

## 6

# Later Bronze Age and Iron Age

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## 6.1 Middle Bronze Age (1500–1000 BC)

Through the end of the Early Bronze Age and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age the seemingly short-lived settlements of the Early Bronze Age were superseded by more substantial round houses. Parts of the landscape were defined and bounded by field systems. In short, the landscape became domesticated. The agricultural revolution long thought to be associated with the Early Neolithic occurred almost 2000 years later, in the course of the Bronze Age. In most current thinking this domestication represents the key difference between the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Bronze Age and it is fundamental to our current understandings of later prehistory. This period, from the Middle Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age, is commonly characterised as being dominated, not by temples or tombs, but by settlements.

This assessment of the later Bronze Age is divided between the Middle (1500–1000 BC) and Late (1000–800/700 BC) Bronze Ages, with the emphasis on the Middle Bronze Age as evidence for it is more readily identifiable, and hence better understood.

### 6.1.1 Chronology

The chronology of the Middle Bronze Age is increasingly well assured. Settlements, burials, metalwork and, increasingly, radiocarbon dates provide a comprehensive framework (Needham 1996; Needham *et al.* 1998). The situation in Cornwall may be seen as typical of much of the South West. Associated groups of radiocarbon dates from settlements such as Trethellan Farm, Newquay (Nowakowski 1991) and individual structures such as those at Callestick (AM Jones 1998–9a) and Trevilson, Mitchell (AM Jones and Taylor 2004) firmly establish that between 1500–

1000 cal BC settlements of roundhouses (typically wooden and stone structures set on terraces or in hollows), together with enclosures and fields, were a feature of the lowlands. There is generally a lack of scientific dates for the upland areas from roundhouse sites for this period with the exception of Leskernick (Barbara Bender pers. comm.).

In general radiocarbon dates in the region have been obtained on a site specific basis and there have been few larger schemes, such as the A30 Honiton-Exeter road scheme, that have examined different sites of similar date (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999).

### 6.1.2 Landscape

Some of what have been considered to be “classic” settlements of the British Middle Bronze Age have been found in Dorset and Wiltshire. Sites such as South Lodge in Cranborne Chase (Barrett *et al.* 1991) and Shearplace Hill (Rahtz and ApSimon 1962; Avery and Close-Brooks 1969), both in Dorset, or Thorny Down in Wiltshire (Ellison 1987) have been considered as type sites. Further to the west the site of Trevisker in Cornwall has fulfilled a similar role (ApSimon and Greenfield 1972).

In Dorset and Wiltshire these settlements typically comprise several circular buildings which were accompanied by raised granaries, ponds and fence lines. Sometimes the settlements were enclosed, and some were also surrounded by field systems. In some cases barrows were sited nearby.

A growing number of other settlements can be placed alongside these type sites. There is a mixture of enclosed and unenclosed (or open) settlements and at several sites only a single building has been found. Examples from Dorset include Badbury (Papworth 1992), Chard Junction Quarry (Taylor and Preston

2004), Middle Farm, Dorchester bypass (RJC Smith *et al.* 1997), Down Farm (Barrett *et al.* 1991), Poundbury (Green 1987), Eldon's Seat (Cunliffe and Phillipson 1968), Middle Farm, Dorchester, (Butterworth and Gibson 2004), Rowden (PJ Woodward 1991a), and probably East of Corfe River on the Wytch Farm oilfield (Cox and Hearne 1991; Brück 1999a, 164). The settlement at Middle Farm, Dorchester, was apparently unenclosed; at least two round-houses were set within a field system. Part of what may have been another unenclosed settlement was buried by colluvium and so was not fully explored (Butterworth and Gibson 2004). Comparable settlements from Wiltshire include Bishops Canning Down (Gingell 1992), Boscombe Down East (Stone 1936) and, perhaps, Potterne (A Lawson 2000). Many earlier excavations at enclosed settlements surviving as earthworks examined the enclosures but paid comparatively little attention to the interior (for example, Piggott 1942; 1973a).

The record from Cornwall is also rich. As well as Trevisker (ApSimon and Greenfield 1972), excavations such as at Kynance Gate on the Lizard (I Thomas 1960) and Stannon Down (Mercer 1970) have been complemented over the past 20 years by excavations of settlements of Middle Bronze Age date such as Trethellan Farm, Newquay (Nowakowski 1991), Penhale Moor and Penhale Round (Nowakowski 1993; 1998; 2001), Callestick (AM Jones 1998–9a), Trevilson (AM Jones and Taylor 2004), Pawton (Framework Archaeology pers. comm.), Biscovillack (Cole pers. comm.) and Scarcewater (Andrew Jones pers. comm.). The basic morphology of many other houses has been established by field survey (such as that on Bodmin Moor, Johnson and Rose 1994).

On the Isles of Scilly, Bronze Age settlements on Nornour and Tresco (Butcher 1978; Taylor 2004) as well as East Porth, Samson, Porth Killier, St Agnes, Porth Cressa, St Mary's and Bonfire Carn, Bryher (Ratcliffe and Straker 1996) have also been investigated. On balance, the present evidence suggests that the Isles of Scilly were not permanently settled until the Bronze Age and that the few Neolithic artefacts so far represent seasonal pre-settlement visits from West Penwith (C Thomas 1985; Ratcliffe and Johns 2003).

There is also growing evidence from Devon. At the enclosed settlement of Dean Moor, in the Avon valley on Dartmoor, living, cooking and sleeping areas were identified within buildings, with evidence for grain processing, weaving, and perhaps pottery manufacture (Fox 1957; Fleming 1979, 125). Also on Dartmoor, the Shaugh Moor enclosure, which was completely excavated, contained five stone-walled circular buildings, all of which were, on the basis of phosphate levels and the small quantity of pottery, suggested to be houses. Several timber buildings were also identified (Wainwright and Smith 1980).

Individual buildings were excavated as part of the Dartmoor Reaves Project at Holne Moor, where they lay within the reave system. Both the stone-walled houses and the reaves were found to have had timber predecessors (Fleming 1988).

In east Devon, work in advance of the A30 Honiton to Exeter improvement examined part, or all, of enclosed settlements at Castle Hill, Patteson's Cross and Hayne Lane (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999). At Castle Hill a field system was associated with the settlement. The Hayne Lane Middle/Late Bronze Age settlement has been suggested to also have evidence for the pairing of a main house and a smaller outhouse of the sort proposed by Ellison (1981).

In contrast only one Bronze Age settlement in Somerset has been subjected to a large excavation, the coastal site of Brean Down where four phases of Bronze Age occupation were separated by layers of blown sand and hillwash material (Bell 1990). Two of the phases produced evidence of buildings, the earliest (Early Bronze Age) being an oval stone-walled hut, and in the later period two circular huts terraced into the hillside with walls partly of stone and partly of timber.

Other evidence for possible settlements in Somerset comes from finds of pottery and flint rather than structures: at Cannard's Grave (Shepton Mallet), Vinny Combe (West Quantoxhead) and several of the small sand "islands" on the northern edge of the Poldens. The ditches at Southay and Poundisford Park, and the pits at Lower Wilton Farm (Curry Rivel), Odcombe (near Ilchester) and Dimmer are all probably part of Bronze Age settlements but no evidence for houses has been found.

Bronze Age flint and pottery has also been found in Cheddar Gorge in caves such as Chelm's Combe, Soldier's Hole, Sun Hole and Gough's Cave, but there is nothing to suggest that they were occupied for any length of time. Elsewhere in Somerset the sites of the Iron Age hillforts at Ham Hill (Morris 1987) and Cadbury Castle (Barrett *et al.* 2000) have all produced Bronze Age finds.

### Larger enclosures

Nearly all Middle Bronze Age settlements can be regarded as individual farms or occasionally, as at Trethellan Farm, of villages. There is little firm evidence for larger settlements but it has been suggested that some larger enclosures acted as regional central places (Ellison 1981). Sites suggested for this category include Norton Camp (Ellis 1989) where a Middle Bronze Age enclosure was discovered defined by a bank and ditch, from which a hoard of eight bracelets and three axes was recovered, and Grimspound, Devon. However, the dating of Norton Camp is not well established (Needham and Ambers 1994). Other examples, though possibly of

Late Bronze Age date, have been suggested to include Hog Cliff Hill in Dorset (Ellison and Rahtz 1987) and Ogbourne Down West in Wiltshire (Piggott 1942) but the evidence is also slight (Needham and Ambers 1994). Apart from the size of the enclosures, there is little to distinguish these sites from other settlements.

### Settlement organisation

The pottery found in most of the settlements in Dorset and Wiltshire is of Deverel-Rimbury type and careful studies of the distribution of it and other finds has allowed the recognition of a recurrent pairing of a main house and a smaller outhouse or ancillary building (Ellison 1981; 1987). Building on this work, the meaning of space within settlements has been considered (for example by Ellison 1981 and Barrett 1994a) as has the significance of the, frequently short-lived, occupation(s) of them (Brück 1999a).

In east Devon the smaller building at Hayne Lane had evidence to suggest that it was used for storage, weaving and food preparation. In contrast, evidence for cooking seemed to be found in and outside the larger, probably residential, building (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999). In the transect across the east Devon landscape provided by the A30 Honiton to Exeter improvement, the frequent recovery of worked flint, albeit poorly dated, suggests the extensive use of river valleys throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. The charred plant remains from the Bronze Age settlements on this project suggest a regular shifting of settlements within a gradual sequence of woodland clearance, creation of pasture and conversion to arable.

The excavated data from Cornwall also indicate that round buildings were used in different ways (see for example, Trethellan Farm, Penhale Moor and Callestick). Across the lowland landscape, settlements vary in size and form and some, such as Penhale Moor and Gwithian, may have played particular roles in craft specialisation. At Gwithian the first evidence for the manufacture of pottery during the 2nd millennium BC has now been recognised (Nowakowski 2004).

Complete excavation of nucleated sites such as Trethellan Farm has also shown that any divisions between domestic and “ritual” life are artificial with clear evidence for ritual practices involving the closure of buildings and the incorporation of human remains into the “domestic domain” (Nowakowski 1991; 2001). These practices are also recorded at Gwithian (Nowakowski 1989; 2004).

Essentially most of these settlements were inhabited by families or extended families, who were involved with farming (animals and cereals), small-scale secondary metalworking (smithing) and participating in exchange networks with resources such as pottery and stone.

### Uplands

In the investigated upland zones of Cornwall a relationship between domestic places and natural rocky outcrops and prominent topographical features has been suggested in the work carried out by Tilley and Bender – principally at Leskernick (Bender *et al.* 1997). Work by Ivor Thomas at Kynance Gate on the Bronze Age and Iron Age roundhouse settlement in the 1950s discovered that the settlement appeared to be arranged around a central pillar or natural outcrop (I Thomas 1960).

In Cornwall there are larger clusters of roundhouses together with their fields, for example at Leskernick (Bender *et al.* 1997), Craddock Moor, Garrow, Stannon on Bodmin Moor (see Johnson and Rose 1994), Trewey Foage (Dudley 1941) and Chysauster (G Smith 1996) in West Penwith. The houses are typically less than 9 metres in diameter, have stone walls, paved thresholds and sometimes have stone-lined drains (such as at Stannon, Mercer 1970).

In comparison with lowland sites, artefacts on these moorland sites are generally notable for their absence. The economic picture would suggest a stock-based pastoral economy. In addition, upland settlements appear to have been left to ruin rather than be formally (and deliberately) abandoned (although see the evidence from Leskernick). There is no evidence for multiple floors, roundhouse refurbishment or middens; this may suggest seasonal land-use during the Middle Bronze Age for some areas of the south-western uplands.

A related pattern might be seen in the evidence from Dartmoor, but there some stone buildings supersede timber ones and a number of stone buildings, for example at Shaugh Moor, appear to have been rebuilt which would also be consistent with seasonal use (Wainwright and Smith 1980).

On Exmoor many roundhouses, sometimes in small settlements of four or five buildings within an enclosure, survive as earthworks (Riley and Wilson-North 2001). By analogy with Dartmoor some may be of Bronze Age date but none has been excavated.

Seasonal occupation may not, however, have been restricted to the uplands or coastal locations. The lowland settlement of Patteson’s Cross in east Devon yielded few finds and on the basis of these and environmental evidence it too may have been occupied seasonally (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, 217).

### Landscape organisation

For the Middle Bronze Age in Cornwall we have a picture of different landscape zones being occupied in slightly different ways which may be an indication of more varied settled lifestyles: in the uplands, the lowlands and in coastal settings. Equally we

have variety within these zones which suggests that lowland settlements also were varied. Compare and contrast Trethellan Farm (Nowakowski 1991), Gwithian (C Thomas 1958; Nowakowski 2004), Penhale Moor (Nowakowski 1993; 1998) and Callestick (AM Jones 1998–9a). At Gwithian there are well-preserved fields together with plough and spade marks (C Thomas 1958; 1970; Nowakowski 1989; 2004). In the upland zones, roundhouse settlements with fields and enclosures appear to indicate a degree of seasonal use with the absence of artefacts, such as at Stannon (Mercer 1970; AM Jones forthcoming) and possibly Leskernick (Barbara Bender pers. comm.).

Widespread and extensive field surveys at places such as Maen Castle, Sennen (Herring 1994), Bosigran, Zennor, (Herring 1987) and Chysauster, (G Smith 1996): all in West Penwith, together with East Moor on Bodmin Moor (Brisbane and Clews 1979) and St Keverne on the Lizard (Johns 1996), have shown the survival of some field enclosures and banks which are relict rectilinear and co-axial field systems of Bronze Age date. None, however, has been scientifically dated. AMS and radiometric dates from pollen cores, such as that from Rough Tor (Gearey *et al.* 2000a) and Northern Downs, Stannon (Tinsley in AM Jones forthcoming), from the Middle Bronze Age indicate a marked impact on land-use and change on the moorlands from a wooded environment to more open grassland. Most of the Dartmoor reaves are thought to date to this period (Fleming 1987; 1994). These linear land divisions demonstrate the extensive intake of land through boundaries that were set out, perhaps in single operations or piecemeal (Brück *et al.* 2003) over very large areas; some reave systems encompass hundreds of hectares. Although crops were grown on parts of the uplands of Dartmoor, most of the moor seems to have been used primarily for grazing. There is nothing comparable elsewhere in Devon (Silvester 1979), 43–4, though evidence was found for a small coaxial field system around the settlement at Castle Hill and some boundaries were also recorded at Patteson's Cross (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999).

In Dorset, Bronze Age field systems have been excavated at South Lodge (Barrett *et al.* 1991), Wytch Farm oilfield, East of Corfe River (Cox and Hearne 1991, 31, 44) where a round house may have stood within the field system, and at Bestwall where a number of apparently isolated houses have been found with a field system (Ladle 2003). The Middle Farm, Dorchester field system included fields, paddocks and droveways, as well as one or more open settlements. How many of the well-preserved celtic field systems that are often thought to date to the Iron Age originated in the Middle Bronze Age is unknown. In Wiltshire, the field systems on Salisbury Plain and Marlborough Downs are thought to originate at this time and it seems that some settlements were enclosed

(McOmish *et al.* 2002; A Lawson 2000, 251; Gingell 1992; McOmish 2005).

In Somerset the first evidence for major physical division of the landscape is only really apparent on Exmoor where the traces of the prehistoric landscape have not been masked or destroyed by later activity. Here large areas of prehistoric fields have been identified, consisting of small square or rectangular fields defined by low stone banks, or lynchets where they run across the slope. These field systems are present on Codsand Moor, Hoar Moor, Almsworthy Common, Withycombe Hill, Little Tom's Hill, Great Hill and Honeycombe Hill. They are often associated with small settlements consisting of four or five stone-walled roundhouses, sometimes all contained within an enclosure. None of these fields or settlements has been excavated, so it is not known exactly when they were laid out (Riley and Wilson-North 2001). However, from Codsand Moor and Hoar Moor, pollen evidence has shown that significant clearance of the local woodland for agriculture began in the Middle Bronze Age (Francis and Slater 1990; 1992). This, together with evidence for large-scale Bronze Age land division in elsewhere in the region, suggests that the fields and settlements on Exmoor also originated at this time.

Away from Exmoor, the evidence for land division in Somerset is limited to an earth bank on Brean Down and an extant hedged field-boundary at Shapwick that has been shown to have started as a ditch (and hedge?) in the Bronze Age (Gerrard and Aston forthcoming). Even the wetlands of central Somerset may have witnessed the construction of some physical boundaries, as at Harter's Hill on Queen's Sedgemoor where two or three rows of large oak piles have been traced from the edge of the hill for 100m into the prehistoric wetland with no sign of stopping. Pollen from the Somerset Levels shows that woodland cover was steadily decreasing during the Bronze Age as larger areas were cleared for agriculture. However, there are some short periods when woodland cover was re-established in some places.

### The wetlands

The broad valleys of central Somerset were a vast area of wetland during the Bronze Age and the analysis of plant and beetle remains preserved in the peat has allowed us to reconstruct the landscape in this area (Coles and Coles 1986). The Brue valley, where most of the archaeological investigation has taken place, was dominated by a raised bog formed from sphagnum moss, cotton grass and heather. At the eastern end of the valley, and to the south of the Polden Hills on Sedgemoor, the environment was more diverse with wet fen woodland, reedbeds and areas of open water surrounded by sedges in addition to the raised bog.

This wetland environment would have been an important source of food in the form of fish, wild-fowl and beavers, and would have provided reed for thatching, wood for making baskets, and otter and beaver pelts for winter clothing. To enter and cross the raised bogs it was frequently necessary to build wooden trackways. Over 19 groups of Bronze Age trackways that span the Bronze Age have been found in Somerset. Some of them are very short, designed to provide sure footing over particularly wet parts of the bog surface; others are several kilometres in length and run from the Polden ridge across the bog to the islands of Meare, Westhay and Burtle.

The most common way of making a trackway was simply to dump armfuls of brushwood down on the bog surface and peg them in place at the sides. The Tinney's Ground tracks are made in this way and represent many phases of trackway construction over a long period always going in the same direction. For other routes, such as the Eclipse track, narrow stems were specially selected to make large hurdle panels which were then laid flat on the bog surface. The most complex structure was the Meare Heath trackway. In the wettest areas on its route the track was built upon a layer of brushwood. On top of this, wooden beams were laid across the line of the track like railway sleepers, and were staked in place through holes at the end of the beams. Split planks were then laid on top of the "sleepers" to form the walking platform.

### Burnt mounds

While the interpretation of burnt mounds over much of Britain remains uncertain – cooking places or saunas – some examples in the South West occur within settlements such as South Lodge and Bestwall in Dorset where they do seem to have been cooking places. At Bestwall a range of pots, one of which was very large, appears to have been associated with cooking, perhaps feasting (Ladle and Woodward 2003).

## 6.1.3 Material Culture

### Pottery

In Cornwall Trevisker forms and fabrics dominate the entire Early through to Middle Bronze Age periods (see Parker Pearson 1990). Gabbro clays from the Lizard dominate the ceramic industry, although no extraction or production sites have yet been identified with the exception of the evidence for manufacture now recognised at Gwithian (Nowakowski 2004). The use of Trevisker motifs on vessels for funerary, ceremonial and domestic purposes reveals a very dominant cultural tradition from the Isles of Scilly to Devon. Co-existing with the use of gabbro clays, other fabrics such as local clays and tempers are used for pot manufacture. These have been recognised in funerary

vessels such as that from the Early Bronze Age Highgate ritual enclosure (Nowakowski 1998) and granitic wares in domestic pottery assemblages from Penhale Moor (Nowakowski 1998) and Stannon (AM Jones forthcoming).

The relationships between the well-defined Trevisker and Deverel-Rimbury pottery traditions are not well understood. Deverel-Rimbury pottery is well known in Dorset but rare in east Devon though it does occur at Axminster (Quinnell in Weddell *et al.* 1993, 89–92) and assemblages at Castle Hill and the two separate enclosures of Chard Junction Quarry I and II in north Dorset have a mixture of Deverel-Rimbury and Trevisker characteristics (Laidlaw and Mepham 1999; Taylor and Preston 2004). Similarly Trevisker related wares in Somerset, notably at Brean Down (Unit 5B) and Norton Fitzwarren (Woodward in Ellis 1989) also have some characteristics that relate to Deverel-Rimbury wares. Some of these sites also span the transition to plainer Late Bronze Age wares, for example, Castle Hill and Hayne Lane and Chard Junction Quarry I.

In Gloucestershire Middle and Late Bronze Age pottery containing a Malvernian derived fabric has been recovered from Thornhill Farm (Jennings *et al.* 2004) and similar material has also been identified in sites at Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Sandy Lane. These show exploitation and exchange of the products from the Malvern source much earlier than previously appreciated and the dispersal of its products over a large area.

### Flint and Stone

As the Bronze Age progressed flint use became increasingly utilitarian and there is less evidence for special treatment in the Middle Bronze Age (Ford *et al.* 1984; Young and Humphrey 1999). Tool types include a range of scrapers (thumbnail and others), arrowheads (transverse, barbed and tanged), knives and points, but small-blade production continued on a more substantial degree than found in contemporary flint-rich regions. Large "special" forms, such as daggers, are almost non-existent (Lawson-Jones pers. comm.). Most material is likely to have been made from local sources, and chert was also used widely (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, 210–11).

Stone axes ceased to be manufactured and although querns become more frequent as site finds, reflecting the increasing emphasis on cultivation, they have not yet been the subject of a systematic study. Other stone objects include whetstones, rubbers and spindle whorls, as well as metalworking moulds. In so far as it can be assessed, a wide range of stones was used for these objects. A fragment of a granite quern from Cornwall has been found at Bestwall on the Isle of Purbeck (Ladle 2003, 271). Cup-marked stones have

also been found occasionally in “domestic” contexts such as at Trethellan Farm, Cornwall (Nowakowski 1991).

### **Metalwork**

Large numbers of bronze objects have been found in the South West and have been the subject of many studies that have examined the data from different perspectives, often chronological and typological or metallurgical. Notwithstanding the quality of many of these studies (for example, Pearce 1983), they have often been poorly integrated with other areas of investigation, such as the study of other aspects of material culture and the use and deposition of the objects. Nor have the depositional patterns of metalwork in relation to sites and landscapes, including natural features, been explored in detail in the region. The Portable Antiquities Scheme has the potential to contribute to this kind of study, but the data collected to date is, as yet, difficult to access.

There are many regional variations in metalworking but the Middle Bronze Age Somerset tradition thrived to the extent that the main metalworking style in England at this time is called the Taunton phase (Needham 1996). Within Somerset this tradition is represented by numerous hoards from places including Edington, Weare, Spaxton, Wedmore, Badgworth, Norton Fitzwarren, Bishop’s Lydeard and Taunton. This phase has, in the past, been called the Ornament Horizon because of the large numbers of metal personal ornaments found in the hoards, including twisted torcs, arm rings, bracelets, finger rings and quoit-head pins (MA Smith 1959). However, the variability within metalworking deposition, even within the South West, is shown by the fact that only a single Middle Bronze Age hoard is recorded from Gloucestershire, from Down Ampney.

Much of this metalwork appears to have been deliberately placed, often as votive offerings. Settlement finds are less frequent but because of the chronological associations that they provide, considerable weight has been placed on them, for example the material excavated by Pitt-Rivers at South Lodge (Barrett *et al.* 1991). Fragmentary copper alloy objects are regular, but rare, finds in domestic contexts for example at Bishops Canning Down, Dean Bottom and Thorny Down in Wiltshire (Ellison 1987; Gingell 1992) and Trethellan Farm (Nowakowski 1991) and Penhale Moor in Cornwall (Nowakowski 1993; 1998). At the last site, small-scale secondary metalworking is likely to have taken place. More unusually, complete bracelets had been placed in the closing deposit at Bestwall, Dorset (Ladle and Woodward 2003).

In Somerset, much of the isolated metalwork has been found in river valleys and can be seen as part of a water-associated cult that became increasingly

important towards the Late Bronze Age. The large hoard discovered during peat digging at Edington was placed in a wetland as the wooden box that contained it survived. In contrast there is a noticeable lack of material from the free flowing, and partly tidal, River Severn, with only two metalwork finds recorded from the river in Gloucestershire. This is in contrast with Worcestershire and Shropshire, where more material has been recovered from the river channel (Robin Jackson *pers. comm.*).

Although Cornwall is rich in sources of tin and copper there is currently no direct evidence of exploitation during the Bronze Age, although hammerstones, principally from museum collections, indicate extraction and mining. Native copper is visible on the cliff faces of the Lizard which suggests that it could have been mined as well as collected from the surface.

Broken stone moulds (found at Trethellan Farm and Gwithian) reveal that small-scale bronze working was a feature of village life (Nowakowski 1991; 2004). A cache of cassiterite (tin) nodules was found at Trevisker while at Tredarvah near Penzance, Trevisker pottery together with scraps of copper alloy objects were found together within a site interpreted as a working hollow (Pearce and Padley 1977). A hollow at Trenowah was associated with Trevisker style pottery and small pits/post-holes containing much cassiterite (Johns forthcoming).

Evidence for metalworking was also recovered from Area F of excavations at the Tewkesbury Eastern Relief Road (Walker *et al.* 2004) where spearhead moulds along with waste material were deposited in a pit.

Wider contacts with continental Europe that may have brought finished copper alloy objects to Britain are evidenced by the two Bronze Age shipwrecks off Salcombe, Devon (Muckleroy 1981). The cargo of one of these boats contained swords that appear to have been made in France. Despite considerable loss through the recycling of objects, goldwork is a feature of the south-west peninsula and hoards comprising bracelets are known from Towdnack, Gulval (Middle Bronze Age) and Morvah (Late Bronze Age). The current consensus is that most prehistoric gold objects from Cornwall are of Irish origin (Eogan 1994).

### **Other materials**

Cylindrical clay loom weights are found regularly on settlements, suggesting that weaving was practised widely. Bone points and awls suggest that leather working was also a routine activity. Rare evidence for organic containers comes from the wooden vessels from the Wilsford shaft in Wiltshire (Ashbee *et al.* 1989), interpreted either as a well or as a votive shaft. There is not yet a systematic study of the exploitation of shale from Kimmeridge in prehistory but frag-

ments are found on settlement sites including evidence for shale working at Gwithian (Nowakowski 2004), mirroring the granitic quern from Bestwall Quarry in Dorset and the fragment of shale and Trevisker pot from Kent (Gibson *et al.* 1997).

#### 6.1.4 Farming

In addition to the remains of fields, plough marks, and querns, and increased quantities of colluvium indicating increased cultivation, the evidence for charred plant remains increases in the Middle Bronze Age. Despite this, the quantity of these remains is still small and the number of the sites that have yielded them is also small and their locations scattered. As a result the date and extent of transitions between important crops of cultivation is not yet well understood.

##### Cereals and plant remains

The principal crops of cultivation were the hulled wheats of emmer and spelt, but emmer is found less frequently in the eastern part of the region, in Dorset and Wiltshire. Spelt wheat can now be seen to have been introduced during this period. Within southern England as a whole, naked barley was replaced by hulled barley at some point in the Middle–Late Bronze Age but it seems likely that naked barley may have continued to be cultivated in the South West for longer than elsewhere (Campbell and Straker 2003). One of the best assemblages from a settlement is from Trethellan Farm where the remains of naked barley and hulled barley together with wheat, oats, small quantities of flax, and the occasional celtic bean were found (Straker in Nowakowski 1991).

This range of cereals has also been found in smaller quantities at other lowland sites in Cornwall, such as Trevilson (J Jones in AM Jones and Taylor 2004) where a large range of wild plants, including seeds of hedge mustard (*Sisymbrium officinale* (L.) Scop) which may have been purposefully gathered for its oil producing qualities, were identified (Straker in Nowakowski 1991). Elsewhere in Cornwall, indirect pollen of the oats or wheat type (*Avena-Triticum*) identified from a peat sequence from the De Lank river and dated to the Early/Middle Bronze Age shows that areas on the north-western edges of Bodmin Moor may have been cultivated (AM Jones and Tinsley 1999–2000).

At Castle Hill, the dominant cereal was emmer, with spelt (which has often thought to have been a Late Bronze Age introduction) and bread wheat also recorded, as were flax and peas. Possible uncultivated sources of food were hazel, sloe, bramble and pignut (Clapham in Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999). A single grain of barley was recovered from Chard Junction Quarry I in Dorset. Little could be said of the small assemblage from Down Farm, Dorset (just 11 identifiable cereal grains) beyond that it contained wheat

and hulled barley (Barrett *et al.* 1991) and this small quantity is typical of other sites on the chalk.

On Middle Bronze Age settlements there is little clear evidence for the storage of cereals in pits. In Cornwall the wide range of vessel types in the domestic Trevisker series would seem to indicate that storage within pots, or other vessels made from perishable materials, was the cultural norm. This is supported by lipid analysis of the Trethellan Farm assemblage that indicates the importance of dairying (Copley *et al.* 2005). Three and four post structures, which may well have been used for storing grain, have been found at a number of settlements: Castle Hill and Hayne Lane in east Devon, at Chard Quarry Junction II and Down Farm in Dorset, and at Thorny Down.

##### Livestock

The varied geology of the region means that the preservation of animal bone varies markedly. In Cornwall bone is generally poorly preserved at Bronze Age sites and in Devon it is all but absent. Where bone has survived, such as in Middle Bronze Age contexts at Trethellan Farm (Nowakowski 1991) and Gwithian, (C Thomas 1958) it indicates animal husbandry with cattle, sheep/goat and pig. Wild and even partial domesticates such as Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) have also been found in these contexts. The gathering of wild marine resources, molluscs and fish, is a feature of coastal settlements such as Gwithian and to a lesser degree at Trethellan Farm.

At Brean Down the domesticated animals were mainly cattle, sheep and pigs in addition to a small number of dogs, horses and a single cat. Wild food included deer, shellfish, birds and fish. At Middle Farm, Dorchester bypass, sheep were slightly more frequent than cattle, and these two species dominated the assemblage (RJC Smith *et al.* 1997) but not far away at Down Farm, cattle predominated followed by sheep. Pig were uncommon and deer rare. Although the sample was small, it was suggested that dairying may have been important in cattle husbandry (Barrett *et al.* 1991) and the evidence for this is much stronger at Bishops Canning Down and Dean Bottom on the Marlborough Downs (Gingell 1992, 141–2).

##### Fishing and marine resources

Large quantities of marine resources (shellfish and estuarine species) have been excavated in Bronze Age contexts at Gwithian as has a large quantity of worked bone points and needles that provides indirect evidence for fishing along with waisted, elongated, flat pebble-tools that have been interpreted as line-winders. This would imply both deep-sea as well as shoreline fishing going on at the site (Nowakowski 2004). At Brean Down on the Severn estuary, shellfish and fish were also eaten. In general, fish bones do

not preserve well so it is likely that they are under-represented, even on soils that preserve mammal bone reasonably well.

The evidence for saltmaking at Brean Down is amongst the earliest in Britain (Bell 1990) while some fragments of briquetage have been identified within the Bronze Age layers at Gwithian (Nowakowski 2004) and some probable fragments have been found at the Trevilson roundhouse (AM Jones and Taylor 2004).

### Transport

It is likely, given the movement of raw materials and objects of stone, flint and chert, shale, gabbro clays, copper and tin, that the sea and rivers constituted major routeways during this entire period. No evidence of boats has been found in the region, though elsewhere in Britain sewn-plank boats have been shown to date to this time (Van de Noort 2006). That the sea was certainly used for wider contacts is shown by the two Bronze Age shipwrecks off Salcombe (Muckleroy 1981), the cargo of one containing swords that appear to have been made in France.

### 6.1.5 Mortuary Practices

Middle Bronze Age funerary practices flow from those of the Early Bronze Age, with cremation burials becoming frequent. There is a distinction between the south-west peninsula and areas to the east.

In Cornwall and Devon virtually all of the radio-carbon dates currently available from barrows fall within the Early Bronze Age; there are no dates from the adjoining parts of west Dorset and west Somerset. Only a very small number of burials (3) have been dated to the Middle Bronze Age: a small barrow at Batton Down, a small ring cairn at Swallowmead, and a flat burial at Rose Ash, all on Exmoor. However, there is also a small number of what may be typologically late Trevisker style vessels known from Cornwall, Devon and Somerset that are not recorded as having come from barrows, yet their complete condition suggests that they derive from burials.

Although the chronology of Trevisker and related wares continues to emerge, and the number of radio-carbon dated sites is small, there is a clear emphasis on the Early Bronze Age for Cornish barrows (Christie 1988; Quinnell 1988; 1997).

Many ring cairns, not all of which need be funerary, are associated with barrow cemeteries. A ring ditch at Markham Lane, Exeter belongs to this period (Jarvis 1976), as may others (Simpson *et al.* 1989), and these may be the earthen equivalents of ring cairns.

This stands in contrast to the well-known barrow and flat cemeteries associated with Deverel-Rimbury pottery in Dorset. Here urned and unurned crema-

tion burials, often in large numbers, were frequently made to the south and east of barrows, many of which date to the Early Bronze Age. Well known sites include the eponymous cemeteries, and Knighton Heath, Latch Farm and Simons Ground, the last three located near Poole and Christchurch harbours (Piggott 1938; Calkin 1962; Barrett *et al.* 1991; White 1982). Similar evidence comes from Wiltshire, where the burials were sometimes accompanied by biconical urns, such as at Shrewton 5a (Green and Rollo-Smith 1984) and Woodford G12 (Gingell 1988). Although less frequent, there is comparable evidence from Gloucestershire where the cremation burials at the cemetery around the margin of Bevan's Quarry round barrow (O'Neil 1967) were contained in Deverel-Rimbury style urns. A small enclosed cremation cemetery at Shorncote Quarry (Barclay *et al.* 1995) also contained at least 15 Deverel-Rimbury Bucket Urns. Some of these cemeteries are in close proximity to contemporary settlements (Bradley 1981).

The same might be thought to apply in Somerset but there have been no significant excavations in the last 30 years. Surviving barrows, which can only be surmised to have continued in use in to the Middle Bronze Age, are mainly concentrated on Mendip, Exmoor and the Quantock Hills, in addition to a small group from the Blackdown Hills.

However, not all the people of the Middle Bronze Age were buried in barrows. Apparently isolated unurned cremation burials are also found, such as at Thomas Hardye School, Dorchester (RJC Smith 2000), while unaccompanied crouched inhumations have been identified at Middle Farm, Dorchester bypass (RJC Smith *et al.* 1997, 80), in Cranborne Chase (Barrett *et al.* 1991, 173–4, 211–4) and not far away at Old Sarum (Powell *et al.* 2005). At Mendip Lodge Wood, Priddy there were 70 to 80 pits many of which contained cremation burials, some of which were accompanied by urns (Read 1923; 1924). These flat burials, both cremation and inhumation, may represent a more common but less easily detected rite. That there were other ways of disposing of the dead is suggested by the recovery of Bronze Age skulls from the Severn Estuary, in particular in the intertidal zone on the Welsh side of the river (Bell *et al.* 2000). On the English side, a skull was recovered from Avonmouth Docks in the early 20th century, which may have been associated with the deposition of a rapier (Bell *et al.* 2000, 72). The recovery of skulls, the most recognisable part of the human body, from wetland and riverine contexts in the Middle and Late Bronze Age is becoming increasingly recognised across Britain and appears to have formed one aspect of mortuary practices during this period (Wells and Hodgkinson 2001).

## 6.2 Late Bronze Age 1000–c.700 BC

### 6.2.1 Chronology

The Late Bronze Age has been defined primarily in relation to metalwork (Needham 1996) and there is an abundance of metalwork hoards. In some ways this can overemphasise changes from the Middle Bronze Age as there is much continuity. However, the Late Bronze Age is less well-known and this assessment attempts to briefly highlight the differences from the Middle Bronze Age.

In part these differences are due to the weakly developed chronology of the phase which makes material of this period difficult to identify, and in many ways this is a product of changes in funerary practices. In contrast to the Early and Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age burials with accompanying grave goods are very rare. Part of the explanation also relates to changes in pottery styles to less distinctive pots. The term “Post Deverel-Rimbury Plain Wares” is dull, and so are many of the pots it describes. It is also possible that pottery was used less extensively than in the Middle Bronze Age.

Many settlements also appear to have been unenclosed, making them harder to locate, while in the uplands of Cornwall, and perhaps Devon also, there was an apparent “abandonment” c.1000 BC, possibly due to a major change in the organisation of land tenure resulting in the creation of “commons” of upland grazing, perhaps caused by climatic deterioration (Herring forthcoming; Quinnell 1988; 1994).

As a result there are few closed and well-dated groups on which to build a dated sequence of pots. Such a sequence is now slowly being established from settlement contexts but there are few long stratigraphic sequences that have what would now be regarded as sufficient radiocarbon dates. The Late Bronze Age sequence at Cadbury Castle, is well documented and studied (Barrett *et al.* 2000), but it was excavated before radiocarbon dating became routine, while the well-stratified sequence at Brean Down also has relatively few dates.

### 6.2.2 Landscape

The apparent abandonment of the uplands in Cornwall is echoed in changes on the chalk downlands of Wessex. In Wiltshire, large ditches and banks that often run for great distances, the so-called “Wessex Linear Ditches”, cut across Middle Bronze Age field systems (Bradley *et al.* 1994; McOmish *et al.* 2002; Birbeck 2006). Small enclosures that are sometimes associated with the linear ditches, and which contain few features, may be cattle pounds, but morphology is not a reliable guide as some sites that had been thought to be “cattle kraals” have proved on excava-

tion to be settlements (Gingell 1992). It is possible that, in part, these changes may reflect a greater emphasis on cattle. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the role of cattle as a means of displaying status in the Late Bronze Age (for example, by Barrett *et al.* 1991) and the very large faunal assemblage from Potterne is dominated by cattle bones (A Lawson 2000). Due to the small sample available, it is not possible to identify any changes from the crops grown in the Middle Bronze Age, though it is possible that the change from naked barley to hulled barley happened during the Late Bronze Age.

### 6.2.3 Settlement

For the reasons given above, Late Bronze Age settlements have proved difficult to identify. However, in Cornwall, an ongoing review of pottery by Henrietta Quinnell is identifying more Late Bronze Age sites, some of which such as Maen Castle, St Michael’s Mount and Trencrom are defended, or at least enclosed. Recent work at Threemilestone near Truro has also produced evidence of Late Bronze Age activity but in a lowland and undefended/unenclosed situation (Gossip and Jones forthcoming).

A Late Bronze Age radiocarbon date and pottery from Trevelgue Head indicates activity in coastal zones during the earlier part of the 1st millennium BC (Nowakowski and Quinnell forthcoming). There is also a Late Bronze Age pit at Killibury, immediately preceding the first phase of enclosure (Miles 1975a), and a Late Bronze Age phase at Bodrifty (Dudley 1956), suggested by some of the pottery, which both indicate activity that has otherwise been hard to characterise. There are similar difficulties in interpreting the remains at Dainton (Silvester 1979; Needham *et al.* 1980) and at Mount Batten, Plymouth, where the settlement evidence is fragmentary, despite the large quantity of contemporary metalwork from the site (Cunliffe 1988). There is also some evidence for buildings, and associated metalwork from Cadbury Castle which predates the establishment of the hillfort (Barrett *et al.* 2000). The Late Bronze Age activity at Brean Down on the Somerset coast is well published and to be understood in the wider context of the exploitation of coastal resources (Bell 1990; Bell *et al.* 2000). Eldon’s Seat in Dorset also lies close to the coast and has a similarly long occupation sequence, stretching back to the Middle Bronze Age (Cunliffe and Phillipson 1968).

Extensive excavations provide some hints as to what might be expected in some inland areas. At Shorncote, activity with numerous circular buildings extended over 10ha with no apparent single focal point (Hearne and Heaton 1994; Hearne and Adam 1999). In contrast there is little evidence for settlements on the Cotswold limestone. This may relate

to differing practices in the two areas: the upland being used for seasonal grazing, for example, but the relationships between the upland and lowland sites of this period are not well understood. The four round houses at Dunch Hill, were unenclosed (Andrews 2006) and, in what may be a similar disposition to Shorncote, a small number of seemingly isolated round houses have been found at Coburg Road, Dorchester (RJC Smith *et al.* 1992).

A few well-defined sites are known. In Devon, the enclosed Hayne Lane Middle/Late Bronze Age settlement has been suggested to show evidence for the pairing of a house and smaller outhouse (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999), while the enclosed settlement at Chard Junction Quarry II appears to have been similar. At both Hayne Lane and Chard Junction Quarry I it was difficult to distinguish Middle and Late Bronze Age phases, though whether this was due to one single, long, phase or separate but identical phases deliberately sited one on the other is not clear.

Elsewhere in southern England, the Late Bronze Age origin of some hillforts has been demonstrated but in the South West the situation at sites that have been suggested as large enclosures is not clear. The internal arrangement of the enclosures at Hog Cliff Hill (Ellison and Rahtz 1987) is not well understood (Needham and Ambers 1994) and there is little material that is certainly pre-Iron Age.

What appears, on the evidence currently available, to be a quite localised type of site is represented by a distinctive series of midden sites between Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs. These contain prodigious quantities of material. At Potterne, the most fully examined of these sites, excavation of less than 1% of the 3.5ha deposit, which is up to 2m thick, yielded over 1 tonne of pottery and 135,000 animal bones. The preferred interpretation of the Potterne deposit is as the build up of material in cattle pounds, including the deliberate dumping of settlement debris, over a period of 500 years (A Lawson 2000). An explicitly ritual interpretation has been preferred for the vast quantities of similar material at nearby East Chisenbury, where the deposit covers 3.5–4ha and is 200m across (G Brown *et al.* 1994; McOmish 1996). Although similar sites are known elsewhere in Britain, the only concentration of them is in north Wiltshire.

#### 6.2.4 Burials

Cremation was practised less regularly in the Late Bronze Age, and formal inhumation burial is rare. There are, however, indications that methods of disposing of the dead which included the burial of only parts of the body, and which are well-known in the Iron Age, were practised in the Late Bronze Age. Recent work also hints at a greater variety in mortuary practices.

Fragmentary human remains have been found in Late Bronze Age contexts at Dainton (Needham *et al.* 1980: 179), Brean Down (Bell 1990, 238), Burderop Down and Rockley Down (Gingell 1992), East Chisenbury (G Brown *et al.* 1994) and Potterne (A Lawson 2000) and at Chalbury Camp (Whitley 1943, 103) and perhaps Down Farm (Barrett *et al.* 1991, 214). These fragmentary remains are thought to derive from excarnation and similar finds are known from a number of sites that date to the Bronze/Iron Age transition with perhaps a slight emphasis on those of Iron Age date (Brück 1995).

Occasional inhumation burials that may date to the Late Bronze Age are also known, such as at Tinneys Lane, Sherborne (Pearce and Reed 2003) and a very poorly recorded burial at Hendford Hill, Yeovil (Taylor and Collingwood 1926, 231–2).

The peat of the Somerset moors is normally so acidic it destroys bone material, but at Greylake on Sedgemoor it is less acidic and human bones from the Late Bronze Age have been found accompanied by sheep jaw bones, pottery and a bronze axe in what was then an area of shallow water, surrounded by sedges and reeds. The site was marked out by oak posts which projected above the water.

At Huntsman's Quarry (Patrick Foster Associates 2000), the primary fills of two small penannular ring ditches (external diameters 5.25 and 6.1m) contained fragments of human bone dated to 1260–840 cal BC (GU-4782) and 1270–910 cal BC (GU-4745). The dates encompass the Middle and Late Bronze Age but as Middle Bronze Age cremation burials are known from Gloucestershire, for example at Shorncote where a similar, but undated, small ring ditch was also found (diameter 4m, Barclay *et al.* 1995), a date in the Late Bronze Age for Huntsman's Quarry remains seems possible.

### 6.2.5 The material world

#### Pottery

Late Bronze Age pottery is less highly decorated and less abundant than Middle Bronze Age material. Known as Post-Deverel-Rimbury Plain Wares, these pots are often simple and large bag- or bucket-shaped urns. They are best known from Brean Down Unit 4, Cadbury Castle, and Potterne, which provides some of the largest stratified groups. In contrast, the quantity of pottery from the extensively excavated sites at Hayne Lane and Shorncote is small, suggesting that vessels made from wood or leather may have been more important in this period than in the Middle Bronze Age. A very rare, and large, find of potting debris was found at Tinneys Lane, Sherborne (Pearce and Reed 2003).

### Other categories of material

Most of the materials used in the Middle Bronze Age such as querns, whetstones, bone tools and bangles made from Kimmeridge shale, continued to be used. Flint was used throughout the Late Bronze Age but, in common with the rest of southern England, it was less sophisticated than in earlier periods (Ford *et al.* 1984) and seemingly less frequent. Amber beads, of material from East Anglia or further afield, appear more regularly and glass beads, perhaps imported from continental Europe, appear for the first time but are very rare (A Lawson 2000). There is evidence, in the form of briquetage, for Late Bronze Age saltmaking on Lundy (Quinnell 2004b).

### Metalworking

As with the Early Bronze Age, tin streaming and working are assumed to have been practised, though actual evidence is again slight (Pearce 1983; Penhalurick 1986). However, metallurgical analyses suggest that metal from the South West continued to form part of the metal pool along with metal brought from across the Channel, the latter demonstrated most clearly by numerous finds of imported Armorican axes which may have served as ingots or a form of currency (Northover in Cunliffe 1988). In Cornwall, copper ingots are known from Kenidjack, Gillan (Tylecote 1967) and St Michael's Mount (Herring 2000).

The deposition of large quantities of metalwork in hoards is a characteristic of the Late Bronze Age. A Somerset metalworking tradition again gives a name to one of the metalworking phases: the Stogursey phase. The type-hoard was found in 1870 and consisted of 20 sword fragments, 29 socketed axes, 37 fragments of socketed axes, two palstaves, two gouges, two daggers, a chape, 20 complete or fragmentary spearheads and 34 bronze fragments.

Other hoards include the one from the interior of the hillfort at Nottingham Hill, Gloucestershire which appears to have been deposited in a wooden box (Hall and Gingell 1974).

Many very valuable artefacts, such as the two swords from Pitney, Somerset, were undoubtedly deposited in very wet environments. It is only at Grey-lake that a structure has been found with such metalwork, but this may be because the bronze objects from the river valleys are almost always chance finds rather than from excavations. The most impressive recent discovery has been the large ceremonial bronze shield excavated at the foot of Cadbury Castle hillfort. It had been ritually "killed" by repeatedly driving another object through it (Coles *et al.* 1999).

Metalworking can be demonstrated at Mount Batten, Plymouth (Northover in Cunliffe 1988) and a single cassiterite pebble was found at Dean Moor (Fox 1957) but fragments of the clay moulds used

in casting are being identified increasingly frequently in settlement contexts. Sometimes these form large deposits, as at Dainton (Needham *et al.* 1980), but more frequently they are represented by a few pieces, often for swords or spears. Occasionally they appear to have been buried deliberately, as at Threemilestone (Gossip and Jones forthcoming), but they can also be refuse, for example at Threemilestone (Gossip and Jones forthcoming), Tinneys Lane, Sherborne, Sandy Lane, Leckhampton and Shornocote (Leah and Young 2001; Hearne and Adam 1999).

Stone moulds also continued to be used and are occasionally found on settlement sites, for example at Burderop Down, Wiltshire (Gingell 1992; Needham 1981). Fragments of copper alloy objects occur in small quantities on many settlements, such as Burderop Down, while gold objects found at Brean Down and Potterne reflect an increase in the archaeological visibility of gold at this time. At Potterne, small numbers of lead and iron objects were found in Late Bronze Age contexts and provide evidence that iron working was beginning in this period. The iron objects are often fragmentary, and also small, making their uses difficult to identify. However, it was not until well into the Iron Age that iron was used regularly for large objects.

## 6.3 The Iron Age (c.700 BC–AD 43)

Throughout the 20th century Iron Age archaeology in the South West was predominantly focused on forts, reflecting a wider perception of these as the focus of Iron Age settlement and social organisation. Although resulting in substantial research on these monuments there was far less investigation of lowland sites and this is reflected in the often limited discussion of non-hillfort settlement in surveys of the 1980s.

Since 1990, one of the major impacts of PPG16 on the archaeology of the 1st millennium BC has been to shift the geographic focus of archaeological investigation and to demonstrate a significant increase in the quantity of evidence when compared to the Bronze Age. As a result, the differences within the region, for example, settlement form and land use, have become more apparent and have been set out in the recent assessment *Understanding the British Iron Age: An Agenda for Action*, prepared by the Iron Age Research Seminar (Haselgrove *et al.* 2001).

### 6.3.1 Chronology

In contrast to the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age chronology is relatively well-established, drawing on a mixture of pottery, metalwork and radiocarbon dates. Most recent syntheses have divided the Iron Age into three phases: Early, Middle and Late (Cunliffe 2005).

However, the chronology of the 1st millennium BC is far from straight-forward, partly due to the differing pottery classifications that have been used for major assemblages. Additionally, in many instances, variations in the adoption and use of material culture, settlement patterns and landscape differences mean that chronological boundaries are likely to vary from region to region and even site to site.

The plateau in the radiocarbon calibration curve in this period creates further problems, with dates from early 1st-millennium BC sites that are often relatively broad, spanning many centuries.

Determining the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age is also more difficult than might first appear. Recent reviews suggest the Late Bronze Age ended c.800 BC with an “earliest” Iron Age from 800–600 BC (Needham *et al.* 1998; Needham 2007) although there are, however, seemingly many similarities between the two periods, primarily in the forms of settlements; this may also account for some of the difficulties in identifying Late Bronze Age activity.

A two-fold division of the Iron Age into Earlier and Later has been used by a number of recent writers. This is largely due to a need to revise the dating of the transition from the Early to the Middle Iron Age. For example, assessment of radiocarbon dates associated with pottery of “Middle Iron Age form” from the Severn-Cotswold area indicates that the traditional date of c.450–400 BC for the transition may be too early and that a date around the middle of the 4th century BC is more realistic (Moore 2007). Similar comments have been made about Cornwall where Quinnell divided the Cornish Iron Age into an Earlier Iron Age, to c.400 BC, and a Later Iron Age (Quinnell 1986, 112).

Aspects of settlement also changed from the 4th century BC onwards. Smaller enclosed settlements appeared, as did more ostentatiously defended forts, with the less complex early hillforts apparently declining. All of these changes indicate potentially widespread changes in society around the 4th century BC. This modification of the chronology of the Iron Age between an Earlier and Later Iron Age also reflects a redefinition of the beginning of the Middle Iron Age in other parts of southern Britain (Cunliffe 2005).

This period from the 4th century BC to the 1st century AD is increasingly referred to as the “Later” Iron Age rather than the Middle Iron Age identifying the “Late” Iron Age only as a specific, cultural element of the 1st centuries BC/AD. The reasons for this are the continued use of Middle Iron Age hand-made pottery forms into the late 1st century AD in many areas and the limited presence of what have traditionally been seen as Late Iron Age attributes, such as imported Roman pottery. It is increasingly

apparent that recent definitions of the Late Iron Age largely reflect changes in the south-east of England which were, in many ways a cultural phenomenon, restricted to a selection of communities, as much as a chronological shift.

For the purposes of this assessment the end of the Iron Age is taken to be marked by the Roman conquest, though both the date and nature of conquest varied across the South West, as did the processes of Romanisation (both before and after the Conquest).

The quality of local chronologies to assess the extent of these changes in the South West varies markedly, partly due to the variable size of collections (Morris and Champion 2001). Dorset has produced a number of key assemblages, such as the Early Iron Age material from Eldon’s Seat (Cunliffe and Phillipson 1968) but perhaps more importantly, large groups from sites that were occupied over several centuries, such as Gussage All Saints (Wainwright 1979a), Hengistbury Head (Cunliffe 1987) and Maiden Castle (Sharples 1991a). Cadbury Castle provides a similar key sequence in the south-east of Somerset (Barrett *et al.* 2000; Clarke 2001), complementing to some extent the Bronze Age sequence from Brean Down (Bell 1990). Early material from Wiltshire has been well studied on account of the pottery from the distinctive midden sites such as All Cannings Cross (Cunnington 1923), East Chisenbury (G Brown *et al.* 1994; McOmish 1996) and Potterne (A Lawson 2000) which straddle the Bronze Age–Iron Age transition.

The quality of absolute dating is, however, varied. There is an increasing number of radiocarbon dates from Dorset, Gloucestershire and Somerset, some of which provide useful short sequences (for example, Mudd *et al.* 1999), but there are no well-dated stratified sequences of dates, and there are very few dates from Devon (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999). In Cornwall there are also small groups of dates from sites such as Trevisker (ApSimon and Greenfield 1972), Penhale Point (G Smith 1988a), Carn Euny (Christie 1978), Trenowah (Johns forthcoming) and the Bryher (Johns 2002–3).

These can now be complemented by a dated sequence from Trelvague Head that spans the entire range of south-western decorated wares. This is the largest Iron Age assemblage in Cornwall and the 19 dates, most of which fall within the 4th to 1st centuries and are all on carbonised residues on pots, form the largest group from a south-western site. The dating of the Trelvague assemblage represents a major advance in our current understanding of pottery manufacture and technology in the region (Nowakowski and Quinnell forthcoming).



**Figure 6.1:** Iron Age roundhouse being excavated at Threemilestone, Truro in 2004. Photo: James Gossip, Cornwall County Council.

### 6.3.2 Settlements

While Iron Age studies have traditionally focused on hillforts, it has become increasingly clear that southern Britain was primarily a land of farmers. Wherever the environment could support it, the landscape was typically one of arable, pasture and managed woodland, dotted with farmsteads. When viewed in relation to the Bronze Age, there is more diversity across the region and the differences may be seen more clearly.

#### Cornwall

The characteristic Cornish Iron Age sites are enclosed settlements known as rounds, open settlements such as Chysauster and Carn Euny, subterranean passages known as fogous, cliff castles, hillforts with stone defences such as Chun and Trencrom or with multiple widely spaced ramparts such as the two sites called Castle an Dinas and also Warbstowbury.

Settlement studies have focused on prominent enclosures such as rounds, hillforts and cliff castles rather than the less easily detected unenclosed settlements. However, evidence from West Penwith suggests that there were also large numbers of open

settlements; a suggestion borne out by the results of the National Mapping Programme which has identified several likely open settlements in the Camel estuary area. This has been reinforced by the excavation of an unenclosed Late Iron Age settlement at Threemilestone which has evidence for the planned layout of houses. There are several rounds nearby, one of which has been excavated and appears to be contemporary with the unenclosed settlement (Schweiso 1974; Gossip 2005).

Rounds were in use from the beginning of the Later Iron Age to at least the end of the Romano-British period, although most excavations indicate that rounds are predominantly Roman in date. Geophysical surveys and aerial photographs have shown that rounds were often embedded in field systems and were presumably farms. The only completely excavated round is Trethurgy, where the activity is mainly Roman (Quinnell 2004a), but the round at Threemilestone has been shown to be Iron Age. Some of the excavated rounds also contain extensive evidence for metalworking (see, for example, Cole forthcoming; Lawson-Jones 2003).

While open settlements such as Threemilestone and Bodrifty in West Penwith may be typical, enclosure was still important as the so-called pound wall at Bodrifty is thought to have been added to the site c.150 BC.

Fogous are mainly restricted to West Cornwall and the Meneage part of the Lizard peninsula (Christie 1979; Gossip forthcoming; Startin forthcoming). There are three traditional interpretations of their function: storage, ritual or refuge (Maclean 1992), and all three may be relevant. Pottery indicates that they may date to the 5th century BC though they are usually associated with settlements or rounds that are later in date.

### Devon

In Devon, the relatively abundant Bronze Age evidence on Dartmoor has tended to overshadow how little is known of its Iron Age (Silvester 1979; Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999, 218). Rural settlements in particular, are poorly known. On Dartmoor Kestor is probably of Early Iron Age date (Fox 1954a;b) but the first securely dated settlement, at Gold Park (Gibson 1992), was only excavated in the 1980s. Sites elsewhere are sparse; there are finds from Foale's Arrishes (Radford 1952) but excavations at Milber Down (Fox *et al.* 1949–50) examined little of the interior, and the Holcombe settlement (Pollard 1974) dates to very late in the Iron Age. Both the Gold Park and Kestor settlements lie within extensive field systems that also contain a number of pounds or enclosures.

Between them, the three Iron Age settlements found on the A30 Honiton-Exeter Improvement in lowland east Devon span much of the Iron Age. The settlement at Blackhorse was occupied for several centuries, originating as an open settlement before its final Late Iron Age enclosed phase. Langland Lane and Long Range were both open settlements. Although the quantity of material culture from these farms is not as great, these sites appear to have more in common with sites to the north and east than with Cornwall (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999).

### Somerset

The situation in Somerset is similar as, with the notable exception of the Lake Villages, relatively little is known about non-hillfort settlements. However, extensive field survey around Cadbury Castle together with aerial photographs, suggest a great density and variety of Iron Age settlements (Tabor 2004a), echoing the conclusion of work on sites on the levels (Miles and Miles 1969).

Some sites such as Bradney, Bawdrip, were enclosed by a bank and ditch but most of the published evidence comes from open settlements. The example at Christon, which was badly damaged by construction

before its recording, is perhaps the most extensively published non-wetland settlement, but because of the circumstances of discovery most of the data comes from pits (Morris 1988). In contrast a small 6th–4th century settlement or farmstead with four roundhouses that lay within an open environment, probably of grassland, is known at Cannard's Grave, Shepton Mallet (Birbeck 2002). There also is fragmentary evidence for other settlements from excavations of sites of later date, for example at Camerton (Wedlake 1958), but others have been identified because of the presence of storage pits such as those along the Ilchester-Odcombe pipeline (Newman *et al.* 2001), and such settlements are likely to be increasingly recognised in development-related work.

### Gloucestershire

In Gloucestershire, in addition to the wealth of new material provided by developer-funded archaeology, a number of significant research projects have come to fruition. These include the important excavations at Frocester (Price 2000) and the first volume of the report on the hillfort at Crickley Hill (Dixon 1994).

The upper Thames valley has seen the greatest amount of excavation with large-scale stripping for gravel extraction enabling unenclosed settlements and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age landscapes to be examined. Unenclosed settlements of Early Iron Age date exist around Lechlade at Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993), Butlers Field (Boyle *et al.* 1998), Sherborne House (Bateman *et al.* 2003) and The Lodgers (Darvill *et al.* 1986). These sites comprise single roundhouses, most commonly post-built, and lie within field systems. In many cases these settlements were associated with pit alignments and ditches.

In the Severn valley, excavation at Hucclecote has revealed an unenclosed settlement, with radiocarbon dates ranging between the 8th and 4th centuries (A Thomas *et al.* 2003, 30). In addition, there are fragmentary hints of Early Iron Age occupation at Frocester (Moore 2006b; Price 2000), Saintbridge (Darvill and Timby 1986), Crypt Grammar School, Gloucester (Dunning 1933) and Dumbleton (Coleman and Hancocks forthcoming; Coleman *et al.* 2003). On the western side of the Severn our understanding of the Early Iron Age of the county is poorer.

Other early settlement on the Cotswolds consists of possibly unenclosed, sites at Stables Quarry and Kings Beeches (Gray and Brewer 1904; RCHME 1976, 107; Piper and Catchpole 1996). Recent excavations of an apparently unenclosed Early Iron Age settlement at Bourton-on-the-Water (Barber and Leah 1998; Nichols 2001a;b; Piper and Catchpole 1996) may emphasise the unenclosed nature of most non-hillfort settlement in the region. The location of the Bourton site reflects those in the Thames and Severn

valleys: it is located on a gravel terrace above the floodplain of the River Windrush.

Through excavation, cropmarks and fieldwalking, we now have a picture of a densely settled region in the Later Iron Age. Small, household-sized enclosures (less than 1ha in size), usually rectilinear in shape, became increasingly common and are found throughout the region, particularly on the north Cotswolds and in the Severn valley (Moore 2006b). A number of such enclosures have seen excavation, most extensively at Frocester (Price 2000), and at Birdlip (Parry 1998), Guiting Power (Saville 1979), The Bowsings (Marshall 1995) and Preston (Mudd *et al.* 1999). Dating evidence from these sites and comparison with similar enclosures in southern Worcestershire (Moore 2007) suggests that they appeared from the 4th century BC onward, with many being occupied into the 1st century AD and some, like Frocester, continuing into the Roman period. In some areas these appear to form distinct clusters of enclosures, for example near Birdlip and in the Temple Guiting area, stressing that many of these enclosures were part of larger communities or occasionally shifted across the landscape (Moore 2006a).

The evidence from the upper Thames valley also indicates a densely settled and intensively farmed landscape, predominantly of unenclosed settlements that are known from cropmarks (Hingley and Miles 1984). Excavated examples include Cleveland Farm at Ashton Keynes (Coe *et al.* 1991), Warren's Field, Claydon Pike (Miles *et al.* 2007; Hingley and Miles 1984) and Thornhill Farm, Fairford (Jennings *et al.* 2004; Palmer and Hey 1990). Even on these unenclosed sites, there appears to have been an emphasis on bounding the household community with large, visibly impressive enclosure ditches around a number of houses, for example at Warren's Field (Miles *et al.* 2007; Hingley and Miles 1984) and Stubbs Farm. Excavations and cropmarks around Preston have also revealed segmented boundary ditches (one part of a longer boundary feature), associated with an enclosure dating to the 4th–2nd centuries BC (Mudd *et al.* 1999, 40).

Our knowledge of settlement patterns in the Severn valley has developed considerably through widespread but small-scale investigations. This is particularly true around Bredon Hill in north Gloucestershire, with Later Iron Age pottery and features recorded at Dumbleton (Coleman and Hancocks forthcoming; Coleman *et al.* 2003; Marshall 1990; Saville 1984a), Alstone (Cox 1985), Wormington (Marshall 1990) and Aston Somerville (Brett and Coleman 2000).

Elsewhere, agglomerated settlements of smaller enclosures and trackways exist at Hailes-Stanway, which has yielded Later Iron Age pottery (Clifford 1944; Webster and Hobley 1964), and dense clusters of probably Later Iron Age enclosures, for example at Broadway (Moore 2006b; CNS Smith 1946).

Settlement further south in the Severn valley may have been similar, but the evidence is not abundant. Frocester indicates a type of settlement that may have been common: a single ditched enclosure later embellished with multiple ditches, which may represent the increasing status of the inhabitants (Price 2000). Other possible Iron Age enclosures exist at Longford near Gloucester (Moore 2006b) and there are examples of what might be termed “unenclosed” round-houses within smaller enclosures at Abbeymeads (Atkin 1987) and a less well-defined spreading, Later Iron Age settlement at Gilder's Paddock (Parry 1999). The overall impression is that Later Iron Age occupation was as dense in this area as that around Bredon Hill.

Banjo enclosures (enclosures from whose entrances antennae-like ditches run out) are also known in the region. Excavation elsewhere has suggested that the ditches defined a droveway that allowed the collection and corralling of livestock. Evidence that they were permanently occupied settlements is ambiguous in southern England, although clear in West Wales (for example, Woodside Camp and Dan-y-Coed enclosure, Williams and Mytum 1998).

There is a suggestion that some of the large complexes of banjo-shaped enclosures known through cropmarks across the eastern Cotswolds may have served similar roles to those in central southern England and their form also appears to indicate an emphasis on controlling livestock. Such complexes occur at Ashton Keynes on the Gloucestershire-Wiltshire border, Eastleach Turville, Barnsley and Northleach-Broadfield, all of which possess a variety of enclosures and trackways (Darvill and Hingley 1982; Moore 2006b). At Northleach a number of banjo enclosures cluster with other enclosures and linear features, the similarities between them suggesting they form a larger settlement unit. This clustering of banjo and other enclosures on the interface between the Cotswold uplands and the upper Thames valley perhaps indicates either a cultural restriction or a particular subsistence role, though there has been no investigation of these enclosure complexes.

## Dorset

Although Dorset is typical of the region in the emphasis of early work on hillforts, it is unusual in having seen several modern research excavations on Iron Age sites: Gussage All Saints, Hengistbury Head, and Maiden Castle as well as several other classic excavations.

The most comprehensively excavated settlement is Gussage All Saints, where the intention was to examine a typical Iron Age settlement and to complement work on hillforts and earlier excavations at

the nearby type site of Little Woodbury in Wiltshire. Gussage All Saints was shown to have been occupied for several centuries, and though few buildings could be identified, large numbers of storage pits were excavated (Wainwright 1979a). Although the emphasis placed on the enclosure itself changed through time, the boundary was always marked (Bowden and McOmish 1987).

Several settlements have been excavated in the south of Dorset, on the Isle of Purbeck including the Early Iron Age sites at Eldon's Seat (Cunliffe and Phillipson 1968), Rope Lake Hole (Sunter and Woodward 1987) and Manor Farm, Portesham (Valentin 2003). Later settlements include Compact Farm (Graham *et al.* 2002).

Settlements are also known on the heathlands around Poole Harbour with partially excavated examples at Worgret (Hearne and Smith 1992) and at several sites in the Wytch Farm oilfield (Cox and Hearne 1991) and on the islands in the harbour (Calkin 1949; Cox 1988a; Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997). An Early Iron Age settlement is also known at Hengistbury Head in Christchurch Bay (Cunliffe 1987) and several Iron Age settlements, mainly of Late Iron Age date, are known in the hinterland of Poole and Christchurch Harbours (Calkin 1965; Jarvis 1984; Cunliffe 1987; Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997).

Further to the north on the chalklands, Iron Age settlements at the earthworks at Rotherley and Woodcuts in Cranborne Chase were excavated by Pitt Rivers (1887; 1888; Barrett *et al.* 1991; Brailsford 1958), while subsequent excavations have included the classic Early Iron Age enclosed settlement at Pimperne (Harding *et al.* 1993).

Later Iron Age banjo enclosures are also known, including those on Cranborne Chase such as Gussage Cow Down, and also in adjoining parts of Wiltshire but none has yet been excavated (Corney 1989).

Elsewhere in Dorset, settlements are known at Halstock (Lucas 1993), Oakley Down (L Brown *et al.* 1996), Poundbury (Green 1987), Sturminster Marshall (Valentin 1994), Tolpuddle Ball (Hearne and Birbeck 1999) and at Whitcombe (Aitken and Aitken 1991).

### **Wiltshire**

Work on Iron Age sites in Wiltshire also started relatively early, with the earlier 20th century seeing a series of excavations: Casterley Camp (Cunnington and Cunnington 1913), Lidbury Camp (Cunnington and Cunnington 1917), All Cannings Cross (Cunnington 1923), Fifield Bavant (Clay 1924), Swallowcliffe Down (Clay 1925), Yarnbury Castle (Cunnington 1933), Highcliffe (Stevens 1934), and Winterbourne Dauntsey (Stone 1935). These examined, not just defended sites such as Lidbury Camp and Yarnbury Castle, but also a range of settlements, open

and enclosed. The number and diversity of the sites examined established them as one of the key groups for the study of the Iron Age nationally.

This importance was buttressed by the application of open area excavation at Little Woodbury, which for the first time revealed the post-built houses and pits that are typically of many, but by no means all, Iron Age settlements (Bersu 1940; Brailsford 1948; 1949; Evans 1989). Since then settlement excavations have been undertaken regularly in Wiltshire, on either a larger scale, such as at Ashton Keynes (Coe *et al.* 1991; Newman 1994), Boscombe Down West (Richardson 1951), Groundwell Farm (Gingell 1982), Groundwell West (Walker *et al.* 2001), Longbridge Deverill Cow Down (Hawkes 1994) and Tollard Royal (Wainwright 1968), or a smaller scale (see for example, Graham and Newman 1993; Mckinley 1999; Poore *et al.* 2002; Rawlings *et al.* 2004). Unusually, few defensive sites have been examined recently.

As a result of the depth of study in Wiltshire and Dorset (Champion 2001), often treated as part of the chimera that is Wessex, these areas have provided some of the key data sets for important Iron Age studies whether of human remains (Wilson 1981; Wait 1985), animal bones (Hambleton 1999), metalworking (Ehrenreich 1985; Salter and Ehrenreich 1984; Foster 1980) or pottery (Morris 1994; 1996; Cunliffe 2005). A range of surveys and syntheses have been undertaken (Cunliffe 1984; Barrett *et al.* 1991; Corney 1989; McOmish 1989; 2001; Fitzpatrick and Morris 1994a; Chadburn and Corney 2001) and these sites have provided the basis of much of the reinvigoration of Iron Age studies in the 1980s and 1990s (Bowden and McOmish 1987; 1989; Hill 1989; 1995a;b; 1996; Parker Pearson 1996; Fitzpatrick 1997; 1998).

### **The Somerset Lake Villages and wetland sites**

The evidence for increasingly regional diversity within the South West is clear but the Somerset "Lake Villages" deserve special mention as the waterlogged finds from them make them of national, indeed of European, importance. They are the most extensively excavated and best-preserved Iron Age sites in the South West, although it must be remembered that their locations and wealth of finds make them untypical (Bulleid and Gray 1911; 1917; 1948; 1953; Gray and Cotton 1966; Tratman 1970; Orme *et al.* 1979; 1981; 1983; Barrett 1987; Coles 1987; Coles and Minnitt 1995).

Glastonbury Lake Village was built on an artificial island of timber, stone and clay which lay in a swampy area of open water, reeds and fenwood. In its early stages the site comprised five or six houses, one of which burnt down, and a series of clay spreads that provided bases for outdoor work. The island was later

extended and more houses built. The site appears to have been permanently occupied despite its location meaning that everything had to be brought in by boat.

At its maximum Glastonbury Lake Village consisted of about 15 houses and had a population of, perhaps, 200. The houses were circular with walls of vertical posts in-filled with wattle and daub; roofs were thatched with reeds or straw. Many of the clay floors were constructed for hearths, some for cooking and warmth, others for industrial purposes. The site was surrounded by an irregular palisade which was probably more structural than defensive and there was a landing stage on the eastern side. It is usually thought that the site was abandoned as rising water levels meant that the island could not be maintained (but see 5.5.4 on page 109).

The Meare settlements consisted of two areas of occupation known as Meare Village West and Meare Village East. They were very different from the Glastonbury Lake Village as they lay on two small humps of raised bog about 60 metres apart, separated by a very wet reed swamp and just a short distance from dry land. Despite the drier conditions at Meare there is little evidence for substantial buildings: circles and arcs of stakes are thought to represent temporary shelters. The site may have been occupied seasonally between periods of flooding.

These sites provide the only significant evidence for prehistoric carpentry and timber buildings in the country and also unparalleled evidence about the lives of their occupants (Evans 1989). Food was primarily from farming the nearby dry land and included spelt wheat, barley, beans and peas, and sheep, cattle, pig and horse. Wild animals, such as wild boar, and roe and red deer, were hunted and wild plants, nuts and berries were collected. Bones from otter, beaver, fox and polecat were all found and, unusually for the Iron Age but perhaps not surprisingly in a location such as this, freshwater fish were also eaten. The bones of sea birds suggest contact with the coast. Personal adornment is represented by beads, brooches, finger rings, armlets, toggles and tweezers. The exceptional preservation has also provided evidence for industrial activities including bone and antler working, bronze casting, iron smithing, shale working, wood working, spinning and weaving. The large number of bone and antler weaving combs from Meare suggest that braid production may have been important (Tuohy 2004). Meare is also one of the few sites in Europe with evidence for glass working. Small yellow annular beads and globular beads of clear glass inlaid with yellow spirals or chevrons were made and have been found widely, some reaching the north of Scotland. This specialist production and widespread trading seems at odds with the remote location.

The sites lay only about 5km apart and appear to have been contemporary (Glastonbury Lake Village:

c.200–50 BC, Meare: c.300–50 BC) but the relationship, if any, between them is unclear.

Other evidence for the exploitation of wetlands comes from the Avon levels. Excavations at Hallen revealed a 3rd- or 2nd-century BC unenclosed, and possibly permanent but short lived settlement. Other evidence from Northwick indicates the Avon levels were used seasonally for cattle pasture with little indication of arable crop production (JP Gardiner *et al.* 2002). A radiocarbon date from a fish trap at Oldbury also indicates a Later Iron Age date (Allen and Rippon 1997). The increased coastal activity around Poole and Christchurch Harbours (Cunliffe 1987; Cox and Hearne 1991) might also be seen in this light.

The reasons for what appears to be an expansion into previously marginal areas in the Later Iron Age are not clear but they may hint at a widespread population increase and possibly the development of specialised, industrial or farming communities as seen at Glastonbury (Coles and Minnitt 1995) or the increased exploitation of resources such as salt and shale (Cox and Hearne 1991) or localised marine incursions.

### Cave Sites

Although roundhouses were the almost universal dwelling, several Mendip caves were also occupied or used in this period. Wookey Hole is of particular importance and finds suggest that activity, and perhaps occupation, there was contemporary with the lake villages (Balch 1914; 1928). There was also activity or occupation in Reads Cavern (Palmer 1922; 1923; Langford 1924; 1925; Tratman 1931). There is Iron Age material from Charterhouse Warren Farm swallet (Levitan *et al.* 1988) and possible Iron Age metalworking evidence at Wookey Hole, Rowberrow Cavern, Chelm's Combe and Saye's Hole (Colcutt *et al.* 1987; Moore 2006b). Similar material is also known from Kent's Cavern, (Silvester 1986). While Roman activity in caves has been reassessed on a national basis (Branigan and Dearne 1992) later prehistoric activity has not reviewed in the same way. Much of the evidence for the use of Mendip caves comes primarily in the form of human remains and limited evidence that they were used for metalworking, with the deposition of currency bars also significant (Hingley 2005). Although some caves may have been used for settlement, some uses of these liminal places may have been explicitly ritual.

### Forts

Long considered as type sites of the Iron Age, hillforts are the largest and most dramatic later prehistoric monuments in the South West. They range in size from less than one hectare up to 88 hectares, a factor that must reflect varied political and social organisation, and changes through time. Only a handful of hill-

forts in the region have undergone systematic excavation but where this has happened a complex sequence of construction, repair and renewal has been revealed as well as evidence for attack and defence; there is, again, considerable diversity.

The larger forts, particularly in the eastern parts of the region, were enormous undertakings involving a large number of people in their construction, certainly more than those who occupied the forts. Once completed, maintaining the defences required a significant on-going commitment of labour.

Traditionally hillforts have been seen as the residences of an elite – kings or chiefs – but current opinion is shifting to the view that they were occupied by farmers. Whilst hillforts produce weaponry, most finds relate to domestic, farming, craft and industrial activities (Cunliffe 2005; Hill 1996).

A broad chronological progression in hillfort size and fortification can be discerned. Early forts often have quite slight defences and relatively little evidence for houses, though there are often four-post structures, presumably granaries. As a result these sites have been distinguished as hill-top enclosures (for example, by Cunliffe 1984). Examples include Bathampton Down (Wainwright 1967), Bindon Hill, (Wheeler 1953) and Norbury (Saville 1983b). Ham Hill (Gray 1925; 1926; 1927), Hog Cliff Hill (Ellison and Rahtz 1987), and perhaps Ogbury (Crawford and Keiller 1928), may also belong in this category.

Early hillforts, with substantial defences, seem to appear from the 6th century BC onwards. These are smaller than the hill-top enclosures and often have a single ditch and rampart, examples include Maiden Castle, which reoccupied the site of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure (Wheeler 1943; Sharples 1991a), Chalbury Camp (Whitley 1943) and Yarnbury Castle (Cunnington 1933). These sites are relatively numerous.

Subsequently, in the Later Iron Age, probably from the 4th century BC onwards, there were significant changes. It seems that many early hillforts passed out of use. Others were either enlarged and additional defences added, for example at Maiden Castle and Yarnbury Castle, with the original fort forming one element of a larger site, or additional ramparts were added, for example at Cadbury Castle (Barrett *et al.* 2000). These sites have been termed “developed hillforts.” It seems likely that only a small number of these sites were occupied and that they were distributed fairly regularly across the landscape.

While these broad trends are relatively well established across much of southern England, and considerable detail could be added in terms of the construction of defences and gateways, there is some diversity in the region, with some areas having distinctive variations.

**Cornwall** Cornish “hillforts”, which might perhaps more usefully be called enclosures, vary in their position on hills, with many on high slopes (not hilltops) in their size and shape, the number and form of their banks and ditches, their entrances, intensity and form of occupation (Johnson and Rose 1982).

Hillforts clearly served a defensive function but display and symbol were also important motivating factors. Designed to exclude people they also served to impress. Some may have been permanently occupied (such as Killibury), but others have sketchy evidence for settlement and need not have been domestic. This is borne out by geophysical surveys of forts on similar geologies; Golden hillfort revealed little evidence for occupation but in contrast, Carvossa appears to have been occupied intensively (Laura Cripps pers. comm.). Many forts are on hills that also have important earlier barrows and other ceremonial/ritual remains.

Cliff castles/promontory forts such as Trevelgue, The Rumps or Maen Castle seem even more likely to be non-domestic and several functions have been suggested, including ritual/ceremonial and trading stations. They vary in form and size, suggesting a great variety in the ways these sites were occupied during the Iron Age. The main phase of occupation of cliff castles was in the Later Iron Age, perhaps c.400 to c.100 BC. On the Isles of Scilly there are two definite cliff castles, Shipman Head, Bryher and Giant's Castle, St Mary's and a possible one, Burnt Hill, St Martin's. In this island location, these sites could reflect contemporary territorial divisions.

**Devon** Few Devon hillforts have been examined and work has been small-scale, sometimes rescue excavations, as at Berry Down (Gallant and Silvester 1985), Dumpdon (Todd 1992) and Woodbury Castle (Miles 1975b; Fletcher 1988), or where the main focus of the work has been on other periods, such as at Neolithic and Roman Hembury (Liddell 1930; 1931; 1932; 1935; Todd 1984). Only Blackbury Castle hillfort has been excavated relatively extensively (Young and Richardson 1955). These forts, which are mainly in east Devon, have similarities with the hillforts of Somerset and Wessex (Miles 1975b, 185).

Hill-slope enclosures predominantly occur, as their name implies, on the sides of hills. They are quite numerous in Devon, particularly in northern Devon, and are often well-preserved (Fox 1952a; 1960; Whybrow 1967) but few have been excavated (Silvester 1978; Reed and Manning 2000) and in consequence they are relatively poorly understood. The adjoining parts of Exmoor and West Somerset also have few classic hillforts but rather more hill-slope enclosures (Riley and Wilson-North 2001; Riley 2006). Hillslope locations are less easily defen-

sible than hilltops, so these sites presumably served different purposes from hillforts (Fox 1960). As so little work has been carried out on these quite common monuments, their date, which could span the Bronze Age to Roman periods, internal arrangements and functions are uncertain. Some were perhaps settlements; others may have been for the pounding of stock.

**Somerset** Although a few sites might have Late Bronze Age origins, such as Norton Fitzwarren (Ellis 1989), most Somerset hillforts emerge in the Early Iron Age. Some, such as Brent Knoll and Cow Castle were located in highly defensible positions on the tops of steep-sided hills but others were more easily approached, such as Maesbury. The sites may reflect a greater focus on land ownership and territories.

Cadbury Castle is one of the most extensively investigated hillforts in Britain (Barrett *et al.* 2000) and illustrates something of their histories. The first defences were a single bank and ditch enclosing an area of 7.5ha. The rampart was an open timber framework filled with earth and limestone rubble from the outer ditch. In the 4th century BC the site was strengthened by two or three additional ramparts and substantial gates protected the entrances. A large population lived in the round houses which appear to have been repaired or rebuilt on a number of occasions, sometimes on the same spot. Contemporary with these houses were large numbers of storage pits. Long-established roadways spread out over the hilltop. Extensive survey around the fort indicates widespread contemporary settlement (Tabor 2004a).

By far the largest hillfort in Somerset is Ham Hill. Its defences follow the edges of a plateau, enclosing an area of 88ha. A fan-shaped extension to the north is more strongly defended with two ramparts, two ditches and an outer bank. Finds from quarrying indicate extensive activity dating back to the Late Bronze Age (Morris 1987) and an extensive programme of geophysical survey combined with air photographs has revealed a complex arrangement of enclosures, roadways, pits and roundhouses. Although several excavations have been carried out they have been on a small scale in relation to the vast size of the site (Gray 1925; 1926; 1927; G Smith 1990; Adkins and Adkins 1991; McKinley 1997).

**Gloucestershire** On the Cotswolds the hill-top enclosures at Norbury (Saville 1983b) and Bathampton (Wainwright 1967) are suggested to be Late Bronze Age or earliest Iron Age (Cunliffe 2005; Saville 1983b). The smaller enclosure at Kings Weston, Bristol (Rahtz 1956) is of Early Iron Age date, and the associated, undated Cross Dyke, enclosing a larger area, may represent an early 1st millen-

nium phase (Moore 2006a). These large enclosures have been interpreted as storage centres and the rectilinear structures at Norbury may be granaries. However, they can also be compared to rectangular domestic structures at Crickley suggesting that some of these enclosures may have also had dense occupation (Dixon 1976; Moore 2003).

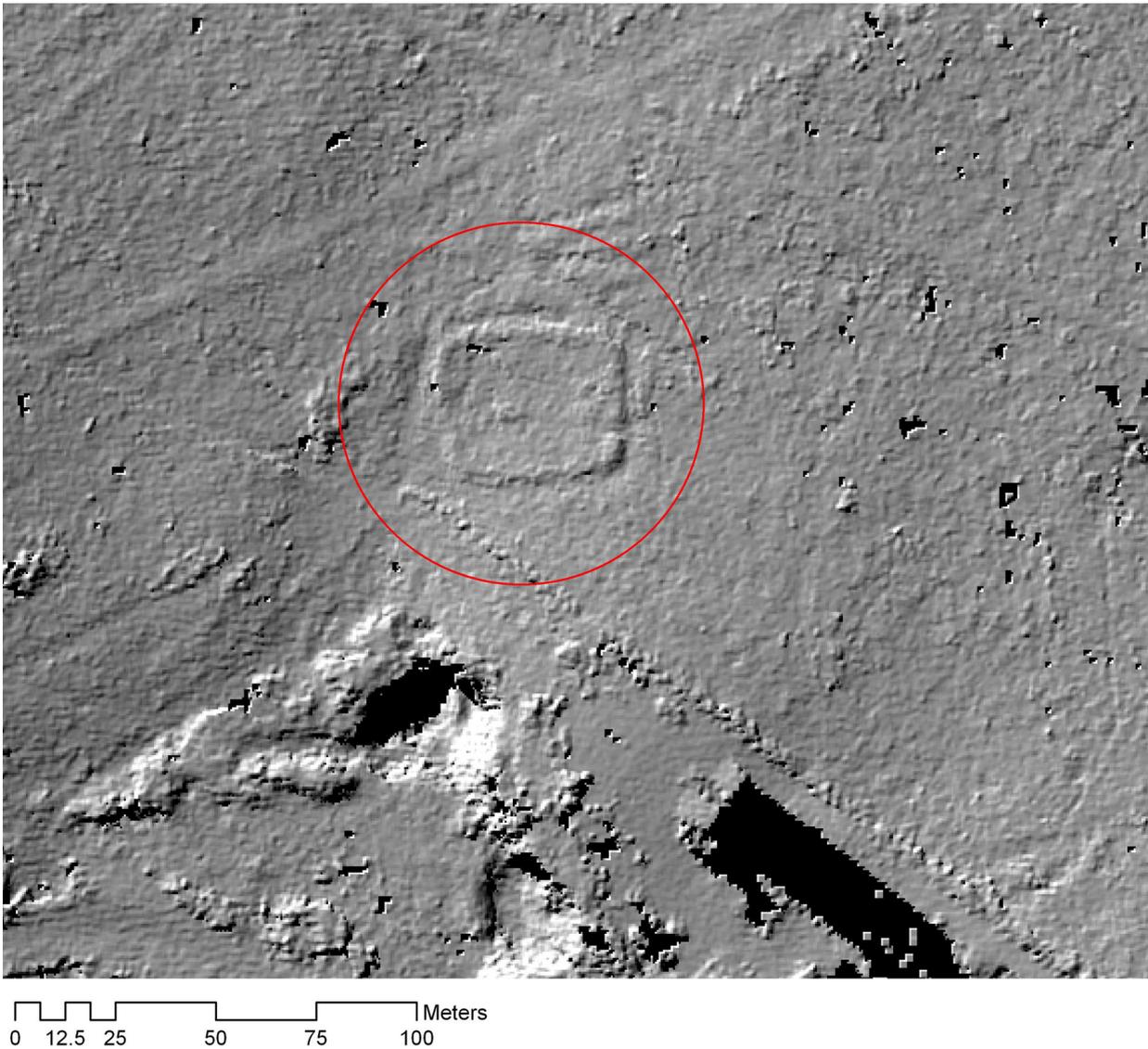
It seems that around the 8th–6th centuries BC a number of small hillforts appeared with pottery related to the All Canning Cross style. These include the enclosures at Shenberrow (Fell 1961), Cleeve Cloud, Crickley Hill (Dixon 1994) and Leckhampton (Champion 1976). More recently, Early Iron Age pottery has been recorded from outside the ramparts at Burhill hillfort (Marshall 1989), indicating extramural settlement or an unenclosed settlement prior to the hillfort.

The Later Iron Age saw the appearance of new hill-top enclosures after the abandonment, possibly caused by violence, of some of these early sites. Crickley Hill was abandoned by the 5th century BC after a final act of destruction (Dixon 1994, 107, 220) with Leckhampton also seemingly burnt. Around the 4th century BC new hill-top sites emerged at Uley Bury (Saville 1983b) and Bredon Hill (Hencken 1938). To the south, along the Avon gorge, Stokeleigh Camp (Haldane 1975) and Blaise Castle hillfort (Rahtz and Clevedon-Brown 1959) were also occupied, although little can be said about the nature of occupation.

Of the many hillforts known on the west side of the Severn in the Forest of Dean, few have seen investigation although Lydney was occupied in the Later Iron Age (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932). Earthwork survey at Welshbury hillfort (McOmish and Smith 1996) suggests some affinity with the smaller, elaborate Later Iron Age enclosures to the west in Wales and this may indicate a somewhat different social organisation in this area with smaller communities placing greater emphasis on defining their social space in elaborate enclosures.

**Dorset** The most extensively excavated hillfort is Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943; Sharples 1991a;b), followed by Hod Hill (Richmond 1968); the excavations at Hambledon Hill were restricted to the complex of Neolithic sites. Smaller excavations have taken place at Charlbury Camp (Whitley 1943), Hog Cliff Hill (Ellison and Rahtz 1987), Pilsdon Pen (Gelling 1977; Thackray 1982) and Poundbury (Green 1987). Waddon Hill has also been examined, albeit primarily for the early Roman military site (Webster 1979). An early hilltop enclosure at Bindon Hill has also seen limited excavation (Wheeler 1953).

In addition, the Royal Commission Survey of Dorset provides a systematic review with a number of useful surveys (RCHME 1952; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1975) which



**Figure 6.2:** Lidar image of a probable late prehistoric defended enclosure in the Forest of Dean. The lidar is able to “see through” the overlying woodland. © Gloucestershire County Council and the Forestry Commission.

have been augmented by a few more recent surveys, such as at Hambledon Hill, though important sites such as Hod Hill, which has evidence for intensive settlement, still have not had aerial photographic evidence transcribed.

The sequence outlined at Maiden Castle is, in broad terms, typical of many sites. A small Early Iron Age fort, occupying the same site as a causewayed enclosure was later incorporated within the much larger circuit of the developed hillfort. This single circuit of defences was then elaborated by the addition of further ramparts and ditches and the two entrances were protected and aggrandised by a complex series of outworks. Excavation within the interior has been limited but it has demonstrated long lived and apparently intensive activity. In contrast to the contempo-

rary occupation around Cadbury Castle, there is little evidence for settlement in the area around Maiden Castle, suggesting that it may have had a large and permanent population (Sharples 1991a).

**Wiltshire** Despite the prominence of Wiltshire sites in Iron Age studies nationally, there have been few excavations on Wiltshire forts since early work at defended sites such as Lidbury Camp (Cunnington and Cunnington 1917) and Yarnbury Castle (Cunnington 1933; Cunliffe 1984), instead work on prehistoric monuments in the county has focused on those of Neolithic and Bronze Age date. Only the promontory fort at Budbury Camp in the north-west of the county (Wainwright 1970) and on a small-scale, Malmesbury (Longman 2006), have seen recent excavation, though

a number of surveys have been undertaken (McOmish *et al.* 2002), and there has been extensive work to the east in Hampshire (Cunliffe 2000a) and Berkshire (Lock *et al.* 2005).

Many hillforts seem to pass out of use in the 2nd or 1st centuries BC but it is clear that several in the South West were occupied and also defended at the time of the Roman conquest. The presence of Roman military bases within several hillforts, for example Hod Hill, Waddon Hill and Hembury suggests this (Todd 1985) and there is evidence for conflict that can be associated with the later phases of the Roman conquest at Cadbury Castle (Barrett *et al.* 2000) and perhaps Maiden Castle, though the cemetery by the east entrance interpreted by Wheeler (1943) as a “war cemetery” was in use before the Roman conquest (Sharples 1991b).

### Oppida

To what extent hillforts were superseded by oppida is a matter for debate. These Late Iron Age defended sites are often seen as having urban characteristics, with the evidence that they provide for trade and exchange being emphasised.

The earliest of the sites considered as oppida in Britain is Hengistbury Head in Christchurch Harbour. The site is essentially a promontory fort, the defences of which may predate the Late Iron Age activity. Extensive evidence for cross-Channel exchange has been found, principally in the form of Armorican pottery and coins, Roman wine amphorae, and raw glass. There is also a smaller amount of evidence for exchange within the South West, primarily in the form of the metals of copper, tin and lead. Glass, shale and salt were produced on the site (Cunliffe 1987). The evidence for trade is clear (Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997) although it has been questioned whether the site was a permanent settlement or was used as a seasonal enclave by Gaulish traders (Fitzpatrick 2001). From the late 1st century BC activity seems to have moved from Hengistbury to nearby Poole Harbour (Cox and Hearne 1991; Cunliffe and de Jersey 1997; Markey *et al.* 2002).

The Late Iron Age activity at Mount Batten, Plymouth, may be related to the exchanges in which Hengistbury Head was involved, though the evidence is much less abundant. However, unlike Hengistbury Head, the site also provides evidence for cross-Channel exchange through the Late Bronze Age and much of the Iron Age (Cunliffe 1988). Mount Batten may have been the site referred to by classical writers as *Ictis* (Cunliffe 1983) though St Michael’s Mount is often thought to fit the description better (Herring 2000).

It is tempting to over-emphasise the novelty of cross-channel contact in the Late Iron Age but there

is, albeit much less prominent, evidence through much of the Later Iron Age (Fitzpatrick 1985; Cunliffe 1990; Taylor 2001b). At Carn Euny decorative motifs with Breton affinities are suggested to appear in the 5th or 4th centuries and there are similar sherds at Trevelgue. There was also trade and exchange within Britain. To take Cadbury Castle, Somerset, as an example, it has produced decorated pottery from Mendip, Devon and Cornwall as well as shale from the Isle of Purbeck, amber from the Baltic or East Anglia, and whetstones from near Plymouth. There are also quern stones from Pen Pits (15km to the north-east), Beacon Hill (21km to the north) and other Mendip sources (Barrett *et al.* 2000).

Further west from Mount Batten there are no obvious oppida unless Gear on the Lizard peninsula and Castle Canyke at Bodmin are possible candidates. A substantial enclosure at Ilchester, Somerset, has been suggested as a possible oppidum (Leach and Thew 1985; Ellis and Leach 1994) but there is little other evidence to support this.

Otherwise the only evidence for these sites comes from Gloucestershire. Salmonsbury appears to be the earliest of these new sites, probably occupied as early as the 1st century BC and continuing into the 1st century AD (Haselgrove 1997, 61). It consists of a low-lying, large enclosure encompassing some 23ha with apparent antenna ditches marking possible stock corralling areas. The enclosure was intensively occupied, including conjoined roundhouses and smaller internal enclosures (Dunning 1976).

Bagendon is the most impressive of the sites. A large dyke system enclosed an area of between 80 and 200ha and forms a “territorial oppidum” similar to those at Colchester and Verulamium (Cunliffe 2005, 191). Bagendon seems to have appeared somewhat later than Salmonsbury; the dyke system was probably created in the 1st century AD with a flourish of activity in the immediate post-conquest period. Suggestions that the site is entirely post-conquest (Swan 1975) seem unlikely and suggestions that Bagendon developed on the periphery of dense Middle Iron Age settlement (Moore 2006a) indicates that more study is needed to determine the exact nature of this earlier activity in order to understand more fully the nature of oppida development in the region.

The nearby enclosure at Ditches emerged first in the 2nd or 1st century BC (Trow 1988) with the Bagendon dyke system and Ditches enclosure representing part of a wider complex. Only limited investigation has taken place in the interior (Clifford 1961; Moore *et al.* forthcoming; Trow 1982) revealing an industrial area at the entrance including coin minting. Both sites have revealed high status occupation in the early 1st century AD, with imported Gallo-Belgic and Samian pottery with the subsequent building of an exceptionally early villa at Ditches in the late 1st

century AD (Trow *et al.* forthcoming; Trow 1988) further indicating the inhabitants' high status and rapid adoption of Romanised lifestyles.

The role of the Bagendon complex is less clear. Sites like Bagendon cannot be regarded as "urban" as most of the interior appears not to have been intensively occupied and instead the evidence suggests a scattered set of activities rather than one single centre. The apparent high-status nature of the finds from the site has led it to be variously regarded as a royal centre or, perhaps, "park" (Darvill 1987b, 168; Reece 1990, 77). However, it seems likely that Bagendon performed a variety of roles as well as possibly being the centre for new elites. The focus of Bagendon around a valley and the presence of large antenna ditches at sites like Ditches and Salmons-bury also indicate an emphasis on controlling cattle or horses.

The variety of ditches and banks at Minchinhampton have also been argued to represent a late Iron Age territorial oppidum (Clifford 1937b; RCHME 1976). Parry (1996), however, argues convincingly that many of the earthworks are of Medieval date; probably wood enclosure boundaries.

### Houses

The timber round house, with a low wall and a conical thatched roof is one of the icons of the Iron Age and numerous examples have been excavated in farms and forts throughout the region. While round houses are common, there is considerable variety in detail (Allen *et al.* 1984). Most houses were post-built, but others seem to have had mass walls of turf or dwarf walls of stone which bore the weight of the roof, and in Cornwall many buildings were of stone. Some buildings have penannular drainage gullies; others do not. Some buildings are set in small compounds.

Assessment of houses in the northern part of the region (Moore 2006b) suggests there is tendency to post-built structures in the earlier 1st millennium BC with a shift to houses increasingly bounded by gullies in the Later Iron Age, although a great deal of structural variation has been noted even within relative small areas of the region.

There is also variation in size, with some Early Iron Age examples being particularly large, up to 14m in diameter, with multiple rings of posts. The example from Pimperne, Dorset, provided the evidence for the principal reconstructed round house at Butser Iron Age Farm (Harding *et al.* 1993; Reynolds 1979). Other large and early houses include Longbridge Deverill Cow Down, Wiltshire, where a house that was burnt down has provided important information on the internal arrangement within the house (Hawkes 1994). Some of these houses have what have been called "dressers" on their right hand side.

Most contemporary and later houses were smaller, often c.6–8m in diameter. Many have central hearths and some, for example at Hod Hill, have what might be cupboards immediately inside the door (Richmond 1968).

It has been suggested that the shape of the large Early Iron Age houses and the use of space in them, with activities apparently being undertaken in one half of them, embody cosmological referents (Fitzpatrick 1997). Examination of doorway orientation in the northern counties of the region has concurred with studies elsewhere, in noting an emphasis on SE or E orientation (Moore 2006b). However, regional and site-by-site variations in house orientation should not be ignored, with sites like Glastonbury Lake Village showing a particular emphasis on non-easterly orientations (Moore 2006b; Parker Pearson 1999) potentially reinforcing recent suggestions (Pope 2003b) that the cosmological factors behind house orientation may be complex.

### Landscape

As it is today, the wider landscape of the South West was varied in the Iron Age and, perhaps for the first time, it is possible to see the exploitation of distinct environments. The differences between, for example, the river valleys of lowland Gloucestershire, the uplands of Dartmoor and the Quantocks, or the heathlands of Dorset are reflected in the types of settlement and the activities carried in, and from, them.

Ongoing landscape characterisation work, based on and often refining the 1994 historic landscape characterisation for Cornwall (Cornwall County Council 1996) has helped identify likely patterns of Iron Age farmland and rough grazing. Field systems are extensive in West Penwith and extend onto cliff-tops and other margins. That at Maen Castle pre-dates the cliff castle and thus may be Late Bronze Age–Early Iron Age (Herring 1994, 40–56) and there are suggestions of a similar situation at Gear, St Martin-in-Meneage. Traces of other field systems survive and geophysical and aerial photography surveys have identified other areas of irregular and block-shaped field systems throughout lowland Cornwall.

Field boundaries have been excavated at Penhale Round (Nowakowski 1998) and Trenowah (Johns forthcoming) but whether they were used for arable and/or pasture is poorly understood. Buried soils have also been difficult to locate, though at Trethurgy an old land surface belonging to an earlier enclosure phase was found and a pit under the rampart produced a 2nd century BC date (Quinnell 2004a). The very substantial lynchets of well-sorted ploughsoil in West Penwith indicate fairly intensive arable cultivation. The Foage lynchet produced a buried soil with pollen of mixed

heath, grass and scrub communities (Herring 1993b). Excavations at Stencoose, St Agnes revealed a field system, dated to 300 BC–AD 300, defined by ditches, but probably originally with earthen banks (AM Jones 2000–1), and perhaps similar to those at Chysauster in West Penwith and Watergate on Bodmin Moor (G Smith 1996; Johnson and Rose 1994).

However, our understanding of the contemporary land-use in upland zones is limited. There are traces of seasonal settlement on Bodmin Moor at Garrow and Stannon where Bronze Age structures were reused in the Iron Age, probably in transhumance (Herring forthcoming). It is possible that the Iron Age settlements of Kestor (Fox 1954a;b) and Gold Park (Gibson 1992) on Dartmoor (Silvester 1979) and those on the Quantocks (Riley 2006) were used in a similar way. The exploitation of wetland areas such as the Severn levels (JP Gardiner *et al.* 2002) is also likely to have been seasonal.

Although celtic field systems have long been assumed to be of Iron Age date, limited excavations have shown many appear to be Romano-British, or to have least continued into that period (McOmish *et al.* 2002). As a result, although some of the numerous well-preserved field systems on the chalklands of Dorset and Wiltshire are Iron Age in date (Crawford and Keiller 1928; Bowden 2005; RCHME 1952; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1975; Crittall 1973; Fowler 2000), it cannot be assumed that they all are.

Substantial land boundaries are also seen in a number of areas. Excavations suggest that, on the chalklands of Wiltshire, many Wessex linear ditches that were probably created in the Late Bronze Age continued to be maintained well into the Iron Age (Bradley *et al.* 1994; McOmish 2002; Kirkham 2005b; Tilley 2004). Some major boundaries, the extensive dyke systems such as Bokerley Dyke, Dorset (Bowen 1990), may also be of Iron Age origin though this is not proven and its setting, appearing to be a major territorial boundary or possibly defence, differs from the dyke systems around the oppidum of Bagendon and other settlements in Gloucestershire.

Not all boundaries provided physical barriers; some were “porous.” In a number of places the Early Iron Age landscapes of the upper Thames valley appear to have been divided up by pit alignments, with examples excavated at Ashton Keynes/Shorncote (Hey 2000) and around Lechlade, at Butlers Field, (Boyle *et al.* 1998), Memorial Hall (A Thomas and Holbrook 1998) and Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993). In some cases these pit alignments and other land boundaries combined to form larger landscape divisions, cutting off spurs in the river (Boyle *et al.* 1998).

Evidence from the upper Thames valley suggests that in a number of cases the same boundaries might be marked in different ways, with ditches on higher ground and pit alignments in low lying areas. One

possibility is that pit alignments were used to define territories on the floodplains where ditches were less necessary, perhaps allowing cattle to pass through on common pasture and that they were intentionally designed to retain water (Rylatt and Bevan *in press*).

Excavations and cropmarks around Preston (Mudd *et al.* 1999) have also revealed segmented boundary ditches, associated with a polygonal enclosure dating to the 4th–2nd centuries BC, one of which forms a long boundary feature possibly using Bronze Age barrows as landscape markers (Mudd *et al.* 1999, 40). These segmented ditches appear peculiar to the region and seem to form field systems further south at Shorncote (Brossler *et al.* 2002) and around Lechlade (Bateman *et al.* 2003; Boyle *et al.* 1998). The role of these segmented ditches is unclear, some replacing earlier pit alignments and they may mark changing agricultural needs and the increasing definition of social and territorial boundaries (Moore 2006b).

### Farming

The agricultural subsistence basis of Iron Age communities is gradually becoming well defined. Charred plant remains, often the residues from crop processing that were used for tinder, show that many Iron Age communities practiced mixed farming with a range of crops grown. The principal varieties were emmer, barley and spelt wheat; some changes in the choice of crops are apparent.

Naked barley was largely replaced by hulled barley through the course of the Iron Age and there was also a shift from emmer wheat to the hardier and more adaptable spelt wheat. Some crops were grown less frequently: rye, oats (whose presence may often be as a weed of cultivation) and occasional flax. Beans are frequent, though not common, discoveries and they may have been grown for their nitrogen fixing qualities as much as a food stuff (Campbell and Straker 2003). The detail provided by weeds of cultivation and charcoals allow interpretations of the landscapes of individual sites to be created (such as that by Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999).

The pits that were probably used to store the seed grain, four-post (or more) structures that were probably used to store processed cereals, and querns to grind the grain have been found on many farms and forts. It is likely that many pits had wicker linings.

This pattern of crops, along with the keeping of cattle, sheep and pig is common to much of southern England in the Iron Age (Hambleton 1999). Cattle and sheep were smaller than most modern breeds, their sizes being analogous to Dexters and Soays. Horses, about the size of modern Exmoor ponies, were used for riding and to pull carts and chariots, as numerous metal harness and vehicle fittings attest. Cattle, however, may have been the main beasts of

traction. Evidence for dairying has been provided by absorbed lipid residues in pottery from Maiden Castle (Copley *et al.* 2005).

Some regional variation may be anticipated, though the evidence is still slight. The plant remains from the settlements on the A30 in east Devon show a continued emphasis on emmer even though spelt wheat is also present (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 1999; Campbell and Straker 2003). However, whether this reflects a genuine regional difference or is merely a product of the small data set cannot yet be determined. These sites did not have storage pits though four-post structures, presumed to be granaries, were present and the plant remains suggested that the crops were stored in them before they had been fully processed.

Variation in animal husbandry might also be expected, with a greater emphasis on cattle in low lying areas and sheep on higher land. Again, the evidence for this is, as yet, slight. One example comes from the Later Iron Age site at Thornhill Farm which appears to show an emphasis on cattle, and possibly also horse, husbandry in the upper Thames valley (Levine 2004). There is a hint that feral horses were broken at Gussage All Saints (Wainwright 1979a).

Singular landscapes such as the Somerset Levels do, however, provide a clearly different pattern (Coles and Minnitt 1995). In addition to the typical cereals and animals, extensive evidence for fishing and fowling was found. Generally, however, the evidence for the eating of fish is rare in Iron Age Britain, although fish bones were found, along with shell fish, at coastal sites such as Caerloggas, Cornwall.

### 6.3.3 The Material World

#### Pottery

Pottery has provided the basis of most Iron Age chronologies, which have been outlined earlier, and many attempts at defining cultural groupings. Of these schemes, Cunliffe's definition of a sequence of geographically discrete style-zones still remains of fundamental importance, providing a robust and secure sequence (Cunliffe 2005).

There is inevitable variation in our knowledge in time and place across the South West but, with the addition of stratified and radiocarbon dated sequences (such as that from Trevelgue Head, Nowakowski and Quinnell forthcoming) or the dating of individual closed groups in areas that were previously poorly served, the basis will progressively become more robust.

In addition to research on residues that has indicated the contents of some vessels (Copley *et al.* 2005), a considerable amount of work has been undertaken on the provenance of pottery, primarily through petrological studies. Peacock's pioneering study on Glastonbury Ware (Peacock 1969a) which

identified, for the first time, a variety of different sources for what appeared to be a single stylistic tradition dating from the 4th century BC onwards, has been followed by several studies. A similar complexity has been revealed amongst the pottery produced in the Malvern Hills area (Morris 1983; 1994; Peacock 1968). Between the 4th century BC and 1st century AD this material was exchanged as far as 40km from its sources. Through the Later Iron Age, Malvern wares in particular, became an increasingly important component of pottery assemblages, with an increasing dominance of regional over locally manufactured pottery at sites such as Birdlip (Parry 1998) and Gilder's Paddock (Hancocks in Parry 1999).

In Dorset the increasing dominance and standardisation of products of the Poole Harbour pottery through the course of the Later Iron Age has largely been determined using visual examination (L Brown 1997). In other areas the adoption of the potters' wheel has been seen as indicating a key chronological marker and also the emergence of specialist potters. Most production, however, remained quite local (Morris 1994; 1996). Particular topographic locations may also have been chosen to provide sources of clay because of their landscape setting, as much as for the material itself (Harrad 2004; Moore 2006b).

As yet production sites have remained elusive, and indeed few sources of clay, even those for the distinctive fabrics from The Lizard, Cornwall have been located (Harrad 2003; 2004), though possible potters' tools, including a decorative stamp from Meare Village West have been recognised (Gray and Cotton 1966).

Pottery has also been used as tool for intra-site analysis, notably in Clarke's (1972) work on Glastonbury Lake Village, even if the conclusions of that particular study have been rejected (Barrett 1987; Coles and Minnitt 1995; A Woodward 2002). Assessments of form and function have also been made of Durotrigian pottery (Pope 2003a).

Lastly, while pottery is the most common form of container to survive from the Iron Age, the Somerset lake villages provide valuable evidence for containers of wood and bark (Earwood 1988). The wooden bowls were hand turned rather than lathe turned, and there is also a rare example of a wooden plate from Wookey Hole (Pugsley 2005).

#### Metalworking

It is a characteristic of the Iron Age in Britain that for much of it iron objects remain rare. Indeed the quantity of metal objects, both of bronze and iron, declines after the Late Bronze Age. Only in the later Iron Age does iron become increasingly frequent.

The Devon/Cornwall area has been identified by trace element analysis as one of, if not the, major source for iron in Wessex during the Early Iron Age.

Iron with high cobalt and high nickel contents is the “most prevalent” in Wessex and the only source of this currently known is the Great Perran lode “near Trevelgue”, although there is no certain link demonstrated between the ore type and and that lode (Ehrenreich 1985; Salter and Ehrenreich 1984, 16–17). The recent excavations at Trevelgue Head have, however, yielded evidence for iron working on an industrial scale (Nowakowski and Quinnell forthcoming). It is likely that iron was exchanged in ingots of partly-worked iron known as currency bars and there is a concentration of these ingots in the north of the region (Hingley 2005). The relative quantity of this distinctive form of iron identified in Wessex decreases during Middle and Late Iron Age, suggesting that south-western sources were supplanted by others nearer to Wessex (Salter and Ehrenreich 1984, 17). There is also evidence for large-scale production at Gussage All Saints (Wainwright 1979a). Elsewhere smithing debris is a common find on Iron Age farms and forts, suggesting that low-level iron working was a relatively widespread skill, but also one that, as the finds from the Mendip caves hint, one that may sometimes have been undertaken in liminal places.

The study of impurity patterns in copper alloys indicates that the South West also appears to have been a major source of bronze (Cunliffe 1987; Northover 1984; 1988). As with the Bronze Age, tin streaming and working are assumed to have been practised, though actual evidence is slight and ingots are often poorly dated (Penhallurick 1986; Fox 1995). However, crucible and clay moulds are relatively frequent finds on settlements (see for example, Cox and Hearne 1991) suggesting that at some levels this skill was quite widespread. The manufacturing debris from Gussage All Saints is the largest assemblage of this material from Britain and points to the specialist production of high status objects, in this case horse harness and cart fittings (Foster 1980; Fell 1988). There is possible evidence for the exploitation of galena, which might yield silver or lead from Charterhouse-on-Mendip (Todd 2007).

The use of flint tools in the Iron Age should not be overlooked even if they were used less frequently and apparently manufactured less skilfully (Ford *et al.* 1984; Saville 1981b; Young and Humphrey 1999; Humphrey 2003b). Flints were used *de novo* in the Iron Age for the manufacture of shale objects on the Isle of Purbeck (Calkin 1949; Cox and Hearne 1991).

Returning to metalwork, the number of fine, display objects deserves mention. These include a decorated scabbard from West Buckland, Somerset (Stead 2006) and distinctive south-western groups of metalwork including Late Iron Age decorated mirrors, with examples from Birdlip, Holcombe (Fox and Pollard 1973) and Portesham (Fitzpatrick 1996), bronze bowls (Fox 1961) and neck rings (Megaw in Sieveking 1971).

The Portable Antiquities Scheme has already seen an increase in the reporting of less eye-catching metal objects (Saunders 2002; Tyacke 2002).

### Manufacturing

In addition to metalworking and pottery, there is some evidence for specialist production of materials and objects (Roche 1997). Evidence for salt production is common around the Isle of Purbeck (Farrar 1974; Cunliffe 1987; Morris 1994) and the same area also produces evidence for the exploitation of shale which was used principally for bangles (Calkin 1949; 1955; Cunliffe 1987; Cox and Hearne 1991). Meare is one of the few Iron Age sites in Europe with evidence for glass working (Henderson 1989) and it is clear that “raw” glass was imported to Hengistbury Head from continental Europe to be made into objects in the Late Iron Age (Henderson 1991). Loom weights and weaving combs are common finds on settlements and it seems that textile production was widely practised as a domestic activity (Tuohy 1999; 2004).

### Coinage

The first coinage in the region comprises coins from Gaul in the Late Iron Age. Early British issues, both in gold and potin (a high-tin bronze), were probably used only in particular spheres of exchange and not as a form of general purpose money. Only during the course of the 1st century BC did distinctive regional issues appear, some of which may be identified as tribal but some are more local (Haselgrove 1993). It is these coins that provide us with the first names from the South West, probably those of kings or chiefs such as BODVOC, and the distributions of series of coinages can be compared to those of distinctive types of pottery and burials, sometimes also thought to indicate tribal groupings (Sellwood 1984).

At a broad level the distribution of individual coinages is relatively well defined (Sellwood 1984; Haselgrove 1994) and it indicates that coinage was not issued, and used only rarely, in Cornwall and Devon. Much detail remains to be defined but the major coin issuing areas were in Dorset, often equated with the tribe of the Durotriges, and Gloucestershire, equated with the Dobunni. Both coinages circulated in Somerset. The situation in Wiltshire is more elusive (Robinson 1977; 1997). The Portable Antiquities Scheme is also leading the discovery of new types of coins, and the revision of the known distributions of better known types (such as by Rudd 2006; Haselgrove *et al.* forthcoming).

Apart from the early coinages (which were not issued in the South West) only the coinage of the Dobunni (van Arsdell 1994) and particular issues found in northern Wiltshire (Robinson 1977) have been published systematically.

### 6.3.4 Social Life

#### Religion

It has been recognised that the distinction in contemporary western thought between ritual and daily practice may have little relevance for much of the Iron Age (Bradley 2005). In the last 20 years a series of seminal studies (such as that by Cunliffe 1992) showed that many settlements in Britain have evidence for cosmology embedded in the architecture and practices of daily life. These studies have changed the study of the Iron Age.

The orientation of the entrances to houses, farms and forts have been shown to be aligned regularly on the rising sun (Oswald 1997; Hill 1989) and the deliberate burial of all or parts of people, animals and objects within settlements has been shown to have as much to do with ritual as rubbish (Hill 1995a; 1996). Many of the key studies have been based on Wessex but it is clear that their implications reach more widely. The recognition of placed or structured deposits on Iron Age settlements throughout the South West is increasingly common, though the criteria for these interpretations vary.

Presumably because of this incorporation of religious activity into daily life, few shrines are known, and those that are, date to the end of the Iron Age. Perhaps the most convincing example comes from Cadbury Castle where a small rectangular structure with a porch is interpreted as a shrine (Downes 1997; Barrett *et al.* 2000). Other possible examples include the small enclosure at Uley West Hill that preceded the Roman temple (A Woodward and Leach 1993) and, less certainly, there are hints of a predecessor to the Romano-Celtic temple at Maiden Castle (Drury 1980). There is also a building in the Harlyn Bay cemetery (Whimster 1977a). It should be noted that the large structure within the Pilsdon Pen hillfort that was tentatively interpreted as a *Viereckshanze* (Gelling 1977) is better interpreted as a more mundane, and much later, rabbit warren.

Finds of Late Iron Age pottery and coins at Roman temple sites may hint at Iron Age origins, for example at Wycomb (Timby 1998) and Hailey Wood (Moore 2001) in Gloucestershire but many could well have been deposited in the early Roman period, as seems to have been the case with the Iron Age coins from Bath (Cunliffe and Davenport 1985, 279).

However, finds of Iron Age metalwork from watery contexts are still best interpreted as votive offerings, though the rarity of finds from such a major river as the Severn is noteworthy (Fitzpatrick 1984). The Salisbury hoard of miniature Iron Age shields and cauldrons, which included a remarkable collection of objects that also span much of the Bronze Age, is without compare anywhere in Britain or Europe (Stead 1998).

#### Burials

Until relatively recently the burials of the people of Iron Age Britain were notable for their apparent absence and could be treated as a “negative type-fossil as it were” (Hodson 1964, 105). Today, the picture is very different (Whimster 1977a; 1981) and Iron Age mortuary practices in the South West can be thought to have included:

- excarnation
- excarnation followed by secondary burial
- “formal” inhumation burial within settlements
- inhumation burials in graves dug specifically for that purpose
- occasionally cremation burial
- probably, the disposal of the dead in watery places

Of these methods, excarnation appears to have been the most common means of disposing of the dead for much of the Iron Age. In southern England, parts of human bodies are often found in storage pits within settlements (Whimster 1977b; Whimster 1981, 4–36; Wilson 1981; Wait 1985, 83–121), suggesting that some corpses were exposed until the flesh had decayed and/or been picked clean by birds and animals. In some cases after the flesh and muscle had decayed sufficiently for the major limbs to be separated, parts of the body were buried within settlements in a form of secondary burial (Carr and Knusel 1997). The finds of human remains from the Mendip caves may also be related to this way of disposing of the dead.

At the same time, however, complete corpses were also buried within pits in settlements and in settlement enclosure ditches. It is extremely rare for grave goods to have been placed with the dead in these contexts but there is considerable complexity within the burial rites (Hill 1995c, 11–13, 105–8). The idea that the remains found within settlements are those of social outcasts or the unclean rather than typical burials is questionable (Fitzpatrick 1997, 82).

Within the South West these practices have been best studied in Wiltshire and Dorset but there is also evidence from Gloucestershire (Moore 2006b) and Somerset. Examples from Gloucestershire include Frocester, Salmonsbury (Dunning 1976), Ditches (Trow *et al.* forthcoming; Trow 1988), Bagendon (Clifford 1961) and Little Solsbury (Falconer and Adams Bryan 1935). This might be true also of the human remains found in the swallow hole at Alveston. There also appears to have been an emphasis placed on deposition in boundary features. At Glastonbury Lake Village four complete adult human skulls, three male and one female, bearing sword cuts were found in close proximity to the timber palisade surrounding the village. The interpretation of the large number of human remains found along with weapons and other

objects at Spettisbury hillfort is not clear (Fitzpatrick 1984).

Two distinctive inhumation rites are clearly recognised: one in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and the other in Dorset. Both isolated burials and cemeteries are known from these areas. How frequent inhumation burial was elsewhere is not clear as its recognition is largely dependent on context or radiocarbon dating.

To take Gloucestershire as an example (Moore 2006b), inhumation burials certainly of Iron Age date are rare, but there are possible Late Iron Age examples from Barnwood (Clifford 1934) and Bagendon (Rees 1932; Staelens 1982, 29). However, an unaccompanied crouched inhumation from Lynchies near Baunton was only shown to be Later Iron Age in date by radiocarbon dating (Mudd *et al.* 1999). This single date allows it to be suggested that, in common with other parts of southern England, other isolated crouched inhumations in Gloucestershire, for example those from the ramparts at Uley Bury (Saville 1983b, 12) and examples from Norbury (Saville 1983b, 42) and Shipton Oliffe (Timby 1998), may be Iron Age. Other crouched inhumations are known from the Iron Age settlements at Roughground Farm (Allen *et al.* 1993), Bourton-on-the-Water, Frocester and Salmonsbury and also from storage pits at Guiting Power (Gascoigne 1973) and Kemble (King *et al.* 1996). A Late Iron Age cemetery has recently been excavated at Henbury (Cotswold Archaeology 2005). A similar pattern may be anticipated in northern Dorset and also in Somerset.

Of the well-defined, distinctive burial rites, that of South-Western Cist Burial started in the Middle Iron Age. Found in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, the burials are usually flexed or crouched inhumations in oval or rectangular graves in small cemeteries though some larger ones, such as Harlyn Bay (Whimster 1977a) are known. Many graves are stone-lined cists. Grave goods are rare and are often costume fittings, though some decorated mirrors were placed with the dead (Whimster 1977b; Whimster 1981, 60–74; Nowakowski 1991, 229–32).

“Durotrigian” burials are found in Dorset – and mainly in south Dorset. The dead were often buried in a crouched position, usually on lying on their right-hand side, with the head towards the east. The graves were often oval and shallow (Wheeler 1943; Aitken and Aitken 1991; Mckinley 1999). Joints of meat, and pottery, are the most common grave goods but almost half of the burials do not have grave goods (Whimster 1981, 37–59, figs 22–3; A Woodward 1993, 216–19). There is little evidence that this rite appeared before mid-first century BC.

A few burials include objects (swords or mirrors) that are found in other regional burial rites in England and are suggestive of a particular status. Across Britain, burials with swords that are certainly of Iron

Age date are only found with inhumation burials. Mirrors are found with both cremation burials and inhumations. The Bryher burial is unique in having both a sword and shield, and a decorated mirror (Johns 2002–3).

Burials with mirrors are known at Birdlip along with a range other grave goods (Staelens 1982) and also at Portesham though this burial was probably made shortly after the Roman conquest (Fitzpatrick 1996). At High Nash, Coleford a sword and shield boss appear to derive from a warrior burial, probably dating to the 1st century AD (Webster 1989; 1990) and there are hints of a possible Late Iron Age bucket burial at Rodborough. A burial with a sword, but also tools, is known from Whitcombe (Aitken and Aitken 1991). All of these finds date close to the Roman conquest of the South West.

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## 6.4 Radiocarbon dates

**Table 6.1:** Details of radiocarbon dates used in the text. Calibrated ranges are at  $2\sigma$  (95.4%) and were calculated with OxCAL 3.10 (Bronk Ramsey 2005) using the probability method and the IntCal04 calibration curve (Reimer et al. 2004).

Lab. Ref.	$^{14}\text{C}$ age BP	Cal AD	Site	Context	Reference
GU-4745	2900 $\pm$ 60	1270 – 910	Huntsman's Quarry	human bone fragments	Patrick Foster Associates (2000)
GU-4782	2860 $\pm$ 70	1260 – 840	Huntsman's Quarry	human bone fragments	Patrick Foster Associates (2000)