

# The Bardic Tradition In Britain



A discussion document prepared for the Council of British Druid Orders by Philip Shallcrass, B.D.O.

## Introduction

*"Sit thou on the heath, O Bard!  
and let us hear thy voice.  
It is pleasant as the gale of the spring,  
that sighs on the hunter's ear,  
when he wakens from dreams of joy,  
and has heard the music  
of the spirits of the hill."*

*MacPherson's Ossian*

**F**or modern Druids, the importance of the Bardic tradition is twofold. Of primary importance is the way in which the artistic, cultural and spiritual aspects of the tradition can open up for us the deeper levels of our consciousness, as well as deepening our understanding of our joint heritage and of our individual place in relation to that heritage.

Secondly, the traditions preserved by the Bardic institutions of Wales and Ireland represent our best surviving more-or-less unbroken link with the prehistoric Druidic past.

After Tacitus' description of the Roman attack on the Druidic stronghold of Anglesey in 61 CE, there are virtually no further literary references to Druids in Britain until the revival of scholarly interest in them in the 17th century.

This does not, of course, mean that the whole structure of the Druidic priesthood was destroyed by the Roman invaders. This would have entailed the wholesale destruction of much of the cultural heritage of the British Celts. What probably happened was that the Druids simply became Romano-British priests and carried on much as they had done before.

In Ireland, which remained beyond the reach of Roman invasion, Druids continue to appear in insular literature well into the medieval period. In Britain, the literary void is filled by the fairly extensive written records of the Bardic Order, who seem to have taken over many of the cultural functions of the Druids.

The intentions of this article are to give an account of the history of the Bardic tradition, from the earliest times to the present day; to set out the nature of that tradition; and to suggest ways in which the Council of British Druid Orders might best pursue its policy of reviving the tradition in areas of Britain where it has fallen into disuse.

This is in accordance with the agreed policy of the Council to establish a network of Bards throughout Britain, and to work towards creating an annual National Eisteddfod.



## The Early History of Bardism

**T**he origins of Druidry itself are somewhat speculative, though recent opinion (1) has suggested that the Indo-European culture of which it is a part may have spread across Europe and into Britain as early as 4000 BCE. One of the implications of this is that a proto-Druidic priesthood could have been responsible for the building of the great megalithic monuments of Europe such as Avebury in Wiltshire and Carnac in Brittany. Any continuity of tradition from this neolithic period through to the beginnings of recorded history must, however, be based on conjecture rather than provable fact (2).

Druids are first referred to by that name in writings of the 1st century BCE, though some of these authors claim to be quoting from sources as early as the 4th century BCE.

Julius Caesar (3), writing in the 1st century BCE, does not refer specifically to Bards, but he does tell us that "students of Druidism... have to memorize a great number of verses - so many, that some of them spend twenty years at their studies." He also says that "the Druids believe that their religion forbids them to commit their teachings to writing... because they did not want their doctrine to become public property, and in order to prevent their pupils from relying on the written word and neglecting to train their memories; for it is usually found that when people have the help of texts, they are less diligent in learning by heart, and let their memories rust."

This ties in well with what we know of the role of Bards from later classical writers, and also with the recorded literature of the medieval Bardic schools of Britain and Ireland. Caesar gives us a glimpse of an orally transmitted tradition, such as that which pertained throughout much of India until recently, where the whole cultural inheritance of the people existed in the memories of a class of trained scholar/priests, the Brahmins.

The earliest written references to Bards by that name are to be found in the works of classical authors such as Diodorus Siculus and Strabo. Both were referring specifically to Gaul, though we may take it that what they tell us applied equally to the situation in Britain, as it was widely accepted at the time that Druidry had its origins in this country (3).

Diodorus Siculus, in his Histories, written about 35 BCE, says that "... there are among them composers of verses whom they call Bards; these singing to instruments similar to a lyre, applaud some, while they vituperate others."

Strabo, in his Geographica, written in about 8 BCE, says that "Among all the Gallic peoples, generally speaking, there are three sets of men who are held in exceptional honour: the Bards, the Vates, and the Druids. The Bards are singers and poets; the Vates, diviners and natural philosophers; while the Druids, in addition to natural philosophy, study also moral philosophy."

In spite of the Emperor Tiberius outlawing Druidry in the 1st century CE, Hippolytus, in his

Philosophumena, refers to Druids still flourishing among the Celtic peoples some two hundred years later.

Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the 4th century CE, adds a little more to the picture, telling us that "... as the people gradually became civilised, attention to the gentler arts became commoner, a study introduced by the Bards, and the Euhages, and the Druids. It was the custom of the Bards to celebrate the brave deeds of their famous men in epic verse accompanied by the sweet strains of the lyre."

For further information on the early history of Bardism, we need to turn to the much later and somewhat less reliable source of the Welsh Triads (4). These were mnemonic devices consisting of a few lines linking together groups of three related subjects. The earliest collections of Triads date from the 13th century, though individual examples are found scattered in earlier Welsh texts.

At the end of the 18th century, large numbers of Triads were brought together by Iolo Morganwg. He did not identify his sources and seems to have written most of the longer commentaries on the brief Triadic statements himself. In doing this, it seems he was attempting to recreate the explanations which must have accompanied the Triads when they were in use as teaching aids in the earlier Bardic colleges.

As embellished by Iolo, the Triads contain a number of romantic allusions to the supposed early history of the Bardic tradition. The three which follow deal with the founding of Bardism. Hu Gadarn, also known as Hu the Mighty, is a Welsh culture hero who was supposed to have led the first colony of the Cymry into Britain in about 1800 BCE. He is also said to have invented the Triad form, to have founded Stonehenge, and to have invented the Ogham alphabet (5).

"The three primary inventors of the Cambrians: Hu the Mighty, who formed the first mote and retinue over the nation of Cambria; Dyvnwal Moelmud, who made the first regulations of the laws, privileges and customs of the country and tribe; and Tydain, the father of poetic genius who made the first order and regulation for the record and memorial of vocal song, and that which appertains to it. From this system, the privileges and organised custom, respecting the Bards and Bardism in the Isle of Britain, were first formed."

"The three inventors of song and record of the Cambrian nation: Gwyddon Ganhebon, who was the first in the world that composed vocal song; Hu the Mighty, who first applied vocal song to strengthen memory and record; and Tydain, the father of poetic genius, who first conferred art on poetic song and made it the medium of record. From what was done by these three men, originated Bards and Bardism, and the privileges and institutes of these things were organised by the three primary Bards, Plennydd, Alawn, and Gwron."

"The three primary Bards of the Isle of Britain: Plennydd, Alawn, and Gwron. That is, these formed the

privileges and customs that appertain to Bards and Bardism, and therefore they are called the three primary Bards. Nevertheless, there were Bards and Bardism prior to them, but they had not a licensed system, and they had neither privileges nor customs otherwise than what they obtained through kindness and civility, under the protection of the nation and the people, before the time of these three. (Some say that these lived in the time of Prydain, the son of Aedd the Great, but others affirm that they flourished in the time of Dyvnwal Moelmud's son; and this information they derive from ancient manuscripts which are entitled Dyvnwarth the son of Prydain)."

## The Age of the Cynfeirdd, c. 500 - c. 1100 CE

**R**eturning to somewhat more reliable sources, we find reference to the founding fathers of British poetry in the *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius, written c. 796 CE. After mentioning King Ida of Northumbria, who reigned between 547 and 559 CE, Nennius says that "at that time, Eudeyrn was fighting bravely against the nation of the Angles. Then Talhearn Tad Awen (i.e. Father of the Muse) won renown in poetry; and Aneirin and Taliesin and Blwchfardd and Cian who is called Wheat of Song (?) won renown at one and the same time in British poetry."

These legendary characters are traditionally referred to as Cynfeirdd, or Early Poets, and represent the period from the earliest British poetry through to c. 1100. Their poetry dates from the so-called Heroic Age of Britain, and consists largely of eulogies to princes and gnomic wisdom.

The most famous literary product of this era is probably the *Gododdin* (6), written by the poet Aneirin, who was one of the few survivors of a "daring and disastrous cavalry raid from Edinburgh, south into what is now Yorkshire." This raid, which took place in the 6th century CE, forms the subject of his poem, which has come down to us in a manuscript dated c. 1250. A couple of verses from Kenneth Jackson's precise translation should serve to give a flavour of the whole.

"A fitting song of a brilliant retinue: and after it has ebbed the river floods, he glutted the grasp of grey eagles' beaks, he made food for carrion birds. Of all the wearers of gold torques who went to Catraeth on the expedition of Mynyddog, the lord of hosts, there came from among the Britons of the Gododdin no man without reproach better by far than Cynon."

"A fitting song of a skilful company. A pleasant little place in the world, he was not covetous [of it] (?); what he desired was the acclamation of bards all around the world for [his] gold and great horses and drunkenness on mead; but when he should come from battle, the praise of Cynddilig of Aeron by bloodstained men."

It is noteworthy that Aneirin refers to his people as Britons rather than Cymry, although the latter term, which means "fellow-countrymen," was in use in his day. Cymry did not at that time apply only to the inhabitants of Wales as it does today, but to the peoples of northern England and southern Scotland as well.

Gwyn Jones (7) says that "the work of the early poets, the Cynfeirdd, already exhibits a notable characteristic of Welsh poetry throughout the ages: the poet is accountable to society, and is its spokesman. He is recorder, instructor, and celebrant. 'Beirdd byd barnant wyr o galon' says the Gododdin-poet: 'The bards of the world pass judgement on men of valour.' The bard, we might say, is the poet as public figure. It is his business to maintain the leader's fame, retail tribal triumphs and disasters, persuade and foretell, convey to his hearers that accepted corpus of lore and precept relating to animals, weather, crops, human nature and behaviour which involves man in the visible and palpable world..."

It was towards the close of this early period that the great law-maker of Britain, Hywel Dda (Hywel the Good), who died c. 950, laid down elaborate rules concerning the rights and duties of the Bardic Order (8).

## The Age of the Gogynfeirdd, c. 1100 - c. 1350

The next period is that of the Gogynfeirdd, the Next to Early Poets, which extended from c. 1100 to c. 1350. The Gogynfeirdd are also known as the Poets of the Princes. Jones (7) says that "the professionalizing of the poetic art becomes much more marked when we reach the Poets of the Princes... The next two hundred years were a time of national reassertion, constant struggle, bitter warfare, internecine as well as external... The poet had his place, including his place at court, and his place in the Order of Bards; and he had his duties... Poetic structure became regularized, the awdl (ode) dominated, with its end-rhymes, sections, connections, repetitions, vocabulary, figures and tropes, alliteration and internal rhymes, woven into a rhetorical or musical pattern of song, sonorous, powerful, and directed very much at the ear. A poet might be born: he had also to be made. There was a craft to be learned, and without mastery of this craft, whatever else you might be, you would not be a court poet."

It is noteworthy that the beginning of this period also saw the re-organisation of the tradition in Ireland, where the fili (poets, seers) reformed themselves into the Order of Bards (9). They too adopted much stricter rules of composition.

The "national reassertion" referred to above resulted from the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066. The "bitter warfare" of the period culminated in the loss of Welsh independence marked by the slaying of Prince Llewellyn in 1282, and of his brother Dafydd in the following year.

It might be assumed that such strict rules of composition as those referred to above might have led to the production of stilted and boring poetry. In fact, this period produced some of the finest mystical verse ever written, including such famed pieces as the *Kat Godeu*, also known as the *Battle of the Trees*, and the *Preiddeu Annwn*, the *Spoils of Annwn*. Indeed, the whole collection of poems known as the *Book of Taliesin*, two of which are reproduced in Appendix C below, come to us in a manuscript dated c. 1275, although some of its contents may have been composed as much as eight centuries earlier.

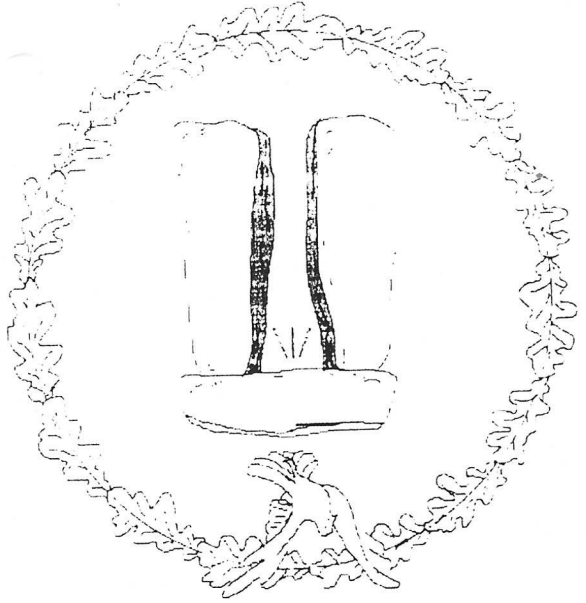
It is also from this period that we find references to the Goddess Cerridwen as "the ruler of Bardism (2)." Cerridwen appears in the *Hanes Taliesin*, the *Story of Taliesin* (10), as brewer of the *Cauldron of Inspiration* from which Taliesin drinks, and from which he gains the gifts of prophecy, of shape-shifting, and of poetry. The Gogynfeirdd poets regarded Cerridwen as the primary source of Awen.



Awen translates literally as "flowing spirit, or fluid essence," though it is often translated as "inspiration, or muse." The action of Awen on a specialist group of diviners is memorably described by Giralduus Cambrensis in his *Description of Wales* (11), written in the late 12th century, during the period of the Gogynfeirdd.

Giralduus says that "among the Welsh there are certain individuals called Awenyddion who behave as if

It is evident from the poetry of this period that the Gogyneidd Bards were steeped in a form of mysticism peculiar to their profession. But although we can analyse the types of metre they used, and gain much from interpreting the meaning of the poems, they provide little in the way of explicit information concerning the



As we have seen, the Bards of the time viewed Awen not as a gift of God, but as a gift of the Goddess Ceridwen. It is also clear that Giraldus equates Awen with the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit. The comparison is an apt one.

reason."

down from above should for a time seem to have lost their suddenly receive the spirit of God as a sign of grace come "It is not to be wondered at... if those who omniscience freely dispensed from on high...

alone, for only He can foretell the future by His true that knowledge of what is to be is the property of God say by sorcery or by the intervention of evil spirits. It is such prophecies are made possible, I do not necessarily "If you should ask... by what supernatural agency coming first of the Saxons and then of the Normans...

Ambrosius, each foretold of its destruction, and the Britain still existed, the two Merlins, Caledonius and "In the same way, at a time when the kingdom of visions which they see in their dreams...

They seem to receive this gift of divination through good shake before they regain control of themselves... waking from a heavy sleep, but you have to give them a recover from their trance, as if they were ordinary people solution to your problem. When it is all over, they will listen carefully to what they say you will receive the sense at all, but all the same well expressed: and if you incoherently and apparently meaningless and lacking any control of their senses... Words stream from their mouths, problem, they immediately go into a trance and lose they are possessed... When you consult them about some

Recent research (2) indicates that the Mabynogion tales may have achieved their present written c. 1325 (14).

found in the White Book of Rhydderch, which dates from earliest more-or-less complete copy of the Mabynogion is the manuscript Peniarth 6, dating from c. 1225, while the fragmentary versions of some of the stories are found in legends which we know as the Mabynogion. The earliest collection of Welsh hero-tales, folk tales, myths, and we have the earliest surviving manuscript versions of the it is also from the period of the Gogyneidd that and mystical style of the Welsh Gogyneidd.

by very few" certainly describes well enough the allusive remark about the style of composition being "understood Naddar, the legendary Serpent Stone of the Druids? The Is the stone referred to here perhaps the Glain

style from this dark cell as is understood by very few... " "They [the poets] shut their doors and windows for a day's time, and lie on their backs with a stone upon their belly, and plaid about their heads, and their eyes being covered they pump their brains for rhetorical encomium or panegyric; and indeed they furnish such a

isles of Scotland in 1695 (12): provides a similar account of the practice in the Western Awen, the Power of Inspiration of the Goddess. M. Martin doubtless have said that it facilitated the reception of the visionary experiences. The Gogyneidd Bards would that this technique can give rise to extremely vivid researches of Dr. John Lilly (13) and others have shown of what we would now call sensory deprivation. The The conditions described here are clearly a form solely upon the subject in hand..."

prevented, the faculties of the soul occupied themselves and the variety of objects represented thereby... This being dark was doubtless to avoid the distraction which light writing... The reason of laying the study aforesaid in the night, lights being brought in, they committed it to the whole next day in the dark, till at a certain hour in the they worked it apart each by himself upon his own bed, class... The said subject... having been given over night, professors... gave a subject suitable to the capacity of each these brought in at a proper season only... The day, not any light at all used but that of candles, and convenience for clothes to hang upon. No windows let in furniture of any kind, save only a table, some seats, and a distances, each within a small apartment without much structure was a snug, low hut, and beds in it at convenient a sept or enclosure far out of the reach of any noise... The place should be in the solitary recess of a garden or within school in Ireland, tells us that "It was... necessary that the Marquis of Clanricarde (12), writing in 1722 of a Bardic Irish and Scottish sources of the 18th century. The on standard compositional practice we need to turn to a type of "divination by poetry." For further information Bards, and, as we have seen, he is referring specifically to Giraldus is our only contemporary source for the Bards' actual methods of working.

form in the late 11th century, and probably existed in some manuscript form one or two centuries earlier. This puts their origins well back into the period of the *Cynfeirdd*, and it is likely that many of the tales derive at least some of their content from much older oral tales. Whatever their true antiquity, it is certain that, by the time of the *Gogynfeirdd*, the *Mabinogion* tales formed a central part of the learning of the Bardic schools.

## The Age of the *Cywyddyr*, c. 1350-1600

**T**he third of the traditional periods of British Bardism is the Period of the *Cywyddyr*, the Masters of the *Cywydd* meter, who are also referred to as the Poets of the Nobility. This period began c. 1350, by which time the death of the last Welsh Princes had rendered the elaborate court poetry of the previous era obsolete. Where once they had enjoyed regular royal patronage, the Bards now found themselves having to roam the countryside, seeking temporary accommodation with whatever members of the landed gentry would take them in.

The foremost Bard of this period was *Dafydd ap Gwilym*, who is described by *Gwyn Jones* (7) as "one of the most consummate metrists these islands have known... *Dafydd* was... the first and best master of the *cywydd*, a metrical composition in general not running to more than sixty or seventy lines, whose unit is a rhymed couplet each of whose lines consists of seven syllables, one line ending with a feminine or unstressed, the other with a masculine or stressed syllable, and each line normally employing the rhythmic devices of *cynghanedd*."

Whereas the compositions of the earlier periods had in the main been either praise-poems or allusive mystical verse, *Dafydd's* two central themes were love and the beauty of nature.

In spite of their relatively straitened circumstances, Bards continued to enjoy the respect of the community, who still regarded them as trusted sources of advice and information. They also continued to meet together to discuss and practice their skills. It is arguable that they sought to educate themselves even more diligently than their predecessors in order to render themselves more valuable to prospective patrons. *Jones* tells us that they studied "history, and ancient story and poetry, and heraldry and genealogy, and metrics and grammar, sometimes through written works, but more significantly through oral instruction."

The Bards of this period had high hopes for a revival in their fortunes when *Henry Tudor*, a monarch of Welsh descent, came to the throne of England in 1485. He would not have been able to defeat *Richard III* and seize the throne without the support of Welsh fighters brought to his cause largely through the efforts of the Bardic Order, who proclaimed him as a new *King Arthur*, come to rescue the Welsh from Saxon tyranny. They also hailed

him as a descendant of the legendary heroes *Cadwallader* and *Brutus*.

Unfortunately, once the Welsh had helped him secure the crown, *Henry* set up his court in England, and, with his encouragement, the Welsh nobility "flocked to London, and Oxford, and forgot their own language and traditions and became more English than the English (8)." This effectively withdrew the traditional source of patronage which the Bardic Order had hitherto enjoyed.

When *Henry Tudor* died in 1509, he was succeeded by his son, *Henry VIII*, who was deeply suspicious of the Bardic Order and its role as guardian of the national cultural identity of the Welsh. He seems to have viewed the ability of Bards to pass freely throughout the land, and to converse with all levels of society, as a possible political threat. He therefore introduced measures to increase state control over the activities of the Bardic Order.

In 1535, the Order suffered further setbacks following the introduction of the Act of Union of that year, which had the stated intention "utterly to extirpe all singular and sinister usages and customs" of the Welsh people (15), and which effectively transferred the governance of Wales to England. This initiated a period of great upheaval, when the few remaining Welsh-speaking landowners had to struggle to hold onto their lands, and when their wealth and status were considerably reduced, making it impossible for them to continue their patronage of the Bardic Order as they had done in the past.

## The *Eisteddfod*

*Song-house of all sounding things - high senate  
Whence harmony springs,  
Which note upon note nature flings  
In the flight of the soul from the strings.*

*Anon, trans. Ernest Rhys (16)*

**T**he word *Eisteddfod* means literally "a sitting, or session." *Eisteddfods* (the Welsh plural is *Eisteddfodau*) have a recorded history in Wales of more than 800 years. In the 12th century they were, as they are now, contests of poets and musicians, proclaimed a year in advance. Records exist of such a gathering being held at *Cardigan Castle* in 1176 (17), at which the winning poet and musician were both awarded Bardic Chairs (see below) as prizes.

Before the decline of the old Bardic Order in the 17th century, *Eisteddfods* were meetings of professional poets and musicians, concerned with maintaining the standards of their craft. These Bards were, as we have seen, highly valued by the Welsh nobility as praise-singers, entertainers, storytellers, historians, and genealogists.

We have also seen that, with the disintegration of the social structure in Wales, the old families could no longer support the Bardic Order. The Bards themselves, however, though impoverished, continued to practice their


art, and to pass on the traditional verse forms, often through their children.

Eisteddfods also continued to be held, no longer in castles, but in taverns, and no longer as learned debating societies, but as public entertainments. Thus the common people took to their hearts and preserved an art form which had once been the sole province of the nobility. Many small-scale, local Eisteddfods continue to be held to this day.

The 18th century saw a revival of interest in the old Bardic tradition among the educated classes. The first large scale Eisteddfod of the modern period was held in a hotel in Corwen in 1789. This was organised by an exciseman named Thomas Jones, with the support of the Gweneddigion Society of London. The event caused considerable interest, and others quickly followed.

We know that both Gorsedd assemblies and Eisteddfods have been held in England, at least since Iolo Morgannwg's original proclamation on Primrose Hill in 1792 (see below). Liz Murray, the Secretary of the Council of British Druid Orders, has in her possession a Bardic Chair which was awarded at a "Semi-National Eisteddfod" held in Torquay in 1922. There seems to be very little published information about Eisteddfods held in Britain beyond the confines of Wales and Cornwall. If anyone has such information, either published or anecdotal, Liz would like to hear from them. Please write to her at the contact address given at the end of this document.

## Bardic Chairs

he Bardic Chair is both an honour awarded for outstanding ability in the Bardic arts and an actual chair given as a trophy in token of the honour. The holder of a Bardic Chair has the title of Cadeirfardd, or Chaired Bard, from the Welsh Cadeir, a Chair of Honour.

The awarding of Bardic Chairs seems to have originated in the ancient Celtic custom of reserving a place of honour for a pre-eminent Bard in the banqueting halls of tribal chieftains. Such Bards were so honoured for their skill in entertaining and informing the chiefs and their assembled followers. It seems likely that they were usually chosen from among the retinue of Bards who were commonly retained as part of the household of tribal chieftains, though there is some evidence from the Irish vernacular tales and from the Welsh Hanes Taliesin and elsewhere, that the honour was sometimes granted to especially skilled outsiders.

It is not clear what methods of selection applied for this place of honour. The award may have been given by the tribal chieftain, by popular acclaim of the assembly, or by other Bards. The most logical judges of Bardic skills would obviously be other trained Bards. Such judges might have been elders of the craft, perhaps Ovates or Druids. They might have been appointed to the task by their fellows, or perhaps chosen by lot.

It is clear from the early literature that members of the Celtic aristocracy themselves underwent a good deal of Bardic training. See for example the stories of Cuchulain (18), the legendary champion of Ulster. This being the case, the assembled clan chiefs would have been reasonably well qualified to award the place of honour themselves.


At some unknown point, this place of honour in the chieftain's hall came to be represented by an actual chair. Bardic Chairs as such are first mentioned in the Law Code drawn up by the 10th century Welsh King Hywel Dda. These Laws state that (19) "a seat at court in the Prince's Hall was always reserved for the chief poet, who was elected to the position by means of a poetic contest."

We have already seen that two Bardic Chairs were awarded in competition at Cardigan Castle in 1176, one for poetry, the other for music. These were awarded at an Eisteddfod, and it seems likely that at this time the awards were made by a conclave of Bards sitting in judgement.

It is also presumably around this time, i.e. during the Age of the Gogynfeirdd, who laid down strict rules of composition, that the convention arose of Bardic Chairs being awarded only for verses in the strict Awdl meter, which was the predominant metrical form of the period. This convention still applies at the Welsh National Eisteddfod, with a Bardic Crown being awarded for a composition in freer verse. Both awards are made by panels of judges appointed by sub-committees of the National Eisteddfod Committee.

There has been frequent confusion over whether Bardic Chairs are linked to specific geographical locations. It should be clear from the foregoing that they are not. They are an honour bestowed on an individual. In the Period of the Princes, they entitled the individual to a place of honour in the Prince's court, but when the court moved, the Bard and the place of honour moved too.

## Gorsedd Mounds

he word Gorsedd means literally "high seat," and, according to E. O. Gordon (20), it refers to ancient mounds, which may be artificial like Dane John's Mound in Canterbury, or natural like Primrose Hill in London. Gordon calls these Gorsedd mounds "high places of worship."

The Mabinog tale of Pwyll Lord of Dyfed (10), tells how Pwyll goes "to the top of a mound that was above [his court], and was called Gorsedd Arberth. 'Lord,' said one of the Court, 'it is peculiar to the mound that whosoever sits upon it cannot go thence, without either receiving wounds or blows, or else seeing a wonder.'" Pwyll accepts the challenge and the wonder which he sees is a vision of the Goddess Rhiannon riding on her white horse.

Alwyn and Brinley Rees translate the term Gorsedd as "throne mound." They refer to a Bardic

manuscript dated 1703, which points to an association between ritual mounds and the Otherworld of Annwn. It describes how a Bard "falls asleep and sees a crowd of people whom he takes to be Gypsies or witches until, noticing their beauty and recognizing among them the faces of deceased acquaintances, he realizes they are fairies (tylwyth teg). They are dancing on the 'play mound' (twmpath chwareu)... he is rescued from their clutches by an angel who informs him that they were the Children of Annwn. A 'play mound' used to be found near or inside graveyards in Wales. The mound was banked up, with turf seats for the spectators arranged around an open floor where the games were played."

They draw parallels with the old turf "theatres" of Cornwall, and with the Irish word Oenach, meaning Assembly, which is glossed as Theatrum. They also refer to Irish tales in which "mounds outside courts are scenes of games and visionary encounters which do not belong to the round of mundane existence," as well as "the holding of assemblies on hills and mounds [which] is a commonplace of Irish history."

Symbolically, the Gorsedd mound is a representation of the cosmic mountain which lies at the centre of the world, and which features in virtually every major religious mythology. The symbolism of the mountain covers a complex of ideas. Its summit represents the meeting point between heaven and earth, so it becomes a place of pilgrimage where people go to be closer to their Gods. It is also the place where the Sky God mates with the Earth Mother, who is embodied in the mountain.

In many mythologies, the sacred mountain is the first land which emerges from the primeval waters at the dawn of creation. It is the world-navel, the source from which sacred rivers flow, the home of the Gods. The great neolithic burial mounds, such as New Grange in Ireland, therefore represent the sacred source from which all life comes and to which all must return in order to be reborn.

Where then are we to look for these ancient ritual sites? The Welsh Triads (19) refer to the three principle Gorsedds (ie. Gatherings) of the Bards of Britain as being:

The Gorsedd of Bryn Gwyddon at Caerleon-upon-Usk  
The Gorsedd of Moel Ewyr  
The Gorsedd of Beiscawen

Another Triad refers to the three Gorsedds of Entire Song of Britain as being:

The Gorsedd of Beiscawen in Dynwal  
The Gorsedd of Caer Caradog in Lloegria  
The Gorsedd of Bryn Gwyddon in Cymru

Bryn Gwyddon is probably the earthworks known as King Arthur's Round Table at Caerleon in South Wales. Moel Ewyr may be Moelfre Hill, at Dwygyfylchi in Gwynedd in North Wales, where there were once three standing stones which were said to represent three women dressed in red, white, and blue. Beiscawen is reckoned to be the Boscawen-un stone circle

in Cornwall. Lloegria is the old Welsh name for Saxon England. Caer Caradog is one of a chain of hills in Shropshire, which includes the Iron Age hill fort, the Wrekin. Alternatively, it is possible that the Caer Caradog referred to here might be the ancient earthworks now known as The Bulwarks on Minchinhampton Common in Gloucestershire, which are believed to be the stronghold from which the Celtic chieftain Caratacus led his rebellion against the Roman invasion in 47 CE.

The Rev. R. W. Morgan includes a list of supposed Gorsedd sites in his book *British Cymry*. E. O. Gordon reproduces Morgan's list with one or two errors and omissions. Both these authors were published by the Covenant Publishing Company. The main thrust of the works put out by this company was an attempt to prove that the British were one of the lost tribes of Israel, so how much reliance can be placed on their publications is open to question. It seems likely, however, that the original source of the list of sites was Iolo Morganwg, on whose published works Morgan and Gordon both draw freely.

Gordon says that "in Britain the Druidical Order numbered thirty-one chief seats of education - each seat was a Cyfaith or City, the capital of a tribe." She makes it clear that each of these "seats" has within its precincts a Gorsedd mound. The full list of sites as given by the Rev. Morgan is as follows - the places in brackets are the actual Gorsedd mounds, where these have been identified:

#### Seats of the three Arch-Druids of Britain:

Caer Ebroc - York  
Caer Leon - Caerleon\* (King Arthur's Round Table?)  
Caer Troia - London (Primrose Hill\*, Parliament Hill\*, Penton, the White Mount, Tothill)

#### Seats of the chief Druids of Britain:

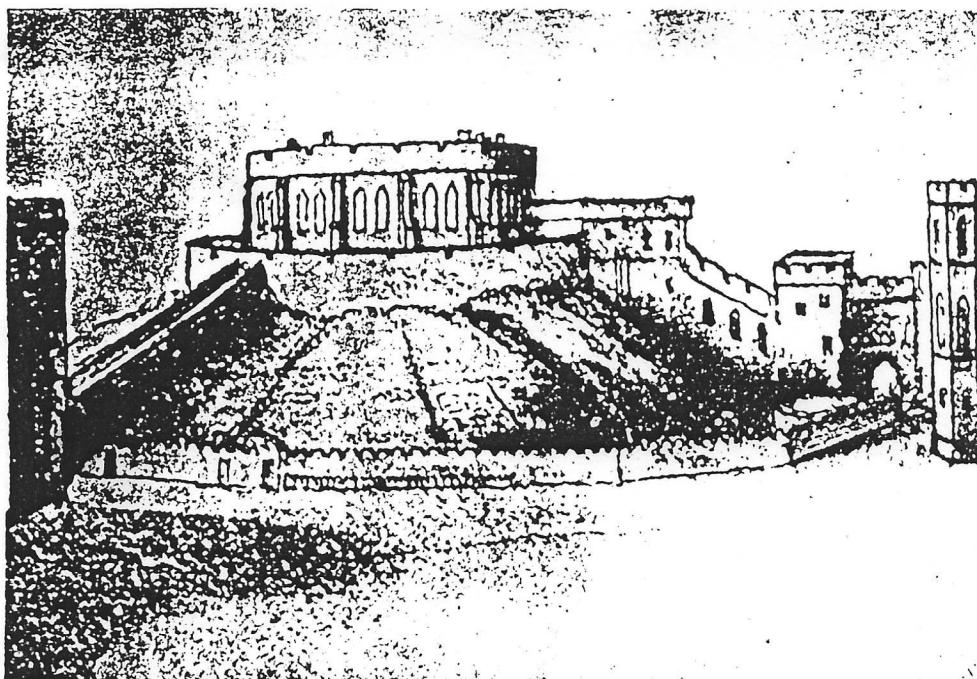
Caer Baddon - Bath  
Caer Caint - Canterbury (Dane John's Mound)  
Caer Cei - Chichester\*  
Caer Ceiont - Caernarvon  
Caer Ceri - Cirencester  
Caer Coel - Colchester ("King Coel's Castle")  
Caer Don - Doncaster  
Caer Dur - Dorchester\* (Maiden Castle)  
Caer Gilou - Gloucester  
Caer Gorangon - Worcester  
Caer Gouric - Warwick\*  
Caer Grawnt, or Caer Gwrgan - Cambridge  
Caer Leil - Carlisle  
Caerleon ar Dwy - Chester\*  
Caer Llear - Leicester\*  
Caer Lleyn - Lincoln  
Caer Membre, or Caer Bosca - Oxford\*  
Caer Meini - Manchester  
Caer Merddyn - Carmarthen\*  
Caer Municip - St. Albans  
Caer Odor - Bristol  
Caer Peris - Porchester



Caer Sallwg - Old Sarum  
 Caer Segont - Silchester\*  
 Caer Urnach - Wroxeter  
 Caer Wydr - Glastonbury\* (The Tor)  
 Caer Wyse - Exeter (Rougemont)  
 Caer Wyn - Winchester\* (St. Katherine's Hill)

The word Caer means simply "city, or fortress," from a possible original meaning of "circular earthwork." Many of these place names appear to have been invented, presumably either by Iolo Morganwg, or the Rev. Morgan. They certainly bear little relationship to the Romano-Celtic place names, where these are known. An asterisk beside a place means that Liz Murray, the Secretary of C.O.B.D.O., has already been notified by persons interested in establishing Gorsedds of Bards associated with those places (see below).

In a footnote Gordon lists a further nineteen Gorsedds or "high places" personally known to her. These are; Arundel (Sussex); Brent Knoll; Mount Bures (Essex); Cadbury Mound; Cardiff; Eton Montem; Harkness; Herefordshire Beacon; Marlborough; Malvern; Montacute; Maes Knoll; Norwich; Rochester; Sinodun; St. Michael's Mount (Din Sol); Wallingford; Windsor (Round Table Mound); Whitfield's Mount (Blackheath, S.E.); "also many others throughout the length and breadth of the land."



ROUND TABLE MOUND, WINDSOR  
 (From Ashmole)

As we have already noted, these lists of sites are derived from somewhat dubious sources. It has been pointed out, for example, that Caerleon-upon-Usk was a Roman settlement. The so-called "King Arthur's Round Table" at this site is, in fact, the remains of a Roman amphitheatre. Other "Gorsedd mounds" on the list appear to have been anything from Bronze Age encampments, through Iron Age hill forts, to the mottes of Norman

castles! Are we then to dismiss these lists as romantic fictions?

If our purpose is to establish firm archaeological evidence for Druids or Bardic Gorsedds having met at the sites mentioned, then we are obviously faced with such insuperable difficulties that we may as well quit before we start. If strict scientific accuracy is to be our benchmark, then we can, for example, forget about Glastonbury Tor as a Druidic site, as the earliest structural remains unearthed on it so far date from no earlier than the 6th century CE. Frankly though, if we were to dismiss the romantic from Druidry, we might find ourselves left with very little of any interest to anyone. We would have to dismiss virtually the whole of Arthurian literature and the Mabinogion for a start.

If, however, our purpose is to establish a functioning network of Bards working at Gorsedd sites now and in the future, then there is no reason why we should not refer to these lists, flawed though they are historically speaking, as our starting point. Obviously, the references to "seats of Archdruids" and "seats of Chief Druids" are pure fiction, but as we are dealing with the Bardic aspect of the Druid tradition here, they needn't bother us anyway.

E.O.Gordon provides us with a useful key by which we may enlarge our lists of sites. She quotes Sir Norman Lockyer, himself quoting the Rev. R. J. Griffith,

who says "we have in Britain thousands of Gorsedds, the pedigrees of which are as unimpeachable as that of the Welsh institution. I refer to the fairs still held on the quarter days of the May Year... the Gorsedd and the popular fair is one and the same, constituting a true monument as ancient as a temple observatory in stone. A better way of putting it is, the temple observatory has survived in (1) stone, in (2) tradition, and in (3) festival."

It is quite true that many traditional May Day festivities were and are held on prominent hilltops. For example, one ancient May Fair was held in the earthwork enclosure above the Cerne Abbas Giant hill figure. In Hastings, the crowning of the

May Queen and the slaying of the Jack-in-the-Green both take place within the ruined castle high on its hill overlooking the town. The various St. Michael's Mounts in Cornwall and elsewhere also have associations with May festivals.

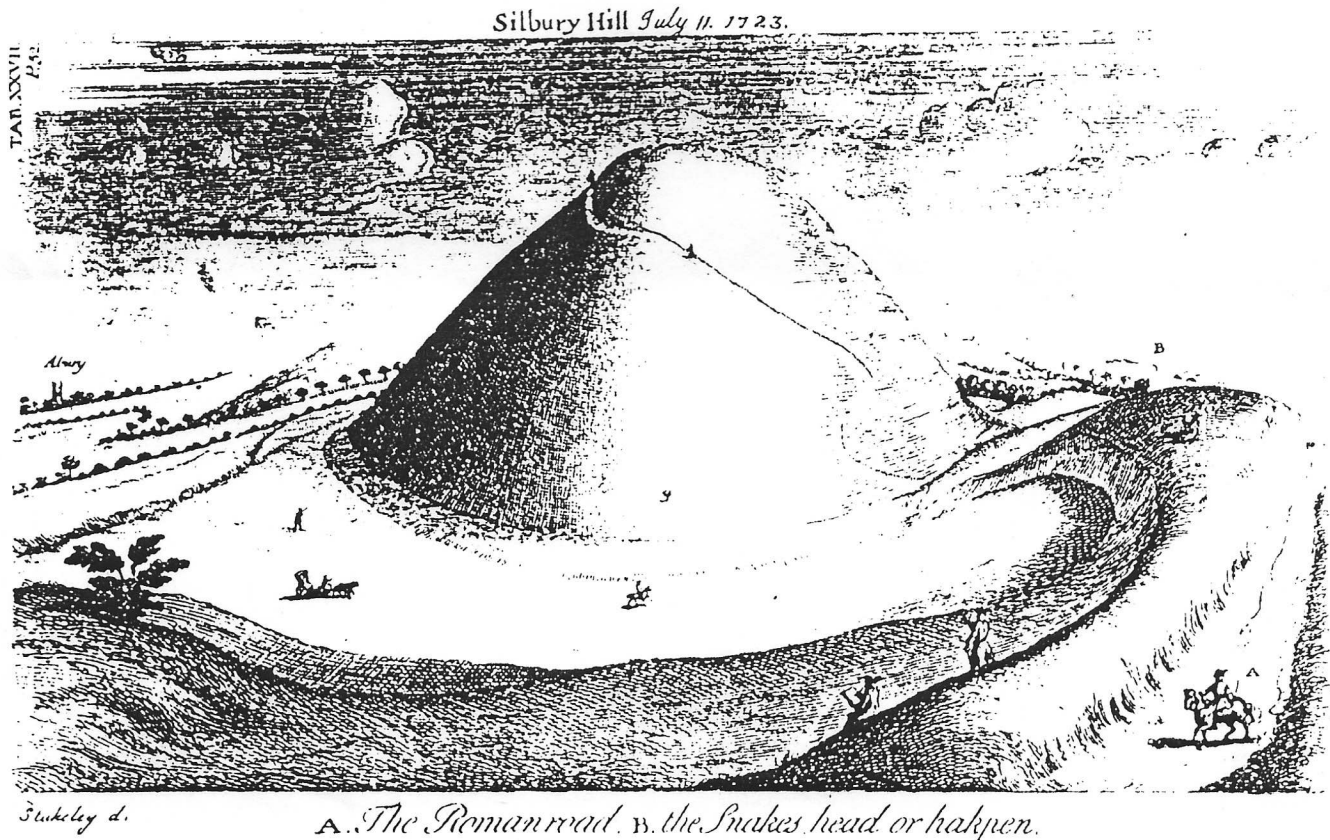
It seems then, that the prerequisites for a Gorsedd site are an ancient mound, which may be either natural or artificial, either with or without an associated stone circle,

and associations with May Day or other traditional rites.

There are many places in Britain which fit one or all of these requirements. One which immediately springs to mind is Avebury\* in Wiltshire, where the complex of ancient monuments includes Silbury Hill, the largest artificial mound in European prehistory, situated less than a mile from the great Avebury henge itself, which is Britain's largest stone circle. And indeed E.O.Gordon says that "Keltic tradition affirms that it was within the circles of Abury that the institution of the Gorsedd had its origin." She also tells us that Silbury Hill had the "Keltic title of Cludair Cyvrangon," which she translates as the "heaped mound of cognitions." To Avebury itself she attributes the Celtic name *Caer Abiri*.

She also refers to the importance of Stonehenge\*, to which she gives the Celtic name of *CaerAmbresbiri*, or *Cor Gawr*, which means Great Circle. She identifies the Gorsedd mound of Stonehenge as the nearby hill known as *Vespasian's Camp*.

To summarize then, we have references to some Gorsedd sites in the Welsh Triads; a list of thirty-one sites which, according to E.O.Gordon and others, represented at one time the seats of the chief Druids of Britain, centres of Druidic learning, places of worship, Bardic colleges, and places of public assembly, each of which has an associated Gorsedd mound; and another list of nineteen further Gorsedd mounds, which were also supposed to have been places of worship, and places of public assembly, and which may be further extended to include any site which has an ancient Gorsedd mound and/or a stone circle, and/or an ancient May Day or similar festival. It is claimed by some of the writers referred to above that Gorsedds, or gatherings of Bards, took place at most or all of these sites.



Using the criteria of ancient mound/circle/festival, we might also add Bala in Merioneth, in which stands the mound known as the *Tomen y Bala*; *Dragon Hill*, which rises from the escarpment below the *Uffington White Horse*, commanding spectacular views over the surrounding countryside, and any number of other sites. Individual members of the Council of British Druid Orders have already suggested *Milton Keynes*, in view of the Summer Solstice alignments built into its ground plan; the previously mentioned *Hastings Castle*, with its *Jack-in-the-Green* festival; and the *Tump in Lewes*, which was an

## The Gorsedds of the Bards of Britain

Gordon says that "the term Gorsedd is applied also to the assemblies held either on or around the mound, or within a stone circle, the remains of which circles are often found near the mounds." She goes on to say that "in purely Druidic times, round these 'Places of Assembly,' all the civil and religious affairs of the district revolved." She quotes the *Tynwald*

Hill in the Isle of Man, where the Manx Parliament still meets, as an example. A Gorsedd (the Welsh plural of which is Gorseddau) of Bards is, therefore, a gathering of Bards who meet at, and/or associate themselves with, a particular Gorsedd mound.

Most reputable scholars (21), however, agree that the whole concept of the Gorsedds of the Bards of Britain, at least as we now know it in relation to the Welsh Eisteddfod movement was the brainchild of the 18th century antiquarian, poet, revolutionary and romantic, Edward Williams, better known by his Bardic name, Iolo Morganwg, whom we have already come across in connection with his imaginative additions to the Welsh Triads.

Iolo was certainly the author of the Proclamation of the Gorsedd of the Bards of Britain which took place at Primrose Hill in London on June 21st, 1792. This was one of the most significant events in the Bardic revival which had begun with the publication of the works of John Aubrey in the previous century, and really began to take off with the 1789 Corwen Eisteddfod referred to above.

Also present at his Primrose Hill ceremony were a number of Iolo's supporters from the London Welsh group, who watched as he took thirteen stones from his pocket and laid them out in a circle on the grassy hilltop. Part of his Proclamation ran as follows:

"We assemble here at the summer solstice of the year 1792.

"We assemble face to the sun and the eye of enlightenment, around the Maen Gorsedd, the Altar Stone, and in the midst of the circle of sacred stones.

"We assemble here to constitute ourselves a Gorsedd of the Bards of the Islands of Britain."

The ceremony was repeated at the Autumn equinox on September 23rd, and a report of it appeared in the October 1792 edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, but it was not until twenty-seven years later that Iolo's Gorsedd of Bards came together with the Welsh Eisteddfod. This momentous event took place in the garden of the Ivy Bush Hotel in Carmarthen in 1819. At the end of the three-day Eisteddfod, Iolo laid out his Gorsedd circle, using the same stones he had lain at Primrose Hill (17), and he and his Bards performed their ceremony.

Iolo claimed that his Gorsedd ceremony was based on ancient manuscripts in his possession. It later transpired, however, that many of these manuscripts were not quite as ancient as they appeared, having largely been forged by Iolo himself. Much criticism has been levelled at him on this account, but it could be argued that the Welsh National Eisteddfod might not have developed into the week-long international arts festival of today had it not been for his colourful contribution.

In *Barddas*, the collection of Iolo material published by the Welsh MSS. Society in 1852, there are a number of Gorsedd Laws which were supposedly incorporated into the law code of the 5th century British King Dynwal Moelmuð, whose name is often Latinized as

Dunwal Molmutius (20). These tell us that the Gorsedd of Bards is the oldest in origin of the "three privileged Gorsedds of the Isle of Britain." They also give us the following information on the nature and duties of the Gorsedd.

"The first is the Gorsedd of the Bards of the Isle of Britain and their foundation and privilege rest upon reason, nature, and cogency; or according to other teachers and wise men, upon reason, Nature and circumstance. And the privilege and office of those protected by the Gorsedd of Bards are to maintain and preserve and diffuse authorized instruction in the sciences of piety, wisdom, and courtesy; and to preserve memorial and record of everything commendable respecting individuals and kindred; and every event of times; and every natural phenomenon; and wars; and regulations of country and nation; and punishments and commendable victories; and to preserve a warranted record of genealogies, marriages, nobility, privileges, and customs of the nation of the Kymry; and to attend the exigencies of other Gorsedds on announcing what shall be achieved, and what shall be requisite, and under lawful proclamation and warning; and further than this there is nothing either of office or of privilege attached to a Gorsedd of Bards."

## The Modern Welsh Eisteddfod and the Welsh Gorsedd of Bards

The annual Welsh National Eisteddfod of modern times (8, 17) dates from the establishment of the Eisteddfod Council in 1860. The event is now overseen by a Permanent National Eisteddfod Council, under which there are two organisers, one in the North and one in the South, an executive committee, and no fewer than seventeen subsidiary committees, each dealing with a different aspect of the event.

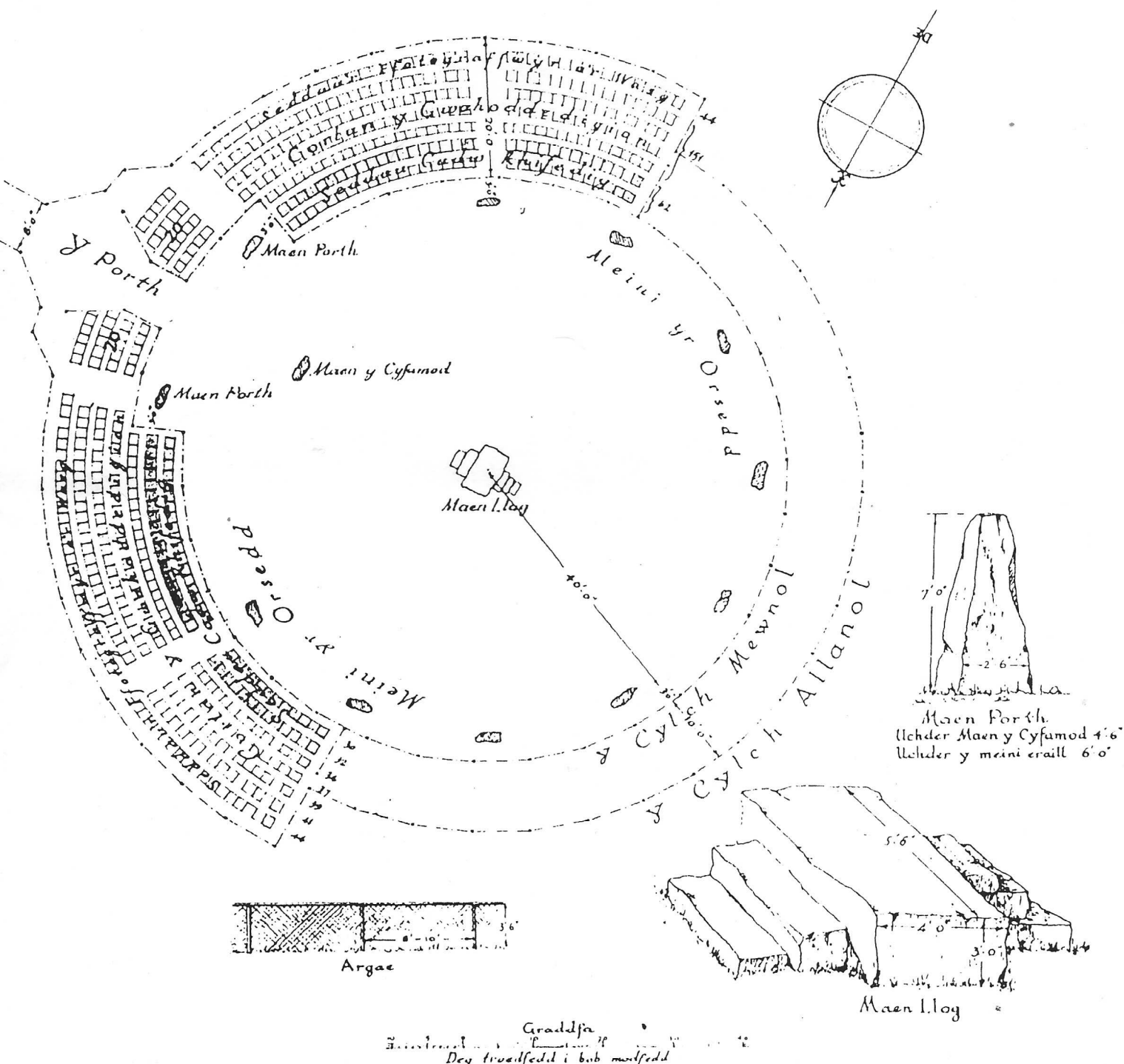
The fact that the event is held alternately in North and South Wales means that the host district has two years to make the necessary preparations. There is fierce competition for the honour of being the district to host the Eisteddfod, which now stretches over the whole of the first week in August each year, annually attracting some 200,000 visitors.

The highlight of the festival is the awarding of the Chair and the Crown which, once presented, remain the property of the recipients, so new ones must be made each year. The prize-winning poems are published immediately and sell in large numbers.

A year and a day in advance of the festival itself, the Gorsedd of Bards meet at the stone circle which is specially erected for the event in the host area, to proclaim the forthcoming Eisteddfod (the Cornish Gorsedd meet in genuine prehistoric stone circles[22]). At this time the list of subjects for competition is also published. In 1949 the list ran to some 80 pages and 276 categories of



# CYNLLUN CYLCH YR ORSEDD.



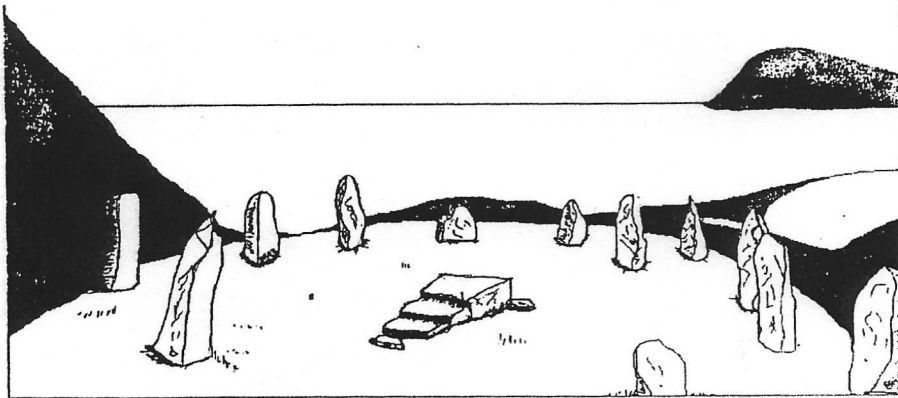
Plan used in construction of Gorsedd circles for the Welsh Eisteddfod

competition in the fields of literature, drama, verse, music, and arts and crafts, with special competitions for children in each category.

The ceremonial Gorsedd of Bards devised by Iolo Morgannwg in 1792 still plays a central part in the Eisteddfod celebrations. The following description of the Gorsedd circle and the ceremony conducted within it is quoted from E.O.Gordon (20), who is quoting in turn from an article in Nature (May 2, 1907) by the Rev. J. Griffith:

"The present Gorsedd circle consists of twelve stones, 30 degrees apart, with a larger stone in the centre. Outside, on the East, three stones are placed to indicate the solstices and equinoxes to an observer at the central stone. The stones forming the circle are called the White Stones, [the central stone is called the Maen Gorsedd, the Presidial Stone] or Stone of Testimony; the circle itself is sometimes called the White circle.

"The stones pointing to the Equinoxes, and Solstices are called Stones of the Sun. The Bards stand unshod, uncovered, within the circle; the Presiding Bard, who must be of the Primitive Order, stands by the Presidial Stone. All the other Bards attend around, standing near the White Stones or periphery of the circle."



Gordon herself says that "readers who desire to recall a Druidic assembly at St. Paul's, the Abbey, or within the precincts of any other of our British circles, cannot do better than be present at one of the National Gorsedd in Wales..."

"A circle is formed of 12 unhewn stones symbolic of the signs of the zodiac. In the centre is the large Maen Llog or Logan Stone... Druidism itself was ordinarily known as 'Y Maen,' the Stone. The Maen Llog must be placed in a central position and must be untouched by any tool...."

"Twelve Bards, one by each stone, guard the Gorsedd Circle to-day as in times past, and two Keepers of the Gate are stationed at the entrance, which is on the East side. The ground plan of the Welsh Circle is similar to that of Stonehenge. At the entrance of the Circle may

be seen three prostrate unhewn stones pointing outwards from the central 'Maen Llogan'; these represent the ancient Kymric symbol of the Awen, or Holy Wings, the three rays or rods of light signifying the Eye of Light, or the radiating light of the Divine Intelligence shed upon the Druidic Circle....

"Preceded by the Regalia of the Order, the members assemble in the market-place, and, marshalled in procession according to their different degrees, wend their way to the Circle. The Arch-Druid, an impressive figure, takes up his position besides the Maen Llogan, raised above the others. Like the High Priest of old, he is clad in white, and wears a golden crescent-shaped breast-plate, symbolic of the Ark or Sacred Boat. He wears a crown of bronze oak leaves round the linen cap upon his head, representing the sacred tree of the ancient Druids. The Druid priests, like their chief, are clad in white, the Bards in blue, symbolic of celestial love, the Ovates in green, signifying the growth of human intelligence in the circle of the arts and sciences...."

"Nor must we omit to describe the magnificent Regalia of the Eisteddfod borne in procession of the Order, before the Arch-Druid... Next to the Sword, surmounted by its crystal and emblematic dove, the most striking object is the Hirlas Horn of the most ancient

symbolism and significance. The Hirlas bore three attributes, viz. authority or might, the loud voice of the sun and its beneficent effects of causing abundance upon the earth. The Hirlas was the chief emblem of the strength of the Creator through the sun, which, at the time of the institution of the Order, rose in Taurus. The sun's rays were represented by the horns of a buffalo pattern. In Welsh, a horn is called 'corn,' and a crown is called a 'coron.' ... The Hirlas Horn was used by the Druids as a sacramental vessel, out of which they drank the first fruits of the sacred Apples, viz. Cider, and afterwards wine, and as each drank out of the Hirlas Horn he

bowed to the sun his thanksgiving... In this we also have the origin of passing the wine in the path of the sun....

"When all have taken up their respective positions within the circle, four long blasts of a silvertrumpet announce the fact to the vast concourse. The Arch-Druid, with uplifted, outstretched arms, then proceeds to open the proceedings with the Gorsedd prayer, reputed to be as old as the institution..."

"At the moment of prayer all the twelve Bards, the guardians of the twelve stones, bow the head towards the Arch-Druid."

This Gorsedd prayer is that which begins "Grant, O God/dess, thy protection..." and is given in full as part of the ceremony set out in Appendix A. It was composed by Iolo Morgannwg.

The robes and regalia of the modern Welsh

Eisteddfod are Victorian in origin (21. Piggott), the robes designed by Sir Hubert Herkomer RA, and the regalia by Sir Goscombe John.

The motto of the Welsh Gorsedd of Bards is "Y Gwir yn Erbyn y Byd," which translates as "The Truth Against the World."

## The Future: Reviving the Gorsedds

In the 1970's Colin Murray, founder of the Golden Section Order, had the idea of reviving the Bardic tradition, with its associated Gorsedd mounds and gatherings, in areas of Britain beyond the confines of Wales and Cornwall, the only two places in which the tradition has continued to flourish. This suggestion was put before the Council of British Druid Orders (C.O.B.D.O.) by Liz Murray at the meeting of the Council which took place in Mells in Somerset, in September, 1991. Her proposals were minuted as follows:

"Liz explained the recent history of the Bardic Chairs and proposed that the Council support the claiming of the known Bardic Chairs which would prove useful in the future both for networking and Eisteddfod plans. Using the references from the book 'Prehistoric London' by E.O.Gordon Liz has compiled a list of known Chairs and is in the process of researching claimants to the Chairs, and any individual or Order who wish to lay claim or to notify the Council of their existing claim please contact Liz...

"In the discussion as to how Chairs should be formally announced it was agreed that a Ritual, to be written by Philip Shallcrass (B.D.O.) would be performed by the claimant, in the presence of witnesses and if possible the local press with a press release being issued by the Council. All claims will ideally be made on the same day with the proclaimer then to wait one year and one day, without challenge, before taking the seat. It is also expected that the claimant make all attempts to learn the local history of the area."

At this initial stage, the proposals seemed clear enough and were agreed to by the representatives of the four Orders who were present. Since then, however, numerous questions have arisen as to the nature of the Chairs: whether the original list referred to might be extended and how; and who should claim them and how. In view of the fact that the whole enterprise looked in danger of disappearing in the confusion, it was agreed by the six Orders present at the Council meeting held in London in December of 1992, that Philip Shallcrass should compile the present document in an attempt to clarify the situation.

It is clear that the initial suggestion put before the Council, as set out in the above extract from the Minutes, had two main aims. These were firstly to establish a

nationwide network of writers, artists, and performers with a commitment to the Bardic tradition; and secondly, to work towards the establishment of an annual national Eisteddfod which would bring members of this network together. The following conclusions and proposals are fully in line with these aims and are based on the foregoing account of the British Bardic tradition.

It may be worth reminding ourselves at this stage that we are, perhaps, not so much "reviving" as re-inventing a tradition, based on our own intuitions and researches, backed up by those of other scholars and mystics, heavily influenced by the romantic notions of Iolo Morganwg, the obscure esotericism of the Gogynfeirdd Bards, and last, and maybe least, the known facts concerning the Bardic Order and its role in Celtic society. The Bardic realm is a land of poetry, where history assumes its rightful place alongside myth, and both are properly subordinate to inspiration.

1) The nature of the traditional Bardic Chairs makes it clear that these cannot be claimed, but must be awarded at an Eisteddfod convened by a local or national Gorsedd (i.e. Gathering) of Bards.

2) In view of this fact, it seems clear that the Council's priority must be to encourage the establishment of regional Gorsedds of Bards. Such Gorsedds might then, if they wished, stage local Eisteddfods at which they might award Bardic Chairs.

3) These regional Gorsedds should meet in public at least once a year at a local Gorsedd mound or its associated stone circle. At such meetings they should perform the Gorsedd Ceremony set out in Appendix A below, and give notice of their planned events for the coming year. They may also put on a performance of the Bardic arts. The fact that a Gorsedd of Bards meets at a particular Gorsedd mound does not imply an exclusive territorial claim to that site. Members of the Gorsedd of Bards should live in the vicinity of their local Gorsedd mound.

4) The criteria for a Gorsedd mound have already been set out above. Briefly they consist of i) an ancient mound, either natural or artificial; ii) a nearby stone circle (optional); iii) May Day or other traditional rites performed on or near the mound.

5) Liz Murray, as Secretary of C.O.B.D.O., is keeping a record of Gorsedds of Bards and their associated Gorsedd mounds. Persons wishing to form a Gorsedd working at any of the sites listed above should write to her at the address given at the end of this document, giving a brief account of their interest in the Bardic tradition, details of the history and folklore of their local Gorsedd mound, and setting out the proposed activities of their Gorsedd.

6) Persons wishing to establish Gorsedds meeting at sites other than those listed above should also

write to Liz giving the same information, so that her list of active Gorsedds may be updated.

7) Persons wishing to establish a Gorsedd of Bards will be expected to have an active interest in at least two of the following areas; i) the Bardic tradition as outlined above; ii) Druidry; iii) the Arts, whether poetry, music, painting, sculpture, performance art, film and video, dance, theatre, or whatever; iv) local history and folklore; v) the Celtic and pre-Celtic heritage and culture of Britain.

8) It is hoped that local Gorsedds of Bards will actively participate in the annual National Eisteddfod planned by the Council of British Druid Orders. Once this event has become established, categories of competition will be announced, and the Council or its appointed judges will award a Bardic Chair each year. It may be advisable for the Council to establish a permanent Eisteddfod committee to oversee the event.

9) It is hoped that local Gorsedds of Bards will play an active part in the cultural and artistic life of their areas, organising local Eisteddfods which might incorporate poetry readings, music, plays, art exhibitions, etc, etc. They might also like to incorporate their Gorsedd Ceremony into a local May Day or other folk festival, where these take place on or near their Gorsedd mound. They may, however, choose to meet in private. News of the activities of the local Gorsedds may be sent to the Editor of *The Druids' Voice* for publication.

10) How each Gorsedd is run is entirely up to the local members. They may, if they wish, elect one of their number to act as a permanent spokesperson, bearing the title of "Chief Bard of the Gorsedd of Bards of Caer ..... ." Alternatively, they may elect a spokesperson annually, bearing the title of "Presider," or they could be really democratic and have no spokespersons whatsoever!

11) Persons wishing to form local Gorsedds should agree to abide by the aims and principles of the Council of British Druid Orders. These may be summed up as follows: i) To promote understanding and knowledge of the Druidic and Bardic traditions; ii) To encourage understanding, friendship, communication, and co-operation between Druidic and Bardic groups; iii) To provide a forum for discussion and debate on matters of Druidic and Bardic interest.

12) Local Gorsedds should also abide by the following principles agreed at previous meetings of the Council: That member Orders and affiliated groups shall not i) interfere with the lawful activities of other member Orders or affiliated groups; ii) shall not attack or otherwise disparage other member Orders or affiliated groups in public print; iii) shall not conduct themselves in a manner likely to bring Druidry or Bardism in general or the Council in particular into disrepute, or use the name of the Council for their personal aggrandisement.

13) Local Gorsedds should also model themselves on the following "Institutional Triads," as set out in the Iolo MSS: i) The three Ultimate Intentions of Bardism: to reform morals and customs; to secure Peace; and to celebrate the praise of all that is good and excellent: ii) The Three Joys of the Bards of Britain: the Increase of Knowledge; the Reformation of Manners; and the Triumph of Peace over the Lawless and Depredators.

14) Conspicuous failure to abide by the aims and principles of C.O.B.D.O. as set out above will result in the offending Gorsedd being removed from the Register maintained by the Council, and removal of recognition by the Council, its members, and affiliates. In other words; Bardic excommunication!

15) In order to get the ball rolling, a single individual Bard may constitute a Gorsedd. In this case, the Gorsedd ceremony should be performed with at least two witnesses present who can confirm that it took place.

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