

Damh the Bard:

I am here on Zoom with Maria Ede-Weaving, who has incredibly important roles within the order, but they're often, I think, kind of in the background unseen. So I'm really happy that I've got you on DruidCast and we can actually explore a bit about yourself. And your path to Druidry, so welcome, Maria.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Oh, it's lovely to be here. Thank you, Dave.

Damh the Bard:

Okay, so let's get straight into it, shall we. So tell me about Maria as a child and where your interest in Druidry came from.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Well, Maria as a child was baptised in the Church of England, but was actually brought up a Methodist. So my mom used to go to a tiny little Methodist chapel in our village, and I was introduced to Sunday school when I was four. And so for the period of four to 13, it was a massive part of my life when I did Bible classes and exams and I still have little lady bird books that I won for the Bible exams and stuff like that. It was just kind of massive. It

Damh the Bard:

Was a big part of your life then? Yeah,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Huge part of my life, I think because my mum came to it later on really in her forties. So yeah, I was at church on a Sunday, several times Sunday school Bible classes on a Monday. Sometimes I'd go on a Thursday with my mom to her little women's group in the church and stuff. So it was massive, really massive. And I suppose what's important to me as a child, I suppose my understanding of it was quite limited really. But I had my first massive spiritual crisis at the age of 13 when my mom died. So my mom was diagnosed with cancer, and it was from diagnosis to death, it was three months. So it was crucial, it was swift and

Damh the Bard:

No time to get used to it really

Maria Ede-Weaving:

No time at all. And it really, I mean obviously it's kind of like it's that first encounter with your own mortality, which is always a shock, isn't it? As a kid, you just think, gosh, how do I process this? I think I became very scared of being here, being in the world and death for the first time felt like presence. It wasn't just a concept. And I think in my sort of childish imagination, there was Christ and it was very fluffy and kind and nice. And there was the crucifixion, which obviously if you really look at it, is incredibly brutal. But my understanding of that was that it was a child's understanding that God dies and then he comes back again and it's all lovely. And it was my first encounter with that visceral, very physical side of dying, and it was terrifying. But I think what it did, it was the catalyst for a quest, really my own search, I suppose, for some kind of healing with my relationship with death.

I just couldn't find that in Christianity, although obviously it's there and many people do find comfort, I suppose within that framework I couldn't. So it sent me off on this journey. And I think as a kid, I'd always been attracted to, I suppose, magical things. I always had a real deep sense of nature, that connection to nature. And I suppose I wouldn't have articulated it, but I think I was feeling the divine nature. I can definitely remember having experiences being stood by the sea and just having a sudden heightened moment and feeling some kind of connection to something that was much bigger than me. It was like that feeling we often get, which now I understand perfectly within Georgia, but I suppose I didn't have a context for it when I was a kid, but I experienced it and just accepted it because it was a lovely feeling. I felt something there and I felt connected to that something.

And I was kind of attracted to astrology, which is actually after my mom's death, I really, really got into. And I think what I was trying to do at that point, I was trying to understand myself. I started to get really interested in a lady in astrology called Liz Green, who was a Yungian analyst. So she had a very sort of psychological take on psychology and another guy called Howard Susportus who was in Psychosynthesis, so that was that first meeting between this kind of spiritual quest and the psychological exploration of self, which I found I wanted to understand myself and why I was feeling the things I was feeling. So that was kind of what happened through my teens. And it wasn't until it was my early twenties, I met a witch and we got talking. She was a member of a Coven in London, but she was very into the Kabbalah, and that was the side of things I never felt drawn to. I knew there was something in that path that intrigued me, and I think I read the Witch's Bible, Janet Stewart Farrar and I knew there was something in there that was kind of calling me, but that formal Wicca, wasn't it? I knew there was something in there that wasn't. So it took me a little while to even find the path within Paganism. I suddenly realised, actually, I think this thing called paganism is the path for me. But I hadn't quite thought found that system.

Damh the Bard:

It's interesting that I've noticed that death can cause that kind of crisis of faith, I guess. And if you've been raised in the Methodist tradition, there must have been talk of heaven. There must have been talk of life after death. It's there in the resurrection, but somehow that did not comfort you.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

No,

Damh the Bard:

And I remember, is it Christopher Lee or somebody, I might even be in the Wickerman that says Reincarnation is much easier to swallow than resurrection. It's easier to visualise, I think, for a lot of people. And I've also found, and I've noticed even within Druidry and Paganism sometime when it gets to that point of sudden change of the realisation of actual death, and it's interesting, we're talking about this just after Samhain as well, really, it can make you question your path and say, well, how is this supporting me through this incredibly difficult process of grief? I felt that in January when my dad passed away, and for me, I realised I was in at the time, in the right place. My mum is saying he's in heaven, and that's making her feel comfort. And for me, he's in the wind, he's in the flowers, the plants, the trees, and I talk to him every day. And it's just interesting how these things can either hold you, or as I say, make you question your path. And obviously what was it do you think about what was it that just made you look elsewhere?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

I think it was probably quite influenced by my dad as well, because my dad at the time, I mean, I had a much older brother and sister, so I came along much later in my mom and dad's life. So my brother and sister had left home, and so it was me and dad and dad, bless him. He stopped work to look after me. I was still quite young when mom died, which the plan was he would go back to work later once I'd grown up a bit. And I think that moment of him giving up working and becoming a house husband gave him a little bit of freedom. And I think he was grieving so heavily, he started walking in nature. It was kind of like his, to start with. It was just because he couldn't bear being in the house. So I mean, we lived in quite a small village, so we had countryside around us.

He would just go out in the country and walk. It's just a way of coping with his grief. And of course, what became a coping mechanism became a passion. He started to really love walking in nature. And then of course, he was learning more about trees and plants and wildflowers, and I'd go walking with him and he'd tell me all about these things. So that idea of walking in nature and being with nature and my dad's kind of relationship with nature, I think was hugely helpful for me. So I think that probably planted a few seeds, even though I think it was always there in me, that kind of love of nature. I think having dad there at that point after mom's death was really helpful. And it was the first kind of little, it was little trail to follow for me into the woods,

Damh the Bard:

Absolutely.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Just his love and nature. And he became very interested in things like Daoism again, which is that kind of pagan thing, that spirit of nature. That's something that flows through nature, which I think he felt extremely, I mean, he didn't become a Daoist, but I think he liked that idea. He wanted to feel that sense of connection to nature and the sacredness in it, even though he didn't follow a particular path, it was his path.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, so

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Sorry, that really, I think that directed me in a certain way. Yeah. So I suppose the call of nature, really

Damh the Bard:

It was, and that moment changed things for you. So we ended up with you meeting a witch who was into Cabala. Sorry to interrupt you, but I thought it was interesting to explore that aspect. So what happened then? So you found,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

I knew there was something in that path that I wanted to explore. I mean, Kate, the lady that lent me all these books, and we had really good chat. She had a very intellectual way of doing it. I should think why she liked the Kabbalah. It was a system, and for me, it didn't feel quite right, so I kept reading. I ended up reading the books of Marion Green

Damh the Bard:

Green? Marion Green, yes. Yeah,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Marion Green, way back now. She had a little correspondence course, so it was just kind of like a postal course. So I did that. So it was a way of exploring. I knew I've got to explore this on my own. It was kind of back in the day, no internet, so it was quite hard to find people who were into the same thing. So I was just reading. I did Marion's course. I can remember setting up a little shrine in my bedroom, then not knowing what to do with it. I thought I would like the idea of having a space decorating. Then just sitting in front of it, I thought, what do I do? Twiddling my thumbs. I wasn't quite sure what kind of system there was that I could work within.

But then I think what happened, I suppose in my late twenties, I went to do a degree. I went back as a mature student, and I did a lit degree, but I had the opportunity of taking some floating modules in other subjects, and I found a module called The Female Face of Religion. I just thought, that sounds really intriguing. So I signed up for that. And of course it was exploring Goddess Spirituality, and particularly in that kind of political sense, Starhawk, all that kind of, well, goddess spirituality basically. And that was the first big revelation. Suddenly that was the idea that, and I had kind of danced with it before. I remember reading Caitlin Matthews lovely little book, the Goddess. It was like a little, you remember the elements of

Damh the Bard:

The Elements of the Goddess? Yes, yes.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Such a lovely little book. And I remember reading it and thinking, but I still felt stood on the outside of something. I didn't quite know how to step in and really experience it, I suppose, because you are brought up with a traditional, which is, it is a male God, and it's very prescribed way of looking at God, which is fine for people who are in that. But I think it ended up being a little bit of a barrier to me exploring that. I didn't know whether I could, it felt a little bit dangerous.

Damh the Bard:

It's a big step, those kinds of things. I think if you've been brought up in a tradition, I remember, I think I was talking to Jason Mankey last month, and we were talking about our first experiences of Pan, and when you've been brought up with this idea that cloven hoof and horn means the devil, and suddenly you're saying, actually, no, it's not. It is a big step to just say, actually, I will drop that baggage and I will explore this in a new way. And I guess that's the same with you, similar kind of thing with yourself.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah, yeah. It was that moment of maybe this is what I need to do. I just need to, you say you drop those assumptions that you have and just be open to something. And I suppose it was quite a safe environment to do that. It was like an academic environment, so you feel a little bit upset, but I could feel myself being kind of pulled into, and that was really the beginning, because I knew I was a deity kind of girl. I think having grown up in that environment where deity was very much a part of your life, I think once I'd had that crisis and I walked away from it, there was this huge gap that needed to be filled. I felt like I wanted that relationship with deity, I just didn't know what kind of shape that would take. Now, it was one of those things, what is this? Do I? But that was the beginning. It's so funny you're talking about

Pan, because I had the most extraordinary experience as a kid of waking up in the middle of the night and in the dark, seeing on the wall opposite my bed.

It was almost like a light and shadow projection on the wall of a man's face with two little horns. And of course, at that stage in my life, the only horned figure I knew was the Devil,

Damh the Bard:

Yes.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

But I can remember having this feeling where I can remember sitting up in bed almost like I think I was probably asleep, but I thought I was sitting up and feeling this lovely, warm, benign feeling coming off of this very jolly face on my wall. And much later on, I look back at that now, and I thought, oh,

Damh the Bard:

That was

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Maybe the first encounter with God in a different way.

Damh the Bard:

Absolutely. And I remember seeing those pictures, and I looked at them and I saw this image that for years, as we've said, have been said, no, this is the devil. And I looked at it and I thought, no, you've got this wrong. This is something out there in the woods. This is a reflection, a face like the green man or an aspect of the natural world, an animistic expression of nature. Maybe that is being shown to me in a more, or at least as anthropomorphic way that I could understand as a human being. And I just thought, no, no, that's wrong. And of course, nowhere in the Bible does it say that the devil has cloven hoof and horn, that's totally imposed, let's put it that way. So very similar. We were both faced with this figure, and neither of us wanted to, well, there was a part of me that felt uncomfortable because of the baggage I had, I think. But ultimately, it didn't scare me off. It didn't make me go no run away. And the same with yourself. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

No, well, that curiosity draws you in the end. It's almost like, and I think that's probably what the whole of my path has been. It's about being given permission to explore, because you always know that you have a feeling, I think when something's imposed on you, a system, the bits you feel uncomfortable about and you push against. And I think when you are in that situation, it's good to be able to give yourself permission to say, well, I want to challenge this or explore this and see how that feels. Because the bottom line is you really are reaching to find your own authentic relationship with nature, with the divine.

Damh the Bard:

It's a great big whatever it is.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

It has to be yours, doesn't it? It's like when it's not yours, when you know the shoe doesn't fit and it's uncomfortable on some kind of level, I think that it's awful to have to stay in that place. That doesn't seem to me to be the purpose of spirituality. Spirituality feels like it's connecting to that big mystery and allowing it to open more and more and more as you grow through your path, deeply understanding that mystery.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah. So you did your Marion Green courses. I remember those by the way. And Quest Magazine. Quest magazine that she produced. It was a very exciting time, that period of growth within Paganism, because we didn't know much at all. Not really. Ronald hadn't published his books yet. But because of that, there was an amazing amount of experimentation and exploration going on. Not on an academic level necessarily, but more on a relationship level. So I look back very fondly on those days. Yeah,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Me too. Well, that really was the beginning, and I think that idea, suddenly, I think of mid nineties, there was just this explosion of books being published. So it was about, there was people out there knowing that there were all loads of people on their own looking for other people who were thinking and feeling the same thing. So suddenly we have this. But I mean, Scott Cunningham, solitary wicca stuff was, I think, really important because it gave people that opportunity to really explore this as a practise and that it was okay to make mistakes, and it was okay to find your way through it. You didn't have to be part of a coven or anything like that. And I suppose that was the moment that I really sort of stepped into it, but I can remember coming to see you. Oh, really? Yeah. You came to talk, I think it been the late nineties in Portsmouth.

Damh the Bard:

Oh, right, yeah. A

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Friend of mine, a guy called Steve, used to run a little group called Positive Outlook. And I remember you came to talk about Obod and you sang to us all, and my memory is the first thing that we did, we chanted Awen, you got everybody to stand up and chant the ar. So that was the first time, although I'd come in through Wicca study, that was that thing that, oh, there's this other thing called Druidry from your talk.

Damh the Bard:

That's amazing. You do these things and you don't know, do you? Don't know what happens afterwards. I had no idea. No idea at all. There you go. There you go. That was a great

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Evening. It was really good.

Damh the Bard:

Thanks. Yeah, I remember it. I remember Steve as well. Yeah, yeah, no, it was really, really fabulous evening. But there you go. I mean, like you say, I got in my car and drove home and you went away going, oh

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah. Well, Steve actually lent me the Druid Way, Philip's book, the Druid Way, and I read then, but I didn't come to OBOD until about three years later, so was still at that point I kind of joined the Pagan Federation and I found somebody else and then a friend of mine, and we all kind of gathered together, and that was the beginning of a little group of just sort of exploring the Wheel of the Year and sharing rituals together and writing rituals and just that whole experience of just creating a practise

Damh the Bard:

From within a framework of wicca or,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah, it was more kind of like that kind of do it yourself sort of wicca thing. And we were learning together really. It was a really nice experience was just, I think the Wheel of the Year was that kind of fabulous. That felt like the system that really worked for me. They knew it. I knew just writing rituals or experience or, thinking about the themes of each festival, really that was the start was really deepening my understanding what this path could be still does.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, about that time, I had a little eclectic group as well of people who were all searching. None of us had become members of anything, and it was very exciting times because we were just looking around and feeling and going off to the woods at Imbolc and freezing our asses off, but lighting our candles to Bridget. It was wonderful, exciting times. It really was. Then, so from there, you obviously somehow found the Order of Bard, Ovates and Druids and got involved with there. So what was that process?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Well, I'd read the Druid Way and I really enjoyed it. And then it was Philip's book, DruidCraft. I read that obviously it was that kind of blending. I wanted to explore the path and I thought, oh, this would be interesting to seeing what Philip's got to say about blending the two. And I really liked that, and that kind of drew me to the OBOD website. But that was just after 9/11, and I remember going to the website and there was a whole section on the website about people's responses to what had happened, and I was so impressed. It was so measured and thoughtful at a point where the world just seemed to have gone crazy and there was a lot of extreme kind of reactions, and obviously there was a lot of fear-based reactions, and it was like this place of sanity and peace. Just hearing people, obviously people were expressing their pain, but also compassion and thoughtfulness and just being that level. I thought, this is great. I want to explore this site more. So I read all the stuff on the website and then as I said in the book at the beginning of the book, at that point in my life, I was trying to decide whether to do an MA with the open university or do the OBOD course. I really didn't know where I was going to go.

I was at a bit of a crossroads and I write at the beginning of the book about my experience with this little Wren in Cornwall, this after solstice, and that was that moment where I kind of got up early in the morning to this absolutely beautiful sunrise. We were in a little cottage next door to St Nectan's Glen, which is still one of my most favourite places there in the world. And just seeing this little Wren in my periphery, hopping around in and out, this sort of dry stone wall feeding, and I dunno what it was, but it was just in that moment, I knew I had to do the OBOD course. And yeah, I'm so glad I made that decision.



Damh the Bard:

Life changing again.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah, it was truly,

Damh the Bard:

Yeah. So you started the course and what was it that, I mean, people start the course and people stop the course and people pause the course, and some people, it takes them four years to go through all three grades. Others like me, it was about eight. Some people have remained their bards for 15, 20 years. So what did the course and membership to OBOD do for you? Particularly?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Lots of things really. Well, for the first year going through the Bardic grade, it was wonderful. It really shifted my perspective in what was possible. I think I realised that I had a lot of mental limitations that came out stuff in the past. So I felt a push forward with my creative stuff that was really, really brilliant, but not just my creative stuff, it was what I could manifest. It almost felt like the idea of the Bard, you take a thought and then you manifest it something. So that was a really positive thing. But the strange thing as I moved into the Ovate grade was that I almost came full circle. My sister had been very ill over a period of years, and all the way through my Ovate grade, that was the run up to my sister's death. So I came, it was coming full circle back to that place when I was a teenager, where you suddenly, you are confronted with death again and how you find your place in it. So a good deal of my Ovate learning was extremely profound because of what was happening in my life with my sister.

And I knew, I mean, my experience with the course, I find it extraordinary. I used to would take breaks because I think sometimes you have to just to process and eliminate things. And then I would pick up the course again, and I'd always find it extraordinary that whatever was in the Gwers at that point in time was reflecting something that was going on in my life. So it was almost like the Gwers knew the timing and the course seemed to know the timing in a way that I wasn't fully aware of. It was kind of like this magical process that was going on. So the fact that that was happening, I knew there was something in the course that was of deep value for me. It really did speak to me, and it was a very sort of healing process. I still haven't finished it. I'm still in the Druid grade. I knew talking about taking how long, certainly I knew after Ovate grade, I had to take a step back. I mean, I took about four and a half years with the Ovate grade, but it had been so profound and I'd had several losses in that period of time. It wasn't just my sister. So it felt like an Underworld journey really do well.

Damh the Bard:

It is. It is, isn't it? That's the thing. It actually is.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

And I was very drawn to that process. I think even I think from that moment of when my mum died, you talk about the Wheel of the year and talk about Samhain, I felt like, I think all of us have a certain draw to a particular festival. We have our favourites and the themes of that festival really draw us. And mine was Samhain, I think because of that early encounter with death. So I kind of stepped into that festival. And in some ways I feel like I didn't come out for years, right? It was almost like I was in one season for a very long time because that festival had so much to teach me. In fact, strangely enough at the moment, I



feel like coming out of that, I'm almost, I feel like because of course the wheel of the Year, you have to keep moving you, even if you are in one festival, I feel like my inner goth needs to take a holiday. Right? Fair enough. I can't stay in that place anymore. No one can stay in the underworld forever. I feel like there wasn't,

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, black clothes don't work in Tenerife, do they? Not really.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

So I kind of felt, I feel like now that experience, which was really valuable to me, and it did help me to heal a lot. And actually strangely, my sister's death helped me to heal a lot about my mom's death. It was that kind strange thing that happens when we have these experiences with that big mystery. But I feel like I'm moving to,

Damh the Bard:

So you're still working your way through the Druid grade. I'm still working

Maria Ede-Weaving:

My way through, which feels absolutely right. I always say to people, because I get a lot of messages from the Facebook page, and I think sometimes people feel like they have to, how long does it take to do this grade? How long does it take us to? And I say, don't worry. I went to see the artist Grayson Perry on Friday.

Damh the Bard:

Oh

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah. And I love him. He's brilliant. And his whole show was kind of about identity, but at one point he was talking about the subconscious and he kind of had all the lights and the auditorium turned off and he lit a candle and you say, this little candle, this is your conscious awareness. And then he was saying, and then this massive darkness of the auditorium. That's your subconscious. And I think that idea that you build a bridge, don't you, in our spiritual work between that place and our little selves, I always call it the little and the big self isn't

Damh the Bard:

Little and the big self.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah, the little and the big self. And I feel like the big self, that big dark auditorium, the Gwers has a relationship with that big self that can see the bigger picture and knows the pace that you should be going at and knows there are points in time where you will process that thing, and then you'll have a little fallow period or a little break, and then you will move on. So I've always trusted the process of the course. I've always felt like I've been guided through. So

Damh the Bard:

Yeah. Well, it's a hard one to get your head around. If you say courses, it's like, okay, well, I get my 12 months and I've got to finish it in 12 months. And the absolute truth is that the journey is more important than the arrival. The arrival is important. And then at the end when you arrive, you go, oh, there's more.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

It doesn't stop. Yeah, it never stops.

Damh the Bard:

Never stops. Absolutely. Yeah.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Yeah. But I love that because you are always learning, and it's always that thing, isn't it? I'm a Gemini and I love systems.

Damh the Bard:

Oh, I'm a Gemini too, Maria.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Oh gosh, you love systems.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, I love them.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

I love a good system. But I always found out I would kind of create a system for myself, and then within seconds almost, it was like the system was undermined because I'd suddenly think of something out that didn't fit into the system. So I'd have to deconstruct everything and then start it again. And then after a period of time you realise that the system is not the thing.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah. Spoken like a true airhead well done.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

This system is just a tool. So it's like you know that the system might be finite, but the journey isn't the thing, isn't your relationship with the mystery. It goes on and on and on, and you feel like you crack and you understand it, and then suddenly you feel like you don't understand anything.

Damh the Bard:

It's right. It just doesn't fit in the right boxes. And I think that's the thing with spirituality is that I think sometimes we look to history, we look to things that actually happened, we try and place Samhain in a place back then where it must have made more sense because that's when they started working with Samhain. And then you realise that you can't fit these things in boxes. People change times change. I remember seeing recently on Facebook might've been elsewhere as well, but there was this kind of

meme that was going around of if anyone tells you that Samhain is all about the thinning, the wheel thinning of the veil, then treat them with distinct suspicion. Because nowhere in the past did it say that that's a modern invention. And I just read that and I think, do you know what? Not every truth happened in the past. If that is true, and it is something relatively new to our paths, maybe we've stumbled on something pretty damned important and you don't throw it out just because you didn't practise it.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

No, no, absolutely. I agree with you. Absolutely. I feel like maybe I wasn't that interested. Maybe it shows in my book actually, I wasn't that interested in the part of routing in history. I'm interested in Celtic things, but I'm also interested in all sorts of other things. A lot of things have fed my path over the years. What I felt most excited about is that thing that we are creating the path as we go along. So there will be things that we will have a different perspective. And it's okay, that perspective is new. I get that desire to find a wisdom in our past because I think people have that sense that maybe we've gone off a path and we've lost certain things and we want to reclaim something. But I'm also fine with that idea of it's totally new. I could never understand the lineage thing in Wicca.

I thought what you all worried about, it doesn't have to be that unbroken thread. Because as I say in the book, my unbroken thread was just to all those beings that went before I had that thing where it wasn't just the Celts, I was feeling that interesting. It was like those people in that primordial forest that were having human experiences and we're still having those human experiences. And yes, our cultures probably were very different, or in some instances they might been in the same, but it's not about getting stuck in one place. It's about opening to the world and building a relationship with the world as it is now.

Damh the Bard:

So you've mentioned a book, and I've been really rude. We've got half an hour into, at least into this conversation, and I haven't even mentioned your book, but I've been fascinating with your life. So there we go. So the essential book of Druidry Connecting with the Spirit of Nature, Maria Eve Weaving. It's a beautiful hard back book, fully illustrated in colour. I mean, everything about it is absolutely beautiful. Thank you. The writing the imagery inside. So tell me about the book. What inspired the book?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Well, it was kind of extraordinary experience for me because I just got a message on Instagram one day from a lady saying, would you be interested in writing a book about Druidry? And I thought it was a scam. It was so untrusting. I thought it was a scam. And it was only my partner, Stevie said, do you know you need to answer and say, yes, I did. And it turned out it wasn't a scam, but the lady who'd asked me to do it, the editor editor asked me to do it. She had read my blog. I've sort of written a blog, I suppose, since about 2010. And it started when I lived on the Isle Wight at that particular time. And the Isle of Wight, I love the Isle of Wight. I used to go there for holidays when I was a kid. I lived in Portsmouth just across the water from it. But kind of moving there, it's such a beautiful landscape, and I felt so connected to the landscape that at that point of time, I was spending a lot of time walking in it, being in it, doing rituals in it. And that was really inspiring me to write. So that's really what my blog was. My blog was just loads of posts about having that conversation with nature.

And my poor blog over the last few years been a bit neglected. But the incredible thing about the internet is that once it's out there, it's out there. And this lady discovered it and read it and said, oh, you think you'd be a good person to write this book? I mean, they do a whole series of introductory books to

things like Shamanism, Wicca and Crystals or whatever. So they wanted one from Druidry. So I thought, yeah, this would be a lovely thing to do. So

Damh the Bard:

Yeah. Yeah. And it covers a lot of the aspects of an introduction. And one of the things I love is the way that you have called, I've got it written down here actually. Yes. So you have the three grades in OBOD of Bard, Ovate and Druid, and those three schools, if you probably go back, well, they definitely go back much further than that. But you call it the Sacred Braid. Yes. And of course, in my mind, I've got a blue, a green and a white thread that are braided together. And of course you start off with the blue and then you weave in the green, and then you weave in the white of the bard, ovate and druid. And I thought, that's such a beautiful imagery. So how did that come about, the idea of the sacred braid for you or that kind of thing?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

I think maybe it was because of my relationship with those things. I mean, I've always kind of considered myself a bard. I mean, I was a musician and singer in the early part of my life. I gig and do that side of it. But I think because of that connection to creativity, and I always felt with creativity that it's the way that we share with each other that helps us to understand being human. It's about what it means to live and actually not just being human, but beings in this amazing world. And of course that drive to write about landscape, to write about nature. There was that Bardic thing going on. But I think because of my encounter with death earlier on that ovate side of things, for me, that underworldly journey to find healing, that urge to know myself more deeply, to build a deeper relationship with everything around me, including myself, there was that kind of Ovate thing. So I felt those two things very strongly wrapped around each other in my life. And I suppose maybe it was the Druid grade, I felt the least comfortable with that as I got older. I don't know that kind of sensing all of those are woven in my life and always have been to one degree or another. And I like that idea of a plait because, well, I like threes all good Druids do,

I like that three thing. But also that it's the never ending journey. It's that never ending knot, isn't it? It's that idea that you, and I think I remember you saying that you got through the grades and then you went back and you did the bardic grade or you reinitiated in the Bardic grade what you really felt. And I think that's sense of that journey where they're all interwoven and there's no beginning and no end. We might start with the bardic grade, but it isn't really the starting point, is it? No. And there is no starting point or finishing point. So a braid seemed to be a good way of explaining that.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, it's a lovely way. I've always said it's like the bard is a foundation and the ovate is built on that, and then the druid built on that. But of course, the ovate never stops being a bard, and the druid never stops being an ovate or a bard. And actually if you stay a bard, it doesn't mean that in a way, I think sometimes the word grade doesn't do it any favours. To me, they've always felt more like schools, different schools of teaching and different schools of thought. And one definitely builds on the other. But you don't go from grade one to grade two, a bit like you do in Wicca with the three grades in Wicca. And of course you second degree maybe you leave. It's somehow more important. Whereas in Druidry, ovate is not more important than Bard. It's just different. And you don't leave the thing behind. And it's not a hierarchical structure as well. So the weave thing, it kind of like you start with the blue and then you weave in to the blue, the green, and you weave into the blue and the green, the white, and then that continues to weave. And that is you all three. If that's where you go, you may stay and keep the

blue, the blue thread. And that's absolutely fine. And I just thought that was a beautiful image and way of explaining it. So hurrah for you. That was fantastic.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Thank

Damh the Bard:

You. And you go into the Wheel of the year in the book as well. We've touched quite a lot on the wheel of the year. Do you have a favourite festival?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Well, as I said, it used to be Samhain, but I mean a lot of my Wheel of the year work is very closely linked to my Deity work. So I tend to have deities I work with through the wheel, but I also do it, I do that monthly through the moon. So the deities that I might work with or I might associate with, I dunno, a waxing crescent moon. I also associate with like Imbolc So I tend to work with my deities through each phase of the moon corresponding to each festival. I kind of like that. So I would've my waiting moon connection to carry with my dark moon connection to the Caileach and so on. So I've completely forgotten the question you asked

Damh the Bard:

Me. Well, I'll tell you what, I'd like to dig deeper on that actually, because what I haven't asked you is you've mentioned a relationship with deity, but I haven't asked whether or that's duotheistic, polytheistic, pantheistic, animistic. And it's obviously so important to you. So what is your personal relationship with deity?

Maria Ede-Weaving:

I think it's very fluid. I think when I first got into wicca, I was kind of exploring Goddess and God, and I would explore them different aspects through the seasons. Now I think I've, well, it's interesting. I kind of had an email from someone who writing in about asking about how to work with the ancestors. And I was talking to this person saying, I did an ancestry where you spit in a pot and send off your

Damh the Bard:

DNA. Oh, yeah,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

I got the results back from that. And I had a little experiment with working with deities from my own heritage, from the results, which was kind of fascinating because I thought it would be nice because up until then, I've worked with all sorts of deities. I've worked with Egyptian deities, really drawn to Egyptian deities I think from very early on so that they've always kind of got placed in my heart. But what I found with deity that you get to certain points in your life and a deity would almost like step forward. I can't explain it. Those moments where, I mean I've been very attached to certain deities, but they feel like they've backed off and someone else has stepped forward. And I tend to think that deities come into your life when you need to learn something that they represent or they symbolise or their quality symbolise.

So again, I've learned to trust the process. But I think with the Wheel of the Year thing, I got very, I used to go to the Goddess Conference in Glastonbury, so I was quite influenced by the Goddess Temple and their kind of Wheel of the Year, Kathy Jones' Wheel of the Year and her goddesses. So I liked exploring those, but I like having the divine masculine in the mix for me. I know not everybody does, but I do because I feel like I've had really positive relationships with Gods particular gods. But going back to your question about the favourite festival, because it was Samhain, so I was very drawn to those dark goddesses, so goddesses that would, I was a little bit scared of. I think that would challenge me. I think maybe I was very hooked on the, almost like that Cerridwen in the chase where you are being required to transform in some way and change.

And I think because I was a little bit scared of that, I knew I kind of had to delve deeper into that. I always think about Kali. I went through a period of time, I really wanted to explore Kali and as Kali devoties so you have to stare into a frightening face to see the compassion. It's like if you have the courage to really look at her, you'll start to see this deeper meaning in those scary transformative times that you go through that underneath it. There's a deep compassion. And so working with that clarity of the crone, always think there's an element of Cerridwen that kind of sees through everybody's bullshit, this is the way you are self-sabotaging yourself. This is the way you are getting in the way of yourself opening up or expanding or growing and learning. So I became really attached to form of deity.

And a lot of the data I work with were like that. But something's happened to me. Like I said, the inner Goth has gone on holiday and I have this real thing at the moment about the Norse God Frey. I mean, he's been there at some points in my life, but it was almost like something in when he was saying, you really need to move forward into another season. And it's like opening peace and blessings and all those beautiful things that he kind of represents. Because what the wheel teaches us is that there's light and dark, and so there's light and dark and our deities, and it's having that balance. It's really experiencing all of them and what they have to teach you. I have a certain amount, I have a selection of deities, which I honour daily. I have my little shrine time in the morning. I honour all of those. But I do find that certain ones will step forward more at certain points. And you just feel, don't you intuitively, when you, I dunno, do you?

Damh the Bard:

I do. I've had a few times like that in the past. And of course for me, Druidry, my path has been very much linked to deities from the Mabinogi and from Wales. But then every now and again, someone will come knocking on my door, I'll have a dream or I will be playing my bouzouki. And some strange melody comes out. And of course it came out, their ISIS just came and said, write me a song. And I said, I don't know who you are. I've never met you properly before. She said, well get to know me and write me my song. And so I thought, oh, well, okay, I will. So Cerri actually was off to a PF conference and I said, bring me back an ISIS figure that I can put on my altar. And there she sat ISIS next to Ceridwwen. And I know that there are people who say that you shouldn't mix pantheons.

And I've read a lot about that because it's one of those things that has to fit in a box. And we said spirituality doesn't neatly fit in boxes, does it? And if ISIS turns up and am I really going to say to isis, I'm sorry, I can't talk to you because I'm Druid who works with Welsh deities. I mean, I can't do that. I've got to explore what she wanted and talk to her and develop a relationship with her and the moon and ISIS veiled and ISIS unveiled. And the whole story just took me over for a little while and ended up in the song ISIS unveiled that I wrote in honour of that journey. And so yes, I have had like you, I've had a certain couple of ravens knocking on my door regularly all this year sent by a certain deity who is definitely not Welsh Hugin and Munin, have been doing their thing for the me and also Freya. And

Maria Ede-Weaving:

He knows that hangman experience very well. Yeah,

Damh the Bard:

Exactly. Exactly. And there have been this year Anglo-Saxon or Norse deities knocking on my door asking, and that happened again. We've got a little long barrow close here called thunders barrow. And the same thing happened there. I took my bouzouki up there, laid on the hill, and I got Thor thunders, Barrow Hill, Thor. I'm in the land of the South Saxons. He says, tell a story of me and my dad in song. And again, I'm not going to say, oh, I'm dreadfully, sorry, Thor. But I work when it comes to thunder, I work with Taranis only off you go. I'm not going to do that because that to me is putting things back in boxes that don't necessarily fit the logic side of spirituality. So yes, it's definitely happens to me as well. Definitely.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

You have to trust that call, don't you? I mean, that's what I feel. Again, that's what I was saying with you're trusting this mystery that you are that little candle and then they are all this, they're in in that place of, I call it other world called it subconscious, whatever. It's subconscious whatever it is, trusting that process. And if you do that over a long period of time, you realise it is a good thing to trust that process learned so much. I mean, I had a similar thing with ISIS after my dad died again, there had been other Egyptian goddesses that I felt much more drawn to in the past, and suddenly I really, really felt her presence and in a way that really helped me post my dad's death when I was really, really struggling. And so why would you ignore that? It's something that has that greater awareness than you and you in that moment. You need to trust that

Damh the Bard:

You open up to it and find out what's going on. Yeah, exactly. Yeah,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Absolutely.

Damh the Bard:

And it's very, very obod as well. I mean, OBOD as a druid order is a kind of universalist thing approach. It takes aspects of inspiration from many different sources. And for some of my time with OBOD and working with the course, I found that extremely frustrating because actually sometimes you just want somebody to say, this is how you do it. Off you go do it. And at no point during the course does it do that. At no point during obod have I ever heard anyone say that it's never been. And sometimes that's what I think people want. And so they look for a more distinct path that's held within a tradition maybe. But over the years now, I can see the absolute beauty and poetry in allowing openness part of the path to develop within the individual druid of the audience.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Well, I guess as well, it's like, I guess as well, I always found with obo, it's like making peace with uncertainty. I think sometimes certainty, I'm always very distrusting people who are super certain about things. I'm always little bit scared about people who are that certain. I've always felt, well, I know why people are like that. I think there's a sense of safety, and I think particularly in the world, that can be



very, very frightening and scary and confusing. Sometimes having a system that's just certain, I want you to feel safe. But I think in the long run, it doesn't make you feel safe because I think that fear remains. And I think you have to trust. You have to trust in uncertainty. I used to say, when I live on the Isle of Wight, it was it a landscape that the whole of the island, certainly south side of the island, the rock was on top of.

It was blue clay. They used to call it the blue slipper. And of course the weight on top of that, quite often the land would just slip off into the sea. So you'd be walking along in something that seems sort of certain, suddenly looking back at a massive great chunk of the land would just fall off and collapse into the sea. And in being in that landscape and living in that landscape, it helped me to trust in uncertainty that it was okay that things will change and they will shift. I'm not totally resolved with that because sometimes I do get really scared of change and it is a frightening process. But it did teach me just to keep trusting in that process, keep trusting in that movement and that change, and it's okay not to know everything. Okay. Not to have a perfect system, even though my Gemini heart really wants one. It's okay. It's okay to keep shifting and moving and good things come from that.

Damh the Bard:

Embrace uncertainty. Well, that's a good place I think to maybe end. I've been talking to you for an hour on my word, but it's been fascinating,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Been fantastic. Oh, it's

Damh the Bard:

Brilliant. Your book is available on all of the bookstores, but it's also available from the OBOD bookstore at druidry.org. Any more books on the horizon or is that,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

No one's asked me yet, but I've got some little things that I'm cooking in the pot my head, some things I'd like to write about. So yeah. Yeah, hopefully watch the space.

Damh the Bard:

Well, thank you for talking, me talking to me. And also Maria, thank you for everything you do for the order because Oh no, absolutely. There are people who are at the front where everybody sees, and I know how much you do. And so on behalf of me and everyone in the order, you are very much appreciated. So thank you.

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Oh, bless you, Dave. Thank you. I really appreciate that. Thank you.

Damh the Bard:

Yeah, I'll see you along the road. Yes,

Maria Ede-Weaving:

Will do. Thank you.

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