

TOUCHSTONE

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

Issue 307



Moon messenger by Cathy Johnson

Tiny Wells
 Cup marks upon ancient stones
 Gather rain to bless
 With earth and sky
 Anoint your brow from these tiny wells
 Ancestral horns bellow in the groundswell
Moss Gnome

ALBAN EILER (SPRING EQUINOX)

We chant a welcome to spring,
 our voices raised in unison.
 As the Earth Mother awakes,
 life abounds upon Her bosom.
 On this day, when light and darkness are equal,
 we sing to the Earth Mother.
 Seeds sprout, flowers grow,
 fertility returns once again.

Adam Grose

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Welcome March which holds the cosmic
 balance of Alban Eilir. Already G&Ss are
 reporting on their activities and in the wider
 world, almost every March day has a cause
 attached. I've noted especially the 8th. It's
 the International Day of Women and
 Hellenists will know it's under the auspices
 of the month's Goddess — Minerva. And
 surely the 3rd, National Unplugging Day,
 merits a star on every Druid's calendar.

Totems - you've contributed a variety, and
 please do keep them coming. Bold
 Reynardine takes centre stage, inspiring our
 imagination and this enchanting verse:
*"Shake paws, count your claws, You steal mine,
 I'll borrow yours. Watch my whiskers, check both
 ears. Robber foxes have no fears." ~ Brian Jacques*

Also within the magazine is our spring vari-
 ety of articles: great oaks from little acorns
 come on p4, there's the hint of spring, p12,
 we are carried on a life-or-death chase on p5,
 inducted into healing methods, p10 and
 Wales has acquired two more dragons on p7.
 And poems... what riches: enjoy!

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"RELAX" SAID THE SEA

"Relax" said the sea
As she held me in her arms
And rocked me gently.
The stones chattered
In time with her breathing,
Rushing and shushing below
While I rested
And felt the sun on my face

"Relax" she said again
"We're old friends, me and you.
I knew you as a child,
And long before then".
Her cool embrace
Felt like home as it always had

She once showed me the silver
Shimmering path
To the place where my dad went.
I'm not allowed to follow yet
But it looked nice

I felt her holding me up,
Effortlessly supporting my body,
My hair floating around my head
Like a mermaid.
I let my thoughts and questions,
My worries and tensions
Flow out of me.
Reverently I asked her what should I do?
"Relax" said the sea

Jackie Innes



BRIGID

Dew-spritz silvers every blade
on hallowed ground still clogged with cold.
Yet here she comes, dawn-lit, intent
on raising up a surge of sap
to stain the season green.

Her bare feet numb, she cuts a path,
kicks up a reek, a squeak of grass, swords
sliding from tiny, icy sheaths.

Arms spread wide to urge and draw, she is
witch
of the Welsh teal leek and daffodil shank
Empress of emerald, eye of cat
Chatelaine of chartreuse, skin of frog
Mixing ochre rot and frost to build
a green unseen since Halloween.

Advancing north at walking pace
See! Brigid summons the spring.

Josie Barrett

THE DANCE OF THE OCEAN

I listen to the song of the ocean, the tiptoeing
of the waves as they slow dance away from
the beach.

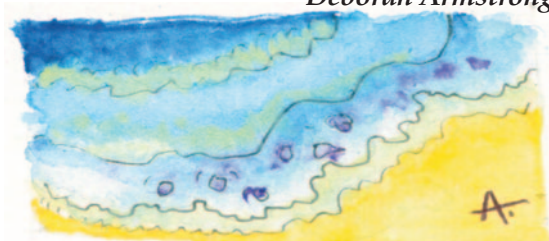
The sand and shells and rocks tumble and
roll in rhythm.

The waves rush together, frolicking and
swirling, anticipating the swell.

They reach the crescendo and drop to take
their bow.

The roar of applause slowly fades as the
dancers rise and start the dance again.

Deborah Armstrong



I came across this quote and it reminded me that I hadn't shared my very exciting news with you all.

'The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.'

— Nelson Henderson in *Songs of Joy* by Joan Chittister

I pick up gifts that nature presents to me. I put them on the windowsill in the Living Room and at some point in the year I give them back to nature.

About three winters ago I was doing just that and decided to plant some of the seeds that I had gathered. The following spring two had sprouted so I placed them in their small pots inside two larger pots, in which I was growing Hazel saplings. I wanted to make sure that they didn't get missed when watering.

Neither I nor Brian, who helped me with the garden at my old place, could identify them.

When I moved home they came with me.

A few weeks ago I asked the new gardener to move all the pots around and the two babies finished up on the table. He asked me what they were. As I didn't know he took some photos and said he would ask a friend who was a tree expert.

A few days later I received a text saying they were American Oak. It was then I remembered. Penny had sent me some acorns from her Oak Tree in New York State during the pandemic and I had



Oak story

THERESA KELLEHER

forgotten that I'd planted them. Now that I knew what they were I realised I had to find a good home for them.

I contacted the Woburn Estate as it's a place very dear to my heart. Lots of lovely experiences in the woodlands and Deer park with Rob growing up. And they have an international tree collection. To cut a long story short (as my old Mum would say), Woburn have accepted both of them. <https://www.woburn.co.uk/the-estate/woburn-deer-park/>

They are White Oaks. Sean, who works with the Tree Collection will nurse them on until 2024 and then he will plant them in the Deer Park. He will be in touch when he does, so that we know exactly where they are. My name will go into the Woburn archives as having donated them.

Such excitement here. A beautiful outcome and it fills my heart to know that generations to come might sit beneath the two little trees nurtured in my garden.

Have a beautiful day.

PS My name in Gaelic is O'Ceileachar and our shield carries three acorns.

PPS this is the stag and the tree that watched me leave Woburn after I had delivered them.



Vixen is my familiar. She is also my guide, grounding me with her earth wisdom. She has

chosen to be invisible, although at times my third eye catches glimpses of a bright tawny body on the path ahead. Sometimes her foxy aura crosses into mine, and my senses sharpen. Perhaps she exists entirely in my dream-time, but wherever our journeying takes place it is a meeting of old souls, an ancient recognition.

The thaw has come early this year. Half awake, I'm listening to the gushing of the burn in spate through a window open wide to the sounds of the night. There's a sound I'm not sure of. There it is again! The raucous alarm bark of a fox.

A wide beam of light sweeps the black hillside. Lamping foxes. The cruellest of pursuits and totally legal. For a moment I watch hypnotised. Suddenly the light swivels full circle and dazzles me as it crawls across my bedroom ceiling. I duck down in panic. My senses are bristling and igniting in every cell of my body. In a heartbeat I'm out on the hill and we're running for our lives.

Vixen is heading for the higher ground. The going is hard, the hillside awash with icy snakes of melt water. She's far too fast for me. I slip and stumble through sods and peat, hearing the keeper's jeep close in on me. My white nightdress feels like a flag, and just as a sort of witch hunt terror slows me down, Vixen draws me into her slipstream. She has gained the heather, and I fly behind her. Our limbs are on fire, our hearts racing to the same bursting rhythm. As we crawl through a thin gap in the march fence the spotlight picks us out. A bullet explodes off the stones, but we are already tumbling down the banks

Vixen Totem VANESSA FIELDING

of Altnacroich burn into safety. Vixen finds her ragged third wind and we're off again.

I'm dizzy and half blind by the time I reach the rowan tree and watch her vanish amongst the roots. I duck beneath the clooties on a bare branch and follow her in. On this night of all nights it seems no wonder that our sanctuary is below the Lady well.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT REYNARD..

A fox is a wolf who sends flowers.

Ruth Brown



Be like the fox

who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction.

Practice resurrection.

Wendell Berry

A fox is subtlety itself.

Aristophanes

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

A DREAM OF FOXES

in the dream of foxes
there is a field
and a procession of women
clean as good children
no hollow in the world
surrounded by dogs
no fur clumped bloody
on the ground
only a lovely line
of honest women stepping
without fear or guilt or shame
safe through the generous fields.

Lucille Clifton 1936-2015

TOTEMS AND EMBLEMS OF MARCH

For me here in the Eastern US, the American Goldfinch is a symbol of spring. The males lose much of their bright yellow over the winter, but as the days get longer, their feathers turn back to their bright, cheery yellow.

Beth Mowry

'March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb.' Weather wisdom, UK

The Alder in March.

Alder is the only deciduous tree to produce cones, which are still dangling, with purple catkins, on bare branches. The cones, bark and leaves dye textiles caramel, terracotta red or green. It thrives with its roots in streams and was the totem tree of Bendigeid Bran, a protector giant God-king from the Mabinogion. In some Celtic tree calendars, this is its month, and here is one of its tales...

THE OLD THIRSTY ALDER

Rippling waves and crackling stones as Fearn drinks...indebted with gladness. "Thou shalt not thirst", the stream bubbled over lichen covered pebbles. As the Alder drank with a thirst so great even the birds on branch took notice. But always felt safe on the mighty tree. For he had stood by the burn for many years, its roots protecting the banking and homes of the lightning sand martens, as they dart about feeding on the wing.

"We are always grateful of the protection you give us voiced a marten".

"Yes and the shelter over our heads as we nest". Another replied.

"Thank you little ones," said the Alder, "standing out in the hot Sun does make one thirsty".

Corrie Raven



*****Newsflash!*** *The Bards, Ovates and Druids Tartan is now available!***

The tartan was born from an idea by Kate Collison (UK) and Billy Stewart (USA) in spring 2020. It was designed by Kate, who runs a tartan business in the New Forest, and discussed at length on OBOD Facebook sites. *Naturally it encompasses* the 3 golden strands of Awen, the 5 elements (earth, air, fire, water & spirit) and the 3 Grade colours. Philip Carr-Gomm gave his approval for the use of the name and design, and his letter was included in the application to the Scottish Tartan Register. Lockdown delayed the registration approval and weaving, but it is finally here now and we are thrilled.

FFI: email on newforesttartan@outlook.com or kate_collison@hotmail.com

More details/ordering at www.newforest-tartan.co.uk

Next month I'll telling the full story of the tartan, of international collaboration and the-manifestation of a dream! **Big love, Kate**



CALLING ALL WRITERS!

Do you have a story to tell? About Relationship with People, and the Land? Aurochs Underground Press are looking for short creative pieces up to 3000 words. Deadline 21st March. FFI or to submit, go to <https://aurochspress.co.uk/>

It was a crazy idea. Let's build a dragon, no, two dragons. And instead of them being at war with

each other – like in the old story of the red and white dragons – let's show them pulling together, inspiring harmony and reconciliation. Tradition and change, feminine and masculine, fire and ice, collaborating like the two strands of the double helix molecule... Making love! It could be a potent symbol of what is needed in the world right now. Like I said. Crazy idea. But we knew dragon-making artists, Georgia and Basia, who'd been to Cae Mabon¹ and were keen to be involved. A patch of bramble scrawny sloping land below the car park offered itself.

We hired a digger and Uli, a landscape gardener who was helping for a month, levelled the ground and made basic dragon forms from earth and stone. In the following weeks we wrestled earth and stone using pick and shovel, muscle and sweat. Then our artistic directors produced a maquette of what the dragons might look like. We were impressed. Really, could they look that good?

Word had gone out to an extraordinary band of artistic and creative people from a colourful mix of traditions. Many were inspired by building dragons that would not just be sculptures. They would be powerful beings with a sacred presence. It was a holy mission. In the week leading up to the full moon in June we gathered the materials – sand, straw, wire mesh, lime, tools...

But we still needed clay to make cob for the dragon skin. After a hunt we obtained a trailer of heavy, moist, red clay from the mouth of Abergwyngregyn valley, where an ancient trackway comes through the mountains to the Menai Strait. There are burial

The Dragon Makers' Tale ERIC MADDERN

chambers, a stone circle and standing stones marking a way back to the Neolithic. It used to

be the northern route through the mountains to Ynys Mon, Anglesey, once the heartland of the Druids. Aspirants from all over Europe came to study there. They'd go through the Pass of the Two Stones and down to Aber on the Menai Strait. At low tide they walked over the Lavan Sands, crossing to their island of dreams, their university of higher powers. For thousands of years before the bridges, this was the way across. So the clay that came back in the trailer had been trodden by these pilgrims, peasants, poets and kings, century after century. The history of this land is imprinted on that earth. There are mythic traces in the soil.

* * *

And so, on the day of the strawberry full moon, June 2022, a remarkable group of twenty-five makers, artists, sculptors, musicians, healers, seers, ceremonialists, dowsers and wonder-makers descended like a band of holy angels disguised as tough grafters. On the first morning we welcomed each other. The sense of excitement was palpable. Georgia was our ringleader. She guided and cajoled us, kept us to time, focussed us on the task, all with great warmth and humour. She was clearly a professional facilitator of creative projects². After an opening embrace the core crew went to the site to work out a plan.

After lunch there was an explosion of energy. Ground was furiously dug by teams of people, slabs of slate were dragged and placed as the dragon's under-armour; wire mesh was rolled out, shaped and pegged into the earth. Soon this emerging being had a carapace of iron and stone, with flared nostrils, eyes, a great ear, spiralling shapes... And a shrine.

On the bank above a trusty crew of stamper and swingers were busy making cob. One bucket of clay, three buckets of builders' sand, some straw and a little water are mixed on a small tarp then stomped barefooted until every grain of sand is coated in clay. It's a primordial alchemical practice, squidding the materials together between your toes until it's like cold, moist flesh. And it's rhythmic, so a good time to sing. By that evening we had a pile of cob balls under a tarp and ready for the morn.

That night we had a beautiful invocation and evocation of the Bee and the Hive from Natalie Vickers, bee priestess, who had just happened upon our magical gathering. It was a beautiful, calming, connecting meditation where metaphors from the realm of the bee came to sing at the centre of our souls.

The next day the cob was pressed onto the wire and stone of the dragon's exoskeleton, then squeezed and smoothed to become her skin. It took a couple of days. After a while a dragonfly emerged, and a flower, a triple spiral, a spider, a bee, a toad... The Mo Dragon, the mother dragon, was coming on beautifully. We worked like bees, a self-organising organism, with Georgia and Basia our queens. In magical style it turned out that the best place for the shrine was at the foot of the tree where the Mo-Dragon's right ear should be. So you whisper your prayers into her ear!

But the second dragon, the male dragon, wasn't coming on at all. So early one morning Paul, the sculptor, unbeknownst to all, rose early and set

about moving soil and building a curved slate wall for the side of the dragon. He must have worked like a maniac the amount he did in just a few hours. After that the second dragon felt not only possible but essential! We ditched the idea of cobbing and decided instead to make him of slate and moss. He was smaller but he was tough and quirky, our comedy dragon.

After a few days a group of local Druids came to bless our work and do a summer solstice ritual. They were led by Caryl, who, with her Sami heritage, did some gutsy yoiking along with drumming and chanting. Our old friend Gwyn was also there. He definitely carries the spirit of the ancient Druids. It was indeed a holy visitation!

One evening we had a sweat lodge by the river. It was such a cleansing and deepening ceremony that the next day we were operating on another level of alchemical harmony. No one in charge, everybody busy doing their task. The men worked on the Mab-Dragon: the young bucks barrowed slate from a nearby abandoned quarry. Sean, our dowser, discovered that the two main male and female dragon lines crossed at a precise point between the dragons. Their only other crossing place at Cae Mabon is the circle in front of the Roundhouse. Apt synchronicity.



By now we were working with a kind of possessed fever. Rod (from Middlewood) and I were moving slates around the head and face. Suddenly one piece swivelled into the air. I stepped back to look. It was an ear, no doubt about it. We sacrificed a fine step stone to

be the other ear. Then it became clear where the eyes had to be. Quick as a flash Freddie placed a couple of red apples as pupils and the Mab Dragon was awake! Part mad dog, part wild boar, part fiery dragon...

It was midsummer's day. In a flurry of work we tidied the site and sanctified the shrine and heel stone. At the stroke of midsummer (10.23am) we began our ceremony. The women lined down from the steps, the men lined up from the gate. We processed to the space between the dragons, men and women interweaving with each other, faces lit by the sun. There followed songs, prayers, drumming and dance. Basia, who'd been to the Druid ceremony at Bryn Celli Ddu early that morning, crowned me with a garland of flowers, some from hedges near the ancient burial chamber. It was indeed a crowning moment. There was a feeling of peace, fulfilment and wonder at the extraordinary thing we'd created.

That afternoon we headed to Dinas Emrys. We detoured to Merlin's secret pool and nearly everyone took a dip for a glorious mountain water blessing. When we reached the sacred hollow at the summit we were ready to rest and let our souls be nourished by that numinous place. In the Temple of the Two Dragons we told them of the healing of their ancient rift. And so the job was done.

* * *

I was standing by the dragons when it began to rain. Cob is vulnerable to the elements so I swiftly gathered tarpaulins and covered the dragons. But the next few days were wet and windy and I couldn't go up to check. When I did I found some tarps had blown off and much of the glorious detail in the original cob was eroded. It was with a heavy heart that I reported this to the Dragon makers.

Peter and I lime rendered the cob to protect it from further erosion. Two weeks later a smaller crew returned for restoration. In the next days we recreated the nostrils, eyes, eyelids, ear, spirals, spider, toad... and dragonfly. We put on a second layer of lime then limewashed her with a yellow ochre tint. After three coats she had a golden sheen.

For Mab-Dragon's eyes I took an old mirror and cut it into wedges which I embedded in a fan to make the iris. For the pupils I used two special stones I'd had for decades. One is a rounded piece of brown sandstone from Hoy in the Orkney islands, not far from John O'Groats. The other is glistening granite, roughly rounded, from Zennor quoit near Land's End. They are from the two extremities of the British Isles. As it happens, where my ancestral roots lie.

I made a strong mix of red ochre and glue. After two coats the sacred stones went into their dragon eye places. Perfect. What I hadn't expected was that the mirrored eyes would twinkle in the sunlight and reflect the green trees and the blue sky. In one of Mab-Dragon's eyes you could even see the eye of the Mo-Dragon reflected. Now, at last, they are seeing eye to eye!



1 Cae Mabon Retreat Centre
<https://www.caemabon.co.uk/>
2 (see www.georgiawisbey.com).

In moving through the forest of the Ovates, one of the skills I felt particularly moved to develop were those of the healer. What follows is the result of that work, combined with experiences I brought with me to the Order. I present them here in the hopes that others may find them useful:

Notes on Healing methods Pt 1

ADAM WINBIGLER

THE EARTH AND STAR METHOD

Recommended tools:

Any instrument with which you may produce a sustained sound; that is, when played, the sound resonates without needing continued playing. I currently use a set of tuning forks, but prior to that a single bell did the job just fine; use whatever you have handy, including electronic means;

Your usual set-up for magical workings, by which is meant the series of rituals which you use to prepare the workspace.

This cleansing may be performed at any time, though for more potent results you may time it around the changes in season or the eightfold Wheel of the Year; it can also be timed to coincide with fortunate astrological aspects, if you wish to invite a specific energy in. It can be performed solo or on a willing participant. If you are performing this on another, modify the instructions so that you are giving them to your client rather than performing them yourself.

When you have made your preparations, assume a meditative posture and begin to breathe deeply. Focus on your breath, on the rise and fall of your chest, and notice the way your body feels as you breathe in and out. Gradually, widen that focus until you are feeling your entire body. Do not take note of it, or pass judgment on it, simply feel it. Then, slowly, retract that focus inward,

towards your center. You may notice the darkness behind your eyelids seem to

intensify or that you suddenly feel colder than before; this is perfectly normal for a shift in state of consciousness.

You will know that you have reached your centre by three sensations, two of which are universal; these are a proximity to a great deal of energy and a deep feeling of safety. The third sensation, which is universal in kind but unique in character, is the way in which the seat of your soul will present itself to you. Some see a vast, blazing star; others behold an abyssal, swirling black hole; still others are granted visions different from either of these, and some do not 'see' at all, but instead perceive with the psychic analogue of their other senses, whether tactile, auditory, or otherwise. However you sense it, take a moment before proceeding to bask in your own radiance.

When you are ready, shift your awareness downward, past your hips through your legs and into your feet. From there, continue moving your awareness down toward the core of the Earth. When you have stretched as far as you feel you can in that direction, leave yourself a tether point to wrap around, and gradually raise your awareness back up into your body. Proceed up past the center through your shoulders and neck up to your head and out, up into the vast expanse of space. Once again, leave yourself a tether at the limit of your reach and come back down.

Gradually let the cord that you have strung fill your awareness. Feel it connecting you to the Earth and to the cosmos, like beads on a string, and feel the energy of the cosmos filtering down from above and that of the

Earth rising up from below to commingle in you. You'll notice a few spots in which they gather, and we'll start with the first, a spot of red energy at the tip of your tailbone.

This is the root chakra, the center of groundedness and safety. Ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the root expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then shift your awareness upwards, to an orange spot that sits just behind where your belt buckle would be.

This is the sacral chakra, the center of movement, creativity, and pleasure. Once again, ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the sacral expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then shift your awareness upwards, to a yellow spot just above your navel.

This is the solar plexus chakra, the center of personal power. Once again, ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the solar plexus expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then shift your awareness upwards, to a green spot in the center of your chest.

This is the heart chakra, the center of unconditional love. Once again, ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the heart expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then shift your awareness upwards, to a blue spot in the center of your neck.

This is the throat chakra, the center of communication and self-expression. Once again, ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the throat expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then shift your awareness upwards, to a navy-colored spot in the middle of your eyebrows.

This is the third eye, the center of perception and intuition. Once again, ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the third eye expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then shift your awareness upwards, to a violet spot at the very top of your head.

This is the crown chakra, the center of connectedness and harmony. Once again, ring your instrument thrice. On each ring, breathe in and feel the crown expand; on the exhale, feel it spin and begin to share its energy with the rest of your energetic system. Take a moment to adjust to this new energy, then allow your awareness to expand outward to the whole of your body.

Feel the way the energies of your chakras swirl together into the bright, golden light that is you. And then, feel it glow even more intensely as the energies of the cosmos and the Earth mix in as well, pushing the radiance beyond the barrier of your skin to fill your entire aura with bright, golden, healing light. Feel it course through you for a time. Then, when you are ready, reach up into the heavens, and (with thanks) release your tether and return that awareness to your body.

Take a moment, then do the same with the

tether anchoring you to the Earth. Now sit. Feel the energies continue their interplay with each other throughout your aura, their luster gradually fading as they do. When the glow has finally dissipated, give your fingers and toes a wiggle. Become aware again of your physical body. When you are ready, open your eyes and rejoin the waking world!

Part 2 in April



There is A NEW SEED GROUP here in New York State: Awen in the Catskills Seed Group. Email is info@theawencenter.org or through Facebook.

BADGER AND TOAD SEED GROUP, Folkstone area. Seasonal celebrations and informal meet ups, online and in person. C/O Sian and Hazel obodbadgerandtoad@yahoo.com

Call out to all Groves and Seedgroups: Remember 2022, when a Grove helped collect wild seeds down in Cornwall? Well, it's 2023 now - what's your Grove up to? These I know of:

The Sylvan Grove had their annual early retreat in the New Forest

The Ash Grove in the SW, held the Wassail ceremony at Glastonbury Abbey

There's a new **Seedgroup in Bath** - find out their news in the April edition.

And **BAM** are busy with preparations in Ashby MA - see events, p 16.



The first hint of Spring ERIN CABANA

Last year, at the end of October, two days before Samhain, I was able to move into my new home. At the right age of 42, I was finally able to purchase my first home. I had moved from a city in the metro Boston area of Massachusetts and had been able to move further north to a rural town outside of Augusta, Maine.

While I had experienced plenty of winters while growing up in Massachusetts and lived outside that magic 495 snow belt where you get hammered, nothing could really have prepared me for the snow the isolation and the beauty that was winter in Maine. During this time, I chose to pick up my bardic studies from OBOD, something that I had put on the shelf for pursuing a different path. Working with the Bardic material has given me a different perspective on nature in the world around me, and that's what leads me to the tale.

Winters in New England are very different from winter in the UK. Having been fortunate enough to live in Scotland while working on my master's degree, I can attest to the fact that spring there can be gentler, weather wise. (The windstorms last year being the exception). And well I do believe the folk-saying of winter coming in like a lion and out like a lamb for March; 99 times out of 100 it often comes in like a raging bull here, and leaves like a stubborn headstrong ox. However, there is one particular moment in early to mid-February that I always look for each and every year; the moment when nature transforms from winter with the dark, cold seemingly endless nights, (cont. p14)

I meditated this morning on creativity..She said to get moving! So, having just moved into my 49th home, I thought this appropriate. Homes have always had an aliveness that I can't quite explain. I feel I leave something of myself behind every time I leave a home...and I feel great sadness when I say goodbye. I feel almost as if I am abandoning the house and all the potential we could have created together.

HOME

I hear,
I see,
I listen,
I feel,
I watch,
I wait,
make me yours.
You leave,
I am sad
for when will
the next soul
love me, need me.
I am your home.
Rest. Be. Stay.

Cyndi Sabo-Cook

It's Ace when the fire gets going
And I can see my hard work going up in flames
And I can sit the kettle on the flat top
Popping and hissing ,it's a good burn.

I have taken my axe into the garden
The woodsman will sing and shine
Sitting with the Horse Chestnut ,smelling
the beautiful grain

So my cousin is the chain saw
Rewarding me like the axe before
I'll lie my back on the forest
And dream of those cold winter nights
And thank as the fire gets going just like
times before.

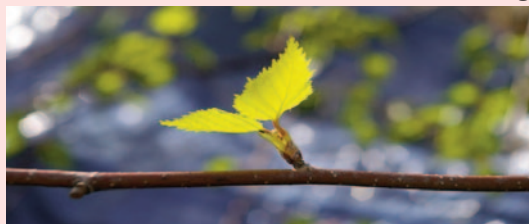
Jon Leigh

INTRODUCTION

I watched a tree
tenderly trace her fingers through the water...
Alder?
I know the names of nothing.
Never taught.
Never thought to learn.

I slept among dead things -
A stranger,
more at home in walled gardens
than with wild Life.
Now, in wonder,
waking to the trace of tender fingers everywhere.
To wide arms of welcome.
To endless unfolding names.

Gemma King



BLACK BEAR IN SPRING

Spring in Mt. Shasta
Wakes up Mama Bear!
Her cubs stay warm,
And unaware.

She searches for food,
While guarding them well.
The mountain cave hides them,
So Humans can't tell.

Slowly they come out
To romp in the sun!
They're finally free,
To have some Spring Fun!

Brigitara Artemisis

the sub arctic temperatures that will freeze your breath to your glasses, the endless trips up and down the stairs to feed the fire, and the sense that the world is frozen in time and that almost a curtain has been drawn around your house. You stay home, you try to stay cozy, and you wait for the outside world to wake up.

About two weeks after Imbolc, I was out walking my dog and I got that first hint, that first scent of spring; that moment when a switch flips inside you and you realize that you have gone from winter cold to spring cold.

I'm not sure what makes that internal switch, I don't know if it's the days are starting to lengthen, I don't know if it's the first return of the birds that you associate with spring here, I don't even know if it's some internal ancient clock system that is knows that the seasons are shifting. But it's at first moments where are you know that winter is loosening its icy grasp, that the sun is returning, and that spring is on its way.

And, as is the way in New England, we are expecting 60F° weather on Wednesday and 25F° weather on Friday with a chance of 5 to 7 inches of snow. To quote Mark Twain "If you don't like the weather in New England just wait five minutes". But, having scented that first elusive growing scent of spring, the days of growing sunlight, and having watched people put out their taps for their maple syrup, I know that spring is on its way and it is here to stay.

NATURAL SHEPHERD

Oh nature shepherd me,	Oh shepherd be my guide
With thy fertile hand	Until your end is nigh
Where the cry of freedom	Take me to your land
Is heard throughout the land!	Where naught shall ever die!
From the mid of dusk til dawn	And on the nearest plains
You never seem to cease	The Green Man laughs and sways
And in the wild your power	Until the day of Ragnarok,
Seems only to increase.	But nature still remains

Samuel Falkingham

WAYS OF LIFE

I have walked many ways so far

ways of body
ways of heart
ways of thoughts
ways of passion
ways of ancestors
ways of soul

all this exists in me
here and now

ways of joy
ways of grief
ways of happiness
ways of despair
ways of wonder
ways of fainting

all this flows in me
here and now

ways of earth
ways of air
ways of fire
ways of water
ways of sun
ways of moon

all this lives in me
here and now

ways of past
ways of presence
ways of future
ways of stars
ways of roots

all this united in me
here and now

Tina

Dear Touchstone,

This pen/ink artwork inspired a short poetic verse regarding the search for the Holy Grail. The roses may have had something to do with it too! The great bear of the starry heavens is experiencing some creative play here now. I believe nature is conspiring big magic these days.

Peaceful blessings, Julie Melton, Toronto



THE HOLY GRAIL

The holy grail
Is shared
When the sun and moon connect
In holy matrimony
Within oneself
The search is within
Not without
In everything
Now

Love



REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

APPLESEED GROVE Glastonbury FFI: theappleseedgrove@googlemail.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: rebnick@btinternet.com

CIRCLE OF COLL Seattle Seedgroup public rituals, workshops, tree walks &... every month. circleofcoll@circleofcoll.org

CORNOVII GROVE. Seasonal rituals in Worcs. www.cornovii.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: N 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: Trudy Richards moondancer@outlook.com.au

VERTON 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 sliabhnam@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

* 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.

12 - 18 April Bioróg Retreat Discovering Mythic Landscape in Donegal, Ireland. Venue: Ards Friary Retreat Centre. Facilitators: Eimear Burke and Sean O Gaoithin. FFI/bookings email seanogaoithin7@gmail.com & FB – Bioróg Retreat

Sunday 7 May Wirral Pathways ONLINE festival. a day of online talks from Druidry and ht astrology

the Life of of Runes, to Egyptian deities and Dion Fortune. Speakers: Lunae Wetherspoon, Penny Billington, Bee Helygen, Danielle Broley, Kevin Rowan-Drewett & Wendy Dee Harris Tickets £7.50 per device

<https://buyticketsat/pathways>

7-10 Sept BAM Druid Gather: Fire ~ Igniting Community. Join us for our fourth year in beautiful Ashby, MA! Adults \$190, children (12 and under) \$60, includes meals and cabin/tenting space. Immerse yourself in a thriving community experience, learning new skills and deepening your connections to the land and fellow Druids. There will be songs, dance, and feasting around the sacred flames; workshops, meditations, Makers' Market, children's activities, Bardic & Ovate initiations, Eisteddfod... and lots of Fire!

FFI: <https://bamdruidgather.org>

30 Sept & 1 Oct Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 1 Non-res weekend workshop in Glastonbury with Penny Billington and Matt McCabe FFI: mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

OBOD Glastonbury Gatherings:
Summer - 3rd/4th June * Winter - 2nd December.**

Strawberry Finch: Antonela Gioscio

