Bryn Celli Ddu
A Calendar Made of Stone
Bryn Celli Ddu is a Neolithic burial chamber with solar alignment. Park at the car park, cross the road and access the new pathway at the ramp. Follow the path alongside the river and between the hedges to the site. It’s a ten minute walk on good, flat ground.
The mound was built around 5,000 years ago in a period archaeologists call the "Neolithic*. The mound was where people in the Neolithic buried their dead.

But why did our ancestors build the mound so that the sun's light shone inside the burial mound on the longest day of the year? *See the timeline on the front cover.*
Bryn Celli Ddu is a "Passage Tomb"—you reach the Inner Chamber by going down a long, low passage.

This is what Bryn Celli Ddu would have looked like in the Neolithic. The mound you see today isn't nearly as big as it would have originally been. We've cut away part of the mound so you can see inside. We've also taken away the roof stones over the passage and inner chamber so you can see more clearly.

The Pattern Stone had spiral and zig-zag decorations carved into both sides. But why was it buried? Who was meant to see the carvings?

The stone will be displayed at St Fagans National History Museum. A modern copy has been set up on site, so you can see the decoration.

The excavations revealed clues that help us understand more about the mound.

It has some features that make it different from other burial chambers on Anglesey.

You can visit some of the other passage graves on Anglesey—check out the map on the back cover!
But why did our Neolithic ancestors want this passage tomb to have such an alignment? What was it about the summer solstice that was special to them?

The first person to notice the alignment was the astronomer Sir Norman Lockyer in 1907...

Then, in the 1920s, the archaeologist Frances Lynch noticed that Lockyer’s theory lined up features that were made before the mound itself was built - like the central pit.

But archaeologists at the time didn’t believe his theory!

Stones 6 and 7 line up with the angled stones at the back of the inner chamber.

Stone H is lined up with the rising sun on June 21.

Stone H is also lined up with both sides of the passage.

Sometimes, it takes a long time to prove that a theory is a fact in archaeology!

But why did our Neolithic ancestors want this passage tomb to have such an alignment? What was it about the summer solstice that was special to them?
Perhaps this special day - the longest day of the year - was shared with their ancestors.

By building the passage so that once a year...

...the sun managed to reach into the inner chamber...

Perhaps the people who built the mound believed they were bringing a special kind of "life" to the dead.

Was it a way of asking them to help look after the things that were still important to the living?

Perhaps other stones made different sorts of connections to the ancestors...

...links that people believed would bring fertility to their crops and animals.
Newgrange in Ireland, where the rays of the sun on the shortest day of the year shines right into the inner chamber of the passage tomb.

Stonehenge in England, where the massive uprights of the stone circle frame the rising sun both on the longest day of summer - and the shortest day of winter.

On the longest day of summer...

They also have stones or passages which line up with the sun -

... or the shortest day of winter.

Maybe, having a calendar like the mound at Bryn Celli Ddu meant that Neolithic or Bronze Age people could join in celebrations at these distant sites - by knowing when it was time to travel.
For us, it's a chance to get a glimpse of what life was like in Wales 5000 years ago!

Archaeologists call this "experimental" archaeology, and it's an important way of figuring out how ordinary people lived in the distant past.

Even today, knowing when things are happening is important.

And we still need ways of keeping track of special days in the year.

At Bryn Celli Ddu, people still use the summer solstice as a chance to share what it was like to live in the time of our Neolithic ancestors.

To see the tools they would have made...

Even taste the food they would have eaten!

Try out the clothes they might have worn...

Animal fur and hide

Fruits, nuts and grain

Neolithic bread!

Making a flint axe

Feathers and teeth

The End
The Neolithic Year
a boardgame for two players

Follow the path through the Neolithic Year. One player is the hunters; the other is the farmers. Use stones or pebbles as your playing pieces; roll a die or flip a coin to take turns moving. Start at Bryn Celli Ddu at the summer solstice; the first player to get back there is the winner!

But watch out! Each circle can slow down or speed up your journey!

- Farmers: go again!
- Hunters: miss a turn!
- Farmers: miss a turn!
- Hunters: go again!
- Go forward three spaces
- Go back to previous water circle
- Move the other player back one space
- Go back three spaces

Start
Finish
Build your own Passage Grave!

1. Start by drawing a circle in the sand. Then gather enough stones to build the inner chamber and passage.

2. Build the walls of the inner chamber and passage. Make the passage and the chamber align with something on the horizon. Maybe the position of the sun when you’re building the passage grave?

3. Carefully build a roof of flat stones over the chamber and passage walls.

4. Now build a ring of kerb stones around the circle you first drew in the sand.

5. Finally, build a mound of sand over the chamber and passage, right up to the edge of the kerb stones. Your passage grave is complete!

Now it’s your turn! Why not build a passage grave next time you’re down by the sea (there are lots of nice beaches on Anglesey)?

Will your passage grave last 5,000 years like Bryn Celli Ddu?
ORIEL YNYS MÔN ON THE B5111,
RHOSMEIRCH, LLANGEFNI, LL77 7TQ
01248 729444
10.30AM – 5PM.

AND FOLLOW ANGLESEY'S
STORY IN THE MUSEUM GALLERIES, WHERE
YOU CAN SEE NEOLITHIC POTTERY AND STONE TOOLS,
BRONZE AGE WEAPONS AND EVEN REPLICA SLAVE CHAINS FROM LLYN CERRIG BACH!

AND WHY NOT CHECK OUT SOME OF THE OTHER FANTASTIC PLACES ON THE BACK
COVER MAP? FIND OUT EVEN MORE ABOUT ANGLESEY'S RICH PREHISTORIC PAST:
EXPLORE THE HOLYHEAD MOUNTAIN HUT GROUP, CAER LÊB AND DIN LLIGWY HUT
GROUP TO SEE WHERE IRON AGE FAMILIES LIVED, OR DROP IN ON LLYNNON MILL
TO LOOK AROUND A LIFE-SIZE IRON AGE ROUNDHOUSE!

CHECK OUT THE CADW WEBSITE FOR MORE COMICS
LIKE THIS WWW.CADW.GOV.WALES

THERE ARE MORE
PREHISTORIC SITES TO
DISCOVER ON ANGLESEY!

VISIT THE PASSAGE GRAVE
AT BARCLODIAD Y GAWRES
WITH ITS AMAZING CARVED
STONES!

AND EXPLORE THE IRON AGE
FIND SITE AT LLYN CERRIG
BACH, WHERE THEY FOUND
SWORDS AND SLAVE CHAINS!