

remains were in existence when Hearne wrote his notes on the church. There were then two spacious halls with their chimneys and the parlours, and a covered passage leading to the church, but these have entirely disappeared.

(*To be continued.*)

The word 'Cromlech' and its improper use in Archæology

By Harry G. W. d'Almaine.

AFTER my initiation into Archæology I was soon confused and puzzled by the indiscriminate use of the word *Cromlech*, and its exact meaning in reference to the monuments of the Stone Age. The more I progressed the more uncertain, indefinite, and even irritating the word appeared to be, until I became uncomfortably conscious that something was wrong, and I consequently set about to find out the derivation and true meaning of the word, and its proper application in Archæology. The difficulties that led me to this investigation were shortly these. The Stone Age monuments, summarised briefly, consist of Menhirs, Dolmens, Stone Circles (of various types), Graves (with or without 'stone circles' surrounding them) and Stone avenues.

With hardly an exception I found all these various types called, or classed at random, as *Cromlechs*, and the word conveyed no definite idea of the type of monument intended. This was confusing and led me to inquire what particular class was meant, and, in using the word, I had, in writing or conversation, to cross-examine in order to identify the form of monument referred to. Finding that the word *Cromlech* was uncertain and indefinite, I yet concluded that a very simple set of words would accurately, and at once, describe the particular *type* of monument.

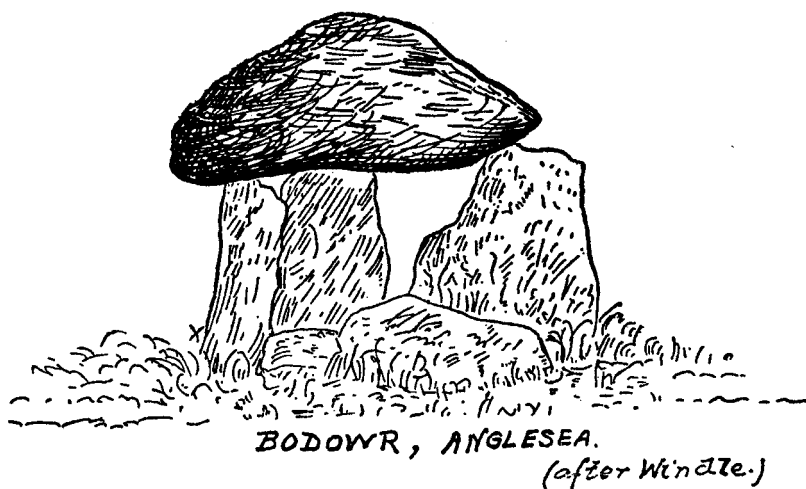
A difficulty that at once presented itself was that, to the Welsh archæologist, the word *Cromlech* meant, what is more generally and properly known elsewhere, as a *Dolmen*, while to the Breton archæologist, the word *Cromlech* meant almost exclusively a Stone Circle. For example:—Le Gonidec, the Breton lexicographer, gives the following definition:—‘Kroumlec’h, S. M. Monument des Celtes composé de pierre plantée en cercle. Ce mot est composé de *kroum*, courbé, et de *lec’h*, ou *leac’h*, ou *liac’h*, pierre sacrée.’ Here was confusion at once; for when one spoke to a Welshman of a *Stone Circle*, and used the word *Cromlech*, he at once jumped to the conclusion that one meant *Dolmen*; while on the other hand, if one addressed a Frenchman, using the word *Cromlech* in the sense of a *Dolmen*, he would immediately think of a *Stone Circle*.

On considering these and many other examples of the uncertain and misleading use of the word *Cromlech*, it seemed to me the word should be wiped out of archæological nomenclature altogether, in favour of more concise terms, which would at once explicitly describe any particular monument; though I strongly advocate the retention of words hitherto in use, *so far as their meaning is a true description of the monument*. I submitted the point, and my difficulties, to Mr. Henry Balfour, the well known archæologist, and he agreed with me at once, that, what he called the ‘haphazard’ use of the present Archæological terms with regard to the Stone Age Monuments was misleading, and in a very unsatisfactory state, especially as to the most generally used word *Cromlech*. I also consulted the Rev. John Griffith, a prominent Welsh Archæologist of great authority, and his immediate reply was that ‘we are badly in need of a whole system of nomenclature to make intelligible the results of scientific study of our ancient monuments.’

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It would be well perhaps here to endeavour to trace the word *Cromlech* as far back as possible, and ascertain its inner meaning, and so show how inadequate it is to convey a proper impression of *any* single type of monument of the

Stone Age. The word *Cromlech* was originally Armorican, compounded of *Crom* (the feminine of *Crum*) meaning *crooked, bowed, bent, curved, concave, convex*; and *llech* (plural *llechau*) a *Stone, a flat Stone*. Together in conjunction therefore, a *flat-curved stone*. Now this meaning very adequately describes some—most in fact—of the cap-stones, or covering stones of various *Dolmens*, and other graves, the under-sides of which are either naturally *flat*, or have been worn, rubbed, or worked flat, while the upper side has been left in its natural *curved* shape. Here is a typical example; this Dolmen is to be found at Bodowyr Anglesea.



This type of *individual* stone—the covering or cap-stone shewn in the drawing—is quite correctly called a *Cromlech*, and some authorities incline to the opinion that the name was originally applied to the cap-stone only. If used in this sense I have no quarrel with the word; but as this form of stone is found in many monuments of a widely differing structure I maintain the name *Cromlech* is wrong, and misleading, when used to indicate the *entire* monument. The first use of the word *Cromlech* that I can trace is in Bishop

Grandison's Register at Exeter (1328-1370) referring to a grant of land apparently from Aethelstan to one Buryan, in which the passage occurs, 'Fossa quae tendit circa Rescel *cromlegh*.' Whether the word *cromlegh* had anything like the same meaning in the 14th century as it has to-day, I must leave others to determine.

In 1588 Dr. Morgan translated the Bible into Welsh, and in turning the words 'In the holes of the rocks'—(Isa. vii-xix)—into Welsh he uses the expression 'y'nghrom *lechydd* y creigiau.' Again; 'Slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks'—(Isa. lvii. 5)—Dr. Morgan translates, 'Gan ladd y plant yn y glynnoedd dan *gromlechydd* y creigiau.' Also; 'O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rocks'—(Jer. xlix. 16)—in Welsh reads 'Ti yr hon ydwyf yn aros y'nghromlechydd y graig.' Of these instances, Silvan Evans, the Welsh lexicographer, says, 'The originals thus translated, signify, caverns, clefts, or holes; and the allusion is to caves, or natural fissures, common in the limestone rocks in Palestine, sometimes used as places of concealment, and sometimes of habitation.'

The Word *Cromlech* as used in the Welsh Bible, may be taken as referring simply to any natural cave, or cavern, suitable for shelter; but it may also be taken as reminiscent of the actual use of artificial chambers like dolmens, provided with an entrance and often a passage; and moreover the fact should not be overlooked that the monuments, so widely termed *cromlechs* to-day, were built many centuries before the very existence of the peoples whose history is recorded in the Bible. The next appearance of the word *Cromlech* that I can trace in Welsh, and the first having any definite relation to Stone Age Monuments, is to be found in George Owen's *Pembrokeshire* written in 1603:—'An other thinge worth the noteinge is a stone called 'Maen y *gromlech*' vpon Pentre Jevan lande; yt is a huge massie stone mounted on highe and sett on the toppes of iij other highe stones pitched standinge vpriight in the grounde' (I. xxvi (1892). 251). I call special attention to the one particular stone—not the whole monument, let it be noted—'mounted on highe.'

In 1695 J. Davies (Camden's Brit. :—Gibson. 676) says : ' In Bod-Owyr* we find a remarkable Kromlech . . . These are thought to have received the name of *Cromlecheu*, for that the Table or covering-Stone is, on the upper side, somewhat gibbous, or convex.' Here we have probably the first published records of the adoption of the word *Cromlech* into the Welsh language from the Armorican, and we may almost safely say this 'taking over' occurred in or about the 17th century. It will be noted that Davies refers to the *Cromlecheu* as being 'covering-stones, convex on the upper side'—the assumption, I think, clearly being that the underside was *flat*. Hence we get back to '*Crom*'=bent, curved, convex :—'*llech*' = a flat stone.

In 1740 Dr. Stukeley in his *Stonehenge* (vii. 33.), referring to one of the Stone-Age monuments, says 'It was one of those stones which the Welsh call *Crw-m-Lecheu*.' The word had apparently become, by this time, well established, as Dr. Francis Wise in his famous letter to Dr. Meade, 'concerning some Antiquities in Berkshire,' (issued from the University Printing-House, Oxford, under date 21st December, 1738) says—'The Welsh word *Cromlech* too, according to their Antiquaries, is only the Hebrew '*Cherem-luach*,' i.e., *The Devoted*, or Altar Stone.'

Interesting as the history of the word *Cromlech* may be, together with its adoption from one language into another, it leads us no further than we were at the start. Its clear meaning is a *flat-curved-stone*, and it is not a word that is in any way descriptive of any of the Stone Age monuments. It is useless as such; it is worse, as it is confusing and misleading, and should be abolished. *Cromlech* is a bastard word—(it has, as mother, *Armorica*, no father, and was adopted by Wales)—yet several other words used to indicate the various Stone-Age monuments are well chosen, are descriptive, and mean exactly what they say. Let them be retained, but get rid of *Cromlech*.

¹ See above drawing : now spelt Bodowyr.

Before leaving this subject I cannot refrain from calling attention to some of the appalling plurals of some of the names of the Stone Age Monuments. Let us take the word *Menhir* to start with. The plural of *Menhir* has been Anglicised into *Menhirs*; this is not euphonious, and the Welsh plural 'Menhirion' would be distinctly more pleasing to the ear. I see Professor Windle uses this plural, only he spells it *Menhirion*, the Breton way.

We pass on to the word *Dolmen*. *Dolmens*, as the plural of *Dolmen* is highly unsatisfactory, is uncouth, and grating to the ear. The Welsh plural of this word is *Dolmenau* (the 'au' pronounced as the 'i' in high)—*Dolmeni*—and I strongly advocate its adoption, though learned friends of mine tell me it would *always* be wrongly pronounced!

I leave the student to judge.

Sutton Courtenay and Abingdon Abbey

By Arthur E. Preston.

CAP. I.

MODERN investigation does not deny that the first beginnings of Abingdon Abbey may credibly be referred to a date in the latter part of the seventh century.¹ The story of its early relations with the neighbouring vill of Sutton, some three miles to the south-west, as unfolded in the Abbey Chronicle, may in the main be regarded as trustworthy, although it is unnecessary to insist on the accuracy of all its detail. Briefly put, the course of events can be stated as follows:—

- (a) Grant of the vill of Sutton to the house of Abingdon by Ina king of the West Saxons about the beginning of his rule in 688.² The authenticity of this charter has not been questioned, and from the

¹ Stenton, pp. 17 and 49.

² *Chron.* i. 14.