

Serpent Star

Lughnasadh 2013

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



Photos from the 12th Australian OBOD Assembly, Beltana 2012.

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 Samhain issue: April 29th 2013.

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From the editor's quill...

Summer has indeed reached it fullness, at least here in Australia, where we've had some hot ones! And yet I can feel it now ever-so-slowly declining. The fires of the Sun have reached their peak at our recent Solstice (an exciting one, many have thought – 2012 and all that) and now the brightness of summer softens into the long red heat that will soon become the colours of Autumn. It seems only a short while ago that Summer began. Wow, time flies when you're a druid. Is that a many-layered metaphor? I will leave that to the reader to ponder among other things as the reflective season draws nearer. But for now, Lughnasadh! Celebration and feasting, dancing and games! The time of the tribe.

Lughnasadh traditionally marks the beginning of the harvest time. It is a harvest of what we have grown; the seeds planted in the Spring. It is a literal harvest of many vegetables and fruits, a basic delight of life, and so are the products prepared from these fruits, stored away for the coming darker months. And the harvest is also an inner experience; where we can reflect upon and enjoy the spiritual fruits of our own hard work. (We all work very hard as druids right? Indeed.)

With hard work follows the welcome balance of relaxation. Everything we do has its cycle of planting and growing, harvesting, and then not doing very much at all. We can honour this throughout the cycles of our life; the ongoing journey of magic and myth as the wisdom of nature is lived.

And so what bright and bounteous harvest will you find in this issue of SerpentStar? Adrienne from Spiral Dance tours with Damh the Bard, while Wyverne shares some shamanic wisdom. And there is a sad but hopeful tale about Wolves. This edition has poetry and prose and is picture rich.

There is also some most exciting news...

*May you enjoy the many sweet fruits of the harvest,
Todd*

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Dragonwyst, Teeth of the Lion
(chosen as a fitting image for Lugh – ed.)

THE 12th AUSTRALIAN OBOD ASSEMBLY

September 2012, Beltana, South Australia

A TRIAD OF TRIADS



Druids in the desert: heartfelt hospitality, firm friendship, soaring Spirit.

- James



Three ways in which Beltana feeds the soul: mountains, music and mysticism.

- Yasi



Three qualities the Morrigan teaches for survival at Beltana: integrity, authenticity, and a love of the land.

- Todd



Druids at Beltana, South Australia, 2012.

With a huge thank you to Ngatina and family and friends for organising and hosting this event.

WEAVING THE SONG LINES ACROSS MANY SINGING LANDS

**Spiral Dance's 2012 November tour to the USA
and UK.**

Adrienne, Spiral Dance

As I sit here on my verandah in the warmth of a summer's evening and watch the last of the day's sun making the leaves of the gum trees shimmer, I began to reflect on the last 20 years with my band Spiral Dance and the amazing journey it has been, sometimes an emotional roller coaster as all things are when they are your passion and so close to your heart, but 20 years of such incredible experiences and opportunities that I will carry with me always. Which brings me to our latest adventure – our overseas tour to the USA and then to the UK with Damh the Bard in November 2012.

Leaving Australia always makes me feel a little emotional even though the thought of a new adventure is on the horizon. Flying over the desert and looking down over the red sand hills and valleys I could almost see the Rainbow Serpent moving her body across the land. First stop for me - Brittany in France – a land I fell in love with years ago, fell in love with her legends, Celtic music and standing stones. I journeyed first to Paimpont Forest or better known as the magical 'Brocéliande', a place of Arthurian legend, the forest filled with oaks, beeches and many whispering broadleaf trees, a place of sacred springs. Legend tells that when the fae were driven out of the forest of Brocéliande the tears they shed formed the inland sea. I met an old woman in the forest who was gathering mushrooms, she pointed me to a tree that grew by the bank of the lake, a tree bent over leaning into the water with two trunks growing from it's base, one trunk almost laying on the other. I found out later from locals in a tabac in the nearby village that according to legend a jealous magician had turned two lovers into a tree, forever to hold each other by the side of lake – there's definitely a song waiting to be written there!! Then onto Carnac to walk among the standing stones, rows and rows of over 3000

megaliths standing in the fields, holding close their secrets.



Whenever I am away from my Spiral family I get itchy feet so it was time to play some music. Our first concert was in Florida, in the Ocala Forest complete with bears and alligators, where twice a year like-minded pagans gather for five days to celebrate Samhain or Beltane. We were playing for their Samhain gathering. It never ceases to amaze me that when we play our songs thousands of miles away from home I can look into the audience and there they are singing along, the lyrics obviously old friends to them. The ritual on the Saturday evening was truly beautiful and very emotional as I always find Samhain a very moving time, made more so with over 600 people holding flickering candles in the dark, remembering their loved ones on the other side of the veil.

We bid a fond farewell to our friends in Florida as it was time to head to Albion's shore! I had lived in the UK many moons ago, travelled there many times and it was the place where my spiritual journey began. It was always a dream to think that perhaps one day I might just get to perform in the UK with my band.

After a few days in the wilds of Cornwall, visiting the labyrinths at Rocky Valley, staying in Boscastle and spending time at the Museum of Witchcraft we made our way to Glastonbury. Driving from the West Country and then seeing the Tor in the distance filled us all with excitement. Glastonbury is a fascinating and spell binding

place, I don't think I have ever been anywhere quite like Glastonbury. Mystical, magical shops line the High Street and small side allies selling an array of beautiful pagan wares from Green Men to exquisite hand made incense. Hippies, Goths and spiritual folk all wandering the streets mingling with the locals. It's a crossroads for many paths, a place that still holds ancient power. We climbed the Tor, that strange and beguiling hill in a fine mist of rain and marvelled at the beauty of the countryside below and felt we had truly arrived at somewhere very, very special. Each of us carried a unique experience of our time on the Tor back down to the Chalice Well Gardens where we spent some quite meditative time sitting by the ancient spring, a place of peace and inspiration.



On Monday night the 12th November we headed to the beautiful Glastonbury Assembly rooms, a unique venue in the heart of Glastonbury built in 1864 and home to the very first Glastonbury Festival in 1914. The walls are beautiful raw stone with green men and stone faces around the walls bedecked with trailing ivy. When Damh the Bard

first booked the venue three months prior to our tour he was told that “no one goes out on a Monday night in Glastonbury ” but we arrived at the venue to hear those two fabulous words that all performers love to hear - ‘Sold Out’! There was a line of folk snaking their way from the front door down the street and around the corner. People had come from the Isle of Wight, Cardiff, Aberdeen and even three visiting Aussies from SA and Victoria!! The hall was jam-packed and the only dancing room was in the aisles!!

To play in Glastonbury with Damh the Bard as our first gig in England was mind blowing, both for myself personally and for us as a band. When I wrote all those songs over the years I never thought I would get to take them ‘home’, let alone perform them in a place so many of us hold special. I remember writing ‘Weaving the Summer’, standing on Mt Caburn, looking out over the English Channel on a chilly May Day morning in 1990, surrounded by the ring of Morris bells and never thought for a minute I would perform it with a band in the UK twenty two years later.



Whenever we play our music to a brand new crowd I get a little nervous – especially this time with us being a mob of pagan musos from Australia (although a few of us first generation from UK parents and two members are from the UK) singing songs about the sacred land of Albion, lyrics of myth and legend about the land of my ancestors. I needn't have worried at all, such a warm and welcoming crowd. From the very beginning of 'Woman of the Earth' everyone embraced the music, but 'Spirit Of Albion' clinched it ... a song they all knew and loved but with a different and rousing arrangement. We were joined by Damh who sang with us and from that point on we knew we were home. I felt humbled at such rapturous applause and sharing a stage with Damh is always an amazing experience but this time it was extra magical. After our set, Damh the Bard took the stage and wove his musical and lyrical magic. We packed down at the end of an incredible night and Damh and I went in search of late night kebabs – not an easy task in a small town in Somerset in the cold weather but our late night hunt paid off – I wonder if all musos are as hungry as we are after gigs? Up early the next day and after the full catastrophe English breakfast we journeyed via Stonehenge to West Sussex and the home of Damh the Bard!

The venue for the Tuesday's concert was a beautiful community centre complete with a 'village green' in Southwick, West Sussex. Damh and Cerri have run OBOD gatherings there in the past and the energy was perfect for our next gig with Damh the Bard. The doors opened and in trouped a mass of wonderful druid and pagan folk, the Pentacle Drummers arrived with Mythago Morris in tow, a ton of OBODies and even some more stray Aussies looking forward to catching Damh the Bard again. Another wonderful night where we felt like we had come 'home', a night of meeting new friends who now feel like family. Could we surprise them with anything new? Yep - Paul doing his Morris Jig to 'Weaving the Summer' certainly put smiles and looks of surprise on most of the faces. We may live on the other side of the planet but we are not that different really!!!



On Thursday we travelled via Mt Caburn and Wilmington, home of that fascinating hill giant the Long Man of Windover Hill, and the place where Anderida Gorsedd hold their public rituals, to Hastings Old Town for our next concert. Hastings was home to me many years before and I was so excited to be going back. Hastings with its tiny twiterns and centuries old buildings, its pebbled beach front where the tiny fishing boats cluster, the net sheds and the old Fisherman's Chapel where Jack in the Green emerges on May morning to be greeted by green-faced bogey men and wild women in tatter coats. The Stag Inn in All Saint's Street is the oldest pub still open in Hastings. Dating from 1540 with whitewashed walls, oak beams and winding passages. It's famous for its mummified cats and the story of Hannah Clarke the witch who lived there in its early days. There is even a local Morris side named Hanna's Cats in honour of its history. A set up in the inglenook for this six piece band with a drum kit was cosy to say the least but I suspect we had more space than most of the folk in the pub. Packed to the rafters was an understatement and to be singing about the Hastings Jack in the Green, a song I wrote years later in Adelaide was a very special moment for me and many of the Bogey boys who were there that night.

The Stag, filled with Green Man and Pirate paraphernalia has some strange goings on – they have paranormal researchers visiting regularly to monitor the happenings – the most famous at the moment – the Landlord and Landlady have five

cats, they lock the rooms to keep the cats out but when Alan and Star go out and then return a little later, the cats happen to be in the rooms that they were locked out of. Star the resident Landlady even saw a door mysteriously open as she was winding her way up the staircase, saw the cat disappear inside and when she went to the door it was locked and the fat cat was on the bed inside!

Damh's and our final gig was the famous Witchfest International. Claiming to be the largest Pagan and Witch themed festival in recorded history. We didn't doubt the claim when we arrived at Fairfield Halls in Croydon, London and found the place brimming over with folk from many pagan and spiritual paths and the atmosphere was electric. Cerri Lee set up her stall of beautiful Goddess sculptures, tee shirts, artwork and acorn incense holders in the vendors' hall and we set up along side Damh and thankfully did a brisk trade in CD sales. Damh had just released his latest CD 'Antlered Crown and Standing Stone' and folk were queuing to purchase and have it signed!!

What followed was a full day and night of workshops, talks and music. Professor Ronald Hutton, Damh the Bard, Carolyn Hillyer, Tylluan Penry and Vivianne and Chris Crowley were among many of the great and the good giving talks. Finally the evening arrived and we were lucky enough to be sharing the stage with other great pagan acts such as Pythia, The Dolmen, Cephalodidge and Damh the Bard to name a few. An amazing night at an amazing venue. We left with a feeling of immense happiness and satisfaction. Time for another late night hunt for kebabs!!

We spent a night of story telling with Ruthie and Gary Colcombe, hosts of the Celtic Myth Pod Show, a lovely couple with a vast wealth of knowledge and passion when it comes to the Celtic myths and legends. We left their home with our heads filled with wonder.

The end of our tour saw the last remaining members of Spiral Dance travel with Damh and Cerri to the beautiful county of Wiltshire, to Avebury Stone Circle, Silbury Hill and The West

Kennett Long Barrow. The energies in this part of Wiltshire are very alive; you can feel it when you walk around the stones and the wild and wooly day with the wind whipping around our faces added to the atmosphere of this magical landscape. Seeing clouties and ribbons tied to branches and twigs of a beech tree reminded me this was still a sacred place.



We'd had had such a wonderful and exciting time travelling and spending time with Damh the Bard and Cerri, but the Great Southern Land was calling and it was time to return home. We sadly said our farewells but knew this wasn't the end of the adventure for the adventure will go on when next we meet and I have a strong feeling that will be in the not too distant future.

SUBMISSIONS NEEDED

To nourish the growing Southern Hemisphere OBOD community, we welcome your contributions (we cannot publish without them).

Stories, articles, photography or artwork, news or events, recipes, reflections, or reviews, anything else druidically inspired. Keep in mind Samhain is the theme for the next issue.

Let your inspiration flow this way.

Contribute to **SerpentStar**
(serpentstar.obod@gmail.com)
or via post (see details on the first page).

DAMH THE BARD 2013



Sponsorship for Damh The Bard

Plans are afoot to bring Damh the Bard and Cerri Lee back to Australia this October/November 2013. Damh will be performing concerts in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide culminating with a weekend Beltane Camp being held in the beautiful Adelaide Hills and being facilitated by Damh and Cerri,

We are looking for 120 sponsors to donate \$50 each so if you would like to be a 'Damh the Bard Sponsor' and help bring this amazing couple back to our Great Southern Land then email info@spiraldance.com.au for more details. Or if you'd like to donate directly you can do so via Paypal.

Paypal log in details are sponsordamh@spiraldance.com.au and make sure you leave your name and email address so we can keep you up to date!
Bright Blessings
Adrienne
Spiral Dance

POETRY'S HAZELS

NIGHTWIND

Marian Mason

She comes to me
In the still of the night
Caressing my body
In the pale moonlight

She's wild and she's wise
And she whispers to me
Of the magick of stones
And the wisdom of trees

Tales of the Old Ones
Brave heroes unfold
The Awen is chanted
Songspells are told

The power quickens
My spirit flies free
To ride with the Nightwind
To dance with the Sidhe.

* * *

WHO IS IT?

Polly Lind (2000)

Is it the maiden of the Goddess?
Setting the passion afire, that you sleep with
Whose arms encircles you,
whose breast you rest your weary head

It is the warrior of the Goddess?
That shows you the strength of courage,
Who demands the truth,
who inflicts the pain hidden deep within

Is it the mother of the Goddess?
That replaces your fear with love,
Who wipes away the tears that you shed
who bandages the wounds you have suffered,

Is it the crone of the Goddess

that reflects you from within
Who finds the scars that have been hidden;
whose arms hold you in your final rest

No

I, I am the Maiden
Whose passion set you afire
Whose comfort you sort in my arms,
whose breast you rested your weary head.

I, I am the Warrior
Who demanded the truth,
Who showed you strength
Who inflicted the pain hidden deep within

I, I am the Mother
Who replaced your fear with love
Who bandaged the wounds you suffered
Who replaced your rejection with acceptance

I, I am the Crone
That reflects you from within
Who finds the scars that you have hidden
Whos arms will hold you in for final rest

* * *

WHY A DEERHOUND

Lady Cu' (2012)

A wee mite that fits in your hand
Mushrooms to look like a Deerhound at 6 weeks
Sort of
The angel comes to its new home

Beds wrecked
Table corners chewed
Leather lounge mangled

But those eyes make you melt
The cheeky face that's says
But don't you love me

The food bill sky rockets
The deerhound grows overnight
One day the baby is full grown

You wonder where the time has gone
Where are the gangly legs?
Floppy ears are gone as well



You sit back and admire
The handsome face
Well muscled body

The cool calm outlook
With the odd crazy time
The joy of the Fav café

Fun in the park
Weekends with the grannies
The luxury of mum and dads bed

Well we must have our portrait painted
Our friend Helen Wells was just the lady
We like her

She comes to visit
We like her place too
Its fun

We sit on the lounge with her
Lick ears
Try and pinch food

What a trick life is
We just live it to the full
We like people to love us

We know how to be gentle with the shy ones
Kind to the fearful ones
Who says Deerhounds are dumb

We are very thoughtful
Intuitive
Fantastic

THE FOAM, THE FISH, AND THE SAND

Kacey Guy Stephensen

Friendships from the past, ghosts of Winter last and Spring just gone. Friendships like flowing currents change with the seasons held encapsulated by the mind. Oh who is it who misses the heart of the true noble friend? The moment roles on... life's waves turn up white foam and sprinkle sand down upon life just as fish is salted or a heart is separated into granules of sand.

Community is a thing which can last as the wave, the foam never survives.... no amazing feats of achievement or rank of class will ever survive the trueness of community. However friendships change or not the impact is still there like the foam upon the wave in the ocean. Sometimes the impact of new foams upon the sea cause the waves to get caught into their own waters, as often as it is that you swim in the waters the only thing that remains there after you're gone is the ocean.

To the solitary foam that floats to the shore...you may have a better chance of being noticed when the time is already gone. However dreadful the waves may look... one on his own is safer than in a crowd of panic stricken granules of sand. We have

all met fish who have pity in themselves to such a large extent that they lose sense of life, we have all met foams who float but don't catch the waves. We have all met sand that won't give in to themselves and who take over other granules of sand.

It only seems pointless when one steps back, a single foam on the ocean wave, and realises how stupid everyone has been acting. The single foam knows that every fish, foam and granule of sand feels just as left out as the lone hawk in the sky or the gold fish amongst hundreds of salmon. So in the end of it all, who can possibly be so sure?

The Gold fish knows he has others who are like him but have never seen them before, the hawk knows he has family in the nest but has no one of his age to agree with his sense of value. The salmon don't know who they are but in a group swarming around the gold fish who's trying to find his way. Oh woe to the beings that always need more; how they miss out, how they swim instead of float.



Aldinga Beach, South Australia.

NATIVE PLANT SPIRITS

A WAY IN

Vyvyan Ogma Wyverne

Because native plants have evolved for so long in the rich, myriad mindscape of this land, we relatively recent migrants have to learn new ways to find our way in to the spirit worlds that plants can reveal to us.

European plant spirit lore is basic to us, and we also have the wisdom the aborigines are now sharing, so that we can make ourselves intelligible to the plant spirits and their allies. Appropriation isn't necessary. It is simply respectful to understand what it means that the place you are in is goanna, ant or wallaby country and that some aspects of its life are under cosmic law which is still being administered (more and more peaceably) by aborigine dream-time spirits.

The Alcheringa is a way of categorising elements of the cosmic mindscape or matrix, and as such is in the public domain. Findhorn's idea of a deva, from Hindu folk wisdom complements the idea of dreaming, so it is extremely helpful to keep both in mind.



Mallee, woman tree

A dreaming is a constellation of potentialities. The deva is the dreaming's predisposition to manifest

those potentialities as living beings. When the mallee dreaming manifests as a tree, it is a mallee tree. When from the same category of latent qualities a human being manifests, that's a mallee woman. As an animal, the same spirituality manifests as a small marsupial, the marla, or rufous hare wallaby. It's also a place and a people. All mediate the earth mother complex. Both draw experientially from the same well-springs of cosmic experience.

The Aborigines talked of their dreaming places in the sky, just as European herbalism associates a celestial array with each plant, so it's a cosmic spirituality, not just an earthly one.

And while the Aborigines recognised that spirituality when it manifested in Australia, it naturally manifests as a full range of plants, animals, people and other entities throughout the world – and beyond. Nevertheless, many Aboriginal 'gods' recorded by early anthropologists are sheer post-romantic period fantasy. I invoke the biome not baiaime.

It is important to be aware that we are strange to the spirit people we are going to be interacting with, and that the living places, plants and other entities we are going to encounter on this journey are vulnerable. If we are crass or clumsy we might harm some of them, so they fear us. The nearer to the ground the more sensitive the politics, so always be courteous and sensitive in approaching a plant if you want to invoke the plant spirit, because they may flee out of their plant till you're gone if you are too eager and impatient for results. It helps to verbally promise humility and respect with exaggerated gestures, and I know from poignant experience how much it helps to confirm your participation in the 'sorry' process.

Most of us have highly evolved psychic senses, dormant perhaps, or awakening, or wide awake at least sometimes, which have evolved on other continents amidst other flora and fauna, under the richly various enchantments of a whole different array of fairies and nature spirits. Most of us will have had since birth a whole range of helpers and

guides and teachers in the worlds beyond. They too must be honoured and their gifts can be used to greatly enhance the whole experience of talking to plants. We are meeting Aborigine fairies for the first time and need to take things slowly and remain sensitive to their response – most people find them delightful to work with once you show them due honour.



Lichens on prickly moss

I fell haphazardly into the meditation that the following plan is designed to help you into in an orderly fashion. I made all the mistakes, incurred the wrath of all the fiercest fairies, unwittingly terrorised beings till I was forced to see them, and generally speaking, I rushed in where angels fear to tread. Not all these steps will be necessary every time. Some can be glossed over sometimes. Others might need to be dwelt on. It's a matter of honing your instincts and crafting your own path.

Here's my step by step plan:

1. Centre yourself. Be aware of who you are. If you like circle magic, cast or imagine a circle around yourself and let yourself be drawn to its centre. Otherwise, meditate for a few moments on the inner peace you find within you, that you recognise as your own. Know who you are, love who you are, and let yourself live vividly in the moment.
2. Attune. Attunement is an on-going process. It begins at birth or upon taking up residence in the land and continues throughout life. With or without intending to, we are continually cultivating an awareness of where we are, what our contexts are and what surrounds us, and the way we fit in. Mental attunement involves knowing, and improves with everything you learn. It can involve being aware politically, socially, ecologically, as an animal in the landscape, as a fairy among the fairies and as a dreaming among dreamings. Emotional and spiritual attunement are sometimes more subtle, but whether we are articulate about it or not it is happening. Becoming conscious of that process enables us to give it more energy, more space, to nurture and cultivate it, to bring it under our control.

While we attune to the environment, the environment attunes us to it and we attune it to us. It can be more or less perfect attunement – no need to strive for it, because when you express a need for it, all nature responds helpfully. Be aware of sacred landscape, both Aboriginal and settlers. Make contact with local spirits through reading about them, making shrines and servicing them, and sending kindly thoughts ahead of you as you walk in the land. It is not necessary to have visited Uluru, but it's helpful. Eat local plants – bush tucker. Live locally, camping out if possible, beneath the stars is best. Or

if gardening in the suburbs, research the area to which the plants you wish to know about are native and try to visit it if possible.

3. Shift into ritual mode. A bard or ovate might take a wand or don a special hat or costume that gives a visual indication to the spirit beings who watch us. A druid might pull on a robe. Announce sacred time and sacred space and orient yourself to the new enchantment, maintaining an awareness that the fairy worlds are already abuzz with the news of you and arriving in orderly or disorderly array to watch, participate and guide and assist the magic. Announce in words, preferably spoken out loud, who you are.



Edible waterbush berries

4. Obtain the consent and blessing of the beings who guide and guard you by name if known. These would include ancestors, soul-group members and spirit friends, spirit guides, guardian angels, watchers and helpers. If you are this far in, no doubt you have Aborigine spirit guides at the ready. Whether you are actively aware of them or not, acknowledge them, invite them in and ask for their blessing and consent.
5. Address the continent. Australia for example is a separate creation, an entity with decided ego boundaries, and a unique soul and spirit all its own. You might see it as a map, or as viewed from a satellite, or

let images and events from your experience of travelling through the land or dwelling in it or studies done on-line or from books pass through your mind – people and animals, city and country, Australia. In a couple of sentences, ask for the inner dreamtime spirit of the land to help your magic. In effect, you are offering yourself as a shaman to unfold the mysteries of her manifestation and to learn to use her latent magic for the benefit of the planet and beyond.

6. Honour Uluru and ask a blessing of power for the quest (she can withhold it if she fears you). The aborigines insist that she fell as an egg from the sky, and though science has other theories, it is not impossible that the continents arrived on earth one after the other as moons that circled long enough to attune and then fell into the ocean at the time of the massive extinctions noticed in the fossil record. Highly controversial of course, but it does help to let go of scientific dogma, which is constantly under review anyway, and be open to the magic of spirit communication.
7. Now zero in. Acknowledge the country or cityscape you are in and in a sentence or two, tell it who you are and what you are doing. The area may be as small or large as you experience it as being. It helps if you establish a grove, temple or sacred garden, and give it a name which you can tell to the spirits who attend magic rites. Ask for guidance into the magic of the plant or place or animal etc. Let images of its people, places, trees and animals, and memories of feelings and impressions fill your mind, and address this myriad collectively, as the spirit of the place, rather than trying too soon to invoke a personification. It has its own will, and after years of ritual and daily rapport it will show you its own array of personifications, tailored to your own needs.

For example, as I enter Adelaide on a bus I ask the city to guide and protect me and help me get around in what is for me unfamiliar territory. This has changed going to town from a rather fraught ordeal to a happy and enriching gala day. On its own such a rapport can make a real difference to how you feel about living or being in an area. From greater to smaller, shift your awareness to your own locality within the greater area, to the garden or spot you are in and then narrow your focus to the plant or group of plants you are aiming to commune with.

All this can be wordless. Some people with busy, chattery brains might want to photograph, sketch, or sing to the plant, or play music, or dance with it. Others skilled in meditation will easily find their way to a shared silence which can be more articulate than words themselves, imparting inspiration that will later unravel in dreams, fantasies, stream of consciousness and your personal omenry - anything from a sense of friendship to a detailed awareness of the inner chemistry of the plant. It's at this stage that you are likely to encounter plant spirits that appear human-like, but with barky skin and twiggy limbs, or flower fairies, tree spirits and the land fairies from round about. Native plants are just learning to form and interact with these European types. They can guide us to the Tuckonies, or Aborigine diminutives, with whom many of them work hand in hand.

8. Ask the deva to commune with you. This is often not really necessary, but you don't know for sure until you get there. Feeling nervous and humble, I was originally a bit scared of my own temerity in addressing the sandalwood tree like that, even though I had faithfully followed instructions in the Ovate gwersi of the OBOD course. Would it be aware of me? Would it understand? I was invoking it as a living tree, a

dreaming, a mythos, a symbol, an individual and an object of scientific interest, and I feared I might be crashing into its inner peace with less than finesse. But it held me still and stilled my mind until I received in clear detail its words: '*I am an awareness... you are called to this work*'. By this I understood that it was not my temerity that brought me to its feet, but the need of this land for its shamans. It will awaken us if we give it half a chance, and if we are patient and committed to 'the good of all beings' it will make good, useful shamans of us.



Moonah, or old woman tree

9. Finally, hug the tree or bush, or cup loving hands around the small plant. The deva will not need explanations, and many fairies and plant spirits will read your emotions accurately without help, but the less human the observer, and the more distant from human forms and mentality, the more it becomes important to make big displays of your emotions. Pixies will want to see big grins, and much happiness, because they fear that they may frighten us, and make us think we're going insane if they're with the wrong person. Reassure them with gifts and outspoken words of welcome and delight in their presence if you become aware of them. Fauns will need to be reassured that you are not prejudging some beings such as devils to

be evil and trying to eliminate them. All species are due respect and kindness, even the angry or enraged ones that are sometimes encountered. There are no evil demons, just some entities with whom we have not succeeded in making peace. If you maintain peaceful attitudes to all, success is sure to follow.

So happy wild-crafting. A world of magic awaits you!



Sandalwood, guardian male

AN EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT!

There is a rumour building, that is slowly being confirmed and organised and further details are on their way, and it is this:

The Australian OBOD Assembly 2014 will include a visit from the OBOD Chosen Chief, Philip Carr-Gomm, and Scribe of the Order, Stephanie Carr-Gomm!

The date is being set for early February 2014, and a venue in the Byron Bay Hinterland is being organised, thanks to Ngatina.

If you would like to sponsor Philip and Stephanie's expenses in Australia, please contact Cherry at nimueart@bigpond.com.

The organisational team is seeking someone to take on the *important role of catering organiser*. You know how much druids love food! Contact Elkie or Trudz at the address below, if this be you.

Transport advice is being organised, thanks to Murray. Reilley has the Bardic Eisteddfod plans under way.

There is a mailing list too for bringing this event to fruition, so if you'd like to be added to it, contact Elkie or Trudz; details are below.

More details will appear in SerpentStar soon.

For further enquires:

Elkie whitelk@bigpond.com

(before mid-Feb 2013 and after June 2013 - Feb 2014)

Trudz: trudyrich21@yahoo.com

(between late Feb 2013 - June 2013).



Photo above: Jimmy Jones, Wolves (06, 775 and 774) in Yellowstone National Park

LAMAR VALLEY PACK

Lady Cu'

Pete and I are fairly average Australians and we live in a small country town near Melbourne, Australia. Pete is an emergency call-taker, and motor racing is his passion along with the natural world around us. I am a nurse and my passions are a toss-up between Scottish Deerhounds, Wolves and just soaking up nature. Our two Scottish Deerhounds are our caretakers, of course.



Peter Minahan, Tazie & Laird at home

We save hard to travel both overseas and around our own country. We favour National Park holidays and try to avoid cities, and during August

2011 we travelled to America. The highlight of our visit was Yellowstone National Park (YNP), and the 4 days we spent watching The Lamar Valley Pack. We viewed them feeding on a kill, with 06 making many return trips to feed her pups, 755 making secret food stashes, 754 taking extra care of the pups, and the yearlings also taking pup duty. To hear a wolf howl in the wild just surpassed any experience I have had, and to then see them left me speechless.

On our first sighting we were both very emotional, as we had really wanted to see this pack but had been talking down the possibility, and then on the second last day we saw the pups, tears welling up again. It is just not possible to put into words. Suffice to say we were both well and truly hooked on wolf watching after those 4 life-changing days.



Doug McLaughlin, 06 taken in 2012 from "the ranch" in Yellowstone National Park

The other amazing thing about our time in YNP was the people we met. Rick the ranger, what a devoted man, what knowledge he possesses and takes time to share, with any who are interested. We met a couple from Oregon who shared their viewing scope with us and Kathy Lynch who again shared her scope. These are people we connected with and have remained in contact with. Before we left YNP we were planning our next visit, to see the Lamar wolves again and our new found friends. When we returned home I subscribed to Yellowstone Reports and checked out the site most days to keep up with the Lamar Pack.

Mid 2012 we booked in our 4 weeks annual leave for our return trip covering Aug/Sept 2012 with YNP our primary aim. And how excited were we, when the 2012 pups put in an appearance, and as they grew, to see photographs of this young growing pack as they followed 06 across their territory. We waited anxiously as the Mollies (a neighbouring pack within YNP) made incursions, and lamented any lost wolves, but they died doing what wolves do. We were full of hope for this Lamar Pack with 06 at the helm, Druid blood in her veins, hunter extraordinaire, she ruled with a softly padded iron paw. (The Druids were a formation pack as part of the reintroduction of wolves into YNP)



Doug McLaughlin, 06 taken, in 2012 at "soda butte midway" Y.N.P.

When we heard of the death of 754 we were devastated, angry, not understanding at all why a

wolf with a collar would be shot. What use is such a pelt? I grew up in a hunting family, a very poor hunting family. We hunted for food and pelts to buy food and clothes. I was raised to kill only what was needed for survival, to make a quick clean kill, not to waste anything and not to leave paddocks or bushland littered with carcasses. So why kill a collared wolf, or any wolf for that matter? Why is it so hard for some to embrace what is so much part of their country, to take simple joy from seeing native animals wild, free and alive. How many of us now truly need to hunt for survival in so-called civilised modern countries?

The loss of 754 would be felt by the pack, the young ones especially I think, but our horror was magnified by the loss of 06, another collared wolf. Now we really feared for the survival of the pack, but they reappeared in the valley, appeared to be hunting successfully, then off over the hills they disappeared again. Over here in Australia we have been waiting patiently, then with increasing anxiety. Now we hear there are grave fears all have been shot, with the exception of 755 and the two girls. Given they are the only 3 wolves from Lamar that have been sighted in many days it seems our worst fears may well be true. Will these three be able to hold it together?

I want to cry, beat my breast, and scream out why??



Doug McLaughlin, 2012 from, "the Ranch" of 06 and 753 in Y.N.P.

Another day on and it seems hope is lost for the remainder of the Lamars. I feel this is not just a tragedy for the Lamars and all those who follow them, but for humankind and all those we seek to dominate. Why this primaevial fear of wolves or any wild animal? How many humans die from wild animal attacks world-wide on a yearly basis? How many humans die yearly in motor car accidents alone? How many farm animals are proven to die from predator attacks per year? Are not these losses compensated for? Do we want to leave our children and grand-children a world void of bio-diversity? Is the destruction of predators really our choice to make?

So many questions I know, but please think on them. Here in Australia we have significant problems with livestock losses from Wild dogs. Many of these animals are domestic dogs gone wild, or domestic dogs that have bred with the wild Dingo. These are large aggressive animals that have put at risk the purity of the Dingo. Animals such as these do need to be controlled. But also we need humans to be more responsible in pet ownership to try and minimise this happening. We also have problems with foxes taking lambs and poultry. The fox is an introduced species that again does need to be controlled, as do domestic cats gone wild. Both domestic cats and foxes cause untold damage to our native animals, birds, reptiles and insects.



Doug McLaughlin, 2012, at "trashcan" of 754 in Y.N.P.

Please wherever you live consider taking any small action that may help protect your native wild-life and environment. We only have one world - please take care of it. We little people do have the power to effect change. Sign petitions, write letters, make donations, give your backyard over to native bird life, it all helps.

As I write both 06 (alpha female) and 754 (beta male) have been shot by hunters, on the missing list are middle grey (2.5 years old), 2 black female yearlings, 1 grey female yearling, 2 black pups and 2 grey pups. It seems that only 3 pack members have survived this year's hunt, 755 (alpha male) and 754's brother, 776 and 820, both of whom are 755 daughters. With the mating season approaching this poses difficulties as wolves are reluctant to mate with close relatives. For 3 wolves to survive in terms of hunting is a problem, but these 2 girls do seem to have a lot of their mothers strengths, hopefully they can rebuild the pack.



Jimmy Jones, 06 in Y.N.P.

I hear arguments that it is letting our ancestors down if large predators are allowed to thrive in the natural world. Well, we live in a different world now.... supposedly more civilised, educated, with more scientific based evidence. I don't see this in much of the anti-wolf argument. How about not letting our descendants down? How about leaving a magical world for those who will follow after we are gone? I would like our descendants thanking us, their ancestors, for leaving them a world full of bio-diversity.

Our ancestors survived because they were in many ways flexible and forward thinking. Looking for

new and better ways to do things, I believe often misguided in what was done, but they possessed these skills. We need to reclaim them and channel them to leave our children a better, healthier world.

I love wildlife, I love all life, and I love to see animals in the wild in their native natural environment. I want others to be able to experience the thrill of seeing a wolf in the wild, unfettered by man. I want my descendants to see Black Cockatoos flying over our home and stopping off to feed in the wattle trees. I want them to hear frogs croaking at night, cicadas chirping at dusk. I want this and so much more, please go out and spread the word, instil love and acceptance in the hearts of others.

Whaaaa, I just found out the remainder of the Lamar Valley Pack have been sighted with the exception of one, who may have been killed or just not seen. I had given them up for dead; there has been some magic worked, a jig has been done, a few tears. I cannot begin to imagine how those in the Park must be feeling right now, soooo, soooo happy. I can't wait to get back to YNP later in the year, this has put new spring in my step.

I would like to give special thanks to Doug McLaughlin from Silver Gate for sharing his photographs with me for this story. Doug is in the park most days photographing the wolves and other wildlife.

Special thanks also go to Jimmy Jones for being prepared to share his photographs for this story. He is a regular photographer and supporter of Wolves.

Both men received an email from a stranger in Australia and openly shared their work. This is a gift all too often not freely given.

A QUESTION, O LEARNED DRUID...

Some more plant pictures to test your herbal lore.

Can you identify this plant?



A clue: It's an angel.

And this?



It may look familiar; it's from Japan.

The answers are on the last page.

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 - fcpitp@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 Samhain 2013.
Finally, some cooler weather on its way!
Peace and Awen. Ed.

Answers to questions: *Angelica and Creeping
Juniper.*