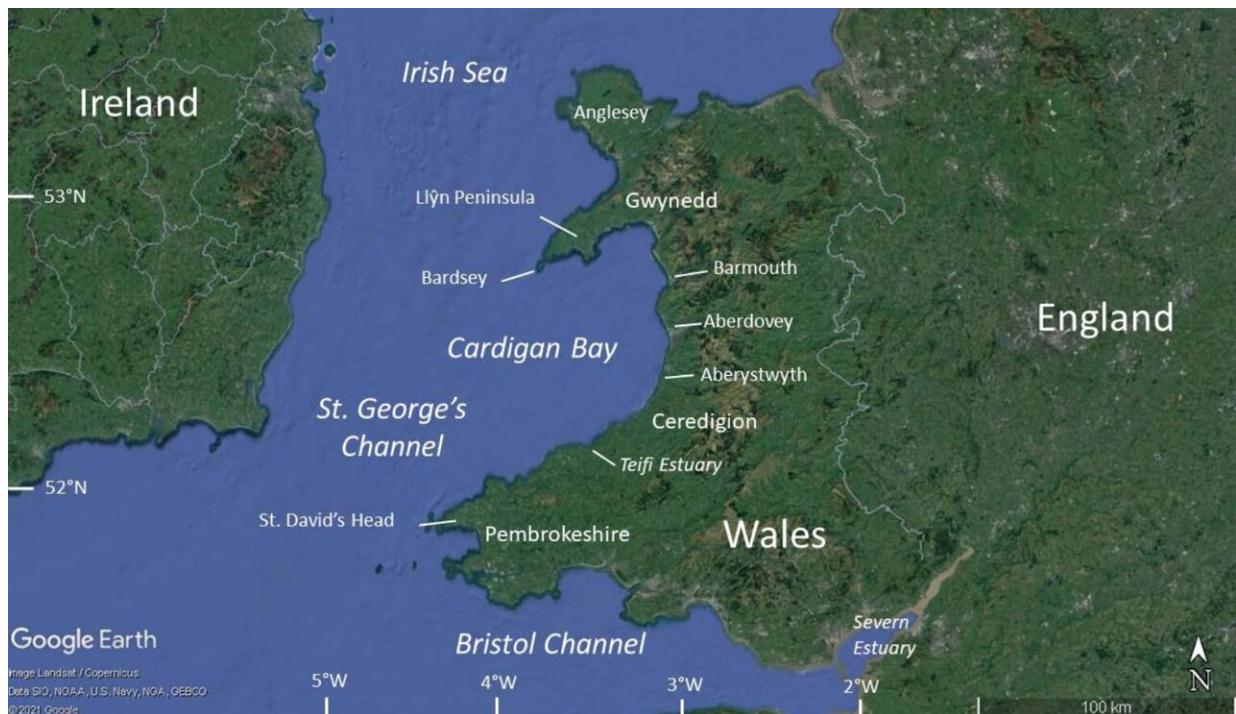


# New study of the Gough map shows what might be the lost islands of Welsh folklore

September 13 2022, by Bob Yirka



Location of cardigan bay and places mentioned in the article. Credit: *Atlantic Geoscience* (2022). DOI: 10.4138/atlgeo.2022.005

A pair of researchers, one with Swansea University, the other with Oxford University, has taken a new look at the Gough map and have found what might be the lost islands of ancient Welsh folklore. In their paper published in the journal *Atlantic Geoscience*, Simon Haslett and

Davis Willis describe two small islands on the map that do not exist today.

The Gough map was created approximately 650 years ago by an unknown person. It gets its name from the noted antiquarian Richard Gough, who came into possession of the map in the early 1800s. It became a well-known document because it broke with previous theologically based mapping.

Ancient Welsh folklore has long suggested an island kingdom once existed off the coast of Wales in what is now Cardigan Bay. Known as Cantre'r Gwaelod in some texts, and as Maes Gwyddno in others, the two islands that made up the kingdom were supposedly ruled by a man called Gwyddno. Evidence of the kingdom has never been found and many historians believe it never actually existed. Still, some insist that it did exist but was overcome by erosion and vanished below the waves of St. George's Channel.

Haslett and Willis point out that mention of the kingdom has been made in early Welsh texts and also indirectly by the famed Egyptian scientist Ptolemy—his notes suggested that the shores of Cardigan Bay stretched farther west than they do now. Such notes suggested that the coast of the Welsh shoreline has eroded quite a bit, hinting that islands nearby could have eroded away, as well.

The researchers note that it is well known that Wales's shoreline is eroding even today. They also point out that a sixth-century monk mentioned in writing that the people living near Cardigan Bay were besieged both by constant invaders and an unruly sea that was eating away at the shoreline. The researchers suggest the comment may refer to an unusually strong storm or perhaps even a tsunami, which could have wiped away low-lying islands in the bay.

The researchers have already set in motion plans to undertake geographical surveys along the coastline of Cardigan Bay and perhaps to extend them enough distance into the sea to determine if there might be remnants of lost islands.

**More information:** Simon K. Haslett et al, The 'lost' islands of Cardigan Bay, Wales, UK: insights into the post-glacial evolution of some Celtic coasts of northwest Europe, *Atlantic Geoscience* (2022). [DOI: 10.4138/atlgeo.2022.005](https://doi.org/10.4138/atlgeo.2022.005)

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