

Report on CAA Summer Meeting in Anglesey July 9th -14th 2012

Sixty-two people attended all or part of the meeting which was based in the university halls of residence on the Ffriddoedd Site, Bangor. When people arrived at lunch-time on Monday July 9th it soon became apparent that security measures taken for the safety of students might lead to inconvenience for adults in search of a small sherry before dinner or even trying to locate friends. However over the week people learnt how to deal with the systems.

The afternoon visits took most of the party to two of the best known megalithic tombs in the island. A few were dropped off to see Plas Newydd the home of the Marquess of Anglesey and now a National Trust property en route to the first site, **Bryn Celli Ddu**, one of the most famous megalithic tombs in Britain, a classic Passage Grave, noted since the 17th century and still the subject of active debate. It was broken into in the early 18th century and the cairn was robbed, until in the late 19th century the chamber and passage were virtually denuded. Excavated in 1865 by Francis Lukis it had become so dangerously ruinous that it was extensively excavated and rebuilt by W.J.Hemp in 1927 when it became a Guardianship Monument.

These excavations revealed that the stone kerb was set into a ditch and that there were stones in an arc (possibly originally a circle) focussed upon a central pit beside which lay a stone with decoration on both sides and over the top suggesting that it has once been free-standing. Hemp also found slight traces of what he had judged to be a bank outside the ditch. He interpreted all these features as contemporary because they were linked by a 'purple clay floor', thought to be an introduced, preparatory layer under the cairn.

In the 1960s this clay layer was re-interpreted as a natural feature resulting from the decay of a grass surface. This grass surface ran down into the ditch which must therefore have been already silted when the kerb and cairn were built. This led to a new, 2-phase, interpretation of the monument: it was originally a henge monument with bank and internal ditch surrounding a circle of stones; the Passage Grave was built later and the henge was buried beneath its cairn.

More recently it has been recognised that the passage is aligned on the summer solstice and a study by Steve Burrow of the National Museum Wales has suggested another sequence of construction, in which all the features, stones, ditch and Passage Grave are of essentially one date. That date is about 3300 cal BC, a date obtained from some of the bones and charcoal found in 1927. In this view the buried arc of stones relates to the establishment of the accurate alignment of the passage. A small excavation in 1995 around the plinth of the decorated stone replica failed to find convincing evidence of the purple clay and a re-examination of the field drawings of the ditch sections did not suggest that a lower fill of the ditch had been missed in 1927, so it was judged in this most recent view that the separation of ditch and tomb was no longer tenable. The ditch was explained as the source of material for a temporary cairn around the chamber during the final alignment of the passage.

This monument still has a very active role in 21st century life. It is much visited by people who commune with spirits and leave flowers and it is still an arena for archaeological debate. The Cambrians spent more than an hour discussing the various interpretations which were outlined by Frances Lynch with comments from several other members. It was felt that a section across the ditch and kerb might be the only way to resolve the question of contemporaneity or separation of ditch and Passage Grave.

On returning to Plas Newydd the impressive **cromlech** on the lawn was visited. Because of its position this is a very well-known monument, but is an archaeological puzzle. The capstone is sufficiently large and heavy to rule out the possibility that it is a product of the picturesque fashion for Druidical ruins, but the plan is not easy to interpret or place into any of the well-known categories of Neolithic tomb design.

In the evening the party visited the Grade 1 main buildings of Bangor University where there was an unexpected reception to launch a new CAA publication.

TUESDAY

The excursions this day encompassed sites in the vicinity of Holyhead on Holy Island and a buffet lunch was taken at the RSPB cafe on South Stack.

Before reaching Holyhead, **Llyn Cerrig Bach**, the Iron Age ritual site discovered in 1944 when the nearby airfield was enlarged, was visited and described by Frances Lynch. The peat from this bog, now once more a lake, was found to contain iron and bronze objects and a good many animal bones. The swords and spearheads were recognised as ancient and sent to the National Museum in Cardiff where Sir Cyril Fox confirmed their age and came north to examine the rest of the material. The collection contains swords, spears, parts of shields, decorative elements from chariots and horse harness, iron chariot wheel tyres and blacksmiths' tools and trade bars of high quality iron. Radiocarbon dates from the animal bone and the varying style of the swords demonstrate that the material was not a single deposition but must have resulted from offerings made over a long period of time, from about 300 cal BC to the 1st century AD, and a few offered to the old gods even after the Roman conquest of the island. Although not all the metalwork is military, it is normally judged that this assemblage conforms to Caesar's description of the Gaulish tradition of offering battle booty to the gods in lakes or groves.

Trefignath megalithic tomb was described by Frances Lynch who outlined its changing interpretations culminating in excavation by Dr Chris Smith in 1977. At that time the tomb stood alone in its rocky landscape. In 2007 evidence for contemporary settlement was revealed by large scale excavations nearby.

The 1977 excavations demonstrated that the tomb had been built in three stages, starting at the west end where a simple polygonal chamber with short passage was surrounded by slight remnants of a circular cairn. The next chamber, to the east, was rectangular with portal entrance and cusped forecourt. Its rectangular cairn was edged by good dry-walling which incorporated the older cairn. Nothing was found in the chamber which was later blocked by the construction of the third chamber within its forecourt. This rectangular chamber had a more impressive portal entrance and more open forecourt. The walled cairn was extended eastward to cover this chamber and the junction of the two walls constitutes the best evidence still visible in the field for the accretion of chambers in these funerary monuments.

Radiocarbon dates on charcoal from under the first cairn suggest that the tomb-building began about 4,000 cal BC, decorated pottery from the final chamber indicates some use (not necessarily funerary) at around 3300 cal BC and an unexpected Iron Age date from a pit at the chamber entrance is evidence for a renewed interest in these abandoned monuments in that period.

Excavations at **Parc Gybi Industrial/Business Park** were described by Jane Kenney of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Between 2006 and 2009 more than 41 hectares of land running down from Trefignath to the outskirts of Holyhead have been excavated by GAT. This great area excavation has revealed evidence of settlement and burial dating from the early Neolithic, through the Bronze and Iron Ages, the Roman period, into the early Middle Ages and up to the 18th and 19 centuries.

Perhaps the most important find has been the **Early Neolithic house** aligned with the tomb of Trefignath and only 100m away to the west. This was a three-compartment building over 15m long typical of many found in Ireland and now being found in Wales. **The Early Bronze Age** is represented by a multiple cist barrow covering 8 stone cists, large and small. This burial site was not far from the Ty Mawr Standing Stone which, because scheduled, is now the one monument in this densely packed archaeological landscape of which we will know least. A wooden round house may belong to the later Bronze Age but, although **Iron Age** finds were almost non-existent, at the head of

the marsh was a group of frequently rebuilt stone round houses which are likely to belong to that period. Another group of stone round houses, to the north, produced **Roman** material. On the hill above these houses, and (discovered when the A55 was built some 500m away to the north) were two **post-Roman/Early Medieval** cemeteries. The post-excavation work and radiocarbon dating programme for these excavations is still in progress.

On the way to South Stack **Porth Dafarch** settlement was viewed from the bus. This site, studied by Hon W.O Stanley, has many similarities with Parc Gybi. The first monuments in this valley were three Early Bronze Age barrows. Urns were first found here in 1848 which led Stanley to excavate the other two in 1875-6. During this work he found that the mounds were surrounded with round stone houses and small rectangular 'workshops', similar to those at South Stack. He also found long stone cists, like those at Parc Gybi, indicating that this settlement too, had probably continued without a break into the Early Medieval period.

Because of numbers, lunch was in two sittings, alternating with visits to the **South Stack Hut Circles**, led by Jane Kenney and Frances Lynch. In the 19th century this straggling group of stone houses set among terraced fields on the sunny southern slopes of Holyhead Mountain comprised up to 50 round houses interspersed with small, semi-subterranean buildings thought to be workshops. In the 1870s they were cleared of bracken and most were excavated by W.O.Stanley and very promptly published in *Archaeologia Cambrensis*. The finds were not closely dateable; most were stone tools, with slag and casting sand suggesting that the agricultural community also worked metal. There was no Roman pottery; but because of a small hoard of coins in one hut and his discovery of Roman pottery at other sites, Stanley dated the settlement to the Roman period. But re-excavation of some huts in the 1980s by Chris Smith provided both a radiocarbon date in the mid-Iron Age and some evidence of agricultural use of the ruined buildings continuing into the 5th century AD. So the current view is that the settlement as whole lasted perhaps 1500 years, but that individual farmsteads and houses may vary in date, demonstrating 'settlement creep' as seen at Parc Gybi.

The remains on the ground today are 16 round houses and 5 rectangular buildings. They form two groups, a larger western one and an eastern one (through the gate) where the two houses have a complex history unravelled by C14 dating. A granary raised on 7 stones was found by the eastern houses. Very similar granaries have now been found at Parc Gybi and Stanley had found examples at other sites he had excavated. This seems to be a local version of the ubiquitous 'four posters'.

Andrew Davidson joined the party in the afternoon to speak about the development of **Holyhead Harbour**. The inner harbour at Holyhead is a well-protected natural creek, but not large. As the nearest point to Dublin it had always been the principal port for Ireland, but if it was to maintain this position, as a mail port and as the link between the parliaments of Britain and Ireland (united in 1800), the facilities for both land and sea travel needed to be improved. The history of the growth of Holyhead in the 19th century is the story of these improvements.

This theme was discussed during a visit to the Breakwater Quarry Park, the source of stone for building the Outer Harbour (1847-73) and while standing on the new Celtic Gateway Bridge (2006) over the old harbour, looking across at the Custom House on Salt Island (1823).

In 1742 there was no quay and boats were pulled up on the mud. But in 1809 Salt Island was purchased and a formal harbour (now the Old Harbour) was constructed there by John Rennie (1810-21). At the same time Telford's A5 was improving road access, to which rail access was added in the 1840s. When the Navy classified Holyhead as a Harbour of Refuge work was begun on the Outer Harbour, to be protected by a huge breakwater, the longest in Britain. 20th century alterations have mainly concentrated on the Inner and Old Harbour areas where the station facilities have been eclipsed and largely swept away by the container port and the car ferry terminals, all on the eastern

side, away from the old town. In 2006 a new dramatic 'Celtic Gateway Bridge' was built to restore the link with the neglected town.

Caer Gybi Roman Fort a three-sided enclosure on what was a shoreline until the 18th century is generally believed to belong to the 4th century AD re-organisation of coastal defences against Irish pirates. It would have protected a naval force and, through a signal station on the summit of Holyhead Mountain (dated to the 4th century by coins from excavations in 1983), could have communicated with the legionary fort at Chester. Despite the lack of documentary reference and Roman finds, the style of building is sufficient to confirm its date. The high walls without a rampart backing, the simple, narrow gate and the distinctive herring bone masonry in the walls are all typical of late Roman forts such as Porchester and Reculver.

During discussions on site Jeremy Knight revealed that he had re-discovered the penny of Edward the Martyr when finds from Guardianship sites were returned to Wales. It had been found in the churchyard and published by Gerald Dunning but there had been subsequent uncertainty about the context. Leslie Alcock had suggested that it came from the foundation trench of the fort wall and dated its construction. However the note with the coin stated that it came from 'graveyard soil'. Lawrence Butler then said that this context had been confirmed by W.E.Griffith who had spoken to the workman who had found it. It came from disturbed ground within the graveyard, not from close to the wall.

The wall is 1.5m thick and over 4m high with wall-walk and parapet above. Only the southern entry is original (but rebuilt) and only the NE tower survives in its original form, with the stump of the eastern extension of the defensive wall down to the shore. The other towers have been damaged or rebuilt.

The fort survives so well because it was given to St Cybi, as a hermitage or small monastery, traditionally by Maelgwn, 6th century king of Gwynedd. The present church within the enclosure has no very early features but the presence of a second church, Eglwys y Bedd, is indicative of early monasteries which would have several churches within their boundaries.

Dr Lawrence Butler spoke at the **Church of St Cybi**. As a collegiate church it would originally have had a cruciform plan but the addition of aisles to north and south of the nave have reduced the impact of the transepts. The earliest visible work is 13th century but a great deal of rebuilding and reorganisation took place in the late 15th and early 16th century. The western tower was added, probably in the 17th century; it overhangs the Roman wall. Dr Ken Roberts, the churchwarden who opened the church for us, mentioned that the current work removing plaster on the west wall had revealed an earlier roofline which pre-dated the 16th century arcade changes and demonstrated that the west wall had not been rebuilt when the tower was added. The church was restored in the 1870s by Sir George Gilbert Scott and Arthur Baker who was the architect for the Stanley chapel, added to the south of the chancel in 1896-7. This contains a very fine memorial to the Hon W.O.Stanley (d.1884) by Hamo Thornycroft.

The exterior of the church has some fascinating embellishments. The battlemented parapets and elaborate early 16th century porch are particularly worthy of note. The fan vaulting is a restoration but the doorway is original. An image of the Trinity and the Five Wounds is central to a very fine decorative wall and the small images on the door jambs are puzzling in the extreme. St Peter and Paul can just be recognised.

From the church the party walked down to the new **Celtic Gateway Bridge** to look across the Old Harbour to Salt Island, the Harbour Offices and Custom House and the Triumphal Arch (1824 by Thomas Harrison) which commemorated the visit of George IV to Holyhead and to Ireland.

George IV's visit to Anglesey in August 1821 was a very notable occasion for a number of reasons. He was held up by contrary winds and retreated to spend a few days with the Marquess of Anglesey at Plas Newydd. During that time news arrived of the death of his estranged wife, Queen

throughout his visit and even received a loyal address from the Methodists on the island, to the chagrin of the Anglican establishment since this gave Methodism social respectability. The king complimented the town on its appearance and gave presents to those who served him there. However he did decide to leave as soon as possible and, leaving his naval escort behind, took the newfangled steam packet, *Lightning* across to Dublin.

This ship belonged to the postal service and was captained by Captain Skinner, an American who had joined the Royal Navy before Independence and became an enormously popular man in Holyhead. It is said that he refused a knighthood on this voyage because it would distance him from the people of Holyhead. He was drowned in 1832 and an obelisk was erected in his memory above the eastern side of the harbour.

King George arrived in Ireland, at Howth, in such a jovial and boisterous condition “as to double in sight even the number of his gracious subjects assembled to greet him”. His footprint is set in cement to commemorate his safe landing. In Dublin he had a good time (with Lady Conyngham in particular) and survived a constant round of parties. On his final night an over-long dinner at Powerscourt prevented him seeing the famous waterfall (enhanced by damming) – which was lucky since the viewing platform was swept away by the flow of water. Frances Lynch spoke about the Anglesey visit and Rory O’Farrell about the King’s time in Ireland.

The bus returned to Bangor *via* Trearddur Bay to see **Towyn y Capel**, the subject of W.O.Stanley’s first publication in one of the earliest volumes of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*. The mound, close to the shore and continuously subject to erosion, was once topped by a small chapel and covered a large cemetery of long cist graves from which bones frequently fell to the shore. Attempts to protect the graves over the years have failed and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust has recently done extensive excavations, directed by Andrew Davidson. One of the most notable discoveries was that long cists were covered by small mounds, occasionally with upright headstones. These markers have normally been lost, but here they were preserved under blown sand which caused the mound to rise over them.

In the evening the new President, David Longley, the recently retired Director of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, was installed by the retiring President, Prof Gwyn Meirion-Jones. He then gave his **Presidential Address** : *The Anglesey House from the Late Iron Age to the Renaissance* This lecture stressed themes of continuity which had been illustrated in the day’s visits and would be echoed in the late mediaeval houses to be seen later in the week. The lecture was followed by an informal reception.

WEDNESDAY

This day was spent in the northern part of the island and concentrated on the copper mines and port at Amlwch where our guides were Dr David Jenkins and Bryan Hope of the Amlwch Heritage Trust. In the afternoon members were invited to take tea at Brynddu, Llanfechell at the invitation of Prof and Mrs Robin Grove White.

In the early 18th century **Parys Mountain** was divided between two unprofitable farms belonging to the Llys Dulas and Plas Newydd estates. On March 2nd 1768 a major source of copper ore was found (or re-found, because the mountain had been mined in the Early Bronze Age) by Jonathan Rose from Derbyshire, initiating a period of extensive mining which was to make Parys for some 30 years the most important mine in the world. This enterprise had a faltering start because of inevitable quarrels between the owners, until in 1778, one of the heroes of ‘management history’, the lawyer Thomas Williams (*Twm Chwareu Teg*) was able to bring them together and exploit all the multifarious resources of the mountain.

Though the quality of the ore was not especially high it was close to the surface and easy to mine by opencast working which eventually destroyed most of the summit and by the mid 19th century the mine was declining. But because of the acidic nature of the water pumped from the mine, dissolved copper could be gained by precipitation, and sulphur by calcining. The mine closed in the 1960s but there are still rich resources of minerals there, and more recently the remains of the mine: the Great Opencast, the ruined office compound of the Mona Mine, the engine house and the tower of its unique wind-powered pumping engine, have become the focus of a major Heritage Tourism enterprise. This has arisen from the enthusiasm of a local group of mine explorers searching for the evidence of the prehistoric mining who realised that the dam holding back thousands of gallons of acidic water in the abandoned galleries was no longer sound. This brought government finance to drain the mine and establish a tourist trail over the mountain. We were guided on this trail by Dr David Jenkins one of the prime movers and sustainers of the project.

En route to the port, members visited the **Roman Catholic Church – *Our Lady Star of the Sea*** which was built in 1932-5, but is still the most conspicuously modern building in Anglesey. It was designed by an Italian engineer, Giuseppe Rinvulcri, who also built two other Catholic churches in north Wales in much more traditional style. The church hall forms a stone-built basement above which six concrete parabolic curves rise to form the main church. The soaring vault is pierced by three bands of flower-like glass bricks which flood the interior with light. The small apse is lit by five star-shaped windows. The church has been recently re-opened after major restoration.

Amlwch Port The success of the Parys copper mine demanded a very large and efficient port but nature had provided only a very narrow rocky creek. An act of parliament was obtained in 1793 to enlarge the port by excavating the eastern side to provide quays with storage bins for the copper ore and for imported coal and scrap iron, but it still remains a very difficult harbour and vulnerable to northerly winds. The harbour was extended northwards in 1817 and shipbuilding was established on the western quays as the prosperity of the mine declined. This yard later moved to the east side where a dry dock was cut out of the rock beyond the harbour offices and the sail-loft. The latest phase of development of the port dates from the mid 1970s when Shell established an off-shore oil terminal which was serviced from Amlwch.

The Harbourmaster's Office is now the headquarters of Geomôn, the organisation which promotes Anglesey's complex geology. The Amlwch Heritage Trust and Menter Môn run the Sail Loft café where members lunched before visiting the new exhibition in the re-roofed copper ore bins and touring the harbour with Bryan Hope, the historian of the port development.

On leaving Amlwch for **Llanfechell** the bus passed several prehistoric sites which have been subject to recent excavation as a Community Project by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Evidence for Neolithic and Early Bronze Age activity has been found at Carrog hilltop, at a possible megalithic tomb and close to a Standing Stone which fell in 2009. Very unusually a packing stone had been decorated with a cup-and-ring mark. Another fine Standing Stone was passed at Soar Chapel on the return to Bangor

Brynddu, Llanfechell has been an estate centre since at least the late Middle Ages. The east wing is likely to date from the marriage of Arthur Bulkeley to the Brynddu heiress in 1565; a broad three-bay cross range was added later that century and a west wing to match the eastern one in 1690. A sketch by Lewis Morris suggests that it has not changed much (externally) since 1742 at which time it was the home of William Bulkeley the 'diarist'. This diary is a record of the weather, of his farms and his business dealings, and of all the gossip of the county. It, alongside the letters of the Morris Brothers, is the basis of our knowledge of the social life of the island in the 18th century. His only daughter was married to the pirate, Fortunatus Wright and the garden at Brynddu received many exotic plants sent by his son-in-law. The walled garden is still extant and is one of the oldest and

best preserved in Anglesey. The house has never been sold, but always passed by inheritance. Robin Grove-White expounded the history of the house while his wife took the other half of the party around the garden before both assembled for tea on the lawn, in a Cambrian tradition which has not been seen for some years.

The Public Lecture was given in the evening by David Hopewell of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust who spoke on *Excavations at the recently-discovered Roman Settlement at Tai Cochion, Brynsiencyn*. This site was discovered by metal detectorists, air photography and geophysics and seems to be a prosperous non-military village at a point where the ferry from Segontium would land; a quite densely packed trading station of **the xx** centuries AD.

THURSDAY

The day was spent mainly in Beaumaris, the administrative centre of the island from the 13th to the mid 19th century. All members visited the church and the gaol but were free to wander in the town in the morning. The President, David Longley, who has done a lot of architectural recording in the town, was available as guide. Sadly, due to a recent theft by a visitor, we were not able to visit the George and Dragon mural. In the afternoon members had to make a choice of two of the three sites offered

Our member, the Rev Neil Fairlamb, vicar of the **Church of St Nicholas, Beaumaris**, could not be present because of a funeral in another of his churches. Consequently we were welcomed by the churchwarden, Lt Col Michael Burkham and Dr Lawrence Butler led the party around the building. Rev Fairlamb had provided some notes on the church for members and a copy of an article by Dr Madelene Grey on some of the memorials.

Like other new towns, Beaumaris remained within the jurisdiction of the original parish – Llandegfan -- until the citizens petitioned for their own church in the early 14th century. This church lacked the flourishes of the present building where the external battlements, finials and Perpendicular style window tracery belong to the early 16th and, in some cases, the early 17th century. There was a big restoration in 1902 by G.F. Bodley who stripped the interior plaster. Beaumaris was the county town and this was the civic church for several centuries so there are some particularly notable memorials, the finest group in Anglesey, and some rich fittings, such as the chancel stalls, which may have come from Llanfaes Friary at the Dissolution.

The large late 15th century alabaster table tomb of William Bulkeley and his wife Elen Gruffudd of Penrhyn stands at the back of the north aisle. There are several later Bulkeley memorials in the chancel, some by notable sculptors. The most important memorial lies in the south porch – the coffin lid of Princess Joan (Siwan) daughter of King John and wife of Llywelyn the Great who was buried in Llanfaes in 1237. The coffin was rescued from use as a horse trough by Viscount Bulkeley in 1808 who placed it in a grotto at Baron Hill, whence it came to the church in the 1920s.

Beaumaris Gaol was a very innovative prison built in 1828-9 by Hansom and Welch who later built the Bulkeley Hotel and Victoria Terrace on the front. The radial cell blocks are surrounded by a high curtain wall from which the temporary gibbet projected over the street. The last public execution there was in 1862. Three cell blocks were originally planned but in 1867-8 an additional cross wing was built, the architecture slightly less intimidating. The only surviving treadmill in Britain still stands in the northern yard. It was used to raise water to roof tanks from which it was piped to every cell. The governor's office was on the upper floor at the junction of the three original corridors. There was an infirmary and work rooms. The prison closed in 1878; the building was later used as a Police Station and then as an Ante-natal Clinic before opening as a Museum in the 1970s. The prison and its context within evolving ideas of crime and punishment were described to members assembled in the prison chapel by Mrs Penny Harris who is currently working on a history of its architect.

The Tudor Rose (32 Castle Street) is a well-preserved segment of a later 15th century hall-house with flanking wings. The street front is the south wing with a 16th century projection over the street. Behind it is the central open hall which in 1550 had an inserted staircase and floor, now mainly removed. The chimney on the north wall also belongs to this re-ordering; in the 19th century it housed a baker's oven. The north wing has been entirely lost. The house survives because of the efforts of its former owner, Hendrik Lek who came to Beaumaris as a refugee and restored the decaying building to house his antique business. It is now an estate agent's office.

Several other buildings in Castle Street (the Bull's Head, The Town House, Tyn y Gongl and the George and Dragon) originate in the late 16th century. Survey work by David Longley over the last five years, responding to commercial development work, has revealed much concealed historic fabric and it is probable that similar work will reveal much more, if the opportunities are taken in other core areas of the mediaeval town.

17th century buildings of note near the castle are the remnant of the **Grammar School** (now the Library) founded in 1603 and the **Court House** built in 1614 and in use up to the 1960s. The court room itself is designed as the great hall of a gentry house, with hammer beam trusses and the judges' seat on the dias beneath a cove of honour. The court proper is divided from the public space by high spikey railings which also ring the dock. In the 18th century an elegant octagonal jury room was added at the back.

In the 1820s the Corporation made a deliberate attempt to become a fashionable seaside resort and built terraces of houses to attract visitors. **Green Edge** (1825) was the first and **Victoria Terrace** (1833) the most spectacular. Nothing on that scale was attempted again.

A very fine 20th century development is **Maes Hyfryd**, the estate of houses designed by S. Colwyn Foulkes in 1950. They were council houses built to strict post-war regulations, yet achieve astonishing beauty, convenience and sympathy with their setting.

Beaumaris Castle was the last of the ring of castles built by Edward I and his great architect, Master James of St George, to encircle the conquered kingdom of Gwynedd. The site was a new one, but stood close to the Welsh town of Llanfaes, whose role as a commercial centre and port was to be transferred to the English borough of Beaumaris.

At Beaumaris, Master James had an undeveloped site and one without a rock foundation to dictate the plan. Consequently this is the most perfectly symmetrical of his concentric designs. It consists of two wards, the inner square in shape, the outer subtly angular with two gates offset from the inner ones. The whole structure was surrounded by a wide moat linked by a dock to the open sea. But, despite the perfection of plan (every yard of ground outside the moat is within arrowshot of the defenders), the castle as it stands lacks the impact of Conwy or Harlech. It does not dominate because it was never completed: the inner towers and walls have no battlements and the two gatehouses should have been a storey higher, with turrets rising above.

It is probable that the castle was planned and the site chosen in 1283 but work was not started until 1295. From 1295 to 1300 work was rapid but money and royal interest evaporated; work ceased until 1306. It continued until 1330 but was never fully completed. In the early 15th century the castle fell to Owain Glyndwr who held it for two years. In the 16th century it began to decay and was used as a prison but in the Civil War there were some hasty repairs. It was held for the king by Sir Richard Bulkeley.

The Cambrians were guided around the castle by Dr Amée Pritchard. During discussion of the later history of the castle Rory O'Farrell recalled that Vernon Hughes, a noted architectural historian and Cambrian, had been convinced that the stucco image of the re-building of the walls of Jerusalem originally in Oldbawn House, Tallaght, Co. Dublin (and now in the National Museum of Ireland) had been modelled on Beaumaris Castle. Oldbawn House had been built in 1635 by Archdeacon William Bulkeley.

Aberlleiniog Castle was described for two successive groups of Cambrians by Dr Karen Pollock. The puzzles of this site have only recently been resolved. It is a motte and bailey castle with three significant periods of construction which can now be dated with some confidence, though intriguing questions still remain.

The first phase is a late 11th century motte built by Hugh of Avranches as part of an incursion across north Wales to extend the Norman conquest beyond the Saxon kingdom. The attack was repulsed by Gruffudd ap Cynan and Hugh was killed, drowned here in the marsh which was then a viable creek with access for boats close to the motte.

The mound was brought into play again during the Civil War when Sir Thomas Cheadle established a fort and gun running point for Parliament, in opposition to the Bulkeleys defending Beaumaris castle for the King. There has been much uncertainty about the nature of Cheadle's fort but recent excavations on the top of the motte have shown that a defensible redoubt was formed by cutting into the top of the mound and creating an earthen rampart with inner revetment.

The really puzzling element of the monument is the rather flimsy stone fort on the top of the mound. Finds from the excavations have now shown that this structure must date from after 1700 and before 1790 when Thomas Pennant visited and described the stone fort. Two views developed in the following 200 years: that the stone fort was an unrecorded medieval structure which had been reinforced inside with clay in the Civil War, or it was a folly which had been wrapped around the top of the motte. This latter view has been shown to be correct, though the identity of its builder remains unknown.

The site is now owned by Isle of Anglesey Borough Council and a new bridge and staircase to the top of the motte has been constructed. Excavation took place during this development.

The group of monuments at **Penmon Priory** – holy well, sculpted crosses, 12th century church, 13th century conventual buildings and secular post-Reformation dovecote – encapsulates the development of Christian history on Anglesey.

The original monastery is reputed to have been founded by St Seiriol, in the 6th century. The monastery prospered and in the 10th century fine crosses were set up at the boundaries of the sanctuary (Noddfa) and the township, but Viking raids have destroyed all other evidence of this date. During the 12th century revival under Gruffudd ap Cynan and Owain Gwynedd the abbey church was rebuilt, and it remains the finest and most complete example of a church of this period in Gwynedd. In the 13th century the 'Celtic' monasteries were persuaded by Llywelyn the Great to adopt a more regular rule, and Penmon eventually became an Augustinian Priory with quite substantial conventual buildings. The priory survived the Edwardian conquest and expanded slightly, but was dissolved in 1538. The buildings passed into the hands of the Bulkeleys of Beaumaris, who enclosed much of the land as a deer park and built a fine dovecote. They also converted the prior's lodging into a rather attractive house. Throughout this time the priory church remained in use, as it does today.

The holy well is behind the church beyond the monastic fish pond. Though it must have been crucial to the siting of the monastery from the first, the present well buildings belong to an 18th century revival of interest in springs and spas. A plaque on the brick well chamber gives a date 1710.

The dovecote is earlier, perhaps built in about 1600, but the large threshing barn beside it may belong to the 18th century when agriculture became a serious interest to Anglesey gentry.

Two crosses (out of four recorded by Edward Lhuyd) and a font (or perhaps a cross-base) found in a stonemason's yard in Beaumaris are now in the nave. All three belong to a school of sculpture which absorbed stylistic traits from northern English, Viking and Irish art and the sculptors who created them may have had close contacts with Cheshire. A few fragments surviving in Bangor Cathedral belong to the same school. The sculptures were described by Prof Nancy Edwards who had just completed new study of them.

The cruciform church is the most complete 12th century building in Anglesey. Stylistic variations suggest that it was built in stages between 1140 and 1170 but the sequence is currently under debate. It was originally thought that the present nave was the earliest part, pre-dating the

tower and the transepts, with the chancel being enlarged under Llywelyn the Great to accommodate the monastic choir demanded by the Augustinian rule. David Longley has recently suggested that the chancel might have been the site of the earliest single-celled church to which a western tower was added; with the present nave being added further to the west, followed by the transepts linked through new north and south arches. This building history would echo that of the sister establishment on Ynys Lannog (Puffin Island) and accounts for the extra width of the chancel which may have been built around existing walls. The chancel (now the parish church) was rebuilt in the 19th century on 13th century foundations.

In the evening the **G.T.Clark Prizes** were presented in a short ceremony which was followed by the **Annual General Meeting**. Five of the seven recipients were guests of the Association at dinner, together with the winner of the Blodwen Jerman Prize, Miss xxx Hudson and her parents.

FRIDAY July 13th

The visit to the **Bryn Gwyn Stone Circle** was missed due to wet weather and the problem of parking the bus on a dangerous road. This is the only stone circle in Anglesey and recent excavations of the badly damaged site had shown that the original record by Henry Rowlands (1723) had been substantially correct. Late Neolithic cremations were found close to the ring, within which a central stone had been erected in the Early Bronze Age.

The party went directly to the **Newborough Institute** where they were welcomed by Miss Enid Mummery who gave a short introduction to the Institute (1902-5) and its benefactor, Sir John Prichard Jones, a local boy who had done well in the textile trade.

Newborough was founded by Edward I in 1303 on the lands of the Princes of Gwynedd's court at Rhosyr but it suffered a disastrous sand-blow and inundation in the 14th century from which its agricultural soils never recovered. By the end of the 19th century it was seriously impoverished. The Institute, with its library, Assembly Rooms and almshouses, still survives as a community centre and it has recently been re-furbished.

The site at **Llys Rhosyr** was not visited by the main party, but David Longley spoke in the Institute about the political landscape of the Princes of Gwynedd. He described the *commote* divisions, each with a royal estate (*maerdref*) centred on a group of buildings (*llys*) where the Prince would stay while administering justice and extending hospitality in the district. There were several of these courts within Gwynedd but Rhosyr is the only site where these buildings, a Great Hall and lesser domestic buildings within a walled enclosure, have been found and excavated (1992-7). Sadly only the robbed foundations had survived.

After a cup of tea the party looked at the original library collection and its system of cataloguing and recording loans.

Llangadwaladr Church was visited next. It is one of the finest churches on the island and contains the Catamanus Stone, undoubtedly the most important historical document of the 7th century in Anglesey. It also contains in its east window the largest quantity of late medieval stained glass, and in the south transept a fine Renaissance memorial. The glass commemorates the Meyrick family of Bodorgan who made their fortune with Henry VII and the very late Gothic south transept was built in 1661 as a memorial to Col Hugh Owen of Bodowen who played a rather equivocal role in the Civil War. The Catamanus Stone was described by Prof Nancy Edwards and the later features of the church were discussed by Dr Lawrence Butler.

The importance of the Catamanus Stone is threefold. Firstly it is a true gravestone designed to stand upright at the head of the grave and it refers to Cadfan (Catamanus) King of Gwynedd who died in AD 625. This reference to a known historical figure provides a firm date for other stones where a similar style of lettering is used. The style is a mixture of Roman capitals and half-uncial

letter forms derived from manuscript writing, known from a few surviving wax tablets. Secondly it was found close to the church and re-used as a door lintel. This establishes royal link to the church, continued in the dedication to his grandson, Cadwaladr. Finally the grandiloquent phraseology has echoes of Imperial Bystantium.

After visiting the church the party moved to **Aberffraw**, in the age of the Princes their major court. Because of numbers two sittings were arranged at the Community Cafe at Llys Llywelyn. David Longley took one group up to the church and discussed the history and topography of the village and the other group came up later to join him with Lawrence Butler.

Poetry and documentary sources emphasise the importance of the village, which may have arisen in the immediate post-Roman period since a ditched enclosure associated with some Roman pottery was found in the 1970s. Nothing remains of the *llys*, demolished in 1317. However 18th century antiquarians believed that they could still make out traces of it at the west end of the village and research into the history of land holdings here would suggest that they were right. Sadly the area is now built over.

The church, much altered in the 16th and 19th centuries, retains a Romanesque arch discovered in restoration in 1840 and rebuilt against the west wall. It is all that survives of any 12th century splendour, but despite the loss of political power in 1283 the church was embellished in the 14th century and doubled in size in the 16th century when a second aisle was added. A good deal of debate arose about the original position of the surprisingly weathered 'Norman' arch, whether it had been a chancel arch or the arch of a large west doorway.

From Aberffraw the whole party went to **Barclodiad y Gawres Cruciform Passage Grave** where again numbers necessitated two groups for entry to the tomb. While Frances Lynch spoke about the monument, Dr Kate Roberts of Cadw spoke to those outside about options for re-display. Cadw, very conscious of the inadequacy of the present arrangements and of the tension between protection of the decorated stones and their adequate display, were hoping to make changes in the near future and were keen to have the views of members.

This important site is related to the famous Boyne Valley tombs in Ireland, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. Like them it had a long narrow passage leading to a vaulted central chamber with three lower side chambers, the whole covered with a large circular mound of earth and stones. The monument was excavated in 1952-3. Cremated bone was found in a side chamber but a unique element of funerary ritual was revealed in the central chamber: the remains of a 'magic' stew poured over a fire and covered with limpet shells. Evidence of such hearths has been found in other tombs, but never the ceremonial detail. The excavators also recognised for the first time that several of the wall stones were lightly pecked with abstract designs featuring spirals, zigzags and lozenges. In the last few years Adam Stanford and George Nash have identified previously unrecognised decoration on Stone 7 (the left-hand stone of the left side-chamber) and on the upper part of Stone 6 (much weathered since graffiti reveal that it had projected above the mound in the early 20th century). With the help of large torches Cambrians agreed that they could see these elusive marks.

On the return journey to Bangor Frances Lynch commented on the **Henblas Estate** as we passed. Some 40 years of 18th century domestic accounts survive from the house and the large threshing barn, visible for miles around, is a product of the agricultural improvers who were very influential at the time. She and David Longley also described the excavations carried out prior to the construction of the A55. The bus stopped on the bridge near **Cefn Cwmwd** to look at the site of one of three late prehistoric and Roman settlements which had been found along the length of the road. The others were at Cefn Du, Gaerwen and at Melin y Plas, near Caergeiliog. The Cefn Cwmwd group had been badly ruined but a long period of occupation was confirmed by the discovery of a carved garnet from a finger ring of the 6th century AD, another example of the post-Roman

continuity which had been stressed at other sites. The badly damaged buildings at all three sites included wooden and clay-walled houses as well as the well known stone ones. At Cefn Cwmwd a small group of Early Bronze Age urn burials had also been found. As we neared the Straits Dr Peter Jarvis explained the innovatory engineering of Stephenson's **Britannia Bridge** of 1846.

SATURDAY

One of the best-known Anglesey monuments, **Din Lligwy**, was visited on the last morning under the guidance of Prof Raimund Karl of Bangor University. Though often described as a 'hut group' it is really comparable to the contemporary Romanised *villas* of the south of England – a well regulated 'estate centre' with houses and working buildings arranged within an imposing enclosure.

Excavation in 1907 revealed evidence for earlier occupation – a less coherently planned set of buildings. The date of the reorganisation which resulted in the present arrangement is uncertain. The angularity of the enclosure and the presence of several rectangular buildings would suggest that they belong to the Roman period. Finds suggest occupation in the 4th century AD, but these may reflect only a small segment of the site's history.

A new reconstruction drawing provided by Cadw was the focus of a good deal of discussion about the original entrance to the enclosure. Cadw preferred a small doorway on the SW but most Cambrians felt that the eastern entrance through an imposing barn, similar to that at Cefn Graianog, was more likely. Though damaged, at least one intact door jamb could be recognised. Standing in this entrance many people were struck by the quality of the square building directly opposite and there was some debate about its possible role.

From Din Lligwy the party went to **Hafoty, Llansadwrn**, the oldest surviving house in the island. It has been owned by the Bulkeley family since the 16th century but Cadw has recently carried out an extensive programme of excavation and restoration. It is only open by arrangement and we were met by Roy Nally, a regular guide there, who showed members the details of the structure, after the history of the building and its record of ownership had been described by David Longley.

The likely original builder was Thomas Norres, Constable of Beaumaris Castle in 1439; in the early 16th century the house belonged to Henry Norres, and in 1511 it was acquired by the Bukeleys.

The original timber-framed house, with a two-roomed basement and a first-floor hall, is now the much-altered east wing. A ground-floor hall open to the roof was added to the west. This was originally a wooden cruck hall, very rare survival in Anglesey, with perhaps clay walls. Later the walls were replaced in stone which encased the timber frame. The final section is the solar wing on the west, which in its present form belongs to the early 16th century. The central hall would have had an open hearth but in about 1530 a large stone fireplace and chimney was added to the south wall.

On the return journey the bus passed the **Bulkeley memorial** (1880) viewed against the panorama of Snowdonia, also the backdrop of a brief visit to the Colwyn Ffoulkes houses at **Maes Hyfryd** above Beaumaris. Passing through the town of Menai Bridge Dr Peter Jarvis spoke about **Telford's bridge** of 1826. The party arrived back in Bangor in time to catch trains south.