

# Cae-Dyni Cupmarks

## Introduction

As part of ongoing research into rock-art and its association with Neolithic burial monuments in Wales, a team from the Clifton Antiquarian Club visited Cae-Dyni (CRN 14) in January 2006 (see Nash *et al.* 2005). This site, located within the coastal zone, east of the coastal town of Criccieth (figure 1) has in the past been considered a cist that has dated to the Early Bronze Age (Powell *et al.* 1969, 306-7). However, we suggest monuments of this size, where the chamber measures 1.3m x 0.80m can still be considered megalithic and therefore earlier in date. This monument, along with eighteen others possesses cupmarks, either carved on the monument or close by on exposed rock outcropping (Table 1).

As far as the authors are aware little has been reported on this monument. Daniel (1950, 193) briefly describes this monument as a large cist. He further claims that Pennent in his *Tour of Wales* (1783) first discussed the site. However, the description may refer to another nearby monument. Therefore, the earliest reference is Barnwell who briefly discusses the site with an accompanying engraving of the chamber area in 1868 (figure 2). Based on Barnwell's engraving little has changed to the morphology of this monument. Indeed, a visit to Cae-Dyni by the team in December 2005 could clearly recognise the major features including the position of the slipped capstone as shown on Barnwell's engraving. In recent times the site has been briefly described by Cummings & Whittle who also discuss its landscape setting (2004, 126). They too consider the probability that the site could be earlier, probably Late Neolithic.

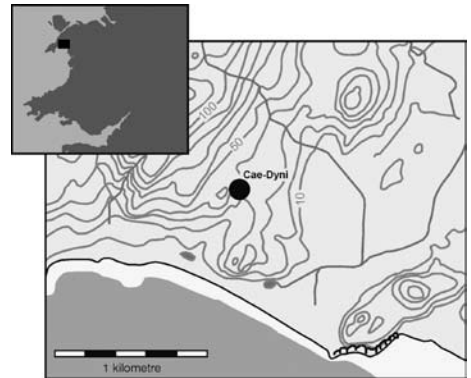


Figure 1. Site Location

## Cae Dyni and the landscape setting

The Cae-Dyni burial monument (SH 5111 3218), referred to in the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) as *Caerdyni* is regarded as a Bronze Age monument and therefore not classified as a megalith structure. The chamber is set within a low denuded rectangular rather than a round mound, measuring roughly 13m x 8m and is oriented east-west (Plate 1). The remains of the mound probably comprise of rubble and earth. On the NW edge of the mound are three stones that are set on end and possibly represent rock outcropping.

There are extensive views to the general coastline, extending as far as Barmouth (c. 10 km to the south). The site is located within the coastal zone, on a slightly west-facing slope. The clayey soils overlie generic Palaeozoic slates, mudstones and siltstones. The monument is set on a small plateau

Site	Grid ref.	Art	Location	References <sup>1</sup>
Bachwen, Caenarvonshire	SH 407 495	Cupmarks	Capstone	Daniel 1950; Hemp 1926; Lynch 1969
Barclodiad y Gawres, Anglesey	SH 329 707	Spirals, zigzags, lines, lozenges, cupmark	Chamber	Powell & Daniel 1956; Lynch 1969, 1970; Shee-Twohig 1981; Nash <i>et al.</i> 2005
Bryn Celli Ddu, Anglesey	SH 508 702	Serpentine, spiral, cupmarks	Chamber, rock outcropping	Daniel 1950; Hemp 1930; Lynch 1969, 1970; Shee-Twohig 1981; Nash <i>et al.</i> 2005
Calderstones, Liverpool	SJ 405 875	Concentric circles, cupmarks, footprints, lines/grooves, spirals,	Chamber uprights (destroyed passage grave)	Daniel 1950; Forde-Johnson 1956; Shee-Twohig 1981; Nash 2006
Cromlech Farm, Anglesey	SH 360 920	Cupmarks, horse-shoe carving	Monument architecture and rock outcropping	Nash <i>et al.</i> 2005
Cist Cerrig, Caenarvonshire <sup>2</sup>	SH 543 384	Cupmarks	Rock outcropping	Lynch 1969; Nash 2006
Cae Dyni, Caenarvonshire	SH 511 382	Cupmarks	Located on two uprights	Nash <i>et al.</i> 2005
Dyffryn Ardudwy, Merioneth	SH 588 229	Cupmarks	North portal of the western chamber	Powell 1973; Sharkey 2004
Llannerch,	SH 559 379	Cupmarks	Remains of chambered tomb?	Sharkey 2004
Treflys, Caenarvonshire	SH 543 384	Cupmarks	Rock outcropping	Hemp 1938
Ty Newydd, Anglesey	SH 617 112	Cupmarks	Capstone	Daniel 1950; Sharkey 2004

Table 1

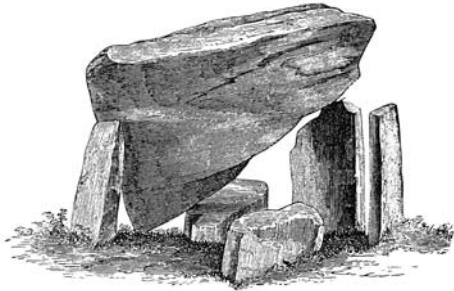
within the remains of an extensive drystone walled field system. Sections of the walling are clearly visible to the north and east. The field system slopes continuously towards the coast, approximately 0.5 km to the south and west. Immediately south of the mound is the source of a small spring. The location of the spring may have had some bearing on why the monument was initially sited.

### Monument Architecture

The chamber, infilled with rubble cairn, is constructed of seven uprights, oriented SE-NW and measures 1.2 x 0.8m (Figure 3a). The majority of uprights lean inwards towards the chamber. Two of these are more than a metre in height, while the remaining are less 0.40m in height. All stones with the excep-

tion of one are of laminated shale/slate, the other being of fine-grained sandstone and measuring 1.1m in height. The capstone, now resting against the upper sections of uprights which forms the south-western chamber wall, leans at an angle of 45 degrees. Although difficult to discern, the chamber appears to be located at the eastern end of a low mound and has a similar morphology to other tombs with recorded mounds, classifying it as a terminal chambered monument.

Located on the largest upright, located at the SW end of the chamber, are up to 13 cupmarks, nine of which are carved on the lower SW-facing section of the upright, while 4, possibly 5 are carved on SE face of the same stone. The cupmarks, each measuring around 40mm in diameter are arranged in no



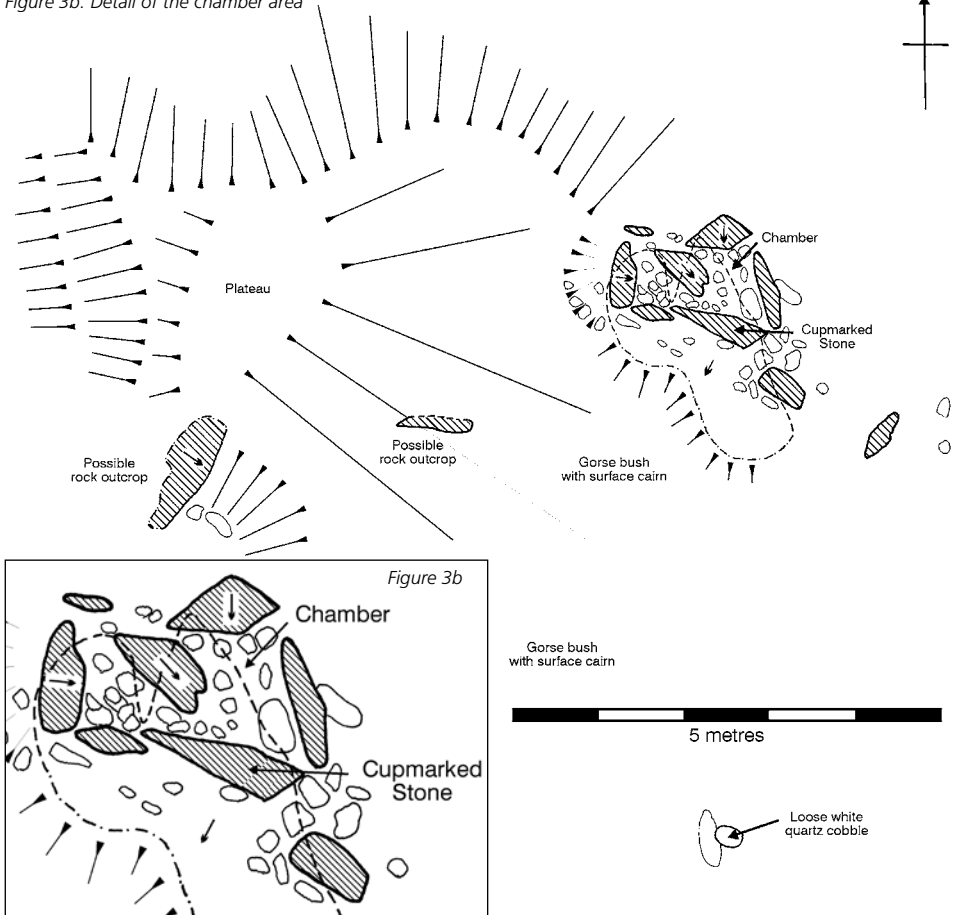
CORTAN ARTHUR, NEAR CRICCIETH.

Figure 2. The chamber area in 1868



Plate 1. View of the Chamber area of Cae-Dyni looking west

Figure 3a. The Cae-Dyni chamber and mound  
Figure 3b. Detail of the chamber area



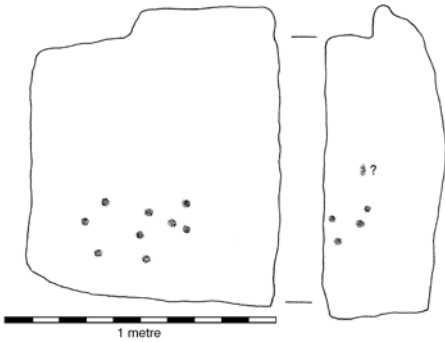


Figure 4. Location of the cupmarks on the south-western upright

recognised pattern. However, on the SE face, a possible crescent alignment comprising of three cupmarks may exist. On the SW face, partly obscured by the leaning capstone the cupmark patterns are arranged into three groups of three, two of which forming a crescent, the other a triangle (Figure 4). Interestingly, the artist was only concerned with decorating the lower section of the upright.

### Discussion

In comparison with the thirteen other megalithic sites in Caernarvonshire recognised by Powell *et al.* (1969, 302), the Cae Dyni site is relatively small, its size can be compared with nearby sites of Penarth and Four Crosses. The architecture, in particular the way the capstone was placed on top of the uprights, does resemble small rectangular chambered monuments elsewhere in north-western Europe such as the Bohuslän monuments in south-west Sweden (Tilley 1999). We do not, however, advocate though that there is a direct cultural link between Cae-Dyni and the monuments of Bohuslän. However, the architecture and possible date for this monument though does suggest that Cae-Dyni may be a hybrid monument that incorporates both Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age traits. The traits include the chamber, uprights and capstone being constructed above ground and therefore visible and this architecture being placed into an oval or rectangular cairn mound. The Early Bronze



Plate 2. Cupmarks present on the south-western upright

Age trait comprises the construction of a well-defined rectangular stone lined cist. It is probable though that all components of Cae-Dyni are Neolithic.

There are a limited number of monuments in Wales that are similar in architecture and possess an identical landscape position. One of these is Bedd Taliesin within the parish of Llanfihangel, overlooking the Dovey estuary in Carmarthenshire (SN 6724 9126). This monument, located outside any of the Neolithic core areas in Wales comprises a rectangular chamber with a displaced capstone that is set within an oval or long mound. Located around the capstone and the chamber are a number of loose sub-angular and angular stone blocks which either form part of the cairn (Nash 2006). According to the Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments (Wales) this monument dates to the Bronze Age. However, its sheer megalithic appearance suggests a Neolithic date. Surprisingly, there has been very little archaeological investigation of this site. Approximately 4km to the south-east of the site are the remnants of a Bronze Age landscape, including a stand-

ing stone (SN 689 877). A large number of cairns are also located 2km to the north and east of the monument on Foel Goch that overlook the Dovey estuary.

Cae-Dyni has been included in the inventory of Cummings and Whittle (2004, 126). Their research, focusing on *viewsheds* (i.e. what can be seen from a selected number of Welsh Neolithic monuments), indicates that the viewshed of Cae-Dyni includes views of the Cambrian coast (to the south) as far as Borth and the southern extent of the Llyn Peninsula (to the west) as far as Abersoch. The view from this monument also includes a vast area of open water, covering an area of 884 km<sup>2</sup>. However, it is probably not what can be seen from the monument that is important, but from where in the landscape the monument can be seen. If the latter applies then the data for the view shed is greatly decreased to include just the immediate slopes that surround the monument to the north, east and west, and may be views of the monument from the sea. However, the monument cannot be seen from the beach or the shingle slopes of the foreshore. If one is assume that these sites are special and located in order to be hidden (i.e. with a covering mound) the viewshed hypothesis cannot apply to this or any other Neolithic burial monument. The mound, its [inorganic] architecture and the people who use it create a powerful and secret world and part of the secrecy is the way sites like Cae-Dyni are located. Metaphorically, they can be seen (if one knows where they are) and not seen if one is outside the circle of knowledge.

Whatever the date, there is clear evidence that Cae-Dyni represents a multi-phased site. For example, one of the uprights possess hitherto undiscovered rock-art comprising 13 cupmarks. These were either made prior to, during or after the monument was abandoned. It is our view that these carvings were made after the monument was constructed, possibly by Bronze Age cults using the monument following its primary use as a place for interring human remains.

Cupmarks are present throughout most of Atlantic Europe and may represent a universal meaning. However, their meaning is still a mystery. Furthermore, it is difficult to suggest their stratigraphic relationship with their host monument. It is clear however that cupmarks, in particular, are found on Bronze Age monuments and can therefore to be considered to be of this date or later, representing possibly Bronze Age cult practices (Schoknecht 1986). However, recent excavations by Waddington *et al.* (2005) have further extended the dating range that suggests that cupmarks and associated carvings could predate the Bronze Age. A similar view is held by Bradley (1997, 57–65). Burgess has suggested that significant stones with cupmarks may have been reused (1989-90), either incorporated into monuments or later, taken away and re-erected as standing stones. A case in question is the reuse of a ornately carved standing stone that was broken into three sections and incorporated into two passage graves – Table de Marchands and Gavr’inis – both located on the Gulf of Morbian, Brittany. Whatever their date, cup-and-ring carvings can be considered a means of statementing, either a monument or a part of landscape. This statementing can be either made by an individual, representing his or her ritual needs or collectively, the carving representing a group. The Cae-Dyni monument along with ten other Neolithic burial monuments in North Wales that either have cupmarks on them or on rock outcropping nearby, probably represents a multi-phased monument that equally addresses traits that are present in both the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (Table 1).

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