

SERPENT STAR

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



Lughnasadh 2022



Welcome, welcome, welcome to the Lughnasadh issue of Serpentstar!

Well, hello there!

Welcome to the Lughnasadh 2021 issue of SerpentStar. I'm Samantha Travis, and I'll be your new Editor!

Too late I realise that I'd actually missed thanking some people the last time we spoke, and so I'd like to thank previous editors Martin, Todd, Wyverne and Mandy for the work they've put into SerpentStar over the years and the legacy they have left for me to continue. Thankyou, from the bottom of my heart, thank you. I have quite the role to fill, and I'm ready to get started!

So, what now? Where are we heading from here? It's been a little quiet on our social media, but you may be seeing some new and (hopefully) exciting things popping up in SerpentStar from here, including a bit of a redesign of... well, almost everything! It'll be a slow, extremely *ambitious* process while I figure everything out and get the rhythms and colours going, but with a new Editor comes new ways to bring you the music, stories, articles, pictures and content that SerpentStar is known and loved for! It takes a lot to put what you can consider a piece of your very self forward, and I want to thank everyone who submitted their work to make this issue a fantastic first issue for me to put together.

Truly, it's an absolute honour and pleasure to be able to see and show off the works of so many people, and so many more to come. Grab yourself a drink and a snack, and settle in. This issue is huge, with a book review by Mandy Gibson, writings from Elkie White, Kacey Stephensen, Nicola and Dawn from New Zealand and Tina Merrybard, with a reading of her short story on the Youtube channel! Not to mention the fantastic poetry and artwork from so many of you wonderful readers out there, even some first-timers!

Until next time, with all the hugs and bright blessings that I can give,

- Sam /\

A reminder to everyone that SerpentStar has a YouTube channel, which hosts last year's DDUDE talk series from Druids DownUnder. I'd like to see other videos from OBODies on there as well - they can either be linked to ones already on other channels, or we can arrange for you to send them to serpentstar.obod@gmail.com for upload. Get in touch if you have a bardic video or a short doco you'd like to share in SerpentStar.



The woman, the myth... yet to live up to the 'the legend' bit. She'll get there one day.

SerpentStar, Lughnasadh 2022

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

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Enquiries via email: serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.

Search 'SerpentStar OBOD' on YouTube to subscribe!

OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere

Groves & Seed Groups

The following are groups listed on OBOD's official Groves & Seed Groups List and have consented to have their information included in this list. Other groups run by OBOD members are listed in the Advertising section.

The Blue Mountains Seed Group

The Blue Mountains Seed Group holds regular public gatherings in Katoomba at the Blue Mountains Organic Community Gardens for the eight seasonal festivals of the wheel of the year. See our Facebook group for more information. This is open to anyone to come along, not just OBOD members. There are also private OBOD members only gatherings, but please come to the public gatherings to get to know the group first.

Email: thebluemountainsseedgroup@gmail.com,

Facebook: Friends of the Blue Mountains Seed Group www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofthebluemountainsseedgroup/

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 and you can see our profile on Facebook 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 two new Bards and one relatively new Bard. 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, and we will be holding our first group Alban. Full moon meditations are conducted for peace and harmony. Email Debby at triskel@mweb.co.za for details.

Druid Pilgrim Grove

We are a grove of wayfaring and friendly OBODies who are happy to support those seeking to engage with pilgrimage as part of their druid practice. We have members around Australia and NZ. A number of us are happy to meet up with pilgrims as they travel close to us. Contact danuta@adruid.com. FB: Druid Pilgrim is a Facebook group that engages with people interested in exploring pilgrimage and druidry. It also acts as a 'Friends of' space for those interested in connecting with Druid Pilgrim Grove.

The Golden Wattle Seed Group

The Golden Wattle Seed Group are an OBOD Seed Group in Adelaide, SA. We hold ceremonies for the wheel of the Year, nature walks, meditations and other rituals for peace and for the land. If you would like to get in contact with us, email us at golden.wattle.seed.group@gmail.com or connect with our Facebook 'Friends of' page: search Friends of the Golden Wattle Seed Group (OBOD).

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

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: macademiagroove@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. We now have a public facebook page: Friends of The Melbourne Grove. FFI contact: Trudy - 0409 186 316, moondancer@outlook.com.au

Middle Earth Fellowship Seed Group

Tauranga, NZ. Also Medieval village, Medieval craft camps, Medieval dance and Border Morris dance.
Contact Yvonne yjames@balnacoil.xtra.co.nz

Silvereyes Seed Group

Perth Hills & members throughout the South West. Email: ghriancu@iinet.net.au

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

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

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

Useful websites for SH OBODies:

www.druidryaustralia.org - a central online resource for druidry in Australia - includes info/booking for the annual Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly.

Southern Hemisphere Order of Bards Ovates & Druids Online (SHOBODO) Community - Facebook group - a private group for Order members living in the Southern Hemisphere.

Druids DownUnder - Facebook group - a group open to druids of any path in the Southern Hemisphere, Australia/New Zealand in particular.

Don't see your group or website listed here?

Send a listing to serpentstar.obod@gmail.com and spread the word!

OBOD Worldwide

www.druidry.org - Official site of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids

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)

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.

Contact Penny touchstone@druidry.org

Druidenstein (German) www.druidry.info/das-magazin-druidenstein

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

Il Calderone (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

Menhir (French) issuu.com/obod-menhir/docs

Ophiusa (Portuguese) www.obod.com.pt/ophiusa.htm



Pagan Transitions

Pagan Transitions was created over 12 years ago to help pagans create meaningful and beautiful funeral rites which reflect the spirituality of the person who has passed through the Gateway, and offer support to the bereaved.

As well as templates that can be adapted to suit individual funeral requirements, and a selection of reading material and poems, there is also a list of Pagan Funeral Celebrants who can create and lead the funeral rite for you and arrange everything with the Funeral Director. Pagan Transitions is a volunteer-run free service.

If you are a Pagan Funeral Celebrant and would like to be listed please visit www.pagan-transitions.org.uk and complete the application form. Any suggestions on how the service can be improved are welcome.

Children of the New Millennium - part 2 – the Dominant Signature

Written by Elkie White

For this article I zoomed in on the Zoomers, specifically those born between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2010. Within this group there was one astro-number signature that stood out above the rest: Taurus-2. This is congruent with the first digit of the millennium – 2 – but it would be wrong to think that simply because every child born in this millennium has that number in their year of birth, that this is the reason for this result. The millennium number is merely one of several; typically more than thirty factors are involved in the calculation of the Signature.

Prior to the current millennium, Taurus-2 scored an average of seven percent per career group. The Millennium Children scored more than double that. Within the career samples, it is the scientists that come closest to the Zoomers of this millennium. Put earthy Taurus with science and you come up with 'Earth Sciences'.

I therefore speculate that can expect to see more 'earth scientists' in this millennium, and possibly a lot more. Earth Sciences include ecology, geology, botany, palaeontology, geography, anthropology, biology, and climatology. Which earth science a person might choose to focus on will depend to some extent of how the Elements stack up in their horoscope.

The Millennium Children scored a whopping 32% in the Element Earth, that's one in three have an earthy Signature. Air and Water scored 26% each. Fire scored a mere 16%, which was way below the previous lowest of 33%, based on the previous century.



From these statistics it is apparent that the Millennium Children are likely to be determined conservationists. As Dr. Randall said in Don't Look Up, "We really had it all didn't we". Just so, druids will be relieved to know that a large sector of these young people is well aware of the need to look after what we've got, and will stand stubbornly against ruining it.

Taurus is renowned for collecting and that may include collecting data, which is a task especially suited to introverts. Taurus-2 people tend to work patiently and systematically towards their goals, alternating that with being outside and close to the earth.

Taurus-2 is ruled by the planet Venus, goddess of love and lovely things. As well as substantial discoveries coming from the earth scientists, we can expect some beautiful art and music coming from the Zoomers.

What do you think the Millennium Children's other dominant signature might be? It's not a trick question. I'll write about it next time.

- *Elkie is currently conducting a preliminary study, and is looking for data to put into a data file for Druids! If you would like to help with her research, please email elkiewhite@gmail.com*

IN CARNATION

Each foot creaks into the Earth.
Its vines
cast a circle around my neck
as if it's a relation.

This dense, embedded path
bores my refined
senses.

That which I seek
grows counterclockwise.

- Lisa Mclean

Earthling

Brightest star, go and seek it out;
there within the fruitful darkness,
grows the greenest sprout.
Upon the delicate hands of love,
Hold the tender form of care,
the verdant leaf and soil deep,
upon the brow, a mindful stare.
Here in stillness and silent peace,
Earth pours through reverent fingers;
Painting mud onto skin,
Turning outwards, from within.
Gently chant the ancient sounds,
Rise up from earth with sap that flows;
Moving body, leaf and limb,
Stones and bones,
Into skin.
Here I stand with all spirit trees;
Honey pouring on earth,
Incense and other offerings.
Pulsing rhythms fill the air,
Rain has come to kiss the land;
The brightest spark of lightning strikes,
Three are the drops that I hold in my hand.

-Kacey Stephensen

Mistress Munchkin and the Plutonium Dragon - Part 1

Written by Tina Merrybard

Mistress Munchkin sat on her lonely clifftop and eyed the nuclear reactor with a somewhat jaundiced eye. It was gearing up for one of those big events, she could tell, and she wondered what would come of her efforts to control the harm this time.

“Some lottery to win,” she humphed to herself. “I might have won a car, or money, or a pony. Instead I get three years on a clifftop with a giant lump of glowing concrete.”

She didn't actually mind all that much, but having been on her own too long, Mistress Elfrida Munchkin had got into the habit of grumphing to herself to pass the time. Actually, to be put into the cauldron to be in the draw for Guardian of the Reactor was a great honour. Not every Druid got to take on such a responsible role. You had to be at the very top of your Druidic game to even be considered.

Elfrida eyed her threatening companion some more. “Don't even think about it,” she growled. You could affect the reality of anything if your power was strong enough, but a reactor was a very powerful dark being, and yet childishly simple too, with a small child's tendency to tantrums, and it required a great deal of the aging Druid's energy to tone down its mischief. Not that age made any difference to your power, if you were a Druid. Elfrida had been studying and building her skills for fifty years, girl and woman, and if anyone could handle the reactor, Lumpy-Bum, as she'd come to call it, it was she.

“The cold's crept into my fingers,” she told it now, “And all I want to do is go into my cottage there and make tea and grumph by the fire.”

Lumpy-Bum radiated a little slap at her in a childish way, just to keep in practice, then subsided back into its grassy hill. Mistress Munchkin could tell that the latest fit of temper had been averted for now, more because the being that was the reactor had truly come to like her company, than because she had used any controlling power. “Good boy,” she told it. “I'm going in for my tea now, but if you feel angry, make sure you let me know.”

She stood up from her cross-legged perch there on the cliff top. Power she had in plenty, but some things you just got too old for, and sitting on the cold ground, even on your ample bum, was still going to give you a pain. Druids didn't like to take away the limitations of the flesh. It was part of the gift that was physical life. She could tweak, though, and tweak she did, so that by the time she had reached the weathered and bleached wooden door of her cottage, she was walking straight and tall once more.

Elfrida Munchkin (a name she had taken for herself long ago at her initiation, the first name meaning “good counsel” to remind herself to be wise, and the second being silly to remind herself not to take everything too seriously) was a lady of some fifty-five years. Her hair was strong, thick, wavy, darkly badger-grey, and was generally to be found in one long braid down her back, if it wasn't blowing wildly about her face in all of its glory. Her body was tall and powerful, with raw bony hands and hips that could carry a babe or a tool belt with equal panache. Her face was of matching strength, with a long nose that tilted down in a way that sometimes reminded people of a gnu, strong cheeks and jaw, and large, dark eyes that were hooded over with heavy brows.

Not a beauty, no, unless you saw the beauty in wildness and in strength, in bright intelligence tempered with heart and humour. Elfrida had all of those things in spades, and indeed, many a man had found her beautiful and still did, though she was choosy in who she accepted, these days at least. Time was when she wouldn't have been, and she liked to look back on those lively times with pleasure, but she didn't yearn for them to return.

She pushed open the rickety door of her little cottage on the cliff. Small, bockety and cosy, it had something she had not come across in a building before; a twinned spirit. Maelgwyn and Gaelgwyn it was called, and somehow the two spirits of elderly siblings managed to inhabit it together in somewhat crabbit harmony.

“I'm home,” she told them now, throwing her grey wool cloak over the back of the couch and going to put wood on the fire.

“Tea please, Fusser dear,” she told the old kettle that hung over the fire, and it began to steam at once. By the time she had prepared her favorite teapot, known as Stewart, the kettle was whistling away in a cheery manner that belied its nickname.

Everything in this cottage had its own spirit, just as everything in the world did, but objects that had been around Druids for long definitely woke up and developed strong personalities, especially the things they used all day long.

You didn't have to name them to work with them, but Elfrida wouldn't have a pet animal here, living so close to the risk of poison radiated by Lumpy Bum, so she'd taken to making pets of her household objects.

She poured boiling water into Stewart, then cradled his warm belly in her cold hands. “It's chilly out there today,” she grumped to the room in general. “You're lucky to get to stay in here by the fire. And, Lumpy Bum is restless this evening. I bet he gets me up in the middle of the night.”

“Ah, Mistress Munchkin,” Gaelgwyn said. He was sitting in an armchair by the fire. She couldn't see him very well but she could feel him there, sitting where he so often was. “Don't be grumbling now,” he told her fondly in her head. “You know you're needed here, and that your Order values your work highly. Soon enough your time here will be done, and we'll be settling into the ways of a new guardian. Where will you go then, Druid?”

Elfrida poured tea into her favourite cup, also her biggest, and known as Bowly. (Sometimes creativity escaped her when it came to naming things.) She leaned back into the crocheted blankets that bored guardians before her had made on the long winter nights, and took her first sip of tea. “Somewhere warm,” she said dreamily. “Somewhere with lots of people. Embodied people,” she quantified apologetically to Gaelgwyn. “I think I'm getting a little strange living up here all on my own.”

“You were always strange,” said the spirit, chuckling in his crusty old way, and she had to agree. She had. “Your kind of strange, however, is a very good thing,” he went on kindly.

She wasn't really sure what he or his sister were. Ghosts, or the embodied accumulated spirit of this old place, or something else entirely, but either way, they probably didn't need to retain their elderly forms and voices. They must want to be old people, for some reason. Elfrida didn't mind. It was like having your grandparents around to give you wisdom, and maybe that was the point. Would she take advice from them if they were a pair of teenagers? Probably not, though she had taken advice from much weirder beings in her time than a teen spirit.

She couldn't feel Maelgwyn right now. Probably the old spirit had gone off to the other cottage in the forest that she was somehow also the spirit of. Elfrida had no idea how that worked, but she'd Journeyed with Maelgwyn to that place, and it had a similar feel to this, excluding the difference of setting.

Why didn't Gaelgwyn go there too? Who knew? Elfrida worked in mysteries, and she didn't need to always know why things were as they were, only that they were.

She sipped her tea peacefully, saying no more. That was the nice thing about spirits and awakened things with personality; they mostly didn't feel any need to keep chattering on about nothing, though she had once owned a handbag that had never shut up and almost driven her mad before she'd rehomed it to a person who couldn't hear it. She'd felt kind of bad about that, until she'd realised that it had never actually listened to her and probably wouldn't even notice that its new owner wasn't replying.

Through the tiny windows that faced the sea, she watched the light fade from the sky. She contentedly wiggled her toes at the fire, cradling Bowly in her hands, while Fussy steamed gently, ready in case she wanted more tea. “This isn't such a bad life,” she told herself. “Maybe I don't really need a warm climate or lots of people. Not yet anyway.”

Her opinion on that changed pretty quickly at 3am when Lumpy Bum blew his top.

- To be continued next issue! Click [here](#) to listen to Tina read Part 1, hosted on the SerpentStar Youtube channel
You can see more of her amazing work on <http://www.tlmerrybard.com>

Aussie Summer Solstice

Summer brings mini heat mirages to our roads' horizon
The smell of bitumen brings the promise of a hot night
Skin prickles with the burning touch of the sun
We yearn for the taste of cold watermelon
While we hide inside from the extreme temperatures.
Yet energy is arising round a festival of snow and pine trees
as in the north they celebrate the Winter Solstice.
Here, our sun and bushfires are burning away
All but the essentials
We will take forward into the new year
As we sift what we need from the ashes.

- Liluri and Tina Merrybard



*In the Land of Old Man sleeping
Where the Wind and the Freshwater meet
Kissing and dancing over the Rocks
As it passes Downwards into the river
Underneath a beautiful Old Gum tree
The blue Sky gets Brighter as
the Sun rays shine through the Branches
The leaves Sing with the breeze playfulness
A white Feather is caressed and cajoled
as it passes through the Air
Occasionally engaging a leaf
Where the birds callout and Balance on branch
The spiral wind Dance begins
Moving upwards, outwards and downwards
in a Pirouette
In ever increasing spinning breathlessness
until the Breeze drops and Calm is restored
as it gently meets the Land
and disappears from Sight*



Deborah Rose Halani



The header image for the Aotearoa section of SerpentStar has been created by Glenn Conroy, who writes: "The image is comprised of several elements that are of special meaning to members of the Grove of The Southern Stars; Matariki, (seven sisters constellation), pounamu, (greenstone), ti kouka (cabbage tree), and of course Kapiti Island."

Druid Camp 'Stop, listen' workshop

Written by Dawn McKenzie

The first workshop of the 2022 Druid camp held by The Grove of the Summer Stars was on stopping and listening. We were asked to walk to the apple grove in silence while being aware of our senses.

On the walk I noticed the seemingly endless variety of seeds in the plants and trees.

*Seed heads preparing
to scatter to the four winds.
Each individual waiting
for the journey to come.*

The experience helped me to switch from the mundane into Druid time and space very quickly.

Not speaking enabled me to connect with the beautiful land surrounding the Woolshed at Pukerua Bay. As I stopped and really listened with all my senses I noticed a multilayered tapestry of interwoven beings. The plants and trees, insects and birds, the earth, sea and sky, and the interplay of energies. It was wonderful to reconnect with the magic of the wilderness.

On the walk I heard a tiny waterfall trickling into a little pool of water.

*Trickle of water
into a grass lined pool
sang of the web of life
in circles of sound.*

After the walk we shared with one person, listening deeply as the other person spoke.

It brought a real connection and depth to the experience. It was a wonderful way to start Druid camp.



Image provided by Nicola



Mindful mead tasting - A bardic adventure

Written by Nicola from the Grove of the Summer Stars

As our final campfire night of the Grove of the Summer Stars Druid Camp arrived, we begun the evening with a workshop to sample the work of our amazing mead makers. When planning the workshop, we struck upon a way to match our eagerness to try them all with a desire to fit the theme of the camp: Magic, Mindfulness, and Mahi (work).

Inspiration struck when I thought about how we approach whisky tastings in my local group. The tasting notes of Scotch Malt Whisky Society are well-known among society members because they have a poet in residence who turns a basic list of flavours into an adventure for the senses.

Drawing inspiration from this, we mindfully sipped our meads, put our words of inspiration into the cauldron, and crafted our own poetry in tasting notes.

So raise a glass to our new tradition, and see what poetry flows next time you try mead!



Sandalwood obsession (Ritual Blend)

Take yourself back to dark nights in the temple, mysterious murmurs and sandalwood prayer beads, subtle sounds and reminiscing.

Black pepper and fresh cut grass on the nose meets spicy pohutukawa flowers, cherries and star anise. The alluring scent of Calvin Klein's Obsession evokes memories of charming strangers while travelling and shared glasses of Riesling.

A bitter end leaves the mouth wanting, with scents of turpentine and over drawn chamomile tea to finish.

Humming hives with a hint of sting (Port Underwood)

Sipping a Chardonnay teaser while walking through lavender fields surrounded by oak forests. A whiff of pine resin and comb honey from bustling hives teases the nose and is met with a sting.

Methylated spirits and metallic astringency, Irn Bru, a funky dose of sweaty sandshoes in grandmother's camphor chest and an oily mouth feel surprise the palate.

Rounding out the sip with the feeling of putting your feet up at the end of the night, with hiking boots at the door, and a late night sherry tipple.

Hillary's Hilarity (Egmont Honey)

A perfect, sweet mead with notes of lemon, tangy grape and rose.

Walking through a lemon grove in spring, dusty summer air and lime jet planes.

The body gives memories of visiting grandma and picnics of lemon curd pikelets and sparkling grape juice.

Ending with notes of rose Turkish delight, this mead takes you from summer to winter in one sip.



Bittersweet Expectations (Egmont Underwood)

Mineral notes of lemon, lime and iodine meet with comb honey that tickles the tongue and whets the appetite. Taste the unexpected with this woody, earthy, sexy brew of honeysuckle wrapped around Key Lime pie, raspberries, and bittersweet expectations.

Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

Moon story

Showing up.
Being love
Slivers of moonlight
In the dark
Underneath the brokenness
We can be whole.
Waxing and waning.
Finding the darkness
Embracing it.
Giving it a home.
A name
A place
Room with a view of the road
The warmth of the sun
Direction of travel.
I am a map
Inscribed on a body.
Direction.
Journey.
A signpost.
Hands reaching out
Reaching back.
An ally.
A friend.
A home.

© *Robyn Parkin 2020*

Stones, the earth's first tears

Stones were the earth's first tears, you know:
Dropping down like rain from heaven
Creeping up from the fire below
Brushed ashore by the ocean's fingers
Climbing one by one to the sky.

Stones cried out the pain and loss
They sang the song of birth
Stones slipped by like lovers on the shore
Crowning all the wisdom of the world.
Stones were the earth's first tears, you know.

© *Robyn Parkin 2016*

Reflections on inner- experience, mindfulness, 'emptiness' and contemplative practice within Druidry.

A Quiet Mind and the Awen flows - Part 1

By Kacey Stephensen

*Three fundamental seeds at the heart of Druidry:
A quiet mind, present awareness and contemplation.*

The perspectives and positions below, reflect only my position on this topic and might not reflect in its entirety, the opinions and experiences of other Druids, although it is inspired and informed by contemplative and mindfulness approaches to Druidry. Nonetheless, through my experience and sharing with other druids, I think the explanatory nature of this essay will resonate with many perspectives and hence represent a certain philosophy - in how we perceive and relate to druidry through our diverse, lived experiences.

Everyone's perception is different, particularly when it comes to the way in which we sense and experience the inner world but also how we relate to ourselves in general, others and how we perceive the world around us. The spiritual 'journey' or quest if one wants to call it that, no matter how deeply engaged in the community it is, no matter how much egregor you share.. It is still a deeply private, subjective process. Nonetheless, we often share in a group-mind, which is evident within a Seed Group or Grove that works together regularly, or in any situation where there is a sharing together, of spiritual or magical endeavoring and this helps to support and nurture the inner state.

We have the standard ways of talking about the 'comprehension' of the grove or light body exercise for example, but every person's application and relationship to the interior experience will be different, if not strikingly different. Even though we know that we may share similar sorts of experiences and can relate things back to each other, even if the actual contents and Nature of the experiences are very different. These methods ought not be thought of as a hard and fast prescriptive to the druidic inner- world or our orientation and relationship to the wider natural world for that matter.

As we are reminded in the course work, everyone will perceive the inner world differently, and it is important that each student finds the approach that works for them, and it might turn out that there is no one particular approach that works for you, but a myriad of diverse ways, in which such comprehension arises.

This indeed, might take many moons meditating, doing the ceremonies, and reflecting on experiences, to tease apart what does and doesn't work for you and that's part of discovering Awen for yourself. It is also true that what works for a time, might not be applicable or relevant forever and some things work in ways we don't even expect, while others are simply mysteries that can't be comprehended through our normal conscious attention, and that's where the juiciness of mystical experience comes forth! From the well of Segais, from the hazelnuts within.. The magical landscape is perhaps a way of describing something completely ineffable and unintelligible, even as much as we might try to rationalize and make conscious sense of a dream, or vision. The deeper psyche understands the richness and beauty of mystery itself.

Part of the process of unfoldment might turn out to be throwing out certain methods that simply don't work. Does it make your spiritual journey within druidry invalid? Absolutely not, it actually validates it because what is relevant to you and what comes from the sincerity of the heart, is what is valid to your orientation to druid practice and philosophy.

I would say many of us will try a practice, either internal or external and try it a few times. Eventually if it's not having the 'desired effect', we have to let it go, wait a while before engaging in the topic again, try a different method or move on from the subject.

So, part of the druidic lesson in this, is the 'Law of the Harvest', and being Lughnasadh, it is fitting that it is called as such.

Our spiritual growth is precisely that, learning to let go when you must, in order to flourish within the things that do work. Learning to recognise when to separate the wheat from the chaff.

It's not always easy, because we might like the idea of a concept but it might not be applicable to us- now, but it might at some point. So it really does teach us about what really matters, and that's being present, and being present with the flow of awen, the grove in whatever way we relate to it, and the embodied- vitalistic experience of nwyfre, in whatever way we comprehend it. At the heart of it however, every single moment, every time you bring yourself back to presence and inner quiet, you become the vessel for awen to be born in you. This state of awareness is central to Druidry, just as much as any actively engaged attainment or journey.

In the West, the main style of meditation technique is visual or imaginary based and it is focused on inner journeying in some way, whether we are talking about the grove or energetics.

We use different mental tools that are there to help us come into a deeper sense of connection with nature and also to act as doorways into that quiet space.

Of course, this isn't the whole picture because every inner pathworking requires a quietened, mindful state, leading up to the inner work. For nothing can arise when the mind is full, the foundations must be clear and grounded. So Druidry certainly recognises the importance of both aspects within the one process and this is how dynamic inner work is.

When we read Joanna Van Der Hoevens book - 'Zen Druidry' combining Zazens approach and the eightfold path, as well as James Nichols Contemplative Druidry, we see how diverse and interpretive our practice can be and how broad and complex contemplation is.

Recently, Thich Nhat Hahn passed away, the Zen buddhist monk who founded Plum Village.

His passing reminded me of how important mindfulness is to my druid practice and how contemplative nature-walking for example, nourishes my experience and interaction with Nwyfre and Awen. Contemplative practices and 'Zen' approaches to meditation are becoming more prominent within druidry and it will help to nourish the dynamic - 'tree of druidism', both within and without.

I think that druidry, like the Eastern religions and philosophies, understands the wisdom of paradox, that sometimes in order to find deep peace or that sense of connection with the spirit of nature, we need the concept of the grove or the light body in it's usually understood sense, as a visual or sensory aid.

Other times our minds might be too overloaded, too noisy that we simply can't visualize in that way. 'Trying to' might only serve to exacerbate distraction and make us inattentive to the inner work at hand.

We know that in order to 'get anywhere' we must let the mind be quiet, and the whole idea is to approach the inner grove without getting caught up expecting anything to happen. The mind can however attach to 'getting there', before we get 'here' and getting here is the most important part of the whole process!

Because you can't get anywhere, without being here first.

Sometimes, we need to let go of attachment to mental activity all together, and this is where the opposite approach of engagement comes in. Because practicing 'emptiness' is still engagement with the world, just not in the way we are use to thinking about engagement. In this state of mind, we are simply being receptive to 'what is'.

We might contemplate the awareness of an internal pathworking with different senses, because the actual goal of these journeys is perhaps, to learn something, or retrieve something but ultimately, I believe, it comes back to the desire to feel Whole and Connected with the different aspects of human nature and wider nature.

Other times, the journey will be planned and we are present and ready to go within, or to 'find' Awen.

But I think on a deeper level, there is perhaps no goal at all, but this moment, and that's where the jewel is found.

The fundamental lesson is the ability to remain present and unexpecting, while also having a goal in mind, if it is an inner journey or a destination within that we are opening up to, then we are becoming receptive to the possibilities of that openness.

This way, we are present and conscious of our deeper awareness, while opening the inner eyes to the world within, remaining mindful and present through the process, and simply opening to the receptiveness of our inner-sense. We are the vessel and the receptacle of mystery.

The One is within the other but sometimes, one aspect needs attention over the other. Yin/Yang, the Triple Spiral... all symbols that teach us about the interconnection between perceived opposites and paradoxes.

Penny Billington in *Contemplative Druidry* said:

“Now, somewhere in the flow of Nwyfre, the life force, there are these jagged bolts of inspiring energy, which we cannot predict. And in fact that’s one of the reasons for being contemplative, because if you don’t make the time and space, how is the inspiration to come in?

If you’re busy preparing for it, ‘doing’ all the time, you know, there is no free space”.

Druidry is a ‘doing’ spirituality, we are actively using inner tools, methods, ceremonies for bringing about a deeper awareness of Presence, to feel connected with nature and the world and so it is in a way, a prerequisite that we will let ‘ourselves’ go. Whether that is in active imagination or if it’s the suspension of the thinking mind. We have to be able to expect to achieve nothing, while actively visualizing an experience to occur or to be open to receive a message that may come into our awareness, without attachment to desire or expectation. That’s when the magic happens, within ‘space’ an inner experience arises; we’ve unlocked the door within the paradox, that is where the inner journey opens up before us.

Zen is also an active practice but starting from the opposite position - becoming ‘nothing’ in order to become something, or who we are deep down beyond identity, symbol, ect. This is what is meant by buddha- nature but I think you could apply it universally wherever you find the same kinds of inner understandings, without applying a culturally specific description to the experience.

Perhaps, within *Contemplative Druidry* we can find our own description of what that is. Indeed, Zazen practice and mindfulness are not about ‘rejecting all thoughts’ but about finding that deeper awareness in you that is aware of the thoughts happening within the context of a greater unified awareness. In the same way that the Clouds are within the Sky, your thoughts are within your mind and your mind is more than your thoughts.

- Read Part 2 in the next issue!

Freedom seeks from within,
Journey then into that place,
Into the heart of the moment,
Where every breath is your life’s purpose and every moment is a
beginning and ending;
Where forever is found in one grain of soil,
Where change is a seed,
Where you leap into the stars or into the sea.

Divine is living, breathing deeply is a gift, breathing with who we truly are, is everything. Be you, amongst the waves of your life, see into your heart, the moon, the stars, the earth, the sun, and your eyes... they are universes.

While the chatter continues, this is happening....

Chaos fills our minds, but this, all of this becomes an odd liberation, while it is the truth the whole time... amongst chaos and collective fear or personal fear, there is this... Expanse.. And it never ends, it’s always there.. Eternal.

-Kacey Stephensen

Artwork by Merryn Grace

Old Eel Wisdom came to me from curiosity and questions. How do we come into belonging with a place? As a descendant of colonists, can I ever really belong? Eels have been in Aotearoa since the Miocene. Is true belonging about how long we've been here? Or the curiosity, care and humility with which we meet te taiao (the natural world) and all beings who exist within it?



The Five Salmon of Knowing:

Where is the source, and where is the mouth?
Down this river that flows like the call to dance,
to migrate, to descend.

There are spirals everywhere and why else but
to become lost within? To roll and tumble in
the eddies and the currents and be swept from
turbulence to gentle flow, again, and again.

The salmon are each of my five senses, and
through them I am beginning to remember the
source and envision the mouth.

And to stop questioning why I dance. Migrate.
Descend.

The Inner Grove:

There's a place inside just for me. It has a silver pond at the centre, the moonlight is reflected in it. It is luminous and dank, green and dark, the sound of Rūrū calls me, the air is still and cool. Tall, pale trunks of kahikatea encircle the grove, and there is a wide, smooth stone with a small fire burning. The fire casts flickering shadows here and there, it is as if the reach of light is a container which I am held within.

It is a gibbous moon, almost full, just like the day I was born. There are small bright insects, or perhaps they are wil o'th wisps, dancing about the edges.

The grove feels like the wisdom of instinct, and the Wild of the never-caged. Not entirely safe, but only dangerous to those who are careless or thoughtless. At the same time, it holds all the quiet nurturing and fierce protection that I will ever need.

May you find places like this, within yourself, where you may rest and unfold.



Awakening a Dead Crab:

There were all those long months spent floating, dissolving into salt and water. And there was the time I renamed myself Merryn, having been reborn from the sea.

I drew this sometime in the middle. During long summer days of intense emotion, adventure and passion splashing about in joy with the waves. Nights skyclad in the sea, holding the hands of my sisters as we worshipped under the moon. Finding myself, as I danced in the dunes, made art, held ritual, sat in contemplation.

To me, seeing this crab nestled between crests of sand in the waist deep water at the end of that summer, meant that I was free.

Free of attachment, free to create my life as I will it. Full of gratitude and wonder for this life and the mystery of it all.

This summer I offer thanks to Salt and Water, for your lessons, your challenges, and your lulling embrace.



- Catch more of Merryn's artwork at www.merryngrace.com and on Instagram: [@merrynsjourney](https://www.instagram.com/merrynsjourney)

Living Treefully: An Inspiring Metaphor for Living & Learning

By Pamela Meekings-Stewart

Review by Mandy Gibson

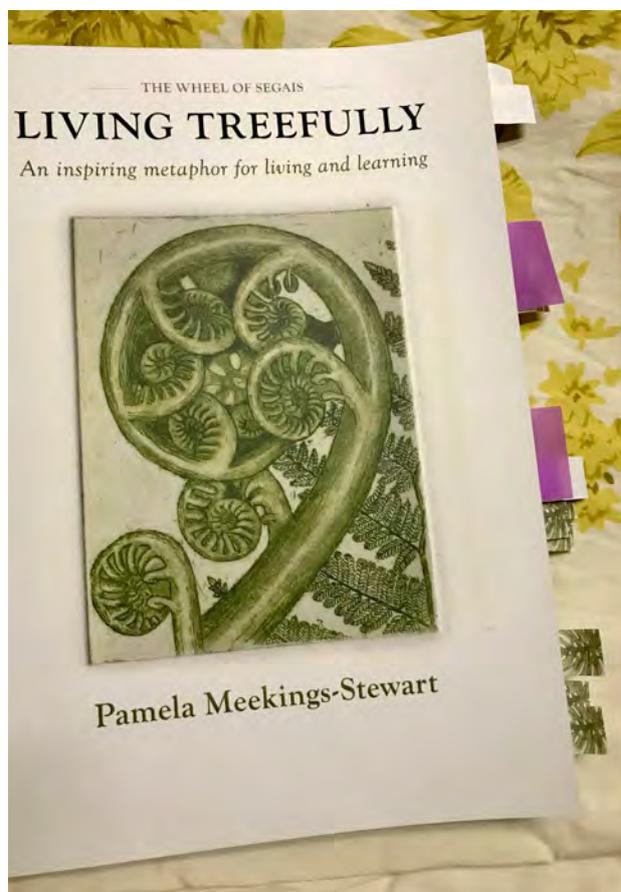
Some months ago I received a review copy of this wonderful book – not only a companion to Pamela’s groundbreaking Wheel of Segais divination method, but also a standalone system that could be used by a single person or group to really get at the heart of starting and working through a new project or life change. I could share a copy of the promo pic of the cover as part of my review, but I really want you all to see my copy as it was when I first finished reading it. Look at all those markers!

Those markers represent all the places I plan to go back to on my second, third, fourth reading as I dive deep into Pamela’s method. It’s simple but thorough, taking in the stages of the Wheel of Segais with fresh explanations of each stage for those not familiar with the original concept. The book works with the ideas of seeding, growth and harvest, tying them to life stages and seasons in a way that is deeply personal.

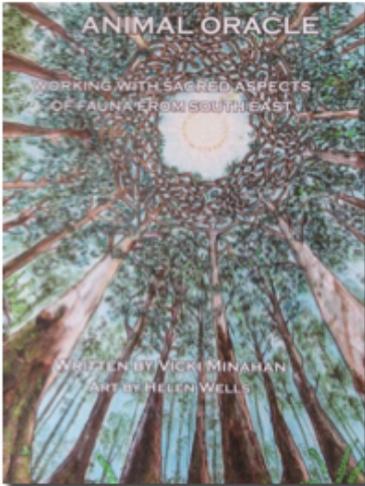
I do owe Pamela somewhat of an apology that I didn’t return to her the questionnaire she sent out with my copy, but in the hope that it encourages you to read the book for yourself I can offer some feedback based on her questions:

Living Treefully is a great metaphor for the ideas presented, being as it is a representation of the pure cycle of life – it also gives something to aim for, the energy and promise of new growth, the strength and stability of knowing your purpose, and the trust involved in allowing things to decay knowing they will feed the next cycle. It’s a beautifully presented book too – soft and attractive illustrations, a fold-out Wheel of Segais diagram in the back and even the choice of paper is soft and comforting to the touch! So much love and care has gone into every page. There isn’t really anything I would change other than to wonder how much more there might be to know – I was grateful for how easy it was to read in a very complex and trying stage of my life, but would also not object to reading a more detailed version of the book if it were available at a later stage.

You can order Living Treefully: An Inspiring Metaphor for Living & Learning by Pamela Meekings-Stewart from her website at <https://www.wheelofsegais.com/living-treefully/> and while you’re there I can highly recommend you pick up the Way-Showing & Wisdom Cards and the original Personal Reader Kit (which I have and use often).



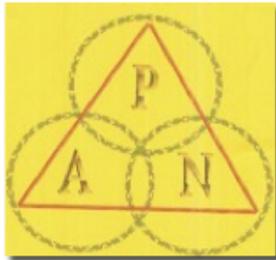
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Animal Oracle by Vicki Minahan

After nearly eight years I am pleased to announce a project close to my heart has arrived with art by Helen Wells. Mountain Ash Animal Oracle is here. I grew up in The Strathbogie Ranges, Victoria, Australia and have been greatly influenced by both the environment and the lifestyle espoused by my parents and extended family. I currently live in Cockatoo, Australia, Victoria

With this book and accompanying cards I have incorporated family stories, autobiographical aspects, my spiritual experiences and scientific information for each animal. My hope is that this will help you to incorporate both the Apparent and Otherworldly aspects to aid you on your journey through life.



Pan's Script by Elkie White

Pan's Script, the book, was written over a period of sixteen years with the goal of providing people with accurate information about their birth data. The book is huge – over 400 pages - but costs only \$50, including postage within Australia. Limited copies left, there will be no further re-runs.

Pan's Script, the report: Over the years the book has spawned individualised reports further designed to help people understand and appreciate themselves. These 20+-page reports are based on your personal Astronumerology. Whilst the book teaches people how to analyse birth data in general, your individual report does all the work for you: entirely personalized and excellent value at \$125.

Pan's Script, the research project: Would you be willing to contribute your birth data to research about druids? I already have data based on writers, musicians, artists, actors, scientists, politicians, sports people, and spiritual people in general, that I have compared with each other and a random sample. To do us justice, I need at least 100 druids. Write to me if you would like to be included: I'd love to hear from you. I might write an article about my findings, but no names will be mentioned. As a thank-you, I will inform you of your Astro-Number Signature and give you my findings about it.

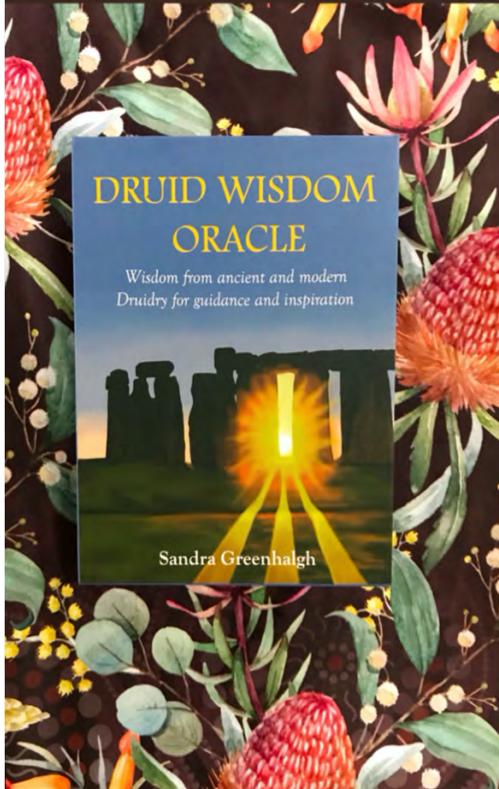


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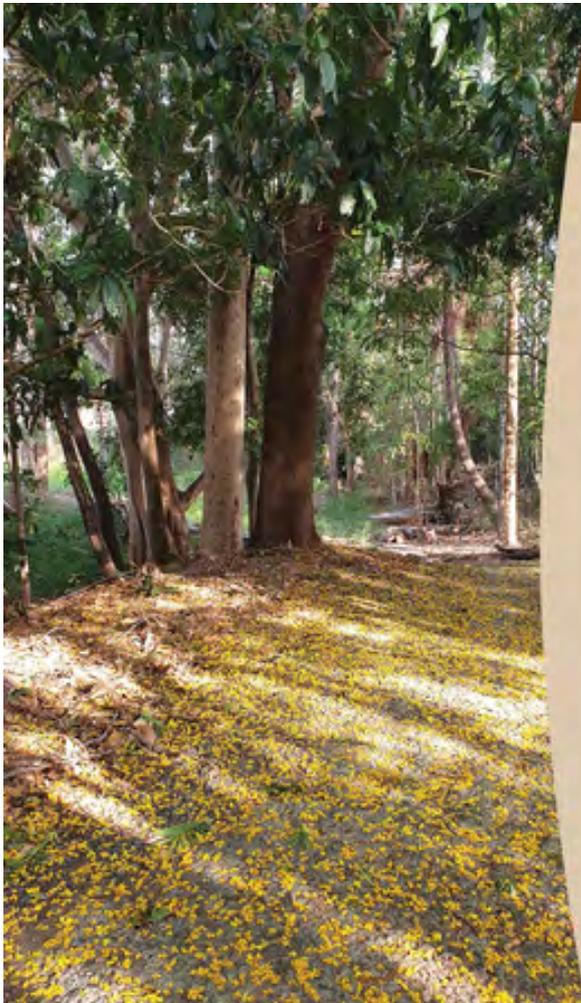
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THE GREEN ALBUM and all the artists on this compilation project are proud and honored to announce our association and partnership with this wonderful organisation. 25% of all (That's ALL 14 artists) sales proceeds from this project will be donated to Rainforest Trust! This amazing group so profoundly echoes the sentiments of this project, and has been putting them into action for 27 years. PLEASE spread the word and get involved!

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Issued June 20, 2016

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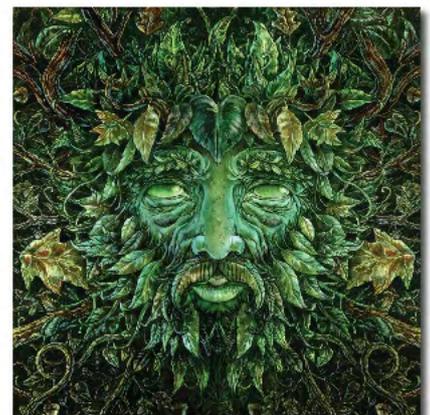
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Anam Cara Soul Space

Readings, Tarot, Astrology, and Sacred Plant
Essences with Fleur Grant



Greetings and Kia ora, my name is Fleur Grant and I am a student of OBOD and a practising tarot reader, astrologer, and sacred plant essence practitioner.

My connection to Spirit has been active for as long as I can remember. I have always been blessed to receive messages, and this ability has been passed down my family line from my Anglo-Irish grandmother, who possessed second sight. I have good reason to believe my Irish ancestors, who left Ireland after one of the large famines, were descended from ancient Druids.

The land of my birth, Aotearoa New Zealand, has provided me with a deep appreciation of the native forest here, and my communion with nature has been further developed through training as a plant essence practitioner. Plant essences contain specific healing properties that shift emotional and traumatic patterns. There are even essences that can shift DNA patterns that have travelled down family lines. This is an exciting area of work, as it ties into the scientific discovery of epigenetics, which is confirming what ancient cultures have always known, that trauma can be hereditary. For instance, there may be a pattern of betrayal and heartbreak in relationships that have travelled down the ancestral bloodline. As Druids, we work with our ancestral inheritance, and it is now possible for us to clear negative hereditary patterns and receive our divine inheritance.

Astrology is an ancient tool which allows us to map the potential of a soul and look at key strengths and challenges. Most people are familiar with Sun Signs, but you are more than just your star-sign! Based on your time, date and place of birth, natal astrology explains the map of the Zodiac for your individual birth, and the position and relationship of all the planets and signs that make up your personality and potential. I also provide updates of full moon and other major astrological patterns for New Zealand and Australia on my Facebook page.

Tarot (I use Rider Waite and the Druidic Tarot) is an amazing tool for Divination. Tarot is my first port of call for questions about relationship insight and decisions.

Anam Cara is an old Gaelic term which means 'soul friend'. Here, at Anam Cara, I work with you in integrity, openness and non-judgement, using the ancient tools of tarot, astrology and sacred plant essences to help you make decisions, clear emotional and hereditary blocks, and move forward with confidence.

Readings are available in person in Auckland, New Zealand, or from anywhere in the world using Skype or Messenger. Please visit my website anamcarareadings.com, and follow my Facebook www.facebook.com/anamcarareadings

Advertising in SerpentStar is free for all OBOD members in the Southern Hemisphere. If your business, event or club is related to our druidry practice, you can advertise on these pages for as long as you require.

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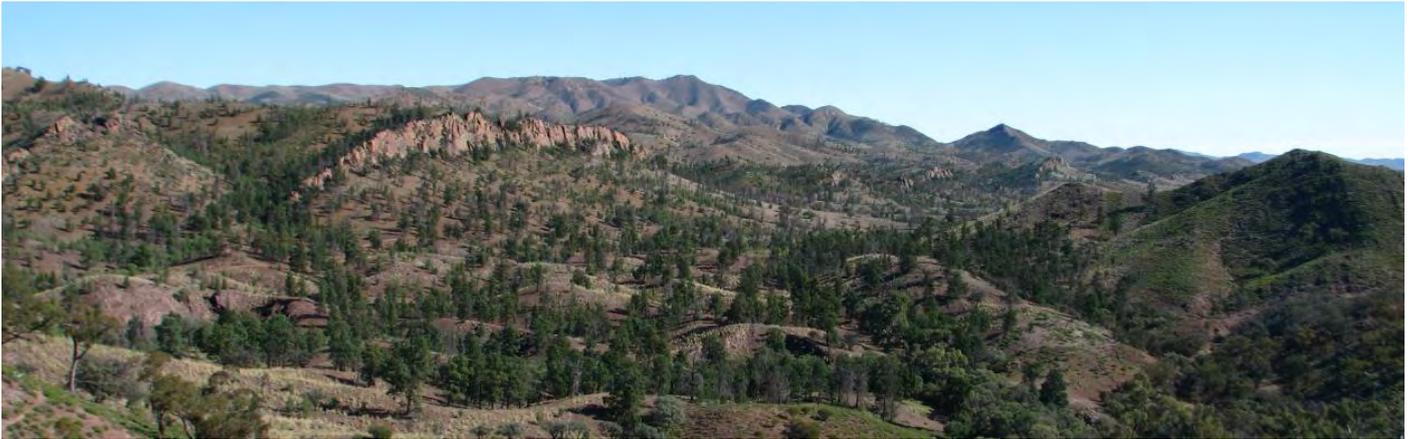
Mentoring is my passion as its about relationship and all things in life is about relationship, I assist you in moving in the direction that helps you. I'm BIG on Self Care and found that this is the foundation to all aspects of moving through life in a harmonious way and being your best Self.

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And finally...

*Far away,
on distant shore and waves
that slip and slide over rock
and sand, both sharp with newness
and worn smooth with time,*

*I sit, and ponder,
and listen to the waves,
and dream of the way ahead.*

*Blank pages with a single dot
of colour that quickly grows,
branches, roots, reaching out
to tangle and snag at memories,
colours and shapes that are yet to
form in the mind's eye,*

*I sit, and ponder,
and listen to the waves,
and dream of the way ahead.*

- Samantha Travis



The Wheel turns...



We come to the time of **Lughnasadh**... which marks the beginning of harvest time. The hay would have been gathered in, and the time for reaping the wheat and barley was due. It was a time of gathering together, of contests and games and of marriages. The marriages contracted at this time could be annulled at the same time the following year - offering the couple a sensible 'trial period'.

In some areas a flaming wheel was sent rolling down the hillside at this time to symbolise the descent of the year towards Winter, and in the Druid ceremony a wheel is passed around the circle in symbol of the turning year. The Christian version of this festival is Lammas, which has recently been revived in some churches. The word Lammas comes from hlafmasse - 'loaf-mass' - since bread is offered from the newly harvested grain.

Text sourced from www.druidry.org

**The deadline for contributing to the Samhain issue of SerpentStar is Saturday, 24 April.
The Samhain issue will be released in the week of 1st May, 2022.**