

The British Druid Order (BDO)

Constitution

Definition

- 1) The British Druid Order (BDO) is a not-for-profit unincorporated association, founded in 1979 as a religious and educational organisation.

Location

- 2) The BDO has two offices: British Druid Order, PO Box 1217, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 4DL, UK; and BDO Midlands, PO Box 6733, Bridgnorth, Shropshire WV16 9BW, UK.

Aims and Objects

- 3) The aims and objects of the British Druid Order (BDO) are as follows:
 - a) To advance the principles of Druidry for the benefit of the public in accordance with the following doctrines:
 - i) Animism, i.e. the belief that all things are imbued with spirit. This fundamental belief encourages us to be aware of the true, spiritual nature of all things, animate and inanimate. This awareness encourages us to treat all beings and all things with respect and lies at the heart of the 'green' spiritual environmentalism that is so much a part of modern Druidry. Animism is also found in Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and other traditions.
 - ii) Polytheism, i.e. the belief that there are many gods and goddesses, all of whom are worthy of respect and reverence. Among other things, belief in a multiplicity of deities fosters tolerance, allowing us to see other faiths as valid paths to spiritual growth. With this in mind, we encourage understanding of and peaceful dialogue with members of other faith groups. While we see the ultimate goal of all spiritual paths as being oneness with the universe, we do not see that oneness as a single, male father god or female great goddess. Universal unity is beyond any such limited human conception. Polytheism is also found in Hinduism and other traditions.
 - iii) Respect for our Ancestors. We recognise ancestors of spirit as well as those of our direct bloodline. Ancestors of spirit are those who have walked similar spiritual paths before us and with whom we therefore feel close affinity. Our respect for our ancestors stems from the fact that so much of who we are is derived from them, both physically and spiritually. We may also find teachers and guides among our ancestors. Respect for our ancestors is found in Hinduism, Shinto and other traditions.
 - iv) Paganism in its original sense, which is simply that of a spirituality that honours the spirits of the place in which we live. Honouring the spirits of our own locale naturally leads us to honour those of other lands we may travel to. In honouring the spirits of place, we are also honouring the inhabitants of that place, both the living and their ancestors in spirit, both the human and the non-human. Paganism in this sense is found in Hinduism, Shinto and other traditions.
 - b) To provide opportunities for the celebration of the festivals of Druidry (see 9c below) through a network of Gorseddau and Groves; to provide celebrants for rites of passage such as blessings for the newborn, handfastings (i.e. weddings) and funerals; to provide information to members to encourage and enable the practice of Druidry individually or in a family setting.
 - c) To advance the education of the public in the subject of Druidry and related topics including the performing arts, storytelling, poetry, music, history and prehistory, genealogy, ecology, conservation, forest skills, plant lore, philosophy, divination, healing, &c.

Governance

- 4) The BDO is governed by founder, Philip Shallcrass (Greywolf), in association with a Circle of Elders who are appointed by invitation by the founder and approved by the existing members of the Circle of Elders. Any member of the BDO may be eligible to become a member of the Circle of

Elders. In practice, those who become members of the Circle of Elders will be those who have a proven record of service to the BDO and its aims and objects. Neither the founder nor the members of the Circle of Elders are paid employees of the BDO. The BDO may provide reasonable recompense to the founder or the members of the Circle of Elders for work undertaken on behalf of the BDO or for expenses incurred in carrying out such work.

- 5) The BDO founder and Circle of Elders may take decisions as to the policy and direction of the BDO in line with those set out in 3) above. They may also raise funds for the pursuance of the aims and objects of the BDO.
- 6) The number of members of the Circle of Elders is not fixed and is liable to vary from time to time, though it is expected to be usually between four and twelve individuals. Membership of the Circle of Elders will last as long as an individual continues to support the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above and so long as an individual is willing to serve as a member of the Circle of Elders and as long as the other members of the Circle of Elders agree to the individual's continued membership. An individual may be asked to step down as a member of the Circle of Elders if they are deemed to have acted in such a way as to bring Druidry in general or the BDO in particular into disrepute or to have gone against the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above.
- 7) Meetings of the Circle of Elders may be called whenever deemed appropriate by the founder or the Circle of Elders. If they are deemed to be formal meetings, a 'chair' should be elected at the start of each meeting along with someone to take notes of the meeting, these to be circulated later to all members of the Circle of Elders. At the discretion of the founder and the Circle of Elders, such minutes may also be made available to the wider membership of the BDO. For a vote to take place, there must be at least four members of the Circle of Elders present or the founder and three members of the Circle of Elders. Votes so taken may subsequently be queried, blocked or overturned by a majority vote of all the members of the Circle of Elders including those not present at the original meeting. Arrangements for such a vote should be made within three months of the date of the original meeting. Voting *in absentia* is allowed by post or electronic means. Where a vote is tied, those present may elect to give a casting vote to the chair of the meeting or to the founder, or may postpone the vote to be taken again at a later date.
- 8) The founder and Circle of Elders may, if they wish and at a time and place of their choosing, call an annual general meeting that all BDO members shall be entitled to attend and at which all members will be entitled to vote. Votes may be put to such meetings at the discretion of the Circle of Elders and decided by a simple majority vote on a show of hands. Voting *in absentia* is allowed by post or electronic means. Where a vote is tied, those present may elect to give a casting vote to the chair of the meeting or to the founder, or may postpone the vote to be taken again at a later date.

Membership

- 9) Membership of the BDO is open to all persons and institutions, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, age, gender or sexual orientation.

Membership may be obtained or granted in several ways as set out below:

a) Elective membership, i.e. anyone who wants to be a member may be a member. This is normally implemented via the BDO website at www.druidry.co.uk/joiningbdo.html where prospective members may send in an e-mail including as many or as few details about themselves as they wish. Their e-mail address is then added to a list of subscribers who are sent an irregular e-mail newsletter telling them of forthcoming events and keeping them up to date with other developments within the BDO or the wider world. There is no charge for this membership. It is not necessary to sign up for the e-mail newsletter in order to be a member although it is necessary to register interest in some way with the BDO.

b) Members of the BDO online Forum at <http://www.druidry.co.uk/forum/> or BDO Facebook pages <https://www.facebook.com/groups/343061264805/> and <https://www.facebook.com/pages/British-Druid-Order/328769958971> or other online BDO groups may also consider themselves elective members of the BDO. There is no charge for this membership.

c) Membership of a BDO-sponsored Gorsedd. Since 1993, the BDO has been responsible for founding Gorseddau (gatherings of bards) in the UK and elsewhere. These commonly offer a form of bardic initiation or dedication to the bardic path that is a part of Druidry. Anyone who has been a recipient of one of these rites of initiation or dedication is welcome to regard herself or himself as a member of the BDO. There is no charge for this membership, although members of some Gorseddau may be asked to make voluntary contributions to the costs of running a Gorsedd such as hiring of venues, &c. Gorseddau are usually open to members of any faith or none and will normally hold open public ritual celebrations of some or all of the eight annual festivals of modern Druidry. These festivals are: Midwinter (also known as Alban Arthan), celebrated on or near December 24th; Candlemas (a.k.a. Gwyl Fair), celebrated on or near February 2nd; Spring Equinox (a.k.a. Alban Eilir), celebrated on or near March 21st; May Day (a.k.a. Calan Mai), celebrated on or near May 1st; Midsummer's Day (a.k.a. Alban Hefin), celebrated on or near June 24th; Lammas (a.k.a. Gwyl Awst), celebrated on or near August 1st; Autumn Equinox (a.k.a. Alban Elfed), celebrated on or near September 23rd; and Hallowe'en (Calan Gaeaf), celebrated on or near October 31st. Gorseddau will normally include opportunities for bards to perform in the traditional arts of music, poetry, storytelling, &c.

d) Membership of a BDO Grove. A Grove is a group of people who come together for the performance of ritual, the celebration of festivals, rites of passage, &c. The first Grove of the BDO was established in 1979 and others now exist in various parts of the UK and elsewhere. Membership of one of these Groves may also be taken to include membership of the BDO. There is no charge for this membership, although members of some Groves may be asked to make voluntary contributions to the costs of running a Grove such as hiring of venues, &c. BDO Groves hold meetings at times decided by the Grove members, often around the eight annual festivals outlined in c) above. Groves offer an opportunity to celebrate the rites and festivals of Druidry in small, coherent groups. They may also offer teaching, counselling and opportunities for social interaction.

e) All those taking our distance learning courses, delivered via the BDO website <http://druidry.co.uk/bdocourse.html>, may regard themselves as members of the BDO. The courses cover the three traditional areas of study and practice that comprise modern Druidry, those of the bard, ovate and Druid. Each of these is covered by a separate course. For each course there is a fee fixed at a rate that amounts to a small sum per week that most people should find no difficulty affording. Fees may be waived or reduced in cases of genuine hardship. The fees reflect the amount of work that has gone into producing the courses and the work involved in administering them, including tutorial support. It is also hoped that the courses will produce revenue that may be used to advance the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above.

f) Honorary membership of the BDO may be conferred on any person deemed to have contributed significantly to the BDO or to the advancement of its aims and objects as set out in 3) above or of Druidry in general, including the bardic or ovate traditions. Such honorary memberships may be conferred by agreement of the founder and the Circle of Elders.

g) Institutions may be recognised as members or affiliates of the BDO so long as their aims and objects are consistent with those of the BDO as set out in 3) above.

h) Any member has a right to attend an annual general meeting should such be called by the founder and Circle of Elders and has the right to vote at such a meeting.

i) Members may exercise their rights of membership only in furtherance of the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above and not for any private interest.

j) Membership of the BDO may be terminated at any time by the founder or the Circle of Elders where it is deemed that a member has behaved in such a way as to bring the BDO or Druidry into disrepute or in a way that conflicts with the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above. Such termination may be subject to appeal by the individual member or another on their behalf. Such an appeal will be put to a quorum of the Circle of Elders whose ruling shall be deemed final.

Accounts

10) As an unincorporated association, there is no requirement under UK law for the BDO to maintain

or produce accounts, since individual members take responsibility for their own actions including their own tax liability. If at some future date the BDO should be required by law to do so, accounts will be kept, audited annually and made available to all appropriate authorities by the founder or someone appointed by him.

Bank accounts

- 11) A bank account in the name of the BDO is held with the founder being the sole signatory. The founder may, at his discretion, appoint one or more other persons as additional signatories or as co-signatories.

The Nemetona Trust

- 12) Should sufficient funds become available, the BDO has the intention of purchasing areas of land on which to plant trees for the creation of sacred groves, to erect stone circles as foci for rituals, to establish Druid and Pagan burial grounds, &c. Such purchase and holding of lands will be carried out by a separate trust to be established by the BDO and called, subject to approval by the Circle of Elders, the Nemetona Trust.

Donations and Bequests

- 13) Donations and bequests to the BDO must be used solely for the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in this constitution.

Investments

- 14) Should funds need to be invested for and on behalf of the BDO such investments will, so far as is possible, be of an ethical nature in line with the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above. Such investments will rule out any investment in the arms trade, tobacco or agrochemical businesses. Investments will need to be low risk and, so far as is possible, should not rely on the fluctuations of stocks and shares or international currency markets.

Alterations to the Constitution

- 15) The founder and Circle of Elders retain the right to alter this constitution at any time as they see fit. Such alterations will be put to the members for approval so far as is possible and practical although such changes may be made by the founder and three members of the Circle of Elders where this is deemed necessary.

Dissolution

- 16) Should it become necessary to dissolve the BDO at any time or for any reason, the decision to dissolve the BDO should be taken by the founder in consultation with the Circle of Elders, or by the Circle of Elders alone should the founder be incapacitated or deceased. Any monies remaining in the BDO account at the time of its dissolution should be used by the Circle of Elders for the aims and objects of the BDO as set out in 3) above or donated to groups or institutions whose aims and objects are deemed compatible with those of the BDO as set out in 3) above.

May the blessings of the awen's flow, of our ancestors of blood and spirit, of the spirits of our lands, of the three worlds, and of the old gods of our people be with us in all we do. So may it be.

Signatures

Signature ... Name ... Address ... Date