

Meditations on the Sacred Places of Gwyn

by Sister Aelfwyn

Thursday 12th October

Meditation 3: The Path of Twrch Trwyth

A Journey Through the landscape of South Wales

Welcoming and Housekeeping -

Honouring spirits of place and land acknowledgement -

Introduction – Hayley

Here within the northern hemisphere we are approaching the dark and mysterious time of Nos Calan Gaef. Some of us may be drawn inwards sensing the magic and mystery that can come with the season. Perhaps our thoughts turn to ways of honouring the Wild hunt and preparing for the onset of short daylight hours. During this season many of us will honour Gwyn ap Nudd as leader of the wild hunt and so I offer this talk and meditation in honour of Gwyn as protector of the Twrch Trwyth the wild boar that is hunted and chased down through the landscape of South Wales. I tell this tale inspired by the medieval Welsh story of Culhwch and Olwen found in the Mabinogion, with a mixture of Geological facts, and my own personal research and instinctive visions inspired by meditation and journey work. We will then go onto a meditation to meet Gwyn within the Black Mountains of Wales and explore how we shape our own landscape as we travel upon our path.

A story of Twrch Trwyth

Sources: Mabinogion Translation: Lady Charlotte Guest, Sioned Davies, Patrick K Ford.
Arthur and the Twrch Trwyth by Margaret Isaac. Celtic Folklore Welsh and Manx

Hayley

There is an ancient and magical tale woven through the landscape of South Wales of a King who was changed into a gigantic wild boar. The great creature was hunted down by King Arthur and his men for a comb, razor and a pair of scissors that was lodged between his ears. This was one of the most challenging impossible tasks in the medieval story of Culhwch and Olwen. During the wild and often fatal hunt to obtain these magical items, the boar ravaged the landscape, and as a result of the many battles to protect his piglets, he carved out his presence within the lakes, mountains and Valleys of Wales from west to east. The folklore and place names of the tracks and sacred sights upon the route are today a constant reminder of the legend that is the Twrch Trwyth.

- 1) Having been chased from Ireland, The Twrch Trwyth first landed Porth Clais near St Davids Wales a sacred place surrounded by bronze and Iron Age sites and is said to be named as one

of the three Tribal Thrones of the Island of Britain. St. David's is best known for being the smallest Cathedral city in England and a sight of pilgrimage.

- 2) The hunt continues on and the Twrch is chased across the landscape up into the Preseli hills a mountain range rising out of the landscape of north Pembrokeshire. A Wild place of vast heath and moorland scattered with Prehistoric burial sites and Iron Age hillforts.

The battle rages and the Twrch takes several stands against Arthurs men within the hills, and it is here where Arthurs Son is said to of met his fate against the Twrch.

Today you can still visit the Neolithic Henge monument called Bedd Arthur (Arthurs Grave) found within the Preseli hills. Preseli is most famous for its Blue Stones used to build the inner part of Stonehenge.

- 3) Hayley

The chase continues eastwards across the landscape rampaging through Clunderwen, Llanddewi Velfry, St Clears Peuliniog racing towards Aber Tywi where the Twrch hid from Arthurs men in a small cave upon a rocky hillside. The Twrch was forced out of his hiding place to make a stand and it is here within the story The King of France met his fate.

A translation of some of the welsh place names mentioned and associated with the story of the Twrch: St Clears or Sancler possibly derived from the French word Le Sanglier – Wild Boar (near to the sight where in the story the French king lost his life) Margaret Isaac Arthur and the Twrch Trwyth

Other names mentioned Clunderwen translates to Oak thicket (acorns a good food source for wild boars) Llanddewi – an ancient and holy place

- 4) The hunting party arrive at Glyn Ystu and lose track of the Twrch. It is at this point King Arthur calls for the help of Gwyn ap Nudd. As:

“The Twrch Trwyth will not be hunted until you get Gwyn son of Nudd in whom God has put the ferocity of the fiends of Annwfn lest the world be destroyed. He will not be spared hence”

Patrick Ford Translation The Mabinogion

“And so Arthur summoned Gwyn son of Nudd and asked him if he had any information about Twrch Trwth. He replied that he had not”. Patrick Ford Translation The Mabinogion

So although Gwyn is represented in the story as part of Arthurs hunting party, he refuses to give any information therefore seems to be protecting the Twrch. Perhaps because

“some legends say that the great boar led the dead to the edge of the underworld and pointed them to their last and final destination” Margaret Isaac Arthur and the Twrch Trwyth

- 5) Hayley

The Hunt continues on into the Black Mountains and further beyond. I would like to continue the next part of the trail in meditation as we have come to the point where Gwyn ap Nudd has been called upon. We will now journey to meet Gwyn ap Nudd as protector of the path and perhaps learn something of our own life path and maybe finding the wisdom and strength to navigate the twists and turns of the route we have chosen.

Meditation: Meeting Gwyn ap Nudd within the Black Mountains – Hayley

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 a vast landscape that stretches way out into the distance. The scent of heather, grass, and moorland fills the air and you sense an inner knowing that draws you to explore these distant lands. You feel a presence before you. The energy is strong and determined. The spirit of Boar has come to guide you upon your path. You are invited to accompany the Boar to make the journey to meet with Gwyn ap Nudd within his hunting grounds upon the ancient Black Mountains you may accept or you may politely decline choosing to stay and commune with the heathlands. You are free to choose.

If you have accepted the invitation, you follow the Boar as your guide through the rugged terrain a long path through the vibrant green valleys, hills, and Mountains rising up in the distance. The path is not an easy one and you find that you have to make several twists and turns upon the way. You pass river and streams, ancient standing stones. Eventually you come to what appears to be a great stone cave upon the side of a mountain. Take some time now to notice your surroundings as what you experience here will be personal to you.

A hunting horn sounds in the distance and you notice a subtle change in the atmosphere. You have been called it is now time to meet with Gwyn ap Nudd. The Boar guides you to the entrance of the cave and you notice a shadowy figure upon a giant black horse, this is Gwyn ap Nudd Lord of Annwn, protector of the Twrch Trwyth. You greet him with great honour and respect and he asks you to join him within the cave. You may have a question for him about the path you are on, or you may just want to listen to any wisdom he may offer. Take some time now to stay a while in his presence.

Maybe 5 or 10 mins silence here?

You here a calling and know that the time has come to make your journey back. You give your thanks to Gwyn and to the spirit of the cave within. You retrace your steps as the Boar calls you back from the cave through the landscape and terrain, through the Mountains, Valleys, Hills and streams, up through the standing stones and heathland. 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
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