ON

THE MEDIEVAL ANTIQUITIES OF ANGLESEY.

The antiquities of this remote and little-known district, may be commodiously arranged under three heads :—

(1.) The British or Cymric, before the introduction of Christianity.

(2.) The Cymric, posterior to the introduction of Christianity, and prior to the conquest of Wales by Edward I.

(3.) The antiquities posterior to the English conquest.

It is not, however, by any means easy to determine, first, at what period Christianity was actually introduced into Wales and Anglesey; and secondly, to pronounce what remains, usually classed as Cymric or Celtic, (such as Carneddau, Maen-hîr, Cromlechs, &c.), were erected before, or what after, the existence of the Christian religion in this district. It is highly probable that a large portion of the ancient military works, and many of the tumuli, cairns, &c., were constructed at a time later than the coming of the Saxons into Britain, and prior to the eighth or ninth century. In the absence therefore of written testimonials and other evidence, as to the date of such remains as we now find pretty numerously throughout the island, it is better to class all such remains under the head of "Cymric Antiquities;" this epithet being quite applicable to them at whatever period they first came into existence. The head of "Medieval Antiquities," will include all such edifices and ruins of edifices, &c., as are clearly posterior to the introduction of Christianity; and will also embrace the military buildings erected by Edward I., as well as the houses constructed down to the end of the sixteenth century.

It is only this latter head which is taken briefly into account in the present paper. The author of it is occupying himself in making an accurate survey, admeasurement, and delineation, of all the antiquities in the island; and has already terminated a large portion of the Medieval, with a small part of the Cymric division[a]. He hastens to give a brief sketch of

[a] He is also engaged in a similar survey of the antiquities of Caernarvonshire, and would be glad to hear of the other Welsh counties attracting the notice, and occupying the leisure, of some of his antiquarian friends.

the result of his observations as far as they have yet been carried.

The isle of Anglesey has always been a district of great simplicity and comparative poverty, notwithstanding that its soil is by no means unfruitful, and that its mineral riches are of high value. Still, not being the seat of any manufacturing population (at any period that we know of), and the attention of its inhabitants being exclusively directed to agricultural occupations, it has never seen the wealth of great feudal landlords spent in adorning its villages or towns,—and it has not been devastated by the hand of modern vandalism. Anglesey remains nearly what it was some hundreds of years ago; the manners of the people are very simple and primitive; its ecclesiastical buildings have never been *improved;* they have been allowed to decay more or less, but they have not been so much injured by this neglect as they would have been by positive interference in days of archæological darkness. On the one hand, therefore, while we are not to expect to find any buildings of importance or even of magnitude (with one exception—King Edward's castle at Beaumarais), so, on the other, we may expect to find the medieval remains less injured than in other parts of the country, a circumstance which, with one or two exceptions, (such as the friary of Llanvaes, destroyed soon after the Reformation, and an abbey near Aberffraw, also destroyed), is found universally to prevail. Much therefore may be learnt of village ecclesiastical architecture in Anglesey, but very little of what would adorn a town.

The total number of the parochial churches in the island is seventy-four, nearly all of very early date in their principal parts: rude in form and small in size: often badly constructed: many barely adequate to the accommodation of a slowly increasing population: nearly all of them untouched by modern hands. Every parish in Anglesey bears the name of its patron saint, or else of the holy man who first introduced Christianity, and built a place of worship in it: this is common indeed throughout Wales; but it is peculiarly so in Anglesey, and is of great value to whoever searches into the history of the district.

The common form of the Anglesey village church is cruciform, always built with strict attention to the orientation of the edifice: small in size, being commonly from thirty to sixty feet in extreme length: low in height, the gable seldom

being more than twenty feet from the ground: the walls always thick, never under three feet: the original windows very few in number, and those being only circular-headed loopholes, without any ornament whatever: every thing being exceedingly plain, ornamentation of any kind being evidently beyond the means of the simple people. A bell-gable almost always at the west end of the church (there being only three or four old steeples in the whole island): the gables carefully topped with crosses, supported upon canopied trifoliated bases, terminating the coping of the gables; the font always at the west end of the nave, of the simplest form, and generally of high antiquity: no side aisles, no triforia, no clear-stories (except at Beaumarais, Holyhead, and perhaps one or two more places); hardly a pillar or shaft to be met with in the whole district.

After such a description of the general character of these churches, it may well be asked what interest they can possess? It is true that they have little or no architectural value, but they have much archæological interest; they form a numerous and unbroken series of village churches, from perhaps the ninth or tenth century (probably much earlier) down to the fifteenth; and they are *untouched*: they are as they were built, and they are likely to remain so, until they fall to pieces in the lapse of future years. Though, therefore, they cannot compete with any of the grander edifices of the middle ages, they supply types of the humbler buildings used by a peasantry almost unchanged at the present day; and they are therefore entitled to consideration by all who enquire into the archæological remains of this country. Unless (which is very unlikely) the condition of the population should change very much,—they are still so simple and happy that no change in their worldly wealth is at all desirable;—it is to be hoped that these primitive buildings will be allowed to retain all the quaintness of their grey and venerable antiquity. Repairs they will undoubtedly need, but modifications *few*, improvements *none*.

The survey of all the parochial churches being as yet incomplete, it would be premature to pronounce an opinion as to which is the oldest ecclesiastical building still existing on the island: but that which is the most interesting, and at the same time one of the oldest and least injured, is the conventual church of Penmôn, with its dependent buildings. The monastic establishment of Penmôn, founded by St. Seiriol in

the sixth century, was connected with one on the small island named after that saint, at the north-eastern extremity of Anglesey. The information contained in Dugdale, concerning it, is scanty, and not altogether reconcileable to the present appearance of the localities. On the island of Priestholm, Puffin island, or Ynys Seiriol, there is only the tower of the conventual church, with a few foundations of walls, remaining; but there are some very curious subterranean galleries of small dimensions, and of unknown purpose, with numerous foundations of circular British huts. The buildings at Penmon itself consist of the conventual church, of the tenth or eleventh century: part of the conventual building, the walls of the refectory, the pigeon-house, &c., while on the hill above the place is one of those early circular-headed crosses, which are to be met with in Ireland, and some remote spots in England. In interest Penmon stands at the head of the ecclesiastical edifices of Anglesey. Next in importance to it would have been the priory of Llanvaes, near Beaumarais; but few remnants are left standing, and a large plain building, the original destination of which is not yet fixed, but now used as a stable and barn, is almost all that remains of it. The splendid altar-tombs, however, which enriched the church, have been preserved, though dispersed among neighbouring churches; and they constitute the principal sepulchral riches of the island. The collegiate church of Holyhead, and the parochial church of Beaumarais, are large structures, and, the latter especially, present good details of architectural execution. There is a good deal of late Decorated and early Perpendicular work in them. In nearly all the churches throughout the island, Decorated and Perpendicular windows have been introduced, some of them with good effect. Porches too of various dates have been appended to the buildings, and in one or two cases, such as Llanvihangel, and Penmynydd, curious wooden carved pulpits and minstrel-galleries exist.

Of tombs and monumental inscriptions, no small variety is to be met with: from a fragment of one commemorating St. Saturninus (of the eighth or ninth century?) to the sarcophagal tomb of St. Jestin, of the thirteenth century, and the elaborate alabaster altar-tombs of Llanvaes of the fifteenth century, and even to others of Elizabethan date at Beaumarais and elsewhere.

The civil buildings of Anglesey are headed in interest and

importance by the stately Edwardan fortress of Beaumarais. It is possible that some remains of the old palace of the Welsh princes may be traced at Aberffraw their capital: but here the survey is as yet deficient. In interest, however, the castle of Beaumarais is perhaps the chief medieval remain upon the island, and in some respects it is more valuable to the military antiquarian than the more stately contemporary structures of Conway and Caernarvon. It is very complete; its parts and their destinations may all be readily made out; its military position (the warfare of the time considered) is very remarkable; and it possesses the only complete military chapel to be found in the Principality. The survey of this is almost entirely finished, and the subject of it is important enough to form either a monographic account, or to be placed in a series of accounts of the Edwardan buildings of Wales. A few other military buildings may probably be traced in some parts of Anglesey, but sufficient observation has not yet been made on this branch of its medieval remains.

Several ancient houses remain in various parts of the island, such as Plas Goch near Moel y Don, Plas Goch in Beaumarais, (the ancient manor-house of the Bulkeley family,) and various detached manorial or farm-houses throughout the district. The site, if not the buildings of Plas Penmynydd, the *original* seat of the Tudors, near Llanfinnan, is of no small interest to the historical antiquarian; just as their family-vault and the altar-tomb (executed *anterior* to the royal fortunes of that house) now preserved in Penmynydd church, are to the artist and the architect. One of the most remarkable houses is Plas Goch, mentioned above, at Beaumarais. Though greatly dilapidated, and indeed tenanted by poor families, the details of the house may be made out satisfactorily. The great dining-hall is in tolerable preservation, though blackened by smoke, and converted into two or three dwelling-rooms. But its canopied dais and its ceiling, fretted with ever-varying pendants of good execution, would not be misplaced at Hatfield, Burghley, or Audley End.

On the whole, the antiquities of Anglesey, though but little known, are not without interest and value; they are important to the national antiquarian and the national historian: and the two great classes into which they may be divided—Cymric and Medieval—are sufficient to occupy the attention of a careful observer for a considerable period.

We may add that a good feeling of veneration for local antiquities prevails in the island, especially among the clergy:—the people are not naturally destructive nor desirous of change; they are proud of their isolation, yet they are courteous and obliging to strangers who will come to explore their remote parochial edifices; they are full of old traditions, and they can point out the scene of many an interesting event, preserved chiefly in the recollection of those living on the spot.

As yet Rowland's *Mona Antiqua* is the only work of authority on the antiquities of Anglesey. It is a book of much learned research as well as of good common sense, and fully deserving the attention of a new and careful editor. The medieval remains of the island are however worthy of description as well as those of the Cymric period; and it is with this view that the present survey is carried on.

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THE HORN-SHAPED LADIES' HEAD-DRESS

IN THE REIGN OF EDWARD I.

The study of costume is of considerable importance to the antiquary, as affording the means of fixing the age of sculptures or paintings which bear no other certain indications of date. We in the first instance derive the knowledge of costume itself from the study and comparison of monuments of different ages, and especially of the illuminations of manuscripts. Knowing the date of these monuments, we are enabled to say with certainty what costume was in use at a certain period; but we are too apt in this and other things to take the silence of writers, or the absence of pictured representation, as a negative assertion, a proof that a certain thing did not exist. It is the object of the following observations to point out an example of the danger of this practice.

No portion of medieval costume underwent more frequent changes than the head-dress of ladies. In the fifteenth century the female *coiffure* was made to take the form of two horns, a fashion which excited the indignation and mirth of contemporary moralists and satirists. This horned head-dress appears