ON THE

# CIRCULAR HUTS

## SOMETIMES CALLED *CYTTIAU'R GWYDDELOD*,

### AND THEIR INHABITANTS.

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The places where vestiges of these circular huts are found have undergone considerable changes since the days when they were inhabited, and probably the temperature of the country was then different from what it is in our days. Wales was formerly well wooded, but within the last four or five centuries or so it has been denuded of its forests. It is necessary to reclothe the country with an almost impenetrable entanglement of brushwood and trees, to convert many a smiling valley into a treacherous marsh, and to reintroduce many extinct animals into Wales, ere we can even faintly realise the condition of the country at the time when these primitive abodes were occupied.

### I.—The Evidence of Writers as to the State of the Country in Ancient Times.

I propose to lay poets, historians, and place-names under contribution, to derive from them a description of the country as it was when it was sparsely populated by the rude inhabitants of the small circular huts that are to be met with along the hill-sides in many parts of Wales. The part of the country to which my remarks will chiefly apply is the northern slope of the mountain range that extends from Conway to the south of Carnarvon, but I shall endeavour, as I go along, to point out the particular districts to which they refer.

To begin with the poets. Incidentally, Welsh poets throw some light on the state of the country in the days in which they flourished. Thus, in a poem ascribed to *Merfyn*, who is said to have flourished in the sixth century, but whose evidence would be equally good had he lived several centuries nearer our days, is an allusion to the oaks of Snowdon, thus:—

"Pan dorrer y deri
Yn agos i'r 'yri
Ai nofiad yn efrydd
O Gonwy i fro gwerydd."

"When the oaks are felled
In the neighbourhood of Erryri
And will gently float
From Conway to the regions of Gwerydd."

The *deri*, oak trees, that are mentioned as being near *'yri*, *erryri*, Snowdon, have long ago disappeared, and Snowdon is in our days naked and rugged, but when the poet sang such evidently was not its state.

In the *History of the Gwydir Family* is a quotation from *Rhys Goch Eryri* (Rhys Goch of Erryri, or Snowdon), a bard who flourished about the year 1400. The extract is taken from a poem addressed to Robert ap Meredith, and it contains an allusion to setting the country or forest on fire,—a not uncommon practice in warfare in ancient times. The poet writes as follows:—

"Hir y bu Ruffudd ruddbar
Waywdan fab Cynan ein car
Ar goesgeirch hir gwayw ysgwyd
Yn gorwedd Llew Flamgledd Llwyd
A'i dalaith Llwybr goddaith Llaw
Fynnodd gynt yn kelffeiniaw
Tann oerfab bid tan arfoll."

"Long did our friend (or kinsman) Gryfudd ap Conan, with his bloody spear, fiery lance, shield, and flaming sword,

lye dormant like a grey headed lion, *whilst his country was all in a blaze* by the hands of the enemy, *who heaped together dry wood to kindle* [welcome] *the fire.*"

These quotations from the Welsh poets are corroborated by Welshmen who wrote in English. I will make a few extracts from *Sir John Wynne* and *Pennant* to show that the country was once a huge forest.

In the *History of the Gwydir Family*, Oswestry edition, p. 75, I find the following words :—

"All the whole countrey then was but a forest, rough and spacious, *as it is still*, but then waste of inhabitants, and all overgrowne with woods ; for Owen Glyndwr's warres beginning in 1400, continued fifteen yeares, which brought such a desolation that greene grasse grew on the market place in Llanrwst . . . . and the deere fled into [? fed in] the churchyard, as it is reported. . . . . The countrey of Nantconway was not onely wooded, but alsoe all Carnarvon, Merioneth, and Denbigh shires seemed to be but one forrest haveing few inhabitants."

Sir John, in this extract, tells us what the country was in his days—"*as it is still*,"—and also its condition previous to his days. Sir John died 1626-7, aged 73, consequently he was not very far removed from Owen Glyndwr; nor was he very distant from his editor, Barrington, who published Sir John's history in 1770 ; but by the latter date a change had come over the scene, for Barrington, in a foot-note to the above quotation, says :

"All this tract of country is mountainous, though not very rocky ; it may therefore have been formerly covered with wood, according to the account, though there is at present little or none to be seen."

We may therefore infer that the Snowdon forest, or Welsh forest, disappeared between the early part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Pennant, in his *Tour*, writes as follows:—"Stags were found here (Snowdonia) in the days of *Leland*, in such numbers as to destroy the little corn which the farmers attempted to sow; but they were extirpated before the year 1626."

The same author speaks of warrants issued by Queen Elizabeth, in one of which it would appear that the forest of Snowdon extended into the counties of Merioneth and Anglesey. The Earl of Leicester, who by letters patent had been appointed Chief Ranger of the forest of Snowdon, endeavoured to prove that his jurisdiction extended into Anglesey, because a stag had been started in Carnarvonshire and killed in Anglesey.

The stag, we are informed by *Pennant*, "was pursued to the banks of the Menai, that it swam over that branch of the sea, and was killed at Malltraeth, *infra forestam nostram de Snowdon.*"

These quotations abundantly prove that the country was formerly almost one continuous forest. But even if history were silent on this matter, place-names, that are most tenacious of life, would tell us the same thing.

## II.—The Evidence of Place-Names, etc.

The evidence of place-names, as to the state of the country in days gone by, is most valuable and trustworthy. Names of farms or wild mountain tracts, undoubtedly descriptive of those places when first applied to them, are no longer appropriate; the inference to be drawn from this is, that the country itself has undergone a change since the time when these expressive names were first applied to this or that spot, and not that the names were originally inapplicable to them. Proof of the correctness of this statement abounds in all parts of Wales. Take, for instance, the modern Welsh

name for Snowdon, *Y Wyddfa*, or *Gwyddfa*, a compound word derived from *Gwydd*, trees, and *fan*, a place, or in other words, the forest; in our days Snowdon cannot boast of even a single primæval oak; all have disappeared, but the name remains to tell us that formerly it was clothed with wood to such a degree that it was pre-eminently *the forest*.

From the names of places along the Snowdon range of mountains it becomes a certainty that all those parts were once wooded, though at present nothing can be discovered of the ancient luxuriant forests but their names. Let us take, for instance, the bleak, naked district to the north of *Carnedd Llewelyn*, and ascertain what lessons the place-names there impart. At the foot of that hill lies a wild, rude tract of land strewn with boulders, called *Argoed*, but there is now no *Coed*, wood, there. In the immediate neighbourhood of the *Argoed* are places called *Gors-gwaen-gwiail*, and *Braich-y-breisgyll*, but the *gwiail*, saplings, and the *cyll breision*, thick hazels, are no more. A mountain ridge to the north of Carnedd Llewelyn is called *Cyrn Wiga*,—an expressive name, for the summit of the ridge would be bare, and would thus resemble horns (*cyrn*), whilst the wood on each side, the *Wiga*, would throw out into stronger relief those bare summits. It need hardly be said that the name *Cyrn Wiga*, under the present condition of that range, denuded of its wood, is a misnomer. Another instance—at the foot of the range, facing Penrhyn Castle, is a place known as *Coet-mawr*, or *Coetmor*, as locally pronounced, the large wood; but this is no more.

Tradition, speaking of the district above-mentioned, says that a squirrel could travel from *Cwm-pen-llafar*, a cwm at the foot of the Carnedd, to the sea, without once touching the ground; and it says that an active man might have achieved the same feat. The turbaries to be met with, even on the hill-tops and in the mountain valleys in those parts, also inform us that in ages long distant flourishing forests

waved their branches over the spots where now they lie weltering in their sodden graves.

Thus history, tradition, the earth, and place-names, separately and collectively, bear testimony to the fact that formerly Wales was almost one forest. I say almost, for place-names show that in remote ages the country had its bare hill-summits. The district that I have hitherto been speaking of shall adduce evidence to the truth of this remark. There are hilltops that have the significant name *Y Foel*, the bald, as *Foel Faban*, *Foelwnion*, *Mynydd-moel*; and then we have the side of a hill called *Y Llefn*, the smooth, a somewhat abrupt declivity on the south side of a conical hill called *Y Gyrn*; then come such names as *Cwm Brwynog*, the rushy vale, and the expressive name *Yr Arryg*, which the author of *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* derives from *Ar* and *Rhyg*. But he shall speak for himself:—

"Possibly the word *Arryg* may be a compound of *Ar* and *Rhyg*, pronounced rapidly *Arryg*, which signifies *arable* or *plowed land* for *Rye*. Below it, on the south-west side, there are some remains here and there of plowed ridges, which prove that some parts of this hill below have been plowed; and it may be supposed that rye must have been the chief, if not the only grain sown on these hills" (p. 141).

The word *maes*, a field, joined with some other appellation, is often to be heard applied to a portion of the unenclosed mountain. Also the word *cae* occurs as a place-name in uncultivated parts of the commons.

We have got, therefore, thus far, that in the forests there were glades probably of no very large extent: and that these were partially cultivated shall be shown by-and-by.

But I have said that many a fruitful vale was once a dangerous swamp or treacherous marsh; and this can also be proved by the prevalence of such words as *wern*, a swamp;

*gors*, a fen; *rhos*, a moor, or watery meadow; in places where at present grow heavy crops of grain, but where once there were undoubtedly swamps and fens.

The very names of the trees that flourished in our primeval forests are preserved in place-names to this very day; thus, we have *Llwyn Celyn*, holly grove; *Llwyn On*, ash grove; *Bryn Helig*, willow hill; *Y Gelli*, hazel grove. Places have such names as *Y Fedw*, the birch tree; *Derwen*, oak, etc., and these names occur where these trees no longer exist. The turbary, however, informs us that the trees just mentioned were indigenous to the country.

Place-names also tell us what animals formerly found a home in our country. I will confine myself in treating of this subject to the Snowdon district.

Beginning with the ancient name of Snowdon, *Eryri*, which may be the plural of *eryr*, an eagle, though some derive the word from *eira*, snow, and thence the English word Snowdon. But that *eagles* frequented those rocky mountains will appear from the following quotation from the "Additions to Caernarvonshire" in Gibson's *Camden* (1695), p. 667:—

"The British name of these mountains *Kreigieu'r Eryreu*, signifies *Eagle Rocks*, which are generally understood by the Inhabitants to be so call'd from the Eagles that formerly bred here too plentifully, and do yet haunt these Rocks some years, tho' not above three or four at a time, and that commonly one Summer in five or six; coming hither, as is supposed out of Ireland. Had they been denominated from Snow, the name must have been *Kreigieu'r Eira*, whereas we always call them *Eryreu*. Nor do the ancientest Authors that mention them, favour Mr. Camden's Etymology; (he derived the word from *eira*, snow) for *Giraldus Cambrensis* writes it *Eryri* (which differs nothing in pronunciation), and Ninnius, who writ *Anno* 858. *Heriri*."

Thus far the cautious writer is strong in the affirmative, but, to make his remarks square in with the previous remarks of Camden, who makes the snow on the Snowdon mountain date, one would think, from the glacial period, for his words are:—"It (Snowdon) harbours snow continually, being throughout the year cover'd with it, or rather with a harden'd crust of snow of many years' continuance" (p. 663), Camden's commentator proceeds as follows:—

"However, seeing the English call it *Snowdon*, the former derivation (that of Camden from *eira*, snow) was not without good grounds; and 'tis possible the word *yrau* might be either the ancient pronunciation, or a corruption of *eira*; and so these Rocks call'd *Kreigiau yr Yrau*, which might afterwards be written *Kreigieu Eryreu*."

The accommodating writer does, however, further on, summon courage to state that the snow continues on the mountain for a considerable part of the year only, and not, as affirmed by Camden, throughout the year. I may state that *Creigiau*, rocks, and *Mynyddoedd*, mountains, are not synonymous terms; and it can hardly be said of perpendicular rocks that they are snowy rocks; though of mountains on which snow remains for a long period yearly, it can with propriety be said of them that they are snowy mountains. On the other hand, Eagle Rocks would be both an expressive and appropriate name, if Snowdon were frequented by eagles, or if eagles built their eyry on the rocks so named. That the Welsh designated places after birds is seen in many places; thus, the rock that towers above the road that leads from Llanrwst to Bettws-y-Coed is called *Carreg-y-Gwalch*, the *Falcon's Rock*; and nothing could be more natural than that the stupendous rocks of Snowdon should take their name from the king of birds—*Creigiau'r Eryri*, the *Rocks of Eagles*, particularly as it is known that centuries ago eagles visited those rocks.

The author of *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains*, commenting on the name of the mountain, remarks, that if the name were derived from *snow*, it would take the form *Creigiau'r Eiry* or *Eira*, and not the form *Creigiau'r Eryri*. In corroboration of the correctness of this remark, I may say that a hollow on the Llanllechid hills, where snow makes a prolonged lodgment, is called *Pant yr Eira*, or *Snow Hollow*.

Giraldus speaks of an eagle that visited Snowdon; and his resting on a certain stone, the Archdeacon tells us, presaged war and carnage.

From what has been said, it would seem that in far distant ages the aborigines of Carnarvonshire might have seen with fear the aerial flight of eagles.

Another animal that once inhabited the secluded valleys of Wales was the beaver. Giraldus, in his *Itinerary through Wales*, Bohn's edition, p. 429, says: "The Teivi has another singular particularity, being the only river in Wales, or even in England, which has *beavers*."

This was in the twelfth century; beavers are mentioned in the *Laws of Howel Dda*, which were drawn up a few centuries before the Archdeacon's days, but these animals were even then very rare. The name of the vale, *Nant y Ffrancon*, the valley that stretches from near Ogwen Lake to the Penrhyn Quarries, is thought to owe its origin to the beavers; it is said in that neighbourhood that Nant y Ffrancon is a corruption of *Nant yr Afan cwn*, the *afan cwn* being beavers. There is also on the river Conway a pool called *Llyn yr Afangc*, and here again tradition informs us that the *afangc* was the beaver.

Names of places testify also to the existence of *wolves;* thus we have *Lluyn Bleiddyn*, wolves' coppice. This is in Llanllechid parish. *Arth*, a bear, is found in combination with other words as a place-name. The prevalence of deer

is indicated by the many names derived from that animal, as *Llam yr Ewig*, Deer's Leap, a place above the Aber waterfalls.

The names already mentioned can boast of a good old age, and from them we may infer that Wales was for centuries in the Christian era but thinly populated. There is, however, another class of names derived from animals, which, although probably not of great antiquity, should not be passed over, for it is almost a certainty that some of the places denoted by them had the names they now bear at the time when the mountain-sides in their immediate neighbourhood were inhabited by the people who lived in the round huts, the foundation stones of which are still visible in those parts, and are the subject of this paper.

The place-names I mean are derived from domestic animals which have reached our own days. On the west side of Cwm Penllafar, which is situated to the north of Carnedd Dafydd, is a *cwm* difficult of access, called *Cwm Môch*, pigs' dingle; just underneath Carnedd Llewelyn, on the north side, is a mountain lake called *Ffynnon Gaseg*, mare's well, and the whole *cwm* is called *Cwm-y-gaseg;* there, too, is *Afon-gaseg*, the mare's brook. The existence of horses is further shown by the name *Foel Meirch*, horses' hill; and cattle have left their name behind them in the same region, for there is to the north of Carnedd Dafydd a *Pant-yr-ychain*, cattle hollow; and a *Ffos-pant-yr-ychain;* and in *Cwm-ffynnon-gaseg* is a hollow called *Pant March*, horse's hollow. Thus in this wild mountain district we have evidence that cattle, horses, and pigs were possessed by its inhabitants. On the west side of Nant Ffrancon are such names as *Carneddy Filiast*, the heap of the greyhound-bitch; *Clogwyn-y-geifr*, the goats' precipice; *Llyn-y-gwn*, the dogs' lake; and in other parts of the Snowdon district like names are to be met with.

There is, however, one animal, the sheep, that has not, as far as I have been able to ascertain, left traces of its existence in place-names in Snowdonia, though in other parts of Wales I have found that it has done so. It cannot, perhaps, be inferred from this fact that sheep were unknown in ancient times in those parts; still, when we find the memory of other animals perpetuated by place-names, it is strange that the sheep has been neglected.

Such names as the preceding are highly suggestive, and if it could only be ascertained how old they are, they would be doubly valuable. But in many instances they can hardly be disassociated from the inhabitants of the primitive circular huts that are to be found in ruins not far from these hollows and dingles and hills, which are named after animals most of which have reached our days. The many deep trackways that lead from one group to another of these ancient abodes, and the furrows, prove that the dwellers therein were acquainted with and employed both horses and cattle as beasts of burden; and it is not unlikely that in their hunting expeditions they were assisted by dogs, as would be implied by such a name as *Carnedd y Filiast*, the cairn of the greyhound-bitch. Raising a heap of stones over the dead was a very ancient custom, but it did not continue long after the introduction of Christianity; therefore this *carnedd*, for whatever reason erected, can boast a good old age. I shall have more to say both about *carneddi* and place-names, therefore I leave this subject, and proceed to discuss the name ascribed to the dwellers in the huts.

### The Gwyddelod, who were they?

The circular huts are sometimes called *Cyttiau'r Gwyddelod*. The word "sometimes" is used advisedly, for it does not appear that they are invariably so designated. Often and again the writer has asked natives what these remains were,

and he has received the answer, "Oh, they are some old ruins." No other answer could be obtained from, nor any information respecting them given by, many a Carnarvonshire farmer; still, it cannot be denied that in Anglesey these huts are called as above, and that the name is not uncommon in other parts of Wales.

*Camden* is the first to allude to these remains, which he does when describing Anglesey. Like remains are found in other Welsh counties—for instance, in Carnarvonshire; but Camden makes no mention of them when he treats of the latter county. However, the writer of the "Additions to Caernarvonshire" states:

"I observ'd that these Inhabitants of the Mountains call any low Country *Hendrev*, which signifies the *ancient habitation;* and that 'tis a common tradition amongst them, as also amongst those that inhabit the like places in Brecknock and Radnorshire, that the Irish were the ancient Proprietors of their Country."[1]

With regard to this remark, it may be stated, that along the Carnarvonshire hills are to this day remains of *Hafodtai*, or *summer habitations*, which were occupied only during the summer months by the farmer and his family, residing there to superintend their flocks and herds, which would have roamed over the unenclosed mountain land if not thus carefully looked after. On the approach of winter, the farmer returned with his family and stock to his *Hendre*, or old abode. This practice, judging from the names of the Hafodtai, and their state of preservation, must have descended to comparatively modern times. The *Hafodty* was undoubtedly connected with the *Hendre* in the manner now stated, and the *Hendre* was in no way corroborative evidence of the truth of the tradition mentioned above, as it would

[1] Gibson's *Camden*, p. 670.

seem to have been in the opinion of the writer, but was simply the homestead of the family, in contradistinction to the summer residence, or *Hafodty*.

It would appear from *Pennant* that even in his day the practice of going to the hills in summer prevailed. Speaking of the Snowdonia mountain, he writes:

"Its produce is cattle and sheep, which during summer keep very high in the mountains, followed by their owners, with their families, who reside in that season in *Havodtai*, or summer dairy houses, as the farmers in the *Swiss Alps* do in their *Sennes* . . . . they milk both ewes and goats, and make cheese of the milk . . . . Towards winter they descend to their *Hendref*, or old dwelling."

This is explicit enough, and effectually disposes of the *Hendref* of Camden's annotator, but there still remains the tradition that the Irish were the original proprietors of Wales —a tradition which perhaps in part owes its origin to the prevalence in Wales of such words (combined with others) as *Gwyddel, Gwyddelod*, in place-names, and to the modern application of these terms to an Irishman, or Irishmen. It shall however be shown by-and-by that the word Gwyddel has not necessarily anything Irish about it, but that it is derived from the Welsh word, *gwydd*, "wood".

I will now refer to the authorities that associate these remains with the Irish, probably in consequence of the name applied to them, *Cyttiaw'r Gwyddelod*. The first reference that I find to these abodes is in *Camden*, p. 674, Gibson's edition. Thus he writes:

"However, we may add, that about the decline of the Roman Government in Britain, some of the Irish Nation crept into this Island (Anglesey). For besides certain intrench'd Banks, which they call *Irish Cottages;* there is another place well known by the name of *Yn hericy Gwidil*, from some Irish, who under the conduct of *Sirigi* overcame the Britains there, as we read in the Book of *Triades*."

The words, *Irish Cottages*, are given in Camden as *Hibernicorum Casulæ*. This was not the name that he found applied to these huts, as his annotator remarks in a passage which shall shortly be quoted; it was *Cyttiau'r Gwyddelod*, and these words he translated into Latin as above. A more correct translation of *Gwyddelod* might be *sylvestres homines*, as shown in *Mona Antiqua*, second edition, p. 27. Upon this foundation, however, and upon another place-name in which *Gwyddel* appears, Camden asserts that these huts were the work of Irishmen. It is true that he refers to a Triad as corroborative evidence of his statement, but taking all the evidence produced by Camden, and giving to it its full value, what he says falls far short of proving that these huts were erected by the Irish invaders of Anglesey under Sirigi. It might be asked what necessity would there be for Sirigi and his followers to take the trouble to erect huts, when the abodes of their vanquished foes would be at their disposal? And if this invasion were the origin of these huts, we should require a large number of invasions to account for the innumerable remains of huts found in Carnarvonshire, Merionethshire, Denbighshire, and other parts of Wales; and again, in these cases the habitations of the conquered would militate against the theory of Camden, for there they stood, the property of the victors, built and furnished ready to hand, and all that the latter would have to do would be to enter and take possession of the abodes of the slaughtered.

I take it that *hericy* is a misprint for *Keric y, i.e., Cerrig y*, and that the place referred to in the above quotation is *Cerrig y Gwyddel*. How Camden connects this place with the invasion of Sirigi, he does not tell us. If it had anything to do with that invasion, the name would have taken a more specific form than *the Stones of the Gwyddel;* but after a lapse of twelve hundred years—the time from "the decline of the Roman government" to Camden's days—the exact

spot on which was fought a battle between the Irish and Britons could hardly be pointed out with undoubted precision. It amounts almost to a certainty that Camden, or his informant, finding a place-name *Cerrig y Gwyddel*, where there were stones artificially arranged, and not knowing that *Gwyddel* had another signification than "Irishman", surmised that this place was the site of the defeat of the Britons by Sirigi.

The author of the "Additions to Anglesey", in *Camden*, commenting on the above quotation, writes as follows:—

"These words, *Yn Hericy Gwidil*, I suppose to have been erroneously printed for *Kerig y Gwydhel*, i.e., *Irish stones;* for we find a place so call'd in the parish of *Lhan Gristiolis*. But I think we may not safely conclude from that name, either that the Irish had any settlement in these parts, or that there was any memorable action here betwixt that Nation and the Britains; seeing it relates only to one man, who perhaps might be buried at that place, and a heap of stones cast on his grave, as has been usual in other places. I also make some doubt, whether those Monuments our Author mentions by the name of *Hibernicorum Casulæ*, or *Irish Huts*, be any proof that ever the Irish dwelt there; for they are only some vast rude stones laid together in a circular order, enclosing an Area of about five yards diameter, and are so ill-shaped that we cannot suppose them the foundations of any higher building: and as they are, they afford no shelter or other conveniency for Inhabitants. Those I meant, are to be seen in a wood near *Lhygwy*, the Seat of the worshipful *Pierce Lloyd*, Esq., and are commonly call'd *Killieu'r Gwydhélod*, i.e., *Irish Cotts;* whence I infer they must be the same which Mr. Camden calls *Hibernicorum Casulas*."

"A Monument of this kind, tho' much less, may be seen at *Lhech yr Ast* in the parish of Lhan Goedmor near Cardigan,

which was doubtless erected in the time of Heathenism and Barbarity; but to what end, I dare not pretend to conjecture. The same be said of these *Killieu'r Gwydhêlod*, which I presume to have been so call'd by the vulgar, only because they have a tradition, that before Christianity, the Irish were possess'd of this Island, and therefore are apt to ascribe to that Nation such Monuments as seem to them unaccountable; as the Scotish Highlanders refer their circular Stone pillars to the Picts. For we must not suppose such barbarous Monuments can be so late as the end of the sixth Century; about which time the Irish Commander *Sirigi* is said to have been slain by *Kaswalhawn law hir* (i.e. *Cassivelaunus Longimanus*) and his people forc'd to quit the Island. We have many places in Wales besides these denominated from the Irish; as *Pentre'r Gwydhel* in the parish of *Rhos Golin* in this County; *Pont y Gwydhel* in Lhan Vair, and *Pentre'r Gwydhel* in Lhysvaen parish, Denbigshire; *Kerig y Gwydhel* near *Festineog*, in Meirionydhshire; and in Cardiganshire we find *Kwm y Gwydhel* in Penbryn parish, and *Karn Philip Wydhil* in *Lhan Wennog;* but having no history to back these names, nothing can be inferr'd from them."[1]

The writer of this extract does not think that we are justified in concluding from the name *Cerrig y Gwyddel*, either that the Irish made a settlement in Mona, or that a memorable action took place there; and further, a similar monument, he states, existed near Cardigan, called *Llech yr Ast*, and he argues from the identity of these remains and the difference of names that it is unsafe to conjecture to what end they were erected; but he would, I think, impress upon the reader that in his opinion, like structures were erected for like purposes. Then he proceeds to account for a local appellation, *Killieu'r*, or *Cellieu'r*, or more probably *Cyttiau'r, Gwyddelod* on the score of ignorance, and the desire to establish the

[1] Gibson's *Camden*, p. 678.

truth of a tradition by reference to place-names in which the word *Gwyddel* appears, and he comes to the conclusion that, *having no history to back these names, nothing can be inferred from them.*

The writer of the extract is *Edward Llwyd*, who in 1693 collected materials for Gibson's *Camden*, and everything he says on antiquarian matters deserves all attention and consideration.

It will be observed that he does not, like the writer of the first quotation, which I have taken from Camden, refer to the *Triads*. The omission must have been intentional. The value of the *Triads* as historic records is not great, particularly when they refer to events that occurred many centuries before their compilation; hence, probably, the silence of Llwyd respecting them.

Llwyd, however, refers to the tradition that at one time the Irish were possessed of Anglesey. I know not whence the tradition sprang, whether from fact or fancy; but I will say that tradition is more likely to be true when indirectly, rather than when directly corroborated, and that the associating of these place-names with the tradition is in itself suspicious, and is suggestive that the tradition had its origin in these names, and not that the names are corroborative evidence of the truth of the tradition.

The next person whose writings I shall quote from with reference to the *Cyttiau'r Gwyddelod* is Rowlands, the author of *Mona Antiqua*. Camden died in 1623, aged 73; Edward Llwyd died in 1709, aged 49; and Rowlands died in 1723, aged 68; so that the whole of my authorities are not, in time, far removed from each other, and the information which the two latter possessed could be obtained from a common source. Rowlands evidently had read Camden, and his remarks are made with what appears in Camden before his mind.

Rowlands describes the probable proceedings of the first inhabitants of the Isle of Anglesey ere the wood was felled and the land cleared, and then he proceeds as follows :—

"That what I say now may not appear to be a vain, groundless surmise, though the custom of other nations, and the then necessity of the thing may be some evidence of it—there are to this day visible upon our heaths and *Rhosydh* the marks and footsteps of those booths and cabbins, in the oval and circular trenches, which are seen in great plenty dispersed here and there on such grounds. No one can well deny them to have been little dwellings and houses; and their being only on those barren, heathy grounds is some argument that they were so used before the better grounds were reduced and cultivated. And that such marks and tokens of them, as we find, might well remain undefaced on such grounds from that time to this day, is not, I think, difficult to be imagined; because these barren, heathy grounds, on which these trenches are, have generally their glebe or upper mould and surface of a claiy, firm, unwastable texture, not to be worn and flatted with rains and weather; and are also generally so barren and despicable, that the plough and spade cannot be suspected to have had ever anything to do with them."

Such is Rowlands' description of the foundations of the circular huts referred to by Camden in the words,—"tumulos fossa circumdatos quos Hibernicorum casulas vocant." Rowlands proceeds as follows :—

"It is true they are called *Cyttie'r Gwyddelod*, viz., the Irish men's cottages. But that must be a vulgar error, if by *Gwyddelod* be meant the inhabitants of Ireland, who never inhabited this island so as to leave any remains of their creats and cottages behind them. For those Irish that are said to rob and pillage this island seldom staid long in it; and if they had, they cannot well be supposed to leave those

marks behind them; for they found here good houses to lodge themselves in for the time they staid, and were in no need of using that Irish custom, where they could not fail of being better provided. But if by *Gwyddelod* be meant the Aborigines—the first inhabitants—as it is not unlikely it may; for the two words that make up that name are purely British, viz., *Gwydd* and *Hela*, i.e., *Wood-Rangers*, which was perhaps the common appellative of the Aborigines, lost with us, and retained only by the Irish, then the objection falls to the ground; and the instance confirms the conjecture, that they are the remains of the first planters' habitations, while they were destroying the woods and cultivating the country."[1]

These are pertinent remarks, consequent upon observation and reflection, and no one who has visited the site of these ancient remains can doubt that they are the vestiges of the abodes of the first inhabitants of the country, though Rowlands supposes that these huts were occupied temporarily until the land was cleared. We shall see by-and-by whether he was correct in this supposition. He, however, is positive that it is a vulgar error to say that by *Gwyddelod* is meant Irishmen, and he rightly finds the root of the word in *gwydd*, wood. Perhaps he would have been still more correct had he derived the word *Gwyddelod* thus: *gwydd*, "wood", *gwyddel*, pl. *gwyddelod*, a person, pl. persons, who dwell in a wood. In this way the word would apply to *a place*, and not to a *race*. Just as a man who lives on the mountains is called a mountaineer, or *mynyddwr*, so would a person who lived in a forest, in contradistinction to one who lived on the hills, or elsewhere, be designated a bushman or a *Gwyddel*. When the woods ceased to exist, the term itself would become obsolete, or if extant, confusing; and hence, possibly, all the misunder-

[1] *Mona Antiqua*, p. 27, Ed. 1766.

standing of the term *gwyddel* in modern times. If this solution be correct, we shall expect to meet in various parts of Wales with words compounded of *gwyddel* that have no reference whatever to Irishmen. For wherever there are mountains there will be mountaineers, and wherever there is a forest there will be bushmen, or *gwyddelod.*

Professor Rhys remarks, in his *Welsh Philology*, 2nd edit., that the presence of the Gaels in Wales "derives most of its support from Welsh place-names, which are supposed to commemorate the sojourn of the Gael by their containing the word *Gwyddel* 'an Irishman', plural *Gwyddyl* or *Gwyddelod*: such are *Gwyddelwern, Llan y Gwyddel, Porth y Gwyddel, Twll y Gwyddel,* and the like. But it is not at all clear to me how any such names can go to prove the priority of the Gael over the Kymro in Wales..... Then there are other deductions to make from the list; for many, probably the majority, of the names adduced have nothing whatever to do with Irishmen, there being another word, *gwyddel,* plural *gwyddeli* (formerly, perhaps, also *gwyddyl*), which is a derivative from *gwydd,* wood. The identity of form between it and the word for Irishmen is only accidental..... The common noun *gwyddel,* which is no longer in use, means a brake or bush." (Pp. 175-7.)

Professor Rhys refers to Dr. Pughe's definition of *gwyddelawg,* "overrun with brambles," and *Gwyddelwern,* "a moor or meadow overgrown with bushes," and states that in the same way *Gwyddelfynydd* is to be explained, and such place-names as *Mynydd y Gwyddel, Gwaun y Gwyddel, Gwern Gwyddel, Nant y Gwyddel, Pant y Gwyddel;* and he ends his remarks as follows:—

"The outcome of this is, that after making the deductions here suggested from the list, there can be few, if any, of the names in question which could be alleged in support of an early occupation of Wales by the Gael. They would un-

doubtedly fall far short of the number of those with *Sais*, 'an Englishman', plural *Saeson*, such as *Rhyd y Sais*, *Pont y Saeson*, and the like . . . by a parity of reasoning, these ought to go some way to prove the English to have occupied Wales before our ancestors." (P. 177.)

In my next paper I will describe the circular or ovoidal huts that are called *Cyttiau'r Gwyddelod*.