

SERPENT STAR

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



SAMHUINN 2017

Welcome to the Samhuinn 2017 issue of SerpentStar!

Just when you think you've said your last "Phew" for a while, "PHEW!" An urgent full time job offer, a full-on Samhuinn camp weekend and all that goes with both of those things have made the last few weeks hectic to say the least. Not to mention what I think may be the biggest SerpentStar we've ever had! It's certainly the biggest one I've done since becoming Editor, and it's pretty darn magical if I do say so myself ;)

Do you like Macadamia Grove's Samhuinn wicker man? The pic on the front cover was taken by our friend 'Ti alla who joined us for the weekend, and shows him finished right before we raised him. She did most of the work too, after we designed him on a napkin. Ain't he a beaut?

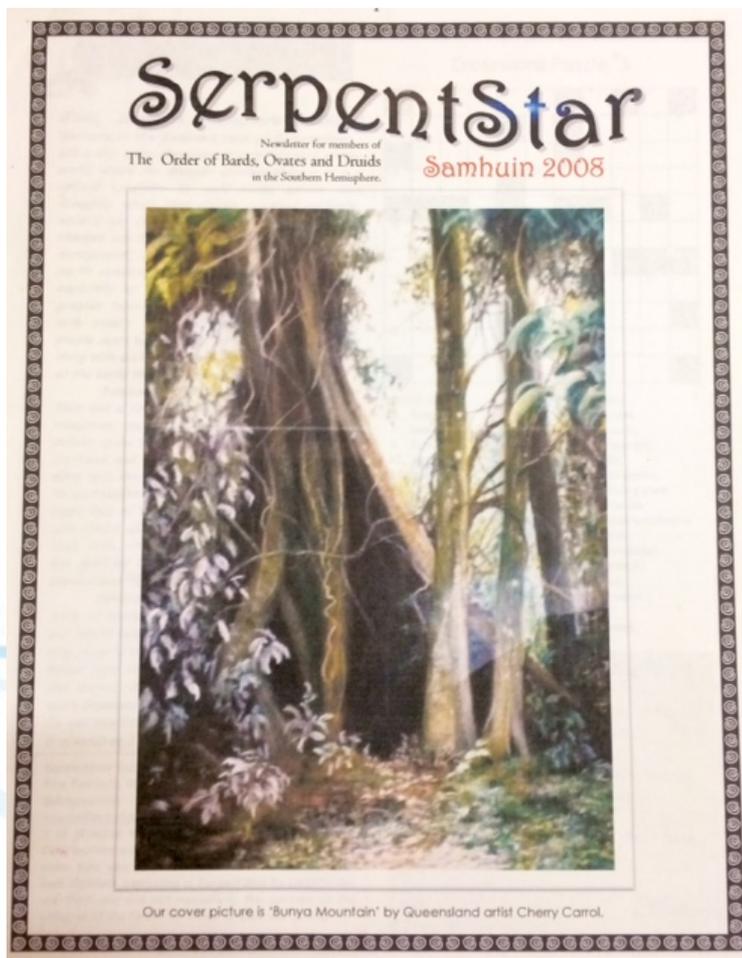
Before I go into what's in this issue, I also want to show you something special. In 2008 SerpentStar changed release dates from the seasonal to the fire festivals, and on this page is a snapshot of the very first Samhuinn SerpentStar. It's one of the ones that will be added to the archive project soon. The archive project has pretty much been completed, with all outstanding copies (that I know of) with me waiting to be either scanned or turned into pdfs. Thankyou so very much to all who helped achieve something so big so quickly!

What do I have for you this Samhuinn? Details about the English Ale/Druids of Oz and TarOz events, both coming up in just a couple of weeks, the last blog extract in the current series from Will, more info about the Southern Hemisphere Assembly, a prose peace from James, an Aotearoa brimming with contributions from Grove of the Southern Stars, a book review from Cherry (who I just noticed contributed the cover image to the first Samhuinn SerpentStar!), a Samhuinn poem from Chris, a story (and artwork) from John, a Samhuinn poem from Sarah, a lovely painting from Leah and a lovely poem from Jowen, a story about the Cailleach from Tracy then even more poetry from Ian, plus some new businesses and courses advertised by our members.

And Damh the Bard and Cerri Lee are coming out next year!!! And we need to help make that happen!

Like I said, PHEW! I love being your Editor. Thankyou everyone.

With all joy, Mandy /|\



SerpentStar, Samhuinn 2017

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

SerpentStar logo by Todd William Dearing. Watermark images courtesy freepik.com and druidry.org. All other images provided by the authors on the corresponding page, unless otherwise credited.

Submission guidelines and subscription info are available from serpentstar.druidryaustralia.org/about

Follow us on Facebook - search "SerpentStar"

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

We are a group of OBOD members living in South Australia, with a few members from different druid backgrounds. We are open to interested people who would like to experience or learn about Druidry within our seed group, or in general, and we hold group rituals for the Equinoxes, Solstices and Celtic fire festivals. We also work magic together for world peace, environmental issues, political issues etc. We put emphasis on reciprocity and hospitality in ritual to reaffirm our reverent and respectful relationship with nature, with the spirits of place, the ancestors and deity; offering libations and natural foodstuffs to the earth mother during ritual. Any interests, questions or enquiries you can email Kacey Stephensen at bardofthegreenwood@gmail.com or William Rattley at wildra2003@yahoo.com.au

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 receive a warm welcome. In 2017 we will be celebrating the seasonal festivals on the following dates: Autumn Equinox – Mar 18, Samhuin – Apr 29, Winter Solstice – Jun 24, Imbolc – Jul 30, Spring Equinox – Sep 24, Beltane – Oct 29 and Summer Solstice – Dec 17. If you would like to join us please send an email to Elkie at whitelk@bigpond.com - our website is www.themelbournegrove.org

Song of the Eastern Sea Seed Group

Situated on the Central Coast of NSW, we invite OBOD members and guests to join us as we celebrate the eight festivals of the Wheel of the Year and explore nature and Druidry together. We have a number of projects in the planning, including a Sacred Grove planting, working on environmental issues as a group, and supporting our local community. Contact Chris at chris@druidryaustralia.org

Wollemi Seed Group

Hunter Valley and surrounds. 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

Druidenstein (German) www.feuersprung.de

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

Il Calderone (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

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

Ophiusa (Portuguese) www.obod.com.pt/ophiusa.htm

SERPENTSTAR



Volume 1, Issue 1

Alban Heruin 1997

At Alban Hefin 1997, a new publication was born, our very own SerpentStar!

To celebrate there will be a FIFTH issue this year, released at Alban Hefin, our official 20th birthday. For this special issue I'm seeking special content, and the theme is "My first OBOD experience in the Southern Hemisphere".

As always, stories, poems, photos, artwork and musings are welcome. The only thing I ask for this special edition is please stick to the theme - anything received that does not fit the specific anniversary theme will be included in the next regular edition of SerpentStar.

Please send submissions to the usual address - sepentstar.obod@gmail.com, and clearly mark them Twentieth Anniversary.

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.



DRUIDS OF OZ AT THE ENGLISH ALE



THE ENGLISH ALE IS PROUD TO PRESENT 'DRUIDS OF OZ'

THIS YEAR'S PRESENTER IS AUTHOR AND ARTIST JULIE BRETT

JULIE IS THE FOUNDER OF DRUIDS DOWN UNDER AND HAS JUST RELEASED HER FIRST BOOK 'AUSTRALIAN DRUIDRY'. SHE HAS BEEN TEACHING AND RUNNING PUBLIC RITUALS BASED ON EXPLORING THE AUSTRALIAN LAND THROUGH THE TRADITION OF DRUIDRY SINCE 2007. HER IDEAS ABOUT INTERPRETING THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR FOR DIFFERENT LOCATIONS HAVE BEEN INFLUENTIAL TO MANY FORMS OF PAGANISM.

SATURDAY MAY 20TH 10AM
THE MYLOR HALL STRATHALBYN RD MYLOR
INVESTMENT \$10

WORKSHOP BEGINS AT 10AM BUT PLEASE BE THERE 15 MINUTES EARLY TO

REGISTER - WORKSHOP RUNS FOR APPROX 2 HOURS

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL EMAIL [INFO@SPIRALDANCE.COM.AU](mailto:info@spiraldance.com.au) TO BOOK

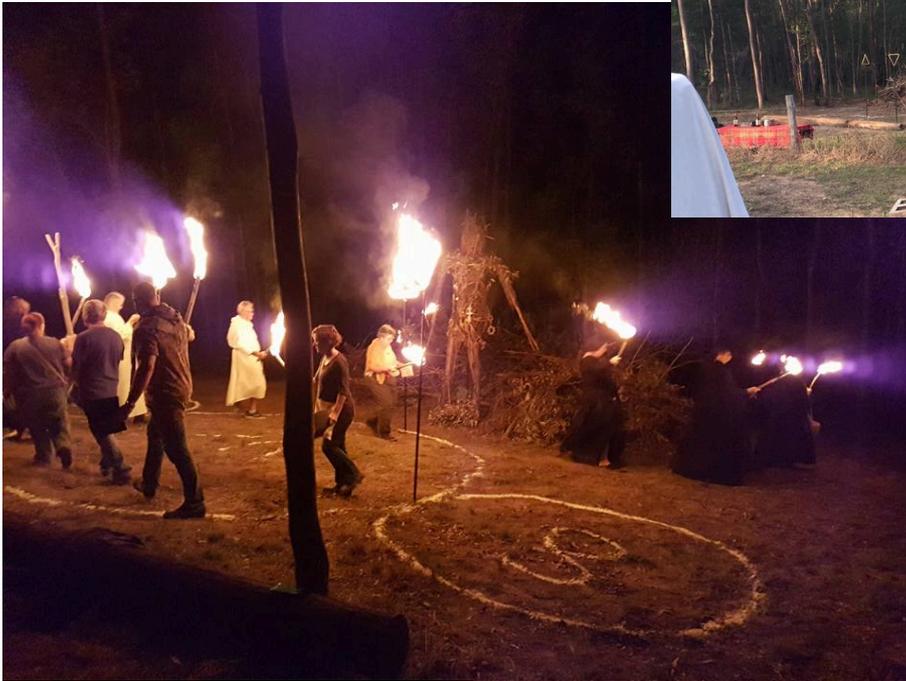
<https://www.facebook.com/events/734127360075868/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/311769095891742/>

<http://www.theenglishale.org>

<https://juliebrett.net>

JUST KIDDING! The front cover was one of the offerings! Here's Macadamia Grove's wicker man in all his roasted-apple-scented magnificence.



Photos by the lovely Melissa (thanks again!), Sandra and Carmen.



- Masked Torch Light Procession • Giants of the Hills - Petal, Tannus & Rufus •
- Burning of the Wicker Man • Hedgemonkey Morris • English Music Session •
- Hot for Joe Border Morris • Preston's Traditional Punch and Judy •
- Fayre Guisers Mummers Players • Kacey Stephensen • Peter Titchener •

• Spiral Dance •

Saturday 20th May 2017
 Mylor Hall & Oval, Strathalbyn Rd, Mylor
 From Midday Onwards

The English Ale



• Singing •

• Dancing •

• Mumming •

• Guising •

• Making Merry •

Wear a mask if you fancy and join in the procession to the bonfire

\$25

evening concert entry : children under 12 FREE
 Concert Tickets on sale at the hall from 4pm
 BOOK ONLINE EARLYBIRD \$20:
www.eventbrite.com/e/the-english-ale-concert-tickets-31273864972
 enquiries: info@spiraldance.com.au

The Ale is generously supported by AHC and Pagan Alliance SA



theenglishale.org

Initiations & Mystery

by William Rattley

Anyone who's known me long enough knows that, generally speaking, when it comes to sharing bits of knowledge pertaining to my spiritual path I am pretty open. I don't like to necessarily hide things and I feel that, so long as it is going to be respected, spiritual knowledge and experience is open to be shared.

Well I've had a little bit of a change in this regard after the Assembly, and not in a negative - I will share nothing - attitude...but rather by protecting some elements, you bring back the sacredness of those elements. If one shares too freely and too often, it can cheapen the mystery and takes away from the magic of working diligently towards a goal if everything is just handed to you willy nilly.

Now you may ask why I changed my stance on this? Quite simply really. I had the privilege of being part of the Bardic initiations.

And while I myself was not publicly initiated (that will be next year), I could understand the power of some secrecy. Why it is that new Bards do not necessarily know what's happening in the ritual, and why Bards are not privy to the initiations of the Ovates, and Ovates are not privy to the initiation of the Druids.

And certainly you may have read some rough recounts, and have a general understanding of what's required. But, for the most part, different Groves (I am sure) work things a little differently - to make it personal and truly transformative.

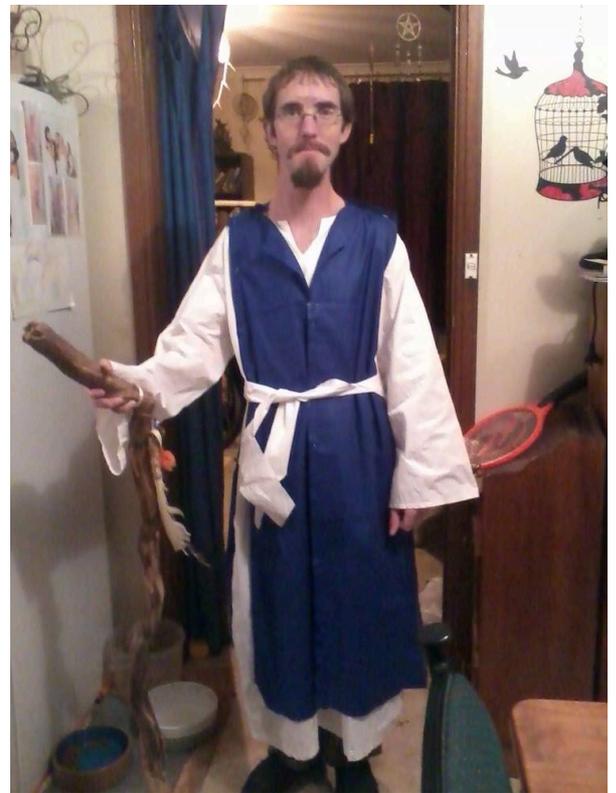
We live in a society that is largely impatient, that absolutely HAS to know RIGHT NOW. Holding off, or holding back, on knowing makes the revelation all the sweeter when the time comes. And I can respect that now. I've seen it first hand, for which I am thankful.

In my earlier years of my spiritual journey I absolutely had to know everything. If I was confronted by something I didn't know, or wasn't privy to, it would really rile me up. I'd either get frustrated that I didn't know it already, or I would wallow in self-pity. It's taken me a fair few years to get used to just going with the flow and accepting things as they come without always trying to force things to my agenda.

I won't lie...I've often been on the front line of those critics who scoff at the more secretive sects of Paganism, and indeed any tradition. Yet now, I can respect that some mysteries are appropriate to balance out growth and understanding. The mystery also adds a level of fun. As I found out at the assembly with jovial questions being exchanged. People digging for answers, but you could tell they didn't really want to know until they experienced it first hand.

And that kind of playfulness adds to the experience. So much fun. So I've changed my tune, and I apologise to all those I've scoffed at over the years for maybe having secrets within their various traditions. I understand how much of an empowering thing it can be. So long, of course, as those secrets are not abusive or manipulative.

Stay inspired /|\





12-14 May 2017

Venue

Club Forster
 19 Strand Street
 Forster NSW

Cost: \$250

Includes all sessions,
 morning/afternoon teas
 and lunches.

Registrations and payment at

www.taroz2017.com

Sunday 14 May

9am - 11.30am
 (includes morning tea)

The DruidCraft Tarot
 Linda Marson—Global Spiritual Studies



Linda Marson

11.30am - 12.30pm

Tarot Re-Home/Trade

12.30pm-1.30pm

Lunch

1.30pm - 4pm
 (includes afternoon tea)

Psychic Pathway
 Jennifer Houston
 Psychic Tarot Reader and Teacher



Jennifer Houston

4pm

Official close and giving thanks
 Gabi Angus West and Pearl Annie
MC: Nisaba Merrieweather



If I knew then what I know now...

by James Howell

If I had known in my youth the fact that I now see in my age, I would consider the study of every topic secondary to mastering the skill of being consciously aware in the present moment of the joys that the moment offers.

Without disparaging the wisdom of prudent forethought, I would learn to discipline myself not to let the future concerns of my mind starve out the happiness my heart could enjoy right now.

I would delight in the golden leaves of autumn rather than wishing for the flowers of spring.

I would enjoy the fireworks of Independence Day rather than wishing it was Christmas.

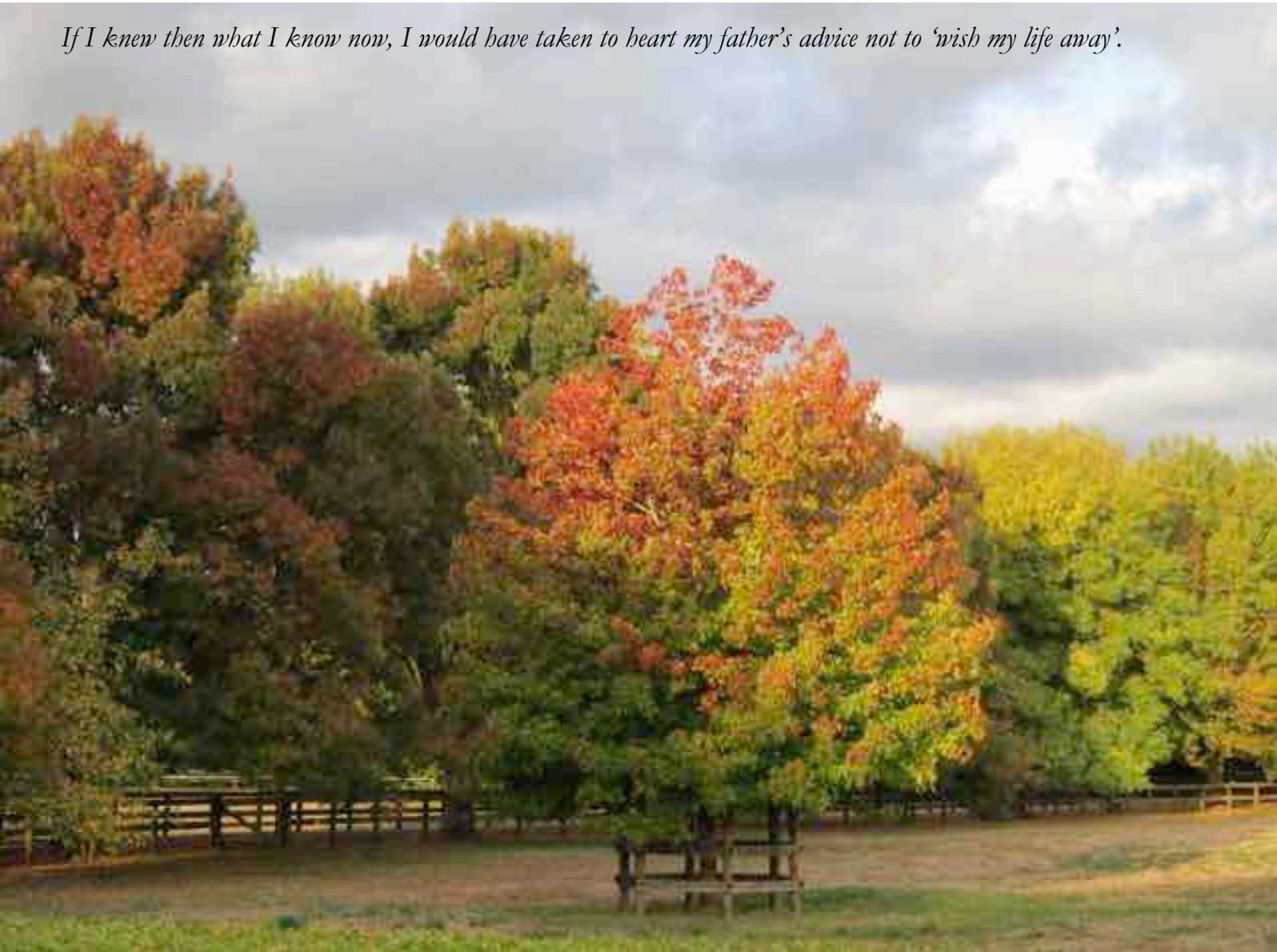
I would enjoy the Roman ruins at York rather than mentally rehearsing the next day's drive to Edinburgh.

I would enjoy the dinner my wages buy tonight, rather than dwelling on tomorrow's tax return.

I would experience the love of my family today rather than worry overmuch about how to fund the grandsons' university.

The future is the todays that are yet to come; if we cannot enjoy today, we will be unable to enjoy the future.

If I knew then what I know now, I would have taken to heart my father's advice not to 'wish my life away'.



The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids 16th Southern Hemisphere Assembly

Beautiful location in 36 ha of bush backing onto national parks

Plenty of quiet places to take time to reflect and enjoy the wildlife

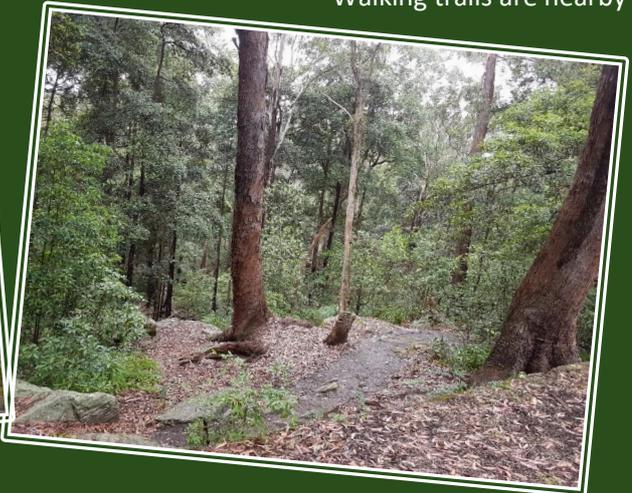


Eisteddfod in the amazing stone amphitheater



Don't miss out on this amazing Assembly for OBOD members. BOOK NOW!

Walking trails are nearby



- Bard, Ovate and Druid Initiation Ceremonies
- Imbolc Ceremony
- Women's and Men's Circles
- Workshops
- Lectures
- Divination
- Storytelling, poetry, music, song, dance....
- Meditation
- Market stalls
- Crafting
- And more....



Friday 11th August - Tuesday 15th August 2017

Pennant Hills NSW Australia

Hosted By - The Song of the Eastern Sea seed group

For more information contact Chris – chris@druidryaustralia.org

Book online - www.druidryaustralia.org/assemblies/





Aotearoa



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

The header image for the Aotearoa section of SerpentStar has been created by Glenn Conroy, who writes: "The image is comprised of several elements that are of special meaning to members of the Grove of The Southern Stars; Matariki, (seven sisters constellation), pounamu, (greenstone), ti kouka (cabbage tree), and of course Kapiti Island."

HAIL TO AUTUMN

At our Autumn Equinox ceremony in March we honour the power and radiance of Autumn and acknowledge the approaching Winter. This year Pamela spoke for Autumn and, at the appointed time in the Working, cast off her cloak to reveal a costume of russets, red, oranges and yellows. Unrolling a parchment scroll and walking the circle, she spoke thus:

I am Autumn

I am the release as the end draws near

I am the last breath.

I protest my leaving!

And my breath shall not be a whisper or a cry

But a shout made exultant by the power in me.

I rebel against my fading!

In these last moments you will see and feel my brilliance

And as I rebel will you view me in fear and admiration.

I am no spectator, I am the spectacle.

You do not touch me, I touch you.

In awe will you stand back as I begin my throes.

Only the daring will approach me as I embrace the Earth

And share my brief spasms of Ecstasy

For the generosity and fullness of my Relaxation.

*All of my animals, too, regret my passing
For they must face the starkness of the time that approaches
The bear eats ravenously for fat, the squirrels store
All Nature quivers as my strength leaves.*

I deny my passing!

Even as I go to Earth shall I give form to the future

And my seed shall rise again in another body.

And so I allow the old to fall away

And in my last, withdrawing sigh

I feel the energy of new creation . . .

For I am Birth, Death and Genesis

Then Tom stepped into the circle, head and body completely covered by his cloak, to speak for Winter thus:

I speak for Winter at Autumn Equinox

As you enjoy the warmth of the sun on this Autumn day

Know you that I am coming!

Notice how the evenings and nights are cooler,

The days getting shorter.

*Soon there will be frosts and the South Wind will howl in
With rain and snow.*

I speak for Winter and I am coming fast...



Labyrinth Summer School: Take a Walk on the Wild Side with Anne & Glenn Conroy



January 2017. While Wellington was being lashed by wind and rain, and OBODS were hunkering down in the hills at the Grove of the Summer Stars camp above Pukerua Bay, Sydney was enjoying clear days with temperatures in the low 30s. While it sounds idyllic, the reality was more testing as we tolerated soaring temperatures, and the early morning cacophony of cockatoos and kookaburras that began at sunrise and continued long after sunset. Add in the odd galah, shy water dragons, and towering gum trees, and you have the setting that was all part of our unique experience of the first Veriditas Labyrinth Summer School, held at Peter Canisius House in the suburb of Pymble.

Walking labyrinths has long been an interest of ours, so to be able to study comprehensively and train as Labyrinth Facilitators so close to home, with expert tutors, was an opportunity we weren't going to miss. The Rev Dr Lauren Artress, based in San Francisco, California, has been at the forefront of the growing Labyrinth movement since 1991 as Founder and Creative Director of Veriditas. Lars Howlett, also based in California, builds, walks, and photographs labyrinths as a practice in mindfulness and was ably assisted by Mark Healy from Tasmania. Each honour the traditional and modern approaches to sacred spaces where the labyrinth is concerned. You could say we were in the presence of labyrinth royalty, yet it never felt like that. The labyrinth can be a great leveller, what Lauren refers to as, "A walking meditation, a path of prayer, and a blueprint where psyche meets spirit".

In a group of about 30 women and men, mostly Australian and all struggling with the heat, we were expertly led though six days of focused discussions on the history of the labyrinth; terminology; the labyrinth as a metaphor for life; ancient and modern labyrinths; associated patterns in nature; the definition of the archetype using the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur; and of course Ariadne's thread. Our brains were stretched with sacred geometry; labyrinth design and construction; presenting to and using the labyrinth with different communities; and its role within ceremonies and ritual. When our heads were near bursting we put the theory into practice as we made labyrinths out of buttons, sparkly beads, leaves, and lentils, or headed outdoors armed with hats and sunscreen to make tape labyrinths on the lawn, or walk the two permanent labyrinths on site. Anne's favourite was the classical designed, very organic one called the Wild Labyrinth! She came across some interesting metaphors on that one! Evenings were spent developing new friendships and reviewing each day which invariably took us off on tangents as we solved the problems of the world, with the labyrinth at the heart of it all.

One of just many highlights was an evening visit to the Centennial Park Labyrinth. Emily Simpson, who inspired the Sydney community to fund the building of this magnificent labyrinth and was the driving force behind the design and construction, facilitated our walk as the fruit bats circled overhead in the reddening sky to the ever-present caw of the cockatoos and kookaburras. Under threatening thunderclouds we closed with a simple supper of dates, bliss balls, and apples before strolling back to the waiting bus, climbing aboard as the first heavy drops of rain fell – replete in body, mind, and spirit.

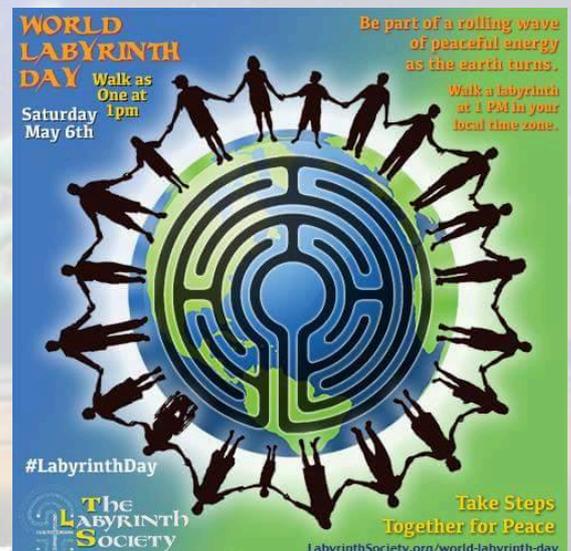
While the course officially finished on the Saturday evening, the sixth day, it didn't quite finish for us. We spent Monday in the Blue Mountains with newly made friends and fellow labyrinth builders at the Blue Mountains Bush Retreat, where we walked two unique labyrinths. A short drive to Katoomba saw us walk the mosaic labyrinth at the Community Garden. Thank you to everyone we met at Summer School, to Lauren Artress, Lars Howlett, Mark Healy, Emily Simpson, and to the team in the background at Peter Canisius House – a wonderful venue, very comfortable accommodation, and no shortage of great food.

Despite the inescapable heat, we left Sydney with a deeper understanding of the power of the labyrinth and are looking forward to sharing our experience and knowledge with others through workshops and presentations. Our ultimate goal is to lead our Druid community through the process of planning and building a permanent labyrinth at the Grove of the Summer Stars.

Blessings be
Anne & Glenn Conroy

PS: It's World Labyrinth Day on 6th May!

Grab some friends, find (or make) a labyrinth and walk your talk with the rest of the world at 1pm!



Druid Meditation Blanket

by Dawn McKenzie

The project began when I read an article by John Michael Greer (thearchdruidreport.blogspot.co.nz, Wednesday, April 08, 2009) where he mentioned the arts of our ancestors are falling into disuse. I felt inspired to learn to knit and with the help of a magazine and DVD, YouTube, and lots of patience, I began to create my Druid meditation blanket one square at a time.

It was Autumn, and as the days got shorter and the nights grew longer I meditated while knitting. Here are some of my reflections:

My first square is light green, a gentle Ovate colour, which seems to sing of the leaves. During the time knitting the square I have sat in my deck chair, under the verandah, watching autumn changes. The last of the white butterflies, the cool wind, the dryness, and the changing leaves. I feel myself readying for the indoors and the winter soups and the fireside meditations. I think of mastering knitting, a craft handed to me by my mum. I connect with my roots, the women before me, my ancestors.

Aren't the wobbly bits

At the edge of a piece

Of craft work

Personality coming

Through?

I have just listened to 'Remain in Light' by the Talking Heads while knitting the light purple square. I noticed the multi-layered African influenced drumbeats, the harmony singing and the experimental nature of the music. The light purple wool quickly formed into rows, knitting is quicker than purl. I checked the DVD and I'm doing purl correctly. There are only white sweet pea flowers and a pastel pink one left on the fence by the house. I'm waiting for rain. Drought was declared yesterday.

My white square reminds me of my Druid robe, the clear white shining stars, the cleanliness of soap, my tai chi gears, sheets flapping in the breeze, and the white clouds drifting overhead. My knitted blanket is going to be magic – like a magic carpet. Each square is a focus for my life as it is while I am creating it. It is a meditation woven in wool.

I can find myself in the strands of wool,

Jumbly, twinkly, spaghetti-like joy

Created by knots on a stick

A community of interdependent loops

Patched together from experience.

Yesterday I knitted a pink fluffy square. I thought of my home and all the comforts I have. It is a place for healing and rejuvenation. I sat on the sofa as the wind buffeted the land. The rain pelted down and I felt the comfort of being inside protected from the elements. I celebrated the feeling of the flow of water.

Magic carpet

Patchwork rug

Druid blankie

Afghan throw

Knitted blanket

Druid journey

Woven strands



inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

Balance - a precious state, not to be found easily or handed out as a gift. No, balance flows. Balance is born of wise choice and actions, it is dynamic, it moves through our whole lives in many forms. The wisdom of our ancestors to be balanced with the excitement of our anticipation, the masculine and the feminine inside us all, emotion and intellect, creation and accomplishment, hearts love for ourselves and for others.

Often we are very aware of the balance we seek as we find ourselves swinging past it frequently, in one direction or another, never quite managing to settle before the spot moves on with life's flow.

At Alben Elfed, the Grove of the Summer Stars celebrated the balance of light and dark once more, committing ourselves to balance, to be blessed with its gifts in our own lives and with us, the lives of all around us.



An Ode to Balance

*I search for balance, often with a frown
An illusive state, is it 'verb' or 'noun'
'Equilibrium' or 'stability'
'Justice', perhaps 'impartiality'
So many meanings 'balance' has for me*

*But to know that my soul has stabilized
Is to be in a place so dearly prized
Where all my emotions and senses strive
Passions, temperance, together contrive
for that 'Balance,' that makes my spirit thrive*

Les Williams



From Rhiannon of the Grove

Here's something I wrote close to the end of my degree last year and I think it fits the Samhain idea of death and rebirth and hope.

We looked at each other, the bound prisoner and I. Calm grey eyes met terrified blue ones. I winked. Don't worry. It will all be fine.

It had been the worst year in memory. The drought-ridden summer had shrivelled the grain in the fields. Rivers dried to dust, leaving fish to writhe epileptically as they choked to death on the foetid air. Stream beds cracked into misery. The autumn rains failed to quench the land's thirst, gathering slightly in puddles and then evaporating, leaving a stinking sludge behind that bred flies and disease, fever stalking in a septic dance from house to house.

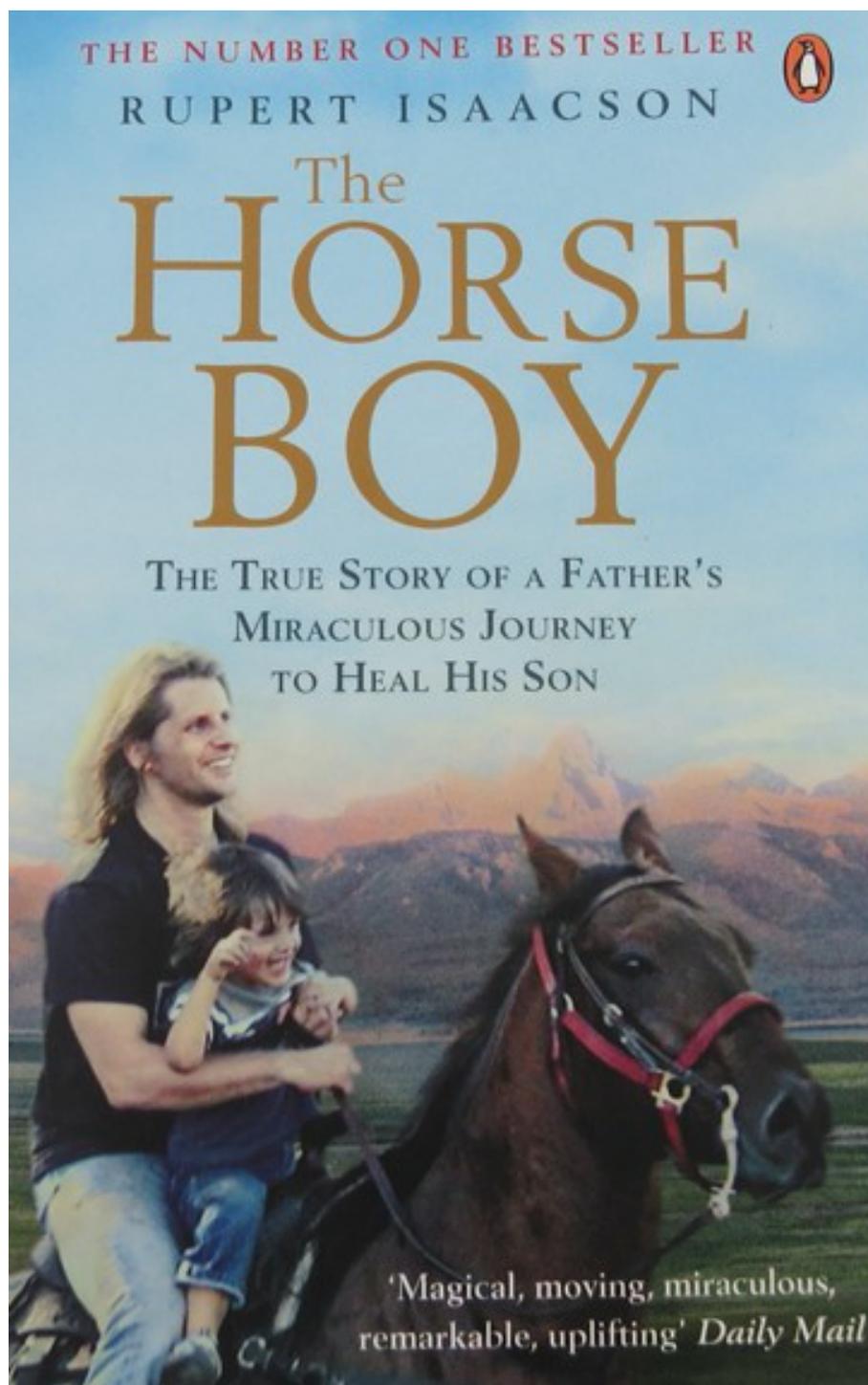
Winter though, winter was the destroyer. With no stores from summer set by we were reliant on forage from the woods, soon buried under snow. The deer herds moved south, and we were without meat. Those that the plague had spared in autumn soon fell to a dreadful cough that turned into bloody, choking death. Mothers left their newborns in the forest because they had neither food nor firewood to keep them alive. Brothers killed each other over black and rotten potatoes, and if, after such a fight, a family suddenly had enough meat to keep them fed for a while, nobody said anything.

It will all be fine my wink said, and I wanted desperately to believe it. I wanted – no, needed to believe that the spring would bring a good crop. I needed to know that there would be food. Those frightened eyes found me again, deep in their starved sockets, and I held his gaze. The prisoner was handsome, or he would have been if famine hadn't tightened his flesh around his bones. Tattoos coiled along previously well-muscled arms and his shrunken chest: A wolf and a bear climbed each bicep to bite at the twin suns on his shoulders while snakes curved around his chest like a pair of fists to challenge each other below his collarbones. Blonde hair was tied back from his face in a braid. There were scars where spear and axe had found him in battles past. He was a fine gift for the Gods, even though his tied hands shook and chapped lips were nervously licked.

I poured all of my ravenous hope into a warm smile for him, my chapped lips splitting and bleeding. My stomach growled at the taste of my own blood. After a long moment, he returned it, all former fear replaced with love. The priest untied him and waved him forward. The crowd parted. The man suddenly had a clear path to freedom, but he went to the altar as though meeting a beloved friend. He would give his gift gladly. He settled himself down on the wooden table, graceful as a cat. He had been cleansed, skin gleaming in the watery sunlight, the hot blood of his predecessors still flowing, nearly black in its redness. The man wasn't looking at me now. His eyes were fixed on the skies above him as he lifted his chin. He still smiled. The priest's knife came down, the man's steaming blood collected in the gold bowl beneath the altar. The eight men that had gone before him, holy now in death, were hanging from the World Tree, blood dripping onto the leaves and feeding the starved earth.

It will all be fine.





'The Horse Boy' by Rupert Isaacson

Review by Cherry Carroll

This is the true story of a severely autistic boy, Rowan. It is written by his father, Rupert, and is a deeply moving and honest narration of the despair, love, defeat and triumph that the family faces as they seek healing for their son. Rowan is barely able to communicate and is incontinent. Traditional methods do not improve his condition but when his father, a lifelong horseman, takes him for a horse ride the boy starts to improve. He seems to have a deep bond with horses and they in turn treat him with great care, appearing to realise that he is vulnerable. Rupert conceives a seemingly impossible plan to seek shamanic healing for Rowan in Mongolia, the traditional home of horses.

The story follows their incredible adventure as the family travels across the wilds of Mongolia, crossing some of the most beautiful and difficult to navigate country in the world, mainly by horseback, to bring Rowan to the Shamans for healing. What follows is nothing short of a miracle.

This is a beautiful story which I found impossible to put down.

Samhain

*His breathing comes hard, there's a wheeze in his chest
The time has now come for him to lay down and rest
His bones are so weary just standing is a struggle
With the last of his energy he walks with a shuffle*

*The Goddess leads him over to look across the Land
To see that his sacrifice has produced something grand
All around them the bonfires are burning so bright
Their children have prepared, now everything is right*

*A mist curls around them as the veil starts to thin
Taking his last breath, he is now free to travel in
The Underworld is now open for those who wish to see
Your Ancestors are here for you, for today they walk free*

*The Cailleach walks among them, stripping the leaves from the trees
As her staff touches the ground, all around starts to freeze
The decay that she creates is important to life
If she hears what you ask she may banish your strife*

*Take some time today to think of your dearest departed
They may reach out to you, their messages wholehearted
What a blessing it is to have this chance to connect
Use this time wisely to prepare for what's next*

Chris Parker



On the Heavens

by John Jordan

I am in the darkness, darkness is all around me.

It is a deep velvety black, totally absorbing. There is no temperature.

I am not cold, yet I am not sure how I can exist.

In front of me is a cast-iron pan, made of the same stuff as the rest of the universe. It is made of velvet black.

In it lies the Moon, filling the whole pan with her warm radiance. She looks like an omlette, flat and yellow. A close look belies the crater marks in her fair skin. I know her; she reflects the light of the Sun, though there is no Sun around to be seen.

I realize I am trying to find the Sun, and slowly an urgency develops inside me. I know she is not the Sun, but maybe she knows where he is.

Without realizing I have a voice until after I have finished speaking, I ask; "Moon, Moon, where is the Sun?"

She opens her eyes and looks at me. Her eyes are deep and blue, as wide as the oceans, and reflections twinkle up at me.

"Who are you?" she asks "and what was it that you wanted?"

She speaks as if rudely awoken, and yawns.

I realize as she speaks that a shadow is slowly creeping across her face, a shadow which is now almost touching her left eye. It is not without some fear that I closely regard the broad sensuous mouth that heightens the femininity of her circular face. Every time she opens her mouth to speak, the shadow slowly eclipses more of her countenance.

"I am not important, but I must urgently find the Sun"

"I can't go telling anyone his whereabouts" she pouts, "I know he is a man of high dignity and short temperature, I must know to whom I am speaking"

I realize I am leaning over the cast-iron pan, and it appears now that her face has taken on the properties of a giant clam. The encroaching shadow has all but swallowed her large blue left eye and is halfway through her mouth. It is as if she is folding herself in half, despite of the bond of conversation between us.

I quickly search for a clue, a reference to my identity. I look all around, but all I can see is deep velvet which swallows my every outward thought.

I turn back to the pan.

"I don't know who I am" I say, "I have not got a body"

It was true, I could not find it anywhere. I realize with a slight shock that now even my words were subtracting from her beautiful face.

"I do not mean to hurt you" I say, without realising what I am doing to her. The pan is slowly filling with black velvet, and its edges begin to disappear.

The shadow has almost taken her other eye, and I am leaning over the pan to hear her last whispers.

"I know you don't," she was barely audible. "I know who you are anyway"

It was true, I was the only other being in the universe and she knew everything that I didn't.

Only three words were left of her now.

I turned all my energy towards her, stretching myself to the last sliver of her beauty.

"Who?" I said, half destroying her.

"The Sun"

She was gone, along with her last words. The pan had disappeared in the blackness.

She had almost taken me with her, we had almost destroyed each other, but no. Something remained in me, something of her beauty.

I looked out again and strained my eyes

Pinpoints of light began to form in the void. One by one the stars were coming out.

I had the feeling I might see her again one day, and hoped that things would be different the next time we met.

DAMH THE BARD 2018



SPONSORSHIP FOR DAMH THE BARD

Plans are afoot to bring Damh the Bard and Cerri Lee back to Australia in September 2018

There will be a Druid's Camp Weekend in Adelaide S.A. as well as concerts in various cities across Australia.

We are looking for 140 people to donate \$50 each so if you would like to be a 'Damh the Bard' sponsor and be part of bringing this amazing couple back to our Great Southern Land you can either donate via Paypal or direct debit.

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Samhuin 2017

*From the silky oak to the Bohdi tree
Those who've come before help define me
From up and down and far away
The spirits of place call to me this day
Ancestors recent or from the distant past
Call upon us now but we're not the last
We have come before and we'll come again
Either in the city or country or as women or men
We are defined not by name but by action or deed
Not our thoughts or our homes, cars or our steed
Our actions you see betray our intentions
And it is by those that we get our honourable mention
Arrive as you must to define your great story
Turn up to explain and provide a reason for glory
But not all actions and lives are story book tales
Alas some are wasted and failures are regaled*

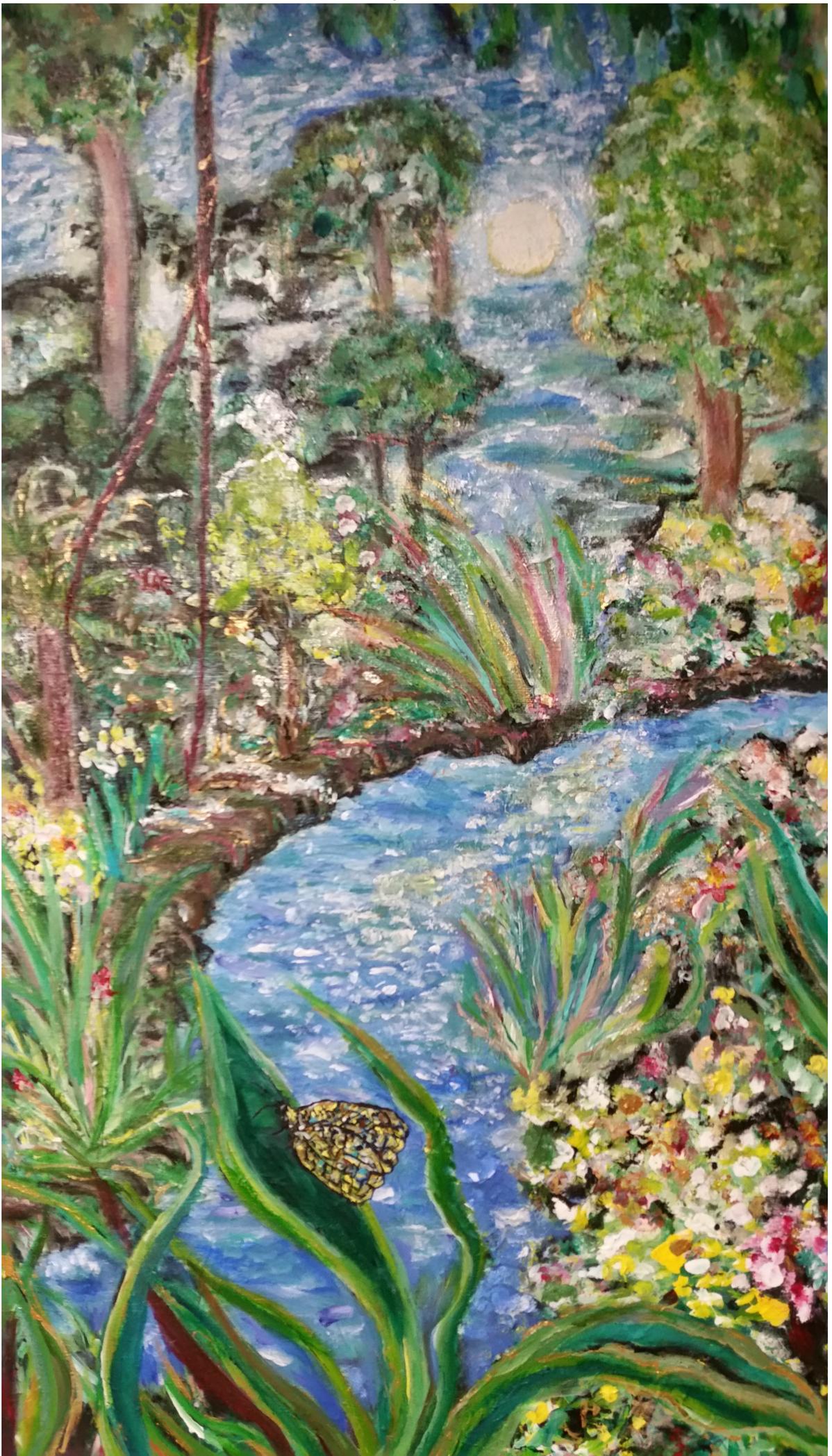
*But we all have a chance to make something new
We are not cut off from change or chances to do
Something different, beguiling and worthy of a name
A chance that was taken and changed the game
But never a soul that has traversed the stars
Has been ignored by the hearts watching afar
For our purpose if we now choose to accept it
Is to take hold of potential and never reject it
Should our ancestors hold us during our greatest mistakes
Then our descendants will honour us as one of the greats
So take heart as our story is never quite done
And we always have a chance at another home run
As we sit and remember the souls gone before
Our hearts quite open to hearing their names once more
They never leave us and we're never alone
And the one day will come when together we're home.*

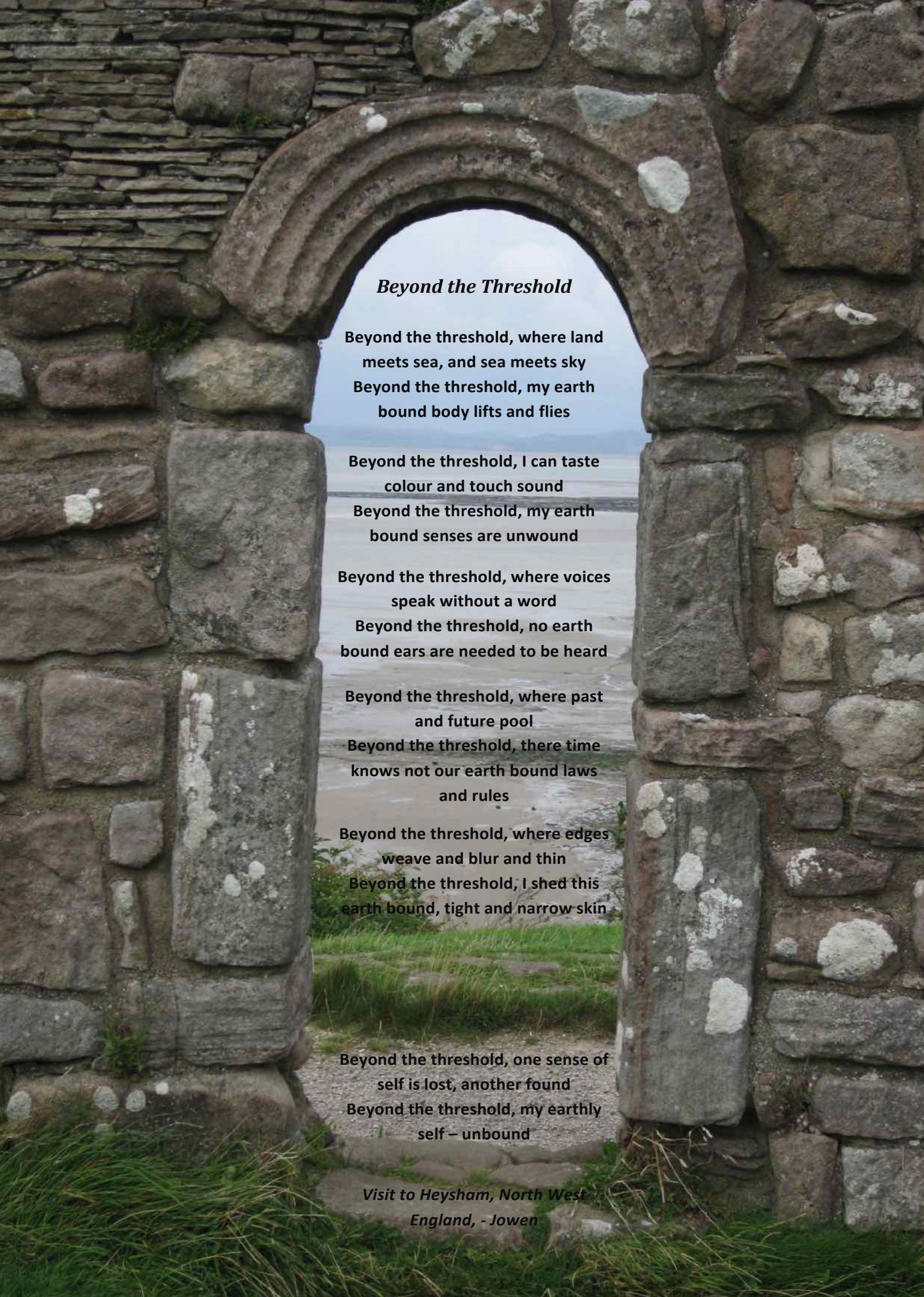
Sarah Duffy



Pic by Carmen Holloway

Artwork by Leah Walsh



A photograph of a stone archway in a wall, looking out onto a beach and sea. The arch is made of large, rough-hewn stones. The wall is made of smaller, more regular stones. The view through the arch shows a sandy beach, the sea, and a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

Beyond the Threshold

**Beyond the threshold, where land
meets sea, and sea meets sky
Beyond the threshold, my earth
bound body lifts and flies**

**Beyond the threshold, I can taste
colour and touch sound
Beyond the threshold, my earth
bound senses are unwound**

**Beyond the threshold, where voices
speak without a word
Beyond the threshold, no earth
bound ears are needed to be heard**

**Beyond the threshold, where past
and future pool
Beyond the threshold, there time
knows not our earth bound laws
and rules**

**Beyond the threshold, where edges
weave and blur and thin
Beyond the threshold, I shed this
earth bound, tight and narrow skin**

**Beyond the threshold, one sense of
self is lost, another found
Beyond the threshold, my earthly
self – unbound**

*Visit to Heysham, North West
England, - Jowen*

The Wheel of Segais



Pamela Meekings-Stewart

What a fabulous introduction to The Wheel of Segais online through Global Spiritual Studies on Wednesday 19 April. Twelve people participated in the live presentation from the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the USA and another 135 signed up to view the recording!

For the next three months I will be working on putting together a 6-part video series and manual on the various aspects of The Wheel of Segais as a divination tool and how to read it.

I have set up a page on my website – www.thewoolshedretreats/wheel-of-segais/ - with the story so far, and I will do regular updates letting you know how the project is going. So if you're interested in becoming a Reader or receiving a reading – stay tuned! I will also post updates here in SerpentStar.

Later in the year I will also be putting together a 12-part video series covering the 12 segments of The Wheel of Segais for those of you who are interested in using it as a facilitation tool for projects, business, life coaching etc.

Yours in the harmony of the Seasons
Pamela
pamela@thewoolshed.com



The Cailleach – Mother of Winter

By Tracy Hamilton-Breed

Why do you tremble little bird?

Be still; still the nervous breath, the tremulous heart and the quickened step.

Be still and hear, be still and listen, be still and feel.

It has been said that I bring the harshest of Winters, long bitter snows, storms that rage and ruin beyond repair; that I bring death and ill tidings and it is sooth, I do.

Is it these things that bring fear?

It is said that I am bent and twisted, that I am shrouded in shadow for my visage is ruinous and causes fright. It is sooth.

Is it this that further instils your fear?

It is said that I walk between the dead and the dying, that I traverse the veil between the worlds. This too holds truth.

Is it this that becomes fearsome?

It is said that I have three faces, and I am the collector of bones. This too holds merit.

Is this what bothers you?

It is said that I am fearsome, and that I guard my charges with ruthlessness. I cannot refute.

Is it this that causes your heart to thunder?

These things I cannot and will not deny. They are truth. Yet every truth holds an ever deeper truth – an accounting of one's spiritual quest.

I am the Cailleach. I am the child of Grianan, the Winter Sun. I rise at Samhuinn and fall again at Beltaine. But I am ever present.

I bring the Winter, I bring an ending to the time of harvest, and give the plants and animals who need it a moment of respite, a moment of rest. It is not death that I bring, but the chance for newness to be brought forth, from the trees which lay dormant in the Winter, and spring forth new growth at the stirring of Spring, to the seeds that were born from the harvest and require the coldness of the Earth to quicken their hearts.

I favor shadow; for it is in the shadow that my work belongs. I am the walker between worlds, and I see life and death and rebirth within every creature. It is this that is cast upon my face. To see my countenance is to bear witness to your own fate, thus I wear the veil.

I am the Singer of the bones. I bring peace to the dying. I birth them from this physical realm to the other world. I hold their souls in my lap as if they were the seed that I nurture so gently as it rests beneath the Earth. They and I sing quietly as my cauldron simmers to bring forth new life after the long Winter sleep.

I am The Cailleach; it is I who must bear the cold of purification as I strip away those things that no longer serve. I am charged with guarding all the Earth's creatures from Samhuinn to Beltaine, and I do so with ferocity for the Winter months are a time of dormancy and all are at their most vulnerable.

I am the Cailleach, and I weave my way among you all, singing to the bones of the Earth, calling new life from the old, calling forth new life from the forgotten and bringing clarity, peace and release.

So be still little bird, be still and ready for sleep, for the Winter months are nearly upon us and my work is beginning.

**There is no dance like
Now**

*There is no dance like now
Take off your shoes
Go barefoot before the mystery
Swirl in circles
As one*

*Divine weavings of the creators
loom
Full of colours and hues of every
description
Hoist the flag of founding
First unfolding's
Of life's lights
Complete
Connect
Correct
With the flowing flowers of life
That pass mind words from the
source
That pass mindwards to the source*

The Weaver

*I am asking the weaver
The one at the loom
I am asking to know
To know the fabric of things
I am asking what thread
These fibers will become
I am asking the weaver
The one at the loom
How the patterns will balance.
I am asking after symmetry,
Simplicity or complexity.
I am asking of the colours
How do they blend together?
I am asking,
I am asking,
I am asking.
To know the fingertips upon my
single strand
Of the worn and weary hands of
the weaver*

*Through the loom of life
Looming large
Tapestries of colours intersect and
blur
Crossroads of colour
Where pathways meet, merge and
mingle*

*Light upon light upon light
Opens and reveals
A mile of mandala
Myriad moment
Magical movement*

There is no dance like now

*Contradict the impossible with
infinite imagination
Be beyond borders
Layers of light orders
Crystalize
Dazzling
Immaculate
Cleansing the outer reaches
Of the inner realm
Returning loyally to the truth
Transforming lights of revelation
Elation
Creation
Bold borders of being
Stretching out and on forever*

*I am asking the weaver
The one who knows.
Asking the way of things to come
Born from the rising and falling .
Swift shuttle shoots
Backwards
Forwards
From the ever present moment
There is a pattern in the rhythm
Fundamental fates will be woven
into one
One grand design
I am asking the weaver
The weaver of mine
Which thread will be sound
Which thread will be strong
Which thread will be pure
Which thread ?*

Poetry by Ian K Brown

**We are making love with
forever**

*We are making love with forever
Cast like shinning pearls
Into the dark soul of the night
We are embracing eternity
Gliding our lips across the skin of
the creator
Kissing the mouth of our mother
Earth*

*We are making love with forever
Waiting for the light to catch us
In just such a way that we shall
shine
Playing in the harmony of the stars
Singing the soul of the sacred back to
its home
Knowing warmth in the wonder
Being dance in the dream of the
divine*

*We are making love with forever
We are lost in the giddy bliss,
Dizzy in our dance with deity
Strip of your clothes
Tug them from around your smooth
hips
Let them fall to the earth
We will make clouds of dust around
our ankles
As your golden bells ring
Shake out your hair
Let it fall upon your shoulders*

*We are making love with forever
light step as you begin the ritual
Find firm footing
As the sacred wheel shifts
The dancers move , around ,
around ,
around
Eyes catch glints of now ,
Eyes catch glints of then
Eyes catch glints of when
Doorways release into the windows of
your soul
Bright shards of gold are reflected by
fire .*

*We are making love with forever
The firelight-shadows-gold will make
forms across your naked skin
You will become the eternal canvas
Where birth and death are born out
and danced
Flickering gilded dancers will make
movement
Large as life
On the canvas of the eternal mind
Making space for mythic shapes to
appear and engulf us .
We are making love with forever .*

**For a free copy of Ian's anthology email
ian.kenneth.brown@gmail.com**



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>

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Issued June 20, 2016

*Thank you for your commitment to biodiversity.
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| BEKAH KELSO | MURPH'S |
| GINGER DOSS | MIDNIGHT |
| KELLIANNA | ROUNDERS |
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Todd William Dearing
WRITING ART DESIGN

♦ ART ♦ VISUAL DESIGN ♦
♦ BOOK DESIGN ♦ EDITING ♦ PROOFREADING ♦
♦ PUBLICATIONS ♦ WRITING ♦

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Located within the Perth suburb of Banjup, Western Australia, Dreaming Tree Grove is a nature-based spiritual group grounded in Druidry, inspired by a "shamanic worldview" and a love of being immersed in natural surroundings. We view Druidry's journey through bard - ovate - druid as a creative and experiential journey, one that explores not just the Self in nature, but the nature of Self. For us, our spiritual path is one of integrity and service, of celebrating life and recognising the interconnection of all things.

Although we are affiliated with the British Druid Order, and while we acknowledge the traditions of our path, and the mythic cycle that weaves its way through our tradition, our connection to place is here within the bio-regional movements of nature that create this part of the Southern Hemisphere. So we explore our spirituality and practise through these sacred lands here in the south west of Western Australia, and therefore our approach reflects this.

To find out more about the Grove, about joining us, and our training program, visit our website:

<http://dreamingtreegrove.wixsite.com/dreamingtreegrove>





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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 Ovale studies. My aim is to help make your ceremony meaningful and memorable....




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

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

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

ajgcelebrant@optusnet.com.au

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Anne Conroy

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Pamela Meekings-Stewart

Registered Marriage and Civil Union Celebrant
 New Zealand

I offer Druid, pagan and alternative spirituality marriages, hand fasting and civil union ceremonies working with couples to create their own unique ceremony.

As a Druid and committed to a spiritual life, the work is important to me. Couples continue to ask for my services and very much appreciate the gentle spiritual aspect of the ceremonies I help them put together.

I am also able to arrange contact for weddings and civil unions at Stonehenge Aotearoa in the Wairarapa with myself as Celebrant.

Marriage and Civil Unions are the only ceremonies that require a legal, registered Celebrant. However, I also craft and perform many other forms of ceremony and blessing:

Namings (children and change of name); **Birth Blessings**; **Vows of Recommitment**; **Entering The Wisdom Years - Croning** (women) and **Sageing** (men); **House Blessings**; **Blessings and Invocations For Passing Over**; **Funerals and Burial Blessings**



Tying the knot

Two lives entwine

Tying the knot

Two families entwine

Binding our futures together



Contact: pamela@thewoolshed.com

TheWoolshedretreats.co.nz

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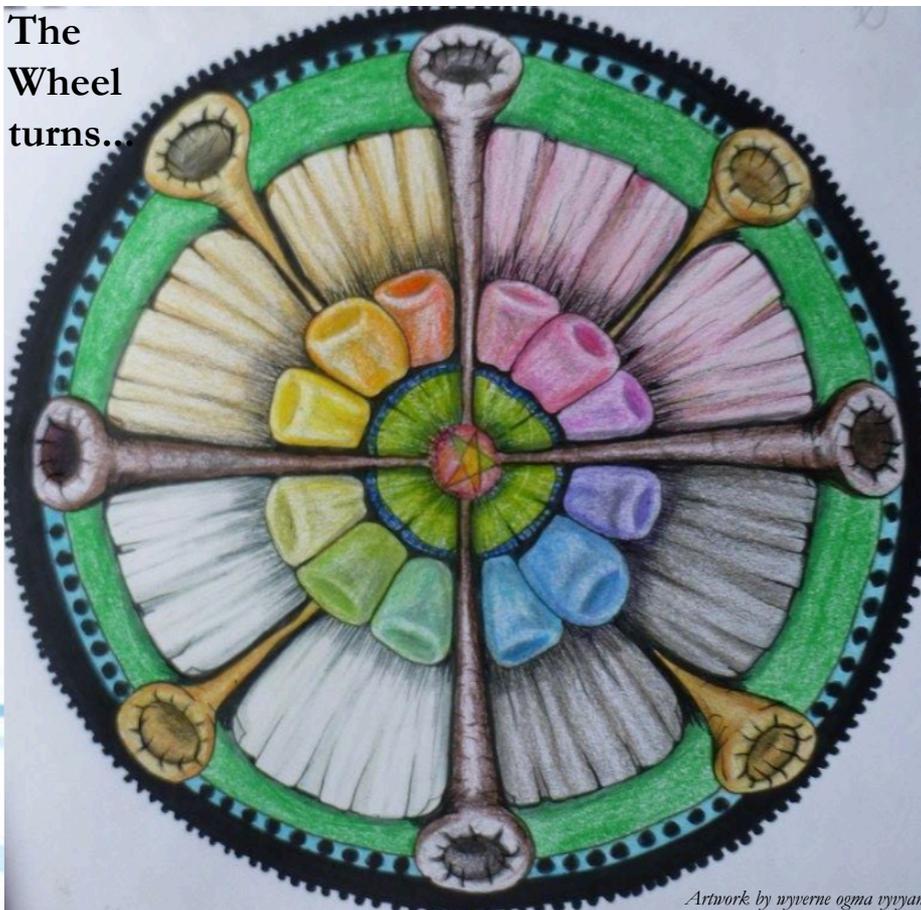


And finally...



Artwork by John Jordan

The
Wheel
turns...



Artwork by nyverne ogma ryryan

Samhuinn... was a time of no-time. Celtic society, like all early societies, was highly structured and organised - everyone knew their place. But to allow that order to be psychologically comfortable, the Celts knew that there had to be a time when order and structure were abolished - when chaos could reign. And Samhuinn was such a time. Time was abolished for the three days of this festival, and people did crazy things - men dressed as women and women as men. Farmers' gates were unhinged and left in ditches, peoples' horses were moved to different fields, and children would knock on neighbours' doors for food and treats...

But behind this apparent lunacy, lay a deeper meaning. The Druids knew that these three days had a special quality about them. The veil between this world and the World of the Ancestors was drawn aside on these nights, and for those who were prepared, journeys could be made in safety to the 'other side'. The Druid rites, therefore, were concerned with making contact with the spirits of the departed, who were seen as sources of guidance and inspiration rather than as sources of dread. The dark moon, the time when no moon can be seen in the sky, was the phase of the moon which ruled this time, because it represents a time in which our mortal sight needs to be obscured in order for us to see into the other worlds. The dead are honoured and feasted, not as the dead, but as the living spirits of loved ones and of guardians who hold the root-wisdom of the tribe.

Text sourced from Druidry.org

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