

ABRED, THE SPIRIT WORLD

*Where do you go to in your sleep?
You might be your maker
Is your road wide or deep?
Where is your silent shaker?*

Apache Rising, Kangaroo Moon

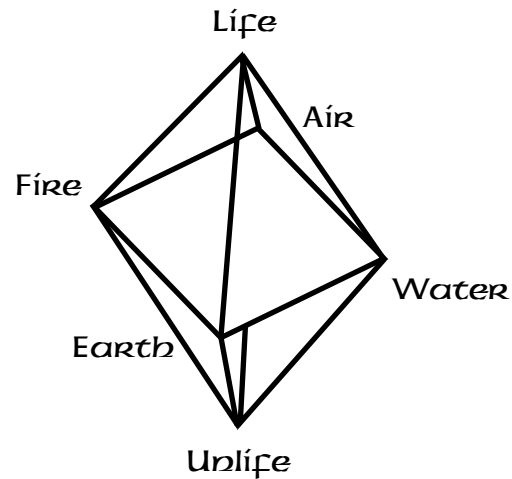
Esoteric scholars speak of the Circle of Manred, an unknown number of worlds of substance, like beads on a necklace. Abred is separate, but surrounds them - it is the spirit world, and most people name it so. There is no matter, only flows and accumulations of spirit and energy. It is inhabited by a great variety of entities of pure spirit, their essences flavoured by key concepts. These beings have their own agendas, conflicts and alliances - some of which involve the physical world. In this place one can experience sublime beauty and terrible danger.

Spiritual geography

Abred has its own geography, though not in the sense that humans usually understand it. It's a space of ideas, and as the spirit world is shaped by the thoughts of its inhabitants the "scenery" presented to human visitors is largely a way of making concepts intelligible to their senses. They expect to be in a "place" and see a "landscape", and Abred generally cooperates with their senses to provide this. Most spatial concepts are an illusion here, relative directions between elemental power nodes being the major exception. Distance and speed are products of exerted will, so an experienced spirit traveller can reach their destination quickly, while a novice will plod along at the rate they think they "ought" to cover ground.

Likewise, the traveller's mind tends to interpret the entities encountered, so greater elementals may be seen as people of appropriate appearance (e.g. powerfully built with dark skin for Iron) and lesser ones as animals of some appropriate type. It's often clear that these beings are not earthly - they might have flaming hair or metal teeth. If the same beings are summoned to Earth they will be formless unless a body is constructed.

This world has the conceptual shape of an octahedron (the same as an eight-sided die). Each of the corners is a **pole**, at which exists the

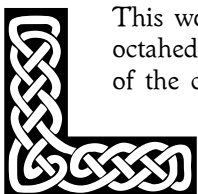


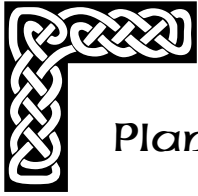
embodiment of a pure elemental force. the elements of fire, air, water and earth are usually described as being in a flat plane, with the axis of life and unlife passing through it. The pole forces are incredibly powerful, and it is perilous to approach them closely. The rare scholars qualified to debate the subject are unsure whether these vortices are thinking beings or just brute phenomena. Some have speculated that the great spirits of Annwn known as the Ancestors are splinters or offspring of the pole forces.

The rest of the "space" in Abred is defined by its proximity to the different poles, and spirits reside in appropriate regions. Some living things attach themselves to an element, like fish spirits congregating near the water pole. Plants take a central position between the physical elements, as they require all four to live.

Getting there

People from Albion can travel to Abred by propelling their mind and spirit there, leaving the physical body behind, effectively in a deep coma. This is usually accomplished through Spirit Magic - most travellers are shamans. However, it is possible to make the transition under the influence of certain drugs (witches might know herbal recipes for this), or even while dreaming. On the rare occasions where the uninitiated dream themselves into the spirit world they probably won't realise it, but events in the dream





Plants

As animals themselves, humans find animal spirits easier to understand and deal with. Plants are a completely different sort of creature, but they occupy an important place in the scheme of things and shamans seek them out for their insight and power.

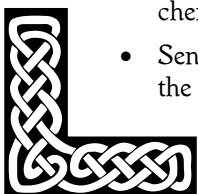
Plant perspectives

Plants are physically less specialised than animals: their life force is “holographic”, spread throughout the body with each part containing the whole and potentially able to grow on its own if removed.

Their perception of time is different to a human’s, and varies a lot between species. They’re very attuned to the seasons and perceive night and day as opposite but equal sides of existence since they experience both fully, unlike the majority of animals. Evergreens never “sleep”. Deciduous plants spend the winter “dreaming” - it is possible to wake them, but it takes extra effort. Some plants grow, seed and die in just a few months or even weeks. At the other extreme yew trees are the longest-lived plant in Albion, capable of surviving over 5000 years. By contrast, oak and beech rarely live longer than 300 years unless cut back regularly for timber. The fast-growing birch lives up to 80 years in the south, longer in cooler climes.

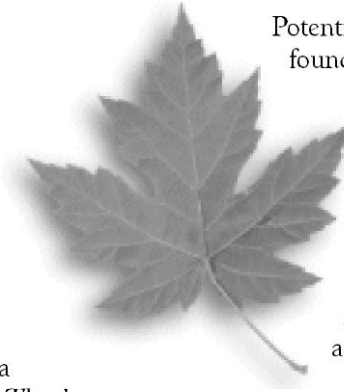
Plant senses give an overall picture of the area, in contrast to human vision which focuses on one point at a time. Perceptions depend on the size and complexity of the plant. A tree could get a large, fairly detailed picture, whereas a blade of grass would get a very basic picture covering only a small area.

- Patterns of light on the leaves give a composite similar to a very basic visual image, a bit like insect vision. Light and dark (and motion) can be distinguished, but colour perception is very limited.
- Movements of air and ground vibration are picked up through the leaves and roots, giving information about size, speed and position.
- A sort of taste/smell sense gives a basic chemical analysis of air, water and soil.
- Sensitivity to the ebb and flow of moisture in the surroundings.



Game stats

Plants differ so much that it’s impossible to give a general template. You’ll have to make each species yourself, drawing from the trees information in the Player’s Book’s *Ogham* section and the herbs information in this book. A couple of examples appear below.



Potentially, any spirit level might be found - older and larger plants tend to have more complex and powerful spirits. Magical abilities vary widely, depending on the properties of the plant: one with healing powers might have *Cleansing* or *Fast Heal*; something poisonous might have *Affliction*. *Commune* and *Woodflesh* are fairly common in higher levels.

Oak

This tree is known for strength, resilience, courage and authority. It’s the king of the woods, supporting many creatures.

Level 2

Wis Av, Ing Pr, Pre Tal, Awa Av

Skills: Intimidation 1, Oratory 1, Persuasion 1, Animal Lore 1

Quirks: Tough

Magic: pick from Bear Strength, Bull Heart, Badger Heart, Toughen, Animal Impulse, Fortify

Rosemary

This herb is well-known for its scent and flavour. It stimulates circulation and helps against stomach complaints and aching joints. It’s said to improve memory. The scent repels moths and purifies the air.

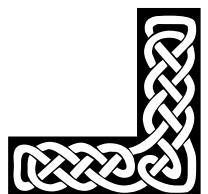
Level 2

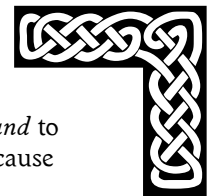
Wis Tal, Ing Av, Pre Pr, Awa Av

Skills: Socialising 1, Medicine 1, Meditation 1

Quirks: Good Memory

Magic: pick from Cleansing, Badger Heart, Spider Mind, Warding, Heart Food, Fortify





The Restless Dead

Ghosts

In theory, when people die their spirits go to Abred and join with the larger complex of human spirits, then eventually get born into a body again. However, this process is not completely reliable. Sometimes a spirit will cling to Earth or find its way back from Abred. Usually this is because of some unfinished business of great emotional importance. Some might seek to protect a loved one or finish an important task; those who died through violence, treachery or injustice might seek justice or revenge. However, there have been instances of strong-willed people simply refusing to pass on and starting a new life as free-willed disembodied spirits, and some have been actively malicious.

Some ghosts are merely a collection of impulses, echoes of a violent death or unfulfilled life. They can have varying amounts of personality remaining, but are never a whole person. They might not even realise they're dead. Others are fully intelligent and aware, usually with a clear purpose. Some scholars refer to them as **lesser** and **greater** ghosts, but this could be misleading as the latter are not always more powerful than the former.

Ghosts almost always have an **anchor** which keeps them in the material world - a person, place or object which they must remain near to. If it's an object they can be dispelled by destroying it, but they'll probably try to defend it. They can sometimes transfer anchors - a ghost tied to a building might remain on the site after it's demolished. The safest way to get rid of a ghost is to satisfy the impulse that keeps it here, for example granddaughter is happy, revenge is achieved, message has been delivered.

The most notable feature of dealings with ghosts is that they're invisible and insubstantial - see the general rules for spirits. They often develop Charm-like abilities as a result of their status as pure spirit and their attempts to influence the physical world as they did in life.

- *Impression* is used to convey fleeting echoes of the ghost's life or death. Sight is the least atmospheric sense to use - an odd sound, smell or texture will do more to increase apprehension in the players than a hackneyed ghostly figure.

- Stronger ghosts can manage *Spirit Hand* to move objects around and potentially cause real physical harm.
- Some ghosts can *Possess* the living - this tends to work much better if the host has some sympathetic connection to them. Others have a less extreme form of influence, using *Suggestion* or *Shape Emotions* to cause episodes of unusual behaviour.
- Rarely, a ghost can *Manifest*, interacting physically with the living for a short while.

Wights

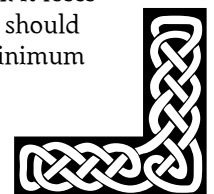
These are ghosts that linger on in the places of the past, obsessing about the Age of Madness and holding on to its trappings. A core personality gradually absorbs little waifs of emotion and memory linked to these places and things, and is made powerful by age and obsession.

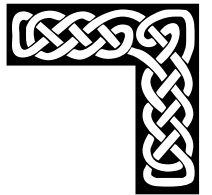
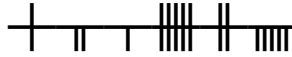
Habits and powers vary. They usually settle in a lair of some kind, like one of the old towers, and spread their influence over the surrounding area. Most try to gather a hoard of things from the old times, either directly through use of *Spirit Hand* (which can also animate their memorabilia to attack intruders) or by influencing other inhabitants through mental disciplines or simple intimidation. Some have been known to use *Glamour* to recreate the old world and make people play parts in it.

Lesser Fleshwalkers

The bodies of the dead do not always stay quiet. Magic can bind a spirit to cold clay, and there are spirit entities which are capable of possessing and animating corpses on their own initiative. The latter are more properly called Fleshwalkers, but the two work about the same. Some pre-Shrug legends refer to them as "zombies". The sorcerous type act under compulsion and can appear mindless, but the spirit visitor type acts on its own volition and often seems more feral.

The spirit's presence slows the **decay** of the host body but can't stop it. The **physical attributes** are based on those of the dead creature, with Vigour raised by 1 (maximum Exceptional) and Agility and Deftness lowered by 1 (minimum Poor). This assumes the body is quite fresh. Each week it loses a level from one physical Attribute. These should be distributed evenly over time, but the minimum





CREATURES OF ANNWN

Afanc

(Cymraeg, *avanc*) A primeval monster dwelling at the bottom of lakes and pools, known in the legends of Cymru. It's said to resemble an enormous beaver or a kind of crocodile, and to drag people into the depths. In one story a maiden persuaded it to lay its head in her lap and lulled it to sleep, then men aided by chains and two oxen stopped it returning to its pool. It has the power of speech: in the previous story the men argued over who'd pulled hardest till the creature itself pointed out that only the oxen had made any difference.

The afanc is about 15ft long, nose to tail, with a squat body covered in brownish fur. Its feet have powerful claws, and it has an elongated snout with large teeth. Its powerful tail aids in swimming, and can also be used as a weapon. It has a deep, watery voice when it feels like talking.

Large (1)

Horror: 3

Vig M1, Pre Tal, Awa Tal

Skills: Unarmed 2, Intimidation 1, Athletics 2

Magic: none

Special: Amphibious; Teeth and Claws (+1 damage)

Combat: Init +3, Bite/Claw 4/5, Tail Bash (unbalance) 4/4, Phys Res 5+1, Energy 3

Baobhan Síth

(Gaelic, *baavan shee*, "fairy woman") This is also sometimes referred to as a *glaishtig* (*glashtig*) - a name used for various supernaturals including a generally helpful ancestral spirit, though here we're concerned with the dangerous corporeal type, a sort of Celtic vampire.

They appear most often to young men in remote locations, seeming to be attractive human women (it's unknown whether there are any males) but seeking only to get close enough to slash open a victim's veins and drain his blood. They're actually a mixture of human and wild elements - their feet, normally hidden by a dress, are hooves like those of a deer or goat. They seem to have a

particularly strong aversion to iron and steel - a drawn dirk is said to keep them at bay - and the fact that they appear at night and are gone at daybreak suggests that they dislike the light.

One story has four young men on a hunting trip taking refuge in a shepherd's hut for the night. They wish they had partners to dance with, and four women come in. The man humming the music sees drops of blood falling from the dancers and flees - his "partner" follows, but he is saved by hiding among the horses till daybreak (it's suggested that the iron horse-shoes repelled the creature), when he finds the drained corpses of his companions.

Horror: 2 for witnessing feeding or seeing hooves

Vig Tal, Agi Tal, Ing Tal, Pre Tal, Awa Tal

Skills: Unarmed 2, Intimidation 1, Socialising 2, Athletics 1, Stealth 2, Woodcraft 1

Quirks: Tough (A), "Addiction" (A, blood), Flawless Appearance (C; partly animal magnetism), Iron Death (C), Body Warp (D->C, hooves)

Magic: usually none, but possibly a charm or two from Body or Mind realms

Special: Night Vision

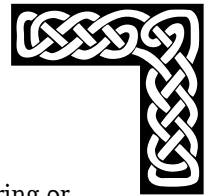
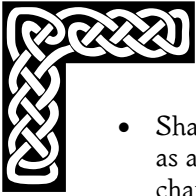
- Blood drain - after a successful bite it can remain attached, automatically doing damage each round (takes a Free action). This starts at 1, but each 2 rounds it increases by 1. (Subsequent bouts within an encounter resume at the last damage level. You can only lose so much lightly.)
- Nocturnal - Dis to most actions in reasonably bright daylight; Threat 2 in bright natural light; Dis to resist light attacks

Combat: Init +5, Unarmed 5/1, Phys Res 3, Energy 2 (note: its greatest weapon is probably its ability to charm the opposite sex, with 5 Adv)

Bird people

See note to *Selkie*.





- Shapeshift - between human and horse forms as a Free action; flawed. Horror 2 to see the change.

Human form

Init +5, Unarmed 5/2, Phys Res 4, Energy 3

Horse form

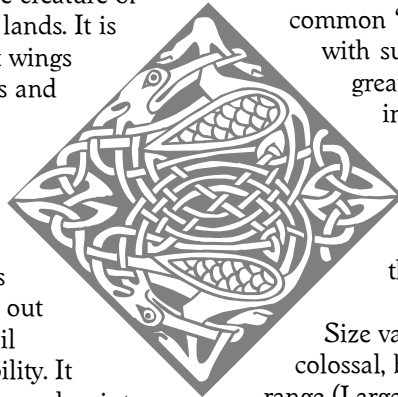
Large (1)

Special: Hooves (+1 damage)

Init +5, Hoof/Bite 5/4, Phys Res 4+1, Energy 3

Water-Leaper

The Llamhigyn Y Dwr is an obscure creature of Cymru legend, a native of the outer lands. It is like a gigantic toad with no legs but wings and a tail. It breaks fishermen's lines and devours sheep that fall into rivers - and fishermen too if it can. The creature can emit a fearful shriek to unnerve its victims. It seems likely that the wings don't provide true flight, but are more like flippers that allow it to propel itself strongly out of the water to grab targets, the tail providing extra propulsion and stability. It seeks to get victims into the water or crashes into them to knock them down so it can use its bite effectively.



Medium

Horror: 3

Vig Ex, Agi Tal, Wis Pr, Awa Tal

Skills: Unarmed 2, Athletics 2, Observation 1, Stealth 2, Shriek (special skill) 2

Feats: Leap Attack (Athletics) 2

Special: Amphibious; Terrifying Shriek (a Vigour-based attack causing mental damage to those nearby); Rubbery Skin (armour 1)

Combat: Init +4, Bite 5/2, Slam (unbalancing salmon leap - multiple of jump 6, attack 5/2), Shriek 6, Phys Res 4+1, Energy 2

Worms

Characters will meet little more awe-inspiring or dangerous than these beasts, which embody untamed elemental power. The setting does not technically have physical dragons - true dragons are spirit creatures (see *Abred*) - but some types of worm resemble certain ideas of dragon. (Some scholars suggest a relationship between dragons and worms, for instance that worms are "fallen" dragons that have spent too long in Manred and dwindled.)

As magic returned to the world they reappeared, perhaps from lairs deep within the earth but probably from elsewhere in the Circle of Manred. Some are like great limbless lizards or worms; some have legs; a few have wings. The more common "lesser" kind are powerful beasts with sub-human intelligence but often great cunning. Some are gifted with intellect and speech: it is entirely possible to have a conversation with one, if it can be bothered (and if you're still alive). Some worms have noticeable links with the elemental poles, but some do not.

Size varies from about 12ft long to truly colossal, but the majority are in the 30-100ft range (Large 2-3). Winged worms tend toward the smaller end (Large 1-2). Colouring varies. They make their home close to the power of the earth, in caves or bodies of water. Their senses are acute, and beyond the usual five - darkness bothers them not at all, hiding from them is often useless, and lying is also perilous. Damage done to them is regenerated as they draw on the chaotic power of the land itself.

Worms should be crafted as individuals, to be rare and noteworthy opponents. You decide what part of their legend is really true. Stats below show the extremes of the range.

Standard abilities

Skills: Unarmed 3, Intimidation 2, Animal Lore 1, Earth Lore 1, Athletics 1, Observation 1 (add skills and levels if desired)

Quirks: Inner Fire (A), Tied to the Land (B)

Magic: usually none; more intelligent ones might know a couple of charms from the Mind realm

