

TOUCHSTONE

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

Issue 312



Light and Sun: Günter Nal

TREE FORM

I sent my feet into the ground,
To sneak through dirt and grind the
rock,
To seek the moisture, build the found.

I spread my arms into the sky,
To house birds and butterflies,
To breath the Sun, aerify

I face the day. I home the night.
My stance is firm, my hug is wide:
I sing the might of warming Light.

May the stars guide your way,
Eilias

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Good day to all! This month's Touchstone is centred around stories. We are all bards of OBOD, and the first understanding of that is that our lives are a story-weaving. Whether or not we'll ever perform as the bards of old, we *are* the story, a relational tale between ourselves, the world and all the sentient life it contains. So let's celebrate that!

Our guest article this month is explicit; to be of use in the world we need new stories to inspire us. We know that focussing on what is wrong saps the spirit, so see *p8* to help shift your perspective. Other articles explore the tapestry of members' lives: developing a shared story with the beloved land, *p5* and coming to an understanding of native trees and the spirit behind all, *p4*. *A spirit journey*, *p11* is an exploration of land and ancestry whilst being sensitive to indigenous cultures, and on *p14* we have the simplicity of a loving story of community experience.

But stories don't have to be articles, or poems - or be written in words at all. *P15* has a story in embroidery: as I said, we are all bards!

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Lughnasadh happens to be my most favourite fire festival. Coincidentally it is the festival my birth moon chose for me. Simply amazing the wisdom we gather in the journey from Bard to Druid with OBOD. This poem was crafted for Lugh.

WE ARE SHADOWS OF RAPTURE

There is nothing i cannot write about
there is no thing to hide
you are a mirror
what you see in me is also in you
what can you not write about?
do you believe you cannot write about me?
when i write about you
i write about me
your deepest fears
greatest joys!
quietest sorrows
and raging furies!
we share all emotions as humans
we are one entity separated only by the
thoughts we believe
beneath the thoughts
we are one
great
love
i write what we are
shadows of rapture
subtle
creeping like the sunrise bleeding
across the midnight sky
blink and the light is here
like you
i blink and you appear so sweetly
encompassing the sky

til all i can see is you
through the dolmens
bleeding
love
too

Julie Melton, Toronto, Canada

SUNRISE MUSING

Looking
at sunrise listening.

Stirring wildlife
Sitting,
warm at the window.

Horizon brightens,
Thoughts—
Inside world,
Mechanistic.

Horizon brightens
Silhouetted, trees
Warming clouds,
Blasting, color,
Magenta, salmon, orange.

Bright disc
timed to the minute
Still,
Was the moment
Seen

Or distraction, King?

Dana Evans Sutton, MA USA



BLESSINGS OF AUGUST...

Ripe ears for the harvest mouse
Nibbling at noon
Swift tunnels of stalks for the hare
In his race to the moon
Magic of sickle,
Cutting the sheaf
Blessing of loaf
And the granary's cache.

PB

I chose Beltane as the beginning of the Wheel of the Year for the S. Hemisphere as illustrated in my Cad Goddeu...

West Australian Ogam A Table of Correspondences: extract Denise Marzi

Example: Boab
Element : Fire
Planet : Sun
Deity : Ra
Energy : Masculine
Message : wisdom
Adansonia gregorii

Which festival is the beginning? Samhain or Alban Arthan has never sat well with me being a Southern Hemispherian. So, flicking through magical tomes I happened upon Lucy Cavendish and was pleased with her agreement ... that Beltane be the start for the Wheel of the Year. Yes, Beltane ! The first breaths of cold, damp, Autumn air; together with my sighs of Awen, after the harshness of the long, hot, dry Australian summer.

There's a wealth of information for each tree, starting with this stanza:

*Nwyfre, the spark of life,
Gwyar, the flow and the change,
Calas, the form and the shape,
Sacred elements spiralling,
Bless the growing of the grove.*



Image: Dana Driscoll

The booklet's 20 trees are described under these three Druidic classifications, and it is copiously illustrated in colour.

Nwyfre

The upside-down tree – or the “Cream of Tartar Tree” because of its pleasant tasting fruit pulp. The Prison Tree near Derby has an enormous hollow trunk reputedly once used as an overnight cell. Lives to a very great age as evidenced by their slender, young counter-parts. Of Ancient Awareness ... Tree Trunk Time Tunnel.

Gwyar

A deciduous tree that loses its leaves at the beginning of the “dry” winter season in the Kimberley Region, when its large hairy gourd-like fruits are displayed. Kidney-shaped seeds are embedded in the pleasant tasting white pulp of the fruit. Large palmate leaves and 5-9 pointed leaflets. Creamy white, sweetly scented solitary flowers open during the “wet” monsoon season which starts around November.

Calas

Often described as grotesque because of its huge, swollen, bottle-shaped trunk, the Boab usually stands bare limbed across the Kimberley landscape until the “wet” monsoon season. Its shallow crown of ungainly branches can reach 14m high and the trunk girth can sometimes be 20m; often hollow; and the spongy wood acts as a water storage reservoir.

Herbalism

The white pulp diluted in hot water makes a pleasant drink; or it can be fermented to produce an alcoholic beverage ... locally known as “jungle juice”. [For full doc. email Ed address]

Growing into Brighid's Field Jo Hayes

It's taken some 20 years to grow into Brighid's Field. At first there were battles with the wind, well, if you plant on a plateau where the hedgerows are cut by farmers, Dartmoor to the east and some very blustery southwest winds where there's not much to stop them, this is what you can expect.

Our field literally came up to our back door, apart from old patio and slabs, there was no defined garden or allotment, just 2.95 acres of meadow. We put in tree beds and a native pack of 250 trees, gifted from SW Forests and around the same time we planted beech and hornbeam hedges to create a garden and allotment area. We have aerial pictures and when we look back it looks so empty and bare, a good reminder of how it has changed, in my opinion for the better.

I'm an East End kid that wanted to be in touch with nature, even so, much against my wishes I was whisked off at 9 years old, to a semi that literally sat next to the green belt bordering Epping Forest. I spent hours wandering about on my own, amongst the Hollies and remnants of the old great managed woodland, that once was. I remember the leaf drop being so big you could roll in it and be covered by the leaves and mysteriously, in part of this wonderful playground an old gypsy grave was marked by a large boulder of rock with an inscription...My excitement of finding the grave and bluebells growing on the edges of the wood, encouraged me to want to spend time in nature, away from arguments, other kids and adults. Just me and Suzie my shaggy, waggy friend.

The pathway towards where I live now has been varied but for one thing, I've always

found a sense of freedom in amongst the trees, so arriving somewhere that had a distinct lack of them was something that needed to be remedied as soon as we could. The 'we' relates to Nick my co-traveller, who loves the green world as much as I do.

I nearly didn't get to start the transformation of the field, as I had fallen in love with New Zealand, I am still in love with it and I've come to regard its magic as my spiritual home. For lots of reasons we came back and married ourselves to our land again. I was told recently that I don't choose the easy path, which on reflection is probably true. My background shaped who I am and that has had a good few ups and downs, so this perhaps is why I chose an empty spot where the winds dashed the hedges and where, looking out today every hedgerow plant I can see is being bent over in swathes of sideways rain.

I remember Nick did most of the planting, tiny 18" trees, even the protective shrubby layer dotted about at the front looked weedy. In went copious amounts of netting and rabbit guards, leaving us with tree beds around the outside of our field. I seemed to pull out weeds and mulch for a good 2 or 3 years, usually this was me, because as a landscaper Nick had plenty to do at work. Coming back to the UK I felt restless and this was a good way of busying myself, that and the addition of a small springer spaniel pup called Fern. I literally poured myself into this place, whilst I grieved for NZ, I started to form bonds with new people and the home soil beneath my feet.

As we discovered when we travelled, it's never a coincidence who you meet, we met

new people who knew close pals of ours 12,000 miles away. A tendril of new friends led us to envelop ourselves in an earthy spirituality, whilst all the time we had young, ash, birch, rowan and oak growing and forming friendships of their own.

It's not unusual for Nick to go missing outside or somewhere doing something. One regular diversion was to sit in amongst a group of hazels that had become a bit of a secret grove. Hazel is Nick's favourite tree; he really does communicate with the wisdom of its energy. The location of the hazel grove has a frisson of its own and it just happens to be beside another area where a young ash tree seemed to struggle compared to its neighbours. Giving this tree more attention seemed to consecrate the whole space around it and even though it was young, for some reason it seemed to have an old spirit and it became our Ancestor tree.

Other areas had their own character too. We had a barn raising using materials that just came our way; Tin from the old barn down the road, the corners were made from telegraph poles that were being taken out locally and a brand-new roof came from Nick's dad, where at his work place, it had been left discarded. The trees behind the barn were the first Nick planted, being gifted from friends or were saplings from some of his jobs. This is what I would call a wild mess of whatever grows, with shrubby plants providing nesting spots and wildlife burrows, it was to be left to have its own way. This was one of the areas for which I had an immediate soft spot. It had a row of old Hawthorn trees leading to the only view of the land lying beyond our field and an old badger sett, when we first came. Here there was a small circular glade, where nothing but grass grew.

Nick fell in love with Celtic tree lore and

earth wisdom and inspired by the books of Glennie Kindred, we started to develop and run workshops on the field. It took a while with lots of spiritual diversions along the way but eventually after a workshop retreat with Glennie we decided to put a peace labyrinth on our land. She came and with many other work-shoppers, we set out an old Knights Templar design lined by stones. The field was evolving with the energy of the young trees.

My spaniel Fern had gained a shaggy friend, a moving rug on four legs, so we called him Raggy, the hedges looked like a hedge and not like a line of sticks and over the other side of the field we had a labyrinth with an 8ft ash trunk in the middle. Looking at a new aerial photo, we started to see the first whiskers of youthful growth. Our friendship circle had grown considerably. New friends Debbie and Steve, introduced our field to their sheep, their spiritual friends Chris and Carol and eventually a whole Druid seed group of people (Alban Nymet), who also loved the green world and were pleased to use our field to celebrate the seasons...

A couple of years passed, Foot and Mouth devastated the farming community and eventually the sheep moved on. The only upside was that the wet seasons that followed created ideal growing conditions for our tree family. We got very wet with a strong desire to see the sun more often, yet our trees loved the few years of extra rain, growth spurting like young teenagers do. More workshops followed and our seed group of Druids grew strong until eventually we started having camps on the field.

Around about the time the Labyrinth came into being we had planted a young oak

nearby and for some reason, ignoring what we knew in our gardening background we decided to surround it with willows, I suppose because we had plenty of them to stick into the ground. The thinking was that they would take root and provide a barrier to the wind, which blasted across the field, giving our young oak some protection. I had grandiose ideas of a large Oak providing shade for ewes and lambs and being a strong feature like Gabriel Oak from Thomas Hardy's, *"Far from the Madding Crowd"*, standing tall and proud with me lying against its bark like Bathsheba. There were several problems with this idyll I had created. The Willows took all the water and the Oak decided it didn't like being there at all, so we had to move it before it completely turned up its toes and secondly, I didn't have seventy years to wait for it to get big enough to lean against, let alone the fact that I didn't look like Julie Christie in the film.

Our circular glade with all manner of trees surrounding, grew into the space we would hold our ceremonies. The willows stretched upwards and the understorey of blackthorn, hawthorn and hazel, provided a bushy backdrop. Ceremony staves with brightly coloured shields and ribbons marked the quarters and cross quarters of the Celtic ceremonies and our learning saw people pass from Bards to Ovates to Druid, whilst the hazels started to produce cobs. Oh, the delight when acorns eventually started to drop.

Concludes next month



August Totems - LINDEN AND BEES

The Lime or linden is revered by most European Druids. It is a status tree that can grow to an immense girth, with close-grained white wood beloved of mediaeval sculptors and Icon writers. Large lindens were places of social gathering and weddings, as well as places for legal assemblies - it was believed that you could not tell a lie under the linden tree. [This connects nicely to the letter about Druid oaths, p 13]

It's our August totem because our nostrils are still full of its gardenia-sweet scent, and our herbalists are currently drying the nectar-rich flowers for a tisane to relax us into a deep, deep sleep.



And buzzing round the linden and occasionally getting drunk on the nectar we have the bee, who works, like the Druid, for the good of all beings! In the Scottish Highlands they were said to hold secret knowledge – '*Ask the wild bee what the Druid knows...*': and it was believed people's souls flew out as bees during dreams. Many members are beekeepers and mead makers and respect their hives by 'telling the bees' whenever there's a change in the household, to prevent the hive failing or flying away.

From Druidry.org, by Liz Ryder ~

Druids, bees and trees form a golden triad, each sharing in a relationship of vital mutualism, cooperation and symbiosis. Bees pollinate trees, and trees feed and house bees. Druids interpret, protect and nurture both trees and bees as sources of health, wealth, wisdom, and access to the faerie world.

Hint to Druid Melissae: Is an article on these amazing beings overdue?

*We walk a strange path
these days between hope
and despair.*

*We fight a strange battle
caught between anger and joy.*

*We hold life dear and defend the richness of
it all.*

*Whatever else befalls, this world is worthy
of celebration*

We can win arguments with the numbers. We can win debates with the science. But it is only now, after decades of environmental campaigning, that the big conservation organisations of the world are recognising that it is emotion and spirituality (or faith, or religion or simply, everyday folk) that really bring change. Some of us have been arguing for that cause for many of those decades. It seems obvious that profound change comes when both “hearts and minds are engaged” . As awareness of the climate crisis and biodiversity challenges finally begins to really hit, that understanding that we respond best to stories is also, finally, hitting home.

Advertisers, promoters, sales-people have known this for years. It’s the big-eyed, cute-faced, fluffy creature that sells the subscription (complete with cuddly toy and regular pupdates, eggdates, cubdates...not often larva-briefings, or worm-news). Faiths have known it too. Large or small, the faiths share their teachings through stories.

To really involve people with a renewed interest in, and commitment to, the world around us we may need more than tradition-

Looking for new stories Gordon McLellan

al stories or religious parables and moral fables. The stories that grow from direct experi-

ence are powerful ways of building connections, building a sense of belonging and when we pare away the green-washing, the jargon, the endless blurbs, a lot of environmental urgency and anxiety just now can come down to connection: to renewing (or refreshing) that sense of really being part of the world.

I am a writer, a storyteller, and a creator of celebrations. Most of my work revolves around helping groups of people (classes of school children, families, wider community groups) find ways of exploring and expressing their relationships with the places where they live, work and play. And whether they have heard of locally declared climate emergencies, or care tuppence for biodiversity crises, that desire to explore, to touch, to feel both physically and emotionally is deep and ongoing.



I am also an Animist Pagan (wouldn’t claim to be a Druid!) and like many in those Druid and wider Pagan traditions (I’ll use Pagan in this article to encompass all of our diversity...think of it as an ecosystem of communities and take offence if you want to at being labelled) tread very carefully around a slippery moral high ground. “We are a nature religion...we understand/appreciate/work with that sense of connection all the time” is an idea that gets proposed too many times. We shouldn’t get complacent.

There is never any harm – or there should never be any harm - in reviewing our own ways of engaging with and understanding the world around us. As an animist, I live in a world that is vibrant with awareness. It's more than just noticing that there are lots of birds in the park or flowers in a bed. In our practice we feel that richness. It is a colour, a scent, a presence in the spiritual atmosphere of the world we work in and engage with.

But it is easy to fall into habits of familiar action or comfortable thought and I think it does us good to stop, step back and renew connections.

All of this is a very long way round to saying "I wrote a book". Actually, I've written several and more are hatching like frogspawn in the pond-depths of my mind, but this one is called "Sacred Animals". Working with Green Magic Publishing, we've just released a new edition of this book, first published in about 1997 through Capall Bann...and this is not now meant to be a shameless sales pitch for the book but helps set a context for these ramblings.

I think that personal connection between self and world is vital. Whatever faith, whatever tradition, or for the ardent atheist environmentalist who sees all spirituality as deceit for the gullible, I think that giving yourself creative and personal time with the natural world is vital. Hence, Sacred Animals – and animals because for lots of people they are a starting point. I know many of us have long-standing relationships with trees but rather than trying to embrace all the cousins at once, I went for animals.



I like activities that are personal: that encourage the individual to think, feel and develop their own languages for what they experience. I think we should challenge ourselves to stop and learn by walking, feeling, by experiencing the world as shared by animals (or animal spirits if you are that way inclined) rather than always accepting information learned from human teachers. This doesn't necessarily grow stories in a traditional sense of plots and beginnings, middles and ends. The story that unfolds for the individual here is more personal: a description of relationships told with words or scribbles, or hammers and nails or a welcoming silence.

It's good to be working with Pagans. So much easier to work with people who accept consciousnesses other than human and who will not necessarily label me as mad /misguided/possessed for talking about spending time with spirits. But the principle remains the same: take time to stop, to let an idea or connection grow. For Pagans it might be the presence of an animal spirit, for others it maybe God speaking through Creation. It may simply (?) be one's own creative self offering new ways of looking at familiar animals.

This is not to dismiss tradition and the shared principles of imagery systems but often those shared understandings are more about the teaching than about the animals. Stop for a moment and think. Do you use correspondences for example? In your practice, would you expect to find a Bull at the North of the world or a Lion at the South? Why? Why not a polar bear? A wolverine? A lemming? A reindeer? Or if you turn over a card in a pack and find a

wolf, what is the story that runs with the wolf? There is nothing necessarily wrong with any of that but it is good to step back and remember that those are stories too. The image is not the animal. That story is not necessarily the animal's story. Or not the animal's only story. That Lion might embody strength or courage. It could also embody ruthlessness, the bloody death of your prey, a long slow decline through a face full of porcupine quills. I would invite you – or challenge you – to separate teaching from animal and then reach out to find what the animal or its associated spirits may share.

I write and lead activities and tell stories that are about the personal. That encourage people to find their own paths through the forests of the world. The bigger map of that world may belong to a spiritual tradition but these paths are their own and the ways of travelling are personal: with poems, masks, drawings, meditations, birdboxes, litter-picks, dances....are also their own. They might be shared with a group or a community. They might be solitary. They might be deeply private and personal and never spoken of in public. It doesn't matter. What does matter is that way of finding connections, renewing connections when needed, refreshing others or simply finding a novel way of spending time with old friends.

Those birdboxes should be in there as well. Or litter picking. Or sowing seeds for butterflies. Or writing a letter to a local councillor. Or lying down in front of a bull-dozer. That combination of physical action with spiritual practice is always worth a discussion. For me, the one informs the other – regardless of which comes first or which claims more of my time or effort. Just now, we need all those layers of ways of supporting the world and promoting a seachange in awareness.

Hopefully, every action encourages reflection, if not actual change. When we act from those spiritual connections, whether we are doing the bulldozer thing, or rescuing toads with a bucket, we should remember that we are not only doing a good deed, we are acting on behalf of family.

We live in a world full of environmental disaster stories. It's good to spend time simply watching, to being open to moments shared in other beings' lives. The rare bumblebee doesn't know it's rare. It just knows it's a bee and it goes on being itself to the utmost reaches of its life. Watch, listen, feel and behind the disaster stories, the anxiety, the worry and the anger, recognise joy and the wonder and passion of a world brimming with life.

Blog: creepingtoad.blogspot.com

Social media:

Creeping Toad or creepingtoad

THE CLEANER CLOOTIE CAMPAIGN

Good morning,

I've recently become aware of "cleaner clootie campaign" which helps raise awareness of the damage that leaving non biodegradable offerings at sacred sites causes to nature and the environment.

Many Blessings and warmest regards

Laura Stallion

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089954569242>

Here you will be amazed by images of vandalism and, more positively, 'The cleaner clootie code' to help visitors - required reading for all responsible Druids.

A Spirit Journey

Ann Beer

In 2004, while working as a teacher in Quebec, I was encouraged by a friend to go to an unusual gathering in

New Brunswick. It was a meeting to celebrate the power of storytelling. There were social workers, artists, nurses, educators of all kinds, community organizers, and professional storytellers, many of them Indigenous. Everyone shared one conviction: that listening to stories, telling stories, and recognizing the wisdom contained in stories should be honoured. Here is the story of what happened to me there.

On the first morning, the session I'd chosen was cancelled unexpectedly. Instead, I found myself sitting by the Wolastoq River, on a glorious sunlit day in May, with a circle of people I'd never met. The River's Indigenous name means: "The River of the Good Wave" in the language of the Wolastoqiyik People, whose traditional territory extends around it. We were listening to an Indigenous storyteller and drum-maker from the Amazon called Carlos Gomes, who has lived in Canada for many decades.

It was a life-changing day for me. Carlos led us in a sacred Drum Circle, beginning with smudging, and giving thanks to Mother Earth. We shared the beauty and power of the drums, the Heartbeat of the Earth. These teachings were unknown to me at the time - I had never heard of smudging. The river flowed peacefully towards the sea. The May afternoon glowed with sunlight. The trees that lined the river danced in the light breeze. Two eagles flew overhead, circling above as we drummed together. Carlos looked up at them and calmly said, "Oh! I know that family. They nest just downstream."

That day was the opening of a door — the

door that led me at last to OBOD, especially to my own Welsh ancestry and the Celtic-Druid traditions root-

ed in my mother's homeland, Ynys Môn/Anglesey. It has been a long journey and a strange one, for a British immigrant living in Canada. Carlos began to teach me about his traditions, mostly long-distance. Later in 2004 he made me a beautiful drum, a drum I still cherish and play today. I asked him why he was willing to share his spiritual traditions with a non-Indigenous person from a colonial culture and a distant land. He said, simply, "Because my Grandmother tells me to. Her Spirit is with me always. She tells me to teach anyone who is ready to listen."

This led to great changes in my life, to becoming part of a drum circle for 15 years, learning from drummers of many nations, Indigenous teachers, and Elders. I finally understood something else Carlos had said back in 2004. "When you open yourself to the energy of the Universe, begin a practice of thanksgiving to Mother Earth, and understand that we are just part of the world, not dominant over it, you move inevitably towards your own path, your own Ancestors. You start wherever your life has brought you into contact with Spirit. But then you find your way home. And you'll know when it happens."

It is all about relationship, Carlos taught me. He showed how important it is to be involved in two-way communication, open, honest, equal, and non-exploitative, with someone else who is also on their spirit path, even if they have travelled further. It involves giving and receiving. There are challenges along the way. Sometimes the learning is hard. It is not about ego or

willpower. It's about waiting, listening, and responding when "things happen," while living your regular life as well and as generously as you can manage. It takes lots of patience.

For me the journey involved finding my way out of a toxic workplace where I'd been unhappy for a long time, and instead spending more time with my family and in a healthier work context. I became involved in environmental issues, and relearned the joy of gardening, which my Welsh-speaking Grandmother had taught me as a child, but which I'd ignored for 30 years.

Since then, working through my OBOD Bardic studies has led to a liberation of creative energy that I had longed to find for decades. I've also been led back to learning Welsh seriously and studying the ancient literature and land-based spirituality of Wales. I've become happier and more rooted in Canada, where I've lived for almost 40 years, understanding at last that we can live in deep communion with our own traditions and with those around us, wherever we are.

I'm learning about healing and being healed, becoming the reed, or hollow bone, for energy to pass through. It is all in a context that is free, voluntary... not rushed or forced, but as natural as laughing or dancing. If ego-driven concerns, doubts, fear, or selfishness re-emerge, then going to the drum or to the trees and water, listening to that connecting heartbeat, brings me back into relationship with the wider world.

When I joined OBOD, I found with deepening intensity this same heartbeat of life present in Grove ceremonies, chanting the Awen, honouring the Wheel of the Year, and learning about the sacred Paths and Circles. "All Spirit is One," Carlos told me, "We only

have to remove the limitations blocking our understanding to let energy flow through us freely." Relationship, Responsibility, Respect — this is how I try to honour whatever tradition I encounter. I hope to be alert to new learning (because I still feel like a beginner), and to the needs of those I meet. Sometimes I fail, as we all do. But I keep going.

This year I was present at the Chalice Well Ceremony in Glastonbury at Alban Eilir, sharing in a circle of people, with sound, silence, and thanksgiving. There I met other OBOD members in person for the first time. From the Wolastoq River to the flowing waters of the Red and White Springs feels like a great distance — and no distance at all. They are kin. The flowing waters of the River and Springs confirm that it is in letting go, being carried forward by the current of life, that we move towards the joy of coming home to the Earth and knowing that we belong.

Inner Journeying & OBOD Ritual Level 1

**How and why do we do things *this way*?
Does it feel right to me???**

OBOD's Inner Journeying and Ritual weekends are designed to support your progress through the Gwers. They give space for all your questions and are friendly, focussed, gently challenging and accessible. Participating with like-minded members has been to many an ideal way to reinforce solitary working, experience group ritual and to deepen understanding of what we do and why we do it.



**30 Sept & 1 Oct Inner Journeying and OBOD
Ritual Level 1 in Glastonbury (non-Res)**
FFI Email mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

OPEN FORUM

I was approached this morning with the following question, by a friend asking on behalf of someone she knows who is about to go to court as a result of a protest action. 'Hi JJ - is there a pagan/Druid oath that could be said in court? '

I replied with the following:

'Not officially so far as I'm aware.

But I suggest something like the following, adapted to reflect individual personality and views: (just making this up now as I go along...)

" I swear, by star and stone,

By all that is fair and free

By the power of truth and tree

To speak from the integrity of my own heart

Reflecting the beauty and being in all nature.

To respect the wonder that abides in all existences

To honour the process of true justice.

Surrendering myself fully to the highest law

And thereby striving always for the principle of love.

So May it be."

It might be useful for anyone else in the Druid and/ or pagan community who finds themselves looking for a suitable oath in a court of law. In true Druid fashion, It can easily be adapted if necessary. Or perhaps there already is a suitable oath of which I'm unaware? *Many blessings, JJ Middleway*

Ed's note: what do you think? What is important in the oath to the Druid and, importantly, to the court? What phrases would constitute a win/win for Druid/legal integrity? Send in your suggestions to touchstone@druidry.org

A Druid is as a Druid does...

Reading all of the inspiring stories in Touchstone every month, made me realise I'm not being very Druidic myself, right?

During one of my travels abroad I hiked to a beach nearby to say goodbye to a stone I connected with the past few days. On my way back I saw a poppy that told me to put its bright red leaves into my tea. I asked for permission again and it confirmed. Which made me think back to another time when I discovered wild peppermint in the mountains during a hike on a different travel. The owner of the hostel I resided at the time, was anxious about me poisoning myself and made sure it was peppermint before he let me brew my tea. So kind... and then it hit me. I AM taking a Druidic path. It became such part of my own identity that I didn't realise it was there. My thanks to the stone and poppy and all of your beautiful stories for making me realise! *Wendy Spijkers*

GROVE & SEED GROUP NOTICEBOARD

Hello, friends! I am thinking of starting a seed group, but need to find others to join my husband and me! I live in Evanston, IL just a stone's throw from Chicago. Can you post this so I might find others interested in joining me? *Thank you so much! Carol Ludwick*
carol.ludwick@comcast.net

New Sussex Seedgroup

Regni Seed Group on the South Downs, West Sussex. Our style - Ceremonies for the eight fold wheel of the year, social, environmentally conscious, spiritual chat, arts and music. **Contact details:** 07931106 949
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/BMK9nbI495iEyKCciAzcUc>

White Horse Beltane Camp - the creative mix John Lamb

At the end of the Magical Morning Meeting on the 1st full day of the White Horse Camps Beltane Camp 2023 held at Wild Ways in Shropshire, we wrote words of what LOVE meant to us on red and pink heart-shaped 'leaves' that we attached to the frame of a Love Tree made out of Apple, Ash and Birch. On the following mornings, we did likewise with each of the elements of Earth, Fire, Water and Air; but first, here are the words of Love that were written on the leaves:

LOVE TREE

And did you get what you wanted from this life? I did... and what was it you wanted? - to feel myself beloved on the Earth.
Beyond body, beyond mind, love grows.
Community (aka my druid family).
Connection, awareness, care, co-creating.
Conscientiousness.
Delight in love that I am and you are a force that runs through all the oneness of all that is love,
Presence being is love.
Doggy love.
Family.
Family soul friendly.
Friendship.
Gratitude.
Harmony in our hearts,
harmony in our lands.

I love camps, I love camps,
I love camps.
I love, I love, I love.
I love me, I am good enough.
I love Wild Ways.

It doesn't matter what the situation is, it only matters how much love you can bring to it.

Familiar love.

Love binds us together.

Love, compassion and healing.

Love for the land the sea, the sky and all living things.

Love for tribe.

Love for Wild Ways.

Love includes everyone.

Love is all we need.

Love is recognizing the beauty in yourself and the world around you.

Love is the flowering of your heart.

Love is truth.

Love like a butterfly.

Love makes the world go round.

Love of ancestors.

Love of my family, daughter and grandchildren.

My dad.

My family - thank you for choosing me, teaching me, healing me.

Myself.

Only love is real.



Our very essence in our very atoms is love.
Presence being is love.
Self love.
Special romance healing.
The love that moves the sun and other stars.
Travel well little one.
Unconditional.
Unconditional, compassionate, fierce and gentle, delicate and strong wonder of connection, held and holding.
When a human being heals the Earth heals.

The OBOD Cloak Project: Jess West from Cheltenham

Every embroidery has a story....

My turn towards Druidry took place in the space created by the silent stillpoint of the first coronavirus lockdowns. In that I re-turned to the dreams, visions and intuitive longings that had been with me as a young teenager but had been exiled as unwelcome in my Ulster Protestant upbringing. This in turn marked a deeper re-turn, a further step along the spiral, of uncovering and re-memembering stories and spirits like Brigid, from which, growing up, I had been separated and caused to feel “were not mine”. My journey with Druidry so far has marked a reconciliation and a deeper homecoming.

The motif I embroidered pays homage to Cheltenham and Gloucestershire, the land that gifted me that space, that stillpoint, and the basin of an ancient sea that now holds me. It shows two of the town’s rivers – the Chelt and the Isbourne – flowing down to meet the Severn-Avon, with Cleve Hill in the distance, illuminated by the sun as it rises-sets, symbolising also the sun god Lugh and the trickster energy of the Between Spaces that had been dancing in my life more urgently around the summer solstice.

FFI: www.facebook.com/groups/761955568330153



REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

APPLESEED GROVE Glastonbury FFI: theappleseedgrove@gmail.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: rebniikc@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 Lughnasadh: August 5th * Alban Elfed: September 23rd * Samhain: November 4th * Alban Arthan: December 16th *

REGULAR OBOD MEETINGS

Fireside chat with Eimear. 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.

EVENTS FROM MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

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

2 December OBOD Winter Gathering at Strode, nr Glastonbury. Details follow...

And for your diaries.... 'I hope you are well! We plan an new **Druid Camp in 2024 in South-West Germany, during the time from 15th to 18th of August 2024**, in Waldhambach. May I ask you to publish it in Touchstone?' Thanks Stefan; very happy to do so.

The website is www.druidencamp.de



Image: John Davis