



The journal of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids
April 2023
Issue 308



Selkie by Maca Smith

WHAT ALCHEMY MEANS TO ME

It is our light illuminating mysteries.
Not collapsing what is otherworldly
into anything “merely” or mundane.
But bridging what’s invisible inside,
with metaphors we can feel or see.
Poetic psychology, mirroring reality.
Clearer than odd, tainted diagnoses,
Connecting with nature and psyche.
Forged in an ancient stellar furnace,
Still glowing in our soul as the world

Franklin LaVoie

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Good day to all, and here’s a question:
when musing on proto-druids (and what
else would any of us do in our spare time?)
have you ever dreamed of handling an 8,000
yr old Mesolithic honey flint spearhead?
Children have amazing opportunities, and
this one is courtesy of a member’s ‘after
event’, p7. See the photos at www.devon-shippon.com.

As usual, we start the month with our bards’
inspiration, then take an Imbolc journey, p4,
consider synchronicity and Grove and allot-
ment green magic on p5: and who are the
joy-bringers on p6? It’s all a lovely evocation
of the turning spring season; of growth and
change. And a constant through the Druidic
year is an awareness of healing, methods of
which are on p10, and creativity, represented
on p12.

I love seeing what will appear for the
‘totems’ section which is attracting new writ-
ers and artists. What a gift to share a connec-
tion to other-than-human sentient life with
the membership - might you be the next to
answer the challenge?

April '23	TOUCHSTONE	Issue 308
3	Bards' Page	
4	A journey at Imbolc	Liz Cruse
5	The serendipity... of Life	Alison Kirkham
6	April totems	Mark & Guenter Nal
7	The roundhouse; learning...	Simon Carroll
9	Grove & Seedgroup connections & news	
10	Healing methods Pt 2	Adam Winbigler
12	Weaving...BOD tartan	Kate Collinson
15	Regular meetings & Mandala	Ann Beer
16	Events	

RECONNECTION REBELLION

In a random town
In a non-descript apartmentbuilding
A lonely person fills a bowl with tapwater
They turn on a led-candle and sit
Holding a pebble found on a nearby road

The sound of birds and the forest
Emanates from the speakers
A diffuser spreads with a whisper
The smell of pines and rain

They journey inwards
Determined to reconnect
Led by a feeling of longing
A sense of what should be right
In a world where so much is wrong

To an inner grove they find their way
Connecting to nature and community
Finding motivation to heal the world
And the courage to heal themselves first

In that random town
In that non-descript apartmentbuilding
Maybe two doors to the left, one floor up
There is another person, doing the same rite
Or a different one, in their own tradition

Sometimes we don't even know we are not
alone
At first we feel alone and disconnected
Driven apart by corporate greed and politics
But the human soul strives to always recon-
nect

First with ourselves
Second with eachother
And finally with the world all around us

ShadowCat



Nature, green in prickly & sting...
Standing in the forest clearing
Hearing the wind
Rustling the leaves
The sweet smell of spring upon it

My heart wanders the lands
Walking besides the spirits of old
Dancing amongst the stones
And circling the spirals' markings

The gentle flowing of the lands
The white, stone fences dotted across
It calls out to me
'Come home, my Child.'

I remember this place
Without ever being here before
My heart starts a song
And my body answers

The low thrumming of magic
This pull of melancholy
Re-join your people
Re-join your clan

This is where I live
This is where I belong
This is where I will always be
Even if just for a minute

Miriam Van Gelder

"Sometimes since I've been in the garden I've looked up through the trees at the sky and I have had a strange feeling of being happy as if something was pushing and drawing in my chest and making me breathe fast. Magic is always pushing and drawing and making things out of nothing. Everything is made out of magic, leaves and trees, flowers and birds, badgers and foxes and squirrels and people. So it must be all around us. In this garden – in all the places."

Frances Hodgson Burnett 1849 - 1924 (+see p5)

You are sitting in a large yurt in the company of other druids. Fairy lights

A Journey at Imbolc LIZ CRUSE

Here the priestess bids you ask a question of the goddess and make an

offering to her. In a circle you stand silent, listening to what Brigid has to say to you. The priestess bids you farewell and you find a path that leads up through the trees. At last – is it minutes? Is it hours? – you arrive at a low thatched hut. The priestess of the forge invites you to encounter the Goddess within.

offering to her. In a circle you stand silent, listening to what Brigid has to say to you. The priestess bids you farewell and you find a path that leads up through the trees. At last – is it minutes? Is it hours? – you arrive at a low thatched hut. The priestess of the forge invites you to encounter the Goddess within.

Next to a wood burner you see a beautiful woman with dreadlocks. She is chanting in honour of Brigid.

*Holy water Sacred flame
Brigid we invoke your name
bless my hands my head my heart
source of healing song and art*

You join in, relishing the simple tunes and the gentle drumming that accompanies them.

A cloaked and robed figure enters the yurt, bringing in a blast of cold air. Sternly she summons you and your companions to begin a pilgrimage to the three shrines of Bridget: the well, the temple and the forge. Struggling into boots and cloak you leave the yurt. You are in a valley. On one side it rises into woods. The bare branches of the trees are etched against the starry night sky. Your guide leads you up a steep path that leads into the trees. Without warning, your guide halts. “*I leave you here. You must make your way alone now. Follow the lights.*” A frisson of fear comes over you. But there is a light and you turn towards it. The shadowy form of a woman coalesces out of the darkness. “*You have come to Bridget’s well. Here if you wish you may drink her water.*” You drink, and feel a shining energy filling you with light. The inner beauty of you and your companions is revealed. Look at them. You walk on. The full moon is rising above the ridge. In a field there is a stone circle, a temple for Brigid.

You go inside the hut where a fire is burning. It can forge metal. It will forge your resolution. You gaze at the flames. When you are ready you cast the stick into the fire to symbolise the exchange of your devotion for the strength of the Goddess. The priestess of the sacred forge blesses you and slowly, you and your companions walk the narrow woodland path back to the track that will take you to the yurt. As you come into the golden warmth of the circular space you hear again the chanting in Brigid’s honour.

*Brigid keeper of the flame
Here we gather in your name
Never lost or forgotten*

You take your seat absorbing the sense of peace between all those who have undertaken this pilgrimage.

But this is the time of recall. With one accord, the company stands and sings three awens. You feel yourself once more entering the Apparent World. You walk to the nearby Long House for a cup of tea and the companionship and laughter of mundane life.

“*That is a wonderful guided visualisation,*” says the reader of this piece. “*I must try that next Imbolc.*” But this is not dreamed. It is one of the wonders I experienced at the recent Imbolc Camp run by White Horse Camps at Wildways on the Borle.

<https://whitehorsecamps.org.uk>

Life is just so mysterious and serendipitous at times that as I write this, a week after Imbolc, I can hardly breathe for excitement!

The serendipity and mystery of life

ALISON KIRKHAM

A few months ago down on our allotment, at a time when I knew about OBOD but it wasn't on my immediate agenda to join, a piece of ground next to our current plot became available. No-body wanted it because it had so many old trees on it, so it wasn't good for veggie growing and other plot holders had been dumping unwanted compostables on there. So I said to my husband Andy; "Shall we take it on to look after the trees?" And we agreed.

On closer inspection, it seemed that the Hazel trees on this land had been planted in a circle with a cherry in the middle and that this circle opened out to fruit trees and I passed comment to Andy that it was our own little "Sacred Grove"! We laughed and talked about putting a fire pit in the middle of the trees, a place to meet with friends in the Summer.

So we set about clearing the detritus, putting up an 'OCCUPIED' sign so we'd get no more of it, and as we cleared and cut back and opened the whole thing up something really magical happened. A friend of ours offered us, by coincidence, some saplings from his garden, some Hazels and some Holly! We were able to put those saplings in the cir-

cle gaps and begin to close it off. I grow willow so I made some pentagrams to hang in the trees, and in my own way I suppose I

was blessing the circle and making promises to keep it safe.

We then began to work on the area with the fruit trees which when cleared was just begging for a hedge and an understory. We bought some bare root plants; dog roses, sea buckthorn, blackthorn, hawthorn and some more hollies, and we planted them. As well as Brigid being in my heart for the beginning of Spring, Cerridwen kept appearing to me in the form of my dear Welsh friend Cerys who died just over two years ago. Dressed in silver and gold I felt her presence.

When I finally joined OBOD at Imbolc it appeared that the universe had been working its magic on me ahead of time. The mystery and serendipity blew me away, the booklet about Sacred Grove planting made me feel sick with excitement, and the story of Cerridwen and Taliesin made me cry. And yesterday when I did my Bard initiation ceremony it all came together and Cerridwen was there to welcome me.

This is our Sacred Grove, started by another Hazel lover yes, and I would say by the size of the trees, they were put in about a decade ago. Now added to by us and all things being well we will be able to nurture it for the next decade or more.



For many people, April is the month when the first Swallows return. Officially known as the Barn Swallow, these birds, weighing less than 25g and with a wingspan of about 30cm, have just completed a 6000 mile (10,000KM) return journey from southern Africa, covering maybe 200 miles per day. For me personally, the sighting of the first Swallow is simply pure joy, a moment of ecstasy happily immune to logic or rational explanation.

April totems - MARK



April is matched now by a real feeling of sadness and loss, as if some close friend has gone away. However, this is tempered by the knowledge that the Swallows are fulfilling the cycle of life. For a while we must share them with our friends in Botswana and Namibia and South Africa,

but they will come back home to us, next year. Then, the joy will be all the greater for the sharpness of the sadness at our parting.

There are ancient totemic associations with Swallows going back at least as far as Classical Greece. For modern day Druids, it seems to me that we can make our own associations though. I think of the sheer joy, not only mine but that of the Swallows too, having travelled so far, including crossing the vast expanse of the Sahara Desert and finding their ancestral birthplace still intact. I think of their faithfulness, their endurance and determination in making this journey. Clearly, you don't have to be big to be tough. Later, on long summer days, I find myself captivated by the the grace and beauty of Swallows as they swoop, bank and glide over the hay meadow by my cottage here in mid Wales, the 'click, click, click' of their beaks clearly audible as they snap up insects to feed their chicks. The experts tell us that a Swallow brood need 6000 insects per day to feed on, testament to their parents' hard work and diligence.

As Autumn approaches and the days cool and shorten, in late September or early October a day comes when the sky suddenly seems quite empty; the Swallows have gone. Often they hitch a ride on the first cool northerly wind of the season. The joy of

TOTEMS AND EMBLEMS OF APRIL

March 'coming in like a lion' can be a comment on the blustery weather, but it could also be astronomical, referring to the positions of huge constellation Leo (appearing early eve and visible for most of the night) and Aries.



Lyon, Acrylic art 29 x 34 cm.

Guenter Nal

After my last piece about building the roundhouse, I received a number of responses, wishing me luck, but also asking about the sort of activities I'd be offering. As with any

long term plan (6 years), you always question if it'll work, as you go; whether the effort you are putting in is worth it.

Last year was a very turbulent year, with multiple health issues that resulted in caring and legal issues and changes in the family dynamic. I've always worked best under pressure, seeing it as a way of focussing the mind. Trying to complete the Roundhouse ready for school visits, certainly was pressurised, but it was also a way of occupying my mind as the events of the year unravelled.

Many times I questioned whether the effort was worth it, but the prevailing answer was yes. It wasn't just something to keep me busy, but something which could offer others a natural space, as well as education. Having mobility issues and dealing with the exhaustion of auto-immune disorder, I've heard people in a similar situation talk of a 'before and after' their event when life changed, whether injury, accident or an illness brought it about. Was this to be the watershed moment, where life moves forward as the 'after event'? It's thought that one of the Druids' roles was to teach the knowledge and understanding of the ancestors and the natural world. But rather than prehistoric scholars, I'd be teaching kids!

The little details in the roundhouse were finished. The compost toilet block finished. Any other extras would become apparent when our first school visited. Dressed as Iron Age

The roundhouse - learning in the natural environment SIMON CARROLL

people, my wife and I welcomed the school off their strange horse-less chariot (AKA bus!). The idea was to stay in character throughout the day, immersing the class in prehistoric-

based activities, which linked to their History topic, as well as nature.

Our ancestors were well connected to their natural environment. From understanding the seasons, flora and fauna, to living sustainably. This is what I wanted to impart to the kids. Before my early retirement, I used every opportunity to use the outdoor space at school, for lessons. Bringing a practical element into the more mundane areas of learning, really brought them to life. From building Stonehenge out of large boxes, to finding the easiest way to transport a concrete block across the playground, using wooden rollers and a sledge. The class loved it and didn't realise that they were doing Science or Maths!

Our activities tried to reflect this outdoor cross-curricular approach. I was well aware of the cost of coach hire and how tight money can be for families. It had to be something worthwhile, which couldn't be done in school, as well as providing up-to-date historical understanding and support for delivery of lessons, once back in the classroom. It needed to be accessible to every child in the class, regardless of attainment levels or any special educational needs.

The site itself is half an acre of wildlife field. It's big enough for the class to spread out, but small enough as to not lose anyone! Being well away from any roads or houses, there are no modern-day distractions. The odd occasion that the farmer went past on

his tractor, we all pointed and shouted “Romans! Romans!” which thoroughly bemused him.

The day began with an introduction and basic safety - otherwise known as common sense! So not loads of rules, just enough to keep the class safe and happy. We pitched it as 340CE, when the Romans were gradually pulling out of Britain. I wanted to show that only a small part of the population became ‘Romanised’. The rest carried on, almost as they had done before, just paying taxes to a different person. It also made it a lot easier to talk about Prehistory in the past tense.

The class would be split into four tribes, rotating around after each 20 minute activity, with a short talk about a different aspect of prehistoric life in between. This ensured that the kids’ attention was held throughout. Each activity would gain them tokens, which could then be traded in the afternoon for materials to build a shelter.

As I an amateur archaeologist, historical artefacts were essential – especially as schools wouldn’t have access to these. The group would sort them into each time period from Stone Age to Iron Age and I’d talk through how they were made and used. The kids were amazed at the chance to handle the Mesolithic honey flint spearhead from 8000 years ago. It was discovered beside our field, showing that prehistoric people were engaged in activity, where we sat, today. As one teacher put it, “*You wouldn’t get an opportunity like that, even in a museum.*” We finished with a spear-throwing game, aiming at a wooden deer. However, I made the deer way too cute and some of them didn’t want to spear it! But as soon as one did, the competitiveness took over and they all had a go. With pottery, they could try making a

beaker, pressing Bronze Age designs onto it, or a beaded bracelet from wooden beads, shells and small carved sticks and an Iron Age Torc. The surprise on their faces when we said that they could take their items home!

As prehistoric people didn’t write, one activity involved memorising facts about a variety of animals. Laminated fact sheets (yes, authentically prehistoric) were tied to trees around the field - size, paw prints and weight, to what the animal would have been used for, when hunted; emphasising that every part was used and nothing wasted. The groups needed a system of remembering all the facts within the time limit and take them back to their Romano British scribe (the teacher), who’d write them down.

The last morning activity introduced them to trees and maps. Using a plan of the site and a tree crib sheet, the group needed to locate and mark various trees on their map, with ogham. They used the fact sheet for the tree uses - utensils, firewood and fencing. By this point, it was lunch. The 2.5 hours had shot by and not one child had complained that they were hungry!!!

We counted up their tokens which were traded for building materials, with a choice of a small or larger clearing in the trees or an open space, all needing different materials, decided by each group. After 30 minutes, the class visited each camp, where the children explained their reasons for choosing that site and materials and any difficulties. We ended the day with a questions and answers session, before waving them off on their horseless chariot, back to modern-day school. When we went back outside to evaluate the day it looked like a herd of wild boar had snuffled their way across the wooded area. We realised that decorating toilet cubicles in

different prehistoric designs would encourage the children to use them more! We'd need another sheltered area, in case of rain so a Stone Age house was built in 2 weeks before the next school arrived. Told you I liked pressure!!! But the lasting feeling was that it all went to plan, and the feedback from the school was fantastic.

Since then, we've had more schools and we've been approached about offering family sessions and prehistoric birthday parties, involving cooking over the fire, storytelling and activities based on nature and prehistory. But to our surprise, this wasn't all. Friends who are counsellors are looking to use the site for their ecotherapy approach, giving clients sessions in nature and activities to support them. We are also in discussions with local charities and wildlife groups about how we can work together. This is on top of our planned *Young Archaeologist Club*, and family experiences for our holidaying guests in the annexe. Everything seems to fit into place, quite naturally.

Six years ago when the surgeon first advised me to retire, I could never have guessed that this project would have snowballed the way it has. I've always loved working outdoors and being able to promote the History of the land and a love of nature. It has surprised me how easily these aspects work together.

Although we charge a small fee for school groups, the community and family days are non-profit making. There is something instinctive about bringing people together; just as our ancient Druids would have done. It may not be 'ceremonial', but it feels right; a feeling of contentment that you are making a worthwhile contribution to the community. And if this is to be my 'after event', then may it be a happily ever after!!!



FOREST OF DEAN, UK

"Hi! I've recently moved to *the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire*, and am looking to make contact with other OBODies in the area. Drop me a line!
moondreamblue@gmail.com."

BRISTOL UK

The Fellowship Of The Four Directions Bristol Seed Group. We are a fellowship at heart so making friends with like minded people and getting people involved is key to our group. We meet up every month in St. George's park in Bristol where we either do ceremony work at our circle of trees or we take part in activities. We arrange a lot on WhatsApp so I encourage all members to join if possible.
Oliver Woods
07494071823 fellowshipoftd@hotmail.com

BATH UK

Having resisted for many years, I finally bowed to pressure and have started an OBOD Seed Group in Bath. So, showing sublime naming inspiration, I've called it The Bath Seed Group! We launched at the Winter Solstice, with Komedia (now a community owned venue) kindly offering us their main space for a midday ceremony, and we were amazingly supported by local, westcountry Druids from Bristol, Wells, Glastonbury, Frome and Stroud. So a stellar crowd!

This coincided with me taking on the mantle of Chief Bard of Bath from Richard Carder. The Bardic Chair for Bath was created by Tim Sebastian back in the day, and Richard was chosen to lead after Tim's death.

Richard has run the annual Bard of Bath competition since then (barring pandemics), but his health deteriorated last summer, and he chose me to take over. This may come as a surprise to many of you, as I'm not known for my poetry, but apparently it was my willingness to sing in public that clinched it.

From celebrating our own divine child (The Mabon) returning at the solstice, we have been nurturing our new light alongside lots of other ideas! So it was that Imbolc saw us join with my chums from the Bath Art Depot, to ask Brighid to work a bit of magic. Our bus station is currently on Weston Island (one of only two islands in the river at Bath) and they are planning to depart. The Bath Art Depot are campaigning for the island to become an international contemporary arts destination. So, following our ceremony, we took our banners (original artwork by Jamie Reid) and our snowdrops onto the island. We planted the snowdrops and asked the Spirit of Place to work with us towards a new beginning.

Phew. After such busyness, I feel a quiet Equinox coming on in our own circle here at Barrow Mead.

Matt McCabe Bath Seed Group



Notes on Healing methods

Pt 2

ADAM WINBIGLER

WHAT IS NWYFRE?

Nwyfre has its origins as a Welsh word meaning "sky," attested in manuscripts from as early as the 1300s. It came into its magickal usage thanks to Iolo Morganwg, the 18th century bard and forger. He likened *nwyfre* to the Holy Spirit, and as Druids have taken it up in the decades since, it has come to mean something more like "breath of life," akin to prana or qi in Eastern traditions.

What follows is my interpretation of *nwyfre*, and I share it here to encourage you not to adopt it, but to investigate it, and to see if your experience of *nwyfre* is similar to or different from mine. I understand *nwyfre* as Spirit in motion, or better yet as the part of the interconnection all beings share through which movement is possible, because *nwyfre* is the current on which Awen ("flowing inspiration") moves. This movement of Awen is what makes art, magick, music, poetry— in short, all those things that make life beautiful and worth living— possible. By becoming aware of and stimulating the flow of this energy in ourselves, we can encourage Awen to manifest in us more potently.

Luckily for us, any action which stimulates vitality does the same for the flow of *nwyfre* in us! The actor, the artisan, the athlete – all partake of Awen's flowing upon *nwyfre*. Though I will guide you through esoteric methods of awakening to and empowering the flow of *nwyfre* through you, do be sure not to forsake the others. *Nwyfre* flows through our hearts, minds, and souls every bit as much as our bodies, and so it is vital

that we do things that keep all of our juices (literal or metaphorical) flowing!

TREE SPIRIT EXERCISE

This exercise is designed to connect you to the spirit of a particular tree. It is recommended to perform it as laid out below the first time to give you a familiarity with subsequently. Druids and other nature-oriented spellcasters may find it useful to perform this at least once with each tree to whom they have a particular connection. If at all possible, perform this exercise in the physical presence of the tree. If you cannot do this, do not despair; journeys inward to visit your tree(s) can have equally powerful effects, and in any case the method is the same.

Make your usual preparations for inner journey work, then assume a meditative posture and focus on your breath. Feel its temperature, the way your chest rises with each inhale and falls with each exhale. Gradually, shift to box breathing – four second inhale, four second hold, four second exhale, four second hold, repeat. If you cannot do this, or if you are unable to maintain it for very long, resume deep breathing.

After a time, allow your breathing to resume a more natural flow and focus on the feeling of your body. Gradually, note that the darkness around you is, little by little, giving way to twilight. A purplish tinge reminds you that there is a sky above you, and twinkling in it faintly are stars. You swear if your hearing was a little sharper, you could clearly hear their song – tinkly, like wind chimes. The earthy scent of moss and pine needles rises to meet your nose, and there's enough light that you can distinguish the silhouettes of the trees against the early morning sky. You turn and notice that one trees, quite close, has a different shape from the others.

This is a tree you know from the waking world. You have sat in its shade, climbed it as a child; perhaps you played among its branches in a tire swing or treehouse, or eaten of the fruit it produced. You know its distinct aroma, the feel of its bark under your hands, and the memories of it you have made over the years wash over you as you embrace here, in this ancient wood. Relax into the tree. Feel its energy and yours begin to mingle, and open yourself to its presence. Receive whatever message it may have for you. Then, ask if it will allow you to experience what its life is like. Wait for an affirmative and if one is given, proceed.

The first thing the tree spirit will show you is the experience of having roots. Feel them—like long, sinuous toes sinking deep, deep into the earth. Feel the tingle of bioelectricity passing through them – the means by which trees communicate. And feel also the further tingle of the roots drawing moisture and nutrients up into the trunk. This is what it is to be rooted, grounded, connected, supported, secure. It is to this feeling that we connect when we take a deep breath with the Earth beneath us. Do so now. Experience the way that new energy courses through the root system.

Now the tree spirit guides you upward, following the sap as it carries the nutrients up into the trunk. Feel this part of the tree – upright, solid, resolute, enduring, straight. Wind and rain have lashed the tree, but the trunk has not given way under the onslaught. It bends only in pursuit of the sunlight, towards which it is ever-growing. This is what it is to be indomitable, powerful, purposeful. It is to this feeling that we connect when we take a deep breath with the Sea around us. Do so now. Feel the way that the new energy amplifies your strength and surrounds you like armor.

The tree spirit guides you further upward still, into the branches that crown the tree. It is morning now, and the Sun in his full glory beams upon the tree. Feel the warmth as a leaf basking in the rays of the sun, gently swaying in the breeze. The tree also shares with you its memories of storms; of branches whipping and shaking in the wind, sometimes breaking; of the burn of a lightning strike; the heavy weight of a downpour of rain. It also shares other memories; perhaps decades of sunrises and sunsets; the song of the birds that have nested there for generations; maybe even its own fond memories of the joyful sounds made by you and your playmates beneath. This is what it is to be free, vital, alive, open to change, and receptive to whatever life may bring. It is to this feeling that we connect when we take a deep breath with the Sky above us. Do so now. Feel its wind stir your branches and revel in the swirl and caress of the breeze.

Gradually become aware of yourself as a separate, human, creature again. Thank the tree. Leave it an offering if it feels appropriate to do so (and, if you perform this ritual in the presence of the tree, in a way that is eco-friendly). Whatever may require dispelling or unwinding, do so. Have a bite to eat and drink some water to ground. When you are able, write your experience down. Documenting your experiences is crucial so that you may properly compare them to each other.

I hope that these practices will prove useful to all who adopt or adapt them. Bright blessings, especially the healers. May they always remember to begin with themselves; after all, as the microcosm, so the macrocosm.



The story starts back in 2017, when my first tartan design was officially registered with the Scottish Tartan Authority. I live in the New Forest in southern England, which dates back to the year 1079, and where around 4000 New Forest Ponies as well as donkeys, cattle, sheep and pigs roam free. With its ancient broadleaf woodlands, conifer plantations, heaths, grasslands, bogs and mires, and 26 miles of Solent coastline, it is an internationally important area for wildlife and habitats as well as a way of life called *commoning*. We have the oldest court in the world, *The Verderers Court* dating back to the 13th century, and the system of verderers, agisters and commoners oversee this very traditional way of life that is completely in tune with nature. The New Forest is where my roots are. I connect with this complex landscape, am proud to be a part of it and feel a deep sense of belonging. Many local folks feel the same, caring for the land, its livestock and wildlife, and continuing the commoning way of life with the traditions and wisdom that has been passed down through their families for generations.

On my return from a holiday in Scotland, it occurred to me that these feelings of roots, pride, belonging and connection to the land were exactly what wearing an appropriate tartan was all about. So, I began researching the process of having our very own tartan, and before long I had pitched the idea, gained all the written permissions necessary, designed a meaningful colour scheme and the official certificate for New Forest Tartan

from the Scottish Tartan Registry had landed on my doormat. I used my savings to get a roll of material made, and started my own little business, The New Forest Tartan Company. Fast forward a few years, and the business is still going strong, the tartan is loved and recognised throughout the New Forest, and in fact I now have 5 New Forest tartans; the original as well as one in each of the four seasonal colours.

In 2020, Billy Stewart from the USA mentioned on one of the OBOD social media sites, that as a kilt wearing Druid and musician, he would love a tartan that connected him to his pagan path. Having successfully been through the design and registration process five times, I offered my services and an international collaboration was born. The first thing to do was to decide on the colours we were going to use, and these of course were themselves dependant on the meanings behind them. After several very long and detailed discussions on the OBOD Facebook site, with input from hundreds of members from all over the world, the list was finalised:

- 3 golden strands of Awen
- 3 grade colours – blue for Bard, green for Ovate and white for Druid
- 5 elemental colours – green for earth, white for air, orange for fire, blue for water and purple for spirit
- 3 nature colours - green for land, blue for sea, blue for sky.

Putting all of these together, we now had gold, blue, green, white, orange and purple. I set about designing the tartan, placing the 3 golden strands of Awen directly onto the green, and utilising the remaining colours as pleasingly as possible. There are so many variables in a tartan design, the order and the width of each colour can be changed with the slide or click of a button. Billy and I

settled on a few different designs, and these were again discussed at length on OBOD social media, but eventually the final design was chosen.

The next step was to gain approval and permission from OBOD themselves to use the words “Bards, Ovates and Druids” in the official registration. This is not a step that all tartans need, but if you want to use a name or phrase that does not legally belong to you, in other words not your own name or your own business’ name, then you need written permission on headed paper. I had been through this part of the process before with the New Forest tartans, gaining the necessary paperwork from the New Forest National Park Authority and the New Forest District Council. So a delightful hour was spent on the phone with Philip Carr-Gomm, who was pleased with the idea as well as the design. He was also rightly adamant that it should be called Bards, Ovates and Druids Tartan, not The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids Tartan. This was because he did not want it to become any sort of uniform for OBOD, as well as meaning that it could be worn by any Bard, Ovate or Druid around the world who may or may not be a member of OBOD. Wise advice from a wise man. His permission letter duly arrived in the post, and I could now set about completing the application form for the Tartan Registry.

The form is rigorous and thorough. You have to describe every aspect of the design in meaningful detail, which was a delight as it meant I could wax lyrical about all the aspects of paganism that we hold dear. There is also the legal permissions part to fill in too. Having a registered tartan automatically gives you the intellectual property rights to the design, so the designer can choose who is allowed to wear or use the tar-

tan, and who is allowed to have it woven. Billy and I have allowed anyone to wear or use the tartan, and have kept the right to have it woven to us two as the designers, along with anyone we give permission to. This is to protect it and stop unscrupulous folks taking the design and flooding the market with cheap, unsustainable, mass produced, poor quality fabric as has happened before with other popular tartans.

I paid the registration fee, signed the application form, had the tartan design printed on as high quality a commercial printer I could find during lockdown, included Philip's letter, and sent the parcel to the National Records Office in Edinburgh. Finally lockdown eased, and the proud moment came when the certificate arrived on my doormat.

Next was to have a roll of the material woven, again a personal investment of several thousand pounds, but some kind folks pre-ordered helping the financial side. The mill is Lochcarron, a traditional tartan mill in Scotland that prides itself on craftsmanship and sustainability, things that are very important to Billy and I. The very first Bards, Ovates and Druids Tartan has now arrived, and I am delighted with it. The colours and design are stunning, the thickness of the pure wool and the quality of weave stand out, and it really is the manifestation of a dream, something that has such intent and meaning that it touches my heart and soul.

As with the New Forest tartans, the Bards, Ovates and Druids tartan is available in a different format altogether. I have a weaver friend who hand dyes then hand weaves scarves, wraps and blankets on his loom at home, using yarns of the softest sheep wool, alpaca and silk blends. These come with tassels, are woven to order and are garments in

themselves rather than fabric that can be cut up to use to make kilts, pouches, sashes, bags, small squares for patches or herb mixes, upholstery, cushions or even curtains.

It has all been a wonderful process, and to create something that symbolises the roots, connection, pride and belonging that we feel deeply has been a real honour. Billy and I worked hard, and we thank everyone who took part in the discussions, as well as Philip for his enthusiasm and permission, without whom none of this could have happened.

www.newforesttartan.co.uk FFI/to order.
email newforesttartan@outlook.co.uk or FB

LAST SNIPPETS

Hi Touchstone, I came across this quote whilst researching the best native forests in Scotland.

""The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness,"- John Muir.

Sounds like a true Druid!!!

<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org>

<https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/news/our-pick-scotlands-native-forests/>

Best Wishes Kevin Hush Anderson

From TOAD... What, no mention??? like the salmon and badger, I travel on ancestral paths; like the frog, I mediate within/without; depth and light. I endure, somnolent until conditions are right... my toadspawn grows in the age-old pools; am I a worthy April totem?



Send your May totem connections to touchstone@druidry.org

*Dear Touchstone,
Working with Mandalas while listening to OBOD materials has become a way of life for me. This one has not been shared anywhere at all in the OBOD online communities. I create the mandalas free-hand using Prismacolor pencils on regular paper, almost always while listening to Eimear or Damh's talks/conversations with guests... Blessings to you all a gloriously sun-filled day in snowy Montreal. Ann Beer*



REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

APPLESEED GROVE Glastonbury FFI: theappleseedgrove@googlemail.com

ARTURIAN GROVE Seasonal rituals near Otley. optimistichannah@outlook.com

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

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

CIRCLE OF COLL Seattle Seedgroup public rituals, workshops, tree walks &... every month. circleofcoll@circleofcoll.org

CORNOVII GROVE. Seasonal rituals in Worcs. www.cornovii.org or email via keith.southall@creativelandscapes.co.uk

DÓITEAN AGUS UISCE (Flame & Well Druid Grove). Seasonal rituals, moots and other gatherings. Colorado Front Range, USA. FFI: flameandwellgrove@gmail.com, <https://flameandwellgrove.org>

DRACAENA GROVE: Saltburn/Cleveland: N 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.

FELLOWSHIP OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS, BRISTOL. Monthly local park meeting/ceremony FFI: fellowshipoftd@hotmail.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 Australia. sandra.macademiagroove@hotmail.com

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

OVERTON PAGAN MOOT- 2nd Thurs The Red Lion, Overton, Nr Basingstoke, Hampshire. 8pm. FFI alex@alexrigg.com

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

SHINING MOUNTAINS GROVE- western Montana, USA, 8 rituals, community, hikes, zoom in winter. contact Heather: roanrobbins@aol.com

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

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

TAMESIS (LONDON SEEDGROUP) seasonal festivals/moots/workshops Contact Ferdiad tamesisgrove@gmail.com

EVENTS

OBOD members and friends are welcome to submit events they have organised for inclusion here. This section may also be posted on our website at www.druidry.org Please tell us if you don't want your event posted on the www.

OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS

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

Bealtaine: May 6th * Alban Hefin: June 17th Lughnasadh: August 5th * Alban Elfed: September 23rd * Samhain: November 4th Alban Arthan: December 16th *

REGULAR OBOD MEETINGS

Fireside chat with Eimear. Join CC every Thursday, 8pm. Google You Tube + Fireside chat
Tea with a Druid: With Philip Carr Gomm/guests every Monday 8pm
Monthly OBOD Peace meditation: with your Grove or by yourself every full moon: 7pm local time
Building Resilience in Difficult Times A monthly OBOD Listening Circle. Online zoom gathering, 1st Wednesday of the month 7pm UTC. Contact harrietlock@gmail.com for link.

12 - 18 April Bioróg Retreat Discovering Mythic Landscape in Donegal, Ireland. Venue: Ards Friary Retreat Centre. Facilitators: Eimear Burke and Sean O Gaoithin. FFI/bookings email seanogaoithin7@gmail.com & FB – Bioróg Retreat

Tues 25th April to Tues 2nd May Mabon's Way A Pilgrimage through Mythic Snowdonia

Journey along the Math-Mabon-Merlin Songline from the Celtic Sea to the Fort of Fiery Higher Powers. 'The most mythically rich twenty miles in Britain.' with Eric Maddern and friends eric@fachwen.org

Fri 28/4/23 - Fri 5/5/23 White Horse Camps Beltain Camp: at Wildways. Shropshire - for more info please contact communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

Sunday 7 May Wirral Pathways ONLINE festival. a day of online talks from Druidry and ht astrology the Life of of Runes, to Egyptian deities and Dion Fortune. Speakers: Lunae Wetherspoon, Penny Billington, Bee Helygen, Danielle Broley, Kevin Rowan-Drewett & Wendy Dee Harris Tickets £7.50 per device <https://buyticketsat/pathways>

3 & 4 June OBOD Glastonbury Summer gathering

Sunday 4th June 2 - 4pm Songlines of Avalon . Druid Devotional singing with JJ Middleway. Chants, prayers and silence in celebration of Druidry and our connection with the sacred Earth and all her creatures. The Avalon Room next to the Goddess Temple in Glastonbury

Mon 31/7/23 - Sat 5/8/23 White Horse Camps Lughnasadh Camp: at West Town Farm, Devon - for more info please contact communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

7-10 Sept BAM Druid Gather: Fire ~ Igniting Community. Join us for our fourth year in beautiful Ashby, MA! Adults \$190, children (12 and under) \$60, includes meals and cabin/tenting space. Immerse yourself in a thriving community experience, learning new skills and deepening your connections to the land and fellow Druids. There will be songs, dance, and feasting around the sacred flames; workshops, meditations, Makers' Market, children's activities, Bardic & Ovate initiations, Eisteddfod... and lots of Fire! FFI: <https://bamdruidgather.org>

30 Sept & 1 Oct Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 1 Non-res weekend workshop in Glastonbury with Penny Billington and Matt McCabe FFI: mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

Thurs 26/10/23 - Tues 31/10/23 White Horse Camps Samhain Camp: at Wildways, Shropshire - for more info please contact communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk