

## Gro Hill cairns and Crugiau Bach stone circle



### Walk Information:

**Maps:** OS Explorer 200

**Distance:** 5 miles / 8.3 kilometres

**Duration:** Allow at least 5 hours for the circular walk

**Difficulty:** medium. Sections have no marked path. A map and compass are essential and a GPS would be useful. NB this walk should only be undertaken in good visibility.

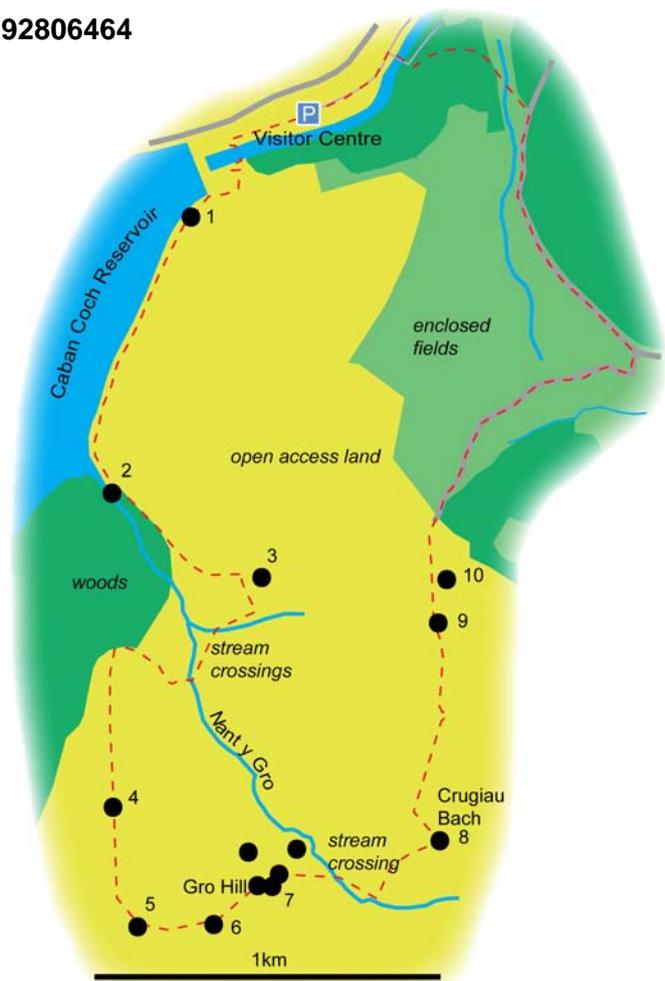
**Start and finish:** Elan Visitor Centre **SN 92806464**

### Walk summary

The walk takes advantage of public footpaths, waymarked paths and open access land, visiting an important group of prehistoric burial cairns and a stone circle, all set within the upland landscape surrounding the Elan reservoirs.

From the Elan Visitor Centre the walk follows the east side of the Caban Coch Reservoir before rising onto the open moorland. The route follows a broad ridge, descending slightly, before climbing to the summit of Gro Hill with its collection of Bronze Age burial cairns. From Gro Hill there is a small stream crossing before reaching the stone circle at Crugiau Bach.

The walk returns to the Visitor Centre via a track, sections of tarmac road and a woodland path.



## Introduction

The upland area which is generally known as the Elan Valley is dominated by the series of reservoirs built by the Birmingham Corporation between 1893 and 1904, with the later addition of the Claerwen Dam in 1948-52.

There is evidence to suggest that the area was already well populated and undergoing clearance during the later Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods, from perhaps around 3000 BC. The characteristic burial and ritual monuments of the prehistoric period are the stone burial cairns, standing stones, stone alignments and stone circles

which crown many of the peaks and ridges of the Elenydd plateau, though are often absent from some of the less accessible central parts of the moor.

The remote and inaccessible upland areas which surround the reservoirs are liberally scattered with spectacular Bronze Age burial cairns and standing stones. Roman activity is reflected by the presence of a Roman marching camp at Esgair Perfedd. In the medieval period, the area was part of the extensive Cwmteuddwr grange belonging to the Cistercian Abbey at Strata Florida, Ceredigion. There are also post-medieval farmsteads, and a considerable number of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century mining sites and industrial monuments.

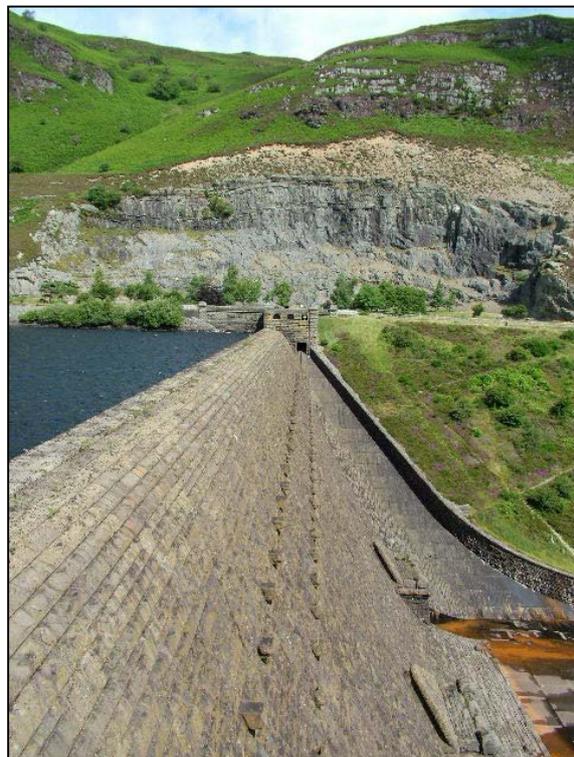
## The Walk

The start and end of the walk follow a waymarked route. From the car park walk towards the visitor centre and follow the track on the right, through the gate, past the turbine house, turning immediately left, behind the building and across the bridge.

At the end of the bridge turn right, walk around the building and ascend the steps, still following the waymarked path. At the top go through the gate and turn right along an old railway track to the top of the **Caban Coch Dam**. Note the **quarry (1)** on the left which provided stone for the dam.



Caban Coch Reservoir



The Caban Coch Dam

Follow the path alongside the reservoir, up some steps and over two stiles. At SN 9218563548 follow the waymarked path left, uphill, stopping at a notice board explaining the history of the **Argae Nant y Gro dam (2)**. In 1942 this small dam was used as a test site for the Dambusters raid on the Ruhr dams in Germany. The path continues steeply alongside a plantation, leading to the open moorland with views back over Caban Coch Reservoir.

Turn right by the marker post at SN 9260163225, following the path alongside an area of conifers within which are the ruins of **Ty'n-y-Pant (3)** (house in the hollow). Cross two fords with stepping stones and continue through a gate alongside forestry. 70 metres beyond the gate at SN 9221962989 turn left ascending a grassy slope (no path) and continue along the crest of the ridge with spectacular views NNE to Cnwch, WSW to Drygarn Fawr and SE to two prominent burial cairns on the skyline, atop the summit of Y Gamriw.

Just before reaching a fence there is a **Bronze Age burial cairn (4)** on the left, which is around 10.5 metres in diameter. The centre of the cairn and has been removed to form a shelter. From the corner of the fence, go through the gate and continue with the fence on the right. When the fence turns right continue ahead following a tumbled stone wall as far as a small quarry at SN 9222162220. Turn SE and descend to a small **Bronze Age burial cairn (5)** partly hidden in the bracken on the far side of the saddle at SN 9228962144. Take a slight sheep path on the right of the cairn which directly ascends the slope heading ESE and then E to the summit of **Gro Hill (6)**, which is marked by a pile of stones on top of the low remains of another **burial cairn** (SN 9254262186).



Burial cairn NW of Gro Hill

There are five small **burial cairns (7)** on the NE slope of Gro Hill, the most obvious of which lies 160 metres NE of the summit, at SN 9263162277. A further 70m to the ENE from here lies a cairn with a prominent stone-lined **cist** or grave at SN 9269062304. The remaining three are to be found at SN 92746238, SN 92606237, and SN 92606237, often surrounded by reeds.



Stone-lined burial cist

Descend E towards the stream, crossing at SN 9284262298, in a slightly boggy area. Follow the base of the slope to the right, and then ascend, following the edge of the bracken onto a small grassy summit at SN 9305162351.

There are several **small cairns** in the reeds to the N, indicative of clearance for ancient agriculture, and there are also the low earthworks of a possible prehistoric hut. Follow the edge of the plateau ENE for around 100 metres to the **Bronze Age stone circle (8)** at SN 9315262407. This comprises 21 visible stones, of which only seven are still upright, one is leaning significantly, and the remainder are recumbent. It is possible that the circle may originally have had at least 40 small upright stones. In the centre of the circle there is a large recumbent slab.



Crugiau Bach Stone Circle

From the circle head NW to a concrete boundary post on top of the low ridge at SN 9307462491, then head NNE, descending into a valley with rocky outcrops on the far side. There is an obvious grassy track leading up to the right from SN 9315462772. Follow the track up and sharply left, then right. The track is indistinct in places. There are two further **Bronze Age burial cairns (9-10)** lying to the right of the track at SN 93146307 and SN 93186321. Descend to rejoin the waymarked path, turning right, through a gate and down a tarmac track to its junction with the road. Walk left along the lane and turn left at SN 9340964641 on a signed path. Cross the stream, ignore the descending path to the village and continue ahead, contouring the slope and descending alongside the fence, ignoring the permissive path on the left. On joining the road, cross the bridge and return to the carpark.



# Gro Hill cairns and Crugiau Bach stone circle

**Maps** Ordnance Survey Explorer 200

**Distance** 5 miles / 8.3 kilometres

**Duration** Allow at least 5 hours for the circular walk

**Difficulty** Medium. Sections have no marked path. A map and compass are essential and a GPS would be useful. NB this walk should only be undertaken in good visibility.

**Start/finish** Elan Visitor Centre SN 92806464

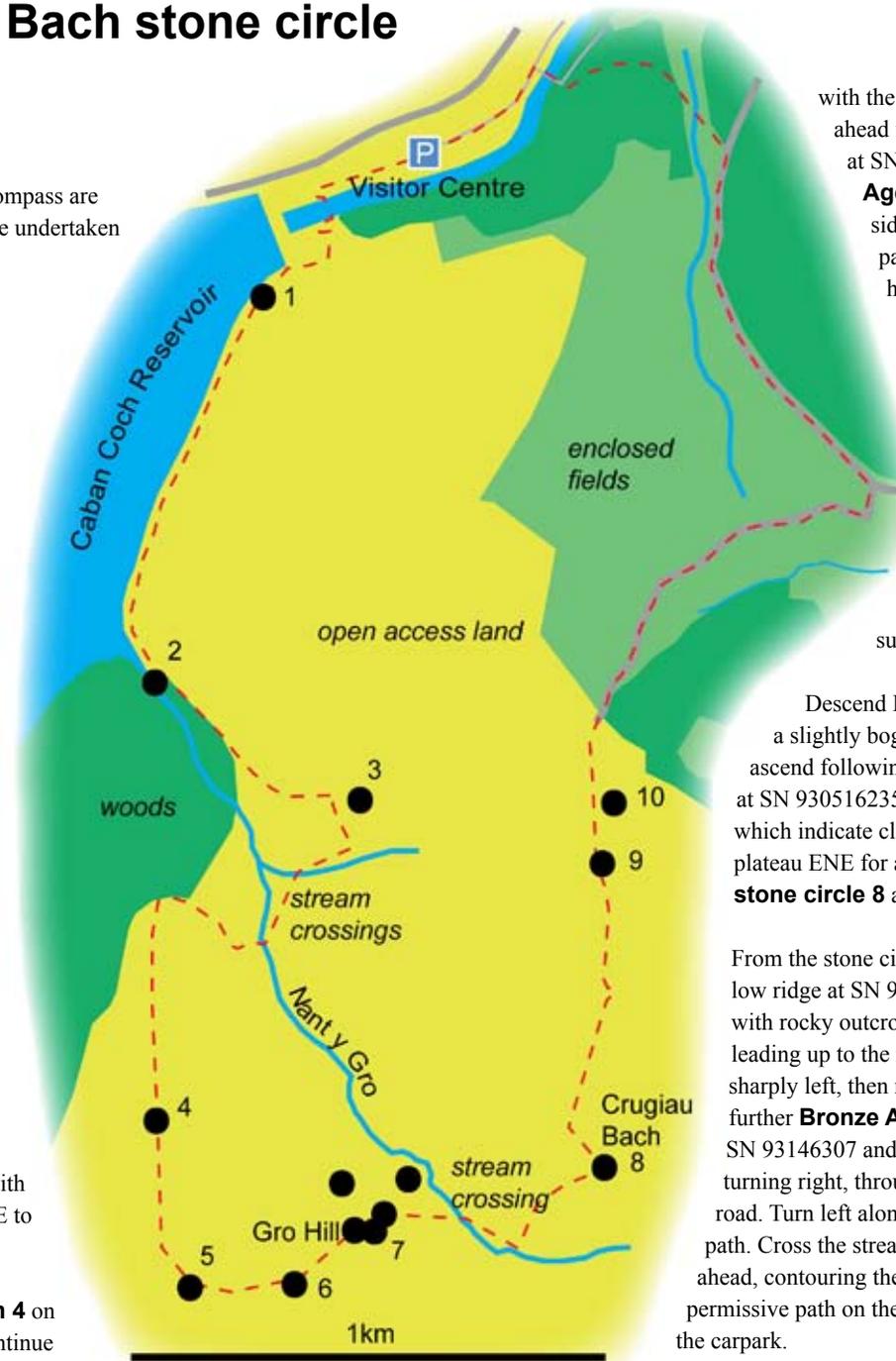
The start and end of the walk follow a waymarked route. From the car park walk towards the visitor centre and follow track on the right, through the gate, past the turbine house, turning immediately left, behind the building and across the bridge.

At the end of the bridge turn right, walk around the building and ascend steps following the waymarked path. At the top go through the gate and turn right along an old railway track to the top of the Caban Coch Dam. Note the **stone quarry 1** on the left, which provided stone for the dam.

Follow the path alongside the reservoir, up steps and over two stiles. At SN 9218563548 follow the waymarked path left, uphill, stopping at a notice board explaining the history of the **Argae Nant y Gro dam 2** and its significance in the Dambusters story. The path continues steeply alongside a plantation, leading to open moorland with views back over Caban Coch Reservoir.

Turn right by marker post at SN 9260163225, following path alongside an area of conifers within which are the ruins of **Ty'n-y-Pant 3** ('house in the hollow'). Cross two fords with stepping stones and continue through a gate alongside forestry. 70m beyond the gate at SN 9221962989 turn left ascending a grassy slope (no path) and continue along the crest of the ridge with spectacular views NNE to Cnwch, WSW to Drygam Fawr and SE to two prominent cairns on the skyline.

Just before reaching a fence there is a **Bronze Age burial cairn 4** on the left. From the corner of the fence, go through the gate and continue



with the fence on the right. When the fence turns right continue ahead following a tumbled stone wall as far as a small quarry at SN 9222162220. Turn SE and descend to a small **Bronze Age burial cairn 5** partly hidden in the bracken on the far side of the saddle at SN 9228962144. Take a slight sheep path on the right of the cairn which ascends the slope heading ESE and then E to the summit of **Gro Hill 6**, which is marked by a pile of stones on top of the low remains of another **burial cairn** (SN 9254262186).

There are five small **Bronze Age burial cairns 7** on the NE slope, the most obvious of which is 160 metres NE of the summit at SN 9263162277. 70 metres to the ENE of this is a further cairn with a prominent **stone-lined cist or grave** at SN 9269062304. The remaining three are to be found at SN 92746238, SN 92606237, and SN 92606237, surrounded by reeds.

Descend E towards the stream, crossing at SN 9284262298, in a slightly boggy area. Follow the base of the slope to the right, then ascend following the edge of the bracken onto a small grassy summit at SN 9305162351. There are several **small cairns** in the reeds to the N which indicate clearance for ancient agriculture. Follow the edge of the plateau ENE for around 100 metres to the **Crugiau Bach Bronze Age stone circle 8** at SN 9315262407.

From the stone circle head NW to a concrete boundary post on top of the low ridge at SN 9307462491, then head NNE, descending into a valley with rocky outcrops on the far side. There is an obvious grassy track leading up to the right from SN 9315462772. Follow the track up and sharply left, then right. The track is indistinct in places. There are two further **Bronze Age burial cairns 9–10** on the right of the track at SN 93146307 and SN 93186321. Descend to rejoin the waymarked path, turning right, through a gate and down a tarmac track to junction with the road. Turn left along the road and then left at SN 9340964641 on a signed path. Cross the stream, ignore descending path to Elan Village and continue ahead, contouring the slope and descending alongside the fence, ignoring the permissive path on the left. On joining the road, cross the bridge and return to the carpark.