



Star Lore for Alban Arthuan

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The Winter Solstice is a time of deep silence, a moment of profound stillness which we feel inside when we look up at the winter sky and see the North Star, and the Big and Little Bears circling around that still point of light, Polaris.

Arthur means bear (Art) and so this time of great importance in the Druid calendar is called Alban Arthuan (the light of Arthur). The time of Arthur may have been when the pole star shifted from the constellation Draco, the Dragon (his father was Uther Pendragon) to Polaris, the North Star, a prominent star in the constellation Ursa Minor. And thus Arthur, who is the root of Britain's ancestral mythology is associated with this time of dark night, when the bear enters her cave for the winter sleep, and only a drop of light remains to grow in the coming days of cold and darkness.

Like Arthur who was thrust into obscure fosterage at birth, the return of the Sun to the Northern hemisphere takes time to be felt and appreciated. So too is the seed of all new possibility often kept in dark wraps until it has time to develop and grow in night's protection.

Looking up at the sky on the night of the Winter Solstice we can imagine a ray of light shining down upon our frozen earth bringing new possibilities, a birth, a new child, a bear cub growing in her mother's womb in the darkness of the cave, soon to enter the world with unknown potential. This place in the wheel of the year has much in common with the moment of the New Moon, just as the Summer Solstice might be seen as the Full Moon of the year for those living in the Northern Hemisphere.

Astrologically, the solstice occurs when the Sun enters the sign of Capricorn. This sign is associated with the element Earth, with the Ancestors, with the magic of manifestation.

Capricorn energy in your chart tells where you can best combine your physical power of the bear's strength with sensitivity to the messages from ancient sources and intuition. Like Arthur,

Capricorn is both strong as a warrior chieftain must be, but also open to new ways of relating to others as in the stories of the Round Table and the triangle of the King, Guenevere and Lancelot. Arthur was taught by Merlin and the Faery women, yet was a powerful military force who had to fight his way to the throne and then protect his kingdom from Saxon invaders.

The mistletoe is sacred to the season and celebration. *Viscum album*, European Mistletoe was harvested from oak trees with a golden sickle on the sixth day of the new moon closest to the Winter Solstice. At that point, the young crescent moon in the sky appears as a sickle. It was gathered with great ceremony, the plant never touching the earth, but gathered in a linen cloth. The Mistletoe growing on the Oak is a symbol of the Moon—mistletoe berries resemble the full Moon—combined with the solar Oak, the marriage of the Sun and Moon, the event which is the New Moon. Mistletoe is also associated with sperm and with fertility, and used in the solstice ceremony it becomes fertilization of earth by sky. This year the day of gathering will be December 2<sup>nd</sup>, and while mistletoe will not be gathered by New England Druids, we can still stop to feel the earth and the sky come together in our hearts.

This year at the moment of the Winter Solstice, the Sun will be traveling with Pluto (Hades), Lord of the Underworld. And so the Solstice, Alban Arthuan (the light of Arthur) will be ushered in with the star of light and the planet of darkness, both in the same degree, 0° Capricorn. Each year the Sun and Pluto meet for a day, but this year they meet at the moment of the Winter Solstice a symbol of large and small cycles at a seed point. Feel the stillness of the season as you walk beneath 'the starry bear of the heavens.'