

The Four Treasures

By Linda Costello

From various sources, we can learn of the four treasures of ancient Ireland; tour guide informationⁱ still includes the ancient legends which continue to be retold, *The Gonne-Yeats Letters, 1893–1938*ⁱⁱ make reference to them, and of course, from the ancient texts, such as the *Cath Maige Tuired*ⁱⁱⁱ, in which many references are made to the four treasures and the powers they represent. In researching this, I have found that there are many discrepancies and inconsistencies in what is being presented. Therefore, for purposes of this article, I shall use the following attributes.

The four purported treasures were brought by the Tuatha De Danaan when they came to Ireland around 1897 – 1700 BC. The first treasure was the 'Stone of Fal' or *Lia Fail*, which would scream when a true King of Ireland stood on it. In later years, this stone was placed on the Hill of Tara, the seat of the High-Kings of Ireland. The second treasure was the 'sling-shot of the God Lugh' or the *Spear Luin*, which was known for its accuracy. The third treasure was the 'Magic Sword of Nuadha', or *Claiomh Solais*, which was capable of inflicting only mortal blows when used. The final treasure was the 'Cauldron of Daghdha', or *Coire Acseasc*, from which an endless supply of food issued.

The treasures came from each of four ancient cities, believed to be located in the “Northern Islands,” from where the Tuatha De Danann purportedly came.^{iv} Each treasure was carried by sacred poets, gleaned to be wizards who taught the Tuatha De Danann all that they knew. Each was the wizard of the city from which the treasure originated.

These four treasures, whether they actually existed or not, continue to be brought up in modern-day writings as sacred symbols. There is much we can glean from the gifts that they bestow. Let's look at each one separately.

Lia Fail

The first treasure of Ireland was the *Lia Fail*, or the Stone of Destiny, which came from the ancient northern city of Falias, and brought by the poet Morfessa. This stone would cry out when a true King of Ireland stood on it. We see echoes of this in the story of The Sword in the Stone from the Arthurian legends, where only the true and rightful king could remove the sword from the stone. As a Stone of Destiny, the *Lia Fail* also symbolizes our truth, our word, our integrity.

There are other stones which are well-known in history, such as the Philosophers Stone, purported to alchemically turn lead into gold, the Rosetta Stone from ancient Egypt which provided keys to interpreting hieroglyphics, and of course, the standing stones of Stonehenge, Avebury, and other sites around the world. Throughout time, famous stones have stood for that which is right, just, and true, and have represented a bridge between earth and the heavens.

From an archetypal perspective, the stone represents that part of us that is solid, firm, and true; a part we can always count on to authentically reveal who we are to ourselves and to others. As we stand on our own inner stone of destiny, we know our true path, and we speak from our deepest being. We are fully free to be who are truly are.

Spear Luin

The second treasure, the Spear of Lugh, came out of the eastern city of Gorias, and was brought by the poet Esras. The Spear of Lugh was renowned for accuracy. No battle was ever sustained against it, or against the man who held it. The Spear represents laser-like focus. One must have the aim, attention, and vision to hit one's target with pinpoint accuracy. The Spear also symbolizes a devotion to honor and dignity. The spearhead itself is said to represent dexterity and nimbleness of wit. All of these attributes are definitely characteristics often bestowed upon Lugh of the Long Arm, or Lugh, the Many-Skilled One.

Throughout history, the Spear has been a symbol of power and conquest. The Chinese Spear (Qiang) is considered the King of Weapons. In the Norse tradition, it was said that Odin's spear, Gungnir, never missed its mark. Zeus's lightning bolt is also often referred to as his spear. Spears were the main weapons used in Homer's Illiad and we see them throughout history as a weapon for thrusting or throwing.

The archetypal symbolism of the Spear is of direct action and focus, of power and strength. We use our inner spear to guide us to our goals, to provide that concentration needed to flawlessly and accurately hit our mark, wherever we choose to focus our attention. We hone our skill with the Spear by building our own inner power and perseverance. We become a direct arrow that never misses.

Claiomh Solais

The third treasure, the Sword of Nuada, came from the southern city of Findias by the poet Uiscias. No one ever escaped from the Sword of Nuada once it was pulled from its sheath, and no one could resist it. Nuada was the beloved king of the Tuatha De Danann, who ruled for many a year, his sword at his side. The Sword represents the power of the king to use force to establish justice by destroying evil, or by establishing boundaries.

Again we see echoes from the Arthurian stories of the power of the sword. Excaliber is one of the most widely-known swords ever. Durendal was the Sword of Roland and was said to be indestructible. Joyeuse was Charlemagne's sword and represented joyful victory to its wielder. Hrunting was the sword of Beowulf and was used to defeat Grendl. The Curtana, or the Sword of Mercy, is still used to this day in the coronation of kings and queens in England.

The word sword comes from the proto-Indo-European word "swer" which means to cut or to wound. Archetypally, we see that the sword represents that which we cut out of our lives which does not serve us. It is a form of purification as we claim our own power and

sovereignty, and set boundaries to support ourselves. The Sword, stands for the courage and fortitude to stand up for ourselves. In its role of purifier, it also symbolizes Truth, and here is where we claim our own Truth with our inner Sword held high in victory.

Coire Anseasc

The fourth and final treasure brought by the Tuatha De Danann, is the Cauldron of the Daghdha, sometimes referred to as the Cauldron of Bounty. The poet, Semias, carried the cauldron to the new land. It was purported that no person ever went away from the Cauldron unsatisfied. It was bottomless, capable of feeding an army, and thus had the ability to bring forth from nothing. It also had the power to heal. The Daghdha was known as the Good God, the god of fertility and of abundance.

We see the Cauldron in history, often in different forms. In addition to the Gudestrup cauldron, an archeological discovery from the first or second century, other famous Cauldrons include those used by the witches in Shakespeare's *MacBeth*, and the Cauldron of the Olympic Flame that burns for the complete time of the Olympic Games. We also see the Cauldron in the form of the Holy Grail of the Arthurian Legends.

The cauldron is a vessel, often used to hold nourishment, such as a cauldron of soup cooked at the hearth. Therefore we can see that the archetypal symbolism of the cauldron would include nourishment and healing. The Cauldron is also associated with Wisdom, the wisdom of knowing the secrets of creation, of life and death, and sustenance. It can also be compared to the womb, the Great Womb from which we all emanate. The Cauldron within us is that part of us that nourishes and sustains us, the part from which creativity springs, our own deep Wisdom which guide our lives.

As you can see, the four treasures live within each of us – our Destiny, our Direction, our Truth, and our Prosperity. Using these symbols assists us in incorporating the qualities of freedom, focus, courage, and wisdom into our beings so that we can live more fulfilling and joyful lives.

ⁱ From the website: © Copyright <http://www.ireland-information.com>

ⁱⁱ *The Donne-Yeats Letters, 1893-1938*; ed. by Anna McBride White & A Norman Jeffares, 1994 by W.W. Norton & Co., USA

ⁱⁱⁱ *Cath Maige Tuired*, ed. and tr. Elizabeth A. Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. Irish Texts Society 52. Kildare, 1982.

^{iv} *The Apple Branch*, by Alexei Kondratiev, Collins Press, Ireland, 1998, pp 82