

The Archaeology of South West England

South West Archaeological Research Framework

Resource Assessment
and
Research Agenda

Edited by C J Webster

Somerset County Council
2008

South West Archaeological Research Framework

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and
Research Agenda

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Front Cover: Aerial view north-east across the Quantock Hills, with the Trendle in the foreground and Hinckley Point nuclear power station beyond. Photograph © English Heritage. NMR.

Back Cover: Excavation at the end of Stukeley's, often disbelieved, Beckhampton Avenue in 2000. Photograph © M Gillings, J Pollard and D Wheatley.

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Foreword

The South West of England is one of the richest archaeological regions in the UK and the results of this Resource Assessment and Research Agenda present a significant document for archaeological work from both a regional, national and European perspective. The project was coordinated and supported by SWALGAO with direct financial support from English Heritage. During the gestation period of this report there have been numerous developments in policies and plans along with changes in personnel. It has taken over 10 years of discussions, meetings, seminars, consultation and cajoling to carry out this survey and publish the results. I would like to thank all the period convenors and contributors to this report and particularly thank Adrian Olivier and Kathy Perrin of English Heritage for their patience and support. This report will be of value to local authority archaeologists, English Heritage staff, university researchers and students, local groups, developers, regional agencies, contractors and consultants involved with research into the historic environment of the region. The volume has a projected life of five years but its publication represents a significant milestone by providing a statement of our knowledge of the region at the start of the 21st century. It arrives at an important time when local government changes are underway and the whole focus of heritage protection in England is set to change. Chris Webster of Somerset County Council was seconded for over two years to pull together this report and we owe him a considerable debt in pulling together a wide range of evidence and presenting it in a readable and comprehensive report. This is very much a shared vision for the region and one that will provide a platform for further research – it is a beginning and not an end in itself.

R A Croft, chair of SWALGAO

Editor's Preface

This volume presents the outcome of the first two phases of the South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF) project: The Resource Assessment (Chapters 1 to 9) and the Research Agenda (Chapter 10). These have been compiled by small groups working on each period assisted by a wider group of consultees who have improved the document as it has developed. Because of the composite nature of the work and the method of group working it is not possible to identify the authorship of any particular section; the editor (usually the convenor of the group) and contributors are given at the head of each chapter. Further details of the project methodology can be found in Section 1.1 on page 1.

Many people were involved in the setting up of the project and over 200 people were consulted during the preparation of this report. Some of those approached were, understandably, too busy to contribute but only one person replied that they did “not wish to contribute to or be associated with the scheme”. Some of the groups found their work more difficult than we envisaged at the start and we struggled with some chapters but I hope that most found it an enjoyable and productive exercise. It is also hoped that the mixing of people with varied period and local interests will have fostered new relationships and research interests across the region. It was certainly a feature of the seminars and part of the work on the final phase of the project, the Research Strategy, will be to develop a mechanism by which the enthusiasm generated by SWARF can be maintained for the benefit of research in the future.

Digital versions of this text and other supporting documents from the project are available at <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/swarf>.

Chris Webster

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Organisations

In addition to local authorities, universities, contracting units and English Heritage, the following societies supported the project:
 Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society
 Cornwall Archaeological Society
 Council for British Archaeology: Wessex

Council for British Archaeology: South West
 Devon Archaeological Society
 Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society
 Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
 Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society

Seminars

The following attended one or both of the seminars held in Bristol in 2005 (Resource Assessment) and 2006 (Research Agenda), providing lively and valuable debate:

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The following organisations were represented:

AC Archaeology, Avon Archaeological Society, Axbridge Archaeological Society, Bristol City Council, Bristol City Museum, British Museum, CBA South West, Clevedon Archaeological Society, Context One Archaeological Services, Cornwall County Council, Cotswold Archaeology, Defence Estates, DEFRA, Devon County Council, Dorset County Council, English Heritage, Exeter University, Gloucester and District Archaeological Research Group, Gloucestershire County Council, National Trust, Oxford Archaeology, Plymouth University, Pre-Construct Archaeology, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Royal Cornwall Museum, Somerset County Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Stroud and District Museum Service, Terrain Archaeology, University of Bristol, University of Exeter, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, University of Oxford, University of Reading, University of the West of England, University of Wales, Wessex Archaeology, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Winchester University, Yeovil Archaeological Society.

Project Management Group

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Vanessa Straker, *English Heritage*
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Period Group Convenors

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Bob Croft, *Somerset County Council*
David Dawson, *ex Somerset County Museum*
Andrew Fitzpatrick, *Wessex Archaeology*
Neil Holbrook, *Cotswold Archaeology*

Rob Hosfield, *University of Reading*
Josh Pollard, *University of Bristol*
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Summary

This volume presents the results of the first two phases of the South West Archaeological Research Framework (SWARF) project: a Resource Assessment and a Research Agenda for archaeology in South West England. It covers the area of the historic counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and is a project sponsored by English Heritage and the local authorities of the region. The project has as its aim the provision of a structure in which to make decisions about future archaeological research and is part of an English Heritage initiative to prepare a series of such reports for the whole country.

The regions of England, as defined by central government, have a short history and so this is the first report to cover the area now called South West England. The first part of the report contains a comprehensive overview of the region from the Palaeolithic to the present day with the aim of providing an accessible and up-to-date review of the current state of archaeological knowledge. It also hopes to define the character of that resource to act as a reference when taking decisions on the future of the resource. The second part of the report highlights the major gaps in our knowledge and also areas where the region's archaeological resource may have most to contribute to national and international research questions.

In order to make the Research Framework as comprehensive as possible the work has been carried out by a large number of people with research interests across the region. The reports originated from a smaller number who prepared draft documents for each period. The membership of these period groups was drawn from all sectors of the archaeological community in order to get as wide a view of the issues as possible. The draft documents were circulated to a wider group which intended to include all those working, researching or just interested in the archaeology of the region. As part of the process two seminars were held, one to discuss the Resource Assessment and one to discuss the Research Agenda. These were attended by over 150 people and provided a forum for discussion that has contributed greatly to the quality of the final document. The final stage of the project, the Research Strategy, will be developed in a similar way and published separately.

The current document comprises chapters summarising our knowledge of the region by chronological period: Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, Later Bronze Age and Iron Age, Roman, Early Medieval, Medieval, Post-Medieval and Modern. These are accompanied by an introduction to the project and the region, a chapter on environmental archaeology in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age and the Research Agenda. The text is supported by maps, diagrams and an extensive bibliography.

As the work demonstrates, South West England is probably the most diverse of the English regions and contains some of its best-known archaeological sites. The caves of Mendip and Torbay contain some of the finest Palaeolithic remains in England whilst later in prehistory sites such as Avebury, Stonehenge and Maiden Castle are of international repute. The Roman period is famous for its spectacular mosaics from sites such as Chedworth and Cirencester and may have remained in contact with the empire into the 5th and 6th centuries. Glastonbury is famous for its Abbey and early Christian associations but the region contains many fine churches and cathedrals, of which Salisbury and Wells are perhaps the best known. The importance of mining in some areas is reflected in the recent successful bid for World Heritage Site status.

Much of the region is dominated by its coast which has allowed extensive influence from bordering areas such as Wales, Ireland and Brittany but has also allowed the spread of people and ideas from the region to all corners of the world. The coast, and the inland areas, present a wide variety of environments: from the rocky cliffs of Cornwall, via the granite uplands of Bodmin and Dartmoor, the wide alluvial deposits of Somerset to the chalk downland of Dorset and Wiltshire and the limestone hills of Gloucestershire. This diversity provides a wealth of avenues for archaeological research to which can be added the important urban deposits of the great medieval and later port of Bristol and other cities such as Gloucester and Exeter.

Archaeological research is not static and many new sites have had to be added to this report as it was being written but it is hoped that this report of the state of archaeology at the beginning of the 21st century will provide a springboard for future research and a focus around which we can pool our energies.

Résumé

Ici figurent les résultats des deux premières phases du projet intitulé « Cadre de recherche archéologique pour le Sud-Ouest de l'Angleterre » (*South West Archaeological Research Framework* ou SWARF) : Evaluation des ressources et Priorités de recherche pour les comtés historiques de Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire et Gloucestershire. Ce projet, parrainé par *English Heritage* et par les collectivités locales de la région, a pour objet de fournir une structure permettant de prendre des décisions pour les recherches archéologiques futures et fait partie d'une initiative de *English Heritage* devant produire une série de rapports qui couvrira tout le pays.

Les régions d'Angleterre ayant vu leurs contours redessinés par le gouvernement central récemment, ce rapport est le premier pour la région maintenant dite *South West England* (Sud-Ouest de l'Angleterre). On trouvera en première partie un aperçu général de la région depuis le Paléolithique jusqu'à nos jours qui présente l'état actuel des connaissances archéologiques sous un format facilement accessible. L'espoir est également de faire de cet ouvrage un outil de référence pour les décisions à venir. La deuxième partie signale les principales lacunes dans nos connaissances mais également les domaines où les ressources archéologiques de la région ont le plus à contribuer en matière de recherches nationales et internationales.

Ce Cadre de recherche devant être aussi exhaustif que possible, le travail a fait appel à de nombreux collaborateurs dont les axes de recherche couvrent toute la région. Les rapports ont été rédigés par un petit nombre d'entre eux de façon à produire un document par période. Les membres des équipes travaillant sur chaque période ont été choisis de façon à représenter tous les secteurs archéologiques et les intérêts les plus variés. Les projets de rapports ont été diffusés auprès d'un groupe plus vaste encore dans l'espoir d'atteindre tous ceux qui s'intéressent à l'archéologie de la région, travailleurs, chercheurs et amateurs éclairés. Ce faisant, deux séminaires ont été tenus, l'un pour discuter de l'évaluation des ressources (*Resource Assessment*) et l'autre pour établir les priorités de recherche (*Research Agenda*), qui ont attiré plus de 150 personnes et ont constitué un forum de discussion qui a fortement contribué à la qualité du document final. L'étape finale du projet, intitulée Stratégie de recherche (*Research Strategy*), se déroulera de façon analogue et fera l'objet d'une publication séparée.

Dans le présent document figurent des chapitres résumant l'état de nos connaissances sur la région

par période chronologique : le Paléolithique et le Mésolithique, le Néolithique et l'âge du Bronze ancien, l'âge du Bronze final et l'âge du Fer, les époques romane, médiévale ancienne, médiévale, post-médiévale et moderne. Chaque chapitre comporte une introduction au projet et à la région, et il s'y ajoute un chapitre sur l'archéologie de l'environnement à l'âge néolithique et au premier âge du Bronze et un autre sur les priorités de recherche. Le texte est assorti de cartes, de diagrammes et d'une ample bibliographie.

Comme cet ouvrage le démontre, le Sud-Ouest de l'Angleterre est sans doute la région la plus variée de toute l'Angleterre et comprend certains des sites archéologiques les plus connus. Les cavernes de Mendip et de Torbay contiennent des vestiges paléolithiques parmi les plus beaux d'Angleterre tandis que pour la préhistoire plus récente des sites comme Avebury, Stonehenge et Maiden Castle sont mondialement connus. La période romane s'illustre avec de spectaculaires mosaïques sur des sites peut-être restés en contact avec l'empire jusqu'aux 5^e et 6^e siècles, comme Chedworth et Cirencester. Glastonbury est célèbre pour son abbaye et pour ses liens avec le début de l'ère chrétienne mais la région possède également nombre de belles églises et cathédrales, Salisbury et Wells étant sans doute les plus connues. Les extractions minières d'autrefois ont par ailleurs valu à la région d'être inscrite récemment au patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco.

Le littoral qui domine une bonne partie de la région l'a ouverte aux influences venant des régions voisines, pays de Galles, Irlande et Bretagne, mais il a également facilité la dispersion des individus et des idées aux quatre coins du monde. La côte et les terres intérieures présentent une grande variété de paysages : depuis les falaises rocheuses de Cornwall jusqu'aux collines crayeuses (*downland*) du Dorset et du Wiltshire, en passant par les plateaux granitiques de Bodmin Moor et de Dartmoor, les dépôts alluviaux du Somerset et les dépôts calcaires du Gloucestershire. Cette diversité offre d'innombrables possibilités de recherche archéologique sans compter les importants dépôts urbains du port de Bristol, datant du Moyen Âge ou plus tardifs encore, et des autres grandes villes que sont Gloucester ou Exeter.

La recherche archéologique est toujours en mouvement et de nombreux sites ont été ajoutés alors que ce rapport était en cours de rédaction mais cet ouvrage sur l'état de l'archéologie en ce début du 21^e siècle servira, nous espérons, de tremplin aux recherches futures et d'axe de travail qui rassemblera nos énergies.

Susanne James Associates

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Bericht werden die Ergebnisse der ersten beiden Phasen des Projekts *South West Archaeological Research Framework* (SWARF) vorgestellt: die Bestandsaufnahme (*Resource Assessment*) und die Forschungsagenda (*Research Agenda*) für archäologische Forschungstätigkeiten in der Region *South West England*, welche die historischen Grafschaften Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire und Gloucestershire umfasst. Das Projekt wurde durch *English Heritage* sowie regionale Lokalbehörden finanziert und verfolgte das Ziel, eine Grundlage für künftige Entscheidungen hinsichtlich archäologischer Forschungstätigkeit zu schaffen. Im Rahmen dieser *English Heritage* Initiative soll eine Serie von Berichten nach der Art des vorliegenden Bandes für das ganze Land erstellt werden.

Die Regionen Englands, wie von der Regierung im Sinne der Verwaltungsgliederung definiert, sind relativ jung in der Geschichte des Landes. Der vorliegende Bericht ist daher der erste, der sich mit der Region befasst, die nun *South West England* bezeichnet wird. Der erste Teil des Berichtes enthält einen detaillierten Überblick über die Geschichte der Region von der Steinzeit bis heute. Damit soll eine überschaubare und aktuelle Bestandsaufnahme der vorhandenen archäologischen Wissensbasis geboten werden. Gleichzeitig soll der Modellcharakter dieser Ressource dokumentiert werden, damit sie in späteren Entscheidungsprozessen als Referenzwerk herangezogen werden kann. Der zweite Teil des Berichts identifiziert wesentliche Lücken in den vorhandenen Kenntnissen und nennt Bereiche, in welchen die archäologischen Ressourcen der Region zu nationalen und internationalen Forschungsfragen beitragen können.

Um den Forschungsrahmen möglichst umfassend zu gestalten, wurde die Arbeit von zahlreichen Fachleuten mit entsprechenden Forschungsinteressen aus der gesamten Region durchgeführt. Erste Berichtsvorlagen für die einzelnen historischen Perioden wurden in Arbeitsgruppen entworfen, die alle Bereichen der archäologischen Gemeinschaft vertraten, um das Spektrum der Ansätze so breit wie möglich zu gestalten. Die Berichtsvorlagen wurden einem ebenfalls breit gestreuten Expertenkreis vorgelegt und überarbeitet. Im Rahmen der Berichterstellung wurden zwei Seminare veranstaltet, eines zum Thema *Resource Assessment* und das andere zum *Research Agenda*. Die Teilnahme von über 150 Personen an den Diskussionsforen gewährleistete größtmögliche Qualität des endgültigen Berichts. Die dritte und letzte Phase des Projekts betrifft die Forschungsstrategie (*Research Strategy*), die in ähnlicher Weise durchgeführt und separat veröffentlicht wird.

Der vorliegende Band präsentiert den derzeitigen

Wissensstand zur Region in den folgenden, chronologisch gegliederten Kapiteln: Alt- und Mittelsteinzeit, Jungsteinzeit und Frühbronzezeit, Spätbronzezeit und Eisenzeit, Römische Periode, Frühmittelalter, Mittelalter, Spätmittelalter, und Neuzeit. Außerdem enthält er eine Einführung zum Projekt und zur Region, einen Abschnitt über Umweltarchäologie in Bezug auf Steinzeit und frühe Bronzezeit, sowie den Abschnitt *Research Agenda*. Die Texte werden durch Pläne und Diagramme illustriert und eine umfangreiche Bibliographie ergänzt.

Wie die Ausführungen zeigen, weist *South West England* geologisch und landschaftlich das wohl breiteste Spektrum unter den Regionen Englands auf und besitzt einige der bekanntesten archäologischen Stätten. Die Hüfen von Mendip und Torbay enthalten Englands reichhaltigste Funde aus der Altsteinzeit, während spätere, vorgeschichtliche Stätten wie Avebury, Stonehenge und Maiden Castle weltweit bekannt sind. Reiche Beispiele für die römische Zeit sind die außergewöhnlichen Mosaikböden der Anlagen von Chedworth und Cirencester, die möglicherweise bis ins 5. und 6. Jh. mit Rom in Verbindung standen. Glastonbury ist bekannt für die Abtei und frühchristliche Verbindungen; darüber hinaus gibt es in der gesamten Region zahlreiche andere historisch interessante Kirchen, wobei die Kathedralen von Salisbury und Wells die bekanntesten sind. Die Bedeutung des Bergbaus in einzelnen Gebieten bestärkte sich jüngst in deren Anerkennung als Welterbestätte.

Ein Großteil der Region ist durch die Küstenlänge geprägt, was den Einfluss aus benachbarten Gebieten wie Wales, Irland und der Bretagne ermöglichte, gleichzeitig aber auch die Verbreitung von Menschen und Ideen der Region in alle Teile der Welt erlaubte. Die Küste sowie die Binnengebiete zeichnen sich durch eine Vielfalt von Landschaftsformen aus: die Kliffküste Cornwalls, die Granithochflächen von Bodmin Moor und Dartmoor, die weitflächigen postglazialen Ablagerungen in Somerset, die Kreidekalkniederungen von Dorset und Wiltshire, und die Kalksteinhügel von Gloucestershire. Dieser geologische Reichtum bietet dem Archäologen zahlreiche Forschungsmöglichkeiten, zu welchen die urbanen Fundschichten des mittelalterlichen Hafens von Bristol sowie der Städte Gloucester und Exeter noch hinzuzuzählen sind.

Archäologische Forschung ist kein statisches Betätigungsfeld – während der Berichterstellung wurde die Liste der aufzunehmenden Stätten mehrmals ergänzt. Dieser Bericht zum Stand der Archäologie am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts soll daher als Sprungbrett für weitere Forschung dienen und als Koordinationsbasis für künftige Aktivitäten.

Susanne James Associates

Abbreviations and Glossary

The military sections of Chapter 14 contain a large number of abbreviations and acronyms; only those used more than once or not explained in close proximity are included here.

| | |
|--------|--|
| AA | Automobile Association or Anti-Aircraft (artillery). |
| ADP | Automatic Data Processing. |
| ALGAO | The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers. |
| AMS | Accelerator Mass Spectrometry. A method of radiocarbon dating technique which directly measures the ratio of ^{14}C to ^{12}C rather than measuring the radioactivity of ^{14}C . |
| AONB | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A planning designation with some of the attributes of a National Park. |
| BB1 | Black Burnished Ware type 1. A Roman pottery style produced in the Poole Harbour area and elsewhere in the South West (South-Western BB1). |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation. |
| BGS | British Geological Survey. |
| BT | British Telecom. The privatised GPO. |
| BVD | Base Vehicle Depot. |
| CBA | Council for British Archaeology. |
| CRAAGS | The Committee for Rescue Archaeology in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset. An excavation unit funded by central government and active in the 1970s. |
| DOB | Defence of Britain Project, a national project of volunteer recording of defence sites. The results were incorporated into an online database (DOB 2002) but this is not updated. |
| EH | English Heritage. |
| EUP | Early Upper Palaeolithic. |
| EUS | Extensive Urban Survey. See Section 1.2.4 on page 11. |
| FM | Frequency Modulation (of radio signals). |
| GCHQ | Government Communications Headquarters. |
| GCI | Ground Controlled Interception. Radar used to guide fighter aircraft to their target. |
| GPO | General Post-Office. The UK postal and telecommunications authority until privatisation. See BT. |
| GWR | Great Western Railway. |
| HEATH | Heathland, Environment, Agriculture, Tourism and Heritage. A project by Cornwall County Council to improve management and understanding of the heaths of West Cornwall. |
| HER | Historic Environment Record, see Section 1.2.5 on page 15. |
| HF | High Frequency (radio transmissions). |
| HM | Her/His Majesty's. |
| HMS | Her/His Majesty's Ship. Also used for naval shore stations. |
| HQ | Headquarters. |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. |
| LBK | Linearbandkeramik. An early European Neolithic pottery style and associated culture. |
| LGM | Last Glacial Maximum. |
| LNEBA | Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. |
| LUP | Late Upper Palaeolithic. |
| MARISP | Monuments at Risk in Somerset Peatlands. A project to assess the current condition of known wooden structures in the peat. |
| MHD | Military Home Defence. |
| MLA | Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. |
| MPP | The Monuments Protection Programme. An English Heritage programme to identify sites and monuments for statutory protection. Some types (such as industrial monuments) were covered thematically in a series of "Step" reports, proceeding from the general to recommendations for individual monuments. Reaction to intended changes in heritage protection legislation has led to the demise of the programme in an incomplete state. |
| MPRG | Medieval Pottery Research Group. |
| NAAFI | Navy, Army and Air Force Institute. Providing food and refreshments to the forces. |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. |
| OD | Ordnance Datum (mean sea level at Newlyn) |
| OIS | Oxygen Isotope Stage. Divisions based on the ratio of oxygen isotopes preserved in deep ice cores which indicate periods of global cooling and warming. Glacial stages are even-numbered. |

| | |
|---------|---|
| OS | Ordnance Survey. The national mapping agency of Britain. |
| OSL | Optically Stimulated Luminescence. A technique for dating when particles of sediment were last exposed to light. |
| PHEW | Institution of Civil Engineers Panel for Historic Engineering Works |
| POW | Prisoner of War. |
| PPG | Planning Policy Guidance. Principally those relating to archaeology (PPG 16, DoE 1990) and the historic environment (PPG 15, DoE 1994). |
| SANHS | Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society |
| SWALGAO | South West ALGAO (see above). |
| RAC | Royal Automobile Club. |
| RAE | Royal Aircraft Establishment. |
| RAF | Royal Air Force. |
| RAFVR | Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. |
| RCAHMS | Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. |
| RCHME | Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. Now part of English Heritage. |
| RIB | Roman Inscriptions in Britain. A published catalogue (Collingwood and Wright 1965). |
| RN | Royal Navy or Royal Naval. |
| RNAS | Royal Naval Air Station. |
| ROC | Royal Observer Corps. |
| SPMA | Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology. |
| TA | Territorial Army. A reserve force. |
| TL | Thermoluminescence. A technique for dating when certain minerals (often in pottery) were last exposed to high temperatures. |
| TV | Television. |
| UBSS | University of Bristol Speleological Society |
| USAAF | United States Army Air Force. |
| VHF | Very High Frequency (radio transmissions). |
| XRF | X-Ray fluorescence. An analytical technique for identifying the elemental composition of an object. |
| YMCA | Young Men's Christian Association. A charitable organisation which also provided recreational facilities for soldiers. |
| YWCA | Young Women's Christian Association. |

Note on radiocarbon dates

Radiocarbon dates used in the text have, where possible, been recalibrated using OxCAL 3.10 (Bronk Ramsey 2005) and the IntCal04 curve (Reimer *et al.* 2004). Dates are given in the text at 2σ (with lab numbers) and full details are given in the table at the end of each chapter.