

## LEGENDS PACK FOR VISIT WALES WORKSHOP, CAERNARFON

### ST DWYNWEN AND SAINT DWYNWEN'S DAY, 25 JANUARY

Dwynwen is the Welsh patron saint of friendship and love. A 5th Century saint, she was reputedly one of the prettiest of Brychan Brycheiniog's 24 daughters!

She fell in love with a young man named Maelon Dafodrill, but her father had arranged for her to marry another. Maelon was so distressed that he attacked Dwynwen. She fled to the woods where she begged God to make her forget Maelon.

After falling asleep she was visited by an angel carrying a sweet potion of forgetfulness, and one that would turn Maelon to ice. When she woke, she saw all that had happened. God then appeared, and granted Dwynwen three wishes. She wished to thaw Maelon, she wished that God met the hopes and dreams of lovers and that she should never marry.

All three were met, and Dwynwen devoted the rest of her life to serve God. The remains of her Church can be seen at Llanddwyn in South West Anglesey. Near the church, overlooking the sea is a small well, known as St Dwynwen's well. It has been a place of pilgrimage for lovers for many centuries.

Today in Wales, we celebrate Gwyl Santes Dwynwen in much the same way as St Valentine's day is celebrated, with sweethearts exchanging gifts and enjoying romantic dinners for two.

## CADAIR IDRIS

Cadair (or Cader) Idris is one of Wales's most iconic mountains. It is about 893m in height, standing at the southern gate of Snowdonia, overlooking Dolgellau. The three peaks are Pen y Gadair (Head of the Chair), Cyfrwy (the Saddle) and Mynydd Moel (the Bare Mountain). In the cwm half way down the mountain is Llyn Cau, supposedly a bottomless lake.

There are numerous stories and legends associated with this mountain and Idris, the giant who's seat it supposedly is. A few of the nearby lakes – such as Llyn Mwyngul (commonly known as Tal-y-llyn lake) are reputed to be bottomless, and those who venture up the mountain at night should take heed before sleeping on its slopes. It is said that those who sleep on the mountain will awaken either as a madman, a poet or indeed never wake again.

Idris appears in many guises in the Welsh tradition – as giant, prince and astronomer. One of the tales told of the giant, is that sitting on his great chair one day, he felt pieces of grit inside his shoes which he removed and cast down the mountainside. The three large stones that rest at the foot of the mountain are said to be those annoying pieces of grit. Another tale tells of Idris throwing pieces of grit across the area. One of these pieces – a significant sized rock landed in Aberllefenni, another in Rhydymain and the third in Abergeirw. There are two other stones on the left of the road through the pass as you head for Dolgellau, linked with this story. The largest across the way from the lay-by was thrown by Idris and the other, a smaller stone was apparently put there by his wife!

But who was Idris? Where does his fame stem from? The trail in terms of an historical Idris probably begins with Sualda ab (son of) Idris, a seventh century prince of Meirionnydd (c 630AD). The father in this case is Idris – Idris ap Gwyddno of Meirionnydd who died in 632 AD, and who is recorded in the Harleian genealogy. He is noted as the son of Gwyddno who, some have linked to that man of the same name - Gwyddno Granhir, owner or ruler of the lower Cantref, or submerged hundred (cantref or hundred being an area of land). It was upon a stream within Gwyddno's lands that the quasi-historical poet and visionary Welsh hero Taliesin was found floating in a basket on May eve.

It is appealing to link these mythological strands historically. In reality, however, we will possibly never know whether Idris was indeed a one-time prince of Meirionnydd. A prince who's renown or military prowess caused him to become a 'giant' amongst men, and immortalised as the giant of Cader Idris, or rather if he is the product of local folk tales and the vivid Welsh imagination, fuelled by the dramatic landscape and changeable weather of the Snowdonia mountains.

While the mountain is most strongly associated with Idris the giant, it is sometimes also referred to as Arthur's seat – presumably referring in this case to the legendary King Arthur. This connection has been popularised by

Susan Cooper in her book *The Grey King* which forms a part of the well known *The Dark is Rising* series.

In Welsh mythology, Cader Idris is also forms part of the hunting ground of Gwyn ap Nudd, lord of the Celtic Underworld 'Annwn', and his strange, red eared, otherworldly dogs. The howling of these great dogs was a portend of death for those who heard it, as it was believed that the pack herded the person's soul into the underworld.

There are a number of marked, named footpaths leading to the summit of Cader Idris, including the Pony Path (Llwybr Pilin-pwn) and the Fox's Path (Llwybr Madyn). The Fox's Path between Llyn y Gader and the summit is on a steep and loose scree slope which must be descended with particular care. Much of the area around the mountain was designated a National Nature Reserve in 1957, and is home to arctic-alpine plants including purple saxifrage and dwarf willow. Further information is available for walkers wishing to visit Cader Idris, on [www.wales-walking.co.uk](http://www.wales-walking.co.uk)

## LLEUCU LLWYD

Lleucu Llwyd is one of Wales's most tragic love heroines, often referred to as the 'Welsh Juliet'. She lived on Dolgelynnen Farm near the Dyfi river around the mid fourteenth century, and was reputedly a very beautiful young woman. Lleucu fell in love with a young poet, Llywelyn Goch the son of Meurig Hen, but her father wouldn't agree to the match, and did everything he could to separate the young lovers.

During their courtship, Llywelyn Goch was forced to travel to South Wales, but vowed that he would return to marry Lleucu. While he was away, her father saw his chance, and told Lleucu that Llywelyn had betrayed her and married another. This broke Lleucu's heart and she died.

Llywelyn returned soon afterwards to Dolgelynnen to fulfil his vow and marry Lleucu, but in fact, his return coincided with her funeral, and he helped to bury her. The records of St Peter ad Venacular church in Pennal record that Lleucu was buried under the church alter in 1390.

The tragic story of Lleucu Llwyd has continued in popular Folk tradition in Wales mainly thanks to Llywelyn Goch's (1350 – 1380) poetry. His elegy for Lleucu is considered one of the leading pieces of its time.

## MARI JONES (DECEMBER 16 1784 - DECEMBER 29, 1864)

In 1800 a young protestant woman named Mari Jacob Jones, who was only 16 years old at the time, walked bare foot from her home in Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to Bala – a journey of over 50 miles there and back – in order to buy a copy of the Bible in Welsh. She had saved for over six years to have enough money to buy a copy, but there was nowhere nearer to home where she could purchase a Bible than Bala. She began her journey one morning in 1800, but by the time she reached the town, there were no Welsh Bibles left anywhere.

Thomas Charles a well respected local man, who organised circulating reading schools in the region (including the school at which Mari herself had learned to read), took pity on Mari and gave her his own precious copy of the Bible. This act inspired the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Mari later married a weaver of Bryn-Crug by the name of Thomas Lewis. She died in 1864 and was buried at the graveyard of Bryn-crug Calvinistic Methodist Chapel. Her own bible is now kept at the British and Foreign Bible Society's archives in Cambridge University Library. It is one of only ten thousand copies of the 1799 edition of the Welsh Bible that were printed at Oxford on behalf of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

On the last page of the Apocrypha, Mari Jones wrote in English: Mary Jones was born 16th of December 1784. I Bought this in the 16th year of my age. I am Daughter of Jacob Jones and Mary Jones His wife. the Lord may give me grace. Amen. Mary Jones His [is] The True Onour [owner] of this Bible. Bought In the Year 1800 Aged 16.

Another of the copies she purchased in Bala is now in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth; see [www.llgc.org.uk](http://www.llgc.org.uk) for further details.

A walking route stretches between Mari's home in Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to the Bala. See The Bible Society in Wales for details:  
<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/what-we-do/our-work/mary-jones/>

## HEDD WYN (1887 – 1917)

Ellis Humphrey Evans was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1887 at Trawsfynydd. Following a basic education he left school at fourteen to begin to become a shepherd on his father's farm, Yr Ysgwrn. He began writing poems at about eleven, and from the age of 19 competed regularly in Eisteddfodau. Much of his work was inspired by the Romantic poets such as Shelly; not surprising perhaps that a young shepherd should muse on nature and religion. In 1910 he took the bardic name Hedd Wyn, and won the first of his 6 chairs at Bala Eisteddfod in 1907.

The First World War cast dark shadows across every community in Britain. Conscription began in 1916, it required a son of the family of Yr Ysgwrn to join the British Army. To avoid his younger brother being sent, Ellis enlisted. He received training at Litherland Camp, Liverpool, but in March 1917, he was temporarily released from duty along with other soldiers for seven weeks to help with ploughing and planting of land. He headed home to Trawsfynydd. During this time he began work on a new 'awdl' Yr Arwr (The Hero), his submission for the forthcoming National Eisteddfod. It was a wet year, and he stayed longer at home on the farm to get the work done, than was allowed. The military police collected him unceremoniously from the field and he was detained at Blaenau before being transported to Belgium and then on to join the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers at Fléchin, France.

His departure had been so sudden, that he'd forgotten the poem for the Eisteddfod, so wrote it again on his journey. It was in Fléchine, while awaiting orders that he finished 'Yr Arwr' and signed it '*Fleur de Lis*'. It was posted on 15 July 1917, the very same day that his Battalion marched towards what would become known as the Battle of Passchendaele.

Back in Wales, the crops ripened and harvesting began. In September that year, the National Eisteddfod was held at Birkenhead. The ceremony of the Charing of the Bard was held on 6 of September in the presence of the Welsh speaking British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George.

At the appointed time, the pseudo name of the victorious bard was announced "Fleur de Lys". The trumpet's fanfare invited the bard to stand and make himself known, but nobody stood. Instead, the Archdruid solemnly announced that the winner, Ellis Evans had been killed in action six weeks earlier. He had been wounded during the Battle of Passchendaele, and died of his wounds on 31 July 1917. The carved, empty chair was draped in a black sheet and has been known ever since and the 'Black Chair of Birkenhead'.

Ellis H Evans is buried at Artillery Wood Cemetery near Boezinge. After the end of the War, a petition to the Commonwealth War Graves commission succeeded in having additional words added to the simple name 'E H Evans' on the plain gravestone. Ever since it has read '*Y Prifardd Hedd Wyn*' (English: "The Chief Bard, Hedd Wyn").

## PRINCE MADOG AB OWAIN

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue... and discovered America. But, according to legend, Prince Madog ab Owain Gwynedd got there first – a whole 300 years earlier.

Madog and his brother Riryd set sail from what we know today as Rhos-on-Sea in 1170, and dropped anchor possibly in modern day Alabama. He returned to Wales with tales of high adventure and set sail a second time, taking a band of settlers with him. It's thought they landed at Mobile Bay and then headed inland along the Alabama river. But the story doesn't end there: stone forts along the river dating from around the time of Madog's arrival are said to be of a similar design to Dolwyddelan Castle, and early explorers are thought to have found evidence of Welsh influence among various tribes of North American Indians – including the use of coracles – a type of boat still in use in Wales today.

Whether fact or legend, Madog's story has provided fertile inspiration for generations of poets, novelists and cultural historians.

Madoc was allegedly the son of Owain Gwynedd a 12<sup>th</sup> Century prince of Gwynedd, widely considered one of the greatest Welsh rulers of the Middle Ages. Following his death in 1170, a bloody feud broke out between his heir Hywel (known as the 'Poet Prince') and Maelgwn, Rhodri and Dafydd his younger sons. They were sons of Owain's second wife, Cristin. In total he had at least 13 children from his two wives and several more born out of wedlock but - as was the tradition in Wales - fully acknowledged. According to the legend, Madoc and his brother Rhirid were among these.

The legend claims that Madoc was disheartened by the fighting between his half brothers and so he and Rhirid decided to explore the western ocean with a small fleet of boats. This they did, setting sail from Llandrillo, Rhos-on-Sea.

The story tells that they discovered a distant and abundant land where one hundred Welshmen disembarked and established a settlement. It has been suggested that their landing place was west Florida or Mobile Bay, Alabama in the US. Madoc and some others then returned to Wales to recruit more settlers and then returned across the Atlantic a second time, never to return.

While there is no absolute proof, there have been some tantalizing anecdotes that seem to support the legend. On November 26, 1608, Peter Wynne, a member of Captain Christopher Newport's exploration party to the villages of the Eastern Siouan Monacan, above the falls of the James River in Virginia, wrote a letter to John Egerton. In it he informed Egerton that some members of Newport's party believed that the pronunciation of the Monacans' language resembled "Welch" which Wynne spoke. Furthermore, the Monacans were among those non-Algonquian tribes collectively referred to by the Algonquians as "Mandoag" – a term tantalisingly close to 'Madoc-ian'.

Another early settler to claim an encounter with a Welsh-speaking Indian was the Rev. Morgan Jones. He told Thomas Lloyd, William Penn's deputy, that he'd been captured in 1669 by a tribe of Tuscarora called the Doeg. According to Jones, his life was spared when the tribe's chief heard him speak Welsh. The chief seemed to be familiar with the language, understanding much of what Jones said. Jones' report says that he then lived with the Doeg for several months, preaching the Gospel in Welsh before returning to the British Colonies where he recorded the adventure in 1686.

Folk tradition has long held that a site called "Devil's Backbone" at Rose Island, about fourteen miles upstream from Louisville, Kentucky, was once home to a colony of Welsh-speaking Indians.

In 1810, the first governor of Tennessee, Jon Sevier wrote to his friend, Major Amos Stoddard regarding a conversation he'd had years earlier in 1782 with the old Cherokee chief, Oconostota about the ancient fortifications built along the Alabama River. In the letter, Sevier claims that the old chief told him that the forts had been built by a white people called "Welsh", as protection against the ancestors of the Cherokee. Sevier had also written in 1700 of the alleged discovery of six skeletons in brass armor bearing Welsh coat-of-arms.

This story is corroborated in a later letter, dated 1824 by Thomas S Hind, who wrote to the editor of the American Pioneer regarding the Madoc tradition. In this letter, Hind also claimed that in 1799, six soldiers had been dug up near Jeffersonville, Indiana on the Ohio River with breastplates decorated with Welsh coat of arms.

It is probable that the truth will never really be known, that no artifact nor evidence will ever be found to prove beyond doubt that a Welsh nobleman discovered America three centuries before Columbus. Nevertheless, it is a tantalizing story and a legend that has withstood the test of time.



## MERLIN

Of Merlin and his skill what Region doth not heare  
The world shall still be full of Merlin everie where.  
A thousand lingering yeares his prophecies have runne,  
And scarcely shall have end till time itself be done.

Michael Drayton, Poly-olbion, Song V.

In 1622, the renowned English poet Michael Drayton predicted that Merlin's world-wide fame may last to the end of time. Four centuries later, Merlin's star certainly shows no sign of fading. He's been the topic of books, novels, plays, academic research, websites, films, numerous television series and artwork. It seems that each generation re-discovers Merlin, and that in each generation this mysterious figure from our distant past continues to capture our imagination.

Merlin, or Myrddin to give him his Welsh name, is perhaps best known for being King Arthur's adviser and wizard in the Arthurian legends. Geoffrey of Monmouth, the twelfth Century writer who brought together Arthurian stories in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*, written 1136, provides the first depiction of Merlin as he is popularly portrayed today. However, Geoffrey was drawing on far older sources. He combined existing tales of Myrddin Wyllt (Merlinus Caledonenis) a northern 'wild man of the woods' with no connection whatsoever to Arthur, with tales of the historic Romano-British war leader Ambrosius Aurelianus, to create the figure he named Merlin Ambrosius.

Stories about Merlin seem to have been widespread in the Celtic countries and on the continent during the dark ages and reached a peak of popularity in the medieval period. As a result, many places lay claim to an association with his life in some way.

The Welsh version of the legend - which is based on the Myrddin Wyllt 'wild man of the woods' character - tells how Merlin, following his defeat in 573 at the Battle of Arfderydd (near Carlisle), lost his mind. He withdrew to Coed Celyddon, the Caledonian Forest in what would have been at the time the Welsh-speaking lowlands of southern Scotland. There he lived as a wild man with only forest animals and a piglet for company. As a result of his experiences during that long sojourn in the woods, Merlin became a prophet. Many of these prophecies were written down in poetic form during the ninth century, reputedly by Merlin himself, and a collection of them are recorded in the thirteenth century manuscript *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* – The Black Book of Carmarthen.

It is therefore, not surprising that many tales about Merlin are located in Carmarthenshire. Furthermore is clear that Merlin as poet and prophet was known in Wales as early as the tenth century, as he is referred to in the prophetic poem *Armes Prydein*, which forms a part of 'The Book of Taliesin'. This Welsh poem was composed by a supporter of the dynasty of Deheubarth

(South –West Wales, of which modern day Carmarthenshire forms a significant part). Modern scholars believe that the writer was possibly an ecclesiast, though it is erroneously attributed to the poet Taliesin. The connection therefore, between Merlin and the town of Carmarthen was made at least as early as the time when Armes Prydain was composed – some two centuries earlier than the Black Book of Carmarthen.

Finally, the sheer volume of sites and place names in the area including his oak tree, hill and cave, some stones and burial chambers suggests a tangible link.

### Merlin Awakes

Vortigern, known to the Welsh as Gwrtheyrn was king of Britannia, (today's Britain) during the fifth century. It was a time of great change. Not since the Roman invasion had the peoples of Britain suffered attack from outside forces, and that history was now a distant memory and the stuff of fireside tales. But, now there was a new threat – the Saxons.

Vortigern had unwittingly hired Saxon warlords as mercenary fighters against the unruly Picts of the north. These Saxons revolted and set up their own kingdoms. Gradually, the Saxon forces came to rule much of what we know as England today, forcing the native Britons to retreat into the western and northern quarters of the island: to Scotland, Wales and Cornwall. A sixth Century Welsh poem called Y Gododdin, tells of the final battle for the Brythonic territory of Gododdin between the British and Anglo Saxon forces. In it, Aneurin the poet describes the fate of the Brythonic army:

O drychant rhiallu yd grysiasant Gatraeth,  
Tru, namyn un gŵr nid atgorsant.

Of the regal army of three hundred men that hastened to Catraeth,  
Alas! none have returned, save one alone.

Vortigern appealed to his Druid advisors for guidance. They told him that he should withdraw to the high mountain ranges of Wales and there find a suitable place to build a stronghold from which he could govern and plan his counter attacks. Having searched long and hard, Vortigern came to the foothills of Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon, the highest mountain in his lands. He chose a steep sided, flat topped hill near the river Glaslyn, and his men set to work quarrying stone and building great walls that would protect Vortigern and his court.

Day after day they worked in the late summer heat to dig foundations and build the walls, but no progress was made. Each night the stone walls were demolished, and each morning on returning to work, the men would have to begin anew. After some weeks, Vortigern called a council of his druids. He asked them to discover why he could not build upon the hill, and what magic

would counter whatever malevolent forces were destroying the walls at night. Having conferred, the Druids advised that Vortigern should seek out a boy who had no mortal father. If this boy was sacrificed, and his blood spilled upon the hilltop, then the troublesome spirits of the place would be appeased and work could continue without difficulty.

Vortigern duly sent men to search each corner of his kingdom to find such a boy. After a few months of fruitless searching, some of the men came to the old Roman town of Moridunum, known today as Carmarthen. There, near the old Roman amphitheatre, beneath the branches of a fine oak tree, they came across some young boys. One of these lads was being taunted by two others about his lack of a father. The soldiers became interested, and intervened in the boys' squabble. They enquired of his mother and the boy who introduced himself as Emrys took them to her. She was a princess of the region who now lived as a nun in the Priory at Carmarthen. She explained that she had been visited one night by a golden spirit, and it was through that visitation that her son had been conceived.

The soldiers took Emrys back to the north, and at dawn on a cold day in the depths of winter he was led by Vortigern's Druids to the summit of the hill. Realising what fate awaited him, he announced that killing him and spilling his blood would have no effect whatsoever. But, he said he knew what was causing the walls to fall each night:

*"Beneath this hill is a lake, and beneath that lake is a stone. Beneath that stone is a deep cave with two chambers. In each of these chambers sleeps a dragon. As you build your walls during the day, the weight presses down upon the dragons' backs and so at night, when they awake, they shake the land and your walls fall."*

When asked what should be done so that the fortress could be successfully built, Merlin advised that the underground lake should be drained, and the capstone beneath it excavated to reveal the cavern. Vortigern's men set to work at once, and found that everything was as Emrys described. They worked all day, until they were able to move the capstone to reveal a deep dark cavern in the heart of the hill.

That night, Vortigern, his Druids and warriors remained with Emrys and kept watch. Just as Emrys had predicted, as the last rays of light left the sky, the two dragons – one white, the other red - awoke. For many hours that night, they fought each other fiercely. At one point the red dragon seemed weak and unable to withstand the tireless onslaught of the white dragon, but eventually, in what seemed like a final desperate attack, the red dragon drove the white dragon out of the cave. It escaped through the opening and flew southwards.

*"What does this mean?"* asked Vortigern of his advisors. None could give him an answer except Emrys.

*“Sir”, he said, “The red dragon symbolises the Brythonic peoples of this land, and the white dragon stands for the Saxons. This is a sign that in the end, the native people of this land will succeed in withstanding the Saxons.”*

To this day, that hill is known as Dinas Emrys – Emrys’ stronghold. But where does Merlin come in to this? Amazed at this boy’s gifts of insight and prophecy, the Druids gave Emrys a new name – a name given to only the wisest and most enlightened poets and seers. They called him Myrddin – Merlin.

The white dragon continued its passage through the heartlands of Wales, heading south until eventually it came to the sea. Legend has it that as it came to the coastline in what we know today as Gower, the sun rose and the dragon was turned to stone. To this day, that peninsula in Gower is known as Worm’s Head – ‘worm’ being the Anglo-Saxon word for dragon. From Carmarthenshire’s coast, it is easy to trace the outline of the head, neck, body and tail of the dragon as it slopes into the water.

The red dragon fared somewhat better. It took its place on the Welsh flag as a guardian symbol for the land, and a device to which the Welsh have rallied in battle for many centuries. Merlin’s first prophecy did come true; Wales was never defeated by the Anglo-Saxons. While later Norman and English Kings claimed rulership of the nation, it has never been conquered. Today, Y Ddraig Goch - ‘The Red Dragon’ as the flag is known, flies proudly outside the Senedd in Cardiff, Wales’s own parliament.

## GELERT'S GRAVE

Gelert was Llywelyn the Great's favorite hunting hound, but he was getting old, and not always able to keep up with the pack after a hare or a stag any more. Nevertheless, Llywelyn kept him near, a constant companion as he journeyed from llys to llys to meet his people and see that justice was done throughout his domains. Back at home, among the family, Gelert was equally favoured, being a favorite playmate and companion for Llywelyn's year old son, trusted for his gentleness and good nature.

One of Llywelyn's courts lay near the village of Beddgelert today. Here in the summer, Llywelyn and his wife and Teulu (warband) would sometimes rest for a few days on their progress from llys to llys and enjoy the good hunting the wooded valley offered. On one such occasion, it so happened that Princess Joan, Llywelyn's wife had been called to visit a local priest, on the same day as Llywelyn and his men had planned to go hunting. And so, reluctantly, Llywelyn left his faithful old hound Gelert with a nurse to watch his young son, and galloped off in search of quarry for the banquet table that night.

The hot afternoon wore on to a beautiful, golden evening. The nurse slumbered in a chair beneath the shade of an apple tree as she rocked the sleeping prince in his cradle. She was roused from her slumbers by the cook calling for her help with some errand or other, and thinking nothing of it, left Gelert to guard the sleeping prince. Little did she know that a lone, hungry wolf had been watching nearby, and seeing his chance, slunk his way towards the tree and the baby's cradle.

A little while later, Llywelyn and his men returned with a few fat hares ready for the pot. Gelert came to the courtyard, barking and wagging his tail to greet Llywelyn, but the old hound's mouth was covered in blood. Alarmed, Llywelyn rushed into the nursery to search for his son, finding it empty and the door open to the orchard beyond, he went out to find the little prince's cot upturned and nearby a bloody blanket. Blinded by his grief, Llywelyn thrust his sword into Gelert's flank, but as the great hound let out a dying howl, the little prince let out an alarmed wail from beneath the upturned cradle. Llywelyn found the child safe and unharmed, and hidden nearby, in the shade of the apple tree the dead body of a thin, hungry wolf.

In his misery, Llywelyn clasped Gelert's still warm but lifeless body to him and vowed to honour the brave hound who had doubtless defended the little prince and killed the wolf. Llywelyn kept his word and built a special grave for all to see. It is still visited by thousands to this day, and has given the village that grew up nearby its name, Beddgelert, Gelert's Grave.

## RHYS AND MEINIR AT NANT GWYTHEYRN

Once, there were two young lovers, Rhys and Meinir. They courted each other near Nant Gwrtheyrn, enjoying the spectacular sea views and the shade of an old hollow oak tree. After several months of courtship, they planned to wed at midsummer in the nearby ancient pilgrim church of Clynnog Fawr.

The day dawned bright and sunny, and as was a tradition at the time, Meinir went to hide from the groomsmen who would come to find her and bear her to church.

The appointed time of the ceremony came. Rhys waited at the altar for his bride, but she didn't come. Seconds turned to minutes and the day wore on, but still, the groomsmen could not find Meinir, and Rhys was left waiting for his bride. Eventually, anxiety turned to panic and Rhys and the congregation joined in the search. The long solstice day dwindled to dusk, and still, they did not find Meinir.

In the coming days, the whole parish searched high and low for Rhys' missing bride, but never found her. Grief stricken, Rhys continued his search day and night, accompanied only by his faithful dog, Cidwm.

One cold night, nearing midwinter, Rhys' search took him down the steep hill towards Nant Gwrtheyrn. The wind picked up and blew a storm inland from the sea. Rhys took shelter beneath the old hollow oak, remembering all the pleasant times he'd shared with Meinir beneath its boughs. Suddenly, a flash of lightening struck the old tree and cleft it in two. Half the bough came crashing down by Rhys' side, revealing what had been hidden within. A skeleton clothed in a pale wedding dress, some bright hair still clinging to a tattered veil. Rhys' heart broke, he fell to the ground and died. His faithful dog, Cidwm, lay down by his master's side and never woke up again.

## OWAIN GLYNDWR AND THE ABBOT OF VALLE CRUCIS

No name conjures up images of Welsh rebellion better than that of Owain Glyndwr. "I am not in the roll of common men," says Owain in Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part I. More than just a revolutionary, Owain was born to Welsh aristocracy in 1354, descended of the royal bloodlines of Powys and Deheubarth in south west Wales. He inherited the title Baron of Glyndyfrdwy, and the manor of Glyndyfrdwy through his father. It was here on 16 September 1400 that he proclaimed himself Prince of Wales, beginning a fourteen-year long rebellion against English rule.

Like King Arthur, there is a tradition that Owain Glyndwr is still alive and sleeping, awaiting a time when he is needed again to lead Wales to freedom. A tale recorded by the chronicler Elis Gruffydd, tells of how the Abbot of Valle Crucis Abbey met Owain early one morning while walking alone on the hills above Llangollen.

"You have risen early, Master Abbot," said the Prince, to which the Abbot replied,

"No, my Lord, it is you who have risen early – at least a hundred years too early." With that, Owain walked away and disappeared into the morning mist.

## PECYN CHWEDLAU, GWEITHDY CROESO CYMRU, CAERNARFON

### SANTES DWYNWEN

Dwynwen yw nawddsant cyfeillgarwch a chariad Cymru. Yn sant o'r 5ed ganrif, yn ôl pob sôn, hi oedd yr harddaf o 24 merch y brenin Brychan Brycheiniog.

Syrthiodd mewn cariad gyda dyn ifanc o'r enw Maelon Dafodrill, ond roedd ei thad wedi trefnu iddi briodi un arall. Pan glywodd Maelon am hyn, mewn tymer angerddol, ymosododd ar Dwynwen. Dyma hi'n ffoi i'r goedwig lle ymbilodd ar Dduw i wneud iddi anghofio am Maelon.

Ar ôl iddi syrthio i gysgu cafodd ei ymweliad gan angel yn cario edlyn melys o anghofrwydd, ac un a fyddai'n troi Maelon i rew. Pan ddihunodd, gwelodd beth oedd wedi digwydd. Yna rhoddodd Duw dri dymuniad i Dwynwen. Dymunodd ddadmer Maelon, dymunodd bod Duw yn cwrdd â gobeithion a breuddwydion cariadon ac na fyddai hi fyth yn priodi.

Cafodd y tri eu bodloni, ac addunedodd Dwynwen weddill ei bywyd i wasanaethu Duw. Mae olion ei eglwys i'w gweld yn Llanddwyn yn ne orllewin Ynys Môn. Ger yr eglwys, yn edrych dros y môr, mae yna ffynnon, a elwir yn Ffynnon Santes Dwynwen. Mae wedi bod yn gyrchfan i bererinion cariadus ers canrifoedd lawer.

Heddiw, yng Nghymru rydym yn dathlu Gŵyl Santes Dwynwen mewn ffyrdd tebyg i ddydd San Ffolant, gyda chariadon yn cyfnewid anrhegion ac yn mwynhau swperi rhamantus.



## CADAIR IDRIS

Mae Cadair (neu Cader) Idris yn un o fynyddoedd mwyaf eiconig Cymru. Mae tuag 893m o uchder ac yn rhyw fath o borth deheuol i Eryri, yn edrych dros Ddolgellau. Y tri chopa yw Pen y Gadair, y Cyfrwy a Mynydd Moel.

Mae lluo o straeon a chwedlau'n gysylltiedig â'r mynydd ac ag Idris, y cawr y dywedir ei fod yn arfer eistedd yno. Yn ôl y sôn, mae nifer o lynnoedd yr ardal, fel Llyn Cau sydd mewn cwm hanner ffordd i lawr y mynydd a Llyn Mwyngil (neu Lyn Tal-y-llyn) yn byllau diwaelod. Mae'n debyg y dylech feddwl ddwywaith cyn mynd i wersylla ar Gadair Idris oherwydd dywedir bod y sawl sy'n cysgu ar y mynydd yn deffro'n wallgof neu'n fardd neu, wir, yn peidio â deffro o gwbl.

Mae Idris yn ymddangos ar sawl ffurf mewn chwedlau Cymreig – yn gawr, yn dywysog ac yn seryddwr. Yn ôl un chwedl, tra oedd Idris yn eistedd ar ei gadair un diwrnod, teimlodd gerrig mân yn ei esgidiau. Tynnodd ei esgidiau a lluchio'r cerrig mân i lawr ochr y mynydd. Dywedir mai'r cerrig mân hynny yw'r tair carreg enfawr sydd i'w gweld wrth droed y mynydd. Mae chwedl arall yn sôn am Idris yn taflu tameidiau o raean hefyd. Glaniodd un darn – cloben o graig – yn Aberllefenni, un arall yn Rhydymain a'r trydydd yn Abergeirw. Mae dwy garreg arall ar y chwith yn y bwlch wrth i chi fynd am Ddolgellau sydd hefyd yn gysylltiedig â'r stori. Idris daflodd y gyntaf, yr un fwyaf sydd dros y ffordd i'r gilfan ac, yn ôl y sôn, ei wraig a luchiodd y llall!

Ond pwy oedd Idris? Sut y daeth yn enwog? Mae'n debyg bod y trywydd i ddod o hyd i'r Idris hanesyddol yn cychwyn gyda Sualda ab Idris, tywysog Meirionnydd yn y seithfed ganrif (tua 630OC). Idris ap Gwyddno o Feirionnydd, a fu farw yn 632OC ac y ceir cyfeiriad ato yn Achrestrau Harley, oedd tad Sualda. Mae rhai pobl yn credu mai Gwyddno, tad Idris, oedd Gwyddno Garanhir, perchennog Cantre'r Gwaelod. Dywedir mai mewn basged ar nant ar dir Gwyddno y cafwyd hyd i Taliesin, y bardd a'r gweledydd lled hanesyddol, ar Galan Mai.

Mae'n braf gweld cysylltiad rhwng y gwahanol chwedlau ond, mewn gwirionedd, mae'n annhebygol y cawn wybod fyth a fu Idris yn dywysog Meirionnydd a bod ei allu milwrol a'i enwogrwydd wedi ei wneud yn 'gawr' ymhlith dynion ynteu ai cynnyrch chwedlau gwerin a dychymyg pobl a ysbrydolwyd gan dirwedd mawreddog a thywydd cyfnewidiol mynyddoedd Eryri ydoedd.

Er mai ag Idris y cysylltir y mynydd gan amlaf, cyfeirir ato weithiau fel Cadair Arthur – sef y Brenin Arthur, mae'n fwy na thebyg. Mae Susan Cooper yn gwneud y cysylltiad hwn yn ei llyfr The Grey King sy'n rhan o'i chyfres adnabyddus The Dark is Rising.

Yn ôl chwedloniaeth Cymru, roedd Cadair Idris hefyd yn rhan o diroedd hela Gwyn ap Nudd, brenin Annwn, a'i gŵn arallfydol â'u clustiau cochion. Y gred

oedd y byddai'r sawl a glywai'r cŵn hyn yn udo yn siwr o farw ac y byddai'r cŵn yn hebrwng ei enaid i Annwn.

Mae nifer o lwybrau troed penodol yn arwain i gopa Cadair Idris, yn cynnwys Llwybr Pilin Pwn (Pony Path) a Llwybr Madyn (Fox's Path). Mae Llwybr Madyn, rhwng Llyn y Gader a'r copa ar lethr serth o sgri rhydd ac mae'n rhaid bod yn eithriadol o ofalus wrth ddod i lawr. Dynodwyd llawer o dir o gwmpas y mynydd yn Warchodfa Natur Genedlaethol ym 1957, a cheir yma blanhigion arctig-alpaidd yn cynnwys y tormaen porffor a'r gorhelygen. Mae rhagor o wybodaeth ar gyfer cerddwyr sy'n dymuno ymweld â Chadair Idris, yn [www.wales-walking.co.uk](http://www.wales-walking.co.uk).

## LLEUCU LLWYD

Mae Lleucu Llwyd yn rhan o un o storïau caru tristaf Cymru. Roedd hi'n byw ar fferm Dolgelynen ger afon Dyfi tua chanol y bedwaredd ganrif ar ddeg, ac yn ôl y sôn roedd hi'n ferch ifanc hardd iawn.

Syrthiodd Lleucu mewn cariad â bardd ifanc, Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen, ond roedd ei thad yn anfodlon i'r berthynas barhau a gwnaeth bopeth o fewn ei allu i wahanu'r cariadon ifanc.

Yn ystod eu carwriaeth, bu rhaid i Lywelyn Goch deithio i dde Cymru, ond addawodd ddychwelyd i briodi Lleucu. Pan oedd o i ffwrdd, gwelodd tad Lleucu ei gyfle, a dywedodd wrth ei ferch fod Llywelyn wedi'i bradychu ac wedi priodi merch arall. Torrodd Lleucu ei chalon a bu farw.

Dychwelodd Llywelyn i Ddolgelynen i gadw'i addewid a phriodi Lleucu, ond pan gyrhaeddodd yn ôl, roedd ei hangladd yn cael ei gynnal a helpodd Llywelyn i'w chladdu. Yn ôl cofnodion Eglwys Sant Pedr mewn Cadwyni, Pennal, claddwyd Lleucu o dan allor yr eglwys yn 1390.

Mae stori drist Lleucu Llwyd wedi parhau'n rhan o draddodiad gwerin Cymru diolch i farddoniaeth Llywelyn Goch (1350 – 1380). Mae ei farwnad i Lleucu'n cael ei hystyried yn un o gerddi gorau'r cyfnod.

MARI JONES (RHAGFYR 16 1784 - RHAGFYR 29, 1864)

Ym 1800 cerddodd merch ifanc o'r enw Mari Jacob Jones, a oedd yn ddim ond 16 oed ar y pryd, yn droednoeth o'i chartref yn Llanfihangel-y-Pennant i'r Bala – taith o dros 50 milltir yno ac yn ôl – er mwyn prynu Beibl Cymraeg. Bu'n cynilo am dros chwe blynedd er mwyn cael digon o arian i brynu Beibl, a'r Bala oedd y lle agosaf i'w chartref lle gallai brynu un. Cychwynnodd ar ei thaith un bore yn 1800, ond erbyn iddi gyrraedd y dref, nid oedd yr un Beibl Cymraeg ar ôl. Roedd Thomas Charles yn ddyn uchel ei barch a oedd yn trefnu ysgolion cylchynnol yn yr ardal (yn cynnwys yr ysgol lle dysgodd Mari ddarllen). Pan welodd pa mor siomedig oedd Mari, cymerodd drueni drosti a rhoi ei gopi personol ef o'r Beibl iddi. Dyma fu'r ysgogiad i sefydlu y Feibl Gymdeithas Frytanidd a Thramor (sef Cymdeithas y Beibl erbyn hyn).

Ymhen amser, priododd Mari wehydd o Fryn-crug o'r enw Thomas Lewis. Bu farw yn 1864 ac fe'i claddwyd ym mynwent Capel Methodistiaid Calфинаidd Bryn-crug. Mae ei Beibl yn cael ei gadw yn archifau Cymdeithas y Beibl yn Llyfrgell Prifysgol Caergrawnt. Mae'n un o ddim ond deng mil o gopiâu o argraffiad 1799 o'r Beibl Cymraeg a argraffwyd yn Rhydychen ar ran y Gymdeithas er Taenu Gwybodaeth Gristionogol.

Ar dudalen olaf yr Apocryffa, ysgrifennodd Mari Jones, yn Saesneg: Mary Jones was born 16th of December 1784. I Bought this in the 16th year of my age. I am Daughter of Jacob Jones and Mary Jones His wife. the Lord may give me grace. Amen. Mary Jones His [is] The True Honour [owner] of this Bible. Bought In the Year 1800 Aged 16.

Mae un arall o'r copiâu a brynwyd ganddi yn y Bala yn Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru yn Aberystwyth; gweler [www.llgc.org.uk](http://www.llgc.org.uk) am fwy o fanylion.

Mae yna lwybr cerdded yn mynd o gartref Mari yn Llanfihangel-y-Pennant i'r Bala. Ewch i wefan Cymdeithas y Beibl am fwy o fanylion:  
<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-bible-society/what-we-do/our-work/mary-jones/>

## HEDD WYN (1887 – 1917)

Ganwyd Ellis Humphrey Evans ar 13 Ionawr 1887 yn Nhrawsfynydd. Yn dilyn addysg sylfaenol gadawodd ysgol yn bedair ar ddeg i ddechrau bugeilio ar fferm ei dad, Yr Ysgwrn.

Dechreuodd ysgrifennu cerddi ban yn rhyw un ar ddeg oed, ac o fewn wyth mlynedd roedd yn cystadlu'n rheolaidd mewn Eisteddfodau lleol. Ysbrydolwyd llawer o'i waith gan y beirdd Rhamantaidd megis Shelly; nid yw'n syndod efallai i fugail ifanc fyfyrion dros natur a chrefydd. Enillodd y gyntaf o chwe chadair yn Eisteddfod y Bala yn 1907, ac erbyn 1910 roedd wedi cymryd yr enw barddol Hedd Wyn.

Cyn pen dim roedd y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf yn taflu cysgodion tywyll ar draws pob cymuned ym Mhrydain. Dechreuodd consgripsiwn yn 1916, ac roedd yn ofynnol i fab o deulu Ysgwrn i ymuno â'r Fyddin Brydeinig. Er mwyn sicrhau na fyddai'n rhaid i'w frawd iau gael ei ddanfôn, ymrestrodd Ellis. Derbyniodd hyfforddiant yng Ngwersyll Litherland, Lerpwl, ond ym mis Mawrth 1917, ynghyd â milwyr eraill, cafodd ei ryddhau o'i ddyletswydd am saith wythnos i helpu gydag aredig a phlannu tir. Aeth adref i Drawsfynydd. Yn ystod y cyfnod hwn dechreuodd weithio ar yr awdl' Yr Arwr' ar gyfer yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol. Roedd hi'n flwyddyn wlyb, ac arhosodd yn hwy adref ar y fferm i orffen plannu nag a ganiateir. Dyma'r heddlu milwrol yn ei gasglu'n ddisymwth a chafodd ei ddal mewn cell ym Mlaenau Ffestiniog dros nos, cyn cael eu cludo i Wlad Belg ac yna ymlaen i ymuno â Bataliwn 15fed Ffiwsilwyr Brenhinol Cymreig yn Fléchin, Ffrainc.

Roedd ei ymadawiad wedi bod mor sydyn, nes peri iddo anghofio'r gerdd ar gyfer yr Eisteddfod ar fwrdd adre ar y fferm, felly ysgrifennodd hi eto ar ei daith. Yn Fléchine, tra'n aros am yr orchymyn i fynd i ymladd y gorffennodd 'Yr Arwr' a'i llofnodi a'r ffug-enw 'Fleur de Lis'. Postiodd hi o'r dref ar 15 Gorffennaf 1917, un diwrnod cyn i'w Fataliwn orymdeithio tuag at yr hyn a adnabyddur heddiw fel Brwydr Passchendaele.

Yn ôl yng Nghymru, aeddfedodd y cnydau a dechreuodd y cynaeafu. Ym mis Medi'r flwyddyn honno, cynhaliwyd yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol yn Birkenhead. Cynhaliwyd seremoni'r Cadeirio'r ar y 6ed o Fedi ym mhresenoldeb y Prif Weinidog, David Lloyd George.

Ar yr amser penodedig, dyma enw ffug y bardd buddugol yn cael ei gyhoeddi: "Fleur de Lys", a'r corn gwlad yn gwahodd y bardd i sefyll a gwneud ei hun yn hysbys, ond safodd neb. Yn lle hynny, yn ddifrifol, cyhoeddodd yr Archdderwydd bod bardd y gadair, Ellis Evans wedi cael ei ladd wrth ymladd chwe wythnos ynghynt. Cafodd ei glwyfo yn ystod Brwydr Passchendaele, a bu farw o'i anafiadau ar 31 Gorffennaf 1917.

Gorchuddiwyd y gadair mewn blanced du ac mae wedi ei hadnabod ers hynny fel 'Cadair Ddu Birkinhead'.

Claddwyd Ellis H Evans ym Mynwent Artillery Wood ger Boezinge. Wedi diwedd y Rhyfel, cyflwynwyd deiseb i'r comisiwn Beddau Rhyfel y Gymanwlad yn gofyn am ychwanegu rhai geiriau at yr enw syml 'E H Evans' ar ei garreg fedd. Felly, heddiw mae'n darllen: 'E H Evans, Y Prifardd Hedd Wyn'.

## Y TYWYSOG MADOG AB OWAIN

'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue'... yn ôl y dywediad, a darganfod America. Ond, yn ôl y chwedl, roedd y Tywysog Madog ab Owain Gwynedd yno yn gyntaf - rhyw 300 mlynedd ynghynt.

Hwylodd Madog a'i frawd Rhiryd o'r Ile a wyddom heddiw fel Llandrillo-yn-rhos ym 1170, a gollwng angor o bosibl ar arfordir Alabama fel y gelwir heddiw. Dychwelodd Madog i Gymru gyda straeon o antur uchel cyn cychwyn yr eil waith, gan gymryd band o ymsefydlwyr gydag ef. Credir eu bod wedi glanio yn Mobile Bay, cyn dilyn afon Alabama i mewn i'r tir. Ond dyw'r stori ddim yn gorffen yno: dwedir bod caerau cerrig ar hyd yr afon sy'n dyddio o gwmpas yr amser cyrhaeddodd Madog ar ddyluniad tebyg i Gastell Dolwyddelan, a chredir i anturiaethwyr cynnar gael tystiolaeth o ddylanwad Cymreig ymhlith gwahanol lwythau Indiaid Gogledd America - gan gynnwys y defnydd o gwryglau - math o gwch dal mewn defnydd yng Nghymru heddiw.

Prun ai ffaith neu chwedl ydyw, mae stori Madog wedi bod yn ysbrydoliaeth ffrwythlon i genedlaethau o feirdd, nofelwyr a haneswyr diwylliannol.

Honnir mai mab anghyfreithlon i Owain Gwynedd, tywysog Gwynedd a ystyrir yn eang yn un o arweinwyr blaenllaw Cymru yn y Canol Oesoedd, oedd Madog. Yn dilyn Marwolaeth Owain Gwynedd ym 1170, dechreuodd gweryl gwaedlyd rhwng ei etifedd Hywel a Maelgwn, Rhodri a Dafydd a'i feibion iau. Roedd y rhain yn feibion i ail wraig Owain, Cristin. Yn gyfan gwbl, roedd ganddo o leiaf 13 o blant o'i ddwy wraig, a ganed nifer mwy y tu allan i briodas; ond – yn ôl y traddodiad Cymreig, roedd pob plentyn yn cael eu cydnabod yn llawn. Yn ôl y chwedl, roedd Madog a'i frawd Rhiryd ymhlith y rhain.

Mae'r chwedl yn honni bod Madog wedi digalonni gan yr ymladd rhwng ei frodyr ac felly penderfynodd ef a Rhiryd deithio'r môr gorllewinol gyda llynges fach o gygod. A dyna a wnaethant, gan hwylio o Landrillo, Llandrillo-yn-rhos.

Mae'r stori yn dweud eu bod wedi darganfod gwlad bell, ffrwythlon lle'r ymgartrefodd cant o Gymry a deithiodd gyda Madog. Awgrymir mai yng ngorllewin Florida neu Mobile Bay, Alabama yn yr Unol Daleithiau y glaniodd llong Madog. Yna bod Madog a rhai eraill, wedi dychwelyd i Gymru i recriwtio mwy o ymsefydlwyr ac yna dychwelyd ar draws yr Iwerydd yr eildro, byth i ddychwelyd eto.

Er nad oes prawf cadarn, cafwyd rhai hanesion diddorol sy'n ymddangos i gefnogi'r chwedl. Ar 26 Tachwedd, 1608, ysgrifennodd Peter Wynne, aelod o griw archwilio Capten Christopher Newport i bentrefi dwyreiniol Siouan MONACAN, uwchben y rhaeadr Afon James yn Virginia, lythyr at John Egerton. Ynddo dywedodd wrth Egerton bod rhai aelodau o griw Newport yn credu bod ynganiad iaith y Monacans yn 'debyg' i'r Gymraeg a siaradodd Wynne. Ar ben hynny, mae'r Monacans ymysg llwythau nad ydynt yn perthyn

i'r Algonquian. Cyfeirir atynt gan y Algonquians fel "Mandoag" - term pryfoclyd o agos at 'Madoc-ian'.

Ymsefydlwr cynnar arall i honni cyfarfod gydag Indiaid oedd yn siarad Cymraeg oedd y Parch Morgan Jones. Dywedodd wrth Thomas Lloyd, dirprwy William Penn, ei fod wedi ei gipio ym 1669 gan lwyth o Tuscarora a elwir y Doeg. Yn ôl Jones, arbedwyd ei fywyd pan glywodd pennaeth y llwyth yn ef yn siarad Cymraeg. Mae'n debyg bod pennaeth y llwyth yn gyfarwydd â'r iaith, ac yn deall llawer o'r hyn a ddywedodd Jones. Adroddiad Jones ei fod wedyn wedi byw gyda'r Doeg am sawl mis, gan bregethu yr Efengyl yn y Gymraeg atynt, cyn dychwelyd i'r Wladfa Brydeinig lle recordiodd yr antur ym 1686.

Mae traddodiad gwerin wedi hir ddal bod safle o'r enw 'Devil's Backbone' yn Ynys Rose, tua phedwar ar ddeg milltir i fyny'r afon o Louisville, Kentucky, unwaith yn gartref i lwyth o Indiaid oedd yn siarad Cymraeg.

Ym 1810, ysgrifennodd llywodraethwr cyntaf Tennessee, Jon Sevier at ei ffrind, Major Amos Stoddard ynghylch a sgwrs roedd wedi cael blynyddoedd ynghynt ym 1782 gyda'r hen bennaeth y Cherokee, Oconostota am amddiffynfeydd hynafol a adeiladwyd ar hyd Afon Alabama. Yn y llythyr, mae Sevier yn honni bod yr hen bennaeth wedi dweud wrtho fod y caerau wedi eu hadeiladu gan bobl gwyn o'r enw "Cymraeg", fel amddiffyniad yn erbyn y Cherokee. Ysgrifennodd Sevier hefyd ym 1700 ynglŷn â darganfyddiad honedig o chwe sgerbwdd mewn arfwisg bres ac arnynt arfbais Gymreig.

Mae'r stori yn cael ei chadarnhau mewn llythyr diweddarach, dyddiedig 1824 gan Thomas S Hind, a ysgrifennodd at olygydd y Pioneer Americanaidd ynglŷn â thraddodiad Madog. Yn y llythyr hwnnw, honnodd Hind, bod olion chwech o filwyr wedi cael eu cloddio ger Jeffersonville, Indiana ar Afon Ohio ym 1700 a rheini hefyd yn gwisgo brestbladau gydag arfbais Gymreig arnynt.

Mae'n debygol na wyddwn ni byth mo'r gwir, na ddaw unrhyw arteffact na thystiolaeth i glawr a fedr brofi y tu hwnt i amheuaeth bod uchelwr Cymreig wedi darganfod America dair canrif cyn Columbus. Serch hynny, mae'n stori ddiddorol ac yn chwedl sydd wedi gwrthsefyll prawf amser.



## MYRDDIN

Of Merlin and his skill what Region doth not heare  
The world shall still be full of Merlin everie where.  
A thousand lingering yeares his prophecies have runne,  
And scarcely shall have end till time itself be done.

Michael Drayton, Poly-olbion, Song V.

Yn 1622, fe ragfynegodd y bardd enwog o Sais, Michael Drayton, y byddai enwogrwydd Myrddin yn para hyd ddiwedd amser. Bedair canrif yn ddiweddarach, nid yw'n ymddangos bod seren Myrddin yn mynd yn llai disglair. Mae wedi bod yn destun llyfrau, nofelau, dramâu, astudiaethau academaidd, gwefannau, ffilmiau, nifer o gyfresi teledu a gwaith celf. Mae'n ymddangos fel petai pob cenhedlaeth yn ail-ddarganfod Myrddin a bod y ffigur dirgel hwn yn ein gorffennol pell yn dal i gipio'n dychymyg.

Efallai mai fel cynghorwr i'r Brenin Arthur a dewin yn y chwedlau Arthuraidd y mae Myrddin yn fwyaf enwog. Sieffre o Fynwy, yr awdur o'r ddeuddegfed ganrif, sy'n rhoi'r darlun cyntaf o Fyrddin fel y mae'n cael ei bortreadu heddiw i ni, a hynny yn Historia Regum Britanniae a ysgrifennwyd yn 1136. Fodd bynnag, roedd Sieffre yn defnyddio ffynonellau llawer hŷn. Cyfunodd storiâu am Fyrddin Wylt (Merlinus Caledonis), dyn gwyllt o'r coed heb unrhyw gysylltiad o gwbl ag Arthur gyda storiâu am yr arweinydd rhyfel Brythonig-Rufeinig hanesyddol Ambrosius Aurelianus er mwyn creu ffigur a enwodd ef yn Merlin Ambrosius.

Mae'n ymddangos bod storiâu am Myrddin yn gyffredin iawn yn y gwledydd Celtaidd ac ar y cyfandir yn ystod yr Oesoedd Tywyll ac iddynt gyrraedd anterth eu poblogrwydd yn y cyfnod Canoloesol. O ganlyniad, mae nifer o lefydd yn hawlio cysylltiad gyda'i fywyd mewn rhyw ffordd.

Mae fersiwn Cymru o'r chwedl – sydd wedi'i seilio ar gymeriad dyn gwyllt o'r coed Myrddin Wylt – yn dweud i Fyrddin, wedi iddo gael ei drechu ym Mrwydr Arfderydd ger Caerliwelydd yn 573, fynd o'i go'. Ciliodd i Goed Celyddon yn ne'r Alban lle roedd pobl yn siarad Cymraeg ar y pryd. Yno bu'n byw fel dyn gwyllt gyda dim ond anifeiliaid y goedwig a phorchell yn gwmni. O ganlyniad i'w brofiadau yn ystod ei arhosiad yn y coed, daeth Myrddin yn broffwyd. Ysgrifennwyd nifer o'r proffwydoliaethau hyn mewn ffurf farddonol yn ystod y nawfed ganrif, yn ôl y sôn gan Fyrddin ei hun, ac mae casgliad ohonynt wedi'u cofnodi yn y llawysgrif o'r drydedd ganrif ar ddeg Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin.

Nid yw'n syndod felly bod nifer o'r straeon am Fyrddin wedi eu lleoli yng Nghaerfyrddin. Hefyd, mae'n glir bod Myrddin yn adnabyddus fel bardd a phroffwyd yng Nghymru mor gynnar â'r ddegfed ganrif gan bod cyfeiriad ato i'w gael yn y gerdd broffwydol Armes Prydain sy'n ffurfio rhan o Lyfr Taliesin. Cyfansoddwyd y gerdd hon gan gefnogwr i linach Deheubarth yn ne-orllewin Cymru. Mae ysgolheigion modern yn credu bod posibilrwydd mai eglwyswr

oedd yr ysgrifennwr er ei bod yn cael ei cham-dadogi ar Taliesin. Felly, mae'n amlwg i'r cysylltiad rhwng Myrddin a thref Caerfyrddin gael ei wneud o leiaf mor fuan â phan gyfansoddiwyd Armes Prydain – o leiaf ddwy ganrif cyn Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin.

Yn olaf, mae'r nifer enfawr o safleoedd ac enwau lleoedd yn yr ardal gan gynnwys ei goeden dderw, bryn ac ogof, cerrig a siambrau claddu yn awgrymu cysylltiad pendant.

### Myrddin Yn Deffro

Gwrtheyrn oedd Brenin y Brythoniaid yn ystod y bumed ganrif. Roedd yn gyfnod o newid mawr. Nid oedd pobl Prydain wedi dioddef ymosodiad o'r tu allan ers goresgyniad y Rhufeiniaid ac roedd hynny bellach yn hen hanes. Ond nawr roedd bygythiad arall – y Sacsoniaid.

Roedd Gwrtheyrn yn anfwriadol wedi talu arglwyddi rhyfel Sacsonaidd fel milwyr tâl i ymladd yn erbyn Pictiaid afreolus y gogledd. Gwrthryfelodd y Sacsoniaid gan sefydlu eu teyrnasau eu hunain. Yn raddol, daeth lluoedd y Sacsoniaid i reoli llawer o'r lle rydym yn ei adnabod fel Lloegr heddiw gawn orfodi'r Brythoniaid brodorol i gilio i rannau gorllewinol a gogleddol yr ynys: i'r Alban, Cymru a Chernyw. Mae cerdd Gymraeg o'r chweched ganrif o'r enw Y Gododdin yn adrodd hanes y frwydr olaf am dir Brythonig Gododdin rhwng lluoedd y Brythoniaid a'r Eingl-Sacsoniaid. Ynndi, mae'r bardd Aneurin yn disgrifio ffawd y fyddin Frythonig:

O drychant rhiallu yd grysiasant Gatraeth,  
Tru, namyn un gŵr nid atgorsant.

O'r fyddin frenhinol o dri chant o ddynion a frysiodd i Gatraeth, Och! Ni ddychwelodd dim ond un.

Apeliodd Gwrtheyrn ar ei gynghorwyr derwyddol am arweiniad. Dywedwyd wrtho y dylai gilio i fynyddoedd Cymru a dod o hyd i le addas i adeiladu cadarnle lle y gallai reoli a chynllunio'i wrthymosodiadau. Wedi chwilio'n hir a chaled, daeth Gwrtheyrn at odre'r Wyddfa, y mynydd uchaf yn ei dir. Dewisodd fryn serth gyda chopa gwastad ger yr afon Glaslyn a dechreuodd ei ddynion ar eu gwaith ac adeiladu muriau mawr a fyddai'n amddiffyn Gwrtheyrn a'i lys.

Ddydd ar ôl dydd roedden nhw'n gweithio yng ngwres diwedd haf er mwyn palu'r sylfeini ac adeiladu'r muriau, ond ni wnaed unrhyw gynnydd. Bob nos bydda'r cerrig yn cael eu dymchwel a bob bore byddai'n rhaid i'r gweithwyr gychwyn o'r cychwyn. Ar ôl rhai wythnosau, galwodd Gwrtheyrn gyngor o'i dderwyddon. Gofynnodd iddynt ddarganfod pam na allent adeiladu ar y bryn a pha hud a llefrith fyddai'n gwrthsefyll pa bynnag rymoedd maleisus oedd yn dinistrio'r muriau yn ystod y nod. Cynghorwyd Gwrtheyrn i ddod o hyd i fachgen heb dad meidrol. Pe aberthwyd y bachgen hwn a thywallt ei waed ar

ben y bryn, yna byddai ysbrydion helbulus y lle'n cael eu tawelu a gallai'r gwaith fynd yn ei flaen heb anhawster.

Gyrrodd Gwrtheyrn ddynion i bob cornel o'r deyrnas i ddod o hyd i'r fath fachgen. Wedi rhai misoedd o chwilio ofer, daeth rhai o'r dynion i hen dref Rufeinig Moridunum, sef Caerfyrddin heddiw. Yno, yn agos at yr hen amffitheatr Rufeinig, o dan ganghennau coeden dderwen, daethant ar draws criw o fechgyn ifanc. Roedd un o'r bechgyn hyn yn cael ei wawdio gan ddau arall am nad oedd ganddo dad. Cododd hyn chwilfrydedd y milwyr a dyma nhw'n torri ar draws ffræ'r bechgyn. Emrys oedd enw'r bachgen ac wedi i'r milwyr holi am ei fam, aeth a nhw i'w chyfarfod. Roedd hi'n dywysoges yn y rhanbarth oedd bellach yn byw fel lleian yn y Priordy yng Nghaerfyrddin. Eglurodd iddi gael ymweliad un noson gan ysbryd euraid ac mai drwy'r ymweliad hwnnw yr oedd ei mab wedi'i genhedlu.

Aeth y milwyr ag Emrys yn ôl i'r gogledd gyda nhw ac ar doriad gwawr ar fore oer yn nyfnder gaeaf, cafodd ei arwain gan dderwyddon Gwrtheyrn i gopa'r bryn. Wrth sylweddoli beth oedd ei dynged, cyhoeddodd na fyddai ei ladd a thywallt ei waed yn gwneud unrhyw wahaniaeth o gwbl. Ond, dywedodd ei fod yn gwybod beth oedd yn achosi i'r muriau ddisgyn bob nos:

*“O dan y bryn hwn, mae yna llyn, ac o dan y llyn, mae yna garreg. O dan y garreg honno mae yna ogof ddofn gyda dwy siambr. Ym mhob siambr mae yna ddraig yn cysgu. Wrth i chi adeiladu'r muriau yn ystod y dydd, mae'r pwysau yn gwasgu i lawr ar gefnau'r dreigiau felly yn y nos, pan maen nhw'n deffro, mae'n nhw'n ysgwyd y tir ac mae'r muriau'n disgyn.”*

Pan ofynnwyd iddo beth y dylid ei wneud fel y gellid adeiladu'r gaer yn llwyddiannus, cynghorodd Emrys y dylid draenio'r llyn tanddaearol a chloddio'r capfaen o dano er mwyn datgelu'r ceudwll. Aeth dynion Gwrtheyrn at eu gwaith yn syth a dod o hyd i bopeth a ddisgrifiodd Emrys. Buont yn gweithio drwy'r dydd tan iddynt allu symud y capfaen er mwyn datgelu'r ceudwll tywyll, dwfn yng nghalon y bryn.

Y noson honno, arhosodd Gwrtheyrn a'i dderwyddon a'i ryfelwyr gyda Emrys ar wylidwraeth. Yn union fel y proffwydodd Emrys, wrth i'r pelydrau olaf o olau adael yr awyr, deffrodd y ddwy ddraig – un wen ac un goch. Am nifer o oriau y noson honno, fe ymladdodd y ddwy ddraig yn ffyrnig. Ar un pwynt roedd y ddraig goch yn ymddangos yn wan ac yn anabl i wrthsefyll ymosodiad diflino'r ddraig wen, ond yn y diwedd, fe yrrodd y ddraig goch y ddraig wen allan o'r ogof. Dihangodd drwy'r agoriad a hedfan tuag at y de.

*“Beth mae hyn yn ei feddwl?”* gofynnodd Gwrtheyrn i'w gynghorwyr. Emrys oedd yr unig un a allai roi ateb iddo.

*“Syr”, meddai, “Mae'r ddraig goch yn cynrychioli pobl Frythonig y tir hwn ac mae'r ddraig wen yn cynrychioli'r Sacsoniaid. Mae hyn yn arwydd y bydd pobl frodorol yr ynys hon yn llwyddo i wrthsefyll y Sacsoniaid yn y diwedd.”*

Hyd y dydd heddiw, Dinas Emrys yw enw'r bryn. Ond beth yw cysylltiad Myrddin â hyn? Wedi iddynt ryfeddu at broffwydoliaeth y bachgen, rhoddodd y derwyddon enw newydd i Emrys – enw a roddid i'r beirdd a'r gweledyddion doethaf a mwyaf goleuedig. Cafodd ei enwi'n Myrddin.

Parhaodd y ddraig wen ar ei thaith drwy berfeddwlad Cymru tua'r de tan iddi ddod, yn y diwedd, at y môr. Yn ôl y chwedl, fel iddi ddynesu at yr arfordir lle mae Penrhyn Gŵyr heddiw, cododd yr haul a throwyd y ddraig yn garreg. Hyd y dydd heddiw gelwir pentir Gwyr yn 'Worm's Head'. Gair Engl Sacsonaidd yw 'Worm' oedd yn golygu 'draig'. O arfordir de Sir Gâr, gellid gweld y ddraig yn ymlwybro i'r mor – pen, gwddwg a chynffon.

Cafodd y ddraig goch fwy o lwc. Cymrodd ei lle ar faner Cymru fel symbol o warcheidwad dros y wlad. Daeth proffwydoliaeth gyntaf Myrddin yn wir; ni choncrwyd y Cymry gan yr Eingl-Sacsoniaid. Tra bu i frenhinoedd Normanaidd a Seisnig hawlio rheolaeth ar y genedl, ni chafodd ei choncro erioed. Heddiw, mae'r Ddraig Goch, fel yr adnabyddir y faner, yn hedfan yn falch tu allan i'r Cynulliad yng Nghaerdydd – senedd Cymu.

## BEDD GELERT

Gelert oedd hoff gi hela'r Brenin, Llywelyn Fawr, ond yr oedd yn mynd yn hen, ac nid oedd mwyach yn medru cadw i fyny gyda'r helfa nag ysgyfarnog na hydd. Serch hynny, cadwodd Llywelyn ef yn agos, yn gydymaith cyson wrth iddo deithio o lys i lys i gwrdd â'i bobl a sicrhau bod cyfiawnder yn cael ei wneud drwy gydol ei dir. Yn ôl yn y cartref, ymhlith y teulu, roedd Gelert yn ffefryn gan bawb am ei addfwynder a'i natur dda, ac yn aml yn cael ei adael i warchod mab bychan Llywelyn,

Lleolwyd un o lysoedd Llywelyn ger pentref Beddgelert heddiw. Yma yn yr haf, byddai Llywelyn a'i wraig a'u Teulu gorffwys am ychydig ddyddiau ar eu ffordd o lys i lys i fwynhau'r hela da yn y dyffryn coediog. Ar un achlysur o'r fath, cafodd y frenhines ei galw i ymweld ag offeiriad lleol, ar yr union ddiwrnod yr oedd Llywelyn a'i ddynion wedi cynllunio i fynd hela. Ac felly, yn anfodlon, gadawodd Llywelyn Gelert, yr hen gi ffyddlon gyda nyrs y baban i wylio dros y tywysog bychan, ac yna carlamodd i ffwrdd.

Trodd y bore poeth yn brynhawn hyfryd, euraidd. Pendwmpiodd y mewn cadair dan gysgod coeden afal wrth iddi siglo'r tywysog yn ei grud. Cafodd ei deffro o'i chwsig gan y cogydd yn galw am ei chymorth gyda rhyw neges neu'i gilydd. Yn meddwl dim mohono, gadawodd Gelert i warchod y tywysog. Doedd ganddi'r un syniad bod blaidd llwglyd wedi bod yn gwyllo gerllaw, ac o weld ei gyfle, yn sleifio tuag at y coed a chrud y baban.

Ychydig yn ddiweddarach, dychwelodd Llywelyn a'i ddynion a phentwr o ysgyfarnogod yn barod ar gyfer swper. Daeth Gelert, ai gynffon yn ysgwyd i gyfarch ei feistr yn serchus, ond roedd genau'r hen gi yn waedlyd. Dychrynodd Llywelyn, rhuthrodd i'r feithrinfa i chwilio am ei fab, a'i gael yn wag. Gwelodd bod y drws ar agor i'r berllan tu hwnt, a rhedodd allan i weld crud y tywysog bach yn wyneb i waered a gerllaw, blanced waedlyd. Yn ei alar dall, tynnodd Llywelyn ei gleddyf a'i daro i ystlys Gelert. Wrth i'r ci annwyl farw, gollyngodd un waedd boenus a dyma'r sŵn crio'r tywysog bach yn dod o dan y crud. Death Llywelyn o hyd i'r plentyn yn ddiogel ac yn ddianaf, ac wedi ei guddio gerllaw, yng nghysgod y goeden afal, corff marw blaidd tenau, llwglyd.

Yn llawn galar, cydiodd Llywelyn gorff difywyd Gelert ato. Addawodd anrhydeddu'r ci dewr a oedd wedi amdiffyn y tywysog bach wrth y blaidd. Cadwodd Llywelyn ei air, ac adeiladodd fedd arbennig. Caiff ei ymweld gan filoedd hyd heddiw, ac mae'r stori a'r bedd wedi rhoi enw i'r pentref cyfagos, Beddgelert.

## RHYS A MEINIR YN NANT GWRTHEYRN

Unwaith ym Mhlwyf Clynnog Fawr, roedd dau gariad ifanc, Rhys a Meinir. Roeddent yn arfer cyfarfod a'i gilydd dan gysgod hen goeden dderwen gwag-foliog ger Nant Gwrtheyrn, a mwynhau'r golygfeydd ysblennydd o'r môr. Ar ôl sawl mis o garwriaeth, penderfynodd y ddau briodi a phenodwyd dyddiad yn ganol haf ar gyfer eu priodas.

Gwawriodd y diwrnod yn heulog, ac fel yr oedd yn draddodiad ar y pryd, aeth Meinir i guddio rhag y ffrindiau ei darpar ŵr a fyddai'n dod i chwilio amdani a'i dwyn i'r eglwys.

Daeth yr amser a benodwyd ar gyfer y seremoni. Arhosodd Rhys wrth yr allor, ond doedd dim golwg o Meinir. Trodd eiliadau yn funudau hir ond dal, ni allai'r llanciau ddod o hyd i'r briodasferch. Trodd pryder yn banig ac ymunodd Rhys a'r gwestai priodas yn yr ymgyrch i ffeindio Meinir. A'r haul yn machlud ar ddiwedd y diwrnod hir, doedd dal ddim golwg o'r briodasferch.

Dros y dyddiau nesaf, bu'r plwyf cyfan yn chwilio bob twll a chornel o'r ardal amdani, ond ni chawsant fyth mohoni. Yn ei alar, parhaodd Rhys i chwilio ddydd a nos am ei gariad, yng nghwmni ei gi ffyddlon, Cidwm.

Un noson oer, yn agosáu at ganol gaeaf, dyma chwilio Rhys yn ei gymryd lawr rhiw serth tuag at Nant Gwrtheyrn. Roedd y gwynt yn codi a storm yn chwythu o'r môr. Cymerodd Rhys gysgod dan gangau'r hen dderwen, gan gofio'r holl amser dymunol oedd wedi rhannu gyda Meinir yno. Yn sydyn, dyma fflach o oleuni yn taro'r hen goeden a'i hollti yn ddwy. Syrthiodd hanner bonyn y goeden wrth ochr Rhys gan ddatgelu beth oedd wedi ei guddio y tu fewn: sgerbwd wedi ei wisgo mewn ffrog briodas garpiog a dafnau o wallt golau yn dal i lynu wrth y penglog. Torrodd calon Rhys yn ei union, syrthiodd i'r llawr a marw. Gorweddodd Cidwm y ci ffyddlon wrth gorff ei feistr ei feistr a dyna le y ffeindwyd nhw ddyddiau wedyn gan drigolion yr ardal.

## OWAIN GLYNDŴR AC ABAD GLYN Y GROES

Does dim enw sy'n consurio delweddau o wrthryfel Cymreig yn well nag Owain Glyndŵr. "I am not in the roll of common men," meddai Owain yn Henry IV, Rhan I Shakespeare . Yn llawer mwy na chwyldroadwr, ganwyd Owain i deulu bonheddig Cymreig ym 1354, un oedd yn olrhain eu llinach o frenhinoedd Powys a Deheubarth yn ne-orllewin Cymru . Etifeddodd Owain y teitl Barwn Glyndyfrdwy, a maenor Glyndyfrdwy trwy ei dad. Yma ar 16 Medi 1400, cyhoeddodd ei hun yn Dywysog Cymru, gan ddechrau gwrthryfel hir – pedair blynedd ar ddeg yn erbyn brenhiniaeth Lloegr.

Fel y Brenin Arthur, mae yna draddodiad bod Owain Glyndŵr dal yn fyw, yn cysgu ac yn aros am amser pan fydd ei angen eto i arwain Cymru i ryddid. Mae 'na Stori a gofnodwyd gan y croniclydd Elis Gruffydd, sy'n sôn am Abad Abaty Glyn y Groes yn cyfarfod Owain yn gynnar un bore wrth gerdded ei ben ei hun ar y bryniau ger Llangollen.

"Rydych wedi codi yn gynnar, Meistr Abad," meddai'r Tywysog, ac atebodd yr Abad,

"Na, fy Arglwydd, chi sydd wedi codi'n gynnar - o leiaf gan mlynedd yn rhy gynnar!" Gyda hynny, gwelodd Owain yn cerdded i ffwrdd ac yn diflannu i niwl y bore.