

EMAS Study Tour

Archaeology of Anglesey



Bryn Celli Ddu Burial Chamber

1 to 5 November 2016

Itinerary

Tuesday, 1 November	Coach pick up at Chester Station - Caernarfon
Wednesday, 2 November	Bryn Celli Ddu Burial Chamber Castell Bryn Gwyn Caer Leb Barclodiad Y Gawres Ty Newydd Presaddfed Burial Chamber
Thursday, 3 November	St Seiriol's Well Penmon Priory The Penmon Crosses Penmon Dovecot Red Wharf Bay Lligwy Burial Chamber Hen Capel, Lligwy Din Lligwy Hut Group
Friday, 4 November	Holyhead: Caer Gybi Roman Fort Holyhead Mountain Hut Group Caer y Twr Hillfort Caer y Twr Roman Watchtower and Signal Station Penrhos Feilw Standing Stones Tŷ Mawr Standing Stone Trefignath Burial Chamber
Saturday, 5 November	Caernarfon – Coach drops at Chester Station



The Place-Name Anglesey

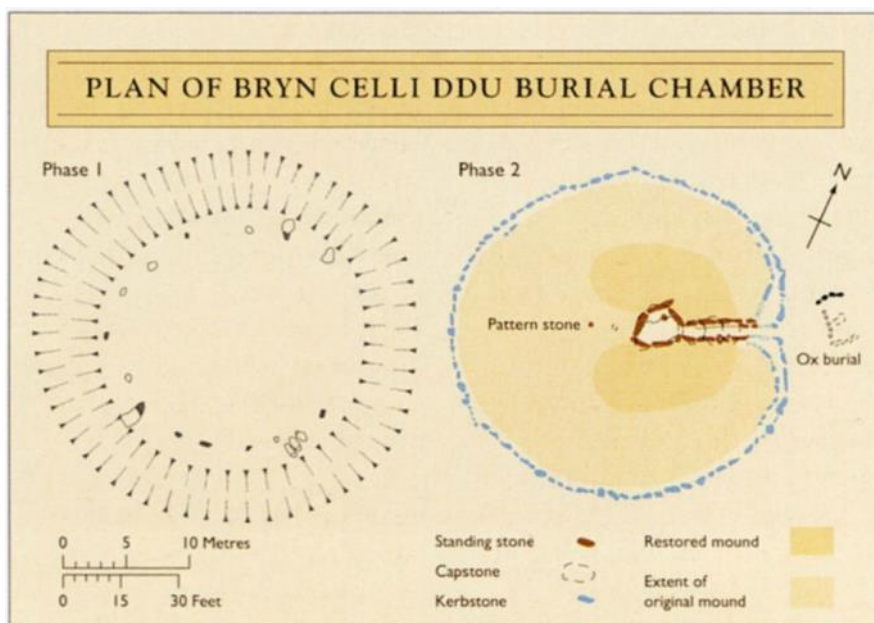
The name Anglesey is derived from Old Norse, coming from either *Ōngullsey* "Hook Island" or *Ōnglisey* "Ōngli's Island - a Scandinavian name (possibly a Viking chieftain) and 'ey' - island. The Welsh name is *Ynys Môn*.

(8) Bryn Celli Ddu Burial Chamber

This site appears to have begun in the later Neolithic as a henge. It consisted of a bank (now lost) surrounding an inner ditch which enclosed a circle of upright stones.

The ditch was 21 m in diameter, 5.2 m wide and 1.8 m deep. Its outer edge can still be seen and several stones still remain.

Towards the end of the Neolithic, the henge was turned into a passage grave. A new stone burial chamber was constructed within the henge and was covered with a large mound which extended into the ditch, obscuring the earlier stone circle.



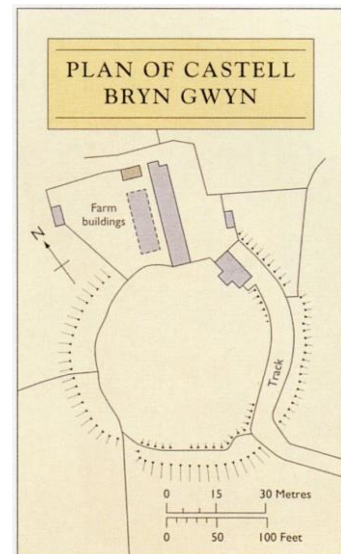
(9) Castell Bryn Gwyn

This monument consists of a single bank, which has been partly destroyed by farm buildings on the north side.

Excavations in 1959-60 revealed a site with a long history spanning the Neolithic to the Roman periods.

The earliest phase was a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age circular enclosure, 39.6 m in diameter. It had a bank and external ditch, broken by a narrow causeway on the south-west side. Excavation uncovered postholes and a scatter of occupation debris which included late Neolithic pottery and a bronze awl.

There were several later additions to the bank and ditch, culminating in a timber-revetted rampart with a V-shaped ditch. Excavation revealed a few sherds of Flavian Period Roman pottery.

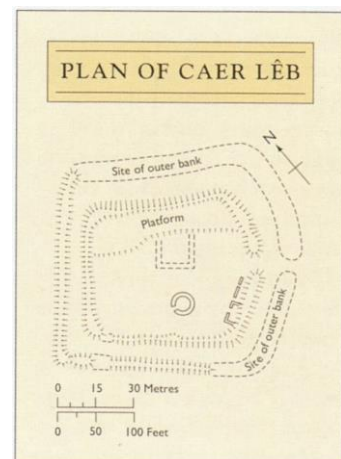


(10) Caer Leb

A rectangular enclosure, c. 61 m long and 48.8 m wide, defined by double banks and ditches. The original entrance was probably on the south side.

Because of its low-lying, marshy situation, the site has sometimes been interpreted as a medieval moated site, but it is unlikely that this was its original purpose.

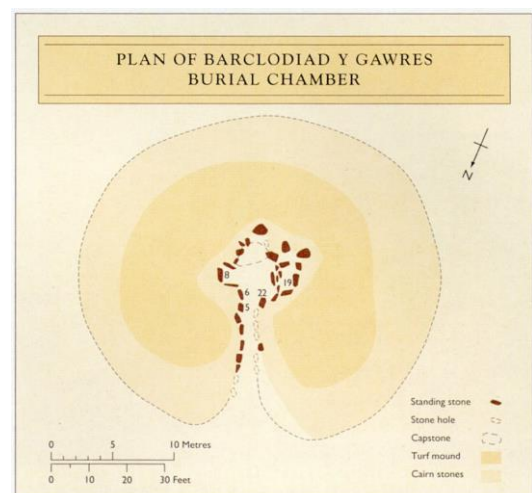
Finds from the 19th century excavation included Roman pottery, a third-century brooch and a denarius of Postumus (260-69). The excavations also revealed stone foundations of a rectangular structure near the entrance and a circular structure near the centre.



(13) Barclodiad Y Gawres

Barclodiad Y Gawres burial chamber has a spectacular cliff-side setting. Its name means "the Giantess's Apronful".

The mound that we see today is a reconstruction based on the original Neolithic form. The tomb consists of a mound c. 27 m in diameter. Parts of the tumulus were made of peat turfs and the edge was loosely defined by a packing of stones. Five of the stones within this passage grave have decoration of high quality.

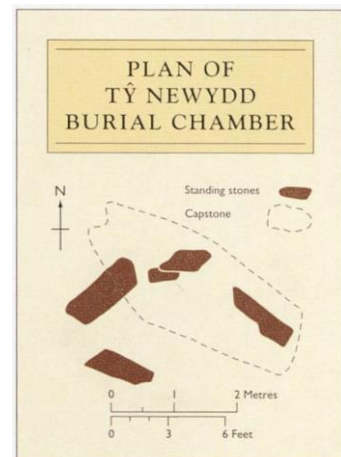


(14) Ty Newydd

An oval-shaped burial chamber which is approached from the west. The uprights are covered by a large damaged capstone 3.7 m by 1.5 m.

A 19th century description of the monument indicates that it was once covered by a round cairn.

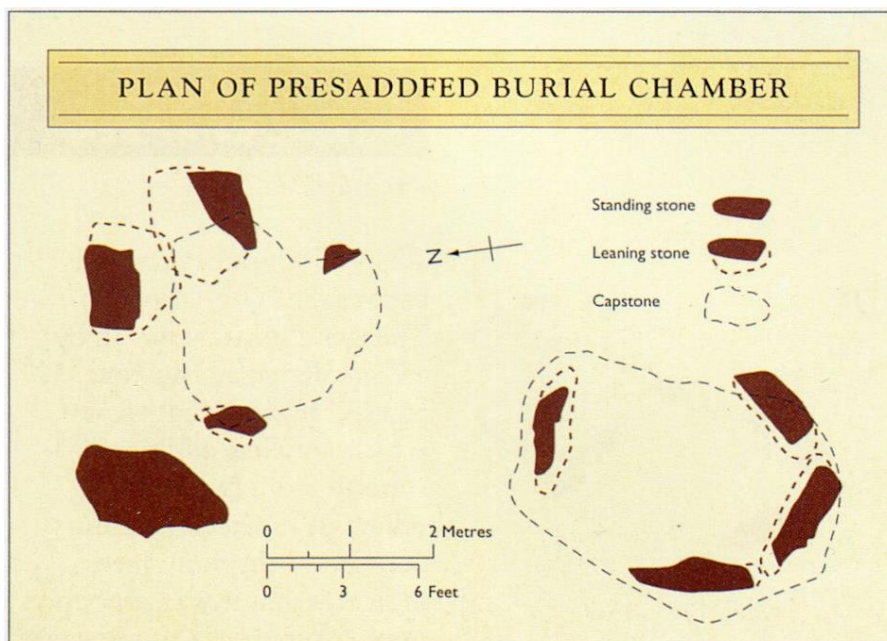
Ty Newydd was excavated in 1936, but the very few finds are not particularly useful for dating the monument. The finds included fragments of Beaker pottery and an early Bronze Age flint arrowhead. The nature of the tomb, however, suggests that it was originally constructed in the Neolithic period.

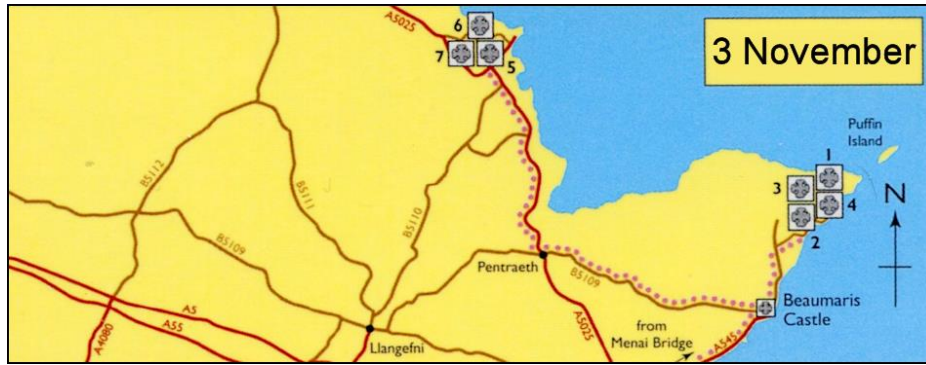


(15) Presaddfed Burial Chamber

The site consists of two small burial chambers c. 2.1 m apart. This double arrangement, with no obvious access between the two chambers is similar to Trefignath (which we will visit on Friday) and may indicate different phases of use during the Neolithic period.

The southern chamber is the better preserved of the two, with its capstone still in place.





Penmon

Penmon is traditionally the site of a 6th century monastery established by St Seiriol. The holy well that survives here may have its origins in this period. It is probable that there was a monastery here throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, although nothing remains of the buildings of that period. The site was attacked by Vikings in the 10th century.

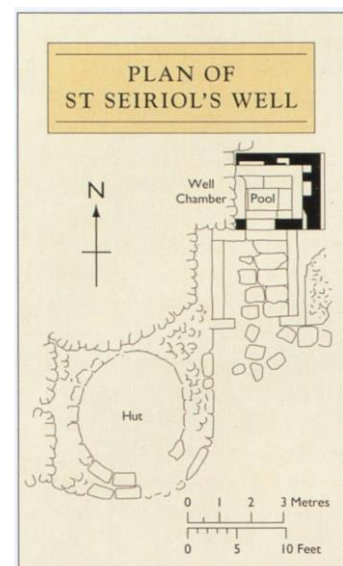
(1) St Seiriol's Well

This well is traditionally thought to be associated with the early Welsh monastic settlement at Penmon. The well and the cell were claimed to be linked with St Seiriol himself.

However, what remains today is probably very much later. The well chamber is built against a vertical rock face, which forms one side of the structure.

Inside the chamber is a small pool surrounded by a slabbed floor. there are also stone benches, wall recesses and a possible 'squint' in the right-hand corner.

The upper part of the chamber was rebuilt in brick, and thickly rendered with plaster. These changes probably took place during the 18th century.



(2) The Penmon Crosses

There are two free-standing crosses in the church: one in the nave and one in the south transept, both dating from the tenth century, and both probably carved by a group of craftsmen centred on Cheshire.

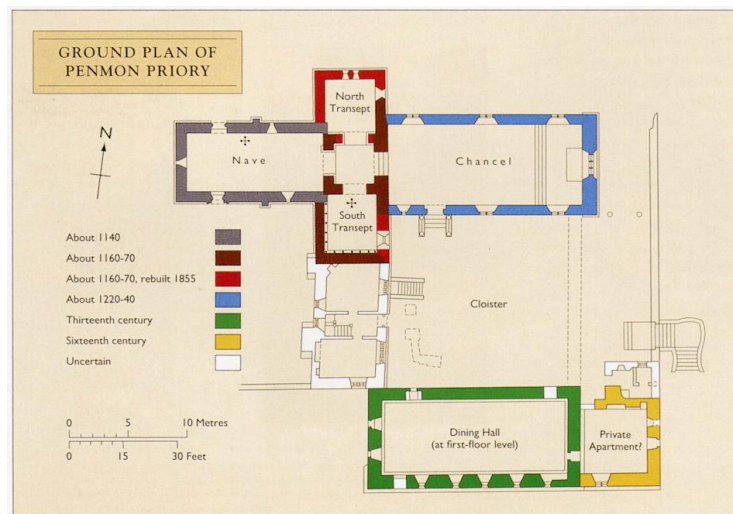
The cross in the nave used to stand in the nearby deer park. It was moved into the church in 1977. The back of the cross is decorated with a form of Gaut's Interlace, which also occurs on Gouts Cross in the Isle of Man and on the Gosforth Cross.

(3) Penmon Priory

The monastic church shows evidence of several phases of construction. The earliest part of the building is the nave, which was constructed c.1140.

Transepts and a crossing tower were added c. 1160 – 70, although partly rebuilt in 1855.

In about 1220-40 the original chancel was replaced with a larger.



In the early 13th century the monastery was turned into a priory of Augustinian canons.

It was probably at this time that the three-storey building to the south of the chancel was constructed. This building housed the canon's refectory and dormitory.

(4) Penmon Dovecot

The Dovecot was built c. 1600, possibly by Sir Richard Bulkeley, whose house 'Baron Hill', just west of Beaumaris, was built in 1618.

Red Wharf Bay (the second word derives from *warf* meaning shore or strand)

Anglesey between the late 9th and the early 10th century had become the political and economic focus of the Kingdom of Gwynedd.

From 855, Anglesey became a target for seaborne raids. When Ingimund and his followers were expelled from Dublin c. 902/3, they attempted to establish a base on the island, but were defeated and driven off.

Between c. 1887 and c. 1894 a hoard of five Scandinavian-type arm-rings was discovered at Red Wharf Bay on Anglesey.

Mark Redknap writes:

"The Red Wharf Bay arm-rings are probably contemporary with the Cuerdale Hoard (buried c. 905), and it has been suggested that Ingimund's activities on Anglesey in 903 might have led to the deposition and their non-recovery."

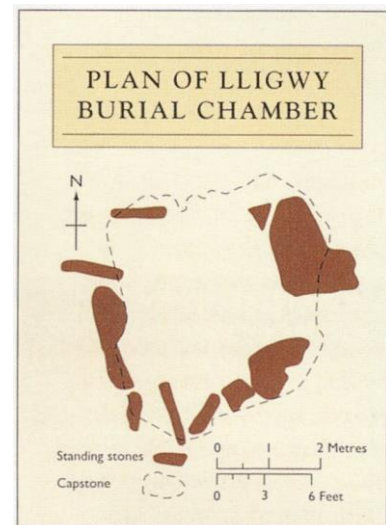
Redknap, M., "The Vikings in Wales" in "The Viking World", (ed) Brink, S. & Price, N., (2008) Routledge

(5) Lligwy Burial Chamber

The original entrance to this tomb can be seen on the eastern side.

The chamber consists of eight low uprights supporting a massive capstone c. 5.5 m x c. 4.6 m. The capstone is about 1.5 m above the bottom of a natural fissure in the limestone rock. The way that the capstone sits so low over a pit gives the tomb a very unusual appearance.

Excavation in 1908 revealed the bones of 15 – 30 individuals (men, women and children). Finds of flint implements, pottery and a bone pin indicate use during the Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods.



(6) Hen Capel, Lligwy

The origins of this small chapel are obscure. Its construction in stone dates to the first half of the twelfth century, and it lay in the parish of Penrhos Lligwy, although it never achieved parochial status.

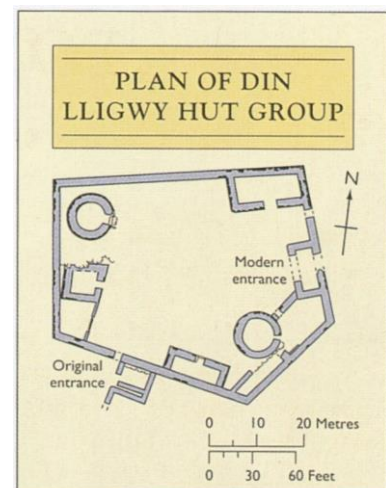
Under the patronage of Gruffed ap Cynan (d. 1137) and his successor Owain Gwynedd (d. 1170) many churches were rebuilt in stone for the first time. At Hen Capel the lower parts of the walls belong to this period, although the upper parts were rebuilt in the fourteenth century.

(7) Din Lligwy Hut Group

The site extends over about 0.2 ha, and is enclosed by a wall 1.5 m thick, surviving up to 1.2 m high. The wall was built of two rows of large limestone slabs with rubble infill. The stone was probably quarried locally.

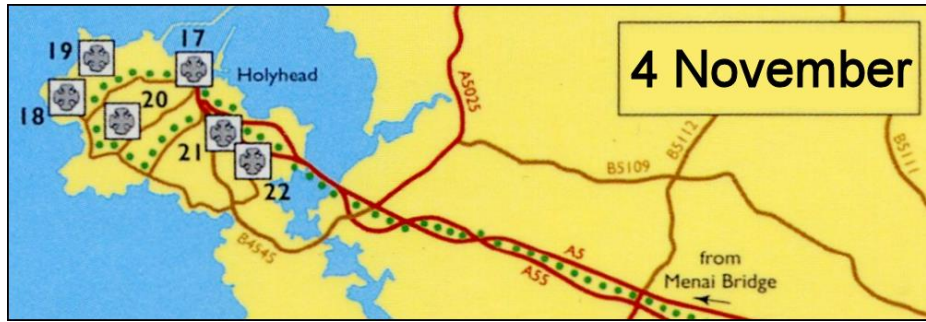
The site is now entered through a modern break in the enclosure wall, but the original entrance lay on the south side.

Excavation in the early twentieth century revealed coins and pottery, mainly of the third and fourth centuries AD, indications that this enclosed settlement had been occupied during the Roman period.



However, this does not preclude an earlier phase of occupation, as such artefacts were scarce before the arrival of the Romans.

Several similar settlements have produced evidence of Iron Age activity, and traces of earlier structures outside of the enclosure, may suggest a similar development for this site.



(17) Holyhead: Caer Gybi Roman Fort

Caer Gybi is a sub-rectangular fort about 75 m by 45 m in size. Its mortared rubble walls are c. 1.5 m thick and survive to a height of 4 m.

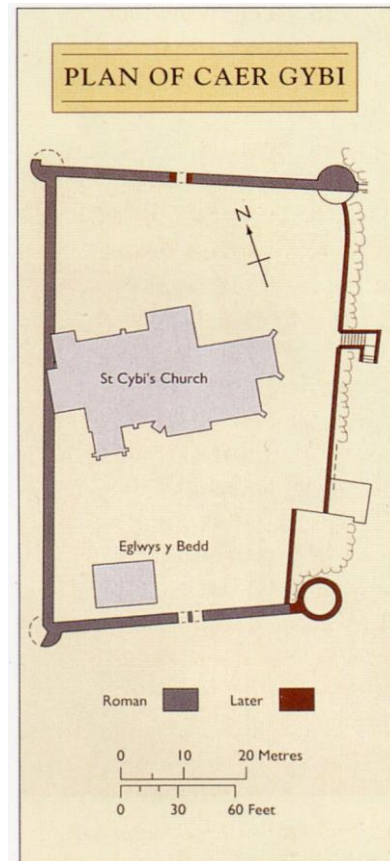
The best impression of the original walls is gained from the outside of the west wall and the adjacent north-west tower.

Originally there were four towers, although the south-west tower is mostly destroyed, or hidden by modern buildings. The north-east tower stands to a height of 7.9 m, although the upper part is a medieval, or modern rebuild.

The position of the site on a low sea cliff by an enclosed quay have led to the suggestion that Caer Gybi is a late Roman coastal fort. There is no direct evidence from here, but excavations at Cardiff, Loughor and Neath have revealed a system of late Roman coastal defence, and Caer Gybi may have been part of such a system.

The fort is traditionally believed to be the site of a monastery founded by St Cybi in the sixth century. The present church dates from the 13th century and was largely rebuilt in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, but may be on the site of an earlier foundation.

The small chapel in the south-west corner of the site is known as *Egwys y Bedd* (church of the grave). Such churches are traditionally thought to be on the site of a founder's grave.



(18) Holyhead Mountain Hut Group

The Holyhead Mountain hut group is an unenclosed settlement along the foot of Holyhead Mountain. Excavations in the 1860s uncovered over 50 buildings (although only c. 20 remain now) and produced Roman pottery, so that for a long while the site was seen as a classic Romano-British village.

However, excavations conducted between 1978 and 1982 showed that only one or two buildings were in use at the same time, and that the date range extended from the 5th century BC to the post-Roman period.

Additionally, late Neolithic and early Bronze Age settlement has been discovered along the foot slopes of Holyhead Mountain and excavation has revealed a collection of Mesolithic flint tools.

(19) Caer Y Twr Hillfort

It is difficult to closely date Caer y Twr, although it is similar in form to other Iron Age hillforts in north Wales.

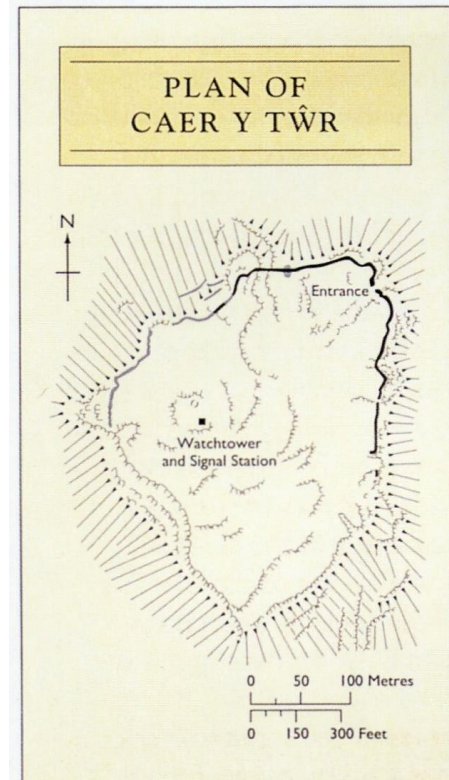
It is situated at the summit of Holyhead Mountain – a position that gives it commanding views of the island.

Caer Y Twr Roman Watchtower and Signal Station

At the highest point of the mountain, within the hillfort, are the remains of a Roman watchtower and signal station. The structure was 6.1 m square and excavations recovered pottery and coins dating to the 4th century AD.

The watchtower commands excellent views of Holyhead harbour and may have been linked to the possible Roman coastal defence at Caer Gybi.

N.B. There is a long and difficult walk to the summit and depending on time and weather conditions it may not be possible to visit this site.



(20) Penrhos Feilw Standing Stones

These are an impressive pair of Bronze Age standing stones, 3.3 m apart and c. 3 m high.

There is a longstanding tradition that they were originally at the centre of a stone circle and that a stone cist containing bones and flint tools had been found between them. There is nothing to support this tradition.

(21) Tŷ Mawr Standing Stone

The Ty Marw standing stone is an imposing Bronze Age monument that stands in an isolated position on a slight rise. It is 2.8 m high and tapers slightly towards the top.

(22) Trefignath Burial Chamber

This burial chamber was excavated in 1977-79, and was then consolidated and laid out for public display.

There are three phases of construction that can be identified, each represented by a burial chamber covered by a mound. The tomb was disturbed in the 18th century, when human bones and pottery were discovered. The 1977-79 excavation revealed stone and flint implements, together with pottery of Neolithic date which was recovered from beneath the tomb itself.

The earliest chamber (1 on the plan below) lies to the west of the site and consists of a simple box-like structure, surrounded by a cairn of boulders. It was probably built c. 3750-3500 B.C.

The second chamber was the central one (2 on the plan). This has collapsed and only one entrance stone and the back stone now stand, but a fallen side stone and a broken capstone can now be seen.

The second chamber's forecourt and wedge-shaped cairn, which incorporated the first phase chamber was retained by a dry-stone wall.

The last, eastern, chamber (3 on the plan) survives in almost its original form. Its stone retaining wall abutted the cairn of the second chamber, showing that this was a later addition. The chamber has two capstones supported on five uprights. The existing mound was extended to cover the new chamber, although it may not have covered the tall portal stones at the entrance.

The final wedge-shaped cairn has a horn-shaped forecourt, which can still clearly be seen.

Excavation shows that the final closure of the tomb did not take place until after 2250 B.C.

