

Great Archaeological Sites in the Vale of Glamorgan



2. DUNRAVEN PROMONTORY FORT, SOUTHERNDOWN



Strung out along the Glamorgan Heritage coast are a series of Iron Age forts that were situated to take advantage of the natural defences afforded by the cliff top. This meant that their builders only had to construct banks and ditches on the landward side where they were vulnerable to attack. They are generally known as promontory forts, even though some of them were not constructed in places where the coastline juts out. The hook-shaped headland, Trwyn y Witch – the Witch’s Nose – that forms the southern side of Dunraven Bay (SS 8867 7279), is one such promontory, where stands Dunraven fort.

On the seaward sides of the site, the fort is defended naturally, by sheer cliffs to the west and very steep slopes to the south. But the man-made defences still to be seen on the northern side of the fort are very impressive. They consisted of two banks with ditches and are still nearly 12m high from bottom of the ditches to the tops of the banks. They curve round from the cliff where the original entrance was probably situated before it was lost to erosion. At this point a third bank on the outer side creates a small enclosed area, which is thought to have helped define the entrance. A short distance outside is a separate small enclosure. Although erosion has made its relationship to the main fort uncertain, it is generally thought to be an

annexe. Inside the fort, three groups of shallow hollows may have been the sites of roundhouses, though some of them may be later quarries.

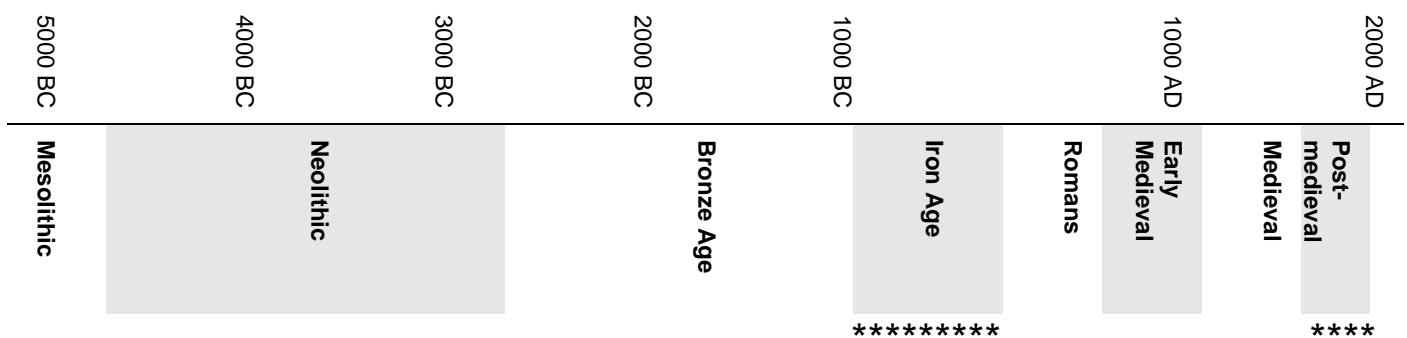
The only person who is known to have carried out any excavations here was Iolo Morganwg, who dug a section through one of the banks. There has never been a modern excavation, but the Trust commissioned a geophysical survey in the 1990s, which revealed more possible huts and defensive features.

Unfortunately much the east side of the fort was landscaped as the grounds of two successive post medieval mansions. The second of these, built in 1802-06, was known as Dunraven Castle although we have no evidence that there was ever a medieval castle on the site. It was demolished in 1962. It was surrounded by the landscaped grounds of Dunraven Park, which probably originated in the 17th century as a deer park.



Dunraven promontory fort overlooks Dunraven Bay (also known as Southerndown beach), south of Southerndown, where there is a car park and visitor centre (CF32 0RP). Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 170, Explorer Series sheet 151.

Timeline (the asterisks indicate the time-spans)



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. Dunraven fort has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00329m, the castle is 00330m, the park 04364m, with individual features separately recorded as PRNs 01166 – 01167s, 04754m – 04763m, 08590m – 08591m. 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.