

The Unnamed Queen

Session 8

1. Pryderi and Calan Mai.

At that time Teyrnon Twrf Liant was lord over Gwent Is Coed, and he was the best man in the world. In his house he had a mare, and throughout his kingdom no stallion or mare was more handsome. And every May eve she would give birth, but no one knew at all what became of her foal.

One evening Teyrnon spoke with his wife. ‘My wife,’ he said, ‘we are careless, losing our mare’s offspring every year without keeping one of them.’

‘What can we do about it?’ she said.

‘God’s vengeance upon me’, he said, ‘if I do not find out what fate befalls the foals— tonight is May eve.’

He had the mare brought indoors, and he armed himself, and began the night’s vigil. As it begins to get dark the mare gives birth to a big, perfect foal which stands up on its feet immediately. Teyrnon gets up to examine the sturdiness of the foal. As he is doing this he hears a loud noise, and after the noise an enormous claw comes through the window, and grabs the foal by its mane. Teyrnon draws his sword and cuts off the arm at the elbow so that that part of the arm, and the foal with it, are inside.

Then he hears a noise and a scream at the same time. He opens the door and rushes off after the noise. He cannot see the cause of the noise because the night is so dark; but he rushes after it, and follows it. Then he remembers that he has left the door open, and he returns. And by the door there is a small boy in swaddling-clothes with a mantle of brocaded silk wrapped around him. He picks up the boy and sees that he is strong for his age.

- Davies, ‘Lludd and Llefelys’, *The Mabinogion*

The second plague was a scream that was heard every May eve above every hearth in the Island of Britain. It pierced people’s hearts and terrified them so much that men lost their

colour and their strength, and women miscarried, and young men and maidens lost their senses, and all animals and trees and the earth and the waters were left barren.

3. Deep Time.

- Davies, 'Culhwch and Olwen', *The Mabinogion*

Arthur said, 'Gwrhyr Gwalstawd Ieithoedd, it is right for you to go on this quest. You know all languages, and can speak the same language as some of the birds and the beasts. . . . They travelled until they came to the Blackbird of Cilgwri.

Gwrhyr asked her, 'For God's sake, do you know anything of Mabon son of Modron, who was taken when three nights old from between his mother and the wall?' The Blackbird said, 'When I first came here, there was a smith's anvil here, and I was a young bird. No work has been done on it except by my beak every evening. Today there's not so much of it as a nut that is not worn away. God's vengeance on me if I have heard anything about the man you are asking after. However, what is right and proper for me to do for Arthur's messengers, I will do. There is a species of animal that God shaped before me. I will go there as your guide.' They came to where the Stag of Rhedynfre was.

- The Stag of Rhedynfre: The Stag said, 'When I first came here, there was only one antler on either side of my head, and there were no trees here except a single oak sapling, and that grew into an oak with a hundred branches. And the oak fell after that, and today nothing remains of it but a red stump. From that day to this I have been here. I have heard nothing about the one you are asking after.

- The Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd: 'When I first came here the large valley that you see was a wooded glen, and a race of men came there, and it was destroyed. And the second wood grew in it, and this wood is the third. And as for me, the roots of my wings are mere stumps. From that day to this I have heard nothing about the man you are asking after.'

- The Eagle of Gwernabwy: 'I came here a long time ago, and when I first came here I had a rock, and from its top I would peck at the stars every evening. Now it's not a hand-breadth in height. From that day to this I have been here, and I have heard nothing about the man you're asking after.'

- The Salmon of Llyn Llyw: 'With every flood tide I travel up the river until I come to the bend in the wall of Caerloyw; never before in my life have I found as much wickedness as I found there. And so that you will believe me, let one of you come here on my two shoulders.'

4. Gwair in Caer Siddi.

- 'Preiddeu Annwn', Anonymous (Llywarch ap Llywelyn?), c. 1200, Haycock, *LPBT*, pp.435-8, l. 8 - 11:

Maintained was Gwair's prison in Caer Siddi
throughout Pwyll and Pryderi's story.

No-one went there before he did -

Into the heavy grey chain guarding the loyal lad.

And before the spoils / heards of Annwfn he was singing sadly

And until Doom shall our poetic prayer continue

- 'Golychaf-i Gilwydd' (c.1200), ed. Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth 2008), 277:

Harmonious is my song in Caer Siddi

Sickness and old age do not afflict those who are there,
as Manawyd and Pryderi know.

Three instruments / organs around a fire play in front of it

and around its turrets are the wellsprings of the sea;
and [as for] the fruitful fountain which is above it -
its drink is sweeter than the white wine.

5. Taliesin at Sea.

- ‘Angar Kyfundawt’ (c.1200), ed. Marged Haycock, *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth 2008), 111-2:

For sixty years
I endured solitude
in the water gathered in a band [around the earth].

6. The Dagda and Boand.

- ‘The Wooing of Étaín’, trans. John Carey in *The Celtic Heroic Age* (CSP 2013), ed. John Koch, 146:

There was a wondrous king ruling over Ireland of the race of the Tuatha Dé, named Eochaid Ollathair. Another name of his was ‘the Dagda’, for it was he who used to work miracles for them, and to apportion storms and fruits: so folk used to say, and therefore he was called ‘Dagda’ [‘good god’]. Elcmar of the Bruig [na Bóinne] had a wife named Eithne; another name of hers was Bóand.

The Dagda desired to lie with her. The woman was willing, save for her fear of Elcmar, because of the might of his magic power. The Dagda sent Elcmar away on an errand to Bres son of Elatha in Mag nInis; and the Dagda worked mighty spells on Elcmar as he set forth so that he would not soon return, and he banished the darkness of night from him, and kept hunger and thirst away from him.

He sent him far astray, so that nine months passed like a single day for he had said that he would come home again between day and night. The Dagda, meanwhile, went to Elcmar's wife so that she bore him a son named Oengus. And the woman had recovered from her confinement when Elcmar came back, and he did not detect her misdeed, that is, that she had shared the Dagda's bed.

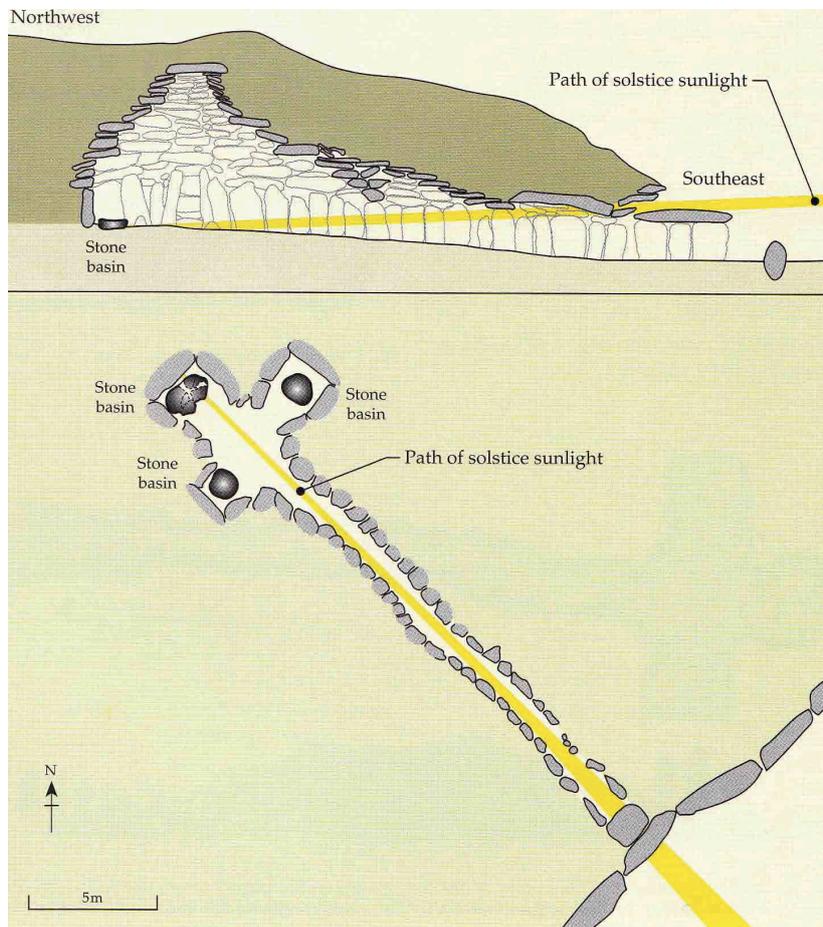
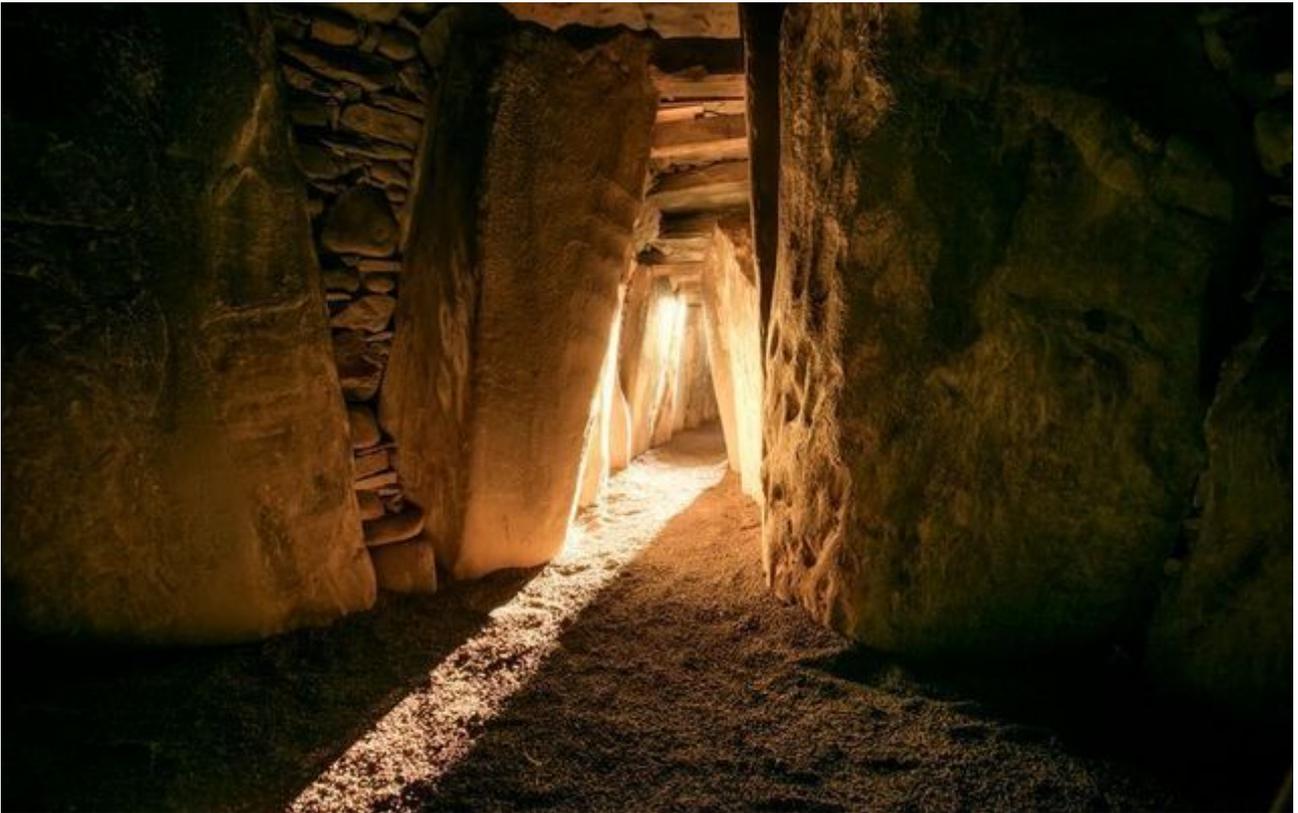
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[Oengus] was called 'the Mac Óc' ['the young son']. for his mother had said 'Young is the son who was begotten at the beginning of a day, and born between then and evening'.

- Brú na Bóinne (New Grange), Ireland, c. 3200 BCE.



- The Winter Solstice Alignment



- John Waddell, The Rhind Lectures:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzAcx8kr6SM>