# Chapter 4

## Imagination and Explanation:
## Landscapes of the Mind

### People and landscape

An eminent English archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, once famously said that 'the archaeologist may find the tub, but altogether miss Diogenes'. In this reference to the ascetic Greek philosopher who renounced riches and comforts and lived in a tub, Wheeler meant that archaeologists sometimes forget the people of the past in their obsession with 'things', and in particular forget about how people thought and felt. In this chapter we will be moving back to 'people', real and imagined. We will 'put Diogenes back in his tub'. We will be moving away from material landscapes to landscapes of the mind and imagination, mental landscapes. This has been a continuously underlying theme of the whole book, of course, but in this chapter we turn to older ways of explaining the landscape.

Today's cultural landscapes can too easily be viewed principally as physical landscapes, a material past made up of features which have been shaped by historical processes – subsistence, industrial exploitation, hunting, religion or warfare, for example. The cultural landscapes inhabited by people in the past seem to have been altogether more subtle, very much 'mental' landscapes, recognising the 'built' elements of the landscape, but also consisting of natural features such as woods, mountains, rivers and stones, and in worlds inhabited by gods, giants, trolls and legendary heroes.

### Landscape – what does it mean?

It is important to bear in mind the origins of the term 'landscape' when we try to project ourselves back in time to the minds of ancient people and how they understood their surroundings. Landscape is a relatively recent invention, derived originally from the term landschap that developed in the Netherlands in the late 16th century, for painted depictions of an area, although there had been earlier largely symbolic depictions such as the 14th century painting of the Bad and Good Government mural in Siena, Italy for example. The Netherlands was a country where the environment had been heavily altered by human intervention, notably through extensive land reclamation programmes. Landschap paintings therefore emphasised human activities and actions such as cattle droving, settlement and farming. However, landscape paintings in the common sense came to depict the environment in picturesque terms that highlighted nature, not culture. In the Welsh context, for example, literary descriptions of 'landscape' before the 19th century are very few, and this is not unusual.

For archaeologists over the past fifty years or more, 'landscape' has served as a convenient (and sometimes not particularly accurate) term to provide an escape from single site studies. It implies not simply a broad tract of land, but an area that requires careful and informed attention: the attention of the intellect rather than of the eye. It has become an area of study in itself.

Now, and embedded within the European Landscape Convention, we can see emerging a new understanding of what landscape is. This is an all-embracing concept, and an inclusive one socially, not restricted to 'beautiful' or special landscapes, for example. It draws on historical and literary associations as well as the physical and material. It combines nature and culture. Most importantly it views landscape very clearly as a matter of perception, an idea not a thing. It is an imagined construct looking to the environment and to the real world for its raw material, and to the inner eye, to the intellect and to the senses for its meaning and character. But if this is not a new idea (being partly a return to the 16th-century artists' definition of landscape as the depiction of the world rather than the world itself) this book does demonstrate an idea new to many. This is that although 'landscape' can only exist in the 'here and now', its perception must take account of the environment, with its very long visible,

tangible and retrievable history (and prehistory).

Crucially, this view insists on a distinction between environment and landscape. There has always been an environment, changing through time, with or without human influence, but the landscape only exists with people and only in our own time. We can use archaeology (and documentary research), as the last chapter shows, as one way to reach an understanding of the environment in order to create our landscapes. But we can only guess as to whether past peoples had 'landscape' in their minds in anything like the same way that we do. Traditional myths are one way of trying to approach this subject, and of bringing some past perceptions of the world into our own mental landscapes.

## Explanations from the past

So in what way did people in the more distant past have any clear sense that they inhabited a 'landscape' as such, rather than simply living on the land, inhabiting a world in which the raw materials were present, recognised and respected. There are numerous tales from all over the world, not only from Europe, which are concerned with the essential matter of landscape, mountains, rivers, woods, swamps and stones, as well as events such as floods, the cycle of the seasons and the origins of societies. Moreover, all of these are connected with people or beings, often named (names meant power): none occur unattached and isolated. These are clear indications that people were fully appreciative of what we would term their 'local landscapes' and their stories are a way of trying to explain the myriad of observed phenomena. Even today, 'nations' and 'states' are imagined rather than natural communities. One of the principal ways of agreeing cultural identity, then as now, was by a shared inheritance of myth, folklore and tradition.

Explanations have become more sophisticated with the passage of time, but society has forgotten at least as much as it has learned, which after all is one of the reasons for needing archaeologists. The words and ideas embedded in stories, myths and traditions may suggest the thought processes which gave rise to our landscape. Archaeologists need to study both in order to approach the past.

Early explanations of the world are usually called myths and are present in all societies at a certain stage in their development. The word itself comes from the Greek 'mythos' which originally meant speech or discourse but which (as they were supplanted by apparently more reliable written stories) later came to mean fable or legend. It now usually refers to stories of forgotten or vague origin that are mainly religious or supernatural in nature. Originally, however, they sought to explain or rationalise the supernatural and society. All myths (like modern scientific explanations) were presumably at some stage actually believed to be true at some level by the people who used or originated them. A modern equivalent is perhaps the 'urban myth'–stories that are superficially ridiculous but that nevertheless contain a deeper widely recognised truth about the modern world.

Broadly speaking, myths seek to rationalise and explain the universe and all that is in it, including contemporary landscapes. They had a similar function to science, theology, religion, history and archaeology in modern societies. Myths remain important and alive, and we need make no apologies for including in our book a chapter of stories which examine a few of the many myths that exist in our twelve areas. Some may describe actual events but, as they all belong to pre-literate oral traditions, they have been embellished and re–fashioned by various story-tellers over time. It is now almost impossible to tell what originally happened to inspire them.

We have already told a story about the Kaali meteorite, to show the physical traces it left in the landscape, and in the next chapter we will show how modern archaeological science explains it. Here we look at the myths that its fiery trail and fall to earth has left behind.

*The Kaali meteorite shower is the only cosmic catastrophe in Europe of any magnitude that has hit a populated area. It also happened at a time when everything connected with heaven was very carefully followed, and clear traces of it have survived in Estonian, Latvian and Germanic mythologies. More distant allusions can also be found in Celtic, Greek and even Christian mythologies.*

*For a very long time (over 2500 years) people had no idea that the Kaali features were meteorite craters. Who could imagine that rocks could fall down from the sky? Where from? Many legends were therefore created about the formation of Lake Kaali. One of them tells us that once there had been a fortification in Kaali. Another version*

*is that this is an old volcano crater. A third version is that an old cave collapsed, leaving rocks and stones piled up.*

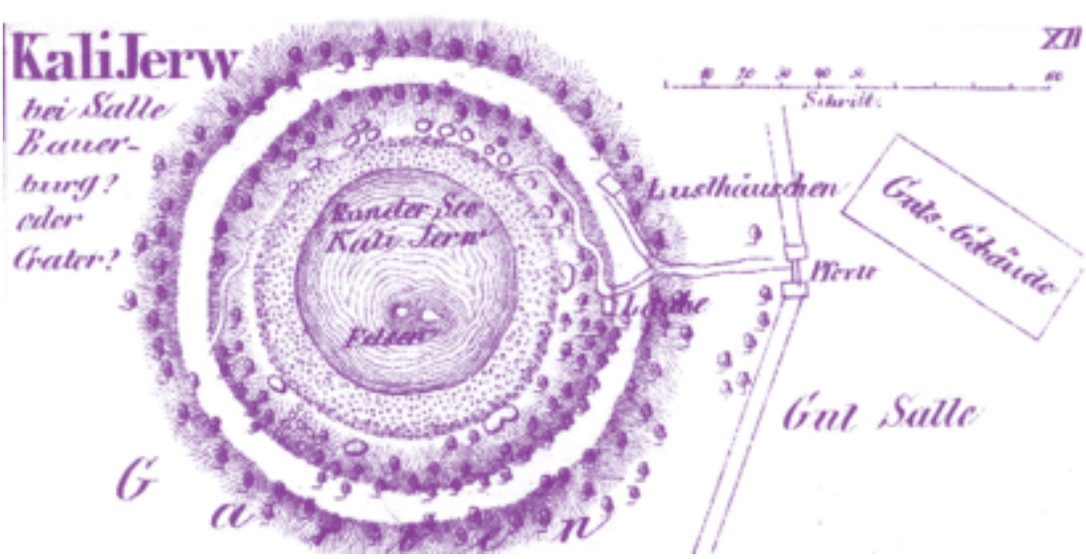
*The Finnish national epic Kalevala, the oldest parts of which recall events that happened thousands of years ago, describes in its songs how the Sun had fallen down and caused a terrible accident on a distant island across the sea. Colourful motifs about the burning of marshes and lakes in Saaremaa and weeping for the perished are frequent in Estonian folklore, too – 'the swamps were set on fire, the lakes stood in flames …'. Some of this folklore has survived in folk songs that are still sung today.*

*The fall of the Kaali meteorite could indirectly be the event which inspired the ancient Greek legend about Phaeton. Phaeton took over driving the Sun cart from his father, Helios, but lost control of it and let the flaming cart fall into a mysterious river, the Eridanos, that no human had ever seen. Phaeton's sisters were turned into trees, weeping for Phaeton at the place where he was drowned, their tears fell as amber. This beautiful legend was born in a far-away southern country, perhaps simply to explain this exotic and mysterious substance, but the mention of amber alone suggests that it is a reference to an event that happened in the Baltic, and very likely the fall of the Kaali meteorite.*

*The knowledge and memory of the disaster travelled far in both space and time. The earliest surviving written sources that may refer to the Kaali catastrophe date from the years 350-320 BC and are connected with the mysterious island of Thule. The Greek traveller Pytheas of Marseilles placed this island north of Brittany, and others have suggested it was the Orkney Islands north of Scotland, yet several scientists have deduced from the descriptions that the spot where 'the barbarian showed me the grave where the Sun fell dead' must instead be Saaremaa. Pytheas' descriptions of the way of life on Thule also seem to fit better the pre-Roman Iron Age in Saaremaa than with the far-off North Sea. The same place seems to be described in the epic 'Argonautics' of Rhodos Appolonios (295-215 BC) where a sailor found a 'deep lake in the far north – the burial of the Sun, from which still fog rose as from the glowing wound'.*

*The Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus described the cult of Nerthus of the Schleswig-Holstein and Jutland settlers in the 1st century AD 'in a secret lake concealed from everybody' on a mythical island. On this sacred island of the Germanics, slaves were sometimes sacrificed to the lake. It seems quite possible that Tacitus was speaking about the Kaali crater. He was also the first writer to mention the Estonians: 'Upon the right of the Suevian Sea [the Baltic] the Aestyan [Estonians] reside, who use the same customs and attire with the Suevians [Swedes]. They worship the Mother of the Gods'.*

*Even later references to the Kaali meteorite can still be found. In the course of converting the Estonians to Christianity in 1220, missionaries cut down the wooden figures of Estonian gods on a sacred hill in East Estonia. Henric's Livonian Chronicle describes the incident, mentioning also that Tharapita, the great god of the Saareans, was born on that hill and had then flown across to Saaremaa. Modern science tells us that the meteorite came from the east, thus creating this belief in the birth and life of a god just as it created the lake of Kaali and its religions, exemplified today by finds of*




*An historical map of Kaali*

*prehistoric ritual deposition of goods and artefacts.*

*But here, too, myth tells a different story. One describes how people decided to find out how deep the crater was. Modern archaeologists and scientists do this with bore-holes through the lake sediments; the local villagers tied together all the ropes in the village and lowered down a cauldron filled with sand. It did not reach the bottom of the lake, but when pulled out, it was found to contain a bloody ram's head with a knife in it. This was evidence enough for the villagers that someone was still living in the depths of the lake.*

These tales clearly show how difficult it is to know where to draw the line between true myths and the evolving traditions, written history and archaeological narratives that follow them. If myths describe the actions of gods and the way the world works, folk tales are mythology in decline, where gods become super-heroes (or ogres and witches) and their landscape is no longer timeless but almost the familiar world, which we ourselves inhabit.

## Giants and gnomes – tales of the supernatural

We now present four more tales, from Sweden, Finland, northern Germany and northern Italy. Although quite different in their settings, they have common threads, all explaining how supernatural beings such as giants, gnomes or 'subterraneans' created aspects of the landscape that are either natural or that seemed impossible to be humanly-made. Interestingly, two of the focal points which appear in the stories, churches and burial chambers, although several thousands of years apart, are both connected with religion and faith. We've told other stories in this book about the creation of symbolic landscapes such as the bog deposits in Ireland, the precise perception of crannogs, the burial rites of the Danish Iron Age, and ritual deposits at Kaali. We have used archaeological evidence for these, but the following stories show how people in the past saw religious and cultural significance in landscape. The first example is about trolls in Bjäre:

*There is a rich mythical world associated with burial mounds, often connected with trolls or giants. These creatures used to inhabit remote places in the area, enjoying the peace and quiet of Bjäre. Unfortunately for the trolls and giants, churches were built in the medieval period with loud bells that destroyed their solitude. To silence them they threw stones or earth at the churches, but very often they missed and a mound or standing stone was created. Soon all the giants disappeared from the area, no doubt because they could not stand the noise, but the trolls were more persistent, or less sensitive. They used the mounds as dwellings*

*Elna Mårten where trolls dwell with their treasure, Bjäre*

*and hid their treasures inside them. Once a year the treasures and the insides of these dwellings became visible for ordinary people, and of course many wanted to get hold of the troll treasures. The failures and successes of those people who tried to steal this treasure are the subject of many other tales.*

Finnish legends also explain how the landscape was inhabited and shaped by giants before humans came along. The oldest giant stories are probably dated to the Iron Age, but the majority of the surviving stories are from the historical period. In addition to natural phenomena, they were also used to explain the pagan monuments whose meaning had been forgotten since the arrival of Christianity. As explanations for landscape features, they form a rich and easily understandable tradition.

*Characteristic of the Vakka-Suomi landscape is its hard, hostile, stone-filled soil. There are great boulders on the fields, and rocky, unfarmed areas. The local rock – 'rapakivigranite', unique to Finland – makes the soil acid and low in nutrients, an infertile, inhospitable land. The barren landscape is fruitful in other ways, however, and it has given birth to a great many stories about the giants who lived in the area before humans. When the humans came, conflicts occurred and the relationship between humans and giants didn't always work smoothly. The giants tried to mimic human ways of living, but often the results were pitiful failures.*

*The giants were the sons of Kaleva, a name apparently originating in the Iron Age, when the Finns had connections with northern Estonia. The first-known written reference to this name is not until 1551 when Bishop Agricola, who was responsible for translating the Bible into Finnish, wrote a list of gods of the ancient Finns. The stories about the sons of Kaleva were creation stories, used to explain how odd natural formations had come into existence. According to the stories, the giants were the original people of Vakka-Suomi, whose fate was to clear ground for the humans who would arrive later.*

*According to the tales, the giants looked like people except that they had six fingers on their hands and six toes on their feet and, of course, were of gargantuan size. The eyes of a giant were the size of saucers. According to one story, when a young giant was old enough to attend to a confirmation class, the ladders of an entire village were needed to be able to take the hat off his head. To cross water they didn't need boats – they could stride across the bottom of the sea. It is told that some giants walked all the way to Sweden, but had to return hungry because the Swedish people, not then as hospitable as the Finns, would not feed them.*

*The Giants Whetstone, Untamala*

*The churchyard where the whetstone stands, Untamala*

*Especially popular were stories about the giants as church builders. These rather recent stories explain the presence of the many stone churches in the area that we would say were built by people during the 16th and 17th centuries. The stories tell of huge female giants carrying stones in their aprons for the male giants to do the masonry. They handled large boulders in the same way that humans handled bricks. The giants were usually paid in food but the payment caused quarrels and, after a dispute, the giants would destroy the church they had built, thereby neatly explaining the area's many natural stone piles.*

*Another popular type of church-building story tells about contests between humans and giants. Humans usually won such contests because, to their misfortune, the giants weren't too bright. This sort of story is linked, for example, to Kirkelinna of Laitila, which is a hillfort dated to the Iron Age. According to the story the giants tried to build their own church where the hillfort stands but after they lost a contest with humans they got angry and in their fury they destroyed what they had built, now all that remains of it are the boulders and a small section of a stone wall.*

*In the churchyard of Untamala there stands a two metre tall granite boulder that was discovered during excavations in the*

*1950s, the memorial of two women buried there during the 12th century. The village story, however, tells us that it is a whetstone of a son of Kaleva. The giant was sharpening his scythe in his meadow and sent his wife for water. When she had been too long on her journey, the giant became angry and threw his whetstone away. The giant's throw was so powerful that the whetstone reached the churchyard and buried itself so deep that it could not be dug out.*

Our next story is from northern Germany, and combines two themes common to many of Europe's folk tales – an explanation of how burial chambers came into being, and the traditions connected with marriage and fertility. Archaeologists still take an interest in one of these, but both are of equal interest to folk story-tellers.

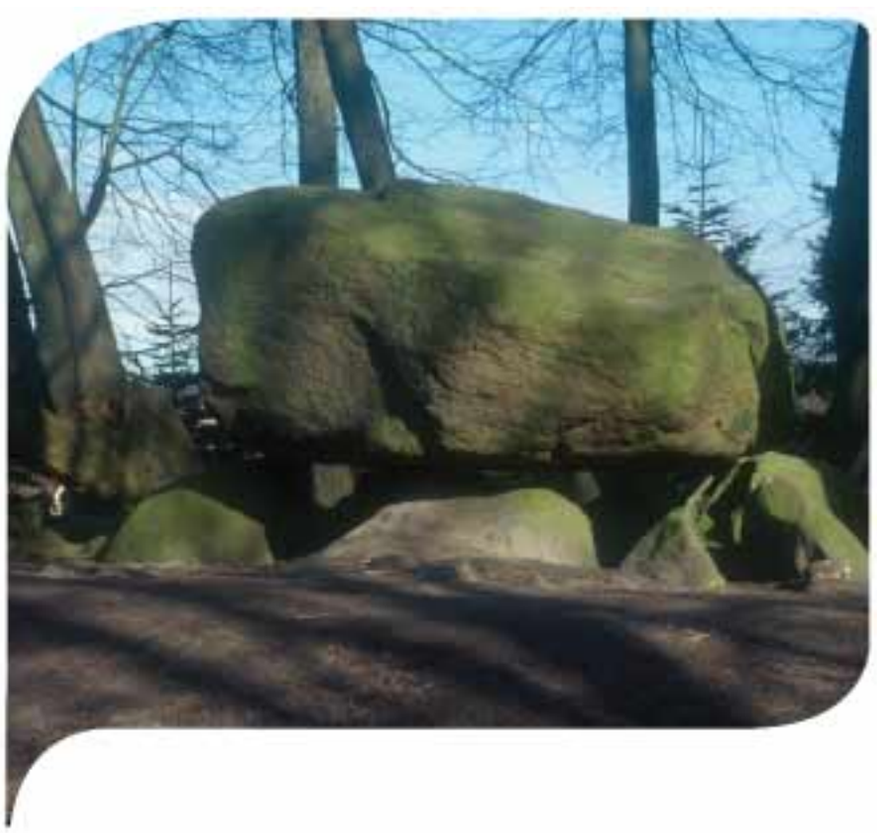
*In Albersdorf there is a famous stone monument traditionally known as 'The Brutkamp' or 'Oven-Stone'. One story tells of the subterraneans (who could bring luck to visitors) who lived here, while another tale says that only giants could have built it. A modern tradition is that newly married couples will have luck in their life if they visit the Brutkamp.*

*Archaeologically speaking, the Brutkamp is a megalithic burial chamber, more than 5000 years old, built by a group of early farmers in northern Germany. It is an important monument, with the biggest capstone in the whole of Schleswig-Holstein (weighing about 23 tons). It does not stand alone, but as part of a group of megalithic tombs near Albersdorf. Along with later Bronze Age grave mounds, these Neolithic tombs add to the special cultural landscape character of the area, and it is surely significant that they have shaped local myth just as much as landscape.*

The idea that giants built monuments associated with ritual, religion and ceremony is a common theme across Europe. In Wales, several Neolithic burial chambers are associated with giants: e.g. Barclodiad-y-Gawres ('Apronful of the Giantess') and a tale tells how such a tomb was created when a giantess let a load of stones that she was carrying slip from her apron.

Another tale of this sort with small, not giant beings, and this time from northern Italy, explains how gnomes, again working with people, transformed the mountainous region of the Dolomites.

*The Brutkamp dolmen, Albersdorf*

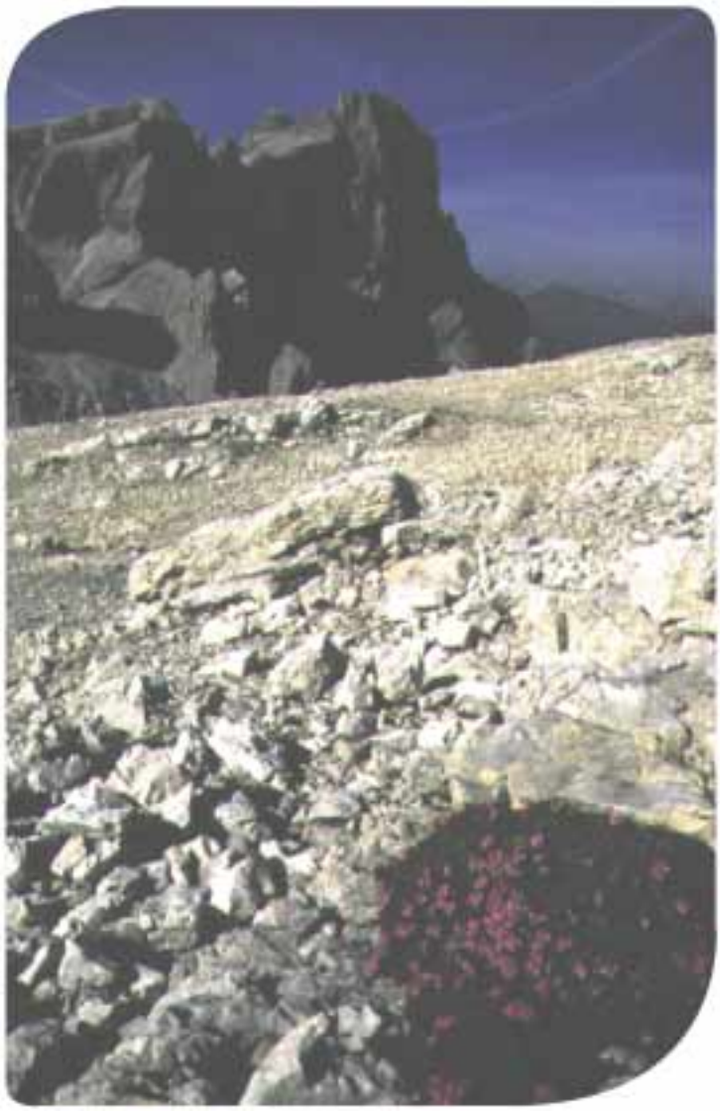


*A drawing of the Brutkamp dolmen, Albersdorf*

*Once upon a time there lived, in a remote kingdom of the Alps, an unhappy prince. He could have anything he desired in his realm, but the only thing he really cared about was beyond his reach. He spent the days riding wildly, driven by an inner fire, and the nights gazing at the friendly moon. Everything around was so still and sombre that the only relief was the appearance of the moon in the night sky, giving a pale hue to the landscape. One night he was riding his horse impatiently while around him vertical cliffs rose over his head, dark and cruel. When he reached the top of the hill he sat down waiting; it was a night with a waning moon, which meant that he had to wait long before it appeared in the east, and he fell asleep and dreamt.*

*He dreamt that he was in a wonderful place where everything around him reflected the unreal bright light of the moon. A beautiful girl appeared 'the princess of this beautiful place', he thought 'the princess of the moon'. What he had desired so much was there in front of him. He spent a long time, hours, probably days, in this idyll, but the moonlight was so strong that he was rapidly becoming blind. He could not stay longer, and had to return to his gloomy mountains. The princess was fond of him and would have followed him anywhere, but she found that in his realm everything was dark and gloomy and she withered away, growing melancholic. She would soon die if she did not return to the moon.*

*A huge dark cloud covered the moon and an eerie thunder awakened the prince. He was wistful and desperate, and the moon was again far away, out of reach. Soon it started raining. The prince saw a chamois climbing the mountain slopes and followed it. He arrived at a cave lit by a small fire, and in front of him were two small strange men staring at him with smart and twinkling eyes. They were 'Salvans', the small people of the mountain who dwell in the underworld, feared for their magical powers. The prince told the two gnomes his sad story. They listened patiently until the end, and then one of them said 'I am Laurin, king of the Salvans. Long ago we lived in peace in these mountains before we were betrayed and defeated: the garden of roses that was the pride of our kingdom was destroyed and my people were slaughtered. Now we have no land to live in, but if you promise to let us live in peace as in the old days, we will help you to find what you are looking for. Wait until the next full moon for my people'.*



*The Pale Mountains of the Moon, Paneveggio*

*When the full moon came, the prince was sitting as always, contemplating the moon, when he saw thousands of gnomes appear from every small crevice in the rocks and every hole in the ground. They rode the faithful chamois up all the highest mountains. They were so far up that it seemed they could touch the moon; then with the moonlight they started to weave a long shining thread that little by little they wrapped around the mountains.*

*The following morning, when the prince woke, he saw something amazing: all the mountains around him had become incredibly beautiful and shining white; it was like being on the moon. The news spread by word of mouth from village to village, from valley to valley, from kingdom to kingdom, and many people came from far away to see the miracle.*

*One day a beautiful princess came from afar to see the pale mountains and, while she was admiring them, the prince recognised her*

*as the woman from his dreams, the princess of the moon. Since then the mountains have been called the mountains of the moon, a place where people, gnomes and chamois live together in peace. And the story does not end here: it is said that one day the princess returned to the moon to visit her parents and brought back to the highest peaks of the pale mountains a small white flower, the emblem of these mountains; we call it the star of the Alps – the Edelweiss.*

## Historical tales

These tales share a clear trend, that humans once shared the world with supernatural beings. Folk tales which set out to explain landscape continued into the historical period and retain similar themes. These tales were devised to entertain as well as to explain. In medieval Welsh culture, great honour was attached to the role of the cyfarwyddydd (or tellers of tales), who went from court to court across Wales plying their art. One of these, Gwydion, is described in the fourth branch of the Welsh Mabinogi as 'the best teller of tales in the world'. The four branches of the Mabinogi together form one of the jewels of Welsh medieval literature. They were collected and written down in the 14th century, but they are many centuries older, passed on orally in the bardic tradition.

The four stories, like those we have heard from Finland and Italy, are set in a mythological world of giants, talking birds, magician and shape-shifters, but the fourth story at least, Math vab Mathonwy, can be seen to describe a real landscape, which up to a point can still be seen and experienced today. Much of the action takes place in our project's Welsh study area, and the tale is a Pathway to the past as well as to the cultural landscape. Math's is a long story as our summary shows.

*Math vab Mathonwy, the lord of Gwynedd lived at Caer Dathyl. He could live only if his feet were in the lap of a virgin, unless he was fighting in the turmoil of war. He could however hear whispering, even low, carried on the wind. Math's world is disrupted when his nephew, Gilfaethwy fab Dôn, fell in love with his virgin footholder, Goewin, and took her away under cover of a raid by his brother Gwydion to steal the pigs of Annwn (the Underworld) from Pryderi in Dyfed. This led to war in Arfon, with Math and Gwydion pursuing and killing Pryderi. Subsequently, in a tale of magic and wonder, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are turned into animals, and princes die in battle, a young man called Lleu, the story's new hero, is born, loses and regains human shape, and with magic powers eventually inherits lordship. Along the way there is love, betrayal, revenge, attempted murder, and people are turned into owls and eagles. It is a convoluted, complex tale, emerging from an oral tradition, with many different characters and symbols, designed to construct and validate kinship and lineage.*

*But (perhaps for the same reason, to confirm land ownership) all the fantastic action takes place at specific real places which are mentioned in the text, and our project has shown that most of these can still be traced today. The action takes place within two genuine historical cantrefi (medieval administrative districts), Arfon and Ardudwy, which can be traced through historical records. The two principal courts (palaces) of these real historical areas are mentioned as the homes of some of the (fictional) central characters in the story. Math lived at Caer Dathyl in Arfon, which is tentatively identified as Segontium/Caernarfon in Arfon ,where there is a Roman fort, a Norman motte and bailey castle and the medieval castle and walled town of Edward I. Lleu lived at Mur Castell in Ardudwy, the modern site of Tomen y Mur, another Roman fort complex and later Norman motte and bailey. Interestingly, of course, it was at palaces such as these that the cyfarwyddydd passed on the Mabinogion in oral form.*

*When he led his army out from Caer Dathyl, the places Math passed through, or where battles took place, are still to be found along the former Roman road from Segontium to Tomen y Mur. The manors of Pennardd and Coed Alun are mentioned, and can be traced by placename evidence on the modern map; the name Nant Call, where battle was first engaged, is remembered in farm names; while Dolbenmaen, where a temporary peace was made, is further south again at a river crossing where there stands another motte and bailey castle, once the administrative centre of Eifionydd (another cantref).*

*Math's enemy, Pryderi, crossed Traeth Mawr, formerly a wide estuary but now enclosed and drained, before being killed in single combat at Felenrhyd and buried at Maentwrog, both places still to be found. Felenrhyd is remembered in several placenames, including a ford and a mill, while*

*Caernarfon, site of a Roman fort and medieval castle, Wales*

*The coastal hillfort of Dinas Dinlle where Lleu was raised by Gwydion the magician, Wales*

*the village of Maentwrog is a mile away (and is the burial place of the giant Twrog, marked by a huge prehistoric standing stone in the churchyard – but that is another tale).*

*The story then describes a surviving Roman infrastructure. Roman or early post-Roman administrators had left the area in the 5th century, but this tale, created, re-told and embellished between (or before) then and the 14th century when it was written down allowed a Roman or post-Roman landscape to survive through oral tradition into modern place-names.*

*Landscape associations continue throughout the story. Earlier in the tale, we had been told that Goewin is the daughter of Pebin of Dol Bebin yn Arfon: this is now a farmhouse in Dyffryn Nantlle, not far from the place where Lleu was transformed back into human shape. When Lleu flies away in the form of an eagle, Gwydion tracks him down in the valley of Nantlle, where he is sitting in an oak tree between two lakes. This translates in Welsh as 'Baladeuly' and we know from historical records that this was also the centre of one of the royal estates of Arfon, with the princes' common lying above in Nantlle. The court connection is emphasised again.*

*Lleu is taken to Caer Dathyl to recover, and when he has done so he and Gwydion set out with an army to Mur Castell. Blodeuedd, Lleu's magically created wife betrays him and flees, and her maidens drown in a lake; and a nearby lake is known as Llyn Morwynion, 'lake of the maiden'. Lleu kills Gronw (Blodeuedd's lover) by hurling a spear into his body, which first pierces a stone Gronw holds in front of him. This takes place in the spot by the Afon Cynfael, where Lleu was struck by Gronw, and some years ago a stone was found nearby which had a hole through the centre. This was known as the stone of Gronw. What is more, a local*

*resident remembers that when his father ploughed the farmland here, he always left the corner of one field untouched – because it was Gronw's grave.*

Folk tales which set out to explain landscape continued into the historical period, retaining similar themes as earlier (religion, dark deeds and death), but without supernatural beings and magic. Following the tale of Math, which contains both Christian and pagan references and symbols, we are now in a truly Christian era where the stories are acted out by identifiable humans (including clergy and knights, some of whom are named) in recognisable landscapes. The following tales from our Spessart project in Germany are an example of this.

*At the edge of Haibach, under tall deciduous trees, lies the Ketzelburg, a prominent round hill enclosed by a strong rampart and a deep moat, and secured on three sides by high cliffs. It towers above the Haibach brook, which runs deep in the valley below. Local people know the site well. The older people played here as children; youngsters still come here today for their nightly rendezvous. The Ketzelburg is a part of the Haibach identity, entwined by legends and sagas. The stories tell of knights, dreadful deeds and mysterious treasures. Lately, some local historians have come to regard the mounds as the remains of Germanic or Celtic ramparts, but the old legends have proven to be closer to the truth than one might expect. More recent studies confirm that this is the site of a medieval castle, a so-called motte, of which many were erected during the 12th century. So here we have an excellent example of modern explanations confirming older ones (or should that be the other way round?)*

*Many small castles were built at this time – small hills surrounded by a bank and ditch, a palisade, a wooden or stone tower at the centre, a few half-timbered houses and a village nearby, providing all that was needed for living. The castles housed ministerial officials and lesser nobility. Many castles, however, were given up and abandoned before long, including the Ketzelburg in Haibach. Legends grew up around its remains and its name.*

*One of these legends tells of a knight who lived here, and of two maids from the nearby village. What was a game for the knight was deadly serious for the young women. On the way back to Haibach from the harvest one day, the maids pounced upon one another in a fierce struggle which left them both dead, each killed by the other's sickle. Two stone crosses were set up to commemorate the terrible bloodbath. The knight was haunted by a guilty conscience. His lord, the Archbishop of Mainz, ordered the castle to be destroyed, and the knight left on a long and dangerous pilgrimage to*

*The motte of the Ketzelburg castle, Spessart*

*Jerusalem. Years later, a lone wanderer came to Haibach, with long hair and a beard and wearing a dusty pilgrim's cloak. He knelt at the memorial crosses and died in prayer. The people of Haibach recognised the lone traveller as the knight, returning from the Holy Land. His death at the site where the maids had fought, for which he was responsible, was a sign of God's forgiveness – so another stone cross was built beside the maids' crosses. The three crosses are still to be seen in the woods of the Ketzelburg.*

*This saga explains the abandonment of the castle, for which no historical records survive. It also seems to depict the struggle between lesser and higher nobility for power. The legend names the Archbishop of Mainz as the man who destroyed the castle. In reality Archbishop Konrad of Mainz, who was driven away by his rival, Christian von Buch, in 1165 and only returned after his foe's death in 1183, complained that the diocese was badly neglected during his absence. The Church had lost many goods and competitive noblemen had erected a castle directly outside Aschaffenburg, threatening the archbishop's interests. Konrad commended himself on having 'taken care' of these problems and having destroyed the castle outside Aschaffenburg. Konrad may not have been referring to the Ketzelburg, but the legend does refer to an actual conflict and Haibach does lie just outside Aschaffenburg.*

The theme of religion is again to the fore here, combined with the perennial themes of love (often unrequited) and death. But we have moved on from stories about giants in a dimly-seen past landscape with mysterious monuments to people we recognise inhabiting a landscape with which we, like them, are familiar (a village, harvest, stone crosses), and set in an historic period (that of pilgrimages to the Holy Land).

Another legend explains the name of the castle the Ketzelburg. In reality the name probably comes from the builders of the castle, the Kesselbergers, who married into the area near Aschaffenburg. But this was long ago forgotten, so people found other explanations.

According to legend, two children, brother and sister, were playing where the castle stands. The girl discovered the handle of a kettle, sticking out of the ground. She dug down and found that it was filled with gold coins. But the kettle was too heavy to lift. She called her brother to help her, but at the sound of her voice the kettle disappeared, leaving the girl holding only its handle. It was never seen again, but the place was henceforth called Kesselburg (kessel being the German word for kettle), which eventually evolved into Ketzelburg.

This legend combines local elements with features of classical travelling lore, which can be found all across Europe. One of these is the gold treasure buried below a prominent hill, a feature also found in the troll legends of gold treasures under Bronze Age burial mounds in Bjäre and Halland. Also the obligation to remain silent when getting treasure is common. If you say a single word, the treasure disappears instantly, never to return.

Medieval Spessart is reflected in other legends too. The Kreuzkapelle, near Frammersbach was founded in the 14th century by the Duke of Rieneck. The chapel served the Spessart glassmakers, but when parish churches were later built in Wiesen and Frammersbach it became more or less superfluous, and instead developed into an important pilgrim church, securing its continued existence today.

*Two legends surround the 'Kreuzkapelle' (cross chapel), which are similar to legends surrounding other chapels and churches. One describes how the Duke of Rieneck got lost in the woods while hunting. He was thirsty and hungry, and had almost given up hope, when a deer bearing antlers with a cross appeared before him and showed him the way to a spring near the path. Strengthened and saved, he ordered a chapel to be built in this spot.*

This legend explains the name of the chapel with the cross in the deer's antlers, and preserves the memory of the Duke as its founder. Later, a second legend concerning the founding of the Kreuzkapelle developed, one that was surely good for the reputation of a pilgrim church.

*A shepherd lay down to sleep. When he awoke, a cross lay in the grass beside him. He took this to his hut, but next morning it had disappeared. When he returned to the place of his nap of the day before, the cross lay there again in the grass. He took it back home, only to find the 'ritual' repeated, and then again for a third time. It was clear to all the villagers that this was a sign from God telling them to build a church on that spot.*

Legends of treasure were also common. The 'Schächerloch' for example is surrounded by numerous stories, even though this legendary hall in a cave, which has enough room to hold sixteen people, is not

accessible today. According to the stories, the room gave shelter and protection to peasants in hiding during the Thirty Years War. It is also said that Emperor Heinrich IV, who was expelled by Pope Gregory VII, hid in the cave in 1077. An adventurous group tried to find treasures in the cave, without success. They were caught in the act and brought before the court of the sovereign, where they were punished with an incredibly high fine, set according to the value of the treasure they had hoped to find. The entrance to the cave was blasted to prevent any further 'adventuring' of this kind. Before this, however, local villagers had also unsuccessfully tried to find treasure, as the following story tells.

*Once upon a time, the Steinmark villagers wanted to retrieve the treasure from the 'Schächerloch'. On the night of a full-moon they took to the woods with pick and spade. When they reached the spot where the gold and silver coins were supposedly buried, their leader Schulze said 'Let someone stand guard at the hole, so no one disturbs our work.' So three villagers stood outside, each carrying a large club. Schulze and a handful of men climbed down and started digging. Suddenly, the three watchmen saw several dark figures carrying tree trunks towards them, and then chopping them into shape. They hammered, chopped and carved like trained carpenters, and soon set up a gibbet. The three guards could see it all clearly but did not say a word, because one is not allowed to speak when retrieving treasure. The mysterious strangers were also silent. Only when they had finished the gibbet did one of them say 'Hey, which one shall we hang first, the one with the red vest?'. Upon hearing this, the three guards threw away their clubs and fled back to the village. Schulze and the others who went into the hole to dig were never seen or heard of again.*

*Deodat-Guy-Silvain-Tancrede Gratet de Dolomieu, who gave his name to the Dolomites*

By now we have truly entered the historical period, where the legends read more like historical documents than invented stories spun by tellers of tales as explanations for the way things were. It is now but a short step forward to the period of scientific discovery and explanation, which is the basis of our modern accounts of cultural landscapes. This story of how the Dolomites of northern Italy received their name is a good example of a 'scientific' tale, which also contrasts nicely with the legendary explanation of an earlier name involving gnomes, which we have already told and which therefore brings us full circle back to myths.

*The Pale di San Martino range is the largest massif of the Dolomites. A quadrilateral of 200 square kilometres with vertical cliffs soaring above wooded valleys and mountain pastures, its heart is a rolling, rocky high plateau recalling, with its clear colours, a lunar landscape. Its magical atmosphere has inspired many writers, such as Dino Buzzatti in his 'Il Deserto dei Tartari'. Though the place is covered with snow most of the year, its shapes remind us of an ancient past when these mountains were a coral atoll emerging from the abyss of a tropical sea. But many things have changed since the submarine relief emerged from the sea, reaching dizzy heights. Winter-like lethargy followed this, then, after a long sleep under thick ice sheets came the new, as the ice melted and the land was populated again by plants, animals and people.*

*We have only called these mountains the Dolomites for about 140 years, a tiny part of their life story. They were re-christened in the 1860s by English tourists and climbers, who named them after the rock they were made of, that name itself is only a little over 200 years old, and named after the traveller and adventurer Gratet de Dolomieu, who first realised their unusual geological character in 1789. Long before that they had been called the Pal Mountains, the Mountains of the Moon. But even earlier, it is said that there was a time when these mountains had sombre tones, but that something happened to turn the dark, gloomy hues into shining white. Those were the days of an unhappy prince who lived in a remote kingdom of the Alps and who was helped by the gnomes...*
*… as an earlier story relates.*

*Sunset on the Pale Mountains, Paneveggio*

So our ability to set out more rational and convincing arguments about landscape evolution and change have still not completely replaced our fondness for, and interest in, the old stories. As well as the survival of stories of giants and gnomes, some of which we have just told, folk traditions are still very much a part of our modern cultural landscapes. Although they may not survive in forms that clearly show their origins as explanations, their association with certain areas of landscape underlies their importance as past reasoning. Many traditions, as we have seen in some of the themes identified above, are connected with religion, birth, love and death. There are at least two such traditions from our areas of cultural landscape. In Albersdorf, as we have already read, megalithic tombs have attracted myths of giving luck and fertility to newly married couples. Another story comes from the Kaali crater, and explains just who is living at the bottom of the lake.

*Once upon a time there was a splendid manor inhabited by a fabulously wealthy couple. They had a son and a daughter, and in order to keep their riches in the family it was decided they should marry each other. After the gorgeous wedding, with many guests, the priest told the coachman as he was leaving that under no circumstances was he to look back. Of course, he did – and with a huge explosion the beautiful mansion together with all the guests disappeared under the earth. At the same spot Lake Kaali appeared, and every midsummer night since, two hands wearing wedding rings appear out of the lake. But the only people who can see the hands are those who come to the lake alone and (more difficult to achieve), have never lied, cheated or stolen.*

*Lake Kaali is still connected with wedding ceremonies. Young couples bring their guests to the lake and throw a bottle containing the wife's maiden name into the bottomless lake in the hope that she will never need it again. More environmentally friendly couples nowadays tend to throw a bouquet of flowers rather than a glass bottle into the waves.*

*All this shows that the heaven-sent lump of iron has not only shaped the cultural landscape of Saaremaa, but that it has also enriched and greatly influenced the mental landscapes of our predecessors. New legends are still being born. Inspiration for them does not end, as precisely at the time when this part of the book was first written, on 21 November 2002, another meteorite fell with much fire and smoke into the sea a few dozens kilometres off Saaremaa. Thunder from the fall was heard also in Kaali ...*

Which leads us back again to the present day, and to explanations our own time has for the landscape that we have read about in this chapter. The final story here brings together many of the strands, not only of this chapter, but also of the whole European Pathways to Cultural Landscapes programme, and – we believe – of the central place of

*A cartoon of the wedding ri that has developed at Kaali crater ©Jaana Rc*

landscape and its diversity within Europe's common heritage.

## The riddle of the wolf pit

The final story in this chapter emphasises the importance of the oral tradition, not only as an end in itself but also as a means of studying the past and of getting to know the people of the past and how they thought and lived. It shows that in the end everyone, expert and non-expert alike, might have opinions as to what something might be, but that 'proof' is difficult to establish. It also demonstrates the importance in the cultural landscape of even modest antiquities. It shows the excitement and interest there is in

r local cultural landscapes, and above all e pre-eminent role of people in cultural ıdscapes (both as participants and as ıservers, tellers of tales and listeners). One uld say that it also shows that there can be ɔ many experts on the job without ything being achieved! Finally, it sums up e importance of using our imaginations ɔngside scientific tools when trying to derstand and explain cultural landscapes. combining the two we will be able to put ogenes back into his tub, where he longs.

*Up on the Hallandsåsen just south of the village of Hasslöv, Sweden, there is a remarkable feature. Not remarkable in itself, because it is really nothing more than a big hole in the ground, but remarkable because it has nevertheless challenged people's imaginations for at least fifty years. This hole, or pit, has a diameter of about six metres and a depth of approximately one and a half metres. It is well-shaped, in the form of a bowl, looking like the hole used by children playing marbles, though only if they were the children of giants!*

*We have no information, either oral or written, about when the pit was dug. Although long familiar to the local people, it only became more widely known after an*

*The wolf pit on the Hallandsåsen, Halland*

*archaeological survey in the 1960s. In official documents, it has been classified as a trapping pit of such great value that it has acquired the status of an ancient monument. Local people say it is a wolf pit.*

*One of the meetings of the EPCL project was held in Halland and archaeologists and historians and landscape experts from ten different nations were able to examine the pit. What should we believe? Several interpretations have been put forward to explain the existence of the pit, but they all fall short of providing a convincing answer. The first suggestion is that it was used for hunting, but the edges of a traditional trapping pit are not symmetrical. One side should have a much gentler slope than the opposite side so that it is easy for an elk or deer to get into the pit but difficult to get out. Also, there is only one pit – trapping pits were usually placed in a long line, which could stretch for tens of kilometres, with small fences between the pits.*

*The second explanation is that the pit was dug to trap wolves. Up until the early 19th century wolves were numerous in southern Sweden, and wolf pits were dug to catch and kill them. Our pit corresponds closely to these wolf pits, but unfortunately lacks any evidence for an actual trapping device such as a cellar-like hollow in the middle of the pit, its vertical edges lined with stones so that, once the wolf had fallen in, it could not possibly climb out again.*

*The third explanation is that the pit is a bomb crater. Although Sweden was not directly involved in the Second World War, in the closing phase of the war allied bombers flew over it and it is not impossible that a plane dropped the bomb before making an emergency landing. However, the pit and surrounding area have been examined using a metal detector and no traces of shrapnel were found, just a Swedish fifty öre coin from 1930.*

*So, what next? An archaeological excavation to examine the contents of the pit, digging our way down to discover (perhaps!) what it was? Even this might not lead us closer to the truth. And, finally, is that really what we want – always to find the truth? It may be that sense of place is greater if we give free play to people's imaginations. How likely is a simple little pit in the ground to engage the attention of both scholars and laymen, from the locality and from other countries, if we know everything about its function? Perhaps its function now, whatever it has been in the past, is to pose questions.*