



## **The Taliesin Tradition**

with Dr Gwilym Morus

Beginning March 20th at The White Lion, Machynlleth.

Taliesin is one of the most renowned figures in Welsh folklore, his tale told for over a thousand years the length and breadth of Wales. But how did he become the mythical bard? What does his myth mean and how did it develop? What is the real meaning of the peculiar and esoteric poems recorded in *The Book of Taliesin*? What is his connection with the Cletwr Valley and St Cynddylan?

This short course will attempt to answer these questions as well as many others regarding Taliesin. By working directly with the medieval texts, Dr Gwilym Morus will guide participants through the labyrinthine twists and turns of the Taliesin tradition, separating out its different historic and mythic strands, giving deeper insight into the practices of the medieval Welsh bards and their use of mythology.

### *Course Outline*

#### Week 1 - *The Book of Taliesin* and the historic poems.

*The Book of Taliesin* is the primary source for Taliesin poetry. This medieval manuscript records not only the very early 6<sup>th</sup> century poems composed by the historic Taliesin but also the legendary and prophetic poems composed by later bards working in his voice. In the first part of this seminar we will look at the manuscript as a whole, its background, context and possible use. In the second part we will look at current research into the historic Taliesin, with particular focus on what his poems tell us about 6<sup>th</sup> century Britain.

#### Week 2 - The Taliesin myth in medieval Welsh poetry: Prydydd y Moch.

Many generations of Welsh bards have included aspects of the Taliesin myth in their poetry. By looking at the most important examples this session will consider what the Taliesin myth meant to the medieval bards and how it informed their own practice of myth making. We will focus in particular on Prydydd y Moch, one of the greatest Welsh bards of his time who served the royal house of Gwynedd as chief bard between 1174 and 1220. He is also closely associated with several poems in *The Book of Taliesin*, an association

that gives a rare insight into the less formal activities of court bards.

Week 3 - 'Angar Kyfundawt' and other poems from *The Book of Taliesin*.

'Angar Kyfundawt' is the longest poem found in the *The Book of Taliesin*, and also one of the most intriguing. Possibly composed by Prydydd y Moch himself, this poem contains many themes closely related to the Taliesin myth. By also referring to some of the other legendary and prophetic poems from the manuscript this seminar will sift out their relevant features and what they tell us about the Taliesin Tradition.

Week 4 - The Tale of Taliesin, the Cletwr Valley and Saint Cynfelyn

The Tale of Taliesin was first written down in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By comparing and contrasting the different manuscript versions the core elements of the myth will be brought into view. Taliesin is also associated with Taliesin's Grave, the Cletwr Valley and St Cynfelyn, associations that could have important implications for our understanding of the mythical bard.

The course consists of 4 x 2 hour seminars, held once a week at The White Lion, Machynlleth. The first session will be held on March 20th at 7pm and then will run every Thursday evening until April 10th.

The course fee is £30 for all four seminars; this covers participation, all course materials and access to the course tutor via e-mail. All texts discussed will be provided in their Welsh original with an English translation. If you can't come to all the seminars you're welcome to join some of them for a reduced fee, although priority will be given to full participants as there are only limited places available.

To register your place, please email [welshmythology@gmail.com](mailto:welshmythology@gmail.com). More information about Dr Gwilym Morus and his courses is available at the website [welshmythology.com](http://welshmythology.com)