

Damh the Bard:

Okay, well, here I am on Zoom with penny Billington. Now, we go back decades now.

Penny Billington:

Several. Yeah.

Damh the Bard:

You're very well known in the order as the editor of the order's journal, Touchstone, but I'd like to get to know you a bit more over the course of this interview. We first met at the Sussex Lughnasadh. Camp in 1995, I think it was.

Penny Billington:

Yep.

Damh the Bard:

And that was when I met you and I heard Arthur's singing voice belting across the field, right? But you were already involved in the order at that point, so take me back and let me know what led you to join OBOD in the first place?

Penny Billington:

Well, I want to say, first of all, that Arthur should never have been there. He took me down in a camper van with a young child and it wasn't his thing at all, so he was going to make sure you weren't all weird and then leave me there and go walk in the Ridgeway for 10 days. He saw someone sitting with a guitar by the central fire and he just didn't move off the field for 10 days, so that's Arthur's story. Now-

Damh the Bard:

Wow. That's amazing. He obviously thought we were weird then, so he had to stay with you. Is that what it was?

Penny Billington:

Yeah. He thought you were his sort of weird and he was quite right, of course.

Damh the Bard:

Too right.

Penny Billington:

But I mean, it's really interesting question to ask anyone where did this idea of a search for spirituality ever come from in the first place? I mean, it should be this spiritual instinct when we have everything we need in a wealthy world that we are privileged to live in our part of the world. You think our spiritual instincts would wither up like our appendix. The fact that they don't means they're vitally and internally important and I felt this as a young child early on. The only expression for religious feeling was the church of England, where I loved the bells and the smells and the men in dresses, just adored those. Then when I got older, I realized I didn't agree with anything they were actually saying, so that was a problem, but sitting in-

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, it doesn't help that.

Penny Billington:

But sitting in an incense filled church is a sort of mystical experience in itself. That was the expression of that, but the love of nature, the only expression for that for the little girl I was, was being a girl guide because then you could go... I used to live to go camping once a year, and to light fires and do all that sort of stuff. I had my childhood doing those things, but there's something else as well, which I hope the next generations don't feel so keen, which is in a British working class household in those times, I won't specify the decade, there wasn't much interest showed.

Penny Billington:

You just got on with living, got on with being nurtured and being loved and all that, but the need... Some people have this deeper need for acceptance and on a deeper level. While I love all my family, I didn't feel I had the understanding from them that perhaps would've nurtured my soul. You see what I mean? That's no reflection on anyone. I know that we probably make a contract to be born before we are, but it'd be really interesting to go back and read it when we begin to wonder what the hell it was all about.

Penny Billington:

I've got this theory that it's not contented people that have experienced this need to spiritually search, it's people who felt a lack. Maybe the lack is just being born. Maybe we all just want to be floating in that sea of spiritual wonder, though I don't actually agree with that because I'm a Druid. I came to Druidry because I love the celebration of embodied spirituality on this Earth.

Damh the Bard:

Were you quite a religious child then at the beginning? Did you enjoy those church ceremonies for a while?

Penny Billington:

I enjoyed basking in the ambiance. I think a lot of children go through a... No, I had to be dragged to church, like any normal child to the question of that. There was no option of staying away. I mean, you went. That was not an issue, but when you get to the very early teens, I think a lot of children get into a questing, wondering searching sort of thing and they're looking around. I mean, I think loads of kids these days probably by their first little teenage witch books when they're 13 or 14 because everyone feels the urge at that point. That's when I would because if it was high church, I would just sit and just drift along in this ambience of otherness.

Penny Billington:

Also, you got to remember, we didn't have that Bible. What's it called? The New English Bible. There wasn't any of that. It was all King James. It was all weird words, which flowed with poetry and mystery. You didn't quite understand them, whereas nowadays it's just like reading the gas bill, I think. I don't want to offend any Christians who like them, that's fine. It's not my thing to engage with mystery using the tools of the every day. That's why I love the Druid ceremonies so much. We have a way of expressing things, like every presence is a blessing. We breathe light and life into this circle. Those are magical statements to me.

Damh the Bard:

Poetic, poetic. You had an amazing interest in the Earth and that was expressed through being in the guides. How did that then lead further on from there? What was the journey from that to sending off for an OBOD pack?

Penny Billington:

Then we'll gloss over this area that most people would like to remain in the dark in their own point, which is called puberty and hormones and all that sort of ... All that stuff comes in and swamps anything else. We got through that, went to college, stuff like that. Then what I started looking for... I suppose it was embodied spirituality because I went looking for exercise systems. I tried Tai Chi, and I tried yoga and I always liked the meditative parts of these more than the exercises because I'm a speedy person, so to slow down is very difficult for me. To slow down in class of 20, it's just teeth achingly tedious, but I did it and it did me a great deal of good, but there's always this question of wanting to go deeper.

Penny Billington:

Then you find you're engaging with someone else's culture. I wanted something that was rooted in the land, and so there was a magical act. I went to a meditation class and various people who were in it came round to my house for cups of tea and things like this. One day in the middle of the room, there was a form to send off for the introductory pack for OBOD, appeared by magic. It also appeared because it fell out someone's handbag, of course, but that doesn't and stop it being magic. It came just at the right time. Just-

Damh the Bard:

That's how it happened for you, was it? You just found a form.

Penny Billington:

It just appeared in my house.

Damh the Bard:

Wow. Okay. That's amazing.

Penny Billington:

Yeah. It's quite a .

Damh the Bard:

You never found out who dropped it there?

Penny Billington:

No, no. I wouldn't want to know because you don't need to know these things. It's all the wonderful synchronicity of coming home to where you want to be.

Damh the Bard:

That's amazing.

Penny Billington:

I feel over many, many, many years that putting on a Druid robe is the best thing I ever did a focus in my life and also, it's a robe that's really big so it can fit all your own ideas underneath it. It gave me what I was looking for, which was acceptance and allowing, acceptance and allowing. I think that's what everyone wants to explore and be as creative as they possibly can be in life.

Damh the Bard:

You sent off for the, I guess what would've been the intro pack at the time and then the course. What was it about that made you, like you say, feel like you'd come home? What was there that kept you there?

Penny Billington:

I think it's what wasn't there that kept me there. It wasn't prescriptive and telling me I must do things and saying that I must be things, have things, do things. That thing in the Gwers that always says if it feels right to you, if you fancy doing this, if it's the right time, those things that just lead you gently through, that's very important to me. Then it didn't ask to do disgusting things, by which I mean, again, I don't want to upset anyone, but I don't do bodily fluids in my magic.

Damh the Bard:

Right, right.

Penny Billington:

I've read a hell of a lot about other magical systems that do use them extensively. I'd rather keep my body fluids in the body, really.

Damh the Bard:

Thank you very much.

Penny Billington:

And my magic on the page. I felt its approach was ethical and sound and treated me like a mature person who could make my own decisions. That was really-

Damh the Bard:

Did you look at any other kind of path? Did you look at the Wiccan path or anything like that, or were you specifically looking for something Earth-centered?

Penny Billington:

I was definitely looking for a nature religion.

Damh the Bard:

Right. Okay. Did you have a look at Wicca?

Penny Billington:

Yeah. I looked at Wicca. Now, when I started, there weren't that many books around, but of course, Janet and Stuart Farrar had opened up the world into Wiccans, and that's what I'm talking about because they talked about drops of blood and things like that in their rituals. That made me think I really didn't want to do that. They also talked about spell craft, which would affect other people, making poppets, binding people, that sort of thing. That's very different. I think that OBOD is a sort of magical mystery system, but it doesn't work in that way.

Penny Billington:

The thing I love most about Druidry is that I see it as profoundly relevant as well because we've got these brilliant role models from ancient times who are peace givers, who are law makers, who are strivers for justice and all the things that we need in the world today. Also, OBOD always seems to have a relevant response to any crisis that would be that world crisis, personal crisis or whatever. You can't go nearly three decades along the path without having quite a few personal crises, some traumatic, some happy, whatever, but they happen and the bottom line is does your spirituality support that?

Damh the Bard:

Give the foundation to support it? Absolutely. I remember somebody asked me years ago, what Druidry was to sum it up. All that came to mind was a path that enabled people to develop a closer relationship with the natural world, seen and unseen because I make no distinction between the unseen worlds and the seen worlds as being natural. To me, they are all part of the natural world and I think that's the real foundation of everything that I see Druidry to be. We're so separate from the cycles of nature. I heard somebody on a podcast the other day that said my Druid... well, they didn't say my Druidry, they said my paganism has nothing to do with fertility. I just thought, well, how are you alive and how do you stay alive?

Damh the Bard:

To me, that really spoke to me and said, wow, that's look how separate we are. We don't even consider the food we eat and the clothes we wear to have come from any kind of fertility of the land. I think that's what, really, Druidry does is it reminds us, we are just... Well, not just, we are part of the natural world, part of that cycle of life, and death and rebirth and everything that goes with it that is expressed through the Wheel of the Year. Within the OBOD course within Druidry, all of the tools are there. If you want to do some spells, you get all the tools to do it, but it's not a major aspect. It's not the thing that will draw people necessarily to it. The spells, if you like, to me, have always been about the change that happens inside and happens with that connection with everything else. To just think it's actually... It's not all about me. Do you know?

Penny Billington:

That's right, but it gradually changes. Doing the study gradually changes your internal landscape, so you have a different set of references that someone who doesn't have a spiritual path just doesn't have. They are huge resources, aren't they?

Damh the Bard:

Yeah.

Penny Billington:

Whether you go down and throw something in your stream and tell it all your troubles because you're depressed or whether you go and sing on top of a hill because you are thrilled to bits. It's that idea, the more you study the natural world and realize we are the natural world, the more you realize that all life is sentient. It's up to us. It seems to be the rule that we have to communicate with it. We got voices, why wouldn't we communicate? As soon as we start doing that, the world responds as if we're right. You've got the handle of it. Hey, you joined the party. Well done. Now keep doing it.

Damh the Bard:

That's it. That's why like when you are doing an initiation... I remember at an OBOD camp, we were down by the willows and we were doing an initiation night at an OBOD camp. We were holding this ceremony. It was a beautiful, might have even been a full moon or something. It was just around Lunhasadh time, I remember it being and just standing there in a circle and between a couple of people, an owl just flew into the circle and just landed on a tree branch right overhanging the circle. It's almost like things like that happen so often that it can't be coincidence. It's almost like you say nature, the spirits of nature, turn around and say I see you. I see you, and I hear and you're speaking the same language as us. I love that. If you-

Penny Billington:

Gives you shivers, doesn't it?

Damh the Bard:

It does. I was going to say just now actually, 27 years... I don't know what year you joined OBOD, but we met in '95, which was numbers of years ago now. To keep people on their path, things have to happen to keep connection going, don't they? Do you have any kind of like memories and things that have made you go yes, I'm on the right path as you walk along here? Any peak experiences or anything like that you are willing to share to 15,000 people?

Penny Billington:

Yes. Well, many peak experiences. I remember being in the middle of a city and suddenly being transfixed by this golden leaved tree. I was practically crying as I saw it. It's just a culmination of lots of things coming together in the shape of this tree. I actually had to sit down on a bench and compose myself. But the main thing is not huge peak experiences because life isn't made up of huge peaks, as it's not made up of huge traumas, please God. Please the gods, I'm sorry. Apologies to the rest of you.

Penny Billington:

I was thinking of my particular friends there, but what it's made up is a load of tiny little incremental things, one after the other, after the other. The fact that there might be a kestrel out in this tree while we're talking to each other. The fact that when I go out, if I'm tuned in... That's the other thing about the owl, the world's waiting for us to join in. You have to be tuned in to notice the owl. It doesn't often fly between people. Usually, they're just there and it's up to us to slow down and start noticing. There's a lot in... We'll talk about my booking minute, which fantastic-

Damh the Bard:

Yes, we will.

Penny Billington:

... because it's got a load of hints about how to be fascinated and how to keep that fascination, how to keep everything fresh and moving because it was pouring with rain this morning. We all want to sit and read in bed for an extra hour and not get up. That's called being lazy and being human, but the fact is, then a bird whizzes past and you think, oh yeah, I want to be in the day as well and you just get up. The natural world is a constant prompt, I think.

Damh the Bard:

You joined the order and at some point I think you took over from me as Touchstone editor, if I remember rightly.

Penny Billington:

I did.

Damh the Bard:

That was a while ago now. How many years have you been doing that now?

Penny Billington:

I started in September 2001.

Damh the Bard:

Wow.

Penny Billington:

It's a long time, isn't it?

Damh the Bard:

That is a long time. Hats off to you, Penny, because you... I mean, touch wood. You haven't missed an issue at all. Even during all of the COVID thing, it was still delivered. It still went out the door. Just fantastic, so my hat's off to you for doing that.

Penny Billington:

Well, thank you very much. But it's really interesting is that I've noticed with my daughter - children that you don't have a job for life now and you don't have a nine to five routine. This is all good. This all allows them to become newly creative and reinvent themselves and find interesting things to do, but there is something to be said for having a contract and doing something, and especially actually when you're depressed, or when you're fed up or when things aren't going well to actually sit and do some external work for an hour. It's just a little touch in with the real world of contracts, and agreements and keeping things going, but I find can be very therapeutic.

Penny Billington:

Thank goodness I've got a nice life so usually, I have to drag myself to the computer like any sane person. The main thing about Touchstone is that the privilege of doing it because this is a grassroots involvement from the newest bard. The number of people who write and say, "I've only been in the

order a few months." They read three Touchstones, then they're writing for it because somehow we've made them feel their opinion is valued and as valid as someone who's been 30 years in the order-

Damh the Bard:

Absolutely.

Penny Billington:

... as indeed it is because the only difference between us is we've been here longer, so therefore we have done more reading, studying. That doesn't mean that the newest bard might not be more in tune, more psychic, more gifted, more intelligent, have more life experience than any of us and OBOD-

Damh the Bard:

That's that enthusiasm and well of discovering. Oh, my God. I love being around that at the gatherings.

Penny Billington:

The people in OBOD aren't threatened by any of this. We want everyone to win. We say a Druid situation is a win-win situation. We want everyone to flower. Touchstone gives them a platform for it. I'm going to give you an advert for Touchstone. I'm going to give you a couple of spoilers because I wrote these down. Next month, for example, we've got... Oh, last month we had 'I am a mushroom'. Why wouldn't you want to read that article? Of course, we're all mushrooms. We're all connected.

Damh the Bard:

The mycelia network.

Penny Billington:

Precisely. This month, we've got online ritual. I mean, what's more relevant that at the moment, how to make it better? We've got Celtic figures as ecstatic transpostures. I don't know when you lost sat in the position of the man in the Gundestrup Cauldron, Dave. In fact, oh God, you're doing it now. Oh, that's clever.

Damh the Bard:

Of course. I'll just go and grab my snake.

Penny Billington:

Then we've got a listening circle for resilience in troubled times, this sort of thing. If you're talking about keeping the ideas fresh and new, what better way than to read articles from different minds every month? I get ideas every month from the people who write.

Damh the Bard:

Yes, absolutely. I think part of the thing that happened with the pandemic is I know a lot of people who, for whatever reason, felt like they were losing touch with their path. Maybe they'd put all of their eggs into a group or something like that and suddenly, the group couldn't make it and they couldn't meet. They were thinking, well, what is my Druidry or is my path to me now if the coven or the Grove can no longer meet up? And that existential threat of this thing out there and all that stuff that was pushing

people's buttons. Of course, a lot of the time when you're busy trying to keep things together like that, the first thing that goes, weirdly enough, is your spirituality, is your spiritual connection because you're so busy doing that you forget to actually be, to take some time to be. I think things that having Touchstone every month and just taking that time to sit down and read and connect with other members around the world through that journal, I think must help people keep in touch with their path, without a doubt.

Damh the Bard:

For me, I had a daily practice that I'd let go just before the pandemic that I took up again. It was that practice every single morning that reminded me that actually, even though I can't go anywhere, I'm still connected with everything.

Penny Billington:

Yes. It puts the whole thing in a wider context, the spiritual context is much wider than the physical context and it's really helpful. I understand about people and their communities and their groups, but one of the big shifts in Druidry is getting away from a human-centric thing. So many people didn't want to seem insensitive, but actually loved the lockdown when they got used to it because it allowed them to be in nature and that sort of thing. I think it advanced people's understanding of nature as a support.

Damh the Bard:

Very much so.

Penny Billington:

It took a load of human pressure off them. Humans are exhausting. It's exhausting being a human, isn't it? I mean, we'll have a cup of tea after this conversation because we've been chatting and we're tired, so we need a cup of tea. You don't feel like that when you've been chatting to an oak tree or just sitting under it.

Damh the Bard:

Absolutely. I mean, for me, before the lockdown, I have to say I was heading towards another burnout, to be honest with you. All of my Druidry, for years have been completely outward-facing. All the gatherings, the Groves, the long man rituals, the gigs, the talks. Then the lockdown came along and of course, that all went and I thought, wow, what do I actually believe now? Actually, it's given me a beautiful moment. It is weird to talk about the pandemic as a beautiful moment. It gave me the space to think and really reconnect with what I felt as a human being, as a part of nature. All right. Enough of me though.

Penny Billington:

I was going to say that all the admin and the organization, that is the Druid being of service.

Damh the Bard:

Yes, exactly.

Penny Billington:

Like you say, it's outwards, but you've got to factor into the equation the fact you are a mad musician as well.

Damh the Bard:

Oh, yeah.

Penny Billington:

We won't go there. It really doesn't help. I live with one. I know this.

Damh the Bard:

I'll get onto your new book in a minute, but I know that you wrote a book called Keys to the Temple, which was about Dion Fortune. You must so, along with the nature spirituality and the work with the guides and that kind of thing, you must have had an interest in some kind of ceremonial stuff as well, and the roots of Dion Fortune. Where did that come from with your interest in her?

Penny Billington:

Well, that's really interesting because she was a formative influencer and actually, I've just written a blog where I credit her as being my teacher, my mentor, although she died years before I was even born. Yes, I had an interesting experience where I thought they say... When this is before I came to OBOD. When the student's ready, the teacher arrives. What? How many people have been frustrated by that little phrase? Actually, look world. I'm ready now. Yes, I really am. Then I realized that actually my teacher was talking to me through books, not one to one. Philip had Nuinn, I had Dion Fortune. That was interesting. Then of course, the mentors of OBOD. I think Philip as the genius of the course. I would say that he's my mentor as well.

Penny Billington:

I've got another teacher who I co-wrote the book with actually, Ian Reese, but the Dion Fortune thing came when there was a load of cheap paperbacks of her fiction came out and they were half price in the local post office in 1974. Someone bought three and said, "Here, Penny, you'll enjoy these." I was knocked out by them. I found out years later that she'd written them to be possibly initiatory experiences for the reader. That started me on thinking seriously about a magical path. This is the time when I was doing Tai Chi, things like that, made me think seriously about magic. Everything I read about magic, like the things I read about witchcraft, I didn't want to do. I didn't want to go down in a basement and wave a sword about. I didn't want to make shapes and invite demons. I didn't want to do any of this stuff, but it fascinated me and I read ever such a lot about it.

Penny Billington:

Then when I read Dion Fortune's nonfiction, I thought, hello, this is ethical, sound, common-sensical, not scary, treats you like a mature person. Thought hey, ho. I've got Dion Fortune and I've got Druidry. I've sort of melded the two in a way, all those ideas, that's how I express my Druidry. It's interesting that when she died, Dion Fortune was actually working on what's called the Arthurian Formula, which was particularly to use the currents of myth and legend that have come about in these lands, and use them as a magical formula to protect Britain during the second World War. That was quite interesting because, of course, Wiccans and magicians and all sorts of people all played their esoteric part in the World War, as well as their practical part. Dion Fortune was actually bombed, 3 Queensborough

Terrace... Or one of her houses along Queensborough Terrace was bombed and she wrote a letter saying she'd often been accused of being a black magician in the past and on this occasion, it was completely true because the ceiling had fallen down on them and they're all black with dust.

Damh the Bard:

So literally. Well, I love those novels as well and as you read them, there's something incredibly bardic about it, isn't it? Because those novels, they're not like do this. To get this effect, do this, do this. To feel this, do this, do this. It's told in story and that is incredibly bardic way. It's like Talesin's poems and all those things that we've inherited. They're not literal and they're open to interpretation, and it gives them a sense of journey as well, which is just so beautiful. The book, Keys to the Temple, has just been reprinted. That's right, yeah?

Penny Billington:

Yes, that's right. That's been reprinted by Aeon Books. If you go to my Facebook page, I've got a code for which gives you something like 20% off until the end of April.

Damh the Bard:

Oh, okay.

Penny Billington:

That's quite a useful thing to have.

Damh the Bard:

Okay. I'll pop a link to that Facebook page in the show notes, so people can find that.

Penny Billington:

Oh, thank you.

Damh the Bard:

You've just finished a book. It's going to be published very shortly by Llewellyn. It's just got the best title of a book I think I've ever heard, Nine Ways to Charm a Dryad. Tell me a bit about this book and the journey for this book, Penny.

Penny Billington:

I've written some big books. I've got my big book on Druidry and this sort of thing. I just wanted something lighter, and accessible and full of pretty pictures and buzzwords and different fonts and stuff that would encourage people to flip and sip, and just keep their fascination with the world. It is called a magical adventure to connect with the spirit of trees.

Damh the Bard:

Sounds lovely.

Penny Billington:

Someone proofed an early copy and said, "Do you realize I read to page 43 and you haven't actually told me what a Dryad is yet?" I corrected that. I put it into the introduction. It is called transparent head syndrome. Because you know, you think everyone else does. The idea is that life is pretty crude and brutal these days. In some places, I mean, we seem to be getting ruder and less pleasant to people and I think charm, we need a major charm event. We can start with our relationship with the trees. It's all about not being human centric. This is a two way process with any sentient life form. Why on Earth would a tree want to be friends with us? Why would a Dryad want to bother with us? Look at us scurrying around. We're just standing there, open mouths, wondering what we are doing.

Damh the Bard:

They're busy being trees. They're doing tree things. They're not waiting for us to sit by them, are they?

Penny Billington:

That's right? Yes.

Damh the Bard:

Oh, finally you're here.

Penny Billington:

To connect with any other sentient life form, I think we have to mirror it and I think we have to try and reflect the things that are important to it. I think we have to slow down. That's the main thing. I'll just read you some of the chapter headings, the charms. The idea is that when you're charming, you charm people, charming meaning attracting them and also magicking them. You cast a spell over them sort of thing, as beautiful trees do over us. I've got the charm of fascination and the climatizing. The charm of true appreciation, so not thinking, oh yeah, there's a green blob on top of that brown trunk, but actually knowing about particularly appreciating things for what they are. You don't want anyone to say, oh yeah, Dave's that blonde guy with glasses. You're Dave, for goodness's sake. An olive tree is an olive tree and a linden tree is a linden tree. They are really different, so the charmer lineage is all about trees in history and getting into a right relationship is about changing our perspective. Healing.

Penny Billington:

Then the charm of Arcadian dreaming is getting back to that the first world with pan and the Dryads and that mythological cusp, beginning of our understanding. The last one is the... I'm missing one now just to be a teaser. Charm nine is the charm of wild creativity because I think the trees encourage us to be wild. They do not judge us and I think we are all too timid with our creativity. We want to do things well. We're brought up in a judgmental world that says it's fine when you're a kid, but when you're an adult. Whoever hears a 30-year-old playing the recorder badly? Not very often. If you can't do it well, you don't do it any more, but just to be wild and just think I'm going to make a pig's ear of this and it's glorious. It's quite something I think. I think there's not enough of that done in the privacy of our own back gardens, in our own parks, in our own whatever. People actually forgive a lot. It's like not noticing owls. They don't even notice us. No one's looking at us.

Damh the Bard:

No. It's the thing to do it for yourself. That's the thing. It's an expression of your inner soul and it's not about approval from other people. That's where the Awen comes from, isn't it? The blessing of the

Awen comes from that idea of whatever I create must come from me and my honesty, my integrity, and be congruous with my life and that's it. That's all that matters. It's actually all that is.

Penny Billington:

It is, but it's a particular sort of connection. I've just written about this in my latest blog thing. I got it from Caitlin Matthews and that's that we have a horizontal plane. We live on a horizontal plane and a vertical axis and of course, we're plugged into the horizontal all the time, reaching out to other people into the world and the worldwide web. All this is horizontal and pulling us out. What we don't do often enough and what the practicum in the Gwersi and everything helps us to do at least once a week is to pull back and connect that vertical plane that says me, the depths, the heights, this is where I am. There's Ursa Major, or Ursa Minor and the Pole star above me. There's the inner fire of the earth beneath me and there's the fire in my heart in between the two. I am the connection. I am the tree. I am the branch between those two.

Damh the Bard:

That moment of just stepping out in your garden, looking up and seeing the, and just for a moment thinking of yourself on this tiny little sphere with all of that out there and suddenly, you get it. You know where you're at? It's a good leveler.

Penny Billington:

It's a double thing. It's a true paradox thing, isn't it? Because first of all, it puts you in your proper place. It's a great leveler, but also it doesn't make you feel small.

Damh the Bard:

No.

Penny Billington:

It makes you feel incredibly [inaudible 00:37:46]. Maybe that's because our job is to be witnesses. Maybe the Earth needs us to witness its myriad wonders. I don't know, but it doesn't make us feel small and insignificant or ashamed. It just makes us feel joined up and part of a glorious whole.

Damh the Bard:

That's right. When you're stand on something, there's this idea you're separate from it, but actually when you look up and see the stars and you see the moon and then you think about the sun and the Earth beneath you, you're contained within it. You're not standing on it, you're part of it. You're contained within it. Then that changes the whole relationship, doesn't it? Fantastic. We've gone deep today.

Penny Billington:

Oh, yes. Yeah.

Damh the Bard:

When is this book available and when can people buy it? Do you have a date yet?

Penny Billington:

In the US, it should be out already. It's out on Kindle already. I think for the paper copy in the UK, it will be April.

Damh the Bard:

In April? Okay. Thank you so much for taking the time, Penny. It's been lovely. I think we've been talking about 40 minutes, which is perfect. All right then. Well thank you for being with us and for your friendship over the years, Penny, as well. It's been wonderful to walk this path with you and Arthur. Hopefully, one day we'll be soon sitting in a field or something. Well, I know in June we'll be hearing Arthur's dulcet tones and yours as well, I'm sure.

Penny Billington:

And yours.

Damh the Bard:

And mine.

Penny Billington:

Gosh, it's going to be good to get back together, isn't it?

Damh the Bard:

It's going to be emotional. It really will. Anyway, thank you very much, Penny. Thank you.

Penny Billington:

Thanks for the opportunity.

Damh the Bard:

Cheers.