



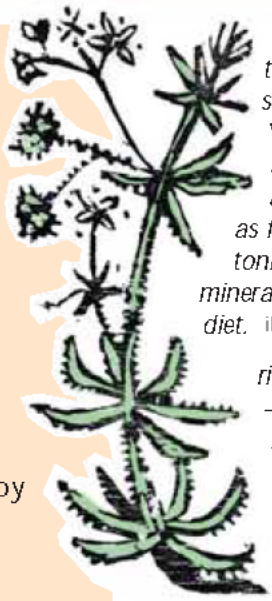
illustration: Jane Dobie © English Heritage

left: The new iron plough allowed farmers to cultivate the deeper and richer soils of the river valleys. More food meant a growing population and rivalry with other tribes for land and resources.

## Living on the land

The late Bronze Age / Iron Age site in Cleeve Wood may seem to be no more than a series of banks, humps and holes in the ground, but people lived on this site for over a thousand years. The site has yet to be excavated, so it will have more to tell us about the people who lived and worked here.

The earthwork was built on a slope and only has a bank and ditch around part of its circumference. It is protected from the north by Cleeve Toot, a rocky prominence from where there are fine views. This would also be an excellent lookout.

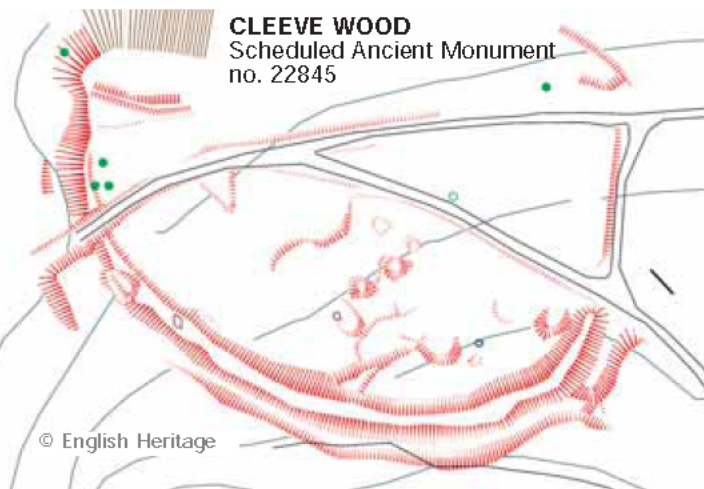


left: Wild plants familiar to us today would have had extra significance to the Celts. Young goosegrass (cleavers), as well as young nettles and ramsoms were eaten as food and as a spring tonic, providing vitamins and minerals lacking in a winter diet. illustration: Lindy Clark

right: The Wraxall Collar – a heavy bronze necklace. It was found in a garden in Wraxall. Although it is made from bronze it is from the late Iron Age. The original is in the City of Bristol Museum.

right (inside): The artwork presents a very tidy, geometric version of an Iron Age enclosure. The enclosure in Cleeve Wood would not have looked as neat and crisp as this, after centuries of agricultural usage.

left: A plan of the late Bronze Age / Iron Age enclosure in Cleeve Wood. The site has been built into a slope and is enclosed on three sides by a single earth bank and outer ditch. This and other similar earthworks have the title of 'univallate hill-slope enclosures'.



CLEEVE WOOD  
Scheduled Ancient Monument  
no. 22845

© English Heritage

This is one of a series of Bronze Age / Iron Age sites strung along the escarpment to the north east (see map bottom right). It is likely that they were farming settlements, managing herds of cattle – exploiting the lush, summer grazing of wet lowlands (now the North Somerset Levels). The animals would have been brought back to the safety of the high ground before the winter floods.

The people who lived or worked here would have had duties of allegiance to a local tribal chief. In this case the ruling family's power base would probably have been at Cadbury Congresbury hillfort, just 2 km south-west from here (see map bottom right).

There are other major hillforts in the area with their subsidiary, smaller sites. For good local examples see the panel to the right. All these groups would have been part of a larger tribe. The local tribe here was the Dobunni (whose principal settlement was at Cirencester) who seem to have displaced another tribe during the Iron Age period, the Belgae (principal settlement Winchester).

right: As trade grew between Britain and Europe money was needed to facilitate complicated exchanges of goods. Celtic Britons were eager importers of wine and other luxury goods. In exchange they exported 'grain, cattle, gold, silver and iron ... also hides, slaves and dogs' according to a report from the first century BC. We know they also exported lead and tin.



They based their new coinage on the Greek 'stater'. The design on the bottom coin is a Celtic / Dobunni version of the original above – showing Philip of Macedon (died 336 BC) driving a chariot. You can see parts of the horse and one of the wheels from the original design but curiously re-arranged in a very different sort of picture.

photos: Liz Milner, by kind permission of the City of Bristol Museum

## Other Iron Age sites to visit nearby ...



If you like a walk with a view, here are some local destinations you will enjoy. These are all important hillforts of the area, their sites chosen to dominate their localities. They are all accessible by public footpath.

above left: Cadbury Congresbury hillfort (grid reference ST442651). Mature oaks amongst the defensive ramparts. Fine views of Mendip Hills and Levels.

above centre: The curving banks of Cadbury Tickenham hillfort (ST 455735). Wonderful views to the Bristol Channel.

## Museums & Heritage Centres

There are Bronze and Iron Age collections in Bristol, Weston-super-Mare and Glastonbury museums. You can visit reconstructed Iron Age buildings at Peat Moors Centre near Glastonbury.



**City of Bristol Museum**  
0117 922 3571  
**North Somerset Museum**  
01934 621 028  
**Lake Village Museum**  
01458 832954/832949  
**Peat Moors Centre**  
01458 860697

photo: Liz Milner, by kind permission of City of Bristol Museum



illustration: Peter Dunn © English Heritage



photos: Peter Milner

above right: Worlebury hillfort, (ST 315635) spectacularly sited on the wooded headland just north of Weston-super-Mare. The site is protected by a series of impressive ramparts but most striking are the dozens of storage pits dug into the site. Sprouted grain was kept fresh in the pits by covering them and excluding the air. Human remains were also found in some of the pits.

below: A map of the distribution of major and minor Iron Age sites in the area. It should be noted that the Cleeve Wood enclosure is one of a series of settlements along the escarpment bordering the A370.

