

Great Archaeological Sites in Rhondda Cynon Taf



7. DINAS SILICA MINES, PONTNEDDFECHAN



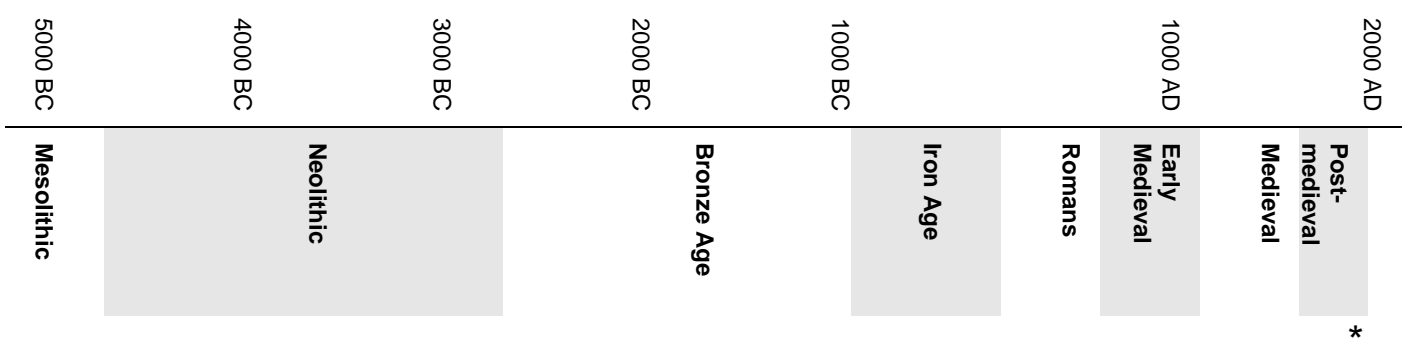
In the 19th century the name of Dinas became known all over the world as the result of an invention that proved to be of great importance for the Industrial Revolution. South Wales was a world leader in metal smelting, both copper in Swansea and iron further east in the Valleys. Both copper furnaces and the blast furnaces that made the iron worked at very high temperatures, and the bricks that lined them were subjected to tremendous stresses. A method of vitrifying the surface to make it more durable was patented in 1817, but it was a local businessman and inventor William Weston Young who conceived the idea of building the entire lining from vitrified brick, which he proposed to make from the silica that could be obtained from the exceptionally pure deposits of sandstone at the head of the Vale of Neath. Once he had perfected the process of making the bricks and obtained a lease of the area where the sandstone occurred, he put together a consortium to finance the enterprise. The Dinas Fire Brick Company started operations in 1822, with quarries at Dinas and a brickworks down the valley at Pont Walby. Mining for silica started in 1903 and went on until 1964.

Remains of the workings can be seen down the hillside, some as earthworks like the tramroad embankment and hollows made by collapsed underground workings. Some of the adits to the mines still survive, although they have mostly been blocked up. The largest are on the banks of the River Sychryd (SN 9173 0792). A tunnel runs through the cliff on the opposite side where the tramroad took the silica down to the brickworks at Pont Walby.



There is parking at the Dinas Rock car park. From there, follow the very steep and uneven footpath to the top of the rock, follow it along the top and then take the first turning to the right. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 160, Explorer Series Outdoor Leisure sheet 12.

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. Dinas silica mine has the PRNs (Primary Record Number) 01472m, 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.