

Who is Nodons?

- Nodons is the British god of healing (MacKillop, 2004)
- He is a sea- or river-God (Bathurst, 1879: 39)
- Various spellings: Nodons, Nodens, Nudens (Bathurst, 1879: 39)
- The name *Nodens* is Celtic, probably Goidelic, the Germanic stem *neut-* meant ‘to catch’, or ‘to entrap’, essentially ‘to acquire’. Was he originally a God of hunting? Or fishing? (Wheeler *et al.*, 1932: 40)
- O’Rahilly (1946:495) argues that the name could mean ‘cloud-maker’ from the word *Nuadu*
- ‘Deus Nodens’ seems to be Romanised British, in the original language it may have been ‘Deus Noddyns’ as the ‘God of the Abyss’, or ‘God the preserver’ (Bathurst, 1879: 39)



The Lydney dog. Bronze. (i) (See p. 40, 88)

Mabinogion and Táin

- Tolkien (1932: 133) suggests that the influence for Nodons could have originated from the Goidels in Ireland as Nuada, and then travelled to Wales and Britain and developed into Nudd and Nodons.
- In comparison to the Mabinogion and The Táin, the “cognates” to Nodons are not deities or Gods, implying that it may have been the British that deified him, and that he originated as a king, as in the Táin, and a hero, as in the Mabinogion. This could suggest that the Táin, from Ireland, could have been the original legend/myth of Nuada, and the story developed in Wales as the hero Nudd in the Mabinogion, and then was deified in Britain.

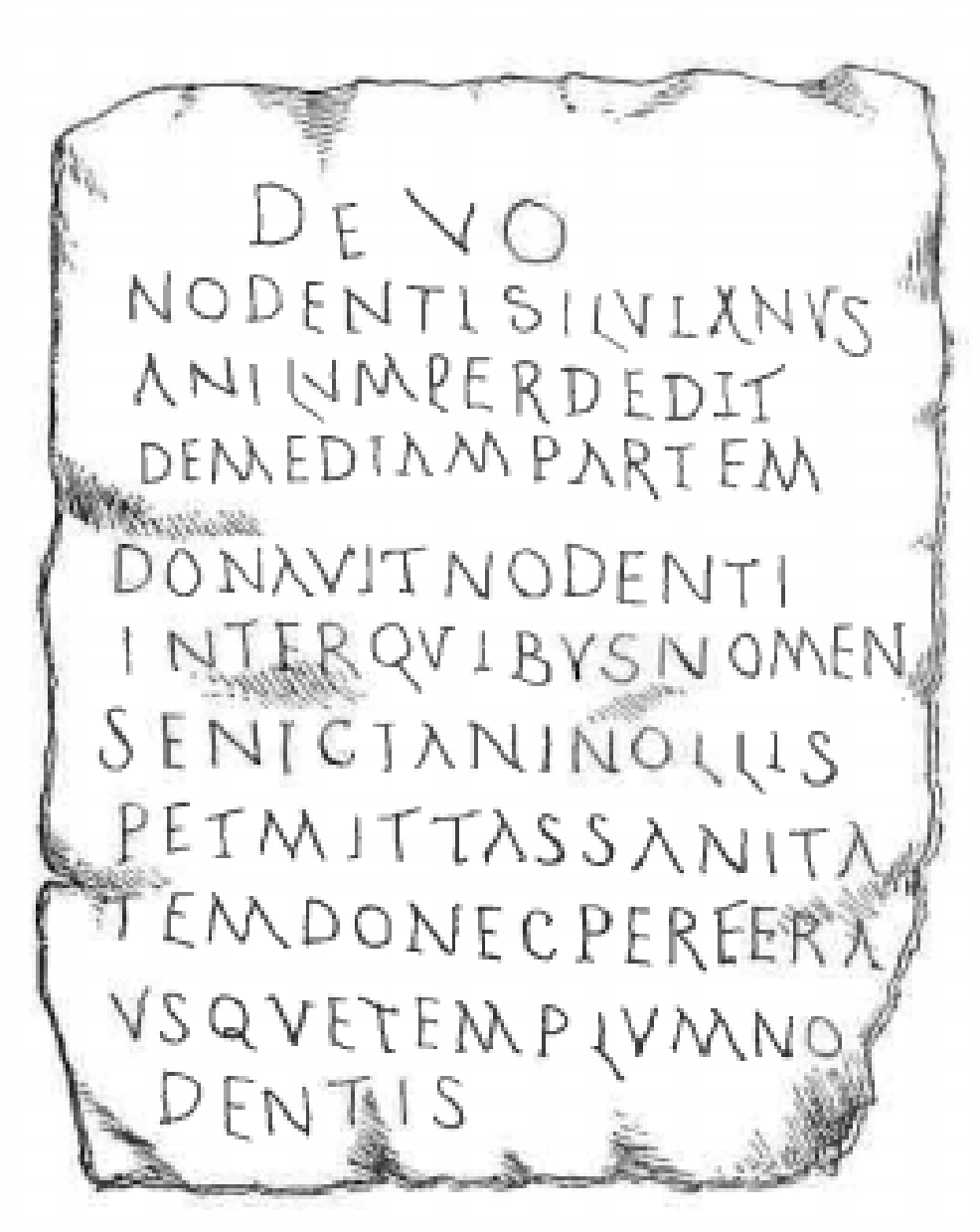
Roman, Welsh, and Irish links

- Welsh mythology - possible cognate to Nudd/Lludd, the Welsh hero (MacKillop, 2004)
- Irish mythology - possible cognate to Nuada/Nuado/Nuadu/Lluadu, king of the mythical Tuatha Dé Danann (MacKillop, 2004; O’Rahilly, 1946: 495-6)
- Irish - Rhys, Whitley Stokes, and Tolkien say that Nodens is phonetically equivalent to Nuada (Wheeler et al., 1932: 39)
- Irish - Gloucestershire Nodens not necessarily the same guy as the Irish Nuada and unclear as to whether Nodens is derived from Ireland (Wheeler et al., 1932: 40)
- Romanisation of the god - Deus Noddyns to Deus Nodens
- Romanisation also possibly occurs in the addition of Mars to the deity - Mars Nodons (Ryan, 2014: 21). However, the evidence is limited - a single inscription with a word beginning with ‘M’ which has been interpreted as Mars, but could equally have been ‘Mercury,’ (Haeussler, 2017: 358). It could even have just been a standard word, and not an additional God.

Nodons

Archaeological Evidence - Sanctuary at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire

- Temple pavement has (1) sea-serpents suggesting he has links to the sea/river/water (Bathurst, 1932: 39), and (2) an inscription “to the greatest God” which suggests the importance of Nodens, and that there is no need to mention his name because it is already well-known and well-established (Bathurst, 1932: 25)
- Bronze Plaque has depictions of other deities: (1) on similar to the Roman God Neptune, (2) two winged Genius’, (3) two ‘reclining Tritons’, (4) Triton, and (5) the votary of Nodens (Bathurst, 1932: 40). The first four mentioned could be implied to be representations of Nodens and his links with water, while the votary may symbolise his links with water through the act of fishing.
- Votive offerings in the form of (1) dog figures in bronze, brass, and stone (Wheeler *et al.*, 1932: 40) and (2) votive tablets, such as the one from Silvianus who lost his ring and offered half of the value of the ring to Nodens for the ill health of Senecianus, until his ring is returned (Bathurst, 1879: 45)



Bronze with repoussé decoration. (See pp. 47, 90)
Published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, 1932

Far left: The Lydney dog (Wheeler *et al.*, 1932: Pl.XXV)

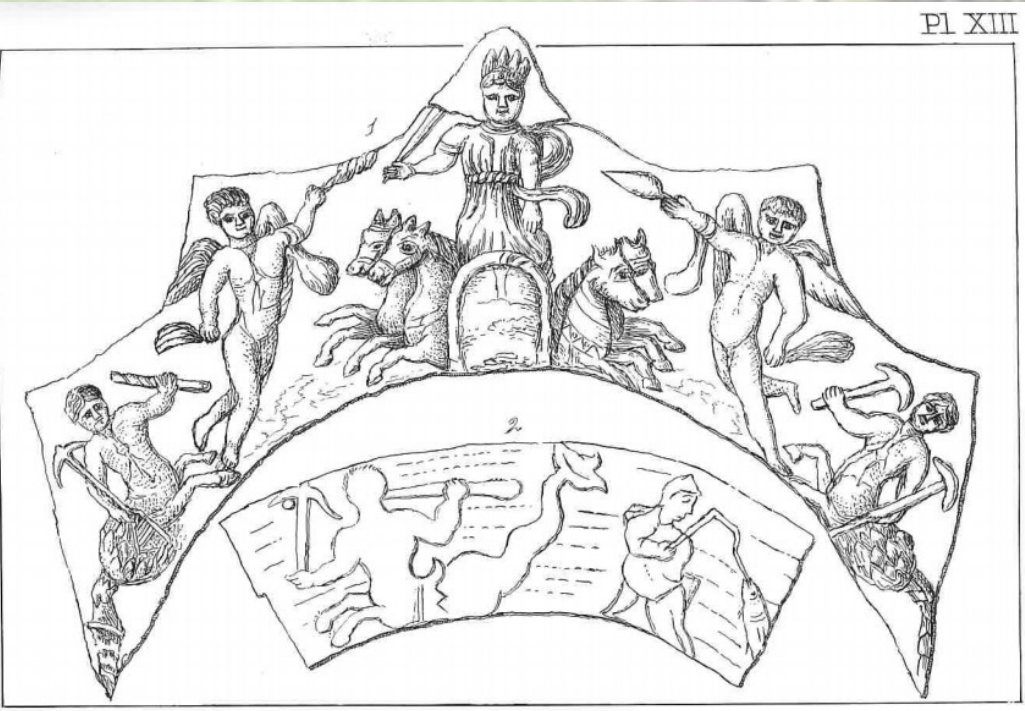
Above: Photograph of the ‘Deus Nodens’ bronze plaque (Wheeler *et al.*, 1932: Pl.XXVII)

Right: Drawing of the ‘Deus Nodens’ bronze plaque (Bathurst, 1879: Pl.XIII)

Far right: Temple pavement mosaic (Bathurst, 1879: Pl.VIII)

Top right: Votive tablet (Bathurst, 1879: Pl.XX)

Background: Collins, J. 2009. ‘Lydney Roman Temple’. *Wikipedia - Lydney Park*. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydney_Park#/media/File:Roman_Temple_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1318760.jpg. [Accessed 10.10.2018]



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Conclusion

- Nodons could have been a deity of fishing because of the links with his name referring to the word ‘to catch’ as well as connection to water, and the association with Mars could have been due to the his agricultural background and providing subsistence (in this case fish)
- Also, with Mars as the Roman God of war, and Nodons as a healing God, the combination of healing and war could have been important to the Romans in their invasion quests - they have a God supporting their war, and said God is aiding their health in battle
- The Táin and the Mabinogion could have been the original and most accurate tales of Nuadu and Nudd respectively, and the British could have simply deified him into Nodens to fit into their pantheon of Gods as there was not a God that provided them with what Nodons could. In terms of using the tales to understand the God, they could simply provide an understanding of why he was deified by the Brits.