

TOUCHSTONE

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

Issue 316



Earth Stone visions

from the stone circle

by David B. Caimbeul

WINTER JOURNEYING

I am following the sun
skirting scratched branches of the southern wood
down the day's shortening.

I am embracing the cold body of the year
sinking to the dark ground.

I am making my home in the grave-place
searching the caverns of night
enquiring of ancestors and archetypes
seeking both shadow and light
that I may know my true face
and when the new fire is kindled
Rise!

Linda Davis

TOUCHSTONE is published by OBOD.

OBOD OFFICE ADDRESS: PO Box 1333, Lewes, E. Sussex, BN7 1DX email: office@druidry.org Phone UK: +44 1273 470888 US: +1 (857) 293-6468

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES please contact the office address above.

TOUCHSTONE SUBMISSIONS to the editor: Penny Billington, 4 Park View, Wells, BA5 1UW, UK email: obodtouchstone@gmail.com

Opinions/statements by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor, Order or publishers.

Submissions from members are welcomed, but it is not always possible to use everything offered for publication. Contributions may be edited without consultation unless a request is made to the contrary. Deadline is the first week of the preceding month: for events, 15th of the month before publication. Submissions may be printed on the OBOD website unless requested otherwise.

OBOD MESSAGE BOARD: register at www.druidry.org/board/dhp

MENTORS: for all enquiries about mentors please email Mentors@druidry.org or write to the Mentor Co-ordinator Steve Hounsome, PO Box 1333, Lewes, E. Sussex, BN7 1DX

Mentors@druidry.org is for members only.

LISTINGS OF GROVES, SEEDGROUPS
: www.druidry.org/community/groves-groups

FIND BOOKS, gifts and jewellery online at OBOD's marketplace: store.druidry.org



Hello to all in this last Touchstone of 2023.

Our cover picture, 'Stone circle with waxing gibbous moon and Ursa Major' reminds us to look for 'Awen from the stars:' so from the damp and cold, greetings also to the Southern Cross and all our S. Hemisphere kin. It's an edition of star and stone!

Our NE Scottish stones report finishes with Christianity, p12 - who will ever fathom those strange markings? and 'Badger stone' p3 cogitates on cup-and-ring markings - were they maps? cosmic records? It's the time of the ancestors, to walk our lands thoughtfully; to find a pine cone p4 on bare earth, or see clearly the landscape as a sentient being with her own story, as enshrined in the mytho-poetic understanding of Australia. p9.

Also this month, the divinatory arts are represented, p5, and Creirwy's poignant story reaches its conclusion, p6. We end with medico-magical tree lore, p 14, and lots of poems and news... as we tuck in to the feast of winter, this is definitely an edition to be savoured!

Mistletoe & Magic to all,

Dec '23 TOUCHSTONE Issue 316

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------------------|
| 3 | Bards' Page | |
| 4 | About a pine cone | <i>Lindsay Clark</i> |
| 5 | Sacred art...bibliomancy | <i>Heidi Hanley Smith</i> |
| 6 | Invisible child | <i>Lisa Corbell-Hollingsworth</i> |
| 9 | Temple of human Frailty | <i>Jude Neeme-Samson</i> |
| 12 | Scottish stones - Christianity | <i>Frances Neilson</i> |
| 14 | Open Forum response - the Aspen plus G&S | |
| 15 | Regular meetings | |
| 16 | Events | |

BADGER STONE, NEAR ILKLEY

Were you trying to tell us something?
These circles in the stone,
Are they a message
Written in a language we forgot
Before we obtained the word
Semiotics?

Or were you looking down into the valley
Across the moor
Down over the tiny waterfalls?
Is this a map
Of land that was not yet Elmet?
Are these the contour lines?
Or were you looking up into the sky
On cloudless nights?
Is this a map of heaven?
These rings and circles
Not yet weathered to oblivion,
Are they the stars?
Is this a supernova,
Shining through the galaxy,
The old, fantastic light
Of one already dead?

Alfie Howard



TRIAD

The Three Phases of Motherhood: Creating; Teaching; Letting Go

It is generally believed that motherhood is the hardest job in the world.

In the beginning, we give our bodies in the creation of our children.

As they grow and develop, we share our knowledge to teach them how to navigate the world.

Finally, when they reach adulthood, we are asked the most difficult of all tasks: watching them leave us to venture out on their own.

Mackena Kristine

TURN THE WHEEL

Ice white crystal carpets glisten at sunrise
Then seep as nectar 'neath the glowing skies
Cobweb kaleidoscopes drape naked trees
And dappled warmth whispers in the breeze
'Awaken Earth from your Winter sleep'
Life erupts, snowdrops nod, rivers run deep.

Turn the wheel



A sea of golden heads sway and chatter
Offering crows and mice a wholesome platter
And earthy scents of nature perfuses
To babbling brooks, bees and chaff chaff muses
Mingling with tones of ripening fruits in summer haze
Oh, these happy, sunny, halcyon days

Turn the wheel



Autumn yield shrouded in morning mist
The veil lifts and it becomes sun-kissed
Though, migrating mice will run in fear
As the rumbling thrasher gets ever near
Trees ablaze, their rustling embers billow
Fluttering down beneath oak and willow

Turn the wheel



Shimmering in the frigid winter chill
Frozen landscapes so peaceful and still
Acorns, chestnuts and sycamore seeds
Embraced by Mother who nurtures and feeds
Green holly decorated with red
Celebrate Winter – Autumn has now shed.

Turn the wheel



Janet Luck

We've been through a few minor family hardships lately. Nothing we can't get through, but I have been left feeling raw like a scraped knee. At about 5PM on Labor Day I stepped out of a hospital to bring a loved one home, and the angle of the sun made it suddenly feel like autumn. The equinox is upon us.

New Age spirituality often means sitting in a quiet room, surrounded by whatever trinkets make you feel good. Perhaps you imagine your body filling with light and you step through some magical door. In druidry we can do this sort of thing too, but we also find spirituality by living in the world and experiencing it completely. The angle of the sun, and this rawness and exhaustion feels like its own sort of magic, beautiful somehow.

Perhaps my life and my magic are like a pine cone, with a spine on each scale such that it is painful to hold it, even gently. It is a plain brown color, an earthy object. But it holds food for the birds and squirrels, and it forms a gorgeous spiral shape simply by doing the job of making one scale after another after another.



About a Pine cone

Lindsay Clark

I go for a walk, and when I get to the sandy scrub next to my neighborhood I take my sandals off. This yields the

delightful feeling of the fine grained sand under my feet as I walk, but also all the prickles from dried grass and plant detritus. I must pay much more attention to sand spurs and broken glass than I would with shoes on. I could step on a green plant without hurting my foot, but now that I am paying attention anyway, I would rather let it be and step around it.

This is druidry.

THE GYRE OF LIFE

Out of the Cimmerian Shade,
Into the obscure.
A forebearer's warmth,
The Earth as my familiar.

Chapter and verse,
For 21 cycles of Sun and Moon,
For 21 cycles of the Gyre.

Why am I?
Who am I?
What am I?

Occupation & admiration,
Disappointments & regret,
Both Cherished and vexatious memories.

Wisdom,
Enlightenment,
Awakened,
Made bare!

I am ready,
Her womb awaits.
Back to the Cimmerian Shade,
I shall be born anew!

Uriel Morningstar

Forecasting the future or finding answers to personal questions has been practised since ancient times by priests, shamans, scholars, monastics and ordinary people like you and me.

The ways in which one can practice divination is limited only by our imaginations. The use of tea, bones, crystal balls, water, entrails, bird flight, Ouija boards and tarot cards are only a few of the objects or natural elements that have found favor in the courts of nobles as well as the medicine lodges of indigenous people.

Without realizing it, I have been practising a form of divination for decades called bibliomancy - divination through interpreting a randomly chosen passage in a book. I called it journaling. I would read something from a spiritual book then write about what it meant to me, how it could help along my path.

I later learned about a Christian monastic practice termed 'lectio divina' in which Christian mystics would let the Holy Bible fall open to a random page and allow whatever scripture their finger fell upon to guide their prayer and, then listen for an answer from God. This practice lasted for centuries, often using Psalms for preference, and for some time, the family Bible was believed to have an even more powerful divinatory affect, perhaps because of the energy of the ancestors that filtered through the pages.

Christians were not the first to use the written word as a divination tool. The Babylonians of the 18th century BCE used the Enuma Anu Enlil, or Collection of Omens, written on clay

The Sacred Art of Bibliomancy

Heidi Hanley Smith

tablets to divine the future. Could this be the origin of the biblical story of the three wise men or magi who foretold the birth of the Christ child and went looking for him?

Greeks, in antiquity, assigned the responsibility of interpreting the Sibylline Oracles, a collection of prophecies, from a singular female seer figure, that developed over a period of time from the 4th century BCE to long after the establishment of Christianity as an official religion.

Romans had their own two-streamed method of bibliomancy called Sortes Homericae and Sortes Virgilanae which utilized random lines of poetry to divine through meditation or dreaming an answer to a question. This form of bibliomancy is often referred to as stitchomancy: divination by text other than a necessarily sacred book.

Many cultures and religions practiced bibliomancy using books such as the I Ching, The Tao te Ching, the Quran and the Bhagavad Gita. 16th century nobles in Turkey and Iran used the Falnama, or Book of Omens to combine words, art and magical recipes to divine the future. Outside the realm of religion, books of literature and poetry such as the works of Shakespeare and Rumi were used to practice rhapsodomancy, the sister to bibliomancy.

In our time, the practice has expanded to include basically any book or text that has meaning to the practitioner. A critical component is that you use a text you trust, that you find inspiration and meaning in. After all, would



you consult a prophet you did not trust? Intuition is also a key component of this form of divination. Matthew Kosinski, in his article *Hearing Voices and Talking Back: On Bibliomancy*, points out that “part of the fun of bibliomancy is hashing out the message for yourself...The occult etymologically speaking, is that which is hidden.” Like any form of divination, the practitioner is not usually given a boldly painted sign with the answer to their question. It is the engagement with the subconscious, the interpretation of symbols, emotions and a small, still voice within that provide the guidance or inspiration.

For some, connection and context may be found in the Bible, I Ching or Quran, for others Rumi, Shakespeare, Robert Frost or philosophers like Emerson or Thoreau. Yet others may use works by Tolkien, the Harry Potter stories or Outlander. (Yes, I tried this with astonishing results). There are also digital bibliomancy sites that offer spiritual or literary quotes to choose from, such as Mystic Scripts.com and Labyrinthos.com. A handful of books on bibliomancy can be found via a Google search and these also provide a book of quotes that you can use for your practice.

The process is quite simple. When you have chosen a book to use, begin the divination practice as you would any other:

1. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.
2. If you normally light a candle or begin with any other ritual, do so.
3. Set your intention or question.
4. Let the book fall open or simply open it to a random page. You may wish to point to a particular section of the text or read through the page and find the words that resonate or speak to your question.

5. You may wish to journal, pray or reflect on what has been discovered.

6. You may wish to make an offering or simply thank the muse for bringing this knowledge or inspiration to you.

Bibliomancy may be an ancient practice, but it has survived the test of time and found its way into popular culture. Philip K. Dick used it as literary device in writing *The Man in the High Castle*. It has shown up in the works of other authors such as Philip Pullman, J.K. Rowling and Paul Coelho.

Should you choose to try out this form of divination, may you find it a gift to your practice and a blessing on your Druid path.

*When considering a triad for the practicum,
I found myself driven to write this instead.
Not knowing the first thing about poems, I
not sure if this would be classed as one.*

*'Everything within this universe,
without exception, is made of atoms*

The ancient crystal and the grain of sand
The flowing stream and the swathes of
grass
The noble trees and the swift fox
The humble human

All atoms
Holding different forms
Though all essentially the same
We are all one
And so shall it always be'

Frances A Sage



From Part 1: Creirwy looks back...

'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?.....

Creirwy the slut. All a man had to do was recite her a love poem, whisper shallow compliments meant to loosen her legs, and she would be his.

Creirwy the loner. Wasn't she considered a prize once? Why did anyone ever think this? A fat old maid who still lived under her mother's roof.

Creirwy the harridan, the hag. Children and lovers stayed as far from her as possible. Even the hungry mutts who prowled for scraps avoided the angry looking woman. No wonder she lived alone.

Was I angry? Maybe. Maybe not. Anger was a cloak that kept me safe, either way. Alone, in my own little cabin, I still told myself the old stories in all the different languages I could remember. Sometimes I even sang. But I allowed no other being through my door, but for the occasional spider and butterfly.

I had just passed my forty-fifth winter when the Phantom Bard came to our territory. No one knew who he was or where he had come from. His head was bare of all hair, but the silver beard he wore made up the loss. He spoke a multitude of languages, even many I had never heard. Small dark eyes peered out from beneath the hood he

The Invisible Child Pt. 2

Lisa Corbell-Hollingsworth

usually wore. And though he was rumored to have come to the harp

later than most, he was a master. His music rang with mystery and loss. He travelled with a bright young boy he called Daire, who seemed to be learning the Bardic ways from him. There was little resemblance between the dark man and the sunny youngster beyond the limp and the occasional grimace.

Creirwy watched their performance from the corner of her eye as she carried her baskets of herbs back to her cabin. As the man plucked his harpstrings and the tiny angel with the dark curls watched him and sang for the gathering crowd, she slowed down, drawn to watch, despite herself. When the boy looked her way and smiled a smile full of sunlight, she nearly dropped her baskets. Drawing in her breath, she gathered them to her and began to walk faster. The man's voice stopped her.

"Friends! I come to you, to the land of my birth, my blood, to seek healing for my son! Though my harp sings to him in the night, allowing him some sleep and relief from the pain that has plagued him from birth, even my harp, with all of its magic, cannot find the words, the note, the touch that will heal him." He looked around, meeting tear-filled eyes throughout the crowd. His own eyes rested on Creirwy and he smiled gently.

"I've come home," he said. "To find the one whose eyes shine gold in the sunrise and silver when the moon is high, whose heart is so filled with Light that it cannot contain it!"

Again he smiled. Creirwy clasped her hands to her mouth and shook her head, then

pulled them away again.

"No," she groaned. "No! You have wasted your journey, sir! No such eyes shine as you say! No such heart...oh! The person you seek is long gone! She is dead!" Just then the boy rushed toward her, dragging one leg behind him.

"Please," he said, looking up at her. His little hand, so warm, took hers. The shock of his touch resonated throughout her entire being and she gasped as if in pain. "Pease, Aunt!"

She looked at them both, the boy and his father. She heard again her mother's voice, the taunts of the young men, the screams of the youngsters who had such fun pointing at her and running away. Her head hurt, so did her throat, her chest, as the cry that had been stuck inside her for so long gathered itself and moved, finally, toward release. The boy tugged her hand.

Creirwy yelled, cried out, and the tears that fell from her eyes became a small stream that flowed toward her cabin, forming into a pond just beneath an oak that had been growing there for thirty years. Unable to stop herself now, she gathered the boy into her arms and continued to weep until he began to squirm.

"You will drown me, Aunt," he gasped. As the two began to laugh, Creirwy reached her arms out to the man who looked on fondly.

"Brother," she whispered.

Affagdu stepped toward her and they clung to each

other for a long moment.

"Welcome home, Brother."

"Welcome home, Sister," he replied.

He nodded toward the pond, then toward little Daire. He looked back at her, tilting his head in question.

"*One drop?*" he asked. She laughed again, feeling the tickle deep in her heart and throat as she did so.

"*One drop? Nonsense!* There is enough for everyone who needs it!" Brother and sister smiled at each other as Daire hugged the stray dogs that had begun to venture closer.

"*Sounds easy,*" Affagdu teased. His sister pondered this, then slowly shook her head.

"Easy is not the word I would use."

As I said, my brother is a hero. And my nephew is a gift from the gods. And my eyes, fully open, shine silver and gold in turns.

Creirwy the Bard? Maybe.

Creirwy the Healer? Perhaps.

Creirwy the Teacher? Possibly.



Aunt Creirwy, who bakes honey cakes for the many children who gather near her door each day? Most assuredly!

That's the thing... when Light meets Shadow with Peace, the choices become limitless.

For many years I have undertaken journeys to places that have touched my soul and spirit.

When I was young in

Southern Africa I walked up Mount Aux Sources, visited God's Window and watched fish eagles on the waters of the Okavango swamp. They all remain within my memory and when I close my eyes and think of them I can cross time and space and enter their purity and purpose. Without even knowing it, long before entering the Druid path, I felt connection to sacred place and visited ancient beings and gathered blessings from star temples in my homeland.

Here in Bandaiyan, the name given to The Body of Australia by the late Ngarinyin elder David Mowaljarlai, we live on a low lying island continent. The mountains of the Eastern ranges form two sequences of sacred peaks from north and south. Both meet at the most easterly point of the continent know as Mount Wollumbin (Mount Warning), the cloud catcher. The cloud catcher is the seventh mountain in both systems and is the place where the first drop of light touches our land each morning as the sun rises from the Pacific Ocean in the east. From the south, north-east of Naarm (Melbourne), where the rainbow serpent song line (Ley Line) passes by from Uluru and Kata Tjuta, the journey north begins at Mount Donna-Bu-Ang and follows north along the dividing range through Mount Bogong and Mount Kunama Namadgi (Snow Mountain), or Mount Kosciuszko, the highest point in the whole continent.

Bandaiyan: Australia depicted as a birthing woman.

Mount Kunama Nanadgi is found heading south from Sydney through Canberra and up into the Snowy mountain highlands. This

The Temple of human Frailty Jude Neeme-Samson

is on the left pelvis of her body. Mount Bogong is just a little further south and it is this landscape temple that creates the

ecosystem for the experience of the temple of human frailty.

<https://www.facebook.com/decolonialatlas/posts/bandaiyan-the-body-of-australia-by-the-late-ngarinyin-elder-david-mowaljarlai-ea/1189747804525622/>

The Snow Mountain has many mysteries to it and the lessons of the Bogong moth stories form part of the understanding of living with frailty in the light of spirit. This temple is also close to the source of three rivers: the Thredbo (Snowy) River, which forms the foundation of the temple, the Murray and the Murrumbidgee rivers, which together form one of the lungs of the Murray-Darling river system.

To get here one can drive south from Canberra and snake one's way up to a town called Jindabyne and then either follow the river valley up to Thredbo or turn right and travel along the Porcupine ridge and land up at a small town called Perisher where a short walk takes you to the rocks that overlook both the valley and the mountainous highlands.

If you go up through the river valley you arrive in the village of Thredbo and after ascending via the ski lift there is a walkway to the summit. Along the way you cross over one of the creeks that feed the snowy river and if you veer right and follow the river and head up you find a flat open rock where you can lay down. It is here that you would be suspended between the earth and the stars above should you be able to spend the night here. It is also possible to recline there during

the day and feel the stars in the sky during the day. The veils are very thin and vulnerable, and the whole place slows you down to listen to the song of the stars, the heartbeat of the mountain and the musical rhythms of the rivers. During winter these places are under snow drifts and cannot be easily accessed, however, in the summer months, short walks and hours of listening are available to reflect upon the frailty of being small within such a vast temple of earth and sky. At the same time one can feel the universality of human integration with the sun, moon, stars and earth. There is no separation.

Many sacred places have a focal point or structure to help the person seeking its guidance to find where and how to be present to its mysteries. The temple of human frailty is far more ephemeral and evanescent. The pilgrim searching to reflect upon their frailty and discover their inner strength for healing and spiritual presence needs to walk, listen and wander through the landscape. The lesson may come when a ripple of light on the brook next to the trail or a voice of a bird in the cold wind reaches your body. It is an open place where one has to slow down to the speed of nature or you may miss it, or even be caught up in the popular overlay of a ski resort or summer hiking destination.

This dreamtime songline that belongs here tells us of what engaging with vulnerability, curiosity and trusting our innate knowing of our direction in life can be. The Bogong Moth visits these highlands. Even though in recent years the city lights have distracted and disoriented the millions of moths that migrate over a thousand kilometres each year to get there, there is now a collaboration in the early southern spring months where cities are turning off all unnecessary lights in the evenings and, over the last two years, there is

a slow return of the moths. Hopefully, a return that will bring them back from the brink of extinction. This is already a lesson in frailty. We can learn, acknowledge and embrace that we are dependent on others to exist and flourish.

The migration of the Bogong moth is unusual as, besides surviving the heat, it appears to hold no reason for their life cycle. Each spring, they emerge from beneath the soil in Darling River plains up to 1,000 kilometres away, and navigate their way to the Alpine region. After spending the summer in the cooler mountain rock crevices and caves, they return to their birthplace to reproduce over winter. They become, as in all moth life cycles, new larvae again growing under the soil from plant roots and other plant matter. During the summer the moths go into a state known as aestivation, which is like hibernation but during the hot and dry summer. The moths find cool caves and survive the summer in a state of dormancy. Then they fly the long journey home to lay their eggs. During the hot months the indigenous people came to the highlands and carried out cultural festivals and feast on the moths. The Moths' summer sleep enabled communities to carry out important social interchange and cultural nurturing.

How do the moths know where to go? They don't have an elder generation of moths to show them the way. The moths are night time travellers and have an internal compass that, along with external landmarks and star patterns, they find their way. It still remains a mystery how and when they choose to leave and travel such a vulnerable journey with many predators along the way. Is it because the heat of the plains would kill them? Whatever the reason they are the first identified migratory nocturnal insect to use

this kind of navigation. Imagine the dangers of a journey where we don't know the end point, the dangers on the way, the constructed dangers of the city lights that take them off their path and then sitting still waiting for the right time to continue the journey home. Many a metaphor for the vulnerability of our human life. The Bogong Moth also has an ultra-sonic inner ear that warns them of the dangers of predators like bats. What inner ear do we have that warns us of danger? How soft is this voice and how easily can we not take heed of its voice, or even miss its alarm?

In a dreamtime story Bogong Moth was once brightly coloured like our native wildflowers. Ignoring her husband's advice, she went to explore the mysterious White Mountain in the distance. As she neared her destination, snow fell, trapping her. Spring came and as the snow thawed, Myee the Bogong Moth was released. Taking flight, her bright and vibrant colours remained, soaking into the snow and leaving her a dull brown. And where this snow melted, beautiful flowers emerged. This is a story of clarity of purpose against all odds and yet bringing something new into the world through offering parts of ourselves, sometimes without even knowing what that might be. New life born of the colours of our life.

The Bogong Moth, and any moth really, is a small very soft and vulnerable creature, frail and susceptible to damage. Yet, like Myee, we can learn to be aware of the advice around us and engage with our journeys with our own inner source of wisdom. What is right for you? What are the risks that might be unforeseen? Curiosity, the urge to explore and traverse new territory, and an open and inquiring mind, are all Moth qualities. Learn to be careful to focus on our ulti-

mate goal, the distraction of an artificial light may not be easy to resist! Where in our life do we seem to keep on trying, unable to give up? Where are we striking out on a new journey, unknown territory and dangers for ourselves? We may change colour, leave our own mark through our adventures. The moth strikes against artificial light and seeks other natural answers to new dilemmas. As Myee the Bogong Moth journeyed new song lines, we can be prepared to take flight and explore unknown territory ourselves! Following our heart has its risks. Or maybe you will unexpectedly change your colour, as our sister Bogong did. Or leave your mark – in many ways Bogong Moth is a symbol of artists as much as explorers. Life will certainly offer a challenge, will you accept?

The Temple of Human Frailty is a place, it is also open and variable. In many ways it is the landscape of our own journey and the courage to undertake it through inner knowledge that frailty, risk and new paths are all part of the temple we create through our frailty.



CHRISTIANITY

Standing stones have, of course, been erected since Neolithic times. But

if some of the symbol stones were of later origin (ie 5th -7th centuries CE) this could fit one theory put forward, that the pagan iconography and signs they represented could be evidence of a Pictish protest against the takeover of Christianity and began to be used to express that. They could also have been nothing to do with a reaction to Christianity instead being used to identify sacred places of pagan worship. This might explain why so many of them are now located in or near churchyards. Indeed Pope Gregory in 601CE writing to Bishop Mellitus recommended the purifying and reuse of pagan sites as a way of helping the local population to accept the change to Christianity.

Certainly the symbol stones seem to have been gradually taken over by Christian iconography with no Pictish symbols at all on the class 3 stones. This leaves the interesting thought that the earlier stones, with both Pagan and Christian symbols, might have been used in the same time period by both Pagans in their ceremonies and Christian ministers in their preachings.

THE MEANING OF THE SYMBOLS

The meaning of the symbols is another unknown. Many stones have beautifully carved animals, all of which would be familiar to anyone owning the Druid Animal Oracle. Every animal from boars to snakes is represented. These have been interpreted by McHardy in a Druidic way too, with the boar, for example, being linked to masculinity and warriorhood as well as the goddess, the sun and the ancestors. However there are also mythical animals like the 'Pictish

The stones of NE Scotland Pt 4... Christianity Frances Neilson

beastie' and kelpies.

The beastie has been described as a 'swimming ele-

phant' though it is doubtful if any Pict had ever seen an elephant on land never mind swimming! The top half is similar to a dolphin but it also looks like it has legs so this symbol really is a mystery. Kelpies are more familiar mythical beings portrayed on many stones. There are numerous folk tales about these water horses which carry anyone who risks mounting them off to a watery grave. If caught and bridled though they will do the work of 10 ordinary horses for the keeper of the bridle. There is a slightly different take on these tales from the Isle of Barra where one kelpie turned first into a horse then later into a handsome man who had fallen in love with and wanted to marry the woman who had bridled and tamed him.

Other symbols are more abstract and leave much to the imagination. The V-rod and crescent and the Z-rod and double disc are probably the most well known but there are others like the 'tuningfork' and the notched rectangle. The tuning fork seems to have been widely accepted as a broken sword similar to votive offerings made in rivers and other waters of the region, though other interpretations are certainly possible given the many layers of potential meaning in all these symbols. The V-rod and crescent have been interpreted as a combination of the moon as a feminine principle being split into three sections by the rod, possibly a masculine one. This could also represent the three phases of the moon as well as the three phases of the triple goddess. For these ancestors there was likely to be less separation between the everyday and the sacred so both could easily be represented here. The V-rod

has also been interpreted as a broken arrow, a death symbol or a streak of lightning from the male sky god. Another idea is that one end of the rods could be a flower in bud and the other an open flower which could then be linked with night and day or the passage of the seasons. Suggestions for the double disc and z-rod include the possibility that the double discs convey a large and small sun, representing the sun of summer and winter, or might represent round barrows but like all these symbols they are open to a wide range of interpretations, almost as many as there are people to imagine them.

The reality is that we may never be certain as to the precise meaning of any of these symbols but the idea that they have been used in the context of a farming culture with a belief system which had reverence for the ancestors and a mother goddess does have much to recommend it. Also it is worth remembering that just because the carvers of these stones were experts at depicting a wide range of animals, birds and every day objects, it does not necessarily mean they were incapable of abstract thought. So the idea that notched rectangles might represent a deconstructed chariot or a plan of a chambered tomb may not be so unrealistic as it might first appear.



OH OAK, MIGHTY QUEEN

You sleep so long
after the winterspell is spoken.
It's late in the year, you finally show your
leaves.

The world is green, before you come again
to show your reign of old and mighty, sheer
everlasting, Majesty.

You nourish your children with your fruits.
Both, animals, the four and two legged ones.
And human kind. They eat you well.
While eating and making meal from your
fruits,
they smell and taste and drink so deep the
wisdom of your kind.

Oh Majesty, dear Mighty Queen,
sing your song again,
after your leaves fall in colorful autumn
times,
to cover warm and clothly the floor.

Sing your song deep in you
in white and cold winter days.
while only the wise and pure at heart
can hear your song.

They are one with you.
Two hearts are one, oh Mighty Queen.

Listen, listen to the Oaks song.

Deep in winter times

Deep in Her

Deep in You.

Do you hear Her?

Do you really listen?

She tells you her dream of the unseen new
world.

of the new spring,

the new cycle of her reign.

She knows she'll be born again.

Every year, every spring.

She knows.

And so do you.

RoswithaRupprecht

OPEN FORUM

Dear Penny and Cally,
Re: Gifts of Druidry – My journey with Aspen – Cally Palmer

I so enjoyed this personal reflection concerning one Druid's journey. For me, Cally's account of her relationship with a particular tree, an Aspen, demonstrated the enormous contribution that trees make to our lives on a deeper level. The Aspen is one of the Bach flower remedies.

I have studied the work of Dr Edward Bach and his 38 flower remedies, using them to rebalance emotional states which in turn support physical health. The Bach remedy method is a complete health system that can be self-administered and is safe to use; it has no side effects or interactions with conventional medicine. Dr Bach developed it specifically with the aim of empowering people – it does not require engagement with a 'professional' (although those registered with The Bach Centre have specialised training and experience), but we can learn to use it ourselves effectively through continued use and the information available freely on The Bach Centre website.

The Aspen is one of his remedies 'for those who have fears'. I was struck by how Cally had transformed over time, time spent with the Aspen and Druidry, to become a more confident and outgoing individual who enjoys life more fully - I care so much less, and yet I care so much more! I'm bolder and brassier...it is only in looking back...that I realise how far I've come and how much I've grown.

The Aspen is specifically used for fears and worries of unknown origin, inexplicable anxiety or sense of foreboding, the vague unknown fears of something terrible going to happen. The tree's name comes from the Greek *aspis* meaning a round shield; the adult leaves are a serrated circular shape. Aspen was the wood used to make shields and there was a traditional association of Aspen with shielding from the darkness associated with fears. Aspen was thought to offer protection of possessions and believed to deter thieves.

Dr Bach said "Health is our heritage, our right. It is the complete and full union between soul, mind and body...". As Druids we understand this principle and when we look back on our own journeys with trees, like Cally, we may see how much they have contributed to this harmony.

Many Blessings

Lynn Rhiannon Selkie Genevieve

<https://www.bachcentre.com/en/>

The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies – Edward Bach

The Plants of Dr Bach: Molecules, Remedies and Lore – Gwenda Kyd



THE OWL IN THE OAK SEED GROUP:

Informal and relaxed members' meetings monthly and seasonal celebrations. Indoors/outdoors.

Norfolk/Cambridgeshire/Lincoln borders.
 Email: Janette at janette.putt@btinternet.com
 or Janet at petejan65@btinternet.com



EVENTS

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 oboddeeplisteningcircle@gmail.com for link.

Members' regular group meetings:

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 drvnon@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.

SILVER BEAR GROVE Middlesbrough, County Durham. TS3 9DD. Contact Paul 07923575364 Email: silverbear-grove@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.

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

2nd Mainland Druid Gorsedd, 1-3 March 2024, near Cologne (Germany) All Druid-grade members of OBOD living in Mainland Europe should have received an e-mail inviting them to participate in this Gorsedd (the mail was sent at the end of October). Are you a Druid-grade OBOD member who would like to join us, but did not receive the invitation? Then just let us know by sending an e-mail to: info@oakwisdom.de, and we'll gladly send you the invitation and additional info.

June 28-July 2nd 2024 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 - currently 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. Would you like to help?

Montana's Shining Mountains Grove & teammates from Nevada and Utah. Heather RR Hroanrobbins@gmail.com

Image: 'Did you manage to see the aurora in early November? We are fortunate to be facing due north as we look out to sea from the end of our street in Saltburn UK...this is how it looked for us. The three bright patches are ships at anchor in the River Tees estuary.'

John Davies

