

# Serpentstar

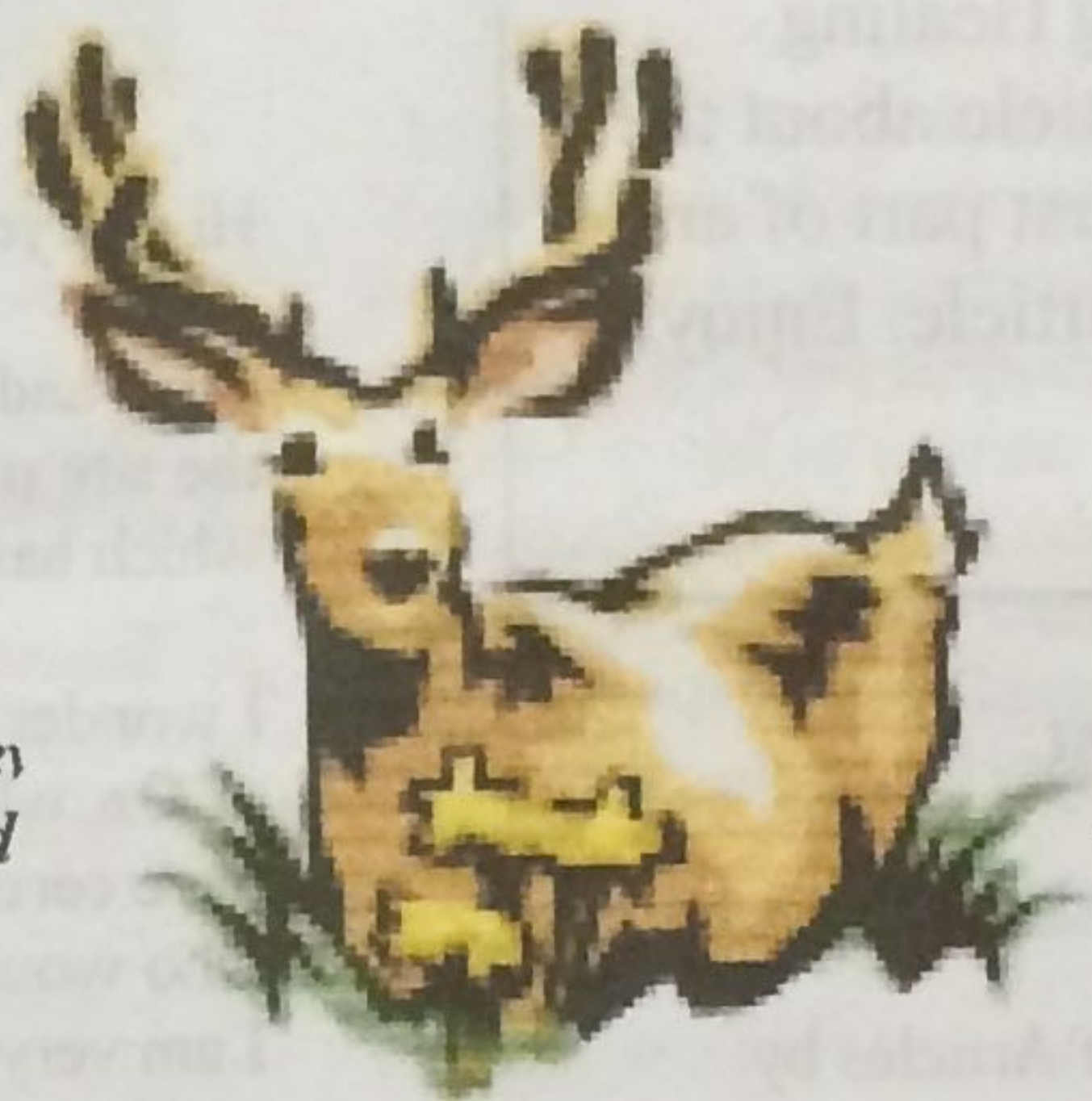
Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Elfed, March 2007

## Blessing of the Seasons (Autumn) – Anon

Autumn is the best time for visiting:  
During its short days there is work for all.  
See the dappled fawns among the hinds,  
Sheltering in the red bracken;  
See the stags run from the round hills  
At the belling of the deer-tribe.  
There are sweet acorns in the high woods,  
Cornstalks are king over the brown earth.  
A palisade of brambles guards  
The ruined rath,  
The hard ground is enriched  
By a treasury of fruit.  
Profuse the hazel-nuts from the ancient  
Hedge-trees.

*Irish poem from 11<sup>th</sup> century, translated by C. Matthev  
From: 'The Little Book of Celtic Blessings', compiled  
Caitlin Matthews, Element Books, 1994*



## Just Be

*Steadfast  
Like the green Earth.*

*Proud and strong,  
Plants and trees  
Her adorning beauty.*

*Transient  
Like the water.*

*Playful rain,  
Rippling fountains,  
Slow moving rivers,  
Still, deep lakes,  
The ever rolling sea.*

*Dancing  
In stillness.*

*Like the calm breeze  
Of air,  
Caressing your face  
Like the breath of Spirit,  
Or Gaia's cleansing storms.*

*Branwen  
February 2007*

Instead of an Assembly this year, we are organizing a Healing Retreat. It will be held in winter to help us turn inward: July 13/14/15 to be exact.

So far people have come forward and offered toning as a healing modality, shamanic journeying on behalf of another person, information about herbs, inter-dimensional co-operation, and meta healing, along with lots of discussion and sharing time.

The proposed venue is Lake Mungo. Carole and Elkie will check out its suitability on April 8/9/10.

If you want to come to the Healing Retreat please contact Carole by email or Elkie by landmail after these dates for further information.

Carole: [carole@zipworld.com.au](mailto:carole@zipworld.com.au)

Elkie: PO Box 404 Ferntree Gully, Victoria,  
Australia, 3156

(See inside for more details – Ed)







## STORM WOLF'S RAMBLINGS



Once again, I must apologise for the lateness of this issue. I just don't seem to have the time like I used to. Added to that some major computer troubles that saw me lose the copy I had nearly finished... I had to start it from scratch again! I also lost the rest of the 'Imaginary Kingdom' release reports, sorry! ☹ If someone can forward them to me again, I will include them in the next issue.

I am beginning to think it is time I passed the reins of SerpentStar on to a new editor... will do some thinking and let you all know next issue.

Last week I saw something I thought I would never see. A photo on the front page of the Sydney Daily Telegraph showing the Murray River dried up. I have memories of seeing the river as a child after visiting Murray Bridge and going on a paddleboat at Swan Hill. It is a scary thought that one of our mightiest rivers could come to this.

On to this issue! There are poems, information about the upcoming Healing Retreat, a thought-provoking article about the Holly and Oak Kings, and the first part of an amazing New Zealand Ogham article. Enjoy!

**StormWolf**

### Websites of interest

How to make a Bridget's Cross:

<http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/5863/cmethd1.html>

The Witches' Sabbats – A Collection of Articles by Mike Nicols:

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/7280/>

### 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 Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). Please let me know if you require a different format.

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### Nature Entwined

In the oceans combined  
Encroaching on landscapes entwined  
And the heavens astound  
As stars twinkle and shine  
With such is the glory  
Of the world of mankind  
Incensed by mans advancement  
And progress in our time  
Desecration of nature  
Is forbidden by many  
On the world of mankind.

Combined with nature  
Our lives are entwined  
From darkness and light  
Two deities combined  
In an aeon on time  
Our universe pulsated with life  
And the great formation began  
In the oceans of time  
Oceans and landscapes entwined

**Mandagora**

Hi everyone!

Elkie and I went for a bit of a drive last weekend, looking for the site of the Healing Retreat. We talked about a lot of things, which has brought me to this thought.

I wonder if there other members of OBOD out there in the land of Oz, who would like to get together throughout the year and have ceremonies to support the earth as she starts to readjust, who would just like to sit on the land, in druid companionship. I am very passionate and concerned about Climate Change. I am documenting the effects of change as I see it and I would like to share this with other likeminded druids.

I am involved in a land care group, and we all have our own patch of bush that we help regenerate, by weeding etc. I would like to extend this further into my druid practice by going to parts of the land, learning about it, with my druid eyes, from an historical climate point of view, and adopting a bigger area to work with spiritually.

I would not envisage this taking the place of the Assembly, which has its own special focus, rather I see some of us just going somewhere for a couple of day, feeling the earth, hearing the other kingdoms, and supporting them through the change.

If anyone is interested you can email me at [carole@zipworld.com.au](mailto:carole@zipworld.com.au). Please make the subject Druid Oz support or something, so I don't junk it as spam!

If anyone is out there doing this at the moment, and would like some company, please let me know.

Carole



## Lake Mungo

### Archaeologically significant part of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area

Located 987 km west of Sydney via the Hume and Sturt Highways and 128 km north of Balranald, Mungo National Park is a 27847-ha archaeological and geomorphological site of world importance. Lake Mungo is one of 17 dry lakes which constitute the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area, declared in 1981. The stark, silent, desolate and sometimes eerie landscape of sand, sparse but resurgent vegetation, and spiny, hard, pitted, crinkled and fluted dunes and ridges can look more like a moonscape.

25 000 to 45 000 years ago the lake covered 135 square kilometres and was about 10 m deep. It was one of a series of freshwater lakes along Willandra Creek, which was then a major branch of the Lachlan River. The lakes dried up about 14 000 years ago. They are, however, an extraordinarily rich source of fossils. Indeed the quality and quantity of evidence pertaining to the landforms, animal life and environmental conditions during the last ice age are of the highest calibre, in part due to the alkaline rather than acidic quality of the soils.

The remains of extinct creatures - Tasmanian tigers, giant, short-faced kangaroos and a strange oxen-sized animal called a *zygomaturus* - have been found. Crucially, carbon dating has indicated that Aborigines inhabited the area 40 000 years ago, making it the site of the oldest known human occupation in Australia. From the lake they gathered mussels, Murray cod and golden perch. They also hunted wallabies and rat kangaroos and collected emu eggs.

Findings of ochre in the area, dating back 32 000 years, constitute the earliest evidence in the Pacific Basin of the deliberate selection of pigments. As there was no local source it has been deduced that the material was carried there for aesthetic purposes. Moreover, a 28 000-30 000-year-old burial site reveals that the body was covered in red ochre. A 26 000-year-old grave contains the earliest known human example of cremation. After the ritual incineration the bones were smashed and deposited in a hole by the pyre. These practices clearly suggest the presence of spiritual considerations.

Convex flake tools made from local material dating back

20 000 years have been found, while sandstone grinders from 10 000 BP (before the present) or earlier suggest the inhabitants adapted to the arid conditions which later prevailed by grinding wild grass seeds, making them among the first people in the world to grind flour. The sandstone came from at

least 100 km away, suggesting patterns of seasonal migration. A number of the finds indicate practices parallel with recent Tasmanian Aborigines.

Prior to being declared a National Park in 1979 this land was part of Mungo sheep station, created when the Gol-Gol station was subdivided in the 1920s for returned soldiers. It was named by the Cameron Brothers after a picture they saw of St Mungo's Church in Scotland. The park still contains a 45-m woolshed, built by Chinese labour of local pine logs in 1869. There are other buildings, including a former homestead, relating to the sheep station. Squatters first arrived with their sheep in 1840. Considerable conflict ensued with the indigenous tribes - the Barkindji, Ngiyampaa and Mutthi Mutthi, descendants of the area's ancient inhabitants. However, many were decimated by European diseases and forced to live on a mission at Balranald. Today they are involved in the management of the park and their wishes concerning the handling of their dead ancestors are now respected.

Today the vegetated dry lake basins are situated within a dunefield stabilised by mallee-type vegetation. Tall, steep escarpments abut the western perimeters of the lakes with crescent-shaped dunes called lunettes to the east, formed by quartz sands and pelletised clay, blown from the lake by the westerly winds. The most famous example of a lunette in the park is the 'Walls of China' which rises to 30 m above the plain and runs for some 30 km around the old lake's eastern shore.

The area has been relatively free of clearing and pasture improvement although introduced animals destroyed the native vegetation, particularly along the Walls of China. Ironically it is this stripping of the flora which exposed the dune's top soil to erosion and hence uncovered the archaeological finds. Today the pre-European vegetation is returning. Bird life is increasing, particularly pink cockatoos and chats and the striking mulga parrot. There are also kangaroos, emus and plenty of lizards.

From:

<http://walkabout.com.au/locations/NSWLakeMungo.shtml>

Another website:

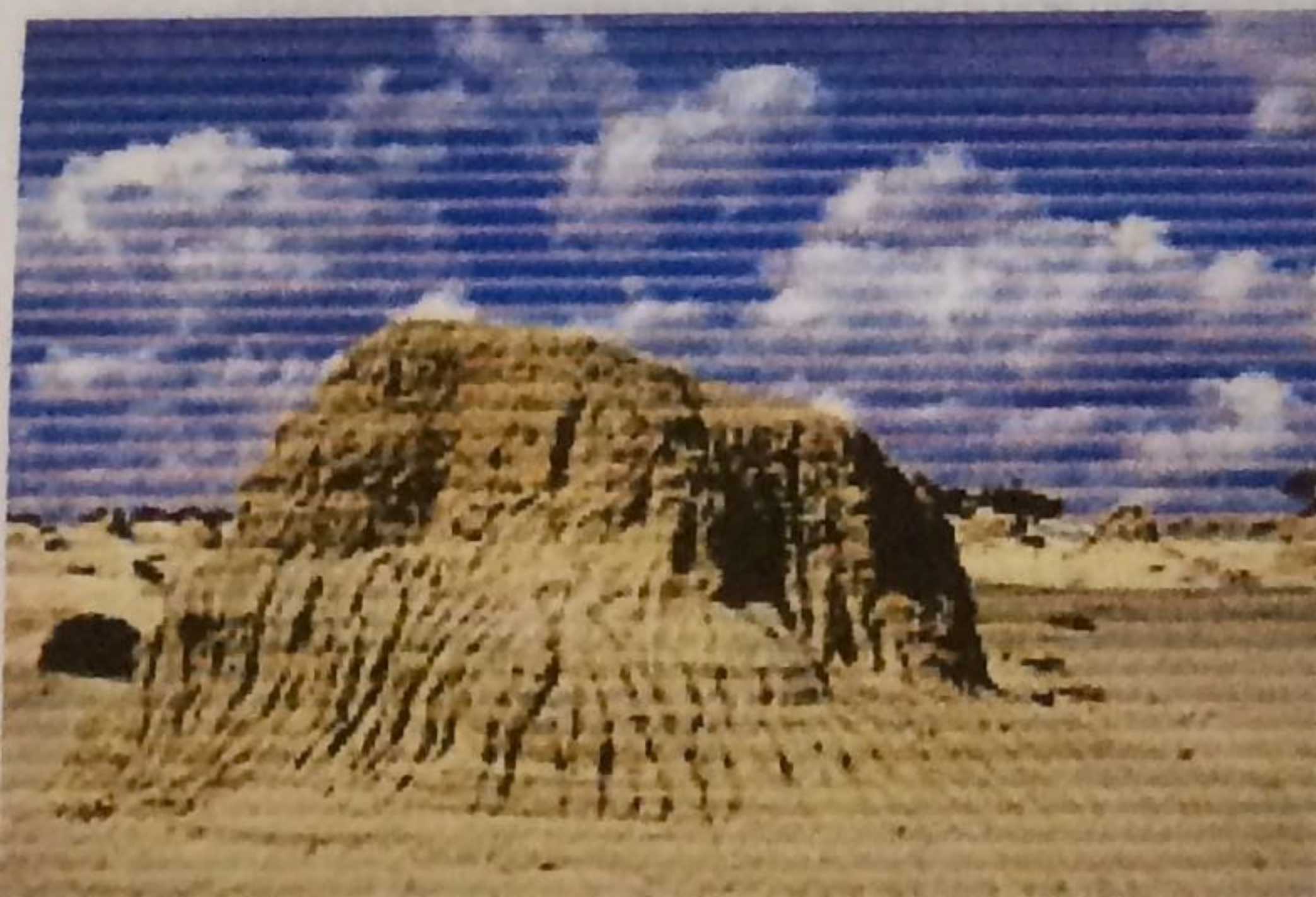
<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/parks.nsf/ParkContent/N0037?OpenDocument&ParkKey=N0037&Type=L>

## UPDATE

Hi Everyone

Over the Easter holiday weekend Carole and I visited Lake Mungo to assess its suitability for our healing retreat. It's not suitable but we are glad we went. It's awesome to look over what would have once been a huge lake teeming with life, now dried up. We agreed that ceremonial work there felt inappropriate. It's got a magic of its own that's fully intact. We stayed at the Lodge. There's only one self-contained cabin available in July and there's no gathering place where we could focus on healing work. We considered the camping ground and the shearer's quarters at the information centre, but there's no privacy anywhere.

On her return journey to Sydney, Carole stopped at Willandra Homestead, and liked the way it felt there. Willandra lies on the eastern edge of the Mungo National Park, and so has a similar





sort of environment. Unfortunately Carole was unable to get inside to have a look but has kindly offered to do a return journey on our behalf. Willandra is about 9 hours west of Sydney and about 4 hours east of Mildura, but Carole is the one to talk to about directions. The Homestead was built in 1918 and was recently restored. It has a U-Shaped design with 26 rooms and verandas all around. There's room for all of you who have said you are coming and a couple more. It has a modern fully equipped communal kitchen, a dining room, 5 bathrooms and open fireplaces. Totally private, it is advertised as 'great for small conferences'. It costs \$350 per night for the entire homestead, which means about \$35 per night for each of us. This works out at \$105 for the 3 nights - Friday 13, Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 July. To book the Homestead a deposit is required, so if you are with us on this, you will need to pay a \$70 non-refundable deposit, per bed.

The biggest problem we face is access. It's on a dry weather (only) road, which means that if the rains come we won't be able to get into the National Park. There is no identifiable wet season, but March to October is the recommended visiting time. This makes our July dates a good choice. The sunrises and sunsets are glorious, and the silence and the stars at night would definitely support our healing agenda. To get to the Homestead you have to drive for about an hour on unsealed roads. Most people had 4-wheel drive vehicles but Carole's station wagon (and Carole) coped admirably with the corrugation and thick dust. Carole advises that people get there before dark on Friday as driving in the dark could be hazardous.

If you are comfortable with the remoteness and can accept the risk of a last-minute cancellation due to rain, I recommend that we proceed with organizing our stay at the Homestead. We will need to be very well organized as there is nowhere to shop for anything we forget. To begin - please send me a cheque or money order to secure your bed. \$70 for now -we will fine-tune that later. Once all of the beds are booked, I will begin returning cheques to those who have missed out, so please send a return address, email and phone number. However - there is a Cottage near the Homestead that sleeps up to 8 people, so if there's 8 people more than can be accommodated in the Homestead, we will book that too. Please make cheques payable to Heather Whitelk and post to PO Box 404 Ferntree Gully, 3156.

With your cheque or money order please nominate an area of responsibility you are willing to accept. Here are some of the most necessary areas. You might like to list an order of preference - first in will get first preference:

- food co-coordinator: planning the menu and allocating who bring which food items
- first aid person (anyone with an up-to-date certificate who can bring everything we might need)
- money manager
- co-ordination with the homestead management (makes the booking, checks what we need to bring such as bedding & towels, picks up and returns keys)
- transport co-coordinator: has a list of everyone who is coming and how they are getting there - anticipated times of arrival and departure
- water coordinator: makes sure we have sufficient drinking water
- amenities provider: someone travelling by car who can bring spare towels, blankets and pillows. Also things like toilet paper
- Plan B researcher: someone to find a place that is close to the National Park but not on the dirt road, where we could go if it rains

\*Experienced outback campers - what have I forgotten?

\*In answer to one question asked - because it's a national park, no pets are allowed

Anyway, this should get us started. I'll send the next email to everyone who has responded - around mid-May - and let you know the results.

Fingers crossed and any other old magic you know, Elkie

## *The Dance in the South*

I felt your warm breath leave my cheek and knew you'd turned away.

Your chariot soon would take you to a distant, far off day.  
I knew you'd soon be leaving me to dance my own tattoo  
I felt my strength returning for the work I'm bound to do.

I knew what would await me, as my slumber moved away.  
My task, to clear the dross and excess of the languid days.  
To take away the sick, the weak, to shelter buried seed  
To give the rest and clear the land and scour the earth of need.

Earth's rhythm pounded through my being, my skirt flew far and wide

The howling of my clan song sent all who feared inside  
My family of flesh and leaf gave thanks and blessed my name  
Those who didn't know of me saw hail and sleet and rain.

I grew to size four fold and with my mantle of white frost  
I took away the dying, dead and those who were too lost,  
I gathered them unto my breast and wished them on their way  
The snow and cold rain falling on the sacrificial day

I gave new hope to worn out land and washed the earth anew  
From far and lofty mountain tops the minerals I strew  
They rained and snowed and thundered by, to reseed magic

earth

To be there waiting, weaving, for the tiny seeds rebirth

And once again as lovers do I felt your warm regard  
My strong and mighty soul wind, dancing through my season  
hard

And then I felt the deep night turn as you were born again  
And moved to my midwifery, the birth waters of spring rain

And dancing in my power now, my kingdom now renewed,  
I felt you once again become aware of my allure  
Your golden eyes struck spark from mine, of icy steely fire  
I know that soon you'd come again to feast on my desire

Your passion I felt growing as you raced on, to my side  
I gave the land a last embrace, a defiant winter bride  
And then my strength was melting as you reached to touch my face  
And once again, as every year to the summer we did race

And now I'm lying dreaming in your hot and fiery arms  
I am once more content to slumber in your veil of charms  
But balance must be well maintained as night will follow day  
And once again I'll stir and dance, when you've turned your gaze away.

Carole



Hi guys,

Here is a synopsis of the New Zealand Tree Ogham that I have been working on and with during my studies, and thought you might find interesting to have a look at or share with other OBODs.

This is just a synopsis of the "work in progress" - this IS NOT the finished version, I am still writing the final draft and creating illustrations and so on.

Tamzin Rae

## New Zealand Raku Ogham- Part 1

Tena koe - Hello  
Nau mai - Welcome

During my nine year journey from Bard to Druid, it was the trees of my native land that spoke to me, not those of my northern ancestors.

Nga Rakau o Ao tea roa- the Trees of New Zealand (Land of the Long White Cloud) spoke to me in many different ways until finally I created, with their help, a New Zealand Tree Ogham of twenty-seven trees, as well as an oracle. I have set out below the Ogham as it came to me with a brief synopsis about each tree.

### ┐ B *Kamahi*

NZ Red / Brown Birch  
*Wiemannia Racemosa*

Colour: Red

Element: Earth

Direction: South

Reptile: *Mako Kakariki* (Green Tree Gecko)

A second growth tree, one of the most widely spread from lowlands to high altitudes where moss festooned Kamahi, stunted and contorted by high winds and cold temperatures, are aptly described as "goblin forests".

Mature seed capsules tint the Kamahi a rusty red. The bark has a high tannin content.



### ┐ L *Kohekohe*

*Dysoxylum Spectabile*

Colour: Orange / Red

Element: Fire

Direction: North

Bird: *Kaka* (Forest parrot)

Ancestor of Mahogany trees, long panicles of flowers sprout directly from the trunk and branches make it a most spectacular tree; often considered an exclusively tropical phenomenon. Found in coastal areas of the North Island and Marlborough Sounds.

A decoction of leaves and bark (very bitter) was swallowed for a persistent cough.





## ≡ F/V **Pukatea**

New Zealand Laurel  
*Laurelia Novae Zelandiae*  
 Colour: Green  
 Element: Water  
 Direction: West  
 Bird: *Kakariki* (Parakeet)



Tree of wet places ; one of the tallest flowering trees in NZ. Naturally found North of Kaikoura to Cape Reinga, and down the West Coast to Fiordland. A "bucket of water " tree - a pioneer expression.

Pukatea bark contains Pukateine, a substance with pain relieving properties similar to Morphine, but without the after effects.

## ≡ S **Kahikatea**

Swamp Pine  
*Dacrycarpus Dacrydioides*  
 Colour: White  
 Element: Water  
 Direction: West  
 Bird: *Kotuku* (White Heron)



One of the Rakau Rangatira - *lordly trees*; most senior member of the Podocarpaceae family - traces of pollen found in Jurassic rocks 160 - 180 million years old. Living up to 5+ centuries and one of the tallest trees in NZ changing it's shape as the tree matures; ancient Kahikatea support whole ecosystems on their trunk and in their branches.

The leaves were used for urinary complaints and the bark was used for bruises.

## ≡ N **Houhere**

Lacebark  
*Hoheria Populnea*  
 Element: Air  
 Direction: East  
 Colour: White  
 Bird: *Piwakawaka* (Fantail)

A quick growing semi-deciduous native, resistant to wind, drought and variations in temperature. Under the outside bark is curiously perforated like lace, and the inner bark is tough and fibrous (used as string).

An infusion of bark was taken for colds, and when soaked in cold water formed a jelly used to treat tired eyes.

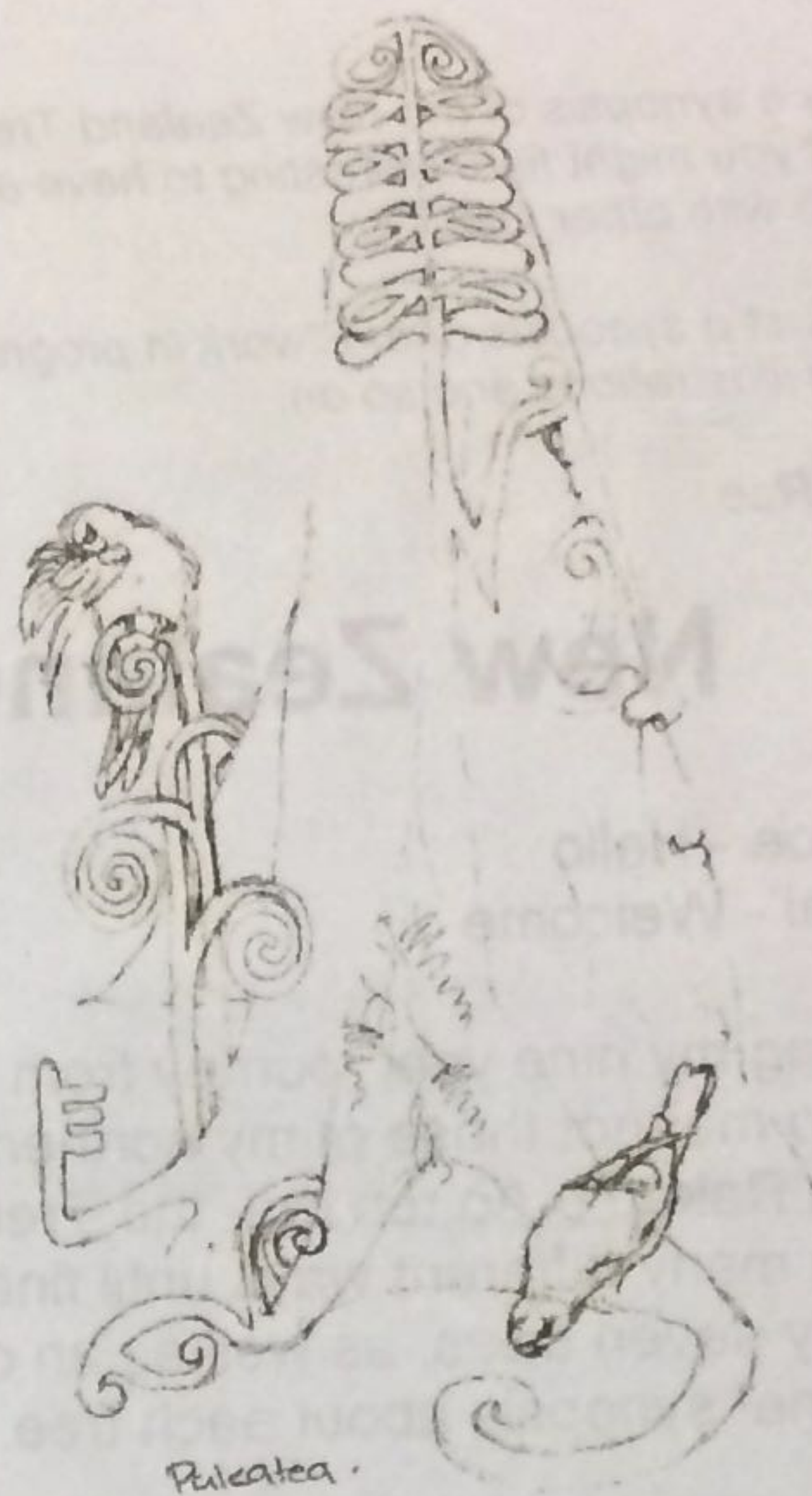


## + H **Matagouri** - ( *Tumatakura* )

Wild Irish man  
*Discara Toumatou*  
 Colour: Silver / Grey  
 Element: Fire  
 Direction: North  
 Insect: *Kapowai* (Dragonfly)

An important pioneer small tree on bare sites with newly developed soils as it fixes nitrogen from the air into the soil. It was called Tumatakuru - standing face beater by the Maoris because of it's rough bark and stiff hard thorns. Delicate white bell-like flowers proceeding the thorns, produce a nectar that attracts bees to make a medium amber - coloured mild flavour honey.

The hard thorns of Matagouri sometimes replaced the bone graver in tattooing.





## ≡ **D Titoki**

NZ Oak?

*Alectryon Excelsus*

Colour: Russet / Red

Element: Fire

Direction: North

Bird: Kiwi

A handsome tree with rusty/brown furry hairs on the branches and the undersides of the leaves giving the tree a russet appearance - unusual in the New Zealand bush.

The berries were a source of fragrant oil used to anoint the bodies of the chiefs, it was also used to ease bruises, arthritis, and treat sore ears. Berry pulp was used to treat tuberculosis and an inflamed newborn baby's navel.



## ≡ **T Hakeke**

New Zealand Holly

*Olearia ilicifolia*

Colour: Yellow

Element: Air

Direction: East

Bird: *Hihi* (Stitch bird)

The largest member of the daisy family, it is a very hardy tree/shrub tolerating dry and exposed conditions.

The bark is thin and papery peeling into thin strips on the main trunk and branches.



## ≡ **C Tarata**

Lemonwood

*Pittosporum Eugenioides*

Colour: Black

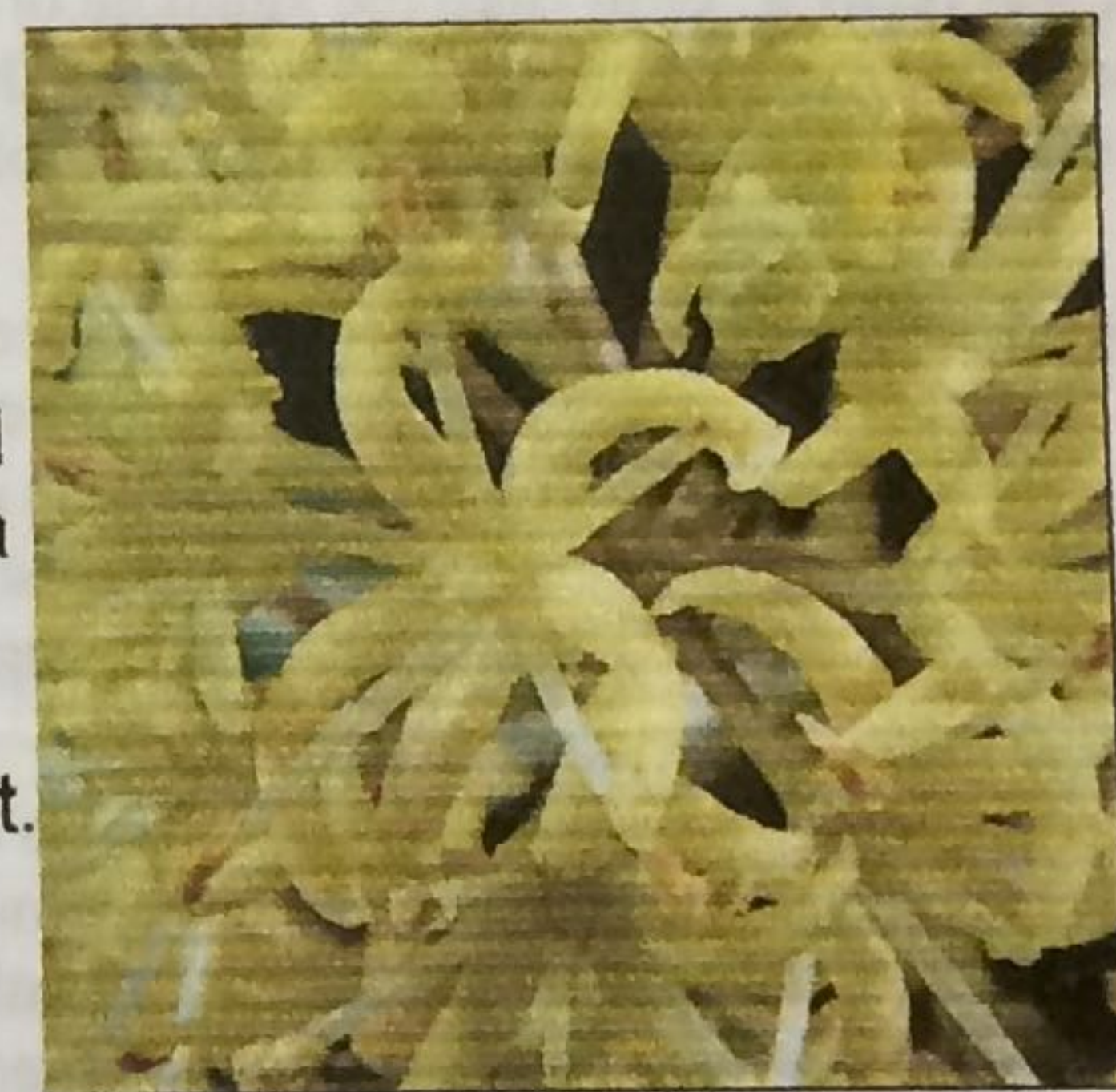
Element: Earth

Direction:

Bird: *Tauhou* (Silver eye, Wax eye, Blight bird or White eye)

Tallest member of the pittosporum family found all over NZ in lowland areas. The Maori had a high regard for this tree; Tarata resin - pia tarata was chewed and kept in special little carved boxes, it was used to cure bad breath.

Leaves and flowers were mixed with fat to make a fragrant ointment.



## ≡ **Q Putaputaweta**

Marble leaf

*Carpodetus Serratus*

Colour: Mottled green

Element: Water

Direction: West

Bird: *Kotare* (New Zealand Kingfisher)

A small tree with branches spread outwards in flattened tiers found along forest margins, often quick growing. It's wood is so sappy it was also known as a "bucket of water" tree because it's freshly cut wood was so sappy that it did not burn easily.





# THE DEATH OF LLEW - A Seasonal Interpretation

By Mike Nichols

*Not of father, nor of mother  
Was my blood, was my body.  
I was spellbound by Gwydion,  
Prime enchanter of the Britons,  
When he formed me from nine blossoms.*

—Hanes Blodeuwedd, Robert Graves, *trans.*



In most Pagan cultures, the Sun God is seen as split between two rival personalities: the God of Light and his twin, his “weird”, his “other self”, the God of Darkness. They are Gawain and the Green Knight, Gwyn and Gwythyr, Llew and Goronwy, Lugh and Balor, Balan and Balin, the Holly King and the Oak King, etc. Often they are depicted as fighting seasonal battles for the favour of their Goddess/lover, such as Creiddyled or Blodeuwedd, who represents Nature.

The God of Light is always born at the winter solstice, and his strength waxes with the lengthening days, until the moment of his greatest power, the summer solstice, the longest day. And, like a look in a mirror, his “shadow self”, the Lord of Darkness, is born at the summer solstice, and his strength waxes with the lengthening nights until the moment of his greatest power, the winter solstice, the longest night.

Indirect evidence supporting this mirror-birth pattern is strongest in the Christianised form of the Pagan myth. Many writers, from Robert Graves to Stewart Farrar, have repeatedly pointed out that Jesus was identified with the Holly King, while John the Baptist was the Oak King. That is why, “of all the trees that are in the wood, the Holly tree bears the crown”. If the birth of Jesus, the “light of the world”, is celebrated at midwinter, Christian folk tradition insists that John the Oak King (the “dark of the world”?) was born (rather than died) at midsummer.

It is at this point that I must diverge from the opinion of Robert Graves and other writers who have followed him. Graves believes that at midsummer, the Sun King is slain by his rival, the God of Darkness; just as the God of Darkness is, in turn, slain by the God of Light at midwinter. And yet, in Christian folk tradition (derived from the older Pagan strain), it is births, not deaths, that are associated with the solstices. For the feast of John the Baptist, this is all the more conspicuous, as it breaks the rules regarding all other saints.

John is the *only* saint in the entire Catholic hagiography whose feast day is a commemoration of his birth, rather than his death. A generation ago, Catholic nuns were fond of explaining that a saint is commemorated on the anniversary of his or her death because it was really a “birth” into the kingdom of heaven. But John the Baptist, the sole exception, is emphatically commemorated on the anniversary of his birth into *this* world. Although this makes no sense viewed from a Christian perspective, it makes perfect poetic sense from the viewpoint of Pagan symbolism. (John’s earlier Pagan associations are treated in my essay on Midsummer.)

So if births are associated with the solstices, when do the symbolic deaths occur? When does Goronwy slay Llew and when does Llew, in his turn, slay Goronwy? When does darkness conquer light or light conquer darkness? Obviously (to me, at least), it must be at the two equinoxes. At the autumnal equinox, the hours of light in the day are eclipsed by the hours of darkness. At the vernal equinox, the process is reversed. Also, the autumnal equinox, called “Harvest Home”, is already associated with sacrifice, principally that of the spirit of grain or vegetation. In this case, the God of Light would be identical.

In Welsh mythology in particular, there is a startling vindication of the seasonal placement of the Sun God’s death, the significance of which occurred to me in a recent dream, and which I haven’t seen elsewhere. Llew is the Welsh God of Light, and his name means “lion”. (The lion is often the symbol of a Sun God.) He is betrayed by his “virgin” wife Blodeuwedd, into standing with one foot on the rim of a cauldron and the other on the back of a goat. It is only in this way that Llew can be killed, and Blodeuwedd’s lover, Goronwy, Llew’s dark self, is hiding nearby with a spear at the ready. But as Llew is struck with it, he is not killed. He is instead transformed into an eagle.

Putting this in the form of a Bardic riddle, it would go something like this: “Who can tell in what season the Lion (Llew), betrayed by the Virgin (Blodeuwedd), poised on the Balance, is transformed into an Eagle?” My readers who are astrologers are probably already gasping in recognition. The sequence is astrological and in proper order: Leo (Lion), Virgo (Virgin), Libra (Balance), and Scorpio (for which the Eagle is a well known alternative symbol). Also, the remaining icons, Cauldron and Goat, could arguably symbolize Cancer and Capricorn (representing summer and winter), the signs beginning with the two solstice points. So Llew is balanced between cauldron and goat, between summer and winter, on the Balance (Libra) point of the autumnal equinox, with one foot on the summer solstice and one foot on the winter solstice.

This, of course, is the answer to a related Bardic riddle. Repeatedly, *The Mabinogion* tells us that Llew must be standing with one foot on the cauldron and one foot on the goat’s back in order to be killed. But nowhere does it tell us why. Why is this particular situation the *only* one in which Llew can be overcome? Because it represents the equinox point. And the autumnal equinox is the only time of the entire year when light (Llew) can be overcome by darkness (Goronwy).



\* It should now come as no surprise that, when it is time for Llew to kill Goronwy in his turn, Llew insists that Goronwy stands where he once stood while he (Llew) casts the spear. This is no mere vindictiveness on Llew's part. For, although *The Mabinogion* does not say so, it should by now be obvious that this is the only time when Goronwy can be overcome. Light can overcome darkness only at the equinox—this time the vernal equinox. (Curiously, even the Christian tradition retains this association, albeit in a distorted form, by celebrating Jesus' death near the time of the vernal equinox.)

The Welsh myth concludes with Gwydion pursuing the faithless Blodeuwedd through the night sky, and a path of white flowers springs up in the wake of her passing, which we today know as the Milky Way. When Gwydion catches her, he transforms her into an owl, a fitting symbol of autumn, just as her earlier association with flowers (she was made from them) equates her with spring. Thus, while Llew and Goronwy represent summer and winter, Blodeuwedd herself represents both spring and fall, as patron Goddess of flowers and owls, respectively.

Although it is far more speculative than the preceding material, a final consideration would pursue this mirror-like life pattern of Llew and Goronwy to its ultimate conclusion. Although Llew is struck with the sunlight spear at the autumnal equinox, and so 'dies' as a human, it takes a while before Gwydion discovers him in his eagle form. How long? We may speculate six weeks, when the sun reaches the midpoint of the sign (or form) of the Eagle, Scorpio—on Halloween. And if this is true, it may be that Llew, the Sun God, finally 'dies' to the upper world on Halloween, and now passes through the gates of death, where he is immediately crowned king of the Underworld, the Lord of Misrule! (In medieval tradition, the person proclaimed as "Lord of Misrule" reigned from Halloween to Old Christmas—or, before the calendar changes, until the winter solstice.)

Meanwhile, Goronwy (with Blodeuwedd at his side) is crowned king in the upper world, and occupies Llew's old throne, beginning on Halloween. Thus, by winter solstice, Goronwy has reached his position of greatest strength in our world, at the same moment that Llew, now sitting on Goronwy's old throne, reaches his position of greatest strength in the Underworld. However, at the moment of the winter solstice, Llew is born again, as a babe, (and as his own son!) into our world. And as Llew later reaches manhood and dispatches Goronwy at the vernal equinox, Goronwy will then ascend the Underworld throne at Beltane, but will be reborn into *our* world at Midsummer, as a babe, later to defeat Llew all over again. And so the cycle closes at last, resembling nothing so much as an intricately woven, never-ending bit of Celtic knotwork.

So Midsummer (to me, at least) is a celebration of the Sun God at his zenith, a crowned king on his throne. He is at the height of his power and still one quarter of a year away from his ritual death at the hands of his rival. However, at the very moment of his greatest strength, his dark twin, the seed of his destruction, is born—just as the days begin to shorten. The spear and the cauldron have often been used as symbols for this holiday and it should now be easy to see why. Sun Gods are virtually always associated with spears (even Jesus is pierced by one), and the Midsummer cauldron of Cancer is a symbol of the Goddess in her fullness. If we have learned anything from this story from the fourth branch of *The Mabinogion*, it is about the power of myth—how it may still instruct and guide us, many centuries after it has passed from oral to written tradition. And in studying it, we have barely scratched the surface.

From : <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/7280/LLew.html>

## Seasonal Recipes

As we all know, Alban Elfed is the time of harvest. Enjoy the fruits of the season with these recipes...

### Fruit Cobbler

For sponge cake:

4oz butter

4oz castor sugar

4oz self-raising flour

2 beaten eggs



you will also need several large pieces of fruit, with skin intact if edible

Grease an eight inch cake tin and then sprinkle with a good amount of sugar. Mix together the above ingredients, except the fruit, until light and fluffy.

Lay the pieces of fruit in the bottom the cake tin and cover with the mixture.

Bake in the oven at 180°C for about 30mins.

Test with a skewer to make sure it is cooked, then turn out, upside-down onto a plate and serve with fresh cream or custard.

From: 'The Real Witches Kitchen' by Kate West



### Cornish Punch

1 bottle rum

1 bottle brandy

4oz sugar

juice of 6 lemons

pinch of nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves

2½ bottles iced water or soda water

Place the spices and sugar with the water in a pan. Boil for 5 minutes. Strain when cold, add rum and brandy.

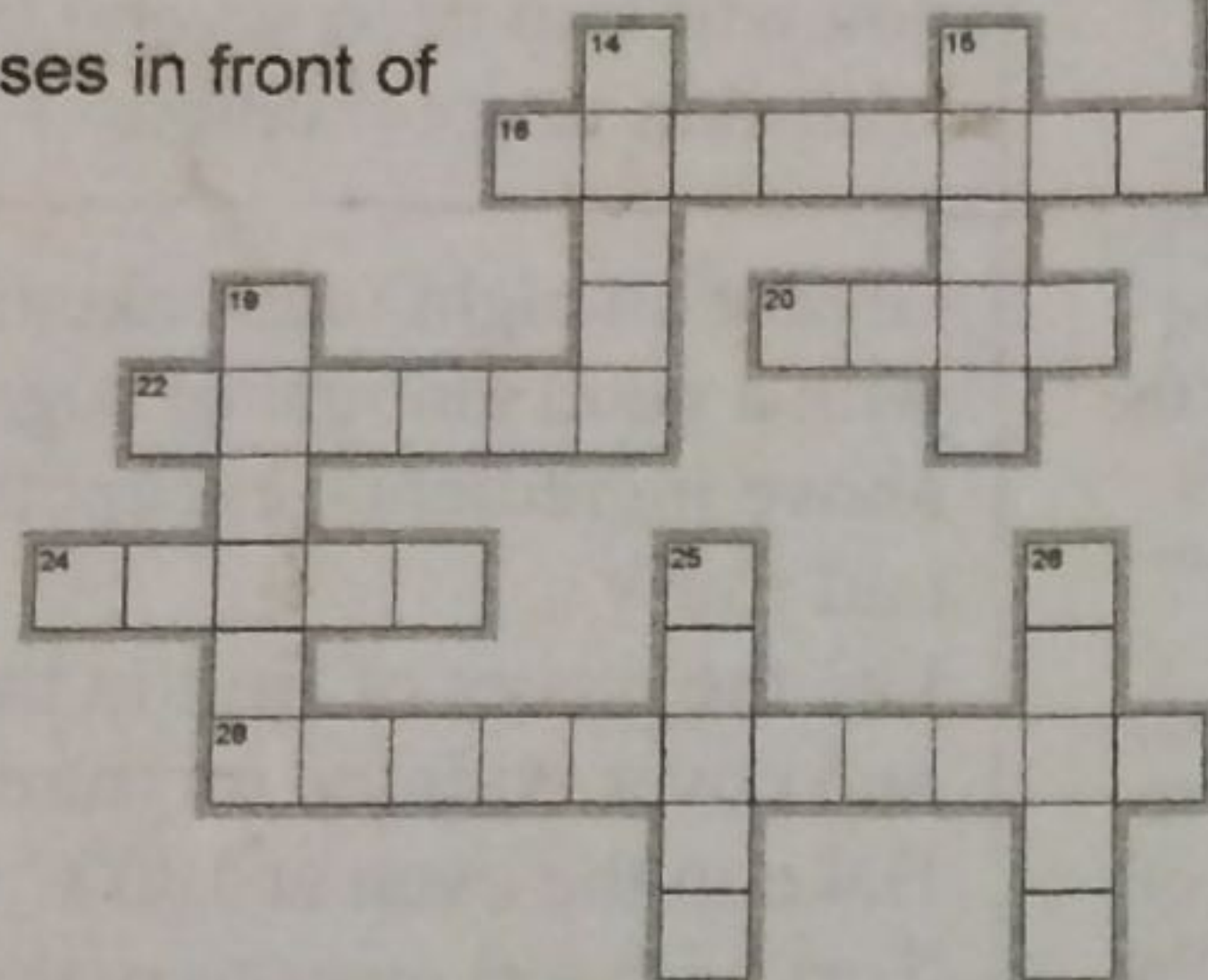
From: 'Celtic Cookbook' by Helen Smith-Twiddy



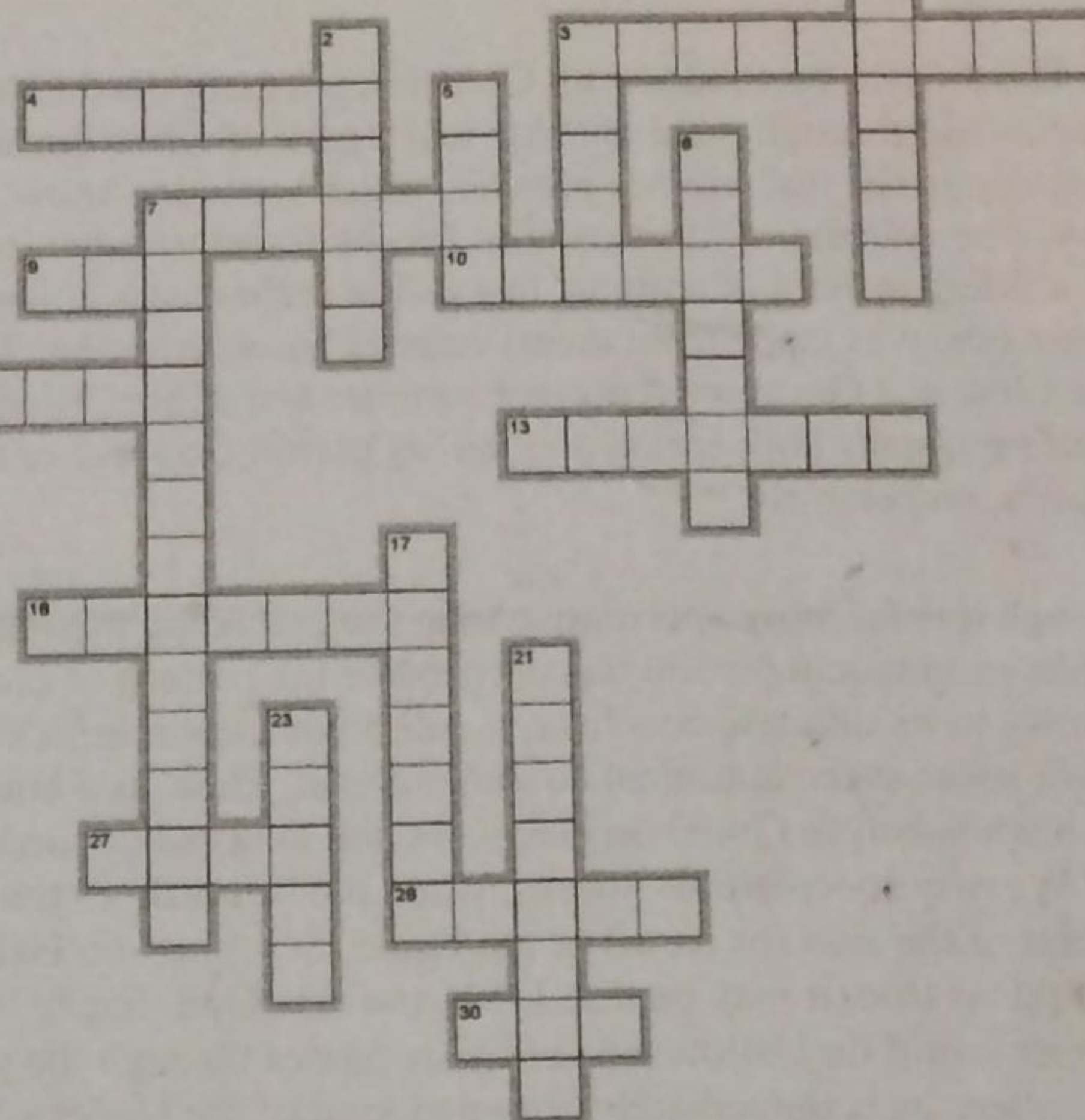
# Children's Page!

## Across

3. The sign of the goat
4. Star sign of the twins
7. Star sign represented by a crab
9. The Lion sign
10. Planet with the most visible rings
11. Planet with the most moons
12. The ram
13. Sign of the scorpion
16. Gemini, Libra and Aquarius are these
18. When the moon passes in front of the sun



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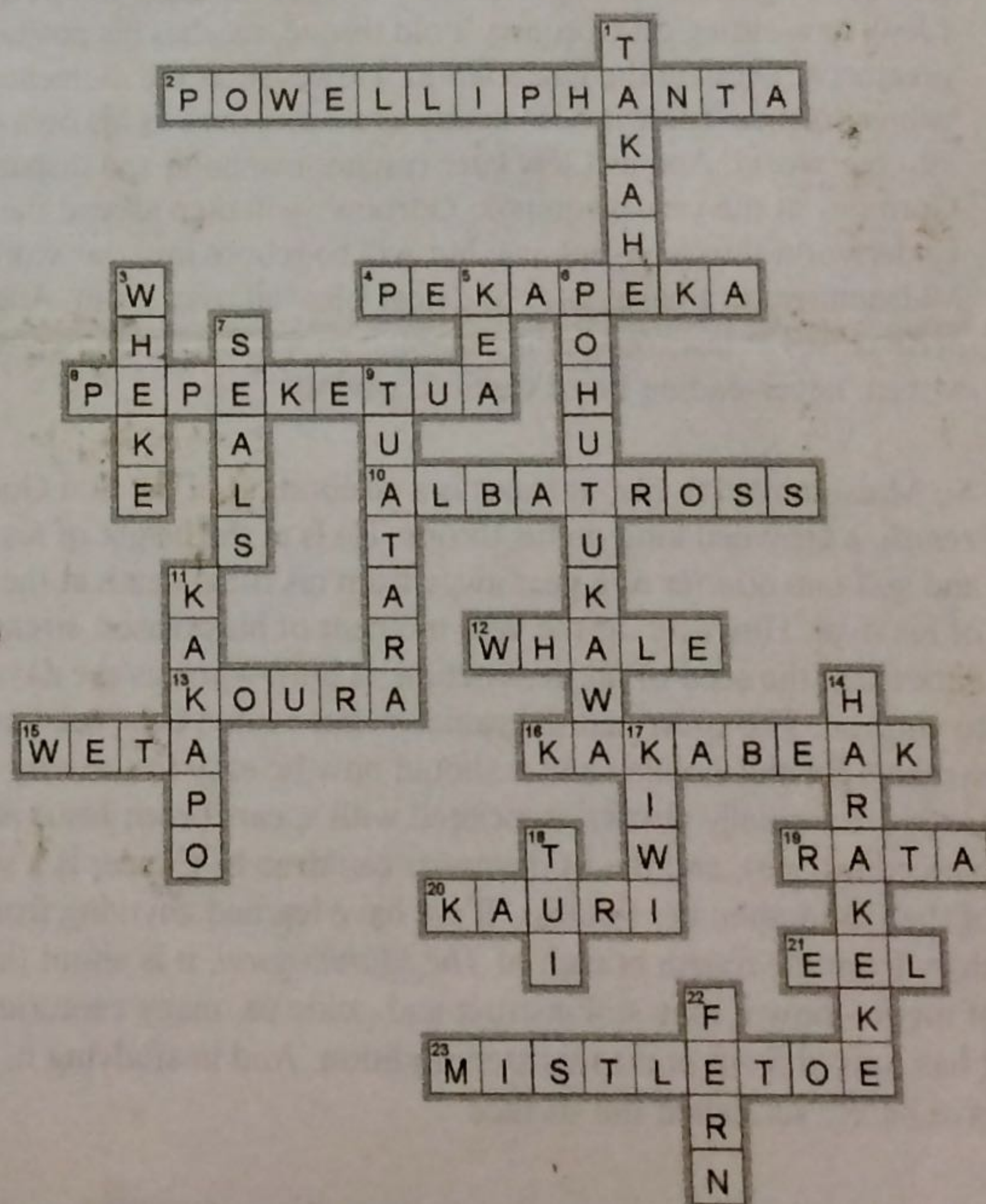


20. Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius are \_\_\_\_\_ signs (4 letters)
22. Contains stars, planets, and all form of heavenly bodies
24. The sign of the virgin
27. The Earth's closest neighbor
28. Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn are this type of sign. Third planet from the sun
29. The centaur
30. Gives us light

## Down

1. Constellation only seen in the Southern Hemisphere
2. Star sign represented by two fish
3. Moving object in the sky with a tail
5. Fourth planet from the sun
6. Planet closest to the sun
7. A group of related stars
8. Seventh planet from the sun
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Way (5 letters)
15. Star sign symbolized by scales
17. Blue-green planet, named after the Roman god of the sea
19. The bull
21. The water carrier
23. Closest planet to Earth
25. The \_\_\_\_\_ signs are Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces (5 letters)
26. Furthest planet from the sun

## Last issue's solution



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