



## Meini Gwyr: ‘a kind of circular stone-monument’ and its place in the later prehistory of Wales

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**M**eini Gwyr is a relict circular embanked stone and earthen monument, probably raised for burial and possibly for ceremonial during the Bronze Age. Sited in south-west Wales at SN 14172658, it lies within a complex of prehistoric features in fields centred upon though mostly lying to the west and north of Glandy Cross, a village in the community of Cilymaenllwyd and parish of Llandissilio East, in a part of Carmarthenshire straddling the Pembrokeshire boundary (Fig. 1). A stone circle was first noted here in the late seventeenth century and though all but two of its stones are now lost, its environs are currently designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (CM 051; NPRN 304287; OS 495 card SN12NW10).

Meini Gwyr was excavated by W. F. Grimes in 1938; some outlying sites and environs were investigated in 1985–86 and 1991–92 by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT), and in 2002 the adjoining landscape again attracted researchers through the Strumble-Preseli Ancient Communities and Environment Study project (SPACES).

Using all available data and paying particular attention to antiquarian sources, it is here intended to evaluate the long-term destruction and excavation of the monument; to consider its relationship to Bronze Age burial and ritual monument typologies and briefly to relate the site to theories about Wales and Stonehenge in British later prehistory.

### THE EARLIEST RECORDS: LHUYD’S FIELDWORK

With so little up-to-date evidence on the morphology or development of the site, recent investigators have, unsurprisingly, been obliged to seek information from early descriptions and surveys for their potential to help reconstruction of lost features. In the SPACES investigation, particular importance attached to the pedigrees of two eighteenth-century plans, one certainly surveyed by or for Edward Lhuyd (Lhwyd) (1660–1709; Roberts 2004), the other printed in 1776 in the name of William Stukeley (1687–1768; Haycock 2002). Though conceded to be inaccurate in detail, Stukeley’s plan was declared to be ‘in many ways a more competent drawing than [Lhuyd’s]’. Furthermore, it was felt that ‘an original source based on Stukeley’s own travels should not be ruled out’.

In discussing these plans, Darvill *et al.* (2003, 22, n. 27) refer to ‘Stukeley 1776, pl 83’ which is a two-volume work with two plates numbered 83 and Volume II is clearly intended (cf. Michel 1982, 17, 41). This ‘Stukeley’ plan includes detail of a ‘kiswaen’ near Meini Gwyr missing from Lhuyd’s, so if the former were to be taken as a true record, it would have to be accepted that Stukeley saw and drew a feature known neither in Lhuyd’s day nor since. Solving these problems of pedigree was not helped when many of Stukeley’s printed illustrations were published in an unconnected venture of 2003 which carried no scholarly commentary as to their true authorship (Mortimer 2003, 117).

To suggest that Stukeley ever journeyed within Wales is a controversial departure. It challenges most

current views of Stukeley's known whereabouts (Barker 1992, 55, site 72; cf. Burl 1996; Piggott 1985 *passim*), and overlooks all other detailed supporting evidence (Briggs 1978; 1980; 1982 and 1997). In chronicling the drawings' provenances to assess their value as archaeological records, the present essay assembles and re-evaluates all known documentation from both published and archive sources.

### Edward Lhuyd and his team's surveys

As compared to many other antiquaries' lives, history has left a reasonable understanding of Edward Lhuyd's. His methodology as innovative data collector in the fields of antiquities, botany, the Celtic languages and geology—particularly palaeontology—is well-known (For Lhuyd generally, see Emery 1969; for his correspondence, see Gunther 1948/1968). He twice personally explored Wales in some detail: first, during 1693–64 to prepare his contribution for Bishop Edmund Gibson's 1695 revision of Camden's *Britannia* (Emery 1958; Walters 1984; Walters and Emery 1977), then over 1697–99 in connection with his systematic Parochial Survey of the Principality. He later visited Brittany, Ireland (Briggs 2006; Edwards 2007a; Herity 1967; McGuinness 1996; O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan 1962), Scotland (Campbell and Thomson 1963) and Cornwall (Hogg 1961; Pool 1977) over 1699–1701. And in these journeys of the later 1690s he was assisted by two or three fellow Welshmen whose graphic handiwork survives in plans of some of the monuments they encountered. Unfortunately, few observations have come down in their original form because so many of Lhuyd's manuscripts subsequently perished in the libraries of country houses or on printers' premises in fires (Rees and Walters 1974).

How far Lhuyd was familiar with Meini Gwyr before 1695 is unclear. He may have first heard of the site from Erasmus Saunders of Cilrhedyn, who, on 27 September 1693, informed him of 'two circles of stones [he had observed] in this county, one at [?] near] Cil y Maen Llwyd, where over 40 stones are pitch'd in the earth in a circular form. . . . Whither they [the circles] be ye Druids Temples or w't they are, I will not presume to determine.' (Bodleian Library MSS, Ashmole 1817, fo. 430, transcribed in RCAM 1917, 111). Brinley Roberts kindly points out (in lit.) that in a subsequent statement Saunders makes it clear that by 1693 Lhuyd was familiar with the area, if not also with Meini Gwyr itself (Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1817a, fo. 434; Saunders to Lhuyd 20 Jan. 1693/4). Within a fortnight he would send Lhuyd an account of traditions relating monuments to giants which also mentioned '*meineu gwyr*' (Anon. 1848, 311). Lhuyd himself wanted it known that he desired 'nothing more than particular Descriptions of such circles of stones as are pitched on their ends in the ground: and such stones as are in any form pitched in ye ground, with other vast stones layed on them, &c' (*idem* 312). Further to this, in 1694 Lhuyd's friend John Lloyd explained in some detail what he considered to be the origins of the name Maen-y-Gwyr (in Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1817b, fol. 433; Lloyd (in Ruthin) to Lhuyd, 25 August 25 1694; Brinley Roberts, pers. comm.).

Lhuyd soon after published the site in his contribution commissioned for Bishop Edmund Gibson's new edition of Camden's *Britannia*. Having discovered the original contribution, in 1977 Walters and Emery demonstrated how this was printed direct from Lhuyd's original MS, not from a transcript of it (as is suggested by Burl 2000, 177 and Darvill *et al.* 2003 *passim*). As already noted, before writing it, Lhuyd had not only briefly explored the country to make observations on antiquities at first-hand in 1693–94; he had also developed a network of correspondents to help expedite that commission. Thus, for a better understanding of Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, he became indebted to Nicholas Roberts, a minor scholar in the Oxford clerical tradition. Roberts had already helped Ogilby in a similar task which was never published (Emery 1958, 180; Walters and Emery 1977, 135). Although Lhuyd acknowledged his contribution, Roberts was not entirely happy at the way his observations had been used, so pestered Lhuyd after the *Britannia* had appeared. His remarks on the Welsh names

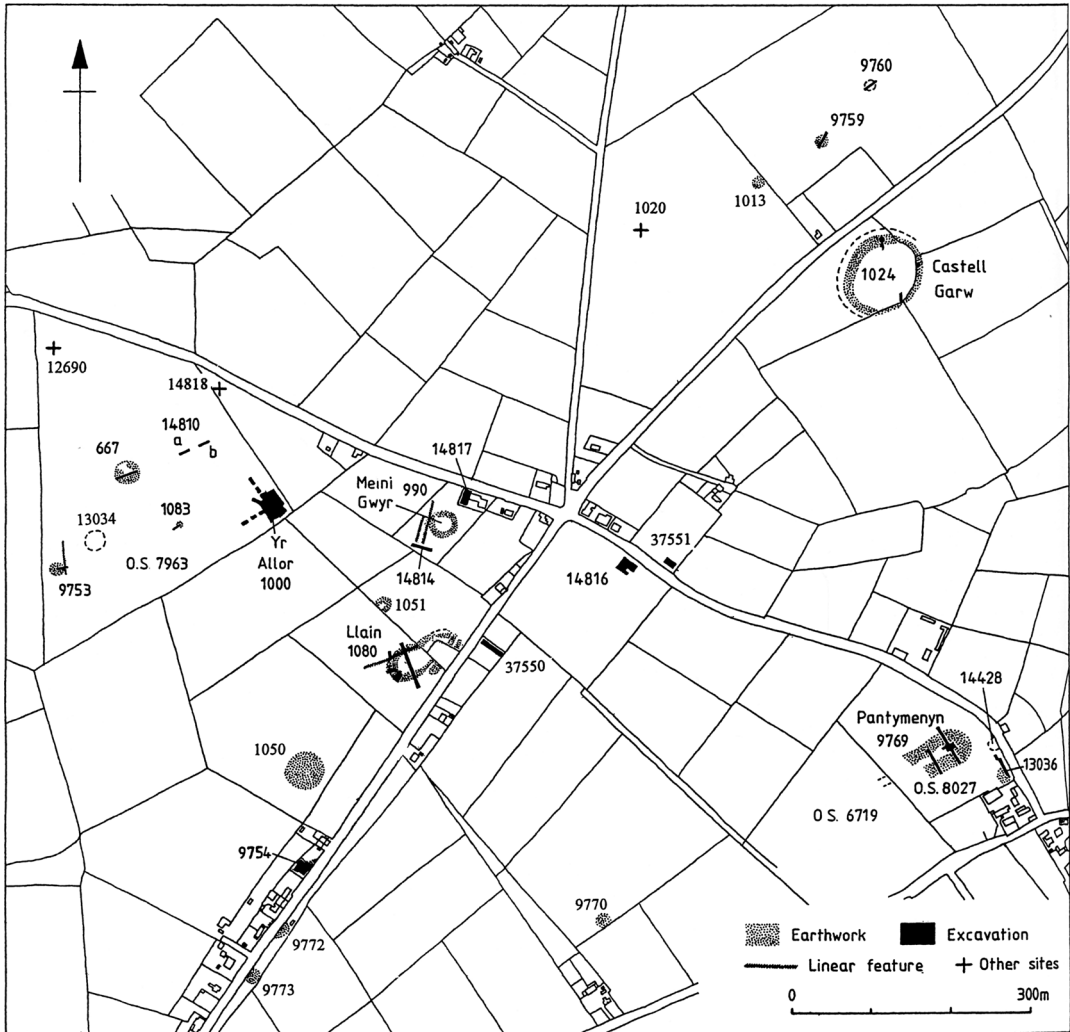


Fig. 1. Plan of the Glandy Cross complex (from Kirk and Williams 2000, fig. 3).

*By courtesy of the Prehistoric Society.*

for standing stones are here of particular interest: ‘Meini Gwyr are not, I suppose, so called from their crokk’d or inclining position, but from ye strength requir’d to bring them thither at first, being as it were manly stones, or stones of strength; for a weighty or heavy stone is very frequently called in our country Main gwrol’ (Emery 1958, 181).

Printed in Edmund Gibson’s edition of Camden’s *Britannia* in 1695, Lhuyd’s account ran:

*But Buarth Arthur or Meini Gwyr, on a Mountain near Kil y man Llwyd, is one of that kind of circular Stone-monuments which our English historians ascribe to the Danes. The Diameter of the Circle is about twenty yards. The stones are as rude as may be, and pitch’d on end at uncertain*

distances from each other, some at three or four foot, but others about two yards; and are also of several heights, some being about three or four foot high, and others five or six. There are now standing here, fifteen of them; but there seem, to be seven or eight carry'd off. The entry into it for about the space of three yards, is guarded on each side with stones much lower and less than those of the circle, and pitch'd so close as to be contiguous. And over-against this avenue, at the distance of about two hundred paces, there stand on end three other large rude stones, which I therefore note particularly, because there are also four or five stones erected at such a distance from that circular monument which they call *King's Stone* near Little Rolrich in Oxfordshire. As for the name *Bruarth* [sic] *Arthur*, it is only a nick-name of the vulgar, whose humour it is, though not so much (as some have imagin'd) out of ignorance and credulity, as a kind of Rustick diversion, to dedicate many unaccountable Monuments to the memory of that Hero; calling some stones of several tun weight his *Coits*, others his *Tables*, *Chairs*, &c. But *Meini Gwyr* is so old a name, that it seems scarce intelligible. *Meineu* is indeed our common word for large stones; but *gwyr* in the present British [Welsh] Signifies only crooked, which is scarce applicable to these stones, unless we should suppose them to be so denominated, because some of them are at present upright, but a little inclining. It may be, such as take these circular Monuments for *Druid-Temples* may imagine them so call'd from *bowing* as having been places of worship. (Gibson 1695, cols 628–9; cf. RCAM 1917, 111, fn.)

This text is repeated verbatim in Gibson's second edition of 1722 with '*Bruarth*' corrected (Gibson 1722, cols 752–3, 759). In Gough's later editions of 1789 and 1806 it became '*Burdh*' though without additional information (Gough 1789, vol. II, 510; 1806, vol. III, 438). '*Meineu Gwyr*' would assume important status as a site-type as Lhuyd offered a general overview of Welsh megalithic monuments (Gibson 1695, col. 630) in a paragraph Aubrey was to copy verbatim into his unpublished *Monumenta Britannia* (Fowles and Legge 1981–82, vol. I, 122–3); its true origin is not noted by Burl (2000, 436). Meanwhile, '*Bruarth*' lingered on, to be repeated by Defoe in an exploration of mainland Britain undertaken between c. 1700 and 1725 (Defoe 1726–27; 1927 edn, 56).

*Meini Gwyr* then took on further interest for Lhuyd. With the *Britannia* contribution under his belt, by the end of 1695 he had begun planning one of the most ambitious and comprehensive investigative topographical projects ever yet then conceived. Consequently, in 1696 he announced his 'Design' for a 'British Dictionary, Historical and Geographical, with an Essay entitl'd "Archaeologia Britannica"'. This he followed up by circulating 'Parochial Queries in Order to a Geographical Dictionary and Natural History, etc., of Wales'. Here, '*Buartt* [sic] *Arthur* in the County of Caermardhin', among others, appears in the seventh query. He used it as an exemplar site to inform potential correspondents about the range of early monuments he was familiar with and to provide a comparison for anything similar they knew of in their own localities (Morris 1909, xi).

Among the surviving replies of these Parochial Queries is one from the Revd D. Lewis, the incumbent of Cilmaenllwyd. The original manuscript is, sadly, mutilated and incomplete. However, the response to query no. 7 states 'There are severall stones pitched on end . . . [text missing] . . . near *Meineu Gwyn*, but noe names fixed . . . [text missing]' (Morris 1911, 65).

It is therefore clear that by the late 1690s Lhuyd certainly knew of *Meini Gwyr* from four correspondents—Revd D. Lewis, John Lloyd, Nicholas Roberts and Erasmus Saunders. It is almost inconceivable that he was not familiar with the site at first hand.

#### British Library Stowe MS 1023–4

'Unable to find an earlier published version' (of the plan of Lhuyd's they employ), Darvill *et al.* (2003,

22) copied theirs direct from the 1925 Royal Commission *Inventory* where it appears alongside plans of the four stone circles near Cong, Co. Galway, Ireland which at the time were erroneously thought to have been destroyed (RCAM 1925 xxxiii–vii; figs 13–14 facing p. xxxv). Unfortunately, neither Edward Owen in compiling that *Inventory* nor the SPACES researchers actually specify where the plan comes from (Darvill *et al.* 2003 *passim*). It was, however, taken from the now well-known compilation of Edward Lhuyd’s field surveys assembled by or for John Anstis, Queen’s Garter at Arms, in 1709 (Wagner and Rouse 1992). The source, clearly identified by Piggott (1965, 169, pls 1 and 2) is currently British Library Stowe MS 1023–4. It incorporates several hundred plans and sketches of prehistoric sites, Roman inscriptions, Early Christian stones and medieval graves or monuments (discussed in some detail by Edwards 2007a and used by Edwards 2007b and Redknap and Lewis 2007). Particularly strong in Irish, Cornish, Scottish and Welsh material, relatively few subjects are of English origin. Although organized regionally, a number of drawings were misplaced by Anstis’s copyist, thereby losing their proper county or country’s attribution, a problem which long hampered the identification of some sites. Its value is further reduced by the absence of a proper index.

Edward Owen, Secretary to the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales from 1908 to 1928, had first encountered this compilation whilst cataloguing Welsh Manuscripts in the British Museum (Owen 1922, 851–2). The first twentieth-century scholar to recognise its archaeological potential, he immediately announced his intention to have the whole Welsh series photographed with a view to ‘their reproduction at an early date’ (Owen *idem*). Consequently, a photostatic copy was made which usefully informed the Commission’s later fieldwork and research (unnumbered MS in the National Monuments Record of Wales). This particular sketch had obviously been overlooked in the account of Meini Gwyr that appeared in the Carmarthenshire *Inventory* of 1917 (RCAM 1917, 111, no. 321, ii), but Owen’s discovery enabled it to assume an important place in the discussion of Stonehenge bluestones in the introduction to the controversial Pembrokeshire *Inventory* eight years later, where Lhuyd’s plan of Gaer Fawr hillfort is also reproduced (RCAM 1925, fig. 14, opp. xxxv). It will be recalled that this *Inventory*’s notoriety is owed to scathing contemporary reviews. One that was written anonymously in the first volume of *Antiquity* in 1927 (245–7) is said to have been from the hand of (Sir) R. E. Mortimer Wheeler.

### **Meini Gwyr: the earliest plan (Fig. 2)**

Lhuyd’s plan of Meini Gwyr is annotated in a near-contemporary hand. Edward Owen would almost certainly have transcribed the notes had he been writing up the monument for the 1917 Carmarthenshire *Inventory*. Unfortunately, however, in common with Lhuyd’s plan of the Cong circles, he entitled his figures of the Meini Gwyr MS plan ‘STONEHENGE Circle (destroyed) at Meini Gwyr, parish of Llandissilio East, co. Carmarthen’. (RCAM 1925, fig. 14 opp. p. xxxv). Mentioning Stonehenge at this point might suggest that Owen was suffering a serious though temporary distraction from the task in hand. Whatever the reason, his failure to transcribe the annotations has never been redressed. This is the plan used by Darvill *et al.* (2003, 23, fig. 9a).

The original Stowe MS description of Meini Gwyr appears in MS 1023 on folio 175 (renumbered from 369; here Fig. 2). It reads:

Meinigwyr on y<sup>e</sup> Borders of Karmarthen

There are two other Stones pitchd on End ab<sup>1</sup> an arrow’s flight to y<sup>e</sup> south and a Kist Vaen to y<sup>e</sup> N.E ab<sup>1</sup> 2 Arrows flight distant from y<sup>m</sup>

Centrally is written: It is in circumference ab<sup>1</sup> 69 paces/

the Stones distant from each other about 3 yards save the second from y<sup>e</sup> third w<sup>ch</sup>. is 7 y<sup>ds</sup> and a q<sup>r</sup> all from a yard and a half to 2 yds high.

Direction indicators are provided by the letters 'E' and 'W' (east and west), giving the impression that the circle is oriented with the entrance pointing due west. To the right of the entrance stones it states: 'The Entrance is ab<sup>t</sup> 3 yds broad, and 5 yds and a q<sup>r</sup> long.'

This differs slightly from the *Britannia* account and might derive from one of Lhuyd's or his amanuenses' later journeys. Comparison between the texts shows an arrow's flight to be about two hundred paces, yards or metres. Curiously, the Stowe MS version omits some detail about the 'entrance'

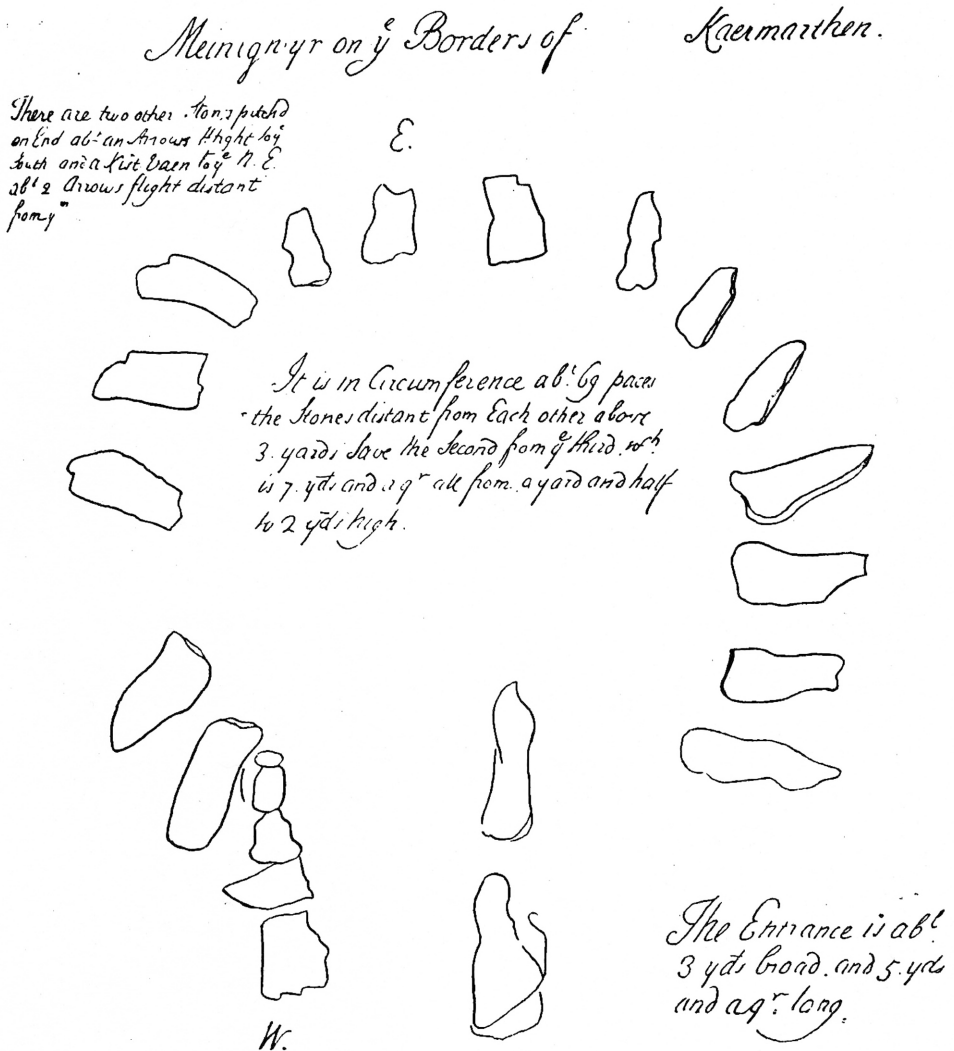


Fig. 2. British Library, Stowe MS 1023, 369/175 Meini Gwyr (from the photostatic copy of 1924 in the National Monuments Record of Wales). © Crown Copyright: RCAHMW.



otherwise it accords reasonably well with the *Britannia*. Although its main purpose was to describe the enclosed circle, it also locates two neighbouring sites: one, significantly of only two standing stones, where the *Britannia* records three; the other, a ‘*Kist Vaen*’, which, given Lhuyd’s use of the term elsewhere, raises expectation that it may have been a monument surmounted by a capstone.

Interestingly, at this early date Meini Gwyr’s entrance is shown looking due west, whereas in reality it is oriented north-west, though this difference presents no serious impediment to its reinterpretation. Certain other differences have not yet been accommodated by subsequent fieldworkers but they do raise the question as to which is the more reliable: this plan, or the *Britannia*’s printed account? An alternative or complementary question must be: could any differences in textual content from the *Britannia* be put down to carelessness on the part of Anstis’s scrivener? This seems unlikely given other scholarly examinations of material from that hand, but at this remove from the original observers, we are now left only with field archaeology to address such questions.

## STUKELEY’S PUBLICATION

### **Stukeley’s Journeys and his Glimpse of Wales**

A tolerable amount of manuscript evidence survives to document Stukeley’s travels. It comprehends correspondence and diaries (Lukis 1882–84), first-hand fieldwork observations and sketches (listed by Piggott in 1965, 206–24, though absent from Piggott 1985). Many notes copied from other antiquaries survive in his Commonplace Book at Devizes Museum and in manuscripts at the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff. The only evidence that Stukeley was ever in Wales is a couple of sketches of Wrexham Church taken in July 1712. These are listed in Piggott (1965, 224; drawn in 1712: Bodleian Library MS Top.gen.e.61, fo.19 and Top.eccles.d.6, fo. 79). Stukeley (1724, 59) notes a visit to Wrexham in the *Iter Cimbricum* which he dates December 1713, while Piggott (1985, 161–4) usefully reconstructed a diary of Stukeley’s travels 1721–25, but not earlier. Interestingly, he concocted no specifically Welsh tour for the 1724 *Itinerarium*, which includes at least some ‘virtual tour components’ derivative of his contemporaries’ activities, if not also of his own (Evans 1956, 75). Stukeley’s published travels are in fact liberally peppered with anachronistic intelligence, some of it even visibly lifted from the Society’s own Minute Books (Briggs 1977, 91, ns 11–13). Nothing else in the diaries or buried in his voluminous scattered correspondence suggests that he ever ventured to explore beyond Wrexham (Lukis 1882–84 *passim*; Piggott 1950 and 1985 *passim*). The idea that Stukeley might have produced a first-hand survey of Meini Gwyr based on his own travels can thus be firmly ruled out, as it must be acknowledged that he himself never visited or surveyed the site (Barker 1992, 55).

### **The *Itinerarium Curiosum* of 1724 and 1776**

Stukeley collated and published the first edition of his *Itinerarium Curiosum* early in the 1720s (Stukeley 1724). It records several journeys, mainly through southern England, on most of which he was probably a participant. Certain sites and discoveries then encountered were well illustrated by plans and prospects, of which some, though not all, were made at first hand en route. Having collected more material than could reasonably be accommodated between two boards, he seems to have retained a sizeable reserve, probably with some future publishing venture in mind. Unfortunately, this was left too late and the opportunity for a new book only arose after his death in 1768. Whether or not he had personally prepared further material with the intention of publishing a second edition by then, is unclear. What is certain is that in 1776 someone else took to the press a much enlarged, two-volume, second edition of the 1724 *Itinerarium* (Evans 1956, 75).

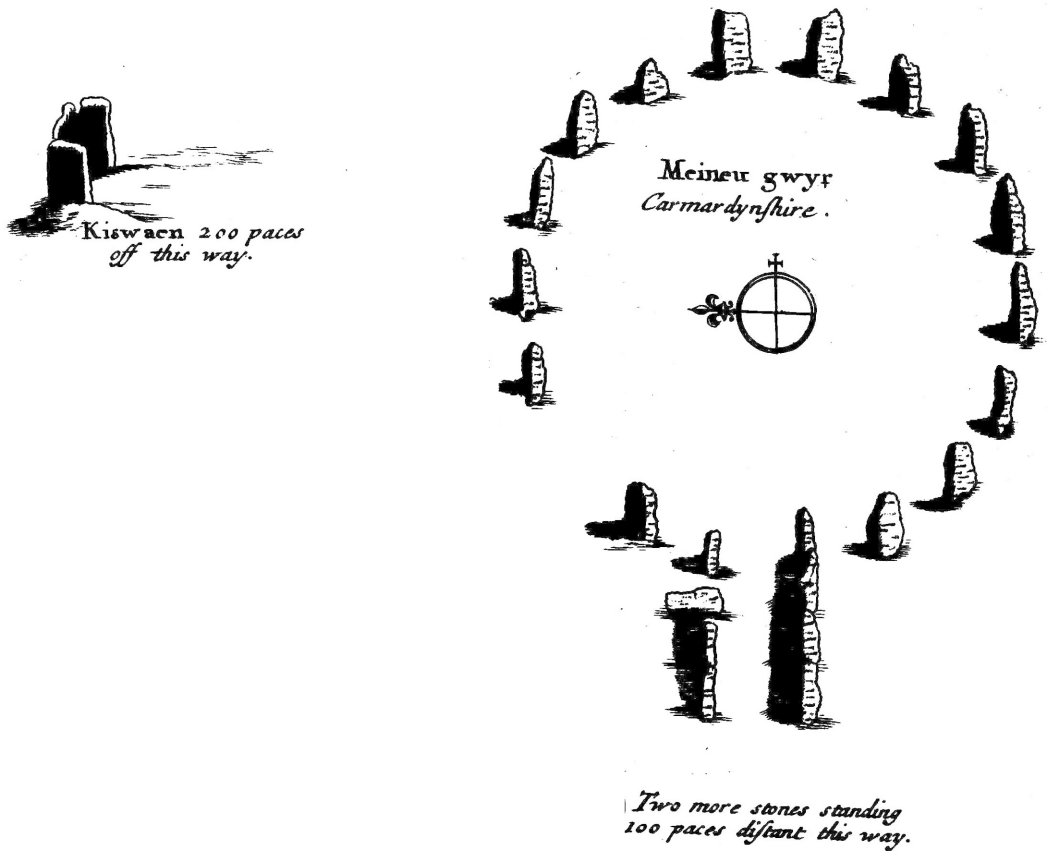


Fig. 3. Plan of Meini Gwyr with the addition of the 'cove' from Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1776, Volume II, pl. 83).

As noted, Meini Gwyr appears on plate 83 (Volume 2; here Fig. 3) among a number of other 'CELTIC Temples', where it is sandwiched between '*Biscaw Wn in Cornwall*' above, with '*Maen y Dans In Maddern Parish in Cornwall*' below. Both are elegantly cartouched to discourage confusion with the text accompanying Meini Gwyr. Here, to the left hand side of Meini Gwyr, and appearing for the first time, is a small and curious device labelled '*Kiswacn 200 paces off this way*'. Its printed compass bearing clearly indicates that these paces were intended to be taken in a direction just to east of north. Right at the bottom of the page, and where the 'entrance' points due west, readers are informed of '*Two more stones standing 100 paces distant this way*'. As these details are a far cry from those that appear on the Stowe MS plan, where, it has to be asked, did Stukeley acquire this 'new' information? If he did not visit Wales and survey it, was it 'borrowed' from another source, and if so, which one and how?



**Stukeley's Commonplace Book, Devezes Museum (Fig. 4).**

We can go some way to answering these questions by examining the documentation relating to Stukeley's known fieldwork.

Like many scholars before and since, Stukeley worked within a tradition where the promiscuous collecting and copying of others' efforts was a common practice. Here, the Devezes Museum Commonplace Book assumes the role of prime witness, since he demonstrably copied into it from the Anstis-Lhuyd field notebook in September 1719. First mentioned by Piggott in 1951, its history and a basic account of its contents and their origins was written by Hatchwell and Burl in 1998. Figure 4 is from a copy made by the present writer in 1976. It also contains material from John Aubrey's draft *Monumenta Britannica*. Numerous scholars have noted this borrowing from Aubrey, the most notable recently being Haycock (2002, 129). Aubrey's *Monumenta* long remained in manuscript and was eventually published privately in the 1980s (Fowles and Legge 1981–82). Indeed, it is a point of some significance that Stuart Piggott felt it likely that Stukeley set forth to survey Stonehenge and Avebury having been first stimulated by sight of Aubrey's *Monumenta* and Lhuyd's drawings (Piggott

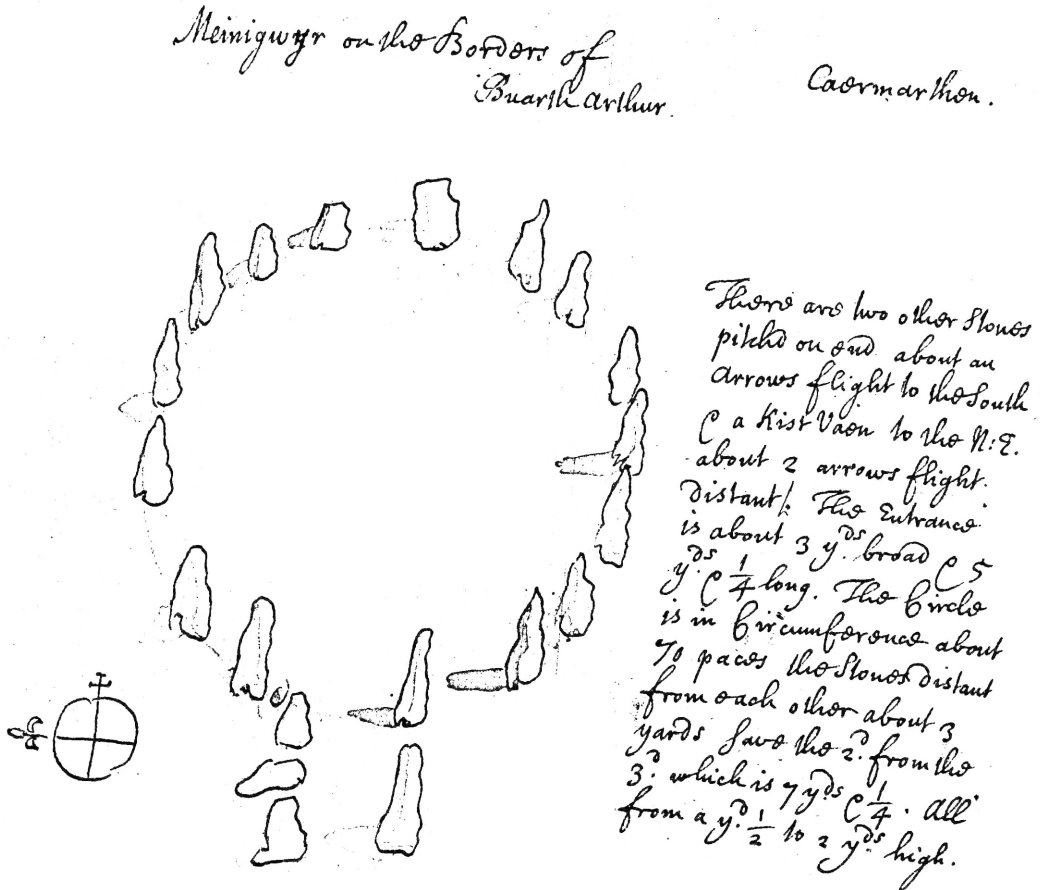


Fig. 4. William Stukeley's copy of Lhuyd's Meini Gwyr in his Commonplace Book (fo. 103, Devezes Museum). By courtesy of the Wiltshire Archaeological Society.

1981, 24). Although Haycock (2002, 129–32) credits Stukeley with a certain scrupulosity for accuracy of measurement in his quest for 'Druids' Circles', at some point the doctor was to forget quite where Lhuyd's plans had come from. Indeed, he was to assert that 'the drawings of stone circles in Wales by Aubrey's friend Lhwyd [Lhuyd] . . . in his *Archæologia Britannica* (1707) . . . are so imperfect that where he is not very particular in description & measure they are of little service' (Haycock 2002, 129, where n. 90 refers to Bodleian MS Eng. misc.c.323, fos 47–9 for which neither date nor context is given). These remarks are rather ironic, as Lhuyd's *Archæologia* was a pioneering linguistic work on the Celtic languages bereft of any graphic illustration (Lhwyd 1707 *passim*; see also Evans and Roberts 2009).

It has been long established that published illustrations for the posthumous *Itinerarium* were engraved from this Devizes manuscript (Briggs and Ward 1978; Briggs 1997). For example, Eglwys Glominog in Merionethshire—probably a structured cairn—was traced so directly as to be printed in mirror image (Briggs 1997, 204–5, fig. 21, 212). The Devizes Commonplace Book includes at least thirty sketches in Stukeley's inimitable hand, all taken straight from the Lhuyd-Anstis volume. Meini Gwyr is among them, sharing a full folio with a sketch of the well-known Arthur's Oo'n which Stukeley almost certainly copied from British Library Stowe MS 1024 (fo. 123). He would later publish the sketch in a monograph about this remarkable site near Falkirk, Scotland (Piggott 1950, 60–1, 106; 1985, 59–60, 90, illus. 59). Because Anstis's scrivener was no linguist and Stukeley probably only dabbled in 'Druidical' Welsh (if any at all), his transcriptions tend to be rather garbled. In fact it is of incidental interest that Stukeley appears to have been linguistically challenged for someone of his educational attainment. His near-contemporary Dr John Woodward (1665/1668–1728) wrote scathingly that 'This famous man is not Master of y<sup>e</sup> Latin-Tongue, nor can you understand him unless he speaks earnestly' (from *Journey into Engl<sup>d</sup> & c by a Saxon Physic<sup>n</sup>*; Bodleian MS Top.Gen. c.12, fo. 13).

Meini Gwyr is identifiable in this Commonplace Book (fo. 103) in spite of these linguistic problems. Entitled 'Meinigwyr on the Borders of Caermarthen' and 'Buarth Arthur', it repeats the main points of Lhuyd's original on the circle's orientation (Fig. 4). It also reads: 'there are two other stones pitchd on end an arrows flight to the south & a Kist Vaen to the N:E about 2 arrows flight distant.' Here, crucially, Lhuyd's original 'from Y<sup>m</sup>' is omitted, throwing into confusion an understanding of the relationship between circle, standing stones and 'kist vaen'. It goes on to explain that

The entrance is about 3 yds broad & 5 yds and  $\frac{1}{4}$  long. The Circle is in Circumference about 70 paces, the stones distant from each other about 3 yards save the 2<sup>nd</sup> from the 3<sup>d</sup>. which is 7 yds &  $\frac{1}{4}$ . All from a yd.  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 yds. high.

Thus through Stukeley, Lhuyd's original circle gained a pace in diameter and lost his explanation of the site's spatial relationships.

This Devizes Commonplace Book version also adds the name Buarth Arthur—missing from the Anstis Stowe MS sketch—which was probably taken from the 1695 *Britannia*. This clearly demonstrates the connection between the Lhuyd-Anstis compilation and the 1776 *Itinerarium* and shows that Lhuyd or a helper was the true progenitor of the Meini Gwyr plan eventually to be printed in Stukeley's name. He was not alone in consulting Lhuyd's compendium during the eighteenth century. Others included Thomas Astle (1800) who later bought the manuscript; Thomas Pennant (1778–83) who certainly published material similar to its surviving content; and possibly also Sir Richard Colt Hoare (personal observation).

To a greater or lesser degree, the relationship between Lhuyd's manuscripts and Stukeley's published works has been appreciated since the 1920s. Working independently and apparently unaware of Owen's

discovery, O. G. S. Crawford (1921) noticed Stukeley's 'Welsh drawings' soon after excavating Carnedd Hengwm, Merioneth in 1920. And sometime later, Colin Gresham perceptively suggested that Stukeley had been 'quite possibly working from a second hand description' (Bowen and Gresham 1967, 282). Lhuyd's surveys and the *Itinerarium* were later more definitively connected in 1978 through graphic depictions of the kerb cairn on Mynydd Llangyndeyrn, Carmarthenshire (Briggs and Ward 1979; Briggs 1980). This included comparison of Lhuyd's drawing with a modern survey by Anthony Ward. More recently, illustrations of a half-dozen Merioneth megalithic sites from the Anstis manuscript were comprehensively analysed and employed to demonstrate the 1776 *Itinerarium*'s apparent 'borrowings' from Lhuyd as well as to explain the geographical shortcomings of Anstis's scrivener (Briggs 1997).

### Stukeley's Invention of the 'Cove'

As will now be clear, archaeologists have long found the 1776 *Itinerarium* particularly useful for documenting the histories of later prehistoric and other monuments. Meini Gwyr has been no exception. Interestingly, Burl took it as an accurate record when discussing and first re-publishing Stukeley's image of the circle in 1981, though initially he nowhere discussed the origin of Stukeley's figure (Burl 1981, fig. 12, 118, 120; 1985, 78; 1988). Coves are a form of druidical monument Stukeley introduced into the record (Piggott 1985, 88) and given their recognition as a site type accompanying some later prehistoric burial or ritual monuments in other parts of Britain, it may have seemed reasonable that Stukeley's Welsh '*kiswaen*' should join them. After mentioning Stukeley/Lhuyd's other 'two stones' Burl also described 'a short stretch of paving [which] led to the centre of the stone circle where the people had set out a rectangle of four thin slabs, laid flat, around an area where a tall post stood' (Burl 1981, 118). This quotation is unsourced and otherwise appears to be absent from the literature (cf. Darvill *et al.* 2003, 26–30; Grimes 1963, 142–3). It seems to arise from a misunderstanding of how the entrance stones were originally placed. By 1985 it had become clear that Stukeley's image was originally Lhuyd's, though supporting evidence was not presented to explain the point (Burl 1985, 78). Since 2005, Burl has again accepted Stukeley's debt to Aubrey and Lhuyd as the source of important site plans (Burl and Mortimer 2005, 2, 6, 7 and 150).

### W. F. GRIMES'S 1938 EXCAVATION

Born and brought up in Pembrokeshire, W. F. (Peter) Grimes had been captivated by the implications of H. H. Thomas's petrographic sourcing of some Stonehenge bluestones to Garn Meini (more recently renamed Garn Menyn), Mynydd Preseli in 1921 and 1923 (Thomas 1921; 1923). Consequently, he was later fired as a professional archaeologist to begin excavating Meini Gwyr in August 1938 'because [of] its proximity to the source of the Stonehenge 'blue stones', [and] its general character and situation led to the hope that something might be learned from it of the connection of Stonehenge with south-west Wales' (Grimes 1939, 373). Although never published in full, his excavation importantly established how the outer 'bank [of the site] was composed of clay and decayed turf scraped up from the surface, with some stones in the body of it' (Grimes 1938). He also noted that '[quite extensive] parts of this central area examined, were featureless' (Grimes 1963, 142).

Employing 'available aerial photographs and illustrations in the Grimes [excavation] Archive (Item 58) held by the RCAHMW', in 2003 Darvill *et al.* produced a useful composite locating the 1938 excavation trenches. They also mapped the main features uncovered then and from the DAT's 1985–86 excavations (Darvill *et al.* 2003, fig. 11, 25; here Fig. 5). The Grimes archive includes a full-scale MS

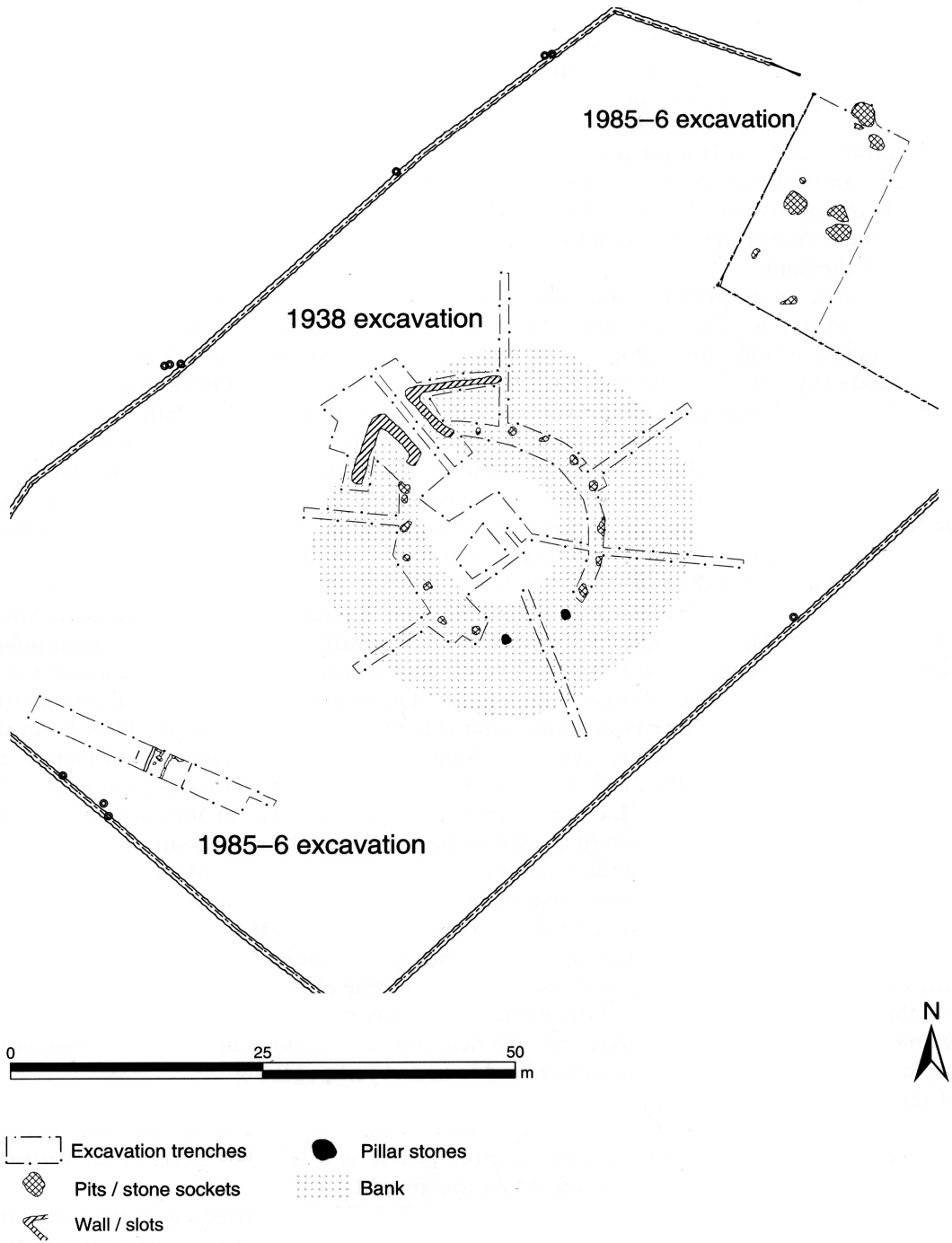


Fig. 5. Plan of Meini Gwyr from Darvill *et al.* 2003 (fig. 12a).  
*By courtesy of the Society of Antiquaries of London.*





**The excavation of 1938 illustrated by W. F. Grimes's photographs**

Fig. 6a (top). General view looking into excavated entrance on the north-west of Meini Gwyr.  
 Figs 6b (bottom left) and 6c (bottom right). Views of north and south excavated trenches defining the entrance into north-west of Meini Gwyr. (All from the National Monuments Record of Wales, Grimes Archive). © Crown copyright: RCAHMW.

contoured plan at 1:500 plotting excavation trenches as well as an arsenal of high definition photographs ranging from site overviews to details of posthole and section cuttings (National Monuments Record of Wales, Grimes Archive, item 128). In fact Darvill *et al.*'s fig.11 appears to derive from a scaled plan by Grimes supported archivally by a levelling notebook offering minutely detailed sections across the excavated area.

Grimes always gave the impression that his site was never fully published because the excavation record had been lost when enemy action destroyed the Ordnance Survey Offices at Southampton during the Second World War. Indeed, it is becoming difficult to appreciate what kind of documentation might have been lost, given the comprehensive nature of what actually has survived undamaged (except by time and sometime inadequate storage facility).

As the SPACES team have demonstrated, this excavation archive is extremely valuable as an aid to interpreting the monument. So, for example, while it has been suggested that Grimes's digging around the entrance to the site showed how it had been lined by a 'palisade' of lesser stones (*Coflein*, accessed 26 July 2011). Contemporary photographs (Figs 6b and c) suggest the word 'palisade' may be inappropriate to describe the slabs which were probably bedded vertically into these trenches. Elsewhere, it is postulated that the entrance feature had been defined by a 'narrow kerbing of small stones [that] ran around the outer edge of the bank for about 10m each side of the entrance, connecting with the trenches that once held the upright stones of the entrance' (Darvill *et al.* 2003 referring to Grimes 1963, pl. 11b: here Fig. 6a); on present evidence (Grimes 1938; 1939 and 1963, 142) and manuscript texts (for e.g. National Monuments Record of Wales, Grimes Archive, item 108), this interpretation seems to exaggerate the extent of a feature which remains undocumented by precise contemporary measurement or to be defined as kerbing (in the usual sense of that term). This entrance appears on Grimes's one published excavation photograph, which shows but a few dozen randomly placed field stones lying well beyond the outer bounds of the site's original circular stone setting (Grimes 1963, pl. 3b; here Fig. 6a).

The feature is given no precise measurement by Grimes, but Lhuyd's statement that it was 'ab' 3 yds broad, and 5 yds and a q' long', appears to fit the excavated evidence and to accord well with the width of the enclosing bank as uncovered. Outside the 'entrance' Grimes found a pit containing charcoal. There was also a hearth within the bank from which Food Vessel sherds were recovered (Grimes 1938; 1939 and 1963, 131–3). Neither those sherds nor any related stratigraphic sections were ever published.

Grimes wrote a pre-excavation site description suggesting that the greater part of Meini Gwyr had gone by the time he came to excavate it (Grimes Archive, item 224). Whatever else is certain, his one published photo confirms the monument as only 'a shadow of its former self' (Grimes 1963, 11B). It is possible that Grimes's photographic record could be of sufficiently high definition to enable the further creation of detailed CAD site reconstructions.

#### THE DYFED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST INVESTIGATIONS

When agricultural improvement and building development schemes began to affect farmland around Glandy Cross during the 1980s and '90s, they triggered archaeological field evaluation, rescue excavation and research by the Dyfed Archaeological Trust over 1985–86 (Ward *et al.* 1987) and during 1991–92 (Kirk and Williams 2000). Cumulatively, these investigations covered a considerable area, encompassing several enclosures, pit circles, standing stones and cairns around the embanked site. While some of these features were trenched, Meini Gwyr itself was not re-excavated, though



material recovered from them helped chronicle the history of the whole monument complex, which radiocarbon dates suggested had been occupied between *c.* 2190 and *c.* 1530 cal. BC. In fact sampling suggested the possibility that the earliest settlement could date as early as the fifth millennium BC with occupation continuing to the ninth century BC.

#### TIME AND EROSION: THEIR EFFECTS ON MONUMENT INTERPRETATION AND TYPOLOGY

Any reinterpretation of the site needs to take full cognisance of its present diminished condition and its long destruction history. Meini Gwyr today survives as a sub-circular enclosure *c.* 20–22 metres in diameter. Its structure and history are still probably best understood from the 1938 excavation, which proved that the two orthostats lying *c.* 6.5 metres apart within the bank on its south are all that remain of some 17 (or more) stones making up the original circle. Grimes usefully established how these had encircled the inside of what is now a low earthwork standing to no more than 0.9 metre. Although this may suggest a monument originally of considerable height, in reality the contoured plans by Grimes and Darvill *et al.* map quite gentle slopes from the bank crests to both interior and exterior levels (Grimes 1963; Darvill *et al.* loc. cit. fig. 12, p. 27). It is difficult to appreciate what Grimes meant when, after re-excavation of the holes, he suggested that they ‘must have been larger than the average for Wales’ (Grimes 1946, 51), since he drew no comparisons.

Grimes cogently noted that the earliest plan of *c.* 1695–1700 (Fig. 2) actually ‘omits the earthwork on which the stones stood’ (Grimes 1936, 18–19; 1963, 97). Unfortunately, it is now impossible to know how far—if at all—that representation was intended to convey the presence of an earthwork when it was drawn. Indeed, the possibility exists that Lhuyd’s survey team had originally drawn the stylised orthostats over an area shaded to convey the presence of a mound or a bank, and that having failed to appreciate its meaning Anstis’s scrivener omitted it. It is therefore impossible to say whether or not the bank was once more or less pronounced than it is now. Curiously, no later graphic depictions of the site are known until Sir John Gardner Wilkinson measured and sketched it around 1870 (Wilkinson 1871, 241, pl. xxx, fig. 3; reproduced in Briggs 2006, 243, fig. 63.3) so the date the orthostats disappeared remains quite unknown. Wilkinson described Meini Gwyr as an earthen circle, and while acknowledging the existence of two stones, drew the bank without them in a way that portrayed the monument as only a narrow circular embankment (Fig. 7a; Wilkinson *idem*, 225–6). That narrowness and even apparent sharpness of the bank’s profile is to a degree confirmed by an even more stylised MS plan made in 1926 by Flinders Petrie (Darvill *et al.* 2003, fig. 10, p. 24).

#### DISCUSSION

##### **Structured Cairns, Stone Circles and Earthen barrows**

A stone circle may be defined as a group of peristalithic uprights enclosing an area basically devoid of other structures. That stone circles (Burl 1976; 2005) are of the same shape and similar sizes as the stone settings surrounding many burial cairns is a point rarely commented upon (Lynch 1972; 1980; cf. Burl 2000). Although structurally similar to revetted cairns, freestanding circles are often thought to have been but loosely related to them (Grimes 1963, 94–6, cf. Griffiths in RCAMW 1964, p. lx). Burl had a more questioning approach to the problem when he noted Bryn Cader Faner and Carn Caca—both kerb cairns—to be ‘combinations of stone circle and burial mound’ (Burl 1976,

272). Most cairns revetted by peristaliths are nowadays felt to belong to the 'kerb cairn' variety or otherwise to related forms of that monument type (as defined by Lynch 1972) or to the 'cairn circles' of Grimes (1963, 95; RCAMW 1964, lx). These monument types and their relatives are common throughout Britain and Ireland, and are particularly well known in upland Wales. Many have been planned (Briggs 1993; Leighton 1984), and a few excavated (Lynch 1993).

Probably following Evans (1893, 186) and Anwyl (1907, 368), in Carmarthenshire the compilers of the County History observed how 'a circle of small stones is frequently found as a curb [sic] or peristalith to the round barrows of the Bronze Age; such "circles" when the cairn or barrow has been removed are often confused with the true megalithic circle [already described]' (Lloyd 1935, 44–6, 58). Writing in 1888, Edward Laws could argue similarly 'from careful examination of many round, or bronze age barrows, I find that (in Pembrokeshire at all events) they were always girdled with a circle of stones, more or less perfect, traces of which are to be found near the outside of the earth tump' (Laws 1888, 20). These observations can be paralleled across much of Britain and Ireland, both in the antiquarian literature and from the results of recent excavations.

There is general agreement that an important purpose of constructing kerbs or freestanding circles, was to dedicate the area within them for burial ceremonial. Burials all too readily disappear if interred in vulnerable cists upon the original ground surface or within a soil infill. The degree to which central spaces were infilled would depend upon continuance of occupancy, stability of population and an availability of materials appropriate to the purpose. Some monuments may never have been finished: those filled entirely with earth could easily be emptied. In Pembrokeshire, where by the 1880s cairns and barrows were disappearing daily, it was observed that 'everywhere the farmers mark out the tumuli as an excellent top dressing, and in this way they are dissipated year by year' (Laws 1888, 28–9). Stone also dissipates rapidly into field-walls, buildings and roads. Even small losses are likely to introduce serious confusion into an understanding of the original appearances and later interpretations of the monuments.

Diameter ranges between kerb cairns and circles overlap considerably and burial was common to both (Briggs 1986, 10–11). Excavation demonstrates that Early Bronze Age burial monuments were

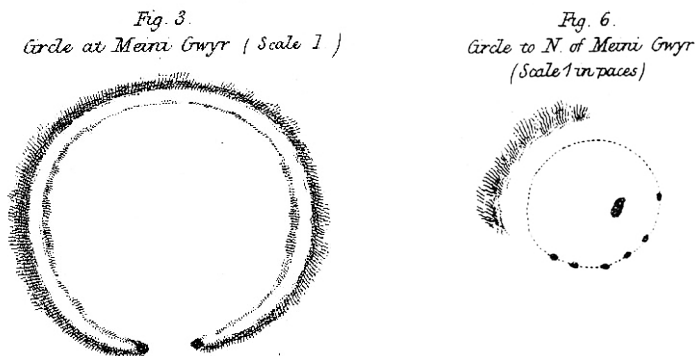


Fig. 7. Meini Gwyr and a nearby stone circle or kerb cairn (probably NPRN 1013), from J. Gardner Wilkinson's plate xxxv, figs 3 and 6 of 1871.

often the foci of satellite pit burials, features difficult, if not on occasion almost impossible to recognize, except by excavation (Stevenson 1976). That both structured cairns and stone circles today tend to be sited in the uplands is probably due more to factors of survival and that facet of environmental determinism manifest in the provision of adequate supplies of suitable stone than it is to early aesthetic perceptions involving natural beauty (Lynch 1975; cf. Fleming 2000). When considering the aesthetics of monuments, the sitings of upland stone cairns are rarely, if ever, compared with those of their lowland equivalents—the earthen barrows. If they were, it would soon be appreciated that there is little rhyme or reason to explain the locations of that growing majority of Early Bronze Age burials now known from crop- or parchmarks recognised by aerial photography.

### **What sort of monument was Meini Gwyr?**

Meini Gwyr is unusual because it is a damaged monument that has been investigated in search of features documented in the antiquarian literature. The difficulty of reconciling documentation with surviving features, however, emphasises how challenging it can be to define and classify later prehistoric composite burial and ceremonial sites generally. Indeed, existing detailed classifications tend not to take account of the fact that some, perhaps even many typological criteria, may result partially or even entirely from factors of erosion and destruction, rather than represent the true intentions of their builders. With these difficulties in mind, the stratigraphic relationship of surviving stone to the date and origins of the bank at Meini Gwyr now needs to be clarified, for without a better understanding it is impossible to know how far they may ever have been part of an original cairn mass or structure, if at all (Grimes 1939; 1963 *passim*; Darvill *et al.* 2003, fig. 11, p. 25).

Combining past opinion with discursive evaluation of their own research, the SPACES team concluded that Meini Gwyr should be classified as an embanked stone circle. The type is defined by its having an entrance through the bank. A handful have been excavated (Lynch 1972, 63, 75). Quoting from Grimes's magisterial work on stone circles, the SPACES team propose only two other examples in Wales: 'Ysbyty Cynfyn, Cardiganshire, and Ffynnon Brodyr, Pembrokeshire—neither of which has been investigated to any significant extent' (Grimes 1963, 127 and 141 respectively). These two seem strange bedfellows for Meini Gwyr. Without any visible circle or record of one, and as an earthwork more oblong than circular, Ffynnon Brodyr was an odd choice even in Grimes's day. And when printed and documentary sources were employed to investigate the pedigree of Ysbyty Cynfyn during the 1970s it was shown that the 'stone circle' had appeared after 1804 and that embankment probably resulted from several centuries' downslope soil creep against the original graveyard wall (Briggs 1979). Neither of these sites are therefore easily comparable to what is known of Meini Gwyr.

Beyond Wales, Meini Gwyr has been compared to embanked stone circles in Cumbria, Ireland and in Scotland (Darvill *et al.* 2003, *passim*). As with several other circular stone monuments in southern Britain, some affinities may reasonably be sought among Scotland's recumbent stone circles (RCAHMS 2011). Strangely, however, any similarity the site may have to other structured cairns or circles within Wales seems to have been overlooked. Here, the entrance feature is of particular interest, and in finding possible parallels three stone circles come to mind. All have circumferences with the continuity of their spaced peristaliths broken by an irregularity that might have been originally intended as a symbolic access to the interior of the monument. All three irregularities are formed by two upright slabs set more-or-less at right-angles on the south-east circumference. All are in Brecknockshire, one at Ynyshir on Mynydd Epynt; another at Banc y Celyn, the last on Hay Bluff at Blaen Dgedi (respectively RCAHMS 1997, SC5, 155–7; SC7, 158 and SC10 159–60). Though none of these features lies on the north-west, it cannot be claimed that the comparison is strong, but it seems worth noting.

As it stands, the monument is best seen as an embanked stone circle, though it seems reasonable to suppose that before being denuded of at least fifteen uprights and probably a good deal of overburden, it may have assumed more the form of a structured burial mound comparable in type to Early Bronze Age ring cairns.

These brief observations underline the need to be cautious when analyzing and categorizing early burial monuments. Without re-excavating Meini Gwyr to analyse more of its original interior infill (if there was one), the pre-cairn ground surface and the stratigraphic relationships of the outer bank and any 'new' buried features revealed by geophysics, further detailed comparisons of what is known may have only transitory value. Indeed, if the archive chronicling prehistoric activity was contained largely in lost infill, it may never be possible to determine what the monument's original builders intended.

### **Meini Gwyr, Preseli and the Stonehenge 'bluestone question'**

After considering their survey results and discussing the site's typology, the SPACES investigators then more confidently reinterpreted its original role and relationships. One new proposal was that Meini Gwyr is, or may have been, one of six 'stone circles sited in relation to upland stone sources' occupying the southern aspect of Mynydd Preseli (Darvill *et al.* 2003, 9). The clear inference here is that the builders of these ritual or burial sites would have been involved in quarrying, perhaps processing, then distributing large products of stone from them.

It is now almost a century since Edward Owen first imaginatively suggested there may have been a later prehistoric adventurer, mercantilist or other cultural connection between Meini Gwyr, Welsh bluestones and Wessex (loc. cit. in RCAM 1925). Ever since that time, Lhuyd's lost stone circle and the romance of the Preseli hills have attracted a host of followers believing in a regular Neolithic to Early Bronze Age traffic carrying Welsh stone and even Irish metals to England along a route across or around Mynydd Preseli. This trade has for long notionally brought together distant products to a sort of European market place on Salisbury Plain, the conceptual foundations of which were cemented in the Wessex Culture by Stuart Piggott in 1938 (Piggott 1938).

Whereas commitment to those theories of transport and interactive trading cultures remains as strong as ever today, the supporting evidence for them has altered significantly in the interim. The integrity of the original theory depended upon several factors (conveniently summarized in John 2008). These included the widespread belief that substantial stones could not have been transported to Wessex from south-west Wales by ice—or indeed by any related natural process. The theory's integrity also required that Neolithic or Bronze Age societies must have been motivated to prospect for and collect or quarry columns of a stone type with a particular visual appeal—namely white-spotted dolerite from Garn Meini on Mynydd Preseli.

The proponents of this theory ignore that much of upland Wales was and is still covered in glacial debris, much of it on the Preselis being made up of columnar dolerite boulders, some of which in the south-west derives from Garn Meini. But of greater significance is the fact that the Stonehenge 'bluestones' make up a suite of at least fifteen different lithologies, often of indifferent visual appeal. Such material is so widespread and varied that its occurrence must diminish the motivational aspect of the human transport argument. These stones have been shown to derive from a topographical area encompassing St David's Head, on the one hand, and South Glamorgan, on the other (Thorpe *et al.* 1991; cf. *British Archaeology*, November–December 2009, 7).

A much better understanding of this geological problem would be gained by sampling, provenancing and mapping (Briggs 2003, 209) not only some of the billions of tonnes of recycled boulders that litter south-west Wales (Jehu 1904; Jones 1956), but also by thoroughly sampling the structural stones of the many monuments that are currently the mainstay evidence for later prehistoric activity

and settlement throughout much of western Britain (Briggs 2003). And whereas steps were taken during the 1930s by F. J. North (1938 and 1940) to initiate such an investigation (principally by examining stones from barrows in the Vale of Glamorgan), and while W. E. Griffiths commissioned an examination of The Druids' Circle at Penmaenmawr during the 1960s (which remains unpublished in the National Monuments Record), few, if any, similar examinations have been undertaken since. Crucial to the question of a bluestone connection is the problem that Meini Gwyr itself has never been sampled petrographically. The distribution of columnar spotted dolerite erratics is not only a feature of the Preseli landscape: erratic dolerites have been recognised well to the north of Garn Meini and the other 'blue stone' exposures (Jones 1956), though here again boulders have not been sectioned petrographically. Basic records of glacial erratics incorporated into hedges in the lower Teifi Valley were made by the author with Mr M. E. Baines during the 1980s (Briggs 1993, 169), but significantly to their more widespread distribution in historic and prehistoric times, the removal or burial of boulders in agriculture and their destruction for building developments are still a commonplace in this area. In fact crystalline boulders are still being uncovered around Cardigan (personal observation).

It is unlikely that much headway will be made in recognising 'regional groupings [of monument type] and [prehistoric] exchange networks' (Darvill *et al.* 2003, 40) until all superficial deposits have been examined to the same laboratory standards as those that currently obtain for the products believed to have been exchanged or moved by prehistoric peoples from glaciated areas (Briggs 2003; 2009 and 2011). Darvill (2011, 131) has described how many quite different stone types appear to have been exploited in later prehistoric south-west Wales while still ignoring the serious investigational handicaps posed by overlooking superficial deposits as major resources for prehistoric lithics-users. His study nevertheless confidently concludes, having creatively mixed science with magic, that 'in prehistoric times stone, was considered to be 'alive' and active in maintaining the well-being of individuals and the community'. Whereas that assertion can be neither demonstrated nor disproved, there can be no doubt that a greater understanding of local stone resources would be achieved were there greater will to investigate it.

There is a long history of dissent against the human transport theory of bluestones, most cogently articulated following the geochemical provenancing researches of Thorpe *et al.* (1991). But in spite of the growing weight of evidence putting that theory into question, the SPACES project promotes human transport entirely without caveat (e.g. in Alexander 2008; Darvill and Wainwright 2011).

## CONCLUSIONS

Through its conceptual but unproven geological association with Stonehenge, since the 1930s Meini Gwyr has achieved iconic status relative to beliefs in the transporting of Welsh boulders to Wessex and to the transmission of other technical or commercial achievements by later prehistoric peoples in Britain. It is unfortunate that there has never been a petrographic study of the monument itself or of the superficial deposits around it. Inadequate understanding of superficial deposits is not just a problem for south-west Wales—whence most of the 'bluestones' almost certainly derive (however they came to travel east): it is an investigative problem for prehistorians worldwide. Without greater understanding of that resource, it will remain impossible to reach meaningful conclusions either about the materials that might have been employed in building the monuments, or about the raw materials used in implement-making.

A detailed review of Meini Gwyr's antiquarian history suggests that at least one key issue of antiquarian authorship and investigation has been recently misunderstood. Further, more detailed

investigation has now established that not only can the earliest (relatively) accurate survey of Meini Gwyr be more confidently attributed to Edward Lhuyd or his amanuenses—with a likely date of 1695–98, but the possibility that William Stukeley ever authored a later survey of the site can now be safely discounted and the notion that the site ever had a Neolithic *cove* can be rejected as a fanciful invention of Stukeley's.

It remains important to establish more of how the site has changed since first recorded before 1700. If progress is to be made, it is vital to distinguish between features that made up the original monument and those that could result from post-abandonment destructive or even recent erosional processes. Without much more information, adequately addressing the site's cultural or chronological affinities and usefully discussing its parallels further afield will remain extremely difficult.

If we are to establish a sound understanding of the relationship between Meini Gwyr and other later prehistoric monuments in the Preselis and beyond our conclusions need to be based upon consistent research methodologies. These demand detailed and exhaustive research among all documentary and printed sources besides well-informed comparisons with monuments and their construction materials nearby and afar. Narratives and conclusions lacking such application and consistency are unlikely to be sustainable.

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