

# The Forest of Annwn

## Introduction

Gwyn is traditionally associated with forests and wild places. The 14th century manuscript *Speculum Christiani* tells us:

'Some stupid people also stupidly go to the door holding fire and iron in the hands when someone has inflicted illness, and call to the King of the Benevolent ones and his queen, who are evil spirits saying: "Gwyn ap Nudd who are far in the forests for the love of your mate allow us to come home." In this they are acting most stupidly that they ask help of the evil spirits which have nothing but eternal damnation (and) against whom the Apostle cries out "We do not want to be the fellows of demons."'"

He also plays a role in the madness of Cyledyr Wyllt and Myrddin Wyllt. Both suffer forms of trauma (Gwyn feeds Cyledyr his father's heart and Myrddin fights in the tragic battle of Catraeth) and are torn out of themselves by Gwyn or His spirits and flee to the forest of Celyddon - a place associated with wildmen and ghosts - where they eventually find healing.

Annwn/Faery is also frequently depicted as a place of green hills with enchanted forests filled with magical creatures where the trees are evergreen.

It was notable when I was writing this meditation that Gwyn is not only associated with forests far away and states of consciousness that involve being 'away' - mad/wyllt or 'away with the fairies' but with coming home. Not only are our travels away important but coming home to root them back into land and community.

This meditation takes the form of an evocation in song and verse based on my personal experiences of the Forest of Annwn leading into its green heart. Participants will have an opportunity to explore the forest and seek advice and wisdom from its inhabitants and/or from Gwyn Himself.

One possible question to ask is: 'How do I come home?'

## Meditation

In the shadow of the leaning yew  
stands the forest at the back of the world.

~

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

Easeful  
easeful its mansions perfected.

Where we grow  
where we grow  
where we grow  
and decay no longer.

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

~

Do you remember walking or riding through a forest  
down a path that never ends with sunlight dappling the shade  
and crunchy leaves and woodland winds

Do you remember sleeping beneath the boughs  
on summer nights or watching the passage of the stars  
whilst the blackbirds continued to sing past midnight  
into the early hours never ceasing at dawn?

Do you remember the feeling of unease,  
as if someone was trying to shake you awake from a dream,  
turning back over, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming on?  
Does it trouble you that these memories are not your own?

~

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

Easeful  
easeful its mansions perfected.

Where we grow  
where we grow  
where we grow  
and decay no longer.

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

~

In the perfection of memory they walk  
through the infinite houses  
room for everyone

the clatter of factories forgotten  
the feuds between families and gangs  
the arguments of politicians.

In the perfection of memory they walk  
through the infinite houses  
room for everyone

the hours behind glass and bars forgotten  
free as gods or ghosts drifting  
like pollen or birdsong.

In the perfection of memory they walk  
through the infinite houses  
room for everyone

until the butterfly on the shoulder  
or the lizard emerging from the mouth  
calls them to move on.

~

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

Easeful  
easeful its mansions perfected.

Where we grow  
where we grow  
where we grow  
and decay no longer.

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

~

I leave you now here in the forest, evergreen, in the perfection mansions of the trees which never grow or decay, to seek wisdom from its inhabitants or Gwyn.

A question you might ask is: “How do I come home?”

(Space for meditation)

Your time in the forest is approaching an end. Say farewell to Gwyn or whoever you were communing with and enjoy your last minutes amongst the never growing, never decaying trees, their perfect mansions.

~

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

Easeful  
easeful its mansions perfected.

Where we grow  
where we grow  
where we grow  
and decay no longer.

Easeful  
easeful the forest.

In the shadow of the leaning yew  
stands the forest at the back of the world.