

SERPENTSTAR

Newsletter for members of The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere



luchnasadh edition

About **SERPENTSTAR**

SERPENTSTAR comes out four times a year at each of the Fire Festivals, Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh and Samhuinn.

Opinions expressed in **SERPENTSTAR** are contributors' own and not necessarily opinions of the editor or of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids.

Deadline for next issue: 20 April 2011

Subscriptions:

Online - Free as a .pdf from www.serpentstar.wordpress.com

Paper Subscriptions - Australia - AU\$10, New Zealand & Pacific AU\$12.50, AU\$15 Rest of world

Via Bank Deposit: Westpac Bank, Salt Productions, BSB: 032016 Acct: 297976

Via Paypal: to ladya.serpentstar@gmail.com

Please email: ladya.serpentstar@gmail.com to advise if you have made a payment, including your postal address.

www.serpentstar.wordpress.com

You can follow us on Tumblr, and submit photos, stories, music, links and we can share them with everyone straight away rather than waiting for the next edition

<http://serpentstar.tumblr.com> Password: aw3n

Have you contributed to **SERPENTSTAR** yet?

We'd love to hear from you!

Contributions are eagerly sought for future editions. Whether you like to create masterpieces in the Kitchen, with paper and pen, a camera, or you've read a relevant news article or some links of interest. Maybe you've created your own Sudoku, or you've written a piece on Druidry, we can use it all.

Please email ladya.serpentstar@gmail.com

All images used in Serpentstar (unless otherwise credited) © freedigitalphotos.net

From the editor...

Greetings,

I trust that you all have had a wonderful "festive" season, and that this edition of Serpentstar finds you and yours healthy, strong and inspired.

This issue is overflowing with insightful articles, beautiful poems, personal reflections and recounts of recent meetings.

I had the pleasure of meeting some local and inter-state OBOD members recently. Whilst I do consider myself solitary in my practice, I found the experience of simply gathering for a meal, filling a local cafe with laughter, very refreshing and it renewed my passion to get stuck into the study of my Gwersi.

I strongly encourage anyone to consider trying to meet up with some other OBOD members, even if its just for a quick cup of coffee, or even try to make it to the Southern Hemisphere Druid Assembly.

I will leave you now to devour the delicious content of this edition. THANK YOU to everyone who contributed this month. It was so inspiring putting this edition together.

Bright Blessings Under the Southern Stars,

LadyA

In this Issue....

"Twilight" - Lady Cu

Celebrating the Wheel of the Year

Arnie - Rafayard

Events

The First full Moon - Dragonwyst

Kitchen Magic

The life and death of the Corn King - Damh the Bard

Nibbles - Lady Cu

A Monkeys Tail Tale

Brownies - Vyvayan Ogma Wyverne

Craft for the Young at Heart + Crossword

Looking Ahead to Alban Elfed

Meet & Greet in Cronulla - Jowen

Crossword Answers and Contact Information of Interest

Page/s

4

5

6

7

8-9

10

11-12

13

14

16-17

18

19

20

21





Twilight

The time between the two worlds

Smoke and mist weaving between the tree's

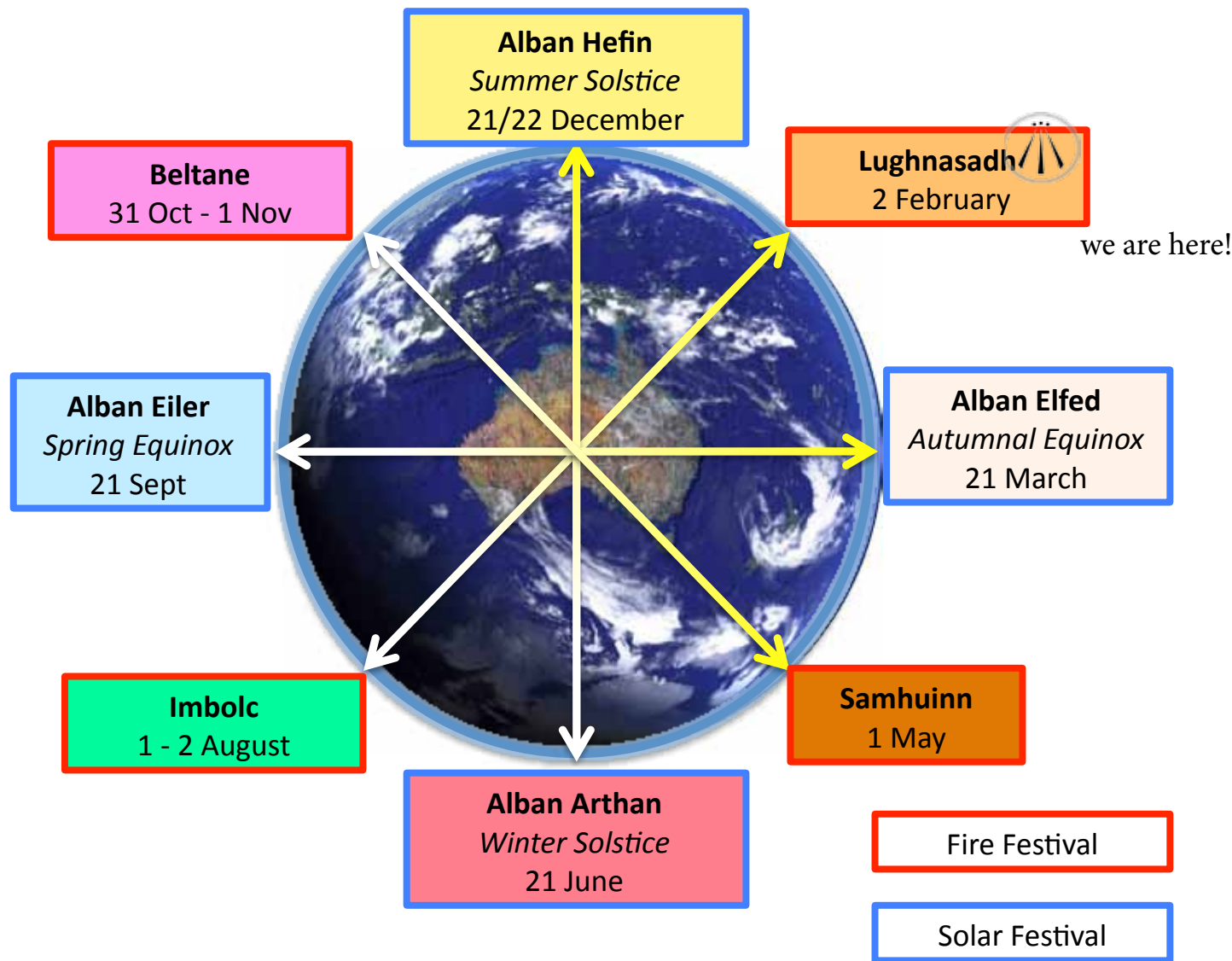
The call to enter the Otherworld

Respect without fear

The loving embrace of the Goddess

- Lady Cu

Celebrating the wheel of the year in the Southern Hemisphere



LUGHNASADH

the essence of lughnasadh is the joy of life under the knowledge that darker times are moving in we take in the warming rays of the sun and store their power for the times coming at the time we celebrate the next festival alban elfed it will be fall and the warm summer days will already be a memory.

Source: www.druidry.org



Arnie 11/01/2011



Towards the end of school last year, I was watching telly on a Friday night. Zoning out really, hanging out for the holidays, when Dean brought in this fluffy, little grey thing that he found under the mulberry tree, outside our front door. Instantly we went into wildlife carer mode. It's something we do and we seem to collect and attract orphaned animals like some people collect spoons.

For the whole weekend we nurtured this fluffy, lovable creature, thinking perhaps it was a wood duck as they are fairly close by to us. It did seem big though. We even took it to a 60's themed wedding. Nestled under my jacket it was very happy, warm and secure. People didn't even know I had it! The fact we didn't have to dress up did not go unnoticed by our teenage children!

On Monday we decided to do a more detailed identification. We discovered we had a baby black swan. A signet. The not so ugly duckling was going reach over 4 kilos! Well! Oh yes it certainly has grown, seven weeks later. He is now starting to get his black feathers and is shedding grey fluff (the softest down imaginable) everywhere. Arnie bosses the dogs, the cat and us around and is the most lovable, amazing creature I have ever had the honour to raise. We have dams so twice a day I go and sit by the dam while Arnie goes for a swim and a fossack on the algie. This is our time, quiet and peaceful. Often I take my 8 string ukulele and sit and play. Sometimes I get in the water, but mostly I just sit and watch this beautiful swan do it's thing.

All this time to contemplate gets me thinking about the associations of the swan and what it means. I consult the druid animal Oracle. Eala-soul, love and beauty. One can not help but notice the beauty around me as I sit on the edge of the dam. Damsel flies, dragonflies, firetail finches, wood ducks and colours so beautiful my breath is simply taken away. It is very easy to feel close to the other world and I allow myself to drift and feel peaceful.

In the hindu tradition the swan represents the perfect union between breath and spirit. It is also auspicious to be connected to the swan when writing music or poetry. The skin and feathers were used to make the bards ceremonial cloak- the tugen. I have been writing lots of wedding songs of late and as I compose some music for a bardic friend's wedding, I can only feel blessed that the very essence of soul, love and beauty is swimming around on the dam in front of me, filling me with inspiration as I write.

For the first few weeks Arnie had to go everywhere with us or he would fret and we didn't want him to feel abandoned again. Who knows what his incredible story at two weeks old was. To arrive two and a half kms away from the swamp, avoiding dogs, foxes, cats and cars. It simply seems incredible that he could simply "appear" under our mulberry tree.

As soon as I held him I felt his love and now understand why love is such a key word with the swan. He nestles into me, puts his ever growing neck under my arm and makes a "phew" type sound. After which he then tries to vigorously preen my hair!

Soul and beauty are unfolding every day while I am on holidays. I connect with the beauty around me, and all kinds of things associated with the soul. The Goddess Brighid has associations with the swan, and she is the Goddess of poetry. We are honouring her here at the assembly this year along with Mannanan Mc Lir. It seems fitting that maybe she has sent this beautiful swan to us for inspiration.

Once when we were at the dam I felt that Arnie was "remembering". I felt so strongly that he was feeling something and then he came out of the water and just sat in my lap for ages. Then the moment passed and we went hunting Slater beetles, which are his favourite.

Our family has become his family. He knows all of us and is wary and protective around strangers, which will be interesting when he is fully grown! I have read that swans stay with their family for two years before going off to find a mate for life. We don't know if he will leave us, when he is bigger we will take him to the swamp where there are other swans and see what happens. They need a very big runway to take off to fly.

Meanwhile, we will continue to be amazed by our beautiful swan as we take care of him & learn about this bird of the Goddess-

- Rafayard

Arnie always seems to get into his water bowl!!



events



Thursday 19th May 2011

Spiral Dance + Damh the Bard (UK)

The Folk Centre, cnr George Street & South Road, Thebarton, SA
Gig starts at 7.30 pm; Tickets \$15 (\$10 concession)

<http://www.spiraldance.com.au> | <http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/>

Friday 20th May 2011

Spiral Dance + Damh the Bard (UK)

Bar 303, 303 High Street, Northcote, VIC
Times and prices coming soon...

<http://www.spiraldance.com.au> | <http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/>

Saturday 21st May 2011

Spiral Dance + Damh the Bard (UK)

Excelsior Hotel, 64 Foveaux Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

Concert starts 8 pm. Tickets \$35

Bookings are advised - preferably by 7th May

To book email kellygarland13@optusnet.com.au | 0435 899 948

<http://www.spiraldance.com.au> | <http://www.paganmusic.co.uk/>

Thursday 6th - Monday 10th October, 2011

*You are cordially invited to the
Eleventh Southern Hemisphere Druid Assembly*

*To be held at "Cooringal Grove"
near Port Lincoln in South Australia*

Cost: \$175 per person, children free

*Join as we gather & celebrate and pay homage
to Brigid and Manannan McLir*

*There will be three full days given to the
Bardic, Ovate and Druid grades
with arrival and departure days either side.*

*Further information: Rafayard -
Ph: 0427 186 874 e: rafayard@bigpond.net.au*



Sometimes a late afternoon walk at a local stream can transport one across realms. The evening of the night of the first full moon of this year was such a time. I left at a brisk pace while the sun was still up, intending my walk to be at least part good exercise. I took my staff along to fend off spider webs strung across my path – a purely practical function. As I walked, I considered my present stumbling block – how to persuade that ever-present censor lodged in my mind that I am a writer, artist, musician and counsellor now, at this present moment, and not in some future time that never seems to arrive.

I considered the many times my intentions had been marked by finding four-leafed clovers - the strongest ones, by finding three four-leafed clovers at once. I wondered if I needed to find three four-leafed clovers to cement an intention to be a qualified counsellor by the time I was fifty. That didn't seem right. It would be mere superstition to hunt out the clover deliberately. There needed to be a sort of incidental synchronicity between the finding and the thinking for that to work correctly, not a conscious forcing of the situation. I found my thoughts confirmed by the complete dearth of four-leafed clovers along my path. They are good at remaining hidden when they are not meant to be found. This time it had to be something different. I had a hunch it would be a step beyond my four-leafed clover trail of the past years.

As I came down nearer the trees I found myself entranced once more by the very ghostly quality of Australian bush. How to paint it? Maybe I should try a sort of pointillism style next time. Thus far it has eluded me, leaving me frustrated. I can do the gumtree trunks but the leaves just won't cooperate – yet. There is such a sense of presence among those trees. It amazes me given that the area is just a small reserve between thoroughly housed and cultivated suburbs. It is an oasis, and it seems that as such, it is thoroughly utilised by every local pixie, fairy, sprite, dryad and nyad, despite the rubbish dumped in the stream bed by the last rain swell, and the shout of noisy, and sometimes destructive, young folk.

I took the path that leads off the concrete bicycle way and follows the stream bed. It has become overgrown with the damp weather of late. Despite waving my staff ahead of me, I still managed to get caught by several small spiders en route. I slowed my pace to clear ahead more thoroughly and told my chattering brain to shut up and just feel the place. The stream was very low and I couldn't help but contrast it's almost stagnant stillness with the floods being experienced elsewhere in the country at present. How very different, yet still the last high water marking could be clearly seen by the bits of plastic caught here and there on overhanging branches.

A little further along, I found myself suddenly aware of the presence of a Water Dragon. I know where I can routinely spot these endemic reptiles, but this was not the usual place. I paused and searched the opposite bank for any signs of the watcher. There was a dark smudge on a rock about halfway up between the grass and trees. It was roughly Dragon-shaped. I couldn't be sure until I moved a little closer. I found a place to scramble down to a rock in the river bed – just close enough to make out a female Water Dragon watching me from above on that rocky outcrop. I sat on my stone and watched her watching me, and listened to the birds, noisy in their early evening settling.

After a while the Dragon changed her position as some noisy children and a dog made their way, unseen, beyond the trees at the top of the bank. Then she was gone.



I scrambled back up on my side of the stream and continued down the path. How could I have “known” I was being watched by a Water Dragon before I saw her?

Logic would put it down to coincidence and the reasonably high possibilities of seeing Water Dragons in that area. However, just how high is the probability?

I know of just one spot where their presence is fairly reliable, and even there I don't always see them. I haven't seen one on the particular part of the bank where this one was for over four years. That, to me, is not a high probability of a pure chance event.

I knew the Water Dragon was there before I saw her.

I felt drawn to a spot further along the stream where the path crosses over to the other side.

There is an old dead tree there. At various times I have seen different creatures making use of the holes in it – Lorikeets, Water Dragons and the local Pacific Black Ducks (which aren't black at all). There wasn't anyone obviously at home now, though. I found my way up onto a lichen-tapestried rock that is slowly being eroded from the bank with the successive flooding of the stream. It's one rock that is ant-free, so good for sitting in meditative stillness, provided the mosquitoes are keeping at bay.

I could not shake the feeling that there was something I was meant to see or find in that area. As I tried to be still, and open myself, my eye was drawn to the pattern of light through leaves on the surface of the pool of water downstream from me.

Don't focus on the obvious reflection, look through it. See what you can see.

I could make out shapes – a face, perhaps, of a beared man wearing a floppy leather hat. The dots of light seemed to float up brighter in some places as if hovering above the water...

What do you see?

I don't know what I'm meant to see.

You don't see because you don't know your runes. There are runes all around you. Learn to read them.

I don't know my runes. That's true enough. I tried to remember why I had chosen the runes I carved onto my staff. Wynn for joy - can't remember the name of the one facing outward; just know it was for protection. The others - was Sigel for healing? No, I don't know my runes.

Go and learn your runes. Know them inside-out and their meanings. You will not need a rune set. You will see runes wherever you are, in the trees, in the ground, in the sky. Ask the question and you will see the runes that will provide the answer.

Ok, I will learn my runes. I can see how this will be a means for me to access my inner wisdom, a language of symbols for my creative self. I understand it will work like dowsing does for some people, though dowsing is not the right medium for me. The runes will be right for me. And perhaps it will be a means whereby the spirit world can communicate with me. I can trick my left brain hemisphere into accepting this logical explanation, while letting my heart tell me otherwise.

With the sun almost gone, I slipped off my rock so that I could get back along the path before the spiders began their evening web-spinning. My mind considered the possibilities of learning my runes and compared it to learning the Greek alphabet which I had done for my own entertainment as a teen.

Suddenly I stopped and retreated a step. I had nearly walked right past it. A mere two paces off the path, on a waist-high rock that stood out alone, was another Water Dragon. He was old, leathery and beautiful. I moved a step closer and could have reached out and touched him with my staff. He didn't flinch. He regarded me, tilting his head a little this way and that, wise and unafraid.

Do not forget or disregard what you have been told today.

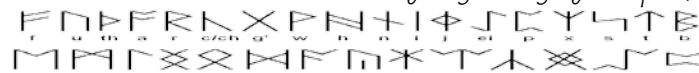
"No, I won't. There is no chance in this meeting. It is too extraordinary do be discounted. Thank you for your presence here."

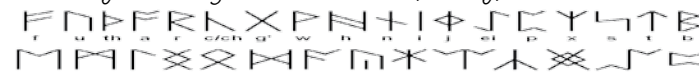
I moved to view him from the other side. I could see the red of his chest, by which I knew him to be male. The dark stripe running from his eye seemed to intensify against the ash of his head. Even with my moving, he did not flinch or move more than his head to watch me.

"So, you are my totem or spirit animal. Now I know." I resolved to learn all I could about the Water Dragons so I would understand what they had to tell me.

After a time of silent communing, I bowed and took my leave of him, not looking back. He, or they, had chosen me.

I found myself seeing faces etched in the bark of the tree trunks as if the tree spirits were revealing themselves, and everywhere I looked were hints and suggestions of runes. If I but knew them better I would discern them and read the world around me. I headed for home under a sky of gentle grey and pink, with the first full moon of the year rising. I am a druid now, today, and not at some never-arriving future time.


r u th a r ezh g' w h n i l ei p s s t b
e m l ng ee d a' y ea to k g'' g st


r u th a r ezh g' w h n i l ei p s s t b
e m l ng ee d a' y ea to k g'' g st

Kitchen Magic...

Aurora's Double Choc Scones

1 cup cream
1 cup lemonade (such as sprite)
3 cups SR flour
2 Tablespoons Cocoa powder
2 Tablespoons sugar
250g chocolate chips



Preheat oven to 180 degrees celsius. Sift flour and cocoa together in a bowl and add the sugar and chocolate chips mix well. Add the cream and lemonade and stir until mixture comes together (It will be sticky, it's meant to be). flour a work surface and a rolling pin and roll mixture out to about an inch thick and cut out scones. Put on a lined baking tray and cook in the oven for 12-15 minutes.

Hope you enjoy them!

Patty's Bumbleberry Upside Down Cake

(Editor's Note: This recipe was originally posted on the OBOD forum, however it sounded too good not to be shared- with Patty's permission of course!)

Preheat Oven to 175 °C

Grease and Flour a 22cm x 22cm square pan.

Toss in 4 Cups of mixed berries (bumble) Note: I use blueberry, strawberry, and black-berry.

Sprinkle the berries with one half cup of sugar.

Cake Batter:

1 cup of warm milk that has been scalded with 2 teaspoons of lavender in it, and let it stand for five minutes.


Add three quarters of a cup of margarine, 1 cup of sugar, two egg yolks (save the whites), 1 teaspoon of vanilla, 2 and a half cups of unbleached flour, two teaspoons of baking powder, and three quarters of a teaspoon of baking powder. Set this batter aside.

Second Batter: Whisk two egg whites with a half cup of sugar until white and stiff (it takes patience and it helps if the egg whites are room temperature) when stiff, gently fold into first batter until suitably mixed and then pour on to berries.

Bake 55 minutes and cool for ten minutes.

Optional glaze: which I never use, 1 and a half cups of icing sugar with two Tablespoons of cream, and 2 Tablespoons of margarine. Drizzle on.





The Life and the Death of the Corn King - Damh the Bard

How did I get here? What am I doing here?
Face up on the hard, dry earth
Blinking into the Sun and the clear blue sky
Sleeping crimson from my wound

A face, soft and warm, fills my vision
Holds the scythe that has quickened my death.
She smiles a smile so full of love and the crows call my name.
And I too smile as my lifeblood softens the earth
Feeds the earth, as my body will feed the people.

I was born of the light, a candle in the darkness
And cared for by millions I grew and found my mate
In the greenwood we played, and laughed, and made love
And our cries of ecstasy sent animals to find each other
And their cries woke the Spirits of the Land.

I grew from green to gold in the fields,
As the eye of light gently changed me and I grew old.
A bearded gent with a crooked cane.
Stroked by the caress of the breath of the earth

Until, hair flaming, my mate called me,
And cut me down.
And beat me from my body,
And ground me to dust.

So now I return to the earth,
And hear the baying of the Hounds of Annwn.
Drawn, take my soul into your arms
and let me sleep, gently, in the cold, dark earth
Until I feel the spark of light once more.

Here in the UK we are just approaching Imbolc and my thoughts are turning to Spring, and the waxing year. But, as is the way of the Wheel, in the Southern Hemisphere your thoughts are on Autumn, and I've been asked to write a piece for the Lughnasadh issue of Serpentstar.

Lughnasadh is a festival that, at least on a physical level, I have a bit of a love/hate relationship with. On the one hand I love the heat and sunshine, the feeling of accomplishment that I can feel all around me - the Earth has been through Spring and now Her harvest is being brought in. On the other hand I know that the year is now waning, and although as a Druid I'm supposed to love every season, the English Winter is not something I look forward to! So I find myself looking back and forward even more than I do at the Solstices, the traditional time of balance. I know that, to some, Lughnasadh is the first Autumn festival, just as Imbolc can be seen as the first Spring festival, but I've always seen Lughnasadh as the height of Summer. Although the Sun is at his Zenith at the Summer Solstice, here in Britain we really feel the full power at Lughnasadh, so although the corn is being brought in, there is still much more Summer ahead.

The green of the Solstice has turned to gold and the land is getting dry. The grass on our rolling hills is also turning from lush green, to a darker green/brown. I wonder how it is for you in the Southern Hemisphere? Here the land is busy, the people are busy. And in the fields John Barleycorn watches. And really for me Lughnasadh is very much about that sacrifice spoken about in my poem above. Once a youth playing in the woods, then meeting the Lady of the Land. Walking hand in hand through early Spring to fall in love and lay with each other at Beltane - the birds singing, the leaves bright and clear, air warming. And from this union he will be born again come the Winter Solstice, but for now we celebrate his power at the Solstice, then very quickly we see him go from his strength, to an old bearded man with a crooked cane, bending in the fields from the burden of his own body. His hair touched by the invisible hand of the breeze, his life drawing to an end.

Then she comes. Across the fields, her chariot's wheels blazing, her hair in flames as the Queen of Summer. She stops beside the field. She knows this man well, they are friends, they are lovers, but their whole life together has been leading to this point, this is the reason for their union. The plants have turned to seed, the land is a bounty of potential, but the corn must be cut so that the seeds can return to the earth, and this beautiful and true sacrifice is what feeds the people. She raises her scythe, and cuts the corn. And so begins the harvest of Lughnasadh. From now until the Winter Solstice the God of the fields has returned to Annwn, like Arthur he rests in the arms of the Otherworld, ready to return as the smallest of lights at the Winter Solstice, the Mabon.

This is not how everyone sees Lughnasadh, but it is my relationship with this festival. Some people have a problem with the word sacrifice, having doubtless seen and read many sensationalistic articles and programs that just don't get it. True sacrifice happens in the fields all around us at Lughnasadh as the corn gives of its life so we can have food, and that is the foundation of my mixed feelings about this festival too. But above it all is one overriding feeling, and that is gratitude.

- Damh the Bard



NIBBLES

A cold wet nose on fingertips
Fingers held lightly in the mouth
The gentle nibbling on fingers

A tugg of the fingers

Its not working

The front paws up and pushing against the body

Come on it's time to get up

- Lady Cu

The Monkey's Tail Tale:



A Union of Love

Once upon a time there was a beautiful & gifted Faerie Bard by the name of Reilly who captured the hearts of many with her gentle charm and loving ways. Such was her skill in the art of story telling that people still talk to this day of the tales of love and magic. It would require a special man to win the heart and hand of one so beloved throughout all the realms and indeed this is what came to pass. Those close to the hero Ben can relate better than I his many superhuman deeds, but I can tell you that the most famous amongst these is his accomplishment in the arena of home entertainment, where he is reputed to have watched 380 movies within the space of a year - a formidable feat by anybody's reckoning! How could any Bard of renown resist such a man as this, with his goodly store of tales on film, but if this wasn't enough, Reilly quickly succumbed to the hero's many other myriad charms.

And so it was that on the 22nd day of the month of January in the year 2011, Reilly and Ben did join together in marriage. Such was the affection in which Reilly was held by fellow Druids throughout the country that they came from all corners of the land to bless the happy union. Before all other guests arrived they gathered at the appointed spot on the edge of the Clovelly cliffs. By a cerulean sea, surrounded by dancing wind and beneath the bright eye of the sun in an arching blue sky, the sculpted rock warm beneath their feet, they joined with the elements and Spirits of Place to create a sacred circle within which the rites could be performed.

The radiance of the day was only outshone by the bride herself who glowed with love for her champion, Ben. The Druid Elkie officiated over the loving couple as they declared their vows of union, while Rafayard serenaded the gathering with her songs of blessings, love and wisdom. Acclaimed throughout the land as a creative Druid and talented Bard her original compositions were a true gift, not only to the bride and her groom but, to all assembled. As Rafayard delighted all present with her music the pretty flower girl released scarlet rose petals around the circle. The delicate petals tumbled around the feet of the guests, caressing toes as they skipped in the wind, each touch a soft velvet kiss filled with the love of the occasion.

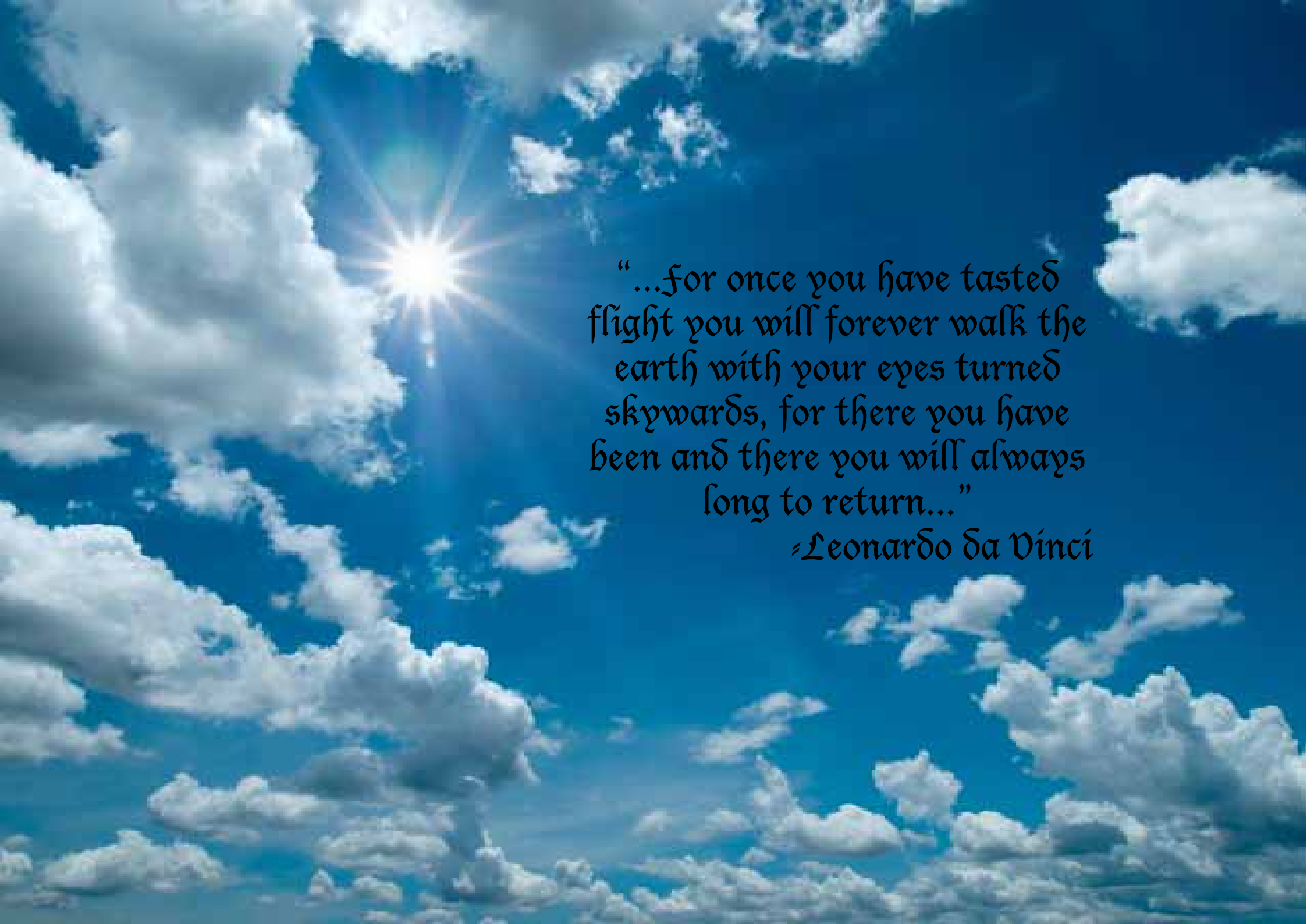
With vows formally made it was time to retire to the hall for feasting and merriment. The celebrations were well underway by the time the sun had bowed its head to evening and the five Druids slipped back out to the cliff. In that liminal space where day has not yet become night, they uncast the circle and gave thanks to all the realms for their blessings on this occasion. As they joined in the merry making on their return to the hall, they witnessed a golden moon rise above the waters; as if taking over from the now sleeping sun it scattered its good wishes like sparkling fairy dust across the surface of the darkened sea.



And who is it that relates this tale of love I hear you wonder - why I am Joemo, a humble sock monkey and companion to Jowen who both, along with Trudy, Carole, Rafayard, Elkie and her staunch companion Felix, feel truly honoured and blessed to have been able to play such a special role on this memorable occasion. And so, without further ado, and with the blessings of Land, Sea and Sky, the Ancestors and the One Spirit of All That Is, I thank you for allowing me to share my tale and ask you to join with me in wishing Reilly and Ben a long and happy life together - and as they share the pleasure of many DVDs in the years ahead, may they never be short of peanuts.

Thank you to the Bride's Dad for providing the photograph of Reilly and Ben during the ceremony.





“...For once you have tasted
flight you will forever walk the
earth with your eyes turned
skywards, for there you have
been and there you will always
long to return...”

—Leonardo da Vinci

Brownies

People who want to make shamanic connections with the fairy peoples usually start by learning as much as they can from books, other seers and folklore. You learn quickly that there are many different kinds of fairies, and that they vary from culture to culture. Then as you become adept at seeing, your notion of what a fairy is usually undergoes a wild transformation. You begin to encounter the many varieties of fairies, elves, nature spirits etc, little and large, pretty and ugly, wise and silly, kindly and malevolent, sick and healthy, weak and powerful, friendly and hostile that the fairy sight reveals to you.

At this stage you may feel a need to focus on direct communion with just one kind of fairy at a time, usually using meditation and attunement techniques you may have learned as a part of a pagan, esoteric or new age teaching programme or similar. You set the scene with beautiful music, crystals enchanted for the purpose, and incense or aromatic oils, herbs and flowers. You centre yourself, you clear your mind, perhaps you might play a drum or a flute, and you open your eyes to the fairies around you. The fairies will be aware of your preparations and they'll crowd around to get a glimpse of you, and to let you see them. You get used to the fact that these are indeed people, albeit high strangeness people, indeed very high strangeness people and that some of them are intensely aware of you and are manipulating you with their powerful will to bring you into their view, sometimes competing with each other for access to you. This can be frightening, but don't panic. When it happens, you can always expect a Brownie to be there for you, to be your trustworthy guide and protector if you so ask.

Brownies are among the easiest of fairies for humans to commune with. They are saintly little people about eighteen inches to two feet high, sometimes appearing in hooded garments of soft brown, grey and mossy colours. They are usually surrounded by a kind of courtly retinue which includes the astral bodies of little girls in their brownie uniforms, and other earth kin. Probably the word Brownie was originally Brehonie, and referred to a pious and much-loved legal fraternity that was quashed in Britain in mediaeval times so completely that history seems to be repressing the memory of them. The Irish Brehons are still revered, though progress in translating their law texts has been slow. But folklore recalls the Brownie as an outlawed exile in wild places, sometimes protected by remote households for whom they very generously did useful work in exchange for nothing but food and clothing – taking offence permanently if offered payment.

In the old ballad Brown Adam he was banished into the woods where he lived by hunting birds with a bow and arrow.

Children's lore, often wiser and better informed than folklore, because children connect more deeply with the deepest myths, situates them deep in the wildest and remotest parts of the mossiest, most mysterious green woods, where they have become invisible to humans, diminished in size to about a foot high. As Brehons once were lawyers among the peoples of old Britain, Brownies are the wise law-givers, counsellors and peace-makers among all the wild woodland animals, birds and fishes, plant spirits, aerial and water beings, fire spirits and earth spirits of their new environment.

Brownies are accessible to us through contemplation of this highly developed, consistently recurring image. If you ask them to they are willing to work closely with you as guides and negotiators on your behalf. They aren't the only wise, human-friendly fairies you'll encounter in the early stages, but they are the ones who will help you to reorient yourself appropriately in our newly expanded reality. And they do appreciate their annual gift of a new linen shirt and a good bannock bun – and firewood; only tokens now but once so meaningful! Paradigms shift again when you realise that to the fairies, you are just one more kind of fairy. We are certainly giants to them, and if we think we're not magical, there's many a fairy, and many a quite justly aggrieved fairy, willing to prove to us that we're just as magically dangerous to them as ever they could be to us. Without some training in stillness and receptivity, our fear paralyses them, our distrust binds them, our mis-visions distort and deform them, our disbelief disables them. The brownies are not just our guides, but our 'handlers' as well, to prevent us from harming the other beings with our unruly, lawless magic.



Like many other fairies, Brownies remember being human, indeed many of them periodically incarnate as humans, and may even still think of themselves as human even though they have evolved since their banishment from human culture. They tell me their story as follows.

Banished during the Conquest from their honoured place in British society, the few survivors fled singly to remote wild places, hiding in the deep forest to evade the hounds that were used to hunt them. In remote wild lands they survived, but were soon forgotten, except in folk-lore. Others, driven deeper into the forest, found food in abundance there, but were intensely alienated, often utterly devoid of all human company, and dependent on prayer, fairy magic and the guidance of Gaia (who knew just what she was doing) for their sanity.

A kind of sensory deprivation along with the effects of breathing the fungal spore laden air and of eating the occasional dodgy mushroom made these fugitives, credited anyway with magic powers, psychically hypersensitive. They soon began to hear the whispers of the forest, to understand the speech of animals and birds. Sleeping in the moss, feeding on the mushrooms, bark, herbs, nuts and berries of the forest's bounty, drinking the dew and the heavy nectar of flowers, they soon fell under the spells of the forest fairies. Experiencing themselves more and more as being of their reality and less and less of this, they grew old and died, or they died through illness or the poison of a mushroom and so became part of the woodland spirit community.

Over the centuries, their mentality was greatly altered by their new environment, and they brought their legal expertise to bear upon the many problems that diverse and often competing beings encounter in their efforts to create a viable and harmonious community of spirits. Our world was becoming less and less relevant to them, but Gaia had plans for them and us, and in accord with these there emerged the Brownie movement, the organisation for little girls that focused the potentially magical attention of generations of eight-to-ten-year-old girls on just the kind of fairied forest environment in which these highly-evolved souls now have their spiritual centres. Aided by I know not what guiding angels and fairies, during the twentieth century the brownies and these little girls effected a cross-dimensional hand-shake of great importance to our planet, and it was a handshake of such goodwill and delightfulness that brownies remain among the best-loved and most trusted of fairy characters in literature and lore. They are good little people, full of kindly charity and love, sweetness and joy, which they spread with the greatest ease wherever they go.

And nowadays they go about quite freely in all sorts of places, appearing in suburban gardens, Japanese parklands, city balconies and the Australian bush, and will appear in a well designated corner of almost any sincerely friendly, safe room if invited. They make charming use of those commercially available little toy doors that you affix to tree trunks, skirting boards and other likely places.

My Brownie guide 'haunts' or 'inhabits' a 14 inch high paper-maché toadstool with a nine inch diameter top. He explains that he magically bonds with the paper toadstool in such a way as to become sensitive to the thoughts and emotions going on around it. Thus it acts like a remote sensory organ, to which he can bring his whole mind's attention at will, manifesting visibly beside it for me if he chooses. It's like having a mobile phone. His sense of humour is delightful, but he seems full of knowledge to impart as our relationship deepens. I service this shrine and others outside with gifts of food and drink and pieces of shiny metal which they use for money in one of their new toyland-like realms. I suspect they'd find a use for anything if you offered it as a token of goodwill.

Toylands? Yes, because expert as they are at bringing peace and sanity into communities of diverse beings, Brownies have learned that a being is a being, whether a toy whose soul has been bestowed via the inarticulate love and magical fantasy of a child, or an angel spirit born triumphantly from the spent corpse of a dying human being, they are all sentient spirits, all worthy of their rights and responsible for their own karma. Between small children at play and all manner of fairies, new worlds of solid reality are being woven all the time from the fantastical logistics and creative imagery of play, and because these new worlds have need of good, wise, fair laws to integrate them into the greater reality, Brownies are invited to participate in the building of them principally as law-givers.

Rapport with Brownies is based upon a mood-sharing which manifests quite strangely to an adult, because it is much more in the emotional idiom of children, or of medieval Brehons. It's hard to put into words, except words so simple they might even sound facile, yet they possess all the more power for being so comprehensible. They teach that happiness is a medicine, something radiant and good that we infuse our surroundings with when we feel happy within. We have a duty to be happy, to emanate beams of radiant happiness for the healing and comforting of our sad and damaged worlds. They know it isn't always possible, but they urge us to make real inner happiness a goal, to care about making ourselves truly happy in innocent ways that harm no one. They urge us to cultivate an optimistic disposition, to carry us through the sad times, and to gravitate (should I say, levitate) back to happiness as soon as things improve. It doesn't have to be noisy happiness; you don't have to smile all the time. Just consciously begin to liberate all the natural joy within you. That will not only improve your health and well-being, your luck and your whole quality of experience, it will also make you a well-spring of healing for everyone in your environment.



Craft for the Young and the Young at heart

apple candleholders

you will need

a piece of firm fruit red apples last the longest

a knife or apple corer

approx 2 or 3 tablespoons of lemon juice

sprig of rosemary basil or other fresh herb of your choice

taper candle and a lighter or matches

1 rinse and dry the fruit or vegetable thoroughly

2 polish the outside with a soft cloth until the apple is shiny

3 stand the apple up on its bottom

4 use a knife or a corer to make a hole in the top where the stem is located go about halfway down into the apple so that the candle will have a sturdy base

5 widen the hole until its the same diameter as your candle

6 pour some lemon juice into the hole and allow it to sit for ten minutes this will prevent the apple from browning and softening too quickly

7 pour out the lemon juice and dry out the hole

8 insert a sprig of rosemary basil or other fresh herb of your choice

9 finally add the taper candle use a little bit of dripped wax to secure the taper in place

article and picture copyright patti wigington 2007



CLUES ACROSS

1. Magician.
7. Moroccan.
8. Sign .
11. Wise ones.
12. Ireland.
13. Early English historian.
14. Giants.
15. Factuality of an account.
18. Suave and sophisticated.
21. Use teeth.
24. Require.
25. Scattered remnants.
26. Old Ireland's political centre.

27. Ages.

28. Threads.

CLUES DOWN

1. Hemisphere
2. Carriageway.
3. Very important.
4. Twistedly.
5. Writer of poems.
6. Shade-loving plant.
9. City in the US.
10. Affectionate name of monster.
15. Frequent.
16. Serious-minded.
17. Close friend.
19. Genuine.
20. Man's name.
22. Metal.
23. Containers.



Wyverne's Crossword...

Looking forward to Alban Elfed...

This is the time of the turning of the Light into Darkness.

Let us step forward into the darkening days holding before us the divine promise of new Light at the end of the Dark Days, from year to year and life to life.

This is the lesson of the Lord and the Lady.

This is our knowledge and our affirmation.

<http://www.druidry.org/obod/festivals/elued.html>



Meet and Greet in Cronulla, NSW

Saturday the 22nd of January was the occasion of Reilly's wedding to Ben, and so a few of her fellow OBODies gathered from various parts of the country to help her celebrate. For those interested to know more about this joyous event I refer you to 'The Monkey's Tale', included in this edition, as Joemo describes it far better than I can.

The pleasure of the weekend didn't stop with the wedding, however. Flying back to our various home States the next day or later gave us time to play in Sydney for most of Sunday, and thus an opportunity to meet up with Lady A, our new SerpentStar editor, and other OBODies from round and about Sydney.

Twelve of us ended up coming together and sharing a delicious lunch at the Heart and Soul Café in Cronulla. Sydney had put on another glorious day for us but I'm sure it wasn't just the weather that was contributing to our upbeat mood. Good food and good company saw our dispositions as sunny as the day. It's always a treat meeting up with fellow Druids and Reilly had provided us with a wonderful opportunity to do just that.

Many of the friendships around the table were formed at pastOBOD Assemblies and so we now look forward to the next (hosted by Rafayard in South Australia in October this year) for yet another chance to meet up with old friends and link up with new. Look out for information about this over the next few months and we hope to see everybody there.

Blessings on old and new friendships,
Jowen



Crossword Puzzle Details and Contact Information of Interest

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

<http://www.facebook.com/druidry>

Contact via Post: PO Box 1333, Lewes, United Kingdom, BN7 1DX

Druidcast - Official OBOD Podcast - via iTunes, www.druidcast.libsyn.com/, www.podcastdirectory.com

Contact Serpentstar - ladya.serpentstar@gmail.com, fax: +61 2 8079 6974

