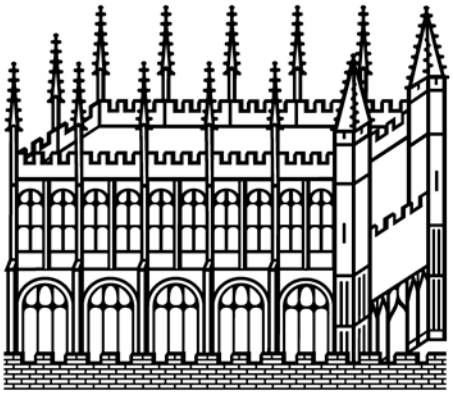

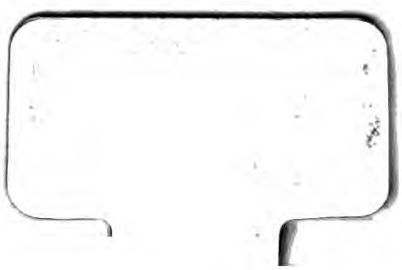


The Stone of St. Cadfan.

# OBSERVATIONS

ON

# The Stone at St. Cadfan,

AT

# TOWYN.


BY

J. O. WESTWOOD, ESQ., F.S.A., F.L.S.,

AND THE

REV. J. WILLIAMS (AB ITHEL).

REPRINTED FROM

The Archæologia Cambrensis.

---

LONDON:
W. PICKERING, 177, PICCADILLY.
TENBY: R. MASON.
1850.

TENBY: R. MASON, PRINTER, HIGH STREET.

# The Stone of St. Cadfan.

---

The genuineness of the remains of the ancient literature of every country, as well as the veracity of its historical traditions, are intimately dependant upon the existence of unquestioned documents, either written or carved. It follows, as a necessary principle, that the higher the antiquity of such documents, and the nearer their age to the period to which they refer, the greater will be their value, being so much the less likely to have undergone any alteration, either wilful or unintentional, whereby either their language, or the facts they are intended to perpetuate, may have been varied.

Such documents are either written or carved. Referring to the Christian period, we may take as examples of the former the manuscripts of the Scriptures, or those of the works of early historians, such as Eusebius or Bede, and we at once perceive that a manuscript of the Gospels of the fourth century, (such as the one recently obtained by the British Museum,) or one of the "*Ecclesiastica Historia Gentis Anglorum*" of the eighth, are documents which it is impossible not to venerate, as affording incontrovertible proofs that at such early periods the relations contained in such manuscripts were considered as truths.

With such a document as the last named, for instance, before him, no one would attempt to deny the fact of the existence of Christianity in England to a great extent at the time when Bede wrote. But, unfortunately for Wales, there is not a single genuine Welsh manuscript in existence, so far as I know, either historical, religious, or poetical, earlier than the twelfth or thirteenth century. Hence the ease with which doubts are thrown upon the productions of the earlier Welsh writers, (who are only known by copies made by comparatively recent scribes,) and hence it is that, except from the relations of contemporary Anglo-Saxon or Irish writers, there is no means of proof (so far as this class of documents is concerned) earlier than the twelfth century of the existence of religion, literature, or science, in Wales.

But Wales does possess a series of documents of very high antiquity, the genuineness of which is unquestioned, and which, extending back to the Roman period, afford proofs of the truths which the want of manuscripts might cause, and indeed has caused, to be questioned.

The carved and sculptured stones of Wales are, in fact, the only unimpeachable proofs which exist in Wales of the extent to which religion, literature, and science was there cultivated, from the third to the twelfth centuries. Of their value, therefore, I need scarcely say a single word. They are worthy to be prized as highly as the most costly executed manuscripts, and yet, as will appear in the subsequent part of this article, it is to be feared that many of them are in danger of immediate destruction; whilst others, even within the last few

years, are known to have been, either accidentally or wilfully, destroyed. On both these accounts, therefore, it is of the utmost importance that correct copies should be published of them all; for, although many are engraved in the works of Pennant, Camden, Gibson, &c., their figures are so rude as to be almost useless.

Many of these stones record but a name, with the accompaniment of some certain indication of the profession of Christianity by the party thus commemorated. Still oftener we meet with the Latin formula, "Hic jacet A. B., filius C. D.," or some analogous words.

But with the exception of the pillar of Eliseg *(see* vol. i., p. 32, for its mutilated inscription), in which some Welsh words are introduced among the Latin ones, a stone found at Tregaron, moved to Goodrich Court by Sir S. R. Meyrick, (supposed by him to be of the sixth century, inscribed with the words *Potenina malher*, read by Sir S. R. Meyrick, *Bod yn yna Mael Hir*, and to be dedicated to a British prince, Mael Hir,[1]) and the stone of St. Cadfan, I am not acquainted with any other memorial bearing an inscription in the ancient Welsh language.

The stone of St. Cadfan, at Towyn, has been engraved in the works of Gibson and Pennant, but so inaccurately that it is not to be wondered at that it has never yet been deciphered. At the meeting of the Cambrian Archæological Association, held in 1848, at Caernarvon, as already stated in vol. iii., p. 364, casts of the four sides of this stone were presented to the museum by W. W. E. Wynne, Esq., who has also kindly placed in my

[1] *Cambrian Quarterly Journal,* vol. ii., p. 142.

hands a series of rubbings taken from the stone itself. These materials have enabled me to present the readers of this Journal with representations of the inscriptions, which have been reduced from the originals with the greatest care, by means of the *camera lucida*.

The stone itself is about seven feet long, and about ten inches wide on the two widest sides, the other two sides being considerably narrower. The figures on the accompanying plate are arranged according to the occurrence of the inscriptions on the several sides of the stone. Supposing the stone to be standing erect, (it is now, however, lying flat on the floor of Towyn Church,) the inscription on the side marked A is to be read from the ground upwards. It appears complete by the two ornamental curved marks after the terminal *n*. Walking round the stone from left to right, the next side, B, has the inscription also carved so as to be read from the ground upwards. The crosses inscribed on these two sides show that each is the commencement of a distinct inscription to the memory of different individuals. The third side, C, in the same manner of progression, is a narrow one, and bears a series of letters along its entire length; but here the order is reversed, beginning at the top and reading downwards. There is here no indication of the commencement of a fresh inscription, and, unless the sense will assist us, we are unable to guess whether it be a continuation of the inscription commencing on the opposite narrow edge, A, carried over the top of the stone; or whether the continuation of that on the broad side, B; or whether, following the ordinary arrangement of the letters, it is the termination of the

inscription on the fourth side, D, which has the letters arranged downwards in the same manner, and which might accordingly be considered as the commencement of the inscription, if we do not here adopt the idea that the sculptor has carried his paragraph from the broad side, B, over the top of the stone to the top of the broad side, D. The solution of this question must be left to the philological skill of the Rev. J. Williams. It will be observed that the stone is broken across, near the top, and this, on the fourth side, D, seems to have influenced the characters of the letters, those of the lower division being much larger than the upper.

The inscription on the first side is tolerably clear and legible. The three letters between the first *c* and ϵ are the only ones respecting which there can be any doubt. They appear to me to represent a *u* and N conjoined, followed by a reversed *g*,[1] rather than IN*b*. The terminal letter is a small *n*, showing that both capital and minuscule letters were commingled indiscriminately. The line is therefore to be read,—

+ CUNGEN CELEN ⋋

The second side, B, has the latter part of the inscription partially injured, by the fracture of the stone near the top. The first seven letters are plain; the seventh is

[1] This form of the minuscule *g*, either with the ordinary straight top bar resting upon a *s*, or in its reversed form, has much perplexed persons not used to ancient palæographical monuments. Instances of it in its unreversed position occur in the Catamannus inscription, engraved in a former volume of this journal, and in the Catacus inscription at Llanfihangel Cwm du, Brecknockshire. (*Cambrian Quarterly Magazine*, v., 519.) The reversing of letters, turning them upside down, or even laying them upon their sides, were usual faults with the ancient stone engravers.

a *g* of curious unreversed form, but exactly similar to the *g* in the British or Irish Gospels of St. Gatien at Tours, of the seventh century. (*Nouv. Tr. de Dipl.*, iii., *pl.* 37, IV. ii.) The next letter is difficult, the stone having apparently been injured; it looks like *n*, and is so given by Bishop Gibson, but in Pennant's figure it looks like CI.[1] I read the next five letters *malte*, the top bar of the *t* being plain. In the now broken space of the top line, both Gibson and Pennant represent a *d*. The last two letters are *gu*. The first five letters of the second line are plainly *adgan*, completing the name GUADGAN, *i.e.*, CADVAN, but the small letters at the end, forming two lines, are now doubtful, in consequence of the fracture of the stone. They appear to me to be a *m*, beneath which is *a*, the second stroke of which is ill-defined, so that it may be only *c*. In the broken space there is room for two letters, followed apparently by R; but Llwyd gives these last letters (as seen before the stone was broken):—

mc
CRta

This line, therefore, appears to me to be intended for—

+ tengrug c(?)i malte(d)gu
adgan m
a?···tr (or a)

The third side, C, is clear, with the exception of the second letter, now broken, which looks like part of *r*. (Pennant gives it *n*, before the stone was broken here.) The eleventh letter seems certainly intended for *b*. The whole is therefore to be read—

an?terunc dubut marciau

[1] In our engraving this letter is represented too much like a *a*.

The fourth side, D, has the top line plain: the middle line is more difficult, the first letter is evidently *c*, the next is more like a *l* without the little bottom curve, which seems to have been turned in the opposite direction; the following appears to me to be an *o*, although the circle is not quite complete on the right side; the next is given by Camden and Pennant as *p*, but it seems to me to be *d*; all the letters in the bottom line seem to me to be plain.

This side of the inscription must therefore be read—

molt tricet
clode
tuar nitanam

I trust these observations will now enable Mr. J. Williams to decipher these ancient inscriptions. Of their age it is difficult to speak, judging alone from the characters of the letters; but, as they are written, for the most part, in very debased minuscule Roman characters, I think we may refer them to a considerable period after the Romans had left the country, and their capital letters had fallen into disuse; such characters may have been used, therefore, from the sixth to the ninth century, when the improvements introduced by Charlemagne would doubtless influence even the scription of Welsh writers. I should scarcely hesitate, however, in regarding them as productions of the seventh or eighth centuries. As such, we have here a series of sentences in the old language of Wales more ancient by several centuries than any other in existence,[1] and which accor-

[1] I do not here overlook the inscriptions in the Gospels of St. Chad, (fac-similes of which are given in the first volume of the Publications of the Welsh MSS. Society, and in my "*Palæographia*

dingly offer the means of testing the correctness of the more ancient of the relics of Welsh literature which have come down to us only in copies of a later date. As such, also, this stone is one of the most precious monuments of Welsh religion and literature, and merits every care which can be bestowed upon it, to place it in such a position as will secure it to future ages.

I must reserve my notes on some of the other early inscribed and carved stones for the following number of this Journal.

J. O. Westwood.

Hammersmith, October, 1849.

---

There can be no doubt that the crosses on the Cadvan Stone indicate the commencement respectively of two distinct inscriptions, and it being formerly the usual practice to begin commemorative sentences with the symbol of Christianity, we may fairly resolve the whole of the present writing into the said number. But the question is, as Mr. Westwood observes, whether the crossless inscriptions are a continuation of their opposites, carried over the top of the stone, or whether they are merely a continuation of the inscription on the side, B. It seems to me that the former mode is the one to be adopted in the present instance, and more especially so since the side D, as well as the side C, is traced downwards, thus violating the zig-zag order, which otherwise,

*Sacra Pictoria,")* since, judging from the form of the letters in which they are written, they are more recent than those upon the Stone of St. Cadfan, and indicate considerably more Anglo-Saxon influence.

it might be argued, was the intention of the engraver to observe, for the greater facility of reading. And, with due deference to Mr. Westwood's superior skill and experience in these matters, (had not this stone been somewhat *sui generis* I should not have hazarded the remark,) I cannot with him regard the curved character at the top of the side A as denoting the completeness of the inscription, but as inserted there simply with a view to fill up the vacant space, or as a hyphen to connect the two sides together.

I would therefore read side A and its opposite thus:—

+ CUNGEN CELEN ARTERUNC DUBUT MARCIAU.

In modern orthography,—

CYNGEN CELAIN AR TU RHWNG DYBYDD MARCIAU.

That is, as I would render it,—

"The body of Cyngen is on the side between where the marks will be."

Again, the sides B and D, as follows:—

+ TENGRUGCIMALTEDGUADGAN MARTH MOLT CLODE TUAR TRICET NITANAM.

In modern orthography,—

TAN GRUG CYVAL TEDD GADVAN MARTH MOLL CLOD Y DDAEAR TRIGED NID ANAV.

Which might be thus translated,—

"Beneath a similar mound is extended Cadvan, sad that it should enclose the praise of the earth. May he rest without blemish."

The proper division of words and sentences was very much neglected in old Welsh MSS. Thus, in a MS. at Cambridge, under the title of "Juvencus," as copied by Llwyd, (*Archæologia*, p. 224,) we have,—

"Nigourcosam nemheunaur henoio mitelu nit gurmaur mi amfranc dam ancalaur."

Which, divided into the form of its verse, in the orthography of the present day, would be,—

"Ni worchysav, ni'm hunawr henoeth,
Vy nheulu nid gorvawr;
Mi a'm franc dav a'n callawr."

See *Dr. Pughe's Grammar*, p. 9.

In the above extract we see also how the M was anciently used where we would now use the V, or the soft F. The same we likewise find in St. Chad's Book, which is supposed to have been written before the year 720, where *irham* and *irgaem* stand for *yr hav* and *y gaeav* respectively. In accordance with this usage, I have read CIMAL, CYVAL, and NITANAM, NID ANAV. The former word, however, might have been intended for CINMAEL, a place of retreat, or a corner. If so, I should translate the line,—

"*In the retreat beneath the mound is extended Cadvan.*"

The substitution of U for W, I for Y, and T for DD, is further apparent in the stanza quoted above, as indeed it is in all the old Welsh MSS.

E for A was also extensively used, such as *deu* for *dau*, *men* for *man*, which would justify my reading TEN, TAN; and that E was used for Y is very clear from the following passage at the end of a copy of the Welsh Laws, a MS. of the thirteenth century:—

"Mae elle etal estraun o alanas kemint abraut enelle cenicier ar alanas maab ad duco iuam ikenedel arall o kan i eneb aueicus drostau."

That is, in modern orthography,—

"Mae y lle y tal estrawn o alanas cymaint â brawd yn y lle cenygier ar alanas mab a ddyco ei vam i genedl arall y gan y neb a veichws drosto."—*Dr. Pughe's Grammar*, p. 9.

As the double L was not introduced until the twelfth century, we could not, of course, have looked for it in MOLT, but why the last letter should be there might prove to some persons a difficulty. It is a fact, however, that some words ending simply in *ll* are vulgarly pronounced as if there were a *t* added; *e.g.*, *oll* and *deall* are pronounced *ollt* and *dallt;* and when we consider, moreover, that the letter *t* enters into an extended modification of *deall*, viz., *dealltwriaeth*, without any apparent reason, but rather contrary to etymological analogy, we cannot help thinking that the said letter did anciently often terminate words of that description.

I have not been able to find *daear* elsewhere written *tuar*, though it is to be found in various forms in the "Myvyrian Archaiology," as *daiar*, *dayar*, *dyar;* the last of which, be it observed, varies but slightly from the word on the stone, so that I have no doubt both are intended to express the same thing.

The plural termination in the early poems of the "Myvyrian Archaiology" is most commonly *eu*, and not *au*, as at present. Nevertheless there are instances of the latter, such as,—

> "Ac enwerys cyfrwyau
> Pan farner y Cadeiriau,"—vol. i., p. 66,

which makes it not so surprising that MARCIAU should exhibit that form. It is necessary to bear in mind that our ancestors had no fixed or uniform system of orthography.

But to leave the subject of orthography, and turn to other features of the inscription. MARCIAU evidently refer to certain monuments which were placed to mark

the spot where the deceased lay interred, probably stones, which, according to the Welsh Laws, were used as marks for various purposes. Such, no doubt, was the stone found in the Isle of Bardsey, bearing the inscription MARC VELIO. There might have been a stone, a maen hir, at each end of the grave, as was the case with the grave of Beli ab Benlli Gawr, (*see* "Hanes' Cymru," p. 35,) and thus the body of Cyngen would in truth be between the marks.

As the word at the end of the side B is imperfect, it would of course be difficult to ascertain its true meaning. I have above conjectured it to be *marth*, as being the nearest approximation to Llwyd's version. *Marth* is a word very much used by the poets in connexion with death and the grave; thus,—

"*Marth* ym pa vro ladd un mab marco."

"There is *sadness* in the plain where the only son of Marco was slain."—*Aneurin.*

"*Marth* marw eurdeyrn Gogledd."

"*Evident* the death of the splendid prince of the north."

*Myrddin.*

"Ail *marth* mawr mor de—yw lladd Llywelyn."

"Like the great *swell* of the south sea is the slaying of Llywelyn."—*Gwalchmai.*

"Er madawg ys mau
*Marth* goviau gyfesgar."

"For Madawg *sad* memorials of regret afflict me."—*Ibid.*

The meaning given to the word in Dr. Pughe's Dictionary is *evident, certain, swelling, heavy.*

Or could the inscription have been intended for *marchog*, in reference to the knightly character of Cadvan? or *merthyr*, a martyr?

*Triged nid anav*, "may he dwell without blemish," is

an expression equivalent to *requiescat in pace*, or *rest his soul*, which pious ejaculation assumes various shapes in the elegiac compositions of the bards.

But who are the persons here commemorated? As to Cadvan there can be no doubt. He was the son of Eneas Lydewig, by Gwenteirbron, a daughter of Emyr Llydaw, one of the princes of Armorica. In the earlier part of the sixth century he came over into Wales, and founded the churches of Tywyn, Merionethshire, and Llangadvan, Montgomeryshire. (*See* Rees's "Welsh Saints," p. 213.) In a poem written between the years 1230 and 1280, he is celebrated as the patron saint of Tywyn, "eglwys gadyr gaduan." And it would appear from the couplet,

"Gwyn y uyd a uyt o nothaed
Men y tric gwledic gwlad ednywed."

"Happy is he who shall enjoy the refuge
Of the place where dwells the sovereign of the region of reanimation,"

as if the poet believed the saint to have been buried in the said church.

*Tric*, it will be observed, is the same word as that on the stone, only they are in different moods.

Cyngen was probably the same with the son of Cadell, who would thus be a contemporary of Cadvan, for he flourished between 500 and 542. He succeeded his father in the Principality of Powys, and is distinguished for the patronage which he afforded to the saints, and for the liberal endowments which he gave to the Church. ("Welsh Saints," p. 161.) It was he who, no doubt, gave Tywyn, being within his dominions, to God and

St. Cadvan, and thus old associations, and admiration of his friend's virtues would naturally induce the prince to desire that, "when he died, he should be buried in the sepulchre wherein the man of God was buried, and to have his bones laid beside his bones," a wish which seems to have been duly accomplished.

JOHN WILLIAMS ab Ithel.

Llanymowddwy.

TENBY: R. MASON, PRINTER, HIGH STREET.