

TOUCHSTONE

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

Issue 310



Child of the Forest: Antonela Gioscio

My love,
 I set a cabin on your lip
 Nestled in your moustache
 The rise of your nose to the north east and
 overlooking the lake of your mouth
 Over the seasons the brush turns from
 brown and red to white
 And the land is sometimes cleared
 But I watch your breath escaping
 And I day trip to your ears
 The air is fresh
 And the view fills me up
 From my cabin on your lip

Katy Schutte

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EDITORIAL

Brides, roses, Juno, Gemini.... so many associations with this happy month. May, with its folkloric prohibition on marrying - perhaps for fear of a faery bride or groom? - is gone, and all is set fair, under the summer sun of the N Hemisphere. If you relocate across the world, though, things can get complicated - see *Hemi-Confusion*, p13. And also from Australasia, a praise of the harsh climate that demands respect and reverence, p5. What is real? asks James on p6. The trees certainly are - but what does their DNA have to do with the Tale of Taliesin?? see p8. And we continue the stone circles of NE Scotland with a pilgrimage to three, p10. All this plus poems galore!

There's nothing within on June's totem - the ROSE. No reading, no study, just sheer sensory enjoyment, so bury your nose in a rose (beware insects & bees) and drink in the fragrance until you are filled with the energy of Rosamundi, the Rose of the World. It's June, the world is full of scent and colour... relax and enjoy!

Pen



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WITHIN MY CIRCLE OF TREES

spinning to the centre
I found myself
twinkle of stars above
venus bright
sundew kissing my feet
on soft green grass
silently within my grove
birdsong and joy
nourishment by the fire
if ever my mood drops
i have a spring of joy
to return to
my circle of trees

Wendy Gardner

A TIME FOR TREES

I do not know how the tree keeps time
In seasons- In seeds
In the birth of birds and gathering of twine

Or is it the fruit from flower to fall
In waiting or moondust
In the lark's call

A symposium of stories in rings of years
Oh to be wise and tranquil like the oak
Present and proud - Humble and here

Angie Bergeson



Magog, ancient oak, Glastonbury PB

BRIG

The wooden woman, She
bears a crooked cross of straw
to place above the rafters
in the coming of the Spring

I have seen her forest faces, She
wears a diadem of stars,
And I cannot approach, Her
Hair is set aflame

I can see it from afar, She
wears the fire like a skull cap
Burning in the starry engine
of the night light sky

Atop a throne of wood, She
Holds the hearts flame in her hand
I approach with a shell of oak
A candle and a dish of sand

Give me strength, She
Who roams the middle world
In the easiest of gossamer,
Ocean made of milk, Her
Pantomime of endless Spring

John Jay Ho'olulu Flicker

TOUCHING THE OAK

Trees ache,
Listening for caring
Intervention,
Strangled by vines
Tightening,
Who will husband,
The forest
Free the old boughs
Clip the suffocating vines
Terrace the hillside
Tend the wood,
The human could,
But would he?

Dana Evans

We walk from our country lane, seemingly to nowhere, leaving the trappings of car and modern life behind.

The late March fields are barren, ageless, with an elemental Northumbrian beauty, and the ever-present Northumbrian wind is a wild creature, sweeping, majestic, sonorous, a force of nature. Trees huddle together against it, stocky on the windward side, more expansive on the lee. Our path hugs the hedgerow, bare except studded with the white stars of blackthorn blossom, leading us on that celestial dance between earth and sky.

And then there they are, the Singing Stones; a crown on the sweep of the summit, nestled between the Cheviots to the west and Lindisfarne and the sea to the east. A small circle, just five stones, and not complete- as a farmer took some down to enable his mowing with a tractor. Even so - there is something so perfect and

The Singing Stones of Duddo TRISHA LONGWORTH

the stones sing as the wind caresses the striations.

Someone was buried here, where I stand. His body

burned. Bones and stone marking this place and his mysterious unknown life. How beautiful to be bone and stone in this landscape forever.

There is something so perfect and intimate about this place. Carved by 4,000 years of the relentless wind.. eroded by this flowing river of air...

I choose my special stone, the one that feels 'motherly' to me, the one that stands open to a conversation. I approach gently and touch her soft cold skin with my lips, both of us damp with recent rain. I place my hands and cheek upon her shoulder and say a blessing prayer.

She doesn't sing for me today, but as we follow the hedgerow back to civilization, a little wheatear

hops along the hedgerow beside us, pleased for company in this desolate landscape. Such a small circle, like a group of old friends, wizened and shaped, watching the huge sky unfurl, and the stars roll by, age upon age. I am so blessed to have met you.

THINKING POINT...

I believe we are here for two basic purposes. The first is to behold with awestruck wonder the magnificence of creation, and to fully revel in its joys and delights. The second is to give forward from that nourishment, to transmute the gratitude into service to life and beauty on earth. These two purposes are equal: giving and receiving. That is the foundation of my worldview, embodied most directly in my 2011 book Sacred Economics. It is also the foundation of health and happiness. Being on purpose opens the channel of life force through the whole body-mind.

Charles Eisenstein



intimate about this place. Carved by four thousand years of the relentless wind, each stone is eroded to a narrow base by this flowing river of air, creating striations in the pal-mate rock above, for all the world like fingers, so that standing in the centre with my arms outstretched I feel myself cupped and held by ancient hands sprouting from the earth; held so gently, so protected. They say

This poem emerged when I was at work yesterday. It's about me trying to connect with the land in Australia, and coming to terms with how harsh the landscape is here. I have wanted to experience it as soft and welcoming sanctuary- but alas that is not the case, for me at least.

BEAUTIFUL CONSCIOUS DUST

The land that birthed me will consume
you.

The sun will roast your flesh,
The grass will rise up to bite you,
The sea will drown you in her soup,
Mother here is a harsh parent.

She will cast dust into your lungs,
And thorns the size of nails into the soles
of your feet
if you dare to walk on her barefoot.
She will drop branches on the heads of
those who
sit under her trees on a summers day.

Her ocean will rip you out to sea and send
you into the mouth of a great white.
Har army of ants will swarm over you and
pierce you with fire.

The winter sun will seep into your skin
and whisper cancer into your cells.
If you build a sanctuary in a field of soft
green grass
she will send fire and floods to tear it
down.

Mother means business.
She wears her dominance with pride,
She wields her power with authority.
She has no guilt or shame for who she is.

She will not be a victim.
She teaches you to submit to her,
She insists on respect,
No sky-clad bodies here,
She requires you to wear a covering else
she will smite thee.

When she sees fit,
she will send rain in the midst of a swelter-
ing summer,
You can smell the trees and the soil thank-
ing her.

When she sees fit,
She will caress you with a breeze that
whisks the mosquitos from your sleepy
ears,
She will raise the dead seeds to life in your
little sanctuary.
She will send a kookaburra to laugh at you
as you mourn into your navel.

And you will learn from her,
You are not the pinnacle of creation,
You are not the center of the universe,
You are dust,
Beautiful,
Conscious,
Dust.

Shelley Clements



Outback

I am hiking in the mountains on a foggy day. The fog is just above the treetops. Out of nowhere, a deer appears. We lock eyes for a few seconds. The deer then runs up a hill just in front of me. Once it gets to the top it looks right back at me and locks eyes with me. At this exact moment, the fog drops down and covers the entire scene around me. It was otherworldly. Is this real?

Is this real? JAMES GRAY

the same wonder looking at this. Did my spirit just leave the planet? Did that really just happen?

Alone at night trying to sleep. I begin to hear laughter all around me. It sounds distant like thunder far away at the start of a storm. It also sounds like it is all around me at the same time. I can feel this deep connection to something that I cannot explain. I decided to drop in and just experience this without any thoughts and just meditate on this experience. In my soul I begin to understand what I am hearing is the past, the long-gone people of this land where I now lay my head. I begin to hear things more clearly, I hear children playing, men and women talking, water flowing, rain, thunder, and birds chirping. Did I really just hear the past? Was that real?

I am watching a comet passing by the Earth. This comet has been passing all of us since time immemorial. Its cosmic journey is endless and never-ending and has been seen by billions of humans spanning thousands of years. A thought enters my mind, I wonder who these people were, their stories, and what they felt seeing this. Were they as amazed at this as I feel right now? I begin to fall into a very deep state of altered consciousness. I can feel all over my body an energy that pulls me up to the stars toward the comet. I am now looking down at the earth, I can see people looking up and pointing to the heavens in awe. The sun rises across the Earth. I understand that we all feel

I am in a beautiful forest doing a Shamanic Journey with drums, rattles, and chanting. Part of this practice is to find a way for your spirit to go down into the earth, either through a tree, a lake, a river, a waterfall, etc. You keep going down until you break through to what is called the lower realm. I start to do this and I find myself falling. It's not a scary feeling but exhilarating. I find myself in a cave and see a man sitting next to a little pool of crystal clear water. This man looks at me, extends his hand, and says have a seat we have a lot to discuss. We talked for what felt like hours. This was my first experience with a helping spirit. In the coming years I would learn so much about myself and gain invaluable wisdom from this spirit. Where did I go? What exactly is this spirit? This cannot just be all in my head.

I am sitting in front of a fire deep in the Santa Ynez Mountains with fellow shamanic practitioners. We have just gone through a spiritual experience of being by ourselves in the forest, for 24 hours to experience being alone without human contact or technology. A vastly eye opening experience. After the 24 hours are done we met up at a fire pit to discuss our experiences. We are all talking, sharing thoughts and feelings and I hear a sound in the sky above us. This sound was coming from a hawk flying above us. We all look up to spot it but do not see anything. One of the participants starts crying at this. We understood what had just happened. I get this urge to bow my head to what I had just experienced. That was no hawk. What exactly was that? Are the other realms really interacting with us?

I am training in Kenjutsu. A line of us are

swinging our Bokutos (wooden katana) dressed in traditional Japanese Hakama and Gi. I can feel that this is spiritual on another level entirely. This isn't martial arts anymore, it is connecting my mind, body, and spirit as one. I enter that state all artists understand. We call it the zone. You lose track of time, the world falls away and you just live the art for a time. Something happens to me in this moment at the Dojo. I can feel the image in my very soul of Samurai hundreds of years ago doing the same thing we were. Wow, what an image I received. It was an image of Samurai yelling Kiai while practicing with their Katanas. They were moving in sync with all of us. This honestly was one of the most spiritual occurrences of my life. Did I really just connect to something way more powerful than words can describe?

All of us who embrace our connection to the Divine have asked these questions many times on our journeys. This is spirituality and being connected. It is scary at times, difficult, and confusing. Dropping in and letting the experience happen without judgment, or the mind getting involved is crucial. At the heart of every spiritual practice on earth Druidry, Shamanism, Mysticism, Wiccan, and Buddhism, all of them know the universal idea of dropping in. Being spiritual isn't just meditating in the forest, lighting candles, or burning sage. Spirituality is in life itself. Spiritual is saying hi to every tree and even the entire forest, the rocks, rivers, lakes, and the spirits that inhabit them. It is not simply performing ceremony but living by ceremony. Learn the song of the plants some call Icaro. The Qero Paqos of the Andes believe in giving thanks to the spirits of the mountains or Apus. Dance in public, drop the umbrella and walk in the rain. Hold the door open for the elderly man and ask him how his day is going. Hug the person who is

mean to you, and learn to forgive. Let music inspire you, listen to it when doing creative projects. Music is at the heart of the human experience. It can connect to every emotion we feel, and every situation we possibly could imagine. Johannes Kepler even used music to correctly represent the way planets orbit the sun. Music is the human soul spoken. I myself am listening to Ed Sheeran while writing this. Live and walk like a Druid, heal like a shaman, love like a Buddhist, perform magic like a witch, study like Merlin. Is this all real? Is it made up? You tell me.

Lets meet in some field surrounded by an ancient forest. Let's laugh, dance, sing, and watch the stars. The spirits can watch and hopefully say hello.



THE OLD WAYS SEED GROUP

We are a Swedish Seed Group that has gone virtual! We are now inviting all Swedish members to join us for future virtual connections, gatherings, and ceremonies, with potential in-person events in the future. To join, you can find us on Facebook by searching "The Old Ways Seed Group" (there's both a page and a group), or by finding us in the OBOD Seed Group directory and reaching out over email!

Entering the darkness of the forest we pass into a timeless world a world where we can meet our ancestors, a

world where we can tune into the wonder of nature in a primaeval miracle of life. A miracle of time and trees inexorably bound together. The trees exist in our time and in their own time; both are non-linear but turning at different rates on separate but linked spirals like related DNA.

Spiralling with the Trees - Thoughts on DNA DIANA BIRCH



All life has as its basis nucleic acids. In most cases this is the double helix DNA or deoxyribonucleic acid although some life forms like 'viroids' are based on RNA – ribonucleic acid which is a single spiral. In evolutionary terms it seems RNA came first. Our basic DNA is the same – the double helix building block partners of Adenine/Thymine and Guanine/ Cytosine linking nucleoproteins spiralling together in 12 chromosome pairs for the Oak and 23 pairs for the human being. The genetic code first broken in the 1960s documents how 3 base pairs or rungs of the ladder represent the code for one amino acid. It is truly one of the wonders of creation that fundamentally life is based upon few essential chemical components albeit combined in millions of permutations. The interconnected relationship of DNA and RNA is ubiquitous to all living organisms. There are a number of other shared chemi-

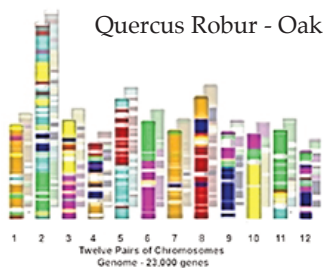
cals which regulate functions of both animal and plant cells but interestingly fungi, which provide an

underground communication network between trees, are more closely related to animals than to plants. Human beings have pairs of two chromosomes (diploid) and having too much or too little genetic material as in 'Trisomy' whereby we have 3 chromosomes of a type instead of two in a pair or having pieces of a chromosome missing in a 'deletion' can have serious outcomes or be incompatible with life. Trisomy of the smallest chromosome number 21 produces Down's syndrome which has a variable effect and can be near normal. However in the plant world certain species such as lilies become bigger and stronger if they have an extra set of chromosomes (polyploid). Chromosomes are visible under the electro microscope as looking like two long sausages tied at the 'waist' and in some the waist is at the middle so that the 'arms' are of equal length and other have shorter and longer 'arms'.



The genetic material is defined as being at various positions along the arms and there are thousands of genes present in each set of chromosomes and known as a 'genome'. The oak for example is estimated to have 23,000 genes per haploid set (one of each chromosome) hence 46,000 per diploid. The human genome has approximately 60,000 genes (more in females due to larger X chromosome).

Of course we know that our genes are responsible for certain bodily traits such as eye colour, hair colour, some facial features and also contribute to multi-factorial aspects such as height, cognitive skills, longevity and the likelihood of contracting certain illnesses. However in most cases it's not so straight forward.



parents (recessive genes) – ie the individual has a 'double dose' and other wise remain inoperative to be passed on in a 'carrier state'. However apart from the considerations of dominant and recessive genes we still have an enormous gene pool which is dormant until 'switched on' by environmental influences. This forms the basis for the study of 'epigenetics'. We don't really know what 'switches on' genes but it is clear that in the case of a pregnancy with a donor egg, this foetus which is genetically unrelated to the host mother, can assume many of the maternal characteristics presumably due to the mother's body influencing the child's genetic makeup by activating and deactivating certain genes.

In a negative manner we can see that maternal alcoholism or drug abuse will influence the baby in utero but in addition there appears to be an inherited (epigenetic) component which is passed to the next generation. It has been suggested that neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism or ADHD can also be epigenetically influenced. In the animal kingdom we can see the effects of 'switching' genes on and off very clearly. Consider the DNA make up of a butterfly. The caterpillar and the pupa have the same genetic make up as the butterfly – so how do the same genes produce such different life-forms?

Of course plants and trees go through similar transformations. Who, when first seeing an acorn would imagine that this was the same organism with the same DNA as a mighty Oak?

Looking at this from a Druid perspective – can this be a basis for shapeshifting? Of Gwion assuming a series of forms before becoming Taliesin? Entering the womb of

The effect of environment as opposed to genetic influences is under constant debate. Of course the body can change enormously under environmental influences notwithstanding genetics, although some genetic 'types' are likely to be more or less susceptible to outside influences of various types. Sun and wind will change features and skin colour to a lesser degree in those with more melanin; nutrition can be key with those overeating carbohydrates more prone to type II diabetes which affects some genetic types more than others; Alcohol, drugs and tobacco can produce pathologies which can also be transmitted to the next generation.

We see the same effect in the plant world. Farmers and gardeners know that some plants thrive in shade, others in direct sun. Some like damp, others dry conditions. Some grow tall in lowland environments and remain short shrubs in arid mountain sides. The stars and moon are also potent influences. Many farmers will plant trees only at the new (dark) moon.

So do we use all our thousands of genes? It seems clear that some genes are active and dictate our health and welfare whereas some are dormant. Some genes will only become operational if they are inherited from both

the mother goddess and then the leather bag where he transformed into 'Shining Brow' as a butterfly emerging from a pupa. And is this the basis for the 'Cauldron of Life' which takes in our bodies and reprogrammes our DNA? Certainly the egg and embryo entering the mother's womb, our personal cauldron, bears little resemblance to the infant emerging nine months later. Finally our bodies change as we go through the process of death.

*My soul turns and goes back to the place
Where, a thousand forgotten years ago,
The bird and the blowing wind
Were like me and were my brothers
My soul turns into a tree
And an animal and a cloud bank
Then changed and odd it comes home
Hermann Hesse*

A further aspect to consider is Ancestral memory versus genetic memory. Our genetic memory is tied to the inheritance with our ancestors for instance in perhaps having the same hair colour or facial features as our great grandparents but Ancestral memory could be seen to surpass the memory of the individual and deal with beliefs, feelings and our view of the past of our 'tribe'. The fact that Celtic tradition favoured fostering children tuned in to the realisation that children could be nurtured and influenced by those to whom they were not genetically related.

So what is life? Is DNA life? The mere presence of DNA cannot equate with 'life' since DNA is also present in a dead body – so how does this relate to 'spirit'? Our spirit – however we each individually define this term – must represent life apart from the physical body and it is this which at death spirals on to the next life. Our DNA provides the 'shape shifting' cloak around our spirit and soul.

The Standing Stones of N. E. Scotland PT 2 FRANCES NEILSON

From part 1... The NE of Scotland seems to have had two periods of intense activity around standing stones. The first: Recumbent Stone Circles (RSCs) were erected. The second: the development of Pictish symbol stones which came considerably later. Now read on...

SIMILAR CIRCLES: *There is only one other place* in the world with similar circles, counties Kerry and Cork in the south west of Ireland. There, despite the circles being of much the same diameter, the recumbent stones are smaller and there are no flanker stones. The shortest vertical standing stones in the circle are on either side of the recumbent with the stones enlarging in size until the two tallest are reached in the north. These are called portal stones as they are presumed to have been the entrance to the circle. Although these circles were also called RSCs initially, it has now been suggested that their name be changed to axial circles to avoid confusion.

It would be interesting to speculate as to whether the original idea developed in Ireland and spread to Scotland or vice versa or if, perhaps less likely, similar ideas developed separately in the two areas. Maybe the idea was carried by traders or immigrants from one place to the other but as all the circles in Aberdeenshire have such similar characteristics it seems like everyone in the area must have had a copy of the same blueprint or the same team of stone masons travelled around building or encouraging the reproduction of the same pattern everywhere they went. Or perhaps there were some county-wide meetings where such plans were formulated by and for all. Otherwise it is hard to

understand how the RSC pattern could be so consistent.

THREE RSCs RECENTLY VISITED

Sunhoney circle is a good first RSC to visit as it is believed to be one of the earliest and is one of the few with evidence of shattered quartz and cremated bone. It is just off the B9119 from Aberdeen on the far side of Echt up a farm track, easily missed. It is a working farm so not obstructing machinery is important. By a space part way up the track big enough for one car is a sign indicating a footpath to the circle, which is completely sheltered by surrounding trees giving it a mysterious and enclosed but also welcoming, protective feel and its central grass looks like it has been cut, lumpily, by the farmer's scythe.

This place is very calm and stunningly beautiful but really comes to life when wondrous shafts of sunlight come out from behind the clouds and hits the pink granite circle stones. The mica in the granite flashes and sparkles jewel-like between patches of lichen as the dappled sunlight transforms the circle into a place of magic beyond time. It is like being honoured by the spirit of the place and by the stones, allowed into its inner life. It is very difficult to leave. It is also unclear how much it might be used for ceremonies now, it seems, sadly, rather deserted. The stones feel somehow complete in themselves: happy enough



to be left alone but at the same time this is definitely a place which cries out for ceremony be performed still.

East (sometimes Easter) Aquhorthies by contrast is a very well signposted site near Inverurie: large signs of Historic Environment Scotland make it hard to get lost though it does involve a one track road with passing places where locals generously stop. It is only a short uphill from the large-ish car park to the stones and a branch was propped up by the gate as a possible staff. There was a snowfall the night before and the stones and ground were still dusted with snow.



If Sunhoney looks deserted, East Aquhorthies looks well used. It has an air of a show house on a new housing estate, with a new drystone wall around the outside and a large sign explaining the basics about recumbent circles, age, possible builders and function. It seems presented with pride as a national monument. There were offerings of flowers on the recumbent stone and pebbles painted in recognition of the Ukrainian war, linking the Scottish saltire with the Ukrainian flag. It is exposed to all weathers as it has no protective trees nearby and it has a scooped out centre, perhaps evidence of former use as a burial chamber or animal pen by more recent farmers as some circles were so used.

The scattering of snow seemed to soften the sharp edges of the stones and quieten sounds so it was like being inside a peaceful, other-worldly place. But the spirits seemed responsive to calling of the quarters. It would be easy to imagine numbers of people meeting as the car park is a good size which might encourage its ongoing use for ceremony and the circle itself had a warm, caring and attentive feel despite the snowy cold of the day.

TYREBAGGER. *You'd imagine this circle* would be easy to locate as it is at the top of a hill overlooking Dyce airport. It is behind and above a modern industrial estate but because of this location, some roads closed for repairs and no signs of any sort indicate its presence, it was a nightmare to find. The internet directions are confusing and years out of date. A suggested car park, for example, no longer exists. There seemed no other access and no sight of the stones themselves for guidance. Even more confusing, the Forestry Commission offer walking and cycling trails on Tyrebagger Hill which don't offer any access to the stones either. To add to the confusion there are also some stones nearby referred to as Dyce Stones, although they are at St Fergus and are Pictish symbol stones.

Had a bolt of awen not struck, the stairs of wood and earth between two warehouses in the industrial estate might have gone unnoticed. These led to a footpath with a view of the stones in the distance. From



there the walk was tricky: an arduous uphill climb passing through farm fields and climbing over very wobbly gates. None of this walk was designated as a public footpath and no one was available at the farm to ask permission. So even going forward here felt uncomfortably like, and probably was, trespassing. On arrival at the circle, there was no immediate access either as it is ringed with barbed wire and gorse bushes. Once again persistence was needed to walk the outside perimeter and find an open entrance with a collapsed gate, which looked like it lost a fight with a tractor. This was not before encountering a yellow warning sign from Aberdeenshire Council threatening prosecution for any damage done to the site.

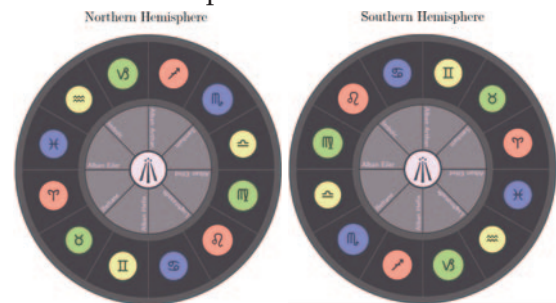
Given all of the above it was not a surprise to find the circle itself deserted and uncared for. Perhaps it had been overused in the past but now recent winds had left broken branches from some beech trees, which partly surrounded the circle, scattered all over the centre so these needed clearing just to walk around inside at all. The recumbent looked like it was being held up on the inside of the circle by several layers of smaller stones held in place by chicken wire netting so it appeared really odd and tilted backwards. It was easy to feel sad and sorry for these stones of which it was once said 'To describe Tyrebagger as a beautiful place would be like saying water is wet'. There were certainly some amazing views and to find a circle of stones in such a location in contrast to the hubbub of the modern world of the airport and industrial estate below felt like being in a place where it was possible to step back and become lost in time. The timelessness and stillness of this circle is a very special experience and encourages a meditative state. It is well worth the trouble and risks involved in finding it.

Having recently begun study in astrology, I decided to base my Ovale Table of Correspondences by overlaying the eight

Hemi-confusion: Building a Table of Correspondences, Upside-down MICHAEL-SCOTT

seasonal festivals on top of zodiac. I considered using the tropical zodiac and the sidereal zodiac. I even tried creating an alternate version of the zodiac with the so-called “thirteenth constellation” Ophiuchus. After consideration and some trial and error, I decided to leverage the tropical Zodiac. The tropical zodiac naturally fits with Druidry because in this system, the division of time and the signs of the zodiac are aligned to the seasons themselves (and not the actual star-constellations); for example in the tropical zodiac system, Aries is defined to begin at the Spring Equinox – or at least this is true in the Northern hemisphere!

Now the trouble begins! As I grew up in the Northern hemisphere but now live in the Southern hemisphere where the seasons are inverted, I am still wrestling with the difference between the two hemispheres, and needed to consider whether I would also invert the signs to align with the seasonal festivals of the Southern hemisphere. I began by creating one calendar for each hemisphere. Note – that while the Spring Equinox begins when the Sun enters Aries in the Northern hemisphere, it actually begins with the Sun enters Libra in the Southern. Therefore all the signs are rotated 180 degrees from the Northern hemisphere seasonal festivals!



Firstly, after doing this I noticed a few points which hold true in both hemispheres:

Each fire festival occurs in

the exact middle of a fixed sign.

Each fire festival is associated with one of the elements so that all 4 are represented over the course of the year.

The Sun festivals always mark the passing of a mutable sign to a cardinal sign.

The Sun “stands still” along the horizon as the sun enters Capricorn and Cancer.

The Sun is moving along the horizon with peak velocity when it enters Aries and Libra.

After reflecting on the differences, and considering the symbolism of each sign and the seasonal festivals themselves, I decided to base my Table of Correspondences using the conventional N. hemisphere associations (i.e. Aries – Spring Equinox, Taurus – Beltane, and so on). I spoke to several New Zealanders who feel differently and strongly associate Taurus with Samhain and Imbolc with Leo – but alas – I cannot! For me, Samhain is strongly associated with Scorpio, Imbolc with Aquarius, and Spring begins with Aries! For this reason in my Table of Correspondences I am using the N. Hemisphere associations – but will celebrate these during the opposite period which reflects the actual season the S. hemisphere.

After building this calendar, I added the accepted polarity, triplicity, quadriplicity, and classical planetary ruler for each symbolic sign. I then assigned NZ animals, trees, herbs, and minerals, where there is some symbolic relationship between each item and the symbolic sign. I expect my table will look quite different from others – but recognise that my journey is different. *For table of correspondences, email michaelscott.heberling@gmail.com*

VILLANELLE ON AN APRIL EVENING SKY

As I gazed upon two parting lovers
One deep behind woods, one welcoming
stars,
One blowing its kiss towards the other.

The gleaming king was peering through
clover
Caressing the queen's shadow from afar
As I gazed upon two parting lovers.

His gaze brushing with compassionate
fire
The blush on a cheek awash with pale
scars
One blowing its kiss towards the other.

Her Highness was coy, veiled for summer,
The bloom of her pregnant body was cast
As I gazed upon two parting lovers.

We are held between father and mother,
Representing the very best of two halves,
One blowing its kiss towards the other.

"To see at dawn this marriage recovered
In fresh flame's embrace", is all that I
asked
As I gazed upon two parting lovers
One blowing its kiss towards the other.

Daniel Smith

REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

APPLESEED GROVE Glastonbury FFI: theappleseedgrove@googlemail.com
ARTURIAN GROVE Seasonal rituals near Otley. optimistichannah@outlook.com
ASH GROVE, GLASTONBURY meeting OBOD visitors for druidic chat. 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: fellowshippotfd@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

Regular OBOD Events

OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS

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



Diana Birch



News from Aeon books:

The Tree of Spirit: Lessons on Tarot, Cabala, and the Spiritual Path by John Gilbert

A fascinating exploration of the symbolic foundations of the Western magical tradition. Using the Cabalistic Tree of Life and the tarot deck, this book takes the foundations of Western esoteric tradition as a basis and goes onward into deep places of magical spirituality.

The Doors of Tarot - Lessons for the Practical Diviner by John Gilbert

An accessible and practical introduction to Tarot divination. John Gilbert was an extraordinary tarot

diviner and teacher, and this book draws on his knowledge and expertise to provide a clear and comprehensive outline of how to accurately and easily understand and read the cards.

Tania Pepper

<https://www.aeonbooks.co.uk/>

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.

Regular OBOD events and rituals on Page 15

3 & 4 June OBOD Glastonbury Summer gathering

Sunday 4 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

Monday 5 June 10am – 3pm Living Treefully – A Workshop for treefully managing change in your life with Pamela Meekings-Stewart and Philip Carr-Gomm at the Goddess House, Glastonbury.. Become seed, become tree, take a walk in your own forest. Follow the seasons, their inevitable stages of Seeding, Emergence, Maturation and Manifestation and find answers to your 'Where next?' questions. There is a natural cycle of change to all things - a project, intention, dream, goal, a life purpose, a relationship or a business, that can be found where the forest speaks. Come along and rustle some leaves. Bring a notebook & pen & *Living Treefully* if you have it. There will also be copies available for sale. £15 payable on entry, but places limited so please book in advance with Maria at pa@druidry.org

10 June 10 - 5 The Fifth John Michell Symposium: Earth Spirit & Cosmic Pilgrim Temenos Academy the Art Workers' Guild 6 Queen Square, Bloomsbury, London WIN 3AT Speakers Prof Ronald Hutton, Cheryl Straffon, Dr Guy Hayward, Tom Bree, Adam Tetlow. Symposium bookings: Daniel Samuel (07513) 883-335 temenosacademy@myfastmail.com

www.temenosacademy.org £55 or Members £50 / Concessions £25 Full-time students with ID
26 - 30 July The 21st Druid Camp. Roots and Stones: A pilgrimage into mythic landscapes. West Wales. Keynote speakers, workshops, eisteddfod, ritual...JJ Middleway, Mara Freeman, Mark Graham, Penny Billington 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/booking form Email 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