

Great Archaeological Sites in Merthyr Tydfil



3. ENCLOSURE ON CEFN CILSANWS



Cefn Cilsanws is a steep-sided rocky hill just outside Cefncoedycymer at the north side of Merthyr, on the edge of the Brecon Beacons. On ground that falls away to the east is a small four-sided enclosure measuring nearly 80m x 60m (SO 0283 0998). Inside the enclosure the surface rises gently to the north and west while outside the ground falls away on all sides except the north; its highest natural point is in the north-west corner. On the east side the ground falls away so steeply that the builders did not feel that it was worthwhile to build any defences, but the other three sides are defended by banks of limestone rubble and boulders. Although time and grazing animals have laid them quite low, they can still be clearly traced. On the west side the rubble is piled against an outcrop of the living rock which was highest at the north side, allowing the builders to create a bank which is still 2.5m high on the outside. More work was needed at the south end where the outcrop was lower, and the rubble here sweeps round to create the shortest side of the enclosure facing south. Here the bank is 1.25m high on its outer side and only 0.75m above the inside of the enclosure, and it fades away as it approaches the steep scarp to the east. In the middle of the south side is a gap 2m wide which was probably the

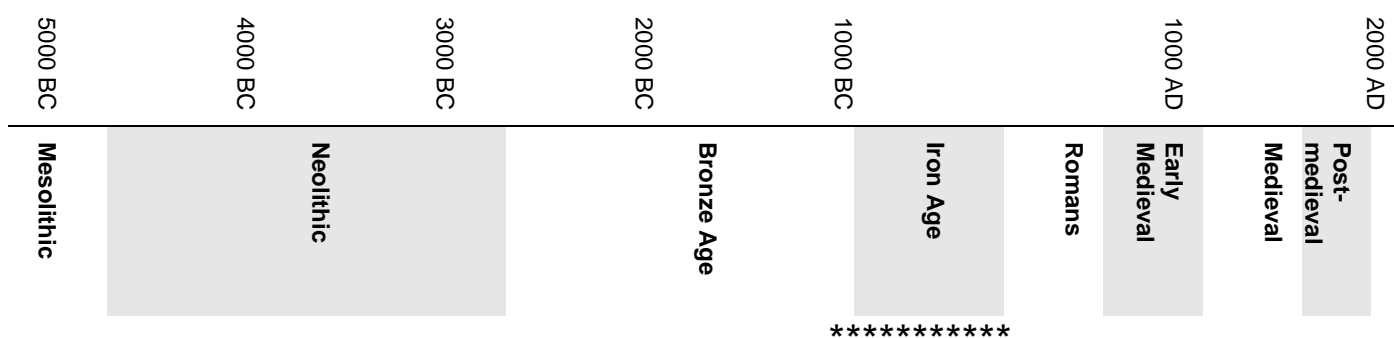
original entrance. The gap on the north side is probably the result of later damage, and indeed on part of this side the bank has slipped downhill. This side is rather lower than the other two, only 1.1m high.

Nothing can be seen inside the enclosure except for grass. There may originally have been buildings inside, but if so no traces are now visible above ground. We cannot tell if people lived here, or whether they only used it for stock. Enclosures of this kind are usually dated to the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, but as this example has never been excavated, we cannot be certain either when it was occupied.



The enclosure is in the middle of the Cilsanws Nature Reserve, with access via the Merthyr Tydfil Golf Course Car Park. 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 enclosure has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 02908m, 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.