

Narratives of Place in the Four Branches

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Abstract

The Welsh medieval prose tales known as the Four Branches include many references to place-names which can still be identified in the landscape of Wales today. This thesis takes a place-centred perspective of the tales in order to examine the nature of the relationship between the tales and the places mentioned in them. There are many onomastic tales connected to places in the Four Branches and suggestions are made for several additional place-names with onomastic explanations that have not been previously identified. The links between the place-names and the physical landscape are discussed in relation to the stories attached to them. It is suggested that clusters of places may 'hold' some of the episodes in a 'crystallised' form with the place-names acting as a kind of mnemonic.

The otherworldly motifs in the Four Branches, along with other sources, have previously been used to reconstruct the idea of a singular 'Celtic Otherworld'. However, in the Four Branches these otherworldly motifs are linked to different places with distinct otherworldly qualities. These qualities are linked to the specific features of the places concerned and so it is argued that the otherworldly themes in the Four Branches would be better seen as additional dimensions of these places. Other landscape-related themes in the Four Branches are associated with ideas about sovereignty; these are evaluated in the light of changing perceptions of landscape and nature. The importance of place to the tales is underlined by the way in which a place-centred view of the Four Branches can offer explanations of specific details that have previously been considered anomalous. This site-specificity provides further evidence that places have a fundamental role in the tales.

Introduction

The Four Branches contain many references to place-names which are very specifically located in Wales in places which are still identifiable in the physical world today. Indeed, the relationship between these places and the tales mean that it is difficult to know whether the tales explain the landscape, or the landscape embodies the tales.¹ Sims-Williams notes that 'place-lore is central to Celtic heroic literature, including the Four Branches'.² However, while the Four Branches have been studied from many different perspectives, the role of place has not often been foregrounded.³ This thesis examines 'place' and its role in the Four Branches.

Place-lore is concerned with 'place' and not simply 'location'. It is not a 'mere background or surrounding for stories ... it is a sensed and intimately known reality.'⁴ In the 1970s, new ideas about 'place' emerged in the geohumanities with writers such as Tuan and Relph remarking on the centrality of 'place' to human experience.⁵ Tuan suggests 'space' becomes 'place' when people endow it with meaning and value. However, this subjective value is not readily communicated, which means that it can be easily overlooked or taken for granted.⁶ 'Place' is difficult to define: Bell speaks of the 'ineffable, subjective, and

¹ *The Mabinogi : Legend and Landscape of Wales*, trans. by John K. Bollard (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2007), p. 13.

² Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Clas Beuno and the Four Branches of the Mabinogi', in *150 Jahre 'Mabinogion'*, ed. by Christiane Batke, Bernhard Maier, and Stefan Zimmer (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001), pp. 111–27 (p. 111).

³ This may be due to the foregrounding of other aspects. For example, in the study of story motifs stories are compared in order to classify stories on the features that are shared. In the light of this type of focus important specificities may be rendered peripheral to the narrative.

⁴ *Storied and Supernatural Places*, ed. by Daniel Sävborg and Ülo Valk (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2018), p. 8 <<http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=1000208>> [accessed 6 November 2018].

⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Kindle Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Edward Relph, 'Placeness, Place, Placelessness' <www.placeness.com> [accessed 29 September 2018].

⁶ Tuan, *Space and Place*, loc. 126.

quasi-mystical character of the topic', and speaks of its 'presence' in terms of 'ghosts'.⁷

Soja suggests a 'thirdspace' with a 'multiplicity of perspectives' involving both real and imagined components which are not seen as in a binary opposition.⁸ 'Place' is not limited to historical and geographical facts. It can be understood as being socially constructed, but 'place' also influences us. While for some scholars the act of naming a location defines it as place,⁹ the definition used in this study is layered and includes location, topography, geology, history, folklore, legends and 'spirit of place'.

Literature review

The prose tales of the Four Branches survive in complete form in manuscripts dating to 1350 and 1400: earlier fragments exist from 1250.¹⁰ However, there is a consensus that the tales were based on earlier oral tales.¹¹ Many excellent translations and editions of the tales include information regarding the location of these places and discuss the onomastic stories attached to them.¹² Although scholars have used these place-names as evidence

⁷ Michael Mayerfeld Bell, 'The Ghosts of Place', *Theory and Society*, 26 (1997), 813–36 (p. 814).

⁸ Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 5.

⁹ John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of The Mabinogi', *Landscapes*, 10.2 (2009), 37–60 (p. 40) <<https://doi.org/10.1179/lan.2009.10.2.37>>.

¹⁰ The earliest surviving redactions of the prose tales of the Four Branches appear in the *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest*, dating to circa 1350 and 1400 respectively. Fragments of the Second and Third branches also appear in *Peniarth 6* which dates to around 1250.

¹¹ Sioned Davies, 'Mabinogi/Mabinogion', *The Celts: History, Life and Culture* (ABC-Clio, 2012), pp. 553–54 (p. 553).

¹² See the following in particular; *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, ed. by Ifor Williams (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1930); *Pwyll Penduic Dyuet: The First of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, ed. & trans. by R. L. Thomson (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957); *Branwen Uerch Lyr: The Second of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, ed. & trans. by Derick S. Thomson (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976); *Manawydan Uab Llyr: Trydedd Gaiac y Mabinogi*, ed. by Ian Hughes (Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2007); *The Mabinogion*, trans. by Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); *Math Uab Mathonwy: The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*, ed. by Ian Hughes (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2013); *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr: Ail Gaiac y Mabinogi*, ed. by Ian Hughes (Aberystwyth: Prifysgol Aberystwyth, 2017).

for the place of origin of the tales or their author, little attention has been focussed on these places in their own right.¹³

The onomastic lore in the native Middle Welsh Prose tales is the subject of Hunter's dissertation.¹⁴ He finds that the elements of onomastic lore are of structural importance to the narratives of the Four Branches, a role which is shared with references to the triads, and the section titles.¹⁵ As onomastic lore is often attached to the place-names in the Four Branches, this raises the possibility that those places themselves can be considered a structural part of the tales and traditional in origin.¹⁶ As McKenna stresses, there is an 'insistent presence of an irreducible body of traditional material' in the Four Branches.¹⁷ This includes the onomastic stories, the names of characters, and the triads, and many of these components are linked to specific places in the Four Branches.

Valuable sources for these traditional elements include editions of the Triads, and *Englynion y Beddau*.¹⁸ Additionally the legendary poems of Taliesin includes allusions to many of the characters of the Four Branches.¹⁹ Place is key to *Englynion y Beddau* and several characters in the Four Branches appear in them. Although these *englynion* appear in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (which dates to the thirteenth century) they are thought

¹³ Brynley F. Roberts, 'Where Were the Four Branches of the Mabinogi Written?', in *The Individual in Celtic Literatures*, ed. by J. Nagy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 61–73; Sims-Williams, 'Clas Beuno'.

¹⁴ T. Gerald Hunter, 'Onomastic Lore in the Native Middle Welsh Prose Tales' (unpublished M. Phil thesis, Aberystwyth University, 1988).

¹⁵ Hunter, 'Onomastic Lore', p. 100.

¹⁶ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 35–36 n. 82. Hughes provides a list of the onomastic tales in the Four Branches, which are concerned with animals, the naming of people, sayings, games and places. There are fourteen onomastic tales listed that relate to place.

¹⁷ Catherine McKenna, 'The Colonization of Myth in Branwen Ferch Llyr', in *Myth in Celtic Literatures*, ed. by Joseph Falaky Nagy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 105–19 (p. 106).

¹⁸ Thomas Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen "Stanzas of the Graves"', in *The Proceedings of the British Academy*, trans. by Thomas Jones (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, ed. & trans. by Rachel Bromwich, 4th edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014); *Englynion y Beddau: The Stanzas of the Graves*, ed. & trans. by John K. Bollard (Llanwrst: Carreg Gwalch, 2015).

¹⁹ *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, ed. & trans. by Marged Haycock, 2nd edn (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 2015).

to have been composed as early as the ninth or tenth century.²⁰ The *englynion* record the traditional burial places of the early heroes of Wales: however, they are ‘not the heroes of history but those of Welsh saga and folktale’.²¹ Some of the personal names used have been derived from natural features in the landscape,²² and in other cases historical figures from the Old North have been relocated to specific places in Wales.²³ Prehistoric remains such as cromlechs and standing stones appear to have been a draw to this process, which then act as testimony to those stories.²⁴

Hunter notes that onomastic lore is not present in the medieval tales of all nations but is found in the prose narratives of Old Norse (or Old Icelandic) and Middle Welsh as well as Old and Middle Irish. The onomastic tales of Old Icelandic usually deal with place-names.²⁵ Lethbridge’s study of the *Íslendingasögur* sagas suggests the landscape itself is a key material context for these sagas and acts as a palimpsest from which they can be read. In some cases, the place-names themselves seem to hold the narratives in ‘crystallised’ form, and Lethbridge raises the possibility that the written sagas may have been compiled from these place-names.²⁶ The role of place-names in these sagas may provide a parallel to that of the place-names in the Four Branches.

In a paper dated 2009, Bollard examines the places mentioned in the Four Branches from a perspective informed by ‘place’. Noting the close relationship between the landscape and the Four Branches he asks ‘why do (or should) mythic elements, explanations, or narratives

²⁰ Thomas Jones, ‘The Stanzas of The Graves’, p. 100; Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno’; John K. Bollard, *Englynion y Beddau*, p. 9.

²¹ Thomas Jones, ‘The Stanzas of The Graves’, p. 98.

²² Ibid., pp. 109–10. For example Epynt; ‘Epynt etymologically means “horse-track” or “horse-path” [which] makes sense as the name of a range of mountains.’

²³ Ibid., p. 108. For example; Jones cites Rhydderch the generous – a ‘sixth-century king of Dumbarton, as was recorded as early as the seventh century in Adamnān’s Life of Columba, but stanza 13 places his grave at Abererch in the Llŷn peninsula.’; See also John K. Bollard, *Englynion y Beddau*, p. 110.

²⁴ John K. Bollard, *Englynion y Beddau*, p. 9.

²⁵ Hunter, ‘Onomastic Lore’, p. 4.

²⁶ Emily Lethbridge, ‘The Icelandic Sagas and Saga Landscapes’, *Gripla*, XXVII (2016), 51–92 <http://www.academia.edu/30996367/THE_ICELANDIC_SAGAS_AND_SAGA_LANDSCAPES> [accessed 18 September 2018].

be connected to place and then persist?’²⁷ He notes that apart from the surviving manuscripts, the ‘landscape is the most manifest early record of the Mabinogi that we have’.²⁸ In Bollard’s paper, the places are said to memorialise the ‘lessons they present’.²⁹ He provides detailed maps of the clusters of place-names in the Fourth Branch as well as much valuable discussion on the connection of the tales to the landscape.

Bollard’s view is informed by Basso’s study of the role that ‘place’ has for the Western Apache.³⁰ For the Western Apache, places and their names are strongly linked to stories which preserve traditional wisdom at specific sites.³¹ In an oral culture, places can serve as symbols of past events; they can act as a mnemonic such that the landscape can preserve and communicate narratives. This results in ‘spatial conceptions of history’ where places, place-names and their symbolic meanings are of central importance.³²

Siewers suggests the Welsh landscape is the central character in the Four Branches.³³ He sees the topography of Wales as combined with the cultural realm and ancestral lore ‘knitted together’ with the land.³⁴ In Siewers’ paper, the Four Branches is seen in the context of sovereignty or right rule, but with a Christian framework.³⁵ Although the landscape is seen as of primary importance, the specificities of place and the many place-names mentioned in the Four Branches do not receive analysis.

Skinner’s recent dissertation looks at the geography of the Four Branches as it relates to courts and journeys. Her thesis draws together and provides much useful discussion of the evidence for the identification of specific places in the Four Branches as noted in previous

²⁷ John K. Bollard, ‘Landscapes of the Mabinogi’, p. 44.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

³⁰ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Kindle Ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); John K. Bollard, ‘Landscapes of the Mabinogi’, p. 45.

³¹ John K. Bollard, ‘Landscapes of the Mabinogi’, pp. 42–43.

³² Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, loc. 734.

³³ Alfred K. Siewers, ‘Writing an Icon of the Land: The “Mabinogi” as a Mystagogy of Landscape’, *Peritia, Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*, 19 (2005), pp. 194–95.

³⁴ Siewers, ‘Writing an Icon of the Land’, pp. 193–96.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 200–201.

literature (with the exception of Bollard's paper of 2009).³⁶ Skinner then draws on this to make an analysis of the geography of the tales. She supports the idea that the author came from Gwynedd due to his detailed local knowledge of the area. Her approach sees the author as having chosen place-names in order to 'link the source legends with the landscape of Wales'.³⁷

Databases and other literature regarding the place-names in Wales have been consulted as widely as possible in the preparation of this thesis. The Archive of Melville Richards,³⁸ the RCAHMW database of place-names, and the database of information derived from the Welsh tithe maps, are all available online.³⁹ *The Dictionary of the Place-names of Wales* is also a useful resource for place-name information.⁴⁰ The use of online archaeological databases such as Coflein and Archwilio have enabled the identification of the archaeological sites that exist in the areas studied.⁴¹ Mapping has been provided by the Edina Digimap Ordnance Survey and Historic Digimap Service.⁴²

³⁶ A. Carla Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys in the Mabinogi: An Investigation into the Toponyms in the Four Branches' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2014). However, Skinner seems unaware of Bollard's paper of 2009.

³⁷ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 6, 82.

³⁸ I acknowledge material from Professor Melville Richard's place-name research archive deposited at the Bangor University, accessed through the Archif Melville Richards database (AMR), a project funded by grants from the University of Wales Board of Celtic Studies and the Arts and Humanities Research Board. Melville Richards, *AMR, Archif Melville Richards Database* (Bangor University, Place-Name Research Centre) <http://www.e-gymraeg.co.uk/enwaulleoedd/amr/cronfa_en.aspx>.

³⁹ T. Driver, L. Barker, and D. Hunt, 'Dinas Dinlle Hillfort, Llandwrog', 2018 <<https://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/95309/details/dinas-dinlle-hillfort-llandwrog>> [accessed 20 August 2019]; 'Tithe Maps of Wales' <<https://places.library.wales/>>.

⁴⁰ Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales* (Llandoverly: Gomer Press, 2007).

⁴¹ 'Archwilio' <<https://archwilio.org.uk>>; 'Coflein' <<https://coflein.gov.uk>>.

⁴² 'Edina' <<https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>>.

Approach and Methodology

The types of place that appear in the Four Branches include natural, prehistoric and Dark Age sites; the types of places that Bollard describes as giving rise to story. He sees these sites as continuing to 'acquire meaning and resonance as history and narrative accrue around them,' becoming a 'multi-layered social construct' and repository of history.⁴³

Through this process of accumulation the past becomes embedded into the landscape in the place-names and the traces of the past that remain visible.⁴⁴ This process takes place over time and gives rise to a deepening palimpsest.⁴⁵

In this study the text of the Four Branches will not be followed in a linear way but will be focussed on place. It will look at the idea that place is an integral part of the Four Branches which helped inspire and act as mnemonic for the component stories rather than being selected post hoc as a setting.⁴⁶ The analysis of specific motifs within the Four Branches has previously been 'criticized for its "atomistic perspective"',⁴⁷ since it may lead ultimately to 'fragmentation of each tale into its component parts.'⁴⁸ The methodology of this study follows this kind of process, but it is needed in order to examine the important role of 'place' in the tales. As Welsh notes, 'individual motifs occur not on their own but as part of

⁴³ John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of the Mabinogi', pp. 40–42, 54.

⁴⁴ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, p. loc. 530-680.

⁴⁵ Lethbridge, 'Icelandic Sagas', p. 68.

⁴⁶ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 82. Skinner acknowledges that 'the study of toponyms is more than "putting a name to a place"' and that consideration must be given to 'what might have been the author's motives in choosing his place-names.' However, this does not allow for the possibility that the place-names in the Four Branches are integral to the narrative as it presupposes that they were 'chosen'.

⁴⁷ Andrew Welsh, 'Manawydan Fab Llŷr: Wales, England and the "New Man"', in *Celtic Languages and Celtic Peoples, Proceedings of the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. by Cyril J. Byrne, Margaret Harry, and Pádraig Ó Siadhail (Halifax, N.S.: Saint Mary's University, 1992), pp. 369–82 (p. 374).

⁴⁸ C. A. McKenna, 'The Theme of Sovereignty in Pwyll', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 29 (1980), 39–52 (p. 36). However see also; Catherine McKenna, 'The Colonization of Myth', p. 106. McKenna points out the need to recognise 'the tension between the traditional, or mythological, and the literary, or fictional' in the Four Branches.

an interlocking structure.⁴⁹ Place is part of this structure. Rather than to fragment the tales, the intention is to enrich them with ideas about place that may have been peripheral to the focus of other studies. This is of importance because it is possible that places themselves may have helped to record and inspire the tales.

Although a few place-names in Ireland and England also occur in the Four Branches, this study is restricted to places in Wales.⁵⁰ The first section of this thesis will be concerned with place-names and the second section with the connection between the landscape, places, and the otherworld(s) as it appears in the Four Branches.

⁴⁹ Welsh, 'Manawydan Fab Llŷr: Wales, England and the "New Man"', p. 374.

⁵⁰ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 74. Skinner notes that 'the descriptions of land and topography are clearest when they are local and in Wales.'



Figure 1: *Place-Names in the Four Branches*.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Place-Names in the Four Branches*, (MiniScale®, 1:1,200,000) (January 2018) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA Digimap Ordnance Survey Service
<<https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/os/>> [accessed 3 August 2019].

Section One: Place-names and Onomastic Stories

In the Second and Fourth Branches there are many onomastic stories related to place-names, including place-names that are strongly associated with the names of the characters. Analysing onomastic stories to show how they explain a place-name is not sufficient: there is a need to look more deeply into the relationship between specific episodes and places.⁵² Place-names may originally arise from topographical features as a way for people to refer to them and then later become associated with people or events by means of stories that become attached to them.⁵³ This process involves events, stories and characters being derived from the place-names, and results in the reinterpretation of those place-names.⁵⁴ We cannot be certain whether the tales that are attached to place-names pre-date the text of the Four Branches; it is possible that the place-names themselves may have been important compositional elements contributing to the creation of the narrative of the Four Branches.⁵⁵ Once a narrative has become connected to a particular locality it can also generate new place-names.⁵⁶ This gives rise to a layering of traditions and narratives attached to a place which have importance whether they are literally true or not.⁵⁷

⁵² W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy: An Enquiry into the Origins and Development of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi*, trans. by W. J. Gruffydd (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press Board, 1928), p. 342 n. 84. For Gruffydd 'It is not enough just to prove that onomastic stories were meant to explain a name'; John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of the Mabinogi', p. 44. Bollard says 'most commentary seems content with the notion that an onomastic episode simply accounts for the name of a place, or with the necessary attempts to identify one place or another, without considering any further relationship of that episode to the place or without considering what the place has become for us when the tale is situated within it.'

⁵³ Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, p. loc. 338; Simon Taylor, 'Introduction', in *The Uses of Place-Names*, ed. by Simon Taylor (Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 1998), pp. 1–11 (p. 1). Taylor notes that most Scottish place-names came into being as understandable descriptions.

⁵⁴ Lethbridge, 'Icelandic Sagas', pp. 58–60.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64. Lethbridge notes that the narrative of the *Harðar saga* was derived from place-names with personal names and some events read out of them.

⁵⁶ Simon Taylor, 'The Uses of Place-Names', p. 6.

⁵⁷ John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of the Mabinogi', p. 40.

Onomastic stories are accompanied by a formulaic phrase which functions to make the onomastic explanation distinguishable from the rest of the narrative.⁵⁸ Some of the onomastic stories in the Four Branches are hidden with only some of the elements of a full onomastic story present in the existing texts.⁵⁹ It is not clear how this has come about; Hunter suggests that this may be a result of a misunderstanding or that some of these elements have simply been missed out in later redactions for some other reason.⁶⁰ Possible explanations will be considered in this thesis.

Anglesey

When Efnisien hears of the marriage of Branwen and Matholwch he maims Matholwch's horses. Bendigeidfran compensates Matholwch with new horses but when there were none left in the area, 'Matholwch was taken to another commot and foals were handed over to him until his payment was complete. And for that reason, the commot was called Talebolion from then on'.⁶¹ The name Talebolion is originally derived from landscape features. Talybolion means, 'the far end of the hollows/ridges'; *Tal* means 'head' or 'edge' and is common in place-names, and *bol* or the plural *boliau* can mean 'swelling in the land', 'hill' or 'cavity' and 'hollow'.⁶² There are also several nearby place-names using the same element such as Cors-y-Bol and Rhos-y-Bol.⁶³ These types of place-names would be

⁵⁸ Hunter, 'Onomastic Lore', p. 29. Hunter adds that these 'phrases is/are traditional and formulaic.'

⁵⁹ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 31 n. 134. Hughes explains that a full onomastic story contains three elements. An element that bridges the time from past to present, for example, 'from then on'. A verb that denotes the act of naming, and finally, a phrase that denotes the reason for the naming, such as 'because of that'. Not all of these three elements are present in the text each time.

⁶⁰ Hunter, 'Onomastic Lore', p. 22.

⁶¹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 23–26; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 36. Skinner remarks that despite the fact that 'Aberffraw was the principal court of the Princes of Gwynedd from the ninth century' it is only mentioned in the second branch and not at all in the Fourth Branch.

⁶² Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, pp. 178–79 n. 28; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 234 n. 26; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 31 n. 134.

⁶³ 'Cors-y-Bol, SH40323 87340' (Ordnance Survey County Series, 2nd Revision, 1:10,560) (1926) Landmark Information Group, Using EDINA Historic Digimap Service <<https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/historic>> [accessed 29 January 2019]; 'Rhos y Bol,

understandable as descriptions of a place originally.⁶⁴



Figure 2: Anglesey and North-West Wales.⁶⁵

SH42513 88264', (Colour Raster, 1:50,000) (June 2018) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 29 January 2019]. Cors-y-Bol is the boggy ground which lay in the area of Llyn Alaw prior to its construction and Rhosybol lies at the north-east end of Llyn Alaw.

⁶⁴ Simon Taylor, 'The Uses of Place-Names', p. 1.

This onomastic story has been interpreted as an incorrect attempt to explain the place-name, with the author understanding *tâl* or *taliad* as ‘payment’ and *ebolion* as ‘foals’; hence ‘Payment of the Foals’.⁶⁶ This seems to suggest that the tale of the foals is an added element, a kind of afterthought or rationalisation. However, Hunter suggests that ‘the onomastic of Talebolion is ... an integral part of the narrative structure of the tale,’ and a logical ‘narrative structuring device’ which is not an afterthought but an integral part of tale.⁶⁷ The reinterpretation of the place-name anchors the tale at this place around which it is centred; furthermore the tale returns to this area later. After several episodes culminating in a war in Ireland the survivors return specifically to Aber Alaw in Talebolion.⁶⁸ Branwen’s heart breaks at the devastation and she blames herself for the laying waste of both Ireland and Wales and ‘her heart breaks. And they make a four-sided grave for her and bury her there on the banks of the Alaw’.⁶⁹

Ynys Bronwen, ‘The Island of Bronwen’ is the site of a cromlech known locally as Branwen’s grave.⁷⁰ Here, in 1813 a farmer discovered a heap of stones over a cist with a cremation urn and local clergymen were reminded of the Mabinogi tale leading them to believe it was in reality the burial site of Branwen.⁷¹ Excavations in 1967 discovered that the barrow is a communal burial place for a family group.⁷² It is centred on an earlier standing stone; a split

⁶⁵ *Anglesey and North-West Wales*, (Strategi®, 1:300,000) (January 2016) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 22 February 2019].

⁶⁶ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 234 n. 26; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 31 n.134.

⁶⁷ Hunter, ‘Onomastic Lore’, p. 82.

⁶⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 33.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33; Triad 95 also refers to Branwen daughter of Llŷr as one of the Three People who Broke their Hearts from Sorrow. See Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 242.

⁷⁰ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 236 n. 33.

⁷¹ R. C. Hoare, ‘Tomb of Bronwen’, *The Cambro-Briton*, II.October (1820), p 71-3 (pp. 71–73) <<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/2001139>> [accessed 22 January 2019]; Thomas Crofton Croker, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (London: John Murray, 1827), pp. 174–75 <<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=yAJgAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA174&dq=fairy+legends+and+traditions+of+the+south+of+ireland+3+ynys+bronwen&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjo3IKi3oHgAhWoUhUIH5n5AN4Q6AEIKjAA#v=onepage&q=fairy+legends+and+traditions+of+the+south+of+ireland+3+yn>> [accessed 22 October 2018].

⁷² Frances Lynch, ‘Report on the Re-Excavation of Two Bronze Age Cairns in Anglesey’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 120 (1971), 11–83 (p. 62) <<http://hdl.handle.net/10107/4746042>> [accessed 22 January 2019]. The barrow contained several cremation pots which had been

boulder, which had not been set up to mark a burial but was used as a focus by the barrow builders.⁷³ While not literally the burial place of Branwen, the detail of the split central stone and Branwen's broken heart seem to resonate.

A variant of Branwen's story appears in triad 53; it refers to 'Three Sinister Hard Slaps of the Island of Britain' 'One of them Matholwch the Irishman struck upon Branwen Daughter of Llŷr'.⁷⁴ The word used is *palfawt* meaning a slap; this word also describes this episode in the Four Branches, *Paluawt Branwen*. This suggests the Triad records the original version of the tale, which involved Branwen receiving a slap from Matholwch.⁷⁵ In the Second Branch version of the tale Branwen receives a box on the ear (*bonclust*) from the butcher each day. At *Ynys Bronwen* a bizarre parallel to the story in the Second Branch was found: the excavations uncovered an extremely unusual occurrence of infant ear bones in ritual deposits alongside the burials.⁷⁶

It seems likely that the author was aware of the cromlech's traditional association with the grave of Bronwen.⁷⁷ However, while the narrative seems an onomastic explanation of the name Bedd Bronwen, the normal onomastic formulae are missing.⁷⁸

Jones notes that the form 'Bronwen' 'invariably occurs wherever Branwen is referred to in place-names'.⁷⁹ It is possible that the name 'Bronwen' could arise from a place-name like y

placed there in a period not greater than 10 to 20 years; John Wiles, 'Bedd Branwen - Cairn South-West of Glanallaw', *Wwww.Coflein.Gov.Uk* <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/302327/details/bedd-branwen-cairn-south-west-of-glanallaw>> [accessed 22 January 2019].

⁷³ Lynch, 'Bronze Age Cairns in Anglesey', pp. 19–26, 57.

⁷⁴ Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 150.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁷⁶ Three occurrences of infant ear bones were contained in small pots although no other infant remains were discovered. 'It is very suggestive of some unpleasant ritual ... but the significance of the ear bones themselves remains a mystery'. Outside Anglesey this practice is unknown. Lynch, 'Bronze Age Cairns in Anglesey', p. 57.

⁷⁷ Thomas Jones, 'The Stanzas of The Graves', p. 115.

⁷⁸ Hunter, 'Onomastic Lore', p. 86.

⁷⁹ Bedwyr Lewis Jones, 'Bedd Branwen - The Literary Evidence', *Anglesey Antiquarian Society and Field Club Transactions*, B (1966), 32–37 (p. 33).

Fron Wen.⁸⁰ 'Bronwen' is the form of the name that would be expected for the name of a woman; the variant form 'Branwen' in the Four Branches may have been influenced by the name Brân.⁸¹ For Jones the form 'Bronwen' in Ynys Bronwen suggests that the association with the legend of Branwen is earlier and independent of the Four Branches.⁸²

Once Branwen is buried, the survivors travel to Harlech and then on to Gwales. This long journey could have been avoided if the survivors had come ashore further south but, since the story is so strongly linked to Talebolion and Ynys Bronwen, the narrative requires that they land at this specific site.⁸³ The earlier episode of the maiming of the horses led to the tale about the foals of Talebolion as well as Branwen's ill-treatment. This leads to the war and finally Branwen's death and burial in the Talebolion locality. These story elements form a cycle, with the episode beginning and finishing here, and is thus strongly linked to place.

Harlech

There are two possible derivations of the place-name 'Harlech'; either *ardd llech* meaning 'high rock' or *hardd llech*, meaning 'beautiful rock'.⁸⁴ In the Second Branch it is the height of the rock that is used as an attribute of the place rather than its beauty. From his position here Bendigeidfran sees the men coming from Ireland.⁸⁵ Furthermore the text tells us that 'the king could hear them from where he was seated on the high rock above

⁸⁰ Proinsias Mac Cana, *Branwen Daughter of Llŷr* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958), p. 154 n. 2.

⁸¹ Bedwyr Lewis Jones, 'Bedd Branwen', p. 33; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 293.

⁸² Bedwyr Lewis Jones, 'Bedd Branwen', pp. 33–34.

⁸³ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, pp. 108–9. Mac Cana suggests that this is the reason for the two periods of feasting at Harlech and at Gwales as the journey to Gwales from Anglesey was so long. They needed to land in Anglesey in order to allow for Branwen's burial at the Afon Alaw.

⁸⁴ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeidfran Uab Llyr*, p. 16 n. 2.

⁸⁵ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 22–23. See also; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 13, 36–37. The Second Branch tells us Bendigeidfran has one of his courts at Harlech, however, Skinner notes that there is no historical evidence that there was a Welsh court here prior to the building of the Edwardian castle between 1283–1289.

their heads.⁸⁶ McKenna has remarked on this rich visual imagery, which is ‘very nearly cinematic in its effect.’⁸⁷ Similarly after the war in Ireland, the survivors feast at Harlech with the birds of Rhiannon singing to them. ‘They had to gaze far out over the sea to catch sight of the birds, yet their song was as clear as if the birds were there with them’.⁸⁸ Eichner’s thesis discusses other instances of magical birds in Celtic literature, some of which have similar attributes to Rhiannon’s birds.⁸⁹ However, despite many similarities there are no other instances where the magical birds have the property of being clearly heard while at a great distance. This suggests this particular property may be an attribute of the location from which they are viewed. The idea of being removed at height and yet hearing what is going on below and at a distance is very atmospheric. Harlech as ‘high rock’ reflects the topography and the author’s drawing out of this produces this atmosphere of place.⁹⁰ This part of the tale thus seems intimately connected or inspired by the place in which it is set.

There is an association between Branwen and Harlech in poetic sources. For instance, a *cywydd ymryson* between Siôn Tudur and Siôn Phylip (1543-1620), refers to Bronwen as imprisoned in Ireland and mentions ‘Tŵr Bronwen’ at Harlech castle. Tudur Penllyn (1420-1485/90) also refers to ‘Tŵr Bronwen’ at ‘Harddlech’ and Dafydd Llwyd to ‘caer Branwen’ at Harlech Castle.⁹¹ It is thought that the poetic references originate in oral tradition which

⁸⁶ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 23.

⁸⁷ Catherine McKenna, ‘The Colonization of Myth’, p. 112.

⁸⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 33.

⁸⁹ Elaine S. Eichner, ‘Magical Birds as a Link Between the *Mabinogion* and Other Celtic Literature: Facts and Fancies’, 2018. In particular, there are clear parallels with Clíodhna’s birds where travellers are kept from grief and sorrow after enduring terrible events and the loss of their companions.

⁹⁰ It is worth noting that the sea reached up to the rock of Harlech when Harlech castle was built, although now it is at some distance. Harold Hughes, ‘Harlech Castle’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, xiii (1913), 275–316.

⁹¹ Glyn Jones, ‘Y Wledd Yn Harlech Ac Yng Ngwales Ym Mabinogi Branwen’, *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, XXV.IV (1974), 380–86 (p. 382); Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, pp. xxxiii–xxxiv.

pre-dates the thirteenth century castle.⁹² The use of the earlier form 'Bronwen' supports this and this may also have led to the naming of the Bronwyn tower of the castle, historically attested in 1564.⁹³ While there is no physical evidence for an earlier structure in this location *Y Pedwar Brenin ar Hugain A Farnwyd yn Gadarnaf*, (The Twenty Four Kings Judged to be the Mightiest), records a tradition that Maelgwn Gwynedd (d. 547) founded *Caer Gollwyn* which is now named Harlech.⁹⁴ Bollard suggests that it is likely that Edward appropriated the site for his castle knowing of 'the symbolic meaning of Harlech as a place.'⁹⁵

There is clearly a layering of history and story intertwined with the geographical location and place-name of Harlech whether there was an earlier castle here or not. As Turkel notes, 'the different ways a place is imagined do as much to shape the understanding of what happened there in the past as any physical trace ever could.'⁹⁶ As with the 'return' to Talebolion, there is also a 'return' to Harlech after Branwen's death. This section of the story seems to be strongly connected to Harlech, such that it needed to begin and end here. This may explain why the author includes two otherworldly feasts rather than have the men go directly to Gwales.⁹⁷

⁹² Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. xxxiv.

⁹³ Harold Hughes, 'Harlech Castle', p. 281; Glyn Jones, 'Y Wledd Yn Harlech Ac Yng Ngwales', p. 382.

⁹⁴ Peter C. Bartrum, 'Y Pedwar Brenin Ar Hugain a Farnwyd Yn Gadarnaf', *Études Celtiques*, XII (1971), 157–94 (p. 182).

⁹⁵ John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of the Mabinogi', p. 53.

⁹⁶ William J. Turkel, 'Afterword', in *The Archive of Place; Unearthing the Past of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), pp. 225–27 (p. 227).

⁹⁷ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, pp. 108–9. This seems more likely than Mac Cana's suggestion that the journey to Gwales was broken here because of its length. See Section 2 for further discussion.

Saith Marchog



Figure 3: *Bryn Saith Marchog and North-East Wales.*⁹⁸

⁹⁸ *Bryn Saith Marchog and North-East Wales*, (Strategi®, 1:240,000) (January 2016) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 22 February 2019].

Seven men and their horsemen are left to guard the country while Bendigeidfran and his men are in Ireland. 'Those men were left in Edeirnion, and because of that the name Saith Marchog was given to the township'.⁹⁹ The tale interprets this to mean; *saith* 'seven' *marchog* 'horsemen'; *saith* may also mean 'saint' in middle Welsh.¹⁰⁰ Bryn Saith Marchog, near Corwen, probably originally derived from 'Hill of the Saintly Horseman'.¹⁰¹ This location is at a distance from the other places of the Second Branch, but there are several place-names nearby which are linked with the names of the characters in the Second Branch. It has been suggested that this onomastic story may be a remnant of an earlier association with the stories of Brân and Branwen in this area.¹⁰²

Gwyddelwern is a few miles away and this place-name may be linked to the name of Branwen's son Gwern and his Irish nationality. This has been seen as a misinterpretation of Gwyddelwern with the author ignorant of its 'true meaning'.¹⁰³ The original meaning of Gwyddelwern may well be topographical with *gwyddel* meaning 'thicket' or 'shrub' and *gwern* meaning 'bog' but the alternate meaning 'Gwern the Irishman', may also be understood.¹⁰⁴

Other places in this area include; Cadair Fronwen in the Berwyn range of mountains,¹⁰⁵ Llyn Brân, Gorsedd Brân and Castell Dinas Brân.¹⁰⁶ Place-names including the component 'Brân' may derive from the meaning 'crow', 'rook' or 'raven', either through the presence of these

⁹⁹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁰ 'Saith²', *GPC Online* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies) <<http://geiriadur.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>> [accessed 3 April 2019].

¹⁰¹ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 191 td. 38, ll. 29. Williams suggests the old meaning was St Marchawc; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 43 n. 226.

¹⁰² Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 136.

¹⁰³ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 165 n. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Melville Richards, *Enwau Tir a Gwlad* (Caernarfon: Gwasg Gwynedd, 1998), p. 246; Sims-Williams, 'Clas Beuno', pp. 113, 125; Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 183; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. xl. Sims-Williams also notes an alternate interpretation of Gwyddelwern which features the murder of an Irishman who is resurrected by St Beuno. Morgan and Owen translate Gwyddelwern as 'alder marsh in the thickets'. They derive it from *gwyddwal* and *gwern* since the meaning of *gwyddel*; 'forest, grove' is not attested elsewhere until the eighteenth century.

¹⁰⁵ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁶ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. lxxii; Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 136.

birds in the environs or, when referring to water, through an allusion to the darkness of their feathers.¹⁰⁷ An earlier form of Gorsedd Brân is attested from c. 1700; *Gorsedh y vrân*, meaning ‘seat of the raven’, suggesting the place-name at this time was linked to the bird rather than Bendigeidfran.¹⁰⁸ However, natural associations may not exclude mythological associations since a topographical name may attract traditions originally belonging to mythological figures.¹⁰⁹ Donald Meek refers to ‘transferable toponymy’ to describe how tales may be mobile and relocate themselves to areas containing suitable place-names.¹¹⁰ Similarly the nearby place-name Caerfallwch has also been linked to Branwen’s husband Matholwch.¹¹¹ Again the place-name may be derived from its geographical features with *ma* meaning ‘place’ and *llwch* meaning ‘bog’ or ‘pool’.¹¹² The ‘Irish’ connection from Gwyddelwern may then have resulted in the relocation of Matholwch from the north-east of Wales to an Irish context.¹¹³

Caer Seint in Arfon and Caer Dathyl

In the Fourth Branch Math is said to have ‘found peace at Caer Dathyl in Arfon’ and he ‘was unable to circuit the land’ as he ‘could not live unless his feet were in the lap of a virgin, except when the turmoil of war prevented him’.¹¹⁴ The story itself does not provide any explanation of this peculiarity. The word *gwastatrwyd* is used to describe Caer Dathyl

¹⁰⁷ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁸ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁹ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 138. Mac Cana sees this as being of common occurrence in early literature.

¹¹⁰ Donald Meek, ‘Place-Names and Literature: Evidence from the Gaelic Ballads’, in *The Uses of Place-Names*, ed. by Simon Taylor (Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 1998), pp. 147–68 (p. 164).

¹¹¹ Mallolwch may be an earlier form of his name; it is used in the Peniarth 6 fragment in every instance and also by Cynddelw (fl. 1155–1200) and Prydydd y Moch (fl. 1173–1220). The alteration of the name Mallolwch may have been influenced by the names Math and Mathonwy. Caerfallwch may be linked to Mallwch (from Mallolwch). See; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 441; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. xxxvii; Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno’, p. 114. The name Mallolwch may have been derived from the place-name ‘by a sort of back formation’ from the place name Caerfallwch.

¹¹² Melville Richards, ‘Caerfallwch’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, XXV.IV (1974), 417–18.

¹¹³ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. xl.

¹¹⁴ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 47.

which translates as a 'fixed abode', a 'permanent dwelling'.¹¹⁵ Math's requirement or need effectively ties him to this place, unless war calls him away.

There has been much debate about the location of Caer Dathyl.¹¹⁶ Saunders Lewis uses the internal evidence of the tales and the battle location to suggest that the author re-imagined Caer Saint in Arfon as Caer Dathyl.¹¹⁷ Williams acknowledges that this does best fit the context, but finds it strange for the author to replace the well-known name Caer Saint with the name Caer Dathyl.¹¹⁸ It has been suggested that the author wanted to place the story to a time and place prior to the arrival of the Romans and so used an unfamiliar name rather than Caer Saint, which was associated with the Roman fort Segontium.¹¹⁹ However this is not convincing as the Roman remains at Mur Castell also feature in the Fourth Branch.

Kaer Seint yn Aruon is named in the Second Branch where the bird bearing Branwen's message found Bendigeidfran 'at a Council of his one day'.¹²⁰ This is identified as being the Roman fort Segontium on the outskirts of Caernarfon. *Historia Brittonum* mentions this in the form *Cair Segont*.¹²¹ The tomb of Constantinus, son of Constantine the Great was also claimed to be here and associations such as these fed into the 'legendary aura' of

¹¹⁵ Catherine McKenna, 'Revising Math', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 46, Winter (2003), 95–117 (p. 99).

¹¹⁶ *Math Uab Mathonwy: Pedwaredd Gaiac y Mabinogi*, ed. & trans. by Ian Hughes (Aberystwyth: Adran y Gymraeg, Prifysgol Cymru Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 22–23 n. 8. Hughes provides a discussion on the various ideas about the location of Caer Dathyl. See also; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 28–35. Skinner reviews previous scholarship on this issue as well as the internal evidence provided by the text.

¹¹⁷ Saunders Lewis, *Meistri'r Canrifoedd* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1973), p. 28; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 28–35. Skinner has also put forward this argument in an analysis of the internal evidence of the text.

¹¹⁸ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 251 nn.67, 10.

¹¹⁹ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. xxiii; Lewis, *Meistri'r Canrifoedd*, p. 28; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), pp. 22–23, n. 8.

¹²⁰ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 28.

¹²¹ 'Historia Brittonum', n. 25 <<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/nennius-full.asp>>; Lucy Toulmin Smith, *The Itinerary in Wales of John Leland in or about the Years 1536-1539* (London: George Bell, 1906); A. W. Wade-Evans, 'Miscellanea', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 98 (1945), 258; Leland refers to Cair Sallog, though he is not referring to the Roman fort but the later fort in the harbour; Bartrum, 'Y Pedwar Brenin Ar Hugain a Farnwyd Yn Gadarnaf', p. 191 n. 19. Here Macsen is credited with the founding of Caer Sallog in Caernarfon.

Caernarfon manifested in *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig*.¹²² The name Caer Aber-seint appears in *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig*, reflecting the location of a new 'defended site on the estuary of the river Seint' around the latter part of the twelfth century.¹²³ The estuary site later became Caernarfon, the name of which refers to its site facing Anglesey. This predates the building of the castle by Edward I in 1284.¹²⁴ This site is traditionally associated with a legendary Welsh *llys* and hall which was probably located on the site of a Norman motte and then later incorporated into the castle built by Edward I.¹²⁵

The names of Segontium and Caer Saint are derived from the names of the River Saint or Seiont which meets the Menai Straits here.¹²⁶ The derivation is from the British river name *Segont with *seg-* meaning 'strong, powerful'.¹²⁷ Despite the original derivation of the place-name, there is evidence that at times in the past it has been understood as referring to a 'saintly' connection. For example, Stevenson notes in 1719, 'Seiont, called now Avon y Sant, from St Peris, the common people mistaking Seiont for Sant.' St Beuno's life also associates him closely with the river, and finally in the Record of Caernarfon's enrolment in 1284 'the name of the river was given as Sayntes'. Stevenson continues 'Thus the confusion, if it is a confusion, with *seint*, a plural of Welsh *sant*, is of long standing.'¹²⁸

Caer Dathyl is referred to in the White Book in the form Kaer Tathyl and Kaer Dathyl four times each, and the Red Book uses Kaer Dathyl on every occasion.¹²⁹ This suggests that the original form is Tathyl which mutates after the feminine Kaer to Dathyl.¹³⁰ Baring Gould

¹²² *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig*, ed. by Brynley F. Roberts (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005), p. lxxvii.

¹²³ Roberts, *Breuddwyd Macsen Wledig*, pp. 40–41, n. 229.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. lxxix.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. lxxix–lxxx.

¹²⁶ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 250–51 nn. 107, 291; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 41 n. 215.

¹²⁷ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 64.

¹²⁸ W. H. Stevenson, "Segontium" and "Seiont", *Y Cymmrodor*, XXXIII (1923), 177–86 (p. 180).

¹²⁹ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 28 n. 8.

¹³⁰ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), pp. 22–23, n. 8.

and Fisher propose that the Irish name Túathal equates with the Welsh name Tudwal, which may have been adapted to Tathal in *Caer Dathyl*.¹³¹

Rather than misunderstanding place-names, the author of the Four Branches may have made imaginative use of them to build and elaborate his story. *Kaer Seint yn Aruon* can be interpreted as referring to a 'saintly' connection (whether real or imagined) and as the author of the Four Branches shows great interest in 'rightful naming', he could have chosen to include a saint's name such as St Tudwal, or its Irish form, Tathyl. This word may be fitting since 'dathyl' also has a recorded use in the Book of Taliesin meaning 'famous, celebrated, renowned'.¹³² These associations may have fed into his choice of the name and this may constitute another reason to associate Math's home *Caer Dathyl* with Caernarfon and its legendary associations.

Mochdref, Mochnant and Creuwriion

Gwydion's journey to the north with the pigs is circuitous taking in three places with the name *Mochdref*, one with the name *Mochnant* and finishing at *Creuwriion* where the pigs are penned.¹³³ Onomastic formulae are used to refer to the place-names,¹³⁴ which include *moch* which means 'pig' and *creu*, 'pen'.¹³⁵ The final place-name *Creuwriion* also includes a

¹³¹ Sabine Baring-Gould and John Fisher, *Lives of the British Saints Volume IV* (London: The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1913), p. 212; W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 343 n. 310 see also; R. J. Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru* (Caerdydd: Gwasg Pryifysgol Cymru, 1938), p. 52.

¹³² 'Dathl', *GPC Online* [accessed 28 January 2019]. Usage is given as '*dathyl oed y glot kyn noe adneu*'. This has been translated as 'renowned was his fame before his internment' see Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Irish Vernacular Influence on the Earliest Medieval Welsh Literature', in *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 29–52 (pp. 45–46).

¹³³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 50.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50. The onomastic formulae used are as follows; 'which for that reason is still called' 'which is also called Mochdref because of that...', 'which is also for that reason called', 'which is still called' 'because of that ... was given to the town'.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241 n. 50.

connection with Gwydion himself as Gwrion and Gwryon are thought to be variants of his name.¹³⁶



Figure 4: Mochdref, Mochnant and Creuwriion.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 260 n.71.16; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 35 n. 100.

The text specifically draws our attention to the route; Gwydion says ‘My brave men ... we must move quickly. The magic will only last until tomorrow.’ However, when they arrive back at *Caer Dathyl* the circuitous route is remarked on; ‘It is strange how slowly you have travelled’.¹³⁸

There is a tradition of onomastic stories accompanying swine based tales, for example in the story of the hunting of the *Twrch Trwyth* in *Culhwch ac Olwen* there are many onomastic elements which seem ‘to have been relocated to accommodate a series of place-names containing elements understood as “pig, swine, sow”’.¹³⁹ The difference in the Four Branches is that the text itself alludes to the more direct route that could have been taken if the onomastic place naming had not been required by the story. Place-names incorporating *moch* are plentiful in Wales, and so the route Gwydion takes could be more direct and still pass through places with the name *Mochdref* and *Mochnant*.¹⁴⁰ It can only be intentional that Gwydion’s choice of route is circuitous.¹⁴¹ In the case of the *Twrch Trwyth* the route taken is not determined by the heroes, but by the swine. It may be of significance to the tale that Gwydion is only able to find Lleu by following the lead of the sow. The sow goes at speed directly to Lleu, unlike Gwydion who has already ‘wandered Gwynedd and the length and breadth of Powys’.¹⁴² The possibility that the author

¹³⁷ *Mochdref, Mochnant and Creuwrion*, (MiniScale®, 1:750,000) (January 2018) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 20 February 2019].

¹³⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 50; Skinner, ‘Courts and Journeys’, pp. 59, 74. Skinner calculates the approximate mileage that would need to have been travelled per day and concludes ‘it is quite impractical that it could be done with young pigs in the time described.’

¹³⁹ Brynley F. Roberts, ‘Culhwch Ac Olwen, The Triads, Saints’ Lives’, in *The Arthur of the Welsh*, ed. by Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 73–95 (p. 91). There is also the story of Henwen who according to Triad 26 was guarded by Coll son of Collfrewy. Henwen crossed from Cornwall to south Wales and then moved up to north Wales bringing forth various types of produce and pest. See Bromwich, *Triadedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 50–52.

¹⁴⁰ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 336 n. 303. Gruffydd also hypothesises that there are lost onomastic references to place-names incorporating *creu* to account for this route.

¹⁴¹ Hunter, ‘Onomastic Lore’, p. 94. Hunter suggests that this is to allow ‘time for the two forces to muster to battle and create the desired distraction’.

¹⁴² Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 61.

knowingly manipulated onomastic traditions provides evidence for his creative use of place-names.

Rhuddlan Teifi

Pryderi was tricked out of the otherworldly pigs in his court at Rhuddlan Teifi.¹⁴³ The text refers to 'the place now called Rhuddlan Teifi', '*yn y lle a elwir Rudlan Teiui yr awr hon*'.¹⁴⁴

Although Rhuddlan Teifi has not been seen as having an onomastic association to date, this phrase usually denotes an onomastic story.¹⁴⁵ Gruffydd translates Rhuddlan Teifi as 'The Red Bank of Teivi'.¹⁴⁶ *Rhudd* has meanings that include 'red', 'ruddy', 'brown', 'bloody', 'covered with blood' and 'scorched'.¹⁴⁷ It is possible that this place-name may prefigure the death of Pryderi as there may be a suggestion that the name has changed due to the later events of the story. Pryderi is killed by Gwydion at Y Felenrhyd, a ford near Maentwrog. Although one can imagine a riverbank red with blood it is not clear exactly how this understanding of Rhuddlan Teifi connects with the location of his death at Y Felenrhyd.

Y Felenrhyd

Pryderi assembles an army to come after the pigs and a battle takes place between Maenor Bennardd and Maenor Coed Alun. There is 'a great massacre' on both sides and Pryderi's

¹⁴³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 48; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 26. Recent archaeological investigations by Bezant provide evidence that there may have been a court at this site. See also Dyfed Archaeological Trust, 'Rhuddlan Deifi, Buthelan, Rhyddlan, Redlan Towy. PRN 8209' <<https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=DAT8209&dbname=dat&tbnname=core&sessid=CHI1ndrt6um&queryid=Q736835001555182361>> [accessed 23 March 2019].

¹⁴⁴ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 2, l. 46.

¹⁴⁵ For example; 'which is now called Bryn Cyfergyr', 'which is now called Nantlleu'. These are both onomastic stories and are discussed later. Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 61, 63; see also Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 59 n. 391. There is a further example; 'the cantref of Dinoding... that is now called Eifionydd and Ardudwy'. Despite the use of the same phrase, this is not an onomastic tale. It refers to a change in historical district names created by the Rhuddlan Statute in 1285. As such it may be a note added by the copier rather than at the time of composition in order to indicate where was meant.

¹⁴⁶ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 5 n. **; In addition there is an early record from 1291 which shows it as Redelantowy. See; AMR [accessed 28 January 2019].

¹⁴⁷ 'Rhudd', GPC Online [accessed 28 January 2019].

men retreat as far as the place 'which is still called Nant Call', a phrase which Hunter has identified as containing an onomastic story.¹⁴⁸ *Call* means 'wise' perhaps meaning that they were wise to flee to the valley.¹⁴⁹ They then fled to Dol Benmaen, where they attempted to make peace. This held as far as Y Traeth Mawr, but it broke down 'because the foot-soldiers could not be restrained from shooting at each other.'¹⁵⁰ See Figure 5: *The Retreat of Pryderi*.

Finally Gwydion agrees to fight Pryderi himself and 'Pryderi was killed; and he was buried in Maentwrog, above Y Felenrhyd, and his grave is there.'¹⁵¹ Skinner identifies the route followed as the old Roman Road from Segontium to Tomen y Mur, but she states 'Afon y Felenrhyd does not exist', believing it to be a misidentification.¹⁵² In fact Y Felenrhyd is historically well attested as the name for the lower reaches of the River Prysor.¹⁵³ The river is a parish boundary as far as Rhaedr Du which lies within Ceunant Llenyrch,¹⁵⁴ and is fordable at Y Felenrhyd as evidenced by the stepping stones shown on historic maps, see Figure 6: *Y Felenrhyd, 1889*.

¹⁴⁸ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 38 n. 124; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 51.

¹⁴⁹ Hunter, 'Onomastic Lore', p. 94; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 55 n.124.

¹⁵⁰ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 51.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁵² Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 65–67, and n. 199 .

¹⁵³ John Speed, *Merionethshire Described* (Bassett and Chiswell, 1676) <<https://viewer.library.wales/1445694>> [accessed 13 August 2019]; Thomas Taylor, 'The Principality of Wales Exactly Described: A New Map of Merionethshire', 1718 <<https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/maps/county-maps/the-principality-of-wales-exactly-described/>> [accessed 10 February 2019]. Speed shows it as named Velenryd Flu and Thomas Taylor as Velenrid R. ; Edward Lhwyd, 'Parochialia Volume 2', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1910 Suppl (1699), pp. 104–5. Lhwyd's *Parochial Queries* dating from around 1700 refers to it twice; 'Pont y velen rhûd on Avon y velenrhûd which divides this parish from Llandekwyn' and 'Llyn Raiad du, on Avon y velenrud'.

¹⁵⁴ 'Rhaeadr Du, SH 66682 38822' (Colour Raster 1:25,000) (June 2018) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 10 February 2019].



Figure 5: The Retreat of Pryderi.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ *The Retreat of Pryderi*, (Strategi®, 1:200,000) (January 2016) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 29 October 2019].

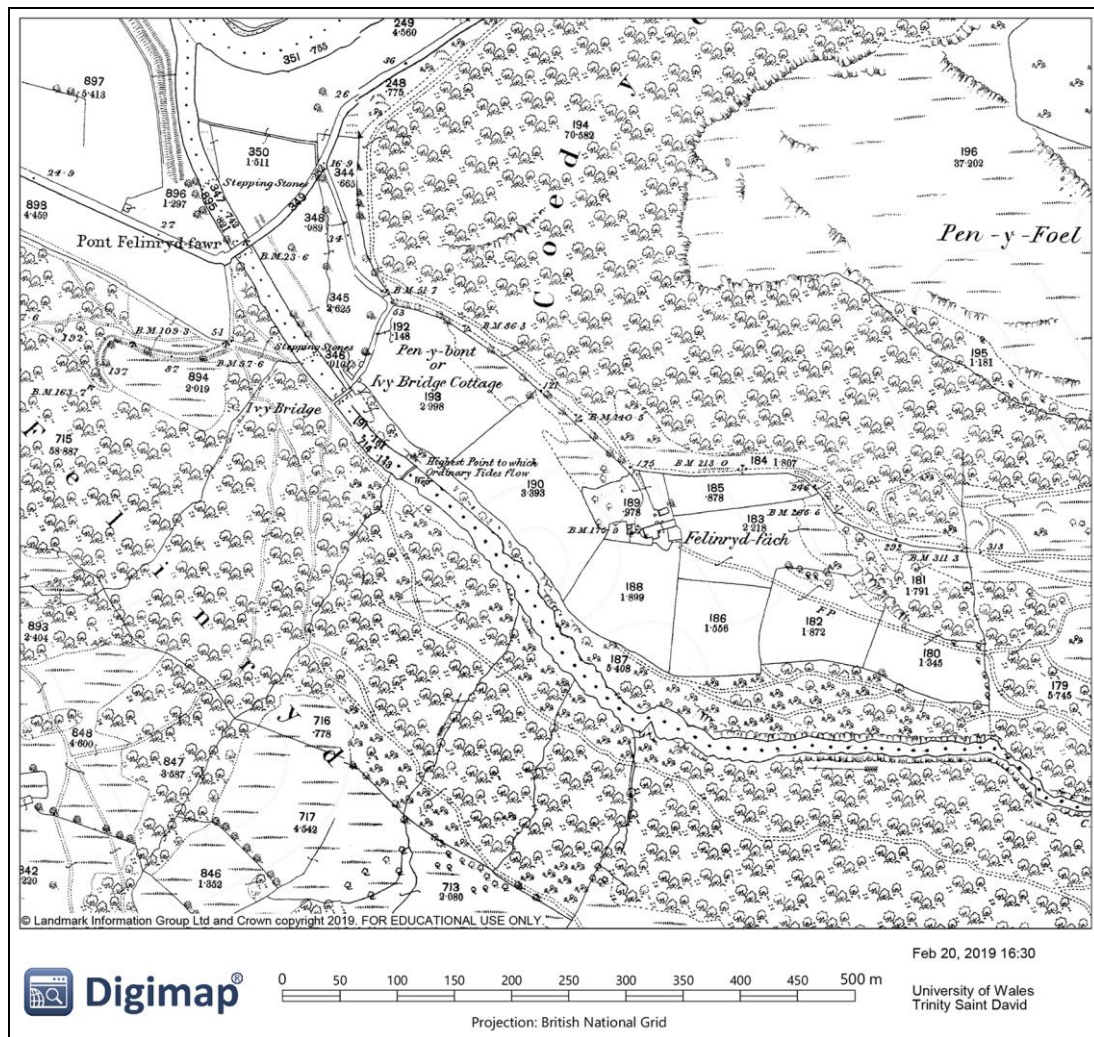


Figure 6: *Y Felenrhyd*, 1889.¹⁵⁶

In *Englynion y Beddau* we are told that Pryderi is buried at Abergwenoli.¹⁵⁷ Thomas has identified this as an out-of-use name for a stream rising near Llyn Tecwyn and flowing into *Y Felenrhyd* near Ivy Bridge.¹⁵⁸ This has been much referenced but as no other source has been recorded it is possible that it is a back formation from the evidence of the Fourth Branch.¹⁵⁹ As discussed earlier the fact that Pryderi's death occurred at a river ford may be

¹⁵⁶ *Y Felenrhyd 1889*, (Ordnance Survey County Series, 1st Edition, 1:2500) (1889) Landmark Information Group, Using EDINA Historic [accessed 20 February 2019].

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Jones, 'The Stanzas of The Graves', p. 107.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas, *Enwau Afonydd a Nentydd Cymru*, p. 146. Thomas's entry for Abergwenoli is accompanied by a symbol denoting that the name is out of use.

¹⁵⁹ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. xlix (ii).

linked to the name of Rhuddlan Teifi, and this may have influenced the site chosen for his death on the route back towards the south.

Mur y Castell and Cynfael Cluster

Mur y Castell is today's Tomen y Mur; the site of a Roman fort near to Trawsfynydd, it occupies a position of strategic importance where two Roman roads cross.¹⁶⁰ The River Cynfael, (now Cynfal) can be reached from there by following the Roman road running north-east. This river is important to the Fourth Branch and is mentioned multiple times in connection with key events.

Blodeuedd and her lover Gronw trick Lleu into showing how he may be killed. Gronw lies in wait 'in the shadow of the hill which is now called Bryn Cyfergyr, on the bank of the river Cynfael',¹⁶¹ and spears Lleu with a poisoned spear. Lleu then flies off in the form of an eagle.¹⁶² Bryn Cyfergyr or Bryn Cyfergyd today, has an onomastic story embedded in its name although the author of the Four Branches has not drawn attention to it.¹⁶³ *Cyfergyr* means 'conflict', 'contest' or 'plot'.¹⁶⁴ The place-name Bryn Cyfergyr is translated 'Hill of the Blows' by Hughes.¹⁶⁵ There are alternate derivations of the place-name. *Gyr* can be translated 'flock', 'herd' or 'drove' although these meanings are only attested from the sixteenth century onwards. Earlier meanings attested fit the story; 'drive', 'blow', 'attack'.¹⁶⁶ *Cyfer* can be translated 'direction', 'place', 'spot' and 'acre' and is a relatively common element in place-names.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 39–40.

¹⁶¹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 61; Some translations have 'under the lee' of the hill; see *The Mabinogion*, trans. by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, Everyman (London: Dent, 1974), p. 71.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁶³ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 65 n. 467; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 244 n. 61.

¹⁶⁴ 'Cyfergyr', *GPC Online* [accessed 28 January 2019].

¹⁶⁵ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 96 n. 466/7.

¹⁶⁶ 'Gyr¹', *GPC Online* [accessed 27 February 2019].

¹⁶⁷ 'Cyfer¹', *GPC Online* [accessed 27 February 2019].

Later Lleu takes his revenge, at the river Cynfael with their positions reversed. Gronw is permitted to shield himself with a stone from the riverbank but Lleu's spear pierces the stone and kills Gronw. The author tells us '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'.¹⁶⁸ This is a full onomastic explanation of the name which presumably belonged to a pierced stone that stood there at that time. *Llech* has two meanings that may be relevant here; as a slate slab, (including that of a gravestone) and as a hiding place with the implication of a sly person, or a coward.¹⁶⁹

There are other relevant place-names in this locality that are not specifically mentioned in the text; Bron Goronwy, Bryn Saeth and Afon Bryn Saeth. The words *bryn* and *bron* refer to types of hill or slope and *saeth* means 'arrow'.¹⁷⁰ Bryn Cyfergyd itself is notable in shape and readily identified at the location.¹⁷¹ The earliest mention of it in documentary sources is 1626 as Bryn Kyvergid, and in 1771 as Bryn Cyfergid.¹⁷² There is a record for Llech Ronw Ucaph and also Gweirglodd Llech Ronw in 1567/8.¹⁷³ The building Llech Goronwy, alludes to the stone and still exists.¹⁷⁴ Bryn y Saeth is attested in Lhwyd's *Parochialia*.¹⁷⁵ It means 'hill of the arrow' and fits well with the story, but is now known as Bryn-saeth.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 64.

¹⁶⁹ 'Llech¹', and 'Llech²', *GPC Online* [accessed 28 January 2019].

¹⁷⁰ 'Bryn¹', 'Bron', and 'Saeth', *GPC Online* [accessed 28 January 2019].

¹⁷¹ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 68–69. Skinner discusses the location of Bryn Cyfergyd and identifies it with a specific hill near the farm marked on modern maps, however she mistakenly assumes that Gronw is shooting from the top of the hill. Shooting from 'the shadow' or 'under the lee' of the hill as is described in the text, would be quite possible.

¹⁷² *AMR* [accessed 28 January 2019].

¹⁷³ *AMR* [accessed 28 January 2019].

¹⁷⁴ Goronwy is a variant form of Gronw.

¹⁷⁵ Lhwyd, 'Parochialia Volume 2', p. 104.

¹⁷⁶ 'Bryn Saeth, SH 71625 40747', (OSVectorMap Local Raster, 1:5,000) (July 2018) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 29 January 2019]; *AMR* [accessed 22 February 2019]; See also Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, pp. 474–75. Owen and Morgan note that a river may be named 'arrow' due to its straightness or speed. Bryn Y Saeth could possibly be understood as 'hill of the river like an arrow', if the origin of this meaning was subsequently forgotten or reinterpreted then the river could be named 'Afon Bryn y Saeth' without any circularity in meaning.



Figure 7: *Mur Castell and Llyn Morwynion.*¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ *Mur Castell and Llyn Morwynion*, (Colour Raster, 1:24,000), Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 20 February 2019].

Writing in 1930 Williams states that although the stone itself is no longer known, the name Llech Ronwy remains.¹⁷⁸ Since then this stone has been a focus of attention with searches for it and reports of its being found or re-found.¹⁷⁹ A stone said to be Llech Goronwy has been erected by the council but there are doubts whether this is the original stone.¹⁸⁰

Llech Goronwy is mentioned in Triad 30;

Teulu Goronwy Peuyr (o Benllyn), a omedassant eu harglwyd o erbynneit y g6enwynwayw y gan Lleu Lla6 Gyffes yn Llech Oronwy ymblaen Kynuael

War-Band of Goronwy the Radiant of (Penllyn), who refused to receive the poisoned spear from Lleu Skilful-Hand on behalf of their lord, at the Stone of Goronwy at the head of the (river) Cynfal.¹⁸¹

It is probable that this triad represents an oral version of an onomastic tale on which the tale is based.¹⁸² The Triad offers a variant location for the stone; '*ymblaen Kynuael*', which Bromwich translates as referring to the head of the river Cynfal which is several miles to the east. However, there was a farm named Blaen Cynfal which formerly occupied the site of today's farm Cwm Cynfal.¹⁸³ If the triad locates the stone, Llech Goronwy at Blaen

¹⁷⁸ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 303 n. 92:20.

¹⁷⁹ See Frank Ward, 'Llech Ronw', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, VII (1935), 352–53. Ward reports that a writer in 1830 knew of the stone standing on the bank of the river Cynfal 'within living memory', but that 'it is not there now'. His investigations led him to a former resident of Llech Goronwy who remembered it as being 'flat on the edge of the stream in the Ceunant Côch' and 'that the stone had been brought up from the Cynfal'. She stated that 'the house was so-called because a large standing stone, now fallen 150 yards north-west from the dwelling was said to mark the grave of Gronw.' The stone was found fifty yards downstream in the Ceunant Coch with part of it broken off. ; Geraint V. Jones, 'Llech Gronw', *Llên Cymru*, XVII (1993), 131–33. Geraint V Jones disputes that this is the right stone. On further investigation he finds a second stone that is of differing proportions to that found by Ward. He pinpoints the location of 'Bedd Gronw' where it was said Gronw Bebr was buried. This is close to the farmhouse known as Llech Goronwy.

¹⁸⁰ 'Llech Ronw, Holed Stone', 1990

<<https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=GAT5189&dbname=gat&tname=core&sessid=CHI1l2pn8pp&queryid=Q085690001550160092>> [accessed 14 February 2019].

¹⁸¹ Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 66.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁸³ Avis Reynolds, *North West Wales Dendrochronology Project Dating Old Welsh Houses: Cwm Farm*, 2012, p. 2 <http://discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk/library/Hhistory/mer016_HH_33_Cwm-Farm.pdf> [accessed 30 January 2019]; Richards, *AMR* [accessed 30 January 2019]. It is attested in the forms Blaen Cynfal and Blaen Cwm Cynfal from 1590 through to 1858, other forms recorded include Blayne gynfell, Blaen Kinvell, Blayn Kynvyll, and Blaen Cwm Kynvel.

Cynfal, it is just under a mile further up the River Cynfal than today's building bearing the name Llech Goronwy, and so more closely in this area than has been suggested.

The river Cynfael appears in the story again when Gwydion pursues Blodeuedd and her maidens and they cross the river Cynfael. The maidens were so afraid that they could only travel with their faces looking backwards and because of this they fell into a lake and were drowned.¹⁸⁴ Llyn Morwynion lies on the far side of the river Cynfal, and fits this description.¹⁸⁵ The text does not mention the name of the lake, but *Morwynion* or *Morynion* means 'maidens'.¹⁸⁶ Historically attested forms of the name include Llyn Morynion 1592 and Llyn-y-Morwynion from 1795.¹⁸⁷ There are other legends associated with this lake which involve the drowning of women due to 'relationship' difficulties.¹⁸⁸

Gruffydd suggests that the episode with the maidens has been included in order to explain the name of the lake.¹⁸⁹ While it would seem odd to include the maidens purely to explain the place-name and then not mention the place-name, Gruffydd suggests this is because the latest 'editor' of the Four Branches 'did not know why the maidens had been introduced.'¹⁹⁰ Again there is a presumption that onomastic place-names and their explanation are included as additions to 'the story'.

¹⁸⁴ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 63.

¹⁸⁵ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 71. Skinner notes that there is a 'major and long-established trackway' which runs close by but does not lead to the lake. The trackway leads to the Iron Age fort known as Bryn y Castell.

¹⁸⁶ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 301; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 73 n. 552; 'Morwyn', *GPC Online* [accessed 14 February 2019].

¹⁸⁷ *AMR* [accessed 30 January 2019].

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Pennant, *Tours in Wales: Volume II* (London: Wilkie and Robinson, 1810), p. 295. Pennant records a legend relating to the nearby 'Beddau Gwyr Ardudwy' at Rhyd yr Halen. The men of Ardudwy are said to have carried off women from Clywd to this place but the men of Clwyd caught up with them and killed them here. The women, 'rather than return home, rushed into an adjacent water, called, from the event, Llyn y Morwynion, or The Maidens' Lake, and there perished.'

¹⁸⁹ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 339. He makes this suggestion because up until now there had been no mention of any maidens.

¹⁹⁰ W. J. Gruffydd, 'The Mabinogion', *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, (1914), 14–80 (p. 61).

Lethbridge suggests that place-names were an important source for the writing of the *Íslendingasögur* sagas with pre-existing tales connected with the place-names or alternatively, with characters and events created from them.¹⁹¹ Both of these possibilities exist here; the story is coded in the landscape through the place-names. Casey has written of 'the capacity of places to hold and gather, to generate particular configurations and sense of ordered arrangements of things,'¹⁹² and this certainly applies here. It is possible that the episode itself was written from the places and place-names in the landscape which can thus be seen as a mnemonic of the tale. This place-based view would explain why onomastic stories can be 'hidden'. Once the onomastic story has been included the place-names have already functioned as a mnemonic without the need for them to be specifically named.

However, it is difficult to unravel the complexity of the relationships between the place-names and the narrative and it is also possible that some of the place-names in the landscape today were named from the story.¹⁹³ A relevant place-name would not be mentioned in a tale if the place was named after the written text began to circulate.

However, it is also possible that the place-name existed, and the writer chose not to use it.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Meek, 'Place-Names and Literature', pp. 149–50 Meek suggests it is 'likely that a place-name, or a cluster of place-names, could form the starting point of a [...] story or poem [...] this would seek to give meaning to, or derive some meaning from, a toponym or set of toponyms.'; Lethbridge, 'Icelandic Sagas', p. 58 Lethbridge notes that the *Íslendingasögur* sagas may have been written from earlier oral tales or from 'certain place-names [...] used [...] as the spark of anecdotal inspiration, creating characters and events out of them and moulding these anecdotes into bigger and more coherent wholes'. But concludes it is most likely that a combination of these approaches was used.

¹⁹² Edward S. Casey, 'How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena', in *Senses of Place*, ed. by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996), pp. 13–52 (p. 25); Sävborg and Valk, *Storied and Supernatural Places*, p. 8.

¹⁹³ Meek, 'Place-Names and Literature'. Meek describes this process operating in regard to the Gaelic ballads of Scotland.

¹⁹⁴ Lethbridge, 'Icelandic Sagas', p. 61.

Arfon cluster

The Fourth Branch bears ‘eloquent witness to the localization’ of its events in the area around Dinas Dinlle and Clynnog Fawr,¹⁹⁵ and it has been suggested that the text is based on native traditions of this area.¹⁹⁶ Many of the characters of the Fourth Branch are strongly associated by name with specific locations here; Aranrhod is associated with Caer Aranrhod, Dylan with Trwyn Maen Dylan, Lleu with Dinas Dinlle and Nantlle, Gwydion with Bryn Gwydion and it is also possible that Blodeuedd appears in the name of the farm named Caer Loda (from *blodau* ‘flowers’).¹⁹⁷ Again not all of these place-names are mentioned in the text. There are fuller traditions regarding the main characters in the Fourth Branch elsewhere. The term *gwlad Dôn* or ‘land of Dôn’ is used by thirteenth-, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poets as a synonym for Arfon or Caernarfonshire.¹⁹⁸ Math, Gwydion, Lleu, Aranrhod and Dylan are all referenced in poetry, in particular in the legendary poems of the Book of Taliesin.¹⁹⁹

See Figure 8: *Nantlle*.

¹⁹⁵ Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 285.

¹⁹⁶ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. xciv; see also Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno’.

¹⁹⁷ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. xciii n. 94.

¹⁹⁸ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. xvii; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. lvi (iv).

¹⁹⁹ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. xci; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 393; Haycock, *Legendary Poems*.

best fish in the sea. Because of that he was called Dylan Eil Ton – no wave
ever broke beneath him.²⁰³

Dylan Eil Ton translates as ‘Sea son of Wave’.²⁰⁴ His baptism seems to impart this nature to
him as directly after he was named, he made for the sea.²⁰⁵

Trwyn Maen Dylan is on the coast south of Dinas Dinlle and Caer Aranrhod, although the
location is not mentioned in the text by this name. There is also a large stone here known
as Maen Dylan.²⁰⁶ Dylan’s grave is mentioned in *Englynion y Beddau*

<i>Bet Tedei tad awen</i>	The grave of Tydei, father of the muse
<i>yg godir Brin Aren;</i>	is in the region of Bryn Aren;
<i>yn yd vna ton toto,</i>	where the wave makes a noise
<i>Bet Dilan Llan Bevno</i>	the grave of Dylan is at Llanfeuno. ²⁰⁷

In a variant *englyn* in Peniarth 98B, the reading for Bryn Aren is Bryn Arien.²⁰⁸ This has
been associated with the Bryn Arien of the Fourth Branch with suggestions that it is either
an earlier name for Trwyn Maen Dylan or is in its vicinity.²⁰⁹ Bryn Aerau nearby has been
suggested.²¹⁰ Williams equates Bryn Arien with Bryn Beddau whose name indicates the
presence of graves. This hill forms a small promontory and is the first headland to be
reached from the direction of Dinas Dinlle towards Clynnog, a detail which fits with the
text.²¹¹ A field named Pen y Fynwent lies at the north end of Trwyn Maen Dylan, which fits
with the identification of Bryn Beddau.²¹²

²⁰³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 54.

²⁰⁴ Marged Haycock, ‘Dylan Ail Ton’, in *Ysgrifau Beirniadol*, ed. by J. E. Caerwyn Williams
(Dinbych: Gwasg Gee, 1985), pp. 26–38 (pp. 27–28); Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 478.

²⁰⁵ Sarah Larratt Keefer, ‘The Lost Tale of Dylan in the Fourth Branch of *The Mabinogi*’, *Studia
Celtica*, XXIV (1989), 26–37 (p. 34). Keefer compares the tale of Dylan to folklore about seals.

²⁰⁶ Thomas Jones, ‘The Stanzas of The Graves’, p. 106; Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno’, p. 117. Sims-
Williams suggests that Maen Dylan marks the site of Dylan’s grave as Llanfeuno may not have
been meant as a precise location.

²⁰⁷ Thomas Jones, ‘The Stanzas of The Graves’, pp. 118–19.

²⁰⁸ Thomas Jones, ‘The Stanzas of The Graves’, pp. 136–37; Haycock, ‘Dylan Ail Ton’, p. 30 n.16.

²⁰⁹ Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno’, p. 118; John K. Bollard, *Englynion y Beddau*, pp. 61–62.

²¹⁰ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 25 note.

²¹¹ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, pp. 278–79; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013).

²¹² Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, ‘Pen y Fynwent, Trwyn Dylan, Clynnog’, 1993
<<https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=GAT1737&dbname=gat&tbnname=core&sessid=CHI1l8bek2f&queryid=Q598321001550498925>> [accessed 17 February 2019].

There is mention of the sea avenging the death of Dylan in a poem in the Book of Taliesin. This could allude to the location of Dylan's grave at the coast, but it is also possible that it refers to the coastline itself; with the waves beating upon it in vengeance.

<i>Pan yw gofaran</i>	Why is it noisy –
<i>twrwf tonneu wrth lan?</i>	the tumult of the waves against the shore?
<i>yn dial Dylan</i>	avenging Dylan
<i>dydyhaed attan.</i>	it reaches towards us. ²¹³

Tidal erosion remains relevant to this section of coastline today and Caer Aranhod, the fortress of Dylan's mother, is just to the north, and strongly associated with inundation legends (see below for more detail). Dylan's uncle Gofannon was responsible for Dylan's death and he may also have been represented in the landscape of the area in the name Llyn Gofannon.²¹⁴

Caer Aranhod

Gwydion and Lleu visit Caer Aranhod on three occasions. Caer Aranhod is the name of a rocky outcrop visible at low tide half a mile off the coast between Trwyn Maen Dylan and Dinas Dinlle. There is some uncertainty over the first element of Aranhod's name. The text of the Four Branches uses the form *Aranrot* (which is rendered today as Aranhod), but an alternate form *Aryanrot* occurs in the Triads and some of the poetic sources.²¹⁵ Koch and Palacios find evidence for the use of this element in the personal names of Old Breton

²¹³ Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, pp. 242–43.

²¹⁴ D. Machreth Ellis, 'Llyn Gofannon', *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, XXI (1966), 147–49. This lake is recorded in the Sheriff of Caernarfonshires's accounts dated 1303–4 and was located somewhere in Uwch Gwyrfa. Machreth Ellis suggests it could be an old name for one of the two lakes formerly in Dyffryn Nantlle; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. lxxviii. Hughes notes 'If this is true, the traditions connected with Gofannon son of Dôn are specifically connected with the contref of Arfon, in particular with the commote of Uwch Gwyrfa, as is also the case with the traditions of the other main characters in Math such as Aranhod, Gwydion, Dylan and Lleu'.

²¹⁵ John T. Koch and Fernando Fernandez Palacios, 'Some Epigraphic Comparanda Bearing on the "Pan-Celtic God" Lugus', in *Celtic Religions in the Roman Period: Personal, Local and Global*, ed. by Ralph Haeussler and Anthony King (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2017), pp. 37–56 (p. 50). This suggests 'some of the medieval Welsh poets and scribes, working within the framework of their language and tradition, thought that [the] first element of Lleu's mother's name was "silver".'

and the Iberian Peninsular.²¹⁶ However, Gruffydd suggests 'Aranrhod' is not derived from a personal name but may originally be topographical in nature.²¹⁷ The element *aran* has a meaning of 'little ridge' and *rhod* may mean 'shield, defence' or 'wheel'.²¹⁸ There is no physical evidence for the topographical origin of the place-name Caer Aranrhod but it may have originally referred to a fort on a small rounded ridge.²¹⁹ It is possible that an earlier personal name with attached narrative became associated with this similar topographical name and by this means the narrative and character became entwined with this place.²²⁰

The text of the Four Branches envisages a coastal location for Caer Aranrhod; Gwydion and Lleu are able to visit it both on foot and by boat.²²¹ Simms-Williams suggests that the author 'may have in mind the hypothetical ancient geography of the region before inundation around Caer Aranrhod'.²²² However Hughes analysis is that; 'the approach to the island in medieval times was ... dependent upon the tide.'²²³

There are local traditions regarding the flooding of Caer Aranrhod. Rhys recounts that there was an inundation of the city here, caused by the wickedness of the inhabitants. Three women survived and fled to nearby places which are recorded in local place-names; Bedd Gwennan, Tyddyn Elan and Rhos Maelan.²²⁴ Rhys recorded forms of the name Caer Aranrhod as follows; *Tregar Anrheg*, *Tregar Anthreg*, *Tregan Anrheg*, *Tregan Anthreg* and

²¹⁶ Koch and Palacios, p. 51.

²¹⁷ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, pp. 188–89.

²¹⁸ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, pp. lxxv, 17, 292–93. The place-name Lledrod contains the same element; lled is 'semi, half', the name refers to a semi-circular defensive enclosure that can still be seen in the landscape.

²¹⁹ Other more mythologically based interpretations include Gruffydd's 'Silver Mound' or 'Silver Wheel'. See W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 189.

²²⁰ Meek, 'Place-Names and Literature', p. 164. Meek describes this process as 'transferable toponymy'.

²²¹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 55.

²²² Sims-Williams, 'Clas Beuno', p. 115.

²²³ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 74 n. 268. Hughes points out that 'the text suggests that it was sometimes possible to reach this island on foot or even on horseback [...] It is also evident from the text that on other occasions a small boat would be required to reach it since it was sometimes surrounded by the sea [...] This is also confirmed by the fact that later in the text the island was completely surrounded by an enemy fleet.'

²²⁴ John Rhys, *Celtic Folklore, Volume I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), pp. 208–11.

Tregan Anthrod, all of which derive from *Tre Gaer Aranrhod*; the ‘Town of Caer Aranrhod’.²²⁵ In Lhwyd’s *Parochialia* another tradition or variation is mentioned; ‘Caer Anrhad was a town, for certain Anrhad was son of Dôn who lived here. This Dôn was a usurper Seisyllt ap Don ...’²²⁶ Humphrey Llwyd maps the site in *Cambriae Typus* in the mid sixteenth century with the name *Caer Ierjenrhod* and a symbol denoting a village.²²⁷

However, there are significant questions about whether Caer Aranrhod was ever inhabited. North’s investigations found it to be an accumulation of glacially transported stones, with no man-made elements.²²⁸ He suggests that sea level changes since the writing of the Four Branches could not account for the fact that Caer Aranrhod is ‘now covered by more than twenty foot of water at high tide.’²²⁹ He suggests that the ‘original’ Caer Aranrhod was on the coast and destroyed by erosion and that the stories associated with it were then transferred to the current day Caer Aranrhod to make the story ‘fit the geographical and social conditions of the medieval time when it was committed to writing.’²³⁰ The degree of coastal erosion in the immediate area can be seen at Dinas Dinlle (below).

A recent aerial survey finds some evidence of human activities in the shoreline near to Caer Aranrhod. The report describes Caer Aranrhod as an oval reef 900m west of the Gwynedd mainland. Its size is approximately 450m by 215 m with a low summit which is exposed during very low tides. It continues, ‘It is generally connected to the land by a submerged area of stony ground. No convincing traces of artificial features can be seen in the shallow

²²⁵ Rhŷs, *Celtic Folklore, Volume I*, pp. 208–9.

²²⁶ Edward Lhwyd, ‘Parochialia Volume 3’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1910 Suppl (1699), p. 51.

²²⁷ Humphrey Llwyd, ‘Cambriae Typus’, *Abraham Ortelius*, 1573
<https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/maps/maps-of-wales/cambriae-typus/>
 [accessed 16 February 2019]. The odd form of the name is probably due to issues with translation; the map was engraved in the Low Countries and Llwyd died prior to publication. Variants of this name were then continued for centuries; See F. J. North, *Sunken Cities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1957), pp. 214–16; and ‘Caer Arianrhod’ in, Peter C. Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary: People in History and Legend up to about A.D. 1000* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1993) <https://www.library.wales/discover/digital-gallery/printed-material/a-welsh-classical-dictionary/> [accessed 29 November 2018].

²²⁸ North, *Sunken Cities*, p. 231.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

water around the reef, although there are suggestions of some regular wall lines and a 'D' shaped structure closer to the shoreline, possibly associated with coastal fishing industries.²³¹

Dinas Dinlle

Dinas Dinlle is an Iron Age hill fort built on a hill of glacial drift in a low-lying area adjoining the coast. The curve of the remaining defences and early maps suggest it was built as a continuous enclosure, but the western parts of it have now been lost to the sea.²³² The hillfort is currently the subject of study by the Cherish Project which estimates that around 20 to 40 metres of the western side of the fort has been lost since 1900.²³³

For some years prior to Llew's naming he was referred to as 'the boy' and lived at Caer Dathyl. As soon as he receives his name, Llew Llaw Gyffes, he goes to the fort which holds his name. This is not remarked on in the text which simply says; 'then they came to Dinas Dinlleu'.²³⁴ Hughes notes that the place-name comes from *Din* and *Lleu*; 'The town of Llew's fort' and the name holds 'an implied onomastic element in the narrative even though the usual tag at the end is absent'.²³⁵

In most instances the text of the Four Branches uses the form 'Llew' rather than 'Lleu'.

'Lleu' is attested in tradition and by the rhyme with *-eu* in the *englynion* in the Fourth

²³¹ T. Driver, 'Caer Arianrhod Reef, Llandwrog', *Www.Coflein.Gov.Uk*, 2010 <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/411089/details/caer-arianrhod-reef-llandwrog>> [accessed 8 February 2019].

²³² Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, *Dinas Dinlle Hillfort, Llandwrog*, 2010 <http://orapweb.rcahms.gov.uk/coflein/G/GAT10_04_14.pdf> [accessed 5 February 2019]; Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 'Dinas Dinlle Hillfort, Llandwrog' <<https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=GAT1570&dbname=gat&tbnname=core&sessid=CHI1l8b220a&queryid=Q545586001550498349>> [accessed 18 February 2019]; National Trust, 'Hillfort, Dinas Dinlle' <<https://heritagerecords.nationaltrust.org.uk/HBSMR/MonRecord.aspx?uid=MNA165393>> [accessed 9 April 2019]; Cherish: Climate Change and Coastal Heritage, 'Climate Change, Erosion and Dinas Dinlle Hillfort, Gwynedd' <<http://www.cherishproject.eu/en/news>> [accessed 15 August 2019].

²³³ Cherish: Climate Change and Coastal Heritage.

²³⁴ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 55–57.

²³⁵ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. 54 n. 326; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 80 n. 326.

Branch and so 'Lleu' is thought to be the original name which later become altered by influence with *Llaw*.²³⁶ The name Lleu is cognate with that of the Irish god *Lugh*, and many cities across Europe are believed to be named after the god *Lugus*.²³⁷ Koch and Palacios point out that reflexes of the name Lugus as a 'divine or mythological figure [appear] in all sub-branches of Celtic' and they suggest Lugus was a Proto-Celtic god.²³⁸ The epigraphic evidence available provides evidence for 'a long-lasting and widespread currency' for the use of forms of the name Lugus or Lleu.²³⁹ However, Hutton has pointed out that the meanings which underlie a god's name may be the original meaning of the town's name.²⁴⁰ The original meaning of *lleu* is 'fair-haired' or 'shining' or 'the bright one',²⁴¹ so it is conceivable that the word may also associate such a town with light.

The text presents us with 'the boy' receiving his name, which results in him going to Dinas Dinlle, a place which, according to the extant text, already exists by that name. This suggests that Lleu becomes entitled to the fort through the receipt of his name, rather than there being an onomastic explanation of the place-name Dinas Dinlle. This is a parallel to the way in which Dylan, Lleu's brother, received his association with the sea. Koch points out that in this episode building up to his naming, the words used; *mi a dynghaf dyghet idau, na chaffo enw yny caffo y henhyf i*, conspicuously avoid the word *llw*, which sounds similar to the name Lleu. *Llw* means 'oath', and it would be expected by the audience.²⁴² This wordplay makes sense in the context of 'a malevolent mother attempting to thwart

²³⁶ 'Lleu (or Llew) Llaw Gyffes' in Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary* Bartrum points out that the Red Book always uses 'Llew' and the White book 'Llew' twelve times and 'Lleu' only twice; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2000), p. xxix; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 412.

²³⁷ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), pp. lxxxiv-lxxxv (vii); Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. 412–13; John K. Bollard, *Englynion y Beddau*, pp. 82–83.

²³⁸ Koch and Palacios, pp. 38, 42.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²⁴⁰ Ronald Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 61, Summer (2011), 57–85 (p. 73).

²⁴¹ Hutton, 'Medieval Welsh Literature and Pre-Christian Deities', p. 70; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. lxxxv.

²⁴² Koch and Palacios, p. 47.

her child's destiny to get his name *Lleu*'.²⁴³ Again this would suggest a form of 'rightful naming' resulting in Lleu going to the pre-ordained domain of Dinas Dinlle, rather than it being named after him.

In *Canu Heledd* there is a reference to 'Dinlle Ureconn',²⁴⁴ which probably refers to a hill fort on the Wrekin or around Wroxeter.²⁴⁵ The derivation of 'dinlle' here has been questioned with some understanding 'dinlle' as meaning 'fortress place'.²⁴⁶ Similarly, in the case of Dinas Dinlle, Owen and Morgan translate the elements *din*; 'fort' and *lle*; 'place', and suggest that the word's unfamiliarity led to a literary reinterpretation and the association with Lleu.²⁴⁷

Lleuar Bach and Lleuar Fawr lie to the south of Dinas Dinlle. *Lleuar* is translated by Gruffydd as 'the place of Lleu'.²⁴⁸ Williams disagrees with this derivation, pointing out that these place-names may derive from the practice of keeping a lamp lit in the old cell or chapel on the hill behind Lleuar Fawr.²⁴⁹ *Lleuar* here seems to be connected to light rather than Lleu. There is also a possibility that Dinas Dinlle was once the site of a Roman lighthouse.²⁵⁰ This may provide another link to the word *Lleu* in its meaning of 'light' at Dinas Dinlle itself.²⁵¹ There are other local place-names which are potentially of relevance. There is an area of land comprising several fields all named Dinlle and Dinlle Fawr listed in

²⁴³ Koch and Palacios, pp. 46–47. Koch also provides an example from the Ulster Cycle where the name *Lug* or *Lleu* is studiously avoided being spoken.

²⁴⁴ *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, ed. & trans. by Jenny Rowland (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1990), pp. 440, 490.

²⁴⁵ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 603.

²⁴⁶ John Rhys, 'All Around the Wrekin', *Y Cymmrodor*, XXI (1908), p. 4 <<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924028058059>> [accessed 7 November 2018]. See also.

²⁴⁷ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 124.

²⁴⁸ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, p. 340 n. 83; AMR [accessed 28 January 2019]. *Lleuar* is recorded as a place-name in the following forms; Llevare in 1572 and Lleyar, Llyar and Lleyer in the 1590s.

²⁴⁹ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 283, td. 83, ll. 27; see also Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, 'Platform House, Capel Leuer, Lleuer Fawr', 1988 <<https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=GAT194&dbname=gat&tbnname=c&ore&sessid=CHI118c9cmx&queryid=Q785845001550500354>> [accessed 18 February 2019].

²⁵⁰ Cherish: Climate Change and Coastal Heritage.

²⁵¹ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), pp. lxxxiv–lxxxv (vii).

the Tithe records,²⁵² which adjoin the fields of the farmstead Bryn Gwydion.²⁵³ The place-name 'Dinlle' also appears in the historical record, in varying forms, independently of the prefix 'Dinas'. Currently it is unclear how these occurrences of the place-name Dinlle relate to the Four Branches and they do not seem to have been remarked on elsewhere to date.²⁵⁴

Bryn Gwydion

Bryn Gwydion is a small hill which lies adjacent to the farmstead of this name and this location is not mentioned in the Four Branches.²⁵⁵ Earlier forms of the place-name are attested as Brynygwdion in 1624-5 and 1668, and as Bryn y Gwiddion in 1655. This name form may be translated as 'Hill of the Gwdion/Gwiddion', which may suggest that the place-name was not connected to 'Gwydion' at that time.²⁵⁶

Gwydion's grave is also said to be in this area at Morfa Dinlle according to *Englynion y Beddau*.

<i>Bedd Gwydion ap Don ym Morfa Dinlleu</i>	The grave of Gwydion son of Dôn on
<i>y don Fain deveillon,</i>	Morfa Dinlleu
	under the stones of Defeillon. ²⁵⁷

²⁵² 'Apportionment of the Rent-Charge in Lieu of Tithes in the Parish of Llandwrog', 1840, pp. 1–99 (pp. 17, 22)

<<https://places.library.wales/viewer/4540874#?cv=2&h=739&c=0&m=0&s=0&xywh=-31%2C22%2C1664%2C595>> [accessed 8 February 2019].

²⁵³ Adjacent and slightly to the north of the 'Dinlle' fields is a 'defended enclosure' recorded from an aerial reconnaissance. The fields contain earthworks of a terraced field system which seems to be associated with the enclosure. RCAHMW, 'Plas Newydd Defended Enclosure', 2009 <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/303248/details/plas-newydd-defended-enclosure>> [accessed 20 April 2019]; RCAHMW, 'Plas Newydd, Earthworks of Relict Terraced Field System', 2009 <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/408657/detail/plas-newydd-earthworks-of-relict-terraced-field-system>> [accessed 13 April 2019].

²⁵⁴ AMR [accessed 8 February 2019]. Forms such as Dynthle 1352, Dynlle 1468/9, Dynlley 1590 and t. Dynlley from 1583 are attested in the Llandwrog area.

²⁵⁵ AMR [accessed February 16th 2019].

²⁵⁶ Variant forms of the name Gwydion are to be expected but when referring to a personal name the definite article is not usually present.

²⁵⁷ Thomas Jones, 'The Stanzas of The Graves', pp. 134–35; John K. Bollard, *Englynion y Beddau*, p. 104. Bollard states that Defeillon is otherwise unknown.

Nantlle

Gwydion eventually finds Lleu by following a sow from Maenor Bennard. The sow may have set out from a field on Eithinog Wen which is known as *Llain yr Hwch*, or ‘The Pig’s Patch of Land’.²⁵⁸ This lies along the right-hand side of the lane leading from Pont y Cim in the direction of the nearby Bryn Gwydion.²⁵⁹ The sow ‘goes upstream and heads for a valley which is now called Nantlleu.’²⁶⁰ The expression ‘a valley now called’ points out the presence of an onomastic explanation, with Nantlleu meaning ‘Valley of Lleu’.

The earliest recorded forms of this name are *Nanthlyne* and *Nantllew* from 1291 and 1300-25 respectively.²⁶¹ Owen and Morgan interpret *Nanthlyne* as deriving from *nant* and *llynau*; referring to the two lakes that existed in the valley here, they note that the form Nantllew derives from *llew* ‘lion’.²⁶² This is the form of the name ‘Lleu’ that is used most frequently in the extant text as discussed above.²⁶³

The sow stops under a tree where she feeds on rotten flesh and maggots. In the tree there is an eagle who shakes himself resulting in more rotten flesh falling from him. Gwydion believes this to be Lleu and sings a series of *englynion*. These locate the tree between the two lakes that were once in the Nantlle valley, one of which no longer exists. For Sims-Williams the fact that the *englynion* mention ‘the oak “between two lakes”’ confirms that the location of Lleu’s tree predates the text.²⁶⁴ However there is some room for doubt as their four line form of the *englynion* differs from earlier saga poetry.²⁶⁵ There are,

²⁵⁸ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 99 n. 511.

²⁵⁹ *Facsimile Text of the Book of Taliesin*, ed. by J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Llanbedrog, 1910), p. 122 n. 71.23.

²⁶⁰ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 62.

²⁶¹ Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 339.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 339.

²⁶³ In medieval Welsh the letters u and w are interchangeable.

²⁶⁴ Sims-Williams, ‘Clas Beuno’, p. 116.

²⁶⁵ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 330; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), pp. 100–102 n. 520.

however, 'linguistic features which could be earlier than the prose.'²⁶⁶



Figure 9: *Llynnoedd Nantlle-Uchaf and Nantlle-Isaf, 1891.*²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 264.

²⁶⁷ *Llynnoedd Nantlle-Uchaf and Nantlle-Isaf 1891*, (Ordnance Survey County Series, 1st Edition, 1:10,560) (1891) Landmark Information Group, Using EDINA Historic [accessed 22 February 2019].

Nantlle also contains Goewin's family home, Dol Pebin.²⁶⁸ Today there is a small housing estate on the site of an old farm of that name.²⁶⁹ In order to reach Lleu, Gwydion and the sow would have passed this place. It is tempting to see the proximity of Dol Pebin and Lleu's place of sanctuary in Nantlle as a connection back to where the tale started, with Gwydion and Gilfaethwy plotting to rape Goewin.

In the Nantlle area the occurrence of the many names associated with the Four Branches in close proximity suggested to Gruffydd that the place-names in this area arose with 'the legend [being] the cause of the names, and not the names of the legend.'²⁷⁰ However, Bollard notes there is a difficulty in determining 'whether the tales were created as explanations of the names or the names were planted in the landscape to preserve the tales.'²⁷¹ The association with Arfon is probably early; *Echrys Ynys* 'designates Eryri (apparently) as *gwlat wytyon*'.²⁷² This would mean that the association of Gwydion with Arfon was already established by the early eleventh century and so Charles-Edwards suggests that the topography of the Fourth Branch, 'was an inherited element in the story'.²⁷³ This would be consistent with the idea that the Four Branches may have been, at least in part, derived from earlier place-lore which was already closely associated with the landscape here. The situation is complex, but it appears that place-names have become associated with characters, leading to a reinterpretation of the place-names and a new understanding of their meaning. As narratives become attached to the place-names in the area, other place-names may be drawn in; either through re-interpretation of existing

²⁶⁸ Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 251.

²⁶⁹ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 28 n. 7.

²⁷⁰ W. J. Gruffydd, *Math Vab Mathonwy*, pp. 341–42 para 308.

²⁷¹ John K. Bollard, 'Landscapes of the Mabinogi', p. 47.

²⁷² Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 394.

²⁷³ T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Poets and Storytellers', in *Wales and the Britons, 350-1064* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 651–79 (p. 668) <<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com>> [accessed 27 October 2018]. Charles-Edwards argues for a date for *Echrys Ynys* prior to 1064 based on its historical content.

place-names or through the generation of new names.²⁷⁴ Thus place-names may arise from the story; as Taylor has noted 'once a narrative has taken root in a particular locality, it can then generate new place-names, or alter existing ones.'²⁷⁵ The precise arrangement of these places in proximity to one another holds the story in the landscape in particular configurations, where journeys and actions can be traced in it. Arguably it is this that ties the tales most strongly to place. When present in this area many of these places are arrayed before you in the landscape offering the opportunity to see them in specific configurations with each other and also to the stories attached to them.

Place-names in the First Branch

Most of the onomastic stories attached to place-names in the Four Branches occur in the Second or Fourth branch. There are a few place-names in the First Branch which may once have had onomastic explanations, but this is not remarked on in extant versions of the Four Branches. In addition to Gwales which is discussed in Section Two, Penn Llwyn Diarwya and Preseli may also have had onomastic explanations.

Penn Llwyn Diarwya

The night before Pwyll's hunt at Glyn Cuch he stays at Penn Llwyn Diarwya, but there is no information or explanation given about the place or its name. The location of Penn Llwyn Diarwya is unknown.²⁷⁶ Skinner remarks that 'the dramatic purpose of Penn Llwyn Diarwya is unclear [the author] has included a place for no obvious reason'.²⁷⁷ Gruffydd suggested that the place-name could be derived from the personal name Bwya who

²⁷⁴ Simon Taylor, 'The Uses of Place-Names', p. 6; Meek, 'Place-Names and Literature', p. 165. Meek describes examples of Gaelic Ballads where 'a story could "pull-in" names and landmarks which originally had no connection with the place-names in the poem. It is also possible a story could generate further place-names.'

²⁷⁵ Simon Taylor, 'The Uses of Place-Names', p. 7.

²⁷⁶ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 48–49. Skinner suggests Llwynduris or Llwyndrain as possible locations in the Glyn Cuch area, but notes that 'they are unverifiable speculation and there seems no reasonable prospect that the author's intentions will ever be divined.'

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

appears in the Life of St David; this involves emending the text (*'hyt um penn llwyn diarwya'*) to read *Diar vwya*.²⁷⁸ However it is unclear what this adds to the story of the First Branch. To date there has been no suggestion that the place-name may have had an onomastic meaning relevant to the story. GPC gives the meaning of *gwyar* as 'blood, gore; field of blood, battle, massacre' and *diar* has meanings which include 'upon' or 'above'.²⁷⁹ By emending the name Pen Llwyn Diarwya to Pen Llwyn Diarwyar it is possible that the place-name originally referred to a location above Glyn Cuch and referred to the anticipated bloodshed of the hunt.²⁸⁰

Preseli

Pwyll was summoned to a meeting by his noblemen at Preseli in Dyfed to discuss his lack of heir.²⁸¹ The place-name Preseli exists now in Mynydd Preseli. The second element of this place-name derives from *Selyf* or *Selef* which in turn derives from the biblical Latin Salomon.²⁸² Solomon was known for his wisdom in early Welsh sources with poets such as Prydydd Y Moch (*fl.* 1173-1220) referring to '*Selyf*, chief of visionaries'.²⁸³ Gwilym Rhyfel (*fl.* 1174) and Dafydd Benfras (*fl.* c. 1220 – 1258) both refer to the wisdom of *Selyf*.²⁸⁴ The need for wisdom at such a meeting may be alluded to in the place-name, but the First Branch does not spell this out and it has not been previously discussed as being onomastic in origin.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁸ W. J. Gruffydd, 'The Mabinogion', pp. 65–66 n. 1.

²⁷⁹ 'Gwyar', *GPC Online* [accessed 21 May 2019]; 'Diar^{3r}', *GPC Online* [accessed 21 May 2019]; W. J. Gruffydd, 'The Mabinogion', pp. 65–66 n. 1. Gruffydd notes that '*Diar* is the usual form in early manuscripts for what would be in the period [...] *y ar* "upon"'.
²⁸⁰ Alternatively, the final element may come from the word *mwyaf* meaning 'largest', 'greatest' or 'most'. See; 'Mwyaf', *GPC Online* [accessed 22 May 2019].

²⁸¹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 16.
²⁸² Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 140; Owen and Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*, p. 335.

²⁸³ Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 130.
²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.
²⁸⁵ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 26. Alluding to the delicacy of such a meeting, Skinner remarks that '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.'

Section Two: Other Dimensions of Place: 'The Otherworld' and Time

Although the Four Branches is set in the real world of Wales, otherworldly themes are linked to several locations in the narrative. In Celtic tradition the 'real world' and the 'otherworld' have been described as sitting side by side.²⁸⁶ The nature of the relationship between the two worlds in the Four Branches has been conceptualised in various ways. For example, Siewers draws on early Irish literature to analyse the role of the otherworld, and concludes that it underpins a dialogue between the landscape and the spiritual realm.²⁸⁷ The two worlds are seen as intimately 'folded together' rather than in a binary relationship.²⁸⁸ In Rees' dissertation about the otherworld of the Four Branches, she reconstructs an idea of the Celtic otherworld using Welsh tradition and Irish sources.²⁸⁹ She suggests the Celtic otherworld is 'all about us, but in a different dimension' and is 'ubiquitous and all-pervading, separated from normal human life by only a veil.'²⁹⁰ These ideas presuppose that there existed a single shared idea of the Celtic otherworld underpinning the otherworld of the Four Branches. However, Sims-Williams has raised questions about the existence of a shared conception of the otherworld in Welsh and Early Irish literature, suggesting that these ideas have been 'projected back from medieval Irish and Welsh texts'.²⁹¹ 'Otherworld' itself is a modern scholarly term and early Celtic texts do not use a single term to describe the concept.²⁹² Our ideas about the otherworld may also be unconsciously influenced by 'the Christian dichotomy of this world/the otherworld'

²⁸⁶ Proinsias Mac Cana, 'The Four Branches', in *The Mabinogi* (University of Wales Press, 1992), pp. 21–59 (p. 39).

²⁸⁷ Siewers, 'Writing an Icon of the Land', pp. 197, 203; Alfred K. Siewers, *Strange Beauty: Ecocritical Approaches to Early Medieval Landscape* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 25–28.

²⁸⁸ Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 32.

²⁸⁹ Rhian Rees, 'Perceptions of Annwn: The Otherworld in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2012), p. 4.

²⁹⁰ Rhian Rees, 'Perceptions of Annwn', p. 30.

²⁹¹ Patrick Sims-Williams, '"Kaer Sidi" and Other Celtic Otherworld Terms', in *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 53–78 (p. 53).

²⁹² Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', in *Celtic Language, Celtic Culture: A Festschrift for Eric P. Hamp*, ed. by A. T. E. Matonis and Daniel F. Melia (Van Nuys, California: Ford & Bailie, 1990), pp. 57–81 (p. 60).

rather than actually deriving from early Celtic texts about native mythology.²⁹³ There is potentially a danger of circularity in methodology if ideas about the otherworld are taken from the Four Branches, projected back to early sources, and which then in turn, inform our ideas about the otherworld of the Four Branches. A process such as this may wrongly lead us to a conception of the otherworld as singular and pervasive.

Skinner points out that ‘otherworldly locations are generally portrayed as different dimensions of known places’ in the Four Branches.²⁹⁴ In order to understand place-based narratives it is necessary to look at the qualities of the particular places concerned.²⁹⁵ Different types of narrative may become attached to specific features of a landscape, and in this way places may be seen to ‘attract certain narrative motifs.’²⁹⁶ The location of the otherworld varies in traditional sources; it may be found under hills, under lakes, under the sea or on islands;²⁹⁷ and otherworldly themes in the Four Branches also occur in a number of different landscape settings. It is possible that ‘the otherworld’ of the Four Branches was not originally conceived of as a singular entity; instead there may be ‘otherworlds’ with varying properties and differing degrees of otherworldliness. A parallel for this is provided by Kuldkepp where, in a study of two Old Norse sagas, he finds ‘an “analogue” kind of otherness, not based on a binary opposition between two variants’, but with differing degrees of liminality.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Sims-Williams, ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, p. 60; Sims-Williams, “‘Kaer Sidi’”, p. 54.

²⁹⁴ Skinner, ‘Courts and Journeys’, p. 50.

²⁹⁵ Sandis Laime, ‘The Place Valence Approach in Folk Narrative Research: The “Church Sinks Underground” Motif in Latvian Folklore’, in *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*, ed. by Daniel Sävborg and Ülo Valk (Finnish Literature Society, 2018), pp. 80–92 (p. 80) <<http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=1000208>> [accessed 6 November 2018].

²⁹⁶ Laime, ‘The Place Valence Approach’, p. 80.

²⁹⁷ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, pp. 42–43; John Carey, ‘The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition’, in *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature*, ed. by Jonathan M Wooding (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), pp. 133–42 (p. 116).

²⁹⁸ Mart Kuldkepp, ‘A Study in Distance: Travel and Holiness in Eiríks Saga Rauða and Eiríks Saga Víðförla’, in *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*, ed. by Daniel Sävborg and Ülo Valk (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2018), pp.

This section will consider whether the otherworld of the Four Branches could be a dimension of the specific places which feature in it, rather than a more general and pervasive entity.

Finally, the role of 'time' as further dimension of place-based narratives will be considered. Our perception of 'place' also involves the dimension of time as we experience space and time simultaneously in specific places.²⁹⁹ Places themselves change with the passage of time, but the traces of past events may remain visible at specific locations. Narratives become associated with those traces and over time it comes to be that 'place-lore contains elements from different time periods.'³⁰⁰ The text of the Four Branches may provide examples of these 'place-centred' rather than 'time-centred' narratives.

Glyn Cuch and Annwfn

At the beginning of the First Branch Pwyll goes hunting in part of his realm - the forest at Glyn Cuch. Here he meets Arawn, king of Annwfn and his hounds.³⁰¹ Pwyll wins the friendship of Arawn by taking his form for a year's duration and fighting Hafgan, another king of Annwfn, on Arawn's behalf. When Pwyll first meets Arawn in Glyn Cuch he is lost: 'neither here nor there'.³⁰² This describes a state of liminality and Pwyll's disorientation in the forest means that at this time the location of Annwfn is mysterious.³⁰³ However, later when returning to Glyn Cuch, Pwyll simply 'set off for his meeting place, and came to Glyn Cuch.'³⁰⁴ The journey between Annwfn and Glyn Cuch seems straightforward with no

206–19 (p. 215) <<http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=1000208>> [accessed 6 November 2018].

²⁹⁹ Casey, 'Space to Place', pp. 36–37.

³⁰⁰ Sävborg and Valk, *Storied and Supernatural Places*, p. 10.

³⁰¹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 3. The colouration of the hounds marks them out as otherworldly; they are 'a gleaming shining white, and their ears were red. And as the whiteness of the dogs shone so did the redness of their ears.'

³⁰² Patrick K. Ford, 'Prolegomena to a Reading of the Mabinogi: "Pwyll" and "Manawydan"', *Studia Celtica*, XVII (1982), 110–25 (p. 114).

³⁰³ D. H. Green, 'Pathway to Adventure', *Viator*, 8 (1977), 145–88 (pp. 156–59).

³⁰⁴ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 6.

boundary remarked on. Annwfn seems to be simply a neighbouring realm and the presence of two kings implies that Annwfn has more than one territory.³⁰⁵

The otherworld of Annwfn in the First Branch is characterised by exceptionally beautiful buildings and inhabitants.³⁰⁶ The word 'Annwfn' may derive from *an-* as an intensive, and *dwfn*; 'deep' meaning the 'very deep'; alternatively *dwfn* may mean 'world' and *an-* 'not', this gives the 'not-world'; other possibilities are *an-* meaning 'in' giving 'inner-world' or 'under-world'.³⁰⁷ There are several allusions to Annwfn in the Book of Taliesin: in *Angar Kyfundawt* Annwfn is below the earth:

<i>Yn Annwfyn y diwyth,</i>	In Annwfn he ranged the [divisions of inspiration],
<i>Yn Annwfyn y gorwyth,</i>	in Annwfn he made them,
<i>Yn Annwfyn is eluyd,</i>	In Annwfn below the earth, ³⁰⁸

Whereas in *Kat Godeu* it appears to be associated with flowing water,³⁰⁹ and in

Preiddeu Annwn, Annwfn is located across the sea.³¹⁰

Thus, drawing on the wider tradition of Welsh literature Annwfn has been envisaged as 'a single realm which can be entered from many places on earth and sea'.³¹¹ Regarding the Four Branches, Davies suggests 'there was no specific location to the Otherworld', since it is found both in the middle of Dyfed as well as at Harlech and Gwales.³¹² However, in the Four Branches, Annwfn itself is accessed only via Glyn Cuch with none of the other otherworldly locations in the Four Branches referred to by the name Annwfn.

³⁰⁵ Ford, 'Prolegomena to a Reading of the Mabinogi: "Pwyll" and "Manawydan"', p. 115; Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', p. 63. Sims-Williams suggests Annwfn is contiguous with Dyfed and also subdivided into more than one realm.

³⁰⁶ Sioned Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993), p. 52.

Davies notes that the author underlines the otherworldly qualities of Arawn's court by having Pwyll compare it to 'all the earthly courts he had seen'.

³⁰⁷ Sims-Williams, 'Some Celtic Otherworld Terms', p. 62; Sims-Williams, "'Kaer Sidi'", pp. 57–58; Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 440 n. 7.

³⁰⁸ Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 114.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 183, 440 n. 7. '*Yn Annwfyn llifereint/ wrth urwydrin dybydant*. In the streams of Annwfn/they come ready for battle'.

³¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 435–38. There are other links between *Preiddeu Annwn* and the Four Branches which will be discussed later.

³¹¹ Sims-Williams, "'Kaer Sidi'", p. 58.

³¹² Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, p. 52.

Pwyll's stay in Annwfn united 'the two realms' and he was called Pwyll Pen Annwfn from then on.³¹³ Pwyll and Arawn strengthen their friendship and the two realms seem to be in peaceful agreement.³¹⁴ Although they exchange gifts, the pigs from Annwfn are not mentioned until the Fourth Branch.³¹⁵

However, Glyn Cuch is mentioned in the Triads in connection with Pryderi and the pigs from Annwfn. Triad 26 in Peniarth MS16: *Tri Gwrdueichyat Enys Prydein*, or Three Powerful Swineherds of the Island of Britain, states the following.

A Phryderi mab Pwyll Pen Annwuyn, a getwis moch Pendaran Dyuet yg Glyn C6ch yn Emlyn.

And Pryderi son of Pwyll, Lord of Annwfn, who guarded the swine of Pendaran Dyfed in Glyn Cuch in Emlyn.³¹⁶

A variant of this triad exists in the *White Book of Rhydderch* and the *Red Book of Hergest*.

Pryderi vab P6yll Pen Annwn, 6rth voch Pendaran Dyuet y tatmeth. Ac y sef moch oedynt: y seithlydyn a duc P6yll Pen Annwn, ac a'e rodes y Pendaran Dyuet y datmaeth. Ac y sef y lle y katw ei, y Glyn Kuch yn Emlyn. A sef acha6s y gelwit h6nn6 yn wrueichiat: kany allei neb na th6yll na threis arna6.

Pryderi son of Pwyll, Lord of Annwfn, with the swine of Penndaran Dyfed his foster-father. These swine were the seven animals which Pwyll Lord of Annwfn brought, and gave them to Penndaran Dyfed his foster-father. And the place where he used to keep them was in Glyn Cuch in Emlyn. And this is why he was called a Powerful Swineherd: because no one was able either to deceive or to force him.³¹⁷

In both variants of Triad 26 the pigs belong to Pendaran Dyfed and Pryderi is guarding them on his behalf. The latter triad explains that Pendaran Dyfed acquired them from Pwyll.³¹⁸

³¹³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 8.

³¹⁴ Andrew Welsh, 'Doubling and Incest in the Mabinogi', *Speculum*, 65.2 (1990), 344–62 (p. 352).

³¹⁵ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 8, 48. The gifts exchanged are 'horses and hunting-dogs and hawks, and whatever treasure they thought would please the other.' The Fourth Branch tells us that the pigs from Annwfn belong to 'Pryderi son of Pwyll – they were sent to him from Annwfn by Arawn, king of Annwfn.'

³¹⁶ Bromwich, *Triodd Ynys Prydein*, p. 50. Dryston son of Tallwch and Coll son of Collfrewy who guarded the legendary pig Henwen also appear in this triad.

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 51–52.

³¹⁸ Pendaran Dyfed is Pryderi's foster father in the First Branch and this detail may explain how Pryderi came to be guarding the swine in the Triad. See also; Bromwich, *Triodd Ynys Prydein*, p. 54. Bromwich suggests that the older triad may suggest that the pigs were originally the property of Pendaran Dyfed. This corresponds with Gruffydd's reconstruction of an earlier form of the Four Branches in which Pendaran Dyfed was originally the father of Pryderi. See W. J.

However, in the Fourth Branch the pigs are said to belong to Pryderi and they have been 'sent to him from Annwfn by Arawn, king of Annwfn.'³¹⁹ The Triad locates the pigs from Annwfn in Glyn Cuch, whereas in the Four Branches the pigs are linked to Annwfn, but Glyn Cuch is not explicitly mentioned in connection with them. However, this does provide evidence of a variant tale where Glyn Cuch is strongly linked to the pigs and Annwfn.³²⁰ Today Glyn Cuch has steeply wooded sides with its valley floor containing many small fields which are partially concealed by trees. Although it would seem an ideal location in which to guard valuable otherworldly animals, it is not possible to extrapolate today's land usage back to earlier times.

See Figure 10: *The Topography of Glyn Cuch*.

Glyn Cuch marks the border between Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire today, but historically it divided the commotes of Emlyn-Uwch-Cych and Emlyn-Is-Cych.³²¹ In the time of the First Branch the entirety of Glyn Cuch lies within Pwyll's territory of Dyfed; the cantref of Emlyn was one of the seven cantrefs of Dyfed.³²² Writing in 1603 George Owen of Henllys remarks on a 'small sand or island not known to which shire it belongs'.³²³ This is at Abercych, where the River Cuch meets the Teifi and the boundaries of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Cardiganshire meet.

Gruffydd, *Rhiannon; An Inquiry into the Origins of the First and Third Branches of the Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1953), pp. 19, 107.

³¹⁹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 48.

³²⁰ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 50. Skinner notes there is a local tradition that the entrance to the otherworld lies in Cwm Ffynnon, the valley of a tributary of the river Cuch. However, it is not clear whether the tradition predates the Four Branches or is derived from it. Skinner also suggests that the ford in Annwfn at which Pwyll and Hafgan fought was at Abercych. In the Four Branches this is named only as 'the ford' and as such it is not located. The court of Hyfaidd Hen, the father of Rhiannon, is also unlocated. It must be outside Dyfed as Pwyll leaves the court to 'return to Dyfed', but there is no other indication of its whereabouts.

³²¹ Dyfed Archaeological Trust, 'Historic Landscape Characterisation: Lower Teifi Valley: Abercych' <<http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/HLC/lowerteifivalley/abercych.htm>> [accessed 26 July 2019].

³²² William J. Rees, *An Historical Atlas of Wales*, ed. by Faber and Faber Limited (London, 1972), plates 22, 23 and 28.

³²³ George Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, ed. by Dillwyn Miles (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1994), p. 104.

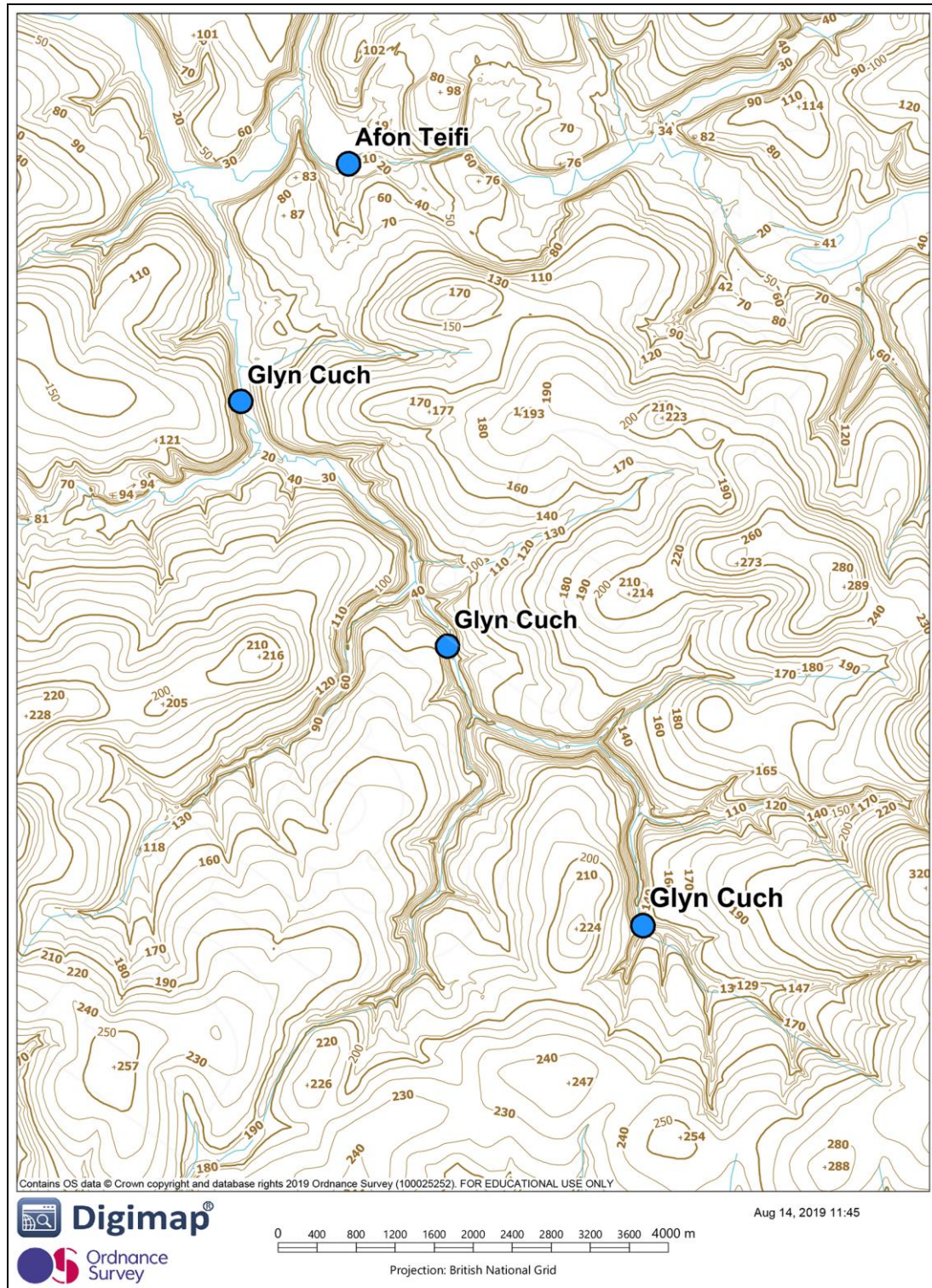


Figure 10: *The Topography of Glyn Cuch.*³²⁴

³²⁴ *The Topography of Glyn Cuch*, (Meridian™ 2, OS Terrain® 50, 1:50,000) (January 2016) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 14 August 2019].

Border rivers in general suggest a kind of liminal zone where, within the geographical entity of a single valley, one can pass from one territory to another simply by crossing the river. This can mean that a river valley may contain two territories while at the same time being one entity. This condition may be paralleled in the ease of movement between the two realms of Glyn Cuch and Annwfn. McKenna has pointed out that there is an ‘uncomfortable suggestion that Glyn Cuch is contested territory – simultaneously Dyfed and Annwfn.’³²⁵

Dyfed and the ‘Wasteland’

The First branch opens with Pwyll as lord over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed.³²⁶ At its close we are told Pryderi adds the three cantrefs of Ystrad Tywi and the four cantrefs of Ceredigion.³²⁷ In the Third Branch we are told that the enchantment was placed ‘on the seven cantrefs of Dyfed’.³²⁸ By the beginning of the Fourth Branch, Pryderi holds the seven cantrefs of Dyfed, seven of Morgannwg, the four of Ceredigion, and the three of Ystrad Tywi.³²⁹

	Dyfed	Ystrad Tywi	Ceredigion	Morgannwg
Beginning of First Branch	Pwyll	-	-	-
End of First Branch	Pryderi	Pryderi	Pryderi	-
Beginning of Third Branch	Pryderi	?	?	-
Beginning of Fourth Branch	Pryderi	Pryderi	Pryderi	Pryderi

Figure 11: Pryderi's Realms.

³²⁵ Catherine McKenna, ‘The Colonization of Myth’, p. 114.

³²⁶ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 3; Skinner, ‘Courts and Journeys’, p. 17. Skinner notes that ‘the uncertainty about the extent of Pryderi’s dominion is also relevant to the identification of Arberth’.

³²⁷ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 21.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

³²⁹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 47–48.

As the table shows Pryderi is said to gain possession of Ystrad Tywi and Ceredigion at the end of the First Branch. However, these territories are not mentioned in the Third Branch.³³⁰ Despite this, if read literally, Pryderi's realm in the Third Branch must have included Ystrad Tywi and Ceredigion. However, in order to escape the enchantment on Dyfed, Pryderi, Manawydan, Rhiannon and Cigfa go to England rather than Pryderi's other territories of Ystrad Tywi and Ceredigion.³³¹ This inconsistency may suggest there is room for doubt as to the territories included in the 'Dyfed' of the Third Branch.

The Third Branch tells us Dyfed is very fruitful and this remains the case even after the enchantment. Manawydan, Rhiannon, Pryderi and Cigfa were still able to hunt and enjoy themselves; there are wild animals and 'fish and swarms of wild bees.'³³² The land sustains them for two years, but then they tire and go to England. After returning to Dyfed, Rhiannon, Pryderi and the hunting dogs are also lost to the enchantment. Manawydan and Cigfa again travel to England and then finally, on returning to Dyfed, Manawydan begins to cultivate the land and it remains fertile since 'the wheat sprang up the best in the world'.³³³ Throughout the Third Branch, despite the loss of people, their dwellings and the flocks and herds, Dyfed itself remains fruitful, full of wild animals and more than capable of supporting life.

Gerald of Wales (1145-1223) remarks on Dyfed as being 'the most beautiful and the most productive' of all the parts of Wales; he also describes the Teifi as 'better stocked with the

³³⁰ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 18–19, n. 13. Hughes points out there is no mention of the cantrefi of Ceredigion or Ystrad Tywi in the Third Branch although they are referred to at the end of the First Branch and the beginning of the Fourth.

³³¹ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 18 n. 30. Skinner notes the significance of this in her discussion of the location of Arberth.

³³² Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 36–37. 'As they wandered through the land they had never seen a place more pleasant to live in, nor better hunting ground, nor land more abundant in honey and fish'.

³³³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 41.

finest salmon than any other stream in Wales'.³³⁴ This remains true in 1603 when George Owen of Henllys remarks that the principal place for the taking of salmon in Pembrokeshire is the Teifi at Cilgerran and that the quality of the salmon here is especially good.³³⁵ The lands around the River Teifi are described in *Buched Dewi* where St David's father is directed to find a tree on the banks of the Teifi where there would be deer, a swarm of bees and salmon.³³⁶ This wording resonates with the description of Dyfed in the Third Branch. However, the tree is located at Henllan in Ceredigion which is on the northern bank of the Teifi, this being the river bank opposite the easterly part of Emlyn in Dyfed.³³⁷ Wade-Evans suggests that the stag, bees and fish are connected with St David's 'right over land', a symbol of possession for which he finds evidence in Welsh Law.³³⁸ There are also other parallels where three types of life found on a tree result in a saint's possession of the land.³³⁹ The use of this wording may suggest Manawydan's possession of the land.

See Figure 12: *Dyfed and Ceredigion*.

³³⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales*, ed. by Betty Radice, trans. by Lewis Thorpe, *The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), pp. 151, 173; Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, p. 30 n. 56.

³³⁵ Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, pp. 119–20. Owen also notes that the Cleddau river provides salmon at Slebech and Canaston near to Narberth. However, the Teifi is foremost with 100–140 salmon taken a day. These are 'most excellent, and for fatness and sweetness exceeding those of other rivers.' Additionally Owen tells us that the special thing about the Teifi salmon is that they may be found in good condition throughout the year, whereas the salmon found elsewhere are unwholesome in the winter.

³³⁶ *Buched Dewi*, ed. by Simon Evans (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1965), p. 26 td. 1 n. 11; Elissa R. Henken, *The Welsh Saints: A Study in Patterned Lives* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1991), pp. 95–96; Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 28–29 n. 46.

³³⁷ A. W. Wade-Evans, *Life of St. David* (London: Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923), p. 61; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, p. 95; Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 28–29 n. 46.

³³⁸ Wade-Evans, *Life of St. David*, p. 61; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, p. 96.

³³⁹ Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, p. 96. Cadog finds a wild boar, bees and a hawk and gains possession of the land. Baglan finds a litter of pigs, a beehive and a birds nest in a tree and there builds his church. Henken notes the 'air of mythological significance' in the way the three forms of life symbolise the totality of the animal world.

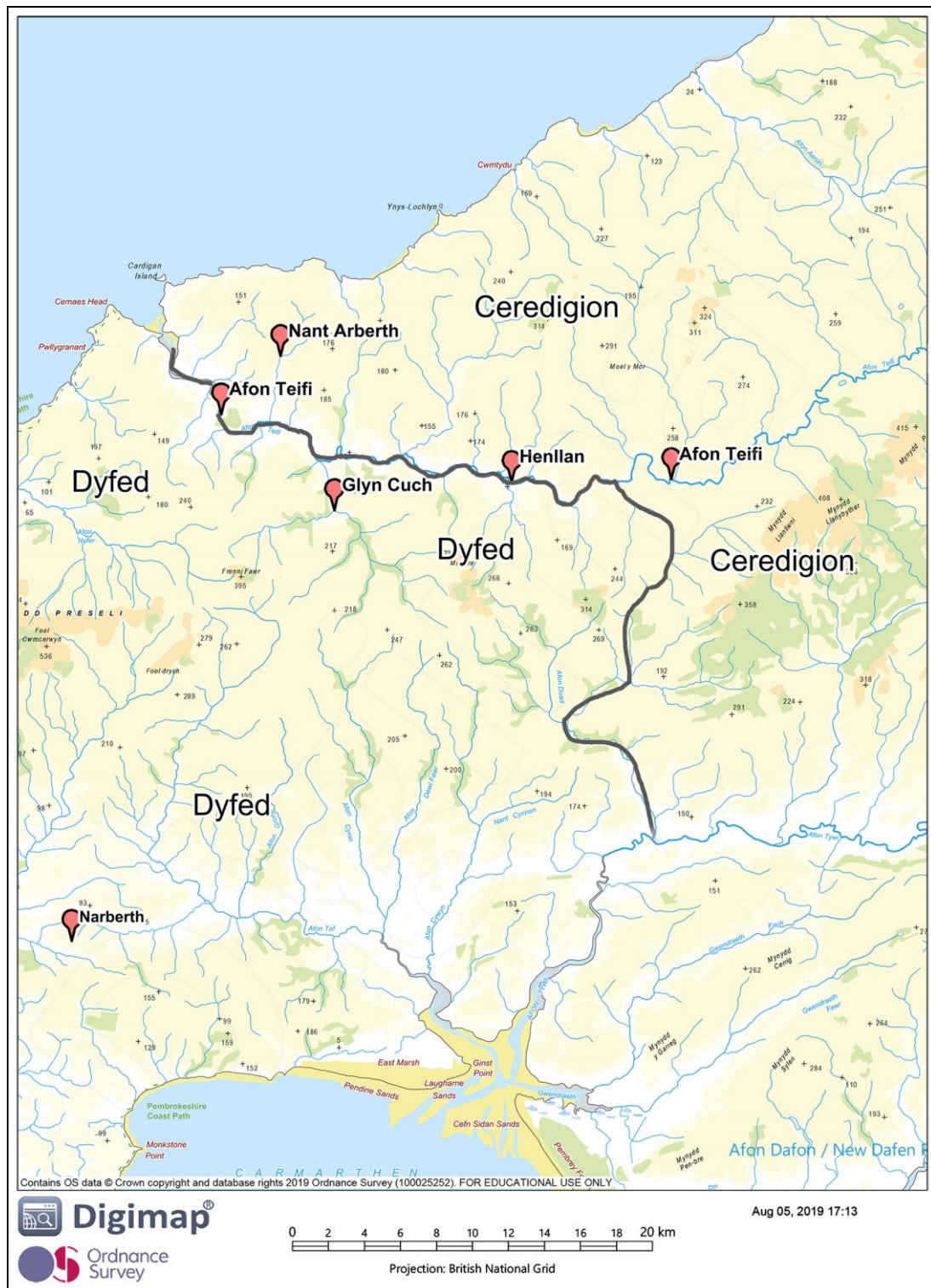


Figure 12: *Dyfed and Ceredigion*.³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ *Dyfed and Ceredigion*, (Strategi®, 1:270,000) (January 2016) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 5 August 2019].

In the Four Branches this emphasis on the natural resources of Dyfed sets the scene for the enchantment that occurs when the people and flocks disappear.³⁴¹ It is Dyfed's fertility that is of relevance to the narrative rather than the specific territorial demarcations of Pryderi's realm. The relationship between Dyfed and Annwfn in the First Branch may also be linked to this fertility,³⁴² which can thus be understood as being part of the 'otherworldly' attributes of Dyfed. Ford suggests the relationship establishes 'communications between human society and the divine world.'³⁴³ Similarly, Siewers sees a 'respect for the otherworldly dimension of the land and its beings [which] integrates human rule with the land.'³⁴⁴

The enchantment of Dyfed in the Third Branch has been seen by many critics as an example of the wasteland theme where the fertility of nature is lost and then restored.³⁴⁵ Koch for instance suggests it 'springs from the notion that both human well-being and the entire fecundity of nature depend on the rightfulness of the king.'³⁴⁶ Ford notes that it is 'an example of the power of a hostile force to rob the land of its fertility.'³⁴⁷ The enchanted land has been described as 'a kind of desert'³⁴⁸ and infertile.³⁴⁹ However, the wild inhabitants remain a constant throughout the Third Branch despite the enchantment. The gifts from Annwfn comprise horses and hunting-dogs and hawks and later, the pigs. They do not belong to the 'wild', natural world of deer, wild honeybees and salmon; they belong

³⁴¹ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 28–29 n. 46.

³⁴² Siewers, 'Writing an Icon of the Land', p. 203; Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 25.

³⁴³ Ford, 'Prolegomena to a Reading of the Mabinogi: "Pwyll" and "Manawydan"', p. 117.

³⁴⁴ Siewers, *Strange Beauty*, p. 25.

³⁴⁵ Welsh, 'Manawydan Fab Llŷr: Wales, England and the "New Man"', pp. 370, 379.

³⁴⁶ John T Koch, 'A Welsh Window on the Iron Age: Manawydan, Mandubracios', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 14, Winter (1987), 17–52 (p. 38).

³⁴⁷ *The Mabinogi*, ed. & trans. by Patrick K. Ford, 30th Anniv (London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 74.

³⁴⁸ C. A. McKenna, 'Learning Lordship: The Education of Manawydan', in *Ildánach Ildírech: A Festschrift for Proinsias Mac Cana*, ed. by John Carey, John T. Koch, and Pierre Yves Lambert (Aberystwyth and Andover MA: Celtic Studies Publications, 1999), pp. 101–20 (p. 109).

³⁴⁹ Jones and Jones, *The Mabinogion*, p. xvi.

to a domesticated world. It is this domesticated world of flocks, herds and dwelling places that is affected by the enchantment.³⁵⁰

*A phan edrychyssant y ford y guelyn y preideu, a'r anreitheu, a'r kyuanhed
kyn no hynny ny welynt neb ryw dim, na thy, nac aniueil, na mwc, na than, na
dyn, na chyuanhed, eithyr tei y llys yn wac ...*³⁵¹

When they looked to where they had once seen the flocks and herds and dwelling places, they could now see nothing at all, neither building nor beast, neither smoke nor fire, neither man nor dwelling-place, only the court buildings empty...³⁵²

Hughes remarks that during the enchantment of Dyfed the disappearance of *cyfannedd* (meaning dwellings or habitations), also implies 'human life in general ... the land becomes *anghyfannedd* "uninhabited by humans", and returns to its wilder, more natural state.'³⁵³ Thus 'Dyfed does not in any way become a wasteland'.³⁵⁴ Similarly Welsh points out that Dyfed 'is deserted but not infertile... the refinements of civilized life are gone: domestic herds, dwellings with their hearth fires, the society of people. It is not nature but culture that has failed.'³⁵⁵

This apparent contradiction between scholarly interpretations may be tied up with our conceptions of 'nature'. Raymond Williams notes that 'nature' is a complex word; 'complicated and changing, as other ideas and experiences change.'³⁵⁶ Spirn cites the ideas of Cicero and Marx and notes that there are distinctions to be made between type of 'nature'; "'First nature" represents a nature unaltered by the human labor that yields

³⁵⁰ These animals are 'kept' by humanity; horses are ridden, dogs and hawks are used in the hunt, and pigs are reared for food. In contrast the wild bees, salmon, and deer exist independently of human domestication and are hunted.

³⁵¹ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, p. 2.

³⁵² Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 36–37.

³⁵³ Ian Hughes, 'Tripartite Structure in *Manawydan Uab Llyr*', in *Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium of Societas Celtologica Nordica*, ed. by Mícheál Ó Flaithearta (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 2007), pp. 99–109 (p. 102).

³⁵⁴ Ian Hughes, 'Tripartite Structure in *Manawydan Uab Llyr*', p. 102.

³⁵⁵ Welsh, 'Manawydan Fab Llŷr: Wales, England and the "New Man"', p. 379.

³⁵⁶ Raymond Williams, 'Ideas of Nature', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 67–85. See also; Sävborg and Valk, *Storied and Supernatural Places*, pp. 15–16. Sävborg and Valk note that the ideas we bring to the word are recent and influenced by ideas of modernity.

“second nature.”³⁵⁷ The enchantment of Dyfed results in the removal of ‘second nature’, or in other words, that created by human involvement. The ‘first nature’ of the wild, undomesticated inhabitants is unaffected. Eventually Manawydan cultivates wheat and through negotiation this ultimately results in the removal of the enchantment.³⁵⁸ This can be seen as the re-establishment of ‘second nature’.

Linked to this, our ideas of ‘wasteland’ may also have changed. One of the uses of the word ‘waste’ in the Domesday book is to describe holdings which were untaxed because they were uninhabited and uncultivated.³⁵⁹ For example, *Haswic* in the Forest of Kinver was described as ‘waste’ on account of the King’s forest.³⁶⁰ This suggests that at *Haswic* human dwellings and activities were curtailed in order to provide land for the natural resources of the forest. This usage of ‘waste’ is a parallel to the enchantment of Dyfed where the human habitations and the flocks disappeared, leaving the natural resources unaffected.³⁶¹

In the First Branch the interrelationship between Dyfed and Annwfn has been initiated through the human world and the otherworld reaching an agreement. In the Third Branch it is this interrelationship, in the form of ‘second nature’, that is lost with the enchantment. It is then regained through negotiation and cultivation of the land.

Arberth

In the First and Third Branches much of the action revolves around Arberth, the site of the chief court of Pwyll and Pryderi and the nearby Gorsedd Arberth. Arberth is generally

³⁵⁷ Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 31–32.

³⁵⁸ Although the wheat is destroyed by mice Manawydan manages to capture one of them and successfully negotiates to remove the enchantment.

³⁵⁹ ‘Hull Domesday Project’ <www.domesdaybook.net/domesday-book/data-terminology/taxation/waste> [accessed 28 May 2019].

³⁶⁰ G. C. Baugh and others, *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 3*, ed. by M. W. Greenslade and R. B. Pugh (London: Victoria County History, 1970), p. 321.

³⁶¹ See below for a further discussion of this theme in relation to *Canu Heledd*.

agreed to be Arberth or Narberth in Pembrokeshire.³⁶² However at Narberth there is no obvious candidate for Gorsedd Arberth, 'a mound that was above the court'.³⁶³ This has led T. Llew Jones to suggest that Gorsedd Arberth could be Crug Mawr, also known as Banc y Warin, near Aberteifi in Ceredigion.³⁶⁴ This is located close to the river Arberth.

See Figure 12: *Dyfed and Ceredigion* for locations.

Skinner points out that Glyn Cuch is also in the vicinity of Aberteifi and concludes that Arberth near Aberteifi would fit the timing of Pwyll's journey to hunt at Glyn Cuch.³⁶⁵ A Ceredigion location would also suit the description of the countryside of 'Dyfed' as discussed above. The major arguments against this site are that it is not in Dyfed and there is no evidence of a court having existed in the vicinity of the Ceredigion Arberth.³⁶⁶ Recognising this difficulty, Skinner suggests 'that the fictional Arberth is an amalgamation of the two places with that same name'.³⁶⁷ That would mean that Arberth in Pembrokeshire (and Dyfed) and the mound of Banc y Warin near the river Arberth in Ceredigion were combined in the Four Branches to create the fictional Arberth.

Gorsedd Arberth

In the First Branch, Pwyll is told 'the strange thing about the mound is that whatever nobleman sits on it will not leave there without one of two things happening: either he will

³⁶² R. L. Thomson, p. 24 n. 3; Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, p. 30 n. 53; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 19–20. Skinner provides a useful overview of the various arguments concerning this.

³⁶³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 8, 230 n. 8; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 21. Davies notes that Camp Hill one mile south of Arberth is not wholly satisfactory. Skinner remarks that '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.'

³⁶⁴ T. Llew Jones, 'Banc y Warin, Y Crug Mawr, Gorsedd Arberth', *LLafar Gwlad*, 36 (1992), 6–7; Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 30–31 n. 56.

³⁶⁵ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', pp. 19–26.

³⁶⁶ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, p. 30 n. 56; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 22.

³⁶⁷ Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 77.

be wounded or injured, or else he will see something wonderful'.³⁶⁸ From Gorsedd Arberth Pwyll sees Rhiannon on a tall white horse 'coming along the highway that ran past the mound'.³⁶⁹ It proves difficult to catch up with her and we are told that there is a magical explanation.³⁷⁰ In the Third Branch Pryderi and the court go to Gorsedd Arberth and there is a loud noise and a mist descends. When the mist rises the people of the court have disappeared and the results of the enchantment can be seen. Gorsedd Arberth is also involved in the disappearance of Rhiannon and Pryderi who are lured to a magical fort by a 'gleaming-white wild boar'.³⁷¹ This fort is near Gorsedd Arberth as it is near the 'top of the mound'.³⁷² The fort captures Pryderi and Rhiannon by freezing them so that they cannot move, and rendering them unable to speak. The fort then disappears with them under the cover of darkness and mist.³⁷³ Finally it is Gorsedd Arberth where Manawydan negotiates the release of Pryderi and Rhiannon, and the freeing of Dyfed from the enchantment.³⁷⁴

Events at Gorsedd Arberth are often associated with a tumultuous noise as well as a supernatural mist.³⁷⁵ The noise serves to mark a powerful force which is unnatural in origin

³⁶⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 8.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 9. See also p. 185. In *Culhwch ac Olwen* there is a parallel; Henbeddestyr son of Erim possesses a similar property to that of Rhiannon's horse. We are told that he 'never found any man who could keep up with him, either on horseback or on foot.'

³⁷¹ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 8, 39, 109 n. 30. Davies notes that the pursuing of an enchanted animal to an otherworld encounter is a common motif. See also; Henken, *The Welsh Saints*, pp. 88–90, 159. White animals serve as 'divine' messengers in hagiographical material where they appear as guides indicating the 'rightful' place for a church to be located by a saint. Henken provides many examples including that of Cadog and Cyngar both of whom were led by a boar.

³⁷² Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, p. 41 n. 151; Ian Hughes, 'Tripartite Structure in *Manawydan Uab Llyr*', p. 104; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 39.

³⁷³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 40.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 45–46.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 18, 36–37, 40, 42, 119. In the first branch 'an enormous claw comes through the window' which happens immediately after 'a loud noise'. Teyrnon cuts off the arm and then he hears 'a noise and a scream at the same time'. In the Third Branch just before the human population of Dyfed disappeared 'they heard a tumultuous noise, and with the intensity of the noise there fell a blanket of mist' and again after Pryderi and Rhiannon were trapped in the otherworldly fort, the fort disappears that night with 'a tumultuous noise above them, and a blanket of mist.' Finally when the mice appear Manawydan 'heard the loudest noise in the world.' A tumultuous noise also features in 'The Lady of the Well' when a silver bowl of water is thrown onto a marble slab. Following this there is a shower of hailstones, and then fine weather.

and as such, it provides a clear demarcation between human and supernatural worlds.³⁷⁶

This contrasts with the border between the worlds of Glyn Cuch and Annwfn where one can pass from one world to the other without remark. Gorsedd Arberth has been described as 'a liminal zone, where this world and the other converge.'³⁷⁷ However, this would seem to be a better description for the border between Glyn Cuch and Annwfn since they seem merge into one another. In contrast Gorsedd Arberth is a specific focal point in the landscape through which magical or supernatural forces are experienced forcefully in the First and Third Branches.³⁷⁸

Banc y Warin is a hill to the north of Aberteifi, which stands out from the surrounding landscape due to its shape which T. Llew Jones describes as giving the impression of having been 'placed' there.³⁷⁹ On the slopes of Banc y Warin there is a farm named Crugmore or Crug Mawr, which may have been the earlier name for the hill itself.³⁸⁰ T. Llew Jones notes that the hill and the road that passes it, fit very well with the story of Rhiannon passing on horseback, and there are also farms nearby with names connected to horses.³⁸¹ This hill has legendary associations: *Historia Brittonum* mentions Crug Mawr in Ceredigion as one of the wonders of Britain. The grave on its summit is said to be able to adapt its size to whoever lay besides it and if it is bowed to three times, it will relieve weariness for the rest

³⁷⁶ Daniel Sävborg, 'The Iclander and the Trolls - The Importance of Place', in *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas*, ed. by Daniel Sävborg and Ülo Valk (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2018), pp. 196, 203 <<http://www.oapen.org/search?identifier=1000208>> [accessed 6 November 2018]. Sävborg discusses the otherworld of the Icelandic family sagas, where in the everyday world of named places otherworldly events are marked by various distancing devices.

³⁷⁷ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 238 n. 36.

³⁷⁸ Siewers, 'Writing an Icon of the Land', p. 203. Siewers sees the mound as a kind of portal to the otherworld.

³⁷⁹ T. Llew Jones, 'Banc y Warin, Y Crug Mawr, Gorsedd Arberth'.

³⁸⁰ T. Llew Jones, 'Banc y Warin, Y Crug Mawr, Gorsedd Arberth'. It is shown as Crugmore on modern Ordnance Survey maps but was Crug Mawr on Ordnance Survey maps up until the 1960s.

³⁸¹ Ibid., Jones notes the names Cwm March, Olmarch, and Glanolmarch. Cwm March is just to the east of Banc-y-Warin, and Glan Olmarch is about 3 km south-south-east. Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 18. Skinner notes that Llwyd fab Cil Coed also approaches Gorsedd Arberth via a routeway.

of one's life.³⁸² Historically, the hill was the site of a battle in 1136.³⁸³ Gerald of Wales also mentions Crug Mawr as being 'on our left soon after riding out of Cardigan' during his journey to Lampeter in 1188.³⁸⁴ He notes that:

there is a tumulus at the top of this hill. The local inhabitants say that it adjusts itself to the size of anyone who goes there. They also maintain that if as evening falls you leave your arms there in good condition you will find them broken to pieces the next morning.³⁸⁵

The legendary associations of the mound may well be connected to its notable appearance in the landscape as well as to its history. *Crug* is defined as 'hillock, knoll; cairn, tumulus',³⁸⁶ and in the immediate vicinity there are the remains of several burial mounds. On the other side of the A487 lies the Bronze Age Round Barrows of Crug-Du-Isaf/Crug-Du-Uchaf and Crug Efa. A Bronze Age Round Barrow has also been noted at the farm named Crugmore.³⁸⁷ Jones saw no sign of a burial mound on the summit of Banc y Warin but considered that the hill itself may be viewed as a tumulus similar to that of Silbury.³⁸⁸

³⁸² Andrew J. Evans, "The Wonders of Britain" <<http://www.wondersofbritain.org/>> [accessed 14 April 2019]. Regarding the date of the *Mirabilia*, Scot Lloyd remarks that they are not included in any manuscripts of the Vatican recension so may not have been an integral part of the *Historia Brittonum*. This means that the date may not be as early as the ninth century. See; Scott Lloyd, *Arthurian Place Names of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), p. 15.

³⁸³ T. Llew Jones, 'Banc y Warin, Y Crug Mawr, Gorsedd Arberth'.

³⁸⁴ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales*, p. 177; Skinner, 'Courts and Journeys', p. 45 n. 49. Skinner refers to an inconsistency in the route taken by Gerald of Wales, assuming that his route took in Cenarth. This may be due to confusion brought about by the long digression introduced by Gerald of Wales discussing the habits of beavers in the area of Cenarth and Cilgerran. The Thorpe edition is used here and this translation notes that he is travelling from Cardigan to Lampeter which seems consistent with the details of the landscape given.

³⁸⁵ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales*, p. 177.

³⁸⁶ 'Crug', *GPC Online* [accessed 5 June 2019].

³⁸⁷ 'Crug-Du-Uchaf; Crug-Du-Isaf: PRN 12147', *Historic Environment Record* (Dyfed Archaeological Trust, 1950) <<https://archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=DAT12147>> [accessed 13 April 2019]; 'Crug Efa: PRN 5831', *Historic Environment Record* (Dyfed Archaeological Trust, 1950) <<https://archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=DAT5831>> [accessed 13 April 2019]; 'Crug Mawr: PRN 5837', *Historic Environment Record* (Dyfed Archaeological Trust, 1950) <<https://archwilio.org.uk/arch/query/page.php?watprn=DAT5837>> [accessed 13 April 2019].

³⁸⁸ T. Llew Jones, 'Banc y Warin, Y Crug Mawr, Gorsedd Arberth'. Although Jones could identify no signs of a burial mound, aerial reconnaissance has identified a defended enclosure on the summit of Banc y Warin. See; T. Driver, 'Banc-Y-Warren Enclosure, Crug Mawr, near Cardigan', *RCAHMW* (Coflein.gov.uk, 2006) <<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/405527/details/banc-y-warren-enclosure-crug-mawr-near-cardigan>> [accessed 10 June 2019].

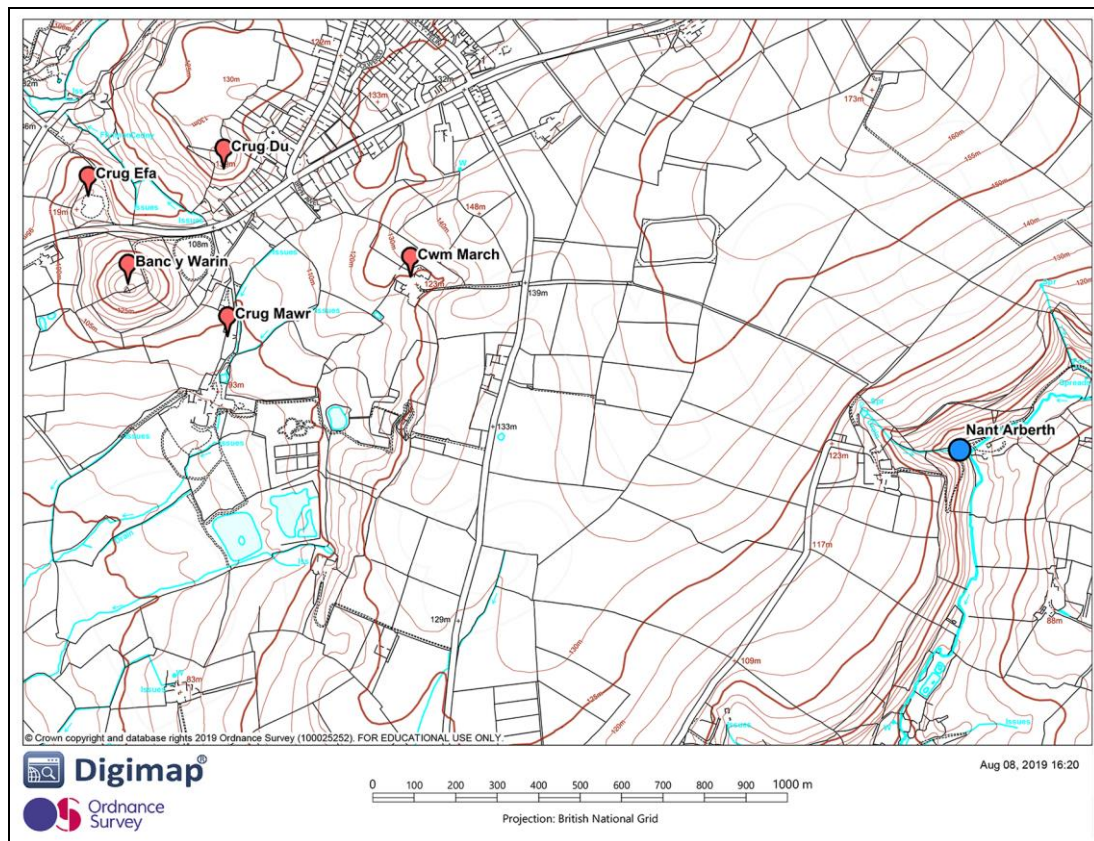


Figure 13: *Banc y Warin and Nant Arberth*.³⁸⁹

The word *gorsedd* can be understood as both a man-made tumulus and a natural hill, with a definition of ‘mound of earth, tump, knoll, hillock; barrow, tumulus, grave’.³⁹⁰ *Gorsedd* is derived from *sed- meaning ‘sit’; the same root as the Irish *síd* in which the Irish otherworld is often located.³⁹¹ Unlike the Irish *síd*, Sims-Williams suggests that the emphasis in the Four Branches is on who is on the mound rather than those dwelling within it.³⁹² In the Four Branches the mound itself acts as a focus for otherworldly sources of power of some kind, and it may be that audiences of the time would not need this to be explicitly spelt out. The idea that mounds have otherworldly attributes was widespread in

³⁸⁹ *Banc y Warin and Nant Arberth*, (OSVectorMap Local, 1:11,000) (July 2018) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 8 August 2019].

³⁹⁰ Sims-Williams, “‘Kaer Sidi’”, p. 59; ‘Gorsedd¹’ and ‘Gorsedd²’, *GPC Online* [accessed 5 June 2019]. See also; Ifor Williams, *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi*, p. 93. *Gorsedd* can also be understood in a legal context as meaning ‘tribunal, court or session’.

³⁹¹ Sims-Williams, ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, p. 64; Sims-Williams, “‘Kaer Sidi’”, p. 56.

³⁹² Sims-Williams, ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, p. 64; Sims-Williams, “‘Kaer Sidi’”, p. 60.

medieval Europe.³⁹³ Mounds such as this may have had a narrative function providing a way outside of conventional reality to the otherworld.³⁹⁴

The poem *Preiddeu Annwfn* mentions many otherworldly forts which may be parallels to the imprisonment of Rhiannon and Pryderi in the Third Branch. *Caer Rigor*: ‘Petrification Fort’,³⁹⁵ may be analogous to their being frozen to the spot.³⁹⁶ *Caer Wydyr*, where ‘it was hard to communicate with their watchman’,³⁹⁷ may refer to their inability to speak. There is also a reference to an imprisonment in *Caer Sidi*: ‘*Bu kyweir karchar Gweir yg Kaer Sidi,/trwy ebostol Pwyll a Phryderi*. Maintained was Gwair’s prison in *Caer Sidi*/throughout Pwyll and Pryderi’s story.’³⁹⁸ This resonates with the capture of Rhiannon and Pryderi inside the magical fort, and it is possible that their imprisonment may have been envisaged as being inside the fort or the mound.³⁹⁹

In the Third Branch *Gorsedd Arberth* provides a viewpoint from which the loss of humanity from Dyfed is first seen. In *Canu Heledd* there is a *Gorsedd* with a similar role; Heledd looks down from the *Gorsedd* of Gorwynion at the land left desolate by the loss of her brothers and laments ‘for the land and the memories it holds’.⁴⁰⁰

*Neur sylleis olygon ar dirion dir.
o orsed orwynnyon.
hir hwyl heul hwy vyghouyon.*

I have gazed on ?uncultivated land⁴⁰¹
from the mound of Gorwynion
Long is the course of the sun; longer
my remembrances.

*Neur sylleis [olygon] o dinlleu ureconn
ffreuer weydre.*

I have gazed from Dinlleu Gwrygon,
the country of Ffreuer.

³⁹³ Andrew Welsh, ‘The Traditional Narrative Motifs of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 15 (1988), 51–62; Sims-Williams, ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, p. 66; See also Sims-Williams, ‘“Kaer Sidi”’, pp. 62–63.

³⁹⁴ Kuldkepp, ‘A Study in Distance’, p. 217.

³⁹⁵ Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 436.

³⁹⁶ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, pp. 43–44 n. 169.

³⁹⁷ Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 436.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

³⁹⁹ Jones and Jones, *The Mabinogion*, p. xvi; Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, p. 55; Catherine McKenna, ‘Revising Math’, p. 96.

⁴⁰⁰ Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 165.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165. *Dirion dir* can be translated as ‘untilled’ or ‘fallow’ land as well as ‘uncultivated’.

*hiraeth am damorth vrodyrde.*⁴⁰² There is sorrow for the ?slaughter of my
?ardent brothers.⁴⁰³

These stanzas provide the image of a land that is uncultivated and haunted by the loss of its people, but this is due to warfare rather than supernatural causes.⁴⁰⁴ In *Canu Heledd* the land is strongly connected with Heledd and her sister Ffreuer, and this resonates with the theme of the goddess of sovereignty where ‘the land or kingdom is a goddess who is wedded to the rightful king and who mourns his death and the resultant devastation of the land.’⁴⁰⁵

This is alluded to in the following stanza of *Canu Heledd*:

Bei gwreic gyrthmwl. bydei gwan hediw.
bydei bann y disgur
hi gyua diua y gwyr.⁴⁰⁶

If Garthmyl were a woman she would be weak today,
her wail would be loud:
she is whole; her warriors destroyed.⁴⁰⁷

The land itself is weakened and mourns the loss of the ‘rightful king’. It has been suggested that Rhiannon’s original role was as a sovereignty goddess, but Dyfed does not seem to be automatically connected to her as queen.⁴⁰⁸ The evidence from *Canu Heledd* suggests that allusions to the sovereignty goddess myth do not need to be literal to allow an author to exploit the myth’s ‘inherent semiotic value’.⁴⁰⁹ The land of Dyfed shows no signs of mourning in the Third Branch as it remains fruitful and full of wild inhabitants. However, the enchantment of Dyfed has resulted in the loss of the relationship between

⁴⁰² Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry*, p. 440.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 490.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 147–48.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 145–46. Rowland notes that the sovereignty tradition is used imaginatively here as Heledd is the sister of Cynddylan not his wife.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 146.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 490.

⁴⁰⁸ J. Hemming, ‘Ancient Tradition or Authorial Invention? The “Mythological” Names in the Four Branches’, in *Myth in Celtic Literatures*, ed. by J. Nagy (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 83–104 (p. 87).

⁴⁰⁹ C. A. McKenna, ‘Learning Lordship: The Education of Manawydan’, p. 105.

the land and humanity and the imprisonment of Pryderi and Rhiannon.⁴¹⁰ The capture of the sovereignty goddess and her son may also be symbolically linked to the loss of connection between the land and humanity.

Llwyd fab Cil Coed is responsible for placing the enchantment on Dyfed. His name is associated with the place-names Cilgoed and Blaen Cilgoed in the parish of Yr Eglwys Lwyd (or Ludchuch) a few miles east of Narberth.⁴¹¹ He placed the enchantment on Dyfed in order to avenge Gwawl son of Clud because Pryderi played 'Badger in the Bag' with him.⁴¹² Although *Broch* (meaning badger) is the word used in the Four Branches, *prif llwyd* is another name for badger and this has an echo in Llwyd fab Cil Coed's name,⁴¹³ *Cil* could be understood as 'corner' or 'recess' with *coed*: 'wood'.⁴¹⁴ Llwyd fab Cil Coed may be connected to Dyfed and the animal life therein. However, Davies has suggested 'that God is perhaps ultimately responsible for placing the enchantment on Dyfed'.⁴¹⁵ *Llwyd* may also mean 'holy, blessed, pious' and this reading would also suggest a divine origin for the enchantment.⁴¹⁶ Human misbehaviour could be seen to have triggered the enchantment which was manifested in the 'dramatic reactions of places' through the focal point of Gorsedd Arberth.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁰ In contrast the land at Nantlle seems very affected by Lleu's plight; see below.

⁴¹¹ Ian Hughes, *Manawydan Uab Llyr*, p. xxxiii. Hughes also notes that Lluydeu mab Kelcoet is mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, his house is said to be at Porth Kerdin in Dyfed, where they put to land after visiting Ireland to win the cauldron. See also; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 209, 274 n. 209; Lloyd, pp. 200–201.

⁴¹² Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 14, 230 n. 14. 'Badger in the Bag' is said to have been played for the first time on that occasion: this may be associated with badger-baiting where a badger is trapped in a bag and beaten to death.

⁴¹³ 'Pryf¹', *GPC Online* [accessed 10 June 2019].

⁴¹⁴ 'Cil¹', and 'Coed', *GPC Online* [accessed 10 June 2019].

⁴¹⁵ Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, p. 61. Evidence for this comes from the words of Manawydan who says 'as long as God will that you be this way' and 'for as long as it please God that we be in this misery and woe'.

⁴¹⁶ 'Llwyd', *GPC Online* [accessed 5 October 2019].

⁴¹⁷ Sävborg and Valk, *Storied and Supernatural Places*.

Feasting and the Head

After the war in Ireland Bendigeidfran instructs the survivors to cut off his head and bury it at the Gwynfryn in London. Their very prolonged journey takes them via Harlech and Gwales where otherworldly feasts take place.

The Assembly at Harlech

As discussed in Section One, the Rock of Harlech provides an atmospheric high point with a distant view. Here the survivors feast and listen to the birds of Rhiannon.⁴¹⁸ In *Culhwch ac Olwen* we are told that Rhiannon's birds 'wake the dead and lull the living to sleep'.⁴¹⁹

Parallels to Rhiannon's birds are found in folktales including one regarding Llwyn y Nef at Clynog Fawr. In this tale a monk walks in the countryside as night begins to fall; he hears the most pleasant music and sits listening unaware of the passage of time, as the bird sings for hundreds of years. Finally, he is roused by a voice. When he returns to the monastery everything is altered, and as he sleeps that night he turns to ash.⁴²⁰ This death is a parallel to that in *Imrann Brain* where a man turns to dust on returning home after his visit to the otherworld. Rees characterises this as his having been 'so long "out of time"'.⁴²¹

Rhiannon's birds catalyse a similar effect in the survivors, absorbing them and relieving them of all their worries during the time they are at Harlech. In early Irish literature magical birds with similar properties appear, such as the ability to 'banish grief and lull the wounded to sleep'.⁴²² Eichner notes that the clearest parallel to the role of Rhiannon's birds in the Second Branch are Clíodhna's birds who also accompany survivors after a battle

⁴¹⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 33.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 196.

⁴²⁰ Salmon Llwyd, 'Llwyn y Nef', *Y Brython*, 1860, 111.

⁴²¹ Rhian Rees, 'Perceptions of Annwn', p. 28.

⁴²² Eichner, pp. 51, 54–55.

and soothe them.⁴²³ However, as discussed in Section One, the birds of Rhiannon are unique in their ability to be clearly heard at a great distance.

The survivors feast in Harlech for seven years and there are no repercussions when the time there ends. The feast may denote a time-limited recovery of an earlier life at Harlech at the start of the Second Branch.⁴²⁴ Mac Cana notes that Harlech is an unlikely place for the otherworld and suggests that the feast in Harlech was not a genuine tradition but was added in order to break the journey to Gwales.⁴²⁵ Jones disagrees, citing poetic traditions which allude to a long feast at Harlech. He also argues that poetic references to the sons of Llyr at Ebyr Henfelen may refer to another version of a feast which took place at Ebyr Henfelen.⁴²⁶ This would mean that two separate oral traditions may be combined in the Second Branch with the two feasts at Harlech and at Gwales.⁴²⁷

The Four Branches as we have it, clearly locates an otherworldly feast at Harlech and it is the topography of Harlech that allows the authors imagining of the birds of Rhiannon as distant, yet at the same time, as clear as if they were there with them.

The Assembly at Gwales

Following the feast at Harlech the survivors travel to Gwales in Penfro.⁴²⁸ This is the island of Grassholm which lies 19 kilometres off the coast of south-west Pembrokeshire, and was known as Gwales until the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁴²⁹ Gwales is translated as 'sanctuary, retreat, refuge'.⁴³⁰ The island is

⁴²³ Eichner, pp. 54–55.

⁴²⁴ Catherine McKenna, 'The Colonization of Myth', p. 117.

⁴²⁵ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, pp. 108–9.

⁴²⁶ Glyn Jones, 'Y Wledd Yn Harlech Ac Yng Ngwales'. See below.

⁴²⁷ Glyn Jones, 'Y Wledd Yn Harlech Ac Yng Ngwales'.

⁴²⁸ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 33.

⁴²⁹ Owen, *The Description of Pembrokeshire*, p. 114. Owen notes, 'far off in the sea stands the island Grassholm, so called of Mr. Saxton but of the neighbours Walleyes, a small island eight miles from the main, and for the remoteness thereof and small profits it yeilds, is seldom frequented.' See also; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 66 n. 368.

⁴³⁰ 'Gwales', *GPC Online* [accessed 14 June 2019].

remotely located and surrounded by strong currents. Recent archaeological investigations have discovered evidence of medieval settlement which could be consistent with an 'undocumented eremitic ecclesiastical site or a retreat for an ascetic hermit.'⁴³¹ It is possible that this may explain its name and also the role of the island in the Four Branches.

The time spent at Gwales is characterised by otherworldly feasting, happiness and abundance.⁴³² The feast lasts eighty years and while the men are there Gwales provides 'sanctuary' from the world where no sorrow or grief is remembered.⁴³³ Additionally there is no aging and Bendigeidfran's head was 'no more unpleasant than when Bendigeidfran had been alive with them.'⁴³⁴

The Second Branch tells us there is a royal dwelling with a large hall containing three doors on the island. Two of the doors are open but the third door, which faces Cornwall, is closed.⁴³⁵ After eighty years Heilyn son of Gwyn opens the door and looks at Cornwall and Aber Henfelen and all their memories return. The stay at Gwales is time-limited; we already know that the door will be opened as the time frame of eighty years has been fixed by Bendigeidfran.⁴³⁶ Once the door is opened the men are still located in 'that very place' but its otherworldly qualities have dissolved.⁴³⁷

It has often been noted that the feasting at Gwales includes many of the features associated with the Celtic otherworld; food is plentiful, time does not count and all cares are forgotten.⁴³⁸ Otherworldly islands are familiar in Celtic sources and real islands may

⁴³¹ Oliver Davis, 'The Archaeology of Grassholm Island, Pembrokeshire', *Studia Celtica*, XLVI (2012), 1–10 (p. 8).

⁴³² Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 85; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 237 n. 34.

⁴³³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, pp. 33–34.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴³⁶ Catherine McKenna, 'The Colonization of Myth', p. 117; Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 32.

⁴³⁷ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 34.

⁴³⁸ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, pp. 102–3; Welsh, 'Traditional Narrative Motifs', p. 59; Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, p. 58.

also have been seen as otherworlds.⁴³⁹ This association may not be confined to Celtic peoples.⁴⁴⁰ There are folktales about fairies living on islands off the coast of Milford Haven, as well as tales of floating islands in the vicinity that lay a few feet below the surface and that alternately appear and then become submerged.⁴⁴¹

These traditions have meant that the specific geography of Gwales has been seen as secondary to the mythic associations it possesses as an otherworldly island.⁴⁴² It is in this mythological context that the door which must not be opened becomes ‘a taboo ... associated with a mortal’s visit to the Otherworld: once the taboo is broken, so too is the spell’.⁴⁴³ On this basis scholars have described the instruction not to open the door in the Second Branch as an arbitrary rule.⁴⁴⁴ However, Gwales also exists in the real-world of Wales, and one might also speculate that the door is hiding something which should not be seen, something that would prompt a catastrophic reminder of loss. There is no explicit explanation given in the Four Branches as to why looking at Cornwall and/or Aber Henfelen causes this sudden and overwhelming reminder of loss. However, it does seem that ‘looking’ is what prompts it. Further, the experience is that of an all-encompassing loss, not simply the loss of otherworldly abundance.

Agori y drws a wnaeth ac edrych ar Gernyw ac ar Aber Henuelen. A phan edrychwys, yd oed yn gyn hyspyssset ganthunt y gyniuer collet a gollyssynt eiryot, a’r gyniuer car a chedymdeith a gollyssynt, a’r gyniuer drwc a dothoed udunt, a chyt bei yno y kyuarffei ac wynt: ac yn benhof oll am eu

⁴³⁹ Sims-Williams, “‘Kaer Sidi’”, pp. 63–65.

⁴⁴⁰ Welsh, ‘Traditional Narrative Motifs’, p. 59. The location of an otherworld on an island is an international story motif; Sims-Williams, ‘Some Celtic Otherworld Terms’, pp. 67–68. Sims-Williams points out that amongst maritime people’s a belief in overseas otherworlds is universal.

⁴⁴¹ Davies, *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, p. 54. Davies cites a report from the *Pembroke County Guardian* dated 1896 and an entry in *Cambrian Superstitions* dated 1831.

⁴⁴² Roberts, ‘Where Were the Four Branches of the Mabinogi Written?’, p. 68.

⁴⁴³ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 236 n. 32. See also ; Welsh, ‘Traditional Narrative Motifs’, p. 59. Welsh notes that this is an international story motif; C611.1 The Forbidden Door where ‘all doors may be entered but one.’

⁴⁴⁴ Mac Cana, *Branwen*, p. 86. Mac Cana ‘can think of no other instance where the duration of the sojourn in the security of the Otherworld depended on the mortal respecting such an arbitrary and ... such an irrelevant prohibition.’ ; Catherine McKenna, ‘The Colonization of Myth’, p. 117. McKenna describes the opening of the door as ‘violating arbitrary rules’.

*harglwyd. Ac o'r gyuawr honno ny allyssant wy orfowys namyn ky[r]chu a'r penn parth a Llundain.*⁴⁴⁵

He opened the door, and looked at Cornwall, and at Aber Henfelen. And when he looked, every loss they had ever suffered, and every kinsman and companion they had lost, and every ill that had befallen them was as clear as if they had encountered it in that very place; and most of all concerning their lord. And from that moment they could not rest but made for London with the head.⁴⁴⁶

Aber Henfelen probably refers to the Bristol Channel,⁴⁴⁷ and the journey from Gwales to London would seem very likely to take them up the Bristol Channel. Opening the door, they see the route ahead and this may be what prompts the sudden return of all their memories and the recollection of the need to take the head to London.

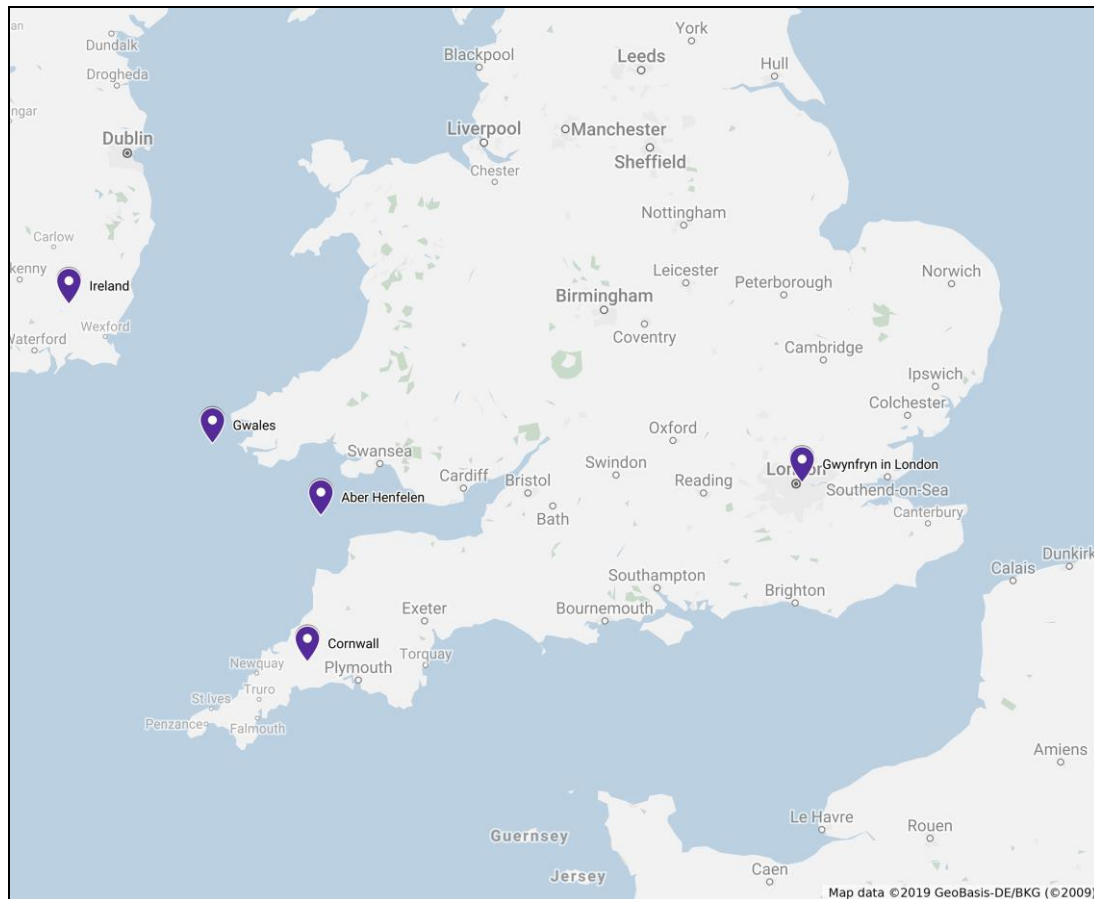


Figure 14: Gwales, Cornwall and Aber Henfelen.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁶ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 34.

⁴⁴⁷ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 236 n. 32; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 67 n. 370.

⁴⁴⁸ *Gwales, Cornwall and Aber Henfelen*, (GeoBasis-DE/BKG)(2009) Google Maps 2019 <<https://www.google.com/maps>> [accessed 28 August 2019].

A similar phrase; *Ebyr Henfelen* occurs in the poem *Goychaf-i Gulwyd*:⁴⁴⁹

*Keint yn yspydawt uch gwirawt aflawen
keint rac meibon Llyr yn Ebyr Henuelen
Gweleis treis trydar ac auar ac aghen;
yt lethrynt lafmawr ar pennawr disgowen.*

I sang in a feast over sad drink,
I sang before Llŷr's sons in Ebyr Henfelen
I saw the violence of battle, and sadness and distress;
blades were glinting on proud heads.⁴⁵⁰

The poem refers to the sons of Llŷr **in** *Ebyr Henfelen* rather than them looking **at** *Ebyr Henfelen* and the content does not suggest an otherworldly feast where all cares are forgotten. Perhaps the poem conflates the feast at Gwales with the sad journey up the Severn estuary towards London when all the woes of the world were with the men once more.

The length of the stay at Gwales is eighty years but the men have not aged in this time and there are no bodily repercussions when they continue their journey. Geographically Gwales is considerably more remote than Harlech; this remoteness and the association with sanctuary may in some way allow this much greater stretching of time. A parallel to this has been noted by Kuldkepp in Old Norse tales who remarks on the link between the remoteness of places and their holy characteristics - with remoteness functioning as a marker of otherness.⁴⁵¹

Brân's Head and The Gwynfryn

Bendigeidfran's head is present at both feasts, which raises the possibility that the head is, in part, the source of the protection that the survivors enjoy.⁴⁵² When the head is buried it

⁴⁴⁹ Mac Cana, 'The Four Branches', p. 30. Mac Cana suggests that *Ebyr Henfelen* refers to the otherworld; however, *ebyr* may derive from *Aber* and *melen* could refer to the yellow sands of the estuary or silty water. See; Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 279 n. 4.

⁴⁵⁰ Haycock, *Legendary Poems*, p. 275.

⁴⁵¹ Kuldkepp, 'A Study in Distance', pp. 214–16.

⁴⁵² Catherine McKenna, 'The Colonization of Myth', p. 117. McKenna suggests the head provides protective qualities to those accompanying it; although 'disturbingly fragmented [Bendigeidfran is] still potent to convene, protect and provide for his followers.'; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys*

needs to be specifically ‘placed’ in the landscape in order to continue to have this protective power. The Second Branch tells us;

*A hwnnw trydyd matcud ban gudywyt a’r trydyd anuat datcud pann
datcudywyt; cany doey ormes byth drwy uor y’r ynys honn tra uei y penn yn y
cud hwnnw.*⁴⁵³

And that was one of the Three Fortunate Concealments when it was concealed, and one of the Three Unfortunate Disclosures when it was disclosed; for no oppression would ever come across the sea to this island while the head was in that hiding-place.⁴⁵⁴

This is also referred to in Triad 37 ‘Three Concealments and Three Disclosures’ which repeats that the head’s presence would prevent oppression ever coming to this island.⁴⁵⁵

A variant triad in the *Red Book of Hergest*, ‘Three Fortunate Concealments of the Island of Britain’ states that the head faces France and prevents ‘Saxon Oppression’ coming to the island.⁴⁵⁶ These triads also tell us that Gwerthefyr the Blessed has his bones buried in ‘the Chief Ports of this Island’ for similar reasons; additionally the presence of the body of a hero that must be strategically placed in the landscape has parallels in early Irish literature.⁴⁵⁷

The Gwynfryn is a hill or mound: Tower Hill in London and the site of St Paul’s Cathedral have been suggested as possible sites.⁴⁵⁸ Other locations for the Gwynfryn have been suggested based on presumptions about an earlier version of the legend of

Prydein, p. 291. Bromwich notes ‘after his death his dismembered head serves as a marvellous talisman for the satisfaction of all human needs and, when buried, it becomes a defence to his country.’

⁴⁵³ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁴ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 34.

⁴⁵⁵ Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 94.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96. Bromwich cites *Caithréim Cellaig* where Eóghan Bél, King of Connacht is buried on the boundary of his territory ‘in a standing position, with his spear in his hand and with his face turned towards Ulster, as if he were fighting his traditional enemies. As long as his body was left in that position, the Connachtmen routed the Ulstermen.’ However his body was dug up by his enemies and buried face down elsewhere.

⁴⁵⁸ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, pp. 64–65 n. 364.

Bendigeidfran.⁴⁵⁹ It has also been associated with Branodúnium, now known as Brancaster in Norfolk, one of the Saxon shore forts.⁴⁶⁰

In the Second Branch as we have it, the Gwynfryn represents a powerful place which is activated by the presence of the head and while hidden there the head is able to protect the island of Britain.⁴⁶¹

Lleu's tree

In the Fourth Branch Lleu in the form of an eagle is found in an oak tree between two lakes at Nantlle. Gwydion sings the following verses:

<i>Dar a dyf y rwng deu lenn Gorduwrych awyr a glenn. Ony dywedaf i eu, O ulodeu Lleu ban yw hynn</i>	An oak tree grows between two lakes Very dark [is the] sky and [the] valley. Unless I tell a lie This is because of Lleu's flowers/Blodeuwedd.
<i>Dar a dyf yn ard uaes, Nis gwlych glaw, nis mwy tawd [tes]</i>	An oaktree grows in a high plain Rain does not wet it, heat no longer melts it.
<i>Naw udein anagerd (a) borthes. Yn y blaen, Lleu Llaw Gyffes</i>	It held nine score skills At its top, [is] Lleu Llaw Gyffes.
<i>Dar a dyf dan anwaeret, Mirein modur ynywet. Ony dywedaf i [eu] Ef dydau Lleu y'm arfet.⁴⁶²</i>	An oaktree grows under a slope, A sanctuary for a fair lord. Unless I tell a lie Lleu will come [down] to my lap. ⁴⁶³

In the second stanza the oak tree is said to be unaffected by rain or heat. The theme of the rain wetting everywhere occurs in *Englynion y Beddau* and so this may suggest it has

⁴⁵⁹ Ian Hughes, *Bendigeiduran Uab Llyr*, pp. 64–65 n. 364. . These include Harlech, with the head facing Ireland (Pentre Gwynfryn lies a few miles south of Harlech), and a hill named Gwynfryn near Wrexham, close to other place-names associated with Brân in north-east Wales.

⁴⁶⁰ John T Koch, 'Some Suggestions and Etymologies Reflecting upon the Mythology of the Four Branches', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 9 (1989), 1–10 (p. 9).

⁴⁶¹ Catherine McKenna, 'The Colonization of Myth', p. 114.

⁴⁶² Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 19.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–6 nn. 520–35.

supernatural properties.⁴⁶⁴ The word *ynywet* in the final stanza means both ‘sanctuary’ and ‘sacred grove’ which also has supernatural or otherworldly connotations.⁴⁶⁵ Hughes suggests that these properties result from the presence of Lleu in the tree.⁴⁶⁶ However, it is also possible that the tree or its location may have protective properties to which Lleu was attracted for sanctuary.

The first stanza suggests that the valley and sky are in mourning: they are very dark and this may be because of the death of ‘light’.⁴⁶⁷ This resonates with the idea of the land mourning for the loss of the ‘rightful ruler’ as discussed in connection with *Canu Heledd*. This is the only occurrence of this theme in the Four Branches, with the land itself mourning its lord. In the Four Branches the valley is named after Lleu.

The oak tree where Lleu sheltered is between two lakes at Nantlle, but today only one lake remains.⁴⁶⁸ However, maps and artworks provide an impression of the landscape in former times.⁴⁶⁹ The liminal zone between the lakes has the quality of being set aside from the normal world almost as though an island, while at the same time being sheltered by the surrounding mountains.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁴ Thomas Jones, ‘The Stanzas of The Graves’, p. p123 stanzas 1 and 3, p127 stanza 45; Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), pp. 103–4 n. 527. Hughes also notes some difficulties in interpretation of the middle two lines of stanza two.

⁴⁶⁵ Ian Hughes, *Math Uab Mathonwy* (2013), p. 105 n. 533.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104 n. 527.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102 n. 521. The name *Lleu* is associated with ‘light’. See also p lxxxiv-lxxxv (vii).

⁴⁶⁸ Skinner, ‘Courts and Journeys’, p. 70. Skinner notes that the second lake was lost due to quarrying operations around 1893-5. She also suggests that a high-status site existed in the area; ‘the *llys* of the prince was probably between the lakes.’ However, local tradition suggests that the court of the princes lies under the spoil heap of Penyrsedd Quarry on the former site of *Tŷn y Nant*. See; Thomas Alun Williams, ‘Baladeulyn Then and Now’, trans. by Vernon Oldfield <<http://www.nantlle.com/history-nantlle-baladeulyn.htm>> [accessed 27 July 2019].

⁴⁶⁹ For a historical map see Figure 9, *Llynnoedd Nantlle-Uchaf and Nantlle-Isaf, 1891* above and for images see Figure 15 and Figure 16.

⁴⁷⁰ Lakes are often the subject of legends and folk tales in Welsh tradition. See for example; Carles-Enric Fernandez, ‘Legends of the Lakes of Wales: Thematic Classification and Analysis’ (unpublished MA thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2012).



Figure 15: *Llynniau Nantlle*, John Warwick Smith, 1797.⁴⁷¹

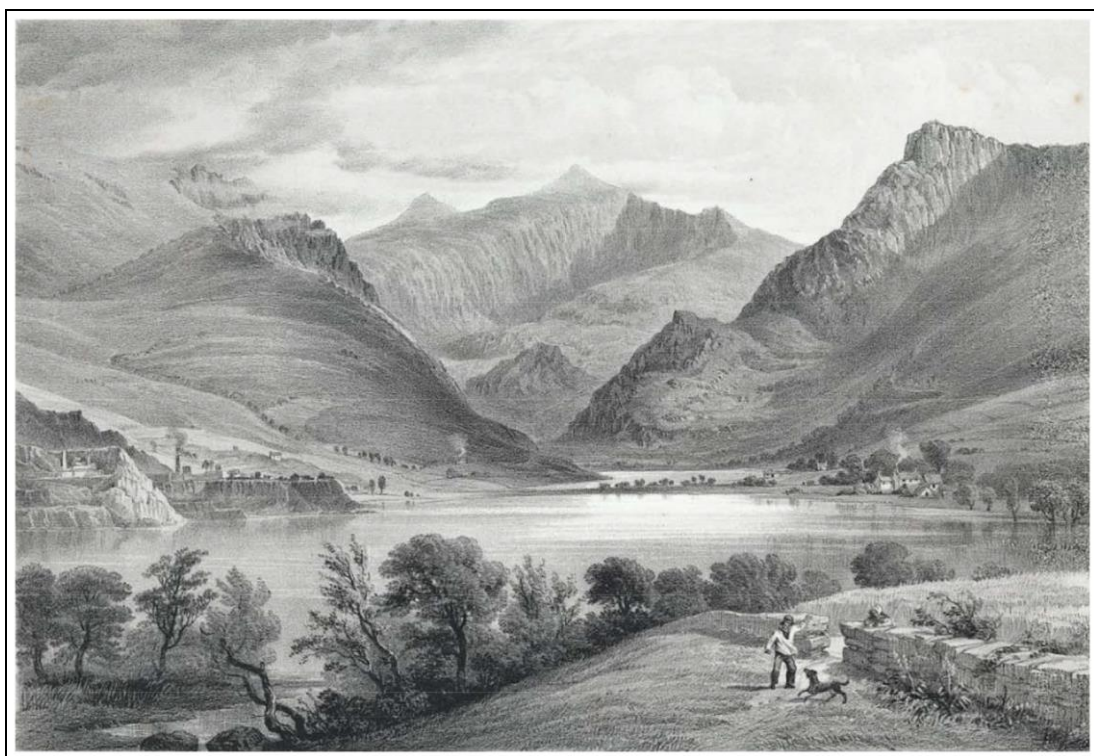


Figure 16: *Snowdon from Nantlle Lakes*, by J Dodd, engraved by C. Haghe, 1854.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ John Warwick Smith, *Llynniau Nantlle*, 1797. Digitised by The National Library of Wales <<https://viewer.library.wales/1443311>> [accessed 13 August 2019].

⁴⁷² J. J. Dodd and C. Haghe, *Snowdon from Nantlle Lakes* (T. Catherall, 1854). Digitised by The National Library of Wales <<https://viewer.library.wales/1132614>> [accessed 13 August 2019].

Time, Place and Landscape Change

Landscape change is a continual process and examples of change caused by coastal erosion and the draining of lakes have been discussed above. It is possible that the underlying oral traditions within the Four Branches may have been derived from earlier landscape conditions. The traces of past conditions or events in the landscape may have acted as a mnemonic for stories that were associated with them. Narratives may also have been inferred from these traces. The Four Branches is clearly linked to places which still exist today but sometimes the landscape has changed, and this can be seen in relation to Harlech and the Irish Sea.

The Second Branch is set at a time prior to the building of Harlech castle in the late thirteenth century. At the time of building and for some time later the castle was directly accessible by sea.⁴⁷³ In 1610 Speed's map of Merionethshire shows the sea still extending to the castle.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ Harold Hughes, 'Harlech Castle'. Hughes notes that there are records of cargo being landed here from Ireland dating back to 1295; North, *Sunken Cities*, p. 240. North notes that there are several references in the Public Record Office to Harlech as a port in fourteenth century manuscripts. It was said to have 'havens, creeks, and landing places on either side'.

⁴⁷⁴ The National Library of Wales website contains many digitised examples of artistic studies of the castle on the rock of Harlech. These vary dramatically in their approach to the subject, and it is not uncommon to find the castle closely juxtaposed with the sea in some images whilst it is at a distance in other images of a similar date and apparent viewpoint. Whilst it is possible some of these artworks are based on drawings of an earlier date, sadly their evidence is unreliable 'National Library of Wales' <<https://discover.library.wales/primo-explore/>> [accessed 2 August 2019].



Figure 17: Extract from *Merionethshire Described*, John Speed, 1610.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁵ Speed, *Merionethshire Described*. Digitised by the National Library of Wales.

In the Second Branch when Matholwch's men arrive from Ireland they approach by boat and Bendigeidfran converses with them from his position on the rock of Harlech.⁴⁷⁶ But, when Bendigeidfran and his army travel towards Ireland we hear that 'the sea was not wide then; Bendigeidfran waded across. There were only two rivers, called the Lli and the Archan. Later the sea spread out when it flooded the kingdoms'.⁴⁷⁷ However, when Bendigeidfran and his army are observed approaching Ireland they are 'wading or sailing across the open sea (*gweilgi*) rather than two rivers'.⁴⁷⁸ Thus the Second Branch contains several different contradictory versions of the Irish sea. To complicate matters further, the rock of Harlech now lies well inland due to the accumulation of sand at Morfa Harlech resulting from coastal drift.⁴⁷⁹ See Figure 18: *The Topography of Harlech*.

The names of the rivers given, the Lli and Archan, may be derived from rivers in Ireland and Wales. While *Lli* can mean 'flood, influx, deluge, or sea', the context means that a specific river is meant with Loch Laoigh in Belfast the most likely candidate.⁴⁸⁰ The river Archan may have been a river in Wales. Sims-Williams suggests that Archan could be a transcription error for Arthan and that the Afon Arth is meant which runs to the sea at Aberarth in Ceredigion. Alternatively, it may be connected with the personal name Archanad which is associated with today's Pen Dinas near Aberystwyth.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁶ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 22.

⁴⁷⁷ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 28. The final line or lines may be glosses; Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The Irish Geography of Branwen', in *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 188–207 (p. 192). Sims-Williams suggests the final two sentences are glosses; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, pp. lxxiv–lxxv. Bromwich suggests that just the latter phase is a gloss on the text and that the kingdoms it refers to were stories of submerged lands in Cardigan Bay such as Cantre Gwaelod.

⁴⁷⁸ Sims-Williams, 'The Irish Geography of Branwen', p. 192.

⁴⁷⁹ North, *Sunken Cities*, pp. 239–40.

⁴⁸⁰ Sims-Williams, 'The Irish Geography of Branwen', p. 194. This is a large estuary flowing into the Irish sea at Belfast; Ian Hughes, *Bendigeidfran Uab Llyr*, p. 44 n.235.

⁴⁸¹ Sims-Williams, 'The Irish Geography of Branwen', p. 194. Sims Williams derives this from the unusual personal name *Archanat* who appears in Triad 44 in which he is carried on horseback up the hill of Maelawr, now Pen Dinas, near Aberystwyth.



Figure 18: *The Topography of Harlech.*⁴⁸²

⁴⁸² *The Topography of Harlech*, (OS VectorMap™ District, OS Terrain® 50) (November 2017) Ordnance Survey (GB), Using EDINA [accessed 6 August 2019].

In prehistoric times, Britain was affected by large scale changes in sea level caused by climate change. When the last Ice Age ended around 12,000 years ago, the ice sheets melted and large areas of low-lying land were inundated as the sea level rose.⁴⁸³ These events left visible traces in the landscape such as the submerged forests which occur in many places around the coastline of Wales.⁴⁸⁴ These forests have been long known as evidenced by Gerald of Wales's description of a submerged forest at St Bride's Bay and as the quotation suggests these traces give rise to speculation about their origins.

like a grove cut down, perhaps at the time of the deluge or not long after, but certainly in very remote ages, being by degrees consumed and swallowed up by the violence and encroachment of the sea.⁴⁸⁵

There are also long, submerged ridges of mixed sedimentary materials which are visible at low tides in Cardigan Bay. This includes Sarn Badrig near Harlech which reaches out over twenty kilometres towards Ireland.⁴⁸⁶ This is a natural feature resulting from glacial processes, but it was formerly believed to be a man-made sea defence which became submerged during the inundation of land lost beneath Cardigan Bay.⁴⁸⁷

See Figure 19: Extract from *Plans of Harbours, Bays and Roads in St George's Channel*, Lewis Morris, 1748.

⁴⁸³ 'The Mesolithic in Wales'

<<http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/lostlandscapes/mesolithic.html>> [accessed 21 June 2019].

⁴⁸⁴ 'Submerged Forests' (Dyfed Archaeological Trust)

<<http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/lostlandscapes/submergedforests.html>> [accessed 21 June 2019]. Radiocarbon dating of these forests provides information which suggests that the sea level changes took place over a considerable time. For example, at Ynyslas in Cardigan Bay the forests have been dated as dying 5,500 years ago, and those at Borth 3,500 years ago.

⁴⁸⁵ North, *Sunken Cities*, p. 192; Sims-Williams, 'The Irish Geography of Branwen', p. 192.

⁴⁸⁶ Natural Resources Wales, *Marine Character Areas MCA 15: Cardigan Bay (North) & Estuaries*, p. 4 <https://naturalresources.wales/media/674522/mca-15-cardigan-bay-north-and-estuaries_final.pdf> [accessed 25 July 2019].

⁴⁸⁷ North, *Sunken Cities*, pp. 153–54. North cites Vaughan, the antiquary of Hengwrt writing in the mid seventeenth century, regarding the connection between the lost lands of Cantre Gwaelod and Sarn Badrig.

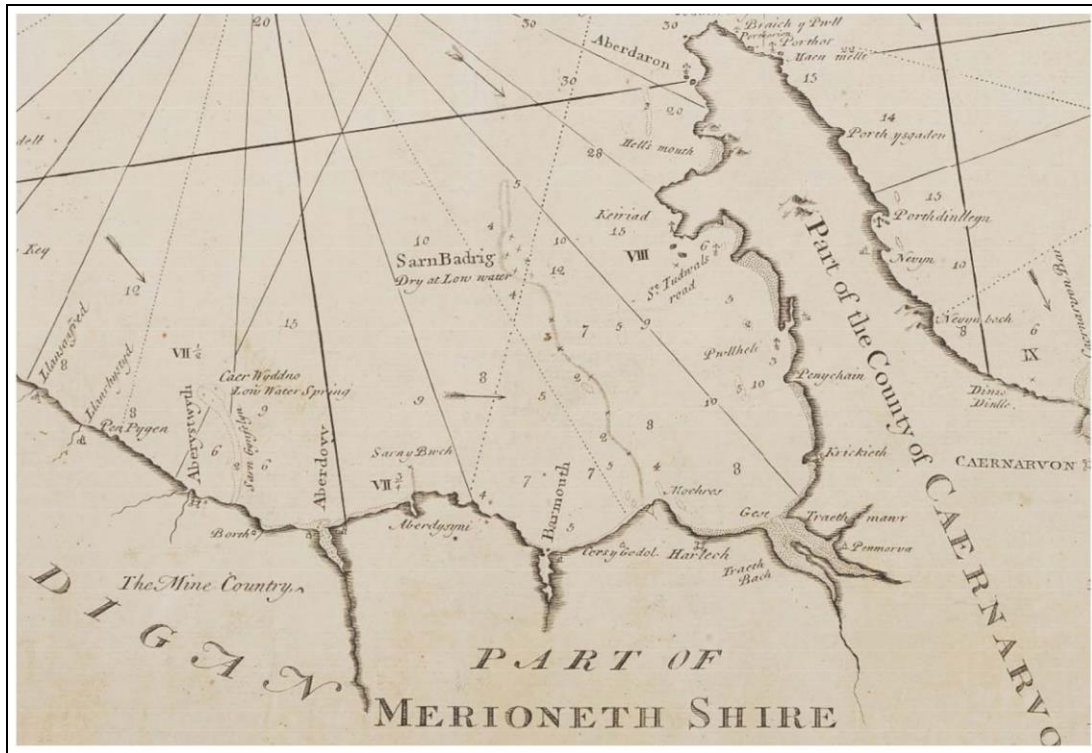


Figure 20: Extract from *Plans of Harbours, Bays and Roads in St George's Channel*, Lewis Morris, 1748.⁴⁸⁸

There are many traditions regarding lands submerged by the sea in Cardigan Bay, the earliest of which appear in the Second Branch and in *Bonedd y Sant* and both of these sources use the phrase '*a oresgynnwys mor eu tir [...]* whose land(s) the sea conquered'.⁴⁸⁹ Other legends include that of Teithi Hen 'whose kingdom the sea overran' in *Culhwch ac Olwen*.⁴⁹⁰ As discussed in Section one, there are also traditions about the inundation of land in connection with *Caer Aranrhod*.

⁴⁸⁸ Lewis Morris, *Plans of Harbours, Bars, Bays and Roads in St George's Channel*, 1748. Digitised by The National Library of Wales <<https://viewer.library.wales/1445668>> [accessed 13 August 2019].

⁴⁸⁹ Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary*, pp. 393–94; Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, p. 392. *Bonedd y Sant* refers to the 'sons of Seithennin of Maes Gwyddno whose land the sea conquered'. The Black Book of Carmarthen includes the following reference; 'Stand forth, Seithennin,/and look upon the fury of the sea;/it has covered Maes Gwyddneu.

⁴⁹⁰ Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 185.

It seems clear that traces such as the submerged forests and glacial ridges may have suggested lost lands and prompted the legends that became associated with them.⁴⁹¹

Ideas about the seas having once been shallower could also have been prompted by these features and legends. North suggests that the men from Ireland arrive by boat during the local geographical time of the writing of the Second Branch, while Bendeidfran wades to Ireland during an earlier time that was inferred from 'dim memories of a time when the sea between Wales and Ireland was extending its bounds.'⁴⁹² However, rather than speculating about 'dim memories' a more likely scenario would be that the prehistoric traces visible on the coastline of Wales were the impetus for the creation of stories and legends which sought to explain their mysterious origins.

A further layer is visible in the landscape today because Harlech is now land locked. However, the line of the old sea cliffs and the water gate of the castle can be seen clearly alongside the flat area of the *morfa*; these visible features preserve earlier conditions of the landscape. These different traces of the past form a kind of palimpsest in the landscape. Traces such as these always occur in specific places because they are physical in nature. Thus, the traces of geological, prehistoric and historic times may all be visible in the same place and at the same time, despite their diverse dates of origin. These different features inspire stories about them. From a place-based perspective this non-hierarchical layering in the landscape means that 'space and time come together in place.'⁴⁹³ This may result in stories about a specific place which are simultaneously linked to the traces of vastly different time periods. This is not to suggest that processes of imagination and reimagination did not greatly contribute to the creation of the Four Branches. The 'real' geological features of the coastline may be reimagined as manmade. Legends then

⁴⁹¹ North, *Sunken Cities*, p. 238.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 237–38, 243.

⁴⁹³ Casey, 'Space to Place', p. 36.

become linked to those features allowing the creation of an 'imagined' world which is anchored to the 'real' world through the traces in the landscape.

Conclusion

A review of the key place-names mentioned in the Four Branches suggests that it is likely that many of them originated as topographical names describing landscape features. These place-names were then reinterpreted as stories and characters became associated with them. In the Four Branches the onomastic stories attached to these place-names are often spelt out explicitly by the use of formulae to draw attention to them. At other times, the place-name may be absent while the story attached to it remains. In these cases, it is possible that either the place-name has been missed out in later redactions of the tales, or that the place was named from the tale. It is also possible that once a place-name had acted as a mnemonic for a story, it had fulfilled its purpose, and so including it explicitly in the story was unnecessary. Several place-names have been identified which have not previously been understood as having an onomastic meaning. For example, the word *gwales* has a meaning of 'sanctuary', and the island of Gwales clearly acts as a sanctuary for the survivors. Similarly, Preseli is a place-name that may be understood as being associated with wisdom and indeed this is a place where a wise decision is reached. However, in these cases, the potential onomastic explanation is not explicitly spelt out in the tale although the place-name remains and its link to the story may be deduced.

Several episodes in the Four Branches have both the beginning and the ending of story motifs linked to the same place.⁴⁹⁴ This suggests that these were independent episodes at one time and that they have a structural role in the tales. Other episodes within the Four Branches are associated with clusters of place-names in a specific locality.⁴⁹⁵ In these instances there is a possibility that the stories were compiled from the place-names; these place-names alongside historical and prehistorical sites in the landscape may act as a mnemonic for the tales and also hold the components of the stories in particular

⁴⁹⁴ For example, Talebolion and Harlech.

⁴⁹⁵ Clusters occur in the Cynfael area and Arfon.

configurations.⁴⁹⁶ Although there can be no certainty, the geography of place is both relevant to the story and traceable in the landscape today.

Most of the otherworldly locations of the Four Branches occur in the 'real' world in named places with a physical reality.⁴⁹⁷ The specific properties of locations with otherworldly features in the Four Branches form a part of their otherworldly character. Places linked to the otherworld are at times diffuse and uncertain. Glyn Cuch seems capable of simply slipping into the otherworld and even the borderlines of Dyfed are uncertain. In contrast, Gorsedd Arberth acts as a powerful focal point for supernatural powers which act forcefully through it. The different landscape features of these places are linked to their otherworldly characteristics. The mound of Banc y Warin occupies a notable focal point in the landscape, whereas the valley of Glyn Cuch has no focal point: it is linear and branching with differing territories on different banks. For the two otherworldly feasts, there is reason to suspect that the different otherworldly qualities of Harlech and Gwales are, at least in part, related to their physical properties in the real world.⁴⁹⁸ As the otherworld of the Four Branches is dispersed over various locations with different otherworldly attributes it is very unclear that it can provide evidence for the idea of a singular otherworld. The otherworld(s) of the Four Branches have specific and varied attributes, which can be seen to vary with real-world geography. Perhaps the most logical conclusion is to see the otherworld(s) in the Four Branches as an added dimension of place.

The themes of sovereignty and the wasteland in the enchantment of Dyfed have been discussed in the light of changing ideas about 'nature' and wasteland. This offers a more nuanced perspective on the connections between the landscape, nature and humanity,

⁴⁹⁶ Casey, 'Space to Place', p. 25. As Casey remarks places can gather and hold things together in a reflection of the layout of the local landscape.

⁴⁹⁷ An exception is the court of Rhiannon's father, Hyfaidd Hen. This is unnamed although the First Branch suggests it is outside Dyfed.

⁴⁹⁸ Harlech has otherworldly birds which can be heard at a great distance, Gwales allows a much greater stretching of time with its greater separation from the everyday world.

which are a key part of the First and Third Branches. The presence of these themes underlines the fundamental importance of the connections between humanity and the landscape in the Four Branches.

Specific qualities of places are also of importance to the tales of the Four Branches. The 'high rock of Harlech' enables one to see things at a great distance yet also hear them clearly. This is not to suggest that this is literally a property of Harlech, but that the topography of the place, reflected in its place-name, enables this imagining of story.

Likewise, Bryn Cyfergyd is a very particularly shaped hill and one could envisage how it may allow a man to hide in its shadow on the nearby riverbank. These strong details of place mean that the tales are intimately attached to these places and not simply set in them.

Specificities of place are also of importance in the otherworldly locations in the tales.

Gwales, for example, is usually seen as of importance for its mythological attributes rather than its geography. However, anomalies such as the 'arbitrary' rule of 'the door which must not be opened' are readily understandable in the geographical and psychological context of the story.

The intimate connection between the tales and the specificities of places provides a sense of authenticity to the tales. The place-names provide an anchor and a testimony to the story, corroborating and helping to transmit it. Traces of the past, visible in the landscape, are also of importance to the tales drawing stories and legends to them. This is not to suggest that the tales have any basis in historical 'fact' but that the places mentioned, and their associated landscapes are a key part of the tales.⁴⁹⁹

This thesis has taken a broad overview of the places in the Four Branches in as much depth as space allows. Taken together, the evidence suggests that places and place-names may

⁴⁹⁹ For example, the prehistoric remains known as Bedd Branwen. It is important to note that suggesting that there is a link between these remains and the story does not presume there is a factual link, or ancient origin of the tales, but simply that the story has become attached to the remains at some point and by some means.

well be fundamental, structural components of the Four Branches. Places and their names do not serve merely as embellishments but are key elements around which the tales coalesce. This intimately links the tales to specific places in the landscape of Wales and for me, this gives them their power.

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