

TOUCHSTONE

The journal of The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids
November 2023

Issue 315



Amanita Forest: Antonela Gioscio

I WALK THE EARTH

Of all the things that I remember of all
the deeds I have done
For all the hurt and pain and shame I
know peace only in love
I have sat upon the grass and emptied my
heart and soul,
Only to find that when I stand, I am given
the gift of being whole.

I have walked the path paved with
shame and cut my feet on words.
But then again my feet do not bleed for
they are far too hard
For they have a wondrous thing to do.
A thing that is their right.
To walk the earth with Goddess Gaia
herself, and discover all the light.

Sarah Mirza

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Hello to all this fine month, as we wend our way through the darkening woods. Armistice Day, 11th November, is also for St Martin, famous for empathy & generosity - sharing his cloak with a beggar - and humility - hiding in a barn of geese to avoid being made a bishop, only to be outed by their cackling! In a troubled world, those three qualities and the leaven of humour are greatly needed, and the awen invites us to open to the mysterious and connect to source to have our best qualities amplified. Salutory advice!

At this time of the stone, we resume the series on NE Scottish stones with the leadership systems of the mysterious Picts, p8; and there's a message from the Hadrian's Wall iconic sycamore tree - see p5. P4 has a Druid journey with Aspen and the gift of a wand to contributors; whilst p6 reveals a searing imagining of the darker aspects of myth and parenthood. There are new events - including Friday treats before the winter gathering, p16, and oodles of poetry, review, a PDF offer p12, a seedgroup that can be accessed worldwide, a reading group - a plethora of riches: do dive in!

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A BLESSING

A blessing on our tears
That reveal our sorrow
And confess our grief.

A blessing on our pain
In which we learn to endure
And which heralds our strength.

A blessing on our scars
All those we have earned
And all those yet to come.

Mervyn Kelly

I was a seeking youngster
I found trees or they found me
I don't know how it was, but we were
us
I lived at the edge of the forest
for twenty-something, moved
away (to the city)
got man, got mental, got dog
moved to another forest
where the trees knew me
and made me whole

I grew up with a lot of boys my age
And we lived outside all the time, summer
and winter. I was the only girl and nobody
cared.
I was one of the gang. I climbed trees before
I walked, they said...
Had to go to school, did not like.
Read books anyway, and learned a lot
Me and one of the cats walked the forest at
night
after reading for hours
We saw the sun rise,
we saw the moon
in all her phases

Synnøve Steinmo

AWEN

What is breath? How do we know it?
What is this sweetness in the blood?
Who is the presence who bestows it,
Channelling that inner flood
Of the joyful gift of being,
Taken, each time, deep inside?
Blessed air, you are all-seeing,
Helping us to open wide
Every path of understanding,
All the streams of vital force,
Each new precious breath demanding
Constant contact with the Source.

Ann Beer



'Tears of the Moon' Andrea E Floyd

CERIDWYN

No one noticed
The change in the light or
The way the wind came from no where
The moment when I alone felt you touch me

Andrea E Floyd

This week, my beautiful great niece was born into the world, and as I had already offered some time ago

to do a Druid baby blessing for her when she was safely settled in the world, I also felt it right to make some magical and protective amulets for her. Some weeks ago, we had to prune our aspen tree, and so I had a lot of aspen wood ready for wand, rune and ogham making. I decided to make my nephew, his partner and my lovely new great niece some amulet necklaces inscribed with runic and ogham blessings. And this sparked the idea for a gift to the Order.

So this aspen tree which I've just mentioned is a rather special one. When we moved into our house in 2008, it was a little sapling stuck in a pot in a messy bit of the garden, which we thought we'd plant out, if it was transferable, when we got to sorting out the garden. As it turned out, when we examined the tree some while later, we realised it had outstripped its pot and taken root – right where the landscapers we were lucky enough to be gifted with intended to put our fairy hut/summer house. They wanted to take it down, but I had fallen in love with that little tree and I was having none of it, so I insisted they built the summer house around the tree. And so it came to be that we ended up with a magical fairy tree house, built on decking around our aspen tree. And oh boy! Did that sapling take off! It's now an enormous aspen tree that has to be regularly pruned lest it take out everything else around it!

Gifts of Druidry My journey with Aspen Cally Palmer

But without realising it that tree, quite apart from being a best friend, has in its own way been a huge part

of my Ovate journey. It's seen me through some of the darkest times and the dearest times. I have sat beneath its leaves and branches so many times, chatting with it, crying with it, laughing with it and just 'being' with it. And now we may be leaving our beautiful tree, and our magical garden, which, although being a great new adventure, will also be utterly heart breaking for us both. I may try and take some cuttings and see if I can root them, to plant in what I hope might be our new magical garden. But in the meantime, I pay homage to my lovely lady whenever I can, and I treasure the wood she gifts me with during her prunings.

It's because Lady Aspen has been such a friend throughout that I'm writing now about My Journey With Aspen for Touchstone, and offering some wands made from her branches as a gift for anyone else who might like to write something for the Order about their own tree-journeys. This, I hope will be a gift in two ways. It allows me to gift a record of something of my own magical journey, whilst allowing me to give something back to the membership at the same time, and hopefully encouraging others to share some-

thing of their journeys too.

I have now finished carving, fashioning and finishing the wands, as well doing the artwork and inscribing them. They are ready to be



sent for the first eight contributions from Tree-loving Companions of OBOD who send in their tree-stories, of whatever kind.

Tonight, I sat under our beautiful Aspen, watching the late evening sun blessing her leaves with ethereal light and I thought about how much I've changed over these years during my OBOD journey. How I've come to love summer having hated it for most of my life. How much I've come to love life, having so often denied it. How great it is just to be alive and basking under the Aspen tree. How I can't wait to go paddling in the sea in a few days' time and watch another evening sunset over the ocean.

I care so much less, and yet I care so much more! I'm bolder and brassier than I used to be, but still quiet and reflective. I take more risks – particularly about 'being seen', but I still know when to hold back. I'm more of a 'joiner' and less of a 'hider'. And I love to laugh almost more than I love anything else in the world! I seem to laugh all the time these days because everything amuses me. It's as if some mischievous, long-lost pixie suddenly broke free and finds the whole world the best laugh ever! I seem to have a permanent giggle bubbling away under the surface. Life of course, can still be full of trauma, tragedy and all the rest, but I seem to have found the proverbial pinch of salt with which to take it! It's not that I don't take life seriously, I do, but I also take it with wonder, joy and a large dose of humour. It's strange, because I hadn't really given it much thought until now, but it is only in looking back over this long journey, that I realise how far I've come and how much I've grown. Who'da thunk it!!

More information on the wands on p 13

TOTEM TREE TRAGEDY, UK Sept 2023

Visitors flocked to the Hadrian's Wall to say goodbye to the landmark sycamore which stood there for more than 300 years, which was chopped down in September in a staggering act of vandalism. Such is the emotional significance of the tree, the police had to stop a number of people from disturbing the scene and trying to take large pieces home. National Trust rangers also collected painted rocks and sentimental items that had been left in memory of loved ones, after receiving calls from worried families who had placed them there while the tree was still standing.

SYCAMORE GAP 23.9.23

there is no answer to why
as the last of my standing people
I had to go, I had to die
for centuries I have guarded this gap
poised and balanced, rooted in purpose
loved and adored by all

I hear your outpouring of grief
as I lie here atop the wall
as my seedlings still hang close
I speak to my companion, Hawthorn,
'I had no choice but to fall your way
yet together our friendship will hold'

but my roots hold fast
my stump remains, I will regrow
for your generations yet to come
and once more I shall watch over
the landscape, our home and see you,
by now ancestors, come and go

but only a small part of me has gone
in this senseless human act
although my heart is torn
and my sadness knows no depths
and our collective souls are ripped
yet, I will not leave you

Hannah Silcock

The Invisible Child Pt. 1

Lisa Corbell-Hollingsworth

My brother is a hero. Why? Well, I could say: because Mother said so...but he doesn't

like that. I guess I don't either. He did endure his pain well most of the time, except deep in the night when he could not sleep for it and could not help but whimper. I was the only one who heard that though. He was a good boy.

Affagdu

Affagdu the sickly.

Affagdu the ugly.

...so the other lads called him...though not in front of me. Not after the first time. They learned to hush when I was near.

My earliest memory was of the nurse with the endless smile who held us, sang to us. I remember her playing with my curls and remarking on them, patting Affagdu, calling him her "poor little love."

It was she who taught me, as soon as I was tall enough to reach the table, how to make the salve that gave Affagdu some respite. She told me often how pretty I was, with my eyes full of gold light by morn and silver light under the moon. I knew she was only being kind. Mother sent her away just before the start of the Gwion disaster.

The little girl came awake with gasp that shook her heart in her chest as the boom became a crash became the sound of shards of iron landing in every direction. This was followed closely by a shriek of unearthly measure.

Here was the shriek she dreaded, the one that

usually preceded her name. But not this time. In the bed beside hers, he

began to whimper. She sighed, admitting to herself that she was sometimes made tired by his neediness, and by the blame that came to her because of it.

"Creirwy, why did your brother fall?"

"Creirwy, his dish has overturned! How did this happen again?"

"Creirwy, can't you see how tired I am? Do you care for no one but yourself?"

Creirwy bit her lip and stared at her brother for a moment. She sighed, then arose and went to him, sitting on the bed beside him. She pulled him to her and shushed him gently. "You're fine, brother. You're safe. What hurts, darling? Is it your legs?"

He only moaned a little, and she tickled him, making him smile. She went to the cupboard and retrieved the salve. Returning to his bedside, she bent and applied some to his always achy muscles. Then she held him again and sang to him, an Irish piece about a Goddess and a warrior. He seemed to enjoy her warrior songs best when he was frightened.

Creirwy had listened from birth to the tales and songs of Bards of every race and tribe

who had visited the halls of her mother, and she could speak all of their languages. She used to dance as well.

At last summer's great festival, however, she had performed a special dance for her mother, danced with her body and spirit,



till the sweat came from her small body and she could dance no more. The crowd had cheered, drawing her brightest smile. But when she had looked at her mother, she'd seen that her mother had not watched at all. Mother had been holding onto Affagdu and talking to him instead. Creirwy never danced again.

So why dance anyhow? And who needs to be seen or cheered? Who needs the attention of young men who were prettier than they were smart?

Mother was gone for a long time after the night of the crashing cauldron. But we didn't need a parent. I could cook and clean and find herbs to ease my brother's pain. Besides, he seemed to have less pain now. I had less time to coddle him and Mother wasn't here to do so either. And Affagdu began to entertain himself and me with his own stories and songs. He could always make me laugh. He began to feel well enough to help me cook meals and keep house.

When Mother finally returned, she was bitter. And she would not let Affagdu help with anything any more. She sent him back to bed, brought in a new nurse, though he was nearly a man.

The next time I awoke to the dreaded shriek was the night he left.

The shriek shattered the dishes on the shelf. It was followed by slaps and cries and Mother's voice ringing out above it all.

"Worthless woman! It was your job to take care of him! It was your only reason for existing! Where is he?"

The nurse's garbled reply brought only more slaps. Then her mother's voice screeched out the word the young woman dreaded to hear.

"Creirwy! Out of bed you lazy girl! Sleeping while I suffer! Ever selfish, aren't you? Where is your brother? Who has taken him? You must have heard something!" Creirwy fell out of her bed and approached her mother warily.

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know anything!"

"No, you don't, do you? Stupid girl! Oh, why? Why did they have to steal away my good child?!"

That's what she said. And I believed it, just like I believed everything she ever said to me or about me. I was alone now, with no one who needed me. Well, except for my mother. I would have left, but somehow, deep inside, I wanted to believe that. She needed me now especially since Affagdu had left.

Oh, yes, he had left, not been taken. The day I went to throw away the pot of salve I used to use on him, I found an acorn inside it and a sprig of rosemary. I knew he had left it for me. I envied him his freedom, but I was happy he had escaped. Certainly he deserved it more than I did.

Who was I anyhow? Not the hero. Not the beloved.

Creirwy the odd little girl who could have been so pretty if she would only smile more and stop singing strange nonsense to herself in languages that could only have come from the faeries. Even her own mother had rejected her!

And later?

....To be continued



Who were the Picts anyway? They were the inhabitants of Britain north of Hadrian's Wall who

The stones of NE Scotland Pictish systems and symbols Frances Neilson

were never Romanised but the term Picti was not used in Roman writing until the 3rd - 4th century CE. Previously they were identified as different distinct tribes, like the Dicalydonies and the Maetae. From Roman sources, there had been an increasing number of attacks by these tribes on them over the years, culminating in a concerted effort in 367CE which seems to have involved Franks, Saxons and Attacotti tribes too. It is around that time that the name Picti started to be used by the Romans. It is of course suggested that this was because these tribes were either tattooed or painted their skins before battle, perhaps with blue woad to help contract the blood vessels in their skin to reduce loss of blood from battle wounds. But the name Picti may have also carried what the Romans believed to be the barbarism of their attackers, conveying both contempt and an underlying fear. Or the Romans may have just used it as a general term to separate Britons in their empire from all the outsiders to the north.

As Hutton says, for much of the 19th and 20th centuries Picts were believed to be a people from an 'older race' of different ethnicity and with a separate language from other Celts. But from the 1980s onward, this belief has been challenged and their language is now thought to be a regional dialect of the language of other Iron Age groups. This would tend to suggest a common ethnicity bringing the Picts firmly back into the Celtic fold. The supposed matrilinear line of succession, also thought at one time to be an exclusive part of the Pictish culture, seems less certain as it is only referred

to in two documents written in the 700s CE. These documents were thought to be of dubious ori-

gin, perhaps used to justify the succession of a particular line of kings. However a more recent reinterpretation of these documents by Gray challenges this, suggesting after all, that these kings may have only become kings by marrying women who were already queens, as many potentially female names also appear in the king lists. These female names may instead be names of the kings' patron goddesses. The possibility of an early and different culture may not be so certain now but it seems many pieces of evidence about the Picts may be interpreted in very differently depending on one's own beliefs and desires. Similarly there are, for example, countless speculations as to the symbol stones' possible uses and meanings, many of which contradict each other.

Should the stones be considered uniquely Pictish or a part of the wider Celtic culture of Britain and Europe? The answer of course is both. In the last 30 years or so considerable efforts have been made by the Hendersons and others to bring them into the mainstream of European Celtic art and history. Some of the more elaborate designs would not be out of place in the Book of Kells and have similarities to the Celtic metal work of Europe. But many symbols are original, enigmatic and puzzling. Some are not found anywhere else in the world, providing vivid evidence of a unique Pictish contribution to history.

DATING AND USES OF THE STONES

There has also been controversy regarding the dating of these Pictish stones. Interestingly in 1903 Scottish sculpted stones

were classified into 3 different groups by Anderson, a classification which is still popular. Class 1 were undressed stones incised only with Pictish symbols. In Class 2 the complexity of the designs increased and they had both Pictish symbols and Celtic ornamentation, including crosses. Class 3 had Celtic ornamentation but were without any Pictish symbols. It was previously believed that the earliest incised stones were carved in the 7-8th centuries CE while the more ornamental Celtic designs were from the 9-10th centuries so the Christian sculpted stones without Pictish symbols would perhaps either have been carved around the same period or even later.

In 1961 though, it was suggested that the 5-7th centuries would be more accurate for the carving of the simpler designs as they fitted in better with other Celtic art found on bone and in the metalwork of that period in Europe. This is somewhat surprising as the dates given for the conversion of the Scots to Christianity were in the mid 500s CE and the earliest stones look distinctly pagan so instinctively feel much older. But the most recent archeological evidence from a new site, and with a more accurate radio carbon dating, suggests that these simpler stones could actually be from an even earlier period. They may now be dated from 1st -3rd centuries CE. This work is ongoing and is being conducted by a team from the Northern Picts Project at Aberdeen University. So, interestingly, as we have gone forward in time, the dating of the symbol stones seems to be going backwards!



The dating of the symbol stones themselves is not really possible of course, only artefacts found around them. Archeological evidence from three different sites around the north east of Scotland, support earlier dating than originally thought. Artefacts from caves in East Wemyss in Fife and Covesea in Moray as well as an unusually walled sea fort in Dunnicaer near Stonehaven, have all supported a date of the 1st century CE as some small hand held items of bone from that period, and found at those sites, bear the same symbols found on the earliest symbol stones. One current academic theory, put forward by Noble and Evans of the Northern Picts Project, is that the symbols began to be used around the same time as the Scandinavian tribes were developing runes and the Irish the Ogham. It is postulated that the symbols are a sort of nonalphabetic written script of a sort perhaps similar to early Egyptian hieroglyphics. They suggest it is possible the symbols were used in multiple ways as public displays of rank and tribal identity, of marriage alliances, memorials to the dead, markers of boundaries and routeways or significant battles as well as icons of Pagan (and later Christian) religions.

They have also suggested that contact with the Romans, who used a written alphabetic script, may have been a triggering factor in that surge of imaginative invention of runes, the Ogham and Pictish symbols around the same time. Each of these could all be a sort of 'beyond the frontier' development in response to Roman writing. If so, each group's writing method was very individual and as such also a proclamation of their

independence from the Roman world.

If the academic thinking above is at one end of a theoretical spectrum then the thinking of McHardy, a writer, broadcaster, storyteller and a founder member of the Pictish Arts Society, is at the other end. He argues first that the symbols are part of a continuum going back potentially hundreds or even thousands of years. So the idea of them being created post Roman contact and for use by specific individuals is unlikely. Also the clan system in Scotland at that time was not, and still is not, hierarchical as feudal systems are. He suggests that a Scottish king system only came into being later than the earliest stones. The king list does not start until 311CE although the reign of kings could have started earlier than the records. Instead as the members of any clan share the belief that they were descendants of the one distant ancestor (eg all members of the clan MacDonald being descendants of an original Donald) they were more like an extended family. The clan chief was responsible to the whole clan and there is evidence that some chieftains were removed by the other clan members if thought to be unsuitable. McHardy therefore argues that the role of the chief is more important than the individual holding it. Because of that and the more communal way of living involved in clan life, he believes it unlikely that individual memorial stones to the dead would be raised. It is similarly unlikely from his viewpoint then that stones would celebrate inter-tribal marriages. He presumes that there would be many more symbol stones than there are if deaths and marriages were marked in that way. Bearing in mind that at the period in time the class 1 stones were probably being carved, chambered cairns for the dead were probably still being used for communal burial rather than individual

graves, this seems an objection worth considering. The clan system has never been quite so much in evidence in the Northeast and the Lowlands of Scotland though being more a Highland way of life. Given that many of the stones are in Aberdeenshire and Angus, areas not particularly clan orientated and in which Doric (a NE of Scotland dialect of English) rather than Gaelic was spoken, it is not clear how much weight to give to clan theory.

PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

By comparison, there are about 200 of these symbol stones on record and they cover a much wider area than the RSCs, from Angus to The Orkneys. More are still being discovered too. One was found on the bank of the river Don in Aberdeen when its waters receded in 2018 and another was dug up from a farmer's field in 2022 just north of Dundee.

It is very difficult to write anything definitive about the Picts and their stones. Indeed in trying to find out more about them it is incredibly difficult not to fall down a rabbit hole like Alice in Wonderland. Dates of certain events are completely different in different sources and views are sometimes so conflicting it is hard to know which may be worth considering and which may not though perhaps all are. Reality can feel as if it quickly begins to unravel and the old adage 'your guess is as good as mine' springs to mind. However Hutton sees this as an advantage " The very paucity of reliable dates and interpretations means that different historians are free to put together their own stories, filling the gaps with their imagination and personal choices." As we all are of course, leaving at core the mystery, unsolvable, intriguing and seductively fascinating.

A fond farewell to Kate at the office

Another long-standing colleague and friend Kate has now reached retirement age, and like Annie a few months back she's opted for freedom rather than posting books and gwersi! We'll all miss her greatly, but she lives nearby so we hope to still see her often.

Dear Kate, we wish you all the very best in your future artistic projects and hope that your retirement is relaxing and joyous and filled with much happiness!



The trees' gift of Awen
Julie Melton



THE TREES SPEAK Written and illustrated by Brenda Jean Rae. An Ogham/Oracle of New Zealand Native Trees. Book & card set

This oracle offers a unique insight into the individual voices and the wisdom of the natural world from a collection of New Zealand native trees. Full colour, and illustrated throughout, the book includes a Spirit painting of each tree, their individual words of wisdom, botanical characteristics, medical uses and their physical role in First Peoples culture of New Zealand and during the European pioneering days.

You are invited to ask these ancient beings to aid you: look into each tree's answers which can be used to empower you - to give ideas or understandings that can help you to improve your life and create positive outcomes and botanical notes give clues to the tree's character and what it was used for in the human world.

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TEXAS OGHAM by Natalie Sedgwick

This 33 page booklet is a gift from the author to all members, especially those in Texas and the S/SW US to connect to their native species. She encourages the reader to make personal associations, and sets the ball rolling with *** native trees, comparisons with the European and her rationale and sources. It's most helpful to give the first example...

English: Birch: Celtic: Beith:

[English Ogham meaning follows here]

Texas Equivalent: River Birch (*Betula nigra*)

This tree makes a strong correlation as it is in the birch family Betulaceae. This tree grows near water, hence the name River Birch, and is a crucial part of erosion control. Further, this tree is often found covered with a Salmon pink curled bark. This was significant to me as the salmon is a key symbol in the Druidic path (Wisdom). Additionally, this tree's proximity to water also lends to the symbolism of purification.

Notes:

Ogham Letter B. The myth tells that the goddess Hebe lost her chalice of youth and an eagle fought to recover the cup and return it to her. Wherever the bird shed a drop of blood or a feather, up sprang a Rowan tree.

ThePresentTree.com

To obtain your copy, email:
nataliesuzzann@gmail.com

TEXAS OGHAM, Y'ALL!



PODCAST REVIEW

Welcome to Nutopia, a documentary-style series exploring radical ideas, new myths and social movements for a positive future shaped by community, re-enchantment, sustainability, ecology, creativity, magic and compassion. Don't worry about poe-faced beard-stroking, there's plenty of mischief, weirdness and fun to be had as we'd expect from witer/presenter Sony award-winning broadcaster David Bramwell: with generous support from OBOD & Hawkwood College. **Example:** Delving into the nature of rituals. Kristoffer Hughes - the power of death rituals and the wheel of the year; the May Day ritual of Jack in the Green in Hastings; spend a night singing with nightingales with Sam Lee & discuss the film with the most chilling ritualistic finale ever: <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/adventures-in-nutopia/>

OF MAGIC FIRE AND FIRE MAGIC: compilation book by OBOD creatives

We have walked through the green forest and made tree friends.

We have swum through the seas and looked at the rain.

We've ridden the storm, flown kites, and felt the breath of the earth.

This time we have felt the heat of the flame, felt the sun and enjoyed the warmth of the campfire.

Once again, many authors, artists and photographers have worked with one element. The result is this wonderful book with different aspects on the subject of fire. As with the previous element books, the majority of the proceeds will be donated to environmental protection projects, which this time can be assigned to the element of fire.

All four books are available in stores and are unfortunately only available in German.

(custos-verlag@gruenwald-greenwood.de)

ISBN 978-3-943195-43-9 10 Euro

112 Seiten mit zahlreichen s/w Bildern

HUNTING THE WILD MEGALITH

Following the trail of the Arthurian Boar Hunt through South Wales

By Dewi Bowen & Olwyn Pritchard

ISBN: 978-1-3999-4598-1. Pp.152

David Jones was a Welsh genius.

T.S.Eliot – and he should know – named him among the four greatest writers of the day. And Jones was the kind of guy whose throw-away remark in a tiny footnote would send a fellow Welshman on a lifetime's quest into the wilder reaches of palaeo-archaeology.

The footnote in question suggested that the route taken by King Arthur's Boar Hunt in the story of *Culhwch and Olwen* in the Mabinogion (one of the "Impossible Tasks" Culhwch was set by his sweetheart's father : to steal comb, razor & scissors from between the ears of the giant boar Twrch Trwyth whom they chased through South Wales, across the Severn into Cornwall) had been marked by our ancestors on the Welsh landscape with cromlechs, standing stones & other monuments.

Dewi Bowen was the 'fellow Welshman' who picked up the ball & ran with it, spending nearly thirty years tracing the ancient monuments that marked the Hunt, studying their myths & legends & developing along the way a theory that the legend might describe some important aspect of our ancestors' lives that needed marking in this way. Worn out with trudging through barren wastes in incessant rain, he was about to give up the quest when archaeologist Olwyn Pritchard joined his team. She breathed new life into the project & together they were able to complete the work, presenting their findings in this book, a sumptuous feast of ancient myths & monuments painstakingly sought out & plotted, the relations one to another teased out & mapped, & the whole beautifully illustrated by the authors, artist Rose Davies & a host of others.



THE OBOD READS

At the beginning of the year we started a small project and were allowed to call it "The OBOD reads". What is it about? We wanted to use OBODies to read a book and make it available to the community. We were excited and then surprised at how many were interested in participating.

And so... everyone got a chapter to read, read the chapter to the microphone, and sent the recording to us. The result is a magical colorful audio book.

We still have a few ideas for more reading projects and so we hope the interest will stay.

Special thanks go to Saga!

The project can be heard at www.weltderlinden.de/hoerbuch *Birgit, Andreas and Ian*

Notes from p 5: more on the wands...

Five of the wands are both pyrographed and painted and then sealed with a sealant, and three of the wands are just pyrography on the plain wood. The wands which are not painted have been beeswaxed and can be beeswaxed as often as anyone chooses (best to use a pure beeswax rather than the furniture polish types), but the wands which have been sealed with a sealant should not be beeswaxed. They can be polished with a soft, plain cloth however, (like lint/duster/cotton cloth etc). The wands are on average, about 12 inches long, some a bit more, some a bit less.

Please send your own Tree-journeys as articles, stories, poems or artwork, to touchstone@druidry.org. The first eight will be sent a wand with love from Cally & Touchstone.



URBAN OAK (HYBRID) SEEDGROUP, DUBLIN, IRELAND

The other day, on my way to a local grocery store, I made a detour through a woodland area that turned a ten minute walk into an hour. I had been working on ideas for the Urban Oak Seedgroup and felt the need to walk among trees. Then the magic happened and I knew how I should prepare to midwife this baby that I've been incubating for almost a year. I will choose a place and time to be patient and await its arrival. It was already named on Aug 7th and listed with my contact details on the OBOD website under Seedgroups in Ireland. Its coming was announced on the OBOD Discussion board as a new hybrid seedgroup as follows:

"My name is Martina and I would like to announce the seeding of the Urban Oak Seedgroup. My highest aspiration is that we will gather together a small group of OBOD members for the purpose of holding regular in-person ceremonies in Dublin, and also to host regular online zoom meetings. Online meetings will welcome international members in order to make connections with our wider OBOD community throughout the world. Please email at furgalskit@gmail.com. How the group forms and comes together to grow and develop will depend on who shows up. I look forward to meeting our new members."

I have been encouraged by other druids and feel warmly supported. Now I find myself waiting with anticipation for the magic, asking myself questions like, when will this seedgroup manifest as a group, when will it be born, what will it look like and who will be its members? I asked the spirits of the trees to help and was told to announce three gatherings in the city, walking among trees and stalking awareness in

nature. Now this seems obvious. Dublin city is full of parks and canal walks, and it is surrounded by beaches and low forested hills. Three dates stand out on my calendar, Nov11th, Dec 9th and Jan 13th, all Saturdays. The time needs to allow for travel, so an early afternoon sounds about right, and the locations must be accessible by public transport. I've chosen 1) the Phoenix Park close to Houston Station, 2) Merion Square close to Pearce Station (Westland Row), and 3) the river Liffey and Trinity College close to Connolly, Tara and Pearce Stations. These gatherings will be well organised, family friendly and flexible for those not up for a bit of walking. I can add intermediate meeting points and pre-arrange text messaging, or Whatsapp location sharing to make finding each other easier.

That's the surface structure, I also have an intention to make these gatherings deeply spiritual, with a light touch. Although the seedgroup is for OBOD members, the in-person city gatherings will be open to friends and family.

The gatherings will be followed up with a zoom call for OBOD members and open to all members worldwide. Choosing a time for zooming is more of a challenge but the calls will be structured with an emphasis on deep listening in addition to a variety of sensing and seeing practices. I've spent a lot more time preparing myself to host these online meetings. Initially they will have a simple structure to allow the group to evolve and develop over time. I'll leave in-person ceremonies up to members to decide. I'll announce gatherings and online meetings on the OBOD FB group spaces. 'Word of mouth' may still be the best way to spread the news, so please share my contact email. I send this message into the OBOD world with love and hugs, and if it is in the best interest of OBOD, and the greater good, may it manifest in the world.

Martina Carroll (furgalskit@gmail.com, include on Subject line Urban Oak Seedgroup)



OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS

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

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 oboddeeplisteningcircle@gmail.com for link.

Members' 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/BDO 8 festivals, walks, discussion/social. FFI: rebnikc@btinternet.com

BADGER & TOAD S.G., Folkstone area. Seasonal/meet ups FFI: Sian and Hazel obodbadgerandtoad@yahoo.com

CIRCLE OF COLL Seattle Seedgroup public rituals, workshops, tree walks monthly. circleofcoll@circleofcoll.org

CORNOVII GROVE. Seasonal rituals, Worcs. www.cornovii.org Email 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, Melbourne, Aus: Trudy Richards moondancer@outlook.com.au

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: roanrob-bins@aol.com

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

THE SILVER BEAR GROVE SEED GROUP new druid group, Middlesbrough. OBOD members welcome. To take part in developing this new group Contact Paul: Txt: 07923575364 or Email: silverbeargrove@hotmail.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.

5th Nov Wirral Pathways Festival a day of talks/workshops: Runes, Stone Circles, Crystal wire wrapped jewellery, Augury. £20. Village Hotel, Bromborough, Wirral. <https://buytickets.at/pathways> FBimetable: <https://www.facebook.com/WirralPathwaysFestival>

15th Nov Death Cafe zoom meeting 7pm UK time for approx 1 hour.

Email oboddeathcafe@gmail.com to register for the link

1 Dec Friday afternoon for OBOD members new to the Winter Gathering, or coming alone. Make connections beforehand at this short informal get together in Glastonbury. Meet & greet, introductions & refreshments with the Ash Grove. Email for info at druidevents@yahoo.com

1 Dec Ushti Baba at The King Arthur Glastonbury Benedict Street 8-11pm. Get your midwinter gathering off to a stonking start: Friday night knees-up with hypnotic Celtic folk-ravers Ushti Baba and the one & only Arthur 'ZZ' Billington band featuring strings, horns and good times aplenty! Tickets only £5 with special OBOD discount: Search 'Ushti Baba' at eventbrite.co.uk and use promo code BARDIC.

2 Dec OBOD Winter Gathering at Strode, nr Glastonbury. 'Animism and Nature Connection' speakers Ceremony, eisteddfod.

15-17 Dec Shamanic massage training by Georgien Wybenga, Shamanic teacher. The Barnes institute, Whitburn. £180- discounted rate £150- who need it. Release, resource, well-being: knowledge from Shamanism, Druidry through direct experience - massage/soundhealing, guided meditation/plant oil/warm stones. Info: sesoulsong@protonmail.com FB@sesoulsong

2024

28 June-2 July Bioróg Retreat - Discovering Mythic Landscape in Donegal, Ireland. Venue: Song House, Falcarragh. <https://thesonghouseireland.com/> Facilitators: Eimear Burke and Seán O'Gaoithin. FFI/bookings email seanogaoithin7@gmail.com

15 - 18 August Druid Camp in South-West Germany, in Waldhambach.

The website is www.druidencamp.de

NEWS OF 2025

2025 OBOD Gathering in the American West. We're working towards an American Western Nemata (gathering of groves)-the AWeN gathering, forming a non-profit, learning from other gathering coordinators, and searching for locations. Have you a great location idea in the US northwest? Are you organized, good at outreach, and would like to help? Do you have great advice to pass on? Vision statement: *"We work to spark an OBOD Druidic gathering in the Americas Western Mountains in 2025, seeking a centrally located place that is financially and physically accessible, imbedded in nature, for our Druid retreat."* This spark started in Montana's Shining Mountains Grove and has teammates from Nevada and Utah, we look forward to seeing you in 2025. Heather RR

Hroanrobbins@gmail.com