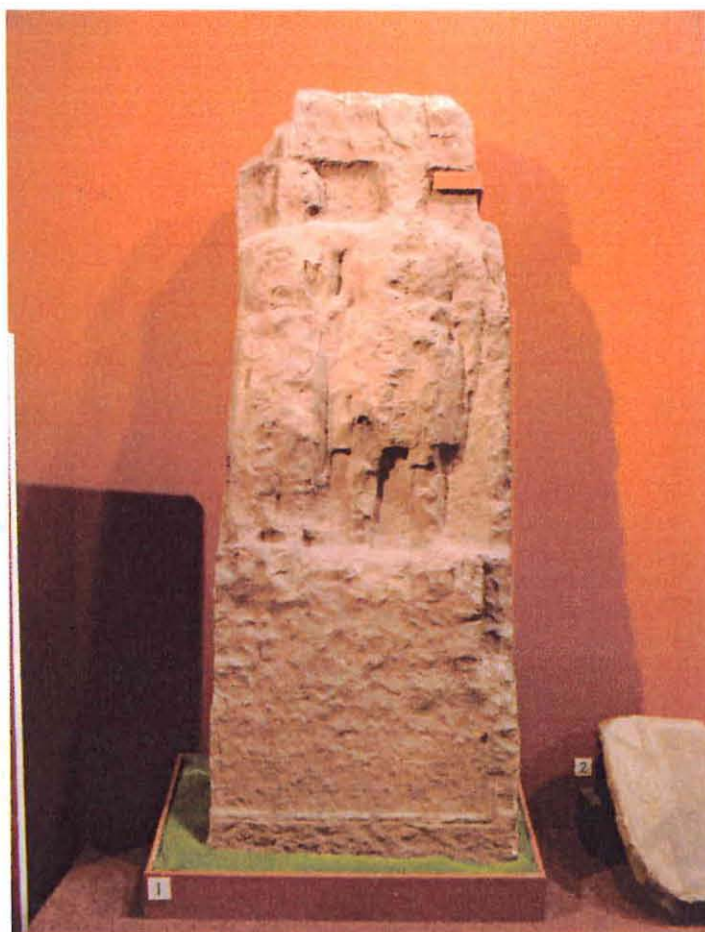


## CPAT Report No 964

# Roman Funerary and Religious Sites

## The Scheduling Enhancement Programme



### CPAT HER

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THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

**CPAT Report No 964**

**Roman Funerary and Religious Sites**  
**The Scheduling Enhancement Programme**

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December 2008

Report for Cadw

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## **Roman Funerary and Religious Sites**

### **1 The Scheduling Enhancement Programme: Introduction**

This brief report covers one element of a scheduling enhancement programme extending to all four Welsh Archaeological Trusts which was initiated by Cadw in 2008. It was needed to inform their thinking on priorities for scheduling enhancement in the two years up to April 2010 when the provisions of the Heritage Reform White Paper, it was hoped, were due to be implemented.

A scoping study was conducted at Cadw's request in the second quarter of the financial year 2007/8, to identify in very general terms the number of sites and features recorded in the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) that still needed to be assessed in order to complete the scheduling programme for prehistoric and Roman sites in the region, taking the study from the earliest times through to 400 AD.

The scoping report was submitted to Cadw in September 2007 and was discussed at a meeting of the trusts' directors and Cadw on 3 October. This was followed by a further meeting between the trusts and Dr Mike Yates on 7 November, as a result of which some preliminary work on a general scheduling enhancement programme across the whole of Wales was conducted by some but not all trusts during the remainder of 2007/8. All four trusts are currently involved, at the time of writing, in this programme, with a view to completing it by the end of the financial year 2009/10.

A series of enhancement programmes had already taken place during previous years across Powys and the former county of Clwyd, in some cases going back into the early 1990s, to study thematically a range of monument types including: unenclosed prehistoric settlements identified through their lithic concentrations (2001-2), prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments (from 1997 until 2005/6 with follow-up programmes in two subsequent years), hut circles/round huts (from 1998 to 2008), defended enclosures of Iron Age and Roman date (in 1993, 1995, 1998 & 2006-7), Roman military establishments (2004 to 2008), and Roman roads (2002 to 2004), together with post-Roman-era studies of early medieval ecclesiastical and burial sites (2001-2003), churches and churchyards (1995-1998), and historic settlements (1992-1994). Such enhancement programmes were designed not only to identify sites which held sufficient potential to qualify them for scheduling as sites of national importance, but also to undertake a rationalisation of the HER, through the validation of authentic sites and rejection of spurious examples, the amplification of existing records as necessary, and the removal of duplicate records.

The scoping study in 2007 utilised a recent extract from the HER to identify: a) all sites and features of prehistoric and Roman date and b) all recorded examples of specific site types such as 'enclosure', 'pound', field system' and the like where the period had been defined as 'unknown'. Sites already assessed during the enhancement programmes of previous years were then removed from this database. Similarly, sites which had nothing more precise than a four-figure grid reference were removed in the belief that there was no realistic prospect of identifying any such site on the ground, an approach paralleling that followed by the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.

The study identified over 1600 sites (or cultural heritage assets to use the current phraseology) where assessment might be useful. Some site types such as burnt mounds, field systems including pit alignments, and caves appeared to provide in themselves typologically discrete studies, but it was equally clear that there were some areas of east and north-east Wales where concentrations of various types of site suggested that a more geographically defined approach might be a more efficient mechanism for assessment. Where a field element might be involved in the assessment, it was felt that



it would be a more economical use of resources to look at the sites of varying types as a group rather than to examine them individually over different years.

The subject of this report are those sites considered to be representative of funerary and burial activity dating to the Roman period within north-east and east Wales. Some sites within these categories fall in areas which have been considered as geographical entities in the programme of scheduling enhancement; they are however reported on here, to both avoid duplication and provide a more complete narrative of the particular monument groups in question.

**Table 1: Occurrence of specific sites types against geographical areas**

Area	Black Mountains	Brecon Beacons	Clwydians	Elan Valley	Epynt	Mynydd Hiraethog	Severn Valley	Tanat Valley	Clwyd Vale	West Monts
Site type										
Burnt mounds		■			■					■
Caves		■	■						■	
Mines and quarries										
Cairnfields	■	■		■						
Enclosures	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Field systems	■	■		■		■	■	■		
Roman settlement							■			
Roman religious sites									■	

Five research objectives, common to all the scheduling enhancement projects, were identified in the proposals for grant aid submitted to Cadw in their final version in March 2008. These were, in order:

- a) an assessment of the archaeological significance of the various site-types and the sites that comprise them, within both the regional and particularly the national framework.
- b) the identification of those sites that might merit further examination through ground survey, geophysical survey and evaluation.
- c) the recommendation of future management strategies, specifically including scheduling.
- d) the enhancement of the regional HER and through it the Extended National Database (END) maintained by the Royal Commission.
- e) the dissemination of information through publication if appropriate.

Particular emphasis here is placed on objectives b), c) and d).

## 2 Roman Religious and Funerary Sites: Methodology

The preliminary stages of the Roman Religious and Funerary Sites study were whole desk-top based, defining and checking the integrity of the database, assessing the authenticity of the sites and features within it, and establishing which if any sites might merit a field visit which in turn might lead to a scheduling recommendation. A basic assumption from the commencement of the project was that no site would be recommended for statutory designation without a field visit being undertaken as a preliminary.



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An up-to-date copy of the HER was provided by the curatorial section of the Trust, and from this the number of sites and features potentially of significance in a funerary and ritual context and dating to the Roman era was identified. After some initial sorting, the number of authentic was found to be extremely low with only 25 sites flagged up. Two sites only were scheduled, both putative Romano-British temples, close to Forden in northern Powys and to the south of Ruthin in the Vale of Clwyd. The early medieval Bryn Gwylan inscribed stone from Llangernyw had also crept into the record by accident and two records referring to it were discarded.

The remaining 21 sites had been categorised under a remarkable number of HER types, 13 in all. In one or two cases there was little to be gained from further analysis. Thus the Maesderwen 'Roman Villa' mausoleum had already been overviewed in relation to the Roman settlement SEP, and as a sub-surface discovery was unlikely to benefit from a field visit.

### 3 Site Visits

Only two site visits were made and neither of them resulted in the recovery of new information.

### 4 Amended Sites

A number of sites were discarded because the evidence favouring a religious or funerary origin was inconclusive or unconvincing. A possible temple site at Lower Gwestydd (PRN 5259) near Newtown in Powys had originally been classed as a temple site but the cropmark evidence suggested nothing other than a double-ditched enclosure with straighter than normal sides. Examined in 1991 during the Defended Enclosures Project, there was nothing here to necessitate another field visit.

The inscribed stone immured in the porch wall at Llanbadarn Fawr church (Rads) is clearly a centurial stone brought the three kilometres from the Roman fort at Castell Collen in a load of building stone, probably in the medieval period and 'rediscovered' by the Victorian builders of the new church in 1878. It must be of the very few centurial stones known from Wales.

Roman cemeteries if they were known to exist undisturbed would probably form obvious targets for scheduling. Sadly, however, cremation burials represent one of the more difficult groups of features in the HER. Some are beyond explanation. Corse y Beddau Cemetery in Brecknock is one example where folk tradition rather than hard fact has acquired a record in the HER, while the Roman origin of the Pontruffyd cremation cemetery was dismissed by Ellis Davies who preferred a Bronze Age origin within a lost barrow. Burials in urns have been recorded from the vicinity of Pen-y-gaer (Brecks) and Caersws (Monts) and also from Ffrith near Hope in Flintshire. Regrettably these are, without exception, 19<sup>th</sup>-century or even earlier discoveries, and locational details are generally hazy, except in the case of Ffrith where Ellis Davies intimated that he had tied down the position from which the urns had been recovered in 1828. Urned cremations are assumed to be of Roman date because of their putative military context, except again from Ffrith where the true nature of the activity remains a mystery. Probably without exception they do not survive. It has not therefore been possible to tie down these early discoveries with any accuracy, but the frequently abbreviated descriptions in the HER have been improved with in some cases greater clarity. More modern discoveries such as the Brynhyfryd Park cremations and mausoleum at Ruthin are the result of pre-development excavations, so they are more tightly provenanced but good survival is unlikely.

**Table 2: Scheduling Enhancement Programme- the current situation**

Area/ Theme		HER record numbers	Records assessed	Finds	Records enhanced	Records: minor changes	Site visits	SAM recs.
Vale of Clwyd	CPAT Report 948	726	168	99	25	6	8	0
Roman Settlement	CPAT Report 963	51	41	313	13	12	1	1
Roman Religious Sites	CPAT Report 964	25	21	N/A	12	7	2	0

**APPENDIX 1****SITE LIST ORDERED BY NAME**

<i>Name</i>	<i>PRN</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Period</i>
Battle Fawr Tombstone	468	SO00513215	Tomb	Roman
Brecon Gaer Tombstone;Maen y Morwy	595	SO0029	Tomb	Roman
Carnedd cremation	1572	SO022912	Cremation burial	Roman
Churchstoke Barrow finds	186	SO2494	Round barrow	Roman
Ffrith Roman cremation cemetery	100027	SJ28435535	Cremation cemetery	Roman
Glan Tanat Isaf Stone Heads	101841	SJ14962408	Carved stone	Roman
Hendre Farm Enclosure	5255	SJ2910117795	Villa	Roman
Llanbadarn Fawr Church centurial s	1171	SO0869064296	Centurial stone	Roman
Lower Gwestydd enclosure	5259	SO1258093520	Enclosure	Roman
Pen y Gaer fort, burial	5707	SO166217	Cremation burial	Roman
Pontruffydd cremation cemetery	102013	SJ08306970	Barrow ?	Bronze Age
Ruthin, Brynhyfryd Park cremation	17805	SJ130582	Cemetery	Roman



## APPENDIX 2

## GAZETTEER OF NEWLY ASSESSED SITES

<b>PRN 186</b>	<b>Churchstoke Barrow finds</b>	<b>SO2494</b>	<b>Round barrow</b>	<b>Roman</b>
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*Old description*

Unlocated barrow near Churchstoke excavated by Lewis before 1833. Possible site - large mound close to Blue Bell Inn adjacent to Offa's Dyke (in England).

A tumulus near Offa's Dyke opened before 1833 to reveal a sunked cist some 0.03 metres deep with a paved floor and stone flag sides one of which bore an illegible inscription (RCAHM 1911 citing Lewis, S 1833). The cist contained some black dust and a...

*New description*

The reference in Lewis (1833) states under the parish of Churchstoke: 'Near Offa's Dyke, ..... are several tumuli, one of which was opened in the last few years: the bottom, which was sunk about a foot (0.3m) below the level of the surrounding land, was paved, and the sides were formed with flag-stones, on one of which was an inscription, very much obliterated; within was only some black dust, among which was discovered a small coin, with a legend quite unintelligible.'

Contrary to the original HER entry, there is no reason to suppose Lewis's direct involvement in this excavation. He was simply reporting an occurrence related to him by a third party who was aware of the excavation. None of the finds can be traced and the exact location of the barrow remains supposition. It can perhaps be hypothesised that the record relates to a Bronze Age funerary monument which had seen some secondary activity many centuries later, as evidenced by the coin and inscription. The location remains unknown but the mound to the north-north-west of the Blue Bell Inn is probably the likeliest candidate (RH 2008).

<b>PRN 468</b>	<b>Battle Fawr Tombstone</b>	<b>SO00513215</b>	<b>Tomb</b>	<b>Roman</b>
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*Old description*

Part of a Roman tombstone found at Battle Fawr in 1877 (Collingwood, R G & Wright, R P, 1965). No further detail. Now in Brecon Museum. [PRN 2400 cancelled duplication of this record.]

*New description*

The Royal Commission Inventory carries the following information (1986, 143):

R.I.B 403: The tombstone in Brecon Museum commemorates a twenty-year old cavalryman named Candidus, attached to the regiment of Vettonian Spaniards who were presumably stationed at Brecon Gaer fort.

The inscription, partly restored, reads:

Diis M[anibus]I Cand[idi..] I ni fili [eq(uitis) alae] I Hisp(anorum) Vett(onum) [c9iuium)  
R(omanorum) tur(ma)] I Clem(entis) dom[o...] I an(norum) XX stip(endiorum) III H [...]

The stone was found in 1877 approximately 2.4km to the north of Brecon Gaer (RH 2008).

<b>PRN 595 Brecon Gaer Tombstone</b>	<b>SO0029</b>	<b>Tomb</b>	<b>Roman</b>
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*Old description*

Circa 1st Roman tombstone found close to Brecon Gaer (PRN 598) in the c.16th century (Anon, 1925). Exact find spot unknown but poss at Maen y Morwynion SO00702987 (see OS, 1903). Subsequently re-sited at SO00652985 but now in the National Museum of Wales.

*New description*

The Royal Commission Inventory carries the following description (1986, 143):

R.I.B 404: A tombstone once known locally as Maen y Morwynion or The Maidens' Stone, on which a man and his wife are depicted, life-size in relief, above a panel recording details of the husband. Found near [Brecon Gaer] in the sixteenth century., the stone was later moved to SO 0065 2985 by R[oman] R[oad] 3. It is now in Brecknock Museum. The stone is severely weathered and only part of the three bottom lines of the inscription can be made out as:

....[u]lix[i] [...] ALAN.D I ..IV....EI...[con]iunx eius h(ic) s(itus) est... (set up by) his wife; he lies buried here.

The only thing that needs to be added to this is that the original position of the tombstone has never been clearly identified. It was reported during a visit by the Cambrians to Wheeler's excavations in 1925 that the memorial had originally been very close to the fort when first recognised in the 16th century, but by the date of their visit it had been moved to the green lane a short distance to the north-east of the fort in order to ensure its safety (Anon 1925, 479). Subsequently it was moved to Brecon Museum, though the date of neither relocation has been established (RH 2008).

<b>PRN 1171 Llanbadarn Fawr Church stone</b>	<b>SO0869064296</b>	<b>Centurial stone</b>	<b>Roman</b>
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*Old description*

Roman inscribed stone set into west wall of St paternus's Church porch. Found in church foundations during rebuilding of 1878 but presumably orig from Castell Collen (par 1159). Inscribed - C VAL FLAVINI. (Sinclair, J.B. and Fenn, R.W.D, 1992, 75)

*New description*

The stone, reading C VAL. FLAVINI, measures only some 0.36m long and 0.13m high and is set into the internal face of the west wall of the porch at a height of just over 1m. It is listed in Collingwood, R.G. and Wright, R.P. 'The Roman Inscriptions of Britain. Volume I, Inscriptions on Stone' (1965) as No.416.

It was undoubtedly collected from Castell Collen, presumably when building stone was transported from there for the construction of the medieval church at Llanbadarn, and rediscovered by the Victorian rebuilders, who made it a feature of it in their porch (RS 2008).

<b>PRN 1572 Carnedd cremation</b>	<b>SO022912</b>	<b>Cremation burial</b>	<b>Roman</b>
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*Old description*

An urn filled with red earth and bones found in the river bank at Carnedd in 1820 (Barnwell, E I 1870). Poss same urn as par 1786 but mis-sited (see below). Presumably a cremation of prehistoric or Roman period (the proximity of Caersws Roman Fort par 772 points to the latter) and poss part of a larger cemetery. Note the names Carnedd Villa and Carnedd crossing shown by refs 05 and 01



respectively adjacent to the Afon Garno Bridge at SO02631980 which may be the Carnedd referred to by Barnwell, E L, 1870.

*New description*

An urn filled with red earth and bones was found in the river bank at Carnedd in about 1820 by the Rev. John Davies. This was noted by Barnwell on the basis of a received letter. It was given to Lord Sudeley soon after the discovery but subsequently lost (Barnwell 1870, 428).

The farm known as Carnedd lies on the south bank of the Afon Cerist at SO 0226 9122, nearly 1km to the south-west of the Caersws fort. The remark about the bridge in the HER should be disregarded. Barnwell did not refer to it (RH 2008)

**PRN 5255 Hendre Farm Enclosure**

**SJ2910117795 Villa**

**Roman**

*Old description*

Cropmark of rectangular ditched enclosure, 17m SW-NE, 12m NW-SE. Possible rectangular annex on SW. Series of 12 circular post settings on interior. Could be entirely modern feature caused by building or feeding structure. Similarity to cropmark of a Roman villa near Bassaleg, west of Newport, Monmouthshire, suggests that this site may also be a Roman villa (RCAHMW, 1999).

*New description*

The cropmark post settings or pits are arranged in three equally-spaced rows of four pits within the main enclosure, but with no pits visible in the possible annexe (CUCAP BUC 069). There is no reason to assume that this is a settlement site, as was originally suggested in the HER, but it does have similarities in appearance and scale to both Neolithic mortuary enclosures (see plan in Gibson, 2005, 117) and perhaps Roman religious sites.

The site lies in an arable field, from which the crop had been taken at the time of the visit (9/9/2008). No surface traces of the site were evident, but it was noted that it was in a position slightly raised above the wetter ground to the south-east (RH 2008).

**PRN 5259 Lower Gwestydd enclosure**

**SO1258093520 Enclosure**

**Roman**

*Old description*

Double ditched rectangular enclosure. 75.6m N-S 61m E-W 80M square reminiscent of a Roman Temple. Whimster plot suggests a parallelogrammic site but recent rectification makes it square. Set on shelf below a ridge.

See find of coin nearby PRN 33093.

*New description*

The site was visited by CPAT in the early 1990s as part of the Montgomeryshire Defended Enclosures project (for which see CPAT report no. 80). No surface traces were found and the site was not considered to be well positioned defensively. There is, however, no obvious reason for ascribing the site a religious function as a temple, and it is probably just a standard defended farmstead with a strong rectilinear outline (RH 2008).



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**PRN 5707 Pen y Gaer fort, burial SO166217 Cremation burial Roman**

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*Old description*

An urn filled with bones found hereabouts (Basire, J & Davies, D survey, 1803). No further detail.

Given the proximity of Pen y gaer Roman fort, it may be more likely to be a Roman than a Bronze Age burial. (CPAT 2003)

*New description*

The approximate location is shown on Plate XIII in Volume 3 of Theophilus Jones's *History of Brecknock* (1911), and from the style of the drawing it must have appeared in earlier editions, hence the 1803 date, although this has not been confirmed.

J Basire, referred to in the original HER record, was a print maker, while Davies was a draughtsman. It is unlikely that either were surveyors, so the depiction of the urn's position is likely to have come from Theophilus Jones himself or perhaps from Richard Colt Hoare. There is nothing to suggest that there was an accompanying written report.

The position as given in the HER is probably as good as it can be in the circumstances. From Plate XIII there can be little doubt that the urn was found to the south of the Ewyn Brook, and it may have been a little north of its current NGR. A Roman attribution is likely but not absolutely certain. (RS 2008).

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**PRN 17805 Ruthin, Brynhyfryd Park cremations SJ130582 Cemetery Roman**

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*Old description*

Cemetery located 1981. Adjacent to poss.fort (Frere, S S 1989, 258).

Two further cremations excavated in 1989 by CPAT (Frere, S S 1990, 304).

Small inhumation cemetery of 12 graves aligned E-W, possibly of Christian origin, no dating evidence. Six graves cut through Roman trackway. (Gaimster, D R M, Margeson, S & Hurley, M 1990, 248).

*New description*

A small rectangular structure, 3.5m by 3.0m defined by a narrow slot was tentatively identified as a mausoleum. Within the mausoleum was the cremation burial of a child accompanied by a pottery vessel, perhaps a flagon. Two other cremations were close by, one of an adult male, and one an adult female accompanied by a cooking pot. One further cremation of a young adult male accompanied by a Flavio-Trajanic era grey-ware jar was found less than 40m to the NW of the mausoleum (Jones 1992).

The 'cemetery' located in 1981 is further to the west and is recorded separately as PRN 102885. It is not relevant to this record, and en passant, its status as a cemetery is uncertain. The inhumation cemetery of 12 graves, about 60m to the NW, has been attributed by the excavator to the early medieval period (Jones 1992, 24) (RS 2008).

**PRN 100027 Ffrith Roman cremation cemetery SJ28435535 Cremation cemetery Roman***Old description*

In 1828 several urns containing burnt bone were found during the levelling of part of Offa's Dyke. Also found were 26 coins, 6 brooches a mutilated altar stone, a stamped lamp and other items.

Twenty-two of the coins were of copper and depicted the emperors Nero, Vespasian, Trajan, Julius Agricola [?], and Maximilian [sic]. One was silver, of Agrippa. Also found were several 'highly ornamented' fibulae [brooches], rings of gold, silver and copper, pins of ivory and silver, beads of glass and amber, part of a lamp with the word 'NINVS' impressed on it, a votive altar with a mutilated inscription, and several urns containing calcined bones and ashes, all of which are in the possession of the proprietor of the land (Lewis, S, 1849).

The 26 coins and 23 other bronze finds found in 1928 are now in the National Museum of Wales, Davies's volume contains details of them all (Davies, E, 1949, pp234-7).

The location at which these discoveries were made is not precisely known, but was obviously on a stretch of Offa's Dyke now flattened, within Ffrith (Spencer, J, pers. comm., 2005).

*New description*

Ellis Davies wrote on the basis of his own researches that the material including an altar was found during the cutting of a road through Offa's Dyke in 1828. This echoes what Lewis had published only five years after the event. Lewis also mentioned several cremation urns which Ellis Davies did not. The material was passed to the National Museum in 1948.

It should not automatically be assumed that the coins and bronze objects were directly associated with the urns. Indeed the coin list from the 1st to the 4th century would suggest not. It is however reasonable to assume that the cremation urns were Roman. Unfortunately these do not appear to have survived. The likely position of the 1828 discovery was mapped by Davies (1949, fig 82), and on the basis of this the grid reference has been adjusted (RS 2008).

**PRN 101841 Glan Tanat Isaf Stone Heads SJ14962408 Carved stone Roman***Old description*

Set in the E wall of this 1646 house are 3 'celtic' heads of uncertain date. Also a rectangular slab with an incised cross. heads and cross may be related. Note also incised crosses at sj13722435 (par5989) n0985;

*New description*

It seems most unlikely that these heads are Roman in origin. We should note too that the stones with incised 'crosses', built into in the parapet of the bridge at Pont Glan-Tanat Uchaf, are of more recent date and probably represent parts of a cider press (RH 5/9/2008).

**PRN 102013 Pontruffyd cremation cemetery SJ08306970 Barrow ? Bronze Age***Old description*

Many urns with cremations inside were noted in 1808. They had red bases and black shoulders with

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matching lids. There is slight evidence for a barrow, since destroyed. The site is probably Roman.

*New description*

All the known references were pulled together by Ellis Davies (1949, 35). The original observations were made by Richard Fenton in 1808 as he was passing through Bodfari, and there were some subsequent observations which may have been first-hand. Ellis Davies was sceptical about the Roman dating and thought the urns were probably Bronze Age and that they have been uncovered within a barrow – the orsedd - since destroyed. Davies could himself find no trace of the site (RS 2008).