

The textual history of *Trioedd y Meirch* (the Triads of the Horses)



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ABSTRACT

Trioedd y meirch (the triads of the horses) make up a coherent sub-group within the corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, or the Triads of the Island of Britain. Ten texts of *trioedd y meirch* survive from between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries; this article seeks to better understand the transmission and development of these texts. It identifies five main versions of *trioedd y meirch* which circulated within Wales during the medieval period and argues that the corpus as it survives today represents the contributions of the many scribes and copyists who encountered this material over a period of centuries and must be understood in its written context. This article also considers *trioedd y meirch*'s relationship to *Canu y Meirch*, a poem which survives in the Book of Taliesin (NLW Peniarth 2) and develops a relative chronology for the development of the expanded narrative triad *Tri marchlwyth Ynys Prydain* ('Three horse-burdens of the Island of Britain', *TYP* no. 44).

WHILE THE TRIADIC FORM is not unusual anywhere in the world as a literary or organizational device, triads seem to have been a particularly popular and fruitful way to organize and transmit cultural inheritance in medieval Wales (and, to a lesser extent, its neighbour Ireland).¹ Triads in medieval Welsh survive in manuscripts from the thirteenth century onward pertaining to a wide variety of disciplines and subjects. Questions about the origin and purpose of these triads persist but it is clear that the form was integral to scholarship in medieval Wales and to the Welsh learned class. Collections of triads survive from the earliest manuscripts onward pertaining to the fields of law (*trioedd cyfraith*), poetic composition (*trioedd cerdd*), proverbs or gnomes (known in later medieval Wales as *trioedd Taliesin*), and medicine, as well as in a text known as *Y Trioedd Arbennig* ('the Principal Triads'), which lists the 'three principal ones' (*tri un arbennig*), 'three principal twos' (*tri dau arbennig*), 'three principal threes' (*tri thri arbennig*), and so on up to the 'three principal tens' (*tri deg arbennig*).²

¹On the triadic form overall, see Fergus Kelly, 'Thinking in threes: the triad in early Irish literature', *PBA* 125 (2003), 1–18 and Morfydd E. Owen, 'Welsh triads: an overview', *Celtica* 25 (2007), 225–50.

²For an edition and discussion of the legal triads, see Sara Elin Roberts, *The Legal Triads of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2011); for an edition and discussion of the proverbial and gnostic triads, see Morfydd E. Owen, 'Trioed hefut yw yrei hynn', *Ysgrifau Berniadol* 14 (1988), 87–133; for an

One subset of these triads in medieval Welsh is the collection of closely-related texts known as *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. This collection is one of the richest sources of storytelling material, or *cyfarwyddyd*, that survives from medieval Wales. Although this corpus is well known, its development and transmission are not well understood. This article attempts to rectify that by re-visiting the medieval corpus of *trioedd y meirch* (the triads of the horses), one of the most studied and best understood sub-groups within the corpus.³ I hope, in doing so, to demonstrate how much can be gleaned about *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* from a granular reading of all its surviving versions.⁴

To date, *trioedd y meirch* are the only part of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* that have been discussed as a coherent sub-section with its own transmission history.⁵ Horse triads appear in ten medieval texts of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* where, with only a few exceptions, they are always grouped together.⁶ In three texts, these triads are marked off with their own heading.⁷ In other cases, however, *trioedd y meirch* are simply included as a block in the collection without any indication

edition and discussion of *Y Trioedd Arbennig*, see Morfydd E. Owen, 'Y trioedd arbennig', *BBCS* 24 (1972), 434–50. For a discussion of the poetic triads, see Paul Russell, 'Poetry by numbers: the poetic triads', in Deborah Hayden and Paul Russell (eds), *Grammatica, Gramadach, and Gramadeg: Vernacular Grammar and Grammarians in Medieval Ireland and Wales* (Amsterdam, 2016) and cf. Ann Matonis, 'The concept of poetry in the Middle Ages: the Welsh evidence from the bardic grammars', *BBCS* 36 (1989), 1–12. There is a dearth of scholarship on the medical triads, but Diana Luft has cautioned that they are likely the work of the nineteenth-century forger Iolo Morgannwg (*Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, vol. I: *The Recipes* (Cardiff, 2020), 7).

³For the purposes of this project, I have constrained myself to texts of *trioedd y meirch* and *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* dating to up to c. 1600; this is what I mean when I refer throughout this article to 'the corpus' or 'the medieval corpus'. *Trioedd y meirch* and the rest of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* continued to be copied into manuscripts into the nineteenth century, however. These early modern and modern texts are discussed in Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: Triads of the Island of Britain*, 4th ed. (Cardiff, 2014), xxxi–lii. Like their medieval counterparts, they deserve a detailed reconsideration, which I hope to return to in the future.

⁴I use the terms 'text(s)', 'version(s)', and 'manuscript(s)' to refer to various aspects of the *trioedd y meirch* corpus throughout this article. Since these are easily elided it will be useful to define them here: I use 'manuscript(s)' to indicate whole books, which survive in archives today (e.g. the Red Book of Hergest or NLW Peniarth 16) and 'text(s)' to refer specifically to the parts of those manuscripts which contain material pertaining to *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* and/or *trioedd y meirch*; individual texts survive within individual manuscripts. 'Version(s)', on the other hand, indicates a group or family of multiple texts which share a line of transmission (e.g. Version 1, Version 2, etc. and similar to Rachel Bromwich's use of 'Early Version' and 'White and Red Version', discussed presently).

⁵This is almost entirely the work of Rachel Bromwich. See Rachel Bromwich, 'Triads of the horses,' in Sioned Davies and Nerys Ann Jones (eds), *The Horse in Celtic Culture: Perspectives from Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 1997), 102–20 and Rachel Bromwich, *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: Triads of the Island of Britain*, 4th ed. (Cardiff, 2014), lxxx–lxxxvii. Marged Haycock's comments on *trioedd y meirch* are cited below, pp. 234–5, especially n. 48.

⁶The exceptions to this grouping are some witnesses to the expanded triad *Tri Marchlwyth* ('Three horse-burdens', *TYP* no. 44), which in a few cases appears mixed in with other triads (see below, p. 241), the witnesses to *Tri gohoyw eddystr* ('Three sprightly steeds', *TYP* no. 42) which appear at the end of the texts in *Y Diarebion Camberäec*, BL Add 15047, and NLW 6434 (see below, pp. 232–3), and Cardiff Central Library 2.26's witness to *Tri rhoddedigfarch* ('Three bestowed horses', *TYP* no. 38), which appears without other horse triads. Cardiff 2.26 does not otherwise contain horse triads.

⁷These headings appear at NLW Peniarth 4 (White Book of Rhydderch), fol. 57r; Oxford, Jesus College 111 (Red Book of Hergest), fol. 146r; and NLW Peniarth 47, p. 24.

that they are different from the other triads. Modern scholarship has tended to imbue them with gravitas and a patina of antiquity, owing, at least in part, to the fact that a fragment of four horse triads survives in the thirteenth-century Black Book of Carmarthen (NLW Peniarth 1), the earliest surviving manuscript written entirely in Welsh. Another obvious reason why *trioedd y meirch* have been seen as a cohesive unit is that they are clearly related to each other on thematic grounds – with a few exceptions, the triads of the horses are indeed about horses. While it was possible for *trioedd y meirch* to circulate independently from the rest of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, they remain a subset of that larger triadic type, which was designed to transmit *cyfarwyddyd*, and should not be considered their own triadic genre.⁸

Nothing can be written about *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* without acknowledging the work of Rachel Bromwich, whose volume *Trioedd Ynys Prydain: The Triads of the Island of Britain* comprises an edition and textual analysis of the corpus.⁹ It is the most complete and influential work on these triads to date. That being said, Bromwich's approach now seems rather dated from our vantage point over sixty years after the volume's initial publication. Bromwich emphasized the origin and early history of the corpus in her work – subjects that, at best, can only be discussed with educated guesses. As a consequence, the later transmission and development of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* have received considerably less notice.

This is not to say that Bromwich paid no attention to this subject. Indeed, she identified two primary strands of transmission for the corpus, which she called the 'Early' version and 'White and Red' version respectively. Unfortunately, the situation is more complicated than Bromwich fully reckoned with and these versions are somewhat inadequate for explaining the transmission of the corpus in the later medieval period.¹⁰ Still, these terms remain useful for discussing texts that survive in manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Indeed, as I will discuss below, there are clear differences between texts of *trioedd y meirch* found in NLW Peniarth 16 and those which descend from it (i.e. the 'Early' version or what I call Version 2 of *trioedd y meirch*) and the versions found in the White Book of Rhydderch, Red Book of Hergest, and manuscripts descended from them (i.e. the 'White and Red' version or what I call Version 3).

THE TRANSMISSION HISTORY OF *TRIOEDD Y MEIRCH*

I have identified three types of triads within the larger corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*: 'epithet + three names' formula-type triads, partially expanded triads, and fully expanded triads.¹¹ The horse triads are united by a slight alteration

⁸It follows from this that I differentiate in this article between *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, which is a title and a proper noun, and *trioedd y meirch*, which I treat as a common noun.

⁹This volume was first published by the University of Wales Press in 1961, with subsequent editions in 1978, 2006, and 2014. Citations throughout this article are to the fourth (2014) edition.

¹⁰I hope to publish my work on this issue in the future.

¹¹While the 'epithet + three names' formula is very strict, defining 'partially expanded' and 'fully expanded' triads is not an exact science. Broadly, I define 'fully expanded' triads as those

to the 'epithet + three names' formula, which usually consists of a title and three limbs containing only three personal names and their patronyms without any padding or supplemental narrative information.¹² In *trioedd y meirch*, by contrast, we are given the personal name of each horse as well as the name and patronym of its owner, so the formula becomes '[horse's name] *march* [owner's personal name] *mab* [owner's patronym]'.¹³ For the most part, *trioedd y meirch* adhere strictly to this formula, though there is certainly room for expansion and innovation. One example of innovation is the long, expanded triad *Tri marchlwyth* ('Three horse-burdens,' *TYP* no. 44), which I will discuss at length in the second part of this article.

In one version of *trioedd y meirch* – Version 2 – *Tri marchlwyth* is followed by the two triads within the *trioedd y meirch* corpus which diverge from the horse theme: *Tri phrif ychen* ('Three principal oxen', *TYP* no. 45) and *Tair prif fuch* ('Three principal cows', *TYP* no. 46). These triads may not be about horses, but they do not stray from the topic of beasts of burden. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is a substantive difference between these final three triads in this version of *trioedd y meirch* and those that precede them in Version 2, all of which conform to the *trioedd y meirch* formula. This difference, combined with the fact that *Tri phrif ychen* and *Tair prif fuch* do not appear in manuscripts associated with the other strands of transmission – namely, Versions 1 and 3 – leads to the conclusion that these three triads are later innovations which were not written until after the divergence of these two strands. Furthermore, two more additional, otherwise unknown triads appear in NLW Peniarth 47.¹⁴

This variation makes it clear, therefore, that *trioedd y meirch* were not seen as sacred or untouchable by scribes of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries and that at least some of these men had no more compunctions about making changes and additions to them than any other part of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*.

which are long enough to be considered short prose passages in their own right and contain a substantial amount of narrative material (examples include *Tri gwddfeichiad* ('Three powerful swineherds', *TYP* no. 26) and *Tri chyfor* ('Three levies', *TYP* no. 35)). 'Partially expanded' triads are the most varied in form of the three types – they are any triads which diverge from the strict 'epithet + three names' formula but do not rise to the level of 'fully expanded' triads (examples include *Tri unben Deifr a Brynaich* ('Three lords of Deira and Bernicia', *TYP* no. 10) and *Tri thaleithiog cad* ('Three diademed battle leaders', *TYP* no. 21). I hope to publish my work on these triad types in the future.

¹²I use the term 'epithet' to describe the words appearing in the title of each triad, following Bromwich, who defined and translated these often archaic and obscure words in her volume (she uses 'epithet' throughout, for instance, at *TYP* lxxviii). I use Bromwich's translations of these epithets as well as her numbering system (ie. *TYP* no. 38, *TYP* no. 39, etc.) to identify triads throughout this article.

¹³Compare, for instance, the 'epithet + three names' formula-type triad *Tri hael* ('Three generous men', *TYP* no. 2): '*Tri hael enys Prydein: Nud hael mab Senyllt, Mordaf hael mab Seruan, Ryderch hael mab Tudwal tutclyt*' (quoted from NLW Peniarth 16, fol. 50r, cf. Bromwich, *TYP* 5) to the *trioedd y meirch* formula in *Tri roddedigfarch* ('Three bestowed horses', *TYP* no. 38): '*Meinlas march Caswallon mab Beli, Melyngan mangre march Llew llaw gyffes, a Lluagor march Caradog freichfras*' (quoted from NLW Peniarth 16, fol. 52v, cf. Bromwich, *TYP* 103).

¹⁴These are *Tri roddedigfarch* ('Three bestowed horses', *TYP* no. 46A; not to be confused with the identically named and better-attested *TYP* no. 38) and *Tri rydegfarch* ('Three coursing horses', *TYP* no. 46B). For both see Peniarth MS 47, pp. 24–5 and cf. Bromwich, *TYP* 127.

That being said, it remains an open question how many of these changes can be credited to creative choices made deliberately and consciously by individual scribes in *trioedd y meirch*'s transmission history as opposed to simply being differences that came about naturally through the process of transmission, such as eyeskip or spelling errors. This is especially the case for names, which tend to be less familiar to and more difficult for scribes than other types of words. I will pay special attention to these questions in what follows.

Questions about the transmission history of *trioedd y meirch* are only intensified by the fact that the various versions of the horse triads, as they have come down to us in the surviving manuscripts, are especially fluid and variable, as Bromwich has noted, writing:

A comparison of the variant manuscript readings indicates that a considerable degree of confusion has taken place in transmission of these triads. Both the forms of the horses' names and the names of their owners are liable to differ in various versions of each triad. This in itself suggests that the confusion goes far back into the oral stage of transmission, and that the extant texts may be based on variant oral versions.¹⁵

I am inclined to agree with her that *trioedd y meirch* is likely to have initially circulated orally. If any text of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* is derived directly from oral tradition, the fragment of *trioedd y meirch* in the Black Book of Carmarthen is the likeliest candidate.¹⁶ I am led to this conclusion by this text's fragmentary nature, the fact that all of its four triads adhere to a strict 'epithet + three names' formula, which is indicative of a mnemonic device, and the significant difference in content between this and other versions of these triads, discussed below.¹⁷ Daniel Huws notes that the scribe probably drew from a mix of written and oral sources for his compilation.¹⁸

¹⁵Bromwich, *TYP* lxxxi.

¹⁶On the Black Book of Carmarthen, see Daniel Huws, 'Five ancient books of Wales,' in *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff, 2000), 65–83 at 70–2, Daniel Huws, *A Repertory of Welsh Manuscripts and Scribes, 800–1800*, 3 vols (Aberystwyth, 2022), i, 332–3, and the section by E. D. Jones on the manuscript in A. O. H. Jarman, *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Cardiff, 1982), xiii–xxiv).

¹⁷On mnemonic devices in medieval rhetoric and education, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990). The type of mnemonic device she describes at pp. 80–107 is especially reminiscent of 'epithet + three names' formula-type triads (see above, pp. 216–17, nn. 11, 12, 13). However, an argument against the conclusion of an oral source could be mounted from the fact that the text breaks off in the middle of *Tri gohoyw eddystr* and an unrelated text begins on the following folio. If these triads were written from memory, not copied from an already incomplete source, it is difficult to imagine the scribe stopping dead in the middle of a triad and moving on to another text. On the other hand, in light of Huws's points about the book's oversized script and its compilation over a long period, it becomes possible to imagine the scribe running out of room on the page – perhaps in the manner familiar to anyone who has ever written a 'happy birthday' card – wandering away, and coming back later with a mind to start in on a new poem, triads forgotten. Since these triads appear only on a recto and verso of a single manuscript leaf, it is also possible that pages which once held additional triads have been lost. Erased text beneath the triads on this page appears to be a comment by a later reader and not a continuation of the triads, see Myriah Williams, 'Studies in the Black Book of Carmarthen,' unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 175.

¹⁸Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts*, 72: 'And if the sources [of the Black Book compiler] were

That being said, I see no reason why these variations must go ‘far back’ into the oral tradition, as Bromwich claims. Indeed, it is possible to track the patterns of these differences in the surviving (written) corpus of *trioedd y meirch*; I have indicated those patterns in Table 1 (p. 220). The table shows which versions of each triad appears within which text.

The version from which each manuscript’s individual triads originated are indicated by the number (V1–V7) given for each. It may be useful to refer back to this table throughout the next part of this article. I have named the versions as follows:

- Version 1 = version found in the Black Book of Carmarthen
- Version 2 = version found in Peniarth 16 and related texts
- Version 3 = version found in the White Book of Rhydderch, the Red Book of Hergest, and related texts
- Version 4 = version found in Peniarth 47
- Version 5 = version found in Peniarth 27ii
- Version 6 = innovation made in the (b) text of Cwrtmawr 3
- Version 7 = innovation made in the (b) text of *Y Diarebion Camberaec*.

Given this large degree of variation, it is not difficult to see why Bromwich wrote that there was a ‘great deal of confusion’ when it came to *trioedd y meirch*, and maybe ‘confusion’ is one word for it. However, as I will discuss in the next section, it belies the fact that the differences which appear are consistent and correspond along lines of transmission.

THE VARIOUS TEXTS OF *TRIOEDD Y MEIRCH*

As the table above demonstrates, there were five written versions of the *trioedd y meirch* corpus in circulation by the fifteenth century, which I have called Versions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Two further versions – Versions 6 and 7 – represent more minor innovations in the late medieval or early modern period. I will briefly outline the five major versions before delving into all seven in more detail. Version 1, the version of *trioedd y meirch* found in the mid-thirteenth-century Black Book of Carmarthen (NLW Peniarth 1), is the earliest of these. The only surviving ‘pure’ version of Version 2 is found in NLW Peniarth 16, which is slightly later than the Black Book. It was clearly influential – horse triads derived directly from Version 2 continued to be copied throughout the sixteenth century.¹⁹ Versions 1 and 2 presumably share a common ancestor,

many, none of them yielding a large haul of poems, it is fair to ask: were they all written sources? Of our [five ancient books of Wales], the Black Book seems likeliest to contain a substantial proportion of poems which might derive directly from oral tradition. This likelihood is increased by the presence in the Black Book of several abbreviated texts and ‘floaters’, fragments of poems, some of them known elsewhere in fuller versions.’ This text of *trioedd y meirch* certainly falls into the ‘floater’ category.

¹⁹On Peniarth 16, see Bromwich, *TYP* xvi–xviii; Rachel Bromwich, ‘The historical triads: with special reference to Peniarth MS. 16’, *BBCS* 12 (1946), 1–5; Huws, *Repertory*, i, 340–1.

	BBC	P16	WBR	RBH	P47	P50	P51	P27ii
<i>Tri rhoddedigfarch</i> (TYP no. 38)	V1	V2	V2	V2	V4		V2	V5
<i>Tri phrif eddystr</i> (TYP no. 39)		V2	V2	V2	V2		V2	V5
<i>Tri anrheithfarch</i> (TYP no. 40)	V1	V2	V2	V2	V4	V2	V2	V5
<i>Tri gordderchfarch</i> (TYP no. 41)		V2	V3	V3	V4	V2	V3	V5
<i>Tri gohoyw eddystr</i> (TYP no. 42)	V1	V2	V3	V3	V4		V3	V5
<i>Tri thom eddystr</i> (TYP no. 43)	V1	V2			V4			V5
<i>Tri marchlwyth</i> (TYP no. 44)		V2		V3	V2	V2	V3	V5
<i>Tri phrif ychen</i> (TYP no. 45)		V2			V2	V2		
<i>Tair prif fuch</i> (TYP no. 46)		V2			V2	V2		
<i>Tri rhoddedigfarch</i> (TYP no. 46A)					V4			
<i>Tri rhydegfarch</i> (TYP no. 46B)					V4			

	Cwrt. 3(a)	Cwrt. 3(b)	DC(a)	DC(b)	BL(a)	BL(b)	NLW 6434	C 2.26
<i>Tri rhoddedigfarch</i> (TYP no. 38)	V2		V2		V2		V2	V2
<i>Tri phrif eddystr</i> (TYP no. 39)	V2		V2		V2		V2	
<i>Tri anrheithfarch</i> (TYP no. 40)	V2		V2		V2		V2	
<i>Tri gordderchfarch</i> (TYP no. 41)	V3		V2		V2		V2	
<i>Tri gohoyw eddystr</i> (TYP no. 42)	V3		V2	V7	V2	V7	V2	
<i>Tri thom eddystr</i> (TYP no. 43)			V2		V2		V2	
<i>Tri marchlwyth</i> (TYP no. 44)	V3	V6	V7		V2		V2	
<i>Tri phrif ychen</i> (TYP no. 45)			V2		V2		V2	
<i>Tair prif fuch</i> (TYP no. 46)			V2		V2		V2	
<i>Tri rhoddedigfarch</i> (TYP no. 46A)								
<i>Tri rhydegfarch</i> (TYP no. 46B)								

Table 1

which we may call Version *X. This is evident from the fact that all four triads found in the Black Book text also have witnesses in the Peniarth 16 text, though in all cases they show a great degree of textual variation.²⁰ Version 1 cannot be wholly unrelated to Version 2. Version *X may have circulated orally. As a written text, it may date as far back as the early thirteenth or late twelfth centuries.²¹ Subsequently, further innovations were made to Version 2 in manuscripts associated with the ‘White and Red’ version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* (first extant in White Book of Rhydderch, written in the mid-thirteenth century, and the Red Book of Hergest, written c. 1400), creating what I have called Version 3. This version contains three triads which are identical to Version 2 and three which appear in substantially different forms than they do in Version 2.

²⁰See discussion below, pp. 221–3.
²¹I can offer no concrete evidence for these dates, and they should be considered tentative, but I consider it likely that some version of *trioedd y meirch* was in circulation around this time on the basis that both the Black Book and Peniarth 16 date to around the middle of the thirteenth century. Since Peniarth 16 must have had a written exemplar (Bromwich, *TYP* xix), it seems likely that Version 2 was first written down by the second quarter of the thirteenth century. *Trioedd y meirch* were, presumably, circulating orally prior to that but, of course, the grounds for an earlier date become shakier and shakier the farther back one goes.

Two unique versions occur in NLW Peniarth 47 and NLW Peniarth 27ii, which I call Version 4 and Version 5, respectively. Both of these were written around the middle of the fifteenth century.²² The Peniarth 47 text represents a compilation of two earlier *trioedd y meirch* texts, one descended from Version 2 and the other a combination of Versions 1 and 3. The Peniarth 27ii text, on the other hand, does not seem to derive from Version 2 and appears to represent an otherwise-unknown version of *trioedd y meirch* descended from Version *X. The fact that the triadic text in Peniarth 27ii does not contain any non-horse triads lends even further interest; apparently it was possible, even as late as the middle of the fifteenth century, to find versions of *trioedd y meirch* circulating without their cousins in the larger corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* and in texts not directly related to Versions 2 or 3. Further, it is clear that it becomes more common for single horse triads to appear in books written in the sixteenth century, either amidst non-horse triads (as is the case in the text of Cardiff Central Library 2.26)²³ or as alternate versions of horse triads that appear elsewhere in the text (as is in the case in NLW Cwrtmawr 3, *Y Diarebion Camberäec*, and BL Add 15047).²⁴ A close reading of *trioedd y meirch* will demonstrate how I determined these relationships.

Version 1 (Black Book of Carmarthen) and Version 2 (NLW Peniarth 16)

There are two types of variations present in the *trioedd y meirch* corpus. The first type, in which the order of the names or limbs varies, is relatively common. Take, for instance, the case of *Tri anrheithfarch* ('Three horses of plunder', TYP no. 40):

TYP no. 40 Version 1 (BBC):

Tri anreith march Inis P[ri]dein:

Carnawlauc march Owein mab Vrien,

a Bucheslum Seri march Gugaun Cletywrt,

a Tauautir Breichir march Kadwallaun filius²⁵ *Katuan*.²⁶

²²On Peniarth 47, see Bromwich, *TYP* xxv–xxvi and Huws, *Repertory*, i, 356–7; on Peniarth 27ii, see Bromwich, *TYP* xxx and Huws, *Repertory*, i, 346–7.

²³On Cardiff 2.26, see Bromwich, *TYP* xxxii and Huws, *Repertory*, i, 537–8. See above, n. 6.

²⁴On Cwrtmawr 3, see Bromwich, *TYP*, xlix–l and Huws, *Repertory*, i, 21–2; a version of *Tri marchlwyth* ('Three horse-burdens', TYP no. 44) appears amidst non-horse triads on p. 55 and again on pp. 93–4; see discussion below, p. 245. On *Y Diarebion Camberäec*, see Bromwich, *TYP* xxxi–xxxviii (because this is a printed book, Huws does not include it in his *Repertory*); a version of *Tri gohoyw eddystyr* ('Three sprightly steeds', TYP no. 42) appears amidst non-horse triads on pp. 61–2. It is notable that this is the final *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* triad in this manuscript's text; it is immediately succeeded by *trioedd cerdd*. The same triad appears in the same position on fol. 63r of BL Add 15047. On BL Add 15047, see Bromwich, *TYP* xxxviii and Huws, *Repertory*, i, 645.

²⁵This and the example in *Tri thom eddystyr* ('Three steeds of burden', TYP no. 43), also in the Black Book and discussed presently, are the only times the Latin *filius* is used as a substitute for Welsh *mab* in the corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*.

²⁶The transcriptions and translations throughout this article are my own unless otherwise noted. I have endeavoured to reproduce each text exactly as it appears in its manuscript with the original orthographical conventions and any spelling errors intact. Corrections or additions by later hands appear in brackets with italics; any places I have made my own editorial interventions are noted by brackets without italics. Expansions of abbreviations are noted by italics without

‘Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:
 Carnaflog horse of Owain son of Urien,
 and Bucheslwm *Seri* [? ‘of the causeway’]²⁷ horse of Gwgon
Cletywrut [‘ruddy sword’],
 and Tafawtir *Breichir* [‘long arm’] horse of Cadwallon son of
 Cadfan.’

TYP no. 40 Version 2 (P16):

Tri anreinŏarch Enys Prydein:
 Carnaŏlaŏc march Ewein mab Vryen,
 a Thauaŏthir march Catwallaŏ[n] mab Catuan,
 a Bucheslom march Gwgawn Gledyfrud.

‘Three horses of plunder²⁸ of the Island of Britain:
 Carnaflog horse of Owain son of Urien,
 and Tafawtir horse of Cadwallon son of Cadfan,
 and Bucheslom horse of Gwgon *gledyfrud* [‘ruddy sword’].’

When one looks past the orthographic differences, it becomes apparent that although the names appear in different orders, these two versions of the triad contain substantially the same material aside from the fact that Version 1 provides Bucheslom with the epithet *seri*, which Version 2 omits.

The second type of variation occurs when the name in one of the limbs has been entirely swapped out with a different name. In these cases the material contained within the triad has been substantially altered. This is the case, for instance, in *Tri thom eddystr* (‘Three steeds of burden,’ *TYP* no. 43):

TYP no. 43 Version 1 (BBC):

Tri t[h]om etystir Inis Pridein:
 Arwul Melin march Passcen filius Vrien,
 a Du Hir Terwenhit *march* Selyw mab Kynan Garrvin,
 a Drudluid *march* Ryterch Hael.

(Three pack-horses of the Island of Britain:
 Arfwl²⁹ *Melin* [‘Huge the yellow’] horse of Pasgen son of
 Urien,

brackets. I have, however, added modern punctuation and capitalization. In terms of translation, I have made an effort to give as literal a translation of the Welsh as possible while presenting readable English. Welsh names have been modernized, but epithets that are often associated with particular figures are presented in the original Middle Welsh with translation in brackets.

²⁷The meaning of *seri* is uncertain. See Ifor Williams, ‘Nodiadau cymysg: *seri*,’ *BBCS* 11/3 (1944), 148–9; Bromwich, *TYP* 107–8; and *GPC* s.v. *seri*.

²⁸This is the translation of this triad’s epithet given by Bromwich (*TYP* 107) but it should be noted that this manuscript reads *anrein*, a nonsense word, and not the more usual *anreith* (‘plunder, spoils, treasure’).

²⁹On the meaning of *arfwl*, see Bromwich’s note at *TYP* 113.

and Du *Hir Terwenhit* ['tall Black the fierce'] horse of Selyf
 son of Cynan Garwyn,
 and Drudlwyd ['Bold brown'] horse of Rhydderch *Hael* ['the
 generous'].)

TYP 43 Version 2 (P16):

Tri thom edystyr Enys Prydein:

Du march Brwyn mab Kynadaf,
 ac Arŵl Gelyn march Pasken mab Gryn,
 a Rudlwyd march Rydderch Hael.

'Three generous steeds of the Island of Britain:

Du horse of Brwyn son of Cynaddaf,
 and Arfwl *Gelyn* ['Huge the yellow'] horse of Pascen son of
 Urien,
 and Rhuddlwyd ['Red brown'] horse of Rhydderch *Hael* ['the
 generous'].

While these two versions of *Tri thom edystr* have enough in common that there can be no doubt they are the same triad, the differences between the names preserved within each of them effectively mean that they refer to different versions of the tradition. Both Selyf fab Cynan Garwyn and Brwyn fab Cynaddaf, who are mentioned in the alternate versions of *Tri thom eddystr*, are also attested elsewhere in medieval Welsh *cyfarwyddyd*, especially in genealogies, and either one would have been a fine addition to the body of *trioedd y meirch*.³⁰ If we assume that *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* were meant to accurately preserve and transmit the storytelling material of medieval Wales, this kind of alteration could be seen as a clear example of their failing at their primary objective. On the other hand, it allows modern readers to see the process of transmission in action.

Version 3 (White Book of Rhydderch and Red Book of Hergest)

Both of these types of variation – that of order as well as content – between Versions 2 and 3 can be seen again in the comparison of the texts of *Tri gorderchfarch* ('Three lovers' horses', *TYP* no. 41) and *Tri gohoyw eddystr* ('Three sprightly steeds', *TYP* no. 42) in Peniarth 16 (Version 2) and the White Book (Version 3), respectively:

TYP no. 41 Version 2 (P16):

Tri gorderchŵarch Enys Prydein:

Ferlas march Dalldaf eil Cunin Cof,
 a Rudurych march Rahaŵt eil Morgant,
 a Gwelwgan Gohoeuwein march Moruran eil Tegit.

³⁰For Selyf fab Cynan Garwyn, see Bromwich, *TYP* 497. For Brwyn fab Cynaddaf, see Bromwich, *TYP* 294.

‘Three lovers’ horses of the Island of Britain:
 Fferlas horse of Dalldaf son of Cunin Cof,
 and Rhuddfrych horse of Rhahod son of Morgant,
 and Gwelwgan *Gohoewgein* [‘the splendidly beautiful’] horse
 of Morfran son of Tegid.’

TYP no. 41 Version 3 (WBR):

Tri gorderchuarch Ynys Brydein:
 Ferlas march Dalldaf eil Kunin,
 a Gwelwgan Goheŷgein march Keredic ap Gŷallaŷc,
 a Gŷrbrith march Raaŷt.
 Tri penuarch Ynys Brydein a dugant y tri marchlŷyth y mae
 eu henwi dracheuyn.

‘Three lovers’ horses of the Island of Britain:
 Fferlas horse of Dalldaf son of Cunin,
 and Gwelwgan *Goheŷgein* [‘the splendidly beautiful’] horse
 of Ceredig son of Gwallog,
 and Gwrfriith horse of Rhahod.
 Three packhorses of the Island of Britain who carried the three
 horse-burdens are those named above.’

TYP no. 42 Version 2 (P16):

Tri gohoew edystyr Enys Prydein:
 Llwyd march Alser mab Maelgwn,
 a Gŷineu Godwf Hir march Kei,
 a Chethin Carnaŷlaw march Idon mab Enyr Gŷent.

‘Three sprightly steeds of the Island of Britain:
 Llwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwn,
 and Gwinau *Godwf Hir* [‘long-necked’] horse of Cai,
 and Cethin *Carnaŷlaw* [‘the cloven-hoofed’] horse of Iddon
 son of Ynyr Gwent.’

TYP no. 42 Version 3 (WBR):

Tri thom edystyr Ynys Brydein:
 Gŷineu Gŷdŷf Hir march Kei,
 a Grei march Edwin,
 a Llwyd march Alser ap Maelgŷn.

‘Three steeds of burden of the Island of Britain:
 Gwinau *Gŷdŷfhir* [‘the long-necked’] horse of Cai,
 and Grai horse of Edwin,
 and Llwyd horse of Alser ap Maelgwn.’

It is clear that Version 3 of these triads has a very different transmission history from Version 2. Some of the differences are probably due to scribal misreadings or other types of corruption somewhere along the line of written transmission.

Others are more difficult to account for. Both triads substitute alternative names in at least one limb: Version 3's *Tri gordderchfarch* gives *Keredic uab Gôawllaôc* where Version 2 reads *Moruran eil Tegit* and *Gôrbrith* where Version 2 reads *Rudurych*; Version 3's form of *Tri gohoyw eddystr* gives *Grei march Edôin* where Version 2 reads *Cethin carnôlaw march Idon mab Enyr Gwent*. This later triad is alternatively titled *Tri thom eddystr* in Version 3, itself a significant difference.

It is possible that the scribe who expanded Version 2 to create Version 3 drew on written versions of *Tri godderchfarch* and *Tri gohoyw eddystr* which ultimately derived from oral tradition – I am thinking here of seemingly arbitrary differences, like the substitution of *Gôrbrith* for *Rudurych* or *Grei* for *Cethin carnawlaw*, which *could* have arisen from oral transmission – but I see no reason to conclude that they came wholesale, and exactly as we have them, from oral tradition. Indeed, as I have already noted, other differences between Versions 2 and 3 may be put down to scribal errors, indicating written transmission. Elsewhere in the 'White and Red' version, triads have often been discreetly expanded, not completely re-written; the changes made to triads in Version 3 do not follow this pattern.³¹ It is possible to speculate, though no concrete evidence is likely to come to light, that Version 3 represents the melding of Version 2 with another, otherwise unattested version we may call Version *Y. Even if this hypothetical exemplar is not accepted, it seems difficult to escape the conclusion that the 'White and Red' version of *trioedd y meirch* (that is, Version 3) was compiled, re-written, and/or developed by a different individual from the one who expanded triads elsewhere in the 'White and Red' version.

It is notable, furthermore, that the two triads that I already identified above as departing from the other *trioedd y meirch* on stylistic grounds – *Tri phrif ychen* ('Three principal oxen', *TYP* no. 45) and *Tair prif fuch* ('Three principal cows', *TYP* no. 46) – do not appear in Version 3.³² Therefore, Versions 2 and 3 must have diverged before the composition of these triads, that is, before Peniarth 16 was written around the middle of the thirteenth century.

Version 4 (NLW Peniarth 47) and Version 5 (NLW Peniarth 27ii)

The already complex situation becomes even more complex when we turn to the unique versions of *trioedd y meirch* found in Peniarth 47 (Version 4) and Peniarth 27ii (Version 5). Both of these manuscripts date from the mid-fifteenth century. Each presents its own problems. It becomes clear that there was no 'standard' version of *trioedd y meirch* by this period, and that the texts in circulation were extremely fluid.

At first glance, Version 4 appears to be the more straightforward of the two; it agrees with Version 2 in four of its ten triads (these are *Tri phrif eddystr* ('Three chief steeds', *TYP* no. 39), *Tri marchlwyth* ('Three horse-burdens', *TYP*

³¹See my discussion of this phenomenon in Celeste L. Andrews, 'Three Powerful Swineherds of the Island of Britain: the development and transmission of *Tri gwrddfeichiad Ynys Prydain* (*TYP* 26)', *CMCS* 87 (Summer 2024), 79–104, at 96–7.

³²See discussion above, p. 217.

no. 44), *Tri phrif ychen* ('Three principal oxen', *TYP* no. 45), and *Tair prif fuch* ('Three principal cows', *TYP* no. 46)) while the rest are unique either in their order or their content, or both. This leads naturally to the initial conclusion that Version 4 represents a substantially reworked version of *trioedd y meirch* which was ultimately descended from Version 2. However, a closer look at the text's unique triads shows that they are much closer to either Versions 1 or 3 and that none of these triads seem to derive from Version 2. This can be demonstrated by comparing two triads from Version 4 to their counterparts in Versions 1, 2, and 3. First, take the example of *Tri gohoyw eddystr* ('Three sprightly steeds', *TYP* no. 42):

TYP no. 42 Version 4 (P47):

Tri gohoyó edestyr Ynys Prydein:

Meinlas march Kaswallaón mab Beli,

a Grei march Etwin,

a Llóyt march Alsych mab Maelgón.

'Three sprightly steeds of the Island of Britain:

Meinlas horse of Caswallon son of Beli,

and Grai horse of Edwin,

and Llwyd horse of Alsych son of Maelgwn.'

TYP no. 42 Version 1 (BBC):

Tri gohoev etystir Inis Pridein:

Guynev Godvffhir march Kei,

Ruthir Ehon Tuthbleit march Gilbert mab Kadgyffro,

a Keincaled march Gualchmei.

'Three sprightly steeds of the Island of Britain:

Gwinau *Godvffhir* ['long-necked'] horse of Cai,

Rhuthr *Ehon Tuthbleid* ['fearless Rhuthr trotting-wolf'] horse

of Gilbert son of Cadgyffro,

and Ceingaled horse of Gwalchmai.'

TYP no. 42 Version 2 (P16):

Tri gohoew edystyr Enys Prydein:

Llwyd march Alser mab Maelgwn,

a Góineu Godwffhir march Kei,

a Chethin Carnaólaw march Idon mab Enyr Góent.

'Three sprightly steeds of the Island of Britain:

Llwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwn,

and Gwinau *Godwffhir* ['long-necked'] horse of Cai,

and Cethin *Carnaflaw* ['cloven-hoofed'] horse of Iddon son of

Ynyr Gwent.'

TYP no. 42 Version 3 (WBR):

Tri thom edystyr Ynys Brydein:
 Góineu Góðófhir march Kei,
 a Grei march Edwin,
 a Lluyd march Alser ap Maelgón.

‘Three steeds of burden of the Island of Britain:
 Gwinau *Góðófhir* [‘long-necked’] horse of Cai,
 and Grai horse of Edwin,
 and Llwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwn.’

It is clear that Version 4 of this triad is more closely related to Version 3 than it is to Versions 1 or 2. Indeed, there is virtually no overlap in either content or order between Version 4 and Version 1. On the other hand, despite the incongruous substitution of *Meinlas* for *Góineu*, who appears in every other version of this triad, Version 4 agrees with Version 3 over Version 2 in its order and its use of *Grei*, Edwin’s horse, in the second limb.³³ The opposite is the case, however, when we turn to *Tri anrheithfarch* (‘Three horses of plunder’, *TYP* no. 40):

TYP no. 40 Version 4 (P47):

Tri anreithuarth Ynys Prydein:
 Canaóthar march Catwallaón mab Catuan,
 a Bacheslóm Serch march Gógaón Gleifrud,
 a Charnaflaóc march Owein mab Vryen.

‘Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:
 Canawthar horse of Cadwallon son of Cadfan,
 and Bacheslwm *Serch* [? ‘of desire’]³⁴ horse of Gwgon *Gleifrud*
 [‘ruddy-sword’],
 and Carnaflog horse of Owain son of Urien.’

TYP no. 40 Version 1 (BBC):

Tri anreith march Inis P[ri]dein:
 Carnawlauc march Owein mab Vrien,
 a Bucheslum Seri march Gugaun Cletywrt,
 a Tauautir Breichir march Kadwallaun filius *Katuan*.

‘Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:
 Carnaflog horse of Owain son of Urien,
 and Bucheslwm *Seri* [? ‘of the path’]³⁵ horse of Gwgon
Cletywrt [‘ruddy-sword’],

³³One difference between Versions 4 and 3 – Version 4’s reading of *Allych* where Version 3 has *Alser* – seems likely to be due to a scribal error or another form of textual corruption.

³⁴This appears to be a misreading or error for *seri*; *serch* is a much better attested word in Middle Welsh than *seri*.

³⁵See above, n. 27.

and Tafodir *Breichir* ['long-arm'] horse of Cadwallon son of Cadfan.'

TYP no. 40 Version 2 (P16):

Tri anreinŏarch Enys Prydein:

Carnaŏlaŏc march Ewein mab Vryen,
a Thauaŏthir march Catwallaŏ[n] mab Catuan,
a Bucheslom march Gwgawn Gledyfrud.

'Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:

Carnaŏlog horse of Owain son of Urien,
and Tafawtir horse of Cadwallon son of Cadfan,
and Bucheslom horse of Gwgon *Gledyfrud* ['ruddy sword'].'

TYP no. 40 Version 3 (WBR):

Tri anreithuarch Ynys B[ry]dein:

Karnaŏlaŏn march Ywein ap Vryen,
a Thauaŏt Hir march Katwallaŏn ap Ka[t]uan,
[a Buch]eslom march Gŏgaŏn Kledyfrud.

'Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:

Carnaŏlon horse of Owain son of Urien,
and Tafod Hir ['long tongue'] horse of Cadwallon son of
Cadfan,
and Bucheslom horse of Gwgon *Kledyfrud* ['ruddy-sword'].'

Again, Version 4 differs to some extent from every other version of this triad. No other version gives this reading of the horse's name in the third limb – a *Charnaŏlawc march Owein mab Vryen*, as opposed to the more usual *a Thauaŏthir* or other variants that start with *T-* and end in *-tir/thir*. However, Version 4 follows the order of Version 1 over the alternative order seen in Versions 2 and 3. Even more strikingly, Version 4 follows Version 1 in its reading of *Buchelsum serch* (> *Bucheslum seri*). As Bromwich notes, this is a tell-tale sign that it must be related to Version 1, the only other text to describe Bucheslwm thus.³⁶

To sum up, then, Version 4 seems to be closely related to Versions 1, 2, and 3 in turn. How can this puzzle be resolved? One part of the solution comes when we zoom out and examine the order in which the *trioedd y meirch* triads appear in Peniarth 47. The final four triads in the text are *Tri marchlwyth* (which we will return to presently), *Tri phrif eddystr*, *Tri phrif ychen*, and *Tair prif fuch* – the four triads that are derived from Version 2. This leads to the conclusion that the compiler of Version 4 (either the scribe of Peniarth 47, Siancyn ap Dafydd,³⁷ or one of his predecessors) added material from Version 2 after he had finished copying another exemplar. This other exemplar, which we may call Version *Z, appears to have been a compilation in its own

³⁶Bromwich, *TYP* 108.

³⁷On Siancyn, see Huws, *Repertory*, ii, 157.

right of Versions 1 and 3. *Tri rhoddedigfarch* ('Three bestowed horses', *TYP* no. 46A) and *Tri rhydegfarch* ('Three coursing horses', *TYP* no. 46B), the two *trioedd y meirch* unique to Version 4, appear to have been part of Version *Z. This exemplar compilation may have taken its Version 1 triads from a longer text than survives in the Black Book of Carmarthen, which included those two otherwise-unknown triads, although this can only be speculative. The proposed stemma of Version 4 is illustrated in Figure 1, below:

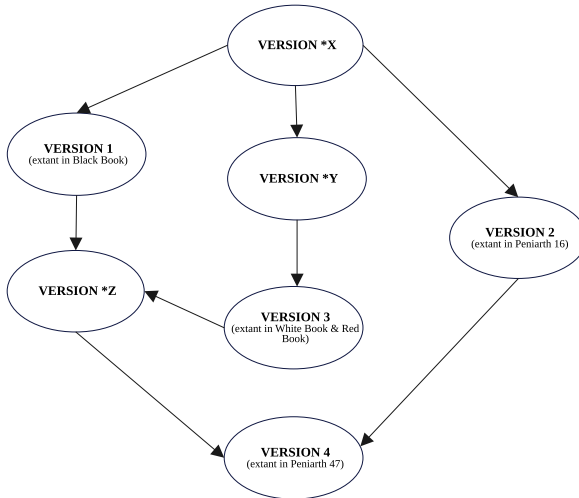


Figure 1: Stemma of Version 4 of *trioedd y meirch*

Interestingly, the unique version of *Tri marchlwyth* in Version 4 is more closely related to Version 3 in its first limb but more closely related to Version 2 in its second and third limbs. This may suggest that the scribe's Version *Z exemplar broke off in the middle of that long triad and he copied the rest from another text he had handy.³⁸ He may have noticed that this second exemplar (belonging to Version 2) included some triads not included in *Z and chose to supplement his new text with them. This not only suggests that the scribe of Version 4 had access to multiple exemplars of *trioedd y meirch* but also that Version 1 was circulating in writing at the time of this compilation.³⁹ Furthermore, Figure 1 above effectively illustrates that these manuscripts were being transmitted in what was effectively a closed, circular system. Versions of *trioedd y meirch* develop, diverge, and converge again but there is only so much material in circulation.

The affinities of Version 5 are even more diverse than those of Version 4. As I have already noted, the seven *trioedd y meirch* here make up the entirety of

³⁸Another implication of this observation is that, unlike Version 3 of *trioedd y meirch* found in the White Book and the Red Book, *Z would have included *Tri marchlwyth* among the other horse triads, instead of intermingled within non-horse *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* triads, as in the Red Book.

³⁹When exactly that time was is difficult to determine. The *terminus ante quem* is the middle of the fifteenth century, when Peniarth 47 was written, but how long before that manuscript's creation its version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* dates remains, for me, an open question.

Peniarth 27ii's text of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. None of the triads in Version 5 are unique to Version 5; versions of them all can be found in other texts of *trioedd y meirch*. What makes Version 5 a confounding member of the *trioedd y meirch* corpus, however, is that every triad in it differs in some way from its cousins in other manuscripts. Different aspects of Versions 1, 2, and 3 seem to appear in these triads, often in puzzling ways. Two, *Tri rhoddeddigfarch* ('Three bestowed horses', *TYP* no. 38) and *Tri phrif eddystr* ('Three chief steeds', *TYP* no. 39), contain all three of the names found in the other versions of these triads but appear in Version 5 in orders that do not match any other known texts of *trioedd y meirch*. Two others, *Tri thom eddystr* ('Three steeds of burden', *TYP* no. 43) and *Tri gohoyw eddystr* ('Three sprightly steeds', *TYP* no. 42), follow the order of Version 2 but give an alternate name in their third limbs. Meanwhile, the version of *Tri anrheithfarch* ('Three horses of plunder', *TYP* no. 40) found here follows the order of Version 1 and *not* the order of Version 2. Indeed, orthographic differences aside, Version 5 of *Tri anrheithfarch* is very similar to its counterpart in Version 1, except that Version 5 omits the adjectives Version 1 uses to describe the horses in its second and third limbs:

TYP no. 40 Version 1 (BBC):

Tri anreith march Inis P[ri]dein:

Carnawlauc march Owein mab Vrien,
a Bucheslum Seri march Gugaun Cletywrut,
a Tauautir Breichir march Kadwallaun filius *Katuan*

'Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:

Carnolog horse of Owain son of Urien,
and Bucheslom *Seri* ['of the path'] horse of Gwgon *Cletywrut*
['ruddy sword'],
and Tafodir *Breichir* ['long-arm'] horse of Cadwallon son of
Cadfan.'

TYP no. 40 Version 5 (P27ii):

Tri anrreithuarch Ynys Brydain:

Karnavlaw march Ywain ap Vrien,
a Bvchesdom march Gwgon Glededyfrvdd,
a Thauawyr march Gydwallawn ap Kadvan

'Three horses of plunder of the Island of Britain:

Carnaflo[g] horse of Owain son of Urien,
and Buches[l]om horse of Gwgon *Glededyfrvdd* ['ruddy
sword'],
and Tafo[t]ir horse of C[a]dwallon son of Cadfan.'

Finally, there is Version 5's *Tri gordderchfarch* ('Three lovers' horses', *TYP* no. 41). The second and third limbs of this triad both include names which are not found in any other version of this triad, *Arwlvrith* in the second limb where other versions read *Rudurych* or a variant and *Cornach arwch* in the

third limb where other versions read *Guelwgan gohoewgein* or a variant. Still, other elements of this triad remain relatively stable, sometimes appearing closer to Version 2 and sometimes appearing closer to Version 3:

TYP no. 41 Version 5 (P27ii):

[...] Arwlvrith march Kahawt ail Morgan, a Chornach Arwch
march Morvrynn ail Tegid.

‘[...] Arflfrith horse of [Rh]ahod son of Morgan, and Cornach
Arwch [‘of wrath’] horse of Morfryn son of Tegid.’

TYP no. 41 Version 2 (P16):

[...] a Rudurych march Rahaót eil Morgant, a Guelwgan Gohoew-
gein march Moruran eil Tegit.

‘[...] and Rhuddfrych horse of Rhahod son of Morgant, and Gwel-
wgan *Gohoewgein* [‘the splendidly beautiful’] horse of
Morfran son of Tegid.’

TYP no. 41 Version 3 (WBR):

[...] a Gwelwgan Goheógein march Keredic ap Góallaóc, a Górbri-
th march Raaót [...]

‘[...] and Gwelwgan *Goheógein* [‘the splendidly beautiful’] horse
of Ceredig son of Gwallog, and Gwrbrith horse of Rhahod
[...]

Version 5, then, appears to be a hodgepodge of Versions 1, 2, and 3. As is the case with Version 4, it seems likely that Version 5 was compiled from all three earlier versions of *trioedd y meirch*. The differences between Version 5 and its cousins are not as straightforward as additions or expansions of the sort an individual scribe would make for creative reasons; some triads in Version 5 have seen multiple accretions that probably took place over a long period of time, as several individuals brought their own knowledge of the *trioedd y meirch* corpus to bear on the text. The proposed stemma for this version is illustrated in Figure 2, below, which again demonstrates the circular nature of the transmission.

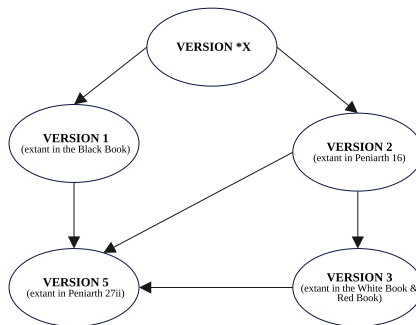


Figure 2: Stemma of Version 5 of *trioedd y meirch*

Perhaps the fact that Version 5 of *trioedd y meirch* escaped the clutches of the larger corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* allowed these changes to continue over a longer period of time than those that became part of the homogenizing process of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*'s transmission. No text that survives seems to be directly related to the one found in Peniarth 27ii, and so it stands alone as a reminder of the great variety and fluidity that was possible between versions of *trioedd y meirch* by the fifteenth century.

Version 6 (NLW Cwrtmawr 3(b)) and Version 7 (BL Y Diarebion Camberäec (b))
As the sixteenth century dawned in Wales, bringing with it the upheaval of the Reformation, the Dissolution, and the ultimate disintegration of the Welsh bardic order, a fundamental change occurred. *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* passed into the hands of humanist antiquarians who sought to preserve the *cyfarwyddyd* they had inherited; the scribes of triadic texts at this time were no longer active members of the community of *cyfarwyddiaid*. Two such mid-sixteenth-century texts of *trioedd y meirch* – the early printed book known as *Y Diarebion Camberäec* and NLW Cwrtmawr 3 (both compiled by William Salesbury) – contain duplicate triads which act as clues to their provenance. In the case of Cwrtmawr 3, the triad in question is the expanded triad *Tri marchlwyth*, discussed below.⁴⁰ I have designated this innovation as Version 6.

The relevant triad in *Y Diarebion Camberäec* is *Tri gohoyw eddystr* ('Three sprightly steeds', *TYP* no. 42). The first version of *Tri gohoyw eddystr* found in this book, like almost all the horse triads within *Y Diarebion Camberäec*, is basically identical to Version 2 and is straightforwardly descended from it:⁴¹

TYP no. 42 Version 2 (P16):

Tri gohoew edystyr Enys Prydein:

Llwyd march Alser mab Maelgwn,
a Góineu Godwf Hir march Kei,
a Chethin Carnaólaw march Iddon mab Enyr Góent.

'Three sprightly steeds of the Island of Britain:

Llwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwn,
and Gwinau *Godwf Hir* ['long-necked'] horse of Cai,
and Cethin *Carnaólaw* ['cloven-hooved'] horse of Iddon son
of Enyr Gwent.'

TYP no. 42 Version 2 (YDC #21):

Tri gohoivv eddestyr Ynys Brytain:

Llwyd march Alser 'ap Maelgwn,
Gwineu Gwddwhir march Syr Cei,
Cethin Carnawlaw march Iddon 'ap Eynyr Gwent.

⁴⁰See below, p. 245.

⁴¹I say 'basically identical' because the orthography in *Y Diarebion Camberäec*'s text has been modernized and Cai is referred to with the honorific 'Syr', which is not present in the Peniarth 16 text. The still later text in BL Add 15047 also refers to Cai as 'Syr Cai' and adds that he is *o Warrwig* ('from Warwick').

‘Three sprightly steeds of the Island of Britain:
 Llwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwn,
 Gwinau *Gwddwhir* [‘long-necked’] horse of Sir Cai,
 Cethin *Carnaflaw* [‘cloven-hooved’] horse of Iddon son of
 Ynyr Gwent.’

This triad appears a second time, however, away from the other horse triads in the text as its final *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* triad.⁴² This second witness to *Tri gohoyw eddystr* is what I call Version 7 or *Y Diarebion Camberäec* (b) in Table 1.⁴³ It follows Version 3 with a slight variation of the proper names in the triad’s second and third limbs. This variation is probably due to a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century scribe being more familiar with the name *Gregar* than *Grei* and mistaking a *Lluyd* (‘and Lluyd’) for a single word.⁴⁴ In the first limb, the epithet *hir* (‘tall’) has been attributed to Cai. It is not clear whether Version 7 followed Version 3 in titling this triad *Tri thom eddystr* (‘Three steeds of burden’)⁴⁵ – Salesbury omits the adjective modifying *eddestyr* in his title and *hoyw* (‘splendid’) has been added by a correcting hand. This innovation also appears in the sixteenth-century text of NLW MS 6434, which is a copy of *Y Diarebion Camberäec*.⁴⁶

TYP no. 42 Version 3 (WBR):
 Tri thom edystyr Ynys Brydein:
 Góineu Góððf Hir march Kei,
 a Grei march Edwin,
 a Lluyd march Alser ap Maelgón.

‘Three steeds of burden of the Island of Britain:
 Gwinau *Góððf Hir* [‘long-necked’] horse of Cai,
 and Grai horse of Edwin,
 and Llwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwn.’

TYP no. 42 Version 7 (YDC #37):
 Tri [*hoyw*] eddestyr Ynys Britain.
 Gwinau Gwddw-hir march Cai Hir,
 Gregar march Edwin,
 Ellwyd march Alser ap Maelgwyn.

⁴²Six *trioedd cerdd* follow before the text breaks off (on *trioedd cerdd*, see above, p. 214); the final page(s) of *Y Diarebion Camberäec* have been lost.

⁴³See above, p. 220.

⁴⁴To be clear, these two changes are not necessarily the work of William Salesbury himself and are more likely to have been in Salesbury’s exemplar. Along those same lines, both changes need not have been introduced by the same scribe or at the same time.

⁴⁵Not to be confused with *TYP* no. 43.

⁴⁶See Table 1 above, p. 220. On the relationship between *Y Diarebion Camberäec* and NLW 6434, see Bromwich, *TYP* xxxiv.

‘Three splendid steeds of the Island of Britain:
Gwinau Gwddw-hir [‘long-necked’] horse of Cai Hir [‘the tall’],
Gregar horse of Edwin,
Ellwyd horse of Alser son of Maelgwyn.’

Below, in Figure 3, I have set out a proposed stemma of all the surviving texts of *trioedd y meirch*. This is not meant to be exhaustive but is intended merely to illustrate how the surviving texts of *trioedd y meirch* are related to each other. Intervening ‘generations’ have almost certainly been lost along some or all of the lines. I have included exemplars that do not survive in the stemma only when it is necessary to account for a version’s relationship to two or more other versions. On a few occasions, involving the hypothetical Versions *Y and *Z, I have used dotted lines to indicate that I consider these connections to be more speculative than others.

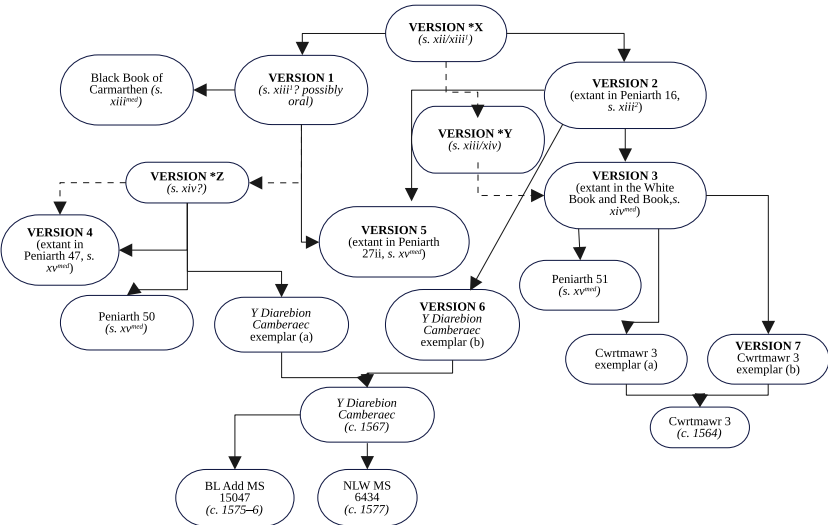


Figure 3: Stemma showing the relationship of the texts of *trioedd y meirch*

CANU Y MEIRCH (‘SONG OF THE HORSES’)

The final element to be discussed regarding *trioedd y meirch* is their relationship to the poem known as *Canu y meirch* (‘Song of the horses’), which survives in the thirteenth-century Book of Taliesin (NLW Peniarth 2). This poem is quite corrupt and difficult to understand, but it includes a list of horses’ names, many of which overlap with the names in *trioedd y meirch*. Bromwich writes that ‘a triadic arrangement is discernable throughout’ the list of names and that ‘obviously there exists a close connection between the poem and the extant versions of *Trioedd y Meirch*.’⁴⁷ However, Marged Haycock, who has edited

⁴⁷Bromwich, *TYP* lxxxiv.

the poem, disputes this argument, noting that although quite a few names do overlap between the poem and triads, the names of the horses and the names of their owners usually do not correspond between the two.⁴⁸ For my part, I will chart a path between these two opposing stances. In my view, the degree of overlap between names which appear in *trioedd y meirch* and those which appear in *Canu y meirch* is too great to be dismissed out of hand, especially in this run of lines towards the end of the horse list (all of the emphasized names appear in at least one text of *trioedd y meirch*):

... a march Taliesin, a march **Lleu** lletuegin, a 'Phebyrlllei' llwynin
a '**Grei**' march Cunin, '**Kornan**' kynheiwawc, '**Awyd**' awydawc.
'**Du Moroed**' enwawc, march **Brwyn** Bron Bradawc, a'r tri '**Carna-**
flaw' nyt ant hynt hilaw. '**Kethin**' march Keidaw, **karn aflaw**
arnaw, '**Yscwydurith**' yscodic gorwyd llemenic, march Ryderch
rydic, '**Llwyd**' lliw cellëic, a 'Llamrei llam elwic...'⁴⁹

'... and Taliesin's horse, and **Lleu**'s nurtured horse, and well-hung
'Strong Dun,' and Cunin's horse '**Grey**', '**Cornan**,' the support-
ive, '**Awydd**' the eager, Famous '**Black of the Seas**',⁵⁰ **Brwyn**
Crafty-Breast's horse, and the three '**Clefted**' [geldings] who'll
never go out to stud. Ceidio's horse '**Cethin**' with a cloven hoof,
skittish '**Dappeled Withers**', a bounding steed, wrathful Rhy-
dderch's horse, '**Grey**', stag-coloured, and 'Grey Leaper' with
useful leap...'⁵¹

I find it difficult to believe that it is a complete coincidence these names appear in both *trioedd y meirch* and *Canu y meirch*. Haycock's point that the horse names rarely correspond to owners which are attributed to them in *trioedd y meirch* is well taken, however. I am therefore led to the conclusion that the names of these horses were 'in the aether,' so to speak, of early thirteenth-century *cyfarwyddyd*. It seems unlikely that the triads were directly derived from the poem, or vice versa, but it seems very likely that *cyfarwyddiaid* of this period had access to a list of horse names – perhaps, as Bromwich thought, the names of the horses of Welsh legendary heroes, or perhaps merely names

⁴⁸Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin*, no. 15 (Aberystwyth, 2007), 387–8: 'The comparisons above do not suggest that our poet was necessarily drawing on the horse triads rather than on his own store of names. It is hard to discern the 'triadic arrangement' perceived in parts of the poem by Rachel Bromwich [...] Neither is it possible to fully endorse the view that 'obviously there exists a close connection between the poem and extant versions of *Trioedd y Meirch*. The triad-makers did not avail themselves of horse names in the poem [...] and conversely, neither did our poet make use of the information found in the extant triads. Where the same name occurs, the match between owner and horse does not correspond. It is also difficult to see how the assumed antiquity of the horse triads can be backed up by the Book of Taliesin poem which has no telling archaisms which require it to be dated before the twelfth or thirteenth century.' Cf. her concordance of the names between the poem and the *trioedd y meirch* corpus on the same pages.

⁴⁹Haycock, *Legendary Poems of the Book of Taliesin*, 15.35–51.

⁵⁰On this name, see Bromwich, *TYP* 119–20 and cf. below, p. 239, n. 60.

⁵¹Translation by Bromwich, *TYP* lxxxii.

that were typical for Welsh horses – and that both the poet of *Canu y meirch* and the author of the *trioedd y meirch* drew from the same source or similar sources.

Trioedd y meirch thus stands as a coherent sub-section of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* with thematic integrity and a unique transmission history which can – indeed, should – be discussed separately from the transmission history of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* overall. It seems likely that these triads circulated orally in their distant past, and the possibility of oral versions being passed in parallel to the written counterparts cannot be discounted, but the written transmission of *trioedd y meirch* dates back to at least the mid-thirteenth century and evidence of alternate spellings, scribal errors or otherwise, points to a robust history of copying.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF *TRI MARCHLWYTH YNYS PRYDAIN*

I have referred on several occasions already to the long, expanded horse triad *Tri marchlwyth* ('Three horse-burdens', *TYP* no. 44). In what follows, I will discuss this triad in more depth. It stands out from its fellow *trioedd y meirch* in two major ways: first, by virtue of being an expanded triad and, second, the fact that it appears apart from the other horse triads in manuscripts associated with the 'White and Red' version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* (that is, those texts which include Version 3 of *trioedd y meirch*). These facts alone make it worthy of further scrutiny and, when scrutiny is applied, it becomes clear that *Tri marchlwyth* has a transmission history that is distinct from that of its fellow *trioedd y meirch*. This study is very granular, focusing on how the details of the triad changed over time. These details are often tiny and, in the scheme of things, rather unimportant. However, by tracing the development of this expanded triad through its eleven surviving witnesses over ten manuscripts, certain patterns emerge which allow us to establish a relative chronology for its development and determine how the eleven versions of the triad are related to each other.

Tri marchlwyth belongs to the category of triads I call 'expanded narrative triads,' or those triads which diverge entirely from the 'epithet + three names' formula I discussed above.⁵² To recapitulate, 'expanded narrative triads' are very long (at least by triadic standards), contain a substantial amount of *cyfarwyddyd* relating to the figures named within the triad, and can be considered short prose passages in their own right. I have argued elsewhere that, unlike 'epithet + three name' formula-type triads, these expanded triads cannot have functioned as a mnemonic devices and are firmly tied to the written transmission of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. Furthermore, I argue, these triads should be considered authored texts.⁵³ *Tri marchlwyth* certainly demonstrates these characteristics.

⁵²See above, pp. 216–17, n. 11.

⁵³For this argument, see Andrews, 'Three Powerful Swineherds,' 81.

The earliest witness to *Tri marchlwyth* is the mid-thirteenth century text in Peniarth 16. Several additions have been made to the text when it re-appears, about a century and half later, in the Red Book of Hergest. These two versions of the triad read as follows:

*TYP no. 44 *X text (P16):*

Tri meir[*ch*] a dugant y tri marchlwyth:

Du Moro march Elidir Mwynôaôr, a duc a[r]naô seith nyn a hanner o Benllech yn y Gogled hyt ym Penllech y Mon. Sef seith nyn oedynt: Elidir Mwynôaôr, a Eurgein y wreic, merch Ewein Gwyned, a Gôynn Da Gyôet, a Gôyn Da Reinyat, a Mynach Naomon y gyghorwr, a Phrydelaô Menestyr y walloôyat, ac Aryanôagyl y was, a Gelbeineuin y goc a n[o]uyes a'e dwylaô ar bedrein y march, a hônnoô 6u hanner y dyn.

Er eil marchlwyth a duc Cornan march meibyôn Elifer, a duc Gôrgi a Pheredur arnaô, a Dunaôt ôwr, a Chynôelyn Drwsgyl, y edrych ar ôygedorth Gôendoleu Arderyd.

E trydyd marchaôelwyth [*sic*] a duc Heich march meibyôn Gôerthmôl Wledic, a duc Gôeir, a Gleis ac Arthanat yn erbyn allt ôaellwr yg Keredigyaôn yn dial eu tat.

'Three horses who carried the three horse-burdens:

Du Moro [Black of the seas?], the horse of Elidir *Mwynôaôr* ['the wealthy'], who carried upon himself seven and a half men from Penllech in the North as far as Penllech in Anglesey. These were the seven people: Elidir *Mwynôaôr*, and Eurgain his wife, the daughter of Owain Gwynedd, and Gwyn the good companion, and Gwyn the good cup-bearer, and Naomon the monk his counsellor, and Prydelaw the cupbearer his server, and Arianfagl his servant, and Gelbeinefyn his cook, who swam with both his hands on the crupper of his horse, and that was the half man.

The second horse-burden, which Cornan carried, the horse of the sons of Eliffer, who carried Gwrgi and Peredur upon him, and Dunod ôwr ['the stout/strong'], and Cynfelyn *Drwsgyl* ['the clumsy'], to look at the battle-fog of Gwenddolau [in] Arderydd.

The third horse-burden, which Haich carried, the horse of the sons of Gwerthmwl *Wledig*, who carried Gwair, and Glais, and Arthanad up the hill of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge their father.'

TYP no. 44 C² text (RBH):

Tri marchlôyth ynys Prydein:

Du y Moroed march Elidyr Môynuaôr, a duc seith nyn a hanner arnaô, o Bennllech Elidir yn y Gogled, hyt ym Pennllech Elidyr ym Mon. Sef seith nyn oedynt: Elidyr Môynuaôr, ac Eurgein uerch Vaelgôn y wreic, a Gôynn Da Gyued, a Gôyn Da Reiniat, a Mynach Naômon y gynghorôr, a Phetryleô Vynestyr y wallonyat, ac Aran Uagyl y was, ac Albeinyn y goc, a noeues a'e dôylaô ar bedrein y

uarch, a hōnnō uu hanner y dyn.

A'r eil marchlōyth a duc Coruann march meibon Eliffer gosgorduaōr, a duc Gōrgi a Phered[ur] arnaō, ac nys gordiwedaōd neb namyn Diuogat [sic] uab Kynan Garwynn y ar y Kethin Kyflym ac aruidiaōt ac aglot a gauas yr hynny hyt hediw, a Dunaōt Wr uab Pabo, a Chynuelyn Drōsgyl y edrych ar vygedor[t]h llū Gōendoleu yn Arderyd.

Y trydyd marchlōyth a duc Erch march meibon Grythmōl Wledic, a duc arnaō, Achleu ac Arthanat, yn erbyn riō Uaelaōr yg Keredigyaōn y dial eu tat.

‘Three horse-burdens of the island of Britain:

Du [Black] of the Seas, the horse of Elidyr Mōynuaōr, who carried seven and a half men upon himself from Penllech Elidyr in the North as far as Penllech Elidyr on Anglesey. These were the seven men: Elidyr *Mwynuawr*, and Eurgain daughter of Maelgwn his wife, and Gwyn the good companion, and Gwyn the good distributor(?)⁵⁴ and Nawmon the monk his counsellor, and Pedrylew the cupbearer his server, and Aranfagl his servant, and Albeinyh his cook, who swam with two hands on the crupper of his horse, and that was the half man.

And the second horse-burden, which was carried by Corfan the horse of the sons of Eliffer *Gosgorduawr* [‘of the large warband’], who carried Gwrgi and Peredur upon himself, and he did not overtake anyone except Di[n]ogad son of Cynan Garwyn on Cethin *Kyflym* [‘the swift’] and he received censure⁵⁵ and dishonour from then until today, and Dunod Fwr [‘the stout/strong’] son of Pabo, and Cynfelyn *Drōsgyl* [‘the clumsy’] to watch the battle-fog of Gwendoleu’s host in Arderyd.

The third horse-burden, which was carried by Erch the horse of the sons of Grythmwl *Wledic*, who carried upon himself Achlau and Arthanad, up the slope of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge their father.’

These are only two of the eleven total extant texts of *Tri marchlwyth* and they exist as the beginning and end, respectively, of a centuries-long process. A few of these differences – for instance, the change between *a duc a[r]naō seith nyn a hanner o Benllech* and *a duc seith nyn a hanner arnaō o Bennllech* – can be regarded as non-substantive changes that occurred during the normal processes of copying and re-copying. However, several other differences are substantial, adding to the content of the *cyfarwyddyd* being transmitted and, occasionally, altering it. In what follows, I will establish a relative chronology of this triad’s development through a comparison of all eleven of these versions. I will argue for the existence of several exemplars (which I have called *X, *Y,

⁵⁴See Bromwich’s note on this name at *TYP* 395.

⁵⁵Here I follow Bromwich in my translation of *aruidiawt*, an otherwise unattested word whose meaning is uncertain. See Bromwich, *TYP* 122.

*Z, *C¹, and *C², respectively) from which the surviving texts of *Tri marchlwyth* are descended.

The texts of the *X family are Peniarth 16 (s. xiii²), as well as *Y Diarebion Camberäec* (s. xvi^{med}) and BL Additional MS 15047 (s. xvi²). These two later texts of *Tri marchlwyth* are the only ones to agree with Peniarth 16, the earliest manuscript in the corpus, in almost all cases without showing any of the various changes which would be implemented down the line. Given that three centuries separate Peniarth 16 from the other *X-family texts, it seems likely that other texts preserving *X were created which have not survived.⁵⁶

Peniarth 16 must have belonged to a slightly different branch from that of *Y Diarebion Camberäec* and BL Add 15047, however. It is the only manuscript to claim that Elidir *mwynfawr*'s wife Eurgain was the daughter of the twelfth-century king Owain Gwynedd.⁵⁷ Every other version of this triad refers to Eurgain as 'the daughter of Maelgwn' (this is presumably the sixth-century king Maelgwn Gwynedd).⁵⁸ The genealogical text *Bonedd y Saint* also states that Eurgain was Maelgwn's daughter.⁵⁹ In light of all this, it seems likely that Peniarth 16's reading of *Owein Gwyned* reflects a mistake on the part of a copyist somewhere along the chain of transmission, perhaps because a scribe was familiar with the twelfth-century king Owain but not his legendary predecessor Maelgwn and made an effort to 'correct' the text.

Peniarth 16 also gives a unique reading of the name of the horse in the triad's first limb. In this manuscript, the horse's name is rendered *Du moro* while all other manuscripts give *Du moroedd*. I agree with Bromwich that the reading *Du moro* should be considered a corruption or mistake.⁶⁰ A comparison with the other surviving texts of *Tri marchlwyth* makes it clear that Peniarth 16's reading of the name is the outlier; every other text calls this horse *Du moroedd*.

Next, we come to the *Y text of *Tri marchlwyth*. This family saw a few changes made to the triad's text but has only one definite member, the text of Peniarth 27ii (s. xv^{med}).⁶¹ Apart from *X-family texts, every manuscript containing *Tri marchlwyth* adds the name *Elidir* to the placenames in the first sentence of the second limb, two places called Penllech Elidir, one *yn y Gogledd* ('in the North') and the other *y Mon* ('on Anglesey').⁶² This is presumably a

⁵⁶Note that these are the same texts of *trioedd y meirch* which belong to Version 1.

⁵⁷For this historical figure, see R. R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford, 1991), especially 48–9 and Chapter 3.

⁵⁸For Maelgwn Gwynedd, see Bromwich, *TYP* 428–32.

⁵⁹The relevant section of that text reads *Eurgein uerch Uaelgwn Gwyned m. Catwallawn Llawir m. Einiawn Yrth m. Cuneda Wledic* (Barry J. Lewis (ed.), *Bonedd y Saint: An Edition and Study of the Genealogies of the Welsh Saints* (Dublin, 2023), §57 (pp. 319–20)). It should be noted that *Bonedd y Saint* can often be found alongside *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*; it appears in Peniarth 16, Peniarth 45, the White Book of Rhydderch, and Peniarth 27ii.

⁶⁰Bromwich, *TYP* 119. She also includes a long note on the meaning of this name ('Black of the Seas') at 119–20.

⁶¹The second, condensed version of *Tri marchlwyth* found in Cwrtmawr 3 may also be descended from *Y but it is hard to be certain; this will be discussed in more detail below, p. 245.

⁶²This is the (Y) Benllech on Anglesey. Bromwich suggests (citing personal correspondence from Idris Foster) that 'Elidir' here could be derived from a borrowing of Irish *leitir* 'side of a hill,

reference to Elidir *Mwynfawr*, the owner of the horse in this limb.⁶³ *Y also sees the addition of the epithet *gosgorddfawr* ('great/large warband') to Eliffer, the man carried on the horse's back in the triad's second limb.⁶⁴

Two further changes were made in *Z, from which the text of Peniarth 47 is descended. Interestingly, both of these changes would remain somewhat fluid and not achieve their 'final form' until the *C² exemplar, still farther down the line. The first of these is the insertion of the preposition *yn* into the final sentence of the triad's second limb. All texts prior to *Z read *y edrych ar ōygedorth Gōendoleu Arderyd* (lit. 'to look at the battle-fog of Gwenddolau of Arderydd').⁶⁵ These are references to the battle of Arderydd and to Gwenddolau, a lord of the Old North who died in this battle.⁶⁶ As it stands in these early versions, this sentence is somewhat ambiguous and difficult to understand. It is not clear, unless one is already familiar with the story, that *Gwendoleu* is the name of the lord and *Arderyd* the name of the battle. *Z makes the small but important change of adding the preposition *yn*: *y edrych a'r vygedorth Gwendoleu mab Keida6 yn Aryfderyd* ('to look at the battle-fog of Gwendoleu

steep ascent or descent,' but, in my view, this is unnecessary given the fact that it is obviously derived from the personal name *Elidir mwynfawr* in this context.

⁶³For Elidir *Mwynfawr*, see Bromwich, *TYP* 345. This is the only triad in which Elidir is named, but he does appear in *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd*, §12, which reads: '*Elidir Mōyna6r m. Gorust Prioda6r m. Dyfynwal Hen*' (Ben Guy (ed), *Medieval Welsh Genealogy* (Woodbridge, 2020), 428). Perhaps the most significant place Elidir appears in the medieval *cyfarwyddyd* is in *Breintiau Gwŷr Arfon*, which is extant today in NLW Peniarth 29 (Black Book of Chirk). The connection between this text and *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* deserves more attention than it has been given. See Bromwich, *TYP* 491–2 and Morfydd E. Owen, 'Royal propaganda: stories from the law-texts,' in T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen, and Paul Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000), 224–54, especially 238–46.

⁶⁴Eliffer is not an unknown figure, but he does not seem to have made much of a mark outside the corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. Apart from *Tri marchlwyth*, this figure appears in *Tri lledyf unben* ('Three prostrate/humble lords', *TYP* no. 8), where he is said to be the father of Peredur and the grandfather of Gwgon Gwron. This genealogy is echoed in *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd*, §5 (Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 428). Eliffer also appears in *Tair prif fuch* ('Three chief cows', *TYP* no. 46). One suspects, given their close textual relationship, that Eliffer may have been introduced to *Tair prif fuch* under the influence of *Tri marchlwyth*. Outside of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, an allusion to Eliffer appears in the poem *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin*, extant in the Black Book of Carmarthen; the reference reads: *seith meib Eliffer* ('seven sons of Eliffer') (see A. O. H. Jarman, (ed), *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*, no. 1.29; a new edition of this poem by Llywelyn Hopwood is available at <https://myrddin.swansea.ac.uk/poem/001/>, accessed 13 May 2025). Given the vagueness of this reference, it is unclear to me if the same Eliffer is meant. Eliffer may also be the figure intended for the *Eliser* named in a stanza of *Englynion y Beddau*, see the discussion in Patrick Sims-Williams, *Englynion y Beddau*, 223–5).

⁶⁵This is the text of Peniarth 16.

⁶⁶See Bromwich, *TYP* 375–6. Other allusions to Gwenddolau in *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* are in *Tri tharw cadug* ('Three bull-protectors', *TYP* no. 6), *Tri anniwair deulu* ('Three unfaithful warbands', *TYP* no. 29), and the related triads *Tri unben Deifr a Brynaich* ('Three lords of Deira and Bernicia', *TYP* no. 10) and *Trywyr a wnaeth y tair mad gyflafan* ('Three men who performed the three fortunate slaughters', *TYP* no. 32). He is also mentioned in *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd* (§6, Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 428) and *Tri thlws ar ddeg* (§12, Bromwich, *TYP* 260). Gwenddolau also plays an important role in the 'Myrddin cycle' of early Welsh poetry. Cf. A. O. H. Jarman, 'The Merlin Legend and the Welsh Tradition of Prophecy' in Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman, and Brynley F. Roberts (eds.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), especially 120–1, 125; Celeste L. Andrews, 'What did Cynddelw know about the Old North?', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 39 (2020), 39–52, at 45–7.

son of Keidaó **in** Aryfderyd'), thus helping to clarify that Gwenddolau was *in* Arderydd, not *from* Arderydd.⁶⁷ Still, though, the phrase is somewhat difficult to parse. It was not until later, in the *C² family, that someone added the word *llu* between *fygoderth* and Gwenddolau – 'the battle-fog of Gwenddolau's *host*,' finally making it clear that it was the warband led by Gwenddolau, not the man alone, who caused such an uproar as to leave battle-fog on the field.

Moving on from *Z, we come next to the *C family and its two sub-groups, *C¹ and *C². This family is associated with texts that belong to the 'White and Red' version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* and they are the texts associated with Version 3 of *trioedd y meirch*, discussed above. The two version of *Tri marchlwyth* found in Cwrtmawr 3 (s. xvi^{med})⁶⁸ are members of the C¹ sub-group while the versions found in the Red Book of Hergest (c. 1400) and Peniarth 51 (s. xv^{med}) are the members of the C² sub-group. It is in manuscripts associated with the *C family, or Version 3 of *trioedd y meirch*, that *Tri marchlwyth* appears outside of the usual confines of *trioedd y meirch* and, instead, can be found in amongst the more general triads of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*.

C¹ introduces two superficial changes. The first is in the alternate reading of the name of Elidir Mwynfawr's cook: the *X, *Y, and *Z texts all give this cook the name *Gelbeineu*.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the second version in Cwrtmawr 3, as well as the version in the Red Book, read *Albeiny*.⁷⁰ This difference is likely due to a copying error, in which a *Gel-* was collapsed into *Al-*. This seems to indicate that Elidir's cook was not a well-known character and it was possible for his name to be miscopied (I suspect, in fact, that this cook and his fellows are the inventions of *Tri marchlwyth*'s original author; none of these figures appear elsewhere in medieval *cyfarwyddyd*).

*C¹ also sees the substitution of the phrase *allt Vaelwr* ('the hill of Maelor') for *riw Vaelwr* ('the slope of Maelor') in the triad's final phrase. This change is interesting, given that the semantic difference between these two words is so slight as to be arbitrary. It seems unlikely that this could arise from a misreading of the text. In another case it might be argued that this difference is reflective of oral transmission, in which the sense was transmitted with a

⁶⁷This is the text of this phrase in Peniarth 47, the only text directly descended from *Z. Apart from the insertion of *yn* it also demonstrates a few quirks of this manuscript's text of *Tri marchlwyth*. It is the only text of the triad to give Gwenddolau the patronymic *mab Keidaw*; this was probably added within the text of Peniarth 47 itself, or one of its immediate predecessors, under the influence of *Tri tharw catug* and *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd*, both of which identify Ceid[i]o as Gwenddolau's father. For the alternate spelling of Arderydd with an *f* in the first syllable see Nerys Ann Jones, 'Hengerdd in the age of the Poets of the Princes,' in Alex Woolf (ed.), *Beyond the Gododdin: Dark Age Scotland in Medieval Wales*, St. John's House Papers 13 (St Andrews, 2013), 41–80, at 46.

⁶⁸The second version of *Tri marchlwyth* found in Cwrtmawr 3 will receive little notice in the discussion of the *C family that follows. I discuss this version in more detail below, p. 245.

⁶⁹This is the spelling of the name in Peniarth 16; the spelling varies throughout the corpus but it remains constant that texts in these first three families use a spelling beginning with *Gel-* or *Gil-* while *C texts (with the exception of Peniarth 51, see n. 78 below) give a name beginning in *A-*.

⁷⁰Peniarth 51 gives the cook the alternate name *Blinwyn*. Since this name is confined to this text, this change (a misreading or scribal error?) must have originated in the work of this manuscript's scribe, Gwilym Tew, or one of his immediate predecessors.

slightly different wording, but in the context of such a clearly *written* triad that seems unlikely. I can offer no satisfying explanation here, other than to speculate that some scribe along the way simply liked one word better than the other.

The changes discussed thus far have all been relatively minor differences which, mostly, came about through the normal processes of copying and re-copying a text over a few centuries. A word has been added here or there, but many of these differences can be explained by minor scribal errors or the corruption of exemplars. This is the case for one of the two changes made in the final family of *Tri marchlwyth* texts, the *C² sub-group, but not with the second. To take the simpler change first, the texts in Peniarth 51 and the Red Book are the only two to give Dunod *Wr* the patronym *fab Pabo* ('son of Pabo'). This addition was probably made under the influence of another triad, *Tri phost cad* ('Three pillars of battle', *TYP* no. 5), in which Dunod consistently appears with this patronym across the manuscript corpus.⁷¹

More substantially, *C² adds an entire phrase to the second limb. Whereas the *X, *Y, *Z, and *C¹ texts simply list the men whom Cornan carried, going directly from Gwrgi and Peredur to Dunod, the Red Book interjects *ac nys gordiwedaôd neb namyn Diuogat* [sic] *uab Kynan Garwynn y ar y Kethin Kyflym ac aruidiaôd ac a glot a gauas yr hynny hyt hediw* ('and no one overtook him except Di[n]ogat son of Kynan Garwynn on Kethin Kyflym ('the quick'), and he received censure(?)⁷² and shame on account of that up until today'). As Bromwich notes, Peniarth 51 inserts this phrase at the end of the limb, not as an interjection within the list of names. Bromwich believes that the Red Book's reading is corrupt and that Peniarth 51 is following the (now missing thanks to a lacuna) text of the White Book.⁷³ This may well be the case, though I would not entirely discount the possibility that the scribe of Peniarth 51, Gwilym Tew, or one of his predecessors edited the text in order to improve

⁷¹He is not, however, given the epithet *wr* ('the stout/strong') in any text of *Tri phost cad*. Peniarth 47 comes closest, reading *Dunaôd* [mab Bwr]r *Pabo*. This appears to be a corrupt reading, with the insertion of the epithet *wr* (perhaps under the influence of *Tri marchlwyth*?) confusing a subsequent scribe who mistook it for a patronym and making a correction. Interestingly, as a consequence, Peniarth 47's text of *Tri phost cad* has four limbs.

On Dunod, see Bromwich, *TYP* 335–6. Apart from in *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, he is probably best known from saga *englynion* associated with Llywarch Hen, in which his name appears three times (see Jenny Rowland, *Early Welsh Saga Poetry* (Cambridge, 1990), 415, 419, 424 and 106–7). His death is noted in the year 595 in the *Annales Cambriae* (see John Morris, (ed and trans) *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London, 1980), 86) and he appears in the Harleian genealogies (§11, Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, 335), in the Jesus College MS 20 genealogies (ibid, 343), in the Llywelyn ap Iorwerth genealogies (ibid, 336), and in *Bonedd Gwŷr y Gogledd* (§4, ibid, 428 and cf. Bromwich, *TYP* 256).

⁷²See above n. 55.

⁷³Bromwich, *TYP* 121: 'The last sentence ... has plainly been given in the wrong order in the text of [the Red Book] ... the sense requires that it should come at the end, and not in the middle of the names listed as constituting the second *marchlwyth*'. It should also be noted that while Bromwich states here that 'it may be presumed' that Peniarth 51 is following the White Book, she states elsewhere (*TYP* xxix) that 'The text is so inaccurate it seems impossible that it could have been taken down directly from either [the White Book] or [the Red Book]:'

the flow.⁷⁴ It is most likely, however, that this sentence began as a marginal note in the *C² exemplar and was treated differently by subsequent scribes who incorporated it into the body of the text.

One more change to the text of *Tri marchlwyth* remains to be addressed. This is the gradual change that took place within the final phrase of the triad's third limb. Again compare the two ends of the spectrum, the texts of Peniarth 16 and the Red Book:

*TYP no. 44 *X text (P16):*

E trydyd marcha⁶elwyth a duc Heich march meibyon G⁶erthm⁶l Wledic, a duc G⁶eir, a Gleis, ac Arthanat yn erbyn allt ⁶aellwr yg Keredigya⁶n yn dial eu tat.

'The third horse-burden, which Haich horse of the sons of Gwerthmwl *Wledic* carried, who carried Gwair, and Glais, and Arthanad up the hill of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge their father.'

*TYP no. 44 *C² text (RBH):*

Y trydyd marchl⁶yth a duc Erch march meibon Grythm⁶l Wledic, a duc arna⁶ Achleu ac Arthanat, yn erbyn ri⁶ Uaela⁶r yg Keredigya⁶n y dial eu tat.

'The third horse-burden, which Erch horse of the sons of Grythmwl *Wledic* carried, who carried Achlau and Arthanad upon himself, up the slope of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge their father.'

The three sons of Gwerthmwl wledig which the horse carried in Peniarth 16 (*X) have become two by the time of the Red Book (*C²), Peniarth 16's *G⁶eir* having been completely lost from the text. The name of Gwerthmwl's second son, *Gleis/Achleu*, has also been altered significantly. An examination of the other texts shows that the names of Gwerthmwl's sons is the most fluid element of *Tri marchlwyth*; no two texts of the triad share an identical reading of these names, as can be seen by these examples:

*TYP no. 44 *Y text (P27ii):*

A'r trydydd, march meibion Gwrthmwl Wledic a dduc arnaw Gwair a Chlais ac Arthenad yn erbyn yr allt Vaylwr yn Geredig-awn i ddial i tad.

'And the third, the horse of the sons of Gwrthmwl *Wledic*, who carried Gwair and Clais and Arthanad upon himself up the hill of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge his father.'

*TYP no. 44 *Z text (P47):*

Trydyd marchl⁶yth a duc Heid march meibon Gyrthu⁶l Wledic a duc Gweir a Gleis ag Archegnat yn erbyn allt Vaeloa⁶r yn Keredigya⁶n y dial eu tat.

⁷⁴On Gwilym, see Huws, *Repertory*, ii, 44.

‘Third horse-burden, which Haidd horse of the sons of Gyrthmwl Wledic carried, who carried Gwair and Glais and Archanad up the hill of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge their father.’

*TYP no. 44 *C¹ text (C3):*

Trydydd marchlwyth, a ddûc Erch march meibion Drychniwl⁷⁵ Wledic, a dduc arnaw Gwaw a Chlaû ac Arllanad yn erbyn y rhiw i ddial y’w tad.

‘Third horse-burden, which Erch horse of the sons of Dyrchniwl Wledig carried, who carried Gwaw and Claû and Arllanad up the slope⁷⁶ to avenge their father.’

*TYP no. 44 *C² text (P51):*

Trydyd marchlwyth, a ddug [*Erch*]⁷⁷ march [*meibion*] Gyrthmwl Wledig [*a dduc arnaw*] Gwaw ac Archeu Arthanad yn erb[yn] rriw Gaelawr yn [*G*]heredigion i ddial e6 tad.

‘Third horse-burden, which [*Erch*] horse of [the sons of] Gyrthmwl Wledig carried, [*who carried upon himself*] Gwaw and Archau [and] Arthanad up the slope of Maelor in Ceredigion to avenge their father.’

It is clear that the *G* in *Gleis* was mistakenly read as a *C* and, from there, received aspirate mutation triggered by the conjunction *a* (‘and’) and thus rendered *a Chlais*. This error happened more than once, as we can see from a comparison of the *Y and *Z texts, the earlier of which contains this error while the latter does not, despite otherwise being the next step in the triad’s development. From here the name of Gwerthmwl’s second son continued to evolve, from *a Chlais* to *a Chlaû* in *C¹ and then to *Achleu* in the *C² text Peniarth 51, where the conjunction came to be understood as the first letter of the name.⁷⁸

The name of Gwerthmwl’s two other sons also evolve throughout these texts. The first son, Gwair, is only dropped entirely in the text of the Red Book; no other version of the triad only names two sons (this is a triad, after all – everything comes in threes). It is also worth noting that the name of the horse in this limb changes from *Heich/Heid* to *Erch* only in the relatively late *C¹ sub-group. This degree of fluidity, as we saw above with the case of Elidir’s cook, probably indicates that these characters were not well known to the

⁷⁵This name – a variant of Gwerthmwl/Gyrthmwl – does not appear in any other text of this triad. It is likely due to scribal error.

⁷⁶Uniquely, this version of the triad does not give the place name *Maelor* for this slope/hill.

⁷⁷The proper name *Erch* is missing from the text written by Peniarth 51’s main, fifteenth-century scribe, Gwilym Tew, indicating that it may have been missing in his exemplar (that being said, see below n. 78). This and the other italicized words in brackets here were added in the hand of the seventeenth-century antiquarian scholar and manuscript collector Robert Vaughan, who made corrections throughout.

⁷⁸The Peniarth 51 text of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* is often problematic (Bromwich has called it ‘very confused and corrupt,’ *TYP* xxii), this perhaps mistaken reading is characteristic of the kinds of changes/differences/mistakes found in this text.

scribes who copied and recopied this triad. Furthermore, again as in the case of Elidir's household, the sons of Gwerthmwl are otherwise unknown and are likely to have been the invention of the triad's initial author. It was therefore up to subsequent scribes to decipher and interpret these unknown names as they saw fit.

All that is left is to consider the case of Cwrtmawr 3's second version of *Tri marchlwyth*, which I have not given much attention to throughout this discussion. Much like the other *C family versions of *Tri marchlwyth*, it appears away from the text's other horse triads at the tail end of the manuscript's *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* material. It reads:

Tri marchlwyth ynys Brydain:

Dû 'r Moroedd Eilidr Awynvawr, a ddûc saith nyn arno o Benllech yn y Gogle[dd] y Mhenllech Elidr ym Mon. Yr ail [march]lwyth vû Gorvûan march meibion Oli[ffer] Gosgorddvawr. Y trydydd marchlwyth vû Erth march meibion Grithmwl Wledic.

'Three horse-burdens of the island of Britain:

Du [Black] of the Seas of Eilidr Awynvawr ['great reined'], who carried seven men upon himself from Penllech in the North to Penllech Elidr on Anglesey. The second burden was [that of] Corfan, the horse of the sons of Eliffer Gosgorddvawr ['of the great warband']. The third horse-burden was [that of] Erth of Grithmwl Wledic.'

This version is noticeably shorter and more bare than other texts of *Tri marchlwyth*. The first limb has lost its distinctive list of the seven men Du carried and the second and third limbs have been stripped of almost all of their *cyfarwyddyd* and give only the bare minimum of information in a format which is remarkably close to the *trioedd y meirch* variant of the 'epithet + three names' formula discussed above.⁷⁹ This must have been a deliberate creative choice on the part of some scribe, though his motivation for it remains obscure. These changes make it difficult to plot its placement on the chronology of the triad's development, since many of the diagnostic details have been dropped. Luckily, however, the horse in the third limb is given the name *Erch*, indicating that it cannot have been shortened earlier than the *C¹ exemplar.

Below, I have included a stemma summarizing the processes described above. As with the stemma describing the relationship of the *trioedd y meirch* corpus, it shows only the surviving witnesses to this triad and is not meant to be exhaustive. It is likely that intervening exemplars have been lost throughout this network. Indeed, it is striking that *Y, *Z, and *C¹, not to mention Peniarth 16's cousins in *Y Diarebion Camberäec* and BL Add 15047, are all represented only by copies which must have been made centuries after their earliest exemplars.

⁷⁹See above, pp. 216–17, n. 11.

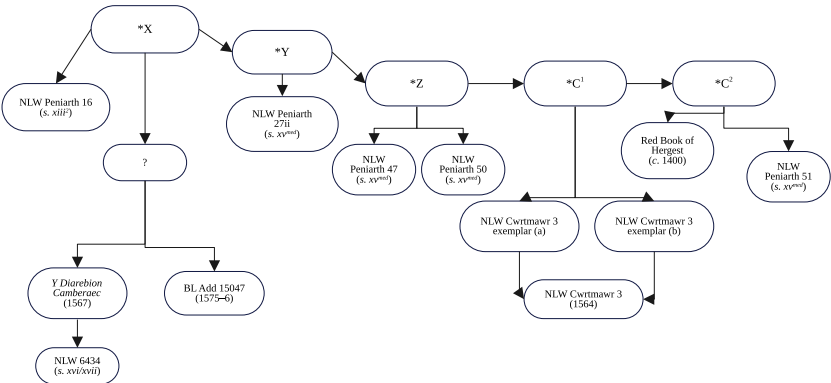


Figure 4: Stemma showing the development of *Tri marchlwyth*

Two fifteenth-century manuscripts associated with Rachel Bromwich’s ‘White and Red’ version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* – the Red Book and Peniarth 51 – appear at the end of a spectrum that begins with Bromwich’s flagship ‘Early version’ text, Peniarth 16. I have argued elsewhere that the ‘White and Red’ version of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* has been altered in discrete, isolated places and that it does not represent a large-scale rewrite of the corpus.⁸⁰ Here, in the case of *Tri marchlwyth*, we can see these discrete alterations happening. The differences which present themselves when the Peniarth 16 text of this triad is read side-by-side with its counterpart in the Red Book happened gradually over a prolonged period of time, not all at once, and were the result of many small changes made, often by accident but sometimes by design, in the work of several scribes through whose hands *Tri marchlwyth* passed.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I offer the following as a summary of the main points I have argued in the preceding pages:

1. *Trioedd y meirch* constitute a clear and coherent sub-group within the larger corpus of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. These triads are united on thematic grounds but, more to the point, also have their own development and transmission history that is distinct from other parts of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. *Trioedd y meirch* are contained in manuscripts as early as the Black Book of Carmarthen (s. xiii^{med}) and continued to be copied through the sixteenth century and beyond.
2. *Trioedd y meirch* display an especially large amount of textual variation compared to other parts of *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*. While many of these variations can be chalked up to eyeskip, spelling mistakes, or other scribal errors, many more indicate that the triads have been deliberately expanded, re-worked, or edited to a greater or lesser extent. This illustrates that

⁸⁰See Andrews, ‘Three Powerful Swineherds,’ 96–7.

Welsh scribes in the later Middle Ages did not view *trioedd y meirch* as untouchable or unalterable but instead felt free to make changes where they saw fit.

3. While it is possible and even likely that *trioedd y meirch* had their origin in the oral tradition, the corpus as it survives today is deeply indebted to its written transmission history. In many ways, a major implication of my argument has been that this written history is worthy of study in its own right and that getting bogged down in searching for an 'oral origin' is a mistake. That being said, I consider it likely that the fragment of *trioedd y meirch* found in the Black Book of Carmarthen was drawn from their oral tradition, perhaps directly, by the scribe of that manuscript.
4. I have identified five main strands of transmission (or 'versions') of *trioedd y meirch*, which I call Versions 1–5. Further, more minor, innovations are identified as Versions 6 and 7. The contents of these strands are summarized in Table 1. *Termini ante quem* for these strands can be derived from the dates of their earliest manuscript witnesses – the middle of the thirteenth century for Version 1 (found in the Black Book of Carmarthen), the second half of the thirteenth century for Version 2 (found in Peniarth 16), the middle of the fourteenth century for Version 3 (found in the White Book of Rhydderch), and the middle of the fifteenth century for both Version 4 (found in Peniarth 47) and Version 5 (found in Peniarth 27ii).
5. I have spent a great deal of space laying out the relationships between each extant version of *trioedd y meirch*; a proposed stemma of *trioedd y meirch* can be found in Figure 3. Very briefly, I have proposed an original, common exemplar (called Version *X) which predates all the surviving versions. Versions 1, 2, and the lost *Y all descend directly from *X. Version 3, in turn, descends from a compilation of Versions 2 and *Y. Versions 4 and 5 both represent fifteenth-century compilations of these earlier versions; their pedigrees are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Duplicate triads in both Cwrtmawr 3 and *Y Diarebion Camberaec* make it possible to trace further innovations in these sixteenth-century manuscripts.
6. As to the relationship between *trioedd y meirch* and the poem *Canu y meirch* (extant in the Book of Taliesin), it seems to me that the degree of overlap of names in these two sources is too great to be put down entirely to coincidence, but neither can a direct textual link be demonstrated. I propose that both *trioedd y meirch* and *Canu y meirch* drew on an earlier list of horses and their owners, which would have been in circulation during the thirteenth century.
7. I have undertaken a close study of the long, expanded triad *Tri marchlwyth* ('Three horse-burdens,' *TYP* no. 44) and established a relative chronology of the various changes and accretions to the triad over its ten manuscript witnesses. This chronology is illustrated in Figure 4. A short version of *Tri marchlwyth* survives in the sixteenth-century Cwrtmawr 3, which must

be the work of a single individual who shortened the triad for his own creative reasons. I have also noted that several otherwise-unknown figures named in this triad are likely to be the invention of the triad's original author and were not part of the larger body of *cyfarwyddyd* circulating in medieval Wales.

Although the identities of most of the men who copied and developed *trioedd y meirch* have been lost to time, we cannot and should not discount their contributions to the body of medieval *cyfarwyddyd* that survives in manuscripts today. I will close by once again emphasizing that while *trioedd y meirch* are valuable to modern scholars as a record of that *cyfarwyddyd* dating back to the mid-thirteenth century, their utility and interest do not end with their earliest witnesses. Later versions of *trioedd y meirch* and texts like them can provide us with valuable information about the manuscripts, stories, and information available to the scribes who inherited them and who were closer to and more familiar with the living body of medieval *cyfarwyddyd* than we can hope to be today.

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