

# Great Archaeological Sites in Monmouthshire



## 2. GRAY HILL STONE CIRCLE



Almost all the stone circles we find in South Wales are relatively modern gorsedd circles put up in the 19th and 20th centuries for ceremonies at the National Eisteddfod, but the stone circle on Gray Hill is different. Gray Hill is on the edge of Wentwood, on the hills overlooking the coastal plain, and on a fine day there are views to the south right across the Bristol Channel,

Nearly 10m across and built of stone that were hewn without iron tools and weathered over thousands of years, it dates back to the Bronze Age. There are nine stones around the circumference, laid on their sides (or 'recumbent'), and a further three in the middle. Close to one side but a little apart is a standing stone. Nearly 55m away to the north-west is another standing stone, and part of the way between the two standing stones, in a straight line with them, is a another recumbent stone.

These are not the only Bronze Age monuments on Gray Hill. There are also several groups of round cairns or barrows (if they haven't been excavated it's not always easy to tell the difference between a barrow which made mainly of earth or a cairn made of stone that has become covered in earth). One of these was excavated by staff and students from the archaeology department of the University of Newport in 2002. They found that there was a stone bank around the outside, surrounding a kerb of larger stones, with a carefully laid surface of stone slabs forming a rough

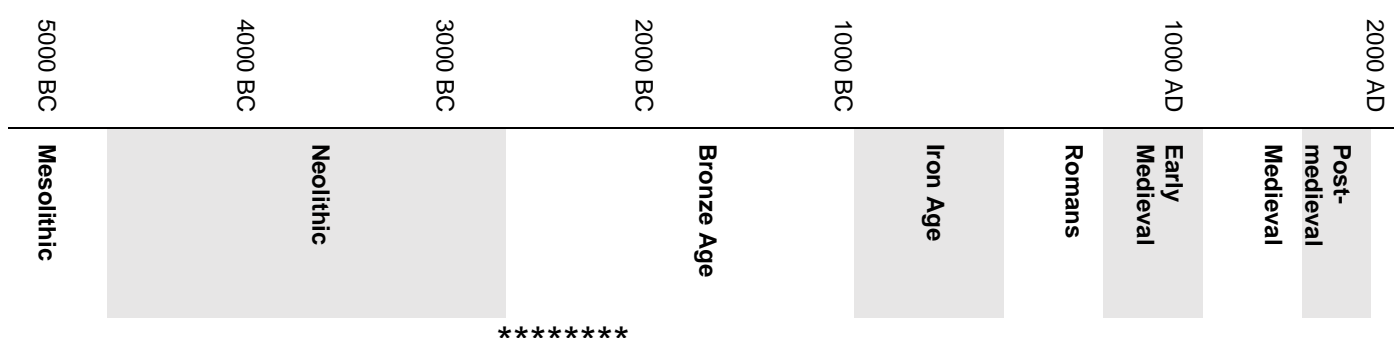
surface in the middle. But they didn't find a burial, and the only artefacts discovered were a bead made from faience and a flint arrowhead.

Altogether, these reveal an important slice of a Bronze Age landscape probably connected with Bronze Age spirituality. Other elements of it make be the D-shaped enclosure a little higher up the slope, and one of the boundary banks that cross the hill. The Newport University excavations found that the bank had a wall built on the top, but not whether this was contemporary or whether it happened later



The nearest car park is at Wentwood Reservoir, from where a steep path leads to the top of Grey Hill. Access is also possible via the footpath from Llanfair Discoed village, but there are very few suitable places to park. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series Outdoor Leisure sheet 14.

**Timeline** (the asterisks indicate the possible 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 stone circle on Gray Hill has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00987g, the standing stones 00988g and 08398g, and the cairns/barrows 00986g and, 01002g – 01004g. 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 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)