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## *The Spoils of Annwfn*

Joe R. Christopher

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# Mythopoeic Society's Online Midwinter Seminar 2024

17th–18th February 2024: Something Mighty Queer

Submission Deadline: November 30, 2023

<https://mythsoc.org/oms/oms-2024.htm>



## *The Spoils of Annwfn*

### **Abstract**

Said Arthur, "Raise the sails, my men -- We'll cross the sea as dark as wine, To seek Caer Siddi's host;  
Three ships we'll sail. "

### **Keywords**

Mythril; Mythopoeic; Poetry; The Spoils of Annwfn; Joe R. Christopher

# the spoils of annwfn

## J R CHRISTOPHER

The following poem is based upon the Welsh "Spoils of Annwfn," the thirtieth poem in The Book of Taliesin. It is one of several Celtic poems and tales which predate Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of Arthur, which established the more familiar traditions.

Said Arthur, "Raise the sails, my men--  
We'll cross the sea as dark as wine,  
To seek Caer Siddi's host;

Three ships we'll sail." (But oh, alas!  
Three sailed upon the sea like glass--  
Three sailed and two were lost!)

Sang Taliesin Manyborn,  
"The sails are filled with rosy morn--  
We'll seek Caer Rigor's host!

To west, to west!" (But oh, alas!  
Three ships upon the sea like glass--  
Three ships and two were lost!)

Cried Llacheu, Arthur's youngest son,  
"The maidens nine will grant us fun  
When dead's Caer Feddwidd's host--

So let us sail!" (But oh, alas!  
Three sailed upon the sea like glass--  
Three sailed and two were lost!)

Said Cai the Fair, "What great expense  
A blue-rimmed cauldron to bring hence,  
To seek Caer Fandwy's host,  
But honor's done!" (Yet oh, alas!  
Those men upon the sea like glass--  
And all but seven lost!)

Cried Custaint, son of Banon, loud,  
And Anwas Winged, and Bedwyr proud,  
"We'll seek Caer Ochren's host!

"We'll scale the walls!" (But oh, alas!  
Three ships upon the sea like glass--  
Three ships and two were lost!)

Gwynn Godyfrion cried "Our souls  
No dream's illusion ever foils,  
Nor yet Caer Goludd's host!

We'll break the gate!" (But oh, alas!  
Three ships upon the sea like glass,  
And all but Prydwenn lost!)

Said Llwh the Windy-handed, "I'll seize  
No cauldron, but Caledfwlch ablaze,  
Caer Wydr's sword embossed,  
And shatter all that city!" (Alas!  
Those warriors on the sea like glass,  
And all but seven lost!)

"the wine-dark sea": a Homeric phrase not in the Welsh.  
Caer Siddi = the Faery City (or fortress).

Caer Rigor: another of the names of the four-sided,  
four-cornered house of the dead.

The nine maidens were those who kindled the fire for the  
cauldron (in the next stanza).  
Caer Feddwidd = the City of Carousal.

Cai = the later Sir Kay.  
The cauldron (or perhaps just its rim) was also covered  
with pearls.

The seven men who survived are not named in the original  
poem; the nine names mentioned in this poem are all drawn  
from early Welsh references to Arthur's host.

Bedwyr = the later Sir Bedivere.

Caer Goludd = the Inward City.

Prydwenn = Arthur's ship.

Llwh Llawwynnawg (related to Lugh Loingheimionach,  
the Irish god of sun and storm) = the later Sir Lancelot  
du Lac.

Caledfwlch = the later Excalibur.

Caer Wydr = the City of Glass.

