

## **Druid Ceremony to celebrate Newbury Bypass trees**

Druids of Britain are to hold a ceremony to celebrate the trees on the route of the Newbury bypass. The ceremony, on Sunday 4th February at 12.00 am, will be part of the first Celtic Spring festival, known as Imbolc'. This coincides with the full moon on Sunday night.

Druids hold the land sacred, and honour the trees as symbols of the beauty and strength of creation. On Sunday, they will congregate around an enormous middle oak' tree towards the Northern end of the bypass.

The celebration is designed to highlight the spiritual element to the protection of land, and confirm that land is held sacred.

The druids will meet at the junction of the A4 and the B4000, about 1 mile West of Newbury town. Everyone is welcome to attend, including children,irrespective of their religious beliefs. The ceremony will last about 20 mins and will involve some chanting.

## Stonehenge protester King Arthur Pendragon defies eviction



King Arthur Pendragon at Stonehenge. Photograph: Barry Batchelor/PA

The druid protester King Arthur Pendragon defied a court order to leave Stonehenge this afternoon, vowing to continue his protest until the site is open to all. Pendragon, formerly known as John Rothwell, set up camp on the edge of the site in June 2008 and faces eviction by Wiltshire council, which says he is blocking the public highway.

The 55-year-old, who changed his name by deed poll 33 years ago, wants visitors to be able to walk around and touch the stones rather than remain in a visitor centre and be confined to marked-out trails. He is also calling for promised improvements to the monument to be carried out.

On Monday last week, the council was granted an eviction order by Salisbury county court to remove Pendragon from byway 12, which is known locally as the Netheravon coach road. Pendragon's camp on the byway sits alongside Stonehenge between the A303 and A344 and includes a caravan. The protester, who hopes to run as an independent parliamentary candidate, pickets staff and tourists daily.

Shortly after the deadline expired today, he said he had no intention to leave. "We have opened a bottle of mead and we are drinking to Stonehenge. I have done a short ritual and spell of protection, calling on the kings of old.

"I am still here so I am in breach of the order as they see it but I have as much right as anyone else to be here. I am not blocking the byway; other tourists park along there. I am not going to go, I am battening down the hatches and continuing my lawful right to protest and my equal right to religious practice."

Pendragon started protesting with consent from the Council of British Druid Orders after last year's summer solstice. The government scrapped plans to remove fences around Stonehenge, build an underpass and grass over the A344 in 2007.

## Druids protest over land marked for homes

A pagan group is planning a ceremony to protest against thousands of homes the government wants to build in our region. Members of the Insular Order of Druids want to hold a ceremony to bless the land in Funtley, north of Fareham, to bring together the different groups which are opposing the plans.

They are planning to hold a ceremony on the land to mark Imbolc, the festival marking the first day of spring, on February 2.

Arch Druidess Debbie King, a leading figure in the Portsmouth-based order, wants to carry out the ritual to highlight opposition to proposals for 10,000 homes on the land.

Mrs King said: 'It's all about nature and worshipping your ancestors. It's about the wildlife. By building these homes we are going to harm ourselves.

'The trees are our lungs. We need to look into why they need to build the houses there.

'We want to go there and bless the ground, to honour it, and if it comes down to it, say goodbye to it. In that respect it's not a protest, but at least we would have been able to say our goodbyes.'

The pagans want to involve as many people as possible.

'We will try and make it multi-faith – this affects everyone, so we want to include everyone,' she added.

And the pagans have joined forces with campaign group South Hampshire's Unheard Voices (Shuv), an alliance of community groups in South Hampshire, in its plans to scupper the bid.

