Oppida are mostly commonly defined as large (measuring c. 15ha or more) hillfort settlements dating to the late La Tène which can be found across temperate Europe. They are often discussed as a single, relatively homogenous site-type, though more recent research has recognised greater variation between oppida at the regional and even local level. Oppida have been described as central places, as urban or proto-urban settlements, and as indicators of state formation. This thesis will examine the archaeological evidence from two regions of western France (Brittany and Aquitaine) during the late La Tène in order to assess how well the large enclosed sites in these areas fit with our definitions of oppida. The name oppidum itself is a Latin word meaning ‘town’ and was used throughout ancient texts such as Julius
Caesar’s De Bello Gallico to describe the settlements that he encountered during his military campaigns in Gaul. These texts have inspired generations of archaeologists to search for the physical reality behind the historical documents. As such, this thesis also investigates the Greek and Roman sources in order to determine what settlement descriptors such as oppidum, vicus, and aedificium would have meant to the authors and audiences of the time and how that information provides a helpful context for archaeological investigation. This cumulated evidence is then gathered together in order to explore the role and significance of the oppida of western France within their contemporary social structures.