

SERPENT STAR

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



LUGHNASADH 2016



Welcome to the Lughnasadh 2016 issue of SerpentStar!

Hi All!

Anyone know the Welsh word for muggy? As I write this, Brisbane and most of the East Coast is looking at a wet, soggy and probably quite stormy Lughnasadh. He's determined to show off his skills all at once by deluging us all!

In any case, at least we can retreat to the cool part of the house with a positively bumper issue of SerpentStar! This issue sees part two of Todd's article on the sacred masculine, a special piece for us from Damh the Bard on his recent trip to Australia and lovely new poems from Peter Bull, Chris Parker and Pamela Freeman. There's part one of a new two-parter from Kacey Stephensen, the promised pictures and article from Linda Marson on her trip to Brittany and wyverne writes for us on her work with the mallee tree. And that's not all - we have new services, new events and new group listings (from all over the Southern Hemisphere! Thankyou and welcome!), and topping it all off a set of artwork from the lovely Sandra. Goodness, just writing it all down makes me want to make a cup of tea so I can sit down and read it!

So I am indeed off to make a cup of tea. And then I'm going to write up the results from my recent reader survey, including responses to your comments and concerns. The future is now, as they say ;)

Blessings and Peace
Mandy /\

SerpentStar, Lughnasadh 2016

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

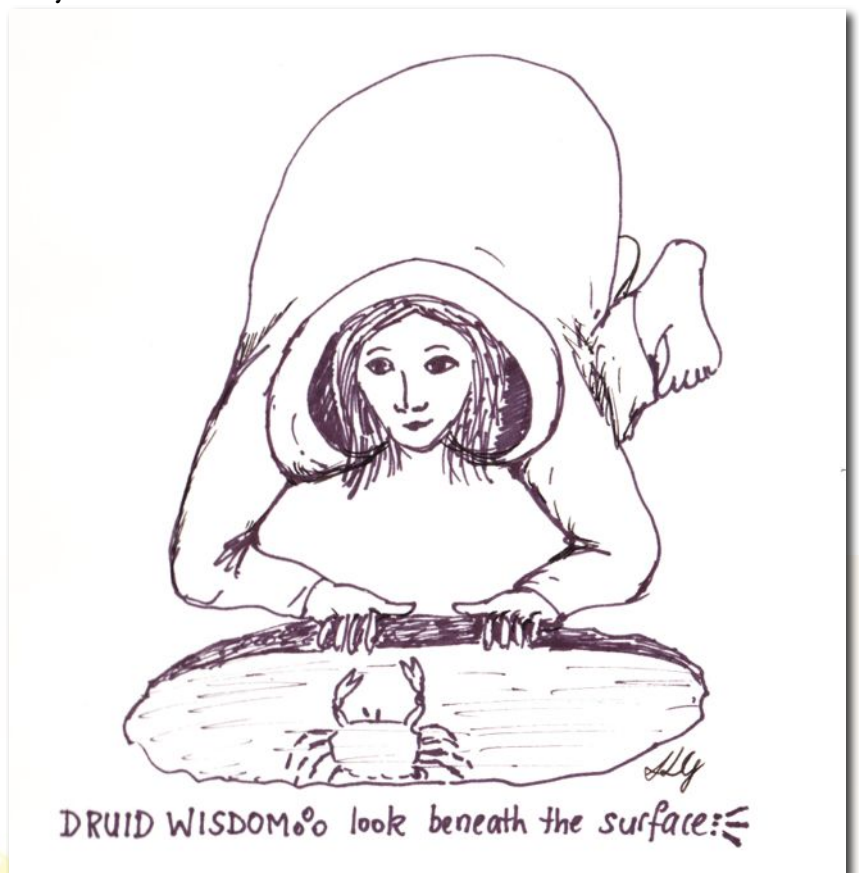
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Enquiries via email:
serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.



Artwork by Sandra

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 Cradle Seed Group

The Cradle Seed Group is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Group currently has only one Druid and three Bards 'in the making'. One area of focus is exploring other spiritual philosophies and understanding the synergies. Other areas of focus are to 'convert' traditional Ogham into the indigenous South African trees and also to understand and use indigenous medicinal plants and trees. All the eight yearly festivals are celebrated, all in solo as we are spread through South Africa – Johannesburg in Gauteng, Haenertsburg in Limpopo. Full moon meditations are conducted for peace and harmony. Email debby@triskel.co.za for details.



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

The Grove of the Summer Stars

The Grove of the Summer Stars (Pukerua Bay, Wellington, New Zealand) celebrates the eight great Seasonal Festivals throughout the wheel of the year. Each of these Druid festivals is held as a community festival and meeting point for diverse creeds and cultures to honour the turning of the year and give thanks for its abundance. The Equinox and Solstice festivals are open to all while the four Quarter Festivals are for Grove members only. We meet at The Woolshed/Grove of the Summer Stars at 11am on the nearest Sunday to the particular festival, except for Beltane and Samhain which are held at night. Lughnasadh is held on the Sunday during Druid Camp even though it is a little early, ie the third week of January (Wellington Anniversary weekend). Spring Equinox is celebrated at Stonehenge Aotearoa, an astronomically correct replica of Stonehenge Albion, in Carterton, New Zealand. On the day (or night) people can bring stories, poems, songs, dances, readings and insights etc to contribute to the theme. The ceremonies are followed by potluck feasting to which everyone contributes. Contact: pamela@thewoolshed.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. In 2016 The Melbourne Grove we will be celebrating the eight seasonal festivals on the following dates: Lughnasadh - Jan 30, Autumn Equinox - Mar 19, Samhuin - Apr 30, Winter Solstice - Jun 25, Imbolc - Jul 31, Spring Equinox - Sep 18, Beltane - Oct 30 and Summer Solstice - Dec 18. If you would like to join us please send an email to Elkiewhitelk@bigpond.com. Our website is www.themelbournegrove.org

Wollemi Seed Group

NSW Central Coast and Hunter Region. We are gathering on the fourth Sunday of each month at Buchanan close to the expressway. Anyone is welcome and we would love visitors, for details contact Rollick on 0423 626 290 or bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au

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.

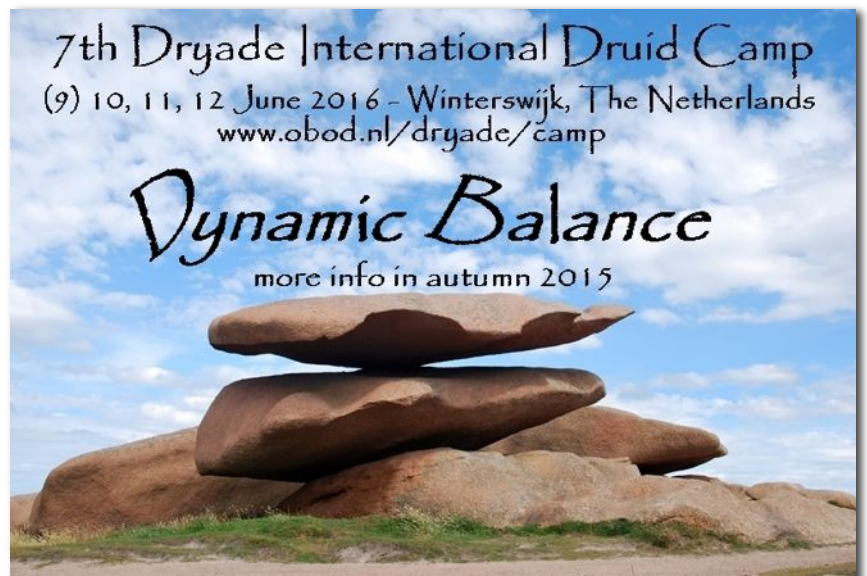
Druid (USA) www.druidmagazine.com

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

Il Calderone (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

Druidenstein (German) www.feuersprung.de

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



Pagan Transitions



Pagan Transitions was created over 12 years ago to help pagans create meaningful and beautiful funeral rites which reflect the spirituality of the person who has passed through the Gateway, and offer support to the bereaved. As well as templates that can be adapted to suit individual funeral requirements, and a selection of reading material and poems, there is also a list of Pagan Funeral Celebrants who can create and lead the funeral rite for you and arrange everything with the Funeral Director. Pagan Transitions is a volunteer-run free service. If you are a Pagan Funeral Celebrant and would like to be listed please visit www.pagan-transitions.org.uk and complete the application form. Any suggestions on how the service can be improved are welcome.

The Calm (and a Southern Storm)

*Beneath the constellation Crux celestial axes cross,
and point towards cathedrals green of Sassafras and
moss.*

*The bellbird's knell reverberates from waterfalls and
wells
and ricochets through caverns where the Forest Spirit
dwells.*

*Defending dawn from darkness, yawning bright against
the night,
the sun rends bending beams ascending, golden rays
alight.*

*Symmetric strings of starlight drift among the
Kurrajongs,
and birds in morning chorus sing illuminated songs.*

*As crimson clouds of faerie floss across the sky entwine,
and curl in lacy tendrils through the crowns of Norfolk
Pine,
the mist sits silent, sifting light, and shadows slowly
bleach,
and frothy foam-like fingers claw at pebbles on the
beach.*

*Earth nectar sipped, as Eucalyptus trees in triptych sit,
from roots as deep as wisdom - cryptic Druid secrets writ.
Cascading crystal creeks spill into still and tranquil
pools,
and polish blocks of ancient rock with sandy molecules.*

*Then softly, in the distance, muffled sounds of thunder
thud
and puffs of sky-clad nimbus skip and scandalously scud.
The whipping wind rotates in figure-eights' of ripping
leaves,
and ghostly She-oak sadness fills the grove as she
bereaves.*

*Storms stalking, supercells with rolling eyes in furious
white,
draw dripping drops in updrafts as the lightning bolts
ignite.
But gentle rain in rivulets and rills will trickle soon,
like dew, the tears of Dryads, or of Goddess Sickle Moon.*

By Peter Bull

The Sacred Masculine: an exploration - Pt 2

by Todd William Dearing

A quickly hewn history: the rigid and mundane paradigms exhibit a wounded masculine (the symbol is Christ on the cross - the vulnerable male has been abused, and so has become defensive against its own acts upon its collective self) and an absent feminine (eg Protestantism denied a place for the Mother as Mary or as the Church). At least Catholicism permitted the feminine (though it was controlled). After the Reformation towards Protestantism came the Scientific Revolution, which said that truth is only valid through logical and empirical fact - no emotion or spirit can be truth - thus remained a dry source of authority for society to chew upon and spit out all kinds of environmentally hostile technology. Humanity, hungry for emotional and spiritual wholeness, has since largely exploited and funnelled its power into mega-corporate agendas. So we see a plutocracy where money and power is the driving concern, over truth, whether scientific or religious.

Those who can thrive in this model are able to gain its rewards (at the expense of the natural world and their natural selves). This model requires a hard-hearted ruthlessness for its success, which men (relating astrologically more to the planets Mars and the Sun) are able to embody more easily than women (who relate more to Venus and the Moon - in our society which is based upon Classical India, Greece, Rome, etc). You will see that women have had to become more aggressive and hard to make it in the corporate world, more masculine. Still, whether man or woman, a mundane corporate-driven society which denies the soul is not very healthy. Basically, the common paradigm asks men to be common men, for the society to function commonly.

Yet it is not a question of one or the other (common or sacred). The aim is always inclusive balance - balance is what brings wholeness, not favouring one over the other, which is a repeat of the competitive and failing patriarchy. Just as the Earth allows all things to live in their diversity, so consciousness must be. And in this balance the darker aspects of our society are able to be healed - suppression of them within oneself will only give them greater power beyond one's conscious control.

So, a lot of meandering things here thus far, but it all contributes to a view of the sacred masculine in men. You can see this archetype in many different cultures as the man aligned with the cosmos: they are the holy men, the nature-priest, the shaman, the spiritual warrior, the sacred artists, the awakened father, the male elder and so on. The roles and functions are many, but the essence is beyond role in outer society. The essence of the sacred masculine is born from the sacred feminine - whether this occurs from within oneself, or in relationship to the sacred feminine outside of oneself depends on the person. The Earth Herself may guide this sacred masculine to completion. It may happen in various ways. The feminine tends to relate more to birth, and the masculine more to death, but death as a sacred transformation (a birth into the Otherworld). And so you see the completion here of the two polarities into wholeness, of Thisworld/Otherworld, birth/death - a circle and cycle.

When you look at the Arthurian Mythos (the myths about King Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere etc) you will see a good example of the sacred masculine as it has been carried culturally over the centuries in the West, though somewhat on society's fringes. There are other examples, but I choose this because I think it reflects one of the main examples of the sacred masculine closest to Western society. The basic pattern is a story of journeying knights - who meet women along the way, who guide their journey either as an antagonist or protagonist - for the feminine is more able to present shadow and light without a sharp distinction. The feminine is more naturally ambiguous, like the Moon, whereas the masculine, like the Sun, has clearly defined edges (like Sunlight making shadows compared to Moonlight shadows). The sacred feminine often births the hero, changes the sacred boy into the sacred man - she is the initiatrix. She initiates the masculine.

The common masculine is the uninitiated masculine. To die old, as only this, is a sad thing - it is to always remain a boy, in an undeveloped sense, even into old age. The sacred masculine differs in that it has awakened through initiation into the mysteries, which means the masculine (and other) forces are no longer unconscious - in body, mind, emotion, spirit etc. The conscious man embodies the sacred masculine - they are not a slave to their animal-instinctual selves, but are in conscious mastery of them. They are not afraid of the feminine - and have no need to suppress it - for they realise She is the universe, She is the Muse, the Goddess of all, as all. She is not simply a woman, though all woman directly represent Her, in her endless forms. This is of course an ongoing journey of development and transformation for the Man.

The sacred masculine made conscious within (whether as a man or woman) gives vision of the God within - which has been wounded into unconsciousness by Modern society and needs healing. The awakened God within is the wounded-healer, the one who has been wounded and is now more whole for it; having healed themselves, they can heal others. It is the wound which inspires the quest, as in the Grail Quest. The wound leads to greater wholeness, for those who are never wounded can never fully grow. Thus the person of the awakened masculine does not fear woundedness. The sacred masculine, when embodied (that is very important - it must become physically rooted in being and belonging to the Earth, not simply theory of the thinking head or feelings of the heart only - it must become primal) and deeply rooted within one's being, becomes like a great tree: powerful, supportive, giving, open, clear and vital, and connected. The sacred masculine can stand true to themselves even amidst the ignorance of a wound-suppressing patriarchal society - standing true, as a man. They can present the true masculine in the face of ignorance, and hold that presence.

These are just some aspects of the topic, and I could go on and on. It tends to cross over many areas and is not an exclusive philosophy, as much of what is written above relates to the feminine also (the two really can't be separated - wholeness is an internal union of the two, anyway.) What I have written is certainly rather loosely structured and is in no way complete or the final say; it hopefully serves for further reflection and discussion on this topic in whatever way it is due. I will end here.

May there be a great healing and awakening of the god, the sacred masculine, in balance with all of Nature.

Todd William Dearing (www.toddwilliamdearing.com)

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.

Still Dreaming

by Damh the Bard

Last October me and Cerri boarded an Airbus 380 and began the 22 hour journey halfway around the world to Australia. It was our fifth trip to the Singing Land and anyone who has my album Antlered Crown and Standing Stone will know how much I love that immense island. I wrote the song The Dreaming after my trip in May 2012 but the song was bubbling away in my subconscious way back in 2010 when I first encountered the feeling most people get when they travel from one hemisphere to another.

The first thing I did when I discovered I was going to Australia back in 2010 was to get on Google and look up everything that could kill me. There was pages of it. Most seemed to be in the sea but it did seem that anything that swam, slithered, or crawled was out to get you. But I figured there are a lot of people living in Australia, so it can't be that bad. And it wasn't. I think I've only seen one huntsman and a white-tailed spider in all five trips. On my most recent trip I encountered the Drop Bear - an evil and terrifying form of the Koala that waits in the trees and drops on unsuspecting tourists. I've got to say that, considering the amount of creatures that quite frankly scare the pants off most tourists, you don't really need to create a fictitious one!

Well, scary creatures aside I remember my first trip, looking to the sky and, at first, not seeing any constellations I recognise. The Moon waxes and wanes in the opposite way, and the Sun moves anti-clockwise across the sky. Then I saw Orion, upside down. The sounds of the birds, particularly the Magpie and Kookaburra were so different to the birdsong of Europe. I had never been to a land in which I felt so alien, and I loved it. Here the Land was still king. Humans weren't always top of the food chain. There were huge areas in which I would simply not survive. What a place!

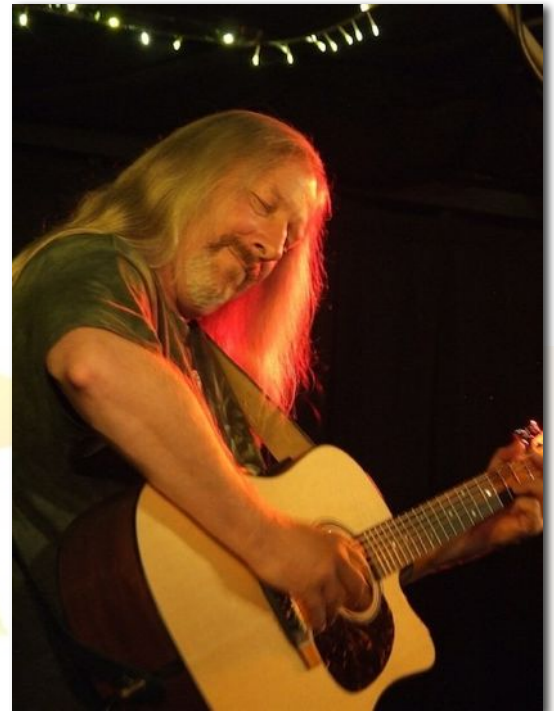
We landed last year in Adelaide and were met by our dear Aussie friends. It was dark so we grabbed something to eat and went straight to bed. The next morning I was woken to familiar sounds. The clog-dancing Possums on the roof, and the musical call of the Magpie outside. I smiled. We were back.

A couple of days later we were at the Australian Wiccan Conference. I was playing a concert in the evening and the moment arrived when I began to play The Dreaming. As I looked around I saw familiar faces of friends, I thought about the sound of the Magpie, of the forest of Gum trees outside. I heard voices singing along with me, but these had Australian accents. This was my song to them, the song that came from my heart to honour the land I now stood upon. It was too much. I got to the last verse and tears were rolling down my cheeks. It's hard to sing when you're crying with joy. I saw that moment reflected in the faces of others there too. It was an amazing emotional connection.

The trip was wonderful, but as with any trip away it had to come to an end, and me and Cerri made our way back to Albion. But the words of the song are true. The Southern Cross will guide me to your shore, to hear you sing once more.

The Dreaming - Damh the Bard

<i>Welcome now a visitor to your shores, Following a dream I can't ignore, From a distant land you may never know, Of sun and rain and snow. Here where the endless skies reach for the sun, The gum trees stand like the oaks of Albion, And the land sings in lines of ancient song, For the soul to sing along.</i>	<i>A Serpent made a path across the land, Formed the rivers and mountains where they stand, These songs are in the Kookaburra's call, But she's laughing at us all.</i>
<i>(Chorus) And the Southern Cross shines down on where I stand. And I hear the voices from the Singing Land.</i>	<i>Oh can you feel me dreaming, Oh can you feel me dreaming, Oh can you feel me dreaming, oh.</i>
<i>Here where the land still is king, Beneath red sand the ancestors are dreaming, And a mother knows which song must be sung, When a new life has begun.</i>	<i>Familiar stars now shine from up above, I've returned to the land that I love, But my heart must try to understand, It's now shared by another land, Beneath the plough I look to the setting sun, As I stand once more on the land of Albion. But the Southern Cross will guide me to your shore, To hear you sing once more.</i>
	<i>Oh I can feel you dreaming, Oh I can feel you dreaming, Oh I can feel you dreaming, oh.</i>



Website: www.paganmusic.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/damhthebard

Twitter: www.twitter.com/paganmusic



A changing of the seasons, celebrating all things English, ritual and ancient.

The first of our winter rains has come; in the Adelaide Hills the creeks and streams trickle and begin to run, the European trees have lost their leaves and the beautiful eucalypts shimmer in the early winter sunshine. The seasons are changing.

We have farewelled another dry, hot summer – the land that was so parched and dry is now is coming back to life as we move into 'the green'. The leafy faces of green men peek out from behind the trees as King George and his mummers players ring their bell to summon all to gather. A bonfire is built with a wicker man waiting to fire the night, masked guisers in rag coats beat their drums to lead you along the path while we await the Morris dancers with their bells, sticks and hankies to accompany the giants Petal, Rufus and Tanis, to the lighting of our ritual fire.

The English Ale is coming and the Spirit of Albion lives on!

Saturday 21st May

The Mylor Hall & Oval, Strathalbyn Rd, Mylor, South Australia

Events during the day outside of hall are free. 7.30 Concert \$25 Adults \$5 Children.

Druids of Oz Gathering

English Music Session (bring your instruments and voices and join in)

Beating of the Bounds,

Preston's Punch 'n' Judy

Morris Dancing

Torchlit Procession with G.O.T.H., Morris Sides, Guisers, Hobby Horses, Giants and Green Men.

Opening Ritual and Firing of the Wicker Man

Evening Concert with Spiral Dance, Kacey Stephensen, The Fayre Guisers Mummers Players and more to be announced soon

All the info coming soon at:

<https://www.theenglishale.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1073581382681794/>

<https://www.spiraldance.com.au>

Mallee My Mother: The Goddess Tree

by wyverne

Gaia is a complex animal. Her continents are something like the organs of the human body. Each has its own logos, or mindset, and different ways of going about things. These different modes are expressed through the genetics of the planet which give rise to the different animal species. When you compare the fauna and flora of, say, Africa with that of Australia, you find great differences expressed in biomes of great diversity which nevertheless contribute seamlessly to the worldwide continuum of species. Nowhere is this more evident than in the trees.



A white mallee tree in the prime of life.

In Europe of the past, trees have been recognised as important organs within the biome, with roles to play that humans can understand - roles that go far beyond their place in the biophysical networks of exchange, the carbon, nitrogen and water cycles that all lifeforms participate in. Our memory of this recognition has been obscured by the massive achievement of the last several centuries, the growth of technology, science, finance and our great sprawling civilisation of cities, highways and air and shipping lines, our mass media and our greedily consuming society. We rely on mere traces of this former knowledge to jog our race memories and guide us back to rediscover the instincts we once had, that enabled us to know so easily what we now recall with so much difficulty.

The ovate grade gives us a beautiful ritual to help us in this work, and many druids are now 'downloading' from trees information-rich nwyfre which we are reading with more and more confidence and accuracy. Better yet, piecing together memories from this lifetime that we begin retrospectively to recognise as barely conscious communion with trees we have loved, and which we feel have loved us, until some of us feel ready to share what we have gained from our best moments of what we feel is true communion with trees. Even casual work in the ovate way will prepare us to benefit from the communion, but those of us who have spent decades dedicated to the practices of druidry - living consciously in natural surroundings, pursuing lucidity and sensitivity in formal ritual and focused questing, dedicated tree-huggers all - will be aware of how much more conscious understanding the ancient seemingly-silent trees around us have to share with us.



My first communicative contact with the mallee tree occurred well before I began druidry. I had been fasting and meditating in a pyramid in the wilderness, where the rainfall is only ten inches and the mallee stretches for miles in all directions. Not expecting a tree to speak, I had been captivated by glimpses of aboriginal ghosts and loved to wander about, eating the native berries, shoots, flowers and roots (including the harlequin mistletoe so beloved of the old druids) and feel their help and guidance in orienting myself to the land. This is a limestone landscape characterised by small dongas - shallow basins which are actually old filled-up blowholes, made when the still-fluid limestone was setting hard when it was first drained of the ancient ocean that once broke upon a rocky shore near where the River Murray now flows. There is a lot of beautiful magic in these dongas, now almost filled with wind silt from the centre of our continent. My guides often guided me to meditate in them. Parabola-shaped, they seemed to enhance my clairvoyance and indeed all my psychic sensibilities.

Trees are new to the rocky land and their roots find easy passage in these deep dongas which are therefore often ringed with mallee trees - small multi-stemmed eucalypts of the kind that yield the famous oil - bearing great upside-down bushes of mistletoe, harbouring populations of birds and reptiles and smaller creatures too numerous to name. My aboriginal guides made me sit down under the mallee tree and feel her consciousness intertwine with mine.

The first feeling that came over me was the awareness of her power. I knew from an Arunta friend that her name and variants of it all over Australia mean woman. Not just any woman, but 'respected woman' - community-minded, mature, maternal and virtuous. So she represents a feminine ideal. According to the ideas that I let flow through my mind, the mistletoe she carries on her

The name Mallee is closely related to Mala, the Arunta word for Woman.

greyish-white-to-pinkish fawn arm-like branches is her child. Attuned to the human communities around her, her relationship with the mistletoe is affected by the same forces that affect human inter-relationships and our relationship to the land as a species in the ecology. When aborigines lived here in pre-colonial times, and populations of human beings were smaller in more reasonable proportion to the carrying capacity of the land, the mistletoe and mallee grew together in happy harmony, just as the land supported the humans in

contentment and pleasure. Mother and child, enriching, supporting and loving each other in due measure. When the population exploded with European settlement, the human population became too heavy for harmonious life to continue, the child became a burdensome responsibility, and the mistletoe became a destructive parasite instead of a symbiotic companion, with some poor trees dying under its sap-sucking weight. I noticed that this phenomenon was worse by roadsides and near towns, where the population density has increased and where the stresses of modern living have made child-raising more stressful than it has ever been before. On the other hand, where the mallee scrub is sparse, and the living more difficult, we often see forlorn skeletons of dead mistletoe saplings hanging on mallees that having killed their burden seem somehow apathetic...

Because first and foremost, the mallee is a mother tree. In European tradition the same spirituality, derived from similar subtle qualities is found in the birch tree, and they share a similar capacity to generate the narratives that shape our lives, embodying the laws of human evolution, communicating essential dreaming to our species, our instincts being blocked by our wonderful but ecologically costly brains. As biologists are noting with growing amazement, the tree is very like a brain - not *has* a brain, but *is* a brain, far bigger than our own and less obstructed by the specialisations that we are still in the process of evolving.

I heard the mallee communicating with me by wordless telepathy, which she directed into my mind in such a way as to stimulate me to produce the words I would have chosen had they been my own thoughts.



Hollow trunks, dense mulch and lots of loose bark - mallee is habitat for myriad species.

This form of telepathy is quite common, and seems to have been used by aborigine seekers for millennia. The first thing she told me was that her roots reach down to the centre of the earth, and her leaves to the outermost atmosphere. Immediately hard reality contradicted this, but she explained that her roots bear sensoria that maintain open lines of communication with the inner and outer planet that actually do constitute veritable extensions of her roots and reach as far as she said. Not material, but absolutely real.

The next thing she told me was that she was a mother in a real sense, and a mother of humanity at that. She gave me images that could easily be interpreted as dot paintings. In her bole - the material, visible part of which is much more than we can see - she conditions spiritual energy replete with information-rich nwyfre and dreamtime narrative from the planetary logos. Taking the template from the millions of human beings who have walked since time immemorial among her gesturing arms, she forms the souls of human females (and certain males as well) and streams them at appropriate times into the places where aboriginal women go when they want a baby, to connect with the spirits and devas who will help them to the right one for them. Thus the babies are born. European women are seldom aware of such things yet they too are supplied from similar sources. And she showed me how my conception was managed in just such a way, so that all my life she's been a kind of second mother - building me up from past, present and future soul-energy, bringing me into alignment with my dreamings, kangaroo, echidna and emu, and keeping my feet on the path home to her to be claimed as a daughter. Never have I felt such love.

Or such grandeur of spirit. Her celestial soul! She seems infinite to my tiny earthbound consciousness. She encompasses in her range of perception far more than the moon and stars of our visible reality. Perhaps she can take us to the implicate order from which the holography that constitutes our planet is maintained, and begin to show us the awesome complexity of our mother planet - who needs such a diverse array of sentient beings to explicate such myriad modes of expression and perception into the vast array of parallel realities we know there must be, and long to experience.



Druids will notice her connection to the wedge-tail eagle, a powerful far-seeing bird.

Ovates will be interested in her medicinal oil which aids convalescence, wards off infections such as coughs and colds, and eases muscular and dental pain.

Bards will find inspiration in her rough beauty and grace, and the many beings she shelters.

Her ogham, of course, is Beith.

Mistletoe - magic herb of the druids - often finds a welcome here.



Summer In Our Land

*We shall have droughts that rob our cattle of their lives,
We shall have floods that take farmer's ripe crop from their grasp
It sweeps away our homes and property and cattle and us.
We have fires that demolish our grasses and our bush
Tree and homes are not safe from the devastation of flame.
The winds will flatten whatever is in it's path of this harsh land.
Our skin will burn and blister, our bodies drained of sweat,
The sun will bleach our hair and the ground will burn our feet.*

*We will will have sand and salad for Christmas lunch at the beach
And fairly-light picnic nights with opera and classics in the park.
At the pubs, rebel rousers and the Barmey Army are sure to meet,
As the sun burns down upon our rugged outback and city streets
And pleasure boats will bob on our glistening harbour waters.
Summer fun, golden tans and laughter is here again they say.
But for those who live their life upon this Australia,
Know the Weather Gods come in many a-harsh way.*

By Pamela Freeman

‘The Nature of the Gods’

Reflections on the nature of the otherworld, pagan faith and belief within modern Druidry.

By Kacey Stephensen

The Gods, they call to me: they call to me in the whisper of the breeze in the silvery birch leaves; they hum within the stones and crystals resting on the forest floor. They beckon me ever deeper into the magic of the otherworld, ever present in this world, through the doorways of trees, the rings of stones, the doors of the sidhe within old willow trees.

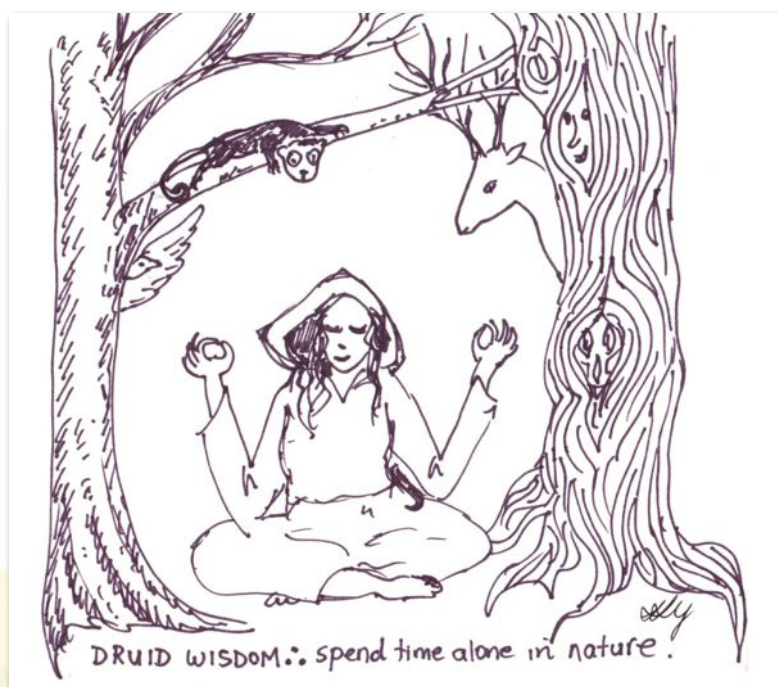
They call to me, saying, "Believe in us, believe in us!"

I have experienced many powerful moments with ‘Spirit’, which have required more than a physical and logical explanation. When I commune with the gods, with the spirits of the land, I can feel their effect - their realness in the world, the world within me and within the world around me. I would like to believe that my connection with the ‘spirit world’ is an intricate connection between psychological symbols and real powers within nature who give us guidance and wisdom. I try not personally to form concrete opinions on what I believe. I just know I have transforming experiences through which I’ve observed synchronicities in my life, and in the world around me, simply by tuning in.

Sometimes putting my faith in deity might be because I am feeling insecure or helpless, but to me that is part of the point of connecting with deity: they are very wise and knowledgeable beings. It is the same as when you turn to a close friend for comfort, wisdom and advice on a given issue or situation; the Gods and Goddesses can help us as helpful and supporting friends, guiding us to healing. Sometimes we may feel we can't turn to ‘people’ for comfort or help, sometimes we may feel a need and longing for (otherworldly) advice which for most druids I would think is intricately interwoven with this world anyway. When we are communing with Gods, guides or nature spirits for healing and counsel, we are connecting with another layer of this world, this universe, and by connecting with that level we are actually more fully in this ‘physical’ world; regardless of the nature of the Gods, experiences define our relationship with the world.

Offering food and drink to the Gods and spirits of the land are important to me in my own rituals; I always like to give something back, not simply asking things all the time. When I give offerings to Ceridwen or Brighid, I am thanking myself as well; I am acknowledging that I am part of divinity, that the whole universe is imbued with sacredness, that nature is inherently divine - and divine of its own right. I am acknowledging my own divinity as a human being for a time, before I return to the elements of nature. Giving offerings to spirit is also a joyous and celebratory thing to do; it reveres life and the spirits of nature, and through such offerings to the Gods we feast with them, we drink and eat with them, we share in the bounty and nourishment of life and celebrate its beauty.

Faith in the otherworld, belief in spiritual experiences is something that many of us take for granted; we have an instinctual acceptance of having faith in the unknown and letting our imaginations and intuitions build upon that. For others, they do not have that conviction in the real existence of Gods or spirits; but I think both groups of people require ‘faith’ to delve deeply into their experiences to honestly understand the wisdom and perceived magic in the symbols and archetypes. I feel when I am walking in the woods, I need to go deeper into it, to walk deeper into the ‘physicalness’ of the forest and explore its beauty and sacredness, but on another level I want to connect with this place in an ‘otherworldly’ way that reveals more to the forest than just the trees; seeing the forest as imbued with spirit and spirits and maybe being a portal between this world and the world of fairy. Adults love to rationalise this feeling, saying it is just the leftover fantasies of their childhood, but it's actually an essential part of the human interaction with the world; to search for the spirits, to open up our senses to their voices, to their whispers... as they dance around the ancient trees.



Artwork by Sandra

I've always considered myself a Pantheist: the universe is inherently divine, all of nature is imbued with Gods, with Spirits, with beings we revere, and all of these beings are dependent on and are a part of the natural environment they are associated with. The typical definition of pantheism is that the (physical) universe is by itself sacred, without any need for a supernatural force, and is usually called scientific pantheism. If we reduced this term further, we end up with physicalist monism, or physicalism - the idea that there is only one substance in the universe and that substance is physical. Then there is Panentheism the idea that the Gods are part of the universe and are also beyond it, but I have a problem with this because there is a basic assumption we have inherited from our material-oriented culture, which goes like this:

The assumption is that the definition of the word 'Universe' is the embodiment of all things physical (again Physical Monism) - everything that is composed of matter, made of matter, created from matter. This presupposes that anything that isn't made of 'matter' is different to the universe or outside of it. What happens if we remove the materialist assumption that the universe is just matter? Then our understanding of what the universe is becomes much more open, yet it stays completely within the concept of Nature - ie something which is an inherent and organic property of a substance or system (in this case the universe), which has no external source to rely on for its own development or power. So if our definition of the universe is more than physical, what is the universe then made up of? Matter and Spirit? Is it just one substance expressed in many ways? How can we know what we mean by matter and spirit anyway? I am a Pantheist because, for me, there is nothing outside the universe - the universe is everything - and since I believe everything is natural (including 'otherworldly' phenomena) then the spiritual experience of archetypal forces or indeed real deities is also natural, and inherent within the very fabric of nature, and in itself opens up a whole new can of baked-beaned questions about the nature of consciousness.

I've had so many moments sitting out under the stars, meditating by a fire in my grove, feeling simultaneously the physical presence of reality but also the tangible feeling of 'energy' - vital force flowing through all things. I am aware of the physicalness of the fire but I'm also aware of its spirit, its substance. These two supposedly different properties (matter and spirit) are actually the same substance, which in philosophy is called Monism - the idea that there are no real dualities in nature, and that everything is part of one whole. These two aspects, or rather 'attributes of nature' - spirit and matter - are aspects of one whole, called the Universe; 'uni' which means all or whole. I think I will call this pantheistic substance 'spirit matter', or 'substance matter', and I will define it as: "The proposition that all matter and all spirit are fundamentally the same phenomena, which are two aspects of one whole."

Before I started writing this article down I wanted to get a good understanding of what other Druids feel about the gods and spirits, and one particular person who replied said she was a 'Functional Animist' which she defined as meaning that functionally she treats the world as if it's full of spirits, but that she honestly doesn't know. I think this is a very good point, if not simply for a practical reason, because if a view which posits the existence of spirits within all things actually helps to heal the planet and human kind then it serves a 'real' purpose - the myth of the magical world inspires and brings insight to people. In the same way that poetry or art transforms the soul, belief and faith transforms our world.

Stay tuned for Part 2 in the Samhuinn issue!



First Harvest

*When the heat of the Sun begins to wane
And the hours of darkness are growing again
The Sun starts its journey back to the north
The wind starts to blow, it's the season of storms*

*The crops have begun to mature and ripen
All of our hard work is coming to completion
It's time to prepare for the dark days ahead
Without careful plans, the winter we will dread*

*This is Lughnasadh, the time of the first harvest
Where we celebrate the bounty of the first fruits
It's a period of intense emotions and activity
A time to celebrate life, growth and fertility*

*Rejoice at the partnership between the Sun and the Earth
Collect the rays of the Sun and store them for rebirth
By Mabon the warmth of Summer will be a memory
We must prepare now to focus our destiny*

*John Barleycorn who lay with the Lady at Beltane
Stands before us now with long beard and bent cane
His time has come as his green turns to gold
He gladly gives his life to feed the town folk*

*His sacrifice is important as death brings rebirth
He teaches us that joy and festivities bring worth
We touch on creation by singing his dance
By honouring his life we leave nothing to chance*

*The Goddess Tailtiu gave her life to bring agriculture
Her foster son Lugh, honours her adventure
Lugh, God of Fire and Light, skilled at all in the land
Commemorates his mother's sacrifice with a feast ever grand*

*So let's harvest what we have learnt since we planted our seeds
And take into our lives what will benefit our needs
Leave a little aside to carry through to next Spring
So the cycle can continue and we will not want for anything*

By Chris Parker



Image used with permission, courtesy Gary Schmitt <https://www.facebook.com/GarySchmittPhoto>



The Sacred Landscape of Brittany

by Linda Marson

Stonehenge, Avebury, the Ring of Brodgar, Newgrange and other ancient sacred sites in the UK and Ireland are awe-inspiring, but nothing quite prepares you for the sheer scale and number of megalithic sites in Brittany. Around the village of Carnac there are more than 3,000 prehistoric standing stones, the largest such collection in the world. And that's not all – in an afternoon of driving you'll come across dolmens, tumuli and single menhirs scattered in villages and woodland.

Why were they built more than 5,000 years ago? How did people use them? These are questions that have exercised the minds of archaeologists and historians for centuries, and will no doubt continue to do so for centuries to come. It's easy to see stone circles as ceremonial or community gathering places, but not so easy to imagine ceremonies or rituals taking place in rows of stones stretching for kilometres across the landscape. Maybe we're looking at huge cemeteries with rows of unmarked gravestones? If so, what's their connection with the dolmens and tumuli in the region?



Local legends about why the stones run in straight lines abound. Merlin turning an invading Roman legion to stone is my favourite! Much more appealing than the Christian myth which says they're pagan soldiers turned to stone by Pope Cornelius.

I'm happy to leave these questions with the archaeologists, historians and storytellers. Of greater interest to me is the way the rows of stones invite you to listen for ancestral messages, to imagine yourself living among the people who knew the answers because interacting with the stones was a natural part of their lives.

I was fortunate enough to spend a short time in Brittany last year. On the first day, my friend and I did nothing but gasp in amazement at what we saw. By day three, we had somehow begun to see the juxtaposition of ancient and modern landscapes as normal. The locals have always done so. Our landlady had lived in Carnac all her life and told us how she played among the stones as a child, which still happens today. What child (or adult) wouldn't want to play hide and seek in dolmens standing in the middle of villages or out in the forest!



On our final night in Carnac, I couldn't resist going over the fence to wander in the dark among the ancient sleeping giants of the 'Alignements de Carnac'. Soft murmurings and fleeting glances of otherworldly presences welcomed me. A sense of peace and calm descended as I moved among them and tuned into the energy of life through the ages.



In contrast to the unadorned, raw beauty of the standing stone landscape, there are the intricately carved interiors of tombs, the dwellings of immortality. The Saint-Michel tumulus is a large artificial hill, now topped by a Christian chapel. The intricate designs carved into the walls and chambers of the cairns at Locmariaquer and Gavrinis suggest that people entered these tombs to pay their respects to those who had passed.

Though smaller than Newgrange in Ireland, Gavrinis is possibly more impressive, since every inch of the corridor walls and central chamber are carved. The time and labour involved in producing these masterpieces of art is beyond comprehension.

I didn't know Brittany was on my bucket list until I went there. I'm forever grateful to my friend, Jenne, who did know about the wonders of Carnac and the Morbihan Peninsula and was looking for a travel companion. So, if you're planning a trip to the UK and Europe, include Carnac on your itinerary and allow plenty of time to absorb the wonders of the region. You'll find lots of affordable accommodation through 'airbnb' and other such websites.

I put together highlights of the journey in a video clip which you can view on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/pwB4ouBzWg8>. Using a step ladder from our apartment to climb over the fence at night has been captured for posterity!

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

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For further information contact Sandra - macademiagrove@hotmail.com

For bookings contact Cherry - nimueart@bigpond.com



Gossip

(Grove Of the Summer Stars – infinite possibility)
January 2016

Just had to share this pic of the first rays of the sun hitting the centre stone on our tor at Grove of the Summer Stars, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand, on Summer Solstice morning. Three intrepid 'Grover's' made the climb! We were determined to be there in time so arrived on the tor at 5.18am. However, because of the hills and the fact that we are on a west coast, our centre stone was kissed at 7.23am!! Fortunately we had brought grubbers with us, and a lot of thistles were sacrificed that morning. Solstice Blessings!

Arohanui
Pamela /\n
Modron – Grove of the Summer Stars



SerpentStar Reader Survey Results

By Mandy Gibson

A few weeks ago I put together a short survey to find out how you're all feeling about your newsletter, and what new things you'd like to see as we move into 2016. I've had some very useful feedback and am going to give you some details, plus respond to comments I received along the way.

- I was happy to see most of you read SerpentStar every issue. Thankyou, and an extra special "Hello to our reader in Wales!" I'd be curious to know just how many readers we actually have in the Northern Hemisphere, because although the content and contributions are Southern-centred I do try to make it accessible and entertaining to everyone.

- It seems a lot of people are accessing new issues from the forum or Facebook link - this is great, but did you know you can also subscribe via the Wordpress page at serpentstar.wordpress.com? A subscription costs nothing, and just means you'll automatically get an email every quarter when the new issue is uploaded. The Wordpress website is also a good place to explore, as there's plenty of back issues there to read, all free!

- One thing I did notice was a reader who said they sometimes accessed SerpentStar via a link on Twitter. SerpentStar doesn't currently have an official Twitter presence that I know of, so if someone out there's sharing it for me then thankyou!

- Regarding the comments on the question regarding layout:

- SerpentStar only comes out quarterly, at Samhuinn, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Imbolc. If you're not receiving these four, and you believe you are subscribed, please email me at serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

- Likewise, please email if you're having trouble reading the newsletter on a mobile. It is released as a pdf so is already optimised for mobile devices with a pdf reader such as iBooks (or if you have a Kindle that is pdf-compatible). I'd need to know what phone you're using to really look into it further.

- SerpentStar is produced in A4 format, and designed to be print-friendly, so if you have access to a colour printer it's very easy and cost effective to produce your own hard copy version. Again, if you have trouble printing it please don't hesitate to send me an email.

- For those who indicated that they miss the hard copy format of SerpentStar I understand, but the idea of paper subscription is a thorny one. At this stage it won't be possible, as the electronic copy has evolved in terms of colour and layout quality to a point where a similar-quality printed version would indeed be expensive to produce and distribute. This is the advantage of electronic-only - so much more is possible in terms of what content can be accepted and how things can be presented when you are not bound by the limits of printing cost and layout requirements. Not to mention saving the trees! That being said, a hard copy special edition would not be out of the question sometime in the future. Who knows?

- Lots of you have said you'd like themes to inspire you to contribute more, and so themes you shall have! Starting when I call for content for Samhuinn, I'll be setting a theme for each issue. Of course, if you want to contribute something that doesn't meet the theme, go ahead! If I get more non-themed than themed contributions, I'll make the theme a special feature.

- I also received a comment asking for content aimed at members of all Grades, and new members. The content of SerpentStar I've received since I took over at least has been, to my Bard eyes, suitable for all Grades and should be of interest to new members. However, I'm looking at ways we can write more for new folk (without going too much into the teachings themselves, which as we know is more a topic for your mentor, or the dedicated sections of the druidry.org forum).

- Of course, if you just want to read and not contribute that's totally okay and welcome! I just bug everyone all the time because you never know when a new person might join who hasn't seen what's available and how they can be involved.

- Thankyou to everyone who said nice words in response to Question 10 - I've loved being involved so far and am grateful to hear you like what I'm doing. I will indeed be putting a footnote for submission closing dates on the last page from now on, though please remember if you miss out for one issue and your piece is not date specific I will hold it over and make sure you're in next quarter.

- To the person who asked in Question 10 about a 'local elder' for their region, I'd answer two ways: take a look at the group listings here and on the druidry.org main site and see if there's a Grove or Seed Group close to you that you can become involved in, and more importantly that if you would prefer to be assigned a mentor closer to you be sure to let HQ know and they might be able to help.

The Serpentstar Reader Survey is still open for responses, and as you can see I have been reading and taking note of them. If you have something to say please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NK2GMBN> - the survey does not collect personal data so your responses will be anonymous and not used for any purpose, other than making your newsletter a better part of your day.



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

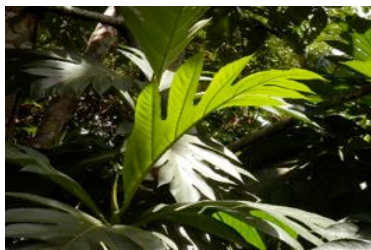
The cost of this programme is \$320 inclusive of 2 days of training, as well as tea/coffee and snacks. A 50% deposit is required at the time of booking via email to secure your place in this limited numbers event. The remaining balance is to be paid 2 weeks prior to the workshop. Direct deposit is preferred, 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 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.

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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

CARD/BOOK GIVEAWAY

Helen has several items looking for new homes (tarot cards and books). She is happy to give them away free of charge to any SerpentStar readers, however she would appreciate a contribution to cover postage. She is only offering them through SerpentStar, as she would like them to go to new homes where they will be used and valued.

The tarot cards have been treated with respect. The Will Worthington decks are in 'as new' condition. The Rider Waite deck cards are in excellent condition but as the set is now over 20 years old the edges of the box are worn.

Helen has listed the items on LibraryThing <http://www.librarything.com/catalog/OCobhthaigh> and will delete items as they find their new home, or add any other items she may find.

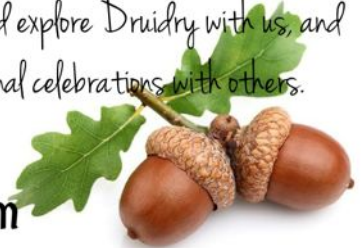
For more details email
helen.ocobhthaigh@gmail.com

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](http://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

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Announcing the grand opening of the YVONNEDRUID on-line store!



Welcome to the YVONNEDRUID on-line store.

Are you having trouble finding your Druid related items in one place, especially in the Southern Hemisphere? Well you have come to the right site. We are constantly sourcing items for you to browse through and find for your Druid needs. To enhance your journey, we have added some items relating to the Green Man, the Sacred Hare, Shamanism and Celtic products. There are many products in stock, from books to jewellery, wands to clothing and all sorts of exciting things to make this your one stop shopping experience.

Apart from the online shop we will be having a stall at the Brisbane Mind Body Spirit Festival, 11-13 March 2016, then further updates as to where we will be as events arise advertised on the YVONNEDRUID site.

If there are any items we haven't stocked, and you are interested, please email us and we will endeavour to source them and let you know. We are also interested in quality handmade items, on consignment and accepted at management's discretion, to be added to the product list. Contact us for further information. Go to the website and put your details in if you wish to receive the YVONNEDRUID newsletter.

www.YVONNEDRUID.com
sales@yvonnedruid.com
readings@yvonnedruid.com

I put this store together to try and make it a one place stop for our Druidic requirements, as I found it so hard and time-consuming trying to get what I wanted, and still want, throughout my Life's Druidic Journey. I hope this will help you too, and I will be adding to it all the time with more products as I source them.

Bright Blessings to all.... Yvonne

*Celebrancy Services available in Melbourne
Legal weddings, handfastings, commitment
ceremonies*

Contact Elkie - whitelk@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.....

*OBOD Member Celebrants
in Australia*



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...



Artwork by Sandra

*The
Wheel
turns...*



Artwork by wyverne ogma vyvyan

...we come to the time of Lughnasadh...which marks the beginning of harvest time. The hay would have been gathered in, and the time for reaping the wheat and barley was due. It was a time of gathering together, of contests and games and of marriages. The marriages contracted at this time could be annulled at the same time the following year - offering the couple a sensible 'trial period'. In some areas a flaming wheel was sent rolling down the hillside at this time to symbolise the descent of the year towards Winter, and in the Druid ceremony a wheel is passed around the circle in symbol of the turning year. The Christian version of this festival is Lammas, which has recently been revived in some churches. The word Lammas comes from hlafmasse - 'loaf-mass' - since bread is offered from the newly harvested grain.

Text sourced from Druidry.org

**The deadline for contributing to the Samhuinn issue of SerpentStar is 24 April.
The Samhuinn 2016 issue will be released on May 1.**