

TOUCHSTONE

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

Issue 314



Cerridwen's Cauldron: Carmen Turner

AEITHER

It is October. I am wholly enveloped in crimson and rust and golden foliage. The intoxicating scent of petrichor that lingers in the air inflates my soul as it eagerly prepares for liftoff.

I fly in my mind up and up and up into the air, higher and thinner as I go. Soul soaring over the cooling waters and above the brilliant autumnal tree line. I freely go without my body beyond the terrestrial sphere into the inner and upper planes.

My spirit is lifted by the sights of natural beauty below that is the season of autumn in far Northern Maine. I am effortlessly carried on the current like an Eagle rising majestically through the cloudcroft. I rise and rise again.

I gently brush the tips of my fingers against the misty entrance to the realm of the Upperworld and dissipate into the Aether, and once there, remember the beauty of fall and return precipitously to my waiting body and waken to the delights of the tenth month.

Jason Desneiges

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Bore da to all - and those two Welsh words might be the sum total of what I'm prepared to go public with, but great oaks from little acorns grow... I am showing willing, for the coming dark times encourage us to study for our Druidry, ideally by a crackling fire.

When the Cailleach, Death Cafe, apocalypse and 'In Memorium' all figure in an edition, we prepare to be challenged! But how do the stories of the Tuatha point to actions we can take for the planet?? And how does Greta Thunberg feature in them?? For starters, Balor stands for today's economic system that devours everything it sees with its greedy eye...Intrigued? See p8...

The equinox brings the possibility of change, and the Moon encourages magical thinking, p5, whilst an Ogham walk suggestion, p4, and remembrance of past loved ones, p10, keep us balanced on the good earth. And at dusk, when we're tired, there are two stories for our relaxation, pp 6&11. Our stores, and our hearts, are full of our harvest.

Welcome to the dark times!

October '23 TOUCHSTONE Issue 314

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 3 | Bards' page | |
| 4 | An (almost) Ogham walk | <i>Abi Crutcher</i> |
| 5 | Moon totem | <i>Hannah S. Death Cafe John K.</i> |
| 6 | The kelpie and the Cailleach | <i>Tracy Rupp</i> |
| 7 | Bards' page | |
| 8 | The apocalypse in Druidry | <i>Stefan Kaiser</i> |
| 10 | Pet companions: In Memorium | |
| 11 | Affagddu and Morda | <i>Theresa Smith</i> |
| 14 | Open Forum/Groves and Seedgroups | |
| | Regular meetings/Events | |

A HISTORY OF RESILIENCE

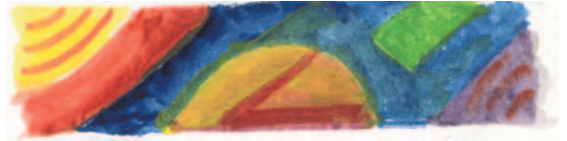
I do not put a date on things because they are dateless.
For time is right and right time is sight.
I cannot teach the pupils who will only listen.
I cannot speak to teachers who will only speak.
I listen with my knowing in the right frame of mind.
I listen with my being in the knowledge of mankind.
I have been on Earth so long I know that when we meet,
we are me and me are we, all things are sentient.
Many times they told us we were wrong and they don't care
So I have visited the place where we can stand and stare.
We each look beyond ourselves, but know we still connect.
I seek the love that binds us all with open heart and mind,
And look into another's eyes, knowing in some ways we are blind.
I dance my walk and walk my dance, and feel the energy shift.
And while I am busy dancing there is no time to sit.
When I rest the dance goes on and on the dance continues.
And when again I join the throng, I know I am still enlightened.
I have not lost my power to be a loving kind of being.
I have not lost my quest for truth even though I am all knowing.
I do not put a date on things because they are dateless.
Keep on dancing in the now time and embrace the throng that's growing.

Sarah Mirza

KOWTOW TO EQUINOX

At Sea of Time I see a bay,
Where Shadow matches Day.
I step ashore, kneel in sand.
I touch the rising tide with hand...
I bow with waves. I taste the salt.
I linger there...
Washed and blessed, I stand up tall.
The depth of Blue, the Void of stars -
I welcome You with open arms!

Eilias



UNIVERSE

When one dabberlocked rock
sunk in mud flats but
rising like a slick mesa
above rag worm wastes
and blanched crab claws.

When that's the centre of the universe.

There's red campion and mayflower
under hawthorne.
A Painted Lady and thistledown
blowing away somewhere over the hill,
where the Ayrshires shrug away thickening
horseflies from their wet eyes.

When that's the centre of the universe.

When there's the crunch and reek of stranded
bladder wrack,
the left long blister hulled boats
slapping against green bearded chains.
Brackish, copper-red pools, crusted with soft
grey lichen.

When that's the centre of the universe
you can always take it away with you.

David Clare

This morning, feeling stressed and a bit down, I resolved to take myself off for a walk. My favourite walk is an old green lane which passes behind my house, and this was the route I decided on.

An (almost) Ogham walk

Abi Crutcher



a little perplexed, as I still couldn't see any leaves in the canopy, but as I searched, I eventually found them, hiding in amongst the ash!

A few minutes in, I became aware that my mind was elsewhere, full of the mundane, stressful thoughts I was trying to get away from. So I stopped and looked around me, with a vague recollection of a grounding exercise – name 5 things you can see etc. I couldn't remember the rest, but I was standing in front of a hedge, so I named what I could see – hazel, hawthorn, holly, blackthorn and honeysuckle. As I did so, I realised that they were all ogham trees, so I resolved to see how many others I could find on my walk.



Before long, I had spotted bramble, ash and elder, then I passed through the gate which takes me beyond the houses, to the part that has been largely untouched for decades, possibly centuries. Here the hedgerow gives way to mature trees lining the track, with a gentle stream running alongside. A tall beech with ivy rambling through it caught my attention as I passed through the gate, then I was pulled away by the insistent demands of a yew on the other side of the track, who wanted me to take a small sprig to keep on my desk when I'm working.



Thanking the yew, I moved on – alder, willow and reed growing by the stream. Nearing the top of the hill, I reached the area with the most mature trees – here I found oak, and as I was just thinking how surprising it was that I hadn't seen rowan, I noticed some berries and leaves on the floor at my feet. I was more than

I didn't have the time or energy for the full circular walk, so at this point, I turned around and retraced my steps, and noticed how different things looked from this direction. The rowan was readily spotted as I could see its scarlet berries easily. On my way down my favourite beech tree inveigled me to sit under her for a while. As I approached I startled a squirrel busy picking up beech nuts, who scampered off chattering. I sat under the beech for a while, drinking in her beautiful energy. I know some people don't consider the beech a 'proper' ogham tree, but she has been 'my' tree since I first started studying ogham more than 20 years ago, and I always feel renewed and inspired after spending time in her company. As I sat, I became aware that the squirrel had returned, this time up in the branches, pulling nuts off the tree, unconcerned, or unaware of my presence, but reminding me that despite the busyness, its good to find time to be playful.

I didn't spot any new ogham trees on my way back down the path, but I spotted an apple tree in a garden, and finally - how could I have missed it - the graceful mature birch tree standing on the corner of my road which I had walked heedlessly past on my way out.

Despite not bagging a full ogham, I returned home with a clear mind, the awen flowing through me, ready to finish one of the tasks on my 'to do' list – a children's activity about the ogham!



OCT TOTEM

The moon, celestial sister, 'the lantern of the poor', comes into her own in the dark season between the equinoxes. But throughout the year she shines as the world turns from the constancy of the sun to the liminal spaces of night. Here's an evocation of Moon magic from high summer.

The Thunder/Stag Moon July 3rd 2023

The Thunder Moon wanders the evening skies. She raises her head and smiles, the tides are still, her work for the day is done. She scoops up the ocean in the palm of her hand and gently watches it flow to the shore.

Then for a brief moment gas and fumes from the earth catch the back of her throat and she hides behind the waiting clouds. Vapour trails sting her eyes.

She shakes her head and the earth wobbles. Crashing waves sweep mankind away. She weeps for the earth, yet every tear raises the level of the ocean and soon balance returns once more.

In the silence of the evening I walk the shoreline, that liminal space between the moon's shadow and the soft ocean's edge. The light is so bright I am dazzled and close my eyes. I stand with hand on heart and absorb this orange and yellow ball of wonder, as she clears the mountain tops and disappears into the warm embrace of the evening's clouds, each waiting for their glimpse into another world.

The silence of this night brings a sacredness and offers fertile ground for transformation, relaxation and growth.

This healing light of the moon recharges my soul. For without her, our world would become unstable and life would end.

Hannah Silcock



There is a story about the Buddha. He was residing in a forest close to a small village with his fellow monks and one morning he was approached by a distraught woman carrying her dead baby. She fell on her knees and entreated him to bring the child back to life. The Buddha, full of compassion for the woman's distress said that she was to go around the village and collect a handful of mustard seeds from a house that had seen no death. The woman subsequently did as asked and throughout the day visited all her neighbours. That evening she returned to the Buddha without her dead baby which had been buried. She had realised that death is part of life and that none are spared.

All of us at sometime in our lives will experience, loss and grief and eventually will succumb to inevitable death. The Death Café movement has grown throughout the world. I propose to offer the chance to meet online to discuss all things related to loss, grief, grieving and death. The intention is, that whilst this may prove to be therapeutic it is not intended to be a substitute for therapy.

Following a nature based spirituality, it is possible we may have particular views on death that we wish to explore, share and discuss. The online sessions will be an OBOD members only forum and will begin at Samhain. The sessions will be held on Zoom on the third Wednesday of every month beginning with the first session on the 15th November at 7pm UK time for approximately one hour. To attend, please email me at oboddeathcafe@gmail.com for a Zoom link prior to the meeting. *Many blessings....John*

Her brothers had warned young Brea to steer clear of the ancient hill-fort and its nearby boggy lake. The old crone, they claimed, lived beneath the dun, and she would eat young girls with strawberry locks, in order to restore her beauty. If, perchance, the bairn did manage to outrun the Cailleach, a faerie horse would then appear, offering an irresistible ride to safety, only to plunge the trusting girl to her drowning death.

Brea was a pensive child, and not one to believe what she had not seen with her own eyes. So, upon one warm and blustery day, she packed within her small pouch one shiny red apple, and trudged through fields of golden wheat and chicory, toward the abandoned hill-fort. The late October sky was a brilliant blue, with cottony clouds magnifying the Sun's waning brightness. At the base of the knoll, Brea resolutely squared her dainty shoulders and approached the dun's opening, which was thickly grown over with weeds and vines. At first her eye caught just a hint of frosty white, perhaps a tuft of milkweed seed snagged within the brush. But soon the tuft grew long and flowing, the pewter tresses of herself, the Cailleach.

Brea ran, surpassing the wind, certain that the enchanted hag was quick upon her heels. The sky grew steely, menacing clouds now blocking the Sun's illuminating rays. Upon nearing the bog, she indeed found waiting a dapple-grey horse, with a tangled white mane and tail. For a split second, Brea recalled her brothers' words, however in the

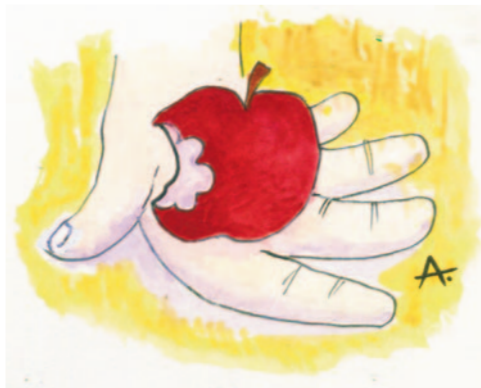
The Kelpie and the Cailleach Tracy Rupp

animal's eyes she saw not the malice of a trickster but rather the gentle spirit of a friend. Grabbing its mane, the girl was flung upon the

Kelpie's back, and affixed there, as it galloped wildly into the bog, and deep beneath the water.

Her eyes slowly adjusted through the mossy green depths, and Brea found to her surprise that she could breathe quite well. The Kelpie floated peacefully to the lake bottom, then trotted calmly toward a magical grove, of ancestor trees, and massive amethyst and quartz stones of the foremothers. Brea found that she was no longer affixed to the steed, and dismounted, venturing in wonder toward the underwater paradise. Upon looking back over her shoulder, she found that the Kelpie had disappeared, and the Cailleach was there, regarding the child with kindly eyes. "You are here, young Brea, in this sacred place, because you came in search of truth, and did not judge. Return now to your home, and never speak of the Otherworld. Simply teach love and peace and justice, and others will come to know you as the wisest of women.

With that, the Cailleach transformed again into the Kelpie. Brea hugged the animal's neck, offering a bite of the bright red apple she bore in her pouch. The Kelpie nudged her gently, as the girl was spirited onto its back, floating through opaque waters, until suddenly awakening dry and Sun-warmed amidst golden wheat and chicory. Within her hand was a bright red apple bearing a single bite.



Cerrid-hen

When Black Hen ate the ear of wheat,
Mother Earth sat back in sweet relief
And thanked the stars; for that tiny grain
Meant the chase had never been in vain.

Little Wren worn down from fright,
Pursued by Hawk all through the night.
Flew from Salmon wise and sleek,
Chased by Otter with a violent streak.

Salmon from Hare with thumping paws,
Chased by Hound with snapping jaws,
Hare fled from Gwion, with fire and sting,
Who stole the way of everything.

Plans to pot and spells undone,
Cerridwen could not exalt her son.
And chaos roamed; Land, Sea and Sky,
To kill Gwion Bach was justified.

Shifting shapes the chase was on
And death came close for poor Gwion;
Hare and Hound, Salmon and Otter,
Wren and Hawk, Earth, Sky and Water.

A tortuous tale, a stressful story
To avenge the theft, Afagddu's glory,
And just as Hawk swooped in to claw,
Little Wren spied just one switch more.

A sack of wheat spilled on the ground,
In an ear he'd never be found.
But Black Hen honed an infinite eye,
And Gwion Bach was about to die!

Cerrid-Hen devoured Peck of Wheat,
And nine moons later lying at her feet,
A boy, a bard, and Mother Earth would sing
For the shining brow of Taliesin.

Alison Kirkham



Written at a poetry workshop given by Liv Torc at a White Horse Camp 2022, where we were invited to meditate on the word 'Bones'. This brought up many themes for me, including an experience of standing in Australia looking at Orion in the clear night, and realising with a shock he (or I?) was upside down, and how far I had travelled from home.

BONES

Soft white bones in the soil
Generous, crumbling into the earth
Like ash, forever cycling.
Whose are they?

A drizzle starts to fall. A light comes on
In a distant house.

I dig my fingers deep around them.
Whose are they?
Better they stay dead.

Pinpoint stars above suck the brains out
of my head
Up into the abyss.



The world turns
upside down.
I hang onto the
earth, good mother,
Through my hungry
grasping feet.
Who am I?

Viv Rimmer

As if the pandemic had not been enough, Europe has been at war since February 2022 and we are feeling the effects. on many fronts. The

looming climate catastrophe has shown itself with all its harshness this summer; the rivers are drying up, the groundwater levels are dropping threateningly and the forests are dying. Uncertainty is in the air and people are preparing for a winter with gas shortages and an impending blackout.

The Apocalypse, i.e. Revelation, deals with the last things in the Bible and is addressed to all people at all times. The word apocalypse has also become common for the end-time myths of other religions. The parallels between the biblical apocalypse and today's situation are obvious. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse have appeared. The first horseman stands for war, the second horseman for civil war, the third horseman for inflation and famine, and the fourth horseman for pestilence and death. The horsemen are not called by God or the angels, but by the animals of the four elements. Hildegard von Bingen sees this as the revenge of the elements for the misbehaviour of humans.

Who would want to contradict this? Karma, the Buddhists would say. The end-time, religious myths often serve to motivate their followers to behave in a desired way, e.g. to devote themselves intensively to religion in order to avert the described horror scenario, to delay it, to be spared or to offer hope if it comes to that.

The historian Strabo wrote that the Druids taught that

The Apocalypse in Druidry Stefan Kaiser

fire and water must one day triumph over existence, which is an obvious belief in an end-time catastrophe. The Gauls feared that the

sky would fall on their heads. Other Irish stories describe how the world will end when the sky collapses, the earth cracks open and the sea swallows everything. Here too, the elements seem to play a role and the consequences of global warming can be glimpsed, floods, droughts and rising sea levels. If one takes into account the confident belief in one's own rebirth of the Celts, the fear of the end of the world may have been greater than of one's own death, because then there is no longer any place where one can be reborn. There is a parallel to this in Tibetan Buddhism, where the apocalypse consisted in the downfall of the Dharma and the fear that one would no longer have a chance to attain enlightenment in the next life.

Two stories describe end-time events in a Celtic context from which we can derive concrete wisdom for today, namely the battle of the Tuatha Dé Danann against the Fomorians and the story of the Holy Grail from the Arthurian legend.

The deity of the Tuatha Dé Danann had once conquered Ireland from the Firbolg, the giants, at the Battle of the Field of Towers (Mag Tuired). In the process, King Nuada had lost his right arm, which cost him the royal crown according to the rules of the Tuatha Dé Danann. The new king was Bress, who was half Fomorian and half Tuatha Dé. The Fomorians were fierce and greedy creatures.



He turned the land into a wasteland, a desert, and hospitality withered in his kingdom. The healers Miach and Airmed regrew Nuada's arm and so he was able to regain the crown. This greatly angered Bress and so he went to the king of the Fomorian Balor. Balor was a one-eyed, hateful giant whose gaze could kill on the spot. For this reason, he had to wear an eye patch that could only be lifted by seven men at a time.

A war was brewing between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomorian, to be decided at the second battle on the Field of Towers. Lugh the Artful realised that only under his leadership could the war be won. He was the grandson of Balor and it was prophesied that he would one day kill him. At birth, Lugh was thrown into the sea by Balor, where he was rescued by the Druidess Birog. He was raised by Mannan mac Lir, the god of the sea, the nurse Tailtiu, an earth goddess who died while doing hard field work, and her husband Eichaid, the son of heaven. He had a special connection with the elements and their gods, just as the Druids still connect today: *"with the earth beneath us, with the sky above us and with the sea around us"*. He went to the royal court and gained access, and when it was clear that he was most capable, Nuada gave him dominion over the Tuatha Dé Danann. The Druids pledged their support to him and the battle began. Nuada died in the battle by the evil eye of Balor and when the fight against the Fomorians seemed already lost, Lugh grabbed a stone, in other versions a spear, and threw it through the eye of Balor, so that he died. The falling eye saw the fomorians' own ranks and killed them all. The wasteland was healed and evil was defeated.

In a figurative sense, Balor stands for today's economic system that devours everything it sees with its greedy eye. Lugh, through his

connection to the elements, stands for closeness to nature and the fight against the greedy economic system. Little Lugh overcomes the giant Balor. Who might Lugh stand for in the present day? Maybe Greta Thunberg, who knows? The story encourages struggle and activism against the impending doom of the world as a result of the greenhouse gas emissions of a greedy economic system. In the extreme, it can also encourage real struggle against attacking Fomorians, whoever they may be. Tailtiu, the earth goddess who died while working in the fields, represents the exploited earth. She teaches us to take care of our earth and not to overtax it.

The wasteland and the desert also play a role in the story of the Holy Grail. Since the king and guardian of the Grail has been wounded beyond repair, his land, with which he is mythically connected, also suffers. Only when the king is healed can the land also be healed. In another version of the story, the wasteland is created by a broken agreement with the Fairies, the nature spirits. The Fairies are hospitable by nature and allow the land to flourish. When the relationship with them is violated, for example through greed, robbery, deceit or violence, the land decays and becomes wasteland. By re-establishing the relationship with the nature spirits, the land can blossom again. And in this there is also the possibility for us to re-establish the relationship, e.g. by renaturalising areas and not taking more from nature than is absolutely necessary.

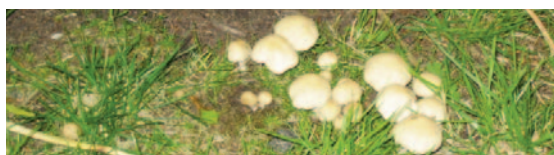
The stories of the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Holy Grail reflect two approaches that we find among us Druids today and sometimes polarise, activism in the form of protest action on the one hand and tree planting and renaturation on the other. Celtic mythology recommends both. The stories teach that there is

hope if we act vigorously, but only if we do. "Business as usual" is not offered as an option. In most apocalyptic texts, the elements seem to play a role, both in their mistreatment and in their healing.

Modern Druidic literature also addresses climate change and dwindling resources. Already for many years, the Archdruid John Michael Greer has been dealing with the ending age of oil. For him, this means the collapse of our economic system to a much lower level. In his book of the same name, *"Collapse now, avoid the rush"*, he recommends that we can already prepare for this age by lowering our personal demands and living as self-sufficiently as possible.

To what extent should Druids today be guided by a possible apocalypse? The one extreme would be to deny the issue and retreat into a 'cure-all' mentality, the other would be to bunker down and disconnect from normal life and become a prepper. Neither sounds very mature or spiritually evolved. We must not deny both individual death (memento mori) and the end of the world, but should become aware of them from time to time. We must look the impending dangers and grievances in the eye with open eyes and act courageously, creatively and decisively. The Celts were always aware that both the world and their lives would one day come to an end and at the same time were connected to it in space and time with all their senses. They celebrated, loved, fought, suffered and mourned, all in their own time. Wholeness is the ideal of Druidry; this includes both the unpleasant truths and the joy of life.

stefan@kaiser24.net



IN MEMORIUM

When my dog passed April 22, it was a very horrific experience. The next morning I went to the wetlands and my trees to grieve. As soon as I entered, a black capped chickadee came right up to me singing. This is very rare, because we do not have them very much at all.. It followed me all the way down the path, till I stopped to grieve very hard, and came and sat by me and kept singing. As I walked back he followed close beside me, singing I stopped at my sacred oak tree... I was greeted by a white throated sparrow a foot away from me, and she sat as I grieved hard again ..I was surrounded by my tree and these beautiful birds, helping me grieve the loss of my pet. It was a very magical moment and a pivotal point in my path.

Dawn Hemmerly

LOSS

For Tupi, who left too soon (2018 to 2023). I wrote this the morning after his death.

Loss, when we lose something,
a piece of our heart dies only to be reborn later.

Loss, the tragic ending of something
we could not imagine,
but opens the door for the new.

Loss, endings become beginnings,
pain becomes acceptance,
grieving opens new pathways.

Cyndi Sabo-Cook



While the story of Taliesin is a very exciting tale of work, fear, triumph, loss, and eventual destiny and triumph, I would tell you now a smaller tale, one of more humble and far sadder origins, but sprouted from the same seed. For almost every story has at least two sides.

One night Affagddu awoke and looked out his window. In the silver moonlight he saw his mother stride forth from the house, her green cloak flapping in the breeze. She went around the corner of the house, and presently he heard hoofbeats pounding as she galloped away. It must have been the slamming of the door that had awakened him. But perhaps not as he rarely slept well. His twisted back pained him if he tried to sleep for too long even in the softest bed. As he looked out the window his thoughts turned, as they always did in the darkest hours before dawn towards his own failings, and the hurts of his deepest heart. How much he wished he could make his mother proud. How just once he'd love to see pride shining in her eyes when she looked at him. He went back to bed and cried himself to sleep with bitter tears.

In the morning his mother still was not home, and he went to the kitchen to get food from the cook before going to the library to read and lose himself in the tales of brave and handsome Knights and heroes that were his favorite. That night his mother returned and told Creirwy and Affagddu to go down to the old cottage by the lakeshore where they sometimes played and wait for her there no matter how long. Being used to the eccentricities of their mother's requests the

The Story of Affagddu and Morda Theresa Smith

two children did as they were told. In the cottage they found a new splendid cauldron and a whole stack of

firewood. The cauldron brimmed with water and what looked like weeds. The two knew better than to touch it, and so went outside to play. Eventually darkness grew close and the two went inside where there were two beds and lay down and went to sleep.

Late into the night the door opened and both children looked sleepily at the doorway where their mother was ushering two strangers into the cottage. One was an old man whose eyes and beard were both white, and a child about their age in dirty clothes but with a nice smile. Their mother bid them go home now and so they did. But before they were out of earshot the two heard their mother's threats and plans.

For a year, all went on as normal, Affagddu and Creirwy followed their mother around and she sang to them of the seasons, and the moon. Each song taught them about the life around them, which plants were good to eat, and which were deadly poison. Where the animals went at night, and what they ate. Where the moon and the sun set at different seasons and the names and directions of the stars at night. Creirwy, of course, delighted in the knowledge and remembered each thing. Affagddu had more trouble keeping all the facts straight, but nonetheless did his best. Each day his mother would praise Creirwy and console Affagddu by saying "All will be made right in time!" And while Creirwy grew strong and wise, Affagddu grew sadder and more bitter each day. For



though he was not wise, nor beautiful, nor even particularly brave, still he could feel as much as any other child.

And Affagddu's heart grew bitter and cold. Not from the lack of love, for his mother loved him with the fierceness of a mad woman. But from the all too obvious and excessive efforts she made to treat him fairly. Her love for Creirwy came unforced as gentle glances and bubbling laughter. But not for him. He could feel the effort that it took for her to love him. He realized at last that in Creirwy his mother could see a reflection of her own perfection, and in him she could only see her greatest failure. And although she did not blame him, still her eyes slid past him when she looked across the room and did not linger.

During this time Ceridwen would often take her big gathering basket and head off alone at various times of the day or night, bidding the children to stay home and stay out of trouble. She would return home, always from the direction of the cottage which both children had been told was off limits for play now, calmer and ever more fiercely determined. He often wished he could go down to the cottage and play with the little boy whose name was Gwion. It would be good to have a friend. As the year crept by Affagddu became convinced that whatever errand she was about had to do with him. For upon her return she would often regard him steadily for quite some time. Her eyes were wild and a little cold, in his discomfort Affagddu pretended not to notice her stares.

Until one night, when the moon shone brightly, she crept into the children's bedroom where Affagddu lay awake, and motioning him to be quiet, beckoned him from the room. Affagddu followed her down and into the main room, where by the fire she bathed him,

anointed him with sweet smelling oils and herbs, and dressed him in new clothes. And she said to him, "All will be well with you by morning, my love." Somehow this made Affagddu even sadder.

Silently she led Affagddu out into the night and down towards the cottage by the shore. They entered the cottage and there sat the old man, still blind, but cleaner and plumper, and the boy with him who had grown considerably in the year Affagddu had not seen him. He could feel that his mother was excited and anxious almost to a fever pitch Ceridwen and Affagddu sat in humble wooden chairs near the wall. So strained was the air in the room that no one dared speak. At last, Affagddu fell asleep in the hard wooden chair, for no matter what was going on, he was still only a small boy awakened in the middle of the night.

Suddenly he awoke to his mother's screams of rage! The cauldron was rocking and spitting black foul-smelling steam and cracks began to form in its belly. The fire leaped upwards engulfing the mantle and huffing in the chimney. Affagddu heard the thatch begin to crackle. He cried out in fear and reached for his mother, only touching the hem of her cloak as she ran out the door chasing the other boy, and leaving him behind. Affagddu's heart broke then just as the cauldron was breaking apart, and he began to cry great gulping sobs and silver tears ran down his cheeks.

Morda in his pain, for Ceridwen screams had left him bloody and bruised, heard the anguished cries of a child. He struggled to his feet and guided by the noise quickly grabbed the child and holding him tightly threw them both from the cottage just as it became engulfed in flames Twisting and rolling he came to his feet, surprisingly agile for one so

old. And trusting his instincts headed uphill away from the lake as fast as he could, the child's body oddly light and terribly twisted in his arms. Morda turned his face from the heat of the burning cottage and hastened away carrying the still whimpering child, Affagddu, in his arms.

As saddened as Morda was at the desertion of Gwion, he realized that he too would have run in the face of Ceridwen's fury. He doubted that Gwion still survived. But he realized it must be so much worse for the child. How terrible to be left to die because your mother's rage was stronger than her love for you!

When they had traveled for most of the night, and Morda's battered frame could not go on, he found them some slight shelter in a stand of trees. Carefully he wrapped his cloak around the child to keep him warm and they slept.

And thus begins the adventure of the survivors, The Broken Boy, and The Brave Blind Man.



New group in N. Yorkshire

Well, it has finally happened! We are about to start **The Rising Moon Seed Group**, in North Yorkshire, basically Harrogate. We are looking for a place to meet and have rituals. We are thinking of monthly meetings as well just to get together and discuss druidry in general and gather with like minded people. If you could be one of them, or you have a suggestion for where to meet, do get in touch with Cyndi and David, at wolfmoon3110@gmail.com

THE ADVENT OF TWILIGHT

As the tiring sun's ascension
falters toward the pale horizon
weakened by the arduous journeys
of the summer's blazing furies

Gloaming shadows now emboldened
spread as roots across the landscape
bit by bit the light consuming
holding all the land in tension

Gone the raucous hues of daytime
tempered and subdued to ochre,
silver, grey, and shadowed purple
muted half-light mists enshrouding

Now the reverie descending
beckons silence through the woodlands
stillness broken only by the
croaks of feathered black blasphemers

Bounties gathered in for keeping
lest the creeping ichor taint them
as the withering shadows spreading
wilt the fruits on vine remaining

Smoke from leaves on altars burning
air perfumed by harvest censers
sacrifices made devoutly
in the ancient oaken temples

Speak we now our fey devotions
at the advent of the twilight
in Her service everlasting
three times three and blessed be.

Owen Youngblood



OPEN FORUM

Dear Touchstone, During my summer travels I stumbled upon this shop in Kagoshima, Japan. Unfortunately it was closed, but I wanted to share the picture. I always travel where the Universe sends me. So it seemed I was still on the right track. *Wendy Spijkers*



What fun... but I like to think our magazine is the one genuine article! If you've spotted imposters around the globe, let us know.

Rituals and climate change

I have just joined OBOD. The first ritual I went to was for Summer Solstice. I waited for the bus on the wrong side of the road, and exactly on time it went past on the other side. So I walked, and whilst I walked it started to rain, and when it became time for the ritual the rain was full-on. Everyone was in good spirits though, enjoying the irony of celebrating Summer Solstice in the pouring rain.

My second ritual was for Lammas. Again it rained, and adding to the rain, this time there was extra wind. It seemed out of place not to be celebrating this summer ritual in the bright sunshine, but again everyone seemed in good spirits.

The Wheel of the Year powerfully marks the seasons, and with relatively short-term variations, the seasons in Britain have remained remarkably stable for a long period of time, as can be seen from descriptions in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon medieval literature.

The seasons still exist of course, but now the Wheel of the Year does not only mark them, it also draws our attention to how far we are deviating from how they have traditionally been, and helps to measure the increasing distance from the idealised versions we might like to be celebrating. The new reality of course is the climate crisis, not only about rising temperatures, but also about all the consequences for the whole system of oceans, atmosphere, land and rain. Among its many consequences is that we are now in the beginning of a new period of history in which seasonal rituals will feel slightly out of place, giving them an additional meaning and usefulness by being reminders of what is happening to the planet.

Victor Anderson

GROVE & SEED GROUP NOTICEBOARD

Good morning, I am in the Bardic grade and have recently started the **BELLBIRD SEED GROUP** on Facebook. I live in rural Southland in the South Island of New Zealand. There are 2 groves in the north island but no Groves in the south island and I've yet to find others in the south interested in Druidry, so listing my new seed group here may find and bring us together. People can contact me on messenger. At present I have 2 non- members in the group. We meet fortnightly in cafes, woodland, beach, at my house.

Kind regards, Heather Auckram

Bagas Has Kernow - Cornish Seed Group

A small group for those who are studying or have studied with OBOD, centred around Mid Cornwall (St.Austell & Bodmin.) We celebrate the 8 festivals and meet in between for study groups, various events are planned over the next 6 months. **If you would like a copy please email george.kestell@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
harrietlock@gmail.com for link.

Members' regular group meetings:

APPLESEED GROVE Glastonbury FFI: theappleseedgrove@gmail.com
ARTURIAN GROVE Seasonal rituals near Otley. optimistichannah@outlook.com
ASH GROVE, GLASTONBURY meeting OBOD visitors for druidic chat. FFI jacki.woolmington@btinternet.com
BIG SKY GROVE, NORFOLK OBOD/BDO 8 festivals, walks, discussion/ social. FFI: rebniak@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.
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

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.

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

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

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

Email oboddeathcafe@gmail.com to register for the link

1 Dec Friday afternoon short informal get together planned for those coming to the Winter Gathering by themselves, or new to OBOD, to make connections. FI in next (Nov) edition

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

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

2024

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



Solstice sunset over the Tees estuary: John Davis