

TOUCHSTONE

The journal of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids
February 2023

Issue 306



Imbolc mandala: Kate Beatty

Erratum

Apologies for an error in the Annual Review. From Harriet: *'The new name of the listening circle is in fact Building Resilience in Difficult Times, not resistance! We're not a resistance group! Perhaps it's an important difference to make, especially in these turbulent times!'*

So let's run that by you again:

The OBOD Online Climate Listening Circle has changed its name to Building Resilience in Difficult Times to better reflect people's experiences. A big thanks to the listening volunteers for their commitment and service. Listening circles are held on the first Weds of the month at 7pm UK time via zoom. Contact Harriet: harrietlock@gmail.com

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Submissions from members are welcomed, but it is not always possible to use everything offered for publication. Contributions may be edited without consultation unless a request is made to the contrary. Deadline for events inclusion is 15th of the month (or during the first week for longer submissions) before publication. Submissions may be printed on the OBOD website unless requested otherwise.

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Imbolc is here! It's 'February fill-dyke' in the UK, but January saw torrential rainfall for the annual magical transformation of the liminal lands of Somerset: shallow lakes spread over the fields on either side of our roads, so praise *Mama Wata*, p5. Currently, the weather is proving the folkloric truth; *'As the light lengthens, so the cold strengthens'*. Brrr: hail the sun!

Where do our Druidic influences originate? A green shirt, P 4, started it all for one member for whom *The woodland is our green cathedral... our temple of mystery and ecstasy*. As green returns to the N. Hemisphere, we have articles on Imbolc, p8, Creating Sacred Spaces p10 and a stunning archaeological decoding, p13.

'All it takes is a look, a more-lingering glance, a shared moment; I see you,' p6: *'He looked at me so plaintively, as if to say What are you going to do to me, are you going to kill me?'* p10; *'Ravens are the first to hatch...'* p5 - oh, yes, Druids love making connections with animal and insects; a process arising from fascination and close examination of their habits. And sometimes, they can choose us especially, and will work with us; and then we name them totems. Which animal will you nominate for March?

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Dark winter, we salute your frozen ground
and stillness.

Imbolc of the returning light, of sun and
water, we welcome your return.

Season of flood and freezing and sun-
warmth; of the first snowdrops and the
promise of spring,

Welcome!

SLEEP

The trees have shed their leaves
the birds,

brave geese and swans
sing a haunting

Lament.

Sleep! Sleep dear earth
release your hold

Let go.

You must die some
to be reborn

Renewed

Ann Dissek



ARTHAINE IS DETERRED FROM TRAV- ELLING IN SPRING BY HIS FOSTER- SON AMHAIRGHEN

Raw and cold is icy spring, cold will arise in
the wind; the ducks of the watery pool have
raised a cry: passionately wailful is the harsh-
shreiking crane which the wolves hear in the
wilderness at the early rise of morning; birds
awaken from meadows; many are the wild
creatures from which they flee out of the
wood, out of the green grass. *Irish, 11thC*

CHILD OF THE LIGHT

Child of the light

Your body,

that animal that moves your soul through
the world,

is not so different from the rivers that lead to
the oceans,

rivers that endlessly find the shores and
recede,

carrying the bones of
forests on their tides.

You too are a river returning to the sea,
carrying what you found here home.

Rest in the light.

You are a soul among souls in a world trying
desperately not to need them.

You are a spirit,

not the walls it lives in.

Alexa Hoggatt

THE DRAGON IN WINTER

The dragon in winter
does not sleep
but only drowzes.

One eye open
sees the deeds of men.

She sighs
the earth trembles.

Hear her voice.

'Come to my fires
all who shiver in the night
whose bellies groan
with fasting,
share my kill.

Enter my mead-hall
spirits that are broken,
drink your fill.

Soon the ice will crack and melt

Soo the earth ripped open

Soon the thunder will roar

Soon the winds will come.

A wing will pass across the sun

and the hard-hearted

will be gone.' *Linda Davis*

One year when I was 11, Mother sewed two Christmas shirts for me and Bentley. Western cut they

were...real cowboy shirts with pearl snaps down the front and on the pocket flaps. Bentley's was fuschia pink. Mine was a lovely green somewhere between emerald and forest. I loved that shirt and wore it until it wore out; well an advance of my adolescent size outgrowing it. But that wonderful magical green shade imprinted deeply and the realization came early that I was to be a "green" man.

Since then, I have forced myself (quite happily, mind you) to choose shirts, sweaters, jackets, socks in many hues, but always there is that special inner smile, that faint little hum of delighted contentment when I dress (rarely) in dark green corduroy slacks, a pale green shirt, a necktie shot through with myriad multi-swirls of greens, my Irish green suede vest topped off with an olive jacket. I've often pondered, though never fulfilled the utter and decadent extravagance of buying a pair of shiny two tone green designer Italian loafers and a green Borsolino fedora to totally pimp myself out.

Realistically speaking, however, and truth to tell, there is little reason or opportunity these days to alter my usual denim attire. Mud, duck poop, barn litter, briar snags and townie duds are not a fortuitous mix. My denims hold up well to the rigors of farm life...not to mention that multiple launderings and occasional patches do not in any manner inhibit their utilitarian function. Neither pigs, sheep, geese, or the occasional

Green BRYCE SCULLY

raccoon give a flying fig about my personal dress code. Their focus is mainly on whatever might constitute

their next allotment of grain and hay rations.

Still, daily, seasonally, my thoughts and delights are heavily imbued with a consciousness of the magic of green. That unutterably transcendent springtime mist of early leaflets emerging from winter buds in April transforms my woodland from bare see through branches, stark against the sky, to a luminous shimmer of pale green which rapidly fills in the spaces to become a backdrop for the multitudes of blossoms, catkins, pollens to appear and perform their annual choreography.

Midsummer green down there in the forest is deep and vibrant; a full blown ecstasy of fulfillment with the overhead canopy rustling and sighing softly at each puff of breeze. The woodland floor becomes an Irish green carpet as grasses and ferns compete for space between the trunks of giant cottonwoods and Firs, Our two pooches live for our morning rambles together down there in the greenwood. Rain or shine, winter or summer makes no difference to us. The wood-

land is our green cathedral...our temple of mystery and ecstasy.

On the day I turned 16, with newly minted driver's license in hand, I went to a local dealership and bought my first car; a 1936 Chevrolet four door sedan. It cost me seventy dollars, earned on weekends and afterschool at a local farm for fifty cents an hour. October 31, 1951 It was grey. I drove it home and the next day I painted it green.



February Totem

February associations- what is yours???

I always associate Brigid with Swans, Wolves, Cows & Serpents

Maria Ede-Weaving

The Hawk of Dawn would be my choice.

Brigid, as the Goddess of the early stirrings of Spring, brings with Her, the Dawning of the 'New Day.' The Hawk of Dawn brings Light at the Spring Equinox. She, like the Hawk of Dawn, represents the East and of the Rising Sun of Inspiration and Awen. Both allow us to perceive reality from a higher perspective with a deeper knowledge from within. Imagine Brigid donning her Blue cloak, as the Hawk of Dawn next reveals its own blue feathered one. They soar in the bright blue sky, sending songs of healing and inspiration to all Beings below, Brigit at Imbolc and The Hawk of Dawn joining Her at Alban Eilir.

Brigitara Artemisis

For us living in the shadow of Raven Tor it's the Raven, as they are the first to hatch near us usually at Imbolc.

Sandy Buckle

In Scotland, Bride was invoked to be the Milkmaid Bride or Golden-Haired Bride of the Kine.

Raymon Stirton



And a Glastonbury secret on the top of the Tor, Bride milking a cow: a carving on St Michael's tower, built in the 14thC.

Ritual of the Mami Wata BRENDAN PARK

Mami Wata is West African pidgin English for 'Mama Water' or 'Mother Ocean'.

Though the journey to our ancestral wisdom appears distant, the destination is not far. Mami Wata has granted permission for all to reach the forever islands and bathe below a sky of shimmering stars.

Every being's aura is purified with each paddle, breath, and dive. We return to the water to remember, to feel the joy of being alive.

Perpetual waves in motion, coaxed by wind, by moon, and great tectonic shifts. I ask that I may receive the blessing of Mami Wata's gifts.

May I be refreshed and cleansed, embody depth and calm, made whole and ready to embrace the radiant coming dawn.

I give thanks to Mami Wata for the guidance and inspiration I have been receiving. May the ritual continue immersed within my very being.

I am called back to the ocean by the sound of ebbing surf. Healing ions vibrate, in the place of our sacred birth.

Mami Wata's never left you, she understands your elemental worth. All oceans are connected, her spirit thrives across the Earth. The salinity of the sea courses through your veins. Mother water lives inside.

She asks you to embrace existence, so roll the dice, stand up, and enjoy the ride.

"Cronk!" The guttural cry sounded high above me, echoing off the dripping, moss-strewn scar of Twyll Du far above. An answering

cronk came forth from the swirling mist as though the very clouds had a voice, a deep and ancient sound reminiscent of quiet thunder.

It was my first time experiencing the wild majesty of Ravens in their own territory. I was in my early teens, and at my insistence my father was taking me up the Glyders for the first time. I was desperate to find some true wilderness beyond the fields of the rural midlands. The ancient landscape of Wales called deeply to my soul, I had no way of comprehending why in those days but in later years I have learned that I am not alone - there's a word for this in Welsh: hiraeth, a longing for the homeland. I'm not Welsh, but the true homeland I sought was in places where wild creatures still reigned above the works of humankind.

As I aged I found myself frequently seeking out the wildest places I could, and since these were usually in the mountains or forests, the ancestral cry of the Raven became a familiar sound in my adventures. Her haunting cronk! began to typify the wilderness for me, almost a necessary sign that I had again entered a wild place and could spend time communing with the untamed creatures and landscapes far from civilization, at least for the few

Raven, Spirit of the Wilderness MARC G.

hours of my sojourn there.

In later life as I trained to become a professional wilderness guide,

ravens became a sought-after companion on my many days of solitude in the mountains. Whenever I saw them, I knew that I was not alone out there, not really. Raven was watching over me, greeting me again with a friendly cronk. The different individual ravens I encountered were all part of the great ancient being which is Raven.

In the wild places, Raven soars like an eagle, but then flips over in care-free aerobatics. There's a humour to her flight which is lacking in the more majestic raptors. Raven is master of the updrafts and the craggs, but has no need to flaunt her mastery to all, she is also secretive. Raven can pass directly overhead and you won't notice her if you are not paying attention, your unattentive peripheral awareness passing her off as 'just another common crow'. Yet if you do happen to be tuned in to Spirit when you enter her wild domain, she may respond to you, fly around you a couple of times to see if you are really paying attention or just there for the photographs.



And she responds, maybe flipping over into her upside-down flight in mutual acknowledgement that she also sees you. Raven is wild, but open to connection to those who are open to her. She teaches the true meaning of wild freedom.

Many are afraid of her though; she also bears the qualities of a guardian creature. Bird of Dread, Omen of Death, Carrion Devourer, sign of the Morrigan. One who hides in Shadows. The books are full of her dark correspondences. Don't take this side of her lightly, for she will only reveal her mysteries to those who are ready, those who respect the Wild and don't come here just to take and to destroy. The dread she exudes is somehow related to the dread which "civilization" holds for the wilderness - a fear of the uncontrollable, untamed energies of the Wild, including our innate fear of death itself. But this isn't all that she is, and although she is Dark, she often flies in the bright sky.

Inner journeys teach us many things, but for myself it's important to realise that inner contact should always be deepening my outer contact with beings in the natural world, otherwise it just becomes escapism. When Raven first met me in the inner world, she was already familiar to me and her presence was there above in the trees of the inner grove. She never came to me as a Totem or Guide or however you would term it: she was a familiar, friendly presence in many of my initial journeys. She was there, ready to respond if I looked and truly saw her.

She was even there watching as I officially "sought out my animal guide" and met another creature in the forest. When I saw her there watching, I simply said "Oh, hi friend. I'm seeking my animal guide. I'm glad it's not you, you'd be too scary as my guide, what with your connections to Odin and the Morrigan!" I didn't see the forest for the trees!

Over the years I have come to depend on her presence whether I am journeying in the

inner or outer worlds. And I think that's the true spirit of companionship and trust, a relationship which introductory books and one-off workshop journeys can never create. Sometimes nowadays I'll enter the inner worlds and just fly with her for a while, content to deepen my connection with Her, and enjoy her wildness and freedom. She has many things to teach me, and I'm still learning. But mostly it's about learning to be myself, and to be free.

So my advice to seekers would be this: as we learn to walk tenderly upon this earth, we may discover that that which we seek has actually already been there all along. It's just that we didn't quite have the eyes to see it yet.

Raven's blessing be with you.

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IF EVERYTHING IS SACRED

Everything is sacred
the sky, the earth, the water

Everything is sacred
the trees, the animals, the plants

Everything is sacred
the circle, the grove, the awen

Everything is sacred
the rites, the poems, the dances

Life is sacred
Love is sacred
Joy is sacred

So tell me friend
Do you treat yourself as sacred?

Shadowcat

Imbolc in the Druid path represents the time of the Quickenings of the

year. The first faint movements in the womb of the Mother. Stirring below us is the new life of spring, new beginnings, new growth. But not just new life and beginnings of the lands, but new journeys and beginnings for ourselves. So not just in the wondrous outer world of nature, but also deep within the souls and hearts of each of us.

Imbolc, one of the four quarter day Fire Festivals, has more emphasis on light rather than heat, rising as a child of light from the flame, like a candle rising out of a bowl of water, representing the light of Spring rising from the waters of the womb of the Mother. It is the only festival of the eight to give itself entirely to the Mother Goddess of many names: the one we know best is Brigid, or as we know her in Alba/Scotland as Bride. It shows mostly the many forms of the feminine in deity, with serene ceremonies of light and water. And as we stand at this Sacred Gateway of time and space, in the Wheel of the Year. This time, 1st/2nd of February, is celebrated throughout the world with many cultures.

In Mexico and Tibet they celebrate the New Year. The Goddess Februa, mother of Mars was celebrated by the Romans, and in the Christian tradition it's known as Candlemas, when Jesus just 40 days old was presented in the Temple and declared by Simeon as 'The Light to lighten the Gentiles'.

Strange how this festival honours the bringing of new life. Some we are familiar with, like the new lambing season, and the appearance of the first flowers, and of bringing children into the world. Like the rebirth of the

Imbolc; Bride's feast RAYMOND STIRTON

Sun Child, the Child of Light at Yule, growing in strength each day. Like the

Snowdrop with many names... the Purification Flower, Fair Maid of February, Christ's flowers and Candlemas Bells.

Imbolc is a celebration of Mother and Child of Light and Water. The light of the flame emerging from the waters of the bowl represent the light of our children emerging from the feminine waters of the womb of the Mother. Down south in Albion, this day was known as, Wives' Feast Day, and an old tradition, called, the Churching of Women, where women would celebrate by carrying candles round the church, after the birth of a child.

Now as we know many Pagan customs were taken over by the Christians trying to repress the old pagan ways, and around the 11th century onwards the processions at Candlemas was added... the blessings for the candles of the altar. Monks would have candles consecrated by the Abbot, who would sprinkle over them the holy water and bless them with incense... But the church never did repress the pagan ways and people still in some parts of the Lands walk their paths, bearing lighted candles through the streets and villages and homelands.

Now at this time of the wheel of the year as Tibetans and Aztecs celebrate the New Year... Christian with their Candlemas... And in the Druid/Pagan ways and traditions. May the Mother Earth ever be blessed with the Sacred Water and Light. Peace flow through the lands and harmony among the peoples, and the Sacred Light brighten our paths.

May Imbolc bring new life to our lands, to our lives, and the stirring of the serpent beneath the soil bring new growth and creations to the Mother. But remember, these manifestations can't be created without a Father who blesses the Mother with his warmth and heat. This wondrous magical union with the Mother brings their children alive in this time of the new Spring. In our new time of living and growing in our own lives journeys, as the Mother brought life to the lands and people, so to the Father, so we bless them both and celebrate with them and walk with the Sacred Spirit of Bride, to keep us looking for the brightest of days growing each day like the Child of Light.

THE STORIES OF BRIDE.

The Goddess has many aspects and is known by many names. To some she is known as Brigantes, Bridgit, and Brigit but to us in Caledon she is Bride.

She is the "Exalted One". She tends the Triple fires -

The Physical Fire of Smith craft, the fire of creative work. The fire within which is that of Healing and also The Fire of the Creative Spirit inspiring Poetry.

She is the guardian of many healing springs; she is known and honoured throughout the land. In Caledon, there are Bride's wells from Wigton to Aberdeen and her name lives on in many place names... One well in Pitlochry was said to provide cures for respiratory disease while another at Corgarrf was a favourite spot for brides to bathe in

on the evening before their marriage to ensure fertility.

When Christianity spread throughout the land Bride was too popular to combat so she was Christianized and made a saint: she became St Bride. She was exalted as the midwife to Mary and the bringer of Christ: she became "Mary of the Gaels". It is also said by some that St Bride had her centre in Abernethy where her nine maiden followers were based at the request of the Pictish king.

In legend the crone goddess of winter the Cailleach imprisons Bride each winter and releases her on the 2nd of February at Imbolc the first day of spring. She is the young maiden of spring appearing at the first sign of new growth. From Beltane to Samhain Bride reigns with her lord Angus Og. *In summer* she is the creative maker, the mother and the protector of all creative endeavours. She supports and inspires the hearth and creativity but she is also a warrior queen defending and fighting for what has to come into being. *Come autumn* we are reminded that she supports all the healing crafts, the power to heal the Earth and all the ailing souls within its being. *From Samhain to Imbolc* the light is at its greatest ebb. We sit at Bride's fire during the long winter nights for inspiration and comfort. It is at this time

the Cailleach reigns, the ancient earth goddess who is one spirit with Bride.

Again Bride will be released in spring reborn as the gentle maiden. Grant that we may gain inspiration from you and be transformed in your love and protection. Blessings.



Bringing the Imbolc Fire:
Wendy Andrew

Greetings,

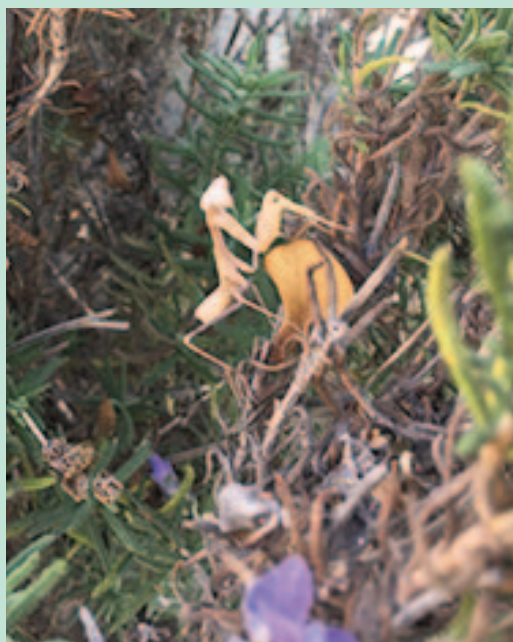
The words to express the encounter I had with a praying mantis last summer have been a challenge. He appeared when I was dead-heading some lavender, looking like a Hollywood alien with his triangular head and enormous eyes, and looked at me so plaintively, as if to say "What are you going to do to me, are you going to kill me?" Well of course not - I went into the house to get a bottle capful of water and the camera. He was there for a few days before he disappeared, probably as a bird's meal. This was such an amazing experience for me; I had never thought of an insect as a sentient being but I could swear he was. Getting it all into such a few words was quite difficult for me but here's my take on it:

PRAYING MANTIS

Garden alien
Beguiling me for its life
The world in its eyes

Brightest blessings,

Jessica McGee



Creating Sacred Spaces Pt 2 ERIC SCHOCH

From part one: 'On the most archaic of levels of culture this possibility of transcendence is expressed by various images of an opening; here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven.' Now read on...

These passages are like a root connecting our world with the divine one above, represented symbolically or with allegorical imagery. Other than passages, sacred objects can show divine will or purpose, such as the heirophany of the burning bush in Exodus. This heirophany guides people from the neutrality of life, often towards greater purpose, 'Something that does not belong to this world has manifested itself apodictically and in doing so has indicated an orientation or determined a course of conduct.'

In her book The Sacred and the Profane, Mercia Eliade places a distinction on what we see as sacred and what we see as merely profane by a phenomenological approach using heirophanies. Hierophanies are theological concepts of higher powers, for example, when the visitation of a higher being appears in time, such as a vision of a deity or spirit - this is a heirophany, something 'other' and more divine. Eliade sees the appearance of these as giving structure to the world, almost as a hierarchy, which the profane world cannot do, 'For the view of archaic societies everything that is not "our world" is not yet a world. A territory can be made ours only by creating it anew, that, by consecrating it.' When we refer to sacred space we apply the same action, to give a hierarchy

of different areas which are more important to us, and extenuate these with divine purpose, making them sacred.

Another proponent of this type of argument for sanctifying space is Gerardus van der Leeuw, who uses this phenomenological approach to understand the relationship between the sacredness of specific places and the rejection we have always had of the profane being anything but mundane. Just as Eliade writes, Leeuw acknowledges the gravity of time in this theory and how by forming distinctions between the sacred and the profane has been a part of our sociological evolution also.

There are places in the world which from the time of their existence within human contact have been revered, whether this is due to culture or geography or simply the outstanding beauty of the place. These places are separate from other sacred places in that they have always existed and were formed naturally, or as some would accept, divinely. One such example is the Ganges River in India. This river is one of the most sacred places amongst Hindu people, and all other traditions in India. The sacredness of this place has become under observation by many western people throughout history, who have wondered what truly denotes this place above the rest. Some people believe that this creation of a sacred object from nature is due to a long lineage of contact people have with such a place and what it means to them, for example, is it something which creates or sustains life? For the Ganges this seems to be the answer, in that as a source of water, the river itself has always been sacred to humans who live in the area, adding to their everyday survival. Even though many see the sacredness of this place as merely social constructed, it does not mean that it is

any less so, or even that it does not have divine creation or legacy behind it. *'The sanctity of water has been part of the Indian tradition from its beginnings in the Indus Valley over four thousand years ago and has remained so ever since. Water in general and the Ganges water in particular is used today for rituals of birth and death.'* The waters are seen as pure and therefore untainted as we are, so to use such waters is to cleanse and to purify. The legends of its creation differ from location to location but all unite the Ganges with this same essence of a pure and sanctified place. The same such approach to sacredness is seen in ancient Egyptian belief with the Nile River, holding the identity of being divinely created and the source of life for those people.

Other such naturally forming sacred places exist worldwide and hold particular reverence in their religious traditions. Often related by sociologists to primitive behaviour, often areas sacred to isolated peoples are seen as culturally sacred, rather than divinely inspired. This idea does not hold, however, and can be reversed. Many accept that not only could creation be linked to sacredness but that we have always had the ability to denote and separate the profane from the sacred, and that there is something which sets them apart, *'Primitive people found a clear distinction between so-called sacred and profane space. Sacred space is the place of regeneration, creativity and transformation. Sacred space provides an anchor for one's existence in the midst of the hazards of the environment.'* This shows the ability even the most primitive or secluded of cultures can create sections of their land which are known to be sacred. These places though are far from only naturally occurring and in modern day, there are far more man-made places which are sacred than natural ones.

We also have man-made places which have

existed throughout history showing us that it is not a modern human attempt of creation which allocates certain places to be sacred and sets them apart, it seems humanity has always had the need to isolate areas and establish them separate and hold them in reverence and places of worship or places imply built to show our knowledge of creation. In southern England is the monumental structure known as Stonehenge, though little is known about its creation or even why it was built. What we can tell, simply by looking at its formation is that the stones once marked a very sacred place. This is because on a landscape detailed by little else but trees, people set about creating something so magnificent that it would dominate the landscape and we know that it must be for divine purpose because it holds no impact of human achievement or hubris. It simply exists; to show that this place is sacred and it must be set apart from the normality, always to be revered.

Across northern America we can see many similar areas of land which serve no other purpose than to simply be. What we must accept from this is that the purpose of simply existing is sacred in itself, for nothing is built in labour without achievement, and to conclude that it has no alternate purpose is to accept that it serves the divine. *‘The sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from “natural” realities. It is true that language naively expresses the tremendum, or the majestas, or the mysterium fascinans by terms borrowed from the world of nature or from man’s secular mental life.’* These are achievements of great undertaking set to show them apart in awe or veneration from the simple, profane others. If we make an altar in the natural world or within our homes, we already have created a sacred space – for it existed as sacred in our mind, long before the first stone was laid.

I originally wrote “The Bearcoonyote” for my nieces after a long day of playing in the snow together. That was when they were at that age when it was a little fun to be scared of what might be in the woods as long as screaming your head off going down a sledding hill would keep the monsters away.

The BEARCOONYOTE

Outside in the crunchy snow
Where only thick-dressed girlies go
There stalks a fearsome, loathsome beastie
Who finds those girlies mighty tasty

A fluffy black-ringed tail,
That’s what I thought I saw
Perhaps I heard a ragged wail
Or maybe a sniffy, snorty huff
As a creature pawed through all our stuff

In the shadows it was hard to tell
What’s its size? What’s its smell?
A black bandit mask and
Great big paws?
Lean, dog-like flanks
With snapping jaws?

The wily BEARCOONYOTE
Goes slinking in the dark
With a whuff and a snuff
And a chit-chit-chitter
It sees a little warm dressed girl
And thinks, “I’m gonna get ‘er!”

So run and play and slide and throw
With icy sleds and balls of snow
But keep a careful, open eye out
For creeping howls and snuffly snouts
Watch the shadows careful, Dears
The BEARCOONYOTE
Might
Be
HERE!

Joshua Ramey-Renk

GROVE & SEED GROUP NOTICEBOARD

Hi! I've recently started my study with this wonderful Order and I'm very keen to see if there is a Seed group or Grove in my area. I live in the Forest of Dean, close to the borders of Chepstow and Monmouth. Bristol is a bit too far for me to travel but if there are any other druids in the Forest maybe we could start something up if there isn't already a group. Please contact me on melaniebenn@hotmail.co.uk

I am Looking forward to create a new **Obod Seed group in Switzerland** together with another Obod Druid, Thomas Stoelzer.

"RAVEN'S MOUNTAIN SEED GROUP" reflects the beautiful region of the Bernese Oberland with the impressive, sometimes snowy mountains of the Swiss Alps and the Beautiful Lake of Thun.

Because Thomas is living near Basel we want to invite also Obodies and guests from this Region as well. Maybe later on we want to create a Grove, - step by step. We would also like to work together of course with the seed Group in Zurich.

We are looking forward to the Festivals, Workshops and more to come, and want to contact other members in this area.

Email guenternal@hotmail.com

Günter, Obod Druid



In the footsteps of the
'gentlemen antiquarians' -
hurrah for the amateurs!

Hurrah for the 'amateurs', those painstaking, passionately-fascinated researchers into our past. As Prof. Ronald Hutton once told me, they can produce results of real value, especially in breaking new ground. And within two days, I've seen two instances of this. The first is *'The Lost King'* - the film of Philippa Langley's ten year research resulting in the discovery of the bones of Richard III; in the teeth of academic scepticism. As important was the reinstatement of Richard as the rightful king of England, not a usurper - ratified when the royal website was altered in his favour: Philippa was awarded an MBE. And it is heartwarming that, when the withdrawal of official funding threatened the dig, a crowd-funding appeal to the Richard III Society produced thousands within days. Power to the people indeed!

The second stunning achievement by an amateur progresses knowledge of our Neolithic ancestors; it has the arresting headline *'Londoner solves 2,000 year old mystery.'*

Our hero: Mr Ben Bacon

His achievement: decoding dots and marks on Neolithic cave paintings.

Who would have the vision to look beyond, behind and further than those evocative cave paintings of animals that command our awe-struck attention? Mr Bacon, that's who. Having noticed dots and marks near the animals, he collected and collated data. He found patterns and specifically a Y pattern he thought represented giving birth and concluded that they could refer to a lunar calendar. With a team including professors from Durham University and University College

London, they worked with the modern-day birth cycles of similar animals to deduce that the number of marks on the cave paintings was a record, by lunar month, of the animals' mating seasons. Mr Bacon said it was "surreal" to work out for the first time what hunter-gatherers were saying.



Both Ms Langley and Mr Bacon approached academia from 'off the street', but what a difference in their receptions. Yet the results of both have advanced our understanding of the recent historic and ancient past. The two examples are a lesson to academics who constantly downplay amateur expertise. And they are a lesson for us too.

From our Druidic perspective these stories inspire because the people are 'ordinary' like us: that is, ordinary going-on-extraordinary in our potential, which Druidry helps us to develop: and we could so easily emulate these amazing role models and run with our passion to make our own discoveries. We are wedded to the land and our human stories are writ large under our feet. If we act on our interests and intuitions with will and faith, who knows what we might find? And, more importantly, who knows how our lives might be enriched? It's not once in a lifetime discoveries that need concern us. It is the living of life with fascination and enquiry that makes our Druidry so potent, whether our field of enquiry is botany, history, music... the list is endless. It's a great big fascinating world: Happy exploring!

THERE IS NO FINAL PHASE: AN ODE TO CERRIDWEN

Bathed in your glowing light
Be my blessed guide
Oh Goddess! The moon your symbol in the night
Glow brightly! Each phase perfect in its right

Ghosted on a morning or half hidden in the night
Each day as you're meant to be
There is no final phase
There is no final dance
There is no final wholeness to find

Bathed in your glowing light
Be my blessed guide
Oh Goddess! Casting shadows in the night
Live fully! Sickle, seed, or cauldron bright

Ghosted on a morning or half hidden in the night
Each day who you're meant to be
There is no final phase
There is no final dance
There is no final wholeness to find

Oh Goddess! The moon your symbol in the night
Glow brightly! Each phase perfect in its right

Oh Goddess!
Bathed in your glowing light
Bathed in your glowing light

Oh awen! Be my blessed guide
Oh awen! Goddess fill me with your light
Oh awen! May I be myself tonight

Cheryl Hasten



IMBOLC

In the never ending re-birthing of endless procreation and evolution
The beautiful silver white moon rode across the night sky like a starlit-disc
Never straying or fluctuating from her arched pathway
Reaching up towards the heavens the silver birch stretched her branches her twiggy
fingers gently guiding the white and silver goddess
Joining heaven and earth in anticipation of new beginnings
Deep within the awakening earth the sap is rising
Each root drawing sucking absorbing in readiness to bring new life from the darkness
The song from the harp of life was composing its tune
Preparing for the life giving beams of light to warm the ground as the moon goddess
gently awakens the forces deep within
Once more the returning warm bright face of Lugh was beginning to shine in this
direction once again

A blessing on the land. A blessing on the sky. A blessing on the elements which
support all beings.

Sandie Coombs

REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

APPLESEED GROVE Glastonbury FFI: theappleseedgrove@gmail.com

ARTURIAN GROVE Seasonal rituals near Otley. optimistichannah@outlook.com

ASH GROVE, GLASTONBURY Seasonal rituals OBOD visitors welcome. FFI jacki.woolmington@btinternet.com

BIG SKY GROVE, NORFOLK Our name reflects the vista and big skies of our Norfolk landscape. Open to OBOD and BDO members/ former members. Meetings for 8 festivals, walks, discussion and social. FFI: rebnikc@btinternet.com

CORNOVIL GROVE. Seasonal rituals in Worcs. www.cornovil.org or email via keith.southall@creativelandscapes.co.uk

DÓITEAN AGUS UISCE (Flame & Well Druid Grove). Seasonal rituals, moots and other gatherings. Colorado Front Range, USA. FFI: flameandwellgrove@gmail.com, <https://flameandwellgrove.org>

DRACAENA GROVE: Saltburn/ Cleveland area of North Yorkshire. Seasonal celebrations & informal meetings. dracaenagrove@hotmail.com

DRUID PILGRIM GROVE: Pilgrimages, gatherings and rituals. Encouragement for pilgrims. Australia and NZ. Contact: danuta@adruid.com; FB: Druid Pilgrim group.

LAKE AGASSIZ SEEDGROUP 3rd Saturday of the Month: Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. Public rituals in local parks. FFI: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lakeagassizdruids/> email agassizseedgroup@gmail.com

LIGHT OF AWEN SEED GROUP in Bristol. Celebrating the wheel of the year, and healing. Email. Lightofawen8@gmail.com

THE MELBOURNE GROVE Seasonal celebrations, Melbourne, Aus: TrudyRichards.moondancer@outlook.com.au

OVERTON PAGAN MOOT- 2nd Thurs The Red Lion, Overton, Nr Basingstoke, Hampshire. 8pm. FFI alex@alexrigg.com

PENDLE GROVE. Clitheroe/ around Lancs. Sionnach on 0161 3432705 or email drvernon@hotmail.co.uk

SHINING MOUNTAINS GROVE- western Montana, USA, 8 rituals, community, hikes, zoom in winter. contact Heather: roanrobbins@aol.com

SETANTII GROVE Seasonal Rituals in Manchester / S. Lancs. Always outdoors. groveofsetantii@yahoo.com.

SLIABH ANAM GROVE Rituals and monthly moots Durango, Colorado, USA. FFI: contact.sliabhanam@gmail.com.

TAMESIS (LONDON SEEDGROUP) seasonal festivals/moots/workshops Contact Ferdiad tamesisgrove@gmail.com
www.tamesisgrove.com

EVENTS

OBOD members and friends are welcome to submit events they have organised for inclusion here. This section may also be posted on our website at www.druidry.org Please tell us if you don't want your event posted on the www.

OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS

On fb and youtube. Hosted by CC Eimear Burke Check druidry.org/facebook

Imbolc: February 4th * Alban Eiler: March 18th * Bealtaine: May 6th * Alban Hefin: June 17th

Lughnasadh: August 5th * Alban Elfed: September 23rd * Samhain: November 4th

Alban Arthan: December 16th

REGULAR OBOD MEETINGS

Fireside chat with Eimear. Join CC every Thursday, 8pm. Google You Tube + Fireside chat

Tea with a Druid: With Philip Carr Gomm/guests every Monday 8pm

Monthly OBOD Peace meditation: with your Grove or by yourself every full moon: 7pm local time

Building Resilience in Difficult Times A monthly OBOD Listening Circle. Online zoom gathering, 1st Wednesday of the month 7pm UTC. Contact harrietlock@gmail.com for link.

Thurs 2/2/23 - Tues 7/2/23

White Horse Camps

Imbolc Camp:

at Wildways, Shropshire

Info please contact

communications@white-horsecamps.org.uk

bookings: <https://white-horsecamps.org.uk/our-next-camp/>

3-5 March 2023 Druid

Grade Gorsedd New Forest

National Park UK EVENT

NOW FULL

1&2 April Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 2.

For previous level 1 participants. EVENT NOW FULL

Email to go on waiting list-mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

OBOD Glastonbury

Gatherings: Summer -

3rd/4th June * Winter**

- 2nd December.



'February' from an Ovate-inspired calendar
by Dr. Diana Birch

Touchstone February 2023