

COURTS AND JOURNEYS IN THE MABINOGI
An investigation into the toponyms in the Four Branches

A. Carla Skinner
B.Sc., Ph.D., C.Geol, FGS.

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for the degree of Master of Arts

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Table of Contents

	page
Lists of Figures and Tables	4
Acknowledgements	5
Summary	6
Introduction	7
Sources	9
Toponyms and the <i>Four Branches</i>	11
Classifying Toponyms	12
Courts in the <i>Four Branches</i>	17
Courts in Deheubarth	17
Arberth	17
Rhuddlan Teifi	26
Courts in Gwynedd	27
Caer Dathyl yn Arfon	28
Aberffraw	35
Harlech	36
Caer Saint yn Arfon	38
Mur Castell	38
Caer Aranrhod	41
Dinas Dinlle	42
Journeys	43
Medieval Welsh Routeways	43
Places revisited	45
Hunting in Glyn Cuch	48
Journeys in the Second Branch	51
Pryderi and Manawydan's Journeys	57
Journey of the Swine	59
Flight of the <i>Gwyr y Deheu</i>	65
Deceiving Aranrhod	67
Deceiving Lleu	68
Search for Lleu	69
Lleu's revenge and the flight of Blodeuedd	71
Discussion	73
Bibliography	85

List of Figures

		page
Fig 1	Pembrokeshire Arberth	21
Fig 2	Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire Locations for Arberth	22
Fig 3	Ceredigion Arberth	23
Fig 4	Crug Mawr viewed across the flood plain of the Afon Teifi	24
Fig 5	<i>Cantrefi</i> and <i>Cymydau</i> of Gwynedd	27
Fig 6	Locating Caer Dathyl and the battlefield	31
Fig 7	Bathymetry for Caer Aranrhod	41
Fig 8	Medieval route ways in north-west Wales and west Mid-Wales	44
Fig 9	Crossing Traeth Mawr and Traeth Bach	47
Fig 10	Glyn Cuch	49
Fig 11	River Liffey and central Dublin <i>c</i> AD 1000	54
Fig 12	Locations from the Second Branch	56
Fig 13	Journey of the Swine	60
Fig 14	<i>Cantref</i> Arlechwedd and location of Creuwriôn	63
Fig 15	Flight of the <i>Gwyr y Deheu</i>	66
Fig 16	The Deceit of Aranrhod and the Search for Lleu	67
Fig 17	Bryn Cyfergyr	69
Fig 18	Revenge of Lleu	72

List of Tables

		page
Table 1	Toponyms listed by Branch and Categorisation	14
Table 2	Toponyms classified by Type and Narrative Purpose	15
Table 3	<i>Cymydau</i> and their <i>llysoed</i> in 12 th century Gwynedd and their relationships with <i>The Four Branches</i>	76

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Summary

The *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* are unusually, perhaps uniquely, rich in toponyms for medieval stories. There have been many opinions expressed about the identity and significance of these toponyms since the topic was first studied by Anwyl at the end of the nineteenth century. This current work has combined a review of previously published opinions and a study of the text in translation with information drawn from historical, archaeological and cartographic sources and from site inspections. Particular consideration has been given to toponyms relating to courts and journeys, which give the closest insight into the author's use of topographic features to characterise his fictional narrative. Maps of all the key locations are provided.

It is argued that many, often obscure, places in Gwynedd are described in a detail which suggests strongly that the author had personal and local knowledge of the district. The same case cannot be made so convincingly for localities in other parts of Wales, while topographic information on journeys in England and Ireland is so vague and devoid of detail as to be unverifiable. This gives support to the opinion, held by many, that the author had his roots in Gwynedd and combined detailed local knowledge with topographical information gathered from Deheubarth and elsewhere in Wales. It is also argued that the author's well-recognised subtlety in characterisation in the tales was also deployed in his choice of places and names, which were not idly chosen but were adopted to link the source legends with the landscape of Wales. New strands of evidence are presented for some of the more enigmatic locations in *The Four Branches*, such as Caer Dathyl, Arberth, the route Gwydion took with the stolen pigs and the battle in Arfon which ensued.

Introduction

The Four Branches of the Mabinogi are four related stories (part of a corpus of eleven tales known as the *Mabinogion*) with a history that extends at least nine hundred years. They have their source in oral tales from the Brittonic and wider Celtic tradition. The tales were written down (in Middle Welsh) at an unknown date but possibly around the end of the eleventh century. They were then transcribed, probably many times, before being preserved in the oldest surviving source-texts.¹ The classic reference text is *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (PKM) published by Sir Ifor Williams in 1930.² The first English translation, which brought international recognition of the quality of the stories, was by Charlotte, Lady Guest.³ The most recent English translation (2007) is by Sioned Davies.⁴

Of the many steps in this chain, the creative genius was an unknown author⁵ who crafted traditional, oral narratives of Celtic heroes and heroines into a series of tales of courtly life which take place in a world where a familiar Welsh landscape interacts with a magic otherworld. Moving between these two worlds are vivid men and women; lively, ambitious, caring, flawed and guileful, and it is these personalities and their skilful characterisation which makes *The Four Branches* stand above other contemporary tales. The stories are among the highlights of the Welsh literary tradition and are well known and treasured in Wales today. Few schooled in Wales will fail to recognise the Mabinogion poster map by

¹ *White Book of Rhydderch* (Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 4 - 5) and *Red Book of Hergest* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Jesus College 111) for this study accessed through Rhyddiaith Gymraeg 1300-1425, <http://www.rhyddiaithganoloesol.caerdydd.ac.uk/>

² Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (PKM), (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1930). Quotations from *Y Mabinogi* in Welsh are from Williams. They are not given routinely, but only when the source text is important to illustrate the argument.

³ Lady Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogion* (London: Dent, 1906; new edition).

⁴ Sioned Davies, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The place names used follow those used by Davies. Where the place names used by Davies differ from those regularly found in maps or other official sources, both names are given. Quotations from *Y Mabinogi* in English translation are from Davies.

⁵ Throughout the term author is used rather than redactor to recognise the extensive creative content that he overlaid on the source legends. There may have been more than one person involved in the authorial process but this is generally doubted as will be discussed later.

Margaret Jones.⁶ The popular appeal of the tales is sustained by Mabinogion-related children's products, giving a modern justification of 'tales for youth' as a meaning for *mabinogi*.⁷ A significant reason for the popular appreciation of the stories, alongside the fascinating tales of love, war, friendship and betrayal, are the places in the stories, known and recognised by all.

For medieval stories, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* are unusually, perhaps uniquely, rich in toponyms. Apart from the geographical interest they give, they are also part of the evidence that drives debates on the origin of the tales and by whom, when and where they were first written down. Many of those who have edited transcriptions in Welsh or translations in English have offered descriptions and explanations of the toponyms in notes or footnotes. But they do not always agree, and most editors and translators have fixed views on the identity of toponyms and rarely discuss the evidence for different identifications. Neither has there been much work to relate the topography as described in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* to other information on topography and landscape in medieval Wales. Very few texts in the large body of literature analysing the *Four Branches* contain maps and those that exist are often too small in scale to be appropriate for understanding and analysing geographical relationships.

This study takes a fresh look at the toponyms in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, reviewing what previous authors have said and analysing the relationship of the toponyms to the story, to the landscape, as best we know it from the time, and to the historical context. The focus is on the places which were the courts of princes or places on journeys that were taken between them. All of the places critical to the storyline have been visited to help understand how the topographic context might have led the author or his sources to include them.

⁶ Margaret Jones, *Mabinogion (poster map)* (Talybont: Y Lolfa)

⁷ Diana Luft, 'The Meaning of *mabinogi*', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 62: (2011), p. 70.

Sources

Place-names and their significance have been the subject of discussion since the very first appreciation of the tales. Luft has described notes made by Lewis Morris in the 1760s on place-names in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*.⁸ In the nineteenth century neither Pughe, who made the earliest translations, or Guest seemed much interested in the topography of the tales, although Guest was interested in names which evoked history or legend.⁹ Rhŷs in his analysis of folk legends and Lloyd in his history frequently refer to places in the tales.¹⁰ An early analysis of toponyms was made by Anwyl in his papers in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* from 1897-1901.¹¹ He noted the concentration of toponyms in certain areas and was the first to suggest it was travelling bards who brought the knowledge of places in the tales to a common point of authorship.¹² The first systematic analyses were done in the 1920s, contemporaneously, although apparently not always harmoniously, by Williams in his edition *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* and Gruffydd in his analysis of the fourth branch.¹³ Later studies tended to focus on toponyms not in a geographic context but as sources of evidence for the provenance of the tales.¹⁴ The translations by Bollard in 2006 and Davies in 2007 both contain small scale maps and place-name notes but often without sources or references.¹⁵ The

⁸ Diana Luft, 'Lewis Morris and the *Mabinogion*', 2012. *EBLJ*, p. 6, <http://www.bl.uk/ebj/2012articles/article3.html>

⁹ Guest, 1906, p.10; in her original introduction Guest indicates how she thinks the place names in *The Mabinogion* might be classified, the most important criterion being the legendary status of persons identified in place names.

¹⁰ John Rhŷs, *Celtic Folklore, Welsh and Manx* (2 vols.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901); J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales: From the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* (London: Longmans Green, 1948; 3rd. edition, new impression)

¹¹ Sir Edward Anwyl, 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, Chapters I and II (1897, pp. 277-293); Chapter III (1899, pp. 124-133); Chapter IV (1901, pp. 125-134).

¹² Anwyl, 1897, pp. 278 and 292.

¹³ Williams, PKM; W.G. Gruffydd. *Math vab Mathonwy: an Inquiry Into the Origins and Development of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi with the Text and a Translation (MvM)*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1928).

¹⁴ For example: Brynley F. Roberts, 'Where Were the Four Branches of the Mabinogi Written?' in *The Individual in Celtic Literature*, J. F. Nagy, ed. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 61-73; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Clas Bueno and the Four Branches of the Mabinogi' in *150 Jahre mabinogion' - Deutsche-wallisische Kulturbeziehungen*. Bernhard Maier, Stefan Zimmer, and Christiane Batke, eds., (Tubingen: 2001), pp. 111-127.

¹⁵ John K. Bollard, *The Mabinogi*. (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2006); Davies, 2007.

texts by Hughes on the third branch in 2007 and the fourth branch in 2000 and 2013 contain the most recent detailed consideration of etymology and provenance of place-names since Williams.¹⁶ Parker, Breeze and Tolstoy also discuss the toponyms in detail in support of their respective theories on authorship, although Tolstoy virtually ignores the rich source of toponyms in the fourth branch.¹⁷

In addition to these general reviews there is a large body of work on myths and legends, history, archaeology and geography which draw upon or refer to *The Four Branches*. The sources consulted for this study are referenced in the text and listed in the bibliography.

Toponyms and the *Four Branches*

The stories in the form that we have them contain no internal chronology, but are played out in a framework of kingdoms and *cantrefi*¹⁸ that would be familiar to a medieval Welsh audience. Hardly a single person in the four branches is a known historical figure.¹⁹ There have been many attempts, largely in the interests of dating the tales, to identify allegorical references to persons and events that may have been current at the time of writing. Many are plausible but none has gained acceptance. The tales are works of fiction and, given the scarcity of corroborating information, the identity of any real persons or events which might have inspired the author and provided entertainment to his audiences are likely lost for ever.

¹⁶ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy: Pedwaredd Gaiac Y Mabinogi* (Aberystwyth: Prifysgol Cymru Aberystwyth, 2000); *Manawydan Uab Llyr: Trydedd Gaiac Y Mabinogi*, (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2007); *Math Uab Mathonwy: The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2013).

¹⁷ Will Parker, 'Gwynedd, Ceredigion and the Political Geography of the *Mabinogi*', *National Library of Wales Journal* xxxii (4): (2002), pp. 365-96; Andrew Breeze, *The Origins of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2009), pp. 100-114; Nikolai Tolstoy, *The Oldest British Prose Literature: the Compilation of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

¹⁸ *Cantref*, plural *cantrefi*; the highest level subdivision of the territory of a prince, broadly equivalent to the English term 'hundred'.

¹⁹ Taliesin is named in the second branch. Caswallon, named in the second and third branches, 'probably retains a memory of the historical Cassivellaunos . . . who led an assault against Caesar . . . in AD45.' Davies, 2007, p. 236.

In contrast the toponyms are many, and can often be readily identified. As already said, these familiar toponyms are a major factor contributing to the popularity of the tales. Recognisable geography, however, does not ensure that the toponyms are a useful analytical resource. The use of known place-names in fiction is a common literary device to engage an audience and the geography of a story may not be directly related to a known geography. The author has few qualms in introducing narrative non-sequiturs and these are particularly notable in the fourth branch which has the largest number of toponyms. Characters disappear (such as Goewin) as soon as their narrative function has passed; events critical to the narrative are irritatingly ambiguous (e.g., the identity of Lleu's father) or are suddenly no longer important (e.g., Math's need for a foot holder). If the author is comfortable with such inconsistencies and ambiguities would he be concerned to show consistency and clarity in the geography of the tales?

This study has been undertaken in the belief that, at some level, the toponyms of the *Four Branches* and their relationship to the narrative, to each other and to the medieval geography of Wales provide a potential tool in understanding the provenance of the tales that has not yet been fully exploited. The first and fourth branches in particular are rich in geopolitical reference and topographic description. There are places which can be visited which evoke a strong conviction that the author had been there too. The detail in some of the journeys is such that it is hard to imagine that the author was merely an editor weaving together legend and travellers' tales, but rather that he was introducing personal experience into his stories. This attention to detail is not consistent throughout the tales. Historical *cantrefi* are named, but the royal courts within them rarely have names known from verifiable history. Sometimes the onomastic quality of a tale is clearly as important as the topographic reality. Sometimes the ambiguity of description is so great that no firm geographical conclusion can, nor was perhaps intended to, be reached.

Because the characters in the tales undertake many journeys, there is the opportunity, with caution, to use time as a geographic proxy. This does not apply when the author uses time as a narrative device to punctuate the tale, when a story element will perhaps begin with a scene-

setting phrase such as ‘once upon a time’.²⁰ But on other occasions time as well as destination is used to characterise a journey, for example, ‘He set out that night from Arberth . . .’²¹ This might give us, as it did the audience, additional information to evaluate the nature and credibility of the journey described.

Classifying toponyms

Place-name evidence features significantly in the arguments on the identity of the author and the location of places, but there has been no rigorous work done to classify toponyms and examine their varied occurrence in each branch. There are seventy-eight separate toponyms used in the *Four Branches* for which a twofold classification is proposed.

The first identifies the toponym by type, which is based upon historical knowledge or credible facts given in the tales:

- Courts - places where static events happen and the heroes and heroines interact - this includes the two most important, and among the most uncertain places in all the tales, Arberth and Caer Dathyl;
- Journeys - locations along the routes of journeys in the tales which may yield valuable information about routes, timings and distances and also, in some cases, assist verification of uncertain locations;
- Territories - that is countries, *cantrefi*, and other administrative units and places referred to but often not visited; and
- Mythical - places for which there is no historic or geographic evidence and which probably never existed.

The second classification is a subjective assessment of the author’s purpose in including the toponym in the tale.

²⁰ Sioned Davies, ‘Written Text as Performance: the Implications for Middle Welsh Prose Narratives’ in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, Huw Pryce, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 140; Davies, 2007, p. xv.

²¹ Davies, 2007, p. 3.

Story -	a place which is judged to be critical to the narrative and without which understanding of the story line would suffer;
Context -	a place or region that is important to the context of the story but not critical to it. Many of these toponyms are classified as 'territories' in the first set;
Onomastic -	places that may be important to the story but seem to have been included by the author not so much for topographic reasons but to offer an explanation for a name; in some cases it is not evident that the author appreciates the onomastic history and the reference may be a survival from an earlier, source tale; and
Legend -	places which may be important to the story but seem to have been included by the author primarily to evoke links to legend: this includes all the mythical sites from the previous grouping but also includes places which are real but which are in the tale to recall legend, such as France which is mentioned twice, but only in the context of the protective force that the buried head of Bendigeidfran brings to the Island of Britain.

TABLE 1 shows the full classification proposed, broken down into each of the four branches and TABLE 2 shows the proportionate occurrence of each of the categories for each branch. The list includes two inferred toponyms, Llyn y Morynion and Bryn y Castell, which occur as descriptions of locations in the fourth branch but which so closely accord to actual place-names that they are treated as such.

This is a simple and subjective exercise and it is fraught with a number of obvious limitations, the most important of which is that some of the toponyms could fit more than one category which this approach does not accommodate. A good example to illustrate subtleties beyond the scope of this analysis is Harlech. Its first occurrence is as a royal court of Bendigeidfran and the place where dialogue, which turns into conflict, with the Irish begins. It is critical to the story and has been classified that way. But by beginning the story at Harlech, for which there is no sound evidence of a royal court, the tale becomes linked with the Welsh legend of Branwen. This closes when Branwen of the tale dies and is buried at a site in Môn which is easily identified as the grave of Branwen of legend. When Harlech is reintroduced at the end of the second branch it is no longer a royal court and has assumed an otherworldly dimension.

TABLE 1

Toponyms listed by Branch and Categorisation

First Branch	Type	Narr	Second Branch	Type	Narr	Third Branch	Type	Narr	Fourth Branch	Type	Narr
Annwfn	M	L	Aber Alaw	J	L	Caer Gawg	M	L	Arfon	T	C
Arberth	C	S	Aber Henfelen	T	L	Kent	T	C	Arllechwedd	T	C
Ceredigion	T	C	Aberffraw	C	S	England	T	S	Arwystli	T	C
Dyfed	T	C	Abermenai	J	S	Hereford	J	S	Bryn Arien	J	S
Glyn Cuch	J	S	Archan	M	L	Oxford	J	S	Bryn Cyfergyr	J	O
Gorsedd Arberth	J	S	Ardudwy	T	C	Arberth	C	S	Caer Aranrhod	C	S
Gwent Is Coed	T	S	Caer Seint	C	S	Dyfed	T	C	Dol Pebin	T	C
Penn Llwyn Diarwya	J	S	Cornwall	T	C	France	T	L	Caer Dathyl	C	S
Preseli	T	S	Edeirnon	T	S	Gorsedd Arberth	J	S	Cefyn Clun Tyno	J	S
Seisyllwch	T	C	France	T	L	Gwynfryn	J	L	Ceri	T	C
Ystrad Tywi	T	C	Glan Alaw	J	L	London	J	L	Creuwriion	J	O
			Gwales	J	L	Ynys Kedeirn	J	C	Deheubarth	T	C
			Gwynfryn	J	L				Dinas Dinlleu	C	S
			Harlech	C	S				Dinoding	T	C
			Ireland	T	S				Dol Benmaen	J	S
			Lli	M	L				Elennydd	T	C
			Llinon	J	S				Felenrhyd	J	S
			London	J	L				Gwynedd	T	C
			Llyn y Peir	M	L				Cynfael	J	S
			Penfro	T	L				Llech Gronwy	J	S
			Seith Marchog	T	L				Llyn y Morynion	J	O
			Talebolion	J	O				Maentwrog	J	S
			Wales	T	C				Eifionydd	T	C
			Ynys y Kedeirn	T	C				Maenor Bennardd	J	S
									Bryn y Castell	J	S
									Maenor Coed Alun	J	S
									Mochdref (1)	J	O
									Mochdref (2)	J	O
									Mochdref (3)	J	O
									Mochnant	J	O
									Morgannwg	T	C
									Mur Castell	C	S
									Nant Call	J	S
									Nant Lleu	J	S
									Penllyn	T	C
									Rhos	T	C
									Rhuddlan Teifi	C	S
									Traeth Mawr	J	S
									Aber Menai	J	S
									Ardudwy	T	C
									Ceredigion	T	C

Classification by Type
C - Courts
J - Journeys
T - places, Territories
M - Mythical locations

Classification by Narrative Purpose
S - Story
C - Context
O - Onomastic name
L - recalling or linking to Legend

Toponyms shown in red are repeats from a previous branch
Toponyms shown in blue are inferred toponyms

TABLE 2

Toponyms classified by type

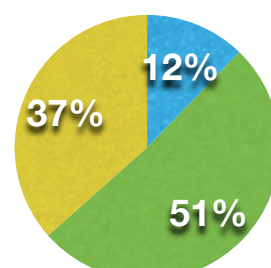
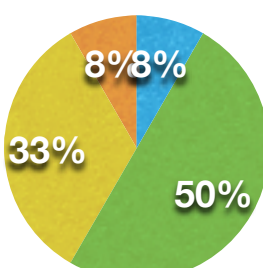
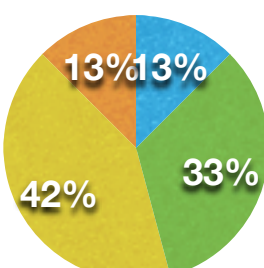
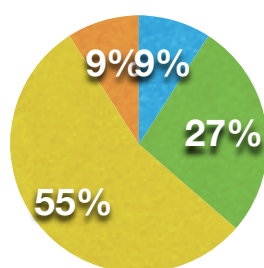
		All	First Branch	Second Branch	Third Branch	Fourth Branch
Court	C	10	1	3	1	5
Journey	J	38	3	8	6	21
Territories	T	35	6	10	4	15
Mythical	M	5	1	3	1	
TOTAL		88	11	24	12	41

First Branch

Second Branch

Third Branch

Fourth Branch



● Courts

● Journeys

● Territories

● Mythical

Toponyms classified by narrative purpose

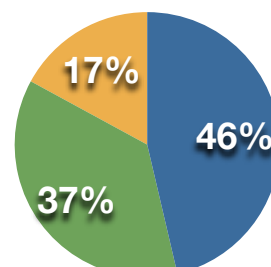
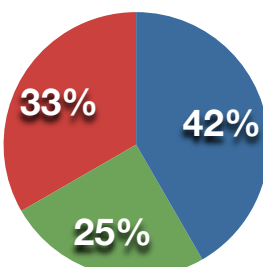
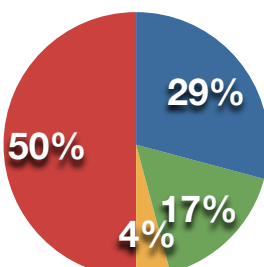
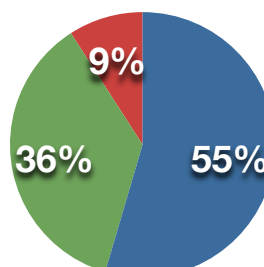
		All	First Branch	Second Branch	Third Branch	Fourth Branch
Story	S	37	6	7	5	19
Context	C	26	4	4	3	15
Onomastic	O	8		1		7
Legend	L	17	1	12	4	
TOTAL		88	11	24	12	41

First Branch

Second Branch

Third Branch

Fourth Branch



● Story

● Context

● Onomastic

● Legend

Percentages rounded and may not sum to 100

Some conclusions which can be drawn from this analysis are:

1. The number of toponyms in each branch varies greatly with the greatest number in the first and fourth branches. The third branch has the least new toponyms (only five) emphasising the extent to which this branch acts as a continuation of the first and second branches.
2. The fourth branch has the most toponyms and the greatest number which are critical to the storyline.
3. While neither of these conclusions will surprise those who know the tales, the paucity of onomastic toponyms will perhaps be unexpected. A widely held view expressed by Richards that 'the Four Branches of the Mabinogi abound in onomastic tales' is not the case as far as toponyms are concerned and the few memorable cases seem to have influenced thinking.²² There are of course onomastic links to personal names too.
4. Despite the obvious limitations of the technique, the broad similarity of frequency of occurrence of classification by type across the four branches is striking and may be some evidence of homogeneity of authorship.
5. The pattern of occurrence when classified by narrative purpose is more varied. The absence of the Legend category in the first and fourth branches is significant. These branches are not of course without their legendary links, but in each case the relevance of the legend is diminished by the author's need to tell the story which takes primacy. In the second and third branches the stories lack topographic detail and legend dominates the story and this is reflected in this analysis.

²² Melville Richards, 'Arthurian Onomastics', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1969, p. 254.

Courts in the *Four Branches*

One of the unifying features of the *Four Branches* is the description, reinforced by repetition, of the life of the princes in their courts where key events in the tales take place. The names of the courts or the descriptive detail given enables us to hazard the identity which the author had in mind for these fictional locations.

Courts in Deheubarth

There are two princes of Deheubarth/Dyfed who feature in the *Four Branches*, Pwyll and his son Pryderi. Pryderi, uniquely, appears in all four branches, born in the first and killed in the fourth. The region under Pryderi's control is normally described as Deheubarth, although that term is only used once in the text, and then by Gwydion of Gwynedd.²³ The author frequently describes Pryderi's forces as *Gwyr y Deheu* (Men of the South). Despite the extent of Pryderi's dominions we are given no detail to substantiate it. At the beginning of the third branch Pryderi offers his mother Rhiannon as a wife to Manawydan and provides Dyfed as her dowry. The unstated supposition is that Pryderi has other dominions to rule although for the whole of the branch we are not told of any discharge of his princely duties elsewhere in Deheubarth.²⁴ This uncertainty about the extent of Pryderi's dominion is also relevant to the identification of Arberth, which features significantly in the first and third branches.

Arberth

Although Arberth is throughout described as 'one of the chief courts', it is the only royal court named in the first and third branches.²⁵ We are told 'every celebration originated from

²³ At the beginning of the first branch we are told that Pwyll is the prince of the seven *cantrefi* of Dyfed. At the end of the first branch Pwyll dies and is succeeded by his son who inherits these seven *cantrefi* but later conquers the three *cantrefi* of Ystrad Tywi and the four *cantrefi* of Ceredigion. At the beginning of the fourth branch we are told that Pryderi rules over twenty-one *cantrefi*, which comprise those previously held and also the seven *cantrefi* of Morgannwg.

²⁴ Hughes, 2000, p. 20-21 discusses the problems in identifying the exact area of Pryderi's authority.

²⁵ This reckoning excludes the otherworld court of Arawn which in the story has all the exotic characteristics of 'real world' courts

there.²⁶ It is where Pwyll returns with his wife after their wedding; it is where Pryderi is born and from where he was abducted and it is where Rhiannon was required to serve her penance.

The many references to Arberth provide a number of possible clues to the location envisaged by the author. The Court at Arberth is clearly a substantial development capable of receiving the prince and his retinue as well as the retinue of visiting nobles. It has many halls and associated settlements. It is also very close to a substantial mound, described as being *uch llaw y llys* (above the court), known as Gorsedd Arberth.²⁷ It is also close enough to this *gorsedd* to make it feasible to take a walk to it as an adjunct to a feast, as happens in both the first and third branch.

(First Branch) After the first sitting Pwyll got up to take a walk and made for the top of the mound that was above the court.²⁸

(Third Branch) That night, after the first sitting, while the servants were eating, they got up and went out, and the four of them proceeded to Gorsedd Arberth and many people with them.²⁹

Gorsedd Arberth is a location known for magical events. In the first branch Pwyll, standing on the *gorsedd*, sees Rhiannon ride by on an enchanted horse. In the third branch, while the heroes of the story are on the *gorsedd*, Dyfed is enchanted and transformed back to its natural, uninhabited state.³⁰ It is from the *gorsedd* that they observe the magic fort in which Pryderi and Rhiannon become trapped. And it is the place where Manawydan tries to hang the mouse and, through his guile, releases Dyfed from the curse. It is significant also that the author emphasises that it is close to and overlooks a major routeway, along which Rhiannon rode in the first branch and along which Llwyd, son of Cil Coed, approached three times in clerical disguise to challenge Manawydan in the third.

²⁶ Davies, 2007, p. 36.

²⁷ Williams, PKM, p. 9.

²⁸ Davies, 2007, p. 8.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁰ It is noteworthy, in the context of the confusion of the extent of Pryderi's domains, that we are told the enchantment is only on the land of Dyfed and not Pryderi's wider domains and also that, to escape the enchantment, they go not to other parts of Deheubarth but to England.

At the beginning of the first branch Pwyll travels from Arberth to go hunting in Glyn Cuch. This is readily identified as the valley of the river now known as Afon Cuch which is a left bank tributary of Afon Teifi. On the way Pwyll makes an overnight stop at a place called Penn Llwyn Diarwya, which is presumably a hunting lodge, before going hunting the next day. This is the first example where reference to time in the text might be taken as a clue to the author's assumptions about distance between the places he is describing. We are told that:

He set out that night from Arberth and came as far as Penn Llwyn Diarwya and stayed there that night. And early next day he got up and came to Glyn Cuch to unleash his dogs in the forest.³¹

In wild terrain such as this long journeys could not be taken in the dark. Even allowing for some licence over the description of 'night', the text suggests that journey to the hunting lodge cannot have been more than an hour or two and thus that the author envisaged Arberth as being relatively close to Glyn Cuch.

There are two candidates for the location of Arberth. One is Arberth (English: Narberth) in south Pembrokeshire and the other is a site in south Ceredigion in the catchment of the Nant Arberth, a right bank tributary of the Teifi. Early opinion favoured the well-known Pembrokeshire location. This was clearly the view of Guest who commented that the domains of Pwyll in the first branch were restricted to the seven cantrefi of Dyfed which included the *cwmwd*³² and town of Arberth but not Ceredigion.³³ Lloyd and Williams consider no other possibility.³⁴ However Gruffydd, in his 1951 lectures, was far from convinced, saying that 'Arberth was never the chief court of the *cantref* of Penfro, much less of the kingdom of Dyfed.'³⁵ Local opinion in the lower Teifi valley has long held that theirs was the true Arberth and this view was documented by T. Llew Jones in 1992. Since then the case for the Pembrokeshire Arberth has been less strongly argued.³⁶ Bollard in 2006 and Davies in 2007

³¹ Davies, 2007, p. 3.

³² *cwmwd*, plural *cymydau* = commote, a two part subdivision of a *cantref*

³³ Guest, 1906, p. 288.

³⁴ Lloyd, 1948, p. 265; Williams, PKM, p. 93.

³⁵ Gruffydd, MvM, p. 18.

³⁶ T. Llew Jones, 'Banc Y Warin, Y Crug Mawr, Gorsedd Arberth', *Llafar Gwlad*, xxxvi: (1992), pp. 6-7.

both recognised that there is scope for doubt although both prefer the Pembrokeshire Arberth because they claim, without giving any evidence, that this better fits the story.³⁷ Breeze strongly favours the Ceredigion location and Parker agrees that it presents a ‘more plausible case’.³⁸ Hughes is swayed by the passion of Llew Jones’s arguments, but is not persuaded because it is not in Dyfed.³⁹

So what then is the evidence from the text?

Arberth in Pembrokeshire

Modern Arberth has a ruined castle at a prominent site on the edge of the medieval settlement, but this is no older than the first half of the thirteenth century.⁴⁰ There was a series of earlier Norman defences, probably on the same site, which were attacked and sacked in various Welsh uprisings, notably by Gruffydd ap Rhys in 1116 and by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth in his campaign in south Wales in 1213.⁴¹ Arberth may have been the *maerdref*⁴² for the *cwmwd* of Arberth. However, all the available records identify Arberth with the Normans and their allies and if there were a preceding Welsh defence no evidence survives. It was however not unusual for the Normans to build their defences on sites used earlier by the Welsh.⁴³ It is easy to agree with W. J. Gruffydd that it is hard to identify Arberth as a chief court of a Welsh princedom of either fact or legend.⁴⁴

³⁷ Bollard, 2006, pp. 24-25; Davies, 2007, p. 230.

³⁸ Breeze, 2007, p. 101; Andrew Breeze, ‘Moor, Court and River in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*’ in *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, Albrecht Classen ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 297-99; Will Parker, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi: Celtic Myth and Medieval Reality* (Oregon House, CA: Bardic Press, 2005).

³⁹ Hughes, 2007, p. 31.

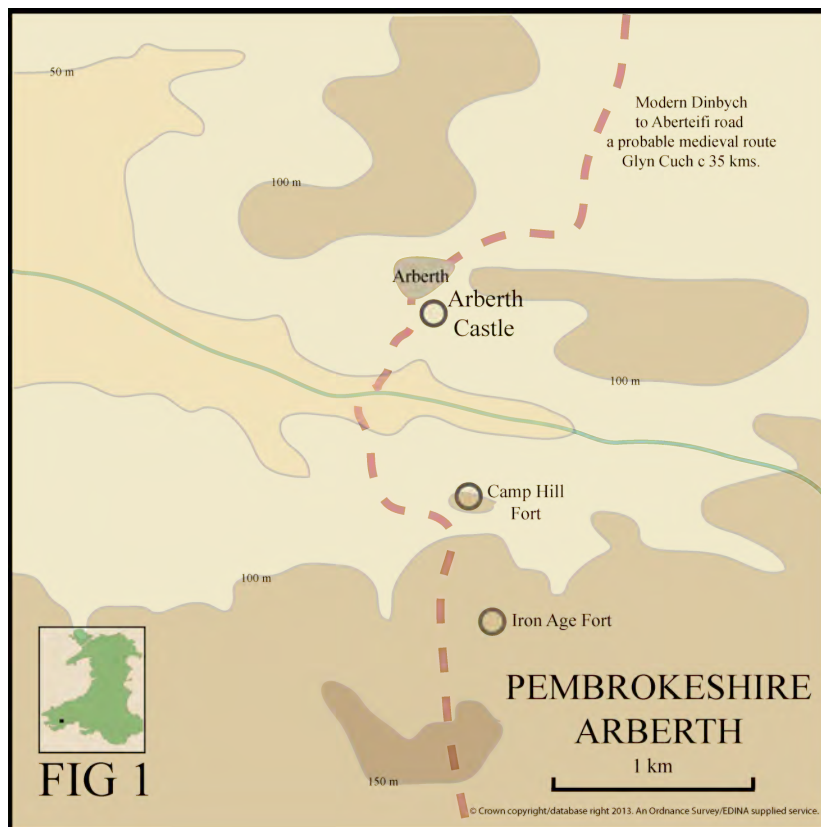
⁴⁰ Neil Ludlow, ‘The Castle and Lordship of Narberth.’ *Journal of the Pembrokeshire Historical Society*, 12: (2003), p. 6-8.

⁴¹ Lloyd, 1948, pp. 434 and 648.

⁴² *Maerdref*, a pre-Norman administrative centre; the territory held by the prince in the *cwmwd* where his representative was based.

⁴³ Ludlow, 2003, p. 6.

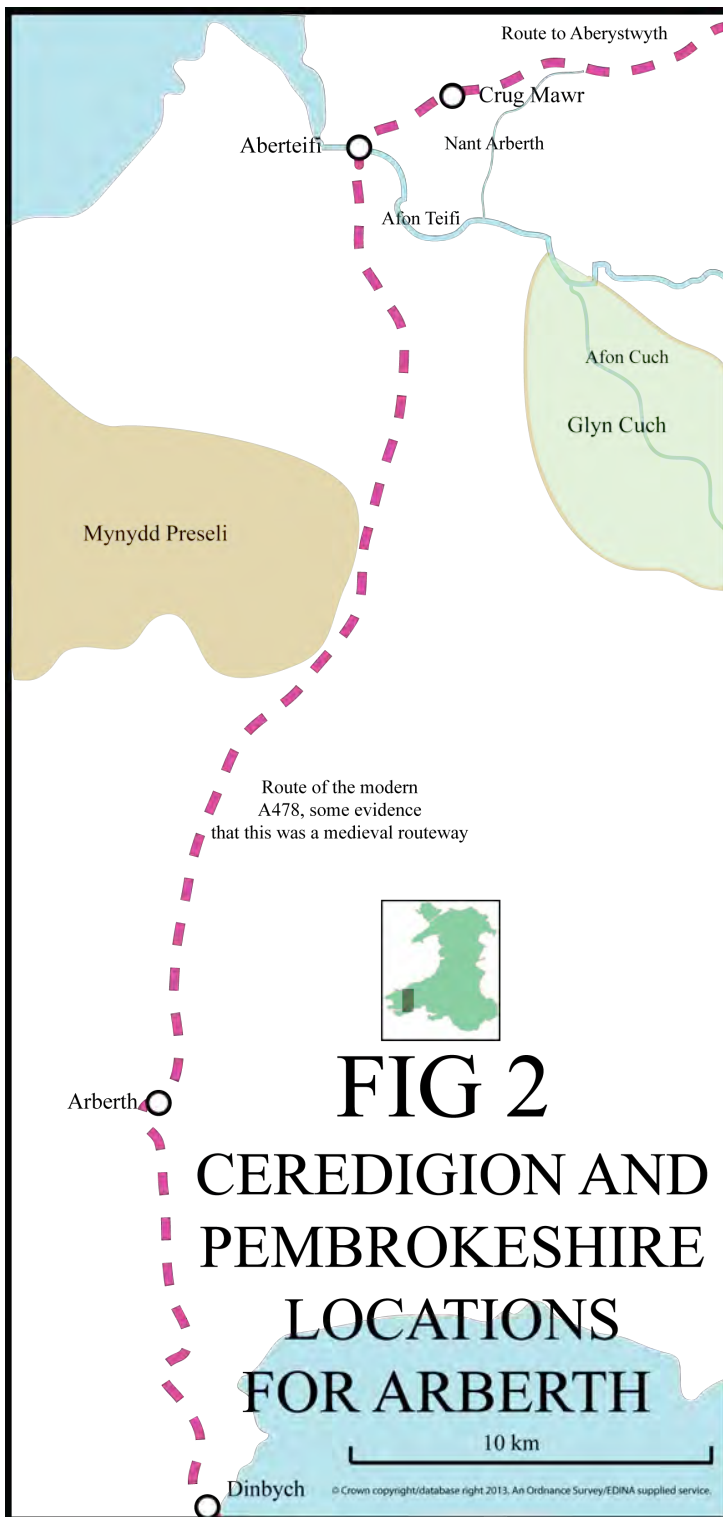
⁴⁴ Gruffydd, MvM, p. 18.



If the castle site in modern Arberth is where Pwyll had his court then, to fit the story, we also have to identify the site of the adjacent *gorsedd* at which the magical events in the first and third branches occurred. The area is one of undulating terrain which yields some possible locations. The two most likely are to the south, both probably Iron Age fortifications and both

along the modern A478. In the wider area there are a number of more prominent sites with evidence of Iron Age defences. None has any surviving historical record or associated legend that might link them to the *Mabinogi*. The nearest candidate for Gorsedd Arberth is known as Camp Hill which lies 2 km to the south of Arberth Castle. Although it is at a slightly higher elevation, it is across a steep-sided valley and would not naturally be described as ‘above the court’. Alternatively the Camp Hill defences have been proposed as the site of the court envisaged by the author of the *Four Branches* in which case the best site of the *gorsedd* would be the southern and higher defence shown on FIG 1. None of the possible sites for the *gorsedd* are prominent landmarks or look convincing as likely destinations for an excursion on foot after a meal.

From a court at Arberth the total journey that Pwyll would have had to make to go hunting in the forest at Glyn Cuch would have been about 35 km taking the line of the modern road skirting the edge of the Preseli Hills, as shown on FIG 2. That is about a day’s riding for a hunting party wanting to conserve their horses for hunting the following day. He might of



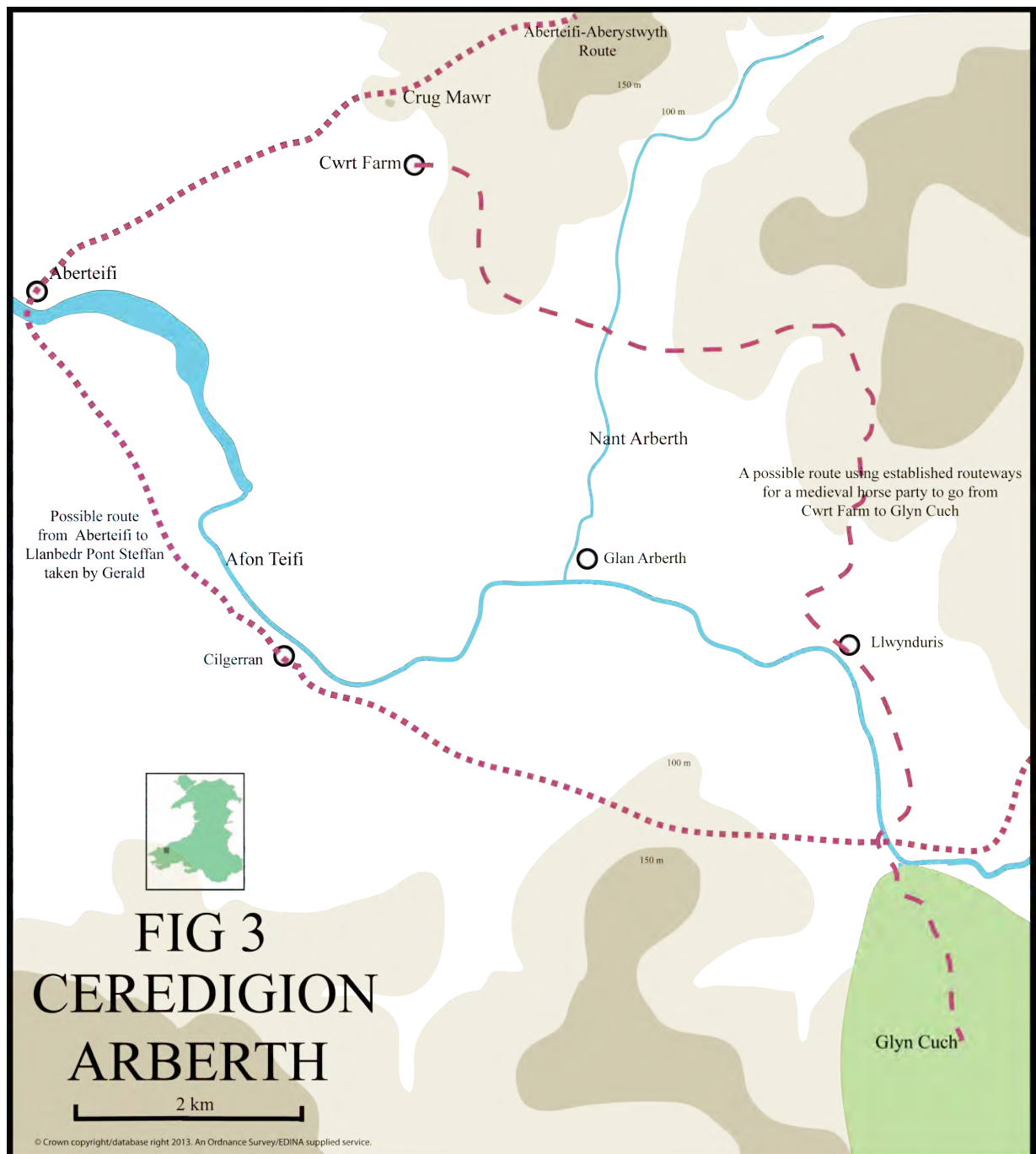
course have received fresh horses at the hunting lodge at Penn Llwyn Diarwya for the second day, which would extend his range somewhat. Without knowing the location of Penn Llwyn Diarwya it is not easy to extend the analysis, but it is hard to reconcile the account of Pwyll's travel to the hunt with a court located at the Pembrokeshire Arberth.

Arberth in Ceredigion

The case for this site is based upon the presence of the Nant Arberth stream near Llechryd in Ceredigion where there was once a substantial house (c.1850) named Glan Arberth.⁴⁵ (FIG 3). This name is preserved in the name of a farm and a housing development on the same land as the original estate. There is no known evidence of any form of medieval court or defence at Glan Arberth. The argument for this site is

based mainly on the presence of a hill of striking form, formerly called Crug Mawr and now called Banc y Warin (Banc y Warren on Ordnance Survey maps), a site of reputed magical

⁴⁵ Thomas Lloyd, Thomas, Julian Orbach, and Robert Scourfield. *The Buildings of Wales: Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 541.



occurrences. There is reference to it in the *Historia Brittonum*, Chapter 74, as one of the *Mirabilia*.⁴⁶ Gerald of Wales passed near by the site in 1188 when accompanying Archbishop Baldwin and he also records it as a site of magical events.⁴⁷ Jones notes that the accounts of the author of the *Mirabilia* and those of Gerald, although similar in character, differ in detail

⁴⁶ Barber, R, *Historia Brittonum*, Chapter 74 in *Myths and Legends of the British Isles*, R. Barber ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), p. 87.

⁴⁷ R. C. Hoare, *Geraldus Cambrensis: The Itinerary Through Wales; Description of Wales* (London: Dent, 1908), pp. 105-108.



CRUG MAWR
VIEWED ACROSS THE FLOOD
PLAIN OF THE AFON TEIFI
FIG 4

1 km



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on the nature of the marvels. From this he suggests that Gerald did not merely copy the *Mirabilia* but had his information direct from independent sources.⁴⁸ There is, of course, nothing novel about the summits of mountains and hills being regarded as places where supernatural events occur, so on those grounds alone it would not be possible to convincingly argue that Crug Mawr is Gorsedd Arberth. But there is other supporting evidence.

The first comes from Gerald of Wales. He did not go to Crug Mawr, but he saw it in the distance, ‘on his left hand’ as he travelled to Llanbedr Pont Steffan. If one travels these roads of the Teifi valley today it is possible to understand how the hill came dramatically to his attention which led him to make specific mention of it in his narrative for that day, which is otherwise devoted to the beauty of the Teifi and the habits of salmon and beavers. Although the hill has a striking, almost symmetrical, profile, untypical of the area, it is not any higher than surrounding land and so it is often obscured from view by other terrain and sometimes seen more clearly from a distance than close by for the same reason. The traveller thus sees it,

⁴⁸ Thomas Jones, ‘Gerald the Welshman’s *itinerary through Wales and description of Wales*’, *National Library of Wales Journal* xi(2): (1949), pp. 135-136

fleetingly but distinctively visible. Such a sight might have struck Gerald as surprising, even magical, and would likely to have led him to ask questions of his escort. FIG 4 shows Crug Mawr/Banc y Warin today as seen from a distance of 4 km across the Teifi.⁴⁹

The road from Aberteifi to Aberystwyth approaches close to Crug Mawr, which forces it to deviate to the west as the road climbs over the lower shoulder of the hill. From the hill the modern road can be clearly seen for a considerable distance in either direction, which fits very well with the accounts of travellers approaching the *gorsedd* in the first and third branches.

T. Llew Jones argued that Pwyll's court was at Glan Arberth, but this is not convincing. Crug Mawr is about 4 km away, out of line of sight and too remote to be described as 'above the court'. It is also too far for a post-prandial walk for a royal party. However the Nant Arberth stream runs across the whole area, and there are locations nearer to the mound which might have been assumed by the author to be the site of the court, including a modern Cwrt Farm only half a kilometre from the hill. Crug Mawr/Cwrt Farm is about 10 km from Glyn Cuch, so this would be an easy journey to make one evening for an early morning start to the hunt.

Bollard and Davies have both said that the Ceredigion Arberth does not fit the geography of the tale, but the argument is not that clear cut. The Ceredigion Arberth has a more plausible *gorsedd* and, from a literal reading of the text, better fits the journey time to the hunt in Glyn Cuch. It is however not in any of the *cantrefi* said to be under Pwyll's dominion at the time of the story. Bollard further argues that Crug Mawr has had that name since the ninth century and therefore could not be Gorsedd Arberth, but that is not a convincing argument when discussing the location in a work of fiction.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The route which Gerald took from Aberteifi to Llanbedr Pont Steffan is not known in detail. An 1804 edition of the itinerary (*Itinerarium cambriae seculaboriosae Baldvini Cantuariensis archiepiscopi per Walliam Legationis accurata descriptio auctore Silv. Geraldo Cambrense* (London: Typis Gulielmi Bulmer et Socci, 1804) includes a map but that does not accord well with Gerald's account. William Rees, *An Historical Atlas of Wales From Early to Modern Times* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), plate 37 more closely follows Gerald's text but there are still inconsistencies. Gerald says he saw Crug Mawr after he left Cenarth but the lie of the land makes that impossible. He could not, however, have failed to see it on his way to Cenarth, whether travelling north or south of the Teifi. There is little doubt that he went to Cenarth because of the detail of his description of the falls on the Teifi but he may not have been to Cilgerran in which case he could have followed the Teifi on the northern (Ceredigion) bank and been even closer to Crug Mawr.

⁵⁰ Bollard, 2006, pp. 24-25.

Before concluding a description of the options for the location of Arberth it is necessary to briefly mention Mynydd Carn. This is the site of a battle in the year 1081 between Gruffydd ap Cynan, aspirant to the principedom of Gwynedd and allied with Rhys ap Tewdwr, Prince of Deheubarth, against Trahaiarn of Powys and several other Welsh princes.⁵¹ Gruffydd and Rhys won the battle and as a result they and their families dominated Gwynedd and Deheubarth for much of the next century. The location is not known but the favoured site is some 5 km south of Arberth.⁵² The possible significance of this battle will be discussed later.

Rhuddlan Teifi

This is the only other court in the *Four Branches* which is described as being located in Deheubarth.⁵³ It is the court where Pryderi receives Gwydion in the fourth branch when he comes, full of mischievous intent, to obtain some of the pigs of Annwfn for Gwynedd. Rhys identified the site as Dolau Bach on the Highmead Estate near Llanybydder and this was accepted by Lloyd, Williams and subsequent authors.⁵⁴ This fertile pasture land in the middle Teifi valley is known to have been in the direct control of the princes of south Wales but until recently there was no evidence of a former court.⁵⁵ However recent investigations including geophysical surveys reported by Bezant are beginning to give substance to the presence of a

⁵¹ Paul Russell, *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: the Medieval Latin Life of Gruffydd Ap Cynan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), p. 69 ; D. Simon Evans, *Medieval Prince of Wales: The Life of Gruffydd ap Cynan* (Llanerch: Llanerch Enterprises, 1990), p. 37. Although Trahaiarn was from Powys he had allies in Gwynedd and had defeated Gruffydd at Bron yr Erw in Arfon six years earlier which led to Gruffydd's exile in Ireland from which he now returned with Irish and Danish mercenaries.

⁵² RCAHMW, 'Mynydd Car, Site of Battle, Near Templeton' (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/300319/details>). Other possible sites also listed in this reference are in the Preseli Hills south west of Aberteifi.

⁵³ In the first branch Pwyll meets with his nobles at 'Preseli in Dyfed' (Davies, 2007, p. 16). This is most definitely not a court because it is a meeting convened by the nobles to which Pwyll was summoned to be told of their concern at the lack of an heir. The account of the meeting shows none of the trappings of court protocol. So this is quite the reverse of a seat of princely power.

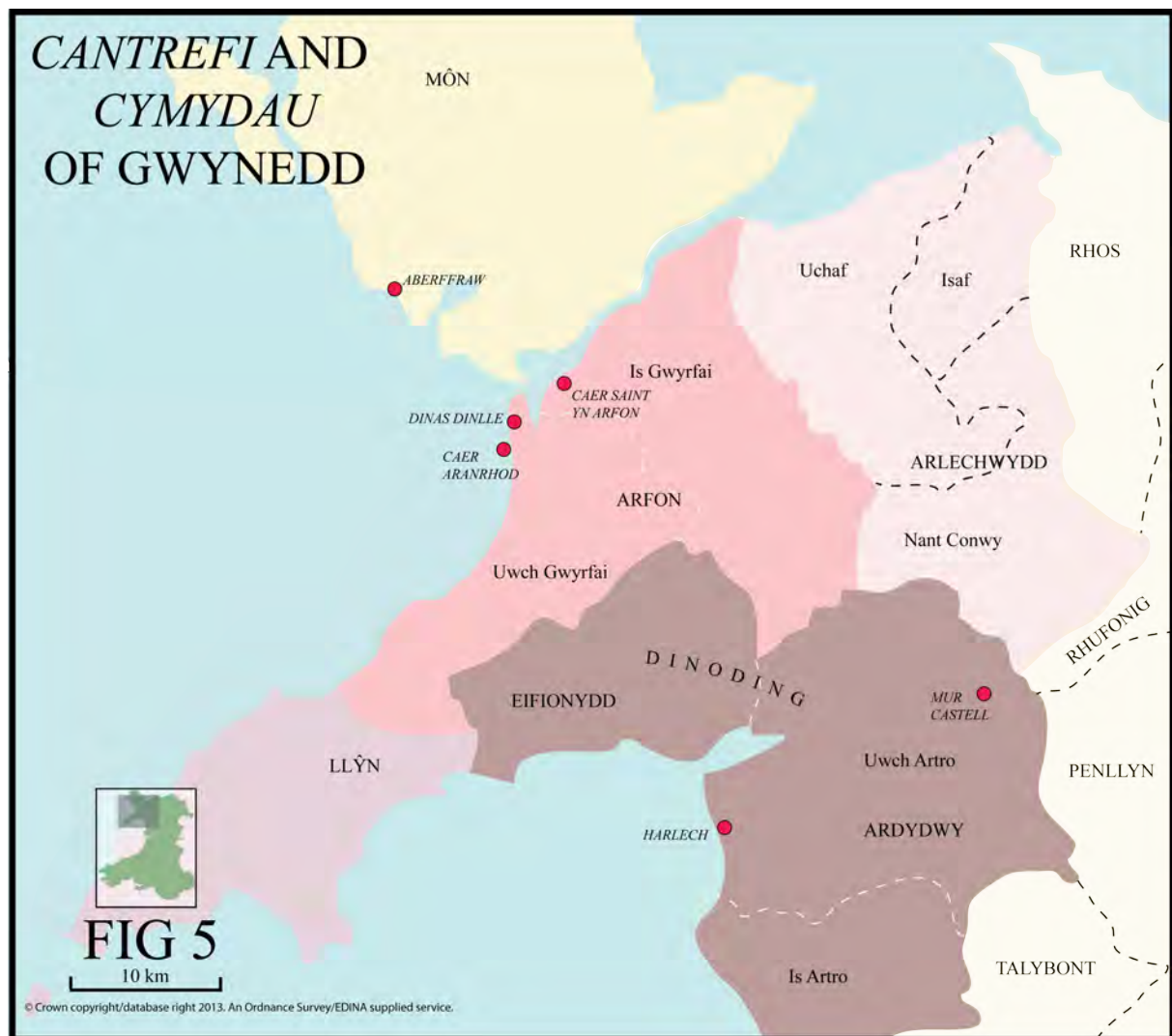
⁵⁴ Rhys, 1901, p. 501; Lloyd, 1948, p. 260; Williams, PKM, p. 257; J. E. Lloyd, *The Story of Ceredigion (400-1277)*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1937), p. 19; Davies, 2007, p. 293; Breeze, 2012, pp. 309-310.

⁵⁵ The Lord Rhys who in around 1165, as part of his extensive patronage of ecclesiastical foundations, vested them in the Cistercians of Whitland Abbey. Highmead House (Dolau Mawr) dates only from 1777. (J. Ceredig Davies, 'History and Traditions of the Neighbourhood of Highmead' *Transactions and Archeological Record, Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society*, 1(3): (1913), pp 5-7; D. J. Davies, 'Llanwenog', *Transactions and Archeological Record, Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society*, 12: (1937), p. 36.)

former court at Rhuddlan Teifi.⁵⁶ If further evidence is forthcoming of a pre-twelfth century high-status site here, this will be a rare direct historical link with the *Mabinogi* not known from previous sources.

Courts in Gwynedd

The fourth branch of the *Mabinogi* has the greatest number of royal courts. These include



Caer Dathyl. This, unlike Arberth, is never actually described as a ‘principal court’, but the regular return of the narrative to Caer Dathyl shows that to be the author’s perspective. Other

⁵⁶ Jemma Bezant, *Medieval Welsh Settlement and Territory: Archaeological Evidence From a Teifi Valley Landscape* BAR British Series, No. 487, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009); ‘Field Note’, *Archaeology in Wales* (2010), p. 102.

courts in Gwynedd play lesser roles in both the second and fourth branches but no single court is named in both branches and, out of the full list of courts in Gwynedd in the tales, only Aberffraw accords in name⁵⁷ with the historically validated courts of the Princes of Gwynedd. FIG 5 shows the locations of the courts in Gwynedd.

Caer Dathyl yn Arfon

Of all the place-names in the four branches the most enigmatic is Caer Dathyl. The location the author envisaged for it has been debated for as long as the tales have been studied. Pughe and, quite possibly following him, Guest, believed that Caer Dathyl yn Arfon was the substantial Iron Age fort of Pen-y-gaer near Tal-y-cafn on the west side of the Conwy.⁵⁸ This was repeated by Baring-Gould and Fisher.⁵⁹ This cannot have been the author's intent because this site is not in the *cantref* of Arfon, as pointed out by Rhys and by others.⁶⁰ The most popular choice is Segontium (Caernarfon). The most compelling argument against Segontium is that there is common consent that this is the location named in the second branch as 'Caer Saint yn Arfon'. Gresham, who also favoured Caernarfon, reports a discussion with Williams in which Williams acknowledged the merits of the option, but felt strongly that it was precluded because the place already had a name within the tales and therefore could not have two.⁶¹ Breeze favours Caernarfon, but suggests it might have been the hill known as Twthill, east of the town, rather than Segontium. Although this site may have been occupied at some

⁵⁷ As will be discussed later, Caernarfon/Segontium was a Welsh high status site but there is no historic record of it being called Caer Saint.

⁵⁸ J. E. Lloyd, 'Welsh Place Names: a Study of Some Common Name Elements', *Y Cymmrodor*, XI(1): (1890), p. 54; Guest, 1877, p. XX)

⁵⁹ Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints Vol. IV* (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1913), p. 212n2.

⁶⁰ Rhys, 1901, p. 225. The west bank of the Conwy was in Caernarfonshire and it is likely that these early identifications were in error because the distinction between the *cantref* of Arfon and the county of Caernarfonshire were not understood. Guest, 1906, p. 299 in a note shows that she completely misunderstands the geographic significance of Arfon and Arllechwedd.

⁶¹ 'Gwnâi Caernarfon y tro yn burion, ond anodd dyfod tros ei hen enw, Caer Saint.' Williams, PKM, p. 251. Colin A. Gresham, 'Archbishop Baldwin's Journey Through Meirioneth in 1188', *Journal of the Meirioneth Historical and Record Society*, X: (1985b), p. 187.

time there is no evidence of any fort or court here.⁶² Gruffydd argues for Tre'r Ceiri, a high point of the hills of Llŷn.⁶³ He is influenced by the need for it to be an elevated location (this comes from the description by Gwydion of the pigsty in Arllechwedd which will be discussed later). He also sees a common root with the Irish-derived name Tudwal and he therefore prefers a location to be as close as possible to other places in Llŷn which are linked to Tudwal. Williams confesses to being attracted to Tre'r Ceiri because of its legendary associations but recognises that it does not fit the geography of the tale.⁶⁴ Maybe this argument influenced Gruffydd because he offers as a footnote a more central alternative, Bryn Hengaer⁶⁵ between Pen y groes and Llanllyfni.⁶⁶ Dafydd Glyn Jones rejected Bryn Hengaer, and also Craig y Dinas another impressive Iron Age site along the Afon Llyfni, because, as will be seen later, they did not fit with the text of Gwydion's search for Lleu. He respected Williams' view that it could not be Caernarfon, but concluded that the most likely site would be on the coast west of Caernarfon.⁶⁷ Hughes (2000), in an extensive review of the evidence for both the roots of the name and the evidence for its location, describes the location of Caer Dathyl as a 'major unresolved issue' but supports the conclusions of Jones.⁶⁸ Davies, presumably following Jones, but with more conviction, states that Caer Dathyl was 'clearly a fort somewhere on the coast between Dinas Dinlle and Caernarfon'.⁶⁹ In his 2013 text Hughes seems more persuaded that Caer Dathyl is Segontium.⁷⁰

⁶² Breeze 2009, p. 107; RCAHMWM, *A Survey and Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Caernarvonshire Vol. 2: Central* (London: HMSO, 1960) p. 158 'the function of the work is not clear but it does not seem to be defensive'.

⁶³ Gruffydd, MvM, p. 343-345.

⁶⁴ Williams, PKM, p. 251.

⁶⁵ Bryn Hengaer is also known as Caer Bryn yn Hengaer and, on Ordnance Survey maps, as Caer Engan.

⁶⁶ Gruffydd, MvM, p. 345n93.

⁶⁷ Dafydd Glyn Jones, *Y Bedwaredd Gainc: Darlith Flynyddol Llyfrgell Penygroes, 1987* (Caernarfon: Cyngor Sir Gwynedd, 1988), pp. 16-19.

⁶⁸ Hughes, 2000, pp. 22-23.

⁶⁹ Davies, 2007, p. 290.

⁷⁰ Hughes, 2013, p. 30.

So what then is the evidence from the text? Unlike for Arberth the text gives us no description of the physical setting of the court at Caer Dathyl, but the many references to it in the tales give rise to useful clues. The most important are these:

(1) When Gwydion returns to Gwynedd, having stolen the swine from Pryderi and hidden them in a sty in Creuwriion in Arllechwedd, he goes to meet Math at Caer Dathyl. In reply to Math's question on the whereabouts of the stolen pigs he replies;

A pen has been made for them in the other cantref below.⁷¹

We know the pigs are in the *cantref* of Arllechwedd so, by referring to their location as 'in the other *cantref*', the only conceivable *cantref* for Caer Dathyl is Arfon which is how it is described throughout. Without doubt this is the medieval *cantref* of Arfon, part of Gwynedd but excluding Arllechwedd.

(2) Following the meeting of Math and Gwydion at Caer Dathyl, they proceed with their entourage to prepare to meet Pryderi who is marching north to recover the pigs.

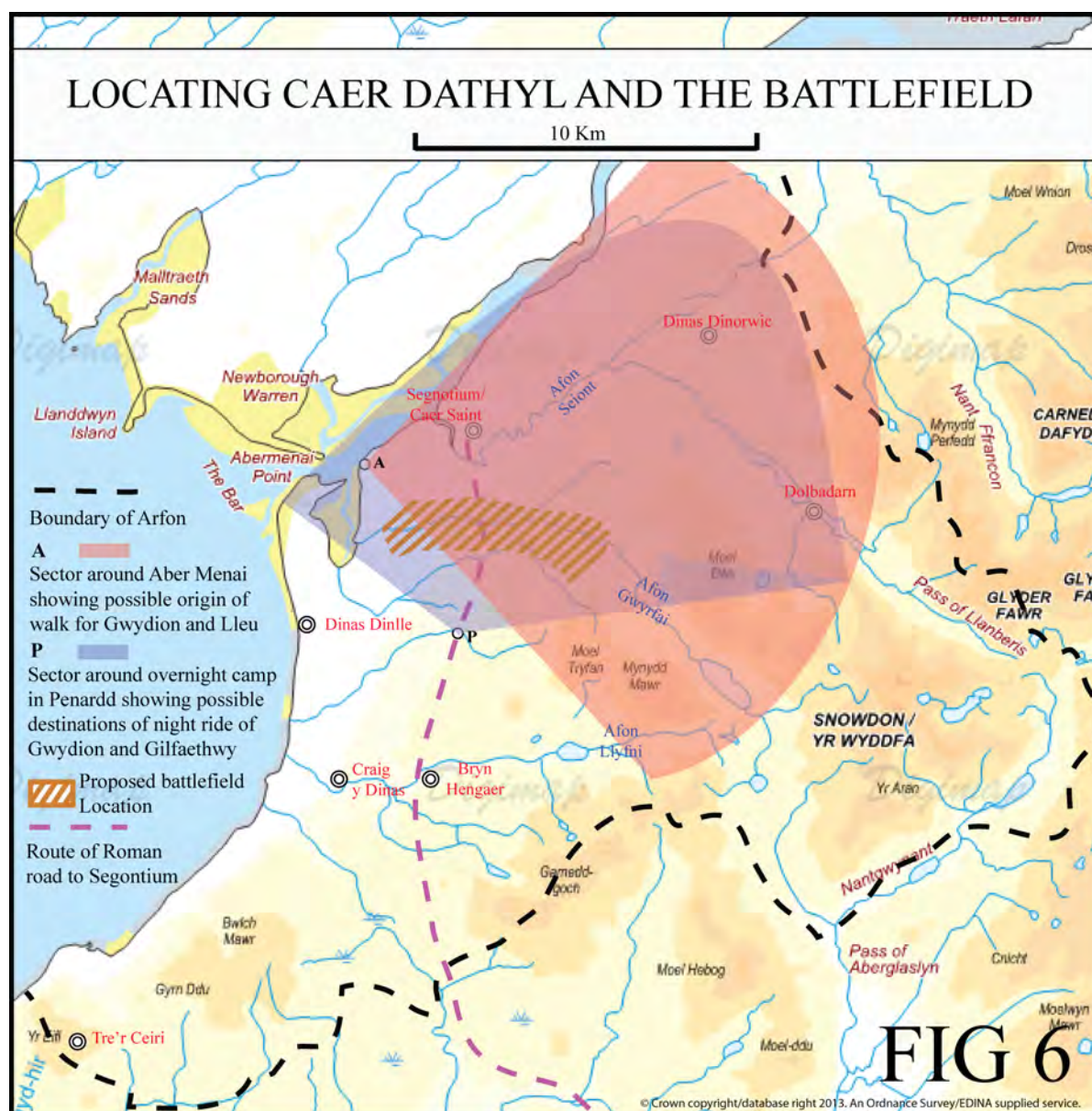
Then behold, they could hear the trumpets and the mustering of people. They armed themselves at once and travelled until they came to Pennardd in Arfon.⁷²

The place-name Pennardd in the area of the former *cantref* of Arfon is preserved today in a substantial farm located to the north east of Clynnog, but it is unlikely that the author was intending to be that specific. This is because the *cantref* of Arfon was divided into two *cymydau* north and south of Afon Gwyrfa, named Arfon Uwch Gwyrfa and Arfon Is Gwyrfa. It was common practice to name subdivisions of *cantrefi* in this way splitting them by a physical feature such as a river or a woodland. Each *cwmwd* was itself divided into a number of *maenoriau*.⁷³ Maenor Bennardd must have been a *maenor* within Arfon Uwch Gwyrfa. Its boundaries are not known in detail but it occupied that part of the *cwmwd* south

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Welsh *maenor*, pl. *maenoriau*; an administrative unit, a subdivision of a *cwmwd* and not to be compared to 'manor' in English. The term in use in Gwynedd was not *maenor* but *maenol* (see Rhys A. Jones, 'Problems With Medieval Welsh Local Administration - the Case of the *Maenor* and the *Meanol*', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 24(2): (1998), pp. 135-46 for a detailed explanation of the difference) but the influence of scribes from south Wales has led to all texts now using *maenor*. (Lloyd, 1890, p. 34).



of the Gwyrfa. It may be assumed therefore that, at the time the tale was being first transcribed, the term Pennardd would have been generally applied to an area south of Afon Gwyrfa. The *Gwyr y Deheu* would have likely advanced along the line of the Roman road from Tomen y Mur to Segontium. To proceed towards the current farm of Pennardd would involve unnecessary ascent and have little military logic, so it is not unreasonable to assume that Math's position on the night before battle would be somewhere in Pennardd along the general line of the Roman road.

But that night Gwydion son of Dôn and Gilfaethwy his brother returned to Caer Dathyl. And in the bed of Math son of Mathonwy, Gilfaethwy and Goewin daughter of Pebin were put to sleep together, and her maidens were forced out violently, and she was taken against her will that night.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Davies, 2007, p. 50.

The text makes clear that the two brothers returned to *Caer Dathyl* from the advanced camp, presumably on horseback. To be feasible as a night-time journey it must have been over suitable terrain and not too great a distance. In such circumstances it is hard to imagine it being in excess of 15 km and likely much less. Thus, even though the site the author envisaged for the overnight camp before the fictional battle is not known, it is possible to hazard an envelope of possibilities for such a journey and this is shown on FIG 6.⁷⁵

(3) Later in the story Gwydion and his (adopted) son Lleu meet Lleu's mother Aranrhod three times at her court at *Caer Aranrhod*. The first visit gives no clues as to the whereabouts of *Caer Dathyl*, but they visit again the following day and we learn more.

And the next day he got up and took the boy with him, and he went walking along the sea shore between there (*Caer Dathyl*) and *Aber Menai*.⁷⁶

Aber Menai is at the western end of the *Afon Menai* (*Menai Straits*). The name is applied to both the *Arfon* and *Môn* shores of the straits, but the context here is clearly the southern shore. The estuary of *Afon Gwyrfa* provided a shelter for shipping and a small port existed here and was used as a port for travel to and from Ireland. *Gruffudd ap Cynan* landed here when he came from Ireland to recover his entitlement as Prince of *Gwynedd* and he used it as a point of escape after his defeat in battle at *Bron yr Erw* in 1075.⁷⁷ When Gwydion and Lleu reached *Aber Menai*, Gwydion used his magic powers to make a ship and to fashion cobbler's materials and then set sail to *Caer Aranrhod* where they carried out an elaborate and time-consuming deception which led to *Aranrhod*, against her will, giving Lleu his name. The inference given by the author is that all this took place on one day after which Gwydion and Lleu retired to *Dinas Dinlle*. The walk to *Aber Menai* which preceded the deception of *Aranrhod* can, logically, have only taken a few hours (perhaps again no more than 15 km) and, if this assumption is made, a limit is placed upon the possible locations for the start of the walk, which is also shown on FIG 6.

⁷⁵ Land of equivalent distance to the west is excluded because it involves crossing the *Menai Straits* and to the east because of the elevation and complexity of terrain.

⁷⁶ Davies, 2007, p. 55.

⁷⁷ Evans, 1990, p. 60-63.

(4) All these considerations have been discussed by many authors since Gruffydd and Williams began to look at the text of the tales to try and identify locations. There is one further geographic clue, however, which does not seem so far to have been deployed in the argument .

Pan welsant y dyd drannoeth, kyrchu a wnaethant parth a'r lle yd oed Math uab Mathonwy a'y lu. Pan doethant, yd oed y guyr hynny yn mynet y gymryt kynghor ba tu yd arhoynt Pryderi a guyr y Deheu. Ac ar y kynghor y doethant wynteu. Sef a gaussant yn eu kynghor, aros yg kedernit Gwynedd yn Aruon. Ac yghymherued y dwy uaynawr yd arhoed, Maynawr Bennard a Maynawr Coed Alun.⁷⁸

At dawn the next day they travelled to where Math son of Mathonwy and his host were. As they arrived, the men were about to take counsel regarding where they would wait for Pryderi and the men of the South. So they too joined in the deliberation. They decided to wait in the strongest part of Gwynedd in Arfon. And they waited right in the middle of the two districts, Maenor Bennardd and Maenor Coed Alun.⁷⁹

Even for our author this is a remarkably rich paragraph, although not without its ambiguities. The text clearly demonstrates his interest in (and understanding of) military tactics. Math and his commanders are considering the choice of the site where they should face Pryderi with best advantage. One of their considerations would undoubtedly be to mitigate losses in the event of defeat, so it is most unlikely that they will chose a place which allows the forces of the South to approach or surround their chief court and threaten the safety of their retinue and their families and deny a place of retreat. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that, since the author has positioned Pryderi as advancing from the south, that *Caer Dathyl* will be to the north (rear) of Math's line. The author tells us they chose to face battle 'in the middle of the two districts of Maenor Bennardd and Maenor Coed Alun'. For reasons already explained, for Pennardd we should not read the modern farm but the whole district south of Afon Gwyrfaï. Similarly for Coed Alun we should not read the place on the outskirts of modern Caernarfon, now called Coed Helen, but the whole of the district north of Afon Gwyrfaï. Coed Alun was apparently in the *cwmwd* in Arfon Is Gwyrfaï adjacent to the river. Thus identifying the site which the author had in mind for the battle is not the impossible task of finding a location

⁷⁸ Williams, PKM, p. 72.

⁷⁹ Davies, 2007, p. 50.

between modern Pennardd and modern Coed Helen, which are 12 km apart, but of finding locations on the boundary of the two *maenorau* which is demarcated by Afon Gwyrfai.⁸⁰

The second geographical clue in this quote is less easy to interpret. The battle site was in ‘kedernit Gwynedd yn Arfon’ for which Davies gives the literal translation as ‘the strongest part of Gwynedd in Arfon’. Since the *cantref* of Arfon contained the summit of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) and the many defences in its western and southern valleys, taking this phrase literally has little tactical relevance to facing an armed force from the south skirting Yr Wyddfa and already moving through a lowland pass. A more satisfactory interpretation is ‘Arfon, the strongest part of Gwynedd’, meaning that they decided to stay and face them where they now were, in Arfon, rather than seeking to establish a defence elsewhere in Gwynedd, such as advancing over the pass into Eifionydd to meet their opponents sooner or to retreat to face them in Arllechwedd nearer where the pigs are hidden. An even better interpretation might be ‘in the heartland of Gwynedd, in Arfon’, emphasising defensibility rather than strength. Gantz translates ‘kedernit’ as ‘stronghold’ and Breeze suggests ‘fastness’ which both have something of the same quality.⁸¹ The distinction in this case is rather subtle but it achieves more significance when later we meet a similar phrase ‘kedernit Gwynet’ in the context of the pen for the stolen pigs.

FIG 6 shows the reasonable limits of the battle site which can be inferred from this analysis of the text. It is in the middle part of the valley of Afon Gwyrfai around the line of the likely advance. It does not extend to the coastal plain to the west (which would expose, on the defending army’s left flank, an undefended route through to the northern coast and the route to Arllechwedd). Nor does it extend too far up the Gwyrfai valley into the higher mountain region. To choose to face Pryderi here would risk leaving the route to the north undefended.

⁸⁰ The boundaries and in many cases even the names of the *maenorau* are not preserved. In Arfon there is some detail for *Maenor Bangor* but the *Mabinogi* provides one of the few other references; Colin A. Gresham, ‘Medieval Parish and Township Boundaries in Gwynedd’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 34: (1987), p. 142.

⁸¹ Gantz, 1976, p. 102; Breeze, 2009, p. 111.

If the author composed the text with a site for Caer Dathyl clearly in mind and had regard to the military practicalities then, on all the evidence above, the possible locations for Caer Dathyl are very few. Tre'r Ceiri or any other subsidiary summits on the border of Eifionydd are clearly excluded. So are the sites along the Llyfni valley and other remnants of Iron Age settlement between the Llyfni and Gwyrfaï valleys. Locations towards Dinas Dinlle equally do not fit. However Segontium would fit all the evidence well and makes Gwydion and Lleu's walk to Aber Menai quite short, which is consistent with the text.⁸² Providing the longer walk to Aber Menai is considered, then the prominent fort of Dinas Dinorwic⁸³ one time occupied by the Ordovices and with associated Arthurian legend, might be considered. A further possible site within the envelope is Dolbadarn. The stone castle dates from the thirteenth century but there were probably earlier structures on this well defended site on the *ffridd*⁸⁴ of the *cwmwd* of Arfon Is Gwyrfaï.⁸⁵

Although by no means conclusive this analysis strengthens the view, which many have held, that Caer Dathyl and Caer Saint are the same place.

Aberffraw

Aberffraw is the location in the second branch where the wedding feast and consummation of marriage between Branwen and Matholwch took place. It was also where Efnysien mutilated Matholwch's horses, the provocation of the conflict with the Irish. The author gives no description of the court save to say that the feast was held in a tent because there was no building to accommodate Bendigeidfran, but his descriptions of court ritual at the feast match those given for other feasts throughout the *Four Branches*.

⁸² Gruffydd, MvM, p. 345 n93 says that the description of Gwydion's journey with Lleu rules out Caernarfon as a possible site for Caer Dathyl. He does not explain this statement, which is a very puzzling one.

⁸³ Also called Pen Dinas

⁸⁴ *ffridd* - mountain grazing land, part of the land held in the name of the Prince in the *cwmwd*.

⁸⁵ David Longley, 'Gwynedd Before and After the Conquest' in *The impact of Edwardian Castles in Wales: Proceedings of a conference held at Bangor University, 7-9 September 2007*. Diane M. Williams, and John R. Kenyon, eds. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), p. 21.

Aberffraw was the principal court of the Princes of Gwynedd from the ninth century. The site of the medieval court is now buried beneath more recent developments.⁸⁶ Despite its significance in the history of the region, it is only mentioned in the second branch and not at all in the fourth branch which deals almost exclusively with the activities of the ruling class of Gwynedd. Identifying Aberffraw as a court of the British in a story about conflict with Ireland might have been symbolic because, by tradition, a court was first established here in the sixth century after Goidelic (Irish) speaking settlers were overcome and expelled by Cadwallon Lawhir to establish Brythonic ascendancy over Môn.⁸⁷

Harlech

This is the site of the famous Edwardian Castle constructed between 1283 and 1289 which takes its name from the prominent rock overlooking Tremadog Bay. At the opening of the second branch Bendigeidfran, family and entourage are holding court at Harlech when they see a flotilla of thirteen ships approaching from Ireland. Matholwch, King of Ireland, wants to marry Bendigeidfran's sister, Branwen. The court, in deliberation at Harlech, agrees to the match and decides that the wedding should take place at the court in Aberffraw.

There is disagreement over the pre-Edwardian history of Harlech. Its rock is a prominent landmark on the fertile and long-settled coastal region of Ardudwy. At the time Edward established the castle any settlement at Harlech had no standing in the administration of Ardudwy. Ystumgwern, 7 km south of Harlech, was the *maerdref* of Ardudwy Uwch Artro until Edward made his new town of Harlech the local administrative centre. This he achieved by physically transporting the royal hall of Ystumgwern together with its administrative functions and re-erecting it within the new castle wall. Taylor, who carried out the modern investigation of the castle, is clear that 'neither history nor archaeology furnish any evidence

⁸⁶ Neil Johnstone, '*Llys and Maerdref: the Royal Courts of the Princes of Gwynedd*', *Studia Celtica*, XXXIV: (2000), p. 172.

⁸⁷ Lloyd, 1948, p. 120.

to suggest that Harlech had formerly had a castle of the princes'.⁸⁸ Gerald stayed overnight at Llanfair, 3 km south of modern Harlech and would seem to have taken the higher Iron Age route bypassing, without comment, whatever settlement that might have existed in 1188.⁸⁹

The persistence of Harlech in legend may have historical substance. There have been claims of a Roman settlement, or at least a signal post on a Roman Road and there have been finds of Roman artefacts.⁹⁰ But the most persistent legends revolve around associations with Branwen which Jones argues are a source for the story in the second branch and not created by it.⁹¹ The name of the south-west tower of the Edwardian castle, called Tŵr Bronwen, may perpetuate the name of an earlier structure in her name.⁹² Ryder has questioned why, if Edward wanted to have a commanding presence over Tremadog Bay, he did not rely on further strengthening the existing Welsh castle at Cricieth and surmises that building Harlech was part of Edward's strategy to be seen to honour Welsh tradition in his works, in the same way that Caernarfon Castle is said to reflect tradition associated with Constantine.⁹³

⁸⁸ A. J. Taylor, *Harlech Castle, 4th Edition*, (Cardiff:CADW, 2002), p. 5; Also from RCAHMWM, 1921, p.60; 'for this earlier structure there is not the slightest evidence'. Paul Martin Remfrey, *Harlech Castle and its True Origins* (Pwllheli: SCS Publishing, 2013) is a recently published private monograph which argues that there was a pre-existing castle at Harlech. Its conclusions rely significantly on accepting the second branch of *The Mabinogi* as fact and on making a creative reinterpretation of Gerald's itinerary to conclude that he came to Harlech and saw a castle in 1188.

⁸⁹ Gresham, 1985b, p. 200.

⁹⁰ E. Waddelove, *The Roman Roads of North Wales: Recent Discoveries* (Ruthin: Edmund Waddelove, 1999), p. 318.

⁹¹ Glyn E. Jones, 'Y Wledd yn Harlech ac yng Ngwales ym Mabinogi Branwen', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 25: (1974), pp. 380-86.

⁹² It is noted by Taylor, 2002, p. 27, that early castle surveys called this tower Le Wedercocktour and it is only by the survey of 1564 that it is called Bronwen's Tower.

⁹³ Charles Ryder, 'The Spiral Stair or Vice: Its Origins, Role and Meaning in Medieval Stone Castles', (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Liverpool, 2011), pp. 215-216.

Caer Saint yn Arfon ⁹⁴

There is consensus that this is Segontium, the Roman fort on the outskirts of modern Caernarfon. Segontium was garrisoned almost continually for over three hundred years from the Roman defeat of the Ordovices in AD77 until the withdrawal around AD390 and it was the Roman military and administrative centre for north-west Wales.⁹⁵ Although one of the remotest Roman outposts, it and its ruins, in the words of Loomis ‘persistently served as a focus for the myth-making fantasy and called forth a series of legends.’⁹⁶ The *Historia Brittonum* lists it as one of the cities of Britain, showing that some 400 years after the departure of the Romans it was well remembered. Bendigeidfran is at this court when he receives the distress message from Branwen carried by a starling. It is also referred to in The Dream of Macsen, another tale from the *Mabinogion*. Although its reputation must have been sustained and reinforced largely by legend there is some evidence of it being a high-status site of the princes of Gwynedd, which might have influenced its choice by the various authors of the *Mabinogion*.⁹⁷

Mur Castell

By consensus this court is identified as the Roman fort usually known as Tomen y Mur. Mur Castell is referred to both in the fourth branch of *The Mabinogi* and also in the Welsh version of the *Vita Griffini Filii Conani*.⁹⁸ However the original of the *Vita* is less specific as to name

⁹⁴ Williams (PKM) names the fort ‘Kaer Seint yn Aruon’. Davies makes the orthographically correct translation to Caer Saint but this is a departure from earlier translations. Guest used Caer Seiont taking her name from the adjacent river which all agree is its derivation and also the source of the Roman name Segontium. Jones and Jones, Gantz and Ford all use Caer Seint. Bollard however uses Caer Saint. Until recently the river was called ‘Saint’ in English but current practice in both English and Welsh is now to call the river Afon Seiont, which is the official name adopted by Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru (Natural Resources Wales).

⁹⁵ Jeffrey Davies, *Segontium Roman Fort* (Cardiff: CADW, 2005), p. 2.

⁹⁶ Roger Sherman Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1956), p. 2.

⁹⁷ Most of the evidence of the high status of Caernarfon comes from later than the likely dates of the transcription of *The Four Branches*. However Llanbeblig, the ecclesiastical site at Segontium, which was a royal chapel in the thirteenth century, is thought to have been an early foundation. E.G. Bowen, *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in Wales*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1954), p. 22; Johnstone, 2000, p. 176.

⁹⁸ Evans, 1990, pp. 43 and 49.

instead referring to 'castris intra murata castella'.⁹⁹ The provenance of the Welsh version of the *Vita* is not well known, so this means that our sources of the name Mur Castell are two Middle Welsh texts of unknown relationship. However there is no obvious alternative candidate site, given the rich set of geographical clues given by the author of *The Mabinogi*.¹⁰⁰

In the fourth branch, after Math and Gwydion had together conjured up a bride for Lleu, and they had slept together, Gwydion said to Math:

'It is not easy for a man without a realm to support himself.'

'I know,' said Math. 'I shall give him the best cantref that a young man can have.'

'Lord,' he said, 'what cantref is that?'

'The cantref of Dinoding', he said. That is now called Eifyonydd and Ardudwy. Lleu set up court in the cantref at a place called Mur Castell, in the uplands of Ardudwy; he settled there and ruled. And everyone was pleased with him and his governance.¹⁰¹

Dinoding was an ancient petty kingdom of north Wales. It may have maintained independent rulers until the ninth or tenth century but even then was subject to Gwynedd from time to time.¹⁰² This circumstance is evidently reflected in Math having the authority to bestow this *cantref* on Lleu.¹⁰³ However it appears the author was aware that Dinoding was no longer a name in regular use and that he needed to explain the modern usage to his audience.

Tomen y Mur is described by Bowen and Gresham as 'atypical in location for Roman forts . . . a very bleak location for a garrison but justified by its strategic importance.'¹⁰⁴ It lay at the intersection between the Roman roads believed to have run from Segontium to Caer Gai

⁹⁹ Russell, 2005, p. 79 and 87.

¹⁰⁰ This is a telling example where the fictional author of *The Mabinogi* provides much more information about the geographical context than the roughly contemporary translator/hagiographer of the *Vita*.

¹⁰¹ Davies, 2007, p. 59.

¹⁰² Beverley Smith, J, and Beverley Smith, Linos (eds). *History of Merioneth, Volume II* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 4.

¹⁰³ Ardudwy and Eifyonydd are adjacent medieval Welsh *cymydau* which combined to make the *cantref* usually referred to as Dunoding. The *maerdref* of Eifyonydd was Dolbenmaen and the *maerdref* of Ardudwy was Ystumgwyn.

¹⁰⁴ E. G. Bowen and Colin A. Gresham, *History of Merioneth* (Dolgellau: Merioneth Historical and Record Society, 1967), p. 231.

(above Llyn Tegid) and from Bryn y Gefeiliau¹⁰⁵ (near Capel Curig) to Brithdir/Dolgellau. The Romans abandoned the fort around 140 AD. At some stage thereafter a bailey mound was constructed within the fort. There is no evidence that the Welsh princes actively possessed the site or maintained the defence. The only authority to speculate on this is Lloyd but he was given to linking elements of legend with fact in his history.¹⁰⁶ The site would have been of limited strategic value to the indigenous population but important to occupying forces who need to use the road network to maintain their authority. Relying on the information from the *Historia Gruffudd Vab Cynan*, twice in twenty years a Norman army occupied the site and used it as a central rallying point to attack the Welsh, firstly in 1095 under William Rufus and then again in 1114 under Henry I. The Royal Commission record that 'there is little doubt that the fine mound castle . . . was erected by William Rufus or his brother Henry'.¹⁰⁷

The Welsh princes needed fortifications in a different location to guard the route along the former Roman road from Caer Gai. This was also the routeway between Ardudwy, under the sway of Gwynedd and Penllyn, part of Powys, although regularly overrun by the princes of Gwynedd. The site they used was in Cwm Prysor at a location which is thought to have been an intermediate watchtower on the Roman road and which they developed into a *maerdref* for upland Ardudwy. This fortification, although overrun on a number of occasions, was maintained into the thirteenth century and featured in the campaigns of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth.¹⁰⁸

Tomen y Mur is therefore a remarkable choice of location for a court in this story since there is no evidence of a sustained Welsh presence, let alone centre of governance at this location. It is eccentrically located to be a seat of government for the whole of Dinoding. It is however

¹⁰⁵ Sometimes known as Caer Llugwy

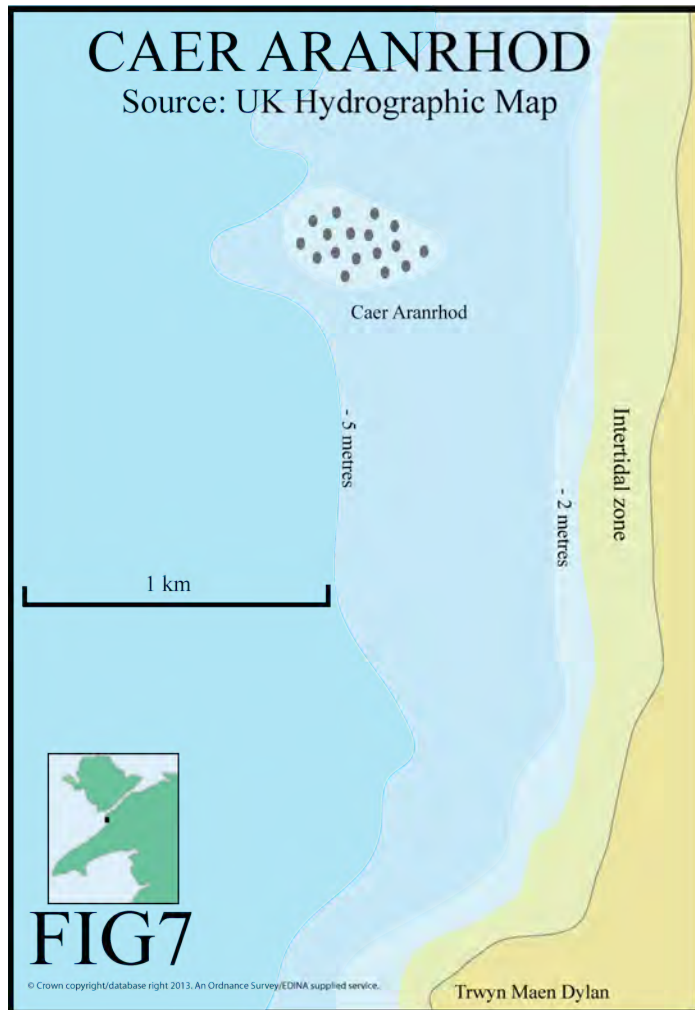
¹⁰⁶ Lloyd, 1948, p. 69.

¹⁰⁷ RCAHMWM, 1921, p. xix.

¹⁰⁸ *idem*.

close to Afon Cynfael the site of the attempt on Llew's life and his revenge, which might have been a factor in the author's choice.¹⁰⁹ The locations mentioned can be seen in FIG 18.

Caer Aranrhod



Gwydion takes the rapidly maturing Llew to where his mother Aranrhod lives.

He made for Caer Aranrhod and the boy with him. When he came to the court, Aranrhod got up to meet him, to welcome him and to greet him.¹¹⁰

Aranrhod is portrayed in the fourth branch as a maverick daughter of the family of Dôn, but also as a caring châtelaine of her estate. She rebukes Gwydion when his second deceit, the attack on her court, is revealed.

'Between me and God,' she said, 'you are an evil man. And many a lad could have lost his life in the uprising you brought about in this cantref today.'¹¹¹

But we have few details of what kind of court this is. It is sometimes approached by land and sometimes

by sea so the author must see it as a coastal or tidal structure rather than an island. Modern maps show a shoal some 600 metres off-shore marked as Caer Aranrhod (FIG 7). These rocks which are partially exposed at the lowest tides are known locally as Tregaranthrag which

¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that the author does not suggest that Mur Castell was the established court for the *cantref* of Dinoding but that Llew on being given the *cantref* 'set up court' there, perhaps recognising his need to explain to his audience the reason why the narrative is focussing on this remote part of Gwynedd.

¹¹⁰ Davies, 2007, p. 55.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

Rhŷs explained as a corruption of Tre' Gaer Aranrhod and hence Caer Aranrhod.¹¹² They were first mapped in the *Cambriae Typus* of 1573 as Caer Ierjenrhod.¹¹³ Jones, pointing out that the text requires a coastal and not an island location, questions the association, but the location fits well with the description in the text.¹¹⁴ Sea level may be somewhat higher today than it was in medieval times, but the difference is nowhere near enough to make what are now nearly submerged rocks part of a medieval coastline.¹¹⁵ The anomaly has however to be read in the context of the many local legends of sunken settlements and magical routeways across the sea. Moving the rocks of Caer Aranrhod a few hundred metres for dramatic purpose to a coastal location is a modest event compared with other magic happenings in the tales of the *Mabinogi*.

Dinas Dinlle

Dinas Dinlle is a large coastal drumlin, which has been significantly eroded on its seaward side, and on which is situated the remains of a substantial Iron Age fort. In the fourth branch Gwydion is described as sometimes staying there with Lleu rather than at Caer Dathyl. In the two journeys in the deception of Aranrhod described later the pair end the first journey and start the second one from Dinas Dinlle. The reference to this location in the fourth branch and the fact that journeys are made between it and Caer Dathyl removes any reasonable possibility that the author envisaged Caer Dathyl and Dinas Dinlle to be the same place (FIG 16). The name of the mound and fort clearly associates it with the legend of Lleu but the author never makes any reference to this, nor feels constrained to explain why, when Math wanted to allocate a court to Lleu within his domain, he sent him to a former Roman fort in the wilds of Ardudwy rather than to the fort which bears his name.

¹¹² Rhŷs, 1901, pp. 207-209.

¹¹³ Peter C. Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary: People in History and Legend Up to About AD1000* (Cardiff: National Library of Wales, 1993), p. 87.

¹¹⁴ Dafydd Glyn Jones, 1998, p. 23.

¹¹⁵ Hopewell has reviewed the evidence for sea level change from the Roman period until the present day. There is conflicting evidence suggesting both that levels might have been slightly higher or lower but in either case the changes are not substantial and that the best assumption that can be made is that there has been no significant change. David Hopewell, *Roman Roads in North West Wales: GAT Report No. 572* (Bangor: Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 2005), p. 12.

Journeys

This section analyses in more detail some of the journeys described in the tales. These are another rich source of geographical information with the added advantage that journeys, by being a linear set of journey points which can be verified against each other, can yield more contextual information than can be obtained by identifying a single place such as a court. We also have a few sources of information about routeways used in early medieval times which can be used to verify the descriptions of journeys in the tales.

Medieval Welsh Routeways

Sources which provide information on routeways which might have been frequented by early medieval travellers in Wales are as follows:

Roman roads: The Romans, in their three-century occupation of Wales, constructed many roads. Their routes are known today with varying degrees of certainty. It is also known that many of the Roman roads survived long after the legions departed, a testament to the quality of their construction, but also because native tribes occupied a number of the Roman facilities so they continued to use the routeways linking them. Many Roman roads that were probably used in medieval times no longer exist as highways but some survive as bridle and pedestrian tracks.¹¹⁶

Archbishop Baldwin's Itinerary: In 1188 Archbishop Baldwin toured much of Wales to raise funds and recruit men for the Third Crusade. The account of his journey by Gerald of Wales who accompanied him provides details of every overnight stop and generally sufficient detail to work out, having regard to the terrain, the likely route the party took.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ The Roman road information on the maps in this dissertation has been taken from various sources. The detailed mapping in Gwynedd has come from Waddelove, 1999, Hopewell, 2005 and Hopewell, *Roman Roads in North West Wales* (Bangor: Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 2013), with additional detail from elsewhere in Wales from Rees, 1966, plate 13 and unpublished reports produced by Dyfed Archeology (<http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/projects/romanmilitary.htm>)

¹¹⁷ Hoare, 1908; Rees, 1966, plate 37.



The Gough Map: This map, named after the antiquarian Richard Gough who first noticed its existence in 1780, is an anonymous map of Britain believed to have been drafted c.1360 but

possibly based on records up to a hundred years older. The map includes remarkable detail of place-names, lines of travel and distances travelled between points. It is very hard to read and is on an imperfect topographical base, but because it is older and better than any other such map it has been subject to considerable scrutiny.¹¹⁸ Edwards has undertaken a close study of the map to elucidate the Welsh coastal route shown on the map from Aberteifi to Chester. Although the interpretation involves some speculation where the original is unclear, Edward's analysis is convincing.¹¹⁹ With consideration of the terrain it is possible to elucidate in some detail the likely route shown on the Gough Map giving a record of a road in use only some 200 years after the tales of the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* were written down.

FIG 8 shows information from these three sources together. It is provided for overview purposes and the sections relevant to the *Mabinogi* journeys will be reviewed in more detail as they are addressed. The Gough Map route is shown in black with intervening waypoints and their identification indicated as black circles.¹²⁰ The Roman roads are shown in red linking the principal relevant Roman forts or settlements shown as red circles. Archbishop Baldwin's itinerary is shown in blue where it departs from the Gough route. The locations of his overnight stays are shown as blue circles. Where waypoints are combined they are shown with the colours nested.

Places revisited

Throughout the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* the narrative rarely revisits the same place in a later tale. Obvious exceptions are Arberth and Gorsedd Arberth where both Pwyll and Pryderi hold court and visit the *gorsedd* in like manner in the first and third branches. Another possible example is Caer Dathyl yn Arfon in the fourth branch which may have already

¹¹⁸ E. J. S. Parsons, *The Map of Great Britain, circa A.D. 1360 known as the Gough Map*, (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1958); Parsons was responsible for the first detailed analysis of the map which has been published by collaboration between the Bodleian Library and the Ordnance Survey. It is also available online, *The Gough Map of Great Britain*, <http://www.goughmap.org>

¹¹⁹ James Frederick Edwards, 'The Transport System of Medieval England and Wales - a Geographical Synthesis' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Salford, 1987), pp. 488-504, <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/14831>

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 499.

appeared in the second branch if it is the same place as Caer Saint yn Arfon. There is also a possible third location, the crossing of Afon Dwyrdd near Maentwrog.

‘. . . as soon as they reached Y Felenrhyd, because the foot soldiers could not be restrained from shooting at each other, Pryderi sent messengers requesting that both armies be called off, and that the matter be left to him and Gwydion son of Dôn.’¹²¹

But this river must surely also have been crossed by Bendigeidfran and his retinue as they went from Harlech to Aberffraw to celebrate the wedding of Branwen and Matholwch.

‘They all set off for Aberffraw, Matholwch and his retinue in the ships, Bendigeidfran and his own retinue overland until they came to Aberffraw. There the feast began . . .’¹²²

All credible land routes from Harlech to Aberffraw have to cross Afon Dwyrdd or its estuary Traeth Bach. The modern road follows the southern shore of the estuary. This route would not have been possible in medieval times because this was a marshy, undrained coast with Afon Dwyrdd taking a more southerly course because the spit of Morfa Harlech was then less developed.¹²³ The most likely route to have been followed is the one which Gresham believes that Gerald took in 1188 with Archbishop Baldwin.¹²⁴ This route is probably also shown on the Gough map although the level of detail is insufficient to be certain. This route still exists today. From the high ground above Harlech a minor road and then a track, known as Fonllech Hir, follows a prehistoric route marked at intervals by huge standing stones. From Llandecwyn a steep descent, now part of the *Llwybr Arfordir Cymru* (Welsh Coastal Path), leads down to Afon Prysor close to its junction with the Dwyrdd at Felenrhyd¹²⁵, where Afon Prysor flows in a deep and rocky channel. From this point a route must be found to cross the Dwyrdd (FIG 9).

The Prysor at Felenrhyd (yellow ford) can neither be described as yellow or fordable but the adjacent Dwyrdd, shallow at low tide and sandy-bedded fits this description perfectly. The

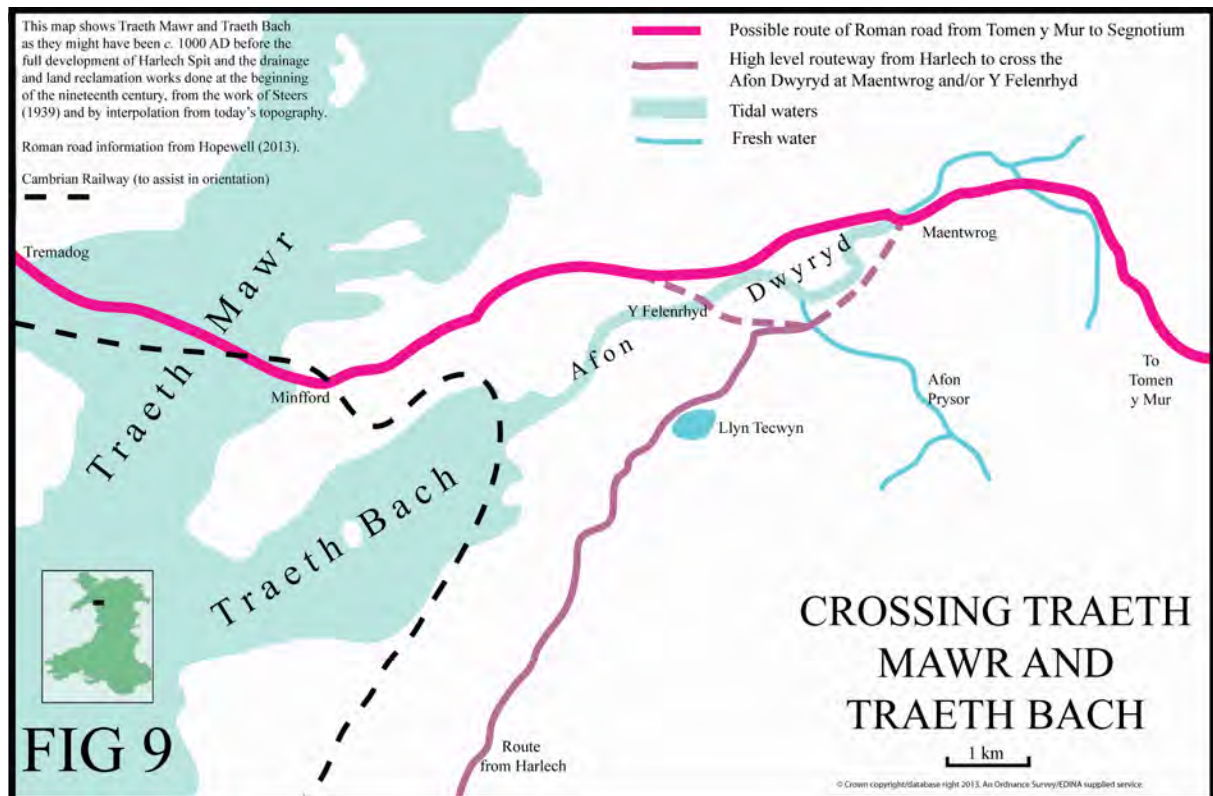
¹²¹ Davies, 2007, p. 51.

¹²² Davies, 2007, p. 23.

¹²³ J. A. Steers, ‘Sand and Shingle Formations in Cardigan Bay’, *Geographical Journal*, 94 (3): (1939), pp. 215-220.

¹²⁴ Gresham, 1985b, p. 200.

¹²⁵ Ordnance Survey maps use the form ‘Felinrhyd’ which is a modern corruption which has no historic basis. There is, and as far as is known never was, a mill. See Hughes, 2013, p. 58.



ford at Felenrhyd is evidenced by its name and also by a record from 1855, ‘opposite Felenrhyd is a ford to cross the Traeth Bach’.¹²⁶ Waddelove considered that the Roman road from Tomen y Mur to Segontium crossed Afon Dwyrdd at this point.¹²⁷ However recent evidence, reported by Hopewell, casts doubt on this and makes a crossing of Afon Dwyrdd near Maentwrog more likely.¹²⁸ Gresham, analysing Gerald’s 1188 itinerary, argues that the bridge where Gruffudd, grandson of Owain Gwynedd, handed over care of the archbishop’s party to his brother Meredudd, was a bridge over Afon Dwyrdd at Maentwrog, perhaps at the same location as the Romans used some 1000 years earlier to cross the river.¹²⁹ But if such a crossing existed why did the author specifically mention Y Felenrhyd, an obscure feature only known to those with local knowledge. There is doubt as to where the author envisaged that Gwydion and Pryderi fought their duel and where the retreating *Gwyr y Deheu* crossed the river. The fact that he specifically mentions Y Felenrhyd and then describes Pryderi’s burial at

¹²⁶ Charles E. Bresse and Edward Anwyl, ‘Roman building at Glasfryn, Trenadoc, Caerns.’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, lxiv: (1909), p. 493.

¹²⁷ Waddelove, 1999, p. 200.

¹²⁸ Hopewell, 2013, p.57.

¹²⁹ Gerald, 1908, p. 114; Gresham, 1985, p.201.

Maentwrog above, that is, upstream suggests that he envisaged the conflict at the ford and not at Maentwrog.¹³⁰

Hunting in Glyn Cuch

The journey to the hunt in Glyn Cuch has already been discussed in relation to the likely site which the author envisaged for Arberth, but three other places are mentioned in this section of the text, the overnight resting place of Penn Llwyn Diarwya, the mythical Annwfn, the otherworld kingdom of Arawn, and an unnamed ford in Annwfn.

The common view is that the location of Penn Llwyn Diarwya is unknown.¹³¹ Others have offered suggestions. Anwyl in 1901, who only considered the possibility of a Pembrokeshire Arberth, suggested that it was ‘possibly . . . another name for Penn Llwyn Gaer, which lies a little to the east of Llanboidy, a place which Pwyll might naturally pass on his way from Arberth to Glyn Cuch’.¹³² On modern maps this is known as Penllwyngwair. Apart from a modest similarity of name there is nothing else to justify the suggestion. No record exists on the RCHAMW database and there are no recorded legendary associations. Gruffydd suggested that the name might have been Penn Llwyn Diar Vwya.¹³³ He therefore suggests that the location might be the spring and mound adjacent to St David’s now known as Clegyr Boia or Clegyr Fwya, an Iron Age hill fort with evidence of occupancy from Neolithic times.¹³⁴ Again the case rests entirely on the name with no link in legend or geography with the first branch. Breeze, also relying on a similarity of name, proposes that the location may

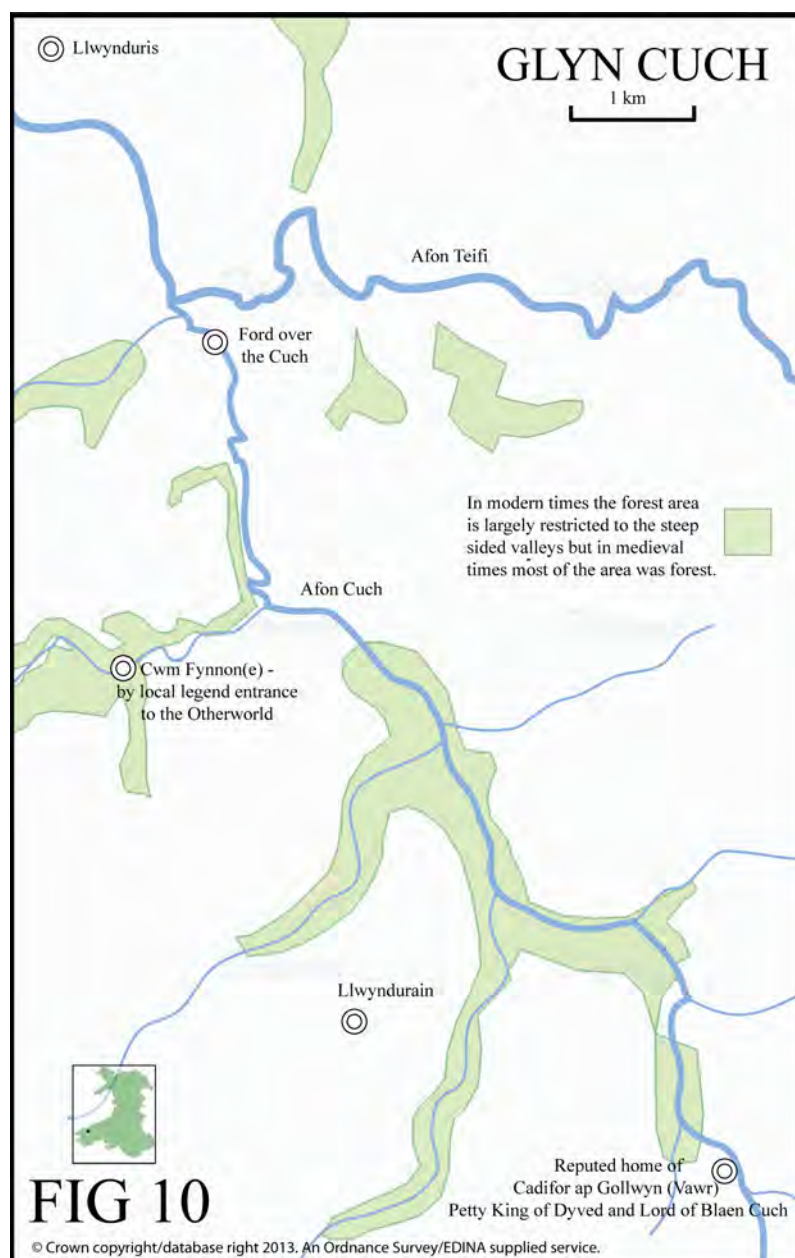
¹³⁰ It might be significant that the only other dual in *The Four Branches*, between Pryderi disguised as Arawn and Hafgan in the first branch, also takes place at a ford.

¹³¹ For example Bollard, 2006, p. 19.

¹³² Anwyl, 1901, p.127.

¹³³ Gruffydd, 1913, pp. 65-66.

¹³⁴ Christopher Houlder, *Wales: An Archeological Guide*, (London: Faber, 1974), p. 186.



be at Llywynduris.¹³⁵ A further option is Llywyndrain which is also within the catchment of Afon Cuch.¹³⁶ These sites in Glyn Cuch are more plausible than sites elsewhere in Pembrokeshire, but they are unverifiable speculation and there seems no reasonable prospect that the author's intentions will ever be divined. More importantly, the dramatic purpose of Penn Llwyn Diarwya is unclear. The author generally seems content with geographic ambiguity and avoids detail when it serves no useful dramatic purpose, but here he has introduced a place for no obvious reason, which adds

no useful detail and to which the story never returns.

¹³⁵ Breeze, 2009, p. 101. This site is in the Teifi valley between the Ceredigion Arberth and Glyn Cuch which fits with Breeze's theories on authorship. Breeze identified an Iron Age fort high above the valley as the likely location, but this is an improbable site for a hunting lodge. Better is the well documented, but now overgrown, castle mound of Llywynduris beside the river which clearly had substance in medieval times and was close to a major ecclesiastical site of Llandygwydd under the patronage of the Bishops of St David's. D.J.C King, 'The Castles of Cardiganshire', *Ceredigion: Journal of the Cardiganshire Antiquarian Society*, 3 (1): (1956), pp. 58-59; <http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/HLC/lowerteifivalley/llandygwydd.htm>

¹³⁶ This is close to the well preserved castle motte of Castell Crychdydd and to a number of sites preserving the memory of Cadifor Fawr, a petty king of Dyfed (died c. 1090) who had jurisdiction of the Cuch valley; Guest, 1906, p. 289.

Annwfn is the otherworld domain of which Arawn is king. It is a feature of the *Four Branches* that otherworldly locations are generally portrayed as different dimensions of known places rather than underground or mythical places as is common in other Celtic texts.¹³⁷ However, local tradition does identify an entrance to the otherworld in Cwm Ffynnon (Ffynone), a feeder stream of Afon Cuch.¹³⁸

The ford in Annwfn is where Pwyll, in the guise of Arawn, fights a rival otherworld king, Hafgan.

So he came to the meeting, accompanied by the noblemen of the realm. As soon as he came to the ford, a knight got up and spoke like this:

‘Noblemen,’ he said, listen carefully. ‘This confrontation is between two kings, and between two persons alone. Each one is making a claim against the other regarding land and territory; all of you should stand aside and leave the fighting between the two of them.’

With that the two kings approached each other towards the middle of the ford for the fight.¹³⁹

The picture painted here is of a wide, shallow ford (wide enough to have a definable middle, and shallow enough to be capable of being waded without hindering the ability to fight). Both combatants have a retinue of men standing behind them but with enough space in the shallows or on the banks to avoid involvement in the fight. Afon Cuch and its side streams are more than 10 km long and now they are bridged by a number of local roads where presumably in earlier times there were unbridged crossing places. But these are small streams in steep-sided valleys, with incised channels hemmed in by trees even today and these potential fords, with one exception, do not fit at all the expansive fight scene described in the first branch. The exception, which remains a ford today, is in the lower part of the Cuch valley, near the village of Abercych, where the valley opens out and provides the right kind of setting. If the author had a location in mind, the ford at Abercych as seen today fits the description perfectly. Now the ford provides a crossing from Pembrokeshire into Carmarthenshire. Around 1100, when the *cwmwd* of Emlyn Is Cuch to the west of the river was reconstituted as the Norman lordship of Cilgerran, the river became briefly a frontier

¹³⁷ Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, in *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture: a Festschrift for Eric P Hamp*, A. T. E. Matonis, and Daniel F. Melia. eds. (Van Nuys, California: Ford & Bailie, 1990), pp. 65-66.

¹³⁸ This was also within the domain of Cadifor Fawr.

¹³⁹ Davies, 2007, p. 6.

between Norman and Welsh power. Cilgerran fell under Welsh control again in the 1130s and remained so until coming under the control of the Earl of Pembroke in 1223.¹⁴⁰ Maybe the battle across the Cuch in the first branch between the rival kings of Annwfn for ‘land and territory’ reflects the Norman/Welsh conflicts of the early twelfth century?

Journeys in the Second Branch

The story in the second branch moves more widely than in any other but the detail is vague and sometimes contradictory. The author seems more interested in using places to link his tale to its source legends than in constructing a geographically recognisable narrative. The story begins at the castle at Harlech and ends, before its otherworldly coda, at an Iron Age burial site in Môn. Both locations are associated in legend with Branwen/Bronwen who in this story is King Bendigeidfran’s sister.

The most interesting journey in the second branch is the campaign in Ireland undertaken to avenge and save Branwen. After the force of Britons¹⁴¹ landed in Ireland they made an audacious river crossing which led the Irish to change their tactics and, rather than face the Britons in battle, to try and win by trickery while ostensibly suing for peace.

‘Lord,’ said his men to Matholwch, ‘the only advice is to retreat across the Llinon (a river in Ireland), and put the Llinon between you and him, and then destroy the bridge that crosses the river. There are loadstones on the riverbed - neither ships nor vessels can sail across.’ They retreated over the river, and destroyed the bridge.

Bendigeidfran landed with his fleet and approached the riverbank.

‘Lord,’ said his noblemen. ‘You know the strange thing about the river, no-one can sail across it, nor is there a bridge. What shall we do for a bridge?’ they said.

Nothing, except that he who is a leader, let him be a bridge,’ said Bendigeidfran. ‘I will be a bridge,’ he said. This was the first time that saying was uttered and it is still a proverb.

Then after Bendigeidfran had laid down across the river, hurdles¹⁴² were placed upon him, and his men walked on top of him to the other side.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Bezant, 2009, p. 55.

¹⁴¹ Bendigeidfran is ‘a crowned king over this island (of Britain) and invested with the crown of London.’

¹⁴² hurdle; Welsh: clwyd; Irish: claith

¹⁴³ Davies, pp. 29-30 but with the river name Llinon preserved untranslated.

The long debated and unresolved question is the identity of the River Llinon and thus, by inference, the geographic setting for the final battle with its tragic consequences for the Britons and the Irish.

Guest made no translation for Llinon, but Gruffydd and Williams wanted to go further. Williams was clear that it was the Shannon, as a Welsh oral derivation of the Latin ‘Sinonam’.¹⁴⁴ Gruffydd thought the important clue was the hurdles placed on Bendigeidfran’s back which alluded to Dublin, in Irish Baile Átha Claith (Town of the Hurdle Ford) and therefore the Llinon was the Liffey.¹⁴⁵ Williams’ view has been followed in many translations into English (Jones and Jones¹⁴⁶ and Ford¹⁴⁷), but Gantz and Bollard¹⁴⁸ have hedged their bets, not willing to disregard the allusion to Dublin while Davies adopts Liffey.¹⁴⁹ Mac Cana¹⁵⁰ followed Williams and Bromwich¹⁵¹ and Sims Williams¹⁵² followed Gruffydd. Breeze, who strongly favours the Liffey, has recently reviewed the various arguments.¹⁵³

The ambiguity of the text fuels much of the debate. Tolstoy goes as far as to say that it is hard to assemble so many inconsistencies in a single paragraph, but this does not prevent him from

¹⁴⁴ Williams, PKM, pp. 195-196.

¹⁴⁵ W.J. Gruffydd, *Rhiannon. an Inquiry Into the Origins of the First and Third Branches of the Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1953), p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones. *The Mabinogion* (London: Everyman/Dent, 1949), p. 34.

¹⁴⁷ Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 59 and 67.

¹⁴⁸ Gantz, 1976, p. 76; Bollard, 2006, p. 53.

¹⁴⁹ Davies, 2007, p. 29.

¹⁵⁰ Proinsias Mac Cana, *Branwen, Daughter of Llŷr* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), p. 119.

¹⁵¹ Rachael Bromwich, ‘Proinsias Mac Cana. *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr* (Book Review)’, *Medium Aevum*, 28: (1959), pp. 208-209.

¹⁵² Patrick Sims-Williams, ‘The Submission of the Irish Kings in Fact and Fiction: Henry II, Bendigeidfran and the Dating of the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 22: (1991), p. 38.

¹⁵³ Andrew Breeze, ‘Moor, Court and River in the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*’, in *Rural Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, Albrecht Classen (ed.), (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012.), pp. 304-308.

forming a firm conclusion in favour of the Shannon.¹⁵⁴ What then is the evidence from the text? At the beginning of the second branch Bendigeidfran's court, sitting in Harlech, saw Matholwch's ships 'coming from the south of Ireland'.¹⁵⁵ Saunders Lewis has argued that this implied that Matholwch's power base was in the south and therefore the British landing to attack him would be to the south.¹⁵⁶ However it has generally been taken, without textural evidence, that the author envisaged that Bendigeidfran's fleet departed from Aber Menai and would approach Ireland to land along the eastern shore in the vicinity of Dublin.

The original description of the landing by the Britons said:

Bendigeidfran a doeth y'r tir, a llynghes y gyt ac ef, parth a glann yr auon.¹⁵⁷

Bendigeidfran landed with his fleet and approached the river bank.¹⁵⁸

Various editions and translations have offered attempts to draw different meanings, but it is hard to understand this as other than a force landing along a shoreline near to the mouth of a river. The Shannon discharges to the west coast of Ireland, so, to sustain the argument that the Llinon is the Shannon this sentence needs creative reinterpretation as Mac Cana has argued,¹⁵⁹ or we must assume, like Tolstoy, that the Britons sailed all the way round the south of Ireland to enter the estuary of the Shannon.¹⁶⁰ Or it might be the Liffey or a fictional river conceived to fit the story.

¹⁵⁴ Tolstoy, 2009, p. 140.

¹⁵⁵ Davies, 2007, p. 22.

¹⁵⁶ quoted by T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Date of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1970), p. 292.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, PKM, p. 40.

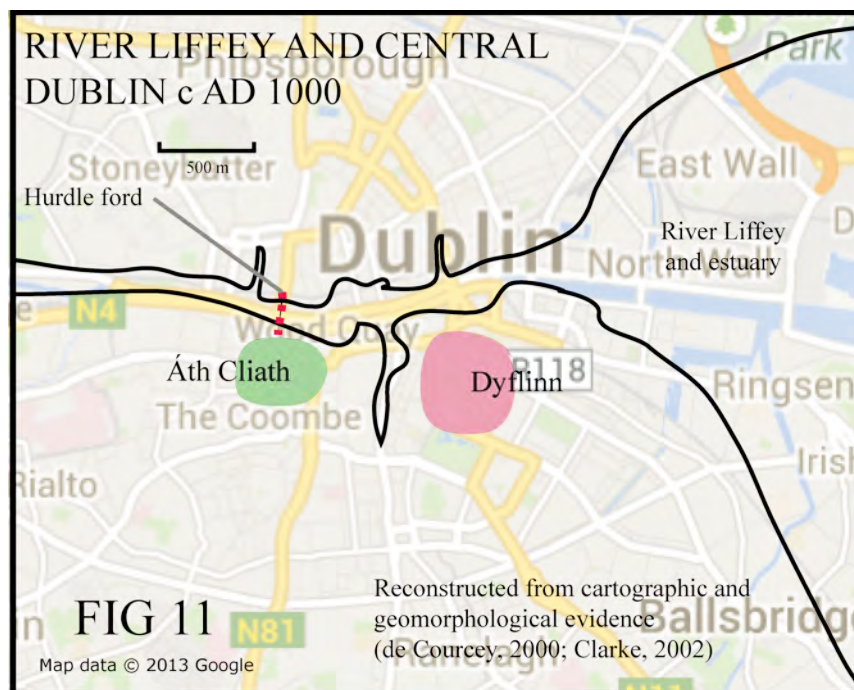
¹⁵⁸ Davies, 2007, p.29.

¹⁵⁹ Mac Cana, 1958, p. 119.

¹⁶⁰ Tolstoy, 2009, p. 176. Tolstoy seeks to support this argument by references to trade links between the west coast of Ireland and Pembrokeshire, where he thinks the tales were written, but he does not suggest how Bendigeidfran, who was too big to get into a ship, waded to the mouth of the Shannon.

Liffey

The Liffey, although shorter than the Shannon, is still a substantial river fed by its catchment in the Wicklow mountains and discharges to the Irish Sea. In early medieval times the Liffey formed the northern border of the settlement of Dublin. It was wide, unconstrained and tidal past Dublin. The only crossing was a ford - The Hurdle Ford - which was linked to the native Irish settlement of Áth Cliath. From the late ninth century there was an adjacent Danish settlement by the freshwater lake called Dyflinn. In the early part of the eleventh century a timber bridge called Dubhghall's Bridge was constructed on the site of The Hurdle Ford.¹⁶¹ It apparently survived until at least 1315. The crossing became increasingly necessary because the surrender of Dublin to an Irish-Norman force in 1170 and the subsequent development of



the town as a site of Norman power led to a migration of native and Gaelic-Norse residents to establish the first settlement of any significance on the north bank of the river.¹⁶²

FIG 11 shows the waterway as it might have been in the tenth century, showing the

relationship of the Hurdle Ford to the settlements and, importantly, that the eastern part of the modern city of Dublin is on land reclaimed by drainage and flood control and that the Hurdle

¹⁶¹ Michael Phillips and Albert Hamilton. 'Project History of Dublin's River Liffey Bridges.' *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers Bridge Engineering*, 156 (Issue BE4): (2003), pp. 161-62.

¹⁶² Clarke, 2002, pp. 1-2.

Ford was only about 1 km from early medieval Dublin Bay.¹⁶³ With this information we can review the case for the Llinon being the Liffey.

The arguments in favour of the Liffey are the allusion to hurdles and the inference from the text that the river was close to the landing place. The difficulties come if we try to understand the tactics of the conflict as the author envisaged them. If Matholwch was in Dublin and the Britons knew this they would logically land on the south part of Dublin Bay. It would make little sense for Matholwch to seek protection from a sea-borne force by abandoning Dublin, retreating over the Liffey and destroying a bridge which was situated less than a kilometre from the coast which the Britons could easily counter by make a landing on the northern side of the Liffey estuary. Neither is there military sense if Matholwch was preparing to face the Britons to the north of the Liffey and then sought protection by retreating south over the river back into the town he was defending.

There are other possible anomalies and contradictions. Can we be sure that the Welsh author knew the town as Áth Cliath? In the *Historia Gruffudd vab Kenan* the town, Gruffudd's birthplace, is called *dinas Dulyn*.¹⁶⁴ In the Charter of Liberties granted by John in 1192 to the citizens of Dublin the town is called 'Dubline'.¹⁶⁵ The reference to loadstones in the Liffey can have no factual basis. Dublin was becoming an active trading centre with expert Norse seafarers establishing a port only 500m downstream from the Hurdle Ford. There is no record or legend of the eleventh century Dubhghall's Bridge ever being destroyed although its reported life span of some 300 years seems remarkable for a timber bridge.

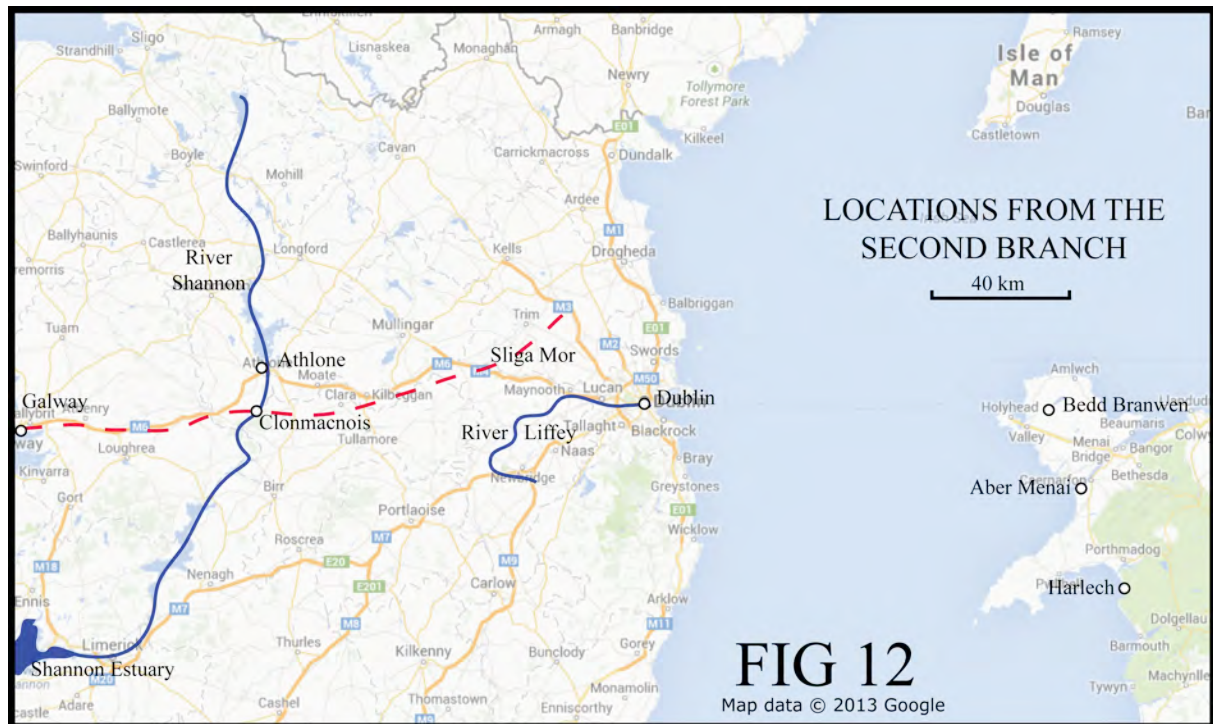
Shannon

Mac Cana and Tolstoy have attempted to identify where the bridge might be if the Llinon is the Shannon. Mac Cana proposed either Athlone or Clonmacnoise, both crossing points on the

¹⁶³ FIG11 has been compiled by combining information from maps published by Clarke, 2002 and John W. de Courcy, 'Bluffs, Bays and Pools in the Medieval Liffey At Dublin', *Irish Geography*, 33(2): (2000), pp. 117-133.

¹⁶⁴ Evans, 1990, p. 23.

¹⁶⁵ Clarke, 2002, Annex 1. In the same charter the river Liffy is called the 'Avenelith' which is no doubt derived from Irish 'Abhainn na Life'.



Shannon on routes westwards out of Dublin.¹⁶⁶ If we need a bridge for the Irish to destroy, the best candidate is at Clonmacnois (FIG 12). This is the site of a monastery founded in AD 546. Here the Slige Mhór, a routeway along an esker which provides a reliable passage through undrained land and which linked Tara/Dublin to Galway and the west coast, crosses the Shannon. In the mid 1990s the foundations of a timber bridge, dated by dendrochronology to AD 804, were discovered.¹⁶⁷ This bridge may be the oldest in Ireland and it is certainly significantly older than Dubhghall's Bridge in Dublin. Clonmacnois and the Shannon were also a political frontier between the kings of Connacht and of the southern Uí Néill dynasty. O'Sullivan and Boland suggest that 'it is possible that the bridge was a military venture, thrown up rapidly by an army moving swiftly across the river during a raid or campaign. In any case, there is no evidence that the bridge was ever reconstructed or repaired.'¹⁶⁸ Tolstoy suggests that 'the fact that the bridge at Clonmacnois is not mentioned in any of the Irish annals might suggest it was never completed or was of short duration.' So the case for the Shannon has some compelling features, but it is over 100 km from any likely landing point on

¹⁶⁶ MacCana, 1958, p. 120,; Tolstoy, 2009, pp. 170-175.

¹⁶⁷ Tolstoy, 2009, pp. 164-165; Aidan O'Sullivan and Donal Boland, <http://www.science.ulster.ac.uk/crg/nua/research/shannon/shannon.htm>

¹⁶⁸ O'Sullivan *ibid*.

the east coast of Ireland and, although Matholwch is not portrayed as a fearless leader, it is a large distance to make a tactical retreat. Alternatively the story may have no direct link to any invasion and may be a way of recalling a memory of conflicts between Irish kings which involved the tactical destruction of a bridge.

Most commentators seem convinced that the Llinon must and can be identified but none deal convincingly with the ambiguities. Mac Cana wants to add text to get the Britons away from the landing place before they cross the river. Tolstoy suggests that the Britons sailed 600 km to the western side of the island rather than across the Irish Sea.¹⁶⁹ Williams explains the ambiguities away by the author's lack of knowledge of Irish geography whereas Mac Cana, although supporting Williams' conclusion says, without evidence, 'that it is the story-teller's narrative that is deficient, not his geography'.¹⁷⁰ Before the Britons leave Wales we have good descriptions of their whereabouts and when they return for the tragic landfall in Môn the author again names the place. For the whole of the narrative in Ireland there is no toponym or topographical description, save the reference in one paragraph to the 'Llinon (a river in Ireland)' and the possible onomastic allusion to the use of hurdles, a common feature of bridge building of the times. The author seems disinclined, perhaps through lack of knowledge or lack of interest, or perhaps by deliberate intent so he can stress the misty uncertainty of the legends in foreign parts, to provide geographical clarification.¹⁷¹ This must argue in favour of Guest's solution of not attempting a translation or identification.

Pryderi and Manawydan's Journeys in the Third Branch

The third branch of the Mabinogi is not rich in toponyms or geographic detail. Gorsedd Arberth, hard by the eponymous royal court appears at the beginning of the story and it is where the denouement is reached when Manawydan's determination and guile is rewarded

¹⁶⁹ In proposing this Tolstoy seems to have forgotten that Bendigeidfran was too big for his fleet and had to wade. That has some degree of plausibility given the legends of land bridges between Wales and Ireland but not to approach the west coast of Ireland.

¹⁷⁰ Williams, PKM, p. 196; MacCana, 1958, p. 119.

¹⁷¹ There are examples in all of *The Four Branches* where passages that are rich in magical or legendary reference tend to reflect the prose style of the other stories in the corpus where credible topographic detail is rare. The adventures of the Britons in Ireland follows that same pattern.

with the lifting of the spell on Dyfed. Five places, all presumably in England are visited, the first, before the spell on Dyfed is cast, when Pryderi by himself goes to Oxford to pay homage to Caswallon, the usurper of the crown of Britain following the death of Bendigeidfran.

After the spell had been cast on Dyfed and Manawydan and his companions tire of having no resources save what they obtain by hunting, they began a tour of three towns in England.

They set off for England, and came to Hereford, and took up saddlemaking.¹⁷²

Such was Manawydan's skill that their presence came to be resented by the craftsmen of Hereford and they left and went to another, unnamed town, by context also in England where they worked as makers of shields. Opposition from the resident craftsmen forces them to leave, as from Hereford, so they went to a third town to take up shoemaking with exactly the same outcome.¹⁷³ The quartet returned to Arberth and took up hunting again. After Pryderi and Rhiannon were trapped in the magic fort, Manawydan and Cigfa set off again for England to a yet further unidentified town to resume shoemaking. The hostile reception of the local craftsmen leads to a repeat of the events of the three previous visits and the couple return again to Arberth but this time with seed to begin cultivation.

The identity of the towns which Manawydan visits is not important for the structure or content of the story. It may be that the author either felt no need to name them or lacked the knowledge of English geography to do so.¹⁷⁴ The intention was probably to emphasise the fact that he was exiled from his homeland but also stresses the author's lack of interest in geographic detail when the story moves outside Wales.

¹⁷² Davies, 2007, p.37.

¹⁷³ See Ian Hughes, 'Tripartite Structure in Manawydan Uab Llyr', *Seventh Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica*, 2004, Mícheál Ó Flaithearta (ed.). (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2007), pp. 99-109 for discussion on tripartite structures in the third branch.

¹⁷⁴ The craftsmen in the story are producing luxury goods which would only have a market in towns with strong royal or baronial patronage and a developing middle class. The best means to speculate about the identity of the towns besides Hereford where Manawydan plied his craft is to look at the royal circuits in the Marches. The best data comes from the itineraries of Henry III (1216-1272) held in the Public Record Office, which, although later than the date likely of authorship of the tales is perhaps sufficiently contemporary for the purpose. Edwards, 1987, pp. 51-61 has analysed the destination and frequency of Henry's journeys throughout his reign which might be assumed as a good measure of influence and patronage and the location where craftsmen might find most beneficial employment. In those parts of England adjacent to south Wales, Henry was most frequently in Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester which are thus the most likely candidates. To find a fourth town, from places visited less frequently by Henry, we can consider Tewksbury, Ludlow and Shrewsbury.

The Journey of the Swine

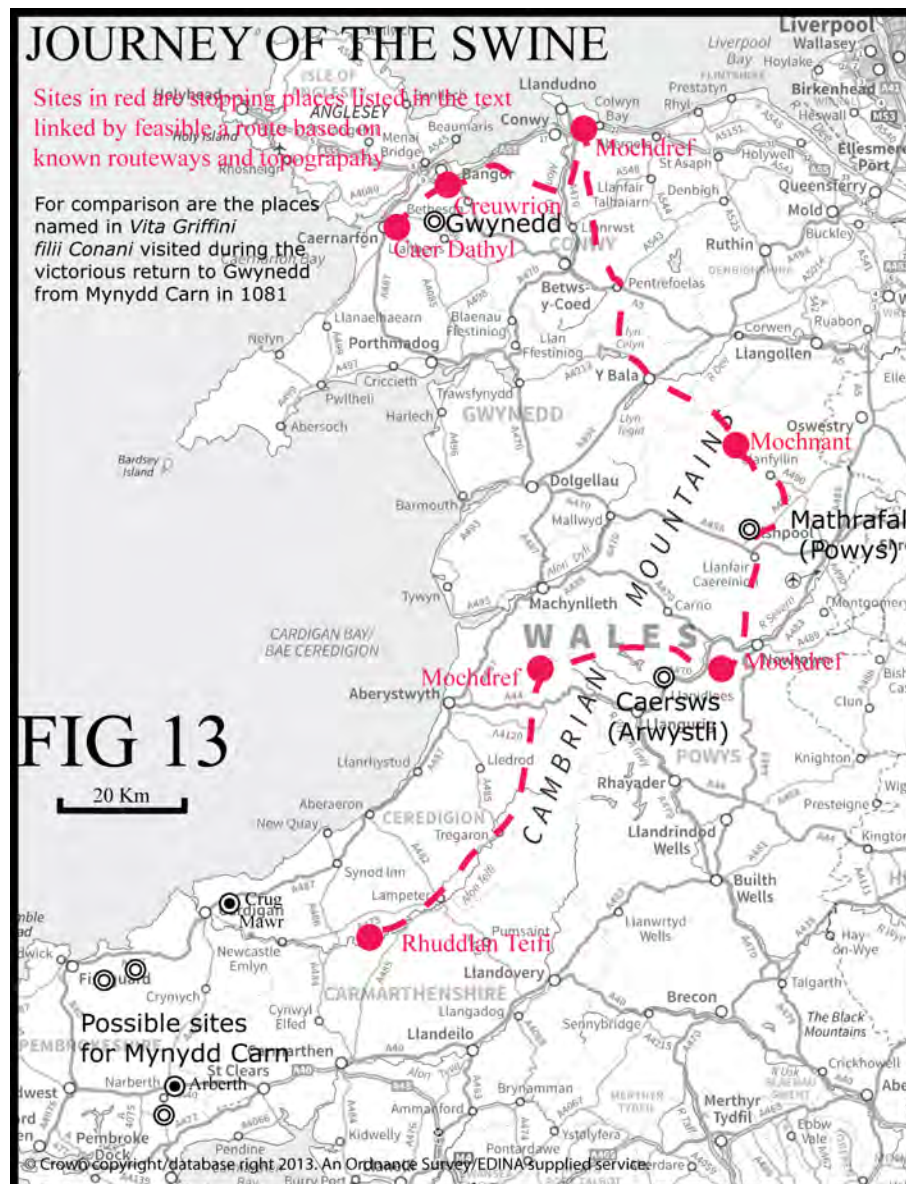
This is Gruffydd's title for the episode where Gwydion tricks Pryderi. Gwydion says when he receives the pigs from Pryderi, 'My brave men, we must move quickly,' but the route he takes is not direct (and clearly driven by onomastic intent) and would have delayed the return to Gwynedd. The route the author describes as taken by Gwydion and his men can be deduced with little ambiguity from the text.¹⁷⁵ It is shown in FIG 13.

On leaving Rhuddlan Teifi the logical route follows the Teifi valley, then crosses the Ystwyth and Rheidol valleys to Ponterwyd and then to the first Mochdref, identified to be a farmstead by Nant y Moch which gives its name to the reservoir which now drowns it, a prodigious day's journey of 54 km. The journey the next day follows credible routeways over the Elenid¹⁷⁶ mountains to join the headwaters of the Trannon and thence through Caersws on Afon Hafren to the second Mochdref, now on the outskirts of modern Drenewydd (Newtown), a distance of 34 km. The third day's journey is north, probably via Llanfair Caereinion (on the Roman road to Brithdir) and then via the Vyrnwy valley to Llanfyllin and then to Mochnant, the village now known as Llanrhaedr-ym-Mochnant, a distance of 42 km. The fourth day's journey is the most improbable being 69 km over the Berwyn range and down to Bala, then following the Tryweryn valley and mountain tracks to Pentrefoelas (on the current A5), then over moorland to the third Mochdref, now Mochdre, between Bae Colwyn and Deganwy. The author explains that this stopping place was in the *cantref* of Rhos but he missed an onomastic opportunity by not pointing out that this was also in the *cwmwd* of Creuddyn.¹⁷⁷ The following day Gwydion and his band took the pigs to secure them in a pen at Creuwriion which has been identified with Cororion between Bangor and Tregarth and which is discussed further below. The coastal route from Mochdre and the Conwy estuary was not available unless, like Gerald in 1188, travellers took to the coastal sands. It is more likely that, if this journey were actually to be followed, the route would be the one revealed in the

¹⁷⁵ Davies, p. 50.

¹⁷⁶ Normally referred to as Elenydd in modern Welsh and English

¹⁷⁷ In the text the author declares the onomastic character of each of the 'moch' locations using the formula 'for that reason it is still called' but he does not make that comment in respect of Creuwriion. Gruffydd called these 'lost onomastic references'.



Gough map; that is back up the Conwy valley to the river crossing at Tal-y-cafn, in use since Roman times, if not before, and then to follow the Roman road which passes Abergwyngregyn to join the coastal strip and thence to Creuwyrion. The stolen pigs are penned there but there is no reference to Gwydion and his men staying the night. In the context of the tale this would be unlikely,

especially since Gwydion was chastised when he reach Caer Dathyl, ‘It is strange how slowly you have travelled.’¹⁷⁸ Assuming that Caer Dathyl was at Segontium that would make the fifth day’s travel some 42 km and a grand total over 5 days of 241 km, mostly over rugged terrain. That would be a very challenging journey for a party of horsemen, even assuming they were able to obtain a regular change of horses and did not have to carry the stolen pigs.

It is clear that a Welsh audience hearing this tale would immediately appreciate that stealing pigs in this way was improbable and also likely enjoy it because of its onomastic detail. It is worth noting however that the route, although improbable in this context, is by no means such

¹⁷⁸ Davies, 2007, p. 50.

clear fantasy as found in the hunt of the Twrch Trwyth in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, another tale of the *Mabinogion*.¹⁷⁹ Also it is by no means the only onomastic journey based on ‘pig-places’ that the author could have chosen. While Gruffydd was not quite right to say that ‘every manor had one’ he was right to say that ‘we cannot suppose that Gwydion is made to take this devious road in order to pass through Mochtref and Mochnant.’¹⁸⁰ Even today’s maps contain many ‘pig-places’ and there are probably many more lost to memory. So what might have put the author in mind of this route? The detail is such that it seems possible that it was travelled, if not in five days, for some purpose at some time. And there is one clue to such a journey.

A battle was fought at Mynydd Carn in 1081 between Gruffudd ap Cynan of the House of Aberffraw and his allies, including Gruffudd ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth, against an opposing alliance of Welsh princes. Mynydd Carn was somewhere in Pembrokeshire and one possible site, favoured by RCAHMW, was some five kilometres south of Arberth. The other candidates are in the Preseli Hills. One of their opponents was Trahaearn ap Caradog who, although a lord from Powys, at that time held sway in Gwynedd having defeated Gruffudd at Bron yr Erw six years earlier. Gruffudd ap Cynan and Gruffudd ap Tewdwr routed their opponents and Trahaearn was killed. The *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* records that after his success at Mynydd Carn, Gruffudd’s forces returned north through Trahaearn’s territories bent on violent revenge, passing through Arwystli and Powys before returning to Gwynedd where ‘he was received with honour into his paternal inheritance and began to rule.’¹⁸¹ Gruffudd’s route as described in the *Vita* is not given in the same detail as the ‘Journey of the Swine’ but a credible interpretation takes Gruffudd up the Teifi valley passing Rhuddlan Teifi, over the Elenid to the headwaters of Afon Hafren (the cantref of Arwystli) and then over the Powys hills. FIG 13 shows the close correspondence with the route which Gwydion took. This finding of course does not prove a link with Gruffudd ap Cynan but it does challenge the notion that the ‘Journey of the Swine’ was an onomastic fantasy and stimulates thoughts about the provenance of the tales which will be discussed later.

¹⁷⁹ Rachael Bromwich and D. Simon Evans, *Culhwch and Olwen: an Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992).

¹⁸⁰ Gruffydd, MvM, p. 336.

¹⁸¹ Russell, 2005, p. 71.

The location of the pound created for the pigs needs further consideration, not to further analyse the journey, but for its importance in further probing the location of Caer Dathyl in the author's mind.

‘Ha wyr,’ heb y Gwydyon, ‘ni a gyrchwn kedernit Gwynet a’r anieileit hynn. Yd ys yn lluydaw yn an ol.’ Sef y kyrchysant y dref uchaf o Arllechwedd, ac yno gwneuthur creu y’r moch, ac o’r achaws hwnnw y dodet Creuwryon ar y dref. Ac yna guedy gwneuthur creu y’r moch y kyrchysant ar Uath uab Mathonwy, hyt yg Kaer Tathyl.

.....

‘Mae yr anieileit yd aethawch yn eu hwysc?’ heb y Math. ‘Maent guedy gwneuthur creu udunt yn y cantref arall issot,’ heb y Guydyon.¹⁸²

‘Men,’ said Gwydion, ‘we will make for the strongest part of Gwynedd with these animals. They are mustering armies behind us.’ So they made for the highest town in Arllechwedd, and there they made pens for the pigs, and because of that the name Creuwryon was given to the town. Then, having made a pen for the pigs, they made their way to Math, son of Mathonwy, in Caer Dathyl.

.....

‘Where are the animals you went after?’ said Math. ‘A pen has been made for them in the other cantref below,’ said Gwydion.¹⁸³

Gruffydd concluded from these exchanges that Caer Dathyl must be at a high elevation because the sty was in the ‘other cantref below’ Caer Dathyl and yet Creuwryon was ‘the highest town in Arllechwedd’. This led him to consider the case for Tre’r Ceiri, a high mountain fort, as Caer Dathyl.¹⁸⁴ The village of Cororion, which Rhys and later Williams identified as Creuwryon, is at an elevation of less than 100 metres.¹⁸⁵ Many, for example Hughes, have pointed out that this does not fit the description of the ‘highest town in Arllechwedd’.¹⁸⁶ The identification has however stood, no doubt because of Sir Ifor Williams’ authority and because of a lack of any alternative suggestion, although Gruffydd never endorsed it. However there are arguments that support Williams.

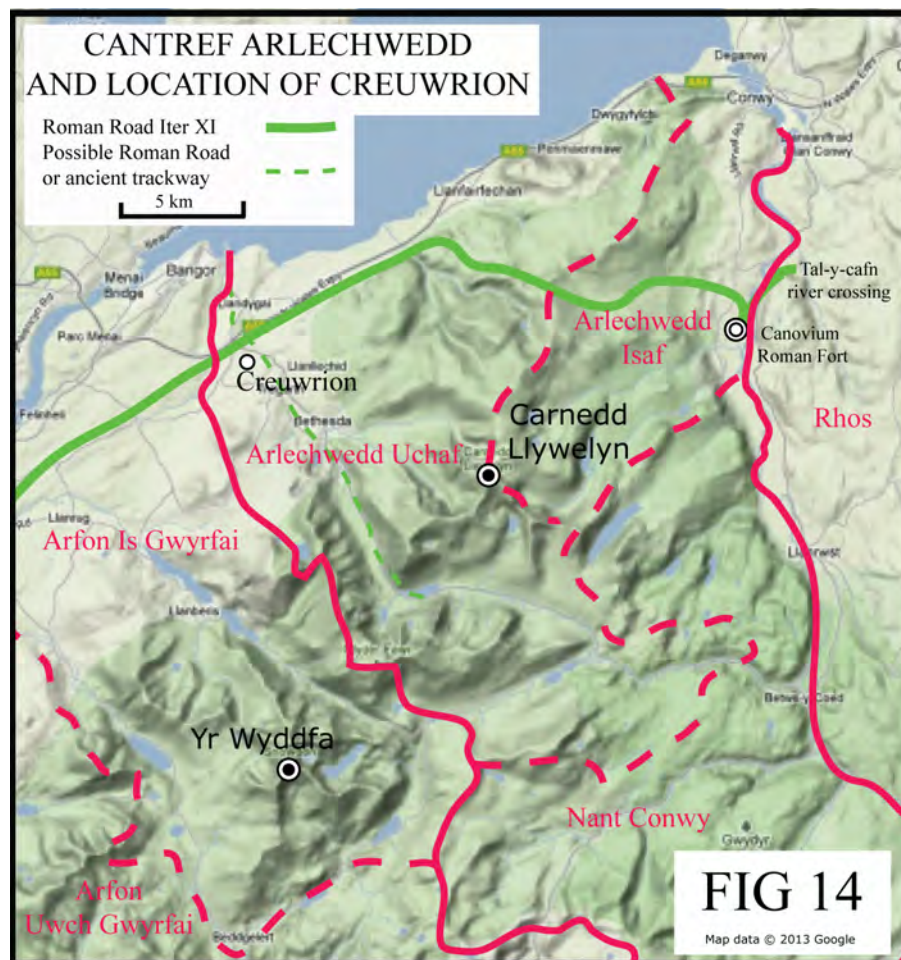
¹⁸² Williams, PKM, p. 71.

¹⁸³ Davies, 2007, p. 50.

¹⁸⁴ Gruffydd, MvM, 344.

¹⁸⁵ Rhys, 1901, p. 526; Williams, PKM, p. 260.

¹⁸⁶ Hughes, 2000, p. 35. Hughes, 2013, p. 52, goes further and says ‘the location of Creuwryon cannot now be identified as Cororion.’



The first argument comes from analysis of the text. Gwydion is close to the coast in the *cantref* of Rhos and not in Gwynedd when he describes the intended place to hide the pigs.¹⁸⁷ He says it is in ‘kedernit Gwynet’. Again the translation ‘strongest part of Gwynedd’ does not seem quite right and Gantz’s ‘stronghold of

Gwynedd’ or alternatively ‘heartland of Gwynedd’ ring more true. Hughes is agreed on this point and he translates ‘kedernit Gwynet’ as ‘the fastness of Gwynedd’ which he equates to Gwynedd Uwch Conwy, the core of historic Gwynedd to the west of the river Conwy.¹⁸⁸ A man of Gwynedd on the ‘wrong side of the Conwy’ would want to get his prize to home soil. In that sense Cororion fits the description. Creuwriion is also described as ‘dref uchaf o Arllechwoed’ although it makes more sense if this is not read as a topographic description but as an administrative one. Arllechwedd, like many *cantrefi*, was divided into *cymydau* signified as *Uch(af)* and *Is(af)*. Although normally and not incorrectly translated as ‘upper’ and ‘lower’ these names of administrative divisions did not necessarily signify relative elevation, as they would, say, in the case of a name of two farms or two lakes, but described an administrative

¹⁸⁷ Rhos is one of the *cantrefi* of Y Perfeddwlad, the buffer between Welsh and Norman power. When the power of the Prince of Gwynedd was in the ascendancy this would be his domain and called Gwynedd Is Conwy but it was not part of the heartland of Gwynedd.

¹⁸⁸ Hughes, 2013, p. 50; Guest, 1906, p. 64 also used ‘fastness’ in her translation.

relationship, first explained by Richards.¹⁸⁹ A translation into English that would capture this meaning would be ‘town in further Arllechwedd’. Inspection of FIG 14 shows that the two *cymydau* of Arllechwedd cannot be distinguished on topographic grounds. Although Arllechwedd Uchaf is bigger and has more mountains it also has a large coastal plain. Both *cwmwd* have coast and their common boundary extends to the highest point of the Carneddau mountains, Carnedd Llywelyn. Cororion is in Arllechwedd Uchaf and therefore could be argued to fit the description of ‘dref uchaf o Arllechwoed’ in this context.

In addition, FIG 14 shows that the author may well have had reason to know of Cororion. The major Roman routeway from Verae (possibly St Asaph) to Segontium, known by the Romans as Iter XI, is well established over much of the ground from the Conwy crossing at Tal-y-cafn and there is evidence from the Gough Map that it was the principal medieval routeway.¹⁹⁰ It passes within a kilometre of Cororion and the author may well have travelled along it, as he might have envisaged Gwydion did with the pigs. Cororion would have been well known locally on account of its deep, in legend unfathomable, pool associated with the legendary and enchanted bull Tarw Penwyn Corwrion whose progeny were prized because they gave milk yields equal to the whole of the rest of the area.¹⁹¹ What better place to hide the magic pigs than in a magic place, close by the highway and safely within the bounds of Gwynedd?

Williams gives neither of these reasons to justify the identification of Cororion as Creuwriion, but they support his argument. It is, of course, possible that the author had no location in mind and was content with naming a fictional place with an onomastic connection to Gwydion.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Melville Richards, who proposed this interpretation, likened this usage to that used in naming Roman provinces as *cis* and *trans*, with *cis* being equivalent to *is* and *trans* to *uch*. (Melville Richards, ‘The Significance of Is and Uwch in Welsh Commote and Cantref Names’, *Welsh History Review*, 2(1): (1964), p. 11.)

¹⁹⁰ The Romans did not establish the routeway but followed the same general line as a routeway in use from the Neolithic.

¹⁹¹ Rhŷs, 1901, pp. 50-70.

¹⁹² Williams, PKM, p. 260 and Hughes, 2013, p. 51 discuss the possible onomastic reference in the name Creuwriion.

Flight of the Gwyr y Deheu

The flight of the defeated army of Pryderi from the battlefield is probably the most readily identifiable and familiar journey in *The Mabinogi*.¹⁹³

They retreated as far as the place which is still called Nant Call Then they fled as far as the place called Dol Benmaen After that they travelled in peace as far as Y Traeth Mawr, but as soon as they reached Y Felenrhyd . . . Pryderi sent messengers requesting that both armies be called off.¹⁹⁴

Gwydion and Pryderi prepared for battle by the ford over Afon Dwyrhyd.

And because of strength and valour, and magic and enchantment, Gwydion triumphed and Pryderi was killed; and he was buried in Maentwrog, above Y Felenrhyd, and his grave is there.¹⁹⁵

The route and places are shown on FIG 15; for the most part the route follows the Roman road from Segontium to Tomen y Mur for which, although there is limited physical evidence, an assumed route has been defined using topography and field boundaries. The most up to date assessment of the route is by Hopewell.¹⁹⁶ There is disagreement on the location of the crossing of Y Traeth Mawr but the soundest assumption is that the crossing was at Minfford. This is known to be the route that was followed before the estuary was drained in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹⁷ As we have already seen, Maentwrog is a village above Felenrhyd, in

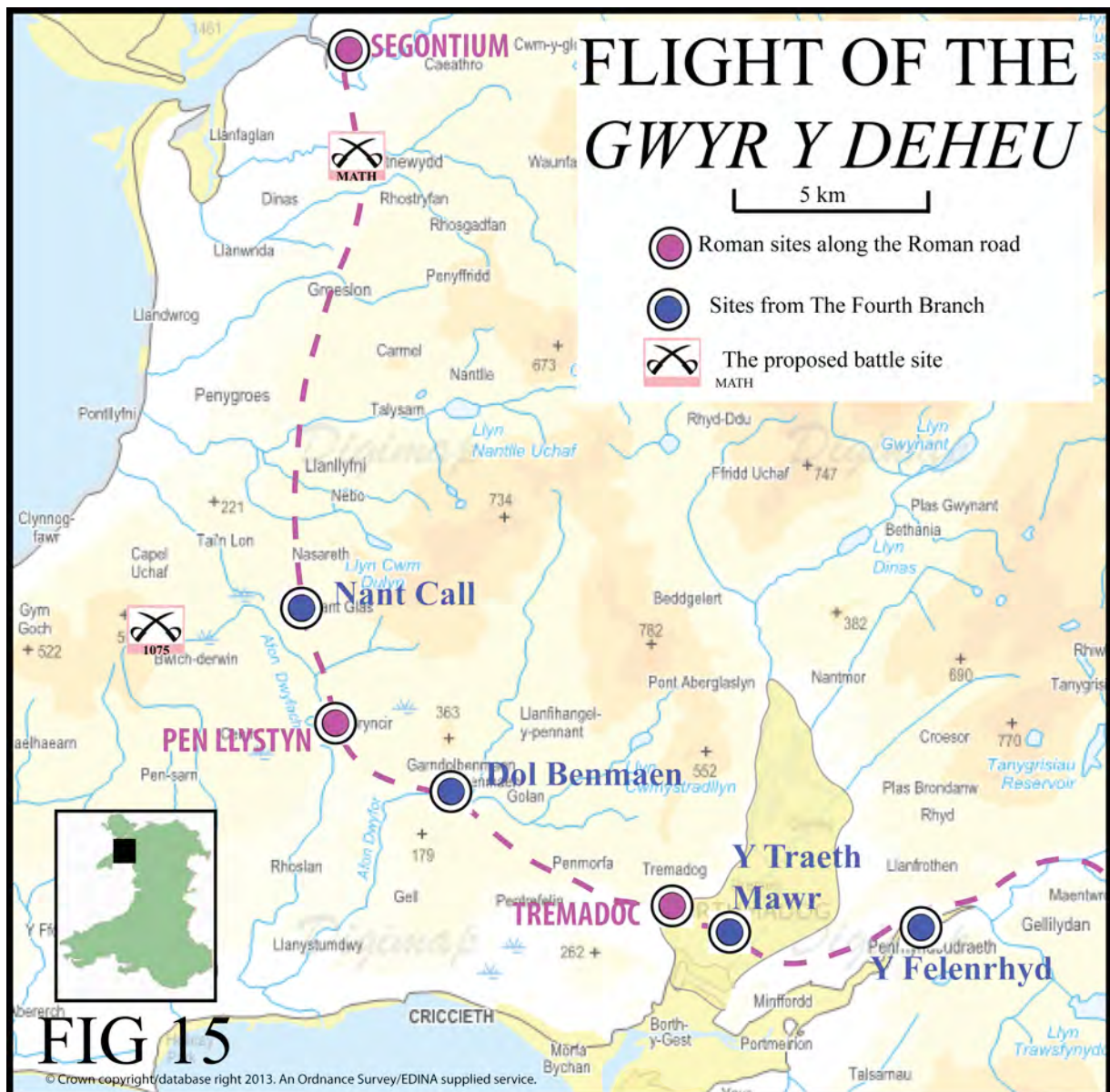
¹⁹³ Some authors have argued (for example Gresham 1985b, p. 187 and Breeze, 2007, p. 111), with good military logic, that the most likely place that Math would have confronted the *Gwyr y Deheu* would have been at the high point of the pass between Eifionydd and Arfon, on the shoulder of Bwlch Mawr, at a location known as Bryn Derwin, where a famous battle did take place in June 1255, when Llywelyn ap Gruffudd defeated his brothers Dafydd and Owain to establish his supremacy in Gwynedd (R. R. Davies, 1987, p. 309). The *Mabinogi* text does not support this conclusion on a number of grounds. We are told that Math waited to meet the *Gwyr y Deheu* between Maenor Bennardd and Maenor Coed Alun which even with the doubt about the boundaries of these *maenorau* must be significantly north of Bryn Derwin. The pass is on the border between Eifionydd and Arfon and could not be described as ‘kedernit Gywned yn Aruon’. By the time the Pryderi’s defeated army gets to Nant Call they are in full retreat but Nant Call is another name for the pass of Bryn Derwin so it cannot have also been the the battle site in the author’s mind. In addition Math tells Gwydion at Caer Dathyl, when he chides him for his delay in returning from Rhuddlan Teifi, that Pryderi’s army has mustered and was within earshot, which if the arguments herein about the location of Caer Dathyl are correct, would not be possible if the invading force had not yet advanced into Arfon. From all of this it must be concluded that the author was not envisaging the battle at the Bryn Derwin pass. For similar arguments the nearby 1095 battle site at Bron yr Erw does not fit the story either. Hughes, 2013, p. 55 makes the same argument.

¹⁹⁴ Davies, 2007, p. 51.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Hopewell, 2013, p. 56-57.

¹⁹⁷ Waddelove, 1999, 205-206 proposed that the line of the Roman Road followed closely with the line of the modern embankment (The Cob) built by Madocks in 1811 to permit the draining of Traeth Mawr. This has been strongly questioned by Hopewell, 2005, p.12 and 2013, p. 57).



the sense that it is upstream along the Afon Dwyrdd, so it fits the description for Pryderi's burial place. There are however conflicting opinions. The *Englynion y Beddau* say that Pryderi is buried by Afon Genoli, which Thomas says is a stream rising near Llyn Tecwyn and draining to Afon y Felenrhyd.¹⁹⁸ Although there are streams rising by Llyn Tecwyn and draining east, they flow into Afon Prysor as shown on FIG 9. Afon y Felenrhyd does not exist and it must be presumed that Thomas was referring to Afon Prysor.¹⁹⁹ No modern sources

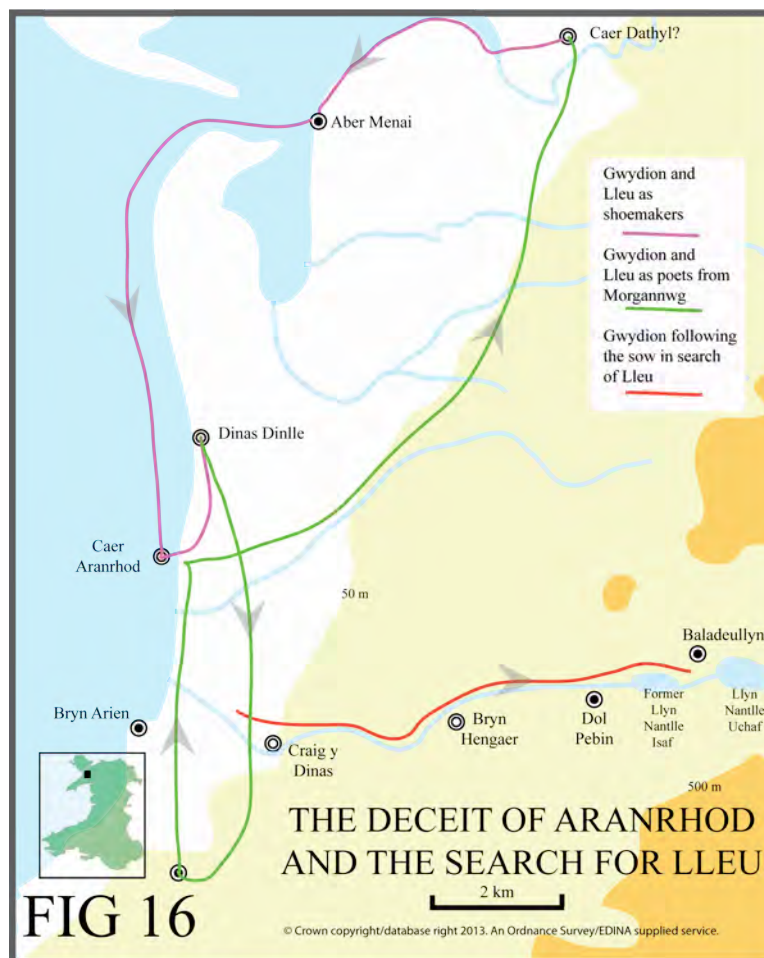
¹⁹⁸ R.J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru*, (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1938), p. 146; Hughes, 2000, p. xiii.

¹⁹⁹ The mis-identification of Afon Prysor as the Velen Rhyd river is long standing. It dates back at least to Speed's 1612 map of Merionethshire which shows Afon Prysor as *Velenryd flu*. Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales 2 Vols*. London: S. Lewis and Co, 1833 calls it *Velen Rhyd*, and this is likely the source of many similar errors from Victorian records.

identify any of the tributaries of Afon Prysor as Afon Genoli. The best course is to follow the author who says Pryderi was buried at Maentwrog, where a stone of that name exists in the churchyard, a medieval site with a history claimed back to the sixth century.

Deceiving Aranrhod

FIG 16 shows the journeys taken by Gwydion with Lleu as he confronts Aranrhod to give



Lleu his name and identity. Most of the place-names were first identified by Sir Ifor Williams.²⁰⁰ They fit the story very well and have not been questioned since.

There are two journeys which form part of the deceit of Aranrhod. The first, the episode of the shoemakers, has already been discussed in relation to the identity of Caer Dathyl.

The second takes place when Gwydion and Lleu were

living at Dinas Dinlle when Gwydion decided that Lleu was in need of the weapons to which a person of his stature was entitled.

Early next day they got up, and followed the coast to Bryn Arien. At the very top of Cefn Cludno they got ready on horseback and came towards Caer Aranrhod. Then they changed their appearance and approached the gate disguised as two young men, except that Gwydion looked more serious than the lad. 'Porter', said Gwydion, 'go inside and say that there are poets here from Morgannwg.'²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ William, PKM, pp. 278-280.

²⁰¹ Davies, 2007, p. 57.

Williams identified Bryn Arien as the headland now known as Trwyn Maen Dylan which stands above the beach and the rock, Maen Dylan, named after Llew's brother. Williams identified Cefn Cludno (Cefn Clun Tyno) as the farm of Coetyno on the slopes above Clynnog. This itinerary fits well with the story and shows the pair passing Caer Aranrhod and then turning back to support the deception that they have come from Morgannwg. Following the encounter with Aranrhod, when Llew receives his arms by trickery, the pair go back to see Math, presumably at Caer Dathyl.

It should be noted that on their first journey Gwydion and Llew approach Caer Aranrhod by sea and on their second by land.

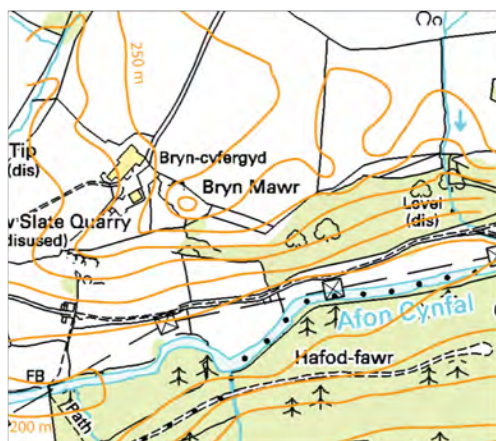
Deceiving Llew

Blodeuedd is alone in her court at Mur Castell while her husband Llew is visiting Math in Caer Dathyl, when she meets Gronw Pebr, Lord of Penllyn, which is the adjoining *cantref* to the east. She is immediately besotted and they begin an affair and, within a short while, begin to plot how Llew might be killed so that they can stay together. Having tricked Llew into revealing the complex circumstances by which his protection from death may be overcome, Blodeuedd entices Llew into a vulnerable situation on the riverbank of the Afon Cynfael beneath the hill which 'is now called Bryn Cyfergyr.'

Then Gronw got up from the hill called Bryn Cyfergyr, and on one knee he aimed at Llew with the poisoned spear, and struck him on his side so that the shaft stuck out of him but the head remained inside. And then Llew flew up in the form of an eagle and gave a horrible scream, and he was not seen again.²⁰²

FIG 17 shows the hill which the author must have had in mind. It is called Bryn Mawr on modern maps, but is adjacent to the farm called Bryn Cyfergyr. It is the only point along the length of Afon Cynfael upstream of its deep gorge where the topography and the position of the river in the valley make it possible to climb a hill and have a credible, although improbable, direct line of thrust of a spear to the river below. The story may be very fanciful

²⁰² Davies, 2007, p 61; Davies, p. 244, points out that the author has failed to highlight the onomastic character of this name - Hill of the Blow.



100 m

Location shown on FIG 18

BRYN CYFERGYD

as seen from a footbridge over the Cynfal. The summit is at 270 m elevation (see map where called Bryn Mawr). The footbridge is at 200m elevation.

FIG 17

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but the geographic situation is certainly not and this, more than any other location in *The Four Branches*, gives a strong indication of the author's personal geographical knowledge. The location is also shown on FIG 18.

Search for Lleu

'Lord,' said Gwydion, 'I will never rest until I get news of my nephew.'²⁰³

Gwydion searches widely for any sign of Lleu without success until he comes to the house of a peasant in Maenor Bennardd, where he learns of a sow who is every day away from its pen. Gwydion follows her one morning and finds her feeding under a tree in which he discovers the injured and festering eagle Lleu. He identifies him and then entices him down by singing three *englynion*, whereupon Gwydion uses his magic powers to return Lleu to his human form. The text allows us to identify the locations the author had in mind. (FIG 16)

²⁰³ Davies, 2007, p. 61.

From Maenor Bennardd Gwydion follows the sow up a stream into Nantlleu, which identifies it as Afon Llyfni, which drains what is now called the Nantlle valley.²⁰⁴ It should be noted that, by following this river from Maenor Bennardd, Lleu would necessarily pass right by both Craig y Dinas and Bryn Hengaer, both Iron Age fortifications which are candidate sites for Caer Dathyl. For Dafydd Glyn Jones this is sufficient to take them out of consideration because of the inconsistency it would produce in the story if the sow had every day been passing the ramparts of Caer Dathyl to get to the tree where Lleu sat.²⁰⁵

The first of Gwydion's *englynion* begins

Dar a dyf y rwng deu lenn²⁰⁶

An oak grows between two lakes ²⁰⁷

The Nantlle valley today only has one lake, but it is known that there were two before one was lost by drainage and covered by slate spoil around 1893-95. The single lake is called Llyn Nantlle Uchaf and the land between it and the now dry lower lake is called Baladeulyn. This is the location of the tree where the author describes Gwydion discovering Lleu.

Baladeulyn was also the location of a high-status site and *maerdref* of the *cwmwd* of Arfon Uwch Gwyrfa. Records are few, but the *llys* of the prince was probably between the lakes, while south of the remaining lake, is an area known as Ffridd Baladeulyn, which would have been grazing land within the royal estate.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Hughes, 2013, p.99 identifies a field near Pont-y-cim, a bridge over Afon Llyfni near the modern farm of Pennarth, called Llian y Hwch (Pig's patch) which may link to the source legend.

²⁰⁵ D. G. Jones, 1988, p. 16. It is also noteworthy that in following Afon Llyfni Gwydion would have also passed directly by Dol Pebin the family home of Goewin, the 'footholder' of Math who disappeared from the story after her rape by Gilfaethwy, again emphasising the near proximity of the locations in the story and the likelihood of the personal knowledge of the author.

²⁰⁶ Williams, PKM, p. 89.

²⁰⁷ Davies, 2007, p. 62.

²⁰⁸ Johnstone, 2000, p. 175. Johnstone further records that there is known to have been a royal presence at Baladeulyn in the person of Einion ap Caradog, uncle of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd. The property was seized by Edward I who stayed at Baladeulyn for several weeks in July 1284, which suggests that the Welsh court there was of some substance.

Lleu's revenge and the flight of Blodeuedd

Lleu recovered from his illness at Caer Dathyl and then began to think of revenge. Gwydion went off ahead of a force of men heading for Mur Castell.

Then they mustered Gwynedd and set off for Ardudwy. Gwydion went ahead and made for Mur Castell. When Blodeuedd heard they were coming, she took her maidens with her and made for the mountains; and having crossed the river Cynfael they made for a court that was on the mountain. And they were so afraid that they could only travel with their faces looking backwards. And they knew nothing until they fell into the lake and were drowned, all except Blodeuedd.²⁰⁹

The road from Mur Castell over Afon Cynfael which Blodeuedd may have taken is the Roman road heading to Bryn y Gefeiliau. The route north of Afon Cynfael is not agreed, but there is a major and long-established trackway going close by an Iron Age fort called Bryn y Castell. It has been suggested that this was the 'court that was on the mountain' that the author had in mind.²¹⁰ Close by, but not on the old routeway, is a lake called Llyn y Morynion. Gruffydd's analysis of what he calls a disguised onomastic tale, because the lake is not actually named in fourth branch, points out that 'there has been no previous mention of the maidens, nor any reason why they should flee and nor any justice in their being drowned' and that the episode has been included to explain the name of the lake.²¹¹ This argument presumes a detailed local knowledge on the part of the author and, for it to have any dramatic purpose, on the part of his audience. The lake in question, which today has been modified to provide a water supply, remains small and remote.

While Gwydion pursued Blodeuedd Lleu went directly to Mur Castell to find that Gronw Pebr had fled to Penllyn. Lleu demanded that he returned to Afon Cynfael to answer to him.

Then they both came to the bank of the river Cynfael. Gronw Pebr stood where Lleu Llaw Gaffes was when Gronw aimed at him, and Lleu stood where Gronw was.²¹²

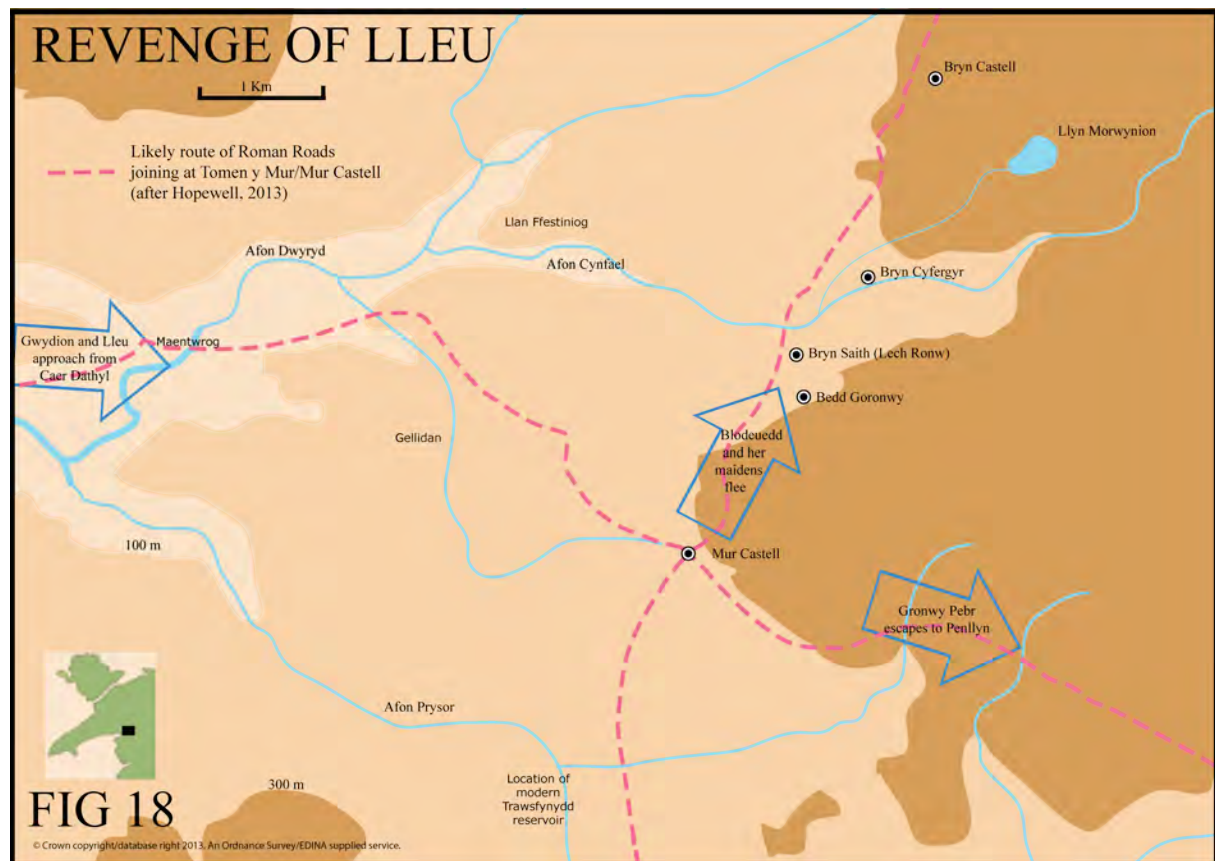
Lleu agreed that Gronw could hold a protective stone in front of him.

²⁰⁹ Davies, 2007, p. 63.

²¹⁰ This suggestion was first made by G.J. Williams, *Hanes Plwyf Ffestiniog o'r Cyfnod Boreuaf* (Wrexham: Hughes and Son, 1882), p. 38.

²¹¹ Gruffydd, MvM, p. 339. Guest mentions the lake by name and its link to the story in a note in her translation. (Guest, 1906, p. 302.)

²¹² Davies, 207, p. 64.



Then Lleu threw the spear at him, and it pierced through the stone and through him too, so that his back was broken and Gronw was killed. And the stone is still there on the bank of the river Cynfael in Ardudwy, with the hole through it. And because of that it is still called Llech Gronw.²¹³

There are two recent reports of Llech Gronw being found but they describe stones of different dimensions. The most recent is the one reported by G.V. Jones in 1992 and this same stone, with a surprisingly symmetrical hole, can now be seen mounted by the farm known as Bryn Saith.²¹⁴ Nearby is a place which by local legend is called Bedd Gronw (Goronwy). All locations are shown in FIG 18.

²¹³ *ibid.*

²¹⁴ G.V. Jones, 'Lech Gronw', *Llên Cymru*, xvii(1-2): (1992), pp. 131-33. The earlier paper report a find of Lech Gronw was Frank Ward, 'Llech Ronw', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* VII (IV): (1935), pp. 352-53.

Discussion

The treatment of landscape and topography in the Four Branches

In the third branch the author describes the delights of Dyfed.

As they wandered through the land they had never seen a place more pleasant to live in, not better hunting ground, nor land more abundant in honey and fish.²¹⁵

We do not know where in Dyfed the author had in mind but the passage chimes closely with the long description given by Gerald at the end of the twelfth century of the wildlife of Afon Teifi.²¹⁶ It is the only powerful descriptive passage about landscape in *The Four Branches* where, for the most part, the descriptive content is about characters and the splendour of the courts. None the less, by repeated reference to places and journeys and to kingdoms and *cantrefi* the author regular evokes images of Wales and its landscape. And although the detail is local, the context is much wider, with bards supposedly coming from Morgannwg, magic abductions from Dyfed to Gwent and with frequent appearances of an otherworld that forms an extra dimension to known places and spaces. And audiences who enjoyed the splendour of the courts and the mystery of the otherworld could, at least in Gwynedd and possibly the Teifi valley, identify with the landscape described and the local legends associated with it. The flight of the *Gwyr y Deheu*, Lleu's wanderings with Gwydion, Gwydion's search for Lleu and the flight of Blodeuedd and her ladies can be traced in detail nearly a thousand years or so after they were first described. The very crag from which the assassination spear was thrown in Afon Cynfael can be climbed as can, if the assumptions of this study are correct, the magical Gorsedd Arberth. No tales from the same period reproduce anything like this precise, identifiable geographic detail. It amazes today and it must have had a similar impact on local audiences when the tales were first told.

But the author is ready to introduce mystery and imprecision. His references to the *cantrefi* of Deheubarth are inconsistent and seem to have little other purpose than to enhance in an unspecific way the status of Pryderi. Gwydion's journey from Rhuddlan Teifi may be based

²¹⁵ Davies, 2007, p. 36.

²¹⁶ Hoare, 1908, pp. 1060-108.

on an actual journey but, although the geography is real, it is quite impractical that it could be done with young pigs in the time described. It is easy to imagine that audiences of the time would have found it no less entertaining, many deriding it for its improbability and perhaps a few enjoying the prestige of some knowledge of part of the route.

Journeys reach their most mysterious in the second branch. While the story is in Wales the geography is identifiable and the journeys credible. But as soon as the force of Britons leaves for Ireland the vagueness and inconsistency increases and legend dominates. It seems evident that the author never saw the expedition to Ireland in a geographical context. He was not reflecting Welsh dynastic conflict but reconnecting with Celtic legend. Maybe also he thought his audience, with no knowledge of Ireland would derive no satisfaction from the detail, even if he knew it himself. The important thing was to tell the story and honour the component legends. Mac Cana says of the second branch that it has ‘the characteristics of a work composed and written in the study’ and the same remark might be made of the excursions into England in the third branch.²¹⁷ This similarity between the second and third branches can be seen in the common characteristics these both these tales show in the classification by narrative purpose presented earlier in TABLE 2.

The descriptions of land and topography are clearest when they are local and in Wales. In the words of Siewers, ‘the failure [to date] . . . to read *The Four Branches* satisfactorily has been a failure to recognise the central character as neither Pryderi nor the pantheon of some lost Celtic theogeny, but the Welsh landscape itself.’²¹⁸

The identity of the principal courts of Gwynedd and Deheubarth

In each branch of *The Mabinogi* references are made to the practice of the prince to make a *kylch* (circuit) of his courts. There is specific reference to the *kylch* in the first, third and fourth branches whereas in the second branch we are given narrative evidence of it with

²¹⁷ Mac Cana, 1958, p. 182.

²¹⁸ Alfred K. Siewers, ‘Writing an Icon of the Land: the Mabinogi as a Mystagogy of Landscape,’ *Peritia*, Vol. 19, (2005), pp. 194-195.

Bendigeidfran holding court in Harlech.²¹⁹ There is limited evidence from history or law books of the royal *kylch* being widely practised; it was certainly in decline as a form of civil administration and tax collection by the tenth century. The *cantref*, although not abandoned, was replaced as the unit of government by the *cwmwd* each of which had a *llys* (court) and *maerdref* (royal administration centre and associated dwellings). In Gwynedd this system, apparently began around 1040, was fully established by the early twelfth century.²²⁰

TABLE 3 shows the network of royal *llys* and *maerdref* thought to have been in place in Gwynedd by the early twelfth century. The likely date of the first transcription of the *Mabinogi* is during this period of change, but it seems likely that the author is deliberately setting his tale in what his audience would recognise as a past or dying royal tradition.²²¹ This is demonstrated by the sites he chooses for courts in contrast to those listed in TABLE 3.

Caer Seint/Segontium and Aberffraw - Both of these were royal sites in the emerging new structure but their familiarity to audiences would have likely been their long historic record as centres of Welsh princely power. Under these names they both have limited reference and in the second branch only;

Caer Dathyl may have been Caernarfon/Segontium but, if so, the author seems to have made the location deliberately ambiguous;

Caer Aranhod, Dinas Dinlle and Harlech were places directly linked to legend associated with characters in the tales, respectively Aranhod, Lleu and Branwen; they were not centres of contemporary royal power.

Mur Castell does not fit the pattern if the author is deliberately choosing locations for royal residences which are not contemporary but emphasise legend and long tradition.

²¹⁹ Davies, 2007, p. 20 'Pwyll himself had just returned from a circuit of Dyfed' (First Branch); p. 36 'They finished the feast, and began to make a circuit of Dyfed where they hunted and enjoyed themselves.' (Third Branch); p. 46 'He was unable to circuit the land, but Gilfaethwy son of Dôn and Gwydion son of Dôn . . . together with the retinue would circuit the land on his behalf.' (Fourth Branch).

²²⁰ Michael Davies and Sean Davies, *The Last King of Wales: Gruffudd Ap Llywelyn c.1013-1063* (Stroud: The History Press, 2012), pp. 74-76; Colin A. Gresham, 'Medieval Parish and Township Boundaries in Gwynedd', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 34: (1987), p. 140. Wendy Davies, *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 235-236.

²²¹ Charles-Edwards, 1970, p. 267.

As far as is known this site meant nothing to Welsh tradition and its only justification in tradition would be as a remnant of Roman power.²²²

TABLE 3		
<i>Cymydau and their llysoed in 12th century Gwynedd and their relationships with The Four Branches.</i>		
<i>Cwmwd</i>	<i>Llysoedd</i>	Commentary
Arfon uwch Gwyrfa	Baladeulyn	This is the location where Gwydion discovers Lleu, transforms him back to manhood and begins the process of his recovery and revenge. There is no written or archaeological record of a <i>llys</i> at Baladeulyn contemporary with the authorship of the <i>The Four Branches</i> , but it is likely that some form of high status site existed here. If it did, the author chooses not to mention it.
Arfon Is Gwyrfa	Caernarfon	Mentioned as <i>Caer Seint</i> in the second branch and possibly as <i>Caer Dathyl</i> in the fourth branch. The location is not known but near to Segontium is possible. A Norman incursion in the late eleventh century saw Hugh of Chester build a motte-and-bailey castle on the site which was later used by Edward I.
Arllechwedd Uchaf	Aber (gwynnegrin)	Not mentioned although it is on the inland Roman routeway from the Conwy to Caernarfon which the author's audience would have identified on hearing of Gwydion's itinerary with the pigs. This site later became the preferred residence of the Princes of Gwynedd from Llywelyn ap Iorwerth onwards.
Arllechwedd Isaf	Castell	Very little detail known but on the Roman river crossing of the Conwy and linked to Aber by the Roman road and also on the "Journey of the Swine".
Eifionydd	Dolbenmaen	Specifically mentioned on the route of Pryderi's retreat but not in the context of a royal <i>llys</i> .
Ardudwy Uwch Artro	Prysor	On the Roman Road from <i>Caer Gai</i> (Y Bala) to <i>Tomen y Mur</i> ; probably a Roman watchtower that was developed into an Welsh administrative centre and defence on the border between Ardudwy (Gwynedd) and Penllyn (Powys)
Ardudwy Is Artro	Ystumgwern	The original administration centre for coastal Ardudwy and not replaced by Harlech (mentioned in the second Branch) until 1284
Malltraeth	Aberffraw	Long established as the principal court of Gwynedd and mentioned in the second branch as a court of Bendigeidfran.

Source: List of *cymydau* and *llysoed* taken from Johnstone 2000, p. 168.

In Deheubarth similar civil administration systems were developed although this was complicated by the more extensive and more successful Norman territorial acquisition occurring at the same time. The Pembrokeshire Arberth was a *maerdref* for the *cwmwd* of

²²² Dark has argued that the nobility of Gwynedd felt a sense of continuity from the Roman era. K. R. Dark, *From Civitas to Kingdom; British Political Continuity 300-800* (Leicester:Leicester University Press, 1994), pp. 256-257.

Arberth and may have had a *llys* perhaps on the same site as the later castle, but there is no documentation giving it any association with any eleventh-century ruler of Dyfed.²²³ The Ceredigion Arberth, although having a persuasive *gorsedd*, has no record as a high-status site. Of the two options, one is steeped in legend but has no court and the other was once a court but has no known legend or tradition. The evidence is not compelling either way. The author could have been envisaging either site or perhaps a completely different one, of which we shall never know. But there is a further possibility. Might it not be, bearing in mind that these tales are fiction and the places described depend upon the creative whim of the author, that the fictional Arberth is an amalgamation of the two places with that same name? A person travelling from Dinbych (Tenby) to Aberystwyth before 1100 would have passed first through a Welsh *maerdref* called Arberth. One, or perhaps two, days later on his journey he would have passed over the shoulder of Crug Mawr. He will surely have been told, as Gerald was at the end of the century, of its magic properties and perhaps that the stream draining the land on the western side was Nant Arberth. He wished to tell a story that needed a court and an adjacent *gorsedd* and, just as if by the magic powers of the characters in his story, by combining the two places with the same name he had what he needed. In the third branch the magic of Llwyd, son of Cil Coed, makes the court of Arberth vanish and, soon after, the magic fort Caer Gawg appears. In such a fictional world it is not a big step to move the court of Arberth north of the Teifi adjacent to Crug Mawr.

The list of courts is completed by Rhuddlan Teifi which, although absent from any written records, was clearly known by the author or his sources and is emerging through archaeological investigation with a possible lost high-status past.

The stories in *The Four Branches* invite the audience to share in the deeds of princes, the splendour of their courts and the interactions of princes and courtiers. The power of these princes is regularly emphasised by naming the *cantrefi* under their control. The author's descriptions show his familiarity with courts and their practices. Yet when he names these courts he chooses to identify them by using places of legend or tradition while, when he is

²²³ Ludlow dates the creation of the Norman castle there to between 1095 and 1110 after which, despite being overrun by Welsh forces on a number of occasions, it remained under the jurisdiction of either the Earl of Pembroke or the Norman crown. Ludlow, 2003, p. 8.

describing the journeys that his princes make, he incorporates geographic description more sophisticated than any fiction of the era. This might be because he was a cautious courtier, mindful that he would hardly invoke royal offence by naming a ford or a rock but he might if he named a modern court and by implication its prince as a character in the tales.

Or he might be saying something about the nature of royal power, that it is ephemeral and unpredictable whereas, in contrast, the landscape of Wales is consistent and certain and can be factually described. So for the principal court of Gwynedd maybe he gives a fictional name to a real place and for the principal court of Deheubarth maybe he constructs a hybrid which suits his narrative purpose.

What might be said about authorship and provenance

Toponyms are one of the main sources of evidence used in support of theories for authorship so it is pertinent to ask if this study has added anything new to that debate.

The issues are threefold:

- was there only one author for *The Four Branches*?
- what can be said on the identity or calling of the author?
- when and where in Wales did the author work?

Authorship

Gruffydd said in 1951 ‘the Mabinogi, in spite of the almost unbelievable complexity of its material, is the product of one mind, the fruit of one integrated artistry.’ This remains the consensus view today.²²⁴ These ‘unbelievable complexities’, when closely scrutinised, do make it possible to show differences of style and content between the branches, as this study has revealed in respect of the frequency of the different types of toponyms shown in TABLE 2. It was evidence like this which led Davies, through detailed textual analysis, to air a case

²²⁴ Gruffydd, 1953, p.2.

for different authorship of the source tales for each branch²²⁵ but she still agrees there is a 'single author in the true sense of the word' for the work as a whole.²²⁶ The contrasts and inconsistencies between the branches have to be considered in parallel with the incoherences and contradictions which regularly occur within each branch. One of the author's talents is his literary confidence which makes him untroubled by discordancy and, in the light of this, it needs very compelling evidence to sustain the multi-authorship argument.²²⁷ There is nothing in this study which gives grounds to question the consensus view.

Identity

There is no consensus about the identity of the author. It has been suggested that he was a cleric or a court lawyer.²²⁸ Williams, following Anwyl, thought that itinerant bards and storytellers were the means by which the tales were collected and he argued that c. 1060, when Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Seisel has control of most of Wales, was a time when they could travel in peace and the creation of the tales might have been stimulated. However this theory does not convince as a means by which stories of military manoeuvres involving topographic detail and complex journeys could be assembled.²²⁹ Nor does it take account of the true nature of a period of 'peace' under a dominant ruler. Medieval princes who held power over a larger part of Wales only achieved this, and more importantly, only maintained it, by engaging in regular campaigns against and negotiation with rivals who threatened.²³⁰ Wendy Davies has commented that 'most of the rulers noticed by the Welsh Annals in the period 1011 to 1063 physically ranged over the whole of Wales.'²³¹ Discussions about the identity of

²²⁵ Sioned Davies, 'Pedair Keinc Y Mabinogi: a Case for Multiple Authorship', in *Proceedings of the first North American Congress in Celtic Studies 1986*. G.W. Mac Lennanan, ed, (Ottawa, 1988), pp. 443-59.

²²⁶ Davies, 2007, p. xxvi.

²²⁷ Breeze writes of a 'curious blend of supreme stylistic skill and indifference to matters of construction'; Andrew Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 77.

²²⁸ Davies, 2007, p. xxvi.

²²⁹ This view was also questioned for different reasons by Charles-Edwards, 1970, p. 268.

²³⁰ Wendy Davies, 1982, p. 106, 'Gruffudd (ap Llywelyn) spent most of his reign campaigning to establish and maintain his own position.'

²³¹ Wendy Davies, *Patterns of Power in Early Wales* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 42.

the author have rarely considered the possibility that there might have been men of learning, lawyers to negotiate treaties, chancellors to fund campaigns or aides in military matters, who travelled in the entourage of the princes and gathered the topographic information to link with the local *cyfarwyddyd* ²³² and either wrote the tales or informed others in the court circle who wrote them. Their journeys would not necessarily follow established routeways but go where the military need dictated, gathering landscape intelligence as they went. This likelihood is demonstrated by the journey taken by Gruffudd ap Cynan and retinue in 1081 which followed a similar, and on the face of it, improbable route of the ‘Journey of the Swine’.

Provenance

The consensus view on the native territory of the author has changed over time. The early view, based on a textural analysis which saw the tales as a life of Pryderi and a linguistic analysis which identified the language as having the characteristics of south Wales, was that the author was a man of Dyfed.²³³ This view came to be doubted largely because the life of Pryderi analysis lost favour and the south Wales origin failed to explain the geographic detail, especially in the fourth branch. Papers by Roberts and Sims-Williams in 2001 significantly sifted the consensus in favour of a north Wales authorship.²³⁴ This however required an explanation of how the author came to know of the geographic context of south Wales that he included in the first and third branches. Breeze proposed an ingenious solution, which was that the author moved from Gwynedd to Deheubarth, and had the benefit of local knowledge in both places.²³⁵ Although Breeze has been widely challenged by suggesting an identity for the author, none of his many critics have even discussed his attempt to explain the ‘dual geography’ of the tales.

²³² ‘traditional story material’ attributed by the author as the source of the tales at the end of the second, third and fourth branches; Davies, 2007, pp. 34, 46 and 64.

²³³ Roberts, 2001, p. 67 summarises the case made by Anwyl, Williams and others.

²³⁴ Roberts, 2001, p. 68, Sims-Williams, 2001, p. 116. Sims-Williams believes the author was a cleric from the class at Clynog but Roberts is noncommittal as to identity.

²³⁵ Andrew Breeze, *Medieval Welsh Literature*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), pp. 72-79; Breeze, 2009, pp. 1-33.

Davies wrote in 2007 ‘there are certainly very strong associations between [the fourth] branch and local topography, perhaps more so than any other tale in the corpus’ (*The Mabinogion*). This significantly understates the case. As we have seen in TABLE 2 the fourth branch contains over half of the courts and journey points, that is, with very few exceptions, the real and visitable places, some of them very obscure and even today only accessible with good maps and local knowledge. It is even harder to conceive, following this study, that the author of *The Four Branches* did not have close personal knowledge of Gwynedd and that the fourth branch at least was written and performed for local audiences who would know these places too. However the character and identity of the places in Deheubarth in the tales are different. They are fewer and less obscure and knowledge of them might well come from merely travelling through the district and hearing of its legends. Whether or not it is correct that Arberth in the story is a fictional hybrid, the fact remains that both candidates are on a regularly travelled route. That route also takes the traveller by the Preseli Hills and close by the forests of Glyn Cuch and its legends. Breeze argued for a concentration of places in the Teifi valley but it is a small cluster and does not present such a compelling case for deep local knowledge.²³⁶ If Crug Mawr is not the inspiration for Gorsedd Arberth and if Penn Llwyn Diarwya is not in the Teifi valley, and neither is proven, then the argument for a second cluster disappears and we are left with a general distribution across south-west Wales. Gwynedd is the only place where the toponym evidence is such that an author with his roots in the region is hard to challenge.

No new conclusions are offered from this study as to the date of the transcription of the tales. Toponyms linked to landscape and legend do not offer clues about time. But a closer study of the links between the tales and journeys in the historical record, as hinted in this study but beyond its scope, might offer new insights.

²³⁶ Breeze, 2009, pp. 136-137.

Concluding remarks

This study has been undertaken to demonstrate, some 115 years since Anwyl's first analysis of toponyms that, by combining a study of the text with an understanding of other disciplines which look at landscape, additional insights can be obtained into these wonderful tales and their talented author. The study of toponyms is more than 'putting a name to a place' but needs to consider what might have been the author's motives in choosing his place-names. Hitherto those studying toponyms of the *Mabinogi* have tended to assume that every fictional toponym, unless clearly mythical, must have a single physical counterpart and that failure to identify it is for want of research rather than lack of understanding of the author's intent. This is not a principle that would normally be applied when studying fiction and it should not be applied uncritically here. Happily in most cases we can reliably and convincingly make the link between fiction and reality and in doing so bridge a thousand years in celebration of the topography of Wales.

But we cannot argue in analysing a work of fiction, as Bollard has, that Crug Mawr cannot be Gorsedd Arberth because it had the former name for centuries before. Nor can we insist on arguing to a conclusion that the Llinon must be either the Liffey or the Shannon when the whole of the period in the second branch, from the moment the Britons leave the shore of Wales until the moment they return, is steeped in legend and lacks all reality in time and space. The author whose subtlety and creativity, and sometimes capriciousness, is so much admired in crafting the characters and situations in these tales has applied those skills to his choice of toponyms. He has long been recognised as a master in the characterisation of persons but surely his skill in the characterisation of landscape needs equal recognition; in both he is unequalled for his period.

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