

# Meditations on the Sacred Places of Gwyn

## by Sister Aelfwyn

### Meditation 4: The Throne of Gwyn ap Nudd: A Journey upon the Berwyn Mountains

#### Introduction

Welcome to the fourth meditation on the sacred places of Gwyn ap Nudd. This month we will be focusing on the surroundings of the mysterious Berwyn Mountains north east Wales and exploring the myth, legend and folklore that for some, came to be associated with Gwyn ap Nudd as **Y Brenin Llwyd** – The Grey King/ Monarch of the Mists and **Cadair Berwyn** – Throne of Gwyn. We will then go on to a meditation to meet Gwyn ap Nudd as the King of mists upon his high throne located above a magical waterfall. So in honour of the King of Mists and the mystery of the Berwyns I will present this talk with a mixture of historical and geological facts, inspiration from walking the landscape, the many books and resources that I recommend (see below) along with my own personal meditations and journey work.

**Sources:** T Gwyn Jones Welsh Folklore and folk customs, [www.pistyllrhaeadr.co.uk](http://www.pistyllrhaeadr.co.uk), [www.grahamwatkins.info](http://www.grahamwatkins.info), – Land of the dead, Yuri Leitch book Gwyn God of Annwn expanded edition, Wales wild guide book, Celtic folklore welsh and Manx – John Rhys

#### Poem Y Brenin Llwyd

by Sister Aelfwyn

*Brenin Llwyd of the moorland craigs ever seeking within the mists  
Passing through the heart of Annwn where poets dare to venture  
Through standing stone beyond time where ghostly waters flow  
Starlight shines upon the lands of your majestic Mountain throne  
Brenin Llwyd you whisper to the pilgrim who welcomes the unknown*

#### The Berwyn Mountains

*“Beyond the wall of Severus, to the west of the land of Britannia, lies a land full of vipers, serpents and otherworld beasts where the souls of men are always brought”*

*(Procopius 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.)*

Mountains are often described as places of pilgrimage, mystical sights and of life changing adventure. Here Procopius, the ancient historian, gives us a description of the mysterious Berwyn Mountains located in the north east of Wales between Llangollen and Lyn Tegid (Bala Lake), a magical landscape made up of vast moorlands, dangerous bogs, waterfalls and sacred stones. The Berwyn's and surrounding villages are steeped in folklore and said to be home to a race of fair folk **Y Tylwyth Teg**.

A couple of examples of faerie lore stories from the Berwyns can be found in John Rhys Celtic Folklore book Vol. One: Two friends out hunting otters and mistakenly caught one of the fair folk. The men were so shocked they set the being free went straight home and meddled no more. Another tale of a cottage dweller on the slopes of the Berwyns spotting a Fairy ring was gifted gold coins until one day he told the tale of their generosity and as a consequence of breaking the faerie rule, the coins were left no more. Some folklore suggests it is a dark, eerie and lonely place where few dare to venture lest they be taken by the Fae!

*"His was a cold, barren kingdom filled with foul swamps, evil vipers and devils. This was the land of the dead, a dangerous desolate place seldom visited by mortals."*

**Graham Watkins-Land of the Dead**

Due to the many stories of missing persons, treacherous blanket bogs where unsuspecting travellers could accidentally fall and be buried waist deep, the Berwyns for some, have become associated with the underworld where souls were taken by Gwyn ap Nudd the King of the Faeries. This could also be assumed by the many place names in the area that are linked to Gwyn.

*"A rocky eminence near Corwen is said to have been built by a giant for his mistress to milk her cows. The Giants name was Drewyn a deduction of Caer Drewyn – stronghold of Gwyn"*

**Welsh folklore and folk customs – T Gwyn Jones**

Examples and translations of Gwyn's name associated with the Berwyn Mountain's:

**Bre-wyn** - Hill of Gwyn

**Tre – wyn** – Home of Gwyn

**Caer Drewyn** – Stronghold of Gwyn

**Nant Gwyn** – Stream or brook of Gwyn

**Cadair Berwyn** – High seat or Throne of Gwyn

Nearby **Turbary Pools** are said to be Gwyn's fish Pond!

**Corwen** is a town located on the banks of the river Dee beneath the Berwyn Mountains. The town name translated in Welsh is the White Choir or White church interestingly in English it translates to Friend of the Heart.

**Bwlchwyn** one of the highest villages in Wales Bwlch meanings pass in Welsh. In English it translates to White pass.

My personal thoughts on these translations are:

**Corwen** – Gwyn's Choir or Gwyn's Heart

**Bwlchwyn** – Gwyn's Pass

## **The Waterfall**

*"The gateway to this distant kingdom was Pistyll Rhaeadr and each night Gwyn ap Nudd would leave his kingdom to stalk the lands of Wales, collecting the souls of the dead."*

**(Graham Watkins-Land of the Dead)**

After travelling through many twisting, narrow country roads and tracks of beautiful Welsh Villages and mountain landscape you arrive at Pistyll Rhaeadr, one of the highest waterfall in Wales. The sight is breath taking, an otherworldly place indeed. There is a noticeable power in the water cascading down a vertical cliff it is as if you were surrounded by many thunderous horse's hooves.

As you look up you can see the flow of the water first escaping through a circular hole, a natural stone 'the fairy arch' then as it makes its way down flowing through rocks and plunge pools, one named the Druids Bowl. Above the waterfall upon an eastern summit, there is a sacred sight, a standing stone known as post Gwyn (the great stone of Gwyn)

**Pistyll Rhaeadr** – Spring of the waterfall

## **Cadair Berwyn**

*“Gwyn ap Nudd was King of the Underworld and the mountains of Cadair Berwyn and Moel Sych his throne” Graham Watkins-Land of the Dead **Moel Sych – Dry Bare Hill***

We climb further now 2730ft above sea level and arrive at the highest peak of the Berwyn Mountains here you will find Cadair Berwyn the summit of the mountain the “Chair of the white summit” English translation. A vast place of stillness and gathering mists, a place of mystical mountain views, a place to sense our achievements, gather our thoughts, clear our minds, or perhaps gain clarity and perspective. Here in the following meditation we shall be exploring Cadair Berwyn as The Throne of Gwyn ap Nudd King of Mists – **Brenin Llwyd**

**Meditation – A journey to The Throne of Gwyn ap Nudd** – S. Aelfwyn

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 standing upon the banks of a beautiful clear stream. The water shines as the light flickers upon the surface. The path before you laid out with mossy banks lined with ancient ferns and mountain ash trees. You notice the smooth shining stones beneath your feet rounded and shaped by the waters of time. As you continue to follow the path of the river, you notice the sound of rushing waters getting stronger and stronger and you are drawn to follow the sound.....

The sound of the rushing waters are strong and you look up to see a magnificent steep waterfall, the waters are cascading through a circular stone as if it is forming a gateway into a magical realm. A gentle mist starts to form around you and you notice there seem to be some silvery flashing lights within the falls. The lights begin to take shape and you sense a presence before you. This is a messenger from The Grey King, King of mists Gwyn ap Nudd. You are invited to accompany the messenger to meet with Gwyn ap Nudd upon his High Throne at the summit of the Mountain above the great waterfall. You may accept or you may politely decline and choose to stay and commune with the magical waters of the falls. You are free to choose.

If you have accepted the invitation, you follow your guide as you are lead through the cascade and foaming waters of the falls and eventually finding yourself upon a rocky outcrop. Your guide is pointing to a single standing stone. You have arrived at the ancient sight of Gwyns Post. You take some time now to commune with the ancient standing stone perhaps connecting with the spirit....

You sense the calling and your guide asks you now to give thanks to the spirit of the stone and continue upon the path as it is now time to meet with The King of Mists.

You continue to follow your guide making your way up the mountain path. The landscape is vast, rugged and bare, the views stretching out the horizon a distant lonely place of silent wilderness. You have arrived at the summit, Cadair Berwyn, the High seat of Gwyn. Take some time now to notice your surroundings as what you experience here will be personal to you. You notice the atmosphere change as, the mists form a solid shape of a Golden Throne 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.

**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 mountain path, through the rugged rocky landscape past the standing stone, through the foaming waters of light, back out through the waterfall, along the

riverbed of shining stones and moss and eventually finding yourself back in the here and now slowly opening your eyes back into this space.

