

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



## **IMBOLC 2015**

Welcome to the Imbolc 2015 edition of SerpentStar! Blessings to everyone across the Southern Hemisphere from Brisbane, QLD Australia. My name is Mandy Gibson and I'll be your pilot for this fli....ahem, I'm the new Editor of SerpentStar. Hullo :)

My eternal thanks up front to previous editors for their outstanding legacy, and in particular to Todd, Wyverne and Martin for their guidance and patience with my many initial questions. I hope to do them, and all of you, good service in my time as Editor.

If you've been following SerpentStar on social media, or receiving emails from me, you will know that there have been a few new things popping up on the website. The guidelines for submissions have been updated, based on questions I received when sending out calls for content, and we now have a new section dedicated to presenting archived back issues from the days before WordPress. As a relative newcomer to the Order I devoured the online back issues, and when it was time to become Editor I had a hankering to read the even older ones. There's lots of wonderful material in them, and we'll be putting up new ones on the website as fast as we can get around to scanning them, so do check them out.

What's in this issue? Well! We have some diverse and wonderful poetry and triads, some photos and words from this year's Southern Hemisphere Assembly, articles from two of our intrepid overseas travellers, a great selection of information about events, meetings and businesses created by our members, plus the usual helpful seasonal information.

We also have, with permission, two extracts from *The Golden Seed: Celebrating 50 Years of OBOD*, compiled by Sharon Zak and Maria Ede-Weaving. This excellent publication is available from the Order's website at shop.druidry.org.

Before I close this Editor Bit, I'd like to offer congratulations for two of the special occasions in the OBOD calendar since the last SerpentStar. June saw the release of the first edition of Druid Magazine - a brand new OBOD publication for American Druids. It's an impressive first outing, best wishes to Renu and her team for its future success.

Just under two weeks ago, the Order also hit a milestone - the 100th episode of DruidCast. The OBOD podcast, helmed by Damh the Bard, continues to be the most entertaining podcast I listen to. It holds a special place for me, as having been my first introduction to the Order, and ultimately the trigger for me joining and committing to the druidic path. So thankyou Damh, and everyone who has been involved over the years, congratulations and here's to another 100!

Information about both Druid Magazine and DruidCast is in the OBOD info section on the next page.

I'll be celebrating Imbolc with Macadamia Grove with some ritual, good food and companionship in our little mountainside space in Brisbane. I hope you are all well, and may your light burn brightly.

In Peace Mandy /|\



## SerpentStar, Imbolc 2015

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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## **OBOD** in the Southern Hemisphere

#### **Groves and Seed Groups**

#### The Golden Wattle Seed Group

For OBOD members in South Australia. We meet for the eight festivals of the wheel of the year, and for nature walks or other activities, from time to time. Send an email to inquire: golden.wattle.druids@gmail.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 member's 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: macademiagrove@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 and find themselves warmly welcomed. We will be celebrating Imbolc on Sunday August 2, Spring Equinox on September 20, and Beltane on November 1. If you would like to join us, please contact Elkie whitelk@bigpond.com, phone 03 9758 5359. Our website is www.themelbournegrove.org

#### Useful websites for SH OBODies:

www.druidryaustralia.org - A central online resource for druidry in Australia.

Druids Downunder - Facebook group - a closed group for druids of any path, in the Southern Hemisphere and Australia 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) and 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.

Druid (USA) www.druidmagazine.com

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

*Il Calderone* (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

Druidenstein (German) www.feuersprung.de

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

7th Dryade International Druid Camp (9) 10, 11, 12 June 2016 - Winterswijk, The Netherlands www.obod.nl/dryade/camp

unamic Dalance more info in autumn 2015

# Appearing At

amh the Bard (UK)

Spiral Oance

**XXX** 

## Bar 303, 303 High St., Northcote, VIC

## Saturday 10th October

A NIGHT OF MAGICK, MYTH AND LEGEND ...

## Doors Open 8pm

*Tickets \$27 / \$22 concession Buy @ Oztix + Booking Fee* 

MUSIC TO ROCK YOUR ANCESTORS!

Assembly Reverie The land lies silent and at peace, Bright faeries tend the ring, The willows murmur in the breeze, Fresh streamers deck their limbs, The oldest of the oaks, at last, Bursts forth a tender green, A celebration of these days, And all that he has seen. And deep beneath and all around, New vibrance resonates, As if a cauldron's on the boil, Which holds within its bowl, The love, the joy, and tears we shed, Merged with Earth's very soul.

"I thought (this poem) might be appropriate just after our Motherland Assembly, as I wrote it after we had the Assembly (at my home) in September 2004. The land was still soaked in the memories of the gathering and there was a quiet contemplative feel everywhere but with deep undertones of a powerful energy. Attached is a photo of one of our circles, 'Willow Glenn', where we held some of the ceremonies."

### 14th Annual Southern Hemisphere Assembly by Sandra

Perhaps a journey begins with the first step, but for me the journey to the 14<sup>th</sup> OBOD Australian Assembly began with a long drive. And what a drive it was! Through a deluge of rain – which created severe localised flash flooding – and across many hours I drove. Along the high way, along the back roads of the Armidale mountain range, and then finally along a well established goat track. Given the nature of the goat track, which as in the best of folk tales crossed a brisk running ford, I had very low expectations of our venue. My visions included a freezing, leaking tin shed, mattresses thinner than those on Binna Burra bunks, and a crowded and freezing bunk-house without enough room to swing a cat. Not that we of the Druidic persuasion are in the habit of cat swinging, of course.

It's difficult to describe my delight on leaving the cocoon of my car and then walking in the teaming rain into the central gathering place. It was warm. Delightfully warm. And cosy. Completely and utterly wonderfully blissful, with the combination of crackling fire, comfy lounges, chairs, tables and an abundant plethora of fruit and avocados and fresh farm grown produce in large cane bowls on benches and tables. And there was a cup of warm lemon and ginger tea as welcome, which was as warm as that given by Rosie and Deniz, our host and helper.



Bonfire drum circle. Photo: Carmen Holloway

I'll talk more about the food later, but now began that experience of meeting the people of the Assembly, which is one of the key features of any large gathering.

Chris and Glenda were the first new OBODians that I met. They'd travelled from elsewhere in NSW in a campervan. They were as warm and welcoming as the venue, and Chris later delighted and amazed us all with his poetry, including the first poem that he wrote and recited in his Bardic Initiation, as well as his handcrafted jewellery displayed in the Druids Sharing Their Passions afternoon. He spoke of how he was stepping away from the computer – including programming – to live life more fully engaged with the Bardic Tradition. Glenda, his wife, was a brand new Bard and her joy and warmth shone brightly. We also shared a story of face-recognition difficulty.

Michael, as OBOD host was also there, his fey presence - usually in great big gum boots - moving in and out of the surrounds and people. As for my previous experience last year, his interactions were a wonderful mix of deep spirit and Loki-laughter-maker.

Then it was a wait for our fellow travellers to arrive. Mandy and Carmen, my fellow Macadamia Seed Group members had already arrived bright and early, and we shared the time while the darkness moved in, and still we waited... 'til finally the light shone upon us! Car lights! Then it was an unfolding of people from cars, and activity and greetings while people located accommodation and each other in a rush and tumble.

That evening, we were finally all at My Hyland, site of the 2015 Australian OBOD Assembly. Well, all bar Kim, that is, who was ruthlessly refused entry by the rising ford and finally joined our company the next day. Our other Macadamia Seed Group member, Linda, was made of sterner stuff – and also on the road earlier than Kim – and was the last intrepid traveller of the evening to join the company.



Sunrise at Motherland. Photo: Mandy Gibson

So, back to the people... Drum roll for the Melbourne Grove Mob – Elkie, who hardly needs any introduction, as the longest and most consistent attendee at OBOD Australian Assemblies; Debs, our talented song-mistress; Fiona, the crafty knit-ress and story teller; the expressive-in-movement Glenda; Khe-Ra, who I enjoyed spending time with last year and again this year; and Narine who I enjoyed meeting for the first time this year.

From more disparate locations came Janet and James from New Zealand – who had many wonderful stories of a life lived fully; Cherry – who later during the Assembly, linked in with the Macadamians – and her husband Denis; Yvonne, our intrepid camper from somewhere along the coast in NSW; the mellifluous Victoria from Canberra; and Todd from far distant South Australia who travelled here gradually over some weeks.



The Nut Hut! Photo: Mandy Gibson

Now our main crew have been introduced, albeit briefly, let us return to the food! As mother of two children who works almost full time, can I say what a glorious pleasure it was to have food prepared for us in generous and yummy amounts? I did bring some survival chocolate (just in-case my terrible visions of bland skimpy vegetable dishes came to fruition) but it was completely unnecessary, although fun to share in the Women's Circle. When on the first night Rosie and Deniz placed a huge lamb melt-off-the-bone lamb shank on my plate, I then knew everything would be OK! Over the weekend, there were also delicious desserts and the most amazing mix of greens from the garden and the cheese was todie-for. Vegetarians and food-restricted people also seemed very well catered for.

OK... friends have been greeted and food is in our bellies so it's now time to talk of accommodation! Debs had the master-sleeping-plan list, so off the intrepid Macadamia Seed Group went into the rain, up past the covered outdoor area... and into a large and lovely dormitory WITH ITS OWN POT BELLIED OVEN.

As this warm abode only contained myself, Mandy, Carmen and Linda of the Macadamia Seed Group, it was quickly christened the 'Nut Hut'. Now, we Queenslanders (and Northern NSW folk) are so deep and spiritual, we understood immediately what a compliment it was being compared to a resilient, nourishing, protein rich food source and intuitively knew that this title had nothing to do with our, at times, vibrant personalities, wicked sense of humour and loud laughter.

The next morning we all started to engage with the Assembly Program, which – over the long weekend - included the Opening Ritual, Bardic Initiations, Eisteddfod, Ovate ritual, Druid Initiations, Men's Circle, Women's Circle, Druids Sharing their Passions – everyone acting out their Soul age was a total hoot - and the Samhuin Ritual. Whew. Unfortunately due to work demands, I had to leave early and didn't experience the Ceremony for Peace, or Closing, or the shenanigans around the fire on the last night, but I certainly managed to fit a lot in regardless, in between lacing and unlacing my mid-life-crisis Doc Martens. Kim also made a magical potion for each of this (when she wasn't playing the biggest drum I've ever seen), there were the most glorious staffs for sale, and Linda was kept busy reading Tarot cards.

One ritual I'd like to spend a little time discussing is our Samhuin Ritual, which I was fortunate enough to facilitate. It was a very interesting process for me, as in a relatively short time frame I needed to craft a ritual for a group of people, many of whom I hadn't met before, which was to be held in a place I'd never been before. So it was a mixture of keeping true to the bones of the OBOD Samhuin Ritual while allowing it to become individualised to the particular bunch of people 'performing' it. Some of those people were experienced ritualists, while others were quite new to ritual. It was a delightful process to meet with almost everyone during that day and discuss their role in the ritual, and tweak it to be as inclusive and creative as possible.

I really wanted to create the feeling of us being snug, safe and warm indoors, so indoors we were, arrayed in a seated circle (on chairs – how civilised!) with fire burning. Who will ever forget the wonderful dialogue between Michael as the Ancient One and Deniz as the Youth at the beginning? The ritual also included Glenda dancing, us all singing the 'Ancestors Breath' song, Elkie drawing back the curtains to connect us with those who have gone before, offerings of bread, salt, wine and honey to the ancestors and Mandy as our dark robed and silent Cailleagh. Although this ritual was suitably somber and introspective in parts, it was also the most light hearted and joyful Samhuin ritual I've experienced.

To summarise, here is my Triad for the weekend, which focused on what I felt were my main Joys:

The Joy of shared friendship The Joy of shared ritual The Joy of properly respecting the ancestors



Crafting in the Women's Circle. Photo: Elkie White

### The Dipterous Tale of the Thunder Egg By Todd William Dearing

"Dipterous?", you may say, in want of a dictionary at hand. I will save you the trouble: Dipterous (n): Having two wings (thank you, wiktionary.org). Okay... now that that's settled, this two-winged tale will now begin, and hopefully as it unfolds through this light-hearted narrative, the reason I have called it 'two-winged' will become clearer. I shall begin this tale with the circumstances of how I was called to write it, and work backwards from there...

There I was, standing in the kitchen at Mount Hyland Retreat Centre, chewing upon one thing or another, as you do in kitchens, when I was approached by an ovate. Now, ovates are supposed to be mysterious, and no doubt she had just been out somewhere deep in the forest, dodging leeches, having conversations with trees, and doing what ovates do best: bringing the wilds into civilisation – in this case, the kitchen. She approached as though from some hidden place, and said, direct and simple: "Dearest Todd, I beseech you, write the story of the thunder egg, write the story as you know it." What could I do but nod and agree.

So, I must now recall the series of events as I perceived them. Having attended the Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assemblies both this year and the last, I have some idea of this mysterious thunder egg, and how it came to our assemblies, and what it did there. Yet I cannot finish this story, because the story itself is not finished, as will also become clear as you read on.

Now, it so happened that earlier last year, 2014, a number of OBODies from the southern half of this planet gathered together on a mountain at a fabulous place called Binna-Burra. And as I sat around the outdoor fire pit there, with the many others who had come, our discussion about that and this and this and that unfolding, it came to the point where one particular wise druid called to the bearer of the thunder egg in a way like this (with much dramatic license added), "Thunder egg bearer, bring forth the thunder egg!" And so came a man of many travels, holding a large rock, and he plonked it right in the middle of our circle, on the fire pit, and stepped humbly back. Before he could return to his seat, the druid woman spoke again, "Tell us the story of this stone you bring."

"Ah!" said the man. "You want to hear the story, then listen closely, for it is a tale of angelic beings, and a long journey up a steep hill." Our ears were all rapt and ready. And so he told the story of how he acquired the thunder egg at the request of the druid woman. He spoke of a long journey from his distant home all the way north to the land of the Queen. But before reaching there, he stopped, at a crystal castle – because if you're going to find a thunder egg, it's likely to be there. Inside this crystal castle, he said, were women with flowing golden hair, smiling faces, and eyes like the stars. They were like angels, he told us. And he asked them, "Do you have any thunder eggs?"

"Yes, we do – travel to the top of that hill" said an angelic woman, smiling brightly as she pointed to the hill. He looked to the hill; it was no small mound. "Very good," said the man, and thanked them and left the castle to climb the hill. It was an arduous climb, but not one beyond his capacity. Dark, thunderous clouds gathered as he climbed. Eventually, he had scaled it to its peak, and behold! Before him, the thunder egg. Appearing much like an ordinary large round rock, it was certainly no ordinary rock – since angelic women would never mislead. So he acquired the rock, giving worthy exchange for it, then brought it with him to Binna-Burra.

So, there we were at the Assembly, and there was this very rock before us. Having all seen the rock and heard its tale, eyes in wonder, minds curious, hearts strangely trepidatious, we sat around it in silence for some time.

"What do we do with it?" someone asked.

After much discussion, it was decided we would leave it in the fire pit while the fire worked its magic into it – and hopefully, the heat of the fire would crack it open, and all the marvels of its mysteries would be revealed to us. Sounded good. So that's what we did, and it sat there for several days while the bards did their thing, then the ovates did their thing, then the druids did their thing, and amid all that we had a hoot of a time feasting and conversing, making music and wandering the rainforest, and so on, as druids do at these kinds of events.



The original Egg in the firepit at Binna-Burra, 2014. Photo: Mandy Gibson

And then it came to the end of our Assembly. The rock had not split. It sat there still. We had wanted to give a piece to the Chosen Chief and Scribe of the Order, but taking a 10kg rock in a suitcase back to England?! So it was decided the rock was not ready to hatch, yet. When the thunder egg bearer himself offered to host the next year's Assembly, then the answer came like day follows night: the rock could come next year also.

Thus at the conclusion of a happy time and sad parting, we all left Binna-Burra for our homes across Australia, New Zealand, or the UK, and the thunder egg was taken back to Dorrigo country, to sit for a year and a day (give or take a few months) at the altar of the thunder egg bearer. And it did.

Thus concludes the first part of this tale.

Now it so happens that the second part follows the first; coincidence or grand design, you be the judge. Either way, I will continue to tell the tale with as much dramatic exaggeration as I can get away with, for the sake of enticing my readers to remember this history which I was called upon to narrate by one cunning ovate.

The seasons had turned. OBODies of the Southern Hemisphere had once again gathered in peace and love. This time at Mount Hyland, and around the time of Samhain (which is a significant key to this part of the story). It was indeed the time of year where the Cailleach is near, breathing close to our hearts, listening through the night, wandering the dark, keeping things well in the hidden reality. It being the time where the veil is thin, and death is near. Not simply death as an end, but dissolution of the old, as a preparation for the coming rebirth of the new at the Winter Solstice. This was the time on the Wheel of the Year we met at. And at this time and place, the thunder egg was brought, after sitting for a year and a day (give or take a few months) and placed upon our assembly altar.

So we performed our planned activities. We gathered for ceremony, as bards, ovates, and druids, and we enjoyed sharing our passions, an eisteddfod, and also a very special Samhain ceremony. And amid all this, it came to the time for the women's and men's circles, on the third day. Somehow the veil was extra thin this particular day, because there was some misunderstanding in communication. The women went about their work. The men went off with the thunder egg, three hammers (one for wood, one for metal, and one for... stone.) Now, I cannot say what the women were doing for I do not know, and an ancient law forbids me voicing much about what it is men get up to when they gather together in the absence of women for sacred business, but I can say this, in poetical form:



The Cracked Egg on the altar at Motherland, 2015. Photo: Chris Parker At the high point of time, when the world was in rhyme with the veil sublime, with the wish, respectfully, to set dragon in rock free, there, with a bammer and a whack there was a large crack, thunder across polarities: a well lit bridge for eternities.

Later reports were that at the high point of the women's ceremony, the rock was also cracked – so, coincidence or random chance, you decide? Anyway, joyously did the men return with the egg in fragments, proud at having done their appointed task well. Laying the pieces out on the alter, spiralling from the centre, and showing the parts which contained two faery beings, and marvelling at the many other pieces; pieces with crystals of quartz, rose quartz, and many amazing shapes and colours. The druids gathered to look and gasp and marvel. Yet the marvel was soon to ebb, as a discussion was to follow which revealed a lack of consensus in group decision. There was a difference of understandings as to how and when the rock was to be broken, and as this was discussed, it became clear that group communication was of central importance. Hear I will add my own little view for what it's worth, that such is the wisdom of the druids: that problems become opportunities for greater solutions. As in alchemical ways, seemingly difficult or suffering situations can actually be worked with in transformative ways to bring about a greater good – this is a great skill and certainly worth developing. And yes, this skill was shown to come forth from the collective wisdom of the OBODies.

The next morning, the discussion was raised again, as we were deciding what to do with all the pieces of rock. There I was, sitting on a chair – as one tends to do at discussions – when like a flash an idea came to me – following on from the thought I woke from sleep with that morning: there is a mythic reality to this event also. I explained this to everyone present as follows: Samhain is the time of death, dissolution, in preparation for rebirth. We had worked with this time in ceremony, so the mythic patterns of Samhain were invoked, to be experienced and lived by us – quite naturally, and for our learning and growth. The shattering of the thunder egg into many parts became a mythic symbol of dissolution at the time of Samhain, and also through a dissolution (only briefly) in group communication and events around that. Following this comes the work of rebirth, of reintegration – solve et coagula, say the alchemists.

Then spoke the thunder egg bearer, telling of the myth of Osiris and his lover-sister Isis, and how she was to wander the land seeking and collecting his separated body parts so as to put him back together. (I had mentioned Humpty Dumpty, but the Osiris myth seems closer to the point.) The thunder egg bearer spoke of the importance of going out into the world and discovering the beauty; integrating the world, and our own selves, through beauty. Such was the elegant conclusion to the splitting of the thunder egg – we had created a mythic experience in response to a series of physical events. And it has been said that these are the two wings of the world: the mythical and the real; or in more common druid parlance: this world and the otherworld.

A couple of details remain before I conclude. The splitting of the pieces went as follows: the two faery pieces of rock were taken by a travelling bard to England, to the Chosen Chief and Scribe of the Order, who looked quite happy to receive them in the photograph I saw, and other pieces were taken to each major city or part of the land, as a way to distribute the energies of the stone. As for the remaining pieces, I do not know their outcome – it becomes a mystery at this point, not because I do not know what happened next, but because that is as far as the story currently goes. The future remains mysterious, and adventure is always around the corner. We shall all meet again at Beltainne next year – and here take note, that Beltainne, being opposite in the wheel of the year to Samhain, has complementary qualities.

So, in returning with our pieces of rock (for those who took some with them) we may see that the dragon of the thunder egg has worked some reintegration magic at our next Assembly.

Thus concludes part two of this story.

### From Samhain to Alban Hefin in 30 Days by Linda Marson

"Linda and Debs, take these two rocks across the seas to Glastonbury. There, present them to Philip and Steph as a token of our appreciation of their visit to Australia to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the modern Order." So spake the tribe at the Mt Hyland Southern Hemisphere Assembly in early May.

A month later, in brilliant sunshine on the lawn in front of St John's Church in Glastonbury we fulfilled our mission...in true bardic fashion:

To Philip and Steph we present With love from downunder sent A gift from the earth Of magical worth We honour you, fine lady and gent!



Debs was the element bearer for Fire and managed to keep her fire alight despite the gale!

A week earlier I had spent three days at the OBOD gathering 'around the Linden Tree' in Germany. Close to 100 OBODies came from Germany, Austria, the UK, Italy, The Netherlands and France. I was the lone Australian, honoured in the opening ceremony...'we have come from East and West, South and North, and from downunder to be here today.'

In German poems and songs down the ages the Linden (lime) tree has been described as a gathering place.



The first weekend in June is the annual OBOD summer gathering attended by about 200 OBODies, mainly from the UK, but also from Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand. Inspiring, joyous, tribal - three words that capture the essence of the experience.

Among the highlights for me was the Bardic Grove facilitated by Damh the Bard – a guided meditation, stories and vocal warm-ups culminating in an amazing series of cascading AWENs that echoed through the Town Hall and cascaded onto the streets of Glastonbury. Then the procession up the Tor for the Alban Hefin ceremony in gale-force winds followed in the evening by the Eistedfford.



Thus the theme of the gathering was reconnecting with the tradition of coming together, celebrating, exchanging and trading beneath the Linden tree. For the Germanic peoples it was the tree of Freya, the goddess of peace, of zest for life and sensuality.

Workshops, the opening and closing ceremonies, the beauty of the German forest and castle in which the gathering was held, and a toetapping, knee-thumping, concert by Damh the Bard were highlights for me.

Each person had been asked to bring soil from their home. All the small and sometimes large contributions (including soil and beach sand from Pottsville NSW) were mixed together and used to give everyone a linden tree seedling to be planted back home. I was touched by this simple, communal gesture which went to the heart of what Druidry is about. I would have loved to bring a seedling back to Australia but I had seven weeks of travel ahead of me, not to mention the hassle of trying to get a seedling back into Australia!

In the space of a month I went from Samhain in Australia to Alban Hefin in England – a heady journey and one I would do again in a heartbeat.

Once you get the idea that words are significant magical even - and actions can be symbolic and magical too, it can sometimes make difficulties.

I remember when the idea of the Thunderstone was first mentioned, I thought "These Aussies are crazy! A stone breaks and that is good? Surely not!" But then they explained, and we saw the beauty in it that the spirits can then dance out of the stone, and that everything grows and changes, breaks or separates or transforms, to form new beings, new configurations - from cell division to the life of stars and galaxies.

And so when Linda and Debs asked to meet us by the labyrinth in the garden of the church of St John the Baptist in Glastonbury High Street, to hand us two pieces of the Thunderstone, we were delighted. And there they stood - emissaries from the other side of the world, but feeling so close in heart, as if they were friends who lived around the corner. And as they handed us the stones, we saw the shining little white people dancing out of the them, and we bowed as we listened to their verse:

"To Philip & Steph we present, with love from downunder sent, a gift from the earth of magical worth. We honour you fine lady and gent!"

If we'd had bardic crowns in our pockets we would have crowned them both there and then!

## On the Delivery of the Thunderstone

by Philip Carr-Gomm





## The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids 15th Southern Hemisphere Assembly



## **BRIBIE ISLAND**

Golden beach, native bushland, close to Brisbane, Queensland Please join us on this beautiful Island

Friday 14th October to Tuesday 18th October

2016

## Hosted by Macadamia Grove

Cabin accommodation or camping

**Catered or self catered** 

For further information contact Sandra - macademiagrove@hotmail.com

For bookings contact Cherry - nimueart@bigpond.com

#### <u>Kokerbin</u>

with a well to the west

out in the middle of no place special there's a weight on the continent our third largest rock, shaping underground rivers while in its ephemeral meadows grow plants that flower after they die quietly overlooked, it's just another hill

Tiki Swain

Photo: wikipedia.com

"I've found that one hundred Druids will mean one hundred opinions; and a rich and stimulating broth that makes when we come together as an Order to add to and stir the cauldron of ideas and practice. I treasure the palpable joy hovering over OBOD gatherings: members seem bonded by the Celtic spirit of life-in-abundance that reminds us, 'Just because it's important doesn't mean that it must always be serious.'

As Druids it behoves us to live lightly on the earth, and this applies to our spirit as much as to our ecological responsibilities. Members will have their own memories of fun, joy and shared laughter leading seamlessly to deep ritual presence; it is part of the Druid dynamic in our spiritual dance through life. We make the course our own, and the current of Druidry makes us 'sib' - family worldwide. And I think our shared understanding of the world and our place in it must come from our ancestors' mythopoetic view of landscape. It is the true gift, and flows through our native myth like a river of enchantment.

Every culture on every continent had that view at one time, making Druidry relevant wherever in the world we practice. If land masses, streams, forests, rivers, trees and rock are all enspirited, as we are, then connection is not only possible, but the only sane and reasonable way to relate to the world: and this is a paradigm-shifting realisation for most of us."

Extract from "An Adventure and a Privilege" by Penny Billington, The Golden Seed: Celebrating 50 Years of OBOD, reproduced with permission.

## Druid Camp and the Summer of 2014

by Pete Blake



I'm a wanderer... there's nothing I like more than just to roam, to be at one with myself and the landscape, engaging my senses inwardly and outwardly. It doesn't matter if it's in a city with the hustle and bustle of the urban environment, or within the old growth of a tall tree'd forest with just the swaying trees and the birds singing to entrance me...

So it was that I found myself with backpack, with tent and with sleeping bag, on a plane, headed for the UK. This was to be my first venture to this part of the world, and with only three weeks to experience as much as I could it was a well co-ordinated trip, but of course with as much opportunity to explore as possible. I had chosen the European summer as my time to go, which is festival season in the UK, with my sights set firmly on Druid Camp while there.

From Heathrow Airport I ventured to beautiful Bath for my first few days, where I based myself while visiting sites such as Stonehenge and Avebury. Then from Bath to Gloucester, where I stayed in a quaint B&B on the outskirts of town which, like most of the places I stayed in, was older than Australia had even been colonised. From there it was time to make the bus trip to the small village of Westbury-on-Severn. Druid Camp itself is set on nearby farming land, on a field which plays host to several camps over the summer festival period.

One of the things you prepare yourself for when you pilgrimage by backpack and bus is the possibility of having to walk distances between destinations, when buses don't drop you off near your next doorstep. But I like this - being foreign to the landscape it allows me the chance to get familiar with the surroundings, and for the surroundings to become familiar with me. But, as chance would have it, someone else's bad timing was good timing for me. Alighting from the bus I was asked by a woman in a nearby car if anyone else had stepped off with me, it seems another camper had missed that bus trip, so she kindly offered to drive me up to the camp. As I was only blindly following a mud map of sorts, I took this opportunity, a drive of several minutes along a laneway lined with hedgerows, and with occasional oak trees and farm houses.

Upon arriving I recognised the large wooden ogham entrance sign I had become familiar with, thanks to the Druid Camp's website, and so here I finally was. Given I had no work or family life to escape from to get here I was among the early-bird arrivals, so a quick and easy sign in and off I went to find a home to pitch my little green tent for the next four days. Happily placed along the fence line, facing towards the adjacent wheat fields I now began to take in some of the other campers' efforts... the tents, the vans, the yurts... impressively decorated with plants and banners, even statues, and other creative displays... glamping, UK festival style.

Being newly acquainted with the land and being a Druid Camp newbie it's always these first moments that offer that defining perspective. So, as I had begun to look around I started to notice among those campers arriving and setting up their temporary village the bare skinned bodies soaking up the sun of this unusually warm UK summer. I'm not new or uncomfortable with nudity within either a spiritual or social setting, that of my own or that of others - after all it's not everyone who can say they have abseiled bare-assed naked down a rock face. But it wasn't something I had expected, and thus was my introduction to the maturity of the European embrace of 'clothing optional'. And well, our bodies are the living temples through which we connect to our Divine selves, with shapes and sizes reflective of the myriad of god and goddess forms found throughout the world.

With Druid Camp only just beginning to come alive I made my way around, observing and becoming familiar with the space, taking a few holiday photos, assisting with a yurt erection (as you do) and then heading for the only market stall now showing signs of life... the Witches. It has been commented to me that I always find myself drawn to witches, and I guess I do. It must be the wildness of spirit, a connection to the moonlit darkness, and the magical way they view the world which resonates in harmony with my own. I love the alchemy of herbs and plants, the magical blends of potions and elixirs for health and healing, reflecting the healthy relationships we should all strive to form with our natural plant life.

These witches were in actuality a lovely and welcoming couple of ladies, professionally trained herbalists, who go under the banner of Sensory Solutions. Like gypsies, their stall consisted of a travelling marquee and antique silver van eclecticly decorated with herbal products, an array of potted plants, books and seating to while your time as you drank herbal teas, magical elixirs and consumed herb filled treats. Not forgetting that one of their assistants hailed all the way from the northern suburbs of my city, making the world appear a few degrees smaller yet again. I spent time here both leisurely and in attendance at some of the various workshops they offered over the weekend. Slowly the camp began to fill. Temporary homes of tents and vans raised and offering shelter from the possibility of rain, until the camping area was a village of people from all walks of life, all there to celebrate a love of the land and their individual expressions of what it was to be a Druid in this modern time.

The horn was sounded and it was time to collectively gather in the main open area... we circled and we stood, hand in hand, around what was to be the altar for the main opening ceremony. An altar from which extended a river of small and rustically hand crafted pots, glazed in blues and greens, which we were all instructed we were to each take and fill with the seeds of what we were gifted with as the camp progressed.

Words were spoken, welcomes were made, and a sword was ceremonially thrust into the earth by warrioress... signalling Druid Camp had now officially begun...



Stay tuned for Pt 2 in the Beltane issue!

#### **Optimism**

We're in the kitchen doing dishes There's no detergent left I suck some water into the bottle and shake it Scrooging for the last dregs

Some little bubbles blow out

No great miracle you say But they hang in the air Float slowly around the kitchen Around our marveling heads Like a miniature universe And we are giants Or gods

Perhaps it was the humidity

(It probably was)

But I think ...

I prefer to think

That the bubbles remained there Floating Defying Newton

Just for us

Just to give us the sensation of being large in the universe

Just for once.

**Tina Merrybard** 

## Wild on Earth

(A personal journey)

We would like to invite you to come and be a part of a personal retreat connecting deeply into the sacred nature of Mother Earth: a retreat that supports you to rest, regenerate, and be inspired by the genius of the natural world. This retreat will be centered at Motherland Forest Retreat and we will take journeys/pilgrimages into unique and extraordinary parts of the land.

We will travel into wild landscapes of extraordinary quality and beauty where the spirit of the land is strong and healing. We will go to little known sacred cathedrals within the natural world. We can offer simple, pure and accessible potent practices to deepen and empower your personal connection to the spirit within yourself and the elements, giving you an authentic sense of belonging to the oneness of all.

This retreat is facilitated by Rosemary Yates and some highly skilled friends, who are wilderness guides with a difference: expert ecologists, meditation practitioners, massage therapist, creative arts facilitators. Please see website below for details.

#### PLEASE JOIN US FOR THIS DEEPLY NOURISHING AND INSPIRATIONAL RETREAT, FOCUSED TO EXPAND CONSCIOUSNESS TO DEEP WISDOM THAT IS INHERENT IN THE NATURAL WORLD IN WHICH YOU BELONG.

This lovingly balanced retreat is based in our comfortable heart based retreat/home. We can offer great food, likeminded company, relaxation and plenty of laughter! We will have to limit this journey to a small group, and we will journey into wild and wonderful places within walking distance of our forest home and a few spectacular journeys into the surrounding landscape of forests, escarpments, sacred groves and river country. We will have a comfortable vehicle with no major hikes, only gentle walks into great places.

COST: \$1250 ALL-INCLUSIVE FOR 5 DAYS (WE CAN OFFER ONLY TWO CONCESSIONS)

WHEN: November 26 – 30, 2015

Motherland Forest Retreat 43km North West of Dorrigo NSW Ph: 02 66578049 http://mt-hyland.com/

### Beating the Second Retreat of the Bard

Stark pink the ice light of dusk. Tree talons grip shadows tightly, resisting the allure of the afterglow. In silhouette, the light dissolves. Starlight drains through a dark colander, and one day ends its story with twice upon a time.

Night's manuscript describes in lonely black ink, the depths of a restless river. And on the far bank, the farthest reaches, candle flame souls flicker blue, Eternity the price for safe passage through dark uncharted waters.

The fog is perpetual, never really lifting. But islands of clarity appear like rafts of white foam in life's viscous soup, made real by imagination. And tomorrow, a blank page...

Peter Bull



## Upcoming Courses at Sacred Balance, New Zealand

#### PLANT SPIRIT SHAMANISM



#### February 20th & 21st, 2016 (10 am to 5 pm)

Plant spirit shamanism is a method of healing which works effectively with plants, herbs, trees and flowers in a way which modern herbalism has long since forgotten. It begins with connection – spirit-to-spirit, soul-to-soul – with the energy, the essence or the genius (intelligence) of a plant to make an ally, guide and ambassador of it so it can teach us about its healing powers and the healing of other plants. Before there ever were herbal encyclopaedias to consult or herbalists and medical doctors to prescribe for us (or tell us what is the 'right' or 'wrong' herb to use for a 'specific condition'), this shamanic art of communing with the plants was used successfully by our ancestors for thousands of years. Once you know its secret you will always be able to find your own medicines and heal yourself.

Having made a connection to the plants you will also understand that they are not limited merely to their use as medicines but can be employed more magically to make talismans, charms and perfumes for protection, success, love, wealth, happiness – or anything else you want – just as rainforest shamans have been doing for thousands of years. These are the pusangas (the famed "love medicine of the Amazon"), the seguros (protective amulets) and icaros (the songs of the plants) which become a powerful force in themselves.

This course is led by Ross Heaven, a shaman, healer and author of nearly 20 books on shamanism, plants and healing, including Plant Spirit Shamanism, The Hummingbird's Journey to God, Plant Spirit Wisdom, The Sin Eater's Last Confessions, Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia, and Cactus of Mystery. For more information on Ross visit www.thefourgates.org.

#### Day 1

Introductions (to each other and the course) Finding and meeting your plant spirit ally The visible face of spirit: understanding how nature communicates with us Hearing the song of the plant Conducting a healing for others using plant spirit medicine

#### Day 2

You can have anything you want! Identifying appropriate plants and making your own pusanga (love, fame, happiness, money, success, etc) Making a seguro (for protection, connection and ongoing healing) and journeying to its spirit for guidance Closing circle and Q & A session/Book signing

#### Please bring with you...

Two bottles with lids (a  $\frac{1}{2}$  litre plastic water bottle with top is fine)

A shamanic drum or rattle if you wish

Please bring your own alternative milk for beverages if you do not consume dairy.

There is a lovely café nearby for lunch, or you may bring a lunch that can be stored in our refrigerator.

#### **Programme Cost**

The cost of this programme is \$320 inclusive of 2 days of training, as well as tea/coffee and snacks. A 50% deposit is required at the time of booking via email to secure your place in this limited numbers event. The remaining balance is to be paid 2 weeks prior to the workshop. Direct deposit is preferred, Sacred Balance Ltd, BNZ Hamilton. The account number is 02 0316 0473744 00, please use "plant spirit" in the particulars and your last name in the reference field.

#### Venue

Sacred Balance Holistic Health 32 O'Neill Street, Claudelands, Hamilton (Diagonal to Claudelands Event Centre) For a map and parking information, please see http://www.sacredbalance.co.nz/

To book contact Jenn Howell, jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz

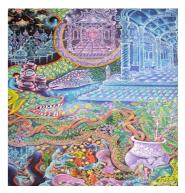
#### The Four Gates Shamanic Healing Diploma An introduction to The Heaven Method™ of Soul Therapy™

#### A training programme to deepen your understanding and practice of shamanism

#### and bring healing to yourself and others.

#### Cambridge, New Zealand

February 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016



Shamanism is the world's oldest psycho-spiritual tradition, predating our earliest civilisations by thousands of years. It is practised in every country and culture of the world, where the role of the shaman has always been - and remains - that of healer, sage, seer, ceremonialist, counsellor and guide for his or her community. The shaman deals in ecstasy, balance, harmony and vision, bringing power, wisdom, health and new consciousness to those who he or she serves.

The Four Gates Shamanic Healing course is a thorough introduction to the world of the shaman - his ways of seeing, healing and being - and the fullest shamanic healing course available, teaching you all you need to know to begin working shamanically and offering healing to others or benefitting from its practices yourself.

During the course, participants are introduced to the key issues of spirit extraction work, energy balancing, and soul retrieval from a shamanic perspective. They learn how soul loss occurs and how to track a soul and bring it back to a person suffering its loss. They explore how this can be effective in working with survivors of abuse, accidents, people who have undergone surgery and other emotional and physical traumas, as well as people dealing with issues such as addiction.

Each participant will act as a shaman to learn these techniques and will also have the opportunity to receive healing themselves.

#### **Programme Facilitation**

The course is led by Ross Heaven, a therapist, shaman and the author of almost 20 books on shamanism, healing and spirituality stemming from more than 20 years of research and experience with healers from a variety of cultures. He is assisted where appropriate by other practitioners as well as support staff who have undertaken shamanic workshops and soul retrievals with Ross and who understand your needs and your training. Jenn Howell, who trained under Ross Heaven in Spain, will also be facilitating the course, as well as hosting it. She has begun her own healing and teaching journey, and runs Sacred Balance Holistic Health in Hamilton.

#### **Course Requirements and Materials**

Please bring a drum and a rattle, a journal and writing materials. It is also useful (but not essential) to bring a pendulum, four quartz crystals and a smudge stick for cleansing.

No prior knowledge of or involvement in shamanic healing is needed for this course and all are welcome. No special purchases are required and there is unlikely to be a need for other expenditure.

#### The Venue

The programme is set on a 3 acre organic lifestyle block in rural Waikato, a 5 minute drive from Cambridge and 10 minutes from Hamilton. Please arrive before our start time of 10am on day one. The course ends at about 4pm on the last day. You may choose to camp on the land or sleep marae style for a small fee, or there are a variety of accommodation options to suit most budgets within a few minutes' drive. Please email Jenn for a list of what is available.



#### **Programme Cost**

The cost of this programme is \$850 inclusive of lunches and dinners, materials and training.

#### Have Questions or Need More Information?

About the venue, accommodation options, travel etc, email Jenn, our host at: jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz About the course, email ross@thefourgates.org

#### THE MEDICINE WHEEL OF THE FOUR GATES AND THE JOURNEY BEYOND FEAR TO EMPOWERMENT



March 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016 (10 am to 5 pm)

The medicine wheel is a universal symbol known in all cultures as a means of gazing deeply into our souls and finding our hidden truths, our blockages and our means of healing them and moving forward in our lives. It shows us where we have been, where we are now and where, in accordance with our unique soul purpose, we should be heading. In the medicine wheel used in this course, life begins in the East (represented by the body and the element of fire). It stands for passion, creativity, fearlessness and adventure. In terms of the life journey it is the part of the wheel we occupy from around 0-14 years of age.

In the South are the emotions (represented by water) and the questions of identity, truth, love and power. It is the part of the wheel we occupy from around 14 to maybe 45 years of age and in this phase we are concerned with finding ourselves, becoming independent and gathering true power around us.

In the West is the mind (Air), concerned with clarity, vision and true direction: making the most of our lives. We meet this stage in our middle years when true vision, combined with the power we have already accumulated can make for an amazing combination, capable of lifting us above the mundane world.

In the North (represented by Earth) we end our journey with old age, where spirit and matter (the life lived and the enrichment of the soul) fuse to prepare us for our next stage of existence: the life beyond death.

In a well-balanced soul all of the elements and 'bodies' of the self (Fire/physicality, Water/emotions, Air/mind, and Earth/spirit) should be equally balanced and the journey around the wheel should be effortless, giving rise to a fit, healthy, well-adjusted and well-prepared person. The problem is that this is rarely the case because we tend to get stuck and unbalanced in any one of these phases. The reason for this is that there are four gateways we must pass through to transition to each next stage. The gateway between the East/the body/passion and the South/the emotions/the true self for example is courage. If we have the courage to move forward into independence we thrive but many become stuck in their fears instead, giving rise to many possible problems – from immaturity to anorexia. The purpose of this workshop is to discover where we are in the wheel of life, to confront and release our blockages and to move forward into a more fulfilling life, at the centre of the wheel: the still place. The course uses drum journeys, meditations and practical exercises to guide you towards wholeness. It is led by Ross Heaven, a shaman, healer and author of nearly 20 books on shamanism and healing, including The Hummingbird's Journey to God, Plant Spirit Wisdom, The Sin Eater's Last Confessions, Shamanic Quest for the Spirit of Salvia, and The Journey to You. For more information on Ross visit www.thefourgates.org

#### Day 1

Introductions (to each other and the course) Mapping our souls to find out where we are The first gateway: knowing our fears and letting them go The second gateway: finding authentic power

#### Day 2

The third gateway: the vision quest – finding a true vision for our lives The fourth gateway: connecting with our soul purpose as a guard against old age and fatigue The centre: coming back to ourselves by expressing commitment to purpose Closing circle and Q & A session/Book signing

#### Please bring with you...

A shamanic drum or rattle if you wish A notepad and pens Please bring your own alternative milk for beverages if you do not consume dairy. There is a lovely café nearby for lunch, or you may bring a lunch that can be stored in our refrigerator.

#### **Programme Cost**

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#### Venue

Sacred Balance Holistic Health 32 O'Neill Street, Claudelands, Hamilton (Diagonal to Claudelands Event Centre) For a map and parking information, please see http://www.sacredbalance.co.nz/ To book contact Jenn Howell, jenn@sacredbalance.co.nz

## Druidry-related Events & Businesses in Australia

#### Newcastle Area Meetup

Expressions of interest are invited for a meetup, with a view to possibly starting a Seed Group. People from the Central Coast, Hunter Valley and all areas north - Anyone close that is!!!!

If you're interested, contact Rollick Ph: 0423 626 290 Email: bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au

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	www.oaksonginstitute.com	phone: 0405 115 279 📑 还

#### **BARDIC GATHERING**

What is a Bard? Bards deliver the magical art of storytelling, poetry, plays and song. The Druid Bard of ancient times spent 12 years learning the art, and the stories were orally passed down with the word never written. They depicted events and special times and the Bards were greatly respected.

Today's Bard is similar but now their word is written. They are storytellers, poets, playwrights or songwriters who enjoy delivering their art to a receptive audience. Bards tell stories of the land, our ancestors, places, animals, families, events; I could go on .... Come along and listen....

On the first Saturday of each month between 10.30am and 12.30pm, listen to present day Bards share their art. Hear the works of others come alive with the magic of voice and presentation.

We meet at The Sacred Tree Cafe 19 Caloundra Road, Landsborough

No monetary fees involved - just lots of fun and enjoyment

Contact 0429 939 120 or visit <u>www.nt2012.com.au</u> for more information.



Hear the voice of the Bard! Who Present, Past, and Future sees; Whose ears have heard The Holy Word That walk'd amongst the ancient trees

- William Blake – Songs of Experience



WiseEarth Education Earth connection programs in South-East Queensland wiseeartheducation.com/about/

## **Upcoming Events**

#### Spring Ritual Date Claimer

Saturday 12th September

Details for this ritual will be available on the WiseEarth Education Facebook page (search WiseEarth Education), and in the next e-news. It will be a celebration of spring and all that it brings for us in our inner and outer lives.

#### Work that Reconnects Workshop

Saturday November 21st, 9am - 4pm, Northey Street City Farm, Windsor

This workshop is inspired by the work of Deep Ecologist and Eco-philosopher Joanna Macy and is aimed at anyone who cares for the Earth, themselves and our collective well-being.

Through a series of experiential processes we will:

- Connect with one another and our inner responses to the condition of our world
- Connect with our passion for all life and our power to protect it
- Be empowered and inspired to take new action for change
- Feel renewed and supported in our work

Cost: \$85 / \$65 Concession/Health Care Card

#### Women as Healers of Mother Earth

Early 2016, More information to come

This workshop will explore how the cycles of the moon, seasons, our lives and our menstrual cycles can teach us about living with the rhythms of nature, and some ways that women can foster a deeper heart connection with Mother Earth, and hence participate in her healing.

More information: wiseeartheducation@gmail.com or murraycarew@gmail.com





"Making the decision to focus on druidry and specifically OBOD druidry was a turning point in my spiritual development. Like many other seekers I'd dabbled in several other forms of spirituality but this is the one that really 'spoke' to me and held my interest and attention. It felt comfortable, like home. I could still appreciate other forms of spiritual expression but I had no need of them. Narrowing the field directed the energy deeper. I became focussed and more present. Divisions between 'spiritual' and 'mundane' faded away as each moment became a thing of value. And as values shifted so did my perception of deity, until one day I woke up blissfully aware that what others called god had become life itself. By life I mean life and death and all other dualities. Celebrating the Wheel of Life accelerated this process. Adapting the OBOD rituals to the Southern Hemisphere, without losing their mystical significance, secured the awareness that we live, we die and we are reborn, just as surely as the sun rises, sets, and rises again. So obvious you have to wonder how people miss it yet so profound in its implications, the Celebrations would help me to understand that life is precious and worth fighting for."

Extract from Article by Elkie White in The Golden Seed: Celebrating 50 Years of OBOD, reproduced with permission.



Celebrancy - Brisbane area - Amanda Gibson

Commitments, Vow Renewals, Blessings, Clearings, Transitions and Women's Circles

Web: ajgcelebrant.wordpress.com Email: ajgcelebrant@optusnet.com.au





## Need some time out from your day to day life?

## Want to escape the City and experience the Outback Heart of our ancient land?

### Interested in helping with a permaculture self-sufficiency project and learning new skills?

Experienced WWOOF host, and OBODie Ngatina, and her family, would like to invite members seeking a time of retreat to consider their home in the Northern Flinders Ranges (SA).

- The stunning ancient landscape and vast starry or moonlit nights are perfect for contemplation and fostering a connection with Spirit of Place.
- Experience living in an heritage listed small town (pop. 20) in a remote location
- Private accommodation in an historic inn first built in the 1870s
- Visit places of significance in the deeply powerful Flinders Ranges
- Help with an arid lands permaculture project learn skills for self-sufficiency
- Flexible arrangements either WWOOF for full food and board or be more autonomous as suits your needs.

For more details about our home and project visit <u>http://casaindomitus.wordpress.com</u> or contact Ngatina on <u>wwoof@sylvanius.net</u> or 0429795002 to discuss options.



## And finally, a Modern Triad...

"I wrote this triad after hearing about Bob Brown's call for folks to engage in civil disobedience to protect the latest threatened bit of ancient forests."

#### A Triad of Gifts:

Give your most heartfelt mutiny to the machine, and to those caught in its trance Give compassion, however it lives in you, to every being in this wounded world Give obedience to none but your soul

#### Murray Carew

Read more at Murray's brand new blog - isibility.wordpress.com



Text sourced from Druidry.org

Although we would think of **Imbolc** as being in the midst of Winter, it represents in fact the first of a trio of Spring celebrations, since it is the time of the first appearance of the snowdrop, and of the melting of the snows and the clearing of the debris of Winter. It is a time when we sense the first glimmer of Spring, and when the lambs are born. In the Druid tradition it is a gentle, beautiful festival in which the Mother Goddess is honoured with eight candles rising out of the water at the centre of the ceremonial circle.

The Goddess that ruled Samhuinn was the Cailleach, the Grey Hag, the Mountain Mother, the Dark Woman of Knowledge. But by Imbolc the Goddess has become Brighid, the Goddess of poets, healers and midwives.

And so we often use Imbolc as a time for an Eisteddfod dedicated to poetry and song praising the Goddess in her many forms. The Christian development of this festival is Candlemas - the time of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. For years successive Popes had tried to stop parades of lit candles in the streets of Rome at this time, until seeing that it was impossible to put a stop to this pagan custom, they suggested that everyone enter the churches so that the priests could bless the candles.

Time moves on, and in a short while we come to the Spring Equinox - the time of equality of day and night, when the forces of the light are on the increase. At the centre of the trio of Spring Festas, **Alban Eilir** (the Light of the Earth) marks the more recognisable beginnings of Spring, when the flowers are beginning to appear and when the sowing begins in earnest.

As the point of psychological development in our lives it marks the time of late childhood to, say, 14 years - Imbolc marking the time of early childhood (say to 7yrs).

We are in the Spring of our lives - the seeds that are planted in our childhood time of Imbolc and Alban Eilir will flower from the Beltane time of adolescence onwards as capacities and powers that will help us to negotiate our lives with skill and accomplishment.



