

Serpentstar

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Eilir, September 2002

Greeting to the Spring Equinox

Glad Bringer of Brightness, hail!
Maiden of Grace, Lad of Laughter.
Gifts of vigour are returning,
Spring's surprise, rainbow's embrace.
Quickened be the heart within us,
Opened be our souls to grace,
May the blessing be abiding,
Welcome sit in every face.

From the 'Celtic Devotional' by Caitlin Matthews



A Book of Druid Poetry From the South Lands.

My tutor, Keith, suggested the idea of producing a book of poetry, like the Order's existing book *Ffirwythau*, but with poetry from Druids in Australia and New Zealand.

What do people think of this idea?

I don't know anything about publishing books myself, but at least one of our readers does, which will be a great help!

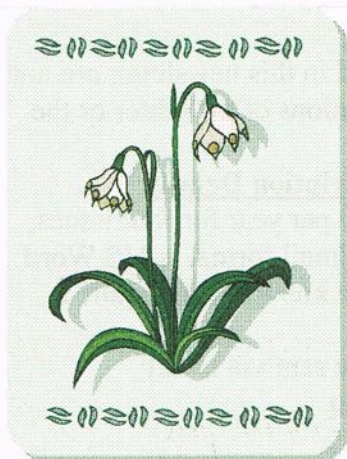
Perhaps the people who published the Order's existing book could publish this one if it goes ahead.

Any input would be appreciated. ☺

(please contact the editorial address)

Siennach

Wrens' nests

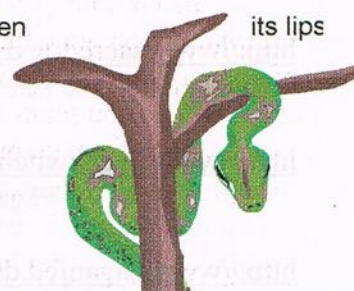


In the most encircling
worlds' words
I find ears.
I flee.

There are three thrilling things about worlds:
wrens' nests containing eggs, wren's eggs and wrens.

When you say or think or write or type 'wrens' nests',
grasses are plucked and lightly and easily
twisted into wry wiry dry wrens' nests,
and your teeth are afraid you might break the eggs,
or a snake might come hissing with its tongue between

I've felt this with the fingers of my ribs
which,
like the twigs of a thorn bush,
might as easily hold
a wrens' nest as a heart.



Vyvyan



EDITOR'S SPOT



Well, spring is definitely here!

Despite the still-cold nights up this way, the days are lovely and warm. The plants and trees are all getting ready to flower, if they're not already!

The male top-knot pigeons are going all out to find a mate, I can hear them calling all hours of the day, and sometimes, if I'm lucky, get to see them dance!

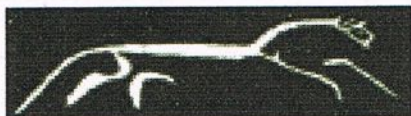
Thankfully we have had some rain up this way. It's probably not enough to get the farmers out of trouble, but it is a help.

On a brighter note, if anyone is interested in submitting poetry for a book (see first page), I have had an email from an Aussie OBOD member whose job is preparing books for publication. So it looks like this idea could be a possibility! All we need now are the poems!

A big thankyou to Kathy, who sent me the last of the Blue Mountain correspondences at the last minute! Its great to hear all about your wonderful grove.

With the magic and warmth of Imbolc,

Siennach



Websites

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

<http://www.crissiam.demon.co.uk/> - Website of Bill Worthington, OBOD member and artist

<http://www.illusions.com/rowanhold/3things.htm>
- A compilation of Celtic triads

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>
- The Internet Sacred Text Archive

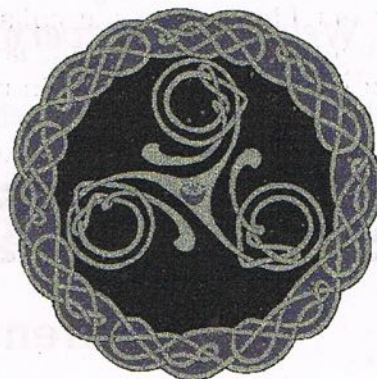
<http://www.hedgewitchart.freemove.co.uk/>
- Pagan Art by Marc Potts

<http://www.paganfed.demon.co.uk/>

A Requiem For A Druggie

*In the new world in a city of the new age
Lived a young man named Cabe.
His Fathers and Mothers pride and joy
Early in his teens in his Fathers footsteps he did go
Where the wine and liquor flowed.
When trouble came the authorities said conform
But like the wild youth of his time Cabe said no.
Then he went one step further than
His Father and Mother would go.
Hard drugs was his game at age nineteen today
He has gone to that great mansion in the sky.
Looking down on us all awaiting the day that we will go to
Meet him there and he wishes good will to us all. AMEN*

Patrick Murphy



Disclaimer

Opinions published in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the editor or the Order.

Submission/Subscription Details

Subscription is \$10 per year for four issues, or free via email. Email format is MS Word 2000. Please let me know if you require a different format.

Submissions can be sent via email:

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or snail-mail:

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Bringing It Home (Part Two)

by Vyvyan



Less obviously, those places, activities and institutions within our own cultures that resonate with ancient Celtic traditions are calling for our kind of reverence and honour. Universities, hospitals and banks all housed in sublimely inspired or sadly dysfunctional architecture are the sacred haunts of spirits of learning, healing and prosperity, of Ogma, of the women of Avalon, the Dagda. Politics and government also are the manifestation of divine spirits, and it is the essence of Celtic wisdom to reverence those spiritualities.

In this world they're presided over by the human manifestations of the Wounded King, and are affected by the general discordancy that troubles our whole planet. It isn't that we should idealize them unnecessarily, but it does make good magical sense to bring a solid, well-grounded, hard-headed Druidical realism to our attitudes to them.

They are the glands, the veins, the brain, the muscles and organs of our planet. It does them harm to revile them or despise them, and it does them good to honour them, as Gaia's best efforts to manifest her organs of understanding, intellect, organisation and self-defence under difficult conditions. Though we may see her as thwarted and crippled by her own diseases of greed and vanity, or as distorted by human misconceptions of her (such as those that arise from thinking of her as all 'Nature' while we 'mindless humans' in our 'greed' and 'stupidity' evolve our nasty 'unnatural' lifestyles in contempt of her), and as crippled by her own peoples' unwillingness to honour her choices as she calls people to their places within the structures of law, government, finance, religion, scholarship, the military, etc., we should nevertheless offer her our magical support in ritual ceremony and meditation.

As Druids, Ovates and Bards, we can contribute to their healing by including their spirits in our personal pantheons and working with them via shrines, icons, divinatory cards, or whatever feels right. Establishing a dialogue with the divine spirit in them it's possible to debate with them in a controlled, healthy way whatever differences of opinion or clashes of ideology we might have with them. Even if there is enmity between us and a particular institution or practice, say, the wood-chipping industry, strategies for giving due respect to all individuals concerned, whether 'goodies' or 'baddies', can be worked out in the grove context, while interfacing with them via some sacred representation of them under the supervision and guidance of the Sacred Grove.

Of course, this turn of the spiral we now have a greater global awareness than ever before, so we may regard ourselves as citizens of the world and festoon our pantheons with the spirit beings of all cultures, past, present, and for those of us who can crack it, the future too.

Even certain fictional characters, such as The Sentimental Bloke, The Gumnut Babies, or Ginger Meggs may represent inspiring archetypes worthy of a shrine, or at least an occasional mead or flower sacrifice – and I personally have had excellent responses from respectful meditation on The Magic Pudding, upon whose richly begraved 'slices' I was raised as a child.

(I'm currently consulting with the thieving possum whose spirit is so creatively manifested in that story, concerning some not so desirable 'possum magic' perpetrated in the Wyeuro orchard lately, involving the demanifestation of significant portions of several almost ripe apples.)

The Silver Brumby is another fictional character that captures magnificently the spirit of a great Australian archetype, one that 'speaks' to you from the spirit of the horse. The only thing that matters is that they capture the imagination and that we address the divine in them, and listen respectfully and sensitively for their responses, whether they come as inspirations, dreams, fantasies or omens that carry unmistakable references to them.

Sacred times and sacred space can be seen in similar ways. Druids hold the eight festivals as sacred times, and there are the four monthly lunar Sabbaths, the two half moons, the full moon, and the dark moon, and most of us have at least some investment in some of the official 'holy' days – even if it's only the Melbourne Cup. But our countries are situated under skies not often seen by the ancient Celts, and by reference to the stars we can, in our distinctively Celtic way, as the indigenous cultures do in their way, observe the rising of significant stars and the passages of the planets in our Southern skies in Druidic ways, and celebrate them too.

As a nation we Australians are called sunworshippers (I'll be in that) and all beaches are sacred. It's easy enough to respond to the sacredness of Aboriginal sacred places, but I myself am only just waking up to the reasonableness of sacralizing for myself the cities that contain most of our people, the farmlands that support us, and the roads that carry us from place to place. I'm not only referring to the statues, memorials and monuments, but also to streets, parks, arcades, parking lots and shopping centres. They all have a spiritual potency that shapes our nation's spirituality, and our attitudes determine the precise nature of that spirituality. Wise attitudes and respect heal it, and fear, hatred and disrespect harm it.

Druidic magic can concentrate healing energy into an earthly system and in doing so can help it to heal itself. This is true even of institutions like the wood-chipping industry, Monsanto, the World Bank, or whatever. Druids may feel a responsibility not to direct hatred, even if not augmented magically, into any organisation, but to deal with anger as one's own problem. Without hate we deal more effectively with dysfunction.

Druidry offers an animistic view of the world. Every atom is a divine being, a centre of creation. Every moment in time is replete with the numinous. The realisation of this is the sacralization of the universe. It starts with the love of all existences. As Earthlings, we can touch even the stars, even the gods, with healing, just by contributing through our magic, conscious or sublime, deliberate or casual, to the structuring of a healthy destiny for this community of Earthly beings.



Correspondences for the Blue Mountains, New South Wales, Australia

Sunset Garden Grove

Sunset Garden Grove is a private grove in the Blue Mountains of NSW, just west of Sydney. It is approximately 15m back from a cliff edge, and faces west. The grove is approximately 1050m above sea level.

This is a small insight into the grove as the year turns. I hope it will convey to those living elsewhere an idea of this place as I walk around it, and of the local associations I have given the festivals. This is how it is when the festivals are celebrated in this small part of the world.



Bright Blessings, Kathy

October

The land is blooming, everything has new growth. Time to fertilize. Time of sneezing!

Weather

Days: 12-18oC
Nights: 5-9oC
Last of the strong winds

Flowering

Mountain devil, iris, heartsease, boronia, pigface, hyacinth, azalea, rhododendron, acacia, viburnum, daisy, calendula, magnolia, flannel flower, lilac bottlebrush, lavender, clematis, hawthorn, snowball bush, keeria, marigold, diosima, native orchids, berberis, isopogen, eucalyptus, buddleia, wisteria, rosemary, forget-me-not, callistemon

Vege Garden

Celery, spinach, silverbeet, turnips

Wildlife

Butterflies, clickbugs, ants, bees, cockroaches, spiders, snails, slugs, moths, cicadas, wasps, possums, magpies, currawongs

November – Beltane

First or full moon, Earth festival. Fertility.

Flower: Waratah (telopea speciosissima)
Herb: Borage (officinalis)
Tree: Isopogen (anethifolius)
Stone: Moonstone
Colour: Pink
Incense: Musk
Food: Fruit
Drink: Cider
Animal: Dingo
Direction: North East

Weather

Days: 14-25oC
Nights: 7-12oC
First electrical storms of summer. Hail and wind.

Flowering

Damperia, isopogen, rose, pansy, marigold, hawthorn, waratah, snowball bush, berberis, sage, kangaroo paw, native orchids, jasmine, calendula, feverfew, wisteria, clematis, nasturtium, acacia, rhododendron, azalea, mountain devil, comfrey, eucalyptus, pigface

Vege Garden

Beans, cabbage, lettuce, peas, carrots, zucchini, rhubarb, celery

Wildlife

Spiders, mosquitos, snails, slugs, ants, flies, wasps, bees, birds, birds, birds!

Alban Hefin - December 21st

Noon, solar festival. Maturity.

Flower: Boronia (ledifolia)
Herb: Aloe (barbadensis)
Tree: NSW Christmas Bush (ceratopetalum gummiferum)
Food: Fruit
Drink: Mead
Incense: Sandalwood
Colour: Light green
Stone: Haematite
Animal: Mountain Dragon
Direction: North
Element: Fire

Weather

Hot
Days: 18-28oC
Nights – 12-18oC

Flowering

Waratah, goodenia, christmas bush, cotoneaster, gerbera, thyme, feverfew, hydrangea, callistemon, rose, acacia, sage, pansy, calendula, nasturtium, comfrey, fuchsia, lambsear, dampiera, gladiolus, banksia, geebung, daisy, lavender, geranium, lomandra, dahlia, grevillea, jasmine, leptospermum, honeysuckle, pigface, wormwood, yarrow, melaleuca, leptomaria

Vege Garden

Pumpkin, peas, carrots, rhubarb, corn, beans, celery, squash, lettuce, potatoes, broccoli, tomato, caulies, cucumber, cherries

Wildlife

Flies, midges, mosquitoes, spiders, ants, ladybugs, bees, wasps, birds, echidnas,



CELTIC WHEEL OF THE YEAR ASTROLOGY

(Part Two)

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[Listing of each festival, its' cultural significance, astrological calculation and date for the year 2003.]

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE CELTIC WHEEL OF THE YEAR 2003

Samhuinn Lunar festival

New moon in Taurus. 1 May 2003



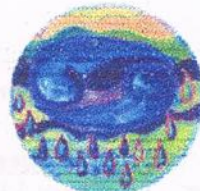
At Samhuinn (pronounced Sow - as in cow - Inn) the sun's energy is losing its power as time moves closer to winter. Traditionally this is the time of Halloween. It was a time of 'no-time' when order and structure were abolished and chaos could reign. For the time of the festival people did crazy things. Work that has been accomplished throughout the summer months can be acknowledged now. It is a time to stop for a while and ponder the wins and losses of the year just passed. It is also a time to free yourself of unwanted aspects of the Self to make way for the new.

Druid rites were concerned with seeking the sources of guidance and inspiration from the spirits of the departed. The dark or new moon, the time when no moon can be seen in the sky represented a time in which our mortal sight needed to be obscured in order for us to see into the other worlds.

Both the sun and the moon lie conjunct in Taurus.

Alban Arthuan Solar festival

Winter Solstice. Sun is at 0 degrees Cancer. 22 June 2003



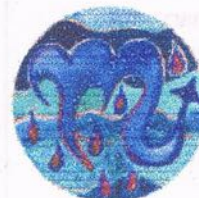
The sun's energy has lost its power and without faith in universal cycles, it appears to be abandoning us completely as we experience the longest night of the year. It is only when we have fully mourned the passing of the old that we can open ourselves up to the new. This is a time of death and rebirth as the sun resumes its journey towards Summer. Traditionally this festival is associated with Christmas and marks both a completion and a beginning.

The Druid ceremony involves the dimming of lights and re-lighting them from one source to symbolise that the darkness of the spirit can be purified as Light enters the darkness of the World.

The sun has reached the Tropic of Cancer and is the furthestest point north of the equator and away from us in Australasia at midwinter.

Imbolc Lunar Festival

Waxing quarter moon in Scorpio. 5 August 2003



Imbolc (pronounced im - olk) is one of a trio of festivals celebrating the emergence of Spring. Although the seasonal winds and storms remind us of winter, the spring flowers and forming buds remind us of the balance between yin and yang, life/death and male/female in the never ending cycle of life on Earth. It is a time to look to the future and plant seeds, physically and psychically which will bear fruit as the Wheel turns in times ahead.

It is a time when Druids honour the feminine principle of birth through poetry and song and light many candles to encourage the Goddess Brigid to return from the darkness of Winter. Candles

burning on water symbolise light rather than heat and the horizontal plane of the feminine principle of space is in balance with the vertical plane of the masculine principle of time. Ceremonies have involved acknowledgement of our connection to the stars and the earth, being accepted into the circle of friends and planting symbolic seeds.

For us in the south, the waxing quarter moon is in the fertile sign of Scorpio.

Alban Eiler Solar festival

Spring Equinox. Sun at 0 degrees Libra. 23 September 2003



Alban Eiler (pronounced ee-ler) marks the point of balance between the Spring festivals of Imbolc and Bealteinne and is a time to honour the coming of the Light into our lives. A time to experience the joy of the concept 'redemption' and to know that Light always follows darkness - physically and spiritually. It is a time for planning and setting goals and expectations for the future.

The Druid ceremony involves honouring the Goddess Ceridwen Cariadwen and the young one, the Mabon, with song and poetry and a blessing of the land to enhance its fruitfulness for the next cycle.

For us in the south, the sun has reached the equator and is at an equal point between Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn on its way towards the Summer.

Bealteinne Lunar festival

Full moon in Scorpio 9 November 2003



Bealteinne marks the time of Spring in full bloom symbolising the most powerful height of fertility of the year when communities come together after the confinement of winter. Traditionally it is the May Day celebration when dancing around the phallic maypole celebrates the fertility of the land. It is a time when handfastings (marriages) and wishes for the future are cast.

A major feature of Druid ceremonies was jumping over the fire to ensure fertility, to ensure safe journeys, or to find partners. Other Druid ceremonies relate to passing cattle through two fires so the smoke purifies them after their Winter confinement and can be experienced ourselves at sunset as the full moon rises and we can pass between the two luminaries to be purified in spirit.

The moon is in Taurus opposite the sun in Scorpio causing a full moon.

Alban Heruin Solar festival

Summer Solstice. Sun is at 0 degrees Capricorn. 22 December 2003



The traditional midwinter festival of Christmas is celebrated in Australasia when Summer is at its height. Light is at its maximum intensity and this is the longest day.

Alban Heruin (pronounced Her-win) is the most complex Druid ceremony. It starts at midnight on the eve of the Solstice with a vigil held throughout the night. The night is over in a matter of hours and as light breaks, the Dawn Ceremony marks the time of the suns' rising. At noon a further ceremony is held.

The sun has reached the Tropic of Capricorn and is the closest point to us on the southern side of

the equator.

Lughnasadh Lunar festival

Waning quarter moon in Scorpio. 25 January 2003



Lughnasadh (pronounced loo-nus-uh!) marks the beginning of the harvest months when hay is cut ready for winter storage and grain harvested for breads. In the northern hemisphere it is celebrated by some as Candlemas whereby candles are carried into churches to be blessed. It is a time to become aware that Summer will not last forever. It was a time of gathering together before the confinement of winter, a time of contests and games. Marriages could be contracted at this time as a trial period to be annulled at the same time the following year if the couple desired.

Druid ceremonies celebrate the height of the summer sun while recognising that death follows life follows death. Symbols such as grain made into bread and grapes made into wine honour this cycle of transformation.

Ceremonies celebrate the sacrificial nature of this time for without the sacrifice of the grain, it could not be transformed into bread.

The waning quarter moon is in the fertile sign of Scorpio.

Alban Eleud Solar festival

Autumn Equinox. The Sun is at 0 degrees Aries. 21 March 2003



Alban Eleud (pronounced el -wood) marks the end of harvest time just as Lughnasadh marked its beginning. Again night and day are equally balanced as they were at the Spring Equinox, but soon the nights will grow longer than the days. The fruits of our labour and of the earth are celebrated at this time.

Druid ceremonies again revere the Goddess Ceridwen Cariadwen and the Mabon, the young one. They represent the completion of the harvest as they again offer seeds and fruit to bless the Earth that produced the bread and wine that will sustain the community through the long winter months.

For us in the south, the sun has reached the equator and is at an equal point between Tropic of Capricorn and Cancer on its way to Winter.

And so the cycle of the Celtic Wheel of the Year comes full circle back to Samhuinn.

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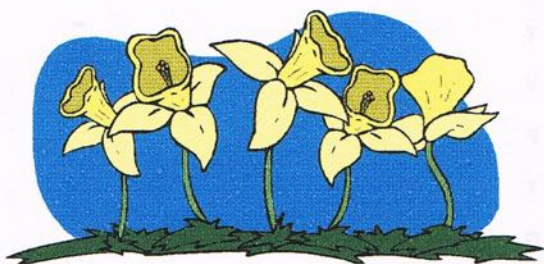
- Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids coursework
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<http://cura.free.fr/xv/13ellis2.html>
- Michel-Gerald Boutet: Celtic Astrology: A Modern Hoax.
<http://cura.free.fr/xx/17bouten.html>



A JOURNEY OF DARKNESS

I HAVE WALKED THROUGH
THE DARKNESS OF MY SOUL,
THAT TIME OF QUIET,
CLOUDED SILENCE.
I'VE WANDERED
THE CAVERNS, OLD,
EACH STAGE OF MY JOURNEY
LAY NOW AFTER
THE FOOTSTEPS OF MY FEET,
NOTHING IS IN VAIN
DESPITE DESPAIR AND PAIN,
YET I APPEAR NOW,
ALIGHT AGAIN SOMEHOW,
YES, THE SUN COMETH
ALTHOUGH THERE WERE TIMES
WHEN THOUGHTS THAT THIS
WOULD NOT BE SO,
STILL, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN,
THIS LIGHT,
ALWAYS WILL I CARRY IT
WITHIN ME,
JUST AS THE MABON
IS ABLE TO RELIGHT THE
WHOLE WORLD
FROM ONE TINY FLAME,
SO TOO CAN I HEED
THAT IN MY LIFE,
AND SEE WITH NEW EYES

TARAN 18/6/02



Seasonal Recipes

Spring Fever Pot Pourri

8 cups hyacinth florets
2 cups freesia flowers
2 cups narcissus flowers ('Cheerfulness' are good)
2 cups prunus or cherry blossom
1½ cups sea salt
½ cup cheap brandy
½ cups mixed spices, such as nutmeg, cloves, and allspice
½ cup powdered orris root
juice of one orange and its chopped peel
optional – few drops neroli essential oil

Mix together the salt, spices, orange peel and juice with the orris root. In a separate container mix together all the flowers. Then in a large pot with a tight-fitting lid, arrange alternate layers of the flowers and salt mixtures, and pour the brandy over the top. Weigh the mixture down with a plate and a heavy weight, and replace lid. Stir once a day or so for between 4-6 weeks. Once the mixture has matured you can check it for strength of smell. If you feel it needs to be a little stronger, add a few drops of neroli oil or another to suit your taste.

(from 'Pot Pourri' by Joanna Sheen)

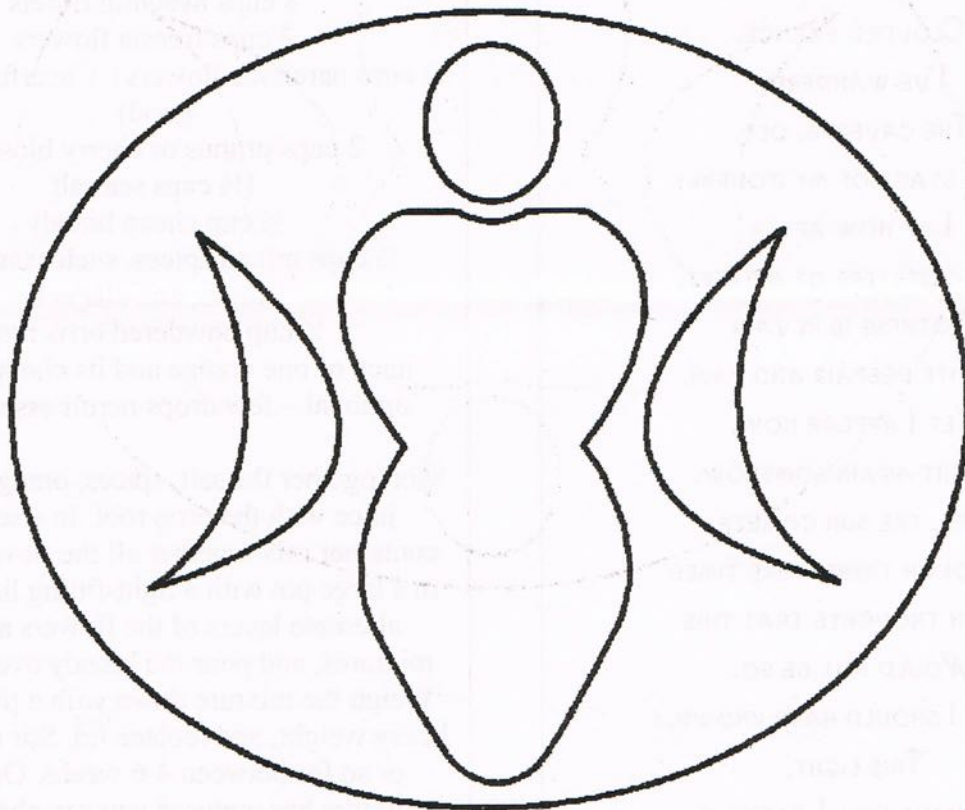
Recipes for the Oil Burner

Spring Fragrances

3 drops Patchouli
3 drops Vetiver
or
4 drops Mandarin
2 drops Frankincense

(from 'Aromatherapy' by Judy Chapman)

Children's Page!



From the Goddess Coloring Book
By Eliza@sacredspiral.com

L N E M E T O N A H N W F
O N D R C B D I P S I K Y
L R D H C N P A S L A N H
W G E I N E A M C B M R D
E B W A L W R E A R H E A
N H U N T D I N T A M N N
O B E N I I A S H N A N U
S H D O G R N A A W N I T
I D O N I R R S C Y O A Y
K A L D R E H I H N P R F
X B B D B C O E I R E G T
M A D B D T D C K D G S G
M O R R I G A N I C G L P

CELTIC GODDESSES

ARIANRHOD	GRAINNE
BADHBH	MADB
BLODEUWEDD	MORRIGAN
BRANWYN	NEMAIN
BRIGIT	NEMETONA
CERRIDWEN	NIAMH
DANU	OLWEN
EIRE	RHIANNON
EPONA	SCATHACH