

Great Archaeological Sites in Merthyr Tydfil



1. ANCIENT SETTLEMENT ON CEFN CAR



High on a moorland ridge in the Brecon Beacons at the northern edge of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough are a number of groups of enclosures and hut circles. None of these have been excavated, but they look very similar to other examples in other upland areas such as Snowdonia and Dartmoor where excavation has dated them to the Bronze Age.

The best group is on the hillside below the crest of the ridge at SO 0224 1329, facing south on a spur between two streams. A meandering low bank of stone rubble, a 'wandering wall', against which have been built a number of enclosures, marks the south-west corner. Some of the separate enclosures that lie on its north and east are nearly circular, including two that share part of the same wall and have a hut circles projecting out next to the junction. Another is a figure-of eight open along part of one curve. In size they range all the way from under 5m to 25m in diameter. The most complicated is formed by very wide banks of stone, up to 4m thick, from out of

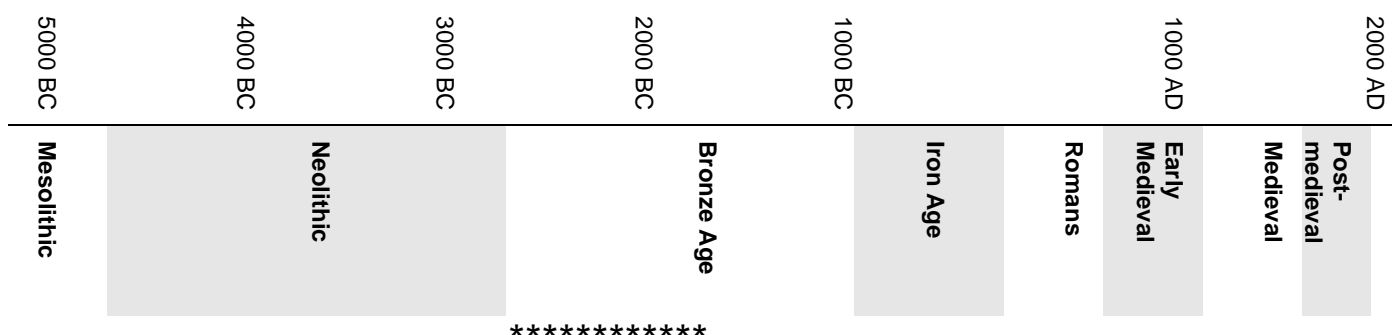
which have been built small oval or circular huts projecting into the internal 'courtyard'.

We do not know whether these enclosures were built by people who were using the uplands seasonally to manage their stock, or whether people were living here permanently and possibly growing crops too. Although this area now looks very inhospitable, it is likely to have been a more attractive place in the Early Bronze Age when the climate was warmer than it is now, and the uplands would have been easier to farm than the thickly wooded river valleys. A number of small cairns in the area may have been created as the inhabitants of this settlement cleared stones to plant crops (and of course more stone from clearance would have found its way into the walls of their huts and enclosures,



The nearest parking to the site is several kilometres away on the east side of Llwyn-on reservoir on the A470. A track leads through the forestry to a gate onto the open moorland and along the ridge of Cefn Car. The featured enclosures are to the south of the track. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 160, Explorer Series Outdoor Leisure sheet 12.

Timeline (the asterisks 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. The Cefn Car settlement has the overall PRN (Primary Record Number) 06054m, with the individual enclosures or hut circles having the PRNs 00789m – 00794m. 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.

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