KEYWORDS: Burial - Capstone - Cup-and-ring petroglyph - Cupule - Landscape

CUP-AND-RING PETROGLYPH ON THE NEOLITHIC CHAMBERED BURIAL MONUMENT OF GARN TURNE, PEMBROKESHIRE, SW WALES

George Nash

Abstract. The paper discusses the recent discovery of a cup-and-ring petroglyph located on the capstone of a megalithic monument in south-west Wales. Cup-and-rings are found in abundance across the Neolithic and Bronze Age Atlantic zone of western Europe, usually carved on rock-outcroppings. In Wales there is increasing evidence that these images along with single and multiple cupules are being used to statement megalithic monuments. The cup-and-ring, located on an enormous capstone of Garn Turne is the first to be found on a Neolithic chambered monument in Wales. It provides possible evidence for stratigraphic use of the monument and is one of an increasing number of monuments that hitherto were considered to be absent of art.

Introduction

It is becoming clear that there is a link between what is termed rock art and the construction and use of Neolithic megalithic chambered tombs in Wales. Rock art, which I term as a conscious decision to mark a surface creating a variety of symbols, appears in a variety of locations (Bradley 1993, 1997; Burgess 1989-90; Beckensall 1999; Nash and Chippindale 2002; Mazel et al. in prep.). Recent research in Wales by Darvill and Wainwright (2003) and Sharkey (2004) suggests that up to forty-five sites possess rock art either within, outside or more usually on the top of capstones or on the sides of standing stones (Table 1). It is not clear if the art and the erection of the monument are contemporary. However, in the case of cupules appearing on the capstones of Neolithic burial monuments, it is more than likely that the art follows the construction and Neolithic use. This sequence, recognised long ago by Daniel (1950: 115), appears to indicate cupules as being primarily a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age phenomenon in this region. However, the dating of these enigmatic designs remains nearly impossible and their position within the chronology difficult to place.

The presence of such markings and their possible chronological sequence may be following the disuse of the monument as a place of burial, suggesting that these monuments constitute an important place for post-Neolithic communities when cremation is the preferred method of mortuary practice. It is probable that within these monuments cremation rites and rock art are indelibly linked. The presence of cupules and now, the first cup-and-ring on a megalith in Wales suggests that the capstones on many monuments were exposed rather than covered by earth or cairn. The exposure or part-exposure of the capstone may have been a deliberate architectural trait, designed along with the careful selection of stone, based on geology, shape and size.

An ongoing study undertaken by the University of Bristol has been exploring a series of monuments within south-west Wales and Anglesey. This research includes the recording of rock art either on the monument itself or within the immediate landscape. It is clear from this research that a number of landscape and monument rules concerning the distribution of cupules applies (see also Tilley 1994). Prior to the discovery of the cup-and-ring on the capstone at Garn Turne, only six monuments and one Neolithic cemetery in south-west Wales have revealed cupules either on capstones or within the immediate landscape (Children and Nash 1997).

Landscape morphology and the Garn Turne monument

In November 2005, the University of Bristol team visited Garn Turne. This visit followed successful fieldwork at the Garn Wen Cemetery, near Goodwick, Pembrokeshire in which a number of cupules were discovered on rock outcropping west of the burial monuments (Nash et al. in prep.).

The Garn Turne monument, also known as *Carn Turne*, *Garne Tarne* and *Old Coldstone*, is the largest of all the monuments in Wales and is one of three megaliths clustered

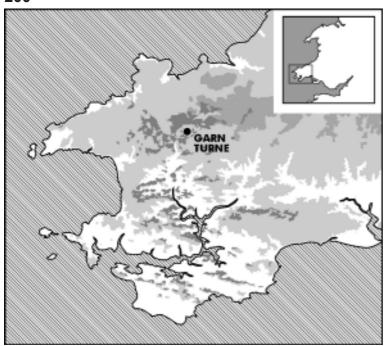


Figure 1. Location of Garn Turne (Drawn by Abby George).

around the hamlet of Colston, within the hinterlands of Mynydd Preseli (Fig. 1). The other two monuments are Parc-y-llyn, Ambleston (SM 9823 2659), and The Altar, Colston, Little Newcastle (SM 9828 2812). All three monuments stand approximately 10.5 km from the nearest coastline and constitute one of only two areas of south-

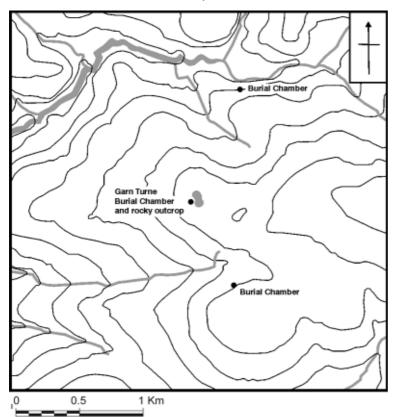


Figure 2. Topographic map showing the location of the three chambered monuments (Drawn by Abby George).

west Wales that possess monuments so far inland. The Garn Turne monument, standing at around 139 m AOD comprises a chamber constructed of a series of now partially collapsed and damaged uprights that support an enormous capstone (SM 97931 27258). The site, located on the western side of an intermediate slope has a similar topographic aspect to the other two monuments. It is also worth noting that all three monuments appear to be separated by a series of upland streams that may represent tribal boundaries (Fig. 2).

Immediately west of the chamber is a large forecourt area. The capstone (5 m \times 4.1 m), weighing more than 60 tonnes, opens out to the forecourt area which is unusually V-shaped, similar to that of Pentre Ifan (PEM 5) and the Irish Court Tombs of southern Ireland. This architectural trait, endorsed by Grimes as the 'Pentre Ifan type' refers to the forecourt area as an 'asymmetric funnel-shaped upright forecourt' (Grimes 1932: 92; 1948: 13). This forecourt and

entrance area, constructed of at least six uprights, faces a large rock outcrop. On the northern side of the forecourt are three uprights that appear to form a continuous arc (Fig. 3), while on the southern side, three further uprights form an intermittent line of stones. Both sets of uprights appear to separate the forecourt space from the surrounding landscape, and thus would have funnelled people from the surrounding landscape to the inner forecourt area. Although

the capstone is the largest stone within the immediate area, other large stones, one or two lying prostate, are located to the south and east.

The two lines of forecourt uprights are not symmetrical and it is more than probable that an inward sweeping arc of stones was present to the south. Two fallen uprights located within the southern section of the forecourt area may have once been erect and formed an inner façade alignment.

Barker (1992: 29) does not entirely agree that this monument is a portal tomb, rather, that it may be an *earth-fast* type. However, many of the *earth-fast* monuments within this region are located and constructed very differently (Figs 4 and 5). Furthermore, these monuments are small and unimposing. Others have suggested that the southern part of the monument, which incorporates the chamber and capstone, may have been part of a long cairn. There is certainly evidence for this at the western end of the monument, to the rear of the capstone.

Grimes (1932: 92) has claimed that a *peristalith* (or kerbing) existed around the monument. However, the line of this kerbing is difficult to define. The immediate area around the chamber is surrounded both by in situ and

loose angular and sub-angular stone, suggesting the remnants of a cairn. It may be that the kerbing delineated

the edge of the mound as well as holding in the rubble cairn. The presence of rock art on top of the capstone suggests that at least the upper section of the capstone was exposed. A similar hypothesis has been promoted for nearby Pentre Ifan (Parker Pearson 1991).

The distribution of rock art and the immediate landscape

Former Inspector of Monuments for Wales, W. F. Grimes, surveyed this monument in 1932 and since then there has been little interest in the area beyond the monument. However, it is more than probable that further sites exist. Rees, on an inspection of the site in 1981 for CADW, noted a possible long cairn amongst the natural rock outcropping.

Sited close to substantial rock outcropping, the tomb appears to merge into its immediate surroundings (Fig. 6). Indeed, it is so well hidden within the landscape that, despite the monument's size, it is difficult to locate. Apart from the nearby rock outcropping, the surrounding landscape is gently undulating. To the north of the monument, the

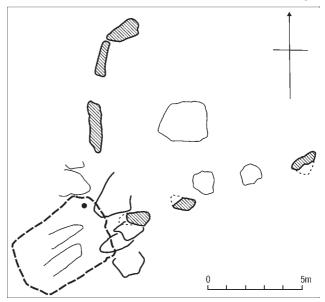


Figure 3. Plan of the site and the location of the cupand-ring petroglyph (Drawn by Abby George).



Figure 4. The Garn Turne monument looking north-west (Photograph: G. H. Nash).



Figure 5. The chamber and façade area looking SE. (Photograph: G. H. Nash).



Figure 6. View of the rock outcropping with natural 'cupule' and the Garn Turne monument looking west (Photograph: G. H. Nash).

southern extent of Mynydd Preseli is in full view. It is probable that due to the shallow soils within the immediate area the natural cairn field has been left undisturbed and used as rough pasture, and thus survived the ravages of recent agricultural regimes. However, in the neighbouring fields a cairn has been cleared and used to reinforce turf boundaries.

Nash (2006) has noted that the rock outcropping may have provided construction material for the tomb itself. The capstone may have originated from this rock outcropping or was chosen and raised in situ. Within the natural cairn field that surrounds the monument, especially towards the south-west and the north-west, is further possible evidence of a ritualised landscape with presence of several standing stones. Beyond this is the rock outcropping. This area has been indelibly stamped with up to six cupules of varying size (SM 97952 27321) and to the east are a further three cupules (SM 97985 27252). Either side of this rock outcropping, to the south-west, are several marshy areas. It is also possible that the cup-and-ring along with the cupules form an extensive multi-phased landscape.

Approximately 50 m to the WSW of the monument and obscured by natural cairn field debris is a recumbent standing stone measuring c. 2.1 m, and is possibly contemporary with the Garn Turne monument (SM 97904 27307). The socket and packing material are clearly visible. A second standing stone is located to the north-west (SM 97935 27298). Both Garn Turne and the standing stones are sited on a small plateau that runs north to south and also encapsulates the rock outcropping. The monument, standing stones, rock outcropping and the marsh areas are all inter-visible; and I see this collection of monuments as establishing a 'ritual catchment area', representing a complex Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age landscape, similar to other recognised monument catchment areas.

Cup-and-ring or something else?

The surrounding geology, including the capstone, is formed from (intrusive) igneous hydroclastite pillow larvas, volcanically created under water, referred to as vesicular soda-rhyolites (Neville George 1970: 28) dating to around 430 million years ago. The upper surface of the capstone can be described as undulating and weathered with very little surface lamination. In places are exfoliated clasts and depressions left from their exfoliation. However, these are not as prominent as the depression that forms the cupule that belongs to the cup-and-ring.



Figure 7. Fossil ammonite located within the entrance façade of Stoney Littleton (Photo: John Swann).

Site	Grid ref.	Art	Location	References
Arthur's Stone, Herefordshire	SO 318 431	Cupules	Portal stone	Children and Nash 1994; Nash 2003, 2006; Hemp 1935
Bachwen, Caenarvonshire	SH 407 495	Cupules	Capstone	Daniel 1950; Hemp 1926; Lynch 1969
Barclodiad y Gawres, Anglesey	SH 329 707	Spirals, zigzags, lines, lozenges, cupules	Chamber	Powell and Daniel 1956; Lynch 1969; Shee-Twohig 1981
Bryn Celli Ddu, Anglesey	SH 508 702	Serpentine, spiral, cupules	Chamber, rock outcropping	Daniel 1950; Hemp 1930; Lynch 1969; Shee-Twohig 1981
Calderstones, Liverpool	SJ 405 875	Concentric circles, cupules, footprints, lines/grooves, spirals,	Chamber uprights (destroyedpassage grave)	Daniel 1950; Forde-Johnson 1956; Nash 2006; Shee-Twohig 1981
Carreg Coetan Arthur, Pembrokeshire	SN 061 359	Cupules?	Capstone	Rees 1981; Children and Nash 1997; Nash 2006
Cerrig y Gof, Pembrokeshire	SN 037 389	Cupules	Capstones, rock outcropping	Nash 2006; Nash et. al 2006
Cromlech Farm, Anglesey	SH 360 920	Cupules, horse-shoe image	Monument architecture and rock outcropping	Stanford in prep.
Cist Cerrig, Caenarvonshire	SH 543 384	Cupules	Rock outcropping	Lynch 1969
Cae Dyni, Caenarvonshire	SH 511 382	Cupules	Located on two uprights	Nash, Swann and Waite in prep.
Dyffryn Ardudwy, Merioneth	SH 588 229	Cupules	North portal of the western chamber	Powell 1973; Sharkey 2004
Garn Turne, Pembrokeshire	SM 979 272	Cup-and-ring, cupules	Capstone, rock outcropping	Nash (this paper)
Garn Wen Cemetery, Pembrokeshire	SM 948 390	Cupules	Rock outcropping	Nash et al. in prep.
Llannerch,	SH 559 379	Cupules	Remains of chambered tomb?	Sharkey 2004
Morfa Bychan, Carmarthenshire	SN 221 075	Cupules	Rock outcropping	Sharkey 2004
Pentre Ifan, Pembrokeshire	SN 099 370	Cupule, spiral?	Portal stone	Lynch 1972
Treflys, Caenarvonshire	SH 543 384	Cupules	Rock outcropping	Barker 1992; Hemp 1938
Trellyffaint, Pembrokeshire	SN 082 425	Cupules	Capstone	Barker 1992; Children and Nash 1997
Ty Illtud, Breconshire	SO 098 263	Geometric forms, semi-representative figures (medieval)	Chamber uprights	Children and Nash 2001; RCHAMW 1998
Ty Newydd, Anglesey	SH 617 112	Cupules	Capstone	Sharkey 2004

Table 1. List of chambered monuments with rock art in Wales and the borders.

Recent unpublished research by Kate Sharpe has questioned the authenticity of some cupules, suggesting that many may be simply natural depressions (Sharpe pers. comm.). I am therefore mindful of the geology of the immediate area. But I will argue that enhanced natural cupules including the Garn Turne cup-and-ring are as important as those fully gouged by human agencies. Natural or otherwise, these visual symbols are within context. On an entrance upright at the Cotswold-Severn burial monument of Stoney Littleton, south-west England, for example the builders have carefully chosen a limestone block that has a large fossil ammonite embedded into the outer face (Fig. 7). This naturally created design clearly forms an archaeological context with the burial monument. Likewise, part of the Garn Turne cup-and-ring may be natural and

the stone may have been selected for this reason. Dispersed across the upper surface of the capstone is evidence of natural circular depressions formed from the exfoliation of clasts.

The partly gouged ring measures approximately 14 cm in diameter whilst the cupule is 5 cm in diameter. Due to the hard and unstable geology of the rock, the ring has been partly gouged. A small, unclosed area of ring extends over a hard intrusive vein. Visual inspection and the removal of lichen from this area does, however, show some working. The cupule may have initially formed from a natural spherical depression, the result of a loosened clast, that was later modified by the artist. Despite the natural elements of the art and although covered with lichen, the cup-and-ring is clearly defined (Fig. 8). A further cupule is located on



Figure 8. The Garn Turne cup-and-ring petroglyph.

the northern side of the capstone that is slightly smaller and less defined and again may be the natural result of a weathered-out clast. It is probable that other modified natural depressions exist on this monument and further assessment is therefore required. As far as I am aware the cup-and-ring from Garn Turne is the first of its type to be found in South Wales and therefore extends the generic family of cup-and-rings to this part of the British Isles.

Discussion

The chambered burial monument of Garn Turne is one of seven monuments in south-west Wales known to have rock art (Table 1). Other monuments include Trellyffant, Nevern (SN 0822 4252), the capstone of Trefael (SN 1030 4030) and a possible cup-and-ring on the portal stone at Pentre Ifan (SN 0993 3707). Other sites may reveal further carved art, either on the monument or on rock outcropping nearby. It is now increasingly evident that rock art has an association with death, burial and the wider setting of possibly ritual activities. Of the forty-five Welsh sites with rock art recognised by Darvill and Wainwright (2003) and Sharkey (2004), over 75 % are either on standing stones, burial monuments or present on exposed rock outcropping.

The recent cup-and-ring discovery at Garn Turne further reinforces the notion that as yet, archaeologists have not looked hard enough at these monuments, nor are they acknowledging the wider landscape in which they are located. The association between landscape, and in this case, exposed rock outcropping, art and death possibly represents a Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age burial phenomenon. The precise dating of cup-and-rings is near impossible to substantiate. However, I beg the question, were they carved before or during construction, during use or when the monument was abandoned? Certainly, cup-and-rings are a common occurrence on exposed rock outcropping in the core art areas of Argyll, Galloway, Northumberland and West Yorkshire (Beckensall 1999). This design, numbering many thousands, appears to date from the Bronze Age. Recently, though, an excavation at the cup-and-ring marked rock outcrop at Hunterheugh Crag, Northumberland, revealed a chronology that indicated multi-phased activity, including burial. Stratigraphically, the rock art appeared to predate the Early Bronze Age (Waddington et al. 2005).

Based on research in this part of Wales by Darvill and Wainwright (2003) and the synthesis by Sharkey (2004), complex rock art in Wales from this period is limited to seven sites, the most famous being the passage graves of Barclodiad y Gawres and Bryn Celli Ddu, both in Anglesey. The art is located within the chambers of each. However, at Bryn Celli Ddu, up to twenty-eight cupules have now been found on rock outcropping, approximately 220 m to the north-west (Nash et al. in prep.). Associated with both the monument and the cupules/rock outcropping is a standing stone that is located some 240 m to the west within a gently undulating landscape: all three monuments are intervisible; and, given the probable Late Neolithic date of Bryn Celli Ddu, all may be contemporary. The standing stone measuring around 1.1 m, along with the rock outcropping and a stream to the east of the passage graves appear to delineate a 'ritual catchment area', similar to that at Garn Turne. The Historic Environment Record (HER) shows that a significant number of Neolithic artefacts have been found within this area. As there is little evidence for finds outside this area, this hints that the focus for ritual/symbolic activity was confined to this delineated area. Likewise, at Garn Turne the landscape appears to be organised with the chambered monument as the focus for ritual/burial activity. The same pattern landscape and catchment as is repeated at Garn Wen (Pembrokeshire).

Cup-and-rings are present throughout most of Atlantic Europe and may represent a universal meaning. However, it is not clear what these images represent. Furthermore, it is difficult to suggest their stratigraphic relationship with their host monument. It is clear, however, that cupules, 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 cupules and associated petroglyphs could predate the Bronze Age. A similar view is held by Bradley (1997: 57–65). Burgess has suggested that significant stones with

cupules may have been a focus for reuse (1989–90), either incorporated into monuments or later, taken away and reerected as standing stones. A case in question is the reuse of an ornately carved standing stone that was broken into three sections and was incorporated into two passage graves — Table de Marchands and Gavr'inis — both located on the Gulf of Morbihan, Brittany. Whatever their date, cupand-rings can be considered a means of making a statement, either concerning a monument or a part of the landscape. This statement can be either made by an individual, representing his or her symbolic needs, or collectively, by a group expressing their continuous support for an ancestral monument.

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