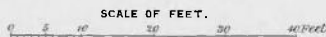
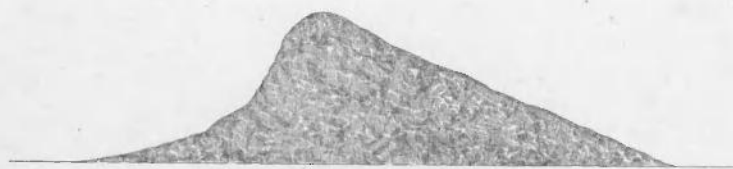
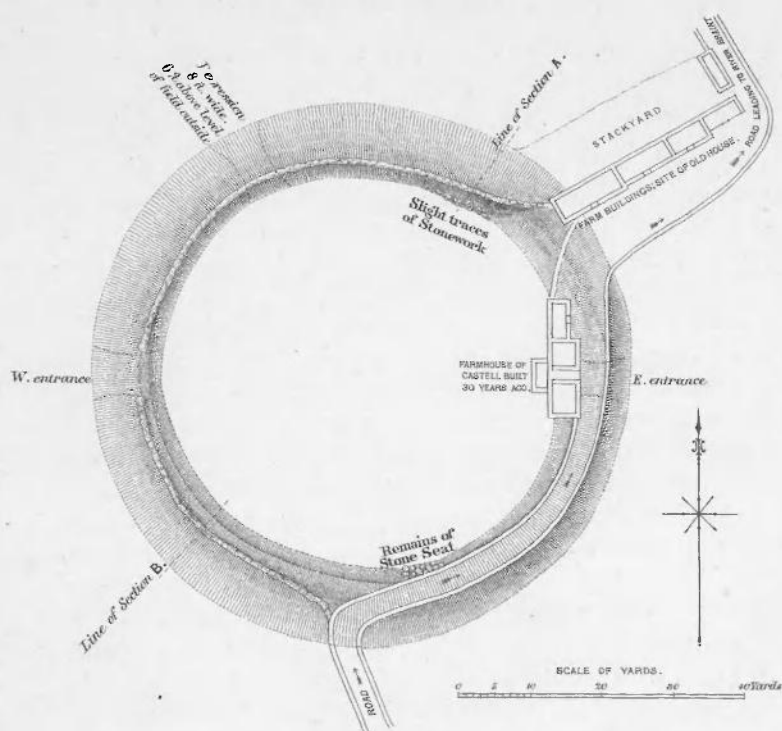


PLAN OF SUPPOSED AMPHITHEATRE AT CASTELL, LLANIDAN, ANGLESEY.



THE AMPHITHEATRE OF CASTELL IN ANGLESEY.

By the Hon. W. OWEN STANLEY, Lord Lieutenant of Anglesey.

THE republication of the following article from the "Archæologia Cambrensis" seems to me very desirable, as I am enabled to make considerable additions of importance to it. Having accompanied the Rev. W. W. Williams on his examination of the Castell Amphitheatre, I found, in his published account, he had omitted all mention of the stone seats which remain in the southern side of the interior, and it was chiefly upon that fact of the stone seats being there that I drew my conclusion that it was a Roman, not a British work, as the British are almost without exception of earth. Fresh engravings are given, and including those of the stone seats as now to be seen in the interior of the amphitheatre. My late brother-in-law, Mr. Albert Way, was greatly interested in "Castell," and was preparing to write on the existing amphitheatres in England and Wales, for which he had prepared some notes. His decease has, however, destroyed all hopes of our having the advantage of his extensive knowledge and research on this and similar remains. During his last illness he returned these notes to me, but I feel that I can do no more than give them almost as they were sent to me.

The Rev. W. Williams' article is most interesting, and describes well the curious remains at "Castell and Tre'r Dryw bâch," with its cirque, oval ring of upright stones, and the remains of a circle of large stones, almost rivalling those at Avebury. One cannot but be struck with the similarity of the two; each has its great circle of colossal upright stones, its amphitheatre, and smaller double oval of stones, corresponding with Stonehenge.

Mr. Albert Way's notes on this subject are as follows:—

In *Archæological Journal*, vol. xvi., is a memoir, "Some Account of the Investigation of Barrows on the line of the Roman Road between Old Sarum and the Port at the mouth of the river Axe, supposed to be the 'Ad Axium' of

Ravennas. By the Rev. Harry M. Scarth, M.A." At p. 153 occurs this passage: "At Charterhouse (on the Mendip Hills), within a quarter of a mile east of Beacon Barrow, are very interesting remains of a Roman station and a perfect amphitheatre. . . . It was ploughed over and sown with hemp (in 1858), but the form of it remains, and the entrances are quite distinct. . . . The farmer pointed out the site of another amphitheatre about half a mile distant to the south, beyond the farm, in the direction of Cheddar Cliffs. Sir R. C. Hoare speaks of one, which he says 'has been destroyed;' but this is probably the one to which he alludes."

At p. 224 of *Archæologia Cambrensis*, 3rd series, vol. viii., is "An account of St. Piran's Round, Cornwall, by the Rev. H. Longueville Jones," in which a view of the spot is given. It is supposed to have been constructed for dramatic purposes and entertainments. Its diameter is about 135 ft., and the mound is about 10 ft. high. There are traces of seven rows of seats, and the summit has been levelled for standing room. Nearly in the middle occurs a circular pit, over which the temporary stage is supposed to have been erected, and here was the *Infernum* mentioned in the dramas. This pit had a trench leading from it, no doubt for purposes connected with the movement of the actors, &c. In Cornwall a round is called *Plan-au-guare*, "place of play." St. Piran's Round might hold 2000 spectators. The Round of Gwennap would hold ten times the number.

Of the amphitheatre at Hamdon Hill the dimensions are not given.¹ They have been since ascertained to be as follows—diameter of circus or area, 67 ft.; diameter over all, *i.e.*, from top to top, for spectators, 104 ft.; length of entrance existing, about 20 ft., cut through the base of the embankment forming southern boundary; the angle of inclination of slope from level, about 30°. The entrance is nearly south. The shape is now so nearly a perfect circle as to leave no doubt of its having been originally mathematically so.

The amphitheatre near Caerleon, towards the Usk, is represented as circular.²

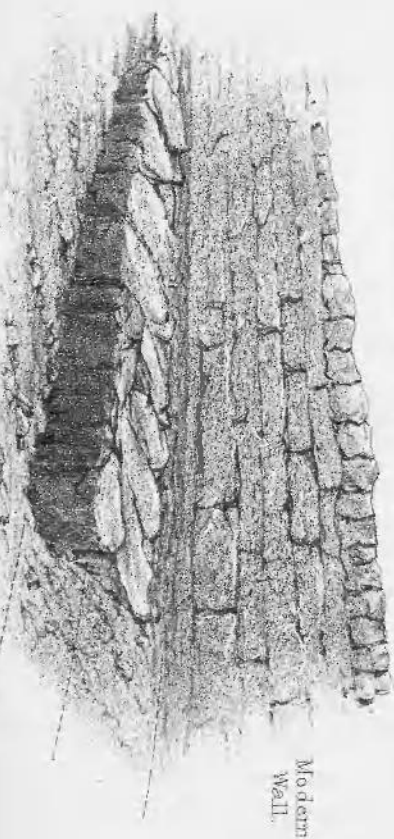
In the report of the annual meeting held at Gloucester (*Archæological Journal*, xvii., p. 345), Dr. Collingwood Bruce gave some account of the investigations then recently made at

¹ See Proceedings of the "Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society" for 1853, p. 84.

² See "Isca Silurum," plate 51.



CASTELL, Interior, looking W.



Modern
Wall.

SUPPOSED SEAT, CASTELL. 2 ft. 3 in. broad, 1 ft. 10 in. long

Corinium (Cirencester), in the course of which he said: "One interesting feature of Corinium is its extramural amphitheatre. We find the *Amphitheatrum castrense* outside the walls at Dorchester, Silchester, Caerleon, Richborough, and several other places. We also have one in the North of England, adjacent to the mural station of Borcovicus.³ It is, however, small in comparison with that of Cirencester, but large enough for the garrison, which consisted of only one cohort. In the sculptures on Trajan's column we perceive two amphitheatres, erected during the Dacian campaign. It was necessary to give the soldiers amusement." The dimensions of the 'Round Table' at Caerleon are found to be 237 ft. by 207 ft., and 17 ft. in height.

Mr. Rees says,⁴ near Llandovery, on Ynys y Bordan, there is an old *Gadlys* or *Bord Gron*, a circular area 198 ft. in diameter, with a deep foss and an outer circle.

In Pennant's "Tour in Scotland," part xxxvii., p. 27 f., an account is given of Mayborough, near Penrith, a circular enclosure about 290 ft. in diameter from the foot of the slope to top of slope, and 320 ft. to 340 ft. from end to the crest of the wall.

From these researches Mr. Way ascertained that the English amphitheatres are not *all* oval.

The following is the memoir written by Mr. Williams, in Arch. Camb. Vol. ii. 4th series, p. 34, and headed "Mona Antiqua."

So many remains of archæological interest in the island of Anglesey have been destroyed of late years, that it is desirable, as far as possible, to record the present condition of those still in existence, for we cannot say how soon they also may be swept away. I have, therefore, undertaken to note down a few particulars concerning what Rowlands calls "*The Cirque or Theatre*," and "*the ring or coronet of stone pillars*," situated in the parish of Llanidan; and also "*the Oval at Tre'r Dryw bach*," in the same parish, passed over by him in silence. After speaking of Caerlëb, he next describes the "large cirque or theatre" (Mona Antiq., p. 89), and then says, "directly west of this round bank there appear the remains of a ring or coronet of very large, erected columns or stone pillars" (*ib.*) It will thus be seen that he

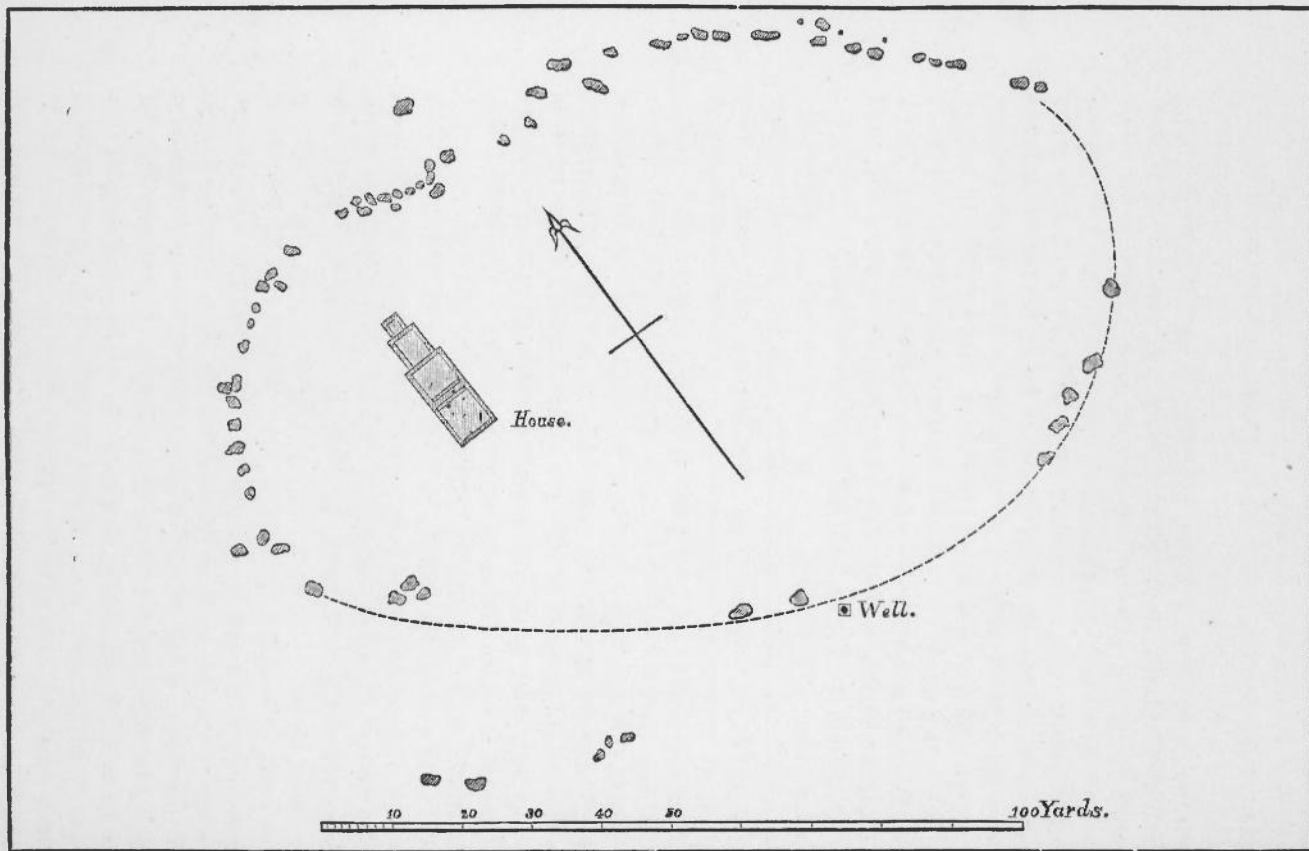
³ See "Memoir written during a survey of the Roman Wall," by Henry Maclauchlin, p. 39.

⁴ Archæol. Camb. New series. vol. v. p. 133.

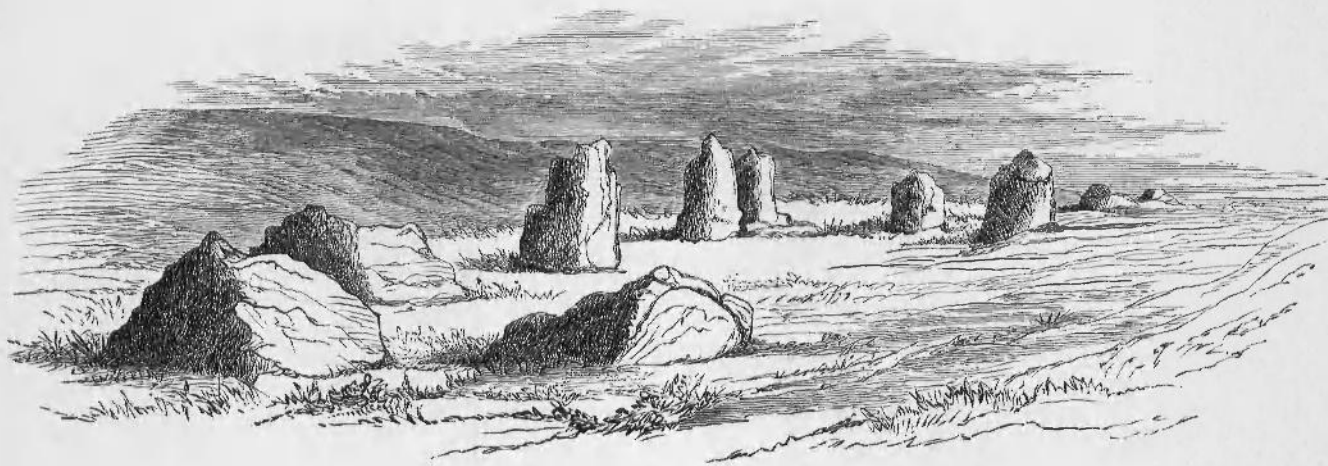
makes no mention of the Oval at Tre'r Dryw bâch, which lies *between* Caerleb and "the Cirque or Theatre" at Castell.

Tre'r Dryw bâch is distant about two furlongs from Caerleb. A road leads up to the east end of the Oval; and in this road, which here widens considerably, it is most perfect, consisting of numerous stones, some still upright, others overthrown, some closely adjoining each other, whilst others are separated by an interval of 8 or 10 feet. These stones vary in height from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 ft.; but many are sunk in the earth, this being more especially the case in the field on the south-east side, which has long been under cultivation. On the west side, beyond what may be considered the limit of the Oval proper, are many outlying stones, and several of large size are built into a hedge here. These may have been moved to their present position at the period when the hedge was originally formed; this supposition being rendered probable from there being now no standing pillars between the stone close to the well, and the three stones near the hedge that runs at the back of Tre'r Dryw bâch House. The Oval measures 130 yards by 70. The accompanying plan gives the number and arrangement of the stones; and the sketch shows a portion of the east side where most perfect. With regard to the object for which this Oval was erected, I am sometimes disposed to think that it may have marked out the boundary of a kind of *stadium*, or, at all events, ground set apart for games of some kind. Thus we have at the back of Penmaen Mawr "a great rude stone standing upright, called 'Maen y Campiau' (or stone of games); and adjoining it a circle of stones which Pennant considers to have been 'the British circus for the exhibition of ancient games.'" (Pennant, *Tour in Wales*, iii. pp. 119-20.) It appears to me not unlikely that the Romanised Britons would retain the exercise of their *campiau*, more especially as some of them so nearly resembled those in use among their conquerors,—to wit, running and wrestling. The Roman soldiery would, doubtless, introduce those more sanguinary shows, for the exhibition of which provision appears to have been made in the neighbouring "*Cirque or Theatre at Castell*," which I shall now proceed to describe.

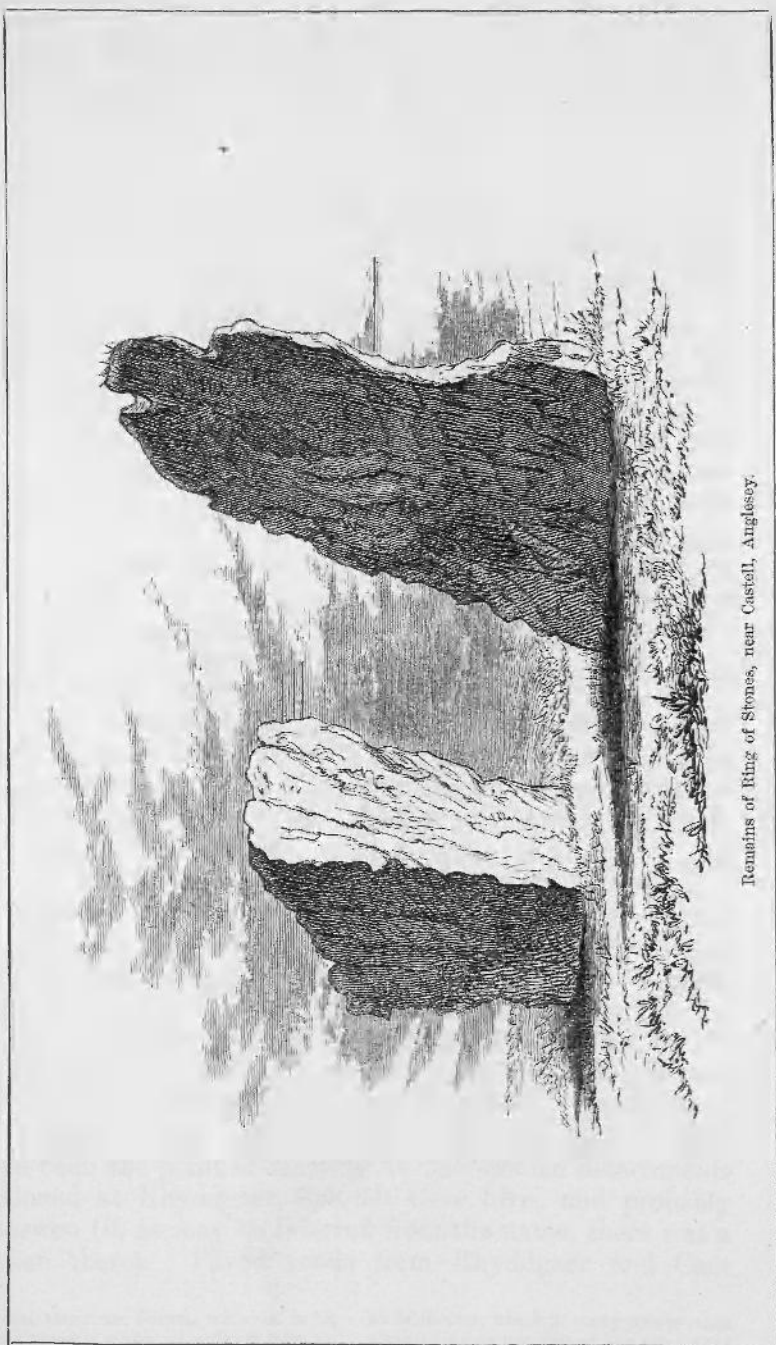
This is situated about a furlong to the west of Tre'r Dryw bâch, and the farmhouse of Castell with some of its out-buildings stand partly within it and partly on the sur-



The Oval at Tre'r Dryw bach, Anglesey.



Remains of Ring of Stones, near Castell, Anglesey.



Remains of Ring of Stones, near Castell, Anglesey.

rounding mound. The name (Castell) shows that popular tradition assigns a defensive character to the work ; but I believe Rowlands to be nearer the mark when he calls it "Cirque or Theatre." The Hon. W. O. Stanley, who once visited the spot with me, immediately pronounced it to be a theatre. As may be seen from the accompanying plan, a road approaches from the south, and passes along the top of the mound, continuing its course in front of the house, and so through the farmyard down towards the river Braint. The internal diameter is 165 ft. The thickness of the encircling mound varies, but averages about 30 ft. The greatest height, inside, is 12 ft. The entrance, 15 ft. wide, faces the west, as given correctly by Rowlands. An idea of its external and internal appearance may be gathered from the accompanying sketches. Of works bearing a resemblance to this amphitheatre there is in Caernarvonshire an oval enclosure, on the farm of Crüg, that was evidently connected with the camp or *caer* there, which has given name to the small church below, Llanfair Is-gaer. The name it goes by is curious, "Gerlan ddibont" (bridgeless retreat). The internal measurement is 190 ft. by 150. Thickness of mound, 20 ft. Height of mound, where most perfect, 9 ft.

In Merionethshire we have a similar work at Tomen-y-mŵr. Internal diameter, 81 ft. ; thickness of mound, 21 ft. ; height, 10 to 12 ft. Of English examples, the amphitheatre at Richborough is nearly of the same size as that at Castell. Mr. Roach Smith (*Antiq. of Richborough Reculver and Lymne*, p. 52) gives its diameter, from summit to summit of the surrounding mound, as 70 yards by 68 ; the greatest depth, inside, 11 ft. 6 ins. The internal diameter at Castell (165 ft.) is 55 yards ; but the surrounding mound being 30 ft. thick, if we measure from summit to summit of the mound, we shall have 65 yards, very little short of the amphitheatre at Richborough.¹ Taking into account the situation of Castell, we may fairly conjecture (granting it to have been really a castrensean amphitheatre), that it might have been the point of meeting for the Roman detachments stationed at Rhyddgaer, Caerleib, Caer Idris, and probably Gaerwen (if, as may be inferred from the name, there was a station there). Paved roads from Rhyddgaer and Caer

⁵ See also Arch. Journ., vol. xxix. p. 12, where there is given an extract from an ancient description of the Amphitheatre

at Silchester, which in many points reads almost like an account of the remains at Castell.

Idris converge on Rhosfawr, falling into the main line that comes up from Barras, and runs on, by Caerlèb, into the interior of the island. The Roman soldiers would scarcely, even in this remote corner, give up their games ; and when we reflect that, besides the above-named Roman posts, there were, within a radius of three miles or so, numerous large villages which, from the remains discovered in them, were evidently at one time inhabited by a population so far civilised as to make use of Samian and other choice wares, we may easily imagine that there would be no lack of spectators. I am aware that the learned author of *Mona Antiqua* assigns to *all* these remains a Druidical origin. Caerlèb he makes the seat of the chief Druid ; but by recent investigation it has been proved to have been a Roman station. He calls the amphitheatre "Bryngwyn," and derives the name from "Brein-gwyn," "supreme or Royal tribunal, the consistory court of the Druids." But I have always heard the name of Bryngwyn applied to a bank situated about half a mile to the west of the amphitheatre, and on one side of which is the farmhouse of Bryngwyn. This name (Bryn-gwyn), notwithstanding what Rowlands says to the contrary (*Mon. Antiq.*, p. 90, line 8), describes the place very accurately. It is a *white* or *fair* bank, and any unprejudiced person viewing the spot would have no doubt but that the name referred to it. As far as I have been able to make out, from old rent-rolls and other sources, the farm of Castell was so called long before *Mona Antiqua* was written.

[Since the publication of the above account a further examination of Castell resulted in the discovery, on the southern side of the interior, of the stonework seat, a drawing of which is here given. This has at one time been, probably, carried the whole way round, some slight vestiges of it being traceable at the north-eastern end of the enclosure near the stackyard. At a higher level than the stonework there were two, if not three, layers of seats, the beds of which may still be followed out in the space between the stonework and the west entrance. There is little doubt but that there was an east entrance, represented by the depression now filled up by the modern farmhouse, which the present tenant remembers being built. He says that he recollects this opening before the building of the house ; and he further remarks that the clay of which the mound is chiefly composed must have been brought from some little

distance, as the soil beneath and immediately surrounding the spot is of a gravelly nature. There is a gap in the mound, 26 yards to the north-east of the western entrance, 8 ft. in breadth, and 6 ft. above the level of the field outside, but it is to all appearance of modern excavation.]

With regard to the "*ring or coronet of very large, erected columns or stone pillars*, three whereof," Rowlands says (*Mon. Antiq.*, p. 89) were "yet standing" in his time, "together with the stump of a fourth broken a little below the middle," there are now but two remaining. He calculates their number to have been originally eight or nine, "pitched in a circle about an included area of about twelve or fourteen yards in diameter." They are situated one on each side of a gate in a fence on the farm of Bryngwyn, a furlong due west from the amphitheatre at Castell. The highest is a thin slab of the common schistose rock of the country, though it is difficult to imagine whence so large a fragment could have been quarried. It is 13 ft. in height above the surface of the ground, 10 ft. wide at the bottom, and tapers almost to a point at the top. The thickness is about 1 ft. The other stone is a massive, angular piece of the same kind of rock; harp-shaped as viewed from one side, being broader at the top than at the bottom. Greatest height, 10 ft.; breadth at top, 9 ft.; breadth at bottom, 7 ft.; thickness, 4 ft. 6 ins. There are some fragments lying in an adjoining ditch, which *may* be portions of the "third and stump of the fourth" mentioned by Rowlands. The taller of the two once formed part of the gable of a cottage; and three semicircular excavations are to be seen near the top, made to receive the ends of the beams supporting the roof. "The collateral pillars," four of which were standing in Rowlands' time, have long since disappeared; and of the carnedd, vestiges of which are placed by him half way between the Bryngwyn stones and the amphitheatre (*Mon. Antiq.*, Plate IV., Fig. 1), there is now not a trace to be found.

In view of the whole question I cannot but think that we have here a mixture of British and Roman remains; and I am disposed to consider Tref Dryw bach and the meini-hirion at Bryngwyn as being the work of the former, and the amphitheatre at Castell that of the latter people.

There were many detached stones to the westward of Bryngwyn, especially towards the lower end of the large field there; and near the hedge at the bottom of that field

there was a circular platform raised 2 ft. above the level of the surrounding boggy soil, edged round with loose masonry, and having a diameter of 18 ft. On the ground being turned up, wood, ashes, and stones, subjected to heat, were discovered. In the adjoining field to the south-west, on the farm of Gläs-ynys, there were three stones set on end, equidistant from each other, and three others lay close together in one corner of the same field. At Maenhir, on the opposite bank, there was a fine, erect stone which gave the name to the farm. The late Mr. Wynne Jones of Tre-Iorwerth told me that it was standing near the house when he lodged there, as curate of Llangeinwen, about seventy years ago. It was subsequently blasted, and worked up into the masonry of a new farmhouse. On the other side of the road leading down towards Maenhir to the shore near the present landing-place of the ferry-steamer (*Lôn Caerau mawr*, an old *sarn*), there were several upright stones, not of large size. Many of these are still visible, being built up into a new wall at the side of the road. One of them, set endwise, and still *in situ*, appears to have formed a side-supporter to the covering of a small cromlech or cistfaen.

There is reason to think that Anglesey, after its final conquest by the Romans, enjoyed for many years a state of profound repose. It was evidently at that time thickly populated, especially in those parts lying near or on the banks of the Menai Strait. The following may be enumerated among the sites of extensive villages: 1, on Menaifron land and part of the adjoining farm of Gelliniog-gôch (destroyed); 2, in the rough ground to the west of Rhyddgaer House (destroyed); 3, the entire bank from the village of Dwyran, by Treana, to beyond Maenhir,—all brought into cultivation, but foundations of *cyttiau* are still traceable in parts (see *Arch. Camb.* Vol. i, 3rd series, p. 278); 4, on the farm of Gaerwen in Llanfair y Cwmmwd (destroyed); 5, at Tanben y cevn (see *Arch. Camb.*, iii, new series, p. 209); 6, at Trefwry, near Caerlèb (destroyed); and 7, in an adjoining field on the farm of Tre-ifan,—in this last, which probably is but a remnant of the large Trefwry town, the foundations of the *cyttiau* are still untouched; at Porthamel (see *Arch. Camb.*, xiii, 3rd series, p. 281); 9, the Trefarthen field, next to Barras, where coins and pottery have been found; and doubtless there were many other villages which have been entirely demolished, and of which nothing is now known.