

Damh the Bard:

I'm here on Zoom with Levannah Morgan. We have known each other for decades, it seems.

Levannah Morgan:

Long enough!

Damh the Bard:

Yes. But we've never sat down and had a good old chinwag about you and your path and what brought you to your witchcraft. So maybe to start off with, let's start there. So how did Levannah become Levannah? How did Levannah become the witch that I know and have known for all these years?

Levannah Morgan:

That's very intertwined with talking about the sea as well.

Damh the Bard:

Well that's good.

Levannah Morgan:

I spent my childhood, most of it in Anglesey, which should be a place very well known to druids, I reckon. So lived by the sea from a very, very early age. And I'm telling you that because when I was in my teens, without being in contact with anybody else who did anything pagan or magical, I formed a very close relationship with the moon and spent a lot of time watching the moon, became an art student. I'm very old, I should say. So this was in 1970s when dinosaurs still stalked the earth. I became an art student and I was also starting to learn at that time about the Women's Liberation Movement and about Goddess spirituality, which was just in its infancy in this country anyway, at that point, feminist spirituality. So as a fine arts student, the subject for my work became the moon, and my own bodily cycles and time cycles. And I thought that was an artistic investigation, but what I couldn't have guessed was that wonderfully, it led me straight back to my roots by the sea in Anglesey and straight into witchcraft in a working alone, spiritual way.

So it all came from there. So everything I did came from the love of the moon and the sea, and a very conscious process from the age of about 19, of making my own bodily cycles coincide with the Luna Cycle and living by a Luna Calendar. And that just led me very deep into spirituality. And to have contact with any other witches, I remember I read Alan Garner's books as a child and for all of my life, Moon of Gomrath will be one of my very, very favorite books. And I went to a very booky school. And at the age of 12, I read The White Goddess because it was listed in the back of Alan Garner's Moon of Gomrath in what I would later come to know as a bibliography. So I thought, well, if it's there I'll read it. So it was a struggle, but it kept referring to the old religion. And being very alone, this is incredibly daft really, I formed the impression that it had died out and I was the only one left. So I didn't even look for other people.

I just got on with it. And to cut along very long story short, I had an extraordinary initiatory dream about Arianrhod, who was someone, something I had known since childhood as a figure in stories. And I began to seek out other women in the Goddess Movement in my 20s. I was very involved in the Anti-Nuclear Movement in the mid-'80s and the spiritual aspects of that. And at the beginning of my 30s, after working alone and thinking there was no one else, the penny dropped and I realized there were lots of other people out there. And I called out inwardly for others to work with. Had a series of dreams in

which I was rode over the sea to an island where a group of witches were waiting for me. And in very short order was put in touch with my Wiccan initiator, the fabulous, sadly no longer with us, George Harold Wake and joined his Coven. And that's how it all unfolded.

Damh the Bard:

When you were on Anglesey, how much of an influence did the stories of the Mabinogi have when you growing up? Were they myths? Were they seen or were they taught in schools?

Levannah Morgan:

Well, hugely. No, I think they weren't actually taught in quite that way. I think I may be a bit of a dying breed in that when I was a small child, we didn't have television. And we didn't have television, largely because television didn't work very well in Anglesey. The transmitter system was just not very good. You could watch Irish TV perfectly. And some friends of ours had TV and used to watch RTE from Dublin. But-

Damh the Bard:

All right.

Levannah Morgan:

... That was a mystery to me. So I had a childhood without telly and I had a childhood that was full of making up your own games. And the games that were made up were all about those stories and those myths from the age of three or four really. But they were also at that time, what I would come to call later, a plethora of local spirits and presences that everyone talked about. And one of them was an extraordinary character called Madam Wen.

Damh the Bard:

That's a great name.

Levannah Morgan:

Isn't it? The Pirate Queen. And I didn't discover until I reached adulthood that she was actually a character in a Welsh language novel written in the 1920s. And we learned about her at school, but I didn't really understand that she was a fictional character. And she was a white lady who walked on the beach at night and the kids would say to each other, oh, if you go on the beach at night, Madam Wen will get you. And I used to see her. From the age of four or five, I used to see Madam Wen and I used to have little chats with her. So that was the beginning of my relationship with Arianrhod really. Although I didn't know it at the time, [inaudible 00:07:11] was the cultural background. But I'm sure you probably know, there's lots more about the characters in those stories that is in Welsh culture and poetry. It's like a background that gets referred to so, yes, that was there.

Damh the Bard:

It was there.

Levannah Morgan:

I have to say, when I got to a certain age, my parents wanted me to go to school in Manchester because they thought that would be better for me because, well, for all sorts of reasons. I had to do that. So I'd go home on the weekends, not very far. So from the age of about 11, I was a bit more separated from

that, but only a bit really. But it never went away. And by the age of 15 and 16, my favorite place was a place again that you may know called Barcodiad Y Gawres. Well a village I lived in was Seguire, I now think was really extraordinary. At the time I thought it was just the place where everyone lived. And onto the northwest of it is Llyn Cerrig Bach, which is the place where one of the largest hoards of Iron Age objects was discovered. And it was actually discovered by a lovely man who I knew as Willie Roberts. And he lived next door to us when I was little.

Damh the Bard:

Wow. Really?

Levannah Morgan:

And he used to tell us it-

Damh the Bard:

It was his tractor, wasn't it? It was his tractor.

Levannah Morgan:

Yes, exactly. That's a whole other story which we could talk about. It's quite a long one though. And on the other side of the village was Barclodiad Y Gawres. Which is one of the most significant megalithic sites, certainly definitely in Wales, but also in the Albion bit of the British Isles. So I was between those two things. And they used to go and sit on Barclodiad Y Gawres at night and watch the moon rising over my magic holy mountain of [foreign language 00:09:31].

Damh the Bard:

Wonderful.

Levannah Morgan:

That was my-

Damh the Bard:

That was your landscape that you grew up in.

Levannah Morgan:

... Landscape.

Damh the Bard:

Wow.

Levannah Morgan:

Of course between those two places out in the sea and somewhere between is the site of Caer Ariahrhod.

Damh the Bard:

Yes. Out to sea there, on low tide, you can just about see the little piece.

Levannah Morgan:

Just about see the reefs. I've been by it in the boats.

Damh the Bard:

Oh have you?

Levannah Morgan:

Yeah.

Damh the Bard:

It's such a magical landscape. And when I was putting my Mabinogi albums together, to go to the place that gave birth to those stories was so important, to really get in touch with the spirit and energy of the tales really. I'm really tempted to ask you to tell me the long story.

Levannah Morgan:

Well, I can if you would like.

Damh the Bard:

You can't say that and then...

Levannah Morgan:

So Mr. And Mrs. Roberts lived next door to us and they were lovely neighbors, really kindhearted and good. And Willie, and actually his father whom everyone just called Taid, which means grandpa in Welsh used to look after us when we little kids. And the road that where we live was the last road before the land, that sought to Sand Dunes, I don't know what the other word for it is. There isn't another word for it in English, but it's nearly Sand Dunes and the sea and the houses that are then now hadn't been built then. And we used to sit on the little Sand Dune and Willie and Taid used to tell us stories. They just looked after us, seven or eight kids from the families in that road. And he used to tell the story of how he found the objects at Llyn Cerrig Bach.

And he was working for the council and they were building the runway at what is now RAF valley. And it's all sand dunes. And they were digging peat out of a number of small lakes, big ponds really, to spread on the sand so that they could put down the concrete surface of the runway. And the way he told it was this, that they had a tractor attached to a baler thing with chains. And they were pulling loads of bales of peat out of the bog and leaving it on the side of the bank there to dry. And the chain broke that attached the tractor to the baler. And he thought, oh my goodness, or words to that effect, it was all time.

And this is the way he told it then said it would've been really difficult to get a replacement because you'd have to go all the way to the Avenue, which is maybe like 15, 20 miles away. And there was petrol rationing and it's really difficult and this was just going to stop the work. Dreadful. Because they were working under pressure for the war. And he looked around and lo and behold, there's a bit of old chain in the bog. So he attached it to the tractor and it worked. It worked that day. And it worked the next day. And towards the end of the next day out popped the hord. And he'd been using a piece of Iron Age chain to pull the peat out of the bog and the end of telling us the story. And this was always the favorite

bit he would say, and here is the chain because Cyril Fox who'd excavated that site, allowed him to keep that piece of chain.

Damh the Bard:

Wow. Really?

Levannah Morgan:

So at a very young age, about five, held this piece of chain.

Damh the Bard:

Wow. Amazing.

Levannah Morgan:

He was a lovely man. And his daughter, I'm not sure if she's still with us actually, Evelyn, she was very protective of his memory and she has had for many years gone rounds and given lectures to schoolchildren all over the island about him and this great story and would borrow objects from the museum. She's had a wonderful talks. So that's the story. I don't know if you've been there, but you can't see very much there at all. And I think later they feared that some of the objects that were found might have gone under the runway and be lost for good. But I think it's pretty clear that they think they got everything there was out of there.

Damh the Bard:

It's a bit of a pilgrimage for me and Cerri, whenever we go to Anglesey, we go to Llyn Cerrig Bach and- Yeah. And...

Bryn Celli Ddu.

Yeah, those places.

Levannah Morgan:

I used to ride my little pony when I was a kid. Everyone did around there. I used to ride. My favorite ride was going right along the Big Long Beach and then inland past Bryn Celli Ddu.

Damh the Bard:

Amazing. And when I first went there years ago, there wasn't even a sign.

Levannah Morgan:

No.

Damh the Bard:

To find it was incredible. And it's right next to, like you say, the RAF base and occasionally they'll take off, but when it's quiet and it's peaceful, there is definitely something magical about that water.

Levannah Morgan:

There absolutely is. And not just the water, but the rocky outcrops around it, which are hard to access now because they're within the perimeter of the R A F base. But it's a very, very special place.

Damh the Bard:

Very special place. And I don't know if it's true, but I've heard it said that the items that were placed or thrown into the Lake as offerings could well have been offered into there around the time when the Romans were attacking the island. And Boudicca was doing her thing.

Levannah Morgan:

Some of them are older and some of them are from that period, obviously studied it quite a lot. And one of the things that's very interesting is it does go back further. So it's a record of votive practices, the years before the Romans come. But yes, some of them absolutely are from that period. And it's really hard not to see them in the context of the Roman invasion and the invasion and them.

Damh the Bard:

Wow. So you grew up on a relatively small island and then you've come to a bigger one, it's still an island. So you've obviously had a deep connection with the sea and that's led to writing *A Sea Witch's Companion: Practical Magic of Moon and Tides*, just come out via Hale Publishing. And obviously this sounds like something that you've had to write to me, from the way you've spoken about your love of the sea and the love of magic and the connection between magic and the sea and the moon of the tides. You were never not going to write a book like this. Is that right?

Levannah Morgan:

That's absolutely a million percent accurate, Damh. Absolutely. And I say it in several places in the book, but witchcraft paganism for me, they're where I fit. They're wonderful. They're the most important things there are, that spiritual path for me is everything. But one of the things that wasn't quite new was the much of paganism, there's so much a land-based spirituality, which is lovely, worshiping the woods and the forest and on the mountains, wonderful. But the sea doesn't seem to feature very much.

So yes, it is a book I had to write, but I also wanted to make sure that there could be that consciousness because how can you think of the moon without the tides, even if you're not by the sea? The tides affect us all wherever we are on the planet. So yes, it had to be done. And I would really, really love to see more recognition within paganism of the magic of the sea and what it can bring. And also what we need to do as responsible humans at the moment, because we are making a mess of the sea, making a mess of everything.

Damh the Bard:

So there's a lot of woodland magic, like you say, there's lots of, the Herne the hunter, the Horned God...

Levannah Morgan:

It is wonderful.

Damh the Bard:

Which is wonderful. Absolutely. But particularly for ourselves, we live on an island, you grew up on a smaller island and there are islands all around this island. And there is a huge amount of folklore all

around the coastal areas, all around this Britain. And of course, you have Cornwall. And I think you live in Devon now, is that right? Sorry just-

Levannah Morgan:

I live in Devon.

Damh the Bard:

So you still have that connection to the sea. Obviously growing up near the sea is going to have an impact and an influence on how your magic works and develops in you as a witch. But was there any one particular moment where the sea just said, you are a sea witch or how you would describe yourself?

Levannah Morgan:

I think so. I think this is an approximate statistic, but no one in the British house has lived more than 80 miles from the sea. And I went to art school in the English Midlands in Nottingham in fact, which is a lovely place. But I did feel terribly landlocked. I was talking about this with a friend yesterday, actually from the age of about four, I could feel the physical effect of the tide in my body. And I thought that's just what everyone did. And I think everyone can if they want to develop that sensibility. But being so far from the sea was difficult. So the first opportunity I got, I went back to Anglesey, went home to make work. So on the 21st of December 1976, because I've been a filmmaker most of my life and made my first film and it was of myself walking into the sea, wearing a red leotard, making a piece of work about the sea, the moon and menstruation.

Because I was quite well known for that work in the 1980s. It was exhibited a lot. And that was the first piece I did. It was cold, it was frost on the beach. And that was the moment, as I made that walk, as I stepped into the sea, that huge connection made. And then within a couple of months I'd had this extraordinary visionary dream of Arianrhod. I met Arianrhod in a very lucid dream. So I felt claimed by the sea at that point and not stopped since really. It doesn't mean to say I've not done that much, a couple of the woodlands and the mountains and the cornfield because I have, and I love it. But it's just the sea is the most fundamental thing for me behind everything. It's that tidal rhythm and the relationship with the moon and the moon is goddess.

Damh the Bard:

I think I'm the same. I was born in Cornwall, but we moved away when I was very, very young. And I have memories of going back there with my parents for holidays and things like that. But I've always gravitated towards the sea wherever I am. And I've lived next to the sea here in Brighton for years and years now. And I think when I want to find peace, there's a certain peace I will get from the woodland, particularly in the spring when there are bluebells. And it's just incredible. But I think I can go to the sea at any time and feel magic, in any weather and in any season. The sea right now the last few days has just been so choppy and powerful.

Levannah Morgan:

Oh yes, I've been there. I was there this morning and.

Damh the Bard:

And then you go there other times and it's just so calm and peaceful, but the connection and the magic is really there all the time. If I want peace, I will take my mandolin or whatever down to the sea and just sit there and play my music next to the sea.

Levannah Morgan:

The first time I talked to you properly, that is what you were doing. I remember it at Boscastle.

Damh the Bard:

Oh yes.

Levannah Morgan:

Just the day after a conference. I helped to organize. That's the first time I talked. There was this lovely sound coming from the clifftop. I walked up there and there you were.

Damh the Bard:

Well, that's my communication. That's the way I communicate with spirits and things.

Levannah Morgan:

I give things to the sea all the time. It's not just the peace. If I'm feeling bad or things are difficult, that that's my mother I can go to.

Damh the Bard:

Amazing.

Levannah Morgan:

To find comfort and peace.

Damh the Bard:

There's so many different spirits of the sea as well from different cultures and stories and myths and legends. Is there any particular spirit of the sea that speaks to you out of all of those?

Levannah Morgan:

Spirits as opposed to deity?

Damh the Bard:

Well, either or both.

Levannah Morgan:

Because in terms of deities, it is Arianrhod in that particular landscape that I come from. I suppose in the book written quite a lot about the folklore of the sea. And I think some of the Selkies, the seal people, that idea of the beings who can live on land with us but are seals in the sea, I find very powerful. I also love the idea that you find in, I was going to say Irish stories, but it's not, it's Irish belief, about the great waves of these islands that are magical beings in their own right, that you can hear and feel coming from many miles away that work that way. And I find a great connection with the ideas that you find in each



of the Celtic countries about drowned lands and the spirits that were lost, so east in Britain, Leoness and close to home Country and Tina Helic.

And they're interesting, I know a bit of a digression, but in Victorian times there's great vogue in antiquities for finding these lost lands around the coast of Wales and saying, well these must have been inundated within recent times. And I found out that they weren't, that most of those lost lands that we know are there [inaudible 00:26:35] and Tina Helic would've gone underwater probably around the time that Barclodiad Y Gawres was built in the neolithic.

Damh the Bard:

Wow.

Levannah Morgan:

Can prove that from the geological record and the time that the Menai straits happened.

Damh the Bard:

Formed.

Levannah Morgan:

So how those legends are-

Damh the Bard:

And you've got the Dogerland as well.

Levannah Morgan:

Absolutely. It was that gradual process of sea level rise after the ice age that inundated those lands. There are more recent ones, but those ones, that's when I think they happen. So those stories are a very ancient part of our culture. So I suppose it's all those things. But I think one spirit, or if you'd like deity, that I became much more involved with writing the book was Dylan, the Son of the Wave. Because I felt I'd written an awful lot about the Goddesses of the Sea and looked at how they function in different cultures, different names, different ways that they happen around the world. And I felt a bit sad for the boys really, because most of the classical sea gods and the ones back in that pot of history were just really terrifying figures. Posiedon presides over earthquakes and disasters and what have you.

And I was really thinking, well there is a space for a different kind of masculine inspired deity. So I did a lot of work with Dylan on them, I have a meditation for him in the book. And he's one of those characters who in terms of that context of the Mabinogion, and he's there very briefly, tiny little subparagraph in the story of Dylan. But there were obviously many more stories about him because there are little references to him and lots of poetry in the stansas. There's a beautiful piece about where the grave from Dylan is, it's on the beach and you can go find it. And so he was obviously a widely recognized figure, but that cultural context, we've lost a lot of it. So Dylan had become very, very fond of, because for me, I can link to him as a spirit that cares for the sea and cares for the sea creatures. And he is lovely to work with in that way. No wave broke beneath him.

Damh the Bard:

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That's right. I love that paragraph. And it's so frustrating because you can tell, can't you, that there's more stories about him, but they've gone literally and it was his fate to be slain by his uncle Govanon and that's it. So I'm going to be starting the Fourth Branch next year and I'm-

Levannah Morgan:

Wonderful.

Damh the Bard:

So I just really feel like I want to make that interaction a little bit more powerful and make something a little bit more of Dylan of the waves. Yes, definitely.

Levannah Morgan:

I suppose stories they become so well known and so commonplace that we think, oh, we don't need to tell everyone that. Everyone knows that. And then seven or 800 years later, clodhoppers like us come along and of course we don't and we go, oh is it, what happened. But in the end, what you do, the best way that you do it is you go out there to the seashore, to the rock pools and you say, please come and talk to me.

Damh the Bard:

Absolutely.

Levannah Morgan:

Please come and meet me and make yourself open and willing. That's where this process of re-enchantment-

Damh the Bard:

Yes. If the-

Levannah Morgan:

... The academic call that we're all a part of which actually I think is a wonderful word, that's what we are all about, I think.

Damh the Bard:

I agree.

Levannah Morgan:

And I think the way that you do that is wonderful because it's very sad that we don't have those stories anymore, but new ones will reveal themselves. That's part of what you're doing.

Damh the Bard:

That's right. If these spirits exist, and I believe they do. They don't just exist in story and they don't just exist in the pages of books. They exist in their own right, connected with the elements and forces that they're connected with in their stories. So if you really want to get to know, so I've always said, if you really want to know the power of the Horned God, go and watch the deer during the rut. Or if you want

to understand the Morrigan, go and watch crows and just spend hours watching crows. And you'll learn her energy through those birds and animals.

Levannah Morgan:

But you'll meet them as well. They'll reveal themselves to you, you have to give it a lot of time. You have to dedicate yourself to it, but they'll be there for you, with you, you'll meet them. So I guess that's the...

Damh the Bard:

So if you had, obviously I would recommend anyone get this book because I've read it and it's fantastic. If there was somebody listening to this who wanted to develop a deeper connection with the sea, a deeper spiritual connection with the sea, a physical connection with the sea, is there anything that you would say to them, go and do this?

Levannah Morgan:

Yes, absolutely. Because I think that for me, magic is always experiential and physical, as well as enjoyed in the brain and in the psyche. And I think it's when we bring the mental and the psychic together with the physical, when we get rid of the split between mind and body, that the magic things happen. And that often those things are very simple but also very profound at the same time. And I hopefully suggest a lot of ways to do this in the book, but you know what I would start by doing? I would start by finding a place that you like by the sea, arriving there at low tide and staying there quietly with eyes and ears and all your senses open till high tide for 6 hours. That's how I'd start. And just being a receptor to what happens to you. That's how I'd start.

Damh the Bard:

And listen and watch. And my favorite bird is a seagull. And I know there isn't such thing as a seagull because there's herring gulls. There's black gulls. I guess it's the herring gulls because they're, people call them shitehawks here, I think they do in the west as well in the west, but I just get so much joy watching the gulls.

Levannah Morgan:

Sometimes they're called grockle hawks.

Damh the Bard:

Grockle hawks.

Levannah Morgan:

Because of their predelection for taking holidaymakers fish and chips.

Damh the Bard:

But I get such joy watching the gulls and they are such an integral part of the sea. So in fact, if I'm away and I call Cerri and I hear over the phone the calling of gulls, I just have this such longing for home. That's the sound of home for me. Do you know?

Levannah Morgan:

That's fabulous.

Damh the Bard:

So a spiritual connection begins with going to the sea, spending six hours from low tide to high tide, senses open eyes open, ears open, just touching, smelling the ocean, all those things.

Levannah Morgan:

Tasting salt on your tongue.

Damh the Bard:

Yes, exactly. But as well as that connection, you are very keen to say that there's another connection that's as guardianship of the ocean. So can you talk a little bit about that?

Levannah Morgan:

Yes. I wouldn't want anyone to think that all we can do is sit by the sea and make spells and everything will be okay because we've done horrendous damage to the oceans and we know that now. And I think a lot of people are trying to put it right. But I would encourage everyone who loves to sea, alongside the magic to do practical stuff. Every time I go to work magic on the beach, which I do a lot, I do a beach clean first. And that's a tiny thing, but it's really important and I try to do everything I can in my life not to contribute any further to the pollution of the ocean. So that's all the usual things we know about this, don't we? Try and eliminate single-use plastic from your life and well certainly trying to eliminate throwing it away. Here down in the southwest, there are some fantastic environmental charities and campaigning organizations that work with the sea.

I am particularly fond of Surfers against Sewage who I think do an absolutely brilliant job. So if you are motivated to do so, you can engage with them, campaign. Look, we know that the water companies are pouring millions of gallons of excrement and other waste into the sea in this country all the time. Get out there and campaign, make your voice known about it. There's so many things you can do. Different things will be right for different people. And I completely accept that different people will feel differently about these. That I think that magic has to be allied to practical action actually, because we exist in all the worlds.

Damh the Bard:

It's a congruency, isn't it? The practical aspect of support of the actual physical ocean then backs up your magic. And it also works the other way around as well. And they walk hand in hand with each other and...

Levannah Morgan:

It's our correspondences, isn't it? It's the way we strengthen the magic and...

Damh the Bard:

Absolutely. Well, Lavannah, thank you so much for coming on to DruidCast and talking to me. I have got a copy of your book to give away as a prize for the show.

Levannah Morgan:

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Thank you. Thank you very much for having me on. It's been an absolute delight talking.

Damh the Bard:

You're very welcome and I hope I see you. It's nice to see you on Zoom, but I could do with saying hello in person. It's been a long time.

Levannah Morgan:

I know.