

Great Archaeological Sites in the Vale of Glamorgan



1. MAESYFELIN CHAMBERED TOMB, ST LYTHANS



Although there had been Mesolithic hunter-gatherers in the Vale for millennia, the introduction of farming in the Neolithic period led to a new relationship between the land and the people who lived in it. The need to stay in one place long enough to plant seeds, look after the growing crops and bring in the harvest resulted in the creation of permanent settlements, and although very few Neolithic houses have been discovered so far in Wales do have the houses built in stone for the dead. These are known as chambered tombs.

One chambered tomb stands in the valley of the River Waycock near Maesyfelin Farm outside the village of St Lythans (ST 1009 7230), from which it takes two of the names it is known by. The other is Gwal y Filiast – ‘the kennel of the greyhound bitch’, a name also given to another chambered tomb in Carmarthenshire. A large capstone perches on top of three megalithic uprights which form three sides of a short rectangle, all of the local mudstone. The other side is open. Originally this chamber stood within the eastern end of a long mound which extended westwards

behind the upright that closes it off at the back, but very little now remains. There is however enough left to show that a shallow forecourt created a recess at the mound's eastern end in front of the chamber. Although this tomb has never been properly excavated, human remains and pottery were found in 1875 in the forecourt area, presumably lying where they had been cleared out of the chamber.

Much later, stone-faced bank with a ditch was constructed around the tomb, creating a circular enclosure. We know that in the 19th century this was used as a pheasantry, one of a series of several on the Dyffryn estate. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the enclosure had been constructed the Iron Age or Early Medieval periods. In the Early Medieval period such enclosures are associated with religious sites, and it is possible that this one might be Powisfa Dewi – the 'Resting Place of Dewi' – mentioned in this area in the Book of Llandaff. If this was the case, the estate owners would just have taken advantage of it for their pheasantry.



The Maesyfelin chambered tombs stands in a pasture field to the south of the lane between the villages of Dyffryn and St Lythans. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 151.

Timeline (the asterisks indicate the possible time-spans)



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 chambered tomb has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 00003s, and the surrounding enclosure is 02833s. 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.