

SERPENT STAR

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



LUGHNASADH 2017

Welcome to the Lughnasadh 2017 issue of SerpentStar!

Once again we move into a new calendar year, and begin the revelries of harvest time. Macadamia Grove had the joy of playing with fire for a second time, pictures on this page and elsewhere.

Lots of neat stuff for you in this issue - poetry from wyverne and Chris Parker, Part 2 of James Howell's thought-provoking (and very topical) article, William Rattley shares another musing with us, we welcome the Song of the Eastern Sea Seed Group to the group listings, OBOD's new Portuguese language magazine *Ophiusa* to the publications list, two new celebrants (Jenneth Graham and Pamela Meekings-Stewart) to our advert section, and there's info on the 2017 Assembly which will be held in Sydney in August. And if that's not enough, we debut a bursting new New Zealand section - 'Aotearoa'! It's my hope that the marvellous content offered by our NZ cousins will inspire other groups around the Southern Hemisphere to send us some content - Brisa del Sur and Cradle Seed Group I'm looking at you!!

NOW, there's also an announcement to make this issue. For those of you who don't already know, 2017 is the twentieth year of SerpentStar! Back in 1997 the first ever issue was released to mark Alban Hefin, and there's a scan of it on the archive page of the SerpentStar website. The archive page is growing, and my aim is to have the entire back catalogue of SerpentStar available in electronic form by the end of the year. More on this will be announced on the website and Facebook page in the next couple of weeks.

That's not even the best bit. To mark the official anniversary of the birth of this lovely little publication, I will be releasing a one-off FIFTH issue of SerpentStar this year, at Alban Hefin, which will be all about the last twenty years. Content for this special issue will be welcomed all year, but please be specific if you send me something - whether it's for the next SerpentStar or for the anniversary special.



That's it for this issue. More announcements to come soon. Stay tuned!!

With all joy, Mandy /\

SerpentStar, Lughnasadh 2017

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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All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.

OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere

Groves and Seed Groups

Brisa del Sur

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

The Cradle Seed Group

The Cradle Seed Group is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Group currently has only one Druid and three Bards 'in the making'. One area of focus is exploring other spiritual philosophies and understanding the synergies. Other areas of focus are to 'convert' traditional Ogham into the indigenous South African trees and also to understand and use indigenous medicinal plants and trees. All the eight yearly festivals are celebrated, all in solo as we are spread through South Africa – Johannesburg in Gauteng, Haenertsburg in Limpopo. Full moon meditations are conducted for peace and harmony. Email debby@triskel.co.za for details.



The Golden Wattle Seed Group

We are a group of OBOD members living in South Australia, with a few members from different druid backgrounds. We are open to interested people who would like to experience or learn about Druidry within our seed group, or in general, and we hold group rituals for the Equinoxes, Solstices and Celtic fire festivals. We also work magic together for world peace, environmental issues, political issues etc. We put emphasis on reciprocity and hospitality in ritual to reaffirm our reverent and respectful relationship with nature, with the spirits of place, the ancestors and deity; offering libations and natural foodstuffs to the earth mother during ritual. Any interests, questions or enquiries you can email Kacey Stephensen at bardofthegreenwood@gmail.com or William Rattley at wildra2003@yahoo.com.au

The Grove of the Summer Stars

The Grove of the Summer Stars (Pukerua Bay, Wellington, New Zealand) celebrates the eight great Seasonal Festivals throughout the wheel of the year. Each of these Druid festivals is held as a community festival and meeting point for diverse creeds and cultures to honour the turning of the year and give thanks for its abundance. The Equinox and Solstice festivals are open to all while the four Quarter Festivals are for Grove members only. We meet at The Woolshed/Grove of the Summer Stars at 11am on the nearest Sunday to the particular festival, except for Beltane and Samhain which are held at night. Lughnasadh is held on the Sunday during Druid Camp even though it is a little early, ie the third week of January (Wellington Anniversary weekend). Spring Equinox is celebrated at Stonehenge Aotearoa, an astronomically correct replica of Stonehenge Albion, in Carterton, New Zealand. On the day (or night) people can bring stories, poems, songs, dances, readings and insights etc to contribute to the theme. The ceremonies are followed by potluck feasting to which everyone contributes. Contact: pamela@thewoolshed.com

Macadamia Grove

Welcomes and is inclusive of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales OBOD members who wish to join in with any activities. We celebrate the eight festivals of the year, and organise other events depending on members' interests. As Brisbane is a central meeting point most of our events are held close to the city, often in the bushland of Mt Coot-tha. Non-members with an interest in Druidry are able to attend some rituals by prior arrangement. Contact Sandra: 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 receive a warm welcome. In 2017 we will be celebrating the seasonal festivals on the following dates: Autumn Equinox – Mar 18, Samhuin – Apr 29, Winter Solstice – Jun 24, Imbolc – Jul 30, Spring Equinox – Sep 24, Beltane – Oct 29 and Summer Solstice – Dec 17. If you would like to join us please send an email to Elkie at whitelk@bigpond.com - our website is www.themelbournegrove.org

Song of the Eastern Sea Seed Group

Situated on the Central Coast of NSW, we invite OBOD members and guests to join us as we celebrate the eight festivals of the Wheel of the Year and explore nature and Druidry together. We have a number of projects in the planning, including a Sacred Grove planting, working on environmental issues as a group, and supporting our local community. Contact Chris at chris@druidryaustralia.org

Wollemi Seed Group

Hunter Valley and surrounds. We are gathering on the fourth Sunday of each month at Buchanan close to the expressway. Anyone is welcome and we would love visitors, for details contact Rollick on 0423 626 290 or bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au

Useful websites for SH OBODies:

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

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

Druidenstein (German) www.feuersprung.de

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

Il Calderone (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

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

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

Pagan Transitions

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

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

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



Lughnasadh Circle offerings, Macadamia Grove
Pix by Mandy Gibson



The Venus Trumpet

by wyverne



*in the afternoon garden
proudly is trumpeted
a trumpeting flower
soft whiskered
and gilded with
pollen*

*blows cool jazz
from dusk to dark*

*then snores a stream
of meme-bearing ripples
into the ether
all the way to venus
from dusk to dawn*

*now in the glittering morning
amid myriad shattering collisions
of sharp-shrieking sparkles
of light-smash a-scatter from
silver-steel spangles
of facets of ice crystals
frenetically splintering
radiant rainbows
into sharp shards of
new dawn day dazzle*

*i see my sylphish self
still as a stone
silent as listen
little as leaf
watching frost forming*

*and seeing frost forming
i don't see me
seeing me
seeing frost forming*

*on the not yet purring
lip of the still
sleeping trumpet*

*i just stand in the sunscream
the mistbead in my hand
scattering shattering sparkles of
clattering crystals of light
into the golden
howl of the morning sky*

Peace? Pt 2

By James Howell

Why do we have wars? (Continued)

Ingrained warriorism in our nature and in our culture. Combat is a tremendous natural high. The adrenaline-induced joy of battle is real, if sick. I felt it myself on a couple of occasions in Viet Nam in 1970. The unholy pleasure of conquest lurks in all of us. In a moment of reverie in Cambodia, I found myself relishing the fact that we were on that piece of ground only by right of superior force of arms. The communists did not want us there, but we were too strong for them to do anything about it that day.

The popularity of ridiculously violent movies and computer games is an indicator of this dark streak in us. In my opinion, these movies and games have the very pernicious effect of desensitising the audience or players to violence and suffering.

Team sports are sublimations of war, and can help diffuse the urge to real war by providing a wholesome outlet for our innate aggression. They also teach valuable lessons about getting along with a group. Some sports, such as boxing, smack more of cock fights than sport and are, in my opinion, unhealthy.

In some ways, honouring of the war dead is a very appropriate remembrance of the sincere sacrifice of the millions of people who have been fed to the meat grinder and to whom, in many cases, we do owe the freedoms we enjoy today. However, those remembrance ceremonies almost perfectly ignore the profound evil of war, and ignore the either clownish ineptitude or manifest evil of those leaders who got the wars started in the first place. Healthy patriotism and love of community can be twisted into narrow nationalism and xenophobia. Remembrance of past suffering should not conjure up dreams of noble sacrifice and glory, but should dampen enthusiasm for future wars. I do believe that purely defensive wars are appropriate and even obligatory.



The scriptures of all three of the Abrahamic religions, which make a significant contribution to the cultural base for a large portion of the world population, include exhortations to war. This introduces at least a tolerance to warfare into many of the moderate, mainstream versions of the faiths. For example, Westminster Abbey contains the bones of many warriors, as well as the bones of many saints. This cultural background subtly affects the thinking of many, even those who do not actively practice their inherited religion.

From Chapter 5 to Chapter 7 in the Book of Deuteronomy, the Bible quickly switches from prohibiting murder to demanding the total destruction of all the Canaanites.¹³

The Koran has many admonitions to war. To cite three: 8:12 “... *I shall cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads, strike off the very tips of their fingers!*”¹⁴, 8:30 “*Make war on them until idolatry shall cease and God’s religion shall reign supreme...*”¹⁵, and 8:65 “*Prophet, rouse the faithful to arms...*”¹⁶

In Matthew 10:34b, Jesus advised his disciples that “*I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.*”¹⁷

Religious extremism. From the Arab conquests of the 7th century to the Crusades, to the protestant/catholic wars of Europe, to modern jihadism, the bellicose effects of extreme, fundamentalist, inerrant religion are too obvious and well known to need review. These dangerous forms of religion tend to thrive in impoverished environments, where the present life is so unpleasant that any hope of a radiant next life is overwhelmingly appealing. Feelings of victimisation from cultural domination also contribute to extremist religion. Religious extremism is not the sole motive for any war, but it often feeds the fervour of the troops and is used by those in power to foster their objectives.

Herd mentality. Most people will go with the flow and support the war presented to them by their leaders, both because they are afraid to make waves and because they are too apathetic to find out what is really going on.



Conversely, leaders can be pressured into unwise action by the fears and demands of their constituents. For example, in 2001 after the World Trade Centre was attacked, great wisdom and strength would have been required in a US President for him to do something subtle and smart rather than grandiose and ill-advised.

What changes are needed to cause peace?

Because of the nature of their world, our ancestors had to fight. We must change the nature of our world, of ourselves, so that fighting is not only unnecessary, but is socially unacceptable.

Change must come from bottom up, because it is not likely to come from the top down. The elites benefit too much from the current system to be willing to change it. We must come to the condition described in Jeremiah 31:33-34, *"...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts...No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me..."*⁷⁸ Unfortunately, this condition may require great trauma to bring it about. Willingness to accept institutionalised killing and theft is the sine qua non for wars.

If everyone strictly followed the Golden Rule, and its inverse formulation: *"Do not do unto others that which you would not have done to yourself"*, conflict would become very rare. To bring such a situation into existence, many things must happen.

Ignorance must be eliminated by independent, fact based, and propaganda-free universal education.

Wealth inequality must be reduced. Our economies cannot continue to be based on a paradigm that requires constant 'growth' in Gross National Product or in population to be successful. Trees do not grow to the sky. A financial system that requires constant expansion of the numbers to service its debt is not sustainable.



Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria, 19 and 20 July 2006

In Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, John Perkins points out the deceptiveness of Gross National Product (GNP) as a measure of the condition of a country.¹⁹ However, GNP is a principal metric used by central banks and governments to determine economic policy. GNP is just a money number that does not measure true wealth. Both inflation and wasteful spending will make GNP go up, even though no gain in wealth has occurred. A cruise missile is nothing but a destroyer of wealth, both in its manufacture and in its use; but, building one increases GNP. Money is not wealth.

Population levels must come into balance with what can be sustainably supported by the Earth. Individuals need an internalised, voluntary ethic of small families, and a spirit of integration with rather than domination of nature. Some religious denominations desperately need to change their doctrine on birth control, but should do so because of their own recognition of error, not because of external coercion. Developing cultures must cease to consider large families as indicators of wealth and virility. Ignorance about birth control and about the detrimental effects of overpopulation must be eliminated.

Religious tolerance is essential. Each person has a right to follow their own path of spiritual development as long as their actions do not encroach upon the rights of another. All religions have good and evil in their doctrines and their application of doctrine.

In summary, here is a partial list of the principles that I believe would bring about peace if scrupulously followed, especially by governments:

- o Do not kill
- o Do not steal
- o Do not lie
- o Honour your word
- o Fulfil your valid responsibilities
- o Avoid causing distress to others
- o Be as productive as you can be for the good of all
- o Share wisely and compassionately
- o Do not take unfair advantage
- o Be unbiased and fair in judgement and action
- o Be kind to all, respecting each person as a spirit clothed in flesh and trying to function under difficult circumstances

To be able to routinely implement these principles, as a species we must become much more compassionate.

What can I do to encourage peace?

Amend my thoughts and actions.

What else?

Notes

13. The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version, Second Printing 1983 (Indianapolis, Indiana: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., 1908, 1917, 1929, 1934, 1957, 1964 and 1982), pp. 184 and 186.
14. The Koran, translated by N. J. Dawood (London, Penguin Group, 1916, 1959, 1966, 1968, 1974, 1990, 1993, 1997), p. 127.
15. Ibid. p. 129.
16. Ibid. p. 131.
17. The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version, Second Printing 1983, op. cit., p. 995.
18. Ibid. p. 809.
19. Perkins, John, Confessions of an Economic Hit Man, First Paperback Edition (Croydon, England: Elbury Publishing, a Random House Group company, 2005, 2006), p. 16.



The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids

16th Southern Hemisphere Assembly



The grip of Winter may still have its hold but the first signs of Spring will be starting to shine through. As the lambing begins and the days slowly grow longer, all members of the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids are invited to come together and celebrate Imbolc at the 16th OBOD Southern Hemisphere Assembly.

Friday 11th August - Tuesday 15th August 2017

Pennant Hills NSW

Beautiful bushland backing onto National Parks.
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Hosted By - The Song of the Eastern Sea seed group

Dormitory accommodation or camping

Catered or self catered

For more information contact Chris – chris@druidryaustralia.org

Book online - www.druidryaustralia.org/assemblies/

Lughnasadh
by Chris Parker



*The Sun King standing tall and proud
Shrouded in gold, he sings out loud
His beautiful song calls out to the Goddess
A picture of beauty, with her love he is blessed*

*Winding a spiral in through the fields
She is delighted by the abundant yields
They greet each other with a passionate embrace
Together they marvel at this wonderful place*

*Her belly with child, swells as the land flourishes
His face starts to age, it's his sacrifice that nourishes
He gives freely of his life so we all will survive
For without his blood the land will not thrive*

*His death brings rebirth as we cut the first grains
Let's bake the first loaf and then store the remains
So that the best is kept for planting in the Spring
The cycle will continue and abundance it will bring*

*So on this night let us feast and celebrate
Think back on our lives it's time to contemplate
Then we must prepare for the darkness to come
There's still work to do, it's only just begun*

Rites of Passage

by William Rattley

For those of you who may not be familiar with the hard facts: 76% of the suicide rate in 2011 were men, and it is now estimated that 19,995 men committed suicide between 2004 and 2014. These are troubling figures. I wanted to start with these figures because they are the end result of a social dialogue that, though changing slowly, is not changing fast enough.

Men of all ages, though predominately the youth, are struggling to cope with the pressures of day to day life and the social expectations of what it means to be a 'man'. While there are some community supports and mentoring groups out there, generally these are few and far between or require sitting on a waiting list, a criminal record, or a reference of some description to be a part of.

Yet what people often do not speak about is the issue of men also being victims of domestic violence. Research has now shown that one in three men experience domestic violence to some degree. The rates amongst same-sex couples are equally troubling.

So where does all this stem from? The factors are many, but largely we find that men are raised under stereotypes and gender expectations as self-destructive and damning as those forced on women. In addressing misogyny, we also need to address misandry. In addressing the objectification of women, we also need to address the objectification of men.

How does any of this, have anything to do with Druidry? Or Paganism in general?

I attended a Domestic & Family Violence forum about two weeks ago. It was a wonderfully delivered presentation, if confronting. What they spoke about was re-writing the stories that our young people grow up with...and breaking the damaging expectations that shape their responses to situations. I like this sentiment...because as a practicing Bard storytelling is one of my favourite things to do, and I firmly believe that we as Bards, as Ovates, and as Druids, have the capacity to help tell a more affirming and constructive story. We have an opportunity to mentor our brothers, our nephews, our sons, our fathers, our mates, into creating a truly self-actualised experience of life that isn't based on shame, or fear, or anger.

Yet I want to clarify: the story we hopefully choose to tell, and choose to live, and choose to teach, is not one of denial. Anger is a part of the human experience, as is shame and fear...and they are not things to be ignored. That's when emotional explosions happen, breakdowns happen, depression sets in.

What our story should be teaching is constructive and mindful ways of managing these emotions and responses, in a way that doesn't hurt others...or ourselves. And we need to stop simply casting blame around in a blanket fashion.

Men are raised with certain expectations piled on them:

- They must win.
- They must be successful.
- They must be employed (even if the job sucks).
- They must be self-sufficient (even if that means denying help from others).
- They must either work out, or have a toned or solidly built body.
- They cannot show affection or it can be construed as predatory (either to friends, family members or partners).
- They cannot want affection or they are considered weak and needy/childish.

The list goes on and on. Add to this list the fanaticism of some fanatically feminist groups to paint all men, guilty or not, as violent, uncontrollable monsters...and you can see how this all spirals out of control very quickly.

I've heard all too often on forums, on social media and in general discussions with my male friends that they always feel as though they are judged simply for talking to a person of the opposite sex. Men are also harshly criticised for choosing to work in any profession involving children... as they often get immediately criticised as being potential paedophiles. Which then means children often are denied positive male role-models, because men are too afraid of doing a single thing wrong and would rather not take the risk to begin with. Even if it is a profession they find plays to their strengths. These judgements and criticisms are often not only made women, towards men... but men can often be their own brothers' worst enemies. Amongst gay men there is an avalanche of stereotypes, labels and expectations.

One of the most damaging of these labels in my opinion is the oft-quoted 'straight-acting'. Firstly, this is damaging because if you're 'acting' you're not being yourself. Secondly, it is damaging because to be 'straight-acting' seems to point towards assimilating the very worst of masculine stereotypes - including all the ones that do our straight brothers, sons, nephews, fathers, cousins and partners so much harm. That is why you see an outrageous obsession with youth and physicality prevalent in the gay community. If you're not at the gym five days of the week you're either not man enough, or not gay enough...depending on who you talk to.

So...how do we as Bards, as Ovates, as Druids address these issues? Firstly, I feel we need to admit something to ourselves, as applicable to women as it is to men: that gender and sexuality are not fixed or static things. They are individual, diverse and fluid.

In making that first important step...we can then break the strangle-hold that hyper-masculinity and hyper-femininity hold over us.

And pagans are not without a plethora of inspiring figures to draw from in order to shatter these stagnant social expectations and damaging gender 'norms'. Indeed most of the male deities in Welsh, Celtic and Irish mythology had the gift of transformation and magic.

Cernunnos changes throughout the wheel of the year. Gwydion was transformed by Math to learn the lessons he needed to learn...and to pay the price for his mistakes. The Green Man changes as much as Cernunnos. Colour, foliage and form. Gwion Bach transformed over and over to escape Cerridwen and then to be rebirthed as Taliesin.

By retelling these stories in a way that is applicable to the here and now, we can show our young people that they have permission to change, and grow, and be individual and inspired. But these figures also teach us what not to do. Zeus was the king of Olympus, but he was a randy old man...and he was, at least to Ares, a terrible father. In many ways Zeus outright despised him, and when people think of Ares they think of a raving warrior - the 'bane of mortals' cutting his way through a battlefield howling for blood. What people often overlook is that the only reason Ares lost his temper to such a degree at the Trojan war was because his sons were killed. So Ares, a devoted father, was blinded by grief and rage at the loss of his sons and Athena had to retrieve him.

The way I relate to Ares now is so different to how I used to relate to him. I mean - what son, at one stage or another, hasn't railed at or disagreed with his father (or father-figure)? What son who was perhaps raised in a violent household hasn't made the promise to themselves to be a loving and devoted father to their own children?

Gwydion risked Arianrhod's wrath on numerous occasions to provide a name, arms and a wife for Llew. The list of potential lessons goes on, and on, and on. But for the moment I will change track, and go to the final part of this dialogue.

Rites of Passage

Within pagan communities it is generally common knowledge that there are many groups for women. For whatever reason women seem to be more comfortable organising womaning ceremonies, birthing ceremonies, motherhood ceremonies and croning ceremonies. Yet pagan men often don't, or at least as not as numerous as women do, and I personally feel that's something that needs to be changed.

I feel that positive rites of passage ceremonies, for boys to men, would be a positive way of celebrating growth and experience that's more than just a simple 'piss up', and bring meaning and inspiration into the lives of men in ways that give them the chance and responsibility of celebrating and directing their lives. In our corporate heavy world men often disregard the need for sacredness.

So not only then is this, in many ways, a call to action (for myself especially) but it's also an invitation, to my brothers here, to go back to your communities and start something - anything - that is freeing of the social stigmas, pressures and stereotypes that chain us on so many levels. I know that often we are approached by friends not within the pagan or Druidic sphere, and they ask questions, and often show a genuine curiosity...and we retreat, we close up, we laugh off their questions because we are afraid that if we answer them we might be seen as foolish or ridiculous.

Have some courage, and have no shame.

As Bards we have the power, and I feel the responsibility, to change the story and give men the courage to find their own voices. As Ovates we have the capacity to help our brothers connect again with nature and with symbols that empower and fulfill them. As Druids we are able to lead by example and construct rituals and ceremonies that celebrate the cycles of life, of death and rebirth that is free of damnation and guilt.

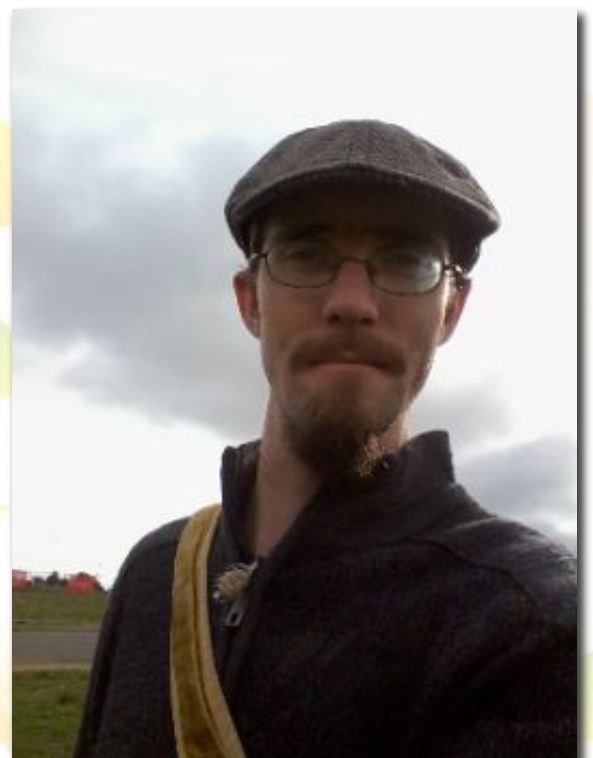
I wish to finish this discussion with an excerpt from a blog I wrote just after the Beltaine Camp in 2013, as well as the chant we used for our men's group at the main ceremony:

"Masculinity is fluid. It is not a set image, it is redefined over and over again in the hearts, the actions and the intentions of each man. The meaning also changes with growth, with age, with experience. There is no set image of masculinity, it is as diverse as each individual on earth. Yes there are similarities, underlying themes that exist within the male population, but even then...each theme (strength, practicality, passion etc etc) is expressed individually."

*"I am the life-giving sun!
I am the tree on the mountain!
I am the voice of my ancestors!
I run with beast of claw!
I fly with bird of wing!
I am Man!
I am the God!"*

Thank you. :)

(blog extract originally posted online 19 October 2016)





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

THE WHEEL OF SEGAIS

By Pamela Meekings-Stewart

The Well of Segais is the Otherworld source of the Boyne that some say lies in the navel of the Goddess Bo-Ann and if we make our way to this pool, and dive deep into its waters to find the salmon, we will find ourselves diving down into the belly, the womb, of the Goddess Herself. And in doing this we will have come to the cauldron which represents the source of rebirth and wisdom. The Well of Segais is a deep pool, surrounded by the Nine Hazels of Inspiration. The Hazel nuts ripen and fall into the pool where the Salmon of Wisdom eats them. She cracks their shells and the empty shells float off, down the many streams that flow from the Well of Segais. It is said that one may never be wise until one has drunk from the Well of Segais.

But what of the '**Wheel of Segais**'? The **Wheel of Segais** is both a divination tool and a simple but profound template for understanding the innate nature of the universe and our place within it. It is my own creation and came to me in a flash of inspiration (awen) supported by over twenty years of study in Druidry, the Four Elements & Seasons and the 12 Archetypes or Wisdoms. I awoke one morning and in that magical time between sleeping and waking, all that knowledge and wisdom came together in a beautiful, simple image that I now call **The Wheel of Segais** or, sometimes, The Wheel of Inevitability! The wisdom contained within it allows us to perceive all that we are and all that we need as we experience the turning of the wheel of the year - the Four Seasons, the 12 stages, the circles of Past, Present and Future, the 'Guardian Angels' who protect the outer circle, and the Well itself in the centre.

In 2016 I attended the Southern Assembly on Bribie Island, where I gave a presentation of 'The Wheel' and did a number of readings. The response that came back from very many of you was, "This is important. I want to learn it!" I have also been running monthly 'Wheel' workshops here in New Zealand, teaching a different stage each month in sync with the seasons and our own OBOD seasonal festivals. There are three stages in each quadrant and I have called them, "From Samhain to Imbolc", 'From Imbolc to Beltane', 'From Beltane to Lughnasadh', and 'From Lughnasadh to Samhain'. The students at these workshops can do readings but, more importantly, they are learning to plot the paths, the cycles, of their projects, their relationships, and their lives through the four (inevitable) stages of Seed/Fire/Winter (Initiation), Nurture/Water/Spring (Emergence), Cultivation/Air/Summer (Maturation), and Harvest/Earth/Autumn (Manifestation).

"Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round like the nest of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop." (Black Elk)

At the Assembly I met up again with Linda Marson, and we are now discussing how I might set up a teaching program through her Global Spiritual Studies website. It's not there yet but stay tuned! I haven't forgotten my promises to you, and hopefully by next SerpentStar (Samhain - a beginning) we will have something to announce!

EARTH TREE - An Anthology of Poems

by Dawn McKenzie

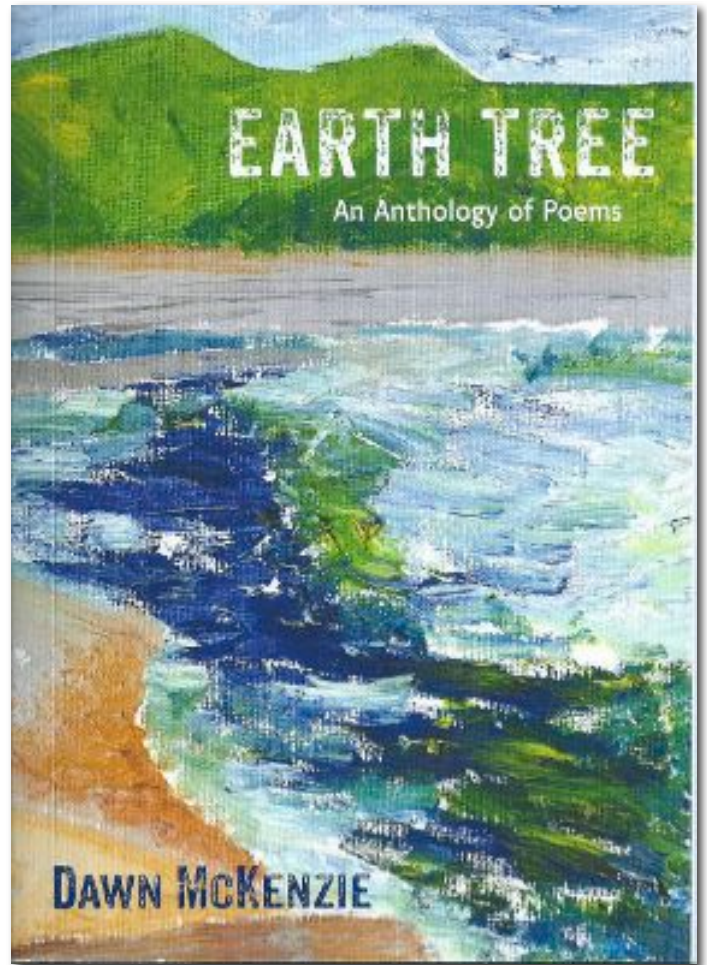
Natures riches, blended knowingly with elemental cycles, with spiritual beliefs, set within the magical land that is Aotearoa, this poetry captures it all. Readers are transported by the imagery created, born of Dawn's life experience and deep understanding of the connection between all life forces. Delightful drawings of the branches and leaves of the trees featured are sprinkled throughout the text, enriching the verse still further. *Earth Tree* is a must have collection of poetry for both those who understand well our dependence and empathy with our planet, and also for those who desire to discover it...

*She knows the cycles
Daybreak to sundown,
The seasons –
Beltane's buds to winter bareness.
She knows the creative cycles,
The birds in her branches
Nest, fly,
and make their homes in her boughs.*

Copies are available from Dawn McKenzie

Email: Leafspr8@extra.co.nz

\$NZ20 + postage



Here are the words to a song to Lugh that one of our bards, Moira, composed and which we sing with great gusto every Lughnasadh. If you would like to hear us singing it (lustily) - here is the link - <https://soundcloud.com/user-611399395/lugh>

CHORUS

*Lugh, Lugh, Lugh Lamhfada (la va da)
Lugh the shining one
Lugh, Lugh, Lugh Lamhfada
Warrior of the sun*

CHANT

*God of craftsmen
Lugh of the long arm
All knowing all wise
LUGH*

Travelled to the West

*With the Tuatha da Danaan (Tu-ha-dei-danu)
Celtic sun god
LUGH*

Slayer of Balor

*The champion Formore
Warrior sun god
LUGH*

Lugh Chromain

*Now called Leprechaun
Sleeping with the aes sidhe
LUGH*

Repeat Chorus

ENDING

*(no instruments)
Lugh, Lugh, Lugh Lamhfada
Lugh, Lugh, Lugh Lamhfada
Lugh, Lugh, Lugh Lamhfada
Lugh ~ ~ ~*



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand

Gaia's Wheel

*Dark emerald forest
A cloak spread lovingly over hip curve of the land
As she slumbers*

*Mist rain rolls in
Sweet lover's breath*

*Veil upon veil, hiding the world of everyday
Opening the secret senses to the real
Here... Now... Life!*

She awakens...

*His misty fingertips
Dance cadence over her spine,
Through her soul*

*Rain falls down
Through skin and thought
Renewing ancient heart*

*Moisture caress
Quickens Pan's dormant seed
Within the belly of his lover*

Time stretches and contracts

The Wheel turns

*What once was
Shall be again*

*Sacred spiral of life
Blueprint of a thousand thousand lives
Yet to come*

Memory ignites

*Instinct drives downwards
Seeking soft bodies of the ancestors
And their wisdom*

*Moon tide pulls upwards
Singing to blood
Both young and old alike*

*Forest child spirals upright
Through an ocean of
Slow-sifting sunlight*

*Arms upraised
Stretching on tiptoe
Towards destiny
Unafraid*

*A single stitch in Gaia's green cloak emerges
Ever changing
Ancient, yet always new*

*Her temple stands open to all
Lessons offered humbly to those
With ears to see and eyes to hear*

*"As above, so below
As without, so within
All time within a single seed
The universe in a raindrop..."*

*Moon tide ebb and flow
Breathe the sunlight
Earth and rain become your body*

*In time
The Earth cycle draws from your soul
The essence of all that you are*

*And a ripe alchemist's fruit falls
...Spiralling back
...To the body of the Mother*

*Mist rain rolls in
The Father returns
His love demands new life*

*Purpose fulfilled,
The old give way to the new*

The Great Wheel turns...

*No regrets
Grace of acceptance*

*Arianrhod spins her parting kiss
Through your brittle hair*

And a myriad of echoed, emerald hues

Down the corridors of time...

by Verity Jones



AIR

*The air is still,
Cool and clear
A delicate breath.
Its gentle stirrings
Shimmering across skin and water.*

*The air is Stormy.
Its turbulent thrashing
Whips at trees and faces
As we move through the violent wind.*

Claire

*The air is Stormy.
Its turbulent thrashing
Whips at trees and faces
As we move through the violent wind.*

Claire

THE BLOG

*We sit in a circle talking.
What to provide for publication?
Is it on-line, is it all gone?
Or on paper, is it?
So poems to write
Articles to prepare
Awen to flow.
Or is it all talk?
The blog to fill weekly,
Who to write the content?
Or all are too busy
With no space for inspiration.*

(Morfram)

(Morfram)

The Grove of the Summer Stars has its own blog called Under the Summer Stars. On this blog members of the Grove share stories and poems. We share knowledge about things that are important to us and our Druidry. We share recipes and reviews. We share our celebrations of the Wheel. We encourage conversations in the comments. We invite everyone to participate in these discussions through viewing our blog at summerstarsgrove.wordpress.com



THE GREEN ALBUM

Tuatha Dea and Nightsong Studios Presents:

THE GREEN ALBUM is a collaborative concept album featuring Tuatha Dea, Wendy Elizabeth Rule, SJ Tucker, Sharon Knight, Winter Jp Sichelschmidt, Celia Farran, Bekah Kelso, Ginger Doss, Damh The Bard, Kellianna Girouard, Spiral Dance, Spiral Rhythm, Murphey's Midnight Rounders, Brian Henke and Mama Gina LaMonte. It's a musical plan of action. An Independent musical compilation created by a consortium of like minded Muses, Musicians and Songbirds from all over uniting as a global Tribe to raise awareness, celebrate and give something back to Mother Earth! All these amazing artists will be offering one gift of song, either NEW or never before released specifically for this Album, and themed toward the universal concept of 'Green'! All of the Artists have banded together, and partial proceeds from every album sold by the collaborators will be donated to Rainforest Trust, a Global Green Charity doing amazing work around the world!

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

<http://www.thegreenalbum.net/about.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/greenalbum/?ref=hl>

Direct downloads available from <http://www.thegreenalbum.net/home.html>

or you can buy a physical album via

http://www.spiraldance.com.au/?CDs_and_Downloads___Ordering_Spiral_Dance_CDs



RAINFOREST TRUST® *Hero*

The Green Album

donated a gift to protect

**1,817 Acres of Balanga Forest Reserve
in the Congo**

This gift assists Rainforest Trust and our local Congolese partner to establish Balanga Forest Reserve, safeguarding crucial habitat and providing a future safe from poachers for the Congo's magnificent and threatened wildlife, including the African Forest Elephant, Okapi, and Bonobo.

Issued June 20, 2016

*Thank you for your commitment to biodiversity.
Together we are saving rainforest acres, forever!*



RAINFOREST TRUST®

Dr. Paul Salaman
Chief Executive Officer



Okapi

<i>TUATHA DEA</i>	<i>WINTER S</i>
<i>WENDY RULE</i>	<i>CELIA FARRAN</i>
<i>SJ TUCKER</i>	<i>BRIAN HENKE</i>
<i>BEKAH KELSO</i>	<i>MAMA GINA</i>
<i>GINGER DOSS</i>	<i>MURPH'S</i>
<i>KELLIANNA</i>	<i>MIDNIGHT</i>
<i>DAVE THE BARD</i>	<i>ROUNDERS</i>
<i>SPIRAL DANCE</i>	<i>SPIRAL RHYTHM</i>
<i>SHARON KNIGHT/</i>	



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Member Events, Groups & Businesses in Australia/New Zealand



The business card for Todd William Dearing features a green, textured background with a central circular logo. The logo is a dark red circle with a stylized, glowing blue and white figure inside. The name "Todd William Dearing" is written in a large, elegant, cursive script across the top. Below the name, the words "WRITING ART DESIGN" are printed in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. Further down, a list of services is presented in a bold, black, sans-serif font, separated by diamond symbols: "♦ ART ♦ VISUAL DESIGN ♦", "♦ BOOK DESIGN ♦ EDITING ♦ PROOFREADING ♦", and "♦ PUBLICATIONS ♦ WRITING ♦". At the bottom, the website "www.toddwilliamdearing.com", email "todddearing@gmail.com", and phone number "0405 115 279" are listed in a black, sans-serif font.

Todd William Dearing
WRITING ART DESIGN

♦ ART ♦ VISUAL DESIGN ♦
♦ BOOK DESIGN ♦ EDITING ♦ PROOFREADING ♦
♦ PUBLICATIONS ♦ WRITING ♦

www.toddwilliamdearing.com
todddearing@gmail.com
0405 115 279

Located within the Perth suburb of Banjup, Western Australia, Dreaming Tree Grove is a nature-based spiritual group grounded in Druidry, inspired by a "shamanic worldview" and a love of being immersed in natural surroundings. We view Druidry's journey through bard - ovate - druid as a creative and experiential journey, one that explores not just the Self in nature, but the nature of Self. For us, our spiritual path is one of integrity and service, of celebrating life and recognising the interconnection of all things.

Although we are affiliated with the British Druid Order, and while we acknowledge the traditions of our path, and the mythic cycle that weaves its way through our tradition, our connection to place is here within the bio-regional movements of nature that create this part of the Southern Hemisphere. So we explore our spirituality and practise through these sacred lands here in the south west of Western Australia, and therefore our approach reflects this.

To find out more about the Grove, about joining us, and our training program, visit our website:

<http://dreamingtreegrove.wixsite.com/dreamingtreegrove>





OBOD Member Celebrants Australia & New Zealand

Advertising in SerpentStar is free for all OBOD members in the Southern Hemisphere. If your business, event or club is related to our druidry practice, you can advertise on these pages for as long as you require. Submission guidelines are available from serpentstar.wordpress.com/about



Fully qualified civil/funeral celebrant, and authorised marriage celebrant, with a professional background in customer service and publications writing/editing, and a personal background in performance and community education. If there is any skill needed to write, deliver and make your ceremony special, you can be assured that I have it...or can make it happen.

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0413 593 609

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Amanda Gibson

Qualified Civil Celebrant

Weddings, Commitment Ceremonies, Vow Renewals, Baby Namings/Blessings, Funerals and Life Celebrations, Home and Business Blessings, Life Transitions and Women's Circles





JENNETH GRAHAM

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Anita Bailey
Celebrancy

Registered Marriage Celebrant
Weddings, Commitment Ceremonies & Vow Renewals

0424 862 428
07 3440 029
anita_bailey@optusnet.com.au

I am a marriage celebrant living on the beautiful Sunshine Coast in Queensland. I have studied with OBOD for the last six years and will soon complete my Ovate studies. My aim is to help make your ceremony meaningful and memorable....



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Your faithful Editor is available for paid work in layout, editing and proofreading of anything from flyers to course materials, and even whole books. I am not a graphic designer, so cannot do logos or other artwork. What I do have is professional experience in editing and proofreading of fiction and non-fiction books, information brochures and web content. I also do layout work for flyers, newsletters and banners.

Give me your content, I'll give you a professional, easy to read, printable PDF or image file.

Reasonable hourly rates based on the work required, Paypal/EFT and tax invoice with ABN available. Email Mandy via ajgcelebrant@optusnet.com.au for details.

Pamela Meekings-Stewart

Registered Marriage and
Civil Union Celebrant
New Zealand

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

As a Druid and committed to a spiritual life, the work is important to me. Couples continue to ask for my services and very much appreciate the gentle spiritual aspect of the ceremonies I help them put together.

I am also able to arrange contact for weddings and civil unions at Stonehenge Aotearoa in the Wairarapa with myself as Celebrant.

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

Namings (children and change of name); Birth Blessings; Vows of Recommitment; Entering The Wisdom Years - Croning (women) and Sagging (men); House Blessings; Blessings and Invocations For Passing Over; Funerals and Burial Blessings



Tying the knot

Two lives entwine

Tying the knot

Two families entwine

Binding our futures together



Contact: pamela@thewoolshed.com

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



And finally...

Recent discussions on the Druids DownUnder Facebook page, and an experience performing a wedding for a Bride who celebrates a Northern Hemisphere Wheel of the Year, got me thinking about how the Wheel turns for the Southern Hemisphere.

I would imagine most of us follow the Order's recommendation to 'flip the Wheel', reversing North and South in our rituals and the festivals to approximate our local seasons - hence SerpentStar referring to Lughnasadh while the Northern Hemisphere is celebrating Imbolc. And it's appropriate from a 'Spirit of Place' point of view. I could talk about how I know of a growing number of people who are going into more detail and creating local Wheels, but this is a short piece and it's not something I have a huge amount of personal experience with as yet. Better to let them explain it from their own expertise - perhaps even in an article for SerpentStar *hint*

What I want to put in your brains, however, is a curious notion that may only be my own constitution complaining but is nevertheless a thing - the idea that for some Lughnasadh can be just as much a dark still time as Imbolc.

Consider the heatwaves currently sweeping Australia - I know when the heat and humidity are bearing down I tend to retreat into periods of stillness. It's not a busy time at all, except when there's work or entertaining or essential chores to be done. My body wants to slow down, contemplate and conserve energy, and at the same time there are storms to contend with and clean-up to do - the garden cleared not of snow but of overgrowth.

To me it seems quite similar to the opposite side - Imbolc - in terms of reflection. For both ends of the world it's the beginning of the new calendar year as well, yet another pause time especially in the current socio-political climate. Granted, I'm probably noticing something that has already been obvious to many of you for a long time, and if so maybe you can explain it better than I can. I would love to hear and possibly share your thoughts on the subject.

Until Samhuinn,
Mandy /\

*The
Wheel
turns...*



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

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

Text sourced from Druidry.org

**The deadline for contributing to the Samhuinn issue of SerpentStar is 24 April.
The Samhuinn 2017 issue will be released on 1 May.**