

SERPENT STAR

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



BELTANE 2015

Welcome to the Beltane 2015 issue of SerpentStar!

I write to you this issue with aches, pains and sunburn! After celebrating an early OBOD Beltane with Macadamia Grove, which included the second of our Bardic initiations this year (welcome Sam and Shawn!), some of us went on actual Beltane eve to an open pagan event in Brisbane. Faeries and assorted wild folk danced, stomped, chanted and made noise from one parkland to another through the centre of the city, followed by a very lively and theatrical ritual and culminating in a joyful and chaotic maypole. It's always an amazing time, but ooooooh I feel every bit of it this morning...

In this equally lively issue we have part two of Pete Blake's article on his trip to the UK Druid Camp; some more atmospheric poetry from Peter Bull; our 'Voice from HQ' features a contemplation of the Beltane-Samhain axis by Maria Ede-Weaving; part one of an exploration of the Sacred Masculine by Todd Dearing; some more words on Beltane passion by Adam Cashmore-Brooke; thought-provoking short pieces by Adam, and Morfran; full details and a booking form on the Four Gates Shamanic Healing Diploma week being held by Sacred Balance, New Zealand; and some more new events and group information.

Always remember that SerpentStar is created for OBODies across the whole Southern Hemisphere, and welcomes contributions from members all over the region. We welcome to the group listing in this issue Brisa del Sur, from Argentina, and I would love to see more from across the SH in SerpentStar - get in touch, let us know you're out there!

Tea calls, lots of tea. May your Belfires ignite first time, every time.

In Peace
Mandy /\



Photo: Shawn Spence



Photo: Carmen Holloway

SerpentStar, Beltane 2015

SerpentStar is a free, volunteer-produced online newsletter for members of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere.

Front Cover photograph and celebrant listing graphic by Mandy Gibson. SerpentStar logo by Todd William Dearing. Watermark images courtesy freepik.com and druidry.org. All other images as credited.

Submission guidelines and subscription info are available from serpentstar.wordpress.com/about

Follow us on Facebook - search "SerpentStar"

Enquiries via email: serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere

Groves and Seed Groups

Brisa del Sur

We are a Seed Group called 'Brisa del Sur' (Southern Breeze) from Rosario, Argentina, and we are writing to introduce our group and share with you and the Order the fulfilling experience and wonderful learning we have had as a result of our journey along the Druid Path. You can contact us at southernbreezesfellowship@gmail.com and you can see our profile on Facebook www.facebook.com/Southernbreezesfellowship

The Golden Wattle Seed Group

For OBOD members in South Australia. We meet for the eight festivals of the Wheel of the Year, and for nature walks or other activities from time to time. Send an email to inquire: todddearing@gmail.com or kaceystephensen@hotmail.com

Macadamia Grove

Welcomes and is inclusive of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales OBOD members who wish to join in with any activities. We celebrate the eight festivals of the year, and organise other events depending on members' interests. As Brisbane is a central meeting point most of our events are held close to the city, often in the bushland of Mt Coot-tha. Non-members with an interest in Druidry are able to attend some rituals by prior arrangement. Contact Sandra: macademiagrove@hotmail.com

The Melbourne Grove

Welcomes all OBOD members (local, interstate, and overseas) to its seasonal celebrations. Family and friends may also attend with a member and find themselves warmly welcomed. If you would like to join us, please contact Elkie: whitelk@bigpond.com, phone 03 9758 5359. Our website is www.themelbournegrove.org

Useful websites for SH OBODies:

www.druidryaustralia.org - A central online resource for druidry in Australia.

Druids Downunder - Facebook group - a closed group for druids of any path, in the Southern Hemisphere and Australia in particular.

Don't see your group or website listed here? Send a listing to serpentstar.obod@gmail.com and spread the word!

OBOD Worldwide

www.druidry.org - Official site of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids

www.druidcast.libsyn.com - Direct download and shownotes for DruidCast (or subscribe via iTunes)

Facebook Groups - OBOD Friends (open to members and non-members, discussing general topics) and **Order of Bards Ovates and Druids** (closed group for members of the Order).

Publications

Touchstone (HQ) Sent free to all members taking the course, and once you have finished receiving course material you can subscribe separately. *Touchstone* is only available to members of the Order.

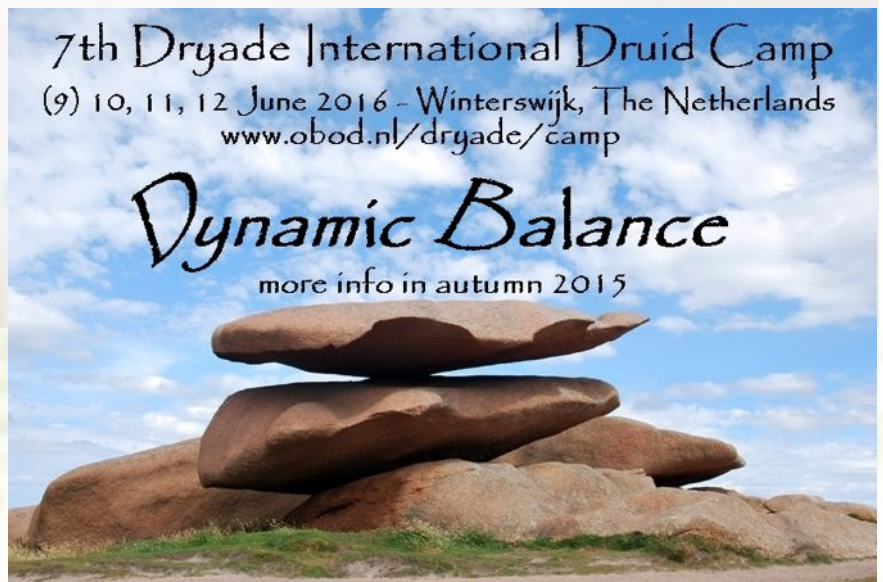
Druid (USA) www.druidmagazine.com

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

Il Calderone (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

Druidenstein (German) www.feuersprung.de

Menhir (French) issuu.com/obod-menhir/docs



Wild on Earth

(A personal journey)

We would like to invite you to come and be a part of a personal retreat, connecting deeply into the sacred nature of Mother Earth: a retreat that supports you to rest, regenerate, and be inspired by the genius of the natural world. This retreat will be centered at Motherland Forest Retreat and we will take journeys/pilgrimages into unique and extraordinary parts of the land.

We will travel into wild landscapes of extraordinary quality and beauty, where the spirit of the land is strong and healing. We will go to little-known sacred cathedrals within the natural world. We can offer simple, pure and accessible potent practices to deepen and empower your personal connection to the spirit within yourself and the elements, giving you an authentic sense of belonging to the oneness of all.

This retreat is facilitated by Rosemary Yates and some highly skilled friends, who are wilderness guides with a difference: expert ecologists, meditation practitioners, massage therapists, creative arts facilitators.
Please see website below for details.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS DEEPLY NOURISHING AND INSPIRATIONAL RETREAT, FOCUSED TO EXPAND CONSCIOUSNESS TO DEEP WISDOM THAT IS INHERENT IN THE NATURAL WORLD IN WHICH YOU BELONG.

This lovingly balanced retreat is based in our comfortable heart based retreat/home. We can offer great food, like-minded company, relaxation and plenty of laughter! We will have to limit this journey to a small group, and we will journey into wild and wonderful places within walking distance of our forest home and a few spectacular journeys into the surrounding landscape of forests, escarpments, sacred groves and river country. We will have a comfortable vehicle with no major hikes, only gentle walks into great places.

COST: \$1250 ALL-INCLUSIVE FOR 5 DAYS (WE CAN OFFER ONLY TWO CONCESSIONS)

WHEN: November 26 – 30, 2015

**Motherland Forest Retreat
43km North West of Dorrig NSW**

Ph: 02 66578049

<http://mt-hyland.com/>

Druid Camp and the Summer of 2014 - Pt 2

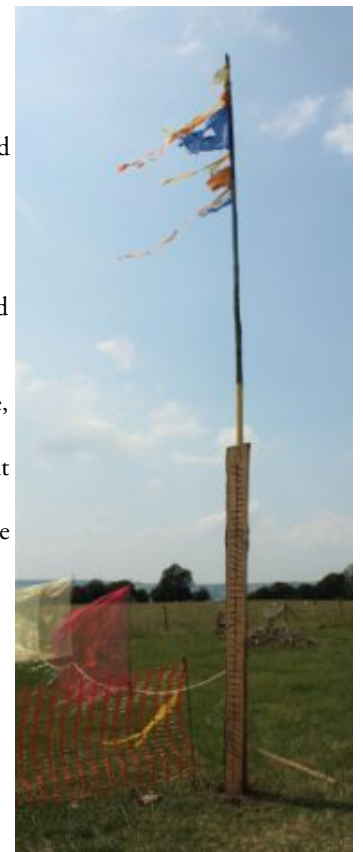
by Pete Blake

Firstly I made my way to the recommended camp-virgin's circle, it was here that we were given advice and information on the camp and how it was run, the different areas and what to expect over the weekend. Questions were asked and answers offered. The informative Penny Billington, editor of OBOD's Touchstone, offered a few words which have stayed with me until this day, mainly around the responsibility we have for Self. Then we each had the opportunity to speak about who we were and what brought us here. It was a good inclusion, given that the camp would have been at least a couple of hundred people, and gave me (travelling alone) my first chance to really meet others.

The event was well catered for, with all meals being vegetarian making them available to everyone. Ample, hearty, simple fare, and delicious. Not forgetting the awesome array of cakes on offer. While camping might be seen as 'roughing it', the food was not a reflection of that and I never heard one complaint about it while I was there. Amenities were ample with wood-fired showers greeting each morning with hot and steaming water, and mindfully kept brief by each camper as we quietly chatted or slowly awoke in solitude while we queued in the morning sunshine. These also had saunas which were fired up late at night for those who chose to use them.



My mornings would begin not with the yoga or circle dancing, but with Stav: a martial art using a short staff and based on the runes, presented by a well versed local instructor, and a much fun start to the day before I headed off for breakfast. I would happily have kept up this martial art, if I wasn't a few thousand kilometres away.



Ten o'clock each morning saw the whole camp gathering in the big main tent for housekeeping issues and an introduction to the day's events and workshops. It would begin with an easy partnering exercise before heading into a collective of cascading Awens. It's at this point, with 200 hundred-odd people chanting Awens in a big tent, that you (as a visitor who has never been in the presence of any more than a dozen Druids) realise just how inspiring for your spirituality attending events like this can be.

Can I just say, as a father, one of the things that so impressed me about the festivals I attended in the UK (including Druid Camp) was the way they catered so well for our younger folk. Both children and teenagers had their own collective spaces, and were given workshops and activities to attend which reflected such respect and care for our kids. One of the highlights to each morning was hearing the organiser for the children's events, a very pregnant Scottish lass, who would speak of the children's ventures from the day before and introduce what they would be up to that day.

She was a true gift, a bard in the very sense of the word who would weave together the days activities within myth and story, and often too much laughter in her explanation to us adults.

Workshops, films, talks and presentations covered the areas of spirituality, women's and men's issues, health and healing, eco-topics, traditional arts and crafts etc. There were too many I wanted to attend, all overlapping so, it was a task to pick and choose.

These made up the bulk of the day and for me meant visiting the witches, learning about native super-foods (which had me eating from the hedgerows for the rest of my trip) and native entheogenics – those plant medicines found growing within the UK landscape, and included such plants as belladonna, nightshade and fly agaric. We sampled and took notes, and learned how to prepare and use a variety of native super-foods and plant medicines. These girls run workshops and apprenticeships which I would happily have signed up for if, once again, home wasn't a few thousand kilometres away.

I spent two workshop sessions learning the craft of carving, in this instance carving spoons from green wood. I chose willow wood which had been struck down by a storm on the instructor's property. My only regret was not purchasing a carving knife from them, as I have yet to locate any since returning of the quality they had. I've always wanted to learn carving and it was great fun. I love crafting items which also have a practical purpose. The art of taking a piece of wood, visualising within it, and carving away what doesn't fit into that mental image.



I attended a sound meditation using mainly singing bowls, some of which were apparently hundreds of years old. Now, I have been facilitating sound-guided meditation myself for over ten years. So it's always difficult at times to not be internally critiquing what they were presenting, and I have to say this event saw me do just that. There is a level of professionalism which I personally feel needs to be upheld, and which for me wasn't quite there. Maybe I'm just hard to please but want, as I did, to enjoy it I just walked away feeling it was nice but not transformational.

However, what was transformational was the sweat lodge I attended. As a participant, and as someone trained to facilitate, I find it such a nice experience to attend a sweat run by someone who, yes, knows what they are doing but does it completely different to how I have experienced it before, as was this sweat. It took a bit of waiting for the facilitator to arrive but when he did all of those who were taking part helped create both the lodge and the fire with myself, who was asked to be fire keeper, off collecting a large part of the wood. This was a hot sweat, but the main difference was that he had us step out after every round to lay on the ground and drink water. You might think this would lessen the effects of being in the lodge, but for me not at all. The other nice touch was that his partner, who never ventured inside, would sit on the outside of the lodge playing her drum. It was quite an enchanting, but oh so exhausting, experience - one I had planned to return to my little green tent from and just sleep, but on the way back I heard the call of "Drinkies!" from another camp-virgin, and while I don't drink I did happily chat into the night about Druidry, Wicca, the current issues of polarity, and his work as a student of Ronald Hutton.



Nighttime entertainment consisted of an Eisteddfod, allowing all prospective Bards the chance to weave their words in front of an audience. As well as comedians and musicians performing into the night, and the communal fire.

There were three main events at this camp, one of which was the handfasting of a couple who were volunteering their time casting runes each day in the divination tent. While I never had the opportunity to personally meet them, unfortunately as they seemed such lovely people, it still didn't take away the heart warming experience of witnessing two people who are very much in love committing that love to a ceremony such as a handfasting. Led by a celebrant, and in a very open and heartfelt ceremony, they were handfasted in the eyes of their northern gods and goddesses. Not knowing the couple and not knowing their wishes I didn't take any photos, although I later found out it would not have been an issue, and there were some lovely shots taken by others anyway.

The camp's main ceremony touched on a subject I really didn't know much about, or have a lot of interest in...astrology. Over the course of the weekend we each had to visit a particular person or book and find out what our star sign was in its Mars aspect. This ceremony was obviously going to be about warrior-ship, and set around the figure of the Celtic Queen Boadicea. So I gathered with the other Cancerians to prepare our presentation to Boadicea as she journeyed around the Wheel of the Year, gifting her with the gifts of our astrological sign...Cancer. Myself and another, unlike the other Cancerians in our group, don't feel fearful of confrontation. So it was I who led our group challenging Boadicea to look within herself as she approached us who were outwardly presenting shields (just as the crab wears its shell to protect its softer internal flesh) and chanting to her, asking her who she was. The ceremony as a whole was very creative, and saw a journalist present who wrote up a positive article for the local newspaper.

Phillip Carr-Gomm was going to be a main speaker at Druid Camp but unfortunately at the last minute he cancelled, unable to attend. But (luckily for us) another well known figure in the Druid community, Kristopher Hughes, was at the camp and so kindly stepped in to give a presentation on our perception of Death. I wish I'd had the opportunity to have spoken with him personally while at camp, he is such a funny man. His presentation, while inspiring and to the point, had us in stitches of laughter and received a very loud round of applause. Death, as Kristopher explained, is something we try to hide ourselves from. At the point of death we pump the body full of fluid and decorate it in make-up to hide the reality of what death looks like. He spoke to us of embracing it as an aspect of the wheel of life, the natural cycles of life. He also spoke about the calcification of the pituitary gland, the results of it, and how it is largely bought about by the fluoride in our water system. I can now recommend each of you reading this to filter your water from fluoride and the negative effects it causes.

Sunday came all too quickly, as things always do when you're having fun, and while the camp was still to have its closing ceremony I had chosen to pack up my gear and make an early walk back down the hedgerow lined lane way to the main road, where I would be catching a bus for the next leg of my pilgrimage to Glastonbury. This time I happily walked back to the road, a lovely 45 minute or so stroll, as I took photos of the scenery and ate a hedgerow-foraged breakfast of berries and nettle seeds.



The magical moment on this walk down to the bus stop was to see my first, and only on this trip, hare come running down towards me: my sign of prosperity as I ventured forth to the Isle of Avalon, and as I reflected on my experiences with the UK Druid community, and how this may filter through to inspire me as I return to my Grove in Perth, and to the growing community of Druids here in Australia...

You can find more information on Druid Camp at <http://www.druidcamp.org.uk>

Pete Blake is a wanderer of the wild, organic, creative, fertile edges. He runs Dreaming Tree Grove in Perth, Western Australia, and is both member and student of OBOD and the BDO. His personal blog can be found at <https://thefertileedge.wordpress.com>

Elemental, My Dear Ocean

By Peter Bull

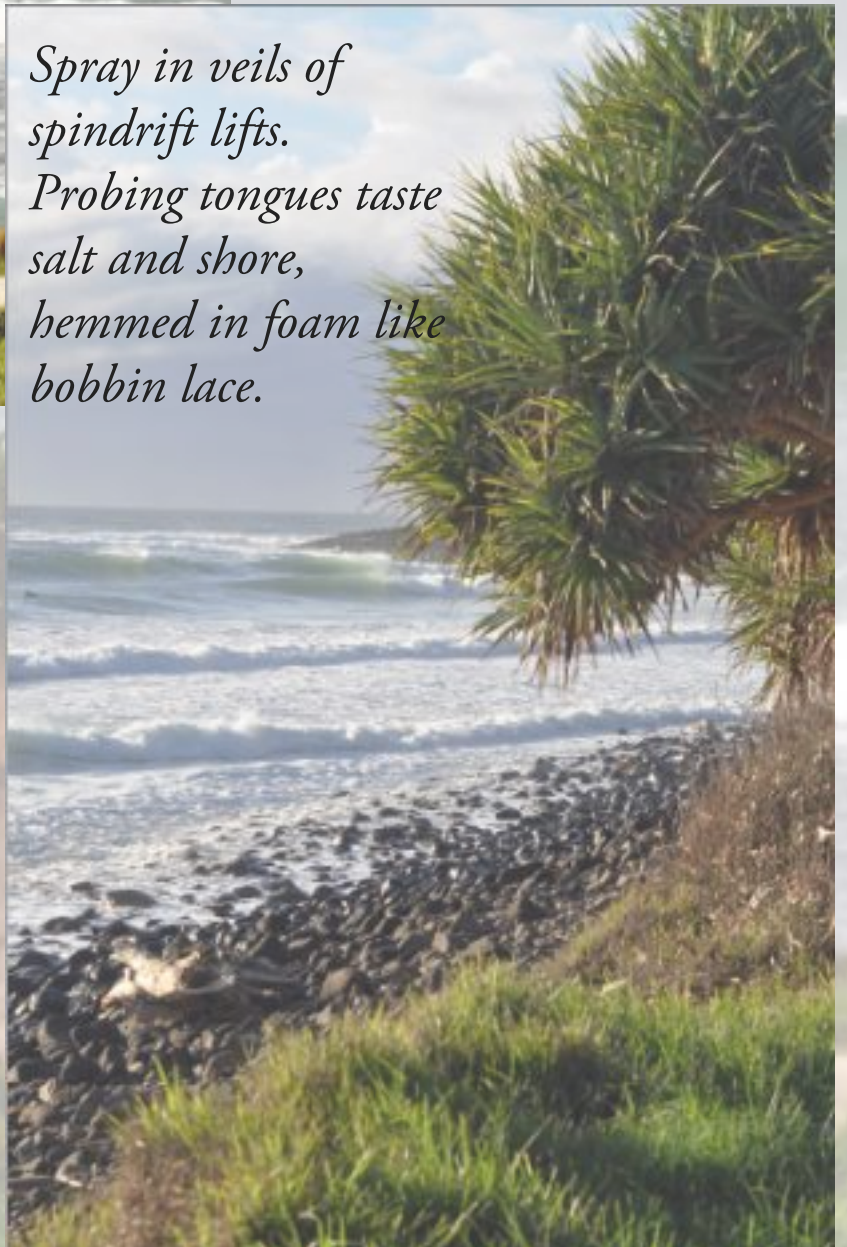
*Beneath an anvil-heavy sky,
the ocean dark and mirrored
deep;
sea-creased along tubular green
folds.*

*White manes and thunder
clasped in waves,
leonine before the wind,
released in roaring turbulence.*

*Spray in veils of
spindrift lifts.
Probing tongues taste
salt and shore,
hemmed in foam like
bobbin lace.*

*Detritus and treasure cast
adrift
on dunes, and tidal scarred,
tormented by Aeolus.*

*Time unwinds in shallow
spirals,
hidden and translucent, coiled
like springtide,
draped warm in rainbow light
and sheets of summer rain.*





Holding the Paradox: The Beltane/ Samhain Axis

by Maria Ede-Weaving

As OBOD folks in the Southern Hemisphere celebrate Beltane, we in the Northern Hemisphere prepare for Samhain. This is a magical thought to me and reminds me of how the mysteries of one festival can inform and enlighten our understanding of others. There are many ways of linking the themes of a particular festival with another in order to discover a deeper understanding of both, but for me there is a special connection between the festivals that fall opposite each other on the Wheel of the Year. For example, the energies of manifestation apparent at the Summer Solstice are the flowering of the stillness and fallow energies of the Winter Solstice; the visions of Imbolc are intimately linked to the harvests of Lughnasadh, and the outwardly directed energies of the Spring Equinox are not possible without the inwardly reflective time of the Autumn Equinox.

The most obvious relationship between Beltane and Samhain is that of sex and death: all life that comes into existence via the mystery of sex must leave via the mystery of death, and the surrendering of our boundaries and sense of separateness when we make love or fall in love, mirrors in many ways the surrender of self through death. These areas of human experience bring us our most profound and transformative experiences and the dance between sex and death give life its momentum. However, beyond those immediately apparent themes of sex and death, I have come to believe that the Beltane/Samhain axis has much to teach us about innocence and wisdom too, or more importantly how we can retain our sense of innocence and joy in the face of change and loss.

Beltane is a wonderfully joyous festival of Union; its energies encourage us to open to the mystery of 'other' as beloved. The sexual focus of Beltane is only one aspect of its mysteries. The beloved 'other' can take many forms: it can be our children, our families and friends; it can be nature and the Divine, or even our greater selves. At Beltane, we celebrate our ability to open and connect in the widest, deepest sense; the blossoming 'I' seeks to merge with the world outside itself, and in doing so becomes something greater, ultimately discovering that any sense of separation we might feel is an illusion because, in truth, we are a part of each other and one with all creation. At Beltane, the 'I' becomes 'we'; we are shown that we cannot live and function in isolation. What Beltane does, in fact, is open us to the transformative power of Love in all its forms.





This opening to the powers of love will teach us much throughout our lives, gifting us with the opportunity to transcend our limited perceptions that we might incorporate into our understanding a deeper perspective of life and self. It will bring us our greatest joy but also moments of intense pain; Beltane's request that we open ourselves to the mystery of another holds a certain risk of hurt, rejection and loss. We can often find ourselves at Samhain, mourning the things that once brought us joy but are now lost to us; relationships or connections born in the heady, intoxicating season of blossoming can at first have us believing that change will never touch us but we can't stay in any season for ever, no matter how joyful – pain and heartache are a part of life too.

Opening our hearts to love and life takes courage, maybe not the first time we do it, but tough experiences over time can close and seal the heart with fear. However, I believe that when we honour and commune with our Ancestors at Samhain, if we truly listen we can hear them saying, "Endings will come, but never let that stop you embracing the joy!"

Beltane teaches us that the union and merging with the beloved 'other' is a sacred act; it is a risk that makes us stronger; its message urges us to be shaken alive by our passion and let the momentum of ecstasy and joy launch us into life. Beltane sets us on a path of profound wisdom because in opening ourselves to loving another, to loving nature and ourselves, we are given the opportunity to love and find Union with the Divine, and by doing so become more of who we were meant to be.

Beltane teaches us that play and pleasure are spiritual acts that we must never downplay because they are powerful tools of healing and catalysts for creativity. If we look at this alongside Samhain's message - to surrender to the greater mystery, to uncertainty and the unknown, to accept endings with grace, to fully trust and let go - then we can see how the relationship between these festivals can show us how to retain our innocence and child-like wonder regardless of what life throws at us. These festivals tell us to face life's lessons and losses without bitterness by honouring the wisdom that change and pain has brought us, whilst at the same time urging us never to be afraid to play, laugh, and enjoy ourselves again.

Albert Camus' now famous quote, "In the midst of winter, I found there was within me an invincible summer", sums up perfectly the relationship between Beltane and Samhain. And so, this Beltane let your heart blossom joyfully; be playful, revel in the pleasure and be grateful for every loss and the wisdom it has brought you. Never lose your trust in life and love, no matter how many endings you encounter. Love and loss are paradoxical paths that lead to the same place: union with the Divine, with self and all creation. With trust, we can tenderly hold the paradox of joy and loss in our heart and be stronger for it.

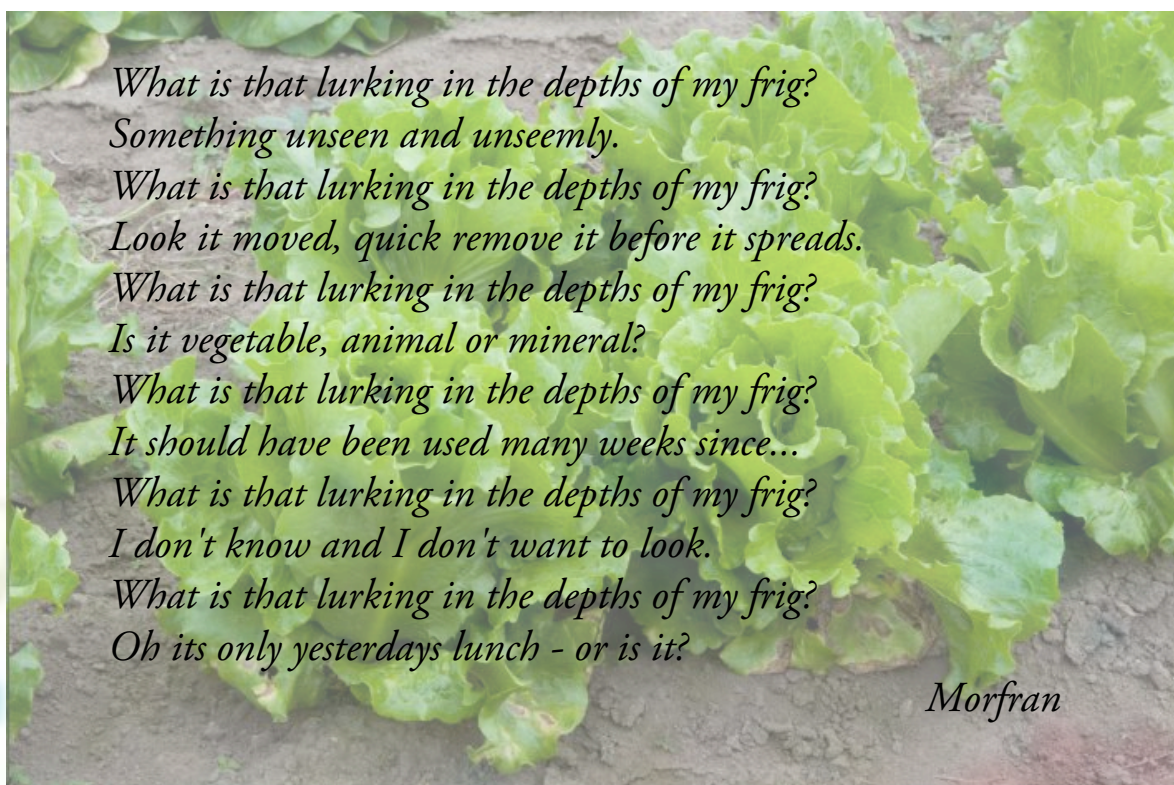


Photo courtesy wikipedia.com

SPIRAL DANCE'S MIDSUMMER FAERIE BALL



JOIN SPIRAL DANCE AND FRIENDS TO CELEBRATE THIS LUSH TIME OF YEAR.

DRESS IN YOUR FÆ FINERY AND CELEBRATE THIS MAGICAL AND POTENT TIME OF THE YEAR. THE VEIL BETWEEN OUR WORLD AND THE WORLD OF THE FÆ IS THIN AND THE OTHERWORLDY FOLK ARE CLOSE BY. THE SUN WILL SOON REACH ITS HIGHEST POINT IN THE SKY FOR THE FEW DAYS ON AND AROUND THE SOLSTICE AND THE SUN APPEARS TO STAND STILL IN THE HEAVENS.

SATURDAY 12TH DECEMBER @ THE MYLOR HALL
STRATHALBYN RD, MYLOR (IN THE ADELAIDE HILLS)

DOORS WILL OPEN AT 7PM

BYO PICNIC TEA AND DRINKS (PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A 'LEAVE NO TRACE' EVENT SO PLEASE TAKE ALL YOUR RECYCLABLES AND RUBBISH HOME WITH YOU.

ENTRY \$20 / \$15 AND ALL FÆ UNDER THE AGE OF 16 ARE FREE

info@spiraldance.com.au

www.spiraldance.com.au

The Sacred Masculine: an exploration

By Todd William Dearing

...And then he spoke to them, saying "The Sacred Masculine is not the same as the common masculine."

This is my understanding, for what it's worth...

Firstly, I would like to clear up what seems a common misunderstanding, that the terms 'feminine' and 'masculine' refer to female and male respectively. In my reading on the growing exploration of these topics, this is not usually the case - most writers will say that, whether male or female, we each have a masculine and feminine aspect to our Self - we are each the entire yin-yang, Shiva-Shakti, god-goddess etc. The aim is wholeness, which means the dynamic integration of both aspects of being. And further, these aspects are not the entirety of our being, just one way of looking at ourselves for reintegration ('solve et coagula', as the alchemists say). We could also consider ourselves from other viewpoints - made of the polar aspects of wild/civilised, as animal/angel, as underworld/upperworld, as old/young etc.

Once again, the aim is integration - fragments in conflict transformed into wholeness, towards the circle, or related symbols. Also, we must remember: masculine and feminine are universal, not just something we humans have. They exist in animals, plants, rocks, clouds, atoms, ideas and feelings etc - everything: a primal duality.

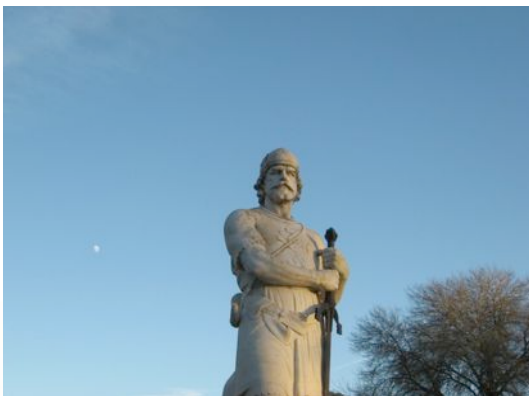


Okay, now that that's out the way, onto the masculine. Men typify the masculine, simply because they are male - they are born with that aspect of their physical nature, thus physically more conscious of it - and this effects them also emotionally/mentally, spiritually, socially, etc. The same (in the opposite) goes for females, though I will focus on the male here. The physical body has a major influence on incarnation, and as such it tends to become central to our consciousness - its influences, whether biological or societal, shape consciousness.

When relatively unconscious of the body, men are naturally subject to these forces (as forms of conditioning via the physical body). There is no guarantee that they are conscious of their masculinity, though they may act from it - generally it would seem the case, but not all men are. But for a man to become masculine in the common sense requires simply conforming to societal expectations and models, whether conscious of them or not. And men may also be, to varying degrees, consciously developed in their feminine side - yet this is less common where biological and societal influences deny or prevent this kind of development.

The common masculine is not the Sacred Masculine. The Sacred Masculine occurs when the biological and societal influences are consciously mastered in a man - opening into the psychological, emotional, spiritual aspects of the masculine also - so the Sacred Masculine is the awakened masculine, which includes also the common masculine but lived consciously. This is a vast realm of many archetypes, and awakening to it is merely a gateway, and is entered and developed by doing sacred work.

Now, the state of general society is a trailing mess of patriarchy, which has the qualities of unconscious automatism to facilitate dominant paradigms of a controlling and often abusive relationship to the Earth, and hence all biological life, in order to favour unconscious collective forces which humanity is still coming to terms with.



This includes an ill relationship with one's own body: the harmful societal influences and conditionings (not all influences are harmful) cause men (and women) to adopt views, and so act upon them, which are largely self-destructive to oneself as a biological being. This is based upon unconscious use of our natural human power, which is our birthright though has become largely forgotten. This includes many out-dated spiritual paradigms, such as the old Christianity ("God gave men dominion over the Earth" - I must say, out of fairness, that there are new forms of Christianity which are progressively eco-friendly and soulful so one should not dismiss the whole gamut), and it also includes paradigms that generally seek the light and the higher consciousness, but never talk about integrating the dark and the underworld consciousness. These paradigms emphasise escaping from this world as a form of salvation and enlightenment - that the greatest wisdom is somewhere else, way up in the 7th dimension or something.

I think these provide some value in that they encourage a positive movement to develop higher centres of consciousness, but they miss a major thing: the importance of rootedness, the importance of the sacred being here on Earth, as the Earth - the importance of entering this world in a healing way, to deal with the mess of the 'lower' chakras etc.

In my understanding, the more complete paradigm - yes I am getting to the divine masculine in a roundabout way - is one that honours both the above and the below, both Heaven and Earth, both the masculine and the feminine; honours all things as sacred (even 'evil' - though evil must exist in balance or it is dangerous - like how a spider is respected for its poison - everything has its place in nature).

This view will value the Earth as an innate paradise, usually feminine, while also recognising the Celestials above as the same - sacred, paradisaical. The universe is a wholeness, where all is sacred for being exactly what it is. It is important to avoid dogma though, so maybe the Earth is masculine also, maybe the Sun is feminine, maybe the Moon is male - a lot of cultures have these views (and others have the opposite) so there is nothing set, merely possibilities of creative spirituality. Anyway, I'm getting off track (a little) so this may be a good place to end this first part.

Stay tuned for Part 2 in the Lughnasadh issue!

The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids

15th Southern Hemisphere Assembly



BRIBIE ISLAND

Golden beach, native bushland, close to Brisbane, Queensland

Please join us on this beautiful Island

**Friday 14th October to Tuesday 18th October
2016**

Hosted by Macadamia Grove

Cabin accommodation or camping

Catered or self catered

For further information contact Sandra - macademiagrove@hotmail.com

For bookings contact Cherry - nimueart@bigpond.com



Upcoming Courses at Sacred Balance, New Zealand

PLANT SPIRIT SHAMANISM



February 20th & 21st, 2016 (10 am to 5 pm)

Plant spirit shamanism is a method of healing which works effectively with plants, herbs, trees and flowers in a way which modern herbalism has long since forgotten. It begins with connection – spirit-to-spirit, soul-to-soul – with the energy, the essence or the genius (intelligence) of a plant to make an ally, guide and ambassador of it; so it can teach us about its healing powers and the healing of other plants. Before there ever were herbal encyclopaedias to consult or herbalists and medical doctors to prescribe for us (or tell us what is the 'right' or 'wrong' herb to use for a 'specific condition'), this shamanic art of communing with the plants was used successfully by our ancestors for thousands of years. Once you know its secret you will always be able to find your own medicines and heal yourself.

Having made a connection to the plants you will also understand that they are not limited merely to their use as medicines but can be employed more magically to make talismans, charms and perfumes for protection, success, love, wealth, happiness – or anything else you want – just as rainforest shamans have been doing for thousands of years. These are the pusangas (the famed 'love medicine of the Amazon'), the seguros (protective amulets) and icaros (the songs of the plants), which become a powerful force in themselves.

This course is led by Ross Heaven: a shaman, healer and author of nearly 20 books on shamanism, plants and healing, including *Plant Spirit Shamanism*, *The Hummingbird's Journey to God*, *Plant Spirit Wisdom*, *The Sin Eater's Last Confessions*, *Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia*, and *Cactus of Mystery*. For more information on Ross visit www.thefourgates.org

Day 1

- Introductions (to each other and the course)
- Finding and meeting your plant spirit ally
- The visible face of spirit: understanding how nature communicates with us
- Hearing the song of the plant
- Conducting a healing for others using plant spirit medicine

Day 2

- You can have anything you want! Identifying appropriate plants, making your own pusanga (love, fame, happiness, money, success, etc)
- Making a seguro (for protection, connection and ongoing healing) and journeying to its spirit for guidance
- Closing circle and Q & A session/Book signing

Please bring with you...

- Two bottles with lids (a ½ litre plastic water bottle with top is fine)
- A shamanic drum or rattle if you wish
- Please bring your own alternative milk for beverages if you do not consume dairy.
- There is a lovely café nearby for lunch, or you may bring a lunch that can be stored in our refrigerator.

Programme Cost

The cost of this programme is \$320 inclusive of 2 days of training, as well as tea/coffee and snacks. A 50% deposit is required at the time of booking via email to secure your place in this limited numbers event. The remaining balance is to be paid 2 weeks prior to the workshop. Direct deposit is preferred, Sacred Balance Ltd, BNZ Hamilton. The account number is 02 0316 0473744 00, please use "plant spirit" in the particulars and your last name in the reference field.

Venue

Sacred Balance Holistic Health
32 O'Neill Street, Claudelands, Hamilton (Diagonal to Claudelands Event Centre)
For a map and parking information, please see <http://www.sacredbalance.co.nz/>

To book contact Jenn Howell, jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz

The Four Gates

Shamanic Healing Diploma

An introduction to The Heaven Method™ of Soul Therapy™

**A training programme to deepen your understanding and practice of shamanism
and bring healing to yourself and others.**

Cambridge, New Zealand

February 22nd to 27th, 2016



Participant Comments

- "The healing that changed my life. It was so liberating an experience!" - **Tania Ahsan, editor of Kindred Spirit magazine, UK**
- "Words cannot convey what a life-changing, transforming experience this has been. A complete rebirth, metamorphosis. Wonderful journeys, profound learnings, brilliant teacher! Amazing experiences during this course." - **Colleen, UK**
- "Life-long questions about my childhood were answered on this course. It helped change my life." - **Josie, Lanzarote**
- "Amazing. I have noticed so many positive changes since doing this course and receiving the healing myself." - **Elaine, South Africa**
- "Thank you for all your teachings, guidance and presence and for the powerful healings and loving energy you shared with all of us. This was a very special and transforming experience." - **Dorota, USA**
- "Thank you so much for five *full full full*-of-power days and for deep insights into the shaman's world, making it our world." - **Fatina, Denmark**
- "Dear Ross, I just wanted to drop you a line as you have been in my thoughts. The info and 'tools' you gave us all a few years back were so useful. My shamanic practice is thriving here in Herefordshire. I, of course, have mentioned you in my new website as having been my teacher. I do hope you are well. And thank you so much again for your 'tools'. The later Aya workshop in Spain was a profound experience: it was gentle, and soft, and tender. Love, and sweet runnings." - **Charly, UK**
- "Been talking about my experiences today and really had no idea how emotional I felt about it all until I did. It was a fascinating few days full of the sharing of love with pretty fantastic people. Thank you so much for the vast amount of clarifying and 'proving' information and the absolutely brilliant way you put it across, resonates with me perfectly. It turned a good week into a truly great week!! Peace profound, love and light and save the dolphins from alien probes." - **Steve, UK**

Shamanism is the world's oldest psycho-spiritual tradition, predating our earliest civilisations by thousands of years. It is practised in every country and culture of the world, where the role of the shaman has always been - and remains - that of healer, sage, seer, ceremonialist, counsellor and guide for his or her community. The shaman deals in ecstasy, balance, harmony and vision, bringing power, wisdom, health and new consciousness to those who he or she serves.

The Four Gates Shamanic Healing course is a thorough introduction to the world of the shaman - his ways of seeing, healing and being - and the fullest shamanic healing course available, teaching you all you need to know to begin working shamanically and offering healing to others or benefitting from its practices yourself.

During the course, participants are introduced to the key issues of spirit extraction work, energy balancing, and soul retrieval from a shamanic perspective. They learn how soul loss occurs and how to track a soul and bring it back to a person suffering its loss. They explore how this can be effective in working with survivors of abuse, accidents, people who have undergone surgery and other emotional and physical traumas, as well as people dealing with issues such as addiction.

Each participant will act as a shaman to learn these techniques and will also have the opportunity to receive healing themselves.

Course Components

Students are taught through seminars, practice and healing exercises so they deepen into knowledge and develop their skills and competency. Training includes:

- Instruction in how the soul can become fragmented and lost
- How to recognise soul loss: Its symptoms and ways of manifestation
- The essential methods of soul return
- Generational and familial aspects of soul loss
- The otherworld locations in which soul fragments may be found
- Tracking the soul and restoring it to the sufferer
- Developing personal power and connection to spirit allies who can aid the healer and support the healing quest
- Spirit extraction: Creating a safe space for energy and soul to return to
- Power retrieval: Empowering the energy body to receive lost soul parts
- Energy balancing: Ensuring that the energy body is able to welcome the soul back home
- Shamanic counselling: Receiving guidance from spirit to ensure that energy returned will remain and thrive

The Programme: Outline Itinerary (Breakfast, lunch and dinner are provided on all days)

Day 1: Arrivals and Introductions

Arrive and settle in. The course begins at 10am. Please try to arrive well before that.

- Circle meeting: Introduction to the course, to shamanic healing, and to the cosmology of the shaman and his principle technique for exploring the otherworld: shamanic dreaming or journeying
- Exploring the Upper World, Middle World and Lower World

Day 2: The Energy Body - Finding Power and Balancing Energy

Going deeper and with healing intent into the 'three worlds':

- The Lower World: Power animals and power retrieval
- The Upper World: Meeting allies and guides
- The Middle World: Finding allies in nature

Dealing with the physical and working with clients:

- Mapping the energy body
- Chakra clearing and energy re-alignment
- Crystal and stone medicine and the use of other energy tools

Day 3: Extraction Medicine and the Removal of Negative Energies

Spirit extraction concerns the removal of energies which do not belong to us and which have often been sent by others as a form of 'spiritual infection' which drains our power. We address this by:

- The Carmina. Enlisting the support of ally in nature who will assist us in the safe execution of this work and by gathering our own power in preparation for the extraction
- A number of extraction methods will then be demonstrated and practiced, including aspects of sin eating, crystal medicine, chupa (sucking extraction), and 'casting away'
- Participants practice extractions on others and receive healings themselves

Day 4: Power and Soul Retrieval

We go deeper into healing, exploring a key aspect of all shamanic work: soul retrieval and the return of lost energy. Our work examines:

- Power retrieval for clients
- The key reasons for soul loss and the methods of soul return
- Finding our own lost soul parts and understanding the deeper meaning of their loss
- An introduction to soul retrieval for others: Spiritual hide and seek; seeing at a distance
- 'Classical' shamanic soul retrieval: Finding new energy for clients
- Students will conduct power and soul retrievals for others and receive healings themselves

Day 5: Shamanic Counselling and Divination

The spirits we work with in the healing of others often have advice and guidance for our clients so they grow healthier and more powerful and their sicknesses do not return. Today's work centres on methods for receiving spirit guidance, including omens, synchronicities, and spirit contact through journeying and speaking as oracles. Techniques include:

- *Rhamanta*: Receiving guidance from nature
- Shamanic rock divination
- Journeying for the guidance of others: The 'classical' counselling journey
- The journey of the healer
- Closing circle: An opportunity for final questions and reflections, and the award of Diplomas

Benefits of this Course

- **Offers you a wider range of experience.** On this course we learn to perform soul retrievals, spirit extractions and the restoration and empowerment of the energy body: the three pillars to all shamanic healing. Without all three, healing is less effective. Yet other courses do not teach all of these practices and even the rudiments are usually taught as separate courses, so costing you more in terms of time and money. *We teach you all that you need so when you leave the course you can begin your work as a healer, confident in your skills and knowing all you need to in order to work effectively.* We also include practices from a number of different shamanic cultures, including those of England and Wales, Europe, the Amazon, the Andes and the Caribbean as part of a cross-cultural programme which offers you the widest experience of the shamanic healing arts. The techniques you learn not only widen your repertoire of skills but through their practice you come to understand the essence of these proven approaches to healing so you know what works and why. Through this you are able to develop a unique style and method, not just follow someone else's 'rules' of healing.
- **Saves you time, money and travel.** To cover the same ground as this course you would normally have to undertake at least three weekends of training with other teachers. This might take you a year or more depending on course schedules and availability etc. That can mean a heavy investment of time and resources before you ever qualify as a healer. With the Four Gates you receive full training in a shorter time which allows you to become a skilled and competent healer much more quickly, and your training is also deeper through your immersion in the programme and closer contact with tutors and fellow students.
- **Gives you the opportunity for client referrals.** Graduates are entitled to have their names added, if they wish, to The Four Gates Healers List and receive referrals from us of prospective clients in their locale. Our Healers List is sent to those who contact us for information about shamanic healing and are looking for shamans in their area. It is therefore a useful way for you to develop your service to others.
- **Provides you with evidence of your skills.** Students receive a Diploma upon completion which is a useful validation of their skills and abilities if they intend to work shamanically with clients and others. It is also useful for obtaining insurance cover for their work. In some cases this qualification has also been used for Continual Professional Development (CPD) assessments.

Programme Facilitation

The course is led by Ross Heaven, a therapist, shaman and the author of almost 20 books on shamanism, healing and spirituality stemming from more than 20 years of research and experience with healers from a variety of cultures. He is assisted where appropriate by other practitioners as well as support staff who have undertaken shamanic workshops and soul retrievals with Ross, and who understand your needs and your training. Jenn Howell, who trained under Ross Heaven in Spain, will also be facilitating the course as well as hosting it. She has begun her own healing and teaching journey, and runs Sacred Balance Holistic Health in Hamilton.

Course Requirements and Materials

Please bring a drum and a rattle, a journal and writing materials. It is also useful (but not essential) to bring a pendulum, four quartz crystals and a smudge stick for cleansing.

No prior knowledge of, or involvement in, shamanic healing is needed for this course and all are welcome. No special purchases are required and there is unlikely to be a need for other expenditure.

The Venue

The programme is set on a 3 acre organic lifestyle block in rural Waikato, a 5 minute drive from Cambridge and 10 minutes from Hamilton. Please arrive before our start time of 10am on Day One. The course ends at about 4pm on the last day. You may choose to camp on the land or sleep marae-style for a small fee, or there are a variety of accommodation options to suit most budgets within a few minutes' drive. Please email Jenn for a list of what is available.



Dates

As specified on the first page of this outline. Includes five days, beginning at 10am on the first day of the course and ending at approximately 4pm on the last day.

Programme Cost

The cost of this programme is \$850 inclusive of lunches and dinners, materials and training. Please see the payment options on the Booking Form which follows.

Have Questions or Need More Information?

About the venue, accommodation options, travel etc email Jenn (our host) at: jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz

About the course, email ross@thefourgates.org

Or, to simply book your place, please use the Booking Form below or book via email with jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz.

The Four Gates Foundation Shamanic Healing Diploma 2016 BOOKING FORM

Please print and complete this form, if paying by cheque, and send it with your payment to: Jenn Howell, Sacred Balance Holistic Health, 32 O'Neill Street, Claudelands, Hamilton, 3214, New Zealand.

Name:

Address:

Zip/Postcode:

Phone number:

Email:

I wish to undertake The Four Gates Shamanic Healing & Soul Retrieval Training and enclose payment in full of \$850 for food, materials and training OR

I enclose a non-refundable deposit of \$425 to secure my place. The remainder is payable in full 6 weeks prior to the programme start date.

Payment Methods

Bank transfer is our preferred method. Sacred Balance Ltd, BNZ Hamilton. Account number 02 0316 0473744 00. Please use your last name in the reference field and "soul heal" as the particulars.

Cheque payable to Sacred Balance Ltd, 32 O'Neill Street, Claudelands, Hamilton, 3214, New Zealand.

THE MEDICINE WHEEL OF THE FOUR GATES AND THE JOURNEY BEYOND FEAR TO EMPOWERMENT



March 5th & 6th, 2016 (10 am to 5 pm)

The medicine wheel is a universal symbol known in all cultures as a means of gazing deeply into our souls and finding our hidden truths, our blockages and our means of healing them and moving forward in our lives. It shows us where we have been, where we are now and where, in accordance with our unique soul purpose, we should be heading. In the medicine wheel used in this course, life begins in the East (represented by the body and the element of fire). It stands for passion, creativity, fearlessness and adventure. In terms of the life journey it is the part of the wheel we occupy from around 0-14 years of age.

In the South are the emotions (represented by water) and the questions of identity, truth, love and power. It is the part of the wheel we occupy from around 14 to maybe 45 years of age and in this phase we are concerned with finding ourselves, becoming independent and gathering true power around us.

In the West is the mind (Air), concerned with clarity, vision and true direction: making the most of our lives. We meet this stage in our middle years when true vision, combined with the power we have already accumulated can make for an amazing combination, capable of lifting us above the mundane world.

In the North (represented by Earth) we end our journey with old age, where spirit and matter (the life lived and the enrichment of the soul) fuse to prepare us for our next stage of existence: the life beyond death.

In a well-balanced soul all of the elements and 'bodies' of the self (Fire/physicality, Water/emotions, Air/mind, and Earth/spirit) should be equally balanced and the journey around the wheel should be effortless; giving rise to a fit, healthy, well-adjusted and well-prepared person. The problem is that this is rarely the case because we tend to get stuck and unbalanced in any one of these phases. The reason for this is that there are four gateways we must pass through to transition to each next stage. The gateway between the East/the body/passion and the South/the emotions/the true self for example is courage. If we have the courage to move forward into independence we thrive but many become stuck in their fears instead, giving rise to many possible problems – from immaturity to anorexia. The purpose of this workshop is to discover where we are in the wheel of life, to confront and release our blockages and to move forward into a more fulfilling life at the centre of the wheel: the still place. The course uses drum journeys, meditations and practical exercises to guide you towards wholeness. It is led by Ross Heaven, a shaman, healer and author of nearly 20 books on shamanism and healing, including *The Hummingbird's Journey to God*, *Plant Spirit Wisdom*, *The Sin Eater's Last Confessions*, *Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia*, and *The Journey to You*. For more information on Ross visit www.thefourgates.org

Day 1

- Introductions (to each other and the course)
- Mapping our souls to find out where we are
- The first gateway: knowing our fears and letting them go
- The second gateway: finding authentic power

Day 2

- The third gateway: the vision quest – finding a true vision for our lives
- The fourth gateway: connecting with our soul purpose as a guard against old age and fatigue
- The centre: coming back to ourselves by expressing commitment to purpose
- Closing circle and Q & A session/Book signing

Please bring with you...

- A shamanic drum or rattle if you wish
- A notepad and pens
- Please bring your own alternative milk for beverages if you do not consume dairy.
- There is a lovely café nearby for lunch, or you may bring a lunch that can be stored in our refrigerator.

Programme Cost

The cost of this programme is \$320 inclusive of 2 days of training, as well as tea/coffee and snacks. A 50% deposit is required at the time of booking to secure your place in this limited numbers event. The remaining balance is to be paid 2 weeks prior to the workshop. Direct deposit is preferred, Sacred Balance Ltd, BNZ Hamilton. The account number is 02 0316 0473744 00, please use "med wheel" in the particulars and your last name in the reference field.

Venue

Sacred Balance Holistic Health
32 O'Neill Street, Claudelands, Hamilton (Diagonal to Claudelands Event Centre)
For a map and parking information, please see <http://www.sacredbalance.co.nz/>
To book contact Jenn Howell, jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz

Druidry-related Events & Businesses in Australia

Newcastle Area Meetup

Expressions of interest are invited for a meetup, with a view to possibly starting a Seed Group. People from the Central Coast, Hunter Valley and all areas north - Anyone close that is!!!!

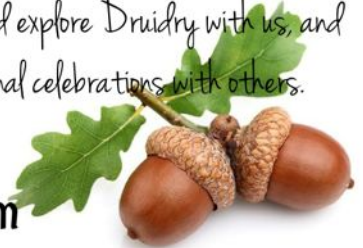
If you're interested, contact Rollick
Ph: 0423 626 290
Email: bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au

DREAMING TREE GROVE

perth - western australia

We are a small independant Grove located in Perth - Western Australia, whose membership includes members and students of DBDD & the BDD. We welcome those who wish to take part in our Introduction to Druidry Program, as well as those who wish to join and explore Druidry with us, and those who would simply like to share in seasonal celebrations with others.

For more information visit:
DREAMINGTREEGROVE.BLOG.COM



BARDIC GATHERING

What is a Bard? Bards deliver the magical art of storytelling, poetry, plays and song. The Druid Bard of ancient times spent 12 years learning the art, and the stories were orally passed down with the word never written. They depicted events and special times and the Bards were greatly respected.

Today's Bard is similar but now their word is written. They are storytellers, poets, playwrights or songwriters who enjoy delivering their art to a receptive audience. Bards tell stories of the land, our ancestors, places, animals, families, events; I could go on Come along and listen....

On the first Saturday of each month between 10.30am and 12.30pm, listen to present day Bards share their art. Hear the works of others come alive with the magic of voice and presentation.

We meet at The Sacred Tree Cafe
19 Caloundra Road, Landsborough

No monetary fees involved - just lots of fun and enjoyment

Contact 0429 939 120 or visit www.nt2012.com.au
for more information.



*Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, and Future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walk'd amongst the ancient trees*

- William Blake – Songs of Experience



WiseEarth
Education

Earth connection programs in
South-East Queensland -
wiseeartheducation.com/about/

Upcoming Events

Work that Reconnects Workshop

Saturday November 21st, 9am - 4pm,
Northey Street City Farm, Windsor

This workshop is inspired by the work of Deep Ecologist and Eco-philosopher Joanna Macy and is aimed at anyone who cares for the Earth, themselves and our collective well-being.

Through a series of experiential processes we will:

- Connect with one another and our inner responses to the condition of our world
- Connect with our passion for all life and our power to protect it
- Be empowered and inspired to take new action for change
- Feel renewed and supported in our work

Cost: \$85/\$65 Concession/Health Care Card

Women as Healers of Mother Earth

Early 2016. More information to come.

This workshop will explore how the cycles of the moon, seasons, our lives and our menstrual cycles can teach us about living with the rhythms of nature, and some ways that women can foster a deeper heart connection with Mother Earth, and hence participate in her healing.

More information: wiseeartheducation@gmail.com or murraycarew@gmail.com

THE FIREY FALL OF THE FALABLE FOOL PHAETON

- a brand new ozzie twist of a traditional yarn (by Adam Cashmore-Brooke)

One morning, Helius the Sun-God yielded to the constant three-word pleading of Phaeton Abbott, PM.

The PM wished to drive Helius's horse & cart around Canberra, to show off to his party co-horts. Very reluctantly agreed to...

Fatally, the foolish Phaeton forgot his morning Weet Bix.

Surely he remembered his Vegemite & toast? Nope! Nope! Nope!

That's why he lacked the stamina that every Aussie boy needs, in piloting too close to the sun. The result? Disaster! Global warming & refugee cooling simultaneously!

As a result the TPP trade treaty fell through, although- that's a secret... & worse, Earth shivered in the daytime & sweated profusely at night...

even coalmines were scorched & useless...

Zeus Murdoch, in a fit fraught with fatalism, slew the high-flyer with editorial rage, causing a foolish Phaeton to suffer a bolt of lightening where the sun dont shine & he fell to into the River Poo & was seen no more.

END



Artwork courtesy exoticindiaart.com



Anita Bailey Celebrancy
 Registered Marriage Celebrant
 Weddings, Commitment Ceremonies & Vow Renewals
 M: 0424 163 428
 F: 07 3446 2208
 e: anita_bailey@bigpond.com

I am a marriage celebrant living on the beautiful Sunshine Coast in Queensland. I have studied with OBOD for the last six years and will soon complete my Ovate studies. My aim is to help make your ceremony meaningful and memorable.....



Fully qualified civil/funeral celebrant, and authorised marriage celebrant, with a professional background in customer service and publications writing/editing, and a personal background in performance and community education. If there is any skill needed to write, deliver and make your ceremony special, you can be assured that I have it...or can make it happen.

My gift as a celebrant is a passion for creating a beautiful experience – each ceremony will be individual to your needs and personality, including research into special moments and traditions that you and your loved ones will remember for years to come.

Located in Brisbane but willing to negotiate travel. If you'd like to know more please don't hesitate to get in touch.

ajgcelebrant@optusnet.com.au
 0413 593 609
 ajgcelebrant.wordpress.com
 www.facebook.com/ajgcelebrant
 PO Box 6129, Logan Central QLD 4114

Amanda Gibson
 Qualified Civil Celebrant

Weddings, Commitment Ceremonies, Vow Renewals, Baby Namings/Blessings, Funerals and Life Celebrations, Home and Business Blessings, Life Transitions and Women's Circles



Need some time out from your day to day life?

**Want to escape the city and experience the Outback Heart of
our ancient land?**

**Interested in helping with a permaculture self-sufficiency project
and learning new skills?**

Experienced WWOOF host, and OBODie Ngatina, and her family, would like to invite members seeking a time of retreat to consider their home in the Northern Flinders Ranges (SA).

- The stunning ancient landscape and vast starry or moonlit nights are perfect for contemplation and fostering a connection with Spirit of Place.
- Experience living in an heritage listed small town (pop. 20) in a remote location
- Private accommodation in an historic inn first built in the 1870s
- Visit places of significance in the deeply powerful Flinders Ranges
- Help with an arid lands permaculture project – learn skills for self-sufficiency
- Flexible arrangements – either WWOOF for full food and board or be more autonomous as suits your needs.

For more details about our home and project visit <http://casaindomitus.wordpress.com> or contact Ngatina on wwoof@sylvanius.net or 0429795002 to discuss options.



And finally...

Beltane Passion by Adam Cashmore-Brooke

Beltane (according to Wikipedia - goodonya Julian Assange) marked the beginning of pastoral summer (that's May, of course, in the Northern Hemisphere), a season when livestock were driven out to summer pastures. Rituals of release (like thanking and honouring the previous season for lessons learned) and rituals of renewal (like attention to the special qualities of fire): such were communal practices of enormous benefit. The AOs SI (often referred to as spirits or fairies) were said to be active at this time, and the goal of many Beltane ceremonies was to appease them. Ancient texts record that, in order to protect cattle at this time, the druids would make two fires 'with great incantations' and drive their cattle between them.

For me (hopefully, a typical OBOD Aussie bloke) October heralds a welcoming to warmer weather, a self-conscious awareness of an expanding wasteline and an intention to enjoy sun and surf. Is more possible? Can we find a uniquely Aussie Beltane flavour? According to Dr Stephen Farmer, psychiatrist and shamanic practitioner, Beltane offers...passion. Is that an Aussie notion? In his excellent book, *Sacred Ceremony*, he begins: "The tradition of Leaping The Beltane Fires was for good luck and the fulfillment of wishes (read 'desires'). It also served to heat up one's loins and carnal desires, since this was also an intensely erotic time. It's the season for the Maypole and the May Baskets. The dance around the Maypole honours the life-giving fertility of the Earth. In days gone by, men and women would dance in a spiral while holding colourful ribbons, moving ever closer to the middle, where not only the ribbons intertwined, but bodies would mingle as an elaborate form of foreplay in a season where lusty passion was unabashedly expressed."

He is talking pre-Christianity, obviously. "Passion," says Dr Farmer, "is the strongest theme of this particular season's festivity, not only in sexuality but sensuality - aromas, sights, sensations of the earth's fecund and flowering bounty." Further, and more pointedly, the good doctor prescribes: "If you are in a relationship, set aside some time during Beltane for lovemaking. If you can, make love outdoors, and augment the setting with your own flourishes, such as candles, flowers, blankets, essential oils (chocolate perhaps) and rose petals. Start the ceremony with a ritual bath together, anointing each other with favourite aromas, like jasmine, lavender, cinnamon, patchouli or frankincense. Take your time and spend a lot of time caressing and kissing."

So, my OBOD friends, do you have a better recipe for a happy and healthy Beltane? Awen's blessing upon you. x

*The
Wheel
turns...*



Beltane marks the time of our adolescence and early wol/manhood. Spring is in full bloom, and twin fires would be lit at this time, through which would be passed the cattle after their long winter confinement, or over which those hoping for a child or good fortune would jump.

We see traces of the Beltane celebrations on May Day, when dancing round the maypole celebrates the fertility of the land and creates an echo of the ritual circle dances that must have been enacted in stone circles throughout the country.

Text sourced from Druidry.org



*Linda Marson, getting up close and personal with one of the multitude of standing stones that stretch in lines for kilometres near Carnac in Brittany. Linda will tell us more about her travels in Brittany in the next edition of *SerpentStar*, including a link to a short YouTube video which she hasn't quite finished yet.*

**The next issue of *SerpentStar* will be released for
Lughnasadh 2016, on February 1.**