

LAMMAS '84

Wood & Water

Vol. 2 No. 12

65p

The Broken Tree

i. song without armour

I saw the Sun sip at the broken tree
and I heard the winter choking
laugh the river sang to me
laugh at the awelling
is there another spring I said
suffer again as I did I said
laugh the river sang to me
laugh at the dawn bell ringing
watch in the night and morning
was it my lonely mind I said
dead hearts mocking
I must be going mad I said
I can hear children talking
live the river sang to me
live with the morning

ii. Torque

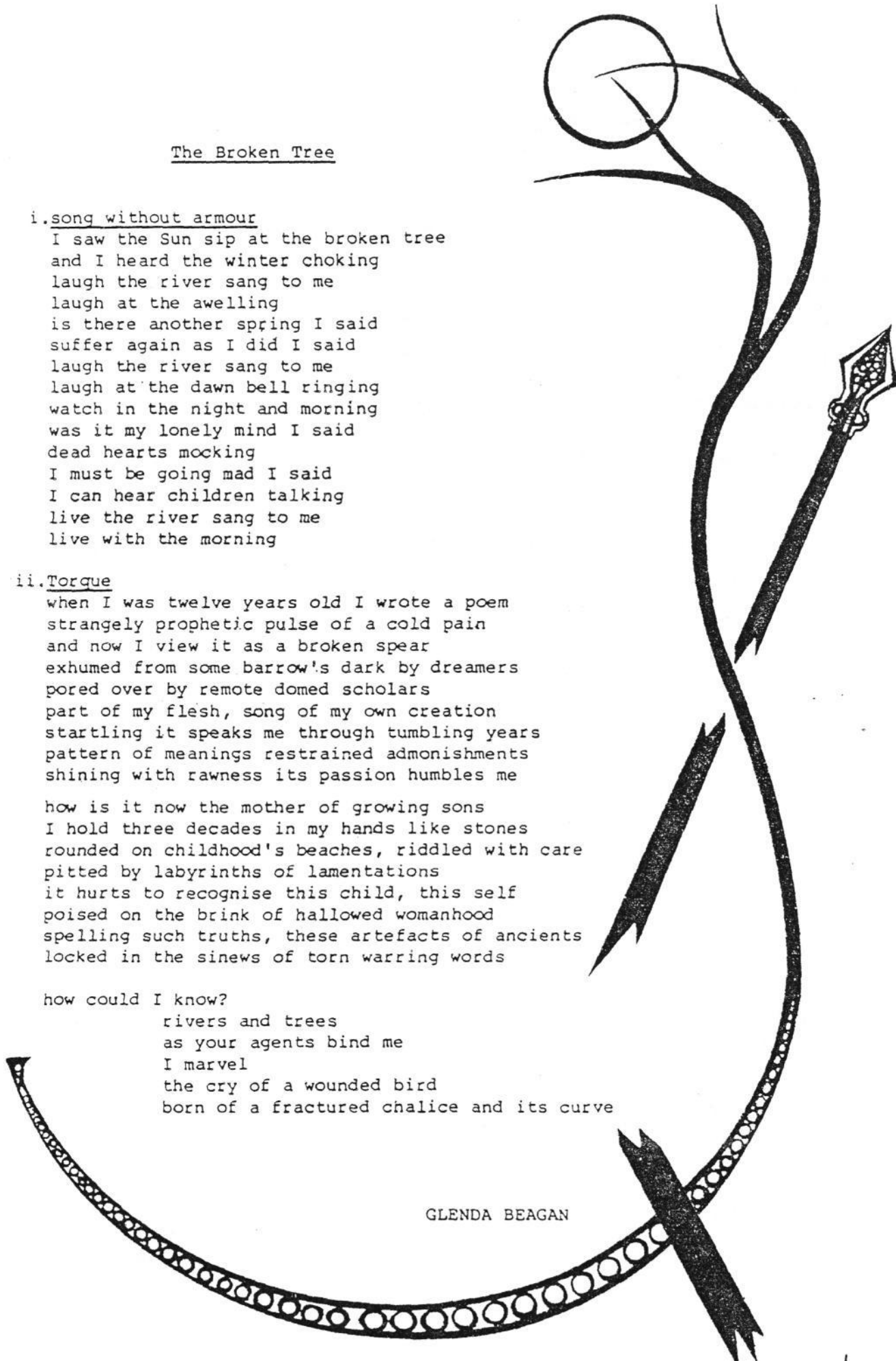
when I was twelve years old I wrote a poem
strangely prophetic pulse of a cold pain
and now I view it as a broken spear
exhumed from some barrow's dark by dreamers
pored over by remote domed scholars
part of my flesh, song of my own creation
startling it speaks me through tumbling years
pattern of meanings restrained admonishments
shining with rawness its passion humbles me

how is it now the mother of growing sons
I hold three decades in my hands like stones
rounded on childhood's beaches, riddled with care
pitted by labyrinths of lamentations
it hurts to recognise this child, this self
poised on the brink of hallowed womanhood
spelling such truths, these artefacts of ancients
locked in the sinews of torn warring words

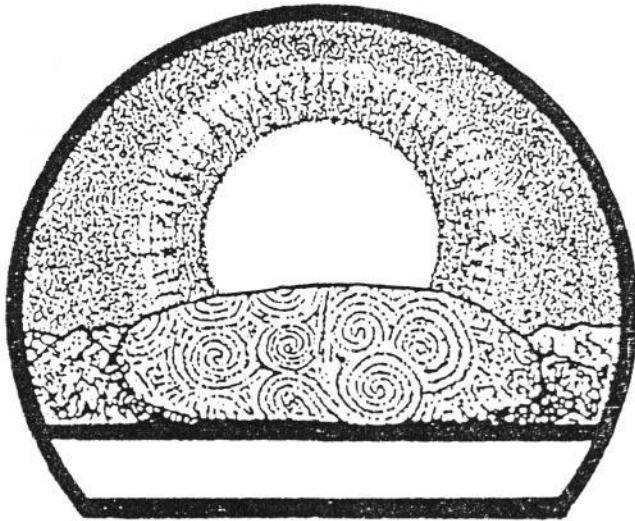
how could I know?

rivers and trees
as your agents bind me
I marvel
the cry of a wounded bird
born of a fractured chalice and its curve

GLEND A BEAGAN



A Goddess Inclined Eco-pagan Magazine.



Suns and Moons

	new	full
Aug 26th	19.25	11th 15.43
Sep 25th	03.11	10th 07.01
Oct 24th	12.08	9th 23.58
Nov 22nd	22.57	8th 17.43
Equinox - Sep 22nd	20.33	

The word "Lammas" is thought to derive from the Anglo-Saxon "hlafmaesse" meaning "Loaf-mass", or the mass when the Sacrament could be made of the first of the new wheat crop. Christians also have their celebration of First Fruits as a harvest festival. In contrast, rural communities were apt to celebrate a Harvest-Home knowing that the time to celebrate was when the coming years food supply was safely gathered.

Bert Bennett says "When the last sheaf was cut, the old ceremony of Crying the Neck took place. The last ears were tied into a carefully shaped bundle which was held aloft while the harvest "lord" cried -

"I have 'un, I have 'un, I have 'un" , and the company replied in chorus -
 "What have 'ee, what have 'ee, what have 'ee", and he answered -
 "A neck, a neck, a neck".

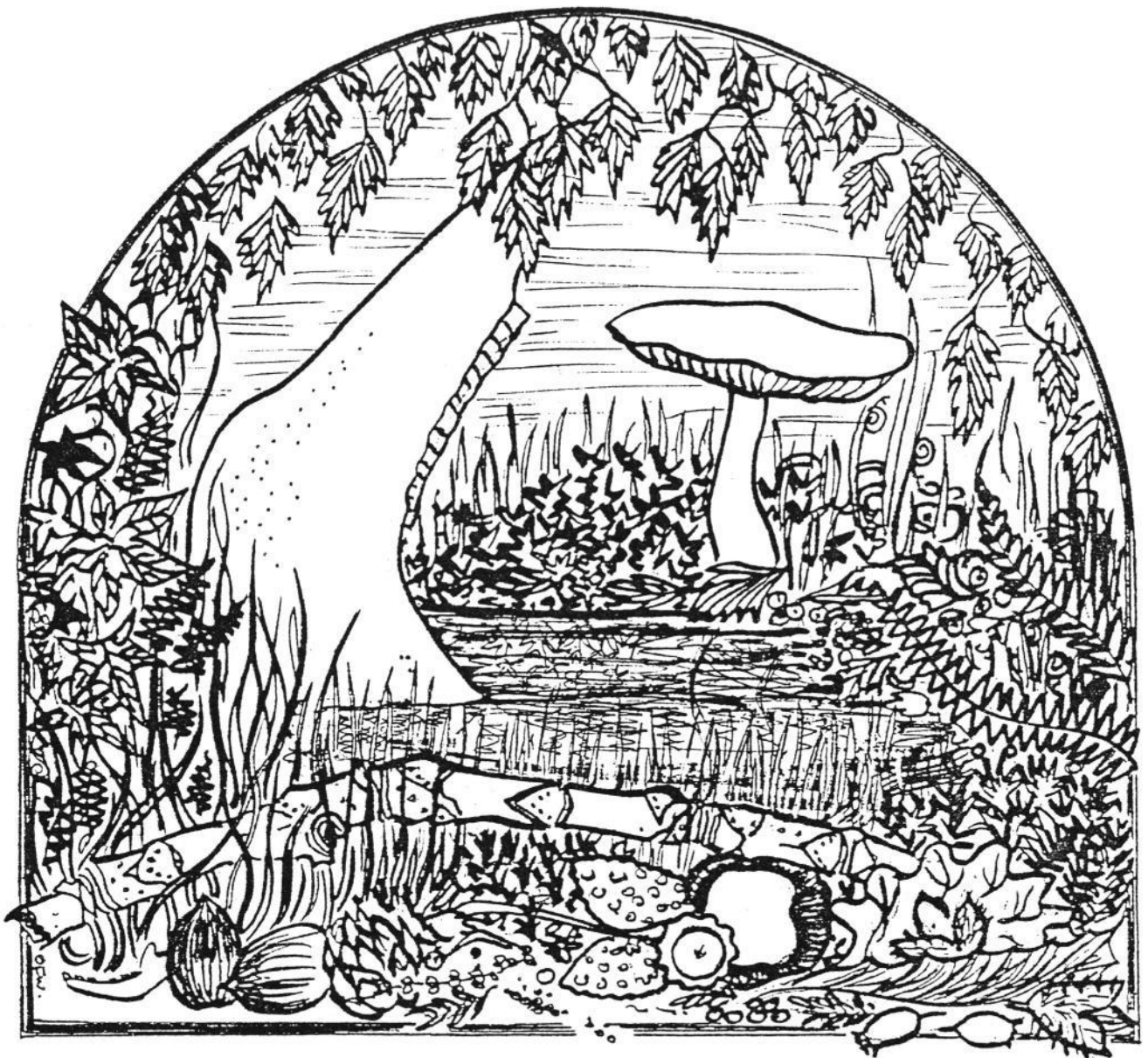
Whereupon everyone cheered the triumphant declaration that the harvest was in.

Cover: Symbols of Demeter, the Corn Goddess, by Olwen.



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RUNNING RED

By the half moon pool, Mother Redcap squats to stir her infusion of this corner of the earth. She has added many ingredients to the basic root stock of filigree veined hazel leaves, disintegrating nuts and ancient catkins - some are secret, handed down to her from her mother, tall, whitehaired Mrs Birch. Others you may know from your own testings and tastings; as she tenderly drops them into the quietly revolving liquid, the cloudscape shivers and breaks apart. Brittle wren's bones, a rusting red hay fork, willow bark that she chews and spits, breadcrumbs, tripping deer's piss, ashes, mistletoe, a bayleaf and shiny ivy berries: all whirl softly, rising and falling in the brown broth. A few crimson drops wrung from her freshly re-dyed cap, done every dark moon, completes the nourishment for her progeny. The soup seeps along the high, dark sided ditch, displaced almost imperceptibly from the pool by a clear cold trickle weaving up from the bottom, through the thick and sludgy layers of decaying vegetation. Mother Redcap slowly rises to clear the channel, scraping frosty crusts of hawthorn leaves aside with her stirring spoon - a yellowing mare's jawbone - setting free the flow to warm the valley's belly..



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That movable feast of folk music which is Folk on 2 is now even more inaccessible than it was. The 6pm Saturday broadcast is now on medium wave only and is replaced by Wimbledon or golf or whatever at every opportunity. The 3 am Monday broadcast continues. Please write to the BEEB and ask them to find a regular mid-week evening slot on VHF stereo, like it used to be.

BBC, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA (we think!)

Pagan Animal Rights

P.A.R. was set up in August 1983. Primarily it is aimed at the increasing numbers of people in the Pagan movement, both those committed to animal rights and those who know little of animal exploitation yet claim to live 'close to nature'. P.A.R. hopes further to clear up misconceptions about the pagan way of life particularly amongst people involved in the animal rights/ecology movement. P.A.R. produces a newsletter at the four fire festivals and hopes eventually to set up local groups. At present there are no subscription rates but all donations gratefully received as P.A.R. is totally non-profit making.

For further details, contact Tina Pye, Pagan Animal Rights, 23, Highfield South, Rock Ferry, Wirral L42 4NA.

Calendar Customs 22-23 Sept '84. Cecil Sharpe House. Regents Park Rd. NW1.

Opportunity to discuss and learn of customs in general and some in particular. May Day, Up Helly-AA, Shrove Tuesday, Morris, Well Dressing, Costume, Commercialisation etc. etc. £12 two days or £7 if unwaged, student, OAP etc. (send a photocopy of UB40 or similar). London accomodation list on request. It's one way of marking the equinox !

Wholefood Cookery School 16-18 Bushloe Rd, Wigston, Leicester. LE8 2BA.

This provides courses of varying duration, whole/half day, evening, weekend and week long summer schools, also correspondence courses, with practical help. They cover the theory of wholefood, what you can actually do with all those beans, seeds, grains etc. plus bread and tofu making, sugar and dairy-free cooking, herbs, spices, all sorts of veg., asian food and the odd bit of homeopathy. Reasonable rates. Creche available.

* * * * * GETTING READY FOR YULE * * * * *

The neo-druidic group The Golden Section Order has produced an attractive catalogue of books, jewellery, study charts, prints, cards, mirrors, musical instruments and tapes. Tel. 01-994 6216, 9 to 6 weekdays or write, The GSO Society, BM Oakgrove, London, WC1N 3XX, UK with SAE.

Beautiful silver and/or gold wire woven CORN DOLLIES - pendants, ear rings, or necklaces. Birth or gem stones may be incorporated if required. Genuine dolly weaving technique used (we have seen glorified springs offered elsewhere). Made by Jan at Wood and Water's address.

* * * * *

BOOKS: Those with a soft spot for 'Celtic Twilight' reading may like the books of Patricia Finney. "A Shadow of Gulls" is set about 113 AD, and takes the 'Ulster' cycle of Hero-tales as a background. Poetry, fighting, The Sidhe, magic and Maeve are twined into a bright tapestry about the weft of Cuchulain. "The Crow Goddess" continues the narrative in a more relaxed fashion. Arthur is brought in to form a triangle with Maeve and Cuchulain, it sounds odd but works. The Maeve/Morrigan identity problem is also resolved better than many other writers have managed. Published by Collins, St. James Pl., London.

Victrix

I saw a child at the drinking fountain
cupping his hands in expectation
nothing came
he did not seem perturbed
and took a stick
to poke about a bit
his face was set
his mouth was curling at the corners
a little girl appeared
she had an air about her
the boy stepped back abashed
and in a moment the bright jet rose for her
reflecting rainbows
she turned
he stood there
silent
tried again
once more the water soared
as magic as before
he let it shrink and sink
frowned
tugged at his socks
and did not drink

GLEND A BEAGAN





The Bleeding Yew Mother and Pentre Ifan Cromlech



(Monica Sjoo. March 1984; an extract from her forthcoming book "Spiral Journey - Stages of Initiation into Her Mysteries")

The Pentre Ifan cromlech near Nevern in north Pembrokeshire about thirteen miles from where I live was taken over as a place of initiation by the Druids. In the oak groves nearby there was a school for neophytes. The cromlech itself - which was called "The Womb of Cerridwen" - was then completely enclosed and formed a dark chamber within which novices stayed for a number of days during initiations. Nevern, in the valley below about three miles from the hilltop cromlech, is steeped in fairy lore and legends about the Tylwyth Teg, the Brythonic Fairy folk. In the graveyard of Nevern church of St. Brynach there stands one of the finest Celtic crosses to be found anywhere. It is about thirteen feet high, has a golden glow and is carved in fine, typically Celtic eternity knots. In the church there is the Maglocumus Stone, dating back to the 5th century a.d., which is carved with the secret Druidic Tree-Ogham alphabet. Both the church and the graveyard have an extremely ancient and eerie feel about them and have repeatedly been the setting for ghost lights and phantom funerals in the middle of the night. One approaches the church through a tunnel of yew trees that appear to be extremely ancient and underneath which there is eternal darkness. Incredibly enough it seems as if yews can live for as long as 2000 - some say 3000 - years. These powerful trees were sacred to the Goddess and it is their presence here which gave a sanctity to the site long before Christian times.

One of the yews is known as the 'Bleeding Yew of Nevern' and is apparently revered by Romanies up and down Britain. As one walks through this tunnel of darkness one suddenly comes across the magnificent and glowing finely shaped Celtic cross at the side of the little church. It is very magic indeed. Many of the tales of Welsh folklore - the 'Mabinogion' - first written down about 1200 a.d., have this setting as their background. Sometimes they have Sheela-na-Gig type female figures and faces and stones with the Ogham alphabet carved on one edge and the Roman on the other.

Since writing about the Pentre Ifan cromlech and Nevern I spent a truly magic day (March 9th 1983) visiting the cromlech for the first time. I had visited Nevern on a stormy autumn day more than a year before and the Celtic cross of the graveyard had inspired one of my paintings that later travelled in the 'Woman-Magic' exhibition around Europe. My friend Valerie Remy and I set out on a mild early spring day and hitched on the beautiful coastal road towards Cardigan, that ancient 'Bay of Rhiannon', to where a smaller road branches off on one side up to the cromlech and on the other side down to Nevern, which lies in a valley by a river. It turned into a day when nothing could go wrong and we felt as if guided all the way. We walked the three-mile long lane and paths leading to the cromlech and found ourselves 'by mistake' taking the 'wrong' path, one leading to the farm of Pentre Ifan. We both became convinced that this was an ancient Fairy path snaking its way through the forest and here and there crossing a winding serpentine stream. The atmosphere was such that we both felt as if 'stoned' and our hands tingled as if from hidden energies. The mood became meditative and trance-like. We had, however, to return down the path so as to find the road to the cromlech which is placed on high with a view of the Preselli Mountains beyond and the sea below. I later learned that 'Pentre' means village and that there was formerly an ancient settlement where the farm now stands.



This cromlech is different from any other I have seen: it does not at all make an enclosed shape, but on the contrary gives a distinct impression of being a 'gateway' to the earth mound that no longer exists. One can see the traces of the large oblong mound - the 'Womb of Cerridwen' - and it must have been truly impressive when it stood there in all its glory. Through the high 'gateway' one can see the mountain top beyond. The capstone of the cromlech gives the impression of floating in space, it is so finely balanced on the tips of the supporting stones. A few stones still remain of the original enclosing lunar/horned entrance to the mound. Again one is struck by the extra-ordinary mushroom shape of so many cromlechs.

I had not realised just how close this cromlech is to the Preselli mountains. Surely it is no coincidence that the Blue Stone inner lunar horseshoe-shaped circle at Stonehenge is also called 'The Womb of Cerridwen'. It would appear that the ancient stone circles on the Presellis from where the Blue Stones were removed to Stonehenge were the Temples of Cerridwen and that this cromlech was a vital part of a vast network of sanctuaries on the mountains. Was this another New Grange, a temple within which the Moon and the Sun were seen to die and be reborn, Her miraculous womb of immortality and regeneration, abode of the 'Living Dead', of the Spirit-Fairies and the Tomb Mother?

The primal mysteries of all religions emerged from women's direct biological and psychic experience in planting the seed, in growing the child, in making the pot. Water, like Fire, was sacred to the Moon Mother. Women were the ancient makers and keepers of fires. Blood is the physical counterpart of the mystical Life Force circling throughout the Cosmos, nourishing the Universe, sustaining its breath and manifesting itself.

(In patriarchies the Source of Life - female and of the Goddess - is defined and hated as the enemy of male life.) Women's menstrual powers and blood are of the essence of the creative powers of the Mother and are at one with the magnetic and mystic serpentine and spiral underground waters. Women first discovered how to use and produce fire and with the use of water brought about the transformation of clay into another substance: they were the ancient potters and the pots were conceived of as the 'Womb of the Goddess'. Women brought about the transformation of wheat and corn into edible bread and through the use of fire they found ways of drying, cooking and preserving foods. Women's internal and sexual fires create life within the watery caverns of our bodies. Women were constantly bringing about transmutations; with blood, with water, and with fire. (For more concerning this see 'The ancient religion of the Great Cosmic Mother of All' by Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor.)

Brigid was not only the Goddess of Fire and Water but also the Goddess of Smithcraft. It was women's discoveries of directed heat and their invention of ovens for baking bread and other foods, as well as kilns for firing pots, that led to the making of furnaces within which fires could reach temperatures high enough to melt metals.

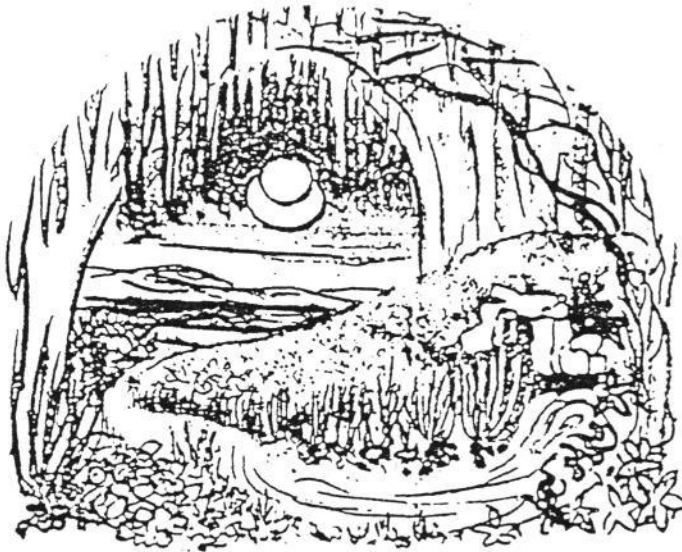
Women's knowledge of herbs had made them the natural healers. Some herbs could also be used for inducing hypnotic states and producing trances and visions in religious rites. The hilltop fire rituals and torchlight processions, the mysteries of the wells and the menstrual life-giving waters, the birth of the sun child in the womb/cauldron of Cerridwen, the Lunar Mother as the giver and creatrix of all life and mental powers - these were the mysteries of transmutation brought about through the Dragon/Goddess powers in women. Women were the mediators of the Goddess and the creators of early cultures too.

After having spent some time at Pentre Ifan figuring out some of these miraculous connections we made our way down the hill, across the main road and into the valley where the village of Nevern snuggles by the river of the same name. It was getting towards dusk by the time we finally entered the graveyard which, within the embrace of the yew trees, is eternally dark even on a sunny day. This is truly the abode of the Death-Goddess. The place felt even more eerie and weird than I had remembered it. We thought that we would like to return here again at Full Moon bringing candles with us, and later in the summer we in fact did so.

I again felt the wonder of finding the amber flowing Celtic cross by the church wall. It is extra-ordinarily powerful and its carvings very delicate as well as, I must say, barbaric-looking. We went searching for the Bleeding Yew Tree among the dark, gnarled, gigantic tree trunks... I had not seen the tree when I visited the graveyard before. But now, as I turned round one of the trunks... I found it!

I wasn't prepared for the impact of it and my reaction was one of amazement and wonder; my hair was standing on end. I had a chill up and down the spine, a split second feeling of unreality, as I saw the dark red, tacky, blood-like substance seeping out as from a cunt or a wound in the trunk of the tree... it was truly astonishing... she is menstruating!

On the later visit we were four women who went with candles at midnight on Full Moon (which was also the Summer Solstice) to communicate with the menstruating Yew Mother. We felt a wonderful maternal presence, of peace and of healing, as we sat meditating around Her trunk, our little candles burning in the darkness. We felt absolutely no fear at being there in the graveyard at the 'witching hour'.



LOST WELLS Review

"A Pilgrim's Guide to the Holy Wells of Cornwall" by J. Meyrick.
(Paperback; 150 pp; map, chart and photographs; privately published, 1982).

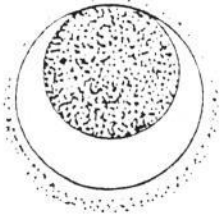
A quite extraordinary book, detailing no less than 192 holy wells in Cornwall, complete with exact and copious notes on the location, accessibility and present condition of each one. This is clearly a work which is the product of many years commitment in research and field investigation, and anyone who has enjoyed the task of rediscovering wells which may have been lost or neglected for centuries, will appreciate the effort and enthusiasm this survey must have involved! I frankly cannot see how it could be bettered, in terms of its painstaking thoroughness.

Virtually every parish in this ancient and distinctly independent land has been visited, and the author tells us just how to find any holy wells in the locality, records any past references, and describes whatever legends or folklore are known.

It may come as a surprise to some readers to find that a fair number of the holy wells are still sheltered by a stone structure of some sort, either original chapels, cells or niches, or later ornate forms; but even many of these are in a state of neglect or decay. There is a fine line to be trodden between preserving the fabric of such antiquities, which can result in trivialising them into sentimental tourist attractions; and preserving the sanctity of the place, far harder to accomplish. Which is better, tranquil desolation or recognition and (often enough) desecration? I've found that the few famed and sign posted holy wells are very poorly served by their visitors; and what were sacred sites become barren shells like museum pieces. A dilemma indeed.

I must admit to a slight disappointment that the writer of this book seems to have little interest in the pagan origins of many holy wells, but instead concentrates upon the Christian tradition of the early Cornish saints and hermits and their (admittedly unorthodox) deeds and miracles. This is a flaw, I believe, but does not in any way negate the fine achievement which the book represents, a definitive study which we should only applaud. Others may now use the information available here to delve more deeply into particular wells and their traditions, many of which could occupy whole studies themselves.

(I am sorry that I cannot advise anyone where to obtain this book, as there is no publishers' address inside, but I did find it widely on sale in decent bookshops in Cornwall, where I hope it may still be obtained, if only on order).



*It's out and spoke his noble queen
And she has told King Willie of a plan
How she might bear her baby son.*

Will's lady feebly swam in an infinite ocean of pain. She was being drawn down to the depths of it. The black tide closed over her head. Red bloody flashes stabbed her sight; her mouth was sealed. She touched bottom.

In the blackness, a white pinpoint. She focussed on it, braving the red flashes, which continued to flicker at the corners of her vision. The white point grew, and gave off light. She made out a shape - milk white, with wild slanted eyes the colour of catkin pollen. The he-goat stood upon its hind legs, and appeared to laugh at her. It fixed her with one bright yellow eye. Around the eyes, the body began to flow, take on colour and lose outline. The impression of fast movement and dizzying colours bewildered her.

Slowly the colour began to firm up, or maybe it flowed from one central point and engulfed all the other hues and tones. She was gazing at the eyes through leaves - young, opened spring leaves, of every shade and nuance of green on the Everliving Earth. The leafy man with the catkin pollen eyes began a complicated series of dance steps which brought him circling closer and closer to her. He held one spot finally swaying gently, hypnotically, nose to nose with her. The eyes smiled; they looked at her with love; and a voice spoke in her head.

"Go seek the answer of the bees". it said.



Will was furious. He had returned from the sanctuary in despair, the bribe-gifts lost, and his mother's song buzzing in his head. Returned to find uproar among the women at the King House, who told him of his lady's sudden collapse into total unconsciousness, and then of a sudden violent waking. Now she stood - actually stood - in their midst, riding her contractions like a warhorse, and calling to him urgently to go to the bees! Will had never heard of anything so outrageous - the bees, on a cold day in early spring, when they would all be well into their sleeping, regenerating time. However, anything was better than staying in the King House, either in anger or despair, so he took himself very grumpily off, out of community once again, to the hill where the bees lived. He passed the idle troop of soldiery, who dined, drank and sneered at him, and wondered what madness had ever possessed him to bring them here at all. After all, what use were they in this sort of crazy situation?

The hives were sleeping, and yet hummed with sound. Will put his ear to one of the hives, feeling foolish, and tried to make out some message from the drowsy sound. At first, it remained amorphous, and then, as time passed, Will fancied he could distinguish individual tones in the sleeping chorus. The bees seemed to be singing their dreams to him from the dark sweet warmth of the hive.

First, he could hear, high and pure above the deeper sounds, the contralto tone of the Queen Bee. Then, counterpointing her, a descant from the nursing bees who tend the larva, each closed in a hexagonal cell. Finally, the bass tone of the rest of the workers provided counter-rhythm, and background to the fugue.

I was the centre of the swarm!
(I was the centre of the swarm)
(Honey and Wax, Honey and Wax...)

I am the Queen of all the bees!
(I am the Queen of all the bees)
(Honey and Wax, Honey and Wax...)

I will be Mother of the hive!
(I will be Mother of the hive)
(Honey and Wax, Honey and Wax...)

The echoes of the chorus seemed to swell to the extent that they beat on Will's ears like drumbeats - Honey and Wax, Honey and WAX, and WAX, and Wax...
And there was the answer - the plan, complete and neat in Will's head as a larva in a cell. Wax, wax, a loaf of wax.

* * * * *

*King Willie he's gone down to the market place
And he has bought him a loaf of wax.*

Loaves of wax were to be had from Will's new armoury room, where they were kept for protecting bowstrings against the damp. Will took several, golden and honey-sweet, to the hearthstone of the King House. He also had two perfectly cut, clear blue chalcedony stones, part of his ubiquitous father-in-law's gifts. When he had assembled these, he called from the birthing room, the two eldest women, and set them a task - to make from the wax, as quickly as possible, the semblance of a new-born boy-child. The women settled before the hearthstone, having first firmly driven Will out. They murmured together, and laughed the thin laughter of the old. After all, they knew their work. They saw, as Will did not, the traditional and ritual meaning of the wax image, of the idea which Will had thought so new and clever. Their busy hands scraped and smoothed. The small body began to take shape. They set the stones into the tiny eyesockets, and covered the head with fine flaxen combings from Will's lady's hair. And when the Sight and the frenzy of creation left them, they laughed even harder at what they saw. For the wax child was a changeling. He was small and dark golden, like their own people, and the wax behind the eyestones had subtly altered their hue, from clear blue to a browner shade. The flaxen hair was incongruous in that setting. It ought, they felt to have been ravenswing black. As they gazed, it seemed to dim a little, so that they whole poppet took on an overall hue of old, deep honey. There was one ritual more - one which Will should not know of. They crept quietly into the birthing room where Will's lady still struggled, helped, or more often restrained by the rest of the women. They joined the group, and as the next convulsion took her, quickly passed the poppet between her straining thighs. In the corner, the he-goat kid never took his yellow eyes from them, and, as they completed the ritual, they seemed to hear his voice - "His name is Bucca".

* * * * *

The mother moved again from the sanctuary hearthstone. Again Will was at the gate. As she reached the gate-tower, Will mutely held the swathed bundle towards her, standing above him.

The mother saw, and silver laughter welled up in her, as she recognised the thing in his arms; perceived the full ploy, and the irony behind it, the trap laid and baited for him by the Dark Mother. And, quietly and smoothly as a hand slipping into a glove, the Hecate-power was there - had been there since the day she sat to her loom to weave this exquisite, dark, painful joke for the Goddess. She saw who would next be Queen; scoured to it by painful initiation; and she saw what Will's unborn child would be. Again she opened her mouth, and Hecate sang to Will, unravelling the spell:

.. who was it who undid the nine witch-knots
 All braided in amongst this lady's locks?
 And who was it who took out the combs of care
 All braided in amongst this lady's hair?
 And who was it slew the master-kid
 Who ran and slept all beneath this lady's bed?
 And who was it unlaced her left shoe?
 And who was it who let her lighter be
 That she might bear her baby boy?

By the sanctuary hearthstone, as Will made off down the valley, the weaving tore from its loom, ripped diagonally from left to right as if struck by invisible knives. In the birthing room, the bone and shell combs fell from the bride's head with a clatter and cracked on the floor. Her hair, tumbling down her back, unravelled from the semblance of the nine plaits, which had remained tangled into the locks even after her desperate struggles to give birth. The shoe, its laces still knotted, collapsed into a now unbewitched heap of brown leaves and fungus. And the kid rose unsteadily to its feet, as Will, panting and lathered, burst through the door clutching his bronze sword, his mother's gift. It laughed at him as he ran it through.

Then, as the stir died down, the Queen screamed. The baby was coming at last. As he was born, she stood, the women at her spread knees, and chanted. All the women knew the words:-

I am the Womb of every Holt.
 I am the Blaze on every Hill.
 I am the Queen of every Hive.
 The Queen of every Hive!

They washed the boy, while Will went forth to announce the birth. He also gathered his father-in-law's troop, told them he no longer needed their presence to keep order, and sent them back with gifts. Their initially reluctant departure was speeded by the appearance of most members of the suddenly-animated community, the men carrying all the weapons they possessed, and the women, led by the Seeress, garlanded.

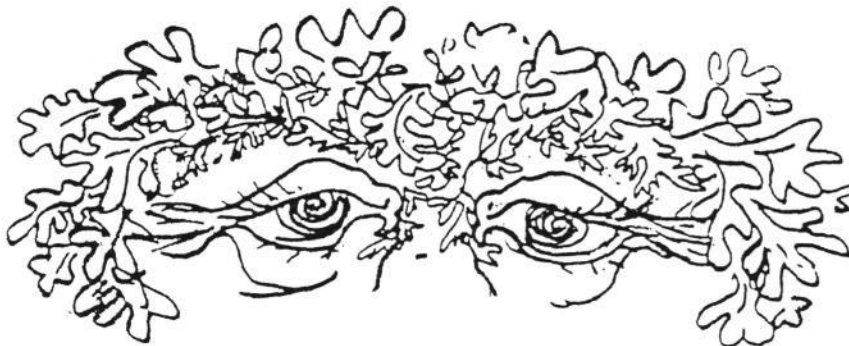
The Queen lay within. They gave her the boy to hold. She was tired beyond tiredness after her ordeal, but calm, and with an inner radiance which belied her exhausted appearance. She dreamed, within her head, of the end of the long spring, and the beginning of her summer power at Beltane. She knew what she would do then and later. She knew Will would join her.

They took the boy out to show him. Wrinkled after birth, but healthy, his skin was a clear golden brown. His hair was honey-dark also. He had wild slanted eyes the colour of catkin pollen. Will told the people -

"My Lady says his name is Bucca".

And now she's got her a baby son
 And great are the blessings that be them upon;
 Great are the blessings them upon.

JAN HENNING





Bibliography, Discography and Author's Note

Quotations throughout from the ballad of Willie's Lady are from the adapted version of the Child Ballad sung by Martin Carthy on Crown of Horn (Topic 12 TS 300). This adaption was made, and set to the Breton tune "Son ar Chiste", by that fine Scottish singer, Ray Fisher. Ray has also recorded Willie's Lady on her album of that name.

For the original Jamieson text of the ballad, which includes the intervention of the "Belly Blind" - a beneficent household demon - see F.J. Child English and Scottish Popular Ballads, Vol. 1 (no. 6).

The Queen's final chant is, of course, part of Robert Graves' translation of "Song of Amergin", and I have used the same format for the Queen Bee's chant.

I leave it to the reader to pick up other allusions in the story, but I should make reference to two very admired friends (if I may so style them, for we never met), now, alas, deceased.

Ekbalco, the ex-top hurdler, was tragically injured and put down recently, just as I was starting to write this, so I had to bring his circumstances into the prologue. Pongee Boy (a very ugly name for him I always thought), was the most beautiful horse I have ever seen - he should have grown a horn on his forehead. I have imported him wholesale as Will's lady's bribe-gift.

JVH. Nov. 1983.



Dear W&W

Thanks for the latest issue (Summer), as welcome as ever, and with yet another fine cover. Jan's "The Hunt of the Unicorn" conveyed the magic and the atmosphere so well, I wish I had been there! And Pete Hannah's notes on the "Sherwood Oaks" were also of great interest because of my own research into the ancient trees of this county.

(Mark then encloses his review of the "Holy Wells of Cornwall" - see review section..He notes the difficulties in obtaining copies and says -)

If any W&W reader has trouble finding one, they are welcome to borrow mine for a while.

I've also just received a book on "The Holy Wells of Ireland" which is even more fascinating, though once again with a Christian imbalance....

Finally, it may be of interest to W&W folk that the next book by Janet and Colin Bord, who write so well on ancient sites and other allied topics, will be on the subject of holy wells, and includes a gazeteer of those surviving examples which might be worth visiting. It is called "Sacred Waters" and will be published by Granada in March 1985.

Best wishes,
Mark Valentine.

Dear W&W,

I enclose PAR's most recent Newsletter and leaflet which you might find of interest. *(See Miscellany and Exchange ads).*

I thought you (*i.e.* Jan) were rather too hard on Robin of Sherwood - I found the series captivating. Okay, it is far from perfect but it had some very nice touches (such as the Spring Stone Circle at the end) and it did achieve something major in my opinion - it must be the first time the Horned God has been portrayed as benevolent to large numbers of viewers (albeit in a watered down form).

Anyway that's all for now - keep up the good work.

Blessed Be,
Tina Pye.

Glenda Beagan, who sent us some poems for W&W, also mentioned that she is suffering with her son's sufferings. She asks for prayers for him (his name is Christopher David), and for her husband John and elder son Patrick.

Dear W & W,

Professor P.V.Glob, in his delightful book "The Bog People" has shown the very ancient history of making offerings to the deities in watery places. The chariots, precious objects and well preserved human remains recovered from peat bogs show every mark of being intentional religious offerings made millenia ago. We still throw coins in the fountain - "for luck" and skim pebbles over the sea, counting the skips before eventual acceptance by the deep.

The urge to leave an offering in water is irresistable even now, and can still be seen in many places throughout this part of North-West Europe, even beyond the Danelaw of King Alfred. There is a pond close by to where I live, and in it I have seen a small cairn or pyramid of votive chariots which somehow contrived to look like supermarket trollies with an old motor car. On another occasion there seemed to be an obvious symbolic sacrifice - a headless tailors dummy weighed down by representations of precious worldly goods- a television set and a gas meter ...

Decorated wheels have a place in Earth religions as symbols of the year with its seasons or the sun, although it may be argued that there is no difference. The one that I saw in the pond was still attached to its cycle frame. Nearby was a group of fertility offerings comprising several mattresses and a brass bedstead, illustrating an aspect that Swann and Flanders had seemingly overlooked in their "Song of the Society for Putting Brass Bedsteads into Ponds".

Wish offerings have always been left wherever a higher spirit has been felt, even in the case of water spirits who surely should be lower? The supplicant would make his or her request and leave an object to remind the well guardian of the desired result. It might be a metal stamp of a limb if lameness were the problem or a coin for wealth. Unfortunately a lime rich spring or well could render an object unrecognisable very quickly. The effect that this might have on the cure can only be guessed at. I found some unrecognisable items where the water is extra hard due to two broken sacks of readi-mix.

According to a nearby notice, this place appears to be under the tutelary guardianship of an entity styled the "Clerk of Works" who seeks to impose certain misfortunes on anyone who might desecrate the pond by leaving rubbish. Not that I could see any.

Thanks are given for requests satisfied by the leaving of flowers and herbs - there were several bags of one and boxes of the other to be seen. Coloured rags or 'clooties' hung on bushes are also a time-honoured way of showing a grateful mind and fluttering pastel tissues indicated continuity with our past.

It is comforting that these traditions are kept up ...Atlantis, the Gadarene Swine, the Mary Rose, the Thames Barrier ... all given to the waters.

I am now going for a walk in the local woods, and will let you know if I find anything of interest there.

Best wishes,

Walter Bvits





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Any contributions to the magazine should be sent to Jan at the above address. Keep writing them, we do like to hear from you.

