

THE MAGIC OF MISTLETOE

Growing mysteriously in the bark of other trees, mistletoe has long enjoyed a magical reputation connected with everything from ancient Druidic rites to stolen Christmas kisses. It helped Aeneas pass safely through the Underworld, was responsible for the death of Baldur, and has many medicinal properties. **STEVE MARSHALL** celebrates a remarkable plant.

Despite its innocuous appearance, magical mistletoe has a fearsome reputation. The sacred plant of the Druids has long been associated with terrifying midwinter rituals such as animal and even human sacrifice, the office Christmas party, and worse. Mistletoe, we are told, has been revered for thousands of years; its original use in lurid fertility rituals has been sanitised, surviving today in a much-diluted form, in the kissing tradition. But how much truth is there in these claims?

Worldwide, there are more than 1,500 species of mistletoe, all of them parasites. With no roots of their own, they depend on host trees for their water and nutrients. British mistletoe, *Viscum album*, is actually a 'hemi-parasite' since it can also produce sugars by photosynthesis. The Latin name describes the mistletoe's berries: *viscum* (sticky, viscous) *album* (white). The common name 'mistletoe' is believed to derive from the Anglo-Saxon words *mistel* (dung) and *tan* (twig), since the plant appears to propagate from seeds deposited on the host tree in bird droppings. Seeds are also distributed by birds eating the sticky mistletoe berries and wiping their beaks on tree bark. The mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) is so named because of its fondness for mistletoe berries.¹

Mistletoe is found all around Britain, growing most prolifically in the south-west midland counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire and around the Severn Estuary into Somerset. Mystical Glastonbury has an extraordinary concentration of mistletoe, much to the delight of its extraordinary concentration of Druids. Thriving in a warm, damp climate, the geographical distribution of mistletoe closely matches that of apple trees – its favourite host. Nearly 40 per cent of Britain's mistletoe may be found in orchards, readily



LEFT: Spheres of mistletoe growing on a lime tree. **FACING PAGE:** Gathering mistletoe on Christmas Eve in a Victorian illustration.

toe sold there is British and from fairly local sources, some is imported from France and elsewhere in Europe.

MISTLETOE MAGIC

It is easy to see why mistletoe was regarded as magical in days gone by. It has no roots, growing inexplicably from the bark of other trees; its berries ripen in the winter, when most other plants are dormant. In summer, when its host tree is in full leaf,

the mistletoe can seem almost invisible; when leaves fall in the autumn it makes a dramatic reappearance, its foliage shining a vibrant golden-yellow amongst the bare branches. Uniquely, mistletoe grows into a spherical shape, forming balls up to a metre in diameter that are especially conspicuous when silhouetted against a winter sky.

Several writers have declared that until quite recently mistletoe was not welcome in churches as a Christmas decoration. Robert Graves, writing in 1948,³ claimed that mistletoe was still specifically banned, though firm evidence of this remains elusive. Can this really be true? It seems rather unfair since holly and ivy, equally associated with pagan customs, are not only used as church decorations – they were given their own Christmas Carol!

Mistletoe may possibly have been frowned on by the Church for its pagan associations and perhaps for its sexual symbolism. The centuries-old 'Doctrine of Signatures' in herbalism survives even to this day: the qualities of plants, healing or otherwise, are thought to be inherent in their appearance. Hence, the spotted leaves of liverwort resemble the liver that the herb is used to treat. Mistletoe could likewise be seen to symbolise male sexuality (at least by someone looking for that sort of thing). Mistletoe's anthropomorphic sprigs bifur-

Mistletoe has no roots, growing inexplicably from the bark of trees

growing on cider, eating and cooking apples but, curiously, not generally on wild crab apples. Other popular host trees include lime, hawthorn, hybrid black poplar and willow. Despite the well-known Druidic connection, mistletoe is rarely found growing on oak trees: a nationwide survey in the late 1970s listed just 11 confirmed mistletoe-oaks in Britain.² Elsewhere in Europe, however, a separate parasitic species *Loranthus europaeus* grows readily on oaks; since it resembles British mistletoe, this may possibly account for the confusion.

Because mistletoe grows readily on apple trees, many orchard owners supplement their income at Christmas by cutting the plant from their trees and sending it to market. Most of the Christmas mistletoe sold in British shops traditionally originates from the annual auctions in Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire. Whilst most of the mistle-





ABOVE: A farmer harvests a crop of mistletoe from his apple trees in Tenbury Wells on the Worcestershire/Herefordshire border. BELOW: A man tries to kiss a shy young woman under a sprig of mistletoe, from *The Graphic Christmas Supplement*, 1887.

cate to form V-shaped pairs, like a pair of man's legs. Growing from the centre of the V are the white, sticky berries, which commonly grow in pairs and could be thought to resemble unfeasibly large testicles. This does not sit well with the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe, since a berry must be removed with each kiss. And what do larger clusters of berries symbolise? Unfeasibly large hæmorrhoids, perhaps?

Mistletoe's well-known importance to the Druids of ancient Britain and France was first noted some 2,000 years ago in *The Natural History*, the only surviving book written by Pliny the Elder. Pliny died in AD 79, in the great eruption of Vesuvius; intending to witness the unfolding disaster from close up, he set off in a boat headed for Pompeii and was never seen again. In chapter 95 of his book, *Historical Facts Connected with the Mistletoe*,³ Pliny wrote:

Upon this occasion we must not omit to mention the admiration that is lavished upon this plant by the Gauls. The Druids – for that is the name they give to their magicians – held nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the tree that bears it, supposing always that tree to be the robur (oak). Of itself the robur is selected by them to form whole groves, and they perform none of their religious rites without employing branches of it; so much so, that it is very probable that the priests themselves may have received their name from

“When found, it is gathered with rites replete with religious awe”



the Greek name for that tree. In fact, it is the notion with them that everything that grows on it has been sent immediately from heaven, and that the mistletoe upon it is a proof that the tree has been selected by God himself as an object of his especial favour.

The mistletoe, however, is but rarely found upon the robur; and when found, is gathered with rites replete with religious awe. This is done more particularly on the fifth day of the moon, the day which is the beginning of their months and years, as also of their ages, which, with them, are but 30 years. This day they select because the moon, though not yet in the middle of her course, has already considerable power and influence; and they call her by a name which signifies, in their language, the all-healing. Having made all due preparation for the sacrifice and a banquet beneath the trees, they bring thither two white bulls, the horns of which are bound then for the first time. Clad in a white robe the priest ascends the tree, and cuts the mistletoe with a golden sickle, which is received by others in a white cloak. They then immolate the victims, offering up their prayers that God will render this gift of his propitious to those to whom he has so granted it. It is the belief with them that the mistletoe, taken in drink, will impart fecundity to all animals that are barren, and that it is an antidote for all poisons. Such are the religious feelings which we find entertained towards trifling objects among nearly all nations.

Pliny is regarded as writing with “variable accuracy” and was not one to let facts get in the way of a good story. Nonetheless, he correctly stated that mistletoe rarely grows on the oak tree, and his account contains other fascinating details, such as the Druids’ reverence for the Moon’s cycles, which has a ring of truth. However, Pliny’s best-known claim, that mistletoe was cut with a “golden sickle”, seems rather less plausible. Mistletoe stems are tough, and gold is soft – it would be far more practical to use a sickle made of bronze, which might appear golden. Perhaps this tale is based on a true observation that has been garbled in the retelling...

There is scant archæological evidence of mistletoe in prehistoric Britain. ‘Lindow Man’ – a famously well preserved ‘bog body’ from the first century AD – was found in Cheshire in 1984 (see FT373:26-27). Apparently ritually murdered, the victim’s stomach was found to contain traces of mistletoe. Numerous press reports declared Lindow Man to be a ‘Druidic sacrifice’. But the mistletoe remains amounted to just four grains of pollen, which may have been deliberately ingested with mistletoe berries (perhaps taken as medicine) but could just as likely have been blown on the wind and swallowed accidentally.⁵

An Early Bronze Age barrow at Gristhorpe in North Yorkshire was excavated in 1834, revealing a rare and magnificently intact ‘tree trunk burial’. Within the hollowed out oak trunk was the skeleton of a man, wrapped in an animal skin and accompanied by grave goods that included food residue. Beneath the skeleton were several spherical objects that were lauded for more than a century as mistletoe berries. The remains, stored in a Scarborough museum, were re-examined in 2005 and carbon-dated to around 2000 BC. Sadly, the ‘mistletoe berries’ were found to be gallstones.⁶

MISTLETOE MYTHOLOGY

Sir James Frazer cited mistletoe as the ‘golden bough’ carried by the Trojan hero Aeneas, to ensure his safe passage to and from the Underworld. Frazer’s monumental work *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* was first published in 1890. The original two volumes were expanded upon, and by 1915 the third edition had grown to 12 volumes. Frazer’s central theme was the solar ‘dying god’ who was married to an Earth goddess and died each year at harvest, to be reborn in the spring. Frazer believed that the world’s oldest religions expanded on this notion, annually electing a king who represented the dying god and so was ritually killed after his year of service.

In Chapter 64: *The Burning of Human Beings in the Fires*,⁷ Frazer explored the mythology of mistletoe, noting that its medicinal use still continued in Europe, and that barren women in Italy would carry a piece of mistletoe to make them conceive. This same belief was held by the Japanese who, like Pliny’s Druids, valued mistletoe as a ‘cure-



PENRITH MUSEUM



CHRISTOPHER FURLONGS / GETTY IMAGES

TOP: A detail from *The Druids Collecting Mistletoe*, an 1832 painting by Cumbrian artist Jacob Thompson. ABOVE: A modern Druid blesses the year’s crop of mistletoe at the annual Tenbury Wells Market.

OH, THE MISTLETOE BOUGH!

It is perhaps surprising that mistletoe features in none of our traditional Christmas carols: is this evidence of the Church's disapproval of its pagan associations? However, a Gothic ballad entitled *The Mistletoe Bough* attained great popularity in mid-19th-century Britain and was a regular feature of Christmas celebrations for many years. The song tells a gruesome tale that was first published in 1822 as *Ginevra*, a poem by Samuel Rogers: in 1830 it reappeared as *The Mistletoe Bough* with music by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop and lyrics by TH Bayley, who also wrote *Home Sweet Home*.

Despite the song's title, mistletoe plays no part in the story, save to establish a Christmas setting. A light-hearted game of hide and seek leads to disaster when a young bride foolishly climbs into an old oak chest; once inside, she is unable to re-open the lid. The castle is searched in vain (not very well, it must be said, since no one thinks to look inside what was presumably a conspicuously large wooden box). Many years later the chest is finally opened, revealing a mouldering skeleton in a wedding dress.

The story is alleged to be based on fact, with several historic houses around England touted as the original location. Top of the list must be Minster Lovell Hall, near Witney in Oxfordshire (pictured at right). There, in 1487, Francis, the 1st Viscount Lovell, disappeared after a row with the Royal Family. Then, in 1708, workmen discovered a secret room, where the complete skeleton of a man (presumably Francis) sat at a table with a book and pen. "The entire contents of the room then turned to dust as they watched." It has been claimed that young brides were fatally interred in oak chests in Exton Hall, Rutland, Brockdish Hall, Norfolk, and in Marwell Hall and Bramwell House, both in Hampshire.

*The mistletoe hung in the castle hall;
The holly branch shone on the old oak wall.
The Baron's retainers were blithe and gay,
Keeping the Christmas holiday.*

*The Baron beheld with a father's pride
His beautiful child, Lord Lovell's bride.
And she, with her bright eyes seemed to be
The star of that goodly company.*

*Oh, the mistletoe bough!
Oh, the mistletoe bough.*

*"I'm weary of dancing, now," she cried;
"Here, tarry a moment, I'll hide, I'll hide,
And, Lovell, be sure you're the first to trace
The clue to my secret hiding place."*

Away she ran, and her friends began



*Each tower to search and each nook to scan.
And young Lovell cried, "Oh, where do you hide?
I'm lonesome without you, my own fair bride."*

*Oh, the mistletoe bough!
Oh, the mistletoe bough.*

*They sought her that night, they sought her next day,
They sought her in vain when a week passed away.
In the highest, the lowest, the loneliest spot,
Young Lovell sought wildly, but found her not.*

The years passed by and their brief at last

THE MISTLETOE BOUGH 79

T. H. Bayly Allegretto H. R. Bishop

1. The mis-tle-toe hung in the cas-tle hall, The hol-ly branch shone on the
2. "I'm wea-ry of dan-cing now," she cried, "Here tarry a mo-ment, I'll
old oak wall, And the Ba-ron's re-tain-ers were blithe and gay, And
hide, I'll hide, And Lo-vel, be sure you're the first to trace The
keep-ing their Christ-mas hol-i-day, The Ba-ron be-hold with a
clue to my se-cret hid-ing place? A way... she ran, and her

*Was told as a sorrowful tale long past.
When Lovell appeared, all the children cried,
"See the old man weeps for his fairy bride."*

*Oh, the mistletoe bough!
Oh, the mistletoe bough.*

*At length, an old chest that had long laid hid
Was found in the castle; they raised the lid.
A skeleton form lay mouldering there
In the bridal wreath of that lady fair.*

*How sad the day when in sportive jest
She hid from her lord in the old oak chest,
It closed with a spring and a dreadful doom
And the bride lay clasped in a living tomb.*

*Oh, the mistletoe bough!
Oh, the mistletoe bough.*



LEFT: Baldur's death, in an 18th century Icelandic manuscript. ABOVE: Aeneas and the Golden Bough.

CHRONICLE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

all. Their favoured mistletoe grew not on oak, but willow trees.

Across Scandinavia, the tradition of lighting huge Summer Solstice bonfires still persists; Frazer linked this to the ritual harvesting of mistletoe, proposing that humans were once burned to death in such fires. Frazer transposed mistletoe-gathering from midwinter to midsummer, arguing that the sacrificial victims represented the sacred oak, which must be cleared of its protective mistletoe before it could be burned. Frazer listed many examples of ritual oak fires across Europe, citing the customs of the ancient Celts, Slavs, Romans and others.

Residual evidence of midwinter fire rituals may still be found – notably in the widespread custom of burning an oak yule log at Christmas. Richard Mabey has gathered first-hand accounts of British fire rituals involving mistletoe. ⁸ 'Burning the Bush' persisted in Herefordshire, in various forms, until World War I. A globe was made by twisting mistletoe and hawthorn twigs. On New Year's morning it was burned on a straw fire in the first wheat field to be sown. Elsewhere in the county the globe was filled with burning straw and carried

Loki the trickster fashioned a spear from mistletoe and killed Baldur

by a runner over the first dozen furrows of the field. In another version two globes, one inside the other, were burned together. In most Herefordshire cottages, wrote Mabey, it was customary to cut a mistletoe bough on New Year's Eve and hang it as the clock struck midnight. The bough that had hung throughout the previous year was then taken down and burned.

MISTLETOE MURDER

In Norse mythology the god Baldur the Beautiful (also spelled Balder, Baldr) was the son of Odin and Frigg, goddess of knowledge and clairvoyance. Baldur had many brothers, including Thor and the villainous

Loki, who resented Baldur for his good looks and for being his mother's favourite. Baldur began to have prophetic dreams of his own death; when Frigg had the same dreams, she hatched a plan to save Baldur. Frigg persuaded every object on Earth to solemnly vow that they would never harm her son. But, for various reasons, the humble mistletoe was not included, so it alone made no vow. Loki discovered this and sought out Baldur: he was with the other gods, who were amusing themselves by throwing rocks and other objects at Baldur, in order to see them bounce off harmlessly. Loki the trickster then fashioned an arrow (or spear) from mistletoe wood and either killed Baldur himself or tricked another brother, the blind god Hodur, into killing Baldur. Robert Graves noted that in the Norwegian version of the story, Baldur was fatally injured by a shot to his heel – the traditional weak spot of heroes. Graves also related that he had personally sharpened a staff of mature mistletoe wood in France and found it to be unexpectedly hard and strong.

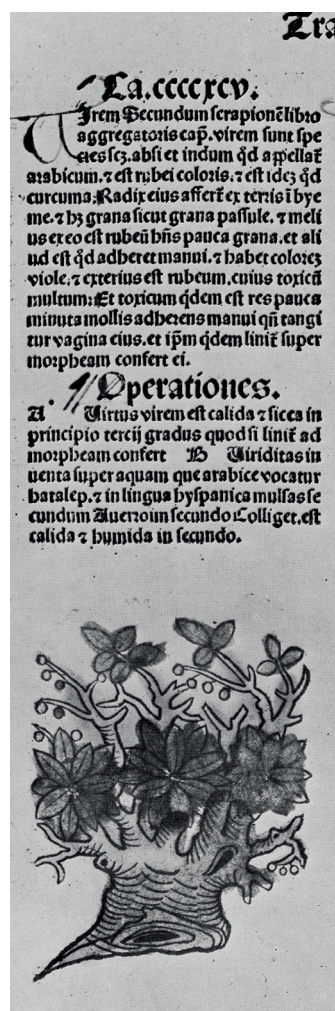
Baldur's story varies in the different Norse sagas, but always ends with his death and immolation on a great funeral pyre. In Victorian Britain, the tale was extended to add credence to the new 'tradition' of kissing beneath the mistletoe. Baldur's mother Frigg was recast as the 'Norse goddess of love'. On discovering that her son was dead, her tears turned into mistletoe berries; she then declared that henceforth mistletoe should be a symbol of love and thus initiated the kissing tradition. Exactly when the kissing tradition was invented is not certain, though some time in the 1830s is likely. A popular export, the custom was adopted by many other countries, notably the USA.

MISTLETOE MEDICINE

The medicinal uses of European mistletoe (*Viscum album*) are probably as old as the legends and magical beliefs that surround this fascinating plant. Mistletoe is a shrub found attached to the branches of broad-leaved trees, particularly apple, lime, poplar and hawthorn. It is hemi-parasitic: that is, it derives some of its nutrition from the host tree, but also uses photosynthesis to produce its own. Mistletoe distributes its seeds largely through the agency of birds and mammals. The berries are covered in a sticky substance which can survive an animal's digestive tract. When the bird or animal defecates onto a branch, the seed sticks to the tree's limb and germinates, drilling down through the wood to reach the host's nutritional system.

Historically, mistletoe was used predominantly in the treatment of nervous disorders, especially for the so-called 'falling sickness' (epilepsy) and 'St Vitus' Dance' (nowadays called Sydenham's chorea). In more recent times, its uses have also extended to the treatment of cardiovascular conditions, and as an anti-cancer remedy. Additionally, mistletoe has immune-system stimulating properties.

All these uses have been supported by modern scientific research. In the case of the cardiovascular system, mistletoe acts as a cardiac depressant, reducing raised blood pressure: interestingly, the best hypotensive activity has been noted from mistletoe collected from the willow tree, a plant that contains natural anti-inflammatory and blood-thinning properties (aspirin, technically salicylic acid, derives both its name and its chemistry from the willow: Latin name *Salix*). Mistletoe can also serve to reduce an over-rapid heart rate (tachycardia) and strengthen the walls of the small blood



ABOVE: A woman carries a branch of mistletoe through the snow. On the reverse of the card are directions for taking Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. LEFT: The oldest printed description and picture of mistletoe, from *Hortus Sanitatis* ("The Garden of Health"), 1491, which describes species in the natural world along with their medicinal uses and modes of preparation.

Loki the trickster fashioned a spear from mistletoe and killed Baldur

vessels (capillaries). It is interesting to note that herbalists treating high blood pressure often combine mistletoe with hawthorn berries and lime blossom, two trees that are among its most frequent hosts.

The plants neurological activity is largely due to its relaxant properties, possibly by a direct action on the vagus nerve. Again, modern research has supported this traditional use, with for example one report of six cases of infantile

spasms, one nine-year-old child, and two adult patients with epilepsy, all of whom became seizure free on treatment with mistletoe. The plant is also a useful remedy for less serious neurological complaints, such as neurasthenia or generalised nervous debility.

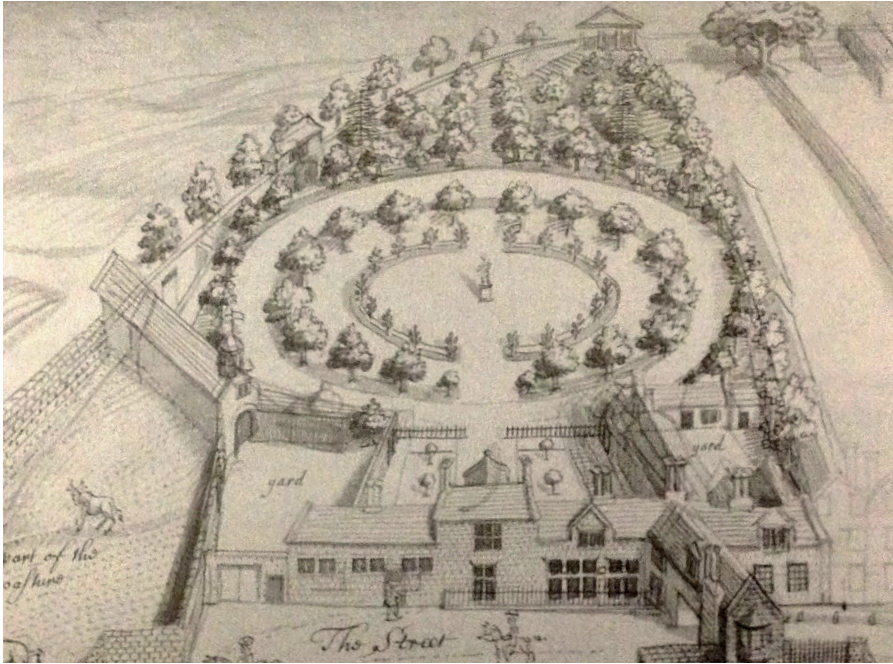
As an anti-carcinogen, mistletoe has attracted a lot of attention. It is used extensively (particularly in Germany) in injectable form, especially for cancers of the breast, colon, cervix, rectum and stomach, and research has shown that the action of constituents in the plant support and enhance the body's own defences against tumours (the so-called "Natural Killer" cells).

It should be noted that it

is the leaves of the plant that are used in herbal medicine, as the berries are toxic (in the UK, preparations of mistletoe berries can only be sold in premises which are registered pharmacies and by or under the supervision of a pharmacist). Equally, incorrect dosage of mistletoe leaves can be toxic.

This fact, along with the complexity and seriousness of the conditions treated, means that mistletoe is emphatically not suitable for self-medication, and a qualified medical herbalist should be consulted before use. Mistletoe is unsuitable for use during pregnancy and breast-feeding.

Ned Reiter BA Dip Phyt FNMH, Registered Medical Herbalist



ABOVE LEFT: Stukeley's drawing of his garden at Barn Hill, Stamford, 1743. ABOVE RIGHT: Propagating mistletoe by squashing the berry into the bark of the host tree.

STUKELEY'S DRUIDIC GARDEN

William Stukeley (1687-1765) was an enthusiastic antiquarian, known for his detailed recording of Britain's prehistoric monuments. As an early Freemason and neo-Druid, Stukeley did much to popularise the use and propagation of mistletoe. He proudly wrote that mistletoe had been carried to the high altar of York Minster at Christmas, casting further doubt on its alleged banning by the Church. Dr Stukeley first practised as a physician, then changed career to become a Church of England cleric. Oddly, his ordination, and his simultaneous promotion of Druidism, were encouraged by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The ancient Druids, Stukeley claimed, practised 'Patriarchal Christianity' – a monotheistic religion that recognised the Holy Trinity and was entirely in accord with the views of the Church of England.⁹ His writings on Avebury and Stonehenge contain numerous references to the Bible, and to ancient Egypt, that seem incongruous today but were highly relevant at the time.

Stukeley's repeated claim that the number three had held special importance for the Druids, and for the Egyptians before them, was not just a personal obsession: in the early 1700s it was central to a bitter religious debate. Stukeley was a Protestant, and in common with Catholics he supported Trinitarianism – the orthodox belief that Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed as three equal aspects of the same one God. Antitrinitarianists believed, reasonably enough, that this amounted to polytheism and was therefore heretical. Stukeley attempted to bolster the Church's position by using his antiquarian research and knowledge to prove that Trinitarianism had an ancient lineage. The Druids who built Avebury and Stonehenge, he declared, were Trinitarianists even before the Roman

invasion of Britain. Stukeley's claims were not widely accepted but he was rewarded with promotion in the Church.

In his books, Stukeley proudly announced himself as a practising Druid, adopting the Druidic name *Chyndonax*. As his passion for Druidry grew, he gave it physical expression through gardening. First, in Grantham, Lincolnshire, he made a Druidic garden with a circular orchard, chapel and Roman altar. Around "an ancient apple tree overgrown with sacred mistletoe" a "temple of the Druids" was constructed, using pyramidal topiary instead of standing stones.

In 1730, Stukeley became a vicar and moved to Stamford, Lincolnshire, where he built a considerably larger Druidic garden, 'The Hermitage', covering half an acre. This new effort featured a rustic 'Merlin's Cave' inspired by the grottos that were then becoming fashionable. The garden was stocked with antique masonry gathered from demolished local buildings. Then, in 1741, Stukeley bought another house in Stamford with two acres of grounds, demolishing several buildings on the site to make way for his increasingly ambitious garden schemes. Part of the new garden became a bowling green; the rest became a bucolic Druid's paradise. As Stukeley described it: "All the rest of the ground I threw into a wild forestiere form, full of walks, trees, fruit, flowers, shrubs of all kinds, annual & evergreen, the whole blended together & intermixed without regularity."

No Druidic garden would be complete without the sacred mistletoe and Stukeley enjoyed considerable success in propagating it "on several kinds of trees". He invented a method that he termed 'inoculation' – now known as bud-grafting. He also used the simpler method, common today, of simply squishing a mistletoe berry into the bark

of a host tree. Growing mistletoe from seed in this way is usually successful but cannot be hurried: it takes around three years for the plant to become visible. The best hosts are apple, lime and willow, but mistletoe will also grow on garden shrubs such as cotoneaster.

If readers in the UK are tempted to grow their own mistletoe, please try to use locally sourced berries rather than imports. Mistletoe expert Jonathan Briggs sells 'growing kits' as well as other mistletoe merchandise, and detailed instructions for propagation may be found on his website.¹⁰

NOTES

- 1 Jonathan Briggs, *A Little Book About Mistletoe*, Potamogeton Press, 2010.
- 2 <http://archive.bsbi.org.uk/Wats23p237.pdf>
- 3 Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, Faber and Faber, 4th edition, 1961.
- 4 Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, Taylor and Francis, 1855.
- 5 Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*, Yale University Press, 2009.
- 6 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jrs.2593>
- 7 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Golden_Bough/Balder_and_the_Mistletoe
- 8 Richard Mabey, *Flora Britannica*, Chatto and Windus, 1996.
- 9 David Boyd Haycock, *William Stukeley: Science, Religion and Archaeology in Eighteenth-Century England*, Boydell Press, 2002. See also Steve Marshall's essay on Stukeley: <https://tinyurl.com/ybqxptn9>
- 10 <http://mistletoe.org.uk/home/wp/index.php/grow-your-own/>

◆ STEVE MARSHALL had a long career as a film composer before becoming an archaeological researcher and the author of three books, including the bestselling *Exploring Avebury: The Essential Guide (2016)* and its musical sequel, *Avebury Soundscapes, an album of music and 3-D binaural sound*.