

CPAT Report No 908

Crugiau Bach Stone Circle and Gro Hill Burial Cairns in Northern Brecknock

FIELD SURVEY 2007



THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The uplands of northern Brecknock are rich in the remains of Bronze Age funerary and ritual monuments, containing not only significant concentrations of sites, but also a range of monument types. During the Cadw-funded survey of these prehistoric monuments, which was conducted in this area in 2005-06 (Jones and Owen 2006), two important complexes were identified in the area to the south-east of the Caban Coch Reservoir, on the adjacent areas of Crugiau Bach and Gro Hill (Fig. 1).

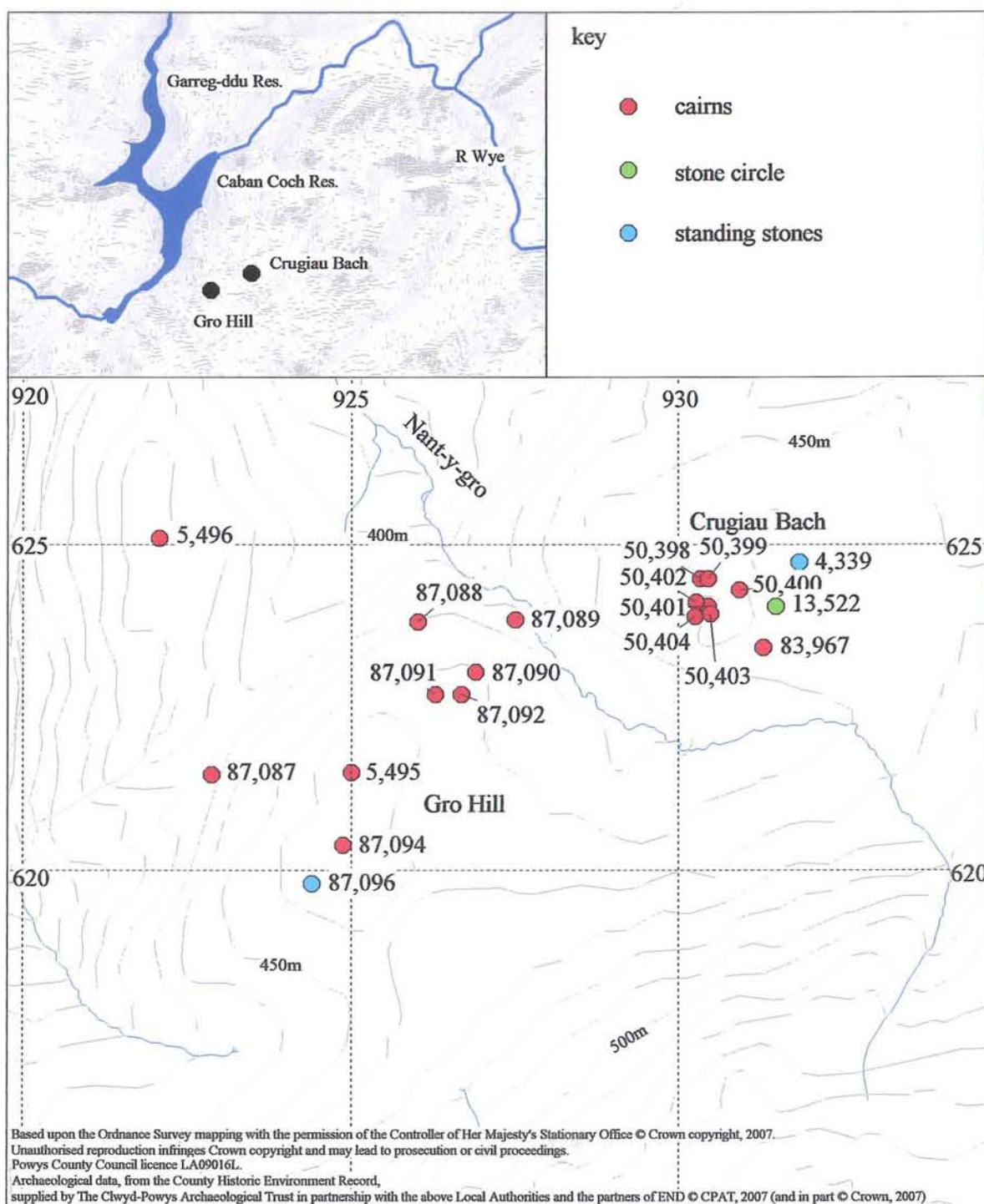


Fig. 1 Location of Crugiau Bach and Gro Hill

- 1.2 Although this area had been the subject of two previous surveys under the Uplands Initiative (Skeates 1999; CAP 2001), funded by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), the 2005-06 survey identified seven previously unrecorded burial cairns on Gro Hill. It became clear that the scheduled stone circle on Crugiau Bach (SAM Br 274) had previously been mislocated by around 500m. Given the nature of the area and the significance of the new discoveries, it was felt that scheduling recommendations should be deferred until the completion of a more thorough investigation of the area as a whole.
- 1.3 A programme of field survey was therefore undertaken during the summer of 2007, again with funding provided by Cadw, which included a detailed measured survey of the stone circle, for which no accurate plan existed.

2 CRUGIAU BACH STONE CIRCLE

- 2.1 The Crugiau Bach stone circle (PRN 5502) lies on a level shelf at 458m OD, on the north-western side of Y Gamriw, to the east of the Nant-y-gro stream (SN 93156240). The circle comprises 21 visible stones, of which only seven are still upright, one is leaning significantly, and the remainder are recumbent. Probing with a surveying arrow has suggested that there may be at least a further 22 very small or recumbent stones which have become buried as a result of peat growth, which amounts to around 0.3m in this area. In the centre there is a large recumbent slab, measuring 1.3m by 0.55m, which may have fallen to the south.



Plate 1 Crugiau Bach Stone Circle viewed from the west. Photo CPAT 2523-013

- 2.2 Like many stone circles the ring of uprights does not in fact describe a true circle, instead measuring 24m across its broadest axis from east to west, and 23.5m from north to south. The tallest of the upright stones (no. 1) is on the southern side, standing to 0.74m, while there are two large recumbent slabs on the east side (nos 16 and 17) and that in the centre measures

1.25m in length. The other upright stones, nos 2, 3, 11 and 19, stand to 0.18m, 0.05m, 0.05m and 0.44m respectively. The remaining stones are all rather small, generally no more than 0.45m in visible length. Although the number of original stones is unknown it is possible that there may have been at least 50 stones comprising the circle, based on the general spacing and potential buried stones.

- 2.3 Around 75m from the centre of the circle, to the north-north-east, there is a small upright stone 0.85m high (PRN 13524), now leaning, which has also been scheduled as part of the monument complex. At distances of between 60m and 120m to the west there are seven small cairns (PRNs 50398-50404), with another (PRN 83967) 60m to the south-south-east. The cairns are mostly rather irregular and varying between 2.5m and 5.8m across and although their general appearance is perhaps more suggestive of field clearance their proximity to the stone circle may be significant. There is, however, also a low earthwork (PRN 50406) in the same area defining an oval enclosure, measuring c. 14m north-west to south-east by 10.7m north-east to south-west, which may also be related to the cairns. The earth and stone bank is mostly turf covered, up to 1.6m wide and 0.2m high, with a possible entrance on the south-west side. There is a suggestion of an internal feature against the bank on the south-east side, which could be a hut.

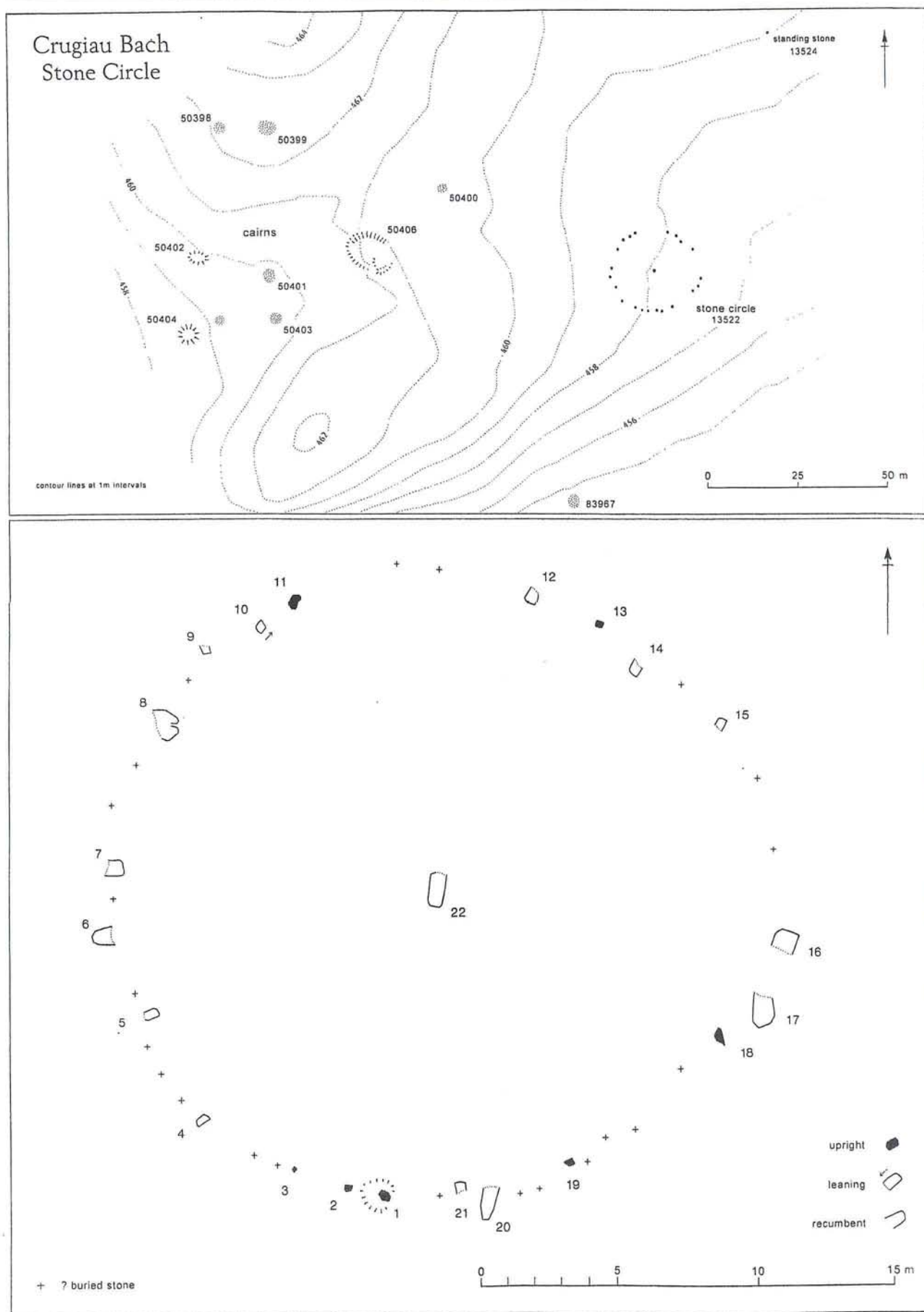


Fig. 2 Plan of Crugiau Bach Stone Circle

3 GRO HILL FIELD SURVEY

- 3.1 Gro Hill forms a low local summit, extending from a fairly level shelf on the north-western side of Y Gamriw, to the west of the Nant-y-gro stream. The entire hilltop and its slopes were subject to a thorough field survey, conducted in a series of transects approximately 30m apart. The survey revisited the seven burial cairns which had been discovered during the 2005-06 survey, as well as other previously recorded funerary monuments in the area. Although the survey failed to identify any new monuments it is clear that this area contains a significant group of burial cairns, with a significant cluster of sites on the slopes to the north-east of the summit, overlooking the Nant-y-gro stream. The sites are described below in order of their Primary Record Number.

PRN 5495 Gro Hill Cairn I (SN 9250062150)

- 3.2 The summit of Gro Hill has a low cairn, largely turf covered, c. 6m in diameter and up to 0.25m high. There is a more recent cairn of loose stone on top of this, measuring 3m by 2m and 0.5m high, and a rock outcrop lies immediately to the south-west.



Plate 2 Gro Hill Cairn I (PRN 5495). Photo CPAT 2375.021

- PRN 5496 Gro Hill Cairn II (SN 9221062510)**
- 3.3 On the level saddle of a ridge to the north of Gro Hill there is a large, disturbed cairn c. 10.5m diameter and up to 0.6m high. A shelter has been dug into the cairn to the south-east of the centre, with rubble walling built around three sides, and there is also a modern marker cairn to the north-east of the centre. There is further disturbance to the north-west of the centre with a turf-covered hollow, measuring 2m by 1.5m. To the south-east of the cairn there is a small satellite cairn, measuring 4.5m by 3.8 and 0.2m high.



Plate 3 Gro Hill Cairn II (PRN 5496). Photo CPAT 2375.016

PRN 87087 Gro Hill Cairn III (SN 922896214)

- 3.4 A well preserved cairn is sited on the south-east side of a col, at the base of the slope on the west side of Gro Hill. The cairn is of rubble construction, partly covered by turf and bracken around perimeter, and there is no evidence of disturbance. There is some suggestion of kerbing around the south side. The cairn is sited on a slope so the west side appears higher than it actually is, the cairn measuring 7.2m north to south by 6.6m east to west and up to 0.6m high.



Plate 4 Gro Hill Cairn III (PRN 87087). Photo CPAT 2375.015

PRN 87088 Gro Hill Cairn IV (SN 9260362381)

- 3.5 A well-preserved cairn is sited on a level terrace on the north side of Gro Hill. The cairn measures 4.5m north to south by 4.2m east to west, with a slightly off-centre cist aligned north to south, measuring c. 1.0m by 0.75m. The cist is infilled with loose rubble and is formed by an edge-set slab forming the east side, large boulders at the north and south ends, while the west side is less well defined. The cist is infilled with loose rubble. The east side of the cairn incorporates a large slab, measuring 1. by 0.7m.



Plate 5 Gro Hill Cairn IV (PRN 87088). Photo CPAT 2375.011

PRN 87089 Gro Hill Cairn V (SN 9275262384)

- 3.6 A circular stone cairn, 7.7m in diameter by 0.5m high, is located on a slight promontory overlooking the Nant-y-Gro stream. The interior is irregular with a hollow 2m in diameter slightly off-set to the south-east of the centre. A small stone-lined cist is exposed near the northern edge of the cairn, aligned north to south, measuring 0.54m by 0.32 and 0.3m deep.



Plate 6 Gro Hill Cairn V (PRN 87089). Photo CPAT 2375.012



Plate 7 Gro Hill Cairn V (PRN 87089), showing cist. Photo CPAT 2375.013

PRN 87090 Gro Hill Cairn VI (SN 9269262304)

- 3.7 A small, partially turf-covered cairn, measuring *c.* 5m in diameter and 0.3m high, with a well-preserved central cist, measuring 0.9m east to west by 0.4m north to south, and 0.3m deep. A single long slab forms the north side with two stones on the south side, a slab at the east end, and the west end defined by a protruding boulder with flat top. The displaced capstone lies at the east-north-east edge, measuring 1.3m by 0.8m and 0.2m thick.



Plate 8 Gro Hill Cairn VI (PRN 87090). Photo CPAT 2375.007

- PRN 87091 Gro Hill Cairn VII (SN 9263062270)**
- 3.8 A low cairn, measuring 6.7m in diameter and 0.4m high, with a central cist aligned north-west to south-east, measuring 0.9m by 0.5m, and 0.3m deep. The north-east and south-west sides of the cist are formed by large stones with smaller stones at the ends.



Plate 9 Gro Hill Cairn VII (PRN 87091). Photo CPAT 2375.009



Plate 10 Gro Hill Cairn VII (PRN 87091), showing central cist. Photo CPAT 2375.010

- PRN 87092 Gro Hill Cairn VIII (SN 9267062270)**
- 3.9 A small cairn, measuring 3.8m in diameter and 0.4m high, is located on the upper northern slopes of Gro Hill. There is a central stone aligned north to south, 0.8m long and 0.3m wide, which may be part of a cist.



Plate 11 Gro Hill Cairn VIII (PRN 87092). Photo CPAT 2375.008

PRN 87094 Gro Hill Cairn IX (SN9248762039)

- 3.10 On open moorland to the south-west of Gro Hill there is a cairn which is constructed on a slight ridge, giving the impression of greater height. The cairn is mostly turf-covered, measuring *c.* 8m north-east to south-west by 8.4m north-west to south-east, and up to 0.5m high. There is a small mound of mostly turf-covered stones to the south-west, *c.* 1.5m in diameter and 0.25m high, and a spread of stone on the south-east side, which may be an associated feature.



Plate 12 Gro Hill Cairn IX (PRN 87094). Photo CPAT 2375.019

- PRN 87096 Gro Hill standing stone (SN 9244061980)**
- 3.11 To the south-west of the summit of Gro Hill there is a small upright stone measuring 0.46m high, 0.4m long and 0.28m thick. There are also at least five small stones in the immediate area, although these appear to be fortuitous and not obviously part of a circle or setting.



Plate 13 Gro Hill standing stone (PRN 87096). Photo CPAT 2375.020

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 4.1 The survey was undertaken with the assistance of Wendy Owen, CPAT, while the sites on Gro Hill were originally identified by Richard Hankinson and Ian Grant of CPAT. Thanks are also due to Cadw for providing funding for the survey and to the Elan Valley Estate for granting access.

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