

# Great Archaeological Sites in Caerphilly



## 4. GELLIGAER ROMAN FORT



The Romans first built a fort at Gelligaer in the 70s AD, with defences constructed of earth and timber and the internal buildings in timber. As with many Roman forts, this was replaced with a new build in stone, which occupied a slightly different site a little to the south of the original, centred at NGR ST13419707. This fort was rather smaller and was in use for most of the 2nd century.

The stone fort was nearly square in plan, and was defended by a V-shaped ditch and an earthen rampart faced with a stone wall. It had four gates, one in the middle of each side, and the gatehouses each had a square tower either side. The headquarters building was in the middle as usual, with the commandant's house to one side followed by a granary next to the gate to make it easy to bring in supplies. Most of the rest of the area of the fort was occupied by barrack blocks. From the amount of accommodation provided, it looks as though the fort was designed for a 500-strong infantry unit.

A large annexe was attached to one side of the fort, outside the defences but surrounded by a wall on the other three sides. Most of one half of the annexe is taken up with a well-equipped bath-house.

The site of the stone fort was reoccupied at the end of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century, but we cannot tell whether it was being used by the

military or by civilians. At the beginning of the 20th century, much of the stone fort was excavated by John Ward of the National Museum of Wales. Ward also dug a few trenches in the timber fort, followed in 1963 by some limited excavation by Cardiff University.

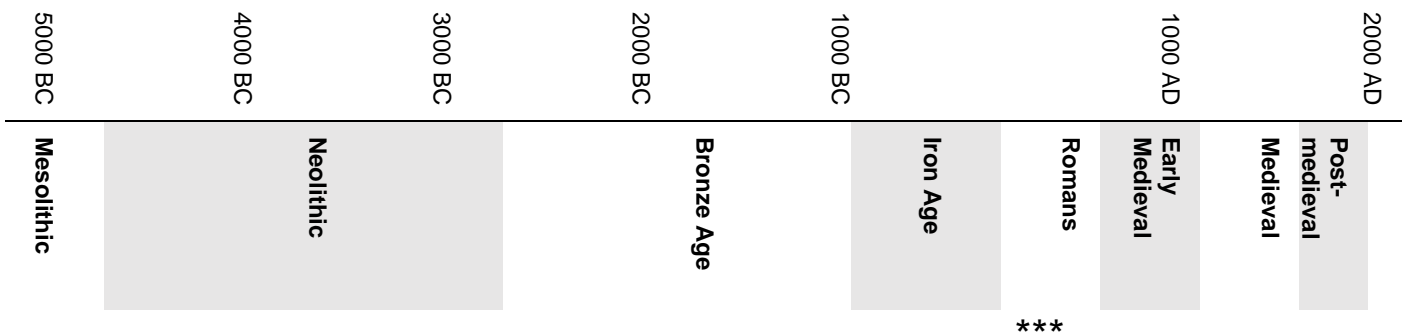
The stone fort is now represented by the low earthworks that are all that is left of the defences. The site of the timber fort is not open to the public.

The site is in Gelligaer village, on the north-western side of Church Road (CF82 8FX). Map: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 166. About 2km to the north at the southern end of Gelligaer Common, are three clusters of earthworks centred ST 1161 9862 (PRN 00652m), ST 1315 9920 (PRN 00667m) and ST 1382 9916 (PRNs 00657m, 00658m) dug by the soldiers stationed at the fort as part of their training in building temporary camps.



*Practice camps 00657m and 00658m*

**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. Gelligaer Roman fort has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00661m, 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 about the Romans in South Wales at [http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/romans\\_in\\_south\\_wales/index.html](http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/romans_in_south_wales/index.html)