



Location: Bryn Cader Fanner (SH 647 354) lies to the east of the small hamlet of Talsarnau in the Arudwy area of Gwynedd in NW Wales.

Main period: Bronze Age.

Access & ownership: The area is reached after a 4 km walk via a Public Right of Way footpath from the end of the minor road above Eisingrug at SH6290034247, or from a footpath up the hillside from the minor road between Talsarnau and LlynTecwyn. The terrain may be boggy. Stout boots, a good map, and a GPS unit are strongly recommended.



Fig. 1. Bryn Cader Fanner. By Talsarnau Times (own work) CC BY-SA 3.0

Bryn Cader Fanner ring cairn lies on an isolated, rocky prominence at the end of an ancient trackway from the sea to the mountains that is lined by standing stones, ring cairns, round cairns, and hut circles. The monument is carefully placed in its dramatic setting to have maximum impact on travellers approaching from the south who are met by a striking silhouette (Fig. 2). Eighteen thin, jagged slate pillars, many with prominent quartz veins, jut outwards like a crown of thorns from a low cairn some 8.7 m in diameter. Originally there may have been around 30 pillars; those surviving are nearly all in the western arc. There are also traces of small set stones forming a kerb around the extreme edge of the mound. Aubrey Burl described the monument as 'one of the wonders of prehistoric Wales' (Burl 1976). A hole at the centre of the cairn was dug by treasure seekers in the 19th century; this may have been the site of a grave or 'kistvaen' described by the 17th century naturalist and botanist Edward Llwyd. More recent damage was caused by the army during the second world war when the cairn was used for target practice! A final episode of 'damage' occurred when a stone was mysteriously erected in the centre in c. 2013. The siting of the cairn, to be visible from the south (Fig. 2), suggests that the individual for whom it was built lived somewhere in that direction, and was carried up the trackway to his last resting place.



Fig. 2. 'Crown of thorns': Bryn Cader Fanner from the south. Image by Rudi Winter CC BY-SA 2.0

The area around Bryn Cader Faner is rich in prehistoric remains (Fig. 3), several associated with the ancient trackway that runs to the coast. Around 275 m SW of Bryn Cader Faner, at SH6454 3517, is a small, enclosed settlement. It measures about 38 m across and has two hut circles, each 4.5 m in diameter, set in opposite corners of a courtyard. The walls have been heavily robbed to build the sheepfold that now overlies the site. Also SW of Bryn Cader Faner lies **Llyn Eiddew** (SH64603498). Only a few low stones remain of this ring cairn circle. The remnants of three small cairns lie within the circle and a further larger cairn can be found around 50 m to the north. A few hundred metres further south along the track is **Llyn Eiddew Bach III** (SH642346). Seven stones now form this ring cairn, one of which is fallen. Burl suggests there may once have been 13 or 14 stones.

Fig. 3. Map showing main prehistoric remains, trackways, and suggested parking places (P). Solid black lines are roads suitable for vehicles

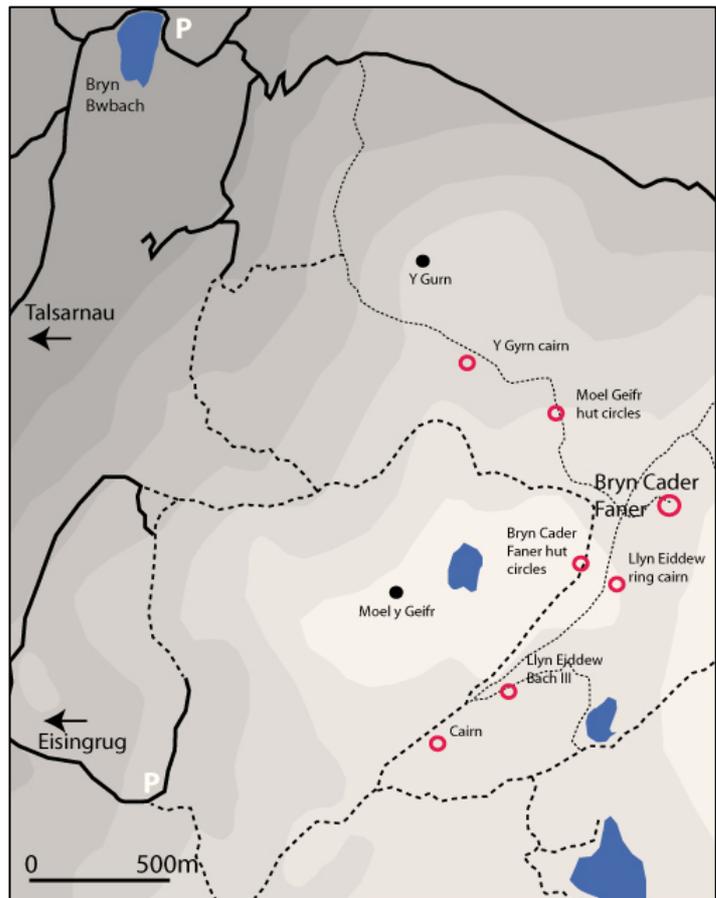


Fig. 4. Cairn to east of footpath, south of Llyn Eiddew Bach III.
By Dewi [CC BY-SA 2.0]

On the path descending north west from Bryn Cader Faner are the hut circles of **Moel Geifr** (SH644356) and a group of cairns at (SH641358) below **Y Gyrn**. The most westerly is 33 m in circumference. A ring of stones extends for around 2 m from the central mounds. As at Bryn Cader Faner, they are set at a 45° angle, pointing radially outwards. A little further up the stream stands a second cairn, Y Gyrn (ii) with two concentric rings; a large collapsed central cist is clearly visible. A slab lying nearby probably once stood upright. A third cairn lies 30 m to the NE on the bank of the stream.

References and further information

- Bowen, E.G. & Gresham, C.A. 1967. *History of Merioneth, I*. Dolgellau: Merioneth Historical & Record Society
- Burl, A. 1976. *The stone circles of the British Isles*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
- Lynch, F. 1979. Ring cairns in Britain and Ireland: Their design and purpose (the Oliver Davies Lecture for 1979). *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Third Series 42, 1–19
- Snowdonia Heritage website: <http://www.snowdoniaheritage.info/en/location/389/bryn-cader-faner/>

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