

HERITAGE WALK

SOMERFORD KEYNES



2 circular walks. Northern loop 7.2 km (4.5 miles) Time: 2 - 2.5 hours

Southern loop 6.5km (4 miles) Time: 1.5 - 2 hours

Terrain: Generally level – but includes some footpaths over farmland which may be muddy, and some stiles. Some short sections are on public roads.

8 Guide points along the walk

Historical sites

Parking and start of walk

Ordnance survey Landranger map:
163 Cheltenham and Cirencester

Ordnance Survey

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These circular walks include some of the surviving medieval remains at the historic settlements of Somerford Keynes, Shorncote and Ashton Keynes. They also take you further back in time to some of the sites of our Saxon, Roman and prehistoric predecessors. More information about the Water Park during these periods is in the booklet "Forgotten landscapes, hidden lives: The archaeology of the Cotswold Water Park" which accompanies this walk guide or is available from Cotswold Water Park outlets.

Some short sections of this walk are on public roads. These can be busy, please exercise caution at all times.

- 1 Park at the Neigh Bridge car park and follow the Thames Path with the lake to your left and the river to your right.
- 2 Cross the footbridge over the Thames and continue to follow the Thames Path with the river to your left.
- 3 Ignore the footpath over the bridge across the river and stay on the path with the river to your left.



1. Somerford Keynes Manor: The range of buildings visible across the fields to your right is Somerford Keynes Manor originally built in the 15th or 16th century, although it has been much altered since that time. The large barn dates to the mid 18th century.

NB these buildings are on private land and are not open to the public.



2. All Saints, Somerford Keynes: Originally built in the Anglo-Saxon period, the church of All Saints was heavily renovated in the 17th and 18th centuries, although a Saxon doorway survives in the Western Wall. Look out for an 11th century carved relief of two dragons above this door.

- 4 Turn right at the boundary before Old Mill Farm to pick up the path to the right of the ditch and then across the field to a small stream.
- 5 Cross the stream and at the junction, turn left to follow the path across fields. The right hand path leads back into Somerford Keynes.
- 6 Go over the stile and cross the road. Bear right to cross another stile and follow the path along the field boundary to 7.
- 7 Turn left along road and cross the stile on the other side of the road just before the bend and go over the stile to follow the path through the woods to the next stile at 8.
- 8 Cross the road and follow the road opposite and to the left into Shorncote.
- 9 Turn right at the T-junction and follow the bend in road. Turn right at the farm to follow the path across the field and then bear right towards the corner of the field with the woodland to your left.



3. All Saints, Shorncote: This small Norman church contains some 12th century wall paintings over the chancel arch and on the north wall. Look out for the Norman sundials scratched on either side of the doorway.

- 10 Follow the path through the back of the woodland, turning left at the lake to follow the path to 11 with the lake on your right.



4. Bronze Age barrow cemetery: Excavations in the gravel pit to the left of the path uncovered a Bronze Age barrow cemetery, a large prehistoric settlement made up of many roundhouses, and a Roman field system.

- 11 Continue along the path around the lake. Do not take the path along the edge of the gravel pit at this point.



5. Multiperiod settlement: Excavations across the large area of gravel extraction to the left of the path uncovered the remains of several thousand years of activity. Findings included a possible late Neolithic timber circle and Bronze Age burial barrows, and a line of large pits, dating from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, that formed a land boundary along the same line as the modern parish boundary. A settlement, including a number of roundhouses, was established on the site in the Iron Age, and by the late Iron Age a series of rectangular paddocks were used for rearing stock. Grazing continued to be important after the arrival of the Romans, although by the 3rd and 4th centuries AD they were also growing cereals. The inhabitants built a comfortable stone farmhouse at this time, and buried their dead in two small cemeteries. Later in the late 5th to early 6th century AD Anglo-Saxon immigrants settled at the site, and built a number of small huts and a timber hall.

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12 Turn right along the southern edge of the lake towards the gates of Keynes Country Park.

13 Before the gates turn left through the car park in front of the Millennium Building.



6. Iron Age settlement: A large Iron Age settlement, containing a number of roundhouses and boundary ditches, was found at the site of this lake. Cropmark evidence shows that the site is at least twice as large as the section which has been excavated.

14 Go through the gate in the hedge and cross the road to enter Cokes Pit Local Nature Reserve and follow the path along the eastern edge of the lake to 15.

15 Follow the road for about 50 yards, and then re-enter Coke's Pit across the wooden bridge, continue along the edge of the lake

16 Follow the road to the T-junction at 17.

17 Either follow the road back to Neigh Bridge Car Park or cross the road to follow the footpath through a small entrance.



7. Neolithic axe find: A Neolithic stone axe found in a field behind these houses had been manufactured in Cornwall and imported to the area. The axe is now in Malmesbury Museum.

18 Turn left at the footbridge to follow the path along the field boundary road back to the Car Park.

ADDITIONAL LOOP

19 At Macks Farm take the footpath through the hedge across the field.



8. Bronze Age Barrow: Crop mark evidence suggests that a Bronze Age Round Barrow was sited here, although the site has now been ploughed flat.

20 Cross the road and continue to follow the path towards the lakes.

21 Follow the short length of path between two lakes, taking a right turn to follow the path which runs along the edge of another lake, and turns left between lakes.

22 When you see open ground ahead, bear right to follow the path with a lake to your right.



9. Roman farmstead: Cropmarks suggest that an extensive field system, associated with a small Roman farmstead existed in the area to the left of the path. This farmstead may have been established as part of the large-scale land reorganisation which took place in the Water Park in the early Roman period.

23 Turn left at the woodland to follow the path with woodland on your right.

24 Turn right along the road for about 50 yards before picking up the footpath on your left. This is a busy road, please take care.

25 Either follow the footpath around the edge of the field or along the bank of the river to 26.

26 Cross the river, bear left and go through the gate to follow the path to the church.



10. Moated manor house: The rectangular ditch around Church Farm to the left of the path is a medieval moat of a type common in England in the 13th and 14th century. This was the site of a small manor house from at least the early 13th century, and by the late 13th century may have been the home of the Keynes family who gave their name to the village. By the early 14th century the manor was the property of Tewkesbury Abbey in Gloucestershire, and remained in their ownership until the Abbey was dissolved in 1540. The rectangular moat does not form a complete circuit around the house and would have been as much a status symbol as a form of defence. It may also have served as a fishpond or improved drainage. The present house is not the original manor and dates mainly to the 16th and 18th centuries.

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- 27** It is recommended that you retrace your steps back to 25 rather than attempt to walk down the road from this point.



11. The Church of the Holy Cross: The Church of the Holy Cross was begun in the 12th century and the nave, chancel and font are all of that date. The arches in the north wall of the chancel, and southern aisle date to the early 13th century. The chancel arch was widened during renovation work in 1876-7 at which time the chancel was painted in its current design. The tower dates to the 14th century, at which time the aisles were also remodelled. If you visit the church look out for the 17th century brass in the chancel commemorating three generations called Henry Hawkins.

- 28** Cross the road and follow the Thames Path through trees between lakes to 29.

- 29** Keep the houses to your left and follow the path, and then a minor road to 30.



12. Iron Age settlement and Roman tile depot: During the Iron Age the inhabitants of a small farmstead on the site of this lake made a living from herding cattle and sheep on the open grassland of the Water park. Shortly after the Roman invasion this farmstead, along with many others in the Water Park, was reorganised and new fields and paddocks were laid out. Despite these changes, the inhabitants continued to rely heavily on grazing livestock for a living. An early Roman tile depot, which may have been run by the Roman army, has also been found at this site, along with fragments of monumental sculpture from a statue to the principal Roman gods.

- 30** Either turn left towards the Neigh Bridge car park or straight on towards Somerford Keynes, turning left at the next junction towards the Neigh Bridge car park. **P**

A heritage walk guide in this series is also available for the Lechlade area, and more heritage walks can be found on the Cotswold Water Park website www.waterpark.org.

Go even further back in time - learn more about the fossils and geology, the rivers and the landscape in these related trail guides for the area:

Keynes Country Park - Geology and Landscape Heritage Trail

South Cerney - Geology and Landscape Heritage Trail

Coates and the Thames & Severn Canal - Geology and Landscape Heritage Trail

These are available from Cotswolds Water Park outlets, Tourist Information Centres and Gloucestershire Geology Trust e-mail: info@glosgeotrust.org.uk, Tel: 01452 864438.