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Magical Transformation in the Book of Taliesin and the Spoils of Annwn

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Abstract

The central theme within the OBOD Bardic grade expresses the transformation mystery present in the tale of Gwion Bach, who by degrees of elemental initiations and assimilation becomes he with the radiant brow – Taliesin. A further body of work exists in the form of Peniarth Manuscript Number 2, designated as *'The Book of Taliesin'*, inter-textual references within this material connects it to a vast body of work including the *'Hanes Taliesin'* (the story of the birth of Taliesin) and *the Four Branches of the Mabinogi* which gives credence to the premise that magical transformation permeates the British/Welsh mythological sagas. This paper will focus on elements of magical transformation in the Book of Taliesin's most famed mystical poem, *'The Preideu Annwfn (The Spoils of Annwn)*, and its pertinence to modern Druidic practise, to bridge the gulf between academia and the visionary, and to demonstrate the storehouse of wisdom accessible within the Taliesin material.

Introduction

It is the intention of this paper to examine the magical transformation properties present in the Book of Taliesin and the Preideu Annwfn. By the term 'Magical Transformation' I refer to the preternatural accounts of change initiated by magical means that are present within the Taliesin material and pertinent to modern practise and the assumption of various states of being. The transformative qualities of the *Hanes Taliesin* material is familiar to students of the OBOD, but I suggest that further material can be utilised to enhance the spiritual connection of the student to the source material of the OBOD and other Druidic systems.

The assumed complexities and obscure nature of the material at hand is due in part to the antiquity of language, and yet one can sense a deeper mystery swimming within the material – if only one could grasp it. I would claim that the tale of the birth of Taliesin forms the backbone of modern Druidry and therefore by proxy I suggest that further authentic material can be deduced, fathomed and incorporated into practise from the vast body of work attributed to the Taliesin figure.

The rise in popularity of the modern Pagan traditions seeks to invoke their inspiration from the past by exploring and connecting to cultural mythologies. The rise of the modern Heathen traditions have made use of the material that they deem pertinent to their cultural expression, the Prose and Poetic Edda for example and taken these as the backbone of their tradition. These serve as building blocks that form the pattern of a new tradition that honourably invokes the past 'source' material whilst being applicable to the modern era and practise. Heathenism has been successful in its efforts to glean spiritual practise by utilising mythology. Druidry emulates this effort but to a lesser degree – the OBOD has strived to

incorporate a genuine British mythological cycle as part of its training program and introduces the student to a Celtic storehouse of wisdom indicative of indigenous British culture and directly associated with the Druidic cultural continuum. The material within the Book of Taliesin provides teachings of great mystery that is indicative of an early system of magical and philosophical teachings, and as I hope to demonstrate can be incorporated into modern practise to provide an authentic body of teachings that transform the student.

The material within the *Hanes Taliesin* focuses on the initial transformation of the student by means of the Awen and subsequent initiations through the three realms of land, water and sky. References to this body of work are present within the Book of Taliesin which refers to the function of the Cauldron of Cerridwen and the origination of Awen; this reiterates the importance of the Book of Taliesin Material as a further guide to the student of Druidry. This paper will serve to demonstrate that the material recorded in its written form is merely an expression of the themes contained therein, they are indisputably corrupted and have been the subject of unknown agendas and motives for centuries, but therein hide a part of their ability to inspire and transform - for the material endures.

The academic evisceration of the material provides an invaluable resource that explores the development and evolution of language and the customs present in medieval Welsh culture, and one can be led to believe that this is all that exists; whereas further magical substance can be discovered swimming within the material. This is beautifully expressed in the words of John Morris-Jones writing in the *Cymmrodor* in 1918 –

“Quite enough has been said to show that these poems and tales, which were mist and mystery to those who would look at them through glass, become clear when focused at from a distance, and the mists and most of the mystery vanishes.” [\[1\]](#)

The above eloquently demonstrates that the material exists as layers, and that one can approach them from various positions of exploration. As works of literal history and genius they are pertinent to the dusty corridors of Academia and to the visionary they provide a key to focus on mystery, but for years never the twain would meet. However in recent decades academia has concluded that the material is indicative of earlier traditions that are pre-Christian in origin, thus providing the visionary with a bridge to its effective exploration from a position of authenticity. As Morris-Jones suggests one must take a step back and come to the realisation that there is more to this material than initially meets the eye, and that to look between the lines is as valid as its literal exploration.

The material serves to transform those who would examine it and it does so, I suggest by mystical means which can be utilised and experienced by the student. With this in mind I take to the application of the Ovatic arts in exploring this material, but do so from a point balanced between academia and the visionary. Before I embark on the dissection of the Preideu Annwfyn poem, a brief exploration of the Book of Taliesin itself is necessary.

The Manuscript

Peniarth Manuscript number 2 as designated by the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, formed part of the body of work entitled *‘Archaeologica Britannica’* compiled from the library of *Hengwrt* by the eminent scholar Edward Llwyd in 1707. The subsequently titled *‘Llyvyr Taliesin’* (The Book of Taliesin), formed part of the inventory of manuscripts held at the library in Dolgellau which became a part of LLwyd’s compilation. However, it is

notable that the designation *Llyvyr Taliesin* was not a medieval title for the manuscript, but one placed upon it by Llwyd or his colleagues at the time. Over three centuries have subsequently passed and the manuscript now forms part of the national collection at the library in Aberystwyth.

The Book of Taliesin is a rather small, unassuming manuscript measuring only 7 inches by 5 and contains in rather plain text 61 poems attributed to the Taliesin figure. It is written by a single ‘excellent’ hand according to the Celtic scholar Marged Haycock, using a regular textura script, which the scholar Daniel Huws dates to the first half of the 14th century.^[ii]

The first translated printed text of the Book of Taliesin in the English language appeared in the form of a compilation known as ‘*The Four Ancient Books of Wales*’ in 1868 translated and edited by W.F. Skene. This tome was to have significant influence on later exploration of the Celtic material and the history and culture of the old Britons. The majority of translations available today are inspired by this authoritative work and it continues to be the most popular quoted translation available. In 1910 the palaeographer and adept of Celtic literature J. Gwenogvryn Evans provided an exceptional facsimile and typography, text and translation of the Book of Taliesin, and although heavily criticised for his conclusions, to which he responded admirably^[iii], his collection forms a formidable and impressive record of the British/Welsh body of Celtic literature.

The material of the Book of Taliesin has been the subject of much academic dissection with several hundreds of papers written in an attempt to make sense of a body of work that Sharon Turner described as “*elaborately incomprehensible*”^[iv]. Several writers attempted to utilise the material to serve their own ulterior motives and vision of history that were at times highly imaginative and verging on the ilk of Iolo Morganwg. Celtic Scholar pitched against Celtic Scholar and by the turn of the twentieth century the battle had become an almost bloody and sadistic pastime, whereby each scholar served to sever the Celtic jugular of his counterpart, stripping the material to shreds with inconsequential arguments that served only to befuddle the layman further. By the early 1980’s a new breed of academic arose that approached the material from a neutral standpoint with little ulterior motive other than the appreciation of the material as relics of culture and language.

Content

The assumed complex nature of the poems arises from the variations in style and content. It can be argued that many visionary students of the material, in particular within the modern Druidry demographic, have been defeated by the lack of visionary guidance and inspiration available to them in exploring the arbitrary Taliesin material beyond the allegory of his birth. This can be compounded by the nature of the material as presented in the Book of Taliesin; it does not provide a clear picture of what exactly is going on and how the material can be utilised in a visionary sense. The nature of its content can appear conflicting and contradictory, with a mixture of pro and anti clerical themes present throughout the material. Critics of the material often dismiss any vestige of its paganism by claiming that it is simply indicative of a medieval worldview. Whilst an aspect of this is true, since the material does provide a snapshot of Wales in the middle ages but as I will explore later, there is more happening beneath the surface than is at first apparent. Much of the information held within the Book of Taliesin can be lost in translation, and with very few adepts to bridge the gap between the academic and the visionary.

If we examine the contents of the Book of Taliesin we will discover several of the poems are religious and scriptural in nature with three relating directly to Christian learning that appear anathema to the prophetic and legendary poetry in the remainder of the manuscript[v]. Combined with further poetry that appear to praise historical figures, notably the enigmatic *Urien Rheged* and the British ruler *Gwallog*, this cauldron of material can bewilder the most adept and enthusiastic student of the mysteries. How does one approach the material in a way conducive to their visionary exploration? Marged Haycock in her seminal work *'Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin'* compartmentalises the material into the following four useful categories[vi] :

Religious – relating to Christian doctrine and learning.

Prophetic – relating to future events by supernatural means.

Encomiastic – relating to the praise of a historical figure.

Legendary – relating to the experience and accounts of a legendary or extraordinary being.

It is probable that the material was not initially designed to be presented in one tome, having existed in the oral tradition for centuries, the manner by which it is currently preserved is not a true reflection of the material's function as a repository of Bardic wisdom - but instead the result of a scribe's production of a manuscript from an earlier anthology. Its presentation as a single manuscript steers the intellect towards its acceptance as a sequential tome as a result of our own literal programming. In order to bring sense and meaning to the material; one must de-programme the intellect which is likely to assume the collection as a doctrine of allegories similar to the Holy Bible that we have become so accustomed to. In order to comprehend the material one must reset the internal 'Perception Filters' and approach the material from a visionary sense combined with an academic understanding.

The Book of Taliesin does not embody a single tome of teaching but is instead a reflection of the scribal process of the dark and middle ages and the attempts of the scriptoria to preserve the material. Consequently we are presented with a varied and diverse storehouse of poetry indicative of society at the time and the ability of the Bardic material to transcend religious restrictions. The body represents a heaped collection of work attributed to the Taliesin figure and indicative of historical, prophetic, cultural and theological themes bound in a single volume, a mixed bag of allsorts that the scribes in all probability assumed to be the product of Taliesin's Awen[vii]. Its anthological nature is beautifully captured by the medievalist Will Parker –

"The Book of Taliesin contains an interesting medley of poetic themes – religious, prophetic, eulogistic, historical and mythological. Collectively, this might be seen as spanning a repertoire of a particular group we might refer to for convenience as 'The School of Taliesin'. In other words, the Book of Taliesin was a one-volume library: a cross section of the interests, activities and preoccupations of its original compilers." [viii]

Without doubt the material would not have survived at all had not been for the efforts of the monastic scriptoria to copy and recopy the documents. In all likelihood the presence of Latinised words and themes pertinent to the Christian religion may have served to prevent their destruction and aided their endurance[ix]. It is imperative that the student of Druidry today understands the process of the materials' endurance and to appreciate the manner by

which it survived the ages, and it did this by assuming the current traditions and moving along in both Bardic, pagan and Christian terms.

Identifying the most useful and accessible poetry that are of value to the student of mystery requires the attainment of keys that help access the material. Roger Sherman Loomis proclaimed a key that inadvertently identified the most useful works for the student, by discovering that the poems most replete with pagan lore begin and end with a tribute to the Christian God or Messiah[x]. These tributes seem generally out of place and in stark contrast to the pagan fuelled themes of the poems' main narrative.

Owing to the fact that the Book of Taliesin is representative of an anthology of earlier works, it is perfectly acceptable to study the poetry within the categorisations listed previously. In this manner we can begin to explore the poetry which is pertinent to the visionary aspects of Druidic practise; whilst simultaneously utilising an authentic storehouse of wisdom. The material is valid and is an important repository of Druidic knowledge and wisdom that can and should form a part of a Druid's lifelong learning efforts. I suggest that by combining the visionary and the scholarly a student of Druidry can glean invaluable spiritual and cultural substance from the teachings of the Book of Taliesin.

What lies beneath?

It is imperative at this point for me to emphasise that an exploration of the material at hand from the perspective of the modern Druid must utilise visionary and mental skills to effectively access its mysteries. Druidry is renowned for the development of mental and visionary excellence and in this case both resources must be engaged without greater emphasis on one or the other. Naturally a significant portion of the mysteries are open to interpretation, but I believe if our interpretation is grounded honourably in the academic and the visionary, where mental and magical excellence are equally employed to tease meaning from the material, we cannot go far wrong. This part of my paper serves to provide you with the resources that claim the material's origin in the distant past and its significance as a valuable tool of teaching indicative of the Old World. This information grounds the material in academia and research and acts as a connective bridge that spans the centuries, thus allowing the student to form the beginning of a relationship with the material.

The figure of Taliesin and our knowledge of him can be traced to the work of Nennius who in his *Historia Brittonum* refers to Taliesin as one the five poets famed among the Welsh in the 6th century. But herein hides a dichotomy for it is easy to assume that the Taliesin figure was a historical individual who can be located in a certain time and place and nothing else, and this in itself can cause significant problems in its exploration. The name Taliesin was common in Welsh society during the middle ages and it is more than plausible that a bard by that name held great influence at the courts of the time and may have inspired the legendary figure or vice-versa. However, it is vital for the Druid student to realise that there are two distinct aspects to the Taliesin figure, one of which is historical and the other legendary, and it is worthy of reiteration here that this paper focuses on the legendary aspect. Professor Patrick K. Ford explores the problem of accepting the figure as a single historical individual and that modern scholarship has had to be creative in its attempt to prove this. He argues that there is much within the content of the Taliesin material which is far from human, and belongs to the realms of the extraordinary or supernatural and therefore cannot be wholly attributed to a single historical figure[xi].

In his guise as a legendary figure, Taliesin is demonstrative of mystery and his poetry expresses his nature as a creature or being of supernatural erudition. And yet the material is presented from a very human point of view, thus affirming to the student that she too can be privy to the nature of Taliesin and be the expression of mystery that he proclaims. The nature of the legendary Taliesin is summed up by Marged Haycock –

“It simply denotes that the poems of the present collection are clearly dealing with a legendary and extraordinary being – a figure who claims to have been created at the world’s beginning, not born of mortal father and mother, who has been in the company of the divine family of Don and has lived in many different forms.” [\[xii\]](#)

This omnipresence that Taliesin refers to and his associations with the various Celtic pantheistic dynasties cause his persona to span an impossible length of time, thus placing him in the realm of the extraordinary. The manner by which Taliesin describes his previous experience has a transmutational quality which clearly demonstrates that his core being, his essence or spirit is not restricted to a human experience alone, but can be present in the form of anything however abstract. The figure of Taliesin acts more like a Demigod than a human being, and in stark contrast to other mythological figures, Gwydion for example, Taliesin is not fallible. He is the epitome of mystery incarnate; he is the personification of the prophetic spirit.

There is evidence within the Welsh mythological sagas that demonstrate Taliesin as a semi mythological figure; in the Mabinogi of Branwen, Taliesin is one of the seven survivors of the battle in Ireland and one of the parties of the wondrous severed head of Bran. In the company of the other survivors he spends eighty years in a Celtic utopia. He appears in the Black Book of Carmarthen material and also in the Vita Merlini. In his legendary persona he is mostly in the company of what are currently identified as Celtic gods. In his associations with the deities of the Celtic continuum and with themes that are indicative of immanency he displays traits of the Old World before the influence of the new religion. But the manner by which this material survives is indicative of the changes that the Taliesin persona underwent and its ability to respond to the new faith as Marged Haycock explains –

“From the point of view of the court poets, it would not be politic for the Taliesin persona to be seen purely as a worn out old druid, desperately making a last stand for paganism, it was imperative that the concept of Taliesin moved along in Christian terms too, absorbing the latest elements of learning as well as retaining the key to the mysteries of the cynfyd (Old World).” [\[xiii\]](#)

There are two points of interest in the above quote by Haycock that gives credence to the material and its nature as ‘Druidic’ or indicative of wisdom from the Old Celtic World. Firstly, Taliesin is referred to as a ‘Druid’ and this embellishment of a rank within the Iron Age priest caste is itself an indication of the antiquity of the Taliesin persona and its association with the culture of Druidism. Sir Ifor Williams refers to the collection of legendary and prophetic poetry within the Book of Taliesin as ‘Druidic poems’ [\[xiv\]](#) Within Taliesin’s poetry there is clear reference to his identification with Druidry when he claims –

“Wyf Dryw, wyf syw” [\[xv\]](#)

(I am a Druid, I am a Sage)

The term 'dryw', which has been incorrectly assigned as 'wizard' in modern translations is interpreted in the University of Wales Dictionary of the Welsh Language as an antiquated term to mean 'derwydd' (druid)[[xvi](#)]. The Book of Taliesin continuously refers to the Druid priest caste, and academics are inclined to accept that the material's origin is of considerable antiquity and that the myths and poetry of the Taliesin persona are suggestive of a residual form of Druidry. Therefore it can be deduced that the legendary persona of Taliesin is a representation of the Old Celtic World but one which has evolved with the new religion. Taliesin's continuous reference to Druids denotes a certain familiarity with the theme of Druids and Druidism that is suggestive of their continued presence and influence throughout the ages.

The second item of interest from the Haycock quote above is in reference to her assignment of the Taliesin persona as a 'key' to the Old World. And the term 'key' is imperative, for it is apparent that the material in the Book of Taliesin and the associated myth of the transformation of Gwion Bach is riddled with druidic elements. Will Parker introduces us to this when he states –

“The myth of Taliesin is the final and perhaps most unambiguous evidence for a residual druidic element blended in with the biblical and classical traditions, creating a distinctive mystical/historiographic vision that would have been quite unheard of anywhere else in Europe at the time.” [\[xvii\]](#)

Students of the OBOD will no doubt be familiar with the transformation themes contained in the myth of the birth of Taliesin or *Hanes Taliesin*. However they may be unaware of its scholarly exploration as a 'key' that serves to unlock the mysteries contained within the Book of Taliesin. As already mentioned the anthological nature of the Book of Taliesin is suggestive of a complicated process of preservation that has been interpreted in many ways throughout the centuries. Owing to this it can be deduced that the material exists in a fragmentary form and this in itself may have been intentional to ensure its survival by combining it with blatantly Christian themes. Arguably the material in the Book of Taliesin forms a core of older material that in all probability was composed in written form during the sub-Roman period [\[xviii\]](#) (5th – 6th centuries). In his 'The Poems of Taliesin', Sir Ifor Williams explains that a key does exist that brings the various fragments together to form a cohesiveness that can then be explored by the student. And one of these keys is the myth of the birth of Taliesin. Sir Ifor explains –

“This poem [Angar Kyfundawt, The Book of Taliesin] and others of the same category cannot be explained without reference to a folk-tale called Hanes Taliesin. The shape-shifting Gwion, who swallowed the three precious drops of inspiration and knowledge, reborn as Taliesin, after a series of metamorphoses which a good storyteller could vary to his heart's content – this infant prodigy – he is the key to Angar Kyfundawt and to all the other poems of the same category in the Book of Taliesin.” [\[xix\]](#)

One could argue that the *Hanes Taliesin* is considerably younger than the material of the Book of Taliesin, but this would be an erroneous assumption for certain passages within the Book of Taliesin refer to the themes of his birth as can be seen in the poem *Angar Kyfundawt*

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A'm haruolles yar

A hen got hold of me

Grafrud, grib escar;

A red-clawed one, a crested enemy;

Gorffowysseis naw nos

I spent nine nights

Yn y chroth yn was.

Residing in her womb. [\[xx\]](#)

It has been suggested by the Celtic scholar Angela Grant that the reference to nine nights may well be a reference to nine nights of the moon, or nine months - the gestational time for human pregnancy [\[xxi\]](#). There is undoubtedly a connection between the themes of the *Hanes Taliesin* and the Book of Taliesin material where the Taliesin figure refers to himself as being Gwion Bach as exemplified in the poem *Prif Gyuarth Geluyd* –

Wyf hen, wyf newyd, wyf Gwion;

I'm old, I'm new, I'm Gwion; [\[xxii\]](#)

This and the fact that his Awen and powers emanate from the cauldron of Cerridwen, and further references to his connection with Gwydion and Arianrhod etc, imply that he is connected to the various deific dynasties of the British Celts such as the divine family of Don [\[xxiii\]](#), and by proxy of the Mabinogi of Branwen to the house of Llyr. These and numerous other references reiterate the material of the *Hanes Taliesin* as a key to mystery and blend it with as Juliette Wood indicates international folk-motifs [\[xxiv\]](#). Not all scholars agree with Sir Ifor's proclamation that the *Hanes Taliesin* acts as a key to unlock the meaning of the legendary poems, but in a Druidic sense this is worthy of further exploration, for this particular key introduces us to the inter-textual quality of the Celtic material which links the various themes present within them together, this will be demonstrated in the section to follow.

Keys may assume various forms, and in this instance it is the transformational and initiatory quality of the events within the *Hanes Taliesin* and their ability to evoke particular experiences which allows us to access to the material of the Book of Taliesin. Gwion bach is transformed by the ingestion of the blessed drops of Awen and is forced into an initiatory sacred chase through the realms of land, water and sky, before assuming a form that symbolises the early stages of life itself, a seed. This in turn is swallowed by Cerridwen in the guise of a black crested hen whereby the initiate undergoes an assimilation process where the mysteries are digested and incorporated into the initiates' new awakening. The child is then placed inside a further receptacle, the skin-belly and set to float on water for the best part of 40 years before being birthed, almost by caesarean section at a salmon weir.

The implications here are widely different to the Irish Fenian Cycle material where the initiate consumes the flesh of the salmon of wisdom and is thus imbued with the spirit of wisdom. In the British/Welsh material the initiate becomes as Patrick K. Ford states "*The personification of wisdom*" [\[xxv\]](#). This process arises from the mystery that is imparted to the initiate by the ingestion of the Awen and the subsequent transformations he undertakes, which causes him to partake of all existences and all time. The nature of the spirit and soul are imparted upon the initiate during this experience. The motifs within the *Hanes Taliesin* material connects the student to a storehouse of ancient Celtic wisdom as Ford explains –

"Virtually every identifiable motif in the Hanes Taliesin has close analogues within early Celtic traditional narratives: this includes shape-shifting, transformational combat, cauldron of poetic inspiration, knowledge gained from ingesting either some liquid or a morsel of food. These motifs tend to be specific within Celtic tradition, so that reconstructing any common

prototype requires some diligence; the European and universal analogues may offer supporting or merely analogous data, but since they too are culture specific they often tend to obscure our vision." [\[xxvi\]](#)

The manner by which the *Hanes Taliesin* material is presented in the OBOD Bardic grade emulates the process described above and locks in the Celtic cultural motifs and enables the student to experience the mysteries by the utilisation of visionary skills. It acts as a cultural and magical key, and is in line with Sir Ifor's thinking. By experiential immersion in the tale the student is transformed and the Perception Filters are altered to allow further study of the material and actually see the woods for the trees. A cerebral exploration of the material will simply result in a cerebral appreciation of it, for the material to become applicable teachings of mystery once must interact with it, and the key to this is relationship.

The Vision

As I have demonstrated above the *Hanes Taliesin* is capable of evoking the initial transformation required for further understanding and assimilation of the mysteries of Taliesin, and once the door is unlocked the various rooms within can be explored from a position of knowing. To stumble amidst the corridors of Celtica without a guide is foolhardy indeed and will serve only to perplex, immersion within the initial 'key' material provides the student with the necessary tools and skills to understand the mysteries and how to apply them to modern practise.

The Anglesey Druid Order has long since made use of the Book of Taliesin within its teaching program, and this immersion has gleaned some surprising and effective results. The reason for the utilisation of this material is two-fold, first it connects us to a body of work that culturally links us to our ancestors, it honours the past for its gifts of tradition and myth. Secondly it provides an authentic stage for the exploration of the Celtic material and the construction of applicable systems based on the teachings of our ancestors. A quick glance at the Book of Taliesin and its plethora of poetry and one would be forgiven for not knowing where to start; therefore I offer this exploration of one of the collection's most enigmatic poems as a Ovatic/Visionary tool.

PREIDEU ANNWFYN – THE SPOILS OF ANNWN

The most examined poem of the Book of Taliesin collection is undoubtedly the one which appears on folio number 54 and begins; with the illumination **G** (*olychaf wledic*). Designated the title *Preideu Annwfn* (The Spoils of Annwn, or the Booty of Annwn) [\[xxvii\]](#) this poem has been the subject of numerous translations and interpretation and has been the focus of Arthurian dissection for centuries. Academics and visionaries alike have attempted to squeeze meaning from its obscure lines in an attempt to decipher the mystery that one senses within its complex and enigmatic structure. Those with an interest in delineating the nature of the Celtic Other-world are particularly drawn to the poem for it seems, on the surface, to describe a physical journey to Annwn. The speaker is undoubtedly Taliesin, who accompanies Arthur on a journey through various island fortifications or *Caer* (pl: *Caerau*) to find, procure or steal the cauldron of Pen Annwfn (the head of Annwn). The riddles which the poem presents appear baffling, but this has done nothing to discourage the myriad of scholars and visionaries alike to descend into Annwn's turbulent waters to find meaning. Naturally any exploration of the poem and its utilisation as a Druidic tool of teaching is

subjectively visionary in nature, but I would claim that this does not negate any mystery that can be practically extracted from between the lines.

What I offer here is a system of teaching and practise that the Anglesey Order has developed over the last 12 years and incorporated as an aspect of its training program. The limitations of this paper prevent a comprehensive exploration of the poem in its entirety; therefore I have selected the primary visionary components contained therein, together with a brief explanation of their meaning to demonstrate the visionary qualities of the poem as follows -

- A transformational journey that explores the nature of the ‘Self’.
- A journey that employs the Celtic archetypes their mythologies and their teachings to adequately prepare and embark upon the journey.
- A teaching that identifies the human endocrine system as symbolized by the 7 primary forts or Caerau of Annwn.
- A system that internalises the Celtic material to provide a British version of the Chakra system but grounded in indigenous Celtic myth.

The teachings within the *Preideu Annwfyn* evolve from the initiatory aspect of the *Hanes Taliesin*, where the student has consciously immersed himself in the mysteries through the ingestion of Awen and is descending further into the realms of Celtic mystery. For a practitioner to be effective she must know herself, her limitations, her strengths, her coping mechanisms and the manner by which she responds to responsibility. This brings about a priest that is fully aware and lucid of his own human condition and understands the meaning of being human and of being a walker between the worlds, a priest of the Gods of Celtica. I suggest that an authentic practise for exploring these facets of the ‘self’ can be discovered within the lines and the visionary component of the *Preideu Annwfyn*.

But why the *Preideu Annwfyn* in particular you may ask? The primary reason is its connection to the Celtic Otherworld - Annwn, and the presence of Annwn in other supporting tales and poems. *Annwfyn* is derived from *an & dwfyn* which can be interpreted to mean ‘Very deep’ or ‘Not world’, the term is referred to frequently throughout the works of Taliesin, the Chronicles of the Mabinogi and in the later works by Iolo Morganwg. Within the Book of Taliesin Annwn is described as being beneath the known world and is deeply connected to Taliesin’s Awen or inspiration. He claims that the Awen he sings is brought from the ‘*dwfyn*’ (deep) and made manifest in this physical dimension. This suggests that Annwn is connected to the source of inspiration and shares a commonality with the cauldron of that quality that appears in the *Hanes Taliesin*. We may refer to Annwn as being ‘Other’ or separate to our reality and yet Taliesin seems to refer to it as somewhere deep within his own experience, implying that Annwn has an internal quality of being ‘Inner Space’, or that place which underlies or underpins our known Universe. Taliesin has the ability to reach into Annwn and bring forth inspiration, he is teaching us that the Otherworld is not beyond grasp, but that we are continuously swimming within its deep currents.

The Celtic concept of the Otherworld can be seen to permeate most our native mythologies, where various characters interact or enter it for reasons that may not initially be fully clear to them. In the Mabinogi of Pwyll it is one of the Kings of Annwn that requests his presence in

the Otherworld and this can be seen referenced within the first stanza of the *Preideu Annwfn*, the first instance of inter-textual reference that act as keys to unlock the mystery.

The realm of Annwn has in some instances become erroneously known as the land of the dead, and yet there is very little evidence to suggest that it is so, and according to Roger Loomis the dead are conspicuous by their absence, and he suggests that Annwn is in fact the realm of the ever-living ones, the immortals, or the abode of the Celtic Gods[xxviii]. Loomis further notes that Annwn appears to lack any mortal inhabitants and the humans who venture there do not undergo a process of death or dying and in most instances they return unharmed to this realm[xxix]. Encounters with Annwn are often challenging where the morals, honour and stamina of the explorer is tested. Courage and bravery are essential attributes for the perilous journey to the Otherworld in search of the elusive cauldron, which in turn will not boil the meat of a coward. The allusive riddles of the poem intrigue and offer snippets of information that seem to refer to another body of mythology that was known at the time, Marged Haycock elaborates –

“Admittedly it (the poem) is not developed to any significant extent; the tone is largely allusive, not explanatory, as though the poetry were designed to lock into a layer of known story material already laid down in the minds of contemporary audiences.” [xxx]

According to Haycock and her contemporaries one cannot fully understand the material without referencing the other bodies of myth that exist in Celtica. This is perhaps indicative of the deliberate fragmentation of the material during the dark ages to ensure its continuous survival, in the hope that future generations will discover the keys to unlock the mysteries, which continue to exist even if fragmented to within an inch of their lives. No sense can be made of the poem without inter-textual reference or the utilisation of the subtle senses; I reiterate here the importance of the visionary arts as a valid and authentic tool of Druidic practise, to make sense of the allusive themes we must utilise the Awen.

We have examined the dusty, physical component of the Book of Taliesin and now we must descend wholly into the visionary. To experience the poem as a living entity that encapsulates mystery is to bring it alive and to tap into the ancient storehouse of wisdom that our ancestors left for our benefit, here we assume our position as the sum total of that which has gone before and descend through the words of dry ink on parchment to the Otherworld that lies beneath. It is perfectly valid for the student to explore the remaining wisdom and fill in the gaps by the utilisation of the Awen to glean a deeper understanding of the mysteries. Will Parker explains the function of exploration by means of the Awen in his Four Branches of the Mabinogi –

“Today, the stimulated imagination is regarded as a source of delusion or fantasy rather than a means of perception; but within the medieval culture involved, the deliberate cultivation of the dream-vision would have been considered one of the most exalted activities of the bardic vates. The ecstatic state or Awen which provided these historical insights would have been thought as direct contact with the archetypal realms.” [xxxi]

Contact with the deeper themes of the *Preideu Annwfn* and indeed other materials within the Book of Taliesin, I suggest, directly initiates contact between the student and the archetypal realms of Celtica, its gods, its teachings and mysteries. But above all it causes a profound exploration of the nature of self and the transformation that this initiates, which can be discovered within this single poem attributed to Taliesin. Alas the constraints of this paper

prevent me from a full exploration of every account of inter-textual reference and meaning to be gleaned from the poem but - it does provide adequate space to focus on the major themes and motifs indicative of its mystery and to provide the student with adequate information for further exploration.

It is pertinent at this point to give the text of the poem in the original language from the Book of Taliesin followed by a translation –

I

1. Golychaf wledic pendeucic gwlat ri.
2. Py ledas y pennaeth dros traeth mundi.
3. Bu kyweir karchar gweir yg kaer sidi.
4. Trwy ebostol pwyll a phryderi.
5. Neb kyn noc ef nyt aeth idi.
6. Yr gadwyn trom/las kywirwas ae ketwi.
7. A rac *Preideu Annwfn* tost yt geni.
8. Ac yt urawt parahawt yn bardwedi.
9. Tri lloneit prytwen yd aetham ni idi.
10. Nam seith ny dyrreith o gaer sidi.

II

11. Neuy wyf glot geinmyn cerd ochlywir.
12. Yg kaer pedryuan pedyr ychwelyt.
13. Yg kynneir or peir pan leferit.
14. O anadyl naw morwyn gochyneuit.
15. Neu peir pen annwfn pwy y vnut.
16. Gwrym am y oror a mererit.
17. Ny beirw bwyll llwfyfyr ny ry tyghit.
18. Cledyf lluch lleawc idaw rydyrchit.
19. Ac yn llaw leminawc yd edewit.

20. A rac drws porth vffern llugyrn lloscit.
21. A pan aetham ni gan Arthur trafferth lethrit.
22. Namyn seith ny dyrreith o gaer vedwit.

III

23. Neut wyf glot geinmyn kerd glywanawr.
24. Yg kaer Pedryfan ynys pybyrdor.
25. Echwyd a muchwyd kymysceter.
26. Gwin gloyw eu gwirawt rac eu gorgord.
27. Tri llonet prytwen yd aetham ni ar vor.
28. Namyn seith ny dyrreith o gaer rigor.

IV

29. Ny obrynafi lawyr llen llywyadur.
30. Tra chaer wydyr ny welsynt wrhyt Arthur.
31. Tri vgeint canhwr a seui ar y mur.
32. Oed anhawd ymadrawd ae gwylyadur.
33. Tri llonet prytwen yd aeth gan Arthur.
34. Namyn seith ny dyrreith o gaer golud.

V

35. Ny obrynaf y lawyr llaes eu kylchwy.
36. Ny wdant wy py dyd peridydyd pwy.
37. Py awr ymeindyd y ganet cwy.
38. Pwy gwnaeth ar nyt aeth doleu defwy.
39. Ny wdant wy yr brych bras y penrwy.
40. Seith vgein kygwng yny aerwy.
41. A phan aetham ni gan Arthur auyrdwl gofwy.

42. Namyn seith ny dyrreith o gaer vandwy.

VI

43. Ny obrynafy lawyr llaes eu gohen.
44. Ny wdant py dyd peridyd pen.
45. Py awr ymeindyd y ganet perchen.
46. Py vil a gatwant aryant y pen.
47. Pan aetham ni gan Arthur afyrdwl gynhen.
48. Namyn seith ny dyrreith o gaer ochren.

VII

49. Myneich dychnut val cunin cor.
50. O gyfranc udyd ae gwibanhor.
51. Ae vn hynt gwynt ae vn dwfyr mor.
52. Ae vn vfel tan twrwf diachor.

VIII

53. Myneych dychnut val bleidawr.
54. O gyfranc udyd ae gwidyantawr.
55. Ny wdant pan yscar deweint a gwawr.
56. Neu wynt pwy hynt pwy y rynnawd.
57. Py va diua py tir a plawd.
58. Bet sant yn diuant a bet allawr.
59. Golychaf y wledic penedfic mawr.
60. Na bwyf trist crist am gwadawl.

Translation –

I

1. I praise the Lord, the ruler of the royal kingdom.

2. Who has extended his sway over the extent of the world.
3. Maintained was Gweir's prison in Caer Siddi.
4. Throughout the story of Pwyll and Pryderi.
5. No one before him went into it.
6. Into the heavy grey chain which restrained the loyal lad.
7. And before the spoils of Annwn bitterly he sang.
8. And until doom shall our poetic invocation continue.
9. Three full loads of Prydwen we went into it.
10. Except for seven none returned from Caer Siddi.

II

11. I am splendid of fame, my song was heard.
12. In Caer Pedryfan revolving to face the four directions.
13. My first utterance was spoken concerning the cauldron
14. It is kindled by the breath of nine maidens.
15. The cauldron of the head of Annwfn, what is its nature
16. With its dark rim and edged with pearls?
17. It will not boil the food of a coward; it is not destined to do so.
18. Lleawc's flashing sword was thrust into it.
19. And it was left behind in Lleminawc's hand.
20. And before the door of hells gates the lamps burned.
21. And when we went with Arthur, famed in tribulation.
22. Except for seven, none returned from Caer Feddwit.

III

23. I am splendid of fame, my songs are heard.
24. In Caer Pedryfan, strong defence of the island.

25. Fresh water and jet are mixed together.
26. Sparkling wine is their drink set before their host.
27. Three full loads of Prydwen we went by sea.
28. Except for seven, none returned from Caer Rigor.

IV

29. I don't rate pathetic men involved in religious writings.
30. Those who have not seen Arthur's feat beyond Caer Wydr.
31. Six thousand men stand upon its falls.
32. It is difficult to converse with their watchman.
33. Three full loads of Prydwen went with Arthur.
34. Except for seven none returned from Caer Goludd

V

35. I don't deserve to be stuck with pathetic men who trail their shields.
36. Who do now know on what day.
37. And when at mid-day was god born.
38. Or who made the one who did not go the meadows of Defwy.
39. Those who know nothing of the brindled ox, stout his collar.
40. With seven score links in its chain.
41. And when we went with Arthur, a sad journey.
42. Except for seven, none returned from Caer Vandwy.

VI

43. I don't deserve to be stuck with pathetic men with no go in them.
44. Those who do not know on what day the lord was created.
45. Or when at noon the ruler was born.
46. Nor what animal they guard, with his silver head.

47. When we went with Arthur, a sad conflict.
48. Except for seven none returned from Caer Ochren.

VII

49. Monks congregate like packs of wolves.
50. Because of the clash between masters who know
51. Whether the wind follows a single path, whether the sea is all one water.
52. Whether fire an unstoppable force is all one spark.

VIII

53. Monks congregate like wolves.
54. Because of the clash between masters who know.
55. They [the monks] do not know how the darkness and light divide.
56. Nor the course of the wind or its onrush.
57. What place it devastates or what land it strikes.
58. How many saints are in the void, and how many altars.
59. I praise the Lord, the great ruler.
60. May I not endure sadness, Christ will reward me. [\[xxxii\]](#)

You will note that the poem begins and ends with a tribute to Christianity and is as suggested by Loomis indicative of those poems most replete with Pagan lore. Upon initial examination it is obvious to any reader that the tributes do not fit with the theme or feel of the poem itself, it is as if they were simply an afterthought, the true reason of which has been lost to us. Before the practical visionary application of the poem can be explained one must attempt to make some sense of it.

Into the Deep

Immediately following the opening tribute we are informed that:

Maintained was Gweir's prison in Caer Siddi

Throughout the story of Pwyll and Pryderi.

Here we are presented with the first tantalising clues to understanding the meaning of the poem itself, its hidden mysteries and the nature of the quest in search of the cauldron. In the original language we are informed that Gweir's prison is 'Kyweir' which according to Haycock means ordered and in good repair, prepared or ready, with the added possibility that it also means a place or a region, meaning that the place of Gweir's incarceration is Caer Siddi. The same term 'Kyweir' is used in the Book of Taliesin poem *Golychafi Gulwyd* in reference to Caer Siddi – which we will explore a little later. These two lines are filled with meaning and mystery and to begin to make sense of them we must start with the assumed protagonist, Gweir. Who in fact is he? It is here that we discover the magic of inter-textual references which give credence to the fact that the wisdom within the poem was purposefully fragmented at some point in the distant past.

The name Gweir appears in Triad number 52 of the collection known as *'Trioedd Ynys Prydein (the Triads of the Islands of Britain)* and it informs us that –

“The three exalted prisoners of the Island of Britain – Llyr Half-Speech, who was imprisoned by Euroswydd, and the second, Mabon the son of Modron, and the third was Gweir the son of Gwirioedd.” [\[xxxiii\]](#)

The three prisoners mentioned tie in beautifully with the Mabinogi collection, Llyr and his offspring are the subject of the 2nd and 3rd branches of the Mabinogi, whereas Mabon the son of Modron appears as the exalted prisoner in the tale of Culhwch ac Olwen. In the latter it is Arthur that is employed to seek his release; similarly it is Arthur that is the hero that embarks upon the raid of the Other-world in search of the cauldron and perhaps to free Gweir. Gweir belongs to a caste of youthful prisoners in Celtic myth that John Matthews refers to as the 'Wondrous Children' [\[xxxiv\]](#), these protagonists are imbued with some form of magical power or ability, or are representative of the initiates' journey, they are either kidnapped or the subjects of a rescue attempt.

The second line tells us that it is the tale of Pwyll and Pryderi that will inform us of the meaning of Gweir's imprisonment. Pwyll appears in the first branch of the Mabinogi, where he encounters a King of Annwn - Arawn in the liminal grove of Glyn Cuch, the first half of the branch tells of Pwyll's adventures in Annwn, and the declaration by Arawn after a year and a day that Pwyll will forever be known as "*Pwyll Pen Annwfyn (Pwyll, Head of Annwn)*". This is important for it tells us that the realm of Annwn and the mortals, who interact with it, are primary to the understanding of the *Preideu Annwfyn*. Pwyll's marriage to Rhiannon, who is also believed to be a creature of the Celtic Otherworld, results in the birth of a baby boy who is stolen from his crib only to appear in the stable of Teirnon on the Calends of May. The child is baptised according to the practises of the time and named Gwri, the similarity of the name Gwri and Gweir is striking and it is more than likely that they are referring to the same individual, later and upon being returned to his rightful parents the child is renamed 'Pryderi'. Not only is Gwri stolen from his parents and spends an unknown amount of time in some limbo before being born alongside a foal, he is also caused to become a prisoner in the third branch of the Mabinogi along with his mother Rhiannon, within a fort that contains a suspended cauldron. Pryderi is the main protagonist of the four branches of the Mabinogi, and yet oddly he appears only briefly in the second Branch which retells the raid by Bran on Ireland, which again involves a cauldron. The entire tale emulates some of the themes in the *Preideu Annwfyn* and further reiterates its value as a tool for the exploration of the self. If one studies the characters of the second branch one will discover a myriad of archetypes indicative of the human condition. It is reasonable to suggest that

Pryderi and Gweir are synonymous with the experience of the initiate or student of the mysteries. They are in fact – you.

Caer Siddi, although the name itself is cognate with the Irish to mean the abode of the gods or the fairies, it appears twice in the legendary poems from the Book of Taliesin. In the poem *Golychaf i Gulwyd* we find the following perplexing stanza –

“Ys kyweir vyg kadeir yg Caer Siddi:

Maintained is my chair in Caer Siddi:

Nys plawd heint a heneint a uo yndi,

Sickness and old age do not afflict those who dwell there,

Ys gwyr Manawyt a Phryderi.

As Manawyd and Pryderi know.”

Again we are offered a tantalising clue to the nature of Gweir’s prison and we are informed that in order to discover its nature we must look to those who know of it, in this case we are told that Manawyd (Manawydan) and Pryderi are the keys. At the closing of the second branch of the Mabinogi after the devastation of Ireland and the severing of Bran’s head, a wondrous assembly of seven survivors gather on the island of Gwales. Amongst the survivors are none other than Manawydan, Pryderi and notably Taliesin. Gwales has long been synonymous with the island of Lundy whose Welsh name is Ynys Weir, but it has also been suggested that Ynys Weir or Gweir’s Island is synonymous with the Island of Grassholm. This attempt to place a mystical island in the physical realm can cause confusion and detract from the true meaning of the poem. It is understood that islands were seen as mysterious and liminal locations to the Iron Age Celts, and it is sufficient within this paper to note that Annwn may have been perceived by our ancestors as lying somewhere in the Western sea, and that the mythical character of Gweir is associated with one of them. What is relevant to the current exploration is the nature of the island paradise at the end of the second branch of the Mabinogi and the description of Caer Siddi in the Book of Taliesin. Both accounts describe a place where sickness and old age do not afflict those who dwell within, and Manawydan confirms this notion as an illusion when he says “*You see there, that door we must never open*”, knowing that the illusionary quality of the fort would cease upon its opening. This confirms that Caer Siddi is a place that maintains the illusionary or assumed states of being, a place where we swim secure in our insecurities. More on this later.

Thus far the poem within the space of two short lines have taken us on a journey through the magic and mystery of the four branches of the Mabinogi, the tale of Culhwch ac Olwen and a further poem within the present collection being examined. This is suggestive that the underlying ‘known story material’ that Haycock speaks of is in fact being alluded to within the poem itself – it is purposefully directing us to other sources to assist the student in making sense of the material. As we examine the inter-textual references we begin to get a feel for the poem and its meaning, and so it continues-

No one before him went into it.

Into the heavy grey chain which restrained the loyal lad.

And before the spoils of Annwfn bitterly he sang.

And until doom shall our poetic invocation continue.

The first line indicates the experience is unique to Gweir and that none other has entered Caer Siddi before him, this gives credence to the fact that Caer Siddi is Gweir's personal fort of illusion and therefore pertinent to his experience alone. We all of us have our own unique Caer Siddi. The heavy grey chain can be interpreted as the shackles of illusion that continuously restrain us, preventing us from accessing the mysteries contained within the elusive Cauldron of Pen Annwfn. Gweir is singing bitterly before the Spoils of Annwn, he perceives the treasure of mystery, but his human condition may prevent him from releasing his own shackles of illusion, for they provide him with a sense of security. We are often far more willing to wallow in our insecurities and remain with what is familiar than do something to transform, the 'better the devil you know' scenario. But as students of mystery we also invoke the mysteries from the cauldrons rim, we are actively calling to it, but the poem questions our integrity and strength, our bravery and courage. Perhaps it is best to stay where we are, secure in our insecurities, rather than attempt a perilous journey into the unknown? Dion Fortune captured this sentiment when she said "*If you are ever offered a choice between being an Occultist and a Blacksmith chose the lighter job and enter the forge rather than the lodge.*" [\[xxxv\]](#)

The journey into Annwn in search of the cauldron is not, as has been suggested by many, an actual physical journey, but instead a profound and transformative journey inward, into the realms of the subtle. The *Preideu Annwfn* portrays our own predicament - stay where we are, perfectly safe and cosy in illusion, or embark on a journey to discover who we are, and why. By identifying with Gweir as a representation of ourselves, we move towards a more immersive relationship with the themes of the poem, rather than the usual passive observation that does nothing to tug at the spirit. If we invoke the powers of Annwn as the poem suggests, then we must respond to it when the vessel that carries us to its magical forts docks and invites us to board.

Three full loads of Prydwen we went into it.

Much has been written in the past concerning Arthur's ship Prydwen, and I am reluctant to repeat some of the established themes. The peculiar nature of her loads, being described as 'Three full loads' has caused many a scholar to scratch their head in perplexity. It has been suggested that this refers to some form of shuttle service that carries men at arms to each of Annwn's forts, or that the ship is simply packed to three times its normal capacity. However from a visionary standpoint I suggest that Prydwen is indicative of something far more mysterious and archetypal. The name 'Prydwen' can be translated to mean "Fair of form", but there is further meaning to be gleaned from her name. There is no doubt that the name refers to a feminine archetype and the suffix 'wen' meaning 'blessed, pure' is common in the names of Celtic female archetypes that have a supernatural or deific quality to them, Branwen, Cerridwen, Ogyrwen etc, etc. In relation to Arthur we see further examples of the 'wen' suffix in his possessions, *Carnwenan*, his knife, *Ehangwenn*, his hall, *Gwenn*, his mantle [\[xxxvi\]](#). In a visionary sense we can begin to fathom the archetypes that are present within the poem, who exist in order to assist the student on the journey into Annwfn. The Three Fullness of Prydwen can be taken to represent our own baggage if you will. But what

is noteworthy here is that help is at hand, there are three primary archetypes that our Bardic invocation may call upon to assist our own journey in search of the elusive cauldron –

Prydwen – the vessel required to undertake the journey. A feminine yet non-anthropomorphic archetype, she is steadfast, secure, stable and yet she is vulnerable to the elements. The pounding of the sea against her bow and the wind constantly tearing at her sails, tests her seaworthiness and the stomachs of those who tread her boards. Prydwen implies that help is at hand, a vessel is made ready but one must understand that the journey may still be perilous.

Arthur – is the strength and courage required to undertake the journey, and yet the qualities of Arthur are incredibly human. He is flawed, fallible and yet filled with courage and bravery. There is a determination here to face each task with nobility and integrity. Without this courage; the forts of Annwn may overcome our defences and cause us to succumb to weakness and failure. We may become permanently compromised by our lack of courage.

Taliesin – is the wisdom that underlies our actions, our bravery is useless unless backed by knowledge, foresight and preparation. Taliesin is the prophetic spirit that causes us to see beneath the obvious to inherently ‘know’ what is going on by means of the Awen. Taliesin and his radiant brow is a gift of the initiatory process of our initial descent into the cauldrons of inspiration and transformation.

Combined, Prydwen, Arthur and Taliesin provide us with the necessary archetypal guides to face the most challenging of Celtica’s cauldrons -the Cauldron of Pen Annwfyn. This vessel is a testing device it is merciless and yet fair. To attempt a journey through the seas of Annwn without eliciting the assistance of the above three archetypes would be foolhardy. From a visionary sense we do not need to attempt this journey alone, within a few short lines the poem has identified who the protagonist is, the initial nature of illusion and also a tripartite archetypal system to assist the passage through Annwn. A visionary exploration of the above causes the student to tap into an ancient storehouse of wisdom that is relevant and applicable to modern practise.

Except for seven none returned from Caer Siddi.

We may assume that the three full loads of Prydwen and the seven survivors that arise from each of Annwn’s forts are individual mortals, and yet there is nothing to actually suggest that this is so. It is simply an assumption that we automatically make with our pre programmed anthropocentric minds. This line is repeated six times in relation to the seven primary forts of Annwfyn, in each instance we are told that only seven return, but we are not actually told what the seven are. Indisputably the significance of ‘7’ was important amongst the Celts, and it can be said that it was some form of holy number for reasons that may well be lost to us. But it is indicative within the exploration of this poem that the number seven holds great significance and is a number that Taliesin continuously refers to in his other poems. Within the *Black Book of Caermarthen* Taliesin informs us that –

“It was with seven faculties that I was thus blessed, and with seven created beings I was placed for purification.” [\[xxxvii\]](#)

We are not informed of who or what the seven created beings are, but they could be seen as representations of the seven individual forts within Annwn. His seven faculties or senses are further elaborated upon in the Book of Taliesin poem *'Kanu y Byt Mawr'* where he claims –

"My seven consistencies of fire and earth, and water and air, and mist and flowers and the fruitful wind."

Perhaps most relevant to the visionary are the seven survivors from the second branch of the Mabinogi. These seven archetypes are worthy of further exploration by attempting to place each of their attributes within the individual forts of Annwn. Here they may act as further guides or assistants that the student may forge relationship with, to assist their passage through Annwn. In light of this visionary component it is reasonable to perceive the seven survivors of the *Preideu Annwfn* as the seven mentioned at the closing of the second branch, and that their qualities are retained regardless of what occurs within the individual forts. With this in mind the visionary can accept the attributes of the seven survivors as essential aspects of themselves, aspects that are retained and honoured as essential qualities of the 'self'. The journey through the forts is not one of vanquishing or exorcising, but rather a journey which acknowledges our attributes -no matter how we judge them -as vital components of this experience. By learning about ourselves we discover our qualities and the manner by which we may be compromised, and how these affect the journey of the student through mystery.

We have reached the end of the first stanza, and as we have seen there is great mystery and much to explore. The second stanza offers an insight into the nature of the cauldron itself.

I am splendid of fame, my song was heard.

In Caer Pedryfan revolving to face the four directions.

The opening line of this stanza is a proclamation by Taliesin of his splendid poetic abilities, never modest, Taliesin knows that he is the best there is, and often makes great sweeping gestures to the cause, reiterating himself as the chief Bard of the Britons. This line appears twice within the poem at the opening of stanza II and III where he asserts his authority as an exceptional bard, the remaining stanzas open with his disdain for pathetic men or those of religious persuasion, namely monks who he pleasurably slanders. He claims his fame within the fort of Caer Pedryfan, often translated to mean the four walled enclosure, or the four turreted fort and is unique among the Caerau in that no actual journey is implied, Taliesin mentions it almost in passing. The primary Caerau are identified by the closing line "Namyn Seith..." (except for seven...) and followed by the name of the individual Caer, namely, C. Siddi, C. Feddwit, C. Rigor, C. Goludd, C. Vandwy, C. Ochren. Note that Caer Wydr is named within the fourth Stanza and is seemingly a destination on the voyage to Caer Rigor. Caer Pedryfan is not, it seems a fort to which a journey is made. There can be two possible explanations for this, one that Caer Pedryfan is synonymous with the status-quo of the student, i.e. their actual physical body, the other that it is referring to the Island of Britain and its four corners. The title Pedryfan appears in *Prydydd y Moch* which addresses Llywelyn ab Iorwerth as *Dreic Prydein Pedryvan: Chief of the four corners of Britain*. For the visionary Caer Pedryfan can be perceived as our initial point of reference, it is our position in the here and now, the place where we invoke Prydwen to berth in preparation for the journey to Annwn.

My first utterance was spoken concerning the cauldron

It is kindled by the breath of nine maidens.

“I received my Awen from the Cauldron of Cerridwen”, said Taliesin in *Hanes Taliesin* and in reference to the Prophetic Spirit of inspiration that is imbued within him. Further references to the cauldron can be seen in the legendary poems of the Book of Taliesin. He claims that his Awen is received from the cauldron of a Witch Goddess in whose womb he resides for nine nights of the moon, before his placement into another womb-like structure, the coracle. All three aspects can be perceived as symbolic of the cauldron. Initially we have the actual physical representation in the form of an iron vessel, which epitomises the primary tool of the Witch Cerridwen, wherein the brew of Awen is boiled. Secondly we have the cauldron properties of Cerridwen’s womb in which the initiate undergoes assimilation of the mysteries; and thirdly, the nurturing qualities of the coracle on water. The coracle or ‘*Bol Croen*’ meaning skin belly - further reinforces the quality of the womb as a cauldron like structure, within which we have access to sustenance and mystery. Ultimately the initiate is birthed in a way reminiscent of caesarean section at the salmon weir of *Gwyddno Garanhir*. For Taliesin to claim that his first utterance was made concerning the cauldron implies that we are being told of the importance of the vessel in his own inspiration and subsequent transformation, and are also being warned of the nature of the cauldron which forms the central theme of the *Preideu Annwfn*.

Taliesin’s frequent reference to the cauldron is mostly in relation to Cerridwen who in turn is a representation of the divine feminine. It is evident that the cauldrons of Celtica are either guarded by females or act as an actual representation of the divine feminine. We are informed that the cauldron of Annwn is kindled by the breath of nine maidens, now whether this implies that the fire was started by their breaths or that they continuously kindle it with their breaths, is open to interpretation but what is important is their number, nine. A study of the Celtic chronicles brings to light other magical females, who are representative of mystery, the 9 sisters of *Insula Pomorum* where Arthur sought healing, the 9 witches of *Caerloyw* who teach Peredur in the Mabinogi the powers of healing, astrology and prophecy. Other instances that pertain to the number nine can be found in Taliesin’s poems; in the *Kat Godeu* (Battle of the Trees) he claims that he was created from nine forms of consistency. One can surmise that the number nine was equally as sacred to the ancient Celts as was the number 7 and that the priestesses that kindle the cauldron may be symbolic of a deeper mystery worthy of visionary exploration. The following lines imply that the nine priestesses may also be guardians or protectors of the cauldron, Caitlin Matthews explores their function in her book ‘*King Arthur and the Goddess of the Land*’ stating that the ninefold priestesses that appear in Celtic myth prevent unworthy heroes from accessing the hallows, which in the case of the poem at hand is the cauldron [xxxviii]. It is evident that the priestesses know the nature of the cauldron, and they are unlikely to transmit that information to those unworthy of receiving it, or to the cowardly.

The cauldron of the head of Annwfn, what is its nature,

With its dark rim and edged with pearls?

It will not boil the food of a coward; it is not destined to do so.

So let us examine the cauldron and its nature, it is evident that there are various cauldrons, each with differing functions within the corridors of Celtic myth, and it is important to gain an understanding of these before embarking on the journey into Annwn. If we look to the

chronicles of the British Celts we can surmise that the cauldron as a symbol of the spiritual had three defined functions –

- A vessel of Inspiration.
- A transformative device.
- A vessel of testing.

All of the above attributes are contextually expressed within the Celtic material almost exclusively in relation to the divine feminine. In the Welsh language the word ‘*crochen*’ meaning cauldron shares the same prefix ‘*cro*’ as the word ‘*croth*’ meaning womb. References to the cauldron within the British and Irish Celtic saga’s perpetuate the position of the cauldron as a vessel of divine, feminine quality. The importance, relevance and magical significance of the cauldron are continuously reinforced throughout our native mythology, where it is perceived as a vessel of spiritual function. The function of the cauldron of inspiration has been previously explored as part of this paper and in relation to Taliesin’s ‘first utterance’.

As a transformational device the cauldron exemplifies a transformative process whereby the initiate undergoes isolation and separation similar to that experienced in death. Within these cauldrons there is a period of reflection and assimilation wherein the mysteries are incorporated into the spirit and body in a cohesive manner. The mysteries have been transmitted but the mind; body and spirit have yet to coalesce it into meaning, to enabling the initiate to articulate them fully. The magical implications of the cauldron as transformative device suggest that in order for the initiate to be fully immersed in the mysteries, he or she must undergo a secondary period of gestational isolation in a womb like vessel. Upon completion of this period of sustained assimilation and nourishment the initiate appears different; he is changed by the experience and steps forth as an adept of the mysteries.

There are examples of vessels within the Celtic material that demonstrate the quality and necessity of transformation within the Celtic spiritual continuum. I am limited in their exploration in this short paper so I offer the following example from a list of many. In the 2nd branch of the Mabinogi we encounter a vessel described as –

“For I will give you a cauldron, and the property of the cauldron is that if you throw into it one of your men who is killed today, then by tomorrow he will be as good as ever, except that he will not be able to speak.” [\[xxxix\]](#)

This cauldron is generally referred to as ‘*The cauldron of rebirth*’ which has a transformative quality; where the dead undergo some form of mysterious transformation within its depths, the mystery of which we are not privy to. This is further emphasised by the inability of the warriors to speak, perhaps a function which purposefully disables their ability to articulate their experience within the cauldron. Whatever we experience within these vessels is deeply pertinent and indicative of individual connection; to attempt to ride in the slip stream of another’s initiatory experience could potentially cause irreparable collateral damage.

Most pertinent to the poem at hand is the cauldron’s role as a Testing Device. We are given a clue, again by means of inter-textual references to the nature of the cauldron and in particular its associations with the head of Annwn, in this case – Pwyll. He is tested in his guise as

Arawn in the first branch of the Mabinogi when he spends a year and a day in the realm of Annwn, he is successful and is thus honoured with the title of ‘Pen Annwfyn’. The Spoils of Annwn reiterates the difficult nature of the journey in search of the cauldron, and that cowardice is a fault that it will not tolerate. This can be seen emulated in one of the thirteen treasures of the Island of Britain –

‘The Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant’, which is said that if the meat for a coward were put into it to boil, it would never boil; but if meat for a brave man were put into it, it would boil with haste and thus the brave could be distinguished from the cowardly.’

The account of Arthur’s raid on Dyrnwch to steal a Cauldron is told in the tale of Culhwch ac Olwen, where he takes to his ship, Prydwen and crosses the Irish Sea, it bears a striking similarity to the poem at hand and the account of Bran’s voyage to Ireland in the second Branch of the Mabinogi. The cauldrons of testing inform us of what the transmitters of mystery expect of the querent and would-be initiate, by informing us of integral qualities essential for the journey. In primary position is the quality of bravery, implying that immersion in the mysteries is certainly not for the faint hearted, and its ability to transform may overwhelm and damage the weak or cowardly. The Irish material tells us of a cauldron which was filled with boiling water and served as a testing vessel during ritualised ordeals. The hands of those true in spirit would be thrust into the water and be unharmed, whereas those who approached with deceit would be scalded.

These testing talismans were essential to ensuring the quality and integrity of those admitted into the mystery schools. These concepts may be seen as antiquated remnants of a distant past, curiosities of history and tradition, irrelevant to modern practise. But I argue that that which is of no relevance falls out of practise, while this material continues to survive and perpetuate its wisdom. Qualities of the cauldron can be seen emulated in current Pagan practise; particularly in the initiatory traditions which are based on systems of teaching and reflection. The cauldron continues to be perceived and utilised as a vessel of inspiration, transformation and testing and is synonymous with the divine feminine. To paraphrase the medievalist Will Parker, the symbol of the cauldron *is in essence a goddess motif, and it is symbolic of the nurturing and sexual qualities of the feminine.*^[x1] They serve to nourish, to assimilate, to gestate, to sustain and sometimes scorn. It is by understanding the nature of the cauldron, in all its guises that we begin to understand the purpose of the journey into Annwn.

Lleawc’s flashing sword was thrust into it.

And it was left behind in Lleminawc’s hand.

Roger Sherman Loomis described this section of the stanza as a remarkable muddle, indeed we are presented with two distinct characters or archetypes that many scholars have perceived as referring to a single individual. Loomis suggests that Lleawc is indicative of a personal name that can be seen in the tale of Culhwch ac Olwen in the form of ‘*llen lleawc wyddel*’ who accompanies Arthur on the raid of Ireland to seize the cauldron of Dyrnwch, whereas Haycock interprets them as two distinct personalities. She translates Lleawc to mean either ‘death dealer’ or ‘destroyer’, but what sense can be made of this in a visionary context?

Lleawc’s sword is thrust into the cauldron, the insertion of a phallic symbol deep into the vessel of testing, which in turn is a symbol of the divine feminine, implies some form of mystical coupling and the coalescence of opposing energies, which combine within the vessel

to bring forth the deliverer of prophecy, Lleminawc. One can see a similarity in these two lines with the function of the cauldron (Cerridwen) as a vessel of testing in the *Hanes Taliesin*, giving further credence to Haycock's belief that the poem is referring to a known body of myth. We are not told what is actually left behind in Lleminawc's hand, on the surface it seems that it may well be Lleawc's sword, whereas others have suggested that it is the cauldron itself. If this is the case, the visionary may take from this the teaching that Lleawc represents the manifestation of the courageous student, who thrusts himself willingly into the cauldron, and that Lleminawc represents the transformed student, the initiate, imbued with the prophetic spirit. To the visionary Lleawc and Lleminawc may represent the profane and potentially sublime nature of the student/initiate.

And before the door of hells gates the lamps burned.

And when we went with Arthur, famed in tribulation.

Save seven, none returned from Caer Feddwit.

The syncretism with the Christian concept of Hell seems wildly out of place here, it interrupts the narrative with a reference that is anathema to the themes being explored. One can only guess as to the insertion of this term and it may suggest that its inclusion was as the result of a later scribe who erroneously associated the realm of Annwn with the Christian Hell, a concept that many still adhere to. This indigenous underworld of the Celts must have seemed to be an aspect of Hell to the medieval Scriptoria scribes, and yet the testing quality of Annwn is not suggestive of punishment which is an attribution of the Christian Hell. However, the tendency to superimpose one's own belief system to that of the previous is common, but the consequences are far reaching for they inadvertently tarnish the original material with constructs which are anathema to it. To this day, Welsh lore suggests that Annwn is indeed the same place as the Christian Hell, and that it is a dreadful place where one is punished and tormented for ones sins, and yet the literal and oracular evidence states the contrary.

The journey through Annwn now arrives at the second of its Caerau, Caer Feddwit, the fort of mead intoxication or the fort of carousal. On initial examination this new fort seems a rather jolly and frivolous place, but as we will see later the qualities of the forts of Annwfyn are far from obvious or straightforward.

In Caer Pedryfan, Strong defence of the island.

Fresh water and jet are mixed together.

Sparkling wine is their drink set before their host.

Three full loads of Prydwen we went by sea.

Save for seven, none returned from Caer Rigor.

Further mystery can be extracted from the combination of jet and fresh water, it is easy as many have done so in the past, to refer this combination as reference to Isidore's *Etymologiae* and his statement, that 'Jet is set alight by water and extinguished by oil'. However I believe there is further meaning here that is applicable to the student. Jet is derived from organic

matter and compressed to almost pure carbon with the addition of some hydrogen and oxygen. Hard jet is as the result of carbon compression combined with salt water, whereas soft jet is the compression of carbon with fresh water. Jet is particularly common in the British Isles with Whitby jet being the most famed. It is interesting to note that the composition of jet is similar to the components of a human being; we ourselves are primarily composed of carbon (jet) and water (hydrogen and oxygen). I suggest that the combining of fresh water and jet can be rationally understood as alluding to the composition and physical make-up of the human body. We are the *echwyd* (*Fresh water*) a *muchyd* (*Jet*), the strong ones who defend the island.

Prydwen calls the traveller once more and as she berths at the shores of Caer Rigor, we are faced with the dangers of intractability, coldness, rigidity and stubbornness. Yet again, only seven return to the safety of Prydwen's decks.

I don't rate pathetic men involved in religious writings.

The first line of the fourth stanza begins the trend of insulting the learned men of religion, which seemingly Taliesin has little regard for, and yet there is a dichotomy here. These very works have evolved into pseudo religious writings, and it is easy for us to fall into the trap of literalism. Perhaps Taliesin offers a warning to those who would study this material that it cannot be achieved effectively by the appreciation and dissection of the words alone, that one must become fully immersed in the material for it to affect the spirit. He accuses the religious clerics who he later identifies as monks, as being ignorant, that their knowledge comes only from books, and that they are blinded to mystery. In the final stanza he elaborates that these monks do not know the nature of light or dark, of day and night nor do they understand the nature of the wind. These refer to natural phenomena which are central to Taliesin teachings and to his understanding of the universe, seemingly the monks and those who care too much about religious writings, become so obsessed by the virtues of the written word that they fail to see the beauty and mystery that surrounds them.

Those who have not seen Arthur's feat beyond Caer Wydr.

Six thousand men stand upon its walls.

It is difficult to converse with their watchman.

There is an implication here that those who are privy to the mysteries are unable to articulate their meaning. We are not told who the six thousand men are or why it is difficult to converse with their watchman. It seems that the student is being faced by a wall of silent individuals who cannot or will not inform the seeker of the nature of the fort, at least not vocally. There are parallels here with the dead warriors who are immersed into the cauldron in the second branch of the Mabinogi, they are miraculously brought back to life but are mute as a consequence. Perhaps those who have undergone transformation are unable to articulate lest this information causes arbitrary damage to the student. The glass tower is a common theme in Celtic mythology, it is said that Myrddin after obtaining the horn of Bran Galed retreated to a glass house and remains there surrounded by the thirteen treasures of the island of Britain. This suggests secrecy, security and sanctuary, which the glass forts and towers of Celtic legend serve by protecting the mysteries whilst simultaneously allowing us to see through their walls. We may perceive mystery visible beyond the glass, and may be

foolhardy to believe that we understand them, and yet the glass is preventing the development of relationship. The glass is a paradox, a representation of the nature of sustaining of illusion.

I don't deserve to be stuck with pathetic men who trail their shields.

Who do now know on what day

And when at mid-day was god born.

Or who made the one who did not go to the meadows of Defwy.

Those who know nothing of the brindled ox, stout his collar.

With seven score links in its chain.

Taliesin's descent into insults continues with his disdain of those who do not possess the knowledge or the stamina to raise their shields high, instead they are dragged on the floor, it paints an apathetic picture of the learned, another scathing attack directed at those whose only reality is that of the intellect with no experience of the subtle. These individuals have no knowledge of the mysteries per-se, they seem to harbour only a cerebral understanding of them. The reference to the meadows of Defwy may indicate the importance of liminality in accessing Annwn, Haycock suggests that the name can be interpreted as a river that runs between this world and the other, betwixt and between its black, deep waters the spirit is carried from this dimension to another. Liminality may be essential to initiating the process; the entire experience of Annwn occurs on island fortresses, which are symbolic of liminality, a god is born at mid-day according to the stanza above, another liminal reference. If we cast our minds back to the first stanza and the reference to Pwyll and Pryderi, we find that Pwyll's encounter with Arawn, a King of Annwn took place in the liminality of the grove at Glyn Cuch. The entire sequence of events that take place in the Annwn experience pertain or are indicative of liminality. This suggests that the experience is one attained by activating the subtle, liminal senses and employing the threshold of liminality to descend into Annwn.

The brindled ox appears in the Triads as one of the three principal oxen of the Island of Britain[xli], it too is suggestive of liminality, it is associated with Caer Vandwy and the powers of fertility and sexuality and yet it is incapable of responding owing to the fact it has been castrated. It is between and betwixt, the epitome of liminality. This entire stanza is focused on the principles of liminality and its use in the subtle arts. Modern Druidic practise serves to evoke this sense of liminality in ritual, ceremony and meditation, each of which act as keys to unlocking the doors to the subtle worlds that are woven into the fabric of this reality.

Stanzas VI, VII, VIII feel quite different to the established mystical quality of the poem, so much so that Roger Sherman Loomis deemed it appropriate in his dissection of the poem to eliminate them entirely from his studies[xlii]. The final fortification to be visited is Caer Ochren, the fort of edges the location of the beast with the silver head. Taliesin then resumes his blatant insulting of pathetic men and monks throughout the remainder of the poem, as Taliesin asserts his superior knowledge and wisdom over them whilst reiterating the necessity for liminality and the employment of the subtle senses. Finally the poem ends with the usual tribute to Christ.

*

The above hopefully serves to demonstrate the complexity of the poem and the many hidden themes that swim in its sea of testing and transformation and also to demonstrate its effectiveness as a practical Druidic tool. I know leave behind the scholarly consideration of the poem and venture entirely into the realm of the visionary and the internalisation of the concepts within the poem and their application.

The Internalisation of Annwn and its Forts

The entire journey into Annwn has an oceanic quality to it, a sea going vessel is required to travel to the various fortifications, which are themselves perceived as islands in the vast ocean of Annwn. Prydwen docks and we are berthed onto a new island, to experience the perils, joys, tribulations, temptations and trauma of each island fort. As previously explored, I do not believe that this is an actual physical journey, but rather an internal one that takes the student deep into the substance of being. The concept of knowing oneself is not unique to the Celtic mysteries; the profound journey of personal exploration lies at the heart of most spiritual traditions, and is an essential experience for the student of mystery.

The connective quality of the sea and its ebb and flow can be seen emulated within the human body and its endocrine function and its tides of hormonal activity. The human endocrine system is unseen, powerful, all affecting, and unavoidable, it dictates the manner by which our bodies and personalities react and respond to the countless data and input that they receive every waking and sleeping second. Our moods, temperament and homeostasis is regulated and to a great degree, controlled by the endocrine system. It is synonymous, from a visionary point of view with the 7 forts of the *Preideu Annwfyn*, it forms a map and a manner by which we traverse the turbulent sea of self, and it brings the poem into sharp focus as a teaching that provides us with a map of being. By exploring the endocrine system in conjunction with the forts we descend steadily through physicality, beyond physiology and to the deep, to the 'not world' and the spiritual realms that we access internally. The internalisation of the forts of Annwfyn encourages and supports the student, by means of archetypal allies, to examine the self whilst utilising the physiological functions of the endocrine system, and the archetypal mechanisms of a school of mystery.

This hidden endocrine system has a tidal component akin to an ocean that exists within us, being pulled by the moon of spirit. Its ebb and flow is timed with pinpoint accuracy with some hormones being released at specific times, activated by the increase or decrease of sunlight. There are 7 primary endocrine glands, which with the exception of the adrenal glands are positioned along the midline of the body from the centre of the head to the base or root, and the position of the sexual organs. The endocrine system consists of a series of glands which regulate the body's internal systems by the release of chemical messengers known as hormones. The glands of the endocrine system are quite apart from each other and have no actual anatomical corridors that directly link them, and yet they will act as a whole. The endocrine glands are classified as ductless, i.e. they have no portals that act as primary entry and exit points, but instead they secrete their messengers directly into the blood supply. These hormones are then directed to their target organs to cause a desired effect. The endocrine system is not entirely controlled by the will and is classified as an aspect of the autonomic nervous system. We rarely feel or sense the endocrine system at work with the exception of the immensely powerful 'fight or flight' hormone released from the adrenal

glands, the effects of which can leave us feeling exhausted or drained and cause the heart to increase its beating.

From the position of the visionary the forts of Annwfyn and their qualities match the corresponding nature of the endocrine glands. To use this system as a tool for the exploration and understanding of the self, the student is taken on a profoundly powerful inward journey, to the subtle aspects of themselves, here to discover how precisely they tick. The glands of the endocrine system and their corroborative forts provide an effective visionary tool for knowing oneself – they tell us an incredible amount about our personalities, how they developed and how they are evolving. A visionary quest into the deep tides of Annwfyn that exist within us can help identify the manner by which we are compromised or affected by the very act of living, and most importantly for the student, why. This acts a teaching system that prepares the student for total immersion in the mysteries and responsibilities of the priesthood.

By exploring our own inherent ‘deepness’ our personal Annwn if you will, we can identify various factors which have gone into the making of ourselves. Immunodeficiency and its resulting symptoms can be traced back to the various endocrine functions as can the root of a particular ailment, illness (mental or physical) or disease. A weakened immune system may imply that our internal forts have been compromised if not completely obliterated; our circuits break and we may become disconnected from our internal functioning. When this occurs we may be left reeling with no reserves or mechanism available to us to rebuild the channels that have been blocked by our own disconnection. We become under siege – from ourselves. Patterns of behaviour and inappropriate coping strategies appear when we or our forts have been compromised. This may be as the result of intense fight or flight scenarios that can result in habitual or repetitive patterns of inappropriate coping mechanisms. This in turn can be dictated, programmed and affected by our historical conditioning and patterns of addiction, abuse, neglect and so forth. Periods of intense elation and happiness also condition our internal mechanisms and dictate the manner by which we respond to life in general, what we strive for and aspire too. Our patterns of behaviour and resulting mechanisms are not passive, they are the symbiotic result of data from arbitrary, physiological, hormonal, nervous, emotional and spiritual sources.

By actively traversing the seas of Annwn and its island forts in a visionary sense, either meditatively, ceremonially or magically, we are accessing a known storehouse of wisdom and descending into the very fabric of mind, body and spirit. The abstract nature of a poem on paper suddenly leaps into life as it is made visionary appropriate and applicable to the student and his or her studies. It is frightfully difficult to connect to the themes of a poem written in an obscure language, and in riddles that makes little sense to the eyes, but by utilising the subtle senses and internalising it we bring forth from the deep, as Taliesin stated, something that connects us through the fronds of heritage and culture to our Druidic ancestors, and to the internal processes of the human being. We bring life and meaning to what is otherwise only a series of letters and words on parchment.

The corroboration between the endocrine system and the forts of Annwfyn, running in sequence from the cranium to the root can be demonstrated thus:

Pituitary Gland/Hypothalamus	<i>Caer Siddi</i>	<i>(Fort of the mound)</i>
Pineal Gland	<i>Caer Ochren</i>	<i>(Fort of edges)</i>

Thyroid/Parathyroid Glands	<i>Caer Feddwit</i>	<i>(Fort of mead intoxication)</i>
Thymus	<i>Caer Wydr</i>	<i>(Fort of glass)</i>
Pancreas (Islets of Langerhans)	<i>Caer Goludd</i>	<i>(Fort of impediment)</i>
Adrenal Glands	<i>Caer Rigor</i>	<i>(Fort of rigidity)</i>
Ovaries/Testes	<i>Caer Vandwy</i>	<i>(Fort of high mystery)</i>

Caer Pedryfan stands apart owing to the fact that no actual journey is made to it within the lines of the poem, and as we have seen it is synonymous with the Island of Britain. However, Caer Pedryfan can also be viewed as the body's energetic field, it is the first point of defence and symbolises protection, control and vitality. So, let us examine more closely the attributes of each endocrine gland in relation to the forts.

Pituitary & Hypothalamus Caer Siddi

Endocrine Function – the Pituitary gland and the hypothalamus act as a single unit, they are connected to each other via a short stalk. The hypothalamus is an integral part of the brain's tissue whereas the pituitary gland sits beneath the brain itself within a small depression in the skull called the pituitary fossa. The pituitary has long been considered the master gland for it initiates the stimulation of all other endocrine glands and provides the command messengers that activate them. It is the command seat that takes information from the hypothalamus and brings it to action. This pea sized gland controls almost all human functions such as growth, sexuality, and metabolism, absorption of water into the blood, the production of milk and the regulation of blood pressure. It sits more or less directly between and behind the eyes at a depth of around 1 inch behind the bridge of the nose.

Fort Function – This is our assumed earthly state, the point from where we make our initial assessment of the world around us, even if our view is obscured or clouded by judgement or preconception. It is the place of illusion for it will do anything within its power to retain the status quo, it dislikes being challenged and will not have its actions questioned. Its purpose is to remain steadfast and keep us in the illusion that it knows best. It is the seat of influence and its power has the ability to convince all the forts beneath it that it is the only truth, however contrived or illusionary. It is convincing and can habitually lock us into patterns of repetition. However, clarity of mind comes from this place, we may be imprisoned here and held by the heavy chains of illusion, but to acknowledge its illusionary nature is to lessen its power over us, thus allowing it to become the place of the fire in the head. Its dictator like quality is not one gained from malice but one that simply strives to keep everything just as they are.

All the forts emulate the relationship of the endocrine glands in that they are intricately connected, each one affecting the other. Caer Siddi is the point of emanation from the 'Not World' the deepness of Annwn is perceived here, for beyond the physical body of the pituitary gland is the un-manifest. Caer Siddi is the initial manifestation and yet it too is unwittingly controlled by the function of the brain and the mysterious quality of Caer Wydr (see Thymus). If Caer Siddi is compromised its symptoms are expressed as stubbornness and the unwillingness to face change or accept anything that may be perceived as a threat to the status quo. One may sense the burning light of inspiration that reaches from the un-manifest

but may be reluctant to act upon it, preferring instead to maintain the illusion that one is perfectly safe and happy, secure in insecurity and bound by those chains of inaction. A compromised Caer Siddi is our seat of unwarranted, illogical fear. Its sense of duty to maintain the illusion of security may prevent us from venturing out and taking risks, which in themselves could prove highly rewarding.

Pineal Gland Caer Ochren

Endocrine Function – The pineal gland sits within the centre of the brain, directly on the midline and may be called the pineal body, the epiphysis or the third eye; it appears in the form of a tiny pine cone. The actual function of the pineal gland has only been discovered in the last twenty years or so. The gland calcifies as we approach adulthood and can be seen on a skull X-Ray quite clearly. It was believed to be active only in young children but it is now understood to be the regulator of melatonin which induces sleep, and the regulation and development of the reproductive glands. But perhaps the gland's most intriguing function, and complimentary to the discussion at hand is the manner by which it is affected by light levels. The hormone melatonin brings about the feeling of tiredness and prepares the body for sleep, it is stimulated by the onset of darkness and inhibited by the arrival of light, however it seems that artificially induced light and darkness that do not contain solar radiation are almost ineffective. It is the pineal glands function to bring about the hypnapompic (awakening) and hypnagogic (falling asleep) states. It is directly affected by the light which enters the brain via the eyes, and yet the image at that point is reversed and upside down, not until the light reaches the back of the brain is the image 'seen' in its correct format. The Circadian function of the pineal gland and its interruption is exemplified by 'Jet lag', and that feeling of being literally 'beside oneself' for hours if not days after international travel. We are creatures that are deeply affected by light and dark. Philosophers have been concerned with the functions of the pineal gland for centuries, and it is still regarded within pseudo-science to be the seat of the spirit, the point that connects the intellect with the body.

Fort Function – if Caer Siddi by means of the pituitary gland is the point of entry for the spirit to experience corporeality, then Caer Ochren and the pineal gland is the point that brings meaning to this by enabling its articulation. Caer Ochren, the fort of edges is the place of the creature with the silver head, it is associated with sunlight and perhaps the creature's silver head is indicative of the moon. It is a place of reflections. To the visionary the fort appears as a mirrored enclosure, its walls silvered, it is the place where we see ourselves – or rather, our reflection. Within its walls we see reflected what we want to see, not necessarily what is actually there, we may be pleased or displeased by our own image, and yet we may not realise that a mirrored reflection is not a true representation, the image is reversed, it is not how the world see's us. We may judge ourselves harshly within the confines of Caer Ochren, for it is the seat of perception and effectiveness. We may conform to the standards and expectations of another here and the limitation of intelligence may impede our experiences, and we are in danger of becoming over analytical within its mirrored courtyards.

The symptoms of a compromised Caer Ochren can be seen in the manner by which we react to light and dark. An illogical fear of the dark may be indicative of our inability to articulate and make sense of the spiritual; an aversion to light indicates that that which discomforts us is in fact ourselves and perhaps the manner by which we present ourselves to the world. The moon's light may shine brightly here, but it shines by another's light. Caer Ochren asks us to ponder the very edges of personality and reason; and the relationship between the conscious and subconscious mind.

Endocrine Function – The Thyroid gland is a butterfly shaped structure that sits directly over the anterior aspect of the larynx and trachea, directly in the middle of the neck, just beneath the ‘Adam’s apple’. It is the only endocrine gland that we can actually feel by palpation of the neck area. Its primary function is the regulation of the metabolism and how efficiently the body consumes or stores energy; it controls the rate of growth and communicates with other organs to determine hormone saturation. It is activated by the Thyroid Stimulating Hormone produced within the pituitary gland. The gland produces the hormones thyroxine and triiodothyronine by absorbing iodine from the diet. The formation of the thyroid was the evolutionary response of an organism that left the iodine rich seas to the iodine deficient land; the gland connects us to over 700 million years of evolutionary development. It is unique among the endocrine glands in that it is directly affected by input from the external environment, it expresses the manner by which the body and its internal workings communicate and respond to environmental and physiological conditions. The four tiny parathyroid glands that lie on the back of the Thyroid, two on either side are significant in the regulation of blood calcium levels. An overactive or underactive Thyroid is indicative of a breakdown of certain physiological functions and raised internal and external toxicity levels. Radioactive isotopes by nuclear fission pose an immense threat to the wellbeing of the thyroid. The paradox of iodine is that without it we fail to grow, despite its essential deadliness, and third world children with poor iodine diets frequently develop Cretinism, whereas radioactive or too much iodine can lead to tumours and other dysfunction, causing the breakdown of hormonal communication and regulation.

Fort Function – The second stanza of the *Preideu Annwfn* concerns itself with communicative qualities, Taliesin ‘speaks’ of his origin, his songs are heard. Courage and bravery are required to approach the cauldron which is warmed by the breath of maidens, the qualities of this stanza in relation to the fort of mead-intoxication are indicative of communication, vocally or by means of actions and body language. The functions of Caer Feddwit are those of nourishment and sustenance, it is the place whereby we express our inner environment, it is how we present ourselves vocally and affect the world around us by the action of words. Speech can nourish, but it can also poison, its effect on the world around us and our own internal, physiological environment can be profoundly affecting. That which sustains us can be surreptitiously toxic. Everything that we find pleasurable and intoxicating in life is expressed through this fortification. It appears as a beautiful a tall tower draped in flowering climbers, fragrant with bee enticing aromas, its walls are sticky with honey and the hum of the hive permeates the air. The plant world communicates with the perpetual darkness of the hive as workers bring nectar and pollen to its cells of sustenance; guards defend the entrance preventing access to their most valued possession, the queen. Mead from honey embodies the alchemical burning of sugars by a colonising life form, yeast which converts the sugary mass into pure energy and finally into alcohol. But from the sweet can come the deadly. A scrape of honey on toast is a delight to a sweet toothed adult, and yet is potentially toxic to a human baby.

Our frivolous nature is expressed here by means of breath and laughter; it is how we bring meaning and emphasis to that which we feel inwardly. A compromised Caer Feddwit is indicative of misguided, misjudged, concealed or untruthful communication. Our confidence is vocalised at this point as the trachea, larynx and thyroid cartilage and glands vibrate with the expulsion of air – consequently words arise that inform the arbitrary world of our inner condition. Self esteem is expressed here, or the lack of it, as is our ability to damage or

soothe by the power of our words. The outward, expressive qualities of bravery and courage are demonstrated here, as we utilise charged words to empower or disempower the intended target. The hive guard will attack first; ask questions later, our own personal Caer Feddwit may also lash out with defensive words before engaging the mind to think rationally or sensibly. As the Thyroid communicates with the various hormones, Caer Feddwit communicates with the other forts, making sense of input and then expressing them, it acts as the gateway for all other forts to interact with the world around them. The result may be appropriate or inappropriate and demonstrate the manner by which the fort is compromised.

Thymus Gland

Caer Wydr

Endocrine Function – The Thymus is perhaps the most mysterious of the endocrine glands, appearing remarkably large in the infant it atrophies in adolescence and practically disappears by adulthood. Etymologically it is derived from the Greek *thymos* to mean a warty excrescence probably because of its likeness to a bunch of thyme. Its primary function is the establishment of the human immune system and the production of fighter T.Cells. It is the increase in adolescent sex hormones that initiates Thymic Involution and its subsequent atrophy. Its function in the body's immune system is a recent discovery but it has been a subject of study for over 2,000 years. Its endocrine function practically sets the scene for the rest of our human lives; it pre-determines our susceptibility to disease and the natural manner by which we will die (unless death is caused by external mechanical means). The effectiveness of the immune system is essential in pre determining our susceptibility to illness and genetic predispositions that result in disease.

Fort Function – This is the seat of liminality and the place of fate unknown, it epitomises inherited patterns that we have no control over, and sets the scene for the remainder of our human lives. However determined our attempts to communicate with it are, we simply cannot. It is voiceless and will not permit itself to be swayed or influenced. It is the result of thousands of generations of genetic predisposition and inheritance. We may perceive the myriad of blank faces that stand upon its glass turrets but we are not permitted communication for they are set, they exist only as memories from the past each one contributing to your current life. Caer Wydr expresses the fact that you are the sum total of all that has been before you. This function may appear mysterious and perhaps unfair, and yet it is a vital aspect of our human experience, we are influenced by the past, by blood and by memory and this is held within the vast halls of Caer Wydr. Its influence can be seen within every subsequent fort – if Caer Siddi's illusion can be perceived, we must then also see through the walls of Caer Wydr for its glass surface may obscure what lies beyond its borders. Glass is a peculiar substance; we may believe that we can see right through it, but light, shadow and reflection can alter the view, preventing us from actually seeing what is there.

A compromised Caer Wydr will express itself as a futile and energy wasting battle against oneself and ones origins, and the determination to not accept the body's limited capabilities whilst ignoring its strengths. Whilst indicative of deep ancestral mystery, Caer Feddwit exemplifies our very human lives and the manner by which we respond to threats from the outside world. Some may seek to understand the mystery of being human in religious writings, whereas Arthur suggests that we look to our own valour, strength and courage to perceive and be accepting of Caer Wydr, for it symbolises what it is to be human in all its glory.

Pancreas' Islets of Langerhans

Caer Goludd

Endocrine Function – The Pancreas sits in the centre of the body, directly beneath the area commonly referred to as the Solar Plexus, it has an Exocrine (duct) and Endocrine (ductless) function. The ductless glands of the Islets of Langerhans secrete their hormones directly into the blood stream via the pancreatic veins. The endocrine function of the Islets is concerned with the production of insulin, glucagon and somatostatin. Insulin and glucagon have a direct influence on the level of glucose (sugars) in the blood. Glucagon is responsible for raising the blood sugar levels if the body requires it, e.g. after strenuous exercise or acute stress, whereas insulin acts to reduce the levels of blood glucose. Insulin also regulates the uptake of carbohydrates and fats and their metabolism. Around a million or so islets perform the essential task of glucose stabilisation and general homeostasis of the human body, and they share this space with the enzymatic, digestive function of the pancreas. The pancreas occupies the 'Hot Zone' of the body where the majority of its heat is created, stored or dispersed. The primary digestive process takes place within this section of the body; with the stomach and liver in direct proximity to the pancreas.

Fort Function – Caer Goludd appears to the visionary as an island of fire, its flames lick at the walls of a two towered castle, one half is bathed in light whilst the other is shrouded in darkness. It shares a liminal quality with Caer Wydr, it is between the worlds, a place that is tangible, real, and yet somehow just out of reach, its edges blur as we focus upon it. It is hot here, the searing heat of the flames indicative of our passion and the fluctuation of personal energy. Caer Goludd is that which we feel in the pit of our stomach, and yet no sensory organ occupies this space. The fort of impediment is a fickle place for we may sense our anger rise from here, shattering the windows of the forts, cracking the walls or its turrets, and yet it is the seat of our creativity. This fort represents the riches we enjoy in life and those things that make us feel good about ourselves. But in a compromised situation we may feel the claw of envy, jealousy or anger rise from the centre of our being, gathering momentum as it rises to burst forth through the portal of Caer Feddwit above. We are easily frustrated in here, and may feel that sometimes we are fighting a losing battle. Caer Goludd is that secret place within us that defines how we learn, what we learn and what influences us, our vanity comes from here as does our smugness and snobbery. The first stirrings of lust and carnality rise within the heat of this place, as sugars burn through the blood so too does this place cause the screaming of our sex hormones to rise their heads and demand attention. This is the seat of our emotions; it is the vice that grips the core when we are in grief, anguish or despair. The dizzying heights of elation and happiness can be felt here, as can the butterflies in the stomach when faced with the rush of attraction or anticipation.

Goludd asks us to stop a while and contemplate its fire, to ask how to walk through the heat of our convictions and passions, loathing and love? How to quench the fires of our own being in order to fully assess the condition of our fort? The borders between emotions are blurry here, without anger there is no passion, without inspiration there can be no creativity. This is the centre of being, the place of reconciliation that accepts the mysteries of Caer Wydr and articulates them in the act of living, of grabbing life and being burnt by its all consuming fire.

Adrenal Glands

Caer Rigor

Endocrine Function – There are two adrenal glands, one atop each kidney, they curve towards the midline of the body, and they are symbiotically attached to the kidneys by a thin fascia capsule that encloses the kidneys and its glands. Both glands appear different in shape;

the right adrenal takes the form of a triangular wedge whereas the left adrenal assumes the shape of a crescent moon. The gland consists of two parts; an outer cortex and an inner medulla. The cortex is responsible for the secretion of glucocorticoids directly into the blood stream and by command of the Adenocorticotrophic hormone from the pituitary gland. The primary hormones of the glucocorticoids are Cortisol and corticosterone. These hormones are most prolific in the early hours of the morning and prepare the body for waking. As the waking (hypnopompic) state progresses the brain initiates the release of Cortisol, a stress messenger that arises from the adrenal cortex by the instruction of the pituitary gland. The effects of Cortisol enable the waking individual to orientate the self in time and space, in other words the body must initiate a process that 'Docks' the mind to the experience of the body it is attached too. Without the release of Cortisol we would be unable to make sense of the world and our place in it.

The adrenal medulla is responsible for the secretion of adrenaline and noradrenalin. When combined they are capable of initiating a split second reaction that may save or avert the individual from imminent threatening environmental conditions, by inducing the fight or flight response.

Fort Function – Caer Rigor is the fort of intractability, of petrification and rigidity but it can also be taken to mean coldness or stiffness. The position of Caer Rigor in the body is a peculiar one, for it infringes on the realm of fire, the heat of digestion surrounds it and yet it also occupies a space atop the conduits of water, the kidneys. The passion of Caer Goludd combines with the emotions of Rigor to create conflicting opposites, like the light and dark of water and jet, Rigor is a perplexing fort of contradictions and conflict. Rigor is a difficult fort and its attributes are obvious and visible to those who fall victim to its power. It is hard, unmoving, one can stumble easily here and the ego may be bruised or rise to assist the passions and emotions of its occupier. It is within Rigor that we develop and express our coping strategies whether they are appropriate or inappropriate. It is the most dangerous of all the forts, for we can fall into the mindset of "I am not good enough, I am a failure, I am right and you are wrong!" We can easily become compromised by the power of rigor and develop snobbish or stubborn qualities. It is the place where we are most threatened and indeed where we ourselves may rise to threaten another.

Our impulses and instincts are controlled by Caer Rigor and these may express themselves rationally or irrationally, Rigor can cause us to become stuck in our ways, immovable, and steadfast. This rigidity can be perceived by the outside world as an aspect of the ego or that which makes a person appear egotistical. Our confrontational impulses arise from this place, and combined with powerful hormones the after effect of a dramatic confrontation can leave one feeling exhausted or ill. The qualities of Rigor are many and it can propel us into action with sheer determination, it is a constructive place where personal strengths can be utilised effectively, and yet its opposite side can be immensely destructive. The effects of a compromised Caer Rigor can be felt far and wide and often spill over to detrimentally affect family life and relationships.

Ovaries/Testes

Caer Vandwy

Endocrine Function - The Ovaries are the female gonads or endocrine glands and lie within the lateral aspect of the pelvis in a shallow fossa. They are attached to the upper aspect of the uterus via a ligament. The ovarian follicles, which are inactive prior to puberty, each contain an ovum (egg). Post puberty and during the childbearing years the ovarian follicle matures

and releases an ovum during the monthly menstrual cycle. The follicle is commanded in its task by the properties of the gonadotrophic hormones, namely the Follicle Stimulating Hormone released by the pituitary gland. The endocrinal function of the ovaries is the timely release of oestrogen which characterises and maintains the non primary sexual features, by promoting breast and uterine growth, widening of the pelvis and the laying of fatty tissue within the buttocks and the hips. Progesterone functions as the command hormone for the induction of the menstrual cycle and the proliferation of the endometrium.

The Testes are the male endocrine gonads and are located outside the body within a skin sack referred to as the scrotum; the primary function of the testes is the production of spermatozoa and androgens (male sex hormones). The primary androgen secreted by the testes is testosterone, which is commanded by the release of the luteinizing hormone from the pituitary gland, this and the Follicle Stimulating Hormone combine to maintain spermatogenesis. Testosterone affects the muscular shape of the male form, the deepening of the voice and by proxy of its counterpart dihydrotestosterone can result in male pattern baldness.

Fort Function – There is immense power within this fort, it is paradoxically creative and destructive, it is the fort which brings all others into cohesion. This is the place of high mystery, wisdom and knowledge. Caer Vandwy is the primal driving force of the human experience it is the seat of reproduction, carnality and lust. This fort can cause ‘lust blindness’ and cause us to fall into the consuming flames of irrationality and obsession, and yet it is the place where we maintain the continuation of our species. As shields hang limply from the hands of priests and ignorance stains the minds of those who know nothing of the birth of god, and the one who went to the meadows of Defwy, the blood of lust blindness drips dreadfully from the turrets of Caer Vandwy. The poem *Ymddiddan Gwyddnau Garanhir a Gwyn ap Nudd* in the Black Book of Caermarthen tells of a battle at Caer Vandwy, where shields lie shattered and ribs broken. The poem refers to Gwyn ap Nudd, himself a King of Annwn, as the lover of Creiddylad who battles each May Day with Gwythr ap Greidol for the hand of the maiden in marriage. Blinded by their lust they fight until the end of time, light and dark, masculine and feminine locked in the constant battle of carnality and lust.

The effects of an unstable Caer Vandwy are obvious, wars have been initiated over love and sex, jealousy and bitterness. Frigidity and ignorance are symptoms of a compromised Caer Vandwy. And yet the wisdom and knowledge of all the worlds and of our origination hide within its crystalline walls, it sings of creation and continuity and deep within the tides of carnality, lust and love swims in the mystery of all knowing. Caer Vandwy drives us daily, in the competitive search for a mate or sexual gratification, debauchery and perversion can arise from this place and the inability to express ourselves appropriately as sexual beings. It is a place of comparison, conformity and competition where we maintain or become victims of our vanity. Our confidence and self esteem, so intricately tied into our sexual drive sings from this place, but so too does inexperience and the inability to conceptualise. We may know nothing of the brindled Ox with its stout collar and seven score links, this castrated creature epitomises the understanding of Caer Vandwy without the restrictions of lust blindness. Caer Vandwy teaches us to embrace and honour our sexual emotions without being compromised by them. But we may be scarred by previous encounters and experiences, our sense of stability and security are governed by this place, it is the map that clearly shows the roads of the past. It is the seat of our productivity and fear, the hormones of this place are

powerful enough to punch holes in sensibility and restrain, we may create and destroy with equal gusto and virility.

Using the system

A practical study of the above system will be fully explored and demonstrated in a future publication written by myself. For the visionary the most effective method of accessing the forts is by means of visualisation. One can visualise the surface anatomy of each endocrine organ and imagine the fort and its island rising from that place. By observing the nature and condition of the forts, we can gain an impression of them and the manner by which we are affected by them. A system of divination can be easily incorporated into its exploration by devising symbols that represent the qualities of each fort and inscribing them onto pieces of wood or small stones; these may then be selected from a bag or pouch or cast onto an appropriate surface. The random selection of a symbol that represents the forts will give an indication of how and why it may be compromised.

Conclusion

The internalisation of the forts of Annwn provides the student with a culturally specific tool of self-exploration, and as we have seen it replaces the need to employ an eastern technique, i.e. the Chakras, in the assumed absence of a Celtic counterpart. The Book of Taliesin and other native teachings provide us with a programme for living consciously and with lucidity, they teach us about the 'self', transformation, inspiration and magic. The journey to Annwn is the hero's journey and it is by understanding the forts that we understand ourselves and the nature of the cauldron. However the journey to self is one of acknowledgment, reconciliation and honour. Nothing is vanquished or dismissed, the forts provide a system of seeing the woods for the trees, and their purpose is not to banish or exorcise aspects of ourselves that we may deem unnecessary or unpleasant. Instead they provide us with the ingredients for the experience of life, and these are the qualities that we bring to the cauldron and stir into its belly. It is the intention, integrity and understanding of those ingredients that determines our experience of the cauldron and how we integrate and assimilate its mysteries.

The poem does not tell us whether or not the cauldron is actually discovered or seized by Arthur and his companions and for good reason... the experience of the cauldron is indicative of your journey. It is yours to find. The mysteries of Taliesin are yours to explore, and yet for centuries they have been jettisoned for the convenience of established non-native systems as J. Gwenogvryn Evans woefully articulates in his facsimile and text of the Book of Taliesin:

"Delphi is deserted and Taliesin is jettisoned. There is no oracle left to consult, and no lecture room open that names the name of Taliesin. The learned who write in Encyclopaedias are like the bards at the court of Deganwy, in the presence of Taliesin they become mute mutterers of blerwm blerwm. This is very remarkable when we recall the fact that our earlier and better poets esteemed Taliesin as their chief, and most assuredly they were right. What then is the explanation of the neglect not to say boycott, of our time?" [\[xliii\]](#)

Writing in 1915 Evans had no idea that the works of Taliesin would inspire a future generation and that a new people would arise to take the teachings and incorporate them into a new vision for a new age. It is my hope that this paper will serve to inspire the new Druids, so that these riddles can be fathomed, and so that the visionary can delve between the lines of these teachings, effectively and efficiently.

There is an oracle, and lecture rooms do exist that name the name of Taliesin, we may choose to neglect the material or boycott it in its entirety, or we may take heed of Taliesin's words:

"Druids, Wise ones, Prophecy to Arthur" [\[xliv\]](#)

Notes

[\[i\]](#) Taliesin; Y Cymmrodor. Morris-Jones. Pp 253.

[\[ii\]](#) LPBOT, ed. Haycock. Pp 1.

[\[iii\]](#) Y Cymmrodor VOL XXXIV, Evans. 1924.

[\[iv\]](#) History of the Anglo-Saxons, Turner. Pp 636.

[\[v\]](#) LPBOT, ed Haycock. Pp 5.

[\[vi\]](#) LPBOT, ed Haycock. Pp 7-9.

[\[vii\]](#) Chwedl Taliesin, Williams. Pp 18.

[\[viii\]](#) TFBM, Parker. Pp 90.

[\[ix\]](#) From the Cauldron Born, Hughes. Part 1.

[\[x\]](#) Wales and the Arthurian Legend, Loomis. Pp 145.

[\[xi\]](#) Ystoria Taliesin, ed, Ford. Pp 2-3.

[\[xii\]](#) Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin (LPBOT), ed Haycock. Pp 9-10.

[\[xiii\]](#) Preiddeu Annwn and the Figure of Taliesin (PAFT), Haycock. Pp 58.

[\[xiv\]](#) Ystoria Taliesin, ed Ford. Pp 10

[\[xv\]](#) Buarth Beirth, The Book of Taliesin.

[\[xvi\]](#) GPC, ed Bevan. Pp 1097.

[\[xvii\]](#) TFBM, Parker. Pp 100.

[\[xviii\]](#) TFBM, Parker. Pp 91.

[\[xix\]](#) The Poems of Taliesin, ed Williams. Pp xvi-xviii.

[\[xx\]](#) LPBOT, ed Haycock. Pp 122.

[[xxi](#)] Magical Transformation in *Pedeir Keinc Y Mabinogi & Hanes Taliesn*. A Grant. 2010. Pp 20.

[[xxii](#)] LPBOT, ed Haycock. Pp 58.

[[xxiii](#)] LPBOT, ed Haycock. Pp 18-19.

[[xxiv](#)] Versions of *Hanes Taliesin*, Wood. Pp 285-286.

[[xxv](#)] *Ystoria Taleisn*, ed Ford. Pp 30.

[[xxvi](#)] *Ystoria Taliesn*, ed Ford. Pp 47-48.

[[xxvii](#)] The anglicised version ‘Annwn’ will appear throughout unless in reference to its etymology or as original title for the poem.

[[xxviii](#)] *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, Loomis. Pp 142-143.

[[xxix](#)] *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, Loomis. Pp 144.

[[xxx](#)] PAFT, Haycock. Pp 55.

[[xxxi](#)] TFBM, Parker. Pp 101.

[[xxxii](#)] Translation – Haycock, LPBOT & PAFT & K. Hughes.

[[xxxiii](#)] *Triedd Ynys Prydein (TYP)*, ed Bromwich. Pp 146.

[[xxxiv](#)] *Taliesin*, Matthews. Pp 21.

[[xxxv](#)] *The Secrets of Dr. Taverner, Fortune*. Pp 74.

[[xxxvi](#)] *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 30, Ford. Pp 269-72.

[[xxxvii](#)] *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, Skene. Pp 506.

[[xxxviii](#)] *King Arthur and the Goddess of the Land*, Matthews. Pp 290.

[[xxxix](#)] *The Mabinogion*, Davies. Pp 25.

[[xl](#)] TBFM, Parker. Pp 418

[[xli](#)] TYP, ed Bromwich. Pp 124-125.

[[xlii](#)] *Wales and the Arthurian Legend*, Loomis. Pp 132.

[[xliiii](#)] *Facsimile and Text of the Book of Taliesin*. Evans. Pp i.

[[xliv](#)] Kat Godeu, *The Book of Taliesin*.

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