



Welsh Archaeology Activities Resource Pack





Hello!

Would you like to learn more about the archaeology of Wales by taking part in some fun activities? If the answer is yes, read on!

We have created five exciting resources aimed at anyone aged 8–16. You can take part in these activities on your own (with adult support) or with others.

Contents

- 1** Introduction: The Archaeology of Wales
- 4** Build Your Own Model Neolithic Burial Chamber!
- 11** Make Your Own Model Hut Circle!
- 19** Make Your Own Ogham Inscription!
- 25** Learn About the Castles of the Native Welsh Princes!
- 31** Record a Caban Soundscape! 

**The creation of the resource pack was kindly funded by Cadw.
All photographs are copyright of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust unless
otherwise credited.**

The Archaeology of Wales

Wales has incredible archaeology, stretching from prehistoric times to the Industrial Revolution and beyond. It's amazing that you can still see examples of this archaeology today; some of it is even many thousands of years old. How cool is that!

There's evidence that people were living in Wales over 30,000 years ago during the **Palaeolithic period**. However, there is very little surviving archaeology from this time. This is partly because several very cold spells meant Wales was covered in ice. Humans started to live in Wales again in about 8000 BC after the last of these cold spells. They hunted wild animals and collected natural foods from the forests and seashore.



Bryn Celli Ddu

During the **Neolithic period**, which was from about 4000 to 2500 BC, burial sites and settlements start appearing in the archaeological record. You can learn how burial chambers were built in the Neolithic period by taking part in our craft activity.

In the Neolithic period, people also began farming and making stone tools and implements. People learned how to make pottery vessels too.



In the **Bronze Age** (about 2000 to 7000 BC), people began to use metal. They just used copper to start with, which is fairly soft, but then they added tin to make a harder metal called bronze. Bronze axes were used to cut down trees.

You can still see some Bronze Age burial cairns in the landscape. A famous one on Anglesey is called Bedd Branwen, which is where Branwen, who features in old Welsh stories (in particular the Mabinogion), was later buried.

Hillforts appear in the **Iron Age** (about 700 BC to AD 43). These defensive settlements may have been necessary to defend their crops and animals. You can find out about roundhouses by taking part in our hut circles activity. Hut circles are the remains of roundhouses.



Dinas Dinlle Hillfort

In AD 48 the **Romans** arrived in Wales, building a network of roads and forts.

The **medieval period** in Wales lasted from about AD 410 to 1485. During the early medieval period, Vikings visited Wales, initially attacking sites to steal treasures but later settling in the area. Churches, carved stones and crosses show that Christianity was also practised in this period.



You can make your own inscribed stone by completing our ogham activity. Ogham was an ancient alphabet. Later on, castles – some built by the native Princes of Wales, some by the English – help us understand the political landscape in medieval Wales. You can learn some of the differences between the two kinds of castles in our Welsh castles activity.



During the Industrial period quarrying and mining took place. In Britain, the **Industrial Revolution** began in the late 18th century, and the effect of industrialisation is still visible. The slate quarrying landscape of north-west Wales is a good example of this. Slate quarry workers had their mealtimes in a caban. You can learn about cabanau and record your very own caban soundscape in one of our activities.

In Wales there is also archaeology relating to the **First World War** (1914 – 1918) and **Second World War** (1939 – 1945). For example, you can still see anti-tank blocks in some mountain passes and coastal areas. These are large concrete blocks built during the Second World War to stop tanks if there was an invasion.





club archaeolegwyr ifanc
young archaeologists' club



Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust



Cadw

Build Your Own Model Neolithic Burial Chamber!

BACKGROUND

The Neolithic period in Britain was from about 4000 to 2500 BC. Another name for the Neolithic period is the New Stone Age. 'Neo' means 'new', and 'lithic' means 'stone' or 'of stone'.

The Neolithic period sees the first farmers in Britain. Pottery is a new technology, and burial chambers, like the one below, begin to appear in the landscape.

In Welsh the word 'cromlech' can be used for 'burial chamber'.

Maen y Bardd burial chamber,
near Rowen, Conwy



Activity 1: Neolithic Brainteaser



Hmm... Here are pictures of two burial chambers, but they look completely different! Have a think about why this might be and see if you can work out what the story could be here. We will answer this riddle on the next page! The picture on the left is Bryn Celli Ddu burial chamber, and on the right is Bodowyr burial chamber. Both are Cadw sites on Anglesey.





Activity 1: Answers

A burial chamber would probably have started off looking like this. The chamber is covered with a mound of earth and stones.



Over time the mound gets eroded by the weather, and the stones in the mound might get robbed to be used as building material elsewhere.

The upright stones and capstone might remain standing, probably because they were too big to move. Sometimes these stones fall over; sometimes they are put back up again. Don't they look amazing?

Sometimes there is reconstruction work to restore a monument.

At Bryn Celli Ddu the passage and mound were partially restored. In the second picture, you can see a modern lintel in the ceiling.



Activity 2: Let's make our own burial chamber!

For our example we are using Maen y Bardd burial chamber (near Rowen, Conwy) as our inspiration.

YOU WILL NEED

- Green and grey Fimo modelling material
- Silver foil
- Craft tools
- Knitting needle
- Baking tray



We are using two 57g packs of Fimo, a modelling material which hardens when baked in an oven. Fimo soft is good, or there's Fimo effect. Fimo effect is a bit more difficult to shape and costs a little more.

SAFETY FIRST

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Baking – the Fimo, baking tray and oven will be hot! Leave them to cool before touching. Ask an adult to help.
- Be careful when using pointy things like knitting needles!
- Be careful with scissors when cutting things out.



METHOD

- Cut a piece of silver foil about 12 x 12 cm. Fold the edges back for a bit of extra strength. The size of the foil will now be about 10 x 10 cm.
- You will need about this much Fimo rolled into balls. The big green and big grey balls are the same size as ping pong balls. You'll need to warm up the Fimo with your hands to soften it.
- Flatten the green ball and place it onto the foil. This represents grass or the ground. Add detail to the grass using something pointy like a knitting needle.



- The grey Fimo is for the upright stones and capstone. Make the three medium-sized balls into short sausage shapes, then flatten the bottom on your work surface. Do not use the biggest grey ball or the smallest grey ball just yet. They should end up looking something like this. Make one of the uprights a bit taller than the rest.
- Try and make your stones look, you know, really old. They need to look like they have been standing there for thousands of years. Use the knitting needle, or use your fingernails. You can use craft tools too. Pinch that clay! Squeeze bits of it! Do what you need to do to make it look old and rough.
- Use a similar process to make the capstone. Make the capstone out of the bigger ball of clay which you have left.



TOP TIP

Make sure the capstone is not too thin, or it will droop. The capstone will rest on the uprights, and we certainly do not want a sad and droopy capstone.



- Put your upright stones on the grass. Place the capstone on the uprights.
- For added effect, using the little ball of grey Fimo that's left over, make some random stones to place around the burial chamber. These stones may have once been part of the mound which covered the burial chamber.



- Bake the model (on the piece of foil) on a baking tray in a preheated oven at 110 Celsius (230 degrees Fahrenheit) for about 30 minutes. The tray, Fimo and oven will be hot – do not touch them! Leave the tray and Fimo to cool for at least half an hour. Ask an adult to help.



AGE 8+

BONUS ACTIVITIES

Why not get even more creative and make a model using different colours?

Research Bryn Celli Du burial chamber

The summer solstice is the longest day of the year. There is a special relationship between the way this chamber was built and the summer solstice. Try and find out what that relationship is. Click here: <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/places-to-visit/bryn-celli-ddu-burial-chamber>

Make Your Own Model Hut Circle!

BACKGROUND

The archaeological remains of roundhouses are sometimes called hut circles. When a roundhouse was no longer in use, its walls and roof would fall down and deteriorate over time until only the remains of the circular stone foundations were left – creating a hut circle. That is the difference between a roundhouse and a hut circle.

Here is an illustration of what a roundhouse might have looked like.....

Image © Toby Driver

Many roundhouses (or hut circles) date from the Iron Age (in Wales that's from about 700 BC to AD 43).



Here is a present-day photograph of a hut circle in the Carneddau mountains in the north.

Roundhouses were also built just after the Iron Age in the Romano-British period – the period which overlaps the last part of the Iron Age and the first part of the Roman period.

Hut circles can disappear from the landscape when:

- The stones are cleared from fields to make room for farming.
- The stones are taken away to be used for building other things, such as stone walls.

Activity: Let's make our own hut circle!

YOU WILL NEED

- Green and grey modelling material – we recommend you use 'COLOURCLAY by scola'
- 10 x 10cm piece of cardboard
- Craft tool
- Knitting needle



TOP TIP

You will need to warm your modelling clay up with your hands before using it.



SAFETY FIRST

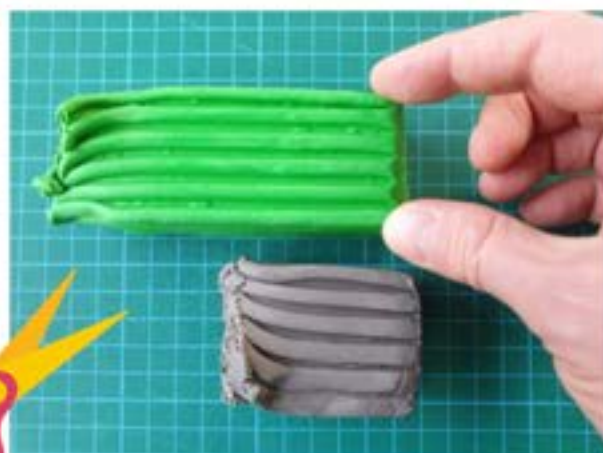
HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Be careful with scissors when cutting things out.
- Be careful when using pointy things like knitting needles!
- Check if your modelling clay goes in the oven to harden. If it does, ask an adult for help.



METHOD

- Cut a piece of cardboard (about 10cm x 10cm). Get two chunks of modelling material ready. You need twice as much green as grey (if using COLOURCLAY by scola, the green chunk is about half of one of the big bars, and the grey is about a quarter).



- Spread some green on the cardboard to represent the ground. It is okay if it is bumpy. After all, the ground can be pretty bumpy. You could use a craft tool to trim the edges.



- Let's make a groove in the grass for our stones to rest in. Use something pointy, like a knitting needle, to mark out a circle. Be careful with pointy things!



TOP TIP

Make sure the circle does not go too close to the edges and leave a gap for the entrance.



- Make the groove wider with your fingers. It doesn't matter if, when doing this, you obliterate the marks you made with the knitting needle.



- Now make loads (and we mean loads) of stones using grey modelling material. Make different sized and shaped stones. Make thin stones. Make... well, lots of stones. We need to fill that groove completely.



DID YOU KNOW...

Roundhouses were often built so that the entrance faced away from the direction of the prevailing wind.

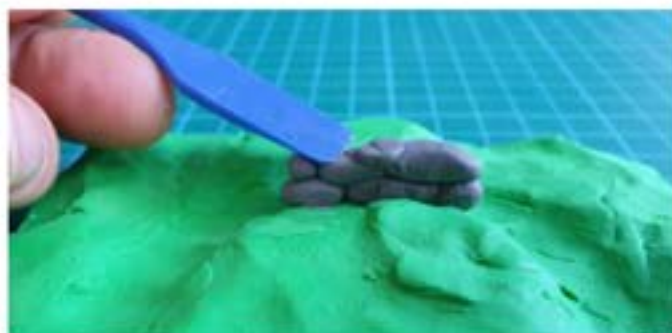
Look at the entrance of the roundhouse remains at Dinas Dinlle hillfort below. The entrance opens out toward you as you approach, and some of the stones used to build the entrance were really big. Were the builders trying to create a 'grand entrance experience' to impress visitors?

Dinas Dinlle Hillfort



Back to our model...

- You could have bits of inner or outer stone facing which are still intact in your model... You could use a craft tool to help shape the facing.



Here is a picture of some stone facing, still intact, on the remains of the large roundhouse excavated at Dinas Dinlle hillfort, which is on the north-west coast.

Stones which have fallen from walls or structures are called tumble. Your hut circle model can have bits of facing and tumble. Facing is often hidden by tumble, so it is fine if the facing in your model is partially hidden by tumble.

- Keep adding stones until you are happy with how your hut circle looks. Scatter some stones (or tumble) around your hut circle for added effect.
- Your hut circle is finished!



Bonus Activity 1

Explore this interactive 3D model of the remains of the roundhouse we mentioned earlier at Dinas Dinlle hillfort. The model was created by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.



Click here: <https://skfb.ly/oztqp>

Instructions for navigating the model:

- Move camera: 1 finger drag or Left Mouse Button.
- Pan: 2-finger drag or Right Mouse Button or SHIFT + Left Mouse Button.
- Zoom on object: Double-tap or Double-click on the object.
- Zoom out: Double-tap or Double-click on the background.
- Zoom: Pinch in/out or Mousewheel or CTRL + Left Mouse Button.



Bonus Activity 2 (Age 12+)



Here is an aerial view of the roundhouse remains at Dinas Dinlle

Excavation sites are often covered up (called backfilling) after the excavation has finished to protect the archaeology. But the roundhouse remains at Dinas Dinlle hillfort have been left open so the public can see it. Have a look at the 3D model ([Link on page 17](#)) to see how it looks.

Sites which have been restored are great. Archaeological excavation helps us understand more about sites, conservation work helps protect these places, and things like information panels mean members of the public can learn about sites.



However, it can also be exciting to see a site which is off the beaten track, perhaps where there has not been any excavation or conservation work yet, and there are no things like interpretation panels. A good example is the hut circle in the Carneddau mountains shown in the photograph.

Think about the roundhouse remains at Dinas Dinlle hillfort and the hut circle in the Carneddau. Which example do you prefer? There is no right or wrong answer; both are great. We are just trying to get you to think about the different ways our heritage can be experienced.



Cadw

Make Your Own Ogham Inscription!

BACKGROUND

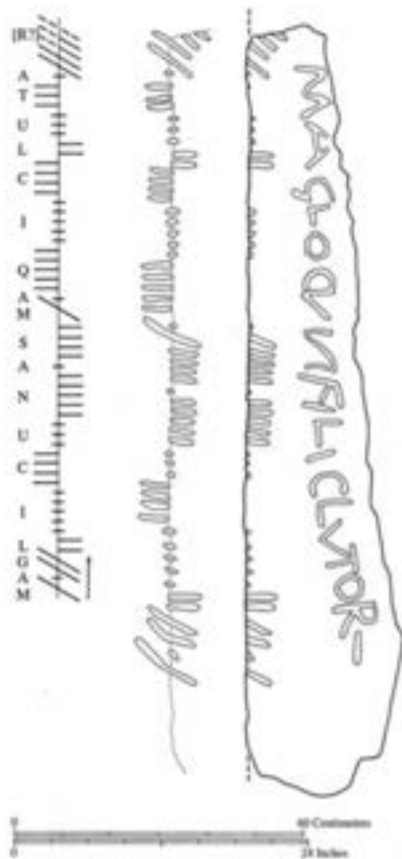
Ogham is an early medieval alphabet mainly used for writing an early form of the Irish language. Most surviving examples of ogham inscriptions are in Ireland, but there are 34 examples in Wales, with most in the south-west. Surviving inscriptions are from the 5th and 6th centuries and are on stones (but there may have been some on other materials). Many stones have a Latin inscription on them, with a repeat in ogham.



Below is an example from Wales, at St Brynach's church, Nevern, Pembrokeshire. The inscribed stone is now part of a windowsill.



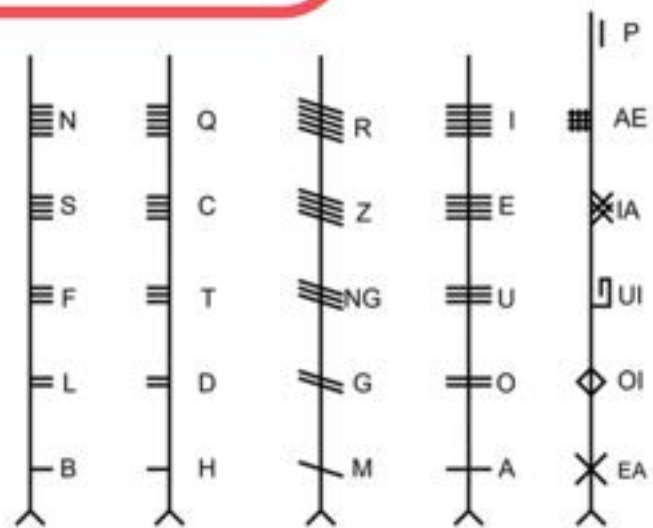
©Mick Sharp/Alamy Stock Photo/JT Photography



Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

There is also a Latin inscription on this stone from Nevern. The ogham and Latin roughly translate as 'The Stone of Maglocunus son of Clutorius'. Surviving ogham inscriptions are memorials to people, usually giving their name.

This is the ogham alphabet!



Activity 1: Let's translate something into ogham!

YOU WILL NEED

- A copy of the ogham alphabet and/or the translation website - ogham.co
- Paper
- Pencil/pen/crayon
- A few words to translate (you could use your name or the name of a favourite pet, for example)





THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Not all modern letters are represented in ogham. The letters J, K, V, W, X, and Y are not in the ogham alphabet.
- You read ogham from the bottom to the top. Take a look at this example.



Dan



We can use our ogham translation for the inscription in Activity 2.

METHOD



- Starting at the bottom of your page, use the ogham alphabet to spell out your word(s).
- If you are using the website you can check if you have written it correctly. Click here to try out your translation: ogham.co.
- Look after your translated ogham, as you can use this in Activity 2.





Activity 2: Make your own ogham inscription

YOU WILL NEED

- Modelling material (air-drying clay or playdough works well)
- Craft board or a plastic sheet on your work surface - making things out of air-drying clay (or playdough) can be a bit messy
- Craft tools for making the inscription
- A little bit of water



**SAFETY
FIRST**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- If you make playdough, do not eat it!
- If you use air-drying clay, remember that it does not need to go in the oven to harden.
- Wash your hands after the activity.

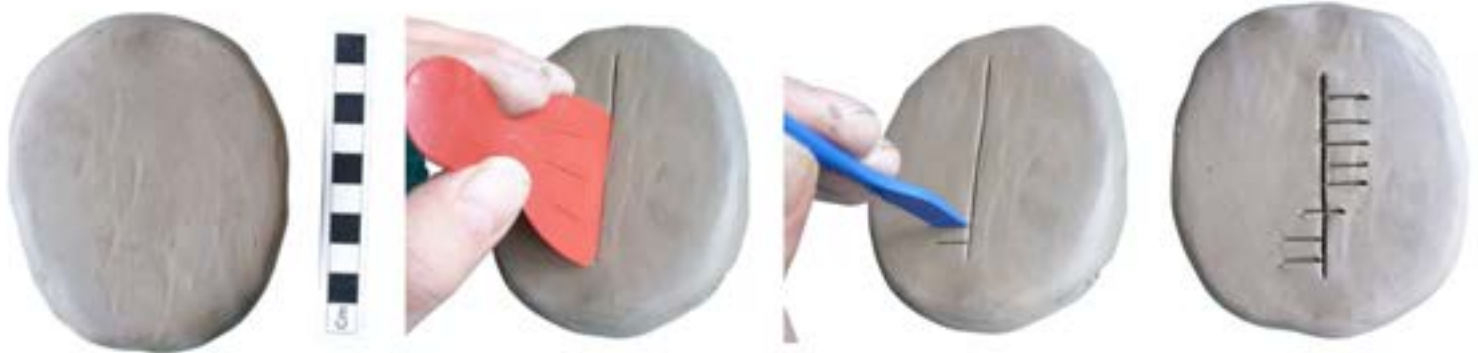
TOP TIPS

- Use your fingers, maybe even a little water, to smooth out any cracks or lines as they appear.
- Here is a link to a playdough recipe:
www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/playdough-recipe.



METHOD

- Warm up a lump of clay about this big (about as big as a golf ball).
- Make the clay into a short sausage shape.
- Flatten the clay. Our photo scale gives you a rough idea of how big our piece of flattened clay is.
- Write your inscription in the clay.



TOP TIP

You may want to practice first, especially getting the spacing correct. The good thing with clay is that you can smooth out mistakes and start again.

- Leave your modelling material to dry, perhaps on a piece of kitchen roll. It will take two or three days to dry. Best not to leave it near a radiator (the clay or playdough might crack).

DID YOU KNOW?

Examples of ogham inscriptions in Wales provide us with evidence of contact between the Irish and the Welsh at the end of the Roman period.

BONUS ACTIVITIES!

You could try shaping a piece of clay into a stone which stands upright, like our example on the right.

Or why not try to make a stone with ogham and latin inscriptions? You could use the St David's Church example in this resource as a starting point.



You can see in the examples that ogham was often written up the side of a stone. It might be fiddly, but could you do that on your clay or playdough?

ARCHWILIO

If you want to explore this fascinating script further, take a look at other examples on [Archwilio](https://archwilio.org). Archwilio is a Wales-wide searchable database of archaeological and historical information. You could search for examples in your area if you live in Wales.



GLOSSARY

Latin – the language of ancient Rome

Inscription – writing which is carved into something



Learn About the Castles of the Native Welsh Princes!

BACKGROUND

There are hundreds of castles in Wales. Finding out about these castles can help us learn about the political landscape in Wales during the medieval period.

Edward 1st (1239–1307) was an English king. He built or repaired many castles in Wales as part of his efforts to bring Wales under English rule. Edward's grandest castles are probably the ones at Caernarfon, Harlech, Beaumaris (Biwmaris) and Conwy. These castles are on the coast, and towns grew around them.



Castell Dolwyddelan ©Paul Davis



Castle Biwmaris(Beaumaris) ©Paul Davis

But the native Welsh princes also built castles. Most of these were built in remote locations and were not usually associated with towns (although Cricieth Castle is an exception). These castles were often built in carefully chosen places to defend or control important roads and mountain passes. Most castles of the native Welsh princes were built before Edward's castles.

Some writers and historians have described the castles of the native Welsh princes as clumsily designed. But it can be argued that their design is actually very clever. They were constructed in ways that adapted to the rough terrain of the hilltops on which they were built. Some castles of the native Welsh princes were constructed for military purposes, some were symbols of power in the landscape, and sometimes the purpose of a castle changed over time.

Activity: Let's have a closer look at Castell Carndochan!

This activity will help you identify the features and structures associated with Welsh castles and introduce you to the different ways of recording them from above.

YOU WILL NEED

- Copies of the two images on the next page (maybe work in twos and threes if you are part of a group)
- Copies of the Castell Carndochan excavation plan and aerial photograph
- Pen and paper to make notes
- Copies of the Castell Carndochan reconstruction drawing



METHOD

- The two images on the next page are from excavation work by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust at Castell Carndochan. Look at the plan of the remains of the half round tower at the top. Also look at the photo of the tower at the bottom. Both images were created by an archaeologist and depict the same area.
- Can you choose five stones from the plan (at the top) and identify the same stones in the photo (at the bottom)? Print out these images and use a pen to circle the stones if that helps. You can identify more stones if you want.



- Next you will need the excavation plan and aerial photograph of Castell Carndochan.
- Can you identify the different parts of the castle from the aerial photograph and excavation plan (made during Gwynedd Archaeological Trust's excavations)?

TOP TIP

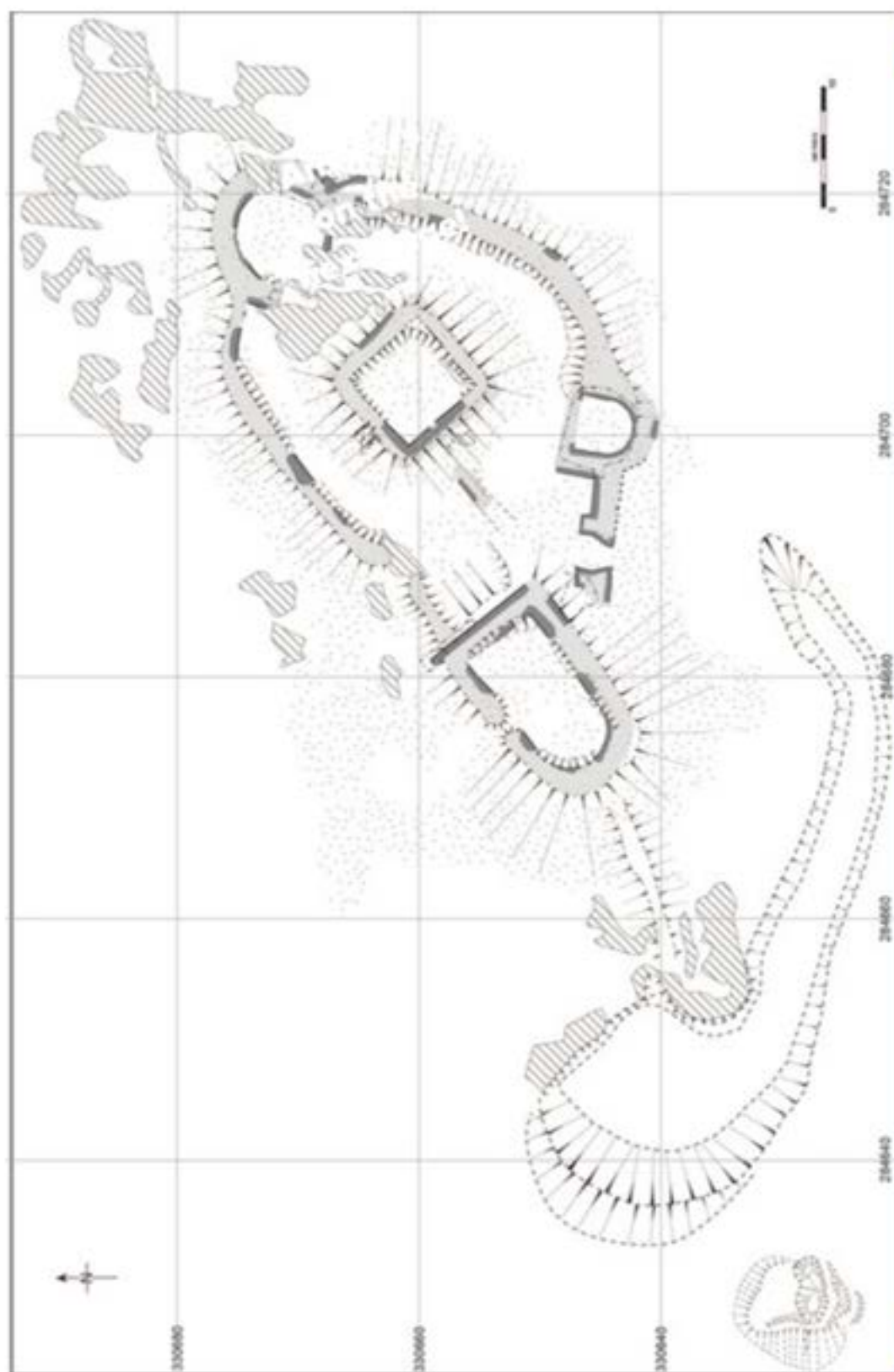
The Keep was the strongly fortified last place of defence in a castle.

Answers
are on
page 29!



Can you add the following to the plan on the next page?:

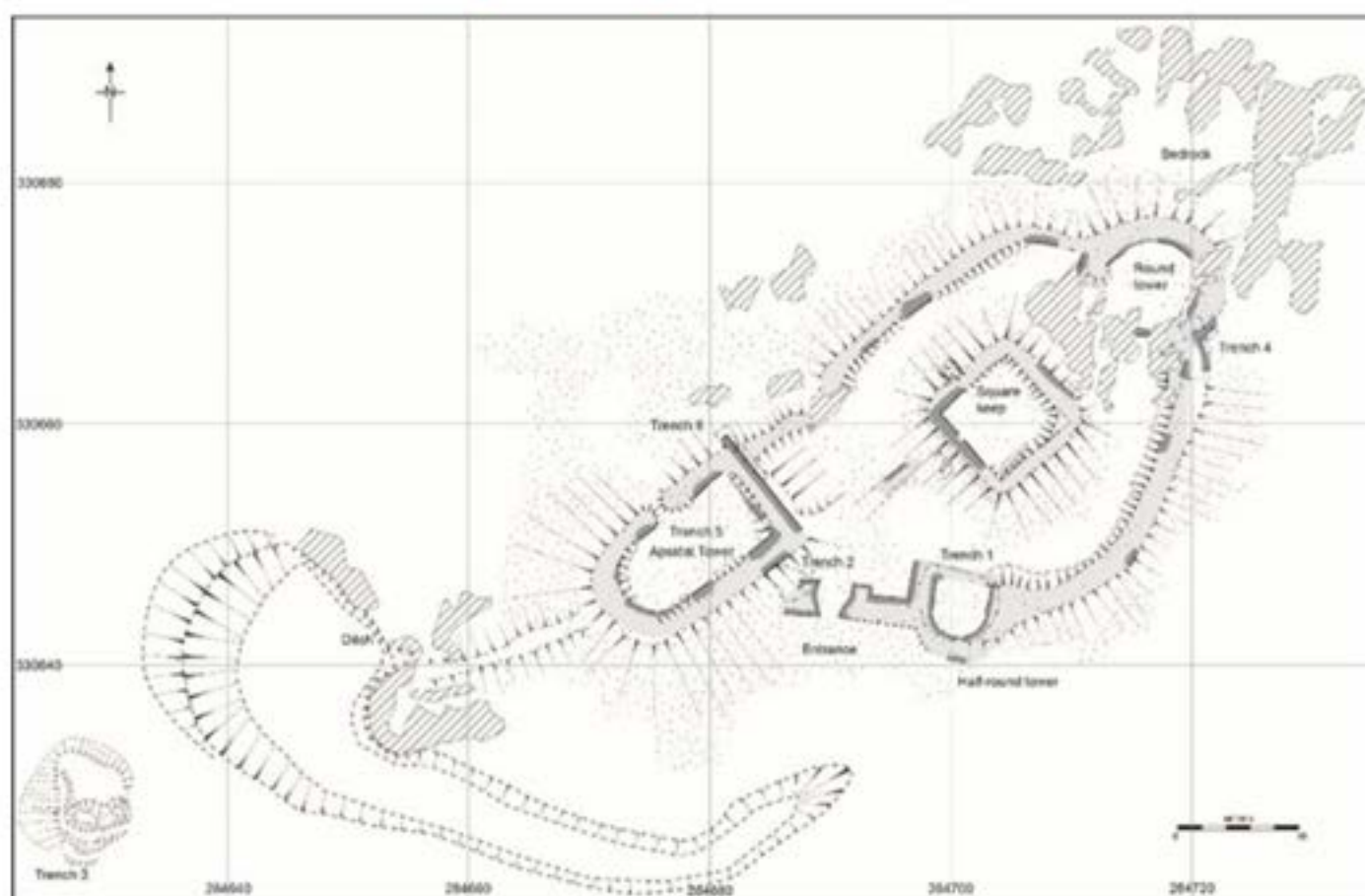
- The entrance
- The elongated 'U' shaped tower (also called an apsidal tower)
- The half round (or 'D' shaped) tower
- Round tower



DID YOU KNOW?

A noticeable feature of some castles of the Welsh princes is their distinctive 'U' and half round or 'D' shaped towers. If you were defending the castle, towers shaped like this would give a wider field of fire. Rounded stonework is also stronger than towers with square walls (a bit like with load-bearing arches).

Here's the correctly labelled plan of Castell Carndochan.



- Here is a reconstruction drawing of what Castell Carndochan might have looked like, reproduced from a book called '[Forgotten Castles of Wales & the Marches](#)' (Logaston Press 2021).
- Can you match the features on the archaeological plan and aerial photograph with the drawing?

cwm archaeolegwyr ifanc
young archaeologists' clubYmddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Cadw

Record a Caban Soundscape!

BACKGROUND

The slate landscape of the north-west is an important, special thing. You can see the remains of slate quarries in the landscape today and how quarrying activity changed the landscape. It is like looking through a window into the past.



This is Dinorwig Quarry, Llanberis. Look how the quarrying activity has eaten into the mountainside!



Map E1.a. Boundaries of the Nominated Property in Northwest Wales.

This slate landscape is so important and special that parts of it have been made into a UNESCO World Heritage site!

You can see which areas on the map and zoom in on each area using this link <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1633/> Other UNESCO World Heritage sites include The Great Wall of China and The Pyramids in Egypt!

Villages, towns and communities grew in quarrying areas as people moved to work in the quarries. The growth of these villages and towns also changed the landscape and helped strengthen the Welsh language.

This is Penrhyn Quarry, Dyffryn Ogwen, with the town of Bethesda in the foreground.

It is brilliant that the slate landscape of north-west Wales has been awarded World Heritage Site status. It's also important that we remember it could be very difficult and dangerous for those working in a quarry.



6469029 © Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales



The Caban

The caban was an important part of quarry life as it was where quarry workers went for meal breaks. It was usually a cabin with a fireplace, tables and chairs. But the caban was not just somewhere to have lunch. It was important for other reasons:

- In the caban, workers had discussions about politics or religion
- There was singing, poetry, competitions and quizzes
- Eisteddfodau were even held in cabans
- There were lectures (a talk about a subject with everyone listening to the speaker)
- These activities would mostly have been in Welsh
- Taking part in these things might encourage quarry workers to go to university or college

Image: ©Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales



Quarrymen having their meal break in the caban at Oakeley slate quarry, 1949

BONUS ACTIVITY

Watch part of the 1935 film 'Y Chwarelwr' to see quarry workers in a caban (starting from 17:42) - <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-y-chwarelwr-1935-online>

(Screen and Sound Archive, The National Library of Wales)



Activity: Let's make a caban soundscape!



Have a go at recreating what it might have sounded like in a caban. You are going to create all the voices and sounds yourselves. Record the soundscape using GarageBand (an app found on iPads).

YOU WILL NEED

- An iPad
- Pen and paper if you are writing short scripts for the different parts of the soundscape
- **There is a video of how we made an example soundscape to help you here: <https://youtu.be/Zs2d-Q0uh1A>**
- Props to make noises, e.g. cutlery



METHOD

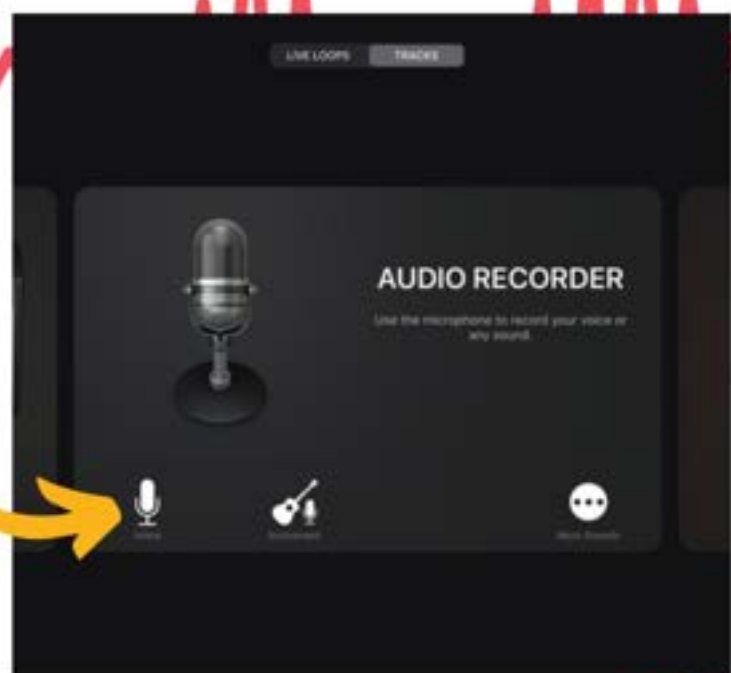
Think about the film clip you watched above and plan what you will include in your soundscape. These could be things like:

- Conversations between quarry workers. Write your own conversations, practice acting them, and then record them
- Sound effects (like tables and chairs, cutlery)
- A quarry worker introducing a song or piece of poetry
- Singing or poetry. Make up a simple song, or sing part of a song you know already, maybe a song you sing in school. Or do the same for a piece of poetry
- Applause (clapping)

Go for it! Start making a soundscape of your own!

Below is a brief guide for using GarageBand to record and edit your soundscape.

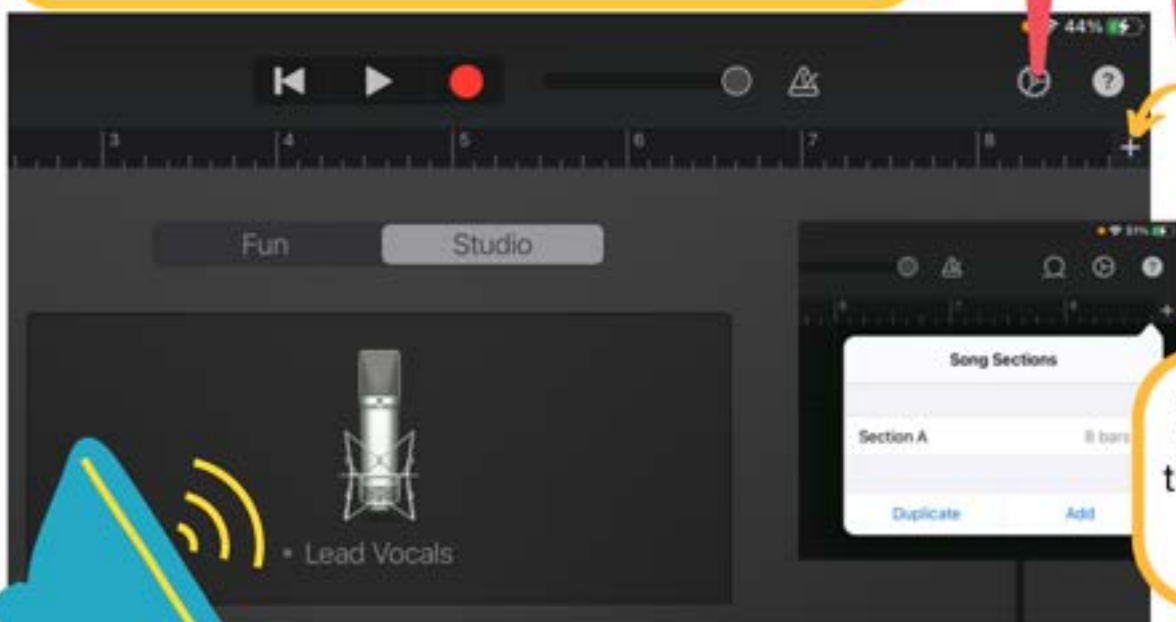
1. Once you've opened GarageBand, on this screen tap the microphone icon



2. Switch the metronome off

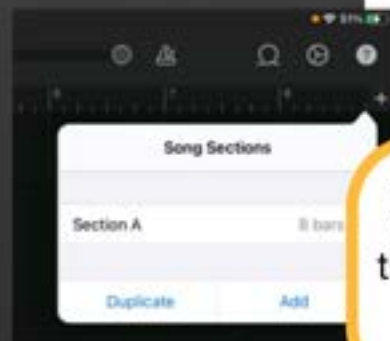


3. Turn the reverb effect down



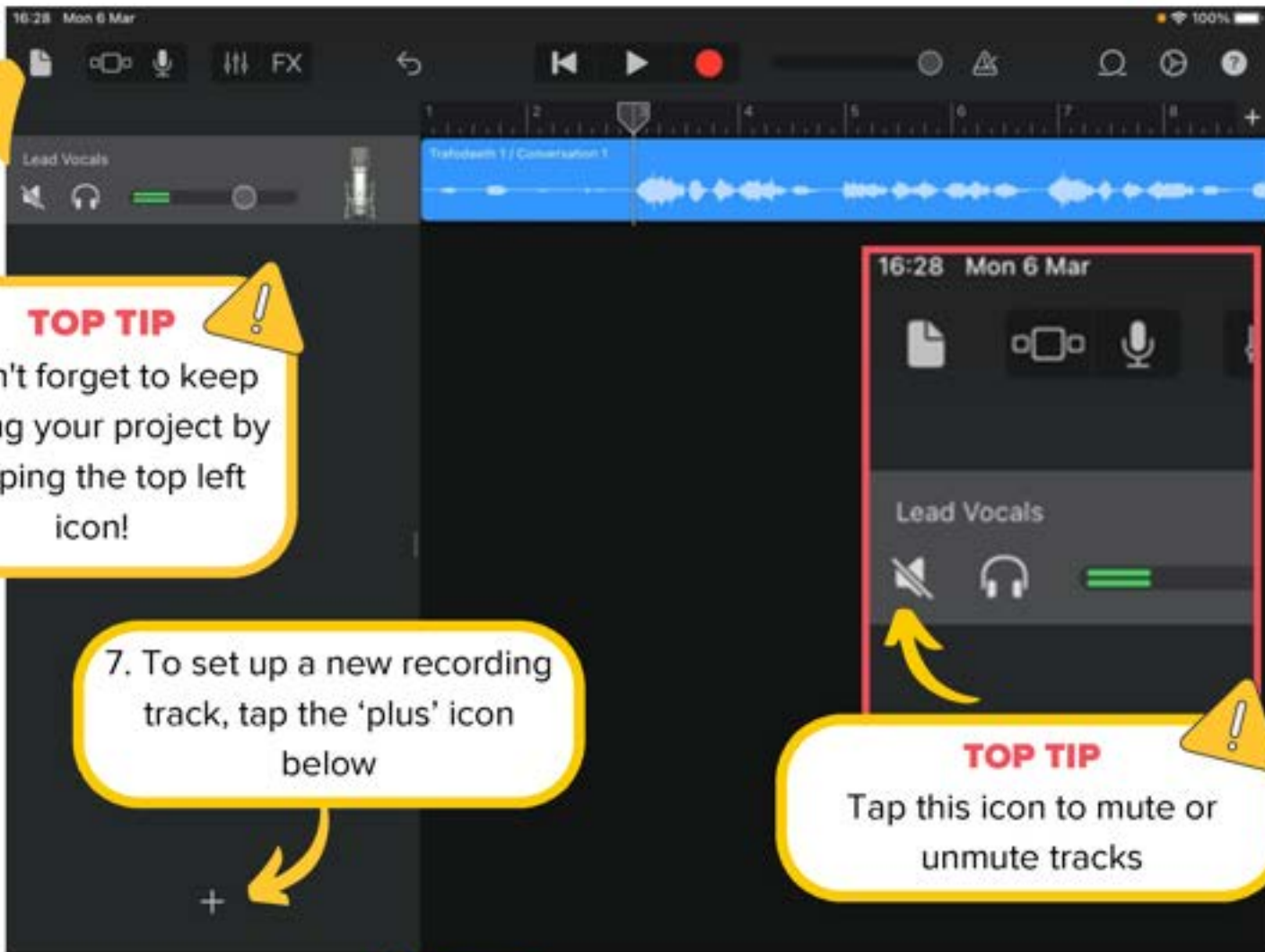
4. Tap this + icon and select Section A

5. Make sure the 'Automatic' option is on





6. Double tap a track to delete or rename it



TOP TIP

Don't forget to keep saving your project by tapping the top left icon!

7. To set up a new recording track, tap the 'plus' icon below

TOP TIP

Tap this icon to mute or unmute tracks



TOP TIP

Slide tracks to change their position in the soundscape



BONUS ACTIVITIES!

Why not make an even more elaborate soundscape than the one in our video?

Or maybe team up with friends and create a joint effort? You could each work on different elements of a soundscape, export the sound files and then combine all your work as a single project. Our 'how to' video explains how to do this.

If you haven't got an iPad...

You could be really inventive and plan, practice and perform all the different parts of your soundscape as a short play.



Inside an old caban, Dinorwig Quarry



This caban soundscape activity also forms part of a primary schools teaching resource produced for Cadw.

