

Great Archaeological Sites in Monmouthshire



1. HAROLD'S STONES, TRELLECH



In the Middle Ages the village of Trellech was a thriving town, but there were people in the area much earlier than that. Just outside the village (SO 4993 0514), in a field alongside the road to Chepstow, are three standing stones in a row running northeast to southwest. They now lean in different directions looking as though they are having a conversation, but they probably originally all stood upright. The stone on the south-west end is the tallest, being well over 3m high, but even the shortest, at the other end of the row, is 2.5m. They are shaped out of the local conglomerate. The central stone has two circular depressions on its southern face, one nearly at ground level and the other 1.2m above. These are probably cup-marks.

There are a number of standing stones in Glamorgan and Gwent, but most of them stand on their own. They are generally dated to the Bronze Age, although this has only been confirmed by excavation on a few sites. Harold's Stones is only one of two sites where we have a surviving row of standing stones. They have not been excavated. We assume that they are Bronze Age too, but it is possible that they may be older and date back to the Neolithic, like the West Kennet Avenue at Avebury in Wiltshire, or some of the stone rows in Brittany.

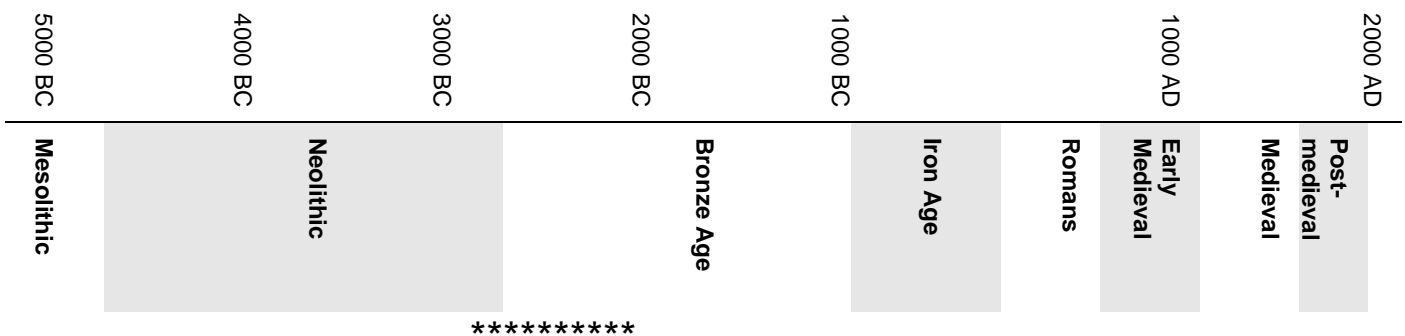
Cup-marks are the commonest motifs found in Neolithic and Bronze Age rock art, made by pecking and grinding away at the surface with a harder stone small enough to be held in the hand. Prehistoric rock art is not very common in South Wales. The

cup-marks on Harold's Stones are larger and not as well defined as most of them in the region. The nearest places to Trellech where they have also been found is at Crick, on two of the stones making up a circle within a round barrow excavated by the National Museum of Wales in 1939, and on a Bronze Age site at Trostrey near Usk. These however were much smaller.



There is a small car park for the stones in Church Street at the south end of Trellech. Take the footpath past the Virtuous Well and across the footbridge. The gate to the field with the stones is on the opposite side of Chepstow Road, at NP25 4PE. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 161, Explorer Series Outdoor Leisure sheet 14.

Timeline (the asterisk indicate the possible time-span)



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