

TOUCHSTONE

The journal of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids
October 2022

Issue 302



Summer in Snowdonia - Bre Ash

"ALL THE FAITH I HAVE"

Sunrise
Nightfall
Next breath
That's all
Earth stand
Tend seed
All you have?
All I need.

Sharon Shaw

PERFUMED

In the perfumed light,
the first syllables gather
waiting for the heart
that recognises them.

Keith MacNider

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Welcome to the Pre-Samhain edition: and we are approaching the end of the T'stone year. This month we're contemplative in soft colours, with bursts of brightness - a Neapolitan-ice-cream-coloured geological, volcanic depiction of Snowdon on the cover; a Bel fire ritual resonating from the opposite side of the wheel, a summer starfish. So not quite time for turnips or trickery yet, but a foretaste of ancestral connection, *p 8*: and more of a Samhain theme next month.

This is the time of study and concentration - so no apologies for the longer articles. *P 6* invites us along on the author's magical journey from childhood and *p 10* is a master class in becoming intimate with the land we might move to, especially for those who long to feel 'its benevolence, its welcome, its abundance and its life...' As the earth is laid bare, now is the ideal time to get more than acquainted. Part of the process might be hugging trees, and *p 4* finds one Druid doing just that.

Lastly, thanks to all for the glue that binds each edition together - diverse, inspiring, magical: what we would do without our poetry - and our bards?

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BRAVING THE STORM

After the keening of the storm
peace
the sky lays healing hands
across the sea
seal song from the skerries twists my heart
flip-flopping through the shallows
broken sandals
washed by a slipping tide
my bag packed tight beside me, monstrous
in its shiny skin
'Better out than in' I'd screamed
wading the plastic vomit of the storm
Now the sand sparkles mirror clean, a ball-
room
for a dancing soul like mine
the bag and I take to the shell strewn floor
bleached skirts tangle, swirl in selkie rhythm
to the ugly clank of can and bottle
Old sea hag, I'm proud of my grey rags, my
brimming bags
my dreads salt-stiff as urchin spines
my green forgiving eyes of wet
sea glass

For she who lost the art to swim
forgot the lore
of tide and moon
the machair is a magic world between
Amongst the harebells and the scarlet pim-
pernels
where purple scented thyme runs into sand
half cailleach, half orphan of the sea
spread like a starfish husk
I scry the shimmering oceans of the sky

The terns spin high and bright as stars
to weave me a sail of billowing blue

Come moon, Come tide

Come grey sea maid

I hear them cry

swooping to pluck ropes of glitter from the
waves

Vanessa Fielding

DRUID'S LIFE

singing in rain and walking in woods,
talking with trees and enjoying campfire,
asking ancestors and feeling moonphases,
humming with bees and breathing smell of
flowers,
tasting harvest and watching stars,
bathing in morning glow and meditating
with stones,
immersing to ocean and perceiving shadows,
touching sky and beeing rooted in earth,
believing in rebirth and honoring divinity,
following the hare and staying in the
moment,
celebrating the wheel oft the year and loving
life,
dancing with nwyfre and tasting awen,
traveling through time and flying into other-
world,
beeing connected to my body and healing my
soul,
beeing nature - beeing one

Tina Igelbrink



BEL FIRE

Through the woodling thicket, Bel fires grew,
Through sapling cloaked and mist-born yews,
Echoed murmurs of the horns they blew,
Sacred oak, sacred fires, sacred through and
through

Up crept the wyrd and crawling things,
Weaving as the night-lark sings,
Round buzzed the chords of stinged wings,
Called to stones – the maker's rings,

And here we gather,

Here we stand,

Our ritual on ancient land,

Gods to gods, hand in hand.

Eric Schoch

Although my Bardic training has scarcely begun, the grove in my N/E London garden is well established.

A Grove in my garden PETER HAMMOND

Some years ago my dog died; a lovely old lady Labrador, and her Earthly remains were cremated. Later her companion died also, and I buried them at the end of the garden; honouring them with an Oak sapling. There was already a Holly and a Yew planting, and I later planted a Hornbeam and some Birches. My garden is not big, but since the Oak and one Birch have grown tall and strong, they have done a good job of squeezing in to it. The Hornbeam has invaded my neighbour's garden, the Holly forms the boundary to the back, and the Yew is biding its time. The remaining Birches, except one, have filled any gaps in the canopy. The final Birch is mature, but standing dead, and will remain there while it is safe.

Together they form a grove, but what could make it a sacred grove?

Next to the grove are two places of meditation. There you will find no Buddha; no joss sticks; no silver bells. Instead in one there are plain Alder walls, some water, mellow lighting and an electric stove with Scandinavian rocks. Yes; a sauna. It is, significantly, the second sauna to stand on that site. I very much miss my first sauna. Not so exotic: the wood from a builder's yard, and oozed a troublesome sticky sap; the tiny wood-burning stove came from ebay; the rocks from a pile of road-builders scalpins in a lay-by in Scotland; the fuel from builder's skips.

In Finland they say that every sauna has its own spirit; saunatonnttu, but this saunatonnttu disappeared one evening when the fire escaped from the stove, and destroyed the

sauna. I was devastated. Not only did I lose my sauna, with all the

cost and months of work, and the wonderful memories past and future; not only did I almost lose the second place of meditation - my mancave, with the two classic motorbikes that live there; there was also a moment, when I first saw the greed and hunger of the flames, that I almost lost my marbles too.

It was the day after the fire that I realised that the flames had also damaged the trees. The shed is directly beneath them, and had the fire brigade not turned up when they did, the shed and the trees would not have survived. In the days that followed, I found myself humbly apologising in person to each of the trees. A part of my own healing; yes, but also perhaps (as Bogart said) the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

I have always liked that little corner of the garden: the trees obscure the view of the rows of houses and provide a little place for nature. There have been hedgehogs, and there are often foxes; birds, of course. Now though, there were trees too. Not just an Oak, Hornbeam, and some Birches etc, but trees - living, breathing, fertile, and vulnerable trees. Trees with a life and a history, trees that are homes, trees that are mortal. Trees that some would say have spirits.

This is where my spiritual path finally changes course; my search for the divine escapes of the confines of the Church. This is where I become... I don't know what I become. Not a Druid; not yet. I don't know enough about contemporary Druidy to claim that title - and I certainly don't know enough about the Druids of old. I am not even sure that I want, or need, a title.

I am.

Jesus got in to a lot of trouble for using these two words, yet so often the only words that make any sense.

That liminal day when I dared hug the Oak, I asked forgiveness for putting her life at risk. I didn't hear a reply. I did, however, know that we shared vulnerability – and in that, we were equal. The Oak is strong, and I'm amazed how she dances in the wind. When the storms blow, I watch her with my heart in my mouth – but the Oak then really seems to come alive. Perhaps a healthy tree in a storm – living on the edge; laughing in the face of danger, is comparable to my youthful exploits on my then-young Triumph: kerb to kerb on country lanes; trusting my life to a few square inches of rubber and my reactions to the unforeseen.

After addressing the Oak, I placed my hands of the fissured bark of the tall Birch, and that of the smaller Birches, and the smoother skin of the Hornbeam. The Hornbeam is mysterious: I can never remember its name, and have to look it up – the name will not lodge in my mind. At first I thought it was a Beech, but the leaves don't remain on the lower branches in the winter, and the seeds don't make that tasty snack. I have often thought that this tree didn't speak to me – not that I thought the others did – but this one did not. It seemed to sit there, reluctantly making the best of the situation in which it found itself. Perhaps it yearned for space and solitude, and to be left alone. Maybe I can identify with it after all.

I stroked the leaves of the Yew, and then nodded politely to the Holly (Holly and I don't hug).



Lastly I stretched across to touch the trunk of the other tree. Hang on; what other tree? It seems there are two Hornbeams. What!? Where did that come from? Why did I not know that I had two Hornbeams? Is it my imagination, or are Hornbeams really such reserved individuals? This tree must have been a part of the original planting from all those years ago, and had been quietly growing without drawing any attention.

If all this gives my grove sacrality, how then can I best use it? Being at the beginning of my studies I still have much to learn, and can only guess. It is helpful though to be able picture the grove in my meditation.

The trees that form the grove create an enclosure with a central clearing. Entering between two Birch trunks, one must stoop beneath a low-hanging branch. Once inside there is room for seating and a central feature, such as a small fire. I am understandably nervous about a fire, but there are other options: I am currently resorting an iron cauldron, which I plan to fill with rocks, and a solar-powered water pump, (although my wife prefers petunias, and a plastic Robin).

Perhaps I can sit there between saunas, and look for my Saunatonnttu.

I hope that the rules of OBOD don't insist on rituals that involve naked dances, and chanting at midnight. The neighbours might have something to say. However, I can imagine enjoying the space in the company of friends, and sharing pints of Holy ale (you do share pints of Holy ale in OBOD, don't you? If not, I'm going back to the church).

pdouglashammond.co.uk

"I am tumbling, swept up in a laughter of sea berries and salted snowflakes; accelerat-

ing heavenwards, as if transecting the curve of Earth's rim, an angelic gravitational tug suddenly lands me down in the gentle rock-a-bye cradle of Orkney Airport. I had arrived on the rearing horse of an Indigo hurricane named Storm Doris. In my pocket I was carrying the hope of a friend – ten years awaiting a child. Eve of the Snow Moon, I sat amongst the stones of Neolithic Maehouse, clutching a small silver Hare. All around me danced and chased giggling bare footed children, deeply loved, feral and free – an ancient playful shimmering from eons past, the offspring of the Shining Ones – I knew what to do."

Orkney had been calling me, like a pulsing beat from a Skara Brae drum and even at my first foot fall there, the giddy whispers were already all around. I had come to perform a ritual, not sure where or how as it was long before my OBOD days, yet like many of us, I intuitively felt that a Druid heart dwelt within me. I often pondered why people believed I could help them in this strange way and why do some of us seem to have this calling where people and animals know to seek us out?

My preparations were intense. Walking meditations in storm Force 10 contrasted with the holy stillness as I crawled into the 'eye' of ancient burial mounds. I was searching and felt continuously guided, astounded by the presence of voices prophesying the arrival of guides such as Owl which would then descend to be by my side. Time was of the essence as the Full Moon approached and I

Pr-Hare: Prayer Hares 1 THERESE KENNEDY

needed to find a charm to channel my ritual. On the eve of the Snow Moon, in the ghost

damp port of Stromness, I spied, amongst the bric-a-brac of a Newsagent window, a tiny silver handmade Hare with crescent moon ears. With some fuss it was retrieved from the display and I was astounded to discover that it was made by an artist that I had known of decades before, but not connected with Scotland at all. This person, had once sailed, and so had I, on a 'Dawn Treader' style wooden sailing ship, *The Marguerite Explorer*, with a sea-gypsy called Swanny. Mentioning this to the shopkeeper she smiled and said the artist was her husband and they had moved to Orkney recently; they had been trying to contact Swanny for years, I said *here is his email*.

That evening, fully cleansed and fasted, clutching the Hare, I watched the sunset from the ancient settlement of Maehouse. I was pondering my ritual and what to do. A luminosity of sunlight and evening air rippled the waters and all around bare footed children began to play and chase; I saw an older man, step out, holding aloft a new born baby joyfully raising it up to the heavens with Venus ascending. What struck me most in this momentary time-slip was the intensity of the love that was all around and the depth of happiness in their being.

Dusk fell and I honoured each of the sacred stones of the Ring of Brodgar. Crossing the circle amidst the rising stars I found a pure spring water pool in a natural stone bowl at the centre. I placed the Hare in the pool, glinting in the frosted moonlight. First dew, I returned enrobed



with flower crown, wind danced bare foot, prayed and felt the presence of such a beautiful lady. (It was only in my Bardic Grade that I met her again and then knew her as our Mother Goddess, whom I now love so very much).

Facing the 11th Stone I raised the Hare up to the heavens as I had been shown in my vision.

This was my first Prayer Hare : Pr-Hare

From that moment onwards, I continued to make Prayer Hares but out of clay, for people seeking intervention from the spiritual realm. I see it as being asked to open a channel for their hopes, often it is of a soul to implant, or of healing, of resolving a relationship or sometimes a simple quest for direction at times of life haze.

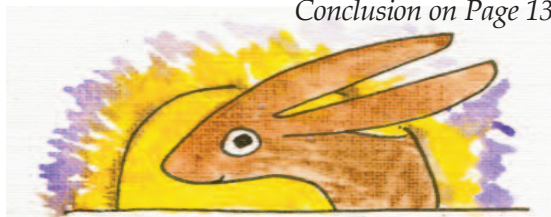
I explain that I shall weave their wish into the magnetic magic of clay, Hare shaped, unique in form to them. Once created I will take their Hare to a sacred place, of its choosing, perform a ritual and invite the Goddess to listen to their Pr-Hare. I then bury or secret their Hare, as it decides, and let the compassion of the spiritual realm do its work.

Many of these Pr-Hares are now hidden in faraway places from Snowden to Arctic Mountains, the hallowed moss of magical Isles, adrift in the blessing of Dutch Water Meadows and playfully buried in the wildness of Cornish Coves.

Yet, how did I come upon being a channel of Pr-Hare ?

I believe that we all had a beginning in the cradle of a wise one as children ...

Conclusion on Page 13



I AM THE TREES

I am the innocence of youth,
nestled in three white Birches.

I am a forest sage,
kneeling before the portal of mighty Oak.

I am an Earth Keeper,
the flowers and berries of Faerie
Hawthorn.

I am a gracefully aging crone,
a nurturing Grandmother Maple.

I am a guardian of the wild places,
the heartbeat of the Wildwood Pines.

I am the bridge between earth and sky,
the sacred Ash.

I am who I am
by the gifts of the trees
along the path of the Eternal Forest.

Heidi Smith



Invitation:

The starfish - seashore inspiration symbol

**Renewal*

**Creativity*

**Healing*

**Sense/feel*

**Psychic instinct*

**'As above, so
below'**

*The Seashell Druid
offers a creative and
spiritual journey
across the seashore*

Linda Lunan



www.lindalunan.com

There are any number of reasons why we may shy away from ancestor work. The difficulties of finding information can seem

formidable. Parents and other relatives may think it's best to gloss over family information, particularly in cases such as an adoption, an estranged sibling or other relative, or where there has been trauma. We may be fearful that if we forge ahead with Ancestry.com and Google searches, we may discover unpalatable facts.

Maybe there are ancestors we do not wish to know. We may hesitate to welcome them into our lives, fearing their influence and doubting that they wish us well. However, even if we do not engage with living family members, each of us has an immutable place in our family line. The truths of our ancestors' lives can lead us to understand aspects of ourselves and inspire transformation. We can also discern the patterns of behavior, belief systems, physical and mental health that repeat through the generations. This knowledge enables us to consciously choose which we embrace and which we decide to release. We may also gain helpful allies among those who wish to see their family line continue and prosper. The ancestors may have work that they wish us to complete or harm that they wish us to set right, as well. We can learn to have a satisfying relationship with ancestors that is unique to our individual selves.

I recently experienced a shift from "it's not really that important in my case" to a connection with ancestors. In the Spring of 2022, I received word of a high school reunion in Sacramento, California, the Central Valley town where I grew up. I signed on and made

Who's afraid of the ancestors? CATHERINE BAUER

travel arrangements. My primary purpose was reconnecting with old friends and perhaps visiting some favorite places from my

youth. However, I found myself thinking that this was an opportunity for seeing family-connected sites, as well. This idea didn't sit well initially, yet it would not leave me. I took my unease and reluctance to meditation.

As I sat quietly, I recalled a Full Moon practice of mine. I welcome the Good People, but only those whose intentions toward us are kind. After singing to the full moon and asking Spirit for peace, I pour a bit of wine and perhaps some cream on the ground and say, "Good People, those of you who wish us well, you are welcome here. Accept this offering." I realized that I could make the same stipulation to ancestors. "You are welcome here if you wish me well. If you have good intentions and insights toward me and mine, you are invited into my life."

Once I made this statement to my ancestors as a group, further guidance emerged. I felt particularly drawn to learning more about my late mother and paternal grandfather. I searched the Web for locations of graves and locations notable within my family of origin. I read everything I could find on the home for unmarried mothers where my mother was born. I was saddened and angry at former residents' description of the constant shaming. They were pressured relentlessly to give their babies up for adoption. However, the infants were not released to adoptive parents immediately after birth. They spent their first month of life being fed and cared for by their birth mothers. The sudden and final breaking of that bond deals mother and baby the type of pain that endures through generations.

This knowledge helped me to understand my own mother's painful and puzzling emotional distance.

The day after I arrived in Sacramento, a trusted friend and I visited the site of the home. We stood on the sidewalk asking Spirit to work a miracle of healing on all of those who had been damaged by the inhumane treatment dealt to the mothers and babies, that profound healing extend through family lines. When we were ready, we walked around the grounds. Much of the property had been razed or adapted into assisted living units. The buildings were freshly painted, and every available space was filling with thriving gardens. We had anticipated feelings of heaviness and mourning. However, we both sensed healing in process and left with a light and joyful feeling. As we drove away, I felt that an important life task had been completed.

On my final day in Sacramento, I visited East Lawn Cemetery. Several ancestors were buried in this serene and lovely property. I had planned to search out more than one grave, but the only way that easily revealed itself was that of my paternal grandfather. I had seen his photo in newspaper archives. He was a handsome, charismatic young man. My grandfather married into a large and prosperous farming family. Faced with his choice of sisters, he courted the one least likely to marry. My mother later told me that my grandmother had "problems." In the vernacular of the early 1960s, this meant possible psychiatric difficulties. Despite this, she became his wife and the mother of his three children, his public family. No doubt her inheritance supported a burgeoning law career, followed by election to the California State Assembly. The finances of this new family in all likelihood extended to cover the liv-

ing expenses of his mistress and the daughter she eventually bore him.

As a member of the California State Assembly, he earned the label of Progressive, focusing his attention on bills that improved healthcare and increased access to education. Several of these became law. He and his official family frequently appeared in newspapers of the time, as well as his campaign materials. However, home life was a different story entirely. Throughout my childhood, my father and his two sisters spoke little of either parent. Anecdotes about their father generally featured one of them receiving corporal punishment. I was proud of his professional accomplishments, but appalled at the private man. I was horrified by the family life he created and his use and humiliation of both women in his life. Yet for some reason I did not understand, on that day, I could not get his image out of my mind.

I stood at his grave for a long while before speaking. I thought of his legislative accomplishments and how his admirable career came at the expense of others. Finally I said, "Grandfather, I would be like you, but only the parts that benefit the world. I don't want to use people like you did. I am proud of what you accomplished, and I ask that you help me to continue good works. But only that, that good, and nothing more." And I was ready to leave, task completed, back into my own time as he faded back into his.

Who's afraid of the ancestors? We may have reason to be. But just as we set limits with people in everyday life, we can set limits with them. We can be frank with them and with ourselves about what we do and do not admire and wish to emulate. And it is within our power to do so, as well as letting their wisdom and goodness enrich our lives.

I've moved several times in my life...and some landscapes I've found easier to connect with than others...

I live now in Kent in

the South East of England, but I'm not from here originally and neither is my family... when I first moved here I felt like a fish out of water and it took me quite a while to feel at home and connected with the land... Reflecting on that journey & what has helped me I wanted to share something of that story in case it could be helpful to anyone else in connecting with their land too..

I grew up North of London in Hertfordshire, but my parents weren't from there either... and I didn't feel so much connection to the land where I lived there. Dad was from Northern Ireland and told lots of stories about Belfast, his home town - the streets and hills and family there: it built a connection in me to a place I'd never been. I wasn't aware of the strength of that connection until we visited decades later and I felt an unexpected surge of emotion the first time I set foot on the land which really took me by surprise. I was curious how that could be... was it the stories I grew up with, some ancestral connection, or did the land in some way claim me as returning kin? Our family holidays were mainly to Celtic lands and I later ended up living for some time in Galicia and in Scotland. I felt much more attuned to these places. I always felt energized and free and returned time and again, as if drawn by some invisible magnetism.

After living in London, where I met my partner, we decided to move out to raise our family...a similar migration that my parents had done. Only we went just south of London, to Kent where they had gone just

Land, migration and belonging TAMSIN YOUNG

north. We settled here in a place with pretty old buildings and clean streets, I liked the river here immediately. We were near the sea and

might be able to afford a house with a garden. But I felt out of place. I missed the sheltering cosiness of the tall London buildings, I felt vulnerable and anxious about whether our mixed race family would be ok outside the city's global mix of people. The sea was nice but seemed too flat, the hills were small, I barely registered them, and the cliffs were chalky and white, not the rocky grey granite that I loved... But over time that has changed and I now love and appreciate this beautiful land where I live. Reflecting on this journey I can see what has helped.

Exploring - Following those urges to go for a little walk in my local area or visit a particular place and being rewarded at times by something magical...a white squirrel spotted on an oak... finding a badgers' sett...or just the way the sunlight fell at that particular time. It sometimes felt like something was calling or guiding me to be met or seen.

Regularity - Taking regular walks in the same places in my local area and paying attention to the trees, plants, birds and other animals that live there... a work journey through a landscape that became familiar, following along the river and past hills and fields. I began to really notice and tune into the wider landscape, to appreciate and be awed by the beauty of the land through the changing seasons, noticing the contours of the hills and feeling their presence and how the trees on the hilltops were bare but not dull in winter, lit up like candles by the low summer sun: the springtime miracle of everything turning multiple shades of green.

I bonded to and was awed by the beauty of that land as it gradually was revealed to my awareness and wondered how I hadn't noticed before.

Following the wheel of the year - enhances tuning in to the seasons and the cycles of the natural world, like seeing how lambs indeed appear in the fields around Imbolc.

Picking things up - being drawn to pick up a particular stone or shell, fallen branch or leaf and then having these things around me as part of my home, I tuned in with their energy which was the energy of this land too.

Caring for the land - Taking part in conservation activities – helping with wildlife monitoring, and cleaning the river, picking up litter while out walking; understanding the interdependence and fragility of our ecology, and the urgent need for us to protect and cherish it; tending my garden, grown on the damaged soil of a former factory, and learning to grow food and flowers for pollinators. In making a beneficial contribution to the environment I feel more a part of it myself.

Learning about the stories of the land - Chance conversations and investigations reveal stories of past landscape, like learning how there had once been a pond surrounded with wells near to my home. I became fascinated with seeing traces of what had been there before - hedgerow lanes appearing to lead to nowhere, streams that had been diverted off course for use as water sources. I felt a little haunted by this and sorry for what had been lost..

Learning about the geology & ecology of the land - helps me to appreciate and value it more. Our river here is a rare chalk stream habitat and the chalk downland hills are a precious and species rich environment, the specific mix of soils can be ideal for growing crops.. ancient woodland, and marshes form part of the varied landscape too..

Having a desire to connect with the land - Someone once asked me if I wanted to work with the land. I answered that I didn't know, but at that moment realised that I did. It is for me a path walked with and created with the land.

The directions - When I moved into my house I had a strange urge to paint a compass on the floor of the landing (I didn't!) with no idea why...following Druidry now I greet the directions in the morning, I believe this has helped me orientate myself to where I am and to go out into the world with a peaceful and receptive way of being that allows me to connect to the nature and land around me..

Being helped to connect by the land and the connection of things through time - When looking to buy a house to settle in, I walked into the street where we were living in a rented home and felt a sudden unexpected surge of emotion that I didn't want to leave the street and didn't want to leave the tree that sat on the end of the street. ... a beautifully strong and vibrant hornbeam.. I had not really noticed it before and had no idea I had an attachment to it.. but at some level that beautiful attachment had been created without my



conscious knowledge.. the next day the house we bought came up for sale and I felt I had been helped by the tree in some strange way...the tree is framed in the window on my landing...the same landing I had the strange urge to paint a compass on..and the tree sits on the land where the pond surrounded by wells once was..and these connections make me consider the mystery of connection between things and beings and places through time.

Appreciating the abundance of the land - travelling through the land I have become almost overawed by the abundance...the landscape is full of fields of crops of all kinds, as well as orchards and vineyards..all nurtured by the specific qualities of the earth here and the warmer climate and the skills of the people that farm the land...the warming of the climate now also brings so much appreciation that this abundance depends so much as well on us all tempering our human activity..

Appreciating the skies - skies are beautiful everywhere and skies are also specific to place.. I see more stars here as there is less light pollution than in the city and I notice how the big dipper hangs over my house at night..the sunsets over the sea are divine and the soft golden light over the fields in winter is beautiful....

Drawing maps - Making little maps of the places I know that I like or feel special to me, helps me reflect on my personal relationship with and knowledge of this place.

Recognising how our stories are entwined with our lands and the other creatures we share them with - On a warm day in June walking in the ancient woodland here - ...my partner recognised the beautiful song

of a nightingale from childhood days in West Africa..I think about how those magical birds travel thousands of miles between Africa and England every year navigating using the magnetic field of the earth...and how amazing that is..and I wonder if our travels are led by some unseen magnetic forces sometimes..and how lovely it is that this magical bird has travelled thousands of miles and met with someone who knew & recognized his song from that faraway land.. & I think about how our stories are intertwined with our lands and the creatures we share them with in sometimes surprising ways.

Going to the land for healing - At times when the troubles of life get me down or wear me out I know I can go out walking in the land or sitting with the land and feel that beautiful healing that will come from the earth, from the trees, the skies, the stones of the beach, the colours of the sea and sky or the light in how it falls in this particular place and time...One day I was feeling this way and looking for a way to feel better. I felt the urge to go to a specific slope of a specific hill that forms part of my regular walks and runs...the way this slope is angled it seems to really capture the warmth of the sun and always feels to have a good energy to me... when I get there I follow the urge to take off my shoes and walk barefoot, find a nice spot and sit down...suddenly and unexpectedly.

I felt a tremendous amount of love from the earth...hard to describe but I felt its benevolence, its welcome, its abundance and it's life... and I feel loved.. I feel better, & I think how although the land can know you, claim you and call to you, in a sense it doesn't care where you have travelled from it will still love you and provide for you as another creature wandering across its back.

From p. 7: 'How did I come upon being a channel of Pr-Hare ?...' now read on...

Pr-Hare: Prayer Hares 2 THERESE KENNEDY

Hares, with tall ears and magnificent spirits and they were possessed by the souls of beautiful happy witches.

When a witch died, they became a Hare.

I am seven. I am lying out on the hard wintry Earth of a North Yorkshire field, a snarling wind beseeching my curls, but not the cascading stars above me. They were not being blown asunder like glitter, instead they hung still amidst the mayhem of the Viking Voiced Wind. This was why I chose to take the dark way home, clutching a bag of spice (sweets), oblivious to the ice bitten air, this was my field – day or night – a place of the faery, a kingdom of mystical life and ancient fern fossils, treasured and where you met your ancestors in the deep starry heavens above. I wasn't supposed to be there at night, in that industrial landscape of coal mining – Barnsley. But I dared to be, I dared to choose this way home.

This January night I had made sure I was there. "I'm off out laking (Old Norse for playing) and gerring a bag of spice," I called as I left the house. Out I skipped in barely adequate attire: it didn't matter. I was out there looking for Granny Washington, up there amongst the heavens. Granny Washington was not related to me, she was the loving soul you visited on rainy Saturdays or spent the day on her couch when you pretended to be sick and couldn't go to school. I already knew, without the words, that she was an enchanted one. She told me things I wasn't supposed to know, she cured me of my warts in the moonlight and revealed the sky blue eyes of blind kittens with the warmth of milk gently applied on a Dock leaf. Granny Washington spoke in the mysterious tongue of Old Norse, a language bewitched with the wildness of the black North Wind, we children all knew that she was our dearest friend. One soft day, she told me about the Hari, and how they would gather before sunrise out on the street and dance and play and box; she was clear they were not Rabbits, they were



This night in my field, under the stars, was the last day of Granny Washington. It was my first funeral. Everyone in the street of eight houses had drawn their curtains and we all stood solemn in the road as her coffin was brought out. I imagined her asleep, wrapped in flowers, holding a bottle of stout and then became puzzled – the coffin was much longer than she would be lying down? Of course, it was because of her ears – her Hare ears.

So that eve, I was out searching for her amidst the polished sharp winter stars and just beneath Orion I found her. It was many, many Moons later, and all grown up, that I like to believe that I identified my Granny Washington Star as part of the constellation of Lepus – The HARE. "

Fifty years later I am cycling along a Dutch Dyke, it's just before Dawn and I zone into a tunnel of young Oaks where daily I whisper the Druids' prayer as I bike to work. Alongside me, in the spring field four Hares are all a-running. I was spellbound, awe struck and in less than a breath I found myself inside the Hare at the front.

Becoming Hare

I am inside your golden Iris.

I see me as a shadow, drifting through an arch of Oaks.

Separated - I am now part of a Being mightier than my world...

Hare, You are not breathing, this surf of air, this surge

The power of your running.

This sweet chlorophyll elixir of oxygen
Infuses you, as if you are transparent.
The shadow in the Oak does not exist
Where the I, in me came from

Where that drifting shadow on her bike was head-
 ed alongside you
 Does not exist inside Hare
 Her place of noises, wars and worries
 Is not of any consequence in this perfect moment
 of movement through the light
 Here I am
 Inside a realm of effortless being.
 Hare arcs and enters the blue
 We are unbound of all Earthly tethers
 Entangled in air
 An ecstasy of cloud
 I have become Shimmering sunlight amidst the
 furred muscle
 I am Part of a being experiencing unsurpassed
 purity of joy
 This is what Nwyfre must be like in a fully living
 present Being.
 Descent.
 Together we free fall down
 The gravitational love of soil and field thud our
 physicality
 And together we vanish into nothingness.
 The woman on the bike cycles onwards to work.

Reflection: If it was not for my emancipated
 bare footed childhood and the stories of wise
 elders such as Granny Washington, would I
 have been enabled to channel the Pr-Hares of
 people? It was as if I had a consecrated child-
 hood that touched on the feral sensual land-
 scapes of the ancients I met on Orkney.
 Which provokes me to ask, as many others
 do too: Are we not bystanders watching
 social media denature childhood? Where are
 our meadowlands of imagination and the
 voices of the wise elders in our communi-
 ties? Those ancestral children, dancing in
 that fading sunlight on the edge of time were
 shimmering with love, and their Nwyfre
 dappled childhood created those powerful
 imaginative minds that enabled their souls
 to become woven between the wind blasted
 stars ... Children as living Pr-Hares. An Old

Celtic sonnet written for the 11th Stone at the
 Ring of Brodgar captures my dream for all
 our children today:

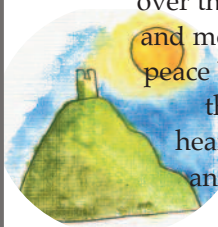
*"They say never such loveliness,
 Between the lochs
 As that girl.
 In the pause between
 Two stones
 She became a Swan
 She flew from us
 Into Sunset and Stars."*

*Twelve months after my trip to Orkney a
 baby girl was born to my friend.
 She still wears the Silver Hare.*

Rising sun
 on the Tor,
 peace be to the East
 the new beginnings
 the wild birds
 and the breath
 of our new day.



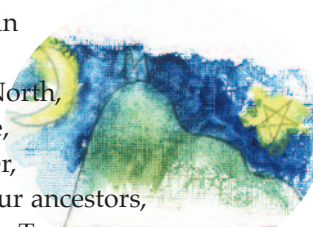
The sun climbs
 over the ancient tower
 and more ancient hill,
 peace be to the South
 the red fire
 heart of passion
 and the chase



as the sun falls
 into its chalice
 a mist drifts by
 from another time,
 peace be to the West,
 to laying down of burdens
 to the ancient waters
 of Avalon and the
 Lady of the Lake.



The night has won,
 the rock mountain
 and starry bear,
 peace be to the North,
 to the solid stone,
 St Michaels tower,
 to the bones of our ancestors,
 to the heart of the Tor.



Giulietta M Spudich

EVENTS

OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS

On fb and youtube. Hosted by CC Eimear Burke Check druidry.org / facebook
Alban Elfed, Sept 17th; Samhain, Nov 5th; Alban Arthan Dec 17th

REGULAR MONTHLY OBOD MEETINGS

OBOD PEACE MEDITATION: with your Grove or by yourself every full moon: 7pm local time
BUILDING RESILIENCE IN DIFFICULT TIMES An OBOD Listening Circle. FREE monthly online ZOOM gathering, 1st Wednesday of the month 7pm UTC. Contact harrietlock@gmail.com for link.

2023

3-5 March 2023 Druid Grade Gorsedd in the New Forest National Park, Hampshire, England.

Email druidry.sylvangrove@gmail.com for further details

1&2 April Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 2. For previous level 1 participants.

Email FFI: mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

28th, 29th, 30th July Bardic Gorsedd. For those currently studying in the bardic grade, a weekend of exploring "The fiery spark of Awen," with special guests Kristoffer Hughes and Eimear Burke. Held at Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, Wales, LL34 6YF. £185 (£85 deposit is required). lorrainem@druidry.org and tomMmentor@druidry.org (please copy both recipients into emails).

REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

ANDERIDA MOOT: 2ND MON The Ship, Southwick, nr Brighton. 8pm FFI: info@anderidagorsedd.org

ARTIO SEEDGROUP, Switzerland (Zurich) Meet/rituals/walks. Lily or Britta at Info@druidry.ch (+41 76 326 6963) c wc

ARTURIAN GROVE Seasonal rituals near Otley / York. Optimistichannah@outlook.com

ASH GROVE, GLASTONBURY Seasonal rituals OBOD visitors welcome. FFI jacki.woolmington@btinternet.com

BRIGANTES SEED GROUP. YORK, England. Gatherings on the full moon. brigantes.group@gmail.com

BIG SKY GROVE, NORFOLK Our name reflects the vista and big skies of our Norfolk landscape. Open to members / former OBOD members. Meetings (zoom) for the 8 festivals & meetings, walks, discussion. FFI: rebnikc@btinternet.com

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 area of North Yorkshire. Seasonal 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.

FAVERSHAM PAGAN MOOT 2nd Mon The Sun, West St Faversham Kent & events FFI www.favershampagans.org.uk

GOLDEN WATTLE SEED GROUP, ADELAIDE S. AUS. Regular meetings, rituals FFI: golden.wattle.seed.group@gmail.com

LAKE AGASSIZ SEEDGROUP 3rd Saturday of the Month: Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada. Public rituals in local parks. FFI: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lakeagassizdruids/> email agassizseedgroup@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 Aus macademiagroove@hotmail.com FB "OBOD Macadamia Grove"

THE MELBOURNE GROVE Seasonal celebrations, Melbourne, Aus: Trudy Richards moondancer@outlook.com.au

PENDLE GROVE. Clitheroe / around Lancs. Sionnach on 0161 3432705 or email drvernnon@hotmail.co.uk

SHINING MOUNTAINS GROVE western Montana, USA, Eight festivals + seasonal hikes, on-line in winter. contact Heather: roanrobbins@aol.com

SETANTII SEASONAL RITUALS IN MANCHESTER / S. LANCS. Always outdoors. GROVEOFSETANTII@YAHOO.COM.

SEATTLE SEEDGROUP CIRCLE OF COLL - public rituals, workshops, tree walks &... every month. circleofcoll@circleofcoll.org

SLIABH ANAM GROVE Rituals and monthly moots Durango, Colorado, USA. FFI: contact sliabhanam@gmail.com.

SONG OF THE EASTERN SEA SEEDGROUP Central Coast of NSW Aus, FFI: contact Chris at chris@druidryaustralia.org

TAMESIS (London Seedgroup) seasonal festivals / moots / workshops Contact Ricky: gelli3@me.com

Touchstone October 2022

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.

Page 15 for Online OBOD ritual dates, Regular meetings and 2023 events

EVENTS 2022

1-2 Oct Walkers between the worlds Part 2 32nd Foundation Course in Celtic & Ancestral Shamanism (Oxon) with John Matthews & Margot Harrison. Non-res. FFI: janedmay@btinternet.com 01865 407680.

15 & 16 October Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 1 with Penny Billington and Matt McCabe, in Glastonbury. Experiential workshop exploring what OBOD Druids do, and why we do it that way, in a supportive, stimulating Druidic setting. FFI or to register, email mattmccabe.1@outlook.com Women's Ceremony and Ritual; Weaving the Magical Threads.

12-13 November Join Wild Women Retreats and OBOD Celebrant River Jones for a sacred weekend of co-created ceremony and ritual. Glastonbury Assembly Rooms £100

Bookings: info@wildwomenretreats.co.uk

2-4 December The magical world of Alan Garner: Into the Living Landscape of Myth (Glos) with John & Caitlín Matthews, & Ian Rees. Like a modern Merlin, the Cheshire writer, Alan Garner OBE, has woven together the abiding myths of British folk-culture in a magical way. We will explore the stories, themes and magical pathways that serve to conduits into the living realms of story. Contact: Hawkwood College, Painswick Old Rd., Stroud, Glos GL6 7QW (01453 759034)



**THE
GROUNDWELL**

Lady of the Lake

This is for the seekers -

For the bravest of souls willing to dive into the depths
of their dis-ease,
To swim in the shallows of their sickness.
To break free from the shackles of the ties that bind.
To examine in earnest the psyche of stuck.
To wallow in wonder.
To those who take up their shields with noble cause,
Doing battle with forces unseen.
Digging out the splinters of embedded wounds,
Unveiling hidden insights.
Vanquishing the victim to voice a radical responsibility.
For those sensing into a time when all channel source connection.
For we are the long awaited,
Like the finely filtered bubbles of a new spring rising.
We are the water-bearers,
Quenching the thirst of those in the desert.
Washing away the world that was, once upon a time.
We are the new cartographers -
Boldly charting a course into territory unknown,
Where there may be dragons!
We are the lullaby for the children,
The lighthouse for lost ships and
Apathy's worst nightmare.
We care with a passion.
We challenge injustice.
We love like lions.
We are the groundswell.

Nichola Lake