

Great Archaeological Sites in Caerphilly



1. MAEN CATTWG



In a field to the north of Gelligaer village, at NGR ST 12699 97432, lies a flat, weathered sandstone boulder, 2.6m long and roughly rectangular in shape, known as Maen Cattwg. Its top is pitted with over 40 cup-marks, circular indentations made by pecking and grinding with a harder stone that was small enough to be held in the hand. It is a cup-marked stone, part of a tradition of rock-art dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age. A second boulder with cup-marks was seen nearby in 1990, but was subsequently moved.

This type of rock art occurs widely in Europe, from the Mediterranean to Scandinavia. In Britain, most of the examples are found in Scotland and Northern England, and can take the form of elaborate panels with a wide variety of designs including rings, spirals and grooves of various shapes. But it is much rarer in Wales. Up until the end of the 1990s, only six examples had been found in Glamorgan and Gwent, of which Maen Cattwg was the most elaborate and best known. Although discoveries over the past 20 years have more than doubled the number of sites,

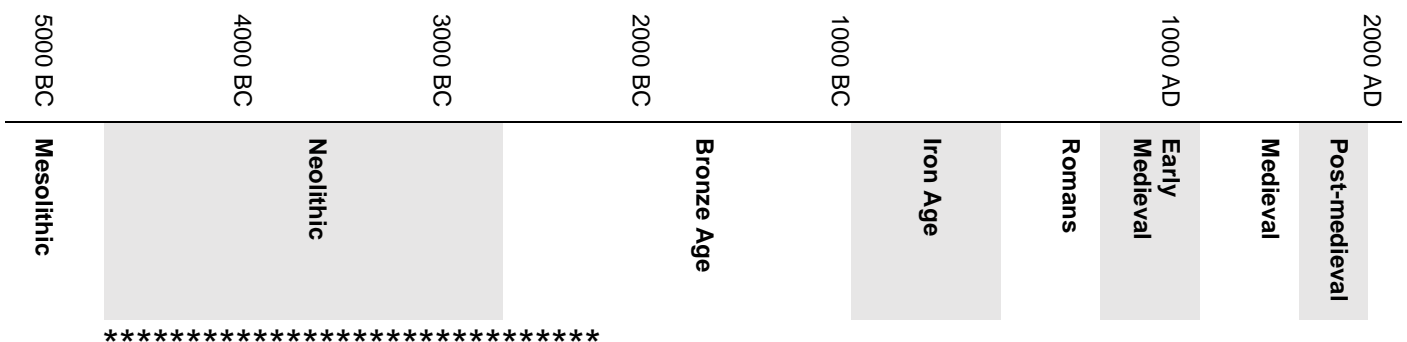
most of them are very simple with a very limited repertoire of motives, and include some stones with just a single cup-mark.

Rock art occurs on both natural outcrops and boulders and on stones that are incorporated in prehistoric monuments such as burial mounds. It has been suggested that Maen Cattwg may have been the capstone to a Neolithic chambered tomb, partly because of its shape and partly because one side of it can be seen to be resting on stones that are embedded in the ground. At the time when the suggestion was made, too, most of the other cup-marks that were known were on monuments. However, since more cup-marks on natural boulders are now known from our area, the possibility that it must have been part of a monument is much weaker. There is not enough evidence to decide either way because it has not been excavated or investigated by geophysics.



To visit the site, walk out of the north end of Gelligaer village along Heol Adam. A stile on the left-hand side of the lane approximately 200m from the pub leads to a footpath. Follow this across one field and into the next. You will see Maen Cattwg lying to the north of the line of the path across the second field. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, 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. Maen Cattwg has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00655m, 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.

