

Two Provings of Barn Owl: *Tyto Alba*

By Elizabeth Stone



Two provings of Barn Owl were conducted in the past two years, unknown to each other until recently. One took place in Wales, the other in Germany. In this article Elizabeth Stone, Welsh proving conductor, provides a thematic comparison of both

My journey with barn owl (*Tyto Alba*) began when I discovered a family of owls living in a tree-box close to our cottage. After some magical encounters, I was inspired to complete a proving. Barn owl is a remedy of powerful synchronicity, yet I was surprised, some months after I had completed the proving, to discover another proving from Germany. This presented a unique opportunity to explore and compare the two. Readers who wish to follow up on this article will find links to the full provings below, available in full online.

As I write this article, I can hear this year's brood of barn owl chicks hissing loudly in their tree-box close to my home. The parent birds fly off before dark to share the task of feeding their offspring. Barn owls often live in close proximity to man and are part of our rural landscape. They are widespread throughout the world but their numbers are decreasing in Britain*. In Britain, the 1981 Countryside Act protects barn owls from disturbance whilst they are breeding. Barn owls belong to the *Tytonidae* family and have many unique features compared with the larger owl family known as *Strigiforms*.¹ To see a barn owl flying out of the darkness is a sight not likely to be forgotten, and its ghostly appearance has linked it with myth and magic over the centuries.

I completed the proving of barn owl feather for my fourth-year project, whilst studying at the Welsh School of Homeopathy. Joerg Wichmann carried out the second proving at the Bergische School of Homeopathy in Germany. Both provings were carried out according to the methodology presented in Jeremy Sherr's book, *The Dynamics and Methodology of Homeopathic Provings*.² The Welsh proving began on October 31, 2003, and was completed on December 16, 2003. It consisted of 12 provers, three male and nine female. All provers took the remedy at the 30c potency, except two placebos. The German proving consisted of 10 provers, two male and eight female, who all took the 30c potency. It began on May 22, 2004, and was concluded on September 4 of the same year.

The German remedy was prepared from a deep-frozen barn owl wing. An alcoholic extraction was

taken and succussed from feather and muscle fibre, to the 30c potency. The sex of the bird is not known, and there are no details as to its history and subsequent death as far as I am aware. The Welsh remedy was made from an adult feather from a live barn owl, found under the tree-box at my home on August 23, 2003. It is not known for certain what sex the bird was. The feather had a unique stubby owl shape and was white with apricot tip, speckled with grey. It was thought to be a wing or covert feather due to its shape. I helped prepare the remedy at Helios, also to the 30c potency.

Key: WP = Welsh prover (plus prover number);
G* = German prover (plus prover number);
US = Unusual symptom; NS = New symptom

Death, darkness and endings are strong themes in the Welsh proving, repertorising as DEATH, thoughts of; Death, awareness in life of; Death desires; Death, thoughts of her unborn child. This theme appeared in the German proving, but not so strongly, with two provers talking intensively about death and dying. Reference to dead creatures occurred in both, reflected in dreams and waking life. **Endings** of relationships and situations are also found, and appear as a process of clearing and sorting, and restoring order from chaos.

WP7, Day 28: (US) I feel that through the incident of resuscitation, then and now, my person/energy has been partially in death. Not that I am close to it, but more that I could feel it, like a pool of water that I have been partially immersed in.

G*4, Day 04: Wept because of the memory of my deceased dog.

WP6, Day 04: Watching the river from the window – it is turbulent and moving – there's lots of stuff in it – lots of rubbish being cleared out. Lots of endings are occurring – stuff that has been left is being sorted out.

Weeping, sadness and grief, and tears also for no obvious reason, also **anger and rage** are clear themes in both provings. German provers noticed sudden mood changes, whilst Welsh provers noticed an increase in emotional expression.

Mind themes:
both provings
Death, Endings
Weeping, grief
Water Awareness of nature, especially birds
Anger, rage
Increased confidence
Firmness in communication
Personal boundaries
Distance & Solitude v Closeness
Indifference v Playfulness
Forgetfulness (everyday things)

* Although numbers have been decreasing, recent reports suggest that this year has been a record year for successful breeding.
www.barnowltrust.org.uk

The idea of birds felt familiar. I felt like I knew more about the feeling of birds, but it wasn't about flying really, but about knowing how great the sky is.

WP2, Day 06: (NS) I was outraged at his selfishness and said so to him.

G#9, Day 12: Found rage to be a good source of power for me. Rage like fire on my hand, that I can breathe in and use for taking a stand in this society.

WP2, Day 23: (US) I think that I feel more. More inclined to cry, generally feel more emotional. (NS) Feeling more highs and lows; not as flat as I used to be. Weeping and sadness.

G#4, Day 14: Weep a lot today, feeling sad, content, sad, content ... needing much shelter when husband is back.

Increased confidence, speaking one's mind and having strong boundaries found common expression. Invasion of one's own space came through in the Welsh proving: Delusions: one's space is being invaded (see Welsh proving, Chapter VII for all rubrics quoted).

WP8, Day 09: (NS) I FEEL CONFIDENT! Like a small piece of growing up has occurred. Said: "No, I've got too much on."

G#3: 1. 20 hr: Answered an email, which had touched me a lot, because I felt totally misunderstood. Answered sharp, clear and marked off.

Forgetfulness of everyday things, feeling confused and making mistakes in writing and driving were strong characteristics. There is a polarity here with clarity and a desire for order. Also compare the physical visual symptoms below.

WP3, Day 14: (NS) I'm very forgetful. Forgot to call someone back. Forgot food. Worse: forgot dog biscuits.

G#1, Day 2: Forgot to put on my earrings, (never happened before) and several times during the last days. Also forgotten to put on my lipstick. Simply forgotten.

Accident and injury occur in the Welsh proving, providing the rubrics: Accident prone; Extremities, awkwardness; Injuries. Only one catastrophe was noted in the German proving, when the school became flooded on the day the proving closed (there were several references to water and rivers in the provings). The only individual accidents that occurred were to teeth. There was laughter about teeth, and incidents of damaged teeth that came up at the Welsh proving meeting, but it was not strong enough to include as a theme. Injuries were most commonly to extremities. I broke my ankle just before the proving started, and the plaster came off the day after the closing meeting.

A desire for solitude and indifference came up in both provings. **Feelings of contentment, playfulness and tranquillity** were characteristic of both provings. Again there is a **polarity of distance and closeness**, which is supported by an increased desire for sexual contact.

WP1, Day 23: I feel SINGLE in myself, not wanting to do group things. It feels like an intrusion.

G#1, Day 3: Think all others are stupid; don't like them.

WP5, Day 06: (NS) Woke to an empty house - enjoyed it...enjoyed the silence and peace.

WP7, Day 26: (US) After lunch we went to the beach. I rolled up my trousers and paddled (in December) - I have only done this twice (this being the second time) in 27 years. The water was cold but I felt no embarrassment. (Permission to have fun)

G#4, Day 4: Good mood. Free day without the children. Go motor biking, must have fun, much energy - especially sexual - after massage.

An awareness of nature, particularly of birds and incidents with birds were common, and were recorded by provers and supervisors alike.

One Welsh prover had an owl hit the car windscreen.

G#3, Day 27: I run through the forest alone as usual. And I have the feeling that the birds (especially a bird of prey that I cannot identify) communicate with me. It is such an intensive perception of these birds' voices, that I am deeply moved. No fear, just the feeling of being really connected to the birds!!!

WP4, Day 02: The idea of birds felt familiar. I felt like I knew more about the feeling of birds, but it wasn't about flying really, but about knowing how great the sky is.

Dreams were vivid and intense. In the German proving, collective threat to a group rather than an individual came across, whereas the opposite was true of the Welsh proving. Water also featured frequently in both, often with fear or anxiety around it. Dreams concerning windows and glass appeared in the Welsh proving only. Interestingly, some provers noted they became more insightful and introspective, as well as more emotional. **Dreams about family, buildings, birds, dead or dying creatures, former homes, and making journeys also occur in both provings.**

Dreams of children and protecting children, particularly of childhood home, were prominent and unique to the Welsh proving.

Thoughts of childhood are reflected in both provings:

G#9, Day 17: Many memories of my childhood. Hatred and rage towards my father who always had terrorised the family with his illnesses.

WP3, Day 14: I'm remembering things from the past - the past winding up on me. Last week remembering childhood. Did I do the right thing? Like a spring - its curling up to meet me - the past. I'm seeing it a more detached way. I'm not blaming myself so much. I feel quite cross about it. I've never seen it in that way before. It's very interesting. It's interesting to take time out to review it. Like sorting out a drawer, you take stuff out and put it back but it's a bit neater.

DREAMS:
both provings
Family
Buildings, home, former home
Birds
Death, dying creatures
Journeys
Water

Themes: Physical

Sleeplessness was a prominent theme. Sleeplessness with difficulty waking and early waking, sleepiness daytime, particularly afternoon, and frequent waking, were highly characteristic. I recently had a great view of one adult barn owl in the tree-box entrance. It was mid-afternoon and he was dozing contentedly.

Headache & Eyes

Headache symptoms were also common and included pain around the eyes and pain extending to neck and shoulders. Other eye symptoms common to both provings were pain, itching and burning, also photophobia. Lachrymation and itching are the strongest symptoms in the Welsh proving. In the German proving, clouds and movements around the fringes of the visual field relate also to noticing things moving in the trees, a sense of being watched.

Mouth

Concurring mouth symptoms include soreness and ulcers to the tongue. Accidents with teeth were noted in the German proving, whilst in the Welsh, grinding and biting teeth together and biting the lower lip were minor features.

Coryza, Throat, Respiratory

German and Welsh provers recorded cold symptoms, but there were no respiratory or cough symptoms noted in the German proving. Impeded respiration and tickling in the throat pit were found in the Welsh proving only, whilst discharges appeared to vary from clear to yellow and green.

Stomach, Rectum

There were common symptoms of digestion, diarrhoea and flatulence in both provings.

Libido

An increased interest in and desire for sex was relevant to both provings, but came through more strongly in the German proving.

Skin

Skin symptoms in both provings agreed, with eruptions and itching being most marked, also a feeling of crawling insects was expressed in both provings. There were a wide range of pain symptoms and itching to extremities that require more detailed comparison.

Generals

Generally, the German proving showed a right-sided dominance of symptoms, whilst the Welsh proving showed a balance between left and right, but interestingly, missed turnings recorded were on the left side. German provers felt the cold more. Fluctuations in energy from extreme tiredness to feeling energised were noted in the Welsh proving, so there were some differences.



Barn owl in flight

Myth

Celtic influence is reflected in the Welsh proving. The stories of Blodeuwedd the Flower Maiden, and Arianrhod, Goddess of the Silver Wheel who carries the dead to Emania, can be found in the Mabinogian.¹ Blodeuwedd was created by magic to be wife for Llew (which means light); she betrayed him, and her punishment was to be turned into an owl. Arianrhod was able to shape-shift into an owl. Lilith, the Hebrew Owl Goddess is synonymous with the Screech Owl in the Bible. She is also depicted with the torso of a snake – young Barn Owls hiss like snakes and their head movements resemble a dancing snake. Lilith later became known as the 'Scarlet Woman'; she has a strong sexuality, which links to both provings. In the German proving, the Grimms' fairy tale is about an owl that was burned to death,

Tyto Alba carries bright Yang energy, yet it lives in darkness that relates to Yin. Proving themes appear to support this duality. Both Kali and Lilith represent the transformational power of the cycle of destruction and rebirth that find expression through the White Owl.

as men feared it. Kali Ma, the Goddess of Destruction, is a central figure. Interestingly, Kali Ma is black and Lilith means 'night'. *Tyto Alba* is a remedy with marked polarities in themes. It carries bright Yang energy, yet it lives in darkness that relates to Yin. Proving themes appear to support this duality. Both Kali and Lilith represent the transformational power of the cycle of destruction and rebirth that find expression through the White Owl. These fascinating stories reflect the power of owl wisdom.

To see a barn owl flying out of the darkness is a sight not likely to be forgotten, and its ghostly appearance has linked it with myth and magic over the centuries.

Conclusion

Both provings support many common themes and strong polarities such as chaos and order, sadness and contentment, rage and indifference, slowness and hurry. The miasmatic influence of *Tyto Alba* appears to be primarily syphilitic. This article offers only a brief comparison.



The German proving is not yet fully translated, (although it is available in full in German: web address provided below) but there is great potential for a more detailed study that we hope to carry out in the future. This comparison will allow even greater clarity and power to the remedy picture. Although I have illustrated the predominance of common elements here, both provings maintain their own

identity and uniqueness. This may be a result of the differences in the original proving substances, detailed above, and also an inevitable result when two distinct proving groups work with the same substance. In summary, the two provings generally correlated, other than the few distinct symptoms mentioned within the body of this article. The full extent of this can be understood by reading both provings in full.

I felt very privileged to carry out the proving, and I hope that as we benefit from this remedy, so barn owls may also benefit from our greater awareness and appreciation of their needs. My thanks to Joerg for his support and use of the translated material from his proving. Thanks also to all those who took part, especially to the barn owl family who made it possible.

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References

- ¹ Colin Shawyer, *The Barn Owl Arlequin Press*, 1998, ISBN 1900159 70 8
- ² Jeremy Sherr, *The Dynamics and Methodology of Homeopathic Proving*, 1994, Dynamis Books.
- ³ Lady Charlotte Guest, *The Mabinogian*, 1841, reprinted 1997 by Dover Publications, Toronto.

The Welsh proving:

www.welshschoolofhomeopathy.org.uk

The German proving:

www.homoeopathiewichmann.de/provings/new%20provings.htm

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