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MONUMENT MANAGEMENT AT GORS FAWR STONE CIRCLE SAM Pe117



**Prepared by Cambria Archaeology as part of a
Service Level Agreement with Pembrokeshire
Coast National Park Authority.**



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Monument Management at Gors Fawr Stone Circle SAM Pe117

Gan / By

Polly Groom

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ARCHAEOLEG CAMBRIA
Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf
Neuadd y Sir, Stryd Caerfyrddin, Llandello, Sir
Gaerfyrddin SA19 6AF
Ffon: Ymholiadau Cyffredinol 01558 823121
Adran Rheoli Treftadaeth 01558 823131
Ffacs: 01558 823133
Ebost: cambria@cambria.org.uk
Gwefan: www.cambria.org.uk

CAMBRIA ARCHAEOLOGY
Dyfed Archaeological Trust Limited
The Shire Hall, Carmarthen Street, Llandello,
Carmarthenshire SA19 6AF
Tel: General Enquiries 01558 823121
Heritage Management Section 01558 823131
Fax: 01558 823133
Email: cambria@cambria.org.uk
Website: www.cambria.org.uk

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Summary

Gors Fawr stone circle is a well preserved monument in an atmospheric setting on the flanks of Mynydd Preseli. The stone circle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Pe117) and is located within the Mynydd Preseli Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Scheduled Area covers not only the stone circle itself, but also an outlying stone pair, located to the northeast of the circle.

Although generally in good condition, the site was beginning to suffer from erosion at the bases of some of the stones. The wet moorland means that water pools into erosion hollows, encouraging poaching by stock when the land is grazed. Gorse clumps were also beginning to grow up around some of the stones, and a large gorse patch obscured the view between the circle and the outlying stone pair.

In consultation with Cadw, a programme of small scale works was drawn up to improve the condition of the site. These were carried out in April 2006, using volunteers, National Park staff and the National Park archaeologist. Erosion hollows were infilled with locally sourced material and selective gorse clearance has restored the sightline between the two monuments.

Introduction

Gors Fawr stone circle (SAM Pe117, PRN 922) lies on the flanks of Mynydd Preseli, just outside Mynachlog-Ddu at NGR SN1346629380. The site comprises the circle and a pair of standing stones located just to the northeast. Both the stone circle and the stone pair are included in the Scheduled Area.

The site is generally in a fair condition, but erosion hollows were beginning to form around the bases of some of the stones on the south side. On the west side of the circle, a patch of gorse was beginning to swamp one of the stones in the circle. The stone pair were, similarly, in fair condition but the more easterly stone was beginning to be engulfed in gorse. In addition, a large clump of gorse was affecting the setting of the monument, blocking the viewline between the stone circle and the stone pair.

The stone circle is probably visited as much for its dramatic backdrop as for the monument itself. Looking to the northeast, the rocky outcrops of Carn Menyn are a clear focus on the skyline, and to the northwest and north, the view is dominated by the uneven 'ridge' of the tops of the Preselis, including Foel Cwmcerwyn and Carn Siân (Darvill and Wainwright:2002:21). Much could be made of the possible ritual significance of these viewsheds, especially since Carn Menyn, Carn Siân and Foel Cwmcerwyn are the sites of significant, earlier monuments. Foel Cwmcerwyn boasts a number of cairns whilst it is suggested that the outcrops of Carn Menyn supplied the bluestone for Stonehenge. A recently noted enclosure around the outcrops may attest further to their significance (Darvill *et al*:2004:106). On the lower ground between Gors Fawr and Cwmcerwyn are at least three further standing stone pairs.

Whatever the explanation given to the siting of Gors Fawr, it is clear that it is within a complex of symbolic, prehistoric activity. For the modern visitor the appreciation of the backdrop is largely aesthetic, but in order to place the stone circle in some kind of context it was considered important that there was a clear visual relationship between the standing stone pair and the main circle. In addition, it was also decided that the main circle, and a surrounding area, should also be free of gorse, both to aid easy access to the site and to enhance the view.

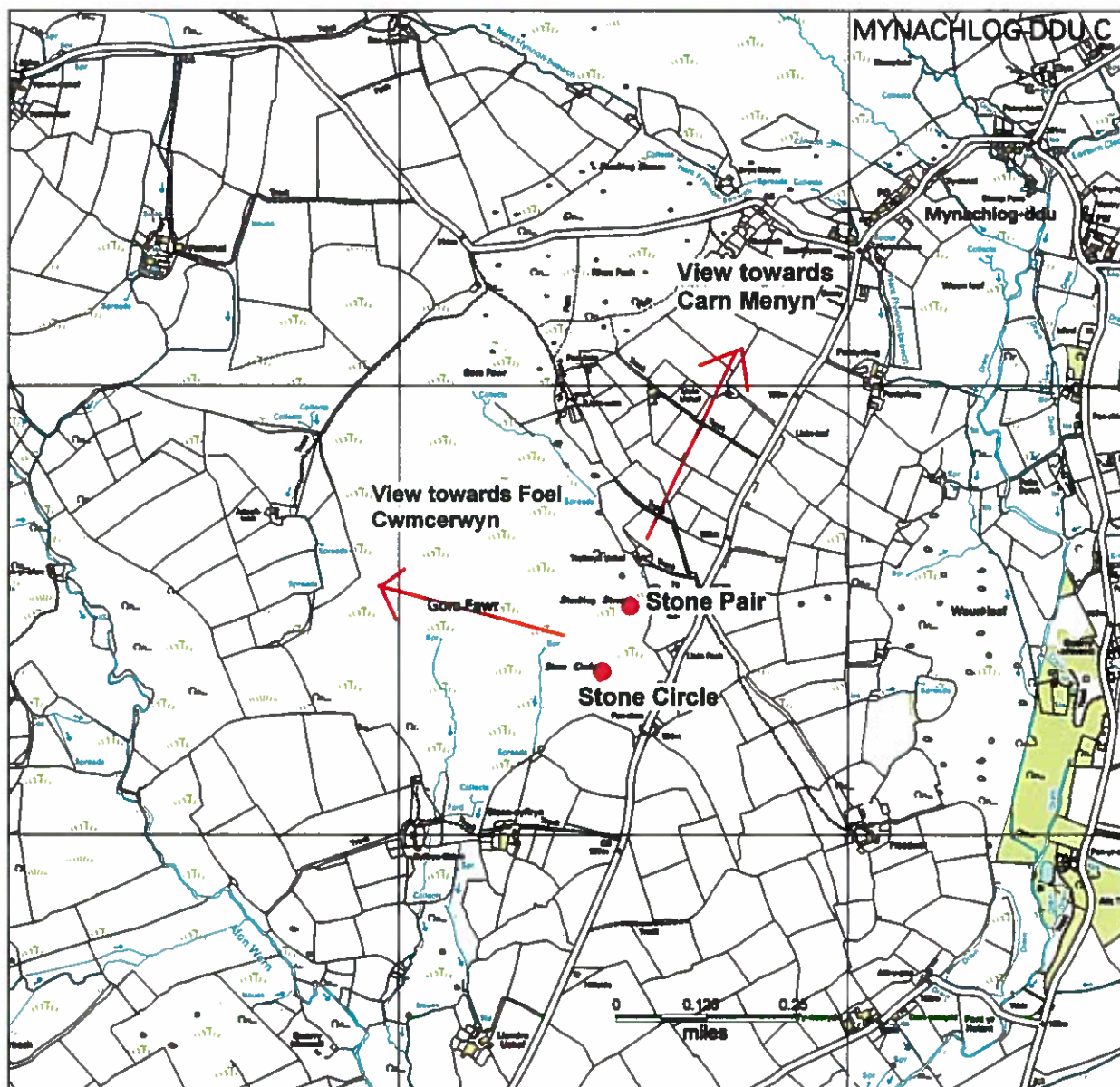


Figure 1: Map showing general location of Gors Fawr, and principal viewlines.



Picture 1 The view from the stone circle towards the stone pair, and beyond to the outcrops of Carn Menyn.

Proposed Management

Simple management works were proposed to improve the condition of this site. The works consisted of infilling erosion scars at the base of the affected stones and removing selected areas of gorse. The following photographs were taken in October 2005, when the site was visited to assess whether work was needed.



Picture 2 (above left) – one of the stones making up the stone pair, partly swamped by a gorse bush.



Picture 3 (above right) – the other stone of the pair, showing a clear erosion hollow at its base.



Pictures 4 and 5 (above) – erosion hollows around the base of two of the stones at Gors Fawr



Picture 6 (above) – the view from one of the stones in the stone pair, towards the circle. The circle is hidden by the gorse.

Land Use and Constraints

Since this is a protected site, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) was granted by Cadw for the infilling of the erosion hollows. Gors Fawr is also sited within the area of the Mynydd Preseli SSSI, but consultation with CCW confirmed that formal SSSI consent was not required for these works.

The area is used for summer grazing (sheep and sometimes ponies) and the proposed works were discussed with the graziers in advance.

Methodology

The works were carried out in April 2006 by a small team of volunteers working with the National Park Archaeologist and PCNPA's Ranger for the north. The gorse was cut and cleared by hand, with stumps being left as low to the ground as possible. The roots were not dug out. Observation suggested that gorse grows quite slowly at this site, so it was decided not to treat the stumps with chemicals but to monitor them periodically for future re-growth. The waste cuttings will be burnt on a site away from the Scheduled Area.

Two erosion hollows were filled around the bases of stones on the southeast side of the stone circle. The hollows were first emptied of rainwater (which had collected over the previous night) and were then lined with a layer of Terram (a water-permeable geotextile). In this instance the Terram will principally act as a marker layer, indicating when any future erosion is reaching previous depths. The hollows were then infilled using soil sourced from a neighbouring field, and re-turfed using turf cut from a ditch close to the stone circle. Using local materials ensures that no undesirable seed stores are introduced into the SSSI.

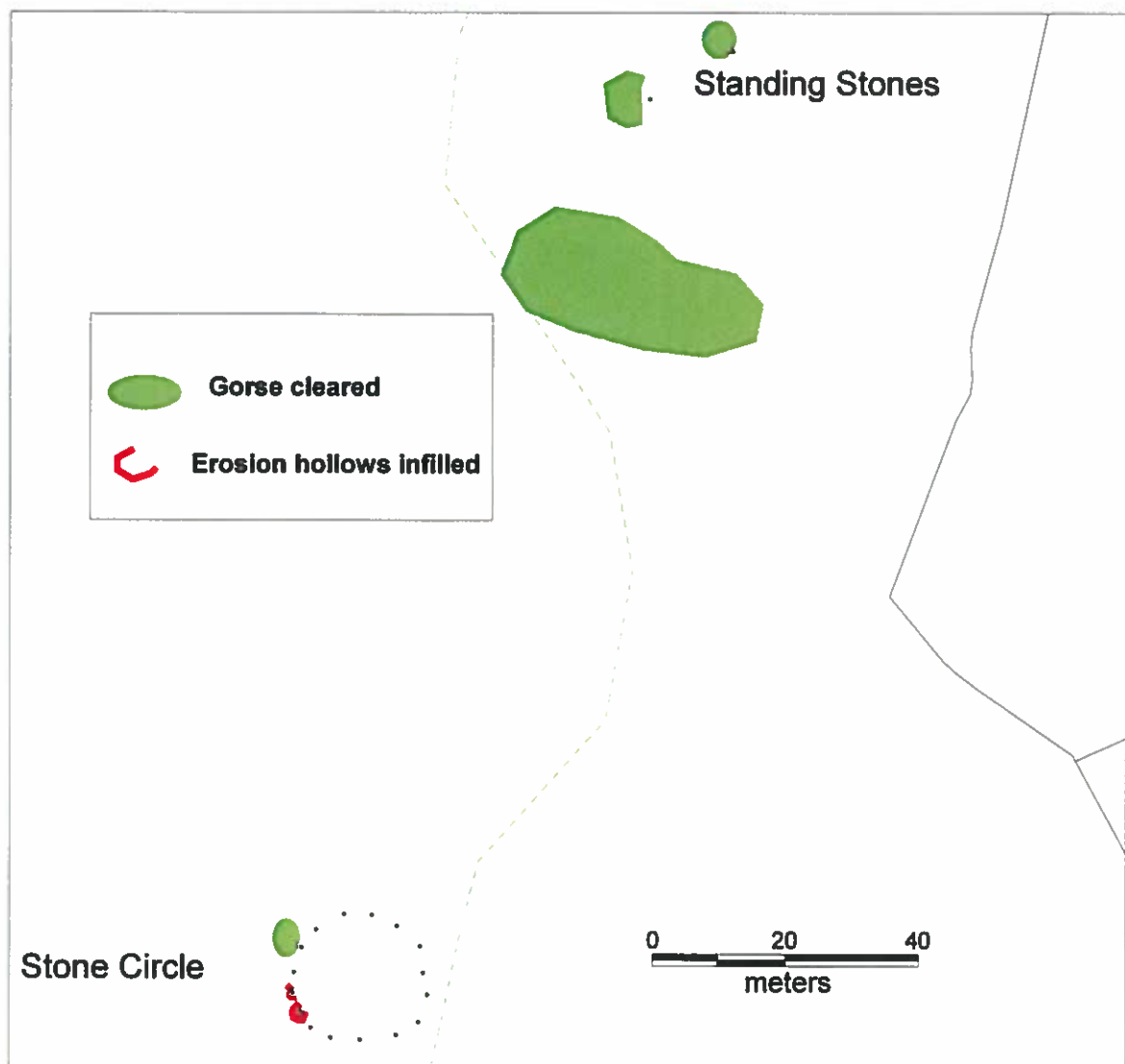


Figure 2 Management works carried out at the site. Erosion control had been proposed around one of the stones making up the stone pair, but there was so much standing water that this proved impossible on this occasion.

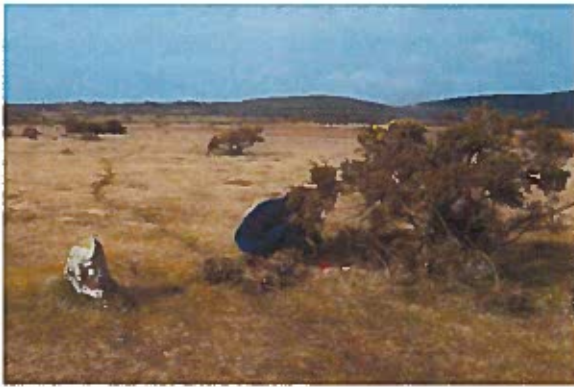
Photographic Record



Picture 7 (above left) One of the volunteers 'bailing out'!



Picture 8 (above right) Gorse bush beginning to obscure one of the stones on the west side of the circle.



Picture 9 (above left) Cutting gorse by hand



Picture 10 (above right) Erosion hollow waiting to be infilled



Picture 11 (above) Gorse surrounding one of the pair of standing stones and **Picture 12 (below)** Volunteers removing the gorse.



Picture 13 (above) Erosion hollow lined with Terram and waiting to be infilled. The turf cut from a nearby ditch will be used to restore the grass cover.



Picture 14 (above) A small piece of Terram in place as a marker, to monitor future erosion problems.

Picture 15 (below) The two infilled erosion hollows (stone at bottom of picture, and one above left). A light sprinkling of earth will help the new turf to 'take' more quickly.





Picture 16 (above) Close-up of the restored profile.

Picture 17 (below) The view from the stone circle to the outlying stone pair. With the gorse removed, there is now a clear viewline between the two sites, and the relationship between them is restored. Gorse removal has also enabled a clearer appreciation of the setting of Gors Fawr stone circle, highlighting the possible relationship between the stone circle, the stone pair and the bluestone outcrops of Carn Menyn – visible in the background of this picture.



Future Management

The site will be periodically monitored by PCNPA staff to ensure that there is no substantial re-growth of gorse. During the summer, the area is used for light grazing. It is hoped that by carrying these repairs out in spring, the new turf will have to time to establish itself before stock come onto the common.

Currently, the site is indicated from the road by a sign which is difficult to see and contains no information. The location would be inappropriate for an interpretation panel, but PCNPA staff are investigating the possibility of erecting a new sign which contains basic facts about the circle – the name and its suggested age, for example.



Picture 18 The current entrance into the Gors Fawr stone circle.

References

Darvill, T, Morgan Evans, D, and Wainwright, G: Strumble-Preseli Ancient Communities and Environment Study (SPACES) Third Report 2004: *Archaeology in Wales, vol 44, 2004: p104-107*

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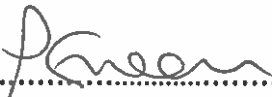
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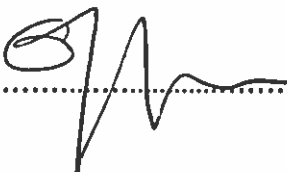
Swydd / Position: Archaeologist (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park)

Llofnod / Signature  Dyddiad / Date 24/4/06

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by
Gwilym Hughes

ar ran Archaeoleg Cambria, Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Cambria Archaeology, Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: Trust Director

Llofnod / Signature  Dyddiad / Date 24/4/06

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

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