

## **NOS GALAN GAFAF 2023**

### **Preparation**

Altar set up - Space for Gwyn with an image and a candle, space for the ancestors with photos/images/objects and a candle.

Offerings - Food offering for the ancestors and mead or cider for Gwyn.

Please bring:

\*A prayer, poem or song to honour Gwyn's Hunt.

\*\*The names of up to three ancestors and a couple of lines to say about each of them.

~

### **Thanksgiving to spirits of place / land acknowledgement.**

~

### **Introduction:**

Tonight we are gathered to honour Gwyn's Hunt and the ancestors.

Although there is no direct evidence that Gwyn is the Brythonic leader of the Wild Hunt piecing together fragments from the lore creates a compelling argument.

In 'The Conversation of Gwyn ap Nudd and Gwyddno Garanhir' Gwyn is presented as a 'bull of battle', a divine warrior and huntsman, with His white horse Carngrun and white red-nosed hound, Dormach. It is implicit in the poem that Gwyn appears to gather the soul of Gwyddno and He also states His presence (as a guide of souls) at the deaths of a number of northern British warriors.

In *Culhwch ac Olwen* the hunt for Twrch Trwyth, 'King of Boars', cannot begin until Gwyn is found suggesting He is the leader of this hunt. The Twrch is described as a human chieftain turned into a boar by God on account of his sins. This is a Christian overlay for this originally being a hunt for human souls.

Welsh Folklorist John Rhyd records how Iolo ap Hugh disappeared into the underworld, exchanged his fiddle for a bugle, and became huntsman-in-

chief to Gwyn ap Nudd and could from thereon be seen cheering Cwn Annwn over Cadair Idris every Nos Galan Gaeaf (so riding with Gwyn's hunt).

Rhys also records a 'sinner' being chased on Cefn Creini by a pack of shapeshifting hounds and a hunter with a black face and horns in his head (Gwyn, a bull of battle', who might be pictured with bull's horns).

Nos Galan Gaeaf / Samhain has long been associated with the dead in Celtic tradition.

~

### **Honouring of Gwyn's Hunt**

Opening prayer to Gwyn:

Gwyn ap Nudd,  
White Son of Mist,  
Hunter in the Skies,  
Leader of the Hunt,

we come this night  
to honour You as You ride  
with Your hunt to gather  
the souls of the dead.

May Your hunt be wild.  
May the passage of souls  
be kind and easeful.

Accept our offerings  
tonight Great Gwyn.

Space for prayers, poetry, songs.\*

Drumming/rattling/chanting to cheer on the hunt for 10 minutes.

~

### **For the Passage of Souls**

#### **Lyke Wake Dirge**

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,  
(Refrain:) —Every nighte and alle,

Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

When thou from hence away art past,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
To Whinny-muir thou com'st at last;  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
Sit thee down and put them on;  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane;  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

From Whinny-muir when thou may'st pass,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
To Brig o' Dread thou com'st at last;  
And He'll receive thy saule.

From Brig o' Dread when thou may'st pass,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
To Annwn's fire thou com'st at last;  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest meat or drink,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
The fire sall never make thee shrink;  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

If meat or drink thou ne'er gav'st nane,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

This ae nighte, this ae nighte,  
(Refrain:) — Every nighte and alle,  
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,  
(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

(Refrain:) — And He'll receive thy saule.

~

## **Honouring the Dead**

We turn now to honouring the ancestors - those who have walked and lived in our landscapes, those of spirit who are our inspirations, those of blood. We speak of family and friends we have lost but who are not entirely lost to us.

Space for honouring the ancestors (particularly those who have passed recently and those who have been a influence on our lives over the past year.)

~

## **Closing:**

Prayer of thanks to Gwyn:

We give thanks to You,  
Gatherer of Souls  
for guiding,  
for gathering the dead.

For your invisible  
often unacknowledged work  
we give acknowledgement and thanks.

Ride, ride, our lord into the dark nights of winter.  
Our thoughts, our prayers, will go after,  
like ghosts as yet ungathered.

## **Seasonal Poem: Autumnal Procession**

Leaves are falling with the rain.  
Darkness is upon us once again.  
Hooves splashing through the mud  
Dance with sycamore colours,  
They are no longer flesh or blood  
But the shape of time's procession  
Riding shadowed through the rain.  
Darkness is upon us once again (x2)

~

\*Poems you could read to honour Gwyn's Hunt

## **When You Hunt for Souls in the Winter Rain**

*For Gwyn on Nos Galan Gaeaf*

When you hunt for souls in the winter rain  
With your snorting horse and hound unleashed  
I shall listen in the gaps between towns knowing  
Through trembling years you come in many guises.

When you hunt for souls in the winter rain  
I shall listen in the gaps between towns knowing  
Your face is the night storm of the underworld  
And you shall bring terror to end all terror

With your snorting horse and hound unleashed.  
Knowing through the years you come in many guises  
I shall not only hail you as a warrior or medieval king  
On the corpse roads I walk to ancestral graveyards.

When you hunt for souls in the winter rain  
I shall listen in the gaps between towns knowing  
You shall not only lead the hunt or coffin bearers  
To the toll of bells casting your glamour

With your snorting horse and hound unleashed.  
Knowing through the years you come in many guises  
I shall be wary yet ultimately know you bring peace.  
Beneath these catacombs is something beautiful.

~ Sister Patience

## **Flight from the cauldron**

I stood upon the shore of Annwn the darkest waters shone with a thousand stars. The descent was calling.

in the presence of stillness  
I take flight upon wings of bone through smoke and flame from the cauldron  
of the deep

I dive Down into the unknown starlit waters of death and madness stripped  
of all I knew as human

I took rest in the ethereal earth of Annwn where substance is essence of magic

I took rest amongst ancestral bones of time and tide eons of stardust lay in eternal peace

I took rest within the magic of deep peace where dark and light are as one and there I felt unburdened and weightless

And So calls the white raven with freedom and strength. I see the path with clear sight and untethered spirit

I took flight from the cauldron with feathered wings and bones anew with the strength of Awen

~ Sister Aelfwyn

### **Wild Hunt Villanelle**

When the wild hunt rides on a thundering night  
Hurling from the deeps and bowers of unseen Annwn  
They raze all life with their sundering might,

Sweeping heavens black warriors of starry white  
Unite with rebel cries to form a spectral fugue.  
When the wild hunt rides on a thundering night

Cities tremble as the harrowing horns descry  
Ghost white horses, hounds of death and long lost truth.  
They raze all life with their sundering might

As they gather up the souls of the dead in flight  
Striking with a fear none but their kindred can endure.  
When the wild hunt rides on a thundering night

Bringing down the skies and singing back the light  
Around our fires only hope can see us through.  
They raze all life with their sundering might

Then vanish to Annwn from tumultuous heights  
Ending the old year and heralding in the new.  
When the wild hunt rides on a thundering night  
They raze all life with their sundering might.

~ Sister Patience