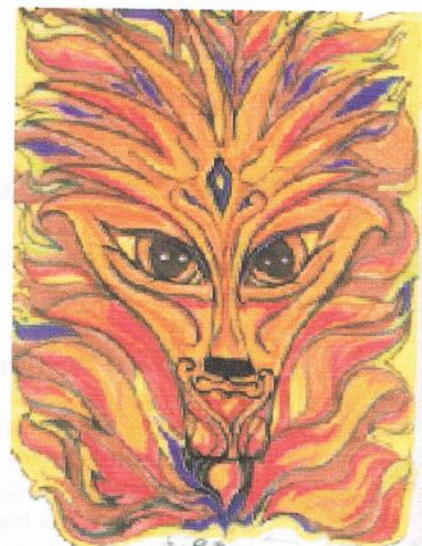


Serpentstar Alban Elued 2000

Newsletter for members of OBOD, Australia and New Zealand. Volume 3, no2.



Graphic 'Fire' by Linda, Melbourne Seed Group

Ganieda Sanctuary

An invitation to the 4th Australian Druid Assembly at Albany Western Australia.

Each year for the last three years, the Order has held an Assembly so that members, friends, and those interested in Druidry, can come together to enjoy each others' company, celebrate the Spring Equinox, experience workshops and talks, and participate in groves and initiations in each of the three grades.

The first two years' assemblies were held in the Wiseman's Ferry area near Sydney, in the third year we met at Cooringal. Now, in this fourth year, we invite you to join us south of Perth, in Western Australia, in the wonderful surroundings of Ganieda Sanctuary. Come and experience the magic of this place, with its views across Lake Grasmere, its great golden rocks, ceremonial circle, sweathouse, healing pools, and light-filled wooden buildings.

Philip & Stephanie Carr-Gomm will be joining us and giving workshops, and there'll be plenty of time for group and individual dialogue and sharing. As a theme for this first Assembly of the new millennium, we suggest:

RECONCILIATION AND THE LAND

Considering our place in this great continent, asking such questions as: Where do our traditional backgrounds find a place here?

- How do we translate our ritual and ceremonial practice? What myths speak to us?
- How do we approach healing... with indigenous peoples?...and with the Land?
- How do we talk to the Land, and how does it talk to us?

With a background of ceremony, ritual, sweat house, music, seminar, discourse and festivity we can use our time together to explore these questions and the role of the modern druid within this.

Ideas and contributions are invited, and we look forward to seeing you there! Ganieda Sanctuary has an intimate connection with the Land from which we can explore these issues in practical and experiential depth; and weave them into our lives.

The following week we'll be holding the Order's first Residential Healing Retreat, so do stay on a few days, if you would like to participate in this! See overleaf for details.

The Cost of the Assembly is \$150 with camping on site, meals and other facilities provided. If you don't want to camp, ask for details of local B&B accommodation

TO BOOK THE OBOD AUSTRALIA ASSEMBLY 2000 PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND TO:

Kennan Elkman, Ganieda Sanctuary, PO Box 1414, Albany, WA 6331

If you need further information, please email, fax or phone Kennan for more details.... elkman@healthquest.com.au

Tel: 08 9844 6393

Fax: 08 9844 6397

Residential Healing Retreat of The Order of Bards Ovates & Druids at Ganieda Sanctuary, Albany, Western Australia

from 23rd to 30th September 2000 with Philip Carr-Gomm and Kennan Elkman

This September we will be holding a residential Healing Retreat for all members - to which you are warmly invited. We've chosen a really magical spot for this experience. There are certain places on the earth that radiate particularly strong healing powers, and one such place is just outside Albany, Western Australia. Here, on high ground overlooking Lake Grasmere, and minutes away from the white sandy beaches and rocky coastline of the Great Southern Ocean, Druid Grade member Dr Kennan Elkman, a medical doctor, Jungian psychoanalyst and holistic health consultant, has founded Ganieda Sanctuary, with his wife Anjouli, aromatherapist and healer. Ganieda is the name of Merlin's sister, and this healing centre has been named after her in honour of the role of the Feminine in Healing.

At Ganieda, amongst great golden rocks, healing pools, and light-filled wooden buildings we will follow a programme designed to open us to our own healing powers, and the healing powers of Nature and the Divine. We will participate in healing meditations and ceremonies together, have aromatherapy and massage, explore optimal health in seminars, and use Druidic sweat-house rituals and herbalism to enhance our healing. There'll be time for relaxation too - with excursions to the sea and local sites.

Ganieda Sanctuary is 400 km south of Perth in Western Australia. Perth is the nearest international airport, with an easy and direct connection by local flight to Albany. For those wishing to drive and see a little 'scenery' we hope to use the local OBOD network in Perth for accommodation and travel as needed. The cost of the Retreat, including accommodation, all meals, and tuition, is £300 (\$500 USD or 750 AUD) in basic shared accommodation on-site (any individual treatments/consultations are extra).

Single accommodation off-site (at a local B&B) is also available at an extra cost. Many members may want to extend their stay to include a holiday in Australia. Your nearest Australian Tourist Office can help you plan this. We look forward to seeing you there!

If you would like to come, please complete and return the form below to Kennan Elkman, Ganieda Sanctuary, PO Box 1414, Albany, WA 6331

Write, phone or email enquiries to Kennan at:

elkman@healthquest.com.au

Tel: 08 98 446393

Fax: 08 9844 6397

TO BOOK THE HEALING RETREAT PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND TO:
Kennan Elkman, Ganieda Sanctuary, PO Box 1414, Albany, WA 6331

The Melbourne Seed Group

The Melbourne Seed Group was founded at Beltane in 1998 by Heather, Kirsty and Dave, (who are members of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids) and Steve and Nadia, (who are not). Leonie joined us at Summer Solstice.

Officially calling ourselves the Melbourne Seed Group didn't happen until Australia Day 1999, so we have 2 anniversaries.

During our first year we have established a small, harmonious core group of people who enjoy each other's company.

We are applying a policy of working with one particular direction for approximately one year, before moving on to another part of the wheel.

A grove of tiny trees has been planted and these hold the energy for us. We have begun the work of adapting the traditional Northern Hemisphere ceremonies to Southern Hemisphere correspondences. We like to work with what is happening here, in Melbourne, at each particular time of the year. I guess ours could be called folk Druidry; it speaks to people's hearts, harmonizes the land, helps and heals.

In like manner, we have begun creating our own songs. We robe ourselves in appropriate colours to switch off from daily business and attune to spirit. The colours awaken the astral planes and inspire deeper insight of what 'it' is all about.

Between ceremonies we hold a planning meeting to discuss the ceremony that is coming up next. These are evolving into a time to do some practical work, pass the Talking Stick and share our spiritual development. Later we attune at deeper levels through journeywork. Each person chooses which parts of the day to participate in.

On December 1st a group of women who have been working together spiritually for several years, decided to unite as an 'Elder Lodge' providing strength for the group. Its function is to guide and help younger members, as required, but also to support and nurture the supporters and nurturers. We offer healing.

The next ceremony is Autumn Equinox, to be held on Sunday March 19 at 6pm. At the planning meeting on Saturday March 4 we will decide if we can do the ceremony on Mount Corhanwarrabul (Dandenong).

We welcome people who want to join us in the celebration of life and want to know and understand their place in the bigger picture.

There are no fees and no expectations placed upon you other than respect for all life forms. If you do not understand the meaning of the ceremonies it is preferable that you come to the 'attunement' gathering. (It is actually better if you come even if you do understand so that we can get to know you and share and support your journey). On the actual day of the ceremony we will not have time to explain anything to you, so please assist us by simply 'going with the flow'.

May your radiance grow ever brighter in the apparent world.

Heather.

WHO WILL SPEAK FOR LOVE?

Life is love.

All you to all me.

For being a part of nature we are all

Brothers and sisters to the birds and trees.

Each one of us is a transformer of Divine Power

And when love finds form we are richly blessed.

The only way to retain love for oneself

Is to give it abundantly to others.

(Spoken by William Ricketts)

Those wishing to contact
Heather may do so by writing to
Heather Whitelk
17 Anderson St.
FERNTREE GULLY.
VIC 3156



Melbourne seed group.....cont,

BELOW IS A COPY OF THE INFORMATION GIVEN BY THE MELBOURNE SEED GROUP, TO THOSE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN CEREMONIES, OR JOINING OBOD.

What is Druidry?

The Druids were the spiritual leaders of the Celts. We are their modern counterpart.

Druidry is a tapestry that embraces all aspects of life but I will try to isolate its key threads for you.

1. A Mystical Path

The Sacred Mystery of the Divine within all of life lies at the heart of Druidry. This is as personal and passionate as Bhakti Yoga. Scientific breath & energy techniques such as chant, mantra and movement are taught to enhance this relationship with The Beloved.

The Druid attains self-realization through seeking and then living within the Light of all that is. The maxim: as above, so below - as within, so without is clearly understood. Regular, deep meditation is advocated.

2. A Shamanic Path

Akin to our brothers and sisters, the Native Americans & Australian Aborigines, Druids practice shamanism or spirit flight to explore the inner landscape and parallel worlds. Techniques for travel between dimensions are taught. Totems, guides and guardians offer advice, often healing in nature, for self or another, a group, the environment or planet. Development of a personal relationship with the helpers is advised.

3. A Healing Path

From the inner worlds comes the inspiration for healing. Techniques are taught for working both within and without to help heal a life-form that is dis-eased.

Development and mastery of one particular healing mode is advised so that the helpers can channel their powers in an effective way.

4. An Ouate Path

Notice is taken of signs & omens in the environment. The ability to observe, read and interpret these comes from the realization of our oneness in all life-forms. It is a by-product of the above. If the heart, mind and instincts are keen, it is possible to develop predictive skills, offer warnings and clarify alternative routes. Development of one particular form of seership, in accordance with guidance received, is advised.

5. A Bardic Path

Because Druidry encourages the development of the inner life, the imagination, (i.e. ability to imagine), is stimulated. This in turn awakens creative expression. Oneness with the Divine and a fertile imagination result in an outpouring of inspired thoughts, words and other forms of expression. The Celts were known and still are, for their rich and intricate artwork, which defined through symbolism, their understanding of life. Development of one particular form of expression, in accordance with what feels right for you, is advised.

6. A balanced path

Druids honour all 5 elements, as manifestations of The One.

Earth - our beautiful mother - the sustainer.

Fire - our radiant father sun - the inspirer.

Air - the stars and planets - Harmony of the Spheres, breath and communication.

Water - the moon - guide to our feeling life & creativity.

Spirit - the dragon/rainbow serpent - guide to our willpower & the kundalini energy within all of life.

Development of a personal relationship with the elemental kingdoms is advised.

7. An adaptable path

Druidry does not belong to any one particular culture or place. It originated when everything else did and journeyed through time and dimensions. It took on the colour, tone and texture of whatever place it found itself in. Its roots are one with the Tree of Life itself and in like mind, it continues to grow. It is inclusive and embracing, loving and kind. It humbly seeks to learn from all life forms. The development of empathy and compassion in hand with discernment and wisdom is advocated.

8. A Responsible path

A Druid is expected to work on themselves for at least 20 years - both inwardly and outwardly - before assuming a place of influence on the world stage. It is considered important to have attained a certain level of enlightenment before teaching, healing and counseling to avoid using others as a means of working through your own issues, how ever well intentioned.

KNOW THYSELF is the maxim in Druidry. When you realize yourself as a part of everything else then you act in the world out of love and compassion. You help, heal, advise, teach & reconcile, where possible. You will be doing this anyway, because it is a natural part of being alive, but you can increase your effectiveness enormously. The Druid's work is everywhere. The development of realistic goals is advised, in accordance with your highest good.

Self-reliance and leadership potential are encouraged.

9. A Harmonizing path. Placed last because it embraces all of the above, the manifestation of Druidry in any place has a harmonizing effect on the environment. One of the more obvious techniques practiced is the celebration of the 8 - fold year. These rituals provide the opportunity for busy humans to take 'time out' 8 times a year. During the ceremonies you can attune to what is going on around you, appreciate, give thanks and deepen your connection with the other life forms who share this planet with you.

These special times in the Southern Hemisphere are:

Samhuin - the beginning of the Celtic year, May 1st.

Winter Solstice - light within the Earth, June 22nd.

Imbolc - first signs of spring - August 1st.

Spring Equinox - time of balanced growth - September 23rd

Beltane - high spring - November 1st

Summer Solstice - light of the Sun at its strongest - December 22nd.

Lughnasadh - first harvest - February 1st

Autumn Equinox - time for reflection - March 20th or 21st

To celebrate the joy of life with others is strongly advised.

The above was 'in my head' when I awoke one morning just before the Summer Solstice. I typed it up immediately and it has not been edited. Its purpose is to offer those who 'wander in' to see what a Druid ceremony is like, a basis for understanding.

For those who would like to investigate further we recommend, 'The Elements of the Druid Tradition' by Philip Carr-Gomm.

Heather Whitelk.

THE MAGIC OF HOME BREWED MEAD

Druidic celebrations seem to go so much better with a glass or two of home-brewed mead. Here is the recipe Helen and I use to make our mead. It is based on a recipe I found in Kisma Stepanich's book 'Faerie Wicca Book 1', for what she calls 'Irish mead'.

It's the simplest and probably the most authentic recipe I've seen – no added chemicals, no sophisticated apparatus required – and reliably (for us, anyway) turns out a very good brew that tastes just like the commercial meads, but with all the benefits that go with lovingly home brewing your own.

- 1 sachet dried yeast or one tablespoon fresh.
- 1 gallon water (about 4 lit)
- 3 1/2 pounds of raw homey (about 1.5 kilo)
- 2 dozen shelled hazel nuts.

1 Bring the water to the boil, stir in the honey, simmer for 45 minutes.

2 Remove nuts, sprinkle yeast over surface, cover, let ferment at room temperature 4-10 days, until fermentation has all but ceased.

3 Bottle and seal. Wait 3 months before tasting – by 4 months it's at its best.

Notes

1: Don't use a metal vessel or utensils, except stainless steel if you must. Stoneware seems to imbue it with a special pleasantness.

2: Rainwater or spring water are probably preferable, but I've used our (additive free, but not, by any means pure) Murray River water with good results.

3: I've made it without boiling the water, with variable success. The best of these unboiled brewings produced the most magical drink I've ever had – utterly beautiful, wild, fey and whimsical. The worst was rather flat and tasteless. You might find it worth the risk as I occasionally do!

4. I fermented one lot in close association with an active vat of Kombu Cha – the result: several bottles of the finished mead had plugs of healthy Kombu Cha culture in their necks and the flavour was horrible. They were our only failures.

5. Any good brewers yeast will do, but at a pinch I've used baker's and wine yeast and both brews were acceptable – in fact, the bakers' yeast gave good flavour and the best head in the glass. Regarding which, see not 6 below.

6. Crown seals may be used, but be warned, they sometimes explode, especially within the first week of later during hot weather. The mead in the surviving bottles tends to be superior to my taste, with a satisfying head on it. Fermentation must be almost completely finished before the mead is bottled if you are using crown seals.

Using corks is safer and the flavour just as good, but the end product tends to be less effervescent, and even quite still. Still a good mead though.

Helen is currently experimenting with variations, adding herbal infusions to the water before adding the honey, yeast and nuts. We'll let you know the results in a later Serpentstar.

Blessings on your brewings.

Vivienne



In Druid tradition, bees come from the paradisaal world of the Sun and of the Spirit. Finely attuned to the position of the sun in the sky, it is the bee who brings the sacred solar drink of mead as a gift to humanity.

Beach (bee) invites us to celebrate. You may have a special reason for celebration or you may simply need to celebrate the wonder and mystery of being alive. You may like to enjoy a glass or two of mead, which – if it has been brewed in Scotland – will carry the scent of heather, and will bring you closer to the highlands. (Or if in Australia, closer to the spirit of the place it has been collected and brewed) (1).

In the Druid tradition there are occasions to celebrate every six weeks or so. As human beings we need to have times when we can come together to enjoy each other's company. The bee tells us that we can live together in harmony, however impossible this may sometimes seem.

By being at one with the natural world, by paying homage to the sun, by centering our lives around Spirit or the Goddess, we can work together in community.

Mead is one of the most ancient alcoholic beverages in the world. Made from honey, water, malt and yeast, it has almost certainly been brewed for at least six thousand years. It was and still is often drunk at the celebration of the eight Druid festival times, with the mead circling the participants until the last drop is consumed.

At the royal court of Tara, the assembly hall was known as Tech Midchuarta, the House of Mead Circling.

The sun in the Druid tradition can, from one viewpoint, be seen as a manifestation of the Goddess, since in Celtic languages the work for sun was originally feminine – in Irish and Scottish it still is (Grian or Griene.) the goddess Brighid is a goddess of the sun and of fire, as well as of wells and water. The firewater mead is therefore a most fitting drink to honor her.

Bards Corner

NEMETONA

A WALK THROUGH MY
GREENWOOD
IN SPRING-
COLOURS OF WHITE, BLUE
YELLOW AND GREEN.

THE BROOK RUNS SO LIVELY,
IT CHATTERS ON
ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOFT
WIND'S SONG.

PARROTS AND WOOD BIRDS
GEESE AND DUCKS,
SMALL GROUND CREATURES
LIVING IN ROCKS.

SURROUNDED BY NATURE,
I AMBLE ALONG,
FILLED WITH PURE WISDOM,
BURSTING WITH SONG.

I PASS FATHER OAK —
MAJESTIC HIS STATURE
HIS LEAVES THE SOFTEST
YOUNG VELVET,
THE BRIGHTEST OF GREEN
HE STANDS IN BEAUTY
OF NEWFOUND SPRING..

PROMISES OF A WONDERFUL
DAY,
I GREET HIM WITH PLEASURE
AND AM ON MY WAY.

OVER THE BROOK
AND UNDER THE BRAMBLE,
THROUGH TALL GRASSES
AND PRICKLY BERRIES
I AMBLE.

I PASS A GROVE-
THREE TREES IN A CIRCLE.
ROUGH IS THEIR BARK
YET STILL THEY ARE NAKED
OF LEAVES I DON'T KNOW,
BUT SOON THEY WILL SHOW.....

SUDDENLY I SEE, LEAVES OF
DARK GREEN,
A HEART SHAPE, THAT BEFORE
I HAVE SEEN-
ON THE ALDERS-
INDEED IT WAS THIS
LYING PROSTATE BY THE WATER-
IT WAS EASY TO MISS.

THE TRUNK IS GNARLY
AND TURNED AND TWISTED.
IT'S LOOK, SMOOTH AND SILKEN,
IT SIMPLY INSISTED —
FOR ME TO BREAK AND SIT UPON IT,
THIS MYSTERIOUS TREE,
AND SEE WHAT'S SURROUNDED.

A HILL WITH OLIVES
AS FAR UP AS I COULD SEE-
TOTALLY ENTICING ME
TO TAKE A LOOK.

LEAVING MY TREE, I CLIMBED UP
THAT HILL —
NOTHING WAS MOVING,
PERFECTLY STILL
WAS THE AIR, AND THE GROUND,
COVERED IN GREEN, SOFT MOSS ALL
AROUND.

I SAT THERE AMONGST
THE STILL FRUIT TREES.
FEELING THE FAERY —
ALMOST SEEING THESE
CREATURES OF EARTH,
OF PLANTS, LIGHT AND WATER.
FEELING JUST LIKE
THE FAERY-QUEEN'S DAUGHTER.

AS THOUGH I BELONGED
AND COULD EASILY DWELL
WITHIN THEIR REALM
AND NO ONE COULD TELL —
JUST WHENCE I HAD GONE
AND WHEN I WAS SEEN —
KNOWN ONLY BY THE FAERY QUEEN.

TO END THIS DREAMING
I SLID ON DOWN THE HILL, WHICH WAS
DEWY, AND TOOK MY LEAVING.

AS I PROGRESSED
I HAD TO TURN BACK,
FEELING THE HAIR RISE
ON THE BACK OF MY NECK

I SAW TRAILS OF IVY
AND CLIMBING VINE
COVERING MORE ALDER
CALLING MY NAME

HERE YOUR MELODIOUS VOICE CALLING —
THE FEELING SO STRONG
I WAS NEARLY FALLING — TO THE GROUND
WITH WORSHIP AND WONDER
IN THE PRESENCE OF MY LADY YONDER

WITHIN THE IVY THERE WAS
BUT AN ALDER
I WAS IN A GROVE —
THAT I COULD NOT FALTER
"DON'T YOU WISH TO ENTER?"
SHE ASKED-
IT WAS NOT EASY,
PRICKLY BRAMBLES MADE IT SQUEEZY.

I FELT HER,
HER PRESENCE SO CLEAR.
I STOOD THERE,
WAITING FOR HER TO APPEAR

DRESSED IN HER GREEN MANTLE
SHE WOULD BE:
"NEMETONA"
SHE IS TO ME.
LADY NATURE
GODDESS OF A SACRED PLACE —
I COULD ALMOST MAKE OUT YOUR FACE

I FOUND MYSELF WITHIN
A SANCTUARY, SILENT AND DIM,
FILLED WITH HER PRESENCE
I DID NOT WANT TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS,
BUT JUST FEEL THE CONNECTION
WITH ALL THAT WAS HOLY
WITHIN THIS GROVE OF ALDER AND IVY.

I TOOK MY LEAVE
NOT WITHOUT A STAVE
OF ALDER TO REMEMBER
THE MOMENT I SHARED
WITH MY LADY OF NATURE
AND MANTLE,
SO GREEN THAT IT PIERCED ME.
ASKING ONLY TO BE NEARER
TO THE SOURCE THAT SENT HER
AND THE FEELING OF BEING
COMPLETELY AT PEACE.

A PEACE SO SWEET,
SO COMPLETE AND CONNECTED
WITH EVERY THING THAT LIVES AROUND ME.
A WORLD FILLED WITH CREATURES
SEEN AND UNSEEN
HEARD AND SENSED!
I HAD ONLY JUST COMMENCED
TO BE AWARE OF WHAT'S IN STORE —
SO MUCH MORE LIES BEFORE.

I GREETED THE YOUNG OAKS IN SPRING
GREEN,
FROM THE SIDE OF THE CREEK THEY COULD
BE SEEN.
SPLENDIDLY STRAIGHT
STRONG AND BRIGHT —
FILLING MY HEART WITH SHEER DELIGHT.

MOTHER AND FATHER POPLAR
NOT YET READY —
LEAVES ARE STILL DORMANT
BUT BRANCHES HEADY
WITH SPRINGS BREEZE AND A GREETING

I PASSED IN FLEETING STEPS TO RETURN
WHERE NEMETONA ONCE HAD BEEN.

I PASSED AGAIN THE GROVE OF ALDER,
BY NOW MY WAY WAS FILLED WITH WONDER.

LADY NATURE SHOWED ME HER COLOURS:
WATTLES WERE YELLOW
BLUE BE WILD FLOWERS.

SNOWDROPS WERE PURE WHITE,
THE RUNNING BROOK A SHEER DELIGHT.

EVERYTHING WAS SINGING A SONG
I HARDLY KNEW, I WAS WALKING ALONE.

SHE SENT HER BIRDS
AND LEFT ME TWO FEATHERS,
A GIFT FROM HER KINGDOM,
A PROMISE.

I KNEW I HAD BEEN
IN A WORLD LIKE A DREAM
A PROOF THAT 'IT IS OUT THERE',
JUST WAITING TO BE FOUND.
THE WORLD OF NATURE IS ALWAYS AROUND

MAY MY EYES ALWAYS BE OPEN;
YOUR BEAUTY TO SEE.
WITH OUT YOUR WORLD TO SHARE
MY EXISTENCE WOULD BE
DEAD AND BARE

THANK YOU
LADY NEMETONA

SUE BASSO 11/9/99.



Bards corner cont....

Story from Robin

Ram, on his way to visit God, saw an old sage sitting under a tree with a book in one hand, beads in the other. He was chanting mantras. "G'day old sage" says Ram. "G'day Ram, where are you going?" asked the old sage. "I'm off to see God," answers Ram. "Why?" The old sage says "Will you ask God for me how many more life times I have to go through before I can be 'liberated'". "OK" says Ram.

A bit further on his way to God, Ram espies a young man under a tree. He was dancing and singing blissfully, totally unaware of anything. Ram said "G'day" but the youth was oblivious and continued to dance and sing.

Returning from his visit with God, Ram sees the old sage still under his tree, chanting and reading the holy book. "G'day old sage" says Ram. "G'day" says the old sage. "Did you see God?" "Yes" replies Ram. "Did he

tell you how many more lifetimes I must live?" "Yes" says Ram, "you must do three more". At this the old sage throws the book and beads to the ground in a violent rage.

Further on Ram sees the youth still blissfully singing and dancing under his tree. "G'day" says Ram. This time the youth acknowledges Ram. Ram says, "I've just been to see God and I asked him a question about you." "What did you ask god?" says the youth. "I asked: How many more lives must the youth experience?" replied Ram. "And what did he say?" asks the youth. Ram replies, "As many lives as there are leaves on your tree". At this the youth smiles joyfully looking at the leaves on his tree. There were thousands of them! The youth beamed and began to sing and dance more blissfully than ever.

LUGHNASADH

The clock winds
down,
Approacheth the
hour.
The sun so bright,
Fading his power.
Before we know it,
He'll greet the Earth,
Awaiting there, for
A new birth.
But now is the time,
Our seeds of Spring,
Have given forth,
Our everything.
So take up your
sickle,
Cut down your yield.
And get ready for,
A new clean field.
The wheel of time,
Circular, no end.
Just keeps turning
'round,
Again and again.

Kirsty Roberts 13th
Jan 1999



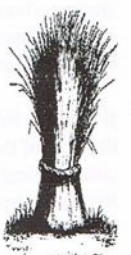
The Song of the Salmon

I am drop upon drop
of experience. I drink my
long journey down.
I wriggle in the
muscling flow. I flicker
in the flash and shine,
I am the flash and shine,
The muscling flow.
I am my journey.
Of wisdom I am
made. Wisdom I
am. I must swim
every river
with love.

Vivienne

B: I am the knife in the hand of Ogma
L: I am the Lady's fire
N: I am an ash tree pointing to the Seven Sisters
F: I am a griffon on a cliff
A: I am a tear drop of illusion
H: I am a diamond in the head
D: I am a flame in a bowl
T: I am a sharp spear
C: I am the salmon wisdom.
Q: I am the flower of Danu
M: I am the spiraled path around a fairy mound.
G: I am the palm of a hand
Ng: I am a flame in a brazier
R: I am a menhir standing tall
A: Who but I assists the birth of the Mabon
O: Who but I hold the secret
U: Who but I unifies the male and female
E: Who but I, has the inner repose of a warrior
I: Who but I sees hope beyond death's gate
Y: to see the immortal soul within.

Joel.



Druidry in the southern hemisphere

[Southern and Northern Hemisphere graphic by Neil Pinnock]

Over the years I imagine we will have many discussions on how our Druidry relates to this area of the world, or, how we as druids relate to this part of the world. As we and grow and learn, our ideas and store of local lore and knowledge will slowly grow and expand, just as our Northern Hemisphere ancestor's knowledge did.

Bards in Australia and New Zealand, and other Southern Hemisphere countries have a particularly hard row to hoe in this regard. Up until now, the Gewrsu have been oriented to the Northern Hemisphere, naturally enough, and this had caused us here in the South to be more alert and aware in our reading of the seasons and cycles, and deciding how some of the more basic parts of the course relate to us.

One of the first things we had to do was remind the office that our seasons are different here, and most of us, I think, got our seasonal festivals all at once, so we could sort them out. I remember planting snowdrops in the Bardic grade and watching them come out in spring, which is August/September here, not February.

Because our forbears brought out the English language with them, we have the same names for the months that they did, but they relate to different seasons. A Bard opening her/his first Ceremony, can get really caught wondering if they should celebrate Imbolc /spring/February/ (in the NH) in Lughnasahd/ harvest/ August or Beltain (summer) in Samhuin. (winter). This can prove to be a real block on the first step of the path.

I think it is important for us to try to look beyond these symbols of dates, to the essence of what we are celebrating and how we are learning about the spirit of this country.

When Europeans first came to this country they tried to superimpose their homeland in this place. Lacking understanding of the ways, culture and spirit of the indigenous peoples, the very new flora and fauna, the seasons etc. they went about destroying what they didn't understand and trying to impose what they knew, to 'make an old home on a new land'

Of course all colonial powers have done this all over the world. What we see today from this, are the dispossession of the people who embody the spirit of the land, English houses that were built but not designed for the weather conditions, farming practices which have destroyed and still are destroying the rivers and pastures of this country, a Christian spirituality which was totally divorced from the seasons and spirituality that existed here, and the adoption of other practices. Some of which are still not appropriate, for this country.

This is slowly changing. People are recognizing the connection and the place and unique culture of the indigenous peoples, we are planting more native plants in our gardens, regenerating wetlands, saving rivers and re foresting. This is a slow process but the consciousness is now here. We are starting to view our environment here with 'fresh eyes'.

But some things will remain the same. Those things that link us to the rest of the world that we rely on for commerce and communication will remain Northern Hemisphere based. The Roman calendar is one of these things and so also it seems, is the interpretation of the Zodiac.

The Southern Hemisphere is unique, it is not 'at odds' with, and simply can't be held up to the Northern Hemisphere for comparison. In our countries we have different land masses, currents winds, weather patterns, minerals plants, including medicinal plants & animals not found anywhere else in the world, and rather than seeing us as being 'at odds' with the Northern Hemisphere, we need to look to find how we complement each other in the duality of the two hemispheres in ultimate unity of this planet Earth.

As I celebrate the Summer Solstice, I am aware that the light which has reached its peak here in the Southern Hemisphere and the next day will start to wane, will move to the Northern Hemisphere where the sun which has reached its darkest and will start to grow. In this I see a balance, part of the dance, the passing of the light from South to North, and of course this occurs at all seasons, an axis of spring and harvest, summer and winter, and the equinox, both spring and summer, a pause, a time of balance in both hemispheres.

I think that if our druid ancestors came here to our countries, rather than impose the knowledge they had learned from the northern hemisphere, they would have looked with sacred eyes at the dance and rhythm of our lands here.

In some major areas they would have seen much that was the same. The seasons follow the same pattern, the sun moves from the east, to the equator, and to the west. In the summer the sun moves out from the equator to the Polar region, just as it does in the Northern Hemisphere, and in the winter it moves back to the equator, a direction that is called south in the Northern Hemisphere, and north in the Southern Hemisphere.

The names of the directions, we bring from the Northern Hemisphere, but the sun follows its own direction, and druids walked the path of the sun.

They would also have learned, and treated with respect, any lore that the indigenous people shared with them, and respected their sacred path. They certainly would not have ignored them. In the spirit of reconciliation, a lot of aboriginal knowledge has been made available to us, including star lore. To acknowledge this and learn from it, is not to appropriate or adopt it. To ignore it is to turn our back on people who have worked with the spirit of this land. We may personally find it difficult to make contact with the local aboriginal people, and not all of us will do so, but Druidry is not meant to be just an easy path, there are many challenges, and some will be uncomfortable for us. These are things that I think bear keeping in mind.

Druidry teaches us that we don't need to make a distinction based on "one or the other". Rather we seek to see the balance in all things, and to see all things as part of the balance.

We are in a unique position to be able to learn and embody the knowledge that our ancestors have passed down to us, from the Northern Hemisphere, and then add to that knowledge by using the tools of Druidry in our new country.

Our seasons hold the balance of the light as it passes around the world, or as we pass around sun.

"The circle of designed opposites, which are complementary, best realizes the nature of the ceremonial year." Ross Nichols.

.....over/

In the book of Druidry on page 298 we see the eightfold year Plan, bereft of 'dates' and Ross Nichols talks of the pairing of opposites. I see the balance of the Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere as a broader canvas of the same principles of seasonal changes that occur in one hemisphere. The following quote is from the book of Druidry

"Alban Arthuan, the Winter solstice, is the rebirth of the tiring sun from the Great Mother as Mabinog, and is clearly a mother-goddess ceremony. Opposite it, or balancing it Alban Heruin, the Summer solstice is the most powerful of the magics; it is the high point of the father-suns achievement in its hemisphere.

Alban Eiler and Alban Elued, spring and autumn equinoxes, have very similar ceremonies; each has a lady bearing significant symbols of gifts from earth: the storage of wine and the seeds for sowing in spring, in autumn the achieved ripened crop of wheat. As the wine is symbol for old stored wisdom, so the wheat sheaf is valued experience from life. Either ceremony can be given seasonal attributions, but the produce of the earth is emphasized.

Imbolc clears away rubbish, washes the face of the earth and implants the first seed. It is clearly a motherhood symbol. Six months later is Lughnasadh, the triumph, the mating, and the death: the height of foliage and the formation of seeds, the mating of Lugh and Eire, and the sacrifice of the year, the killing of one mate by the Mother Goddess and the taking of another. Both ceremonies there are essentially of the Mother goddess.

Beltain and Samhuin have in common the magic blossom, the heavy magic of earth, the spells of the sidhe people, with the pentagram. Samhuin has the more awesome magic of the death of time, the coming back to Earth of those who have passed its boundaries, a look into the depths of timelessness and the open doors between the worlds."

Now we can see that not only each hemisphere has this wonderful balance, but the Earth as a whole maintains this balance by the weaving of seasons, solstices 's and the equinox's between hemispheres, casting an all encompassing circle around both hemispheres, and bringing the balancing of the seasons on to a separate global platform.

The constellations in the Australian sky today, through the different seasons, don't 'match up' with the constellations in say Ireland 2,000 years ago, because of the procession of the equinoxes, which is a very slow shift in the sky pattern, as observed from earth. The star patterns at the seasons would also be different in Ireland in the Northern Hemisphere today. The universe and our galaxy is always changing and moving.

We need to learn more about the stars and the constellations from a Southern Hemisphere perspective, and learn what appears in our skies at the beginning of the seasons here. By here I mean in the country state or territory we live in. To deny what is happening around us and keep working with inappropriate information is not, I feel, the spirit of Druidry.

We need to seek out the mysteries of the constellations as they appear in our skies at the beginning of our seasons, and hear their message.

Last night, which was Friday the 18 of February, and the anniversary of the discovery of Pluto, (I didn't know that until last night!) Andrea and I went to join the Shoalhaven Astronomers. They were very helpful and gave us a lot of information re the star patterns in the Southern Hemisphere. When I came home I stood on the bridge and watched Leo rising in the South East.

Below is some information on the night skies in the Southern Hemisphere. As we observe the skies we will bring more information to the newsletter.

On the **March** (our autumn) equinox Alban Elued, Leo will be rising at around 7pm and Sirius, is in the Zenith.

Leo and Virgo share the Zenith at midnight. (Pisces is in the Zenith at midday)

At 7pm on **May** the 2nd, Samhuin, Cancer and Leo are in the Zenith and Scorpio can be seen rising in the South East.

June Solstice (our winter) Scorpio and Sagittarius share Alban Arthuan, the Zenith at midnight and Orion is in the Zenith at noon.

On **August** 5th Imbolc, Scorpio is at the Zenith at 8pm, which is when Aquarius is fully visible in the southeast.

On **September** equinox (our spring) Alban Eiler, Pisces is fully visible in the East at 7pm and at midnight is in the Zenith. Leo and Virgo share the Zenith at noon)

On **November** the 11 Aquarius is in the Zenith at 7pm and Aries is visible for the first time in the North East.

On **December** solstice (our summer) Noon-Scorpio and Sagittarius share the Zenith. Orion is in the Zenith at midnight

On the 10th of **January** Aries is in the Zenith at 7pm when Taurus is fully in the North East

At 7pm on **February** 14th Taurus is at the Zenith, with Cancer rising in the northeast.

One interesting piece of information available to us right now is that the indigenous people of the Northern Territory have a name for Scorpio, which rises from the east and is fully visible at night around 6pm on June 15th. This is called Ingalpaur: the crocodile. It is the largest and brightest Sky Figure during the month of July.

The sky figure has more than one meaning to various tribal groups. When this figure was seen in the early morning sky during the month of December, tribes around the northern coast knew that they would see Malay traders arrive to exchange knives and axes for the trepang, or sea cucumber, which would then be traded with the Chinese.

Also interesting, is that the Australian Aboriginal people are so far the only known group who have a "constellation" which is made of an area which has no stars, i.e. is a dark constellation and is shaped like an emu.

In the interests of star lore, I would advise everyone to join their nearest astronomical society, and get out there and see what is going on.

Rather than thinking that the constellations determine what is happening with the seasons on earth, I believe that they impart their particular flavour or influence upon each season, in each hemisphere, in the world as a whole and through their procession through their great wheel of the "procession of the equinoxes." Three circles, one within another, within another.

Druidry in the Southern Hemisphere cont.

To me this is more in keeping with the organic process of Druidry, the circle with the spiral. A slow dance through the heavens and the seasons here on earth, again duality, the stirring of Ceridwen's Cauldron perhaps!

I read somewhere in the course material, "Seek not to walk in the footsteps of those before us, seek instead, what they sought!" and I think that this particularly applies to us here.

So rather than seeing one hemisphere as dominant and the other as being at odds, seek what it is in both that induces balance.

I would suggest, rather than just reversing the seasons and the direction of the circle, plant the flowers of the festivals and celebrate when they are in flower, At the same time see what native flowers are coming into bloom Watch the sun, and see how it moves through the sky during the year.

Make landmarks, or use buildings if you are in the city, for sunrise and sunset, and write your observations in your journal. Likewise identify and map the stars in your part of the sky. Try to bring these things into your life through observation, rather than only reading the through the gwersu or books.

We are in fact working with the spirit of place, and this is of course going to be different wherever we live in the different parts of New Zealand and Australia.

The link with our Ancestors is not to practice "what" they practice, in terms of the northern hemisphere, and specific country environment, but "how" they practiced in those areas, how their knowledge was gained. Seek to use their tools of observation, and way of working with spirit to fully understand the earthly and stellar environment that we live in.

We need to ask ourselves what the term Druid means. Is it a description of someone who practices the Northern Hemisphere practices and ceremonies, or does it describe the practice of working with the spirit of the place, as our ancestors did as they migrated across Europe and on to Britain Ireland and Scotland and on again to the rest of the world?

We also are pioneer Druids here, and it is we who must write the books and keep the journals, of the earth and stellar lore of these lands, as we see them. It will take many lifetimes I'm sure, to accumulate what our forbears did in the Northern Hemisphere, but remember that they also moved from place to place and were able to adapt to the lands where they settled.

For those of you who are interested in looking at the Southern Hemisphere skies, the following list should be of help.

References from

Aboriginal Sky Figures Gparingu Naputa, and Gordon Patston, available at ABC Bookshops.

The Star Guide, By Robin Kerrod. RD press, available Angus and Robertson. (including maps for both Northern and Southern Hemisphere Skies and a star wheel for the Southern Hemisphere)

For the seasonal wheel of the year, The Book of Druidry. Ross Nichols Thorsons press.

Members of the Shoalhaven Astronomical Society were also very generous with their help.

This is a list I have at hand should any one wish to contact their local group.

Astronomical Society of NSW. Max Gardner 02-9337-3371

Astronomical Society of Victoria. Linda Mockridge. 03-95965448

Canberra Astronomical Society. ACT 02-6288-7394

Brisbane Astronomical Society. Qld. Darryl Mitchell. 07 3847-2206.

Astronomical society of South Australia. Tony Beresford. 08 8338-1231

Astronomical Society of Western Australia. Val Semmler. 08 9299-6347.

I would be interested in developing a central register of information on plant lore and connection with stellar and seasonal activities, so we can start building our information base, for the whole country. Of course it goes without saying that this will be available to all members.

New Zealand members may want to hold their information closer to home, however it can all be shared on request.

Through out the year Andrea and I will be looking at the skies at the times of the fire festivals and sun festivals and will relay any information we find.

We are all migrants on planet earth!

Carole Nielsen./\



News from Philip

HELLO EVERYONE,

JUST OVER A YEAR AGO, AT THE END OF 98, I CAME OVER TO GIVE A FEW TALKS AND WORKSHOPS IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND. I PARTICULARLY WANTED TO SUPPORT AND ATTEND THE ASSEMBLY NEAR SYDNEY, WHICH I FELT WAS A GREAT INITIATIVE. LITTLE DID I KNOW HOW MUCH THIS VISIT TO THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE WOULD AFFECT OUR FUTURE LIVES!

NOW, AFTER REALLY ONLY A VERY SHORT SPACE OF TIME, WE FIND OURSELVES AS A FAMILY IN A NEW MILLENNIUM AND LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND. WE ARE ENTRANCED BY THE CLEAR NIGHT SKIES, THE CRYSTAL-CLEAR LIGHT, THE PROXIMITY OF TURQUOISE SEA, AND THE FREE-AND-EASY STYLE OF LIVING THAT ALLOWS OUR TWO GIRLS TO GO BAREFOOT IN THE CLASSROOM, AND BOOGIE-BOARDING STRAIGHT AFTER SCHOOL.

WHAT EXCITES US TREMENDOUSLY IS THE FEELING OF NEWNESS, OF FRESHNESS, THAT EXISTS IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE. I BELIEVE THAT DRUIDRY HAS A CHANCE TO DEVELOP AND GREW IN NEW WAYS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS EVOLVING UNDER A DIFFERENT SKY, AND LISTENING TO THE SONGS OF A DIFFERENT EARTH AND DIFFERENT PEOPLES.

I DO HOPE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO COME TO THE ASSEMBLY IN SEPTEMBER, AND HOPEFULLY THE HEALING RETREAT LATER THE NEXT WEEK, BECAUSE THEN WE'LL HAVE THE CHANCE TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER AND TO LISTEN TO THESE SONGS TOGETHER TOO.

YOURS UNDER SOUTHERN SKIES,
PHILIP /|\

News from Whangarei

We had a beautiful Alban Heruin. We got rained out, so moved into our house. There were about nine of us. We welcomed back a few old friends who have for a number of reasons, missed the past few ceremonies, and we welcomed in one new lass.

We split the ceremony into three distinct sections. The initial part was a gentle review of the year and our aspirations and resolutions.

There were many quiet times as we considered what people had said. The main ceremony was also interspersed with many long quiet times, so we had a very leisurely and quiet and settled time. It was indeed a time of reflection.

On New Years day, the local Theosophy Society, of which Melanie Closs is president, and quite a few of the regular ceremony participants are also members, had a little new millennium ceremony on the beach at the head of the Whangarei Harbour. The forecast had been terrible but on the morning it was beautifully clear.

The sun rose directly down the harbour and lit up our little area brilliantly. I enclose a copy of the ceremony, which Melanie and I put together

Have a great Year 2000
Yours under the spreading pohutukawa tree
Bill Huddleston .../ | \

Any member who wishes to have a copy of Bill and Melanie's ceremony, please let me know and I will forward it to you. Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope. It is wonderful!
Carole/| \

THE "GAELIC DRUID ORDER OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS".

"Since the formation of "Sgiath an Fhithich Grove" sometime ago (we actually formed the group over ten years ago), our membership has grown tremendously, so much so that we are really to big now for one Grove.

To make things more awkward, all our members wish to remain working under the same umbrella, as we have quite a unique direction. We decided then, that the only option was to form a new Order based on our approach to Druidry here in the Southern Hemisphere. So it was then, that during the Dawn Ceremony on the Summer Solstice last year, we declared the founding of the "Gaelic Druid Order of the Southern Cross".

The Order, as the name suggests, maintains strong ties with our ancestral lands and culture (that of the Scottish Highlands), whilst

working with the energy and power of our adopted home. It is our belief that a connection to one's ancestry is important and the study of the Gaelic language and culture forms an integral part of Bardic studies.

People of Gaelic descent can find a connection to their heritage, whilst "non" Gaels can use the Order as a platform from which they can discover their own roots.

It is a very exciting time for Druidry in the Southern Hemisphere, just as it must have been when our ancestors first settled in Alba. We have new energies to explore, and new "Spirits of Place" to work with.

Beannachdan oirbh,

Ruiseart /| \

<http://druid.drak.net/druid/druidorder.html>

<http://members.networx.net.au/~raven/ravenswing.htm> " P.O.Box 356 KlemScott. W.A.6911.

ESTABLISHMENT OF AUSTRALIAN DRUID COLLEGE

ANNOUNCEMENT....Akkadia. Ford.

An Australian Druid college, College Corona Australia was formally established at Alban Eiler, 1999 by Druids from five States in Australia and with connections to five Druid Traditions. The college has specific aims and intentions related to the ongoing development of Druidry in the Southern Hemisphere, as expressed in its Charter of Foundation. The college is an autonomous Peer-body of Druids and there are no fees whatsoever for involvement.

All eligible, qualified Druids – from all Traditions – (equivalent to having graduated from the Druid Grade in OBOD) are hereby officially invited to make contact.

Information about the areas of work of the College and entrance into the college will be provided only to Druids. Due to the nature of the proposed areas of enquiry of the Australian Druid College, only Druids from the Southern Hemisphere are at present eligible to apply.

There are Druid representatives of the college in every state of Australia. For further information contact: ADC – Foundation at the following addresses. Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your enquiry

PO Box 7023	PO Box 203	PO Box 356	PO Box 92
Holland Park East	The Basin	Kelmscott	Newtown
Brisbane	Victoria 3154	WA 6911	NSW 2042
Qld.4121.			

"OBOD/NOBOD Virtual Quilt Project."

Quilters of the Order unite!

Some members of NOBOD, while having a discussion about making wall hangings, suggested that we make our wall hangings into a virtual quilt.

It is hoped that as many members as possible will contribute to the quilt.

The theme is -Spirals, Labyrinths and/or Elementals.

It is suggested that the quilter either combine spirals or labyrinths with a *predominant* elemental colour theme as follows: Earth- browns and greens of a particularly earthy tone Air - white and yellow/gold

Fire- reds, oranges, reddish purples Water- blues and greens of a particularly watery tone.

Or:

A square about an elemental theme, adhering as much as possible to the colours given above. The pieces must be square and the recommended, but not mandatory, size is 24" to 36" We'd like to start having these arrive at their final destination by July 2000. Send Photos only and please have a copy for yourself so Bill doesn't have to send the photo back. People can add more than one square as the project unfolds, this could be an infinite event! Each square will link to a page about the person who did the square, a poem, favourite something etc. These should also be sent with the picture.

Bill will be doing the scanning and JPG handling. He suggests that digital images be about 1024 pixels in the greatest dimension and JPG compressed at 100%, and he will standardize them from there. Libby will be involved with the design (putting the squares together), an offer, which I think, is heroic!

Bills address is Bill Blank / POB 85 / Chaffee, MO 63740. U.S.A.

* Some suggestions on photographing the square. This will require attention to detail. Here are some suggestions by one of our members who was a former professional photographer.

* Take your pictures in 'natural light', not direct sunlight, but on a sunny day. * Avoid fluorescent lighting altogether. Natural light is a better indicator of "true colour". * If you have lighting or professional lighting (even a flash unit is better than fluorescent) or even a friendly photographer friend who has a studio set up already, these would be your best bets for true colour representation

The quilt will be shown on the OBOD and NOBOD website, and will be a wonderful representation of the diversity and community of OBOD members from all over the world, a wonderful way to celebrate the way we see our sacred world as a Druid Community at the beginning of a new millennium. Each square will be added to the quilt as the photos come to Bill. Who knows where or when it will end!

For those people who don't quilt, don't despair. As this project seems to be growing in leaps and bounds, we will try to accommodate those of you who crochet, embroider etc. Please feel free to start co-coordinating a display of the craft of your choice and Bill will work out a way to present it. We will 'make it up as we go along' Please note that this project is for members of OBOD only.

Blessings from Thimble Grove

Carole Nielsen/\

For more information contact P.O.Box 44 Windang, NSW 2528 AUSTRALIA. carole@zipworld.com.au phn 02-4295-4213

I found this a handy guide for creating mazes, Celtic Design, Maze Patterns by Aidan Meehan, Thomas and Hudson, this book has over 200 illustrations, and has good lessons for creating you own work. ISBN0-500-27747-8

Some websites for labyrinths mazes quilts etc.

<http://www.geocities.com/heartland/flats/4237/bahama.jpg> <http://tsw.com/artists/bethanyreynolds/bethanyreynolds.html>

<http://members.aol.com/blondberry/> <http://members.aol.com/blondberry/bullseye.html> <http://village.infoweb.ne.jp/~reiko/index.htm>

http://village.infoweb.ne.jp/~reiko/color_chart.html

<http://www.bighornquilts.com>

<http://users.nac.net/bittsjr/quilts/badsue.html>

<http://library.thinkquest.org/16661/cgi-bin/load.cgi> <http://www.aqsquilt.com/> <http://www.jbx.com/~gila/quilting/quilt.html> <http://www.equilter.com/>

RECONCILIATION AND THE LAND

In Australia there has been a "debate" over recent years on the whole subject of reconciliation

Whilst this is ostensibly about healing the rifts between the white and aboriginal peoples, it has a wider implication with the land itself, and is a very long way from achieving its goal.

This issue is hardly confined to Australia; it has and is being reckoned with in other colonised countries such as New Zealand and, notably, South Africa.

Nor is it just a "colonial" issue, as recent events in Indonesia and East Timor have demonstrated, as well as the nationalistic undercurrents in Austria. The United States white population has the problem on two fronts: with the indigenous Indians and the imported Africans and their transported culture and traditions.

Although a wide and complex topic my focus will be on the issue of healing and the relationship of reconciliation to the landscape itself: the Land.

Sorry is a hard word here: Abdurrahman Wahid (Indonesia's President) can say it, but John Howard (Australia's Prime Minister) cannot. Sorry is the complement of forgiveness, indicating that any apology is incomplete without the corresponding forgiveness. It is very difficult to apologise if a power complex lurks in the background. And forgiveness itself requires that we have fully faced and integrated the betrayal that underlies it, which in many countries and cultures is a long way away, and festers like a deep infection. Betrayal is a division: a wresting asunder of a primordial state of unity into disunity and conflict; a schism of wholeness.

We all recognise that the division of peoples requires "healing", but until we examine and identify what healing actually is and the depth of its demand, any other process will be somewhat limited, arbitrary and incomplete; leaving open the possibility - or inevitability - of the wound breaking open again.

First and foremost, healing is not synonymous with curing: this is the great mistake Western medicine has made. Curing is about getting rid of a problem so that it is no longer there, so curing may not heal.

Healing is about integration of a problem from division to wholeness, so healing may not cure. Some people can be cured of cancer, but not feel healed at an emotional and spiritual level; remaining dependent on "check-ups" and reassurance. Others can be healed by an illness and die in peace, though not conventionally cured.

Healing comes from the Old English word "Hal"; hal means to "heal", but also "wholeness", and even "holy". So healing is synonymous with wholeness and extends to the spiritual dimension of our existence: it is not about - usually superficial - problem solving. Healing is an archetypal process; it transcends people and cultures, time and place.

For true healing to be effected the archetypal depths of the process must be activated and engaged; which is where the power of ritual resides.

Presently we are addressing the process of reconciliation with the politics of peoples. If we have learnt one thing from the completion of the Second World War it is that political solutions are limited and repetitive. The situation in Northern Ireland stands as testimony to this fact, as recent events in Austria indicate the festering behind superficial solutions.

Many commentators have remarked on the fact that the forces that led to the Second World War have not been fully acknowledged, dealt with and reconciled; from the archetypal perspective I can only add my voice to this view - with some sadness.

So how is this issue addressed between peoples, if our politics and rationality aren't enough? It requires an appreciation of the non-rational realms: the world of emotions, feelings and spirit.

It requires an appreciation of the culture and its lore; of myth and myth-making; song, story and poem, and this necessarily connects us with the land itself.

But how can we in the West achieve this? Aren't we spiritually impoverished and bereft of myths to guide us? Where are our rituals, ceremonies and rites of passage? For it is these we must rediscover, connect with and LIVE if we are to bridge the gulf with other peoples.

Several years ago I attended an indigenous peoples' conference in the Western desert of Australia. Seated under a flimsy gum tree affording scant protection from the hot sun we were listening to an Aboriginal elder talk of his work with Aboriginal youth.

His problem was that the colonisation of Australia had led to a disruption of cultural patterns within his people, and he was addressing this by reintroducing rites of passage away from civilisation and technology - in direct contact with the land. As he was talking an Anglo-Saxon voice came from the audience: "That's all very well for you, your spirituality and culture is alive, ours is dead."

An Apache Indian Chief in the audience took up the right of reply: "That's not true, you do have your own culture. However, you're lazy and are looking to us for it. But you're not Indian and never will be. You just have to dig a little deeper in your own culture; it's buried, not dead. We recognise it in your druidry and pantheistic spirituality." (Actually he prefaced this with: "There are several things that shit me, one is people wearing eagle's feathers when they haven't earned them...")

The audience was silent. Some serious consideration was going on. That afternoon I felt restless and walked into the landscape. The day was hot, and the desert there exposes itself in a harsh, uncompromising yet very real and beautiful manner.

By the end of the afternoon I was thirsty and tired, and keen not to lose contact with my way back to the farm-station. The storm clouds began to gather and I was blessed with a range of experiences; synchronicities with nature, where I felt in communion with the land and the land "talking" to me...

.....over

I see that the initial step of reconciliation is about the rediscovery of our own culture and the spiritual ways that talk to us. This dimension is contexted in myth and story; enacted in ritual and ceremony.

It is becoming increasingly revealed in our time; maybe because the need for reconnection is so great and dire, and the need itself is spirit beckoning to us. It is also primarily an inner process; about our own wholeness, which is an essential prerequisite for connecting with the "other" in our environment in an ever shrinking world.

Yet it is more than this, as the healing journey necessitates a revisioning of our relationship with the environment and the land herself. My experience is that if the inner healing journey is valid then you will inevitably be drawn into a deeper connection with nature and the land; it is inescapable.

From here the connection process - relationship - becomes a dialogue, not only do we "talk" to the land, but the land "talks" to us. This may be in feeling, synchronicity, inspiration and dream; but, whatever the form, it is recognisable and indisputable.

In Britain the ley lines indicate a profound wisdom of the land. In Australia the aboriginal culture has song lines to identify places and their role or purpose. Often this is simply practical - water or shade, for example - but equally important is the spiritual dimension encoded in song and myth.

We are embedded in the landscape. The sun still rises and sets, we don't experience ourselves as on a planet orbiting a star. The Copernican revolution may influence the way we think, but maybe not the way we feel and experience reality. We exist within and are part of cycles within cycles of existence as reflected in the heavens, the land and our bodies (which are part of the land).

The inner reconnection process also encompasses our relationship to our bodies and nature in ways that have become more commonplace, practical and even of future necessity. No longer do Western pharmaceutical medicines and technologies cope with the malaises of our civilisation; our "dis-eases".

We have rediscovered the importance of our diet; which is also a beginning in the reconnection process, and a fundamental instinctual dialogue with nature and the land. For our malaises we recognise the power of the herbal kingdom, and our ritual connection with this in the healing process.

If we read accounts of this from the spiritual perspective, ranging from Castaneda's stunning accounts of his relationship with the Yaqui shaman Don Juan, or to the more culturally compatible Wulf in Brian Bates' "The Way of Wyr", we see the depth and relationship of spirit and nature manifesting in herb and hallucinogen. We also see something vitally important: the role of ritual.

Our need for ritual is becoming increasingly obvious. In recent times we have deified the rational, scientific and technological: we have simultaneously relegated the world accessed through ritual as "animistic" (implying "primitive"), "childish" (because children have not yet lost their essential wholeness and the ritual function embedded within it) and confined it to sundry "specialists" (priests) who hold it for us de facto, ministering the wafer (in the same manner as doctors now minister their pharmaceuticals: in and of itself a hidden ritual process).

Yet in times of stress and emotional upheaval we are drawn to ritual and the magical realm, it is no longer as suspicious and "evil". What we need to do is integrate it within our lives - routinely.

And the land offers ample opportunity for this. If we can escape the violence to the night of street lights and never-ending television, and leave our prison-cities to appreciate nature on her own terms, then we chance upon a wealth of cycles and patterns that lend themselves to ritual and reconnection.

If we continue this process we appreciate the wellbeing and sense of wholeness it brings, and we are then available to a dialogue with nature, the land and existence itself.

We may be able to access through literature and elsewhere traditional ritual patterns to assist us in this process, and information to support and direct us. But these patterns are to be lived in the present, and in many ways we are faced with a challenge of not only rediscovering our mythology but also reinventing it: such is the nature of the changing times we are in and the demands of the future.

Once we have begun this, then the dialogue with the land becomes routine and commonplace - though never dull! The process itself and the patterns we rediscover and are revealed to us can then invest us with a real spiritual authority, which we can wear with honour and humility.

Then, and only then - in my opinion - are we in a position beyond the wounds and the betrayals to approach the proud peoples of this world who have for so long held alight the torch of natural spirituality, whilst we have wandered in the cul-de-sacs of egocentric and political monotheisms (I exclude here the genuinely mystical dimensions of these disciplines) and material deserts.

Then can the process of reconciliation begin.

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The above article will be repeated in the March edition of Touchstone and forms the basis of the March Topical Focus on the HealthQuest website.



Journey of a Human Soul

Oddly enough I learned a lot from Red Dwarf (a science-fiction comedy). Perhaps the most important thing/reason was to hear the phrase 'the sum is greater than that of its' parts'. Can't remember who they told us had said that now, but without hearing it, I wonder if I'd be arriving at some of these understandings.

'Grove Guardian'. Many times in gwerns a guardian is mentioned. I always wondered and struggled a little over this term, never feeling or sensing a presence as such that matched what I thought it should. Who or what is this term supposed to refer to I wondered? I mean is it supposed to be a separate person, tree, guide, spirit, what? Is it Brighid, or other deities?

I had always tended to associate the term guardian of the grove as a kind of person. However thinking about it for a few moments, I came to think differently. My thinking sort of went, but a grove of trees doesn't need a person as such to be a representative, protector or whatever; a grove has a presence unto itself and suddenly it all came alive for me. (Perhaps this is basic stuff for some of you, I welcome your opinions).

Therefore is a guardian of the grove some sort of 'one consciousness' of the trees and all present? Suddenly changing slightly the way I look at my own and other groves. Given that the sum would not be, without the parts, it still warrants being called an entity or presence on its own merits. It is capable for example of detecting danger to itself, protecting itself, etc.

Therefore a guardian would be its 'own entity' or power or spirit, yet still a sum of the parts that go together to make it up. There's probably more I could muse on that particular topic.

Related somehow in a way I cannot express is what follows because it did after all, follow when I was thinking about it all. Druidry has a kind of broadening effect. Perhaps others say it's a natural thing to happen. Given that Druidry teaches to look inside oneself, it teaches personal growth, but also helps expand ones' ability to see and understand more of what goes on outside of you too. None the less, I find the broadening effect, that I can see evident in my life, fascinating, even exhilarating. Concepts told to me for example in the Bardic grade, I came to accept and understand in my own way.

Now I'm in the ovate grade, and sometimes for no reason that is written in any gwerns, I find myself revisiting some of those basic concepts. I re-visit and expand my understanding in ways I never thought of at the time.

Perhaps it's all written that way, it's probably supposed to happen for lots of reasons including those I written above - but I still marvel at the ability of the human mind/psych. 'Is that what it's all about?' I muse to myself. 'Think for a minute' I say to myself. Your soul returns and with each time it revisits old concepts and experiences new ones too. Each time it expands with that experience. Life is a funnel, in reverse - we get bigger' in a sense.

Now keep thinking along those lines and ponder on the future. Our thinking becomes so 'big' are we able then to tap into or even become part of a 'single consciousness'? Is that partly involved with 'a greater spirit, or Reiki for example? More room for open discussion here too. Is this again, basic stuff for some? Is this too arrogant sounding? Or am I covering concepts yet to be found in further studies? In any case, it's no wonder our souls eventually move onto the white light. We must simply 'out grow' these mortal bindings eventually.

Boy, what changes. I usually get a feel early in a year for what kind of year it's going to be for me. I was thinking the end of last year that upon reflection I have been through a lot of changes. And I can see it. I am, and my life is, nothing like it ever was. The power/magic of all this is amazing. It has broadened things in ways I never knew possible. I look back and then onto others who simply live their 'one little life' as they see it, struggling all the way through for what they tell themselves they need. They're missing so much, it seems such an empty way to live in comparison - but perhaps that's being rude I don't mean to be - it is after all, their life.

Kirsty Roberts :-)



last call

Serpentstar subscriptions are now due . Those who subscribed later through last year, will be notified when their subs are due. Please send cheque of money order for \$10.00 payable to C. Nielsen as above.

Please renew my subscription for Serpentstar 2000

Name.....

Address.....

Phone..... email.....

Letters

Dear Carole,

Received "Serpentstar" today and it is wonderful! Just wanted to say in response to your last page comments (Alban Heruin Issue), that it would be a pity to lose the beautiful quarterly format you have developed over the last couple of years' hard work.

If members want more contact, why don't individuals, Groves or Seed-Groups around Australia take the initiative and post out bulletins of events they are hosting? Whilst our membership here is growing, I don't think there is enough activity to warrant a centralised monthly newsletter at this stage of development – but I am happy to go along with whatever all the members want. Until that time, the quarterly format ensures that there is plenty of interesting material to read when "Serpentstar" arrives - and the cost of subscription for members and the workload of putting it together is manageable.

It would be nice if "Serpentstar" was advertised more regularly in "Touchstone" - with new members all the time, there could be many who have never heard of the newsletter. Your suggestion that we all introduce ourselves to each other is a good idea so following is a brief biography to add to the collection. With Blessings, Akkadia ...

BIOGRAPHY

Akkadia is Co-Chief of North-East Arbor Grove and has been within OBOD since 1991, Co-Founding Australia's first Seed-Group in 1992, which was proclaimed a Grove at Alban Heruinn, 1995. In addition to this, she is an Ordained Priestess of the Western Mystery Tradition and holds Master's Degrees in both Egyptology and Visual Art, with a primary focus upon research and practical exploration of the living mysteries of Kemet (ancient Egypt). Akkadia's first book "Isis Afrikan Queen" was recently released in both the U.K. and Australia, published by Capall Bann Publishing.

Members are always welcome to correspond on any issues related to her especial interests in ceremonial, star-lore and ancient Egypt. //

Pen Pals

Some members of OBOD from other countries have wondered if we in OZ would like to write and share our path with them. Here is a list of people who would like to hear from us.

Lynn McLaughlin
10 Lapham Drive
Colonie, NY 12205
USA

Mark Parton
Streekstraat 8
6436 EP Amstenrade
Netherlands

Rebecca Horne
6302 Elgin apt 91
Lubbock Tx. 79413
USA

Details of Emma Restall Orr's talk in Sydney at the Theosophical Society, Blavatsky Lodge, 484 Kent St. Sydney near cnr. Bathurst St. Phone 02-9267 6955. Email <hpd@mantra.com.au>

Drinking from the Holy Grail

Subtitle: An Introduction to Druidry, Ancient and Modern

Detail :

Exploring the distant past of this ancient tradition, searching for its origins within the islands of Britain and Ireland, tracing its evolution through the millennia, Emma will take us on a journey from the burial mounds of Stone Age England to the sacred groves of 21st century Australia. Revealing her vision of the tradition as a spiritual philosophy of healing and personal freedom, a quest for inspiration, Emma will speak of how each individual's journey is recognized as unique. She will share with us an understanding of how and why Druidry is increasingly practiced in a modern world as a way of finding and drinking from the Holy Grail, and allowing its power to flow into the creativity of living well.

Serpentstar is a newsletter for OBOD members. Opinions and statements by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor or the Order, (except, of course, for my article in this edition).

All submissions from members are welcome. The deadline for the next newsletter is the last week in May.

Please send to Carole Nielsen P.O.Box 44 WINDANG N.S.W. 2528

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