

# Great Archaeological Sites in Cardiff



## 1. GARTH HILL ROUND BARROW CEMETERY



Strung out in a straight line along the ridge of Garth Hill from ST 1026 8348 to ST 10610 8367 is an impressive row of five mounds, ranging from about 9m to 26m in diameter. They vary in height; one stands over 4m high, the tallest barrow in Glamorgan. These are Bronze Age round barrows. Although some barrows are lone monuments, they are often grouped into cemeteries, as here.

Round barrows and cairns were constructed in the Early Bronze Age to mark burials. Barrows are typically made of earth. Sometimes the earth came from digging a ditch around the perimeter, as can be seen around the easternmost barrow on the Garth. None of the other barrows have ditches, as least as far as we can see today. Cairns were made of stone, depending at least to some extent on the materials that were to hand when they were being built, but external appearances can be deceptive – some barrows have stone structure inside. There are signs that most if not all at least have been dug into at some time, but the people who did it have no left no records so we don't know what they found.

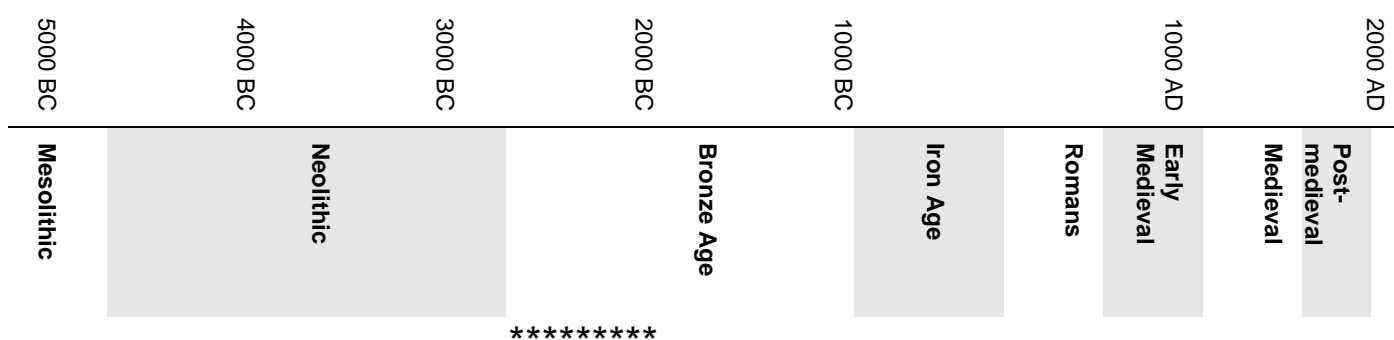
The primary burial in a barrow or cairn is usually at the centre, and may be enclosed in a cist built from stone slabs before the earth or stone was heaped up above it. At times the primary burial was made in a pit dug into the ground. Sometimes the body was cremated before burial, in which case the ashes might be placed in a pottery urn. At other times the unburnt body was buried in a foetal position. Any secondary burials were made around the sides, and sometimes were added well after the monument was first constructed.

Although these barrows were constructed thousands of years ago, a story grew up in the neighbourhood that they had been thrown up very recently to make Garth Hill qualify as a 'mountain' according to the criteria set by the Ordnance Survey. This story formed the basis of the film *The Englishman who went up a hill and came down a mountain*.



Garth Hill is an Open Access area. It can be accessed along the Ridgeway Walk long distance footpath from the villages Pentyrch to the south or Gwaelod y Garth to the east. The nearest railway station is at Taff's Well, on the Cardiff to Pontypridd line, where you can cross the river into Gwaelod y Garth. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 151.

**Timeline** (the asterisk indicate 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. The Garth Hill Barrows have the PRNs (Primary Record Numbers) 00707m – 00711m, 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. See more prehistoric burial monuments at [http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun\\_rit/english/fun\\_ritmain.html](http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun_rit/english/fun_ritmain.html).