

# SERPENTSTAIR

Newsletter for members of The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere



## Samhuinn Edition

# About **SERPENTSTAR**

**SERPENTSTAR** comes out four times a year at each of the Fire Festivals, Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhuinn.

Opinions expressed in **SERPENTSTAR** are contributors' own and not necessarily opinions of the editor or of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.

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Contributions are eagerly sought for future editions. Whether you like to create masterpieces in the Kitchen, with paper and pen, a camera, or you've read a relevant news article or some links of interest. Maybe you've created your own Sudoku, or you've written a piece on Druidry, we can use it all.

Please email [ladya.serpentstar@gmail.com](mailto:ladya.serpentstar@gmail.com)

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## *From the Editor...*

Greetings, and welcome to the Samhuinn edition of Serpentstar for 2011.

This issue we have some fascinating articles from Vyverne and Aurora, and a delightful, and inspiring story from Steve on Autumn. As the days continue to lengthen, I find it is indeed a time for reflection and renewal, a time for lovely hot baths and reading on the couch, snuggled under a blanket. It is also a time of the year, that personally I find hard to motivate myself.

Recently I was visiting a local healer, and she has a picture of a religious figure from a spiritual path that my parents "brought me up in." I'd found myself having feelings of guilt in the past, about no longer following that tradition and angrily, looked at the picture and said "What! What do you want from me. Leave me alone!" And clearly in my head I heard a voice not of my own, telling me that for this life, Druidry is my path. That all my experiences with my former "spiritual path" were to lead me here and would increase my learning and knowledge. To be at peace with the path I'd chosen. It was a tremendous feeling of relief and restoration. Staying in touch with local druids and using the online forum have been a great inspiration and support, including communicating with my tutor. I strongly encourage anyone to make sure of the tools we have, and if possible, try to come along to the Druid Assembly. I can't contain the feelings of excitement and anticipation I have for that weekend, I know its going to be a magical, joyous time. This month of May, those of us in Australia have the opportunity to see Spiral Dance and Damh the Bard performing live. Those who are looking to attend Sydney, please see the Events page regarding a change of venue.

May the path before you be clear and may you find comfort, healing and enlightenment in these longer, winter days.

Bright Blessings under the Southern Stars,

Lady A

# *An Australian Wheel of the Year... Aurora*

*The following is a seminar written by OBOD member Aurora, as part of the "Treasure Trove" seminar series on the OBOD forum.*

Hello from the Southern Hemisphere,

I thought for my turn here on the Treasure Trove I would share what I've learnt about the wheel of the year as I experience it here in Oz, specifically the Western Sydney area. As I have found that the traditional Northern Hemisphere wheel didn't really fit the landscape that I experience here all that much, the whole part about snow and the earth being bare and the fact that the harvest is in one particular season is something I've never experienced. And yes that means snow is a foreign object for me!

So the Northern Hemisphere wheel was very useful in that it got me to notice and pay attention to the land around me and which led me to see how it did and didn't fit.

As a result of this my wheel has three parts:

- \* The astronomical solar cycle of the Summer/Winter Solstices and the Spring/Autumn Equinoxes.
- \* The cycle of the native plants and animals and peoples of the area that I live in.
- \* And the agricultural cycle of the European settlers as it has been adapted here.

## The Solar Cycle

The solar cycle of the equinoxes and solstices happens here just on the opposite end of the calendar as experienced by people in the northern hemisphere (which is where the majority of written information on the topic comes from) and some of the imagery associated with these festivals is absent or not quite right

### Winter Solstice : June 22nd

The longest night of the year is now but the sun also starts its journey back to strength this day. A time to gather with loved ones to share warmth and comfort in the cold of the year. Also a good time to celebrate new beginnings.



### Spring Equinox : September 23rd

The light and dark are now in balance for a short time and the weather is starting to warm up and the days lengthen. A good time to reflect on the balance within our own selves and to acknowledge growth and change in our lives.

Summer Solstice : December 22nd

The longest day of the year and the time when the sun shines longest, usually marks the start of the hot and dry months when the sun's heat becomes searing and burning. Marks the start of a time of purification, cleansing and rest.

Autumn Equinox: March 21st

A time of balance between the light and dark times. The weather is cooler and more pleasant. A good time to reflect on what you learned in the fire time and to give thanks for the lessons you received. It is also a good time to start planning and acting on new projects and endeavours.

The Native Cycle

I was really inspired into looking at how the native year unfolds especially locally after seeing some of fellow OBOD member Julie's work on the native wheel near her home on the coast. I live about 30km inland from the coast and have noticed that there are differences even in that small amount of distance in weather patterns and seasonal cycles.

This is a table from her blog that compares observations of the seasons from various sources from around the country including many native aboriginal weather calendars

SEASONAL CYCLES FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
TRADITIONAL		LUGHNASSACH	MABON		SAMHAIN	YULE		IMBOLC	OSTARA		BELTANE	LITHA
COASTAL SYDNEY	FIRE	STORM	PEACE		MOON	HARDENING		FLOWER	WIND		BARKFALL	
DARUG - WEST SYDNEY	HOT/DRY		WET/COOL			COLD		COLD/WINDY	GETTING WARMER		WARM/WET	
MELBOURNE		HOT/HUMID STORMY	COOL/STILL MISTY			COLD/WET WINDY	WARMING FLOWERING		WARM/WET WINDY		WARM TO HOT	
TROPICAL NT	WET/RAINY	DRYING		HOT/DRY	DRY/COOL/FIRE TIME				HOT/HUMID		RAINS BEGIN	
CENTRAL NT	HOT/FIRE/RAINY					DRY/COLD					HOT/FIRE/RAINY	



I'd like to talk a bit about what happens during the 6 seasons of Western Sydney based on the original cycle of the D'harawal people. Below is a combination of personal observation & research on the native yearly cycle.

#### Cool getting warmer : Sep-Oct

The whole bush is a blaze of colour and scent now. There are birds everywhere squawking, screeching and chattering away as they gorge themselves on the flower nectar and the bees are pretty busy now too. A time of purposeful busyness and activity, a time to enjoy the world in the warming dry weather too.

#### Warm and wet : Nov-Dec

The weather starts to heat up now but is offset by the rains and storms that help refresh and nourish the land and people after the mass flowering times, Many native trees also start to shed their bark, branches and seed pods at this time of cleansing. Also the time that many insects start to emerge and become more visible.

#### Hot and dry : Jan-Feb

This is the time of heat, fire and reptiles. A time of purification, endurance and stillness as temperatures soar into the high 30's and into the 40's with very little rain to bring relief and fires are not uncommon across the landscape clearing away the old and discarded matter in the bush.

Any remaining seedpods are made and shed at this time and many seed eating birds and animals are more easily seen. Lizards and snakes symbols of transformation are easily seen basking in the fiery heat of the sun at this time too.

#### Wet becoming colder : Mar-Apr-May

The rains make a return and bring with them cooler and much more pleasant temperatures and life giving nourishing healing water to the land. Many plants have another short flowering and fruiting trees feed the many flying foxes that squeak and screech at night. The air starts to become clear and crisp again as the humidity of summer dissipates and dew can be seen and felt making the grass damp and encouraging the fungi to sprout and decorate the bush floor along with native orchids. A powerful time as spirit can be strongly felt in the land.

#### Cold and frosty : Jun-Jul

It's cold and there is not too much rain at this time of year so it can be very still and crisp and clear, but it is a time of new beginnings and fruitfulness as the wattle trees start to come into bloom with their fluffy yellow flowers and fill the air with a sweet scent and the honey eaters start to make their appearance to feast on the wattle and the other

flowers soon to come. Also the Humpback whales can be seen migrating north along the coastline towards their breeding grounds in the tropics where they will give birth. Which all coincide around the time of the winter solstice.

#### Cold and windy : Aug

It's still cold but the air is not still any more but is now full of movement and energy in the form of wind that can get pretty strong. This I feel is sign for us to get up, get moving, be creative and let thoughts, ideas and projects flow and start to bloom, Just like the rest of the bush does at this time of year.



## European Agricultural Cycle

The most important thing to know here is that you can always have something harvesting and growing all through the year outside in the yard, though something's may need help to survive especially in the hot and dry times when rain is scarce.

Generally though I feel you can group the plantings and harvesting into two major cycles, which I call the light and dark harvests. So named as they fall in the times of the solar cycles between the equinoxes when either light or dark is dominant in the sky.

So the Dark Harvest covers the period of planting and harvesting from around the Autumn equinox through to the Spring equinox when the time the sun spends in the sky is at it's lowest and would typically include plants such as the following:

Apples, kiwifruit, limes, nuts, pears, papaya, persimmons, olives, pomegranates, capsicums, Carrots, pumpkin, spinach, zucchini, bananas, plums, lemons, berries, beans, cabbage, mushrooms, squash, quinces, mandarins, Swedes, turnips, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, rhubarb, ginger, avocados, kale, sweet potato, grapefruit.

And the Light Harvest covers the period of planting and harvesting in the period between the Spring Equinox and the Autumn Equinox when the time the sun spends in the sky is at it's greatest, and would include plants such as:

Strawberries, asparagus, green onions, sweet corn, pineapple, artichokes, blueberries, cherries, mangoes, mulberries, carrots, leeks, tomatoes, peas, lychees, peaches, beans, raspberries, cucumber, eggplant, garlic, passionfruit, apricots, bananas, blackberries, currants, gooseberries, melons, Asian greens, red onions, salad greens, tomatoes, celery, okra, figs, grapes, guava, oranges.

This is kind of general as there are points at each end of the harvest cycles where there will be plants whose growing period starts in one cycle and finishes in the next and some plants have different varieties that will come to maturity at different times too. Overall though a great majority of plants will fit into the light/dark harvest pattern.

So I hope you found this interesting and inspiring.  
Blessings Aurora

### References:

Solstice dates by <http://www.archaeoastronomy.com/2011.html>

Frances Bodkin: D'harawal Seasons and Climate Cycles, © 2008

Jocelyn Howell & Doug Benson: Sydney's bushland: more than meets the eye, © 2000.

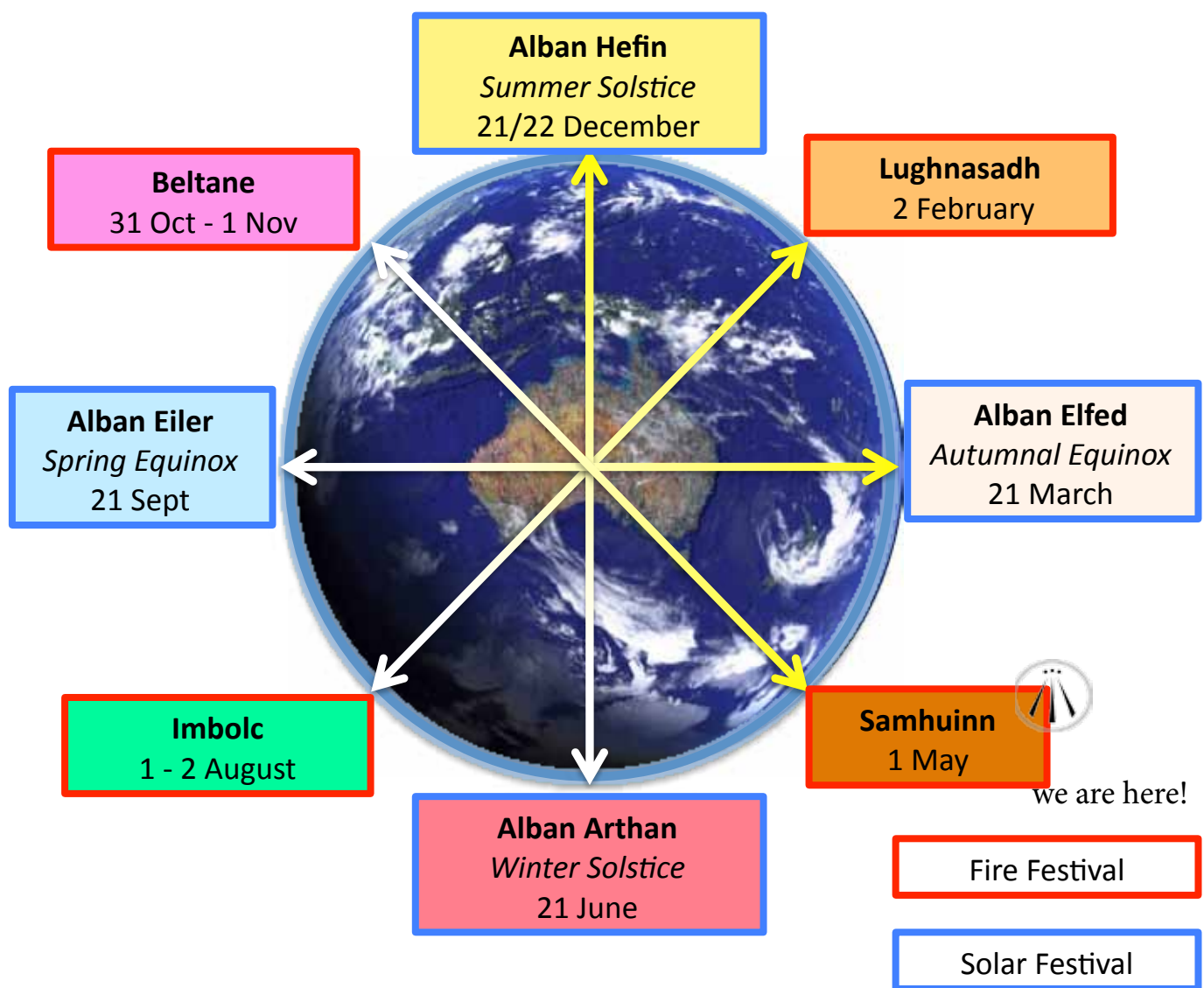
Julie Mills: <http://druidsdownunder.blogspot.com/>

Australian gardening calendar, Penguin books © 2005

The farmers market companion : finding and using seasonal produce in Australia, Penguin books © 2006.

And many observations and conversations with fellow people over the years.

# Celebrating the wheel of the year in the Southern Hemisphere



## Samhuinn

is the traditional Celtic New Year, and is one of the most magical times of the whole year. It is a time when the veil is lifted between the realms and earth. The spirits of the underworld were among the people for the night, and it was said that faeries migrated from the summer hillocks to the winter barrows on Samhain night.

Many of the traditions of [modern day] Halloween derive from Pagan & Druid customs. It is a time of prophecies, of disguising oneself to avert evil, of performing rites of protection from the dead and Otherworldly spirits. The ancient Druid practice was to circle the tribal Samhain bonfire with the skulls of their ancestors, who would protect the tribe from demons that night.

More information: <http://www.druidry.org/obod/festivals/samhain.html>



"You go home tonight to your  
home of winter  
To your home of autumn,  
and spring, and summer  
You go home this night to  
your eternal home."

"Sleep now, sleep, and away  
with your sorrow  
The sleep of the seven lights  
be yours, beloved  
The sleep of the seven joys be  
beloved."

"Death without fear, with joy yours  
and forgiveness  
As the sun of the skies pours  
its love on your body  
As you travel to the dwelling  
place of peace."

Sleep now, sleep, and away  
with your sorrow  
A death of peace and  
tranquility  
This night the brightness  
and summer time shall  
come!"

-Sharonne MacLeod NicMacacha



# Samhuinn History and Traditions

This is the beginning of the Celtic New Year. Samhuinn is Irish-Gaelic for 'the Summer's end', and is pronounced 'sow-in'. Samhuinn represented the death of the summer sun god, Lugh.

This festival celebrates Nature's cycle of death and renewal, a time when the Celts acknowledged the beginning and ending of all things in life and nature. Samhuinn marked the end of harvest and the beginning of the New Celtic Year. The first month of the Celtic year was Samonios - 'Seed Fall'.

Two Roman festivals became incorporated with Samhuinn - 'Feralia', when the Romans commemorated the passing of the dead, and 'Pomona', when the Roman goddess of fruit and trees was honoured. The Halloween tradition of bobbing for apples is thought to derive from the ancient links with the Roman fruit goddess, Pomona, and a Druidical rite associated with water.

Samhuinn heralds the beginning of Winter when the world starts to darken and the days are getting shorter - the 'dark half' of the year and the demise of the power of the sun.

Samhuinn is considered a celebration of life over death, and a time to remember those who have left the world of the living. Candles would be lit at the graves of loved ones. In Mexico family members light many candles around the graves of their loved ones and lay out special feast foods for the spirits, and remain there all night.

Halloween originates from the ancient Celts' celebrations and is based on their 'Feast of Samhuinn'. The Catholic church attempted to replace the Pagan festival with All Saints' or All Hallows' day, followed by All Souls' Day, on November 2nd.

The eve became known as: All Saints' Eve, All Hallows' Eve, or Hallowe'en. All Saints' Day is said to be the day when souls walked the Earth. In early Christian tradition souls were released from purgatory on All Hallows' Eve for 48 hours.

In order to protect themselves from any roaming evil spirits the Celts would appease them by offering them treats. The custom of wearing costumes on Halloween is thought to derive from the Celts disguising themselves at Samhuinn, so the spirits would think that they belonged to their own company. They could then communicate with the spirit world, known as 'souling'.

Source: <http://www.new-age.co.uk/celtic-festivals-samhain.htm>

How will you honour your ancestors this Samhuinn?

My late grandmother was very particular about having a proper cup of tea, from a teapot with a tea cosy, in a cup and saucer. Each Samhuinn, I make a cup of tea to her specifications, and reflect on fond memories of her whilst I enjoy the tea. LadyA

**on this night a hallowed eve  
spirits walking roaming free  
guide them with this glowing light  
they have no need to bring us fright**

**-ember grant**



# Animal intelligence.

vyvyan ogma wyverne

The main objection that rationalists make to the idea of communicating with animals more meaningfully than most people usually do with their dogs, cats and horses is that the animals are not intelligent enough. Science has always claimed to know that animals' brains are simply not specialised for complex thought and they have no brain centres specifically designed for the use of language. This objection rests on two assumptions: that intelligence depends on a brain, and is proportional to the size and complexity of the brain, and that the communication of complex ideas is only possible between beings with human-like cerebral intelligence.

But both these assumptions have been challenged in recent research into animal intelligence, surprisingly, in research relating to animals with very simple brains or no brains at all. Echidnas have exhibited extraordinary intelligence in tests devised by animal behaviourists, although their brains are very simple. Many stories are told about octopus intelligence for which no scientific explanation can be given.

Kangaroos also show intelligence – reasoning and rapid learning ability – about the same as a dog, but they too have small, simple brains for their body weight and so are not given credit for it – except by people who live with them in close contact.



People who work and live in close association with animals such as cats, dogs, horses, sheep, cows, elephants, seals and goats do not doubt that the intelligence of their animals is much higher than present day science can account for. Whales and dolphins with their brains rivalling human brains in terms of size in proportion to their body weight and degree of convolutedness are admitted to be highly intelligent, but it is clear to anyone observing them that they use their brains in quite

different, non-human ways until called upon by natural or artificial circumstances to become intelligible to human beings.

Understanding this is the key to understanding what limits human ability to see into and appreciate the intelligence of other animals. What we must understand is that human intelligence tends to be fairly narrowly focused on human affairs, is species-specific and conditioned by nature and experience to block most of the vast spectra of event and effect that constitute the fabric of reality. Human intelligence makes intelligible to humans that selection of sensation and inspiration that combine to make our very specific kinds of awareness. It is vast and rich to us but tiny in comparison with the infinitudes of data in our environment, mediated as it must be through the brain, with its limited array of logistical acrobatics that make up human intellect.

A death-adder must intelligence which to a death-adder the not narrower sensation and limited array of that make up intelligence. The



be assumed to have makes meaningful totally different but selection of inspiration and the logistical acrobatics death-adder human body is an intelligence

system that is tightly and complexly logical in very specific ways, and that necessitates a large much convoluted brain. The death-adder's body is designed to support an intelligence system that operates in ways ours does not, but there is no reason to suppose that it is more limited than ours.

We are evolving specialised organs of thought which are located in our brains, and we're enchanted by what's going on there. Unencumbered by such a noisy apparatus, do death adders make all their sensations dramatically more intelligible to themselves through their whole bodies, or through organs we haven't yet understood, than we do our sensations, blotted out as most of them are by the higher-impact activities of our brains? Cerebral intelligence in humans, intelligence beyond our ken in death adders?



Many psychics experience direct knowing through their life-fields things which their brains routinely filter out – force fields, auras, telepathy, and much besides.

Furthermore, studies of migratory birds and fish show that they share consciousness far more than large-brained animals do, communicating over long distances, and spreading newly devised solutions to problems very rapidly throughout whole species. This also bespeaks non-cerebral, i.e., non-human intelligence.

Any animal, human or not, can be seen as an individual, as a member of a culture or society – herd, tribe, localised population etc, and many societies make up a species. A multitude of diverse species make up our planet's biota, plant and animal. Event-sensitive beings (and even atoms are event-sensitive) are the experiential and intellectual faculties of our planet, and are therefore as diversely specialised for as wide and yet specific a variety of sensorial selecting as is necessary to constitute a planetary intelligence far greater than that of any one of its components and no doubt greater *in toto* even than the sum of its components.

Ant nests are examples of animals in which radically specialised individuals are inter-dependent in such a way that the colony behaves like a single animal made up of several hundred or more semi-individuals whose actions are concerted by the queen who is entirely dependent on them. Humans

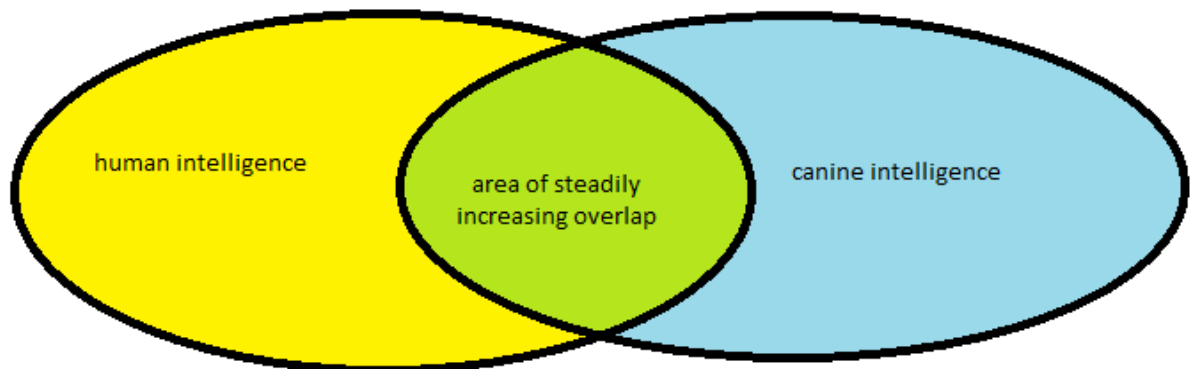


too can be seen in this way, although our socialisation may seem to be much more complex and flexible. The experience we mediate for the planet as individuals is mediated to her also by our cultures as a whole although it isn't easy for us to discern this as we are inside it. Our planet thinks, feels, dreams and experiences as much and as effectively through her jungles and buffalo herds as she does through her cities – but in vastly different ways.

We can communicate effectively with animals only to the extent that our experience overlaps with theirs. Look at the diagram. The yellow represents an unknown 'quantity' (some say



unfathomable). So does the blue. They may or may not be equal. The point is, we don't know. The green represents the area of overlap – of shared experience within which we can communicate.



Even if the overlap is small, we must question the arrogance that says that the other animal's intelligence always only extends as far as the green zone above and ignores the inevitability of there being a blue zone probably at least equal to our yellow one – and also the arrogance that says that only the other animal's intelligence has been extended by communing with ours. Ours is just as much extended by what we learn from them.

When we transcend this 'speciesism', we can begin to look for the animal's intentions to communicate with us, no longer imagining that all the intention is ours, the animal being passively receptive and responsive or not to our teaching. In their terms, we become a lot more intelligent!

# SUDOKU

## Some Silly Stuff....

Q. What do you call a fat jack-o-lantern?

A. A *Plumpkin*

Q. Why are there fences around cemeteries?

A. Because *people are dying to get in*

Q. Why do Egyptian Mummies make good employees?

A. Because *they are all wrapped up in their work*

Q. How do you make a milkshake?

A. *Sneak up behind a glass of milk & yell "Boo!"*

Q. What type of ghost haunts a chicken coop?

A. A *Poultry-geist*

Q. Why is a ghost such a messy eater?

A. Because *they are always a goblin*

	3	5	7					
		1	2	6			9	8
8			9			1		7
6					7	4	8	
	5		1		4		2	
	8	7	5					3
2		4			1			9
1	6			3	9	5		
					2	6	4	

## Wyverne's Crossword...

1	2	3		4			5	6	7	
8							9			10
11			12		13			14		
		15				16				
17					18			19		
		20		21						
			22					23	24	
25	26					27				
28				29		30				
31						32				
	33									

### Down:

1. Middle position.
2. Scrap of cloth.
3. Builds.
4. Carrying board.
5. Exists.
6. Rope-making fibre.
7. Exclamation of surprise.
10. Affirmativeness.
12. Suffering.
13. Uses ears.
16. Tidy.
19. Breaks.
21. Selenium.
24. Note after re.
26. Touched with a digit.
27. Furniture.
29. Be in debt.
31. Mineral spring.

### Across:

1. Artistic ability.
8. Listener.
9. Lather.
11. An ogham.
14. Which person?
15. Weeping.
17. Woman's name.
18. Direction.
20. Keep up.
22. Come together.
23. A French friend.
25. The thing.
27. Black marketeer.
28. Also.
30. Equines.
32. An ogham tree.
33. Dad.
34. Slanderous.

## *Steve's Autumn Story...*

In attempting to be diligent, attentive and focused Druids, sometimes we can stray from the path, loose our connectedness and become somewhat dis-enchanted. To find our enchantment again, sometimes we need to be open to some unusual inspiration from the most unlikely guides.

On a sunny and beautiful autumnal day, I was busy doing grown-up things around the house when I saw our five year old daughter striding outside with great conviction and in her hands she held an empty wicker fruit bowl. I wondered for a brief moment what mischief she was up to, but then dutifully went back to the grown up things.

A few moments later I heard a small voice behind me "Daddy, are seed pods important to druids?" I almost laughed with the innocence of the question, but luckily decided to treat the question with the seriousness with which it was asked.

"Oh yes, darling, seed pods on the ground in autumn remind us that the seeds have fallen to the ground and that they will turn into new life in the spring". That answer seemed to satisfy her. I looked up from my task to see her staring into the basket. I asked "What have you got there darling?"

"Oh, I put some seed pods in this basket for you and I also put some yellow leaves in because they reminded me of the sun". Now that really had me very curious indeed. So I looked into the basket and was instantly mesmerised. Beautiful brown seed pods scattered around spiralling yellow leaves. I was mesmerised, transfixed and spellbound. Such beautiful contrasting colours and so carefully arranged.

"That is beautiful my darling."

"Do you want to come with me Dad and get some other stuff?"

Needless to say, the grown-up stuff was put down and I followed my little autumn guide out into the sunshine. We found the most extraordinary things. A large discarded cocoon from what must have been a massive moth. We found some beautiful persistent blossoms of varying colours. And my guide picked some beautiful bluish green leaves and yellow blossoms from a lemon-scented gum. She held them to my nose and insisted I smell. The smell was incredible.

Maybe it was the concentration and intensity of the moment, but it was like I had never smelt a gum blossom before. It was a beautiful smell that must only occur just before the blossoms turn brown, like musty sweet pollen. We had a lovely hour or so walking the garden and connecting with the season through all our senses.



I have thought in the past about the whole 'not until your 18' rule of the OBOD course work.

Which I think is in place for a good reason. But maybe it is partly to protect the wisdom that the young already hold innately in their hearts. And maybe we do all this coursework and persistent ritual and grove work and circling to reconnect with that innocent childlike wisdom. I know one little girl who certainly had the time and inclination to help me reconnect with the seasons.

# EVENTS

## *Southern Hemisphere Druid Assembly*

**Thursday 19th May 2011**

**Spiral Dance + Damh the Bard (UK)**

The Folk Centre, cnr George Street & South Road, Thebarton, SA  
Gig starts at 7.30 pm; Tickets \$15 (\$10 concession)  
<http://www.spiraldance.com.au> | <http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/>

**Thursday 6th - Monday 10th October, 2011**

*You are cordially invited to the  
Eleventh Southern Hemisphere Druid Assembly*

*To be held at "Cooringal Grove"  
near Port Lincoln in South Australia*

*Cost: \$175 per person, children free*

*Join as we gather & celebrate and pay homage  
to Brigid and Manannan McLir*

*There will be three full days given to the  
Bardic, Ovate and Druid grades  
with arrival and departure days either side.*

*Further information: Rafayard -  
Ph: 0427 186 874 e: [rafayard@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rafayard@bigpond.net.au)*

**Friday 20th May 2011**

**Spiral Dance + Damh the Bard (UK)**

Bar 303, 303 High Street, Northcote, VIC  
Times and prices coming soon...  
<http://www.spiraldance.com.au> | <http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/>

**Saturday 21st May 2011 - CHANGE OF VENUE**

**Spiral Dance + Damh the Bard (UK)**

Bald Faced Stag Hotel, 345 Parramatta Rd Leichhardt, NSW 2040  
Concert starts 8 pm. Tickets \$35

Bookings are advised - preferably by 7th May

To book email [kellygarland13@optusnet.com.au](mailto:kellygarland13@optusnet.com.au) | 0435 899 948  
<http://www.spiraldance.com.au> | <http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/>

## International Celtic Gathering, Ontario, Canada.

22nd - 24th July 2011

The Celtic Gathering 2009 was such a smashing success that DruidicDawn.org is hosting the 2nd Celtic Gathering scheduled to be held on July 22nd to 24th 2011 at the Mansfield Outdoor Centre, Ontario, Canada. The Celtic Gathering is all about participation and fellowship if you would like to speak, perform, teach, then please let us know and we'll see what we can do. We can't guarantee everyone a slot, so we suggest you book sooner than later to give you every opportunity to "show and tell".

This fantastic event is being held at the best location in Ontario on 300 acres of mixed woodland. A unique opportunity to participate in various workshops centred on Celtic Beliefs and Druid Practices. To all of those who would like to know what a great event it was, have a look this video <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/2363>, and you'll see what we're speaking about. Places are limited, and we suggest you book now so that we can see you in July. The booking forms are on-line and let us know, if you wish to present and we'll endeavour to sort out the schedule to fit you in. Information available from <http://www.druidicdawn.org/node/1381>, looking forward to seeing you there!



Hello everyone, greetings from Cooringal.

Now is the time to make your commitment and let me know if you are coming to the assembly.

I am meeting with the chef soon to discuss our menu and I need to know numbers so that we can cater efficiently. Please fill in the enrolment form and send that along with your deposit to the address provided. Please feel free to ask any questions if you have them. I have decided not to use the music school for accommodation this year as two of the teachers run holiday programs.

If you don't want to camp, get online and google Pt Lincoln accommodation as there is a plethora of choice to suit every budget.

We are honouring Mannanan McLir and Brigid at this assembly. If you have ideas, can you run them past me so that we can try to fit things into the schedule.

To give you a bit of an idea;

Thursday - arrival day. Settle in, find your space and relax. The opening ceremony will be around 5pm followed by dinner. Catch up with old and new friends. Music in the evening.

Friday - Bardic Day - The Bardic grove will be held in the morning. After lunch we can get creative and do things to get ready for the ball. Ideas on decorations for the marquee please. I would like to have a special story telling session to open the feast and then we will dance, play and have fun. I hope you are thinking about your sea costume. Those not in costume will be sent to dig the latrines!!!

Saturday - Ovate Day - We are going to Greenly beach where we will honour the spirit of the place in a beach ceremony and also do the Ovate Grove ceremony. We will spend the day enjoying the beach. We will come home, relax, have dinner and have a quiet night of healing and inspiration in whatever form it takes.

Sunday - Druid Day - The Druid Grove will be in the morning. There is plenty of space at the moment for suggestions here of things that others may want to do while the druids are in the grove. Sharing and teaching others skills, could be a focus. Around 3pm we will have a mens and womens circle and then go straight into the Beltaine ceremony. After we have feasted I would like to have an evening circle where we philosophize on the question "How do we as druids contribute to the wider community?" Then we could share more music and fun around the fire.

Monday - Departure day. The closing circle will be around 10am. People are then free to do whatever they like. In the afternoon we could go to another beach for those that are still around.

We will have groups again to share the chores and a talking circle each morning after breakfast. These are two aspects of last year's assembly that worked really well, so we will continue with this tradition. So there is the basic outline. Time now to put thought into action.

Kindest Regards and Blessings of the Season, *Rafayard*



Cooringal Kyanite



Great Nesting Material



## The 11<sup>th</sup> Southern Hemisphere Assembly

To be held at Cooringal Grove, Nr Port Lincoln, South Australia

At the home of Dean, Rafayard, Aysha, Surya and Ari Gentilin and their assorted menagerie of dogs, cats, birds and alpacas

From Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October to Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011

I would love to come to the assembly at Cooringal Grove!

Name.....

Member/if so which grade? .....

Camping on site? .....

If no then I assume that you have made your own arrangements in town, which is 8 km from the farm and not on any public transport route.

Special dietary requirements? .....

Do you need picking up from the airport/bus stop ? .....

What is your time of arrival? .....

What is your time of departure?.....

Do you wish an initiation? ..... If so which grade?.....

Cost of the assembly is \$175 per person children, under 16 are free

Please send this form along with \$50 deposit to Lesley Gentilin PO box 1446, Pt Lincoln, SA, 5606 email [rafayard@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rafayard@bigpond.net.au)

The remainder will be due the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. You can pay in full with your enrolment form if you wish.

If you want to direct deposit please make sure your NAME is identifiable in the transaction so that I can trace you and let me know by email.

Acc name Dean and Lesley Gentilin BSB 013 423 Acc no 524 926 162

I accept full responsibility for myself (and children) in the case of any emergency and will incur no responsibility or liability towards the landholders Dean and Lesley Gentilin

Signed.....

There was a time when music was seen as a sacred thing. Consider for a moment a deep, reverberating musical note. A constant sound; a vibration that is contained within all life - within the very fabric of the Universe itself. This sound exists. It is the note at which the Universe vibrates. Scientists now have equipment that can tune into this note.

Consider another thing. Why is it that our major scale is made up of 7 notes running from A to G, and once we reach the eighth note of a scale we have reached the same note, eight higher? Why is it that the first, third and fifth notes in a scale sound beautiful to our ears and form the major chords, yet a first, second and fourth are horrible? Why is it that most songs are written around the same first, fourth and fifth chords of a scale? This is the basis of folk music, blues, twelve bar, and most modern pop tunes. To me this science is truly magical, the foundation of the Bard's Magic. By placing note, next to note, we are weaving a magic that is in tune with the Universe, and with the Gods. I'd like to take you on a journey, to the place and time when I first experienced this power.

I was sitting with my back against the trunk of an old Oak. It was early May and the bluebells carpeted the woodland's sun-dappled floor. I took a deep breath of air, filling my lungs, a sensation that was as sensual as tasting the best Champagne. It was my lunchbreak, and I was lucky enough to work so close to this special place. My spaniel dog sniffed around, then came and lay down next to me. I was here to commune with the Spirits of Place. One of the things that had attracted me to the Druid path was that it didn't view this Earth as a place to escape from. The idea that life was something evil was totally alien to me. The thought of reaching a state of enlightenment that meant I no longer had to return to Earth for future lives I found terribly frightening. It was days like these that I lived for.

I know that some people find silence the trigger for their connection to Spirit, and there are many times when I too find this the case. But on this occasion, I had brought my mandolin with me into the woods. I felt totally at peace, with the world, with myself, and with Spirit. I closed my eyes and began to play, not to anyone else but to the Spirit of this mighty Oak, and the nature Spirits whose space I was sharing. I played a D minor chord. Minor chords sound mystical, sometimes sad, and you'll find that most chants have been written in a minor key. A minor key can shift our consciousness into a place where we are open to the unseen world. I just picked around this chord for a while, listening to the notes as they carried on the wind, occasionally humming along, caught up in the moment. Another magical thing that music does is to bend time. Time becomes something very different whilst in this space. I'm not sure how long I was sitting there, just playing around with sound, but after what seemed like both a couple of seconds, and yet hours, I sang a line.

Gather round people, let me spin you a tale,  
Of a Mother's anger, and a curse doomed to fail.

I didn't stop playing the mandolin, but I did open my eyes. For a moment less than a second I saw faces looking at me from within the bluebells. Tiny shimmering lights sparkled, then were gone. Yet their impression was still there in my mind. Although I could no longer see them, I knew they were still there. I closed my eyes once more, a sweet sensation within my chest. I sang the line again....

Gather round people, let me spin you a tale,  
Of a Mother's anger, and a curse doomed to fail.  
Arianrhod's baby, whom she did disown,  
And Gwydion stole him, to raise as his own.

A song was forming from the moment. The sacred sound of the mandolin was blending with the note of the Universe, and voices were whispering to me, voices that seemed to come from both outside of me, yet I was hearing them inside my mind.

"Tell my story," She said.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am your muse, I am the Lady of Flowers, the May Queen, the Queen of Death, and the ghostly Owl of the night sky".

I closed my eyes, and felt the power of the Oak behind me, heard the whisper of the breeze within the branches, and within those whispers I heard Her voice once again.

Now the boy he grew to be strong and brave,  
But his Mother cursed him not to be given a name,  
When he cast a stone where a Wren it did land,  
She said, "The Young Lion has a Steady Hand!"

Then instantly, a chorus sang within my head. A chorus of voices that rang through the woodland, a chorus that I knew must be there.

Call the May, Call the May, Call the May, Call the May!  
Gather round people and Call in the May!  
Call the May, Call the May, Call the May, Call the May!  
Gather round people and Call in the May!

I had only written two other Pagan songs at this time, one had come to me whilst driving, the other as I walked through the woods like an ancient Bard, playing my mandolin, once again to the Spirits who would listen to the gift I offered them. This one, once more, came as if from nowhere. I knew the story that was being told. It came from the Fourth branch of the ancient Welsh book called the Mabinogion. I had learned the entire Four Branches by heart, to be able to tell them around campfires, under the stars, as part of my Bardic training. Now another aspect of the Bard was emerging, the telling of the myth, in the form of song.

The voices were singing once more. It was a cacophony of sound. I played along to the singing, and tried to listen for words within. A word here and there, but nothing to draw from, then...

So she laid upon him a new destiny,  
You shall never have any weapons unless given by me!  
A great and powerful man then came into my awareness. "This will not be!" he shouted.  
Then a mighty army by Gwydion's charms,  
Forced Arianrhod to give Lleu his arms.

A seething woman's face, twisted with rage. Turned to face me, her arms outstretched.

Then in rage and torment she laid down this curse,  
"He shall never marry a woman of the race of the Earth".  
Two cloaked figures entering the deep forest.  
So Gwydion and Math planned to foil her hate,  
And with the herbs of the forest, they twisted his fate.

Again the chorus rang out within the woodland. A thousand ethereal voices singing in total harmony.

Call the May, Call the May, Call the May, Call the May!  
Gather round people and Call in the May!  
Call the May, Call the May, Call the May, Call the May!  
Gather round people and Call in the May!

I had to open my eyes once more. I was exhilarated, I felt completely at one with the Spirits of the Woodland. The place felt joyous, the air was electric, it felt like something was changing. I played with the chords, keeping the energy flowing, sensing the dancing figures just outside of my awareness, within their realm. In a place where the sacred sounds of our worlds combine. I closed my eyes once more....

I saw a Grove deep within the woods. It was the dawn of Beltane, and around a vast cauldron, two magicians were chanting, occasionally one would add another herb into the brew.



So they gathered from the forest, from the Grove where they meet,  
Flowers of Oak, Broom and Meadowsweet.  
And uttering upon them a verse of power,  
A figure began to form from the flowers.

From within the cauldron, new life was forming. A woman of such beauty and radiance whose feet would bring life wherever they fell upon the Earth.

Oh rise and wake fairest Lady of Spring,  
Come and be wed to the Forest King.  
'Flower Face' is your name, sweet Blodeuwedd,  
You carry life, within your breath!

And she danced within the Grove, feeling the warmth of the dawn's rays upon her skin, a Goddess within the body of a human, her senses reeling with delight, as the voices chanted the verse of power.

Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet, come Hawthorn, come May!  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet, come Blodeuwedd, come wake!  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet, come Hawthorn, come May!  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet,  
Come Oak Broom and Meadowsweet, come Blodeuwedd, come wake!

Then joining in a chorus of celebration.

Call the May, Call the May Call the May, Call the May!  
Gather round people and Call in the May!  
Call the May, Call the May Call the May, Call the May!  
Gather round people and Call in the May!

The song was finished. I stopped playing the mandolin and let the final chord ring out into the woods, and fade away. I sat for a little while, eyes closed, just taking in the peace of the moment, as my awareness returned to the outside world, to the calling of the birds, and the smell of the earthy air.

I open my eyes, the sun's glare blinding me for a moment, until I re-adjusted to the brightness that surrounded me. I never wrote down a word of that song, I just knew it, and would write it down later when I got home. I kissed my hand, and placed it upon the earth just at the base of the Oak, giving thanks for the gift of Awen, the gift of Bardic inspiration. Then after a short time, I began to walk back – I had to get back to work.

The Awen isn't like the Life Force. It isn't with us all of the time. It comes in flashes of radiance, it is the quest of the Bard to bring more into their lives, to drink from the cauldron that creates the Fire in the Head. I've found that to sit and try to write a song is impossible for me. I cannot force inspiration, it simply is there or it isn't. I have only rarely found it in my home. Most often it is found in the wilder places, on the moors, in the woodland, or upon the Hollow Hills where the Faerie dance on Midsummer's Eve. And the key I have found is the use of sacred sound, whether that is a drum, mandolin, guitar, or the celtic harp.

The Gods gave us music, and when we play in their sacred places, they listen.

## Roast Pumpkin Soup

4 medium cloves of garlic, unpeeled  
800g peeled, deseeded pumpkin (Kent Pumpkin is my favourite)  
200g peeled sweet potato  
1 tablespoon oil  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
Salt and Pepper, to taste  
1 Litre Vegetable Stock  
Cream, Sour Cream and/or nutmeg and ground pepper to serve



- \* Chop pumpkin and sweet potato into even-sized pieces
- \* Place pumpkin, sweet potato and unpeeled garlic cloves on a baking tray, and drizzle with 3 teaspoons of the oil and toss to coat with oil
- \* Bake for 20 minutes, then remove the garlic so that it doesn't overcook.
- \* Continue baking pumpkin and sweet potato until tender and cooked through.
- \* Heat remaining teaspoon of oil in large saucepan over medium heat. Add nutmeg, cumin, salt & pepper. Cook, stirring for one minute.
- \* Add pumpkin, sweet potato and stock and bring to the boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until stock has reduced. (the more the stock reduces, the thicker the soup will be)
- \* Peel roasted garlic and add to saucepan. Allow the soup to cool for approximately half an hour before pureeing in batches in a blender or with a hand mixer.
- \* Serve the soup hot, is delicious with cream or sour cream and a sprinkle of nutmeg and ground black pepper.



## Easy Apple Crumble

1 Cup Plain flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup + 3 teaspoons, firmly packed brown sugar  
100g chilled butter, chopped  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup rolled oats  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  chopped walnuts  
6 x granny smith apples  
3 teaspoons cinnamon



- Preheat oven to 180°C
- Peel, core and slice apples. Add 3 teaspoons of brown sugar and cinnamon and mix until the apple is coated in the mixture. (if you are short on time, 800g tin of canned apples will also work)
- Combine the flour, remaining brown sugar, butter and oats in a bowl.
- Using your fingertips, rub the butter into the flour mixture until the mixture resembles fine bread crumbs. Stir in the walnuts.
- Spoon the apple into a 6 cup capacity ovenproof dish. Scatter the walnut mixture evenly over the apples.
- Bake in oven for 20-25 minutes or until golden.
- Spoon the apple crumble into serving bowls and serve with ice-cream!



# Recommended Reading...

## Non-Fiction

Recommended by OBOD Member Brenda Rae, as being helpful with the Ovate work

- \* "Astrology under the Southern Cross" - Richard Sterling, Doris Greaves & Milton Black ISBN: 0091836514
- \* "Godzone Skies" - Vicki Hyde. ISBN: 0908812191
- \* "The Star lore handbook" - Geoffrey Cornelius. ISBN: 0811816044
- \* "The Stargazers guide to the Universe" - Robin Kerrod. ISBN: 9780764158445
- \* "Work of the gods" (Maori Astronomy) - Kay Leather and Richard Hall. ISBN: 0854671056
- \* Stonehenge Aotearoa - Richard Hall. ISBN: 0958253870

## Fiction

- \* "Way of the Wyrd" Brian Bates ISBN: 9781401905019
- \* The Wanderers Series - Caiseal Mór
  - "The Circle and the Cross" - ISBN: 0671037285
  - "The Song of the Earth" ISBN: 9780671037291
  - "The Water of Life" ISBN: 0671037307



## Puzzle Answers

1	C	2	R	3	E	A	4	T	I	V	5	I	6	T	7	Y	
8	E	A	R			R					9	S	O	A	P	10	
11	N	G	E	12	T	A	13	L					14	W	H	O	
	T		15	C	R	Y	I	N	G							S	
17	R	I	T	A		18	S	E		19	S					I	
	A		20	S	U	21	S	T	A	I	N					T	
	L				22	M	E	E	T		23	A	24	M	I		
25	I	T				A		N		27	S	P	I	V			
28	T	O	O			30	A	S	31	S	E	S			I		
32	Y	E	W						33	P	A				T		
		34	D	E	F	A	M	A	T	O	R	Y					

9	3	5	7	1	8	2	6	4
7	4	1	2	6	5	3	9	8
8	2	6	9	4	3	1	5	7
6	1	2	3	9	7	4	8	5
3	5	9	1	8	4	7	2	6
4	8	7	5	2	6	9	1	3
2	7	4	6	5	1	8	3	9
1	6	8	4	3	9	5	7	2
5	9	3	8	7	2	6	4	1

# Alban Arthan - Winter Solstice

In this darkest time of the year we celebrate the return of the Divine Child, the Mabon the rebirth of the golden solstice Sun, who will bring warmth, light and life back to Earth again. The Wheel of the Year revolves beyond death and towards new light & new life.

## *A Visit From The Yule Spirits- Richard De Angelis*

'Twas the night before Yule, when all 'cross the hearth,  
not a being was stirring; Pagan, faerie, or beast.  
Wassail was left out & the alter adorned,  
to rejoice that the Sun King would soon be reborn.

The children lay sleeping by the warmth of the hearth,  
their dreams filled with visions of belov'd Mother Earth.

M'lady & I beneath blankets piled deep,  
had just settled down to our own Solstice sleep.

Then a noise in the night that would leave us no peace,  
Awakened us both to the honking of geese.  
Eager to see such a boisterous flock,

When we raced to the window, our mouths dropped in shock!

On the west wind flew a gaggle of geese white & gray,  
With Frau Holda behind them in her giftladen dray.  
The figure on her broomstick in the north sky made it clear,  
La Befana was approaching to bestow Yuletide cheer.

From the south came a comet more bright than the moon,  
And we knew that Lucia would be with us soon.  
As these spirits sailed earthward o'er hilltops & trees,  
Frau Holda serenaded her feathery steeds:

"Fly Isolde! Fly Tristan! Fly Odin & Freya!  
Fly Morgaine! Fly Merlin! Fly Uranus & Gaea!  
May the God & the Goddess inside you soar,  
From the clouds in the heavens to yon cottage door."  
As soft & silent as snowflakes they fell:

Their arrival announced by a faint chiming bell.  
They landed like angels, their bodies aglow.  
Their feet left no marks in the new fallen snow.

Before we could ponder what next lay in store,  
There came a slow creaking from our threshold door.  
We crept from our bedroom & were spellbound to see...  
There in our parlor stood the Yule Trinity!

Lucia, the Maiden, with her head wreathed in flame,  
Shown with the radiance for which she was named.  
The Lightbringer's eyes held the joy of a child,  
And she spoke with a voice that was gentle, yet wild:

"May the warmth of this household ne'er fade away."  
Then she lit our Yule log which still burns to this day.  
Frau Holda in her down cloak stood regal & tall;  
The Matron of Solstice, the Mother of all.

Under her gaze we felt safe & secure.  
Her voice was commanding, yet almost demure:  
"May the love of this family enrich young & old."

And from the folds of her cloak showered coins of pure gold.

Le Befana wore a kerchief on her silvery hair;  
The veil of the Crone who has secrets to share.  
In her eyes gleamed a wisdom only gained by spent youth.  
Her voice was a whisper but her words rung with truth:

"May health, glad tidings, and peace fill these rooms."  
And she banished misfortune with a sweep of her broom.  
They then left a gift by each sleeping child's head,  
Took a drink of our wassail, & away they sped.

While we watched them fly off through the night sky we laughed,  
At the wondrous magick we had found in the Craft.  
As they departed, the spirits decreed...  
Merry Yule To You All & May All Blessed Be!

