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CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE EARLY CELTS IN WALES

Jeffrey L. Davies

Tacitus's *Annals* (xii.32) record how in AD 48 the governor of Britannia, Ostorius Scapula, led the army against the Decangi (*sic*): the first historical reference to a Celtic tribe inhabiting Wales. Thereafter Rome was to become embroiled in protracted warfare with two other militarily powerful Welsh tribes, the Silures and Ordovices, conferring particular fame upon the former. Tacitus's physical description of the Silures as *colorati* and with curly hair (*Agricola* xi) forms part of a precious body of documentary evidence which allows us to glimpse first-century AD Welsh communities for whose wartime behaviour we can find echoes in contemporary Britain from Kent to Caledonia, or earlier in Caesarian Gaul. The origins of these Celtic communities inhabiting the principality are to be sought not in a pattern of migration and interaction with indegenes but rather in a protracted phase of social and economic change affecting sedentary communities over at least a millennium. It is this process of adjustment and evolution, coupled with the workings of 'cumulative Celticity' (Hawkes 1979), which gives rise to the fully developed insular socio-economic systems of the western British pre-Roman Iron Age (PRIA).

Wales is topographically a mountainous area but upland is unevenly distributed; hence the dramatic contrasts between Snowdonia and offshore Anglesey, or the Cambrian range and lowlands of Glamorgan and Dyfed and the broken hill-country and fertile valleys of the Marches. Geomorphological and pedological differences are critical in comprehending the settlement base and social development of this distinctive geoclimatic region, whilst geography has fostered a strong regional and sub-regional identity which crystallized in the territorial divisions of late prehistoric and early historic times.

By the early first millennium BC the region was characterized by agricultural communities of family or extended family size which were sufficiently sedentary to require permanent settlements encompassing a variety of habitats. Some occupied classic pastoral upland typified by the flimsy huts and 'field systems' on the Denbigh Moors, of which Graig Felen is a good example (Manley 1990b). The majority, though, occupy lowland settings exemplified by the early to late bronze age (EBA–LBA) settlement complex at Atlantic Trading Estate, Barry (Glam.) (Price and Wardle 1987; Wardle 1988), or those built on the stable peat of the Severn foreshore at Cold Harbour (Mon.), with nearby Chapeltump 1 and 2 probably representing

successive timber settlements of the seventh to ninth centuries BC (Whittle 1989). More remarkable still is the waterlogged complex at Caldicot Castle Lake (Mon.) with its worked timbers and wide artefactual range, including the remains of plank-built boats and a Wilburton chape incorporated in deposits of the eighth century BC (Parry 1988; Parry and Parkhouse 1989, 1990) (Figure 35.1). In south Pembrokeshire a middle to late bronze age (MBA–LBA) multifocus agricultural settlement at Stackpole was abandoned to sanding in the eighth century BC (Benson *et al.* 1990). All were apparently unenclosed. In this respect Meyllteyrn Uchaf (Caerns.), a concentric enclosure with two timber round-houses dated *c.* 1950–1380 BC (Kelly 1990, 1991a, 1992), is an exciting new discovery. None continued in occupation beyond the onset of the climatic deterioration of the sub-Atlantic phase.

THE LATE BRONZE AGE CRISIS

Much has been written on the issue of climatic deterioration beginning just before 1250 b.c. accelerating after 850 and reaching its coolest and wettest about 650, with a period of climatic amelioration from *c.* 450 (Lamb 1981; Harding 1982). The impact will have been most severe in areas of high precipitation, especially the exposed western hills and classic uplands where vegetational coupled with anthropogenic changes led to leaching and podsolization, and at worst to extensive peat formation. Though the effects are thought to have been less severe in the rain-shadow zone of eastern Wales, overall a massive loss of exploitable land and a dramatic curtailment of agricultural potential is envisaged, precipitating a protracted crisis which can only have led to a primitive economic recession and certainly pressure on population, if not a demographic decline in some areas (Burgess 1985).

It is thought that one response to the crisis was a retreat from the uplands and the realignment of settlement in favour of more sheltered locations. However, pollen sequences from the Brenig valley (Denbs.) seem to conflict with the general hypothesis that the Welsh uplands were wholly abandoned soon after 800 b.c. (Lynch 1993: 167). What is significant is the wholesale failure of many LBA settlements – even those in lowlands – to continue in occupation into the EPRIA, clearly indicating dislocation and thus far-reaching socio-economic change. The starkness of climatic variation between the Welsh regions – broadly eastern and western – eventually led to different subsistence systems and social frameworks which are manifest in the settlement archaeology of the LBA/EPRIA transition.

One response, perhaps universal but better represented in eastern Wales, was conflict leading to a growing investment in the physical security of groups of families and their chattels by the construction of fortified villages. The relationship between climatic deterioration, the process of nucleation and fortification is complex. In a Welsh dimension the eastern bias is perhaps explicable by the fact that this interface between upland and lowland supported a habitually larger population, but one which suffered proportionally greater stress because of a reduction in agricultural yields which could not be remedied through normal expansion; and if, as is suggested, there was a switch of emphasis to pastoralism, which demands proportionately even more land, sources of conflict would have multiplied.

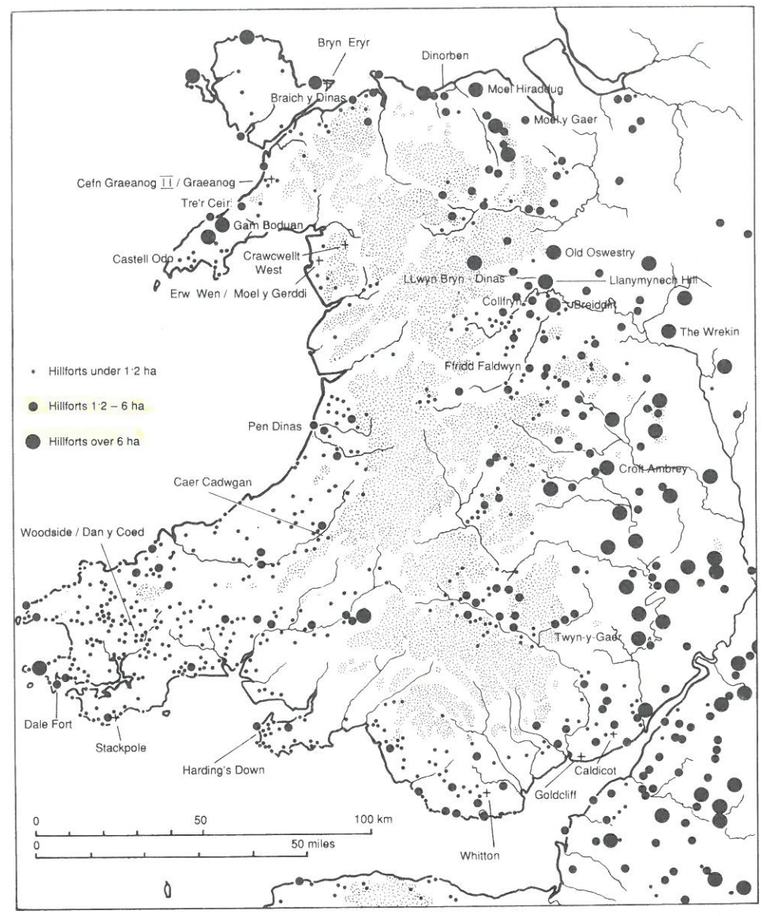

Figure 35.1 Wales and the Marches: hill-forts and other sites mentioned in the text.

Fortification takes a number of forms: a timber-reinforced rampart of *c.* 800 BC at the Breiddin (Mont.) (Figure 35.2) (Musson 1991); an eighth-century BC stone-revetted earthwork at Llwyn Bryn-dinas (Musson *et al.* 1992); but palisades dominate as at Moel y Gaer (Guilbert 1976) (Figure 35.3a), Dinorben (Guilbert 1979b), Old Oswestry (Varley 1948), Dale Fort (Pembs.) (Benson and Williams 1987) and possibly Ffridd Faldwyn (Mont.) (Guilbert 1981). Such sites, normally on hilltops, represent a fundamental reappraisal of the needs of communities which hitherto do

Figure 35.2 The Breiddin, Mont.: simplified plan of the late bronze age and iron age defences and internal features at the south-western end of the hill-fort. (Source: Musson 1991.)

not seem to have inhabited defensible, nucleated settlements. Whilst most are of the order of 3–5 ha, the Breiddin, with probably 28 ha enclosed, is an exception, with clear implications in terms of population and social organization. The site was apparently permanent with timber buildings and four-posters (Figure 35.2) and, judging by the presence of Broadward complex weapons, tools and items of personal adornment, of high status. Its occupation ended within the eighth century BC with its burning. At Llwyn Bryn-dinas, too, occupation terminated within the century, whilst at Coed y Cymdda (Glam.) (Owen-John 1988) the defences were left unfinished.

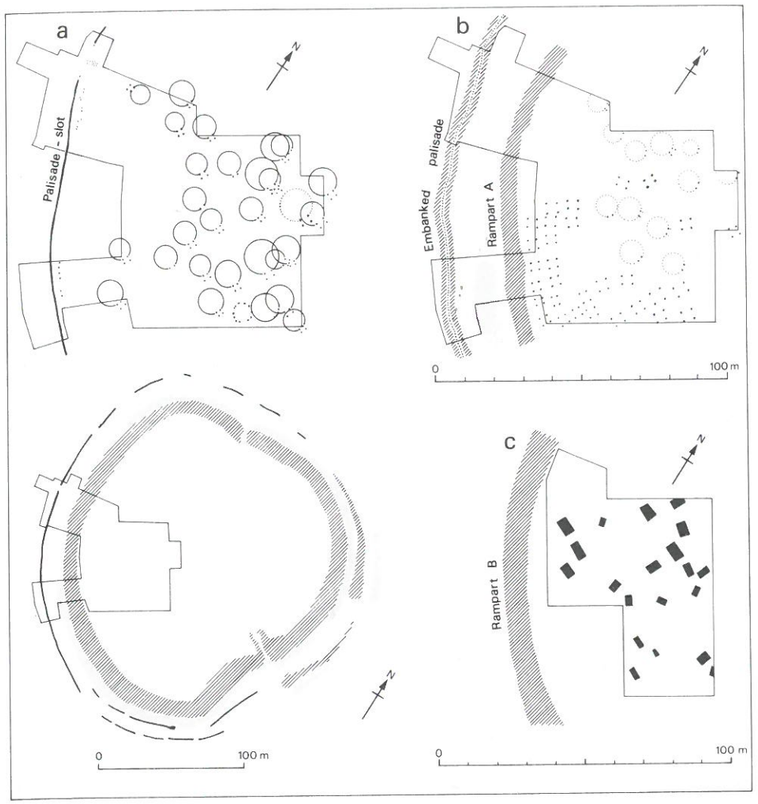

Figure 35.3 Moel y Gaer, Flint.: the western defences and internal structures: (a) Phase 1; (b) Phase 2; (c) Phase 3. (Sources: Guilbert 1976, 1982.)

The general tendency for these community settlements to be abandoned suggests that social stress may have been transient and/or spasmodic. Nevertheless, they seem to have been the harbinger of a need to enclose and protect communities; hence the hierarchy of defended settlements which is the hallmark of the PRIA. Despite the apparent sharp breaks exhibited in the settlement record some of the essential components of MBA/LBA settlement, especially structural and artefactual, continue, though economic strategies were changing in response to the prevailing conditions, whilst in the emergence of a more markedly hierachical social system we can discern one of the dominant forces of the PRIA.

Climatic amelioration after *c.* 450 b.c. allowed communities to establish an

agricultural balance leading to a population recovery, with eastern areas benefiting soonest. The north and west may have suffered a more prolonged hiatus (Williams 1988), with the loss of upland grazing necessitating an increase in forest clearance, archaeologically recognizable only after *c.*400 b.c. (Turner 1970; Taylor 1980; Kelly 1991b).

SETTLEMENT IN THE PRE-ROMAN IRON AGE

On the one hand a trend towards fortified community settlement continues whilst on the other we discern clear sub-regional trends in the development of settlement type and hierarchy, reflecting differential socio-economic systems. Hill-forts – widely distributed over the principality – loom large in this story.

Hill-forts

New data allow us to appreciate regional trends within their development sequences, and it is no longer possible to generalize about their function and chronology on the basis of morphology or size, or necessarily apply the chronologies and socio-economic strictures of the southern English hill-fort sequence to Wales (Savory 1976a). Yet there are clear general trends. For example, palisaded enclosures which often underlie hill-forts, as at Castell Odo (Alcock 1960), Caer, Bayvil (James 1987), Bryn Maen Caerau (Williams 1988) and Moel y Gaer (Guilbert 1976) may be superseded by sixth–fifth-century BC timber-laced defences or earthworks, whilst timber-lacing itself is not normally employed after the fourth century BC – Phase 3 at Moel y Gaer (Figure 35.3c), post-dating 180 BC, being an exception. Similarly, early gates tend to be simple portals, with more sophisticated guard-chambered gates coming into fashion in the Marches and north-east Wales in the fifth century BC (Guilbert 1979a). Multivallation and enlargement are also features of the MPRIA and LPRIA.

By virtue of the fact that hill-forts reflect investment of energy in their building, maintenance of defences and internal structures, then size and complexity should relate directly to permanence, population density and the socio-political situation prevailing within a given area. Long-term settled occupation is certainly implied at the Breiddin where, despite its incongenial position, occupation is intense and continuous from the later third to first century BC (Figure 35.2). Yet apparent permanence may be belied in the archaeological record, for at Moel y Gaer the late fourth/early third century BC Phase 2 settlement, with 2.7 ha enclosed, with its stake-walled round-houses and rows of four-posters, is a short-lived plantation (Figure 35.3b). At this site, at least, the three phases in its history, each separated by interludes of centuries, is surely related to a sub-regional cycle of socio-political unrest (Guilbert 1975).

The question of functional similarity or dissimilarity in terms of hill-fort occupation is one which cannot be pursued here, yet there are clear hints that hill-forts were socially, if not economically, significant. The distribution pattern of many of the larger forts on the upland margins such as the Vale of Clwyd suggests that they acted as nodal points from which the control of valley resources could be organized and

integrated with upland grazing. Whether this necessarily assumes a redistributive function is unclear, though some possibly served as the social and political focus of a community through the residence there of an élite group, with non-resident members tied to a major hill-fort through links of kinship or patronage. In support of such a claim we might note the incidence of high-status metalwork from Moel Hiraddug (Brassil *et al.* 1982) and Pen-coed-foel (Cards.) (Savory 1976b).

Sub-regional differences in hill-fort development, resulting in part from geomorphology, but more particularly from economic and social differences, are typified by the contrast between those of the northern Marches and south-west Wales.

The Welsh Marches, a 50 km wide belt of broken country, is studded with hill-forts whose density is greater in the south-central hills prompting Stanford (1991) to suggest that 'Hillfort settlement was better suited to the social and economic needs of the hill tribes than those people of the northern plains'. At the northern extremity of the March Dinorben had passed through a phase of palisaded defence to timber lacing in the fourth/fifth century BC (Guilbert 1980) whilst the 10.5 ha Clwydian fort on Moel Hiraddug developed from a single enclosure to a multiple enclosure fort with a guard-chambered main inner gate by the early fifth–mid-fourth century BC (Brassil *et al.* 1982; Guilbert 1979a). Further south in the valleys of the Severn and its tributaries the hill-fort sequence as presently known is later. At Llwyn Bryn-dinas the LBA rampart was refurbished in the fourth/third century and again in the second/first century BC. The 28/40 ha stone-walled fort on the Breiddin was built after 270 ± 90 b.c. and was packed with round-houses and four-posters, the latter often replacing houses (Figure 35.2). Llanymynech Hill, at 57 ha one of the largest hill-forts in Britain, impressively sited in the fringe of the Shropshire plain, was in existence by the late second century BC (Musson and Northover 1989). If it was as densely occupied as the Breiddin then in these instances we must be dealing with settlements which not only have the attributes of defensive strongholds but function as hill-towns, and by implication centres of power.

In south-west Wales hill-forts are of more modest size, the majority lying on the fringes of the uplands. Some, such as Dale Fort (Benson and Williams 1987), Llanstephan Castle (Guilbert 1974) and possibly Caer Cadwgan (Austin *et al.* 1984–8), may have been in existence by the mid-fifth century BC. Others such as Merlin's Hill, the third largest hill-fort in Dyfed, initially an univallate enclosure of 1 ha, was enlarged to 3.8 ha sometime after 360 ± 60 b.c. (Williams *et al.* 1988), whilst the successive enlargement of Pen Dinas, Aberystwyth, with Phase IV associated with third- to first-century BC Malvernian ceramics (Figure 35.9f), suggests an early origin (Forde *et al.* 1963). Despite its relatively unimpressive size Moel Trigarn at 2.8 ha is covered in building platforms, *c.*220 in all, suggesting a substantial population at some stage in its history (Baring Gould *et al.* 1900); but sites of over 2.5 ha are exceptional. Pembrey Mountain (Williams 1981), Holgan Camp (Williams 1984), Castell Henllys (Mytum 1989) and Coygan Camp (Wainwright 1967) represent the norm, with C–14 dates suggesting that the majority were being built from the fourth century BC, and in some instances, as at Holgan, apparently having a short life.

Elsewhere in Wales the study of hill-forts is bedevilled by minimal excavation and few C–14 dates. In the south-east only Coed y Bwnydd (Babbidge 1977) and Twyn-y-Gaer (Probert 1976) have produced C–14 dates which suggest that the former at

1.4 ha was extant by *c.*400 b.c., whilst at the latter the earthwork annexe was built soon after 294–231 BC. The region abounds with powerful 2–5 ha hill-forts, both coastal such as The Bulwarks, Porthkerry (Davies 1973b) and Sudbrook (Nash-Williams 1939) or dominating tracts of fertile vale such as Castle Ditches, Llancarfan (Hogg 1976), and Llanmelin (Nash-Williams 1933). On ceramic grounds these were occupied in the first century BC to the first century AD, but the chronology of developmental sequences such as at Castle Ditches remains unknown. Similarly, of the multiple-enclosure forts which occupy the upland margins of South Wales only Harding's Down West has been examined (Hogg 1973) and their broad chronologies remain undetermined. Finally, in the north-west the position is just as grim. The only dates available are for minor sites; the weak double ringwork at Castell Odo (2390–2215 B.P.) and an origin sometime before *c.*100 BC for the 0.1 ha stone fort at Bryn y Castell (Mer.) (Crew 1984). Despite the impressive size and obvious complexity of the larger hill-forts such as Garn Boduan and Braich y Ddinas whose dimensions, if not morphology, are broadly akin to those of north-eastern Wales, their development and broader relationships are presently unclear.

Non-hillfort Settlement

Though hill-forts loom large, the dominant type of settlement throughout the first millennium BC was the farmstead, normally delimited by any of several enclosure techniques. Unenclosed settlements are also known. Indeed in some areas we may be seeing only a fraction of the actual settlement evidence. Though there is undoubtedly a broad relationship between hill-fort and farmstead, a simplistic model of it may be misleading given the chronologically and spatially variable pattern of hill-fort building and the many different types of broadly contemporary settlements which can exist.

This situation is well illustrated in south-west Wales where Williams (1988, 1991) notes a duality in the settlement pattern; the north and east with a dominant hill-fort element; the inland south and west pattern comprising promontory forts, 'ringforts' and concentric antenna enclosures (James 1990) of less than 0.5 ha (Figure 35.4). Rectilinear ditched and embanked enclosures of the Penycoed type are common to both areas (Davies 1994) and appear to date to the second century BC and later. Penycoed (Figure 35.5) is interpreted as a farm (Murphy 1985). The incidence of unenclosed settlements such as Stackpole (Benson *et al.* 1990) is problematical. This second-century BC and later coastal site appears not to be marginal and may well be characteristic of what has not survived agricultural practices elsewhere in the region. What is particularly interesting is that defensibly postured settlements of the sixth to fourth centuries BC in the inland south-west give way in the third to second centuries BC to a proliferation of 'ringfort'-type sites, possibly either indicating population growth resulting in the fragmentation of social groups and tenurial units, or the consequence of partible inheritance (Williams 1988). Both causal factors may be applicable. Certainly, a settlement explosion seems to have occurred by the last centuries BC.

In north-west Wales the non-fortified element has been intensively studied and subject to recent recension (Smith 1974, 1977; Kelly 1988, 1991b). Stone-built 'hut-

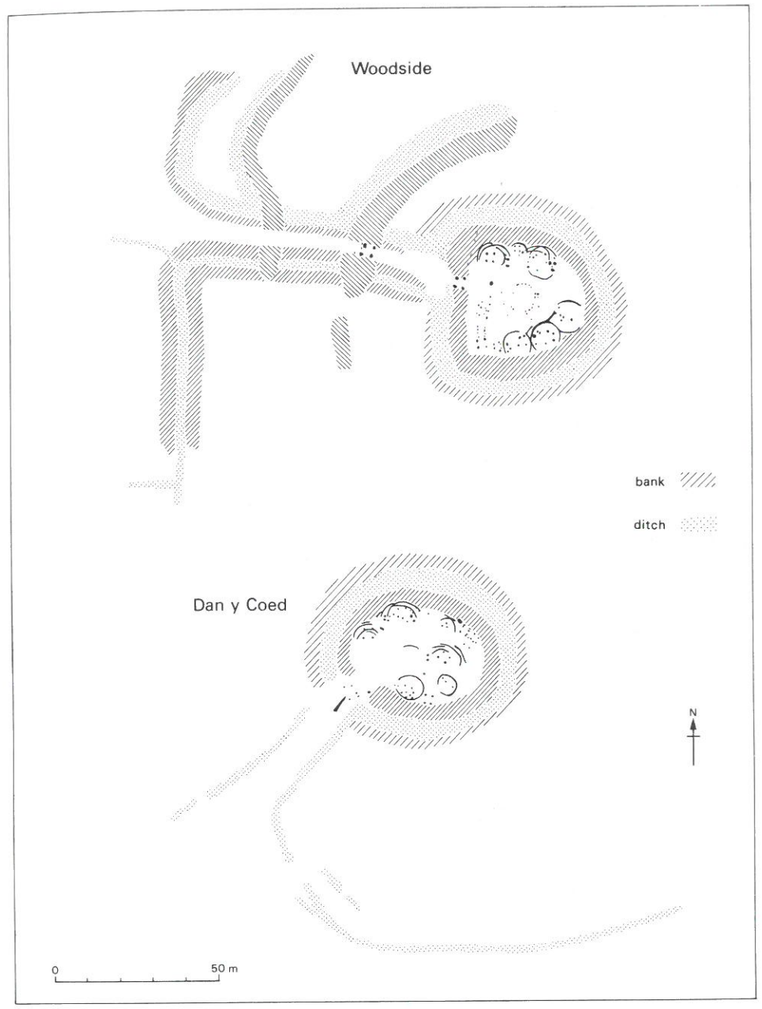

Figure 35.4 Woodside and Dan y Coed 'ringforts', Pembs. (Source: Williams 1988.)

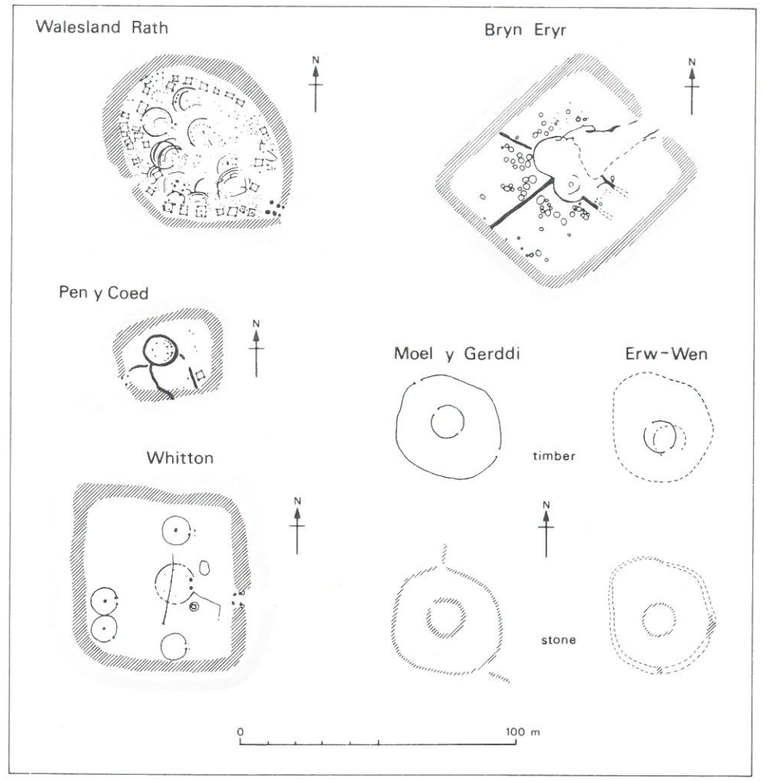

Figure 35.5 Non-hillfort settlements: Walesland Rath, Pembs. (Source: Wainwright 1971); Bryn Eryr, Ang. (Source: Longley, forthcoming); Pen y Coed, Carm. (Source: Murphy 1985); Whitton, Glam. (Source: Jarrett and Wrathmell 1981); Moel y Gerddi and Erw-Wen, Mer. (Source: Kelly 1988).

circle' settlements of enclosed and open type, with associated field enclosure systems, survive in considerable numbers. Enclosed forms can now be seen to originate within the PRIA and have timber precursors, whilst the possible bronze age date of unenclosed, upland huts and enclosures has been cast into doubt as a result of work at Crawcwellt West (Mer.) (see p. 687). In addition other types of settlement have been recognized: two large timber round-houses and four-posters within Henge A at Llandegai (Caerns.) (Houlder 1967) may be an abberation, but at Bryn Eryr (Ang.) (Longley 1988) a timber round-house was transformed into a rectangular, embanked

and ditched farmstead after the fourth/third century BC (Figure 35.5). It is, however, the stone-built settlements, presently surviving only in marginal landscapes, which predominate and for which a fairly consistent pattern of development is now emerging. At Erw Wen (Mer.) clearance was followed by the construction of a timber round-house and concentric palisaded enclosure, then translated into stone, all within the period 770–400 b.c. A similar sequence occurs at Moel y Gerddi *c.*330–190 b.c. (Kelly 1988) (Figure 35.5). On the Graeanog ridge (Caerns.), where settlement is long-lived and multi-focus, clearance coincides with an initial phase of agricultural activity – a field system of *c.*400–200 BC at Cefn Graeanog II and Graeanog – probably associated with a timber settlement (Kelly 1991b). Sometime about 200–150 BC the first stone farmstead was built against a lynchet at Graeanog II, only to be abandoned until the first century AD. The trend, then, seems to be the gradual replacement of timber farmsteads in stone as timber became exhausted, though in areas already lacking timber such as Ty Mawr (Ang.) (Smith 1987) settlements were already being built in stone well before the third century BC. If the pattern recognized on the Graeanog ridge is generally applicable, then there was a massive phase of land clearance and settlement after *c.*500 BC and, although not always successful, seems to indicate an expansion of settlement, if not population increase, particularly in the last centuries BC.

Prior to the application of aerial photography to the central region of the Welsh Marches the dominance of hill-forts gave a seriously unbalanced picture of later prehistoric settlement. That picture has been rectified and a balanced landscape of fortified/unfortified, hilltop, hillside and valley-bottom settlement exhibited by diverse types of cropmark enclosures has emerged (Whimster 1989). The majority of these are of less than 0.5 ha enclosed and appear to be farmsteads. Morphologically diverse, their chronology and economies are only known in a few instances, as at Sharpstones Hill (Shrops.) Site A, where a rectilinear enclosure apparently succeeds an LBA/EPRIA settlement of more dispersed character sometime before the third century BC, and Site E, where a bivallate rectangular farmstead was occupied from the third century BC into the Roman period (Barker *et al.* 1991); or Arddleen (Mont.), where an LPRIA origin is suggested for a lowland concentric enclosure (Britnell and Musson 1984). It is an untested assumption that the great majority of these enclosures were constructed between the fourth to third century BC and the Roman period. Curvilinear forms are more prevalent in the western Marches, rectilinear in the east; but whether morphological variation represents fundamental differences in date, function or simply cultural preferences is uncertain. Multiple-ditched enclosures such as Collfryn (Mont.) (Figure 35.6), however, *are* seemingly different, not only being more defensively sited but having much longer and complex structural sequences which Musson (1991) suggests may place them in a hierarchically higher slot as 'pioneering' settlements, sometimes succeeded by less overtly defensible settlements.

Non-hillfort settlement in north-east Wales has also benefited from an aerial photographic input (Manley 1990a, 1991) and shows a settlement pattern akin to that of the central Marches, particularly in the Tanat valley and the upper Clwyd. The presence of unenclosed settlement is also vouched for by the discovery of a second- to first-century BC farm at Prestatyn (Flints.) (Blockley 1989) and an apparently similar site at Rhuddlan (Blockley 1989: 223), whilst an apparently isolated timber

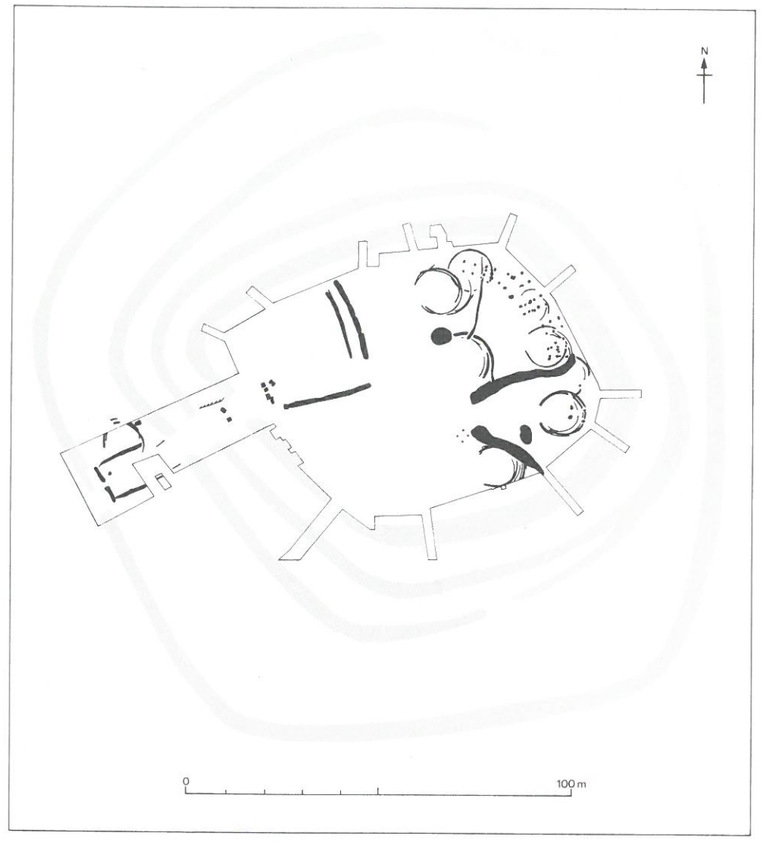

Figure 35.6 Collfryn, Mont.: iron age features. (Source: Britnell 1989.)

round-house associated with second-century BC Malvernian pottery appears to represent something more than seasonal occupation on moorland at Nant y Griafolen, Brenig (Denbs. (Lynch 1993: 159–61).

In south-east Wales non-hillfort settlement is largely constrained to the lowlands of Glamorgan and Gwent, though pastoral enclosures occupy upland margins. Most of the investigated settlements belong to the LPRIA. Some, such as Mynydd Bychan (Savory 1954, 1956), have a defensive potential, as does the second-century BC to first-century AD rectilinear hilltop enclosure at Cae Summerhouse (Davies 1973a, 1982; Robinson 1988: xvi–xvii), now seen to be bivallate. A similar situation pertains

at the rectilinear early first-century AD farmstead at Whitton (Jarrett and Wrathmell 1981) (Figure 35.5). Many LPRIA settlements manifestly underlie those of Roman date, as is the case at Llandough, Biglis and Caldicot (Robinson 1988), though our knowledge of them is woefully poor. The PRIA artefactual range at the above is unequivocally first century BC to first century AD (Figure 35.7). Though 'Glastonbury Ware' sherds from Llandough and Biglis hint at occupation prior to *c.*50 BC, pre-first-century BC settlement sites are elusive. That such must exist is demonstrated by exciting new discoveries from the Severn foreshore where a rich PRIA sequence is emerging. This involved the laying down of trackways such as the Upton Track (470±70 b.c.) (Whittle 1989), and the building of settlements after a long hiatus. At Magor Pill (Whittle 1989) a dump of third- to first-century BC ceramics (Figure 35.9d,e,g) indicates the proximity of a settlement, perhaps akin to that remarkably preserved at Goldcliff (Bell 1992, 1993), where three to four rectangular timber buildings were built on a peat shelf. Building 1 (Figure 35.8) produced an uncalibrated C–14 date of 2120±90 b.p. Environmental data indicate an association with grazing and the utilization of estuarine resources, perhaps on a seasonal basis. Such structures are highly unusual, even in a wider British context, and in Wales have broad parallels only at Moel y Gaer, Phase 3 (Figure 35.3c). Such evidence serves to demonstrate the large-scale but perhaps seasonal exploitation of the Wentlooge Levels in the LPRIA as well as the probable character of undefended settlements on drier land.

SUBSISTENCE

The mode of PRIA subsistence was deeply rooted in prehistory with the pattern of settlement and social organization dependent upon it (Caseldine 1990). Mixed agriculture was the norm with regional variation in microclimate and topography determining overall subsistence strategies. Though climatic deterioration accentuated the bioclimatic diversity of the principality, the pattern of settlement, even in lowland settings, represents land-use systems which rely upon both pasture and arable. The needs of both were met by woodland clearance from *c.*400 b.c. for cultivation on the Graeanog ridge, and for pasture in the vicinity of Tregaron Bog (Cards.) (Turner 1970; Williams *et al.* 1987) and the Ystwyth Forest (Taylor 1973, 1980).

Cereal cultivation is held to have been more important in some areas than others (Williams 1988) though its incidence on marginal landscapes such as Moel y Gerddi and Erw Wen demonstrates the tenacity of agriculturalists. Evidence for field systems, that primary mechanism of land division, is patchy. Small, squarish relict fields survive extensively in north-west Wales, but rarely elsewhere, though examples exist at Stackpole and Pembrey Mountain in the south-west and at the Breiddin and Collfryn in the Marches. Pre-rampart plough-marks are known at Woodbarn Rath (Vyner 1986), whilst wooden ard-tips come from Walesland Rath (Pembs.) (Wainwright 1971) and a possible iron bar-share from Llanstephan Castle (Guilbert 1974). However, agricultural tools such as reaping-hooks and sickles (Figure 35.7) are rare, which suggests that iron tools never became commonplace among the agricultural community. In contrast food-processing equipment, normally querns of the saddle

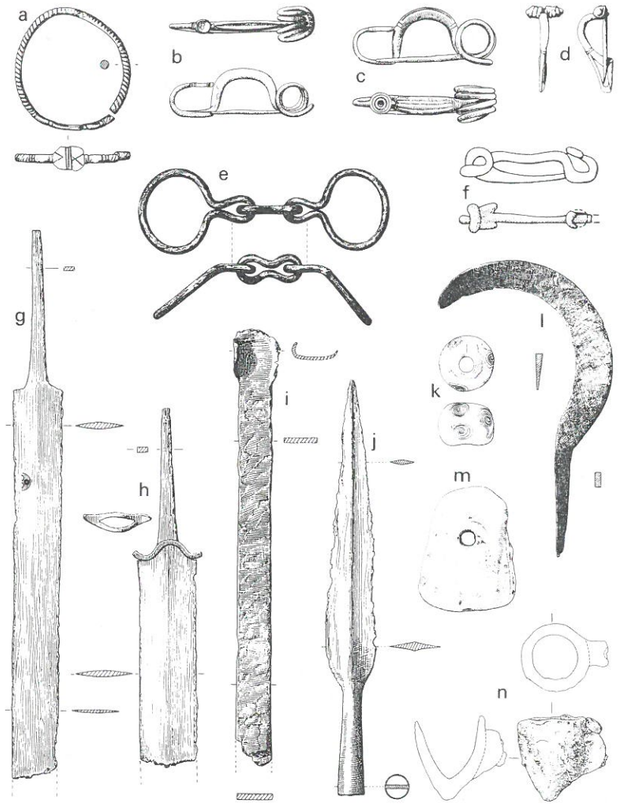

Figure 35.7 (a) La Tène-style copper alloy bracelet, Coygan Camp, Carm.; (b)–(c) La Tène I-style copper alloy brooches from Moel Hiraddug, Flint. and Merthyr Mawr Warren, Glam.; (d) La Tène-style copper alloy brooch, Caldicot, Mon.; (e) iron horse bit, Llyn Cerrig Bach, Ang.; (f) late La Tène I–II-style iron brooch, Breiddin, Mont.; (g)–(h) iron swords, Llyn Cerrig Bach; (i) 'currency bar', Llyn Cerrig Bach; (j) iron spearhead, Llyn Cerrig Bach; (k) blue glass bead with spiral decoration, Collfryn, Mont.; (l) iron sickle, Llyn Cerrig Bach; (m) clay loom-weight, Breiddin; (n) crucible, Llwyn Bryn-dinas, Denb. (Sources: (a) Wainwright 1967; (b) Brassil *et al.* 1982; (c) Grimes 1951; (d) Robinson 1988; (e), (g), (h), (i), (j), (l) Fox 1946; (f)–(m) Musson 1991; (k) Britnell 1989; (n) Musson *et al.* 1992.) Scale (a)–(d), (f), (k) ½, remainder ¼.

Figure 35.8 Crawcwellt West, Mer.; late iron age ironworking settlement (Source: Crew 1989); Goldcliff, Mon., later iron age rectangular timber buildings. (Source: Bell 1992.)

variety, is mandatory and frequently renewed, even on farms such as Penycoed where the environmental data produce little indication of arable. At Twyn-y-Gaer saddle querns were being replaced by beehive types in LPRIA contexts. The main crops were wheat – spelt and emmer varieties – and barley. Spelt eventually predominates from Cefn Graeanog II to Woodside, though emmer was the main crop at Ty Mawr and probably also at the Breiddin and Collfryn. Barley was grown everywhere, except in areas of poor drainage and high acidity, and was the secondary crop at Cefn Graeanog II. Of oats and rye there is some evidence at Penycoed, but there is none for bread wheat or legumes. The crops were most likely stored in the ubiquitous four-, sometimes five- or six-post structures, common everywhere except in the north-west, though the stored commodity could have varied over time and place.

It was a long-held view that the dictates of topography, soils and climate would have led to a dominance of pastoralism in the subsistence strategy of PRIA communities in Wales. However, recent research demonstrates pastoral and arable activities at the great majority of settlements, without prejudicing their relative importance – always difficult to assess. The role of pastoralism may often be indicated in settlement morphology – the concentric enclosures, embanked track-ways and antenna-ditches of the south-west (Figure 35.4), or annexes attached to hill-forts such as Ffridd Faldwyn (Mont.), or most graphically at Twyn-y-Gaer, where no fewer than eight successive fence alignments of an annexe were recorded before its transformation into earthwork (Probert 1976). A relatively poor database makes it difficult to establish the relative importance of species, but the ubiquity of droveways and enclosures suggests a greater concern with cattle management, and where bone assemblages are sufficiently large cattle are either dominant – for example, Coygan Camp (Wainwright 1967) – or occur in broadly equal numbers to sheep – Dinorben and Collfryn. Though sheep were dominant at Croft Ambrey in the southern Marches (Stanford 1974), there is no evidence of a switch to large-scale sheep farming characteristic of the LPRIA of southern England. The ubiquity of spindle-whorls, and loom-weights at the Breiddin (Figure 35.7m), Castle Ditches, Biglis and Prestatyn do, however, highlight the importance of these animals. Pigs too were kept – apparently in some numbers at Coygan – whilst the importance of horses for traction and riding is evidenced by numerous examples of horse-gear and cart and chariot fittings in the archaeological record. Finally, though there is reliable evidence for the production of surpluses, there is none for agricultural intensification or specialization.

PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE

Metalworking

In Wales the study of PRIA metalworking in copper alloy (bronze) and iron has received a heightened profile consequent upon research into their primary production and an on-going programme of metal analysis (P. Crew, pers. comm.). These analyses have served to demonstrate that conceptual models of metal production are of small value unless tested against an empirical framework, and that in the case of ironworking some traditional views have been shown to be invalid (Crew 1991).

With the collapse of the insular bronze industry there was a dramatic reduction in the range and scale of bronze object production. Large, luxury objects are rare before the second century BC, and only really come into their own in the first century BC to early first century AD; for example, the shield fitments from Moel Hiraddug (Brassil *et al.* 1982) and Tal-y-Llyn (Savory 1964; Spratling 1966). Bronzeworking was limited in scale, and judging by the distinctive handled crucibles (Figure 35.7n) and residues from a variety of sites was probably catering for the needs of local communities and only relatively small objects were being produced. Such appears to be the case at copper-rich Llanymynech Hill, itself a focus of metal extraction and working in the second to first century BC, and Llwyn Bryn-dinas, where the casting and finishing of objects was undertaken on a small scale within a timber smithy (Musson *et al.* 1992). The high zinc content Llanymynech ores were certainly being exploited from the third century BC and served the needs of numerous communities from nearby Four Crosses (Warrilow *et al.* 1986) and the Breiddin to Old Oswestry and Croft Ambrey. Copper of diverse origins (or the finished pieces) were certainly being traded about. A high antimony ore, possibly of continental origin, was used in the Cerrig-y-drudion 'bowl' as well as a piece from Tal-y-Llyn, whilst two horse-bits and sheet-metal fragments from Llyn Cerrig Bach have a high cobalt content and a south-western English source is proposed (Northover 1991). Other examples of copper from Llanymynech are to be found in a shield fitting from Moel Hiraddug and a horse-bit from Llyn Cerrig Bach.

Ehrenreich (1985) suggests that ironworking was introduced via Atlantic routes, became established in areas such as south-western England which had existing metallurgical significance, and was then transferred to south Wales. Though iron technology was already in a dynamic state from *c.*700 BC, as indicated by the competence of a smith in fashioning copies of a bronze sickle and spearhead from Llyn Fawr (Glam.), it is assumed that bronze tools and weapons continued to be used until a sufficient number of smiths had mastered the new technology. Hence, in the EPRIA iron objects were rare and expensive and the scale of production small, leading to a recycling of objects (Alexander 1981). In Wales, as elsewhere, there is an increase in its frequency after *c.*300 BC, with a consequent decline in recycling; for example at Twyn-y-Gaer (Probert 1976). Only with the apparently massive increase in the supply of iron in the first century BC was it used for the fashioning of large objects such as the Capel Garmon fire-dog (Savory 1976b: pl.VI) or the cauldron-chain in the Lesser Garth hoard (Savory 1966a). By this stage, as Alexander (1981) has suggested, there were two social levels of ironworking (as was doubtless the case with bronze); low-level smithing producing utilitarian goods, and prestige smithing producing high-quality metal and finished objects, particularly military equipment as evidenced at Llyn Cerrig Bach.

Much of this LPRIA iron may have been of Welsh origin. Whilst Dinorben (Gardner and Savory 1964) has produced evidence of primary production, most of the evidence for ironworking (for example, at Llwyn Bryn-dinas) relates to forging, and current opinion suggests that hill-forts were not principal centres for iron production. It is in the context of the scale and chronology of primary production that Crew's work at Bryn y Castell (Crew 1984, 1991 and forthcoming) and Crawcwellt West (Mer.) (Crew 1989, 1991 and forthcoming) is of such significance.

At a 0.1 ha stone fort on the one hand, and a 4 ha upland settlement of scattered timber round-houses and stone enclosures on the other (Figure 35.8), bog ores were being exploited to produce bar iron in increasing quantities in the first century BC and first century AD. Crew has suggested that the economic basis of Crawcwellt may have been founded primarily on iron production, and notes the frequency of such sites in the locality. Clearly LPRIA iron production was extensive in the north-west, the early first-century AD increase satisfying a huge demand; whether in response to the necessity of equipping war-bands for internecine war, or the threat from Rome is unclear.

Iron production in Wales was seemingly decentralized, and the same may apply to smithing. What is significant is the fact that iron was clearly being traded because of its special properties. Harder, high-phosphorus iron – the bog-iron product – is good for weapon production, and in this respect it is notable that a ploughshare-type 'currency bar' in the Llyn Cerrig Bach deposit (Figure 35.7i) is probably a north-western product (Crew and Salter 1992) as other objects in the hoard may be. If north Welsh iron was being exchanged – with a reciprocal trade in low-phosphorus and high-carbon iron for the production of some of the tyres and a 'Malvern'-type currency bar at Llyn Cerrig Bach – as a valued and distinctive product, then we are some way towards explaining other archaeologically manifest exchange systems.

Salt

The production and distribution of this commodity is evidenced by its characteristic briquetage containers – 'VCP' (Figure 35.9c) (Morris 1985). The principal sources of western British salt lay outside the principality at Nantwich (Ches.) and Droitwich (Worcs.), whose products have differential distribution patterns over the sixth to fifth century BC and fourth century BC and later. Cheshire salt has a later distribution in north and north-west Wales, whilst Droitwich salt has a southerly distribution to the Wye at Twyn-y-Gaer and the Severn at Sudbrook, though these are marginal (Figure 35.10d). Though the scale of production and distribution varied over time, a more or less mutually exclusive distribution pattern emerges by the third to first century BC, with some Cheshire salt reaching the southern Marches. Neither product reaches south and south-west Wales, where sea-salt may have been utilized, which begs the question as to why Cheshire salt reached maritime north-west Wales. Was it due to a reciprocal exchange for another commodity, raw metal?

Pottery

Generally speaking, pottery is rare through much of Wales, that of the EPRIA and MPRIA being the most scarce. The region was essentially aceramic and wooden vessels (Figure 35.9j, k) must have sufficed for most purposes other than cooking, whilst metal cauldrons will have graced élite households.

The LBA/EPRIA is characterized by the production and distribution of highly localized pottery with broadly similar forms but different fabrics; for example, at the Breiddin and Llwyn Bryn-dinas. Local production of coarse wares may then have

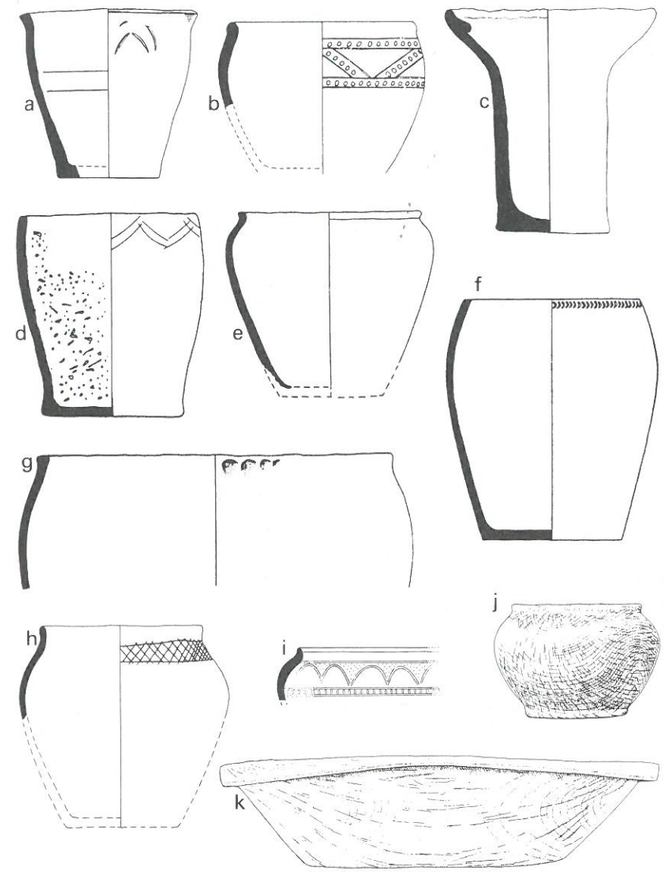

Figure 35.9 Ceramic and wooden containers: (a) Coygan Camp, Carm.; (b) Lydney, Glos.; (c) Collfryn, Mont.; (d), (e), (g) Magor Pill, Mon.; (f) Pen Dinas, Card.; (h) Breiddin, Mont.; (i) Castle Ditches, Llancarfan, Glam.; (j), (k) wooden bowls, Breiddin. (Sources: (a) Wainwright 1967; (b) Cunliffe 1991; (c) Britnell 1989; (d), (e), (g) Whittle 1989; (f) Forde *et al.* 1963; (h), (j), (k) Musson 1991; (i) Hogg 1976.) Scale: (a)–(i) 1/4, (j), (k) 1/5.

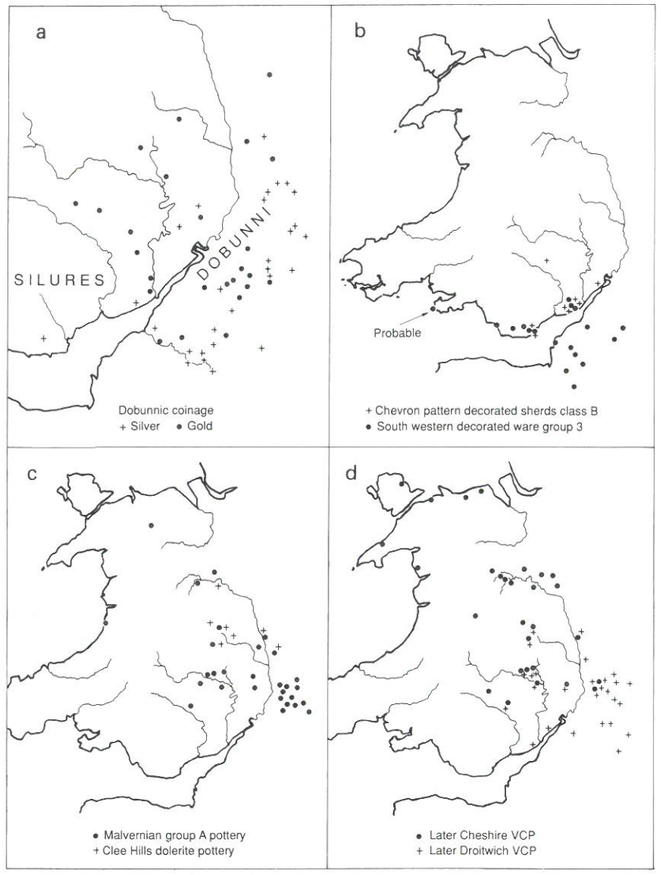

Figure 35.10 (a) Distribution of Dobunnic coinage. (Source: Manning 1981); (b) distribution of chevron/'eyebrow'-decorated pottery and Group 3 South-western Decorated pottery. (Sources: author; Peacock 1969 and author); (c) distribution of Malvernian Group A and Clee Hills pottery. (Sources: Morris 1981, 1982); (d) distribution of later Cheshire and Droitwich briquetage ('VCP'). (Source: Morris 1985.)

continued in the Marches to judge by the restricted distribution of dolerite-tempered Clee Hills ware (Figure 35.10c) (Morris 1981). In the LPRIA a pattern of coarseware production is evident in Spencer's (1983) Class A products, distributed from west Gloucestershire to the Gower, whilst unspecified plain wares of probably comparable age exist in small quantities in south-west Wales (Williams 1991). By the time that the Breiddin was refortified in the third/second century BC only a little locally produced pottery was being used; the remainder was being imported from at least two sources just north of the Malvern hills (Figure 35.9h) (Musson 1991). Stamped and linear-tooled Malvernian wares appear in a variety of fabrics from *c.*300 BC as specialist, high-quality products with a distinctive distribution related to their social value, which though focused on the Marches has outliers at the Brenig and Pen Dinas, Aberystwyth (Figures 35.9f, 35.10c) (Morris 1981; Cunliffe 1991: 462–3). Similarly, second- to mid-first-century BC 'Glastonbury' or South-Western Decorated Wares (Peacock 1969) of Group 3 (Figure 35.9i), with a distribution concentrated upon the Mendips, have coastal outliers in south-east Wales from the Knave, Rhosilli (Gower) to Sudbrook (Figure 35.10b). The well-defined LPRIA Lydney-Llanmelin style (Cunliffe 1991: figure A.18), more especially those forms with chevron/'eyebrow' decoration (Figures 35.9a,d, 35.10b), may imply an ethnic linkage (see p. 695).

WIDER HORIZONS

Though production and exchange of commodities on a local and regional basis was an enduring feature, Wales was never isolated from wider British and continental exchange networks. The continental origins and nature of the objects in the Parc-y-Meirch (Savory 1976b) and Llyn Fawr hoards – weaponry, equestrian and feasting equipment and items of personal hygiene – indicate that the Welsh LBA/EPRIA aristocracy were as conscious of what was *de rigueur* as their counterparts elsewhere in Britain and Ireland. Maritime links via the Atlantic routes are vouched for by the unique sherd in so-called 'Braubach' style from Merthyr Mawr Warren (Glam.) (Savory 1976b), similar to stamp-ornamented Armorican imports of the fifth century BC from Carn Euny, Cornwall (Christie 1978: figure 34.4). Metalwork in early La Tène (ELT) style, of which the most common examples are Marzabotto-type fibulae (Figure 35.7b,c), is rare in Wales, but no fewer than three brooches come from Merthyr Mawr. This concentration, coupled with the evidence for metalworking, suggests that the Ogmore estuary was perhaps of significance in articulating these Atlantic contacts. Savory (1990) has suggested that the Osismi of western Brittany may have had a role in spreading metalwork and a little pottery to south Wales, citing a pot from Bacon Hole (Glam.) (Savory 1976b), a mould from Worm's Head (Glam.) (Savory 1974), the Clynnog (Caerns.) collar (Savory 1976b) and the La Tène I or II bracelets from Coygan Camp (Figure 35.7a). Though the direct importation of larger items of metalwork was uncommon, the Cerrig-y-drudion 'bowl', one of the finest pieces of Celtic art found in Britain, and recently reconstructed as a lid (Stead 1982), may be an exception. In the middle La Tène continental links waned, to re-emerge in a small way in La Tène III, though the imported prestige items found in southern England are absent. Whereas imports may

have been necessary to sustain the expansive economies of southern England they may have been an irrelevance amongst the highly fragmented societies of the west (Nash 1984). Yet the peripheral zone to which Wales belonged was a source of mineral wealth which may, in part, have helped sustain the dynamic economies of the core – continental as well as British. In this context first-century BC Gaulish coins, of a type widely distributed in northern and western France, from Merthyr Mawr, Caerwent and Weston-under-Penyard, and an issue of the Coriosolites found in an iron mine at Scowles, Lydney (Glos.) (Boon 1980b), may indicate that Gaulish intermediaries were seeking metal sources. Indeed it is not impossible that the Porth-Felen lead anchor-stock (Boon 1977), typologically of second- to first-century BC date, may be a relic of a shipwreck linked to classical sources pertaining to the exploration of western sea-routes in connection with a search for metals *c.*90–70 BC (Strabo III.5.11).

BURIAL AND RITUAL

Rituals connected with death were apparently not being widely observed in LBA Wales, when most of the evidence for burial disappears. Thereafter this trait, common to northern and western Britain, is perpetuated. Yet a scattering of burials, encompassing a variety of rites, is known, with the probability that 'normal' burials are grossly underrepresented either because they are unfurnished, are cremations, or because of the principality's predominantly acid soils.

Few authentic cemeteries are known. About six inhumations of LPRIA date were found at a bronze age barrow complex at Four Crosses (Warrilow *et al.* 1986), with a similar focus at Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth (Murphy 1992), where an unfurnished cremation was apparently followed by two inhumations with La Tène III fibulae. The Ogmore Down (Glam.) inhumations with their ELT helmets remain an enigma (Savory 1976b), but if these are dubious high-status burials, then authentic examples do exist. Gelliniog Wen (Ang.) (Savory 1976b) is the only Welsh example of an LPRIA 'warrior' burial; the Cerrig-y-drudion 'bowl' is said to have been found with an inhumation, whilst there are two possible instances of La Tène III burials with mirrors – Llechwedd du bach (Mer.) (Fox 1925) and Llanwnda (Pembs.) (Boon 1980c). The 'spoons' found at Ffynnogion and at Castell Nadolig (Savory 1976b) may either have accompanied burials or form ritual deposits on their own. Inhumed remains within caves associated with PRIA material, as was certainly the case at Big Covert (Savory 1951) and probably at Nant y Graig (Davies 1949: 445–8) and Culverhole (Boon 1980a), may represent other ritual practices rather than a funerary rite.

Of more interest because of its likely general applicability is burial within or close to settlements. As to the former, inhumations, largely of LPRIA date, are known at Moel Hiraddug, Coygan Camp, Mynydd Bychan, Stackpole and Llanmelin, whilst unfurnished inhumations – some encisted, others beneath cairns – exist at Merthyr Mawr. Two cremation deposits, just outside the 'ring-fort' of Castle Bucket (Pembs.), provide one of the earliest dates for PRIA burial – 390±60 bc – though the inclusion of animal bones suggests the faint possibility of ritual deposits (Williams 1985).

PRIA ritual practice in Wales is largely manifest in the form of the deposition of offerings to the gods in watery places. However, comparative data suggests the probability of PRIA shrines beneath those of Romano-British date, as seems likely at Gwehelog (Gwent.) (Wilson 1991), or where Roman cult objects point to the existence of a healing shrine as at Llys Awel (Denbs.). Cult activity may also be indicated at hill-forts such as Dinorben where numerous fragments of human skulls are known (Gardner and Savory 1964: 221–2), or less convincingly at those spots where reputedly PRIA or Romano-British carved stone heads have been found.

Tacitus's reference to 'groves devoted to Mona's barbarous superstition' (*Annals* xiv.30) being felled in AD 60/1 relates to another well-known Celtic custom of practising ritual in an arboreal setting, where the druids (a Tacitean reference to their presence on Anglesey) will have officiated. Until such cult centres have been identified, it is only in the case of the 'cult of watery offerings' that we may gain some insight into a focus of religious observance. The LBA practice of bog, lake and river deposits is continued into the PRIA, as instanced at Llyn Fawr, but it is not until the last centuries BC that metalwork was deposited in any quantity. Though the great deposit at Llyn Cerrig Bach (Fox 1946) is the best known, the Capel Garmon fire-dog is also reputed to have been found in a pool, and the Trawsfynydd tankard in a bog. Fitzpatrick (1984) notes a continuing bias towards the deposition of weaponry, which Llyn Cerrig Bach has in plenty – 11 swords, 7 spears, shield fitments, at least 10 horse-bits (Figure 37.7e, h, j) and up to 22 iron tyres, some of which qualitatively are likely to belong to chariots. Such items, some possibly the spoils of war, he suggests were deliberately selected as élite status symbols made consecrate to the gods in public ceremonies, with faunal assemblages – cattle, sheep, pig, horse and dog bones at Llyn Cerrig Bach – as the appropriate contribution of the plebs, thereby cumulatively ensuring group security and prosperity. The ceremonies at Llyn Cerrig Bach were probably recurrent since the metalwork spans the second century BC to the first century AD. Its diverse origin, with a putative continental blade with an armourer's mark (Figure 35.7g) (Savory 1966b) and an Irish bronze trumpet, begs the question of whether the lake had, as Fox suggested, a significance as a cult focus well beyond Anglesey. The recognition of a widespread pattern of exchange in finished products as well as raw metal (Northover 1991) makes such a question desperately difficult to answer.

CELTIC SOCIETY IN WALES

There are numerous indicators which suggest that Welsh PRIA society shared traits common to the Celtic world at large, with power articulated through social hierarchies based upon tribute networks, whose basis will have been aristocratic lineage, status or prowess in war. Both economy and society, then, will have been centred upon the aristocratic household where status-building activities – feasting and the patronage of the arts – were focused. The recognition of such in the archaeological record, against a background of gradations in absolute ranking and clear differences in social organization over time as reflected in settlement archaeology, is a major challenge.

Recent research has suggested the existence of two basic socio-economic systems: an eastern redistributive economy in those zones dominated by large hill-forts, where agricultural surpluses were stored and exchanged, and a western clientage economy in those where hill-forts are few and where a dichotomy exists between producer farmsteads and consumer settlements of higher status (Cunliffe 1991: 394–8). Certainly the large, complex hill-forts of the Marches imply a much higher population density and one more amenable to manipulation and organization. A multifocal system may be envisaged here, with the biggest as the strongholds of the most powerful clans; and, though absolute power was fragmented, common cultural traits and lively exchange networks imply a strongly knit alliance of clans. Hidden social distinctions may lie within the settlement range of powerful hill-forts and producer farms, and within the structural range of individual settlements as exemplified at the Breiddin and Collfryn (Musson 1991). Defensive complexity and house dimensions at the latter (Figure 35.6) suggest an élite residence, and whilst the Breiddin apparently has smaller houses it has proportionately four times as many four-posters as Collfryn, suggesting a key role at least as a central repository of agricultural produce.

In south-west Wales Williams (1988) perceives two contrasting social systems: a redistributive system based upon the larger hill-forts of the north and east, with a clientage system in the inland south and west – certainly from the third century BC – based upon producer farms, and small promontory forts and 'ring-forts' which were high-status consumers of agricultural produce. If the latter were indeed residences of élite family groups, then their sheer numbers imply no regional political focus in the MPRIA and LPRIA and we may envisage a system of small clans who rarely acted in concert. However, though no central authority is visible in the settlement record or any other tangible indicator of PRIA political allegiance, it did exist by the time that the *civitas Demetarum* was in being by the later second century AD.

If conditions in Wales were seemingly inimical to the creation of centralized tribal communities on the southern or north-eastern English model, by the later second century AD Roman sources show that it was divided into a minimum of four tribal areas – Ordovices, Deceangli, Demetae and Silures (Jarrett and Mann 1969; Rivet and Smith 1979) – roughly approximating to the broad geographical divisions. Several writers have mused on the possibility that this political division was already reflected in the four main 'cultural provinces' of the LBA (Burgess 1980; Savory 1980) though Jones (1984: 33) warns against an uncritical acceptance of such views and writes, 'The same geographical elements as helped to form the earlier cultural provinces by influencing the distribution of LBA metalwork are also likely to have influenced the later pattern of trade and settlement, and of social and political cohesion.' The tribal distribution of the second century AD is likely to hold good at least for the immediate pre-Roman period, but although there is a broad consensus as to their geographical placement – the Ordovices excepted – recognizing these entities is difficult. They were most probably composed of clans who only came together at times of stress; instanced in the first century AD by the Roman threat. The distribution of ceramics, a traditional means of recognizing ethnicity or 'identity-conscious interest groups', is a less reliable guide to clan or tribal

distribution in Wales for reasons stated above, though the chevron/'eyebrow'-decorated Lydney-Llanmelin pots (Figure 35.9) have a tight distribution which may conceivably define a 'Silurian' heartland (Figure 35.10b). Where tribal coinage impinges upon Wales we can attempt to be more specific. Both Manning (1981) and Sellwood (1984) define a region west of the lower Severn which did not share the monetary system of the Dobunni *c.*35 BC–AD 43 (Van Arsdell 1989) and must have been excluded from it (Figure 35.10a). Whether this formed part of Siluria or represented a border zone is speculative.

The recognition of the Silures and Demetae as *civitates* may either reflect their precocity or a higher level of political consciousness, and by implication the continuation of an essentially PRIA form of power structure. Furthermore, the Silurian and Demetian élites were sufficiently wealthy to create an urban focus, which in turn presupposes a substantial agricultural surplus and the possibility that such was also the case in the LPRIA. The absence of *civitas* development elsewhere in the principality may be a silent commentary upon the inability of the agrarian base in those areas to produce the necessary surplus, which together with geographical constraints which inhibited political co-operation fostered the continuance of highly segmented societies.

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