

1880 Letter from Owen Jones

February 8th 2004

This I believe an interesting hand written article which sadly on my copy has some badly faded areas it has been re-written here and I hope may be of interest to the reader, thanks to Mori and John Roberts and Tom Parry for helping fill in the gaps, and Juliet Hammond for the typing..... Edric Roberts.

From a hand written letter by
Owen Jones, Bryn Eisteddfod, Llandudno 1880.

Gloddaeth and its surroundings,

"It is evident that the country surrounding the locality on which the modern town of Llandudno now stands was inhabited at a very early period ; for we trace several vestiges of the Druidical religion on the Great Orme's Head. A few paces westward of Dolfechan we find some divination stones, though the place is generally called at present "Hwylfa Ceirw " because the hunters used to drive the stags between those rows of stones in order to catch and spear them, when the whole mountain was a deer park; but the more ancient name "Cerrig Coch" ie Divination stones still cling to them. Another Druidical vestige is the "Gorsedd" i.e. the mound of Judicature above the Wyddfid Farm and within sight of the Rocking Stone on "Pen-Dinas" where cases of uncertainty or doubt in jurisprudence were decided.

This ancient fort generally called "Pen Dinas" which from early times was named "Creuddyn" i.e. "The bloody fort", a name still clinging to the township must have been formed at a very early period perhaps when Belinus son of Molmutius formed public roads, and erected many strongholds not far from them; which must have been from four to five centuries previous to the Christian era. There are several vestiges leading us to conclude that the Copper Mines on the Great Orme's Head were worked to some extent at an early period; at least some time prior to the Roman Period and as the discovery of very rude implements in the ancient workings such as Stone Hammers and Bone Chisels and we are further led to conclude that these ancient miners were Phonecians as we find some foot marks of their religion left unto this day in the locality.

Near the old mine works, there is a rude stone hut standing and called in the language of the Country. "Lletty y Filiast"; that is, "The Lodge of the Greyhound Bitch". In the Ancient Mythology of the Britons, the greyhound bitch represented the moon, Phoenician Goddess of plenty and both from the name and formation I am persuaded it was a hermits's cell, where a devotee of the worship of the moon used to watch the first appearance of the new moon prostrating himself before it.

Some eight or ten years ago a labourer while digging in a garden within a few yards of the above cell, found a copper medal, on one side of which was the image of Apollo, and on the other figures of the sun, the moon and three stars, and several eminent numismatics who had opportunity of seeing it have pronounced it to be a very old medallion connected with the Phonecian mode of worship, and representing the, "Host of Heaven"

There is a good spring of water near Bodafon called "Ffynnon Sadwrn", Saturn's Well, and between Glan Conwy and Hendre Waelod there is a large Cromlech called "Allor Moloch" that is the Altar of Moloch, again on the slope of the Caernarvonshire mountains two or three miles beyond Caerhun the old Roman inscription and Coed Sadwrn or Saturn's Grove the above must have been imported from the east at a very early period and most probably by the Phoenicians who traded here for metals about 500 years before the Christian era.

About 55 A.D

the Roman Governor Ostorius Scapulae led an army from Deva (Chester) along the ancient British road in order to subjugate the Ordovices who inhabited North Wales. On his march he took possession of all the British forts in his way so that the natives could have no advantage to harass him in the rear. He formed his camp near the place where the present church of Caerhun stands, and that station was called Conovium. He marched a faction of his army to the stronghold near to the place known as Llandrillo yn Rhos in doing which it seems that a Roman Officer of some eminence called Sempronius fell, which event is commemorated by the name of the dingle at the base of the said hill, which is still called by the natives, "Nant Semper", i.e. "Sempronius's Dingle". Having reduced that Fort the Romans marched in the direction of the Little Orme's Head, in order to attack the strong Fort that now stands above the town of Llandudno; and it seems the Britons posted a body of Archers on a small hill called, "Bryn y Bwau", or "The Archers'Hill" to dispute this passage and from the names of the places in the neighbourhood such as, "Pant yr Ellyll", The Hollow of the Hobgoblin, and "Yr Adwy Rudd" i.e. "The Bloody Pass" we conclude that a very obstinate struggle took place there, and a place called Tyddyn Holland there is a stone commemorating the fall of a Roman Officer. Then the Romans

invested a small fort called, "Y Castell" above Bodafon, after taking which it seems they marched forward in the direction of the Great Orme's Head, and two Roman knights were sent to demand capitulation of its Garrison, the chieftain of which sent two knights to meet them, and to discuss the terms; and it seems that the four knights met on the plot of ground now surrounded by Mostyn Street, North Parade and Church Walks, the said plot being called previous to the building of the town, "Clwt y Pedwar Marchog" i.e. "The Field of the Four Knights". However after a desperate struggle, which is indicated by the name "Creuddyn", that is, "The Bloody Fort" the old fort was taken, and remained in the possession of the Romans for some centuries. The huts of the garrison, the residence of the Chieftain, and other vestiges can be traced yet within the ramparts.

After the Romans left this country, having denuded North Wales of all its able bodied men, the country fell an easy prey to some hordes of adventurers from Ireland, who maintained possession of Anglesey and Caernarvonshire for about 120 years. In the year A.D.443 Caswallon surnamed, "Llaw Hir", that is the Long Handed, succeeded his father, Einion Yrth, in the government of those parts of North Wales called afterwards Powys, comprehending the counties known now as Montgomery, Flintshire, and Merioneth, and had his seat of Government at Castell Caer Einion, in Montgomeryshire. He conceived the idea of wresting the remaining parts of Eneudocia from the Gwyddelians and having fought several battles with them he at last slew their leader, "Serigi the Gwyddelian" with his own hand, in a hardly contested field, at the place where Holyhead stands now; and a chapel was erected on the spot, a portion of which stands to this day. After clearing the Gwyddelians from the Island Caswallon erected a mansion for himself on a hill on the northern part of the Island, the remains of which is called "Llys Caswallon" and the parish Church at the base of the said hill is named after his chaplain, "Llan Eilian" and the point of the Island there is called, "Elianus". Soon after that, Caswallon erected another mansion in the Creuddyn which was called "Bod Caswallon", that is, the abode of Caswallon, near where Bodysgallen now stands. There was a road crossing the Island of Anglesey, from the "Llys Caswallon" above mentioned, to the Bod Caswallon here, vestiges of which road can be traced from Pen y Sarn near Castell Maelgwyn, to Din Sylwy, the Fort of the Sun, in Anglesey, or in other words, from the neighbourhood of Amlwch on the northern side of the island to Penmon on the eastern side; and at that time the Lavan Sands was a fruitful vale, across which the said road led to this district.

It is said that Caswallon lived to a good old age and governed the people with great success for 74 years; and on his death in A.D. 517 he was succeeded by his son Prince Maelgwyn, who had his private residence at Bryn Euryn, or Dinarth near Llandrillo yn Rhos, and another called Castell Maelgwyn near his father's residence on Anglesey. Maelgwyn was a powerful , and in A.D. 546, he was elected Sovereign of all the Britons, in consequence of which he erected a strong castle on the Deganwy Hills, for his Royal Residence and he also had Banqueting house about half way between his Royal residence at Castell y Vaerdref and his private residence at Dinarth; and from that circumstance is the name Gloddaeth derived. There was a small castle of timber probably, on a hill called after him Bryn Maelgwyn, overlooking Gloddaeth, Bod Caswallon, and Vaerdre Castle, where a guard used to be posted; and another watching place was Bryn Gosol. While Maelgwyn kept his court at Vaerdre Castle, the plain between that and the Great Orme's Head was a Race Course, and Princes contested for the prizes. On one occasion, Elphin son of Gwyddno Granhir, King of Cantre'r Gwaelod, whose patrimony had recently been overwhelmed by the sea, was the guest of Maelgwyn at Vaerdre Castle; and his Bard Taliesin there with him. It seems that Elphin had somehow displeased his patron Maelgwyn who imprisoned him in the keep of the Castle; but his friend the Bard Taliesin, composed a poetic address to Maelgwyn, by which he succeeded in procuring the release of his patron Prince Elphin: that poem is preserved still; and among other poems of his that are preserved is a Poetical Dialogue between Taliesin and Ugnach who it seems was Chieftain of a Fort, called Caerllion. Which was situated on Mynydd y Dref, above Conway.

In some of our ancient documents we are informed that an Eisteddfod, or Congress of Bards was held at the above place under the presidency of Maelgwyn, who being bent on fun ordered the Bards and the Minstrels to run a race from Caerllion to Vaerdre Castle where they were to have another contest in singing and playing.

We have it on record that Maelgwyn erected the College of Bangor into a Bishopric, and amply

endowed it, and that he also founded the Priory of Penmon, and the College of Caergybi, or Holyhead, in Anglesey. He also erected the Castles of Caer Digoll, or Shrewsbury, Caer Collwyn or Harlech Castle; and also Caer Gyffin or Aber Conwy. He died in 560 A.D. in the adjoining church of Llanrhos where he had shut himself up to escape the Yellow Pestilence, which depopulated the Creuddyn; and he was buried in "Ynys seiriol", or Priestholme now known as Pufin Island.

Owen Jones,
Bryn Eisteddfod,
Llandudno. Sept. 1880.