

SERPENT STAR

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



IMBOLC 2016

Welcome to the Imbolc 2016 issue of SerpentStar!

Hiya All

Imbolc is upon us! The theme for this issue is 'Honouring Our Modern Bards' and as themes go it prompted some very interesting responses. We have the first of a new two-parter from Kacey Stephensen, poetry and art from Rhodry Yates, Chris Parker and Jez Runnalls and a little tale from Glenda Cooen. I had the honour of reviewing The Green Album, a great compilation for a great cause, and Susan Jones tells us all about OBOD's Tutor (Mentor!) program. Finally, wyverne takes us into the wilderness, and Sandra from Macadamia Grove gives some useful ritual tips and tells us why we should all book for Assembly (bookings close September 12!).

On the subject of Assembly, I'll be looking for attendees of this year's event to volunteer photos, articles, poetry and artwork from the weekend for the Beltane edition. It comes out only two weeks after Assembly, so the turnaround will be small, but if you think you might like to be involved just let me know while we're at Bribie.

The theme for the Beltane edition, incidentally, will be 'The Fertile Tribe'. Even if you're not joining us on Bribie, let the season move you to muse on fertility, our tribe, other types of tribe, anything that moves you. I look forward to a bumper Beltane SerpentStar!

The rest of my editorial space is being given this edition to Macadamia Grove's own Yvonne Hortin, who will shortly be leaving us for WA and is holding a stock open day this weekend. If you'll be in QLD and would like to visit check out the details below.

Keep Warm
Mandy /\



I am holding an open day for any one who wishes to come along and physically see what is being offered on the YVONNEDRUID website, plus other items such as sandalwood products, drums etc. This includes the staffs which are extremely difficult to post.

I am shortly relocating from Glass House Mountains in QLD to the South West of WA so thought to have this open day. Please be advised that it will be cash only sales. If you have something or things you would like to have put aside, or to obtain my address, please email me at sales@yvonnedruid.com.



Artwork by Sandra

SerpentStar, Imbolc 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.

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 Elkie whitelk@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.



Re: awakening our primal instincts (Bards), I let the chooks out for a free range, and not much later I observed a Magpie swooping the Rooster. I thought to myself, "You cheeky magpie!" Then ten minutes later I looked up to see an Eagle circling way high! Quick: time to get the chooks back into their safe house.

On re-assessment, I realised that clever Magpie was attempting to teach that rescue Rooster to LOOK UP! - to keep a watch out for predators in the sky. This rescue Rooster, who had spent all his life (till recently) penned up, had NO idea what an Eagle was!!!

Glenda Cooen

An interview with Susan Jones, OBOD Mentor Co-ordinator

I was curious to know about OBOD tutors and what they do. Who better to ask than Susan Jones who, for 16 years, has been OBOD's Tutor Co-ordinator, looking after a team of 50 Tutors worldwide and a worldwide web of Druidry.

Please share with the readers of Serpentstar a little about your spiritual upbringing, and how you came to be Tutor Co-ordinator for OBOD?

In short hops, I'd say I was a congenital Druid. I inherited it in all but name from my father, for whom nature was his greatest inspiration. Many years ago on a retreat I picked up a book about nature spirituality that seemed pale and simplistic compared to the rich, juicy and yet simple experience that I knew was possible. I angrily threw the book across the room.

Not long afterwards, in a vegetarian cafe I found Philip's book 'Elements of the Druid Tradition' – which I didn't put down until the last page. I joined OBOD, joined the Dobunni Grove, became a mentor and in 2000 became Mentor Co-ordinator. From a corner of England, I have the pleasure of linking members one-to-one with more experienced members across countries, continents, and oceans.

Errrm, I say Tutor, you say Mentor...?

Feel free to use either or neither! For almost 20 years it was 'Tutor'. A while ago I consulted with mentors and OBOD members and asked them which they'd prefer. The members preferred 'tutor', the mentors preferred 'mentor'. So we now use either, whichever people prefer. Neither word is quite accurate and if we could find a better term we'd use it.

Are you busy....?

Every year about 10,000 letters and emails criss-cross the globe between mentors and members. Yes, it is busy, but nicely so and it grows but just steadily, which seems healthy. In 2003 I came over for the OBOD Australian Gathering near Adelaide. It was the days before wi-fi and for three weeks I tried to keep up with correspondence from variety of internet points. One, a concrete open shed with black swans swimming past, was especially scenic. I realised that there was too much for one person to do and so a second joined me. This month the team expands to three, with Steve Hounscome in Dorset and Mike Williams in Wales.



Steve Hounscome



Mike Williams

So who are the mentors?

They are an amazing team of Druids. Some work in industry, some in the public sector, some in their own businesses, some are retired. Many are artists, musicians and writers. They live in many different habitats from the heart of major cities to remote islands. Some run groves, some are solitary. The youngest is in their 30s, the eldest in their 70s. About half are female and half male. OBOD mentors give their time freely and they provide a unique and valuable service.

What do OBOD mentors do?

They have two main roles. One is to accompany members in the Bardic, Ovate and Druid grades. The other is to act on behalf of the Order in taking care of grade transitions. The aim is to help members develop themselves spiritually and psychologically through the OBOD course – with the emphasis on the word ‘themselves’. Mentoring is part of a system of support for OBOD members at every stage of their journey. There’s also online discussion forums, a helpdesk for Bards, a massive website, Damh’s Druidcast podcasts, a Facebook page and Facebook groups, groves and seedgroups for those who can get to them, gatherings, Stephanie, Annie, and Damh on hand at the OBOD Office in Sussex, Touchstone and last but not least, your very impressive Serpentstar.

What is the value of mentoring to OBOD members?

A fundamental aspect of our human nature is to want to be understood and to understand. Talking about spiritual experiences is little practiced in everyday conversation, yet OBOD mentors do it all the time, with deep interest and experience. I believe there is a value in these conversations. Making an effort to communicate spiritual experiences makes us understood to someone else, and partly - perhaps - to ourselves.

Is it more of a challenge to be a Druid in Australia or New Zealand than in Britain?

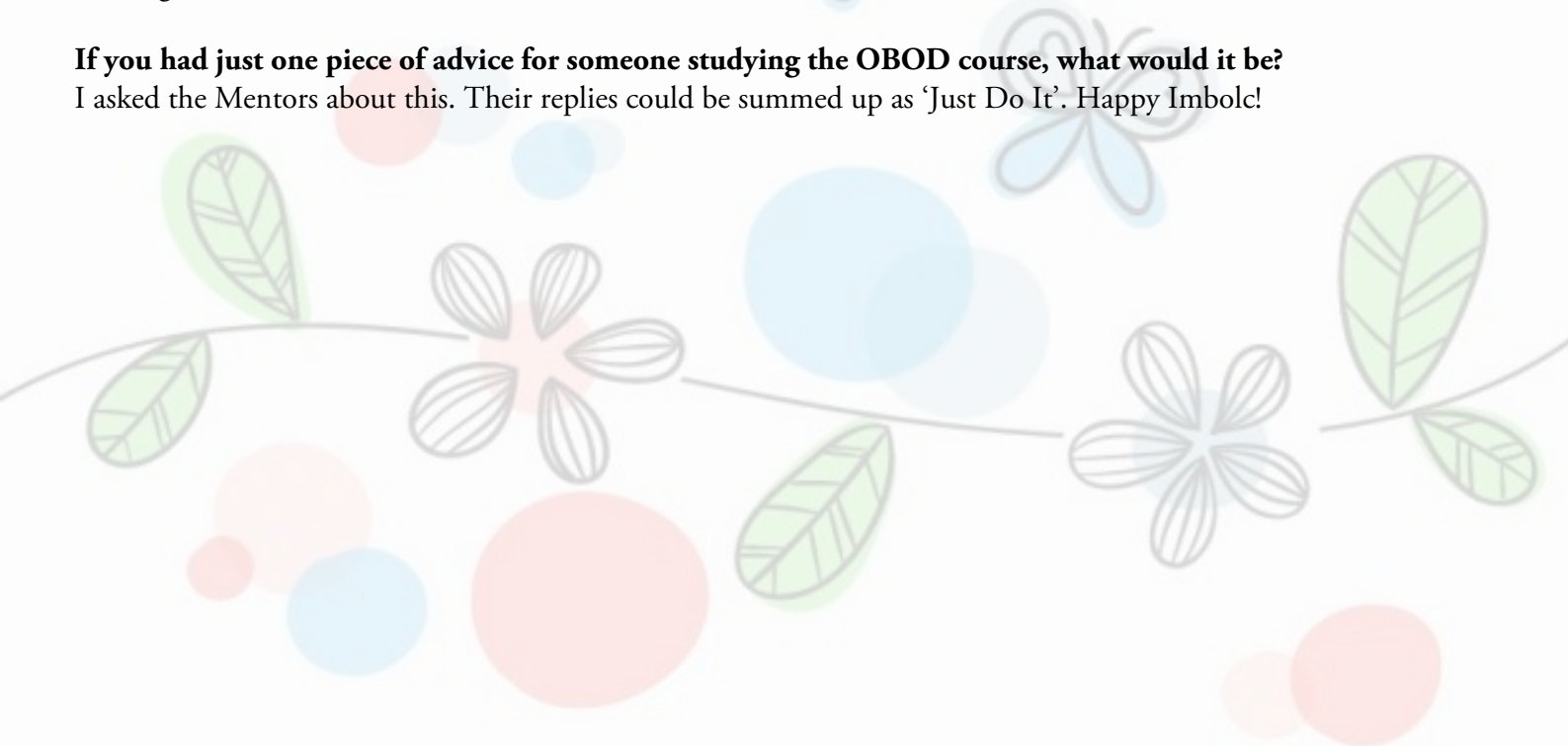
In some ways yes, and in others, no. Apart from the obvious differences of climate, animals and plants, seasons and stars, a very special factor stands out. And that is an extraordinary awareness of the spirit of the land. This was made obvious to me on an unforgettable walk around the mallee with Wyverne (who wrote an article about her beloved mallee in the previous edition of Serpentstar). I believe the spirit sings loudest where it has been singing the longest.

How could I get to be a mentor?

All members are considered at the end of their Druid grade. The steps to become an OBOD course mentor begin following with consultation, starting with each member’s own mentors. Factors considered include where we have ‘vacancies’ and how many other people are under consideration, for there are always more people wanting to be Mentors than there are vacancies. Recommendations go to Philip for his agreement. I then invite potential new mentors to begin training, at the end of which we should both have a better idea if OBOD mentoring is for them. So for anyone interested in becoming a mentor, wait until you are in Druid grade and mention your interest to your Druid grade mentor.

If you had just one piece of advice for someone studying the OBOD course, what would it be?

I asked the Mentors about this. Their replies could be summed up as ‘Just Do It’. Happy Imbolc!



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

2016 Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly by Sandra (Macadamia Grove, Queensland/Northern NSW)

Why do I love Assemblies so much?

Is it meeting old friends that I rarely see due to the tyranny of distance?

Is it meeting new people and making new connections?

Or is it for a variety of other reasons, such as participating in rituals or gleaned new knowledge?

Perhaps it is all three!

Assemblies provide us with that 'time out of time' where we can consciously connect with our Druidic tradition, in the company of others who follow that same tradition. In the Southern Hemisphere, getting together with other Druid-folk is quite a rare thing due to the larger number of gatherings for witches and other pagan people, as well as because many of us can be quite solitary in our practices.

It's lovely to see a large number of OBODies registering for their first Assembly this year. I still remember attending my first Assembly, back in 1997. This was also the first Australian Assembly. It was terrifying at first, as I didn't know what to expect and didn't know anyone else who was attending. The Assembly was a sensory overload of new faces, experiences, laughter, challenges and new ways of thinking. Afterwards, on my long drive back to Queensland, I didn't travel alone. With me travelled many marvellous memories that I still cherish today.

I look forward to sharing unique and special experiences with all who are able to attend this year. A draft program will be available soon, mapping out the workshops, initiations, rituals and other events that we have planned.

In the meantime, I'd like to gently remind all who are considering attending this year that ***all costs must be paid in full by 12 September***. More information is provided in the flyer on the previous page.



The second Australian Assembly, 1998

THE GREEN ALBUM

Tuatha Dea and Nightsong Studios Presents:

THE GREEN ALBUM is a collaborative concept album featuring Tuatha Dea, Wendy Elizabeth Rule, SJ Tucker, Sharon Knight, Winter Jp Sichelschmidt, Celia Farran, Bekah Kelso, Ginger Doss, Damh The Bard, Kellianna Girouard, Spiral Dance, Spiral Rhythm, Murphey's Midnight Rounders, Brian Henke and Mama Gina LaMonte. It's a musical plan of action. An Independent musical compilation created by a consortium of like minded Muses, Musicians and Songbirds from all over uniting as a global Tribe to raise awareness, celebrate and give something back to Mother Earth! All these amazing artists will be offering one gift of song, either NEW or never before released specifically for this Album, and themed toward the universal concept of 'Green'! All of the Artists have banded together, and partial proceeds from every album sold by the collaborators will be donated to Rainforest Trust, a Global Green Charity doing amazing work around the world!

THE GREEN ALBUM and all the artists on this compilation project are proud and honored to announce our association and partnership with this wonderful organisation. 25% of all (That's ALL 14 artists) sales proceeds from this project will be donated to Rainforest Trust! This amazing group so profoundly echoes the sentiments of this project, and has been putting them into action for 27 years. PLEASE spread the word and get involved!

<http://www.thegreenalbum.net/about.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/greenalbum/?ref=hl>

Direct downloads available from <http://www.thegreenalbum.net/home.html>

or you can buy a physical album via

http://www.spiraldance.com.au/?CDs_and_Downloads___Ordering_Spiral_Dance_CDs



RAINFOREST TRUST® *Hero*

The Green Album

donated a gift to protect

**1,817 Acres of Balanga Forest Reserve
in the Congo**

This gift assists Rainforest Trust and our local Congolese partner to establish Balanga Forest Reserve, safeguarding crucial habitat and providing a future safe from poachers for the Congo's magnificent and threatened wildlife, including the African Forest Elephant, Okapi, and Bonobo.

Issued June 20, 2016

*Thank you for your commitment to biodiversity.
Together we are saving rainforest acres, forever!*



RAINFOREST TRUST®

Dr. Paul Salaman
Chief Executive Officer

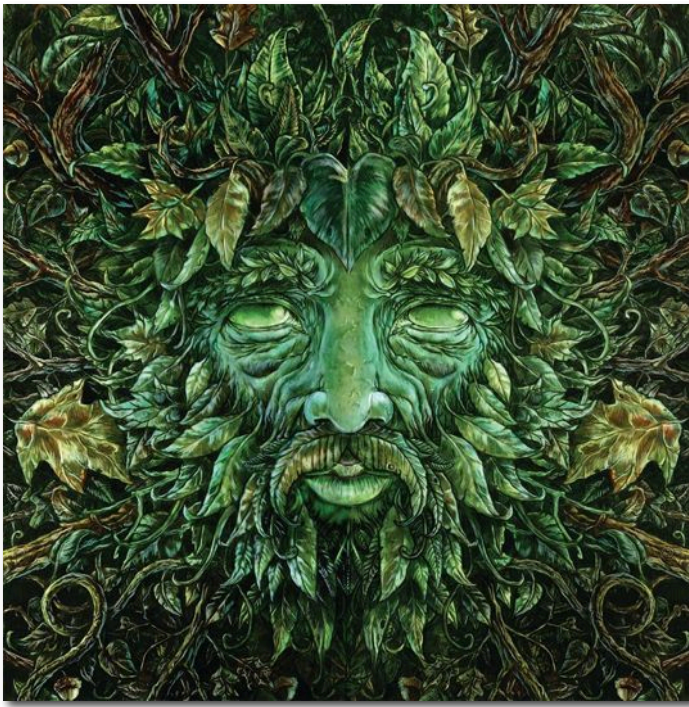


Okapi

TUATHA DEA	WINTER S
WENDY RULE	CELIA FARRAN
SJ TUCKER	BRIAN HENKE
BEKAH KELSO	MAMA GINA
GINGER DOSS	MURPH'S
KELLIANNA	MIDNIGHT
DAVE THE BARD	ROUNDERS
SPIRAL DANCE	SPIRAL RHYTHM
SHARON KNIGHT/	



© T12/okapi



The Green Album opens with the words "It is your gift to walk the earth." And so it is, and beautifully expressed by the 14 diverse acts who've contributed a track to the compilation. Did I say diverse? Modern work to dance to, classic simple folk and lush folk rock, chants and meditations, devotionals with magical musicianship, and even little spots of deceptively cute-but-cutting lyrics.

The download copy is great for those who live minimally, while the hard copy for me came with the joyful gasp of opening the package and seeing the beautiful green artwork pop out.

Some performers are new to me, others are old favourites, but essentially if you like the music played on Druidcast you'll find heaps on here to make you think and hum. Some tracks you might even fancy covering at your next local Eisteddfod, and then you can encourage everyone to contribute to the Rainforest Trust by buying the album that it's from!

Review by Mandy Gibson



Imbolc

*When the heat of the Sun starts to warm us again
And the hours of sunlight are growing each day
The Sun has started its journey back to the South
The Wattles are in bloom, it's the festival of Flowers*

*As the ground starts to thaw, young shoots reach for the Sun
The Child of Light, now an infant, looks with Love at his mum
Brigid the child bride brings forth fertility and desire
That the Lord of Light will return and all will bask in his Fire*

*This is Imbolc, a time of hope and preparation
Where we celebrate the beauty and wonder of creation
On this day let us Feast and rejoice at the return
Of the growing Child of Light, for this we now yearn*

*The lambing has begun, the Ewe's milk is such a blessing
To help the community through the last of winters depression
The magpies have begun to collect grass, bark and sticks
And started to make nests ready for their new born chicks*

*Though the land still lies in darkness, new hope starts to show
The infant Lord of Light shows his power as the light starts to grow
Little by little the blessed Earth gifts us with her first flowers
It won't be long now till the light overcomes the dark hours*

*So let's open ourselves to inspiration and planning
And ready our Yule blessed seeds for the spring planting
Prepare for the future as the hard work's about to begin
Get ready for new beginnings with a thorough spring clean*

Chris Parker

Awen & the Bardic Musician

by Kacey Stephensen

Working With Awen as a Bardic Musician

*The Awen I sing,
From the deep I bring it,
A river while it overflows,
I know its extent;
I know when it disappears;
I know when it fills;
I know when it overflows;
I know when it shrinks;
I know what base there is beneath the sea.*

(A translation from 'The Hostile Confederacy' by Taliesin)

This segment from a very long poem, written possibly by a bard in the middle ages who had the same name as the mythical Taliesin, is a very powerful piece of work! It is very useful to use in ritual just before chanting Awen or when creating music, poetry or going on a shamanic journey. As it states in the poem: *From the depths I bring it*, and also: *I know what base there is beneath the sea* - we can interpret the wisdom of the underworld, the unconscious, the other world and the depths of things; the seeing and perceiving of the depths of our souls.

In this article I am putting the emphasis on the first part of the poem, when Taliesin announces: *The Awen I sing*. I am a musician, a Celtic Folk singer/songwriter and it is my 'main thing' if you like, that I work with; music I mean, after all it is my job! It is the stream of Bardism that I deeply resonate with, partly I would say because music is in the family and I was brought up surrounded by all kinds of music. Though, I was the first to be into Celtic music and world folk music!

When I think of a musical bard, I think of two images: one being of an ancient musical Celtic bard with his or her Claspagh (an Irish harp) or Welsh lute singing ancient stories to his tribe around a hearth fire. Or I imagine the medieval bards who recited the lineages of their kings in the castles of Wales and Scotland, or the Filli's and Olamhs of Ireland. Then there is the modern image: he or she embodies the creative expression of this world here and now, and yet is inspired and ignited in passion and creativity by the memories and stories of the ancient past, the spirit of our ancestors and the spirit of the land.

I usually see this image as a person who probably, like me, plays guitar! And probably harp or mandolin or some other instrument that is rather alternative to the normal. I think of Damh the Bard and Robin Williamson, and many others. The thing that is interesting to notice about being a Bard (as many of you would have found), especially if the Awen you are channelling is through the Arts, is that the way a bard does something in music or poetry or painting is often different qualitatively to how the same person would in a 'secular' way.

It's an intuitive thing, because I think most of us would agree - our Bardic creativity comes from that deep place within and the inspiration of the land, the spirits of nature and the gods and goddess that we may work with. Maybe the difference is simply that we relate to our deep spiritual essence in a 'Celtic spiritual' way. I think, essentially though, inspiration is *inspiration* - any poets who don't define themselves as bards, or even know what a bard is, are still tapping into the same perennial spirit, just in a different form and a different way. I think, for my personal path, the path of the bard has helped me to form and shape my musical and poetic self and bring it more into form in a druidic and pagan context, fundamentally transforming me as a person. It has opened me up more deeply to the Awen within nature and the spirit of place, of trees and of all natural systems that embody spirit and magic; with the quality to foster poetry within the bardic heart.

Creating Song with Bardic Techniques

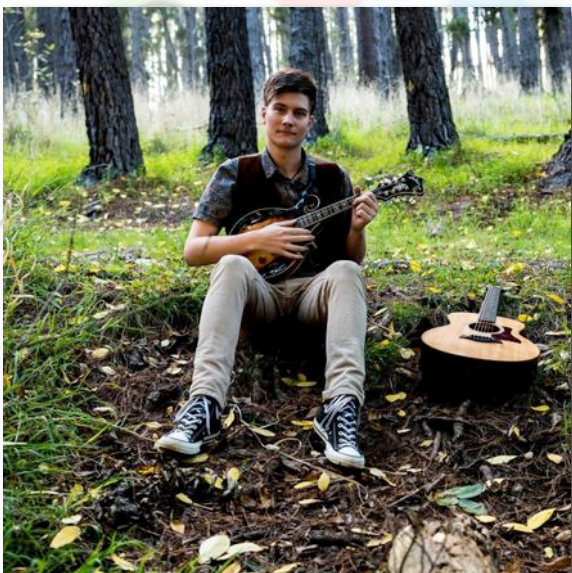
Often when creating song and writing lyrics for a song I will start off with a riff I have created on the guitar or mandolin and just play that riff over and over again, really feeling the quality and feelings it brings up. I take notice of these feelings and after a while might start singing along to it, and get the feel of the vocal line. After that, putting pen to paper, lyrics are born. A song is a living being that evolves and grows from the seed that planted it; the first moment when plectrum hits the musical chord, and is fostered even before then in the womb of complete possibility.

Often when I'm out in nature meditating, or after ritual, I will be filled with inspiration and insight and often this manifests as a song and other times as a poem. Often while walking in the woods, or by a river sitting quietly, I will open my eyes after a while and see the magic of creativity in the leaves of the trees and in the green grass; a poem will straight away start to flow through me and I have to release the words! So I say out loud this poetic feeling and a poem or song comes out as a gift to the beauty of the moment, to the spirit of the land.

Other times I take a more ritualised approach, and might do a number of things to find the inspiration and channel it into a song. I often play a riff I've come up with, and to find the tune and lyrics for the song I will become more deeply aware of the spirit of the guitar and the energy of the strings. I'll chant Awen over and over again with the song that is forming, and it helps to bring into awareness the song through feeling and intuition.

A few times I've practiced the bardic meditation, where you put a stone on your belly and lie in the dark to gain poetic inspiration and insight. I find usually with this one, because it's done in the darkness, the inspiration comes when you relight the candle - when the seed is germinated in the darkness. Inspiration comes to the awareness once the spark of inspiration is received, after lying for ages in the dark with a stone on your belly! It's a much more intense and serious way of gaining insight or vision into your self, but usually I find it isn't the best way for songwriting... its more for deep shamanic transformation. Still, you could try it for poetic insight into your soul which you could then write as a song or poem. Try this technique, however, very mindfully and make sure you are in a stable state of mind. Lots of things can arise at times from the depths of your mind when you lie for ages meditating in the darkness. It requires grounding and concentration and you might be faced with buried feelings, emotions or fears that you need to work through. This in itself is a mode of inspiration - it can be the start of healing, to recognise these feelings and transform them or transmute them with the relighting of the flame in the darkness of your unconscious. The light of renewal and healing and hope is ignited, and you are awakened to a bright new day with reinvigorated strength to work through your pain.

Again, though, be mindful and be discerning with your vision quests and keep your rational mind alert to keep you grounded and observant of your own mind. Again though, everything in balance - other times this technique is very light on the mind and can be very soothing, like sleeping in a nurturing cave or the womb of the goddess herself, depending on how you approach it from the get go! But sometimes we need to delve deep into our souls, and heal the wounds or confront things. Always remember to relight the flame of inspiration after resting - it brings you back to reality and integrates the visions or realisations into your conscious awareness, into the light of day so that you can sort the wheat from the chaff.



Usually, when it comes to getting the flow of Awen moving, it just comes naturally when it's meant to. Sometimes, though, I have the calling from spirit to work on Awen in a more elaborate way, and bring it up from the depths in ritual or deep meditation.

Stay tuned for Part 2 in the Beltane edition!

Awen (jii) One day only dust

What am I to you?

A falling leaf, from afar away branch, off some ancient tree?

When you look upon my face, what do you see?

The stains of time, a hidden mind... the harder you look, the less you will find

When my breath leaves this world, what then will I be?

Shall I rot in the ground, or join the vast eternal infinity?

What is I? Woe, who is me?

Is that eye, with your iiii's, before i which you see?

Me? Who is he? Only flesh do they see...

A mind behind closed doors, a presence beneath the floor boards...

Awen with the memory our sacred footfalls; They creak and they groan

A ripple upon the Rivers of Avalon...Awen... I am an ancient stone thrown

A fleeting consciousness

Awenjii I am the whisper in the wind, I am the silence in your soul

Awenjii I am the howl of the wolf, I am the caw of the crow

Awenjii I am the mother that births, and the babe that is born

Awenjii I am the lover that's held, and the lover scorned

Alas by the very builders of time this world of men has been warned

Awenjii You can see me, but only when blind

If you search for me, then no one will you find

If you utter my name, I cease to be



I am nothing

I am no one

I am one, I am all

But I am, am I not a word?

Not utter a word

Nor whimper, nor laugh or nor cry

I live, & I die

I die, & I live

But never do I end

I am you, you are I, we are them, they are us.

Who?

One day...

Only dust....

Awen (jii)

One breath, rich Earth Neath thine feet.

Awen (jii)

One breath, soft Sky bove' thine heads.

Awen (jii)

One breath, deep Seas surround us.

What are we?

One day...

But dust in the winds of time

One day...

Only timeless time and the echo of ancient voices lost in the vastness of the halls of endless eternity

A fading memory of ages gone by, bygone times...

One day...

Only dust...

One day...

Only dust...

One day, but whispers on a whimsical wind.

One day...

Only dust.

Rhodry James Williams Yates

Entering Wilderness

by vyvyan ogma wyverne

As pagans, by now we know the importance of connecting to the land and most of us have made some conscious attempt to do so. Out of my decades-long immersion in remote, sparsely-populated mallee wilderness here are some of my thoughts on how to connect with nature in a magical way.

Whether your reasons are personal, spiritual or animistic; or to do with yourself, the biome or the planet; or whether you seek mental, emotional or magical contact, it begins with the self - the ego. Nature experiences can be quite awesome, a feast for the senses: so much to take in, so stimulating to our senses and exciting to our minds. It makes sense to prepare for the encounter bodily, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Your body will need plenty of fresh water and quick energy from healthy sources. Your mind should resolve all troublesome quarrels it might be having or put them quietly aside, your soul should be respected and given due honour and allowed to bring forth its best poetry, be it verbal, sensual or just feelingful, and your spirituality calmed and harmonised.

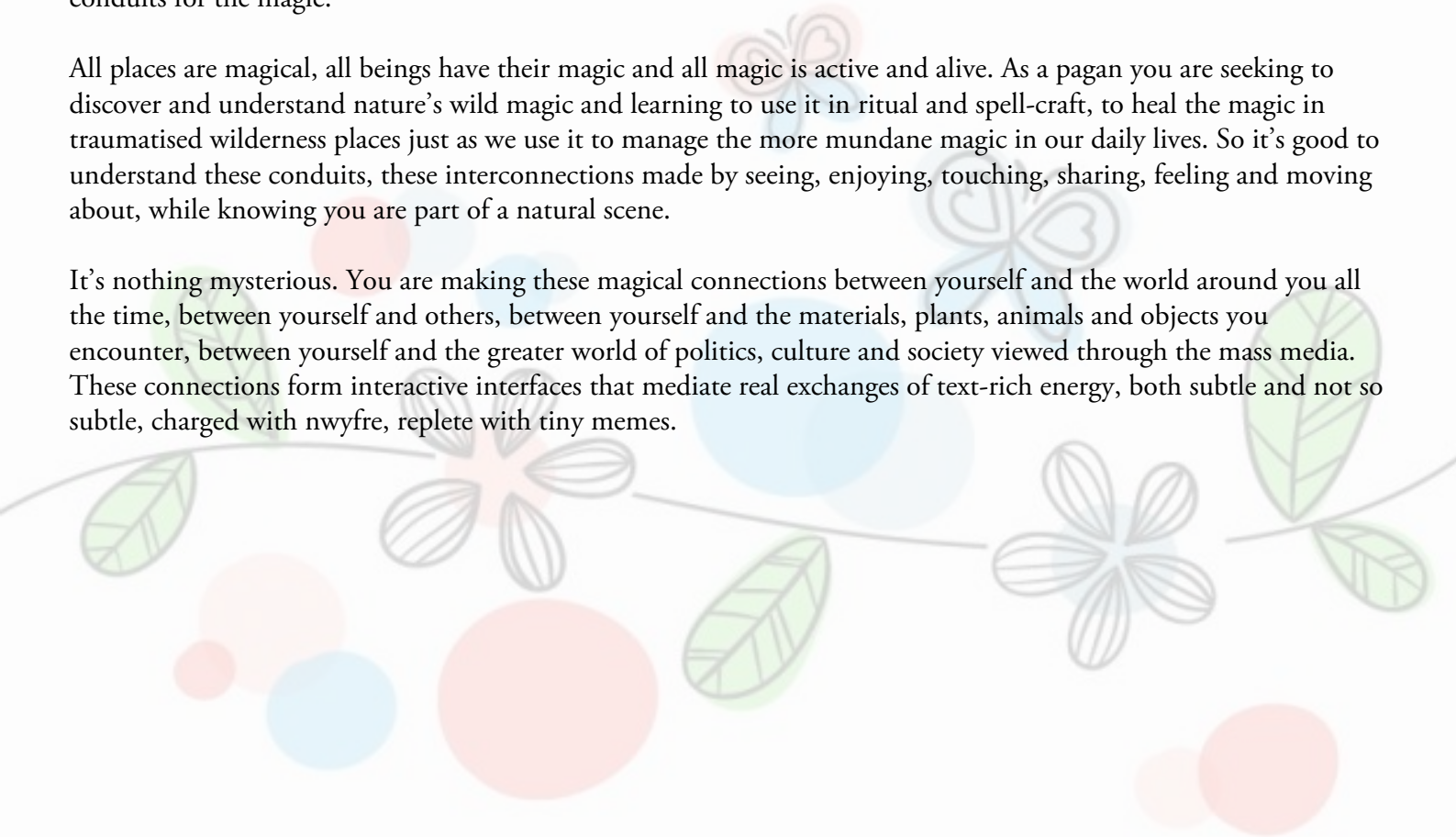
It's sometimes worth doing a small ritual incorporating the light-body exercise or similar. At this time you might find time to enchant any wand, staff, crystals, rune-stones or other charms; or robes or cloaks or hats you might be planning on wearing; flutes, drums, or fiddles, harps or harmonicas. This would be a harmonising rite, and would benefit from having the Schumann resonance played in the background.

Find quiet time to gather your thoughts and feelings about the trip, consider your expectations and any qualms you might have, and let them all have their place. They will all affect the way you respond to what you experience, and affect the magic of your own radiance as it prepares to mingle with the radiances of the natural landscape as you enter it.

Imagine the moment of entry, when birds notice you, when you share space with trees or dip a hand into water. Pictures and information of all kinds will help this meditation. Knowing what species live there, some history of the place's human inhabitants, some geological details can provide further points of contact. All of these become conduits for the magic.

All places are magical, all beings have their magic and all magic is active and alive. As a pagan you are seeking to discover and understand nature's wild magic and learning to use it in ritual and spell-craft, to heal the magic in traumatised wilderness places just as we use it to manage the more mundane magic in our daily lives. So it's good to understand these conduits, these interconnections made by seeing, enjoying, touching, sharing, feeling and moving about, while knowing you are part of a natural scene.

It's nothing mysterious. You are making these magical connections between yourself and the world around you all the time, between yourself and others, between yourself and the materials, plants, animals and objects you encounter, between yourself and the greater world of politics, culture and society viewed through the mass media. These connections form interactive interfaces that mediate real exchanges of text-rich energy, both subtle and not so subtle, charged with nwyfre, replete with tiny memes.



You're spreading happiness, sorrow, fear, ideas, mannerisms, fashion trends and all kinds of information and taking in your share of what others are sharing - participating in the great waves of change, the magical transformations that drive the evolution of our planet and all her species. Contact points may be disharmonious – you learn not to 'poke the bear', and the ovate will benefit from trusty guides and guardians of the wilderness places they visit or move into.

These will filter out vandals and they'll manage and protect beginners, and as you learn respectfulness and responsibility they will help you to build viable interfaces that will gradually activate your subtle sensitivities, deeply enhancing the way that magic works through you. If you ask it, they may even assist you in opening your psychic eyes. If you go with good intentions you will usually find a welcome.

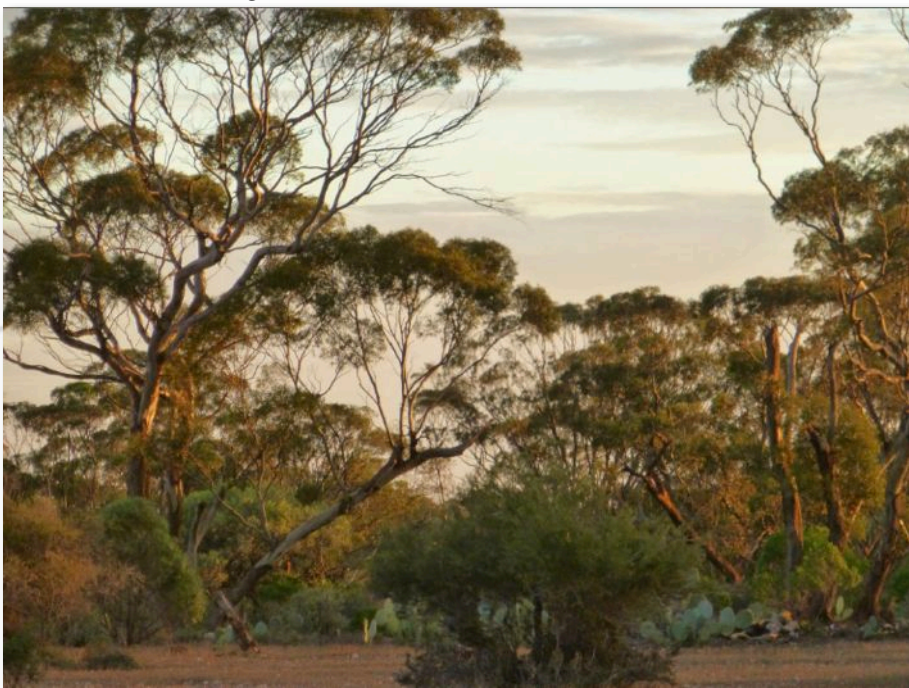
All this is very subtle, and like trails of tenuous gossamer can be easily spoiled. Just as our neurology works best when our cells are clear and healthy, so we need clear, healthy senses; calm, orderly minds; realistic information; lively imaginations; optimistic, happy feelings and good, honest intentions. That's when we do our best magic, both consciously in ritual and sublimely in our everyday lives.

Our body perfumes mingle with the pheromones of plants, the exhaust of traffic and industry, and the breezy breaths of deserts and oceans. Learning to manage those interfaces is what the ovates' most rewarding task would seem to me to be. You may like to consider the amount of energy and attention you give the place before you get there – energy replete with your attitudes, feelings and magic impacting remotely in myriad tiny ways on the whole community of entities - while you are opening your mind to what you can glean of the energy of the information you have about the place.

Depending on how deeply you intend to connect – from a pleasant afternoon walk in a park to a months-long nature retreat in unspoiled wilderness; from a few minutes to a life-time; from a few photos through a café window to a detailed study of the botany; you can craft your interfaces with nature and her many lively beings with ritual, spontaneous acts of magic and skillful management of the enchantment of the visit.

Myth, mystery, history and fantasy, poetry and song, a listening meditation, a sense of the numinous, sensitivity to the varying energies of the biome, an open mind, a love of nature and a philosophy with a firm basis in reality are all valuable ingredients in the mixture. Bring these with you and you can expect to find the way to harmonious, easy, relaxed communion made smooth for you by the fore-knowledge you will have of each other, your piece of wilderness and you.

Of course, you can just grab your hat and go, plunge into the wilderness experience and out again to ruminate upon at your leisure, and your magic just as effective. That may be right for you. In magic, it's a matter of what you feel drawn to. If it feels good, do it.



This place is full of sentient, intelligent beings, all responding to you!

Artisan Work and Poetry by Jez Runnalls

*'Greet the dawn and the day it brings
if greeted well your heart will sing,
six points are there for you to find
heart, soul and nature are entwined,
the seventh point you'll also find
but only when the six combine'.*



The Motivation for the 'Enter The Oak' was shamanic with a doorway into the tree of life, under-world and upper-world represented as an Oak with all its wisdom and strength. There is also a concave mirror behind the piece which lets your eye reflect out of proportion through the opening when you look into the doorway. I use it as a meditation portal to journey to the otherworld and an anchor of vibrational presence of the Oak in my druid retreat.



The motivation for the 'Moondragon' piece was a fiery night around my large cauldron, that I light on various festivals, looking at the moon rising above Fraser Island and showing a silver runway across the sea and really understanding-internalising-feeling the connectivity between earth and moon, hence Dragon combined with the Moon.



The Dragon fire pit was simply linking Dragons and fire as I call my forge 'Dragon's Breath Forge'.

*Crusts and dripping
mead and meat,
earthen floors
beneath our feet.*

*Hag stones watch
and cloodies hang
for Faerie folk
and songs they sang.*

*Grow secret herbs
to cast our spells,
with water from
enchanted wells.*

*They sang of love
for like and land
observe this well
where ere you stand.*

*Through ancient lore
in verse and song
knowledge we keep
our hearts beat strong.*

Tips for Participating in OBOD Rituals

by Sandra (Macadamia Grove, Queensland/Northern NSW)

Perhaps you've never participated in a ritual before, or you plan to attend this year's Assembly and feel a bit uncertain about what happens in a shared group ritual. Here's some tips and suggestions to help you prepare. These are quite generic, as ritual practices can vary from group to group, but hopefully you will find them helpful.

What shall I wear?

This is often the first thing that crosses the mind of many people. I suggest wearing something comfortable and non-restrictive, that you feel is appropriate for the ritual. Some people prefer to wear colours pertinent to their OBOD Grade level; blue for Bards, green for Ovates, white for Druid Grade; while others prefer to mix it up a bit.

Wearing a purpose-made robe certainly isn't compulsory, though it is my personal choice to wear one in ritual. I also liked the symbolism of wearing coloured tabards (for the grades) over my standard white robe, and the 'getting down to work' feeling I get when I do it. Usually, in a public setting I will put my (quite baggy) robe on over the top of the 'street-clothing' I'm already wearing, unless it's really hot weather and then I'll remove any under layers.



Photo: Mandy Gibson

Sole matters! While it's lovely soaking up the feeling of the earth through your bare feet, walking on sharp-stoned ground isn't so fun. I suggest wearing appropriate foot wear depending on the terrain - none for soft grass, or sandals or boots for rough or uncertain ground. Sandshoes (joggers or trainers) are very practical, though aesthetically don't always 'vibe' well with the popular image of druid accoutrements. But once again, comfort and practicality should be your key considerations.

A small bag, hung off a belt or worn with a long strap across your chest, may come in handy for ritual notes, drinking water, car keys, mobile phone, small drum and magical equipment. Certainly not compulsory, but if you do wish to wear a bag in ritual I suggest that it provides you with easy movement so you don't need to grab it at inopportune times to stop it falling off!

What to bring?

If someone is hosting a ritual and you are attending for the first time, ask them what they would like you to bring. Bringing a plate of food to share afterwards is usual practice, or perhaps some mead if appropriate. I also recommend bringing your own drinking water... although we've had some recent summer rituals where someone has brought along an esky full of chilled water and mead, this isn't always the case!

Getting orientated...

Prior to a ritual, it's handy to ascertain which direction the group will move in around the circle - whether clockwise or anti-clockwise - as well as which elemental/animal/plant correspondences are ascribed to each direction. These can alter quite a lot between different groups and locations. There's no right or wrong way; it's a case of respecting what occurs during the ritual, even if it may feel slightly peculiar to your thinking.

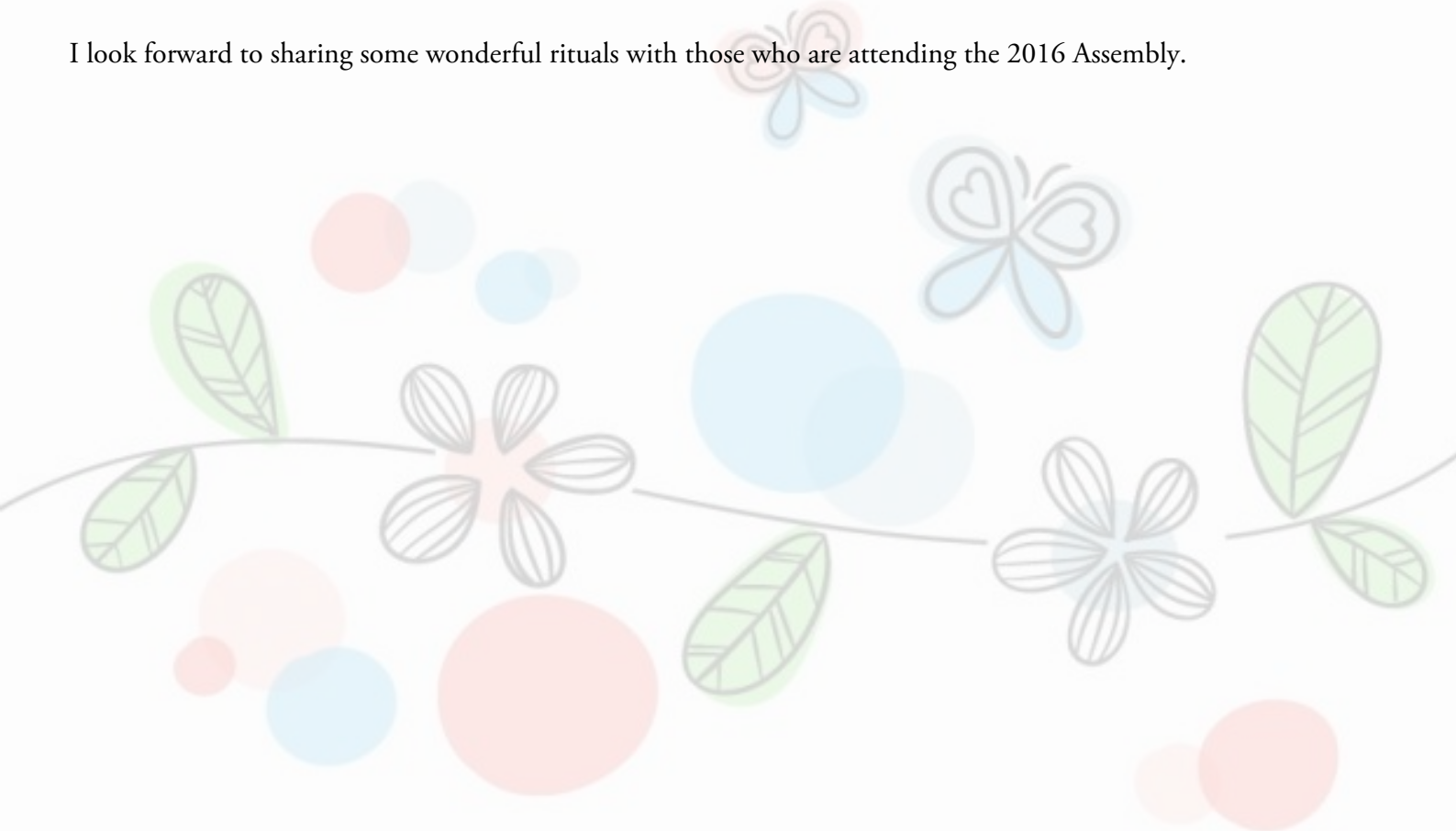
During the ritual

- Mobile phone etiquette: If possible, leave mobile phones turned off, and outside of the area the ritual is being performed. In my opinion, the time for using a mobile phone to take pictures is before the ritual, or afterwards – NEVER during a ritual. NEVER. Also if you are taking pictures of people you don't know, please ask them first – not everyone appreciates their image being circulated via social media.
- Where to stand and sit: while this varies from group to group, but in general don't stand in front of the directional points (North, South, East, West) unless you are the person who is welcoming/acknowledging that direction. Unless requested otherwise, space yourself evenly around the circle circumference.
- If you have severe physical limitations and are worried about standing for extended periods, prior to the ritual have a chat to the host person/people regarding other options, such as a strategically placed chair or block of wood.
- Eyes up: usually people participating in rituals read their lines from pre-printed pages. I strongly recommend that people LOOK UP from the pages as much as possible, until it is your turn to speak. Otherwise it's too easy to spend most of the time staring at text instead of enjoying what's going on. If you have a speaking part, and are worried about missing your place, try and remember who is talking immediately before you as a prompt to check the script. The worst that can happen is that everyone else in the group will turn to look at you if you forget when it's your turn to talk... and that's OK!
- If possible, it's great to learn 'off by heart' the shared lines in a group ritual, such as the Druid's Prayer.
- The other main suggestion is to not indulge in idle chit chat during the key parts of a shared ritual. Although people rarely do this, it can be very off-putting when it occurs. If you need to ask a question about what's going on, ask the person closest to you in a very quiet voice. Generally you will pick up quite quickly what's going on, simply by following the actions of others in the ritual.
- Feeling unwell or wanting to leave the ritual: If you feel dizzy or faint or distressed in a ritual, let one of the hosts know. They may likely sit you down in a quiet place, either inside or outside the ritual area until you feel better. I don't suggest just walking away by yourself during a ritual in progress. Let someone know so they can provide support.

After the ritual

Often people share a hug, and then chat about the ritual while sharing food and drink. It's a social and relaxed time. If you are feeling unfocused, vague, dizzy or unwell, make sure you have something to eat and water to drink. If this doesn't work, try the time honoured method of hugging a tree, but if that isn't helping either, have a chat with the hosts. By its very nature, shared ritual causes changes in our psyche and can sometimes have quite a big impact on us, so sometimes it's important to chat to other people about what you are experiencing.

I look forward to sharing some wonderful rituals with those who are attending the 2016 Assembly.



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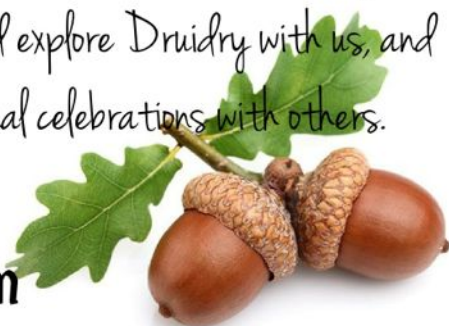


DREAMING TREE GROVE

perth - western australia

We are a small independant Grove located in Perth - Western Australia, whose membership includes members and students of OBOD & 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





Welcome to the YVONNEDRUID on-line store

Here you will find items that will enhance your Druid journey, as well as 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.

I source products from as many places as possible to make your quest, in the Southern Hemisphere especially, an easier journey.

I put this store together to try and make it a one place stop for our Druidic requirements, so I hope this will help you and check regularly as I will be adding to it all the time with more products as I source them.

Join the mailing group and receive a monthly short newsletter with updates of happenings.

www.YVONNEDRUID.com
sales@yvonnedruid.com

Bright Blessings to all....Yvonne

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



Like the look of SerpentStar? Looking for someone to create your marketing materials or newsletter?

Your faithful Editor is available for paid work in layout, editing and proofreading of anything from flyers to course materials, and even whole books. I am not a graphic designer, so cannot do logos or other artwork. What I do have is professional experience in editing and proofreading of fiction and non-fiction books, information brochures and web content. I also do layout work for flyers, newsletters and banners.

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*Celebrancy Services available in Melbourne
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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.

Based in Tamborine, QLD but willing to negotiate travel. If you'd like to know more please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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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?**

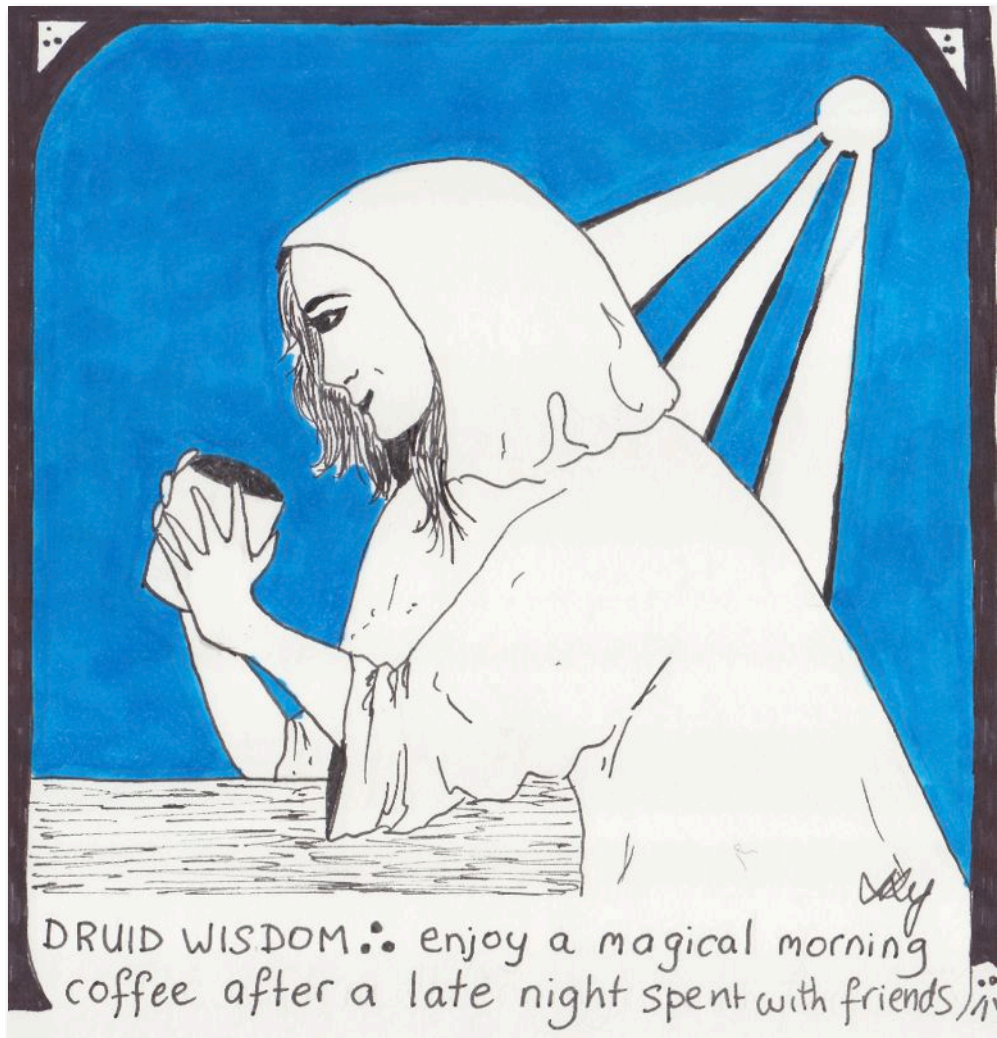
Experienced WWOOF host, and OBODie Ngatina, and her family, would like to invite members seeking a time of retreat to consider their home in the Northern Flinders Ranges (SA).

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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

Although we would think of **Imbolc** as being in the midst of Winter, it represents in fact the first of a trio of Spring celebrations, since it is the time of the first appearance of the snowdrop, and of the melting of the snows and the clearing of the debris of Winter. It is a time when we sense the first glimmer of Spring, and when the lambs are born. In the Druid tradition it is a gentle, beautiful festival in which the Mother Goddess is honoured with eight candles rising out of the water at the centre of the ceremonial circle.

The Goddess that ruled Samhuinn was the Cailleach, the Grey Hag, the Mountain Mother, the Dark Woman of Knowledge. But by Imbolc the Goddess has become Brigid, the Goddess of poets, healers and midwives. And so we often use Imbolc as a time for an Eisteddfod dedicated to poetry and song praising the Goddess in her many forms.

Text sourced from Druidry.org

**The deadline for contributing to the Beltane issue of SerpentStar is 26 October.
The Beltane 2016 issue will be released on October 31.**