

# Great Archaeological Sites in Caerphilly



## 2. BEGWNS



On the summit of Mynydd Machen, at ST2237590020, stands a large flat-topped circular mound with a diameter of approximately 25m, known as Begwns or Begwyns. It has never been excavated, but from its form and position, it is believed to be a Bronze Age barrow or cairn, rising at least a metre above the surrounding hillside, although it is difficult to assess this and it varies depending on which side you look at. The mound is covered in grass, but stones below the surface are visible where it has been eroded and damaged by illegal off-road motor bikes. Round barrows and cairns were constructed in the Early Bronze Age to mark burials. Barrows are typically made of earth and cairns of stone, depending at least to some extent on the materials that were to hand when they were being built, but external appearances can be deceptive.

On a clear day, there is a superb 360° view of the hills around, extending to the south over to the other side of the Bristol Channel. It is possible that the site may have been used at a later date as the platform for a beacon, to take advantage of the

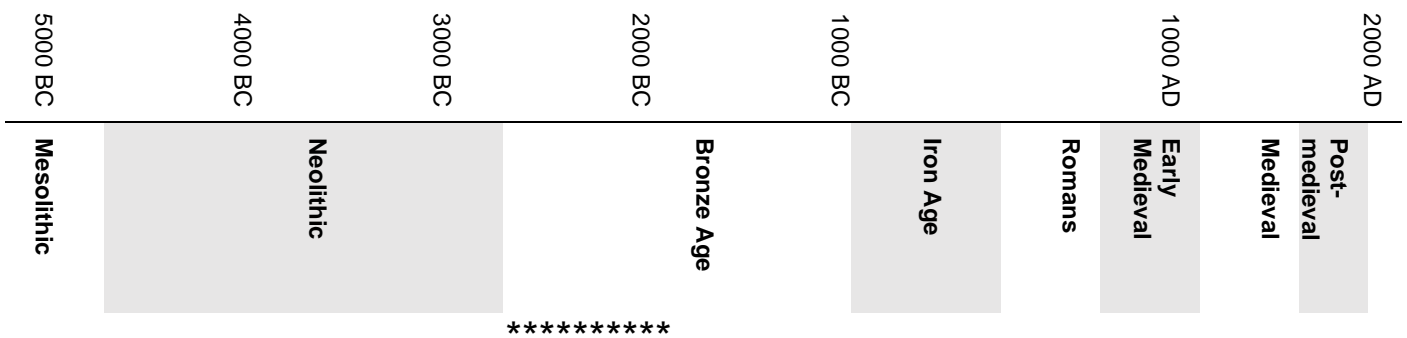
all-round visibility, in the same way as its modern equivalent, the mobile phone mast. A trig point was established on it in the 19th century for the same reason.

The primary burial in a barrow or cairn is usually at the centre, and may be enclosed in a cist built from stone slabs before the earth or stone was heaped up above it. At times the primary burial was made in a pit dug into the ground. Sometimes the body was cremated before burial, in which case the ashes might be placed in a pottery urn. At other times the unburnt body was buried in a foetal position. Any secondary burials were made around the sides, and sometimes were added well after the monument was first constructed.



The site is on the Open Access common land of Mynydd Machen, and can be reached along the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway Walk and the Sirhowy Valley Walk. There is car parking in the Sirhowy Valley Country Park, and the nearest towns are Pontymister and Crosskeys, both with railway stations on the Cardiff to Ebbw Vale line. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 152.

**Timeline** (the asterisk indicate the possible time-span)



You can learn more about this site, and other similar archaeological sites in Wales, by going to <https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/>. Please read and observe the Conditions of Use. Begwns has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00012m, and you can search for other similar sites here too. You can contact us via social media or through the methods given at the bottom of the page. See more prehistoric monuments at [http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun\\_rit/english/fun\\_ritmain.html](http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun_rit/english/fun_ritmain.html).