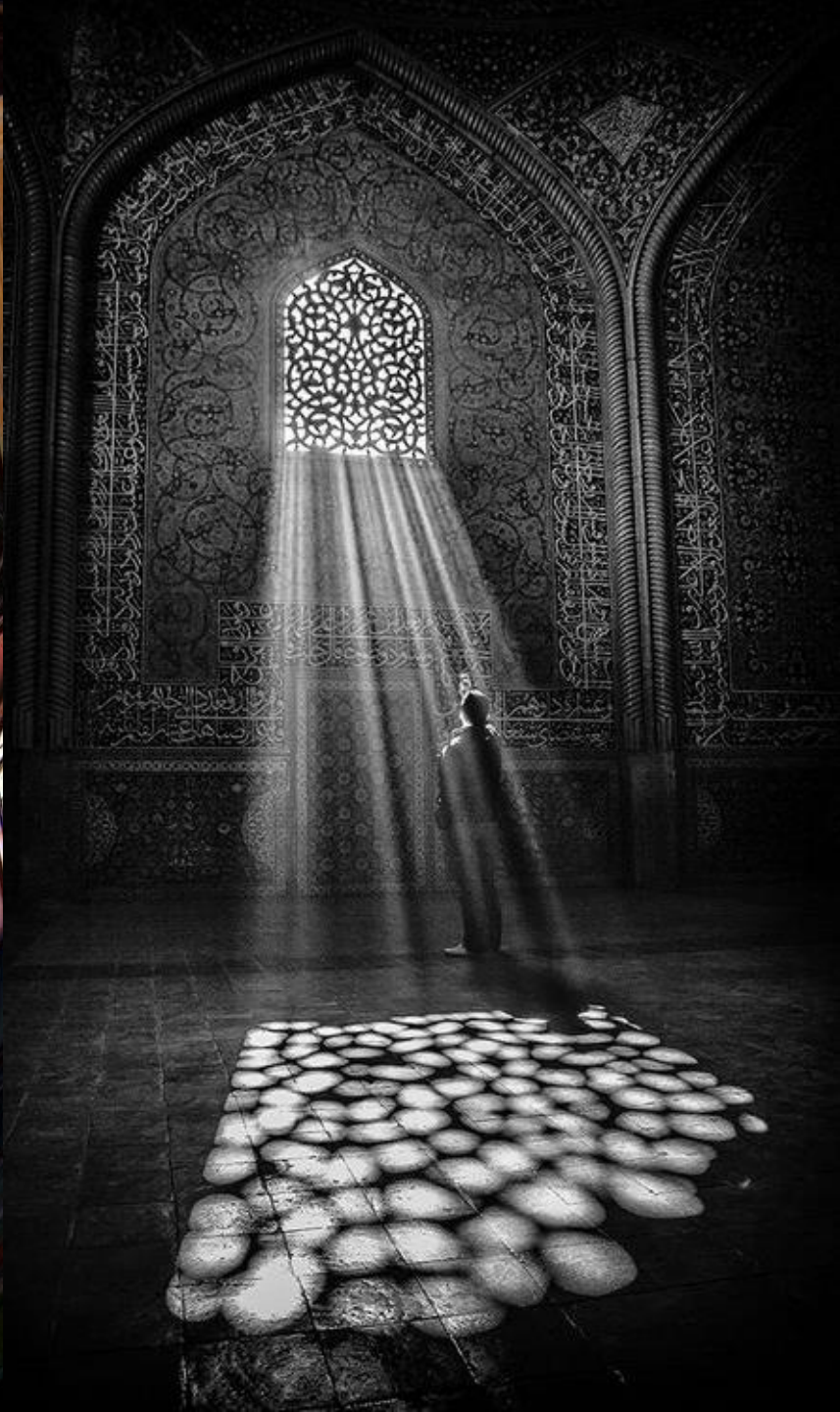


Sky and Place

Light,
Heavenly Objects
and Rhythms

- Bernadette Brady
- Trinity Saint David University of Wales







Christopher Tilley



places,
paths
and
monuments

a phenomenology of landscape

Christopher Tilley – Phenomenology of Landscape – Chapter One is a key chapter for your research

- Brings together geography and anthropology and from that perspective argues against **the neutrality of space**.
- He makes the case that space or rather spaces can only be viewed through the lens of the culture, age and gender of the individual encountering the space, or a community's activities in that place. He claims that spaces are the medium or the activity of the populations within them.
- He argues that the naming of places empowers them, it creates landscapes (19) and turns them into encultured landscapes (24).
- He writes: 'Narratives establish bonds between people and features of the landscape such as mountains, creating oral guidance for activity.' (33)

QUESTION: In this work Tilley views landscape as a human creation – the only voice. Your research project could support this argument or disagree.



Christopher Tilley suggests that a **storied landscape can become humanized and encultured by its saturation with place names, human intentionality and even mythological characters.**

Such a landscape embedded in culture will maintain its potential to influence human activity, even if that activity is believed to be a conscious undertaking by humanity to maintain the place names and stories of the area. Such is the case for these two valleys and their joining ridge.

Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, 24.

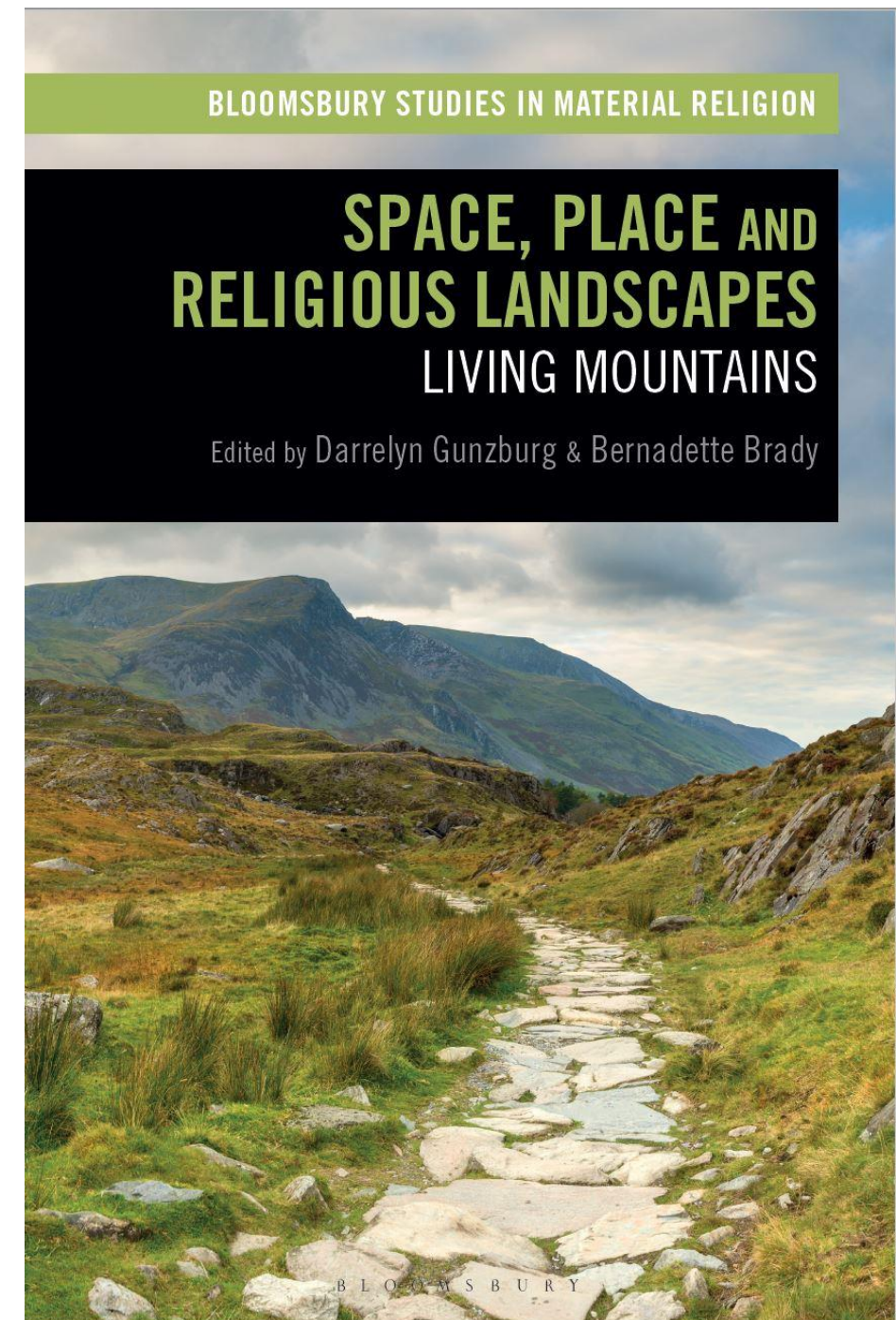
The Song of a Place

Sky, Mountain, Valley

A case study of sky, rhythm and place



Bernadette Brady, 'Mountains talk of kings and dragons, the Brecon Beacons', In *Space, Place, and Religious Landscapes: Living Mountains*, edited by Darrelyn Gunzburg and Bernadette Brady. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020 (forthcoming).



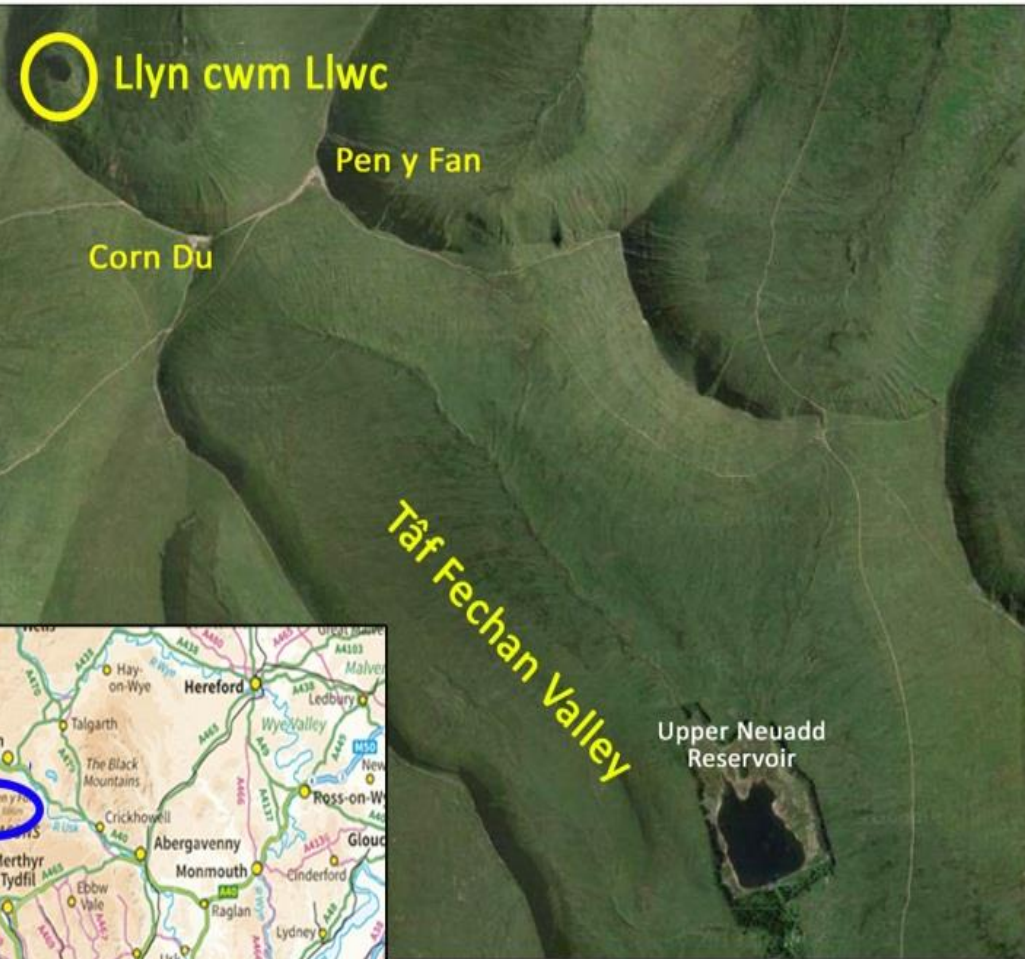
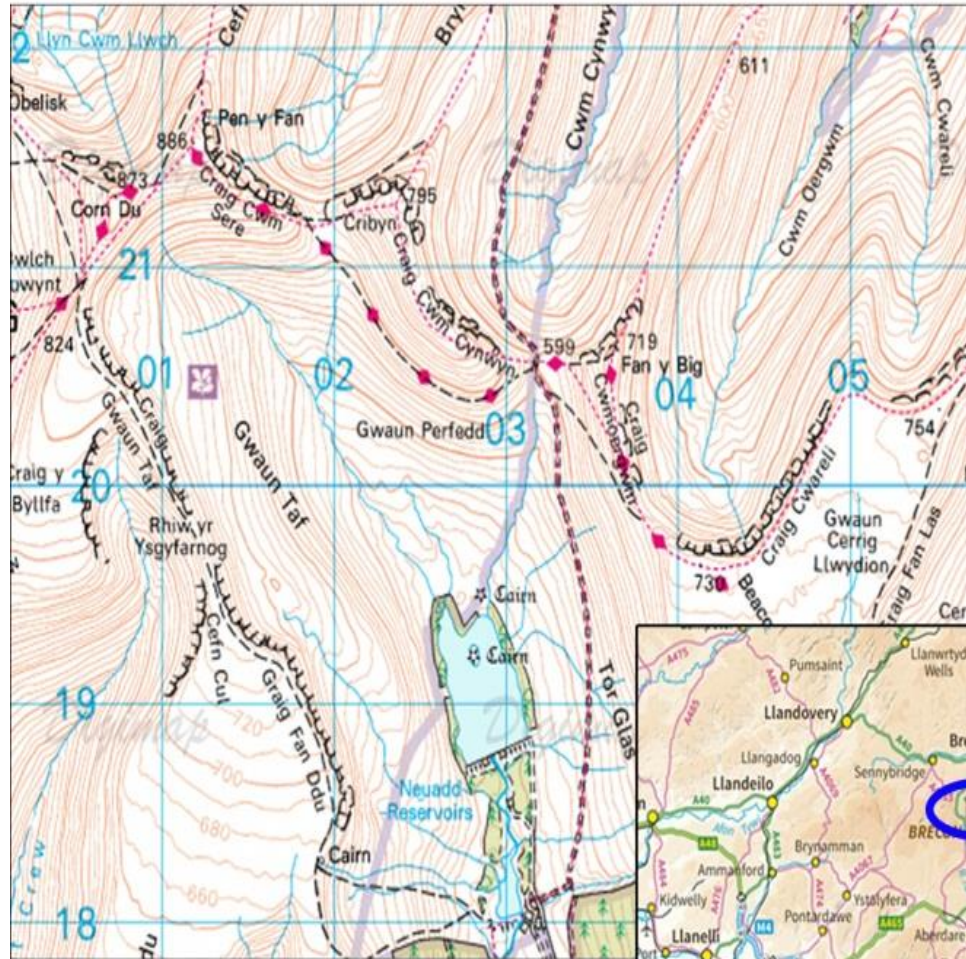
The Land and the Legends

Ingold's Lines
– threads that
produce meaning





The story of a place



Looking north at the highest peak
in the Brecon Beacons



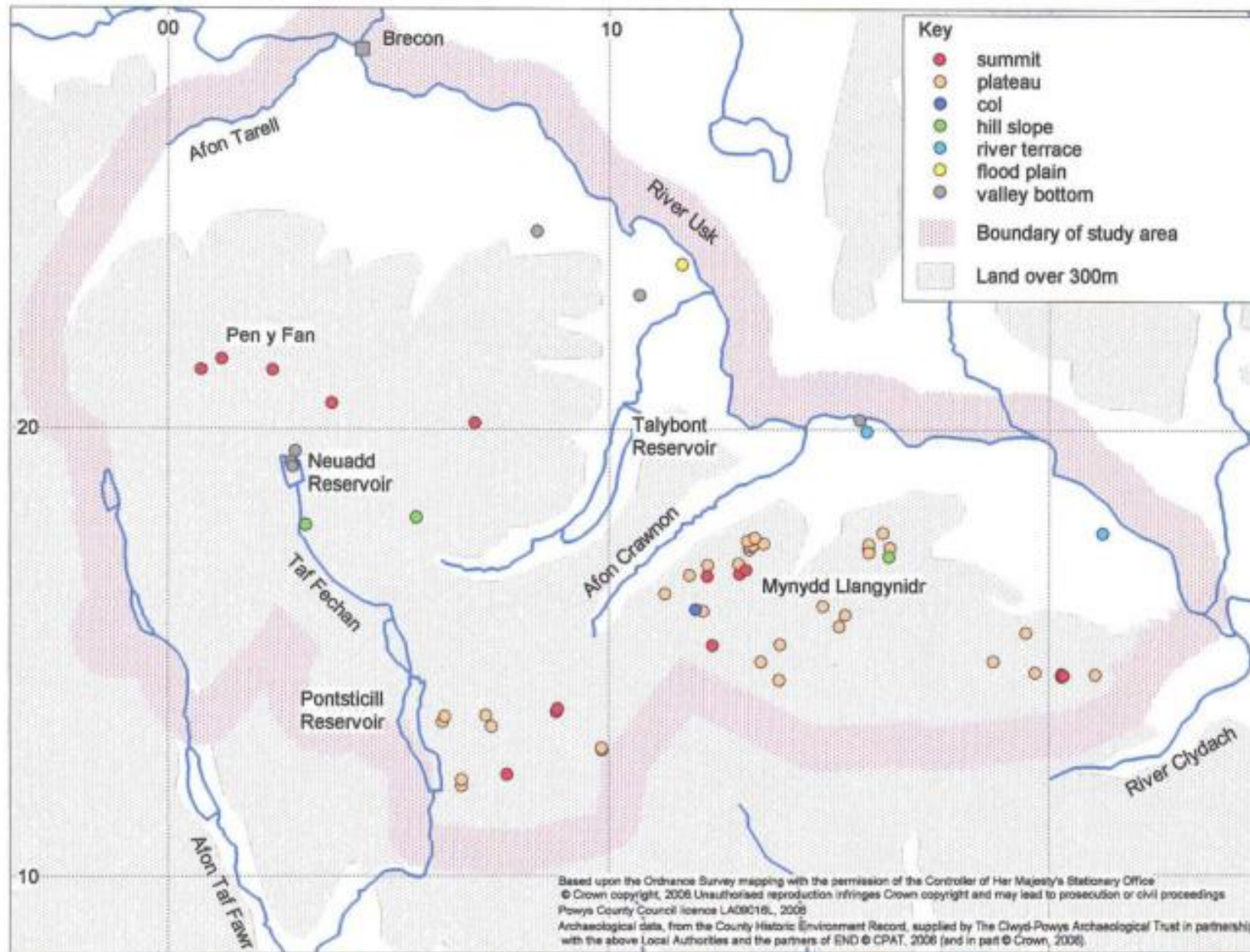
Looking south at the highest peak
in the Brecon Beacons – the Severn in the back ground

Pen y Fan

Corn Du

Llyn Cwm Llwch





Jones, N.W, and W.J Owen, 'Prehistoric Funerary & Ritual Sites: Eastern Brecon Beacons', (Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments, 2006) p.8

Neuadd Reservoir – cairn in foreground plus Island which contains six other known cairns in background.

Additionally the peak Pen y Fan holds a cairn in which was found a bronze horde.



Arthur's Chair – The medieval name of Pen y Fan and Corn Du

In 1188 Gerald of Wales in his work, *Journey around Wales*, named the location in the following manner in relationship to a 'miraculous' lake, stating that the lake is flanked '**to the south by a range of hills the chief of which is Cadair Arthur, or Arthur's Chair, so called from two peaks which rise up in the form of a throne.'**



Photos B.Brady

Of this throne like peak he ascribes magical qualities as he described it the following manner:

‘On the topmost point of this mountain a spring of water bubbles forth. Its deep basin is square in shape and like a well, but no stream ever runs from it. Trout are said to be found there from time to time.’



The Miraculous Lake – Llyn Cwm Llwc

Gerald spoke of the lake that lies to the north of Arthur's Chair. He called the lake Miraculous and talked of it undergoing changes depending on different times of the year. It could turn into rich pasture-lands, or become adorned with gardens and orchard while at other times it can be covered with buildings, while it groaned horrible when iced over.

In the winter time it had special powers to identify or announce the true king of Wales.



A Youtube on Llyn Cwm Llwc: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7UQrPE1Do8>

Giraldus, Cambrensis, and Lewis Thorpe, *The Journey through Wales ; and, the Description of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) p.94-5

Mythic Welsh Kings

More
threads.....



The Mythic King Arthur



King Arthur of Britain, by Howard Pyle from *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights*. (1903

- Some of King Arthur's attributes are:
- the dragon, (*Welsh chiefs were known as dragons*)
 - He is linked to the north
 - He has a tendency to dwell in high places, or liminal areas
 - He maintained an otherworldliness.

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 292; Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2007), 503.

Gildas (c.500–570) *De Excidio Britanniae* (*Ruin of Britain*),

The Threads So Far....

- Evidence of burials and bronze hordes from the time of pre-history, (a sacred place?).
- the topographical features of the highest place in southern Britain.
- the literary evidence of the stories of magic, wonder or 'other worldliness' of the lake that can proclaim the true king of Wales.
- The story of the square well with no stream, and rare trout.
- The peaks linked with Arthur and the dragons – Arthur's chair.



The Sky and the Dragon

More
threads.....

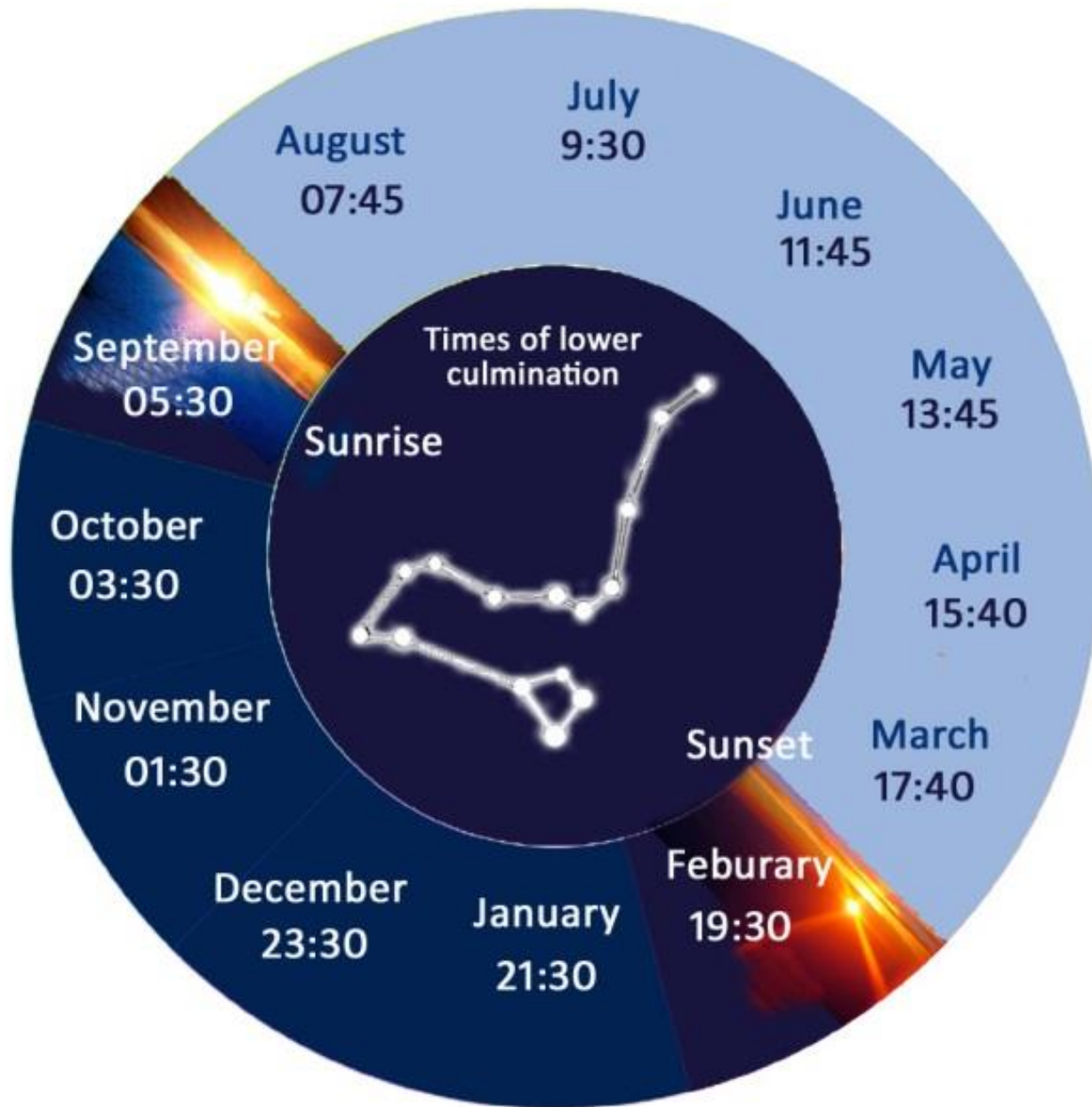




The ridge which is Arthur's Chair runs about an azimuth of 79° . (roughly East-West)
From the valley floor it has an altitude of about 10°

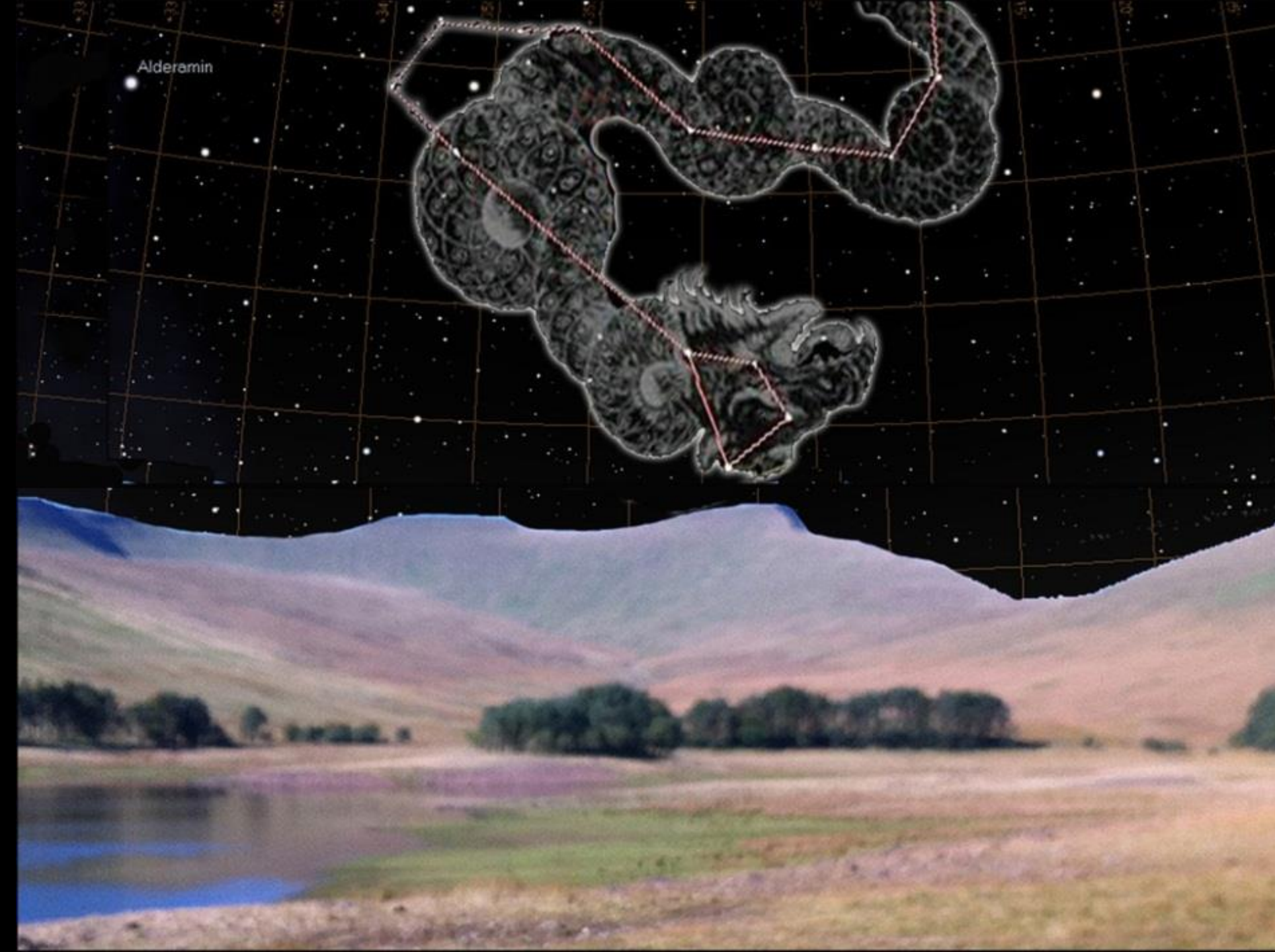
By the sixth century CE if not earlier, the sky viewed from the valley looking towards the ridge would have been seen through the lens of Greco-Roman celestial cartography. This placed the two bears and a dragon as the dominate features of the northern sky.





Draco's lower culmination is only occurs at night (thus visible) in the winter months. This pattern is still applicable today.

The local mean times to the nearest 5 minutes of the lower culmination of Draco for the year 1000 CE for the fifteenth day of each month (Gregorian calendar).



Draco is only
seen at its lower
culmination in
the winter
months.

This is also the
time of the year
when the magic
lake would
proclaim
kingship!

The Power of Place

The Action of Humans





1896-1902 the
Upper Neuadd
Reservoir was
built





The Neuadd Reservoir has been stocked with wild brown trout , managed by the Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association and it is reported that the fish are hard to catch – bag limit is only two fish.

'Fly fishing is the only permitted method and small imitative patterns are recommended. The trout will not be large and they will not be easy to catch, but it is hard to imagine a more beautiful or more isolated place in which to fish this side of the Scottish border.'



. 'Fishing in Kite Country ',
<http://www.fishing-in-kite-country.co.uk/fishing/neuares.html>.

The Power of Place

Legends Emerge



- The site was marked as sacred or special
- In the winter time the magical lake had special powers to identify or announce the true king of Wales.
- ‘On the topmost point of this mountain a spring of water bubbles forth. Its deep basin is square in shape and like a well, but no stream ever runs from it. Trout are said to be found there from time to time.’

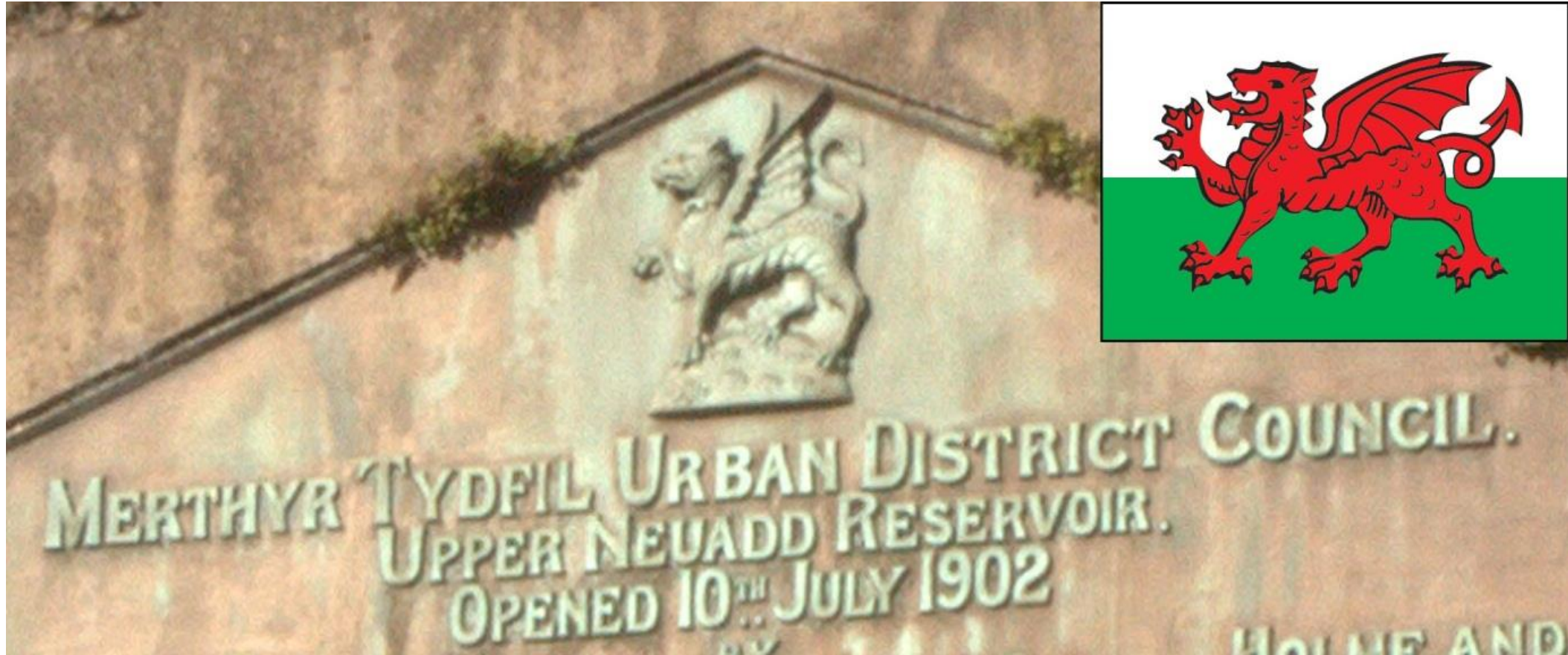
The Bronze Age burials in the valley and the bronze horde found in the horde in the cairn on the ridge.

Draco stands on its head in the seat of Arthur in the winter evenings]



The building of the reservoir and stocking it with hard to catch trout.

In 1902 when the dam was built in the Tâf Fechan Valley this plaque was erected on the Upper Neuadd Reservoir.



The dragon was officially adopted as the national emblem of Wales in 1959. Wales is unique amongst European countries in viewing the Dragon in a positive light. For the Welsh the dragon is a cosmogising dragon – nation building.



Christopher Tilley suggests that a storied landscape can become humanized and encultured by its saturation with place names, human intentionality and even mythological characters.

The Valley Today - the story continues

- Its wilderness is maintained by being part of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It has been made a Dark Sky Area. Now the starry dragon is protected and allowed to be clear in the night sky



An official Brecon Beacons Dark Sky image



The Dragon has 'photo bombed' the promotion



The Rhythm as an agent

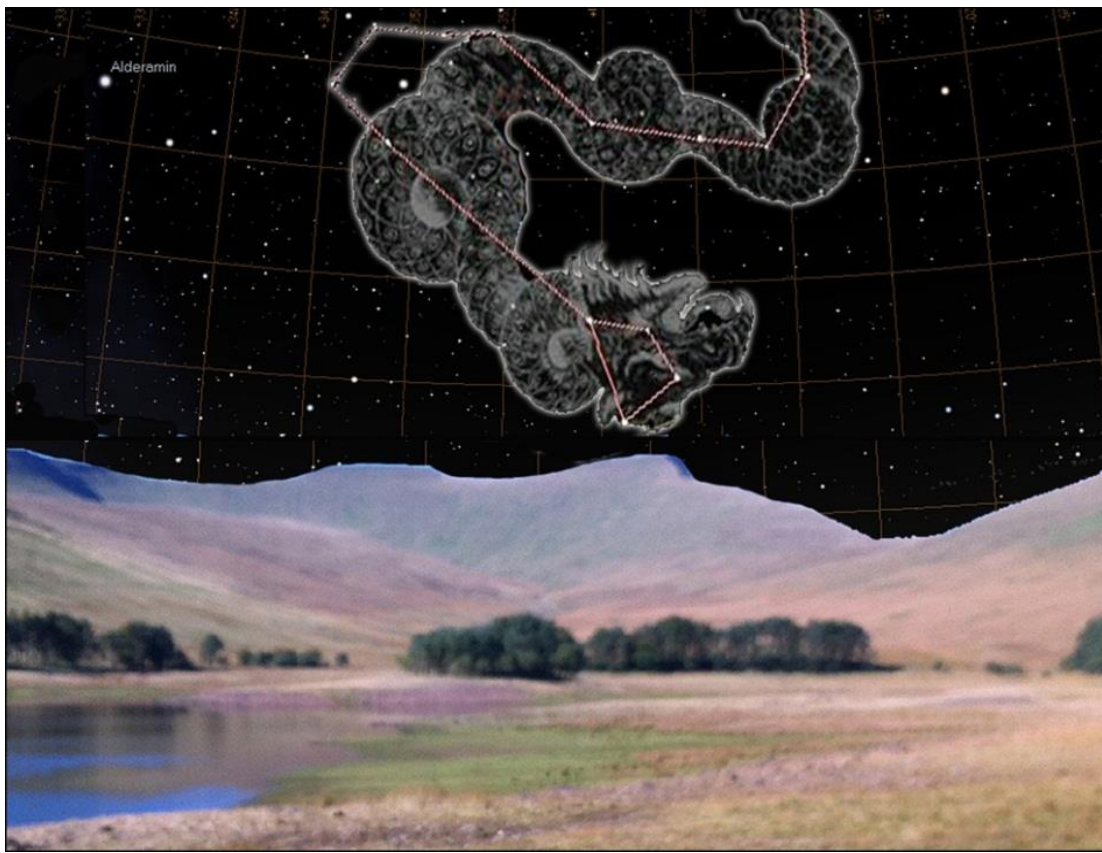
Sane Kane's
notion of the
song of a place





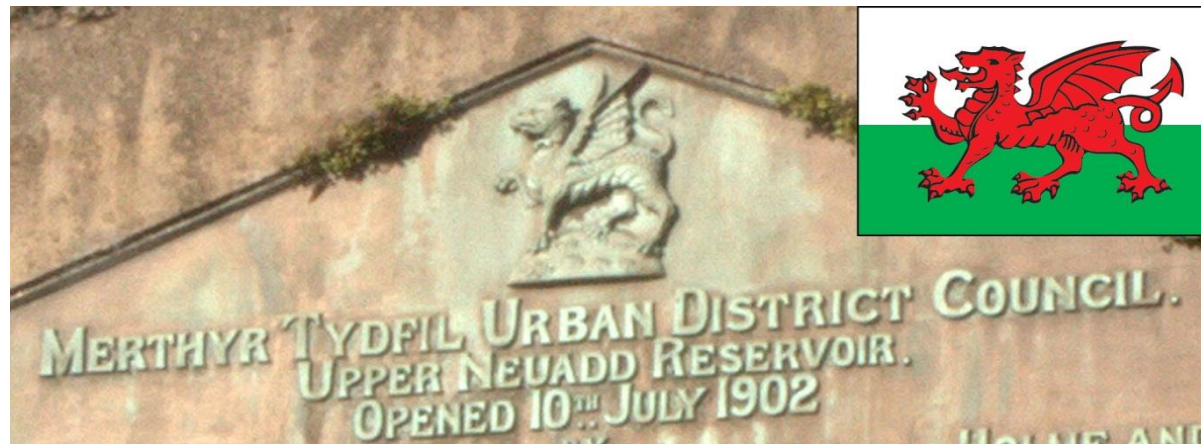
The Song of a Place

Sean Kane talks of
'the song of the
place to itself'. Kane,
*Wisdom of the
Mythtellers*, 46, 50.



Kane's idea of **a place singing to itself** can be extended to the sky, the dragon in winter sitting on Arthur's Chair, **an annual rhythm which allows the place to sing to itself**. This song has possibility enabled Gerald's story to emerged as the contemporary features of the place.

The union of sky, mountain and valley appears to be re establishing its own story, evident in appearance of the folk legend components.



A place
singing to
itself - the
peak of the
Brecon
Beacons.



The valley hold a sacred landscape which is
emerging to reveal a older meaning – a dwelling
place of the cosmogonic Welsh Dragon.

References:

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, 292; Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*. Aberystwyth: CMCS, 2007.

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Giraldus, Cambrensis, and Lewis Thorpe, *The Journey through Wales ; and, the Description of Wales*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978. p.94-5

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