

SERPENT STAR

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



BELTANE 2017

Welcome to the Beltane 2017 issue of SerpentStar!

Remember how Douglas Adams, bless him, described the concept of space in the *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*?

This issue of SerpentStar is big. Really big. I'm going to let it speak for itself, with its pictures and stories from Assembly, its poetry and prose and its showcase of the talent we have in this region.

And then it's time to begin work on the special 20th Anniversary SerpentStar - details below, submissions close Friday 15 December!

With all joy, Mandy /|\



SERPENTSTAR



Volume 1, Issue 1

Alban Hefin 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 - serpentstar.obod@gmail.com, and clearly mark them Twentieth Anniversary.

SerpentStar, Beltane 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. Front cover and editorial page photos by Chris Parker. 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). 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 or Fiona at Fiona.mulholland@bigpond.com

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

The Windharp Seed Group

Based in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia and named after the She-oak or Casuarina, also known as a Windharp. She-oaks are known as windharps because of the mystical sound they make when the wind breathes through the knotted leaves - a soft music like that of the Aeolian Harp. We are a learning group who gather to celebrate the eight seasonal rituals of the wheel of the year and study together. We also hold various shared events and ceremonies that non-members are able to attend. Contact Tamzin Woodcock or Adrienne Piggott windharpseedgroup@gmail.com



Wollemi Seed Group

Nestled between the mountains and the sea, Wollemi Seed Group covers Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Greater Hunter Region. Rich with flowing rivers, fields and natural beauty, we meet fortnightly to explore the depths of the Bardic and Ovate paths. We meet for each of the festivals, and invite all interested in Druidry and the love earth to join us. For information, 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

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.



What happens when someone gets injured at an Assembly?

This question came up at the recent Assembly as a part of a general discussion about future assemblies, and three suggestions were put forth:

1. That we become incorporated.
2. That we seek 'umbrella cover' from a group such as Gliding Seal Events.
3. That the public liability insurance of the venue we hire is all we need.

From listening to each person's response, it seems to me...

- That incorporation relates more to groups that have ongoing activities, like a car racing club.
- That umbrella cover might be the way to go if the assembly venue doesn't have public liability insurance.
- It is very important that the question is asked of the venue: "Do you have public liability insurance?" If the answer is "Yes", then further questions can be asked.
- Our gatherings are like family get-togethers, such as birthday parties, which are covered by the public liability clause of the host's house and contents insurance. In the case of assemblies, one could reasonably expect that the insurance taken out by a venue would do the same job.

Please don't write to me personally about this because I'm not qualified to answer. I'm hoping that someone among our membership, who is qualified, will send a response to Serpentstar and set us on the right course.

Elkie

ASSEMBLY PIX Part 1

Contributions on this page by Valkyrie Blacksmith and Mandy Gibson



That Imbolc Morn

by Sarah Duffy

*We all arose with clouded eyes
That mirrored the darkened skies
Weary bodies dragged out of bed
The promise of dawn danced in our heads*

*The spiral lay before us on the earth
And we assembled here full of mirth
We gathered there from strong to weaker
And the dance offered much to the seeker*

*"Uphold your candle source of illumination"
It was ever more than our rumination
It was cold before dawn down deep in our bones
But anticipation has heat more than you know*

*To our right the figures glided sleek and with grace
Too dark to make out expression upon face
They stirred ancient wonder within and without
Enchantment was brewing there was no doubt*

*The circle was cast upon hardened ground
The reciters and casters used spirit and sound
The quarters were called and breath steam did rise
The birdsong quite deafening across the skies*

*The candles a burning the stage was set
The call to Brigid was made and forwards she stepped
Radiant and sombre, beguiling and reverant
She glowed on her own and amongst those there present*

*What was to come next we could not imagine
She embodied the Goddess and it was more than a pageant
Voices were lifted we were reaching a fever pitch
When flames surged forward and the arch it was lit*

*Roaring the fire it burnt all around her elated
Glowing she stood otherworldly and voices syncopated
The Goddess present and the arch was ablaze
No more we could ask and we stood amazed*

*Brigid the patroness of the Druids
Of smithcraft and poetry, of fire and renewing
The cauldron effusive the smoke all encompassing
The dawn it was rising with mist dispersing*

*The ritual had peaked and our bodies responded
There was much to take in and our doubts absconded
We came back to earth changed from before
The circle retracted, the ritual no more
The Goddess she lingered, we kissed as we passed
The intent of our time here in our souls it would last.*



Pic by Tina Davidson



My First Druid Assembly

By Jenny Swain

I knew about the assemblies long ago, but had never had the opportunity to attend one. When the 16th Assembly was to be close to home I jumped at the chance to attend, so on the 11th of July I put my application form in.

I found the application painless and got to and enrol, then sat back and waited for the day to arrive. As it got closer I got more and more excited and apprehensive. I came with an open mind, as I had never been to a Druid event but many other Pagan events. There were many wow factors.

On the Thursday night I packed my car and went to bed to await the morning to come. I had to go to work first and all day I was getting excited - 3pm and I was out the door and on my way to my very first Assembly, at which I had also elected to become initiated into the Ovate grade.

When I turned into the street leading to the camp the first thing I noticed was the AWEN signs pointing the direction that I needed to travel. This impressed me and I knew I was in for a good weekend.

I was welcomed by the organisers and shown to my room where I unpacked and got ready for the welcoming. We had a special treat from Damh the Bard and Philip Carr-Gomm. We then moved down to the parade ground. Circle was cast and the fun began. This was very different from other ceremonies that I had attended. The four faces of Brigid each entered the circle and bid us all welcome. After which I needed to get to bed as I had a big weekend ahead.

Saturday Morning

I wasn't planning on waking too early this morning, however I awoke to the sounds of beautiful music wafting on the air. This was the morning Chakradance meditation.

This little fellow sat and chatted with me after breakfast, and enjoyed the sun with me for a short time till it was time to go for a workshop.

I came to the Druid Assembly not expecting to participate in much except going to workshops, and found that I had little speaking parts in nearly every ceremony. This tested me greatly as I find it hard to talk in public, especially with strangers.

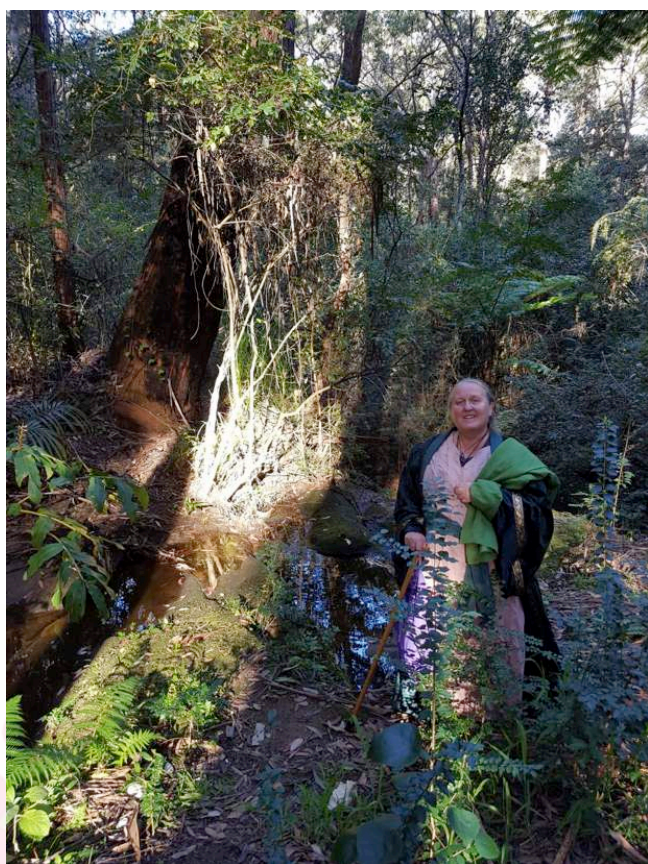


The Bardic Initiation

This was very moving to witness and everyone had tears in their eyes. It was held in what was once an old chapel surrounded by bush and wildlife. The kookaburras and cockatoos were present and lent their voices to the ceremony. It was only 4 o'clock, felt like 6, time seems to stand still in the bush.

We came back from the initiation for afternoon tea. After attending such an event I was excited and nervous for the next day, when my initiation was to happen.

After dinner the cottage was electrified with preparations for the Eisteddfod. I was not attending. There was a picture painted however on the Sunday morning of shadow puppets around the fire, and such merriment it all sounded magical. From all accounts I should have gone, however was in a little pain.



One of my fellow bunkmates preparing for the Eisteddfod



My Initiation

Wow, Emotional, Powerful and Daunting all rolled into one.

A rebirthing experience and the gifts I received are precious and will remain with me always.

The bushland setting was just wonderful and it seemed like all of the creatures and trees were talking to me.

Monday

Another wow factor. We were woken at 5am for an Imbolc ceremony, and again words cannot explain. There was a path of light leading into a circle of light. The Awen was lit and this was a beautiful sight.

I went to work with 55 Druids chanting the Awen in my head, and all I could do was to complete my shift and get back to you even though it was to say farewell and that we would all see each other soon.

Tuesday

The time was drawing near to bid farewell to you all. Breakfast was over, closing ceremony complete, tears flowing. Then the packing and farewelling began with promises of keeping in touch by phone, facebook or meet-ups.

My first Assembly will be very memorable, and I know that I have formed long term friendships around Australia and across the ditch to New Zealand. I cast my mind back to the events many times over and the sound of the AWEN still rings in my ears.

Not sure where these words of inspiration came from, however they seem very powerful: "Be what you want to be. With a little bit of hard work you can do it."

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.

Paypal login address for sponsorship is
sponsordamh@spiraldance.com.au

or

email us for direct debit details: info@spiraldance.com.au

Introduction to the History Project

by Elkie White

The Australian Druidry History Project was launched at the Assembly. The catalyst for this project came from Josie Winter, who instigated the successful Pagan Collective of Victoria (PCV) which I have recently been given the honour of joining as a representative of OBOD.

Josie was asked to write an article for *The Wild Hunt* on 'Druidry in Australia', and needed my answers pronto. The first question was, "Tell me about the history of druidry as a spiritual practice in Australia?" Obviously I could not do justice to such an important question in 24 hours and so I offered to create a questionnaire for the assembly, with the view that if the interest was there, we could then extend it to other groups and individuals.

Well the interest was there, and I thank everyone at the Assembly for their support. I took four completed questionnaires home with me and have been receiving a steady stream of them since. A delightful trend has already emerged in regard to the question, "What do you think is distinctly 'Australian' in regard to druidry?" The responses have embraced not only the physical distinctiveness of Australia (soil, seasons, animals, plants etc) but also its emotional/spiritual distinctiveness (equality, tolerance, light-heartedness, humour, mateship etc). It will be fascinating to see how this develops.

Josie has decided to mostly leave the history question on the back-burner for now, but intends to put together a more thorough piece at a later date. I sent her a draft questionnaire to her for comment, and in response she alerted me to the need for facts and figures for the history nerds, and so I pass on her request, to you, for names, dates and places, wherever possible. I also sent a draft to David Waldron, who is a history lecturer at Ballarat University. David replied that it was a good questionnaire, and asked whether druidry was worth seeing as distinct to other pagan groups. And so I have included that query in the questionnaire. I sent it to OBOD HQ seeking their support and Philip suggested that we advertise it on the OBOD Facebook page, and in Touchstone, in order to reach more people. I also wrote to Mandy seeking permission to include her idea for a special edition of *Serpentstar*, which she kindly gave me.

For those of you who weren't at the assembly here it is, and you are invited to participate - please do! You can print the questions as here presented or, better still, write and ask me to attach the questionnaire to an email. It is in Word and thus very easy to edit, according to your needs. My address is whitelk@bigpond.com and I hope to hear from you.

Towards a History of Druidry in Australia: The OBOD contribution

Preliminary notes:

Welcome to the Australian Druidry History Project! The catalyst for this project came from several sources including Josie Winter's article for *The Wild Hunt* and Julie Brett's book on Australian Druidry. Through this questionnaire, you are invited to include your story and perspective. You do not need to answer every question but just the ones that you feel comfortable with or that you feel are important. It is only out of our personal stories that an authentic understanding of druidry in Australia can emerge. To save paper, the questions have been packed into one sheet of paper (**the next page**). To write more, simply cross-reference to additional sheets. If you prefer, send me an email and ask me to send you the questionnaire in Word format as an attachment. That way you can answer straight into the document.

Please return, with your responses, to Elkie: whitelk@bigpond.com by December 2017. Thanks.

Your name:

Email contact:

- Are you happy to be contacted in regard to this project?
- Please describe where you live: city/town/district/State/Territory/general ecology
- What is your local indigenous language group/cultural tribe?
- Do you have any contact with them?
- Generally speaking, do you support the idea of writing a history of druidry in Australia?
- What value might it have?
- What should it include?
- When did you join OBOD?
- How far along the course are you?
- Why did you join? Why not some other druid group? What do you like about OBOD?
- When did you realise you were a 'druid'? And how did that feel?

- This project ties in with the 20th Anniversary of SerpentStar, a newsletter for OBOD members living in the southern hemisphere. You can write the answer to this question and also submit it for inclusion in the special edition of SStar coming out in summer this year. The question is: What was your first OBOD experience in the SH? Or, here's how Mandy put it: At Alban Hefin 1997, our very own SerpentStar was born. To celebrate there will be a FIFTH issue this year, released at Alban Hefin, our official 20 th birthday. For this special issue I am 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.

- As a possible starting point to the above: when did you first meet another druid or member of OBOD? Describe that encounter.
- What do you know about the history of druidry in Australia? *This is a key question and so please answer it to the best of your ability. Single sentences and full essays are both welcome, and everything in between. Point form is also okay, but for the history buffs please include names, places, and dates wherever possible.*
- Would you be willing to research the history of druidry in your local area for this project?
- Are you involved in any other groups (related to your druidry or spirituality – including historical societies, other spiritual groups, environmental groups, social justice groups)?
- Do you see any link between the druidry that you practice today and the druidry that was practiced by the United Ancient Order of Druids in the early years of European settlement?
- Why do you think druidry is becoming more popular in Australia? What do you think people are looking for? Has this changed over the years?
- What do you think is distinctly 'Australian' in regard to druidry?
- Where do you see druidry in the future of Australia? Or, what do you vision for us in the future? Where would you like it to go? Can you relate your ideas to what druidry in Australia has been in the past?
- If someone asked you to specify what a druid is in 3 sentences, what would your 3 sentences be?

As members of OBOD we are not asked to be anything other than that. However some people attach the following words or phrases to druidry, hence the question: How comfortable are you with the following words? Please rate each from 0-10, with 0 being the least comfortable, and 10 the most comfortable.

- druid
- pagan
- eclectic (druidry)
- home-grown (druidry)
- "nature-based spirituality"
- the word 'religion' (in regard to druidry)
- Related to the above, do you think that druidry is worth seeing as distinct to other pagan groups?
- What further questions would you like to see included in a questionnaire about the history of druidry in Australia?

If your own story is not included in the above questions please feel free to write it on as many extra sheets as you like.

ASSEMBLY PIX Part 2

Contributions on this page by Tina Davidson



Memories from the Imagination

(and observations of a social gathering of like-minded visible and invisible entities;
and people)

By Michael Vlasto

At a meeting place of great rocks, flowing water and many an arch-thief of the bird tribes(!) we gathered to renew our ancient promises, and to look deep into the future and the past; in order to act in an appropriate way in the here and now, in this world of chaos.

My thanks to the disembodied one, who sitting in his glen far away sees all, and always reminds me of a blonde Jimi Hendrix, for casting the spell over us of becoming a pudding; all the different ingredients mixed in a cauldron of wonder, to make a pudding of inspiration called 'Albert'. For it was at a friend's house in Pennant Hills that a certain Norman Lindsay was instructed by a young boy to write a story about an everlasting pudding, which would feed all people as long as there was hunger for wonder in this world.

So aboard the magical boat that never sinks, we all plunged into the whirlpool and arrived at the Isle of the Druids; there we were instructed to maintain stability of attitude, in the city of fragmented attitude. This we practiced every day; deep-rooting the tree, nay, the Great Tree, of life. Calling it to rise in our circle, by the united will of everyone and everything present, and it came at the word of power. Huge it was, majestic, clothed in green to pour its ripe fruit upon us, in thanks of being called. And so we all grew; Bards for a day; Ovates for a day; Druids for a day; little trees growing, talking of everything a tree will talk about. All our fears washed away, as we little ones sucked our thumbs and became all we chose to dare to wish to be. Some resting in the pure creative, others resting in healing and illumination, while others climbed the cliffs nimble as goats, to meet the intelligences of why we need mystery and dragons.

I saw all climb aboard the boat that sailed to the Isle of Lost Opportunities, to rescue the children standing on the shore there, to meet the beautiful princess with white eyebrows; her mother with long red hair like snakes; and the prince from out the South who died for one kiss of her mouth. I saw kind people welcome the children home; old wise men who understand everything they have ever done; old wise women who washed them clean in the river as the new moon dipped; and the storyteller, showing them the golden links of their myth, where they fitted in and where they were going. And why? If not to eat of the great 'Albert', fresh risen from the pot!

I saw many a bottle of the Bee's golden medicine vanish into open mouths. I saw a dog illuminated in the great circle, and wondered what its spirit would become next time it encircled the Great Egg. I saw young men, confused and frightened by life, suddenly understand the beauty of one new step. I saw the old one throw the anchor out of the boat, so we could all land on a new shore.

"All changed, utterly changed,
So a terrible beauty was born."

As we climbed the track no waking footsteps mars,
To meet the Lady, dream fair in her beauty.

I saw Awen whack us as we ate Weetbix, baked beans and infinite varieties of chicken.

I saw a Druid woman, sombre-eyed, turn the spindle at her side.

Super Puffin leap and fly, going North.

I saw dawn rise in a great circle of fire, the cauldron steaming in the centre, while the three maidens robed in starlight called 'She who we honoured with snowdrops, fire and song, Mother of All.' And she came; through the arch of the rising sun, we changed 'We swear, by love to stand'.

I saw joyful meetings.

I saw sad partings.

As all became still once more,

As we came home to this world

And shuffled off, our swags crammed with memories.

A sailor, a penguin, a koala and a pudding, on the road once more.



Image courtesy freepik.com

The Small World

*Little voices pull me outside
Through the small, dusty glass window
Which is my eye
I see the Magazine children playing in
The filthy wind
Across the rail yards, dancing through barbed-wire fences
to the grey-grass world of Eternal Summer*

*Under the lonely wires
Beside the violent kings of industry
(belching hateful fire to make day into night)
they build their empire of sand, and use bottle-top money
to buy their rusty daffodils
Sometimes finding a valuable gem amongst
the wasted life.*

*A broken glass heart, or
An iron smile
Until the dusk brings the cold sea fog
to chase them home
Turning in the lonely light
She came to say goodbye, the men are taking her away
And her empire being sprayed with some new poison
But she says she won't be far
And gives me her most precious gift
A small round stone enhanced in moss
To one small patch she points
"We live here"
Soft as a bird she is gone
And my wet eyes wish that I had wings
Like a magazine child.*

by John Jordan



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."

2019 OBOD Southern Hemisphere Assembly in Aotearoa New Zealand

Thursday 17th January - Tuesday 22nd January 2019

Spring! We have had nothing but rain, rain, rain and then rain and wind!! Farm roads have become bogs and you cannot tell what colour my dear old RAV is from the mud. I wrote this poem to celebrate the joy of owning a dog and the healing power of Nature's storms.



Storm Walking with Kyra

by Pamela Meekings-Stewart

*IT HAS TO BE DONE!
Maybe another cup of tea?
IT HAS TO BE DONE!
C'mon, you'll be back by three.*

*The rain on the roof
Drowns out all other sound
The wind, finding a gap in the window frame
Is shrieking like some demented spirit
Seeking Halloween.
I do not want to go out for a walk
But SHE does – tail wagging, eyes pleading.
Raincoat, warm hat, rain boots, poo bags, leash
Off we go . .*

*Raindrops become missiles
Exploding and burning against my skin.
The wind roars and pushes us backwards
As we negotiate around deepening puddles.*

*The hair on her back is standing straight up!
I would move forward quicker
If my nose was as pointed as hers.
Storm sylphs dance about her ears.*

*She chases a rabbit, doggishly joyful
Then I too find my joy in the storm.
Flowering tagasaste bows and salutes.
I drink the raindrops from my tongue.
I walk straighter.
Power and warmth embrace me.
My wet mouth is smiling.*

*And so back home.
Both of us towelled dry.
A warm basket with a tartan blanket for her,
Tea and hot, spicy muffins for me.
What joy to own a dog
Who must be walked every day.*



Airmid's Cloak

We'd like to share this healing ritual we added into our Spring Equinox ceremony to invoke the spirits of Airmid, an Irish healing goddess, Goddess of the Growing Green, and her brother Miach to send healing energies to our ritual participants and out to the world.

Modron: We are going to do something special today – we are going to create a Flower Woman and Man with the flowers and fronds you have brought with you – the Goddess and God of Healing – for our Mother Earth, for our families and communities and for ourselves in honour of the magical healers Airmid and her brother Miach. This is an ancient story and was told to us by Philip Carr-Gomm.

Storyteller: This story comes from the land of Ireland. The god of Healing was known as Diancecht and he was a strong and powerful god. Such a healer was he that his hands could seal wounds simply with a touch, and his voice could cure the ills of the soul simply with a song. But he was a man in great demand, and he was a man with a temper. One day he heard someone remark that his son Miach was a better healer than himself. He shrugged off this comment, but over the coming weeks and months he started to hear more and more rumours and reports that his son had indeed surpassed him – that Miach rather than he should now be known as the God of Healing. In a fit of fury, and without thinking, Diancecht found his son and struck at his head with a magic sword cleaving his son's skull and brain in two. Weeping tears of sorrow and regret at his foolish pride and jealousy, Diancecht dug a grave and placed his son's body on it, covering it with earth as he said a prayer for his son's soul on its journey to the Summerlands. The following Spring, a miracle occurred. Where Miach had been buried, there grew a herb garden – no ordinary garden this, but a garden in the shape of Miach's body. And from this shape there sprang three hundred and sixty-five different plants, each one a cure for the illnesses of the three hundred and sixty-five nerves of the human body. Miach's sister, Airmid, discovered the miracle whilst visiting her brother's grave. She realised that Miach had found a way to convey his healing knowledge to the world. She decided there and then to preserve this knowledge for all time by gathering the herbs and laying them out on her cloak, which she spread beside the grave. As she picked each plant, she placed it carefully in the right position upon her cloak, until at last she had the form of her brother, laid out in flowers and leaves beneath her feet. She then planned to let the herbs dry, whilst she catalogued each one, relating it to the part of the body upon which it lay, until at last she would possess a complete apothecary that could cure every known ailment. But this was not to be. Although her father Diancecht sorely regretted killing his own son, he was still a jealous god who could countenance no rivalry. He discovered Airmid beside the grave, just as she laid the last herb upon her cloak. At once, he understood her plan and in a fit of jealous rage he grabbed hold of the cloak, lifted it up, and shook it furiously, scattering the herbs to the four winds the wisdom never to be discovered again. But today, as a powerful act of healing, we will pass through the magical Alban Gate and together create the God and Goddess of Healing for Miach and Airmid.

Modron: Let us spend a few minutes now in quiet meditation. This is a time for us to be conscious of what, in ourselves and in our lives, we wish to heal. In the centre burns the sacred flame, symbol of the inner flame that is within us all, flame of creativity, flame of healing. Let us now in perfect love and perfect trust, centre ourselves in peace and in power within the Sacred Grove, and meditate on what we wish to heal. *(Brief meditation)*

(Participants pass through the Alban Gate and when all are through they all help to create the God and Goddess of Healing with the flowers and fronds they have brought.

(When all but Druid 1, South and East have placed their flowers and fronds and returned to the circle...)



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

Druid 1: (*Places flower or frond*) As flowers and new growth spring anew from the earth so may they bloom with love and healing in our hearts, in our minds and in our lives.

South: (*Places their flower or frond*) I speak for the abiding Earth and Her laws now and forever. Be wise!

East: (*Places their flower or frond*) I speak for the seed of Life now and for ever. Be healed and renewed!

North: (*Places a candle between the heads*) May the warmth and light of the growing days bring our prayers to fruit.

West: (*Sprinkles water on the flowers and fronds*) I speak for the blessings of Water, the power of Love, the power of Healing, now and forever. Be blessed!

(*All return to the circle*)

Druid 2: A Blessing for Spring:

May you find greening and

Regeneration in this season

May all dross be cleansed from

You in healing waters and may

New life flourish and flow, in you

And around you.

May the divine union within lead

To creative expression and joy.

(*Juliet Batten, Dancing with the Seasons*)



Two new additions to our Grove Library

The Grove of the Summer Stars has quite an extensive Druid/Pagan library and while you have to be physically here to borrow books, you can view our collection at <http://connect.collectorz.com/users/woolshedlib/books/view>

Here are reviews for a couple of new additions:

The Parliament of Poets: An Epic Poem, by Frederick Glaysher.

This takes place partly on the moon, at the Apollo 11 landing site, the Sea of Tranquility, a Journey toward healing the psyche of the planet. In a world of Quantum science, Apollo, the Greek god of poetry, calls all the poets of the nations, ancient and modern, East and West, to assemble on the moon to consult on the meaning of modernity. The Parliament of Poets sends the Persona on a Journey to the seven continents to learn from all of the spiritual and wisdom traditions of humankind. On Earth and on the moon, the poets teach him a new global, universal vision of life. One of the major themes is the power of women and the female spirit across cultures. Another is the nature of science and religion, including Quantum Physics, as well as the 'two cultures', science and the humanities. That transcendent Rose symbol of our age, the Earth itself, viewed from the heavens, one world with no visible boundaries, metaphor of the oneness of the human race, reflects its blue-green light into the blackness of the starry universe.

The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors, by David George Haskell.

Unless you already have an ear for natural soundscapes, there is a good chance you will discover a whole new orchestra by reading this book, the second book by American scientist-cum-poet David George Haskell. His first, *The Forest Unseen*, won acclaim for its eloquent writing and Zen-like close observation. This volume is an even deeper meditation, focusing on the aural experiences of getting to know trees and their goings-on. Haskell focuses on a dozen trees, revisiting each of them to slowly unravel their stories – their ancient ecologies, deep histories and complex relationships with other parts of the natural world, including us. From an Amazonian ceibo tree, which serves as a place of connection for indigenous people confronted with encroaching oil exploration interests, to an olive tree at the Damascus Gates in Jerusalem, which tells of ancient water wars and modern conflicts of belonging, Haskell tunes into arboreal soundscapes to look for links and networks. He has a deeply respectful voice as a nature writer. It requires some effort to slow down enough to fully immerse yourself in his storytelling but, once you do, you'll find yourself captivated by an unexpected symphony.



Grove of the Summer Stars Druid's Tree Labyrinth Update

A blustery day greeted us this year at Imbolc, but that didn't stop 15 cloaked and coated Druids from heading outdoors for the blessing of the site where the Druid's Tree Labyrinth will emerge from. Imbolc - the perfect time to have new ventures acknowledged and blessed, so exactly right for setting the intention of a place of sanctuary.

What is the meaning of sanctuary - and of sacred places - in the context of our lives and creative pursuits? Founding member of the Labyrinth Society, dowser, geomancer, and author, Sig Lonegren, has this to say about sacred space: "Sacred space is a place where you can go to experience non-physical realms. These can be places of emotion, intuition and of the spirit. It could be places like Stonehenge, a holy well, a Native American Medicine Wheel, the Great Pyramid, a Japanese pagoda, or a labyrinth."

Sig Lonegren built the labyrinth at Glastonbury, having lived there for 20 years, so it was only right to invite the energy of Glastonbury into the space as well. To acknowledge the spirituality and ancestors of the land we invited Tau Huirama, local Kaumatua, to offer a Maori blessing. He made a deeply moving call to the spirits and guardians of the land which he had placed some years ago, then blessed the site itself; for the building of the labyrinth and for the future energy it would hold in nurturing and supporting others. The collective energy and intentions of those present were evident, supported and held by our Modron, Pamela.

Since the site blessing, the land all around has been overly blessed with rain, rain, and more rain, so progress has been somewhat delayed. More recently we've had some very welcome dry spells, so access to the site has now been cleared and plans are underway to clear and level the site itself; markers placed in the ground as a guide for the digger. With summer just around the corner we'll be working hard to make up for lost time and look forward to reporting further progress in the next issue of SerpentStar.

Bright blessings from Anne and Glenn Conroy, Grove of the Summer Stars, Pukerua Bay, NZ



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

Charlene Hillyard tells us about her Australian Experience....

Thursday August 10th Pamela Meekings-Stewart and myself left Wellington airport with our Druid cloaks on for Sydney. It caused quite a few smiles, but as Wellington airport has Gollum and the eagles from *Lord of the Rings* most people thought we were just actresses!

When we arrived in Sydney we had time to go on the 'hop-on hop-off bus tour' which was amazing, and at 2.30pm we realised we hadn't eaten so we went to a lovely restaurant at The Rocks which was to become our regular haunt while we were there. That night Pamela, Rosemary and I went to see the show *Kinky Boots*, which was fantastic. Here is a picture of Pamela and I in our 'Boots'!



What a wonderful time Pamela, Rosemary and I had at the 16th OBOD Southern Assembly in Sydney from 11th to 15th August. The lovely Ben the Bard collected us from our hotel in Sydney to take us out to Pennant Hills, where the Assembly was held in the beautiful grounds of the Baden Powell scout camp. We were welcomed with afternoon tea, shown around the site and presented with lovely gift bags which were full of surprise gifts donated by the members of OBOD Australia; such as a gum nut necklace with the Awen symbol on it, aromatherapy bottle, seeds, lovely messages etc. Then at 7.30pm we attended the Welcome Ceremony on the Parade ground where many ceremonies, workshops and musical gatherings were held under the gum trees and eye of the Kookaburra throughout the whole weekend.

On Saturday, Chris Pingel conducted a lecture on the life of Ross Nichols and his friendship with Gerald Gardiner and the Ancient Druid Order, which was very interesting, and Danuta held a Creative Writing workshop. At 2pm Pamela and I were invited to help with the Bardic Initiation ceremonies. She attended one group of six initiates and I the other. My area where we held the initiations was in the old stone chapel area of the forest. It was wonderful being part of the initiations, as it reminded me of my own initiation into the Bardic Grade.

After the afternoon tea, Pamela and I would return to our cabin and rest and reflect on the days so far. With so much going on we found it important to allow time to absorb the energies, atmosphere and exhilarations of what had gone on during the day and to write up our diaries. Before the Eisteddford in the evening an artistic working bee was set up in the hall for people to make their masks for the evening. Mine just needed some feathers on it to compliment the fake acorn leaves.

The Eisteddford was held at night in the amazing stone amphitheater and everyone paraded with their cloaks and masks to the amphitheater to be treated to a wonderful shadow puppet show of Gwion Bach and the story of Taliesen. Then others joined in with stories and songs to make it a lovely evening of song and laughter.



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

On Sunday 13th (my birthday and I was to find out there was another member's birthday too) we met for talking stick time. This happened every morning at 8.30am and it was lovely to gather as a whole group before we divided up into workshops, initiations or men's or women's circles.

At 10.30am Elkie gave a History of OBOD in Australia lecture about a history project to discuss the writing of the History of OBOD in Australia and what it means to be an OBOD living in Australia. Followed by an introductory lecture by Danuta on Ayurvedic medicine.

At Midday, I ran my workshop on 'Farewell to a Loved One' which was attended by around 25 people. The feedback I received was lovely and many received insights from this workshop. Some wanted to talk to me afterwards which was nice as I was quite nervous running my first workshop. This workshop was based on my Ovate gift from the Ovate Grade.

After lunch at 2pm Pamela and I made our way into a forest grove with other Druids and Ovates to help run an Ovate Initiation Ceremony. This was also very moving and reminded us of our Ovate initiation. Just after we chanted our Awens all the birds in the forest sang their songs - the Cockatiels, Kookaburras and Bush Turkey. It was very moving.

Then at 4pm Julie Brett talked about creating a local wheel of the year incorporating the Australian seasonal cycles which was very interesting.

Most of us retired to bed early on Sunday night as we needed to rise early for the Imbolc Ceremony.

Monday 14 August: Meeting at 5.30am at the parade ground we were met by an amazing vision of tea lights, Druids, music and members walking with their cloaks carrying a tea light in their hand. It was very moving and haunting. The vision of the Druids in white took me back around 3,000 years. It was breathtaking to see the spiral of tea lights and to walk through it. Past Brigid's cauldron surrounded by the first of spring's flowers. We were all given a part to play in the ceremony, and I was one of the Brigids. It was amazing.



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

The Wheel of Segais



Pamela Meekings-Stewart

Exciting News!

In order to help you become familiar with the wisdom contained in the Wheel of Segais, I am putting together a personal reader kit. This will consist of an A4 copy of the Wheel of Segais on which to do your casting; a Salmon of Wisdom book of meanings; and nine seeds for casting (plus a couple of extras in case you lose one or two!). I have finished the book and have put the Kit out to 12 people, two of whom are well-known OBODies, for feedback and review. Once the feedback has been received and incorporated, The Wheel of Segais personal reader kit will be available for sale. Hopefully, November this year will be the launch. Stay tuned!

If you would like to be informed of when the Wheel of Segais Personal Reader Kit becomes available, please contact me through The Wheel of Segais website below.

The Wheel of Segais is a simple but profound template for understanding the innate nature of the universe and our place within it. It allows us to perceive all that we are and all that we need as we experience the turning of the wheel of the year - the Four Seasons, the 12 streams or stages and the Well of the Salmon of Wisdom, the Well of Segais itself, in the centre. If you would like a personal reading, you can contact me at pamela@thewoolshed.com, 0272068876 or 2399234. Cost: \$40

Out of town or in another country? Book an on line reading through my website – www.wheelofsegais.com



ASSEMBLY PIX Part 3

Contributions on this page by Trudy Richards, Lisa Norris, Cecily Vickers and Chris Parker



Ross Nichols and the Ancient Druid Order, Pt1

By Chris Pingel

Seed thought from OBOD's website:

"Any study of the druids must begin with a process of demystification." Jean Markale - The Druids: Celtic Priests of Nature

Earlier in the year I came across a statement in a book that said Ross Nichols, who founded OBOD in 1964, had previously been a member of a group called the Ancient Druid Order. This intrigued me as to how ancient this group could be and why did Ross Nichols leave it. So I did some digging. The bulk of what I have to tell you comes from an essay written by the American druid chief, now deceased, Isaac Bonewits.

Philip Peter Ross Nichols, also known as Nuinn, the Gaelic word for the Ash tree, was a teacher, poet, artist, author and naturist who founded The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids (OBOD) in 1964. While not entirely a new Order, the OBOD was a breakaway faction and modern version of the Ancient Druid Order (ADO), which has a history dating back to 1912, 1717, or to pre-Christian times depending on who you believe. Nichols was born in Norfolk on the 28th of June 1902, and was one of four children. In 1914 at the start of World War I his family moved to Cornwall and then Somerset, and then after the end of World War I (1918) he was sent to Bloxham School in Oxford, a boarding school for boys where he developed a passion for poetry. In 1921 he entered St Johns College in Cambridge, graduating with a Masters degree in History in 1924.

While studying at Cambridge the leading anthropologist and folklorist Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941) author of the classic *Golden Bough: a Study in Magic and Religion* (1890) was teaching there, his work along with the likes of Robert Graves (1895-1985), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), T.S Eliot (1888-1965) and Jessie Laidlay Weston (1850-1928), another folklorist working mainly on mediaeval Arthurian texts, inspired Nichols' lifelong interests in mythology, psychology, magic and religion. After leaving Cambridge, Nichols worked as a journalist and private teacher. His poetry and other writings were published in many of the leading magazines, journals and periodicals of the day. He also received reviews in the Times Literary Supplement and other British newspapers.

Nichols was a devout Christian and regularly attended his local Anglican churches, and for a number of years was actively involved with the Scout Movement before turning his attention to socialist and pacifist causes. He was also a vegetarian and naturist, and in the early 1930's joined one of Britain's first nudist colonies: the Spielplatz, located in Bricket Wood near St Albans, Hertfordshire. It was here that Nichols first became acquainted with fellow naturist Gerald B Gardner, owner of another nearby nudist colony, The Five Acres Country Club.

In 1939 at the outbreak of World War II, Nichols was appointed Headmaster of Carlisle & Gregson Ltd, a private college in London (known as Jimmy's), a school noted for teaching Winston Churchill who during 1893 was 'swotted' at Jimmy's to pass the entrance exams for Sandhurst Military Academy. Nichols worked there during the week and spent his weekends at Spielplatz. Throughout the war years of the 1940's, Nichols concentrated on his poetry, and within a short time-span had four books of poetry published. As well as writing, Nichols was an accomplished watercolour painter, and even had some of his work exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. In 1948 Robert Graves published *The White Goddess*, his study of the myths and folklore of religion, which proved an influential book for Nichols. As a teaching academic, his position as Headmaster of a private College, with its long end-of-term vacations, afforded Nichols the opportunity to indulge his passion for travel, during which he visited Egypt, Morocco, Bulgaria, Malta and Greece, and was a regular visitor to Wales, Ireland and Scotland. He loved to explore historical and archaeological sites, taking photos and sketching ancient monuments.

Later in 1949, Nichols became the assistant editor of *The Occult Observer*, a quarterly publication covering Occult, Art & Philosophical subjects published by Michael Houghton the owner of the now famous Atlantis Bookshop in London. The publication only ran for one year however, during which time Nichols wrote about Druidry for the first time. Interestingly, during his time as editor, Nichols prepared for publication an article by an Indian writer, Mir Bashir. This article told of Bashir's journey to a holy man who possessed an ancient book, written on palm leaves, which told you all you need to know about yourself by accurately measuring your shadow. The article was called the Book of Shadows. Apparently Gerald Gardner preferred that name to the term grimoire.

That same year Houghton published Gerald Gardner's first book *High Magic's Aid*, which while fictional contained his basic ideas for what was later to become 'Gardnerian Wicca'. Already good friends with Gardner by this time, Nichols left the Spielplatz club in favour of Gardner's Five Acres Country Club.

In 1952 Nichols revised, edited and published a two-volume edition of *The History and Practice of Magic* by Paul Christian, a nineteenth-century French work translated by two friends of his, James Kirkup and Julian Shaw, to which he added supplementary articles and notes from other friends among London's occult community. In 1954 he then helped Gerald Gardner produce *Witchcraft Today*, his first non-fiction book on witchcraft. Margaret A Murray the eminent anthropologist wrote the introduction for the book, which when released became an immediate success. As a result of it, covens began forming up and down the country, each practicing its dictates, and so the Gardnerian tradition of witchcraft was born. That same year in 1954 Nichols joined the Ancient Druid Order (ADO), no doubt at the suggestion of Gerald Gardner who had joined the same Order years earlier. As an active member of the ADO, Nichols took on the office of Scribe, a position that suited his academic and literary abilities. Later he became Chairman of the Order, in which capacity he frequently lectured on Druidry around the country, and in 1962 travelled to Ireland to lecture at the Theosophical Society in Dublin.

In 1963 together with his druidic mentor the Chosen Chief of the ADO Robert MacGregor Reid, they travelled to a Gorsedd (or gathering) in Brittany (western France) where Nichols was ordained as the Archdeacon of the Ancient Celtic Church by Archbishop Tugdual. The Ancient Celtic Church belongs to what they describe as the Liberal Catholic tradition. Although he was Anglican it is clear why Nichols was drawn to this spirituality. Their website makes a number of interesting claims. For example, they believe that sexuality, whether straight or gay, is a good thing and encourage their clergy to have healthy sexual relationships. They are a monastic order but their monastics may live in their own homes and be single or married. They locate their faith in the centre of the Western Mystery Tradition and they see the purpose of all true religion as personal mystical experience. They are certainly a progressive religion.

Archbishop Tugdual was also a charismatic individual. The Ancient Celtic Church describe him as a poet, iconographer, preacher, writer and healer as well as a great mystic. He also was known for his great sense of humour. As a visiting bishop once wrote, "He laughed all the time and the meal was interspersed with jokes of all kinds, but he could also suddenly get up, go to the chapel and sing all night the 150 Psalms of David." He was so important in the church that in 1996 he was posthumously canonised and is now remembered as St Tugdual.

In the following year, 1964, his friend and collaborator Gerald Gardner, his mentor Robert MacGregor Reid, and his friend Archbishop Tugdual all died.

As had happened several times in the past history of the ADO, the death of the chosen Chief caused a rift among senior members of the Order, and as a result the ADO split into two groups. When one group chose to elect Dr Thomas Maughan as the new Chosen Chief of the ADO, the other group disagreed. The second group then decided to form a new reconstructed Order focusing on the three grades of Bard, Ovate and Druid. Nichols became its first Chosen Chief, and so The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids (OBOD) was born. Nichols was then given the druidic name of Nuinn.

Philip Carr-Gomm offers more insight to this rift in his book *Druid mysteries*:

"The teachings and ceremonies of the Ancient Druid Order, while inspired by the classical accounts of the Druids, drew mostly on the material of Iolo Morganwg, combined with influences from the Order of the golden Dawn and the Theosophists, rather than the inspiration of Celtic mythology and folklore, and when Ross left the Order he was able to re-introduce a focus on this core material."

*This article was originally given as a talk at 2017 Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly, and is Part 1 of 2.
Stay tuned for Part 2 in the Lughnasadh 2018 issue of SerpentStar.*

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Ayurveda is a person-centred philosophy of health and wellness, and recognises every individual as a unique and vital combination of body, mind and soul.

An Introduction to Ayurveda

Ayurveda is one of the world's oldest systematic medical sciences, with an oral tradition spanning at least 8000 years. It offers “a complete way of life that describes every detail of life—diet, exercise, living conditions, medicine and behaviours that are beneficial or harmful to life” (Dr S. Ajit). Its sheer scope and universality make it different to all other healing modalities, as it draws together all elements of life into a fundamental understanding of the individual, their experiences of the world, and how that influences every aspect of wellness.

The fundamentals of Ayurveda rest in millennia old writings and oral teachings which come to us through the earliest Indian writings, called the Vedas. According to these, Ayurveda came to mankind directly from Lord Brahma, who organised the teachings into eight systematic categories so that we would be better able to understand the complexity of our whole being within the physical world.

Elements and Doshas

The entire universe is made up from five essential elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. While these energies have analogous representations in our real world in the form of space between the stars, the air we breathe, the fire from the hearth, the water in the rivers and the earth under our feet, according to the Rishis (the ancient Indian sages), these physical forms are merely coarse representations of unseen energies underpinning the way everything from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy forms and functions. These elements are then coalesced into three basic humours or intelligences: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Each and every thing is made up of a unique combination of these basic intelligences, making each and every one of us uniquely ourselves for this place and this time. These humours are often called Doshas.

Prakriti and Vikriti

The purpose of the Prakriti and Vikriti is to understand the predominating humours that respectively have formed us and currently are influencing us excessively. In understanding our Prakriti and Vikriti we are able to begin to manage our unique natures more subtly because we have a deeper understanding of the environmental and mental factors that are beneficial to our wellbeing. We are able to understand and establish the conditions that are most beneficial to us fulfilling our roles in our lives, families and communities.

Daily and Seasonal Routines

Key to this is the understanding of Daily and Seasonal Routines. While most of us understand that we are what we think, what we do and what we eat, most of us have never heard of the deep temporal influences that make what and when we do things, or what and when we consume things, different depending upon the time of day, time of year or time of life. According to Ayurveda, not only do we need to establish good routines in our lives to manifest the best we can be, but those routines are often particular to who we are, where we live, what we do in life, our age and the season.

Basically, the aim of establishing solid Daily and Seasonal routines is to create a pattern of behaviour in our lives that aligns with our Prakriti, and so strengthens us to fulfil our life purpose by improving and maintaining our health and creating an environment conducive to fulfilling the deepest desires of our true selves. Good daily and seasonal routines make us more resilient to the buffeting of day to day anxieties and environmental forces, and they strengthen us to do the things we must do: both emotionally and physically.

Something You Can Try: Tongue Scraping

Arguably, the most important thing anyone can do for their health is brush their teeth and scrape their tongue. Tongue scraping doesn't just clean your tongue, but it also massages the internal organs, encouraging the excretion of toxins. This must be completed within 3 minutes of waking, otherwise the toxins built up on the tongue and in the organs will begin to be reabsorbed by your body.

While a lot of toothbrushes now come with some sort of scraping or rasping brush for the tongue, Ayurvedic texts describes the use of a bent stick or wire to scrape the tongue. The sticks were fresh twigs pulled from particular trees with medicinal qualities. The wires traditionally were either gold, silver or copper. All three of these metals are antibacterial in quality, and it is recommended that everybody now uses a copper tongue scraper as copper remains readily available.

You can purchase a copper tongue scraper at many health food shops, or online from retailers in Ayurvedic lifestyle products.

The How-to of Tongue Scraping

1. Brush your teeth as normal.
2. Take the tongue scraper and gently scrape down the centre of your tongue from the back to the front three times, cleaning the tongue scraper if necessary between scrapings.
3. Gently scrape once along the left side of the tongue.
4. Gently scrape once along the right side of the tongue.
5. Rinse.
6. There will likely be some phlegm in the back of your throat, and it is normal for this to be loosened during this process. Spit this out, as it too is part of the toxic build up from the metabolic processes that occurred during the night.



Beltane: The Point of Joining

Invisible tendrils of chance brought you here

Without a song

Or clash of swords.

The soft fingers of tomorrow said yes

And you emptied into the river of me.

It was forever,

That moment overdone in pauses –

In holding breaths and hands.

A petal perfect formed, I thought,

You said, but

Then the fires leapt across our soles

As we danced above their licking flames

Blessing ourselves with a year and a day

While forever blindly merged with time,

And turned the great wheel yet again.

Danuta Raine

Danuta Raine

You can find Amber Priestess on Facebook,
and at our soon to be new website
www.amberpriestess.com.

Or contact Danuta at danuta@amberpriestess.com

Amber Priestess

ASSEMBLY PIX Part 4

Contributions on this page by Tina Davidson and Chris Parker



Whiteline Magical Trees

By Geoff Warren (Fire Raven)

*I was driving down the highway,
Doing a hundred and ten.
Counting down kilometers,
All of a sudden then.*

*I spied upon a hill top,
For all the world to see.
An unusual forest,
That perplexed me.*

*The trees white as snow,
Towering so tall.
Giants amongst giants ,
But that's not all.*

*They only had three branches,
That they spun around with glee.
A truly magical forest,
You must believe me.*

*I think they generate power,
Thats the magic of those trees.
Those magical waving branches,
Spinning in the breeze.*

*I wonder where the magic goes,
Maybe down through its roots.
Bringing us all magic powers,
In tiny magic shoots,*

*I can see one problem,
With these trees absurd.
With constant spinning branches,
What about the poor old bird.*

*A bird wanting to sit and rest,
So high up from the ground,
Would quickly get dizzy,
Going round and round.*

*Upside down then up again,
A roller coaster pace.
It could be catapulted,
Into outer space.*

*These trees will be birdless,
And that is such a shame.
Even though they are magical,
They appear to be insane.*

*So I leave those trees behind,
Still driving at a hundred and ten.
White line fever pending,
With my focus truly Zen.*

Whitelinewhitelinewhiteline!!!!!!



Manannan rode the waves of the great expanse of the sea. Horses, fiercely galloping, turning up the waves, white horses moving on the gigantic singing hills of the other world, manifest now from the great land of Tir Na Nog, beautiful Apple Isle.

A great jetty, a giant bridge is sturdy and sure against the crashing and rising watery mountains and rolling hills of the Selkie kingdom.

Cold icie westerly wind blows, hitting my feet that gently walk upon damp sea salt batted, wooden guardians. Looking across and into the water from my wind blown and frozen head, there in the waters are the Selkie, bathing in the strong immensity.

They are so gentle, placid and free, moving against the current as if, they were gliding.

These are the spirits of the sea, watery beings of romantic and poetic power. They are the magickal beings that hold the space between this world and the otherworld.

The Jetty we walk on is like a great wooden vessel, an old tall ship taking on a very adventurous and tempestuous journey to the land of the sea gods. The waves lapping and smashing against the jetty, almost lifting it up into the realm of air.

Mannanan's horses were clearly seen in the splashing movement of the crashing and racing waves; Racing, galloping, running!

Excitement, such excitement and almighty respect. These are the feelings that are experienced when one sees the horses of Mannanan upon the waves!

White manes, white hooves.... splashing, splashing, coming up and then going down; Into this world and out of this world, into it, and out. Two realities overlapping, the horses of Tir Na Nog connecting the physical waters with the other side of the cosmic implicate order that David Bohm talked about, the great Cauldron the great mystery that is spirit.

Meanwhile, I look down again to the sides of our tall ship; there, the four Selkie are gracefully floating with the currents and simultaneously against them, natural wizards of water magick.

They know how to glide with it and how to manipulate it. They are great zen masters of the tempest, laughing at it and with it, playing, gently gently upon the sea that holds them, nurtures them...the great mother of the ocean, or the God Lir himself.

Playful playing, graceful being, singing and dancing the energy currents of the ocean.

I saw a Selkie turn...diving down into the rising wave and there in the corner of my eye....the site of what looked liked a human, diving into the surf.

There, the Selkie! The Seal Gods are dancing, rejoice people! Rejoice for the song of the sea sings and it dances and it whirls up and hurls great waves and great sounds. It brings with it the gifts of beauty, the strength of surety, the command of a king, the majesty of a watery and very, very confident Queen.

*Blessed are the beautiful isles of Mannanan, like celtic knot work, always just a foot away in the ocean, or the site and sound of the song that sings from the fruiting tree of orchards that fruit all year...
the orchards of the soul deep within.*

Seals teach us to relax and play, but they also teach us to test ourselves, to stick it out... to be strong but ready to flow. They teach abundance and nourishment, nourishment of the depths of the unconscious, they are the messengers of the otherworld.

Blessed are the Selkie who sing the beauty of the sea.

Lets nourish and love the sea for all beings.

Kacey Stephensen

Sleeping Giants by KC Guy

CD Review by Rollick

It's not often I am floored by the talent of a young person but KC has done it. I remember a very young chap at the Binna Burra gathering quietly trying to fade into the background of a jam session, seemingly clutching a mandolin in what looked like fear and trepidation. But my how he has grown! That night he also sang a song by Damh the Bard and I thought to myself this chap has talent

KC's EP reminds me of the early Spiral Dance and Damh the Bard music that I fell in love with many years ago. Soulfully resonant and written with the passion and depth that you can't help but stop and pay attention to: the lyrics of all the songs on this EP.

Song 2, 'Sleeping Giants', is a hauntingly beautiful song that resonated with my love of the wilderness, its destruction and the question 'will they survive when man is gone', poignant and questioning in a way I would suspect from a much older soul.

"Life is short, Love is Longer", the first line of 'Seasons' immediately grabs the attention of the listener. This song shows KC as a wordsmith and composer we need to nurture and support as part of our community. The emotions that KC conjures, be it lighthearted or deep and brooding, makes for fantastic listening. I only wish there was more of it (hint: when do we get an album??) This young man is someone we must watch and support over the next few years and beyond.

KC, enjoy your success as we enjoy your music. I am sure you are wise beyond your years. Congratulations on a wonderful EP, and a rousing start to what I believe will a long career.



Pic by Mandy Gibson

Sweet Surrender

*Silence pouring down,
Smothering all sense of time,
Blistering in its eloquence
Healing in its touch
But bold !
Perceive !
Woven within its pristine folds,
The laughter of its denizens'
The murmur of its flow,
And the gentle sighs of its mantle,
As its magic soothes the Soul.*

Cherry Carroll

(This is a poem that I wrote after attending Danuta's writing workshop. It was inspired by the peace and Spirit of the bush down at the Ovate Grove area when I went down there early one morning alone.)

People with phones at odd angles, occasionally running off giggling? At Assembly? Never!

We have more decorum than that.

Or maybe we don't.

Behold, the fruits of a secret project conducted at Pennant Hills. A lighthearted and loving project we like to call

Selfies With Elkie



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>

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

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

or you can buy a physical album via

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



RAINFOREST TRUST® *Hero*

The Green Album

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in the Congo**

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

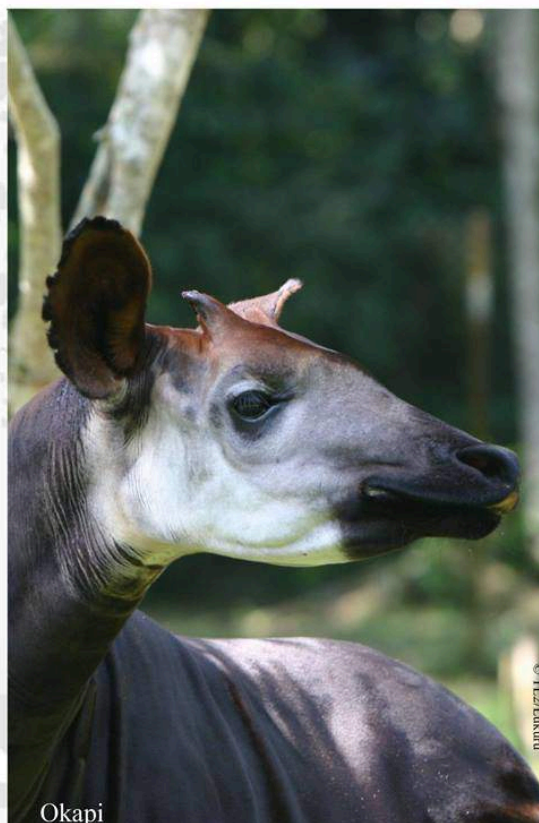
Issued June 20, 2016

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



RAINFOREST TRUST®

Dr. Paul Salaman
Chief Executive Officer



Okapi

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



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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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Anam Cara Soul Space

Readings, Tarot, Astrology, and Sacred Plant Essences with Fleur Grant

Greetings and Kia ora, my name is Fleur Grant and I am a student of OBOD and a practising tarot reader, astrologer, and sacred plant essence practitioner.

My connection to Spirit has been active for as long as I can remember. I have always been blessed to receive messages, and this ability has been passed down my family line from my Anglo-Irish grandmother, who possessed second sight. I have good reason to believe my Irish ancestors, who left Ireland after one of the large famines, were descended from ancient Druids.

The land of my birth, Aotearoa New Zealand, has provided me with a deep appreciation of the native forest here, and my communion with nature has been further developed through training as a plant essence practitioner. Plant essences contain specific healing properties that shift emotional and traumatic patterns. There are even essences that can shift DNA patterns that have travelled down family lines. This is an exciting area of work, as it ties into the scientific discovery of epigenetics, which is confirming what ancient cultures have always known, that trauma can be hereditary. For instance, there may be a pattern of betrayal and heartbreak in relationships that have travelled down the ancestral bloodline. As Druids, we work with our ancestral inheritance, and it is now possible for us to clear negative hereditary patterns and receive our divine inheritance.

Astrology is an ancient tool which allows us to map the potential of a soul and look at key strengths and challenges. Most people are familiar with Sun Signs, but you are more than just your star-sign! Based on your time, date and place of birth, natal astrology explains the map of the Zodiac for your individual birth, and the position and relationship of all the planets and signs that make up your personality and potential. I also provide updates of full moon and other major astrological patterns for New Zealand and Australia on my Facebook page.

Tarot (I use Rider Waite and the Druidic Tarot) is an amazing tool for Divination. Tarot is my first port of call for questions about relationship insight and decisions.

Anam Cara is an old Gaelic term which means 'soul friend'. Here, at Anam Cara, I work with you in integrity, openness and non-judgement, using the ancient tools of tarot, astrology and sacred plant essences to help you make decisions, clear emotional and hereditary blocks, and move forward with confidence.

Consultations are available at my practice in Auckland, New Zealand, or from anywhere in the world using Skype.

Please visit my page
www.facebook.com/anamcarasoulspace/
for more details.





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

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

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

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Anne Conroy

REGISTERED CELEBRANT

My celebrancy is heart centred for those looking for someone who can genuinely support individuals and families when the need arises, in a relaxed and caring manner, in the Celtic tradition.

Regardless of the type of ceremony and its level of complexity, you can be assured of respect, empathy, deep listening, compassion, and creativity, along with a healthy dose of humour.



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



And finally...

Special props for the **Selfies with Elkie** project go to Carmen and Sam, who managed to get these two within the space of the same conversation!



Why do cows have hoofs instead of feet?

Because they lactose.



*Joke contributed by Geoff Warren.
Image courtesy freepik.com, from
which this was the closest I could get
from the search term: "Cow with a
headache." LOL - Ed*

The
Wheel
turns...



Artwork by nyverne ogma vyryan

Beltane, on May 1st, marks the time of our adolescence and early wo/manhood. Spring is in full bloom, and twin fires would be lit at this time, through which would be passed the cattle after their long winter confinement, or over which those hoping for a child or good fortune would jump.

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

Text sourced from Druidry.org

The deadline for contributing to the special Alban Hefin 20th Anniversary issue of SerpentStar is 15 December. The special issue will be released on 22 December 2017.