



The Taliesin Tradition

with
Dr Gwilym Morus-Baird

September 13th - October 18th

The Taliesin myth is one of Britain's oldest surviving traditions. With its roots in the Celtic Iron Age it continues to flourish to this day as a central part of Welsh language culture, modern paganism and druidry. The main sources for this tradition include some of the oldest, most mystical and intriguing poems of the Welsh bardic tradition, as well as some of the better known folk stories of Wales. By examining these sources in detail, this course explores the evolution of this venerable mythology; what is essentially the oldest surviving evocation of a native British priesthood.

Week 1 (13.9). From Druids to Bards

Beginning in the Celtic Iron Age, this session follows the evolution of the Brythonic priest class through the Roman period, into the Early and High Middle Ages. Along the way we will follow the development of the Welsh bardic tradition, beginning with the historical Taliesin in the 6th century and ending with the bardic nobility of 12th century Wales.

Week 2 (20.9). The Chief Bards: Cynddelw Brydydd Mawr and Prydydd y Moch

From the 11th century onwards, we see the chief bards of Wales not only serving the Welsh aristocracy, but also evoking the Taliesin mythology in poetry and performance, as suggested in the poem *Angar Kyfundawt*.

Week 3 and 4 (27.9 - 4.10). Poems from The Book of Taliesin

The Book of Taliesin gives a rare glimpse of the esoteric culture of the medieval Welsh bards. Week 3 and 4 are dedicated to interpreting the more important poems from the book, including *Prif Gyuarch Geluyd*, *Buarth Beird*, *Kat Godeu*, *Mabgyfreu Taliessin*, *Mydwyf Merweryd*, *Kadeir Teyrnnon*, *Kadeir Kerrituen*, *Preideu Annwfn*.

Week 5 (11.10). The Later Tradition: Poetry 1300 - 1600

The Late Middle Ages saw the slow transformation of the Welsh bardic guilds. As Welsh society changed under English occupation, so too did Welsh bardic culture. During this period the Taliesin myth was taken up by a new generations of bards.

Week 6 (18.10). The Later Tradition: Folklore 1500 - 1900

The Taliesin mythology persists into the modern era as part of Welsh folk culture. The story of Taliesin and Ceridwen was once common throughout Wales. By comparing the different versions of the story with the earlier material from the course, this session looks at the shape of the tradition as it's passed onto us today.

Practicalities

The course will be held on a Sunday evening, beginning at 7:30pm and aiming to finish by 9pm. We'll be using Zoom, so please download from zoom.us and get it up and running if you haven't already. There will also be additional materials provided on a private web-page. This includes supplemental video material (no more than 15 minutes) to watch before each session, mainly readings of the original Welsh texts as well as notes on their form and structure.

All of the materials needed for this course will be provided. It's not necessary to buy any books, but if you do want to buy one of the main texts please get yourself a copy of *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (CMCS 2015) edited by Marged Haycock. It's currently out of print so only second hand copies are available.

Unless you have already, please follow the free *Taliesin Origins* video course before we begin. If you want a refresher, you can find all of the videos and related materials listed on this page:

<https://celticsource.online/taliesin-origins-course-page>

It's not essential, but it will give you a firm foundation and ensure you get the most out of this course.

Course Fee

The course fee is £80 and should be paid in full when booking your place or at least before we begin on September 13th. There are a limited number of places so please do make sure you book early. I

f you need to pay in installments, please get in touch. If you are on a low income, there are a limited number of discounted places for those who need them.

If you are outside of the UK, please pay via Paypal: gwilmor@gmail.com

If you live inside the UK, please pay via bank transfer:

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Dr Gwilym Morus-Baird

. . . studied Medieval Welsh Literature at Bangor, specialising in the Welsh Bardic Tradition. Since then he has taught many courses, modules and workshops on the subject, including his now long-running online course on *The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. In more recent years he has been developing a series of online lectures called *Celtic Source*. He is also a musician and storyteller.