

# TOUCHSTONE

*The journal of*  
**THE ORDER OF BARDS,  
OVATES & DRUIDS**

June 2025 | Issue 334

## *This Issue*

✿ The Wild Edge of  
Druidry by Dru Jaeger.

✿ Lucky Stones by Jon  
Nash.

✿ Retelling our Stories by  
Shaun McCann.

✿ Plus lots more!



Cover: "Tree of Life" by Amanda Wolf Hara

# Editorial

Welcome to June's *Touchstone*, a sunny and summery issue to guide us through the longest days of the year, as the sun reaches its height.

Our three articles this month form a kind of narrative - Shaun McCann writes about the importance of telling our own stories, Jon Nash shows just how potent that advice can be with a beautiful piece set on a beach, and Dru Jaeger finishes the trilogy with a wonderful article about Druids and the sea - perfect for the start of summer!

Our world is a difficult place at the moment, and those difficulties have led to two of our bards adapting the Druid's Prayer. The poems, by Tony Stainsbury and Marina Evans, can be found on pages 5 and 6 and are well worth spending time with.

The cover of this issue is adorned with the beautiful *Tree of Life* by Amanda Wolf Hara. Amanda shared her piece on the Facebook artists group and I knew I wanted it for the cover of *Touchstone*! I've been holding onto it for a couple of months as it struck me that it needed to be a cover of a significant issue, such as a solstice or an equinox. I think we can all take a lot of good advice from the bears in Amanda's painting - in these difficult days, lay back and enjoy the summer sunshine while you can.

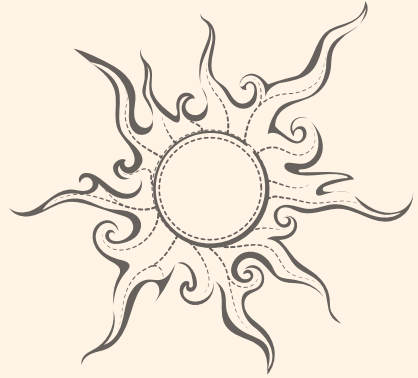
Don't forget - *Touchstone* is what you make it, so please continue to share your articles, poetry, stories and artwork as we begin our journey into the waning half of the year.

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## Alban Hefin by Jessica McGee

Our star reigns supreme  
superb in its brilliance  
all shadows banished.



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# Chosen Chief's Bit

Bandia daoibh a chairde! Beannachtaí an tSamhraidh daoibhse. Summer Blessing to you all!

I am writing this after a weekend of Bealtaine celebrations. First, we and other OBOD members attended the Bealtaine Fire Festival at Uisneach, the Sacred Centre of Ireland, since ancient times, where we were invited to take part in the procession up to the Sacred Fire. A big thanks to Marcella Dillon-Walsh for making an OBOD banner at short notice.

The next day, we held our Bealtaine ritual in the Grove at Three Castles. I love how our central fireplace gives way to two fires placed in the south-east, representing polarities, and how, within the ritual, we are invited to integrate those polarities within ourselves to create something new.

Following the recent Supreme Court ruling in the UK regarding the definition of a Woman, there was much concern expressed by members about the safety of Trans members within the Order. Although inclusivity and diversity are among our core values as stated on the website, in order to reassure our Trans members, I posted the statement below on the Order members' Facebook group, The Hearth and the OBOD Facebook page:

*"OBOD has always been an inclusive Order that welcomes everyone, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or ethnic origin. We are committed to social justice, diversity, inclusion and tolerance - as is clearly stated on the Order's website - however, we do understand that there are times when it is important to reassure people that everyone is welcome and supported by us, including the Trans community who have been experiencing such a difficult time recently. Please be reassured that the Order is a safe place for Trans people and that OBOD celebrates its Trans community. Trans people positively enrich our Druid community; we will continue to welcome them as valued members, as speakers at our gatherings, and as guests on our Fireside Chats and Druidcast. There will always be a safe spiritual home in OBOD for all Trans members."*

In some spaces, this was followed by concerns expressed by female members about their safety. I want to state that the Order is a safe place for women, for men and for all our members. It is disappointing to see the polarised and hateful statements made on the Facebook page, which only serve to polarise people further, where they become firmly entrenched in their own position.

The love of all existences, inclusivity and diversity means exactly that. I know this is a very challenging notion. Listening to and acknowledging someone's point of view does

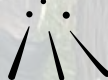
not mean you have to agree with them. I taught Human Development for twenty-seven years, the core of which was relationship-building skills. I used a listening exercise from Joanna Macey and Molly Brown's book, *Coming Back to Life*. In this exercise the participants were asked to speak about an issue they were passionate about for three minutes, then they were asked to speak from three different perspectives: the perspective of someone who holds the opposite view; the perspective of a non-human who is affected by the issue; and the perspective of someone from the future who is affected by the issue. As you can imagine, this was very challenging for people, but I encouraged them to try it. The results were transformative in that the participants were able to enter into the perspective of the 'other' for a short time and this allowed them to shift even slightly their own position, maybe to a place of understanding and compassion but not agreement, a place where they could see the hurt, fear and humanity in the person rather than seeing them as an enemy.

Looking at the conflicts in the world at the moment, we can see how sides are firmly entrenched in their hatred of the other. If the two sides in these conflicts do not sit down and parley, they will destroy each other. Being willing to listen to each other, no matter how painful or difficult, is how peace deals are brokered. It happened against the odds in Northern Ireland with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, where it seemed impossible that peace could ever prevail there. A friend of mine was involved in the pre-talks where both sides could not even agree to be in the same building. But with skill, support and a willingness to change, they did eventually meet and sit in the same room. Several years later, my friend was approached by ex-combatants from both sides asking him to mediate and facilitate a conversation between them as they recognised that they had been both perpetrators and victims. That must have taken immense courage and a willingness to be honest.

We as Druids have the resources, values, and skills to sit and listen to the other, to see the humanity in the other. Our Druid ancestors were peace brokers; we in OBOD begin and end our rituals with Peace. Tuning in to the energy of Bealtaine and the two fires can assist us in finding another way. It does not have to be either/or but rather both/and. This is what inclusivity is. No one said being a Druid would be easy – it is full of challenges, mystery, magic and miracles.

Beannachtaí agus draíocht an dá thine daoibhse. Blessings and magic of the two fires to you all!

Go n-éirí libh! May you rise, may you succeed!

Eimear 



## Litha by Susan Knox

Litha! Gaithert thegither  
We raise oor een in thanks an blessin  
Tae the Solar God.  
Hertsun, renewin, towardsome  
An so, as the ramash Aigle –  
We soar!

*Susan has written eight poems in Scots to mark the Wheel of the Year. Look out for more in future issues of Touchstone.*



## The Thinning of the Veil by Cynthia Richardson

As a dew drop on a blade of grass in the glen  
awaits to be drunk by the beetle below.  
As a newborn fawn suckles the doe in a nearby  
grove, a wolf with a pup awaits to eat.  
We have a shared space and an individual gift to  
give to self and others; a purpose beyond what our  
dreams must teach us.  
Our ancestor's song told a story, their journey  
became our lullabies, and the sacred lessons were  
lost as a stone thrown into the sea.  
Would we learn if the stone were to find its way  
home into our hands?  
The smooth familiar weight, cool and perfectly  
formed.  
Would our heads spin and our soul quake?  
Would the lessons of purpose speak to us as we  
sit around a fire in the embrace of others, or the  
solitude and peace as we walk alone in a grove?  
A life well lived and fulfilled has a necessity of  
letting go and a faith in the path we set our feet  
upon.  
It is a tugging of the soul and a pounding of the  
mind.  
This battle of purpose; a song in the soul and  
cadence of the mind.  
Be still and listen.  
Can you hear the voices on the grassy hill?  
They are calling you home.

## The Elements Live Inside Us by Eline Kieft

First an unknowable mystery  
as a spark of energy ignites  
the physical matter of our being.

Our body and bones are like the Earth  
providing solid structure, stable and firm  
like trees and rocks and stones.

Breath moves through us like Wind,  
receiving inspiration and letting go  
swift and fleeting, yet ever-present.

Fire lives in our expressive hearts,  
reflecting the power of the Sun to  
warm, encourage and grow.

Our blood, like Water, carries  
our subterranean soul from  
source into the deep, deep sea.

Consciousness, this light of being  
infuses our whole body, like ether,  
with spirit and the great mystery.

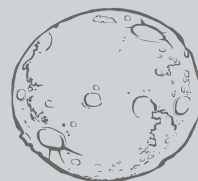
Dying is merely shapeshifting,  
the elements change back to energy, and  
sacred life force returns to Origin.

## New Moon by Asaemon

I waited for black, but it's white.  
I waited for cold, but it's warm.  
I waited for emptiness, but it's overflowing.

I thought I'd be poor, but I used to be a king.  
I thought I'd be alone, but a court awaited me.  
I thought I'd be afraid, but laughter comforted me.

I used to run away from you because I thought  
you were gloomy,  
And yet thanks to you,  
I loved like I had never loved before.





**“Soon Enough” by Tony Cavalline**

## The Love of ALL Existences by Tony Stainsbury

### Grant, O Spirits, thy protection...

Protection from the hand that strikes unseen.  
Protection for those cast beyond the circle.  
Protection that makes no bargain with fear.

### And in protection, strength...

The strength to raise a voice in the shadow of fear.  
The strength to bear witness without retreat.  
The strength to stand when others fall.

### And in strength, understanding...

Understanding that power without compassion is hollow.  
Understanding that true courage shelters the vulnerable.  
Understanding that we are each the shield of the other.

### And in understanding, knowledge...

Knowledge of the bond between protector and protected.  
Knowledge that standing firm is both a burden and a blessing.  
Knowledge that silence is an act of betrayal.

### And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice...

Justice that lives not in words but in deeds.  
Justice that answers the cry of the outcast.  
Justice that honours the worth of every soul.

### And in the knowledge of justice, the love of it...

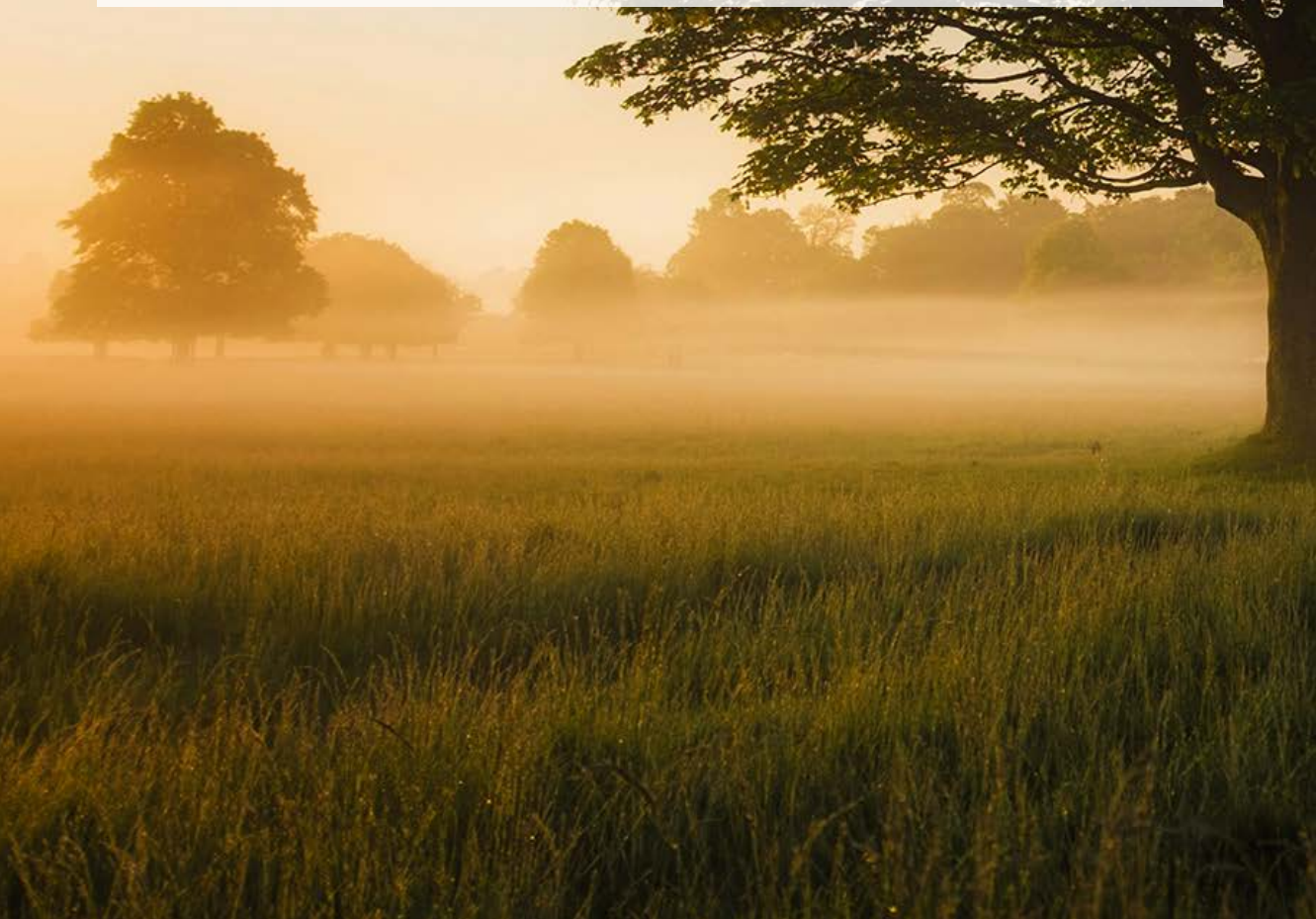
A love that roars, refuses to bow.  
A love that builds bridges where others raise walls.  
A love that kindles hope in the heart of despair.

### And in the love of it, the love of all existences...

All bodies, all spirits, all sacred ways of being.  
Every existence a prayer made flesh,  
Every soul a note of the world's great song.

### And in the love of all existences, the love of the Spirits and all goodness...

If you claim the name of Druid yet turn from any being.  
If you pray with your lips but not with your life.  
You walk no sacred path I know.



## A Druid Prayer for Troubled Days by Marina Evans

**Grant, oh God and Goddess, your protection** from a world that runs counter to our deepest selves. Protection from the liar, and the dictator, from the unfettered power of money.

**And in protection strength:** strength of purpose and resolve. Strength of shoulder, heart and voice.

**And in strength, understanding** of the uses and limits of power. Understanding of the turn of the year, the use of words, the song of thrush and the ebb and flow of the rising waters and of the human soul.

**And in understanding, knowledge** of bird, beast, briar and breath. Knowledge of book and bread, barn and burrow, beginning and boundary.

**And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice.** Just reward, just desserts, justice done and seen to be done and the justice meted out in quiet corners that keeps hopes alive and our planet turning.

**And in the knowledge of justice, the love of it.** For justice means that the needs of all can be

met, that the weakest are served and the cruel do not prosper. Justice of a good harvest for a thoughtful farmer and high praise for a natural performer. Justice for those who dare not seek it, and justice for those who run from it.

**And in the love of it the love of all existences.** Love like family for all of more than human kind, flower, fungi, feathered and furred. For grass, grasshopper, greenwood, goat and grandfather.

**And in the love of all existences, the love of God, Goddess, Great spirit and all goodness.** Love for the stumbling pause into which each of us pours our hearts' devotions. Love for the guy in the sky with a beard, so far beyond what we can picture. Love for our Earth mother, birthing snowdrop children and catkin offspring as we speak, love of moon, sun, sea and mountain, love of ancestors lighting our pasts and spirits of those as yet unseen lighting the paths to be trod. Love of every kind word over hateful action. Love of every humble act, beautiful painting, beam of sunlight. Love of our tribe.

**So may it be.**



## Retelling Our Stories by Shaun McCann

The archetypal image of the Bard is that of the storyteller and lore keeper: those who take in, hold, and tell the lore of the tribe. This is an image that transcends both culture and time and is found in troubadours, trobairitz, minnesingers and too many counterparts to name.

Yet in the same way that I've invoked history to note Bards and Bardic analogues, history is often the first thing that comes to mind when we think of the Bard in relation to the spiritual path, and perhaps, even as Bards in the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.

As Bards, as Druids, we should know the stories, myths and histories of our ancient forebears, and there is a wealth of this treasure to draw from.

However, we are also lore keepers of the present moment, and lore keepers of the present-made-past through the lens of the future we will inhabit individually and collectively.

Every Wheel of the Year ritual concludes in part with the line "As the fire dies down, may it be relit within our hearts, may memory hold what the eye and the ear have gained." Poetic as it is, and it is one of my favourite parts of Order ritual, it is also a practical imperative about where we are now and where we have been - not our ancient predecessors, but us, ourselves, as we transit from moment to moment. "May memory hold what the eye and ear have gained." Not merely their memory, their eyes, their ears but our memory, our eyes, and our ears - and our stories.

There is a saying - where it originated I do not know - that goes something like 'If you want to get where you're going, you must start where you're at'. Where we are, where we can be, where we should be, is with each other.

Sometimes the present moment, the present tension, the present obstacle, can loom so large in our forward vision that it can obscure the many moments, the many tensions and the many obstacles that we have successfully been through or overcome before. To illustrate, I recently had a long impromptu discussion with someone in distress and they described a long domino chain of if-this-then-that about how their world was going to come apart if one course of action didn't come to pass.

How they got their life together, got a diverse set

of skills developed and applied, compounded with education and training, daily focus and discipline - this long road they took out of a dark place and that all of it will have been for nothing if they can't clear this hurdle. It was an important hurdle.

It wasn't the present crisis that grabbed my attention though.

They described at length a series of Herculean tasks that brought them to this moment. And they were prepared to completely dismiss them all in the face of a possible present obstacle over which they've got no control. It completely went over their own head how they had overcome not one obstacle or problem, but a series of them over the course of years, each of which was greater than the present obstacle individually and especially in aggregate. When we are hit by overwhelming difficulty, despair or disappointment, it is very easy to lose sight of where we are in the progress of our own story.

We are, as should be apparent, not the only people in the story of our journeys, and those stories, characters and arcs overlap with others.

People don't always remember the last time they felt as hopeless in the face of what they might feel in the now, nor that they overcame it and how. Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear. But this can be hard to notice against the present taking up the whole of our vision.

We cannot always help people to overcome the day to day obstacles that are generated by the oversized present, but in moments where each of us can lose sight of where or who we are, the value of community is such that those we love and those who love us can tell our stories back to us.

We don't always have to remember for ourselves - those we love and those who love us, can do it for us. They can remind us what we care about, who we care about and why we care about it. They can see the longer arc and remind us of what we have faced and what we have faced down.

In my home community's Rite of Matrimony after the couple takes their vows, the celebrant turns the couple to face the friends and family that have gathered there with them and asks them to support the couple by noticing when



they're at their worst and helping to remind them of what it was like when they were at their best, how it has been and how it might be. The whole church signifying their willingness to do so – says as one – “I do!”

This type of response, this type of care, isn't the domain of marriages alone. We need to take opportunities to tell each other's stories back to ourselves and each other - the ones we've forgotten we're in, or that we've written, or forgotten we are writing. And where that is not possible, to take the opportunity to join in writing a new one.

As any flight attendant will tell you: 'please put your own mask on before assisting others.' The degree to which we can connect with another or help them connect to themselves, is in part determined by how we've stayed connected to ourselves and this may be true of our stories and the stories of others.

Have you forgotten your story? Ask those you love to tell it back to you. You will be surprised at the perspectives and insight that will come out that you, as its author, may have taken for granted. Likewise, and you can't force it, but take the opportunity to do the same for those around you: you may be surprised at your ability to not only help people reconnect with their story but how it reconnects you to your own - and the new one that gets written between you and another when you do.

As Bards, our vocational hazard may be that when we think of what we do we think of those other than ourselves, stories other than ours and times other than now, looking back as we do at the image of those who have come before us. It is sincere, it is important, and it is part of what we do but if we are to truly do as they have done, then we must speak to the stories of our local landscape, our human landscape and our spiritual landscape. They told the stories of their time, and we must treasure and transmit them, but we also must tell the stories of our time, of each other, to each other and for each other.

As the fire of our collective flame of aspiration flickers and wanes against the winds of an all too turbulent now, this is the only way we will keep it lit within our hearts.



**The Goddess Bohan by Tatty**

## Lucky Stones by Jon Nash

*Lucky stone lucky stone bring me some luck*

*Today or tomorrow at Twelve O'Clock.*

— folk rhyme

Just after midnight my foot slips a little underneath me as the wave makes impact. I feel a stone press into the soft skin of my arch but hold it there, not taking my eyes off the full moon. The night is warm and the sea water feels inviting, swirling around my ankles. It's been a long day of exploring so this moment of pause and peace is welcome.

I haven't been on this beach in years. Not since childhood summers where we came here regularly to a static caravan a short walk from where I'm now standing. My parents had lived here during the early years of my life but long since moved. But the sea kept calling them back every summer. It's been calling me too, but I've only recently answered.

It started during lockdown. Between myself and two good friends. A game that became a concrete plan; a busy list of THINGS WE WOULD DO WHEN COVID WAS OVER. Among a truly random selection (from hitting local clubs we'd never been in, to seeing the Cheese Rolling in Gloucester) came the best idea. Semi-ironic nights out in our hometowns. Introducing each other to the places we grew up. So far we'd partied at Chard Carnival in Somerset, braved my hometown of Warminster in Wiltshire and now arrived at Lancing, Sussex where, by coincidence, James had grown up and I had sometimes been a visitor on the beach in the summer.

It felt magical to finally be completing our trilogy of trips from Devon after so long but also strangely bittersweet. It was this time fifteen years ago my Dad had died and walking the streets of Brighton and Lancing I saw him everywhere. Searching bookshops in the lanes, his hands behind his back, aviator sunglasses glinting in the sun on the beach, in a plane setting off from Shoreham airport. Something was in the air this weekend. Coincidences were clustering.

Long before I knew what a Druid was or had heard the word animist, those summer holidays were about connection to the sea. How cleansing it felt to submerge yourself, to float and be held and also how terrifying to recognise the might of the sea; it could pull you deep under, wear cliffs down and shatter houses.

The Lancing beach was broken up by storm defences, first shaking wood, now mighty banks of rocks. Climbing over them on this July night I think *'all the sea needs to beat these is time'*.

Each summer holiday, once my bag was unpacked in my hot tin room in the caravan I would head

straight to the beach for my own little ritual. I would greet the sea and promise to respect it during the time we would share together if it would keep me safe. I'd find a pebble on the beach that called to me, wash it in the waves and take it wet back to my room where it would dry on a shelf. Then on the last day of the holiday I would return it to the sea and say goodbye for another year. I couldn't have told you exactly what I thought I was doing but it felt important. It became a little tradition. And some of those stones, I have to tell you, were lucky.

Pebbles, flints and chalk pieces marked out from the others with a hole. In Sussex these were called lucky stones (despite being more common here than elsewhere they still take some finding—a geological four leaf clover). In other places they are called Hag Stones, Fairy Stones, Adder Stones, Odin Stones, Druid's Glass, Glain Neider (in Wales) or Milpreve (In Cornwall). The folklore says that if you look through the hole in the stone you will be able to see magical things invisible to the naked eye. That it will bring you great luck and good fortune. That wearing one can protect you from drowning. Heroes in the *Mabinogion* are aided by such special stones that reveal invisible monsters or turn them invisible as they mount a daring escape.

### LUCKY STONE

Portal in a solid stone  
Eyepiece to the otherworld  
Hag's heart worn by the sea  
Odin climbs through you  
To steal the mead of poetry  
Serpents curl and spit  
Their tongues splitting open  
A womb in glass  
Peredur advances on the  
Addanc  
Owain slips out of sight  
As you rest in my pocket  
Borrowed from a beach  
To one day be slipped  
Tide like  
Back into the sea.

Earlier in the day we hit Brighton Beach and, in the shadow of the crumbling West Pier, James tells us about Sussex lucky stones and begins to search the pebbles. I realise he's describing what I know

as Hag Stones or Seeing Stones. A folklore that seems to be across all of Europe at least if not further afield. A story of humans and stones and seeing the world differently. We team up, spread out and work methodically through stone by stone but... no luck. My best discovery is a

grey stone run through with a line of quartz which I take to join the others on my altar at home.

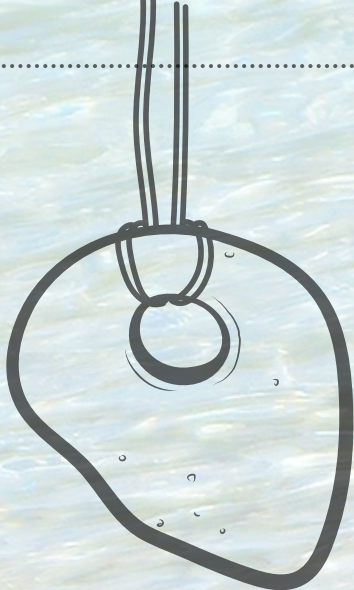
And now I'm here standing on the beach, stones under my feet. The moon has escaped from a behind a shroud. My foot has slipped deeper in the stones and when I lift it, the water moves back and the moonlight hits the white stone which had been pressing softly against my sole. I pick it up and suddenly, without turning my head, I know my Dad is stood to my right looking out to sea. The sense is so strong my eyes tear up. And then it passes as quickly as it came. I slip the stone in my pocket remembering my old childhood ritual.

This time I think I must offer something back to the sea in this exchange. In my lads' weekend planning I haven't brought any offering things with me. I stagger back over painful stones to where my wallet is packed into my shoes. I take a few coins, return to the waters edge (it's closer now, less pain on the walk back!) and throw them into the dark, powerful mass. I feel a little less close to drowning.

Suddenly I feel a presence to my left. It's James. Sensing my high tide of grief, softly standing by til it goes out again. He gently places a hand on my shoulder and holds out his hand. Drops something into it. A stone. With a perfect hole worn through. "I found one for you" he says, then delves back into the dark to find one for Sam. I search and find another, quickly and with ease even in the shadows and hand it to him. "So we all have one, so we all have some luck".

And then, stones in our pockets we walk away from the sea.

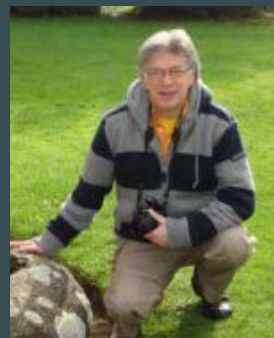
When I get home, I take the other stone out of my pocket. Disappointed to see it's just a chalk stone worn smooth. It's only when I turn it over, I see the hole. "Lucky" I think. "Really lucky."



# In Memoriam

## Chris Street

We recently found out about the passing of Chris Street, who many of you will know from his book *Earthstars*. Chris' brother, James, shared some recollections on Chris' life and career:



"Chris was one of the most creative and sought-after writers in the advertising business. His offbeat sense of humor was always evident in his work, and he originated some of the funniest, most entertaining and most memorable television commercials of the 1970s and 80s. Despite a highly accomplished 30-year career in advertising, Chris felt that his work in promoting consumer goods was not really where his heart and soul were destined to lead him. Following a long-standing interest in spirituality, healing, Earth mysteries, ley lines and sacred geometry, he took an enormous leap of faith, leaving a successful, well-paid position to become an author, educator, healer and mystic, and this became his true calling. His enthusiasm for a wide range of mystical subjects and his deep fund of esoteric knowledge were simply amazing, and his circle of friends and followers never failed to learn new and interesting facts from him with every conversation and publication.

Notable among his literary works were *Earthstars* (1990), *Earthstars: The Visionary Landscape* (2000), and *London's Camelot and the Secrets of the Grail* (2009). His books were researched meticulously, written in an informal, friendly style, and were very well received by an eager audience of readers. Although packed with information, they were entertaining and easy to read, and they became an inspiration to other authors who followed similar paths. His words were full of beauty, mystery and magic, and revealed him to be a wise and wonderful man with an old soul.

Chris enjoyed listening to a range of musical styles, but was particularly fond of rock and roll's guitar greats. Before he became afflicted with Parkinson's Disease, he was an accomplished musician himself, which was something of a family trait. He could play the introductory guitar riff to Chuck Berry's *Roll Over Beethoven* effortlessly at full speed and without missing a note."

Go well to the Summerlands, Chris, with the best wishes and gratitude of your OBOD friends.

## The Wild Edge of Druidry by Dru Jaeger

Many of us are drawn to druidry by our deep love for trees. We gather in groves, study woodland plants and immerse ourselves in the mysteries of the dark forest. But our druid ancestors lived in a world with landscapes as varied as ours, and some inhabited the wild edge where sea, sky and land meet.

Historically, the sea played a central role in shaping the various Celtic cultures of the Atlantic Northwest. As archaeologist Barry Cunliffe explores in his books *Facing the Ocean* (2001) and *On the Ocean* (2017), maritime travel spread materials, language and ritual practice from the coves of Iberia to the cliffs of Ireland. In the days when journeys by land were arduous and dangerous, intrepid adventurers and merchants set out in boats to cross the ocean, connecting the communities at the watery fringes of western Europe.

Dive deep into those cultures from which druidry springs, and you begin to sense the encircling presence of the ocean. We find gods of the sea, like Manannán mac Lir, who rides across the waves on his chariot, shrouds the Isle of Man in protective mist and carries his crane bag filled with treasures. In the *Mabinogi*, Branwen crosses the Irish Sea to marry Matholwch, and her brother Brân follows with his army, wading through the waves to rescue her. Later in the tales, Dylan ail Don, son of Arianrhod, is killed and the waves sing his lament. We have stories of selkies in Scotland who emerge at the shore and shed their seal skins to live among humans. Mermaids - *murúcha*, merry maids, *mari-morgans* and *maruxaina* - slip between sea and land in Irish, Cornish, Breton and Galician folklore, both protecting sailors and luring them to their doom. And in the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, the book of the taking of Ireland, the sea brings successive waves of culture to the island. In the final phase of the story, as the druid Amergin approaches the shore, he calms the storm, singing:

*"Am gáeth i m-muir, am tond trethan, am fuaim mara..."*

*"I am the wind on the sea, I am the ocean wave, I am the roar of sea..."*

Beyond the grove and far from the forest, the sea is an eternal realm of myth, magic and mystery.

I have always been drawn to the water's edge, and over the last decade, I've spent much of my druid journey exploring the shores of Britain, Ireland and Galicia. After many years of wandering, I settled on the coast of Morecambe Bay in northwest England. This is the ancestral territory of the Setantii, a Celtic tribe who inhabited a

watery world of salt marshes and shifting sands, and whose story is largely lost beneath the waves.

Morecambe Bay today is home to an extraordinarily rich and diverse community of plants, sea creatures and birds. Migratory flocks visit to feed and raise their young on the shoreline. The water teems with fish, and sharks move silently in the Lune Deep, the ancient canyon that runs far below the waves. Fog rolls in and clears as quickly as it arrives, opening the view across the expanse of the bay to the Lakeland fells. The landscape is constantly changing, and every day brings a new encounter. As in the distant past, it is a potent place to be a druid.



Being a druid of the wild edge connects me deeply with the rhythm of the tides. Where I live, at the lowest tide, the water pulls back from the beach to reveal three kilometres of sand, silt and creeks. This makes the edge of Morecambe Bay dangerous territory for the unwary walker, but it offers a powerful daily reminder of the cycle of life. As the moon circles the earth, so the tide flows and ebbs, covering the land with incoming waves and exposing a reshaped earth to the sky above as the water withdraws. In just twelve and a half hours, the world will be changed. Everything here is temporary and uncertain.

Unlike solid land, with its groves, stones and altars, the shore resists permanent spaces for ritual. So I step onto the freshly revealed earth of the ebb tide, draw a circle in the sand and mark the directions with shells and driftwood. I gaze at the horizon, watching the flight of seabirds and hearing the roar of distant waves carried on the salty breeze. I call out, honouring the three realms of the Celtic cosmos in the words of the 8th-century poet Blathmac: "*muir mas, nem nglas, talam cé.*" *The beautiful sea, the blue sky, the present earth.*

Understanding the division of the universe into three interconnected realms - sea, sky and land - opens up a powerful connection with time. The sea is the realm of the ancestors, holding the secrets of the past beneath its waves and delivering them to the shoreline in storms. The deep waters of the ocean are a symbol of emotion, and I feel that connection in my heart, too. The sky speaks of the future, a place of thought and wisdom, expansive consciousness and far-seeing vision. The earth beneath my feet roots me firmly in the present, the realm of the body and becoming. So, the shifting edge of the shoreline is a place where past, future and present meet and where I can find unity between my body, mind and heart.

Druidry at the wild edge is all about adaptation. Living on a windy shore largely devoid of trees encouraged me to approach the ogam in a new way. I struggled to make sense of a forest-based system. But immersing myself in the history of Irish letter names, kennings, and medieval lists of colours, birds and occupations opened a rich tapestry of meaning and associations, which I could use to encode my knowledge of the shore.

In my sea ogam, duir is not a mighty oak but a tenacious acorn barnacle. Clinging to the rocks, repeatedly immersed in the waves and exposed to the air, these tiny creatures are a gateway to the mysteries of time, as much as the roots, trunk and branches of any tree. They are a powerful symbol of strength and resilience, encouraging me to consider how I can weather life's storms. And they remind me, always, to stay firmly rooted in the present.

For a long time, I feared that following the call to the shoreline was taking me away from the druid path. I struggled to make sense of my spirituality in a metaphorical environment I did not inhabit. But over the past few years, I've learned the value of following my intuition, sensitively adapting the practices of woodland druidry and letting them be shaped by the world I live in. And I've come to appreciate that wherever druidry makes its home, whether it's the shoreline, desert, mountain or city street, mystery can still reveal itself.

If you are heading to the sea for your summer holidays, bring your curiosity along with your beach towel. Draw a circle in the sand as the tide retreats. Gather stones, shells and driftwood as offerings. Step into shifting space between sea, sky and land, and sense the flow and cycles of time. Being by the sea is good for your wellbeing, and it can open you to the energy of life. Watching the sun set behind mountainous clouds over a stormy sea can inspire wonder.

If you live far from the ocean, you can still immerse yourself in the mysterious, watery world of the druids of the wild edge. You might read stories of the sea or meditate to the sound of crashing waves. A sea shell or stone in a container of saltwater could be a fitting addition to your altar or sacred space at home.

And if your druidry moves you to care for the living world, why not give your time and attention to protecting the ocean? All of us can take action, whether we live close to the shore or not. Too many of our waste plastics find their way into the sea, and run-off from intensive agriculture pollutes marine environments, causing vast algal blooms that disrupt delicate ecosystems. Climate change bleaches coral reefs and threatens the patterns of deep currents that drive our weather.

The ocean and the creatures who call it home urgently need our love and care. As druids, the sea is calling us.

## A Glimpse of the Hills by Frances Kelsey

Sometimes I feel like a child  
In the dense, dark forest -  
Forgetful of how I came here,  
Wandering the paths -  
Because I know that I am seeking  
But know not what I seek.

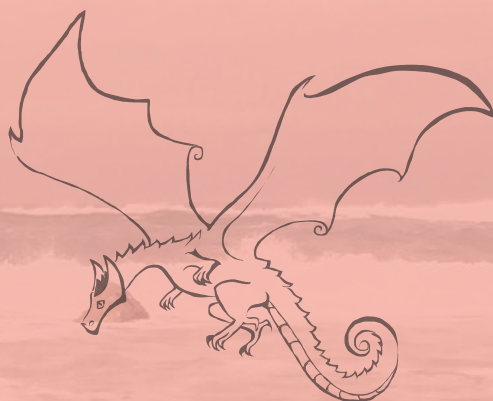
Time passes – night follows day,  
The procession of an ordered universe  
Whose immensity is such that I,  
Frail child that I am,  
Can scarce begin to contemplate,  
Let alone comprehend.

Paths abound,  
A wealth of possibilities,  
Yet my way feels set, automatus.  
For to entertain a concept of choice  
Would – when I feel so small –  
Allow the dragons in.

But still, one day at sunrise,  
Wren's voice -  
A call of self -  
Dares me to seek those dragons,  
To choose, with courage,  
An upward path.

Knowing that, strangely,  
It will take me also to the depths,  
Guided by a hint - a glimpse -  
Of a dragon's back.

*Frances composed this poem at the Druid Gorsedd, held in the Malvern Hills in April 2025. Turn over the page for more reflections on the weekend.*



## The Malvern Druid Grade Gorsedd by Mary Laycock

In April I was able to join a fantastic and varied group of Druids at the Gorsedd in Malvern. We explored the theme of dragons, and experiencing this transformational energy was a privilege and an honour. We had the opportunity to be cleansed by the spring waters of Malvern, and feel the protection of the hills which, some say, forms the backbone of a dragon, a landmark that is clearly visible in the landscape once it has been pointed out to you.

Throughout the weekend, I heard similar themes from people in different ways. A Gorsedd is a time to come together, to drop into a sacred time and place, to leave the daily humdrum life behind for a while, to create a circle for an extended period of time and then grow, heal, connect with fellow peers, integrate your learning, and absorb other people's love and energy both on an individual level, and as a collective.

The weekend, facilitated and coordinated by Lorraine Munn and Tom Moxon, was held at Malvern St James School, and we will be returning there in 2026 for another Druid grade Gorsedd, details of which will be forthcoming.

At the end of the Gorsedd I had a vision, which was as clear as day. Throughout the United Kingdom, small huts and hubs had been created, silver and gold light was radiating out of them, and dragon lines were connecting them together. In these turbulent times, I recognise that people need to come together and find their tribe. A shift from things been centrally controlled to people taking back that power and responsibility is occurring. Small groups of people are coming together, to help and support each other in a local way, and looking after their neighbourhood once more. In times gone by, people worked together, celebrating their individual gifts and skills. Society cared and looked after one another, valued and shared what was available,

including the land and other species, on a daily basis through ritual, celebration and traditions. Tribes and their elders would come together at set points in the year from the surrounding villages, to discussion ideas, settle disputes, and trade with each other. Instead of being an individualist society, the community understood that everyone was interconnected, and the web of life, including nature was intertwined.

I deeply believe and hope that in years to come OBOD Gorsedd's will be in every region of the UK and around the world. This is the time for us to step into our power, to take responsibility for our planet and the local environment, and the decisions that are made about us. It is through small steps, and coming together that we as an Order can make a positive difference.

During the closing ceremony we made a human dragons tail and moved out of the studio, holding hands, to the beech tree in the centre of the school. We surrounded it and joined the circle up again like the Ouroboros, a symbol of wholeness and infinity, before singing the AWEN for a final time.

My journey from home in East Yorkshire to the Gorsedd in Malvern took 4 hours, but my journey to get there started many years ago. It began when I started my OBOD journey, and continued to the point where I was able to walk up to the Druid Gorsedd gathering, and be accepted as I am, nearing the end of the Druid grade.

The Order has recently set up a database, so emails regarding future Gorsedds can be sent to OBOD members directly. If you would like to join your fellow companions and develop life long friends, simply fill out this form by clicking [druidgorsedds@obod.org](mailto:druidgorsedds@obod.org) and be the first to hear about these fantastic events. Alternatively, all upcoming Gorsedds will be listed on the back page of *Touchstone*.



# Andrew's Bit At The Back

One of the things I discovered when I started editing *Touchstone* was that I had to be early for everything. Due to the nature of putting together a magazine, I work about six to eight weeks in advance. I remember my first day as editor very clearly - it was 29th December 2023. My house was still covered in Christmas decorations and I was still bingeing on festive TV and mince pies, yet, somehow, I had to mentally transport myself to Imbolc to infuse my first edition with the early signs of spring! As someone who loves being ready for things early, I enjoy that juxtaposition enormously.

However, this year, it hasn't quite worked like that. I no longer feel as through I am running early. Part of the issue is, I think, the calendar. Easter seemed to fall very late this year. I love observing Easter - we get couple of days off work in the UK to mark the occasion, so what's not to love?! But this year Easter was so far beyond Alban Eilir that it did not feel like Easter at all. It felt like Beltane.

But it's not just the calendar that caused confusion: Beltane rolled in a few weeks early this year. By Mid-April the hedgerows outside my home were rich and abundant and there was the distinct smell of hawthorn blossom as I settled down to my hot cross buns on Good Friday.

As Shakespeare so eloquently put it, it feels as though "time is out of joint." That's not just my imagination - I have proof.

You may remember, back in August's *Touchstone* last year, I wrote about my experiences surveying moths. I wrote about the rare Silver Cloud moth and how they live in abundance in the orchards we survey. Well, in May 2023 we found ten Silver Clouds in our traps, a record number for Warwickshire. A year later, in May 2024, there was a single Silver Cloud in the traps, a huge collapse in numbers. This May, we didn't find a single Silver Cloud, despite surveying on the same date we did in 2023.

Now, we know that there is not a problem with the environment of the orchard as the number of species we found has increased year on year. The issue is that the Silver Clouds are now appearing earlier and earlier in the year, so are moving out of the window

when we set our traps. Rather than emerging in May, these rare moths are taking to the wing earlier in April.

The changing climate in the UK is compounding the issue. This spring is on track to be the driest in the UK has ever experienced and it is playing havoc with the natural world around us. In fact, there have been times over the last week where I have looked to the hedgerows and thought I was beginning to see signs of maturation, of Midsummer among the grass and leaves. I even have crane flies bobbing around my garden and they don't usually emerge here until late-Summer.

It is not my perception of time that is at fault this year. Our world is changing. The effects of the climate crisis are everywhere for us to see. It is the natural world that is "out of joint." The earth of this usually damp "green and pleasant land" is cracked and crazed by lack of rainfall. Our wildlife, our flora and fauna, is trying to keep up but the natural rhythms which have served them for millennia, no longer function

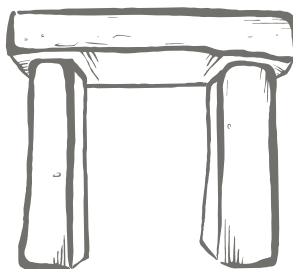
in this dissonant world.

Although I still run to the same editorial deadlines, this year the seasonal content I am preparing feels more congruent with the world outside. It is as if my six-week headway has collapsed. If that is playing havoc with my mind, imagine just how stressful it must be to the Wrens and other birds out in the hedgerow trying to raise their first brood while the signs of mid to late summer appear around them.

Nature may be "out of joint" but that means, as Druids, we have work to do. We need to support our local flora and fauna as best we can. We need to ease the stresses they are facing without disrupting their world further. We need to stay present, in this moment, to observe and react. As Eimear so eloquently wrote in her introduction to this edition, we need to bring together the contrasting worlds, of what was and what is coming to be, and build a bridge between them. That is not easy but it is the role that is calling to us this Alban Hefin.

Until  
next time,

Andrew iii





To find Events from OBOD members and friends throughout the year, check the events page on the  
Druid Hearth: <https://hearth.druidry.org/events>

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## Upcoming Events

**Bardic Gorsedd:** 25-27 July 2025 at Penmaenmawr, Wales. For more information email  
[bardicgorsedds@obod.org](mailto:bardicgorsedds@obod.org)

**Druid Gorsedd:** 10-12 October 2025, Devizes, Wiltshire. For more information, email  
[druidgorsedds@obod.org](mailto:druidgorsedds@obod.org)

**Summer Gathering:** 7 & 8 June 2025, Strode Theatre, Street.

**Winter Gathering:** 6 December 2025, Strode Theatre, Street.

*I dream of sparks  
that rise and drift like pollen  
seeding the night-wind.*

*I breathe them in  
drinking the fluttering fire  
deep into my belly.*

*I bank the hearth  
keep the flame-seed close  
and deep in my heart.*

*And every fire  
calls to mine: star and sun  
and stag and molten stone.*

*Lightning knits them  
runs through brain and vein  
and delicate fungal webs.*

*We are one flame  
one song of cinders  
falling from a summer sky.*

**The Fourfold: Elemental  
Words - Fire**  
by Steven Shakespeare