

THE BRYN GWYN STONE CIRCLE, BRYNSIENCYN, ANGLESEY



By George Smith with Astrid E. Caseldine, Catherine J. Griffiths, Frances Lynch and Genevieve Tellier



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Cover picture: The Bryn Gwyn stone circle and Castell Bryn Gwyn, by Rowlands, 1723

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1. SUMMARY

Excavation in 2010 near the two large standing stones at Bryn Gwyn, Brynsiencyn, Anglesey confirmed that they had once formed part of a stone circle *c*. 16m diameter consisting of 8 stones dated to the Later Neolithic period, associated with cremation activity. Fragments of some former standing stones remained while others had been removed entirely. Evidence was also found of modification of the circle in the Early Bronze Age.

2. INTRODUCTION

The two standing stones at Bryn Gwyn (Scheduled Ancient Monument A22), west of Brynsiencyn, at SH46246693 stand in a hedge-line between two large rectilinear fields (Fig. 2). The larger of the two, c. 4m high, is one of the tallest in Wales. The stones were visited in the early 18th century when they were described as part of a stone circle (Rowlands 1723). Most of the surviving stones were removed or broken up early in the 19th century as part of field improvements, apart from the two stones that stand today.

Geophysical survey was carried out at the Bryn Gwyn stones in 2006 by GAT as part of a pan-Wales survey of prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments for Cadw. This was designed to look for evidence of the former stone circle, the position of which was uncertain. Study of the antiquarian descriptions showed that the circle would have extended on the north side of the two standing stones and the geophysical survey identified a curvilinear feature there (Smith and Hopewell 2007). In 2008 a small evaluation excavation was carried out there to investigate this curvilinear feature (Fig. 5). Three standing stone pits were found of which two contained stumps of broken-off standing stones. Two stones lay in an arc in relation to the two extant standing stones that indicated a former stone circle of 8 stones and about 16m diameter. Another standing stone was discovered that lay inside the circle, unrelated to the projected circle (Smith 2008).

In 2010 a further excavation was carried out for Cadw to identify the full extent of the stone circle and to look for evidence of use and dating (Smith 2010) and more fully described here.

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3. TOPOGRAPHIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The south of Anglesey is dominated by parallel ridges lying approximately south-west to north-east, between which lie the rivers Cefni and Braint, which once formed deep inlets. The Bryn Gwyn stones stand on an unusually level area at 10m OD in the valley of the River Braint, and about 200m to the south of the river (Fig. 2). The Braint is a very small river but it is the longest in Anglesey, originating at the east side of the island. Although low-lying the land around the stones is quite well drained because of a gravel sub-soil and its soil is of good quality, able to support arable crops.

A description of the Bryn Gwyn stones by the local antiquary, the Rev. Henry Rowlands in 1723 recorded them as being formerly part of a stone circle, which at that time was ruinous of which Rowlands said '...three of them yet standing whole and entire, and the Stump of a fourth...' and he estimated that the circle had been of 8 or 9 stones and about 40ft (12m) diameter and produced a fairly realistic sketch (Fig. 3). The stones were visited by other antiquaries and descriptions vary with suggestions of between 8 to 12 stones with a diameter of 12-14 yards (11-13m). There was also a small group of other large stones shown to the south of the circle shown by Rowlands (Fig. 3). These

outlying stones may have formed a separate monument and were mentioned by other visitors. Some time after Rowlands' visit a small cottage had been built on the site. An account of 1797 (Hutton, 181) says of the stones that '...ignorant country people supposing money was hid under them, recently tore them up.' and this suggests that there was widespread robbing activity. It may be that by 1802 only the two stones present today were still fully extant. The largest stone had been used as the gable wall of the small cottage can still be seen on the top of the larger standing stone. Written accounts show that the cottage was still standing in 1817 but it and most of the stones had been cleared to make way for a reorganised field system before 1841, when the Tithe map was produced (Baynes 1910-11, 65). Two stones survived because they were incorporated in a new field bank.

The RCHMW (1937, 103) recorded that it was impossible to estimate where the former stone circle lay because the two surviving stones did not form chords of a circle. However, the re-assessment of the site in 2002 indicated that the circle lay on the north side of the two surviving stones and that the positioning of the stones in relation to true north by Rowlands (Fig. 3) was an error, as the two stones surviving today are recognisable in Rowlands' sketch. This means that Rowlands sketch was not oriented with north to the top although it is so positioned in relation to Castell Bryn Gwyn. This also means that the outlying group of stones shown on Rowlands' sketch was probably on the north side of the circle, not on the south side, as it is shown. Stukeley (1724) also produced a plan of the monuments but this was based entirely on Rowlands' drawings and more fanciful. Comparison of Rowlands' drawing of 1723 with that by the Rev. Skinner of 1802 (Figs 3 and 4) allowed the surviving stones to be identified and placed in their correct relation the former circle, showing that it had been on the north side of the two stones. Baynes (1910-11, 62) also described slight remains of an outlying bank of c. 225yds (205m) diameter and of a ditch of c. 120yds (110m) diameter. There are some slight undulations in the field but nothing to match Bayne's description. In 2006 a geophysical survey was carried out for Cadw as a follow-up to the previous site visit (Smith and Hopewell 2007). This provided no evidence of a stone circle but did identify a series of anomalies forming a possible curvilinear feature on the north side of the possible stone circle, but much smaller in diameter than the feature described by Baynes (Fig. 5). It also identified the outlines of an earlier field system of small, strip-like rectangular fields on a different alignment that of the modern field boundaries.

4. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The main aim of the excavation was to establish the full extent and nature of the probable stone circle identified in 2008. It was hoped that some *in situ* deposits might be identified that could produce dating evidence for the circle. The work was carried out between November 29th 2010 and January 7th 2011. The former grid was re-established and the trenches were laid out to encompass the projected extent of the stone circle. The plough soil was removed by mechanical excavator with subsequent work by hand. After the initial cleaning and planning there was heavy rain followed by frozen ground and then snow. Excavation then concentrated on investigating and recording the main features already identified. One half of each feature was excavated, leaving fill that could be a source for future research.

5. EXCAVATION RESULTS

The largest area, Trench 1, of 128 sq m, was excavated on the north side of the present field boundary, to include the area of the 2008 excavation and the projected extent of the stone circle (Fig. 6). This trench was expected to include four stone pits of the circle, including the two located in 2008, as well as the isolated stone pit within the circle. The area where the 18th century cottage had been was not examined as it was expected to be much disturbed. An extension, Trench 2, was made to the south through the hedge bank to investigate the area of another expected standing stone pit. Another area, Trench 3, was excavated on the south side of the field boundary to investigate the expected position of the eighth and final stone pit.

Stone Pits or possible stone pits (Figs 7 and 8)

The three stone pits found in 2008 (Pits 3, 6 and 7) were re-identified. Pits 6 and 7 contained standing stone stumps stone and still contained some *in situ* fill. Two new stone pits (Pits 119 and 159) were identified in their expected positions on the basis of equidistant setting for a circle of eight standing stones.

Pit 3 (Trench 1)

This pit lay on the arc of the stone circle and at a position that would fit in with a circle of eight stones, set equidistantly. The pit was fully excavated in 2008 so was not re-excavated in 2010. The original stone pit had been widened during robbing in its upper part but lower down the original shape of the pit survived. It was sub-circular, 1.2m diameter, and 0.87m deep below the subsoil surface, with steep sloping sides and approximately flat base. Within the pit on its north side was a large piece of limestone, possibly a packing stone.

The pit appeared to have held a large stone of columnar section that had been pulled out complete, as there was no stone stump or fragments. The entire remaining fill derived from the robbing phase and contained fragments of coal, 18-19th century pottery fragments, roofing slate, iron objects and a clay tobacco pipe fragment. However, two flint flakes were also found. Although the stone fragment found in the pit was of limestone it is more likely that a columnar-shaped stone would be of a harder rock.

Pit 6 (Trench 1)

This was an isolated pit inside the arc of the stone circle, its position and orientation having no recognisable relation to the stone circle. Only part of the pit and the top of the standing stone stump it contained had been exposed in 2008 at the very edge of the excavated area. A wide, irregular robbing pit had been dug around the standing stone when it was demolished. The pit held a large limestone slab, approximately flat-sided and of even thickness, 1.6m long and 0.3m thick. The slab was set vertically and oriented approximately south-west to north-east. It had been broken off at 0.5m below the subsoil surface by drilling a line of seven holes through the slab at approximately 0.20m (8ins) intervals to allow it to be snapped off. The boreholes slanted down slightly from south to north showing that they had been driven from the south side. After the stone had been removed the pit had been backfilled with soil and finally with a mass of cobble stones, probably from flooring derived from the demolition of the nearby cottage.

At the west side of the stone, below the limit of the 19th century robbing pit, the original pit fill remained, containing soil and small sub-angular boulder packing stones. The base of the slab was at 1.08m below the subsoil surface (Fig. 8). No artefacts or charcoal were found in the pit fill but a bulk soil sample for flotation produced 3 fragments of hazel charcoal, two of which were used for radiocarbon dating, producing dates in the early second millennium BC.

The depth of the standing stone stump suggested it had stood to a height of at least 2m. The robbing appears to have taken place in the early 19th century so that it would have been standing when Rowlands visited and during the life of the 18th century cottage. Rowlands' drawing shows a circular symbol within the circle, meant to indicate a 'cromlech' (Fig. 3). Pennant in 1783 mentions '.. the cromlech in the middle of the circle, all extremely imperfect'. This could refer to remains of the stone in Pit 6, which may have been partly demolished by that time. The vertical position of the stone stump shows that it had not leant or fallen. It may have been partly broken up to provide building materials for the cottage, but still remaining as a sufficient obstacle to ploughing to cause it to be further removed when the cottage was demolished and the new fields created.

Pit 7 (Trench 1)

This was first identified in 2008. It contained the remains of a large orthostatic slab of schist set with its long axis on the arc of the circle. The upper part of the stone appeared to have been removed as part of the early 19^{th} century field improvements. A large robbing pit had been dug around the stone to some way below the subsoil surface and then the slab broken off by hammering. The *in situ* stone stump was vertically set but the slab was fractured and there were many flakes and fragments of rock in the robbing pit. Part of the north end of the stone was broken off but the size of the pit showed it had been *c*.1.90m wide and 0.20m thick. The remaining stump was 0.75m in depth and the base was at 1.30m below the subsoil surface. Some of the original stone pit and its fill of small boulders in silt matrix survived below the level of the robbing. The lowest part of the stone sat in a narrower pit *c*. 0.70m wide (Fig. 8). No artefacts or charcoal were identified from the original pit fill by excavation or by environmental flotation, so no radiocarbon dating was possible.

Pit 11 (Trench 1)

The edge of this shallow and irregular pit had been partially exposed in 2008. Its upper fill contained some 19^{th} century pottery and some rotted fragments of limestone. Further excavation in 2011 showed that it was irregular in outline, *c*. 1.8m diameter, 0.30m deep and approximately flat-bottomed. More fragments of limestone were found, forming two lines in a T-shape. No artefacts or charcoal were found to allow dating. The pit lies on the arc of the arc of the stone circle but does not fit into the circle in terms of spacing of the stones. Although it was very shallow it could still have held a large block that was stable without a deep foundation. The Post-medieval pottery in its upper fill could just derive from a robbing phase.

Pit 119 (Trench 1)

This pit was newly discovered in 2010. It lay on the arc of the circle and at the correct position for a circle of eight equidistantly set stones. It was difficult to identify because it lay within a natural spread of glacial stones within the general gravel subsoil (Fig. 7). Its fill was recognisable because its fill was darker than the subsoil around. It proved to be a rather irregular pit with steep-sloping sides, c. 1.5m diameter and 0.70m deep below the subsoil surface. A few original packing stones survived on the north edge of the pit. On the base of the pit was a somewhat decayed and irregular, broken fragment of a limestone slab, c. 0.20m thick, that had been set vertically and facing approximately north and south. This seems to be the snapped-off fragment of a large slab of limestone, facing towards the centre of the circle.

There was some possible packing material on the north side of the pit but no certainly surviving original pit-fill and no artefacts or charcoal.

Pit 140 (Trench 1)

This pit lay at the edge of Trench 1 and only part of it lay within the excavated area. If the pit was circular then that part appeared to be about half of a pit *c*. 1.8m diameter and 0.8m deep below the subsoil surface with a rounded base. Its upper fill was a uniform, fine, almost stone-free silt, quite different to the fill of the other pits. The lower fill contained more stones, including some charcoal but there were no artefacts and the pit was not selected for radiocarbon dating.

The pit was close to the 18th century cottage and could gave been associated with it but some Postmedieval pottery might have been expected. The pit happens to lie at the geometric centre of the stone circle but its profile and lack of packing stones suggest it had not held a standing stone. It was neat and unlike a robbing pit and its fine gravel upper fill suggests some other function

Pit 159 (Trench 1)

This pit, in the south-west corner of the trench, was not identified until near the end of the excavation because it lay within another area of subsoil containing small glacial boulders and was obscured by an

overlying layer of thin dark charcoal-rich soil (111) and by several smaller features, two of which, [151] and [156] were cut into the edge of the pit fill.

The pit fill was slightly more humic than the surrounding natural glacial till. Only the south-western half of the pit was excavated. The pit was sub-circular 1.7m diameter and 0.7m deep, below the subsoil surface, with steep sides and an approximately flat base. The fill contained some small boulders concentrated in the upper part of the fill, which appeared to be disturbed packing stones left in after the standing stone had been pulled out. There were no artefacts or charcoal fragments in the pit fill.

The size and shape of the pit was very similar to that of Pit 3 and, like Pit 3, seemed to retain its original shape, with no robbing pit so if it held a stone it was columnar-shaped and must have been pulled out entire, not broken up. This stone was one of those illustrated by Rowlands, next to the surviving tallest slab and shown as a columnar stone that was at that time leaning to the east (Fig. 3).

Pit 116 (Trench 2)

Trench 2 was laid out to include the expected position of another stone pit, assuming that stones were placed equidistantly. The expected position of the pit lay partly under the 19th century field bank, which was dismantled, but there was no pit exactly at the projected position. The trench was crossed by a shallow quarry ditch [114] belonging to the field bank. In one corner of the trench was part of a possible pit [116], quite shallow and with rounded profile, filled with fairly pure, loose gravel. In this respect it was quite different to any of the other stone pits. In addition it was not on the arc of the circle and the field bank here had been re-built in recent years after the fall of a large dead elm tree. It seemed most likely that the pit belonged to this episode although this could not be proved.

Two smaller features, 123 and 143 were also identified in Trench 2 and are described later.

The apparent absence of a stone pit here may be that the circle was oval and that the stone pit was beyond the area excavated. Another possibility is that the circle was of a horse-shoe shape and a gap or entrance in the north-east quadrant.

Pit 125 (Trench 3)

The north edge of this trench extended up to the edge of the field bank where it was crossed by a shallow quarry ditch [109] associated with the bank.

A large area of disturbed gravel was exposed of indistinct and irregular outline. A cross –section was cut across this, which revealed it to be the fill of a large oval, shallow pit [125] 3.8m by 2.4m and 0.4m deep, with a gently sloping profile. The edges of the pit could be determined by their compactness, but otherwise the fill was mainly gravel, if slightly darker and more humic than the natural gravel subsoil. There were no artefacts within the pit but there were several small boulders, taken to be remnant disturbed packing stones (Fig. 7).

The pit lies on the projected position of a stone hole. Its large size and gentle profile suggest that it was a robbing pit. Its shallow depth contrasts with the other pits but could have held a large but naturally stable stone. If this is correct the stone must have been removed prior to the construction of the 18th century cottage or it would have been visible in front of the cottage on Skinner's drawing of 1802 (Fig. 4).

Other features (Figs 7 and 9)

In the south-west corner of Trench 1 a thin, irregular spread of dark charcoal-rich soil (111) lay directly on the stony subsoil and over part of the top fill of Pit 159 (Fig. 7). A few fragments of burnt

bone were found in this spread. After removal of the layer several small, sub-circular, charcoal-filled features were exposed lying in two slightly curving lines, on either side of Pit 159.

At the south-west side of pit 159 were three features, 131, 136 and 138. 131 and 136 showed as charcoal-rich patches which proved to be just the top fill of larger features. 131 had a substantial stone lining or packing, suggesting that it had been a post-hole. The charcoal-rich upper fill had probably collected after subsidence into the top of the hole after a post had been withdrawn. Pit 138 did not have a charcoal-rich fill but was identifiable by stone edging, presumed to be packing stones for a former post. The pit was 0.50m diameter and 0.75m deep. Its fill contained fragments of burnt bone which were notably concentrated in layer near its base. The bones proved to be cremated human remains of more than one individual (Tellier, below). There was also one piece of pottery - a rim of dark, smooth fabric with external decoration, identified as probably from a small Collared Urn (Lynch, below). Pit 131 was similar in size and packing stones, but did not contain any bone (Fig. 9).

The other line of six features, 151, 153, 156, 157, 158 and 176, lay in a slightly curving line, approximately parallel to the previous three features. These showed up clearly because of the dark fill. They varied from 0.1 to 0.25m in diameter. Two of them appeared to be cut into the edge of the fill of Pit 159 (Fig. 7) which may have remained *in situ* when its standing stone was withdrawn, showing that the small features post-dated the standing stone. Feature 151 was excavated, showing it to be quite shallow, unlike the larger holes of 136 and 138. However, it is possible that what was seen was just the infill of a cavity after a driven stake had been pulled out.

The two lines of features each lay on slight arcs and these arcs were approximately concentric to the stone circle, suggesting some kind of association (Fig. 7). The subsoil to the north of the line of outer pit/post-holes was quite homogeneous, in which features would be visible and with no sign that the line of stones continued further. The inner line of smaller possible stake-holes if just driven stakes would have been very difficult to see beyond the area where they were picked out by the top fill of charcoal-rich soil. If they existed further to the north they would also have been destroyed by the widespread robbing pits dug around pits 6 and 7.

If the inner line of possible stake-holes had continued as a concentric arc elsewhere around the circle they would similarly have been difficult to identify. There were in fact three other possible post-holes in a similar position in relation to the circle on the opposite side of the circle, 123 and 143 in Trench 2 and 175 in Trench 3 (Fig. 7). Two of these, 123 and 143 were excavated. Pit 123 was 0.5m diameter and 0.85m deep with a probable packing stone (Fig. 9). Pit 143 was 0.35m diameter and 0.40m deep. Both were sub-circular with near vertical sides and so clearly were artificially cut and as pit 123 had some probable packing stones was probably a post-hole. Both had dark fill from the presence of finely comminuted charcoal, and this made their identification obvious and provides a contextual link with to the dark soil spread (111) and possible with cremation activity in the south-west corner of Trench 1.

One other small feature [162] was found, between pits 6 and 140. It was oval in plan, 0.55m by 0.30m in plan and 0.20m deep, below the subsoil surface. The top fill was dark silt, possibly because of the presence of finely comminuted charcoal and lower down a gravelly silt. There were no artefacts or identifiable pieces of charcoal and no indication of date or function but the top dark fill could again provide a contextual link to the activity represented by the charcoal-rich spread (111).

6. REPORT ON THE CREMATED BONE

By Geneviève Tellier, University of Bradford

Cremated human bones from two contexts were submitted for analysis following the partial excavation of the Bryn Gwyn stone circle. Unurned cremated human bones were recovered from a spread of charcoal-rich soil (111) which partially overlaid pit 159 and from the fill of pit/post-hole 138. This report provides a summary of the results; details of the osteological analysis are presented in full in the archival report.

Methods

The osteological analysis followed the standards published for the examination of cremated bone deposits (McKinley 2004). Each deposit was first weighted and then passed through a sieve stack of 10mm, 5mm and 2mm mesh sizes. Maximum bone fragment length (in mm) was recorded for each deposit. All identifiable cremated bone fragments were then recorded and classified into four anatomical categories: skull, axial skeleton, upper limbs and lower limbs. The minimum number of individuals (MNI) represented in each deposit was based on the presence of duplicated skeletal elements and/or on the identification of bone fragments with obvious age-related differences. For sub-adults, age was estimated based on the rates of dental development and epiphyseal fusion (Schaefer *et al.* 2009). For adults, age estimations were based on age-related morphological changes to the surfaces of a number of skeletal elements (Ubelaker 1999). Sex assessments for adults were based on visual assessments of sexually-dimorphic traits on the pelvis and cranium (McKinley 1994: 19-20). The location and nature of any pathological lesions identified were also recorded.

Demography

The main results of the analysis are presented in Table 1. Spread 111 contained 33.4g of cremated human bones which represent at least one individual. Due to the limited amount of bones from this context as well as high level of fragmentation, age and sex estimations could not be carried out. Context 138 contained 1042.9g of cremated human bones which represent at least four individuals: a neonate, an infant (0-2 years old), a juvenile (5-8 years old) and 1 adult (>18 years old).

Context	Туре	Weight (g)	Age	Sex	Pathology	Inclusions
111	Unurned	33.4	-	-	None	Charcoal inc. hazel Two burnt flint flakes
138	Unurned	1042.9	 neonate infant juvenile adult 	-	None	Charcoal (1.7g)

Table 1: summary of the results of the osteological analysis

Pathology

No pathological lesions have been identified on the cremated human bones from spread 111 and pit/post-hole 138.

Pyre technology and cremation ritual

The cremated bones from spread 111 and the majority of the cremated bones from pit 138 were all white, which indicate that the bones were fully oxidized during the cremation (Stiner *et al.* 1995). However, a small number of lower limb shafts and cranial vault fragments from pit 138 were incompletely oxidized (hues of blue/grey on inner and/or outer surfaces), most likely because these elements were positioned at the extremity of the pyre and therefore exposed to less heat. The identification of cremated bones from all anatomical categories and presence of curved transverse fractures on long bone fragments from pit 138 suggest the cremation of complete and fleshed bodies. The cremated bones displayed an unusually high level of fragmentation, as the maximum fragment lengths from spread 111 and pit 138 were respectively 34mm and 44mm. The majority of the cremated bones from pit 138 were recovered in the 5mm (34.9%) and 2mm (45.9%) sieves. A number of intentional and accidental factors can account for the fragmentation of cremated bone deposits (McKinley 1993). In this case, fragmentation could have occurred prior to deposition, either accidentally through the manipulation, curation and transportation of the bones, or intentionally as the bones were deliberately fragmented. The weight of a post above the burial deposit in pit 138 could also account for accidental fragmentation.

The small amount of charcoal and lack of burnt stones associated with the cremated bone deposit in pit 138 suggest that the bones were not scooped from the pyre site(s), but carefully hand-picked. The unusually high level of fragmentation and uncommonly large number of individuals represented

(MNI=4) strongly suggest that the burial in pit 138 represents redeposited cremated bones. A fragment of cremated human lower limb from this deposit produced an AMS date of 4315+/-35 BP (SUERC-39677), calibrated to 3020 – 2886 BC, at 95% probability and is associated with the use of the circular setting of pits or post-holes which pre-dates the construction of the stone circle. The few cremated human bones from sspread 111, which also contained two burnt flint flakes and hazel charcoal, most likely represents the remains of a small 'token' of re-deposited cremated bones associated with a cremation-related activity. This deposit is probably contemporary with a later period of activity at the site in the 18th-17th centuries BC associated with the erection of stone 6 and the disturbance of the upper fill of pit 138 (See Discussion, below).

7. ARTEFACTUAL EVIDENCE

The finds from the 2008 and 2011 excavations are described together. The majority of the finds were of 18^{th to} 19th century date and are not described further. The majority consisted of pottery, mainly kitchen wares and a few table wares associated with the former cottage on the site, as well as one much worn copper alloy coin, probably of George III, a copper alloy button and a few clay tobacco pipe fragments, iron nails and slate fragments. The sketch of the cottage by Skinner shows that the roof was thatched (Fig. 4).

Those finds described below are those objects that might be associated with use of the stone circle and comprise pottery, flint and stone.

Pottery (Fig. 10) By Frances Lynch

Rim-sherd, **SF 20** from Context 139, the top-most fill of post-hole 138 just beyond the south-west side of the stone circle. This layer was equivalent to the more extensive layer 111, which appeared to have subsided at a late date into the top of this post-hole as well as into the top of post-holes 131 and 136 (Figs 7 and 9).

This sherd (35 x 30 x 09mm (wall)) has a black core and mid-brown surfaces. It is very hard and well fired; the clay is compact and grits are not easily visible in it. There may be some very small stone grits. The rim is quite neatly flattened and has a concave internal bevel (Fig). This concavity has been created with a finger nail, causing undulations which do not seem intentional. On the outside there are two smooth oval impressions, but the piece is too small to demonstrate a regular pattern.

I would judge this to be a fragment of the rim of a late Collared Urn. One would expect more visible grit in such a pot, but the hard firing is typical, as is the internal bevel, often with a certain concavity. The sherd comes from Context 139 which is the upper fill of a pit or posthole which, lower down, contained the cremated remains of 4 individuals. A bone from the cremation produced a radiocarbon date of 3020 - 2886 cal BC. Such a date would not suit the identification of this sherd as a Collared Urn, especially not a later one, even though one could stress that the sherd is small and from the upper level of the fill. It is difficult to think of a Middle or Late Neolithic pot type to which one could convincingly assign the piece. The date obtained from charcoal from below the packing stone of the large stone within the circle – a stone which does not look as if it was part of the original design – would suit it much better. One would have to suggest that this period of renewed activity around the 15^{th} century BC was the time this urn was broken and trodden into disturbed ground around the earlier monument.

Rim-sherd SF5, from Context 104 within standing stone pit 7. This was the Post-medieval robbing backfill but must have been re-deposited, deriving from the original packing backfill of the stone-pit. The sherd was unfortunately broken during excavation and was too fragmentary to re-assemble fully, although small, its shape and design allows it to be confidently reconstructed.

A single small rim-sherd (27 x 25 x 10mm) (recently broken and abraded by sieving) decorated with incised herringbone on the internal slope of the rim and with similar herringbone decoration on the outside with horizontal grooving and perhaps a band of dotted decoration below it. The fabric is red on the exterior, brown on the inside, with a black core. The clay is compact and contains some very well-crushed grits which do not appear on the well-smoothed surfaces.

The compact fabric, herringbone decoration on both surfaces of the rim and its internal slope all suggest that this comes from a small Food Vessel of some kind, with a date in the earlier part of the Early Bronze Age. Presuming that this does come from the original packing of the stone-pit it provides the best evidence for the date of the erection of the stone circle.

Flint and Chert (Fig. 10)

These are summarised in Table 1. There were 14 pieces of flint and one piece of black chert of which two pieces of flint and the piece of chert were plough-struck or frost shattered and are probably natural inclusions in the local soil. The other 12 pieces comprise 4 pieces from the topsoil, 4 pieces from post-medieval backfill and 5 pieces from possibly *in situ* contexts. The latter comprise pieces from two possible post-holes, from the top of the packing fill of stone pit 7 and two pieces from the *in situ* spread 111 in the south-west corner of the trench, around pit 159.

Context	Natural	Split pebble	Flake/Flake frag/Irreg frag Class			Retouched piece	
	piece						
			1	2	3		
Topsoil	2	1		1	1		
Post med backfill Pit 3				2			
Post med backfill Pit 7	1					1 notched piece	
?in situ fill Hollow 105						1 backed blade/piercer	
?In situ fill Pit 7					1		
In situ fill ?PH 107					1		
In situ fill ?PH 136					1		
In situ spread 111 nr Pit 159					2		

Table 1 Summary of flint objects

All but one of the pieces are quite fresh, dark grey, somewhat translucent flint and is tertiary flake fragments. Of these, four are probably punch-struck, three with plain platform and one dihedral. Of those with a complete breadth four were probably blades of 12.5 to 14mm in width. Four pieces are strongly burnt, including a small split pebble. Two of them are similar small crescentic splinters from thin flakes, which might be from the same fire-fractured object but they are from different but related contexts, one from the spread 111 around pit 159 and one in the upper fill of possible post-hole 136, which may derive from the same spread. They may therefore be part of the same object and may derive from cremation activity.

One retouched piece (SF202) is a broken backed blade. It came from the post-medieval backfill of the robbed stone pit 7. It is made from a mottled yellow-brown flint different from the rest of the pieces but fairly common in surface collections in Anglesey and West Gwynedd. It has a curving, steeply retouched back, the tip is missing and it has been broken at the butt end, where the more recent break shows that the flint internally is mid grey, the yellow-brown colouring therefore being a patination or staining. The other retouched object (SF216), from the top of the *in situ* fill of pit 7, is the butt segment of a thin flake or blade in which a notch has been created by fine abrupt retouch, the flake then snapped by a straight break, rather than a twist microburin break. The break was presumably deliberate to remove the butt from the blade, by way of creating a perhaps a backed blade or point. Two of the other flake fragments are also butt fragments and may also have been deliberately removed by a simple snap rather than retouched notch. None of these pieces are diagnostic of date or function

but the neat invasive flaking of SF202 suggests a Later Neolithic date. The very small quantity of material present shows that there was very little lithic working or deposition of lithic material around the stone circle and this is corroborated by surface collection in the same field, which was unproductive (GAT HER, PRN 3135 FI File).

Stone (Fig. 10)

One pebble tool (SF4) came from the 19th century backfill of the robbed out standing stone pit 3. It is a flat oval pebble, 96mm by 69mm by 39mm, of hard fine sandstone. It is facetted and heavily chipped around two edges, probably from use as a light hammer. Similar but more neatly facetted pebble tools occur in Neolithic and Bronze Age contexts on Anglesey and the Llŷn Peninsula, interpreted as flint working tools (Smith 2012, 173) but this example is more heavily battered, which suggests a different function.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

8.1 Charcoal Identification By Astrid E. Caseldine and Catherine J. Griffiths

Samples taken specifically for charcoal identification were received from a range of features including pits, pit/post-holes, stake-holes and a charcoal-rich spread. Charcoal was also examined from pit samples processed for charred plant remains. The aim was to gain some information about former woodland in the area as well as to provide identified samples for radiocarbon dating.

Methods

The samples were identified by examining the wood anatomy visible in three sections (transverse, transverse longitudinal and radial longitudinal). The charcoal was examined using a Leica DLR microscope with incident light source. Identification was by reference to standard texts (e.g. Schweingruber 1978, Schoch *et al* 2004). Nomenclature follows Stace (1995). The results are presented in Table 2.

Results

Pits

Charcoal was identified from two pits within the stone circle. Three samples were examined from Pit 6, a pit containing the remains of a standing stone. No charcoal fragments were recovered from fill 121 and only some very small fragments of indeterminable charcoal were found in fill 147, but hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and oak (*Quercus* sp.) charcoal was identified from fill 148. Two of the hazel charcoal fragments gave earlier Bronze Age dates although the plant macrofossil assemblage (see below) may be later in date, perhaps medieval or later.

Oak charcoal was recovered from pit 140, a pit at the centre of the stone circle and with which it might be associated. There is, however, a possibility that this pit relates to later activity at the site, either activity associated with the nearby 18^{th} century cottage or 18^{th} century treasure hunters and that the charcoal is therefore also later.

Other features

Charcoal from a spread (111) of charcoal-rich soil, partly overlying Pit 159, comprised hazel. Hazel charcoal was also recovered from the upper fill (132) of pit/post-hole 131, one of three features in a curving line to the south-west of Pit 159, while both hazel and oak were identified from the lower fill (133). Charcoal from two stake-holes, 151 and 153, part of an inner concentric line of features broadly parallel to the former line and to the north-east of Pit 159, similarly yielded hazel. The occurrence of hazel in samples from both lines of features perhaps lends support to the view that they were associated. Charcoal from a pit/post-hole, 143, in a similar position within the stone circle but on the opposite side, was identified as oak. The absence of hazel does not preclude the suggested possibility

that the dark fill of the pit/post-hole provides a contextual link with the charcoal-rich soil spread (111) because of the small amount of charcoal identified. Dates obtained from cremated bone from Pit 138 and hazel charcoal from the upper fill of pit/post-hole 131 indicate that the charcoal spread and pit/post-holes date to the Middle to Late Neolithic and are earlier than the central standing stone 6.

Discussion

The charcoal evidence suggests oak and hazel woodland in the vicinity of the site during the middle Neolithic - earlier Bronze Age. This is in keeping with charcoal evidence from other archaeological sites for this period which indicates the widespread availability and exploitation of these taxa (Caseldine 1990, in prep.).

Sample	202	203							
Recorded			209	218	221	222	225	226	227
find									
Context	147	148	112	144	133	132	141	152	154
Feature	Pit	Pit	CS	Pit/P-H	Pit/P-H	Pit/P-H	Pit	S-H	S-H
	6	6	111	143	131	131	140	151	153
Taxa									
Quercus spp.	-	2	-	5	1	-	2	-	-
(Oak)									
Corylus	-	3*	12	-	2*	2	-	3	1
avellana L.									
(Hazel)									
Charcoal	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
indet.									

Table 2 Charcoal identifications from Bryn Gwyn standing stones.

* includes samples sent for AMS dating

CS = charcoal spread; P-H = post-hole; S-H = stake-hole

8.2 Charred Plant Remains from Bryn Gwyn Stones, Brynsiencyn, Anglesey By Astrid E. Caseldine and Catherine J. Griffiths

During the excavations at Bryn Gwyn samples were taken for the recovery of charred plant remains with the aim of obtaining information about the surrounding environment and landscape. The samples were from two pits. Pit 6 was from within the stone circle and contained the remains of a free-standing standing stone and Pit 7 was one of the pits forming part of the stone circle itself.

Methods

The samples were processed by flotation and the flots received from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. The finest sieve mesh used to retain the flots was 500 μ m. The flots were sorted and identified using a stereomicroscope. The remains were identified by reference to a seed collection and standard texts (e.g. Berggren 1969, 1981, Schoch *et al* 1988, Anderberg 1994, Cappers 2006, Jacomet 2006). Nomenclature and ecological information is based on Stace (1995). The sample details and results are given in Table 3.

Results and discussion

No charred plant remains were recovered from the bulk soil sample from Pit 7. Of the samples from Pit 6 sample 202 from fill 147 failed to produce any charred remains other than small fragments of wood charcoal, whereas a few remains were recovered from sample 203 from fill 148. The latter included hulled barley (*Hordeum* sp.) and oat (*Avena* sp.), indicating cereal growing in the area. The oat could be either wild or cultivated. Oat can tolerate less favourable conditions and was commonly grown in upland Wales. Barley and oat may have been grown as a mixed crop or separately. The weed seeds present, most of which can be associated with arable farming, disturbed ground or grassland, included corn marigold (*Chrysanthemum segetum*), goosefoots (Chenopodiaceae), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), possibly vetch (cf. *Vicia* sp.) and possibly hedge bedstraw (*Galium* cf.

mollugo). The occurrence of corn marigold suggests cultivation taking place on acidic and sandy soils in the area. Further evidence for acidic soils in the area is provided by a charred heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) stem, perhaps from heather or possibly peat collected as fuel. Similarly, the hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragment could have been gathered incidentally along with wood for fuel or, alternatively, could indicate the collection of wild foodstuffs.

AMS dates on hazel charcoal from fill 148 of Pit 6 suggest an Early Bronze Age date and barley, both naked and hulled, is frequently found on Bronze Age sites in Wales whilst hazelnut shell is also a relatively common occurrence (Caseldine 1990, in prep.). However, the charred plant macrofossil assemblage of barley, oat and weed seeds, such as corn marigold, resembles that often found in later periods and would not be inconsistent with agricultural activity in the medieval period or associated with the 18th century cottage. In particular, although corn marigold has been recorded from earlier sites in Britain, the date of its arrival is uncertain (Stace 2010) and in general corn marigold is typically found on sites of Roman, medieval or post-medieval date such as Cefn Du on Anglesey (Ciaraldi 2012) or Cefn Graeanog (Hillman 1982), Ynys Ettws (Caseldine 2006) and Parc Bryn Cegin (Kenney 2008, Schmidl *et al* 2008) on mainland Gwynedd. Given that the upper deposits of the pit had been disturbed, it is possible that some of the charred remains were intrusive from above and therefore that the charred cereal and seeds could be later in date than the charcoal.

Table 3 Charred plant remains from Bryn Gwyn

Sample	202	203	Ecological
Context	147	148	Preference
Feature	Pit 6	Pit 6	-
Sample size (litres)	<i>c</i> . 10	<i>c</i> . 10	-
Taxa			
Corylus avellana L.	-	1	W
(Hazel) – shell frags.			
Chenopodiaceae	-	1	A C, D
Calluna vulgaris (L.) Hull	-	1	H, M, Wo, a,
(Heather) – stem			p, s
cf. Vicia sp.	-	1	Ā, C, D, G,
(Vetches)			H, M, W (o)
Plantago lanceolata L.	-	1	G
(Ribwort plantain)			
Galium cf. mollugo L.	-	1	G, W
(Hedge bedstraw)			
Chrysanthemum segetum L.	-	1	A, D, R, a, s
(Corn marigold)			
Avena sp.	-	1	A, D
(Oats)			
Hordeum sp. hulled	-	2	А
(Barley)			
Cerealia indet. frags	-	1	А
cf. Rhizome	-	1	
Wood charcoal	+	+	

Ecological preferences; A = arable & cultivated; C = coastal, salt marshes; D = disturbed ground, wasteland, rough ground; G = grassland; H = heaths; M = marshes, fens, bogs; R = road sides; W = woods, hedgerows, scrub; a = acid soils, calcifuge; o = open ground, clearings; p = peaty soils; s = sandy soils; w = wet. + present

9. DATING AND DISCUSSION

The evidence so far shows that the circle consisted of stones that were alternately slabs and columns laid out on a fairly precise circle of c. 16m (17.5yds) diameter with eight almost symmetrically placed and equidistant stones c. 6m apart (stone centre to stone centre). This would have meant that opposing pairs were of similar stone shape. The only reservation to this interpretation is the failure to identify a convincing stone pit in the expected position in the north-east quadrant. Also, Pit 119 is slightly closer to Pit 3, at 5m, than expected and would then be 8.5m from the dubious stone pit 116. There is a possibility then that this was not a complete circle but a 'horse-shoe' of seven stones open at the north-east, facing Castell Bryn Gwyn. About half of the circle was not excavated and there must be other features still to be found.

There are two anomalous pits, 6 and 140. Pit 140 is geometrically central to the circle but with no evidence of function although it had a very loose fill unlike packing material and its profile suggests that it had not held a standing stone (Fig. 9). It is best interpreted as an 18th century treasure hunter's pit. Pit 6 did hold a substantial stone but the position of the stone and its orientation had no relation the stone circle, although both were clearly extant at the same time. The interpretation of the evidence is that the stone in Pit 6 was put in place some time after the circle. Although the stone appeared to bear no geometric relationship to the circle it must have been a major visible part of the site. One possibility is that it was a marker stone, rather than a structure in its own right and its long axis happens to be close to the line of the winter sunset/summer sunrise solstice. The slab faced approximately north-west to south-east and its long axis lay close to the midwinter sunset/midsummer sunrise solstice line. Correspondingly it faced towards mid-winter sunrise/midsummer sunset. The slab of limestone must have been quarried and brought to the site, the nearest limestone bedrock occurs

about 500m to the south-west, where there are disused quarry pits close to the hill of Bryn Gwyn and from which the hill probably takes its name (Fig. 2).

It may be meaningful that the winter sunset/summer sunrise solstice line that passes through the centre of the stone circle also passes through the centre of stone pit 159 and close to the group of smaller features, one of which contained a multiple cremation burial (Tellier, above). The charcoal-rich spread (111) contained a few cremated human bone fragments and pieces of hazel charcoal but over all the very small number of fragments of charcoal and of cremated bone suggests that it was not a pyre site. The fragmented and mixed nature of the bones in the multiple burial in Pit/post-hole 138 was suggested to mean that they were re-deposited (Tellier, above). This could mean that they were the part of a family group that died at different dates and were later combined for re-burial.

Summary of radiocarbon dating results

Context 161, the main fill of pit/post-hole 138. This contained a quantity of cremated bone, identified as from four individuals. The majority of the bone formed a dense layer near the bottom of the feature. The fill above this layer contained a fragment of probable small Collared Urn (Lynch, above). A fragment of cremated human lower limb from the lower fill produced an AMS date of 4315+/-35 BP (SUERC-39677), calibrated to 3020-2886 BC, at 95% probability.

Context 132, the upper fill of pit/post-hole 131 (probably slumped in from wider charcoal spread 111). Corylus charcoal produced an AMS date of 4185+/-35 BP (SUERC-39678), calibrated to 2891-2834 BC or 2818-2663 BC (71%) or 2648-2636 BC, at 95% probability.

Context 148, the primary fill below packing stones in stone pit 6. Corylus charcoal produced an AMS date of 3380+/-35 BP (SUERC-39679), calibrated to 1754-1606 BC (91%) or 1579-1536 BC, at 95% probability.

Context 148, the primary fill below packing stones in stone pit 6. Corylus charcoal produced an AMS date of 3565+/-35 BP (SUERC-39680) calibrated to 2023-1870 BC (80%) or 1846-1811 BC or 1805-1776 BC at 95% probability.

These dates taken with the probable dates of the two fragments of pottery are difficult to reconcile. Both pieces of pot are small and not primary deposits in their contexts. The cremation from pit/posthole 138, however, is part of an actual event and shows that there was funerary activity here in the early 3rd millennium BC, the Middle Neolithic period, probably involving a circle, or at least an arc of small pits or post-holes. The date from the hazel charcoal in the top fill of pit/post-hole 131, which is almost certainly part of the same activity as spread 111, indicates that there was further activity here in the first half of the 3rd millennium. However, spread 111 overlay one side of the fill of the robbed standing stone pit 159. The stone in the pit must have been withdrawn, rather than dug out, during the 18th century AD, and that this meant that some of the packing fill of pit 159 stayed in situ, with its covering of spread 111 (Fig. 7). If it is correct that the top fill of pit/post-hole 131 is part of slumped-in spread 111 then the 3rd millennium date from pit/post-hole 131 must be from a residual piece of charcoal. This follows because although there were no radiocarbon dates from the stone circle itself, the one piece of pot (SF5), from Pit 7 was identified as probably a Food Vessel suggesting that the circle was erected no earlier than the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. Food vessels as a type have a long period of use, from about 2200-1750 cal BC. The small piece of Collared Urn (SF20) in the top fill of pit/post-hole 138 therefore belongs to the phase of activity represented by spread 111, when there was disturbance of pit 138 during the earlier second millennium BC. This is unlikely to have involved removal of a timber post, which would not have survived over that length of time but could have been a small orthostatic stone, or, of a cover stone if the pit was actually a small cist, not a posthole. The two AMS dates from the solitary standing stone pit 6 are not very consistent, but assuming that the earlier one is residual then the stone in Pit 6 was erected no earlier than the 18th-17th century cal BC, so some time after the stone circle itself and this would correspond with the activity represented by spread 111 and the Collared Urn fragment in the top of pit/post-hole 138.

The Bryn Gwyn circle lies on naturally quite level ground south-west of the probable Neolithic henge of Castell Bryn Gwyn, the south-west entrance of which faces in the direction of the stone circle. The henge was associated with Late Neolithic Grooved Ware pottery and is likely to pre-date the stone circle, which could be an elaboration to the ceremonial landscape around the henge. The stone circle does not lie on a major solar alignment from the henge but it is possible that the henge may have been placed in relation to the actual hill of Bryn Gwyn, because it lies on the winter sunset/summer sunrise solstice line when viewed from the henge (Fig. 2). The hill itself would be interesting to investigate as aerial photographs suggest that there might once have been a sub-circular enclosure on the hill-top (Thompson 1994, PRN) now largely obscured by buildings and gardens.

The Bryn Gwyn stones are important as the only known example of a true orthostatic, free-standing stone circle on Anglesey. Another possible example once existed at Penrhos Feilw on Holy Island, where, as here, two standing stone remain, each *c*. 3m high and 3m apart. However, geophysical survey there did not produce any evidence of a circle (PRN 2748 FI File, GAT HER), although, as demonstrated at the Bryn Gwyn stones, such a survey cannot be conclusive. The Bryn Gwyn geophysical survey did not produce any convincing evidence, although in hindsight some of the robbing pits were visible as faint anomalies but too slight to be identified from the background of natural variations.

The proximity of two major monuments on this plateau-like location area suggests that the area was a ceremonial focus. Both also lie close to the River Braint, which once ran further east than its present course. The river now exits to the Menai Straits via a shallow meander but it has been suggested that had an open sea estuary at the maximum of the post-glacial sea-level during the earlier Neolithic (Whittow 1965). This may have continued until blocked by later sand blows and sand accumulation around the western entrance to the Straits due to longshore drift. Thus, prior to the historically recorded sand blows that occurred in the 14thC AD, burying much of the farmland of Newborough to the west, the river may have been navigable for small boats. This may have been relevant to the setting of the prehistoric monuments and to the activities that went on there. The River Braint River, although small is the longest river in Anglesey, and flowing through the most fertile land in the island might have been a focus for Neolithic activity. A formal connection certainly existed between some henges and nearby rivers, as at Stonehenge, which was connected to the Avon by an avenue at a later stage in its life, and others, such as those at Durrington Walls and Marden (Wiltshire) physically adjoin rivers so have an obvious association. It has been suggested that henges may have had a symbolic or ceremonial association with rivers concerned with fertility (Harding, 54-6). Palaeo-environmental work might be usefully carried out in the valley of the River Braint to try to understand its historical development.

The probable presence of a focal ceremonial area here means that there is a high likelihood of other features in the area, such as minor circles or burials, or of linear features such as a cursus or of an avenue between Castell Bryn Gwyn and the stone circle or the river. However, surface collection shows that there are few lithic finds here (PRN 3135 FI File, GAT HER). This corresponds to evidence from elsewhere that the areas around henges were 'special places' devoid of contemporary occupation or other activity (Harding 2003, 60). Extensive surface collections have taken place in the Stonehenge area (Wiltshire) and around the Thornborough henges (North Yorks). These show that Later Neolithic lithics occur at a distance of 0.5km or more in both cases. At Thornborough, the nearest substantial collection, 0.75km away also had a variety of raw materials and low levels of usewear, which suggests short term settlement and widely dispersed population contacts.

Castell Bryn Gwyn itself is a key site in national terms and needs re-assessment. The original excavations found some features in the interior but it was not possible to understand their function or date (Wainwright 1962) and there has been more recent re-interpretation of the excavation record (Lynch 1991, 100-3). The complexity of the phasing derived from interpretation of the excavation of the bank and ditch needs re-investigation by re-excavation and by acquisition of a radiocarbon

sequence. Ideally there would also be study of a new area of the enclosure bank and ditch to look for more Neolithic deposits.

Burl records about 900 stone circles in the Britain and Ireland, with several areas of concentration, but not in Wales where circles are relatively few and widely dispersed (Burl (1976). In north-west Wales there are only two extant examples of circles of large stones, these being the Druids Circle at Cefn Coch, Penmaenmawr and the circle at Bryn Gwyn. There are circles of smaller stones around Penmaenmawr and at Cerrig Arthur, Meirionnydd and another possible at Pant y Llan, Arthog (Meirionnydd). There were also two probable examples, both destroyed, at Cae Coch and Cwm Mawr, both near Tremadog, Gwynedd. There are other circles with more numerous smaller stones that have more in common with ring cairns, to be found at Llecheiddior and nearby Hengwm, Llanaber (Meirionnydd). The circles of large stones at Penmaenmawr and Bryn Gwyn are distinctive and both lie close to other major monuments. At Penmaenmawr there are large ring cairns and numerous smaller cairns in the general area. Bryn Gwyn is close to the probable henge of Castell Bryn Gwyn, 300m to the north-east (Wainwright 1962) and there is a chambered tomb at Bodior on the ridge to the north-east. However, there are relatively few known examples of Bronze Age burial mounds in this area, as if the focus moved elsewhere during the second millennium BC.

Rowlands and other 18th century visitors also noted groups of smaller stones to the south-east of the Bryn Gwyn circle (Fig. 3) but these have been cleared away and their position may never be relocated. Rowlands also records what he describes as a large cairn mid-way between the Bryn Gwyn stones and Castell Bryn Gwyn, approximately where there is now a cottage, Bryn Gwyn Bach. However, Rowlands' drawing makes the feature look more like a fragment of field walls and clearance (Fig. 3). Further to the west there was once probably another standing stone or other monument surviving as a place name of the farm of Maen Hir.

Anglesey has a considerable number of chambered tombs and a concentration in the south suggesting that the area was well-settled and some kind of ceremonial centre there could be expected and the henge at Castell Bryn Gwyn may have been such a focus. Seven known 'henge complexes', as opposed to single monuments are known from Britain and all these complexes seem to have been long-lived foci of funerary or ritual activity judging by the number of other contemporary or later monuments that occur close to them (Harding and Lee 1987, 43-4). Although henges were not constructed in prominent positions in the landscape they were located in topographically specialised positions - in relatively level areas. Such areas were obviously suitable for the construction of large earthworks and allowed them to be 'displayed' within a spacious, open setting. The locations were in lowland and often, like Bryn Gwyn, close to rivers in places that could have been focal, accessible points for population. The excavations at Castell Bryn Gwyn showed that it was being used during the Later Neolithic and a functional connection between it and the Bryn Gwyn circle seem very likely.

Castell Bryn Gwyn appears to have had two opposed entrances, one to the south-west and one to the north-east (Lynch 1991, 100-3). The south-western entrance faces towards the Bryn Gwyn circle and this orientation was recognised by Rowlands. The excavations at the two sites now show more confidently that this alignment is deliberate and the standing stone in Pit 6 at the Bryn Gwyn stones has no recognisable relation to the design of the circle but which does align with the south-west entrance of Castell Bryn Gwyn. The plan of most henges in Britain includes an element of deliberate orientation, with the largest number, 21 out of 42 known henges being oriented within the NW/NNW to SE/SSE arc. However, as at Castell Bryn Gwyn, a significant proportion, 11 out of 42, have an orientation within the WSW/W to ENE/E arc (Harding and Lee 1987, 37). In a general sense the overall alignment between Castell Bryn Gwyn and the Bryn Gwyn circle, south-west to north-east, the midsummer sunrise/midwinter sunset axis, is one that is significant in the layout of many other circles and henges, such Bryn Celli Ddu and New Grange.

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BRYN GWYN FIGS 1-2





BRYN GWYN FIGS 3-4 Fig. 3 Drawing of the Bryn Gwyn stones (C) and Castell Bryn Gwyn (A) by Rowlands (1723) Fig. 4 Drawing of the southern standing stone and former cottage at Bryn Gwyn by Skinner (1802)





BRYN GWYN FIG 5-6



BRYN GWYN FIG 7



BRYN GWYN FIG 8



BRYN GWYN FIG 9



BRYN GWYN FIG 10





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