

CPAT Report No 1111

Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw Stone Circle, Llandrillo, Denbighshire

EXCAVATION AND SURVEY 2011



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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August 2011

Report for Cadw

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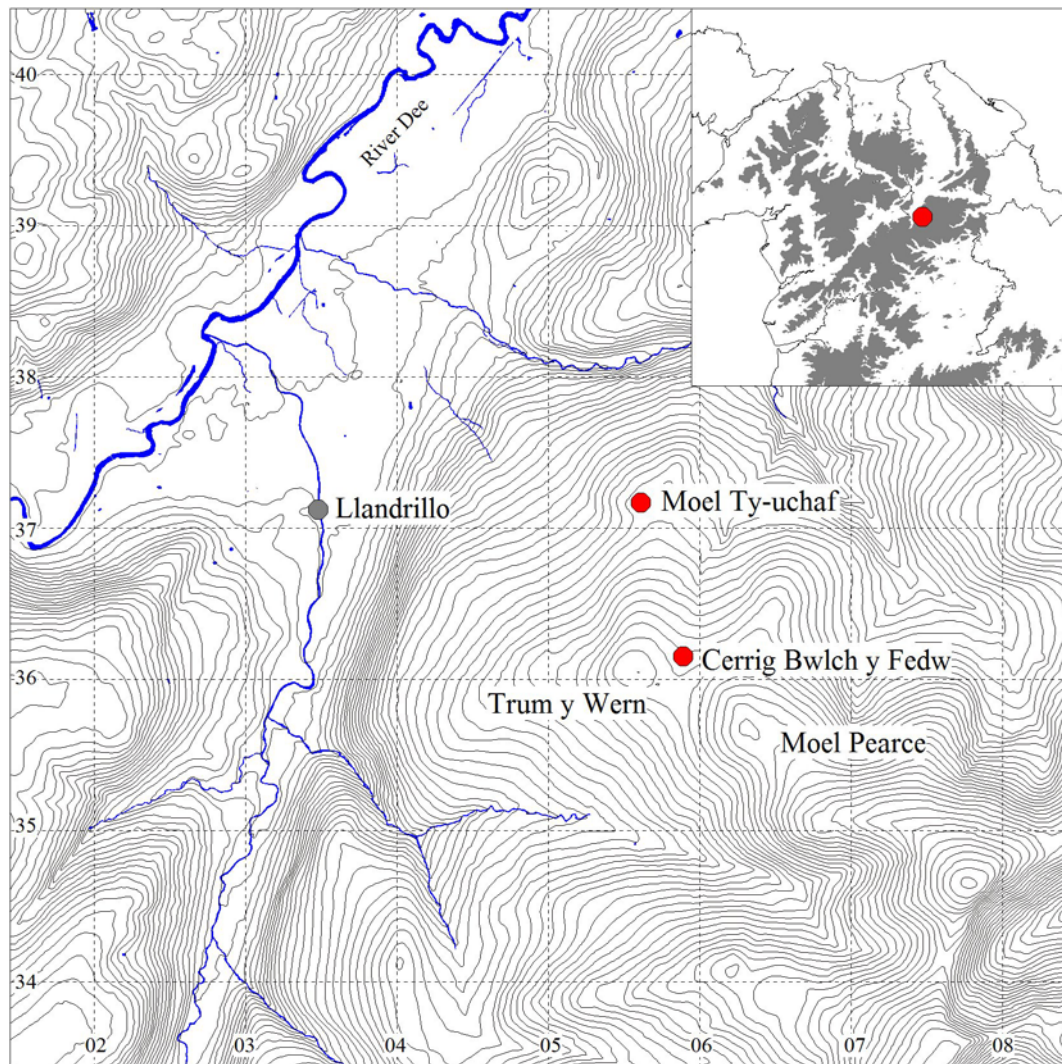
cover: Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw Stone Circle viewed from the south-west. Photo CPAT 3331-0001

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A programme of detailed survey and trial excavation was undertaken on the site of a small stone circle (PRN 105066) at Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw, near Llandrillo in southern Denbighshire (SJ 0589 3615). The work was funded by Cadw as part of the continuing study into prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments in mid and north-east Wales.



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Fig. 1 Location of the Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw Stone Circle

- 1.2 The Dee valley around Llandrillo and the surrounding uplands contains an unusual concentration of important prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments, including the stone circle at Moel Ty-uchaf (PRN 100847), which lies around 2km to the east of the village. In addition to the stone circle there is also a platform cairn and a smaller burial cairn.
- 1.3 A second, small stone circle was discovered by Ken Brassil of CPAT in the late 1980s, around 1km to the south-south-east of Moel Ty-uchaf. The stone circle lies at an altitude of 525m OD on the north-eastern side of Bwlch y Fedw, a minor col between Trum y Wern and Moel Pearce which together form a spur extending north-westwards from the Berwyn ridge (Fig. 1; SJ 05878 36158).

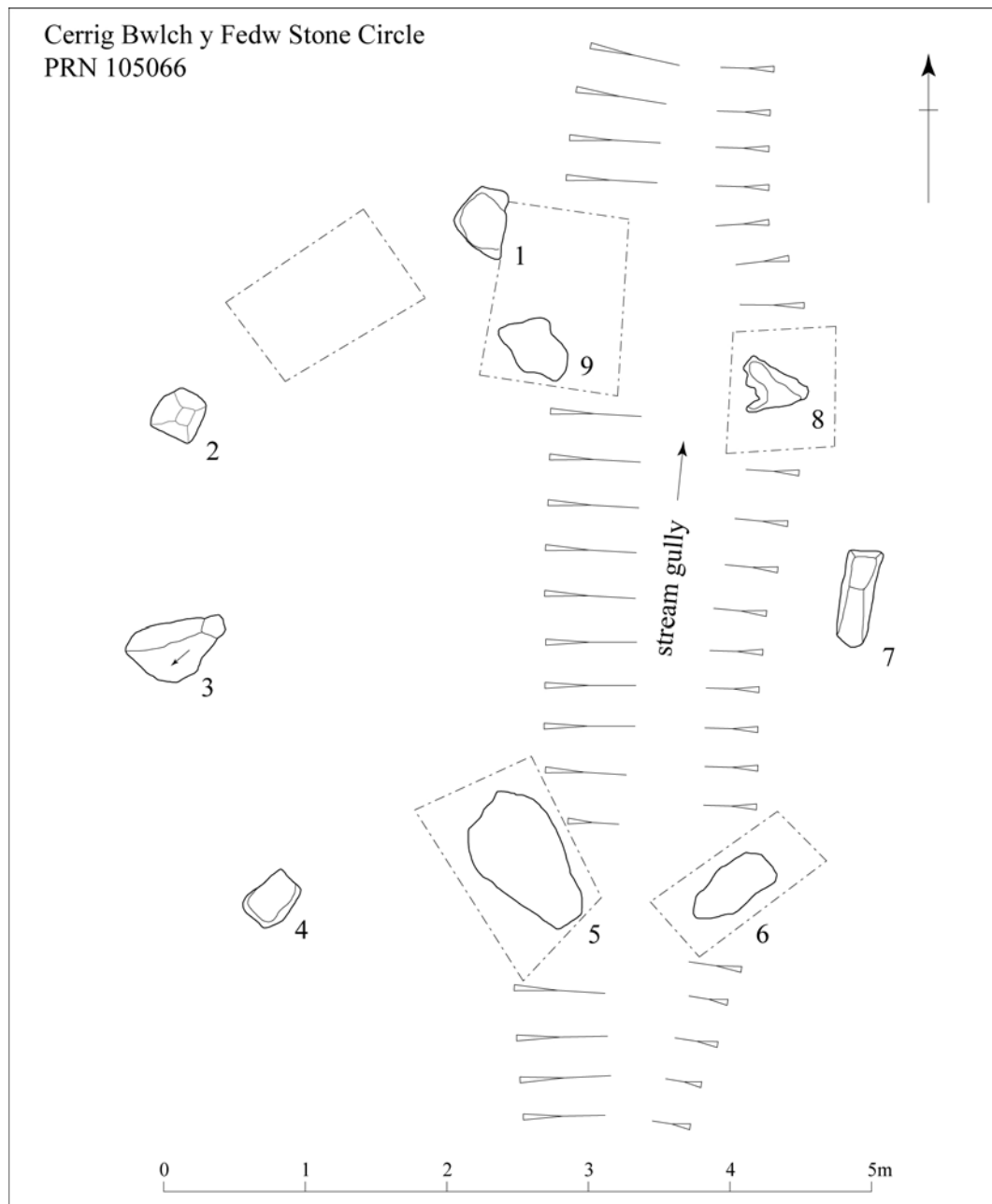


Fig. 2 Plan of Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw Stone Circle.

2 EXCAVATION AND SURVEY

- 2.1 A small-scale excavation was conducted in late August 2011 in conjunction with a detailed total station survey to record accurately the position of those stones which were already known, as well as attempting to identify any further stones which might be associated.
- 2.2 The fieldwork identified five upstanding stones (stones 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7) forming a circle around 5.1m in diameter, with a stream gully cutting through the eastern side. Two recumbent stones (stones 5 and 9) were also recorded, both of which were partly covered by turf. Based on these results, the excavation focused on examining the two recumbent stones, as well as investigating the apparent gaps between stone 1 and stones 2 and 7, and between stones 5 and 7.



Fig. 3 Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw Stone Circle viewed from the south-west. Photo CPAT 3331-0001

- 2.3 The excavations uncovered two further, recumbent stones (stones 6 and 8), but produced no evidence for any stone between stones 1 and 2. There was no indication of stoneholes for any of the recumbent stones and it was also apparent that stones 8 and 9 had been displaced. In addition, stone 8 appeared to have been fractured, and it was considered possible that it may have originally been part of stone 9.
- 2.4 The position of the stream gully is significant and is likely to explain why some of the stones are no longer upright. There was some suggestion of a slight bank along the eastern side of the gully, and it is possible that the feature was deliberately excavated as a drain. The surrounding area is covered in peat which, within the excavations was between 0.2m and 0.36m deep. The development of the peat evidently continued after the stones became recumbent since stones 5 and 8 had become completely buried, while only parts of stones 5 and 9 were visible on the surface.



Fig. 4 Stone 1 from the east.
Photo CPAT 3331-0019

Stone 1 measures 0.48m long, 0.36m thick and 0.85m high.



Fig. 5 Stone 2 from the west.
Photo CPAT 3331-0021

Stone 2 measures 0.34m long, 0.34m thick and 0.35m high.



Fig. 6 Stone 3 from the east.
Photo CPAT 3331-0023

Stone 3 measures 0.48m long, 0.24m thick and 0.78m high.



Fig. 7 Stone 4 from the east.
Photo CPAT 3331-0025

Stone 4 measures 0.35 long, 0.3m thick and 0.17m high.



Fig. 8 Stone 5 from the south-south-east.
Photo CPAT 3331-0027

Stone 5 measures 1.05m long, 0.62m wide
and 0.1m thick.



Fig. 8 Stone 6 from the west-south-west.
Photo CPAT 3331-0035

Stone 5 measures 0.65m long, 0.3m wide
and 0.24m thick.



Fig. 9 Stone 7 from the east-north-east.
Photo CPAT 3331-0029

Stone 7 measures 0.6m long, 0.18 thick and
0.67m high.



Fig. 10 Stone 8 from the east.
Photo CPAT 3331-0033

Stone 8 measures 0.48m long, 0.38m wide
and 0.1m thick.



Fig. 11 Stone 9 from the south-south-west.
Photo CPAT 3331-0031

Stone 9 measures 0.53m long, 0.37m wide and
0.1m thick.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The survey and excavation have demonstrated that the small stone circle at Cerrig Bwlch y Fedw may originally have been formed by eight stones, of which only five remain upright, all of them well-set. The remaining stones consist of two large, recumbent slabs on the south side and two smaller stones on the north-east side which may have been fractured from a single slab. The damage to the stone circle appears to relate to a stream gully which bisects the eastern half of the circle from south to north, possibly having been deliberately excavated as a drain.
- 3.2 The circle has a diameter of roughly 5.1m, although the stones are not placed exactly on the circumference, nor are they equidistant. On the western side, which is best preserved, stones 2, 3 and 4 are placed at intervals of around 1.8m, while the distance between stones 1 and 2 is considerably greater at 2.5m. There is, however, no evidence that an intervening stone has been lost and it may be that this formed an entrance into the circle. The position of the recumbent stone 5 suggests that it fell to the north and may have also been placed at a distance of 1.8m to 2m from stone 4. The original position of stone 6 is uncertain, although the distance between stones 5 and 7 is such that it could also have been placed around 1.8m from either stone. Similarly, it is not possible to determine the position of the final stone, although here the gap between stones 1 and 7 again suggests a spacing of 1.8m to 2.0m.
- 3.3 The largest stone now standing is stone 1, which is 0.85m above the turf. Even though stone 5 measures 1.05m in length, in order for it to have been set firmly in the ground it is unlikely to have been taller than stone 1. The position of both of these stones may be significant with stone 1 on the north side and stone 5 to the south. Indeed, the view from the centre over stone 1 leads directly to the highest point of Moel Ty-uchaf at SJ 0578 3726, although this is 200m north-east of the stone circle of the same name.

- 3.4 None of the stones appears to have been deliberately quarried or worked, suggesting that the builders of the stone circle utilised whatever stone came readily to hand. The source may well have been a series of rocky outcrops around 120m to the west-south-west where there are numerous loose blocks of stone.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 4.1 The writer would like to thank the Richard Hankinson and Ian Grant of CPAT for undertaking the work, together with Arfon Hughes of CCW for facilitating the work.