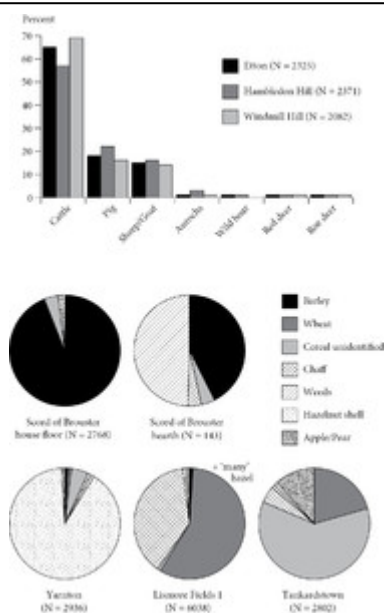


Fig. 22.1. Economic remains from selected British Neolithic sites. (a) Histogram showing relative frequency of the main food mammals at three early Neolithic sites. (b) Pie charts showing relative frequency of charred plant remains. Bones: Windmill Hill calculated from Grigson (1999, Tables 145.1–3), summing pre-bank and early Neolithic contents, excluding ribs and antler. Hambledon Hill main enclosure ditch from Legge (2008, Tables 8.6 and 8.7), assuming 3.3% of cattle are wild (cf. 1 of the 30 metacarpals plotted in fig. 8.3) and 5.3% of pigs were wild (cf. 1 of the 19 measurements listed in Tables 8.33 and 8.34). Etton summed from Armour-Chelu (1998, fiche tables 75 and 58–60). Plant remains: Scord of Brouster from Milles (1986, fiche tables 27–28); ‘house floor’ is total of samples 79–82, ‘hearth’ is total of samples 56–58, Yarnton from Robinson (2000, Table 8.1), Lismore Fields 1 from Jones (in Jones and Rowley-Conwy 2007, Table 23.1), Tankardstown from Monk (1988, 186–187).

The way this affects interpretation is shown by the British Neolithic samples in Fig. 22.1. The animal assemblages are remarkably consistent, suggesting that the animal economy was cattle-based in southern England at least. The predominance of pig on late Neolithic sites is a major change resulting from a different mode of animal consumption (Sergeantson 2011; Rowley-Conwy and Owen 2011). The plant remains are however much more variable. The late Neolithic samples from Scord of Brouster comprise a ‘house floor’ sample, almost entirely edible barley, perhaps an accident during food preparation, and a ‘hearth’ sample, predominantly inedible weeds and chaff. Cereals need processing to separate them from these waste products (Hillman 1981). The final fine sieving removes small weed seeds and chaff fragments. The ‘hearth’ sample is probably this kind of waste, disposed of into the fire by which the barley processor sat.

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Wild pigs and cattle were present in Neolithic Europe, and separating wild from domestic can be problematic. In both species, wild were larger than domestic, but sexual dimorphism in cattle means that Neolithic wild females are about the same size as domestic males, which can pose a challenge. Pigs are not sexually dimorphic but have other problems: they are often supposed to have been loosely herded by Neolithic farmers, so bones of feral and mixed specimens may occur. The size range in a single population is however quite well understood (Albarella and Payne 2005), and a recent survey has shown that most European Neolithic pigs were in fact close-herded and fully domestic (Rowley-Conwy et al. 2012). (p. 432) (p. 433)

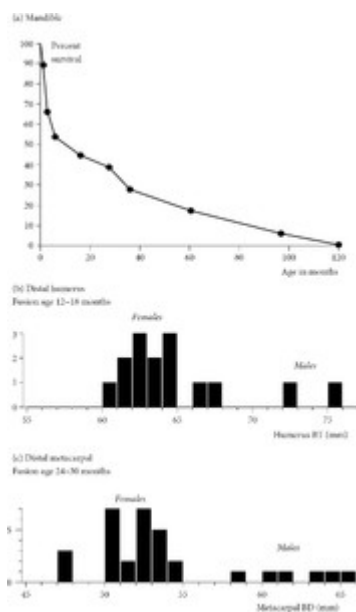


Fig. 22.2. Age and sex of the cattle from Grime's Graves, showing the evidence for dairy production. Top: mortality curve based on the mandibles (data from Legge 1992, Table 6d). Middle and bottom: dimensions of fused distal humeri and distal metacarpals, with tentative sexual division (data from Legge 1992, Appendix 1). Measurements as defined by von den Driesch (1976).

(p. 434) Dairy products were important. Before Neolithic times, humans would seldom consume milk after weaning. To digest milk, young mammals produce the digestive enzyme lactase until they are weaned. Some humans however continue to produce lactase into adult life, particularly in northern Europe, which allows them to consume milk throughout their lives. Some zooarchaeologists have argued that this was post-Neolithic adaptation. However, the gene for continued lactase production occurs in Neolithic humans from Sweden (Malmström et al. 2008), and lipids from milk have been found in Neolithic pottery (Evershed et al. 2008). The cattle bones themselves have long been argued to show dairying (Legge 1981). The clearest zooarchaeological example is the Bronze Age site of Grime's Graves (Fig. 22.2). In dairy herds, most male cattle are killed shortly after birth, to free the milk for human use. The adult herd thus consists largely of the breeding and lactating females. At Grime's Graves many animals were killed very young, seen in

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the steep reduction in 'per cent survival' next to the vertical axis in Fig. 22.2a. Jaws cannot be sexed, so sex ratios among older animals are established through limb bones. Distal humerus and distal metacarpal, which fuse at 12-18 months and 24-30 months respectively, show that by these ages the herd already consisted mainly of females (Fig. 22.2b, c). The high kill in the first couple of months (Fig. 22.2a) must therefore comprise the missing males.

The Northern and Western LBK

The rapidity of the LBK spread across the loess soils of central Europe is no longer put down to shifting cultivation. European soils do not lose their fertility after a couple of years, so there would be no need to move to a new location (Lüning 1980; Rowley-Conwy 1981). LBK people lived in permanent and quite widely dispersed settlements. Thick forest faced the colonists, inhibiting their ventures, so the LBK may have spread by boat, along the major rivers where the earliest settlements are found (Rowley-Conwy 2011). There would have been few natural clearings, although some areas along watercourses may have been clear of forest (Kreuz 2008).

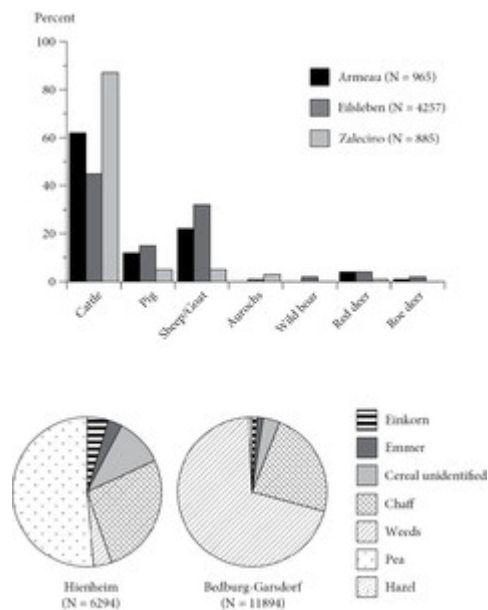


Fig. 22.3. Economic remains from a few LBK sites. (a) Histogram showing relative frequency of the main food mammals at three sites in France, Germany, and Poland. (b) Pie charts showing relative frequency of charred plant remains. Bones: Armeau from Poplin (1975), Eilsleben from Döhle (1994, table 6), Zalecino from Sobocinski (1984, table 2). Plant remains: Hienheim from Bakels (1978, table 15), Bedburg-Garsdorf from Knörzer (1974, Table 1), Oldenburg-Dannau LA191 from Kroll (1981).

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Although LBK settlements were surrounded by forest, farmers made remarkably little use of its products. The animal bones are dominated by domestic animals. Figure 22.3 presents three examples spanning the LBK's northern edge from Paris to Poland. Cattle predominate, because they cope relatively well with forest grazing. This was a new development in the European Neolithic: farmers to the south-east relied on sheep and goats as their main domesticates. LBK farmers reconfigured the animal economy for the central European forest environment. Pigs were also suited to this forest, but they were not common, often being outnumbered by sheep. This suggests that the animal economy was centred on the farming clearings themselves: the wild and domestic pigs remained of different sizes, suggesting there was little interbreeding between the two. Domestic pigs were evidently close-herded near the settlements (Rowley-Conwy et al. 2012).

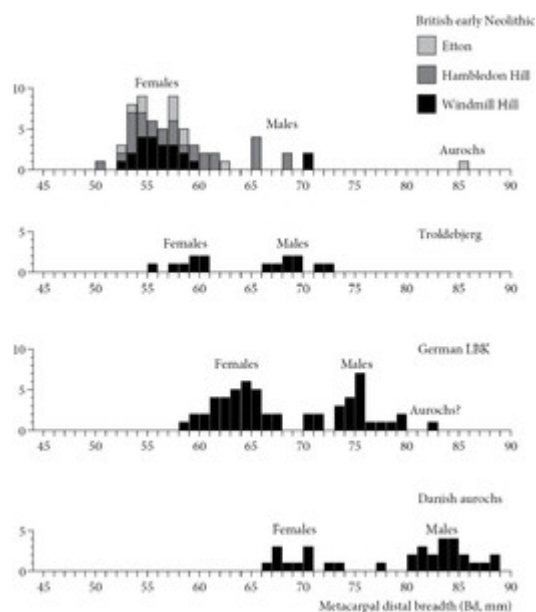


Fig. 22.4. Histograms of cattle metacarpal distal breadth, BD as defined by von den Driesch (1976). Danish aurochs from Degerbøl and Fredskild (1970, table 11), German LBK from Müller (1964, 154) and Döhle (1994, 186–187), Troldebjerg from Higham and Message (1968 table C), Etton from Armour-Chelu (1998, appendix 1), Hambledon Hill from Legge (2008, table 8.28), Windmill Hill from Grigson (1965, table VII, xv, 1999, appendix 1.1).

(p. 435) LBK farmers arrived with the full suite of domestic animals. Cattle were not independently domesticated in central Europe, and their DNA shows that the breed had its origins in modern Anatolia (Legge 2010). Figure 22.4 presents distal metacarpal measurements from various populations. The Danish sample of aurochs forms the metrical benchmark. The German LBK animals are considerably smaller, and at no sites are there animals intermediate in size between aurochs and domestic cattle. Pigs are more complex. The first domestic animals in Europe carried Near-Eastern mtDNA, indicating importation from that region. Later in the LBK, morphologically domestic pigs appear (p. 436) that carried the mtDNA lineage of European wild boar. This suggests that farmers incorporat-

ed female wild boar into their domestic pig population (Larson et al. 2007). There is zooarchaeological evidence that this happened in the Paris Basin (Tresset and Vigne 2007, Fig. 22.2).

Cultivation was also modified to suit the temperate forest environment. The wide range of crops cultivated in the Balkan Neolithic dwindled to just five: einkorn wheat, emmer wheat, pea, lentil, and linseed (Kreuz 2007). It is remarkable that barley, now tolerant of poorer conditions than the wheat species, was not part of this crop suite. Two botanical assemblages are shown in Fig. 22.3. As discussed, these fully agricultural (p. 437) economies are represented mainly by their waste products: chaff and weed seeds. The weed seeds are characteristic of crops grown in small intensively cultivated 'garden' plots rather than more extensive fields (Bogaard 2004), so cultivation was probably carried out with hoe and digging stick rather than the ard. The pig may also have been useful as a quasi-tool, preparing and manuring land in advance of sowing (Rowley-Conwy 1981). It is not clear whether the sowing season continued to be the autumn, as in the Balkans (Bogaard 2004), or was changed to the spring (Kreuz and Schäfer 2011)

The LBK thus appears as a scatter of specialist 'loess farming units', operating a system of agriculture that was considerably modified from that of its parent cultures in the Balkans. It is remarkable how little attention the LBK farmers paid to the resources of the forests that surrounded them: their economic efforts were focused almost entirely on farming the clearings they occupied.

Neolithic Farming North of the LBK

Along its northern border, the LBK spread stopped as abruptly as it had begun. It had reached the northern edge of the loess to which it was adapted. Well drained and fertile morainic soils lay further north in southern Scandinavia, but the loess was separated from this by a zone of poor glacial outwash sands, which formed a zone of 'badlands' not well suited to agriculture.

The farming standstill lasted for some 1,500 years. Mesolithic hunter-gatherer populations were extensive well to the north—the Ertebølle of southern Scandinavia—and also closer to the farmers further west—the Swifterbant of the Rhine-Waal-Maas estuarine complex and the Ijsselmeer. Fewer appear to have occupied the area between the LBK and the Ertebølle. Whether these hunter-gatherers acquired any domestic animals from the farmers has been a subject for discussion for several decades.

Some specific instances of claimed domestic animals may be mentioned. A *Bos* metacarpal from Rosenhof in northern Germany was originally claimed to be domestic (Nobis 1975), although there were grounds for believing it was from an aurochs (Rowley-Conwy 2003). Recently, molecular biological work has suggested that the animal was indeed wild: its diet was similar to aurochs (Noe-Nygaard et al. 2005), and its mtDNA lineage was of Near-Eastern and not native European origin (Scheu et al. 2008). Some other cases are claimed, including a few goat bones in the Netherlands (reviewed in Rowley-

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Conwy 2013). The goats are undated by radiocarbon, but if they really are Mesolithic they must have been acquired from, or have escaped from, the nearby farmers.

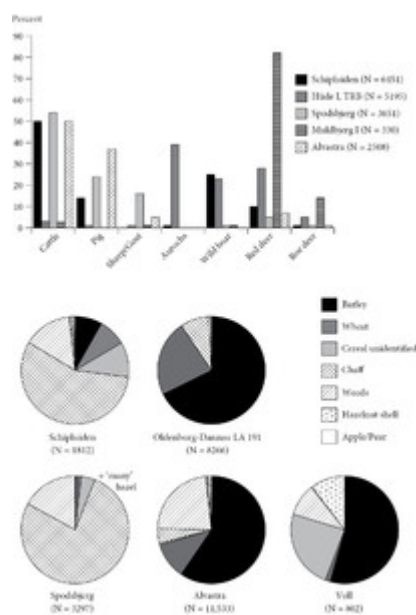


Fig. 22.5. Economic remains from selected continental Neolithic sites in the area north of the LBK. (a) Histogram showing relative frequency of the main food mammals from Schipluiden (Netherlands), Hüde I TRB level (Germany), Spodsbjerg and Muldbjerg I (Denmark), and Alvastra (Sweden). (b) Pie charts showing relative frequency of charred plant remains from Schipluiden (Netherlands), Oldenburg-Dannau LA 191 (Germany), Spodsbjerg (Denmark), Alvastra (Sweden), and Voll (Norway). Bones: Schipluiden from Zeiler (2006, table 22.2), Hüde I from Hübner et al. (1988, table 16), Spodsbjerg from Nyegaard (1985, table 1), Muldbjerg I from Noe-Nygaard (1995, table 6), Alvastra from During (1986, table 6). Plant remains: Schipluiden from Kubiak-Martens (2006, Appendix 19.2), Oldenburg-Dannau from Kroll (1981), Spodsbjerg from Robinson (1998, table 1), Alvastra from Göransson (1995, tables 3, 4, and 5), Voll from Soltvedt (2000, table 1).

Farming finally spread northwards around 4000 BC. The *Trichterbecher* or *trægtbæger* (TRB) extended north to the latitude of Oslo and Stockholm. Its farming regime was very different from that of the LBK (Fig. 22.5). The cultivation regime was further modified: peas and lentils, fairly common in the LBK, disappear; einkorn diminishes nearly to vanishing point; and barley reappears and dominates at some (p. 438) (p. 439) sites. In the late Neolithic, cereal agriculture spread into south-western Norway, and the sample from Voll has mostly barley among the identified cereal grains (Fig. 22.5). In Denmark, the ard was present at Hanstedgård at the start of the middle Neolithic around 3300 BC (Eriksen and Madsen 1984), and at the late Neolithic site of Hjelle in south-western Norway at the time of the first evidence for cultivation in this region (Soltvedt 2000).

The animal economy was also different: the LBK uniformity disappeared. Some sites have a dominance of domestic animals (Fig. 22.5), and even at Skumparberget, at the northern extremity of the TRB near Stockholm, the bones comprised only domestic animals with cattle at 82% (Bäckström 1996). But at other sites wild mammals predominate. In Denmark, Muldbjerg I and others have a large proportion of wild mammals in the early Neolithic, before *c.* 3300 BC. Thereafter domestic species predominate everywhere. Isotopes in human bone mostly suggest a terrestrial diet, based presumably on agriculture, from the start of the Neolithic (Richards and Koch 2001). Further south, in northern Germany, wild resources continued to be significant until much later. Hüde I (TRB layer) is dominated by wild mammals (Fig. 22.5), and Parchim continues this pattern into the late Neolithic. Some of the sites in this region have remarkably high frequencies of wild horse (Sommer et al. 2011), and many also have substantial numbers of beaver and otter, birds, and fish (reviewed in Rowley-Conwy 2013). All in all the evidence for agriculture in the ‘no man’s land’ region between the northern edge of the former LBK area and the Baltic hinterland is rather weak throughout the Neolithic.

At the end of the early Neolithic around 3300 BC, agriculture went into retreat: the northern edge of farming withdrew from near Stockholm and the island of Gotland, to the southernmost part of Sweden in the middle Neolithic. So-called ‘Pitted Ware’ hunter-fishers replaced TRB farmers in much of the central Baltic. Ancient DNA suggests that Pitted Ware people may have been of a different ethnicity to the farmers (Malmström et al. 2009). On Gotland, wild boar replaced the domestic animals of earlier times (Rowley-Conwy et al. 2012). Animal bones from Pitted Ware sites are overwhelmingly from wild animals (reviewed in Rowley-Conwy 2013), and stable isotopes in human bones reveal that Pitted Ware people throughout eastern Sweden consumed a diet very high in marine foods (Fornander et al. 2008).

(p. 440) Britain and Ireland

The earliest sign of any domestic species in this region (apart from the dog) is from Ferriter’s Cove in south-western Ireland. Two domestic cattle bones have been directly dated to *c.* 4300 BC (Woodman et al. 1999). How they arrived there is unclear (Tresset, this volume); no continental Neolithic influence can be seen on Britain at this time, which remained firmly Mesolithic, so direct contact with possible areas of origin such as Brittany is most likely. Perhaps the bones arrived in joints of meat rather than live animals.

The Neolithic appears in Britain just before 4000 BC, in Ireland perhaps a century or two later (Whittle et al. 2011). The British Neolithic is the scene of a unique debate about the onset of farming: was the adoption gradual, with a mobile ‘Mesolithic’ lifestyle continuing through much of the period (e.g. Thomas 2008), or rapid, involving a considerable amount of immigration (e.g. Rowley-Conwy 2004)? Or is a middle position, stressing local variability, the best option (e.g. Cummings and Harris 2011)?

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Animal bones from almost all Neolithic sites have an overwhelming predominance of domestic animals (Fig. 22.1). There is now general agreement that aurochs, wild boar, and deer are surprisingly rare (Legge 2010; Serjeantson 2011). The only exception is the isolated early Neolithic pit at Coneybury (the 'Coneybury anomaly'), which contains the remains of ten domestic cattle and seven roe deer, perhaps the remains of a single feasting event (Maltby 1990). This is the only site of this kind, and the roe deer in any case produce less than 10% of the meat weight (Rowley-Conwy 2003b, fig. 5). It would certainly not be safe to generalize from it to the whole Neolithic economy. It is true that animal bone assemblages from the first couple of centuries of the Neolithic remain elusive, and those plotted in Fig. 22.1 are from ritual monuments. Assemblages from settlements, dated to the crucial couple of centuries, will be of the greatest interest. What can be said at this stage is that by the time the early Neolithic was fully established, wild species played only a peripheral role in the economy.

Apart from some finds of linseed, cultivated plants are dominated by just two species, emmer and barley, with bread wheat appearing at a few sites; barley apparently becomes more common in the late Neolithic. The importance or otherwise of the cereals has been very contentious. We saw in the methodology section that we cannot simply sum the plant remains from any site and expect that the result will present an 'averaged' picture of the economy in the way that the animal bones do. The contrasting samples from Scord of Brouster make this clear (Fig. 22.1). Workers elsewhere in Europe all assume that cultivated cereals were overwhelmingly predominant despite the high frequency of weeds at some sites (e.g. Bedburg-Garsdorf in Fig. 22.3). Hazelnut shell is common at many British Neolithic sites. Samples containing many weeds and hazelnut shells, interpreted at face value, have been used to suggest that (p. 441) wild species provided most of the plant food (e.g. Thomas 2003). But nut shell, like weed seeds, is a waste product, which may even have been used for kindling and thus commonly be charred (Jones 2000). Recognition of the complexities of plant samples suggests that cereals were predominant in most places: what we see are their waste products, discarded as useless and burnt by chance along with the nut shell (e.g. Legge 1989; Jones and Rowley-Conwy 2007).

The problems are illustrated by the samples in Fig. 22.1, all from early Neolithic timber houses. Tankardstown in Ireland is dominated by cereals, with an admixture of apple or pear; chaff and weeds are uncommon. Chaff is much more common at Lismore Fields 1, whilst at Yarnton hazelnut shell predominates. The early Neolithic plant economy was however probably fairly similar at all three: the chance exigencies of charring caution us not to accept these samples at face value. This understanding has led to a recent reappraisal of the role of cereals in the British Neolithic: even the proponents of a gradual transition and the continuation of a largely 'Mesolithic' economy into the artefactual Neolithic now restrict their arguments to the *early* Neolithic (Thomas 2008). A degree of regional variation (Cummings and Harris 2011) remains possible: Bishop et al. (2010) found that whilst agricultural plants dominated the Neolithic economy in most of Scotland, the Outer Hebrides might have persisted in a largely hunter-gatherer way of life. The importance of cereals in the early Neolithic is now generally accepted, to the extent that a cereal decline has recently been suggested for the late Neolithic (Stevens and Fuller 2012);

but whether this is anything other than an artefact of research emphasis remains to be seen.

The importance of dairying has been mentioned. We lack settlement sites producing samples like that from Grime's Graves (Fig. 22.2). Most information on the Neolithic economy in England comes from sites of a ceremonial or ritual nature, such as the causewayed enclosures (Andersen, this volume). Distal metacarpal measurements from three are plotted in Fig. 22.4. The British sites, like contemporary Troldebjerg in Denmark, have smaller cattle than the German LBK sites, reflecting the fact that they are some 1,500 years younger. Unlike Troldebjerg, however, cattle at the British sites do not divide equally between the sexes: females predominate at all three.

Cattle at Hambledon Hill were killed mostly between two and four years of age (Legge 2008). An economy in which dairy husbandry was highly developed would have a surplus of young females at precisely this age, when the best breeding cows would be selected whilst those with less desirable traits would be culled and eaten. Further, the cattle bones at Hambledon Hill showed less breakage than is commonly found at archaeological sites, often with the limb segments discarded with the bones still in articulation. This shows that the cattle were consumed in a more lavish manner than usual, indicative of large-scale meat consumption in the manner of feasting. The cereals too were brought partly prepared. Hence, this was a site for consumption rather than a place where such foods were raised and prepared. Thus whilst the entire cattle economy is not represented here in the way that it is at Grime's Graves, the pattern nevertheless supports the argument for a dairy economy.

(p. 442) **Conclusions**

We have traced the arrival and development of farming in the Neolithic of western and northern Europe. The spread was not steady; it stopped at the northern edge of the LBK for some 1,500 years before it then rapidly moved into southern Scandinavia, Britain, and Ireland; northern central Germany was apparently missed out of the initial advance, being infilled only later; and the spread into environmentally hostile regions such as north-western Scotland was delayed.

For the most part, however, the spread of agriculture appears to have been a rapid and complete process. Claims for domestic animals (other than the dog) in Mesolithic contexts have almost all proved spurious—Ferriter's Cove in Ireland is an outstanding exception to this. The 'Mesolithic' economic component in most Neolithic economies is currently being downplayed. Consequently most transition events look much sharper than they did just a few years ago (Rowley-Conwy 2011).

A gradual transition implies local continuity, and thus a considerable local component in the human population that became farmers—though some immigrants are never excluded. A rapid transition need not imply local community, but could be brought about by immigrant farmers—though of course some local involvement is never excluded either. This

debate continues. As the study of prehistoric genetics becomes more routine, more light will be cast on this issue. But for the time being the pendulum has swung towards a greater immigrant component. Whether this will stand the test of time will be a matter of great future interest.

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A. J. Legge†

Tony Legge died while this chapter was in press. He developed improved methods of sieving for animal remains, and flotation for plant remains, and these have been widely adopted on archaeological excavations. He was a pioneer in the identification of domestic animals, starting with gazelle and sheep/goat in the Near East, and later turning to cattle and pigs in Europe. Over 30 years ago he was instrumental in putting forward the then-controversial suggestion that cattle were milked in the British Neolithic. He worked in Israel, Syria, Croatia, Spain, Turkmenistan and Cyprus, as well as several major sites in Britain, including Hambledon Hill.