



Viewpoint

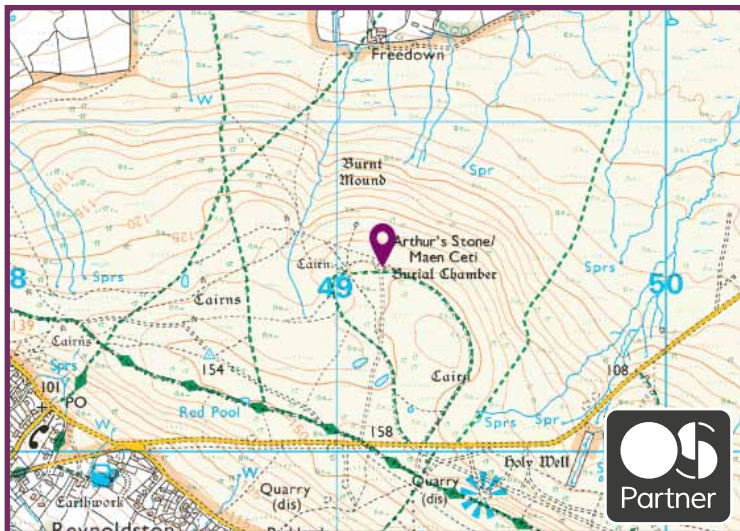
## A stone's throw



Time: 15 mins

Region: Wales

Landscape: rural



### Location:

Arthur's Stone, Reynoldston, Gower, SA3 1EL

### Grid reference:

SS 49141 90580

### Directions:

The stone is close to Reynoldston village on the B4271 from Cilibion to Reynoldston. Look beside the road for an unmarked craggy car park area. From here follow the footpath to the stone.

It's easy to miss from the road and not marked on many maps but just 10 minutes from the parking area you'll come to a giant, balancing boulder. Known as Arthur's Stone, or Maen Ceti in Welsh, it keeps watch over the North Gower coastline and across the Loughor Estuary beyond.

Legend has it that King Arthur found a stone in his shoe and threw it all the way here from Carmarthenshire. Touched by the hand of the king, the stone grew in size.

The Gower is associated with mystic ley lines and full of Bronze Age burial and ceremonial sites. So it's no surprise that myths abound about this landscape.

Can you read the 'script of the stones' on the Gower Peninsula?



Take a closer look at this mighty rock. Perched upon a set of pointed supporting stones, it's a 25-tonne boulder, measuring 4 metres wide by 2 metres high. It looks like it might topple over at any minute!

Look carefully and you'll see that the rock is no longer whole - a section has been split off. Over time, legends have told that it was struck by lightning during a violent storm or that St. David, the Patron Saint of Wales, split the stone in defiance of the Druids who worshipped on it.

For others, the stone's significance dates back to the end of the Neolithic period (around 2500 BC), when it was used as a burial tomb. With very basic hand tools, Neolithic builders excavated beneath the immense rock, inserting the upright stones as they dug to create two burial chambers to inter their chiefs.

From our viewpoint by the stone, we also have a stunning view over the saltmarsh coastline of North Gower and across the Loughor Estuary to Carmarthenshire. At almost 200 metres, the elevated land we're standing on is known as Cefn Bryn. This long, high sandstone ridge runs through the middle of the Gower Peninsula like a backbone.

The ridge was widely used for prehistoric ceremonies and funeral rituals. Look at a map and you'll see it's dotted with ancient monuments. Just north-west of the stone, three noteworthy cairns (stones piles up as memorials) have been excavated to explore their ancient role.

But whether Neolithic builders or Bronze Age worshippers, they didn't transport the rock here themselves. These people took advantage of dramatic, land-sculpting events that still shape the Britain we see today - the Ice Age.

### Erratic behaviour

Britain has gone through various Ice Ages over the last 2.6 million years. During these periods, sections of the land lay under a weight of ice up to a mile thick. When the Earth's temperature warmed up, these ice sheets slowly melted and moved downhill under gravity. Some broke up into large sections, called glaciers.

As the glaciers travelled downhill they scoured out the rocks in their path, plucking them out from the ground and transporting them in the ice. After the ice melted, the rocks were left behind. Known as 'glacial erratics', some rocks travelled hundreds of miles across the country in this way.

Arthur's Stone is a good example. Some glacial erratics have become tourist attractions. In the Victorian era, the Bowder Stone in Cumbria, for example, had a ladder fitted to climb it and a resident hermit installed underneath!



Loughor Estuary © Rory Walsh



The Bowder Stone © Katie Moore

Viewpoint created by Caroline Millar.