

# Serpent Star

Imbolc 2013

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



*Lambs of Iona*

*SerpentStar is a newsletter for members of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere. It comes out four times a year at each of the Fire Festivals; Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh, and Samhuinn.*

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**Contributions** are eagerly sought at the above addresses; email or post. Please make sure your contributions do not violate copyright laws.

Opinions expressed in SerpentStar are the contributors' own and not necessarily the opinions of the editor or of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids.

*Submission deadline for Beltane issue: 29th October 2013 .*

\* \* \*

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<https://www.facebook.com/SerpentStarOBOD>

For information about the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids visit: [www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org)

## *From the editor's quill...*

*The first signs of Spring are approaching, at least where I am, south of Adelaide. We had a brief but beautiful warm winded night! Nature is always on time, so it would make sense that Druids would be too... operating on standard-druid-time, that is.*

*While the world races regardless of the season, and at double-pace at the silly season, many people never find the time to rest, let alone reflect. The modern tendency to go go go at a high pace is alarming when seen from Nature's way of working. So as the lambs appear, and the blossoms blossom, and the other seasonal variants of your local region wander out of the winter, spend a thought for the stressful effect of an unnatural lifestyle upon those who may be caught up in the clock, and practice kindness towards them.*

*Kindness, innocence, peace, light, and nurturing ourselves; rising from the dormancy of the winter; unfolding and forming a place of beauty and gentleness within, we set forth a good foot for the active side of the year to come. For ourselves and those we share the Earth with. The time to sow those seeds, both physically and metaphorically is approaching.*

*So here is an offering to the Southern Hemisphere OBOD community, by those of that community, that I hope inspires, informs, and illuminates such a mood as Imbolc is attuned to, for the wholesomeness that grows through this coming year.*

*I would also like to add that submissions for future issues are a most welcome thing for SerpentStar. Please don't be shy. Send them in any time. (see the panel to the left on this page for details.) Many thanks to all those who added something for this issue, especially wyvern for her regular contributions. This issue looks wonderful!*

*With peace and arwen,  
Todd*



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*Dragonwyst, In the Baulkham Hills, NSW*

# A JOURNEY TO MERLIN'S ISLE

*Todd Dearing*

One day, the opportunity arose, so I grabbed it. I planned and organised and before long, I was there.



*Looking over London*

The call of my ancestral spirituality was what brought me to Druidry, after twelve years exploring various eastern traditions. I then came to realise I have always been what I would call a Druid, since my earliest memories. I don't buy the rational-empirical notion that Druids only existed way-back-when and anything we do today can never be what was. I believe that Druidry is seeping, if not oozing into our world from the thin places and times we may frequent, and from our own dreams, aspirations, blood and bones. It was on my visit to the United Kingdom in July this year that my fantastical notions were met with the reality that is Merlin's Isle.

It was summer. It was cold. Actually the weather was not very different from an Adelaide winter. My journey of three and a half weeks contained lots of walking and lots of driving and many places visited. I certainly can not fit it all in here; so I will relate some of the key points.

I spent the first couple of days in London, exploring the well known tourist sites. I saw the queen, the Tower of London, the British Library, and the National Gallery; I walked a lot, and found the underground transport very useful for getting around. This ancient city has a life of its own, a spirit that moves through and around the huge population of humans and other beings. And there are layers and layers of history and culture there, mostly hidden, but still there. Upon seeing the huge towers of books on display at the British Library, it struck me that London exists as a great centre of human culture and learning going back at least two thousand years.

I left the city with the aid of hire car, and then it hit me: greener than green, so very enchanted: merry climes woven into old pastoral land, dotted with stone cottages and sheep, and dim memories of something far older. The romanticism of the moment overtook me for the next few days, the harmonies of classical music and the rolling green hedge-lined hills carried me somewhere far from the grey city I came from.

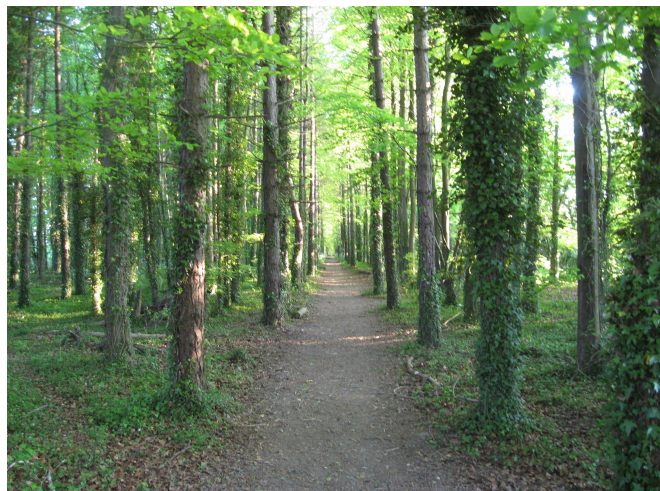


*Merry Old England*

I began my planned tour, first heading West to Glastonbury for the OBOD Summer Gathering. I stopped at the White Horse of Uffington and Wayland's Smithy on the way, my first taste of some ancient sites outside of



London. The whole area seemed quite happy to remain as it was, ancient and undisturbed. It was wonderful to walk from the Horse to the Smithy along a dirt track, to get a taste of the countryside on foot, and a beautiful tract of forest.



*The forest near Wayland's Smithy*

It was a delight to meet so many OBODies in one place, mostly from England, but also from nearby lands; Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, the Netherlands, Italy, among others, and myself all the way from Australia. The OBOD Gathering was a success, with workshops for each grade, and a ceremony atop Glastonbury Tor, an entertaining eisteddfod, a visit to Avebury, and a whole group meditation, spread over two days. It was good to see so many groves from different regions, with their banners displayed, all meeting up as one.

And Glastonbury itself was a whole experience. It's basically a magical city, and I would have imagined small ally-ways leading off the main street to shops selling enchanted wares, if it wasn't actually the reality. There were wizards and witches and druids walking the streets, among the locals, the tourists, and the colourful others; musicians, new age enthusiasts, street folk, and pilgrims. And Christianity is present too, adding its sacredness to the town, from the Abbey and the upon the Tor itself; appearing well

integrated with the spirit of place and its pagan displays. I visited the cave-shrine, and climbed the Tor. I hold close the memories of this place.



*Glastonbury Tor, from the town*

The druids had come and many were leaving, so I began my venture to the ends of Cornwall, a place many of my ancestors lived some time ago. It felt like home in a way, as did many of the lands I visited, each in their own way. I wandered my way through Dartmoor National Park; by wandering I mean: "going round in circles several times, and then back and forth a bit looking for the road I wanted." It's all part of the journey, I told myself. I knew I couldn't get lost for too long, and in getting lost, one can then find oneself again, with the added benefit of some unanticipated discoveries. I visited a small town where some of my ancestors five generations back lived before coming to Australia. I headed to Tintagel, where I was to stay.

Tintagel is the legendary birthplace of Arthur, and the historical residence of the Earls of Cornwall much later than that. The island was awesome, with some remaining ruins of a 13<sup>th</sup> century castle. I visited Merlin's Cave beneath there, and walked around the top. The entire area is beautiful: the desolate cliffs and the call of the gulls; the many choughs (appearing on the Cornish Coat of Arms) whom some I

fed Cornish pasty to; the wide Atlantic ocean, the gentle sun and the gloomy clouds; the old stone buildings and tracks around the town; the older ruins, and the living folk-culture, preserved by the dedication of many local people.

The Cornish language, Kernewek, came very close to extinction with the last known native speaker dying in 1891. Efforts to revive the language have increased since then, and it now begins a new phase of growth. The Kernowyon are a traditional Brythonic Celtic people, connected to the Welsh, with a rich history, mythology and culture; certainly a valid and interesting source for Druidic research.

I ventured on in the rain to Penzance to gaze briefly upon St. Michael's Mount at high tide, and then met with the Merry Maidens in the twilight mist, to meditate for some time.



*The Merry Maidens*

Then I was driving again, towards South Wales, with non-stop rain. I intended to visit Myddvai and Llyn y Fan Fach, legendary sites around the story of the Physicians of Myddvai. It was a half-hour walk up a gentle slope following a stream to the lake; the lake was a beautiful and powerful place.

My journey then took me East to Coventry to visit a friend, the poet and performer Barry Patterson. It was great to be able to sit on the Earth near a small fire and share conversation and poetry with Barry.

Then I was back on the road, and to York, with the intention to “see a city in the North-East, with Viking influences.” It was interesting for a few hours, but then I felt it was time to move on, towards Scotland.

Scotland was the most beautiful landscape I experienced. The weather eased into a warm mid-twenties and clear sky, as I passed many lakes rimmed by mountains, often covered in pines. Picturesque and spacious, a welcome change to the motorway, and prior to that a rather closed-in landscape. I made my way to Oban, a port with ferries leading to many of the isles of the Hebrides. It was beautiful, especially at twilight, with many small fishing boats spread about the bay, the nearby isles visible to the west.



*Duart Castle, Isle of Mull*

I took a ferry to the Isle of Mull, then drove to Fionnphort on its western side, and boarded a short ferry to Iona. This was to be the pinnacle of my journey. Iona is known largely for its ancient Christian settlement, beginning with St Columba in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, and leading up to the present day, as a place of



pilgrimage for many people, Christian and non-Christian alike. St Columba held to both Druidic and Christian teachings, and the Isle itself is thought to be a burial place for the ancient Kings of the region prior to, and following, his coming.

My impressions of the place: lambs and soft green lawn, a retreat from the world, a timelessness and the living presence of a spiritual history. It was easy to feel a respect for human spirituality beyond any given creed in this place. Though cold, and certainly more-so in winter, it would make an ideal place for those seeking a hermitage, as St. Columba himself did, and the druids reputed to have lived there before him.



*At the top of Dùn Ì, Iona.*

From Dùn Ì, the highest point on Iona, I looked out across the East, past the Abbey on Iona, to Mull, with the mainland and the rest of Europe far beyond. I looked to the South, the worn and rock woven hills along the central ridge of this island, and far beyond and more to the East, I envisioned where I had come from, Australia. Then to the West, the Atlantic Ocean, mysterious to me; I imagined those who would take a voyage by ship to the lands in that direction, beyond Ireland, to Iceland, Greenland, and the American continent. I looked to the North, a gradual descent to the edge of this isle, then heading to the bulk of the Hebrides. It felt so far from the 'civilised

world', yet the spirit of tiny island felt also so complete, as though a more real kind of life existed here. Druidic magic in thin-places.

I left that place of prayers, and made my way back to London over several days; facing forty eight hours in airports and planes, I arrived home, to Adelaide, such a tiny little town in comparison, but a place where I appreciate all that I am connected to here. So it seems successful travel makes you appreciate home all the more, while also broadening your experience and understanding of the world – that's my conclusion to it all.

And one final point regarding Australian Druidry: I visited those ancestral lands of the Druids, and sought to understand more of their original ways, to deepen my own connection and to further authenticity in my view of this tradition. Yes, I feel a little bit less puzzled now about these mysteries, but I think I prefer the warmer climate of Australia.

## **THE DRUID FUNDRAISER 2013**

### ***Kristopher Hughes to NZ***

Druid Fundraiser is the first of its kind to create a community based funding platform to share the wisdom and inspiration of Druidry across the world. But we need your help to create the funds for the flight costs of bringing Kristoffer Hughes (a Welsh Chief Druid and renowned author) from Wales to New Zealand. There are great rewards ranging from signed books from Philip Carr-Gomm, handcrafted silver Awen pendants, and much much more.

For details visit:

<https://www.pledgeme.co.nz/Crowd/Details/1143>

or

<https://www.facebook.com/druidswap>

## SOME NEW ZEALAND NEWS

The *New Zealand Lughnasadh Druid Camp* will be held on the weekend of the 19th January 2014 (running for 4-5 days), at the Woolshed Retreat, Wellington. For details, visit <http://www.thewoolshedretreats.co.nz/the-seasonal-festivals/>

### *Dragonfire Grove*

We are an open Grove in Auckland NZ, welcoming those who follow the Druid path. We honour the 8 seasonal festivals and support others in the celebration, study and journey of Druidry. With close links to OBOD England and other Groves within New Zealand we offer fellowship, a growing lending library, trips to other Groves and camps to name some of our activities.

*The Druid Path* is the Dragonfire Grove study group which meets fortnightly to share ritual, meditations, explore Druidry and fellowship. We welcome all those wishing to deepen their connection with Druidry and the wisdom of nature and this is a gentle way of meeting others and learning about Druidry.

Please contact Caroline Williams for details on 0210706343 or [druidtherapy@gmail.com](mailto:druidtherapy@gmail.com)

### *Druid Therapy*

Bringing the Druid Healer back into our modern world has been a passion of mine for over 10 years. I have trained as a counsellor and worked in the fields of addiction, anxiety, trauma and homicide for over 15 years and have always felt the need for a therapy which offers more depth and holistic aspects.

With my 15 years training as a Druid with OBOD I have been able to weave these two paths into a healing model which brings the wisdom and sacred knowledge of Druidry together with the underpinnings of psychology.

The magic of myth, druid oracle cards, the principles of connection, love and wisdom counselling is a journey into wholeness and change.

Visit

<http://druidtherapy.blogspot.co.nz/p/up-coming-events.html> or contact Caroline Williams on 0210706343 or [druidtherapy@gmail.com](mailto:druidtherapy@gmail.com)

## THE S.A. BELTANE CAMP

*In association with Pagan Alliance of SA*

To be held in the lovely Adelaide Hills, from Friday 22nd November to Sunday 24th November.

Hosted by special guests from UK Damh the Bard and Cerri Lee.

Come along to a weekend of Workshops, Meditation, Ritual, and Artistic Expression, to celebrate the union of the Goddess and the God, and unlock the Bard within us all.

Friday night Concert featuring Damh the Bard and Spiral Dance.

Cost of the weekend is \$250, which includes all meals, dormitory accommodation and all activities.

(\$10 Discount available for Damh the Bard Sponsors and members of PASA.)

For all enquires / bookings please email : [beltanecamp@hotmail.com](mailto:beltanecamp@hotmail.com)

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL AS NUMBERS ARE LIMITED TO 70 PEOPLE - DEPOSITS DUE 1ST OCTOBER

Payment / Deposit can be made by direct deposit or PayPal.

Costs have been kept to a minimum for the full weekend - please don't ask for concessions as refusal may offend.



# THE 13<sup>TH</sup> SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE OBOD ASSEMBLY

24-28 January 2014

The venue that has been booked is Binna Burra Mountain Lodge, located in Lamington National Park, just north of the Qld border and approx 1hrs drive from the Gold Coast Airport or 2 Hours from Brisbane.

Lamington National Park is located on the bones of an ancient volcano and is a deeply powerful and stunningly beautiful sub tropical rainforest area. There are a number of walking trails easily accessible from the venue and they also provide activities for guests like flying fox, abseiling etc... if anyone has time between all the Assembly stuff that is!

The website for Binna Burra Mountain Lodge is:  
[www.binnaburrallodge.com.au](http://www.binnaburrallodge.com.au)

*To secure a place, it is essential to book your accommodation as soon as possible.*

## Accommodation Options:

Costs listed here are for the whole event (4 nights)

**Camping:** This option costs \$112 per unpowered site (2 people, extra adults \$48, children \$24). You would need to provide all your own camping equipment.

**Bunkhouse:** \$150 per person. There are 4 rooms with 9 beds and one room with 4 beds available. Linen is available to hire from the venue for \$11 per bed.

**Twin - share, shared bathroom:** \$760 per room, so provided two occupants: \$380 per person. There are 11 of these rooms available (and 2 already booked for us) all linen provided.

There are other more expensive options, which include ensuites, if you are really after that, let

Ngatina know (see 'How to book your place' below), and she can confirm prices and availability with you.

## How to book your place:

Booking your accommodation option is vitally important! Email Ngatina at [gypsy@sincorp.org](mailto:gypsy@sincorp.org) with your desired accommodation option and she will confirm availability with the venue (unless it's bunkhouse which we will know straight away as we have the whole thing no matter what).

Once Ngatina has confirmed that your preferred option is available, please contact Cherry Carroll (Nimue) (contact email: [nimueart@bigpond.com](mailto:nimueart@bigpond.com)) to transfer the cost of your accommodation option in full to the banker for this event.

We require your **full accommodation costs** as we will be charged for the room even if you do not honour the booking. **The balance of the assembly costs, including catering will be payable at a date to be confirmed closer to the event.**

Please annotate your transaction with your name so that it can be recorded against your booking. Bookings will not be considered finalised until payments have cleared.

I recommend booking as soon as possible to avoid the disappointment of your preferred option being unavailable.

Additionally, if you would like a special ceremony conducted for you, such as an initiation, naming, wedding etc., please contact Elkie at [whitelk@bigpond.com](mailto:whitelk@bigpond.com)

If you have any special needs, or for further inquiries about this assembly, contact Elkie: [whitelk@bigpond.com](mailto:whitelk@bigpond.com)

## POETRY'S HAZELS

### River Murmurings to the Merlin.

*Carole Nielsen (Sooty Owl)*

Sometimes I feel like a huge waterfall  
cascading over the rocks and I'm enveloped  
in the voice of that,  
And then I hear you as the quiet and gentle  
murmur of the brooks and streams.....

Sometimes I feel I am a slowly moving river,  
and then i feel you as a forceful current,  
bringing life and vitality through my  
waters.....

Sometimes I wander sleepily through the  
dunes and marshes  
and then I taste your salty breadth and depth  
and my curiosity is sparked.....

Sometimes I feel a feather fall from the sky  
and I feel you riding lightly on my surface.....

Sometimes I face a rock that divides my path  
and then I know you have offered choice....

Sometimes I feel words stir in the depths of  
my womb  
and I know your salmon swims there.....

Always I am coloured by the sun and the  
moon, the sky and the clouds  
and sometimes I sparkle.....

Sometimes the Earth drinks from me  
Sometimes I drink from her....



*The River Dart, Dartmoor National Park, UK*



*Dragonwyst, In the Baulkham Hills, NSW.*

### Imbolc

*Barb McFarlane*

Deep in the glooming darkness,  
tiny spark of inception  
warm in the nest with eyes tight shut  
all focus on creation

Feed the dreaming one with milk of love,  
peace of silence and stillness of waiting.  
Lay flowers and light candles in blessing for  
the growing time ahead.

### SUBMISSIONS NEEDED

To nourish the growing Southern Hemisphere  
OBOD community, we welcome your  
contributions (we cannot publish without them).

Stories, articles, photography or artwork, news or  
events, recipes, reflections, or reviews, anything  
else druidically inspired. Keep in mind Beltane is  
the festival theme for the next issue.

Let your inspiration flow this way.

Contribute to **SerpentStar**  
([serpentstar.obod@gmail.com](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com))  
or via post (see details on the first page).



# ANCIENT PATTERNS OLD AND NEW

*Kacey Guy Stephensen*

I am a Bard, young in body but old in soul; many mountains I have seen and many gum trees too; many trails I have walked amongst bush and kangaroo. Every path leads somewhere in the bush, even if it is mellow. A druid knows how to find their way if they keep their eyes on the light of day.

So one must have ears open and eyes not limited to their rational mind, to find your way in the bush, you must listen to the songs of the land, and keep on cruising, being compassionate and kind.

The seeker must open their entire self to their whole poetic potential, unleash the bard within! And let the magick reach its fruition.

Bardic eyes, bardic tongue, bardic ears and bardic song. I am young, 18 at that, but I feel something strong, the Awen in the flats. I feel it in the earth, her soil of many a different tone, I feel it in my body way beyond the bone. I feel the nwyfre of all beings, the life force of all things. This red mighty land has it all; the hooves and the wings.

This sacred ground is different wherever you go, for every unique part of her being has a different song to show. Every word is manifested wisdom, every verse a new; for she is the mother of the earth tribes, their wisdom ancient, eternal and true.

Be the bard of the wild, the bard of gums and sands, of dry creeks and ancient wetlands!

The wind has a tale or two to tell, many thousands of years of it, and many more to come, of all the lives had here, and all the magick therein.

Backs were scorched in the heat of the sun,

the drover's horses new to a land they did not come from.

Who has caught the glimpse of this fabled land? Those men and women with spiritual hands; they dance the patterns that the earth mother sows, and their hands weave magick; knowledge from the native stones.

This country touches me deep within, it pulls on the bardic heart strings: "let me in," the earth mother cries as she calls for us to rekindle our lives. The flame in the head gets brighter and brighter as the wheel of the year makes its presence known, in the click of the fingers the season has changed, the dance continues, the patterns and the waves.

So being a Bard on Australia's shores in essence is nothing new. The elders told stories inspired by nature, connected with the dream time, deep within their memory's muse.

The elders of this sacred land have 'bards' alike with us. Their aural traditions handed down through the generations, their wisdom stories never lost.

Poetry comes from within, inspired in connection to the earth, sea and sky. And this ancient sunburnt land is made up of stories that will never die.

We are connected to this land, intrinsically part of it. We are the gum and the drooping sheoak, we are the wombat and the hillside. We are the memories and the happenings, we are the soft moist earth and the scorching, yet revitalising, life giving sun.

No labels can describe the poetry of the living world, but walk through the bushland, open your heart up to the sight of the bard, and you will peek at a mystery much greater than the mysteries of death, and birth.

The elders have many stories to tell, wisdom that we must respect, for we are bards of the southern land, friends of a tribe that others would rather forget.

But it is our duty and our shared connection, to keep the memory of this land alive with all our loving affection; our own tradition shall thrive and live, loving this earth and all her kin, and we shall respect the elders' trust, to leave them at peace at last, at last.

In partnership with the elders of the sun, we are the bards of the oak and the river Gum, we are the druids of stag and hawk, we are bards of the emu and the little rush stalk.

Keep your ears open fellow bard, come on a journey with me, for I am young and eager too, to tread this path and embrace its food; but steady now, we must not haste, for we are of this land, there is no race.

We must not encroach on older ways, but we can give reverence to and respect for their grace. We can sing songs of our own inspiration, brewed up from our own conscious attention, and in so doing build our own spiritual affiliation with the beauty of this land and with this place.

\* \* \*

## THE WEAVER

*Renee Ngatai*

The wind was whirling along the mountain top. Winter was in full force. The land did not welcome strangers. The trees were on guard and the birds silent and watchful. No one chose to come to this place. The few who mistakenly came rarely survived the encounter. If they did, they were wholly changed. It was this place a woman called home. The human silence eased her pain.

The woman was old, so old. She was as old as time itself. The rocks were her litter mates. The sister trees bore the pain of her maturation to womanhood. The wind liked to recall the many names given to her on brighter days. Great Mother it whispered,

Earth mother it rushed and Silent wife it wailed. Like the slow heartbeat of the earth, she ebbed and flowed. The woman bore the weight of the voices of those she guarded. She heard their grief and joy. She watched them rise and fall.

The aeons fell behind her, like the heavy raindrops that fell from the sky and turned to sleet in her heart. Like the world turned, she continued. There is never an end to her place in the stone grove. Her room was a simple room. It was as familiar to her, like snowflakes to winters cold barren earth. The walls were roughly hewn stone and the floor woven flax over wood. Inside the fire cackled like ravens. The chair creaked as she took up her place before the fire.

The distaff welcomed her warmth as it slid in against her shoulder. The fibres itched to begin. Her energy began to drain, her heartbeat rose in fear. She reluctantly pinched some fibres, crushing them to her will. She attached the thrumming strands to her spindle. It began to whorl and spin, all of its own accord. Just like how the seasons turn, as a wheel turns, this weaver must weave. The gathering thread began to whisper, snippets of triumph and rumblings of terror.

Spinning was as natural to her like the bark of her sisters. Her gaze soon shifted to the conspiracy in the fire. Within this aged hearth another's story began to reform. Images of monsters under the bed, tender sprigs of new love, dark stone alleys and the sharp end to a short life, all took shape in the curling, flickering glow. Slowly but surely, the ball of thread on the spindle thickened. It grew and it rounded.

As new life began to quicken within a womb. The weaver stood. She removed the thread from the spindle, and returned to her loom. She took this thread and wove another life into the fabric of the world.



# AWEN MEDITATION

Caroline Williams



The following is a wonderful exercise which can be used either as an individual meditation, ritual or with the group.

*Kind permission to use the exercise has been given by Kristoffer Hughes from his amazing book *The Cauldron Born*.*

Awen is inspiration, knowledge, the soul of the universe, and when we explore the origins of the meaning “soul” being ‘coming or belonging to the sea’ this following exercise is a powerful way of connecting to Awen.

Either perform this actually at a source of natural water, preferably the ocean, or visualise being there:

*Imagine it is the liminal time between dawn or dusk and become aware of the surroundings, the smells, sounds and sensations of this magical place.*

*Begin to walk towards the waters edge, removing your clothing and continue until you are waist deep.*

*Feel the sensation of water against skin, the temperature on your flesh, the ebb and flow of the waves tugging at your body, the sounds of the waves lapping against you, the sea-bed beneath your feet. Do you notice the sounds of birds or other life? Are there clouds in the sky, what is the light like? Make the images bold and vivid.*

*Begin to breathe in time with the waves, in and out with the very breath of the sea.*

*Extend your arms out a little from your sides so you form the three rays of the Awen symbol,  $\Lambda$ .*

*Take a deep breath and visualise the central column of your body and the central ray as one; a blinding ray of light descending from the sky above you, filling you. Hold this image for several seconds.*

*Take another breath and imagine a ray from your neck down through your right arm; hold and repeat with the left arm.*

*Feel your body alive with the flowing radiant energy of the Awen, filling your senses and glowing as the waves embrace your lover body.*

*Filling your lungs with air begin to intone the 3 sacred sounds of the Awen: of either 'Arr' 'oooo' 'when', or 'oh' 'ee' 'oo'.*

*Allow the sounds to vibrate and resonate within your entire being; the sounds cascading from your lungs, out your lips to fall into the sea you stand in.*

*Allow your mind to become as expansive as the sea, connecting to this water that flows across all the earth. You are one, in all places at the same time, across time and place. You are the Awen. Continue for as long as desired then return back to the current present time and record your experiences.*

## FOLLOW THE GLEAM: BUILDING BRIDGES

*vyvyan ogma wyverne*

Being a natural philosopher at heart I like to have a reasonable basis for my belief. As a druid in mixed society, when my beliefs are questioned I appreciate the credibility that goes with having a sound rationale. I try to ensure that a *scientific* description of the material world supports my belief in nwyfre as a flow of information-dense effects through the network of communication that interconnects all material beings. So I will begin with a glance into the magic of the rich and varied world that is within the range of our ordinary perception and proceed later to the so-called 'invisible' worlds that exist beyond that range.

If I stand near a tree, its radiance mingles with mine. They interact and both are changed, charged with the excitation of this new stimulus, which we communicate to everything around us. The same happens if a rock fetches up under a tree, or in my hand. As a human being I have special senses - of sight and sound, smell, taste and touch - which read the radiances of the material world, streaming data to my brain where I construct my perception of reality. This means I can create much more dynamic interfaces than I otherwise could, reading much more of the detail encrypted in just the light, for instance, simply by looking at things, stones, trees, yes, but also far-off mountains, the rising sun, the distant stars and galaxies, and indeed everything that radiates or reflects the colours of the spectrum of light. In dividing the light in this way I am part of the processing of light – light changes as it changes me. I respond to it and it responds to me.

These exchanges may be subtle, but as a human being, I have a brain as well as senses, a brain that generates a mind that

categorises and stores information selectively according to nuances more subtle than I can bring to consciousness. It's a mind that gives or finds in or for everything a meaning, and it responds to everything with feeling, understanding and imagination to categorise, judge, wish for, repel or condition the nwyfre in all sorts of ways. All the time I am feeding back my responses to the whole through the beings nearest me, and contributing to its evolution.

All of this is dynamic and effective and all of it is magical. The power that the mind exercises over matter, which medical scientists know can cause psychosomatic illness when random, repressed or abused, can also enhance life when used consciously and may be used creatively for all kinds of exciting and beneficial magical effects beyond healing. We have before us the task of learning how to use it.

The universe is logical; our physiology is logical and we think logically, but within the infinitely packed reality we inhabit, our ever-evolving minds are as yet not capable of comprehending more than a relatively small range of logical systems of limited extent, which we work very hard to extend, for example, through education and intelligently sought-out experience and the mass media developed for the purpose. The magic of mind over matter is *also* logical, and it is by understanding the default logic, which doesn't foreground human needs over those of other beings, that we learn to advance *beyond* it and contribute to the evolution of the more human-friendly logicistics of the metaphysicist's reality. Nature doesn't mind if our planet dies – we do, and we can save it by taking control of our proper share of the planetary magic.

Logic maintains and manages the relationships between systems in the universe. Some of the logic governing physics is so simple that its laws can be written as

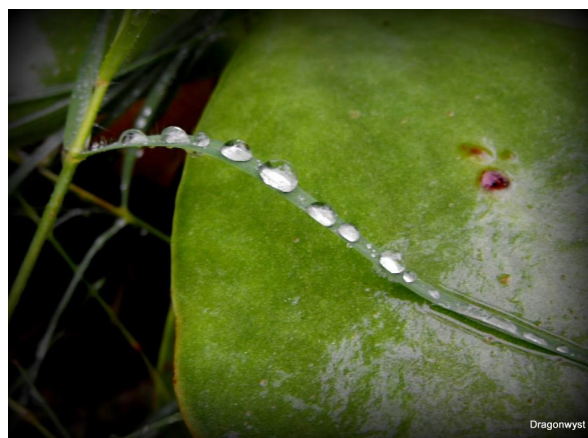
mathematical formulae. Other logic, such as that of children's play is whimsical, witty and subtle, often submerged and not obvious, with so many variables that it takes child psychologists years of study to begin to discern it. Our species is timidly and cautiously learning to reason logically, experimenting creatively with meaning, relationship and idea, observing the energetics and transformative power of ideas, observing the poetic force of thought, feeling and experience, beginning to understand how attitude can heal or harm us, learning the consequences of faulty, simplistic or misapplied logic along with those of sound reasoning. And in doing so we are learning to believe in the magic.

The more logically we reason, the more realistically we view the world and the more appropriately we interact with it. Even people who seem to be illogical are simply following an inner logic of their own that does not necessarily mesh seamlessly with that of others, though at least equally sound. It may even be less flawed than the common logic, not more so. We should respect all paths even at that level, even if they clash with our own, perhaps even paths less respectful than our own.

All this is obvious when we consider the visible world, and equally true when we begin to search the edges of our consciousness for evidence of what exists beyond. So far I have considered only the material universe, without addressing the question of aether, the light body, the astral plane and so on. The reason for this is that we need to be sure of our material body's clarity and to affirm what so many spiritual pathways still often deny – the validity of the here-and-now life of the biological body we live in and through.

The surface of any object infinitesimally small to infinitely vast, including humans, receives and responds to information about its environment. A mirror reflects reality. Images

are created in it by virtue of what happens when light strikes its surface. Many birds and animals are imitative, and will, upon receiving impressions from other animals, mimic them, or mirror them. In the zodiac reflections of the great celestial patterns generated in the intricate spiral dance of galaxies and stars, and planets and their moons contribute to and reflect the myriad forces affecting the lives of small mammals on earth, including our human selves.



We're used to seeing and responding to, mimicking and mirroring the actions of our fellow creatures, of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish, insects etc. We do it mindfully, and who's to say trees don't? Being motile, our gestures are writ large, purpose-built for the sensoria we've evolved. We can see our fellow animals responding to hunger, love, fear, joy, anger, pain and the passions of oestrus, social competition and the hunt. It's different when we come to appreciating the life experience of a plant.

The plant seems still, usually needing a breeze or other disturbance to move its leaves, the roots fixed firmly in the ground. We can't see the writhing, twisting, bustling activity of its growth – time-lapse photography had to be invented to show us that, and even then, its dance has not necessarily evolved as a means of communication. It tells us about the growth habits of plants, but except in a very few anomalous species does not seem



to demonstrate responsivity to fellow creatures, and tells us nothing about the inner experience of the plant.



Microbiology does lift the veil a bit. It's a precise science and is currently making amazing breakthroughs into the biochemical responsivity of plants. The gushes of pheromones and bating of vital processes, the alterations in tensions and force-fields within the tissues of plants in response to threats such as herbivores, bad weather or pathogens is comparable to that which we find in animals, where we take it for granted it is associated with feeling, with awareness, with intelligence. Plants have a 'fear' response, although just as it is chemically different from our own, it is probably experientially different to the same degree and corresponding to the chemical difference. And plants have attitude: it's basic to their spirituality and anyone can discern it. People often joke about the perkiness of petunias or the bombast of a much-frilled gladiolus, the feistiness of a young pine tree or the gaiety of a bed of annuals. Take it seriously. It's a major key to the fun and magic our favourite garden flowers have brewing for us.

Plant chemistry centres around the flamboyant, light-hearted, extravagant, dancing, delightful magnesium, while that of animals centres around dull, plodding, solid,

pattern-seeking, hard-working, reliable iron. Therefore a sensitive study of magnesium and iron are useful to an ovate seeking to bridge the communication gap between them. Basic chemistry can be a useful starting point. Watching magnesium expend its capacity for inter-reaction with air in an extravagant flare with little energy input while iron absorbs and consumes more and more energy before glowing dully, and still more before passing through the red, orange and yellow part of the spectrum before flaring much more sedately, can help us to understand what sort of bridge across what kind of gradations in what spectra of nature we have to build. Same sort of process, but at a different speed and with comparable but different results.

How do plants experience us? Plants have no visible organ that corresponds to an eye or an ear. We can see only what our very different physiology allows us to see. Certain fine highly active structures in the neurology of the brain are in form so similar to tree branches that they are termed 'dendrites' after a Greek word for a tree. It's not difficult to understand that though they serve different physiological forms, having similar shapes brings them into a special relationship through the natural geometry of forms. Morphic resonance begins to be a feature. Humanity needs to be doing much more research into these areas of plant study, both as scientific studies and as the magical explorations that are much more relevant here to ovates in particular.

Now at about this point, we can turn our attention to the extended reality that becomes accessible to us as we open our psychic eyes. We have to acknowledge that there is another gap to be bridged: the gap between our scientific, *objective* understanding and our own personal *subjective* experience. We have in our support the testimony of generations of fey peoples and fey individuals, accounts of whose daily experience have contributed to the lively traditions in many cultures worldwide of 'plant spirits' in human or

human-like form, traditions that persist in the mainstream imagination as myth even though seldom still believed in - and always have and no doubt always will.

We have no scientific instruments that can verify the claims of seers who talk to plant spirits. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, and besides, is the subjective experience of millions of believers since the dawn of time not evidence? Obviously, it's unscientific to go *beyond* the evidence so far as to say it isn't.

People who practice organic gardening often become conscious of plant spirits. The Findhorn Foundation (see <http://www.findhorn.org/>) revived our current consciousness of them. Rudolph Steiner (see <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/19101208p01.html>) taught us more about them. Cultures worldwide are currently contributing to our knowledge of them in Australia and the world wide web is currently vibrant with the buzz of their magic.

Anyone who takes the time to approach the idea of communicating with plants seriously

can usually fairly readily obtain a glimpse, or other equally clear and unmistakable impression, of a dryad, provided they start with a domestic or traditionally befriendable tree. (Apple tree dryads are willing, patient and druid-friendly teachers, having been family members for millennia and are now Ogham trees as well, and apple wands are easy to enchant).

So the bridge we have to build between our experience and that of plants is apparently being built with equal willingness and enthusiasm from both sides. And the gap between science and subjective or 'psychic' experience is not so difficult to bridge.

Immersion in nature or gardens and parks is necessary for successful communication with plant spirits. If you can't get out and about, work through pictures in books or on line. I've seen plant spirits pop up out of seed-packet pictures. Reading about nature as scientific, faeried, whatever, can deepen and widen the experience and be very inspiring. But one thing is certain: none of it works without an open mind.



Dragonwyst

## CONNECTING COMMUNITY - LINKS AND EVENTS

### DRUIDRY

The Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBOD):  
[www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org)

Druidry Australia: [www.druidryaustralia.org](http://www.druidryaustralia.org)  
*The website for The Order of Bards Ovates and  
Druids in Australia.*

OBOD Druids New Zealand:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OBODDruidsNZ/>

Druidic Dawn: <http://www.druidicdawn.org/>  
*A large hub of resources, discussion and online  
community for druids.*

Druidcast: <http://www.druidcast.libsyn.com/>  
*A monthly podcast from The Order of Bards  
Ovates and Druids. Many hours of excellent  
listening.*

### PAGAN GATHERINGS

#### Australia

##### NSW

##### Pagans in the Park

Pagans On The Coast hold a monthly *Pagans In  
The Park* picnic in Budgewoi, 2nd Sunday of  
every month, 11am to 3pm at McKenzie Park (at  
the end of Lake Street), Budgewoi, NSW.  
(More details at  
[http://www.pagangatherings.com.au/pagan\\_gatherings\\_nsw.htm](http://www.pagangatherings.com.au/pagan_gatherings_nsw.htm))

##### QLD

##### Pagans in the Park

A Meet & Greet picnic for local pagans to network  
and socialise. This is an open event, all trades  
welcome. Family Friendly. This event is FREE, we  
only ask you please bring a plate to share with the  
group. BYO Alcohol. Last Sunday of the Month at  
Dayman Park, Urangan (Hervey Bay)  
Contact: Daina - [fcptp@gmail.com](mailto:fcptp@gmail.com)

##### SA

##### Pagans in the Pizza Bar

Meet on the first Tuesday of each month at  
Marcellina's, 273 Hindley Street, Adelaide, 8pm.  
Socialising and dinner from 6pm; guest speaker at  
8pm. Gold coin donation for non Pagan Alliance  
Members.  
(Visit <http://paganalliancesa.drak.net/> for more  
information.)

##### New Zealand

Visit this facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OBODDruidsNZ/>

##### South Africa

Visit the South African Pagan Council:  
<http://www.pagancouncil.co.za/>

##### South America

Visit The Pagan Federation International – South  
America: <http://www.sam.paganfederation.org/>

The Pagan Awareness Network keeps a listing of  
community events around Australia. If you wish to  
advertise an event please let them know.  
<http://www.paganawareness.net.au>

*If there are any additions or updates to this  
community links page, please contact SerpentStar  
at [serpentstar.obod@gmail.com](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com). Ed.*

### **Thanks for reading SerpentStar.**

*We welcome all feedback.  
Email [serpentstar.obod@gmail.com](mailto:serpentstar.obod@gmail.com)*

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*Next issue is Beltane 2013.*

*With warm wishes upon wide winds,  
Ed.*