

TOUCHSTONE

The journal of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids
January 2023

Issue 305



Draco, the Dragon constellation. C15th

CALLING THE POWERS OF THE WEST

Elation!

The Salmon comes, bringing brilliance
and clarity of mind

Trees exude the energy that never dissipates
into the woods

for their mortal kin to absorb
joyous in the crisp and colors
drinking in Awen like water.

Tracy Rupp



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to all members, and to a bright new
2023, full of the promise of enchantment.

What is Sacred Space and how to make it?
It's a key question for this time of new beginnings, to explore on *p.10*. And our new *totem column* is off to a good start, spawning a column *p 4*, article *p 12* and a poem *p 3* all dedicated to January totems; will it be yours in February? Which animal, bird, insect, tree is your Imbolc totem?? Then, do you wish you understood a little more about the Welsh bardic tradition? If so, read *p 9* and a plethora of poems there to encourage you to have a go! Lastly, there's an opportunity for writers, *p 14* and we look back on the year gone with the Annual Review, in all its glory, *pp 5-9*. Who knew we did so much and so well and with such enjoyment through 2022???

An update - on the editorial email address. Some of your emails have taken other routes to get here, but touchstone@druidry.org is now the only address, so if you have sent to an alternative, it will have gone astray. If you haven't had an acknowledgment, please resend just in case. I'd hate to miss your wisdom, your poetry, your creativity - it's what Druidry's all about!

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UNIVERSE

Dark the sleep, light the dream
The truth revealed in soul's wide space
Explore its depths, reach out to find
The universe inside each soul
Here's freedom where we can create,
Discover who we really are
Then open out and reach the stars
From deep within our own true selves
From here we can embrace the world
And feel the force of love and life.
To go inside is to reach out
And break the shell that separates.
All universes then unite
The cosmos grows as souls expand

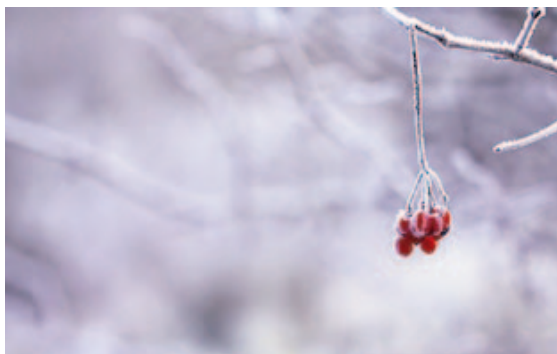
Jackie Innes



WINTER'S GROVE

Icy winds froze my grove
Into a slumber deep
Snow crunches beneath my feet
Yet I sit still
A slow pull from the Earth
To feed my heart

Moss Gnome



TOTEM

Wolf mother
grey lady
walker between worlds
protector of the pack
and of the land.

I walk in your tracks
you look out through my eyes.
In the evening howling
and the morning song
we are one.



BRIG

The wooden woman, She
bears a crooked cross of straw
to place above the rafters
in the coming of the Spring

I have seen her forest faces, She
wears a diadem of stars,
And I cannot approach, Her
Hair is set aflame

I can see it from afar, She
wears the fire like a skull cap
Burning in the starry engine
of the night light sky

Atop a throne of wood, She
Holds the hearts flame in her hand
I approach with a shell of oak
A candle and a dish of sand

Give me strength, She
Who roams the middle world
In the easiest of gossamer,
Ocean made of milk, Her
Pantomime of endless Spring

John Jay Ho'olulu Flicker

January Totem

New year, and the winter world still and frozen. Through our chimneys snuffles the wind; through the dark forest snuffles BADGER; Broc, camouflaged carnivore, shadow-walker, earth pig, snuffler, sett-dweller, clan-mammal; holder of the traditional ways.

'At the cold, dark time of year - I stand for continuity and heritage - My sett is handed down through the generations, and I follow the ancestral tracks - no human can make me change my course.

I stand for community and inclusivity - my rambling family home is shared with other animals: woodmice, voles, rats, rabbits, weasels and even foxes.

I stand for the rhythms of life - Listening to nature, sleeping copiously in the dark times

I stand for regularity and for playfulness - I change my bedding, and my children learn their life skills through example, and through playfulness

I stand for tenacity; my earliest fossil bone may be over two million years old...As Gwawl, the Badger King, I was beaten in a bag and emerged unchanged... I endure, maintain, play and thrive until the bright spring should come again.



Famous voices, Druid perspectives

This space can be filled with any short quotes to inspire Druids in 2023, from famous people not known as Druids. Include a sentence about the author, as well as the quote. Choose from talks, fiction, song lyrics, from authors, speakers... you get the picture. Send to touchstone@druidry.org

Go ahead and try talking to a tree or a pond. If you are like me, a voice in your head will hector you: "It isn't really listening. It can't understand you. You are being silly." And even if it seems like the tree is talking back to you, do you wonder if maybe it is just your imagination? Normally, people need some help to inhabit the Story of Interbeing deeply enough to consistently act on it.

The help comes in the form of a direct experience. We can't force the other beings of this world to reveal themselves in their beingness, but we can ask them. The way to ask is to give attention to your longing: your longing to rejoin the living universe, to be companioned." Excerpt From Climate:A New Story by Charles Eisenstein, Public speaker. Key themes include anti-consumerism, interdependence, and how myth and narrative influence culture.



The way we see the world shapes the way we treat it. If a mountain is a deity, not a pile of ore... if a forest is a sacred grove, not timber, if other species are biological kin, not resources; or if the planet is our mother, not an opportunity - then we will treat each other with greater respect. This is the challenge; to look at the world from a different perspective. David Suzuki, world leader in sustainable ecology <https://davidsuzuki.org/>

CHOSEN CHIEFS BIT

Annual Review 2022

*Peace,
Here you come, striding up that leafy street,
looking for me.
I'm here.
Remember sitting under that tree in Pavia?
We were there together there and I knew, for
an hour, your happy blood.
Open your heart now, let me enter it, I want
to live in you for good. Brendan Keneally*

How wonderful to write an Annual Review of the year we emerged from lockdown! Although the year began in the shadow of Covid and its restrictions, I am so grateful that we are free at last! The year has been full of activity, as OBOD members revelled in our ability to gather together again.

Our Online Winter Gathering at the Solstice was still held online, and there were two wonderful presentations. David Bramwell's *No. 9 Bus to Utopia* was about the various communities he visited around the world. Jo Dunbar and Adrian Rooke treated us to a magical story about the Mistletoe and the song of the mistletoe. We had our first zoom meet-up where members didn't just watch the online offerings, but got to meet each other in breakout rooms. This was a great success and many members have told us they valued the opportunity to meet and talk with other Druids from around the world, so we have continued to host these.

In March I attended *The Druid Gorsedd* in a beautiful centre called Noddfa in Pen

Maen Mawr in Wales. The last one had been held in 2020 in Ireland. What a joy to be able to sit in circle with fellow Druids and reconnect once more.

The highlight of the year was our Summer Gathering which was attended by over 450 members from all over the world. Unfortunately due to Covid restrictions we had only three members from the Southern Hemisphere. The excitement as we gathered in the marquee in the Abbey grounds was palpable given that it was the first time in two and a half years that we had been together in Glastonbury. We were welcomed by Adrian Rooke standing in as Pendragon, as Damh could not attend due to a COVID infection. While Damh was very much missed, Adrian did a wonderful job and held the space beautifully. Ronald Hutton gave a most entertaining presentation on the history of the Order going back to its predecessors. He had us all enthralled with his usual wit and erudition. He spoke of how the successions of the role of Chosen Chiefs were so acrimonious and how the handover of the Chosen Chief role from Philip to me was the first peaceful one. I remember his repeated phrase "And what could possibly go wrong!" I am happy to say that all is still well. Ronald's talk can be heard on Druidcast and watched on the Order's Youtube page. This was followed by Philip who spoke of how the Order has developed and spoke of all the people who have contributed so much to the Order through their dedication to service to make it what it is today. It never ceases to amaze me how generous our members are in giving of their talents, gifts, and service to the Order. Long may this tradition continue!

As I had already been installed we had what has, thanks to Peter Cawston, become affectionately known as the

Celebration of the Confirmation of the Installation of the Chosen Chief. It was a very moving ceremony for me – to stand with Philip, Stephanie and Adrian standing behind me holding their wands in the form of the Awen while being held so beautifully by all who were gathered there. Philip presented me with a beautiful gold and silver pendant representing the triskele and awen. This was made by Charlie Carr Gomm. A replica of it will be on display in the Witches Museum in Boscastle with photos of the ceremony. It was wonderful for me to have my family present. While they are aware of my Druidry in Ireland, it was special for them to see me as a Druid with the Order in Glastonbury. I want to make a special tribute to Jennifer O'Neill-Kaan who wrote a very moving song specially for the ceremony, 'Breacadh an Lae', which means 'A New Dawn's Light'. Her singing as always was magical. We had our celebration of the Summer ceremony on the Tor in the afternoon. Thanks to Gabby and Paddy for holding everything. What a joy it is to stand together on the Tor and experience the magic of ceremony! Listening to the chant taught by Jennifer in the morning, 'Tús Ré Nua' meaning 'Beginning of a New Era', was so moving. Saturday ended with the Eisteddfod with wonderful performances from all the artists. Sunday began with ceremonies at Stonehenge and Avebury. The morning session in the marquee began with a very interesting and informative conversation between Philip and Ros Watts entitled *"The Healing Powers of Mushrooms and Trees – where Psychology meets Druidry"*. Members gathered in their



Groves for the afternoon. Another highlight was the Céilí held on Sunday night. It proved to be very popular despite the early start to the day. Thanks to Ursula Billington and her band. I really loved the dance taught to us by Penny Billington.

Just as we did for the 50th anniversary, we had Fringe events on the Monday and Tuesday. These were very well attended, and accounts of the various presentations have been published in Touchstone. One event I'd like to mention is the *'Sing-along-Wickerman'* which was presented by David Bramwell on the Thursday before the Gathering. It was wonderful to see people coming up the High Street wearing animal masks lending to the atmosphere.

In July Kristoffer Hughes and I went to the International Camp in Germany. Our hosts Bettina and Egbert kindly invited us to come a few days earlier so that they could show us around their landscape. They live near Nuremburg – a beautiful city. One magical place we visited, called *Druidenhain* meaning Druid Grove, contains large boulders with trees growing through and around them. The camp was held in the north of Germany called the Eiffel. On the way there we stopped at a Celtic site called *Glauberg*. There is a large barrow from the 5th century BC where bodies of three people of high status were found with amazing jewellery.

There is a statue on display of a Celtic prince which has a very interesting headdress believed to be a representation of mistletoe. He is wearing a torc which looks very much like the Awen symbol.

In June I gave a presentation for the Doreen Valiente Foundation entitled *Powerful Women in Irish Mythology* – Bioróg.

Dragon Oak OBOD Retreat (DOOR) in the USA held their gathering in September. Due to COVID restrictions I was not able to attend in person. However, I held a workshop via zoom. Many thanks to Kristoffer Hughes, who was there physically, for his help with the logistics.

Philip took a break from *Tea with A Druid* at the beginning of the year. He was sadly missed and there was great excitement when he returned to host the Teas in May. He distils his wisdom and insights on Monday nights at 8pm (UK). I have continued with the Fireside Chats, having taken a summer break, on Thursday nights at 8pm (UK). For those who cannot watch them live recordings can be viewed the YouTube channel.

Although we are now able to meet physically it is still very important for many of our members to hold the Wheel of the Year ceremonies online. Many thanks to all those who held the ceremonies so beautifully and creatively with images of their landscape, videos, and music: *Alban Arthan*: White Horse Camps (UK); *Imbolc*: Chinook Hills Grove (Canada); *Alban Eiler*: South Devon and Dartmoor Grove (UK); *Bealtaine*: Highland Oak Nemeton (Baton Rouge USA); *Alban Hefin*: Ash Grove (UK); *Lughnasadh*: The Border Grove (UK); *Alban Elfed*: Eldermas Seed Group (Worldwide); *Samhain*: Cornovii Grove (UK). A very special thanks to Penny and Arthur Billington for creating the beautiful Ceremony invites and thanks; 2022's theme has been the Ogham Trees.

As the Order continues to grow in size, the sense of community is getting

stronger. Our online events have brought so many people together, through the Tea with a Druid, Fireside Chats, Zoom meet-ups. Members have formed online seed groups at a rate of at least one per week.

MEMBERS ACTIVITIES

Éigse Spiorad Cheilteach organised by Paul Corcoran, Anna Coote and myself was held in August in Ireland with very interesting presentations: *Staring at Ring Forts* by Justin Moffatt; *The Eternal Path: Fairies, Sacred Landscape, and the Song of the Numinous* by David Halpin; *Envisioning Rebirth: The Role of Healers and Seers in Restoring the Wasteland* by OBOD member Cáit Branigan; *Finding your Imbas* by Sherrie Scott

Marc Meier has created an amazing *Inner Journey to Dinas Affaraon* meditation to find the answer to our most important questions. What is interesting about this meditation is that it is accompanied by music specially composed for the journey. I found this very powerful and evocative. For further information: www.epic-inner-journey.com

This year Liv Torc was commissioned to write a piece which was filmed on how climate change is communicated for an exhibition at East Quay Gallery in Watchett Somerset. Liv interviewed scientists, environmental activists, including myself, on their thoughts and feelings on humanity, the planet, their work and the tricky job of communicating climate change science. From these interviews Liv created a satirical piece "Meta Than This".

<https://youtu.be/p4WID3ULEzY>

The OBOD Online Climate Listening Circle has changed its name to *Building Resistance for Hard Times* to better reflect people's expe-

riences. A big thanks to the listening volunteers for their commitment and service. The Listening circles are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7pm UK time via zoom. Contact Harriet at harrietlock@gmail.com

Following a Fireside Chat with Fleur Camille the idea was born to create a community cloak and send it around to the world to members to sew or embroider prayers or wishes onto it. Thanks to Marcella Dillon-Walsh and Fleur for dreaming this up. Fb group: Global Community Fireside Chat Cloak Embroidery Project - Cloak of many threads linking the Global Community of Druidry through ritual alchemy of sewing and embroidery – weaving a story through land, place and space.

The OBOD Inner Journeying and Ritual weekends run by Penny Billington and Matt McCabe are still very attended. They're held in Glastonbury, which was also the location for November's 'Putting the year to Bed'. This was a day of Druidic activities for three SW Groves organised by Penny (Ash Grove) & Belinda (South Devon and Dartmoor Grove). The day's talk and workshopping were followed by a candlelit outdoor ritual and eisteddfod.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some members held a New Moon Ritual for Peace online. We also had our first online Healing Ritual on November 23rd. The OBOD Healer's circle meets every month online, and holds a healing ritual twice a year:

<https://facebook.com/events/s/obod-healers-circle-first-publ/1802599376768368/>

This year's Mt Haemus award went to Bill Frankham for his most interesting paper:

Fallen Branches: Reconstructing the Lost Saga of Caswallawn ap Beli Mawr.

Members and friends of the Order have contributed some wonderful books on Druidry and related subjects this year. Another new phenomenon is the quantity of audio books now being created. Let's start with a list of these:

Nine Ways to Charm a Dryad: A Magical Adventure to Connect with the Spirit of Trees Audiobook – Penny Billington

The Druid Path: A Modern Tradition of Nature Spirituality – Hardback and Audiobook by John Michael Greer

The Book of Hedge Druidry: A Complete Guide for the Solitary Seeker Audiobook by Joanna van der Hoeven

The Path of Paganism: An Experience-Based Guide to Modern Pagan Practice Audiobook – by John Becket

Easing into Druidry: Audiobook by Kimberly Beyer

And then the print books:

Jo Dunbar: Secrets from a Herbalist's Garden

Penny Billington: Nine Ways to Charm a Dryad

Melanie Godfrey: Ancient Faerie

Sandy Coombs, Diane Maxey, Wendy Trevennor: Ogham and The Wood Wide Web

Iona Jenkins: To sing with Bards and Angels

Jenna Paulden: The Alchemy of Avalon

May the coming year bring peace and deeper understanding and with these a greater sense of interconnectedness with each other, with the earth and with her beings,

Eimear 

“Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding.”

—Albert Einstein

It is common knowledge that the Druids forbade, or at least

Language of the Bards NYDD DYLAN AP GWYN

strongly discouraged the recording in writing of their beliefs - which accounts in large part for why we have no sacred literature from their time.

What we do know however is that the ancient Brythonic language survives today in the form of Welsh, Cornish and Breton.

Since modern Welsh is derived from the original P-Celtic, its modern iteration is of interest as a living testament to how important “language sound” was to the ancestral Celtic people. By way of example, I would like to share with you a very short poem by one of Wales’ most respected modern poets which I have translated for your enjoyment and hopefully to provide you with an insight into the magical and mellifluous sound of Welsh.

BARDD

Canodd ei gerdd I gyfeiliant berw ei waed;
Canodd hi, a safodd gwlad ar ei thraed.

Canodd ei gân yn gyfalaw I (derfysg) Dyn;
Canodd hi ac nid yw ein (llên) yn un.

by T.H. Parry-Williams

POET

He sang his poem to the accompaniment of
his boiling blood;
She sang, and a nation rose to its feet.

He sang his song in counter-melody to (stir-
up) mankind;
She sang and our (scripture) is transformed.

gan T.H. Parry-Williams

This is a somewhat startling poem title on the face of it because ‘Bardd’ means one poet (the plural being ‘Beirdd’) - yet there are

clearly two voices, a male and a female throughout the poem. Is this the

male and female aspect of one poet? Or is Parry-Williams only ascribing the honourable title “Poet” to one of the interlocutors?

The word ‘ei’ can mean ‘his’ or ‘hers’, but the way the word following ‘ei’ changes, clarifies whether ‘ei’ was a male or a female - this is how we know there is a male and a female voice in the poem. So clearly, the very first line is the voice of a male. ‘Hi’ (in the second line) is only used in relation to females. For example,

③ ‘ei gerdd’ means ‘his poem’.

③ ‘ei cherdd’, means ‘her poem’. The root word for the object ‘poem’ before the change or mutation of the first letter is ‘Cerdd’. C changes to G (for males) and c changes to ch for females.

The word is mutated both because of the gender of whose poem it is, but also importantly because it what sounds better. The mutation causes the changed word to roll off the tongue more fluidly and the sentence is less saltated or staccatoed.

Another interesting characteristic of the poem is that the male voice represents a more controversial and “base” intention than that of the female voice. The words in brackets which I have intentionally translated as “stirred-up” and “scripture” actually translate as “riot” and “literature”.



Stir-up can be positive, but the accompanying context of the song is that it is delivered in a “counter-melody” indicating dissonance and discordance. The word used by the poet (derfysg) literally translates as ‘riot’. But to “riot mankind” doesn’t translate elegantly, so an alternative might be to use the words ‘provoke’ or ‘enrage’ but perhaps these are too strong.

I hope you have enjoyed this small insight into one of the languages of our ancestors of tradition.

Transformation sequence... follow me through the magazine...

EARTH

Hare,

I see you

Form pressed against cold clay

The Quicksilver moonlight

Tracing your shape shifting

While beneath your fleet foot

The year turns, the Sap rises

Drawing down the Circle

of Life

From the heavens

Threefold and Infinite

Hare

I see you

Hound

I scent you

Your sleek frame casts shadow

cross my Form

I turn , I twist , I run , Still you pursue

With vengeance in your heart

Threefold rage ,

I gain the river , diving in

My fur is silvered

As Salmon’s scales my transformation

Hound

I scent you

Race with the hare to page 12..

Creating Sacred Spaces

ERIC SCHOCH

In every religion worldwide and in every cultural tradition there are places, objects and areas, either geographically or manmade, which have the attribute of being sacred.

This may be due to cultural understanding through ancient tradition or because of some divine inspiration altering this certain place from mundane to becoming sacred. These areas cannot be categorised simplistically, this is because they are not all equivalent either in their holiness or equivalent in size or nature. Every form of sacred space in every religion differs from tradition to tradition, but there is always one thing we must equate to all these areas: they must be treated with upmost respect and reverence no matter what personal identification we may have with them.

Many have attempted to identify the sacred and attempt to establish a general overview of what it means. Just as it is difficult to denote religion as a definitive language it is equally hard to define sacredness within that religion as each differs from the other. In 1917, Rudolf Otto was the first major scholar to attempt to define the sacred and the profane in his book, *The Idea of the Holy*. This book received great reviews along with criticism due to its originality. Otto describes what he sees as a distinction in reality when we come across a sacred place or item. In one reality we have the item in plain existence, for example a mountain is simply a mountain. In the other reality the mountain has transformed and taken on divine purpose and becomes sacred; this could be due to any number of circumstances. This new reality is

described by Otto as taking on a new potential. This new potential is within every sacred place: it has become potential housing for the divine or the holy. As the new area is described as such it then becomes revered by us and it is due to this reverence that we create the term sacred. When we refer to a place as sacred we are establishing that place apart from the rest of the world as having the potential or actuality of divine housing or purpose. Otto also describes the idea of *tremendum*, a word he often attributes to certain sacred spaces. This idea of *tremendum* is the innate fear we have when confronted with such a place. For example if we are always told to revere something because it is sacred, we will assume incorrect contact with such a place as something terrible or sinful.

This new potential is within every sacred place: it has become potential housing for the divine or the holy... it then becomes revered by us...

He thus describes tremendum as follows, 'The Hebrew *hidquish* (hallow) is an example. To 'keep a thing holy in the heart' means to mark it off by a feeling of peculiar dread, not to be mistaken for any ordinary dread, that is.' What Otto describes is that the feeling of fear and dread linked to the sacred becomes even more intensified: we know that as we defy the sacredness of a place we incur in ourselves this divine fear of possible actions taken against us or simply an innate guilt. He also notes the fundamental reasoning of sacred ideas, that something 'other' in its reality and if it is divine becomes *mysterium*, 'Conceptually 'mysterium' denotes merely that which is hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar.'

To us Pagans, the idea of creating sacred space flows from the same concept, although it seems that our beliefs of what constitutes

sacredness relies on a more nature-centric idea. Simple ritual acts such as walking through the woods or by rivers and streams sometimes stirs within us a feeling of being. It would logically follow that this connection to the spirits of the land then allows our mind to transfer the idea of sacred space and allows the undisturbed landscapes to become holy. When Christianity arose throughout Europe and spread north, it encountered such spaces long revered and hallowed by Pagans. Perhaps the reason these places exist to this day is a common link between all beliefs; for these areas were not torn down but converted and given new Christian names and even backgrounds. Pope Gregory I even decreed to his English Bishops that these sites not be torn down out of spite, but preserved and Christianized instead.

Mercia Eliade explains in The Sacred and the Profane (1957), that just as Otto had understood previously, religious people will take on a split-tier organisation of the world, creating two separate realities, one containing sacredness, the other neutral ground; both of these realities exist together and it is only by imbuing a divine attribute to certain places that we remember and revere them. Eliade also remarks on how this same psychological reasoning happens in secular life. An atheistic man may not associate a church as sacred, but he may do so with his birth-home or his old school: as it means something other than neutrality, he will approach it with caution, nostalgia or other feelings of wonder. Though religious sacredness will represent something more, often a gateway or passage which connects the profane world with the divine, something as simple as altars or objects can do this. 'On the most archaic of levels of culture this possibility of

transcendence is expressed by various images of an opening; here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven.'

More next month...

The second transformation...

WATER

Salmon

I see you

On the river bed you lie
Against the ochre gravel there
In camouflage you cannot hide
From these Bright searching eyes
Knowledge gained Ocean wide
Is not enough to quench
The hunger of the Goddess robed
In Otter shape
Salmon
I see you

Otter

I sense you

The Triple moon upon your back
Lights every rock round
Where I lie
In shadowed weeds and brackish water
I feel your presence
Yet skilful pursuit
Cannot stop the alchemy
I leap the Weir
Otter
I sense you
From above your shadow
Casts its spell upon my flight
My wing is swift as in my name
But I am no match for the Flame
Of anger in your heart
It powers your stoop
That seed was sown
by me transformed

Swim with the otter to page 13...

Albatross - a January totem JOHN DAVIS

A long time before I had any association with (or knowledge of) Druidry, I'd admired those enormous seabirds that soared on the winds above the Southern Ocean. They mate for life, raise only one chick every two years, live for fifty years and more, and travel thousands of miles every year facing whatever storms cross their path.....they epitomise the virtue of perseverance.

*It isn't surprising that many pieces of lore have become attached to them. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote his epic poem, *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, in 1798 in which the albatross is given a Christ-like persona and the killing of the albatross is equated to the wilful killing of Christ and terrible consequences are heaped upon the mariner. His redemption is only brought about with a change of attitude towards life and his place within it....it is a story of transformation.*

My wife and I sing sea songs and shanties at our local folk club, and a favourite is "Down upon the Southern Ocean" by Bob Watson. This song shows the deep sense of admiration and wonderment of the albatross by sailors in those lonely places.

It was these themes of redemption, transformation, admiration and wonder that drew me to the albatross when I began my druidic journey in my 60s after living and working the whole of my life thus far within a Christian context. I had come to a point where I realised that my spiritual journey was moving away from what had been familiar....the restrictiveness of doctrine and

certain aspects of practice were leading me onto another journey. I had to face feelings of regret, bereavement, confusion at what was passing, whilst holding onto hope for what was to come. During the first few months within the Bardic grade, I expressed these feelings in the following poem... it will be read at my funeral.



*Soaring high above the restless waves
I scan the scene with eyes both keen and bright.
I see for miles the unobstructed view
Till shadows fall and day turns into night.*

*Though dark surrounds, so many miles pass by;
The southern stars shine brightly all around,
A lonely path is my allotted course.
My instinct strong, the gods know where I'm bound.*

*At this small hour the air is calm and still.
With wings out-stretched I ride untroubled and unheard;
But, as dawn breaks, the east becomes enflamed,
A storm to face....I press on undeterred.*

*It's all changed now, I'm tossed around the sky.
The wind.....so strong, the sea....all flecked and grey;
The future's bleak. If the gods be real,
Give inward strength and bear me up today.*

*With storm now passed, the gods had noticed me;
They did consult and agreed that I might live
To fulfil the task, that which was mine alone.
With uplifted wings my heart-felt thanks I give.*

*As I journey home, I'm much wiser than before;
I realise now that my task was to be me.
As I sweep the ocean, the truth is being revealed.....
A simple truth, yet profound.....I know that I am free.*

BREATH OF THE EARTH

Behold the breath of the Earth,
listen to its ancient harmony.
A sacred song that whispers through the trees,
in and out as the seasons go by.
Gentle, steady and strong,
it flows like a river.
In a tongue as old as the Earth herself,
it speaks to us.
If we listen, really listen.....
what will it say?

Adam Grose (Meirneal)

AIR

Swift

I see you

Rising from the Salmon's leap
On swept back wing into the Blue
I , relentless , follow you
On invisible thread that's drawn
by Arianrhod to bind our fates
I , hawk of Dawn , will hunt you
Down
Until my gift has been returned
Swift
I see you

Hawk

I see you

From above your shadow
Casts its spell upon my flight
My wing is swift as in my name
But I am no match for the Flame
Of anger in your heart
It powers your stoop
That seed was sown
by me transformed
Hawk
I see you

Fly on to page 15...



CALLING ALL WRITERS!

Do you have a story to tell? About Relationship with People, & about Relationship with Land? Aurochs Underground Press are looking for short creative pieces for inclusion in AUROCHS 1: HOMECOMING, the first literary journal designed to present & promote ways of seeing and experiencing the Earth from an explicitly Animist perspective.

So here's the brief for you to interpret. We are looking for short stories, prose poems, lyric essays and memoir pieces up to 3000 words. They can be traditional in style, experimental, fluid, and shapeshifting if these techniques feel right and you can make them work.

What we are NOT interested in is anything that promotes ideas of ethno-nationalism or the racial supremacy of any group. Indigenouness, as interpreted here, is not strictly the property of any race or culture, and can be achieved by people who migrate to a place as well as those who have deep ancestry in it.

SO GET WRITING!

When you have your story ready, please submit to Aurochs Underground Press at <https://aurochspress.co.uk/> using the *Contact form and upload the document in Word format.* Deadline for Submissions for Aurochs1: Homecoming is MARCH 21 (Spring Equinox) 2023. Intended Publication: Midsummer 2023.

Deraills of pubulcation, distribution & all business relating to authors plus more on the project at <https://aurochspress.co.uk/the-journal>

PLANNING A SABBATICAL

I am planning my Sabbatical from 2/1/24 until 7/31/24. This is a long-cherished wish: now I'm 56, children are all grown up and so I can set off for the semester abroad I haven't done during university times.

I will be travelling UK for six months, a work /travel/holiday time. I want to stay for a couple of weeks in Stratford upon Avon and dive into Shakespeare's world from a different angle than the ordinary tourist. So I am looking for board and lodging where I could in return lend a helping hand. My main profession is teaching (English and German) I am also a trained bookseller and have a master's in literary studies. But household assistance/jobs around the house would be very welcome as well. I am an animal lover, experienced looking after children and love gardening. Additionally I can imagine to work in anything connected with tourism or culture – guiding people around, B&B, café or kitchen. I am very flexible only would love to be near or even better directly at Stratford.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best winter greetings from Germany, Bettina
bettina.dohmann@web.de

Bettina Faltis, mobile 0049 176 96 87 32 45

THE GREENE ARTE JOSH WILLIAMS

An exploration of the magic of plants, through the lenses of animism, folk magic, herbal medicine, plant lore, land connections, and rituals aligned with tides of nature. Josh Williams explores, introducing us to working with Tree Spirits to create magic and medicine. A workbook to grow your own work with the wonderful and magical bounty the plants have to offer.

From Aeon books: www.aeonbooks.co.uk/
discount code TGA20 - valid until 28/2/23.

FIRE

Little seed

I see you

As you drop
To Earth
I follow in your wake
Though you lie with many
In this field of fallen grain
I the Goddess of the corn
In Hen form
Take you with my beak
Little seed
I eat you

Ceridwen

Inside you

I gently rest within your womb
In this dark place
Fire of anger from its ashes
Nurtures life once more

Your Inspiration shapes my
New form
In you I am
Reborn
Ceridwen
Inside you

SPIRIT

Fairest Child

I free you

From my womb
I bring you forth
and place you on the Water
I have gifted all my skill
Now others they will take their part
Go safe
Fulfil your destiny
Radiant one
I free you

Transformation sequence: Penny Stevenson

REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

APPLESEED GROVE GLASTONBURY FFI: theappleseedgrove@googlemail.com

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

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

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

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

THE MELBOURNE GROVE Seasonal celebrations, Melbourne, Aus: Trudy Richards 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
www.tamesisgrove.com

EVENTS

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

OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS 2023

On fb and youtube. Hosted by CC Eimear Burke 2023 date: Alban Eiler: March 18th
Bealtaine: May 6th; Alban Hefin: June 17th; Lughnasadh: August 5th; Alban Elfed: September 23rd
Samhain: November 4th; Alban Arthan: December 16th **Check** druidry.org/facebook

REGULAR MONTHLY OBOD MEETINGS

OBOD PEACE MEDITATION: *with your Grove/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

5 January PAPPs present - Changing Views of Paganism In and Out of the Academy 19:30.
A Webinar with Professor Ronald Hutton (Eventbrite listing) – contact Lynn – l.genevieve.1@research.gla.ac.uk

15th January 2 - 3.30 pm Wassailing Glastonbury Abbey Orchard with the Ash Grove - come and add your voices! (Abbey entry charge applies)

Thurs 2/2 - Tues 7/2 White Horse Camps Imbolc Camp at Wildways, Shropshire - for more info please contact Communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

3-5 March 2023 Druid Grade Gorsedd in the New Forest National Park, Hampshire, England. Email druidry.sylvangrove@gmail.com for further details. **EVENT NOW FULL**

1&2 April Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 2. For previous level 1 participants. **EVENT NOW FULL.** Email FFI: mattmccabe.1@outlook.com to go on waiting list.

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 & Facebook – Bioróg Retreat

Fri 28 April - Fri 5 May White Horse Camps Beltain at Wildways, Shropshire -for more info please contact Communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

Mon 31 July - Sat 5 August White Horse Camps Lughnasadh West Town Farm, Devon for more info please contact Communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

Thurs 26 October - Tues 31 October White Horse Camps Samhain at Wildways, Shropshire for more info please contact Communications@whitehorsecamps.org.uk

OBOD Glastonbury Gatherings: Summer - 3rd/4th June * Winter - 2nd December.**