

# Great Archaeological Sites in Monmouthshire



## 3. LLANMELIN WOOD HILLFORT



On the hillside high above the Roman town of Caerwent is a large hillfort (ST46109257). It is one of the best studied in South Wales thanks to the excavations that were carried out there in the 1930 by the National Museum of Wales and by the re-excavation of some of these original trenches as part of a community excavation in 2014. The main enclosure, over 2 hectares in size, is roughly elliptical in shape. It was first constructed in the Early Iron Age, and later enlarged to its present size with new, stronger defences. Ditches were cut into the rock and the material dug out of them was used to build up the banks – some of the stone rubble was actually built up in places into drystone facings for them. There was one entrance on the south side. Geophysical survey has picked up traces of what are probably roundhouses inside.

Hundreds of years later, probably in the middle of the 1st century AD, this entrance was remodelled and strengthened, and the banks turned in at the entrance so that any enemies trying to get in would be exposed to spears and stones thrown down by the defenders. An annexe was added to the outside of the main enclosure immediately to the east of the entrance. The annexe was a long narrow slightly curved rectangle extending on the southeast side where the ground was flattest. It

had its own defences and a separate entrance, and was divided into three separate enclosures, although we do not know why that was.

The finds made during the excavations show that occupation does not seem to have continued very long into the Roman period, but that the people were living in the annexe to fort again in the 12th – 13th centuries.



Access is via a footpath from the lane between Llanfair Discoed and Shirenewton, there is space for a few cars to park a few hundred yards to the east at Crossways Green. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series Outdoor Leisure sheet 14.

There is also a much smaller Iron Age hillfort on the same hilltop, but it is easy to miss if you visit the site as it is completely covered in trees. The site has been named the 'Outpost', but we don't really know was the relationship between the two.

**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. Llanmelin hillfort has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 01026g, and the 'Outpost' is 04437g. 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.