

TOUCHSTONE

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

Issue 309



Goddess submerged: Frankie La Voie

THE STAG IN SPRING

The Great Stag outside my window;
Beneath the large Oak tree!
Our eyes and souls became as "one,"
As He looked right into me!

His antlers, broad & beautiful;
His body strong and tall.
His crown will soon be left behind;
From His head the antlers fall.

Spring is the time He takes them off,
For small animals to eat.
They use these gifts for food you see;
To them it tastes so sweet!

Brigitara Artemisis

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A merry May morning to all members - and in Somerset, the sunny, windy, energetic lead-up to the month is glorious. And so are you, gentle reader...

Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And Summer's lease hath all too short a date. (Sonnet 18)

Big Bill Shakespeare tells us the seasons are ever-turning, and the point is that it is his poem that makes the beloved immortal. Druids, also, can make nature - the beloved, the ever-changing - immortal; through diary, article, poem:

'So long as men can handle, or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.'

Whatever you witness as you go walking, capture in a sentence, and send it in!

This month we have a Druid meeting p4, the glories of the stones of Scotland p8, a story resonant with our ancient tales p6 and a fond farewell, p5. Our May totems pp7&14 range from delicate beauty to raw power; such is the paradox of May energy - *'The force that through the green fuse drives the flower...'* Our bardic offerings are many and various; we have books for you, regular meetings and art from nature... Be inspired! How will your creativity express itself?

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AWEN REFLECTIONS

Ah when the times were simpler
Dimmed focus
Inner locus
of control

Ah oo when
Sun emerges
Thrusting strong
Surging throngs
Of light, beaming
Illuminating the den.

Ah when
The sighs deepen
The heart weakens
From grief.

Ah oo when
The breath slowly flowing
Rising from directions
Unknown

Ah when
The hen cackles
The rooster, rascal!
Running in circles
Threatens the fox

Ah oo when
All is settled again
Ah oo when
A snore, a bore

Ah oo when
Rises no more
But then
The Awen starts
Yet again

Dana Evans

NETTLE

On scrubby ground
On the edges of fields
Beneath a wandering hand is where you'll
find me.
Soft, bright green leaves that nibble and tingle,
But do you ever notice my flowers?

Or the army of bees that worship me for
hours?

Delicate petals form small stars
That I nod in a cosmos of warmth
On a sunny day.
Gentle puffs of pollen
Are a celebration of the sun.
I wave at you
As I guard the borders of your home
From dogs, and children, and snoops.
I know you see me,
And yet your gaze wanders
Fingers point in warning
You scan for my enemy.
The doc leaf.
Then you wonder why I hide
Among your plants.
A stinging surprise
That's such sweet vengeance.

Suzie Johnston



Fiery dawn: Iona Jenkins

I see the ghost of sunset,
its glow upon the intricate
pattern of Victorian brick.
And though I am tethered by my body
I know the world still turns
and I with it.
Behind me waves of peach and grey
break against the kitchen window.
I am a lone seabird
crying night along the lines.
They kindle no watch fires
in the houses of multiple occupancy,
only dim bulbs behind drawn blinds.
But my sharp eyes are focused
far beyond the streetlights.
White wings carry me
to distant shores.

Linda Davis

*Gorsedd*s are wonderful things; a chance to step out of our everyday lives and take a deep dive into our

'The sun in our Hearts' The Druid gorsedd 2023 ANDREW ANDERSON

Druidry. Such was the case with this year's Druid Grade Gorsedd, arranged by Lorien Cadier, Marion Sibbons and Clare Fisher from the Sylvan Grove. It took place at Avon Tyrell Centre in the heart of the beautiful New Forest, where we got to sleep in wooden cabins surrounded by pine trees. The theme was 'The Sun in our Hearts', a perfectly warming topic considering the "churlish chiding of the winter's wind", which still had a keen edge on the first weekend of March!

Upon arrival, we were individually invited to walk a labyrinth which circled and spiralled through a clearing among the pines. We were to collect a 'gift' from a golden cup in the centre; a beautiful stone painted by Sylvan Grove member Sue Harris. After the tribulations of travelling, the labyrinth was wonderfully disorientating, a liminal space separating us from the real world and setting us on the right path for our contemplative weekend.

After our evening meal, we began our work. Lorien and Marion opened the sacred circle and planted some seed ideas to germinate as we slept. Saturday began with us returning to the circle and answering the question of how we used the light of our *Druidry* in the wider world. As we spoke, we lit a tea light from the central candle, and created a glorious ring of lights which filled the centre of the circle. After that came the main work of the weekend, creating a section for a ritual themed around the seven

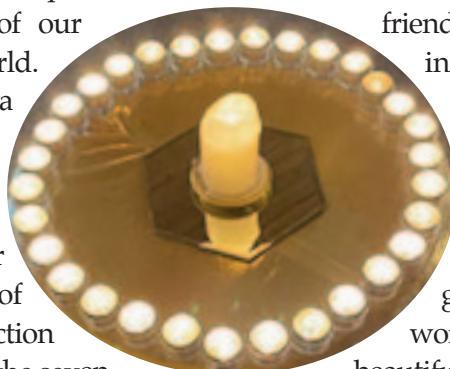
gifts of *Druidry*, giving lots of opportunities to discuss and share ideas, as well as to explore the wonderful

site of Avon Tyrell. The ceremony was performed in the pine grove where we had walked the labyrinth. Wrapped up against the cold, the ritual provided many memorable moments as the sun set and the local crows cawed their blessings.

Saturday evening saw the *Eisteddfod*, and there was a real depth and diversity of talent on display. From dramatic monologues to poetry, wonderful songs and storytelling, we seemed to run the gamut of emotions. The evening culminated in discussions and chanting around a roaring campfire.

Sunday began with a gong bath given by Debbie Brown. I have never experienced one before but I cannot recommend them enough. Imagine floating on an ocean of sound, the sonic waves crashing over you as you journey through a series of inner vistas. It was the perfect activity to relax and centre us before we emerged, blinking, back into the real world.

Of course, the greatest joy of a Gorsedd is the opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new people. Our time was wonderfully social as well as spiritual, with the light of friendship and community burning brightly all weekend. Thank you so much to Lorien, Marion, Clare (who was unable to join us) Maggie, Sue, Gary and the other members of the Sylvan grove for facilitating such a wonderful weekend in such a beautiful part of the country.



A Fond Farewell to Annie in the Office

Stephanie, Damh and I can't believe it. But sadly it's true: our long-standing colleague and friend Annie has reached retirement age and the mad fool that she is, she's opted for freedom rather than being chained to the desk at the Oak Tree Press.

We've tried to persuade her that after thirty years answering all the lovely members' queries, she might miss answering the phone, writing emails and filling envelopes with booklets. She wavered for a moment, a micro-second or less, when we suggested she'd be happier still working, but then she repeated her desire to head for the hills – or in her case her nice holiday home in France.



We'll miss you Annie, and I know all the members will too. I remember once, probably ten or twenty years ago now, someone sent in a poem called 'Brown Envelopes' which recounted, very lyrically, how much they appreciated the hands which had filled those envelopes... it was a lovely tribute to you and Stephanie, who prepared the mailings in those days, and we all deeply appre-

ciate all the hard work you have put into this job over those three decades.

As you move on to the next phase of your life, please know that you will be missed dearly. We wish you all the very best in your future endeavours and hope that your retirement is filled with joy, laughter, and much happiness.

on behalf of everyone at the office



DRUIDS OF ARRAN

We hold an open ceremony for each of the seasonal celebrations at a secluded and accessible location with both outdoor and wet weather options! Yes, I know, how lucky are we? We're also within 400 yards/metres of the ferry terminal, so you don't need to bring a car across!

Details are on our facebook page : Druids of Arran

We also have an OBOD Seedgroup with both in person and virtual members for those on the mainland.

You can contact me at debbiemerritt2@gmail.com

New seed group here in New York State: **AWEN IN THE CATSKILLS SEED GROUP.** Email is info@theawencenter.org or through Facebook.



Managwylan sailed the vast seas and from his navigation and skilful trade-craft became respected and an influential authority in his land-surrounded-by-sea.

Managwylan the Navigator GARY LLEWELLYN

His hair and skin were those of someone loved by the sea, bleached and salt kissed. His sparkling, glinting blue-grey eyes and lilting voice even set an angry sea at ease and he stole the heart of all those he met.

While away from the land-surrounded-by-sea his concerns, and those of his younger brothers, were overseen by his mother, Gwylanwen Hen. She was renowned, respected and feared, but behind her back they would call her Gwywen Hen, the old withered one. It was said that she could spot the arrival of herring, from peering out to sea from the high rocky cliff, before even the fishermen in their coracles. It was said that her harsh voice could cut through any conversation and carry farther than the wind. It was said that she was so fiercely protective of that which Managwylan owned it was as if his possessions were eggs in her nest.

Beyond navigation, trading, and an easy attitude, Managwylan was uncanny in his ability to spy out and read the sea and the sky around him. This made him an incredible mariner and drew rumours that he saw through the eyes of the gulls and that they guided his way. The only rule that his mother ever placed on him was to return with anything, any goods, or any skills but to never return with a wife!

One autumnal morning, Managwylan's small vessel emerged through the mist. It was fully laden. With him were two men and a woman. Managwylan did not go to his mother, as he had done every previous time.

His mother waited and waited. Then she heard that her eldest son, Managwylan, was showing his 'new wife' the land

where he lived. She was furious and brooded on her displeasure. Nevertheless, late in the day, when Managwylan, his wife and her brothers arrived and expected food and beds, she was courteous. Managwylan knew something was wrong and while he and his new brothers shared their new ideas he wondered where his mother had gone!

She considered what had come to pass, Managwylan no longer had ears for her suggestions, they were lost on the wind, and so for the next days and nights, she, the once treasured mother, gathered Morey eels and a Greater Weever fish, she had called them to her nets, an easy trick, for one that knew how. Then, hidden in a sea cave, she rendered them to a soupy paste and applied it to a fish harpoon and let the outer crust of the paste dry. Next, she visited the father of the girl to whom her eldest son was supposed to wed, the girl to whom he had been pledged by her promises to the wind.

Gwylanwen Hen was of the sacred matrilineal blood but had born only boys. If their family was to retain its influence, then one of her sons would need to be wed to the sacred blood line. The father was stoked with humiliation that his daughter was displaced. Gwylanwen Hen piled on the magnitude of the affront to his family, the dishonour, and her dismay that it had been conducted by her eldest son! The father, now filled with fury, sought out Managwylan and accepted the harpoon as it was handed to him!

The angry argument when the two men met on the quay side quickly degenerated and

when Managwylan expressed his right to choose any wife he pleased and then tried to charm the dishonoured father the confrontation collapsed into blows. Managwylan, in reasoned defence, thrust a blade at his attackers advance and it drew deep red but he, Managwylan, was pierced in the ankle.

The father was fast dying when Managwylan was helped back to his home. Rapidly his own health declined, he shivered and sweated but was cold to touch. His brothers sought out his mother's aid, as she was skilled in herbs and remedies. With calm sympathy she alone soothed him and gently took him to the high cliff over-looking the sea where the air was pure and carried the scent of the sea. His mother thought of the achievements of her eldest son, of all that he had done and that he had broken the one taboo he had been given. He had done the one thing he must never do! And with that, a tear in her eye, she gently pushed him beyond the land. Managwylan fell or flew, and the ebbing tide carried him away.

One of the younger sons would take the small vessel, he knew much from near-coast sailing and would learn all that Managwylan had learned before him. That eager young man set off in the spring when the harsh storms had abated but the mist remained till noon. However, it was Managwylan who returned in that vessel under the spring sunshine seven weeks later.

No further record is held of Gwylanwen Hen or Managwylan's first wife. There was an anecdotal report that, a few days before Managwylan's return, an old fisherman saw the two women heading out beyond the familiar coastal swell and into the mists. Managwylan eventually married into the sacred blood and was regarded as the leader

of the land-surrounded-by-sea. He guided the people of the land-surrounded-by-sea for many prosperous years and is even said to have been able to shroud the island in mist to conceal it from danger. His voyages were many and such was his success that he fell into legend. He was regarded as a wise protector and appeared in many tales, though often by other names.

MAY TOTEM BY MARK

May- is it a month or is it a flower? Well, of course it's both if you live in the UK. This is the time of year when the Hawthorn comes into bloom, its blossoms known as 'May' alive with insects enjoying the pollen and nectar and the air filled with scent. Around 300 insect species are supported by this small tree and in Autumn the red berries or 'Haws' are enjoyed by birds such as Blackbirds, Thrushes and wintering Redwings and Fieldfares.

Traditionally, the Hawthorn is associated with Beltane and Mayday, with Maypole dancing and with the 'Queen of the May', decked in flowers of May and representing Blodeuwedd. All of this is bound up with the celebration of fertility. Its leaves are edible and it has been used in healing, particularly for heart and circulation problems.

The Hawthorn is also associated in Druidic tradition with Faerie, the Sidhe. Lone Hawthorns, especially old established ones, have long been considered a portal from and into the Otherworld. Cutting May to bring into the home is considered to bring bad luck and cutting down a Hawthorn tree is regarded as a terrible thing to do; punishment will follow. The Hawthorn has been important to people from far back in pre-history, surviving the disapproval of the Christian Church with its hatred of Paganism to enrich our lives today. It is a tangible link as well as a spiritual link to our ancestors and at this time of year, smothered in blossom, it is a joy to behold.

As someone born and raised in Angus in the Northeast of Scotland, my interest in standing stones began when I was at secondary school.

We were allowed two weeks off every October for 'tattie holidays' to help the local farmers lift their potato crop, bent double picking the potatoes up by hand from the earth. By chance I ended up at a farm called The Stane of Morphie. The

said stone sits directly in front of the farm house and at about 10ft high you could hardly ignore it. It dominated the surrounding land and the mystery of who put it there and why fascinated me. A little later I discovered the Aberlemno Pictish symbol stones, standing in a small village about 10 miles from my home. These were easily accessible at the roadside of the village and in the churchyard. They were even more fascinating as they were incised with mysterious symbols, animals mythical and real, and with battle and hunting scenes.

Despite being a 'local' I didn't discover recumbent stone circles, which are located further north in Aberdeenshire, until I was at university and only visited them very recently. This made me wonder then how many Druids are as aware of this rich range of stones in the north east as they are of the larger, more spectacular stone sites elsewhere in Scotland.

The north east of Scotland seems to have

The Standing Stones of the North East of Scotland



FRANCES NEILSON

had two periods of intense activity around standing stones. The first is when Recumbent Stone Circles (RSCs) were believed to be erected while the second was the development of Pictish symbol stones which came considerably later. Recumbent Stone circles (RSCs) 'A wondrous gret croune of stanes' (a wonderful great crown of stones) John Leslie (1578) If Callanish on Lewis and the Ring of Brodgar on

Orkney are the Neolithic equivalent of cathedrals, then RSCs are more like local parish churches. However as the Aberdeenshire Council says 'The RSC is Aberdeenshire's unique contribution to the tradition of erecting rings of standing stones which was current in certain parts of Britain and Ireland during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC.' They claim to have around 100, though the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (the RCAHMS, now called Historic Environment Scotland) only documented 71 complete circles in 2011.

It is unknown how many there might have been originally as some may have been destroyed or dismantled to reuse the stones. None have been destroyed though since Frederick Coles, an Assistant Keeper of Archaeology at the Museum of Antiquities in the early 1900s, identified them as a unique and specific group belonging to the area.

They are all thought to date from the end of the Neolithic to the early Bronze Age period

(2500 - 1500 BC), based on carbon dating of artefacts found around these sites. The geographical area is quite specific approximately 60x40 miles. Stone circles may have replaced earlier ones built of wood. There is certainly evidence of a wood henge in Warren Field in Crathes, Aberdeenshire which is believed to date from 8000 BC, and, if so, predates similar finds in Mesopotamia by 5000 years. Its 12 pits where the wooden pillars would have stood were spotted as 'anomalous terrain' during an air survey conducted by the RCAHMS in 2004.

Despite perhaps having a similar function to wood henges and other stone circles elsewhere RSCs have an unusual and distinctive character. They are all between 18.2 - 24.4m in diameter. Interestingly given the name, only one stone of the circle is recumbent, the rest are vertical. The recumbent stone is placed, with not a single exception, in the south to the southwest section of the circle. This stone is always massive (on average 24 tons in weight) and has been laid carefully, chocked up if necessary, to ensure its upper surface is flat, though some of these have slipped over time so now are no longer level.

The two tallest stones of the circle, the flanker stones, are close in on either side of the recumbent making the 'crown' mentioned above. The other stones in the circle gradually reduce in size as they move further from this threesome with the smallest stones in the north to northeast section of the circle opposite the recumbent. This pattern is remarkably consistent over all the RSCs in the area and much attention seems to have been paid to the height of the stones and to their shape, one of the flankers tends to be slender while the other is more stout but are usually of the same height.

As to their colour, there seems to be an intentional colour contrast between the recumbent stone and the others in the circle, the recumbent being always of grey granite while the vertical stones are usually of pink granite or gneiss, or in the case of one unusual stone of red jasper. It has been suggested that the smaller examples of these circles were built by local farming groups, perhaps comprising only a few extended families while the larger communal monuments must have had many more people involved.

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE CIRCLES

There are some interesting ideas about why the circles were aligned as they are. They obviously frame a particular section of sky above the recumbent and between the flanker stones. So there are those who believe the alignment is connected with a standstill moon's position in relation to the recumbent stone. However, standstill moons only occur once in every 18.6 years, when the moon does stand still briefly like the sun does at solstices. There are cup marks, only ever on the recumbent stone or the flankers, which seem to indicate the extremes of the major and minor standstill moon limits. It seems unlikely though that a group of local farmers would be only concerned about such an infrequent event, they would want something more useful in their daily lives too. It is now thought that they were used as lunar calendars but also with alignment to the winter solstice sunrise. The latter would work as annual correction to the passage of time as indicated by the moon and would give a more accurate timing for the changing of the seasons. If so it indicates both a need for and the sophistication to track time and correct for the seasonal drift of the lunar year.

Of course their survival as a group could have depended on tracking these changes as

accurately as possible. However these circles were probably put to more than one use, and were likely built for ceremonies marking the changes of the seasons and the cycle of life, possibly in evening or night time ceremonies given the lunar connection. A small number of circles seem to be associated with death, cremation and burial as there is archaeological evidence of fire marked stone, charcoal and cremated bone, all thought to be from funeral pyres. There were scattered fragments of white quartz found inside these circles too. The quartz can be interpreted as significant to both the moon with its links by colour or the sun by its warmth and light. It is possible that the circles were used as a place where the dead were ceremonially sent off on their journey to their next life. Another suggestion is that the erection of the stones might have been a symbolic closing off of a burial site rather than an initiation of use. In Victorian times for example it was suggested that the stones were placed to lock in ghosts of the dead. The only thing that is really clear is that these sites must have been identified as sacred places very early on and may then have been used continuously for a variety of different purposes over the succeeding years. End of Part 1...



OPEN FORUM

Beltane (almost) greetings!

It has been nearly four years since you devoted your time to the World Druidry Survey of 2018-2020, answering 189 in-depth questions about your personal Druid path. It has been nearly two years since I completed 'World Druidry: A Globalizing Path of Nature Spirituality', presenting the findings of that study in hardcover and paperback forms.

The World Druidry Survey was the first (and remains the only) large-scale study of the lives, beliefs, and ritual/devotional practices of modern-day Druids from around the world. The hardbound books were designed and priced for an academic/scholarly/library audience, rather than for regular, every-day Druids. The goal was to offer a solid source of information about modern Druids, to combat myths and misinformation about our tradition. However I have received many requests from fellow Druids for the book to be released in electronic form, so I learned how to make ebooks of comparable quality to the physical editions. *World Druidry: A Globalizing Path of Spirituality* is now available for pre-order as an e-book, and will be released on May 1, 2023, on the following platforms:

On Kindle: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BZWJV9K1>

Kobo: <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/world-druidry>

Apple iBooks: <https://books.apple.com/us/book/id6447220292>

Yours, under the California Coast Live Oaks,
Larisa <https://larisa-a-white.com>



SACRED CIRCLES: wheels of Power & Connection

by Gale Park pp.134. ISBN 9798987153901

"Sometime in that long cold night I had a vision in which the stars coalesced into the shape of a wheel. Several years later, I started this book."

The wheel described in this book is a map or diagram of the time & space that we experience in our physical existence: it provides a link to the material & supernatural forces that affect us. The basic points on the eight spokes of the wheel have many associations for druids, but the wheel can also be used as a portal to connect with gods & goddesses, faeries, angels guides & more.

Chapters include:

Circle Symbolism & Origins: Circles in the Lives of the People.

The Wheel as Space or Place: The Directions, The Elements, The Animals.

The Wheel as Time: Seasons, Festivals & Ceremonies.

Using the Wheel: the Four Directions as Human Aspects, Points of Contact with Divinity.

Creating your own Wheel: Astrological Signs & the Moon - a practical section which includes a number of useful guidelines.

Clearly a labour of love, this personal offering makes an excellent introduction to a wide range of druidic principles.

SACRED ACTIONS JOURNAL *A Wheel of the Year Journal for Sustainable and Spiritual Practices.* REDFeather **Dana O'Driscoll**

Within Revival Druidry, the cultivation of Awen is perhaps the closest thing we have to a sacrament. We sing the Awen into our circles at the beginning of every ritual, and in turn the Awen breathes its inspiration back into us. Sometimes it can feel as if Awen is an uncontrollable lightning strike, blasting its way past all barriers to its manifestation. Lightning is, however, notoriously unreliable in its frequency and strike patterns. Perhaps a more functional metaphor for Awen is that of a stream or well. By honing our skills with patience when Awen isn't necessarily present, we can create a smooth and clear channel along which it may flow when it does appear.

Dana O'Driscoll's Sacred Actions Journal is the perfect guide to nurturing Awen's flow. Firstly, it's important to say that this isn't a book to give you set, pat answers. or to spoon feed you. It demands you bring your own curiosity and engagement. The techniques and questions O'Driscoll presents are ways of fostering the Awen in one's life, of helping to weed and water a lush garden of creativity. There is a lot of protein packed into a very short volume, and it deserves to be savored and digested slowly.

Secondly, the simple brilliance of the Journal is the way it leads the reader to weave their own relationship to Awen, without ever mentioning the word directly. It gently guides you from reading to writing, from thinking to doing. Especially for people newer to earth spiritualities, analysis paralysis around how to approach a practice can be profound. People worry about "doing it wrong" to the point where they do nothing--

or worse, resent advice because it is not perfectly tailored to a particular background or situation. The writing prompts of the Sacred Actions Journal gently and gracefully short-circuit this tendency. The work may not be easy - but it is made as simple and as clear as possible. And even if you don't consider yourself a writer, you should seriously think about engaging with the *Sacred Actions Journal*. O'Driscoll provides between 10 and 15 writing prompts for each High Day. Some are geared towards reflection, meditation, deliberate thinking but there is also a deeply practical vein present, more focused on action: figuring out composting strategies or exploring alternative cooking methods. Finally, there is a selection of suggestions for a sort of meta-analysis of your journaling practice, and suggestions for ways to cultivate it further.

Finally, as with *Sacred Actions*, O'Driscoll and Red Feather produce a book for bibliophiles. O'Driscoll deftly plays both writer and illustrator, and the Journal's construction mimics that of its predecessor, with a heavy-duty cardboard cover and sewn binding. The paper provides a wonderful surface for all manner of inks—something I definitely appreciate as a user of fountain pens for sure!

As with all "journal style" books, my main gripe is that there are never enough pages or space given for all the thoughts the prompts inspire. In a perfect world, this product would have been sold as a two-pack, the text in one slimmer volume, and a separate, beefy journal in another. Of course, there's nothing stopping one from having their own dedicated notebook for this work, and that is likely what I'll end up doing. Obviously, this is a minor quibble and shouldn't detract from the overall quality of the Journal. No matter where your focus lays, the Sacred

Actions Journal provides a clear foundation for reflection, growth, and digestion that will deepen your relationship to both land and your own creative understanding.

Simple. Definitely not easy. Yet definitely worth doing.

Cat (Catriona) McDonald

OAK CIRCLES

Big oak tree,
Your story is old and wise
Told through rings of knowledge and time
Your roots grow deep and encircle life
through the generations,
Your branches spread out catching the golden rays of the sun.
Bigger and stronger you grow with each cycle.
Watching upon human change, tragedy and celebration,
Your silence and stillness is your earthly spirit
Sustaining life and protecting all those who dwell under your bough.
When cold autumn breeze arrives,
I pick up your golden leaves from the forest floor and remember you
Thank you, old wise tree of the sun.

Simon Toussifar



THE GATEWAY

I pass through the Gateway,
Joining the path of the Ovate,
With newness and humility,
And yet, so familiar.
I carry the light of Spirit with me.
A life, a death, then life again.

Each path is a doorway to another world,
Magic embracing me,
A Mistress comes to guide me.
The power of nature unfolding, as I plunge
within.
I change.
A life, a death, then life again.

Ancestors all around me
Deeper into the forest I go.
I walk the path in my inner world.
The trees whisper,
The stones speak.
All witness to my journey.
A life, a death, then life again.

Prophetic dreams, healing, spirit guides,
Visions yet to be,
Totem animals, ogham, plants,
Tree Divinity.
I weave the time, and walk the past,
Standing in the now.
A life, a death, then life again.

A dragon's breath, a faerie's laugh,
The energies building; strength, and health,
Nwyfre flowing free.
Fire, water, earth, and air,
I journey around the wheel of the year,
Step, by step, by step.
A life, a death, then life again.

My footsteps in the sands of time,
I stop, and stand,
Changed.
A light in the darkness,
An empty chalice,
Ready to be filled again.
A life, a death, then life again.

Dawn Burns

WHO AM I?

Who am I
who stands silent
while a squirrel settles to sleep on a
branch
and a tiny wren potters about on top of
the fence

Who am I
who watches
gentle breath clouding into the frosty air
and drowns deep in the darkness of an
alpaca's eyes

Who am I
who catches
the wistful night call of the invisible owl
and is breathless at the glorious burst of a
robin's song

Who am I
who feels
the gentle gaze of the waning moon
and the soaring summons of the rising sun

Who am I?

I am no-one and
I am
Everyone.

The miraculous miracles of nature just
bring me to my knees in absolute awe that
I should be privileged to witness them.
That squirrel and wren that no-one else
could see but me, Norman, our alpaca,
looking deep into my eyes; the robin and
the owl singing in my garden that others
can hear; the moon and sun that everyone
can see that do their unbelievable dance
every single day without fail so that we
can live. We do nothing to deserve such
love.

Clare Keily

SNIPPETS: PRAISING THE SEASON JUST GONE

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*

*The beautiful ornamental pear trees are the
first to bloom in my area. Such a gladdening
sight! Here's a haiku I wrote for them:*

THE PEAR TREE

Spring's emissary
A thousand white moths flutter
Against sharp blue skies.

Jessica McGee



Class of '23: (Article p5)
This year's Druid Gorsedd

MAY TOTEM: THE BULL

*Virility, strength, prosperity, and a driving
will: what a totem for May.*

The constellation of Taurus carries the Pleiades on his shoulder: as his red eye, Aldebaran, shines down through his own month, so the land exudes these virtues as abundant green proliferating and the unstoppable will of nature to grow.

Celtic bull associations are deep and mysterious... in Europe, the god Esus is connected to Tarvos Trigaranos, 'The bull with the three cranes', carved on a pillar.

In Scotland, the tarbh-uisge is the mythic water bull, echoed in the Isle of Man as the tarroo ushtey. Nocturnal loch-dwellers, they are amphibious and shapeshifting. Their progeny are distinguished in a herd by their small ears (sometimes red - reminiscent of the cattle of Annwn?).



In Ireland, a bull figured in a mythic marital tiff... in the Ulster cycle Queen Maeve instigates the Cattle raid of Cooley (Táin Bó Cúailnge) to steal the Brown Bull, Donn Cuailgne, to make her goods and chattels equal to that of her husband, who owned Finnbhennach the White Bull. The bulls - pigkeepers who had undergone many transformations - finally became worms, lapped up by cows drinking and gestated. Well worth reading up on this fine month and then considering... which qualities of the bull will best align us to the season and help our practice?

MANZANITA FAIR

Pearl urns cluster on
Cinnamon satin bark-skin
Queens wear no finer

Jessica McGee



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 OBOD and BDO members 8 festivals, walks, discussion/ social. FFI: rebnikc@btinternet.com

BADGER & TOAD SEED GROUP, Folkstone area. Seasonal/ meet ups FFI: Sian and Hazel obodbadgerandtoad@yahoo.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 Yorks 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.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS, BRISTOL. Monthly local park meeting/ ceremony FFI: fellowshipotfd@hotmail.com

BOREALIS CIRCLE SEED GROUP 3rd Saturday of the Month: Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. Public rituals in local parks. FFI: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lakeagassizdruids/> email: borealiscircle@gmail.com

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

MACADAMIA GROVE Seasonal/ events, Brisbane Australia. Sandra.macademiagroove@hotmail.com

THE MELBOURNE GROVE Seasonal celebrations, Melbourne, Aus: Trudy.Richards.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 W. Montana, USA, 8 rituals, community, hikes, zoom. FFI: 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 SG) 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

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.

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>

3 & 4 June OBOD Glastonbury Summer gathering

Sunday 4th June 2 - 4pm Songlines of Avalon. Druid Devotional singing with JJ Middleway. Chants, prayers and silence in celebration of Druidry and our connection with the sacred Earth and all her creatures. The Avalon Room next to the Goddess Temple in Glastonbury

26 - 30 July The 21st Druid Camp. Roots and Stones: A pilgrimage into mythic landscapes. West Wales. Keynote speakers, workshops, eisteddfod, ritual...Early booking advised FFI: <https://druid.camp/>

Mon 31 July - Sat 5 Aug White Horse Camps Lughnasadh Camp: at West Town Farm, Devon - for more info please contact communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

11-13 August Éigse Spiorad Cheilteach join us in the centre of Ireland for a weekend of workshops, talks, fun and laughter. Organised by OBOD members Eimear Burke, Paul Corcoran and Anna Coote. See Eigse.net for tickets and information!

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. 'What we do in OBOD and why we do it.' FFI: mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

26 - 31st Oct Thurs - Tues White Horse Camps Samhain Camp: at Wildways, Shropshire - for more info please contact communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

