

The Welsh *mystwyr*

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In his contribution to the debate about the nature of the pre-Norman church in Wales, Dr Huw Pryce comments on the once prevalent view that its institutions were 'monastic' in character and that the all-too-few textual sources that we have, from Gildas onwards, employ what is termed a monastic vocabulary in relation to such units or communities. He rightly insists that 'we need to keep an open mind about the significance of the monastic terminology which was applied to them'.¹ This opens up a wide field of investigation which is now being actively pursued although it would still seem to be difficult to define clearly the monastic and pastoral functions of the early post-Roman church in Wales, as well as to determine the exact nature of a religious unit referred to in such terms. It is with one of these, in the Welsh context, that I am concerned in this paper.

The point has been made that in the available Latin texts the most frequently used terms for post-Roman religious institutions in Wales are *eccl_sia*, *locus*, *monast_rium* and *podum*, of which only *podum* has not been borrowed into Welsh. *Eccl_sia*, of course, in its Vulgar Latin (VL) form *ecl_sia*, gave Primitive Welsh (PrW) **egl_s*, Welsh (W) *eglwys*,² now 'church', but originally it could have stood for 'a religious community' and is often replaced in place-names in the medieval period by *W llan* as in Llangeinor, Glamorgan *Egleskeinwir* 1180 × 1183;³ Llangain, Carmarthen

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¹ H. Pryce, 'Pastoral care in early medieval Wales', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, edited by J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), pp. 41–62.

² K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), pp. 227 and 412.

³ *Cartae et Alia Munimenta quae ad Dominium de Glamorgan pertinent*, edited by G. T. Clark, 6 vols (Cardiff, 1910), I, 162; see also *Episcopal Acts and Cognate Documents Relating to Welsh Dioceses 1066–1272*, Vol. 2, edited by J. C. Davies (Cardiff, 1948), L192, p. 666.

Egleiskein 1154 × 1171;⁴ Llanwensan, Glamorgan *Egloiswensen* 1254⁵ etc. Whether these, and other examples in the *Liber Landavensis*, suggest that the semantic development of the ubiquitous W *llan* from its original meaning, that of its English cognate *land*, to that of 'religious enclosure' and so on to 'church' was, in this very early context, a relatively late occurrence, is, of course, debatable.⁶

Latin (L) *locus* gives Old Welsh (OW) *loc* 'place', as evidenced in the tenth-century Computus fragment on astronomy and the Oxoniensis Posterior MS where it glosses the Latin *podum*.⁷ In Middle Welsh (MW) *lloc* had developed the sense 'consecrated place, monastery' and is evidenced as such in the twelfth-century Black Book of Carmarthen.⁸ By the thirteenth century it is recorded compounded with W *mynach*, *manach* 'monk', L *monachus*, as the second element of the word *mynachlog* in a Welsh translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, as an element in a place-name, *Manachlog Uargan*, and as a common noun in *mynachloc canonwyr* (L *canonicorum conuentus*).⁹ It is this word which survives as the current Welsh word for 'a monastery'.¹⁰ The new Welsh

⁴ *Episcopal Acts and Cognate Documents Relating to Welsh Dioceses 1066–1272*, Vol. 1, edited by J. C. Davies (Cardiff, 1946), D203, p. 283.

⁵ *The Valuation of Norwich*, edited by W. E. Lunt (Oxford, 1926), p. 315.

⁶ T. Roberts, 'Welsh ecclesiastical place-names and archaeology', in *The Early Church in Wales and the West*, edited by N. Edwards and A. Lane, Oxbow Monograph, 16 (Oxford, 1992), pp. 41–44 (p. 42), notes the probable antiquity of *eglwys*-names in Wales, whilst A. Preston-Jones, 'Decoding Cornish churchyards', in *ibid.*, pp. 104–24 (pp. 108–09), in accepting the use of *eglos* 'to name a very early site' in Cornwall, also asserts that the Cornish *lann* 'is a demonstrably early element'. The evidence of the *Liber Landavensis* charter material indicates that many religious settlements designated *ecclesiae* become *Llan*- in the later established place-name (W. Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm* (London, 1978), p. 38).

⁷ I. Williams, 'The Computus fragment', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 3 (1925–27), 261; H. H. E. Craster, 'The glosses of the Codex Oxoniensis Posterior', *Revue Celtique*, 40 (1923), 135–36.

⁸ A. O. H. Jarman, *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Caerdydd, 1982), p. 9 line 74.

⁹ *Brut Dingestow*, edited by H. Lewis (Caerdydd, 1942), pp. 31 and 157.

¹⁰ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru. A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (Caerdydd, 1950–), s.v. *mynachlog*.

Academy English—Welsh Dictionary has no other word to offer,¹¹ although three other archaic forms based on *W mynach*, *manach* may be noted. One is a lost *Menechi* in the vicinity of Tenby and Penally, Pembrokeshire, location unknown, and in *Lann Menechi* by the Gabalfa river crossing in Llandaf, Cardiff, which is also *villa meneich* (an alternative plural form of *manach*) in the same documentary source in the *Liber Landavensis* and dated c.685 A.D. by Professor Wendy Davies.¹² This form may well contain the suffix *-i* which signifies territorial possession when added to personal names in particular to form place-names like *Cydweli* (*Cedweli*), *Arwystli*, *Ceri* etc., which, presumably, led Melville Richards to define *Menechi* as 'land of the monk or monks' (*tir y mynach neu'r mynaich*).¹³ Another is the form *mynechdid*, *menechdid*, first recorded in the thirteenth century in the University of Wales *Dictionary*, < *manach* + the abstract substantive ending *-did*, MW *-tid*, *-tit*. With initial lenition after the Welsh definite article, *Y Fynechdid*, it appears as the place-name *Efenechdid* in the Dee valley west of Llangollen.¹⁴ Although both forms are

¹¹ B. Griffiths and D. G. Jones, *Geiriadur yr Academi: The Welsh Academy English—Welsh Dictionary* (Caerdydd, 1995), s.v. *monastery*.

¹² *Liber Landavensis*, edited by J. G. Evans and J. Rhys (Oxford, 1893; facsimile edition, Aberystwyth, 1979), *menechi* pp. 124 and 255; *lann menechi* p. 51; W. Davies, *The Llandaff Charters* (Aberystwyth, 1979), pp. 102–03.

¹³ Melville Richards, 'Early Welsh territorial suffixes', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 95 (1965), 205–12 (pp. 207–08); *idem*, *Enwau Tir a Gwlad* (Caernarfon, 1998), p. 18; R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1938), p. 127. O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, 56/57 (Nottingham, 1985), p. 163, defines the equivalent Cornish *meneghy* as 'sanctuary', comparing it with the Breton *minic'hi* 'refuge, asile'.

¹⁴ J. Morris-Jones, *A Welsh Grammar* (Oxford, 1913), p. 231. The suffix *-tid*, *-did*, normally occurs in the formation of abstract substantives from adjectives as in *W rhyddid* 'freedom' < *rhydd* 'free' + *did*; *W glendid* (originally *gleindid*) 'purity, holiness, cleanliness' < *glân* 'clean' but also 'pure, virtuous, holy' + *did* etc. Added to *manach* > *menechtid*, *menechdid*, with consequent vowel affection over two syllables, later *mynechdid*, it has been interpreted with various shades of meaning ranging from 'the state (calling) of a monk' to 'monks' simply and even 'parish' in an early-eighteenth-century dictionary. See Ifor Williams, 'Nodiadau ar Englynion y Clyweit', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 3 (1926), 19 and *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v. *mynechdid*, *menechdid*.

defined as 'monastery' in the dictionary, Sir Ifor Williams's preference for the latter was 'a grange, the outlying farm of a monastery' which he also preferred as the meaning of the third *mynach*-based term which can be noted here, namely *mynachdy*, with *W t_* 'house, abode', again defined in the dictionary as 'monastery, abbey' whilst conceding that it has the sense 'a farmhouse belonging to a monastery' in place-names.¹⁵

What, therefore, of the remaining Latin term *monast_rium*? It has been noted that in Anglo-Saxon texts, Latin or English, this term and the Old English (OE) derivative *mynster* < VL **monisterium*, are by far the commonest used to denote early religious communities, large or small.¹⁶ It also occurs frequently for a similar purpose in the comparatively few Latin texts that apply to Wales, especially the charter material of the twelfth-century *Liber Landavensis*, much of which, of course, has been ascribed to earlier periods, in some cases back to the sixth century.¹⁷ This too has a derivative Welsh form which is not too well known and which is not current in Modern Welsh. In modern orthography this is *mystwyr*, OW *mustuir* < VL *mon'st_rium* where syncope of the unaccented intertonic vowel of the second syllable had already occurred, the long *-e-* of the penult giving the Welsh diphthong *-wy-*, this being an important feature as an aid to determining the etymology of later forms.¹⁸ It is, therefore, cognate with Old Irish (OIr) *monister*, Middle Irish (MlIr) *mainister*, Breton (Bret) *moustoer* having come through Old French (OFr) *moustier*, now *moutier*, like Cornish (Co) *mynster* from English (E) *minster*. On the other hand the Welsh *mystwyr* is not evidenced in Welsh literary texts, and it is probably because of this that it was never listed and defined in any Welsh dictionary until the appearance of *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*. However, the short entry in that work ends with the succinct statement, 'It occurs, possibly, as an element in place-names' (*Digwydd o bosibl fel elfen mewn enwau lleoedd*), and what follows is an attempt to remove this reservation by noting some place-names in which, I suggest, this term may well constitute the whole or part of their composition.¹⁹

¹⁵ I. Williams, *Enwau Lleoedd* (Lerpwl, 1945), p. 55.

¹⁶ Blair and Sharpe, *Pastoral Care*, p. 4.

¹⁷ Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm, passim; eadem, The Llandaff Charters, passim*.

¹⁸ Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 268 and 651–53.

¹⁹ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, s.v. *mystwyr*.

To my knowledge the word *mystwyr* was first discussed by Joseph Loth in a contribution to a miscellany presented to D'Arbois de Jubainville in the 1890s.²⁰ He notes the Old Welsh form *mustuir* which occurs in the phrase *mathenni mustuir mur* (= *Mathenni mystwyr mawr*) in one of the *Liber Landavensis* charters which is ascribed by Wendy Davies to 760 A.D.²¹ It records a grant of land at *Mathenni* (W *ma* 'place' + the personal name *Tenni*), now *Llandenni*, a small compact village between Usk and Raglan in Gwent.²² Loth renders the phrase *le grand moutier en Mathenni*, 'in *Mathenni*', perhaps because there is a stop in the manuscript after *Mathenni* followed by the words *mustuir mur cum omnia sua libertate*. Since then it seems to have been generally accepted that *mathenni mustuir mur*, ignoring the stop, is a name phrase with *mustuir mur* as the qualifying element, with the exception of Egerton Phillimore who suggests a genival relationship, 'Llandenni of the great monastery'.²³ This is the earliest documented form of *mystwyr* that we have, and whatever the exact relationship that is implied, the use of the term to denote a religious entity at or near Llandenni is clear enough, for the location is referred to specifically in another of the *Liber*

²⁰ J. Loth, 'Contribution a la lexicographie et l'etymologie Celtiques', in *Mélanges H. D'Arbois de Jubainville a l'occasion du 78e Anniversaire de sa naissance* (Paris, n.d.), pp. 195–227 (p. 213).

²¹ *Liber Landavensis*, p. 297; Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, p. 117.

²² Like many personal names which form the second element of *Llan*-names, *Tenni* is an obscure name of whom nothing is known, but it is accepted that it occurs, with lenition of the initial consonant, in the name *Hendredenni* (*Hendredenny* on the OS map), north-west of the town of Caerffili, Glamorgan, a demesne manor of the Welsh lords of Senghennydd Is Caeach, which survives as the name of two substantial properties, *Hendredenni Ganol* and *Hendredenni Uchaf* as well as that of an urban estate which is an outlier of Caerffili (*Hendredeni*, *Hendredenny* 1307 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* (London, 1904–38), vol. 4, p. 324; 1373 NLW Bute MS 6158 (1)). Cf. also a reference to a well, location unknown, *ffynnon Denni*, in *Tyre ffynnon Denni* 1715 NLW Tredegar MS 56/402. See also J. A. Bradney, *A History of Monmouthshire*, 4 vols (London, 1904–33), II:ii, 40 n. 1; Egerton Phillimore's opinion in *The Description of Penbrokeshire by George Owen of Henllys*, edited by H. Owen, 4 vols (London, 1892–1936), III, 244, and Melville Richards, 'Some Welsh place-names containing elements found in continental Celtic', *Études Celtiques*, 13 (1972–73), 396.

²³ *The Description of Penbrokeshire by George Owen*, edited by Owen, IV, 536 n. 1.

Landavensis documents of c.785 A.D. as *ecclesia Mathenni*. Other than that, unfortunately, there is a total lack of early supporting documentary or literary evidence. No further forms of the name are available until the *Mahenni* of the Norwich Valuation of 1254, but later forms show the seventeenth-century substitution of *llan* for *ma-*:

Mathenni mustuir mur c.760 (12th c.), *Mahenni* 1254, *Mykenny* 1291, *Mathenny* 1295, 1314, *Landenny* 1535, 1631, *Mathenny alias Llandenny* 1570, *Llandenny* 1576, 1682, 1695, *Llandenye* 1577, 1610, 1673, *Landennie* 1608 etc.

The church of Llandenni stands on a little knoll in the centre of the village immediately to the west of the main road from Usk to Monmouth. It is situated in the heartland of early Christian communities in south-east Wales and close enough to the Roman town of *Burrium* (Usk) which controlled communications to the north along the Usk river valley and the Olway valley to the north-east.²⁴ Enough information can be gleaned from the Llandaf charters to show that Llandenni in the middle of the eighth century was an estate with flocks and herds and there was a bridge on its boundary.²⁵ No record exists of standing stones or burial sites as yet, but in 1991 it was reported that a small deserted village appears in an aerial photograph as a shadow site in a field called *Cae Eglwys* on a farm in the modern parish where two carved stones were ploughed up from a rectangular depression at one end, one being the lower stone of a medieval quern but the second almost certainly a small Roman altar reused as a stoup in some unknown chapel.²⁶ There is, obviously, here a site which merits further archaeological investigation, notwithstanding the fact that the deserted village site and the present village of Llandenni are just under a kilometre apart. But the possible mid-eighth-century date of the form of the place-name is hardly to be ignored.

The second example is reasonably well known and is the name of the

²⁴ V. E. Nash-Williams, *The Roman Frontier in Wales* (Cardiff, 1954), revised edn edited by M. G. Jarret (Cardiff, 1969), pp. 116–17.

²⁵ Davies, *An Early Welsh Microcosm*, pp. 30, 43 and 129.

²⁶ Council for British Archaeology, Group 2, Wales, *Archaeology in Wales*, vol. 31 (1991), 47.

township of *Mwstwr* in the old lordship of Glyndyfrdwy and ecclesiastical parish of Corwen, Merioneth, in the upper Dee valley, Glyndyfrdwy being now a village and the centre of a parish formed out of Corwen in 1866.²⁷ The township boundary was not well defined and it has been suggested that it was centred on the location of the farm of Plas Isaf (SJ 164 421) in a bend of the river and close to the confluence of a stream, the Afon Ro, and the Dee,²⁸ possibly on the slender evidence of a field-name which was *Baider Saint* on a Rug estate map of 1791 but can be identified in earlier documents of the same estate in 1615 as two fields named the upper and lower *bedd y saint* 'the grave of the saints' respectively but on which again there are no structural remains whatsoever.²⁹ However, the toponymical evidence is by far the most convincing of the examples I present here not because it is early but because the recorded forms of the name, more numerous than of the other examples, consistently display that essential proof of derivation from the original VL *mon'st_rium*, namely the Welsh diphthong *-wy-*, OW *-ui-*, in the second syllable:

Mystuyr c.1200 (1294), *Mistuir* 1222 (1294), *Mustoir* 1236 (1294),
Mistwer 1278, *Nustewyr* 1291, *Mesdour* 1292 × 1293, *Mystwyr*
 1528, 1592 × 1593, 1614 × 1618, 1660, 1670 × 1671, *Mistwyr* 1528 ×
 1529, *Muster* 1543 × 1544, 1548 × 1549, *Mustowre* 1549, *Mustwir*
 1566, *Mystroyr* 1581, *Mystwr* 1596, c.1700, *Mwstwr* 1744 etc.

The earliest example, *Mystuyr*, appears in a recital of the foundation charter of the abbey of *Valle Crucis* (Glyn-y-groes or Llanegwystl) c.1200 lower down the valley for a colony of monks from the Cistercian abbey of *Strata Marcella* (Ystrad Marchell) near Welshpool in Powys in an inspeximus charter of 1294, the forms of 1222 and 1236 being included in the same document.³⁰ The monks were granted one half of the *villa* of

²⁷ D. R. Thomas, *A History of the Diocese of St Asaph*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Oswestry, 1908–13), II, 152.

²⁸ D. H. Williams, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands in Wales* (Cardiff, 1990), p. 65.

²⁹ National Library of Wales, Rug (Merioneth) MS 245 (now transferred to the Gwynedd Record Office)—*bedd y saint vcha* and *bedd y saint issa*, merged in a field called *Ddôl Bont* (350) on the Corwen Tithe Map, 1839.

³⁰ *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 12 (1866), 412–17. The sources of the thirteenth-century forms listed after those of the 1294 charter are as follows: 1278

Mystwyr which was recognised later as a grange. A selection of subsequent forms of the name are listed above where, as anticipated in 1549, in 1596 there is evidence of a frequent change in common speech in Welsh, the reduction of the final diphthong, giving *Mystwr*, with further development by assimilation to *Mwstwr*. As I have said, the toponymical evidence is strong, if of comparatively late provenance, but what is lacking is any inkling of what might have been originally referred to by the name *Mystwyr*, subsequently *Mwstwr*.

This modified form *Mwstwr* helps to focus attention on a similar form to be seen in the compound *Coedymwstwr*, with W *coed* 'wood', in the parish of Coychurch, or Llangrallo near Bridgend, Glamorgan:

Coide Muster 1536 × 1539, *Coyt mwstwr*, *Koed must(er)*, *Coyd mustwr* 1578, *Coedmustur* 1612 × 1613, *Coedmuster* 1629, 1676, 1736, *Coed Mwstwr* 1711, 1778, 1833, *Coedmwstwr*, *Coedymwstwr* 1738, *Coydmwstwr* 1807 × 1830.

The name was borne by four farmsteads with differing qualifying elements, *canol* 'middle', *uchaf* 'higher', and *bach* 'little, lesser' later *isaf* 'lower', all portions of an original substantial holding which was *Great Coed mwstwr* 1807 enlarged as a residence by A. J. Williams MP for South Glamorgan 1885–95, now a well-patronised hotel and restaurant, *Plas Coedymwstwr*.³¹ The properties are clustered around the slopes of a hill which rises to 114 metres above O.D. level on the summit of which there is a univallate hill-fort.³² There are some indications of a reasonably stable community of some antiquity in these surroundings. Near *Coedymwstwr Ganol* there is a *hendre*, tautologously named *Old Hendre* on the OS map,

Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls 1277–1326 (London, 1912), p. 171; 1291 *Taxatio Ecclesiastica ... auctoritate P. Nicolai IV circa A.D. 1291* (London, 1802), p. 289; 1292 × 1293 PRO E179/WL/536. The majority of the remainder are quoted on the slips s.v. *Mystwyr* in the Melville Richards Archive, Bangor.

³¹ G. O. Pierce, 'The evidence of place-names', in *Glamorgan County History*, vol. 2, *Early Glamorgan*, edited by H. N. Savory (Cardiff, 1984), Appendix II, pp. 456–92 (p. 486).

³² Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales (RCAHMW), *Inventory ... Glamorgan*, vol. 1, part 2 (Cardiff, 1976), (614), p. 20.

which is *Hendre Bedran* 1584,³³ and although only partially wooded at present the district would appear to have been densely wooded at one time as local place-names testify: *Coychurch* (*Cohytchirche* 1247, *Coytechurch* 1291), *Tor-coed*, *Pen-coed*, *Coed-y-gaer*, *Coedypebyll*, *Prysg* and the contiguous parish of *Coety*, the former lordship of Coety having been held, perhaps significantly, by the tenure of serjeanty of hunting.³⁴

It is situated on the fringe of the coastal lowland of the Vale of Glamorgan, the border vale, as it has been termed, a Romanised area, but although the RCAHM Glamorgan *Inventory* notes the almost complete absence of any association of early Christian monuments with known Roman sites here, well-known early ecclesiastical sites with their concentrations of memorial stones and crosses, three of them datable to the sixth century, are in reasonably close proximity—Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major), Margam, Llancarfan, Llandough, Ewenni and Merthyr Myfor (or Merthyr Mawr)—and at, or near the parish church of Llangrallo itself were the remains of two tenth- to early-eleventh-century crosses (one inscribed EBISSAR) with another similarly dated fragment of a pillar cross near the

³³ Although names which contain *hendre* (*hendref* 'old homestead') could have a late provenance, J. E. Lloyd in a discussion of the *hendref* and its counterpart, the *hafod* 'summer dwelling' has no evidence of the latter as part of the name of any ancient township but he adds, '*Hendref* on the other hand, is not uncommon in this connection' and he cites, among others, *Hendre Biffa* in Flintshire 'which is mentioned in Domesday' ('*Hendref* and *Hafod*', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 4 (1929), 224–25 (p. 225), and see Melville Richards, '*Meifod*, *lluest*, *cynaeafdy* and *hendre* in Welsh place-names', *The Montgomeryshire Collections*, 56, part 2 (1960), 177–87 (pp. 180–82)). The term is found in the charters of the *Liber Landavensis*, including *Henntre Iguonui* (p. 172) in a charter dated 620 A.D., and *Hentrev Merchitir* in the bounds of Llangadwaladr (Bishton, Monmouth) (p. 183) c.710 A.D. (Davies, *The Llandaff Charters*, pp. 107 and 110). In the present writer's collection of seventy-four recorded *hendre*-names in Glamorgan, two are first recorded in the thirteenth century, five in the fourteenth and twenty-six in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some became settlements of several holdings such as *Hendreseisyll* near Gelligaer (*Hendreseisyll* 1307 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. 4, p. 324) where, by 1316, fifteen holdings were in the lord's hands by escheat, and at an unlocated *Hendreboeth* (*Hendreboyth* 1307 *loc. cit.*) in the same area there were a sufficient number of customary tenants to render 31s. a year.

³⁴ H. J. Randall, *The Vale of Glamorgan* (Newport, 1961), pp. 25–26.

adjacent church of Coety.³⁵ Further evidence of early occupation in the Coedymwstwr hill area is inconclusive, but one point of some significance, perhaps, is that an enclosure near the farm of Coedymwstwr Ganol is listed by the RCAHM among hill-fort sites with banks on three sides mutilated by quarrying.³⁶ On a Dunraven estate map of 1778 the field adjacent to the east side of this enclosure is called *Cae'r ffunnon* (= *Cae'r ffynnon*) 'the well field', the well itself being clearly marked in one corner and named *Funnon-y-Munalog*, that is *Ffynnon y fynachlog* 'the monastery well', having the current *W mynachlog* as its qualifier.³⁷

Is this an allusion to the existence of some lost foundation in the vicinity? Since there is no trace of a medieval monastery in the area the use of *mynachlog* here is puzzling and, likewise, there is not a shred of evidence, physical or otherwise, for the existence of a *mystwyr* other than what may be inferred from the name *Coedymwstwr*. My inclination is to suspect that the reference is to the location of the pre-Norman cell of Crallo at Llangrallo, or its predecessor.

However, it is worth considering whether the spoken form *mwstwr* is capable of undergoing further modification in the vernacular. The sibilant *s* becomes the palato-alveolar *sh* under the influence of the consonantal *i* which functions as a palatal glide, written *si* but pronounced *sh(i)* as in *siarad* (*sharad*) 'to speak', the personal names *Siôn* (*Shôn*) and *Siân* (*Shân*), *si_r* (*sh_r*) *E sure* etc.,³⁸ and particularly in borrowings like *siawns*, *E chance*, *siars*, *E charge* etc. where it represents the palatal *E ch*. Possible metathesis of the medial consonants of the form *mwstwr* in common parlance would produce a form difficult to pronounce unless enunciated in a similar manner, that is *mwtsiwr*, pronounced *mwtsiwr*, and written by non-Welsh scribes and cartographers as *mwtsiwr*, *mwchwr* or *mwchwr*. *Mwtsiwr* (on the OS maps) is the name of a holding, with its close neighbour *Mwtsiwr Uchaf*, to the east of the site of the Tironian abbey of St Dogmaels, or Llandudoch, on the Pembrokeshire side of the river Teifi and

³⁵ RCAHMW *Glamorgan*, vol. 1, part 3 (934, 935), pp. 59–60; V. E. Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950), nos 193 and 194, pp. 130–32.

³⁶ RCAHMW *Glamorgan*, vol. 1, part 2, (636), p. 27.

³⁷ Glamorgan Record Office, D/D Dun (Surveys of the estate of Charles Edwin) Map 7.

³⁸ T. A. Watkins, *Leithyddiaeth* (Caerdydd, 1961), p. 57.

on the bank of a small stream which runs into that river almost directly opposite the town of Cardigan on the other side and a couple of miles from the Teifi estuary.

The abbey was founded as a dependent priory of Tiron in 1113 × 1115, its first abbot being installed in 1120. In a confirmation of the original grant to the monks of Tiron the donor, Robert FitzMartin, gives *antiquam ecclesiam sancti Dogmaelis cum possessione terrae eidem ecclesiae adjacentē, cuius nomen est Landodog* ('the old church of St Dogfael with possession of the land which adjoins it, the name of which is Landodog').³⁹ The late A. W. Wade-Evans was surely correct in comparing the problem posed here with that of the pair *Crantock* and *Langorrown* in Cornwall where, as Oliver Padel has shown, *Langorrown* (*Langorroc* 1086) is the name of the churchtown in which the church of the saint is situated, the Welsh form of whose name is *Carannog*, commemorated in *Llangrannog* further up the coast of Ceredigion, so that *Landodog* or *Llandudoch*, as the grant to the monks of Tiron implies, is the name of the location of an earlier oratory or cell, which was of sufficient standing to be noted in the *Annales Cambriae* and the Welsh *Brut* s.a.988 as having been ravaged, with St Davids, Llanbadarn, Llan Illtud and Llancarfan, by the black 'gentiles'.⁴⁰ Leaving aside the problem of the varying forms of the saint's name as we must (but on which there is an informative note in Charles's survey of Pembrokeshire place-names),⁴¹ there is no need to postulate two establishments of two different saints as was once the case, or to engage in a search over too wide an area for the possible specific location of the early Christian community which preceded the Tironian abbey, the remains of which are the central feature of St Dogmaels today, the present parish church being still situated within its precincts. This consideration adds a further dimension to the significance of the possible existence of a *mystwyr*

³⁹ F. G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales 1066–1349* (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 19–20; A. W. Wade-Evans, 'Pembrokeshire notes', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 90 (1935), 123–34 (p. 129); *Episcopal Acts and Cognate Documents Relating to Welsh Dioceses 1066–1272*, Vol. 1, edited by Davies, D49, p. 242.

⁴⁰ O. J. Padel, *A Popular Dictionary of Cornish Place-Names* (Penzance, 1988), p. 74; *Brut y Tywysogyon (Peniarth MS 20 Version)*, edited by Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1952), p. 10.

⁴¹ B. G. Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, 2 vols (Aberystwyth, 1992), I, 178–79.

in this vicinity.

The sixteenth-century antiquary and historian of Pembrokeshire, George Owen, in a fragment of a second book of his *Description of Penbrokeshire* c.1603, wrote of what he terms the *ould Abey* of St Dogmaels that 'yt is reported that in auncient tyme this Abbey stood in an open field neere a place called the Cayre a myle from the place yt now standeth where yet appeareth some smale Rvyns & is called yr hen Manachlog that is the old Abbey ...', George Owen's mile being more like two as the crow flies.⁴² Richard Fenton in his *Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* (1811) accepted this and so did the RCAHM in its Pembrokeshire *Inventory* (1925), pointing out that the location was near the farm of Tre-c_n 'where formerly stood a cottage called Mynachlog'.⁴³ The cottage no longer exists, and George Owen's *Cayre* cannot be located there unless there is confusion with the multivallate hill-fort site of Caerau about two miles to the south-west of Tre-c_n where, it must be admitted, cist graves have been found between the ramparts, suggesting its adoption for use as a burial ground, but no structural remains.⁴⁴

It is more logical to seek a location nearer the abbey site as implied in the original donation. There is a firm local tradition that adjacent to the site and on rising ground to the east called *Shingrug* (this being *W eisin* 'husks, hull of grain' + *crug* 'heap, mound', that is 'a chaff heap, winnowing bank') which is still the present street-name, with a working water grist mill standing nearby, there stood a church or chapel. George Owen again states: 'the parishe church in old tyme stooode between (the) ii mylles ... called yr hen Eglwys'.⁴⁵ The exact nature of the so-called church is really not known but continuing eastwards along the gradual slope is a lane called *Mwtshwr Lane* leading to the farms of *Mwtshwr* (now a residence) and *Mwtshwr Uchaf*. Before *Mwtshwr* is a broadly triangular field which now has the

⁴² *National Library of Wales Journal*, 5 (1947–48), 267.

⁴³ Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, I, 187; R. Fenton, *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire* (London, 1811), p. 282: 'the place retains the name of Yr hen Vanachlog, the old monastery'.

⁴⁴ H. James, 'Excavations at Caer, Bayvil 1979', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 136 (1987), 51–69: 'a small defended enclosure of presumed Iron Age date, ... limited excavation demonstrated that the site's final use was an early medieval cemetery'.

⁴⁵ See also Fenton, *A Historical Tour through Pembrokeshire*, p. 281; H. M. Vaughan, 'The Benedictine Abbey of St Mary at St Dogmaels', *Y Cymmrodor*, 27 (1917), 14.

name *Parc Miss Meade* but it is rounded at its lower corner and along its western side runs a ditch which does not seem to be of natural origin. Local suspicion is that in this area there may have stood some structure of early religious importance, its exact location unknown, but it is another obvious candidate for further investigation.

The main drawback is the complete absence of early documentation or literary evidence of the name *Mwstwr* here. This is obviously most unusual if its probable antiquity can be substantiated:

Mouchourr (Lane) 1720, *Much Moor (Road)* 1820, 1830, *Muchwr* 1836,
Park y mwchwr 1838, *Mutchwr*, *Mwtshwr* 1846, *Mwtchwr* 1853,
 1857

The earliest forms are those which are quoted by B. G. Charles, whose research is likely to have been very thorough, and it is interesting to note that the eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century forms have the palatalised *ch* as the medial consonant. It is this, perhaps, which leads Charles to the opinion, with which I have to disagree, that the name is 'possibly abbreviated from *park* or *tir y mwchwr* with a bye-name *Moucher* "a great eater"'.⁴⁶

The evidence of standing stones, stone cover slabs, crosses, pillars etc. kept in the parish church within the abbey remains is impressive, but there is little certainty as to where exactly they came from within the immediate locality, some later pieces having been found on the abbey site in the course of clearance and all ranging in date from the seventh to the ninth century and later with one exception, this being the rough pillar-stone of the fifth to early sixth century bearing the Latin inscription SAGRANI FILI CUNOTAMI and its Ogam equivalent SAGRAGNI MAQI CUNATAMI where, as Jackson has shown, its dating can be inferred from the Latin form *Sagr_ni* as opposed to the Ogam *Sagr_gni* in a period which saw the reduction of the Goidelic consonant group *-gn-* to *-n-* with compensatory lengthening of short vowels.⁴⁷ This coastal region, of course, with the LL_n

⁴⁶ Charles, *The Place-Names of Pembrokeshire*, I, 187.

⁴⁷ *An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Wales and Monmouthshire*, VII, *County of Pembroke* (London, 1925), pp. 358–60; C. A. Raleigh Radford, *St Dogmael's Abbey: Abaty Llandudoch*, Department of the Environment Official Handbook (London, 1962); Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of*

peninsula in the north, was the most open in Wales to continental and Irish influence over the western seaways, the SAGRANI stone being a prime example of the fusion of Celtic and Christian/Roman traditions and, possibly, an attestation of Nash-Williams's belief that there was a re-introduction of Christianity, probably from Gaul, in the sub-Roman period.⁴⁸

The fifth example of the possible survival of *W mystwyr* as a place-name element relies as much on historical and circumstantial evidence as the St Dogmaels *Mwtshwr* although there are more recorded forms of the name available, this being the second element of *Pontymister*, now an industrial urban area with Risca on the east bank of the river Ebwy in Gwent. It is originally the name of a bridge over the river which took its name from a tenement on the boundary of the parishes of Basaleg and Machen on the west side of the river, an area well-known for its indications of pre-Norman religious activity.

The name *Basaleg*, or more correctly *Baseleg* is, of course, derived from the Latin *basilica*, and again whatever the exact nature of the pre-Norman community implied by the name, by 1116 it had become a cell or priory of the Benedictine monastery of Glastonbury in Somerset⁴⁹ only for its endowments and property to be transferred back to the bishop of Llandaf between 1230 and 1240.⁵⁰ The site of the priory remains unknown but some distance from the parish church and close to the boundary of the contiguous parish of Machen the present *Park Wood* was *Coedymynachdy* (*Monachty Woods* 1814, 1841) on the west side of which were marked *Monastery Lands* on the Basaleg tithe map (1844).⁵¹ Seventeenth-century Tredegar

Wales (384–390), pp. 211–13; Jackson, *Language and History*, pp. 171 and 180.

⁴⁸ Nash-Williams, *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales*, pp. 4 ff.

⁴⁹ *Cartae et Alia Munimenta*, edited by Clark, I, 38 and 130.

⁵⁰ Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales*, p. 63; *Episcopal Acts and Cognate Documents Relating to Welsh Dioceses 1066–1272*, Vol. 2, edited by Davies, L396, p. 719.

⁵¹ W. Coxe, *An Historical Tour of Monmouthshire*, 2nd edn (Brecon, 1904), p. 58: 'No remains of the priory exist at Basaleg, there is, however, a ruined building at the distance of about a mile, in the midst of a deep sequestered wood ... on the confines of Machen parish, which is by some supposed to be part of the original cell. The name of this forest, still called Coed y Monachty, or the Wood of the Monastery, seems to confirm this opinion'; see also J. A. F. Pickford, *Between Mountain and*

estate records also refer consistently to the land of *Manachty* 1668, 1675, 1677 etc. and it is pertinent here to remind ourselves again of Sir Ifor Williams's preferred interpretation of the term *mynachdy* as an outlying farm belonging to a monastery, a grange.

It is not now generally accepted that such a 'monastic' terminology here has to do with the property of the priory of Basaleg, for the estate documents tend to link the land of *Manachdy* with the farm of *Pontymister* a little to the north on the bank of the Ebwy. Its location on the present OS 1:25,000 map differs slightly from that shown on the Basaleg tithe map (1844), but so slightly as to make little difference to the point at issue, for what seems to me to be reasonably clear is that this is the farm which originated as a tenement named *Maistyr*, *Maistre* 1600, *the Myster* 1631 etc. close to the Basaleg/Machen parish boundary, indeed 'a tenement or grange' called *Maystre* in 1568.

What surely must be relevant is that the Papal taxation of c.1291 lists among the possessions of the Cistercian abbey of Llantarnam, or Caerleon, three carucates of land in *Mayster*, and this Cistercian presence is confirmed by a note on the rear flyleaf of a twelfth-century edition of the *Homilies of St Gregory*, known to have belonged to Llantarnam, recording the building in 1204 of a mill on the grange of *Maistir Kanvawr*, where *Maistir* is linked with a personal name in all probability, a variant form of MW *Kynfawr*, ModW *Cynfor*.⁵² The mill is recorded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and similarly a nearby wood which is reminiscent of the Coychurch *Coedymwstwr*. It would seem, therefore, that the bridge over the Ebwy called *Pont y Maustre* 1603 × 1625 etc., now *Pontymister*, acquired its name from its proximity to this property until the eighteenth century when the bridge name itself becomes the identifying feature of the farm, when *Maistir ffarme* 1694 becomes *Pontymeistir ffarm* 1726 etc. The collected forms are as follows:

Maistir Kanvawr 1204, *Mayst(er)* 1291, *tenementa sive graungiam ... in loco ... vocato Waystre* (leg. *Maystre*) 1568 (1570), *Maistyr*, *Maistre*

Marsh in the Hundred of Wentlwg (Newport, 1946), p. 56.

⁵² D. H. Williams, *White Monks in Gwent and the Border* (Pontypool, 1976), pp. 80, 89 and 91; *idem*, *Atlas of Cistercian Lands*, pp. 24 and 47, and private correspondence; G. O. Pierce, 'Under the eaves: Some place-names in the Rhymney Valley area', *Morgannwg*, 36 (1992), 106–08.

1600, *Maistire* 1600, (*land called*) *the Myster* 1631, *Maister farm* 1677, 1694, 1711, *Maes Tire* 1668, 1675, 1714, *Maes Tyre* 1677, *Maistir ffarme* 1694, 1723, 1756, *Pontymeistir ffarm* 1726, 1814, 1839;

Pont y Maustre 1603 × 1625, *Pont y maister* 1624, 1711, *Pont y mistir* 1625, 1839, *Pont y Myster* 1630, *Maister Bridge* 1635, *Pont y mister* 1806, 1839, *Pontymuster* 1806, 1814, *Pont-y-meistr* 1833, *Pont y Mistir* 1839;

Masters Mill 1545 × 1651, *the maister mill* 1635, *Maister Myll* 1638, *Pont y Maister Mill* 1748 × 1789;

Coed maister 1602, 1604, *Coed master* 1602, *Coed mayster* 1623, *Coed y Mwster* 1631, *?Pontymista Brake* 1850

However, it should be noted that the forms *meistir*, *meistyr*, *maestir* which the element assumes in this instance rather than *mwstwr* or *muster* poses a problem of identification should a name have in it the W *maestir* 'open land', particularly as this is an element which does occur in that sense frequently in farm- and field-names and thus opens up another possibility which should be thoroughly examined as a precaution every time *maestir*, *meistir* crops up in future place-name surveys. In this example, since the forms which could be interpreted as containing *maestir* are not overwhelmingly preponderant and that this common element (like *maister*, *master*) is more likely to have been substituted by scribes for the archaic *mystwyr*, *mwstwr*, than vice versa, it may be considered that the circumstantial evidence makes a case for *mystwyr*.

There is still much that remains tentative about the identification of *mystwyr*-names in Wales. What I have endeavoured to do is to present possible toponymical evidence for the existence of some examples of the term which appear to have survived in the spoken language as place-name elements whatever the circumstances of their provenance, the period of their adoption or even the exact nature of what was so named. Since *mystwyr* is not otherwise recorded, its form implies its adoption into Welsh from the fifth to the sixth century onwards, so that names containing the word must be old.⁵³ Its survival must indicate a measure of antiquity relating to the areas in which it is found which is difficult, if not impossible, to appreciate

⁵³ Roberts, 'Welsh ecclesiastical place-names and archaeology', p. 41.

fully at the present time.

What has been said should not be interpreted as referring only to physical remains. One can get no nearer to a definition than the location of some early Christian settlement, and if it is considered that because the fact of proximity to a known religious house has been used in support of the presence of the element in a name, it could refer to the later establishment, as indicative of ownership, perhaps, it is difficult to accept that a term of such early provenance in the language which was not in circulation in the vernacular would have been applied to a much later institution. Furthermore, there could be an element of continuity of settlement to be taken into consideration.

What English term should be used to translate *mystwyr* is a matter for conjecture. The similarly derived E *minster* would be misleading since it could be confused with the much-discussed Anglo-Saxon *minster* for which there seems to be no reason to assume that there are comparable institutions as part of the early Christian church in Wales. It would appear to be more prudent, therefore, to retain the Welsh term *mystwyr* as it stands.

