

10 May 2012  
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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Roger Hulm suggested putting some information about standing stones in his area on the Mid Wales website after visiting the BBC Bus in Rhayader in May 2005. Here are the pages he's put together for us.



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#### Maen Serth

Maen Serth a single standing stone stands on the top of a hill called Esgair Dderw.



#### Maen Gwyngweddw

Maen Gwyngweddw, the 'stone of the white widow', is made from crystalline quartzite.



#### Maen Gwercynydd

Maen Gwercynydd stands beside a 1st century Roman Road running from Rhayader to Castell Collen.



#### Newbridge on Wye

This standing stone at Newbridge on Wye may have marked a drovers crossing of the Wye.



#### Cefn Llech Farm

This standing stone at Cefn Llech Farm is one of two stones in the Dulas valley.



#### Drum Ddu

It is likely that this stone marked the ancient track across the 'bwlch' between Drum Ddu and Y Gamriw.



#### Llanwrthwl Church

The stone in Llanwrthwl churchyard close to the south porch.



#### Banc Du Stone Circle

Banc Du Stone Circle also known as Fowler's armchair after a one time squire of Cwmhir.

## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Maen Serth

Height: 7ft 2"

Location: Esgair Dderw, near Rhayader

OS Grid Ref.: 943698



### Written by Roger Hulm

"Maen Serth stands on top of a hill called Esgair Dderw. There are some interesting stories connected with this stone. 'Maen' is the Welsh name for a large stone, whilst 'Serth' can have two meanings, either steep, or obscene!

From the east or west side, the stone can be seen to lean at a steep angle, but the other meaning - obscene - could be connected with a much older story about the stone from many centuries ago.

The story goes that in the late 12th century, there was a dispute over the land surrounding Rhayader between the Norman 'Marcher' Lord, Roger Mortimer, and the Welsh chieftains - Rhys ap Gruffydd and the two brothers, Cadwallon and Einon Clud. During a temporary 'lull' in hostilities, at Christmas 1176, these men had gathered at Rhys' castle to feast and joust.

At the jousting event, the Welshman Einon Clud defeated Roger Mortimer but the Norman was a bad sportsman. He ambushed Einon on the hill above Rhayader and killed him as he was returning home. A short time later, the other brother was also ambushed by Mortimer on the same hill and killed.

It was said that Maen Serth was the place of the double killing which has given another local name to the stone - the 'Princes' Stone'. It is also where the Welsh description "obscene" could have arisen.

From the 16th to the 19th century, the stone could have served as a marker for a drovers track which led across the Elenydd from Cwmystwyth to Rhayader and on to England.

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## Public Access

Go along the public road from Rhayader towards the Elan Valley, through Cwmdeuddwr to the start of the Elan Valley Cycle Path, then turn right up the old road to Aberystwyth. Continue for one and a half miles, climbing the steep hill beyond the lake on your left until the hill begins to ease. There are some rocks and a small waterfall on your left and a track leaves the road and climbs the hill.

Take the opposite track to the right of the road leading backwards at an acute angle. This climbs for about 100 metres, rounds the shoulder of the hill, then descends to meet another track from the left.



You will see Maen Serth directly ahead, on the skyline to the south. It is no more than 200 metres from the bottom of the hill to the stone at the top."

**Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader**

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### your comments

**eddie**

go to the top of the 2 mile hill towards the zig zags, and follow the track towards the golf links, u cant miss it  
Wed Apr 8 09:05:23 2009

**cracker rhayader**

the stone is on top of the golf links aint it  
Tue Aug 19 14:55:44 2008

**Rob Sprack, Bournemouth**

It's easily spotted from the byway that runs up the hill. We drove up there over the early May bank holiday and walked over to see what the stone was as it was just a name on the OS map. I'm more curious to know more about Maengwyngweddw further up the byway as I could only see a boulder there where as Maen-Serth was obviously a standing stone.  
Mon Jun 16 16:58:55 2008

**Simon Roberts**

How noticeable are the stones Mr Hulme? - I've lived in town 51 years.  
Sun Sep 16 20:34:10 2007

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Maengwyngweddw

Height: 2ft 6"

Location: Penrhiw Wen, near Rhayader

OS Grid Ref.: 926706



Written by Roger Hulm

"This stone is remarkable in several ways. First of all, it is largely pure white, being made from crystalline quartzite. It also possesses a unique shape, which could be compared to a hunched female figure or even a crouching frog. It is strangely symmetrical, as if it were carved where it was found. Locally, it is hardly surprising that it has been found a place of honour and value.

The English translation for the Welsh name for the stone is 'the stone of the white widow' and this has led to speculation that this stone - and not **Maen Serth** could have marked the site of the ambush and murder of the Welsh Prince Einon Clud in the 12th century. The stone could have been named after his surviving widow.

It is more likely that it was placed here to mark an ancient track from Rhayader to Cwmystwyth across the Elenydd because these featureless moors must have been difficult to cross at the best of times. From the early 16th century, this was also a cattle drovers route, from Ceredigion to Rhayader and beyond.

### Public Access

From Rhayader take the Elan Valley road west through Cwmdeuddwr, and turn right as for Maen Serth along the old Aberystwyth road. After climbing the steep hill, you will see a waterfall and some big rocks on your left, and a track climbing the hill. The road continues to climb for a further 1000 metres, but where it finally levels off, turn off into a layby on your left, and park.

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A well-marked track, which has been used by two wheeled and four wheeled vehicles, runs backwards from here at an acute angle. Walk along this track for 400 metres and you will see the stone on your left, no more than 10 metres from the track. The stone is



made from white quartzite, it is low and squat, nestling in a clump of reeds."

**Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader**

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Maen Gwercynydd

Height: 4ft 6"

Location: Gwercynydd Farm, Nantmel

OS Grid Ref.: 021651



### Written by Roger Hulm

"This stone is no more than 1,000 metres from the line of a 1st Century Roman Road from Castell Collen towards Rhayader. It could easily have been seen from the track over Rhiw Gwraidd. It might have been used to mark the ownership of land, however, or even to mark an ancient trackway from Rhayader to Penybont.

### Public Access

From Rhayader, take the A44 eastwards, past Gaufron for three miles until, on a long, straight section, you come to a turning on your right to Nant Glas. In the angle between the road, and the main road, there was a small Roman camp. Just half a mile up this road, after a group of houses at the top of the hill, turn left along a minor road towards a wood ahead.

Continue past the wood; and climb a steep hill past the turning to Cefnlllyn Farm on your right. The narrow road continues for a further 500 metres to another road junction where you turn right. After 400 metres, you will see Gwercynydd Farm at the bottom of the hill, and a track runs west from a gate, at the bottom of the hill beside a stream, to a gate into a field. The farmer here, is called George Meredith, and if he can spare the time, he is fond of a chat!

This is a public footpath, and if you follow it across the field, there is a gate into another field, and then a further gate after you have crossed this, into the field in which the stone is sited."

### Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader



\*\*\*Please note that Mr George Meredith of Gwercynydd Farm, Nantmel, suggests that visitors contact him before visiting the stone.\*\*\*

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Newbridge on Wye Standing Stone

Height: 5 ft

Location: Newbridge on Wye

OS Grid Ref.: 014580



### Written by Roger Hulm

A stone like this might have been erected in the Bronze Age, over 3,000 years ago! In later years, it could have marked the course of a military track linking the Roman Fort at Castell Collen with another Roman Fort sited at Caerau Farm, near Beulah.

Much later, from the 16th century until the coming of the railways, it could have marked a shallow crossing of the Wye for drovers, driving hardy, Welsh black cattle towards Worcester, and the English markets from the pastures around Tregaron, in Ceredigion.

### Public Access

You can see this large stone in the big playing field next to the farm on your right, before you get to the bridge over the Wye, as you drive along the B4358 towards Newbridge. It is about halfway down the field, and leans at quite a steep angle to the west. The gate into the playing field is normally open, and you can walk down and have a look at the stone."

### Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader

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#### your comments

##### Tinka

I live in Newbridge-on-Wye and go and watch the local football team every weekend there so I walk past the stone regularly but I've never known why it was there so thanks

for telling me! now I will appreciate it a lot more!

**Jamie Morris**

I'm soo excited about seeing the stone. Want to see it again please.

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Cefn Llech Standing Stone

Height: 5ft

Location: Cefn Llech Farm, near Pant y dwr

OS Grid Ref.: 951770



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### Written by Roger Hulm

This is one of two such large stones in the Dulas valley. You can just see the other one in the fields below Henriew if you continue along the minor road after viewing this stone, through Cefn Llech Farm, across the stream again, up the hill and bend sharply to the left. If you stop on the hillside just 400 metres after the bend, you can see the tall standing stone in the centre of the field across the valley.

It is impossible to guess the original purpose of these stones. I have been told there was more than one stone at Henriew, in fact there was a configuration.

At Cefn Llech, you will see another stone lying down. This was once upright. Maybe they once marked the boundaries or ownership of land? There might even have been an ancient track through the valley?

In my experience, where such stones have a broad and a narrow face, and do appear to mark an old route, they are normally erected with the broad faces across the line of the track. The reason for this might have been to give the stone a maximum visibility from a distance.

### Public Access

Take the B4518, St Harmon road up the steep hill northwards from the Leisure Centre at Rhayader, through St Harmon to the village of Pant y dwr.

As you come into the village, ignore the turning on the right to Bwlch y Sarnau, and continue ahead for about 200 metres to a road junction on your left. Turn left here, and continue along this narrow road for about two and half miles, until, at a bungalow, at the bottom of a hill, by some tall conifers,

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across a small stream, the road begins to double back to the east.

The standing stone can be easily seen in the field between the stream and the road. The road continues past Cefn Llech Farm in 400 metres, then finally back to the B4518 in one and half miles."

**Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader**

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Drum Ddu Standing Stone

Height: 2ft 6"

Location: Llanwrthwl, near Rhayader

O.S. Grid Ref.: 954606



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### Written by Roger Hulm

"It is likely that this stone marked the ancient track across the "bwllch", south west from Llanwrthwl, between Drum Ddu and Y Gamriw. Positioned only 30 metres or so from Carnau Cefn y Fford, it probably also marked the junction of this track with another from Newbridge on Wye, and Llysdinam, across Drum Ddu and continuing up the slope of Rhiw Saeson over the top of Waun Sarn towards the Elan Valley.

### Public Access

Take the A470 south from Rhayader for 3 miles until you reach the turning to Llanwrthwl on the right. Cross the bridge over the River Wye, and follow the road around to the left, and then the right, past the first turning on your left to the second which is marked Glan Rhos.

Continue on the narrow road for two miles up a steep hill to the very top of the pass, at which the metalled road ends, and is replaced by a track, with another joining it from the right.

Park your car here, and walk up the remainder of the hill to the top where the track levels off. This land is called Abergwesyn Common, it is owned by the National Trust. You may have to look hard for the stone, because it is about 50 metres off the track to the south, in a patch of reeds.

There is a crossing of ancient tracks here, and it may prove easier to find Carnau Cefn y Fford which is rather a large but low pile of stones lying just to the left of the old trackway from Newbridge on Wye across Drum Ddu, then over Waun Sam towards the Elan Valley. Once you have found the Carnau, look about 30 metres North of it to find the standing stone."

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Llanwrthwl Standing Stone

Height: 4ft 6"

Location: Llanwrthwl Churchyard

O.S. Grid Ref.: 975637



**Written by Roger Hulm**

"You will find the stone in the churchyard, close to the south porch.

It is thought that this stone was here long before the church was built, and was used for worship in Roman times and in the Pre-Christian era. It might even have been the reason the church was built here, because this had been a sacred site from time immemorial.

### Public Access

Llanwrthwl is 3 miles south of Rhayader just off the A470 trunk road to Builth. Turn right off the main road if coming from Rhayader, cross the river, and follow the road round to the left and right to the church, just after the first turning on the left. There is good parking under a wall, for the church nearby."

**Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader**

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### your comments

#### Connor Farmer from Llanwrthwl

I live really near there and we visited it to. We took some pictures, its very interesting.  
Sun Nov 29 17:17:02 2009

#### Peter Lane, Knighton

Thanks for this invaluable info, Roger. I must try to visit all

the stones. How about extending your series to cover the stones and tumuli of the radnor forest area?  
Tue Jun 21 19:30:51 2005

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## Standing Stones of Rhayader

Last updated: 24 November 2005

### Banc Du Stone Circle

Height: 1 ft

Location: Banc Du, on Brondre Fawr Hill Public Access

O.S.Grid Ref.: 042793



### Written by Roger Hulm

"This circle is also known as Fowler's Armchair. Fowler was, at one time, Squire of Cwmhir so this is a modern name for the circle.

A relatively modern book - 'The Ancient Stones of Wales' by Chris Barber & J. G. Williams (1989) - records the circle as being 60ft in diameter and having 5 stones - there being one 3ft high which has been called Fowler's Horseblock. The authors also relate that there were once 19 stones.

When I visited in May 2005, it was no more than 30ft in diameter whilst there were in excess of 30 stones! What is more, the tallest stone was outside the circle, about 20ft to the east. I feel sure it must have been the one referred to as "Fowler's Horseblock"



because of its remarkable shape, having a single step leading to the flat top'.

I also suspect that it might have been dug out nearby because only 100 metres to the south along the return path, there is a notable rock outcrop with similar parallel splits, and others, both at right angles and at 45 degrees! This is an authentic stone circle but one which has been disarranged, and probably supplemented with stones from a nearby cairn.

The function of stone circles like this one is not known, but it has been conjectured that they might have been places of worship. What is certain, is that many circles have been erected in high and remote places, remote from the bustle of

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everyday life.

This particular circle enjoys an impressive view to the south west, from the heights of Brondre Fawr Hill, across the parishes of St Harmon and Rhayader, stretching as far as the mountain portals of the Elan Valley, 15 miles away.

### **Public access**

From Rhayader, take the B4518 St Harmon road across the hills to St Harmon (3 miles), and then Pant y Dwr. Here, at the Mid Wales Inn, turn right towards Bwlch y Sarnau. You will have to take the right fork within one and half miles to Bwlch. Turn sharp left at the top of the hill in the village onto the mountain road towards Laithddu. Another road joins from the right in about 1 mile, and about half a mile further on.

Just beyond the crest of the hill, you will see some forestry on the left. Stop here and take the track on your left, at the near edge of the trees. This track continues west for about 400 metres, and bends right, across the hillside until it enters a large area of cleared forest by a gate.

Go through the gate, and continue for a further 1000 metres towards the far end of the cleared area. Here, you will come out of the enclosed land at the top of the hill by a gate. You will need to carry on down the hill, taking the left fork above a small quarry, continuing over the hill until the track begins to bend left past some trees, and down to a small "saddle" between two hills.

From here, you will be able to see the stone circle on the hillside ahead, but until you are close, it might look like a cairn, or a low pile of stones. Most of the gates on this route open freely but you might have to climb over the odd one! This track however, is a public bridleway so you have every right to be on it!"

**Written by Roger Hulm from Rhayader**

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#### your comments

**Andrew Strong, Abbeycwmhir**

I recently walked up to Brondre Fawr - as I was walking back to my car (down the hill to the east) I realised there were pairs of stones... it seems there is an avenue facing the rising sun.

Sun Jul 20 13:18:17 2008

**Simon Marshall, Aberystwyth**

"When I visited in May 2005, it was no more than 30ft in diameter whilst there were in excess of 30 stones! What is more, the tallest stone was outside the circle, about 20ft to the east." I think you've confused the (alleged) stone circle with the nearby round cairn (which is in the foreground in your photo). Excellent web pages by the way. Very enjoyable!

Thu Mar 23 00:43:29 2006

**Charles Liam Gordon-Harmon**

I have studied the scant history of Saint Garmon(a.k.a.



St.Harmon), he was a missionary-monk sent by St.Patrick in the early 5th century. He Christianized the good people of Powys and south Gwynedd. I have no doubt at all that this is the origin of my family name(Harmon). My family is descended from the Harmon/Harmans of Harman Hall, Sussex-England. I have learned that the Harmans were an ancient family originally from Wales. They have been known to have been in Sussex long before 1066, and the Norman invasion. I believe that it is likely that St.Harmans Cross in Dorset may have been where he first landed(?).

Fri Mar 3 15:24:57 2006

**Basil in Ashford, Kent**

I would like to see a lot more of these relics preserved.

Fri Jun 17 19:42:52 2005

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