

SerpentStar

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Hefin, December 2006

Blessing of the Seasons (Summer) - Anon

*Good is the season of peaceful summer;
The council of the trees gather together,
A band unshaken by the whistling wind,
A green gathering in sheltered woods;
Eddies swirl the stream,
Good is the warm turf under us.*

*Irish poem from 11th century, translated by C. Matthews.
From: 'The Little Book of Celtic Blessings', compiled by Caitlin
Matthews, Element Books, 1994*



Lughnasadh Camp Aotearoa/New Zealand, January 26-29 2007

You are invited to join us at Pukerua Bay, in
the Grove of the Summer Stars for Druid
Camp.

The theme this year will be the Taliesin story,
woven together with the story of Tane
Mahuta, great Atua of the Forest.

We plan a full programme of events, and plenty
of time to stare out over the South Pacific
and Kapiti Island, sharing around the central
fire with your tribe.

Please contact Ady on
DruidCampNZ@pagangrove.net
for booking details.

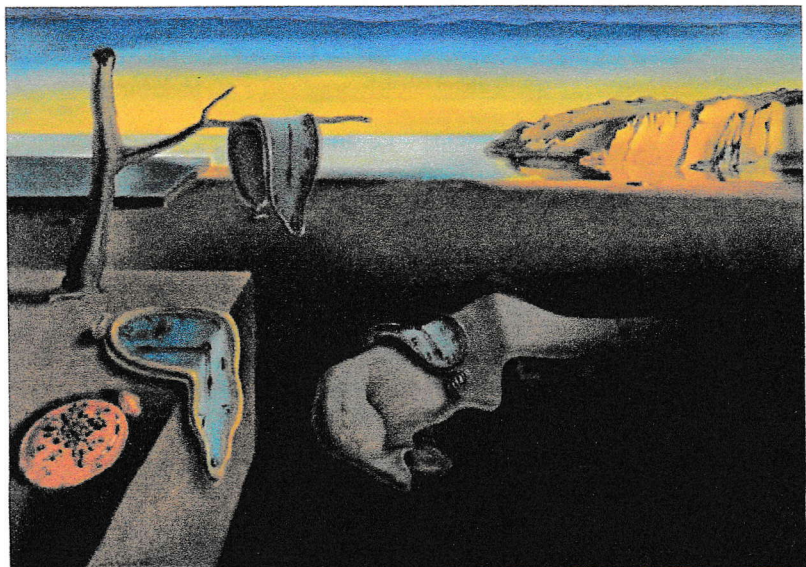
Details will be kept current on the website
<http://camps.druidry.org/southpacific/nz.htm>

The Ascension of Time

On the oceans of life
To traverse the wind
A speck of life
Leaves a mark on time
Stars blaze and shine
In the galaxies entwined
And the mystery unwinds
To the ascension of time

Midnight starlight
Swaying in the wind
On the world of mankind
To the journey in time
Unravel the twine
Is the universe thine
Acknowledge mankind
The ascension of time.

Mandagora



'Persistence of Time' – Salvador Dali



STORM WOLF'S RAMBLINGS



Greeting of the new year to you all!

Ok, ok, I know SerpentStar is late again, and I humbly apologise. They don't call Christmas the silly season for nothing! I didn't even get any Christmas cards sent this year!

I have to apologise too for a mistake I made when sending out the September issue. I was informed that the recipient email addresses were visible. I apologise to anyone who feels their privacy was violated and trust that no one will use these addresses without the owner's permission.

I have been made a moderator of the South Pacific Grove on Yahoo Groups, and some people have requested a 'how to' on accessing this.

First go to:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/South_Pacific_Grove/

If you are not a member, or are not signed in to Yahoo, you will see a page saying what the group is about. In the top right hand corner of the description, is a 'Join this group' button.

When you press this, it will take you to the Yahoo sign-in page. If you are already a Yahoo member just sign in and you can apply for membership to the Grove. If not a Yahoo member, click on the 'Sign-up' button to become one!

And that's about it! Any and all topics are welcome to be discussed, with a preference for Druidry and Southern Hemisphere related items.

This issue we have reviews of the recent Druid Assembly, the release of Tim Finn's new album, and an article on why you shouldn't mess with Elves!

Take care everyone, till next time

StormWolf

Calling All Sydney OBOD Members & Friends

We are organising a post Christmas get-together of OBOD members and friends who live in or around Sydney (or anywhere for that matter), probably a picnic in the Botanic Gardens on a Sunday afternoon, but this is open to suggestions if you have an alternative idea. Please email me, Meghan Stevens, at meghanst@optusnet.com.au to let me know if you are interested.

A CELTIC BLESSING FOR HOSPITALITY

*I saw a stranger yestreen,
I put food in the eating place
drink in the drinking place,
music in the listening place,
and in the sacred name of the Triune,
He blessed myself and my house,
my cattle and my dear ones,
and the lark said in her song
often, often, often
goes the Christ in the stranger's guise.*

Submitted by the editor's mother!

Travelling Druid

I'm travelling to NZ and Oz for a few months in the spring (sorry, I mean autumn for you!) and it would be good to meet up with some like-minded spirits if time / itinerary allows.

I'm planning to devote March and April to NZ, as it's further south, moving on to Oz in April and, possibly, May. I hope to get round most of NZ but Oz is so vast I'm not sure yet where/what I'll be doing/going. I know I WILL be in Brisbane for a while as I have a cousin there...

Well, I'm 51yo, been with OBOD about three years, currently struggling thru Ovale...!

I'm travelling to Oz and NZ on a combination of whim and one-off opportunity. I shall be closing my bookbinding business at the end of February and this trip is to be 'time out', time to assess, time to think, etc.

My interests are nature, crafts, music (I am learning the harp), good food, peace and quiet (I do not have television) etc.

Adam Watson

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AdamWatsonBooks@aol.com

Healing Retreat in 2007

Instead of an Assembly next year, we are proposing a Healing Retreat. That is, an opportunity for Australian and New Zealand druids to come together to share and develop their healing skills. It will be held on the Winter Solstice weekend so that we can be warm and cosy together around a central fire. The venue has not yet been decided so if you have any ideas, or would like to participate in the Healing Retreat in any capacity whatsoever, please write to the Editor of Serpentstar (see box below!).

Disclaimer

Opinions published in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the editor or the Order.

Submission/Subscription Details

Subscription is \$10 per year for four issues, or free via email. Email format is Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). Please let me know if you require a different format.

Submissions can be sent via email:

stormwolf@dodo.com.au

or snail-mail:

N. Egan

39 Chester St, Inverell, NSW, 2360

THE 9TH ANNUAL DRUID ASSEMBLY AT COORINGAL GROVE

The 9th Annual Druid Assembly held from Friday September 29th to Monday, October 2 this year was a complete success in every way.

Port Lincoln is a beautiful seaside town, surrounded by spectacular wild country, and in the midst of rolling hills is Koorringal Grove, the home of Rafayard (Lesley) and Dean Gentilin and family (date). Their house, which is full of character, and their magical fairy gardens were thrown open without reserve for the occasion.

The theme was the powers of the earth. Truckloads of amethyst, so plentiful that it has been mixed freely with the gravelly pebbles of the pathways round the house, and crystals of all sorts everywhere made for a calm and tranquil yet vital ambience that helped to set the mood. Unsettled weather conditions stabilised for a weekend of near perfect weather.

As you'd expect with Rafayard music was everywhere - exquisite harp, guitar and mandolin music brought the faeries near, invoked the gods and enlivened the atmosphere, drums beat out lively rhythms, trumpets played and singing and laughter went with it. Unforgettable was Rafayard's utterly thrilling invocation of the goddess Anu, beautifully sung to the golden notes of the harp.

People came from everywhere, all over Australia and Ann and David Whitlock were there from England. Every presence was truly a blessing! There were old faces glad to be meeting again, and newcomers who all fitted in immediately and a good time was soon underway. As usual at Koorringal, community involvement was a feature, and people came and went with good wishes and their own special input all weekend. Kids were everywhere, and were entertained and entertained us with their artistic and musical activities and they added their special magic. They were even stomping about up on the roof there for a while! Dogs, a duck and the constant coming and going of wild birds, lizards and the occasional snake, added their blessings too.

Catering was superb, with an abundant supply of excellent healthy food and drink, always available.

Ceremonies for each grade were held incorporating earth weaving rites, and the initiation of a new ovate, David from Adelaide, and there was a special druid naming ceremony for Lesley, who emerged from the ritual as Luis Aquilla Fayard, to be known as Rafayard. Family and friends made this ceremony special for Rafayard. In a group ceremony with many friends and community members invited we celebrated Beltane early, with Carole and Wayne spectacular in the role of Flower Queen and Green King. The huge Beltane fires were magnificent!

One highlight of the weekend was Dean's fascinating workshop, in which we learned a little bit about dowsing, ley lines and the towers that distribute this 'dragon' earth energy harmoniously throughout the land. It culminated with the actual raising of a tower in a place we were able to dowse before it went up. We were left in no doubt of the value of the exercise - most of us could successfully find the lines of power.

With talent laid on, the Eisteddfod was a great success, with drama, story telling, ballad singing, poetry, and a reading of scientific fact as well, with children participating with as much aplomb as adults. But then, we'd all had plenty of practice the night before at the party! Even Cherry, who was absent, contributed her splendid poem by cassette, amid much laughter.

It's to Rafayard's and Dean's and family's credit that there seemed to be music all the time, and all of it live, not just CDs playing in the background. The keynote of the whole show was participation.

Only one incident gave us pause right at the end: Trudy, who had entertained us with scintillating jigs and reels on her mandolin, fell as she was dismounting after her ride on one of the horses, breaking small bones in one hand and a foot. A spontaneous healing ceremony was held round the fire as she was taken to the doctor for immediate treatment. Best wishes to her. Let's hope her recovery is complete by now and she's back to her playing again!

Our thanks go to Rafayard and Dean and family for their generous hospitality and the hard work they put into making the whole assembly a complete, unforgettable success!

wyverne



Launch of Tim Finn's Imaginary Kingdom

Tim Finn of *Split ENZ* and *Crowded House* fame, approached Cris Mullane (photo), of The Fellowship of Druids Aotearoa (FODA), New Zealand, and member of OBOD to become involved in the launch of Tim's new album *Imaginary Kingdom* (cover photo). Cris prepared a script and involved Druids from The Order of Bards Ovates & Druids in the Sydney, Melbourne and London performances. This is a compilation of the reports of those Druids.

The launch opened in Auckland 6th October at *The Sky City Theatre*, with the foyer decorated in potted native trees and plants of all varieties, logs and copious quantities of river stones, to honour the natural philosophy, integral to Tim's album.

As mist drifted across the stage lit in blue and blush pink hues, the very surprised audience observed hooded Druid Cris entering carrying a staff surmounted by deer antlers. The audience very quickly became involved with calling the quarters and loudly supported their favoured direction (their own particular quarter of the city). At the end of the opening ceremony Tim Finn started his performance to enthusiastic applause.

On his re-entry for the closing ceremony, The Druid of Devonport received uproarious applause and the audience joined in the thanking of the quarters with each group, based on their geographic affiliations, attempting to outdo the previous one with chanting, cheering and whistling. Chris placed a pendant over Tim's head, gave him a blessing for a safe journey and a successful international tour and handed Tim a bronze baton containing a 'gift of words' to be carried to Druids at the other launch venues. The ceremony finished with a great ovation and much calling of support for the Druid.

Later in the foyer people approached saying how much they'd enjoyed the ceremonies and the spiritual aspect of the concert and asking questions about Druidry. Others were surprised at how normal Druids looked!

The second stage of the launch was in Sydney's *The Basement*. While defining the quarters underground without a compass was a little tricky, it was successfully done by Druid Carole Nielsen. Carole's appearance on stage, hooded with a staff covered in snakeskin, quieted an audience that had been busy eating and drinking.

Carole could feel the Awen flowing and let it carry her. When calling for peace in the quarters, the audience voiced support. During the closing ceremony and too much applause Carole presented Tim with an amulet she had made of three blue ceramic leaves. Scottish born Jimmy Barnes, sometimes called the 'elder statesman of Oz Rock', was part of the audience and expressed his delight at Druid involvement.

The day of the Melbourne launch was an extraordinarily blustery one with a passionate, hot spring cleaning wind blowing debris from trees and houses and people all day, the kind of wind that sends animals and children into whirly-gig frenzies.



As Druid Keira Lyons wandered the streets to the venue she encountered a family of Magpies in her path, then a thick line of marching ants, blooming bottlebrush and other native trees. As she wandered in her own Imaginary Kingdom for a moment the landscape changed to palm trees along the beach front areas and throngs of people out for a stroll along the promenade on a day heralding the imminent return of summer.

The performance started to a very full house at *The Prince of Wales*. The blessing of the quarters in Welsh reverberated, with a little help from the sound equipment, to make the Welsh words sound ever more mystical. A large contingent of the Melbourne Grove joined in supporting the peace in the quarters by Awening and after 'May there be peace throughout the whole world', there were murmurings through the crowd of 'That's for sure' and 'Amen sister'. Tim entered to rapturous applause. The crowd loved the set and the band themselves were raving about the night. A little bit of Welsh and Awen never goes astray.

The final phase of the launch was in London on 20th October at *The Scala* in King's Cross and started with Druid Adrian Rooke blessing Tim and the band backstage. Adrian appeared on stage in robe, jewellery, a country hat with jewellery and oak leaves and a carved staff festooned with oak leaves. The audience remained silent and focused during the opening ceremony.

After the performance Stephanie and Philip Carr-Gomm presented Tim with a Druid Animal Oracle and Adrian gave him a special Ogham carving he had made. In the foyer one of those big security guards that are on duty at such events, went up and shook Adrian's hand then touched his heart saying 'That really meant something to me brother!' Many people stopped Adrian in the foyer and chatted, then all bid farewell!

Sequel: Tim is due to return to New Zealand to complete his *Imaginary Kingdom* International Tour later in November with a performance at *The Bruce Mason Centre* on Auckland's North Shore, where he will present Cris with messages gathered from Druids on the journey. Tim has already expressed his delight at the Druid ceremonies and how they were adapted to suit changing requirements at each different venue. He was 'mightily impressed' with how the Druid network operated so effectively across the seas and in lands a world apart to provide support to his concerts. Druidry is definitely an international movement.

The only other time an album has been launched with a Druid blessing occurred exactly a decade previously, when in 1996 the *AfroCelts Sound System Volume 1* was launched with the Order's Pendragon and Modron, Bill & Cairis Worthington, on stage in London and later Dublin, exchanging a chalice and sword for a spear and calabash with African counterparts. The audiences loved this ritual opening, which was devised by Order members Simon Emerson, who started the band, and Myrddhin the band's harpist from Brittany.

- Meghan Stevens

Ed's note: Carole's report follows. Keira and Philip's reports will be in the next issue of *SerpentStar*.



Cris - 'The Druid of Devonport'

Imaginary Kingdom - Sydney Launch

Hi everyone...

After spending a fairly busy few days at the Corringal Grove Assembly, I came home expecting to do some "Druid" veging. Not to be.

On my email was a plea for help with a CD launch for Tim Finn. Before I knew it, I was rehearsing a script for a ceremony that was going to open a concert at The Basement in Sydney, to launch Tim Finn's new CD.

The ceremony started in New Zealand with Druid Chris Mullane, came to Sydney, went on to Melbourne and Keira Lyons and then on to the UK for Adrian.

At each ceremony a message from the presiding Druid was passed onto the Druids conducting the next ceremonies.

Each druid wrote a report and sent it on to the other Druids participating in the launch.

It was great. Anyway here is my report

Well where do I start? It's been a long time since I seriously pushed my boundaries, and now I remember why :-)

First, thanks for the script Chris. It is apparent that you have put a lot of work into it, I loved the section on the inspiration for creativity, the AWEN really flows for me with that.

It was great. We arrived early, I like to be on a train 1/2 an hour before it leaves the station, and watched the team setting up. Rob was fantastic, made me feel that all was well, and that all would be taken care of, which it was. Tim came in and talked to us before his rehearsal, briefly mentioning his interest in Buddhism.

I had my rehearsal and sound check at the last minute, but that was OK. I only had to walk half a dozen steps from the green room to the centre stage, and the mic was OK. It took me a minute during the performance to realise that I had to turn my whole body when I turned, rather than my head, so the mic would pick up OK.

Defining the quarters was tricky, but what do you expect in a Basement in the city? I made sure that I got it right though!

All the support crew were really supportive and I felt like one of the team. I walked around Circular Quay practicing my lines and went back at 9pm to the green room.

Tim was great backstage, talking and attempting to sooth my jangled nerves. He is really down to earth and very genuine, which made everything as grounded as it could be. He gave lots of encouragement, which was great.

Tim talked about his mum, and wanted her mentioned so I added to the line in particular to the Ancestors and family of Tim Finn *and Tim's mother Mary, watching in the Summerlands.*

Tim was happy with that.

The crowd was good, and there was not much interaction, apart from some affirming sounds here and there. I do remember that people were smiling and listening.

Meghan was there to lend Druid support both before and during the launch which was great. Wayne Inga and Tor were there also.

Wayne was standing next to Jimmy Barnes, who is Scottish, and he said that Jimmy was rapt that there was a Druid there and clapped and cheered when I had finished. hahahaha. Jimmy told me later that it was a "nice touch", but I was still "coming down" and didn't recognise him!!!

When I came out for the last part of the ceremony everything went well, I thanked the God and Goddess for their blessing on the eisteddfod and thanked the elements and spirits of the directions.

When I called Tim and gave him the baton and the amulet, the other band members started to come out, and the energy was high and they were pumped up.

I called for the blessing and protection of the God and Goddess, and the music was starting behind me, so I left it there and closed the ceremony in the apparent world in the green room, which was fine.

There is a lot of adrenalin happening at that time of the performance and I let the AWEN flow and went with it.

Tim thanked "Carole the Druid a few times" at the end of the performance, which made me feel like I had "done well" ...:-)

Everyone said there was a lot of applause, and I think, I vaguely heard this. I have to tell you that at the end of my first section, the AWEN was flowing really strongly, but my legs turned to jelly and I held on to the keyboards as I came off. :-)

I don't think that I have had such an adrenalin rush, since I saw Joe Cocker live in Sydney 10 years ago.....hahaha, so my memory hasn't held what my eye and ear had gained.

"Stunned mullet" is probably the right phrase!

But it was great and I am very happy that I was able to have that experience, and bring some Druidry to the population at large.

Cheers and Blessings
Carole



YOU NEVER WANT TO CROSS AN ELF BY BRAD STEIGER

FATE :: May 2006

For many people today, the image of an elf is firmly established in the characters of either the handsome Legolas Greenleaf or the lovely, ethereal Arwen as depicted in the Peter Jackson film of J. R. R. Tolkien's Ring saga by actors Orlando Bloom and Liv Tyler. While the elves in Tolkien's vision are tall and stately beings, tradition has most often portrayed elves and their fellow citizens from the unseen realm as diminutive, hence, "the wee people." Small in stature though they may be, elves, the "Hidden Folk," are not beings with whom to trifle.

Careless or disrespectful humans who trespass on forest glens, rivers, or lakes considered sacred to elves may suffer terrible consequences—even cruel deaths. Entrepreneurs who wish to desecrate land whereon lie fairy circles or mounds in order to build a road or construct a commercial building may find themselves combating an unseen enemy who will accept only their unconditional surrender.

Trouble at the Herring Plant

In 1962, the new owners of a herring-processing plant in Iceland decided to enlarge the work area of the building. According to Icelandic tradition, landowners must not fail to reserve a small area of their property for the Hidden Folk, and a number of the established residents earnestly pointed out to the recent arrivals that any addition to the processing plant would encroach upon the plot of ground that the original owners had respectfully set aside for the elves who lived under the ground.

In a condescending manner, the businessmen explained that they didn't harbour those old superstitions and neither did their highly qualified construction crew who had modern, unbreakable drill bits and plenty of explosives.

But the bits of the "unbreakable" drills began to shatter, one after another.

An old farmer came forward to repeat the warning that the crew was trespassing on land that belonged to the Hidden Folk.

The workmen laughed when the old man walked away—but the drill bits kept breaking.

Finally, the manager of the plant, although professing disbelief in such nonsense, agreed to the local residents' recommendation that he consult a local elf seer to establish contact with the Hidden Folk and attempt to make peace with them. The seer informed the manager that there was a very powerful member of the Hidden Folk who had selected the plot near the herring-processing plant as his personal dwelling place. He was not an unreasonable being, however. Elves really do try to get along with humans and compromise whenever they can to avoid violence. If the processing plant really needed the plot for its expansion, the elf seer said, the Hidden One would agree to find another place to live. He asked only for five days without any drilling, so that he could make his arrangements to move.

The manager felt a bit strange bargaining with a being that was invisible—and, as far as he was concerned, imaginary. But he looked over at the pile of broken drill bits and told the seer that the Hidden One had a deal. Work on the site was shut down for five days to give the elf a chance to move. When five days had passed and the workmen resumed drilling, the work went smoothly and efficiently until the addition to the plant was completed. There were no more shattered drill bits.

Because the incident cited above occurred in 1962—practically medieval times in some young people's minds—many readers will no doubt assume that Icelanders of the 21st century no longer cherish such quaint beliefs. Those readers would be wrong.

In the Boston Herald, December 25, 2005, Ric Bourie wrote that highway engineers and construction crews still regard the Hidden Folk very seriously: "Mischievous befalls Icelandic road builders who can't recognize good elf domain, including breakdowns of heavy equipment and even worker mishaps and injuries. It is said to have happened on more than one job site, enough to take the mythology seriously. Consequently, road planners here consult with an elf expert before routing a road or highway through rock piles that may be elf habitat."

Bourie interviewed elf seer Erla Stefansdottir, who named elves, gnomes,

dwarves, angels, light-fairies, and "the hidden people" as all belonging to classes of what she called elfin beings. Any of the above-named entities, Ms. Stefansdottir said, "...can get quite upset if we ruin their houses or go against their wishes. They get very upset and we have to face the consequences. They can put a spell on us."

Fairy Mound Disturbed

While some people may be surprised that stereotypically stoic Scandinavians believe in elves and other beings from the hidden world, it seems that the whole world embraces the stereotype of the country folk of Ireland taking their wee people seriously. According to popular leprechaun and elf stories, the Irish know that to disturb the mounds or raths in which they dwell is to invite severe supernatural consequences.

Since ancient times, it seems that the Irish have understood that there are certain areas that the wee ones consider sacrosanct, special to them. Certain mounds, caves, creek areas, and forest clearings have been staked out by the Hidden Ones as their very own, and the wise human, sensitively in touch with the natural environment, knows better than to trespass on such ground.

The trouble at the fairy mound outside the village of Wexford began when workmen from the state electricity board began digging a hole for the erection of a light pole within the parameters of a rath. The villagers warned the workmen that the pole would never stay put, because no self-respecting community of fairy folk could abide a disturbance on their mound.

The big city electrical workmen had a coarse laugh and made uncomplimentary remarks about the level of intelligence of the townsfolk of Wexford. The workmen finished digging the hole to the depth that experience had taught them was adequate, then placed the post within the freshly dug opening and stamped the black earth firmly around its base. The satisfied foreman pronounced for all within earshot to hear that no fairy would move the pole from where it had been anchored.

However, the next morning the pole tilted askew in loose earth.

The villagers shrugged that the wee folk had done it, but the foreman of the crew voiced his suspicions that the fairies had received some help from humans bent on mischief. Glaring his resentment at any villagers who would meet his narrowed, accusative eyes, the foreman ordered his men to reset the pole.

The next morning that particular pole was once again conspicuous in the long line of newly placed electrical posts by its weird tilt in the loose soil at its base. While the other poles in the line stood straight and proud like soldiers on parade, that one woebegone post reeled like a trooper who had had one pint too many.

The foreman had endured enough of such rural humour at his expense. He ordered the crew to dig a hole six feet wide, place the pole precisely in the middle, and pack the earth so firmly around the base that nothing short of an atomic bomb could budge it.

Apparently fairies have their own brand of nuclear fission, for the next morning the intrusive pole had once again been pushed loose of the little people's rath.

The foreman and his crew from the electricity board finally knew they were licked. Without another word to the grinning villagers, the workmen dug a second hole four feet outside of the fairy mound and dropped the pole in there. And there it stood, untouched, untroubled—exactly where the wee folk permitted it to stand.

The Wee People's Rock

In The Times, November 21, 2005, Will Pava and Chris Windle tell how a small colony of wee folk living beneath a rock in St. Fillans, Perthshire, cost developer Marcus Salter, head of Genesis Properties, nearly \$40,000 when community pressure forced him to scrap his building plans and start again. A group of his workmen had been about to move a large rock from the centre of a field to make way for the new housing development.

According to Salter, one of the residents of St. Fillans came running, shouting that they couldn't move the rock or they would kill the fairies. At first Salter thought the man was joking. Then came the series of angry telephone calls.

Salter attended a meeting of the community council where he learned that the council was considering lodging a complaint with the planning authority, which was likely "to be the kiss of death for a housing development in a national park."

Although the Planning Inspectorate has no specific guidelines on how to deal with fairies, a spokesman told Salter that "Planning guidance states that local customs and beliefs must be taken into account when a developer applies for planning permission."

Salter was forced to redesign the new estate so that the wee people's rock would be in the centre of a small park nicely situated within the new community.

When some friends and I were discussing the recent accounts of wee people activity receiving media attention in late 2005, Patty recalled staying with an Irish family some years ago.

"They owned a large hotel that dated back to before the Easter Rebellion (1916) and had housed lots of IRA activity," Patty said. "The owner of this place, Mr. Conroy, told me that there are fairy rings all around the area outside of Dublin—especially in St. Kevin's Bed. There is a story of a truck driver that made fun of the villagers for their superstition about the fairy circles and to prove how stupid he felt they were, he drove his truck through one of them! Then he got out of the truck, laughed at the crowd watching him, and promptly died of a heart attack! Conroy swore that this man was a big fellow in perfect health."

Patty heard another story while she was in Ireland about some construction workers who wanted to remove a stump near a fairy ring. They felt that since it wasn't actually in the fairy ring, the coast was clear. They tried to dynamite the stump three or four times and nothing happened. They checked the dynamite, the wiring, and so forth and found nothing wrong. Finally, they all saw a little man dressed in green climb out of the stump and run. Just as he ran off, the stump exploded into a million pieces!

As crazy as this sounds, there was a photographer there from the local newspaper who had heard about all the problems and was going to take a picture of them trying to blow up the stump. He did actually get a picture of the leprechaun. However, Patty was told, it is locked away somewhere in Trinity College.

Patty recalled many conversations with the maid at the hotel where she stayed and she said that she had heard many stories of people who had seen the "wee folks." And on one thing all the stories agreed, Patty said, "You never want to cross one! Not ever!"

Intelligent Energy

I have concluded in my research that there exist throughout the world pockets of energy in which another order of intelligence abides. And I should make clear that I agree wholeheartedly with elf seer Erla Stefansdottir, who includes elves, gnomes, dwarves, angels, light-fairies, nisse, brownies, skaramooshes, and devas as a single shape-shifting intelligence that we have come to call "The Hidden People." In some instances, these pockets of intelligent energy may be influenced by human intelligence and manifest in a physical form as a variation on the theme of a human image. In other circumstances, this energy may direct and control—even possess—human beings.

In essence, these "nature spirits" may be the "Elder Race" or "The Old Ones" referred to in so many myths and legends. These vortexes of intelligence may comprise a companion species to our own and may well have maintained a strange kind of symbiotic relationship with us throughout the centuries of mutual evolution.

David Spangler of Findhorn claimed that he was told by such intelligence that they recognize humankind as a necessary and vital part of the synergistic state of the planet, thus they are essentially benignly concerned with human survival because it bears directly upon the survival of Earth. Spangler's understanding of humankind's relationship to these entities is that we were "first cousins," and that we somehow had a common ancestor.

The elves' benign nature has been experienced by those men and women who have won their favour. On behalf of such humans, the Hidden Ones can materialize to help a poor farmer harvest a crop and have it in the bins before a storm hits, or they can clean a kitchen in the twinkling of an eye to ease the stress of an exhausted housewife. If they see fit to do so, the elves can guide their favoured humans with their ability to divine the future, and they will stand by to assist at the birth of a special couple's child, whom they will tutor and protect throughout his or her lifetime.

Other researchers, biblically inspired, see the elfin clans as forms assumed by the rebellious angels who were driven out of Heaven during the celestial uprising led by Lucifer. These fallen angels, cast from their heavenly abode, took up new residences in the forests, mountains, and lakes of Earth. They exist in a much-diminished capacity, but still possess more than enough power to be deemed supernatural by the human inhabitants of the planet. These parapsychical beings on occasion take humans as mates, thereby breeding a hybrid species of entities "betwixt Man and Angel."

Among the more than 30,000 men and women who have returned the Steiger Questionnaire of Mystical, Paranormal, and UFO Experiences, a remarkable 29 percent claim to have seen elves, fairies, or some form of nature spirit. In certain cases, recounted in the questionnaires, such a being may have considered a deserted house or barn its own. Generally, if the elfin entity understands that a human wishes to occupy the dwelling place and if it is treated with respect, it will quietly move out. At most, a token gift of fruits, nuts, or meal would compensate the spirit squatter and make it agree to move on to a more natural habitat. However, in some instances, humans have just walked into a particular situation at the wrong moment, and they can experience some trauma before squatting rights are straightened out and understood.

Invisible Assault

Together with the return of her questionnaire, Lorrie Jastrow sent an account of an experience which occurred to her and her fiancé, Karl, shortly before their marriage. They had gone to a movie, then decided to drive out to the tiny house in the country where they would live after they had celebrated their nuptials.

Lorrie thought it was fun to go out there and plan their future. The house was on land that was too wooded to be good farmland, but they intended only to plant a small garden for vegetables. Karl would continue his job in town.

"Our only lights that night were our flashlights. Since we wouldn't be moving in for another month or so, the landlord had yet to switch on the electricity. He had given us keys to the place, though, and he didn't mind that we would drive out there to dream about our future life together."

That night when they walked into the house, Lorrie had an eerie feeling that something was wrong, that they were not alone. "Karl must have felt the same way as I did, because he kept looking over his shoulder, like he expected to catch sight of someone spying on us.

"Then we heard a strange chattering, like some giant squirrel or chipmunk, coming from a dark corner in the room. It suddenly seemed so unreal, unearthly, and a strange coldness passed over my body. I told Karl that I wanted to leave, that I was frightened."

But before they could move toward the door, Karl suddenly threw his hands up over his head as if he were trying to grab at something behind him. His head seemed pulled back and to one side. His mouth froze in a grimace of pain and fear, and his eyes rolled wildly. He lost his balance, fell to his knees, and then to his side. He rolled madly on the floor, fighting and clawing the air around his neck.

Lorrie stood stunned with fear and bewilderment. Karl managed to struggle to his feet. His eyes bulged, and he gasped fiercely for each breath. Some unseen thing seemed to be strangling him. He gasped that they must run to the car, that Lorrie must drive.

Somehow, they got out of the house with Karl stumbling, staggering as if something heavy and strong were perched atop his shoulders with a death grip about his throat.

"I...can't get the damned thing off of me!" he gasped.

At last they got to the car. Lorrie got behind the wheel, and Karl told her to drive, fast. He was still trying to pry the invisible thing's hands from his throat.

Lorrie drove for about two miles down the road—and suddenly there was a blinding flash inside the car. A brilliant ball of light about the size of a basketball shot ahead of their car, then veered sharply to the left and disappeared into a clump of trees.

"I did not stop until we were back in town," Lorrie said. "Karl lay gasping beside me, his head rolling limply on the back of the seat. He did not speak until we were well inside the city limits, then he said that some inhuman thing had jumped on him from the shadows of the house. He was certain that it could have killed him if it had really wanted to do so."

Lorrie Jastrow concluded her account by writing that although they returned to their small home in the country with some trepidation, they never again encountered that monstrous, invisible strangler that chattered like a giant rodent. Once the nature spirit had time to calm down and come to terms with the fact that humans were reclaiming the empty house, it moved on to another, more appropriate dwelling. But it certainly did give Karl and Lorrie a piece of its mind before it did so.

Protective Entity

People who leave their vacation homes empty for the major portion of the year also frequently suffer from an elfin spirit developing a proprietary interest in what appears to be vacant property.

Scott Halstead said that he and his family had vacationed in the same cabin in the Northeast for the past 22 years. "We started vacationing in this cabin when Allan was two years old, and we always take the last two weeks in August. And for 22 years, we've had to share the cabin with something else."

Halstead and his wife Lynette made a point to emphasize their contention that although the "something else" sometimes frightened them, their sense of the entity was that it was extremely protective of the cabin and the grounds on which their cabin and others like it had been built.

"The cabin and nine or ten others are situated on a beautiful lake," Halstead said. "And old Charlie the caretaker knows that there is something kind of spooky going on around there, but he usually just shrugs and says that it doesn't bother him. It sometimes bothers his dogs, though. He's got two big German shepherds, and I've seen them cower and whine when neither Charlie nor anyone else was near them."

Lynette said that when their son Allan was around four he would say that he had an invisible friend named Mo-Ko who lived in the woods. "If we were afraid that he might wander off in the woods, he would say, 'Mo-Ko won't let me. He says that I have to stay near the cabins.' Who could complain if his invisible playmate was also a good baby sitter?"

Lynette and Scott agreed that the most dramatic evidence of a guardian spirit looking over the cabin came in 1985 when Allan was 11 and their daughter Tonya was 7.

"Scott and I had gone swimming," Lynette said. "The kids knew that we would be chilled when we got out of the lake and a fire would feel good to us. Allan had watched his father building a fire for years, so he knew the basics, but he just kept piling on kindling. Tonya tossed newspapers and magazines onto the fire, and pretty soon they had a huge blaze roaring in that fireplace."

Shivering, clutching towels to their chilled bodies, Scott and Lynette returned to the cabin to see the colonial-style rag rugs in front of the fireplace on fire, the curtains to the side of the chimney ablaze, and another finger of flame moving across scattered newspapers toward the living room carpet.

"There was that moment of panic, when you just kind of scream and shout before your brain kicks in," Lynette said. "Allan and Tonya were standing against a wall, crying their heads off in fear."

And then, as weird as it may seem—as strange as it is for Scott and Lynette to attest to it—something started to beat out the flames.

"I'm standing there barefooted and soaked in my swimming suit with a towel

wrapped around me," Scott said. "I don't even have time to react, really, when I see something snuffing out the fire. More than beating out the flames, it's like something is smothering it, as if it is covering the fire with a big wet blanket. In minutes, what looked like it would be a major disaster, has become a smoke-filled cabin, a couple of burned and scorched throw rugs, a blitzed curtain, and two crying kids."

Lynette said that she hugged Allan and Tonya and gave thanks to God "...and to whatever protective spirit looks out for the cabins."

Over the years Lynette and Scott Halstead said that there were numerous signs to indicate that some spirit entity was protective of the cabin. All of the family said that from time to time they felt someone was watching them. Items would disappear and reappear in bizarre places. And an eerie kind of scratching noise would often be heard issuing from within the walls.

Out of curiosity, they once wrote to the Wagners, a family they knew rented the cabin in July, and asked if they had ever noticed anything "peculiar" during their occupancy.

"Beverly Wagner wrote right back and said, 'I imagine you're referring to the invisible live-in maid?'" Lynette laughed at the memory. "The Wagners had noticed some of the same numerous little things that we had, but once when they left a messy table after a party at the cabin, they woke up the next morning to discover that someone or something had stacked the dirty dishes in the sink and cleaned the table top. Jim Wagner jokingly said that it must be elves, so he left a bowl of oatmeal on the front step that night. In the next morning it was gone, but, of course, birds or some critter could have eaten it."

Scott and Lynette speculated that it could be the spirit of some Native American who cherished the environment around the lake and who kept a vigil over the cabins and their inhabitants, but they added that they had come to believe that the force, the energy, that loved the place so much was something more primeval.

"It's almost as if nature itself is somehow protective of the few remaining areas that we humans haven't covered over with concrete and erected shopping malls and gas stations," Scott said. "Sometimes I would visualize some kind of elf or nature spirit sitting outside near the lake, looking across the beauty of this area toward the city and sighing, 'What fools these mortals be.'"

Wrestling with Huldefolk

Richard Connors found out that an elf may sometimes envy a human's possessions and try actively to claim them for his own. Richard said that his family was one a few "token Irish" in a small town in northern Minnesota that had been settled predominantly by immigrants of Scandinavian stock. Ever since Richard could remember, he had heard stories about the family of Huldefolk that lived in a cave on Ulmer Sorenson's property north of town. Teenaged boys would sometimes go out there to test their mettle by throwing rocks into the mouth of the cave and daring the Huldefolk to come out and chase them. Some of the braver teens even walked a few feet inside the cave and shouted their challenges. Later, they told everyone how badly it smelled inside the cave, worse than skunks or civet cats.

Every now and then, someone would breathlessly describe having seen one or more of the Huldefolk moving around in the woods after dark, and it was common knowledge among the kids that those nocturnal raids on farmers' chicken coops that carried away hens and eggs were the work of hungry Huldefolk, not wily foxes.

Richard's father told him that the stories about the Hidden Folk had probably been made up by Ulmer Sorenson himself, to discourage kids from plundering apples from his orchard. His father said that their Scandinavian neighbours had their stories about the dark creatures of the forest just as did the Irish with their leprechauns.

Late one afternoon on a warm July day, Richard decided to ignore the "No Trespassing" sign on Sorenson's fence and cut across his orchard to take a shortcut to his girlfriend's farmhouse. He was walking on a worn deer path when up ahead he could see a short, stocky guy coming toward him. As he drew nearer, Richard saw that the stranger was one ugly character. He had coarse black hair that literally jutted from his skull, deep-set black eyes, and an enormous nose. And when he grinned at Richard, he saw yellowish,

jagged teeth that seemed badly in need of a dentist.

Living in a small Minnesota village, Richard was perplexed that he had never before seen the stranger anywhere in town or in school. "He was about five-foot four or so and built like a fire hydrant. He was dressed in a worn bib overall a couple of sizes too large, a torn, dirty work shirt, and his bare feet—at least size 13s—were covered with thick, black hair."

As they stood facing one another, it became clear from the stranger's frank stare that he was greatly covetous of Richard's new jeans and boots. Without speaking a word, the brutish fellow suddenly tackled Richard around his waist and hurled him to the ground. Richard at that time was five-foot-nine and 180 pounds of solid muscle, captain of the high school wrestling squad, and never one to turn down a tussle. "The ugly little guy was incredibly powerful, and he seemed very surprised when I did a reversal, escaped from his takedown, and flipped him over on his back. I was twisting his hairy arm behind him when this incredible thing happened: I swear to all the saints that he started to grow larger."

Before Richard's amazed eyes, his opponent stretched several inches taller and gained about 50 pounds. "And the smell of him became almost overpowering. He stank bad enough when he was a short little bugger, but now he could win a fall by his smell alone. Not being an idiot, I realized that I was up against something beyond my powers of reasoning. This was no ordinary farm boy. Deep in the pit of my stomach, I knew that I would now be fighting for more than my pants and my boots."

The coarse-haired, foul-smelling stranger now filled out his bib overalls and worn shirt. His black eyes were turning red in color and from deep within the creature's chest came a low, steady growl.

"Then I knew for certain that the legends about the Hidden Folks in Sorenson's woods were true," Richard said. "I turned tail and ran as fast as I could, leaving the thing roaring and screaming behind me. Twice I glanced over my shoulder to see if it was following me, but I didn't stop running until I got back into town."

When Richard told his family of his encounter with the creature over dinner that night, his father laughed and said that Ulmer Sorenson often hired temporary field hands from a pool of unemployed lumbermen from up north.

"A lot of those men are pretty rough and tough and a bit short on manners," his father said. "And they might take a fancy to your new boots and jeans and decide to 'borrow' them without your permission. You best not tangle with any of them."

Richard did not press the issue with his father. "Nor have I ever done so with anyone else," he said, "but I will always know that there are many kinds of creatures and spirits that exist in the shadows all around us. Maybe they normally live in some other dimension and only occasionally pop into ours. Whoever they may be and whatever their names, I know that the Hidden Folk are real."

Brad Steiger is a professional writer who deals with the strange and unknown. He lives in Forest City, Iowa.

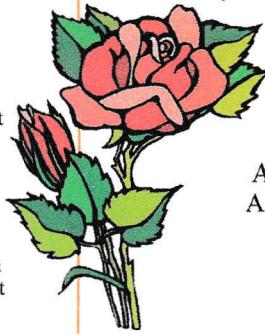
From: <http://fatemag.com/issues/2000s/2006-05article1a.html>



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Seasonal Recipes

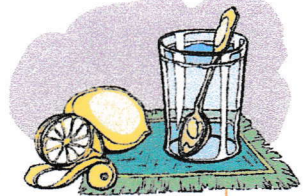
Litha (Summer Solstice) Incense (for burning on a charcoal block)



2 parts sandalwood
1 part wormwood
1 part chamomile
1 part rose petals
A few drops of jasmine oil
A few drops of lavender oil

Lemonade

3 lemons
6oz sugar
1½ pints water



Gently wash the lemons and peel the rind thinly. Put the rind and the sugar into a heatproof jug. Bring the water to the boil and pour over the rind and sugar. Cover and cool, stirring occasionally. Then add the juice of the three lemons. Strain and serve chilled.

From: 'The Real Witches' Kitchen' by Kate West,
Element Books, 2002

...since most European peasants were not accomplished at reading an ephemeris or did not live close enough to Salisbury Plain to trot over to Stonehenge and sight down its main avenue, they celebrated the event on a fixed calendar date, June 24th. The slight forward displacement of the traditional date is the result of multitudinous calendrical changes down through the ages. It is analogous to the winter solstice celebration, which is astronomically on or about December 21st, but is celebrated on the traditional date of December 25th, Yule, later adopted by the Christians.

Again, it must be remembered that the Celts reckoned their days from sundown to sundown, so the June 24th festivities actually begin on the previous sundown (our June 23rd). This was Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Eve. Which brings up another point: our modern calendars are quite misguided in suggesting that 'summer begins' on the solstice. According to the old folk calendar, summer begins on May Day and ends on Lammas (August 1st), with the summer solstice, midway between the two, marking mid-summer. This makes more logical sense than suggesting that summer begins on the day when the sun's power begins to wane and the days grow shorter....

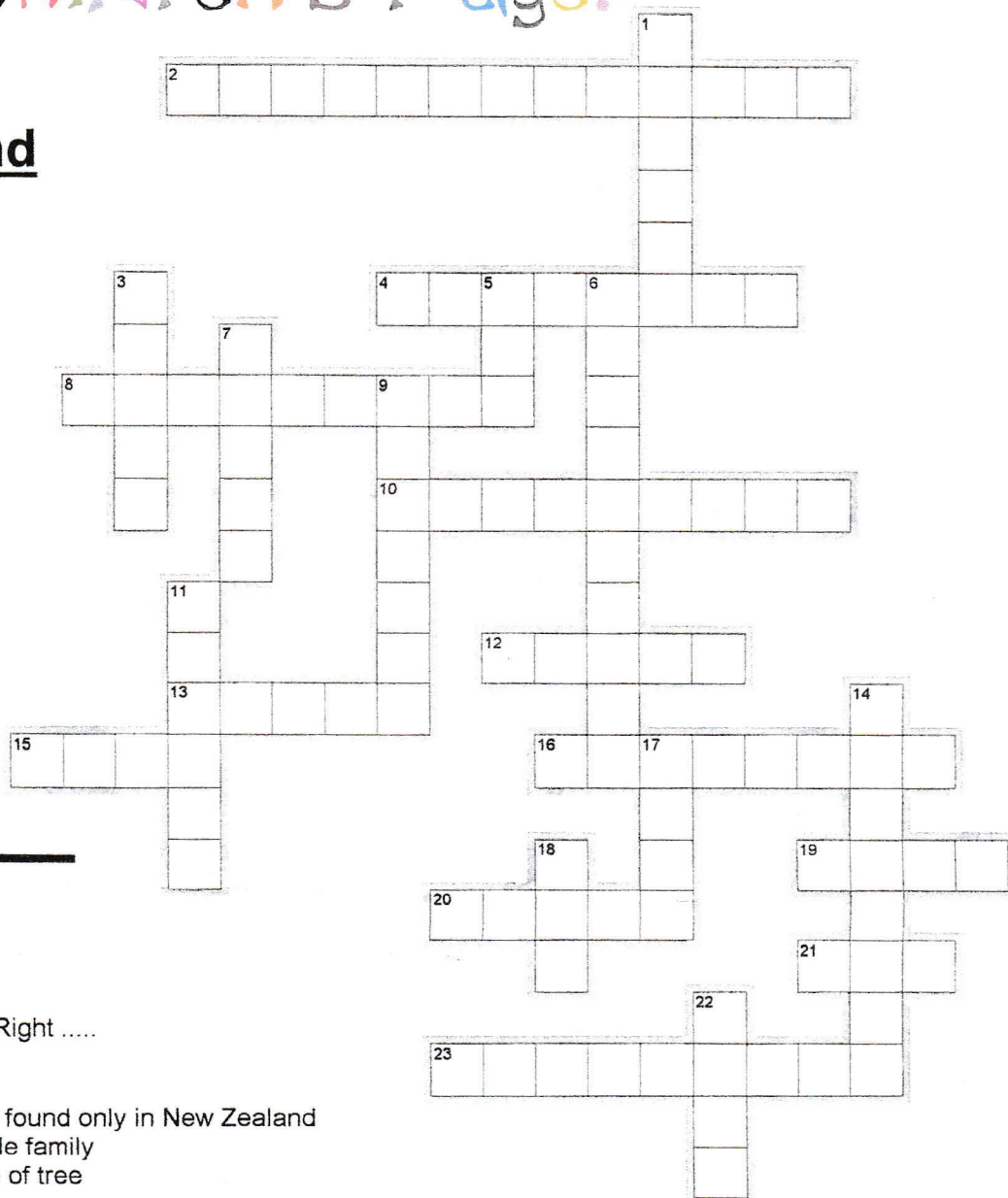
... "old" Midsummer's Eve of June 23rd is also the eve of the Feast of John the Baptist...

...St. John himself was often seen as a rather Pagan figure. He was, after all, called 'the Oak King'. His connection to the wilderness (from whence 'the voice cried out') was often emphasized by the rustic nature of his shrines. Many statues show him as a horned figure.... Obviously, this kind of John the Baptist is more properly a Jack in the Green! Also obvious is that behind the medieval conception of St. John lies a distant, shadowy Pagan deity, perhaps the archetypal Wild Man of the Wood, whose face stares down at us through the foliate masks that adorn so much church architecture....

From:

<http://www.mythinglinks.org/summersolstice2000.html>

New Zealand Native Flora and Fauna



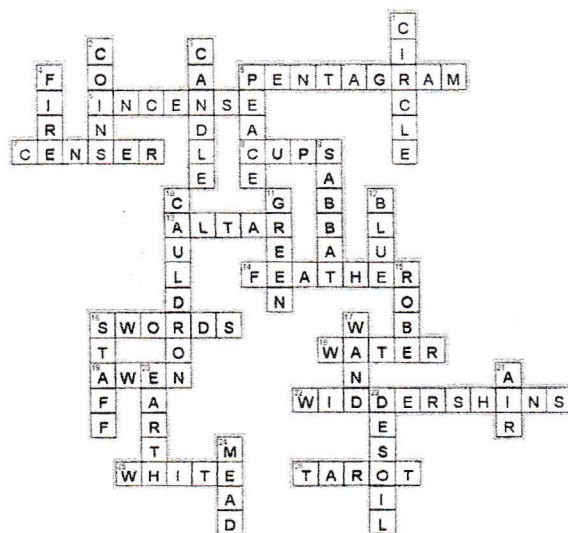
Across

2. Giant snails
4. Maori word for bats
8. Maori name for frogs
10. World's largest seabird
12. Sea mammal - Southern Right
13. Maori word for crayfish
15. Large cricket-like insect
16. Member of the pea family found only in New Zealand
19. Tree, member of the Myrtle family
20. 'Tane Mahuta' is this type of tree
21. Snake-like fish
23. Parasitic plant sacred to Druids

Created with EclipseCrossword — www.eclipsecrossword.com

Down

1. Flightless green and blue bird with large red beak
3. Maori word for Octopus
5. Inquisitive parrot, also a car brand.
6. New Zealand Christmas Tree
7. Marine mammal - New Zealand Fur ...
9. Reptile that is a 'living fossil'
11. Endangered flightless parrot
14. Flax plant used to make baskets, clothing, and more
17. Famous flightless native bird
18. Bird in the honeyeater family, unique to New Zealand
22. Symbol on the All Blacks flag



Created with EclipseCrossword — www.eclipsecrossword.com

For hints go to:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/summary.aspx?id=33531®ion=all>
and: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/defaultlanding.aspx?id=32842>

Last issue's solution