



BUTSER ANCIENT FARM

A Guide To The
Moel y Gerddi
Round-House



Moel y Gerddi Round House

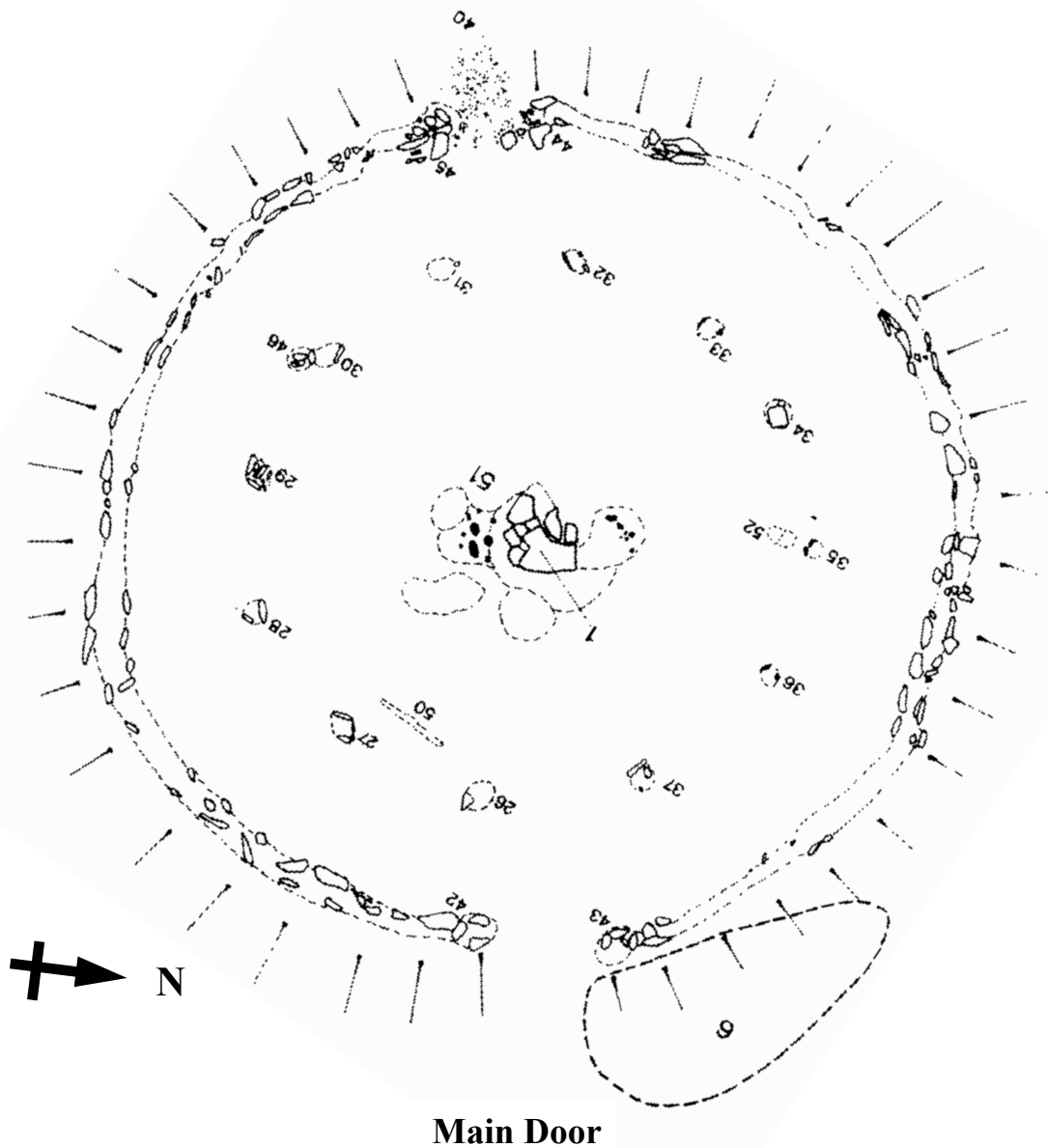
Moel y Gerddi lies in the parish of Llanfair at SH61663170

It is positioned on the flat top of a low ridge skirting the western flanks of Moel y Gerddi hill.

The house is in the centre of a circular enclosure approximately 30 meters across. The house is 10 meters in diameter, with two doorways, facing east and west. There is an inner ring of 12 post holes approximately 1.5 meters in from the wall. In the centre of the house is a fireplace of flat stone slabs, in a shallow depression, covering an area of about 1 sq. meter.

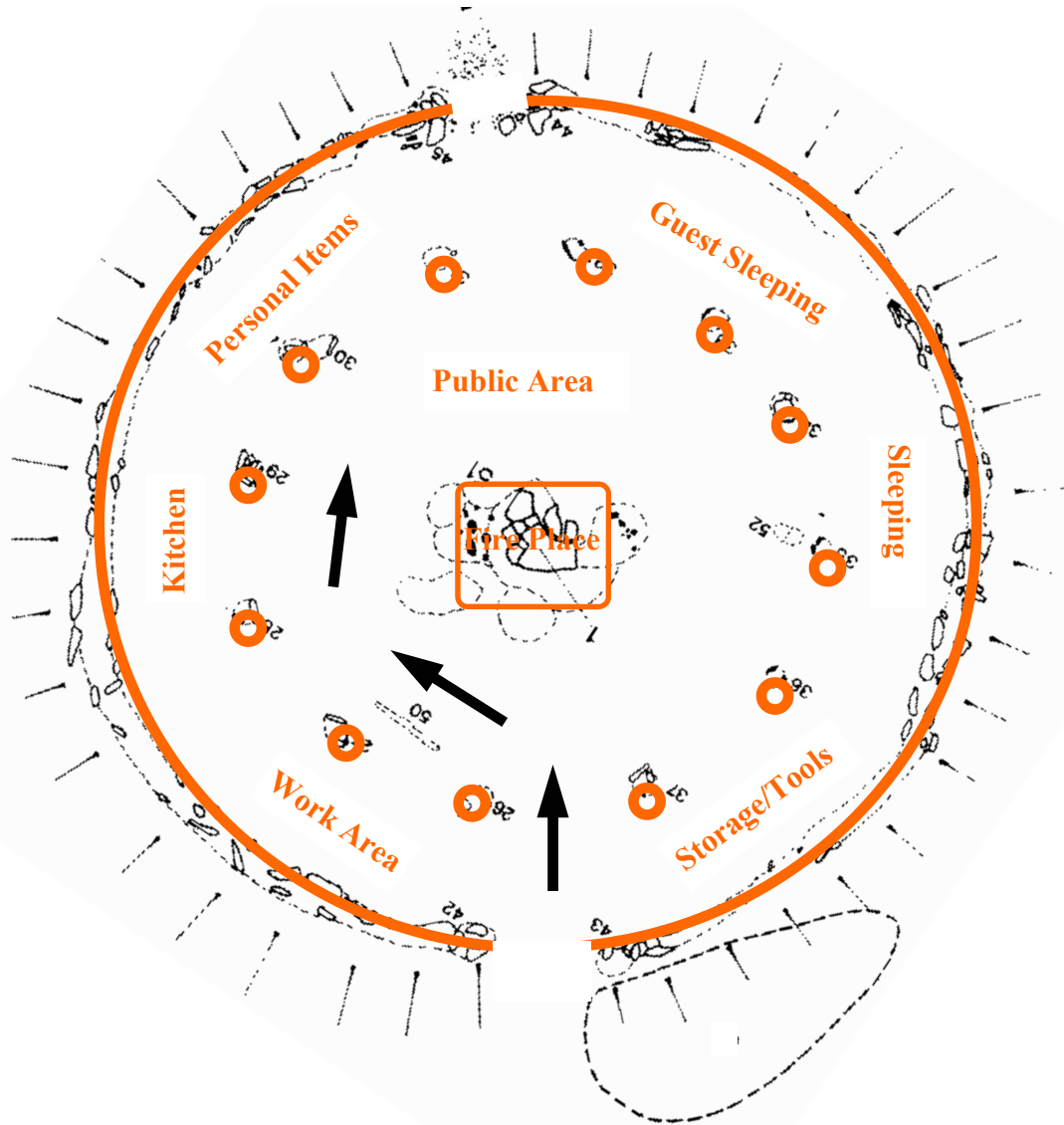
The phase shown is dated middle Iron-Age.

Information taken from the excavation report of the Prehistoric Society



The following pages contain **Safety Information**, printed in green. Please observe any **warnings** or **instructions** as required. Thank you

Layout of a Round House



Over the last few years, as technology advances, more information about the interior of buildings has become available.

In the light of that knowledge it is now possible to use that information to attempt to furnish and decorate the interior of a round house to a comfortable standard of living.

It is accepted that on entering a house, your movement should be to the **left**, and following round **clockwise** into the **public area**.

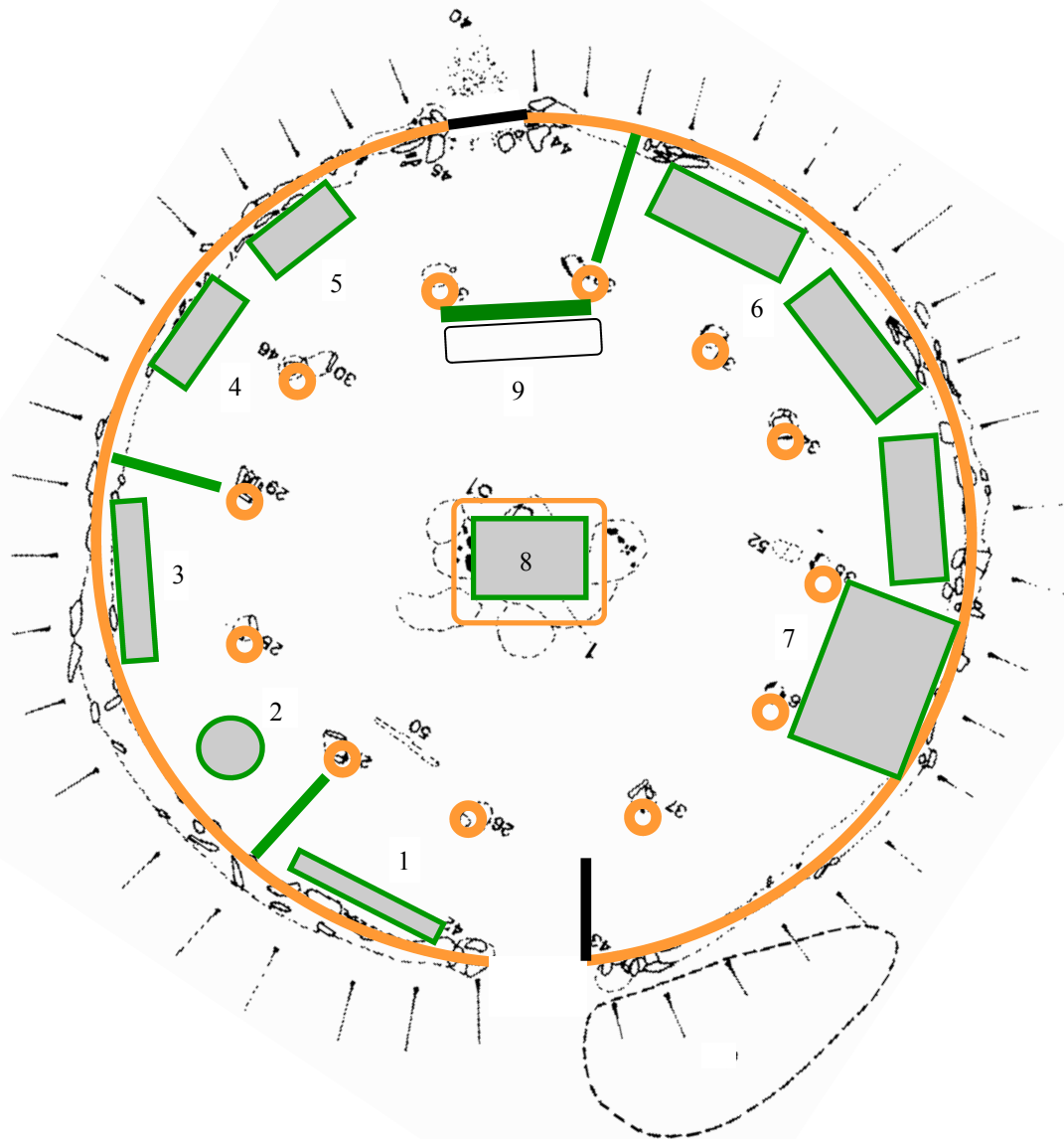
Please do not stand in the doorway, as you will block the light, and make it difficult to see anything in the house!

As you go in you will find the **kitchen** on your left, and the **sleeping area** on your right, across the other side of the fire. Move into the **public area** behind the fire.

The **fire place** is in the centre of the house, with the fire-dogs surrounding it, and a cauldron hanging on a chain either over or next to the fire.

Please take care if the fire is lit, and do not allow children to touch the fire!

Furnishings in the Moel y Gerddi



Furnishings in the round house

- these items will be built into the round house during the year.
- They may not all be there when you visit!

Working clockwise from the doorway

1. Loom, machine for weaving cloth.
2. Quern, stones for grinding grain into flour.
3. Dresser, storage for pots and food.
4. Table, used for eating from in the public area.
5. Chest, box for storing clothes and other items.
6. Beds, single beds in the guest area.
7. Double bed, for the owner of the house.
8. Fire, surrounded by iron firedogs (Andirons)
9. Couch, for sitting down to eat.

The following pages contain a more detailed house contents.

Furnishings in the Moel y Gerddi

Furnishings in the round house — In detail

Working clockwise from the doorway.

1. Loom, machine for weaving cloth.

Please do not attempt to use the loom!

Full title, an 'upright, warp weighted loom'. There are chalk weights keeping tension on the threads to make it easier to weave, and to produce a neater cloth. The two bars across the middle are for pulling the alternate sets of threads forward (sheds) to enable the weft thread (horizontal) to be woven into the warp threads (vertical).

2. Quern, stones for grinding grain into flour.

Do not allow very small children to use the quern.

This is a 'rotary' quern, as it turns around. The grain is placed in the hole in the middle, where it drops into and between the stones. As the top stone is turned, the grain is crushed, and falls out around the edge.

If you wish to try to turn the quern, make sure both knees are on the wool pad, this will support your back. The stone is HEAVY

To operate the quern, kneel down, hold the pole (the one hanging from the ceiling) at a place just above the height of the stone. Push the handle (the one that sticks out from the stone) with the pole. If there is grain in the stones, they will turn relatively easily, if not, it will require a lot of effort to turn the quern.

3. Dresser, storage for pots and food.

Furniture has been found as far back as 5000 years ago, in the Neolithic (late stone age) in Skara Brae, in Orkney. In this house we have a shelf unit of oak planks.

(The iron-age peoples had almost all of the carpenters tools that we still use)

This makes an ideal storage area for pots of food, kitchen equipment, and eating bowls and spoons.

4. Table, used for eating from in the public area.

(The table may be in front of the couch)

The small oak-plank table is based on a find from Ireland. The Roman writers say 'they (the Britons) sit on the floor and eat from low tables'

It is more of a serving board, than a table as we would use. Bread and meat would be put on it, and carried to the seated people. The description of item 9 continues this subject.

5. Chest, box for storing clothes and other items.

This chest is made of oak plank. The lid of the chest is a copy of a find from the Glastonbury Lake Village, in Somerset. It had the peg swivels at either end, and was interpreted as a 'door'. As you can see, the pegs provide a hinge system that works well. It also provides a display area for smaller items that would be too fragile to place on the floor, such as gaming boards, and jewellery boxes, or perhaps some of the finest pottery.

Furnishings in the Moel y Gerddi

Continued from previous page.....

6. Beds, single beds in the guest area.

7. Double bed, for the owner of the house.

Please do not put your feet on the bed.

There is evidence for beds in houses as far back as the Neolithic. In the house in Skara Brae, in Orkney, there were duck feathers found in one of the bed areas!

The beds in this house are made with a wooden frame, and a woven wooden base (gives a bit of spring).

The large bed has a mattress of hay, and both beds have skins on them for extra comfort. There may have been rolled sheepskins - used for pillows, and the possibility of duvets, or feather beds (those of you old enough will remember quilts and 'eiderdowns').

8. Fire, surrounded by iron firedogs (Andirons)

Do not touch the fire if it is lit.

The fire-pit is a copy of the one in the excavation. By dropping the fire below the floor level we have discovered that it gives you more control over the fire, as it suffers less from the draughts in the house. (Mostly caused by the unusual feature of a back door)

The fire is surrounded by a decorative iron frame, called 'firedogs' or 'andirons'. It would seem that these iron frames were not used for hanging pots on, nor roasting meat on spits, as there is no wear on any that survive. It may have been a way of 'showing off' as iron was expensive, and the centre of the house was an ideal place to display wealth.

Hanging on a chain is the cauldron. You will notice that we have rigged up a rope system to help control the cauldron over the fire. Some cauldron chains are very large and fancy. These large cooking pots have been found in burials, and can be made from iron or bronze. The cauldron is a very efficient way of cooking meat, as boiling uses far less fuel than roasting.

There are fire tools in archaeology, such as tongs and pokers, that are used to manage the fire; and iron 'flesh-hooks' for removing joints from the cauldron.

There are some iron-age burials where the firedogs, and a cauldron full of food, have been placed in the grave to accompany the dead to the afterlife.

9. Couch, for sitting down to eat.

The couch in the public area is an experiment. The Romans make an observation that 'they (Britons) sit on the floor and eat from low tables'.

In many cultures the seating is cushions or rugs, and some sort of backrest. We have placed a plank between two of the inner posts, and covered it with a skin. On the floor in front of it, we have put assorted skins to create a cushioned area for sitting on.

This seating is used in conjunction with the low table (#4) which can be used to serve food to the eaters.



We hope you have found this guide useful in understanding how the interior of an Iron Age round house works.

If you have any questions, please ask our staff for additional information.

You can also find **Butser Ancient Farm** on the web at;-
www.butser.org.uk

If you would like to learn more about the Iron Age, visit;-
www.gallica.co.uk