

SerpentStar

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Hefin, December 2004

From the chapter: Summer

*Watching the newborn
evokes memories.*

*Young and old
are ripples
in the same river.*

*"Songs of the Seasons - A Collection of Zen
Poetry and Paintings" by Stephen Cassettari*

Fairies in the Garden

*I see fairies dancing, upon the willow leaves
I hear froglets playing, one hundred there must be
The fairies are very playful creatures but also very shy
They are very graceful, like a gliding butterfly
They sit upon red mushrooms, watching us go by
For they are very tiny, no bigger than a fly
Sitting in the lavender, thinking about their day
A fairy's life is very busy, nearly all they do is play!*

Aysha Centilin



Finding Ceridwen's Treasure

*Draw
Dreamy circles
Into golden sand...
They speak
Of my love
Which is forever.
Carve
Triple spirals
Into ancient stone...
To tell
Of my existence
That has no ending.*



*Walk
Within a labyrinth
Of silent trees...
And find therein
The Sacred Grove
Of true believers.*

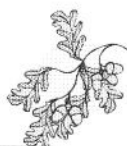
*Seek
The centre
And share
Of my cauldron... the fountain
Of truth.*

*Feel
The healing Awen flow...
Like a waterfall
Of living light
And know
My magic.*

*Brænwen /A *



STORM WOLF'S RAMBLINGS



Hi everyone,

I write this from a hot and steamy Northern NSW afternoon!

Not too much rambling today, we are having a survey instead!

What would people like to have at next year's Assembly? The location for the Assembly can be found somewhere else in this issue, and there have been suggestions about it being a week long Assembly, rather than just a weekend. What do you think?

What sort of workshops, events, rituals, whatever, would you like to be a part of?

Do you have a subject you would like to run a workshop or do a talk on?

Moonfox has offered to run a poetry writing workshop if people are interested.

Please send your ideas and suggestions to the editorial address.

I look forward to hearing from you, and hope you all have a safe and happy Solstice, Christmas, and New Year!

Take care everyone,

Storm Wolf

WINDS SECRETS

With the winds breath

He shares my secrets

Sighing, whispering loudly

He comes, he goes

Joins me for but a moment

Then the moment is gone

My thoughts with it

To caress and rub cheeks

With someone else

He is of many loves

Touching many at one time

Softly, or roughly

Stroking their hair'

Airing their clothes

Nearly omnipotent

But not quite a god

My friend, come we shall walk together

Taran WOLF

FOUND

In remains of sweat lodge after Assembly - one silver "sleeper" earring. If this is yours contact Cherry at

carrollracing@big.net.au and she will be pleased to return it to you.

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

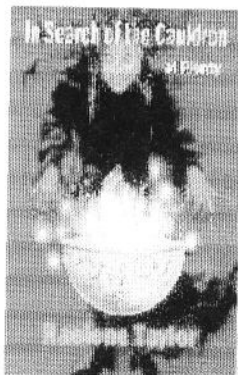
'Glen Oswald', Lamonts Lane,
Inverell, NSW, 2360

SerpentStar is printed on 100% recycled paper

Just letting you know that my book 'In Search of the Cauldron of Plenty' is being published this month.

To preview the book go to www.ZeusPublications.com

Childrens, then click on the name. The novel appeals to 8-13yrs and will be available at Dymocks Book Stores - Raelene Taylor

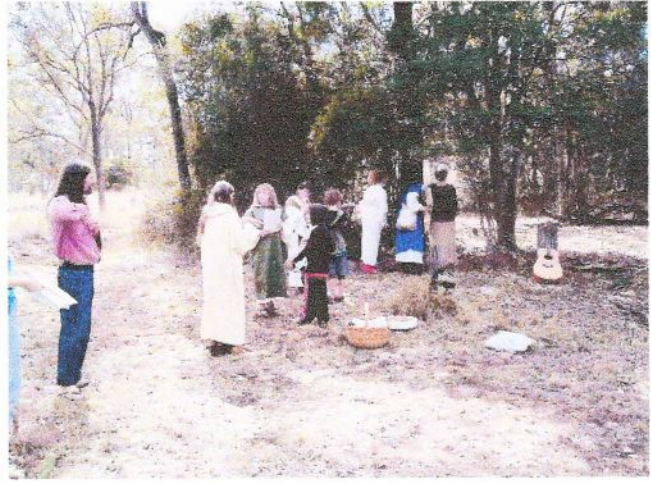


Websites

www.druidry.org - Website of the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids



The Faerie Ring



Entering the Faerie Ring for the Bardic Grove



The ceremony for Dennis and Cherry's wedding renewal



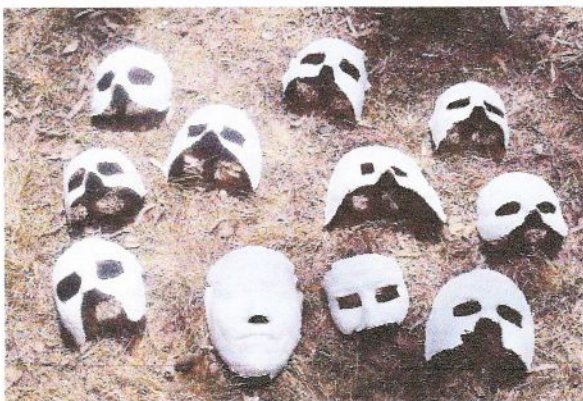
The renewal!



Your humble editor having a mask made!



Another mask waiting to dry



Drying masks



Decorating the masks



The completed masks



The Hawk



Cerridwen, Afagddu, Creirwy, and Lord Tegrid



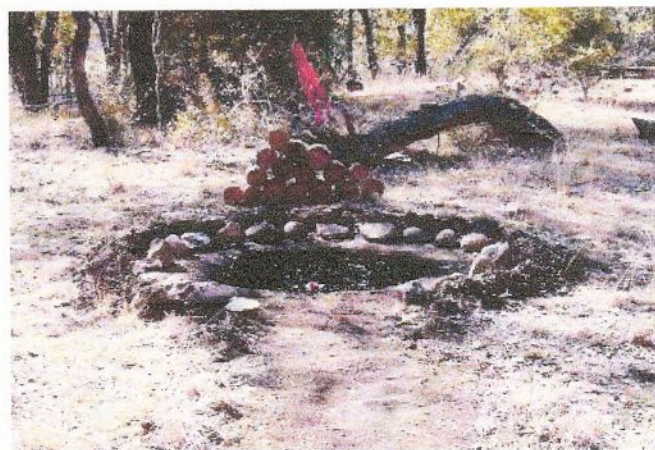
The Taliesin Players!



The ocean



The remains of the sweat lodge



The fire pit where the rocks were heated for the sweat lodge

FLYING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

No one really understands the power of instinctive kindness. This story began in 2003 with a gift of the book 'Southern Echoes' from Susan Jones, from the Australian Druid Assembly. Messages were written to me inside it from those who never thought that we would meet. My review in Touchstone led to a discussion about the possibility of attending the Assembly while in Australia visiting our family.

These were the first words I read on the Assembly website from the hosts Cherry and Denis Carroll:

"We have a small slice of heaven on 160 acres which we would love to share with you all. . . . There are some wonderful trees, including several species of ironbark, eucalypts and bloodwoods, crows ash, pines and more. Mount Wooroolin rises to the North behind us. This is a long extinct volcano which radiates its energy across our land, creating a deep sense of peace and tranquility. Grey kangaroos, wallabies, possums, sugar gliders, echidnas, frilly lizards, goannas, blue tongue lizards . . . and snakes, make up our native animals. . . . There is also a flying fox colony. . . . They hang in the trees like giant overripe fruits during the day but, at night, the sky is black for over half an hour as they pass overhead.

It was difficult to imagine anything more different from Glastonbury, and hard to accept that the Assembly Ceremonies would be more than a pale shadow of the magic of the Tor. It was impossible to see that the qualities of the Australian landscape could represent the essence of OBOD Assembly Ceremonies without tradition and history.

Because I had learned to read, love and listen to the landscape around Kuring-gai Chase National Park, where my grandchildren live, I knew that I had already been touched by the soul of the bushland spirit. This association, though, had never been linked to the spiritual landscape of my own druidic practice. I sensed that I would be open to the voice of the Queensland landscape, but still could not see how the Northern and Southern Hemispheres could close the gap of perception and spiritual metaphor.

I had been invited to take on the role of North, which seemed appropriate in my crone state; representing winter, and earth, (the element I need most to balance my fiery nature). To my surprise, and the first lesson in humility, North in the Southern hemisphere, is the Fire direction; its symbol the Frilly Lizard. There were other unfamiliar symbols too – the Whale, the Echidna and the Magpie. The circle is cast widdershins which was disorientating.

With my sense of direction uprooted, and my familiar symbols displaced it seemed right to devise a ceremonial garment which might signify the power of the New World rather than the Old. I emerged as a creature in fired earth and cream, with bronze sequins shimmering among the folds. I sloughed off my English spiritual skin with my new robe and emptied my heart of its home perceptions. My headdress, though remained intact, a cream plaited circlet decorated with feathers, sheep's wool and a glittering cairngorm set in pewter, which caused some comment in Australian Immigration. It made me feel that something of my own was there to comfort me.

. Nothing, even the meditations in NSW, the sealing away of familiar ritual, or the rising images of the Lizard and the Echidna could have prepared me for the dream awakening into magic, which crept into my consciousness as we drove 220 km across the straight dust of the Queensland roads. The tumult of the outside world simply dissolved into the air. As the gold of the parched landscape disappeared into the distance either side of the tree lined road, I sank into a kind of dormant state, to expect nothing and to respond to everything; my former self fading away in the sunset.

Darkness falls suddenly in Australia in September at about 6.30. We were travelling along a dirt track without road lighting, when we spotted a gateway festooned with balloons in the headlights. Before we turned in, a brown owl glided onto the road, and slowly rose in front of us with wings outspread. Our eyes met for an intense moment, closing the gap between the world that lay behind and ahead. It was without surprise that I learned from Cherry and Denis that owls rarely appear on the ground.

From the first hug of welcome strangeness evaporated. As people arrived that evening, and through Friday, the power of place drew everyone together. As we explored our home together, the mood of mutual warmth wrapped us in tranquillity. The consecration of the land in the Opening Ceremony had a primeval significance, the first public declaration of sacred vows that had ever been made in this already magical space. It was like being the first pilgrims in a new land of joy.

For me this act was the closing of the gap between the northern and the southern hemisphere. And more potent even than perfection of the sphere, was the realisation that the Lizard of the fiery North in the blazing spring sunshine ensouled me more powerfully even than the ancient magic of Glastonbury. As Ceremony after Ceremony unfolded, so the spiritual grace which shone into my heart grew with a more brilliant light than I had ever known.

Everyone ate and drank together, laughed and cried together, and moved around the circles and sacred places together. Some camped; others slept in beds. Time slowed down and stood still among the pale clumps of tall grasses, the waving topknots of the narrow trees, and the haunting melody of the Australian magpies who sang in the woods unseen from dawn to dusk. Although some had organised aspects of the Assembly there seemed to be no leaders or followers, just an ebb and flow of passive and active roles; the whole group energy creating and strengthening the web which spun us through the rhythms of the days and nights together.

The ceremonial pattern meant that there were three open and three closed Ceremonies; the open being the Opening, the Closing, and the renewing of marriage vows by Cherry and Denis. The others were Bardic and Ovate initiations, and for the six of us who were in the Druid Grade or beyond, a Ceremony and meditation in the faerie grove. This drew us into deep questioning – and the declaration of thoughts and emotions which bound us together so deeply that we forgot the time. Our meditative magic burned through layers of known and forgotten gods deep into the centre of the warm earth, singing in our bones and blood.

Central to the fellowship of the Assembly were two strands woven into the weekend, through mask making, story telling, song, Ceremony and meditation.

The first was the volcanic nature of the land itself, and the second the gentle affection shared with us by Cherry, who with Denis, had thrown open their home and bestowed on us so many gifts of nourishment and love. A sense of grace and kindness hung in the air and drifted through the trees. In the Closing Ceremony, special mention was made of David and myself as visitors from the North. We were invited to walk hand in hand into the centre of the circle to plant a tiny rosemary bush as a symbol of remembrance of the Assembly. Then all were given rooted sprigs of rosemary to tend in our own soil and remind us of one another.

Never had Awen seemed to me such holy state of being, in this one small spot at sunset in a faraway land, our tears caught by the invisible song of the wind, and the rippling shadows of the leaves on the sunny earth, mingling in an elemental embrace.

Before we left, to find my own valediction among the dawn birds, I opened Southern Echoes, and Ruisart's words seemed to crystallise all I had learned and felt:

'Instead of leaving our cultures in the old country - or bringing them with us and stubbornly keeping them fixed and static . . . we simply have to translate our ways into the "language" of our new lands. It is important that we honour our ancestors but we must also understand that we are the ancient Druids of the future . . .'

Ann Whitlock



THE SEVENTH AUSTRALIAN DRUID ASSEMBLY

Murray Barton aka Moonfox 2004

The Seventh Australian Druid Assembly was hosted by Cherry & Denis Carroll at their beautiful property near Kingaroy in Queensland. Here in Australia the Assembly is passed around, a sacred object, moving from Grove to Grove visiting the far-flung corners of our land. Last years assembly held at Wyeuro in South Australia was on the plain of a vast ancient seabed. This year we moved to the element of fire, Denis and Cherry's property is on the rim of an ancient volcano.

Once again members made the pilgrimage from all around the country, we weaved our way to the assembly paths crossing and winding and building on the tapestry which is our Druid tradition here in this southern land. Again we were gifted with the presence of an overseas visitor- Ann Whitlock and her husband David from England were visiting family in NSW and made the trip up to Qld to join us for the assembly.

Cherry and Denis courageously opened their hearts and their home to us and the preparations they had made were evident in every moment of the assembly. The schedule was at once intense (the volcano making its presence felt!) and relaxed with quiet spaces for meditation and conversation. A time to strengthen the bonds of relationships which exist only by phone or email for most of the year and to forge new relationships.

2004 has been the biggest assembly so far held in Australia with five Bards, two Ovates and seven Druids in attendance along with around a dozen interested new comers ranging from Taoists and Buddhists to Christians and followers of American Indian traditions. All were keen to ask questions and learn about Druidcraft.

Aside from getting to visit different parts of our land one of the beautiful features of having our assembly move from place to place is that we experience the Awen interpreted in slightly different ways as each host brings their own personal touch. Cherry and Elkie worked tirelessly to create the rituals and I am sure all members join me in thanking them and congratulating them on a job well done.

With only a few faltering steps/missed words we sang our way to the Faerie Ring for the Opening Ceremony followed by the Bardic Grove &

Diane's Bardic Initiation. After lunch was the mask-making workshop for the Taliesin play followed by the Nine Ladies & Activist Druidry talk

with Ann Whitlock. In the evening we returned to robes for the renewal of Cherry & Denis' wedding vows in the Oak Tree Grove, a beautiful ceremony that left hardly a dry eye in the circle. In the evening Bardic skills were shown off in the Eisteddfod ritual, a little mead was also consumed as we passed the mead jug and talking stick around the camp fire.

We started Day 2 with the Ovate grove and Cherry's Ovate initiation followed by the combined first rehearsal and performance of the masked Taliesin play- a fabulous success with many curtain calls as the line between audience and performer was stretched to its limit. After lunch Druid grade members returned to the Faerie Ring for a deep and evocative ceremony of that grade. We completed the weekends weaving with a haunting closing ceremony at Willow Glenn Grove. The last word in ceremony though was had by Sue, a non OBODie, who led a number of hardy Druids in a traditional American Indian sweatlodge- the volcano speaking through the local basalt rocks which were heated in a fire pit.

Over the course of the weekend a bird spotting competition was held with a beautiful stain glassed fairy wren as the prize. David Whitlock spotted 34 of Kingaroy's 142 species of birds- he was hardly seen without a pair of binoculars and bird book for the entire weekend. Honourable mentions also go to Aysha and Peter & Ngaire. Dishonourable, but loving, mentions to Suriya and Ari who embodied the trickster energy over the weekend.

After the assembly I asked quite a few people which was the highlight of the weekend for them, no-one could pick out one thing as standing out above the rest, from the beautifully prepared meals to the thought and detail of each ritual a fabulous weekend was had by all.

Our thanks go to Ann Whitlock for bringing to Australia her vision and practice of a Druidry which is acting directly in the world and for her warmth, insight, humour and pizzazz. It was suggested that "head office" might be sending these UK Druids down to check up on us and that

Ann was chosen for her reputation as being a bit of a tough nut- well she clearly cracked under the Australian sun sharing her heart with us, thank-you Ann.

Thanks also to Elkie for her work on the rituals, to Peter for the juggling and the puzzles, to Keira for the mask making and the theatrical production of Taliesin. Finally and most importantly thanks to Cherry and Denis your love for each other and your commitment to this Druid tradition shone through every part of your gift of this assembly to us, may the Gods always looking kindly on you.

As our tradition teaches every ending is a new beginning and we try to never leave an assembly without preparing the loom for the next gathering. Some hear the call of the Gods and volunteer, some are told in vision or meditation, some are encouraged, cajoled and just short of threatened. I'll leave it to you to decide which but next years assembly will be hosted by the insatiable pair of Ngaire and Carole at Peter and Ngaire's New South Wales property. Join me in wishing them well in preparations and we look forward to seeing you around the sacred circle in 2005, Blessed Be!

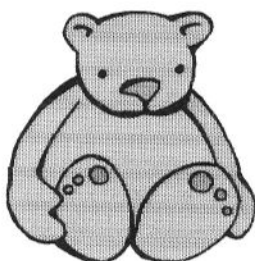


Pirates and Bears

They got on the bus
And said not one word
Hugging their soft cuddly toys
Each on reflecting in their own way
Their experiences, sadness and joys
Tiredness creeping into their bones
From late nights and many things new
Glazed eyes staring out of the bus
At landscapes of colourful hues
Then one starts talking
Questions are rolling
Mummy can I be a bard?
Who can I write to?
When will we get there?
I'm hungry!

(there's just a few, for a start)
And as we pass through another small town
I see tears have started to fall
And she rubs her face into the fur
Of her rabbit, to help deal with it all
So much emotion welling up inside
She stares at her April and cries
Hugging her closer, missing her Cherry
A friendship that words can't describe
The hours go by

They're coming round slowly
They've even started to fight
Ahhh, back to normal
Sigh I guess it shows they're alright
The sadness is dimming as thoughts take over
About more adventure to share
Faces are smiling and little pirates keep hugging
one rabbit, one dog and one bear.



SALT LAKE

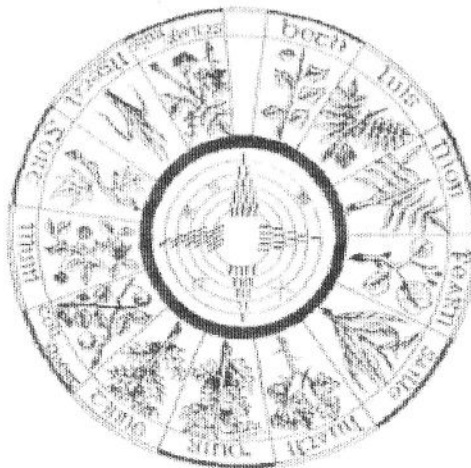
APPLY A WASH OF SALT WHITE.
PAINT THINLY,
A SILVER OF WATER.

MIRROR PERFECT.

TAKE A LOOK.
TELL ME,
WHAT IS IT
WE'RE BEING ASKED
TO SEE.

MURRAY BARTON DECEMBER 2004

Lesley Gentilin



FIRE KEEPER

*The sun had but set
The light is shallow
Looking through heat haze
The stillness begins to dance
The dreaming has begun
Time was no more
Life tested in thought
Seconds flowed into minutes
Minutes to hours
Hours to years
Then centuries drifted away
I am alone in a time unknown
No man before me has seen this land
Nor the moon that rises in the sky
I am still, my breath is slow
The bats head south
Leaving their mountain roost
Their eyes are like stories
As the trees begin to chant
I feel their energy pass into my soul
It feels good and I begin to smile*

DEAN GENTILIN

Seasonal Recipes

Sugared Nuts

125g/4oz pecan nuts
125g/4 oz whole blanched almonds
1 egg white
½ cup caster sugar
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1. Place the nuts on a tray and cook in a moderate oven until they are a pale gold colour. Stir once or twice. Remove and leave to cool a little.
2. Beat egg white until stiff. Stir the sugar and spices into the egg white, then add nuts and mix until they are coated. Cover a baking tray with non-stick paper and spread nuts out evenly. Bake for about 15 minutes in a moderate oven, turning several times, until they are sticky and brown underneath.
3. Separate any clumped nuts, and place in an air-tight container when cool.

From: 'Gourmet Gifts' by Beverly Sutherland-Smith

Honey Vanilla Icecream

5 egg yolks
2 tbs honey
1 tspn vanilla essence
2 cups/500ml/16fl oz low-fat skim milk
8 strawberries halved

1. Mix the egg yolks with the honey and vanilla in the top of a double saucepan. Add the milk and whisk for about 8 minutes over simmering water until mixture thickens slightly.
2. Place mixture into a freezer-proof container and freeze until almost set. Break into chunks or spoon into a food processor and process until smooth. Return to freezer until firm. Serve with fresh strawberries.

Serves four

Hazelnut Icecream

¾ cup/90g/3oz hazelnuts
½ cup/100g/3½oz caster sugar
1 cup/250ml/8fl oz cream
1 cup/250ml/8fl oz milk
½ tspn freshly squeezed lemon juice

1. Place hazelnuts in a baking dish, place in the centre of a pre-heated 180°C oven until skins start to burst and nuts are golden beneath the skin. Shake pan from time to time. Place nuts in a kitchen towel, rub until most of the skin has come off.
2. Place nuts in a processor, grind until very fine and oily, stopping once to scrape down sides. Add sugar, cream, and milk, process until well combined. With machine running, add lemon juice to taste.
3. Pour mixture into a large freezer-proof container, cover and freeze until partially set. Remove from freezer, beat with rotary or electric mixer until smooth. Pour back into container and freeze until firm.

Makes about 2½ cups

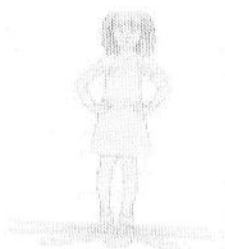
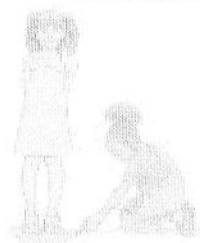
From: 'Homemade Icecreams and Sorbets'
ed. Margaret Gore

What's the Time?

In summer, the days are longer and the nights shorter than at any other time of the year. Midsummer's day is the longest day of the year. The sun also rises higher in the sky than it does during the other seasons. Check to see where it rises and sets each day.

Shadow clock

You can find out how the sun changes position during the day by making a shadow clock with a friend. You will need to do this on a sunny day in a place where you are allowed to draw on the ground with chalk.



1. In the morning, ask your friend to stand with their feet together. Draw around their shoes and shadow with chalk. Then write down the time above the shadow.

2. Every two hours, do the same thing in the same spot. Write down the time above each shadow outline. Look how the position and the shape of the shadow have changed during the day.

What happens?

As the sun rises higher in the sky in the middle of the day, shadows become shorter. As the sun moves across the sky during the day, shadows change the direction they point in because they always point away from the sun.

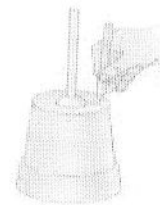
Shadows are longer in the morning and the evening when the sun is low in the sky.



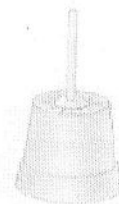
1. Turn the flowerpot upside down. Push the stick through the hole in the pot and into the ground.



2. Wedge modelling clay around the stick, as shown, to hold it upright and keep it in place.



3. Mark where the shadow is by drawing a line on the pot. Write the time next to the line.



4. Do the same thing every hour. Now you will be able to tell the time on sunny days.

Sundials



Sundials have been used to tell the time for thousands of years. You can still see them in some places. A sundial is a very simple type of clock that uses a shadow to tell the time. Try making a sundial of your own. You will need to keep it in the same place once you have made it.

The upright part of a sundial is called a gnomon. Its shadow falls onto a flat dial marked rather like a clock face.

You will need:

- A flowerpot
- A ruler
- A black marker pen
- Modelling clay
- A stick twice the height of the flowerpot