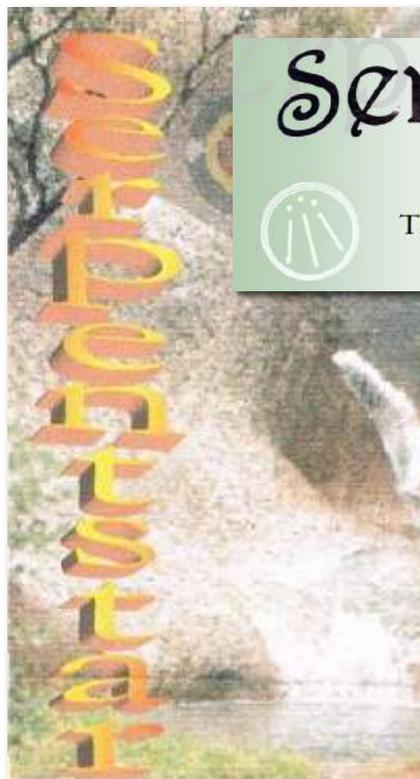


# SerpentStar

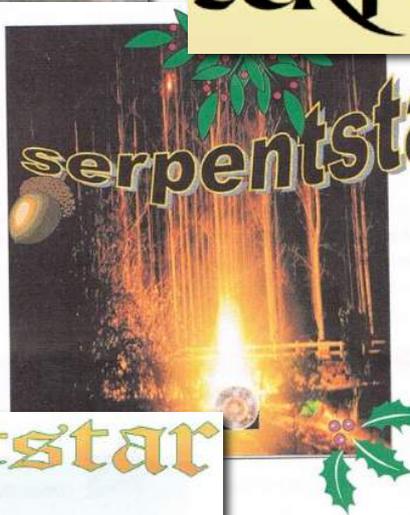
A newsletter of The Order of Bards Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere



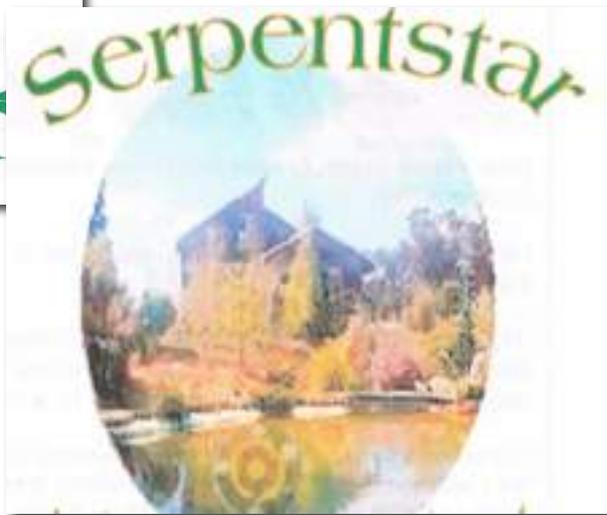
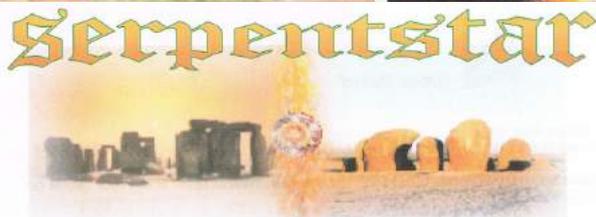
**SerpentStar**  
Magazine and newsletter of  
The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids  
in the Southern Hemisphere.

20th Anniversary  
Edition  
Alban Hefin 2017

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



**SerpentStar**  
Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD



**SerpentStar**  
Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

## SERPENTSTAR



# Welcome to the Alban Hefin 2017, 20th Anniversary Issue of SerpentStar!

Dear Reader

I find it almost impossible to believe this is SerpentStar's 80th edition. Surely somebody's added up wrongly! (*I had, apologies Philip, it's number 76! - Ed*) But then I look at the Order and all the numbers seem extraordinary to me: over 22,000 members, over 175 groups, 19 countries represented at the Order's 50th party in Glastonbury, the course in 7 languages, 8 journals published by members - of which SerpentStar is one. Incredible, really, when I think back to how the Order was when I first joined 47 years ago, in Nuinn's time. Then there was just a handful of members. Over the last thirty years the Order has grown in this way because of the amazing people who seem to have heard its call, and those of us who have been to Order gatherings, and have been able to meet other members, know this as a fact.

Stephanie and I have had the good fortune to be able to visit many OBOD events around the world, and now just recently Damh the Bard has encouraged me to try out Live Facebook videos as a way of bringing members together, and I have to say I'm really enjoying this new way of interacting. Every Monday evening in Lewes I have a conversation about Druidry or a related topic and try to engage with those commenting as much as I can. The recording then goes up on my YouTube page and blog, and in the OBOD FB video library. I'm calling it 'Tea with Philip' to convey the idea that this is an informal gathering, and it would be great to see you there!

As strange as this new technology may seem, it feels to me like it presents us with a real opportunity for more than a superficial meeting or exchange. I think it really can represent, in this world, a meeting that we can be having in the Otherworld - a gathering in the Sacred Grove that brings us together to explore the Big Questions, while having fun too!

Mandy has asked me to mention something that happened on a visit Down-under, and we have always had a ball when we have visited (as have Damh & Cerri when they visit too). And we are so impressed at the way in such a vast country you have been able to maintain a tradition of holding annual gatherings in different parts of the continent without fail. So congratulations to everyone! And now for something silly. When thinking about our trips over to you, these memories surfaced:

There are two kinds of Near-death experience - the literal and the metaphorical. I had both on one of our early visits. Stephanie and I were in a member's garden, somewhere outside Sydney, and we were left alone as she prepared some drinks inside. As I waited, I noticed an interesting-looking appendage on a tree - a sort of natural bracket on a tree trunk filled with leaf-mould. I don't know why, but I started to play with the leaf-mould, only to hear our host shrieking "No! Take your hand out!" This was where some deadly spider lived. If it had struck, there would be no time to even call an ambulance - and no point. I would already be on my way to Druid Heaven. Ok, so this isn't a real NDE, more of a flirtation with one, but at least it was a flirtation with literal death, whereas the next incident was simply an experience of metaphorical death. It happened the next day. Australia seems to me to be that sort of place - in a nutshell, dangerous!

We got up early with the kids to see the Olympic torch being carried past us, on its way to Sydney. We were amongst a small crowd, and we waited for ages - an eternity. In the end, out of sheer frustration I shouted out 'What's taking him so long, has he only got one leg?' Now this was a mean and very un-PC thing to say I know, but none of us is perfect, and I was tired and hot. But immediately I made this remark, a huge cheer rose from the crowd - not, as I thought, in appreciation of my comment, but to greet a one-legged man hopping along with the Olympic torch held proudly high. For some reason, he stopped by us to catch breath and let the children hold his torch. Our girls held the torch up, we happily took pictures, and then, as the lovely athlete who we had chatted to briefly continued on his journey, they glowered at me, and I went through my metaphorical NDE. "Sorry," I mumbled, "I didn't know."

Warm wishes to everyone and hope to be with you again soon!

Philip Carr-Gomm



Philip & Stephanie Carr-Gomm at the OBOD Winter Gathering, Glastonbury 2017

# 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](mailto:southernbreezesfellowship@gmail.com) and you can see our profile on Facebook [www.facebook.com/Southernbreezesfellowship](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:bardofthegreenwood@gmail.com) or William Rattley at [wildra2003@yahoo.com.au](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:whitelk@bigpond.com) or Fiona at [Fiona.mulholland@bigpond.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au)

## Useful websites for SH OBODies:

[www.druidryaustralia.org](http://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](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com) and spread the word!*

# My First Experience of Druidry in the SH

By Elkie White

Mine is a tale of blissful ignorance. I was teaching in a Steiner School and a part of the curriculum involved teaching the children tribal ways and stories. Along came a parent who told me that she was sitting in a circle of people who were learning about Native American ways and I considered it an ideal opportunity to learn some of their tribal ways for my class. And so I began learning Native American stories, dances, and songs, and ultimately, participating in Native American rituals. Three years later, this would culminate in a vision quest on a hilltop in Flowerdale. During that long night three significant things happened, although at the time I did not fully appreciate that. In fact, it is only with hindsight that I can see just how significant they were. At the time I sat there hoping it wouldn't rain, berating myself for choosing a slope for my circle, and trying to keep warm. I had taken a blank shield with me and perched it in the centre of the circle. The men had kindly bent the willow, and stretched the leather into a circle for me, the idea being that my protector might appear on it.

It was impossible to sleep on that slippery slope, but I must have dozed at some point. When I looked up through bleary eyes some time later, there was a dragon on my shield. This puzzled me because I had undertaken this quest within the NA tradition, but this was definitely not a thunderbird! As I woke up properly it faded away, but I'd seen enough to be able to paint it when I got home. Sometime after this, I received the message that would totally change my life: "You are not Native American! You are not Aboriginal! You are to study your own indigenous spirituality!" Now I was completely confused.

What indigenous spirituality? I was born in England and as far as I knew, England did not have an indigenous spirituality. They were Christian. We are talking about 1994 here. I would not own a computer for another six years. Try to imagine not being able to do a google search for information! I decided to focus on the dragon, and within two weeks of flipping through books, I came across *The Druid Animal Oracle*. It had four dragons in it, and, (to my great excitement) the words "If you are interested in learning about Druidry and how it can be followed as a spiritual way, we can also send you details of the teaching program of The Order of Bards Ovates and Druids. The program is sent by mail..."

So into the post goes my hand-written letter to PO Box 1333, Lewes, E. Sussex, England to Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm. I knew nothing about druids but I had to start somewhere, and I now like to think the dragon placed me on the druid path. To begin the course, I had to negotiate a telegraphic transfer with the bank – imagine that!

I can still remember how excited I was when my first package arrived. As far as I was aware, I was the only person doing the course in Melbourne and I followed the instructions carefully. This was a different course to what bards receive today. The new course was created in 2000 but this was what we now call 'the old course'. However I barely noticed that everything was orientated to the northern hemisphere because I had entered from the NA path and everything was northern hemisphere there too. When the Melbourne seedgroup began three years later, we made it our first task to convert the ceremonies to the southern hemisphere, but that's a whole other story.



Photo credit: TrekEarth

## Carole Neilsen - First Editor of SerpentStar!

First, my first experience with OBOD.

My daughter and I went to a Mind Body Spirit expo at Darling Harbour in Sydney. We came across a weekend in Wiseman's Ferry for a Celtic Spiritual experience and decided to go. It was a great weekend and there were some Druids there - not OBODs - who lived around Wiseman's Ferry. We had a talk to them and had a couple of ceremonies with the general group and met someone who told us about OBOD.

So we contacted OBOD and decided to do the Bardic Grade. We got our pack and went up to the Blue Mountains, we drove around letting our instincts draw us to the beginning of the Megalong Valley and initiated each other. It was very exciting and I suppose that was our first OBOD experience, it was also noteworthy that whenever my daughter and I organised a little ceremony for ourselves it would storm. It happened consistently for about 6 months and we both had a lot of dreams during that time. The dreams were very much a part of the OBOD experience.

I was contacted by some OBOD Druids not so long after that to help in a wedding, also at Wiseman's Ferry, where I stood in the West while other more experienced Druid members of OBOD officiated. It was wonderful and after the ceremony I had to go away for a little while and sit in the bush and digest the magic that was generated. Of course as we all know, the first and second assemblies were later held at Wiseman's Ferry, so that place was very special to Druidry and OBOD at the time.



### When were you editor of SerpentStar?

The first Assembly was in 1997 and was a wonderful, if wet affair. People came from all over Australia and New Zealand. We huddled under makeshift shelters and made circles in the paddock/meadow and pitched tents and swags in the woodland. We were a group of people who had never met, yet we slotted together like family.

### What inspired you to become part of SerpentStar?

At the end of that weekend, not wanting to lose the connection I suggested we have a newsletter. Elkie immediately said "Yes what a good idea, it should be you!" That wasn't something I anticipated but I said yes because I thought it was important. There was some discussion about the name and I think it was Akkadia who suggested SerpentStar. This was thought to be a good name as it didn't appropriate any indigenous spirituality, but covered the Southern Hemisphere on an astrological plane. "The aim of this newsletter/notice board is to inform and draw together members in the peace and light of the grove, and to support and nourish each other in our quest for strength, understanding, knowledge, justice and love. let's work together to achieve this aim."

### What was your favourite part of being editor?

I have to first talk about the least favourite part of being editor. I was just learning about computers, my son was helping me. So I decided to use word processing to do the newsletter. It was a nightmare! Getting a newsletter layout into a word document, getting the pictures to sit in the right place, was so hard for a beginner. I was also working two jobs and SerpentStar would often be finished at 2 or 3 in the morning, after some catastrophic fail that inevitably happened during the production of the newsletter, usually at the deadline for posting. So there were spell check failures that I didn't see, it could take hours to print because I always tried to use the best resolution for the pictures. I was wanting to get the whole thing perfect with hardly any computer skills. I remember posting out the first newsletters, I was so focused on the content that when I actually got a response saying thank you and how good it was, I suddenly realised that I had posted it to real people, all over Australia, most of whom I had never met!! The immediate response was of course wonderful. Finding the pictures for the banner for each edition was always a meditation I enjoyed.. The articles, the sharing of wisdom, of the different roads people were walking in the OBOD family, and the love so obviously offered. It was wonderful to be part of all that. However I realised that SerpentStar needed to be shared to grow, needed to move through many hands to unite us with renewal and regrowth. So one weekend I went up to Stormwolf's home and sat with her, while she took over that responsibility and rebirthed SerpentStar. It was a loss for me, but it was exciting too, to know that Serpent Star would move among members and draw from them the creativity they had to offer, revealing the different prisms of our groves and members, and the facets of our Australian Druid wisdom that were being revealed so generously. Funnily enough I eventually went to TAFE to learn more about word processing and finished up with Advanced Diplomas in Website Production & Design, a bit of network engineering and was asked to teach computing, which I did.

# How I got Here

*I took off my ancestral shawl  
of Catholicism  
and departed the temple  
of the one true faith.*

*I left weeping tears of rage and grief  
for I was leaving my lover god  
and my faith people.*

*Into a spiritual desert I walked  
an empty dry land  
Screaming with silence  
I shivered in cold uncertainty  
for I had left behind  
judgement and righteousness*

*I chanced upon a pagan fire  
besides an ocean of possibilities  
It's flames fierce beneath the full moon  
I looked up  
but there was no pattern in the stars  
so I took a lover  
and discovered the sacredness of my own body*

*I met a Teutonic goddess  
who shared her knowledge of otherness  
who opened closed doors and shuttered windows.  
who took me in her silver chariot  
along gravel tracks between tree less hills  
to the gateway between worlds.*

*Stepping through time  
I met an ageless crone  
her arms stretched wide in welcome  
her hair a wildness of past lives  
and current lovers.  
She introduced me to the mad and magical  
And gifted me her friendship*

*"One rule" said the crone  
"No rules!  
There is no wrong.  
We are all perfect.  
A circle is unending  
And learn how to say No."*

*I kicked my feet high and beat the drum  
dancing to the sacred grove  
with my tribe  
the mad and magical  
I sat amidst ti-kouka talking trees,  
with my questions unanswered  
but finally asked  
I wrapped myself  
in a new shawl  
called druidry.*

I had studied Druidry with a gentleman in Queensland in the Danic tradition for three years when he disappeared, with my freshly paid fees as well. It was an expensive mistake, but I felt the need to find another guide in my Druid's path. After casting my net around I found OBOD. I had just received my first few Gwersi and was feeling deeply connected with new words, they spoke to my soul, I was then surprised by an offer off coming to a gathering. Four weeks after starting I was contemplating trekking off to Port Lincoln, somewhere I had never heard of, to meet a group of people I had never met. It was my first chance of a holiday for quite some time, so I decided to make a trip of it and, since I was nearly there, go to Tasmania as well.

I arrived in Port Lincoln after the worst flight I had ever been on. I was told I would be met at the airport, and what a greeting. I was met By Rafayard, and hugged within the first minute of arriving! I felt I was home! The gathering was challanging, exciting, and had an air of trepidation about it. I soon found I had to let my hair down and go with the flow. My initiation was a phenomenal experience, and it left me transmuted, transfixed and looking at the world from a new dimension. Within this group I found people who challenged my thought patterns and my self-delusion, as well as people who shared their passions with me. I remember I had a conversation with Dean about paramagnetic energy, that only we seemed to understand. I was in heaven.

Since then I have been to many gatherings, and even started a Seed Group in my home area off The Hunter Valley and Newcastle. This is my path and my life. a long way from where I was 12 years ago!

Rollick



Pic by Jez Runnalls

Moira Wairama, Grove of the Summer Stars, Aotearoa

Pic by Cecily Vickers

# The Origins of SerpentStar

by Zan & Akkadia

1991. A quiet forest. We were sitting within a newly replanted section of our rainforest garden in Northern NSW, reminiscing about recent travels abroad, a nine-month sojourn from Africa, to London and America. It was during our three month stay in London that we had regularly attended a Pagan moot in a pub in SoHo called "Talking Stick", a rare time in the Western Mysteries when all the main traditions gathered informally to share experiences, to share a drink and most importantly to listen. It was during one such night that we heard the Chief of OBOD Philip Carr-Gomm speak on Druidry (years later Philip told us, it was the only time he had spoken at Talking Stick). What he said touched our hearts so greatly, that upon return to Australia, we wrote to the Order in the UK and enquired about the possibility of commencing training in Druidry, in Australia. Far from the centre of Druidry and Groves in the UK, would the Order accept our request to be trained?

We eagerly checked our mailbox each day and week and finally, about a month later, a letter arrived, accepting our request to be trained and enrolling us in the emergent OBOD correspondence course, which we began immediately and were initiated into the Bardic Grove at Alban Heruinn 1991, in the North-East of Australia. So our first experiences of Druidry in the Southern Hemisphere were directly connected to OBOD. Following initiation, our time as Bards was tutored directly by the Chief Philip Carr-Gomm and this continued throughout our Bardic year. We learned later that we were the third and fourth initiates in Australia (and in the Southern Hemisphere) within OBOD, at a time when we knew of only one other in Druidry in OBOD (Murray B. in South Australia), when distances could not be bridged by email, or sms, or websites, remembering it was 1991. When the time eventually came to be initiated as Druids at Alban Heruinn 1994, we were initiated in Sydney by a UK Druid, who himself had also been initiated by Philip, a member of the College of Caer Lud (an inner college of the Order that ceased to function in the late 1990s), who had recently moved to Australia. Subsequently, we were then tutored throughout the Druid training by Philip. We formed a Seed Group in 1992, which in time blossomed into a Grove after our Druidic initiation, the first OBOD Grove on the East Coast of Australia, called the North-East Arbor Grove, founded at the same time as the Order authorised a Grove in Western Australia (run by Tony T.).

The early history of OBOD Druidry in Australia is connected to the North-East Arbor Grove and you can see us robed in the photo on the cover of the first issue of SerpentStar on the right hand side of the image. Our Grove Inaugurated the Druid Assembly in Australia for OBOD in 1997, this was the first time any Southern Hemisphere members had met in person, some travelled from as far as New Zealand to attend. Ceremony, feasting, initiations, festivities and workshops took place on private land at Wisemans Ferry. It was also at this First Assembly in 1997, that the idea for a newsletter was mooted around the central fire, again the first ceremonial fire that all Order members in the Southern Hemisphere had gathered around (and there is a photo of this fire also in SerpentStar) and Druid Zan H. Co-Chief of the North-East Arbor Grove named the newsletter SerpentStar. An OBOD member Carol N. (a Bard at the time) offered to perform the task of compiling and mailing the newsletter out and this is clearly visible on the reverse side of all the early newsletters.

Our Grove hosted the visit of Philip Carr-Gomm to Australia to attend the Second Druid Assembly in 1998. Interest in Druidry in the Southern Hemisphere was growing, with attendance doubling between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> assembly. At the culmination of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly we ceremonially passed the light of the Assembly on to Corringal Grove in South Australia, with the intention that the Assembly would move each year around Australia.

Our Grove then hosted the visit of Emma Restall-Orr, at the time Joint Chief of the BDO and like Philip in 1998, Emma stayed with us at our home in Newtown, Sydney.

After a decade of very public activities and service within OBOD, including seven years as an Ovate tutor, around 2001 we changed our focus to more inner work and continued our lives as Druids, through regular journeys to the old lands of Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales through a working we named Hermetic Druidry. In 2011 we celebrated the important milestone of our twenty years in Druidry on the summit of Dun I, on Iona, Scotland. A place of profound meaning in Druidry, and for many years was the location of an annual OBOD retreat and the place from which we were gifted at the time of our Druidic initiations. In 2013, while attending the Druid Conference in the UK and staying with OBOD/BDO Druids nearby, we finally were able to meet Philip Shallcrass and the opportunity to see Emma after so many years, which was beautiful.

We now have twenty–six years of experience in living Druidry within the Southern Hemisphere and more particularly, in Australia; of these years, having passed through the twenty–year milestone so significant in the ancient cycle of Druidic training, we now have twenty–three years lived as initiated Druids.

We have often reflected upon the challenges of Druidry as a tradition in lands so far from the old countries and where the sacred trees grow in only few places and then where some simply, do not grow at all.



The early years of Druidry in Australia saw many passionate discussions about how to fit the cycles into the Southern Hemisphere and there was also attempts to substitute Ogham trees with Australian native trees/plants/animals, which simply, in the majority of cases have no relationship exoterically or esoterically. This is a quest that undoubtedly continues with every new generation of initiates in these lands. There are many teachings about this, suited to the Ovate Grove, which we will not speak of here. A Druid College was formed with the intention to work through matters such as these, called Corona Australis, with Foundation Druids (including ourselves Akkadia and Zan) from a number of Druidic traditions (including OBOD and BDO) but Druidry in these lands is not easily syncretised, or perhaps not at all, so correspondence on this ceased. Well–qualified Druids have remained silent, whilst those newer upon the path grapple with these matters, for outside the framework of the established correspondences, all else are simply personal ways of working, with inherent philosophy of Druidry as a foundation.

The profound experiences of living as Druids over these decades, has necessitated continual learning and practises, of planting a sacred Grove, of planting two properties with native trees, of watching the cycles of these trees rise and fall with the seasons; of learning the lore of star and stone in this land and in the old lands of our ancestors and never forgetting that beyond time, Druidry exists.

We felt it was important to add some history to the 20th Anniversary of SerpentStar, as this is also the 20th Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Druid Assembly in Australia and these events are not only intertwined, but have been so formative in Druidry developing in the years since and are also directly connected to our lives as Druids, as recounted here. We do not expect the majority of those involved in OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere now to have ever heard of us, and this very brief history may come as a surprise to those new to Druidry since 2001. All we have written here is how it occurred, we have maintained a private Grove archive from those years, including all early SerpentStar issues and the events may be collaborated by Philip, or Emma, or the few Druids still around from those days. We are offering this history now, which has never before been written down, as a gift to SerpentStar, so that the Bardic memory of Druidry in Australia may be strong, may stay strong and continue to thrive. It gives us immense joy to see that the newsletter not only continued, but has grown and flourished in these two decades.

We were not the first Druid in this land, so unlike Amerghin, we did not sing the land into being. This is a land of ancient spirits, not of our ancestors, upon whose bones we tread with respect. But having seen a decade, a century and a millennium in as Druids, we have learnt much and have something now to say.

May SerpentStar continue to shine.

Thank you for listening.

From the Hearth of Hermetic Druidry, North–East Arbor Grove  
By Star & Stone  
Zan & Akkadia /|\  
dragonstone1@bigpond.com

Facebook: Druidry – Inspirations



## Taking the Plunge

by vyvyan ogma wyverne

To my great disappointment I had to miss the first Druid assembly, but I looked forward all year to the second one in 1998 and to my delight everything conspired to make that possible for me. Absorbed in building my life on a little farmlet in a remote backwater of Murray Mallee, I had begun seriously to lose touch with the outside world. OBOD was providing me with a way back in through the teachings, magic and enchantment of the druid path. It's true I was captivated and very much wanted to meet other people similarly enthusiastic about magic, ritual, healing and creativity for the good of all beings. I had completed all three grades and was a tutor of Bards and Ovates at the time.

Especially exciting was the fact that the event was being hosted by my Ovate tutor, Rafayard, (Leslie) and Dean Gentilin, at Cooringal Grove in Port Lincoln, just two easy bus trips away. I took my old guitar, after considering leaving it home because it was too battered. But old guitars tend to cling and when you're planning a trip to where there are likely to be campfires around which songs might be sung, some guitars are just plain cussed and will not be left at home. Dean picked me up from the bus, and took me out to Cooringal Grove where excitement was mounting as the show began. There weren't many of us in those early days and small groups create a special magic that never really fades away. I made bonds of great affection during that weekend that will never fade.

Cooringal Grove is a seriously beautiful place, carefully tended for optimal magical living, set in magnificent grounds rich in natural fauna and flora, with geology that is pure poetry in stone, crystal and morphology. The great Southern Ocean is not far away. In rainy seasons, surface run-off water flows in a deep creek past the house and gardens, where the still-haunted native scrub shades into the exotica planted to meet the needs of the family. Rocky slopes dense with sheoak one side of the

### When were you editor of SerpentStar?

I took over the editorship of SerpentStar in Beltane 2007 from Stormwolf and I was editor for three years, handing over to Lady A (Kimmy Austin, now Kimmy Morley) at Beltane in 2010. Kimmy handed it back to me at Imbolc 2012 to keep it active while we waited for Todd Dearing to come along and take over, which he did with panache at Beltane in 2013.

### What inspired you to become part of SerpentStar?

Living on a remote farmlet with limited access to transport and animals to care for was making it hard for me to attend OBOD events, so editing the newsletter was a great opportunity for me to participate, stay informed and maintain contact with fellow OBODies. It also gave

me a chance to improve my publishing skills and learn a lot about the internet.

### What was your favourite part of being editor?

I loved seeing Druidry taking hold and growing, with more and more people beginning to strike up the courage to send in their contributions – poems, articles, stories and thoughts - that revealed along with their amazing talents and wisdom the steadily evolving spirit of Druidry in the southern hemisphere. I've also enjoyed watching SerpentStar going from strength to strength under the masterly editorship of three splendid OBODies, firstly Todd Dearing, then Martin Samson, and then Amanda Parry (aka Mandy Gibson) who has really brought it right up to standard as a newsletter to be proud of.

bridge, broad green camping grounds on the other, shaded by big fragrant trees with birds of all kinds thronging their branches. The flower garden is full of fairies, the herbs, the veg and the crystals, stones altars and shrines placed with gentle inspiration here and there. And through it all you hear the pipes of Pan...and the intermittent fly-over of roaring planes headed for the airfield hard by – because they had happened to time their big jamboree to coincide with ours. Undeterred we resigned ourselves good-naturedly to them and got on with the assembly with a right good will.

Rafayard is an inspiring music teacher and Dean is a keen muso, and their kids are all proficient and enthusiastic musicians too, so music carried us through. But Dean and Raf are also natural born hosts, and very much involved in their community, so with great food laid on, we partied with the locals! It worked very well, generated much joy and goodwill and we made that valley ring! That was truly good medicine for me.

For me the most invigorating, life-focusing things were:

- my first experiences of formal ceremony with fully initiated fellow Bards, Ovates and Druids, which thrilled me then for the first time as it still does all these years later.
- the experience of singing in a kind of loose bardic circle, which ignited my delight in singing to small audiences, my battered guitar notwithstanding, and I've since become addicted to bardic circles and campfire sing-alongs.
- my first sally into any kind of human society after years of living intensely in isolation almost alone with nature as a recluse. It was an unqualified success for me. It kick-started a major healing process, set a lot of things right in my life and lifted me right out of the rut that I was in danger of stagnating in. Though I was not immediately able to put my finger on it, as time went by it became clear to me that I had found my tribe - and they had accepted me.

## Magic in Desert Country by Cherry Carroll

My first Southern Hemisphere OBOD experience was at the November 2003 Assembly in Wyeuro SA, which was hosted by Wvyverne and Nellie .

It was the first time that I had travelled so far on my own and also the first time that I had met another Druid. So many 'firsts'! I met Elkie at Melbourne airport after flying in from Brisbane. I have no idea what I was expecting a Druid to be like but it was such a relief to see a friendly face, and I felt that I was reuniting with a long lost Sister. We then flew on to Adelaide and shared a hire car to Wyeuro.

Wyeuro is wild desert country and the primordial spirit of the land is palpable. I was fortunate to be taken by Wyverne, who is so in tune with that spirit, to a naturally cleared area which had once been an ancient ocean bed. Standing in the centre of that sacred space I closed my eyes and was buffeted by its energy. I wrote in my journal later:



*Pic by Jez Rummalls*

“Moving into the centre I was buffeted by a powerful force and could not get my balance. Wyverne was standing on the edge of the area and called out for me to move back further which I did and I immediately experienced a huge surge of energy which became as a whirlpool of water sweeping around and over me, filling me with invigorating radiance.”

Wyverne told me that she had seen the waves crashing over me as I stood motionless.

This was a magical time of exploring the raw warmth of Mother Earth, meeting trees of power which held images of dragons, goblins, horse heads and other creatures. Sandalwood, pepper tree and mallee called to me as I passed and faerie folk watched with curiosity this strange human who crept past, fearing to disturb them. One sitting on a tree root allowed me a fleeting glimpse before chuckling and disappearing from view and others teased me as they flitted in and around the pepper tree.

Down by the Murray River I meditated with a huge Old Man Willow. His craggy face and gnarled limbs became obvious as he invited me to sit with him. He was full of wisdom and has remained with me as a mentor on my inner plane ever since that first meeting.

I celebrated my group Bardic initiation during the Assembly, which was a profound experience, being drawn deep into the Earth and held safely in the arms of the Mother. The feeling of all-encompassing love within the circle was overwhelming. Sharing rituals, music, laughter and companionship for the first time with fellow members was beautiful. Complete strangers had become family.

This first experience of an OBOD Assembly lives forever in my heart and will always be my favourite Assembly. Not because it was my first Assembly, but rather because of the blissful simplicity of merely sharing and absorbing the vast energy of wild places, feeling the endless connection with it, and experiencing the utter joy that this brings.



# february 26 & 27 2000

## hokowhitu campus centennial drive palmerston north

### 50 free seminars, activities & entertainment, exhibition hall, food & live music

---

**new spirit  
candlelight benefit concert**  
each year at the new spirit festival we have enjoyed a great concert on the saturday night.

It's the same in palmerston!  
**DON'T MISS THIS GREAT MUSIC EVENT & HELP A GOOD CAUSE TOO!**  
TICKETS ARE \$15 AT THE DOOR.  
7.15 PM SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY, IN THE AUDITORIUM

Starring:  
celtic & folk harmony trio **ELAN**  
millennium hippies aka **BRENDA & MARK LIDDYARD-LAURENT**,  
from the uk, **CATLIN & SIVA**,  
plus your hosts **CHRIS & JENNY JAMES** & more!  
**PROCEEDS TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

---

**new spirit festival great start to millennium**  
for those of us who have observed the huge increase in interest in spirituality over the last couple of years, the new millennium looms with a promise of greater progress in rates of consciousness & spiritual development. We believe the new spirit festival is helping drive this movement by providing a wide range of topics, possibilities & methods in a visitor friendly environment. noted speakers & presenters from nz & overseas provide stimulation & challenge. There are ample opportunities for visitors to get involved and to try something new.

As you wander through the festival you will be entertained by some superb musicians & performers. celtic & south american music is a feature, also didgeridoo & flutes, all outside, the saturday night concert in the auditorium is a fund-raiser for amnesty international nz - see above!

An amazing weekend of coming together, of meeting old & discovering new friends, the campus setting provides a relaxed environment in which to enjoy the festival atmosphere. over 50 free seminars & activities, live music & entertainment, over 50 stands in the exhibition hall & the groups with their own marquees running their own programmes, & over 30 healers, astrologers & readers of various kinds will be available. a great, stimulating weekend, with wonderful speakers & guests, both local & from overseas. join us & catch the spirit!

tickets for the festival are \$20 (weekend), or \$15 (day). buy your tickets at the gate.

## My First OBOD Experience in the Southern Hemisphere

by Dawn McKenzie (Druid, Grove of the Summer Stars and Grove of the Four Southern Dragons.)

I met Philip Carr-Gomm on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2000, and wrote in my diary at the time:

“Listening to Philip Carr-Gomm talking about his study and practice in the Druid tradition was inspiring. He was barefoot, dressed in beige trousers and a black sweatshirt. He spoke softly, lyrically and passionately about being a Druid. As Chosen Chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, and as author, he engaged me with his two talks. What he spoke about rings true. At last some deep part of me is being acknowledged. Druidry isn't a antiquated religion, it is right for the here and now. I love how I can feel close to the land and my ancestors, here in New Zealand and throughout the world.”

The experience was so inspirational and life changing, I have kept the brochure from the talks.

**programme changes**  
Details may change at the last minute as we check the notice board at the information desk. please to where you buy your tickets. these are all the planned seminars and activities, there are many other spontaneous things happening on the stands and in the marquee area, there are no bookings for any of the events so first come - first served, although there should be enough room & seats for all - don't forget to show your ticket at each entrance. the rooms are fully air conditioned so the chairs should be very comfortable.

**rose seminar room**  
sat 10.30 **ancestral reconnection** psychology for the new millennium. dialogue with the soul & reveal your true purpose. experience enhanced self-awareness by connecting to your history within the being. **rose seminar sat 11.30** **revelation** come to the spirit - 21 weeks of a journey from the form & the form to the form & the whole, each step an integral part. **rose seminar sat 12.30** **revelation** the art of healing & regeneration, explore the self help methods of a 5000 year old shamanic philosophy based on the principles of the great ancient law. **rose seminar sat 1.00** **revelation** a new & different analysis to which income taxes are seen to be the operating source of negativity & poverty. **author sat 2.00** **revelation** the high conscious wisdom of an extraterrestrial species experience the clarity & high intelligence of these beings through this channelled lecture. **rose seminar sat 3.00** **revelation** the high conscious wisdom of an extraterrestrial species experience the clarity & high intelligence of these beings through this channelled lecture. **rose seminar sat 4.00** **revelation** the high conscious wisdom of an extraterrestrial species experience the clarity & high intelligence of these beings through this channelled lecture.

**auditorium**  
9.30 - 10.45 **ancestral reconnection** psychology for the new millennium. dialogue with the soul & reveal your true purpose. experience enhanced self-awareness by connecting to your history within the being. **rose seminar sat 11.30** **revelation** come to the spirit - 21 weeks of a journey from the form & the form to the form & the whole, each step an integral part. **rose seminar sat 12.30** **revelation** the art of healing & regeneration, explore the self help methods of a 5000 year old shamanic philosophy based on the principles of the great ancient law. **rose seminar sat 1.00** **revelation** a new & different analysis to which income taxes are seen to be the operating source of negativity & poverty. **author sat 2.00** **revelation** the high conscious wisdom of an extraterrestrial species experience the clarity & high intelligence of these beings through this channelled lecture. **rose seminar sat 3.00** **revelation** the high conscious wisdom of an extraterrestrial species experience the clarity & high intelligence of these beings through this channelled lecture. **rose seminar sat 4.00** **revelation** the high conscious wisdom of an extraterrestrial species experience the clarity & high intelligence of these beings through this channelled lecture.

**what's happening**  
The new spirit festival can be a full on experience as well as over 50 free seminars & other activities, the exhibition hall has over 50 stands with wonderful things to try, buy & experience. up to 30 readers of tarot, numerology, palm, faces etc. will be available plus charts & consultations from the astrologers on the healing & astrology area. the hokowhitu campus chef & staff will provide excellent food & healthy food all day in the cafeteria, where you can also enjoy everything from champagne to cappuccino. over 1000 people have attended the previous three new spirit festivals. celebrate the energy of autumn & experience the new spirit festival of the millennium join us for the biggest spiritual gathering of 2000 to be part of the new spirit festival & the fun! tickets \$20.00 (weekend) \$15.00 (day) available at gate or by mail.

**visit our website:**  
[www.newspiritfestival.co.nz](http://www.newspiritfestival.co.nz)

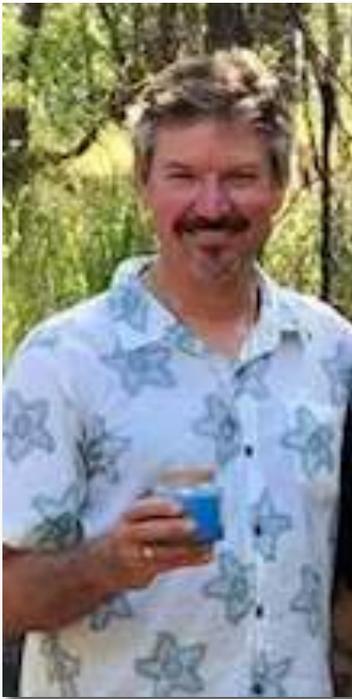
**how to get there**  
9.30 - 10.45 the speaker will be in the auditorium. before the bridge turn left into hokowhitu. a first right into centennial drive, hokowhitu campus is on the right, about 400m. the entrance to the festival is through the lower black foyer. watch for the sign!











My first contact with OBOD was a coffee with Sandra at Mary Ryan's bookshop in Brisbane. It was a lovely chat, with lots of laughs and a muffin. I was very interested in the people of the group. She outlined the sort of group that OBOD was, the sort of numbers that attended the events and how often the group met. It was casual and personal and Sandra was a great ambassador for the group, appearing quite normal and not strange at all. It was only later (after I had attended a few meetings and met others) that I found out what OBOD was really like!!



It was exactly the right kind of strange, and one that I fit right into, and felt quite at home with straight away. I think the next meeting was at the local grove, where I met everyone else, who were all welcoming and lovely. I highly recommend coffee with an OBOD member as a great way to start into the group.

*John Jordan*

## OBOD Worldwide

[www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org) - Official site of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids

[www.druidcast.libsyn.com](http://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](http://www.druidmagazine.com)

**Druidenstein** (German) [www.feuersprung.de](http://www.feuersprung.de)

**Dryade** (Dutch) [www.obod.dds.nl](http://www.obod.dds.nl)

**Il Calderone** (Italian) [issuu.com/ilcalderone](http://issuu.com/ilcalderone)

**Menhir** (French) [issuu.com/obod-menhir/docs](http://issuu.com/obod-menhir/docs)

**Ophiusa** (Portuguese) [www.obod.com.pt/ophiusa.htm](http://www.obod.com.pt/ophiusa.htm)



## SerpentStar, Alban Hefin 2017

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

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

Submission guidelines and subscription info are available from [serpentstar.druidryaustralia.org/about](http://serpentstar.druidryaustralia.org/about)

Follow us on Facebook - search "SerpentStar"

Enquiries via email: [serpentstar.obod@gmail.com](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com)

All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.

# My First Assembly

by Katherine Moss

I met a man who was a Druid and my journey begins.

I wasn't sure whether Druidry was for me. I had no interest in the Celtic goddess or gods, knew nothing of them and was horrified by the Chase of Taliesin, but was fascinated by Cerridwen's cauldron and the herbs and roots that went into it. I love the trees and plants that are sacred to the Druids and the veneration shown to them. Like a good mystery, it had piqued my interest.

Going to the Druidry Australia page I found that the Assembly was in Sydney and coming up. So excited! I was going! And then, the doubts started setting in. I asked for a refund. A sense of regret came over me and thought that it was interesting that I would feel that way. I got a lovely email from Chris Parker which helped me open my mind to being a plant person. Repaid again to attend the Assembly, but this time I was biting at the bit to go.

Isn't it strange how you meet that one or two someones who will have an effect on your life?

I met Elkie White when I went to Monbulk to get a Rowan and a Witch Hazel. This lovely lady took the time to have a coffee with me and I told her about Pan. When you say you're a devotee of Pan it doesn't sit well with some, but she got it and the guard came down.

I told her how on one occasion I was planning to go to the pine forest near me, and Pan wanted the physical experience of driving a car. Long story short, we set the rules and I let him drive. Quite hilarious, the image of the Great Horned God of Nature behind the wheel driving a car. He was laughing and enjoyed driving on the straight and sometimes winding roads of Anakie. So different to the first time we met. I was in a pine forest. There was no delicate hello, 'how are you'-type thing; just panic. I kept thinking I'm in the middle of nowhere, alone by myself, with a touch of black humour I thought they could find my dead, naked body in the forest but I swallowed the fear and kept going. He literally scared the bejesus out of me, and then He showed Himself.

Not long after I was attending a workshop and we were asked to bring a deity to the workshop, as there was going to be a possession (no, not that kind of possession, it's also known as channelling and I am what they call a vessel). Knowing only Pan I asked him to come along with me, He said he won't come with me but would accompany me and has been with me since that moment in the forest.

Convoyed up to Sydney with Geoff Warren, we shared a good laugh and crappy coffee at the stops along the way. After being solitary for so long it was good to have someone to journey with. Wasn't sure how I would be accepted coming from a Shamanic Witchcraft background, or even if I would fit in, always been on the edges alone; and that people would glaze over if I talked about herbs and plants.

A question of initiation: I never really wanted to be initiated into any tradition, thought about it but that's as far as it got. Initiation for me has a sense of occasion like a marriage or a christening and only wanted to do it once. I particularly like the part of the initiation that talks about coming freely to Druidry but also leaving freely so I stay because the door is always open. I had planned to get initiated at the Assembly but put it on hold, and witnessing other Bardic initiations I look forward to my own initiation in January.

The Ritual: Laughing to myself I thought how funny, I went from doing rituals at midnight to getting up at 5am to be part of a ritual before the dawn. I saw the spiral, my first spiral ever, all lit up with tealights and you could feel the magick in the air. I stopped in my tracks drinking in the sight of it all. Look! Look! Not sure to whom I was speaking to out loud to. To me? Myself? Spirit of Place? No-one? I stood there for a few moments in the peace and quiet of the pre-dawn in awe of this beautiful spectacle before me. Met up with the others, tears flowing (not being an emotional person this was a huge deal).

As we entered the spiral, I saw four Druids in the background working the cauldron, raising the energy; I could see the live energy of the Awen, moving, swirling, dancing around the Druids and I wanted to be part of it. I can't remember much after but that moment was enough to stay with me.

All too soon the event was over and we had to say goodbye. I have made some lovely new friends who will become old friends, and we'll have memories of the Kookaburra joining us, the chicken food stories and the fabulously funny shadow boxing theatre. It is with excitement to Adelaide I go.

I met a group who are Druids and my journey begins.



## The Smell of Deepening Mystery

by Michael Vlasto

It was the 1950s, and I grew up in Devon in the time before television, and a time when there were fields and flowers and things. My father had a farm there, and my mother was Cornish, so my childhood was filled with stories of Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere and the Mabinogion. Amongst all the strictures of upper class childhood and boarding school, with everything you have ever learned about it from boy's own adventure stories, I had this magical induction to the myth and magic of our early Celtic traditions through oral transmission at the knee of my mother and nanny.

Then after a decade of travelling, and having already moved to Australia and then returned to Britain, I found myself in the early 1980s a wandering in Edinburgh with my harp, and I met a wild young man called 'Kaledon Naddaire'. He took me back to his flat and introduced me to his order of the coëlbren or ogham circle of the seasons. Gone was the usual order, as all was back to front, but as I had not studied Ogham, his huge revelations fell rather flat. This intense young man, marinated in mystery, and I accepted all he offered as quite ordinary.

Anyway, when I returned to Oz and settled in the south of Western Australia in the deep Karri forest near Pemberton, my partner and I met a Druid who had a community near Albany. We spent long hours talking to him about the Druid Tradition, and he told me a story about a great druid who rode a flaming spear in battle. That great druid had built giant harps as tall as trees, that he set up along cliffs that rose above the wide plane where the enemy's army amassed. He summoned the wind, and it played through the harps, casting the enemy to the ground, an army unable to move.

Amongst his stories of valour and victory, the Druid of Albany told me about the newly formed OBOD, and suggested that I write to them. Yet it took a number of years, and many adventures that passed like bubbles in the breeze, before I actually did write. I had move to Dorrigo by then, where I still live, and was attending a local festival. Homelands festivals were famous in those days, and often involved many naked people running and leaping about - rituals with easily 200 people in them. There came a bearded man in a long white robe who called himself 'Pendragon'. He threw the sticks for me, and again the word OBOD was raised. This time, I did not forget. So, I wrote to them and soon became a Bard. This is how the journey began, across the lake to a shining city...

**My first experience of OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere** was when in 1998 I attended a 4-day workshop Philip Carr-Gomm was giving in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. I live in Wellington, 650 kms away! I had just ended a 16-year commitment to a guru – Swami Muktananda and then, on his death, Gurumayi Chidvalasananda, not because I thought they were not enlightened beings but because it was time to stop being told by bossy swamis what to do spiritually and to find my own ‘right way’.

A dear friend, Mary-Alice, had seen an advertisement for Philip’s workshop, had looked up Druidry.org, thought it was worth a look and invited me along. I was most reluctant as the last thing I needed was another ‘guru’ of whatever persuasion. However, I was at a loose end, we could share petrol money, M-A would drive and we had somewhere to stay. So we hit the road – me with a definitely cynical eyebrow raised.

Entering the first morning of the workshop I was amazed to find about 50 or 60 people seated in a circle and in the centre sat Philip Carr-Gomm dressed in casual trousers and shirt, with hair as curly as mine, not much taller than me, and looking for all the world like some of the Nature spirits I had met in my childhood. He greeted everybody warmly, and in our introductory talking circle was genuinely interested in every person and their journey celebrating each one’s spiritual experiences. He greeted each participant as an equal and I could not believe the humility of the man. I was hooked. Here was the Chosen Chief of a very large spiritual organisation who was excited by our spiritual diversity, by our humanness and our experiences in Nature.

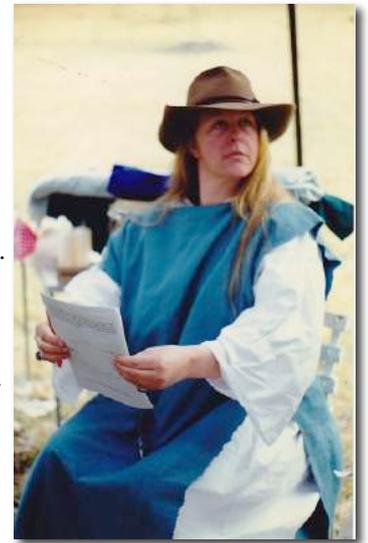
For the four days of the workshop I sat in rapt attention and a sort of fuzzy bliss as Philip wove the story of Taliesen around our hungry spirits. As soon as I returned home I joined OBOD and started a small group honouring the seasons, calling in the quarters, etc. These seasonal events were, and still are, held at ‘The Woolshed’, my beautiful farm of 52ha at Pukerua Bay outside Wellington. In 1999 we became the Grove of the Summer Stars.

*Arohanui and Blessings*  
*Pamela Meekings-Stewart*



Celebrating 20 Years

If I wasn't such a rule breaker, I'd write about attending the 1997 inaugural Assembly as being my first experience with OBOD in Australia. That weekend marked me moving out of my solitary status to meeting with other 'real life' Australian OBODies. But that first Assembly, wonderful as it was, is a blur of rain-drizzled memories, with only a few key people (Akkadia, Zan, Carole, Joel, Elkie) and remembrances (camping in a Birch tree grove, the 'all hands in' approach, sitting around the porridge pot under a small tarp and the inclement weather) in clear focus. So, it's about the second Assembly in 1998 that I will speak of. Perhaps that is more apt anyways, as the second Assembly marked the first visit by Philip, our Chosen Chief, to Australia.



*Photo above is from the first Assembly – it's kinda daggy but I like it :D*

Compared to the relative terror I felt at attending my first Assembly, by my second Assembly I was an old-hand. This time I flew down, instead of the mega-drive from Brisbane to Sydney, and stayed the night before at Akkadia and Zan's apartment in Newtown. Staying in that part of Sydney in the 1990s was an eye opener in itself, with a hotpotch cauldron of different cultures. Then it was off on a wild grocery shopping trip with Zan before heading off up the mountains and into the bush.

How lovely it was to greet those OBODies I'd met for the first time at the inaugural Assembly! How lovely also to meet and make new friends. Despite wonderful and special rituals and workshops, to me, it's always the people, my fellow OBOD family-tribe, who are the cherished aspect of my experiences with OBOD in Australia. And of course, there was the delightful bonus of spending time with Philip in my home country, after first meeting our Chosen Chief in England in the late 80s.

Thankfully, the accommodation was a bit more luxurious than that at the first Assembly, being bunk houses rather than soggy tents. We also had an undercover meeting place – with a roof – rather than a tarp stretched between the trees. And we had a kitchen...with the great fortune of having an OBOD member who was a proper cook, who was able to turn the groceries into a series of wholesome and healthy food for us.

Yes, there were the amazingly and deeply felt shared ritual experiences (including Initiations), which are a feature of our Assemblies. Workshops there were aplenty, by a range of people including Philip and yours truly. I spoke of the differences and similarities between witchcraft and Druidry, which was very well received by the attendees. Was my talk one of the many sources of inspiration for the Druidcraft book and tarot? Perhaps not, but I like to think so. \*smile\*

We also had the Eisteddfod/costume/dress-up event thing, which perhaps started the occasional 'tradition' of an inspired speaker who liked to include an extremely lengthy tale. But my shinier memories include those shared experiences which weren't part of the program; singing chants with Elkie and some other OBODies as we washed the dinner dishes; sharing a bottle of honey mead with Carole; the happy laughter and deep conversations; chatting with Joel about Macadamia Seed Group (which is now the flourishing Macadamia Grove); having my numerology forecast completed by a very gifted attendee; and exploring the trees and features of the glorious surroundings.

Sadly, the Assembly had to come to an end, as they all need to do. But there were a few more twists in the tale, one of which included playing a naughty hoax on Philip by tricking him and telling him that the bridges were all washed out and we were stranded in the bush for a couple of days– which meant he'd miss his international flight.



*From the second Assembly*

Fortunately, after allowing an expression of sheer horror to cross his face, our Chosen Chief demonstrated that he has a great sense of humour once we told him it was a joke. For the record, it wasn't my idea - really! - though I admit to delivering the 'sting'.

After the Assembly, I also did something I rarely do; I 'chucked a sickie' and rescheduled my Brisbane flight home for the next day. This meant that I spent the night back in Newtown drinking black Sambucca and reminiscing about the joy filled, wonderful, inspirational weekend spent with my fellow OBOD members.

*Sandra (Macadamia Grove, QLD)*

# 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](mailto: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](mailto:whitelk@bigpond.com) by the end of 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.*

## And finally...

### When were you editor of SerpentStar?

My first edition was Imbolc 2015, having taken over the editorship after that year's Assembly. What is it about Assemblies and SerpentStar? Something in the air.... ;)

### What inspired you to become part of SerpentStar?

I'd had recent experience as an editor, both for private projects and in my 'day job', and when the word went out that Martin was looking for someone to take it on I was excited to offer.

### What was your favourite part of being editor?

It's been a labour of love putting this together every quarter, and a special round of love was reserved for this special edition. Thankyou and blessings to everyone who's contributed and to all of you who continue to support SerpentStar. Roll on the next 20 years!

*Solstice (and Anniversary) Blessings*  
Mandy /|\

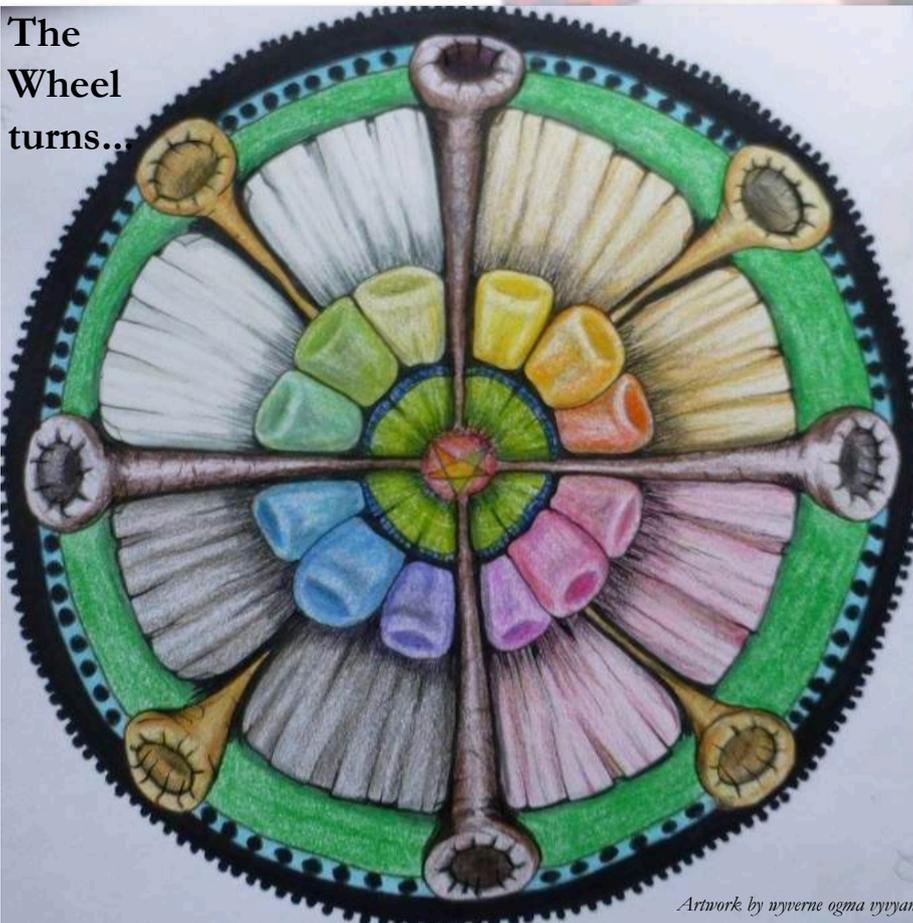


SERPENTS



Celebrating 20 Years

The  
Wheel  
turns...



We have reached the time of the Summer Solstice, **Alban Hefin**, *The Light of the Shore*, by December 21st or 22nd [the dates for each of the solar festivals vary each year since the events are astronomical not man-made, like our calendar]. Light is at its maximum, and this is the time of the longest day. It is at this time that the Druids hold their most complex ceremony. Starting at midnight on the eve of the Solstice, a vigil is held through the night - seated around the Solstice fire. The night is over in a matter of hours, and as light breaks, the Dawn Ceremony marks the time of the sun's rising on this his most powerful day. At noon a further ceremony is held.

Text sourced from Druidry.org

**The deadline for contributing to the Lughnasadh issue of SerpentStar is 25 January.  
The Lughnasadh issue will be released on 1 February 2018.**