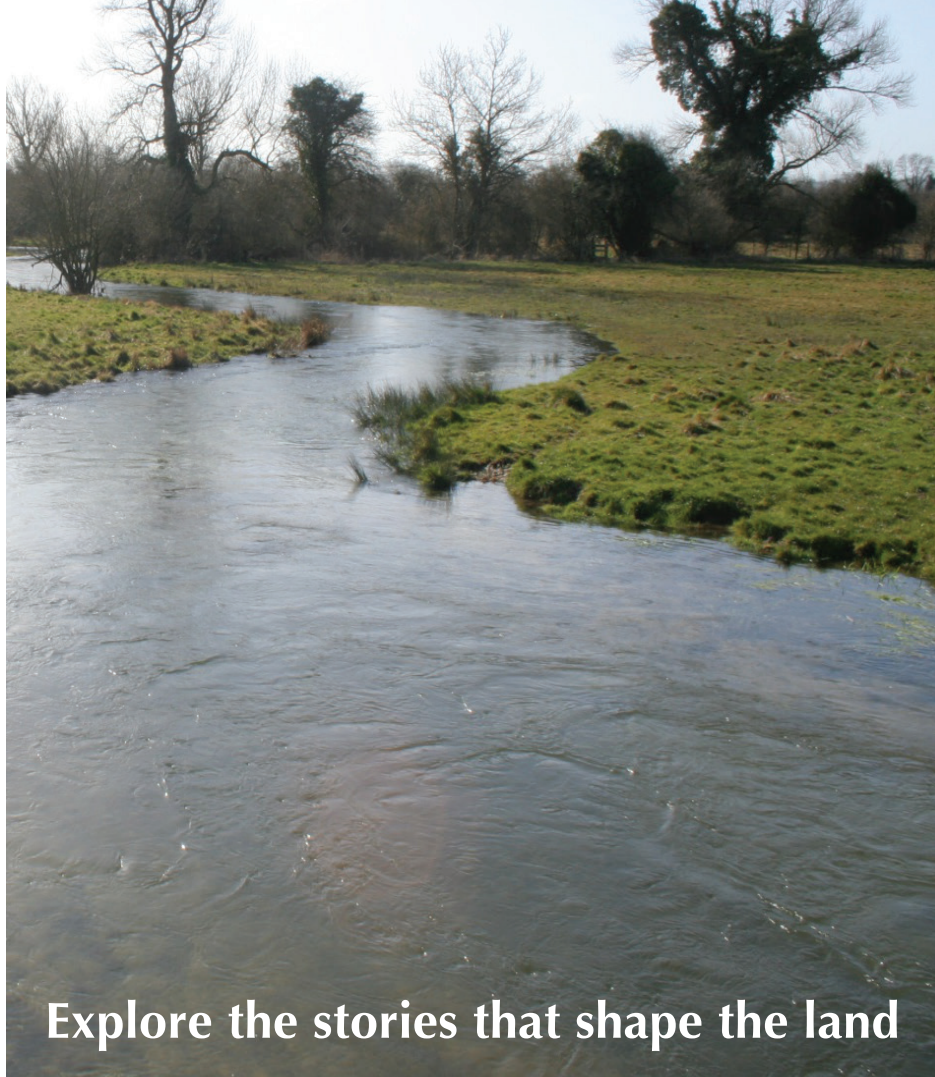


# Greystones

## A Landscape Through Time



Explore the stories that shape the land

Follow this self-guided trail to discover the stories that run through this landscape across time on Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Greystones Farm.

Greystones is a landscape created by people who have gathered, lived and farmed here for over 6,000 years. Situated in the Cotswolds AONB, it is a wildlife reserve and organic dairy farm that makes Simon Weaver organic cheese. It is visited by walkers, and by people learning about prehistory and the natural environment. Yet, underneath the surface of this living landscape are nationally important archaeological remains, testament to the societies that created them. There is a huge 6,000-year-old Neolithic enclosure, which attracted communities from miles around to gather for ceremonies. Over 2,000 years ago during the Iron Age, dispersed communities came together to live here in a defended oppidum, known today as Salmonsbury. An oppidum was a centre of power, where the community controlled trade and the manufacture of goods, such as metalwork. Oppida appeared in Britain before the arrival of the Romans during AD 43. A little over 1,000 years ago, local Anglo-Saxon people met at a large stone here to discuss and agree important matters.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust manages Greystones to raise awareness of the whole landscape story, from its deep history to biodiversity and modern farming. Organically reared sheep and cattle graze pastures left unploughed to prevent damage to archaeological remains. Traditional land management practices allow wildflowers and grasses to bloom and seed, so providing food for pollinating insects and birds.

Today, government funded schemes support environmentally beneficial farming. This, alongside the work of the Wildlife Trust, helps protect the archaeology and improve wildlife habitats while recognising the importance of farming to a healthy and productive living landscape.

### Visitor Information

**Location:** Start at the car park in Bourton-on-the-Water near to Greystones Farm entrance, and end at the Farm.

**Grid Reference:** SP 16979 20794.

**Distance:** 2 miles / 3km.

**Time:** 1 hour.

**Difficulty:** Mostly level, along grass footpaths and rough tracks.

**Refreshments:** Available nearby in Bourton-on-the-Water. They will also be available from the new visitor centre at the farm from spring 2018.

This map is not intended as a substitute for an Ordnance Survey map. Please wear good shoes and outdoor clothing. Dogs must be on lead.



*Greystones Farm is under knowledgeable, intelligent and sensitive ownership with the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. They are aiming to do the right thing to balance archaeology, farming and wildlife. Neil Holbrook - Chief Executive, Cotswold Archaeology*

From the car park take care crossing the road and turn right onto the pavement beside the wooden railings. Take the signposted footpath on the left, beside the Cotswold stone wall. Continue along the footpath until you reach the gates of Bourton-on-the-Water Cemetery.

## 1. The Living and the Dead



*Left: an Iron Age burial in the oppidum. Right: Bourton Cemetery.*

This public cemetery dates from 1888 when St Lawrence Church closed its graveyard in the village. It is on the site of a smaller Baptist cemetery dating to 1701. It is located inside the Iron Age oppidum. The cemetery moved burials to outside the village, creating a distance between where people were buried and where they lived. This was typical of Victorian preferences, which evolved as church graveyards filled up and were prone to outbreaks of infectious disease.

Iron Age attitudes to death were very different. Graves were in pits right in the centre of the oppidum, side by side with houses. Some people were buried in the pits. Other pits contained just parts of bodies. These were ancestors buried as part of complex rites including excarnation, where the dead were exposed to the elements and carrion eaters before parts of them were selected for burial.

Continue right along Cemetery Lane with the cemetery on your left. Pass the allotments until you reach the hedged fields on your left.

## 2. Hedges for Life

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust manages this hedge in the traditional Midland style to benefit wildlife. Such laid hedges provide well-concealed habitat for invertebrates, birds and mammals, and plenty of blossom and berries for wildlife to eat. They are better for wildlife than the traditional Cotswolds dry-stone wall. While walls are often considered more in keeping with the region's character, hedges have their place too in what is a diverse landscape.

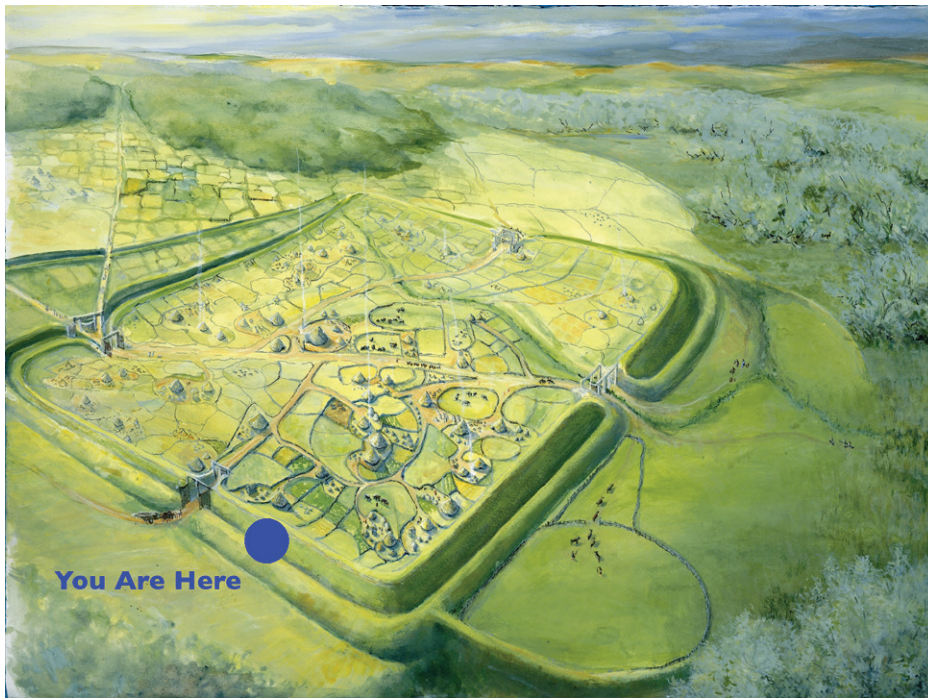
The field behind the hedge is pasture. Maintaining pasture here protects the oppidum's archaeology, since pasture does not need to be ploughed, and ploughing might damage underlying archaeology. Maintaining pasture also promotes the grasses and wildflowers that benefit wildlife by providing pollen, nectar and seeds for food.

*The most important thing about this landscape for me is that it is multifunctional. It needs to tick the box for food, wildlife, flooding, and for its cultural and archaeological interest. If it was just a farm, it wouldn't be as interesting, it would be the same as lots of places around here (Tom Beasley-Suffolk - Nature Reserve Manager, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)*

Look across the field for good views of the Dikler Valley and ridge beyond it. This is a typical Cotswolds landscape of arable with pasture. The Iron Age landscape would have been a finer-scale mosaic of smaller arable fields, pastures and woodland copses.

Walk a little further along the lane until you see the ground drop steeply down to your right through a gap in the hedge.

### 3. Mighty Ramparts



The Iron Age oppidum may have looked something like this. A settlement of round houses and fields enclosed within earthen ramparts.

You are standing on top of the massive rampart that enclosed the Iron Age oppidum. This would have been an impressive sight

during the Iron Age, when fewer trees grew all around. These Iron Age ramparts weren't guarded like medieval castle walls. So, what were they for? They deterred attack, defined the community who lived here, proclaimed the oppidum as an important place and communicated the status of the oppidum's community, who could command enough people to build the ramparts.

Like many small, enclosed oppida, Salmonsbury has a long history. It was occupied from the 4th or 3rd century BC. It may have consolidated in one place many smaller Iron Age settlements scattered throughout the area. Occupation continued for the next two to three centuries and only ended with the coming of the Romans in the 1st century AD when the Romans moved the town further west. Finds of fine imported pottery suggest the oppidum was an important and wealthy local centre.

*Actually finding the skeletons, round houses and storage pits, you sort of realise that from a few thousand years ago there is almost a direct connection with what we are doing now. That is fascinating. (Simon Weaver - Cotswold Organic Dairy)*

Continue along the lane. The line of the tall hedge on your left curves left because it follows the line of the Iron Age rampart. It is a 2,000-year-old boundary line still in use today. This line was part of an extension of the rampart in front of the enclosed settlement, probably to create an area for corralling livestock.

Continue until you reach the lakes.

### 4. Gone Fishing

These lakes were created after gravel quarrying during the 20th century and today are fished for carp and pike. This area was marshy ground during the Iron Age, much like The Moors you'll see later. A Roman altar was found during quarrying, suggesting

the oppidum continued to be an important place into the Roman period.

Follow the footpath past the lakes. Continue over the boardwalk through the trees until you reach the pasture fields. Turn right, walk through the footpath gate next to the field gate, and head for the gate in the hedge opposite.

## 5. Unguarded Rampart

You are walking along the ditch between the two lines of earthwork ramparts. The oppidum was in the higher field to your left. Trees follow the top of the inner rampart.

Stop just before you reach the gate in the hedge.

## 6. A Home for Badgers

Where the rampart takes a 90-degree turn away from the footpath is the corner of the oppidum. You may see exposed soil, which comes from the burrows of rabbits and badgers. Burrowing mammals can cause damage to the archaeological earthwork. Badgers are protected, and are an integral part of our native biodiversity, so archaeologists, farmers and ecologists have to find common ways to manage and balance their impact on the archaeology, farming and wildlife.

Continue through the gate, across the next field and through a second gate.

## 7. The Moors

You have entered The Moors, an area of lowland marsh near to the River Eye.

The Moors is divided into narrow strip fields bounded by double-ditched hedges, each planted along a central causeway that runs to the river. Were they drains or routes to access the river?



*A Meadow Brown butterfly feeds on the nectar of knapweed.*

Molehills reveal black soil, dark with the organic matter of decayed marsh plants.

Traditional farming maintained this natural soil fertility by promoting native marsh plants. But the area was damaged by the turnip and kale fodder crops grown here in the 1980s. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has returned to traditional farming practices to restore these fields to grasslands, increasing grass and wildflower diversity, including the return of orchids. This in turn benefits bees, butterflies and birds. Hay is grown during spring and early summer for winter fodder. After the hay is cut, cattle and sheep graze here in the autumn.

Follow the footpath along the narrow hedged lane. Turn right out of the lane onto the Oxfordshire Way.

## 8. Farming behind Enemy Lines

The Moors fields were managed using stone field barns such as the one that once stood in the corner of this field. Italian POWs helped farm the fields during the Second World War. This

photograph shows farm labourers and POWs bringing hay to the barn that stood here. The hay fed livestock over winter.



*Farm labourers and Italian POWs bringing in hay on Greystones Farm during the Second World War.*

Continue along the [Oxfordshire Way](#) towards the River Eye.

## 9. Vital Water

The river provided drinking water, good wetland pasture and a routeway for the Iron Age oppidum.

The river still follows its natural course and has not been engineered, although it has changed course naturally across the valley floor over the millennia.

Today, the river supports many plants and animals, as habitat and food source. Rushes, reeds and other marginal water plants grow along its edges. It is home to mayflies, freshwater shrimp, water voles and otters. Kingfishers and damselflies skim along it, catching fish and insects respectively. Stand here for a while and see what you can spot.



*Water voles thrive in the slow-moving waters of the River Eye.*

The marshy fields either side of the river are home to a vast range of wildflowers, such as marsh orchids, yellow rattle (pictured right), meadowsweet, ragged robin and greater burnet. These splashes of colour offer food for insects and birds. Wildflowers thrive here because traditional land management has been maintained here for hundreds of years and continues to this day due to the work of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. The fields either side of the river are so important for wildlife that they are protected under British law as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



*The floodplain and rivers are what connect Greystones to the wider landscape and make it interesting from a wildlife perspective as wildlife is constantly moving through the area. (John Field, Living Landscape Advisor - Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)*



Return along the Oxfordshire Way, cross the lane and continue across the field opposite. As you approach the wall bear right to its far end.

## 10. The Meeting Stone



This is by far the largest stone on the farm and stands on the farm's highest point. The sockets carved into it suggest it was once used as a gatepost. It was probably erected in the 18th century to mark the meeting place of the parish and to commemorate the much older meeting place of the Anglo-Saxons. Salmonsbury which derives from 'the ploughman's oxen enclosure' in Old English was the meeting place for the local Hundred, an early medieval administrative area within a shire. This continued the area's use as a meeting place, a tradition begun 5,000 years earlier.

Anglo-Saxons may have lived in the Bourton area. The name derives from old English 'burgh' for fort and 'ton' for settlement – the 'settlement beside the fort'. We know they buried their dead in the oppidum's ramparts. Saxons frequently re-used earlier, prehistoric monuments to bury their dead. It was a way to demonstrate their links to the past and shows the continued significance of the oppidum.

Walk back along the wall and continue through the gate on your right.

## 11. Enter the Iron Age

You are now entering the Iron Age oppidum through the original north-east entrance. There has been a gateway here for over 2,000 years.



*You have entered the oppidum through the gate in the top right of the illustration. You are walking towards the centre of the picture, along the line of the trackway.*

Imagine entering here during the Iron Age. You are looking along a road running between timber round houses and fenced enclosures for animals and crops. As you walk further into the oppidum you notice the activity - people repairing thatch roofs, making clay pots and hammering iron into farm tools at forges. There are the smells of animals, fires and even human waste on midden heaps.

If you look behind you, you can see gaps in the ridge that lead to Stow-on-the-Wold and Evesham. The oppidum is on a long-distance route that connected the Thames and Severn valleys via those gaps.

Continue along the path and through the gate in the corner of the field.

## 12. The Gathering



You are just outside a large circular area that was encircled within a bank, ditch and circle of pits. It was built here about 6,000 years ago as a meeting place where people gathered from across the landscape to hold ceremonies, festivals, cattle fairs or to exchange marriage partners.

*The value of Greystones has to be that there have been people here for 6000 odd years. Being able to see how people have lived and used the land is something I don't think you can see in many other places. (Volunteer at Greystones Farm)*

Walk along the path towards the Greystones Farm buildings. The area of narrow fields to your right are known as Berryfields. This was part of medieval Bourton's common fields. It was hedged and 'privatised' during the 1620s.

When you reach the farm, turn left to look into the milking parlour.

## 13. Robot Milkmaid

Today's organic cattle farm is assisted by a robotic milker. You can watch the cows queue up for a feed and to be milked. In a relatively short period the farm has gone from milking cows by hand to this fully automated system, and it is proving extremely popular with the cows, who often jostle at the gate for their next turn.

The farmer uses the milk to make Simon Weaver Organic Single Gloucester and Cotswold Brie cheeses.

*We want to farm organically and sympathetically with the requirements of the Wildlife Trust. Both sides are enthusiastic to do that and to work together. (Simon Weaver - Cotswold Organic Dairy)*



Return to the main farm buildings.



## 14. 21st Century Farming

Greystones is a traditional Cotswolds farm. It has the appearance of an 18th or early 19th century 'new model' farm, built outside the local village during the enclosure and improvement of common land. Today it is home to a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve as well as a working farm.

Here at Greystones, the past influences the way the landscape looks today. Iron Age ramparts give shape to the land and habitats for animals such as badgers, while traditional farming techniques used over thousands of years create the area's species-rich meadows, pastures and marshland.

This coming together of farming and conservation brings together revitalised traditional farming and modern technology. The farmer benefits by being able to produce specialist organic cheeses and from more efficient milking technology. The landscape benefits from more sympathetic management, protecting the archaeology and natural habitats, and as a result wildlife and the environment also flourish. Pollinating insects thrive on the wildflowers. Rivers and land are not polluted by chemical fertilisers and pesticides. And the public has free access to the site for learning and leisure.

*The most important things about the landscape are that it works for people and the environment. As a Wildlife Trust we want people to identify with the landscape, to want to learn about it and feel part of it - to get people to engage with life beyond their front doors.*

*(Will Masefield, Community Wildlife Officer - Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust)*

**You can return to the car park along the lane past the farm buildings.**



We would love to hear your feedback. Follow this link to leave a comment <http://bit.ly/Greystones>.

To discover more about Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust visit <http://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk>.

To find out more about the Simon Weaver Cotswold Organic Dairy visit <http://www.simonweaver.net>.

To learn more about the ways in which heritage, farming and the environment are managed visit the REFIT project website - <http://www.refitproject.com>.

To find out more about the work of Cotswolds AONB and Natural England visit <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk> & <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england>.

If you have enjoyed this trail and want to find out more about the Cotswolds you can visit <http://www.escapetothecotswolds.org.uk>.

You can also take a walk with the other Cotswolds self-guided trail in this series to 'Discover Bagendon's Hidden Landscapes' <http://bit.ly/Bagendon>.

This guide has been funded by the European Union's Heritage Plus programme as part of the REFIT project.



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Gloucestershire

