

## Neanderthal Boy - 40,000 years ago

Unfortunately the physical remains of Neanderthals are not numerous in Wales. The first available evidence we have for early humans or Neanderthals in modern-day Wales dates from the later Lower Palaeolithic. Although they belong to the same genus, *Homo*, as us, they were very different and do not appear to have adapted to their changing environment as well as modern humans. As the ice retreated following the end of a glacial period, Neanderthal men and women moved westwards in pursuit of prey and in Wales found shelter in limestone caves, such as **Pontnewydd Cave**, in Denbighshire, occupied around 230,000 years ago in the middle of an interglacial, and **Coygan Cave** in Carmarthenshire where late Neanderthal (60,000 - 35,000 years ago) hand axes have been discovered.

At **Pontnewydd Cave**, the evidence showed that at this time, approximately 230,000 years ago, Neanderthal man coexisted with such animals as rhinoceros, bear, wolf, leopard, horse and bison.



Above - molar teeth from a type of lemming called a 'collared lemming'. Right - flint tools including scrapers and spear points. All from Pontnewydd Cave.  
(Photo Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales)



Above - part of the skull of brown bear discovered in Pontnewydd Cave  
(Photo Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales)

Below - Coygan Cave handaxes.  
(Photo Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales)



The excavations at **Pontnewydd Cave** discovered the oldest human remains known from Wales dating back some 230,000 years. Excavations at the cave by Amgueddfa Cymru between 1978 and 1995 unearthed a total of 19 teeth, discovered deep inside the cave. These have been identified by experts at the Natural History Museum, London as belonging to an early form of Neanderthal.

These people lived by hunting or scavenging wild game and gathering plants for food. They made and used stone tools which they fashioned into such implements as handaxes, knives and spearpoints.



The above imaginary scene is set around 300,000 years ago during an interglacial period. Early Neanderthal hunters are shown in the distance (left) driving straight-tusked elephant into swamps using fire and (far right) hunting deer using spears. (Illustration Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales)

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor/article/1968/>

<http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/item/12436-pontnewydd-cave-denbighshire-this-cave-produce>

<http://www.gtj.org.uk/index.php?id=4742>

<http://www.peoplescollection.org.uk/Item/35636>