

SerpentStar

Newsletter for the Australian and New Zealand members of OBOD

Alban Hefin, December 2002

Greeting to the Summer Solstice

Glory of the Day-Star, hail!
Lifter of the Light, Burnisher of the Sky:
Gifts of love to earth are bringing,
Summer's shimmer, dew's delight.
Dancing be the heart within us,
Open our souls to bliss,
Courage vanquish every shadow,
Greet midsummer with a kiss.

From the 'Celtic Devotional' by Caitlin Matthews



An Open Letter To SerpentStar

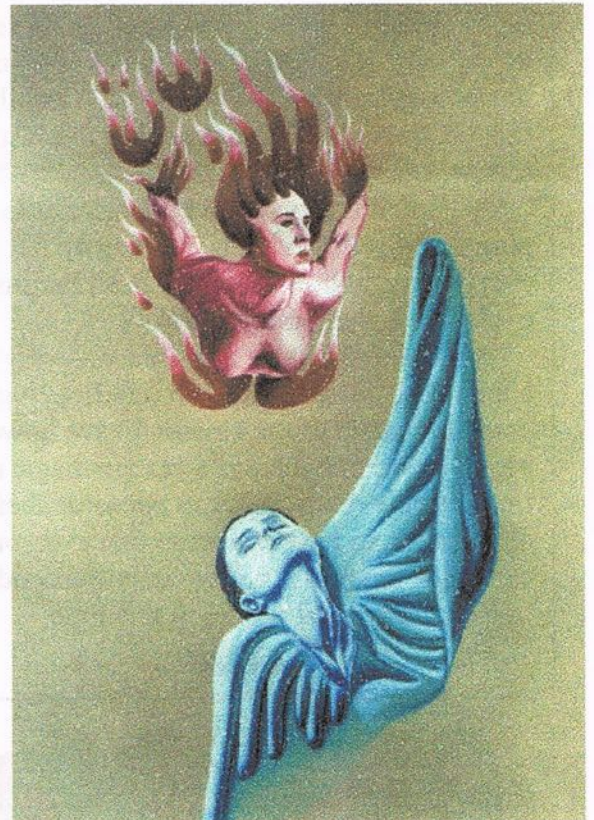
On the oceans of life you
Chart your own destiny.
Expect adversity in your
Interaction with others
Of your kind on this
Battlestar. -
- And adversity with old
Fashioned laws. After all
There is no adversity
In the grave.

R.
Return

I.
Into

P.
Peace

Patrick Murphy
Sunday, 6th October 2002



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Summer

Hot sun sears my skin
Elementals dance in the heat haze
Willy willies stir up the dust
As air conditioners hum away
Cooling the occupants of
Heat encased buildings.
Dogs pant in the shade of trees
Not much cooler than the sun-drenched earth.
The leaves of trees hang limply
The heat has silenced the birds
The only sounds are the flies swarming
Over a flat lizard on the tar-melted road.
The swimming pool, centre of the universe
Children splash in the water
Parents chat under umbrellas
And I walk in the sun
Melting away as the sweat drips from me.



EDITOR'S SPOT



Hello everyone!

Summer has come, and so have the rains (well, a little rain, anyway)! The days are lazy and hot, the nights are warm, but not so warm as to disrupt sleep, at least not here anyway!

The butterflies are visiting all of the flowers in my garden, and trying to avoid being caught by my cats! It's amazing the twists and jumps the cats make to try to catch them! Luckily though, the butterflies are usually too fast for them.

My garden is growing well. I have little purple and yellow violets popping up everywhere, and the butterfly bush has just exploded in the last two weeks!!

I must admit that for a while I was very jaded about Christmas, working in retail, seeing the commercialism of the season. I have however, begun to see that there is a certain magic at this time. People really do try to put aside their differences, to have peace, so that everyone can enjoy themselves, especially the children!

With many good wishes at this time,

Siennach



Websites



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

<http://www.orkneyjar.com/folklore/selkiefolk/>
- A website dedicated to the folktales of the selkie

<http://www.geocities.com/athens/acropolis/4198/>
- A website all about my favourite forest spirit, Puck!

<http://www.folklegend.com/> - A website containing folklore from around the world

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~kevrenor/ccal1.htm> - The website for the Celtic Council of

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 *Ffrwythau*, but with poetry from Druids in Australia and New Zealand.

I am now taking submissions of poems. Please contact me at the editorial address.

Siennach

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Takin' It All Home: Translating Our Ritual Structure to Personal Space by Kami Landy

We come home from ritual energized, connected, inspired, determined to keep up this relationship with those who dwell in Otherworlds. Then we look around. No nemeton. No bonfire. No well. No knowledgeable ritualists to guide us through the process. No TIME. Oh well, there's a ritual about once every six weeks. WAIT A MINUTE! That's not all there is to life or even to our Pagan religion. You don't HAVE to have all the lovely trappings, you may not even always want them. So, what can we do at home, in those few minutes here and there that busy people can steal for themselves?

*Well, first let's look at physical structures. We have a pretty elaborate ritual space setup. Do you need a whole nemeton at home? Well, it's nice if you plan to do that sort of formal ritual, and can make a lovely meditation spot, but you don't actually *need* it. So, what do you need? How can you approximate the various shrines and altars in your own home? Well, first off, I'm going to describe something that will work best for a person who is in their own home. Later we will talk about adaptations for a dorm or room in a non-pagan house.*

So- the basic definers of sacred space; a "centre", then fire and water. The centre is the central axis, the roof tree. If you don't have a central chimney, there is probably a staircase or a supporting wall somewhere near the middle of the house. This is your "bilé", the roof tree which holds the whole house together and enables you to go up and down freely as our "world tree" enables us to pass between worlds freely. As such, you might want to decorate that wall with a Celtic knotwork tree-of-life picture or carving or a quilt of that name. You can put an incense (or better, sweet oil) burner on a shelf or side table near it. When you come down in the morning, go up to bed at night, or return from a trip, be aware of the constant movement between natural, human and spiritual worlds. Let the simple act of walking up and down stairs, or of touching the side of your chimney, become a meditative reconnection with all the levels at which we exist. No, you probably can't do it every time you go up and down stairs; there are

kids to yell at and missing tie-tacks to find while running madly about. But that once or twice a day will help you to remember who you are.

What of the fire? We can't very well keep a sacred fire burning in the house, or can we? What is the pilot light on the hot water heater or furnace or cook stove if not an eternal flame? Now, it lacks something of atmosphere to go down to the basement for worship, although there is historic precedent for it, so what is the "hearth and heart" of your home? If you have a fireplace, well, you're home free- there's a veritable hearth. Look at the Scottish tradition of "smoorring" the fire at bedtime; it's a lovely, quiet, meditative moment to focus on the sanctity and security and permanence of home. If you don't have a fireplace, then look to the "fire" you use most for domestic tasks, the stove. Doesn't everyone seem to gravitate to the kitchen anyway? Since it's probably prohibitive to light a whole bonfire in the kitchen, how about a nice little cast iron brazier, especially if it's cauldron shaped, which can live next to the stove? Light it as you begin to cook a meal, briefly giving thanks for the use of this powerful force for our daily needs. Do you or the kids do homework at the kitchen table? It can also be a fire of inspiration. You might hang a Brigit's cross or corn dolly above it, or a sun face. The Brigit's cross drawn upon the mantle or door frame has been used as a talisman against fire in ancient and recent times.

Where better to think of sacred water, flowing water, than the bathroom. I think that indoor plumbing is well worth our reverence! Seriously, it's not hard to create a little fountain or sculpture of river rocks and shells to place beside the sink or in a corner of the tub. Again, when you are in there for your own daily ablutions, pour a cup of water over this small shrine so it cascades down into it's own "pool", perhaps a china or even plastic bowl, and ask for the continuing presence and goodwill of that goddess or spirit who guards the water in your house or in the land under it. If you feel moved to offer a gift of silver or nuts or a charm in the form of something you need you can place it

there until you are able to put it in a nearby natural water source. Try not to offer your best ring down the drain unless you're REALLY in need... Once again, as the connection with fire reminds us of our ability to harness that wild power, so this moment of contemplating water reminds us to be still and deep, to listen to the flowing forces within the earth.

In our rituals, after we have opened these three portals between worlds, we invite three kindreds; the gods, the beloved dead, and the spirits of nature. How shall we attend to them at home? First, not everyone has a personal patron deity. If you do, you will determine the proper place for a shrine based on who he or she is. A shrine to Brid belongs in the kitchen or by the fireplace or near your desk for inspiration. A shrine to Manannan might be part of your water focus, or might be at the front door since he is a guide between worlds and is found at boundaries. A shrine to Cernunnos or Flidais might look awfully like a hunting trophy on the wall, or be a small circle of trees in the yard. Lugh might like to be remembered at your work or in the "seat of authority" to which you retire after a long day. The Dagda can be found in the bedroom or the kitchen or your comfy chair. And so on. If you want a general work-altar for honouring all the gods as you need to, then you will want to set aside a corner as your "temple space". Mine lives between the computer and my desk and is put away most of the time, the icons or tools being used for "decorations" atop a shelf or tucked safely into a drawer, since the space is needed by the kids or the person at the computer most of the time. Take your time finding out what works for you, the gods are patient. And they sometimes give hints. Oh- and don't forget the shrine in your car. Where else do you have so much time for contemplation, privacy to speak aloud, and need of protection?

I believe that ancestor worship belongs in the home. Powerfully. Constantly. Simply. Make a collection of photos, mementos, favourite items from previous generations of your families. Put it where the household gathers, in the dining room or living room for example. You might make a pretty dish or incense burner a part of the display, so that you can offer food from your feasting when you have a traditional or old favourite dish, or so you can burn a special scent of incense. Did Grandma always wear

rosewater? Did Great-grandpa smoke a pipe? Did Great-uncle Harry travel to China and bring back a sandalwood box? Smell carries memory more than any other sense. At special occasions be sure to include those family members who no longer have bodies. Tell stories about them. Remind the children which days were a favourite holiday or a birthday or anniversary. Keep it simple but reverent, and they will surely be there to help you when you need perspective, patience, wisdom, or solutions to thorny problems.

And what of the Sidhe? Ask the kids. Is there a fairy mound or fairy wood nearby? Go out walking when the moon is full and bright and bring them gifts of feathers, bright coloured things, milk and honey, or a tot of whiskey if they prefer. There are those who point out to us that the land spirits here are those whom the Native Americans knew, and they prefer corn meal or tobacco, berries, shiny things, but NEVER alcohol. The nature spirits are the spirits of plants and animals, as well as the spirits of place and the Sidhe-folk. Your bird feeder can become a place of offering to them, especially if you can put a deer-lick or the like nearby. If there is an interesting rock in your yard make an altar of it and leave pretty things or food offerings there for the critters. Some of your food leftovers can become offerings for the nature spirits, who will accept them in their form as ravens or crows or starlings, squirrels and cats and raccoons. Why not? Do we not share meat with the gods, offering them the parts of a meal they can "eat" but consuming the flesh on their behalf?

Do not forget the Earth Mother. Without her we are not. Where should her altar go? EVERYWHERE. Your worship of the Earth can be in recycling, turning off lights, cleaning up the neighbourhood, asking permission before planting or harvesting a garden, and so on. This is easy worship to teach our children, who will remind us again and again. But how and where can we focus our devotion? Well, you could put a table by the recycling bins, with gifts the earth has given you which you give back to her; first fruits, goddess-shaped rocks or holed stones, and so on. There might be a special rock or tree in the back yard through which you connect most powerfully with the earth. Water it lovingly. Or by the kitchen sink, or by your bed, or wherever you feel most connected with the land and its cycles.

And, how will you reduce, contain and make manageable the chaos toward which the universe tends? Why not show the outsiders a place, as we do in ritual, with a gargoyle at your front gate or at the bottom of your drive. You could even impress the neighbours with a pair of protective stone lions or dogs. But the doorway itself provides a barrier as well as a passageway. Folklore is full of protective charms; a horseshoe, a rowan tree or yarrow plant, a knot of string or a drawing decorating the entry way to confuse those who would cause harm, etc. For myself, I've never felt a need for such protection, trusting those to whom I give honour to protect the space I have made theirs; the advantage to saying to the many beings of our pantheon; "My house is your house", is that they will help to protect its peace and security, and generally will remember not to fight or track mud inside.

Thus, your entire house and the land around it become your nemeton, your sacred grove. If you live in an apartment you might have to be a bit creative, but reasonable substitutes aren't hard to find; a picture of a gargoyle on your mailbox if that is your outer boundary, or else on your apartment door, replaces the stone one on the walk. There is surely a tree or bush nearby, or a window box garden you can create and a bird feeder you can hang to honour the spirits of nature. And where is the centre for you? Probably not the elevator shaft, even if it's the centre of the building, but perhaps the point of demarcation between public space (the living room) and private space (the bedrooms). You can place your remembrance of the vertical axis at that doorway. Again, dorms are a bit harder; often no fire is allowed, you haven't your own source of running water, the roommate might not share your religious beliefs. These concerns make it all the more important to surround yourself with simple reminders that you are not alone in the universe. A bonsai tree with a dish of water at its roots and an incense burner or little electric night light nearby make a lovely altar containing the central axis or world tree, the sacred fire and the well of wisdom. Pictures that remind you of the three kindreds surround your bed, and you can still find places outside to offer a dish of milk to the animals who convey your caring to the spirits of nature. Place a rock which feels particularly solid and old on your desk or under the head of your bed, and on the door a picture which seems protective to ward

off unwelcome chaos. You can still take the time, morning and evening, to touch and meditate on these items, to change the water and the incense (or scented oil rubbed on the light bulb).

Offerings to your gods and ancestors might come in the form of things you can thumbtack below their pictures; pictures of the things you identify with them, coloured ribbons, etc., rather than things which need to be burnt or dropped in a well or which get messy.

So, with a general sense of sacred space set up around you, worship and magic become ever more a part of daily life. You needn't go away from home to find the gods and spirits, but rather come from well-worn patterns of devotion to join with your community in celebration on the high days. At another time, I will talk about specific rituals for particular purposes, and ways in which our relationship with the gods and spirits can help us.

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 Glassie, Henry, *Folklife in New England*
 Ross, Anne, *The Pagan Celts* (Totowa NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1986)
 Webb, Mary, *Precious Bane* (NY: Penguin, 1985) (fiction with strong reference to folklife in East Anglia, first published in 1924.)

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As posted on the free druidy course mail-list.



Ogham of the Tuatha de Danann

B: I am a knife in the hand of Ogma
L: I am the eye of Brighid
N: I am an Ash branch
F: I am a sea-hawk flying over a cliff
S: I am a path leading to a magical well
H: I am a diamond on the forehead
D: I am the chariot wheel of Taranis
T: I am the spear of Lugh
C: I am the salmon who eats the hazel nuts of wisdom
Q: I am the apple blossom of Danu
M: I am a fairy hill, entered by circling three times.
G: I am the palm of a hand
Ng: I am a knife at the throat
Z: I am a brazier burning green flame
R: I am a knot at the heart
A: I am the beginning
O: I am infinity
U: I am a bee hive
E: I am a poplar leaf
I: I am the entrance to a burial mound
Y: I am the mistletoe, sacred to Druids

by **Ioel MachOibicin**

A Christmas Poem for the Forces

In the forces we serve this land
 Our land of Australia we sing
 To a Merry Christmas and a Happy
 New Year

From coast to coast we roam this
 land of Australia we sing to a
 Merry Christmas and a Happy New
 Year.

Pathfinders in Asia this land
 Our land of Australia in the
 forces we serve on land and sea and
 Air we sing to a Merry Christmas
 And a prosperous New Year.
 In unhappy lands in the V.N.
 We are far away from our
 Prosperous land of Australia
 We still sing to a Merry
 Christmas and a Happy
 New Year.

Patrick Murphy



Uluru



**Like a friendly cuddly bear she sits,
 with her enormous body sprawled
 upon the red scorched earth:
 Her head rising proudly,
 silhouetted against the sky:
 A mystical aura surrounds her space:
 The strength of her spirit lingers
 silently:
 The sun creates illusions of colour
 and texture
 from blood red to deep purple:
 Like a magnet her energies draw me
 to her:
 Dominant in all her majesty:
 Watching - waiting - warning -
 be careful - go lightly!**

**Unthinking selfish beings
 climb and scar her body:
 But she waits serenely,
 sheltering - an oasis in the desert:
 calm - warm - beckoning!
 Her ancient eyes have seen time eternal:
 She knows the past:
 She sees the future:
 She waits patiently - understanding -
 guiding:
 I took her to a corner in my heart,
 where I jealously guard her
 and keep her
 and call her my own.**



How the Kiwi Lost it's Wings

From: <http://www.maori.org.nz/>

One day, Tanemahuta was walking through the forest. He looked up at his children reaching for the sky and he noticed that they were starting to sicken, as bugs were eating them.

He talked to his brother, Tanehokahoka, who called all of his children, the birds of the air together.

Tanemahuta spoke to them.

"Something is eating my children, the trees. I need one of you to come down from the forest roof and live on the floor, so that my children can be saved, and your home can be saved. Who will come?"

All was quiet, and not a bird spoke.

Tanehokahoka turned to Tui.

"E Tui, will you come down from the forest roof?"



Tui

Tui looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. Tui looked down at the forest floor and saw the cold, dark earth and shuddered.

"Kao, Tanehokahoka, for it is too dark and I am afraid of the dark."

All was quiet, and not a bird spoke.

Tanehokahoka turned to Pukeko.

"Pukeko, will you come down from the forest roof?"



Pukeko

Pukeko looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. Pukeko looked down at the forest floor and saw the cold, damp earth and shuddered.

"Kao, Tanehokahoka, for it is too damp and I do not want to get my feet wet."

All was quiet, and not a bird spoke.

Tanehokahoka turned to Pipiwharauroa.

"Pipiwharauroa, will you come down from the forest roof?"



Pipiwharauroa

Pipiwharauroa looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. Pipiwharauroa looked around and saw his family.

"Kao, Tanehokahoka, for I am busy at the moment building my nest."

All was quiet, and not a bird spoke. And great was the sadness in the heart of Tanehokahoka, for he knew, that if one of his children did not come down from the forest roof, not only would his brother lose his children, but the birds would have no home.

Tanehokahoka turned to Kiwi.

"E kiwi, will you come down from the forest roof?"

Kiwi looked up at the trees and saw the sun filtering through the leaves. Kiwi looked around and saw his family. Kiwi looked at the cold damp earth. Looking around once more, he turned to Tanehokahoka and

"I will."

Great was the joy in the hearts of Tanehokahoka and Tanemahuta, for this little bird was giving them hope. But Tanemahuta felt that he should warn kiwi of what would happen.

"E kiwi, do you realise that if you do this, you will have to grow thick, strong legs so that you can rip apart the logs on the ground and you will lose your beautiful coloured feathers and wings so that you will never be able to return to the forest roof. You will never see the light of day again."

All was quiet, and not a bird spoke.

"E kiwi, will you come down from the forest roof?"

Kiwi took one last look at the sun filtering through the trees and said a silent goodbye. Kiwi took one last look at the other birds, their wings and their coloured feathers and said a silent goodbye. Looking around once more, he turned to Tanehokahoka and said,

"I will."

Then Tanehokahoka turned to the other birds and said,

"E Tui, because you were too scared to come down from the forest roof, from now on you will wear the two white feathers at your throat as the mark of a coward. Pukeko, because you did not want to get your feet wet, you will live forever in the swamp. Pipiwhararoa, because you were too busy building your nest, from now on you will never build another nest again, but lay your eggs in other bird's nests. But you kiwi, because of your great sacrifice, you will become the most well known and most loved bird of them all."



Seasonal Recipes

Summer Lemonade Pot Pourri

- 2 cups lemon verbena leaves
- 1 cup lemon thyme
- 1 cup lemon balm
- 2 cups lemon mint (Citratra) leaves
- 2 cups thin strips of lemon peel
- 2 cups lemon scented geranium leaves
- 8 tablespoons lemon oiled fixative
- 2 tablespoons mint oiled fixative

To make the fixatives, mix together in a jar $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cut orris root with 6 teaspoons of the essential oil. Put each fragrance mix in a different jar.

Combine all the ingredients and allow to mature.

(from 'Pot Pourri' by Joanna Sheen)

Recipes for the Oil Burner

- 3 drops Lemon
- 3 drops Bergamot

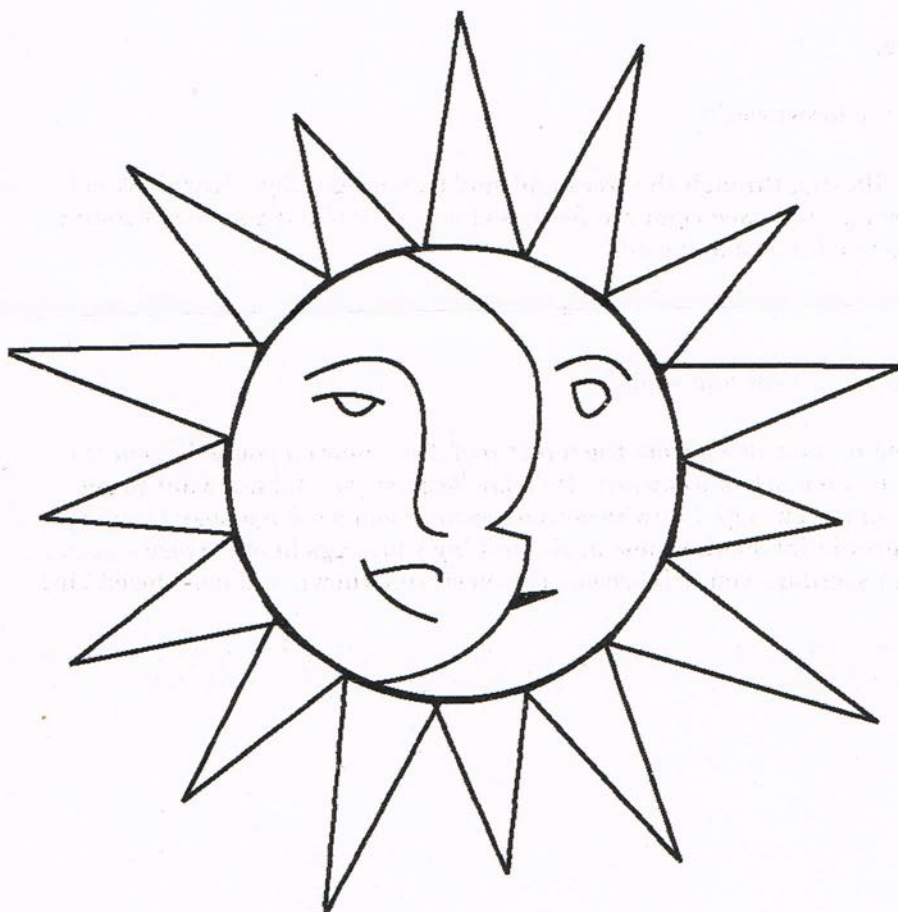
or

- 3 drops Pine
- 3 drops Cypress

(from 'Aromatherapy' by Judy Chapman)



children's page!



From the 'Sun, Moon, and Stars Colouring Book' by Eliza@sacredspiral.com

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

NZ NATIVE ANIMALS

HIHI	PEKAPEKA
HOIHO	PEKEKETUA
KAKAPO	TAKAHE
KEA	TIEKE
KIWI	TUATARA
KOKAKO	TUI
KOURA	WEKA
MOHUA	WETA
	WHIO

For more information about these animals, go to:

www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/001-Plants-and-Animals/index.asp