

Great Archaeological Sites in Caerphilly



7. HOUSE PLATFORMS GELLIGAER COMMON



On a high point at the eastern edge of Gelligaer Common is a group of eleven house platforms. These are the remains of the dwellings of the people who made a living in this exposed spot. The platforms were made by digging into the hillside and dumping the spoil downslope. This created a more level space on which to build a house, with the upper end enclosed by the 'hood' of the natural surface of the hill. This end is usually rather wider than the lower end, which falls away sharply at the edges to the surrounding ground level. On some of them it is possible to see that there are stones under the turf, others are just earthworks

In 1938 Aileen Fox, the wife of the Director of the National Museum of Wales, excavated a couple of them. She found that the central platform in one group of three was a building with walls around 1m thick, made of turves and slabs of the local sandstone, enclosing a rectangular space 18.3m x 5.5m, with drainage channels running alongside the walls at either side. Two post-holes would have contained the posts that supported the ridgepole of a roof running the length of the building, which would probably have been low and covered in heather thatch. There was a door in the middle of each long side. In the upper part was a hearth, the lower part had the remains of paving, and the finds included sherds from cooking pots. The neighbouring platform to the southeast supported a similar but smaller building on its lower end, with the upper part occupied by a small yard containing a small hearth apparently protected by timber windbreak. A glazed jug from this building

was dated to the late 13th or early 14th century. The evidence for the building on the northwestern platform was less clear, but it may have had a wooden floor. Rubbish had been disposed of into a pit inside this building.



Aileen Fox also excavated another group of house platform on the western edge of the common, by Dinas Nofddfa (centred 0935 0319). These were much less substantial and did not have hearths suggesting that they were only occupied seasonally for the summer pastures.

The main group of house platforms are on the open access land of Gelligaer common, on the high ground marked as Twn y Fiffawydd, also known locally as Bryn yr Hebog. Map: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 166. The Dinas Noddfa platforms are north of Coly Uchaf farm.

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. These house platforms have the PRNs (Primary Record Numbers) of 00978m – 00980m, 01024m and 01719m 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