

Great Archaeological Sites in Rhondda Cynon Taf



3. HEN DRE'R MYNYDD, BLAENRHONDDA



Just below the head of the pass over Rhigos mountain to the north of Treorchy stand the remains of the ruined settlement known to local people as Hen Dre'r Mynydd – 'the Old Settlement on the Mountain' (centred SN92290192). It stands on a shelf at the western side of Cefn Glas, overlooking the headwaters of the Rhondda Fawr. The old parish road, reduced to a trackway since the modern A4061 was constructed, runs through groups of round huts and irregular enclosures built in stone rubble, some of them apparently standing on their own, others sharing walls to form a complex cell-like structure. There are several groups of them, and the largest consists of twelve or thirteen round huts and two roughly rectangular enclosures. Where best preserved, the walls are 1.2m wide and up to 1.00m in height, constructed from rubble

The site was explored in 1902 and 1921 by members of the Rhondda Naturalists' Society, with the help of the National Museum of Wales. They cleared the floors of

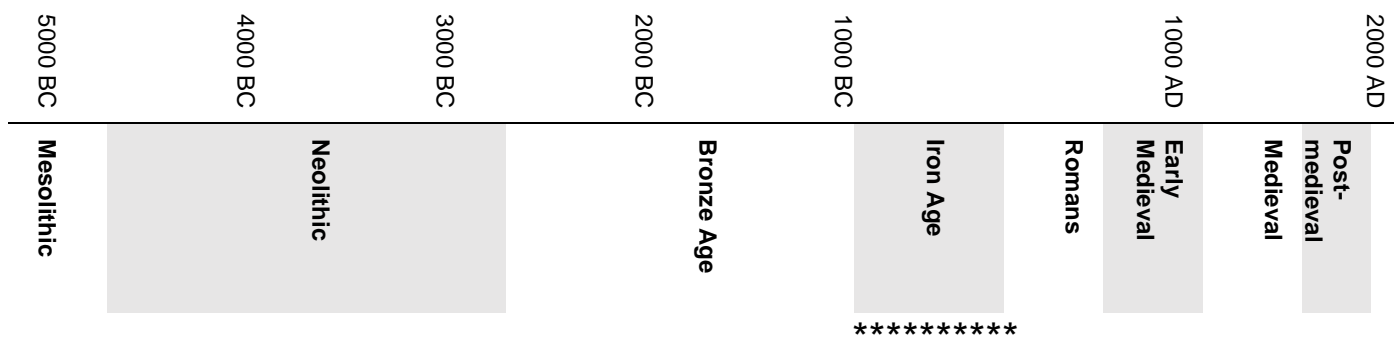
eight of the huts, two with hearths. The finds consisted of stone tools, pot boilers, charcoal, iron slag and a fragment of leather. At the time they were excavated, none of these could be assigned a date, although the slag tells us that it must have been occupied in the Iron Age or later.

In 2015 the Trust organised a community project to enable local volunteers to join in learning more about the site. The geophysical survey they carried out suggested that there were more walls buried underground, which had been cut by the old road. Although Treorchy Library holds the records of the Rhondda Naturalists' Society, and even a few pieces of the slag from the excavation, the volunteers were disappointed to find that there were no notes from either of the excavations. It is possible that they may have been given to Ystrad Library further down the valley, but that was bombed in the war. A visit to the National Museum revealed that the only thing there related to the excavation was a stone that had been used as a rubber, but there was nothing left that would allow us to obtain a date using modern techniques – no charcoal that could be sent for a radiocarbon date.

Although we still cannot put a definite date on this settlement, most archaeologists still think that it was occupied in the Iron Age, on the basis of the form it takes and the iron slag that was found there. Occupation may have continued into the Roman period, but there were no houses of the type we find in the Middle Ages or later.

The A4061 runs immediately to the east of the settlement. There is a forestry car park opposite it on the west side of the road. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 170, Explorer Series sheet 166.

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 three groups of huts that make up the settlement have the PRNs (Primary Record Number) 00019m - 00021m, 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 monuments at http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun_rit/english/fun_ritmain.html.