

Great Archaeological Sites in Blaenau Gwent



1. MULFRAN STANDING STONE



On Mulfran or Milfraen, the mountain above Nantyglo, is a small, roughly shaped monolith on a slight platform cut into the hillside at SO2022710436. It was hewn from the local sandstone, set so that the natural bedding planes run vertically, and chocked in place with packing stones rammed into the ground around its base. This stone looks like many other prehistoric standing stones. It is twice as wide as it is thick, and the two wider side face

These enigmatic monuments, also known as menhirs, are mainly associated with the Early Bronze Age, but the tradition may have started in the Neolithic. We can only guess why – modern theories include the ideas that they may have marked territories, boundaries or trackways, or perhaps have commemorated a particular person or event. They range in size from the really big, which may be three or four metres tall, to little ones well under a metre in height and smaller than the one on Mulfran Mountain (the scale pole is 1m tall).

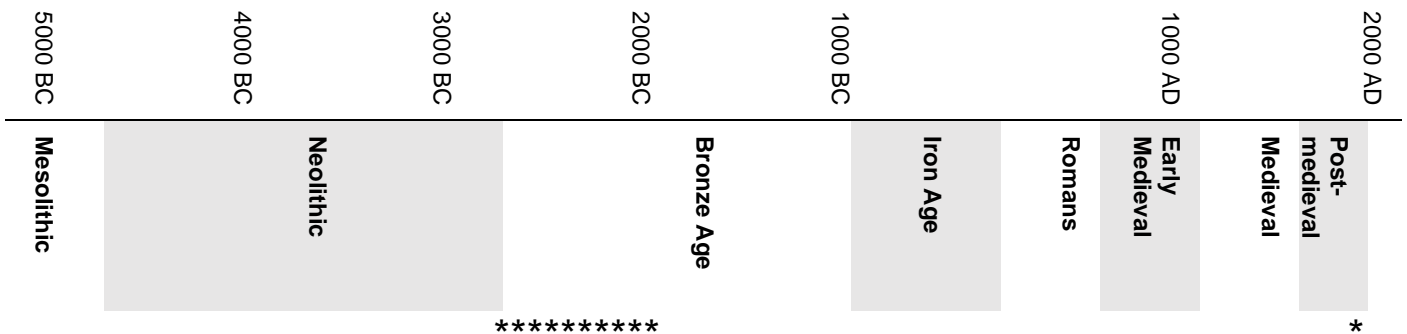
But look a little closer. At the top left corner of the NW face the letters G J O have been pecked into the stone. These are not part of the original design, because

writing did not come to Britain until thousands of years later. They were clearly added in relatively recent times, probably sometime in the 19th century judging by the shape of the letters. They may have been just casual graffiti, but it is more likely that the stone was being used at that time to mark a boundary. GJO may have been marking a claim to the grazing, but it's more likely that he was concerned with the mineral rights to the valuable coal deposits under the mountain.



The site is on open access land. Mulfran is not the subject one of the popular mountain walks on the web, but there are a number of footpaths leading up from Nantyglo. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 161, Explorer Series sheet outdoor Leisure 13.

Timeline (the asterisk 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 Milfraen standing stone has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 08664g, 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 standing stones on our website at http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun_rit/english/fun_ritmain.html.