

Great Archaeological Sites in Bridgend



2. BWLCH YR AVAN



In the hills north of Bridgend, between the summits of the Werfa and Twyn Crugyrafan from SS 91967 95102 to SS 92109 95129 are the remains of an earthwork that once helped to control the routeway along the ridge of Mynydd Llangeinor, between Cwm Garw on the west and Cwm Ogwr on the east. It consists of a ditch with a bank on either side.

The best-preserved part is at the west end, where a length of about 90m survives. Here the twin banks still stand to up to 1.5m in height and over 3m wide, and the central ditch is about 1m wide and 1m deep. At its western end it gradually fades out into the steep slope of Cwm Nant-ty, and the earthworks of the northern bank and the ditch become difficult to trace where a modern field boundary follows their line.

C B Crampton, a pioneer in the study of pollen in archaeological contexts, excavated a section through this dyke in the 1960s by. He found that there was heather pollen in the ancient land surface that had been buried when the banks were constructed, implying that this area at least had already been heather moorland at the time.

This dyke is one of three that cross the high ground around the headwaters of the Garw and Ogmore rivers. The others are Clawdd Mawr at Bwlchgarw to the west (from SS 89430 94900 to SS 89530 94700), and Bwlch y Clawdd to the east which runs between between Craig Ogŵr (ST 93965 94397) and Mynydd Ton (ST 94048 94530). The belief among historians and archaeologists is that they were constructed in the context of the many little kingdoms that arose after Roman occupation had come to an end. The suggestion is that they marked territorial boundaries across the main routeways, which used the ridges for travel as they would have been easier than the wooded valleys. However, there is no good dating evidence. Crampton's excavations took place at a time when radiocarbon dating was not used as routinely as it is today, and he was trying to establish a dating system based on idea that vegetation in the uplands had developed in a standardised way.

The ridges in fact remained an important part of long-distance communications right up into the 18th century, and it was only with the coming of the railways that routes moved definitively down into the valleys.

Bwlch yr Afan dyke is on open access land in the area known as Bwlch yr Afan off the A4017 ,close to the telephone mast on the Werfa where there is room for parking. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 170, Explorer Series sheet 166.

Timeline (the asterisk indicate the possible time-span)



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