



Penmoelallt... a woodland lost in time.

Way Station 10  
www.merthyrnats.org.uk  
GPS location: N 51°46.18  
W 003°25.26  
O.S co-ordinates SO 020 089

# HIDDEN HISTORY

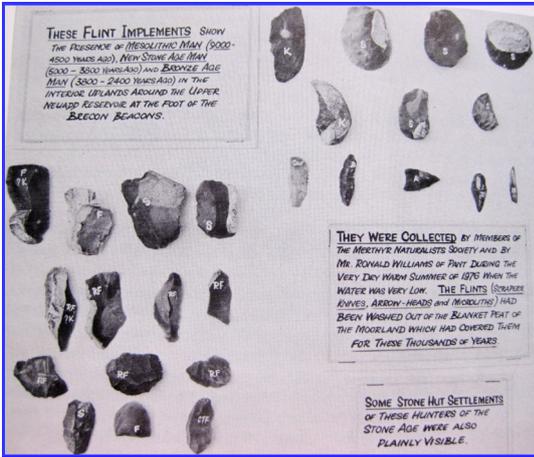
Here is a timeline based on what is known about and things found in and around Penmoelallt woodland. As you read, imagine you are living in each age. What could you see, hear, smell? How would you feel about how you lived and what may have happened to YOU?

**6,000 BC** (8000years ago), **Mesolithic** or **Middle Stone**

**Age** people lived in the Penmoelallt area.

Stone Age arrow heads and knives have been found close to the woodland.

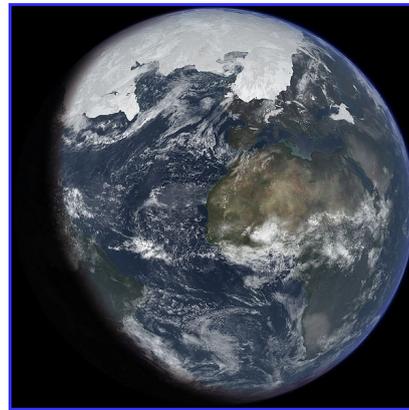
The Stone Age people carefully shaped each flint-stone so it could be used for a different purpose.



During the last **Ice Age**, the pressure of the heavy ice caps on the top of the mountains, carved the landscape we see around us today.

It took thousands of years, but eventually, around **ten to twelve thousand years ago**, the ice melted. Modern men, women and children came to live and make their homes in Wales.

The picture below shows how much of the Earth was covered by ice in the last Ice Age. Where is Wales?



For some information about the rocks and how they were formed look at the 'Fossils' leaflet - number 2.

**4,000 BC** (6,000years ago) **Stone Age** people began to farm. We call them **Neolithic** people. They grew grain and kept sheep and cattle. Their tools were made from wood, stone and bone. Remains of a Neolithic hut and some Neolithic pottery have been found on Cilsanws, the valley side opposite Penmoelallt woodland.

Pieces of beaker pottery have been found above Penmoelallt woodland. Pottery is made from wet, sticky mud. When the pots are dry, a fire is lit underneath them. A temperature of 600° centigrade turns the clay into pottery.



The iron ore found in rock needs a very high temperature so that it can smelted (melted) to remove all the impurities from it. The **Iron Age** began about **800 BC** but it wasn't until about **500 BC**, (2500 years ago) that the Iron Age people began to use only iron to make their swords, tools for farming and long nails. Bronze became the metal for crafts people to make luxury goods: Celtic jewellery became very fine.

Some people say we were in the Iron Age until the end of the Industrial Revolution (see the stone table time line in the Outdoor Classroom) What do you think?

The Roman Emperor Nero and his wife Poppaea Sabina. Similar Roman coins have been found in the Merthyr Tydfil Area.



We can trace the age of Bronze back to around **2,000 BC**. Bronze is a mixture of copper and tin. The people found both metals in the ground, but not usually in the same place. People from different areas of Britain would exchange gifts of raw metal (and jewellery) to develop good relationships. They used fire to melt and fuse the metals together. By beating and casting the hot metal they could make daggers and jewellery. The **Bronze Age Beaker people** buried pottery in the graves of their warriors and other important people of the time.



A 'snap-shot' of life in a Celtic Round-house. Morlais Castle in the Taf Fechan Valley was built on the site of an Iron Age fort.

BC  
AD

The **Romans** came to Britain in **43 AD** and went through the land like a whirlwind, fighting with the Celts and building long-lasting roads and military bases. The Roman Road through the Brecon Beacons is a good walking and mountain biking route. It passes between Pen y Fan and Corn Du. Almost no improvements were made to the Roman roads in this part of Wales until the eighteen hundreds!



Thank you to all our dedicated volunteers, without whose help, the Penmoelallt Woodland Project would not have been possible.

# HIDDEN HISTORY

**Princesses Tudvyl** and Sanos were daughters of Brychan Brycheiniog who ruled Breconshire. Tudvyl was martyred for her Christian faith in **480 AD**. Merthyr Tydfil is named after her. Her sister Sanos gave her name to the valley-side opposite Penmoelallt — Cilsanws.

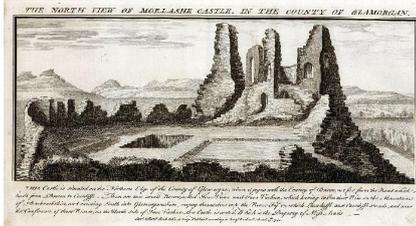


**700** Early medieval. There are few records of what happened in the Penmoelallt area at this time.

**Owain Glyndwr** united Wales under his rule in **1400**. Soldiers from this part of Wales were skilled archers and used in many battles. There are Welsh characters in Shakespeare's plays about the Kings of this period.



After **1066** the **Normans** built many castles in Wales to show their power and to suppress the people. **Gilbert de Clare** built Morlais Castle in **1270 AD**. The ruins of the castle overlook Merthyr and the surrounding countryside today.

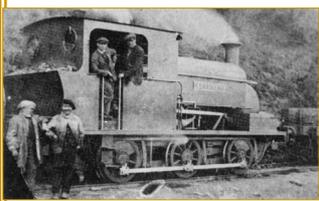


**World War II** began in **1939**.

Powerful lights, that shone into the night sky, were positioned on Penmoelallt hillside. They confused enemy aircraft pilots who thought they were flying over a town not the countryside. Some nights the Penmoelallt countryside took the bombs that were meant for Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff.



**Richard Crawshay** bought the great **Cyfarthfa Ironworks** in **1795**. He stopped the Penmoelallt wood being used to make charcoal for iron making, because he wanted somewhere to go hunting!



There are three reservoirs to the north of Penmoelallt woodland. The **Navvies Line**, a railway line, was built in **1886** to carry limestone from a nearby quarry to build the dams that created the reservoirs. Its name reminds us of the people who built it. Today it is part of the footpath from here to Cefn Coed.

The **Miners Strike** in **1984** was a time of conflict and difficulty. In the years that followed, all the mines in this area were closed. In 1989 the steel works closed bringing an end to the historic industries that had turned the Taff valley into an iron and steel production line.

**Quarries and Kilns** Limestone was first quarried here for farming.



Lime is needed to make some soils more productive for growing crops. Lime is made in lime kilns. Farmers would burn limestone in their own kilns all over the valley sides. The lime was traded with farmers in Brecon for grains like oats and barley. In the eighteen hundreds, lime was needed for iron making and larger quarries and kilns were created to produce greater

quantities. You can see a large quarry and an industrial limekiln on the hillside across the valley. (sit on the fox and grouse bench for the best view)

The limestone was also used for road building and for cement.

In **1994** a **hurricane** hit Penmoelallt woodland.

'Penmoelallt' means 'the bare top of the forest'. Some ancient Oak and Ash trees were blown down. The terrific wind also blew down a Sorbus Leyana, one of the rarest trees in the world! But... The fallen tree let more light into the woodland. Berries began to grow and new trees with different leaf-shapes grew; more new, rare trees! Remember! Even in the 'Age of Technology' the natural world is a force and a resource to be treated with greatest of care and respect.



**Merthyr Rising 1831**. The road between Merthyr and Brecon was very busy with goods being traded between the two towns. The old Drovers Road can still be seen on the hillside opposite Penmoelallt woodland. A tollgate was set up to raise money for the Government by charging stage coaches and drovers for using the road. Some drovers would hide the smallest of their animals in bags under their coats so they would not have to pay so much!

When the toll was increased the people of Merthyr Tydfil became angry and started a riot. The army was called down from Brecon to stop the riot. The local people stood below Penmoelallt woodland and threw stones and rocks at the soldiers as they passed by on the road. When the army reached Merthyr there was a violent fight.

Dic Penderyn was arrested, imprisoned and hanged. This was thought to be unjust and wrong. A modern Martyr for Merthyr Tydfil.

## Remember to keep the Countryside Code!

- Be Safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates & property as you find them.
- Leave machinery and livestock alone.
- Protect plants & animals and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.

## You want to know more?

Visit these websites:

[www.alangeorge.co.uk](http://www.alangeorge.co.uk)  
[www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/cardiff/](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/cardiff/)  
[www.breconbeacons.org/forestfawr/](http://www.breconbeacons.org/forestfawr/)  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

Look at this book: ISBN 0 905928 21 0  
 The Historic Taf Valleys Volume Two  
 By John Perkins, Jack Evans and Mary Gillham