

# The Legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod

You may have stood on the cliff tops or on one of the sandy beaches of Cardigan Bay and looked out to the sea. On a wild and stormy night, you can also hear bells tolling coming from the sea.

## The Bells of Cantre'r Gwaelod

Many hundreds of years ago, there was no sea in Cardigan Bay. Instead, it was the land of Cantre'r Gwaelod.

It was a beautiful land ruled by Gwyddno Garanhir. He was a kind and wise king, who made sure that the people of his land were happy and safe. The land was excellent for growing crops and fruit, especially grapes. The people worked as farmers in the fruitful fields and everyone had plenty of food to eat.

Gwynddno lived in a beautiful palace, Caer Gwynddno, with his wife and two children, Mererid and Gronw.



Although Cantre'r Gwaelod was a happy and fruitful land, the people had one fear: the sea. Their villages and fields lay beneath the level of the sea.

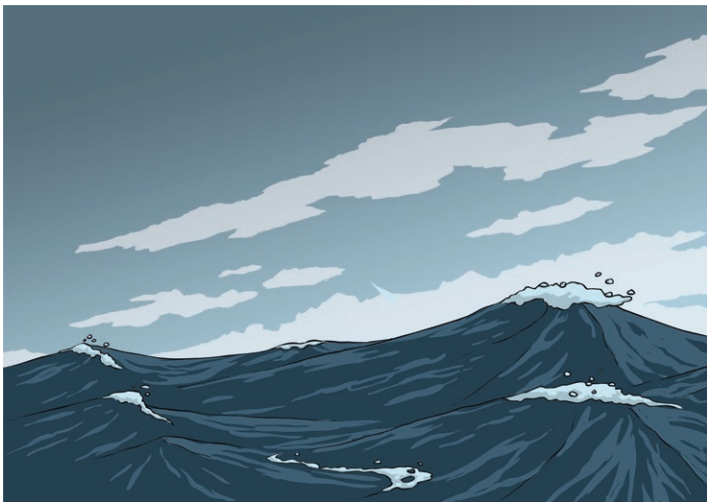
To keep the sea from flooding in, Gwyddno had an enormous wall, a breakwater, built around Cantre'r Gwaelod. Gwyddno asked his most trusted and responsible friend to look after the

breakwater. His name was Seithennyn, and he was in charge of opening and closing the doors in the breakwater to stop the sea from coming into Cantre'r Gwaelod.

Unfortunately, Seithennyn was not as trustworthy or responsible as Gwyddno had thought. Many guards had to help him keep watch for any danger from the sea.

One night, there was a huge feast in Gwyddno's palace to celebrate the birthday of his daughter, Mererid. Important people had been invited to the feast and musicians

from far and wide came to play their music. One of the old harp players, who was blind, told Gwyddno that a storm was coming. Gwyddno laughed and said that no storm would dare spoil the birthday of his daughter. He hoped that Mererid would find a wealthy husband that night.



Seithennyn had other ideas. He wanted Mererid for himself so he secretly left the wall and went to the feast to ask Mererid to marry him.

The guards on the wall waited for Seithennyn to come and close the doors that night. They did not realise that he was at the feast, drinking wine and dancing with Mererid. They looked out to sea and saw dark, stormy clouds gathering in the distance. A storm was coming! They went to tell Seithennyn but they could not find him.

By now, it was raining heavily and the wind was howling but there was still no sign of Seithennyn. He was the only one who could close the doors so the guards decided to leave the wall to find him.



The people in the feast could not hear the storm outside and they continued to eat, sing and dance. Now the sea was roaring and the waves were crashing over the breakwater walls. The guards could not find Seithennyn in the palace! Who would close the doors?

Eventually, they saw him dancing with Mererid. They rushed over and told him about the storm. He told them to go back to the wall, ring the alarm bell and close the doors; he would stay and dance with Mererid.

They rushed outside, but the alarm bell did not ring and the doors weren't closed.

It was too late. The guards were never seen again.

The sea thundered in and Cantre'r Gwaelod was swallowed by the waves. All the fields and villages disappeared that night and most of the people too.

Gwyddno, Mererid and Seithennyn managed to escape. Mererid agreed to marry Seithennyn and they went to live in North Wales.

Gwyddno was so sad he could not bear to leave his beloved home. For many years, he could be seen sitting on the clifftops of Cardigan Bay staring out to sea, yearning for his lost land.