

Les Fouaillages

What is it?

It is the remains of a prehistoric burial mound where people, in the past, buried their dead.

How old is it?

We think that it was created in about 4800 BC (almost 7,000 years ago). It is older than Stonehenge or the great pyramids of Egypt.

How do we know how old it is?

Because of something called radiocarbon dating. This is a scientific process which can tell us how old something is. It can only be used on material which was once a living thing, such as bone.



Why is Les Fouaillages so special?

It is one of the oldest stone monuments in Europe.

What does it look like?

A series of large stones, arranged in a pattern. You might easily walk past it without realising how important it is. The site hasn't always looked like it does today. At different times in history, it would have been covered by a mound of earth.

How do we know about it?

Les Fouaillages was discovered by accident in 1977. A couple called John and Cherry Lihou were walking on L'Ancrese Common after a gorse fire. They noticed a flat stone poking through the side of a mound of earth and thought it might be something interesting. The following year, we found out that the stones were part of a man-made feature. More work on the tomb took place in the early 1980s



John & Cherry Lihou

and the results were surprising. The archaeologists didn't find a tomb with chambers, like La Varde or the Déhus. They had discovered something completely different for Guernsey.

What have archaeologists found there?

Over 35,000 finds! This included pieces of pottery, stone tools and flint. The site was remarkably well-preserved, which suggests that nobody had disturbed it before.



Can I see any artefacts from the site?

Yes, there are some on display at Guernsey Museum.

What was Les Fouaillages used for?

We think that the site has been used for different things, over the thousands of years. There were long periods when it probably wasn't being used at all. Here is a timeline:

Date	What's happening?	More info...
4800 BC	People start building Les Fouaillages.	Flint tools were also discovered, probably made by fishers and hunters. Tree holes were found nearby, which suggests there was a forest in the area.
4000 BC	The tomb is not used.	We do not know why people stopped using the site. Perhaps an important person died, the community moved away, or people used another tomb somewhere else.
3000 – 2000 BC	A shrine or mortuary house was built. It was not a 'house' as we understand it but perhaps a place to worship.	A large collection of stone tools were found from this time, as well as 'polissoirs' (these are stones to polish axes on). Two of these polishing stones weighed more than a quarter of a ton (that's about the same weight as a grand piano!).
2000 BC	The tomb was sealed.	The people at the time left behind 8 spectacular flint arrowheads. Some are a high-quality honey-coloured flint from France. The whole structure was then covered by an enormous pile of earth. This mound proved to be very useful. It preserved the site very well and protected it from damage.
2000-1800 BC	We think there was a small farming settlement there.	Archaeologists found evidence of timber-framed buildings, hearths, pottery and people working flints.

1800 – 50 BC	Probably used as farming, because the land is fertile and good for growing crops.	We have no evidence from this time.
50BC – 1000 AD	The mound is used to mark a boundary, possibly between different landowners.	These boundary-markers were used in Britain but only one other example is known in the Channel Islands.
1000-1200 AD	Les Fouaillages was covered by a blanket of sand (a 'sand-blow').	Farming was no longer possible but bracken and gorse began to grow on top and around the site.
1940-1945	The monument was not damaged during the German Occupation.	Discarded cartridges from a machine gun have been found in the area. This suggests that it was used for military practice.
1977	The tomb is discovered by John & Cherry Lihou, after being hidden for thousands of years.	

Tell us more about the arrowheads found...

The dark-coloured flint probably comes from the region of Caen in Normandy. The honey-coloured flint comes from Grand Pressigny in central France, not far from the city of Tours. Finds like this suggest that there were people moving between these places.



How did people move big stones in the past, without diggers?

With a lot of effort! People in those days had no metal tools. Wheels or oxen would have been used to pull the great stones and into position. These monuments were clearly very important to the people that built them.

When is Les Fouaillages open?

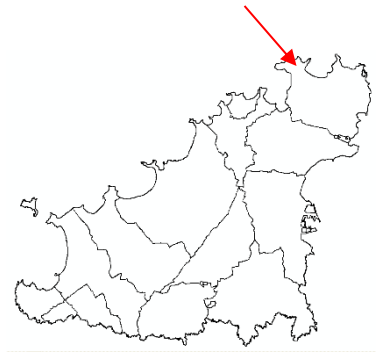
You can visit at any time and entry is free.

Les Fouaillages

L'Ancrese Common

Vale

Perrys Guide: 6 B2



If you head towards along Les Amarreurs Road, heading towards the kiosk, it is signposted.