

TOUCHSTONE

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

July 2024 | Issue 323

This Issue

- ✿ Reflections on the Summer Gathering.
- ✿ The Spirit of the Tarot by Steve Hounsome.
- ✿ A Review of Time For Magic, the art of Jamie Reid.
- ✿ And much more!



COVER: "Magic, Mystery and Myth" by Stephen Barnes

Editorial

It was lovely to meet so many of you at the Summer Gathering in Street in June. Much of this edition is devoted to those magical few days. We have an article from the archives about the first ever Glastonbury Gathering in 1998 and a reflection on a joyous coincidence during this year's event. Our Bard's Pages are full of three-line poems which you wrote as part of our Sunday morning workshop. And to round off, my first ever "Bit at the Back" is on why I love the Summer Gathering so much.

As if that wasn't enough, we have the second of three articles by Steve Hounsome on the tarot and a review of the wonderful *Time For Magic* book, which is a collection of the astonishing work of Jamie Reid.

Finally, I want to say a huge thank you to Stephen Barnes for his extraordinary picture, which is on the cover this month. I wanted something special for July's edition, when we would be reflecting on the Summer Gathering, so asked Stephen if he could create an image which encapsulates the coming together of the Order. I'm sure you will agree, he has captured the essence of our wonderful, worldwide grove. Thank you, Stephen.

And don't forget to submit your articles, art work, poems and stories for our Folklore edition, which will be coming this October! More information on Page 4.



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Awen by Jon Nash

The druid walks, white robe and all,
by the roadside.

The motorcyclists helmet tilts
with confusion or surprise.

Both on an awen pathway
to wherever the future lies.



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Opinions/statements by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor, Order or publishers. Submissions from members are welcomed, but it is not always possible to use everything offered for publication. Contributions must focus on Druidry or contributor's experience of Druidry and may be edited without consultation unless a request is made to the contrary. Poetry no more than 40 lines. Deadline for events inclusion is 5th of the month before publication. Submissions may be printed on the OBOD website unless requested otherwise.

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Chosen Chief's Bit

Bandia daoibh a chairde! Hello everyone!

As I'm writing this I can still feel the magic and energy of our Summer Gathering where we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Order. Here is the talk I gave on the Saturday morning of the Gathering in the Strode Theatre.

'OBOD is 60 years old I'm not going to give you a history of the Order. However, I will offer my observations of some developments since I joined in 2003.

Is é an t-aon táirseach fíor sa saol na athrú. The only real constant in life is change.

When I joined the Order I wasn't on Social Media. I found it strange to discover that Druids used such technology like the Message Board and something called the Druid's Head which was a virtual Pub. The Druid's Head closed down at some point and the Message Board kept going until recently when sadly it was hacked.

I received my Bardic Gwers as a hard copy. I remember the excitement every month when the brown envelope arrived in the post. I know this will resonate with many of you. Accompanying the hard copies were cassettes. They became outmoded and along came the CDs, which reigned for a while. In the outside world CDs replaced vinyl as an indestructible alternative and a purer sound.

I remember in 2019 a member asked if the courses could go online as CDs were outdated and computers no longer had CD drives. At this point, we were developing our online course which launched in 2022.

The pandemic in 2020 brought many changes for the Order - an important one for me was the online Installation ceremony. It was a real demonstration of how we can create magic and connection on planes other than the physical. Of course, as Druids we navigate the boundary between this world and the other, walking with a foot in both. I could feel, in a very intense and profound way, Philip handing the mantle of Chosen Chief to me.

We have since developed our community through the magic of rituals online, our Zoom meetings - Climate Listening Circle, Mental Health Group, Death Café, etc. What I find fascinating is that as our membership grows in number we get a deeper sense of community, thanks to all this technology. And now we have the Hearth - a wonderful innovation - an intimate private space for our members, free from Trolls, advertising, and data mining - which will make the need for official OBOD Facebook groups redundant.

Here is a story:

I bhfad 'is i bhfad sa tsean-aimsir sa tír seo, fadó, fadó in Éirinn, bhí buachaill darb ainm Cian, agus é ag taisteal thar na tíre ag lorg eagna 'is brí na beatha. There was once a young boy, called Cian, travelling across the land of Ireland in search of wisdom and the meaning of life.

As he travelled, he reached a small village i lár an phortaigh, in the middle of a bog, where he met an old man. "Where can I find some food and a place to stay for the night?" he asked.

The old man replied "We are a small village, and we don't see many outsiders. But there is Aoife, who lives at the end of the village in her teach mór (mansion). She is very hospitable and will provide you with food and shelter."

Thanking the old man, Cian made his way to the teach mór. Fuair sé fáilte mór ó Aoife, a bhí ina bean cineálta, he was warmly welcomed by Aoife, a kindly woman, agus fuair sé nua gach

bí 'is sean gach dí, de réir nósanna na flaithiúlachta ag an am sin, and was given the freshest of food and the oldest of drink, according to the laws of hospitality at that time. D'eirigh leo go han-mhaith le chéile, They got along well and when it was time to leave, Cian was sad to say goodbye to his newfound friend. He said, "Is iontach an bhean thú, agus tá chuile ní atá agatsa tuillte go maith agat. You are a really good woman and deserve everything you have."

Ach mar freagra, d'aithrís an bhean feasa an nath seo: "A mhac, éist liom, ní tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn" To this, the wise Aoife replied, "Don't be deceived Cian, ní tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn, there is no flood that does not recede.....for this too, shall pass".

Cian was perplexed by this reply but continued on his journey.



Years passed and Cian, now a young man, was still in search of wisdom across the world. His travels brought him back to the same bog hoping to meet the kind and wise Aoife again but he couldn't find her house. He asked a young boy the way to her home, who said, "Aoife now lives in the next village and works for the taoiseach (Chief)."

Cian made his way to the house and was shocked to find Aoife opening the door, dressed in rags. She was working for the taoiseach as a servant. As she welcomed him in, Aoife explained that a flash flood had made her homeless overnight. Despite her changed circumstances, the old woman lost none of her kindness. She provided Cian with food, shelter, and much needed companionship as she had done before, while he helped her with the chores around the house.

When it was time to say goodbye, Cian was saddened by Aoife's plight and cried "Níl sé seo ceart. Is tú an bhean is cineálta ar domhain. This is unfair, you are the kindest woman in the world."

Aoife embraced the young man and said in her wise way, "Cuimhnigh ar seo, níl tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn, this too shall pass."

Cian still did not understand the meaning behind those words and continued on his travels.

Once again, several years passed by and Cian, seasoned with his experiences from his travels, was now a rich and wise man. He could never forget the kindness he had been shown in his youth and went again to find Aoife. He took with him a gold ruby ring as a present for her. But when he reached the village, he discovered that Aoife had passed away. He found her grave which was engraved with the words "Níl tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn, This too shall pass". Heartbroken that he had not come sooner, Cian promised himself that he would visit the grave every year. And so, he would travel every year to the bog until one year he was devastated to find that a storm and flash flood had washed away the grave. He looked up to the heavens and whispered in anguish "Níl tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn, This too shall pass".

Eventually, Cian was too old to travel but his reputation as a fear feasa, a wise man, had spread far and wide. And so it was that he received a letter from the Ard Rí's (High King) druid.

It said "The Ard Rí has recently lost his wife and new-born son. He is grief-stricken and has not smiled in months. Tá achainí aige fáinne a fháil le frása a

chuireann brón ar fhear sona agus áthas ar fhear brónach. An bhfuil tú in ann cabhrú leis?" He wishes to have a ring that is engraved with a phrase that makes a happy man feel sad, and a sad man feel happy. Can you help him?"

Cian put the gold ring with rubies he had had made for Aoife all those years ago into a small package and sent it to the Ard Rí. On receiving the package, the Ard Rí inspected the ring and as he read the engraving, he let out a cry and tears of joy and sadness flowed down his cheeks. On it was written "Níl tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn, This too shall pass."

Is é an t-aon tairiseach fíor sa saol ná athrú! - The only real constant in life is change.

The arrival of the Hearth presents us with opportunities for change and the challenges that come with it. Some have greeted this with great enthusiasm and excitement. Others are less enthusiastic and perhaps some are sceptical as to how it might work or are resistant to technological changes such as this.

Worldwide we are experiencing huge changes, from climate change, futile wars etc., which can easily send us into despair. We need to be gentle with ourselves and with each other. We need to be kind to ourselves and to each other.

Remember: Níl tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn!
This too shall pass!

Beannachtaí agus
Síocháin (Blessings
and Peace)

Eimear 

Call for Submissions The Touchstone Folklore Issue

October's *Touchstone* is going to be a Folklore themed edition, perfect for reading as the nights draw in. Why not share some of your local folklore with our readers, or retell a well known tale with a 21st Century twist. Is there a piece of modern folklore that interests you or could you write about a folklorist?

And we aren't forgetting you artists and photographers! This is a call to to send in your folklore inspired pieces.

Let me have your articles and stories (1,400 words or less), your poetry (no more than 40 lines), your artwork and photography. Send submissions to touchstone@druidry.org by 31st August 2024.

From the Archives

Extract from **Re-Viewing Touchstone** by H Catherine Watling

On these pages are two accounts of two Summer Gatherings separated by 26 years - the Order's first gathering in Glastonbury and a magical tale from the 2024 gathering.

In a recent Facebook post, H Catherine Watling reflected on the experience of attending the first OBOD Summer Gathering in Glastonbury in 1998. Her post was based on a section of a much larger article from the July 2004 edition of Touchstone, where she considered the impact of Touchstone as a magazine and some of the articles which affected her. Twenty years later, it's lovely to share a short extract from this article again.

After finishing my Druid Grade studies in February, instinctively I found myself looking back through the Gwersu of the three grades, my Grove book entries and the letters from my tutors - re-living a seven year journey that has been filled with wonder and challenge. I then began to browse through past copies of



Catherine on 20th June 1998

Touchstone - I've kept every issue since the time I joined OBOD - to find that they evoked memories in a similar way to a piece of music or a long-forgotten scent that suddenly makes you feel like you are actually back in the past. They also made me realize just how far, or to be more accurate, how near, I have come in my relationship to OBOD.

I was enchanted by the first issue I ever received (no. 20, March 1997) edited by Maddy Johnson, and immediately had a sense of having found my home, even more so than through the early Gwersu. Through the articles, poetry and stories, I picked up on the atmosphere, the Group Soul, of the Order and felt deeply in tune with it, knowing that it was something I wanted to be a part of.

Several editions from '98 contain material on the first ever Annual Assembly, bringing back great memories of its warmth and simplicity. Everything took place on the Saturday, rather than over two days as now. The Assembly itself consisting of a circle of us seated with Philip on the grass in front of St Benedict's Church Hall. It was followed by an Eisteddfod that was both beautiful and intimate - a smallish circle sitting in the hall with performers doing their bit in the centre, only a few feet from the audience. There was no preceding feast, the only refreshment, as far as I remember, being glasses of tap water as it was an exceptionally hot evening. The Eisteddfod concluded with everyone joining hands to say 'We swear by peace and love to stand.....' and chanting the Awen. I felt literally high, further confirmed in my knowledge that I had 'come home'.

Looking at past editions emphasises how much has changed, as well as how much remains the same within the Order, as with the cycle of the seasons and in our individual lives - an important part of Druidic teaching. There is the sense of continuity, stability, rootedness but also of dynamism, new people bringing fresh ideas and approaches.



Weaving the Strands of Friendship by Lee-Anne, Marcus and Martiha

LEE-ANNE'S STORY

Friday afternoon – the Avalon Club Meet and Greet at the 2024 Summer Gathering. I find myself seated at a table with a burly, swarthy looking man – dark hair, dark beard and black T-shirt. He introduces himself as Marcus. We are asked to share our favourite celebration, but all I can think of is how much he looks like a swashbuckling buccaneer from days of yore. Later that evening at Bobs Field Camping he wanders past our tent, and I raise a tentative hand to wave in recognition. He walks over to chat to my husband and me, and what unfolds is a magical hour of sharing our stories. Strangers no more – we become fellow travellers. I realise that he can't be a pirate, because he is the kindest and gentlest man I've met. "You must meet Maritha and her husband Stephen; I think you'll like them". He strolls off to the cantina and a few minutes later, returns with a small, bubbly South African woman who smells of Sandalwood. Suddenly we become aware of the fizzle of the magic of synchronicity that bursts like fireworks all around us. Maritha and I are the same age, we both studied to be teachers (different universities), we came to this country at the same time (October 1999), we are both twice married, and remarkably our families lived in the same small town in the middle of the arid, dusty Karoo in South Africa... and knew each other. In the past I'd walked past her house and family business countless times and her mother regularly bought goods from my uncle's Wholesalers. Now we both live in Hertfordshire... oh, and we are both left-handed. Phillip's speech at the Gathering on Saturday was about basking and weaving. I can only bask speechlessly at how once we were strangers living almost parallel lives, but we are now being woven together with bonds of synchronicity and friendship. I came to OBOD to find where I belonged – and now I do! And I will always be grateful to Marcus for his inspiration to weave us together... and for not being a pirate.



Maritha, Stephen, Lee-Anne and Olly
at Avebury

MARCUS – THE WEAVER'S STORY

My cup quickly raneth over after the serious frivolity and joyous cacophony of Druids meeting for their first gathering at Friday's meet & greet. There's a magical buzz in the air when like-souled folk connect the first time. There was more magic to follow as a couple of these folk pinged the Wyrd Wide Web by waving to me at the campsite I was staying at. Before long, we were holding our own, cozy version of Tea With a Druid – one seasoned long-timer and a couple of newcomers who didn't yet know any Druids at home. In a flash, I knew who lived near them, felt they would be like peas in a pod and began to describe the folk so they would recognise them. And would you believe it, moments later, the very couple I described turned up at the campsite! I didn't tell the newcomers that they were on site, but nipped over to apprise them and ask if it was okay to introduce them. You should have heard the whoops and cries of joy when the ladies met. The joy brings tears to my eyes as I recall the meeting and was enough to fill the whole weekend – and it had only just begun.



MARITHA'S STORY

Stephen and I arrived in Avalon on Friday afternoon, brimming with excitement to see our Druid friends again and to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of OBOD. As we entered the gate to Bobs Field Camp Site, a fellow Druid told us about the new couple who have joined OBOD, saying the lady is also South African. Needless to say I was even more excited! Sitting at the cantina with a rainbow of souls around us, my eye caught Marcus. His face lit up immediately. 'You must meet the new Obodies!' he said. He took me across the field and there I saw a relaxed couple, sitting in the late afternoon sun outside their tent. Olly with his kind, open face and Lee-Anne with her fabulous smile and lively, fiery eyes. What followed, was a waterfall of synchronicities as we talked about our lives in South Africa. With every sentence, we discovered yet again just how extraordinary similar the mosaic of our lives have been. The collection of memories, experiences and even emotions that shape our identities are so alike that we were instantly filled with a knowing that we will always share a deep understanding of one another, without lengthy explanations. Thanks to Marcus and OBOD, I now have another kindred spirit, here in the UK, who shares my love of the arid landscapes of South Africa and the Spirit of the Land! Going forward, who knows what new, beautiful and interesting images may emerge from the tapestry of our lives together?.....

The Abbey Song by Carol, Nicki, Mangala, Andy and Guy

Touchstone recieved this poem from Carol Bradshaw who wrote "This was written as part of group work set for us at Glastonbury Abbey during the 'Inner Journeying - 'Singer, Seer Sage' course run in March 2024 by Penny Billington and Matt McCabe."

I sing the song of this place.
I see the spines of the abbey
reaching to the sky,
Ancient, strong, famous, fabled.
I see the bright heads of the daffodils
Nodding in the breeze. They know what
happened here.
I see the monastery ruins and in my mind's eye.
I see the monks and hear their silent chants,
Heads bowed as they sing their eternal song.
I see the great yew at the back of the grounds,
Majestic, steadfast, evergreen
And behind it a magical, arched door
Leading to somewhere else.
I sing the song of this place

I feel the song of this place.
I am the Darkness, the damp crevices.
The unseen history of our ancestors,
In the unseen there is life.
I am the fern that hangs on the edge of the well
Unseen as visitors gaze into the waters beneath.
I am the lichen that grows on the underside of
the branch,
The soft curls of my lobes
Cling to each other creating our community.
I feel the song of this place.

I sing the song of this place.
I hear the rooks, pigeons and starlings
Singing their song of this place.
I hear the wind rustling
Through the bare beech branches.
I listen to the pitter patter of gentle spring rains.
I hear the beat of my heart.
I sing the song of this place.

I feel the song of this place.
I touch the rough stone arches
and glistening stained glass of yesteryear.
I touch the earthenware pots
of the kitchen table
ever waiting for its guests.
I touch the silky petals of the
flowering magnolia
standing proud against the naked spring trees.
I touch the gnarly bark of the
orchard's apple trees
where boughs of mistletoe gently rest.

I sing the song of this place.
I know the song of this place,
The brutal end to the long years of faith.
I feel the tranquillity that still resonates
the song of the season,
the renewal of life,
the singing of birds, the cawing of corvids,
the bright colour splashes amongst the grass.
I know the song of this place.



Drumskin girdles the Tor;
Riotous rhythms, a river of beats.
Sun sinks in a bath of sound
~ David Hinchliffe ~

Drumming frenzy on the Tor
All our selves one beating heart
And the long dead, loud and living
~ Julie Hinchliffe ~

Drumming on the Tor with wind in our hair,
Our hearts beat in rhythm with love in our eyes,
Belonging beyond words, happy and clear
~ Kieron Sibley ~

Dancing, embracing to a Druid beat,
Hearts racing, stamping feet,
Magically in tune.
~ Anne Le M Perchard ~

Echoing drums in an ancient tower
on a lonesome hill,
Heartbeat lost in the ongoing rhythm.
One of many and one with all.
~ Barbara Gottwik ~

Standing in the circle, round,
Exhilaration I have found
The magic of the ancestors rises from the ground.
~ Stu, Jay, Clair & Elin ~

My first ceremony at the Tor as a brand new Bard,
Nerves and uncertainty transformed
to joy and belonging,
Connection and a sense of coming home.
~ Niamh Feely ~

Atop the Tor, the silent sentry stands,
I playfully, wanting to chase the bees
and run with the dogs
And then, the raging blaze never disappoints.
~ Tanya Baker ~

Tor dogs barking out of time,
anger blessed by Awens.
Air and soul transformed
~ Jeff Latham ~

Crow sweeps across the circle,
A synchronicity felt within
As spirits of the sky invoked.
~ Alanna ~

The circle of companions, hands linked, robes
rippling as the element of air ran riot.
Our hands joined, our voices soar, our hearts
open to the resonance of the Awen.
The druid stands with arms outstretched as
A pigeon descends and lands before him.
~ Holly ~

Pigeon flutters to ritual cairn,
Welcome surprise, collective smiles.
How did it know?
~ Lisa, Caroline, Anne & Michael ~

A group of stones,
Cairn on the Tor, alive,
Misting through the past and now.
~ Sonia Tully ~

Wind whistling on the Tor,
Air swirling beneath my spreading wings.
As the Past stands in the shade,
The Present holds the balance
And the Bard is lit by the rising sun.
~ Lorien Cadier ~

Sudden shaft of golden light
Brings to all joy and delight,
Summoned Sun pours magic bright.
~ Sue Dudley, Kevin Mcilroy & Steve King ~

Walnut grove beneath the Tor,
Cows attending, wanting more,
Fills my heart with so much awe,
And makes my spirit rise and soar
~ Cally Palmer ~

I came to Glastonbury, but did not climb the Tor.
I felt remiss not doing this,
you must ascend, it is the Law.
Fortunately, in synchronicity, we still shared
ritual, Druidic connection at its core.
~ Ricky Gellissen ~

A sea of friendly faces,
Collective warmth in unfamiliar places
Helps the Awen reach the deepest of my spaces.
~ Jay Aggett ~

Seated together, listening and sharing,
Nervous, excited ... welcome unity.
Kindness shared makes peace tangible.
~ Clair Roe ~

A friend thanks me for helping her
An old friendship rekindled
Hands held across time.
~ Rachel Pittaway ~

The rose of red and white
the scent and essence flows,
their truth crosses time.
~ Michael Wall ~



“She doesn’t need all those”
Poem & photo by Emma Ross

Beautiful blooms,
Rockery red and white
ritual roses remain -
I claim them all,
garnering from the ground,
feeling disgruntled glances
gathering greed?
I return to the hall
Into the refectory,
Roses arranged,
placed as a pentagram
beside the ritual robe.



Stonehenge this morning,
the honour felt like home,
Blessed by golden sunshine
and being understood.
Singing with a one-time stranger
amongst the ancient stones.
~ Sharon Pilbeam ~

Reeling in the Sun rise, circled by the stones,
Feeling held and nurtured, vibrations rise within,
Rising to my foggy brain, clarity dawns.
I am whole again.
~ Lesley McIlroy ~

I stand between mighty stones on the
vast land of my ancestors,
Love and deep awe flood my heart.
I feel magical inspiration spreading
goldenly through my soul,
While a moon hare watches me at sunrise.
~ Cerid Christina ~

Beautiful white spring, from the Earth you speak
Blubbling, splatter, gurgling
sounds of continuous flow,
I drink within, in silent conversation
With all my seen and unseen friends
Where we sit there is no time, only here and now.
~ Natasha Etheridge ~

Trees outside the window
Overwhelming in their greenness
Make me feel so small.
~ Jacki Woolmington ~

Beech King, towering on the ledge,
A chuckle, “Welcome!”, recognition,
My childhood friends of grove and thicket,
My ticket of admission.
~ Michael Schreiber ~

Mighty old tree behind the Abbey,
Energy flowing through my fingertips,
Connection of past and present.
~ Esther Doria ~



*Thank you to everyone who took part in the work-
shop and submitted a poem. Unfortunately, a lack
pace meant I couldn't use them all.*

The Spirit of the Tarot by Steve Hounsome

When I started my exploration of the Tarot in my teens, it was very much in the traditional manner – that of choosing cards and laying them in a ‘spread’, usually the Celtic Cross, and looking up the meanings in a book or two. From there I progressed to considering what I thought and felt they meant before I looked in the book.

In time, in my early twenties, this led me to a more earnest study of the cards, making my own notes on each one first, then notes from the increasing number of books I was gathering and which I still have – the books and the notes. By this time I was attending a weekly meditation group and decided to enter into meditation on each card, which quite literally, added a whole new dimension to my study of the Tarot.

A meditation on each and every card led me to an understanding of them in an experiential sense in a way that nothing else could. It was later that I came to the awareness that it was what I call the energy of each card that I was experiencing. It is here that we enter that extra, non-physical dimension of the inner and/or esoteric realms and worlds.

That energy can go under many different names, be it life-force, chi, prana, nwyfre or whatever. It amounts to the same thing – that which gives life to and pervades all things, be it human, animal, tree, rock, plant, lake, river or air and so on – it is everywhere and it is everything. We can say that everything that happens does so first at this energetic level, for it is from this underlying, causal energy that matter is formed.

In this case, the matter we are concerned with takes the form of Tarot cards. Looked at from the purely material viewpoint, they are just seventy-eight pieces of coloured card. When we add to this view a knowledge and understanding of the energy that gave them this form we can see that this is their inner essence and what they represent.

It is for this reason that I am always saying that the cards do not ‘mean’ anything – they just are, because energy simply is – it exists of itself and is ‘shaped’ (in a non-physical sense) by everyone that has and will ever use the Tarot. In this way it is your experience of the card that matters, which can be different each and every time you look at it, meditate with it or enter into it in a journeying manner. It is for this reason too that I am an exponent of having regard for and treating the Tarot as a sacred object.

From what we know, our ancestors knew that this vital energy pervaded all things and lived by the

reality of animism – the view and practice that a spirit inhabits and gives identity to, all things. Over the hundreds of years of its existence the Tarot has been and continues to be influenced and added to by all that ever place their hands on a deck and use it in some way.

For me, this gives those of us who use the Tarot ‘seriously’ and especially professionally, a responsibility and duty to treat our decks as a sacred object. If the Tarot is imbued with an inner essence, if not in the actual cards themselves then in what they represent and radiate, my sense is that it behooves us to pay due regard and homage to that.

How we do this is really up to the individual, but we can certainly view the traditional practice of wrapping your cards in silk and/or a wooden box (natural materials and so absorbent of external energies) as a reflection of this. From what I see these days this is not so common but it is always how and why I have taught my students, then it is up to them. I think that one of the dangers

of the more recent spread of popularity of the Tarot lies in the commercialism that befalls such a widening and enlargement.

As an example of this, when in the 2000’s I worked as manager of over 300 psychic readers on one of the premium rate telephone lines so popular then and indeed, responsible for some of this cheapening, I would frequently need to address a similar issue with readers. This was that they did nothing to prepare themselves before taking any call, and nothing to detach themselves afterwards. They also invariably simply picked up their deck of cards from wherever they had discarded them after their last shift, and carried on. Once they had been taught techniques that reflected the sacredness of their work and art, issues such as continued minor illness, fatigue, general burnout and more, disappeared.

Central to this is the idea, knowledge and acceptance that there is an energy that is alive, or at least conscious, of itself, that is part of what calls itself Tarot. As previously mentioned, as I progressed with my exploration of and work with the Tarot over many years, I came to experience what I call the Spirit of the Tarot. This is for me, how this consciousness manifests, albeit a convenient label to put upon it. It does however, serve to help us deepen and enrich our experience of and interaction with it.

I have found, to some degree at least, that this can happen each and every time I pick up my cards, though I would certainly argue that a practice that shifts you from your everyday level



of consciousness and awareness is necessary to achieve this. For me this is primarily through meditation, but there are many methods.

Amongst the very many books on Tarot I have devoured over the years, I read in one of them (and I really cannot remember now which!) that there existed beneath the Great Pyramid in Egypt an initiation chamber that contained life-size images of the Major Arcana cards. The initiate was duly shown in, the door closed behind them and they were collected in due course. They were admitted to the priesthood at that point, provided they were still sane! Of course this is pure conjecture, but it did leave an impression on my mind that I later committed to as a guided journey and have used both for myself and many students over the years as a means to encounter something of the inner essence of each card. I also recall on one of my very many visits to Glastonbury an exhibition that was basically just that – the twenty-two life-size images of the Major Arcana hanging in a hall. I spent a good while in there and so far as I know, did indeed emerge sane!

Over the course of my inner journeying with the cards I found that when I entered into what I call 'the Temple of the Tarot', complete with the card images on, or really part of, the walls around it, a pause enabled me to experience this Spirit of the Tarot. I have never seen, sensed or experienced it as any one particular card (it is really all of them), nor in any human form, but mostly as shimmering lights. What is noticeable each time it does 'appear' is that my experience is far deeper and richer than without it.

It was with something of a wry smile when I first saw one of the 'Harry Potter' films, wherein the pictures in Hogwarts move and are alive, since this is how I had experienced the card images, once the Spirit of the Tarot had been invited and invoked in my journeying.

The Tarot is now the product of everything that it has ever been, the end result of all that has gone before. When we add to this its use of symbolism, colour and at times brilliant artistic expression to convey a theme, idea or concept, we can realise that we have in our hands an enormous receptacle of 'hidden' or arcane knowledge, awareness and understanding. To reiterate my earlier point, this places it a long way away from a card meaning 'you will encounter a dark-haired man who will tell you a difficult truth' or some such fortune-telling parlance.

Rather it is a sacred object, capable with the right approach and regard, of revealing its mysteries and secrets. These are what I feel the Spirit of the Tarot is guardian and keeper of and I have found it to be simply wondrous. Whatever the future of the Tarot turns out to be and however it comes to be adapted and used in new, technological

forms and formats, I think that, with the Spirit of the Tarot at its helm, it will not only evolve, but improve.

If you would like to download and undertake the Guided Journeys referred to in the article, you can do so here - <https://www.tarottherapy.co.uk/meditations-downloads>

Open Forum

Linda Marson, OBOD member from Australia, offered a workshop at the Summer Gathering called *Tarot, the Tree of Life and YOU!* During the session everyone used their DOB to determine their personality and soul cards. Your Personality card represents the lessons and challenges you face in this lifetime as you come to terms with your true purpose – your soul card.

Calculating that was easy but the path you're walking in this lifetime on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and one you've walked in a previous lifetime was a more complex and time-consuming process involving adding numbers assigned to the letters of your full name on your birth certificate.

Due to the high level of interest in the topic, Steve Hounsom, convenor of the Tarot group on the *Druid Hearth* has agreed to start a subgroup where Linda can provide information, respond to questions and clarify the process which became a little confused during the workshop. Copies of the handouts at the gathering will be available and there will be plenty of time to explore your special relationship with the Tarot and the Tree of Life.



Wand Competition

Our wonderful Wand Competition finished in April, but we recieved more entries than we had wands and several entries just missed out. Here are the final two pieces which explore members' relationships with different trees.

The Hedge by Sylvan Spring

By the time I was born, the feijoa trees on the farm my mum had grown up on had long since curled around each other to form a dense hedge. We'd pick buckets of delicious, sour feijoas off the grass every autumn. I would cut them in half under the hedge's shade with a knife I'd found under a bush once when I was four, and kept hidden there ever since - a little secret delight in my own capability, since I wasn't allowed to use knives yet. I'd suck out the slimy flesh, pretending I was an explorer, taking refuge in the thick shade and bountiful fruit of this tree for a while, before pushing on to my next adventure. There was a hole in the canopy of the feijoa hedge right in the middle, and you could sit under it, staring up into the big sky awaiting you beyond the quivering leaves.

I went to that place to visit my grandmother, my aunts and uncles every summer and every easter until I was 18. My grandfather bought the farm in the 40s, thanks to a generous donation from his father. A generational foothold and inherited colonial knowledge that Māori, the indigenous

people of this land, were shut out from. Grandad built the house his four children would live in from the ground up, while also working full-time as a wool classer and providing beeswax from his hives for the war effort. He planted the feijoas when he first settled on the land, not knowing that their eventual fruit would feed descendants he'd never get to meet. Back then, they had a good few acres, an orchard, a stream full of eels, their own spring, some cows and sheep. The land has since been subdivided, and subdivided, and subdivided again, the old farmhouse almost swallowed up by suburbia. The feijoa trees were thankfully planted close enough to the house to survive this succession of amputations.

In the summer of my twenty-ninth year, I returned to the farmhouse after being away for almost a decade. Though both my grandparents are long gone, the same deliciously musty carpet smell lingers in the halls, the same woodburner stove stands sentinel in its corner of the kitchen, the same feijoa trees shiver in the gentle winds as they would have known. I have been given the strange honour of sleeping in their old bedroom. Throughout the afternoon the dissonant sounds of suburbia skitter across the lawn towards my window. I can almost feel the land itself leaning away from the constant drone of car engines and the drum & bass belching from the neighbour's UE Boom. In the morning, I awake before dawn and can hear nothing but the birds and the insects, the same sounds I imagine would have beckoned my granddad out to tend the sheep. It's as if I can feel the land undulating through every decade my ancestors have occupied it. I try to imagine what sounds would have been here before we came. What would have trilled alongside tūisong, what would have sat beneath the knifesharp call of the ruu?

I step outside to greet the feijoa trees, still knotted in their long embrace, presenting as one great mass of leaves. It's not autumn yet, so no feijoas. I'll go back for that, taste again the fruits of my grandfather's labour, maybe find my knife under the bush where I left it. But for this summer, it's enough to sit amongst the roots and look up to the patch of sky peeking through the leaves. Not with the child's sense of the boundlessness that lays beyond it, but the adult's sense of contentment that this little patch of sky gets to be over my head, for a little while longer.



The Gateway by Andrea E Floyd

When I started looking for a farm that would take me out of the city and back to nature - all I really wanted was a beech tree.

Beech trees have always been to me - "those that abide". In an extrasensory way - I feel them. They are so strong with contorted roots that hold to any surface be it vertical or horizontal. They are always the spirits of the forest in the winter, holding their golden leaves until Spring. Their bark so many shades of grey and silver and so quick to heal when someone leaves their mark upon them hoping somehow someone might read the words.

And yet they abide despite adversity.

When I first viewed this land for sale, a huge beech greeted me as I entered the drive. Sold! No more needed to be said.



And you can imagine my delight the first time I walked the land and saw the richness of the forest with sparkling streams and beech groves and mighty oaks and poplars, dogwood and redbud, maple and ash. Land rich in life: fox and deer, bear and bobcat, birds and flowers, butterflies and bees! So alive!

As I became older and grew in sensitivity the oaks became as important as the beech trees. They speak to me now, their voices different than the beech. They are old and wise too.

In truth, they all speak to me now. As life can have a knowing beyond fact, a knowing from heart. All of this life has become sacred to me, within and without.

I am blessed by this land.

Summer Solstice

by Suzie Johnston

Dusty daphne fragrant air
Presses against my skin
Prickled pink
From the sun's kiss.
All around the flood of flowers
Nod sleepily in gratitude to
Bee, butterfly, beetle
And the grasshopper
Fiddling its rasping, chirping tune
Atop grass-fine fronds.
Dragonflies drift,
Hanging like jewels
Above the pond's sparkling surface.
They dance together
Then dart away,
Wings flashing.
Birds bathe
In cool waters
A splashing solstice salute
To the high sun.
The longest day
Drags dreamily into
A clear night
Accompanied by the
Twee
Of swift and swallow
And the endless circles
Of flitting bats.
The sky above turns
A riot of orange, pink, purple.
Finally an inky blue
Painted with stars
Is the blanket
The solstice wraps around
My shoulders
And bids me
Goodnight.



Reviews

Time For Magic by Jamie Reid, Philip Carr-Gomm, Stephen Elcock and John Marchant

Like too many of us, I was only really aware of Jamie Reid's work though his association with *The Sex Pistols*. His torn-up cover of *God Save the Queen* is as iconic as the song itself and yet, as this stunning book clearly shows, there was so much more to Reid than the *Pistols*. As the great-nephew of the Chief of the Druid Order, George Watson MacGregor, Reid's childhood was infused by the "influences of Druidry and social protest", propelling him to create art which is in the "visionary tradition of radical dissent." John Marchant aligns Reid with William Blake, which may feel like a bold claim to those unfamiliar with Reid's work. However, flicking through the pages of this sumptuous and startling book, the connection between the two feels wholly appropriate.

After Stephen Elcock and Marchant's contextualising discussion of Reid and his work, the book is divided into eight sections, reflecting the wheel of the year. Reid created work which directly explored each of the festivals within this cycle, and these are presented season by season. However, the collection also takes in his wider work and presents them within the context of the festival with which they resonate most clearly. For example, *No Feelings*, produced to illustrate a *Pistol's* song, is included in the section on the Winter Solstice, where the brutalist architecture of three tower blocks, looming over a bound female figure chimes with the coldness and restriction of that time of year.

Philip Carr-Gomm's insightful introduction to the Wheel of the Year sets the tone for the rest of the book, describing our world as "a dancing world of colour, movement, and change", a "kaleidoscope" and "a Catherine wheel".

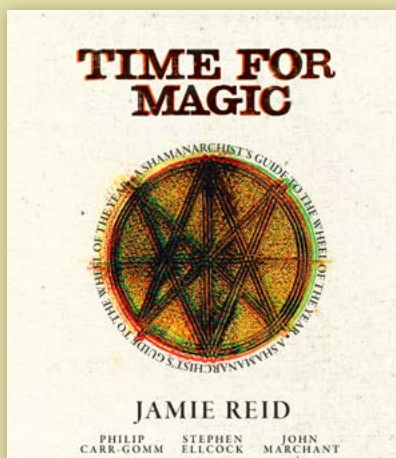
Each of these images feels as if it were plucked directly from one of Reid's paintings, creating a beautiful symmetry of word and image.

Every time I go to this book, I feel as if I lose myself in it somehow. I find it difficult to focus on one aspect, on one season. I keep flicking backwards and forwards through the sections, devouring the content. Not that that is a complaint! As a child of the 70's I feel a deep connection to Reid's aesthetic and his work absolutely nails not only the changing seasons but the different decades within which he was working. From the familiar collage of 1974's *Nature Still Draws a Crowd* through to 2020's humorous *Dragon's Revenge*, Reid's work feels both of the moment but also timeless, being deeply connected to the land and Englishness. There are so many pieces worth dwelling on, but, for me, 1990s *Access to Stones* shows Reid's aesthetic at its finest. There is something so primal and affecting about the image, created as part of the campaign to allow access to Stonehenge and other English Heritage sites. The image itself, with its layers of mystical blue and electric orange is deeply evocative of the solstice sunrise, the angular letters of the title almost runic.

Reid is variously described in the texts as an "iconoclast, anarchist, punk, hippie, rebel and romantic." However, it is the word "Shamanarchist," used in the subtitle of the book, which feels most appropriate. His work is full of deep connection to the land and to time. It never allows the observer to be complacent, capturing as it does moments of transience. And yet there is something deeply

rewarding about his work, which affects all those who engage with it. Whether you know Reid's work or are coming to it for the first time, this wonderful book will surprise and captivate you. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Find it in the OBOD store here: <https://store.druidry.org/products/time-for-magic>



Andrew's Bit At The Back

There is something deeply magical about the Summer Gathering. For me, the event shouldn't work at all. I'm not a huge fan of the summer months (I'm one of those people who likes rainstorms and falling leaves) and yet, every year, I look forward to the Summer Gathering. In fact, it's so special to me that it feels like it has been a central part of my life for decades, although, in reality, it's not been anything like that long.

Don't get me wrong, I like the Winter Gathering too, although my relationship with it is more complex. I have often found myself unable to attend at the last minute as work, weather or family issues have taken precedence. But, at the start of June, I have a deep calling to let my other responsibilities fall away and to get myself down to Glastonbury.

Perhaps that's why my favourite part of the Summer Gathering isn't part of the Gathering at all. It's the night before! There is a special kind of magic that whirls around the streets and alleyways of Glastonbury on that Friday night, a magic akin to Christmas Eve. Endless possibilities lay ahead. People who haven't met in twelve months hug each other on the pavements and in the pubs. Everyone is happy to be there. It's one of the most beautiful nights of the year.

I remember my first Summer Gathering – I'm sure we all do – and the abject terror of it all. I arrived in town having only been to one OBOD event previously, so really knew very few people in the order. I went to a very wonderful QOBOD event on the Friday evening and met up with some friends but, on the Saturday morning, I arrived in the Town Hall and couldn't see anyone I knew. I ended up sitting next to a very lovely couple who I have never seen again, who talked to me as a friend and reassured me everything was going to be alright. I'm an avid writer of diaries (I've kept one every day since September 1986) and my reflections on that first Gathering speak volumes: "Honestly, today opened a big door for me. A different world exists out there, a grove, a place of refuge. And I've found it. I feel recharged and ready for the world again."

One of the great joys of the Gathering is the Eisteddfod and there is one thing from my first Eisteddfod which I remember vividly. It's a song which I heard for the first time that day which has become an unofficial anthem of the Summer Gathering in my head - Willowolf's beautiful and poetic "Children of the Sun". Maybe the key to why

the Summer Gatherings are so magical was there in front of me from the very start. Maybe, as a Druid, I am a child of the sun after all. Every time I hear that song, I am taken back to those balmy evenings in the Town Hall, knowing I've found my home.

Not that the Summer Gatherings are wall to wall sunshine - who remembers the Summer Gathering in 2019? Up on top of the Tor, the clouds loomed around us and we all got soaked during the ritual. I got a fantastic picture, below, of a lone Druid striding up the Tor and into the storm. Of course, as we now know, 2019 would be the last Summer Gathering for a few years, so maybe it wasn't just wet but was also prophetic of the stormy times ahead.

On reflection, it wasn't only the weather that was dark in 2019. "So many people are missing" I wrote in my diary "it just feels weird, frankly." And I think that's what makes the Summer Gathering so magical – the people. In 2020, after Eimear's virtual investiture as Chosen Chief, I met up with several chums on-line so that we could have a virtual Gathering. In those dark days, that meeting made all the difference in the world. On a larger scale, a full, in-person Summer Gathering is a truly magical thing. It's not only seeing your friends that is important but seeing the people who have been there year after year but you have never spoken to. It's the sense that we are a Grove, an Order, that we are all together, laughing, singing and celebrating that is so magical. We are the Children of the Sun. We are the Summer Folk. For those few days in early June, there's nowhere else in the world I'd rather be.

*Until
next time,* Andrew iii





Events



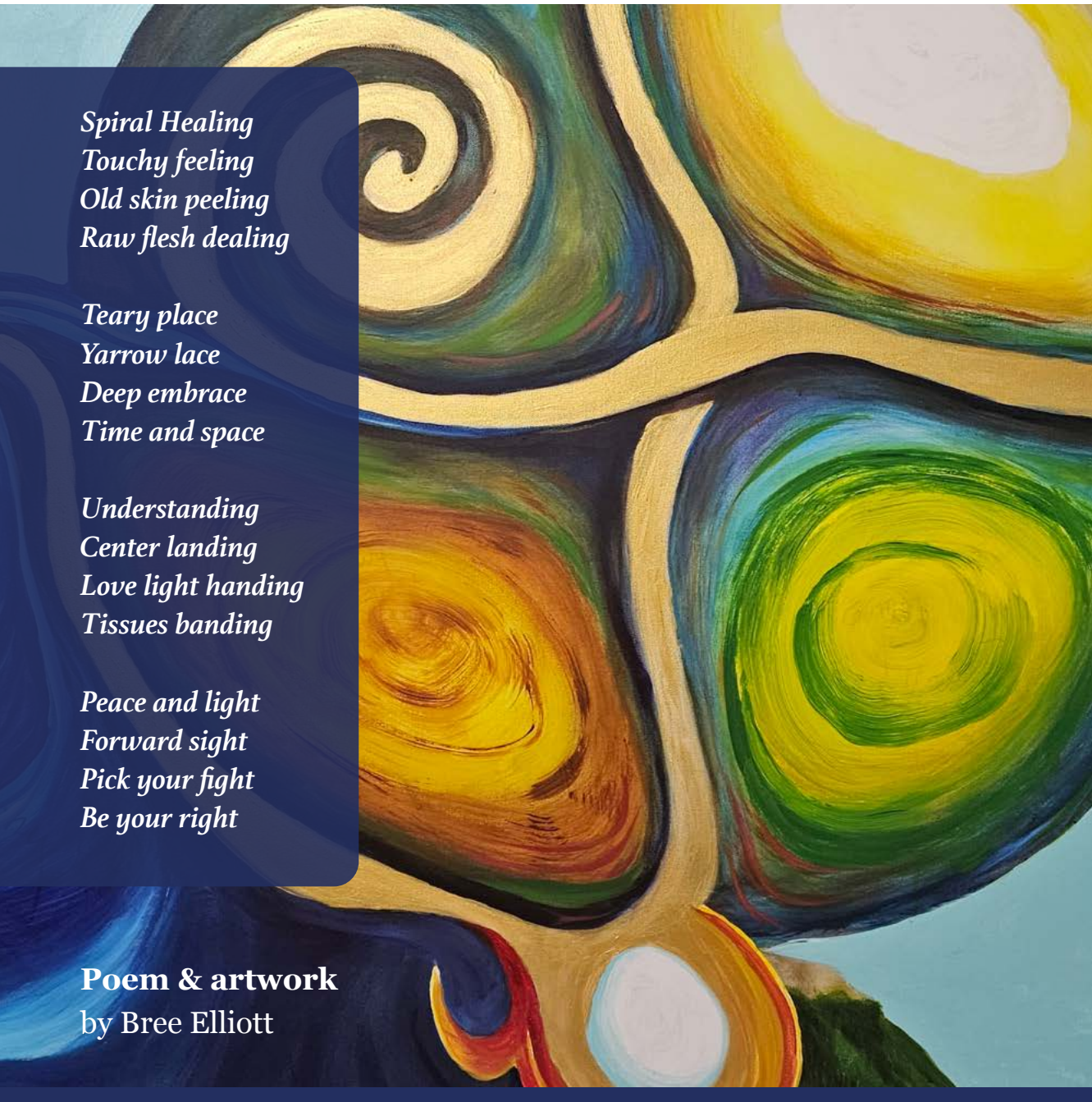
To find Events from OBOD members and friends throughout the year, check the events page on the Druid Hearth: <https://hearth.druidry.org/events>

OBOD Wheel Of The Year Online Rituals

Check the Tune In page on the Druid Hearth: <https://hearth.druidry.org/tune-in>

DATES FOR 2024:

| Lúghnasadh: August 3rd | Alban Elfed: September 21st | Samhain: November 2nd |
| Alban Arthan: December 21st |



*Spiral Healing
Touchy feeling
Old skin peeling
Raw flesh dealing*

*Teary place
Yarrow lace
Deep embrace
Time and space*

*Understanding
Center landing
Love light handing
Tissues banding*

*Peace and light
Forward sight
Pick your fight
Be your right*

Poem & artwork
by Bree Elliott