

Great Archaeological Sites in Blaenau Gwent



2. TREFIL RANGE ROUND CAIRN



The hills to the north of the Tafarnaubach industrial estate were once used as a rifle range, traces of which can still be seen on the hillside, but far older than these is the cairn that can be seen at SO 1169 1162. A roughly circular heap of stones about 4m in diameter and 0.75m high, it stands on the edge of north-east facing escarpment on a spur overlooking the source of the Sirhowy River.

Round barrows and cairns were constructed in the Early Bronze Age to mark burials. Barrows are typically made of earth and cairns of stone, depending at least to some extent on the materials that were to hand when they were being built, but external appearances can be deceptive.

The primary burial in a barrow or cairn is usually at the centre, and may be enclosed in a cist built from stone slabs before the earth or stone was heaped up above it. At times the primary burial was made in a pit dug into the ground. Sometimes the body was cremated before burial, in which case the ashes might be placed in a pottery urn. At other times the unburnt body was buried in a foetal position. Any secondary

burials were made around the sides, and sometimes were added well after the monument was first constructed.

The cairn on Trefil Range is a typical example for the southern edges of the Brecon Beacon, made up of a loose heap of lumps of the local stone. It was only recognised in the early 2000s and has never been excavated, so we do not know what lies within and under the heap of stones, how many burials there were, or whether the inside of the cairn was carefully structured.

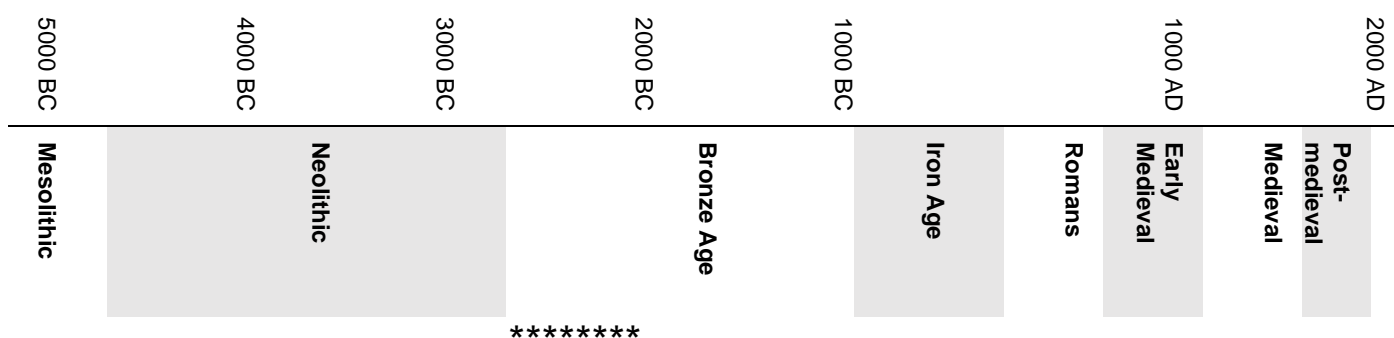
Its position is a typical one too, situated in a prominent position on a spur of slightly higher ground on a mountain plateau. It has extensive views to the north-east, east and south-east, but on the western side the long-distance views are blocked by the high ground of Cefn Pyllau-duon.



The view eastwards from the cairn

The site is on open access land north-west of Tynewydd and south-west of Trefil village. 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 Trefil Range round cairn has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 08656g, 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 burial monuments on our website at http://www.ggat.org.uk/cadw/fun_rit/english/fun_ritmain.html.