

DISCOVERY OF POSSIBLE NEW STANDING STONE PAIR ALIGNED WITH HILLTOP AND SPRING ON ANGLESEY

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Summary

Two erect stones, just over a metre high, possibly of prehistoric erection, have been newly found by Christopher Dickson at Mynydd Mwyn Mawr Farm, near Llanerchymedd, Anglesey, and we describe the results of site visits and preliminary metal detector survey. The stones face towards, and are exactly aligned with, both the pumphouse/spring in the same field, and with a nearby hilltop in the same line of alignment. The combination of vertical erection, similar height and shape, stone composition, plus alignment and orientation of the two stones with the hilltop and pumphouse/spring are suggestive of intentional configuration of the stones. The stones share numerous features with some of the other recognised prehistoric standing stones in the Anglesey area, including a flatter “face” and rounded or uneven “back”, a prominent location and possible packing stones, but are a little smaller and may have been missed for this reason. They seem to form a pair. We show that the pumphouse contains a natural spring which, in the not too distant past, housed an important source (or possibly the “primary” source) of the River Alaw. An additional site visit was performed by Dr George Nash of the University of Bristol in March 2014, and based on similar factors of stone composition and selection, alignment, packing stones and site location, he is of the opinion that the site is of Bronze Age origin.

On the balance of the evidence so far, it is likely that the stones represent an early Bronze Age site, and entry into the Historic Environment Record is recommended.

Introduction

On 6 May 2010, one of the authors (CD) noticed a pair of erect and significantly aligned stones on Mynydd Mwyn Mawr Farm (NGR SH 411 825), 2 km SSW of Llanerchymedd, Anglesey. At the time of discovery, and of writing, these stones have not been recorded in either the online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW) or in the Gwynedd Historic Environment Record. Indeed, they do not even have a PRN or record that they are present and so far unexplained. This makes it likely that they have not previously been noted by the archaeological community. They also don't appear on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1839 (one inch to one mile), 1889 (1:2500) or 2005 (1:25000). They are located on a field which is well off the beaten track, helping to explain why the site has not previously been highlighted.

This discovery, and an absence of any record of the site, has prompted further investigation by the authors in the summer of 2013. This paper describes this further investigation.

Mynydd Mwyn Mawr (MMM) farm is located in the heart of Anglesey, 2 km along a minor road south from the B5112 as it leaves Llanerchymedd, and close to the River Alaw. More details of the site are given in the Results section, below.

Archaeological Background

The Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (GAT) has most recently surveyed all the known funerary and ritual sites on Anglesey in 2002-2003 (Smith, 2004, 11-30). However these stones at MMM had not been discovered prior to the Anglesey survey, and did not feature in it. The author of the survey, George Smith, was invited to inspect the stones in 2010. Based on an initial visual inspection, his opinion at the time was that they were probably not prehistoric (Smith, 2010). However, in our opinion, the tight and highly unlikely alignment and orientation of the stone pair with a pumphouse (which has turned out to house a river source) and a nearby hilltop, could be suggestive of Bronze Age ritual activity - see for example Lynes, 2012a, 19-26 and Lynes, 2012b, 4-5, for recent work on the important relationship of Anglesey standing stones to their view of the landscape and to significant geographical features such as mountains and rivers, and the latter gives further references for other geographical regions. For the prehistoric ritual significance of springs in particular, see for example Leary & Field (2012, 64). This, coupled with many similarities to nearby prehistoric standing stones (*eg* Carreg Leidr, and the larger Llech Golman and Pen yr Orsedd stones), and a lack of plausible alternative explanations (see Section 7: Discussion) indicated further work would be beneficial.

Project Aims

The authors undertook an investigation to examine the stones and site in more detail, to make a further comparison with known prehistoric stones in the area, and to examine the pumphouse and possible links with the River Alaw, which could have given rise to ritual significance in the past. This report briefly describes this investigation and, assesses the evidence and likelihood that the stones were erected intentionally as a Bronze Age ritual site, compared with alternative explanations.

Methodology

A few brief site visits were undertaken but the main focus of the investigation was between 18-22 June 2013, with the help and support of the Owners of Mynydd Mwyn Mawr Farm. In addition, other surrounding areas were examined briefly for context and comparison.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is very little evidence to directly date the site. Therefore the overall approach we took to assess the site's origin was to consider a range of

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evidence. This included: physical observations, an analysis of the alignment and orientation of the stones, a metal detector survey, an assessment of the possible ritual landscape, and a comparison of the site with other known (generally prehistoric) monuments in the vicinity. This evidence is described in the Results section, below. This enables us to assess which is the most likely explanation for the stones - which we do in the Discussion section.

The weather was generally dry and bright and the soil was generally dry. (A context sheet for this project, MMM13, is available directly from the authors.) The site was examined and photographed, particularly to check and record the alignment and features of the stones. The metal detector survey was undertaken for bronze and iron to see if any additional evidence of prehistoric activity could be found, with a view to causing minimal disruption to the stones themselves. This covered an area a few metres in radius around each of the stones, plus a corridor around two metres wide between the stones, and a general sweep in the field below the pumphouse.

We theorised that the pumphouse housed a spring which had been a source of the River Alaw, and this could underpin the ritual significance of the site. To check this, the pumphouse was emptied, a visual inspection of it was performed, and a visual inspection between the pumphouse and the main flow of the river was also undertaken to see if there was evidence that any spring had been connected with the River Alaw.

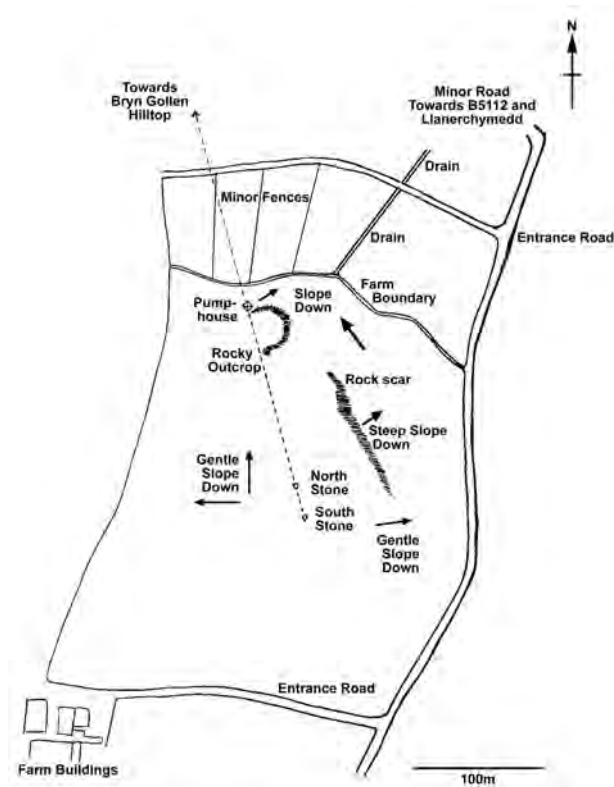


Figure 1 Site Plan of Mynydd Mwyn Mawr Farm – “Fron” Field (Illustration by Dickson & Tram, partly based on Ordnance Survey Open Data, used under the OS OpenData licence)

Results

The Stone Pair

The stones are approximately in the centre of a large field, known as “Fron” (see Figure 1), towards the northern end of MMM farm, and stand around 90m AOD. The field slopes gently down to the north, giving a commanding view of the beginning of the River Alaw to the north, and an almost 360 degree view of the countryside including an impressive view of Snowdonia to the south. Both stones are vertically erected. Each stone has a flatter “face” and more curved “back”, is generally “triangular” or egg shaped in elevation depending on the viewpoint, and has an apex at the top (see Figures 2 and 3).

They appear to form a pair, partly because of their similar size, composition and orientation. Moreover, from a position directly in front of or behind the stones, they “mirror” each other in shape, with one appearing to sway slightly to the right and the other slightly to the left.

The stones are approximately 24m apart. The alignment of the stones is the same as the orientation of their flatter faces, *ie* aligned as closely as can be observed with the pumphouse in the field and the hilltop at Bryn Gollen (see Alignment, below), both towards the NNW. The stones are skylined on the saddle of a hill which slopes gently down to the north.

The stones are set very solid in the ground, with no apparent cutting marks to indicate quarry extraction. They are apparently composed of smooth, weathered granite, and appear likely to have been originally glacial erratics (Nash, 2014). The surrounding soil is generally mixed from soft and a little sandy through to quite stoney. There is no evidence yet of other postholes in the field, though there are a few bare patches possibly due to thin soil cover.

We refer to the stones as the North and South Stone for easier reference, although, more accurately, the South Stone is to the SSE and the North Stone is to the NNW.

South Stone

The South Stone is 1.11m in height from current ground level at the stone. This ground level next to the stones is slightly below the surrounding ground level in the field, probably due to recent cattle erosion. The stone is 1.03m in height above the “lichen line”, a horizontal dividing line above which lichen is present, but below which there is none. This line of lichen may well delimit the original soil level. The stone is 1.32m wide at its widest point, and 70cm thick from “face” to “back”, at its thickest. The depth of the stone in the soil was a minimum of 40cm from the lichen line, as deep as could be observed on this occasion.

There is a small hole, approximately circular in cross-section: 60mm deep, 50mm high at the widest point, and 40mm wide, approximately in the centre of the “flat face” of the stone. This is visible in Figure 2. It is angled upwards at around 40 degrees from horizontal so is not likely to have been designed as a receiver hole for a gate bolt. At least one other nearby stone has similar holes which are unlikely to have been created as gate bolt holes – see Section 6.4.2 - Carmel Stone, below.

If the hole was created more recently, this does not of course prevent the stone itself from having been erected



Figure 2 South stone, photo looking SW. Photo by Dickson & Tram



Figure 3 North Stone, showing possible packing stones and the "lichen line". Photo looking SSE, by Dickson & Tram

prehistorically. Given its angle of entry, the only explanations we have so far examined are that either it is a cupmark, or that it was drilled perhaps for dynamiting or removing the stone – although the integrity of the hole and relative smoothness of the “face” of the stone, suggests that dynamiting was not attempted (and there is no other evidence that it was).

North Stone

The north stone is 129cm in height, 1.15m from its lichen line. It is 1.50m wide at its widest point at ground level, and around 1.20m before significantly widening out. This gives the stone a curvy (possibly “female”?) appearance – see Figure 3. It is 0.73m thick from “face” to “back” at its thickest point. Its depth in soil was not measured. There is significant evidence of large and closely compacted packing stones along north face of, and in front of, the north stone – see Figure 3. There is also some evidence of smaller packing stones to the south of this stone, and also around the south stone, although soil erosion and their relative size make it more difficult to positively identify these smaller stones.

There is a marking on the east side of the north stone, (see Figure 4). This has the appearance of a geometric shape, quite delicate and heavily weathered, etched within the shape of a rectangle, 0.205m x 0.13m. This is an unusual shape although there are examples of rectangular Bronze Age and Iron Age rock art elsewhere in the UK and Europe. (See for example Amerside Law 3a in Northumberland (Northumberland Rock Art Archive web site, 2013), and the Valcamonica and Valtellina areas of North Italy (Arcà, 2004, 318-349).) There is at least one example of rectangular engravings with horizontal internal lines on an early Bronze Age grave vessel, found in Patrickholm, Scotland (held in the National Museum of Scotland).

The heavy erosion, and absence of letters and numerals, in themselves could suggest significant age. We have also noted the possibility of more shapes, heavily worn, along the base of the stone on the same side, including one or more rows of four small circular indentations reminiscent of the cupmarks on one of the Gelligaer Common stones in South Wales for example (Rock Art in Wales website, 2013). However we are not aware of rectangular markings very similar to this one. Nash is of the opinion that the marking is not Bronze Age and is probably historic rather than prehistoric, but it is of unknown origin at this stage (Nash, 2014).

Alignment

The two stones can easily be seen by eye to be accurately in a straight line (to within around one degree) with the hilltop Bryn Gollen (see Figure 5), a significant local landmark 1.2km to the NNW (direction estimated at around 345 degrees from magnetic north using an iPhone compass, or around 341 degrees from true north), at NGR SH 408 837. The hilltop was historically known as Bryn Gwallen (Ordnance Survey Map First Series, 1839-41). It is notable that the flat faces of the stones also face directly towards this hilltop, and the tips of the stones line up very closely “heightwise” with the actual top of the hill, which is most clearly seen when viewed by eye on-site.

On visual inspection of a satellite photograph (using Bing and Google maps), it was easily seen that the stones are also closely aligned with (to around one degree), and

face towards, the pumphouse in the same field, which was the original cause of interest in the site, even before the stones were spotted over a rise in the field. The pumphouse is of particular interest because our observations show that it houses a spring which in times past was probably an important and old source of the River Alaw before the pumphouse was erected (see Pumphouse/Spring, below).

The vertical erection, similar height and shape, alignment and orientation of the two stones with the hilltop and pumphouse/spring are suggestive of intentional configuration of the stones. On the null hypothesis that the configuration occurred at random, assuming a broadly linear distribution of each parameter, the probability of this arrangement can be shown to be of order one in 38,000,000 (the probability calculation is available as an Annex directly from the authors).

Note that these four objects (the two stones, pumphouse/spring in same field and nearby hilltop) were the first four objects to be examined, so the alignment was *not* the result of searching dozens of objects and millions of possible combinations. Thus the alignment is very unlikely to be due to chance, and is a strong indication that the configuration was intentional, *ie* that the stones have very likely been intentionally chosen, erected, orientated towards and aligned with the spring and the hilltop. Of course, such a probability calculation cannot, on its own, show why the site has been configured in this way.

Metal Detector Survey

Multiple “hits” were found, not unexpectedly, and various objects like small nails and horseshoes, all probably iron, were excavated from shallow holes up to around 40cm.

An unusual metal artefact 0.125m long was found, approximately 0.2m under the surface, approximately 0.50m northwest of the north stone, pointing across and away from the stone towards the northeast. It has the appearance of a chisel or other metal tool. It is unknown in composition, most likely iron, and this is under investigation.

Some years ago, landowner John Astley found a small stone implement in the grounds of the same farm approximately 700m SE of the stones. It was roughly an oblate spheroid with an indentation at each “pole”, and an indented ridge around the “equator” of the stone, possibly a Bronze Age hammerstone.

Pumphouse/Spring

Based on several observations below, we conclude that the pumphouse houses a spring which would previously have been seen as an important source of the River Alaw. The key observations are as follows.

The pumphouse is approximately 140m to the NNW of the North stone (this distance has not yet been measured accurately but can be approximated from the Bing satellite image). The water level observed on a previous visit (25 May 2013) was only 20-30mm below the bottom of a few steps down, even after a dry spell of a few weeks. Thus, the water table was very close to the nearby ground level just to the northwest of the pumphouse, which slopes gently down away from the pumphouse. This suggests that if the

pumphouse including the basement brick wall had not been put there to dam the water, the water would flow out of the ground just to the northwest, forming a natural spring.

We emptied the pumphouse (with thanks to the landowners) on 19 June 2013 and entered its basement, and observed incoming water in two small flows. The pumphouse refilled itself at a calculated rate of approximately 4.2 litres per minute, based on the measured size and volume of the water chamber and its time to refill.

The old course of the River Alaw can be followed fairly coherently on-site from the pumphouse to the fully-flowing river at the village of Llanerchymedd around 2km to the NNE. This course is dry at points where there are observable and relatively recent diversions and breaks in the river (*eg* a driveway erected at NGR SH 412 829, where the river flow is partially interrupted), but the old course is clearly visible and continuous. The old river course up until the main river flow is relatively wide in places, at around 0.5m.

There are several springs visible on the OS map which feed the river, but this observed spring is probably the highest and farthest from the main river course.

The landowners have confirmed that two independent contacts have previously commented that the source of the Alaw had traditionally been on this part of the farm. The primary source of the River Alaw was on that part of the farm, according to a previous quarry worker from the site who spoke to John Astley (landowner) on an occasion some years ago in the village. Also, the primary source of the Alaw was believed to be in the northern end of this farm by a retired local headmaster Arfon Jones of nearby Moelfre School, whose father used to live in a cottage just north of the farm and further along the river flow – this was previously commented to the landowners, and restated in 2014 (Jones, 2014). Apart from the pumphouse, there are no other significant water features in this part of the farm, so this is the only candidate for the source as described.

The pumphouse can therefore be seen as housing a spring which, previous to the construction of the pumphouse and thereby the damming of the spring, could have been viewed as an important source of the River Alaw. This would have rendered it possibly an important ritual feature.

Other nearby indicators of possible ritual significance

There are no apparent Bronze-Age monuments currently at the top of Bryn Gollen, with which the MMM stones are aligned. However there were previously two round barrows close to the hilltop skyline, both of which unfortunately have since been removed: one around half a kilometre east of the hilltop (PRN 3589) and another just under a kilometre southwest of the hilltop (PRN 2081). Either or both of these may have been intervisible with the stones at MMM, increasing the likelihood that the stones and hilltop were part of a ritual landscape.

Moreover, there are many other confirmed prehistoric monuments within a few hundred metres of the River Alaw, including Maen Hir (also known as Maen-y-Gored, PRN 2062), Bedd Branwen (2088), Glan Alaw (see below) and Llys Einion (2103), indicating possible ritual significance of the river itself.

Comparison with other monuments in the vicinity

Known prehistoric standing stones

There are many recognised prehistoric standing stones nearby, in the North Anglesey area, most of which are larger than, but share many similar features with, the Mynydd Mwyn Mawr stones. These features include: being part of a group of similar size facing a common direction, having a flatter face and rounded or uneven “back”, facing towards a neighbouring hilltop, possible packing stones at the base, a commanding view of a river valley and surrounding countryside, and have a roughly triangular or egg-shape with an apex at the top. A very brief review of similarities follows below, based on a review of a tour of NW Anglesey Standing Stones provided by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust website, 2013) for example:

Llanfehell standing stones (PRN 3047, 10km NW of MMM) “of similar size [to each other]...facing approximately same orientation...are visible from a long way around”, (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013)

Llanfehell “Church Stone” (PRN 3048, 10km NW of MMM) whose “‘best’ face...faces directly towards the hill of Mynydd y Garn” (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust website, 2013)

Glan Alaw (PRN 2066 near Bod Deiniol, 5.5km NW of MMM), “...some packing stones are visible around the base” ... “one face split the other a natural curving surface” (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013).

Llech Golman (PRN 2201, 4km east of MMM) “...The ground surface has been worn away around the base of the stone revealing a number of packing stones ...” one flat side on south. The north side somewhat flattened”, (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013).

Pen yr Orsedd Stones (South stone PRN 3517, 11km NW of MMM) “Two standing stones 280yds apart....An angular slab tapering towards the top... the orientation of the faces means it aligns with Castell Crwn and the same can be said of [PRN] 3516 although in a different place viz a viz Catell Crwn”. North stone: “...hard angular rock, tapering towards the top. ...Some probable packing stones, cobbles, are visible around the base where exposed by cattle trampling. Possibly significant, it faces towards Castell Crwn.” (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013).

Maen Fabli (PRN 2199, also known as **Maen Addwyn**, 5km east of MMM), which visual inspection (by CD in May 2013) shows has a flat “face” and curved “back”.

the **Capel Soar** stone (PRN 2021, 10km WNW of MMM, near Llanfaethlu), “...approximately triangular, that is narrowing towards the top...has a dramatic view to the E & the Snowdon range...” (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013).

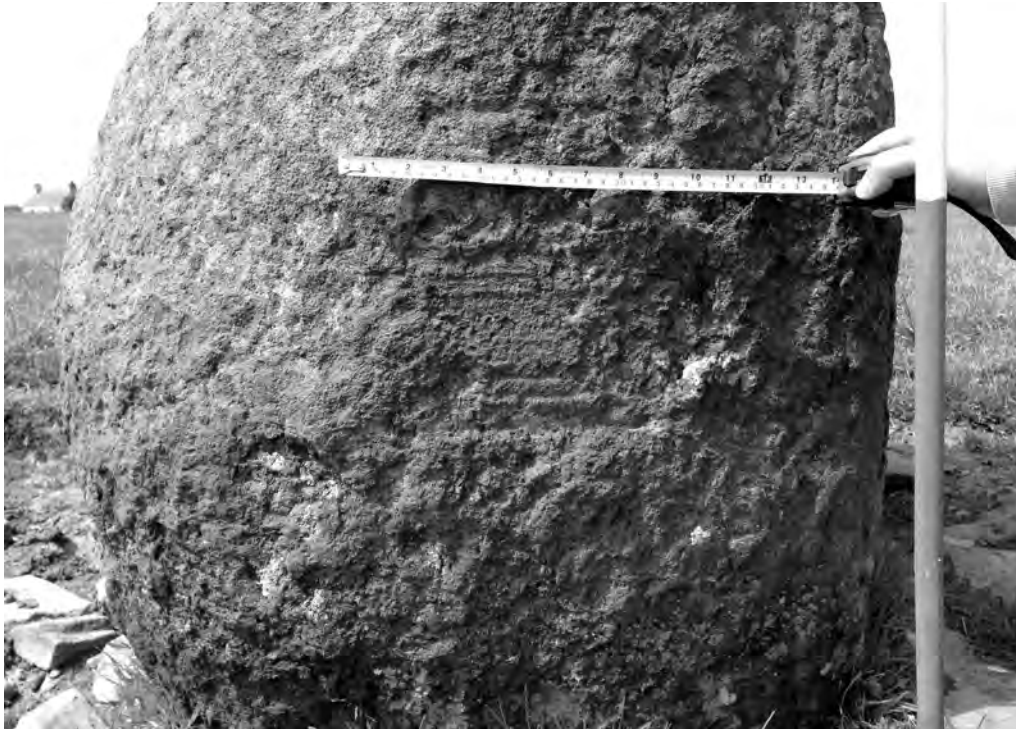


Figure 4 North stone, showing marking. Photo looking west, by Dickson & Tram



Figure 5 Both stones aligned with, and orientated towards, the nearby hilltop of Bryn Gollen to the NNW. Photo by Dickson & Tram

Although smaller than the stones above, the Mynydd Mwyn Mawr stones are approximately the same height as the well-known nearby prehistoric **Carreg Leidr** (PRN 3579, 3km to the east of MMM), at around 1.3m high “...Packing stones are visible around the base” (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013); and of course many small prehistoric stones across the UK, *eg* the Doll Tor circle in Derbyshire at NGR SK 238 628 (English National Heritage List number 1017664), Castlerigg circle in Cumbria at NY 291 236 (number 1011362) and NW Europe (*eg* Carnac in Brittany), so their size shouldn’t disqualify them from having been erected in prehistoric times. Carreg Leidr is sometimes described as having a “hump” back associated with an old legend of a thief turned to stone on stealing a bible, but it could equally be described as having a flat face with a protuberance at the top of the face, similar to a small protruding face or nose, and a curved back like the MMM stones as described above.

A brief review of the monuments on Anglesey (through Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013) indicates that, in addition to Pen yr Orsedd noted above, there may be only one other documented Bronze-Age stone pair, the much larger stones at Penrhos Feilw (PRN 2748. “almost identical in shape and size [to each other]. They are approximately 3m high, 1m wide at the base and 0.2m thick. It is unusual to find a pair of standing stones in Anglesey although they are more common in southern Wales” (see the Penrhos Feilw entry

of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013). Most of the others are single stones or, in the case of Bryn Gwyn, two remaining stones of possibly a much larger circle.

There is a pair of Bronze Age stones at **Maen-y-Bardd, Caerhun** (PRN 525), on the Gwynedd mainland, 25 km or so to the southeast of MMM. They are respectively 1m and 1.3m high, set roughly 18m apart (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013), and in these respects are very similar to the Mynydd Mwyn Mawr stones. However a visual inspection shows these are located amongst a wide array of erect stones, some possibly prehistoric, and are actually quite difficult to positively identify as a pair.

We can therefore see that there are many similarities between the MMM stones and the known prehistoric stones in north Anglesey, which increases the possibility that they are also prehistoric in origin. However they may be of particular interest as being a probable pair with a precise alignment with, and facing towards, significant nearby natural features.

Carmel Stone

There is also the **Carmel Stone**, (PRN 7378, around 2km to the west of the MMM stones), which is 1.2m high – but it is of uncertain antiquity. “The stone does not appear to have been dressed, but has what may be a naturally flat face on which a ring of 6 holes has been cut. A seventh hole is



Figure 6 The pumphouse. Photo looking SE, by Dickson & Tram

located outside the ring. The width and depth of the holes vary with the largest, at the top of the ring, being about 2" in diameter and at least 7" deep, cut back into the rock at an angle of about 45 degrees [to the horizontal]. Others are no more than shallow depressions c.1/2" deep but still definitely circular in shape. Interpretation: unknown." (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013). Most or all of these holes would be completely unsuitable as gate bolt holes. We therefore think it is unlikely that these holes were designed for this purpose, however the circular arrangement appears intentional and we query why and when they were actually created. Similarly, we noted above that the Mynydd Mwyn Mawr South Stone also has a hole in the flat face of the stone coming out at an angle of around 40 degrees to the horizontal.

Discussion

The main candidate explanations considered for the stones' presence so far are as follows:

1. Cattle rubbing stones. This is inconsistent with the observations for the following reasons:

Low probability of accidental alignment, indicating intentional alignment and orientation towards the pumphouse/spring and hilltop, which would be pointless in the case of cattle rubbing stones.

John Astley, landowner and an experienced cattle farmer, has stated that there would be no reason to erect two rubbing stones in the same field and in close proximity (Astley & Astley, 2013). It would be significantly more effort for no additional benefit.

Some of the soil around each stone has been eroded, probably due to rubbing by cattle which sometimes are kept in the field. As a result, part of both erect stones, and some possible packing stones, have been revealed below the general soil level. A similar effect is seen *eg* at Llech Golman, a large standing stone nearby on Anglesey (see also Section 6.4 - Comparison with other monuments in the vicinity) which sits in a field used by livestock, as observed by one of the authors (CD) in May 2013. The HER entry for Llech Golman notes "The ground surface has been worn away around the base of the stone revealing a number of packing stones." (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust Historic Environment Record, 2013). Also, there is a marked absence in lichen on the Mynydd Mwyn Mawr stones at a level below the surrounding (higher) soil level. This suggests the lower portions of the stones have been exposed relatively recently in the stone's history in the ground, because the lichen has not had time to spread uniformly down to the new soil level. Therefore the stones have been exposed to cattle rubbing for a relatively short period compared to the time that the stones have spent in the ground. The conclusion must be that cattle rubbing was not the original purpose of the stones.

2. Field boundary stones. This is also inconsistent with the observations, for the following reasons:

It is hard to imagine why a boundary marker would need to be so heavy, and why one would go to such effort with packing stones. It would be sufficient to place large stones on the surface or dig them in a little if required.

There is no obvious need for a field boundary to be aligned with the distant hilltop, and for the tips of the stones to be lined up with the tip of the hilltop, and for the stones to be rotated to face towards it. There is no record findable of such a connection between a boundary and the more distant hilltop.

At this point of the field, there is no obvious reason why only two stones would be used to form a field boundary. If there had previously been more stones, why would some be removed and two left for this purpose? Also, only two stones can clearly be seen in the 1945 aerial photograph (viewed at the Aerial Photographs Unit, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, 2013).

It would make no sense to divide the field in this way, because there is a natural division in the field caused by a deep rock scar 40m to the northeast of the stones. This would be the logical place for a field boundary, and indeed a plan of the farm (then called Pen Mynydd Mwyn) from 1792 held by the National Library of Wales, indicates there may have been a field boundary in the far northeast of the field, close to this scar, but far removed from the stones.

There is no evidence therefore that the stones were ever used as a field boundary, but if they were, this does not of course prevent them having been erected previously for another reason.

3. Early Bronze Age ritual site. This is implied by:

- the alignment and orientation toward hilltop and spring,
- the possible packing stones, and
- the similarities to nearby prehistoric standing stones.
- It is also consistent with the observations including:
- the apparently specific choice of stones,
- the choice of site, and
- the proximity of the stones, and the proximity of the aligned hilltop, to two historic round barrows.

During his site visit with the authors on 22 March 2014, Nash gave his opinion that the site is of Bronze Age origin. This was based on similar factors of stone alignment, orientation and possible ritual landscape, packing stones and site location, as well as stone composition and selection (Nash, 2014).

It is strange that the stones are missing from the OS map; but they are present in the aerial photographs from 1945, so they have clearly been omitted by the Ordnance Survey at least from 1945 to present. There was a quarry onsite at times in the past (as can be seen for example in the 1839 Ordnance Survey 1st Series map), so they may have been missed due to confusion with neighbouring stone outcrops, or they could have been mistaken for cattle rubbing stones, or simply overlooked due to their smaller size relative to some of the larger standing stones on Anglesey.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We therefore conclude that, based on the current evidence, the Mynydd Mwyn Mawr stones likely represent an early Bronze Age ritual site and recommend immediate protection

of the stones from development or damage.

However further research would also be beneficial. The authors are continuing this work with the permission of the landowners, including a proposed geophysical survey of the area and investigation at the pumphouse. Possible future projects include further investigation into the disappeared round barrows on the hillside at Bryn Gollen.

More speculatively, the most interesting and unusual aspect of the site may be that they are a probable pair with a precise alignment with, and facing towards, both a hilltop and spring – both known ritual landscape features. Taken together with other sites, this could give insights into the religious beliefs and ritual practices undertaken at the time of their erection: for example, were they processional markers, or something else?

Compare the question posed by Cummings and Whittle for example (Cummings & Whittle, 2003, 264), regarding the potentially poor visibility of distant lines of sight from Neolithic monuments in a wooded environment, within a proposed ritual landscape. In the case of MMM, the spring is in a hollow and hidden from view from much of the surrounding area including the stones themselves. It may be possible therefore that the stones were deliberately placed high on the hill slope and visible all around, and to direct prayer or veneration towards this important ritual feature. This could be compared to modern Christian churches in Britain which are generally aligned east-west towards the Holy Land, and with Muslim qibla compasses which indicate the direction of prayer towards the Ka'aba in Mecca, neither of which site can be directly seen by the participant.

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