

Serpentstar - Third Australian Annual Assembly



Alban Theruin

Newsletter for the Australian & new Zealand members of O.B.O.D.. vol 3 no 1. December 1999

Superb setting, near perfect weather, wonderful, wholesome food, great music, some organized, some spontaneous, all bound together with Lesley and Dean's relaxed hospitality: the ingredients for a great assembly – which it was!

Everything seemed to flow smoothly and unhurriedly bespoke timing – yet there was no rigidity or feelings of cold efficiency; things were done quietly and calmly in their proper times.

The kids were well behaved and delightful, participating in events with dignity and inspiration – real little Druids in the making.

One of the best features was the way Dean and Lesley had involved the local community – not so much that they took over, but just enough to keep things from becoming intense among us OBODs. OBODs only ceremonies were very intense, with the trees, the rocks, the birds, lizards and kangaroos, responding most magically – all heady at times.

I shall never forget the Alban Eiler ceremony in Lesley and Deans magnificent herb garden, among the huge rocks, overgrown with herbs of fragrance, medicinal and magical power, and beauty. The paths were filled with people:

Lesley and Deans friends and family, their children, the Choir, other members of the local community, and of course, us OBODs resplendent in our robes and tabards, not to mention a crowd of at least as many non-material beings too, who also made their presence felt. It was beautiful.

For me at least, the weekend was an unqualified success. Congratulations, Dean and Lesley! Many magic moments will stay with me for the rest of my life.

The recording session was exciting; I look forward eagerly to hearing the results of our labours.

Vivienne

We gathered on Friday. 5 residents, 5 from Interstate and were there 5 locals as well?

I cannot remember exactly, but together we opened the assembly in a unique part of this magnificent land. Those who were OBODies then continued on to the Bardic Grove and were embraced by the warmth and strength of the Ironstones. The presence of members unable to attend was quite tangible. There we initiated Dean in the circle that he had aligned and built with Lesley and others.

The return journey was one I will never forget. Our gaze had turned West to the sun, a huge golden Ball melting into the horizon, when suddenly we became aware of the moon on the other side of us. Just 30 hours away from fullness which was like a huge white balloon slowly ascending. We felt our presence acknowledged and blessed.

The great Sun and Moon continued with us through out allowing us to completely soak in the beauty of the place. Corringal Grove is 60 acres just inland of the south coast and Lesley and Dean, together with many friends are creating a self-sufficient haven. The veil between this world and the Summerland felt very thin. Furthermore I know now what the possible future direction for all life on this planet is. 'Authenticity' is the word that kept coming to mind throughout those 4 days.

Friday evening was a surprise. Gathered around the fire with the local people we realized that many talented musicians were already familiar with the songs that had come forth through some of OBODs creative membership. We listened to Vivienne sing her song to Bridget as tears flowed silently within, the beauty of the lyrics of these songs is indescribable; surely we are moving into a new level of consciousness.

The recording of the CD was one of the highlights of this years Assembly. The level of professionalism was a new experience for some of us, yet I always felt acknowledged even though I was clearly being stretched beyond where I thought I would ever go.

Having conceived and nurtured it we now eagerly await the birth of the CD. It feels like our contribution to the development of OBOD generally and Australian Assemblies in particular. Another special treat for me was capturing Lesley singing her Song to Anu on tape this year and if that wasn't enough, chanting Anu to the light of the full moon with 60 plus people.

But then I felt pampered all weekend. The food was specially grown and prepared for us and people arriving with plates of sumptuous food were a nightly event. And again this year we had a singing cook! Last year Lisa, this year Kirsten. If cooking develops the vocal chords than I had better return to the kitchen!.....over >

...Third Australian annual Assembly cont.

Saturday was Ovate day, so why did I awake with a headache and feeling like.....? But I am glad I did because if I didn't I would not have experienced the healing power of the Ovate Grove. There, I lay down directly under the mistletoe draped like Royal Robes over the SheOak trees. By the time I left the headache had completely evaporated. With energy levels regenerated and to the sound of several stout "Oys" we created a herbal ointment with freshly grown herbs and in honour of the song called it Myriad's Miracle cure"

Shortly afterwards, The Alban Eiler Ceremony was held in the garden amongst the gaiety of herbs, flowers, veggies, children, their grandmother and the full range of ages in between, whilst Mother Wren watched on.

The presence of witnesses was keenly felt throughout those 4 days; the aboriginal ancestors were never far away. Two little blue wrens chortled with us around the fire and could be heard singing along with us as we practiced the song to Bridget. We were introduced to Port Lincoln parrots who heralded the start of the Ovate Ceremony along with the honeyeaters. The jays and ravens signaled its completion.

Directly following the group recording of the Awen and Anu on Sunday evening, and owl appeared and I will never forget her face. On Monday, a kangaroo began grazing on the hillside just before it was time to depart.

As a part of the closing ceremony, a willow tree was planted to commemorate the 3rd Australian Assembly and the thought was voiced that it might become the first tree in a new grove. And so the light continues.

With love to all, Heather Whitelk.



Notices

Ceit, (Grove Mother of "Sgiath an Fhithich")

Would like to remind everyone that Emma Restall Orr (Bobcat), Joint-chief of The British Druid Order, Author of 'Sprits of the Sacred Grove' & 'Principles of Druidry' will be conducting a lecture /workshop tour of Australia in March, 2000, dealing with topics such as:

- The roots and sources of Druidry, the evolution of Druidry over 10,000 years, modern practice.
- The basic tenets of Druidry as a native spiritual tradition, working with spirits of place and ancestral spirits.
- 'Awen', inspiration and creativity, sources of inspiration, the power of nature, the nature of deity.
- 'Nemeton', the sacred sanctuary, tools for healing, freedom and creativity.
- Ritual based around the eisteddfod, with everyone encouraged to bring/create music, story, poetry, dance.....

For all details, bookings and enquiries regarding events in your state please contact the state organizer listed below.

Perth; 1-7 March, Contact Ceit PH. 08-94971698 or 0414-776470. raven@networx.net.au.

Adelaide: 8-14 March. ELF Promotions, Teresa Stevenson. Ph 08-81771952 pendraig@camteh.net.au

Melbourne 15-21 March Fiona or Brad ph 03-52210353 guardians@geelong.hotkey.net.au

Sydney; 30 March-6 April, Zan ph.0295578495 or 0413650411. reptilia@ozemail.com

Bobcat: <http://www.nemeton.demon.co.uk> British Druid Order: <http://www.druidorder.demon.co.uk>

SYDNEY VISIT;

THURSDAY MARCH 30TH. 7.30PM – introductory talk on Druidry and book signings, at Blavatsky Lodge, Theosophy House, 484 Kent St. City Sydney. All welcome, no charge.

Saturday April 1st. 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. Public workshop (venue Newtown area) "Druidry – the quest for Inspiration" Advance bookings and OBOD/BDO Members \$45.00 Includes morning and afternoon tea/ coffee/biscuits.

Saturday Evening -: Dinner in Honor of Emma's Visit at the "Green Gourmet Taoist Vegetarian Restaurant". RSVP by Alban Elude 02-9557-8495.

Sunday April 2nd, Ceremonial Day and Feast, Royal National Park, South of Sydney. Please phone Grove to advise attendance. 02-9557-8495.

Tuesday April 4th, 7-9 pm. Evening presentation, venue Blue Mountains area. "Mud and blood – Healing journey of the Druid" Advance bookings welcome, cost for all participants -\$15.00. Contact Kathy on 02-4787-6972.

All are welcome to share in the inspiration of Emma's visit to Sydney, the final stage of her Australian Tour, and an exciting beginning for the year 2000. Please make all advance payment for either the workshop or the talk, by cheque or postal notes, payable to A. Ford, Post to NEA Grove, P.O.Box 92, NEWTOWN, N.S.W. 2042.

All bookings will be acknowledged upon receipt, and venue details confirmed.

News from Philip!

Dear members,

As I write this, we as a family are preparing for a great adventure: we're renting our house out for a year in January, and are taking off to New Zealand and Australia.

When I came your way in 98 to attend the Annual Assembly outside Sydney, to visit Ganieda in W.A. and give workshops in NZ, I had only the vaguest idea of what to expect. But what a surprise was in store! I had thought of Australia as an old land – an ancient land –, which of course it is, but the overwhelming impression I received as I travelled about, was of a land whom the Spirit of the Future was watching carefully over, as a Parent watches over a child. Instead of being very aware of the past, as I had expected, I became aware, instead, of all the potential that seems almost to hang in the air.

And this impression stayed with me as I moved on to New Zealand. So on returning to the UK, we decided we would try spending some time – first near Wellington, and then later in the year, coming over to Australia for the Annual Assembly and Healing Retreat, that we have planned to follow on from the Assembly at Ganieda.

We will still be actively helping in the Order's work, via the magic of email (which means we can be anywhere in the world and still be in touch with everyone in the office) and also by giving talks and workshops, and participating in ceremonies and other events with members. We're looking forward to it tremendously! We're also very aware that the difference in exchange rates, the higher production costs, and the cost of airmail postage, all conspire to make the course and books expensive for members in Australia and New Zealand. There are huge logistical problems to producing and mailing the course outside the UK, but we will certainly be looking at this possibility too.

Last but not least we are looking forward to just being in your part of the world – soaking in the atmosphere, learning about the indigenous cultures and traditions, as well as learning about the more recent and emerging identities and culture. And we're looking forward too to marvelling at the beauties of the Natural World – to exploring Fjordland in New Zealand, wandering through the Jenolan caves in the Blue Mountains and more!

Even though OBOD can sometimes seem large and impersonal, we are in fact a very small community – just a few thousand of us spread around the globe – and I do hope that we can get to meet as many members as possible during our stay.

Have a wonderful Summer Solstice!

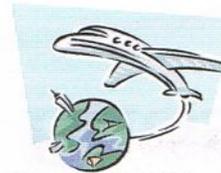
Yours amidst the packing cases on a drizzly grey Winter's day,
Philip & Stephanie /\

Eagle Manifestation

I was seeded in the womb
Of vision, in the dream of sleep
I woke. I am the light.

I am the mothering eagle,
The eagling mother, the gyre
Of seeking, the seeking gyre

Of finding, the winding gyre,
The gyring wind, the lift of a wing,
The wing, I am the
manifestation.....Vivienne



Kiora Carole & friends.

This spring festival/Alban Eiler, I shared my celebration with a group of people who perform 'Dances of Life'.

Amidst a beautiful surrounding of mature trees, stream music and bird song of Chingford Park we had an opening ceremony, then the dancing began with the construction of the tree of life. It was a wonderful afternoon as we twirled, sang and clapped our way through various configurations.

People – anybody- was/were welcome to join or leave at anytime. People just blended in or out. It was great!
If anyone is interested in knowing more about the group and the dances (they would be great to perform at an Assembly) their email is www.lotushelath.co.nz. Or sacreddances@Yahoo.com or you can write to P.O.Box 6354 Dunedin 9001. NZ.

I have also recently encountered an amazing set of oracle cards Wisdom of the 4 Winds, by Barry Brailsford. I have always enjoyed my set of Animal Oracle cards, but the Wisdom cards are grounded in star lore; legend and universal truths connected to Aotearoa (NZ). Barry also writes very interesting books on the first peoples and their stories/legends showing that we are all one people. His email is <info@stoneprint.co.nz> Website www.stoneprint.co.nz
I hope you will find the above interesting, as I wanted to share this knowledge with you. And this verse on the Value of Nothingness.

It is the nothingness of an empty cup that makes it useful,
It is the nothingness of a room that make it safe for us to live in,
The nothingness between the branches of a tree , gives shelter to birds, and baffles the wind, filters the sun, and thus cools the earth
Without the nothingness of valleys, gullys and hollows,
Rivers, Lakes and Oceans could not flow and form.
Without the nothingness above the earth we could not walk, fly and rejoice in the freedom of nothingness of air.
Let us allow nothingness into our world.
For without nothingness there would be no creation; no space to grow; to.
So let your minds, hearts and should be full of nothingness,
So they can be filled with compassion, peace and light for the whole of creation.

Thank you for allowing me to share this with you all; I look forward to my copy of Serpentstar each time it arrives. Keep up the great work

From under the Southern Cross.....Tamzin Rae

Dear Carole,

I was dismayed that my letter came across so angry-sounding when I read it in the Alban Eiler Serpentstar. The last thing I wanted to do was create ill feeling. I only meant to express my fear of being left out. I didn't mean to imply that I had been relegated to a passive role; only that I feared that people *could* be if Serpentstar stopped being a forum for us all.

You reassured me completely on that point, not least by issuing the most radiant and exuberant Serpentstar yet..the Alban Eiler issue I mean, with more variety and energy and love going into it than ever before, though of course that depends as you so rightly say on the contributors, and the ebb and flow of creativity. Thank you.
I am truly sorry to have sounded so crabby when I was really only afraid of being left out.

Bright Blessings to you all.....Vivienne

Vivienne and I had a chance to have a good talk about Serpentstar and its directions at the Assembly, and I have some comments to make on the last page.....that our meeting and communication at the Assembly was so productive is also a reminder that our annual get togethers are so very important for the growth of our movement, as an order and as druids personally, getting to know each other, meeting, sharing, developing and expanding our spirituality and directions.....Carole/\

Plainsong

Loping in a long easy mile-eating stride I followed the well-beaten path across the plain. Earlier I'd had to go much slower, pushing my way through the tall grasses, testing each step before committing my weight, so as not to tread on a rock or in a hole, because in the long grass I couldn't see my feet.

I'd gone many miles from the track in search of game. I only have two ducks tied to my belt for my troubles. Still I would never have made the Plainsong if I had caught something bigger.

Now I can let my legs and feet do the work. Up, down, pounding a ceaseless rhythm on the earth. I'm not as fast as some of the other hunters but I can run all day and all night if I have to. The sun is dipping toward the horizon and I pick up my pace, the Plainsong won't start until moonrise, which gives me some time, but I would like to dress the ducks and wash some of the sweat and dust from my body before I join the others around the great fire.

I'm so busy thinking about what I am going to do that I am not focused on what I am doing. A startled rabbit regards me from the middle of the path.

By the time I've thought about raising my spear arm the rabbit is gone. Not that I'll go hungry but it is an opportunity lost... and besides it is a matter of principle. I am a hunter; the rabbit was sitting waiting for me
And I was unprepared.

Every moment of every-day is a test for a hunter. Not just the heart pounding tests of a charging bore or a stag at bay but the simpler tests, hours of patient waiting and pain staking slow and silent movement always asking, will my people go hungry this day? That is why I should always be alert, a missed kill could result in some-ones death as surely as if I had killed them myself. A nine-fold curse on the Plainsong and its distractions. And nine times nine on your own foolishness I chide myself.

I halt my running and while I'm catching my breath I reach for the tobacco bag in my pouch and roll a smoke with the reed-paper just as my father showed me. Before taking any smoke myself I offer it to the four directions, to the ducks whose lives will feed me and to the rabbit who tested me. I had offered a simple smoke ceremony to the ducks when I took them but you can never be too thankful.

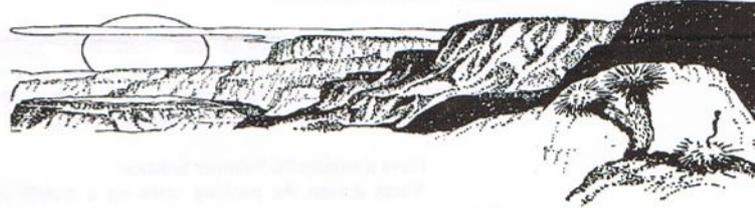
The smoke is sweet and acrid, a mix of herbs that has made my kin well known across the plains. I hunt more than anything else but at certain times of the year I help my brothers and sisters prepare the tobacco by gathering the secret herbs from across the hills. I sprinkle some fresh tobacco and the remains of my butt across the low grass next to the path. A gentle breeze teases it and it falls in eddies and swirls. I thank the spirits and the Ancestors for their blessings.

Then I am off again, feet falling and rising and falling again, the regular beat re-established and all in harmony. I ask the spirits to test me again Because I am focused now, my whole body is a trap ready to spring should
Something crosses my path. My long muscles are lean and hard and will react quickly and without error. But it is not to be. I have had my test already, a hunter must always be alert and I was not.

I will be late for the Plainsong but it doesn't matter any more. The spirits have given me a gift in the form of a lesson, or a reminder, for it is a lesson I should have learnt long before. Perhaps it is as my father told me, that as a hunter you always have to be re-learning to be alert because even watching to see if you are alert or not is a form of complacency. Perhaps my kin and village will survive another winter as a result of my re-learning tonight.

It is full dark as I cross the stream just a few short miles from the village. I pause to drink and the moon protrudes its gibbous form over the horizon. As I start to run again I can hear the drumming and see the flames of the great fire but I am in no hurry

Murray Barton



HEALING

This is a call for prayers for Ellie Shallcrass, Philip Greywolf's wife.

Having fought leukemia for nearly two years she broke her remission a few months ago and has just been taken into intensive care with pneumonia.

When the word first went out about her condition, prayers around the world guided and helped her to find her strength again. Please, let us do it again, offering her the strength and power again to fight. And let our prayers too offer Greywolf what he needs to support her and care for the children. He is doing a beautiful job, it is horrendously stressful.

Ceit

Bards Corner



The Birth of Lough – Lamhada

I saw my god's hand lift an earth– swathe
Fold of a valley of her dress. She stepped
A laughing, impatient step, and I saw
Every atom dance, every cloud swing, every
Stone stand up, every star swirl I space. I saw
Spring forth from stones, springs uncountable.

Every atom laughed, each aeval locus was
Effusive with the laughter! Sweet was the sound.
He came forth fro every smiling stone!
So dancing the air! So singing the water!
The sculpting earth! The easy and urgent
Blossoming drama of fire.

Oh where you stand, bright Lough, though I
Know only your name, and the sky of your eyes,
And the steps I take, laughing, towards you,
Dancing stone that I am, red – eyed elf of a
Planet of war that I am, our won sad sister
That I am, where *you* stand, Lough, my love, my
Shining truth, *there* is logos, *there* is locus
There is love

Vivienne

SUMMER TONES

The sun in full strength.
Looking down upon us in his joy.
His smile beaming, searing across the land,
Our bodies sweat upon the red sand.
The blue/black crow, his mothers voice,
Talking to us, listening's our choice.
The magpie's song, sweet melody,
Warbling tones, free on the breeze.
The warrior is poised, spear high in hand,
Stands tall on the cliff, surveying the land.
Hearing her heart, that regular beat,
Wide blue oceans cool her tired feet.
Realizing now of all I have seen,
To walk on the land, I have not yet been.
Feeling her sage, spiritual ways,
Found her voice as it plays.
Walk with the land, listen with feet,
Become with me, one with that beat.

Kirsty



For those who celebrate both!

Invocation of Saint Nicholas

Let the Adept prepare a place of warmth near a chimney
with all manner of stockings strewn about. Let bayberry be
burned, and the cup filled with milk. The sacrament should
consist of sugar cookies.

Let banishings be performed in the East for grinchies, the
South for scrooges, the West for snowmen and the North
for mice. Once the space is consecrated, let the Adept
intone:

HO Santa!

Jelly to thy belly and tickles to thy whiskers.

Red King of Elves, yea, thou who art the Master of the
antlered ones and they who make toys. Thee, Thee I
invoke! Thou who saileth over rooftops in thy bark of
generosity. Thee, thee I invoke! Thou of rosy cheeks and
cherry lips. Thee, thee I invoke! Thou, upon whose knee
sit the innocent.

Thee, thee I invoke! Thou who haileth from the land of the
North. Thee, thee I invoke. Thou twinkle-eyed, twitching
nose, thick middled courier of gewgaw. Thee, thee I
invoke! Thou aged and jolly being of mirth and merriment.
Thee, thee I invoke!

SANTA! NATAS! ATANS! TANAS! SATAN!

I am the white-bearded Elf-King. I am the knower of good
and evil deeds. I am keeper of the list and the manifester of
rewards. In my name are the devious acts of children
reprimanded. Behold me! I am the commander of the
antlered beasts who carry my bark above the Earth!

- HO Dasher!
- HO Dancer!
- HO Prancer and Vixen!
- HO Comet!
- HO Cupid!
- HO Donner and Blitzen!

In my left hand is time and space in my right! In stealth
shall I enter abode and partake of the sacrament left unto
me in offering. As I have said, I will deliver unto my
disciples what they have requested of me, if they be
worthy of my blessings. Seek me at Yule-time yet forget
me not, for I watch thee with keen eyes!

Christmas in Australia.



Some members share their thoughts on celebrating the seasons and Druid and Christian festivals in the Southern Hemisphere

For me, Christmas is not particularly special, less so when I see decorations here which are northern European or northern hemisphere – I mean, where is there snow in Australia at this time of the year? So the outer form of Christmas - such as snow decorations, reindeers - are kind of cultural overlays, as is the sight of a person attired as Father Christmas wandering around in very hot weather. But then again, contradictions make life! Summer here is almost a time of hibernation, unless one can get to the beach.

In terms of food, well, we eat Asian food nearly all the time, and so the Christmas meal is often a curry. My parents were Europeans/British, and so we used to have hot meals but changed that some time after we migrated to Australia. So salads and fruit were common.

For rituals in general, well, I struggle these days trying to sort out what to do. My body is basically northern European and seems attuned to the north. My mind increasingly accepts and wants to explore this country here, far from the green of my early years. It is a mixture, and sometimes I simply do rituals which celebrate both at the same time, at others, ones more specifically oriented to the southern half of the world, at others, the northern.

These days, it is harder to decide, I find, there is a kind of emptiness present, odd. As though new ways must be found, yet they are buried deep within the rocks and landscapes of one's origins.

Sometimes I see the springs of renewal trickling out, and then I am at peace again.

So for me, Christmas is often a cluttered time, thick with some memories of being bored as a youth, others, of the great pleasure of being with loved ones.

Be well.....Keith.

Searching for a Southern Hemisphere Christmas.

What does Christmas mean to you? Is it snow covered fir trees, hot meals and Santa, or has this time of year evolved for you into a uniquely 'Southern' feel? North versus south - it sounds like the American civil war. Which way do you go in your circle? Where is the sun for you within the four directions? The debate is a big one, and I'm not here to play with that. But it is all tied in somehow. For us Alban Heruin approaches. Father sun, at his strongest - and don't we know it! As we desperately try to keep our European plants alive in our cottage gardens.

The sheep of our countries down here fill windows with images of snow, pine trees decorated with Santa's, icicles, and red & white booties but do they know why they do it? If that feels right for you then do it. But I'm afraid I'm here to jump on the soap box a bit and say - it doesn't feel right for me.

But what does feel right for me? I'm a British descendent living in Australia. As such I need to find a way to honour my ancestors, and at this time it means honouring their beliefs, but I believe being a (studying) Druid means you should also honour land you live on. I love the land I live on. I love Australia and her unique voice. Her ancient tones crackle thru the call of the Crow, her perfume wafting thru the searing heat, taste her presence in the dust of her skin. A deeply spiritual land that calls anyone who will listen. Ok so what does all this babbling mean Kirsty?

I guess I'm musing as I go along here. With a child on the way I desperately search for a way of celebrating this time of year in a way that is meaningful to my family and ancestors, but also for the land I call home. Yet duality swirls within me, I get dizzy with it all.

How many of you have felt the duality? I admit I do. Often when I am working in my circle I find myself becoming 'fuzzy' with North and South. Sometimes drawing a circle one way or the other. I can't explain it but I feel North and South are the same somehow.

Perhaps as someone said in an email we are could call them something else, perhaps Polar and Equator. Are we indeed thinking about it the wrong way? Perhaps we are trying to tie outdated stereotypes to it all. And yet I am not here to totally deny Christ, but I will make a big assumption here and say that most of us know about the debate in which they discuss that Christ was not actually born at this time. So I'm going to leave Christianity out of this argument.

So this year I will search to fill my house with decorations that somehow represent what the land is going thru at the time. Yet my family will exchange gifts. I'll admit I like the feeling. In the spirit of celebration of summer, what could be more 'sunny' than exchanging gifts.

I'll go to my husbands family Christmas dinner where Nan reheats hot roast dinners for us because she loves doing it for us. I won't deny her that.

Then perhaps Craig and I will quietly retire at the end of the day and share some left-overs as we watch the sun go down as we lay quietly upon a beach.

(more rambling thoughts from my journal here:)

How hard it is to formulate thoughts and feelings into words at times. Yet thru poetry and prose does my heart really sing. Feeling power, spirit, whatever today but can't put it into words. Summer, we all feel the call.

Kirsty

I am aware that some members don't get Touchstone, so thought I would reprint this article that I found on the O.B.O.D. website.

Perhaps it will promote some discussion, it also fills up the back page.

From Touchstone, by Chris Turner, Summer 1998

There will be an eclipse of the Sun in the Southern Hemisphere at the Longitude of Stonehenge at midday on the 21st June 2001. This is an event of great magnitude and significance. This is a portent of no less than the rebirth of Druidry, no longer confined to a country or a culture, but as a great force for Light to shine amongst all peoples in all parts of the world. I believe that the outward form of Druidry will and must undergo great development and change in order to accommodate the new flowering and expansion of the spiritual forces that Druidry represents, and to realize the ethics, principles and objectives of this spirituality within the Apparent World.

Before we can begin to understand and appreciate the future direction of Druidry, it is necessary to remind ourselves of its history and nature, both in the distant past and in more recent years. My own belief is that the Spirit of Druidry is an expression of the One Light that flows through and emanates from the physical fabric of Britain. It is part of the One Light and manifests itself of itself. It is independent of mankind and is not dependent on mankind for its existence.

The Spirit of Druidry existed long before the first men set foot on these islands. When at last they did come, the belief systems that they brought with them were changed and developed by their interaction with the Spirit in its manifestation as the Spirit of Britain. These early people were Druids although the term itself belongs to a much later period. We do not know what language they spoke, what they called themselves or what Their beliefs were.

What is certain is that they were all touched and inspired by the Spirit that is the Spirit of Britain. It is this recognition and acknowledgement of Spirit that I understand to be the heart and fundament of Druidry. From this it follows that Druidry is a function of the Spirit. It is not cultural and it is not racial. The several Celtic people of Britain were Druids (their own term), but Druidry is not Celtic. The English peoples also worshipped as Druids, although the name they used is lost to us, until the overt practice of Druidry was overshadowed by Roman Christianity. Even then, the ancient ways were quietly continued, not as some sort of stubborn underground tradition, but a constantly renewed and spontaneous response to the Spirit of Druidry that flows unceasingly from every stone and tree and river in these islands. Druidry has never been lost in Britain. This is not because dedicated and committed men and women have nurtured the flame in secret over the centuries. It is because the Spirit of Druidry flows through this land of itself, and there will always be those who hear and listen and respond to its call.

There have always been Druids in Britain. There has never been a time without Druids since men first stepped onto these shores. The public revival of Druidry in 1717 simply gave form and structure to a system of spiritual awareness that had renewed and sustained itself of itself throughout the long night of Christianity. That there is an irresistible renaissance of Druidry is beyond question, but it not yet upon us. The present worldwide upsurge of Druidic study and practice is only a preparation for the rebirth, which is still to come. Despite some rationalization, modern Druidry still looks back to its perceived ancient and cultural roots.

The New Druidry will look forward into the future from a firm standpoint in the present. The emphasis of Druidry will, I believe, take a monumental change of direction and this change will be marked in the Apparent World by the eclipse of June 21st, 2001. What is required of us as Druids is to be aware of these forthcoming changes and to take advantage of the day for ourselves, for mankind and for our Mother Earth. We do not drive Druidry, Druidry drives us. I anticipate that the nature of these changes in Druidry will be from particularity to universality. This is a process that has already started and which has achieved great progress. However, this is still only a preparation for the changes, which will follow the eclipse. In short, I believe Druidry will and must "go public".

There seems to be a twofold responsibility which I think we should address as Druids by opening the Teaching to a wider audience. The first is towards our Mother Earth. The willful exploitation of the Earth can only be brought within acceptable limits by an overt change in the attitudes of the despoilers and the over-consumers. Druids cannot effect a change of this magnitude by covert Working alone. The attitudes and responsibilities of Druidry must be brought out into plain view. The second responsibility is towards the spiritual welfare of those who need help and guidance, but who are not able, for one reason or another, to take up formal membership of our Order.

There is a need for spiritual involvement in the celebration of Creation and in the Rites of Passage that give us our identity within our society and within the wider family of Mankind. This is refused by many churches and movements to non-members while others have lost credibility or authority. Druidry can assist many people who need a spiritual direction in their lives and can bring peace and comfort to many who would otherwise be denied. Ultimately, of course, these two responsibilities are one, for one feeds the other.

Here we are presented with a once-and-for-all opportunity to create a change that will have incalculable and far-reaching effects both within the Apparent World and in the Spiritual Planes. It seems that we have been presented with the ideal outward expression of this change in the event of the Eclipse. Uniquely, we have been given time to prepare in advance, rather than catch up in retrospect. Moreover, we will be able to announce the public creation of a new World and Social Spiritual Movement, that of Druidry-in-Public, that is to come into being at the time of the Millennium Eclipse: Midsummer Day 2001. The only question that remains is: do we have the vision and do we have the courage to follow the signs that are writ large across the heavens?



Serpentstar

Hi everyone!

Well this is the beginning of the third year of Serpentstar.

For the new members amongst us, Serpentstar was born at the first Australian Assembly. The reason I compile it, is because I suggested on the last day of that Assembly that the members who were there could try to stay in touch and inform the members who couldn't attend what had transpired.

For the first year, the newsletter was sent to all members, with the financial support of those of us who were at the 1st assembly. Last year it was sent only to members who contributed to the costs of printing and postage. Postage was dearer last year, as the newsletter grew out of sticky tape and single envelopes, but it is still paying its way.

We have shared a lot of things over the last 2 years.

For those of you who have asked for back copies, they will get to you in the New Year.

This year Rosemary and Alice were major contributors and we thank them and all the other contributing members for the time, effort, love and valuable information they gave to us.

At this years Assembly, we talked about the membership, the newsletter and value in finding out a little more about us as individuals.

Vivienne and I talked about clarity in the newsletter, and how sometimes commuters can sideline us. Members who are fortunate to be close to each other share a lot more, and those who are isolated would appreciate more sharing in the newsletter, about groves, their make up and general things like expressions of Druidry in Australia.

Kirsty and Keith have contributed to this newsletter, their experiences of Christmas..... perhaps some others can contribute more for the next newsletter?

We thought that members could also make use of the newsletter to introduce ourselves to each other, and get to know each other more, send in more chat items etc.

I send about 50 newsletters out, to members in Oz and NZ. Serpentstar is not meant to take the place of Touchstone, but more to share our discoveries of our path in the Southern Hemisphere.

Perhaps some would prefer a different format, a less elaborate but more frequent newsletter? Whatever. The important thing is that you feel that this your newsletter to shape and contribute to as you wish.....

So with the newsletter going into its third year with good support from members and more druid events happening again in the coming year, we can truly say we are growing strong and our roots are deepening in both our lands.

Blessed be and a Happy Alban Heruin to all!..... Carole/\

So here is my biography, please send in yours and lets get acquainted.

I am a medical herbalist and masseuse aged 50 and have two children aged 29 and 27. Wayne, my partner and my daughter Inga are Bards and I am studying the ovate grade.

I was basically practicing as a lone Wiccan and I found Druidry through my studies as a Herbalist, when I came across a reference in Maude Greves 'A Modern Herbal,' to some herbs I used in my practice, Meadowsweet, Vervain, Mistletoe and others, as being herbs sacred to the Druids. A 'chance' meeting by my daughter and I with someone at a Celtic weekend, and the forms for OBOD were in our hands within a moon span. Of course, it felt just right.

I practice my Druidry with the seasons of this land and spend time researching the myths and stories of the North of Ireland, Donegal, where my great grandparents came from. I also have Scottish ancestors but have yet to find more about them.

I also pay attention to the local lore for my area, which is on the east coast just an hour south of Sydney in --Wadi Wadi country and always acknowledge the Ancestors of this land in my ceremonies.

I am presently working with Andrea, another member from Nowra, and we are forming a seed group, which we have based on creative processes. We hope to have pottery firings, mask making, music, candle making for our seasonal ceremonies, poetry, herbal medicine making and whatever else to express our druid spirituality and healing work. In this way, we hope to further our understanding of the spirits and spirituality of our ancestors, in the lands of our ancestors, deepen our respect for, and understanding of, the spiritual ancestors and people of this land and nurture and grow our connection to this land and the spirit of this place.

Carole Nielsen/\

Serpentstar is an Australian and New Zealand newsletter for members of O.B.O.D.

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