

# Great Archaeological Sites in Monmouthshire



## 7. CLYDACH IRONWORKS



The remains of Clydach Ironworks stand close to the River Clydach as it cuts its way down from the uplands of the coalfield to the fertile farmland in the Usk valley (SO 2290 1325). Back in the heyday of the works in the first half of the 19th century the scene would have been very different, with smoke and fumes from the furnaces. Like other ironworks sites in the South Wales Valleys, Clydach was chosen because owners could lease land locally to extract the necessary raw materials, iron ore, coal and limestone, and hillside against which to build the blast furnaces.

The Clydach works were opened in the 1790s with a single furnace. By 1813 when the works were first offered for sale there was also a second as well, with the blowing engine powered by a 42-foot waterwheel, as well as a rolling mill and a forge with a Trevithick steam engine. A third furnace was added in 1826, blown by a Boulton & Watt engine, and there was a fourth by 1839. When the works went out of production in 1861, the complex included coke ovens and the plant to refine the pig iron produced in the blast furnaces. All that can be seen today is the brick linings of three of the furnaces with a casting house in front and, at a higher level on the

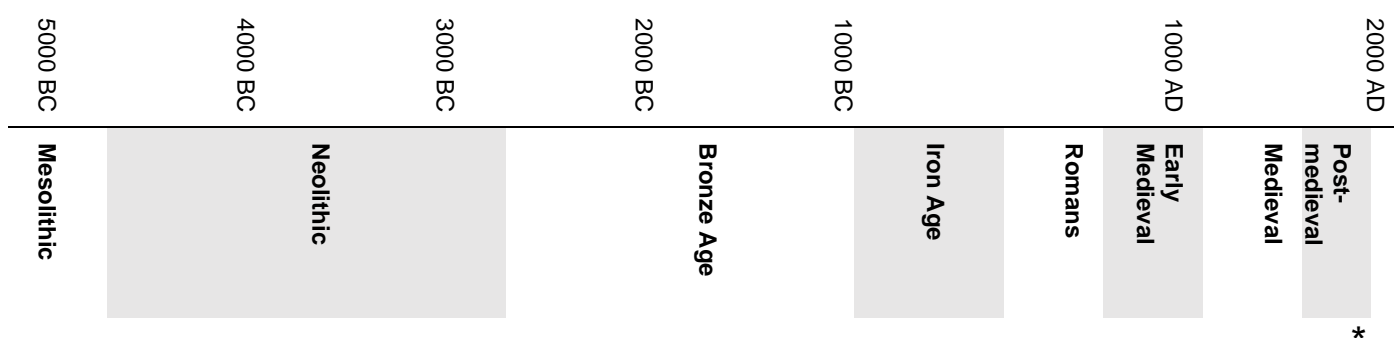
hillside behind, the gable of the charging house and the wheel pit for the waterwheel. There was an inclined plane to the right where the raw materials were brought up into the charging house to be loaded into the furnaces.

These raw materials were brought into the site on tramways. One of these crossed the river opposite the furnaces on an iron bridge. This is known as Smart's bridge, and has the date of 1824 cast into the top of the arch.



Clydach ironworks lie towards the bottom of the Clydach Gorge, just off the A465 Heads of the Valleys road. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 161, Explorer Series Outdoor Leisure sheet 13.

**Timeline** (the asterisk indicates the 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. Clydach ironworks has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 02476g, and Smart's bridge is 02476g. 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. . You can find more about the South Wales iron industry via the industrial pages of our timeline <http://www.ggat.org.uk/timeline/timeline.html>.