

*FROM THE HALL OF THE
RICH MOUNTAIN KING*

*THE STORY OF THE THIRTEEN
TREASURES OF
ANCIENT BRITAIN AND IRELAND*

Tricia Maguire

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- [GLC](#)** The Project Gutenberg eBook,*** *The Mabinogion*, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest, 1849 Edition, text by David Price
- [HB](#)** The Project Gutenberg eBook,*** *Historia Brittonum, History of the Britons, (Historia Brittonum)* by Nennius. Last update, February 4, 2013. Translated by J.A. Giles
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- [WCD](#)** Bartrum Peter C. A Welsh Classical Dictionary Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru The National Library of Wales. References only linked to chapters.

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[BT](#) The Book of Taliesin. Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru The National Library of Wales

[BA](#) The Book of Aneirin Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru The National Library of Wales/Cardiff City Council.

Introduction

Around 1460 CE, a Welsh poet, Gwilym Tew, framed a cryptic catalogue of 'Treasures', objects allocated to lesser-known historical figures of *Prydein*, the place-name applied where the Brittonic language had been spoken long-term - now Wales, Cornwall, and The Old North i.e., Central and Southern Scotland and North England. It is the mainspring for the derivative catch-all title 'Britain' but for Celtic peoples Alba is the Earth and its homelands, the *Albion* of the classical explorers and geographers. Ireland was termed *Ierne/Hibernia*; contributions from there are vital in the period covered from remote time to the close of 6th Century CE while the focus of the list is on the years 300 to 600 CE, moving through Roman occupation to newer wranglings in social order and beliefs. NB, be warned, behaviours and attitudes do not sit well with current, improving perspectives but certain themes remain relevant and the content in many ways is startling. The purpose here is to 'find' each treasure and deeper aspects of Tew's message.

His ingenuity was inspired by the literature of his home country, in lists of kings and saints, epic poetry and the collective memory of his peers, the Bards. The academic jury is still 'out' on poetry accredited to Merlin the Druid while agreement exists on genuine material by the 'Chief of Bards', Taliesin. That aside, by heeding the nature and importance of both, a dramatic invention had Taliesin choose the Treasures and Merlin collect them. The theory works insofar as their actual involvement unites many of the items and hints of the paranormal fuse with reality. The compilation refers to dynasties of the early mediaeval 'Dark Ages', their holdings, traditions, and exercise of sovereignty where **every article** hinges around -

If you be primary bards formed by heaven,

Tell your king what his fate will be.

It is I who am a diviner and a leading Bard.

(The History of Taliesin - [GLC](#))

Demonstrating a technique of short-hand aids to memory, the first drafts were given simply as-

The Mantle of Arthur in Cornwall

The Knife of Llawfrodedd

Dyrnwyn, the sword of Rhydderch Hael

The Cauldron of Dyrnwych the Giant

The Hamper of Gwyddno Garanhir

The Whetstone of Tudwal Tudglyd

The Horn of Bran Galed

The Coat of Padarn Beisrudd

The Chariot of Morgan Mwynfawr

The Crock and Dish of Rhygenydd ✓

The Halter of Clydno Eiddyn

The Chessboard of Gwenddoleu ap Ceidio

and then, over a century, 'clarified' by brief notes about the merits of each item and with slight alterations in the published order or objects. An example, often vying for twelfth slot, is The Stone and Ring of Eluned, its solution a solar annular eclipse where near-total darkness could come in handy for clandestine activity . (✓The Crock and Dish count as two to give thirteen in total).

Gwilym Tew was a Bard, member of an order schooled in preserving literature, music, verse, history and genealogy. The profession had existed for thousands of years, progressing into three classes with Druids and Ovates. Druids practised religion, philosophy, medicine and education; Ovates specialised in prophecy, astronomy and magic [\(1\)](#) though often, all were adept across the arts. Their deductions on astronomy and solstices are harnessed throughout the islands in tumuli and circles such as Newgrange, Machrie Moor, Callanish, Bryn Celli Ddu, Stonehenge and Ring of Brodgar, Orkney, below.



Courtesy sgc:foto

The profession gave entrance to royal or aristocratic households in the official retinue as registrars of lands and performers of sophisticated entertainment and eulogy of the living. For the agenda of the National Assembly, the Feis at Tara, Ireland, *“the poet-historian...brought his record of events. National records were examined; ...family records were carefully examined and corrected....This was a point of great importance; for a man’s right of inheritance to property depended on his genealogy, except in rare cases where might took the place of right”* (2). In Wales, descent and entitlement to land was codified by the 10th century under King Howel Dda. In the century before, Eliseg’s Pillar at Valle Crucis, near Llangollen, was erected by a ruler of the district in tribute to his ancestry and as a mini-history carved into stone. Making good copy of all this data had initiated a busy age of squiggly handwriting – by the end of the 1st millennium CE it had produced king-lists, hagiographies and histories of the Welsh and Britons – demonstrating their erstwhile commonality. Meanwhile the advancing Christian movement, peopled by the children of aristocracy, bent on education, disseminated information across mainlands and islands. Several treasures reflect an interaction of Welsh folklore, the Annals of Ireland, biographies of Columba and Kentigern - missionaries in Scotland, while St. David’s in west Wales was a popular venue. Written by near contemporaries then stored and re-copied, and with the Chronicles of the Anglo-Saxons, the facts of the Treasures were captured. When combined with the output of the secular poets, the interplay of the cast is reinforced and an obscure list builds to a cohesive whole.

In recollections and weaving entertaining stories along the way, Bardism progressed with the later medieval scribes and poets. The monasteries had in-house clerks and pertinent business while the secular writers were installing libraries for the gentry, travelling from manor to manor on regular circuits, penning dedications for their patrons. That does not however connote an entirely harmonious situation. By the time of their departure, the Romans had positioned Christianity as the official religion but the Bards, already ethical, monotheistic, spiritual progressives and pacifists would be challenged by loss of patronage redirected towards clerics. As the second millennium proceeded, allied to national duress where Wales became the target of England, the Bards were at pains to hold onto their literary capacity but increasingly, their gift of clairvoyance gained from ‘being in the presence’ became side-lined, no longer in favour so it was a rare thing when a patron of the Arts, one Hopcyn ap Tomas (3) who deciphered Bardic prophecies, was consulted by Owain Glyndŵr, the 14/15th century Prince of Wales, rebel and nationalist renewing the age-old concern regarding the political destiny of those who would govern.

By then, the days of the ‘primitive’ Bards were almost over, when those of uncanny ability could insert a word or reach into the past to insinuate a secret or produce an inexplicable ambience in their work. Gwilym Tew was among those who deplored daft fakery but realised the depth of loss. From a Bardic family, ambitious and proactive in its organisation and a schism, he instituted a new school in Glamorgan, taking the Chair in 1460.(4) In a re-energised drive with poetry under scrutiny and new rules assigned to its strict, intricate

metre, grammar and composition, this group was inclined to an accord with the religious houses, finding sponsors or a new direction. But he once owned a version of the Book of Aneirin, author of an epic piece *The Gododdin*.⁽⁵⁾ Surviving through recital until put into writing, it was triggered by a closing scenario of the 6th century. In Bardic verse, reiteration as a memorising device is almost hypnotic and the cadences of repeated rhythms in sets and within lines, shifts the mind to an intuitive state. The famed writers of that century, Taliesin, Aneirin and Llywarch Hen, possessed a facility in expression of events, be it sorrow or joy. In Wales, Taliesin is considered to have 'invented' the praise-form and authoring the Treasures became popular within that vein into the 16th century.

In the aftermath of the upheaval of the Roman conquest of 'Britannia', belligerent resistance grew to counter a new potential overthrow by hostile Germanic tribes. Forced by climate change, peaceful, tolerated searches for new farming country altered, described in the 8th century by [Bede](#), the monk of Jarrow, with a particular gain for the Britons at 'Badon Hill', assumed to be Bath, Somerset. Though unidentified by [Bede](#), Arthur as patriotic victor was declared in the *Historia Brittonum, the History of the Britons*, as were the Men of the North, the kings intent on safeguarding their own establishments. It was assembled c. 830 in Bangor of North Wales, at least in part by Nennius, a monk who famously took a "heap" of fusty paperwork and re-organised it sensibly. His outburst about those sources then changes to persistent howls about 'lost' papers, certified by a stray word no longer in vocabulary or outmoded placenames. Arthur is elusive, *almost* unverified, but Nennius has been proven correct in his dispatches of the warfare conducted by rulers of the Old North in resisting this new colonisation which began at least as soon as Roman withdrawal c. 410. In pay to those warlords, famous Bards were singing their praises while netting minutiae about a melée of supportive or antagonistic rulers and clergy. From this milieu Taliesin became the designated illustrious bard, corroborated by the tributes he wrote in his assignments with Urien and Owain of Rheged and Guallauc of Elmet: they will be met in cameos while unpacking the Treasures.

The 'co-creators' of the collection open the Black Book of Carmarthen, priceless and the oldest Welsh-language script in existence, the title denoting its cover and ascription to the Priory of St. John, Carmarthen, south-west Wales in the mid-13th century. As it was only robbed (from St. David's) during book-raids by Henry VIII, a king of England d. 1547, it had perhaps some previous notice because revelations for the Treasures frequent its pages. The neat construction of *The Dialogue of Merlin and Taliesin* is dated 11th-12th century but embodies residual fragments in naming Dumbarton, Strathclyde as *Nemhtur*, obsolete by the 8th century. (FABW/[BLON](#)). Merlin says armies rallied there, while discussing the feud of Arderydd, the backstory of The Chessboard, and Taliesin talks of strikes on South Wales perpetrated by Maelgwn, chief of Deganyw, Conwy; both positions are key in the life of each

speaker. Other items in The Black Book refer to mortals and fabled figures - all inform the list significantly and as it is under constant review, there must be more to reveal.

Sir Walter Scott, author and historian, in his preface to *Sir Tristrem* by Thomas of Erceldoune says of his own backyard –“ *the minstrels of the south of Scotland, living in or near the British tribes of Reged and Strathclwyd, became the natural depositories of the treasures of Celtic tradition, esteemed so precious in the Middle ages*”. That would account somewhat for awareness of those overlords in the inventory and is a worthwhile comment on its preservation; where patronage of the Bards did continue in unison with manuscript accumulation by the wealthy, that literary heritage was aided into the second millennium CE.

Outside the Bardic profession, how Gwilym Tew methodically amassed the catalogue or the components available to him is guesswork, but predating Tew’s list by a decade, Gwyddno and Bran Galed figured in poems by the Bard Guto’r Glyn.[\(6\)](#) Also, constancy of storytelling had resulted in a mediaeval Welsh classic, the *Mabinogion*, a core of four tales numbered as *Branches*; with another seven stories, they appeared in written form in the White Book of Rhydderch, i.e., its cover and the person (d. 1400) who commissioned it from professional scribes for his library, and is the earliest extant production of the collection. [\(7\)](#) It contains the life-or-death Bridal quest of *Kilhwch and Olwen*, possibly completed circa 1100 and a major repository of the Thirteen Treasures. The challenge to seek and retrieve a series of marvels is demanded by the Welsh Chief Giant, Yspaddaden Penkawr, the father of Olwen from the man who wishes to marry her, Kilhwch, who then obtains support from his relative Arthur to execute the tasks; the promotion of Welsh folk tales is the formulation of the Arthurian genre. *Kilhwch and Olwen* is a highly imaginative masterpiece of remembered personae; a fuller version is incorporated around 1400 in The Red Book of Hergest, the colour of its binding and the manor-house on the Welsh Borders where it alighted via several owners. [\(8\)](#) Another segment is *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, motivated by a belief of the Celtic world where lying down to sleep on an ox-skin induces visions and welcome fortune. The protagonist Rhonabwy participates in the 12th Century Welsh wars with the Anglo-Normans; his colourful dream draws parallels to factional in-fighting that advantaged Anglo-Saxon expansion during the Dark Ages but ends with Arthur agreeing a temporary truce, on consultation with advisers from his whole ‘Empire’. It is another tour-de-force of named individuals though neither story observes a strict calendar, tying age-old concepts to contemporary sites, customs and people. [\(GLC\)](#). The Red Book also holds poetry attributed to Merlin and Llywarch Hen, as well as Triads – texts on diverse subjects, in sets of three, a balanced number and mnemonic.

Genealogies such as *Bonedd y Sant*, Lives of Saints, King-lists of *Gwr y Gogledd*, The Descent of the Men of the North or *Hanesyn Hen*, the Old History, allow identification of the Treasure-keepers, with further cross-checking and referencing by Celticists. The English genealogist, Peter Clement Bartrum, studied Welsh to scrutinise its mediaeval span and literature and from there his far-reaching research into the development of [Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain/The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain](#) was published in 1963 which supplies

the headline for each chapter; many people in these pages are entrants in his *Welsh Classical Dictionary: people in history and legend up to about A.D. 1000* ([WCD Introduction](#)). Most other secondary and tertiary reviews are linked to the web. Also, *Fair Use* is made here of the English translation of the *Mabinogion*, an entertainment for young people, by the linguist and educator Lady Charlotte Guest released in total in 1849. [GLC](#). It is full of puzzles and opportunities for calculation which is carried through to the Treasures but it will be no surprise to those who always comprehended truths dismissed as fanciful, that sciences now legitimize 'folktales' to a degree.

In this decryption, a chronological or apt order has been gauged with items grouped for ease of reading. Reconstructed family trees show the main actors and their inter-related dynasties. (Page 8). Besides the difficulty of reckoning accurate birth dates, in these big families the eldest child was easily a generation ahead of the youngest which can make genealogical charts seem skewed; there are both missing persons and some left out deliberately for simplicity. A **rough** sketch of the historical context is tendered, as are photographs – anywhere indicated by the Treasures can be visited .

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With due acknowledgement for all © references.

THE FAMILIES

Key: Name, owner of Treasure ; Name, listed; → child named right ; & with sibling below; //some doubt in order of lineage; ♥ ♥ marriage/relationship.

Padarn → Edern → Cunedda ♥ → Gwen → Eigr → Arthur
c. 300

→ Gwawl ♥

→ Garbanion → Dyfnwal Moelmud → Cyngar → Morgan Fwlch
→ & Bran Hen

→ Ceneu → Pabo → Dunod Fwr ♥
→ & Mar → Lleenog → Guallauc → Ceredig
& Dwywai ♥
& Arthwys → Ceidio → Gwenddoleu

Coel Hen
c. 360

→ Gwrwst Ledlum → Meirchion Gul → Elidir Lydanwyn ♥ → Llywarch Hen
& Cynfarch Oer ♥ → Efrddyl ♥
& Eliffer ♥ → Peredur & Gwrgi
& Urien → Owain
→ & Rhun
→ & Pasgen
→ & Morfudd ♥

→ (Gwidol)// Gwrwst Briodor → Elidir Mwynfawr

(/) Morgan Mwynfawr

Coroticus → Cynwyd → Dyfnwal Hen → Clynog → Tudwal Tudclyd ♥ → Rhydderch Hael
(Date ?) → & Serwan → Mordaf Hael
→ & Senyllt → Nudd Hael → Dreon

→ Cynfelin // → Cynwyd → Cynfelin Drwsgl
& Cadrod Calchfynydd ♥
& Clydno Eidyn → Cynon ♥

→ Gwawr ♥
Brychan & Nyfain ♥
(Date ?) & Gurygen Goddeu ♥

SOURCE; WCD.

The hamper of Gwyddno Longshank The food of a man would go into it; the food of a hundred men would be got from It ⁱ



In Celtic folklore the Hamper is said to be one of “*the oldest and best-known vessels of plenty*” (9) This type is allied to bodies of water lauded for their bounty and if in due gratitude held as sacred or as repositories of prized items such as swords, the treasure-chest was then spellbound, hopefully forever, to disallow major disruption.

The qualities of the Hamper do not elude Yspaddaden Penkawr, a trial for Kilhwch “*The basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir, if the whole world should come together, thrice nine men at a time, the meat that each of them desired would be found within it. I require to eat therefrom on the night that my daughter becomes thy bride. He will give*

it to no one of his own free will, and thou canst not compel him.” (GLC)

The Hamper is a bizarre fish weir “on the strand between Dyvi and Aberystwyth” (GLC) i.e., Cardigan Bay, Ceredigion, West Wales, still turning over a profitable industry. Traditionally, a tremendous catch transpired each May eve in a fossil resulting from a tsunami c. 3000 BCE, that washed over Ceredigion leaving behind a petrified forest (hence the Basket/Hamper) at Borth. An alternative and more colourful exposure of the tsunami is in “*a dialogue between Gwyddno Garanhir and Gwyn ap Nudd, lord of the Other World; verses relating to Seithenyn and the drowning of Cantref Gwaelod*” the surrounding hundred. Garanhir, Longshanks or Crane-legs, is the mystical Fisherman of the area while Seithenin lost his Crown due to disregard for safety. His gate-keeper indulged in a feast, eating and drinking, and when the whole company fell asleep while the fortress-gates were left open, the court was inundated. (BBC). Adverse effects of alcohol is an oblique theme for several of the Treasures and various authors including Taliesin, a son of this neighbourhood.

On one Beltane, May eve, of the 6th century unlucky Elffin son of Gwyddno, chief of this cantref, expecting a profitable haul of baited fish spied only a small leather bag. On opening that, an infant’s head was seen with light emanating from the forehead so that Elffin

immediately names the boy Taliesin, Shining-brow i.e., the Light of the Third Eye¹, and opts to foster the chatty little baby who instantly predicts gratifying fortune for Elffin as compensation. Taliesin forever enjoyed the dual persona of miraculous being, born via metamorphoses and charmed by three drops from a Cauldron of Science and Inspiration, knowing all once and future time, maturing to be the acknowledged supreme Bard. Interim, aged 13, his faculties of clairvoyance spare Elffin and his wife, imprisoned and threatened by Rhun, the son of Maelgwn Gwynedd in his court at Deganwy; he quashes a ruse to disgrace the couple and by magic raises a storm to secure Elffin's freedom. In an echo of Merlin Emrys (see p.16), Taliesin then silences the royal retainers by doubting their integrity with a reminder of pre-eminence in 'his' declaration -

If ye be primary bards....

.....It is I who am diviner and leading bard

- and it contains a more sinister omen because Maelgwn would go on to suffer a singular death in a mid-century plague (p.29) while his bards are discredited as sycophants. Freed, Elffin is reimbursed for his fosterage at a seashore horse-race where Taliesin tips him some mature holly sprigs to throw down as caltrops to defeat other riders; Taliesin is moving on and where the race ends a pit is scooped out, revealing precious objects, adding the sentiment of 'Fair pay/just reward' to his name. ([WCD p24](#)).

This 'biography', *The History (Hanes) of Taliesin*, was appended to Lady Charlotte Guest's Mabinogion, a standard in the many dedications that accrued beyond his physical death (date unknown). As here, poems were drafted as genuine homage or interpretation of his essence though other writers hijacked his reputation as a visionary to fabricate 'prophetic' forgeries. Those with merit may well have been composed through Bardic inheritance as in *The Battle of the Trees* from the Book of Taliesin disclosing his beliefs and abilities. All, Taliesin insists, are the science of physics and pure forces that can be tapped and an extraordinary ability achieved because at one time we were as one with the universe. Metempsychosis is portrayed in skipping through time, altering from one species to another and his inter-dimensional perception given as - *I was enchanted by Math* and - *I was enchanted by Gwydion*, ([10](#)) where Math epitomises the Primordial Wind and Gwydion is the Milky Way. They are teamed as uncle and nephew in the Fourth Branch. Don, the river deity, is sister to Math and mother of Gwydion and also the custodian of her fabulous Irish family the Tuatha

¹ In many cultures it is the sixth of the informative physical senses; it can be enhanced to preternatural level and to blend with higher spheres of consciousness. The Gitanes display it on the palm of the hand though most set it on the forehead e.g., Hindu statuary and on the Buddha, as a sign of the relationship to and anatomical seat of the Pineal gland. It was the Wudjat, eye of Horus of Egypt, which depicts the section of brain known in the East as The Crystal Palace. Theft of a Hindu forehead jewel inspired the *Moonstone*, a novel by Wilkie Collins, published 1862

Dé Danaan, the actual tribe later deified as gods of light i.e., visible planets/astral bodies. Many times, Taliesin is given the role of distributor of enlightenment.

In the History of Taliesin above, the Cauldron of Ceridwen that he had been charged with stirring not only split during preparation of its brew, splashing and transforming him, but also the contents washed into a nearby stream, the waters poisoning the horses of Gwyddno Garanhir, which may be construed as a 6th c. insult to the environment. The forest of Borth can be seen now and then at low tides and was broadcast in the BBC TV programme *Coast*. Mosaics on the seafront retell the stories. (Pictured).



The Hall is flooded



Baby Taliesin discovered by Elffin

*The Coat of Padarn of the Red Coat. If a nobleman put it on it would be suitable; if a churl, it would not serve*ⁱⁱ

The Romans mandated Paternus/Padarn as a client governor to contain attacks along the frontier in their northern Empire of Britannia. Wearing this garment, *the Red Cloak/‘the Purple’* was not an entitlement of a churl, a person of ‘lower’ societal standing. In this latter period of the 4th century, other appointees were dotted around the province; Padarn’s son Edern continued in post and Coel Hen’s influence radiated from the Pennines (p. 37).²



Padarn is considered to have been a member of the Votadini/Gododdin clan of the Lothians (AM) particularly of the Manau Gododdin (HB) who occupied the coast around the Firth of Forth; a relic is the Manau stone at the town centre of Clackmannan, east of the River Forth and close to its estuary in Scotland. His importance lies within this new aristocracy and those dynasties that continued as the overlords of Britain for many centuries. In his locale, threats came from incursions by the northern tribes from Caledonia, vexing the perimeter in plundering raids. However, in allegiance with continental groups, these tactics were sapping and weakening the resources of supremacy around the Empire until the beginning of the 5th century saw Roman withdrawal, replaced by sanctioned, wealthy

families. In their positive Imperial partnership in the Clyde-Forth valley, the Damnonii and Gododdin had kept a preferential status enjoyed ever since, considering the standing of Glasgow and Edinburgh in Central Scotland.

In short, Padarn represents ascendancy. His grandson Cunedda (AM) went on to marry Gwawl, daughter of Coel Hen. Owing to her rights by kindred with North Wales, (her maternal great-grandfather had been a chief of Caernarfon) their relocation invested a ruling majority (HB) with few exceptions in N/N-West Wales until early 9th century. But in *The Ruin of Britain*, its author Gildas mocked Padarn’s direct descendants, Cynlas Goch of Bryn Euryn, Rhos-on-Sea and Maelgwn Gwynedd

² ‘Padarn’ pictured – from a Spanish deck 18th/19th century. *The King of Swords as the Roman Empire. Playing Cards* by W. Gurney Benham, 1931.

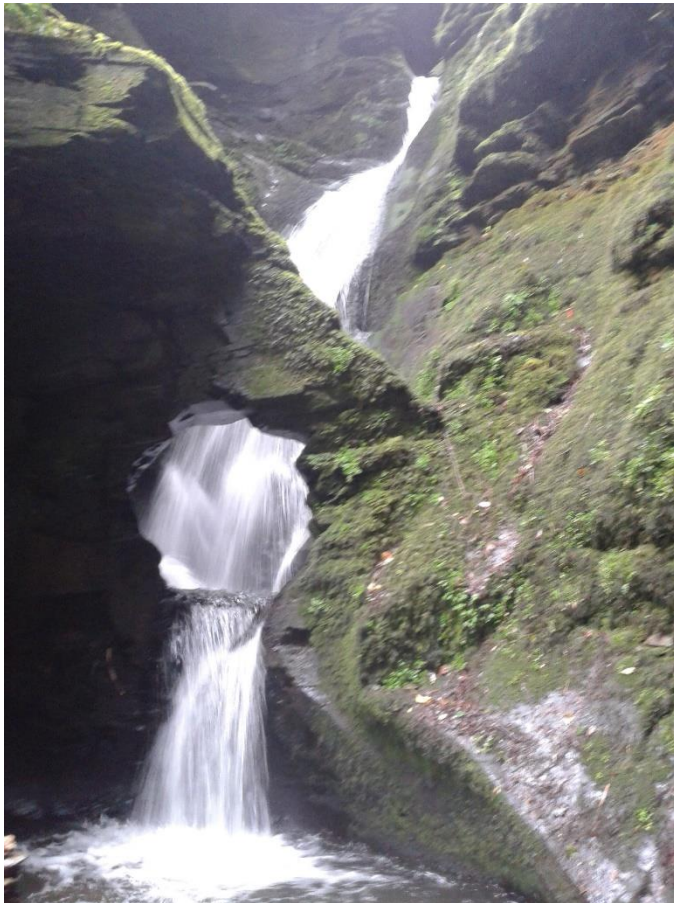
of Deganwy. ([WCD p.12](#)). Deriding the pagan fondness for astronomy, (p.17) Cynlas' hillfort was belittled as the pungent den of a bear/*Arth*, and Maelgwn himself to *Pendragon*- when derogatory, a primeval reptile.



Maelgwn harried other parts of Wales and annoyed the Church with his inconsistent support and behaviours and it is said that Cynlas Goch had killed a rival, one Huail brother of Gildas, whose pain and frustration is clear and though he accurately fixes both in North Wales, by criticising them in tandem and through his choice of words, Gildas has increased speculation around the Arthurian issue.

Conversely, Cunedda's daughter Gwen and her daughter Eigr had married Chief Elders of Cornwall, the latter becoming the mother of the historical Arthur who according to *Culhwch and Olwen* ([GLC](#)), had issues with quite another Huail. Make what you will of the Stone/*Maen Huail* in Ruthin town centre, Denbighshire.

*The Mantle of Arthur (in Cornwall) Anybody who might go under it could see everybody,
and nobody would see him ⁱⁱⁱ*



(Knock. Knock...) “Who’s on the Doors?”

“Who’s asking?”

“Arthur! ... Kai! ... Bedwyr!... Mabon!!
-and **his** mother works for Uther Pendragon..” [\(11a\)](#)

and the rest etc., is a Mediaeval farrago which has entertained ever since yet it would be disappointing to dismiss the genuine though subtle traces that preserve some fascinating truths .

There is some consensus that the evidence for the real Arthur and his push to oppose invading Anglo-Saxons lies in archaic literature and that

Nennius, credited as the recorder of Arthur’s militancy ([HB](#)), was thought incapable of making it all up. [AoW 1](#). His assortment of a dozen battles where Arthur acts as General for various rulers is the bedrock of this paradox but the late 5th into 6th C. was still in transition from ‘oral’ to literate society which compounds imperfectly remembered events. Continued by the Welsh raconteurs, some of this homegrown Arthurian literature ferments from pagan beliefs and abilities, adding to the mystery as well as a modern tendency to doubt it all.

“though he was no Arthur” is a remark made about his status in *The Gododdin*. The intriguing disparity of a highly-regarded fighter at an end-of-century conflict and Arthur’s lasting prestige pertained to a time when it was usual only to contrast non-fictional persons. [\(AoW\)](#) His crusade continued a period of growing retaliation from the latter half of the 5th century ([HB](#)), also reported by [Bede](#) who credits at least the initial operations to the Romano-British captain Ambrosius Aurelianus, and concludes with the Battle of Badon Hill as a noteworthy achievement; it is also referenced in the Tale of Taliesin & Dream of Rhonabwy [\(GLC\)](#). The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles verify the country under siege and report onslaughts on the south/west coast e.g., a young prince of the Britons was killed during a sortie on Portsmouth in 501, while their king-list c. 495 is proof of wider progress and residency. ([ASC](#)).

One of Arthur's conflicts arose at Caerleon on Usk, Gwent, his 'court' in *The Lady of the Fountain*. [\(GLC\)](#) It begins with Arthur in the company of Owain, son of Urien of Rheged and Cynon, son of Clydno Eidyn. Their lifetimes and common purpose span the 6th century in the North and South; they are the freedom-fighters and Sons of Destiny/ mab Darogan, who will come back when needed. Locations are indicative of the adoption and popularity of Arthur across Welsh literature as the proponent of national autonomy, flourishing from the lands of the Dumnonii tribes of Cornwall and Devon into Somerset and south Wales and therefore, Arthur is said to have another court at Celli-Wig in Cornwall.

The place-name is seen too in Brittany and Wales [\(12a\)](#). In their shared Brittonic language it denotes an *extended family community (Wig) living in a forest-grove (Celli) (BLON)* while a principle of land shared out by lots is encoded in Celtic terms such as [\(Cant \(BLON\)\)](#) or [Cavill.\(13\)](#) That might be implied in *The Elegy of Uther Pendragon*, in this case the Premier Chief, which is contained in the Book of Taliesin where the speaker is said to have apportioned one-ninth of either his homeland (*I have shared my refuge*) or bravery to Arthur, a characteristic in all of his children.[AoW 2](#). Elsewhere, Caradog *Freichfras* (a chronic injury to the arm) is titled the Chief Elder of Celliwig. The Mantle of his partner Tegau Eurfron is listed as a Treasure in some editions; the garment reaches the floor i.e., not raised in intercourse or pregnancy by another during Caradog's absences because they have a monogamous relationship. His mother Tywanwedd's second husband is given as Tudfwlch the Prince of Cornwall and her sister as Eigr who marries Rhica/Ricca, also an elder of Cornwall though by a different partner becomes the mother of Arthur, whose birth-date is proposed at 480. His sister Morgan went unknown until it was grasped that her name and title of Healer (Tud) are not gender-specific. [\(WCD p.65\)](#) Although this lore lacks absolute certainty it has been ascertained from credible genealogies, as are other half-siblings and cousins in e.g. *Kilhwch and Olwen* so the close relationships of these people evince a 'Wig' network. On the other hand, infighting continues and Arthur's demise at Camlann, c. 537-542, conspired by the hierarchy of Cornwall is the incessant dilemma of the century. [\(WCD Arthur ab Uthr p.29/ Camlan, p29\)](#).

Meanwhile, business carries on at the island fortress of Din Tagel/Tintagel which had enjoyed a prime commercial and exotic position in trade with the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Near East since the millennia BCE, for cassiterite, the tin ore of Cornwall. Crafted in metallurgy to produce bronze in an alloy with copper, also plentiful in Devon and Wales, it has an attractive crystal appearance and often occurs in association with other semi-precious stones. Luxury goods and cosmology are favourite themes of the Mabinogion so it's interesting that gold and tin from Cornwall are constituents of the Nebra Sky Disc of Germany, dating to the Bronze Age. These riches plus manpower were the quarry and harvest of Roman occupation but in the post-Roman economy of the Dumnonii, Tintagel continued to occupy its status as the channel for high-quality items shared with society's *crème de la crème* until mid-6th century when Mediterranean commerce changed hands in the rise of new Empires. Halls were the meeting-points of that clique and Arthur has the

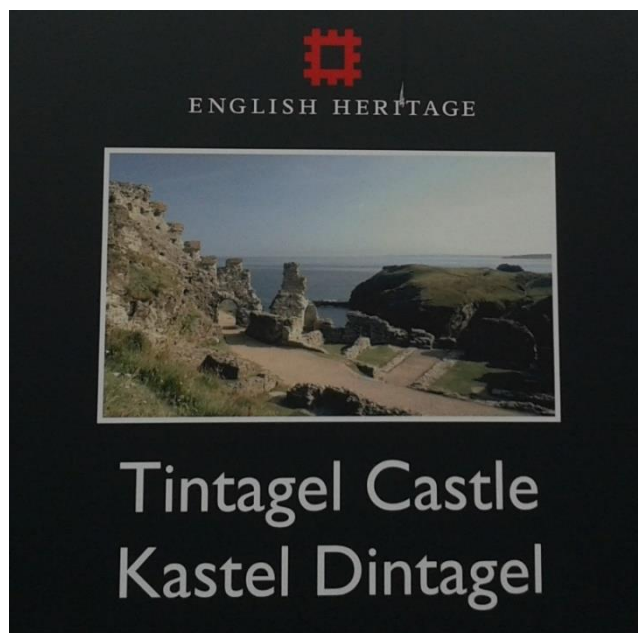
artisan Glwyddyn Saer as architect/carpenter/master-builder of his own hall, Ehangwen. ([WCD p.24](#)).

By c. 1100, various authors, poets and recorders had conserved insights into Arthur's true world. And then in 1138 and unlike Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth did make it all up for his blockbuster *History of the Kings of Britain*, falsely co-opting Merlin to secure the liaison of Eigr/Igern and Uther Pendragon at Tintagel, consequently the birthplace of 'King' Arthur. Intentional or not, it replicated pre-existing myth of the usurped male/ Saturnine father/ fecund woman/ mysterious child. A cleric and teacher, Geoffrey's confection of history, mystery and magic conflicted dependable knowledge in his wildly popular and enduring merger, though it heralds some lost reportage because Tintagel had been in ruins for centuries and his book predated by another century the erection of the new castle. At present, it is in England's 'Top 5' visitor attractions but its inceptive importance has only lately been vouched for by comparative review and archaeology. In going a bit too far - he was after all using ideas cited here- Geoffrey's version set in motion a new vogue in Arthuriana.

'Merlin' is a title of a visionary and Geoffrey's portrayal was gleaned from several predecessors. Among them, one Merlin of Carmarthen, South Wales,

distant and who has left almost no vestige but is the undoubted forerunner in this context. Ambrosius Aurelianus who in the latter 5th century aspired to take charge of southern Britain, winning a memorable victory at *Guoloph*, Nether Wallop in Hampshire, is also known as Merlin Emrys. Even in adolescence, he confounded the Druids of a major leader at Dinas Emrys near Beddgelert, North Wales, still accessible and a superb viewpoint. In a metaphor for the State of the Nation, he enlightened the ruler Vortigern on its instability, evoked by a depression at the summit where he could see the competing stakes of Wales and the nascent England played out by a Red and a White Dragon. The supposition that a useful hill had been named just to co-operate with written His/tories of the 9th century, was surprised by excavations of 1954-56 that uncovered artefacts and ramparts of several phases, mid 5th C. parallels for Vortigern and Ambrosius Aurelianus and moreso, outside their centre of authority in an area which had its own eminent chiefs. ([SHN](#))

It is only by the contrivance of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales, also writing in the 12th century that Merlin morphs into one, while Uther Pendragon was already, quite independently celebrated as magician and mentor in those arts, i.e., a Druid. In the Triad of



Enchantments he gifted his talent; the recipient, Menw son of Teirgwaedd pops up in *Kilhwch and Olwen* as one of Arthur's company. ([WCD p.48/GLC](#)). Menw casts invisibility spells to allow them to go about unseen but seeing in hostile terrain and also shapeshifts as a bird for freedom in an out-of-body experience to assess a situation - proceed or not.

The opening lines above are borrowed from *Which Man is the Gatekeeper* ([BBC](#))(f47v), a blurring of actuality and Celtic mysticism. As might be the case at any Mediaeval Hall, Arthur and the porter challenge each other about their identities and credentials. In endorsing his companions, Kai, Bedwyr and their joint campaigns, it also reads as a dirge for Arthur where this is the threshold of another life. Mabon, one of three magicians he vouches for here, is also on the wish-list of Yspaddaden Penkawr where Mabon is described as a child snatched from Modron his mother soon after birth, then held prisoner. These clues match Mabon with the Druidic autumn equinox and therefore the segue of summer/autumn/ winter. In the Black Book, since Modron is said to be in the service of Uther Pendragon, it elevates the latter to a Master of Seasons who can invoke the Celtic pantheon and in the highest manifestation inferred by his name he is Alpha Draconis³, the Pole Star whose period aligns



with the standing-stone structures and the visitations that so impressed stargazing civilisations for over two thousand years and in the four millennia since then, still held in awe.

In the Mabinogion, the search for Mabon translates to situations often signalled by a wild hunt or devised by Arawn, Lord of Annwn the Otherworld, in charge of shape-shifting, and arrangements are frequently set up over a twelve-month. Rhiannon, closely allied with the horse-goddess Epona, is queen of Summer and Pryderi her lost child who reappears as Spring is the Mabon equivalent; in their absence the land has been laid waste (14). (All four core tales of the Mabinogion spotlight Pryderi.)

This autumn/winter period of October to April synchronises with visibility of the seven-star cluster the Pleiades, stationed between the sun and first-quarter phase of the moon in company with the Milky Way on the Nebra Sky

³ Urania's Mirror, Astronomy cards, 19th century. In public domain. The pole star, Alpha Draconis with Ursa, the constellation of the Bear. That name in Brittonic and Welsh is Arth.



Disc⁴ (pictured). Affinity with the macrocosm underpins reciprocal beliefs sewn into this Eurocentric literature where the cosmos is personified, interactive, and deities illustrate the seasons. The dark months of the Pleiades are closed by the seven bright stars of the constellation of the Great Bear, an all-year-round navigational aid, optimal in April. In dangerous undertakings, *Seven Guardians remain* to oversee the country and *Only seven return* are devices of both the Second Branch [\(GLC\)](#) and *The Spoils of Annwn* [\(BT/FABWVIII\)](#).

The seven variously embody Manawydan son of Llyr, with Pryderi and either Arthur or Taliesin, the latter two so revered, they become quasi-mythical.

This is Paganism where Annwn is a supernatural, multi-layered space of energies and intelligence. Harnessing a deep union with it allows access for the psychic mind and/or hermetic manipulation of physics to imitate the processes of the world – darkness, mist and fog = cloaks. It's a scarce happening as only a few have the aptitude now but in that the stories have no boundaries, the reader is encouraged to see no limits to metaphysical ability. Perilous paranormal and physical journeying require safety and so, to steer a situation in Ireland *"The Druids and other 'men of might' could make a magic mantle which rendered its wearer invisible, called a Celtar"* *"At the battle of Clontarf, the banshee Eevin gave (the hero) a mantle, which as long as he wore it, made him invisible and protected him from harm.....; as soon as he threw it off, he was slain"*.[\(15\)](#) Similarly, in the Second Branch [\(GLC\)](#), six of the Seven Guardians were slain by Caswallawn/Cassivellaunus when only his sword was visible outside the *"Veil of Illusion"* - a take on his ambition and inter-tribal fighting 1st C. BCE, incidental to Julius Caesar's bids at invasion.

In *Kilhwch and Olwen*, an un-named mantle is a cherished possession of Arthur but in *The Dream of Rhonabwy* *"Gwen was the name ...one of its properties (being) no-one could see - the wearer- and he could see everyone. And it would retain no colour but its own."* Gwyn/Gwen (m/f) signifies white and often something of a mystic nature but there can be little doubt that The Mantle of Arthur in Cornwall is another play on the paranormal hitched to facets of the earth – As above, so below.

In Cornwall the best of such a Treasure presents in a line of waterfalls serried along the north coastal path, two miles North-East of Tintagel in the forest of St. Nectan's Glen. The approach is from the tiny hamlet of Trethevey marked by a Roman milestone of the mid- 3rd century; a Roman road arriving here from Tintagel perplexed the authors of the Victoria

⁴ Creative Commons License. CC BY-SA 3.0

County History of Cornwall by 1906 [\(VCH\)](#) but it's a signpost of antiquity and perhaps of the natural marvel in the forest.

Any billowing, copious waterfall screens those who stand behind it, so giving a good one-way view, a cover for stealth and defence. It could well have been the playground of young daredevils - rites of passage may be an exaggeration but looking back, it would have been ideal for testing one's peers; nowadays it's all No Climbing and Health & Safety. Much altered by rock erosion, the age of this 60ft. cascade is evidenced by a wide circular aperture, a shelf across a fissure and by a small cave scoured from the lateral spray of the dense white-water chute – the pool that collects before run-off into the wood is St. Nectan's Kieve or Tub (photo at head of chapter).

Long after his own domain of "Celli was lost " [\(11b\)](#) Arthur walks on into future events. However coincidental, Celli-Wig is logged in a charge sheet of 1302 from the Penwith assizes, noting that Thomas de Kellewic had been killed by two others at Lanestly/Gulval. [\(12b\)](#). Cornwall claims that Arthur led a confrontation at Vellan Druchar close to the crossroads of four parishes, one of which is Gulval. [\(WCD p.8\)](#)

The knife of Llawfrodedd the Horseman would serve the twenty four men at the table^{iv}
.....*The knife of Llawfrodedd the Bearded. Truly this would serve twenty four men at the
table all together*

Llawfrodedd the 'Bearded' is counted in the list of Arthur's companions, in *Kilhwch and Olwen* and in the *Dream of Rhonabwy* in Arthur's council in negotiation of a truce with Saxons (GLC). The deputation is sent by *Osla Gwylllellfawr/ Long Knife*, emblematic of a Saxon warrior, and for the fiction, Arthur's defeated opponent at the conflict of Badon Hill. (WCD p.3)

It's difficult to reconcile the headline captions for Llawfrodedd. Genealogies of the Saints⁵
a) peg the chap with the Beard at Nidan* (Llanidan) on Anglesey [16a/54](#). (Nidan is a great-grandson of Urien of Rheged – i.e., → Pasgen → Goronwy → Nidan).

Otherwise b) the Horseman is the husband of Arthur's daughter, Archfedd, and parents of two children. ([16b Add85](#)). Llawfrodedd is given also as grandfather to St. Idloes. The eponymous village of Llanidloes sits in the Hafren/Severn Valley some 25 miles from its fountainhead in mid-Wales. In the *Dream*, Arthur and company follow the valley on the way to Caer Badou (Badon Hillfort) where Gwen, his mantle is laid out signifying some protective device at a battle-site but for the purposes of the Treasures, that was relocated to Cornwall.

By inference, the Saxon defeat at Badon lies behind this request for an interruption in hostilities and Llawfrodedd's entertainment of the conference, attended by twelve deliberators from each side. This lull switches intensity to the North from the evolution of Arthur striving to halt another takeover - "with all the kings and military force of Britain,he was twelve times chosen their commander, and was as often conqueror" (HB). That launched at least a thousand theories and so much more in the popular imagination surrounding this elusive person, never a King but in his day earning accolades as a remarkable tactician.

And incompatibility might subside when the fighting blade cannot be deployed as a weapon contra to the peace and diplomacy intended in crowding around the table for a satisfying dinner, e.g., "*Llawvrodedd, the Red Knight or ruddy horseman, who had a famous knife, which probably was his carving knife, which served all his company. The Bretons of France likewise, had formerly but one knife for each company, and that was chained to the table*". ([17](#)). As a magical implement, the knife is banded with the cauldron for life-giving provisions and there is a further overtone to the strict hall etiquette when Kilhwch is admonished; no-one should be admitted by the butler because the guest-list is restricted and the feast has begun- "*The knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn*".

Apart from noticing eclipses of the sun and stars shining in daytime, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles do not report hostilities after 534 until the coming of Ida (of Northumbria) in 547.

⁵ The 'saints' were missionaries for the developing Insular Church, not then canonized.

[\(ASC\)](#) That is supported by [Bede](#) who reports only internal squabbling and the behaviours of the descendants of Padarn, reproved by Gildas.

Llawfrodedd's appearance in the Treasures would suppose a higher profile for him long ago but his recognition is minimal – perhaps the calamity of lost records, damp and rodents or the contradictory entries may simply refer to different stages in his life.

The pot and dish of Rhagenydd the Cleric The meals he wished for he would get in them'



Rhagenydd is an alias, an approximation in the Welsh literature of a title from Irish nobility, *Rioghdamhna* (pron. Roy-dam-na). Below the *Ard Ri*, High King of All Ireland, the framework of royalty constituted the *Righ*, a King of one province, with minor kings in sub-divisions above an aristocracy of chiefs and land-holders. During the tenure of those nobles, a next-in-line was predetermined and the *Rioghdamhna*, not automatically son of the incumbent, in the definition of the phrase had to be 'fit to be king'. Should anything befall the submitted candidate, a substitute - the *Tainiste*/Tanist, was voted as a 'second'.[\(18\)](#)

There has been no attempt to distinguish this person; his anonymity may be deliberate because systems of discernment were not understood. The item starring 'Diwrnach the giant' is tied with another royal who is not a cleric but heir to the High King and he and 'Rhagenydd' are contemporaries. The *title* recurs in the league of Arthur's advisers as *Rhiogan son of the King of Ireland* in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, and in another corrupt form as *Riogonedd* in *Geraint son of Erbin*.[\(GLC\)](#) However, Rhagenydd's rank applies not to the national but to the provincial elect.

In the spreading of Christianity many from nobility enrolled so this 'Cleric' must solicit some celebrity or notoriety. To eliminate all doubt and be absolutely relevant to the inventory, the choice lies with Aedh Dubh of Leinster or Aedh Dubh of Ulster. The former was already a serving King of Leinster who abdicated, c.592, promoted to Bishop of Kildare.[\(19\)](#) The latter is the *son* of Suibhne, King of East Ulster and the Dal Araidhe cenél (family group), who assassinated the *Ard Ri* Diarmaid macCearbhaill (MacCaroll), eventually joining the Clergy of

Iona despite the disinclination of the Abbot Columba, who had endowed the community c. 563.

Diarmaid MacCearbhaill was High King (20) and the last to have been inaugurated according to pagan rites on the Hill of Tara, approved by peers and Druids at the Stone of Destiny. As the coronation compound and regal headquarters in county Meath, Tara also hosted the Feis, a triennial convention held from 29th October to 4th November. Said to date from the 4th millennium, it was attended by the national rulers, lawmakers and genealogists (Bards), its remit the harmonizing of oppositions, law, efficient governance, familial rights to territory, which continued to the year of Diarmaid's coronation. There is no certain agreement on the question of High Kingship and central authority then and this assassination concurred with lasting change when the status of Ard Ri passed to the provinces and inevitable dissidence, Meath no longer the royal residence. The Feis was discontinued as was Tara's predominance.(21)

Diarmaid was controversial, overly aggressive, but also a scion of one of the most famous of Ireland's Kings, Niall 'of the Nine Hostages' of the Northern Ui Neill, lords of the north-west; Diarmaid is a cousin, of the Southern branch. Slipping his bodyguard and so exposing himself to danger, his death is revenge upon revenge for killing his wife's paramour, a relative of Aedh Dubh. Diarmaid chose to ignore this deadly hazard, predicted by his Druid Bec macDé. (22)

Aedh's subsequent (undated) confinement on Iona among the western islands of Scotland is a seven-year penance for crime to be spent in austere life, a pattern of that time and all novices are nominated 'clerical scholars'. On one level, "the meals he wished for" in the pot and dish are typical of anecdotes from various biographies of Columba - he enlists an almoner to feed the poor and had a refectory constructed on Iona fed by fair pasture and fishing and, *God suffered no guest to come upon him without his knowing, for fear there should be shame upon him if he were unready before them.* (23) (24).

On quite another level, this is a challenge to the beliefs of the Celtic world where Christianity volunteered an alternative creed and physical nourishment, supplanting the magical Vessels of Plenty, cups, cauldrons and horns that responded positively at any wished-for moment, though it seems to have been forgotten that originally the most precious gifts of the Vessels were Truth and Right Action. This pagan wisdom is validated in texts from c. 9th Century onwards but folk-memory, language and archaeology lodge it firmly in the far past.(25) One specimen of the dishes utilized in the new worship is a lead chalice engraved with Christian symbols dating to the 6th century, dug from the Vindolanda fort, Hadrian's Wall, Northeast England in 2020.(26).

Columba's introductory biography was written by Adomnan, Abbot of Iona, and is packed with anecdote, kept in a close community and completed within the century after his death. Of Irish nobility, a direct descendant also of Niall, and involved in the politics of his own country and Scotland, Columba's interaction with Aedh Dubh the "bloody murderer" is

extracted from this reliable journal, bewildered by the personality of this Rhiogan at variance with his father, the 'mild-judging Suibhne'. However, on a par with the clairvoyant flair of the Druid Bec macDé, who foresaw the Threefold Death of Diarmaid macCearbhaill, now the priest Columba predicts that Aedh would resume his violent ways and also experience that end. [\(27\)](#).

And so it happened both victim and assassin suffered a 'Triple Death' i.e., three rapid-sequence assaults/accidents where the combination is fatal, a hypothesis seen as retribution for equal deeds or marks out the dead as 'special'. Aedh Dubh was attacked on a ship then fell and drowned in Lough Neagh c. 588- 592 by an agent of the Dál Fiatach cenél, then presiding over East Ulster. [\(28\)](#). Aedh's coup of regicide had been truly appalling, concurrent with the waning traditions of millennia. For the Treasures, this is a cusp of pivotal change, divulged in most of the Irish Annals and surely, widely discussed by both secular and clerical communities. Diarmaid and Columba too had clashed when the High King refused Columba permission to copy and distribute an illustrated book, an elementary application of Copyright Law.

The cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant If flesh were put into it to boil for a brave man, it would boil swiftly, and if it were put (in) for a coward, it would never boil ^{vi}



CASTLEDERG CAULDRON [\(29\)](#)

“...thou will not get. The cauldron of Diwrnach “

“beheaded by..... Excalibur”-

“Arthur.....carried off the cauldron full of Irish gold”- [GLC](#)

it’s a rotten life being a giant, really [\(30\)](#)

From *Kilhwch and Olwen*, “.. there is yet that which thou wilt not get. The cauldron of Diwrnach Wyddel (Irishman) steward to Odgar the son of Aedd the King of Ireland, to boil the meat for thy marriage feast” [GLC](#). In addition, a cauldron “would not boil the food of a coward” is asserted in Taliesin’s enigmatic poem *The Spoils of Annwn*, ostensibly describing a search for a cauldron and spear undertaken by Arthur and his retinue. [\(BT/FABWVIII\)](#). In the prose of the White Book, Diwrnach is not presented as a giant, but all versions of the Treasures describes him as such. Yspaddaden Penkawr begs the sword of Gwrnach/Urnach also; another Giant, all given prominence in the Mabinogion.

The 'owners' of the cauldron, Diwrnach, Odgar and Aedd, dwell in a pyramid of monarchy over independent subdivisions, the norm in Ireland's highly-regulated society, developed over millennia until Anglo-Norman invasion. The Welsh term Diwrnach ([WCD p.15](#)) corresponds with *Tigearnach* (*Tierney*, Lord) on the echelon below the provincial and divisional kings and their heirs, numbering about two hundred but with sizeable grounds across the country. The next tier comprised the *Taoiseach*, chiefs, [\(31\)](#) the term still in use as Prime Minister and Head of the Legislature of the Republic.

There is no Odgar in the Annals or King-lists of Ireland as it was never a personal name. But as a phonetic and legible approximation for *Oidhre/odhar* [\(32\)](#) - heir, successor or descendant in the Irish Gaelic post 1200 CE, it makes sense and as one in waiting for the role of High King, differentiates from *Rhiogdamna*, the candidate for provincial accession. (Middle Irish, *eigre*, pre-1200) [\(33\)](#).

In the plethora of kings and family chiefs across the five provinces, many were called Aedh, inviting Fire/Mars energy for the self. Contemporary annals backed up by interactions with other players for this appropriate time-frame would propose Aedh macAinmire [\(34\)](#) as the sought-for King, from the Cenél Conaill of the Northern Ui Neill succeeding his father Ainmire (564-566) as *Ard Ri, the High King of All Ireland*, for twenty-seven years (c. 568-594). [\(35\)](#) *Cenéls* are family branches of a notable ancestor, in this case Niall who carried the epithet 'of the Nine Hostages', notorious in Wales as a raider and plunderer in the latter stages of the 4th century, only fended off by Roman intervention. [\(36\)](#) Niall was the father of Conall Gulban and Eoghain who won the area from West Ulster across to Donegal, securing the realms of the Northern Ui Neill. Other sons entrenched the Southern Ui Neill group in Westmeath and Meath. The hunt for the Cauldron falls into this period of choosing the High King from a narrow group, among them the Ui Neill cousins - Diarmaid macCearbhaill (see Rhagenydd Ysgolhaig) slightly pre-dates Aedh macAinmire as sovereign.

macAinmire presided over the decisive *Convention of Drumceatt*, Limavady, in the Roe Valley on the eastern shores of Lough Foyle in 575. One agenda concerned monetary tribute and war-service owed by the Dal Riada to the controlling confederation. A cenél originating in north Antrim with branches in occupation of Argyll, Scotland, headed by the newly-appointed King Aidan macGabhran was suing for independence and release from obligation; macGabhran was a serious player, ready to challenge any rival of his choosing. The politics were fierce; had accord not been reached macAinmire had threatened to invade but a treaty freed the colony, its autonomy decided with financial remit cancelled and agreement reached on mutual military support in case of other hostility.

Contention around the Bards whom macAinmire had intended to dismiss was also discharged. They had become too many, too rude and too expensive but were saved for - a) love of poetry, b) fear of being lampooned for refusing them (pricey) hospitality and c) the immortal memory of those they praise. Re-organised, job descriptions re-focused on literature and genealogy, they were dispersed throughout the country. [\(37\)](#) macGabhran had been accompanied to the

Convention by Columba, abbot of Iona and a poet who argued in support of the Bards. He is another descendant of Conall Gulban and by 574, had given his distant cousin Aedh macAinmire a cloak/cowl of protection. When it was inadvertently left behind in 594, he was killed at the Battle of Dun Bolg; his seniority and weight of adversity are factors but the loss of the talisman and with it, his confidence, the fundamental cause of his defeat.[\(38\)](#) It is also an appropriation by the clergy of objects once held to be transformed by the 'Otherworld'.

A few miles from Drumceatt in 1896, a hoard of golden miniature copies - torc, boat and cauldron, dating to the Iron Age 1st century BCE, were dredged up in the townlands of Broighter. Due to the location and richness of the deposit, this is thought to be a king's offering to Manannán, mythic son of the Sea and expert navigator. On islands dependent on his auspices for safe passage, he is venerated as the Isle of Man and Anglesey, Ynys Môn. The Broighter collection, although small, says so much about the expertise of the smith, boatbuilding and pursuits overseas but the premise of seizing the cauldron reads as restitution, tit-for-tat raiding in the folklore of Wales and Ireland.

This time, Diwrnach is overcome, felled by Arthur's sword Caledfwlch. *Caled = hard, b/fwlch = gap or opening*, therefore designed to cause a hefty cleft on contact, evolving through time and several languages to Excalibur. Here it is wielded by Llenlleawg the exalted Irish god Lugh. [\(WCD p.55\)](#). Often described as carrying a spear, and of one eye, one arm, Lugh is an unmatched comet of *prehistory*, a blaze of radiance typified as an omnipotent force. Druids and Sorcerers stood in awe of this all-time phenomenon [\(39\)](#) - Third Eye open, one arm raised the other low, creating the 'sky to earth line', while emitting a deep scream during invocations, the trumpet-call of righteous intent. To astronomers the 6th century CE is the 'age of comets'. Measurements prove their proximity to earth was unheard-of and the light emitted was weird so a truly strange atmosphere ensued across unpolluted skies among thousands of visible, brilliant, stars. The conclusion infers some celestial intervention has assisted the mission. The closest, ascertained, event was a meteor storm of October, 569 CE that emanated within the Leonids' 33-year cycle allied to Comet Tempel-Tuttle's orbit; this can produce a spectacle described as 'stars falling like rain'.[\(40\)](#) As a narrative subject that happens to coincide with the second year of Aedh macAinmire's reign, it compels attention.

As do the findings on genetic gigantism and consequent morbidity at Queen's University, Belfast, - *it's a rotten life being a giant*- reporting the 'Giant Hotspot' of Mid-Ulster in 2016. Caused by a mutation, a rather high ratio per population was assessed through clinical inquiry in Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon, the big towns west of Lough Neagh. The rogue gene responsible for this human growth anomaly has descended from one ancestor who lived **2,500 years ago**.[\(41\)](#) In the overlap of Welsh/Irish saga, the storytellers engendered a frisson around this atypical condition, at last interpreted by the science of genetics.

But just 50 miles away at Castlederg in West Tyrone, a wonderful bronze cauldron was cut out from a bog in 2011. Kept in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, it dates to the 7th century BCE and is one of 32 of this period which have been disinterred across the country.

Its given dimensions are Dia. 46cm rim x 56cm shoulder x 40cm depth (18"x 22"x16") with ring-fittings to suspend from a crossbar on metal uprights. It's a practical solution in a country that still benefits from a cattle industry as well as indicating the amount available for and size of a party but its proportions may have presumed a pairing with giants.

"if flesh were put in it to boil" expresses the purposes of the Cauldron – 1) generous provisions in conclaves for regal accession and suitability, and 2) ancillary tool for divination in that process.⁽⁴²⁾: As a senior official, a Druid would deliver the validation on choice of candidate by sleeping on a calf/ox hide to dream while the fire burned and the Cauldron bubbled and as trusted counsellor, see the person pre-destined for rulership.

Again, the fiction is revealing when Diwrnach's cauldron is stolen, full of Irish gold. It was the habit of the kings of Ireland to accept some of their dues in ounces of silver and gold⁽⁴³⁾ and archaeological finds such as the Brighter hoard disclose enterprise and availability of precious metals. Perhaps the most marvellous are the Tara Torcs, waist-length twists of gold unearthed in 1820 but dating to c. 1200 BCE, outstanding in calibre and manufacture.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Those late retrievals become more telling in justifying the quests and treasure hunts of idylls.

While Arthur himself lost his life at Camlann c. 537 -542, and therefore should not co-exist with Aedh macAinmire, he enjoys eternity; reincarnation allows all possibilities as told in The Second Branch, its narrative moving across planes. Not only is a cauldron symbolic of an able monarch and abundance, here fallen combatants are reposed in the Cauldron of Renaissance under which the Irish have stoked a fire.^(GLC) The symbolism here is red/white: solar/lunar: fire/water: blood/ semen: life. They emerge *reborn but silent* – the transformative virtues of the cauldron have spirited them to the Otherworld yet still able to influence and act alongside their companions in this sphere.

The ancillary quote that the *cauldron does not boil the food of a coward* is voiced in the Book of Taliesin in the authentic *Preiddeu Annwn/ The Spoils, or Plunder, of Annwn* ⁽⁴⁵⁾ . As a sea-voyage quest, Arthur's boat is overloaded with Taliesin on board as recorder, bound for Ireland. There, in the Second Branch, the Welsh had left alive five pregnant women whose children became the forebears of Ireland's kingdoms; bragging rights obviously but also 'auld acquaintance' among pockets of the Dumnonii diaspora⁶. Often hidden by the sea-mists of Manannán, Taliesin correlates the country with a Four-Cornered Fortress; the description suits not only the shape of its land-mass but because Ireland had long affirmed a landlocked epicentre in Westmeath at the ceremonial and burial complex of Uisneach. In use from prehistory into the mediaeval age, linked by road to Tara, it is home to the pool of the immemorial god-comet Lugh.

The poem reads as an adventure for the companions but doubles as a blind for the mysteries and understanding of creation. Taliesin explains the womb as a cauldron and his muse, the

⁶ E.g., See [Dal Messin Corb](#)

Awen, as *warmed by the breath of nine maidens* i.e, full-term, 9-month human gestation. Maturing in darkness and travelling the birth-canal is not without risk, akin to the dark months of the year. In speaking of a *cauldron rimmed with pearls*, or pinned with gleaming rivets belonging to the Lord of the Otherworld, he juxtaposes the metaphor of conception, the cervix spangled with semen, to a sinister collision when the comet Lugh/Lleminawg bursts in, once more described as a flashing weapon, striking another solid body. Rushing out of deep, dark space through stars and sparks like gleaming gems, the repetition and congruence of story and poem shouts newsworthy, leaving a lasting impression of some 'big bang'. Taliesin makes clear the experience had produced the effect of drunkenness or disorientation and the feeble light available conjured the doorway of an underworld. Yet, it's another winter's tale of disappeared children – now a young prisoner named Gweir is held in cold, and "*the brindled ox, thick his headband*" points to the visible constellation of Taurus, 'crowned' by star-belts in the disc of the Milky Way, flanked by Auriga, the Chariot, and the Pleiades - *only seven returned*. The apprehensive period of the thin places and festivals from Samhain to the shortest day of the Solstice, the strange liminal emanations of the fairy-fortress Caer Sidhe and meteoric interventions are gifts for the Chief of Bards, "*am I not a candidate for fame if a song is heard*". He elevates all to a keening for catastrophes and a poignant reminder of Arthur whereas in Kilhwch's quest, visits from the galaxy are made farcical but by the time that was written down, the immediate terror of these occurrences was passing from memory.

Although debate lingers as to cause and duration, some widespread cataclysm generated a dust veil, crop failure, food shortages, plague, climate change and cold around 530-550 CE, with localised effects determining a start date for measurable changes in e.g., tree rings and soil samples. It was noted by writers of the time but only fathomed by recent scientific advance. It may have impelled migration in these Dark Ages, reactions to that, and the 'premonitions' of the *wunderkind* Taliesin at the court of Maelgwn of Deganwy who expired in the Justinian/Yellow Plague. "A most strange creature will come.....His hair, his teeth, and his eyes being as gold, And this will bring destruction upon Maelgwn Gwynedd." (GLC)

The Whetstone of Tudwal Tudglyd which would sharpen the weapon of a brave man and blunt the weapon of a coward ^{vii}

In days of hand-to-hand armed combat, whetstones were ordinary maintenance tools so some distinction is intended. 'Defender of the people' Tudwal Tudclyd ([WCD p.60](#)) was born around 510, chieftain of an area centred around Alt Clutha, the Dumbarton rock, the fortuitous vantage-point on the estuary of the river Clyde, west Scotland. Rivers and mountain ridges were co-opted for territorial organisation and this 'Whetstone' stamps his



northern boundary, situated two miles north of the head of Loch Lomond in Glen Falloch, separating the clans - Picts east and north of the loch and Dal Riada to the west and north in Kintyre. His southern lands ranged over modern Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and east towards Lothian. The

Whetstone marked the apex of a line via Lochgoilhead and Toward, to the Firth of Clyde and its islands of Bute and the Cumbræes [AM](#), acting as a defensive chain. But ownership has to be communicated and to this day the Clach nam Breatann/Stone of the Britons, exceeding 9 metres/30 feet in height sits on a ridge some 200+ metres/700 feet above sea level. It **seems** to be two units but it may be the upper fracture was rearranged ([46](#)) – deliberately, to seem forbidding? ⁷

Tudwal Tudglyd is filed in several genealogies. In the Alt Clutha lineage of the Men of the North, he is father of Rhydderch Hael; in the Pedigrees of the Saints, married to Ethni of Ireland, parents of Rhydderch and two others; in Hanesyn Hen, as father of Morgan Mwynfawr⁸. Their 4th and 5th C. ancestors are styled in both Brittonic **and** Latin e.g., Ceredig/Coroticus (b. 410) whose soldiers are accused in a letter from Saint Patrick with killing/robbing/hostage-taking the latter's devotees. Hostages met labour requirements,

⁷ Clach nam Breatann courtesy rjc:foto

⁸ Given their age and scarcity, the genealogies are not always secure or lineages infer blood relationship.

seen then as fulfilling the duty of a ruler to provide for his people and wealth was dependent on the prerequisite of locally available assets. In this case, the raid was aimed at an advertised, large religious function in Ireland; Coroticus has sturdy ships as well as an army, but instead of the customary bargaining for ransom, the hostages are sold, the booty withheld. Patrick is one of the few protestors, deploring slavery as well as deportation. His letter is circulated by envoy with the intention of public hearings so that the guests of Coroticus - secular, clerical and military are shamed by the actions that fund his hospitality "to enjoy a banquet with such people". [\(47\)](#)

That was the 'hall culture' of communal feasting among the powerful, later substantiated in coupling Alt Clutha with Tintagel. During Tudwal's tenure, a trading economy obtained until c. 550 CE⁹ where valuable metals were exported while receiving non-essentials from the West and East Mediterranean and North Africa at Tintagel, the administrative depot. From there, distribution focussed on select destinations, Dumbarton Rock among them. This is considered to be 'gift-giving among an elite', who also appreciate the 'finer things' of Romanisation - opulent fabrics, silk for clothing, jewellery, tableware, foods and alcohol, all have been retrieved in excavation and affirm importation from the same 'warehouses' around the Med. Tudwal belongs to an exclusive syndicate of Cornwall, Somerset and Wales - Cadbury, Congresbury, Pen Dinas, their buildings recognised as hall-structures because for the hall-host, allegiances ought to be the reward of sharing those tokens. [\(48\)](#)·[\(49\)](#) The basics of the feast, meat knives and drinking horns, appear elsewhere in the Treasures as a gloss for pressing business - politics, aggression, or diplomacy.

The challenge implied in the imagery of the Whetstone is inarguable – dare the might of Strathclyde; be prepared to excel if moving again the ever-alert Tudwal. His inclusion in the Thirteen accentuates affairs of his lifetime when the century had begun with the inception of a seat of coronation on the Kintyre peninsula by a branch of the Dal Riada clan of North Antrim, Ireland. In time, this reversion threatened a resumption in hostilities among Picts, Irish and Britons, which had erupted in preceding centuries and the Irish had withdrawn from various environs. But, across the mere 10 miles of the Rathlin Sound (Ballycastle to Kintyre), the Dal Riada swear long-held affiliation with Argyll on Scotland's west coast. Circa 499-503, the Annals of Ulster record the inauguration and then the death of the King Fergus Mor mac Erca. His descendant Conall grants the island of Iona to the abbot Columba (521-597), [\(50\)](#) in whose biography by Adomnan¹⁰, Tudwal is mentioned as the father of Rhydderch of the Rock of the Clyde. His warning-shot, the Whetstone, separated Strathclyde from the tensions of Dal Riada and Pictland but a break in relations would appear during Rhydderch Hael's tenure.

⁹ Until the rise of the Sasanian/ Iranian Empire

¹⁰ Late 7th century. It also proffers some commentary on the Dal Riadic rise and political impact on the development of Scotland and see §23 for the seminal exposé of the **River Ness Monster**

Further on, the Annals of Ulster announce that the Dal Riada was ‘destroyed’ in the Vale of Leven (Glenn Limnae) in 704 CE – the southern valley of the river Leven is the last link from the Stone of the Britons to Dumbarton Rock. On the contrary, some engagement arose in 717 where the Britons were overcome “at the rock called Minuirce”, to the triumph of the Dal Riada [\(51\)](#) Place-name surveys designate this as the Stone of Strathclyde, its bastion in the Valley of the Roebuck. In the last several hundred years, the nooks that carried a name-relationship with the stone have disappeared along with the appreciation of what it once represented [\(52\)](#), though it lasts in vintage maps, charters and railway-guides.

The chariot of Morgan (Mwynfawr) the Wealthy If a man went into it, he would wish to be where he desired and he would be (there) immediately^{viii}



11

Morgan Mwynfawr/Wealthy b. 540 ruled Strathclyde, in a lineage that prospered at least from the time of Confer the Rich b. 200. ([WCD p.65//p.79](#)). In 1st and 2nd century CE, Roman military occupation in central Scotland didn't harm, and may even have stimulated, the economy of the Damnonii group. There are no findings in the archaeological record that their agrarian subsistence required any improvement by foreign introduction of new grains, livestock breeds or farming tools – i.e., self-sufficient and open for business. By playing a balanced long game, the indigenous hierarchy could prosper through Roman patronage but maintain sufficient clout and independence after troop withdrawal. Provision of food and clothing for the occupying army was rewarded with imported de-luxe glass and ceramic crockery, while new markets appeased Roman demand for jewellery, dress items and weaponry; a mutual skill-swap resulted in enhancement of top-spec tools and commodities. Though there are limited coin finds, perhaps payments were levied in taxation; barring the odd hoard, coins appear mainly along the Firth and route of the Clyde, hinting at lucrative maritime transactions. [\(53\)](#)

From then until the 6th century, the descent of Strathclyde is fairly well attested. In the Hanesyn Hen (Old History) genealogy, Morgan Mwynfawr is registered as the son of Tudwal Tudclyd and brother to Rhydderch Hael and not at all in the lists of the Descent of the Men of the North, though power-sharing among uppermost families was often a norm. In the Triads, he is termed one of The Three Red Ravagers /Reapers. [\(TYP\)](#). That implies both

¹¹ Painting *Dumbarton Rock from the South* by Joseph Farington, 1788. Public domain.

aggressor and plunderer, and bloodshed where no plants can grow until sufficient time has passed for their recovery; pillage boosts his wealth. It is not yet apparent which incidents Morgan is culpable of, however he is familiar as an opponent of Kentigern/Mungo who became Glasgow's patron saint and Bishop.

In agreement with the Welsh Lives of the Saints, Kentigern's parents are given as the young Owain, son of Urien of Rheged and Theneu/Denw, daughter of a ruler of Lothian ([WCD Cyndeyrn Garthwys p.35](#)). His aristocracy is stressed by '-tignos', seen in Vortigern, a mid-5th century chief of the southern Britons and the Irish Tigearnach. Timing is tight, requiring parentage in the early teens; it was a scandal and possibly an assault, certainly outside a brokered arrangement but the mother and child attained safety and support with a small community on the north bank of the Firth of Forth at Culross.

Though biographies may be apocryphal, they bracket the leaders of the Insular Church as the educated heirs of nobility but Morgan was no supporter, driving Kentigern out of the Clyde valley and Glasgow. Cadder, near the Roman Antonine Wall, and the Molendinar Burn had been appropriated for cells to preach from. The Burn flows below a spent volcanic plug – the Molendinar 'hill with the brownish eminence' ([54](#)) currently the Necropolis. It had been a Druids' space, hilltops favoured in artless practice; the memory is retained in its approach road - the Drygate. On his restoration at the invite of Rhydderch Hael, the precinct opposite was reclaimed by Kentigern, since developed as the Cathedral where his tomb lies in the crypt.

As for Morgan's 'Treasure', Celtic chariots were much admired as was Auriga, the constellation of the Charioteer at its height in the winter months and brightest in January. Greek mythology deemed the invention of the carriage as a necessity for a foot deformity and Morgan was just so, sick and bad-tempered. This is another instance of disguised items in the list recalling other times; the chariot builder was one of "the men of might", with the know-how to combine ponies, locomotion, suspension and stability at top speed. A perfect type, whose specifications allowed expert handling, was lifted at Newbridge, near Edinburgh Airport, in January 2001. The deposit dates to c.500 BCE, described by a happy archaeologist as "the Ferrari of its day", ([55](#)) and the restored chariot is cached somewhere in the cavernous National Museum in Edinburgh. This Treasure could be a folk-memory of a costly item befitting an affluent King but any ambiguity is ousted by a visit to the heart of Morgan's turf.

Via Loch Lomond, the *River Leven* joins the Clach nam Breittann, the Stone of the Britons, to Dumbarton Rock, the stronghold of Strathclyde, providing a quick, direct route. The second fastest river of Scotland after the Spey of the Highlands, this outflow of Loch Lomond ends its six-mile course by meeting the Clyde at the Rock (below); its speed is helped by a smooth, stepped river-bed only slowed by a deep basin near its terminus. Both lake and river appear in the addendum to the *Historia Brittonum* as Natural Wonders - a popular topic. The first, the lake 'Lemonoy' contains a cluster of inhabited islands, surrounded by mountains topped by eagles' nests ([56](#)) and supplied by numerous inlets (adding to a pressure gradient?) with the river 'Lemn' its only exit. The Gaelic word is Leamhan, an Elm Bank. ([57](#)) By comparison,

the lake/river route is shorter than by land, removing 5 miles/8 km from journey time; in the navigable stretches, sailors report it is still fast, deep and unpredictable.



River's end behind the Rock

Dyrnwyn, (White-hilt) the sword of Rhydderch (Hael) the Generous If anybody but himself drew it, it would burst into fire from its cross to its point ^{ix}.



“King Rydderch son of Tothail who reigned upon the Rock of Cluaithe” [\(58\)](#) is better-known. Born c. 540 [\(WCD p.65\)](#), he is the son of Tudwal Tudclyd, shared ancestry with Clydno Eidyn and after Morgan Mwynfawr, in the 570s was governing his father’s realm. The Rock of Cluaithe was his pedestal of Dun Breatann, the fortress of the Britons i.e, Dumbarton Rock, a volcanic remnant and still an arresting feature in the Firth of Clyde, central Scotland.(pp 34-36).

Rhydderch is listed in the Genealogy *The Descent of the Men of the North* and in the *Triads of the Island of Britain* as one of the Three Generous Men with his direct paternal cousins, Nudd and Mordaf. ‘Generosity’ was expected of rulers, to influence friends and supporters, pay housekeeping, troops, scouts, guards and underscore their own wealth. The grouping mirrors the rise of this family’s fortunes, the prosperity of enforced compliance during Roman occupation and the mutual support of nobility.

Proof is borne out by archaeology [\(59\)](#) while Rhydderch can finance offensives; he’s a major ally and participant of this era, the sword Dyrnwyn the emblem of his life.

His kingship begins almost simultaneously with that of Aedan mac Gabhran of the Dal Riada on the western peninsula of Kintyre & Argyll but their antipathy is reflected in literature; Aedan is tagged *Bradawc*, [\(WCD Aeddan Fradog p.3\)](#) i.e., wily or treacherous, abusing Rhydderch’s hall-hospitality in the Triad of an Unrestrained Ravaging [\(TYP\)](#). It is believed also that the battle of Arderydd, c. 573 (below), was inflamed partly by their quarrel over territory, with Rhydderch among the victors.

But, while his father had focussed on the jeopardy posed by Aedan’s ancestors, Rhydderch’s scope broadened. Resistance to the political endeavours of Germanic and North European incomers continued. Their arrival over several centuries was a mix of peaceful migration, invitation as mercenaries by Roman and native rulers, or further reconnaissance and aggression “from the East to the North....from the East to the South” [\(BBC/FABW XVIII\)](#). In

the table of Treasures, the most frequent 'Order of the Items' discovered by Bartrum puts Arthur's Mantle and Rhydderch's Sword at Nos. 1 & 2, reflecting distinct periods of counteraction through an epoch of sweeping change.

Episodes of the late 6th century are given as "Hussa reigned seven years. Against him fought four kings, Urien, and Ryderthen, and Guallauc, and Morcant. Theodoric fought bravely, together with his sons, against that Urien..... sometimes the enemy and sometimes our countrymen were defeated". (HB) Their theatres of war that later fused as Northumberland, were the Celtic regions of Bernicia on the east coast of Lothian, and Deira, North Yorkshire. While this does not imply concerted action and loyalty among the four, 'Rhyderthen' - Rhydderch Hael, supports the stakeholders in restraint of the new neighbours. Husa rose from one branch of the Anglian kings while Theodoric was a son of Ida of the leading dynasty who had pushed north from Deira and mid-century seized the promontory and fortress of Din Guaire, now Bamburgh, renamed when gifted to an Anglian queen.

Morgan (Morcant) Fwlch (WCD p.63) was a direct descendant of Coel Hen and sometime king of Bernicia; as a geographic marker, Fwlch/Bwlch is a mountain pass. The cogent fit for his surname begins to the east of Edinburgh in the gap some 7 miles south of the A1 and Traprain Law, at a northern juncture of the Whiteadder Water. Ringfenced by the hillforts of White Castle (Garvald), Green Castle (B6355) and Black Castle (Gifford), like Traprain all were settled in the Bronze and Iron Ages by the Gododdin, lead tribe of the Lothians; the ring could operate as its guardhouse and look-out post. The Water's course cuts a valley to the south-east, through the Lammermuir Hills and into Bernicia, an important buffer zone of an auxiliary clan that held the coastal strip beside the North Sea, crossing the river Tweed at Berwick, and the junction of the Whiteadder; today this is the northern sector of Northumbria.

Urien Rheged (d.585/6?) (WCD p.2) descended from Coel Hen by his grandson Gwrwst (Fergus) Ledlum. Although Coel the Elder is remembered in Ayrshire around the Kyle ward, his roots were in the Pennines, promoted as Dux or Roman colonial governor (AM) the appointment earning lasting influence. The Coel family carried the nom-de-guerre *Three Hundred Spears*; Urien's father Cynfarch Oer was patriarch of the lineage of *The Three Hundred Swords* of the Cynferchyn. (WCD p. 38). Rheged has been calculated to span the Solway Firth, from Galloway to Cumbria and recent archaeology at Trusty's Hill, Galloway, may be instructive. (60, 61) Urien is known through genealogies, Triads and via the court poetry of Llywarch Hen, his cousin, and Taliesin. By default the Bardic eulogies become war correspondence; the latter cites a mortal victory for Rheged over Theodric, aka Fflamddwyn the Flame-thrower, of Bernicia. (p.53). From Taliesin's views on Urien's lordship, Rheged stretched to the Lyvennet valley, Westmoreland, and the Catterick area of North Yorkshire. At one time a substantial Roman camp and administration centre covering a Celtic settlement, it occupied the intersection now 5 miles south of Scotch Corner at the junction of the N/S A1 and W/E trans-Pennine route.(62) With his son Owain, Urien acted to foil several of the

Anglian kings, but “whilst he was on an expedition he was murdered, at the instance of Morcant, out of envy, because he possessed so much superiority over all the kings in military science”. (HB).

Urien’s murder was plotted at Lindisfarne c. 586, where he had devised an ambush to contain the Angles on the island to effect a limiting defeat. Whatever the nuances beyond jealousy and self-interest of Morgan and his allies, having premeditated Urien’s death they went on to victimise his comrades and drove out Llywarch Hen (p.49) while Rheged became increasingly assailable.

Guallauc (Gwallog) (WCD p.44) also descended from Coel Hen and Chief of Elmet, West Yorkshire. The dominion embraced Leeds – Bede touches on the Elmet Wood nearby and the remainder of a 15-acre hillfort at Barwick-in-Elmet to the east of the city spreads over Wendel and Hall Tower Hills, the estimated capital.(63) Elmet’s extent is not conclusive but the study of Brittonic place-names demonstrates a circuit almost enclosed by the rivers Wharfe and Aire intersected by the Leeming Lane Magnesian Limestone formation (BLON) hence the Roman Calcaria near Tadcaster – NB, Sherburn-in-Elmet due south of Tadcaster. The Lane ran north/south from Durham to Nottingham and parallel to a belt of the Roman Dere Street/A1, close to Elmet’s eastern boundary with Deira, i.e., River Tees to the Humber estuary. Dere Street commenced at York and was the main thoroughfare north into Scotland, looping a series of forts.

As sometime Bard to Guallauc, “Is he not my chief?” Taliesin described him as incomparable and ubiquitous, and that by his efforts there was concord from Dumbarton Rock to **Caer Caradog**. (BT/FABW XXXVI). All is forever changed after the assassination of Urien; it seems that Guallauc with his brother-in-law Dunod Fwr (of Yorks/Lancs) and Morgan Fwlch, intensified oppression of Urien’s sons, Owain and Pasgen.(64) Later, Guallauc’s son Ceredig held back the Angles into the 7th C., marking Elmet as last to be annexed by the new polity of Northumberland.

Caer Caradog – near Leebotwood/Church Stretton, Shropshire once Wales, was the fortress of Caractacus, 1st century Welsh chief and patriot.(65) According to the nearby Much Wenlock Museum the allegory of *The Sword in the Stone* developed from Mitchell’s Fold stone circle, 20 miles west of the Caer. (Mitchell/Muckle = big). Access can be difficult by rugged road and it lies in a remote location but the reward is a vast monument on a prehistoric domain set in an expansive, open plain looking over to the Black Mountains of South Wales. Dating to the Bronze Age of some three thousand years ago, the Fold had a ‘Druid’s stone’ at its centre until vandalized in recent memory. Ironically, that would have been purposed for trying charges of guilt/innocence, but for congregation or observatory, the Fold is little changed. The smith was ‘a Man of Might’, transforming organic ores by fire and water. Imbued by this alchemy, the sword imparts strength and success; moulded for a king, this is ceremony.

Dyrnwyn, White Hilt, the sword of Rhydderh Hael burst into flame when anybody but the owner drew it, so it was handed back promptly. That is rooted in Celtic notions of magical flaming swords deduced from comets and thunderbolts; the colour intends an uncommon or otherworldly inkling but here reads as an amusement, a bit of light relief in the darkness of the Dark Ages. A clue as to how it's done is given among the escapades of Arthur's companions, Kai and Bedwyr, in *Kilhwch and Olwen* (GLC). While honing the sword of Gwrnach the Giant, they jest that the inner edges of the scabbard need renewal to prevent rust while the sword is also burnished to a level where it takes on a blue appearance. This is noticed in poetry of the time e.g., *His sword was blue and gleaming*.(66) High maintenance of the kit might accomplish such a sharpness of metal and snug fit in the scabbard to produce friction and therefore a few sparks when drawn. A shake of saltpetre, dried from dung salts or moss to produce rudimentary fireworks and explosives, would guarantee the effect.

The hilt is obtained from Morse, the tusk ivory of walrus hunted in waters adjacent to the North Atlantic. Constant whittling is a keynote in e.g., *The Dream of the Emperor Maxen* and *The Lady of the Fountain* (GLC) and suitably demonstrated by the 12th/13th century Lewis Chess Set – see the King's picture that heads this chapter; the pieces are exhibited at the National Museum, Edinburgh and the British Museum, London. In Columba's biography as ransom to secure liberty from a master in Ireland, the monk gives a hostage living on Tiree a "sword ornamented with carved **tusks** of beasts" because " *the teeth of marine animals...shine like ivory...the warriors make their chief boast in the brilliance of their weapons*" (67) Excavations at Dumbarton Rock produced Mediterranean finds as well as antler and bone that tally with Rhydderch's lifetime but none re. metalworking^{67b} so one is not sure where swords were produced by then; in the Iron Age, the Smithy/Ceardach Island of Loch Lomond was a bloomery site for his ancestors, situated between the Rock and the 'Whetstone' (p.35).

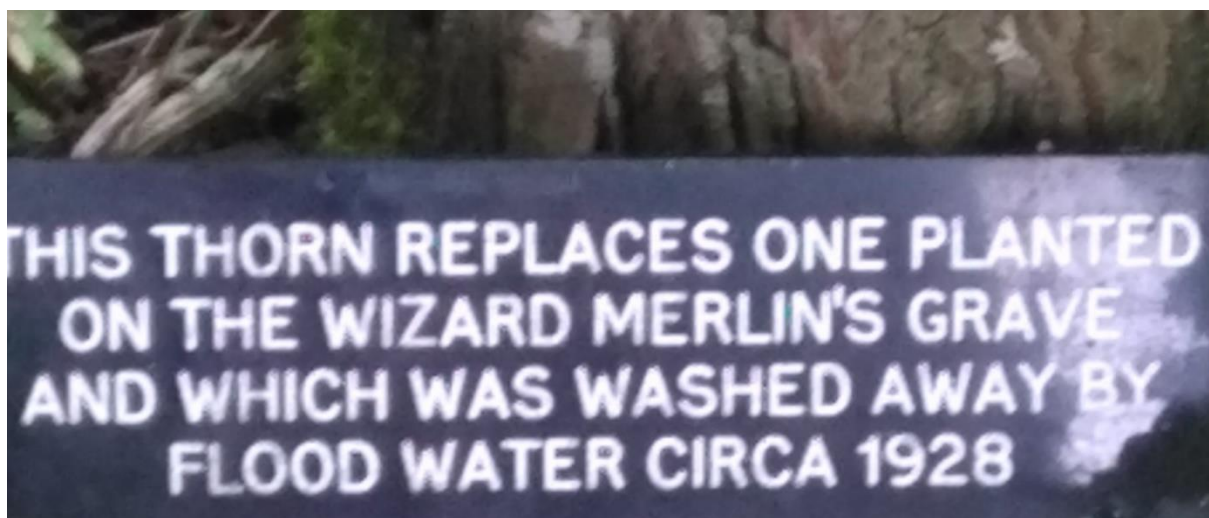
Enter Merlin. (WCD p.72). His connection with Rhydderch Hael appears in hagiographies of the Bishop Kentigern/Mungo, well-known in Glasgow's history and in several poems (p45). Altogether, they yield sketches of a mentally unwell clairvoyant, Laloecen, not addressed as



a Druid though in poetry, wearing the symbolic torc; his name Laloecen has been traced to Brittany. An esoteric being is hard to pin down but manifests when his drama transfers to Wales as the Wild Merlin of the Forest, the Druid of Gwenddoleu whom Kentigern encounters in Rhydderch's court sometime after the Battle of Arderydd; the site revealed by Merlin to Kentigern. The confusion of Ambrosius Aurelianus/Merlin Emrys and Laloecen was questioned by 1447 by the Abbot Bower of Inchcolm, an island in the Firth of Forth, with recollections maintained in Church archives,

recommissioned for The Black Book of Paisley Abbey, Scotland, pictured, now at the British Museum Libraries, London, (Royal MS 13 E.x). In the summary of this Book, Laloecen is flatly referred to as Merlin and a trio forged, stating that Rhydderch, Kentigern and the Seer all died in the same year. (68) Whether that is accurate or not, having sought reassurance from Columba of a peaceful death, not brought about by his enemies, Rhydderch Hael died at home.

Strathclyde may well have been a conduit of information and poem from the Old North (GKHJ) and additional anecdotes survive in the Scottish Borders. Kentigern's Christian conversion of the Pagan is shown in a vivid stained-glass window in Stobo Kirk, the location explained by Kentigern's previous development of a monastic community at Hoddom, the rite solemnized at an altar-stone, recently discovered near the mother-church of Stobo which is dedicated to him, as is the cemetery near Hoddom Castle. However, in this area the old ways were upheld until the end of the 16th century, discussed in letters among clergy of the parishes, when the folks around the clachan of Drumelzier, approximately four miles from Stobo, were still lighting the Beltane fires to mark the start of summer. Here, the Book of Paisley states Laloecen had been hounded to a triple death by shepherds of its then chief, Meldred and here, beaten and falling from a height, he drowned in the river Tweed so, on its banks a plaque at the foot of a thorn-tree marks his conceivable burial lair(69). The poets of Wales were fascinated by him, searching out factual clues, faced with the explosion of Arthurian Romances, soon to be overtaken in England by Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Occasionally, the traits of Laloecen may be implied; "for the sake of his dignity" and Gwilym Tew writes of Merlin "of keen dignity". (WCD p.80) Over time the Welsh *Llallogan* was inscribed in a 'Conversation' with his sister Gwenddydd (the morning-star). Re-examination of the hagiographies and Old Welsh vocabularies resulted in the cautious suggestion the name does mean 'honour or dignity'. (70).



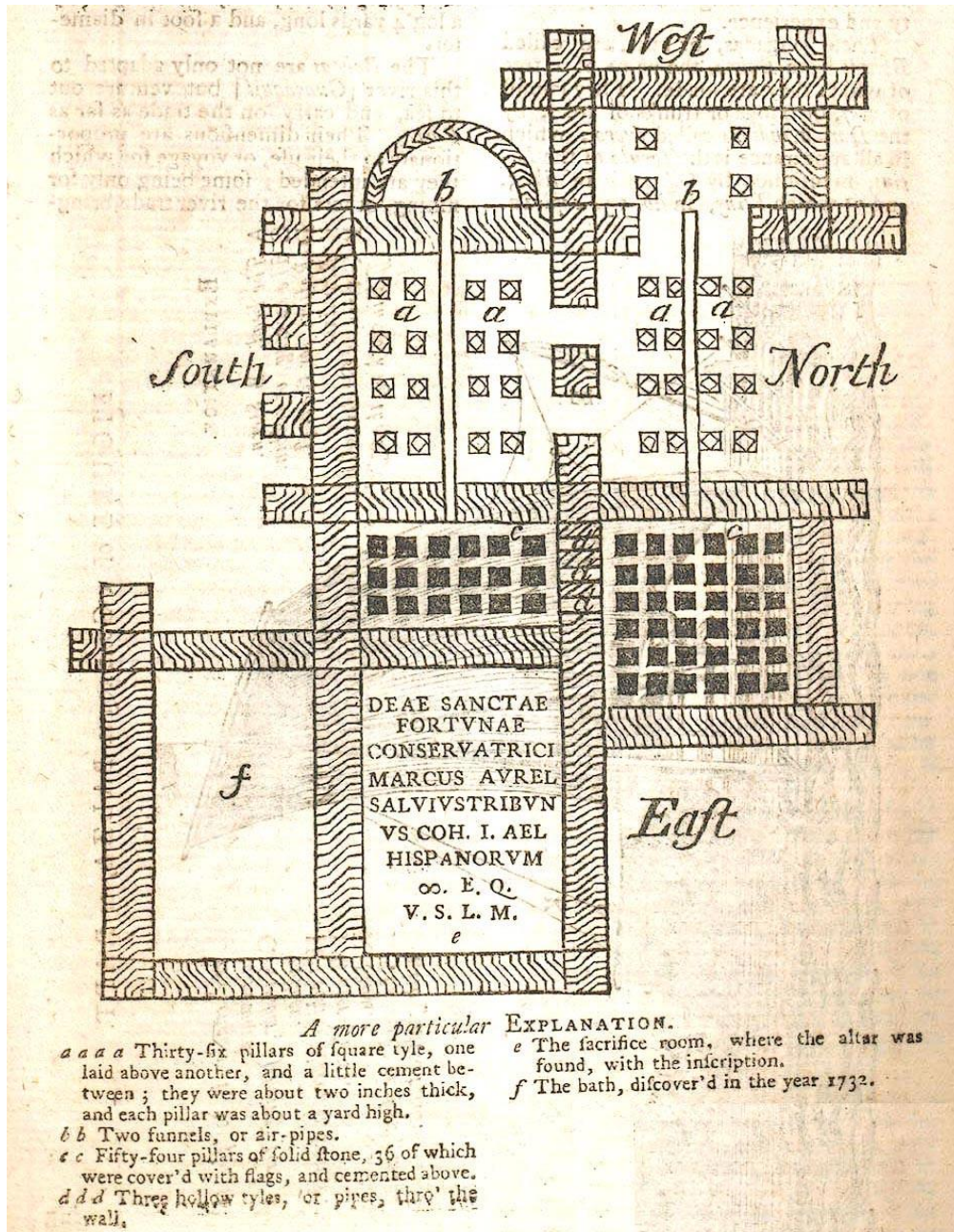
***The Gwyddbwyll (gameboard) of Gwenddoleu ap Keidio. Gold board, silver (men); they would play by themselves*^x**

Labelled Fidchell in Ireland and Gwyddbwyll in Wales, this was a hunt or battle-game for tactical education on a par with the Roman *latrunculi*, Viking *hnefatafl* and Indian chess. The idea of self-propulsion is a link, on one level, to the Celtic mindset where talismans or vehicles behave of their own accord imitating the dynamics of planets, stars and the natural world. *Gwyddbwyll* implies an inherent acumen in wood – each type of timber has an innate purpose but the oak is said to be exceptional. In classical Greece, male and female initiates in the grove at Dodona, consulted the prophetic (whispering) oaks, *mantichae drues*. In Celtic Albion and Ireland, Druids acted as senior advisers where prophecy was crucial and one spur to open the mind was the Gwyddbwyll. In 1995/96, domed glass counters and the residue of a wooden board with ashes laid above, were excavated from a grave at Stanway, Essex. Without doubt the cremation burial of a Celt, the carefully placed grave-goods included a set of surgical instruments and a straining dish for herbs. With eight rods (*divining for water etc./the magic wand prototype*), plant analysed as *Artemisia (healing, purging)* and a jet ring (*ornament & magnet*¹²), the collection amounted to the ‘tools of the trade’ for the ‘Druid of Colchester’ in an interment dated close to 43 CE. Admittedly not gold and silver, the game is conjectured from the blue and white beads, 13 of each and deliberately fixed as if in play on a board of 12 or 13 x 8 squares. To a layperson, it’s a game of ingenuity where one player’s ‘king’ tries to escape from the centre to the limit of the board while the opposing player tries to block. (71) For divination, the game-pieces were prompts to predict outcomes and for that reason, some threatening conflicts were avoided and agreed by diplomacy, the preferred Druidic way.

A tense scene in *The Dream of Rhonabwy* (GLC) sees successive games of Gwyddbwyll enacted by Arthur and Owain of Rheged. As a fictional device it’s weighted by prior and future events; messengers arrive to report bloody infighting among the champions (the Ravens) of both sides and the response each time is ‘play on’ until Arthur destroys the golden game-pieces and Owain orders a stand-down. This moves immediately to a request from Saxon assailants for a truce. The chronology is improbable since Arthur is gone before Owain comes of age, but immaterial; it’s a rebuke of Civil war and a portent of the ever-present danger of a third unforeseen force – the Ravens have deployed swords with three cutting-edges. Controversies of ongoing loyalty and treachery ... *Whosoever will follow Arthur...and whosoever will not ...* expand into the discord that alienated Arthur and his nephew Mordred, finalised by Camlann. And so to the tragedy of Gwenddoleu son of Ceidio, grandson of Arthwys and another descendant of the Coel dynasty. (WCD p.53). The eponymous Caer Gwenddoleu endures in the modified place-name Carwinley in the 12th century parish of Arthuret,

¹² Jet is magnetic when rubbed on animal fur, in plentiful supply along the East Yorkshire coast, handy for drawing metal splinters from wounds

Cumbria, on the fringes of Hadrian's Wall. The unremitting thread of Roman colonisation is seen less than a mile south-west of Carwinley at the Scouts patrol & security fort, the *Castra Exploratorum*, nowadays the private hotel of Netherby Hall. A chequer-board is easily intimated by the hypocaust stacks of the bath-house within the rigid rectilinear walls of this grand fort. ¹³



¹³ By kind permission of Jean Norgate at the Old Cumbria Gazetteer. From the Gentleman's Magazine of 1750, p. 27 *Draught of an ancient Roman sweating-stove*

The remains of this curiosity were inspected and thoroughly described by the historian William Camden on his travels in 1586; his drawings, area maps and numerous visits were added to in translations and various publications. Inscription stones classify this as a camp of equestrian units [\(72\)](#). Competency was paraded in public mounted pageants and improvised altercations, with theatrical helmets worn, welded from metal alloys, the visors tinned to simulate silver and a headpiece of gold, a faint yellow. One is the Crosby-Garrett helmet metal-detected within 60 miles in 2010; to any superstitious Celt seeing these activities in the third century, the game alive with pieces in action and the whole all silver and gold....?? The outfits are still worn in eerie re-enactments as pictured here.¹⁴



Gwenddoleu and the terrible battle of Arderydd are inextricable. Three miles south-west of Carwinley, the area around St. Michael's at Longtown has been endorsed as the front through clues and discussion in the Welsh Annals, Poems, Triads and anecdote from the vicinity [\(FABW.V.\)](#) but the Why? and Who ? are not absolute. [\(WCD p.23\)](#). The provocation is given in the Triads as – *shepherds fighting over a lark's nest*. At face value, skylarks habitually build their nests on the ground but this analogy for a boundary dispute trivialises the event and the presence of major dynasties is notable. The alleged protagonists were Rhydderch Hael of Strathclyde and Aedan macGabhran of Argyll, possibly the latter in alliance with Gwenddoleu. Others were Rhydderch's cousin Dreon and his army, one of the three noble retinues [\(TYP\)](#), the nephews of Urien of Rheged, sons of his twin sister Efrddyl and Eliffer of the Great Army, Gwenddoleu's paternal uncle.¹⁵

Elsewhere it's said that the sons of Eliffer were only witnesses as was another relative, Dunod Fwr of the North Pennines, sometime ally of Morgan Fwlch. Cynfelin Drwsgl, brother of Clydno and Cadrod of the ruling family of Edinburgh also attended. Even though fatality was extremely high, a faithful troop of thousands continued for a further six weeks after their leader had fallen - *Gwenddoleu is killed, Merlin is driven insane* but over time he reveals to Kentigern it was staged between the Liddel Water and the Carwinley Burn [\(73\)](#). Both drain into a bend of the River Esk just north of Netherby - five minutes by car.

¹⁴ No attribution, image widely available online.

¹⁵ To place Eliffer, see © The Journal of Scottish Name Studies 11, 2017, 93 -102. William Patterson, Scottish Place-Name Society. Oliver Castle, Upper Tweeddale. Patterson suggests "the perceived importance for later Welsh writers of the slaughter at Arfderydd may have been as the start of a chain of disastrous events affecting a much wider area in the following generations".

For Merlin personally and professionally this is ruination, failing in his duty as political prophet, not saving his king. Place and precognition are implied In yoking the gameboard to Gwenddoleu and Merlin; his inaccuracy or inability to prevent Arderydd and its consequences increases the poignancy of Taliesin's purpose*tell your king what his fate will be.*

Two poems in the Black Book of Carmarthen are based on Merlin's consequent asylum as a Hermit in a forest and in an apple-tree (the native variety grew up to 60 feet/20m). *Apple-tree/Yr Afallenau* ([BBC/FABW.L](#)) is an elegy for the promising blossom of the parent-tree that becomes instead its fallen dead and glory dimmed until future victories be gained; in Bardic ideation, warriors and weapons are stylised as birds, animals, trees. While Rhydderch's men continue to search for him, there is self-recrimination for the devastation and *Greetings (Hoianau)* continues the themes of Gwenddoleu's death and threat of discovery by the hounds of Rhydderch Hael. The verses, addressed to a piglet, have drawn mockery but the animal typifies a self-perception of utter vulnerability and the dogs a cipher for battle but, before intrusion by sheep and newcomers, the border forests **were** home to wild boar and wolves, bestowed covert concealment and therefore a feasible bearing for his memoir. Capture by Rhydderch's soldiers would account for his presence in the inland court at Partick, as recorded in the biography of Kentigern.

In their time, the Roman fort of Aballava at Burgh by Sands, at the head of the Solway Firth, was a soldiers' day's march of fifteen miles from Netherby; in preserving local names for installations, this too describes a grove or apple orchard. A perennial, the closeness of Aballava to Caer Gwenddoleu posits a dedicated Druidic space, open air, open meetings held 'in the eye of the light and in the face of the sun' and the ideology of life before Arderydd –

these trees were the inestimable gift of Gwenddoleu, he who is now as if he was not.

[\(Afallenau 74\).](#)



Courtesy sgc:foto

The Horn of Bran the Miser The drink wished for would be found in it^{xi}



Vista across the plain of the River Forth from the 'Horn' to the mound of Stirling Castle.

This is the lynch-pin. The collection of the whole is conditional on Merlin and Taliesin meeting this objective - by correcting the meanness of Bran, so that he agrees to part with the Horn, the other kings donate their Treasures. Predating Gwilym Tew's catalogue the Bard Guto'r Glyn openly criticised his patron in *The Miserliness of Henry Griffith of Newcourt*, dating from the 1440s/50s. It spares little in this denunciation of a man so rich who is amused by not paying money owed, causing dissension and spoiling the reputation of his family. Guto'r then accentuates the comparison - the goodness of Henry's parents and the Three Generous Men i.e, Rhydderch, Mordaf and Nudd Hael versus Henry's avarice; this poet will transform him as Taliesin the magician altered Bran Galed's temperament to a level of generosity exceeding the Trio from Strathclyde.⁽⁷⁵⁾ To understand that, is to understand Taliesin.

To the Men of the North, Bran Galed was the Miser, mean and stingy, where *Galed* describes a hardness in people and substance. Despite its magical and legendary overlay, the list is rational and genealogy asserts his descent from Coel Hen therefore with his relatives, this family lends a considerable infrastructure and Bran was said to be well known, carrying some sway. He is the paternal uncle of Morgan Fwlch of Bernicia and his distant kin are Eliffer, Gwenddoleu, Guallauc, Dunawd Fwr, and Urien of Rheged. These actors dominate set locations, as do Rhydderch, Clydno and their relations, in total defining the Old North. Their areas are delimited by topography - *Bannawg*, to the Welsh one precise demarcation beyond which is Pictland.

In some editions of the catalogue, the assumption is that the Horn of Bran is a Cornucopia or Horn of Plenty, and explained as such in margins of the texts but in the Brittonic language *bann* is a peak or summit analogous to the tip of an antler as well as a war/ hunt/ drinking-

horn or spear. [\(BLON\)](#). The Black Book of Carmarthen labels Bran as *a son of Iwerydd, Iwerit, Gweryd, Ymellyrn* with the last occasionally seen as a woman's name [\(WCD p.58\)](#) but all were mediaeval variants for the **River Forth** [\(76\)](#) which meanders into its Firth on the east coast, Fife to the north, Lothian to the south.

Combining Bran's status, the connotations of Bann, the headwaters of the Forth and its *Bannauc/Bannockburn* tributary, identifies the (Cambuskenneth) Abbey Craig that now supports the Wallace Monument, as the Horn. Facing the broad Stirling Castle Rock on the opposite bank, these are the twin strongholds of the Forth Valley. The Castle too is considered an abode anterior to the Stuart palace and just as Edinburgh, magnificent and an excellent day out but both tend to muddy the chances for investigating their substructures. The Craig has been compromised to accommodate the Monument but the integral implication of the Bann can still be determined. The slender pinnacle ascends to 300 ft. from flatlands, in some areas is cliff-like and the level the Monument stands on, while obviously safe and adequately proportioned, is not overly generous owing to the narrowing of the cone. Features of ramparts confirm a hillfort with several phases of occupation, dated so far to 560-730. [\(77\)](#) Sitting near the head of the Forth this enclave of notable landmarks separated the northern departments and consolidated power at the centre. Bran's eyrie is of strategic importance, monitoring the lowest-lying ford of the river, when passable a vital crossroads for traffic through Scotland. It allows a 360° panorama so no-one could travel there undetected, the pass lying amid Castle Rock and the Horn and so the liability of confiscated goods, the meaning of this headline? It also caps the eastern limit of The Old North above the Forth -Clyde line, the Whetstone to the west.



Wallace Monument



Viewpoint



The cliff-edge

Between Bran Galed and other Britons, internal rivalries are unmistakable in verses ascribed to the elderly Llywarch Hen, fretting about persecution - *Bran ab Ymellyrn planned to exile me, and burn my houses ...Morgan and his men planned to exile me and burn my lands*. After the assassination of Urien by Morgan Fwlch, a friend advises Llywarch to leave Rheged - *Trust not Bran, trust not Dunawd.....go to Llanfawr*. The animosity is directed also at Pasgen and Owain, by Dunawd/Dunod Fwr, Morgan, and Guallauc. ([WCD p.73](#)). Rheged's southern flank bordered Guallauc's in West Yorkshire and Dunawd's kingdom of Dunoting. Its epicentre in the North Pennines lay in Dentdale and in its entirety encircled the Yorkshire Dales to the Ribble Valley of Lancashire. ([WCD p.23](#)).

There can be no doubt that the creativity of Aneirin, Taliesin and Llywarch Hen contribute to the *Historia Brittonum*; the poet-historians precede reflections on Urien, Rhydderch, Guallauc and Morgan engaging with Hussa and Theodric. Some of the genuine elegies withstood re-copying; even where they cannot be legitimately credited, or were written 'in honour of', this was sustained for hundreds of years to appear in the 'Books' of the second millennium. The exact method of transmission to Wales is unclear but the histories of Llywarch Hen materialized by the 9th century. [AoW 3](#). his recorded poems containing reference to one Lailoken, recognised as Merlin of the forest -Silvestris/Wyllt/ Wild. United with Taliesin across time, they 'win' the Treasures by changing Bran's disposition.

The answer begins in the Book of Taliesin in *I sang for the sons of Llyr, "I have been with Bran in Ireland"*, referring to the 2nd branch of the Mabinogi where Bran travelled to Ireland both to rescue his sister Branwen and destroy a cauldron. Requesting decapitation, the retained head enjoys long life, is jovial, entertaining and generous at a prolonged Otherworld banquet. The tradition predated poem and story; Taliesin here includes Manawyddan, Pryderi, Maelgwn of Deganwy and Urien of Rheged while revamping other elements for *Preiddeu Annwn/The Spoils of Annwn* (pp25-29), the hunt for spear and cauldron, where the hero ought to have been Bran but substitutes the starring role for Arthur. ([78](#)). Obviously, the update falls into line with Bran Galed and his contemporaries so it's a literary trick. A thousand years later, yet still familiar with the legends and verses, the poets Tew et al internalise those with 6th century real events, recognising the switch of personalities and the *bann*, Galed's rock, is muddled with Bran's cornucopian feast.

However, only mortal death can truly guarantee ultimate change so now the psychopomps Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwyddno Garanhir step forward. Just as the beings of Egypt and Greece, Anubis and Charon, tended to the souls of the dead, Gwyn is a Lord of the Otherworld, or after-life of spirit; Garanhir 'Crane-legs' resembles the primal shamanic 'bird-man'. In their dialogue from the Black Book of Carmarthen ([FABW XVIII](#)), Gwyn relates he has been present at the end of life of Gwenddoleu, the warriors of Prydein and with battle-phantoms overhead

*- I have been in the place where Bran was killed,
The son of Gweryd, of far-extending fame,
When the ravens of the battle-field screamed.*



Castle and Monument.

The halter of Klodno Eiddun This was in the staple below the feet of his bed . He would wish for the horse he desired ; he would get it there in the halter ^{xii}

Klodno Eiddun/Clydno was born into the clan of the *Three hundred shields of the Cynwydion*. ([WCD p.69](#)). Cyn, meaning *hounds/dogs of war*, was a common element of many Brittonic names. In fleeting notes from *Kilhwch and Olwen* Clydno is the father of a daughter, Eurneid and in *The Lady of the Fountain*, of a son Cynon. ([GLC](#)).

In central Scotland, the Romans encountered the Votadini/ Guotodin/Gododdin tribes, overlords of all the Lothians sprawling out to the east coast and south to meet the lands of



the Brigantes along the course of the river Tyne. The future of the Votadini was impaired by the 2nd century of occupation, experiencing '*resistance is futile*' – corralled and cut off from the northern clans. To be seen to this day, the Bridgeness Slab ([79](#)) depicts Imperial imposition, praising the Antonine Wall erected west to east along the narrow 'neck' of the Clyde ↔ Forth estuaries. In the National Museum in Edinburgh, the Slab advertises a favourite Roman Triumphal scenario of mounted troops subduing indigenous peoples, trampled under-hoof; a replica has been raised in Harbour Road by Falkirk Council, close to the discovery spot. (Picured). The Romans had little interest in the hinterland by the latter part of the 2nd century - the

northern groups were having none of it anyway and so were intentionally partitioned, thus engineering the Edge of Empire.

Local geography is studded with summits easily adapted as hill forts– Dalmahoy, Kaimes, North Berwick Law, Arthur's Seat, the 'Castles' of Whiteadder and Dunbar. All were domiciles; excavations authenticate residency +/- items from the Bronze Age /Iron Age/ mediaeval dates – and most impressively on Traprain Law, the Gododdin hub until the mid-5th century. This 40 acre town, soaring to 700 feet from lush, level farmland was occupied for almost 1,000 years, the foremost hillfort of the North supported up on the coast by North Berwick Law, the majestic look-out over the Forth. A last deposit on Traprain was a large hoard of fine Roman silver from the Empire's dwindling days in this colonial outpost and though its provenance is speculative, the wealth of the collection supposes a final salute. ([80](#) National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh).

By the next century, Clydno (literally famous, renowned) supervises the area around modern Edinburgh from the height of Dun Eidyn. The rock is massive, affording an ample expanse for conspicuous structures, enhancing the status of its occupants – see and be seen on the skyline from miles around.



Dun Eidyn/ Edinburgh Castle Rock.

Elsewhere, Clydno acts with his cousins Rhydderch Hael, Mordaf Hael, and other chiefs when they travel to Arfon on the southern bank of the Menai facing Ynys Môn, Anglesey, in retaliation for the killing of their relative, Elidir Mwynfawr, the Wealthy. He was a son-in-law of Maelgwn of Deganwy, perhaps the most influential of the warlords of Gwynedd, succeeded by his son Rhun (p.11), the assassin of Elidir. After setting fire to Arfon and pursued by the Welsh, Clydno et al charge home, not to their own strongholds but up the river Forth – as a quick getaway and to some ally and recess for a protracted wait. By existing codes, the Welsh have to agree who will lead hereon, send back for advice and during their lengthy absence other circumstances arise demanding formal decisions. The legal cliffhanger becomes well-known as a precedent in Oldest Welsh Laws. Wales claimed victory but the enmity is temporary – at the end of the century the men of Gwynedd would return to support the north in another shot at curtailing the rise of the Angles.

Clydno's Treasure builds from Roman subjugation, not only the evidence at Bridgeness but also the late 1st century cavalry barracks-cum-stables of Elginhaugh Fort (81), where halters would have been lashed to rings at the end of *bunkbeds* in quarters shared by horses and riders; the Fort was 6 miles SE of Dun Eidyn. The Romans drew in cavalry from their extensive empire, e.g., Spanish at Hadrians' wall and 30 miles south-east of Elginhaugh a contingent from the south of France was quartered at Newstead fort, Trimontium (82) the three peaks of the Eildon Hills in the Scottish Borders, and another arena for equestrian pageant and the findspot for the Newstead helmet and visor. (Pictured, National Museum of Scotland).

Newstead was posted on the upper reaches of Dere Street, Governor Agricola's 1st century road to Scotland. Running alongside the older Leeming Lane/ Magnesian Limestone trackway then shunning the coast, cross-country via Newstead, then Elginhaugh, it passed the foot of Dun Eidynd, skirted around the Firth and can be picked up through to Perth.



The Newstead Fort was situated 11 miles west of Kelso, seemingly the estate of Clydno's brother, Cadrod Calchfynydd. [\(WCD p.9\)](#). In effect a Chalk Mountain, in Scots it translates to Chalk Heugh, now contracted as Kelso on the banks of the Tweed, while the moniker is kept alive in the town's Chalkheugh Terrace. As Cadrod's jurisdiction it would give the brothers mutual control over this inland 50 mile highway.

Cadrod's wife was Gwrygon *Goddeu*, i.e. *of the Forest*, and the only member of her very large family to carry this ancillary title. She is one of an influential group of sisters who partnered or birthed chiefs and 'Saints' – her elder siblings, Gwawr and Nyfain, were the mothers of Llywarch Hen and Urien of Rheged, respectively. [\(WCD p.72\)](#). His daughter Morfudd was the passion of Clydno's son Cynon. The joint dynasty is recorded by Taliesin; *A Song to Urien* [\(BT/FABW XLII\)](#) concedes occasions where he has had to intervene but as a Bard, for defence, never attack -

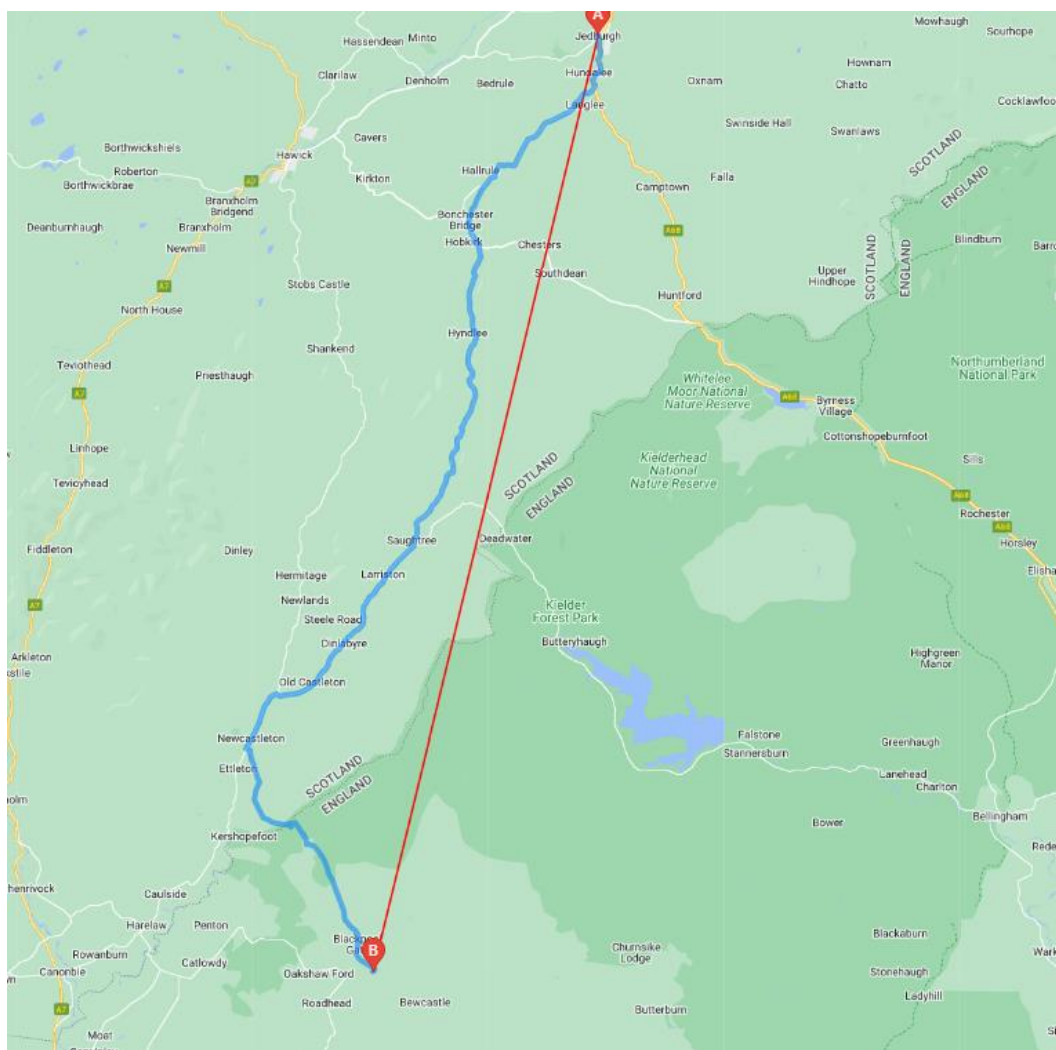
I strove against the fall of spears on shoulders,

Shield in hand, Godeu and Reged protecting.

Another day of strife with the Angles of Bernicia, commanded by Theodric *Fflamddwyn*/the 'Flamethrower' is titled *Gwaith Argoed Llwyfein* [\(BT/FABW XLVII\)](#) The Battle (in front of) the Wood of the River Lyne? [\(BLON\)](#) He wrote that, on one Saturday, from sunrise until midday, *Fflamddwyn marched ...to wage war against Goddeu and Rheged....*, losing his life in the fray with Urien and his son Owain, [\(WCD p.88\)](#). This is an adverse incident in the resolute Anglian takeover from the eastern coastal bloc of Rheged and Gododdin lands that would effectively close off the North Sea-side route.

However, if all translations and historical sites are acceptable so far, there is a geographic argument for placing this river in the Kershope Forest, Cumbria, where it combines at the Commons of the Black Lyne and White Lyne, and the Forest of Gwrygon and Cadrod took in the nearby Jed and Wauchope. There are clusters of Old English (OE) place-names inside the eastern counties of the Scottish Borders which relate to clearances *leah/lee* of 1) once densely-wooded areas, 2) habitats of wild animals and 3) native trees. The transit from Brittonic ›OE ›Scots in Wauchope is OE *wealh*= *foreigner/Briton/Welsh* = Old Northumbrian *walh* = Middle Scots *wauc*, and *Hope* is a valley. [\(83\)](#). It straddles the B6357, from a fork of

the Liddel Water¹⁶ at Newcastleton (previously Copshaw, OE hill-top + small wood)([84](#)) through to Bonchester Hill, an elaborately defended structure of the pre-Roman and Dark Ages ([85](#)). Along the way it takes in Riccarton (*OE, Richaerd*) Saughtree Fell (Willow trees) and Wolfe Lee (*OE Wulf*). Quite separate areas of the Jed, dating back to the last Glacial Period at Crag Bank and Wolfhopelee ¹⁷ bisect Bonchester and the A68 junction at Carter Bar, where the Jed Water rises from the Cheviots. The forest there alters to bald hills then a mix of open moorland, high rocks and sparse woods in the Kielder and Northumberland Parks. (Illustrated route is Jedburgh to Whitelyne Common, i.e., upper sector of Rheged into Goddeu. The opinion may be dismissed as speculative but the map usefully shows the long push and pull that clinched the Scotland/England border as it stands today). By kind permission of © Driving-distances.com/Uk route-planner-mileage.



¹⁶ This may explain Cynefin Drwsgl's presence as witness to Arderdydd which befell 'next-door' i.e., Liddel Water/ Carwinley Burn.

¹⁷ Scottish Natural Heritage SSSI Site Code 416

Then, as the 6th century plays out, the forces of Gododdin and Rheged are reflected in the malevolent eye of Yspaddaden Penkawr, invariably demanding something of disturbing significance. To celebrate the nuptials, [GLC](#), he now wants “*the horn of Gwlgawd Gododin to serve us with liquor that night*”. Gwlgawd is the brewer of Dun Eidyn who produced the alcohols consumed from one harvest to the next in a year-long party c. 600 in anticipation of a show-down with the brutal Aethelfrith/Edelfled nicknamed *Ffleisor, the Twister*, [\(WCD p. 38\)](#) who succeeded Ethelric c. 593 in the main royal branch of Bernicia, intent on subduing both Brittonic and Anglian opponents in his political aspirations, marrying into the Deiran dynasty and who over some twenty years, unified Northumbria [\(Bede\)](#), “Eadfered Flesaur’s reign lasted twelve years in Bernicia, and twelve others in Deira” [\(HB\)](#).¹⁸

The climax is planned for *Catraeth* and is the premise of the chilling Gododdin, [\(BA/FABW LI\)](#). Written by the eulogist and visionary Aneirin, in one line he invokes Taliesin as a colleague in their crafting of truth and reason behind circumstances. In English, a logical train was configured with full analysis by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson in *The Gododdin The Oldest Scottish Poem*, comparing two scripts (A & B) preserved in the mediaeval Book of Aneirin at Aberystwyth. [\(GKHJ\)](#). [\(WCD p.45\)](#)

Gwilym Tew’s incentive is evident. The epic describes allied troops converging under three hundred mounted headmen in the Hall of the Rich Mountain King, *Mynyddog Mwynfawr*. That is an anonymous title but the strapline of this Treasure of the Halters endows Clydno with the ability to mobilise massed cavalry; he may have conceived the plan - Aneirin venerates him and his son, Cynon. Soldiers have checked in from the north, from the Forth, from Anglesey, from Gwynedd – descendants of Padarn and Cunedda. As their Manau Gododdin kinsman, this is the instance where Arthur is esteemed superior to the best of the current warband. The Coel dynasty is represented by fighters from Ayr, from Elmet and by a brother of Gwenddoleu. The warrior Gwenabwy is here who in his youth had been guided by Merlin, according to the *Greetings/Hoianau*. Geniality in the Hall equates to that of Senyllt from the generous/wealthy clan of Strathclyde and the Bard describes a lavish set-piece in a riot of feasting, finely furnished, with music, wood-fires burning, precious stones bartered, unlimited food, mead and wine, target practice on the roof. But these are exhausting times – “*a short year they remained in peace*” and then the explicit alarm is realised. Gwlgawd’s brews were too potent, a sabotage, so the large and elegant army which left Dun Eidyn on the march south, by horseback and foot along that ancient route by Elginhaugh and Newstead, was slaughtered.

Little is known of Aneirin and he unveils few personal details. [\(WCD p.18\)](#) He claims loyalty to Gododdin but is said to be the son of Dwywai. She is known as the sister of Guallauc and when married to Dunod Fawr also as mother to the Saint Deiniol. Another family member

¹⁸ Continuity and dates for the Northumbrian Kings are a little unclear.

is killed, *the only son of Cian from beyond Bannawg*, i.e., Cian, a Bard of Pictland (HB). In one version of the poem his locality is narrowed to Maen Gwyngwn, identified as the land of the Venicones, the valley of Strathmore or Fife (BLON), and reference to a 'broken-fronted shield' thrust by one Grugyn (GKHJ) seems an early description of the [Pictish H-shaped buckler](#)? The complexity of the Brittonic description is removed by the modern, which sees a crafty armament suiting both left- and right-handed fighters, each groove providing a rest and pilot for the sword.

But as Bards did not bear arms Aneirin, though bloodied in the havoc, is spared by grace of his art to tell how it's all gone wrong. Owing to the largesse of an unnamed leader, architect of the venture, and despite skilled warriors singled out for particular praise, the presence of unfit and over-confident units lose a momentous contest in futility and unnecessary cost to life. This younger generation, heirs to the war-horses Guallauc, Urien, Rhydderch and Clydno is killed, dying too soon to augment their own reputations.

In the closing stages of the disintegration of the Old North, the army's route is a moot point. To conserve energy, better to contain the troops on the middle ground of the roads and the Forest that had been a direct link from Dun Eidyn via Rheged to Elmet, now interrupted by their destination.

Catraeth was difficult to pinpoint, confused with Brittonic battle-dykes, the Catrails, and there are few markers to identify the site from the poem but since the 19th century there has been a consensus that Rheged's long-lost lands around Catterick, North Yorkshire, by then in the new Deira is the pitch. (GKHJ). Richmond/Catterick, near the cataracts on the River Swale and an important river crossing, was at the centre of several invasions. The matter could be resolved by Aneirin's emphasis on Celtic adornment – splendid horse tack, only the best of weapons and armour, the Chiefs in amber and gold - wars do leave detritus but in all the diggings around the A1 no matching trove has come to light. (86) Discoveries are of Roman wares, a few Anglian graves and indicators of their occupancy as soon as the Romans exit by dismantling the Catterick garrison and repurposing building fabric to suit domestic styles.

On the other hand the motif of the poem, *Men went to Catraeth with the dawn*, suits Bardic allusion to distant time in the chronological scope of the Treasures. C 3,000 BCE, the Swale river-bank was home to a Neolithic encampment beside the *Scorton Cursus*, known to be valued as processional aisles for ritual, this a model of linear precision. Combed parallel ditches shaped a central bank, scars of the Ice Age, the dread eternal winter. Close to the walkway are associated ring ditches and another trench leading to the river. Once measuring approx. 1670m x 40m with a considerable knoll at its north-west, scant scraps lie between a deep loop of the Swale and Scorton, only 3.5 miles on the opposite bank from Catterick., (87)

Although no texts exist to shed light on Clydno's later years , his legacy is perpetuated in the Black book of Carmarthen - [\(FABW XXIX\)](#)

Whose is the grave beneath the hill?

The grave of a man mighty in the conflict

The grave of Cynon the son of Clydno Eiddyn

And by Aneirin -

No hall was ever made so faultless

Nor a hero so generous..

As Cynon.....

Son of Clydno, of lasting fame! I will sing

To thee a song of praise without limit, without end.

[\(FABW.LI\)](#)

While the lament for Catraeth continued through Welsh literature in Triads [\(TYP\)](#), and [Stanzas of the Graves](#), the name is unmarked in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. [\(ASC\)](#). The impression given by The Gododdin was the engagement seemed to have been going their way until an about-turn blamed on over-consumption in the mead-hall or occasionally poor battle strategy. So, was a narrow victory with too great a casualty toll unworthy of propaganda unlike the Battle of Deagsastan 603 CE? [\(Bede\)](#), (site inconclusive). Using the same year, the Chronicles record Hering the son of Hussa at the front an army supported by Aedan macGabhran, acting against Aethelfrith. Begun towards the end of the 9th century CE, several entries of the Chronicles state that since 603, "no king of the Scots has dared to lead an army against this nation" which may be helpful only in limiting a date for Catraeth.

For 598 CE, Irish records include "the Battle of the Saxons" against Aethelfrith by Aedan macGabhran (defeated) and his aide from east Ulster, Mael Uma a son of the king Baetan, (who overcomes Aethelfrith's relative) [\(88\)](#). In Culhwch and Olwen, he is listed as Maelwys the son of Baeddan [\(GLC\)](#) whose brother Fiachna, in 592, had been the person responsible for the homicide of Aedh Dubh (p24). [\(89\)](#)



The Roman Dere Street, now A7, south of Edinburgh and the fields of their Elginhaugh cavalry barracks (pictured) affording surveillance over its Bridge and the North Esk river.

Merlin takes the Treasures to a safe place ^{xiii}

Had documents not perished? A complaint closes the Black Book of Carmarthen where Merlin chides a character, Ysgolan, for the destruction of books. [\(WCD p.19\)](#). Infamous in Brittany for identical reasons, he is representative of the dark force of intellectual loss, the criticism recurring into the Golden Age of the Welsh Bards and perhaps a bit of the regret that prompted Tew's retrospective. However, having gathered the Treasures, Merlin has to locate a haven for all time but there is a difference of opinion in the various catalogues. ^{xiv} Some say he hid them in Caerleon -on-Usk, the former Roman HQ in South Wales, a principal setting for Arthur's court because, as the reader is told in Geraint, son of Erbin, it was *the most accessible of his dominions, by sea or land*. [\(GLC\)](#) Others favour an onward transfer to Ynys Enlli, Bardsey, off the Llyn Peninsula. The following is merely a proposal; this paragraph warns of missing links.

Accretions of the Merlin Legend say this is his burial place which completely refutes the Drumelzier history of course but, one cannot overestimate the importance of Enlli as a spiritual retreat or pilgrimage destination throughout the mediaeval period from the 5th century onwards. [\(90\)](#) Given that holiday stories were traded always, the attachment may be helped by the *Afallenau* poem in conjunction with "the famous 1,000 year-old 'Afal Enlli' Bardsey apple tree" which, as is often repeated, was discovered in 1998 by the orchardist Ian Sturrock beside the Hermit's/pilgrim's Cave at Plas Bach, the little country house. [\(91\)](#) Perhaps through the monastic communities of scribes, for without giving his source but including other known facts about Merlin, the insider Ranulf Higden of Chester (**d.1364**), wrote - "in a place in North Wales called Nefyn is an isle which is called Bardsey, inhabit of monks. Where Merlin called Silvestris is buried as it is said. There were two Merlins, one of them called Ambrosius.....who prophesied in Snowdonia in the time of Vortigern.... Also there was an other Merlin in Albania that is now Scottelonde which had two names; one name was Silvestris, that other was Calidonus of a wood called Calidonia, where he prophesied; called Silvestris in that he being in a battle, see in the air a marvellous thyng through the which he began to be distraught. Which going to a wood began to prophecy in the time of king Arthur". (From footnotes of the several translations) [\(92\)](#). Higden did not mention Treasure but his was the authoritative text for centuries and it may account for the conclusion and the belief that Merlin relocated there.

Signing off for now,

From the Conversation of Merlin and Taliesin,
the Black Book of Carmarthen.

Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru – The National Library of Wales



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Front cover courtesy of sgc:foto

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EXTRAS

(on coinage) King Edward (I)....caused halfpennies and farthings to be printed and made round,the prophecy of Merlin seems to be fulfilled where it is said the half shall be round. [\(93\)](#)

Edward 1 - The third major change brought about by the recoinage was the introduction of three new denominations. In addition to the penny, there was the halfpenny, the farthing and the groat of four pence. The striking of round halfpennies and farthings eliminated the need to cut pennies into halves and quarters, another practice that dated back to the Anglo-Saxon period. [\(94\) Early Edwardian Pennies \(1279-1344\) by Rod Blunt](#)

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