

A History of Caerwys

By S. E. Williams

The town of Caerwys in Flintshire is about four or five miles south west of Holywell; parts of the parish extend to the Denbighshire boundary. The town itself is on a spur of a plateau between two ravines and above the Wheeler along which the railway from Chester to Denbigh runs. In the ravine to the west is the well of St. Michael with a stream running from it to join the River Wheeler about a mile distant. In the ravine on the east are seven springs called "Ffynnon Deg" by the Welsh residents and "Seven Springs" by the English. From these flows the river Wys which also joins the Wheeler at Afonwen. During my childhood these two ravines were very beautiful, as woods covered the slopes and they made ideal ground for the very popular game of "Llwynog". There were no school dinners in those days, we took sandwiches for mid-day, and in suitable weather we took these with us and ate them as we wandered through the woods in our game, whether we were the 'hunted' or the 'hunters'. Those beautiful woods have been spoilt by the felling of timber during the last war. From the Clwydian range on the opposite side of the valley, Maesmynnan Wood, which was once so beautiful, looks a veritable scar on the landscape. This wood was noted for its wild and rare flowers and was a favourite haunt of botanist, but its flora and been strangled by the fast growing bramble and willow-herb.

The whole of the parish of Caerwys lies in the widest part of a belt of Carboniferous Limestone which extends from Prestatyn to Llandegla At Afonwen there is a very large deposit of white marl covering about fifteen acres, and varying in thickness from a few inches to forty-five feet, and wherever tested is found to be resting on Drift Sand and gravel. This

marl contains ninety-six to ninety-eight per cent of carbonate of lime and was once used extensively in the manufacture of Portland Cement. As the limestone in the immediate district is hard and in well-defined and regular beds and rather highly coloured by oxide of iron it is quite evident that this recent deposit is not a native of this place. About two miles to the north east and three hundred feet higher, there is a tract of country known as 'Ffrith-y-Garreg Wen' (the Moor of the White Stone). This tract contains the upper series of the Carboniferous Limestone free of oxide of iron. The natural fall or wash of this tract is to the east, where a ravine known as 'Trefaith' has been formed, running in a southerly direction and expanding into a chasm east of Caerwys, its stream 'Wys' forming a tributary of the 'Wheeler' at Afonwen. The natural conclusion is that the marl, having 'Ffrith-y-Garreg Wen' as the gathering ground, was washed down and deposited in its present position.

There seems to have been various versions of the name 'Caerwys' through the ages and different opinions as to its origin. In the 'Flintshire Ministers Account' for 1301 to 1328 it was written by one bailiff as 'Kayros', by another as 'Cairos', another wrote 'Cayros', whilst another version was 'Kayrus'. In a later volume of 'Flintshire Ministers Accounts' of 1328 to 1353 it became 'Cayrus' and finally 'Caerwys'. Pennant in his 'Tours of Wales' writes "the name savours of great antiquity – 'Caer' the fortress and 'Gwys' a summons, which shows it had been in early times the place of judicature. 'Caerwys' with a neighbouring town, now lost, called 'Trefedwen', and Rhuddlan had been from early times the seats of judicature for these parts of Wales."

William Davis in his "Handbook of the Vale of Clwyd", written in 1857 also gives this version, he writes "the name of the place is thought to be derived from 'Caer', a fortress, and 'Gwys', a summons; denoting that this was anciently a small Roman station, and subsequently a seat of judicature".

One writer suggests it is the ‘fortress on the Wys’ as ‘Caer’ means fortress, and the river in the ravine to the east of the town is called the Wys, it was originally ‘Caer-ar-Wyts’ which eventually became ‘Caerwys’.

In 1890 G. W. Shrubsole wrote, “there is something suggestive in the name ‘Caerwys’; the suggestion I have to make is that in ‘Wys’ we have the shortened form of ‘Varis’.’Caer-Varis’ would naturally in time resolve itself into ‘Caerwys’”. This also seems to be the opinion of B. Willis in his ‘Survey of St. Asaph’ he writes – “Rectors of Caer-wis, or as it is called more properly ‘Caer-vis’, being an abbreviation of ‘Caer-Varis’, the winter residence of Antoninus”.

Whilst the suggestion ‘Caer-ar-Wys’ is based on geographical fact, we cannot overlook the fact that both the other versions are as likely to be correct, as they are founded on history. Pennant and W. Davis have sound reasons for their views in claiming ‘Caer-y-wys’ (fortress of the summons) is the origin. In 1809 Pennant wrote “In 1281 before the Archbishop of Canterbury the infringement of their liberties asserting that it was the tenor of their privilege to be judged according to the laws of Wales, at Caerwys, Tref Edwyn and Rhuddlan. When justiciary courts were in after times appointed, Caerwys recovered its ancient honours. In this town were held the great sessions. It had its town hall and its jail, and was the place of execution. It remained the place of judicature until sometime past the middle of the seventeenth century, when the courts were removed to Flint.”

In 1857 William Davis writes “Caerwys appears, previously to the conquest of Wales by Edward I., to have been, together with a neighbouring town called ‘Tref-Edwys’, long since decayed, and the borough of Rhuddlan, one of the chief tribunals for this part of the Principality. In 1244 the Welsh Abbots of Cymmer and Aberconwy, having been constituted

by the pope a court of enquiry to ascertain whether David ab Llewellyn, Prince of North Wales, had been under the influence of terror or force, in concluding a late unfavourable treaty with King Henry III. of England; and if so to absolve him from fulfilling it, summoned King Henry to appear before them in the church of Caerwys to answer to the complaint of David; but he, incensed at the indignity offered to his authority, immediately applied to the pope to annul the commission, which was accordingly done.” These statements are authentic historical facts, therefore the claim to the origin of the name being ‘Caer-y-Wys’ is quite sound.

G. W. Shrubsole also has good reason for suggesting that ‘Caer-Varis’ is the original name, he claims that Caerwys was the site of ‘Varis’, the Roman ‘itinerary’ station between Chester (Deva) and Caernarfon, and not ‘Bodfari’ which is the view usually taken by antiquaries. He writes “In discussing the claims of the two localities, Bodfari and Caerwys, it should be borne in mind that Varis was in itinerary station, distant from Deva by thirty two miles. That its position, considering its isolation and the character of the surrounding tribes, would be well chosen it is certain. It would possess natural capabilities for defence as Deva or Segontium (Caernarfon). The site of Bodfari has none of these merits. Its situation, in a valley dominated by surrounding hills, altogether unfits it for the purpose of a Roman station. Nothing that has been found there justifies the claim in the least degree. Bodfari is but the mansion of Varis, and would point to the possible existence on the spot of a Roman Villa, not very far away from the line of the Roman street. While the claims of Bodfari have been over-estimated, those of Caerwys have been strangely overlooked. We find Caerwys mentioned in ‘Domesday’ showing that eight hundred years ago it had the repute of being a fortified site or ‘caer’. Nor are we in doubt as to the origin of the ‘caer’. Its situation is characteristic of a Roman rather than a British fortification. The latter sought the mountain top, as in so many

instances in the Vale of Clwyd, the other preferred a level but commanding site, with a natural defence of rock or river on one or more of the sides of the 'castrum'. The town of Caerwys is protected on its east and west flank by a rugged ravine, affording considerable security. It is worthy of notice that the streets of Caerwys run north and south as in the case of Chester and other Roman 'castra'. A mile or so north of the town is a straight piece of road pointing for the main thoroughfare. It is in the right direction for the itinerary road. Besides the town itself has the impress remaining of a Roman station in the direction of its streets, parallel with the probable outer entrenchments, and at right angles to one another. These features prove its Roman origin. In the matter of distance, Caerwys exactly fulfils the mileage of the itinerary, vis., thirty two miles, that is twenty nine, or twenty nine and a half English miles, equivalent to thirty two Roman miles. Now following the route taken from Chester at times along the Roman street, at others over ancient roads with equally old fortifications, or along a line for miles strewn with Roman relics and finally emerging into the street leading to Caerwys, we have all along the course, been more or less in touch with objects of contemporary age. I therefore on these grounds regard Caerwys as the Varis of the 'Itinerary'".

In recent years a stone-paved road has been contacted in ploughing fields at Wern Fawr Farm, short lengths of the road were noticed beneath the depth of the plough by the farmer, who removed many of the stones. As recently as 1944 the farmer at an adjoining farm also exposed a stretch of paved road which was about nine feet wide. The stones which made up this road were oval in shape and about six inches long, they were dug up and cast into the hedge bordering the road. It is conjectured by local historians that these stretches of paved road must have been the Roman Itinerary Road from Chester to Caernarfon, which lends

support to the view of G. W. Shrubsole that Caerwys was the 'Varis' on the Itinerary route, and that Caer-Varis was the original name.

Whichever version of the name is correct, there is no doubt that Caerwys is a very ancient place. If it was the 'Varis' of the Roman period it dates back to some time before 410 AD which is the date generally taken when the Romans made their departure from Britain.

About a mile from Caerwys are two farms on opposite sides of the road called 'Tref Edwen' and 'Marian Tref Edwen'. As 'Tref' would mean township in old Welsh laws it would be reasonable to presume that these would be within the precincts of the "neighbouring town called 'Tref Edwyn' long since decayed" mentioned by Pennant and W. Davis as being one of the places of judicature with Caerwys, in early times. There is now nothing at all to indicate there was once a town on the site, it has more than 'decayed', it has disappeared completely.

The land about here is somewhat rocky, several fields in the locality have bare patches of rock, whilst there are several small "ffrithoed" in the vicinity. It seems rather strange to me that there was once a town there.

Between Marian Trefedwen and the town of Caerwys stands a farmstead known as "Plas-yng-Nghaerwys", it is the largest farm in the district; its buildings are very old, the farm buildings have been repaired and modernised to some extent, but the house itself is in a bad state and unoccupied except for a couple of rooms used by a farm-worker. The present house, although very old, is not the original building, a stone in the gable end inscribed "Piers and M. Griffith 1589" is said to have been over the front door of the original house. This Griffith is said to have been a descendant of "Ednowen Bendew", chieftain of one of the

fifteen tribes of Gwynedd. This old homestead being so near Trefedwen makes me wonder if there is any connection in the names Trefedwen and Ednowen.

There are fields in these two farms with the interesting names of 'Maes-yr-Hafod', 'Llety Madoc' and 'Cilffrwn' which might suggest that in times gone by there were residences of these names on the spot. A stretch of lane nearby, so overgrown that the hedges meet and make it unusable, is called 'Ffordd Frederick' which also suggests it may have been a street of that name in the lost town of 'Tref Edwyn'.

Adjoining the farms 'Trefedwen' and 'Plas-yng-Nghaerwys' is another farm called 'Gelli Lyfdy'. This is said to have been erected in the first half on the seventeenth century, but the farm buildings date back further still, as one of the main beams of the barn, which are of oak, bears the date 1586, but it must have been in existence before even this date, as it is mentioned in the Domesday Book as "Cheslilaved". Early in the seventeenth century this was the home of the bibliographer John Jones, attorney of the court of the Marches, whose manuscript collects and transcriptions are now in the National Library of Wales. Owing to this fact some people in the district think the origin of the name 'Gelli Lyfdy' must have been 'Gelli Llyfrdy'.

Other sites and names of historical interest in the Parish of Caerwys.

1. "Ffordd y Palmant Coediog", this is a stretch of road which runs between the farms 'Ty Coch' and 'Plas Cerrig', and is claimed to be part of the Roman road previously mentioned. In my youth this was a grassy lane used only as a farm-track, it is now a metalled road along which runs a bus service from 'Caerwys' to 'Holywell' via 'Babell'.

2. "Palmant Cerrig", is the name of a field belonging to 'Harp Farm' not many yards away from 'Ffordd y Palmant Coediog'. This farm adjoins the farm 'Wern Fawr' where the paved road was unearthed in the process of ploughing.

3. "Erw'r Palmant", is also the name of a field, this time belonging to 'Plas-yn-Rhos' about three quarters of a mile away.

These names may have influenced Shrubsole in his assumption of the course and route of the Roman road from Chester to Caernarfon, and in assuming that Caerwys was 'Varis', the station on that route.

4. "Croes Wian", this spot at a crossroads is still called 'Croes Wian', although there is now no cross or base of cross remaining, nor any remembrance of such. The site is on the boundary line of the franchise of the town of Caerwys, and in the charter of Edward III (1357) to the burgesses of Caerwys, the boundary of their franchise is said to run "a via juxta Crucem vocatam Crosse Wyaun quae ducit versus Marian Croyken" a phrase which proves that a cross was then in existence here. (Ancient Monuments of Wales). 'Croeswian' is now the name of a farmhouse about fifty yards from the cross roads and happens to be home of my childhood.

5. "Maes Gwian", there are several fields in the vicinity belonging to different farms, which bear this name. The tradition is that an important personage called Gwian once lived in the vicinity.

6. "Erw'r Castell", is the name of a field close to the town of Caerwys, it is supposed to have been the site of an important fortress, in fact the 'caer' from which the town got its name.

7. “Ffordd Mehemia”, this lane forms part of the boundary of the parliamentary boundary of Caerwys. It is popularly called ‘Ffordd Mehemia’ and has always been known as such within the memory of people still living. The correct form of the name is said to be ‘Ffordd Bohemia’, the Bohemian Way, from the gipsies who formerly congregated there. This road was formerly the approach to Caerwys from the Mold – Denbigh main road, but nowadays only the northern portion remains as a public road, toward the south it is lost completely.

8. “Marian Liws” or Lucy, this is a stretch of common alongside the road leading to Caerwys Station where in olden times executions took place. Lucy it seems was the last person to be executed there. Her crime was really an accident as it was her fiancé she killed attempting to part him and her father whilst fighting. She expected a reprieve and imagined she could see a horseman coming along the road down the mountain which can be seen from this spot; as they were preparing to hang her she insisted “Dacw fo Syr Huw Miltwn yn dyfod i lawr efo mhardwn”. An order for her reprieve did arrive from Sir Hugh Milton in the afternoon, but it was too late as she had been executed that morning.

9. “Pren Mawr”, is a cottage on the roadside between Pen-y-Cefn and Caerwys. As the name implies there was once a very large tree at this spot, it was curiously shaped, having four large branches which pointed north, south, east and west. Each time a funeral cortege passed that way the bier was placed under the old tree and all the mourners recited ‘The Lord’s Prayer’. Presumably this custom stopped about a hundred years ago when the tree was blown down in a terrific storm.

10. “Maesmynan”, is a beautiful old hall about a mile to the south west of Caerwys on the Mold – Denbigh main road; near the spot where the present hall stands once stood the

palace of Llewelyn, the last Prince of Wales. Pennant in his "Tours of Wales" states that it was because of this royal palace Caerwys was chosen by Queen Elizabeth as the place to hold the great eisteddfod of 1568. Some people still doubt that Prince Llewelyn ever lived at Maesmynan, to those people I would refer Sir John Wynne's book the "History of the Gwydr Valley" in which he writes 'In the raigne of David, sonne of the said Prince Llewelyn (Llewelyn ap Iorwerth) by Joane, King John's daughter, who began to raigne anno 1240, Eiugan and Gruff ap Caradog tooke parte with their sister's sonne, Llewelyn ap Gruff, the last prince of Wales of that time, afterwards slayne at Buellt'.

"We receive it by tradition from father to sonne in Erioneth, that David ap Llewelyn, being Prince by the ayde of his uncle the King, came to the throne of Pwllhely in Llun to parle with the bretheren Eiugan and Gruff; whom the brethren met with such a force on the day of truce, that the Prince told them they were too strong to be subjects; where to they answered that he was rather too weak to be Prince, and soe parted without any conclusion or agreement. In the end they were forced by long warrs to forego that country, and to lose their land there, and to joyne themselves to their nephew Llewelyn ap Gruffith, who then had his court at Maesmynan in Flintshire. He also held as is afore mentioned, the cantreds of Englefield, Dyffryn Clwyd, Ros Roroniawg against his uncle David; having warre on the one side with the King, on the other side with his uncle, who gave them greate possessions (as some thinke), as before is remembered about Denbigh Castle."

More proof comes from the writings of Richard Lloyd the antiquary, he says "Gruffydd ap Caradog, second son of Caradog ap Thomas, who was known as the 'Lord of Friwlwyd', in Llanarmon parish, Caernarvonshire, possessed very large estates in Rhos, and Ruoniog, which he had acquired with Lewki, daughter of Llywaich Vaughan, ap Llywaich Goch ap Llowaich Holbwch. But he gave his support to Llewelyn the last Prince of Wales, who was

his nephew, and suffered so much loss in doing so that he had to retire to Maesmynan in Flintshire, where Llewelyn held his court, and there he remained a prisoner upon the Prince's bounty."

Yet more proof comes from Miss Angharad Llwyd's "Mona", she writes "A description is given of the regalia belonging to the Prince of Wales, having been given up to Edward I., and the remaining part was accidentally found by some men who were cutting a road in the park behind the Palace of Maesmynan, the usual residence of Prince Llewelyn in times of peace. The workmen discovered a casket made of brass and curiously wrought, which crumbled into dust when exposed to the air; it was buried three feet underground, near a large tree. It contained several armlets of twisted or wreathed gold, heart shaped with a ring adhering to the broadest end of it, four torques, one of these being much heavier than the others; a large chain composed of beads, about the size of pigeons eggs, having a ring between each to connect it together. The treasure altogether weighed twelve pounds, for which the men (seven in all) received from Mr. Richards, a silversmith in Chester, more than £27 each"

These writers prove beyond doubt that it was the residence of Prince Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, it was probably as much of a castle as palace; for the Prince's military ambitions it was well situated between the strongholds of Caerwys above, and Bodfari, which lies at the entrance of a pass between two ranges of hills.

Antiquities found in the Parish.

A gold torque was discovered in a field about a mile from the town in the year 1815. This torque, or collar, weighed twenty-four ounces and measured fifty-two inches; it was found during the removal of an old tumulus on Bryn Sion Farm. It was bought by the Duke of

Westminster for two hundred guineas and for a time was kept at Eaton Hall, Chester, but is now kept in the British Museum.

This torque is said to be a splendid specimen of ancient craftsmanship and proves that the early civilisation of the district was of a high order. From the historian Dion Capius we learn “that such an ornament was worn by Boadicea when leading the Britons to battle against the Romans; and taking all circumstances into consideration the probability is that this valuable and highly interesting antique gem was worn by the celebrated Amazon herself on that occasion. This ancient decoration is of pure gold. The privilege of wearing the golden torque was limited to those only who were distinguished by the highest rank of valour.”

Inscribed Stone.

This stone is alluded to by some as “Carreg Bedd Buddig” (the gravestone of Boadicea), it bears the inscription ‘HIE LACIT MULER BONA NOBILI’ in crude characters. It was found by the historian Pennant, used as a gatepost at the farm Plas-yn-Rhos near Caerwys, he had it removed to Downing Hall where he resided at the time.

Tumuli (Gorseddau).

There are several of these scattered about the district, in fact it is claimed by some that nowhere else in the kingdom is there to be found so many tumuli as exist between Caerwys and Newmarket. In his book “Prehistoric and Roman Remains of Flintshire” Canon Ellis Davies names and describes sixteen or so of these tumuli within the parish. Some of these tumuli are larger than others and have been excavated, during which process some interesting finds have been made. The tumuli around Bryngwyn Hall seemed to be the largest specimen.

When the tumulus in Coetia'r Orsedd (a plantation near the hall) was opened it was found to contain bones, in it was also found a stone mattock or hammer. Most of these tumuli were found to contain bones which proves they were really old burial places.

Other things found in them were flints, charcoal, fragments of urn and pottery, and the tip of a bronze knife. Names of fields in the locality indicate the vicinity of these tumuli or Gorseddau. We have 'Erw'r Orsedd' and 'Cae'r Orsedd' in several farms in the locality; others are 'Gorsedd Penrhirdir', 'Gorsedd Pant Ifan' and 'Gorsedd Raelwyd Ucha'. The inscribed stone already mentioned stood originally on the mound or Gorsedd in 'Cae'r Orsedd' at Plas-yn-Rhos before it was utilised as a gate post. It is believed that his mound was the grave of Boadicea (Buddig). The discovery of the torque, the inscribed stone, and the existence of so many tumuli "strongly indicates the fact that this neighbourhood was the scene of an eventful battle between the Britons and the Romans, when 60,000 of the former were slain by the latter, and from the surrounding tumuli there cannot be any doubt but these monuments of antiquity were erected as memorials for the dead, who were slain in this or some other battle at a very early Period." (from "Handbook of Vale of Clwyd")

I have just discovered that the inscribed stone found at 'Plas-yn-Rhos' and removed to 'Downing Hall' by Pennant is now in Whitchurch Church.

Ancient Paved Road

This has already been mentioned on page 5.

Bronze Spearhead.

This spearhead was found, deep in the ground, in 1908 by a workman employed at the Afonwen Portland Cement Works. The spot was close to the road leading to Caerwys, on the

east side, about two hundred yards north of the junction of the Caerwys road with the main road from Mold to Denbigh. This spearhead is five inches long and one and two fifths inches across the blade at the widest point on the socket, about the middle are two shallow loops opposite each other, the point is slightly bent. The finder sold it for a pint of beer at a local public house, and after changing hands several times, it became the possession of Mr. C. Sumner, 'Maes-yr-Esgob'.

Beads.

A collection of beads were found in 'Erw'r Castell' in 1792 and exhibited by Miss Angharad Llwyd in an exhibition held by the "Cambrian Archaeological Association" at Rhyl in 1858. Judging by the fact that the beads appeared in the catalogue of the exhibition under the head PRIMAEVAL we may conclude they were of prehistoric date. What became of them is not known.

Copper Coins.

A number of copper coins believed to be Roman were found at Afonwen and in the field in which the inscribed stone was situated a considerable number of copper coins of different Roman Emperors were discovered some years ago.

THE HISTORY OF CAERWYS.

Extract from "The Place of Caerwys in Welsh History" by Edmund Owen, "History has very little to record about Caerwys. Possibly it was a post of the Roman Empire. Whether it existed before that time is uncertain".

It is mentioned in Domesday when it was spelt 'Kayros'.

Pennant in his 'Tours of Wales' says 'Caerwys has the most considerable fairs for cattle, sheep and horses in all the county. They are of great antiquity. The first John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, appears among the subscribers to a charter for a market in 1356, but the markets have now failed since the increase of Holywell". This was written in 1809 but in my school days (1909-1917) there was a flourishing monthly fair held the last Tuesday of each month, when all four main streets of Caerwys were crowded with farmers and dealers, and the various conveyances of these people were parked all over the town and many people found it profitable, catering dinners and teas on this particular day. The cattle were at the Smithfield in Holywell Road, the pigs were in pens in the yards of the "Royal Oak" which adjoins the Smithfield, the sheep were in pens on the roadside near the "Drover's Arms", and the horses tethered between the "Fox and Hounds" and the "Piccadilly Inn". In the square in the centre of the town were several stalls where travelling pedlars sold their ware. These was every evidence of the public houses having done a profitable business too on fair day, for on our way home from school we often came upon inebriated farmers asleep on the roadside. There was one old couple whom I knew very well, who made the fair an occasion for a monthly 'spree'; they would wait near the school for a grand-daughter who was a chum of mine and it took us both all our time to get them home safely, they wanted to sit down every few yards and were continually quarrelling, a thing they rarely indulged in when sober.

These monthly fairs gradually diminished with the years, and the easier method of transport of both humans and animals made it possible for farmers to take their stock for sale to larger markets which were also better shopping centres. The monthly fair is still held at Caerwys, on the last Thursday in the month, but it is a very small affair nowadays, and to me hardly seems worthwhile holding at all, as so few animals are brought, and all are dealt with at the Smithfield which is capable of accommodating many more animals than are brought

for sale these days. One can go through the town and not know there was a fair on at all without going to the vicinity of the Smithfield, whereas in my schooldays it was a long and difficult place to negotiate any “Through traffic”.

Charter of 1241. – kept at Mostyn Hall.

“In the year of 1241, the 26th year of Henry III reign, that Prince granted to the inhabitants of Tegengl a charter, exempting them for the ‘amobr’ – but at the same time, imposing on them an obligation to find twenty-four people who were to keep the peace of the country; and obliging this town (Caerwys) Picton and Acton and other hamlets to find three men each to work three days in the harvest as they were want in the days of the two preceding Welsh Princes. This seems to have been issued during some temporary advantage which Henry had over the Welsh”. (from Pennant’s “Tours of Wales”).

This ‘amobr’ was a payment made by a woman, or on her behalf, when she married. It was paid by women of all ranks, and was assessed at the amount paid by the woman’s father as ‘ebediw’. In the Laws the amount ranged from £1 - £10s for the daughter of a chief, down to 2s for the daughter of an ‘alltud’, and 1/- for the daughter of a slave. Amobr was usually paid by the bride’s father if he personally negotiated the marriage. The Welsh Laws explain that amobr was paid because the woman lost her privilege and kindred by marriage; that is the tribe lost one of its members.

Ebediw was an ancient Welsh payment – a succession duty paid by a man’s heirs for the privilege of entering upon the father’s possessions. It was paid by men of all ranks, but women were exempt. Payment ranged from £12 for an abbots’ ‘ebediw’ to 5/- for the ‘ebediw’ of a villain.

Charter of 1290.

“The town of Caerwys received a charter in 1290 which made it a free borough with guild merchant with a hanse and all the liberties and free customs of a free borough, as the king’s burgesses of Conwy and Rhuddlan; but there is no reference to a mayor or to the highly prized privilege of choosing its’ own officials. It remained in the “northern sphere of influence” dominated by Rhuddlan. The great forum of the vill was held before the constable of Rhuddlan, or his deputy, and we even find the constable of Rhuddlan, who was ‘ipso facto’ mayor of Rhuddlan, described as the mayor of Caerwys.” (from “Flintshire Ministers Accounts 1301 – 1328”)

“The possession of a merchants gild was the sign of municipal independence. It was in fact the governing body of the town in which it was allowed to exist. It is to these early merchants that this country owes its greatness. The bell which swung out from town tower gathered the burgesses to a common meeting, where they could exercise their rights of free speech and free deliberation on their own affairs. Their merchant’s gild, over its ale feast, regulated trade, distributed the sums due from the different burgesses, and acted in fact, pretty much the same part as the Town Council of today.

The grant of a Hanse was a very ancient and important one. It originally was a league or union of merchants, and arose from the dangers of travelling. Merchants travelled together and had a common depot or storehouse for their merchandise, which eventually became the central point of the Hanse. Lubeck, Hamburg and Bremen, in Germany were often spoken of as the Hanse Towns.

If any bondman of anyone should dwell in a town granted a charter, and held land in it (this was the qualification of a burgess) and be in the afore-said gild, and hanse, and be a ratepayer for a year and a day, he might not henceforth be re-demanded by his Lord, but remain free in the same town. It must be borne in mind that slavery, with its bondmen and

freemen, then existed, under the feudal system, and Britons were then slaves ‘de jure’ and ‘de facto’.” (Henry Taylor in *Archaeological Cambrensis*, vol. 9)

Justiciary Courts.

Caerwys has been famous in history for its justiciary courts. I have already mentioned that “from very early times it had been the seat of judicature for these parts of Wales.” This may have been one of the reasons Prince Llewelyn-the-Last chose to reside here.

When Wales was conquered by Edward I Caerwys seems to have lost its courts of justice, but on the introduction of justiciary courts into Wales under the sanction of the English Law, Caerwys recovered its former importance, and the assizes for the county were held here until the year 1672, when they were moved to Flint, and then to Mold, where they are now held.

I have failed to discover where the early courts were held, but in 1244 we learn that the Welsh Abbots summoned King Henry to appear at the church tower at Caerwys to answer to the complaints of the Welsh Prince David ap Llewelyn.

The assizes were held in the High Street where the residence “Hen-Lys” (the old court house) now stands. I cannot say if this is the original court house, it certainly is a very old building and has only been a residence for the last twelve years or so. It was for very many years a public house called the ‘Cross Foxes’. During my childhood it was uninhabited for many years and was in a bad state of repair, with broken windows and rotten wood-work, the floors of the second storey fell through as one walked on them, but in the time of the 1914 – 1918 war, the building was taken over and repaired by the government, and several families of Belgian Refugees resided there. It was afterwards converted into a convalescent home for a time and finally bought and converted into a private residence.

The jail was not far from the court house but on the opposite side of the street and was joined by an underground passage; this passage was exposed some years ago during road repair work. The jail too was converted into a dwelling known to this day as “yr Hen Jel”.

A magistrate’s court is still held at Caerwys in the Police Station on the last Tuesday of every month, so it still retains a shred of it’s past glory.

The Eisteddfod.

“Caerwys was long renowned as being the Athens of North Wales, as a place where the British Olympics were performed, it being the seat of the Eisteddfod, or sessions of the Bards and Minstrels – the grand theatre, where in honourable contention, they tried their skill, poured forth their extemporaneous effusions, awaked their harps to melody, “And gave to rapture all their trembling strings”.

Under the British Princes, the Bards and Minstrels were associated in corporate or rather colligate bodies; into which none were admitted, but such as had given proof of their skill in the respective sciences, before proper judges appointed to preside on the occasion.” (Dam’s’ Handbook of the Vale of Clwyd’)

“What gave Caerwys a particular glory was the honour it had of being the place of the ‘Eisteddfod’, or the sessions of the Bards and Minstrels for many centuries.

These ‘Eisteddfodau’ were the British Olympics. Fired at first with generous emulation, our poets crowded into the list and carried off the prize contented with the mere honour of victory. At length when the competitors became numerous and the country oppressed by the multitude, new regulations took place. The disappointed candidates were no longer suffered to torture the ears of the principality with their wretched compositions. None but bards of

merit were suffered to rehearse their pieces, and minstrels of skill to perform. These went through a long probation; judges were appointed to judge their respective abilities; and degrees suitable were conferred, and permission granted to exercise their talents.

The judges were appointed by commission from our princes and after the conquest of Wales, by the Kings of England.” (Pennant’s Tours of Wales).

The character that made the principal figure in these meetings (eisteddfodau) was of great antiquity. The chairing of the bard is a very important part of any large eisteddfod to the present day. The Bardic (the Beirdd of the Britons) were of great authority among the Celtic nations. It is highly probable that the bards and minstrels were under certain regulations even during the time of Druidism.

Many famous eisteddfodau have been held at Caerwys, the first of which we have a record of is the one held in the twelfth century, convened by Gruffydd ap Cynan, father of Gwennllian, our Welsh ‘Joan-of-Arc’. Twice an eisteddfod has been held by royal commission, in 1525 and again in 1568. The 1525 eisteddfod was by commission of Henry VIII, it read:-

“Be it known to all persons, both gentry and commonality, that an Eisteddfod of the professors of poetry and Music will be held in the town of Caerwys in the county of Flint, the 20th day of July 1525 in the fifteenth year of the reign of Henry VIII, under the commission of the said King, before Richard ab Howell ab Ieuan Vychan Esquire, by the consent of Sir William Gruffydd, Knight, and chamberlain for North Wales, and Sir Roger Salsbri, Sheriff for the county of Denbigh, and the advice of Gruffydd ab Ivan ab Llewelyn Vychan, and the chair Bard Tudur Aled, and several other gentlemen and scholars, for the purpose of instituting order and government among the Professors of Poetry and Music and regulating

their art and profession according to the old statute of Gruffydd ab Cynan, Prince of Aberffraw". (Jones' 'Relics of the Welsh Bards').

The chief prize at this eisteddfod was a Silver Harp which had been one of the prizes since time immemorial; it was won by Owain Llwyd, a blind old harpist from Llanelltyd. T. F. Edwards in this essay on Caerwys gives the account of the blind old harpist's long journey from Llanelltyd to Caerwys. The night before the event, he and his granddaughter, dusty and footsore after their long journey in the hot July sun, slept near the stream in Maesmynan Woods. The singing of the birds awoke the child early, and after washing herself in the stream she took half the dry bread they had left, soaked it in the stream and made a breakfast of it. Later the noise of the crowds travelling to the eisteddfod awoke the old man, she then attended to him, washing his face with the stream water, combing his long white hair and giving him the other half crust soaked in the clear water of the stream. Having eaten their meagre breakfast the two climbed the steep path to the town to the hall where the eisteddfod was to take place. Having played tune after tune on his harp for three hours against other competitors the old harpist was pronounced the victor and was adorned with the silver harp, which was between five and six inches long, and had nine strings (to represent the Muses). The old man's success was loudly applauded, it was an outstanding achievement and brought him lasting success as he spent the rest of his days at Alton Towers, presumably as the family harpist, and his little grandchild was brought up as a lady.

The Silver Harp was taken to Mostyn Hall for safe keeping and although it was used for the same purpose at later eisteddfodau it remains in the possession of Lord Mostyn to this day.

The next eisteddfod which is recorded as having been held at Caerwys was held by commission of Queen Elizabeth in 1568. It is interesting to know that this commission is still

in existence, kept at Mostyn Hall having been preserved through the ages by the Mostyn family. It reads:- “Elizabeth, by the grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, Quene, defender of the faith, and to our trustie and right wel-beloved Sir Richard Bulkely, Knight, Sir Rees Gruffuth, Knight, Ellice Price, esquio^f, doctor in cyvill lawe, and one or our counsail in our marches of Wales, William Mostyn. Ieuan Lloyd of Yale, John Salisbury of Ruge, Rees Thomas, Maurice Wynne, Will^m Lewis, Peres Mostyn, Owen John ap Holl Vaughan, John Will^m ap John, John Lewis Owen, Moris Gruffyth, Symound Thelwall, Ellice ap Will^m Lloyd, Rob^t Puleston, Harry Aparry, William Glynne and Rees Hughes, esquio^{rs}, and to every one of them greating. – Whereas it is come to the knowledge of the lorde president, and other of said counsaill, in o^l marches of ~Wales, that vagraunt and idle psons naming themselves minstrels, rithmors, and barthes, are lately grown into such an intolerable multitude wthin the principalities of North Wales, that not only gentlemen and others by their shameless disorders, and often-times disquieted in their habitacons, but also the expert minstrels and musicians in toun and contry thereby much discouraged to travail in the exercise and practise of their knowledge; and also not a little hyndred in their lyryngs and pfermts. The reformacon whereof, and the putting these people in ord^f, the said Lorde president and counsail have thought verely necessarye; and knowing you to be men of both wysdome and upright dealing, and also of experience and good knowledge in the science appointed and authorised you to be commissioners for that purpose, and for as such as o^f counsail of late travayling p^{te} of the said principalitie and pfect understanding or credible report that thaccustomed place for the execution of the like comssyon, hath bene heretofore at ‘Caroyes’ in our countie of Flynt, and that William Mostyn esquio^r, and his ancest^{rs}, have had the gyfte and bestowing of the sylver harpe apptayning to the cheff of that facultie, and that a year’s warning at the least hath bene accustomed to be geven of thassembly, and execucon of the

like commysyon to be at the said towne of 'Caroyes' the Monday next after the feast of the blessed Trynittee, w^{ch} shall be in the yeare of o^r Lorde God 1568.

And therefore we require and command you, by the authoritie of these psents not only to cause open pclamacons to be made in all fayres, m^rketts, townes and other places of assembly wthin our counties of Angliye, Carn^rvon, Meyryonneth, Denbigh, and Flynt that all on every pson & psons that extend to maynteigne their lyryngs by name of color if mynstrells, rithmors, or barthes within the Talaith of Aberfioire, comprehending the said five Shyres, shall be and appears before you the said day and place, to shewe their learnings accordingly: but also that you xx^{rre}, xix^{en}, xviii^{en}, xvii^{en}, xvi^{en}, xv^{en}, xiv^{en}, xiii^{en}, xii^{en}, xi^{en}, x^{en}, ix, viii, vii, or vi, of you whereof youe S^r Richard Bulkley, S^r Rees Gruffyth, Ellice Price, and Wm Mostyn esquo^{rs} or iii^{ee} or ii of you, to be of the nomb^r to repayre to the said place the day aforesaid, and calling to you such expert men in the said facultie of the Welsh musick as to you shall be though convenient to pceede to the execucon on the pmisss, and to admytt such and so many as by your wisdoms and knowledges you shall fynde worthy into and und^r the degrees heretofore in semblable sort to use exercise and followe the sciences and faculties of their pfessyons in such decent ord^r as shall apptaigne to eche of their degree and as yo^r discrecons and wisdomes shall pscibe unto them geaving straight monycons and comaund^t in or the name an on o^r behalf to the rest not worthy that they resume to some honest labo^r, and due exercise, such as they be most apte unto for maintenance of their lyvings, upon paine to be taken as sturdy and idle vacaboundes, and to be used according to the laws and statutes pvided in that behalf letting you with o^r said counsail look for advertisement by due certificate at youre hands of yo^r doings in the execution of the said pmisss. For seeing in any wise that upon the said assembly the peas and good order be observed and kept accordingly, assertayning you that the said Wm Mostyn hath pmsed to see furniture and things necessary

provided for that assembly, at the place aforesaid, Given under o^r signet, at o^r citie of Chester, the XXIIIth of October, the ninth yeare of o^r raigne. Signed her Highness counsaile in the m^rches of ‘Wales’.”

This eisteddfod took place on the 26th May, 1568 and lasted for three weeks; the enthusiasm of the competitors did not flag from beginning to the end of the long contest.

Several bards sang their salutation to this great Eisteddfod in verse,

‘Huw Eurorog’ wrote:-

“Mawr glod Eisteddfod is dail - ac ir-wydd
Yn nhref Caerwys adail;
Mawr gyfa’ sydd mur gaf sail, -
Mor gauad y mae’r gwiall”.

‘Ieuan Dew’ wrote:-

Gosod Eisteddfod gwasel, - dawn ini,
Dan onen frid uchel,
Goreu Tref heb gwrth Rhyfel
Gras Duw i Gaerwys y del.”

“Dan onen laswen, dyna lws-naid – Beirdd
Gyda barn peneithiaid;
Digel Eisteddfod a gaid
Yng Nghaerwys trwy’r cynghoriad.”

‘Simwnt Fychan’

“Mae’n graddau ninau iawn waneg – ydyw

Edwyn pawb wi ddameg;
Yn ei rwystr un ar osteg
Yn dwyn braint hir dan bren teg.”

‘Owain Gwynedd’

“Ceu-bren frig las-wen onen lwys liw – hawl
Ar Heol egluriw;
Caerau rhawg uwch ewr y rhiw,
Caerwys eglur-lwys glaer-lliw.”

‘Huw Lynne’

“Yn oed Duw Iesu iawn Iôr, - gwiw roddiad
Y Graddiwyd pob Cerddor;
Pymtheg cant Brif ffyniant Bâr,
A thri ugain ac wyth rhagor.”

‘Huw Pennant’

“Twr llys i Gaerwys ag erioed, - o dwf
A dyfod dros fân goed;
Braisg onen Capten y coed
Bron o hen gyff Brenhin goed.”

‘William Lynne’

“Cysgod Eisteddfod, nid oes dig, - gwir iach
O Gaerwys urddedig;
Cofia’r Braint, cyfa yw’r brig,
Cwrt glwys-fraint is cort glas – frig.”

‘Bodo Haffest’

“Yng Nghaerwys, gymwys ag amod-ydyw

Nid oedwn y bôn-nôd

Mae dyfyn a brethyn bod, -

Nos da wyddfa’n Eisteddfod.”

‘Sion Tudur’

The Eisteddfod was held in the ‘Town Hall’ which had been gaily decorated for the occasion, this hall was on the spot where ‘Compton House’ shop now stands, not many yards from the ‘Cross’ in the centre of the town. This structure may have originally been the base of a cross, but for many centuries a tree has grown in the centre of it, at the time of the Eisteddfod (1568) it must have been an ash tree as it is alluded to by several of the bards in the above verses.

According to Pennant fifty five bards and musicians were successful at this Eisteddfod. The chief prize was the silver harp previously alluded to, and on this occasion Simwnt Fychan was the successful competitor, the Chief Bard elected by the commissioners.

“And we the said Commissioner by virtue of the said commission, bring Her Majesty’s council, do give and grant to Simwnt Fychan, Bard, the degree of Pencerdd, and do order that persons receive and ‘hospitably’ entertain him in all places fit for him to go, and come to receive his perquisites according to the Princely Statutes in the case made and provided,

Given under our hands in the year 1568.

William Mostyn, Esquior

Ellice pierce, Doctor of Civil Law

Morris Gruffyth Esquio¹⁷

(T. P. Edwards “Henafiaethau Caerwys”).

Simwnt Fychan’s winning ode was to Pirs Mostyn, the president of the Eisteddfod; twenty four verses all in a different metre, the following is a copy:-

“Meistr Pirs Mostyn, O Dalacre, Llywydd yr Eisteddfod”.

1. Unodl Union

Pen breiged bonedd bennod, - pairch vowredd

Por glasgledd pur glwysglod;

Pwyll distaw pell yw d’ystod,

Pirs aur Nydd parhaus wr nod.

2. Unodl Cyrch

Nodol wyd a ffynadwy,

Ni hu’n! Oes neb enw yn vwy,

Nerth draig, Caswallon wrth drin,

Neu Edwin a wnai adwy.

3. Unodl Crweca.

Adwy ni wrn, dyna wir,

Yn dy lin o ddilynir

Ond glan a cnyfan ach hir oleudog,

Iaith vreudeg ith frodir.

4. Prost Cyfnewidioc.

Dy vrodir divai rydyd,

Dy vreuder a dyf rediad;
Da vrawdwr nydd o vrudid,
Dy vradwyr hy dyvrodud.

5. Prost Cadwynioc.

Divroddaist a vu rydyn
Dinag wyt i ben a gwaun;
Dawn a hoedel nid anhydyn
Duw a ro hyny'n dy ian.

6. Cywydd Llosgyrnioc.

O ran dy serch arwain da son
I'th deg annerch a'th dai gwunion
Dy ddynion a diddanedd;
O gaer a phont gorhoff hawg
D'air a fynu hyd Ryvoniawg,
Ior doniawg aur adanedd.

7. Awd Gywydd.

Llwyth Trevor, llu waith travael,
Llew ebrwydd hael llwybraidd hedd
Llwyth Edwin oll i'th hadyd,
Llawn dwys yd, llin hyd sedd.

8. Gwawdodyn Byrr.

Meirion coed perion lle i caid puredd,
Mostyn am arial moew dwyn mawredd,

Maelgwn i'th Rhisiart yn mhob vewart
Newrddart mab Rhisisart yn mhob rhyseidd.

9. Cyhydedd Nawban.

Ail huned gwreigiol lain nod gwragedd
Yw Elin wisged Olwen osgedd;
Ail Anna tyfai lan otiredd
O irdwf iesin euraidd ryssedd.

10. Byrr a Thoddiad.

Gwawr Domas solas ddisalwedd – a bair
Gwin hir a llysieuftedd;
Gwawr dwf Essyllt, geir di vaswedd
Glan ryw hadyd gloew anrhydedd,
Gwelwyd o'i gwin gael digonedd;
Gwirdduw a'i gad, a'i gwrdd gydweidd;
Goreu gwy synwyr cyssonedd – gynal
Gannwyll yr iawn vuchedd.

11. Clogyrnach.

I'w thai y leni waith haelionedd,
Aml yw lluniaeth mal y llynedd;
I gaer ragorawl
Ag arvaeth gwirvawl,
Ammodawl ymadwedd.

12. Cywydd Deuair Vyrion.

Croew vir cryf vedd

Cof yw cyfedd.

13. Toddaid.

Claear yw daear duedd – llann-hassaf.

Caer yw arddasaf crain ddewisedd.

14. Cyhydedd Verr.

Eura'r gwirion Eryr gwaredd,

A nad weini anudonedd;

O'r lle uchaf o arllechwedd

Wyd yr haelaf hyd yr Heledd.

15. Cyhydedd Hir.

Gwir ddwyn gair o dys

Garw glan i'th graig Lys,

O uggainawdl wys Gan dy lyssedd;

Gorau un gwr Iaith,

Gorau mam gair maith,

Glewion wyr unwaith

Glan Rianedd.

16. Gorchest y Beirdd.

Is Clwyd graig Lyr,

Wr llwyd Ieirll wyr,

Ail wyd i hyr, a'i wlad wedd,

A'th dai i'th dir,

Y rhai for hir,
A wnai yn wir, yr un wedd.

17. Cadwyn Vyrr.

Deryw d'euro'n
Draw diorwan
Dirwd arian, doriad wired;
Deuaist Wynedd,
Dawnus d'anian,
Dewrwiw drian, deuryw diredd.

18. Tawddgyrch Cadwynoc.

E ddisgynodd addas ganiad,
At vawl ranniad, yt vael rhinwedd
Eurddwbl Wnedd irweydd blanniad,
Yn gyfanniad enwog vonedd:
I'th hen Deidian y ddoedd bleiduau,
O'r Cynt-heidiay, for cant tudwedd;
I'th vyrddeidiau neth hog sieidiau,
Iawn gyreidiau yn gyfrodedd.

19. Hupynt Hir.

Ar wir deler, wythryw gweler
O'th loew seler, i'th gweler
O'th loew seler, i'th lysieu – wledd,
A'th gyd holant, a'th ganmolant,

Arfer Rholant ar vawr haeledd.

20. Hupynt Byrr.

Ym mysc siasau,
Eur vawr diasau, arfer drawsedd,
A hydd dirion,
A dia gwirion, O drugaredd.

21. Gwawdodyn Hir.

Mynnu'r wyd wynnu euraidd annedd;
Mynnu ystunnu oes a dawned;
Mynnu esgynnu oesawg wnedd;
Mynnu cydtynnu mewn cyttunedd;
Mynnu annynu wnionedd; - ffynnu;
Mynnu dirynnu da wirionedd.

22. Cyrch a Chwtta.

Wyd brysurglod Birs eurgledd
Oll i wared llaweredd;
Anturiwr heb hwnt orwedd;
Anturiaist yn oed dewredd;
Aeth drwy vyd waith d'orvodedd
Ior dewrnerth ar dēyinedd;
A'th law, rhag more nerthol wyd,
A wnai d'orswyd yn d'orsedd.

23. Cywydd Deuair Hirion.

O eglur Gymru Ogledd

Ydwyd lain nod hyd lynn Nedd.

24. Hir a Thoddaid.

Par elw i Degeingl perwyl deagwedd;

Pa sawl da yma Pirs hael ddiommedd;

Par vel gloew viragl purvawl glyvaredd;

Par yn llu cysson, par yn llai casedd;

Pa vo cad guriad garwedd – plaid vlaengor

Par dorf ai wasgai Peredur vreisgedd.

The reason for holding the Eisteddfod in 1568, as stated in the Queen's 'commission', was to limit the number of bards and minstrels who could 'clera' from house to house. The qualified bards and minstrels could demand hospitality and the best of everything wherever they chose to go; this was their privilege according to the tradition of the country. This privilege had been abused by a great number of people who called themselves bards and musicians and who made themselves perfect nuisances to the country in general; if a householder refused to grant hospitality to these quacks they abused and mocked him. Eventually a complaint was made to the Queen who proclaimed that at eisteddfod be held at 'thaccustomed place for the execution of the like comysson ---- at "Caroyes" in the countie of Flynt', which all the bards and minstrels roaming the country had to attend to qualify; those who failed to qualify had to earn a living by some other means. This Eisteddfod served its purpose and the country was rid of all but the qualified bards and musicians.

Another eisteddfod was held at Caerwys within a year or so and 'Simwnt Fychan', elected Chief Bard in 1568 was the adjudicator for this subsequent eisteddfod. A large

number of bards assembled for the chief competition, the prize for which was the silver harp. The subject set by Simwnt Fychan for this contest was ‘Yr Eos’. This was an impromptu contest between South Wales and Gwynedd, and many beautiful poems were composed in this competition. The successful competitor on this occasion was “Sion-ap-William-ap-Sion” who competed under the Nom de Plume “Sion Tudur”, his poem is as follows:-

“Yr Eos”

Clywais deg wurlais wedi gorllwyn – nôs,

I maros a morwyn:

Ai laws maes irlaes mwyn.

Eos glwysais is glaslwyn.

Iach iawn ydwyf o chlywais – ar fedw,

Arfodi pereiddlais;

Edn llwyd adwaen y llais,

Eos gefn llwyd ysgafn lais.

Miwsig in coedwig mewn ceudawd – llwyn

Llawenydd hyd ddyddd brawd;

Mae’r Eos feindlos fwyndlwd

O mewn gwyddd yn mân wau gwawd.

Mwyn lan gloyw chwiban cloch aberth – y llwyn,

Mae’n llawenydd prydferth:-

Miwsig heb poen y mwysg perth

Minio glwys bwngc mewn glasberth!

Mesurol garol dan geurydd – glasberth
Gogleisbwngc llawenydd,
Miwsig mwyn ymmysgc manwydd
Eos hyd y nôs dan wydd!

Eos fwyn llwyn darlleiniais – y man
Mynych i rhyfeddais;
Lleied hon greulon groywlais
Mewn tor llwyn a maint yw'r llais.

Er llais tra hoffais trafferth – man adar
A'u mwyn wawdydd dierth;
Eos drwyn bert is draen berth
Yw'r gwin bwngc organ y berth!

Nid cwafraid crychiad crochach – na'r organ
New gowirgerdd degach
Nid manwl nodau mwynach
Nid ysbort, ond Eos bach.

Dysgedig fiwsig foesawl – gerdd Eos,
Gradd Awen ysbrydawl,
Desgant i'r dysg naturiawl.

Clywais a baic, glas a bort,
Cyd nod dydd, nid caniad hurt;
Cyd eilio 'sbonc, cydlais bart

Cerais bwnc yr Eos bert!

Some bards competing at this eisteddfod had also competed at the previous one held in 1568; amongst them was Risiant Dafis D.D., Bishop of St. David's, one of the people responsible for translating the Bible into Welsh. The standard set at this Eisteddfod was very high, so much so that it became the topic of discussion amongst the Bishops of the day, and brought particular glory to Caerwys.

The Eisteddfod seems to have been in abeyance after this as we do not have record of another until 1798 when a very successful Eisteddfod was held under the auspices of 'Cymdeithas y Gwyneddigion'. Having given due notice of a year and a day this Eisteddfod was held on the 29th of May 1798 lasting three days, and was held in the Town Hall, where two hundred and thirty years before, the great Eisteddfod commissioned by Queen Elizabeth was held.

The commissioners for this eisteddfod were the Revs. Robert Thomas, Peter Whitley, Robert Williams, Llewelyn Llwyd, Walter Davies and Dafydd Ddu Eryri. The entries for this eisteddfod were to be sent to the Rev. Llewelyn Llwyd at Caerwys. He was the son of the Rev. John Lloyd, Rector of Caerwys, and friend of the Historian Pennant.

The subject for the chief poem on this occasion was "Cariad i'n Gwlad Trwy Adgofiad yr Hen Eisteddfod a Defodau Cymru". The successful competitor this time was Robert Davies (Bardd Nantglyn) this is his poem;

Mawr Gariad i'n Gwlad gloëdig – furiau
Gan foroedd terfysgfrig,
Bro gu gain Brydain a'i brig

Sy' wridol drysoredig.

Teyrnas an enaint aini – yw Prydain

Pob rhadau sydd ynddi,

Gwiw seiliwyd guregys heli

Yn ddyfrgylch o'r hamgylch hi.

Gwlad ydyw lawn geld odiaeth – dra siriol

Drysorawg a helaeth,

Mel ddiliau a llynau llaeth

Mae yma gan ein mammaeth.

Paenes Ewrop ynys auraidd – wiw brid

Yw Brydain ffrwythlonaid;

Uwch pob pau mewn breintiau braidd,

Ac o reol garuaidd.

Ein cysur fel mur fawl mod – a'n coron

Yw caru'n mammaeth wlad

Os coron a wisg cariad

Coron gwledd yw caru'n gwlad.

Gwyllf filod y geillt ofalant – prysur

I'w preswyl y casglant,

Cywir i ni, caru wnant

Oghed parth gwlad eu porthiant.

Welwn ehediad gloywon loyw odiaeth
Mor Ion tynant, - anrywiol naturiaeth,
Yn cynal anianol debygoliaeth
Cywir o degwch eu crëadigaeth
Fflwch diogelwch di gaeth – a hoffnant,
A da'n ymgarant dir eu magwriaeth.

Carwn ninau'n cywir wen Ynys,
A bro iach deglawn barchedig lwys,
Cywir trwy dalaeth cariad tra dilys
I'r oror ogylch yw'r Aur-wregys.

Os cawsain wregys cariad
Gair yn glwm am gyray'n gwlad,
Du elyn ni wna ddidaliad – llwyr llym
Fyth rym y fath rwymiad.

Santeiddier enw ner uniawn eiriau,
Am ei warediad a mawr iadau,
Sain'r Efengyl nid swn eirf angau
Fu'n cael eu bestyn i fyw'n clustiau,
A gweision ein Ion yn bau – ysprydol
Wych a thra ethol iach athrawiaethau.

Dianaf waith Duw nef Ior
GAdwo'n gwlad i gyd yn glir,
Na ddaw saeth yn nyddiau Sior

Na gelyn twym i glawi'n tir.

Cariad a fo'n glymiad glan
Deil oll y dial allan,
Yn fraich dan lwyth faich y wlad
Boddlon yw coron cariad,
Goddefgar mwyngar a mad
Fydd y gwr a fedd gariad,
A gâr wydd ei gywir wlad
Sy' fodlon i'w sefydliad.

Pryd o ddail parhad o ddiliau – cariad
Sy'n curo'r aberthau,
Gwell tamaid sych nag ych gau
Amryw sen a 'mrysonau.

A garo rodio'n ddiw'radwydd, - tra f'o
Trwy i fywyd yn ddedwydd,
Heb ofid na llid ond llwydd
Bid lawnrwym mewn bodlonrwydd.

A boddlonrwydd o rwydd roddiad
Bair gariadus bur gu roddiad:
Ac i'n goror y gwna gariad
Dda hoff anwyl ymddiffyniad.

Clwm garaid i'n gwlad glydwedd – a gaffom
Yn gyffes ddiduedd;
Cariad ni chwymp cywiredd,
A champ mwy, - ni chwymp a''i medd.

Cariad i'w ddeiliad ni ddwg – wyn bradus,
Mae's buriedig amlwg,
Da gwelir a digilwg
Fuddiol ddrych, ni feddwl ddrwg.

Mewn cariad rhaniad rhinoedd – mwyn bunom
A'i henaid i orsedd,
Bro chariad rhad anrhydedd,
A chariad yw'r wlad a'r wledd.

Gwlad olau Caerau cywrain – pyrth gwiwras
Porth gornwch wylofain
Paradwys le glwys wawl glain
Pardwys uwch llaw Prydain.

Next to 'Bardd Nantglyn' in merit was 'Twm o'r Nant' a relative of Daniel Owen our Welsh novelist from Mold.

The first day of this Eisteddfod was devoted to the bards, the 'subject' of the competition was a very popular one and a great number of entries had been received and a great deal of discussion took place. The following day was the musicians day, the

competitions took twelve hours; after a stiff contest Robert Ffoulkes was pronounced the best Singer and William Jones the most successful instrumentalist.

Another very important eisteddfod was held at Caerwys on the 19th May, 1823; the people who organised this were Miss Angharad Llwyd and her brother Rev. Llewelyn Llwyd, Vicar of Nannerch. This eisteddfod was not held in the Town Hall where previous meetings of the kind were held, but at the Schoolroom where their famous father the Rev. John Llwyd had held his Grammar School. As in the great Eisteddfod of 1568 several bards addressed the meeting in verse, amongst them was the famous Welsh poet from Mold, J. Blackwell, whose bardic name was “Alun” his salutation was:-

Hawdd amor bob gradd yma – orwych feirdd

Rhowch fyrdda ‘ni wledda;

Lluman arfoll Minerfa

Sudd uwch Caerwys ddilys dda.

Bu Caerwys, er bob corwynt – ‘sgydwai

Weis cedyen eu tremynt, -

Er braw anhylaw helynt,

Nyth y gain farddoniaeth gynt.

Troi o hyd mae byd heb oedi – â’n isel,

Mewn oesodd, brif drefi;

Rhoes Groeg hen, a’i Hathen hi,

Awr i Gaerwys ragori.

'alun' was the winner in the Essay competition at the Eisteddfod, the subject was "Y lles o Golodd yr Iaith Gymraeg". The successful bard was William Edwards from Ysceifiog, his Nome de Plume at this eisteddfod was "Eos Gallester"; he also used the names "Gwilym Gallester" and "Bardd 'Sgeifiog".

The Bards and Musicians at the Eisteddfod (1823) were lavishly entertained by Miss Angharad Llwyd at her home in "Siamber Wen" where they were very interested in the R.S.S. of Miss Llwyd's famous father the Rev. John Llwyd, Rector of Caerwys.

Another eisteddfod took place at Caerwys in 1886; the prize essay at this eisteddfod "Eisteddfodau a Henafiaethau Caerwys" by "Caerwyson" (Rev. T.P. Edwards) has been the source of most of the information on eisteddfodau for this essay.

There have been several attempts at re-establishing the eisteddfod at Caerwys after this, but none have been on the lines of the old eisteddfodau where the bard has been the chief figure. The mode of the present day eisteddfod has changed greatly, it is more a competitive meeting where the chief event is the choral competition. An annual competitive meeting of this sort is held at Caerwys every year, and has been held annually for more than sixty years. It is always held the first Thursday in March and is called "Y Cyfarfod Mawrth" by local inhabitants. It is not a wholly Welsh affair these days, as so many English people have come to reside in the village and they are also catered for at this meeting.

This year being the "Festival Year" in Britain, a movement is afoot to establish an eisteddfod on the lines of the old eisteddfodau where the bard will be the chief figure. Programmes have been printed and distributed, and it is hoped to attract a number of intellectual people to Caerwys, to this eisteddfod to be held September the first. The committee organising this eisteddfod is an all Welsh one, composed of members who are

native of the Parish of Caerwys; these people are well known to me and a number of them are anything but fluent in their Welsh; but I am very glad to say that a movement of this sort is encouraging these people to speak their native language on every possible occasion in order to bring back the fluency of their childhood. Even the English residents are taking a great interest and one or two are seriously attempting to learn Welsh.

“CAERWYS COURT”

The following article appeared in the “Chester Chronicle” 24th November 1962.

I have been delving into the old accounts of the Caerwys Court – which, it is reported, closes next month. In June 1856, there was no business, but in the following month it was noted that a number of applications were made to the Magistrates in respect of rates in aid of the Mostyn Turnpike Trust and orders were made for the payment by the Township of Tredre of £13 10s., by Trefedwen of 25/-, and by Gryngwyn Isa of £4 and Gelliloveday of £8. The names of the Magistrates appearing then were the Hon. T.P. Lloyd and Mr. Llew. F. Lloyd and others. Of course there had to be some poaching and a fine of 5/- was registered in October of that year; in another case a fine of £1. In January the following year a man was summoned for by the Officers of the Board of Guardians of the Holywell Union for neglecting to maintain his wife and he was ordered to pay 1/6 a week or go to gaol for 14 days.

There was the swearing in of John Williams as a Constable and in September of that year two men were charged with malicious injury to another man and were fined 6d. In February 1858 a man named Owen was charged with vagrancy and committed to Flint gaol for one month. Other business was the appointment of Constables for Caerwys, Ysceifiog, Nannerch and “Bodfarry”. There were a lot of Highway offences but the exact nature of them

was not stated and often the penalty was a fine of 6d. There were quite a lot of cases of drunkenness but little thieving about that time and indeed, the first case was recorded in 1860 and that concerned a juvenile.

In May, 1864, there were two cases under the Highways Act of driving a wagon without reins' and the fines there were one of £1 and the other of 6d. And now look at July of that year.....for doing malicious damage to trees, a man was sent to gaol for six weeks. In February the following year theft raised its head and there were four cases before the court, and in April a sentence of 21 days' gaol was imposed for the theft of a hen; in August two months for the theft a geese. And I notice that the accused had an alias. Theft continued.....in September a woman was sent to prison for one month for stealing a piece of ham. And that particular account book ended in October 1865.

SOME NOTABLE PEOPLE OF CAERWYS

BLEDD YN FARDD, an accomplished bard at the court of Llewelyn the last Prince of Wales in the thirteenth century; he was a native of Caerwys.

GRUFFYDD YR YNAD GOCH, also an accomplished and talented bard at the court of Llewelyn at Maesmynan; he was a colleague of Bleddyn Fardd. He also was a native, having been born quite near Maesmynan; his talent showed itself very early and he became a member of the Prince's household at a very early age. He was broken hearted at Llewelyn's death and wrote this elegy to him:-

“Oer gallon dan fron o fraw – allwynin
Am Frenin dewin dor Aberffraw;
Aur dilyfn delid o’i law
Aur dalaith oedd deilwng iddo.”

Dr. THOMAS WYNNE, member of an ancient and highly respected family who resided at Maes-y-Coed; he became a Quaker and in 1682 went to America in the “Welcome”. He resided in Philadelphia which is said to be built on the same plan as Caerwys; one of it’s main streets was once called ‘Wynne Street’; a railway station also bears the name ‘Wynnwood Station’.

Dr. JOHN WYNNE, who became Bishop of St. Asaph and afterwards of Bath and Wells. He was born at ‘Maes-y-Coed’ in 1667; he had a distinguished career, became chaplain to the Earl of Pembroke, Professor of Divinity at Oxford, then Principal of Jesus College, Oxford before being appointed Bishop of St. Asaph in 1714. He was the first Bishop appointed by King George I. On the death of Bishop Hooper in 1727 he was appointed Bisop of Bath and Wells where he remained sixteen years. He was buried in Northop church June 15th 1743.

WILLIAM DAVIES, better known as “William Dafis y Golch”, born at Caerwys in 1736, he was a Calvinistic Methodist Preacher, much persecuted in those troublous times as a Nonconformist Reformer, but he staunchly carried on his work for the Calvinistic Methodist movement and did a great deal to establish it in the district. He died in 1822 at the age of 86.

THOMAS GLYN JONES, born at “Y Glyn” Caerwys in 1786; another indefatigable worker for the C. Methodist movement; he walked many miles on Sundays establishing Sunday Schools.

THOMAS JONES, born at “Penucha” Caerwys in 1756. (A relative of Sir Herbert Lewis, M.P. for Flints, whose family still reside at “Penucha”). He joined the Calvinistic Methodist cause at Caerwys in his youth, became one of its ordained ministers and made a name for himself as Preacher, Writer, and Hymnologist. He was amongst the first eight to be ordained as Ministers in the C. Methodist cause in 1811 in N. Wales. He was a great scholar, had the command of four languages, Welsh (his mother tongue), English, Latin and Greek. His written works number thirty five; his hymns ninety seven; some of them being well known hymns sung in Non-conformist churches today:-

1. Aed, Aed, y newydd am y Dwyfol waed, etc.
2. Wele’r dydd yn gwaurio draw,”
3. O! Arwain fy enaid i’r dyfroedd, etc.
4. Mi wn fod fy Mhrynwr yn fyw, etc.

to mention but a few.

He was also associated with the Rev. Charles Bala in compiling the famous C. Methodist “catechism” “Yr Hyffordwr”.

He was a contemporary of such famous men as Daniel Rowland and William Williams Pant-y-Celin who died within a year of each other, and to whom Thomas Jones wrote and elegy from which I quote:

“Rowlands – seren uchel, oleu,
Canwyll Cymru, mawr ei ddoniau;
Williams fywiog bêr ganiethydd,
Fedrus enwog athrawiethydd;
Dwy hen golofn yn yr Eglwys
‘Nol eu gilydd aent i orphwys.’”

When his great friend the famous Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala died in October 1814 he was indeed broken hearted at losing a colleague and friend who he so greatly admired. He wrote a three hundred and fifty line Elegy to him in which he show his admiration:-

“Yn ei dŷ, wrth fwrdd neu brydiau,
Llawn oed def o nefol eiriau:
Efo’i frodyr mewn Gymmanfa,
‘Roedd mewn gras a dawn yn flaena’:
Mewn gwyddorion an athrawiaeth,
Goleu oedd, an iachus odiaeth:
O! Mor gu, uwch ben llu, yn fynych bu’n gyhoedd,
Yn cyhoeddi hedd i filoedd,
Gyda grym a nerth y nefoedd!.”

This talented native of Caerwys died in June 1820, his last work was an ode to the death of King George III who predeceased him by five months. This work, “Awdl ar Farw Sior III”, of three hundred and fifty three lines was the winning ode at an eisteddfod held at Wrexham that year.

JOHN FFOULKES, “Bachgen Pant Ifan” was the name by which he was best known. He began preaching at the age of fourteen, his eloquence brought crowds to his meetings; he was one of the champions of the Wesleyan Methodist cause in its infancy at Caerwys and the surrounding districts.

REV. JOHN LLOYD, Rector of Caerwys 1778 to 1793; Historian and Antiquary; a contemporary and friend of Thomas Pennant, the famous Historian and author of ‘Tours of Wales’, he resided at ‘Siamber Wen’. Besides being Rector of Caerwys he was also Principal of a Grammar school which stood near the residence now known as “Summer Hill”; this was the school where the Rev. Thomas Jones (previously mentioned in this essay) received part of his education; and where the eisteddfod of 1823 was held.

MISS ANN LLOYD, (Angharad Llwyd) daughter of the Rev. John Lloyd was born in 1779 and resided at ‘Siamber Wen’ which stood on the site where “Grove House” now stands; the bards and musicians at the Eisteddfodau held at Caerwys in her lifetime were entertained and welcomed here at all times. She took great interest in any antiquities or traditions pertaining to Wales and the Welsh and added many of her own M.S.S. to those already collected and written by her father. She took infinite trouble and spared no expense to add to her M.S.S. as which are now treasured possessions of the Welsh Nation. They are known as the “Ty’n Rhyl” M.S.S. as she had lived at Rhyl the latter part of her life, and is buried there. In Cathrall’s “History of North Wales” (1828) it is undoubtedly Miss Lloyd he refers to when he writes “the true and genuine ‘amor patriæ’ seems still to flourish in this place (Caerwys) as in its own native soil, for the love of ancient lore and an enthusiastic

attachment to British Literature in general appear to animate some of the principal inhabitants of the town, particularly some amiable and highly accomplished females, who have distinguished themselves by their patronage of the Bards and their laudable exertions for the cultivation and preservation of their native language.” Though why he should have written in the plural form is a mystery to me as I have failed to find any other famous ‘females’ of this period at Caerwys.

THOMAS ELLIS M.D., born in 1798 in South St. Caerwys was the son of Rowland Ellis also a doctor. He graduated as a doctor whilst still a very young man, and on the death of his father he was the sole practitioner. Besides being a doctor of medicine he was a talented poet and although his duties as a doctor made him a very busy man he managed to find time to compose; each Christmas he composed the carols to be sung at the Parish Church; and many of his poems won prizes at Eisteiddafou. At the “Eisteddfod Frenhinol Gwent a Dyfed” 1833 his poem “Y Dderwen” won first prize. In 1849 at Eisteddfod Frenhinol Aberffraw his “englyn” “Llew” took first prize. He took many prizes at various Eisteddfodau with his poems; his bardic name was “Tegeingl”.

REV. ROWLAND ELLIS M.A., born at “West View”, Caerwys, was the son of Dr. Thomas Ellis; he became Vicar of Edinburgh and eventually Bishop of Aberdeen.

JOHN EDWARDS M.R.C.V.S. There were three men who bore this name and qualification; the first came from Ereiniog, Caernarvonshire, to reside at “Plas-yng-

Nghaerwys”, he was famous as a Veterinary Surgeon, and wrote a book on the subject; he was also a talented bard and preacher for the C. Methodist Cause; he died in 1823 and is buried in Caerwys churchyard, on his tombstone is written:-

“Pregethwr a gwr rhagorol – Gladwyr
Goleu – deg rhinweddol
A Meddyf dawnus moddol,
Sydd yma mewn dalfo dol.
Defwch a gwelwch y gwaeledd – yw dyn
O dan ei holl fawredd;
Er ei enw a’i wir rinwedd
Bellach ei dy bach yw’r bedd”.

His son JOHN EDWARDS M.R.C.V.S. was born at “Plas-yng-Nghaerwys”, he had much the same talents as his father, he was much in demand as a Vet., he also wrote articles in connection with his profession. He was a zealous worker for the C. Methodist Cause and was instrumental in establishing the chapel at ‘Pen-y-Cefn’ at the other end of the Parish of Caerwys. He died in 1875 and was buried in Caerwys, the following “Englyn” can be seen on his tombstone:-

“I Amaethwyr mae weithion, ofid tost
Fod Tad Milfeddygon
Wr cu dan y garreg hon
A Caerwys heb ei choron.”

His son, also a JOHN EDWARDS M.R.C.V.S. was also born at Caerwys, 1837, and followed the same calling as his father and grandfather, he became as famous in his profession as they did. His practice was at Abergele but his services were in demand as far as Anglesey. He died in 1875, having survived his father only two months; he also is buried in Caerwys and on his tombstone is written the “Englyn” –

“Hir welir dysglaer ole – hynodion

Edwards Abergele

Y mhlant ein plant, trwy’r Gantre

Ni welir law leinio ‘i le.”

The elegies on their tombstones prove how highly esteemed the generations of John Edwards were.

WILLIAM EDWARDS was a very talented bard who was known as ‘Wil ‘Sgeifiog’, ‘Bardd ‘Sgeifiog’ and ‘Wil Shon Saer’, but whose bardic name was “Gwilym Callester”. He was born in 1790 at a thatched cottage called “Plas Iolyn” which stood near ‘Marian Liws’, but of which there is now no trace. He like his father was a wheelwright, hence the name ‘Wil Shon Saer’. His bardic genius was obvious when he was only a boy, and his compositions made him famous at every Eisteddfodau near and far. He became famous not only at eisteddfodau but everywhere he went; he would construct poetical witticisms on every occasion and could go on doing it all day, so great was his genius. Unfortunately he was addicted to ‘drink’, this caused him to lose his reason at times, it was during a spell of me burnt a collection of his finest poems, which ‘Gymrodorion’ had helped to publish, and so some of his best works were lost forever.

An example of his genius is shown in a story told of him when ‘Talhaiarn’ offered to pay him ten shillings, if he could compose an ‘Englyn’ in ten minutes in which he used both the names ‘Llanrhaidr Mochnant’ and ‘Rhosllanerchrugog’; Wil coughed and promptly reeled off “ Ho, it’s ready in five minutes here it is”

“Y Calfiniaid cul fynant – rhodres
Yn Llanrhaidr Mochnant;
Yn Rhosllanerchrugog crogant
Bob Armin, Socin a Sant.”

Another example of his genius is seen in the following “Englynion” to “Syr Edward Pierce Mostyn” President of the Eisteddfod at Mold in 1823. They were composed at the Eisteddfod and made him the winning bard:-

“Deuodd a brysiodd o’i breswyl – a mad
Ddarpariad i’r perwyl
Y Marchog enwog anwyl
Gyda gwen i gadw gwyl.

Llwydd iddo’n Llywydd addien – Syr Iorwerth
Sy wr araf trylen;
Tydain yw, tad i’n Hawen,
A mur o gulch y Gymraeg wen

Llwyd Pengwern wen, hen ein hyd, - a llyw da
Ydyw Llwyd bob enyd,
E wna ‘nwyfron yn hyfryd;

Llwyd a gan lliw du i gyd.”

He was a popular personality, and it grieved his friends, and especially some of his acquaintances among the bards of the day, that he should end his days in Denbigh Asylum, and many Elynyion were written to him whilst he was a patient there; here is an example:-

“Er dolur a dialled – a salwch
‘Asylum’ yn diwedd,
Dy waith, bob darn, sai’n garnedd
Llwyr i dy fawl, ar dy fedd.”

Most of his life was spent at ‘Ysceifiog’ a village two miles or so from Caerwys and he was buried there in 1855. A magnificent tombstone was erected to his memory by his fellow bards ‘Caledfryn’, ‘Talhaiarn’ and others and several ‘englynyion’ were written to adorn it, here is one by Gwilym Hiraethog:-

“Gwilym Callestr gai restru – un uchel
Yn Achau Beirdd Cymry;
Fe’i genid ef i ganu
Yn gelfydd brydydd o’r bru.”

THE RT. HON. SIR HERBERT LEWIS, G.B.E., LL.D., M.A. He resided at ‘Plas Penucha’, a mile or so from the home of my childhood; I remember him very well; he had many times visited my home, he took a great interest in our family as my mother had been a member of his household staff in her youth and it pleased him immensely that eight of her children won a scholarship at the local school, and attended the Holywell County School. He

was a most beneficent gentleman, and my family are indebted to him for many kindnesses and encouragement.

He was born in 1858 at Mostyn; the eldest son of Enoch Lewis who was well known in Flintshire, both as a business man and as interested in public affairs. In particular Enoch Lewis was keenly interested in the education of the adolescent, and his son received a generous education – at Denbigh Grammar School, at Montreal University and at Exeter College, Oxford, where he graduated as Master of Arts.

He found excellent training ground for his subsequent Parliamentary work by devoting himself early in his career to local administration, becoming a Guardian of the Poor, a River Dee Commissioner and a member of Flintshire County Council. He was the first Chairman of the Council, being, at the age of thirty, the youngest occupant of that position in the kingdom. He was also the first Chairman of the Technical Instruction Committee of Flintshire, and he was instrumental in organising the first series of county technical classes form in the United Kingdom after the passing of the Technical Instruction Act, 1889. He was prominently identified with the development of Intermediate Education in Flintshire and in 1869 he became Chairman of the Joint Education Committee responsible for the planning of the Flintshire scheme. While holding this office, he had the honour, at the Hawarden inquiry, of leading the examination of Mr. W. E. Gladstone. In the same year, he was appointed Chairman of the County Governing Body of the Flints. Intermediate Schools, and devoted much time to this work. His zeal for education was a family inheritance; his great uncle, the Rev. Thomas Jones (previously mentioned) of Penucha and later of Denbigh, had helped the Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala to found Circulating Schools in Wales. His grandmother established a school at Pen-y-Cefn Chapel in the Parish of Caerwys. His father founded an elementary school at Ffynnongroew which he maintained at his own expense for twenty five

years prior to the passing of the Elementary School Act of 1870. He also raised funds locally towards the establishment of the University College at Bangor, of which father and son became governors.

Mr. Herbert Lewis entered Parliament at his first contest and during his parliamentary career never suffered defeat at the polls. He became member for the Flint Boroughs in 1892, when Mr. W. E. Gladstone was Leader of the Liberal Party, and represented that constituency without a break till 1906, when he succeeded Mr. Samuel Smith as Member for the County. In the redistribution of seats in 1918, Mr. Lewis took an active share in securing representation for the University of Wales, and it was natural therefore, and fitting that he was selected as the Liberal candidate and its' first Member, representing the University until his retirement in 1922. He represented Welsh constituencies without a break for thirty five years, and sat in five Parliaments – thirteen years as a Private Member and seventeen years as a Minister of the Crown, serving under three Prime Ministers, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George. Of his thirty years in Parliament, only eleven were spent on Opposition benches. Upon his entry into Parliament, he was appointed Joint Secretary with the late Lord Rhondda of the Welsh Group of Liberal Members. At that time the Welsh Liberal Party in the House of Commons mustered thirty one out of a total representation of thirty four.

Mr. Lewis first came into prominence in the House in 1894; dissatisfied with the slow progress that Welsh Disestablishment was making there – to which second place had been given in the Newcastle Programme of the National Liberation Federation – he joined what was then called “the Welsh Revolt” Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. D. A. Thomas, Mr. Frank Edwards and Mr. Herbert Lewis declared their independence of the Liberal Party on the question of Disestablishment in Wales. The Welsh Disestablishment Bill was introduced in

1895, but the defeat of Lord Rodeberry's Ministry on the cordite vote killed the bill while it was yet in Committee, and Wales had to wait another twenty five years before Disestablishment in Wales became an accomplished fact.

The next eleven years were spent in Opposition. The overwhelming defeat of the Liberal Party in 1895 and its' subsequent internal dissensions, gave the free lances of the Opposition an opportunity of showing their mettle and developing their debating skill and knowledge of Parliamentary procedure, of which two young Welsh Liberal Members fully availed themselves. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Herbert Lewis worked so effectively in partnership that the Government whips of the day found it advantageous to consult quite informally, these two young Welshmen, who were so assiduous in their attendance, and so constant in their criticism, and indeed sometimes in obstruction of Government measures. In these activities, the grievances of Wales were freely and frequently ventilated. Such questions as a share of the Museum grants for Wales, and improving it's pier and harbour accommodation were often to the fore. Mr. Lewis pressed for the removal of Welsh records from the Records Office to Wales, and his was the first voice raised in Parliament pointing out the suitability of the Welsh uplands for afforestation. Other Welsh questions ventilated by him in the House were the harshness of officialdom towards the Welsh language, the alien magistracy and differential railway charges.

When the Education Bill of 1902 was passed he took his full share in resistance to that Measure, and in the subsequent campaign of passive resistance inaugurated in England and conducted with particular vigour in Wales.

Upon the formation of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's administration in December 1905, Mr. Lewis was appointed a Junior Lord of the Treasury, an office which he held until July, 1909, when he became Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Government Board. Here

he remained until 1915. When Mr. Lloyd George's Coalition Administration was formed in that year, he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Education – a post which he most congenial, in view of his life-long experience in Education work, and which he retained until his retirement in 1922. Mr. Lewis acted as Chairman of the Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education, on whose Report the provisions of the Education Act of 1918 were mainly founded. The two most important of this Act were the universal raising on the school leaving age to fourteen, and the establishment of day continuation schools for all young persons between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. In the passing of this Act and of the School Teacher's Superannuation Act, Mr. Lewis gave unstinted aid to his colleague Mr. Fisher, with whom daily co-operation was a constant pleasure. He also piloted the Libraries Act of 1919 through Parliament and was largely instrumental in securing the passage of the Places of Worship Enfranchisement Act upon the Statute Book in 1920, after thirty years of Parliamentary vicissitude. He also carried the grant that established and endowed the Department of Scientific Research – which has saved millions of British Industries, and the grants for the University education of ex-service men.

A survey of Sir Herbert Lewis' work would be wholly inadequate that did not make special reference to his signal services to the Welsh Nation and people. No Welsh M.P. has advocated so persistently and so successfully in the House of Commons and on public platforms the needs of Wales, and no one has done such constructive work for Welsh institutions. He steadily advocated over a long term of years the claims of Wales to a National Museum and a National Library, and he lived long enough to see both institutions firmly established, the former at Cardiff and the latter at Aberystwyth, and he played a large part in securing adequate State aid in their subsequent development. He was from the outset, and for seventeen years, Vice President, and afterwards President, of the National Library of

Wales, from which he retired in 1927. In October of that year the Court and Council of the National Library formally expressed their appreciation of his great services and many gifts to the Library. Speaking at Cardiff in June, 1922 the late Principal J. H. Davies of Aberystwyth College acknowledged that the University of Wales owed more to Sir Herbert Lewis than to any man; and in reality he was, in a sense, the creator of the Welsh National Library and the Welsh National Museum.

One of Sir Herbert Lewis' last public speeches was fittingly made at a meeting of representatives of public bodies in Flintshire held at Mold to raise money for the National Library.

With Mr. A. Acland and Mr. R. A. Jones of Liverpool he originated the Conference of the Joint Education Committee of Wales and Monmouthshire which ultimately led to securing the Charter for the University of Wales. He was for many years a member of the Court of Governors of the University as well as a Governor of one of its' constituent Colleges and he was largely instrumental in securing substantial grants from the Government towards the maintenance of the University. An ardent Welsh Nationalist, Sir Herbert Lewis advocated a generous scheme of devolution for Wales.

He was articled as a solicitor in 1882 and for some years was a member of the firm "Herbert Lewis & Davies", Liverpool. He was also at one time a ship owner. He travelled very extensively, beginning at the age of thirteen with a voyage in a sailing ship to Spain. He visited most of the countries of Europe as well as Palestine, Asia Minor, India, Egypt, South Africa, South America, Canada, the U.S.A., China and Japan.

He was a Calvinistic Methodist and took a deep interest in the work of the Connection at home and abroad, having paid two visits to its' Mission field in India. In 1925 he was

elected Moderator of the General Assembly but declined the honour. He was a Deputy-Lieutenant for Flintshire and was made Constable of Flint Castle in 1910. In 1907 the Freedom of Flint and in 1923 that of Aberystwyth were conferred upon him. In 1921, at the time of the threatened General Strike, he was appointed Civil Commissioner for N. Wales. For some years he was President of the London Welsh Charitable Aid Society. He received his Privy Councillorship in 1913. In 1918 the Honorary Degree of LL.D. was conferred on him by the University of Wales, and in the Dissolution Honours of 1922, when he declined a peerage, he received the G.B.E.. In 1923 he was one of the members specially elected by the Athenaeum to commemorate the Jubilee of the Club.

In June 1925, Sir Herbert Lewis, when on a visit to Aberystwyth, slipped and fell into a quarry and seriously injured his spine. For some time his life hung in the balance, but he made a marvellous partial recovery, and was able in time to return to his home at Penucha (Caerwys). Here, carefully nursed, he soon adapted himself to the new conditions and, though confined to an invalid's bed, followed current events with the keenest interest. A man of wide culture, his years of invalidity were spent in steady and wide reading. He maintained contact by correspondence with a host of friends a steady stream of whom visited him and went away refreshed by his vitality, his fortitude and his vivacity. Sir Herbert was never a robust man, but he possessed the wiriness of the Celt. An ever courteous manner and an unruffled temper did not mask but graced a firm tenacity of purpose. Throughout his life he devoted himself to public work and during a long career in stirring times and amid exciting political situations he never let his Party down or caused anxiety to his political chiefs by false moves or indiscretions. On the other hand, he was never a Bête Noire to his political opponents, with many of whom he was on terms of warm personal friendship.

In 1886 he married Ada, daughter of Mr. Charles Hughes J.P. of Wrexham; she died in 1895 and in 1897 he married Ruth, daughter of Mr. W. S. Caine M.P. for the Cambourne Division of Cornwall.

LADY LEWIS learnt to speak Welsh and took a full share of public work in Wales, being especially interested in Education, Temperance and Music. She was one of the chief organisers of the Womens Temperance Organisation and worked assiduously for the movement; her home 'Pen Ucha' was the scene of many a rally of this movement; she did a great deal of philanthropic work in this and other spheres, which is recorded only the memories and hearts of those concerned.

Her favourite hobby was the collection of old Welsh Folk tunes; she travelled many miles in this pursuit and many were the amusing anecdotes she could relate in connection with this hobby. Her method was to visit old people and get them to sing to her the old Welsh songs taught them by their parents; she carried a Dictaphone with her, and thus, songs were recorded which had been handed down from one generation to the next.

In conjunction with an eminent musician Lady Lewis published these songs, many of which would otherwise have been lost to us forever. Some of the songs collected in this way were "Yr Hen Wr Mwyn", "Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn Yr Haf", "Gee Ceffyl Bach", "Dacw Mam Yn Dwad" and many more.

She was a member of the Council of the National Library and the Court of Governors of the National Museum (which her husband had helped so much to establish) and the University College of North Wales.

During the First World War she was Superintendant of a large soldiers' canteen in Westminster, and her services were recognised by the bestowal of an O.B.E.

Their son Dr. Mostyn Lewis is on the staff of the Wrexham Technical College.

Their daughter Mrs. Idwal Jones (nee Miss Kitty Lewis) lives at 'Pen Ucha' and carries on the family tradition of public work of every kind. Before her marriage she was missionary in India, where she did excellent work.

Before ending this chapter perhaps it would be as well to mention Caerwys' association with Royalty; I have already mentioned the fact that Prince Llewelyn-ap-Gruffydd the last Prince of Wales had a palace within a mile or so of Caerwys. The bibliographer John Jones of "Gelli Lyfdy" also claimed that King Arthur had a palace at Caerwys where he lived after making peace with the Saxons and this was the reason for Caerwys being the seat of judicature for this part of Wales in early times, and also the reason it was chosen for holding the Eisteddfod.

PLACES OF WORSHIP.

PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL is situated at the bottom end of Water Street. This is a fairly modern building, the schoolroom to the right of the main building was built in the 1920's but the main building is very much older. This is not the original place of worship of the "Calvinistic Methodist Cause" as it was formerly called. It seems to have been the first of the Nonconformist Denominations to have been founded in Caerwys, as the Rev. Thomas Jones in his 'Hunangofiant' gives an account of the request made to his father for the tenancy of a house in the town for the purpose of holding meetings. Thomas Jones was then only a boy in his teens, between 1769 and 1772 he tells us; his step mother, who was interested in the Nonconformist Movement, had encouraged him to attend meetings in the town and he became attached to the Movement. He persuaded his father (who was a staunch churchman) t

let the property for this purpose, and so we have the first chapel of the Nonconformist Movement – the ‘Calvinistic Methodist’ established at ‘Capel Main’ near ‘Marian Liws’. It is undoubtedly due to the help given by the Rev. Thomas Jones that the cause became so firmly established as I stated previously he was among one of the first eight ministers to be ordained in the Calvinistic Methodist Cause.

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST Denomination have a chapel in Chapel Street. I used to think that this was what gave the street its’ name but it is more probable that it originated from the fact that the ‘Capel Main’ once stood at the end of this street. This building is a fairly modern one and this too is not the original building where the Wesleyans held their meetings. Their first indoor meetings were held in the house of a Mr. Robert Anwyl who resided on the spot where “Swan Cottages” now stands.

We have a BAPTIST CHAPEL also in the town, and though it was the latest of the nonconformist buildings to be erected in the town it has been closed for a number of years. It is the only nonconformist church which has a house attached; it seems a great pity that it should have to close down.

THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL is situated on the hill between Afonwen and Caerwys; this was only erected at the beginning of this century to accommodate the number of English people who had come to work at the factories in the district. This chapel too is attended by a few faithful adults but fortunately it has a

flourishing Juvenile Sunday School. We also have another PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL at pen-y-Cefn at the far end of the Parish, about two miles away from the town itself. This chapel was built around 1870, due to the efforts of the zealous Calvin John Edwards M.R.C.V.S. previously mentioned.

THE PARISH CHURCH dedicated to St. Michael is of course the oldest place of worship in the town. In its principal structural features the church is of the late Decorated period with Perpendicular and later details, and it has been attached to the tower of an earlier building of which no other traces appear to have survived. This tower is square and massive with walls three feet three inches in thickness. It is claimed that the base of this tower dates back to the Roman occupation when it was the base of a Roman Observation tower; the next portion as far as the ridge below the clock is 13th century; this ridge once formed the coping of the top of the tower; it was lacking in height, and accordingly received an additional storey in the year 1769. The bell chamber house's four bells, three comparatively new, but the fourth is a 700 year old "Sanctus Bell" bearing the inscription "Tradis Campenani". There is also a Sanctuary ring in the tower door. In the belfry is a box of Bibles each book bearing the following note – "This book belongs to Caerwys Church, John Lloyd, Rector 1792. Printed by His Majesty's Special Command." The clock in the tower was erected by public subscription in 1915 to the memory of Bishop Rowland Ellis.

"At the 'Decorated' reconstruction of the edifice the pitch of the roof was lowered, and the low round-headed door way which opened from the interior of the church underwent alterations, giving place at a still later date to the present low square-headed doorway. If, therefore as is most probable, the earlier church consisted only of a single body, the southern body must represent the addition of the 15th century. Some of

the windows are 'Decorated'; those at the east end are 'Perpendicular' of slightly different periods and varying details. The roof of the present nave and chancel has been renewed, but that of the north aisle has been well restored, and presents an interesting example of late 'Decorated' or early 'Perpendicular' oak roofing, the tower wind braces are of an elaborate and pleasing design. The arcade was originally formed of immense oak beams, but these have given way to modern stone piers and arches. A Decorated window on the south side of the chancel has been filled with fragments of coloured glass of the early 16th century, formerly in one of the east windows. The church had a rood screen and loft, but the loft was removed to the west end and transformed into a gallery. At a later restoration the screen was taken down and utilised for lining the large sacarium, the east end of the north aisle, and back of the chancel stalls. The remains show the screen to have been of considerable interest though the ideas are conventional and the execution rough. In view of the association of the Welsh Princes of Gwynedd with the Parish of Caerwys, it is interesting to note the presence of the dragon among the decorative motives. A carved pew door of the year 1682, which was surrounded by panels of the early screen-work, was found in the church.

On the south side of the chancel is a canopied tomb of the 'Decorated' period now sheltering the figure of a female which has probably been brought from some other part of the church. This effigy is of the 13th century and is supposed to represent the wife of Prince David ap Gruffydd (died 1282)". (Ancient Monuments in Wales)

The 'Boy-Rector' also lies buried beneath the chancel wall. He was the son of a rich merchant of Caerwys and became Rector of the church at the age of nineteen. He died in 1582 and his tombstone is to be found embedded in the south wall; the

inscription, which is still quite legible, reads:- “Hic iacet Robert Evans de Caerwis, Sepultus, 13 Die Augusth, Anno Domine 1582.” This appears to be the oldest tombstone in the churchyard.

The church Nave was once used for public meetings, and in Edward VI’s reign as a school. This was stopped in the reign of Queen Mary, and when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne a house was built for the purpose. The present school, which is a Church School, was built in 1831. At first it had a school-house attached, but as the number of pupils grew this house was taken over as a classroom, and about 1910 another classroom was built as there were two hundred or so pupils at that time; the number has dropped to the half since then.

INDUSTRIES OF CAERWYS.

A perusal of the Caerwys Parish Register of Marriages gives a clue to the various trades and industries which have been carried on in the parish at one time or another; i will mention some of the more unusual trades, such as whip-plaiter, felt-maker, nailor (sic) cooper, basket-maker, miner – three were several of these, which seems to indicated there must have been a mine of some sort in the vicinity. Wire-drawer – there were several of these too so there was evidently a wire-drawing mill in the locality. Woollen manufacturer and Weaver – I have recollections of a woollen and flannel mill called “Pandy Mills” functioning; it was closed for many years but during the last war the house and buildings were renovated and made habitable as dwellings. Chandler – there used to be a tallow-candle factory within a hundred yards or so of the school

when I was a child; the odour pervading the locality from this factory was at times most obnoxious. This factory building has now been converted into a cowshed by the son of the farmer owner who was a farmer, chandler and skin-merchant. The skins were collected from butchers for many miles around Caerwys and were treated at the 'Factory' where they were soaked in chemicals to loosen the hair and fur on the one side and the fat on the other. The fat was converted into tallow candles at 'Pendre' and the wool sent to the 'Pandy' and other woollen mills in the district. The Factory where this soaking was done is about half a mile out of town at the bottom of the ravine to the east of Caerwys; this was functioning until the last war but closed down for two reasons, the lack of man-power and the fact that butchers no longer did their own slaughtering. The 'Factory' got its water supply from a pond through which runs the river 'Wys' flowing from 'Ffynnon Deg' on its way to join the Wheeler at Afonwen a mile or so away. Paper-maker – there were many English names in this trade; these were people who had come to work at the Paper mills at Afonwen. By this time the wire mills at Afonwen had been closed and taken over by a paper-making firm who had to bring in the English tradesmen for the processes of paper-making until the local men were qualified; many of these English people settled in the parish and took what work they could get, when the paper mills in turn were closed, others left to carry on their craft elsewhere, some went on to Holywell where the paper mills are still in operation. I can remember the closing down of this paper mill and the commotion it caused in the district, as so many people were thrown out of work, and it meant either leaving the district altogether or travelling a distance to and from work each day. On leaving school most of the girls and boys were taken on at the paper mill and were able to live at home; but when the mill closed down many of these girls were compelled to leave home and take domestic service, the idea did not appeal to them at all as they had been

used to working in numbers and dreaded the thought of having to work alone. The people most hit at this time were the widows with young children who were not free to go into service, I know of one or two who went through very hard times at this period as there was nothing for them but he dreaded 'Parish Relief' those days. Sometime in the 1920's this mill was taken over and worked as a Leather Mill, this absorbed all the skins the 'Factory' could supply, and many more besides. This once more brought prosperity to the district and also another influx of English workers, trained in the processes of leather making; some of these merely stayed long enough to train the local men in the different trades of tanning, dyeing, etc., others have settled down and become part of the community. Some of the names which came to the district as the result of the paper mill, and leather mill were Spry, Dafter, Godwin, Nicholls, Courtney, Isgar, Ayling and others. Once again the only ambition of many girls leaving school is to get work at this leather mill. The skins processed at this factory are the softer variety, the sheepskin and calfskin; some years ago glove making was begun, to make use of the leather made there, it is in this work most of the girls are engaged.

A foundry was in operation too, many years ago, where I believe parts of steam rollers and steam engines were made; I have no recollection of this in action; the building was derelict until the last war when it was taken over by some government department and repaired for storing purposes; it has recently been sold and it is rumoured in the district, a manufacturing firm has bought it and there are hopes of another factory opening up.

Portland Cement was once manufactured at Caerwys and once employed a large number of men, it was a great blow to the district when this closed down too; I think it would be about 1914 that this happened. The materials for the manufacture of this

cement were obtained locally, in fact the works is situated on the bed of white marl previously mentioned; this marl was extensively used, as also was the dark limestone from a neighbouring quarry which was ground up with the clay. The mixture was then pressed under grind-stones, passed through sieves and thoroughly mixed in a water mill. It was then dried, cut up into blocks while soft, burnt, and then ground again, when it was ready for use. This works had a large ware-house and siding at the local railway station; this ware-house is now used by a corn-merchant, but the siding has not been used for years. The Marl which was once used in the manufacture of cement is now used for agricultural purposes, carted away long distances by the latest type of mechanical lime-spreader trucks which drive onto the field where the lime is needed and spread it over the land as required. Many tons of this marl go to Cheshire and parts of Staffordshire; strangely enough, local farmers will not use it.

Near this old cement works too is a rich bed of sand, and at the moment this is in great demand for building purposes. Five or six years ago the two tall chimneys of the old cement works were demolished as they had become a menace to the neighbouring cottages; the mounds of rubble these caused, added to the derelict picture the works now presents.

About a mile from Caerwys there is now a Gravel Quarry which employs quite a number of men; this quarry was once a huge mound of pebbles and formed part of the beautiful Maesmynan Wood. The largest of these pebbles are crushed and washed by machinery; the smaller ones used as they are, in road making and for the manufacture of concrete.

A Saw Mill near the railway station completes the list of the 'works' in the district; here only a few men are employed in sawing the wood brought in from the surrounding district, which is fast becoming bereft of its once beautiful woods.

Farming of course plays a large part in the life of the district, but they are for the most part fairly small farms, where only two, three or four men are employed.

WELLS OF CAERWYS.

The wells of Caerwys have played a large part in its history and therefore are worthy of mention in this works.

FFYNNON DEG is the name given to the springs which rise in the ravine to the east of the town from which flows the river 'Wys'. This river has a very strong current and in years gone by it was used for the working of first of all the 'Factory' where skins were soaked and cleaned, about half a mile further on it worked the flour mill of 'Plas Isa', further on still it worked the mill at the Hydraulic Cement works before finally joining the river 'Wheeler'.

These springs were at one time the only water supply of the town, as they were nearer than any of the other springs in the district. These were at one time called 'Ffynnon Sarah' after Sarah who lived near, and who professed to be a witch able to charm or curse the waters from the wells; the people believed this and brought her gifts to keep her pacified.

ST MICHAEL'S WELL is at the bottom of the ravine to the west of Caerwys, and was until a few years ago, surrounded by woods, the beautiful Maesmynan Wood.

This well is also the source of a stream which was dammed to create fishing lakes for the residents of Maesmynan Hall at one time. At present an elderly spinster has no use for these lakes and they have become neglected and surrounded by swamps. This is the stream mentioned earlier, near which the blind harpist and his little grandchild spent the night. The water from this stream is utilised for washing the gravel at the Gravel Quarry previously alluded to. The church takes its name from this well.

The story goes that this stream was once the scene of pilgrimage as the waters are supposed to contain certain virtues. It is said that a chapel once stood at this spot, but it was probably made of wood if ever there was one, as it seems to me an impossible spot for a building of any sort, as the well is among precipitous rocks and very difficult to get to, but nevertheless it seems to have had age long associations with the social and superstitious customs of pagan times.

LATEST NEWS OF CAERWYS MAY, 1951

as reported in the local press.

W.I. – Mrs. Idwal Jones presided on Monday and gave a talk on her recent visit to Paris. In the social half-hour the choir sang several pieces. The tea hostesses were Mrs. Capt. Jones and Mrs. Byrd.

TOWN CROSS. – a relic of Roman times, the Cross in the town centre, is to have a ‘brush up’ for the Festival of Britain. The Parish Council is to have it cleaned up, and a rockery and flowers will adorn the site.

REVIVAL OF AN OLD TRADITION. – An old tradition may be revived at Caerwys on Sunday, Regation Sunday. After a short service in the Parish Church – if the fine weather holds – the Rector (the Rev. D. J. Sinnett Richards) plans to lead his congregation through various fields in the district to bless the crops.