

Serpent Star

Beltane 2012

A newsletter for members of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere



Dragonwyst



Dragonwyst

Dragonwyst, *Gum on a tree-stump*

SerpentStar is a newsletter for members of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere. It comes out four times a year at each of the Fire Festivals; Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh, and Samhuinn.

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*Submission deadline for Lughnasadh issue:
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From the editor's quill...

Ah Beltane... where Spring reaches completion and an abundance of Nwyfre invigorates the land. Where everything grows, and life surges upward with freshness and vigour. And so do our hearts become full of such life, reflecting the seasonal vitality, love, and joy, as we meet this gateway to Summer.

For those who don't know me, my name is Todd Dearing, entering the new position as editor of SerpentStar. Yes, there has been a change of editorship. Much thanks is offered to the previous editors for their work, and especially to Wyverne for her help in the transfer. I hope I can nourish and nurture this newsletter further.

This is a newsletter for the Southern Hemisphere OBOD community. Please consider it your own, and if you have something to add to it, send it my way. Southern Hemisphere Druidry seems to be growing well of late, which is wonderful to see.

Druidry is healthily diverse, so I hope to see a wide range of submissions in the future; a sharing of what inspires you: articles, photos, news, art, stories, practical and useful stuff, poetry, book or movie reviews, recipes, events, and so on.

I'd love to hear some feedback about this and other issues. And if enough of you have enough of an opinion to share, I will add a regular Talking Stick section to provide an open forum where readers can share their thoughts and opinions on various topics.

And now I'm running out of space to introduce all the jewels you'll find in these pages: a wyster dragon's wisdom on writing, inspired poetry, deep druidic contemplations, film and music reviews, a fairy retreat and more. I will let you discover all about these for yourself. Enjoy!

*With the bright blessings of Beltane,
Todd*

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INSPIRATION

By Dragonwyst

Marion finished reading. She placed the pages on the table before looking into the younger girl's face.

"Well," asked Bronwyn, "what do you think?"

"You certainly have potential."

The eager eyes widened. "Do you really think so?"

"I don't think so, I know so," Marion smiled. Then, more seriously, "but you are still trying too hard and the result, I have to say, is contrived."

Bronwyn looked crestfallen.

"Bronwyn, you must understand. Writing is not just about perfect grammar and imitating the masters. There is a place you need to discover. It is like the space between heartbeats – a place where time ceases to exist. For each writer it is different. When you write from that place there will be a new depth to your work. Your ideas will take shape in your own words and your true meaning will shine through."

"But how will I find that place?" Bronwyn looked as if she was on the verge of tears. Marion took the girl's hand and pressed it between hers.

"As I said, stop trying! It is like looking at a star that can only be seen when not looked at directly. I don't know how else to explain it."

Bronwyn brushed away a tear. "You make it seem as if I must stop writing in order to write!"

"That might just be the answer. Why don't you go for a walk instead of picking up that pen again? It's a beautiful day – go spend some time at the stream. Who knows? Maybe you'll discover something new."

Bronwyn shrugged and managed a half-smile. "Now it sounds as if you're giving me a project," she said as she headed for the door.

And maybe I am thought Marion as she put the papers to one side and turned back to the potato-peeling.

Bronwyn's bare feet pattered along the hard clay path that led to the trees and down to the stream. The warm sun revealed a copper glint in her brown hair as she pushed the loose strands behind her ears. Soon she was in the shadows of the leafy canopy where spring green was beginning to give way to the deeper hues of summer.

Her mind wrestled with the problem at hand as the path dipped between the trees. How does one find a place that can only be found without looking at it directly? How to write without trying? The paradox was both tantalizing and frustrating.

Bronwyn could hear the gurgling of the stream just ahead, as it played over the rocks. Unseen birds whistled above and around her as she turned off the path and scrambled over the boulders to the stream itself. She took a deep breath of the damp, cool scent of water, soil and bark as she settled herself in a favourite spot.

The water slipped through a crevice and over a lip just at the foot of this rock. Bronwyn loved to watch the smooth flow that changed to froth, catching the gleams of sunlight that filtered through the leaves. There was something about the contrast that appealed to her. Same water – one minute smooth, the next whipped up into splattering, cheerful bubbles. A gentle breeze stirred the leaves allowing the sunlight to add a dancing sparkle to the miniature waterfall.

Bronwyn watched, entranced, lost in the sight and sound and scent of the moment. The sparkles of light on the water seemed to shift and coalesce as if trying to form a shape. They danced apart and came together again, this time more distinctly.

She found herself gazing at the image of a unicorn, disturbed only by the ripples of the water. It seemed to be looking right at her! She held on to the moment, not daring to move a muscle and barely breathing. It was so beautiful! She wasn't sure if the unicorn image was in the water or above it. It didn't matter.

She remembered a legend about unicorns.

If you tried to catch them, they disappeared. You had to wait, quietly and without thinking about them, for them to come to you.

The sparkling unicorn dipped its horn towards her and dissipated into stars of light that dazzled Bronwyn's eyes. She closed them against the brightness, not wanting to open them again in case the moment was lost. She could see the after-image of the unicorn on her eyelids.

"I won't lose you," she whispered. "I will keep you in my heart. If I can't see you, I'll feel you."

As the cool breeze teased her hair and tickled her face, she slowly opened her eyes. Every leaf, twig and blade seemed full of luminosity. She felt as if she had been transported to a place outside time that was an instant after creation. It was as if everything had just come into being in pristine newness. Every myth, legend and story from the dawn of time was etched in the plant and animal life around her. It was all intertwined. *Twisting together like the silver spiral of a unicorn's horn*, she thought, smiling to herself. *I guess this is what real inspiration is like: arriving when un-looked-for, like the unicorn.*

She uncurled from her spot on the rock and made her way back to the path, with one destination in mind – her desk, pen and paper.

It was some time later when, papers in hand, she sought out Marion once more. Marion raised her eyebrows in mock surprise.

"What, again already?" she asked as she took the proffered papers.

"Yes, again already!" affirmed Bronwyn, face aglow. "Thanks for suggesting the walk. I had an amazing time. And, I think I may have found that place you were talking of."

"Let's see what we have."

Marion finished reading. She placed the pages on the table before looking into the younger girl's face.

"Well," asked Bronwyn, "what do you think?"

"As I said," replied Marion with a wicked grin. "You have potential..."

OUR FAV EATERY

By Vicki Minahan

Well here we are with 2012 passing by, Laird and Tazie have just turned 3 how time flies. Laird came to us as a pup and Tazie last October after the loss of our beloved Puppy (Eilean). Tazie brought joy and focus to our lives at a difficult time, she is a real clown but very serious about maintaining the comforts of home.

As a home grown farm girl she did find adjusting to the suburbia of Cockatoo



a bit of a challenge, but life does have bonuses, Tazie discovered the joys of eating out. To the point if we drive past her new fav eatery she starts to cry. We on a regular basis go the "The General Store" in Emerald, Victoria. They do fantastic food with a good vegetarian choice as well, we love it the hounds love it.

We have got to know the staff to the point we get asked where are the dogs if we show up without them. Everyone understands the little foibles of hounds, occasionally we just have to put front paws on the table and sneak a lick from the plate. But those staff now put coffees out of reach.



So to all you hounds out there get onto your two legs and tell them about the new best

place for hounds to eat out. You get bowls of water, bacon scraps, lots of pats, praise and how beautiful you are, what more to ask for.

POETRY'S HAZELS

What's Your Favourite colour?

By Dragonwyst

"What's your favourite colour?"
Asked my little boy of me.
Well, you know, I have to answer
It's the colour of the sea.

It's the palest shade of morning
Edged with waves of golden foam,
And a beach of scribble patterns
Where the sea snails love to roam.

It's the deepest shade of indigo
Beneath a sky of blue
With summer sunlight dancing
To the seagull's plaintive mew.

It's the silver of the evening
With the gentlest touch of pink
That slowly fades to greyness
As the stars begin to wink.

It's the darkest navy velvet
With a moon-made path of light
That leads through magic dreamtime
To the other side of night

It's the Iron-grey of storm clouds
With the green and white of gale
As the waves are whipped to mountains
In the stinging wintry hail.

Yes, the colour of the ocean,
Through the seasons, rain or shine,
Is my most favourite colour,
O dearest child of mine.

The Owl Poem

By Orin Raven Winter

To the sight of the owl once came by the prey of a dragon, but an owl's hath knows beyond a dragon's giant eyes to see the trick thus they perform to harness a feast of numerous feathers. The eyes of an owl linger still within the soul of the wizened heart through which auspiciously, all the most profound lessons does he teach. White grey, feathers bold and mellow that fly amongst clouds and over tree top bellows. The owl watches and waits, for the time when his wisdom can be spake. He does not frustrate over such a struggle when flying amongst such unreasonable muggles. The tune of a piper's sound upon the wild woods, does it beckon upon such old eyes as an owl's hood.

The pipes, pipes of pan does he hear, as he flies across mountains of dear, and wilder beast dancing wild as tiger prances on their child.



Mist over Adelaide; a view from Morialta

Goddess Alight!

By Todd Dearing

Oh Goddess in awakened beauty,
Fill our minds with your fury.
Passionate creative Muse,
Plunge your heart into the whole.

We know in silence, dreams becoming,
We know then how to sift your humming,
Sit through your running, running stream,
and swim like dolphins ultra keen.

You are bliss; this, this and this,
More-so upon our so lonely sojourn.
Keen with wisdom, infinite sight,
Goddess bright, alight, alight!

Power, you're a native focus,
Peace, you're a concentric locus,
Beauty, such to sharpen soul,
and leave silence in its roll.
Meandering river wrought,
Rugged earth to garden plot.
Wrought our hearts to hear your flow,
In time knowing, why this woe.

On this Earth, as our blood quickens,
Your Self is Nature, holy taster.
Nature's grace your gift of stature,
Beauty from beyond all Nature.

Goddess, Goddess, infinite light!
Hearken in the Poet's heart,
Hearken, hearken, light or dark.
Bright uprising fluent arc!

* * *

Tearoom Lament

By Dragonwyst

Oh, how I hate the tearoom
With it's titivating topics
And the tinkle of the teacups
And the sour, smoky air.
I would rather be exploring
In the technicolour tropics
Far from the tinkly teacups
And the harping on the hair.

I would rather be a-camping
In a cannibal-ish territ'ry
Or riding on an elephant
Through croc-infested stream.
I've sent myself to Coventry
And will not chat to anyone
For titivating teatime talk
Just makes me want to scream!

*(written when I was doing my nursing training in
the good ol' days before smoking in public places
was banned)*



Some busy bees in a eucalypt

OAK, THE GATEWAY TO TRANSFORMATION

By Caroline Williams

The tiny acorn as it nestles expectantly in the deep embrace of the earth doesn't resemble the mighty and towering Oak it eventually grows into being.



A Helm Oak, Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

How often we also forget that just like the acorn we are a young seed of potential curled up inside a hardened shell of life's trials and tribulations.

So how does the acorn transform into the Oak? The sacred Druid tree which symbolises transformation, nobility and the gateway into the spiritual mysteries. The Oak which is known for lightning strikes, its twisted and gnarled trunk calling us to venture into the realms beyond. The quote below from Bob Proctor explores the science and nature of the acorn in this analogy.

“Although the acorn may appear to be a solid object, by now you should clearly understand that the acorn, like everything else which appears to be solid, is in truth, “a mass of molecules at a very high speed of vibration.” Within the acorn, there is a nucleus or a patterned plan that dictates the vibratory rate at which these

molecules will move. Moreover, the same principle holds true for all seeds. In other words, every seed has a nucleus or a patterned plan within it, which dictates the vibration it will be in and which thereby governs the end-product into which it will expand or grow.

I believe you are all aware of this fact: everything in the universe is governed by a basic law-“Either create or disintegrate.” Therefore, it follows that, if something is not in the process of growing, it must, by the law of its being, be dying. For example, so long as the acorn is kept out of the earth, it is slowly but surely disintegrating. However, as soon as you plant the acorn in the earth, the patterned plan or the vibratory rate of the acorn sets up an attractive force and the acorn begins to attract everything that vibrates in harmony with it. If you were able to observe with the naked eye exactly what is taking place, you would see a “parade” of particles of energy-a never-ending stream of them-marching in a very orderly manner toward the acorn. As they came in contact with the molecules making up the acorn, they would join, marry, become one, and of course, the acorn would expand, become larger, grow.”



PHOTOGRAPHY

Morisset, New South Wales

By Dragonwyst

So if we take this analogy and apply it to ourselves, what is the seed of our true potential? And are we vibrating or even “planted” in the ground where we can truly flourish? In nature all the elements of sustenance, nurture and potential are all around in the very life force or “nwyfre” that connects everything in the web of life. By slowing down and allowing ourselves to tune in to our unique soul song we can begin to flourish and grow in harmony with our individual acorn energy!

Walk in beauty and peace

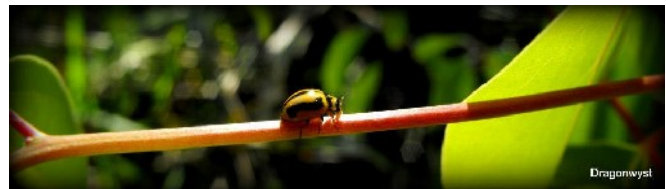
Caroline

* * *

Caroline Williams - I am a trained and qualified counsellor in New Zealand specialising in addiction, trauma, homicide and dual diagnosis. I weave the psychological underpinnings of my counselling career with the gentle wisdom of over 15 years experience of training with the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids to work with what I call ‘Druid Therapy’. I do this by leading workshops (‘Grail Questing’ and ‘The Handless Maiden-Journey into Wholeness’) and I also run a series of workshop's through the Auckland Women's Centre on ‘Positively Fabulous Women’. In addition I support individuals through one-on-one therapy sessions which weave animal oracle cards, myth, cups of tea and psychology together to create change and increase connection. I work with bringing the idea of the Druid Healer back into our culture, in an inclusive way, but still holding the gifts of modern learning to create a space of growth and safety.

Visit Caroline's website at
<http://druidtherapy.blogspot.co.nz/>

Contact Caroline through
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email (druidtherapy@gmail.com).



CONTEMPLATIONS OF A DRUID

WE ARE INFINITELY SMALL

By Orin Raven Winter

All the galaxies, stars, milky ways, endless star systems expanding and contracting... all the suns and moons, black holes and solar systems..this is it.

Have you ever looked up at the sky, or gazed through a telescope and been over come with the sudden realisation that you truly are smaller than a speck of dust in a cosmic ocean?

That everything you do, work for, the people you love, the wars, your garden, your home, every single thing that makes up your life is *infinitely* insignificant when it comes to the whole universe?

Your probably feeling proud and saying "well of course... anyone who has a brain will realise that"... although there is a difference somewhat between looking up at the sky and going "gee that is amazing," and looking at the earth, nature, the stars and truly going... wow gee this is amazing.

Quite a few times now in meditation I have gotten to such a state of consciousness whereby I am no longer identified with thought forms, the label and use of a chair for example, or the concept of my own body so forth. Once you peel back all the psychological layers of human consciousness... you find something much more infinitely ingrained in everything – spirit, beingness, awareness.

An ant doesn't need you to teach it English and show it that it exists for it to be (aware) and present to its existence. Nor do you find a tree labelling a constellation of stars for it to know that it is effected on a cosmic scale by the stars.

I'm not saying a tree or an ant intellectually knows this... no they are beyond that kind of thinking.

Every single species on the face of the planet is

happy and completely at peace with the way things *are*.

When I say they are at peace with the way things are... I'm not saying something scientific, I'm not applying a religious doctrine or philosophical hypothesis... I am merely stating a state of being. Everything is "being" here isn't it?

The closest I can get to being able to give you a taste of being in the *now* is to ask you this simple but none the less profound question:

Try to remember... what it was like when you were first born?

When you took your first breath out of the womb how did you see the world?

Haha you cant answer that can you because there's nothing to remember!

You were in such a state of *beingness* - awareness of just what *is* - that you were beyond remembering... so you forgot about it when your parents taught you how to read, write, that you could 'own' things... the list goes on.

So then... how does this relate to the stars and the universe?

Well... I am writing this because recently I went into meditation and became very present. I could feel the 'energies' if you will of everything, the consciousness within all beings and how everything is truly one.

After a while my consciousness naturally shifted from being identified with my body - all of a sudden I felt immensely small... like a piece of dust on the wind.

Within that second I was taken into an incredible vision.

I was reduced from skin to bone, from atoms to nothing, I shot up through the atmosphere into space.

Physically the most incredible sensation came over

me... the presence of knowing how insignificant I am.

I saw my self meditating on earth as an extremely small... piece of nothing, living, breathing, laughing and having a life on a tiny dot in the middle of a huge black ocean of empty space.

I started to feel very light... I was no longer jailed in my body by the mind's pre-conceived ideals on what the body is. I became a single speck of white light... a tiny tiny speck of white light surrounded by billions of tiny specks of white light.

I then turned into a floating flower and soon after came back to normal consciousness.

What this journey taught me was something incredibly enlightening.

To not just, on an 'intellectual' go..."oh yeah it's a big universe, we are pretty much nothing compared to everything" and to actually experience that on a emotional, spiritual, and psychological level...is a incredible insight to have had.

It's a blessing to feel that insignificance... because you soon realise that it's the insignificance which makes its so significant and sacred.

The whole universe is breathing; it's one huge consciousness showing its self in many different faces.

This beautiful earth we live on is a speck... she is a speck on a wide ocean... but this speck is an incredible organism.

She is one life, self sustaining and self regulating; we are her cells, the trees her lungs. We are not separate lives at all, in fact we are all one life.

Spiral Dance's Annual Midsummer Faerie Ball

Break out the glitter and don your faerie wings, it's that time of the year when the veil between the worlds is gossamer thin, when those of the faerie tribes join us in a night of revelry to dance and celebrate the shortest night of the year and the returning strength of the summer sun.

Spiral Dance has been celebrating the Summer and Winter Solstices for the last 18 years with concerts and events held regularly in Adelaide and interstate. This year is no exception and will be looked forward to by many as the first concert since the band has returned from touring the USA and UK. It was Spiral Dance's fourth tour to the USA and their first venture to the UK to take their own brand of folk/rock overseas and to tour their latest cd 'Through A Sylvan Doorway'.

Spiral Dance has been playing their own blend of Pagan Folk Rock throughout Australia and overseas since 1993 and their music and lyrics are inspired by stories of myth, legend and ancient folklore. Irresistible melodies, rousing jams and rich vocals join together to create music of magick and mystery.

The Midsummer Faerie Ball will be held at:

Guthries, the Folk Federation of SA
126 Prospect Rd, Prospect, SA 5082
(At the Prospect Town Hall)

Saturday 22nd December.
Doors open at 7pm.

Entry \$15/10 concession.
Under 16 admitted free.

BYO Picnic tea - No food available for sale at the venue.

No BYO Booze! - Full bar facilities available.
Hot for Joe Morris Dancers will be performing as well.

Enquiries to: info@spiraldance.com.au
or 0438 310228

<http://www.spiraldance.com.au>

REVIEWS

SPIRIT OF ALBION MOVIE REVIEW

By William James Rattley

When I first heard about this movie being made, I simply couldn't wait for it. A movie based around the music of one of my favourite artists. A movie that put Paganism in a positive light, rather than the portrayal used in "The Wickerman" movies.

I mean admittedly even the few movies, like "The Craft" or "The Covenant" that do treat Paganism (Wicca mainly) in a more positive light... they still have the need to interpret it through an angsty, dark and Gothic lens. I'm not saying their aren't Gothic Pagans out there, gods know I've seen plenty in my time, however there are other sides to the coin that I feel needed to be addressed in film.

"Spirit of Albion" I feel, attempts this. The movie was actually a rendition of a stage performance put on at a "Witch-fest" gathering. The producers of the movie also wished to incorporate as many of the original cast from the stage performance as they could.

The story of the movie follows the trials of three people, who each have issues they are dealing with in various methods.

First there is Esther, a hard working woman who has trouble standing up for herself. In many respects she is the kind-hearted soul who gets burnt out trying to please everyone. She is so happy trying to please others, that she loses sight of what she wants to do for herself.

Her guide, is the Goddess Cerridwen. The Welsh Goddess of Inspiration, Magic and Wisdom. The keeper of the primordial cauldron from where all dreams, aspirations and manifestations originate.

Secondly there is Annie. She's the party animal, the "If I stay numb, I don't have to feel the pain (or

the joy)" personality. She spends so much time trying to bottle things up using sex, drugs and partying. She's at the point where she's burnt herself out, has stopped caring... and just wants things to stop messing up for her.

Her guide is the Horned God. Cernunnos, Herne, Pan... the masculine energy, the Green Man. The protector of nature and all its living creatures. The King and Hunter.

Thirdly, there is George. A young man who is an adamant activist against the war in Afghanistan, where his brother is fighting. Yet, as often happens, George has fallen into the trap of turning his activism into a type of private war.

His guide is the Morrighan. The Phantom Queen, an Irish Goddess of Death, Battle, War and Lust. In this movie Morrighan is mainly focused upon for her relationship to death and war... both topics I will touch on later.

The plot of the movie progresses and each character finds themselves guided to a grove (by their respective assistants) where they are then able to share with one another the issues they find themselves faced with.

At the start of the movie, the main characters... Esther, Annie and George do not realise that their guides are Celtic Deities. The only extra person that they are able to communicate with to discuss issues, is the strangely amusing Rob... (Robin Goodfellow).

The music helps to define what the story is trying to teach. Starting with a lesson about the seasonal festival of Samhain (Halloween), explained by Cerridwen through the song "Samhain Eve" to the lesson of interconnection and respect for nature as delivered by the Horned God, in the song "Land, Sky and Sea".

Morrighan, joins George in a duet of "Pipes of Pan" which is one of my all-time favourite songs from Damh the Bard. Which is a song about appreciating the small, sometimes seemingly

insignificant parts of life. Annie has a slight breakdown in front of Esther and George, which brings them to the song "Only Human". Everyone sings this song, and I recommend everyone listens to this song.

With all the characters together, and the timely arrival of Annie's brother (who is a clergyman), the "guides" reveal themselves for who they are.

This then leads on to an explanation of each God and Goddess. Cerridwen shares her song with Esther with "Cauldron Born", The Horned God explains to Annie's brother the difference between himself and the Christian rendition of the devil in "Green and Grey".

Esther asks what they need to do in order to embrace a new life. Cerridwen explains what some people do using the song Cauldron Born. She also however embraces the timeless wisdom that each person will embrace their path differently. Some will use rituals, others will not. Ultimately they bring it back to personal choice, and by default, personal responsibility.

I think one of my favourite parts of the movie is when George is confronted by the Morrighan. He is clearly frustrated that his new friends got the Goddess of inspiration, and the God of nature... and he gets the Goddess of war and death. I feel they handled this topic beautifully.

As the Morrighan says: "I don't like it... but someone has to be around to clean up the mess."

They also touch briefly on the concept of reincarnation, but again they leave it for individual interpretation and discernment. As the Morrighan says:

"It is up to you whether you place a beginning or an end to anything."

I think, in George's case, and certainly in my own life, the lesson was clear though. It is all too easy to turn protesting against violence, or anything, into one's own private war. It is one of the reasons

that I stepped back from many of the protests because I was also investing too much time and energy into "fighting the good fight".

War, is still war, whether with words or with weapons. Sometimes too, words can hurt a lot more and a lot longer than a physical blow. But when we are caught up in the protests, in the shouting and the debating, it is all too easy to forget. It was one of the lessons that I certainly had to learn.

As Morrighan told George: "Your whole life has been a battle."

And for many of us, it is a battle, a lot of the time without us realising it. I found that one of the most powerful ways of protesting anything for me... is to meditate. I remain calm and peaceful, I don't get caught up in spin-cycle debates (or arguments) and I don't provide potential antagonists with fuel for their own fire.

Silence is sometimes the greatest statement someone can make. Morrighan explains her role to George and the others through the song "Morrighan". This is one of (I feel) Damh's most heartfelt and emotional songs. It always sends a shiver down my spine.

Finally, after the plot unravels (Which I do not wish to spoil), Arianrhod, the Weaver appears and explains her role in the whole scheme of things with the song "Lady of the Silver Wheel". The whole movie wraps up with a challenge to the viewer. Do you go back to the mundane world and simply shrug off the mysterious aspects of your life? Or do you step forwards and embrace a life of celebration and ecstatic union with the whole of existence?

The final song played is "Spirit of Albion" after which the movie is named. I feel that the plot was excellent. It had a deep message to the viewer, mixed in with some light-heartedness. The actors definitely carried their emotions well. Though the singers had a little trouble hitting some of the higher notes, I do believe this serves as a

reminder... that this movie portrayed everyday people... not stars.

It portrayed everyday issues that many of us face. It delivers a possible pathway for the viewers to pursue and discover. Yet to me it says loudly, that whether or not we are the best singers in the world or not... life is worth celebrating. So sing... sing even if others give you strange looks, sing even if you feel a little embarrassed. Sing in the car, or whilst walking along the street. Sing in the middle of a busy mall.

We get so trodden under by life because we forget to appreciate and celebrate the small things in life. This movie reminds us of that inherent goodness and need to celebrate that flows through each and every moment of life. I also appreciate the fact that this is a far more positive spin on Paganism, as I mentioned earlier.

All in all I think my favourite character was Morrighan. The actress (Jo Marriott) was perfect for the role. She also had one of the loveliest voices of the cast and she held herself with an air of directness that was tempered by an underlying compassion. Despite her cold exterior and strong warrior outside, you could see a care bubbling below the surface, like a warm fire.

Also, her cape rocked!

Finally, I think the costume design was mesmerising. From Arianrhod's staff and dress to the Horned God's two set of horns. Absolutely wonderful. The historical sites and environments they used were also wonderful and you could tell that the producers of the film really had a deep love for the land they were attempting to put across to the viewer.

Again, a wonderful film. I congratulate everyone who made it. Biggest thanks however fall on Damh the Bard's shoulders for writing the music that inspired first the stage performance and then the movie.

Blessings everyone.

(For information on this movie, visit <http://www.thespiritofalbionthemovie.com/> or write to the OBOD office. Ed.)

IMRAMMA (A SOUL QUEST) SONG REVIEW

By William James Rattley

Another review.... one I feel has been long in the waiting. The first time I sat and listened to Imramma, I admit, it did cut deep. I've never been that good at adjusting to change, though nowadays I am generally better at handling it.

The main verse that really cut... was this:

*"Faces of lovers come and gone,
A glass full of tears,
And as I watch they fade away
Back into distant years
All a part of who I am,
My hopes and dreams and fears"*

Yet ultimately this is a song of hope. It says... that despite the changes you go through, despite the fears you face, despite the regrets you may drag along behind you...

*"Life's a symphony,
So sing along, sing along.
Each note a harmony
In our song, in our song."*

Often when we are at our lowest, we forget to appreciate the small things. We forget that the sun is still shining, that the birds are still singing and that the flowers are still blooming. We forget that we have friends and family that love and respect us. We forget that we are worth something.

This song reminds us of the good qualities of life. It reminds us to stand and celebrate the changes in our lives. To look at the positives, yet to retain a healthy respect for where we have come from. We

are the end product of our experiences. Who we are now is a result of the actions and reactions we have taken in the past.

A quote from Damh the Bard from an interview a few years back:

"If you know your roots, then you have a foundation that is strong and you can look to the future with a lot more hope," - Damh the Bard (Vienna 2009)

I do feel that this is the viewpoint that Damh illustrated perfectly in this song. Yet again, for its message of hope I am sure that there have been some people that have found this song (like me) to be confronting at certain times in their lives.

That is fine. This song, much like 'Sun and the Rose' (by the same artist), has been a catalyst for change in my life. They've helped me confront things, to be honest with myself. 'Sun and the Rose' (which I may review later) helped me find the courage to go on.

'Imramma (A Soul Quest)' reminded me to look back along the path I'd travelled and to respect it for what I've accomplished and learned. You know that a song has heart when it can both make you want to bawl your eyes out, and also dance around the room in an ecstatic celebration of life and self-worth.

So thank you Damh the Bard.

For the Lyrics go here:

<http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/lyricsimmrama.html>

I encourage you to look up, and listen to the song... it is fabulous :)

REVIEWS NEEDED

Do you have a review you've written, or would like to write? Books, movies, events, music, places, art work, fashion etc. Send it to **SerpentStar** (serpentstar.obod@gmail.com)

A QUESTION, O LEARNED DRUID...



Can you identify this plant?

A clue: it's a well known druid herb.

And how about this one?



A little harder perhaps.

The answers are on the last page.

I advise against using refined sugar and stimulants, but I must admit that some fairies are easier to find if you're on a sugar high...



A FAIRY RETREAT

By Wýverne

In our culture, until recently, almost everything has dictated against the seeing of fairies. Social attitudes, urban planning, calendars, work schedules, diet, education, noise, pollution, electrical fields and the mass media have all tended to obscure the realities nearest to our own, and some still do. So if you're serious about getting closer to our neighbour-realities and learning to see the fairies and ghosts of our own, you might like to consider a fairy retreat. It will take some planning; you will need at least two weeks and preferably four to begin to make the perceptual shift towards seeing their worlds, and you may need to do some radical reorientation during the previous cycle of the moon before you begin.

You are multi-dimensional, but you are also fragmented, so that that part of yourself that perceives through the material senses is perhaps only rarely aware of the experience of those parts of you that perceive the fairies that live all around us or the ghosts that haunt our cities and towns, or the gods that guide our evolution.

Most children learn to select out fairy perception at an early age, but the interface remains lifelong,

waiting to be reactivated. If you have a hankering to see fairies, surely it is because your seer-self wants you to, wants you to be aware of your experiences in the fairy realms - which are as vivid and structured and meaningful as those of our material world - and is among the many highly specialised fairy beings who are willing to help you to succeed.

The retreat takes one complete cycle of the moon, from one half-moon's waning till the next. You can do it alone or with a friend or dedicated group, although it's a very introverted thing and companionship should not be too intense. It begins with a debriefing, followed by a period of fasting and meditating, then a week of active engagement with your heightened perception, and a week-long withdrawal period.

1. DEBRIEFING:

Debriefing is simple, and can be done before you begin the retreat. Ideally you should start this on the evening of the half-moon waxing. It consists of setting aside a little time at dawn and again at dusk to listen to the birds and sounds of nature audible through the noises of human activity, and think about fairies. Imagine seeing them. Perhaps you have pictures or books or statues of fairies or elves or plant spirits, angels, gods or whatever you love best. Use them as icons, talk to them, let them know how much you want to see them and be part of the bridge between our worlds. Remember the intensity of your childhood engagement with fairylands and fantasy worlds. If you can scry, use a mirror or crystal ball, actively invoking your favourite spirits. Write a calling chant, sing or croon to them. Or just imagine you are looking into the eyes of your fairy self and inviting him/her to connect with you and teach you.

Note any anxiety, any sudden loss of concentration, or point where the mind wanders, or mundane thoughts intrude, and focus on them as they arise. Ask all unnecessary anxieties to abate, and if any persistent thoughts or objections intrude, deal with them and then ask them to recede. Eucalyptus leaves or oil is helpful.

This is not a relaxation exercise, but a vital, active self-exploration, a seek and satisfy mission to find and allay all anxieties that stand between you and your goal – and perhaps discover whether or not you have the courage to proceed. Consider any ambivalence you might have about your own self-image, your credibility among your peers, what fairies will think of your strategies and fibs - anything that comes to mind might block your enhanced perception. You need your own full consent. Spend a couple of half-hours a day doing this intensively and also take advantage of odd times during the day to run the themes that emerge for you through your mind.

Wearing a crystal or a ring will help to remind you to return frequently to the task, and you'll be surprised how much more clarity you can achieve by this simple exercise than you might have expected. It's a technique that can be adapted for other purposes too.

Meanwhile, the venue for the retreat is important. A place where fairies are likely to be is obviously best, but it doesn't have to be a breathtakingly beautiful wilderness. Your own backyard is very often the best place, even if there's a constant hum of traffic and noisy neighbours, as you will have been gardening there while thinking about fairies and will no doubt continue to do so afterwards. But if you have no garden find a quiet place that you have free access to and can visit often. Your own bedroom or den may be right for you.

You can enhance your space if permitted with crystals, pyramids, geodesic towers, shrines, altars, fountains etc, with music or Schuman resonance, runes, incense and chanting. Building tiny houses brings them!

2. ORIENTATION:

After the week's debriefing, on the dark moon preparation for the fast begins. Prepare by reducing your food in-take. Take the whole week to reduce to small serves of wholemeal bread and water, honey and milk, salads nuts and fruit, or

other minimalistic whole-foods diet. If you really can't give up smoking, chew horehound leaves or drink a tisane of them as strong as you can enjoy it every few days. Horehound helps to repair the damage to the lungs that smoking tobacco might otherwise cause.

While fasting your body, you should also fast your mind, so if possible, phase out any newspapers or magazines, don't watch TV, don't turn on the radio, don't even play recorded music and avoid any reading that isn't absolutely necessary at all – unless it's to help you to focus on fairies. Stay away from the computer as much as possible for the week or whole month if you can. You will return to them all with a fresh mind.

Whenever your body yearns for its accustomed soothing noises, you can sing, hum or play a musical instrument or drum, but it is more helpful to invite your body to appreciate the sounds around it instead. Natural sounds such as birdsong, breezes through the trees, the sound of the sea are easy enough to enjoy, but if your neighbour's having band practice or there's a pneumatic drill drowning everything out, make your peace with the noise, love the technology and remember that some beings of the other dimensions love these noises, and work unseen magic for the people making them. Learn to love them as city fairies do.

Your activities while fasting should include frequent meditation, for example, transcendental meditation, a light-body exercise or breath-work or yoga in a magic circle, pyramid or temple; sensitivity exercises such as holding a crystal or pebble, wand, rune-stone or other pleasant magically enhanced object; some easy gardening or the creative-visualising of gardens of light, walking, observing plants, birds, and the life of your garden or the place you are in. If poetry comes to you, write it down, but don't strive for anything during this time. If you play a flute, drum, harp or other instrument, take it with you, but don't play it unless you feel prompted to.

Take rests as you need to, enjoy the slowness and especially enjoy the heightened sensory experience

and the clarity of mind. Drink plenty of the purest water you can find, enhancing it if you wish with crystals, runes, earth resonances, drumming, chanting, or music or 'mooning' on an altar or in a pyramid, and if you feel dizzy or light-headed, put a dab of your favourite pure-run honey (Scots wild heather honey is perfect for it) on your tongue and let it slowly dissolve there. Don't have any more unless the dizziness returns.

Deepening the enchantment of this time, you might enjoy a three-week-long social fast also. You may be in the same house with your family or need to be accessible to dependents or supportive friends, but try to be alone as much as you can in a place where the fairies are likely to be. Then resume your social life as carefully, thoughtfully and selectively as you can.

Pets sometimes enhance the fairy experience and can be good companions on your fast. Telepathic communication often happens between people and animals under conditions like these. Wild places may offer you some wonderful encounters with wild animals that enhance the experience still more.

3. ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT:

By the time the moon is full you are ready to begin the phase of active engagement, while fasting and meditating. Brave souls will benefit from a near total week-long fast on water alone, but it needn't be that radical. You can eat fruit, honey, natural, unsweetened yoghurt, and drink small quantities of milk, herbal tisanes, herbal beer or honest mead and even tea or coffee.

The more you drink just water and dewdrops and sip just nectar from flowers and magically enhanced honey the closer you are to flower fairies. Adding fruits and berries brings you to elves and brownies like a little wild game – trout or hare. Whatever you eat will help you to different fairies.

The amounts taken should be tiny, and bread and milk or cheese should be shared with the fairies on

a smaller plate on an altar. You should meditate while absorbing the food and take their full metaphysical radiance into your being. Give full attention to the flavours, even of the water and let yourself feel your body responding to it. Love your body. Explain to it what is happening as if it were a simple-minded, innocent companion.

Hunger pangs tend to vanish after the first twenty four hours of a fast and after that the delightful feeling of lightness and calm that comes upon you tends to make it deliciously easy to stay on it. Don't take to your bed. You won't be feeble or ill. Light activity as normal will be not only possible but highly desirable.

Your retreat should include time outside at night, and at least one lengthy meditation and attunement to it, especially the full moon, but as I've said, frequent meditations on the moon throughout its phases during the whole retreat are a powerful aid to seeing fairies. Stare at it until you can feel it staring back. Smile and feel her smile. Or if it's a he for you, feel *his* smile. Ask her/him to help you see fairies.

Locate Venus and do the same. Venus might make you want to dance and if you feel uninhibited, do so. If you have any feelings for any other stars, seek them and attune to them too. If you can't see them, just think about them.

While attuning to the plants around you some will have attracted you more than others. Focus on some of these. Remember that you are shifting to your seer-self's perceptual modes and be aware of slight personality changes. You might feel softer, more serene, smilier, and you might even feel sentimental. Let yourself. Feel the gentle pull of the mind of a flower and let it draw out your fairy nature for you, just as a five year old child might.

Don't be surprised if you suddenly feel accustomed to all this – your seer-self is! If you feel a sudden wave of affection as if for an old friend, between you and a daffodil, recall that that's what you are, old friends, because we bond with flower friends in our earliest childhood, and

they never let us go, but love us always. Don't be surprised if you catch yourself calling a rosebush 'darling one', or a daisy 'beloved'. They expect it and they respond in kind. These are plant spirits, and you might glimpse human forms among them, hovering between you and a plant, just the face, or a whole person, or using tricks of the light, and accidents of line and shape to suggest a human form among their leaves. Smile when you see them, or say something, because they observe you and try to delight you. Once you are aware of those, it won't be long before the flying fairies, garden elves and other aerial beings get to know about you and they'll begin to try to show themselves to you too.

On the other hand, especially if your place is noisy or subject to sudden interruptions you might feel stimulated and energised instead. Here you may begin to catch fleeting glimpses of small intense little beings that take you by surprise. They appear suddenly and you instantly lose sight of them, or else you suddenly become aware that one has been staring very intently at you for a long time, but again, as soon as you see it, it's gone. These are insectile, with iridescent wing covers and helmet-like carapaces on their heads – fun and dynamic to be with.

Watch birds, too, and lizards, as many small fairies and elves ride on them, or ghost them to transport themselves, manoeuvring them into conspicuous positions for viewing 'humans viewing elves'. This applies also to many wild animals, including bats. If any seems particularly tame or foolhardy, or to behave in some conspicuously unusual way, watch it carefully through half-closed eyes. Sometimes the elf or fairy may leave it to appear near it within a sort of haze that is fairly easy to see.

If you are in an area that is sufficiently woodsy, even if it's only half a back yard full of trees and bushes, or a library with plenty of that sort of thing in it, and you've been thinking about fairies a lot, you might meet a brownie. The kind you would look for is the one who inspires the brownie lore behind the Brownie movement for little girls aged

eight to ten, with Brown Owl, Grey Squirrel, and the like. These come readily to dedicated shrines, and help enormously in regulating the access that other fairies have to you and the courtesy with which they treat you. Give them honey, milk and sweet cakes or bread.

If you have large stones in your place, loudly call the gnomes. They'll make you talk, out loud if they can, because they read the ocean of thought from which we select the things we say, reading volumes of thought process, experience and attitude for every word we speak. When we speak, not only do we stream vast amounts of data through our minds in the selection process involved in deciding what to say and which words to use, but also when we've chosen a word, our reactions set in motion waves and depths of subtle response of which we're scarcely aware but which the gnomes revel in. If you give them a crystal, a charged stone or gem, or metal object, they'll be pleased. They adore cats' eye marbles and cheap glass spheres.

Some fairies will try to make you laugh, dance or sing, whistle or hum a melody, and if possible, this can be exquisitely enjoyable, even if you're not accustomed to it. It often brings the fairies very close and after losing yourself in the performance you may be taken by surprise to see them thronging around you, leaning against your knees, and climbing into your lap with delight. They might even pull your beard if you've got one, or cling to your plaits. They may make you speak or sing in other languages if you know any.

If you can sleep outside among them, like tramps of old, that's ideal, but otherwise, try to make the transition from being with them to being asleep as continuous and flowing as possible. If you can, at the end of the day go straight to the room you will sleep in and spend some time writing in a leisurely way about the experiences you've had that day. Or write poems, stories or whatever you feel inspired to write, bearing in mind that at these times, if you've made successful fairy connections even if you weren't aware of them at the time, you may be replete with their communications to you, and this is an optimal time to channel them, either onto

paper, or verbally onto cassette or as music or dance, alone or in the company of selected friends.

4. WITHDRAWAL

When it's time to come off your fast, ideally at the time of the half-moon waxing, if you've fasted for seven days you should take seven days to come off it and make the transition to your new diet designed to maintain the enhanced fairy vision. Meanwhile, other activities bring you out of the deep enchantment of the fairy worlds and reorient you to the mundane world around you. Here are some suggestions for week four.

Day one: Add one teaspoonful of rosehip syrup, or one tablespoon of apple juice or raspberry or blackberry juice to each glass of water, and drink five glasses full over the course of the day. Up to three tsp of honey. Let your senses fully explore each flavour as it happens.

Give thanks and say, sing, pipe, drum or chant your farewells.

Day two: As day one, but add two or three teaspoons of rosehip syrup building up to about five, or slowly increase the proportion of juice to water to half and half. Have one tablespoon of goat's milk yoghurt or keffir five times a day. Unbuild temporary structures, clear altars, uncast circles.

Day three: During the day drink three glasses of rosehip syrup in water as strong as you like, or full strength berry or apple juice. Have two tablespoons of yoghurt or keffir three times a day. Eat two or three walnuts or other nuts, such as hazel, pecans or almonds (not cashews). Drink tisanes as desired using herbs such as mint, catnip, hollyhock flowers (especially if feeling jittery) borage, vervain, lemon balm, sage or thyme (but be careful of the latter until you are off the fast). Tidy and restore the site.

Day four: As Day Three but only two glasses of syrup or juice, and add an apple, pear or other fruit. Eat slowly with awareness. Wild fruits such as blackberries are to be preferred. You can also

begin nibbling herbs and salad vegetables in the garden if you have them. Tisanes or water as desired. Be aware of the depth of the fairy enchantment as it fades and you return to your material senses. Remind yourself not to delete the memory of it. Some of it will become more meaningful in retrospect.

Day five: Substitute for one serve of yoghurt or keffir a small bowl of porridge or meusli or a slice of wholemeal bread with unsalted butter. You can add a small amount of dried fruit and some crushed nuts to the porridge or have them separately. Have a glass of vegetable juice (unsalted) or vegetable cooking water with the midday serve of yoghurt. You could substitute a boiled egg for the second serve of yoghurt. Meditate on the enchantment of your everyday life and how the magic of the fairy retreat might enhance it or change it.

Day six: As day five, but increase the amount of nuts seeds and dried fruit, substitute a small lightly dressed herby salad for the vegetable juice, chewing slowly and appreciating every flavour, and have two eggs and three pieces of fruit.

Day seven: As day six, but add a piece of bread, and you can have a small piece of meat, poultry or fish or cheese with your evening meal. Hare, goat, or rabbit are good meat, but lamb will do. Most freshwater fish are wonderful.

Thereafter, you'll find your way into your own preferred diet, keeping the emphasis on natural uncooked or simply-cooked fresh foods, plenty of nuts and herbs, with meat not more than once or twice a week, and honey, not sugar, for sweetening, and herbal beers such as hops, horehound or ginger, flower wines and mead *pour aider la digestion*.

By adding or changing items one at a time, you'll begin to find your own body's responses to food and drink and events like music, films and parties intelligible and be able to use these stimuli not only to build and maintain health more successfully, but also to enable you to find the

most appropriate fairy wavelengths and stay on them for as long as you're comfortable there.

I advise against using refined sugar and stimulants, but I must admit that some fairies are easier to find if you're on a sugar high, and black coffee or coca cola facilitate communion with some kinds of elves (so does working with technology). But with proper meditation, for example yoga, and substituting very sweet, high-pitched music for sugar, and rock and roll or flamenco for coffee, you can do without these drugs (and live longer, too!)



CONNECTING COMMUNITY - LINKS AND EVENTS

DRUIDRY

The Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBOD):
www.druidry.org

Druidry Australia: www.druidryaustralia.org
*The website for The Order of Bards Ovates and
Druids in Australia.*

OBOD Druids New Zealand:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OBODDruidsNZ/>

Druidic Dawn: <http://www.druidicdawn.org/>
*A large hub of resources, discussion and online
community for druids.*

Druidcast: <http://www.druidcast.libsyn.com/>
*A monthly podcast from The Order of Bards
Ovates and Druids. Many hours of excellent
listening.*

PAGAN GATHERINGS

Australia

NSW

Pagans in the Park

Pagans On The Coast hold a monthly *Pagans In
The Park* picnic in Budgewoi, 2nd Sunday of
every month, 11am to 3pm at McKenzie Park (at
the end of Lake Street), Budgewoi, NSW.
(More details at
http://www.pagangatherings.com.au/pagan_gatherings_nsw.htm)

QLD

Pagans in the Park

A Meet & Greet picnic for local pagans to network
and socialise. This is an open event, all trades
welcome. Family Friendly. This event is FREE, we
only ask you please bring a plate to share with the
group. BYO Alcohol. Last Sunday of the Month at
Dayman Park, Urrangan (Hervey Bay)
Contact: Daina - fcptp@gmail.com

SA

Pagans in the Pizza Bar

Meet on the first Tuesday of each month at
Marcellina's, 273 Hindley Street, Adelaide, 8pm.
Socialising and dinner from 6pm; guest speaker at
8pm. Gold coin donation for non Pagan Alliance
Members.
(Visit <http://paganalliancesa.drak.net/> for more
information.)

New Zealand

Visit the International Pagan Federation in New
Zealand page at:
<http://www.nz.paganfederation.org/>

South Africa

Visit the South African Pagan Council:
<http://www.pagancouncil.co.za/>

South America

Visit The Pagan Federation International – South
America: <http://www.sam.paganfederation.org/>

The Pagan Awareness Network keeps a listing of
community events around Australia. If you wish to
advertise an event please let them know.
<http://www.paganawareness.net.au>

* * *

Thanks for reading SerpentStar.

We welcome all feedback.
Email serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

or write to:

v o wyverne
PMB2 Angaston
SA 5353
Australia

Next issue is Lughnasadh 2013.
Get those submissions flowing this way!
Peace and Awen. Ed.

Answers to questions: *Meadowsweet and
Pyrethrum of Commerce.*