

TOUCHSTONE

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

July 2025 | Issue 335

*The Summer
Magic Issue*

- ✿ The Dog Days of Summer by Jack Wolf
- ✿ In the Quiet Magic of Summer by Abby Campbell
- ✿ Sun Prints, Sun Magic by Kaz Leroux
- ✿ Plus Lots More!



Cover: "Summer Magic" by Josh Warren

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Editorial

Welcome to July's *Touchstone*, and it's a special "Summer Magic" issue! Whenever I have reached out to members for themed content, I am always thrilled and delighted by what comes in. The "Summer Magic" issue is no exception. Within these pages you will discover all you need to know about Asparagus Wizards, Cyanotypes and thirsty Foxgloves, as well as a host of other magical and mysterious aspects to summertime you didn't know you needed in your life.

Jack Wolf's article about the 'Dog Days' of summer is a particularly potent read. Jack explores the meaning behind the name and rounds off his article with a simple but effective ritual which we can all perform during those days of oppressive heat. Abby Campbell's article reminds us of the importance of looking for ordinary magic this summer while Marika O'Sullivan's piece, called *Tom's Magic*, explores how an individual we barely know can infuse our lives with wonder. It's a beautiful, nostalgic read and well worth spending time with. And, with another stunning front cover by Josh Warren, depicting a number of magical moments from across the summer months, this really is a very special issue.

Find a shady corner, grab a glass of something cold, sit back and let this issue cast its spell of summer magic!



Song of the Bees by K.J. Elise

As they buzz from flower to flower,
The bees dance:
Swaying the sacred stamen tower.
In droning trance,

The bees dance:
Hovering o'er honeysuckle—How?
In droning trance,
They sip nepenthe's nectar; now—

Hovering o'er honeysuckle, [how]
(While the winds whisper and wheeze)
They sip nepenthe's nectar . . . Now!
Dance with the bees.

(While the winds whisper and wheeze)
Swaying the sacred stamen tower,
Dance with the bees,
As they buzz from flower to flower.



Chosen Chief's Bit

I'm writing this just after the Solstice and bathing in the afterglow of our Summer Gathering in the Strode Theatre, Street. We started off on the Friday with our Meet and Greet in the Avalon Club, which was facilitated beautifully by the Dartmoor and South Devon Grove. The Open Mic in the Assembly rooms was a great success with over thirty bardic offerings and held so well by Marcus Bollonius. While there was a lot of rain that weekend, the rain held off so we could hold our ceremonies simultaneously on the Tor and in the grounds of Strode Theatre. Daniel McKenzie presented the Banner to honour members who have passed. A big thanks to artist member Josh Warren, who made this beautiful banner. We had an opportunity to write the names on the banner. There will be an official ceremony to honour the banner at the Winter Gathering. The Eisteddfod, as always, showcased the amazing talents of our members.

On Sunday morning, Damh announced that he is stepping down as Pendragon and that Matt McCabe is taking over the role. I am sad that Damh has stepped down as we have had a great working relationship for the last five years, and at the same time, I am delighted to have Matt as my Pendragon. We will have a formal handing over of the Sword from Damh to Matt at the Winter Gathering. The theme of our Sunday morning session was Exploring the Inner Landscape of the Soul, where we had a meditation to bring the light of the sun down into the centre of our Groves, as the Altar of our Heart, followed by presentations by Tom Moxon, Marion Sibbons and Fi Ware. We had breakout groups where we explored and discussed what we discovered on the Altar of our Heart, how we could symbolise this. Participants were invited to draw a representation of this symbol on paper. Each breakout group processed onto the stage in the auditorium and placed their symbol in a cauldron which was blessed. We



chanted Awen honouring where we were and the Imbas to honour the land where those symbols would be taken. I brought them back to Ireland with me and I placed them to be ritually burned in my Solstice fire in my Grove. It was filmed and the video is now on the Hearth.

There was a very strong feeling of connection, community and love after the Gathering and this was created by all who attended. May this connection continue to grow and evolve bringing

us closer, to truly honour diversity in all its forms, to listen to our words and to the words of others with open hearts and minds.

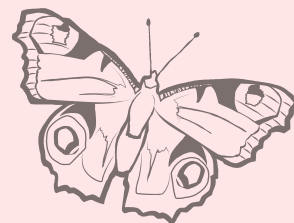
I know the Solstice has passed and the power of the sun is slowly diminishing but it is still here and may it shine and nourish all of us.

Beannachtaí agus Síocháin!

Eimear

Drops of Joy by Patrizia Tazzi

Drops of joy met by mistake in a flowery meadow.
Colorful wings that puff as I pass, emanating good scents.
Make my steps light, always preserve those who live under them.
Breathe a light air and fly with her happy.





Lay Me Down in Love by Angie Devereux

You blew me away
In summer's sultry nights
Where aching thunder rested

You stripped me clean
With searing spirit breath
Then set me free to fly

Oh let fragility be my wings
On your sigh I will fly
float high above

Spread me scatter me
like a million seeds
Let me rise in your splendour
I will sing my song for you

Merge me with the earth
Paint me across the sky
Sink into the ebb and flow of life
Let's drink of the divine

May my tears fall like sparkling raindrops
Burst out like budding leaves
Be whispering gentle rain playing in the soft-
est breeze

Let us dance across the galaxies
Then swim beneath the seas
Explode my heart with petals
a confetti made of love

Then lay me down, oh, lay me down
In gentleness
Lay me down in love

The Path Home by Charlie Bigwood

Remember what you already are
Connect, listen and trust your soul
Source - Light - Original frequency

Become a bridge between realms
Anchoring presence and awareness
Nature - Meditation - Ritual

Live in the world without reacting
Integrating and breaking cycles
Grace - Courage - Calmness

Remember your light while standing in the
dark
Embracing your shadow
Silence - Clarity - Expansion

Helping yourself emits the light
The highest form of service
Healing - Empowerment - Discovery

Turn inwards to the world within you
Walk when no one is watching
Authentic - Harmonised - Humble

A soul that remembers is truly free
Creating reality from your heart
Unity - Love - Peace

You were never lost
Allow yourself to be the
person you are
It's been there the whole
time



The Selkie by Carys Birch

I am not made for dry land.
My steps halting, my legs bent
Unsurely.

But when I slip into my silver skin,
Cool water crisp on my hot eyes,
I am free.

The ocean is in my veins,
Blue and pulsing under the thin lace of my skin,
I am salt and water,

Pulled by the moon.
Sweat and blood and salt.

I am a
collection of
fish bones
bound
together by
kelp.





Image: The Legend of Conla's Well by Addie Hirschten

Clay Creations and Nature Spirits by Michelle Hawkins-Collins

At The Wisdom Space's nature hub, a magical three-acre beech woodland near Box, Wiltshire, we celebrate each turn of the wheel with gatherings that reconnect us to ourselves, our community, and nature. Founded in 2020, The Wisdom Space is a community interest company that emerged from the realisation that many of us feel disconnected from our deeper selves, our communities, and the natural world. This disconnection has contributed to rising anxiety, isolation, and a lack of resilience. In response, we host events that bring local people together, allowing them to explore what truly matters and to rediscover a sense of wholeness.

During our recent Beltane celebration, we embraced the season's magic by inviting local potter Nicky Moon to join and to guide us in crafting clay faces inspired by nature. Beltane, a time when the veil between worlds is particularly thin, provided the perfect backdrop for honouring the fey folk that enliven our woods. We set up our creative session in the aptly named "Enchanted Woods" area, surrounded by the vibrant energy of the season.

Armed with a generous lump of air-dry clay and a bounty of foraged treasures, participants were encouraged to unleash their imaginations. As we ventured into the woodland, each of us found a unique spot among the trees, transforming our woodland space into a living outdoor gallery. The joy and creativity that blossomed were truly remarkable; little nature spirits emerged from the

trunks and branches, each one a testament to the participants' inspiration and connection to nature. What makes this activity even more special is its environmental mindfulness. The clay faces are temporary; they wash away with rain, leaving no trace behind. This ephemeral quality invites us to engage with nature without causing harm and serves as a poignant reminder that nothing in life is permanent.

We hope this activity inspires others to create their own clay beings in gardens or local woodlands. Imagine the delight of those who stumble upon these whimsical creations—a gentle reminder of life's magic amid the distractions of modernity.



Sun Prints, Sun Magic by Kaz Leroux

UVs may have a bad reputation, but did you know you can make magical pictures with them and plants or other simple items? Some techniques are safe and easy enough for children to make, too. Sun prints are cameraless contact photography techniques.

The two techniques I have experimented with are anthotypes and cyanotypes. For anthotypes, an emulsion is made by crushing a good handful of petals, or just a berry or two, with a pestle and mortar with only a couple of drops of water. Pass the purée through a small piece of fabric to filter the bits out and extract a sort of ink. Brush this emulsion on thick paper and let it dry in a dark place. Position your herbs or negative on the dry emulsion, then leave in full sun in a clip frame for a few hours or until the colour has faded. Unfortunately, there is no way of fixing anthotypes. The only way to preserve them is to keep them in a lightproof place.

Cyanotypes are more complex, using tiny quantities of two non-toxic chemicals, sometimes used

in processed food: ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide. The initial and basic result is always Prussian blue, but the pictures can be toned with various herbs or plants, and wet cyanotypes offer all sorts of fascinating textures.

I am yet to experiment with chlorotypes, where the background is simply a large leaf that withers where exposed – no emulsion required.

If you would like to try either of these processes, just follow the simple steps: prepare a surface according to your chosen technique, place flat things like herbs, feathers or large negatives on the light-sensitive surface, and leave in full sun for a while. The UVs will affect the exposed surface, while the covered parts will remain intact, making a picture.

The beauty of these experimental techniques is that they are all environmentally friendly, using the sun and often plants to make beautiful pictures. Have fun this summer, and see what magical pictures you can create!



Images by Kaz Leroux

Cyanotype: Avebury, with full moon atop the stone, Guinea fowl feathers

Anthotypes: Mauve: emulsion: sweet pea; leaf: rowan



In the Quiet Magic of Summer by Dr Abby Campbell

Summer is layered with memory and draped in light—sun-drenched days, thunder-fed nights, the scent of basil, and the low buzz of honeybees weaving through the herb garden. As my awareness deepens, each summer surprises me with quiet revelations. It's not due to anything spectacular, but because the same familiar rhythms—however subtle—continue unlocking secret doors within me. What can we say about the silent things that neither dazzle our senses nor shake the ground? In my Druid circles, we often speak of magic—of tree folklore, elemental power, and the veil between worlds. But what about the enchantment that hides in plain sight, overlooked in our rush toward something grander or more otherworldly?

Summer teaches me this truth again and again. It appears in the way morning light streams through lace curtains, in the dew that lingers just a little longer on the grass, or in the sound of my grandchildren laughing as they run barefoot through the garden. Even the crescent-shaped bites on overripe peaches whisper it, too. These moments don't need to be summoned; they already hum with presence, offering themselves freely.

I used to believe that summoning magic necessitated elaborate rituals, extended devotions, or rare celestial alignments. While there is deep beauty in such sacred rites, I think we risk overlooking something essential when we separate the wonder from the mundane. Magic is not performance—it is living spirit. It pulses within the unnoticed fabric of our days.

Recently, while walking mindfully through my grove, I heard a flicker of movement as I passed a large bush. A curious, red fox cautiously came out of the pampas grass and watched me for a brief moment before silently slipping back into its hollowness. My heart paused. I stood still, watching the place she disappeared, sensing something ancient awaken in me. There was no grand vision, no spoken words—only the sacred simplicity of presence. I sensed the land winking, reminding me that I, too, am part of the wild weaving.

Later, I recalled a lesson from a Druid study: the tale of Nuada's sword—truth's blade, keen with both clarity and mystery. Fluid and alert, the fox embodied that same wisdom. She did not speak, yet her presence whispered everything I needed to hear. It was not grandeur, but wonder, that made our simple encounter sacred.

It's funny how children instinctively understand this truth. One early morning, my granddaughter was helping tend the garden. Innocently, she plucked a dandelion. "There you go, Sun Puff," she said, blowing its seeds into the breeze, as if

casting blessings. There was only belief, reverie, and the unselfish offering of joy. I believe the land responds to that kind of reverence—the kind that expects nothing but gives everything in return through attention. It is the kind of reverence that says, I see you, or You matter.

Learning to see again, with the soul-sight of our ancestors rather than eyes trained by screens or headlines, has power. The clouds disclose the weather, the river's song shares the mood, and the soil's aroma reveals the land's health. Our ancestors did not require formal ritual to speak with the spirits of place. They simply listened—without agenda, without interruption.

This summer, I have made it a daily practice to pause for the ordinary. Kneeling at the edge of the tomato bed, I inhale the green-spiced air. I watch wasps drink from the birdbath as their wings tremble in the heat. After rainstorms, I sit on the porch and feel the world breathe—a hush beneath the dripping leaves.

Magic is all around us, even in the earthworm turning soil and in the spiderweb catching the first light. The way sunflowers follow the sun with steady devotion feels spectacular, too. In those quiet garden moments, I occasionally think of our ancestors not as distant beings but as ones who still walk beside us, waiting for us to slow down long enough to notice. "This is it," they whisper. "It's right here in this breath, this birdsong, and this moment." I envision the Celtic goddess Airmid among them, carefully tending all of her 365 healing herbs, observing how each plant stretches toward the light in its own sacred rhythm.

We do not need to escape our lives to find the magical. We only need to look again—to see how memory glows in the corners of summer light, how the steam from a teacup becomes incense, how even the hush of a room holds its own prayer. The sacred has been here all along, draped in the familiar. Druidry continually teaches me that we are never truly separate from the sacred. It is in the compost, crickets, bruised plums, and linens that sway in the breeze as they dry. We show the sacred when we care for each other, light candles at dinner, and hum while we sweep. Each small act draws us closer to the sacred pulse of life. The more I attune myself to these daily sacraments, the more I feel a soft shift within me. It is a returning, a remembering—a quiet unraveling of all I was taught to forget. I find myself becoming someone who once again notices even the little things, before the world convinced me that magic existed only in fairy tales, rare visions, or mystical rites.

While we tend to envision summer days as bright and sweet, they can also bring challenges.

Circumstances bring worry, sorrow, and pain. Regardless, magic endures. The shelter of a tree canopy or a warm hug from a loved one can offer solace and comfort. An unexpected flight of a hawk overhead or a kind word can provide the signs we need in those moments.

I believe the Earth speaks most clearly not through spectacle, but through the language of everyday enchantment—a language we once knew and are slowly and reverently learning again. Occasionally, even for us, the ordinary can unexpectedly transform into the extraordinary. A neighbor smiles and waves from their porch, inquiring about the garden. A friend gifts a jar of golden honey. A child picks up a rock and insists it has spellbinding power. These moments invite us in as they radiate warmth and ground us in a sense of belonging, reminding us that love is a sacred pulse. It doesn't require verification because it is a steady, living presence that only requires our active participation.

For this summer, may we allow ourselves to be enchanted by the ordinary. May we find ceremony in our mornings, grace in our gardens, and peace in the daily. As we pursue distant wonders, let us also honor the beauty before us: the bees, the breeze, and the bowl of berries on the windowsill. Stillness teaches this best—not the absence of sound or motion, but the vibrant tranquility that lives beneath the noise. This kind of serenity holds everything together in quiet devotion, including the pause between bird calls, the breath's silence before a sigh, and the star's lull blinking in the night sky.

We have been taught to fear quietude—to rush past it, to drown it with noise and distraction. Yet in the life of the land, stillness is not emptiness. It is rest. It is ripening. It is a sacred pause that allows for renewal. Summer understands this truth. Even in its brightness and bloom, a deep exhale beneath it all reminds us we don't have to strive or prove. We are already a part of this great unfolding.

The land asks only that we show up with vision and openness. It reminds us to walk gently and to speak to the world with curiosity, care, and veneration. You already understand what I mean, especially if you've ever sat beside a tree and felt it breathing or listened to a creek's laughter jumping over rocks. Even if they sound like metaphors, they are invitations from Earth Mother. She reminds us that we belong, that we are held, and that even the smallest moment is wondrous.

May we let the season carry us deeper into this knowing.

May we allow the sun to ripen us.

May we let the wind teach us to bend and return again.

May we come to see the ordinary things as sacred once more.

Let us remember: the Druid's path is not an escape into distant mysticism. It is a vow to love this world so deeply that, in return, it reveals its hidden light.

That, I believe, is summer's truest magic.



Image: Queen Maedbh's Cairn by Tatty

Summer in the City by Morgan Hollett

Beltane has well and truly sprung here in central Europe. The cattle have arrived for grazing at their summer pastures, fields blanketed in yellow flowers stretch for miles and miles, and songbirds looking for a hot date serenade the local population each morning... or perhaps not if you're an urban druid dwelling in a concrete high-rise!

As druids, we're encouraged to observe the seasonal shifts through the lens of nature: croci and daffodils give way to tulips and dandelion clouds, the familiar V-shapes of migratory birds reappear overhead, and hedgerows come alive with the sounds of scurrying animals. But what about those of us living in the hustle and bustle of a thriving city? What cues can we keep an eye out for at this time of year?

As it turns out, there's plenty of them! They may look and feel a little different to the signs you'll read about in nature books, and each city will have its own unique quirks, but pay attention and you'll quickly learn how to observe the passing of the seasons in your niche of the world.

I'm currently living in Berlin, Germany, and here are the five big signs that summer has once again arrived in the capital:

1. Asparagus Wizards: at the end of April, the asparagus wizards come out of hibernation. These wizened old men seem to appear from nowhere and set up camp outside supermarkets throughout the city, tables laden with thick white spears of locally sourced asparagus. You don't tell them how many spears you'd like. Instead, they'll ask how many people you intend to feed, how big their appetites are and whether you want the finest asparagus on offer or if the standard stuff will do. You'll come away with a perfectly portioned paper bag of local produce for your feast. Then, one day, they'll vanish just as suddenly as they arrived, not to return until the following year.

2. The Return of the Strawberry Huts: around the same time, small cabins painted to look like strawberries pop up across the city, like mushrooms after rain. Punnet upon punnet of locally and seasonally grown strawberries line their interior. Sometimes, if it's been an especially good yield, they'll also sell jams or other mouthwatering creations made from their

strawberries. These are the best strawberries you'll ever eat, far better than anything you'll find in the supermarket. Enjoy them while they're around!

3. Summer Soundtrack: while our countryside neighbours are waking up to songbirds and falling asleep to the relaxing rustle of crickets, summer in the city sounds a little bit different. As the first shafts of sunlight fall across the high rises, the sounds of battle begin: our mornings are spent listening to the maniacal cawing of crows (hooded, like their youthful human counterparts) as they fight over the contents of the nearest bin. In the evening, you'll drift off to Abba's *Voulez Vous* or the Backstreet Boys' *Backstreet's Back (Alright!)* as open-top party boats float up and down the Spree alongside geese, swans, mallards, mandarin ducks and the occasional heron.

4. Local Wild Smiles: like a snake shedding its skin, Berliners across the city are sloughing off their oversized winter coats and hardened scowls, although the latter is a little harder to spot. Look closely (and don't worry about doing so — staring at people is a national pastime here), and you might notice a slight upturn at the corners of the mouth and a little bit of sparkle in the eyes of the native inhabitants.

5. From Greyscale to Full Saturation: winter in Berlin is like a faded black-and-white photograph. The buildings are grey, the people are grey, the sky is grey. Even the river is a dull, uninspiring shade of grey. In contrast, the arrival of summer feels like someone overdid it on the saturation toggle. Who knew the sky could have so many shades of blue?! The trees such a diverse palette of green? And what are all these vibrant yellow flowers bursting out from the cracks in the pavement? As the sun sets over the city, you'll be treated to displays of pinks, purples, oranges and reds, and you'll find yourself thinking: "ah, maybe it's not so awful here after all."

So there we have it: five signs the urban druid in Berlin can use to track the seasonal shift into summer. We often complain that we're too far from nature and that our rural friends have it easy when it comes to observing the rhythms of the year, but take a look around and you'll find the magic of the seasons lurking where you least expect them.



Summer Magic by Liz Cruse

One of my activities that springs from my Druidry is volunteering at the Chalice Well Gardens in Glastonbury.

The other day, I had finished my shift and was hurrying away when I was halted by a palpable force field around a flowering cherry tree that stands near the shop by the exit gate. Underneath the luxuriant summer foliage of the tree, foxgloves of white, tinged with pink, were standing in ranks as if protecting the tree. They dared me to walk past. Then they dared me to leave the garden and I understood that there was no need to hurry, that I could sit for a while by the rust-coloured vesica pool listening to the trickle of the water from the flow form. I could be still and revel in the sunlit summer colours of the flowers: the white, pink and mauve stocks, the orange and burgundy wallflowers, the specks of blue of the last forget-me-not flowers.

An orange tip butterfly made its erratic way through the air.

An unseen blackbird piped his complexly melodic improvisation.

At this point, rapt in the summer bloom, admiring the shape of acer leaves against the uprights leaves of a grass and the intricate form of aquilegia flowers, Dave the gardener wandered over and offered to give me the lesson in dowsing that he'd promised me the previous week.

Dave manages his domain by dowsing to ascertain what the garden wants and what various plants need and desire.

Remember those foxgloves that stopped me in my haste? Dave explained that when he had arrived that tree had been sick. The opulent spring blossom that we all loved, had been in reality a cry for help. The leaves didn't grow properly, dropping off too soon. The tree was covered in moss. Dave took various plants to the tree and dowsed as to which it wanted to grow with. A main contender was foxglove though there were others too. It transpired that all the plants the tree selected were 'thirsty'. The tree was waterlogged so a drain was also installed. Now the tree is in generous leaf, no longer stressed.

Dave showed me how to take guidance from the movement of the dowsing rods in response to simple questions. He demonstrated with "Where

is the nearest source of red spring water?" Privately I was a little sceptical. After all, Dave knew that very well. No rods needed.

Then he asked which plant would be best at this point for my own spiritual welfare. The rods swung round in two arcs, scanning it seemed. Then they both pointed in one direction. We set off slowly in that direction and arrived at a diminutive purple sage plant. It seemed one particular sprig would help me. I was advised to place it in spring water and dip my hands in the water over the next few days.

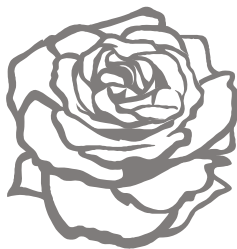
I can vouch for a calmness that manifested in me and also a sadness. Sage or not?? Oh I am such a sceptic.

But here is the truly wondrous thing. Dave left me with the rods to experiment by myself. That day it had rained briefly. Before the foxglove epiphany I had been admiring a bush of white roses. They held drops of water on their petals. I tasted a couple and it seemed to me the water had absorbed the sweetness of the rose's scent. I said to the rods, "Take me to the rose full of raindrops."

I expected to be led to the bush I had been with a while ago, expected that unconsciously I would direct myself there. But to my surprise, after swinging wildly the rods took me in another

direction entirely and then told me to stop by a flower bed. Huh! thought I. No roses here. But then I saw, in the middle of a shrub, a full-blown white rose. The rose bush was masked by the shrub – only the blowsy flower showed herself. It was indeed a rose full of raindrops.

I can only describe it as Summer Magic.



Lilacs by Jessica McGee

Breathing the lilacs
their infusion is complete
as gifts of heart songs.

The Dog Days of Summer by Jack Wolf

'*The Dog Days are over, the Dog Days are done.*' sang Florence and the Machine, in their eponymously titled single from their 2008 debut album, *Lungs*. The track came out in December, which was just as well, because if she'd brought it out in, say, August, the Dog Days – those few weeks between roughly July and September when the weather can be insufferably hot – would have been in full spate. I don't know how alert Florence Welch was to astronomical symbolism when she wrote the track, but the accompanying video seems to make some visual reference to the ancient Egyptian Goddess, Sopdet, or, as the Greeks called her, Sothis, whose appearance on the eastern horizon at dawn preceded the annual flooding of the Nile, and heralded the New Year.

This yearly appearance of the Goddess refers, of course, to the heliacal (with the Sun) rising of a star – in this case, the star we know as α *Canis Majoris* or the Dog Star, named ultimately after the Greek *Κύων*, or *Dog*. This name refers to the star's prime position in the constellation of Canis Major alongside Orion The Hunter – which, to the Ancient Greeks, made it his hunting dog. But the ancient Greeks also gave the star another name, *Sirius Σείριος*, which translates as *the Scorchers*. And while the ancient Egyptians celebrated the appearance of Sothis in the dawn sky as a promise of fertility, Greek tradition was far less enthusiastic about Sirius, connecting it with oppressive heat, drought, thunderstorms, fever, and rabid dogs. In *The Iliad*, Homer, plainly no fan of high summer, describes it like this: '...that star they call Orion's dog, brightest of all / but a fatal sign emblazoned on the heavens / it brings such killing fever down on wretched men.' (trans: Robert Fagels, 1990. Bk 22, ll 35-37)

The English term *Dog Days* derives from the Greek *κυνάδες ἡμέραι*, via the Latin *dies caniculares* or *puppy days*, and for the most part, Mediaeval and later European tradition continued to accept the classical interpretation of this being a time of year where the heat brought out the worst in people, dogs, and natural phenomena. Though I haven't come across anyone repeating Pliny's advice to feed chicken manure to dogs during the height of summer to stop them from biting, I wouldn't be surprised to find it alongside more sensible advice like that in Philip Moore's 1564 *English Hope of Health*, which counseled that 'there be sometimes of the yeare wherein purgations (ie: bloodletting) ought not to bee ministred, as in Somers; specially the Dogge daies, as they are commonly called, during the time

that the Sunne is in Leo, for then is nature burnt vp & made weake.'

The actual dates of the Dog Days are variable, and the reasons for this are to do with astronomy and climate as well as tradition. If we use the Ancient Egyptian reckoning that their beginning coincides with the heliacal rising of Sothis, then they run for something between 30 and 60 days from whatever day this happens on until the weather changes. But most modern calendars and traditional almanacs don't bother with any of this and hold the period of the Dog Days to fall during the hottest part of the summer – from the 3rd July to the 11th August. There is some sense in this. Because the exact date at which the Dog Star becomes visible in the pre-dawn sky changes depending on the viewer's latitude. In

most locations north of Egypt this means that the connection between the appearance of the Scorchers and the weather being *Scorchio!* is broken.

The further north you stand, the later in the summer is the heliacal rising of Sirius – until eventually it does not appear until the hottest part of summer is almost over. In Birmingham, UK, for instance, it will not appear until the last few days of August – three weeks after the end date given by the farmer's

almanac. Hesiod – another ancient Greek and hater of high summer – seems to have been very aware of this, arguing that the Dog Days actually begin long before the appearance of the star itself. Hesiod seems to have known nothing about latitude; while he puts forward a clever theory to explain why the Summer is already far too hot long before Sirius appears, he never realises the real reason why summer in Greece would have been well advanced before the Scorchers – already visible further south – put in an appearance. (Add precession into this and the connection between the rising of the star and the hottest part of summer becomes even more tenuous. In fact, in 10k years, Sirius will rise everywhere in winter.)

So what, if anything, should the Dog Days mean to us as modern Druids? There is no evidence at all that the ancient Druids paid any attention to the heliacal rising of Sirius, though they would certainly have known about it – but that does not mean that we should not pay our respects to the Dog Star when it rises with the Sun if we are interested in doing so. More practically, we could ask how we should approach the hottest days of summer if we are to take seriously the genuine dangers posed by heat



and lack of water that go with a lengthy period of hot weather. We could take the advice given to avoid strenuous exercise (maybe save that ten mile hike in that National Park for later in the year) and make sure to stay hydrated.

This applies to the non-human beings with whom we share our world, too. As R.H Davis writes in his short story *The Bar Sinister*, which is written from the point of view of a street dog, we could make sure to leave water out – both for local street dogs and for other creatures like garden birds who may struggle to find water – and ensure that if we have double coated or short nosed companion animals that find it hard to pant, we do not let them overheat. Avoid going out in the midday sun, as only Mad Dogs (and Englishmen) do that – and take care not to be led either by other humans or by our own inner contacts into doing crazy things that we might well regret later; the Spirits of hot Summer can be tricky and deceptive. It's not for nothing, after all, that the media have tended to call the period of the Dog Days the 'Silly Season'. Take care. But for those who are ritually inclined, attuning to the rising of Sothis / Sirius can offer an interesting way to begin to connect with the seasonal stars as well as suggest a route towards connection with our ancestors of antiquity, especially if we have Mediterranean or north African ancestry.

This short ceremony honours Sothis as the herald of new life, and draws on the appearance of the Dog Star as a driver of change – something that fits better with the later northern date, when the seasons are on the point of shifting to something cooler rather than sweltering through the hottest part of Summer.

If you can get up in time to see the rising of Sothis / Sirius, timeanddate.com/astronomy/night gives a good guide to date and time in your latitude, but otherwise find a convenient moment, and set up your space in a darkened room facing towards the East. When you are ready, visualise the night sky over the desert, prairie, or other flat land, and watch the rosy pre-dawn glow slowly spreading over the sand. Sothis will appear shortly before the sun does as a bright white spark in the fiery dawn light, just above the horizon. You may see her transform into a goddess, and she may have a message for you, or you may simply see the Star. As the light spreads over the desert, visualise the sand (or grass, etc) that stretches between yourself and the horizon, and notice if there is anything drawn in it. You may see drawings of your ancestors going about their daily business, or perhaps you will see hieroglyphs written there which you may need to ponder on or ask for guidance as to their meaning. Sothis is the bringer of positive change, so perhaps you will be guided to the answer to a question that has previously seemed unanswerable, or you may have a sudden flash of insight into something else entirely. Eventually the

Goddess / Star will leave you and continue on her journey through the sky as the sun rises over a clear horizon and the bright light of day hides her from view, while life-giving rainclouds gather in the North, South, East, or West. Make a note of what you have learned or seen and offer your thanks to the Dog Star as the Guardian of this sacred moment, then close the circle in your usual fashion.

Keeping Cool, Magically by Star Fox

Whilst I really do enjoy summer and the sunshine, the heat can get a little overbearing at times. And whilst there may be ways to stay cool with cool drinks, or jumping into the local lake skyclad, or fanning oneself graciously, there might be a magical way to keep cool indoors.

Typically, heat is associated with the fire element and coolness with the water element based on how we normally experience the physical expression of these elements. There is a meditation technique using the water element from the writings of the magician Franz Bardon to cool down a room temporarily:-

"Imagine you are drawing the water element down to you from an infinite ocean. In the beginning image it in the form of a cold vapour which you constantly condense more and more as it comes closer to your person and the room. Fill the entire exercise room with this cold vapour...you must feel this icy coldness to the point that it causes goosebumps on your physical body." Franz Bardon, *Initiation into Hermetics* p. 144

I like to add in visualisations of ice forming around the room too. The author of the above also recommends this is a temporary measure for a short period of time and to imagine dissolving the visualisation of the element when finished to avoid attracting the attention of elementals and spirits who might be drawn to the energy.

If you like this sort of thing I quite often post magical things like this in the Druid Magic Circle on the Druid Hearth and would love to hear your experiences with the above meditation.

Keep cool!

Tom's Magic by Marika O'Sullivan

Bainneoir Uisce - water diviner. Magic Man

Tom would come to the village once a week driving his shiny jaunting car pulled by Malachi his black horse, whose feathers and mane flowed out behind as he proudly trotted through the houses prancing like a circus pony, flanked by two sleek hounds.

We children would wait pent-up with excitement on Saturday mornings, and when we could hear him coming from a distance, our ears tuned to the sound of chains and bells attached to the harness, we'd dash out running behind him as soon as he arrived.

Once in the village Tom would stop for groceries and then further along the road tie his reins to the rail outside Mrs Foley's shop and go inside to buy sweets, porter and a pack of Major. When he came out, he'd fix his kindly, piercing blue eyes on us children, and hold open a large striped paper candy bag offering around the mixed assortment of pear drops, and other sweets. It was a lucky dip and we relished each one.

Over the years, the adults although still needing his wisdom if a herd got sick, and his divining skills when a well dried, banned us from seeing Tom. They had decided he was strange because he was a recluse, and were worried he might enchant us away like the Pied Piper. For us children, this added to his allure and we couldn't resist his company and the treats, a few of us more daring ones prepared to take the risk of being found-out, would even take up his invitation to ride in the trap along the road to the golf links.

After setting off, he'd pop open a brown pint bottle and sup Guinness, while telling us fantastic stories about the other worldly, the Sidhe, or little folk, and how a lone whitethorn in a field was a faery tree, and to always respect it. He'd talk of herbs and healing while showing us hedgerow plants that held cures enthralling us with the magic of nature.

Tom taught us how to hold his divining wands and feel how they quivered and moved when held over water running deep under-ground. He also encouraged us to help injured animals and there was often a wild creature that was recovering from an injury in a box or a bird with mended wings flying

alongside. Once he rolled back the edge of his large coat pocket to carefully show us two baby hares he'd found by the roadside that were curled up inside drowsing, nestled in grass and daisies. They wriggled as he gently stroked them with the back of his finger, then dropping milk into their mouths until they slept again.

Sadly, like many children, I grew-up and for a few years forgot about my love of magic, herbs and fairy tales, and along with others barely noticed that Tom came to the village less and less - that he was fading away like a shadow.

Years on when I came back from living away, I asked about him and was sad to hear that he had died alone in his cottage.

However, it was easy to find his burial place in the church yard as I scanned the rows of neatly tended gravel plots, because Tom's was not in line, it was at the edge, marked by a small stone:

Here lies Tom Ó Séaghdha, Bainneoir Uisce 1890 - 1983

Next to him grew a beautiful gnarled Hawthorn tree, rich with delicate May blossom and filled with birdsong. His resting place was a carpet of wild flowers, the air sweetly scented and humming with life.

I sat on the ground to breathe it all in and a hare came out of the hedgerow and stopped beside me. I looked in wonder as it then turned to stare deep into my eyes with its kind, piercing blue ones, and everything began to shimmer with enhanced light. Tom was magic, how could I forget.



Triad by Rachel Anderson

Three powers to hold in the waiting place:
the patience of stone,
the reflection of water,
the strike of lightning.

The patience of stone reminds me to remain grounded, to allow time to pass without forcing the next step. The reflection of water invites me to stay open and receptive, to see what is being revealed, even in stillness. The strike of lightning reminds me that when the moment comes, action will be swift and impactful.

Bardic Tales

Dordogne by Maaïke Lammers

The air is so sweet, smells of honey and sun-dried hay lying in fragrant rolls on undulating fields.

In the summer sky an eagle soars its circles. The thermals both choreographer and compass. He dips a wing for a moment, gold and white glittering in the sun.

Effortlessly he rises again with only a small movement of his wing feathers.

I stand on the ground and watch him as the wind carries him out of my field of vision, far away to the ochre rock walls that rise steeply along the river.

There is green fire all around me, the green of June and young leaves, light and cheerful, but also the green of damp moss and dark ferns where snakes live in the shade.

I lie down on the grass. The canopy above me a kaleidoscope, the sun causing the green to fall apart in hot white to mysterious black.

Songbirds and crickets sing their life song,

confirming their existence. I close my eyes and feel the silence. A deep stillness enters my body, empties my head and lightens it.

Here the first people once lived, here they hunted mammoths and deer. Here they made fires and prepared their food. Here they gave birth to their children, taught them how to live. Here they drew their art on the walls of deeply hidden sacred caves.

And here they looked at the eagles high above their heads.

I dig my fingers into the earth, this old earth that in the silence whispers stories of who she is, what she gives, and that she is more ancient than our brain can fathom.

I open my eyes and sit up. The river flows. One of the veins of the earth.

A fish jumps.

My dog sits down next to me and licks my cheek.

Pim Hill by Lorraine Munn

The leading poet said

Make a complex point: philosophical, transcendent, transformational through simple imagery

my druid self drifted

Warm weather blue sky dry
To the east the king at midsummer

sit still in front of the Rowan
the scar of quarry floor below
the scare of falling

Safety in the presence of tree arms
meeting underground above
A chiff chaff musical rebuke
bramble on the leaf litter floor

balancing on roots
buzzards cry
bees pollinate
brown crumble layers for
bracken to climb through

Sit let inspiration come
Stay feel the insects crawl lick lay eggs
Let the next generation colonise
Lay with the forest floor - these trees are hungry





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

Upcoming Events

Bardic Gorsedd: 25-27 July 2025 at Penmaenmawr, Wales. For more information email bardicgorsedds@obod.org

Druid Gorsedd: 10-12 October 2025, Devizes, Wiltshire. For more information, email druidgorsedds@obod.org

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



Image: Moth meets Monarch by Amanda Wolf Hara