



TOUCHSTONE

— The journal of —



THE ORDER OF BARDS OVATES & DRUIDS

July 2026 | Issue 347

This Issue



My Mystic Switzerland
by Gabi Cavegn.



Who Were the Celts and
the Druids?
by Sarah Supahan.



Reflections on the Druidic
Esprit de Corps
by Bruno Martins



Plus Lots More!



Cover: "Forest" by Jessica Pixie

Editorial

Welcome to July's edition of *Touchstone*!

Well, it looks like we are in for another long, hot summer in the northern hemisphere. We have only just arrived at the Solstice as I write this and yet we are already heading into our second record breaking heatwave of the year. What should we do on such hot days? Well, firstly, make sure you help the plants and animals around you, many of whom will be having a torrid time of it, and after you've done that, settle down with a cool, refreshing drink and read through this wonderful edition.

There are lots of treats awaiting you, including a wonderful piece by Gabi Cavegn about Switzerland. I will be talking to Gabi about her article and we will be sharing stories of some of the lesser known sacred sites in our own vicinity in this month's *Touchstone Unbound*, which is on Friday 3rd July at 7pm UK time.

And a huge thank you to Jessica Pixie for sending in some wonderful artwork, including the stunning front cover.

Elsewhere there are wonderful pieces on Celts, Druids, *Espirit de Corps*, Ramon Lull, the city of Ys and even a ritual for a Fire Festival, which you can prepare in time for Lughnasdh. The harvest will soon be upon us!

Stay cool - and hydrated!



TOUCHSTONE (July '26 - Issue 347)

- 2 Chosen Chief's Bit
- 3 Bard's Page
- 5 Reflections on the Druidic *Espirit de Corps* - Bruno Martins.
- 7 Who Were the Celts and the Druids? - Sarah Supahan.
- 9 My Mystic Switzerland - Gabi Cavegn.
- 11 The Found City of Ys? - Myrich.
- 12 A Ritual Quest for the Fire Festivals - Hilde Liesens
- 13 Ramon Lull - Howard Evans
- 14 Andrew's Bit at the Back
- 15 Events

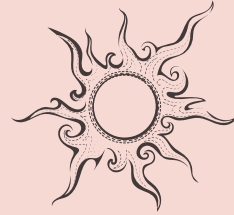
Fire by Maca Smith

Red painted faces, golden embers.
The distant flicker of Alpha Centauri.
Primeval volcanoes, man made hearths.
One sleek and glimmering salamander.

All ancient stars.

The fervour at Brighid's Forge.

Fire, what transforms our motives.



TOUCHSTONE is published by OBOD.

OBOD OFFICE ADDRESS: Unit 1, Highlands Farm, London Rd, Bolney. RH17 5PX

Email: office@druidry.org

Phone UK: +44 1273 470888

Phone US: +1 (857) 293-6468

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES: Please contact Lena and Jo at the office address above.

TOUCHSTONE SUBMISSIONS:

To the editor: Andrew Anderson.

Email: touchstone@druidry.org

Opinions/statements by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor, Order or publishers. Submissions from members are welcomed, but it is not always possible to use everything offered for publication. Contributions must focus on Druidry or contributor's experience of Druidry and may be edited without consultation unless a request is made to the contrary. Poetry no more than 40 lines. Articles of 1,400 words or fewer. No AI generated content. Deadline for events inclusion is 5th of the month before publication. Submissions may be printed on the OBOD website unless requested otherwise.

CIRCLE FORUM BOARDS:

<https://hearth.druidry.org/circles/>

MENTORS: for all enquiries about mentors please email Mentors@druidry.org (members only)

LISTINGS OF SEED GROUPS & GROVES:

<https://hearth.druidry.org/seed-groups-groves>

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

Chosen Chief's Bit

Bandia daoibh a chairde! Greetings to you all! I'm writing this piece at the Solstice. The warm embrace of the sun can be felt here in Ireland, which is in sharp contrast to the wild, wet weather we experienced at our Summer Gathering.

Despite the challenging weather, we had a magical and eventful Gathering. We started off with our fringe events: Meet and Greet and Open Mic on Friday in Glastonbury, which were a great success. The theme for the Gathering was Peace, which was carried through the weekend from the Grove meetings to the Rituals and the Closing ceremony on Sunday.

On the Saturday morning, the honour of Ollamh was conferred on Professor Ronald Hutton. In ancient times in Ireland, the title of Ollamh was given to a master scholar, poet, historian and keeper of wisdom. Oll means 'great' in Irish, and it was the highest honour that could be bestowed upon an individual, a title not conferred lightly. In modern times, Ollamh means 'professor'. Ronald was presented by the Chosen Chief with a Golden Branch (beautifully crafted by Stephanie), which was the symbol of the Ollamh in ancient times. Ronald was also honoured with the title of Fellow of the Order by Philip. These honours were in recognition of Ronald's mastery of knowledge, his service to tradition, community and culture, his scholarship and outstanding contributions to the historical understanding of Paganism and Druidry, his service to the Order, and his leadership of the Dobunni Grove, and so much more.

Stephanie presented him with a ceramic wild boar – known for its fierceness, raw power, and ability to forge new pathways through the forest. Taliesin and Amergin described themselves as a 'wild boar', and as Stephanie said, so too Ronald epitomises the wild boar who has drawn on this power to confront the inertia and conservatism of academia to forge a path for himself and others. This was followed by a wonderful talk by Ronald.

On the Sunday morning, it was announced that Stephanie was stepping down as Scribe after thirty-eight years. Her successor is none other than our *Touchstone* editor, Andrew Anderson. He received a standing ovation and great cheer. During the ceremony, Andrew was asked by the Chosen Chief how he would carry the mantle of Scribe and here is his response: *I will carry the mantle as lightly as a feather used by scribes in days of yore to*

channel the Awen from the ether to the page, and I will carry it as heavily as a folio where the words wait silently in anticipation of being read. I will carry this mantle with the wonder of a child and the worldliness of age to find, as a great bard once wrote, 'tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything.'

When asked by our Pendragon if he promised to uphold the values of the Order of integrity, honesty, kindness and care, our new Scribe responded yes, and that for help with this, he would channel the animals that have guided him through the

Groves of Bard, Ouate and Druid: The Badger, from whom he learned Integrity; Honesty which he learned from Fox, a wild pragmatist deeply connected to the world around her; he promised to uphold the value of Kindness with all the fluffy fellowship of a burrow full of Rabbits and the warmth of a purring Cat stretched out in the sunshine; he will uphold the value of Care which he learned from Mother

Bear *'who licks her cubs into shape on a cold winter's night getting them ready for the world outside the cave'.*

A big thanks to Stephanie for her holding of the Order over the years, for her dedication to service to the members and for her kindness. While I will miss Stephanie for her invaluable contribution and support in her role as Scribe, I offer a big welcome to Andrew and look forward to working with him.

After this, Kevin Redpath presented a short film, *A Glastonbury Tale*. This was followed by a very interesting talk: *From Shaman to Starman* by David Bramwell. Both were very well received. On the Sunday afternoon, there was a fringe event, *Meet the Triad*. This was held in the United Reformed Church in Glastonbury. It was well attended and offered a space for members to ask questions and for discussion. For those who could not attend the Gathering, recordings of the talks and ceremonies will be broadcast over the next few months on *Druidcast*.

As the sun continues on its declining path, may we enjoy its warmth, energy and blessing. Summer is not yet over. Go siúlaimid i shíocháin, i ngrá, 'is i dtaise dúinn féin agus do chuile neach!

May we walk in peace, love and compassion for ourselves and all beings. Beannachtaí 'is Síocháin faoi na Daracha (Blessings and Peace under the Oaks)

Eimear





Bewick's Wrens by Hayley Kynefin

A pair of bewick's wrens
goes foraging among the stones
and leaf-strewn mess of old wood
vertically clinging
flicking to and fro their tails
snapping back and forth and hopping
up and down,
spring-loaded confidence
packed to its highest density.
You tiny birds
in clockwork offset to each other's motions
make the whole world seem composed
of territory
easily defensible by art of song
like yours, a synesthetic
Möbius strip turned telephone.
I'll capture you at least twelve times
with the only capable instrument: my eyes
and ears, and reconstruct your voice and swagger
in my mind
where you will hunt the worms and caterpillars
and spiders
of wriggling and weaving possibilities that there
reside
and guide me, with your indomitable poise,
through these dark times.



Spires by Jo-animist

Trees touch clouds
Tendrils wound
Further than
My heart can
Forming fast
Clouds cast
Symbols

Grey Bird by Neridah Rogers

Little grey bird
What have you come to tell me today
Beneath the mist of the ancient forest lay
A path to follow towards a gate
Through which the next harvest awaits.

Grove of Gaia by Hannah Maslowski

As I walk deeper,
Into the sacred grove,
I see all the hidden life,
Like the Fungi that twists,
Connecting itself,
To the tree roots beneath them,
Sharing their lives together,

As I look up,
I see a range of magnificent birds,
From the woodpecker,
Making sounds for miles,
To the Robin,
Who passes messages,
From the otherworld to us,

As I look at the trunks,
Of the strong trees,
All around me,
Insects crawl,
Building a home within,
Finding comfort,
In the darkness of the trunk,

The sacred grove,
Is a wondrous place,
Full of life,
Everywhere you look,
There are stories,
Coming from the love of Gaia.

Sacred Datura by Jessica McGee

Bedecking the wilds
Nightshade faces the heavens
By the grace of birds

The Oak Tree by John Davis

In Saltburn Valley Gardens, there stands a mighty oak;
It probably was standing before Saltburn's name was spoke.
It's gnarly bark and broken boughs betray the history
Of a chequered life with ups and downs; in fact, it's just like me.

I've made this tree's acquaintance, I'm very pleased to say;
When on my daily walkabout I chanced about that way.
It stood there with it's arms outstretched and I sensed I heard it say:
"Will you stop and stay awhile and pass the time of day".

There are days when I just stand there, content to spend some time;
No words need pass between us, silence is just fine.
But, eventually, the time comes round when I must go on my way;
Then a quietly spoken blessing until another day.

Sometimes I feel I need to speak, something is on my mind;
I seek the oak tree's wisdom, some solace I might find.
The oak tree is the Druid's tree, it holds a special place
In the hearts and mind of those drawn here, to Nature's sacred space.

Some will find this fanciful and cannot comprehend
How the oak tree's health and ours from a common source descend.
If, indeed, that be the case, a secret it remains;
Until such time that peoples' hearts reach out to trees again.

Life's Passages by TriSgri

Nostalgia is a trickster, it plays upon the mind.
Wander memory lane & who knows what you will find.
Imagination can make it better, at times it's painted worse.
Turning points led to blessing, but then we thought it curse.
Life weaves for us a tapestry, it teaches & it will test.
In the rearview mirror, your heart now knows it was best.
The future is not known, nor what's around each bend.
Spirit leads course corrections, & it turns out in the end.
Changes of people & places were steps along the way,
Smoothing our rough edges, new lessons on each day.
The passage of time carries us to our autumn of years,
Driven to do while we can, aging fuels our fire & fears,
Reflecting on love & grief, and on our joys & sorrows
Savoring todays, storing up memories for tomorrows.
When winter comes, bodies worn, heads white but wise
We've done our best, lived life fully, strengthened ties
Our ancestors begin to beckon from the other side
The veil is at it's thinnest, our next adventure open wide.



Image: Owl ~ The Haunting Call of the Soul by Maryanne Mattson

Reflections on the Druidic *Esprit de Corps* by Bruno Martins

When first embarking upon the Druidic journey, one of the most profound thresholds we cross is the definition of Druidry itself. Before joining the Order, many of us - myself included - sought clarity in the ink of scholars and modern practitioners. We gathered definitions like fallen acorns, each offering an evocative perspective, yet each remaining a singular seed. As I began to walk the path in earnest, I realised that every Druid is eventually forged under a definition that is uniquely their own, tempered by the specific rains and suns of their personal landscape.

However, beneath this tapestry of individual experience, there exists a common denominator, a foundational pulse that beats in time across the entire tradition. This is perhaps best expressed through the French term *Esprit de Corps*. Though it translates literally as “*Spirit of the Body*”, its true essence is found in the intangible: a sense of pride, fellowship, and a profound, common loyalty shared by those who belong to a particular calling. It is the invisible thread that binds all those who engage with the Druidic path. Our *Esprit de Corps* is the anchor that allows us to find beauty within the daily friction. We must acknowledge that one of the true challenges of the journey lies in perceiving Awen through the tension of the everyday. It is easy to feel the flow of inspiration while standing atop a tor at dawn, but the real work of the Druid is to find that same sacred spark amidst the clamour of the commute, the pressures of the workplace, and the weight of responsibility.

While one could fill a library explaining this Druidic *Esprit de Corps*, our Bardic training teaches us the power of brevity. We are encouraged to synthesise and poetically distill fundamental truths into potent, concentrated doses of wisdom. In the tradition, these truths are best captured in Triads. Below, I offer three such Triads that I believe translate the essence of our shared spirit, the heartbeat of our collective “Body.”

I. Three marks of a Druid:
A tongue for the old tales,

An ear for the silent heart,
And a mind like an open gate.

How do we recognise a kinship of the spirit? It is not by robes or regalia, but by the way one interacts with the seen and unseen worlds, even when those worlds feel at odds. To hold a tongue for the old tales is to be a vessel for the myths that shaped the land, ensuring the ancestors’ voices are not lost to the winds of modernity. Yet, this speech must be balanced by an ear for the silent heart - the ability to listen to the unspoken griefs and joys of our fellows, and the quiet vibration of the earth itself. Finally, we must maintain a mind like an open gate; for a gate that is rusted shut bars the way for the Awen to flow, while one that swings freely allows for the constant evolution of the soul.



II. Three things a Druid must keep open:

The lore of the ancestors,
The door to the neighbour,
And the book of the world.

The *Esprit de Corps* is maintained through a refusal to become insular. The Druid

stands at the crossroads, ensuring the ways remain clear between the sacred and the secular. The lore of the ancestors provides our roots, but we must also keep the door to the neighbour unlatched, practising the sacred hospitality that has always been a hallmark of our tradition. We are also called to read the book of the world, the living scripture sung in the “three great melodies of Creation: the wind in the trees, the stream at snowmelt, and the cry of a new-born babe” (Triad presented in Bardic Course, “*Approaching the Forest – Gwers 2*”).

III. The Wealth of the Grove:

A shared myth,
A shared silence,
And a seeking spirit.

In a world obsessed with material accumulation, the Druid measures prosperity by a different currency, one that increases only when it is shared within the “Body”. Our shared myth gives us a common language of the soul, while a shared silence allows us to stand together in the presence of Nature without the need for clumsy explanation. Ultimately, our true treasure is the

seeking spirit, the eternal “Why?” that drives us further into the forest and into ourselves.

These triads suggest that our *Esprit de Corps* is not a rigid set of dogmatic rules, nor a static relic of a bygone age. Instead, it is a living, breathing way of being - a shared rhythm that moves through us all. We are a “Body” in the truest sense, held together by the melodic breath of the Bard, the piercing vision of the Ovate, and the grounded wisdom of the Druid. When these aspects align within us, the tension of the everyday ceases to be a distraction (or even a burden) and becomes, instead, the very string upon which the music of Awen is played.

By keeping our gates open and our ears finely tuned to the subtle silences between the world’s noises, we ensure that the spirit of Druidry

remains as vibrant and enduring as the ancient oaks.

As we walk our respective paths – be it rushing through city streets, walking deeply into the woods, or cultivating our gardens - let us remember that while our footsteps are uniquely our own, the ground we tread is a shared heritage. We do not walk alone. We walk as part of a continuous lineage, a fellowship of seekers who find the sacred in the ordinary and the eternal in the passing moment. In the wisdom of the three, we find the strength of the many; and in that strength, the *Esprit de Corps* remains unbroken, like a grove whose trees do not grow in isolation; their roots entwine beneath the soil, sharing strength and sustenance far below the surface. May the Awen flow within you, may your path be ever green.



Phenology Wheel: July by Alison Kirkham

Who Were the Celts and the Druids? by Sarah Supahan.

Names and their origins: As with other societies that are often today called by their neighbors' names for them (i.e.: the Yurok Tribe's modern name is from the Karuk Tribe's word meaning "downriver" - the location of the Yurok from the Karuk homeland), "Celt" is considered a name coined by others and placed upon several tribes of Europe. Although Caesar said that one tribe of the Celts called themselves by that name, others insist it was never a term the people called themselves. The "Celts" or "Kelts" are considered a group of tribal societies in Iron Age and Medieval Europe who spoke a similar language and had a similar culture. The Celts' home territory was in central and eastern France, extending across southern Germany and into the Czech Republic, but they were travelers and invaders, and landed in many areas of that continent, becoming the largest culture group in ancient Europe. Although the Celts were not indigenous to the British Isles, they eventually arrived there too and were prominent during the Iron Age (beginning around 1200 BC), the Roman Age (the Romans beginning a sustained invasion of Britain in 43 AD) and the post Roman Age (beginning in 410 A.D. in Britain), incorporating their culture and language into the many tribal cultures which originated there.

The Romans called the Celts "Galli" (or Gallus for a single person) which is where the term "Gauls" came from. The name "Keltoi", also referring to the Celts, was first used by Hecataeus of Miletus (a Greek geographer from a place in present-day Turkey) in 517 BC when writing about people living near what is now Marseille (in France). In the 5th century BC, Herodotus (a Greek historian and geographer also from a place now in Turkey) referred to the Keltoi living around the head of the Danube (in Germany). The name "Celtiberi" is used by Diodorus Siculus (Greek historian from Sicily) in the 1st century BC to denote people he considered a mixture of Celtae and Iberi who inhabited large regions of central Spain. Other Greek and Roman geographers also spoke of "Celtici" or "Keatikoi" living in present day Portugal.

After the word "Celt" was used by Edward Lhuyd (an antiquary, geologist, and botanist) in 1707, it

became a generalized umbrella term for all the people of the British Isles. The Irish, Scottish, Cornish, and Welsh languages, in turn, became known as "Celtic languages". Modern people have come to embrace the term Celt.

The British Isles in total were said to be known by the Scottish Gaelic language term "Albion", and Scotland itself was called Alba (meaning "dawn"). It was also called Caledonia, a name primarily used by the Romans to refer to the area north of the River Forth. The name is said to refer to one of the ancient tribes in the area. The Romans originally called Great Britain "Pretani" ("People of the designs"), later changing the P to a B to form "Brittania". Wales derives its name from the Germanic (and subsequently English) settlers, signifying "land of Romanized foreigners." Conversely, Ireland is referred to as Éire by its indigenous population. It's also referred to as "Erin" (Éirinn) which means "of Ireland" or "from Ireland", whereas the Roman's called the island "Hibernia" ("wintry").

All that aside, the ancient, indigenous people of the British Isles were first and foremost distinct tribal people who had their own languages and customs, calling themselves by their own names. These tribes were the Druids.

The Druids, the Original People: There is little that is written, and less so that is accurate, about the ancient druidic people of Great Britain. They were regarded as "aliterate," deliberately refraining from recording their histories, beliefs, and laws to protect this knowledge, instead preserving it through oral tradition. It's probable that some written records were made during the late Roman period, but what documentation survived that period was lost during the pillaging of Scotland by Edward I of England in 1296. This was a deliberate attempt to destroy Scotland's historical repositories. What written information survived the earlier times must be recognized as only the records of the invaders who worked diligently to discredit the people and the customs the invaders were trying to destroy. Consequently, we must read between the lines - if we read them at all - and understand that what we are reading is not only coming from the invaders' point of



view, but also through the language translations of the Romans and the Greeks. Translations, without cultural context, are often inaccurate.

While there were likely Druids who had specific roles, talents or skills, my contention is that the ancient tribes of the British Isles were Druid as a religious group (such as Christian, Jewish, or Muslim). Druidism was the original religion of the islands and likely of Western Europe as well. The things we are told about the Druid religion, such as that they performed human or animal sacrifices, came from the Romans – again the conquering invaders who were attempting to discredit the “primitive” and “barbarous” people they were trying to displace. Given that Rome had only banned sacrifice in 97 BC and Julius Caesar’s invasion of the British Isles began in 54 BC - only 43 years later – this accusation was likely more a reflection on Caesar’s own past culture. Given that it’s reported that Caesar never witnessed a sacrifice himself in the British Isles, it’s more likely that these were made up stories used to disparage the indigenous inhabitants, specifically to justify the appropriation of their lands.

“The ancient Greco-Roman sources are now regarded somewhat skeptically, considering it is likely they “were eager to transmit any bizarre and negative information” about the [Celts], as it benefited them to do so.”¹

If there is any real evidence of the Druids performing sacrifices (such as theorized in Anne Ross’ book: *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince: The Story of Lindow Man an Archaeological Sensation*, which details an archaeological find in France from only 2,000 years ago) it’s important to note that a lot had changed following the Roman invasion and with the Druid religion being suppressed and likely bastardized.

The Druids, therefore, are an ancient people made up of many different tribes from the British Isles of which many of us are decedents. Druidry is a religion that those of us who have ancestors from this area can still embrace today, and no, we do not believe in, nor practice, the sacrificial taking of life be it human or animal.

Footnotes

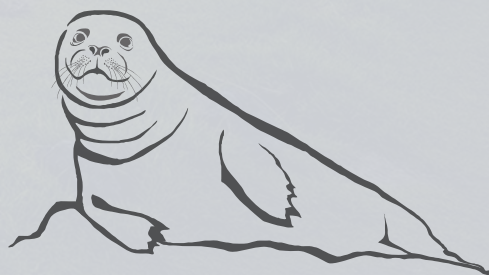
¹ Wells, Peter S., *The Barbarians Speak: How the Conquered Peoples Shaped Roman Europe*. Princeton University Press. pp. 59–60.

Shapeshifting by Maaïke Lammers

Black head above water
the Seal swims toward me.
Dark eyes,
wisdom, trust.
I feel my tears,
place my hand on his head,
we become one.
I swim into the waves,
dive underwater,
turn, spin,
celebrating the joy and purity
of life.

I am old.
Old as existence.
I swim along rocks
in blue green waters,
along centuries gone by.
Along forts rising
on Northern shores.
I swim further back in time
along pristine coastlines.
I am Life.
I am Love.
I am Pain.
I am the Indictment
of what is happening in my time.
I am Sacred.
I am the Seal.

Then I’m on the beach.
break away,
feel bereft.
He turns, swims back out to sea.
I watch him go.
Once more I see his black head
above the waves.
I am filled with love for the beauty
of life.
Filled with grief
for its destruction.



My Mystic Switzerland by Gabi Cavegn

I love travelling, I always have and probably always will. But there were times in my life when it was not possible, due to jobs, having small children, pets, caring for parents or times of illnesses. This taught me to enjoy even the smallest of excursions, and a day trip became a real adventure. Now that I am retired and the children are grown up, I'm up for new places to explore. Even if it's just around the corner here in Switzerland.

My OBOD studies have awakened new interests in me, and it seems each day I find something new I'd like to learn more about and visit. But there are places too that I have known since childhood that are especially dear to me. They are not the most famous attractions in Switzerland, although maybe some are known abroad too. Others you probably have never heard of and nor have most Swiss people. What unites them and makes them special is the unique energy they hold for me. Some are of exceptionally rare natural beauty; others speak of ancient cultures or the rich history of my home country.

Among them are the most scenic Swiss land-

scapes, stone circles, museums, historical sites, works of art and culture, places of healing, ancient trees and Celtic burial sites.

In the last few years since I started my studies of Druidry, I have visited many unfamiliar places and other well-known sites that I now see with new eyes. This brought so much magic back into my life, that it made me want to share it

with like-minded people. I started to write about it and it soon became a small travel guide to 11 mystical sights to see in my home country. One of them was the Menhires of Clendy/Yverdon.

Yverdon / Menhires of Clendy:

On a freezing cold but perfectly sunny Sunday in February 2025, I travelled to the shores of the Neuenburgersee in Yverdon. It was my first encounter with standing

stones and I had read a lot about it in the weeks before. In my naivety I expected signs to lead the way to the alignment of Clendy and queues at the entrance. Well, reality was a bit different! I missed the bus stop since no one else was stopping there with me. I had to walk back through deserted streets until I finally found the sign



Image: Menhires of Clendy by Gabi Cavegn

that let me to the shores of the lake. I knew the stones were near the lake, but no further sign could be found. I had to ask the few people that passed my way on that cold Sunday morning and mostly they had never heard of the stones. I couldn't believe it!

Finally, someone had a guess and, after a short walk through a wooded marsh, I found myself face to face with the very impressive Menhirs of Clendy. My odyssey was rewarded. I had the place all to myself and could absorb the quiet, serene atmosphere. The stones had long been covered under the waters of the lake of Neuchâtel, and their actual arrangement is a bit arbitrary. Nevertheless, I felt the power radiating from the stones and my heart was pounding happily in my chest with the joy of having accomplished my quest. It was the beginning of my love story with the standing stones that hopefully will last for many more years to come.

On my way back, I ignored the bus and took a walk along the shore of the lake that took me back to the station. The lake of Neuchâtel is the biggest lake that lies entirely within the borders of Switzerland and, in summer, attracts many people with public beaches and water sports of all kinds. Yverdon has a beautiful old town and recently I also discovered Neuenburg with its nearly Mediterranean flair. Worth a visit too!

Yverdon can be reached by train in two hours from Zürich Main Station. You then go to the public beach with its restaurant and splendid views on the lake. Don't forget to taste the local white wine. It's very yummy! The alignment of the menhirs is not far from there and you probably find it best with the help of your cell phone and/or the friendly people.

More information can be found here: www.yverdonlesbainsregion.ch/de/poi/menhire-von-clendy/

More places to visit in Switzerland include:

- Bruno Weber Park, Dietikon
- Emma Kunz Centre, Würenlos
- Lenzburg
- Wildeggen

- Hexenmuseum Schweiz (museum of witchcraft), Gränichen
- Linde (lime tree) of Linn
- Celtic Burial Mounds of Unterlunkhofen
- Monte Verità, Ascona
- Parc La Mutta, Falera
- Peninsula Chasté, Sils

More information about these magical places can be found in my whole travel guide on the Hearth Blog. Part 1 is here:

<https://hearth.druidry.org/my-mystical-switzerland-ii-places-to-see-for-travelling-obodies-part-one-2>

Part two is here: <https://hearth.druidry.org/my-mystical-switzerland-ii-places-to-see-for-travelling-obodies-part-two-2>

and the guide is also on the Order's website Blog.

<https://druidry.org/resources/my-mystical-switzerland-ii-places-to-see-for-travelling-obodies-part-one>



Image: Sea Raccoon
by Jessica Pixie

The Found City of Ys? by Myrich

'Archeologists are now moving towards a realization that many of the older ideas are truer than has been thought...' - Nuinn, in *The Book of Druidry*

Many of us in druidry are drawn to stone circles across Britain and Ireland, great legacies of times and people gone by - the stones speak for the ancient ones. This story is different in two main ways to our beloved stone circles. This is the story of three stone walls, underwater, just off the coast of Brittany, in northern France, which were discovered recently by nautical archeologists.

A team of researchers, from universities across France, used LIDAR, a water-penetrating technology that allows scientists to view structures on the sea floor, in conjunction with archeologists actually diving down to the structures which were up to 10 meters below the surface. Some of the stones have been classified as monoliths, with heights reaching 2 meters and widths 1.5 meters. It has been determined that the structures are approximately 7000 years old, with researchers estimating their construction to have taken place between 5000 and 6000 BCE, around the same time as rapid sea level rises (up to 5mm a year).

Though we cannot know for certain what these walls were built for, archeologists have suggested that they could be fish weir, used to trap fish in an enclosed ocean valley. Researchers have simulated the sea levels in the area in 6000 BCE, which would place some of the structures on land - it is suggested that these walls could have been protective, of a settlement, perhaps. Moving such large stones, which collectively weigh over 3,000

tonnes, would have only been possible with a notable workforce, so a neolithic city, or town, seems likely if not necessary for the structures to have been constructed.

Anyone familiar with ancient European myth and legend will most likely have made the link between submerged stone structures off the coast of Brittany and the story of a lost city - Ys (Kêr-Is in Breton) - very quickly. Ys is a mythical city which features in Breton legends, a city that is swallowed by the ocean and has been lost ever since. The legend often locates the city in the Bay of Douarnenez, which is only 10km away from our collection of submerged stone walls. Though researchers have likely not found the remnants of Ys itself, if they even exist to be found, it is entirely possible that the loss of these walls to the ocean (and anything contained within them) inspired the neolithic peoples of Brittany to pass on stories of a lost city.

Just as the druids passed for centuries into myth, so too may these stones have achieved a similar level of myth. It is a story that can offer some inspiration for us in both our druidry and our everyday lives: what is lost is not gone, but is there to be found, if only we look closely enough.

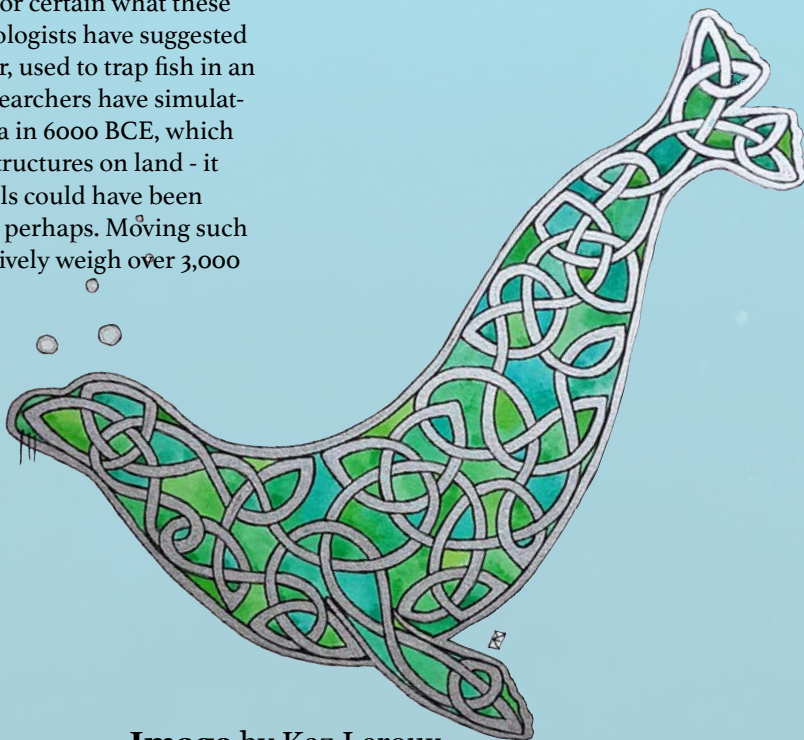


Image by Kaz Leroux

A Ritual Quest for the Fire Festivals by Hilde Liesens

Four times a year, at the time of the Fire Festivals, the Heart of Yew community get together to celebrate the season. As well as other meditations, explorations on the land and craft making, we hold a ritual specifically to mark the festival.

Our rituals are put together during the course of the camp. The process begins with a 'Ritual Dreaming'. This is a guided meditation that leads participants out into the spiritual roots of the land to find images and inspiration for the seasonal rite. At Imbolc, our dreaming took us to a Goddess dressed in white who led us from our central fire into the wider landscape. The imagery we brought back was surprisingly consistent: the colour white, knights and pilgrims, a bright healing light, movement in spirals. The theme of a Quest for the Grail stood out very clearly.

I would like to share the ritual we wove from this. Although it functioned as a community celebration of Imbolc, it can be adapted for any number of people and any time of year. It brings the healing of the Grail and the Light of the Goddess to any darkness we might experience. I hope these words inspire you and this rite will find new life in your hearts and your circles.

The ritual works best in twilight or darkness. Keep the space dimly lit or dark if possible. On a central altar, place a vessel that symbolises the Grail, and surround it with candlelight. This vessel can be any cup or bowl. For our ritual we used a large shell with a candle floating in it. The altar also held an image of the Goddess and a pot with snowdrops and dog's mercury, plants of the season that featured in our Dreaming.

Process into the space clockwise and take your places in a circle around the central altar. Lanterns are passed clockwise around the circle, until each participant has one to light their Quest. Place your lantern on the floor in front of you.

The Herald speaks words of welcome

Give Peace to the Quarters. Cast the circle.

For our celebration, we were directed to hold hands, and find the little flame that burns in all of our hearts, then to allow it to grow bigger and

brighter. We then passed it through our left hand into the hand of our neighbour and felt it return through our right hand back to our hearts.

Invoke and honour the Quarters in the usual way.

Say the Druid's Prayer and chant three Awens. Invoke the Goddess in whichever form seems appropriate for your purpose.

Remember the stories of the Grail and prepare the participants for their Quest by speaking the words below. The Druid guiding the rite can speak to this in their own words.



"Long ago, people went on Quests to find a source of renewal for their Land. Sometimes it is spoken of as a great cauldron of plenty. Sometimes it is a holy well. Sometimes it is seen as a bright healing light. And in the most well-known stories it is called the Holy Grail. But before they leave, the knights questing for the Grail are prepared for their journey. They spend time in stillness, are bathed and dressed in white. To symbolise this, we are each blessed with the Element Water."

The person holding the Western Quarter blesses each participant with water.

Each person in turn now takes up their lantern and takes a spiral journey into the centre of the circle. There, they can make their prayers and dedications before returning to their place. This process is best accompanied with music. In our rite, we all participated in gentle drumming and spontaneous singing and chanting.

When the last participant has returned, the Druid asks them to remember their journey and what they brought back, and to use it for the good of All That Is.

To close, thank the Goddess and close the Quarters in the usual way. Say the Druids' Oath.

Close the circle in the way it was opened. We visualised the light again, this time moving from our right hand into our left and coming to rest at our hearts.

If you are interested in joining us at the Heart of Yew, and perhaps taking part in the weaving of our next ritual, you can find us here: www.heartofyew.com

Ramon Llull by Howard Evans

Perched on one hilltop, the Puig de Randa, Mallorca, is the 17th century Santuari de Cura, a place of retreat and healing. According to the sanctuary's website, Ramon Llull (1232-1316) was a philosopher, poet, theologian and thinker who lived an isolated existence in a cave on Puig de Randa. It's said that Ramon Llull attained enlightenment in that cave (which is still there) and surrendered himself to meditation and contemplation. He was known locally as *Metge Illuminatus* (the enlightened doctor).

In English translation, Ramon Llull is known as Raymond or Ramon Lully. In John Masefield's book, *The Box of Delights*, Cole Hawlings, is a Punch and Judy entertainer who possesses a magical box that can control the elements and take people back in time. Hawlings is later revealed to be Ramon Lully, an alchemist who has created the Elixir of Life. Anyone who visits Mallorca is bound to meet the statue of Ramon Llull at the entrance to the city where the Passeig des Born meets the sea. When my children first saw him, they had no doubt he was the wizard Dumbledore, with his long hair and beard, his cloak, his quill and his book. The Catholic church may offer a different account of the life of Ramon Llull but I'm happy to think of him as many locals prefer, as a wizard and alchemist.

The following story, *STONE*, was initially written as a contribution to a theatre project initiated by the painter Mati Klarwein who lived in the Mallorcan village of Deia:

"I came across a man, long bearded like me, walking on the barren rock above the tree line, above the grass line, above the line where only lichens thrive. Yellow lichens, black lichens, white lichens - each lichen coloured according to the direction it faced. Perhaps, you ask, why only three colours of lichen when there are four directions? This was the question I asked him, this man with a long blue beard, wondering along the top of the mountain.

Because the south is too hot, he said. Facing the sun, there is no moisture in the rock to sustain even the life of a lichen. As he spoke, he turned to face the south and

the blue faded from his beard and the whiskers sparkled white. And for this same reason the rock facing south is smooth.

He led me on a walk around the peak that towered above all the other peaks of this island floating in the sea. He called this peak the Puig Major, because that is what it was. Other peaks had other names but only one peak is the biggest. The sea in which the island floated was only ever called The Sea because, back

then in the time of which I speak, there was only one sea, in the same way as there was only one Sun.

As we spiralled around the Puig Major his beard turned from blue to yellow to white and, as we looked at the rock, we saw the rock was marked in different ways according to the direction it faced. We call this rock limestone, he said. Because that is what it is. This whole island in the middle of The Sea is one enormous limestone rock, and it changes every day. It changes because the rock is soft and succumbs easily to the wind and the rain and the waves. On the south side the rock is smooth because the water never

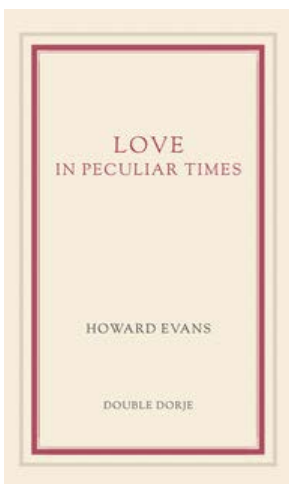
stays there long. But, to the north the rock is riven with grooves and gullies because that side doesn't see the sun but faces the winds and rains from the north. Sometimes the winds and rains from the north arrive as violent rampages. Sometimes the wind is so cold that the water freezes and cracks the rock.

Look here, he said, tapping me with the feather with which he tapped and pointed. I looked where he pointed, to a stone cracked into pieces. Water finds fault lines in the stone. At night when the temperature falls, the water freezes and cracks the rock.

We squatted together and he taught me how to look with a gaze like his. As I looked, he marked shapes and symbols on a piece of parchment with his feather. What is that, that you do? I asked.

I write, he said. God talks to us through nature. I am learning God's language. Walk with me and I will show you more of what I've learned."

STONE is included in my book of short stories, *LOVE IN PECULIAR TIMES* and can be found on [Amazon](#). My novel *STILL*, a somewhat true adventure set in the world of light workers, treasure seekers, and wind watchers, is also available on [Amazon](#).



Andrew's Bit At The Back

At the winter gathering last year, Stephanie Carr-Gomm asked me if I would take the mantle of the Scribe of the Order from her. I think I must have looked either horrified or upset because she grabbed my hand and said "It's ok, you don't have to say yes!" In truth, I was simply overwhelmed by the trust that Stephanie and the Order were placing in me. I still have to pinch myself some days that I am the editor of *Touchstone* so the idea of being the Scribe of the order took a little getting used to!

Obviously, I did say yes – and the reason why is very important. Like many of you, I trod a labyrinthine spiritual path before arriving at OBOD, but, soon after engaging with the Order, I began to experience a strange sensation – a feeling like I had come home. I have got so much from being a member of OBOD. It has enriched my life in so many different ways, not least by introducing me to many of my best friends. Having the opportunity to take on the roles as editor of *Touchstone* and now Scribe of the Order is a way I can give back the love and support I felt, both to those of you I know and those of you I don't.

Stephanie's contribution to the order is immeasurable and her skills are multitude. Not only did she organise the OBOD office, sending out the right gwersi at the right time to thousands of us around the world (have you ever stopped to think quite what an undertaking that is?) but she is also a fantastic author and artist. In fact, the very first time I met Stephanie was in the backstage area of a theatre in Leicester when she was down on her hands and knees painting a set for a panto. When I told her I was a relatively new a member of the order, she gave me a great big hug and welcomed me to the path. Ever since then, she has always greeted me with

a great big smile and a hug.

We must never forget the phenomenal contribution Stephanie has made in helping to set up and run the order. We are all here today because she was so blooming good at what she does. The good news is that she isn't going anywhere. She will still be at our gatherings, its just that now she can put her feet up a bit more!



My time as Scribe will necessarily be different. For a start, I won't be running the office – it's a very well-oiled machine and they certainly don't need me blundering in there and moving everything around. I will also continue to be the editor of *Touchstone*. As I wrote earlier, this still feels like my dream job and I don't want to give it up anytime soon! The role of the Scribe embodies elements of language, story and communication, things which the order helped me to manifest

in my life through the Bardic grade. But that doesn't mean I'm just going to make you all listen to the words and stories I create. Far from it. I see my role as facilitating the voices the order. This idea of facilitation has always been central to my creativity – it's the core of my first book, *The Ritual of Writing*. I was also an English and Creative Writing teacher for a long time, a career I followed because I love helping others find the wonder in words.

I am always inspired when we sing the Awen together at gatherings and groves. Though some of our voices may be a little shaky to begin with, by the end, every voice soars to create the most beautiful sound. Together we have such stories to tell. It's my hope that I can help make those stories heard.

Until
next time, Andrew iii



To find Events from OBOD members and friends throughout the year, check the events page on the Druid Hearth: <https://hearth.druidry.org/events>

Upcoming Events

Bardic Gorsedd: 24-26 July 2026, Noddfa Retreat Centre, Penmaenmawr. For more Information, email bardicgorsedds@obod.org

Druid Gorsedd: 5-7 March 2027, Cornwall. For more information email druidgorsedds@obod.org

Winter Gathering: 12 December 2026, Strode Theatre, Street (some introductory activities on 11 December)

SHOBOD Assembly: April 29th - May 2nd 2027, Adelaide, Australia

Weaving the Web: 22.-25. July 2027, Herbstein/Fulda, Germany. for more Information, email weaving@obod.org or www.weltderlinden.de/weaving

Social Media



Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/druidry>



TikTok:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@oboddruidry>



Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/oboddruidry>



Threads:

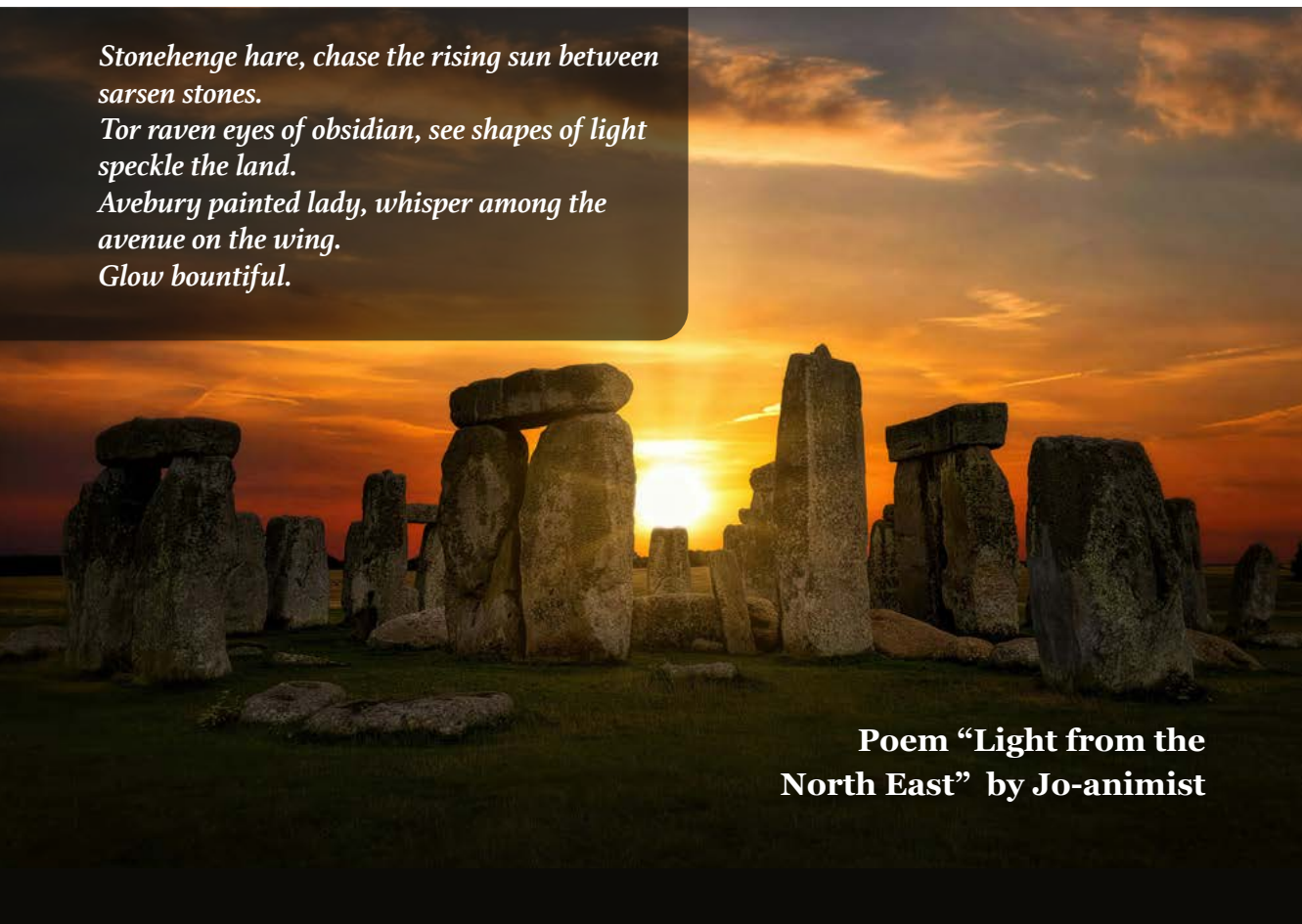
<https://www.threads.com/@oboddruidry>

*Stonehenge hare, chase the rising sun between
sarsen stones.*

*Tor raven eyes of obsidian, see shapes of light
speckle the land.*

*Avebury painted lady, whisper among the
avenue on the wing.*

Glow bountiful.



Poem "Light from the
North East" by Jo-animist