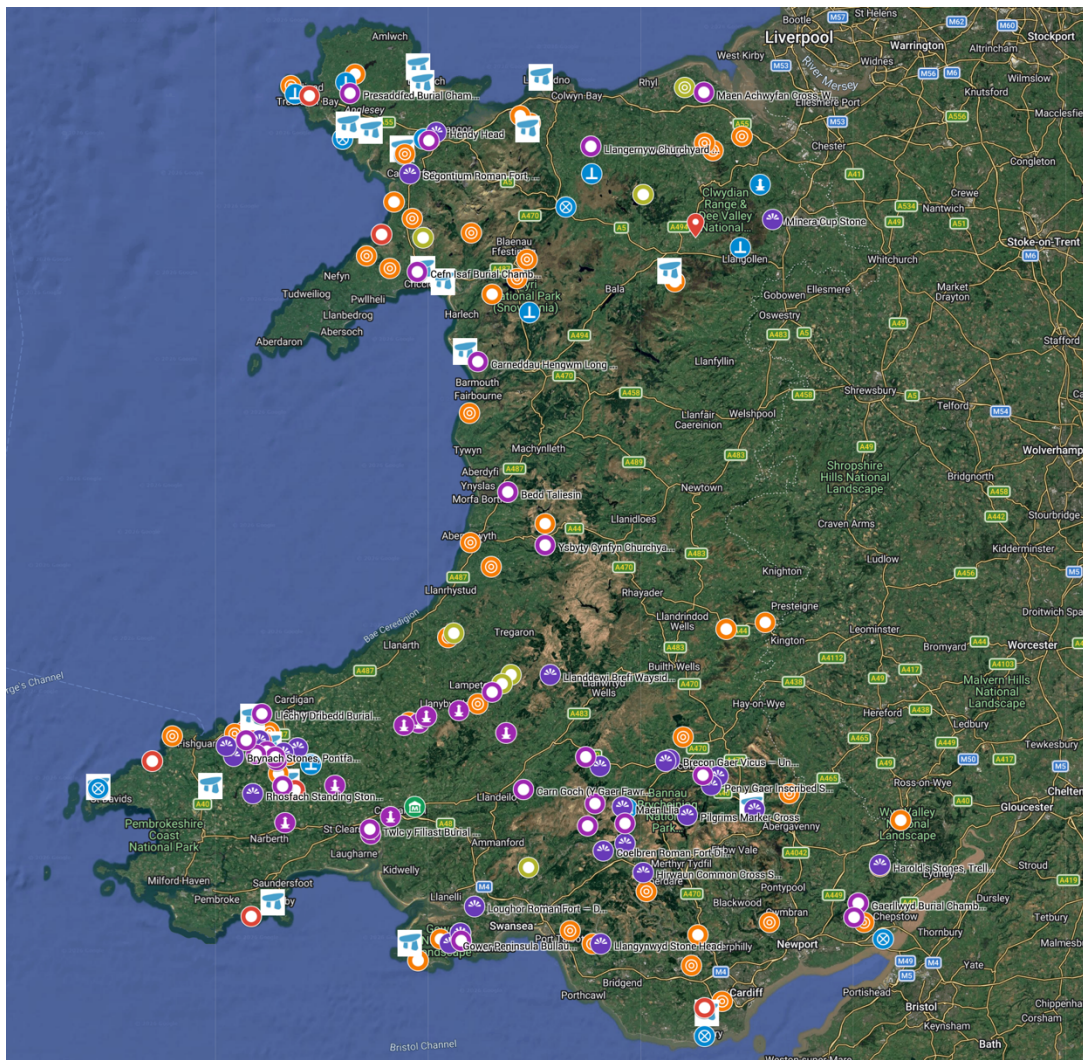


Wales Megalithic Sites

Stones of Mystery: The Complete Map

One hundred and sixty-two sites of carved and sacred stone, spanning fourteen thousand years of the Welsh landscape



Interactive map: www.tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites



Researched and written by Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly

Introduction

Wales is a country written in stone. Long before there were books or borders there were burial chambers on the headlands and standing stones on the ridgeways, and long after the last capstone was raised the carving went on, in ogham strokes and Latin capitals, in incised crosses and plaited interlace, in the worn faces and cup-marked boulders that still turn up in field walls and churchyards where nobody thought to look. This map gathers that heritage into one place: the megalithic monuments of the first farming communities, the hillforts and settlements of the Iron Age, the inscribed memorial stones of the early Christian centuries, and a growing record of carved stones that the official databases have missed.

The map is built to be used on the ground. Every site is placed by GPS or Ordnance Survey grid reference, every pin carries the history of what stands there and how it came to be known, and nothing is stated with more certainty than the evidence allows. Where a position rests on a published grid reference not yet checked in the field, the pin says so. Where a claim is contested, as it is at Waun Mawn, the pin gives both sides. Where a stone is known only from local report, it is recorded as a report and nothing more. The result is a working document as much as a finished one, and it grows as the fieldwork does.

The articles that accompany this map give the full history of each site. This paper provides the frame: what the map contains, layer by layer, and an acknowledgement of the records, institutions, and people whose information it draws upon.

The Map and Its Layers

Layer One: Wales Megalithic Sites

The foundation layer of the map, with one hundred sites spanning the whole country and the whole depth of Welsh prehistory. Here are the great Neolithic burial chambers, Pentre Ifan, Bryn Celli Ddu, Barclodiad y Gawres, Tinkinswood and their kin; the standing stones and stone circles of the Bronze Age, from Gors Fawr and Bryn Cader Faner to Maen Llia on its mountain road; the hillforts of the Iron Age, from Tre'r Ceiri and Foel Drygarn to Twmbarlwm; the caves that sheltered the earliest Welsh, Paviland and Hoyle's Mouth among them; and the places where prehistory meets history, the Stonehenge bluestone country at Craig Rhos-y-felin and the ninth century Pillar of Eliseg. Each pin carries a full historical account with images.

Layer Two: The Carmarthenshire Museum Early Christian Stones

Ten pins with a different purpose. Carmarthenshire Museum at Abergwili holds one of the most significant collections of early Christian memorial stones in Wales, nine stones of the fifth to ninth centuries including the celebrated bilingual Voteporix Stone. This layer places each stone back at its point of origin, the churchyard stile at Castell Dwyran, the demolished chapel at Llanfihangel Croesfeini, the hillside chapel site at Maesllanwrthwl, so that the gathered collection and the emptied landscape can be read together. A tenth pin marks the museum itself, where the stones may be seen.

Layer Three: Unexplained Carved and Anomalous Stones

Twenty-six pins recording what the national databases do not. Some are stones reported but never documented: the carved cross at the foot of the Blaen y Glyn waterfall that appears in no official record, the bullaun stone in Llanrhidian churchyard, the cup-marked boulders reported by farmers around Llangorse Lake. Some are famous monuments whose smaller details have never been systematically

examined, from possible incised marks on Maen Llia and Harold's Stones to the lesser carvings of Nevern churchyard. And some are the scattered stones of the Roman forts, carved material absorbed into farm walls and town buildings around Y Gaer, Coelbren, Loughor and Segontium. The layer is a map of the gaps in the record, kept honestly, with what is confirmed and what is merely reported clearly separated.

Layer Four: New Additions, July 2026

The newest layer, twenty-six further sites added in July 2026 and ranging across the whole country: the Glandy Cross complex and Carn Goch in Carmarthenshire, the bluestone country of Carn Goedog and the contested circle of Waun Mawn in the Preseli hills, the Dervacus stone on Sarn Helen, the carved chamber of Ty Illtud, the fourteen thousand year old reindeer engraving of Cat Hole Cave, and in the north the great long cairns of Carneddau Hengwm and the wheel cross of Maen Achwyfan. Every pin carries its Ordnance Survey grid reference, and positions resting on published references not yet field-checked are marked as such.

The Map as a Whole

Taken together the four layers hold one hundred and sixty-two sites, from the Ice Age engraving at Cat Hole to the eleventh century cross at Whitford: some fourteen thousand years of people marking the land of Wales in stone. The layers are designed to be read against each other. The megalithic monuments of the first layer show where the sacred landscape began; the museum stones of the second show how the early church inherited it and how the modern age gathered its fragments indoors; the anomalous stones of the third show how much still lies unrecorded; and the additions of the fourth show the map doing what a living record should do, which is grow. The work continues, and corrections and further information are always welcome through the channels given on the map.

Acknowledgements

This map and its accompanying articles rest on the work of many institutions and individuals, and the debt is acknowledged with gratitude. The site records of Coflein, the online catalogue of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, underpin the whole project, together with the scheduled monument and listing records of Cadw. The collections, labels and staff of Carmarthenshire Museum at Abergwili, of Amgueddfa Cymru, of Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery and of Oriel Mon have informed the museum stones research. The reports of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, and the standard catalogues of the early Christian monuments of Wales, provided the scholarly foundation for the inscribed stones.

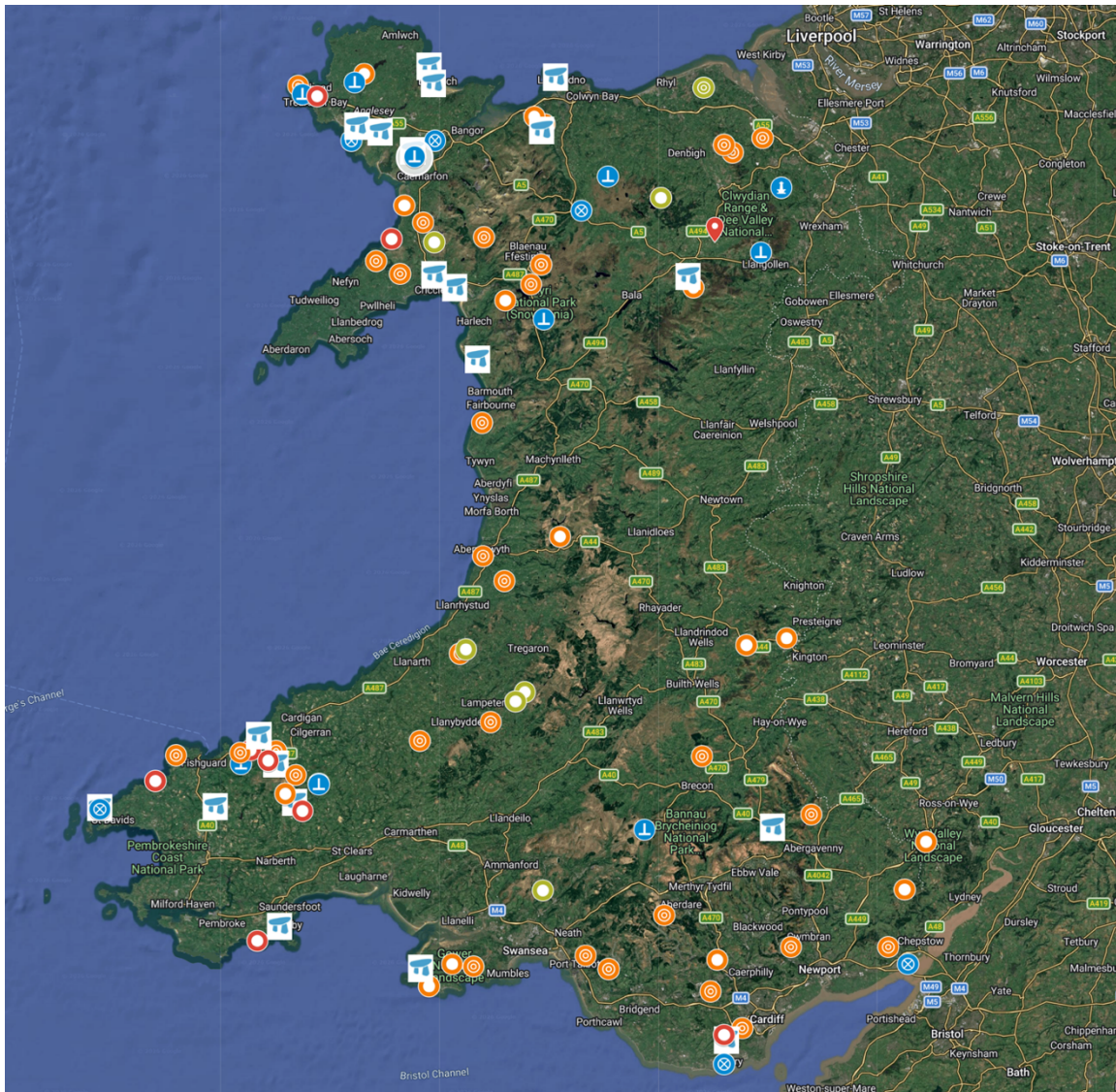
For the prehistoric sites, the published excavations and surveys of W. F. Grimes, of Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright, and of Mike Parker Pearson and his colleagues have been drawn upon, together with the geological work of Richard Bevins, Nick Pearce and Rob Ixer and the critical responses of Brian John, whose disagreement is itself part of the record. The antiquarian accounts of Edward Lhuyd, William Stukeley and John Aubrey, the field guides of N. P. Figgis to prehistoric Preseli, and the community records of the Megalithic Portal have all contributed. Positions were checked using the Ordnance Survey grid and standard conversion tools.

Finally, and not least, thanks are owed to the farmers, landowners and local people across Wales whose reports of stones in their fields and churchyards supplied much of the third layer, and whose permission makes fieldwork possible. Several sites on this map stand on private land, and visitors are asked always to seek permission where access is not public, to leave every stone exactly as they find it, and to report anything the record has missed.

Wales Megalithic Sites

Layer One: The Hundred Sites

The foundation layer of the map: burial chambers, standing stones, stone circles, hillforts and caves across the whole of Wales



Interactive map: www.tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites



Researched and written by Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly

Layer One: The Hundred Sites

The foundation layer of the map holds one hundred sites spanning the whole of Wales and more than thirty thousand years, from the Ice Age burial at Paviland to the ninth century pillar of Eliseg. Here are the burial chambers of the first farmers, the standing stones, circles and cairns of the Bronze Age, the hillforts of the Iron Age, the caves that sheltered the earliest inhabitants of Wales, and a handful of later monuments, Roman, early Christian and medieval, that carry the story of the high places onward. The entries below take the sites region by region, roughly from north to south.

Each entry gives the coordinates by which the site is placed on the map. The descriptions are drawn from the national records, published excavation reports and field observation, and legend is reported as legend, never as fact. Where the record itself is uncertain, at Bedd Morris, at Gwytherin, at the Table of the Three Lords, the uncertainty is stated, for a map that pretends to more knowledge than exists serves no one. The two standing stones at Llanfyrnach are treated together in a single entry.

Ynys Mon (Anglesey)

Barclodiad y Gawres

53.2073 N, 4.5036 W

The giantess's apronful is one of the great passage tombs of Britain, set on the cliffs above Porth Tre Castell. Built to a cruciform plan with a central space and side chambers, it holds a wealth of decorated stones carved with spirals, zigzags and lozenges, art with closer kin in the Boyne valley of Ireland than anywhere in Wales. Excavation in the 1950s found the cremated remains of two young men, and over the central hearth a remarkable deposit that had included frog, toad, snake and fish, the residue of some ceremony beyond recovery. The mound has been partially reconstructed and the chamber protected, and the carved stones remain in place within.

Bryn Celli Ddu Burial Chamber

53.2078 N, 4.2361 W

The mound in the dark grove is the most famous prehistoric monument on Anglesey, and one of the most remarkable in Britain, for it is two monuments in one: a passage tomb raised upon the site of an earlier henge and stone circle. At midsummer the rising sun shines down the passage into the chamber, one of the few proven solstice alignments in Wales. Within the chamber stands a smooth freestanding pillar, and behind the mound a replica of the pattern stone, carved with winding serpentine lines, marks where the original stood. The tomb is in Cadw care and the chamber can be entered.

Bedd Branwen

53.3363 N, 4.4629 W

By the Afon Alaw lies a low ring cairn identified in tradition with the grave of Branwen, whose sorrows are told in the second branch of the Mabinogi. An urn found here in 1813 put the association into print, and excavation in 1967 revealed the monument's true complexity: a small standing stone at the centre, a carefully built cairn ring, and eight Bronze Age urns, most holding cremations, one accompanied by treasures that included amber beads. Legend and archaeology rarely sit so closely together, and whether or not a queen of the Island of the Mighty lies here, someone greatly valued certainly did.

Bodowyr Burial Chamber

53.1883 N, 4.3030 W

A small and perfect dolmen in a field near Brynsiencyn, its mushroom-shaped capstone poised on three uprights with a fourth fallen and a sillstone at the entrance. The covering mound has gone entirely, leaving the stone skeleton that has become one of the most photographed small monuments on the island. It is in Cadw care, railed but freely visible.

Bryn Gwyn Standing Stones

53.1772 N, 4.3022 W

Two great stones, one of them among the tallest in Wales at some four metres, are all that remain standing of what was once a circle of perhaps eight stones about twelve metres across. Excavation has traced the sockets of vanished companions. Marks near the top of the taller stone have been claimed as astronomical, a claim best treated with caution, but the pair need no embellishment: they are giants, and with Castell Bryn Gwyn close by they belong to a concentrated ritual landscape near Brynsiencyn.

Castell Bryn Gwyn

53.1784 N, 4.2979 W

A circular banked enclosure near Brynsiencyn whose story begins in the Neolithic, with flint tools and pottery of the third millennium BC found beneath its earthen wall, and continues through the Iron Age and into the Roman period. Whether it began as a henge or a defended enclosure remains debated; that it held meaning for two and a half thousand years is not. It is in Cadw care.

Caer y Twr

53.3134 N, 4.6754 W

The hillfort crowning Holyhead Mountain, the highest point on Anglesey, its drystone rampart enclosing the rocky summit above the sea cliffs of the island's western tip. Within the fort stand the remains of a Roman watchtower, raised when the mountain served as a lookout against sea raiders, and on the slopes below lie the hut groups of Ty Mawr. From the top the view runs from the Wicklow Mountains of Ireland to the peaks of Eryri.

Din Dryfol Chambered Tomb

53.2249 N, 4.4073 W

A chambered tomb built and rebuilt in several phases along a rocky ridge near Bethel, its most striking survivor a tall portal stone standing like a door into the vanished mound. Excavation showed that the monument grew by stages, chamber added to chamber over generations, a reminder that these tombs were not single acts of construction but long works of communal memory. In Cadw care.

Din Lligwy Settlement

53.3507 N, 4.2595 W

The finest ancient village in north Wales: a walled enclosure holding round and rectangular stone buildings whose walls still stand shoulder high, occupied through the Roman centuries by a prosperous native family. Finds included Roman pottery and coins alongside evidence of ironworking. A few minutes away stand the Lligwy burial chamber and the ruined medieval chapel of Hen Gapel Lligwy, three ages of Anglesey within one short walk.

Lligwy Chambered Tomb

53.3499 N, 4.2528 W

A squat and immensely powerful tomb whose capstone, one of the heaviest in Britain at perhaps twenty-five tons, sits low over a chamber partly dug into the rock beneath. Excavation in 1909 found the remains of between fifteen and thirty people with pottery of the late Neolithic. It makes an

instructive contrast with the airy dolmens of Pembrokeshire: the same purpose, a wholly different architecture.

Pant-y-Saer Burial Chamber

53.3175 N, 4.2387 W

A Neolithic chamber on a limestone plateau near Benllech, its slab-built chamber set over a rock-cut pit within a kidney-shaped cairn now largely vanished. Excavations in the 1930s recovered the unburnt bones of more than fifty individuals, together with evidence that the tomb was reused in the Bronze Age. The forecourt was deliberately blocked in antiquity when the cairn was enlarged, the tomb closed by the community that had built it.

Penrhos Feilw Standing Stones

53.2957 N, 4.6618 W

A pair of slender stones, each about three metres tall, standing three metres apart in a field on Holy Island. Tradition speaks of burials and weapons found between them and of a surrounding circle, none of it now verifiable. Paired stones of this kind are rare, and their purpose, gateway, marker or memorial, remains unknown. In Cadw care.

Trefignath Burial Chambers

53.2932 N, 4.6143 W

A long cairn near Holyhead that excavation revealed to be three tombs in succession, each chamber added east of the last over centuries of use, the final phase fronted by tall portal stones that still stand. Trefignath is the clearest demonstration in Wales that a chambered tomb could be a living monument, extended and rebuilt as generations passed. In Cadw care, beside the modern industry of Holyhead, the old and new economies of the island side by side.

Tre-Gwehelydd Standing Stone

53.3195 N, 4.4927 W

A standing stone by the Afon Alaw with a modern story to tell: broken into three pieces, it has been mended and held together with metal bands, and stands today as a monument both to the Bronze Age and to the conservators' craft. A stone valued enough to be repaired rather than removed says something about how Wales holds its past.

Ty Newydd Dolmen

53.2360 N, 4.4824 W

A burial chamber near Llanfaelog whose long thin capstone cracked in modern times and now rests partly on a brick pier inserted to save it, an honest patch that has kept the monument standing. Excavation found burnt bone, pottery and a barbed and tanged arrowhead, evidence of use into the Bronze Age. In Cadw care.

Gwynedd and Eryri

Bachwen Burial Chamber

53.0189 N, 4.3752 W

A dolmen in a field running down to the sea at Clynog Fawr, its thin wedge-shaped capstone carried on four uprights with the hills of Yr Eifl beyond. Its glory is the capstone's upper surface, carved with some hundred and ten cup marks and two shallow grooves, with a further eight cups along the eastern edge, one of the richest displays of cup marking on any Welsh monument. The chamber is the survivor

of an early Neolithic long cairn whose mound has gone, leaving the decorated stone open to the sky it was perhaps always meant to address.

Bryn Cader Faner

52.8982 N, 4.0114 W

The crown of thorns: a ring cairn high on the moor above Talsarnau whose thin slabs lean outward from the mound like rays, the most beautiful Bronze Age monument in Britain by common consent. It has suffered, robbed by treasure hunters and damaged by the military in the twentieth century, and perhaps half its stones are gone, yet what remains is unforgettable, a circlet of stone on an ancient trackway with the mountains of Eryri behind. The walk to it is long and boggy and worth every step.

Bryn-y-Castell Hillfort

52.9689 N, 3.8953 W

A small stone-walled fort on a craggy hillock near Ffestiniog, excavated through the 1980s and found to be a centre of iron making, with furnaces, a cobbled interior and a distinctive snail-shell shaped building adapted as a smithy from an earlier roundhouse. Partly reconstructed for display, it is that rare thing, a hillfort where the visitor can see not just the walls but the work that went on inside them.

Caer Engan Hillfort

53.0488 N, 4.2740 W

A defended enclosure on a rocky knoll near Penygroes, about 120 by 64 metres within a double rampart that weaves natural outcrop and artificial bank into a single circuit. Unexcavated and well preserved, it is a scheduled monument holding its secrets in the Nantlle valley, with the ridge of Mynydd Graig Goch and its great cairn on the skyline above.

Carn Pentyrch Hillfort

52.9501 N, 4.3465 W

A concentric stone-walled complex above Llangybi on Llyn, an inner ring some twenty metres across within an oval circuit, with a third, slighter enclosure beyond. The three lines are probably of different ages, the massive inner wall perhaps early medieval upon prehistoric foundations, a fort remade long after its builders were forgotten. On the hillside below rises Ffynnon Gybi, the saint's well, old and new sanctities sharing one slope.

Cist Gerrig

52.9233 N, 4.1682 W

Three stones like a great stone armchair are all that survive of this portal dolmen near Morfa Bychan, the two portal uprights and the door slab standing while chamber and cairn have vanished. On a sloping rock outcrop a short distance to the southeast, fifteen cup marks can be traced, pecked into the surface rather than ground, linking the tomb to the wider tradition of marked stone that this map records. A difficult site to reach, and a strange and memorable one.

Dinas Dinlle

53.0817 N, 4.3349 W

A great coastal hillfort south of Caernarfon, its double ramparts crowning a hill of glacial drift that the sea eats year by year, half the fort already lost to the waves. The name carries Lleu of the Mabinogi, whose story haunts this shore, and recent excavation within the surviving ramparts has revealed a substantial stone roundhouse. It is a monument on a deadline, and among the most evocative places in Gwynedd to watch the meeting of archaeology and erosion.

Dinas Emrys

53.0221 N, 4.0787 W

The most legendary hill in Wales: here Vortigern tried to build his tower, here the boy Merlin revealed the two dragons sleeping beneath the pool, and here the red dragon of the Welsh first fought the white. The wooded crag near Beddgelert carries real archaeology to match the story, ramparts and a pool platform with occupation of the post-Roman centuries, exactly the age in which the legend is set, together with a later medieval tower base. Few places in Britain hold myth and evidence in such balance.

Dyffryn Ardudwy Burial Chamber

52.7846 N, 4.0942 W

Two chambers in one long cairn beside the village school at Dyffryn Ardudwy, and a monument of national importance, for the western chamber is among the earliest portal dolmens known in Britain, its small closed chamber and forecourt later engulfed when the second, larger chamber and its great trapezoid cairn were added. Pottery from the forecourt pit belongs to the earliest Neolithic. The whole sequence of the tomb builders' craft can be read here in one place, in Cadw care beside the road.

Castell-y-Gaer Hillfort

52.6606 N, 4.0832 W

An oval enclosure above Llwyngwrl on the Meirionnydd coast, defended by scarps above steep natural slopes and by a stony bank with an additional ditch to the south, arranged to force an offset approach on the east-facing entrance. A modest fort with an immodest outlook across Cardigan Bay.

Llech Idris Standing Stone

52.8623 N, 3.8862 W

A tall slab of stone, some three metres of it, standing alone on the moor of Trawsfynydd. Its name ties it to Idris the giant, who in legend hurled it here from the summit of Cadair Idris away to the south, and the old road it stands beside, later the Roman route to Tomen y Mur, suggests its real work may always have been to mark the way.

Mynydd Graig Goch Round Cairn

53.0109 N, 4.2387 W

A substantial Bronze Age cairn, eleven metres across and two high, set on the southern shoulder of Mynydd Graig Goch at the western end of the Nantlle ridge, positioned to be seen from Cwm Pennant below. The original monument keeps its kerb of large slabs on the north side, distinguishing it from the modern walkers' cairn on the summit. The dead of the Bronze Age were placed to watch over the living valleys, and nowhere shows it more clearly.

Tomen y Mur

52.9298 N, 3.9274 W

A Roman fort above Trawsfynydd with a small amphitheatre, the only one known at an auxiliary fort in Britain, its earthworks later crowned by a Norman motte. In the Mabinogi this is Mur Castell, where Lleu and Blodeuwedd, the woman made of flowers, held their court, and the layers of the site, parade ground, bathhouse, practice camps, medieval castle mound, make it one of the richest single monuments in Wales. The stone the Romans dressed was quarried and reused for a thousand years after they left.

Tre'r Ceiri Hillfort

52.9744 N, 4.4241 W

The town of the giants, on the easternmost peak of Yr Eifl in Llyn: the best preserved hillfort in Britain, its drystone rampart still standing to walkable height in places, enclosing the foundations of more than a hundred and fifty stone huts. Occupied through the Roman centuries, it held a community living at five hundred metres above the sea, and to walk through its gateway is the nearest thing Wales offers to entering an Iron Age town by its own front door.

Ystum Cegid Isaf

52.9482 N, 4.2357 W

A burial chamber caught in a drystone field wall near Llanystumdwy, its great trapezoid capstone, some four and a half metres at its longest, balanced on four surviving uprights with a fifth lying broken. The chamber would have stood about head height when built. A tomb that farming absorbed rather than destroyed, and the wall that runs through it has probably protected it for two centuries.

The North East: Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire

Brenig Platform Cairn

53.0967 N, 3.5101 W

On the moors above Llyn Brenig stands a reconstructed platform cairn, Brenig 51, a flat ring of stone raised above the heather with twenty-six small stones in a circle upon it, part of a whole Bronze Age cemetery excavated ahead of the reservoir and laid out as an archaeological trail. The Brenig valley offers something rare: an entire ritual landscape, cairns, ring cairn and platform cairn together, legible in a single walk.

Bwrdd y Tri Arglwydd

53.0112 N, 3.3362 W

The Table of the Three Lords, near Llandegla, is a stone with two identities. It served in the medieval period as the meeting point of three lordships, the boundary stone at which their lands touched, and it is also reputed to be the remains of a Neolithic chambered tomb, a claim that cannot now be proved or dismissed, for no mound or earthwork survives around it. Whichever came first, it is a monument to the oldest use of stone in the landscape: the marking of where one thing ends and another begins.

Caer Bach Hillfort

53.2388 N, 3.8831 W

The little fort, a small hillfort on a rounded hillock above the Conwy valley, ringed by two lines of defence, an outer earthen bank and ditch and an inner rampart with traces of laid stone revetment on its northwest face. A hut circle lies against the inner wall. It sits on the old hill route between the valley and Tal y Fan, in a landscape thick with the monuments of every age.

Capel Garmon Burial Chamber

53.0730 N, 3.7657 W

A chambered tomb of the Cotswold-Severn family far from its kin, set on a farm above the Conwy with the peaks of Eryri filling the western sky. The long cairn had a false entrance, the true way in being from the side, and one chamber keeps its great capstone. In the nineteenth century the chamber did service as a stable, one more chapter in the long afterlife of the Welsh tombs. In Cadw care.

Carreg y Llech

53.1171 N, 3.1239 W

An imposing standing stone at Treuddyn in Flintshire, almost as wide as it is tall, a slab of sandstone nearly two metres in each direction planted on edge. The name means simply the slab stone, and no legend or record explains it: it stands, as it has for perhaps four thousand years, on its own authority.

Druids Circle (Meini Hirion)

53.2535 N, 3.9158 W

On the high shelf above Penmaenmawr stands one of the great stone circles of Wales, some thirty stones on an embanked ring beside an ancient trackway. Excavation found urned cremations of children near the centre, burials that gave the circle a darker cast in modern telling, though their true meaning is beyond us. The circle stands close to the Graiglwyd axe factory, whose stone travelled the length of Britain, and it belongs to a whole cluster of rings and cairns along this terrace between mountain and sea. The name is eighteenth century romance; the monument is Bronze Age fact.

Eliseg's Pillar

52.9921 N, 3.1893 W

Near Valle Crucis Abbey stands the broken shaft of a ninth century cross raised by Cyngen, last king of Powys of the old line, in honour of his great-grandfather Eliseg, who drove the English from the land. Its long Latin inscription, now almost wholly weathered away but recorded in 1696 by Edward Lhuyd, traced the dynasty's descent from Vortigern and Magnus Maximus, history and propaganda cut in stone. The abbey that later rose beside it took its name, the valley of the cross, from this pillar. Few stones in Britain carry so much politics.

Gop Hill Cairn

53.3104 N, 3.3721 W

Above Trelawnyd rises the largest artificial mound in Wales and, after Silbury Hill, the second largest in Britain, a vast cairn of limestone whose purpose remains unknown: tunnelling in the nineteenth century found no burial. In the cave below the hill, however, excavation found the remains of at least fourteen Neolithic people. The mound watches over the Vale of Clwyd, and whatever it was raised to do, it still does it: it commands.

Gwytherin Churchyard

53.1385 N, 3.6807 W

In the circular churchyard at Gwytherin, where tradition places the convent of St Winefride, stands a row of four small stones aligned east to west, one bearing a Latin inscription of the fifth or sixth century. Opinion divides three ways: an early Christian setting; a Bronze Age row reused and inscribed; or an arrangement of the stones made as late as the eighteenth century. The row is recorded in the national database, and the uncertainty is stated here as it stands, for the stones are eloquent even while the experts disagree.

Lletty'r Filiast Dolmen

53.3291 N, 3.8452 W

The lair of the greyhound bitch on the Great Orme, a ruined burial chamber in a hollow on the limestone headland, sharing its name with tombs far to the south. Above it lie the Bronze Age copper mines, among the largest yet found in the ancient world, and the tomb's builders were the ancestors of the miners: the Orme was a place of consequence for thousands of years before the resort town grew at its foot.

Maen y Bardd Dolmen

53.2282 N, 3.8880 W

The poet's stone, a small perfect dolmen on the hillside above Rowen, its capstone poised over a low chamber beside the old road across the pass of Bwlch y Ddeufaen, a route walked from the Neolithic to the Roman age and beyond. Nearby stands the tall stone called Ffon y Cawr, the giant's stick, hurled in legend by a giant at his idle shepherd. Tomb, track and standing stones together make this hillside one of the most rewarding prehistoric walks in Wales.

Moel Arthur Hillfort

53.1845 N, 3.2805 W

One of the chain of hillforts crowning the Clwydian Range, its banks and ditches enclosing a small summit with a Bronze Age burial mound nearby, evidence that the hill was marked long before the fort was made. Curious depressions near the top may be the scars of a brief nineteenth century gold rush, a modern treasure legend to set beside the ancient ones. The fort is a station on Offa's Dyke Path's finest stretch.

Moel y Gaer, Rhosesmor

53.2125 N, 3.1828 W

A hilltop enclosure whose excavation in the 1970s, ahead of reservoir works, made it one of the key sequences for the Iron Age in Wales: a timber longhouse of the third millennium BC, then a late seventh century BC palisade around timber roundhouses, replaced in turn by a rampart of stone and earth. The visible banks are the last page of a very long book of occupation reaching back, perhaps sporadically, to the Neolithic.

Moel Ty Uchaf

52.9238 N, 3.4055 W

A cairn circle of forty-one close-set stones, about twelve metres across, on a rounded hill above Llandrillo in the Berwyn foothills, with a central cist and the ring of Tyfos in the valley below. None of the stones is tall, and the monument's power lies in its completeness and its setting, a near-perfect ring on a bare hilltop with the Dee valley spread beneath. Among those who know it, it is spoken of as one of the loveliest small monuments in Wales.

Penycloddiau Hillfort

53.1995 N, 3.3060 W

One of the largest hillforts in Wales, its ramparts running for well over a mile around a whale-backed Clwydian summit and enclosing some twenty hectares. The scale of the circuit implies a community, or a confederation, of real size, and walking the full circuit of banks on the Offa's Dyke Path is the best way to grasp what Iron Age labour could achieve.

Tyn y Coed Dolmen

52.9453 N, 3.4187 W

A burial chamber near Cynwyd in the Dee valley, its three-metre capstone propped at one end on small boulders while its western end sits snugly into the remains of a long mound. The chamber has been robbed and disturbed, yet the monument remains clearly readable as what it was, a Neolithic tomb, sharing the valley with Moel Ty Uchaf and the Tyfos circle on the hills above.

Powys and the Marches

Maen Llia

51.8609 N, 3.5637 W

The great slab of Maen Llia stands nearly four metres tall at the head of the Llia valley, beside the mountain road and the line of Sarn Helen. Diamond-shaped, weathered and immense, it is the largest standing stone of the Bannau and probably a Bronze Age marker on a route that has never gone out of use. Legend has it drink from the river when it hears the cock crow. Two miles south stands its lettered counterpart, the inscribed Maen Madoc, and the question of possible markings on Maen Llia itself is taken up in the companion article to this map.

Gwernvale Barrow

51.8659 N, 3.1470 W

Beside the A40 at Crickhowell lie the stripped chambers of a Cotswold-Severn long cairn, excavated in the 1970s when the road was widened. Beneath the Neolithic tomb the diggers found something older still, traces of Mesolithic activity and early Neolithic occupation, a place already known and used before the monument was raised upon it. The traffic now passes within feet of chambers that once lay deep inside a great trapezoid mound.

Twyn y Gaer, Grwyne

51.8916 N, 3.0279 W

A fort on a dramatic isolated summit above the Grwyne valley in the Black Mountains, an elongated oval of rampart, ditch and counterscarp with an inturned eastern entrance. Excavation from 1965 showed the enclosure growing by phases from an original eastern core, the internal cross-ramparts marking the older fronts, a fort that expanded with the fortunes of its people.

Twyn-y-Gaer, Llaneglwys

52.0076 N, 3.3789 W

A small oval fort on a rounded knoll north of Llanddew, its double banks enclosing a space some seventy metres across, with a length of bank and ditch running out northeast from the causewayed entrance. One of the quiet majority of Welsh hillforts, unexcavated and unvisited, holding its ground above the Wye-Usk watershed.

Castell Crug Eryr

52.2254 N, 3.2341 W

The eagle's crag, a motte and bailey castle on a commanding hilltop above the Edw valley in Radnorshire, its mound over four metres high within a banked enclosure. It belongs to the medieval end of this map's long story, a Welsh castle of the Marches associated by name with the herald bard Llywelyn Crug Eryr, and it earns its place among the older monuments by doing what they all do: taking the high ground and holding the view.

Four Stones, Old Radnor

52.2402 N, 3.1059 W

Four squat boulders set in a square in the Walton basin, the finest example in Wales of the arrangement known as a four-poster, a form more at home in Scotland. The basin around them, invisible from the ground, is one of the great ritual landscapes of Britain, with cropmarks of vast Neolithic enclosures and cursus monuments beneath the fields, and the Four Stones are its one enduring above-ground witness. Legend makes them kings' burial markers; archaeology keeps its counsel.

Carn Fawr Round Cairn

52.1340 N, 3.9475 W

A Bronze Age cairn on the summit of Craig Twrch in the uplands northeast of Cynwyl Gaeo, a stone mound some twenty metres across and over two metres high, prominent in open moorland and doubtless raised for someone of standing. It is a scheduled monument, and with the Esgair Ffraith cairns nearby it marks the high burial grounds of the communities whose valley chapels and memorial stones appear elsewhere on this map.

Esgair Ffraith Round Cairns

52.1155 N, 3.9759 W

A group of Bronze Age burial cairns on the ridge of Esgair Fraith near Cynwyl Gaeo, scheduled as monuments of national importance and neighboured by the evocatively named Bedd y Milwr, the soldier's grave. Little has been recorded of them in detail, which places them among the many upland monuments of mid Wales that are protected, mapped and still essentially unstudied.

Ceredigion and the Cambrian Uplands

Pen Dinas Hillfort, Aberystwyth

52.4016 N, 4.0825 W

The great coastal hillfort of Ceredigion, its ramparts enclosing the twin summits of the hill between the Ystwyth and Rheidol at Aberystwyth. The fort developed in phases, the two summit enclosures eventually joined into one, and its banks sheltered a substantial community above the harbour mouth. The column on the southern summit is a nineteenth century monument to Wellington, the newest layer on a hill that has been claimed and reclaimed for well over two thousand years.

Pen-y-castell Hillfort, Llanilar

52.3518 N, 4.0130 W

A many-phased earthwork on a prominent flat-topped hill above the Ystwyth, where airborne laser scanning has revealed an early curving enclosure invisible on the ground, possibly Bronze Age or older, beneath and beside a strong oval Iron Age fort of the fourth or third century BC. The whole complex encloses some 1.7 hectares. It is a reminder that even in the twenty-first century the hillforts are still giving up new information, and that not every discovery needs a spade.

Castell Perthi-mawr Hillfort

52.2086 N, 4.1557 W

An Iron Age fort southwest of the Trichrug cairns, defended by two drystone walls whose staggered, offset openings created a zigzag approach designed to wrong-foot an attacker. The interior, about 112 by 60 metres, holds beneath its turf the faint ring of a six-metre roundhouse. Fort and cairns together make this quiet Ceredigion hilltop a two-period landscape, Bronze Age burial and Iron Age defence within one walk.

Trichrug Cairns

52.2181 N, 4.1352 W

The three humps: Bronze Age burial cairns crowning the prominent hill of Trichrug between the Aeron and the sea, a summit of mid-Silurian sandstone that has drawn attention for four thousand years. The cairns, raised for burial and ceremony, gave the hill its name, and with Castell Perthi-mawr on the neighbouring rise the group shows the familiar Welsh pairing of high dead and defended living.

Hirnant Stone Circle

52.4392 N, 3.8355 W

A ring of sixteen small upright stones, six metres across, in the hills near Nant-y-moch, a monument that has been called at various times a stone circle and a ring cairn and is now best understood as a kerb circle, the retaining ring of a cairn whose loose stone was long ago carried off for building. The classification matters less than the setting: a small, complete ring with enormous views, marking how the uplands of the Cambrian mountains were used by the living to house the dead.

Pembrokeshire and the Preseli Borders

Pentre Ifan Burial Chamber

51.9990 N, 4.7700 W

The most famous prehistoric monument in Wales: the great portal dolmen below Carn Ingli, its five-metre capstone of some sixteen tons poised on the points of three tall uprights with a delicacy that has astonished visitors for centuries. It is the surviving skeleton of an early Neolithic tomb with a deep forecourt, and its stone is the local igneous rock, cousin to the bluestones on the ridge above. Recorded by antiquarians from the sixteenth century onward and among the first monuments in Britain to be taken into state care, it remains, deservedly, the image of the Welsh Neolithic. In Cadw care with open access.

Carreg Coetan Arthur, Newport

52.0186 N, 4.8283 W

Arthur's quoit stands in a small railed enclosure among the bungalows of Newport, a dolmen whose capstone rests on just two of its four uprights. Excavation found cremated bone and pottery of the earliest Neolithic. The town has grown around the tomb and left it a garden of its own, an accommodation between ages that has kept the monument safe. In Cadw care.

Cerrig y Gof

52.0137 N, 4.8626 W

The smith's stones, beside the Newport to Fishguard road, is unique in Britain: five rectangular stone chambers arranged radially around the edge of a round mound, facing outward like the petals of a flower. Nothing else like it is known, and its excavation in the nineteenth century recovered bone, charcoal and pottery but no explanation. Of all the monuments of the Welsh Neolithic and Bronze Age, this is perhaps the strangest, and it stands almost unnoticed beside the A487.

Carreg Samson

51.9584 N, 5.1330 W

A magnificent dolmen above the harbour of Abercastle, its rounded capstone carried on three of seven uprights over a polygonal chamber. Excavation showed the chamber was built over a pit and that the capstone was probably levered up from where it lay, the tomb assembled around its own roof. The saint of the name is said to have set the capstone in place with his little finger, one more case of the church adopting what it could not explain.

Coetan Arthur, St Davids Head

51.9045 N, 5.3082 W

On the wild headland of St Davids Head lies Arthur's quoit, a collapsed dolmen whose big capstone now leans on a single upright, the remains of a Neolithic chamber on one of the great promontories of Wales. It shares the headland with the ramparts of the promontory fort and the hut circles and field systems of a settlement that continued for millennia, all within sound of the sea.

Ogof Geifr Settlement, St Davids Head

51.9027 N, 5.3121 W

The headland around Ogof Geifr carries the remains of a defended settlement with round houses behind the bank of the promontory fort known as Warrior's Dyke, together with ancient field walls running back across the heath and the chambered tombs of Coetan Arthur and Carn Llidi above. Taken together, St Davids Head preserves an entire prehistoric landscape, dwelling, field and tomb, in a few hundred windswept acres.

Garn Fawr Hillfort

52.0078 N, 5.0669 W

A stone-walled fort wrapped around the craggy summit of Garn Fawr above Strumble Head, its multiple ramparts threading the outcrops, with hut remains within and a companion fort on the neighbouring crag. From the top the view runs across the whole sweep of Cardigan Bay, and on clear days to Ireland, sightlines that were surely part of the fort's purpose.

Foel Drygarn Hillfort

51.9703 N, 4.6834 W

The hill of three cairns, at the eastern end of the Preseli ridge, where an Iron Age rampart encloses three great Bronze Age burial cairns that were already a thousand years old when the fort was built around them. More than two hundred house platforms pock the interior, and finds have included glass beads and Roman pottery. The fort's people lived among their monumental dead, and no site in Wales shows the continuity of the high places better.

Craig Rhos-y-felin

51.9919 N, 4.7443 W

A rhyolite outcrop in the wooded valley of the Brynberian stream, identified by geological fingerprinting as the source of one of the rhyolite bluestones at Stonehenge, matched to within metres of the crag. Excavation revealed what its investigators interpret as a Neolithic quarry, with a recess from which a monolith was removed; others read the deposits as natural. Together with Carn Goedog on the ridge above, it places this quiet Pembrokeshire valley at the centre of the longest-running question in British archaeology: how, and why, the stones went east.

Gors Fawr Stone Circle

51.9316 N, 4.7147 W

The complete stone circle of the Preselis, sixteen low stones in a ring on the open moor below the ridge, with two taller outlying stones to the northeast forming a gateway or alignment. The stones are small and the circle's power is in its position, with the crags of Carn Menyn on the skyline, the bluestone country presiding over its own ring. Unlike so much here, it is easily reached and freely open.

Carn Besi Burial Chamber

51.9163 N, 4.6826 W

The wreck of a Neolithic chambered tomb beside the A478 near Efailwen, its stones tumbled and its original form largely conjectural, possibly robbed when the road was made. It stands within sight of the Preseli tops and belongs to the remarkable concentration of monuments around Glandy Cross, the ritual heart of the region, whose principal sites appear on the newest layer of this map.

Gwal y Filiast (Bwrdd Arthur)

51.8992 N, 4.6603 W

The greyhound's lair, a dolmen deep in the woods above the gorge of the Taf near Llanglydwen, its capstone resting on four uprights above the rushing river. Also called Bwrdd Arthur, Arthur's table, it

collects the two great folklore traditions of the Welsh tombs, the hounds and the king, in a single secluded monument, one of the most atmospheric in the southwest.

Trellyffaint Dolmen

52.0479 N, 4.7982 W

The toad's town, a burial chamber near Nevern whose capstone carries dozens of cup marks, one of the few decorated tombs of the region. Gerald of Wales told of a man of these parts pursued and consumed by toads, and the name has clung to the monument since. Tomb, carving and legend together, it stands for the layered character of the whole Nevern landscape.

Garn Turne

51.9070 N, 4.9392 W

The collapsed giant among Welsh tombs: a chamber whose capstone, at an estimated sixty tons among the heaviest ever raised in Britain, fell in antiquity and lies as it dropped, with the stones of a V-shaped forecourt before it. The attempt itself commands respect. Recent survey has traced further stones and possible earlier features around the monument, which sits in rough ground below a rocky knoll near St Dogwells.

Kings Quoit, Manorbier

51.6408 N, 4.8061 W

A dolmen on the headland above Manorbier bay, its thin capstone resting on two low uprights and the slope of the ground, looking across the cove to the castle where Gerald of Wales was born. The simplest architecture on the finest site: the tomb builders of the coast knew exactly what they were doing when they chose their ground.

Hoyle's Mouth Cave

51.6698 N, 4.7318 W

A cave in the limestone ridge near Tenby, occupied by hunters at the end of the last Ice Age, whose flint tools and the bones of the animals they pursued have come from its floor, with later use in the Neolithic and after. With Paviland along the coast, it belongs to the small company of Welsh caves that carry the human story back beyond ten thousand years.

Bedd Morris Standing Stone

51.9922 N, 4.8588 W

A tall stone beside the mountain road from Newport over to Pontfaen, long taken for a Bronze Age monolith and carrying the legend of a robber or a murdered traveller named Morris. Honesty requires the doubt to be recorded: the stone bears an Ordnance Survey bench mark and cut boundary inscriptions, it has served as a parish boundary stone, and the national record is not persuaded of its antiquity, since no early antiquary mentions it. Ancient stone reused, or boundary stone mythologised, it earns its place either way, and it is examined further in the companion article on the anomalous stones.

Llanfyrnach Standing Stones A and B

51.9522 N, 4.6098 W

Two standing stones, the Brynmeini stones, in fields between Hermon and Llanfyrnach, a few dozen metres apart, one visible from the lane. The footpath the maps show has vanished on the ground, and the pair are recorded in the national database but little studied, quiet members of the great scatter of single stones across the northern county whose purposes, marker, memorial, gathering place, remain open.

Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort

52.0178 N, 4.7449 W

The fort where the Iron Age has been rebuilt: excavated over decades more thoroughly than almost any small hillfort in Britain, and its roundhouses then reconstructed on their original foundations, the only place in the country where that has been done. Thatched, furnished and fired, the houses of Castell Henllys let the visitor stand inside the world the other ninety-nine sites on this layer can only imply. It is run as a heritage centre by the national park.

Carmarthenshire, Gower and Glamorgan

Craig Gwrtheyrn Hillfort

52.0380 N, 4.2860 W

Vortigern's crag, above the Teifi near Llanfihangel-ar-arth: an Iron Age fort of about a hectare and a half with a drystone rampart, an elaborated southwestern entrance and a rare surviving patch of chevaux de frise, sharp stones set on end to break a charge, of which some thirty remain. Tradition makes this one of the refuges of the fifth century warlord Vortigern, whose name it bears; the fort itself is centuries older, and the story is one more case of legend seeking out the strongest ground.

Gelli Dewi Uchaf Barrow Cemetery

52.0737 N, 4.0573 W

Six round barrows in a line from northwest to southeast along the flank of Mynydd Pencarreg, low mounds of earth and stone on the saddles and knolls of the rough grazing, none more than knee height now but together forming a linear cemetery of the Bronze Age. Cemeteries of this kind strung their dead along the skyline routes, and this one, little known and never excavated, still does.

Carn Llechart Stone Circle and Cairn

51.7399 N, 3.8881 W

On the moorland ridge above Pontardawe lies one of the finest ring cairns in Wales, a circle of some twenty-five slabs set shoulder to shoulder and leaning outward around a low cairn with a central cist. The ring was the kerb and crown of a Bronze Age burial monument, and its situation, on open upland with long views over the Swansea valley, is characteristic of where the age placed its dead.

Paviland Cave (Goat's Hole)

51.5502 N, 4.2554 W

The most important Palaeolithic site in Britain. In 1823 William Buckland found here a skeleton stained with red ochre, buried with ivory ornaments, and named it the Red Lady; the bones are those of a young man, and modern dating places the burial around thirty-three to thirty-four thousand years ago, the oldest ceremonial burial known in western Europe. When he was laid in the cave the sea was distant plain and mammoth country; the tide now runs at the cliff foot below. Access is by low tide and rough scramble, and the cave's contents are in museum care, but no site in Wales carries deeper time.

Parc le Breos Burial Chamber

51.5883 N, 4.1126 W

The Giant's Grave in Parc Cwm on Gower, a Cotswold-Severn chambered long cairn found by workmen in 1869, its trapezoid cairn restored to outline with a central passage and paired side chambers that held the remains of some forty people. The tomb served its community for centuries, bones moved and rearranged as new burials came. Cat Hole Cave, with its far older engraved reindeer, lies a short walk up the same wooded valley, and the two together span twelve thousand years.

Maen Ceti (Arthur's Stone)

51.5936 N, 4.1793 W

On the ridge of Cefn Bryn lies one of the most storied stones in Wales: a vast capstone, a glacial boulder of some twenty-five tons now split, propped on low uprights above its chamber. Legend calls it the pebble Arthur shook from his shoe as he strode to Camlan, and tells of the stone going down to the sea to drink on midsummer eve. Antiquity made it a wonder of Britain; the Gower commoners have grazed their stock around it for a thousand years without disturbing it.

Sweynes Howes

51.5859 N, 4.2803 W

Two ruined megalithic tombs on the eastern slope of Rhossili Down, a few hundred metres apart, their chambers collapsed among spreads of cairn stone. The name attaches them in folklore to Sweyne, the Norse founder of Swansea, but the monuments are Neolithic, three thousand years older than any Viking. Above them the down carries Bronze Age cairns, and below, the great beach; few short walks in Wales cross so many ages.

Pen-y-Castell, Cwmavon

51.6115 N, 3.7510 W

A small Iron Age fort on a steep-sided hill above the Afan valley, a single bank following the contour around a summit sixty-five metres long, with a simple eastern entrance, an outer berm and a second rampart on the more approachable sides. A workmanlike fort for a small community, guarding its valley as the larger forts guarded theirs.

Y Bwlwarcau Hillfort

51.5839 N, 3.6772 W

On a spur of Mynydd Margam above Maesteg lies a hill-slope fort, an enclosure sited not on a summit but on a slope overlooked by higher ground, which tells at once that defence was not its first purpose. A small central enclosure sits within three widely spaced concentric ramparts taking in over four hectares, an arrangement suited to stock management as much as war. Unexcavated, it is one of the best examples of its class in the south.

The Rocking Stone, Pontypridd

51.6022 N, 3.3278 W

On Pontypridd common rests a logan stone, a glacial boulder so poised that it can be rocked, a natural wonder that the nineteenth century made into a monument. Around it Myfyr Morganwg, self-styled archdruid, laid out serpentine stone circles for druidic ceremony in the 1850s, and eisteddfodic gatherings were held here in the tradition invented by Iolo Morganwg. Nothing on this spot is prehistoric except the boulder itself, and everything on it testifies to how powerfully Wales wanted its stones to speak.

Rhiwsaeson Hillfort (Caerau, Llantrisant)

51.5398 N, 3.3506 W

A strong multivallate fort above Rhiwsaeson, its defences of two close-set banks and ditches with a counterscarp measuring thirty metres across and seven or more in height where best preserved, with the entrance on the southeast. On the steep southern side the outer works were never needed. It belongs to the busy Iron Age landscape of the Ely valley, with Caerau at Cardiff downstream.

Castell Nos, Rhondda Fach

51.6907 N, 3.4987 W

At the head of the Rhondda Fach a natural rocky knoll has been scarped and ditched into a small motte-like stronghold, with traces of a possible bailey, commanding the whole length of the valley below. No document records it, and it is best read as a medieval Welsh castle improvised from a naturally strong position, the upland lordships defending themselves with whatever the ground offered.

Caerau Hillfort, Cardiff

51.4668 N, 3.2481 W

A large triangular multivallate fort on the ridge above Caerau and Ely, in the western suburbs of Cardiff, one of the biggest hillforts in the region and now the subject of long-running community excavation that has traced occupation back to the Neolithic. Within its ramparts stand the old parish church of St Mary and a medieval ringwork, the whole hilltop a compressed history of the city below it.

Tinkinswood Burial Chamber

51.4515 N, 3.3078 W

The greatest capstone in Britain roofs this Cotswold-Severn tomb in the Vale of Glamorgan: a single slab of some forty tons, its raising one of the heaviest lifts of the Neolithic world. Excavation in 1914 recovered the remains of around fifty people from the chamber. Folklore made the site perilous, promising death, madness or poetry to anyone sleeping within on the old spirit nights, the three fates of those who meddle with the otherworld. In Cadw care, a short field walk from St Lythans.

St Lythans Burial Chamber

51.4426 N, 3.2949 W

A mile from Tinkinswood stands its elegant companion, a tall open dolmen whose chamber of three uprights and heavy capstone was once the heart of a long mound now almost gone. The field it stands in was called the accursed field, where nothing would grow, and the capstone is said to spin on midsummer eve while the stones go to the river to bathe. The two Vale tombs together, one massive, one graceful, are the southern bookend of the Welsh Neolithic. In Cadw care.

Westward Corner Round Barrow

51.3938 N, 3.3070 W

A Bronze Age round barrow on the rise above Porthkerry bay, nine metres across and standing to nearly two metres, now surrounded on all sides by the houses of Barry. Its encircling ditch, recorded in the 1970s, has largely been filled and disturbed. The barrow survives as a green island in a modern estate, one of the many small monuments that towns have grown around and, in growing, kept.

The South East and the Wye

Harold's Stones, Trellech

51.7428 N, 2.7266 W

Three great stones of puddingstone lean at their separate angles in a field at Trellech, the alignment that named the village, the town of the stones, and one of very few stone rows in Wales. Tradition ties them to Harold's victories or to Jack o' Kent's stone-throwing contest with the Devil; the row is Bronze Age, and its stones have watched the rise and near-total disappearance of the medieval town beside them, once among the largest in Wales. The question of undocumented markings on their faces is taken up in the companion article.

Heston Brake Long Barrow

51.5947 N, 2.7157 W

A long barrow on a low ridge at Portskewett above the Severn shore, its mound reduced but its chamber stones exposed in a line, the entrance once flanked by two taller pillars. Excavation in the nineteenth century found human bone within. It watches the estuary crossings as it has since the Neolithic, with the two Severn bridges now in its view.

Llanmelin Wood Hillfort

51.6290 N, 2.7789 W

The principal hillfort of the Silures country in Gwent, a banked and ditched enclosure with an elaborate southeast entrance and annexe, long proposed as the tribal centre whose people the Romans eventually resettled at Caerwent, Venta Silurum, in the fields below. The claim cannot be proved, but the geography argues for it, and no pairing in Wales puts hillfort and Roman successor so neatly side by side.

Twmbarlwm Hillfort

51.6277 N, 3.0937 W

The mountain above Risca that every valley child knows as the Twmp: an Iron Age fort along the summit ridge, with a great mound at its eastern end that is almost certainly a medieval motte raised within the older enclosure. Beloved, burnt, eroded and endlessly climbed, it is the most visited ancient monument in Gwent and the emotional high ground of the eastern valleys.

King Arthur's Cave

51.8373 N, 2.6593 W

In the wooded limestone of the Wye gorge near Symonds Yat, on the Herefordshire bank, opens a double-mouthed cave whose floor has yielded the tools of Ice Age hunters and the bones of hyena, mammoth and cave lion, with occupation returning in later prehistory. It stands just over the modern border, but the Wye has never been a boundary to the human story this map follows, and the cave belongs to the same ancient world as the Welsh caves of Gower and Tenby.

Sources

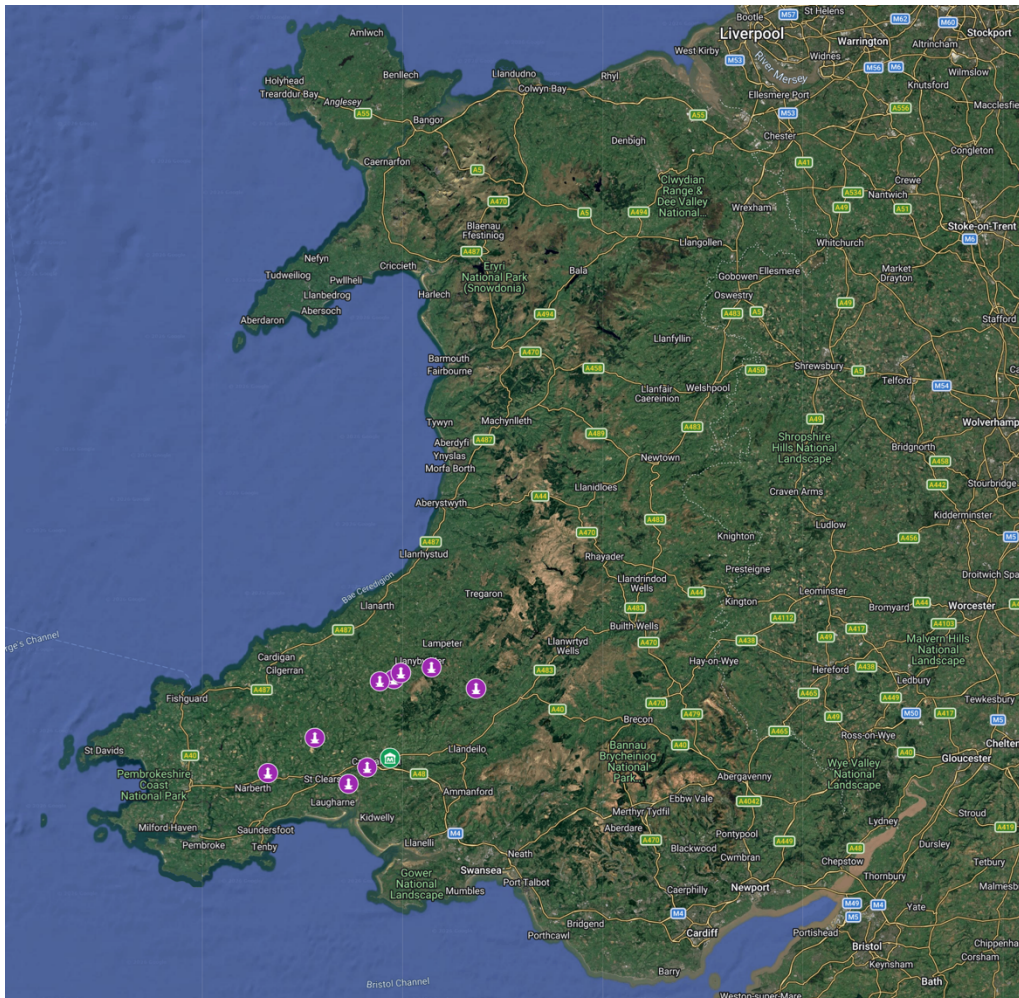
The site records of Coflein, the online catalogue of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and the scheduled monument records of Cadw, together with the published excavation reports for the individually excavated sites, the guidance of Cadw for the monuments in state care, the accounts of the early antiquarians from Edward Lhuyd onward, and field observation. Folklore is drawn from the standard collections of Welsh tradition and is presented throughout as tradition, not as history.

Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly, 2026

The Carmarthenshire Museum Stones

Early Christian Memorial Stones of Carmarthenshire

Ten stones, ten journeys: the memorial stones of the fifth to ninth centuries gathered at Abergwili, and the places where they stood



Interactive map: www.tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites



Researched and written by Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly

Carmarthenshire Museum Early Christian Stones

Stone No. 1 — The Voteporix Stone

5th – 6th Century AD



Bilingual Ogham and Latin Memorial Stone | Carmarthenshire Museum Photograph:

Graham Tudor Emmanuel.

Introduction

In the quiet galleries of Carmarthen Museum, housed in the former Bishop's Palace at Abergwili on the outskirts of the town, there stands a modest pale stone, roughly the shape of an elongated wedge. It does not shout for attention. It carries no gilding, no elaborate carving, no medieval flourish. Yet this single stone weathered, ancient, and profoundly silent represents one of the most important objects in all of early Welsh history.

It is known as the Voteporix Stone, and it dates to somewhere between the 5th and 6th centuries AD a time after the Roman legions had departed Britain, when the old-world order was dissolving and something new and distinctly Welsh was beginning to take shape. In this period of transition, a people were finding their language, their faith, their identity. The Voteporix Stone is their voice.

Discovery and Journey to the Museum

The stone was discovered in 1895 at Castell Dwyran a small, atmospheric settlement in the heart of Carmarthenshire, home to the ancient church of St Teilo. For years before its discovery, it had been quietly incorporated into a stile at the edge of the churchyard, doing the humble work of a stepping stone while carrying one of the most important inscriptions in post-Roman Britain beneath its surface.

After its removal, the stone was relocated to a field in front of Gwarmacwydd House, Llanfallteg, before being donated to the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society. In 1921 it entered the care of Carmarthen Museum, where it has remained ever since. It is possible that the stone was originally positioned with reference to the Roman road running west of Carmarthen, and local tradition warned that the land must never be ploughed, lest there be “thundering's and lightnings and the cattle will die.”

The Inscriptions: Two Languages, One Man

What makes the Voteporix Stone extraordinary is that it speaks in two languages simultaneously. It is a bilingual monument the product of a world where cultures overlapped, where Irish settlers lived alongside Romanised Britons, and where memory was honoured in more than one tongue.

The Latin Inscription

Carved in Roman capital letters on the face of the stone, beneath a simple ring cross, the Latin reads:

MEMORIA VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS

“The Memorial of Voteporix, the Protector”

The ring cross marks this man as a Christian. The use of the Latin word Memoria a formula common in Continental early Christian inscriptions from the late fourth century onwards — hints at spiritual connections that reached well beyond Wales, possibly as far as the Continent or even North Africa.

The Ogham Inscription

Running along the edge of the stone in notched strokes is the second inscription written in Ogham, the alphabet invented in Ireland. The Ogham records his name in its Irish Goidelic form:

VOTECORIGAS

The Ogham inscription is evidence of Primitive Irish still being spoken in south-west Wales in the 5th or 6th century. The language had not yet died out in this part of Britain, preserved among the descendants of Irish settlers who had crossed the Irish Sea in the preceding generations.

Voteporix: The Man and His World

Voteporix was a man who stood at one of history's great fault lines. He was a Briton of Irish descent, conscious of his Roman past, living at a time when the kingdom of Dyfed whose heartland lay across what we now know as Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire was beginning to take shape as a distinctly

Welsh entity. His people, the Déisi, had migrated from the Waterford area of south-east Ireland during the late 4th and early 5th centuries, crossing the Irish Sea to settle in the territory of the Demetae in south-west Wales.

His title ^Protector, rendered in Latin as ^Protictoris is deeply revealing. In the Roman Empire, protector was a specific grade of officer, a member of a trained imperial bodyguard corps. By the 5th and 6th centuries, the legions were gone from Britain, but the prestige of Roman titles lingered. For Voteporix or his family, the title Protector was likely an inherited honorific a sign not of military command but of ancestral Roman connection.

The Gildas question

When this stone was first identified in the late 19th century, scholars immediately connected it to Vortiporius, King of Dyfed, condemned by the monk Gildas in his treatise *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* around 540 AD. Gildas called him the “bad son of a good king” and compared him to the beasts of the Apocalypse.

However, modern linguistic analysis has introduced a significant complication. The name on the stone Voteporigis is missing the letter ‘r’ in its first syllable, compared to Vortiporius. In the phonology of early Welsh and Irish naming, this is linguistically meaningful. The stone, modern scholars now conclude, commemorates a different individual not Gildas’s condemned king, but perhaps a kinsman or predecessor of similar standing.

Why This Stone Matters

The Voteporix Stone sits at the intersection of three worlds: Roman, Irish, and emerging Welsh. It demonstrates that the so-called Dark Ages following Roman withdrawal were not dark at all, but alive with movement, multilingualism, cultural exchange, and Christian faith. In a period from which written records are vanishingly rare, this stone is one of the most articulate voices we have.

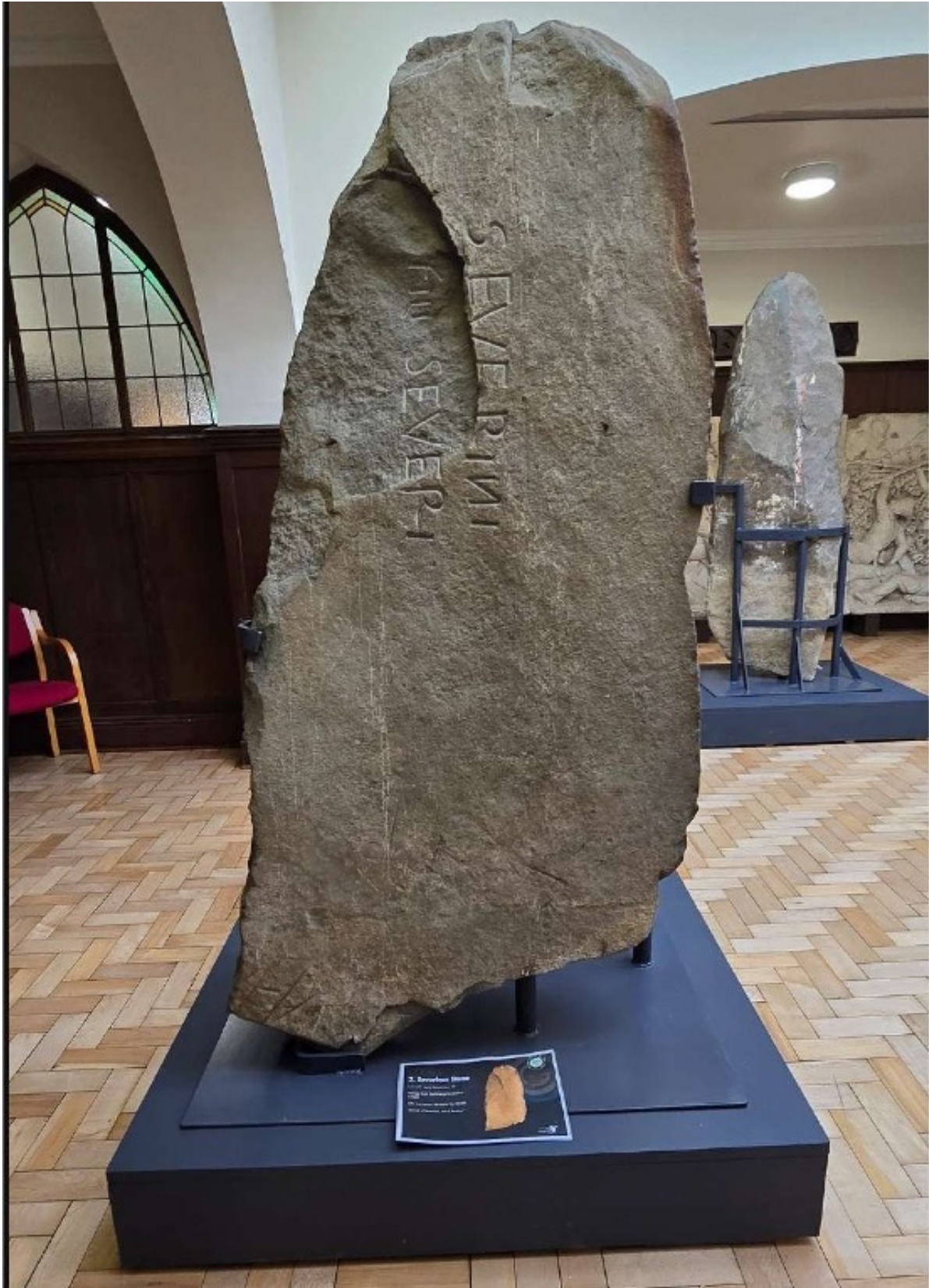
It is a window into the kingdom of Dyfed at its formative moment a kingdom whose most celebrated later ruler would be Hywel Dda, Hywel the Good, codifier of Welsh law. The Voteporix Stone predates Hywel by some four centuries, but it stands in the same soil, speaks in the same landscape, and belongs to the same unbroken thread of Welsh identity.

A Reflection

Standing before this stone in Carmarthen Museum, one is reminded that history is not only the story of kings and battles, laws, and treaties. It is also perhaps most powerfully the story of ordinary human longing: the longing of those left behind to say that someone lived, that someone mattered, that a name should not be allowed to vanish into silence. Voteporix, the Protector. Remembered in Latin. Remembered in Irish. Remembered across fifteen centuries. And remembered still, in the quiet of the museum that bears his stone.

Stone No. 2 — The Severinus Stone

Later 5th – Early 6th Century AD



Latin Memorial Stone | Carmarthen Museum Photograph: Graham Tudor Emmanuel.

Introduction

Standing next to the towering presence of the Voteporix Stone in the gallery at Carmarthen Museum, the Severinus Stone presents a very different character. Where the Voteporix Stone commands the room with its height and its double inscription, the Severinus Stone is partial, broken, its upper portion lost to time. What remains is a large irregular slab of pale sandstone, its surface bearing a Latin inscription of modest but profound simplicity. It is not a declaration of power or royal lineage. It is a son's tribute to his father.

In four Latin words, it says everything that needs to be said: here was a man, here was his son, and the son wished the father to be remembered. That impulse to carve a name into stone rather than allow it to dissolve into silence is the same impulse that drives memorial culture in every age and every civilisation. In this, the Severinus Stone speaks with timeless clarity.

Discovery and Journey to the Museum

The stone's early history is a familiar story of neglect and repurposing. It was first noted in the graveyard of the ruined chapel at Llanfihangel Croesfeini a lost place of worship in the parish of Newchurch, west of Carmarthen, which was demolished in 1847. The stone had been standing in that churchyard, serving its original memorial purpose, but after the chapel fell it was removed in 1856 and taken to Trawsmawr Farm, where it became a working farm stone.

An early historical account records that there formerly stood about three miles from Carmarthen, at a place called New Church, a stone of roughly eight feet in length and two feet in breadth. Even by the 19th century the inscription was already fading, and only the core words could be clearly distinguished. The stone eventually came to Carmarthen Museum, where it now stands preserved still incomplete, still eloquent.

The Inscription: A Father and Son

The Latin inscription on the Severinus Stone is among the simplest and most direct in the entire collection:

SEVERINI FILI SEVERI

“(Stone) of Severinus, son of Severus”

The formula is entirely typical of post-Roman memorial practice in western Britain. It gives us two names: the man commemorated Severinus and his father Severus. There is no title, no epithet, no ring cross. Just the name, the lineage, and the stone. The genitive case of the Latin tells us this is “of” Severinus belonging to him, his stone, his memorial.

What is immediately striking is the choice of names. Both Severus and Severinus are wholly Roman in origin. Severus derives from the Latin word meaning stern, serious, or strict a name deeply embedded in the vocabulary of the Roman world. It was borne by emperors, governors, soldiers, and churchmen across the centuries of Roman rule. Severinus is its diminutive form, meaning in effect “little Severus” or “son of the stern one” a naming pattern.

common in Roman family tradition, where the son carries a softened echo of his father's name.

Roman Names in a Post-Roman World

The survival of purely Roman names like Severus and Severinus in 5th and 6th century Carmarthenshire tells us something important about this society. Roman administration had officially withdrawn from Britain in the early 5th century, yet here, perhaps a generation or two later, a family in south-west Wales was still using Roman names with no Celtic or Irish element whatsoever. This was not an accident or an oversight it was a deliberate statement of identity.

Over fifty commemorative stones survive from 5th to 9th century Wales. Many of these inscriptions claim social status in distinctly Romanised terms, using titles such as magistrati, medici, and protictoris. The Welsh inscriptions show an eagerness, remarkable for one of the least Romanised areas of Roman Britain, to emphasise connections to the Roman Empire after its people had left their shores. In this context, the Severinus Stone fits a clear pattern: a family maintaining Roman naming tradition as a mark of prestige, civilisation, and continuity.

The name Severinus also carries ecclesiastical resonance. It was the name of many early Christian saints including Saint Severin of Noricum, a 5th-century monk who evangelised in present-day Austria, and a 6th-century Roman philosopher martyred by the Ostrogothic king Theodoric. Whether the family of our Severinus had any knowledge of these saints we cannot say, but the name belonged to the Christian world as much as the Roman one.

Llanfihangel Croesfeini: A Lost Sacred Landscape

The original resting place of this stone the ruined chapel of Llanfihangel Croesfeini deserves attention in its own right. Llanfihangel means “church of St Michael,” and Croesfeini translates as “cross-stones” a name that speaks directly to the tradition of early Christian memorial stones in this very landscape. The site is in the parish of Newchurch, a name which itself suggests an early medieval foundation, built over or near an older sacred place.

The chapel was demolished in 1847, but before it fell it held multiple early Christian stones, including this one and others now also housed in Carmarthen Museum. The concentration of memorial stones at this single site suggests it was a place of considerable spiritual importance in the post-Roman period perhaps a cemetery church, perhaps an early monastic enclosure, perhaps a site that had been sacred long before Christianity arrived. The stones were its voices. When the chapel fell silent, the museum preserved them.

A Stone of Quiet Dignity

Unlike the Voteporix Stone, the Severinus Stone makes no political statement. It claims no royal lineage, no Roman military title, no bilingual ambition. It is, in the simplest and most human sense, a gravestone a son’s permanent act of remembrance for his father.

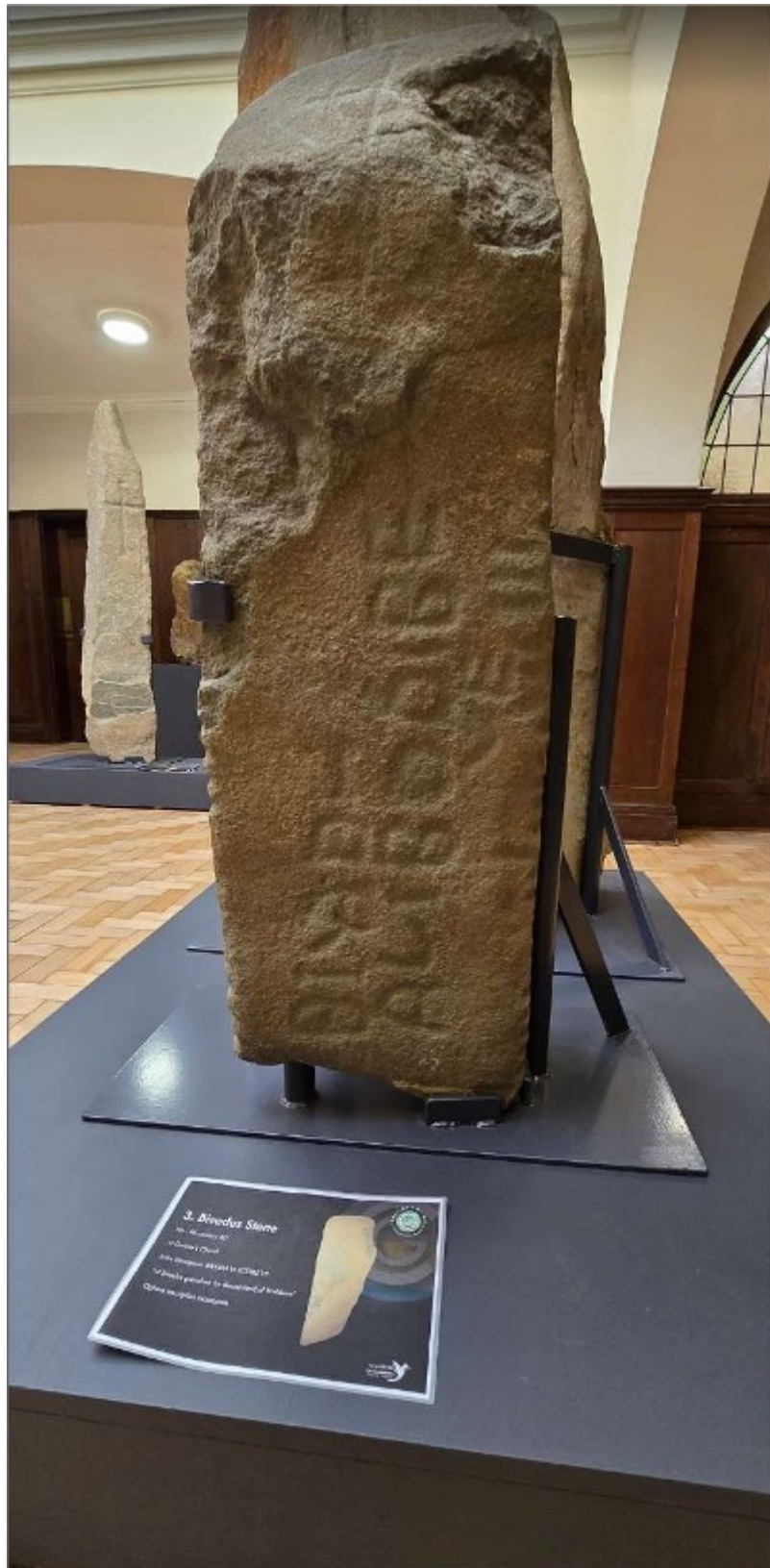
There is something deeply moving in that simplicity. Severus, whoever he was a local landowner, a church elder, a Romano-British farmer of moderate standing had a son who

loved him enough to commission a stone and carve his name for eternity. That act of love has outlasted the chapel that once sheltered it, the farm that once used the stone as a gatepost, and fifteen centuries of Welsh history.

Severinus, son of Severus. He carved his father’s name into stone so that it would not be forgotten. And it has not been forgotten. It stands in the museum at Abergwili still patient, weathered, and enduring, as all true love endures.

Stone No. 3 — The Bivodus Stone

5th – 6th Century AD



Latin and Ogham Inscription | St Gwynio's Church

Introduction

Among the early Christian stones of west Wales, the Bivadus Stone stands out not for its size or ornamentation, but for the quiet complexity of its inscription. Now preserved at St Gwynio's Church, it belongs to the long transitional period between the end of Roman rule and the emergence of a distinctly Welsh Christian culture. Like many stones of this era, it is modest in form a simple upright slab, weathered by centuries of exposure yet it carries within it a layered story of lineage, language, and identity.

Where some stones proclaim titles or Christian symbols, the Bivadus Stone speaks instead through ancestry. Its inscription is a declaration of descent, a reminder that in early medieval Wales, memory was often preserved through the naming of fathers, grandfathers, and kin. In this way, the stone becomes not only a memorial but a thread in a much older tapestry of family and belonging.

Discovery and Context

The stone is associated with St Gwynio's Church, a site whose origins stretch deep into the early medieval landscape of Carmarthenshire. Although the precise circumstances of its discovery are not fully recorded, its survival within this sacred setting suggests that it once stood as part of a small cemetery or early Christian enclosure the kind of place where local families commemorated their dead long before parish structures took their later medieval form.

St Gwynio's itself is part of a network of early ecclesiastical sites scattered across the region, many of which preserve stones inscribed in Latin, Ogham, or both. These stones reveal a community in transition: Romanised in memory, Christian in faith, and yet still connected to older Irish and British traditions.

The Inscription: A Lineage in Stone

The Latin inscription reads:

BIVADI AVI BODIBEVE "Of Bivadus, grandson [or descendant] of Bodibeve"

This formula is typical of early medieval memorial stones in Wales, where the genitive case ("of Bivadus") marks the stone as belonging to the person commemorated. What makes this example particularly interesting is the explicit reference to descent *vi* being understood as an abbreviation for *v(i)ri* or *v(i)ndos*, indicating a grandson or descendant.

The name Bivadus is unusual and may represent a local or regional form, while Bodibeve appears to preserve an older Brittonic or possibly Irish-influenced personal name. Together, they offer a glimpse into a family whose identity was shaped by multiple cultural strands.

The Ogham Inscription

Along one edge of the stone runs a fragmentary Ogham inscription. Though incomplete, its presence is significant. Ogham the earliest written script of Ireland appears on several stones

in west Wales, marking the presence or influence of Irish settlers and their descendants between the 5th and 7th centuries.

Even in its damaged state, the Ogham on the Bivadus Stone confirms that this community was bilingual in memory and inscription. Latin served the Christian and Romanised world; Ogham preserved older Irish naming traditions. The two scripts together reflect a society negotiating its identity across languages and generations.

A Window into Early Medieval Identity

The Bivadus Stone belongs to a period when lineage was a primary marker of status and belonging. To name one's father or in this case, one's grandfather was to assert continuity, legitimacy, and place

within the community. In a world without written records or parish registers, stones like this were the archives of family history.

The combination of Latin and Ogham also reveals a cultural landscape far more interconnected than the term “Dark Ages” suggests. These were centuries of movement, settlement, intermarriage, and adaptation. The people who carved this stone lived at the meeting point of Roman memory, Irish tradition, and emerging Welsh identity.

A Stone of Ancestral Memory

Though its inscription is brief, the Bivodus Stone carries a quiet dignity. It does not speak of kings or warriors, but of family of a man named Bivodus, and of Bodibeve, whose name he carried forward. It is a reminder that early medieval Wales was shaped not only by rulers and saints, but by ordinary families who marked their presence in the landscape through simple acts of remembrance.

Stone No. 4 — The Cross-Carved Stone

7th – 9th Century AD



Gwastad Gwrda, Llanllwni

Introduction

If the earlier stones in this collection speak through names, titles, and bilingual inscriptions, the Cross Carved Stone from Gwastad Gwrda, Llanllwni speaks through something even older and more universal: the symbol of the cross itself. It is a long, tapering slab of weathered stone, its surface marked not by words but by a carved cross whose simplicity is its power. In a landscape where literacy was limited and languages overlapped, the cross was the one sign every Christian could recognise.

This stone belongs to the later phase of early medieval memorial culture in Wales, when the cross rather than Latin text or Ogham strokes became the primary means of marking sacred ground and sanctifying memory. It is a quiet object, but not a modest one. Its message is unmistakable.

Discovery and Context

The stone was originally discovered at Gwastad Gwrda Farm in the parish of Llanllwni, a site known to have produced more than one early Christian stone, “Church of St Michael” places it within a long tradition of early Christian foundations dedicated to the archangel. These chapels often stood on older sacred sites, and many served as small cemetery churches for dispersed rural communities.

Although the precise circumstances of the stone’s discovery are not fully recorded, its survival within this chapel’s orbit suggests that it once stood upright as a grave marker or boundary stone. Such stones were often placed at the head of a burial, or at the edge of a consecrated enclosure, silently declaring the presence of Christian faith in the landscape.

Older museum catalogues recorded the provenance under the corrupted form “Gwastad Gwrda, Llanllwni,” now understood to refer to this Llanllwni location.

The Carved Cross

The defining feature of this stone is its incised cross a simple linear design, cut with enough depth to survive centuries of weathering. Crosses of this type are characteristic of the 7th to 9th centuries, a period when Christian symbolism became increasingly standardised across Wales.

Unlike the ring cross on the Voteporix Stone or the inscribed formulae of the Severinus Stone, this cross is unadorned. It does not attempt to imitate Roman forms or Irish styles. It is simply a cross direct, declarative, and unmistakably Christian.

Such stones served multiple purposes:

Grave markers, identifying a burial without the need for text; territorial markers, defining the boundary of a llan or early monastic enclosure; devotional objects placed where travellers might pause to pray.

The absence of an inscription does not diminish its meaning. In a world where many could not read, the cross was the most accessible form of sacred communication.

A Stone of Transition

The Cross-Carved Stone represents a shift in early medieval Welsh memorial culture. Earlier stones often emphasised lineage naming fathers, sons, and ancestors. Later stones, like this one, emphasised faith. The focus moves from family identity to Christian identity, from personal remembrance to communal belonging.

This transition mirrors broader changes in Welsh society:

The consolidation of Christian communities; the rise of local saints’ cults; the increasing authority of ecclesiastical sites; the gradual fading of Ogham and Roman naming traditions.

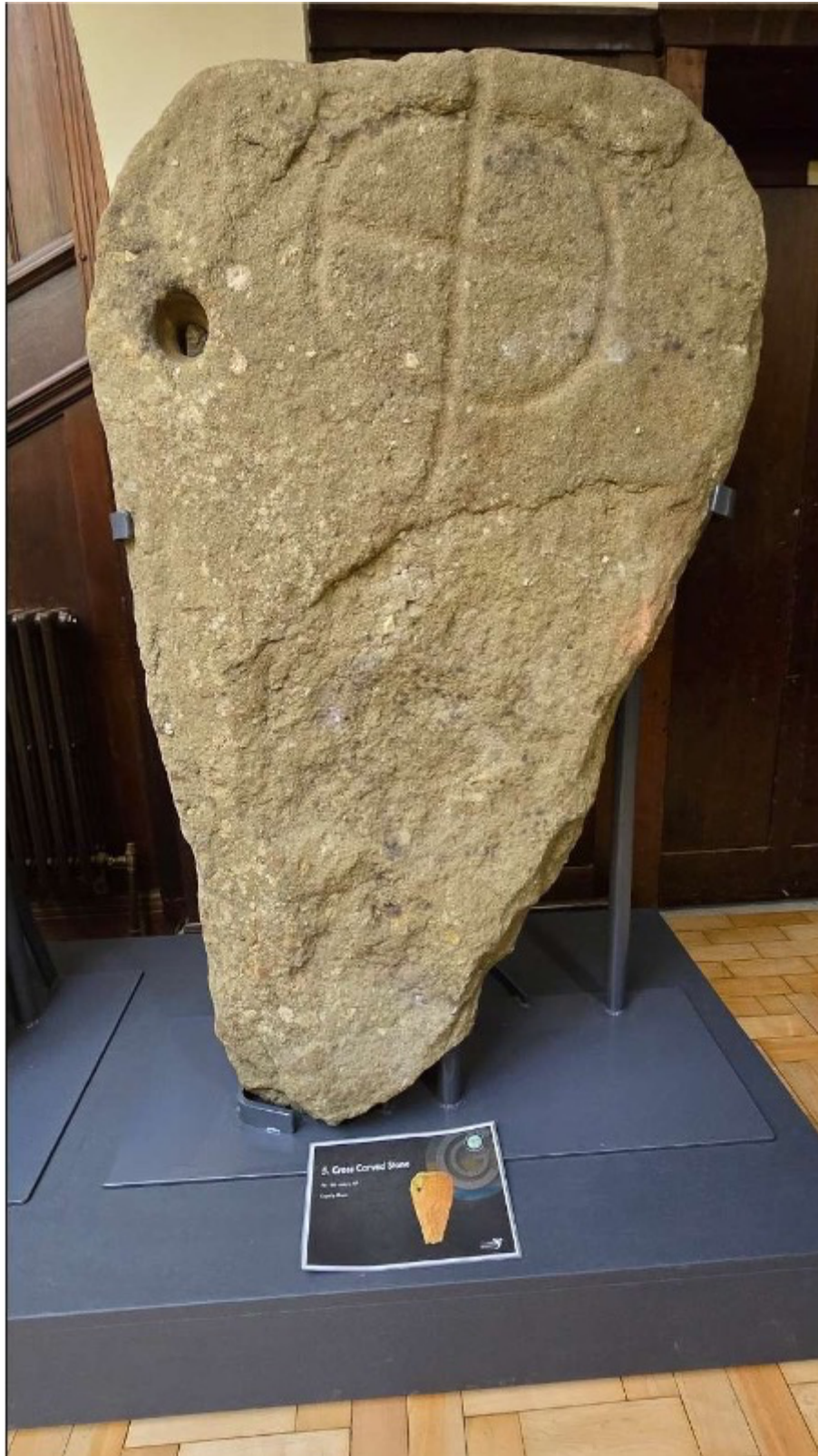
The stone stands at the threshold of this transformation — a marker of continuity and change.

A Reflection

There is a particular beauty in the simplicity of this stone. It does not tell us who it commemorates, nor who carved it, nor what story lies beneath its surface. Instead, it offers a symbol that transcends the individual. The cross carved into its face is the same cross recognised by countless generations before and after the stone was raised.

Stone No. 5 — The Cross-Carved Stone

7th – 8th Century AD



Capel y Groes

Introduction

The Cross Carved Stone from Capel y Groes belongs to a moment in early medieval Wales when Christian identity was becoming firmly rooted in the landscape. Unlike the bilingual memorials of the 5th and 6th centuries, this stone speaks through a single, unmistakable symbol: the carved cross. It is a modest piece irregular in shape, weathered by centuries of exposure yet it carries a clarity of purpose that needs no inscription. It marks a life, a faith, and a community that chose the cross as its enduring sign.

Where earlier stones emphasised lineage, this one emphasises belief. It stands as part of a wider shift in memorial culture, when the cross itself became the primary language of remembrance.

Discovery and Context

Capel y Groes “the Chapel of the Cross” is a name that already hints at a long-standing devotional tradition. Though the details of the stone’s discovery are not fully recorded, its association with this chapel places it within a sacred landscape shaped by centuries of local worship. Many such chapels began as small early Christian sites, serving scattered rural communities long before the parish system took its later form.

Stones like this often stood at the head of a grave, at the boundary of consecrated ground, or at a place where travellers paused to pray. Their purpose was not to record biography but to sanctify space.

The Carved Cross

The defining feature of this stone is its incised cross simple, linear, and deeply cut. Crosses of this type are characteristic of the 7th and 8th centuries, a period when Christian symbolism became increasingly standardised across Wales. The carving is neither elaborate nor decorative. It is functional, devotional, and direct.

Such stones served several roles:

Grave markers, identifying a Christian burial without the need for text; boundary stones, marking the edge of a llan or early ecclesiastical enclosure; prayer points, where the faithful might pause on a journey.

The absence of an inscription does not diminish its meaning. In a society where literacy was limited, the cross was the most accessible and powerful symbol available.

A Changing Memorial Tradition

By the 7th and 8th centuries, the cultural landscape of Wales had shifted. The bilingual world of Latin and Ogham was fading. Roman titles and Irish naming traditions were giving way to a more unified Christian identity. The cross-carved stones of this period reflect that transition.

They are:

Less concerned with ancestry; more focused on faith; simpler in form; more widely distributed across rural communities.

The Capel y Groes stone stands firmly within this tradition a marker of continuity and change, of old landscapes adopting new symbols.

A Reflection

There is a quiet dignity in this stone’s simplicity. It does not tell us who it commemorates, nor what story lies beneath its surface. Instead, it offers a symbol that transcends the individual a cross carved by hands long gone, standing for a faith that shaped the lives of countless people in early medieval Wales.

In its weathered lines, we glimpse a community that chose to remember not through words, but through a sign recognised by all. The Cross-Carved Stone of Capel y Groes continues to fulfil that purpose today, reminding us that sometimes the simplest marks carry the deepest meaning.

Stone No. 6 — The Cunegnus Stone

6th – 9th Century AD



This stone was also discovered at Gwastad Gwrda Farm, Llanllwni the same site as Stone No. 4 forming a documented pair of early Christian stones from this location.

In the museum's older handwritten records, this stone's provenance was also listed under the corrupted form "Gorsestiini," which modern evaluation confirms refers to Gwastad Gwrda, Llanllwni.

Introduction

The Cunegnus Stone is one of the quieter pieces in the early Christian landscape of Carmarthenshire a long, slender slab bearing a single, fragmentary Latin name. It does not display a cross, nor does it carry the bilingual complexity of earlier stones. Instead, it offers a single word: CVNEGN “of Cunegnus.” Yet in that one name lies a world of meaning.

This stone belongs to a period when Christian burial traditions were well established, but inscriptions were becoming simpler, more economical, and more focused on identity rather than lineage. It is a memorial reduced to its essence: a name, a life, a presence in the landscape.

Note on Provenance:

Stones 4 and 6 were historically catalogued under the corrupted place-name “Gorsestiini.” Modern evaluation, supported by RCAHMW records, confirms that both stones originated from Gwastad Gwrda Farm, Llanllwni, and were historically known as Llanllwni I and Llanllwni II.

Discovery and Context

Although the details of its discovery are not fully recorded, its preservation within this sacred setting suggests continuity of use: a stone raised in the early medieval period, later incorporated into the evolving life of the chapel, and eventually recognised as part of the region’s earliest Christian heritage.

The Inscription: A Name Preserved

The Latin inscription reads simply:

CVNEGN “of Cunegnus”

The use of the genitive case “of Cunegnus” identifies this as a memorial stone belonging to the person named. Unlike earlier stones that list fathers, grandfathers, or titles, this inscription stands alone. It tells us nothing of Cunegnus’s lineage, status, or role. Yet the name itself is significant.

Cunegnus is a Latinised form of a Brittonic personal name, likely related to elements meaning “hound” or “warrior,” common in early Welsh naming traditions. Its preservation in Latin form reflects the continued prestige of Romanised Christian culture long after the empire’s departure.

The simplicity of the inscription suggests:

A community comfortable with minimal text; a shift toward Christian identity over ancestral display; a memorial tradition focused on marking presence rather than proclaiming status.

A Stone Without Ogham

Unlike some earlier stones in the region, the Cunegnus Stone bears no Ogham inscription. By the 7th century, Ogham had largely fallen out of use in Wales, replaced by Latin as the dominant script of Christian memorials. The absence of Ogham here reflects that cultural shift a move away from the bilingual world of Irish settlers and toward a more unified Welsh Christian identity.

A Marker of Faith and Memory

Though the stone lacks a carved cross, its context within a chapel landscape makes its Christian purpose clear. Many early stones relied on placement rather than symbolism to convey meaning. A stone raised in consecrated ground needed no additional sign to declare its sacred function.

The Cunegnus Stone therefore stands as:

A grave marker; a declaration of identity; a testament to the enduring human needs to remember.

Its simplicity is not a lack, but a choice a reflection of a community whose faith was expressed through place as much as through inscription.

A Reflection

The Cunegnus Stone invites a quieter kind of contemplation. It does not tell a story in detail, yet it preserves a life with remarkable economy. A single name, carved more than a thousand years ago, has survived the collapse of kingdoms, the rebuilding of churches, and the passing of countless generations.

Stone No. 7 — The Heutren Stone

9th Century AD



Llanllwni

Introduction

The Heutren Stone marks a late chapter in the early Christian memorial tradition of Carmarthenshire a period when inscriptions had become sparse, names stood alone without lineage, and the act of carving a stone was itself the statement. It is a simple, upright slab bearing a single name: HEUTREN. No cross, no formula, no embellishment. Yet in its simplicity, it carries the same quiet dignity found throughout this collection.

By the 9th century, the communities of early medieval Wales were long accustomed to marking graves and sacred spaces with inscribed stones. The Heutren Stone belongs to this mature phase of the tradition, where the essentials of remembrance had been distilled to their purest form.

Discovery and Context

The stone is associated with Llanllwni, a parish whose roots stretch deep into the early Christian landscape of Carmarthenshire. Like many rural communities, Llanllwni would have had a small ecclesiastical centre a llan around which burial grounds and devotional sites developed over centuries.

Although the precise circumstances of the stone's discovery are not recorded, its preservation within this parish context suggests that it once stood as a grave marker or memorial within a local cemetery. Stones of this type were often reused, moved, or incorporated into later structures, surviving only because their inscriptions caught the attention of antiquarians or local historians.

The Inscription: A Name Without Ornament

The inscription reads:

HEUTREN "Heutren"

This is a personal name of Brittonic origin, preserved in its Latinised form. Unlike earlier stones that use the genitive case ("of Voteporix," "of Severinus"), the Heutren Stone presents the name directly. This stylistic shift is characteristic of later memorial stones, where the inscription functions more like a label than a grammatical statement. The name is confirmed in the national record: the collections of Amgueddfa Cymru, Museum Wales, include a replica catalogued as the Heutren Stone of Llanllwni among its early Christian monuments.

The absence of lineage no father, no grandfather reflects a broader cultural change. By the 9th century, the emphasis on ancestry had faded, replaced by a simpler form of commemoration. The name alone was enough to anchor a person in memory.

A Stone Without a Cross

The Heutren Stone bears no carved cross, yet its Christian context is unmistakable. By this period, the presence of a stone within consecrated ground was itself a declaration of faith. Many later stones omit the cross entirely, relying instead on placement and tradition to convey their sacred purpose.

This simplicity may reflect:

A community accustomed to Christian burial practices; a reduced need for symbolic markers; a shift toward minimalism in memorial design.

The stone's plainness is not a sign of neglect, but of confidence a community secure in its identity and its customs.

A Glimpse into 9th-Century Wales

By the time the Heutren Stone was carved, Wales had undergone centuries of cultural blending and transformation. The bilingual world of Latin and Ogham was long gone. Roman influence had faded

into memory. The early kingdoms had taken shape. Christianity was firmly rooted in every valley and hillside.

The Heutren Stone stands within this settled Christian landscape a world where the act of naming was enough, and where the stone itself served as a quiet witness to a life lived within a stable, enduring community.

A Reflection

The Heutren Stone is perhaps the most understated of the collection, yet it carries a profound message. A single name, carved more than a thousand years ago, has survived when everything else the person, the family, the community that raised it has passed into silence.

Stone No. 8 — The NATO Stone

4th Century AD | Roman



St. Peter's Vicarage, Carmarthen

Latin inscription: [BON]O R(EI) P(UBLICAE) NATO "To the man born for the good of the state".

The stone is catalogued in the Roman Inscriptions of Britain corpus as RIB 412, classed as a commemorative pillar carrying a formula that also appears on milestones of the period.

Introduction

Among the early Christian stones that form the core of this collection, Stone No. 8 stands apart. It is not a memorial to a Welsh king or a carved cross from a llan. Instead, it belongs to an older world the Roman province of Britannia in the 4th century AD. This small, inscribed.

stone carries a Latin dedication to a man described as “born for the good of the state.” Its presence in Carmarthen Museum speaks to the deep Roman roots of south-west Wales, long before the emergence of the early medieval kingdoms.

Where the Voteporix Stone bridges Roman and Irish identities, the Nato Stone is purely Roman in form, language, and sentiment. It reminds us that the landscape the early Christians inherited was already layered with centuries of Roman administration, military presence, and Latin literacy.

Discovery and Journey to the Museum

The stone was discovered at St. Peter’s Vicarage, Carmarthen a location that points to its Roman origins. Carmarthen (Moridunum) was the only Roman town in Wales to survive into the post-Roman period as a functioning urban centre. As the former civitas capital of the Demetae tribe, it would have been home to Romanised buildings, public inscriptions, and a Latin-speaking elite.

The stone’s precise date of discovery is not recorded, but it likely came to light during construction or garden work at the vicarage in the 19th or early 20th century, a period when many Roman antiquities were unearthed in and around Carmarthen. It was subsequently acquired by Carmarthen Museum, where it has remained as a testament to the town’s Roman past.

The Inscription

The Latin inscription is carved in Roman capitals and reads:

[BON]O R(EI) P(UBLICAE) NATO

“To the man born for the good of the state”.

The inscription is fragmentary, with the first part of BONO (meaning “to the good”) partially lost. The formula Rei Publicae Natus is a known Roman honourific, used to commemorate individuals often local magistrates, councillors (decuriones), or benefactors who were regarded as a blessing to their community.

The stone may originally have been part of a larger monument or funerary context. Its style and lettering are consistent with 4th-century Roman epigraphy, a period when civic pride and public service were still celebrated in stone across the Western Empire.

A Roman Stone in a Post-Roman Collection

Carmarthen (Moridunum) was one of the few Roman towns in Wales, and the surrounding countryside was dotted with villas, forts, and roads. Roman influence persisted long after the official withdrawal of legions in the early 5th century. The Nato Stone is a direct link to that Roman past a past that the early medieval inhabitants of Dyfed and its neighbouring

kingdoms consciously remembered and, at times, invoked through titles like Protector or through Latin inscriptions on their own memorial stones.

The survival of a Roman honorific stone into the early medieval period and its eventual preservation in a museum alongside early Christian monuments mirrors the continuity of Latin literacy and Romanised identity that characterises post-Roman Wales.

Reflection

Stone No. 8 is a reminder that the story of this collection does not begin with the 5th century. The people who carved the Voteporix Stone or the Severinus Stone lived in a landscape shaped by four centuries of Roman rule. They walked on Roman roads, spoke a

Latin-inflected language, and may have seen stones like the Nato Stone still standing in old town centres or reused in church walls.

The Nato Stone honours a man whose name we no longer know, but whose contribution to his community was deemed worthy of inscription. In that sense, it shares the same impulse that runs through every stone in this collection: the desire to say that someone lived, that someone served, that someone should not be forgotten.

Stone No. 9 — The Stone Head

IRON AGE (C. 800–100 BC)



Llangynog

Introduction

After eight stones rooted in the early Christian centuries of Wales, Stone No. 9 takes us somewhere far older into the deep past of the Iron Age, nearly a millennium before the Voteporix Stone was carved. This carved stone head from Llangynog belongs to a world without Latin inscriptions, without chapels, without Christian symbols. Yet it shares something essential with the later stones: the human impulse to shape identity, belief, and presence in stone.

Where the Christian stones speak through crosses and names, this one speaks through form a carved human face emerging from the rock, its features worn but unmistakable. It is a rare survival from a period when carved stone heads held symbolic, spiritual, or protective meaning across Celtic Britain and Ireland.

Discovery and Context

The stone head comes from Llangynog, a landscape rich in prehistoric settlement and ritual activity. Although the exact circumstances of its discovery are not recorded, its style and dating place it firmly within the Iron Age tradition of carved stone heads found across Wales, Ireland, and western Britain.

These heads are often discovered:

Near ancient enclosures; close to springs or water sources; within later farm boundaries; or incorporated into medieval structures.

Their original placement is rarely known, but their cultural significance is widely recognised.

The Carved Head Tradition

Carved stone heads are among the most distinctive symbols of Iron Age Celtic art. They appear in many forms stylised, abstract, or naturalistic but they share a common purpose: to represent the human presence in a world where the boundary between the living and the spiritual was fluid.

Scholars interpret these heads as:

Protective symbols, guarding entrances, or sacred spaces; representations of ancestors, linking the living to the dead; ritual objects, used in ceremonies or offerings; expressions of identity, marking territory or community.

The Llangynog head, with its simple carved features, belongs to this ancient tradition.

A Face from the Iron Age

Although weathered, the carved head retains enough detail to convey its original intention: a human face rendered in stone. The simplicity of the carving is typical of the period Iron Age artists favoured stylised forms rather than realistic portraiture.

The head may once have:

Stood upright as a boundary marker; been placed near a shrine or ritual site; served as a guardian figure; or been part of a larger carved object now lost.

Whatever its original role, it carries a presence that transcends time. Even in its worn state, the face looks back at us across nearly three thousand years.

A Stone Outside the Christian Sequence

Stone No. 9 sits apart from the early Christian stones that precede it. It does not belong to the world of Latin inscriptions, Ogham strokes, or cross-carved memorials. Yet its inclusion in the museum's sequence is meaningful. It reminds us that the Christian landscape of Wales was built upon far older

foundations that long before chapels and llans, people here carved stone to express identity, belief, and memory.

In this sense, the Stone Head is not an interruption in your series but a deepening of it. It shows that the human desire to mark presence in stone is ancient, enduring, and universal.

A Reflection

The Stone Head from Llangynog is one of the oldest human images carved in Welsh stone. It carries no inscription, no date, no name. Yet it speaks with extraordinary power. It reminds us that long before written memory, people shaped their world through symbols faces, forms, and figures carved into the landscape.

Stone No. 10 — The Maesllanwrthwl Stones: Paulinus, Talorus, and the Third Stone

Early Medieval Period (6th–9th Century) | Maesllanwrthwl, Cynwyl Gaeo, Carmarthenshire

Introduction

Unlike the single, defined monuments that dominate this collection, Stone No. 10 is better understood not as one lost object, but as part of a triad of stones whose journey from a remote Carmarthenshire hillside to the museum gallery tells a story of faith, folklore, and fragmentation. Their original home was Maesllanwrthwl, a site whose very name

llan indicating an enclosed sacred space points to an early Christian origin, possibly associated with the obscure saint Gwrthwl.

These stones do not stand in isolation. They emerge from a landscape dotted with prehistoric standing stones and medieval settlements, suggesting that this site was a focal point for spiritual life for millennia. Where the Voteporix Stone speaks of kingship and the Severinus Stone speaks of family, the stones of Maesllanwrthwl speak of faith, healing, and the endurance of memory even in broken form.

The Site: Maesllanwrthwl

The stones were discovered at Maesllanwrthwl (also recorded as Maes Llanwrthwl) near the farm of the same name, which once belonged to the Johnes family of Dolaucothi. By 1915, the site thought to be located in a field called Cae neintyr (formerly Cae Polion) showed no visible building remains, though surface irregularities suggested buried foundations worthy of archaeological investigation.

The dedication to Gwrthwl, believed to have been an early saint, places this site within the tradition of llan or clas churches that dotted the early medieval Welsh landscape. These were not parish churches in the modern sense, but small monastic or mother church sites serving extended communities across multiple generations.

The Three Stones

Three stones are recorded at this site, all found within a short distance of one another:

The Paulinus Stone (NPRN 417861).

The most significant of the three, the Paulinus Stone is a massive, irregular slab that once tapered toward a rounded top. It bears a horizontal Latin inscription in Roman capitals that has been dated to the late sixth century. The inscription reads:

"A guardian of the Faith, of his homeland always a lover, here Paulinus (PN) lies; most conscientious observer of all that is right."

Scholars have suggested an association with Bishop Paulinus, who is recorded as attending the mid-sixth century Synod of Brefi a landmark event in the early Welsh church. If this connection holds, the stone commemorates a man of considerable standing, perhaps a bishop

or senior church figure, placing Maesllanwrthwl within a network of major early Christian sites.

The stone now survives in three fragmentary pieces, now housed at Carmarthen Museum. A plaster replica is also held in the collections of Amgueddfa Cymru Museum Wales.

The Talorus Stone

The second inscribed stone from the site, known as the Talorus Stone, was noted in 1879 as already being significantly damaged, with much of it "broken off and lost". Its inscription appears to have commemorated an individual named Talorus, though the fragmentary nature of the stone makes complete translation difficult. By the time antiquarians recorded it, the stone had already suffered the fate of many early monuments reuse, neglect, and fragmentation.

The Third Stone

A third stone, uninscribed, was also present at the site. It may have served as a simple grave marker, a boundary stone, or a companion to the two inscribed monuments. If it bore no text, it would have belonged to the tradition of cross-carved or plain stones that marked sacred ground without the need for words.

Journey to the Museum

Before their removal to Carmarthen Museum, the stones had a remarkable history. They were moved to Dolaucothi House sometime before 1693, where they came into the possession of the Johnes family. At Dolaucothi, the Paulinus Stone was laid prostrate in a gutter an undignified position for a bishop's memorial, but one that gave rise to a powerful local tradition.

The Healing Tradition

It was in this position laid flat, perhaps at a threshold or water channel that the Paulinus Stone acquired a reputation for healing. People with diseased children would draw them under the stone, believing that passing through or beneath it could cure their ailments.

This tradition connects the stone to a much older practice. Across Britain and Ireland, megaliths, holy wells, and early Christian monuments were often attributed with healing powers, their sanctity layered over pre-Christian beliefs about the power of stone and water. The Paulinus Stone thus became a folk shrine, its Christian origins merging with vernacular traditions that persisted for centuries.

Fragments and Survival

Today, the Paulinus Stone exists in three fragments, its inscription partially preserved, its original form reassembled in the museum. The Talorus Stone survives in even more diminished form. The third stone, if it still exists, may be unrecognised among the museum's holdings or may have been lost entirely.

Yet fragmentation is not failure. These stones have survived the collapse of the chapel they once adorned, removal to a gentry house, centuries of exposure, and the vicissitudes of antiquarian collection. Their broken state is a record of their journey through time.

Why These Stones Matter

The Maesllanwrthwl stones represent a different kind of early Christian site than those associated with the Voteporix Stone or the Severinus Stone. Where those stones were tied to named individuals of royal or landowning status, these stones emerge from a llan a sacred enclosure that served a community rather than an individual.

The association with Bishop Paulinus, if correct, connects this remote Carmarthenshire site to the wider world of the sixth-century church: to the Synod of Brefi, to the establishment of ecclesiastical hierarchy, and to the spread of monastic Christianity across Wales.

And in the healing tradition attached to the Paulinus Stone, we glimpse the persistence of belief beyond formal religion. The same stone that carried a bishop's Latin inscription also served, in folk practice, as a cure for sick children. This layering of meanings official and popular, Christian, and pre-Christian, learned and vernacular is the texture of early medieval religion.

A Reflection

Stone No. 10 is not one stone but three, not a single voice but a chorus, even if fragmented. The Paulinus Stone speaks of a bishop and a synod, of Latin learning and ecclesiastical authority. The Talorus Stone speaks in a voice now too broken to fully understand. The third stone speaks in silence.

Together, they remind us that the early Christian landscape was not populated only by kings and protectors, but by communities gathered around their llannau, their saints, their stones. And in the tradition of drawing sick children under the Paulinus Stone, we see something more: the human need for healing, for hope, for a touchstone of grace in a world that offered no guarantees. The stones of Maesllanwrthwl are broken, but they have not lost their power. They wait in the museum, fragments of a faith that once moved people to carve inscriptions in Latin and to pass their children beneath ancient stone, seeking what we all seek: healing, memory, and the assurance that someone, somewhere, will remember.

Original Locations and GPS Coordinates

Where the Stones Stood Before Coming to Carmarthen Museum

Each of the nine early Christian stones now housed in Carmarthen Museum was removed from its original location a church, a chapel, a farm, or a field over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, as their historical significance became recognised. The entries below record the known or probable original site of each stone, together with its GPS coordinates for mapping and future research. Entries marked as Pending require confirmation from the museum label or catalogue before the GPS coordinates can be considered authoritative.

Stone 1 — Voteporix Stone

Original Location: Castell Dwyran Church, Pembrokeshire / Carmarthenshire border. GPS Coordinates: 51.8318°N, 4.6947°W

The stone was recognised in 1895 at Castell Dwyran, having stood by the churchyard stile and served as a stepping stone for an unknown period; a local account holds that it was moved during fence repairs some years earlier. It was donated to the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and entered Carmarthen Museum in 1921. Status: Confirmed.

Stone 2 — Severinus Stone

Original Location: Llanfihangel Croesfeini Chapel (ruined), parish of Newchurch, Carmarthenshire.

GPS Coordinates: 51.8442°N, 4.3446°W

The chapel was demolished in 1847. The stone was removed to Trawsmawr Farm in 1856 before eventually entering museum care. The nearest surviving church is St Mary's, Llanllwch. The GPS

coordinates are placed at the Llanllwch church site pending exact coordinates for the demolished chapel. Status: Confirmed with note.

Stone 3 — Bivadus Stone

Original Location: Llanwinio Church (St Gwynio), Carmarthenshire SA34. GPS Coordinates: 51.9089°N, 4.5296°W

Discovered in 1846 during foundation digging for the rebuilt church at Llanwinio. Moved to Middleton Hall around 1852 and donated to the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society in 1919. Note: the provenance in some secondary sources lists this stone as coming from Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr, which is incorrect the confirmed origin is Llanwinio. Status: Confirmed.

Stone 4 — Cunegnus Stone (1)

Original Location: Gwastad Gwrda Farm, Llanllwni, Carmarthenshire. GPS Coordinates: 52.0300°N, 4.3000°W

Two inscribed early Christian stones are recorded as having been held at St Michael's Church, Llanfihangel-ar-arth. The GPS pin is placed at the church site. Museum provenance should be confirmed against the label. Status: Confirmed with note.

Stone 5 — Cross-Carved Stone

Original Location: Capel y Groes, Brynteg, Llanybydder, Ceredigion / Carmarthenshire border. Approximately 5 miles south-west of Lampeter.

GPS Coordinates: 52.0608°N, 4.1206°W

Capel y Groes is located at Brynteg, in the Llanybydder area on the Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire border, approximately 5 miles south-west of Lampeter on the River Teifi corridor. GPS coordinates placed at Llanybydder parish, SA40 area. Museum label to be confirmed on next visit. Status: Working confirmation.

Stone 6 — Cross-Carved Stone (2)

Original Location: Gwastad Gwrda Farm, Llanllwni, Carmarthenshire. GPS Coordinates: 52.0300°N, 4.3000°W

Gwastad Gwrda (also spelled Gwastad Gwrdda) is a farm site near Llanllwni, Carmarthenshire. Multiple early Christian stones were found here, suggesting the site may have been an early chapel or burial ground predating the current parish church of St Llonio at Llanllwni. The stone is catalogued by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales as an incised cross-slab, dating to the 7th–9th centuries, and referenced as Llanllwni I or Llanllwni II in standard catalogues. The name Gossestiini appearing in earlier research notes is a phonetic or scribal corruption of Gwastad Gwrda. Status: Confirmed.

Stone 7 — Heutren Stone

Original Location: Llanllwni Church (St Llwni), Pencader, Carmarthenshire SA39. GPS Coordinates: 52.0488°N, 4.2276°W

GPS placed at Llanllwni Church per research notes. The name "Heutren" requires verification against the museum's accession records and RCAHMW catalogues. It may be a misreading of an inscription, a local name not used in official records, or a stone not previously catalogued under that name. Status: Pending confirmation of name.

Stone 8 — Nato Stone

Original Location: St. Peter's Vicarage, Church Street, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire SA31 1GW.

GPS Coordinates: 51.857931°N, 4.301251°W

The stone was discovered on the grounds of St. Peter's Vicarage, opposite the southeast entrance to St Peter's Church, within the site of the Roman town of Moridunum. A 4th-century Roman honourific stone bearing the Latin inscription [BON]O R(EI) P(UBLICAE) NATO ("to the man born for the good of the state"). It commemorates a public benefactor, likely a local magistrate or town councillor. The stone is now part of the Carmarthen Museum collection. Status: Confirmed. The stone is catalogued in the Roman Inscriptions of Britain corpus as RIB 412, classed as a commemorative pillar carrying a formula that also appears on milestones of the period.

Stone 9 — Iron Age Stone Head

Original Location: St Cynog's Church, Llangynog, Carmarthenshire SA33. GPS Coordinates: 51.8083°N, 4.4114°W

Important note: this is the village of Llangynog near Llansteffan in Carmarthenshire (SA33), not the village of the same name in Powys (SY10). GPS confirmed at the Carmarthenshire site. Status: Confirmed.

Stone 10 — Stone (Unplaced)

Original Location: Maesllanwrthwl (Maes Llanwrthwl), Cynwyl Gaeo, Carmarthenshire. A possible early Christian chapel site associated with St Gwrthwl .

GPS Coordinates: SN 65400 37100 (approximate location of the chapel site)

Status: Confirmed through RCAHMW records (NPRN 417861) and Amgueddfa Cymru collections data

GPS Coordinates 52.015952 °N, 3.9627979 °W

<https://tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites>

Sources and Further Reading

The following works were consulted in the preparation of this research series and are recommended for further study of the early Christian stones of Wales.

Primary Reference Works

Nash-Williams, V. E. The Early Christian Monuments of Wales. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, on behalf of the National Museum of Wales and the Board of Celtic Studies, 1950. The foundational catalogue of all known early Christian monuments in Wales. Every stone in this collection is referenced within it.

Edwards, Nancy. A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales. Volume II: South-West Wales. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007. The authoritative modern successor to Nash-Williams, covering Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire in full. The definitive scholarly reference for every stone in this collection.

Online Databases

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales — Coflein database. Available at coflein.gov.uk. The national inventory of archaeological and historical sites in Wales, referenced throughout this series for NPRN site records including the Maesllanwrthwl stones (NPRN 417861).

Amgueddfa Cymru — Museum Wales online collections. Available at museum.wales. Consulted for accession records and replica holdings relating to the Paulinus Stone.

People's Collection Wales — Tudor59 collections. Available at peoplescollection.wales. The digital archive into which this research series is published, hosted under the username Tudor59.

Museum Source

Carmarthenshire Museum, Abergwili, Carmarthen, SA31 2JG. Direct observation, photography, and label transcription during research visit, March 2026. Graham Tudor Emmanuel.

Summary of the Collection

Across these nine stones carved, weathered, fragmentary, and in one case impossibly ancient a remarkable story unfolds. It is the story of a landscape shaped not by kings or chronicles, but by ordinary people who chose to mark their presence in stone.

From the bilingual world of the 5th century to the Christianised hillsides of the 9th, and finally back into the deep memory of the Iron Age, each stone offers a glimpse into the lives, beliefs, and identities of the communities who raised them.

The early Christian stones Voteporix, Severinus, Bivadus, Cunegnus, and Heutren reveal a society in transition. Latin and Ogham sit side by side. Roman titles linger long after the empire's departure.

Crosses begin to replace inscriptions as the primary language of faith. Names are carved to preserve lineage, then later simply to mark a life. These stones speak of a people negotiating their identity across cultures: Roman, Irish, Brittonic, and Christian.

The cross-carved stones from Capel y Groes and Gwastad Gwrda, Llanllwni, show the growing confidence of Christian communities, where the cross alone was enough to sanctify memory. Their simplicity is not a loss but a refinement a sign that faith had become woven into the landscape itself.

Stone No. 10 the Maesllanwrthwl triad brings a different kind of voice to the collection. Three stones from a lost sacred enclosure near Cynwyl Gaeo, associated with a possible bishop's memorial, a healing tradition, and the obscure saint Gwrthwl, they remind us that the early Christian landscape was shaped not only by kings and protectors but by communities gathered around their llannau.

The Paulinus Stone, if correctly identified, connects this remote Carmarthenshire hillside to the Synod of Brefi and the highest levels of the sixth-century Welsh church.

And then there is Stone No. 9 the Iron Age stone head from Llangynog a face carved nearly a thousand years before the Christian stones. It widens the lens of the collection, showing that the impulse to carve identity into stone is far older than the churchyards and chapels that followed. It connects the early medieval world to a deeper, more ancient tradition of marking presence, protection, and belief.

Together, these stones form a continuous thread through Welsh history. They speak of memory in its many forms: names, crosses, symbols, faces, and sometimes silence. They remind us that history is not only preserved in manuscripts or monuments, but in the quiet endurance of carved stone patient, weathered, and still speaking across the centuries.

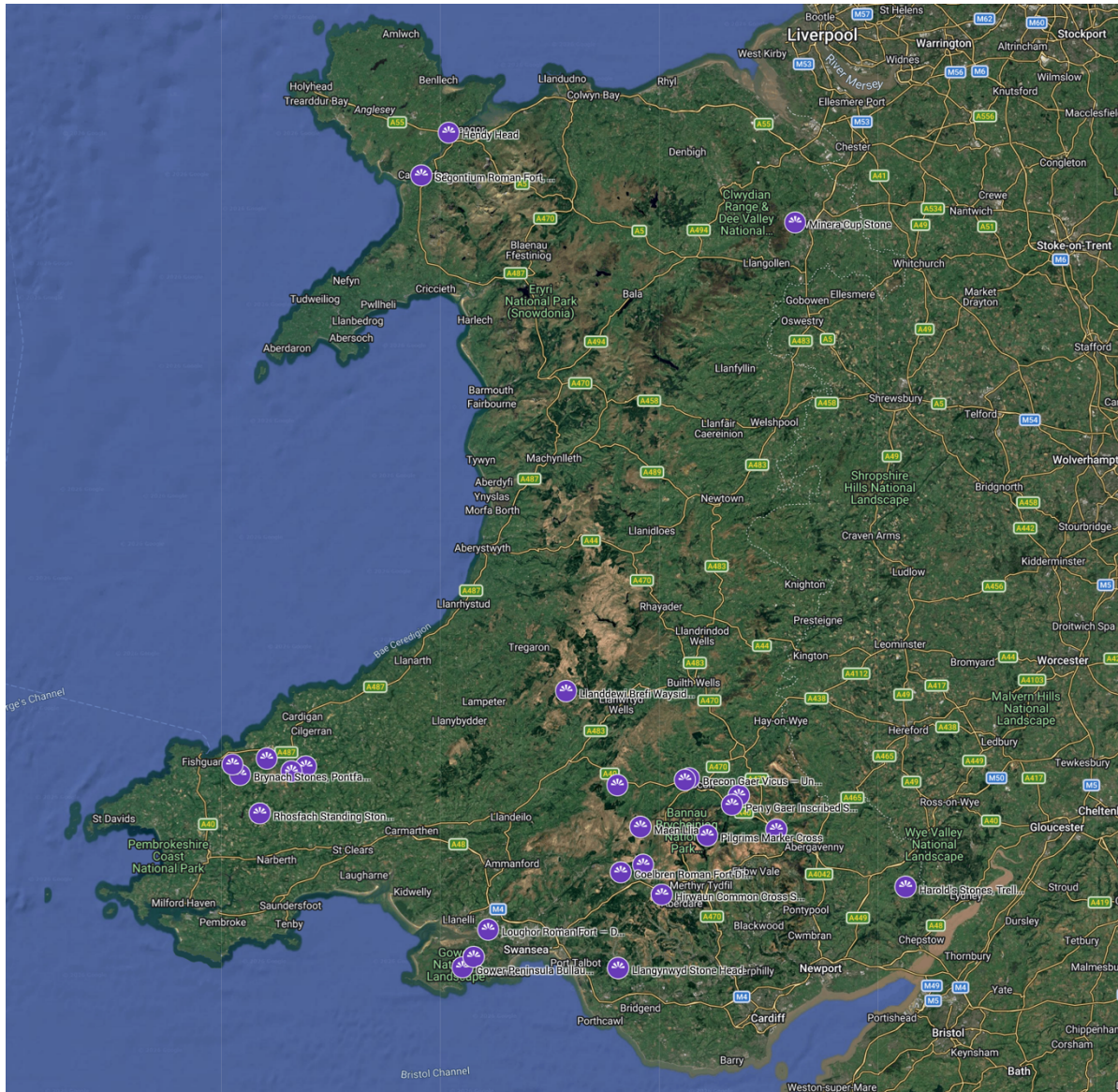
<https://tinyurl.com/Ancient-Stones-of-West-Wales>

Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly, 2026

Stones of Mystery

The Unexplained Carved and Anomalous Stones of Wales

Twenty-six sites where the record is incomplete: the carved stones that official databases have missed



Interactive map: www.tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites



Researched and written by Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly

Introduction

Official records do not hold everything. Across Wales there are carved heads, cross bases, cup-marked boulders, inscribed slabs and basin stones that appear in no national database, known only to the farmers whose fields they stand in or noticed by passers-by and never followed up. There are also famous monuments whose smaller details, the faint incised cross, the worn cup mark, the reused Roman block in a field wall, have never been systematically examined because attention rests on the spectacle beside them. This part of the article records both kinds: sites where something has been reported but not yet documented, and known sites where the record is demonstrably incomplete.

A word of honesty is owed here. Much of what follows is not established fact but reported observation awaiting verification. Where a stone is confirmed and scheduled, the entry says so; where it rests on local report or a single sighting, the entry says that instead, and nothing below is claimed with more certainty than its source warrants. The value of setting down the unverified alongside the verified is that it makes a map of where the gaps in the national record lie, and gaps, once mapped, can be closed.

A Stone Without a Record: The Blaen y Glyn Cross

Pilgrims Marker Cross, Blaen y Glyn

Talybont-on-Usk, 51.8477 N, 3.3650 W

At the foot of the Blaen y Glyn waterfall above Talybont-on-Usk stands a skilfully carved stone cross that appears on no official record. Searches of the registers of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and of Cadw have so far produced nothing, though the stone has evidently been noticed, and forgotten, several times over the years. It carries an inscription whose few letters have been read as Odee or Adee, a reading that remains uncertain, and the character of the lettering raises the possibility that the inscription was added later than the carving of the cross itself. Whether the cross was cut on the spot or carried there, who set it up and why, are all open questions. What is certain is that a carved cross stands at a waterfall in the Bannau and the national record does not know it, which makes it the clearest possible example of why this survey exists.

The Stone Heads

The Hendy Head, Anglesey

Oriel Mon, Llangefni, 53.2215 N, 4.1951 W

Discovered during ploughing at Hendy Farm near Llanfairpwllgwyngyll in the 1950s, the Hendy Head is carved from quartz-rich red sandstone and is widely considered to be late Iron Age, the image of a Celtic deity. Its slightly flattened crown and the drilled hole at the mouth suggest ritual use, offerings placed upon the head or liquid poured through the mouth. It is now held at Oriel Mon in Llangefni, and it stands as the essential Welsh comparator for every carved head reported from a field wall or churchyard elsewhere in the country: the fixed point against which the undocumented examples can be judged.

Llangynwyd Stone Head

St Cynwyd's Church, near Maesteg, 51.5845 N, 3.6512 W

A carved head is associated with the twelfth century church of St Cynwyd at Llangynwyd near Maesteg, a site rich in story as the home of the legend of the Maid of Cefn Ydfa. The church fabric contains various carved stone elements whose documentation is incomplete, and the head belongs to that

borderland where the old veneration of the carved head passed into the gargoyles and corbels of the medieval church. A full photographic record of the carved stonework in and around the churchyard has yet to be made.

Basin Stones and Cup Marks

Llanrhidian Bullaun Stone, Gower

SS 499 920

In the churchyard of St Rhidian and St Iltyd at Llanrhidian on Gower lies a basin stone with a cup-like hollow of the kind known in Ireland and Scotland as a bullaun, stones traditionally associated with healing and with cursing. Bullauns are common in the Irish Sea lands but rare and poorly documented in Wales, and this example, though it has come to local attention, has no formal entry in the national record. Documenting it properly, with measurement of the hollow and a check for any inscription, would be a genuine addition to the Welsh corpus.

Gower Peninsula Bullaun Stones

area centre SS 490 880

Llanrhidian may not stand alone. Gower has a rich early Christian heritage and many ancient churchyards, yet no one has ever systematically looked through them for basin stones, the specific lens through which Irish and Scottish churchyards have yielded so many bullauns. It is entirely possible that several Gower churchyards contain basin stones that have simply never been identified as such, and a circuit of the peninsula's early church sites with that one question in mind would likely produce new records.

Llangorse Lake Cup Marks

SO 131 268 area

Several cup-marked boulders have been reported by farmers around the margins of Llangorse Lake but have never been visited or formally recorded. The lake is the site of the famous crannog, the island residence of the kings of Brycheiniog, and its shores are among the most historically charged ground in the Bannau. If the reports are accurate, these boulders would be important additions to the Welsh rock art record, which remains thin compared with northern Britain. The crannog is scheduled; the boulders, as yet, are not even located.

Preseli Hills Cup Marks

SN 160 320 area

The Preseli hills hold one of the densest prehistoric landscapes in Wales, yet survey attention has concentrated so heavily on the bluestone outcrops and the megalithic monuments that the plainer question of cup-marked outcrops has scarcely been asked. It is likely that marked rock surfaces exist between the known sites, unnoticed because nobody was looking for them. Any confirmed cup marks in these hills would carry significance from the sheer density of activity around them.

Minera Cup Stone, Wrexham

SJ 270 525 area

Cup-marked rock art is recorded at Minera near Wrexham, close to the old lead mines, but the full extent of the markings has never been systematically documented and the precise rock awaits field verification. The district has known prehistoric and Roman activity, and the stone sits close to the find-spot of the Wern Stone Head, making the two natural companions for a single day of fieldwork in the northeast.

Crosses, Markers and Inscribed Stones

Hirwaun Common Cross Socket

SN 958 059 approximate

On common ground near Aberdare, beside a historic route, lies a stone socket that once held an upright cross, now long gone. Nothing records what the cross looked like, when it was removed or what it marked. Cross bases without their crosses are easily overlooked, yet they are firm evidence of route marking and boundary definition, and the dimensions of a socket can even suggest the form of the cross it held. This one has never been precisely located and measured.

Llanddewi Brefi Wayside Crosses

SN 625 554 area

Llanddewi Brefi is among the most significant early Christian sites in Wales, the place where St David is reputed to have preached at the Synod of Brefi in the sixth century, and its church holds famous carved stones. But the village and its surroundings contain further carved stones and cross fragments, in walls and boundaries, that have never been fully documented. At a major station on the pilgrim ways any unrecorded cross or marker matters, and a systematic look at the village fabric beyond the church itself is overdue.

Trecastle Inscribed Stone

SN 883 297 approximate

An inscribed stone has been reported on the old drovers road near Trecastle, its inscription never fully read. The Trecastle corridor has carried travellers east and west across the Bannau since Roman times, and inscribed stones on drovers roads are rare things. If the inscription proves pre-modern it may be a boundary mark, a name stone or a votive marker; until it is found again, photographed under raking light and read, it remains a report and is offered here as nothing more.

Pen y Gaer Inscribed Stone

SO 162 233 approximate

A stone bearing an inscription has been noted in a field wall near the Pen y Gaer hillfort above Llangorse Lake, one of the best preserved hillforts in the Bannau, but the inscription has never been formally documented. Given the extraordinary heritage of the Llangorse basin, the crannog, the early Christian tradition, the Norman works, an inscribed stone in this setting deserves to be found, read and placed on record.

Sarn Helen Cross Markers

Ystradfellte to Coelbren section

The Roman road of Sarn Helen crosses the Bannau from north to south, and the lonely section between Ystradfellte and Coelbren was walked in later centuries by pilgrims and drovers. Carved stones, boundary markers and cross fragments have been reported along this stretch, and not all of them are on record. A route that carries Roman, pilgrim and drover traditions in a single line is exactly the kind of corridor where undocumented material survives, precisely because it lies away from the roads that visitors use. Walking the whole section and recording every carved stone encountered remains to be done.

Rhosfach Standing Stone

SN 075 224 approximate

A standing stone is reported near Rhosfach on the plateau of north Pembrokeshire, between the Preseli hills and the Teifi valley, in a zone where a number of stones appear on maps yet have never received

detailed survey. Stones on this upland may have marked prehistoric routes that later became drovers roads and possibly pilgrim ways, and this one awaits location, measurement and a careful check of its faces.

The Growing Stone, Cwrt-y-Gollen

SO 233 168

Near Crickhowell, by the Usk, stands a recorded standing stone with a tradition attached: that it grows, and cannot be permanently removed from its place. Traditions of growing or wandering stones cling to certain monuments and not to others, and they often mark the stones that held unusual significance in the pre-Christian landscape. The stone is on the record; its folklore, and any surface features that might reward close inspection, are not, and gathering the oral tradition from local sources before it fades is as much a part of the task as the photography.

Bedd Morris Standing Stone

SN 024 370

Bedd Morris stands beside the old road between Newport and Fishguard, a scheduled monument carrying the legend of a murdered traveller, and it already appears on the main layer of this map. It earns a second entry here because its surfaces have never had a detailed photographic survey and the surrounding field boundaries have never been examined for related carved material. Even a well recorded stone can hold undocumented detail, which is the whole argument of this part of the article.

Churchyards Awaiting a Second Look

Brynach Stones, Pontfaen

SN 023 340

The small church of St Brynach at Pontfaen, deep in the Gwaun valley, holds two early medieval pillar stones. The first, a dolerite pillar about 1.1 metres high, carries an outline Latin cross whose head holds a fine and unusual detail, three concentric circles at its centre, easily missed in weathered light. The second, slightly smaller, also bears an incised Latin cross. The Gwaun valley is famous for its isolation, keeping the old calendar's New Year to this day, and that same isolation means its carved stones have never had the scrutiny given to Nevern over the hill. A systematic comparison of everything carved at Pontfaen against the national record would be a rewarding day's work.

Nevern Churchyard Carved Stones

SN 083 401

Nevern is justly famous for the Great Cross of St Brynach and its bleeding yews, and the major monuments are well recorded. But the churchyard walls and the church fabric carry numerous smaller carved elements that have never been systematically documented, overshadowed by the spectacle beside them. At a major pilgrim station on the road to St Davids, a survey that deliberately looks beneath and beyond the famous cross could yet add to the record of one of the best known churchyards in Wales.

Ogham Stones, Clydai Churchyard

SN 274 348

St Clydai's Church in north Pembrokeshire holds ogham-inscribed stones that have never enjoyed the fame of those at Nevern or Penally, and elements of the churchyard fabric may contain further carved material as yet unremarked. North Pembrokeshire has one of the highest densities of early Christian inscribed stones anywhere in Britain, and it is precisely the less visited sites in such a landscape that repay a full photographic survey.

Maen Llia: A Question of Christianisation

SN 924 193

Maen Llia itself is one of the great standing stones of Wales, scheduled, recorded and already on the main layer of this map. It appears again here for one unresolved question: some observers have suggested a possible cross incision on its face, faint lettering having also been reported as still visible in the mid twentieth century. If any such marking could be confirmed, a Christianised prehistoric stone on a Roman road in pilgrimage country would be a discovery of real significance, and the question can only be settled by photographing every face under different conditions of light. Until then it remains exactly what this article calls it, an anomaly worth the journey.

Harold's Stones, Trellech

SO 499 052

The three great stones at Trellech are well known and duly scheduled, but the full extent of possible cup marks and incised marks on their faces has never been comprehensively documented, and the surrounding landscape, the earthworks, the holy well, the buried medieval town that was once among the largest in Wales, is poorly integrated in heritage mapping. The stones appear on the main layer of this map; they appear here because a known monument can still hold unknown detail, and Trellech holds more than most.

The Scattered Stones of the Roman Forts

Y Gaer and the Brecon Gaer Vicus

SO 003 297 and SO 010 300

The Roman fort of Y Gaer west of Brecon, once garrisoned by a Spanish cavalry regiment, has fed the surrounding landscape with carved stone for fifteen centuries, and the field walls and farm buildings around it have never been fully assessed for what they absorbed. The fort has already yielded remarkable sculpture, most famously Maen y Morwynion, the maidens' stone, a weathered relief of a Roman citizen and his wife now in Brecknock Museum, its worn inscription generally read as commemorating a wife who lies there. Beyond the ramparts, the civilian settlement or vicus extended into fields that have never been fully surveyed, and surface finds of ceramic, metal and stone have been reported by farmers. Vicus sites often produced votive heads, altars and inscriptions in greater numbers than the forts themselves, and a field walking programme here could be highly rewarding.

Coelbren Roman Fort

SN 857 107

The auxiliary fort at Coelbren in the upper Swansea valley has likewise lost much of its carved stonework to the surrounding farms, built into houses, walls and tracks over fifteen hundred years. No systematic survey of the buildings within a mile or two of the fort has ever been made, and carved faces, inscriptions and decorative fragments have been recorded in exactly such settings at comparable forts. Reused Roman stone in agricultural buildings may be the most overlooked heritage in Wales.

Loughor Roman Fort

SS 564 981

At Loughor the Roman fort of Leucarum lies beneath the medieval castle, and the town that grew around them has been quietly recycling Roman material into its buildings for centuries. The fort guarded an important river crossing on the route west into Carmarthenshire, and a survey of the castle environs and the older town buildings for carved and tooled Roman stone has never been undertaken.

Segontium, Caernarfon

SH 485 624

Segontium was among the most important Roman forts in Wales, garrisoned for over three hundred years, and its museum holds carved stones from the site. But medieval Caernarfon was built extensively from fort material, and the carved elements reused in the older town, particularly around the medieval core, have never been fully catalogued. A patient survey of the pre-Victorian buildings of the town centre, looking for tooled and carved Roman work, could add to what the museum already holds.

Sources

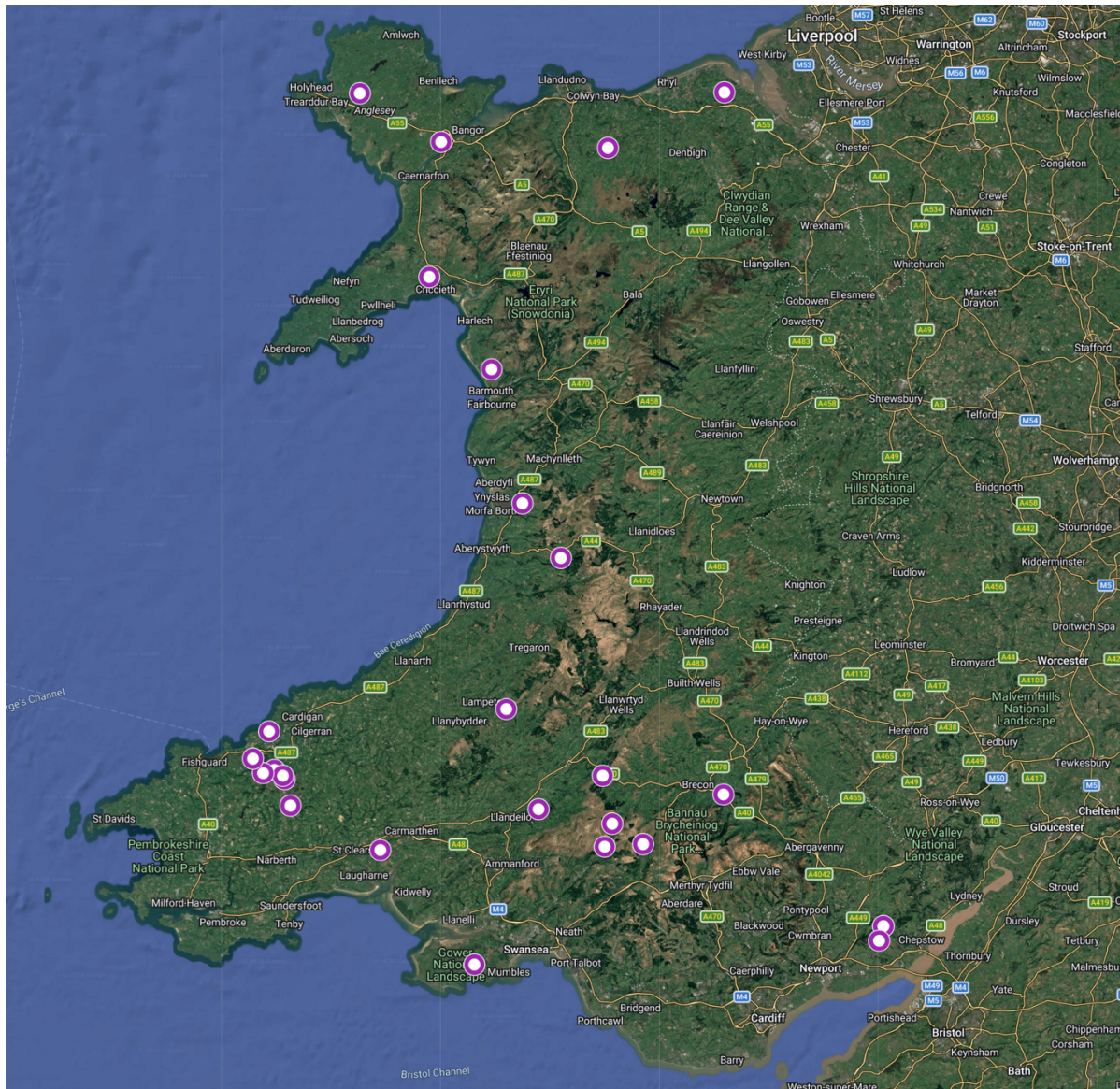
The site records of Coflein, the online catalogue of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and the scheduled monument and listing records of Cadw. The records of the Dyfed and Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trusts, the collections of Brecknock Museum and Oriel Mon, and the community records of the Megalithic Portal. Field observation, correspondence and local report, gathered in the course of the research and identified as such wherever a statement rests upon them.

Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly, 2026

Wales Megalithic Sites

Twenty-Six Further Sites

Standing stones, burial chambers, hillforts and carved stones added to the map of five thousand years of Welsh stone heritage



Interactive map: www.tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites



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Introduction

The map of Wales Megalithic Sites gathers the standing stones, burial chambers, stone circles, hillforts and carved stones of Wales into a single record, from the tombs of the first farming communities to the inscribed stones of the early Christian centuries. In July 2026 twenty-six further sites were added to the map, and this article gives each of them its history. They range across the whole country, from the Glandy Cross complex in Carmarthenshire to a churchyard in the Elwy hills, and across twelve thousand years, from the oldest rock art in Britain to the finest wheel cross in the land.

Each entry below carries the Ordnance Survey grid reference used to place the site on the map. Nothing here is stated with more certainty than the evidence allows: where a claim is contested, as at Waun Mawn, the entry says so, and where a position rests on a published grid reference not yet checked on the ground, the map notes that too. Several sites are on private farmland and this is mentioned where it applies; permission should always be sought where access is not public.

Carmarthenshire and the Tywi Valley

Meini Gwyr, Glandy Cross

Grid reference SN 1417 2658

Meini Gwyr, also known as Buarth Arthur, stands at the heart of the Glandy Cross complex, the most important concentration of Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual monuments in west Wales. It is an embanked stone circle, a form rare in south Wales, consisting of a broad circular bank 36.6 metres across into which seventeen standing stones were once set. Edward Lhuyd counted fifteen still standing in the late seventeenth century, and William Stukeley sketched the site around 1720, noting further stones nearby. Only two remain today, one metre and 1.7 metres high, leaning inward as the whole ring once did. Professor W. F. Grimes excavated the site in 1938 and found an entrance on the western side flanked by upright stones, with a stone kerb along the bank and a clay-filled pit holding a quantity of charcoal before the entrance. Most of his records were destroyed in a bombing raid on Bristol in 1940. Around the circle lie the burial mounds, standing stones and henge of the wider Glandy Cross complex, including the two remaining stones of Yr Allor, The Altar, some 200 yards to the west. The circle sits on a ridgeway linking the western Preseli hills to the eastern Cleddau, a route along which the Stonehenge bluestones may once have travelled.

Twlc y Filiast Burial Chamber, Llangynog

Grid reference SN 3382 1607

Twlc y Filiast, the lair of the greyhound bitch, lies hidden in a wooded dingle beside a stream at Llangynog, a few miles west of Carmarthen. It is a Neolithic burial chamber, one of very few chambered tombs surviving in this part of Carmarthenshire. The capstone has slipped from its supporters but the chamber survives well, and its quiet streamside setting, unusual among Welsh tombs which more often stand on open ground, gives the place an atmosphere all of its own. The name belongs to a family of greyhound names attached to megalithic tombs across south Wales, of which Gwal y Filiast near Llanglydwen and Lletty'r Filiast on the Great Orme are further examples, a folk memory perhaps of the hounds of Welsh legend.

Hirfaen Gwyddog Standing Stone

Grid reference SN 6245 4640

At around 4.9 metres, Hirfaen Gwyddog is one of the tallest standing stones in Wales. It stands near Ffarmers on the boundary between Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, and it is this role as a boundary marker, recorded in early charters and continued without a break to the present day, that has very likely

preserved it. A stone that marks a line on the land is a stone nobody may move. It was probably raised in the Bronze Age, and it has stood witness while every boundary around it, of commote, lordship, parish and county, has been drawn and redrawn across three and a half thousand years.

Carn Goch Hillfort

Grid reference SN 690 242

Above the village of Bethlehem on the south side of the Tywi valley, between Llandeilo and Llangadog, rises the largest Iron Age hillfort in south Wales. Two forts share the ridge of Y Garn Goch, the red cairn: Y Gaer Fawr, the big fort, covering some eleven hectares, and its smaller companion Y Gaer Fach. The ramparts of Y Gaer Fawr are immense banks of tumbled stone, pierced by at least six entrances marked by pairs of large upright slabs that may once have carried timber gates. The hilltop was in use long before the Iron Age: near the northern rampart stands a great cairn of stones that probably began as a Neolithic or Bronze Age burial monument, and further burial mounds lie on the hill. The whole hill is open access land, crossed by the Beacons Way, and a memorial stone to Gwynfor Evans stands near the western approach. The views along the Tywi towards the Black Mountain repay the climb many times over.

The Preseli Hills

Bedd yr Afanc Gallery Grave, Brynberian

Grid reference SN 1084 3459

On the boggy moor below Brynberian lies the grave of the afanc, the water monster of Welsh legend that was said to haunt a pool of the Afon Nyfer until it was dragged from the water and buried here. The monument itself is as singular as its story: Bedd yr Afanc is a Neolithic gallery grave, the only monument of its kind recognised in Wales. Two parallel rows of low stones form a passage some ten metres long, the remains of a chamber once covered by a long mound now almost lost in the peat. It is a modest thing to look at and a rare thing to stand beside, and the walk to it across the open moor, with Carn Ingli rising to the north, is part of the experience.

Bedd Arthur Stone Setting

Grid reference SN 1305 3253

High on the Preseli ridge, beside the ancient trackway known as the Golden Road, an oval setting of small standing stones carries the name of Arthur's grave. It is one of several monuments in these hills attached to his name, for legend gathers thickly along this ridge. The setting looks directly across to the crags of Carn Menyn, long associated with the Stonehenge bluestones, and its horseshoe of low stones has been compared to the bluestone horseshoe at Stonehenge itself, though the resemblance may be no more than chance. Topographical and geophysical surveys carried out in 2002 alongside those at Gors Fawr and Meini Gwyr revealed previously unrecorded features at the site, a reminder that even the best known monuments of Preseli have not yet given up everything they hold.

Carn Goedog Bluestone Outcrop

Grid reference SN 1283 3328

The tor of Carn Goedog rises from the northern slope of Mynydd Preseli, a long crest of spotted dolerite whose weathered pillars stand ready-made for the taking. Geological analysis by Richard Bevins and Rob Ixer identified this outcrop as the principal source of the spotted dolerite bluestones at Stonehenge, displacing Carn Menyn which had held that reputation since 1923. Excavations directed by Mike Parker Pearson from 2014 recorded features at the foot of the crag which the excavators interpret as a Neolithic quarry, with radiocarbon dates around 3300 BC, though other researchers, notably the geomorphologist Brian John, argue that the features are natural and the case for quarrying

unproven. Whatever the truth of that debate, the geology stands: stone from this hillside was raised on Salisbury Plain, and the walk up from the old drovers' road gives a view of the pillars from which it came. The map already carries the companion outcrop of Craig Rhos-y-felin in the valley below, the identified source of one of the Stonehenge rhyolites.

Waun Mawn Stone Setting

Grid reference SN 0839 3403

On open moorland southwest of Brynberian, one standing stone and three fallen companions lie in a shallow arc on the hillside of Cnwc yr Hydd. Excavations in 2017 and 2018 led Mike Parker Pearson's team to propose that these were the remnants of a great dismantled stone circle 110 metres across, and that its missing stones had been carried away to become the first bluestone circle at Stonehenge, a claim that carried the site around the world's press. The science that followed told a different story. Geological work published in 2022 traced the surviving stones not to the Stonehenge quarries but to the local outcrop of Cerrig Lladron barely a mile and a half away, and found no material link to Stonehenge at all, while a further study in 2024 questioned whether a completed circle ever stood here. The claim is therefore contested and the honest position is uncertainty. The stones themselves remain, in a wide and lonely landscape with views to the sea, and the debate they started is now part of their history.

Carn Ingli Hillfort

Grid reference SN 0630 3725

Carn Ingli, the hill of angels, dominates the town of Newport and the Nyfer estuary. Tradition holds that St Brynach of Nevern climbed here to commune with the heavenly host, and the mountain has kept its name and its reputation ever since. The rocky summit is enclosed by ramparts of piled drystone, and on the slopes and terraces below lie the foundations of many round huts and enclosures, the remains of a community that occupied this exposed and commanding place from the Bronze Age into the Iron Age. From the top the whole of the north Pembrokeshire coast is laid out, from Dinas Head to the Teifi, with the Preseli ridge running away to the east.

Llech y Dribedd Burial Chamber

Grid reference SN 1009 4318

Llech y Dribedd, the stone of the three feet, stands in farmland near Moylegrove within sight of Cardigan Bay. It is a classic tripod dolmen: a massive rounded capstone poised on three squat uprights, the whole monument balanced with an assurance that has now lasted more than five thousand years. Like Pentre Ifan and Carreg Coetan to the south and west, it belongs to the family of early Neolithic portal tombs that ring the Nyfer valley and the coast, the visible legacy of the first farming communities of north Pembrokeshire. Its position, with the sea to the north and the Preseli skyline to the south, is among the finest of any of them.

Bannau Brycheiniog

Maen Madoc Inscribed Stone

Grid reference SN 9181 1577

Beside the Roman road of Sarn Helen, on the open moor north of Ystradfellte, stands a pillar of stone some three metres high. Cut into one face, in Latin capitals of the fifth or sixth century, are the words DERVACIVS FILIVS IVSTI HIC IACIT: Dervacus, son of Justus, lies here. Nothing more is known of Dervacus, nor of the Madoc whose name the stone now carries, but the monument speaks clearly enough. A generation or two after the legions left, a British family buried their dead beside the Roman road and marked the grave in the Roman manner, in the Roman tongue. The stone is a natural

companion to Maen Llia, the great uninscribed slab standing two miles to the north on the same mountain road, and the two together make one of the finest short walks in the Bannau.

Cerrig Duon Stone Circle and Maen Mawr

Grid reference SN 852 206

In the high valley of the infant Afon Tawe, below the eastern flank of the Black Mountain, lies the ritual complex of Cerrig Duon, the black stones. The circle is in truth an egg-shaped ring of about twenty small stones, none more than knee height, some barely clearing the turf. About ten metres to the north stands Maen Mawr, the big stone, a squat rectangular monolith over two metres tall with two small stones aligned behind it, and running towards the circle from the northeast is a double row or avenue of tiny stones more than forty metres long. Cadw describes the whole group as a ritual complex of the Bronze Age. The builders here were not making an architectural statement; they were marking a place, and the place still explains itself, held between the river and the mountain wall. Reaching the site means stepping across the Tawe, which should not be attempted after heavy rain.

Saith Maen Stone Row

Grid reference SN 8333 1543

Saith Maen, the seven stones, is a row of seven stones on the hillside above Craig-y-nos in the upper Swansea valley, some standing and some fallen. The row points roughly towards the Cerrig Duon circle over the watershed to the northwest, a relationship that may be deliberate, for stone rows in the Bannau often seem to reach towards other monuments across the grain of the land. It is a short climb from the road through Craig-y-nos Country Park, and the row makes a natural pairing with Cerrig Duon for anyone walking this corner of the mountain.

Mynydd Bach Tre Castell Stone Circles

Grid reference SN 8331 3106

On the moorland of Mynydd Bach southwest of Tre Castell stand two Bronze Age stone circles side by side, a larger ring of about 23 metres and a smaller companion a few paces away, with the traces of an associated stone alignment nearby. Paired circles are uncommon anywhere in Britain and this is among the best examples in Wales. The stones are low and the setting is everything: wide upland grazing on the old Roman road westward from the camps at Y Pigwn, which lie just along the ridge. Whoever raised these rings chose a routeway that was already old, and that would remain a highway, for Roman soldiers and later for drovers, for thousands of years after them.

Ty Illtud Chambered Tomb, Llanhamlach

Grid reference SO 0982 2640

On the brow of a hill above the Usk valley near Llanhamlach stands Ty Illtud, a Neolithic chambered tomb of the Cotswold-Severn family with a feature no other tomb in Wales can match. The inner faces of the chamber are covered with incised carvings: crosses of several forms, chevrons and lozenges, and what appears to be a five-stringed lyre. They are probably the work of medieval hands, cut by masons quarrying the flagstone outcrop nearby, and they attach to the tradition that St Illtud used the ancient chamber as his hermitage, which gave the tomb its name, the house of Illtud. John Aubrey recorded in the seventeenth century that treasure was believed to lie beneath the mound, and that when digging began such a tempest of thunder and lightning arose that the workmen fled. The tomb stands on private farmland and permission should be sought at Manest Court on the lane below before visiting.

Ceredigion

Bedd Taliesin

Grid reference SN 6716 9123

On the hillside above Tal-y-bont in north Ceredigion, looking out over the Dyfi estuary, lies a Bronze Age round cairn with its burial cist exposed at the centre, the capstone pushed aside long ago. Tradition names it Bedd Taliesin, the grave of Taliesin, the sixth-century poet whose legend was born a few miles away on the shore of Cors Fochno, where the infant bard was said to have been found in a leather bag at the salmon weir. The attribution is legend rather than history, and the cairn is some two thousand years older than the poet, but the name has held for centuries and the monument has become part of the story it carries. Whatever lies beneath, the outlook over the estuary to the mountains of Meirionnydd is a grave site fit for a prince of song.

Ysbyty Cynfyn Churchyard Stones

Grid reference SN 7523 7912

The circular churchyard wall at Ysbyty Cynfyn, on the mountain road near Devil's Bridge, has several large standing stones built into its fabric, the tallest over three metres high. For two centuries these have been claimed as the remains of a prehistoric stone circle taken into Christian use, the old religion literally built into the boundary of the new. Modern opinion is divided: some of the stones may have been placed or moved when the wall was built, and how ancient the setting really is remains an open question. The name records another layer of history, for ysbyty is a hospice, and a medieval hospice for travellers and pilgrims stood here on the mountain road. Whatever the true age of its stones, the churchyard remains one of the most suggestive meeting places of the prehistoric and the Christian in Wales.

Gower and the South East

Cat Hole Cave, Parkmill

Grid reference SS 5377 9002

A short walk up the wooded valley behind the Parc le Breos burial chamber on Gower, a cave mouth opens in the limestone above the path. Cat Hole Cave was used by hunters of the last Ice Age and by many generations after them, but its fame rests on a discovery made in September 2010, when an engraving of a reindeer was found on the rear wall of the cave. Dating placed it at around fourteen thousand years old, which makes it the oldest known rock art in Britain. The cave mouth is now protected by a grille to safeguard the engraving, but the site can be visited and the valley setting, with the Neolithic tomb below and the Ice Age sanctuary above, compresses ten thousand years of human presence into a few hundred yards.

Gaerllwyd Burial Chamber

Grid reference ST 447 968

Beside the B4235 between Usk and Shirenewton, in a farm field at the Gaerllwyd crossroads, stand the remains of the only surviving megalithic tomb in Monmouthshire. The chamber is partly collapsed, its unusually thick capstone now resting at an angle on the remaining uprights with further stones scattered at its base. It was raised in the early Neolithic, most likely in the first half of the fourth millennium BC, beside an ancient trackway running inland from the Severn shore towards the Black Mountains. Folklore tells that the stones were thrown here in a contest between the Devil and Twm Sion Cati, a game of quoits which the trickster won when his throw landed the capstone squarely on the uprights.

Gray Hill Stone Circle

Grid reference ST 4383 9354

On the heathy top of Gray Hill, Mynydd Llwyd, above Wentwood and the Severn levels, lies a ruined stone circle with outlying standing stones, one of very few stone circles anywhere in southeast Wales. The ring is small and disturbed, and cairns and traces of later field systems lie around it, so that reading the hilltop takes some patience. The reward is the setting, with the Severn estuary spread below and both crossings of the channel in view. The hill has clearly drawn people for a very long time, and the circle, whatever ceremonies it once held, was placed where the land and the great river meet the sky.

The North

Presaddfed Burial Chamber, Bodedern

Grid reference SH 3477 8086

In a field near Bodedern in western Anglesey stand two Neolithic burial chambers a few metres apart, the remains of what may have been a single long monument or two tombs built side by side. The northern chamber still carries its capstone on upright supporters; the southern has collapsed. In the eighteenth century the standing chamber was reportedly occupied as a dwelling by a local family, one of many recorded cases of Welsh cromlechau being pressed into service as shelters, sties and dairies down the centuries. The site is in the care of Cadw and freely accessible.

Plas Newydd Burial Chamber

Grid reference SH 5197 6972

On the lawn of Plas Newydd, the great house of the Marquesses of Anglesey above the Menai Strait, stands a Neolithic burial chamber with one of the largest capstones on the island, a slab of enormous bulk resting on stout uprights with a smaller chamber attached. The tomb owes its manicured surroundings to the landscaping of the eighteenth-century park, when the monument became an ornament of the grounds, and it owes its survival to the same accident of taste. Access is through the Plas Newydd estate, now in the care of the National Trust, and the chamber makes a striking pairing of the Neolithic and the Georgian, with the Strait and the mountains of Eryri beyond.

Carneddau Hengwm Long Cairns

Grid reference SH 6134 2050

On the moorland shelf above Tal-y-bont in Ardudwy, side by side and aligned on each other, lie two of the largest Neolithic monuments in Gwynedd. The Carneddau Hengwm, the old bank cairns, are a pair of great long cairns, each retaining the remains of burial chambers and portal stones within its tumbled mass, the southern cairn approaching sixty metres in length. Around them spreads one of the richest prehistoric landscapes in north Wales, with standing stones, circles and Bronze Age cairns scattered across the shelf between the mountains and the sea. The pairing of two such monuments is remarkable and suggests a place that held its importance across many generations of the early farming communities of Ardudwy.

Cefn Isaf Burial Chamber, Rhoslan

Grid reference SH 4839 4088

In a field at Rhoslan in Eifionydd, between Criccieth and the mountains, stands a plain and handsome Neolithic burial chamber, sometimes called the Rhoslan cromlech. A single large capstone rests on low uprights above a simple rectangular chamber, with no trace remaining of the covering mound. It is the simplest form of the megalithic tomb, and one of the best of its kind in Gwynedd, standing quietly in farmland much as it has for over five thousand years.

Maen Achwyfan Cross, Whitford

Grid reference SJ 129 788

In a field near Whitford in Flintshire stands what is often described as the tallest wheel cross in Britain, a sculptured pillar of the late tenth or early eleventh century rising to around 3.4 metres. Every face is carved: plaited interlace and knotwork in the Viking-age taste of the Irish Sea world, with a small human figure among beasts on the lower shaft. The monument belongs to the years when Norse settlers and their descendants were part of the life of the coast between Chester and Anglesey, and its carving blends Celtic, Scandinavian and Christian traditions into a single statement of faith and standing. Why it was raised in this spot remains unknown, though burial mounds nearby suggest the place was already old and already sacred. It makes a northern counterpart to Eliseg's Pillar near Llangollen, which this map already carries.

Llangernyw Churchyard Standing Stones

Grid reference SH 8757 6744

The churchyard at Llangernyw in the Elwy hills is best known for its ancient yew, one of the oldest living things in Britain, but it holds an older stone secret. Two small prehistoric standing stones flank a third stone incised with crosses, standing together in the churchyard a few paces from the church wall. As at Gwytherin in the next valley, which this map already records, the arrangement suggests a sacred site of great age taken over and consecrated by the early church, the standing stones of one faith gathered into the burial ground of another. The three stones, the yew and the circular churchyard together make Llangernyw one of the most complete examples in Wales of that long continuity.

Sources

The site records of Coflein, the online catalogue of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and the scheduled monument records of Cadw. The reports of the Dyfed Archaeological Trust and the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, including the latter's survey of the Neolithic chambered tombs of Breconshire. W. F. Grimes's excavation of Meini Gwyr in 1938. The surveys of Bedd Arthur, Gors Fawr and Meini Gwyr by Timothy Darvill and Geoffrey Wainwright published in the *Antiquaries Journal*. The excavation reports of Mike Parker Pearson and colleagues on Carn Goedog and Waun Mawn published in *Antiquity*, the geological work of Richard Bevins, Nick Pearce and Rob Ixer published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, and the responses of Brian John published in the *Holocene* and elsewhere. The antiquarian records of Edward Lhuyd, William Stukeley and John Aubrey, and the field guides of N. P. Figgis to prehistoric Preseli.

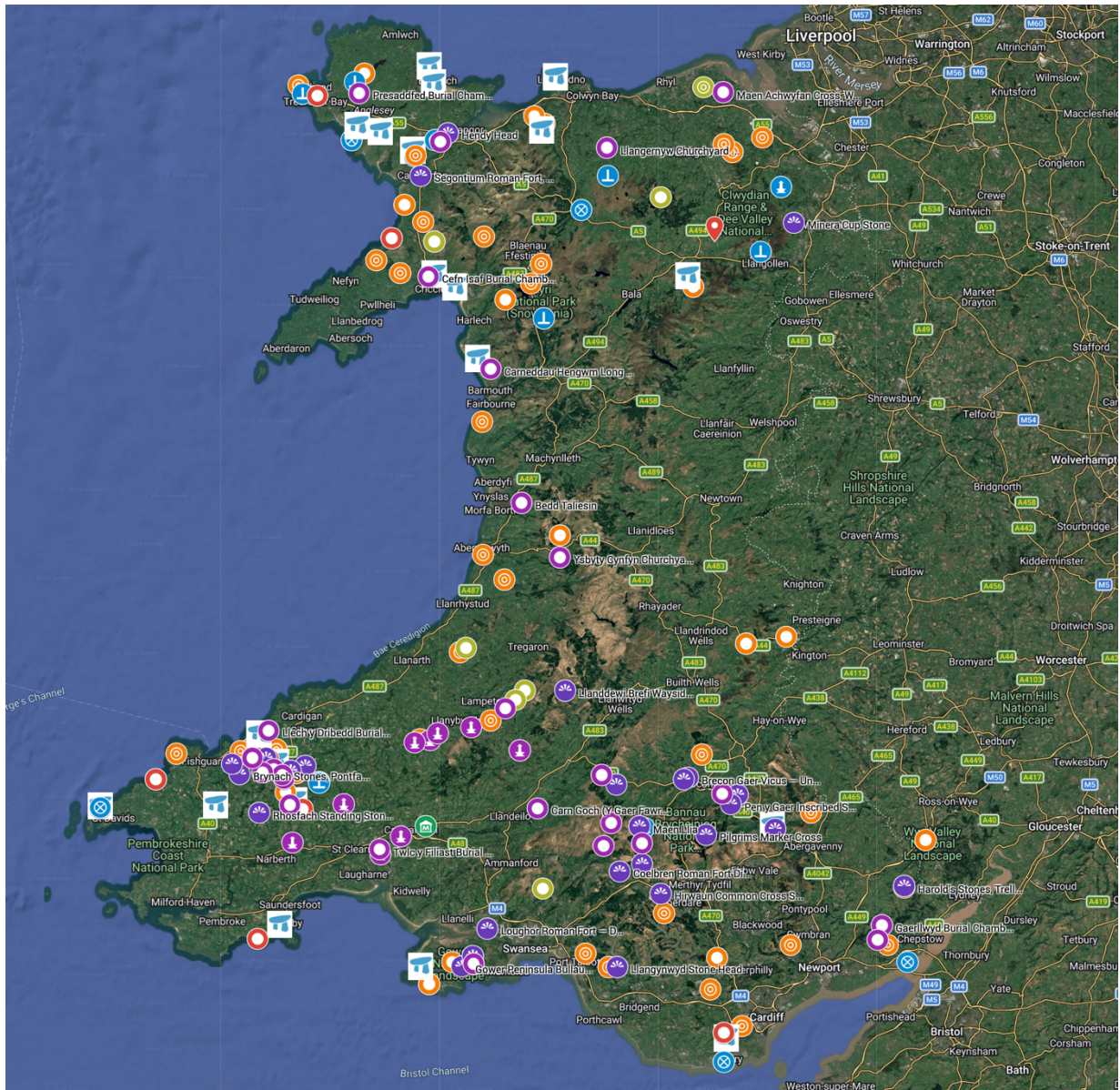
The Wales Megalithic Sites project is now complete. It began as a single map of standing stones and burial chambers and grew into a record of one hundred and sixty-two sites across four layers, spanning the whole of Wales and some thirty-five thousand years, from the Ice Age burial at Paviland to the wheel cross at Whitford. Alongside the map stand five written parts giving every site its history: the hundred foundation sites, the early Christian stones of Carmarthenshire Museum returned on paper to the places they came from, the carved and anomalous stones that the official records have missed, the twenty-six sites added in July 2026, and a closing summary with a timeline of Wales in stone.

Every site is placed by grid reference or GPS. Nothing is claimed with more certainty than the evidence allows, legend is told as legend, and where the experts disagree the disagreement is recorded. The project corrected its own errors as it went, and it remains open to correction still. It is complete, but not finished, because no honest record of a living landscape can be. The map is free to use, the stones are waiting, and the best thing this project can achieve is to put someone on a hillside in front of one of them.

The Long View

A Closing Summary and Timeline of Wales in Stone

The Wales Megalithic Sites project brought to a close: one map, four layers, five articles and thirty-five thousand years



Interactive map: tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-In-Sites



Researched and written by Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly

The Project in Summary

The Wales Megalithic Sites project set out to gather the carved and sacred stone heritage of Wales into a single living record: an interactive map of one hundred and sixty-two sites in four layers, and this accompanying publication of five parts giving every site its history. The foundation layer holds one hundred monuments spanning the whole country, from the caves of the Ice Age to the pillar of a ninth century king. The second layer restores the early Christian memorial stones of Carmarthenshire Museum to the churchyards, chapels and farms where they originally stood. The third records the anomalous stones, the carved heads, cup marks, crosses and basin stones that official databases have missed, keeping what is verified and what is merely reported honestly apart. The fourth carries the twenty-six sites added in July 2026, and shows the record doing what a living record should do, which is grow.

The method has been the same throughout. Every site is placed by GPS or Ordnance Survey grid reference, with positions resting on unchecked published references marked as such. Every claim is traced to the national records, the published excavations or named local report, and legend is told as legend. Contested questions, the Waun Mawn circle, the Bedd Morris stone, the Gwytherin row, are given with both sides standing. And the project has corrected its own record as it went: discovery dates reconciled against the original publications, museum provenances checked against the catalogues, a confusion of two similar-sounding names on inscribed stones found and put right. A record that cannot correct itself cannot be trusted, and this one has tried to earn its trust.

Wales in Stone: A Timeline

The table below sets the sites of the map into the long order of time. The dates are conventional approximations; the periods shaded into one another, and in Wales the old ways always lingered in the hills long after new ones arrived on the coast.

Period	Approximate Dates	The Age and Its Stones	Sites on the Map
The Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic)	Before c. 9600 BC	Ice Age hunters shelter in the caves of the limestone coasts and river gorges. The Red Lady burial at Paviland, around 33,000 years old, is the oldest ceremonial burial in western Europe; the engraved reindeer at Cat Hole, around 14,000 years old, is the oldest rock art in Britain.	Paviland Cave, Cat Hole Cave, Hoyle's Mouth, King Arthur's Cave
The Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic)	c. 9600 to 4000 BC	After the ice, hunter-gatherers move through a warming, wooded Wales, leaving flint scatters and camp sites rather than monuments. Traces of their world lie beneath later tombs.	Occupation traces beneath Gwernvale
The New Stone Age (Neolithic)	c. 4000 to 2400 BC	The first farmers raise the chambered tombs, the cromlechau, and carve the first decorated stones. Toward the end of the age, stone from the Preseli hills is taken east to Stonehenge.	Pentre Ifan, Bryn Celli Ddu, Barclodiad y Gawres, Tinkinswood, Dyffryn Ardudwy, Parc le Breos, Gop Hill, Carn Goedog, Craig Rhos-y-felin
The Bronze Age	c. 2400 to 800 BC	The age of the standing stones, stone circles, rows, cairns and round barrows, and of the cup marks pecked into capstones and outcrops. The dead are placed on the high ground to watch over the living.	Gors Fawr, Druids Circle, Bryn Cader Faner, Moel Ty Uchaf, Maen Llia, Cerrig Duon, Bedd Branwen, Bachwen, Carn Llechart, Harold's Stones

The Iron Age	c. 800 BC to AD 74	The hillforts crown the summits of Wales, from single farmsteads to walled towns, and the carved stone head expresses the beliefs of the age.	Tre'r Ceiri, Carn Goch, Foel Drygarn, Penycloddiau, Castell Henllys, Caerau, the Hendy Head, the Llangynog head
Roman Wales	AD 74 to c. 410	Conquest brings forts, roads and inscribed stone in the Roman manner. When the forts are abandoned their carved stones scatter into the walls and farms around them.	Tomen y Mur, Segontium, Y Gaer, Coelbren, Loughor, Sarn Helen, Maen Madoc's road, the NATO Stone (RIB 412)
The Early Christian Centuries	c. 410 to 1100	The age of the inscribed memorial stones, in Latin and in ogham, of the llan enclosures, and later of the great carved crosses. Kings, bishops and families set their names in stone.	The Voteporix Stone and the Carmarthenshire Museum collection, Maen Madoc, the Paulinus Stone, Eliseg's Pillar, Maen Achwyfan, Nevern, Gwytherin
The Medieval Centuries	c. 1100 to 1500	Castles take the high ground the hillforts held, boundary stones mark the lordships, and masons carve crosses, heads and marks into churches and older monuments alike.	Castell Crug Eryr, Castell Nos, Twmbarlwm's motte, Bwrdd y Tri Arglwydd, the Ty Illtud carvings, medieval Trellech
The Making of the Record	1690s to 2026	Edward Lhuyd begins the written record in the 1690s; the Voteporix Stone is published in 1895; Grimes digs Meini Gwyr in 1938; the Cat Hole reindeer is found in 2010; the bluestone quarries are excavated and debated from 2014; and in 2026 this map gathers the whole story into one place.	Every site on the map, and the layers still to come

A Finishing Word

Thirty-five thousand years separate the young man laid in the cave at Paviland from the reader opening this map on a telephone beside a field gate, and the whole of that distance is walked in stone. The people of Wales have always answered the land in the same material: a chamber for the dead, a stone for a boundary, a name for a grave, a cross for a faith, a cairn for a summit. The monuments in this record are not relics of separate vanished worlds but chapters of one continuing conversation, and the newest chapter is the recording itself, the grid references and photographs and articles by which this generation marks what it values, exactly as every generation before it did.

The project is complete, and it is not finished, for no honest record of a living landscape can be. Stones will be reported from field walls and churchyards; the anomalous layer exists to receive them. Claims will be tested and corrected; the record is built to bear it. Whoever takes up this map, on the screen or on the hill, is invited to add to it, to question it, and above all to go and stand where the stones stand. They have waited a long time, and they are patient.

<https://tinyurl.com/Wales-Megalithic-Sites-DV>



Graham Tudor Emmanuel, Kidwelly, 2026