The Archaeology of South West England

South West Archaeological Research Framework

Resource Assessment

and

Research Agenda

Edited by C J Webster

Somerset County Council
2008
South West Archaeological Research Framework

The Archaeology of South West England

Resource Assessment
and
Research Agenda
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The Archaeology of South West England

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

R A Croft, chair of SWALGAAO

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

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

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

Chris Webster
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Organisations

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

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

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The following organisations were represented:
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Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Les riégions d’Angleterre ayant vu leurs contours redessinés par le gouvernement central le plus récemment, ce rapport est le premier pour la riégion maintenant dite South West England (Sud-Ouest de l’Angleterre). On trouvera en premières parties un aperçu général de l’histoire de la riégion depuis le Paléolithique jusqu’au Moyen Âge et les珥at au docte de connaissances archéologiques sous un format facilement accessible. L’espoir est d’égalemement de faire de cet ouvrage un outil de référence pour les liégiens qui désirent contribuer à la recherche dans nos connaissances et de manière générale les domaines issus de nos recherches archéologiques. Ce cadre de recherche devant être restés en contact avec l’empire jusqu’aux siècles servira, nous l’espérons, de tremplin aux recherches futures et de faire de cet ouvrage un outil de référence du patrimoine mondial de l’Unesco.

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

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


Um den Forschungsrahmen mit möglichst umfassend zu gestalten, wurde die Arbeit von zahlreichen Fachleuten mit entsprechenden Forschungsinteressen aus der gesamten Region durchgeführt. Erste Berichtsvorlagen liefern die einzelnen historischen Perioden wurden in Arbeitsgruppen entworfen, die alle Bereiche der archäologischen Gemeinschaft vertraten, um das Spektrum der Ansätze so breit wie möglich zu gestalten. Die Berichtsvorlagen wurden einem ebenfalls breit gestreuten Expertenkreis vorgelegt und in ihrer Arbeit. Im Rahmen der Berichterstellung wurden zwei Seminare veranstaltet, eines zum Thematisierung Research Agenda und das andere zum Research Agenda. Die Teilnahme von über 150 Personen an den Diskussionsforen gewährleistete eine breite und umfassende Kenntnis der Ressourcen der Region zu natio nalen und internationalen Forschungsfragen beitragen können.

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

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

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