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## CADAIR CAE CHWARAE LLYN Y FELIN

*The journey and story begin in the playing field which is directly underneath the bridge that leads to the entrance of Harlech Castle*

*Here you are sitting, hopefully comfortably, in the middle of Llyn y Felin - the mill pond - but luckily for you there is no longer water in the pond, or you would have to swim! You see at one time this playground was a pond. A pond that provided the water to turn the wheel which worked the mill.*

*But that was in times gone by. Long ago. Many moons. And there are many long ago's and past times here in Harlech. There's history and legends and traditions around every corner, at the top and bottom of every hill!*

*Many, many moons ago and long, long times past, before the castle was built, there was a man living in Wales called Cuneddau ap Ederm, or Cuneddau Wledig as he was also known. He had at least eight sons and one daughter. One of the sons was called Meirion.*

*And this is a story about Meirion. As with most good stories no one knows to sure where the story came from.*

*It may be that it is a true story - maybe not - but there is truth within it.*

*It may not be a legend, - a traditional story - but some parts are legendary*

*But whether you read the story, or listen to it, I am sure that you will enjoy it.*

*It is one big Knickerbocker Glory of a story, full of layers of history and traditions and imaginations. It was told to me by a little bird!*

*Follow the trail, sit in the chairs, listen to the sounds, and imagine the wonderful goings on that are about to unfold.....*

**Chair 1**

***Crawc. Crawc. Crawc.  
Jackdaws were roosting  
Starlings murmuring  
Gulls were wailing  
at the sea.***

***It was a cold dark night in a bleak midwinter when Meirion arrived back in Harlech. He was very glad to be home, having travelled quite a way. He was exhausted. Fatigued. Very tired. The only thing he wanted was his cosy bed by the glowing fire.***

***He kicked off his shoes, took off his hat and the Torc Aur - the golden torc - that he wore around his neck.***

***This Torc Aur denoted that he was a leader. But this was not just a common golden torc.***

***O no indeed***

***This was Torc Aur Harlech - the golden torc of Harlech- and it was common knowledge that gold was not the only component of this torc.***

***O no indeed***

***This torc also contained wondrous and magical powers. O yes indeed.***

***Using his sleeve Meirion polished the torc until it sparkled in the light of the fire.***

***"The torc is like the sunset here in Harlech," thought Meirion, "and the sunset in Harlech is second to none."***

***He smiled a wide grin. He was so happy to have arrived home. He replaced the Torc Aur around his neck, for that was where it belonged. Around the neck of a leader. No one else could take it off.***

***Meirion lay on his bed and snuggled down under his warm carthen - his Welsh woollen blanket. He stared at the fire and the flames danced like waves of liquid gold. It was not long before Meirion was fast asleep.***

## CADAIR BRON Y GRAIG

*You are now in Bron y Graig. A lovely, quiet park shaded by beautiful trees. The bench here is in the shape of a leaf. This huge leaf could have fallen from one of the trees. A leaf grows on a tree. A story can grow on a page in a book. A leaf is also another name for a page. It's time we turned a leaf to continue with Meirion's story.*

### **Chair 2**

***It was by now the middle of the night. It was a dark, dark night. A silent, silent night.***

***The liquid gold flames were still dancing but they were shorter by now and the fire glowed a deep orange red. It was very quiet. Very still. There was no snoring to be heard from the bed since Meirion was in a deep, deep sleep, too deep to snore.***

***Something jumped onto the bed and Meirion woke suddenly with a fright.***

***" Who's there?" he shouted " Who's there? "***

***" Prrrrrr Prrrrr Prrrrr," answered the cat rubbing her head against Meirion's shoulder.***

***Meirion laughed.***

***" Now don't you go telling anyone that a scraggy moggie turned me into a scaredy-cat," he said stroking the cat's head, " or no one will think that I am a brave and valiant hero, worthy of being a leader of my people. "***

***" Prrrrr " said the cat before leaping onto the bottom of the bed and kneading a lair in the folds of the carthen.***

**Meirion instantly fell back into his deep sleep. His feet were very warm. The cat was better than any hot water bottle.**

**It became a silent, silent night once again. Meirion and the cat were fast asleep. There was no sound. It was very silent. Very still. And very, very dark.**

**But in that darkness, there were shadows moving very, very, very slowly. Deep grey shadows. Skulking, sneaking shadows. Equine, horse like shadows.**

*There are many stories and tales in Wales about the Ceffyl Dwr - the water horse. The Ceffyl Dwr lives in ponds and lakes, in rivers and waterfalls. Sometimes the Ceffyl Dwr will try and persuade you to sit on its back, and when you do it will gallop like the wind and fly high in the sky before disappearing, like mist, and you will fall to earth. Other time it will appear out of the water, eyes flashing, nostrils flaring, hooves kicking and neighing loudly before attacking you!*

*But was it a Ceffyl Dwr creating those skulking shadows that night in Meirion's chamber?*

**The fire was almost extinguished by now. Meirion felt something lightly touching his neck and sleepily he brushed his hand to flick away the cat's tail.**

**"Get your tail out of my face," he said, turning over to get back to sleep.**

**He felt the weight of the cat on his feet and thought, "If the cat's sleeping on my feet, how come his tail is round my neck? "**

**He opened his eyes but could not see a thing in the darkness. He could feel the tail twirling and twisting tighter and tighter around his neck. Meirion tried to pull it away from his neck, but the tail had the grip of iron. Suddenly, he felt a second, and a third tail grasping at his neck and throat and chest. The Torc Aur! The tails were trying to steal the Torc Aur. But of course, we all know that it was impossible to take the torc away from Meirion's neck. But these tails**

***were trying their best! Meirion tried to fight the tails but there were too many of them. They were squeezing, binding, crushing.***

***The cat awoke with a terrifying Mmeeeeeeoooooowwwwww. It jumped from the foot of the bed attacking the owner of the tails. The day was dawning by now, and the cat saw two huge, round eyes staring down from above, and then there was a massive snout next to the cat's rather snub nose, and suddenly the snout had hurled the cat to the furthest corner of the room. The cat sat still, staring at star!***

***When the stars disappeared, there was no sign of Meirion in the room. No sign whatsoever.***

***The cat went back to Meirion's bed.***

***It had a look under the carthen. No Meirion was not there.***

***It had a look under the bed. No Meirion was not there either.***

***It had a look in every nook and cranny, even up the chimney, but there was no sign of Meirion.***

***Where was he?***

***The cat decided to stay there, on the bed, until Meirion returned.***

## CADAIR PEN Y GRAIG.

*Yes it is isn't it? The view from Pen y Graig in Harlech is magnificent.*

*The sky, the horizon - that far away line, that we can all see, even though it does not exist!*

*The sea and the mountains. The names of those mountains and hills are noted on the slate in front of the story chair.*

*That sky and that horizon, the sea and the mountains have looked like that for years and years. Since the legendary days of the Mabinogi.*

*"Bendigeidfran fab Llyr was the crowned prince of the Isle of Britain, and one afternoon, he was sitting on a rock near his court in Harlech, looking out to sea." That is how the second branch of the Mabinogi begins.*

*Bendigeidfran was the giant king of the Mabinogi. He walked through the sea to Ireland to rescue his sister Branwen*

### **Chair 3**

***"I wish I had a giant of a big brother who could come and rescue me" thought Meirion as he was being dragged along the dirt and grass and rocks.***

***The dawn was breaking by now and Meirion was in the grip of three huge tails, three tails of three strange and frightening creatures. Giant Seahorses!***

***They stopped suddenly on Pen y Graig. Meirion noticed how the Seahorses were slowly changing their colour as the sun rose. They changed from a dark grey to a light green with a slight pink hue. Their big round eyes were turning around and around, independently of each other, and in different directions! One of these eyes looked down at Meirion, and he could see right up inside the***

***snout of the Seahorse. He felt himself being sucked up like a bit of Lego disappearing up the Hoover. And then he was snorted out like a bit of snot, falling to the floor in a heap and stumbling, when he tried to stand up.***

***The strong tails still had a grab-hold on Meirion, but they were now entwined about his feet. His neck was free from their strangled grip. He gulped a lung full of fresh, salty air.***

***One of the Seahorses, who had a larger snout than the other two, was trying to prise the torc away from Meirion's neck, but to no avail. He tried to Hoover it up and Meirion went with it, up into the snout and back out again. Up into the snout and back out again. Over and over and over again until Meirion felt as if he were on a trampoline.***

***Meirion heard a clacking sound and a growling grumble.***

***"Clliiic clliiic. Psachsach Grrrch"***

***"Crrrch. Wwsht."***

***"Clliiiiiiiiic. Clliiiiiiiiic"***

***It was the Seahorses. They were obviously speaking to each other, but Meirion could not understand a word that they were saying.***

***And then, to his amazement, they started speaking Cymraeg - Welsh - to him***

***"Give us the Torc Aur and you will be free to go," said one of the giant seahorses in the squeakiest voice Meirion had ever heard.***

***"Give us the Torc " said the others in voices that were just as squeaky as the first!***

***Hearing such huge creatures speaking with such tiny vocal squeals tickled Meirion and it made him giggle.***



***"Why are you laughing?" asked one of the seahorses.***

***"Your voices," he said still laughing, " you sound like little mice."***

***"And you think that you have a right to make fun of us?" answered one of the Seahorses threateningly in his squeaky voice***

***"You may perceive that we have squeaky voices, but at least we can speak to you in your language. Do you speak ours? " Asked another Seahorse in a prickly tone. And they started speaking their clacking and their growling grumble sounds again.***

***Meirion had to admit that he did not speak Seahorse! And he stopped laughing.***

***Because the Seahorses' eyes moved around independently of each other, and they looked in different directions at the same time, Meirion did not know where to fix his gaze. Their colour was also changing; they were by now a vibrant green, the same colour as the grass and the leaves.***

***" You have to give us the Torc Aur," one of them said yet again, " We need it's magical powers."***

***" No! I can't," said Meirion, "I need the torc so that I may guide and lead my people."***

***" But our needs are greater than yours and your peoples'," pleaded another of the Seahorses***

***" No never. Never. I will never surrender the Torc Aur! " Shouted Meirion.***

***" In that case we have no choice," said the Seahorse with the biggest snout.***

***" What do you mean?" asked Meirion, "what do you m....?"***

***And the very next moment that big snout was hovering Meirion up until he and the Torc Aur disappeared down, down into the depths of the Seahorse.***

***"Prrrrchh sschh, Clic clic clic", one said.***

***"Yes, that's right, down this path, past the cave, it's a short cut to the beach," said another in a squeaky voice.***

## CADAIR Y TRAETH

*On the shore red roses growing*

*On the shore white lilies smiling*

*We're on beach in all it's glory*

*We're on the beach - let's tell a story !*

*The beach at Harlech. One of Wales' best beaches.*

*Miles of soft, golden sands.*

*Dunes. Sand. Sea.*

*And somewhere beneath that sea was Meirion. Apparently.*

### **Chair 4**

***Six months had passed since Meirion had been hoovered up and disappeared into the depths of one of the Giant Seahorses. Everyone assumed that the Seahorses had kidnapped Meirion and had taken him to their realm under the sea. The cat sat hopefully on his bed, waiting for his return.***

***Harlech's residents were also full of hope. Hoping that the Torc Aur's magical powers were robust enough to guide Meirion back home. Back home so that he could lead and guide them.***

***The residents had organised 'around the clock' observers on the beach. They were always at the ready to welcome Meirion home. But as the days became weeks, and the weeks months, and the months seasons people were becoming despondent.***

***Then one fine evening, in mid-summer, with the sun disappearing slowly behind Penrhyn Llŷn, Glesni, one of the observers, was strolling along the beach, eyes peeled. In the sky the gulls were enjoying hovering lazily on the***

**warm thermals. Up above the town the 'Brain', the Welsh word for crows, were crowing.**

*Well, the people of Harlech call them 'Brain', but most of them are Jackdaws. On the other hand, it's common knowledge that Jackdaws are very intelligent. So, brain is quite an apt name, isn't it?*

**Suddenly a Jackdaw landed on Glesni's right shoulder. And another on her left. And another on her head. Glesni caressed the Jackdaws' feathers and they pecked and crowed in her ear.**

**"No there's no sign of him. Keep waiting. Keep looking. We live in hope, don't we?" said Glesni to the shiny birds with their big black beaks and vibrant blue eyes. "Off you go. Look to your work, " she added.**

**The three Jackdaws flew down and landed on the long line of seaweed and driftwood left by the last tide. The Jackdaw's liked nothing better than scratching amongst the seaweed, hoping to find treasure. Any treasure. Anything that gleams. Jackdaws love shiny things! But they were also looking for anything that would bring them, and the rest of the residents of Harlech, some hope. Everyone was lost without Meirion.**

**The Jackdaws would pick and scratch, search, and scatter, amongst the seaweed and driftwood every day. Sometimes a gull or two would attempt an ambush, resulting in an argument and a bit of a stand-off for a time. But on the whole the gulls and the Jackdaws managed to live fairly harmoniously.**

**Glesni looked at the industrious birds and smiled.**

**Pick and Scratch. Search and Scatter.**

**Pick and Scratch. Search and Scatter.**

**Suddenly one of them started to crow very loudly and started scratching ferociously.**

***Crawc CRAWC Pick Pick***

***Crawc CRAWC Scratch Scratch***

***And the other two birds hopped over and joined in the revelry***

***Pic-Pick-Scratch-Scratch Crawc crawc CRAWC !***

***Pic-Pick-Scratch-Scratch Crawc crawc CRAWC !***

***Glesni hurried over to see what was the cause of the commotion. She saw a piece of old rope and an old rusty link from an old rusty chain. She saw sandhoppers hopping and flies flying. But nothing out of the ordinary. And then she saw a tiny particle of glimmer amongst a clump of salty, withered seaweed. The Jackdaws were picking and picking. And the particle was gleaming and gleaming. Glesni kneeled down and joined in the scratching and rummaging. With her hands she dug amongst the seaweed and sand until she unearthed a shiny thing.***

***She embraced it and jumped high her eyes full of tears of joy. But the next moment she was on her knees and her tears were flowing with sadness. Glesni did not know whether to laugh or cry. She was so happy to have found Torc Aur Harlech amidst the seaweed and maritime rubbish.***

***But no sight nor sound of Meirion, and that made Glesni very sad – even though she was very happy! How could that be possible!***

***The Jackdaws were very excited, and were crowing very loudly; and that excited the Gulls who started squawking so loudly it could be heard in the town; and that excited all the dogs in the area who started barking and ran off down to the beach; and that annoyed all the residents in Harlech, and they all ran after the dogs to see what all the excitement was about.***

***The only one who didn't get at all excited was the cat who remained asleep on the bed!***

***When the people of Harlech saw the Torc they rejoiced loudly.***

***"Meirion has returned! Meirion has returned!" they cheered.***

***"No. No, he has not" said a solitary voice. It was Glesni's voice. "The Torc is back but there is no sign of Meirion."***

***The jubilant rejoicing became a crushing silence.***

***"But he will return. He will. He's bound to return to claim the Torc Aur" said Glesni***

***No one knew what to do. Should they stay or should they go?  
Some sat on the beach and started to sing. Others danced.***

***Some wrote in the sand. A word. Or a poem. Or a message.***

***Others drew pictures in the sand. Pictures of the Torc Aur. Of Jackdaws. Of huge Seahorses. There was even a picture of a sleeping cat!***

***Everyone stayed on the beach until the sun had set over Llŷn. They stared at the sky as it changed from red to rose pink to a deep, deep blue-black the same colour as the feathers of a Jackdaw. But there was no sight nor sound of Meirion.***

*Another chair in another playing field. And there is plenty of space to play in this field. Or to sit and imagine. Imagine all sorts of stories.*

*There have been many people from Harlech and the surrounding area who have imagined many stories. Some have written those stories and published them. Ellis Wynne, Lasynys who published 'Gweledigaethu y Bardd Cwsg' (the Visions of a Sleeping Bard) over three hundred years ago, and which is considered a literary masterpiece and a true Welsh classic;*

*and in the 20th century T Rowland Hughes, Rhiannon Davies Jones, Dyddgu Owen, Robert Graves and Richard Hughes.*

*Opposite the playing field is Ysgol Ardudwy, the area's Secondary School, and there have been many past pupils of Ysgol Ardudwy who have imagined and written and published stories of all genres in Welsh and in English - Mari Strachan, Robin Llywelyn, Phillip Pullman, John Sam Jones, Haf Llewelyn, Nia Medi, Emlyn Gomer.*

*Yes, Harlech is a very good place to free your imagination*

*And who could have imagined that seahorses could have caused such mayhem? But that was what they did.*

## CADAIR CAE CHWARAE SIOR y 5ed

### Chair 5

***After Glesni had discovered the torc amongst the seaweed on the beach, everyone waited for Meirion to return. At first it was fine weather, the days were long and everyone enjoyed being on the beach, singing and dancing and drawing and writing. But as the summer turned to autumn and the days became shorter and the weather became colder, the people's enthusiasm for the outdoor life diminished. They stayed home. Indoors. Warm and cosy.***

***But Glesni continued to spend much of her time on the beach. Watching. Observing. The Jackdaws kept her company.***

***It was a cold, dark night in a bleak midwinter and the sea was angry.***

***"There's a storm brewing, " said Glesni to the Jackdaws***

***"Crawc crawc crawc," agreed the birds***

***The gulls above were being thrown around by the wind and their cries and wailing left a feeling of trepidation in Glesni's heart.***

***The waves thrashed and crashed, increasing in size and strength. The first was big, the second bigger and by the seventh a huge mountain of water was bowing above her head.***

***Glesni ran. Fast. Faster. Running towards the dunes.***

***The Jackdaws flew. Fast. Faster. Flying above the dunes.***

***The wave surged and bulged, it swelled higher and higher, snatching and seizing everything in its path.***

***The Jackdaws flew, crowing loudly in an attempt to warn the residents. Luckily, most people managed to get to the higher ground, away from the reaches of that huge wave as it broke against the rock, hurling everyone and everything it held in its grasp, into a sea of confusion and despair.***

***Everyone was stunned. Too frightened to say or do anything. Too scared to react. The sea had claimed the low lying land, exactly as it had done to Cantre'r Gwaelod. It was indeed, in every sense, a dark bleak night in Harlech.***

***And in that darkness, there were shadows moving very, very, very slowly. Deep grey shadows. Skulking, sneaking shadows. Equine, horse like shadows.***

***A throng of Seahorses came out of the sea, clacking and a growling, their tails whipping the waves***



***"The Torc Aur. Protect the torc" shouted one of the residents***

***"Yes, the torc, They want the Torc Aur," shouted another***

***Without warning a huge cackling flock of Jackdaws attacked the giant Seahorses, screeching whilst pecking and scratching at their eyes and tails. The gulls gave support and joined the battle, and since it was winter the starlings also helped. But the Seahorses marched on, trudging nearer and nearer, despite the savage attack by the birds.***

***The residents threw the torc from one to another in an attempt to protect it from the Seahorses who were whipping and scattering everyone with their ferocious tails.***

***One of the residents threw the torc up, up high into the sky and some birds caught it.***

***No not the Jackdaws. Nor the Gulls. Nor the Starlings.***

***The Torc Aur was caught by Adar Rhiannon. Adar Rhiannon are magical birds who appear above Harlech from time to time.***

***The Birds of Rhiannon took the torc and flew higher still, up, up high into the sky. And as everyone knows when the birds of Rhiannon fly up, up high into the sky above Harlech everything becomes calm. And life is sweeter.***

***It was as if time had been frozen. Everything was quiet. Very quiet. Except for the enchanting singing of the Birds of Rhiannon***

***Meirion appeared amidst this enchanted quietness, carrying a lifeless Glesni in his arms.***

***Everyone was stunned.***

***"Come on, hurry up," he said "Glesni needs your help"***

***A number of the residents ran towards him and took care of Glesni.***

***" Why all of this fighting. And attacking. And hurting. And stealing. Why? "***  
***Meirion asked the giant Seahorses.***

***"Cliiic cliiic. Psachsach Grrrch" " Crrrch. Wwsht." " Cliiiiiiiiiic. Cliiiiiic "***  
***answered the Seahorses,***

***"I know. I know. But if you trust me, I will speak to my people. I'm sure that we can come to some sort of arrangement," said Meirion***

***Meirion and his people sat down together with the giant Seahorses.***

***Meirion explained to the people that he had spent time in the realm of the Seahorses. A wondrous, beautiful, and very diverse realm. He had heard and listened to their stories; had learnt their language and songs; had come to understand their fears and their woes.***

***" The realm of the Seahorse is being spoiled and destroyed by an invisible enemy. The realm of the Seahorse is being colonized by the debris and rubbish of this invisible enemy. And that is why they need the magical powers of the Torc Aur - in order to discover who their enemies are," Meirion told his people***

***"But it is our torc. We the people of Harlech own the Torc Aur," shouted one of the residents***

***"Yes, I know. But I don't believe that the magical powers of the Torc Aur are needed in order to solve the problems facing the Seahorses," said Meirion***

***"We. You and me," he said "We are the enemies of the Seahorses."***

***"What?" said the people in astonishment "but THEY are OUR enemies! THEY are the ones who have attacked US and kidnapped our leader and tried to steal our Torc!"***

***"The reason that they are attacking us is because we are colonizing their realm. Destroying it. Devastating it," said Meirion.***

***"Nonsense. Balderdash," shouted someone, "I've never been near their realm!"***

***"But your rubbish has," answered Meirion, "and my rubbish. And the rubbish and refuse of each and every one of you here. Our rubbish is their enemy."***

***Slowly. Gradually. His people realised that what Meirion was saying was the truth.***

***A deal was struck. A contract drawn. An agreement was made where the people gave assurances that their rubbish and refuse would not end up in the realm of the Seahorses. The Seahorses agreed that they would not attempt to steal the Torc Aur ever again.***

***And henceforth there was peace. Meirion, like all great leaders, had remembered Bendigeidfran's most famous words. "A fo ben bid bont" - He, or she, who would be a leader, let him, or her, be a bridge.***

***The Birds of Rhiannon sang for some time above Harlech and during that time Glesni's health was restored and she and Meirion would spend much of their time in each other's company. Everyone smiled when they saw them together. Glesni and Meirion hand in hand and the Jackdaws provoking the cat!***

***Glesni enjoyed listening to Meirion telling of his adventures in the realm of the Seahorses. But that is another story. A story for someone else to imagine and write. You maybe?***

***Don't forget to listen to the birds. The birds are expert at carrying stories.***

***Can you hear the Jackdaws cackling?***

***The Gulls wailing? The Starlings twittering?***

***Harlech Birds each, and everyone. And they all have a story to tell***

***And if you are very, very lucky and listen very, very carefully you will hear Adar Rhiannon up, up high in the sky.***

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<sup>i</sup> STORI MEIRION - Fersiwn Saesneg  
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