

# A Bibliographic Guide to Welsh Arthurian Literature

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## 1. Introduction

The following is intended to provide a bibliographical guide to the Arthurian references found in medieval Welsh manuscripts. In addition to bibliographic data, it includes brief discussions of each text and its significance. Naturally, these short discussions are not intended to replace those found in my *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), especially chapters two, three and four, which are necessarily considerably more detailed and involved. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the following will prove a useful and easily accessible handbook of those texts that are relevant to any study of the early Arthurian legend.

## 2. The Manuscripts

Most of the early references to Arthur are found in only a handful of manuscripts, briefly outlined below. In addition to the references cited in the individual sections, anyone seriously interested in Welsh manuscripts should consult Daniel Huws' *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff, 2000).

### a. *The Black Book of Carmarthen*

The 'Black Book of Carmarthen' (National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 1) was compiled by a single scribe over a period of years in the latter half of the thirteenth century. It contains religious poetry, early praise-poems, prophetic verse belonging to the pre-Galfridian Merlin cycle and poems concerning Arthur and other 'legendary' heroes.

The most substantial Arthurian poem contained in the 'Black Book' is *Pa gur yv y porthaur?* ('What man is the gatekeeper/porter?'), which has been most recently translated and discussed in detail by Patrick Sims-Williams in 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in Bromwich *et al.* (ed.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 38-46. The other references to Arthur are only brief allusions, for example in *Englynion y Beddau* ('Stanzas of the Graves'), though still important.

For the text see A.O.H. Jarman (ed.), *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Cardiff, 1982); for a general survey of the 'Black Book', its date and contents in English see A.O.H. Jarman, 'Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin: The Black Book of Carmarthen', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 71 (1985), pp. 333-56. The manuscript, with a good introduction, is now available for viewing online at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=blackbookofcarmarthen>.

### b. *The Book of Taliesin*

The 'Book of Taliesin' (NLW Peniarth MS 2), of which 38 folios survive, was written by a single scribe in the first quarter of the fourteenth century. Its contents (a mixture of religious, prophetic, mythical and historical poems) purport to comprise the collected works of the bard/sage Taliesin, as they were envisaged in the later Middle Ages. The case for a genuine early nucleus which might represent the authentic work of a sixth-century Taliesin is based on a group of archaic praise-poems addressed to Urien of Rheged and contemporary rulers: Ifor Williams, *Canu Taliesin* (Cardiff, 1960) and *The Poems of Taliesin*, translated by J.E. Caerwyn Williams (Dublin, 1968). Of more certain date is the tenth-century prophetic poem *Armes Prydein* (dating *c.* 930), which briefly mentions Myrddin (Merlin). The majority of the poems in the manuscript date from between the eighth and the eleventh centuries and are implicitly attributed to the fictional persona of the all-knowing, semi-divine Taliesin; for this legendary Taliesin and his relationship to the historical Taliesin of the sixth century, see Ifor Williams' *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1954) and *Chwedl Taliesin* (O'Donnell Lecture, 1957); P.K. Ford, *The Mabinogi* (1977); M. Haycock, "'Preiddeu Annwn" and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983-4), pp. 52-78; P.K. Ford, *Ystoria Taliesin* (Cardiff, 1992); P.C. Bartrum, *A Welsh Classical Dictionary* (Aberystwyth, 1993), pp. 595-97; O. Davies, *Celtic Christianity in Early Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 1996), chapter 4; J.T. Koch, 'De Sancto Indicaelo Rege Historia and Its Implications for the Welsh Taliesin', in J.F. Nagy and L.E. Jones (edd.) *Celtic Studies Association of North America Yearbook 3-4: Heroic Poets and Poetic Heroes in Celtic Tradition* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 247-62; M. Haycock (ed. and trans.), *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 9-21.

The name of Arthur appears in only five of the poems in the 'Book of Taliesin' – *Kat Goden*, *Kadeir Teyrnnon*, *Kanu y Meirch*, *Marwnat vthyr pen[dragon]* and *Preiddeu Annwfn*. Of these the most significant is *Preiddeu Annwfn* ('The Spoils of Annwfn'). The reason for

the scarcity of references to Arthur is probably a matter of genre: ‘that Arthur and Taliesin (like, say, Arthur and Charlemagne) were too important to share the same platform’: P. Sims-Williams, ‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 51.

See M. Haycock, ‘Llyfr Taliesin’, *National Library of Wales Journal*, 25 (1988), pp. 357-86 for a discussion of the manuscript; a fuller study is provided by her unpublished 1983 doctoral dissertation. Further analysis of the manuscript and the poems can be found in Marged Haycock’s published works, not least the article and book cited above; see also her ‘Taliesin’s Questions’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 33 (1997), pp. 19-79, and “‘Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules’”: three early medieval poems from the “Book of Taliesin”, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 13 (1987), pp.7-38. Some debate exists over the links between the Taliesin poems and paganism, with John Koch suggesting that Haycock and others are wrong to argue that the Taliesin poems do not reflect in any way Celtic paganism and its struggles with Christianity: J.T. Koch, ‘The Celtic Lands’, in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 263-65.

The text is available in J. Gwenogvryn Evans (ed.) *The Book of Taliesin: Facsimile and Text* (Llanbedrog, 1910) and the legendary poems are now edited, translated and discussed in Haycock’s *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007). The Arthurian references are discussed – with further references – by Sims-Williams in his ‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71. A facsimile of the manuscript is also available online from the National Library of Wales at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=bookoftaliesinpeniarthms2>.

### **c. *The White Book of Rhydderch***

The ‘White Book of Rhydderch’ (NLW Peniarth MSS. 4 and 5) is a remarkable and unprecedented compendium of medieval Welsh prose and poetry, written in the mid-fourteenth century, which is now bound in two volumes in the National Library of Wales. Peniarth 5, which originally preceded Peniarth 4, contains religious texts, the Welsh Charlemagne cycle and other matter. Peniarth 4 contains the earliest complete text of the ‘Mabinogion’ tales and, taken as a whole, the ‘White Book’ provides the earliest texts of much of the best of Welsh medieval secular prose.

A good recent discussion of the ‘White Book’ is Daniel Huws, ‘Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch’, in D. Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 227-68 – a brief summary, by Huws, can also be read in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 9-11. The tales have been published in *The White Book Mabinogion* (Pwllheli, 1907) by J. Gwenogvryn Evans, reprinted as *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch* (Cardiff, 1973), as well as in numerous individual editions. Most relevant for present purposes is R. Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (edd.), *Culhwch and Olwen: An edition and study of the oldest Arthurian tale* (Cardiff, 1992). A full facsimile is available from the National Library of Wales at <http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=whitebookofrhydderchpeniart>.

### **d. *The Red Book of Hergest***

The ‘Red Book of Hergest’ (Jesus College, Oxford MS 111) is the largest of the of the Welsh medieval vernacular manuscripts and includes a copy of almost the whole of Welsh literature that dates pre-1400 (it was created by three sets of scribes working in collaboration sometime between 1382 and *c.* 1410), including the most extensive version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, but with the exception of the materials in the ‘Book of Aneirin’, the ‘Book of Taliesin’, and the religious and legal texts. The chief scribe was one Hywel Fychan ap Hywel Goch of Builth and his hand has been identified in several other Welsh

manuscripts, including in the ‘White Book of Rhydderch’, where the original scribe had left a space. There is a close correspondence between some of the texts in the ‘Red’ and ‘White Books’ (for example, their versions of the ‘Mabinogion’ and the Triads) and it is generally held that they derived independently from a lost common archetype.

The main texts of the ‘Red Book’ can be read in diplomatic editions in J. Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans (edd.), *The Text of the Mabinogion and other Welsh tales from the Red Book of Hergest* (Oxford, 1887); J. Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans (edd.), *The Texts of the Bruts from the Red Book of Hergest* (Oxford, 1890) and J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *The Poetry in the Red Book of Hergest* (Llanbedrog, 1911). A full facsimile of the ‘Red Book of Hergest’ is available online at <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=jesus&manuscript=ms111>. For a description of the ‘Red Book’, see J. Gwenogvryn Evans, *Report on Manuscripts in the Welsh Language* (London, 1898-1910), II, pp. 1-29 and the references in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 12.

### ***e. The Book of Aneirin***

The late thirteenth-century ‘Book of Aneirin’ (Cardiff MS 2.81) is a much-discussed manuscript of 38 small vellum pages, containing five poems (*Y Gododdin* and its four ‘Additional Songs’ or *Gorchanan*). Arthur is mentioned by name only once in the manuscript, in the B-text of *Y Gododdin*.

On the ‘Book of Aneirin’ see B.F. Roberts (ed.), *Early Welsh Poetry: Studies in the Book of Aneirin* (Aberystwyth, 1988) and for the text see I. Williams (ed.) *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1937). For *Y Gododdin* see the above and K.H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969), A.O.H. Jarman, *Aneirin: Y Gododdin, Britain’s Oldest Heroic Poem* (Llandysul, 1988), and J.T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff, 1997). For a general overview of the ‘Arthurian Allusions in the Book of Aneirin’, see A.O.H. Jarman’s article of the same name in *Studia Celtica*, 24/25 (1989/90), pp. 13-25. A full facsimile of the manuscript is available at the following website: <https://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=6493>.

## **3. The Texts**

### ***a. Historia Brittonum §56 and the Annales Cambriae***

The Cambro-Latin *Historia Brittonum* was written anonymously in A.D. 829/30; whilst it has often been ascribed to one ‘Nennius’, this claim rests on very dubious evidence and is not really sustainable (see D.N. Dumville, ‘Some Aspects of the Chronology of the *Historia Brittonum*’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 25 (1974), pp. 439-45; D.N. Dumville, ‘Nennius and the *Historia Brittonum*’, *Studia Celtica*, 10/11 (1975/6), pp. 78-95. Cf. P.J.C. Field, ‘Nennius and his History’, *Studia Celtica*, 30 (1996), pp. 159-65). Although there has been considerable debate over the nature of the *Historia*, modern scholarship largely rejects the notion that it represents simply a ‘heap’ of earlier materials which can be mined for largely unaltered and genuinely ancient sources, brought together and preserved by a simple compiler in the ninth century, as promoted by L. Alcock, *Arthur’s Britain: History and Archaeology AD 367-634* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 32. Instead, a detailed analysis of the text indicates that the author of the *Historia Brittonum* had, in the main, only very late and unreliable sources available to him; that he wrote with a unity of structure and outlook; and that he was engaged in the active processing of his sources. The result of this is that there seems little possibility of recovering usable information about the fifth and sixth centuries from his text. Furthermore, the claim that the twelve battles ascribed to Arthur in the *Historia Brittonum* §56 must have been taken from a pre-

existing (and early) Welsh poem is merely an assumption, and one which recent academic commentators have rejected on a number of grounds. Given all of this, §56 of the *Historia Brittonum* can be only really considered to be evidence for the concept of Arthur possessed by the early ninth-century author of the *Historia*, nothing more. For a detailed discussions of all of this, see D.N. Dumville, 'The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*', *Arthurian Literature*, 6 (1986), pp. 1-26; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'The Arthur of History', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 15-32; D.N. Dumville, '*Historia Brittonum*: an Insular History from the Carolingian Age', in A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (edd.) *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter* (Wien/München, 1994), pp. 406-34; T. Green, 'The Historicity and Historicisation of Arthur' (1998), archived at <http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/historicity/arthur.htm>; N.J. Higham, *King Arthur, Myth-Making and History* (London, 2002), pp. 119-69; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp.15-26, 30-44. The Arthurian battle-list in §56 runs as follows:

At that time the Saxons increased their numbers and grew in Britain. On Hengest's death, his son Otha came down from the north of Britain to the kingdom of the Kentishmen, and from him are sprung the kings of the Kentishmen. Then Arthur fought against them in those days, together with the kings of the British, but he was the *dux bellorum* ['leader in battles']. The first battle was at the mouth of the river called *Glein*. The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth were on another river, called the *Dubglas*, which is in the country of *Linnuis*. The sixth battle was on the river called *Bassas*. The seventh battle was in Celyddon Forest, that is *Cat Coit Celidon*. The eighth battle was in *Guinnion* Fort, and in it Arthur carried the image of the holy Mary, the everlasting Virgin, on his shoulders, and the heathen were put to flight this day, and there was a great slaughter upon them, through the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the holy Virgin Mary, his mother. The ninth battle was fought in the city of the Legions. The tenth battle was fought on the bank of the river called *Tribruit*. The eleventh battle was on the hill called *Agned*. The twelfth battle was on *Badon* hill and in it nine hundred and sixty men fell in one day, from a single charge of Arthur's, and no one laid them low save he alone, and he was victorious in all his campaigns. (J. Morris, *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (Chichester, 1980), p. 35, with minor modifications)

The other important pre-Galfridian source which possesses a concept of Arthur as a historical figure who won battles against the Anglo-Saxons of *c.* A.D. 500 is the *Annales Cambriae*, 'The Welsh Annals'. This was compiled in the 950s and it contains the following references to Arthur:

[A.D. 516] *Bellum Badonis, in quo Arthur portavit crucem Domini nostril Jhesu Christi tribus diebus et tribus noctibus in humeros suos et Brittones victores fuerent...* [A.D. 537] *Guieth Camlann in qua Arthur et Medraut corruerunt, et mortalitas in Britannia et in Hibernia fuit.* (Morris, 1980, p. 85)

[A.D. 516] The battle of Badon, in which Arthur carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for three days and three nights on his shoulders, and the Britons were the victors... [A.D. 537] The battle of Camlann, in which Arthur and Medraut fell, and there was a great mortality [*i.e.* plague] in Britain and Ireland.

Although it has sometimes been maintained that these entries derive from much older British annals, this notion is extremely problematical in the light of the textual history of the *Annales Cambriae*: see especially K. Grabowski and D.N. Dumville, *Chronicles and*

*Annals of Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 209-26; Green, 2007, pp. 26-28. Furthermore, there seems to be some kind of relationship between the Badon entry and the *Historia Brittonum*'s account of Arthur's victory at *Guinnion*, with the result that a number of recent analyses have considered the *Annales* to be directly derivative of the *Historia Brittonum*'s account in terms of both its content and its concept of Arthur. See further J.T. Koch, 'The Celtic Lands', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 252-53; Higham, 2002, pp. 201-07; Green, 2007, pp. 28-30, 75-77, 216.

For a detailed discussion of both of these sources, and the context and reliability of their concepts of Arthur, see T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), especially chapters one, two and six, and N.J. Higham, *King Arthur, Myth-Making and History* (London, 2002), especially pp. 119-69, 193-217. Latin texts with translations of both the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales Cambriae* can be most easily obtained in J. Morris (ed. and trans.) *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (Chichester, 1980). The best editions are, however, those of J. Stevenson (ed.) *Nennii Historia Brittonum* (London, 1838), and E. Faral, *La Légende Arthurienne: Études et Documents, les plus Anciens Texts*, three volumes (Paris, 1929), III, pp. 1-62. The tenth-century Vatican Recension of the *Historia Brittonum* has been recently edited in D.N. Dumville (ed.), *Historia Brittonum. iii. The Vatican Recension* (Cambridge, 1985).

### ***b. The Mirabilia of the Historia Brittonum***

The *mirabilia* appear in §§67-75 of the *Historia Brittonum* (dated A.D. 829/30) and consist of twenty marvels. The first four are numbered (the rest simply begin *Aliud miraculum est*, 'Another wonder is' or *Est aliud mirabile*, 'There is another wonder') and are not located in Wales. Marvels 5 to 14 are located in Wales, generally in the south-east of the country and along the English border, and the last six marvels are those of Anglesey (15-18) and Ireland (19-20). The non-Welsh marvels appear to be drawn from pre-existing sources but the central group (5-14) seem to be of a somewhat different character – they seem to have had a much more popular context for the editor than the others in his list, and the nature of his account of them suggests that he was personally acquainted with these *mirabilia*. Of these 'Welsh' marvels, two (in §73 of the *Historia*) are associated with Arthur:

There is another wonder in the country called Builth. There is a heap of stones there, and one of these stones placed on the top of the pile has the footprint of a dog on it. When he hunted *Twrch Trwyth*, *Cafal* (*Cabal*), the warrior Arthur's hound, impressed his footprint on the stone, and Arthur later brought together the pile of stones, under the stone in which was his dog's footprint, and it is called *Carn Cafal* (*Carn Cabal*). Men come and take the stone in their hands for the space of a day and a night, and on the morrow it is found upon the stone pile. (J. Morris, *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (Chichester, 1980), p. 42, marvel no. 12)

*Carn Cabal* is a prehistoric cairn which gives its name to *Corn Cafallt*, a hill near *Rhaeadr* (*Powys*). The significance of this marvel lies mainly in the fact that it is a solid indication that the core of the tale of the hunting of *Twrch Trwyth*, told in detail in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, existed in the early ninth century at the latest and that Arthur was already associated with it; also significant is the fact that Arthur's hound is called *Cabal* 'horse', suggesting that the dog was perceived as being huge. There is an illustration and description of a candidate for the stone referred to in the *Historia* in Lady Charlotte Guest's *The*

*Mabinogion* (London, 1849), II, p. 360 (p. 290 of the compact 1877 edition). This Arthurian ‘marvel’ has been considered to be already ancient by the ninth century (see Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (edd.), *Culhwch and Olwen. An edition and study of the oldest Arthurian tale* (Cardiff, 1992), p. lxxvi, and T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 67-70). The other Arthurian *mirabile* is number 13:

There is another wonder in the country called Ercyng (*Ercing*). There is a tomb there by a spring, called Llygad Amr (*Licat Amr*); the name of the man who was buried in the tomb was Amr. He was the son of the warrior Arthur, and he killed him there and buried him. Men come to measure the tomb, and it is sometimes six feet long, sometimes nine, sometimes twelve, sometimes fifteen. At whatever measure you measure it on one occasion, you never find it again of the same measure, and I have tried it myself. (Morris, 1980, p. 42, marvel no. 13)

The region *Ercing* is Archenfield (Herefordshire) and the usual identification of the spring *Licat Amr* ‘the eye [or source] of *Amr*’ is the river Gamber in Herefordshire and its source Gamber Head in Llanwarne, next to which is a now-destroyed prehistoric tumulus which is presumably the grave. Clearly this ‘marvel’ is, like the one above, an onomastic topographic tale drawn from local, popular folklore and here designed to explain the name *Licat Amr* and an associated grave. The story of Arthur killing Amr is otherwise unknown, although ‘Amhar son of Arthur’ appears in *Geraint* as one of Arthur’s four chamberlains along with Bedwyr’s son, Amhren: see Gwyn and Thomas Jones (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1949), p. 231. The milieu of the two Arthurian *mirabilia* is thus one of wonderful animals, supernatural events and remarkable features in the landscape that are explained by reference to Arthur and his attendant legends.

For a discussion of the *mirabilia* see O.J. Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31 particularly pp. 2-4; B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saint’s Lives’, in R. Bromwich, A.O.H. Jarman and B.F. Roberts (edd.), *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at pp. 88-93; Patrick K. Ford, ‘On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 30 (1983), pp. 268-73; and T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 67-72. A Latin text and translation of the *mirabilia* can be most easily had from J. Morris (ed. and trans.), *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (Chichester, 1980). The best editions of the *Historia Brittonum* are, however, those of J. Stevenson (ed.), *Nennii Historia Britonum* (London, 1838), and E. Faral, *La Légende Arthurienne: Études et Documents, les Plus Anciens Texts*, three volumes (Paris, 1929), III, pp. 1-62.

### c. *Y Gododdin*

The collection of heroic death-songs known as *Y Gododdin* is found in the late thirteenth-century ‘Book of Aneirin’. There has been much debate over the statement that the warrior Gwawddur ‘fed black ravens on the rampart of a fort, though he was no Arthur’ (B.38).<sup>1</sup> Thomas Charles-Edwards, building on his theory of textual transmission – set forth in T.M. Charles-Edwards, ‘The Authenticity of the *Gododdin*: A Historian’s View’, in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (edd.) *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd, Studies in Old*

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<sup>1</sup>J.T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin. Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff, 1997), numbers this *awdl* (‘stanza’) B<sup>2</sup>.38 and reconstructs the Arthurian reference as *cit-ni-be em Arthür*. The word translated above as ‘fed, glutted’, *gochore*, is taken by Koch as ‘sends down, draws down, entices’ but this does not change the meaning of the passage.

*Welsh Poetry* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 44-71 – has concluded that, as the reference to Arthur only occurs in the B text and not the A text of *Y Gododdin*, it need be no older than the ninth or tenth century ('The Arthur of History', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 14). Recently, however, John Koch has attempted to 'reconstruct' the text of *Y Gododdin* (via principles of textual criticism and historical linguistics) to show how it would have looked if it was composed and written down pre-638, as he believes it to have been, and he argues that the *awdl* which mentions Arthur should be seen as part of this 'original' text of *Y Gododdin* (*The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff, 1997), esp. Introduction and pp. 147-48). Whether he is right or not is, of course, to be debated; Graham Isaac, for example, has instead argued that there is no linguistic evidence which would necessitate dating *Y Gododdin* as a whole before the ninth or tenth century: G.R. Isaac, *The Verb in the Book of Aneirin: Studies in Syntax Morphology and Etymology* (Tübingen, 1996), and G.R. Isaac, 'Readings in the History and Transmission of the Gododdin', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 37 (1999), pp. 55-78. See T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 13-14, 50-52, for an overview and discussion of recent opinions.

Whatever the date of this *awdl*, the nature of the Arthurian reference and its concept of Arthur deserve comment. As Koch has observed, 'Arthur is presented as the unrivalled paragon of martial valour and is thus used to form a highly unusual comparison by rendering explicitly inferior the honorand of the *awdl*.' Arthur was clearly viewed by the poet as the impossible comparison, a 'Brittonic superhero' and legendary paragon of heroism to whose heights of valour not even a man who killed 300 in one rush could compare (J.T. Koch, 'The Celtic Lands', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at p. 242; see further O.J. Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), p. 14; Green, 2007, pp. 14-15, 52). This concept of Arthur does not only appear in *Y Gododdin*; it is also to be found in a number of other non-Galfridian sources, including the mid-seventh-century *Marnnad Cynddylan* and the poetry of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century *Gogynfeirdd*.

Turning away from the reference to Arthur, there is one other significant 'Arthurian' allusion in *Y Gododdin*. This is the appearance of Myrddin (Merddin, Merlin) in the A text of *Y Gododdin* (stanza A.40), where it is said that *amuc Moryen / gwenwawt Mirdyn*, 'Morien defended the fair song [or blessed inspired verse] of Myrddin'. Unlike in the case of B<sup>2</sup>.38, this *awdl* is found in both texts of *Y Gododdin* (A.40 and B<sup>1</sup>.5), suggesting it may go back to the 'original' poem. However, whilst the *awdl* is present in both texts, the reference to *gwenwawt Mirdyn* is absent from the stanza in the more archaic B text and it has been excluded by Koch from his reconstruction of *Y Gododdin*. It is generally agreed that the Myrddin allusion cannot be seen as original to the poem and instead it should be considered as a relatively late interpolation to the text (*i.e.* belonging to perhaps the tenth to twelfth centuries, see Koch, 1996, pp. 242, 245; Koch, 1997, pp. lxxxv, ciii, cvi, 157-62; A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Book of Aneirin', *Studia Celtica*, 24/25 (1989/90), pp. 20-23). It should, of course, be noted that this reference is, in any case, only tangentially 'Arthurian' as Myrddin and Arthur were not associated with each other in pre-Galfridian tradition.

For the text of *Y Gododdin*, see I. Williams (ed.) *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1938). For translations and reconstructed texts, see K.H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh, 1969); A.O.H. Jarman, *Aneirin: Y Gododdin, Britain's Oldest Heroic Poem* (Llandysul, 1988); and J.T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff, 1997).



#### ***d. Marwnad Cynddylan***

The archaic heroic elegy *Marwnad Cynddylan* ('The Death-song of Cynddylan', a seventh-century prince of Powys) only survives in manuscripts dating from c. 1631 and later; the earliest is NLW 4973, p. 108ff., copied by Dr John Davies of Mallwyd. However these are believed to be accurate and reliable copies of much earlier originals and *Marwnad Cynddylan* has been shown to have been almost certainly composed in East Powys immediately after Cynddylan's death at *Winwæd* in A.D. 655 – see J. Rowland's *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990).

The poem would seem to refer to Arthur in much the same way as does *Y Gododdin* (Rowland, 1990, p. 186 suggests an alternate, non-Arthurian reading for the text of the poem, but this doesn't seem to have gained general acceptance). It implies that the military deeds of Cynddylan and his brothers are of such great valour that these warriors might be seen as *canawon Artur fras, dinas dengyn*, 'whelps of great Arthur, a mighty fortress' (see R. Bromwich, 'Concepts of Arthur', *Studia Celtica*, 10/11 (1975-6), pp. 163-81 at p. 177; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 53-54; R. Bromwich *et al*, 'Introduction', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 1-14 at p. 5; J.T. Koch, 'The Celtic Lands', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 245-46. 'Fortress', *dinas*, here has the sense of 'defender, defence'). As such it shows that the concepts of Arthur as a 'peerless warrior' and the ultimate standard of comparison were present in East Powys (roughly modern Shropshire) by the mid-seventh century. This concept of Arthur as the 'paragon of military valour' is clearly shared by other non-Galfridian Welsh sources too, such as the poems *Kadeir Teyrnnon*, *Gereint fil[ius] Erbin*, *Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr*, and *Marwnat vthyr pen[dragon]*, and is also to be found in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd*.

See J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), for an edition, translation and discussion of the historical context of this poem; J.T. Koch and J. Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales* (Malden, Mass., 1995), pp. 360-62 also has a translation of the whole poem.

#### ***e. Pa gur yv y porthaur?***

*Pa gur yv y porthaur?* ('What man is the gatekeeper/porter?', also known as *Ymddiddan Arthur a Gwyllyd Gafaelawr*, 'The Dialogue of Arthur and Gwyllyd Gafaelawr') is an important pre-Galfridian Arthurian dialogue poem from the 'Black Book of Carmarthen'. It should most probably be dated to roughly the same period as the other Black Book *Ymddiddan*, that is the ninth or tenth century (R. Bromwich, 'Introduction', and B.F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (edd.) *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 20-21, 281-325; B.F. Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen*, The 'Triads, Saints' Lives', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at p. 78; see further T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, p. 80). However, as with much Old Welsh verse, a later date is impossible to rule out entirely and, indeed, Koch has pointed out that a date of composition in the eighth century is not implausible in the case of this poem (in *Speculum*, 69.4 (1994), pp. 1127-29).

The poem is, itself, simply a summary of many earlier mythical Arthurian tales, as Sims-Williams has pointed out ('The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 38). In it Arthur is the head of a company of folkloric heroes and pagan gods who exercise marvellous and superhuman powers. It has 90 extant lines, the ending of the piece being lost due to a missing

manuscript leaf (which unfortunately means that the poem breaks off in the middle of an extremely intriguing sentence). In the extant portion of the poem Bedwyr and Cai are Arthur's main henchmen and its general world is one in which Arthur and his men fight battles against human or supernatural enemies, including cynocephali (dog-headed men), witches, and Palug's Cat. The relationship between *Pa gur?* and *Culhwch ac Olwen* is problematical as there is some overlap – however, given the length of *Culhwch ac Olwen*, overlap is understandable and there are many points on which there is no overlap. It is thus unlikely that the compilers of *Culhwch* drew on a written text of *Pa gur?*, though they may well have known of it. Rather they both seem to draw from the same body of early Arthurian tradition, but with *Pa gur?* representing 'a stage prior to the merging of that tradition with the story of the wooing of the giant's daughter' and one at which Arthur and his heroes were outside the gate rather than inside the court (Koch, 1996, p. 261). The poem begins as a dialogue between Arthur and Glewlwyd:

'What man is the gatekeeper?  
 - 'Glewlwyd Great Grasp;  
 what man asks it?'  
 - 'Arthur and [*or with*] Cai the fair.'  
 - 'What [*band*] goes with you?'  
 - 'The best men in the world.'  
 - 'Into my house you will not come  
 unless you vouch for them'  
 - 'I shall vouch for them,  
 and you will see them,'  
 (lines 1-10: Sims-Williams, 1991, p. 40)

This porter scene is probably a stock narrative formula of vernacular story-telling (analogous scenes are to be had in chapter 32 of the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* and in *Culhwch ac Olwen*) which is derived from Celtic mythology (see Koch, 1996, p. 261, and 'Further to *Tongu Do Dia Toinges Mo Thuath, &c.*', *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), pp. 249-61). The word *gvared* that Sims-Williams translates as 'vouch for' can also be translated as 'disclose', 'discover'. Thomas Jones has plausibly suggested in light of this that the passage should be taken as indicating that when Arthur and his followers arrive at the gate they are invisible and that, 'since Arthur promises to reveal them,' one of Arthur's 'endowments' or magical gifts in the background story was the power to make his men invisible' (T. Jones, 'The Early Evolution of the Legend of Arthur', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 8 (1964), pp. 3-21 at pp. 16-17). After the above passage the poem develops into a list of Arthur's men and their exploits recounted by Arthur, including deeds by Arthur himself:

Though Arthur laughed [*or ?played*]  
 he caused the/her blood to flow  
 in Afarnach's hall,  
 fighting with a witch.  
 He pierced Cudgel(?) Head  
 in the dwellings of Disethach.  
 On the mountain of Edinburgh  
 he fought with dogheads.  
 By the hundred they fell;  
 they fell by the hundred  
 before Bedwyr the Perfect [*or Perfect-Sinew*].  
 (lines 37-47: Sims-Williams, 1991, pp. 41-42)

The final conflict mentioned by the poem (lines 81-90) is a battle against *lleuon*, 'lions, wild-cats' and the monstrous sea-cat *Cath Paluc* ('Clawing Cat', later 'Palug's Cat') attributed to Cai. In other sources this features Arthur rather than Cai and it seems probable that all the sources are recounting a generally Arthurian battle, with Cai simply made prominent in *Pa gur?*'s telling and Arthur elsewhere. This might well apply to all the battles referred to in the poem and it is most interesting that the Arthurian battle against were-wolves at *Traeth Tryfnyd*, mentioned in *Pa gur?* (lines 19-22, 48-51) as involving both Bedwyr and the sea-god Manawydan son of Llyr, is included in *Historia Brittonum* §56 as Arthur's tenth battle.

For a full discussion and translation of *Pa gur?* see P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 38-46, and T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 79-85, 100-2, 106, 112-13, 119-21. See also A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Delineation of Arthur in Early Welsh Verse', in K. Varty (ed.) *An Arthurian Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Lewis Thorpe* (Glasgow, 1981), pp. 1-21 at pp. 7-10; A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', in P.B. Grout *et al* (edd.) *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 99-112 at pp. 107-11; B.F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (edd.) *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 281-325 (which includes the text of the poem); and B.F. Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saint's Lives', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at pp. 78-79. For an interesting comparison between this poem and the fragmentary English ballad 'King Arthur and King Cornwall', see O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 30-32.

#### ***f. Culhwch ac Olwen***

*Culhwch ac Olwen* is the earliest tale in the so-called 'Mabinogion' and is preserved in two manuscripts: the 'White Book of Rhydderch' (Peniarth 4, cols.452-88) and the 'Red Book of Hergest' (cols.810-44), with the White Book only having the first two thirds of the story. The language of *Culhwch ac Olwen* appears to be Late Old Welsh and the composition of the extant redaction of the tale is generally placed in the late eleventh century, although one recent reviewer has suggested dating it to the mid-twelfth century: see R. Bromwich and D.S. Evans (edd.), *Culhwch and Olwen: An edition and study of the oldest Arthurian tale* (Cardiff, 1992), pp. xiv-xxv, lxxvii-lxxxiii; J.T. Koch, 'The Celtic Lands', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 258-59; D. Edel, 'The Arthur of "Culhwch and Olwen" as a figure of Epic-Heroic Tradition', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 9 (1983), p. 3; S. Rodway, 'The Date and Authorship of Culhwch ac Olwen: A Reassessment', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 49 (2005), pp. 21-44. All of the above datings do, however, cause some significant problems if we choose to give a roughly similar date to the quintessentially Middle Welsh 'Four Branches of the Mabinogi' (as has often been the case) and Jones, Jackson and, most recently, Ford have all instead offered a mid to late tenth- or early eleventh-century date for the tale: T. Jones and G. Jones (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1949), p. ix; K.H. Jackson, *A Celtic Miscellany* (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 197-204; P.K. Ford, 'Culhwch and Olwen', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Garland, New York, 1996), pp. 104-06, also p. 508; see also Koch, 1996, pp. 258-59. Such a dating is also suggested by Koch, who has recently dated the tale tentatively to *c.* 1000 (J.T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1997), pp. civ, cv), and Edel, who supports a date in the second half of the tenth century for a written version of at least some parts of *Culhwch ac Olwen* (Edel, 1983, p. 3).

The concept of Arthur held by the tale is both that of a great overlord (he is the 'Chief of the Kings of Britain') and a renowned monster-slayer. Though *Culhwch ac Olwen* is most probably a literary composition it was clearly based on a number of earlier

oral and legendary Arthurian tales which were brought together and fused with the ‘giant’s daughter’ folklore tale-type to create the story as we now possess it – the Arthurian material is generally considered to represent the same body of very early non-historical tales as *Pa gur yv y porthaur?*, *Historia Brittonum* Chapter 73 and *Preideu Annwfn* do. The two most obvious examples of such pre-existing tales incorporated into *Culhwch ac Olwen* are (1) the stories of the hunting of the divine great boar Twrch Trwyth – which is an event associated with Arthur from at least as early as the eighth century on the evidence of the *Historia Brittonum* (see Bromwich and Evans, 1992, p. lxvi: the concept of a mythical Giant Boar probably has its origins in pagan Celtic religious beliefs), and (2) the journey to Ireland by Arthur in his ship Prydwen to seize the cauldron of Diwrnach, which is clearly related to the journey to the Otherworld told in the eighth-century or earlier poem *Preideu Annwfn*. Both would appear to partly derive in *Culhwch* from local onomastic folklore. Other early Arthurian tales which would seem to be preserved in the story of *Culhwch ac Olwen* include the killing of the Very Black Witch ‘in the Uplands of Hell’; the killing of the giants Wrnach and Dillus the Bearded; the rescue by Arthur’s warband of the pagan god Mabon ap Modron from an Otherworldly fortress; and Arthur’s settling of a dispute between the divine Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwythyr ap Greidawl. See further particularly Bromwich and Evans, 1992, especially pp. xlvii-lxxv; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), especially pp. 57-59, 65, 68-69, 95-100, 107-08, 112-16, 159-62, 166, 173-75; Edel, 1983; and B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saint’s Lives’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 especially pp. 76-80).

At least some of the main characters of the tale (including both Culhwch and Olwen) may not have been traditional and have almost no recorded existence outside of the story itself, belonging to the ‘giant’s daughter’ folk-legend that forms a frame for the pre-existing Arthurian tales rather than these tales themselves, although Yspaddaden Penkawr may have his origins in pre-500 oral tradition (see Koch, 1996, p. 256) and the name *Culhwch* is mentioned in a probably ninth-century *englyn* from a lament to Cynddylan of Powys. For the text with superb notes, a bibliography and a full discussion see Rachel Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (edd.) *Culhwch and Olwen: An edition and study of the oldest Arthurian tale* (Cardiff, 1992). See also T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), chapters two, three and four; B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saint’s Lives’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95; D. Edel ‘The Arthur of “Culhwch and Olwen” as a figure of Epic-Heroic Tradition’, *Reading Medieval Studies*, 9 (1983), pp. 3-15; and J.T. Koch, ‘The Celtic Lands’, in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 256-62. Modern and reliable translations are available in T. Jones and G. Jones (trans.), *The Mabinogion* (London, 1949) and P.K. Ford (trans.), *The Mabinogi* (Berkeley, 1977).

### **g. *Preideu Annwfn***

*Preideu Annwfn* (‘The Spoils of the Otherworld’) is contained in the fourteenth century ‘Book of Taliesin’ (Poem XXX) and features the figures of Taliesin and Arthur. Haycock has suggested that the date of composition cannot easily be narrowed further than to the Old Welsh period in general but this has been challenged by Koch, who has shown that a mid to late eighth-century date would suit this poem, making it an earlier witness to the Arthurian legend than the *Historia Brittonum*. M. Haycock, ‘Preiddeu Annwn’ and the Figure of Taliesin’, *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983-4), p. 57; J.T. Koch, ‘The Celtic Lands’, in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature* (New York, 1996), pp. 263-65. Koch’s research does, of course, confirm and vindicates Sir Ifor Williams’ opinion that the poem should be dated to *c.* 900 or before (in R.S. Loomis, ‘The Spoils of Annwn’: An Early Welsh Poem’, in R.S. Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (Cardiff, 1956), p. 131). It should be

noted that the features Koch uses to date the poem to the mid to late eighth century would be present in earlier compositions also, and the mid to late eighth century might therefore be seen as a *terminus ante quem*.

The background to the poem is a story of an expedition by Arthur in his ship, Prydwen, to Annwfn – the Celtic Otherworld – to seize a magical cauldron belonging to *Pen Annwfn* ('The Chief of the Otherworld'), along with one or more remarkable/faery animals, from a fortress there, to which there are numerous analogues in Celtic literature (for example, the quest for Diwrnach the Irishman's cauldron in *Culhwch ac Olwen*). There also seems to be a story of the imprisonment of Gweir in the Otherworld and his release by Arthur, which again finds analogues in *Culhwch ac Olwen* (with the rescue by Arthur's warband of the pagan god Mabon ap Modron from an Otherworldly fortress) and elsewhere. Fuller versions of these stories must, by necessity, have been part of the mental furniture of the audience of *Preiddeu Annwfn* in order that they might understand the now obscure allusions contained within it. As such, these stories must pre-date to some unknowable degree the composition of the poem: see Haycock, 1983-4, p. 55; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 54-67.

For discussion, text and translation see M. Haycock, "'Preiddeu Annwn" and the Figure of Taliesin', *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983-4), pp. 52-78; M. Haycock (ed. and trans.), *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 433-51. For detailed analyses of the poem see also T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), especially pp. 54-67, 159-60; P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 54-57; A. Budgey, "'Preiddeu Annwn" and the Welsh Tradition of Arthur', in C.J. Burne, M. Harry and P. Ó Siadhail (edd.) *Celtic Languages and Celtic People* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1992), pp. 391-404; and R.S. Loomis, 'The Spoils of Annwn' An Early Welsh Poem', in R.S. Loomis, *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (Cardiff, 1956), pp. 131-78. Both Budgey and Loomis contain alternative translations of the text, as do J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), and J.T. Koch and J. Carey (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales* (Malden, Mass., 1995).

#### ***h. Englynion y Beddau***

The *Englynion y Beddau* ('Stanzas of the Graves') record, 'often with unexpected poetic power, the sites of the graves of once-famous heroes, testifying to the close association between heroes and places in early Welsh literature' (P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 49), and 'the heroes named...belong to legend and folklore rather than to history' (A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', in P.B. Grout *et al* (edd.) *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 99-112 at p. 111). Whilst the earliest extant manuscript containing them (the 'Black Book of Carmarthen') dates to the thirteenth century, there can be no doubt that the vast majority of the *englynion* are far older than this – Jenny Rowland has recently dated the Black Book text to the mid to late ninth century, but as antiquarian records of oral tales and topographic folklore they may well represent much older traditions: J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 389; see also T. Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen: Stanzas of the Graves', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 53 (1967), pp. 97-137. Of the 73 stanzas in the Black Book, only three (8, 12 and 44) mention well-known Arthurian characters and of these the most important is no. 44 which names Arthur himself:

[There is] a grave for March, a grave for Gwythur,  
a grave for Gwgawn Red-sword;  
the world's wonder (*anoeth*) [is] a grave for Arthur.  
(Sims-Williams, 1991, p. 49)

The poet's implication is that the graves of these Arthurian heroes are known but that of Arthur himself is *anoeth*, impossible to find/achieve, probably because he was rumoured not to be dead (a belief which is referred to elsewhere in the pre-Galfridian literature, see T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 72-75). With regards to the other heroes in this passage, Gwythur is found associated with Arthur in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Kanu y Meirch*; Gwgawn appears in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*; and March is the cuckolded king of the semi-Arthurian Tristan stories. The following two stanzas (8 and 12, respectively) also concern characters and events from the early Arthurian legend:

The grave of Gwalchmai is in Peryddon (*periton*)  
as a reproach to men;  
at Llanbardarn is the grave of Cynon.

The grave of Osfran's son is at Camlann,  
after many a slaughter;  
the grave of Bedwyr is on Tryfan hill.  
(Sims-Williams, 1991, p. 50)

The grave of Gwalchmai, Arthur's nephew in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, is also referred to by William of Malmesbury c. 1125 in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, where it is placed upon the sea-shore 'in the province of Wales called R(h)os' and is said to be fourteen feet long (compare both the size of the grave and nature of the tale with the grave of Amr, Arthur's son, in the *mirabilia* of the *Historia Brittonum*). *Alld Tryfan* probably refers to Tryfan in Snowdonia but unfortunately no other non-Galfridian references to a tale of Bedwyr's death have survived to us; Camlann is obviously Arthur's last legendary defeat and the collocation with Tryfan in the above *englyn* suggests it was identified, at least by this ninth-century text, with Camlann near Mallow, Merionethshire.

See T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 72-78, and P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 49-51, for an examination of the *Englynion*. O.J. Padel's 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31 at pp. 8-12, has discussion of the belief that Arthur was not dead and would return, as does Green, 2007, chapter two. For the text and discussion see Thomas Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen: Stanzas of the Graves', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 53 (1967), pp. 97-137.

### ***i. Kat Godeu***

*Kat Godeu* ('The Battle of the Forest') is one of the so-called transformational poems from the fourteenth-century 'Book of Taliesin'. As it stands the poem itself certainly dates from later than the sixth century but contains elements which may reflect much older sources, for example the possible survival of pagan tree-lore (John B. Coe and Simon Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), p. 141). The bulk of the poem is concerned with a great mythological battle – also mentioned in a variety of other non-Galfridian sources – fought by the divine sons of Dôn via an army of magically animated trees, the forest thus animated, it has been argued, being the famed *Coed Celyddon*, 'the Caledonian Forest': Ifor Williams, *The Poems*

of *Taliesin* (Dublin, 1968), pp. xliii-xliv; R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 207-08, 540; M. Haycock, ‘The Significance of the “Cad Goddau” Tree-List in the Book of Taliesin’, in M.J. Bell *et al* (edd) *Celtic Linguistics: Readings in the Brythonic Languages for T. Arwyn Watkins* (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 297-331 at pp. 308-09.

Arthur himself is named only once, when the ‘druids of the wise one’ are commanded to ‘prophesy [to] Arthur’ (lines 237-238). The text here could mean either ‘of Arthur’ or ‘to Arthur’, but it seems more likely that they are to prophesy to him and that he was therefore present (P. Sims-Williams ‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 51-52). In addition, near the beginning of the poem the ‘lord of Britain’ is mentioned in the context of the battle and Haycock has argued that this should probably be seen as a reference to Arthur too (see Haycock 1990, p. 298):

*Keint yg kat goden bric / Rac Prydein wledic*

I sang in the van of the tree-battalion (or ‘in the battle of the branchy trees’) before the lord of Britain. (lines 26-7: Sims-Williams 1991, p. 52)

Therefore in *Kat Goden* we seem to have a potentially early poem that features a mythical battle fought by the trees of *Coed Celyddon*, which is in some – perhaps major – way associated with Arthur; for a full discussion of all this, including the potential date of *Kat Goden* itself, see T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 62-67. The association of this battle with Arthur – henceforth called *Cad Goddau* to distinguish it from the poem of the same name – is, to some large degree, confirmed by an examination of other early sources. Thus, in the poem *Kat Goden*, at least part of the fighting – coming immediately after the reference to ‘the lord of Britain’ – is focussed around a fort called *Kaer Nefenbir*:

I wounded a great scaly animal: a hundred heads on him  
 And a fierce host beneath the base of his tongue,  
 And another host is on his necks.  
 A black, forked toad: a hundred claws on him.  
 An enchanted, crested snake in whose skin a hundred souls are punished.  
 I was in *Kaer Nefenbir* where grass and trees attacked,  
 Poets sang, warriors rushed forth.  
 (lines 30-44: P.K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley, 1977), p. 184)

There is only one other reference in medieval Welsh literature to this fortress – it is named as one of the places conquered in the past by Arthur in *Culhwch ac Olwen* (see Green, 2007, p. 65). This is obviously suggestive of Arthur indeed being the *Prydein wledic*, ‘lord of Britain’, at the head of the army of trees in *Kat Goden*. Similarly, later Welsh manuscripts state that an alternate name for the battle *Cad Goddau* was *Cad Achren*, a name which is highly suggestive of the name of one of the forts – *Caer Ochren* – that Arthur lead the attack on in the early poem *Preideu Annwn*: see for this identification, Green, 2007, p. 63; A. Budgey, ‘“Preiddeu Annwn” and the Welsh Tradition of Arthur’, in C.J. Burne, M. Harry and P. Ó Siadhail (edd.) *Celtic Languages and Celtic People* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1992), pp. 391-404 at p. 396, and M. Haycock, ‘“Preiddeu Annwn” and the Figure of Taliesin’, *Studia Celtica*, 18/19 (1983-4), pp. 52-78 at p. 75. Such a link between *Cad Achren* and Arthur’s assault on *Caer Ochren* gains considerable support from the fact that *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* and other Welsh texts describe the battle of *Cad Goddau* as a ‘futile/pointless battle’ which was caused by a roebuck and a dog, identified as a

greyhound in one text. This accords well with the description of Arthur's assault on *Caer Ochren* in *Preideu Annwfn* as a 'woeful conflict' which seems to have been undertaken in order to retrieve the 'beast they keep with a silver head' (Green, 2007, p. 63; Budgey, 1992, p. 396).

Given all this, and the fact that the forest animated in *Kat Godeu* is considered to have been *Coed Celyddon*, it is difficult to avoid connecting this apparently mythical Arthurian battle with the *Cat Coit Celidon* ('the battle of *Coed Celyddon*') attributed to Arthur in §56 of the early ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* (Green, 2007, p. 67). As with the *Historia's* tenth battle, which appears as a battle against were-wolves involving the former sea-god Manawydan son of Llyr in *Pa gur yv y porthaur?*, we appear to have a situation in which a mythical Arthurian battle has been borrowed and historicised by the author of the *Historia* (or his hypothetical source) for his list of Arthur's supposed victories against the Saxons.

See further on this battle, T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 62-67. The full text of the poem can be found in J. Gwenogvryn Evans (ed.), *The Book of Taliesin: Facsimile and Text* (Llanbedrog, 1910) and M. Haycock (ed. and trans.), *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 167-239; it has been translated by Haycock in the above volume and by P.K. Ford as an appendix to his *The Mabinogi* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 183-87.

***j. Marwnat Uthyr Pen[dragon], Kadeir Teyrnon, Mad[awg] drut ac Erof, and Kanu y Meirch***

Aside from *Preideu Annwfn* and *Kat Godeu* there are four other Arthurian references in the 'Book of Taliesin'. These are found in the poems *Marwnat Uthyr Pen[dragon]* ('The Death-Song of Uthyr Pendragon' – *Pendragon* is abbreviated in the manuscript); *Kadeir Teyrnon* ('The Chair of a Prince' or 'The Chair of Teyrnon'); *Mad[awg] drut ac Erof* ('Mad[awg] the fierce and Herod' – *Madawg* is abbreviated in the manuscript); and *Kanu y Meirch* ('Poem of the Horses'). None of these poems are usually dated any more precisely than to the Old Welsh period in general, roughly the ninth to eleventh centuries. *Marwnat Uthyr Pendragon* is a wholly Arthurian piece, being probably envisaged as being spoken by Arthur's father, Uthyr Pendragon, who seems, from *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* no. 28 and Geoffrey's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, to have been a Taliesin-like figure, a magician and shape-changer in Welsh tradition: P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 53. The lines that are of particular significance for Arthur are as follows:

A victorious sword-stroke before the sons of Cawrnur.  
 I shared my shelter,  
 a ninth share in Arthur's valour.  
 I broke a hundred forts.  
 I slew a hundred stewards.  
 I bestowed a hundred mantles.  
 I cut a hundred heads.  
 I gave to an old chief  
 very great swords of protection.  
 [??]  
 An iron protection ...[??]... mountain-top.  
 To my deprivation, to my sorrow, ?[sinew was brave].  
 The world would not exist were it not for my offspring.  
 (lines 12-24: J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 150-51)



Lines 13-14 are clearly to be related to the concept of Arthur as a mighty warrior, and Sims-Williams has suggested that Uthyr here means that he has passed on his qualities to his son (1991, p. 53). This is reinforced by the proud and intriguing boast (reflecting perhaps the non-Galfridian concept of Arthur as the ‘Protector of Britain’ against supernatural threats) in line 24 that ‘The world would not exist were it not for my offspring’. With regards to Uthyr he is clearly conceived of as a powerful warrior and protector himself in the above lines, whilst the earlier parts of the poem have sometimes been used to argue that Uthyr was a pagan Celtic God (see K. Malone, ‘The Historicity of Arthur’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 23 (1924), pp. 463-91 at pp. 469-71; R. Loomis *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (London, 1926), p. 352). It is interesting in this context that the god Mabon ap Modron is described as Uthyr’s servant in lines 13-14 of *Pa gur yv y porthaur?*. For a full analysis of this poem, see now T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 145-50.

*Kadeir Teyrnnon* is an obscure boasting poem uttered by the legendary, semi-divine Taliesin before he releases his patron Elffin from imprisonment. He begins by praising a certain *Teyrnnon* who, if this is taken as the common-noun *teyrnon*, ‘a prince’, may well be Arthur himself: Sims-Williams, 1991, p. 52; T. Green, ‘A Note on *Aladur*, *Alator* and *Arthur*’, *Studia Celtica*, 41 (2007), pp. 237-41; M. Haycock (ed. and trans.), *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 293-94, 300. Unfortunately as a whole the poem remains difficult but the following lines deserve comment:

He brought them from Cawrnur,  
pale horses under saddle...

The third deep matter for the wise one:  
the blessing of Arthur  
– Blessed Arthur –  
with harmonious song:  
the defender in battle,  
the trampler on nine.  
(lines 13-14, 17-22: Coe and Young, 1995, pp. 148-49 and Sims-Williams, 1991, p. 52)

Clearly the latter lines tell us something about how the tales of Arthur were viewed by the bards, as well as confirming again the concept of Arthur as a great warrior and defender. The former lines (lines 13-14) recall line 12 of *Marwnat Uthyr Pendragon*, which refers to Uthyr’s attack on the ‘sons of Cawrnur’. Viewed together these two references can probably be taken to imply the existence of a lost Arthurian tale in which Arthur and Uthyr warred against Cawrnur and his sons (who were probably giants, Welsh *cawr*). Further discussion of this poem can be found in Green, 2007 (‘A Note’), and Green, 2007 (*Concepts*), pp. 118, 197.

The other two references are less significant but still interesting. *Madawg drut ac Erof* is a fragment of a poem:

Madog, the rampart of rejoicing,  
Madog, before he was in the grave,  
he was a fortress of generosity  
[consisting] of feat(s) and play.  
The son of Uthyr, before death  
he handed over pledges.  
(Sims-Williams, 1991, pp. 53-54)

This Madog is also mentioned in *Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr* and it seems clear that he was Arthur's brother in non-Galfridian tradition. The above however is all that really remains of whatever stories were current in early Welsh tradition regarding Madog, aside from two lines from a late twelfth-century religious poem ('Madog, famous leader, was false; he had great profit: wretched sorrow!': Sims-Williams 1991, p. 54). Finally there is the untitled poem generally called *Kanu y Meirch*, a long list of the horses of traditional heroes:

And Gwythur's horse;  
 And Gwawrddur's horse;  
 And Arthur's horse,  
 boldly bestowing pain;  
 ...  
 And Llamrei, full valuable,  
 wide-nostrilled and powerful;  
 (lines 30-33, 50-51: Coe and Young, 1995, pp. 148-49)

The grouping of the heroes was clearly dictated by rhyme but it is interesting that Gwythur and Gwawrddur are found elsewhere associated with Arthur (in *Englynion y Beddau* and *Y Gododdin* respectively). Arthur's horse is not given a name in this poem, but in *Culhwch ac Olwen* it is named as *Llamrei* – intriguingly, a horse so named appears later *Kanu y Meirch*, though without the name of its owner.

The text of these poems can be found in J. Gwenogvryn Evans (ed.) *The Book of Taliesin: Facsimile and Text* (Llanbedrog, 1910), and M. Haycock (ed. and trans.), *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp.167-239, 293-311, 387-403, 459-62, 503-13. Haycock's edition includes translations of all of these poems; partial translations, along with the corresponding text, are also given by P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 52-54, and Coe and Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 141-51. W.F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales* (Edinburgh, 1868) gives full translations of the poems, but these are not reliable.

### ***k. Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr***

The *Ymddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr* ('Dialogue of Arthur and the Eagle') is found in numerous manuscripts of the fourteenth century and later. On linguistic and thematic grounds it should probably be dated *c.* 1150 and considered non-Galfridian in content. The poem is a religious one, with Arthur portrayed as a pagan warrior-hero who gains religious enlightenment from the eagle, which is revealed to him as the reincarnation of his dead nephew Eliwlad, son of Madog, son of Uthyr:

Arthur of surpassing far-flung fame,  
 bear of the host, joy of shelter  
 the eagle has seen you before.  
 ...  
 Arthur of the terrible sword,  
 your enemies stand not before your rush.  
 I am the son of Madog son of Uthyr.  
 (stanzas 2 and 6: J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), p. 105)

The concept of Arthur is clearly to be compared with that of *Y Gododdin* and *Marwnad Cynddylan* – he is not ‘King Arthur’ but rather a peerless warrior-hero, *gwryt gadarnaf*, ‘strongest in valour’, and *penn kadoed Kernyw*, ‘chief of the battalions of Cornwall’. Indeed, the dialogue seems to occur on the coast of Cornwall, with Arthur speaking *o tu myr*, ‘beside the seas’, and addressing the eagle as one who *a dreigla glyncoet Kernyw*, ‘roams the valley-woods [=the wooded Glynn valley near Bodmin?] of Cornwall’. We also find, in the first stanza, Arthur describing himself thus:

I am amazed for I am a bard;  
from the top of the oak with its beautiful branches,  
why does the eagle stare, why does he laugh?  
(Coe and Young, 1995, p. 105)

This notion of Arthur as a bard is found elsewhere too, in the non-Galfridian *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (nos. 12 and 18W), *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and also in an *englyn* and prose fragment from MS Mostyn 131, p. 770, which though late (perhaps fifteenth-century?) is clearly working in the native non-Galfridian tradition of Arthur:

Sandde Bryd Angel drive the crow  
off the face of ?Duran [son of Arthur].  
Dearly and belovedly his mother raised him.  
Arthur sang it  
(J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 250-51)

Another nod to pre-Galfridian concepts of Arthur comes later in the poem, when Arthur asks if he should mount a campaign against God and Heaven to retrieve Eliwlad from the afterlife, to which the eagle replies *Arthur, bendefig haelion... a Duw nithycia ymryson*, ‘Arthur, chief of generous men... it is of no use to strive against God’. In this exchange we would seem to have a reference to Arthur’s role as the liberator of prisoners from the Otherworld, encountered in *Preiden Annmfn* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*, though here such an expedition is dismissed due to the power of the Christian God (compared to that of the pagan gods?).

With regards to the eagle itself, the identification of this bird as Arthur’s nephew Eliwlad mab Madog mab Uthyr confirms that, in non-Galfridian tradition, Uthyr was indeed Arthur’s father and that Arthur had a brother named Madog. Eliwlad ap Mad(og) ap Uthyr also appears in the mid-fifteenth-century *Pedwar Marchog ar Hugain Llŷs Arthur* (‘Twenty-Four Knights of Arthur’s Court’) as one of the ‘Three Golden-Tongued Knights’ of Arthur’s Court: see R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978).

See further on this poem P. Sims-Williams, ‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, in Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 57-58; O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 64-67; A.O.H. Jarman, ‘The Delineation of Arthur in Early Welsh Verse’, in K. Varty (ed.) *An Arthurian Tapestry* (Glasgow, 1981), pp. 1-21 at pp. 15-16; and M. Haycock, ‘Ymddiddan Arthur a’r Eryr’, in M. Haycock (ed.) *Bloddegerdd Barddas o Ganu Crefyddol Cynnar* (Abertawe, 1994), pp. 297-312. For text see I. Williams, ‘Ymddiddan Arthur a’r Eryr’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 2 (1925), pp. 269-86.

### **1. *Ymddiddan Melwas ac Gwenhwyfar***

The *Ymddiddan Melwas ac Gwenhwyfar* ('Dialogue of Melwas and Gwenhwyfar', also known as *Ymddiddan Arthur ac Gwenhwyfar*) is extant principally in two manuscripts of the sixteenth and seventeenth century (Wynnstey 1, p. 91 and Llanstephen 122, p. 426) and should be seen as non-Galfridian in origin, dating from perhaps as early as the mid-twelfth century: R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 383-84; P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 57. The dialogue begins in the A-text at a feast, where Gwenhwyfar is waiting on the guests, among them Melwas:

'Who is the man who sits in the common part of the feast,  
without for him either its beginning or end,  
sitting down there below the dais?'

'The Melwas from Ynys Wydrin (Isle of Glass);  
you, with the golden, gilded vessels,  
I have drunk none of your wine.'

'Wait a little...  
I do not pour out my wine  
for a man who cannot hold out and would not stand in battle  
[and] would not stand up to Cai in his wine.'  
(Sims-Williams, 1991, p. 59)

In the following *englynion* Gwenhwyfar continues to taunt Melwas, while he proclaims his valour versus that of Cai. In both texts there is a reference to Gwenhwyfar and Melwas having met at a court in *Dyfnaint*, 'Devon', but the nature of this meeting isn't clear. The background to this poem is a pre-Galfridian Welsh story concerned with the rescue of Gwenhwyfar ('white fairy/enchantress') by Arthur from an Otherworld Island of Glass controlled by Melwas ('honey-youth') – who appears in other works as a magician who was a 'thief that by magic and enchantment took a girl [presumably Gwenhwyfar] to the end of the world' – similar to *Preideu Annwfn* and its analogues.

See further the *Vita Gildae* of Caradoc of Llancarfan, discussed briefly below, and P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 58-61; also see T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 59-60, 151; B.F. Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saints' Lives', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at p. 83; O.J. Padel *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 67-69; and R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 380-85. For texts and translations of both versions see J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 110-15, and M. Williams, 'An Early Ritual Poem in Welsh', *Speculum*, 13 (1938), pp. 38-43.

### **m. *Ymddiddan Gwyddno Garanhir ac Gwynn ap Nudd***

The Arthurian interest in the 'Black Book of Carmarthen' poem *Ymddiddan Gwyddno Garanhir ac Gwynn ap Nudd* ('The Dialogue of Gwyddno Garanhir and Gwynn ap Nudd') is found near to the end, in seven stanzas that are sometimes considered as a separate work, *Mi a Wum* ('I have been'). The poem dates from perhaps the tenth century, although it could be a little later or a little earlier than this: R. Bromwich, 'Introduction', and B.F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in R. Bromwich and

R.B. Jones (edd.) *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 20-21, 281-325; A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Delineation of Arthur in Early Welsh Verse', in K. Varty (ed.) *An Arthurian Tapestry* (Glasgow, 1981), p. 6. The Arthurian reference is as follows:

I have been where Llacheu was slain  
the son of Arthur, awful [/marvellous] in songs  
when ravens croaked over blood.

(J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), p. 125)

Llacheu son of Arthur is also mentioned in the pre-Galfridian *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* (no. 4) and *Pa gur yv y porthaur?* and thus can be considered 'a figure of considerable importance in the early Arthurian saga', belonging like Cai and Bedwyr 'to the oldest stratum of Arthurian tradition': R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978), p. 416; see further T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 168-69. A thirteenth-century elegy by Bleddyn Fardd records that 'Llachau was slain below Llech Ysgar' and, whilst the place is unidentified (though it was the site of one of the courts of Madog ap Maredudd, d. 1160), Sims-Williams suggests that there may have been a local legend underlying the above stanza like that of the *Historia Brittonum* chapter 73 ('The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 44; O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 99, suggests that 'below Llech Ysgar' might refer to Crickheath Hill south of Oswestry, Shropshire).

The slayer of Llacheu is not named in non-Galfridian sources; in *Y Seint Greal* he is said to have been slain by Cai, but this is due to a mistaken equation between Llacheu and Loholt of the *Perlesvaus* (Bromwich, 1978, pp. 417-18; C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddnyd Rhonabwy and later Arthurian Literature', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 183-208 at p 197). For some analysis of its Arthurian content, see T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 61, 160-61, 168-69. For the text, see B.F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (edd.) *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 281-325; J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), and J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 124-25.

#### ***n. Gereint fil[ius] Erbin***

*Gereint fil[ius] Erbin* ('Geraint, son of Erbin') is found in three of our manuscripts; in the 'Black Book of Carmarthen', the 'White Book of Rhydderch', and the 'Red Book of Hergest'. The date of this poem is usually given as falling between the ninth and mid-twelfth centuries, though Rowland would seem to consider a mid to late ninth-century date as defensible: J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 241, 389; P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 46; see also R. Bromwich, 'Introduction', and B.F. Roberts, 'Rhai o Gerddi Ymddiddan Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin', in R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (edd.) *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 20-21, 281-325. The poem concerns a battle fought at 'Llongborth' and takes the form of a eulogy to one Geraint. Geraint himself is usually identified as a Dumnonian prince from the late sixth century, whilst Llongborth could be Langport (Somerset) or some miscellaneous *llongborth*, 'ship harbour' (A.O.H. Jarman, 'The Arthurian Allusions in the Black Book of Carmarthen', in P.B. Grout *et al* (edd.) *The*

*Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 99-112 at p. 106; Cf. Sims-Williams, 1991, pp. 46-47).

The Arthurian reference comes in the eighth stanza (see Sims-Williams, 1991, pp. 47-48, for the solution to the different readings in the Black Book and the Red Book): 'At Llongborth were slain brave men of Arthur – (they) hewed with steel – the emperor [*ameraudur*], (the) ruler of battle.' This might be interpreted literally, that is to say that the poet was envisaging that Arthur's 'brave men' (if not Arthur himself) were present at this battle, assisting Geraint. In this case the reference should probably be seen as another case of honouring the subject of a poem by associating him directly with Arthur the 'paragon of military valour', here through making Arthur's men present at his final battle (in *Marnnad Cynddylan* the subject is honoured by being made a 'whelp of great Arthur'). Alternatively, and better to my mind, the formula 'brave men of Arthur,... the emperor, the ruler of battle' might be taken like 'whelps of great Arthur, a mighty defender' as simply a comparison honouring (and referring to) the subject(s) of the poem, in this case Geraint and his slain brothers-in-arms referred to in the next stanza, which forms a doublet with this one (*i.e.* they were so valorous that they might be called/likened to 'brave men of Arthur', just as Cynddylan and his brothers are of such great valour that they might be called/likened to 'whelps of great Arthur'). For a full discussion, see T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 78-79.

With regards to the concept of Arthur it is clearly again that of the 'peerless warrior'; the reference to him as 'emperor', *ameraudur* (< Latin *imperator*) might foreshadow Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthur in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, though as Jarman notes the "imperial" character of the portrait [of Arthur in this poem] should not, however, be overemphasised, for the strict meaning of the word is probably closer to 'general, commander', etc.' (1983, p. 106).

Text and translations of the poem can be found in A.O.H. Jarman (ed.), *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Cardiff, 1982); R. Bromwich and R.B. Jones (edd.), *Astudiaethau ar yr Hengerdd* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 286-96; J. Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 457-61, 504-05, 636-39; and J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 116-21.

### ***o. The Latin Saints' Lives***

Arthur appears in the eleventh- to thirteenth-century *Lives* of Padarn, Carannog, Illtud, Gildas, Cadog, Goueznou and Euflamm; texts and translations of these can be most readily accessed in John B. Coe and Simon Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 14-43. Perhaps the most notable feature of the majority of these texts is that Arthur is usually portrayed not in the heroic terms encountered in other early texts, but as a tyrant – in fact what we are seeing is the use of Arthur as a 'foil' for the saint. The *Vitae* are ecclesiastical hero-tales that share many features with their secular counterparts and as such require conflict, this conflict being generally between the religious hero and the secular power, with the ruler being belittled in defeat. Thus Arthur is 'an arrogant, grasping tyrant who is humbled in ignominious defeat, not in any armed struggle but in his childish greed and even in his failure to fulfil his traditional role as giant or dragon-slayer... the Arthurian episodes appear to be genuine fragments of Arthurian legend [consistent with the portrayal of Arthur found in *Culhwch ac Olwen* etc.], manipulated so that they may display Arthur in the worst possible light': B.F. Roberts, '*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saints' Lives', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at p. 83. However, it is worth noting that Arthur's wrong-doings in the other *Vitae* are not seen as irredeemable or malicious, as the deeds of other rulers that act as foils for saints are.

In the *Vita Gildae* of Caradoc of Llancarfan (1120s or 1130s) we find a version of the pre-Galfridian Welsh tale of the rescue of Gwenhwyfar from an Otherworldly Island of Glass controlled by Melwas, which is the background to *Ymddiddan Melwas ac Gwenhwyfar*, as well as a tale of conflict between Arthur and Huail ap Caw, which is referred to in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and would seem to reflect the concept of Arthur as ‘Protector of Britain’: T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 59-60, 123-27, 151; P. Sims-Williams, ‘The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems’, in Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 58-61; Roberts, 1991, p. 83. In Lifris’ *Vita Sancti Cadoci*, written between 1061 and 1104, we find two tales that are not known from any other source, one seeming to reflect a topographic folktale involving the exchange of magical or Otherworldly animals at a ford, and another that looks to be a folktale in which Arthur is a mighty warrior, protector, and defender of the realm/guardian of the border who exists outside of normal society: see O.J. Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31 at pp. 7-8; Green, 2007, pp. 128, 199-200; K. Malone, ‘The Historicity of Arthur’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 23 (1924), pp. 463-91 at pp. 481-82.

Also otherwise unknown are the tales of Arthur slaying dragons which have been manipulated by the authors of the Welsh *Vita Prima Sancti Carantoci* (c. 1100?) and the twelfth-century Breton *Vita Enflami*. In the case of the latter, the story would seem to have already been in existence by c. 1110 from the evidence of the Perros Relief and it shows clear signs of deriving from local topographic lore; it is also interesting for its description of Arthur as having ‘armed himself with the triple-knotted club and defended his eager torso with the shield which a lion-skin covered’ (Coe and Young, 1995, p. 39) and the fact that the author seems to have known of other stories of Arthur hunting monsters in Brittany, though he does not give details of these.

For discussion of the Saints’ Lives see B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saints’ Lives’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at pp. 82-84; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), particularly within chapters three to six; O.J. Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31 at pp. 6-8; O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 37-47; J.T. Koch, ‘The Celtic Lands’, in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 268-69, 292; and G. Ashe, ‘Saints’ Lives’, in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York, 1996), pp. 394-95.

***p. De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudensis, Liber Floridus, and Gesta Regum Anglorum***

Although not strictly ‘Welsh’, these three Latin texts do contribute significantly to our knowledge of pre-Galfridian Arthurian folklore and so are deserving of consideration here. Such folklore is most fully referenced in Herman’s *De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudensis* (‘The Miracles of St Mary of Laon’). This is an account of a journey made in 1113 to Britain by some canons of Laon, in northern France (O.J. Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31 at pp. 4-6 and pp. 8-10; J.S.P. Tatlock, ‘The English Journey of the Laon Canons’, *Speculum*, 8 (1933), pp. 454-65). Whilst travelling between Exeter and Bodmin the canons were shown the ‘seat’ and the ‘oven’ of King Arthur and were told that this was ‘Arthurian country’ – ‘Arthur’s Seat’ is otherwise unknown but ‘Arthur’s Oven’ may well be the ‘King’s Oven’ recorded on Dartmoor in 1240. Both would seem to be the same kind of topographic folklore that is found in *Historia Brittonum* §73 (see Padel, 1994, pp. 5-6). A similar piece of topographic folklore is recorded by Lambert of St Omer in the *Liber Floridus* of 1120, who added to the *mirabilia* of the *Historia Brittonum* a building known as ‘Arthur’s Palace’, which is now

generally acknowledged to be a circular building of Roman date near Stirling (Scotland) known as 'Arthur's Oven' in the thirteenth century (Padel, 1994, p. 6).

When the Laon canons arrived at Bodmin in Cornwall, they once again encountered the Arthurian legend:

...a certain man having a withered hand kept a vigil at the shrine [of Our Lady of Laon] to recover his health. In just the same way as the Bretons are accustomed to arguing with the French about King Arthur, the same man began to bicker with one from our community by the name of Hangello of the community of Lord Guidon, Archdeacon of Laon, saying that Arthur still lived. Then there arose a not a small tumult; many men rushed into the church with arms and if the aforementioned cleric Algardus had not prevented it, it would almost certainly have come to the spilling of blood. (J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), p. 47)

The text clearly shows that in the pre-Galfridian period a belief in Arthur still living was common to both the Bretons and the Cornish and was a matter of such strong feeling that a riot was only just averted when it was questioned. This should be viewed alongside the reference to Arthur having no grave in the probably ninth-century Welsh *Englynion y Beddau* and William of Malmesbury's statement in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c. 1125) that 'Arthur's grave is nowhere to be seen, whence antiquity of fables still claims that he will return'. See on all of this O.J. Padel's 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31 at pp. 8-12, and T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 73-75. For the other piece of Arthurian folklore found in William's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, relating to Gwalchmai's grave, see above under *Englynion y Beddau*; Green, 2007, pp. 71, 170-71; and P. Sims-Williams, 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at pp. 49-50.

#### **q. *Trioedd Ynys Prydein***

The 'Early Version' of *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* ('The Triads of the Island of Britain') is found in the mid-thirteenth-century NLW Peniarth 16. This manuscript ends with triad 46 and the remaining triads are found in the fourteenth-century 'White Book of Rhydderch' and the 'Red Book of Hergest' (47-69), Peniarth MS. 47 (fifteenth century; contains most of the triads of the 'Early Version' and triads 70-80) and Peniarth MS. 50 (81-6), with triads 87-96 consisting of 'miscellaneous additions to *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* which appear for the first time in one or other of the late manuscript collections': R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978), p. xi. The triads were originally mnemonic devices devised by the 'guardians' of Welsh traditional material to facilitate the recall of this material by systematising it and associating three characters or episodes with one another on the basis of features common to all three. The original collection of these triads, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, appears to have first been put together in the eleventh or twelfth century, though obviously the traditions it contained were older than this. With regards to our extant manuscripts, the contents of the 'Early Version' (NLW Peniarth 16) of this corpus can be considered pre-Galfridian in nature, whilst those triads found in the 'Later Version' (WB and RB) do show the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth at several points, though they are not in the main derived from him.

Many of the triads have Arthurian references and these are particularly prominent in the later versions of the triads, reflecting the growing interest in the Arthurian legend



and the drawing of traditional non-Arthurian figures into this cycle – indeed in the ‘Later Version’ Arthur displaces other characters from their original stories (as in the hunting of Henwen, *TYP* no. 26W). In *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* Arthur seems to be conceived of as the ‘lord of Britain’, as he is in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and perhaps *Kat Godeu*. Thus in *TYP* no. 1 Arthur is Chief Prince of the Three Tribal Thrones of the Island of Britain: at Mynyw [=St David’s] in Wales, Celliwig in Cornwall [his court in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and *Pa gur?*], and ‘Pen Rhionydd in the North’ (see T. Green, ‘A Note on Aladur, Alator and Arthur’, *Studia Celtica*, 41 (2007), pp. 237-41 in n. 17, for another possible Arthurian occurrence of this court). In some triads *Llys Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Court’, is used as the frame of reference for the triad rather than *Ynys Prydein*, ‘The Island of Britain’ (as in *TYP* no. 9); this becomes increasingly common over time). Arthur is not, however, the inactive and ineffectual ruler of later Romances but rather he still possesses ‘the hero’s destructive energy as his ravaging devastates the land for seven years’ wherever he goes: B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saint’s Lives’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at p. 81; *TYP* nos. 20 and 20W.

Arthur’s high status in Welsh tradition is made clear by the fact that his name is sometimes added at the end of a triad ‘as a fourth and exceptional example of a particular feature’ (Roberts, 1991, p. 80) – for example in *TYP* no. 2 Arthur is said to be ‘more generous’ than the three named ‘Generous Men’, and in *TYP* no. 52 he is ‘more exalted’ than the Three Exalted Prisoners (two of which he himself frees in *Preideu Annwfn* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*). Turning away from the portrayal of Arthur to his deeds, we find references to tales of his final battle at Camlann and conflict with Medraut, though these are late and/or probably influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth (nos. 51, 53, 54, 59, 84); his imprisonment (no. 52, in the Otherworld?); his attempts to procure/hunt boars (nos. 26 and 26W); and his role as Protector of Britain (no. 37R), when he discloses the ‘Head of Brân the blessed from the White Hill, because it did not seem right to him that this island should be defended by the strength of anyone but by his own’. Additionally Arthur is named as one of the Three Frivolous Bards (no. 12) and in no. 18W an *englyn* is attributed to him on his Three Battle-Horsemen.

For an indispensable discussion, text and translation of all the Arthurian triads, see R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978), which has recently been updated into a third edition (Cardiff, 2006). See also B.F. Roberts, ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saint’s Lives’, in Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), especially throughout chapters three, four and six; and O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 84-88.

### *r. Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain*

*Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain* (‘The Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain’) is found in over forty manuscripts, the earliest being NLW Peniarth 51 (c. 1460). In all fifteen treasures are named, though each list contains only thirteen. Two of the feeding vessels mentioned in this text – the ‘Hamper of Gwyddno Garanhir’ and the ‘Cauldron of Diwrnach the Giant’ – are also mentioned in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and the late date of the manuscripts of *Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain* shouldn’t be allowed to obscure the fact that we have here an attempt to transmit and preserve genuinely ancient fragments of lost traditional literature of medieval Wales. The origins of these ‘treasures’ are probably to be sought in stories of magic objects won (or bestowed) from the Otherworld, with this text being simply a list of 13 of these traditional talismans. There are two items of specific Arthurian interest in the list. The first is the cauldron of Diwrnach the Giant, which is undoubtedly the same as that cauldron of Diwrnach Wyddel taken from Ireland (a euhemerisation of the Otherworld) by Arthur in *Culhwch ac Olwen*. Of this it is stated:

if meat for a coward were put in it to boil, it would never boil; but if meat for a brave man were put into it, it would boil quickly (and thus the brave could be distinguished from the cowardly). (J.B. Coe and S. Young (ed. and trans.), *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), p. 89)

This should obviously be compared with the statement in the perhaps eighth-century poem *Preideu Annwfn* that the cauldron of the Chief of Annwfn, which Arthur travels to the Otherworld to seize,

boils not a coward's food (Coe and Young, 1995, p. 137)

underlining both the relationship between the *Preideu Annwfn* tale and that in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and the traditional nature of this 'Treasure'. The second item is:

The mantle of Arthur in Cornwall: Whoever was under it could not be seen, and he could see everybody. (Coe and Young, 1995, p. 91)

Arthur's mantle again appears to be traditional Otherworldly talisman and treasure. It is mentioned briefly in *Culhwch ac Olwen* and in *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* it is called Gwenn ('white, pure, sacred, holy'): 'According to the tale, one of the properties of the mantle was "that the man around whom it might be wrapped, no one would see him and he would see everyone. And no colour would ever stay on it except its own colour". Its own colour was white, and it was brought to Arthur by a red man mounted on a red horse. Its Otherworldly origins are clear.' (P.K. Ford, 'On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 30 (1983), pp. 268-73 at p. 270).

See on *Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain*, B.F. Roberts, 'Culhwch ac Olwen, the Triads, Saint's Lives', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at pp. 85-88; R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978); and T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 57, 115. On the Otherworldly possessions of Arthur and the stories surrounding them see P.K. Ford, 'On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 30 (1983), pp. 268-73.

### *s. Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*

*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* ('The Dream of Rhonabwy') is probably of a late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century date, though possible composition-dates range from the mid-twelfth century to the mid-fourteenth century (the latter date is provided by a reference to 'Rhonabwy's Dream' by the poet Madog Dwygraig (*fl.* 1370-80)). Interestingly, the tale on the whole seems to be largely independent of Galfridian influence. Although it is normally considered alongside the 'Mabinogion' group of tales, it differs in several ways from the others in this 'group' – it is only contained in the Red Book of Hergest (cols. 555.10-571), not the White Book of Rhydderch; it is separated from the other 'Mabinogion' tales in the Red Book by some 56 columns; and it appears to have been written by one single author and not to have evolved over time like the other tales. Most importantly, traditional material is utilised not as an end in itself but so as to create a completely original Arthurian tale composed in 'a satiric rather than a heroic vein, with a highly complex interplay of ambiguities and ironies' (C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature', in Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 183-208 at p. 185), with King Arthur himself being portrayed in a non-heroic light – although, interestingly, he is portrayed as a giant. In effect, the 'Dream

of Rhonabwy' breaks all the 'rules' that the other 'Mabinogion' tales stick to while being very familiar with these conventions, and *Rhonabwy* should probably be best seen as a parody of the whole fabric of Arthurian literary conventions in general.

See for a full discussion of *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later Arthurian Literature', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 183-208; J.T. Koch, 'The Celtic Lands', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 278-80; O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 94-99.

#### *t. The Gogynfeirdd and Cywyddwyr*

The Arthurian legend makes a number of appearances in the works of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century *Gogynfeirdd* (the court poets of the Welsh princes) and later Welsh poetry. It is frequently used as a source for positive comparisons with which to honour the subject of a poem, and this usage obviously echoes that of the earlier pre-Galfridian poets. In these twelfth-century and later compositions Arthur appears generally in his pre-Galfridian guise as a 'paragon of military valour', just as he does when used as a comparison in *Y Gododdin* and *Marnnad Cynddylan*. Thus the mid-twelfth century poet Gwalchmai ap Meilyr – who seems to have been named after Arthur's nephew – praises Madog ap Maredudd, king of Powys (d. 1160) for having *Arthur gedernyd* ('Arthur's Strength'), and Cynddelw (*c.* 1170) compares the fearsome shout of Madog's army to that of Arthur's host. Similarly Prydydd y Moch (who flourished *c.* 1170-1220) refers to 'Generous Arthur, the battle-famous lord' and says that 'he was a whirlwind, attacking beyond measure'.

Other elements of the Arthurian legend which appear in the work of the *Gogynfeirdd* include Medraut (the references to whom are always favourable, for example Meilyr Brydydd, in a lament for the death of Gruffudd ap Cynan (d. 1137), praises his subject for having Medraut's valour in battle, and Meilyr's son Gwalchmai lauds Madog ap Maredudd for possessing the 'good nature of Medrawd'); Arthur's son Llacheu (who appears, like his father, as a paragon of valour, thus Cynddelw's reference to *Llacheu uar*, 'Llacheu's ferocity'); Gwenhwyfar's father Ogrfan Gawr (with Hywel ab Owain, d. 1170, seeming to make a reference to a lost tale of Arthur's suit for Gwenhwyfar); and also, in passing, Gwalchmai, Cai, the *Twrch Trwyth*, *Kelli wic* and Camlann (which seems, curiously, to be portrayed as a successful battle). On the whole the fragments of Arthuriana that are found in the works of the *Gogynfeirdd* appear to be non-Galfridian in character – the poets making reference to tales and characters known to us from pre-Galfridian materials, such as the *Twrch Trwyth* and Cai's killing of Dillus the Bearded – and, indeed, seem in some ways to go clearly against the Galfridian narrative, as in the treatment of Medraut and the battle of Camlann. See further O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 51-61; R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978).

It is instructive to note that although the Arthurian legend clearly had a place in the body of legends drawn upon by the twelfth- and early thirteenth-century *Gogynfeirdd*, it was not nearly so prominent as it was to be in the work of the later poets. This prominence increases over time probably as a direct result of Arthur's growing international fame and the popularity in Wales of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (which the poets certainly seem to have been aware of and which was translated three times into Welsh in the thirteenth century as *Brut y Brenhinedd*) and *Y Tair Rhamant* ('The Three Romances'), from which many of the late references seem to derive: B.F. Roberts, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae* and *Brut y Brenhinedd*', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), p. 111; Padel, 2000, pp. 54, 60-61, 99; C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Breuddwyd Rhonabwy and Later

Arthurian Literature’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 202-03.

As Lloyd-Morgan points out (1991, p. 198ff.), Welsh writers in general seem to have seen this new material as a valuable resource, extending and enriching their native stock of stories, and it quickly came to dominate, with the writers blending it, where possible, with the native traditions. In contrast to the prose writers, however, the *cynyddwyr* – the poets of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – seem to have been somewhat selective in how many of the continental and Galfridian developments they chose to adopt and how closely they followed them. They seem to have been happy to continue to draw on the native and non-Galfridian Arthurian tradition, and when there was any discrepancy between this and the non-native material they frequently sided with the former. Thus in the fourteenth century Lacheu continues to feature as a standard of praise; Medraut remains an honourable and valiant character (rather than the traitor of the *Historia Regum Britanniae*); and the poets’ concept of Cai is that of *Culhwch* rather than that of the ‘Matter of Britain’. When Dafydd ap Gwilym and Dafydd ab Edmwnd refer to the abduction of Gwenhwyfar by Melwas they are referring not to continental tales of infidelity but to the Otherworldly pre-Galfridian tale that underlies *Ymddiddan Melwas ac Gwenhwyfar* and the *Vita Gildae* of Caradoc of Llancarfan.

Of course, this is not to say that the *cynyddwyr* (or the late *Gogynfeirdd*) routinely rejected the non-native materials. Indeed, they seem to have generally favoured the *Brutiau* and the ‘Three Romances’ over *Culhwch ac Olwen* and the like as a source for poetic references and comparisons (Lloyd-Morgan, 1991, p. 203, for example the references to Peredur, Geraint and Owain made in the poems of Bleddyn Fardd in the late thirteenth century and the appearance of the grail and characters such as Lancelot in fifteenth-century texts). Additionally we can see that the influence and dominance of the post-Galfridian material on their work did increase over time and that the native traditional material was increasingly eclipsed by or blended with this. For example, the poets’ conception of Gwenhwyfar probably changed during the fourteenth century from a victim of abduction to a willing adulterer, and Medraut, though he manages to remain a positive character throughout the middle ages in native tradition, finally becomes the enemy of Arthur/traitor that he is the Galfridian tale in the work of the early sixteenth-century poet Tudur Aled. On the whole, however, the resistance by the poets to obvious changes in the nature of the established native Arthurian characters is notable and surprisingly long-lasting. Reference to the full range of the Matter of Britain did not really appear until very late and only then in the work of certain poets of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century, such as Siôn ap Hywel and Tudur Aled (Padel, 2000, pp. 99-101, 111, 113-19).

Both this continuing use of native Arthurian tradition and the adoption and co-existence of non-native elements can also be witnessed in the later versions of *Trioedd Ynys Prydein* and related texts such as the mid-fifteenth-century *Pedwar Marchog ar Hugain Llŷs Arthur* (‘Twenty-Four Knights of Arthur’s Court’). An awareness of the Galfridian tale of Arthur and Medraut, for example, is clearly the source of several of the later Triads concerning Camlann but it also seems to act as a catalyst for the recording of other apparently non-Galfridian (and sometimes contradictory) traditions regarding the battle (such as TYP nos. 53, 59 and 84). Similarly in *Pedwar Marchog ar Hugain Llŷs Arthur* some of the groups of knights are drawn straight from the pre-Galfridian tradition of *Culhwch ac Olwen* (for example, ‘Three Irresistible Knights’), others are largely non-Galfridian in character but betray some influence (for example, ‘Three Golden-Tongued Knights’), and yet others are entirely non-native (for example, ‘Three Virgin Knights’). See Bromwich, 1978; Padel, 2000, pp. 87-88, 91-2; Lloyd-Morgan, 1991, pp. 200-02.

See further O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 51-61, 71, 99-101, 111, 113-19; R. Bromwich (ed. and trans.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads*

(Cardiff, 1978); R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), particularly the chapters by C. Lloyd-Morgan and P. Sims-Williams; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007); and J. Rowlands, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry: a Study and Edition of the Englynion* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 250-59. On the *Gogynfeirdd* see J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *The Poets of the Princes* (Cardiff, 1978) and A.O.H. Jarman and G.R. Hughes (ed.), *A Guide to Welsh Literature I* (Swansea, 1976).

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