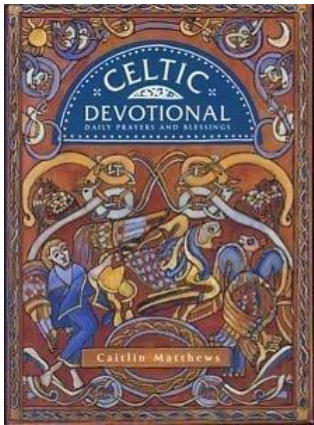




May	
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Beltane (An Bhealtaine)
May 6 <sup>th</sup>	HON Beltane Ritual
May 13 <sup>th</sup>	HON Grove Meeting Page 4
May 13 <sup>th</sup>	Bardic Circle Meeting Page 4
May 14 <sup>th</sup>	Sixth Source Sharing Circle–Page 4
May 20 <sup>th</sup>	BREC– Conservation Woods Walk Series Page 4
May 27 <sup>th</sup>	Magical Spring Market Page 4

## Song of Beltane

*I am the calm, I am the quickening,  
 I am the intoxication and the force,  
 I am the silence, I am the singer,  
 I am the stallion galloping to its source.  
 I am the bright pavilion and the feasting,  
 I am the wedding couple and the bed,  
 I am the morning chorus and the heart-  
 beat,  
 I am the goal to which all paths are led.*



From the Celtic Devotional by Caitlin Matthews

Contemporary western Paganism started with a relatively narrow band of traditions and belief systems but has, over time, morphed into a variegated jumble of practice and belief. Wikipedia identifies nearly forty varieties of Wicca, thirteen versions of eclectic or syncretic Paganism, five flavors of Druidry (some of which are *isms*), and a host of other Celtic or northern European-based contemporary Pagan practices. Whew!

All this has come a long way from two naked guys hanging out in a British campground. None of this has any foot cleverly mired in the long-ago belief systems of our ancestors. Most of this has emerged, in whole or in part, since the middle of the last century. In other words, Contemporary Western Paganism is less than a hundred years old. In many respects, we are in the forefront of a cultural and spiritual evolution. Our flavor of Druidry has roots that go back to the seventeenth century but the flowering branches are relatively new. We do have much in common with other Druid organizations today and many of our members are members of more than one Order.

Similarly, we have a common birthright with our mainstream Wiccan partners. Part of our implied task is to help Paganism today become an accepted spirituality within the greater community around us. While that means we of the OBOD persuasion are to a large extent more accepting of children and people who hold multiple spiritual belief systems, it also means that we take a stand, and take a risk.

We stand at the gateway between yesterday and tomorrow. We pledge not to stand idly by and prop the gateway open but rather to be a welcoming place where the ancestors and our descendants can find room to discuss, debate, and find peace. In one way we are akin to our long-ago namesakes:

we stand between warring factions. If your heart is in the right place, you cannot do it wrong...be a peace-maker!

—Art Scarborough

## *Gulf Coast Gathering 2023! Part 2*

The first activity on Saturday was the grade breakout sessions for the Bards, Ovates, and Druids to each decide on their gift to the gathering to be presented during the Alban Eilir ritual. Interestingly, Saturday morning also brought something unprecedented to GCG: sleet! Fortunately, it was short-lived, but it surprised the Ovates who were meeting outside!

After the sessions, we looked at the lighter side of Druidry with Salvatore Culotta's "The Awen and Play," as he showed us the need for fun and pleasure in our druidic practice—as he says, "What we have is too important to take seriously." He had us all laughing—and sometimes crying, too—as he gave us some good things to keep in mind on our journeys.

After lunch, Ashley Rodriguez presented "The Bitter Winter: Surviving and Healing Appalachia," in which they told three stories from their childhood and adolescence in West Virginia. Again, tears and laughter from the audience accompanied Ashley's storytelling.



Ashley Rodriguez presenting "The Bitter Winter: Surviving and Healing Appalachia"

The Alban Eilir ritual was held at 3:00 p.m.—and a very special Alban Eilir ritual it was, because we incorporated a baby blessing with a final presentation into the ceremony! But before that, the three grades presented their gifts. As always, the Bards' creativity really shone with their invocations to the rivers of their native areas, directing blessings toward the baby.

The Ovates had a piece of deadfall oak from our Grandfather Oak, the namesake of Highland Oak Nemeton, and dedicated it to the gathering, The Druids gave everyone sprigs of mistletoe, because this plant, sacred to ancient Druids, symbolizes both light and darkness: it is a parasite that feeds on and damages trees, but it also uses light to photosynthesize, and though all parts of this plant are highly toxic, many life-saving anti-cancer drugs are extracted from it.

The high point in our ceremony came when Art Scarborough combined his presentation on "The Light of the Future: A Baby Blessing," with blessing an actual baby! Vanessa Thibodeaux, a Bard in our grove, brought her four-month-old daughter Beatrice Alia, to be blessed, and I have to say, Bea was an amazing little lady for the whole thing. Even as Art rubbed some earth on her feet and water on her head, and welcomed her to the world of Druidry, she never uttered a peep of protest!



Art Scarborough blessing "The Light," little Beatrice Thibodeaux

## GCG 2023!

Part 2...Continued



After all the emotional roller-coasters of the presentations and ceremonies, the nightly Eisteddfodau around the campfire were essential for coming back to earth and recentering. Special thanks to all those who provided music, songs, stories, and general merriment each evening, and to Mark Fowler for providing mead!

If you are interested in more details about the gathering, please visit our [website](#). The full schedule, descriptions of all the talks, and the menu for the weekend are all online! And mark your calendars, GCG 2024 will take place March 21–24, 2024! Registration will open on October 1, 2023, at 12:01 a.m. CDT.

—Kathleen Harrington



Vanessa Thibodeaux, Beatrice Alia, and Art Scarborough



Richelle Cole and Vanessa and Little Bea Thibodeaux with Art Scarborough



Jen Delyth Original



**May—Flower Full Moon**



May's full Flower Moon reaches peak illumination at **2:36 p.m. (CDT) on Friday, May 5**. It will be below the horizon at this time, so plan to venture outdoors on the nights of the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> to get the best view of the bright full Flower Moon! Find a location with unobstructed views of the horizon, if possible.

The full moon names used by *The Old Farmer's Almanac* come from a number of places, including Native American, Colonial American, and European sources. Traditionally, each full Moon name was applied to the entire lunar month in which it occurred, not solely to the full Moon.

**The Flower Moon**

May's Flower Moon name should be no surprise; flowers spring forth across North America in abundance this month!

**Alternative May Moon Names**

May's Moon names tend to speak to the arrival of spring and all that it entails!

The Cree names **Budding Moon** and **Leaf Budding Moon** celebrate the awakening of local flora, which really begin to leaf out now in many areas. Similarly, **Planting Moon** (Dakota, Lakota) marks the time when seeds should be started for the farming season ahead.

The activities of animals marked spring's arrival, too, which is highlighted by the Cree names **Egg Laying Moon** and **Frog Moon**, as well as the Oglala term **Moon of the Shedding Ponies**. All three names indicate that warmer weather is on the way!

**The Sixth Source Sharing Circle**, Sunday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, will meet at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, located at 8470 Goodwood Blvd, Baton Rouge, LA 70806 at 12:45 p.m. For more information, please contact Salvatore Culotta at [salcc99@gmail.com](mailto:salcc99@gmail.com).

**Baton Rouge Magical Market 2023**, Due to bad weather on the original scheduled date, the Magical Spring Market has been rescheduled for Saturday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and will be held at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, located at 8470 Goodwood Blvd. There will be local artists, several food vendors, and discussions from some of our local pagan communities. This event is family-friendly and the general public is encouraged to attend.

**Conservation Woods Walk Series: Manchac.**

Explore the natural places throughout the parish just beyond your backyard at BREC Conservation Areas with staff on a Conservation Woods Walk.

Further off the beaten path, these walks are geared toward providing an interactive experience at Conservation areas and trails throughout the parish to make these special natural spaces more familiar. Open to both novices and experts alike, these walks are more primitive and more rigorous than your regular walk in the park. Preregistration is required and all children must be accompanied by an adult.

This walk takes place at Manchac Park which is located at 19010 Old Jefferson Hwy. The walk is from 9:30 a.m.–11:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>.

You can register online at:

<https://www.brec.org/calendar/detail/17705/3479>

Cost is \$5.00 per person from ages 8 years and up.





## Highland Oak Nemeton Announcements



### Grove Happenings

This month's grove meeting will be at La Madeleine Restaurant, located at 7615 Jefferson Hwy in Baton Rouge from 3:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup>. We meet in the private dining room, and we hope everyone will be able to join us.

This month, we will discuss our recently held public Beltane (Bealtaine) ritual and celebration at the Lake House here in Baton Rouge. It was a perfect day and enjoyed by all.

If you are unable to join us in person, we invite you to join us in Zoom. To join Zoom, go to:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88338465418?pwd=TjFJb1h6NmhzSzUrN0czTzFuRVlvQT09>  
Meeting ID: 883 3846 5418  
Passcode: 319206



### Highland Oak Nemeton—Bardic Circle Meeting

**Meeting Topic:** Creating Intention

**When:** May 12, 2023

**Where:** TBD (either La Madeline or Highland Oak Park)

#### Overview:

Bardship is more than the tangible creatives that come to mind when we think about being a Bard. Sure, telling stories, writing songs, and making art are all lovely Bardic pursuits, but we also have opportunities to **create intention throughout our lives**; to live intentionally.

#### What to expect:

In this session, Vanessa will talk about how she creates intention in her life and then we will open the floor open for discussion. You might want to prepare by spending some time thinking about the following:

- What are your tools of creation?

- How are you setting intentions, now?
- At what frequency do you set and think about your intentions?
- What prompts have you set in motion or followed to help nudge you through the life you want?



### Highland Oak Nemeton—Ovate Circle Meeting.

There will be no Ovate meeting this month, but we will be back on track in June!



## *y Cornel Cymreig* "The Welsh Corner"

By Art Scarbrough

### Minding Your A's and B's!

This month we'll start looking at the English translation of some common Welsh words. Here are a few that begin with A or B. Many are found in more complex terms such as place names. For instance, Aberystwyth means "the mouth of the Ystwyth." Or Bryn-bach would be "the small hill."

#### A

Abaty	=	Abbey
Aber	=	River mouth or estuary
Afon	=	River
Allt	=	Height
Ardal	=	District

#### B

Bach	=	Small, Little
Bangor	=	Monastery
Bedd	=	Grave
Bera	=	Pyramid
Betws	=	Chapel
Blaenau	=	Upland
Bod	=	Dwelling
Braich	=	Arm or branch
Bryn	=	Hill
Bwlch	=	Pass, col, gap, or saddle
Bychan	=	Small

## Final Thoughts



Previously, I mentioned what is involved in putting together a yearly gathering. This time, I want to mention some of the volunteers who signed up to help at this past gathering. If I or other members of the committee have not said this before, a sincere thank you! We would not have been able to pull it off without you!

Hannah Buras  
Honora Buras  
Al Cheatham  
Richelle Cole  
Adam Denoon  
Valerie Martin  
Chris Martin  
Frannie McNeil  
Jamie Morgan  
Joe Rielinger  
Michael Rollins  
Joshua Smith  
Nicole Youngman

If I have left your name off this list, my apologies.

## EISTEDDFOD



### "Photosynthesis"

*A log reunion  
(The element of Fire,  
Sol flees to Air)*

*The couple entwined  
(Embracing, they press  
Through green windows)*

*The crushing force  
Of Sun-spat flame  
Lover from lover,*

*Fire holds Earth  
Until She and Her Beloved  
meet at the log again.*

—Adam Denoon /\

I thought I would add this excerpt from the Druidry.org website in homage of Bealtaine.

### On a Hawthorn Tree

*Oh! come to see me, when the soft warm May  
Bids all my boughs their gay embroidery  
wear,  
In my bright season's transitory day,  
While my young perfume loads the enamoured air.  
Oh, come to see me, when the sky is blue,  
And backs my spangles with an azure  
ground.  
While the thick ivy bosses clustering through,  
See their dark tufts with silvery circlets  
crowned.  
Then be the Spring in all its pomp arrayed,  
the lilac's blossom, the laburnum's blaze,  
Nature hath reared beyond this Hawthorn glade  
No fairer alter to her Maker's praise.*

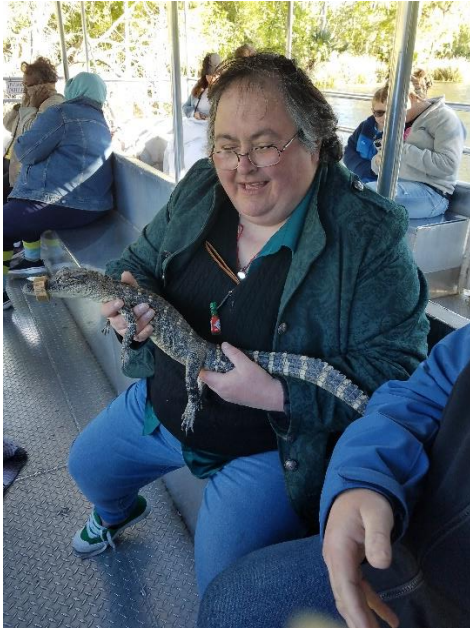
George W.F. Howard  
Earl of Carlisle 1802–1864

## Parting Shots



Wendy Bourg is ready to get the gathering started!!

**Parting Shots...cont.**



Pat Booker and Little Michael, the Alligator, during the Swamp Tour



Salvatore Culotta



Gale Park storytelling during Eisteddfod



Big Michael (Little Michael's papa) just hanging around.



Jamie Morgan holding Michael, the alligator

Until next year...



peace and blessings to all!

*We swear, by peace and love to stand,  
Heart to heart and hand in hand.  
Mark, O Spirit, and hear us now,  
Confirming this, our sacred vow!*

*Awen*

*//\*