

# Serpent Star

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



Imbolc 2025





# Welcome, welcome, welcome to the Imbolc issue of Serpentstar!

Why, hello! I hope everyone's doing well!

As the land begins to stir beneath our feet, I welcome you to the Imbolc 2025 issue—a celebration of renewal, inspiration, and the first whispers of spring. In the Southern Hemisphere, Imbolc marks the quickening of the earth beneath winter's frost. Here in Australia, the timing shifts but the spirit remains: August finds us at the tail end of winter where the days lengthen, and the sun begins to climb higher in the sky. The wattle blooms, the earth warms, and the air carries a promise that change is near.

Imbolc is sacred to Brigid—goddess of poetry, healing, and the hearth. Her presence reminds us to tend our inner flame, to clear the cobwebs from both home and spirit, and to make space for growth. Our Lady has returned and brought back the spring!

Let us embrace this liminal moment—the turning from stillness to motion, from seed to shoot. Whether you light a candle, plant new intentions, or simply walk beneath the early spring sky or even throwing open the windows and breathe in the refreshing air after being cooped up during the winter, may this Imbolc awaken hope and clarity within you.

For this issue, we have writings by Tina Merrybard, Dan O'Sheedy, Fiona Dowson and Frances, along with artwork from John Jordan and a very special announcement from Jan, the organiser for SHOBODA 2026 in Tasmania, Australia! As for the 2025 SHOBODA... I have a little surprise at the end of this issue. Enjoy!

Bright, slightly thawed (but warm) blessings,  
- Sam /\



*We had a little friend come to visit us during our post-ritual feast! So polite, too! - Sam*

## SerpentStar, Imbolc 2025

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

All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.

A reminder to everyone that SerpentStar has a YouTube channel, which hosts 2020'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](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com) for upload. Get in touch if you have a bardic video, music or a short doco you'd like to share in SerpentStar. 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 Grove

The Blue Mountains Grove 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](mailto:thebluemountainsseedgroup@gmail.com),

Facebook: [Friends of the Blue Mountains Seed Group](#)

### Brisa del Sur

We are a Seed Group called 'Brisa del Sur' (Southern Breeze) from Rosario, Argentina, and we are writing to introduce our group and share with you and the Order the fulfilling experience and wonderful learning we have had as a result of our journey along the Druid Path. You can contact us at [southernbreezesfellowship@gmail.com](mailto:southernbreezesfellowship@gmail.com) and you can see our profile on Facebook [www.facebook.com/Southernbreezesfellowship](http://www.facebook.com/Southernbreezesfellowship)

### The Cradle Seed Group

The Cradle Seed Group is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Group currently has only one Druid and 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:pamela@thewoolshed.com)

### Macadamia Grove

Macadamia Grove includes OBOD members from South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales. 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](mailto:macademiagroove@hotmail.com)

### **The Melbourne Grove**

Celebrating the seasons in a cycle around Melbourne.

Contact: Elkie: [elkiewhite@gmail.com](mailto:elkiewhite@gmail.com)

Facebook: [Friends of The Melbourne Grove](#)

### **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](mailto:yjames@balnacoil.xtra.co.nz)

### **Silvereyes Seed Group**

Perth Hills & members throughout the South West. Email: [ghriancu@iinet.net.au](mailto: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](mailto:chris@druidryaustralia.org)

### **The Windharp Grove**

Based in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia and named after the She-oak or Casuarina, also known as a Windharp. She-oaks are known as windharps because of the mystical sound they make when the wind breathes through the knotted leaves - a soft music like that of the Aeolian Harp. We are a learning group who gather to celebrate the eight seasonal rituals of the wheel of the year and study together. We also hold various shared events and ceremonies that non-members are able to attend. Contact Tamzin Woodcock or Adrienne Piggott: [windharpseedgroup@gmail.com](mailto:windharpseedgroup@gmail.com)

### **Wollemi Seed Group**

Nestled between the mountains and the sea, Wollemi Seed Group covers Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Greater Hunter Region. Rich with flowing rivers, fields and natural beauty, we meet fortnightly to explore the depths of the Bardic and Ovate paths. We meet for each of the festivals, and invite all interested in Druidry and the love earth to join us. For information, contact Rollick on 0423 626 290 or [bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au](mailto:bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au)

### **Useful websites for SH OBODies:**

[www.druidryaustralia.org](http://www.druidryaustralia.org) - a central online resource for druidry in Australia - 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 Down Under](#) - 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](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com) and spread the word!

### **OBOD Worldwide**

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

[www.druidcast.libsyn.com](http://www.druidcast.libsyn.com) - Direct download and shownotes for DruidCast (or subscribe via iTunes)

### **Facebook Groups**

OBOD Friends (open to members and non-members, discussing general topics)

Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (closed group for members of the Order)

### **International 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](mailto:touchstone@druidry.org)

Druidenstein (German) [www.druidry.info/das-magazin-druidenstein](http://www.druidry.info/das-magazin-druidenstein)

Dryade (Dutch) <http://www.obod.nl/dryade/>

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

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



### **Pagan Transitions**

Pagan Transitions was created over 15 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.

Unfortunately, Pagan Transitions is currently down, but you can find a list of OBOD celebrants here: [https://druidry.org/people\\_type/celebrants](https://druidry.org/people_type/celebrants)



# One of My Favourite Trees

- by Tina Merrybard

This is a photo of the tree I call the Shelter King. They are an aged King Jarrah that stands on our own land right near our house. I call the tree that because another tree nearby, a friendly and garrulous Salmon Gum, has showed me an image of how this grand old beauty shelters and feeds the younger trees around it.

Jarrahs are my heart trees and this is the very first tree, in real life rather than in my inner grove, who ever spoke to me or allowed me into a vision of its own experience of the world. I sat with my back touching the grand trunk of this tree, a first unable to hear their voice, feeling quite silly actually, and then as my mind quieted, I began to feel the wind as if through my leaves, to feel the movement of insects and birds, not as annoyance but as beings the tree is fond of, almost like pets! I realised that my human experience was being gifted with a tree experience. Oh how lovely the spring breeze felt against my bark and leaves!

The Shelter King also showed me an image of Aboriginal women gathering food at their base. I well believe it, since the tree was here long before European people came to this land, and it sits on the edge of a fertile valley, with water sheeting along under the ground past its very roots. I think food would have been easy to come by here, and that this groundwater and fertility is why The Shelter King is so very big.



This is a kindly tree, as they mostly are. Once I began to be able to sit calmly enough at their feet, they spoke to me of wisdom. I particularly remember asking them once how it felt to be dying. I asked the tree this because they have dieback and while we are doing what we can in the way of treatment, this tree was very damaged before we ever came here. Nonetheless they hold on, and I do believe they are grateful for our help. They have also told me they like a taste of seaweed tea on occasion too, after seeing me give it to some nearby vegetable plants and perhaps tasting it via their far-spreading roots too!

Anyway, upon me asking such a tactless question as, "How does it feel to be dying?" the tree seemed amused and told me that living is the same as dying. I had to muse on that one, but I decided it is true. We are all of us on that journey from the cradle (or seedling) to the grave and we know where we are heading for most of that time. It is the getting there that matters, though, and the knowing of an end can even sweeten that journey if we let it.

My experience of the tree's life during my share in their very long journey of dying is of a patience and joy, of standing tall to experience all that the world gives them. "I am still strong," the King told me, and that is very true. Any one secondary branch that this tree still holds aloft weighs far more than I could hope to lift, and yet the King spreads dozens of them to the sky through every winter's storm and every summer's heat. It benevolently and even fondly shelters multitudes. Strong indeed.

Those words it told me about living being the same as dying reminded me of the Oak tree in the book, *The Sword in the Stone* by TH White, a favourite spiritual coming-of-age story of mine. Paraphrased from memory: "An Oak tree takes a hundred years to grow, a hundred years to live and a hundred years to die." I don't know how long the Shelter King has lived or how long they have to live, but while I can, I will sit with them and be sheltered by them, care for them and love them. This is the heart of my Druidry.

Tell us about one of your favourite trees!

# Protecting the Quest

- by Dan O'Sheedy

## My Path Alongside Druidry

My journey into the world of Vision Questing began almost hand in hand with my first steps on the Druidry path. In nearly the same month, I was initiated into both paths. One by the sacred grove of the Druids, and one the ancient practice of the Vision Quest.

For me, they were never separate, but rather, intertwined.

Both traditions taught me to listen. Listen to the trees and waters, how to observe the silent movement of clouds, and notice the deep, unseen currents that shape the soul.

With some extra training I came to serve as a Protector for others, and hold the space as they embark upon their own Quests. There is a lot of 'chop wood, carry water, peel carrots' work involved, but to me it feels like sacred work, tending the hearth while others walk beyond the edges of the known.

While a Vision Quester sits alone in Nature, fasting and listening, my role is to remain close by yet unseen. I become one of the silent guardians, a keeper of the boundary between the world they are leaving behind and the one they are stepping into. It is much like tending an inner grove: that sacred, hidden place where shadows rise, old stories fall away, and a deeper self can finally speak.

To be entrusted with someone's threshold crossing, and to help weave that basket, is an honour beyond words. It is to witness a human soul in dialogue with Nature, raw and vulnerable, beginning to remember.

## What Is a Vision Quest?

So... what exactly is a Vision Quest, I hear you ask?? It is an ancient rite of passage, a ceremonial journey into solitude and the wild, designed to reconnect a person with their deeper purpose, inner truth, and the living Earth. In the lineage I work with, rooted in the teachings of Grandfather Stalking Wolf, the Quest is a four-day solo vigil in Nature.

There is no food, no distractions, no company.

Only water, Nature, and the big questions your soul wants to discover the answers to.

And you are all alone with all your thoughts... that's usually the hardest part for most people to deal with, in this age of constant distraction, and not the part where you fast for 4 days.

The ceremony is deceptively simple.

You sit alone in Nature, 'fasting from all that is familiar'.

You bring with you only the bare essentials for survival: a tarp, sleeping bag, water, and most importantly, the commitment to face yourself fully. And without the usual props we fill our lives with, the layers begin to slowly fall away.

What remains is raw, real, and powerful.

People come to the Quest for many reasons.

It might be to mark a life transition, to grieve, to seek clarity, or to reclaim a forgotten part of themselves. But regardless of the reason, the Quest tends to reveal what is most needed. It can flush up deep material, helping you move through personal stories into a more connected place with yourself, the environment, and that which is greater than you.

I hear you say, after reading this, "Excellent... I could do with a few days in the bush! Peace and quiet!"

Unfortunately, this is not a retreat or a holiday.

It is a ceremony of transformation.

It requires courage, commitment, and a willingness to be undone.

For those who are called, it can be one of the most powerful ways to remember who you truly are, and why you are here.

## An Invitation

There are moments when the soul stirs and the old ways call to us. Not as an echo of the past, but as a living summons rising from Nature itself.

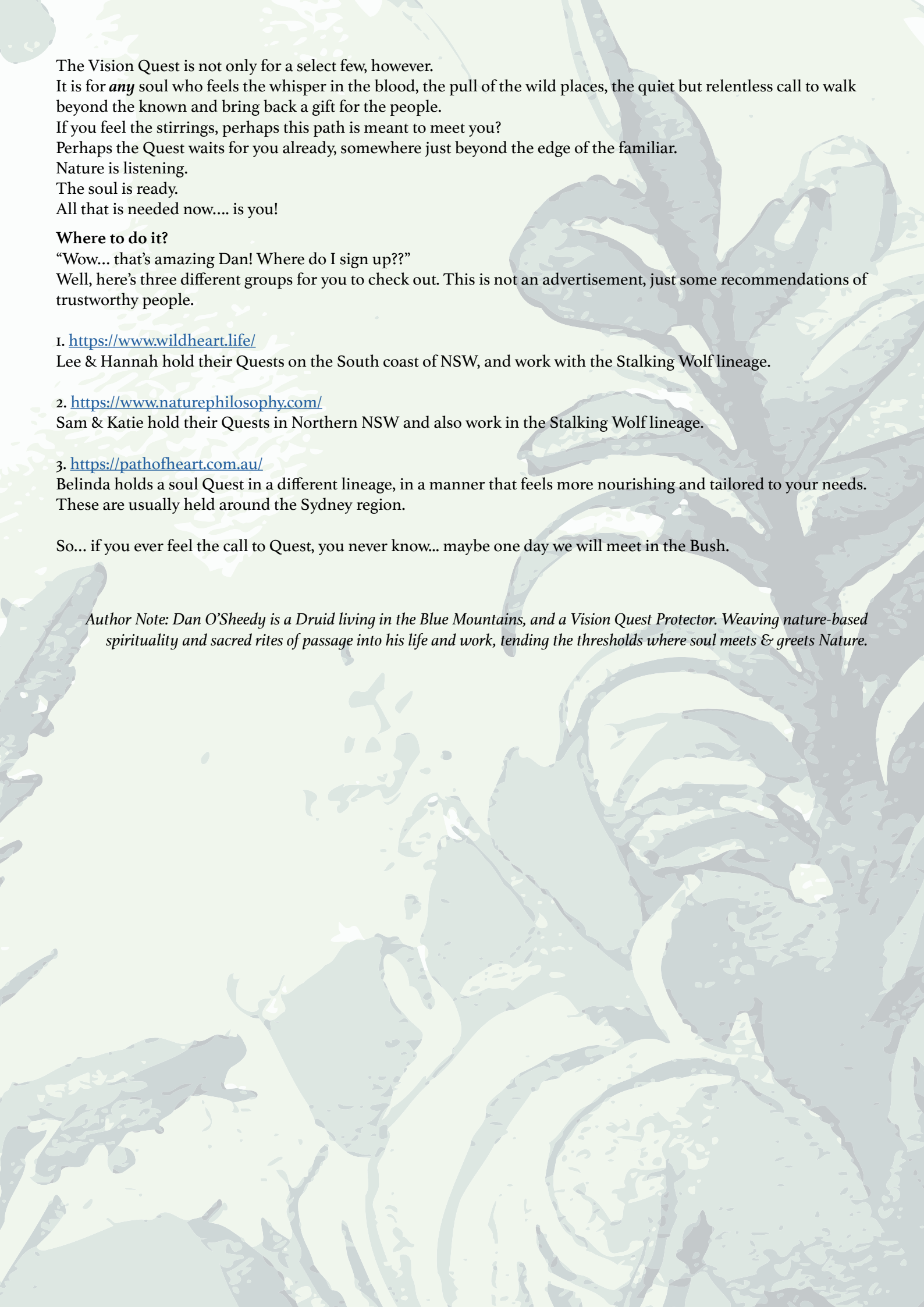
If you have ever felt the cry for something more, a hunger for deeper purpose, a longing to stand clearly within the truth of your life, then know this: the Quest is a door that stands open.

It is not an easy door.

It will ask for your comfort, your certainty, and bring up all your old stories.

It will offer, in return, something far rarer.

The chance to remember who you truly are, and to carry that truth back into the world.



The Vision Quest is not only for a select few, however.  
It is for *any* soul who feels the whisper in the blood, the pull of the wild places, the quiet but relentless call to walk beyond the known and bring back a gift for the people.  
If you feel the stirrings, perhaps this path is meant to meet you?  
Perhaps the Quest waits for you already, somewhere just beyond the edge of the familiar.  
Nature is listening.  
The soul is ready.  
All that is needed now.... is you!

#### **Where to do it?**

“Wow... that’s amazing Dan! Where do I sign up??”

Well, here’s three different groups for you to check out. This is not an advertisement, just some recommendations of trustworthy people.

1. <https://www.wildheart.life/>

Lee & Hannah hold their Quests on the South coast of NSW, and work with the Stalking Wolf lineage.

2. <https://www.naturephilosophy.com/>

Sam & Katie hold their Quests in Northern NSW and also work in the Stalking Wolf lineage.

3. <https://pathofheart.com.au/>

Belinda holds a soul Quest in a different lineage, in a manner that feels more nourishing and tailored to your needs. These are usually held around the Sydney region.

So... if you ever feel the call to Quest, you never know... maybe one day we will meet in the Bush.

*Author Note: Dan O’Sheedy is a Druid living in the Blue Mountains, and a Vision Quest Protector. Weaving nature-based spirituality and sacred rites of passage into his life and work, tending the thresholds where soul meets & greets Nature.*



# The Memory of Druids

- Fiona Dowson

They were never forgotten.

The Druids lived on in memories.

The evidence for this appears, remarkably, in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

A group of pilgrims travelling to Canterbury would, you could think, be largely Christian but and it's a big but, the stories they tell have a strong pagan element to them.

There are references to ancient Greek legends in The Merchant's Tale.

There is also a Druid who appears as a character in The Franklin's Tale.

Set in Brittany, less Britain, the area of France which had and still has it's own language of Breton and a strong Druidic tradition, the story is of a noble lady who is married to a poor knight. When he goes travelling leaving her alone she promises to be true.

Of-course a young squire falls in love with her and she repels his advances.

She will, in the best story telling tradition, become his lover if he can fulfil an impossible task. That is, to render the stones which litter the sea harmless so her husband's ship can have safe passage home.

The squire achieves his task with the aid of Druidic magic.

Yes, there it is, in the middle of a Christian pilgrimage, a reference to the old magic of the Druids.

The amazing thing about the magic here is that it is credible.

The Druid ensures that the sea is free of dangerous stones by predicting when the tide will be so high that it will be safe to sail.

This gives us real insight into the knowledge of the Druids. By studying and memorising the cycles of the moon they could predict the tides which is a kind of magic.

The Franklin's Tale seems to be set in Chaucer's own time. The characters of the Knight and the Squire reflect two of the pilgrims.

This is a slender thread of evidence with which to suggest that there were still Druids in Brittany in the fourteenth century but what it does tell us is that Chaucer was confident his audience would know and understand who the Druids were.

The Franklin doesn't explain to his audience what a Druid is. He is never referred to as a magician.

Chaucer's Druid is a benign character. He acts with honour, refusing to burden the Squire with a debt even though he has achieved the task for which the Squire agreed to pay him.

There is no suggestion in The Tales that magic was seen as an evil thing. In The Franklin's Tale the story is set in the merry month of May against a background of dancing and merry making in a beautiful garden. The Druid is a character of spring time and happiness. Perhaps we can draw inspiration from this and always make our Druidic practice a source of joy and working with nature to save lives and ensure safe passage.

My own telling of The Franklin's Tale can be found on You Tube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_6Jqtzx2Xo&list=PLQhRD76vKpKHiproqH5JJGQFLhkhzTWi7&index=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_6Jqtzx2Xo&list=PLQhRD76vKpKHiproqH5JJGQFLhkhzTWi7&index=9)

Links to other stories can be found via The Chaucer's Canterbury Tales Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/682150746204373>

*Editor's note: Fiona has also kindly sent in a tutorial on tablet weaving, found here on her Youtube channel.*

*Check it out here: <https://youtu.be/wtEPL2axO6o?si=IFE7Y2GU4RyLc8Ri>*



## Van Hunks and his pipe (or more famously "How Table Mountain got its cloth")

- A traditional dark Afrikaans folktale, or "spookstorie" from Cape Town, the Western Cape Province, South Africa,  
written in a style that lightly mimics Afrikaners when they speak English.

In the days when the Cape was still Dutch, and Devil's Peak was still called *Windberg*, Table Mountain was still a naked mountain, *so sê die mense*. It didn't have a cloth.

In those days there lived a man on that mountain, named Van Hunks. He wasn't a man of means or manners. In fact, his home was frequented by sailors. He was never seen in well-to-do company, and the slaves and children feared him. When he disappeared one day, no one minded, and for a few years his house stood empty, weeds and grass shooting up through the slate tiles of his stoep.

Shocks and gasps ran up and down the *Heerengracht* when, years later, Van Hunks re-appeared, now in fine heeled boots, with ruby buttons on his velvet jacket and gold on each finger, and in his ears. Pistols, a long sword and a dirk could be seen on his belt. A trail of slaves, bent from years of working the decks of ships, trundled behind him, carrying iron clad wooden chests filled with unseen treasures.

It took the slaves two days to unload his ship docked in the harbor and carry it all up the mountain to van Hunk's old house. Another two months of renovations was needed on the old house, which by the end of all the work was transformed into a small Estate. During this time a few Burghers warily had dealings with the "Foreman" who bought building materials - a cunning man whom it was rumored could only have been First Mate on Van Hunk's "business travels". Then, one day, the work was done, and the Foreman was seen taking most of the slaves back down the mountain. They loaded the ship, set sail on the tide, and was never seen again.

Now settled, with only a few slaves left to help manage his Estate, Van Hunks was rarely seen in town again - something the Burghers didn't mind at all. There were a few times, however, when a curious eye wandered to search the ominous direction of the Van Hunks Estate. Nosey folks reported seeing Van Hunks up early most days, making his way higher up the mountain to a small cave on an outcropping, from which (it was whispered between the washer women, or drunks) Van Hunks could be seen smoking his pipe, and scanning the ocean horizon with his Spyglass.

"Has too many enemies now" and "not just the Portuguese, but the Spanish and the British" and "not to mention those of his own kind" was the popular comments on Van Hunk's peculiar daily activities. That he had turned Pirate, and was now fearing for his life, was the general conclusion held by everyone.

Van Hunks was a master pipe smoker. The blue balls of smoke billowing from the cave mouth where he smoked all day, stood testament to the fact. Perhaps he smoked so much to soothe his guilty conscience, some Burghers said. Others said he had no conscience, and he simply smoked that much because he could. For whatever reason, the slaves from the van Hunks Estate bought large bags of dark pipe tobacco every week for their master.

On one of these mornings, when Van Hunks had already been in his cave for a few hours, spying the horizon, and smoking, a stranger started making his way up the mountain. The stranger wore dark, heavy linen clothes, and a black misshapen hat pulled low over his face, casting a shadow that made his features difficult to discern. The stranger had nothing on him, except for a beautifully crafted long stem pipe.

"*Goeie môre, meneer*, and by which name may I call you?" the stranger said, as he sat down, uninvited, next to Van Hunks.

"Everyone knows who I am. Who are you, and where are you from that you don't know that I am Van Hunks of Table Bay?"

"*Jinne*, I'm just observing the courtesies, being polite," the stranger laughed, "and for all you know, we might be old acquaintances..."

"*Haai, jy*, say who you are immediately, and what you want, *of loop!*" van Hunks bristled. "I don't have an appetite for nonsense!"

"*Raak gou kwaad, nè?*" the stranger replied "No need for anger, I merely meant that it looks like we are both travelers and master smokers! Where I'm from, we smoke all day... people complain it smells of Sulphur."

Van Hunks snorted.

"Nowhere on land or sea will you ever find a person MY equal when it comes to smoking pipe tobacco. I don't care where you are from, or where you've been. Where I've been... *ja-nee, boetie*, I can tell you stories that will make your hair grey, and your heart shrivel."

"That is well-spoken, sir, but do you have the grit to back your talk? Ag, if only I hadn't run out of tobacco... I would challenge you to a smoking competition." A sly smile and a strange glint in the eyes could be seen on the shadowy features of the stranger.

Van Hunks nudged his bag of tobacco with the toe of his fine boot.

“Hierso, I have a whole bag. Stuff that pipe of yours, let’s not waste time. We’ll see who puts their pipe down first, *ons sal. Kom ons rook!*”

So, pipes were stuffed, flames struck, and the fire sucked deep through the pipes, and the first puffs of dark smoke started bubbling out the mouth of the cave. The smoking competition had begun. However, before the first pipe had even been knocked out, the second competition had begun: the tale-telling competition, and what a terrible telling it was! A back-and-forwards swapping of horrible tales: of betrayals, lies, stealing, backstabbing and murder, each sinner telling their sins with pride and unnatural lust.

The sun travelled across the sky, the afternoon slowly darkened... and the stories too. With each pipe smoked a heavy cloud started forming around the cave, eventually rolling down the hill, until birds sought shelter, and the small deer laid down, and kept still, shivering, and the people of the Cape all stopped their doings to stare up at the mountain – what op deesaarde was happening up there?

But so cruel and foul were the stories that Van Hunks told, that the stranger eventually fell silent, succumbing to quiet, uncomfortable smoking, forced to continue listening to the now uninterrupted barrage of tales coming from the gleeful Van Hunks. Bolstered by the stranger’s silence, he arrogantly packed his pipe and smoked and spoke with a nasty fever, until the stranger looked ill.

At last, hours after midnight, in the twilight of early dawn, the stranger choked, and put down his pipe, tears in his eyes.

“Van Hunks, *nee, stop! Ek kan nie meer nie*. You speak like a madman and your tobacco is sickening! I can’t take it anymore!”

Triumphant, van Hunks laughed, and knocked out his pipe one last time.

“*Vat so!* So, we agree then that I’ve won? Now, take off your hat, *laffaard!* I would know the face and the name of the coward who dared challenge me!” and with that, van Hunks leaned over and knocked the hat off the stranger’s head.

The smoke had covered the side of the mountain so completely that the dim morning light hardly illuminated the cave... but with the stranger’s hat off there was no mistaking the horns on his head. Van Hunks went ice cold.

“*Ja,*” the Devil said, “do you see me now? By your own mouth and tales you so proudly tell, you have proclaimed yourself as one of my own. You DO know me, just as I’ve known YOU for a long time, looking forward to this day, to fetching you myself! But I must concede that you HAVE won... this day! So to you, I say this: until next time! Look for me when I come, for surely I will. *Jy behoort aan my!* One day I WILL claim you.”

That morning the Burghers woke to find Table Mountain covered in a long, low hanging fog, making the mountain look as if it had been laid with a white cloth.

Van Hunks never came down the mountain again, which was renamed “Devil’s Peak”, and whenever the South-Easterly winds blew strong over the Cape of Storms, and the fog was hanging low on the mountain, the Burghers would whisper to their children: *Van Hunks rook alweer, once again smoking against the Devil, battling for his soul.*



Illustration by [Katrine Harries](#) (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1993).

- Kindly sent to us from Frances van Zyl in Praetoria, South Africa





Join Us for the 2026 Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly at Roches Beach, Tasmania.  
Just 10 minutes from Hobart Airport, the venue offers a fully catered, all-inclusive experience with accommodation provided onsite.

Accommodation is in shared dormitory rooms (maximum 5–6 people per room).  
This four-day, three-night gathering (from 1pm Thursday 12th to 10am Sunday 15th February 2026) invites you to immerse yourself in Druidry through rituals, meditations, an eisteddfod and inspiring workshops.

There will also be opportunities for initiation into the grades of Bard, Ovate and Druid.

Everything is taken care of - just bring yourself and your spirit of connection.

We look forward to welcoming you to Lutrawita/Tasmania.

The Assembly will be held on the Country of the Pydairreme people and we acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.

There are only 25 spaces left of the 40 available at the The 23rd Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly  
Bookings close on the Monday 12th January 2026 or when we reach 40 people.

Monday 12th January 2026 is also the final date for requesting an initiation.

Payment in Full must also be received by Monday 12th January 2026.

To book, please visit: <https://www.druidryaustralia.org/assemblies/>





## Member Businesses, Groups & Retreats in Australia/New Zealand



### 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

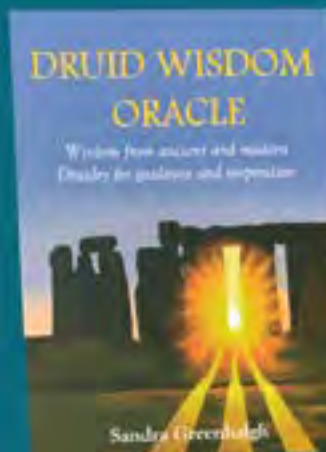
With this book and accompanying cards I have incorporated family stories, autobiographical aspects, my spiritual experiences and scientific information for each animal. My hope is that this will help you to incorporate both the Apparent and Otherworldly aspects to aid you on your journey through life.



## Druid Wisdom Oracle cards

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## Pan's Script - Astronumerology by Elkie White

Pan's Script, the Book will help you to understand yourself by teaching you how to analyze your birth data: your date, place and time of birth and the name you were originally given. Instead of selling yourself short, astronumerology encourages you to embrace your full potential. Available from [Balboa Press](http://Balboa Press).



Pan's Script, Individualized Reports: Whilst the book teaches people how to analyse and interpret birth data in general, your individualized report does all of the work for you: entirely personalized and outstanding value at \$125.

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# THE WHEEL OF SEGAI

The Wheel of Segais is a simple but profound template for understanding the nature of change, the innate nature of the universe and our place within it. It allows us to perceive all that we are and all that we need as we experience the turning of the wheel of the year - the Four Seasons, the 12 streams or stages and the Well of the Salmon of Wisdom, the Well of Segais itself, in the centre.

Over the last few years the Salmon has certainly been busy and a number of products from The Wheel of Segais are now available for 'treeful' living, life coaching and divination: the Personal Reader Kit and Way-Showing Cards for divination; Reader Training and Life Coaching online; and the latest offering, my book Living Treefully.



Living Treefully is a book for any person, organisation, group, team or relationship that has ever asked the question, 'Where next?' – a system for managing change and 'living treefully' in the seasonal ways that trees do. It can help to guide you and provide insight, no matter where you are in the journey of your life right now.

I received this great review from Mandy Gibson:

Some months ago I received a review copy of this wonderful book - not only a companion to Pamela's ground-breaking Wheel of Segais divination method, but also a stand-alone system that can 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. 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 resented 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.

The Book is becoming really popular in the UK and I have just sent off my last books of the last printing and am about to receive the next delivery from the printer this week. So if you have been waiting for a copy, Living Treefully it is now available again.

For prices and how to order the book, The Wheel of Segais – Living Treefully or any of the other products go to the Wheel of Segais website [www.wheelofsegais.com](http://www.wheelofsegais.com) or send me an email at [pamela@thewoolshed.com](mailto:pamela@thewoolshed.com).

**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.**

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

# OBOD Member Celebrants

## Australia & New Zealand

**Pamela Meekings-Stewart**  
Registered Marriage and Civil Union Celebrant  
New Zealand



I offer Druid, pagan and alternative spirituality marriages, lived living and civil union ceremonies working with couples to create their own unique ceremony.

As a Druid and committed to a spiritual life, the work is important to me. Couples continue to ask for my services and very much appreciate the gentle spiritual aspect of the ceremonies I help them put together. I am also able to arrange outdoor weddings and civil unions in beautiful locations in the Wairarapa with myself as Celebrant.

Marriage and Civil Unions are the only ceremonies that require a legal, registered Celebrant. However, I also craft and perform many other forms of ceremony and blessing:

**Naming** (children and change of name), Birth Blessings, Vows of Recommitment, Entering The Wisdom Years - **Crowning** (women) and **Sealing** (men), House Blessings, Blessings and Dedications For Passing Over, Funerals and Burial Blessings

*Tying the knot  
Two lives entwine  
Tying the knot  
Two families entwine  
Binding our futures together*

Contact: [pamela@newzealand.com](mailto:pamela@newzealand.com)  
Tel: +64 274 100000

**Anne Conroy**  
REGISTERED CELEBRANT

My celebrancy is heart centred for those looking for someone who can genuinely support individuals and families when the need arises, in a relaxed and caring manner, in the Celtic tradition.

Regardless of the type of ceremony and its level of complexity, you can be assured of respect, empathy, deep listening, compassion, and creativity, along with a healthy dose of humour.



[www.ritualcelebrant.co.nz](http://www.ritualcelebrant.co.nz)  
**Ph: 021 781 873**  
E: [anne@ritualcelebrant.co.nz](mailto:anne@ritualcelebrant.co.nz)

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It would be great for us to work together, as I am here in your service to make the ceremony unique to you, so don't delay, get in touch today.

Mentoring is my passion as it's about relationships and all things in life to do with relationships. I assist you in moving in the direction that helps you. I'm into Self Care and found that this is the foundation for all aspects of moving through life in a harmonious way and being your best self.

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## And finally, the Wheel turns...

Sent in to us by the ever-inspired John Jordan!

We saw a lot of similar tracks at the SHOBOD Assembly 2025 Assembly, come to think of it...

Which you can check out in our SHOBODA 2025 special, out right now!



This is the Feast of Imbolc. The Light of the Sun in the Wheel of the Year stands in the North East, within the Cone of Darkness. This is a time of hope and preparation. This is the time of the growing of the Light.

This Feast is known by many names to many people, for the Truth is reflected from many mirrors. It has been celebrated as Februa and Candlemas. Our ancestors called it by names long forgotten, and our children will call it by names as yet unconceived.



Artwork by wyverne ogma vyvyan

At this time, our ancestors saw the Sun, the weak and helpless Child of Light, grow stronger day by day. The land still lies in darkness, but the rule of the darkness is challenged by the infant Lord of Light. Little by little, the skies grow light and the blessed Earth gives forth her first flowers, snowdrop and crocus, as promise of the Summer that is to be when all creation will rejoice in the One Universal Light.

This Feast of Imbolc is sacred to the Lady, the child-woman, the virgin who is known as Brigid and Athena and Britomartis and names without number. She it was who brought forth the Child of Light out of the Darkness in the darkest of the Dark Days. She it is who has nurtured the Child and now brings him forth as the new hope. She it is who has prepared the sleeping Earth to bring forth her bounty in the Summer which even here has its first beginnings. *by Coifi*

Text sourced from [www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org)

**The deadline for contributing to the Beltane issue of SerpentStar is Sunday 26th October 2025**

**The Beltane issue will be released in the week of 1st November 2025.**

**Bright blessings, and see you next time!**