



# Iron Age Hillforts in Britain and Beyond

*Dennis Harding*

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Widely regarded as major visible field monuments of the Iron Age, hillforts are central to an understanding of later prehistoric communities in Britain and Europe from the later Bronze Age. With such a range of variants represented, no single explanation of their function or social significance could satisfy all possible interpretations of their role. While they are conventionally viewed as defence settlements or regional centres controlled by a social elite, this role has been challenged in recent years, and instead hillforts are being considered primarily as expressions of social identity with strong ritual and cosmological associations. Current hillfort interpretations are in danger of reflecting contemporary social sensitivities more strongly than any recognizable Iron Age priorities, and the need for critical analysis of basic archaeological evidence is paramount.

Critically reviewing the evidence of hillforts in Britain, in the wider context of Ireland and continental Europe, the volume focuses on their structural features, chronology, landscape context, and their social, economic and symbolic functions, and is well illustrated throughout with site plans, reconstruction drawings, and photographs. Harding reviews the changing perceptions of hillforts and the future prospects for hillfort research, highlighting aspects of contemporary investigation and interpretation.

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