

Meditations on the Sacred Places of Gwyn

by Sister Aelfwyn

Thursday 10th August

Meditation 1: Glastonbury Tor

The story of St Collen and the King of Faerie

Welcoming and Housekeeping -

Honouring spirits of place and land acknowledgement -

Introduction

A Medieval Welsh manuscript the Buchedd Collen records the life of a 7th century Welsh Abbott residing in Glastonbury Abbey who had a calling to dedicate himself as a hermit. He eventually took up residence in a small monastic cell said to be located upon Glastonbury Tor. During his time spent here he became aware of the local people of the land honouring Gwyn ap Nudd and therefore attracting the attention of the faery King himself....

I shall now read a translation of the story St. Collen and the King of Fairy from The Welsh Fairy Book by W. Jenkyn Thomas followed by a Meditation in which we will journey to the Cell of St. Collen, the Monastic herb gardens and eventually if we choose to accept, to the Courts of the Faery King Gwyn ap Nudd

The story St. Collen and the King of Fairy

Sources: The Welsh Fairy Book by W. Jenkyn Thomas and Translation by Lady Charlotte Guest

St Collen was so distressed with the wickedness of the people that he withdrew to a mountain and made himself a cell under shelter of a rock in a remote and secluded spot.

One day when he was in his cell he heard two men conversing about Gwyn ab Nudd, and saying that he was king of Annwn and of the fairies. Collen put his head out of the cell and said to them. "hold your tongues quickly, those are but devils." "Hold thou thy tongue" said they, "thou shalt receive reproof from him." And Collen shut his cell as before. Soon after he heard a knocking at the door of his cell, and someone inquired if he were within. Then said Collen: I am. Who is it that asks?" "It is I, a messenger from Gwyn ab Nudd, King of Annwn and of the fairies, to command thee to go and speak with him on top of the hill at noon."

But Collen did not go. And the next day behold the same messenger came, ordering Collen to go and speak with the King on top of the hill at noon.

But Collen did not go. And the third day behold the same messenger came, ordering Collen to go and speak with the King on top of the hill at noon. "and if thou dost not go, Collen, thou wilt be the worse for it."

Then Collen, being afraid, arose and prepared some holy water, and put it in a flask at his side and went to the top of the hill. And when he came there he saw the fairest castle he had ever beheld, and around it the best appointed troops, and numbers of minstrels, and every kind of music of voice

and instrument, and steeds with youths upon them the comeliest in the world, and maidens of elegant aspect, sprightly, light of foot, of graceful apparel and in the bloom of youth: and every magnificence becoming the court of a great king. A courteous man on the top of the castle bade him to enter, saying that the king was waiting for him to come to meat. Collen went into the castle, and when he entered the king was sitting in a golden chair. He welcomed Collen honourably, and desired him to eat, assuring him that besides what he saw he should have the most luxurious of every dainty and delicacy that the mind could desire, and should be supplied with every drink and liquor that his heart could wish: and that there should be in readiness for him every luxury of courtesy and service, of banquet and of honourable entertainment, of rank and of presents: and every respect and welcome due to a man of wisdom. "I will not eat the leaves of the trees" said Collen.

"didst thou ever see men of better equipment then those in red and blue?" asked the king. "Their equipment is good enough" said Collen, "for such equipment as it is." "What kind of equipment is that?" said the king. Then said Collen: "The red on one part signifies burning, and the blue on the other signifies coldness." With that Collen drew out his flask, and threw the holy water on their heads, whereupon they vanished from his sight, so that there was neither castle, nor song, nor steeds, nor youths, nor banquet, nor the appearance of anything whatever but the green hillock.

Meditation on the Meeting Gwyn ap Nudd in the story of St Collen

I invite you now to close your eyes and focus on your breath. Breathing in and breathing out feeling a sense of stillness about you and feeling a sense of calm within.

You find yourself upon the luscious green sloping hills of Avalon upon the edge of the great Tor. Observing the land you notice you are standing within a beautiful cloister like garden abundant in flora and fauna. All about you are fragrant herbs and flowers of all different shapes, sizes, textures and colours. Each one with their own spirit energy and healing properties. You may be drawn to spend some time here, perhaps you may be drawn to a particular herb and find that it may have a message for you.

Upon the edge of the garden you notice a small hut, a monastic cell fashioned from simple materials mud, clay, stone and straw. A place for silent contemplation with a deep sense of peace and stillness. You sense a presence there is a figure standing in the doorway of the cell, a messenger from the King of Faery Gwyn ap Nudd. You are invited to accompany the messenger to meet with Gwyn ap Nudd. You may accept or you may politely decline and choose to stay amongst the healing herbs in the cloister garden. You are free to choose.

If you have accepted the invitation, the guide asks you to follow the path along the sloping green hill. You notice the softness of the grass beneath your feet and the gentle swirling mists that surround you. You notice the atmosphere change as you reach the top. You have arrived at the Faery Courts of Gwyn ap Nudd. Take some time now to notice your surroundings as what you experience here will be personal to you. You sense a calling, It is now time to meet the King of Faerie. Your guide takes you to a great feasting table where sits Gwyn ap Nudd. You greet him with great honour and respect You may have a question for him or you may just want to listen to any wisdom he may offer. Take some time now to stay a while in his presence.

5 or 10 mins silence here

You here a calling and know that the time has come to make your journey back. You retrace your steps as your guide calls you back down the green sloping pathway through the mists, into the

cloister garden through the herbs upon the edge of Avalon and eventually finding yourself back in the here and now slowly opening your eyes back into this space.

Discussion, Sharing experiences or thoughts – all who wish to do so
END