

SERPENT STAR

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



BELTANE 2018

Welcome to the Beltane 2018 issue of SerpentStar!

Hello All!

Big busy time of year for everyone, so I'm going to tell you what's in this one and then let you go exploring!

This issue's cover image comes from the Middle Earth Fellowship Seed Group of Tauranga NZ, and features the May(October?)pole from their Beltane celebration. Inside you'll find poetry and articles inspired by the season, images poetry and some special-length first hand accounts from this year's Southern Hemisphere Assembly, plus updates to our group listings, the History Project, and information on the next Assembly (less than three months away, yikes!)

In fact, you lucky readers, I've just realised that due to the dates of the 2018/19 Assemblies you're going to get Assembly goodness two issues in a row! Stay tuned for another bumper issue come Lughnasadh!

With love and blessings as always
Mandy / | \

SerpentStar, Beltane 2018

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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Submission guidelines and subscription info are available from serpentstar.druidryaustralia.org/about

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Enquiries via email: serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.



Pic by Mandy Gibson

OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere

Groves & Seed Groups

The following are groups currently listed on OBOD's official Groves & Seed Groups List for 2018 and have consented to have their information included in this list. Other groups run by OBOD members are listed in the Advertising section.

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

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

The Grove of the Summer Stars

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

Macadamia Grove

Welcomes and is inclusive of South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales OBOD members who wish to join in with any activities. We celebrate the eight festivals of the year, and organise other events depending on members' interests. As Brisbane is a central meeting point most of our events are held close to the city, often in the bushland of Mt Coot-tha. Non-members with an interest in Druidry are able to attend some rituals by prior arrangement. Contact Sandra: 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: Lughnasadh - Jan 28, Autumn Equinox - March 24, Samhuin - April 28, Winter Solstice - June 16, Imbolc - July 29, Spring Equinox - Sept 23, Beltane - Oct 20, and Summer Solstice - Dec 23. If you would like to join us please send an email to Elkie at whitelk@bigpond.com or Fiona at Fiona.mulholland@bigpond.com

Silvereyes Seed Group

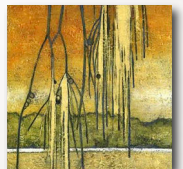
Perth Hills & members throughout the South West. Email: ghriancau@iinet.net.au

Song of the Eastern Sea Seed Group

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

The Windharp Seed Group

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



Wollemi Seed Group

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

Useful websites for SH OBODies:

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

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.



Pix by Tamzin and Trudz (we took a lot of photos this year....)



*My father arrived by air,
He knew he had to go in order to grow.*

*My roots are in their old land,
That land calls me home.*

*My mother arrived by sea,
She knew she had to go in order to grow.*

*My heart in in their new land,
That land calls me home.*

*My parents met in this land,
They knew that together they could grow.*

*My soul is torn between the two lands,
Which land can I call home?*

Wen 2018



Artwork by John Jordan

**ASSEMBLY PT 1 -
CEREMONY**
Pix by Julie, Sandra
and Trudz



Poetry by Julie Brett

Hallet Cove

*We cambered over the dragon's back
The freshly torn earth scattering promises
In forest green crystals among the shale and scale
By a shrine of sand and stone
Of spirals and symbols
Telling the story of the journey
And the spirit of the sea there with us.
Brigid's valley held the setting sun
Out over the ocean
As the salmon swam upstream
Seeking wisdom and wonder.
The land whispering stories*

*Releasing her secrets on the winter wind
And we sang them out as we saw them
And they heard us
I know they did
Looking over the dragon's back
Diving in and out of the water
As the sun was swallowed by the distant waves
Red skies and red stars riding high
Slowly enveloped in an indigo
Blanket of night
Knowing certainty's folly
And sincerity's wisdom
And the beauty of wonder
Reached out for in the darkness.*

Brigid

*Fire Goddess
Inspired one
Bringer of Awen
Keeper of the cauldron
I hear your call
You speak to me
And through me
As I let go
I am moved by your
Divine flow
Flowing spirit
Lady of poets
Lady of the flame within
The sacred fire in the head
The sacred Awen that sculpts
Action into art
Words into poetry*

*Voice into song
I hear your call
I know your fire
I have overflown
With your presence
I have been overwhelmed
By your generous spirit
I have felt your fires
Leap higher and higher
I have felt it out of control
And now I know
You are also Goddess if the hearth
Keeper of the sacred flame
Tender of the warming fire
You keep the flame held safe and dear
Never allowing danger near
You are the lady of the hearth
And of the Home
You'd never leave the flame alone
Tender, keeper, knower*

*You speak quietly and with wonder
Held within the sacred hearth
The hearth
The heart
The Earth
The bright centre of our beings
Not overflowing
But held dear
Contained, cared for, loved.
A fire that knows control
A fire that knows power
But also temperance
A fire that warms the heart
But never threatens
You are the lady of the hearth
You are the lady of the fire
The lady that gives both inspiration
And the powers of tempered wisdom.
Blessed be*

**18TH SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE OBOD ASSEMBLY
(SHOBODA-2019)
FIRST TIME IN AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND
17th to 22nd January 2019**

**Proudly hosted by
The Grove of the Summer Stars
With special guests Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm
And Eimear Burke!**



The venue is booked, the Heads of Department for various tasks have their *mahi* (work) well under way, beds are being assigned and we're practicing our *waiata* of welcome!

The Registration Form, Payment Information and Draft Programme are on our website with lots of information about accommodation, meals, costs, etc. –
<https://www.groveofthesummerstars.nz/shoboda-2019>

**Final date for Registration is Friday November 23, 2018.
Final date for payment is Monday December 3, 2018.**

We have 45 Registrations so far with at least another 10 to come that we know of. Don't worry! We have plenty of spaces. The single rooms have all been taken but there are still plenty of twin share and double rooms available as well as a camping option.

Comments and queries to: pamela@thewoolshed.com

A New Bard Encounters The Awen

by Jordana Langridge 25/08/2018

I stumbled unintentionally on the Golden Wattle Seed Group's promo for the 17th Southern Hemisphere Order of Bards Ovates and Druids Assembly, when I was merely trying to find out if druidry really existed in the current era.

For the third time, a direct reference to druidry had popped out of reading material and on that third stroke, I stopped wondering and went searching.

"Oh, wow... a retreat? A camp? Workshops look good...", I thought, as I went about enrolling to attend, only then finally realising that there were indeed modern exponents and adherents to the spirituality and philosophy of Druidry. But I couldn't enrol then and there, I had to join the Order first and that was in Sussex! Oh.

Weeks went by while I pondered, researched and considered what embarking on such a commitment would mean and whether I was ready for it. Was now the right time? All rhetorical questions because I knew with every little discovery, clue and omen leading me to Druidry that I had found at last, the path I was meant to be on.

I joined OBOD in April and the wheel continued turning, leading me to The Melbourne Grove and my first experience of a Druidic seasonal ceremony - Alban Arthan held on Mt Dandenong and for that winter solstice celebration I recited a poem that had astounded me when first I heard and read it in the third gwers of the Bardic grade. Days after this ceremony I signed up for the 17th Assembly and requested to undertake the Bardic initiation.

More weeks went by until on August 10th I found myself amongst new friends of like mind with many wonderful and interesting experiences unfolding over the following four days. However, it took me until the last day to realise that sometimes, it is better to allow things to happen when they will, in their time. This was to do with two abandoned attempts to perform at one of the evening Eisteddfods.

I knew all the words by heart. I'd gone for a walk on the Saturday between showers of rain, amongst the trees, under the sky and sun at Glenhaven, rehearsing the lines and devising movements and actions to go with that poem. For the last line, I realised I needed a helper and that my solo performance needed to become a duet. In a flash of knowing, I realised who was the one to help and later I approached that person who readily accepted the offer to be part of my performance.

When I didn't get up during the Sunday Eisteddfod, I set my sights on the Monday night. It didn't happen then either and I reasoned that it wasn't meant to be and I should just drop it. I reminded myself that there had been so many great moments over the course of this Assembly and I should just be content with that.

It's the last group event on the last day of the 17th Assembly of the Southern Hemisphere Order of Bards Ovates and Druids. We are sitting in a circle in the main hall and there are four people before the Talking Stick will be handed to me. What am I going to say? I decided on something about the right time and the right reason... then it dawns on me, now, begin to understand and recognise the power of Awen as the Talking Stick is handed to me and I say: "I believe things happen at the right time for the right reason". I carry the Talking Stick to the centre of the circle and announce 'Rapt Form' by Nuinn.

Time slips by. I am outwardly motionless, inwardly in utter turmoil as the opening line has almost completely escaped me. I stand. I wait. And it is politely suggested from within that I look at the Talking Stick. I do. There is a green and blue and grey feather and it is as though a wondrous bird flies the first words back into my consciousness...

"Fire upon night, the way flashing"... and then the poem takes over, carried by the force of Awen to the final line, to the last word, requiring the last action...like a tree falling, I fall, backwards to the abyss...without a care, with complete faith as my co-performer guides me to the floor.



My First Time - 17th Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly

by Spitz Pemberton, Druid Truckie

I have been a Pagan and Druid for about 3 years now. It has been a bit of a slow process, as most people in my area who profess to be pagans are not really willing to share information beyond "Look on the 'net". In December 2017 I met Tina, who is part of the local seed Group and had been studying Druidry for many years through OBOD. I had reservations about joining OBOD, due to a misconstrued idea that it would be like most other groups or religions, telling you how to think and feel. After meeting Tina and having her explain how OBOD worked, I decided to join the Order and started the Bardic Grade in January 2018.

In August 2018, Tina and I boarded a flight to Adelaide, after spending weeks talking each other into attending the 17th Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly. When we arrived in Adelaide we met up with Jenni, another WA Druid from Albany. We picked up the hire car and drove to Gawler. We stopped at the Exchange Hotel, to meet up with more attendees and wait for the campsite to open.

So, with nerves on edge we met new people, about 20 all up, faces blurring and names abuzz. My mind was working hard to take it all in, how will I remember everyone? I'd just like to say that I struggle remembering names at the best of times, and it was not the best of times as I had now been awake for over 30 hours. After a nice lunch, we made our way out to Glenhaven Park in Stockport.

After arriving, we helped unload gear and settled ourselves. Later we had the welcoming and the talking stick, basically a quick introduction. After dinner Michael told a story, with characters from Arthurian legend. Due to being extremely tired I can't remember the story, but the message I took from the story was, "Be true to yourself and be true to your quest, whatever it may be." I hope one day I will be able to spin tales like Michael.

After that we were treated to a dance lesson by Unanyntji. The lights were lowered and music was played, and we moved as the music took us. It was meditative, and it allowed us to become one as a group as we danced to songs of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Then there was a Bardic Circle, people shared songs and stories. So many new things to experience and this is only the first day. By now I had been awake for nearly 40 hours, so I was getting desperate for sleep.

Saturday morning I slept in, so missed the morning meditation. After breakfast was the talking stick, I think I am going to like this as it gives everyone a chance to say something. As I was still finding my place in the group, I basically said good morning.

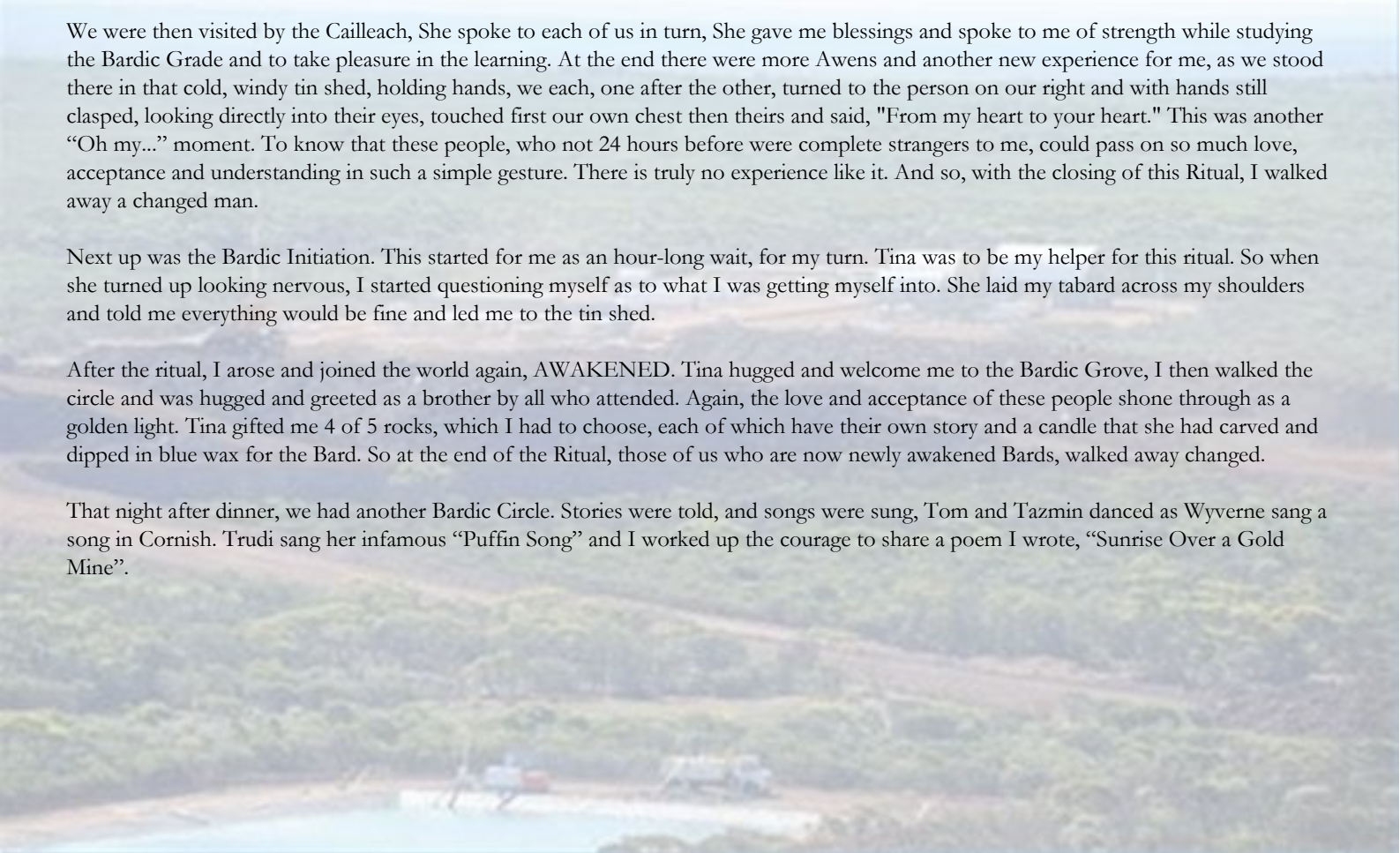
After morning tea, we held the Opening Ceremony. My first Druidic Ritual beyond the very simple things I do at home. We held the ritual in a tin shed, that may as well have been open to the elements with all the gaps between roof and walls. The Rituals started with prayers, asking the spirits for their guidance, blessings and protection. And Awens.... "Oh my...", nearly 40 voices lifted in prayer and chant. It was comparable to a choir in a cathedral, the Awens resounded around that tin shed, beautifully. They moved as a physical presence around us and through my body. Never in my life have I heard or felt such a thing, just the memory of it gives me goosebumps.

We were then visited by the Cailleach, She spoke to each of us in turn, She gave me blessings and spoke to me of strength while studying the Bardic Grade and to take pleasure in the learning. At the end there were more Awens and another new experience for me, as we stood there in that cold, windy tin shed, holding hands, we each, one after the other, turned to the person on our right and with hands still clasped, looking directly into their eyes, touched first our own chest then theirs and said, "From my heart to your heart." This was another "Oh my..." moment. To know that these people, who not 24 hours before were complete strangers to me, could pass on so much love, acceptance and understanding in such a simple gesture. There is truly no experience like it. And so, with the closing of this Ritual, I walked away a changed man.

Next up was the Bardic Initiation. This started for me as an hour-long wait, for my turn. Tina was to be my helper for this ritual. So when she turned up looking nervous, I started questioning myself as to what I was getting myself into. She laid my tabard across my shoulders and told me everything would be fine and led me to the tin shed.

After the ritual, I arose and joined the world again, AWAKENED. Tina hugged and welcome me to the Bardic Grove, I then walked the circle and was hugged and greeted as a brother by all who attended. Again, the love and acceptance of these people shone through as a golden light. Tina gifted me 4 of 5 rocks, which I had to choose, each of which have their own story and a candle that she had carved and dipped in blue wax for the Bard. So at the end of the Ritual, those of us who are now newly awakened Bards, walked away changed.

That night after dinner, we had another Bardic Circle. Stories were told, and songs were sung, Tom and Tazmin danced as Wyverne sang a song in Cornish. Trudi sang her infamous "Puffin Song" and I worked up the courage to share a poem I wrote, "Sunrise Over a Gold Mine".



The next morning, Sunday, was an early start due to the Imbolc Ceremony. After the formalities were observed, Cailleach started speaking quietly and gently. It took me a few moments to realise what was happening, Cailleach was waking Brigid from her winter sleep. Here again is an "Oh my..." moment - a Goddess, who is considered as negative in aspect, speaking as a loving mother would, waking a child - there was magic here. Then Aenghus Mac Og approached singing a song of love and awakening, the Cailleach words then became a counter point to the song and as they sang and spoke. I could feel the magic working on me, awakening something in me. The beauty of the moment had tears running down my face. I could feel the shifting, from Cailleach's reign to that of Brigid. I was saddened and gladdened by this shift, as I had only just met the Cailleach and now She was leaving. Yet, here we have the Goddess of spring and fire, newly awakened. Who on this earth could be sad when in Her presence. We finished the ceremony outside, around a bonfire, the morning had cleared during the ceremony and the promise of a fine spring day was in the air, another sign that the wheel turns.

After breakfast was the talking stick - I spoke of how this weekend had started changing me and with that change, I had started seeing people around me with a different sight, an awakened sight. I could see a light within the people around me, a fire in their hearts. It is a beautiful sight.

Then it was the Ovates' turn to be initiated. While this happened, we Bards spent time chatting, creating, playing music and getting to know each other. Some hours later the newly elevated Ovates joined the world again. We all hugged and congratulated them, wishing them well on the next part of their journeys.

After lunch was men's circle. This was enlightening to say the least and very healing, it also lets you know you're not alone. The thing to remember is, for the healing to start, you need to be honest. Honest with yourself and those in the circle.

That night we held an Eisteddfod, basically a formal Bardic circle. Again, songs, stories and poetry were shared, and fun was had by all. The next morning, Monday, started cool and clear, it was time for the Druids' initiations, they had found a spot that was secluded and afforded the initiates privacy for their Ritual. It was Tina's turn and I wish I could have been there for her on this day. While the Ritual was in progress, Julie led the Bards and Ovates around the camp, checking out the trees, plants and animals as we saw them. Glenhaven Park is very peaceful, the land so welcoming and the people so loving, it is good for the heart and soul. The Druids finished their Ritual and returned to us. We welcomed our new Druids back to the world with hugs and congratulations all round, everybody basking in the glow that is the love and joy shared by this group of wonderful people.

The closing ceremony was a bittersweet affair. We acknowledged and thanked the traditional owners of the land, the Ngadjuri people. We thanked the land for its use during the Gathering, the jar with soil of past assemblies was walked around the circle and all present added a few grains of soil to the jar. The jar, talking and candle were handed to Rosemary and Liz, from New Zealand, who will be holding the next Assembly. We thanked Cailleach, Aenghus and Brigid for their presence, love and blessings during the Gathering and with Awens, a round of "My heart to your heart" and with thanks to the spirits and guardians, we uncast the circle for the final time and the Ceremony was closed.

The Final morning, Tuesday, I started the day talking with Michael over what was left of the bonfire. I told him a story of a time I was in the Navy and a single sunrise on a glass calm ocean. Later during a rather sombre talking stick, due to the smaller number of people in the circle. Michael mentioned the story and how it reminded him of his childhood, he said it was a highlight of the weekend for him. I don't know if he realises it, but he made the weekend even better for me. Thank you, Michael.

After a spell of cleaning, it was time for Tina and I to depart. We hugged our way through the crowd more than once. Saying goodbye was difficult as we had become close to all these wonderful people, they had gone from being strangers to something akin to family in the space of a few days. Maybe Michael was right when he said, "We move from lifetime to lifetime, searching for those we have known before." We are not the same people we were in a previous life, whereas we are friends now, maybe in the past we were family. Our lives may be short, but we are long in the universe.

During the final talking stick, I told everybody, "When I started my journey as a Pagan and Druid, I felt as if I was a lone tree on top of a hill, battered by stormy winds and rain. Surrounded by fog and unable to see far around me. But after the weekend, the fog had lifted, I could see now that I was not alone. I was part of a great forest that surrounded me, embraced me and supported me. All the people I have met since starting my journey, especially those who were there at my first Assembly: You are my forest, I love you all, and I want to thank you for the love and support you have shown and shared with me.

May the peace of the Grove be with you all.



Sunrise Over a Gold Mine

*Sunrise over a gold mine,
In the clean, crisp, bracing air,
A cool desert night, having just passed,
I see the soft undulating lines of the hills,
Being cut and reformed into stark geometric shapes.*

*At the foot of the hills,
In the valley below,
A sea of mist forms, like a blanket,
To hide her shame,
And the means by which,
They rape her for her riches.*

*Cutting her, gutting her,
Spilling her across the land,
Moving tonnes for mere ounces,
I weep, I weep, for can they not see,
The riches are there, for you and me,
In the cool desert night air,
The mists in the valley, at the foot of a hill,
And in the sunrise over a gold mine.*

Spitz Pemberton, Druid Truckie

**ASSEMBLY PT 2 -
CREATIVITY**
Pix by Elkie,
Mandy, Sandra,
Tamzin and Trudz



2018 Assembly and Druid Initiation 10-14th August 2018

By Tina Merrybard

It was my first assembly, and my friend Dusty's too. Dusty and I made each other brave enough to go. Dusty is new to OBOD, and he was going to have his Bardic initiation. I really, really wanted to meet some of those lovely people I've been friends with for so long on the OBOD board and on Facebook. I wanted to see how a big ceremony runs and feels and bring what I learned back to WA. I wanted to have my Druid initiation, such a huge milestone, done by the Druids at the Assembly. We encouraged each other some more, and then we booked the plane tickets from WA to SA.

We picked up our hire car and our other WA friend, Jenni, in Adelaide and drove north out of Adelaide. We three get on well, so we chatted and laughed as we drove to Gawler to meet some of the early arrivals for lunch while we waited for the campsite to be open.

It was a trepidatious time for me. Here I was, meeting all these people I had only met on facebook, in some cases not even that. Some knew each other very well, but we didn't feel left out. Lunch was had amongst laughter and fun and much chat. I was introduced to many people and tried hard to keep names and faces in my memory. Then off we went to the campsite.

It was much less forested than my own home in the Jarrah/Marri forest East of Perth, or Dusty's in the Karri forest 'down south' of Perth. The trees were mostly lower, but the trees (that I was to learn were native pines) were incredibly friendly and approachable from the get-go. Birds called in the trees. Some I knew, some I did not. The magpies have a different accent to ours.

The first night we settled in, had a meal, then Unanyntji turned down the lights and had us all dancing the elements, which really got us in the zone. Then it was Bardic circle. The first one! I heard Kasey for the first time live. Oh my, such timbre to his voice. That young man is a treasure. Julie Brett played her song Shapeshifter, the very first time I had heard it. It is such a beautiful song. Tree played his tin whistle so beautifully.

Oh dear it is all blurring together for me already. I can't remember which music was played on which night. I was so tired that night, I had to go to bed, but I really didn't want to!

Saturday morning I got up early and went to walk the land to find my connection. I leaned on a friendly pine for some time, and admired some tall eucalypts with bark as swirly as a flood-plain seen from the sky.

We had talking stick after breakfast. That was lovely and gave me a feeling for how it might go over the assembly, but actually it got better each time as people's hearts opened more and more.

Later in the morning was the Opening Ceremony. It was very, very cold and wet, and we had to hold it in the gymnasium, which had open gaps between walls and roof, and wind and rain blew in. It was very lovely. The Awens sounded amazing in there, especially with so many voices. Cailleach spoke to each of us personally. I can't remember what she said to me properly, dammit, but it was about my initiation and how I would grow and prosper from there. I hope my subconscious remembers! The talking stick and urn of soil from all of the assemblies past were passed around and we all blessed them, and the stone and crystal wand which will replace them in New Zealand next year, because it wouldn't be environmentally safe to take the usual symbols. The stone and urn were particularly filled with warm energy.

It was my first really big ceremony. It was an interesting experience. I don't think I was completely in the space yet, but there were moments of real power. I learned a lot from watching how the more experienced people spoke and handled their actions.

Later in the day was Dusty's initiation. That was very powerful. Thought my heart would beat out of my chest as I went to get him to bring him back to the circle! After the initiations, as each new Bard was welcomed into the circle of the Bards, we one by one all hugged them and told them lovely welcoming messages as our hearts told us to, and Tree played his Low D tin whistle (sounded amazing) and Danuta sang wordless tunes (as she did so often over the assembly, and enriched everything thereby) and we all danced and smiled and laughed in our place in the circle as we waited for our turn to hug and kiss them. It was so joyous.

That night was bardic circle again, and by then Tamzin and Tom and Wyverne and others had come as well. The moment where Wy played a folk song on the guitar and sang in Cornish, and Tamzin and Tom got up and gently danced together, nearly burst my heart with beauty again (and not for the last time, oh no, far from it!)

Sunday morning very early was the Imbolc ceremony. Once more it was held in the gym due to the weather, and yet by the time we went out to light the bonfire, the rain had stopped. From then, the weather turned and by the last day it was sunny and warm. Cailleach was there again, and she woke Brigid from her sleep so gently and lovingly, as Kacey sang and walked the circle. Another moment of stunning beauty. By the time we finished and had stood around the bonfire and sung Awens, we were a close unit. Shared ceremony had done its magic. We were beginning already to love each other, if we didn't already, even those like me who were new to this group.

Later in the morning, we had an herbal workshop with Kate, which gave me much to think about, and then we co-opted the meeting space/kitchen and firepit for the Ovate ceremony while the Bards went and had a fun circle that I was sorry to miss, but I wouldn't have missed being a part of the initiation for anything, either! I was a participant but not a helper. It was a truly amazing ceremony and parts of it will be with me forever. I felt very privileged to be able to be there to be part of it.

After our late lunch was women's and men's circle. It was a special ceremony for one lovely lady. It began in sadness and ended in hugging, smiling, dancing and clapping and a picnic!

We did a workshop in the afternoon to write a song all together, run by Adrienne and Kacey. That was really fun and we wrote a long song that then had to be sung through twice because we were having too much fun to stop. My throat was sore but I didn't stop singing! I particularly loved watching Kacey and Adrienne out front enjoying our singing as they sang and played along with us.

That Sunday night was Eisteddfod. I was so nervous because I'd said I'd sing and play my lyre (for some reason Bardic Circle was less intimidating and also the guitar is much more forgiving of nervous fingers than my lyre!) but the other Kate told me that she just tells herself that 'nobody's gonna die'. That helped. I loved how everyone joined in on the chorus. They were always so generous in joining in to help you along, even if they didn't really know the song.

After that I could relax and listen to stories and poems and songs. There were transporting stories and songs of, magic, happiness and sadness. Trudy played her mandolin and sang a song called "I missed it," all about missing public transport all over the UK in her holiday. We all laughed until we cried. It was wonderful.

Monday morning, we had talking stick as usual, then we three new Druids went to be initiated. By then the weather was fine, though very cold, so we had it outside which I was very glad of. I can't talk about it, of course, but it was solemn and beautiful, and oh it was so very joyful, and when we walked back to the camp everyone came to us and hugged us and it was just...well, more wonderful than I can say.

I can't praise our five Druids of the assembly enough. They each have a light-body that wraps around you in warmth and love and calm. Extraordinary. Brigid grant that I grow to be what they are.

Later again we did the closing ceremony, also outside, around the firepit. As Kacey thanked Aengus Og for being with us, we all turned west and at that moment the setting sun broke through the clouds and shined on us. We gave the symbols to the ladies from NZ who will take them home to the next Assembly, and then we did Awens, and a group hug, and 'my heart to your heart,' and we just didn't want to move apart, because we knew it would be the beginning of the end and we none of us wanted it to end.

I have no idea how you can come to love people so very dearly in such a small space of time. Maybe it is true what Michael told us, that we have sought each other out lifetime after lifetime.

And so we came to the last evening, with an impromptu singalong in the common room, which began with me trying Tracey's 8 string uke by playing Spirit of Albion, and everyone stopping talking in wider and wider circles, and joining in one by one, until we were all singing our heads off (pure joy for me!) and a Bardic circle out round the fire, a rather uproarious and tiredly delirious affair. I'm an old lady, yes, but I still stayed up until 12.30, not wanting it to end!

Next morning. Last talking stick. So many less, with some already gone. Already missing them as their heart-lights moved out across the country and even further.

Julie and I took the plants from the altar out to give them back to the land, and we sat for a while to meditate. I could feel the others going but could send my own light out after them to hold them, then on over the world slowly until it held the whole planet, then slowly, slowly it came back to me undiminished by the distance it had travelled. It was a lovely thing, that meditation that Julie suggested we do, because it helped me tie myself back together. I felt that parts of me had been being torn away as the people left, but this showed me that I can hold them and let them go as well. I feel them still as a constellation of golden lights, all connected by lines of that light.

Then it was time to clean up, and time for Dusty and I to leave to meet our plane, but first we had to be held and hugged and loved one last time by everyone there. It was so lovely that they came out to see us off, and for two far-from-home West Aussie travellers, it was more precious than the others probably knew. We left late because of it, but I'd have missed my plane rather than miss that last loving session!

All the way home Dusty and I chatted and cried and laughed and got goosebumps over again at the amazing moments we had shared in, and it sustained us all the way home.

Phew! Now I have to go to the next one in New Zealand!



Pix by Sandra and Tamzin



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."

Everything of the All flows through me: Embracing Our Divinity

On 25th October our Full Moon Circle (Papatuanuku's Daughters) met to celebrate 'Honey Moon/The Lover', so named as it is the closest Full Moon to Beltaine (in the Southern Hemisphere). I had been feeling unsettled all week as more hate, aggression, blaming, shaming, anxiety, etc. flowed from media reports and, I have to say, from overheard conversations. I could feel all this 'stuff' sticking to me and I wanted to use our Honey Moon celebration to open our hearts to love of others flowing from love of self and Self. 'Honey? 'Lover'? What could I use for the ritual? I wondered if it was time to re-embrace our own divinity that perhaps we had lost in all the 'noise'. Bingo! Moy-Mell!!

"In every one of us, if we can still our questing heart and our puzzling mind, there is a secret doorway. Who knows how you will find this doorway? Through great suffering, so that one day you turn aside, and in anguish stumble upon the key - there in your heart? Through reading the lines of a poem, or hearing the words of a song that lead you to this hidden place? Or will it be when you grow old - when the seeking of fame and fortune, of possession and distraction, weary you at last, and you take the first deliberate steps towards a discovery of the Soul that Breathes within you?"

However you journey to this doorway, however young or old, however driven by sadness, or delight in exploring, once you turn its handle and step forward into the realm this doorway reveals, your life will change forever. For you will discover there the land that is known to the Druids and Celts of Old as Tir-n'an-Og, the Land of Eternal Youth. Some call it Tir-na-Moe, the Land of Promise, others Moy-Mell, the Land of Honey. It is the Secret Heaven within each one of us, that if we dare to enter, we discover is not bounded by the limits of our mind or soul, but is coexistent with the Universe. There we never age, and live in perfect health and joy - feeding our hearts with the love of all Creation, and expressing our beauty and our strength in acts of noble generosity and courage.

For some it is easy to travel to this place. They have learnt the ways, and know the routes that magic, and the teachers of old, have laid across this trackless land, and they come and go through this doorway, refreshing their bodies, hearts and minds - bringing with them the gifts of youthfulness, of healing and of art. But for others it is only through great trials that they discover Tir-n'an-Og (Moy-Mell)." (Philip Carr-Gomm)

And then I turned to my notes for the book I am writing – Journey of the Thirteen Moons – and found more joy:

*As a bee seeks nectar from all kinds of flowers
Seek teachings everywhere.
Like a deer that finds a quiet place to graze
Seek seclusion to digest all that you have gathered.
Like a mad one beyond all limits
Go where you please and live like a lion
Completely free of all fear (Dzogchen Tantra)*

The bee in many ancient Mediterranean, Celtic and Eastern cultures was considered sacred, as was the fermented honey drink, mead, aiding prophetic utterances and inducing reality-altering ecstasy, the intoxication of love.

Mead is a ritual drink often used in the Celtic seasonal festivals, most particularly Imbolc when the young Goddess, Brigid, is invoked and entreated to return with the Spring; the honey or mead representing fertility and abundance. Honey or mead is also traditionally added to the central fire in many festivals to invoke blessings upon those gathered.

Moy-Mell. The intoxication of love. Embracing our Divinity. I think I'm on to something.

LOVE AFTER LOVE

*The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
And each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life. (Derek Walcott)*

And then two days before Full Moon this popped into my Inbox:

"You will continue to suffer if you have an emotional reaction to everything that is said to you. True power is sitting back and observing everything with logic (logos - the divine animating principle pervading the Universe). If words control you that means everyone else can control you. Breathe and allow things to pass." (Bruce Lee)

Which I just had to follow up with my most favourite reading from Barry Brailsford's 'Wisdom of the Four Winds':

Some who come to sit beneath the Wisdom Tree are born to power, the will to direct and the way of command. Such are the leaders. Yet, power of itself is dangerous if not held within the balance of wisdom and love. Others come with love but have yet to learn to honour it with power and wisdom. Their way is vulnerable, for they are often at the mercy of others and open to exploitation. Those who are gifted wisdom, but have yet to know love and power, sit within frustration, for wisdom is without effect if paralysed by lack of action, and withered by the lack of love.

*Overcome rather than conquer
Walk above instead of under
Step around rather than through
Embrace love, wisdom and power
To walk the path of truth*

Look deep with the eyes of the sage to bring into harmony wisdom, love and power.

*Everything of the All flows into me
Everything of the All flows into me
Everything of the All flows into me*

I embrace my divinity

With love and blessings

Pamela Meekings-Stewart (Meadwyse)



Inspiration, wisdom and blessings from New Zealand



The Wheel of Segais

The Wisdom of the Four Seasons as a Divination Tool



We've packed the boxes, we've put on the stickers, calculated the postage and the Wheel of Segais Personal Reader Kit is now available to buy!

www.wheelofsegais.com

The divination kit contains a copy of the Wheel of Segais on which to do your casting; a Personal Reader Guide; nine hazelnuts for casting (plus a couple of extras in case you lose one or two) and a notebook and pen to record your personal reading,.

AND NOW: THE WHEEL OF SEGAIS READER TRAINING!

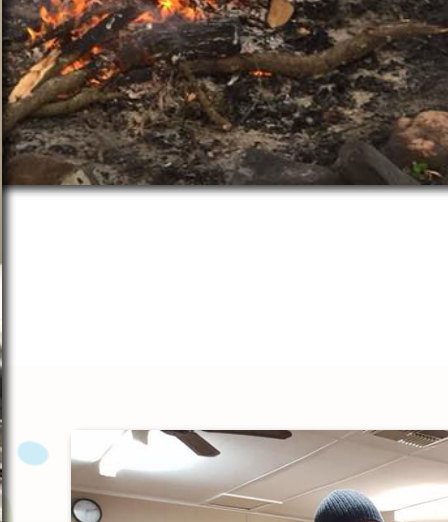
After a very successful Wheel of Segais tour in the UK, I am now putting together the video components for the **Wheel of Segais Be a Reader for Others Training**. Each participant will need to receive a Personal Reader Kit by mail before the on-line training begins, which will be included in the cost of the course, as well as a copy of the initial recording from May 2017. The further six recordings are being recorded now and I am researching ways that we can be interactive for some of them.

For more information: www.wheelofsegais.com/be-a-reader

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

You can book an online reading or Life Coaching Session through my website
www.wheelofsegais.com

**ASSEMBLY PT 3 -
SILLINESS**
Pix by Julie,
Sandra, Tamzin
and Trudz



DAMH THE BARD

2019



SPONSORSHIP FOR DAMH THE BARD

Plans are afoot to bring Damh the Bard and Cerri Lee back to Australia in April 2019.

There will be a Sponsor's concert in Adelaide as well as a weekend camp over the Easter Long weekend 2019.

We are looking for 120 people to donate \$50 each so if you would like to be a 'Damh the Bard' sponsor and be part of bringing this amazing couple back to our Great Southern Land you can either donate via Paypal or direct debit.

Paypal login address for sponsorship is
sponsordamh@spiraldance.com.au

or

email us for direct debit details
info@spiraldance.com.au



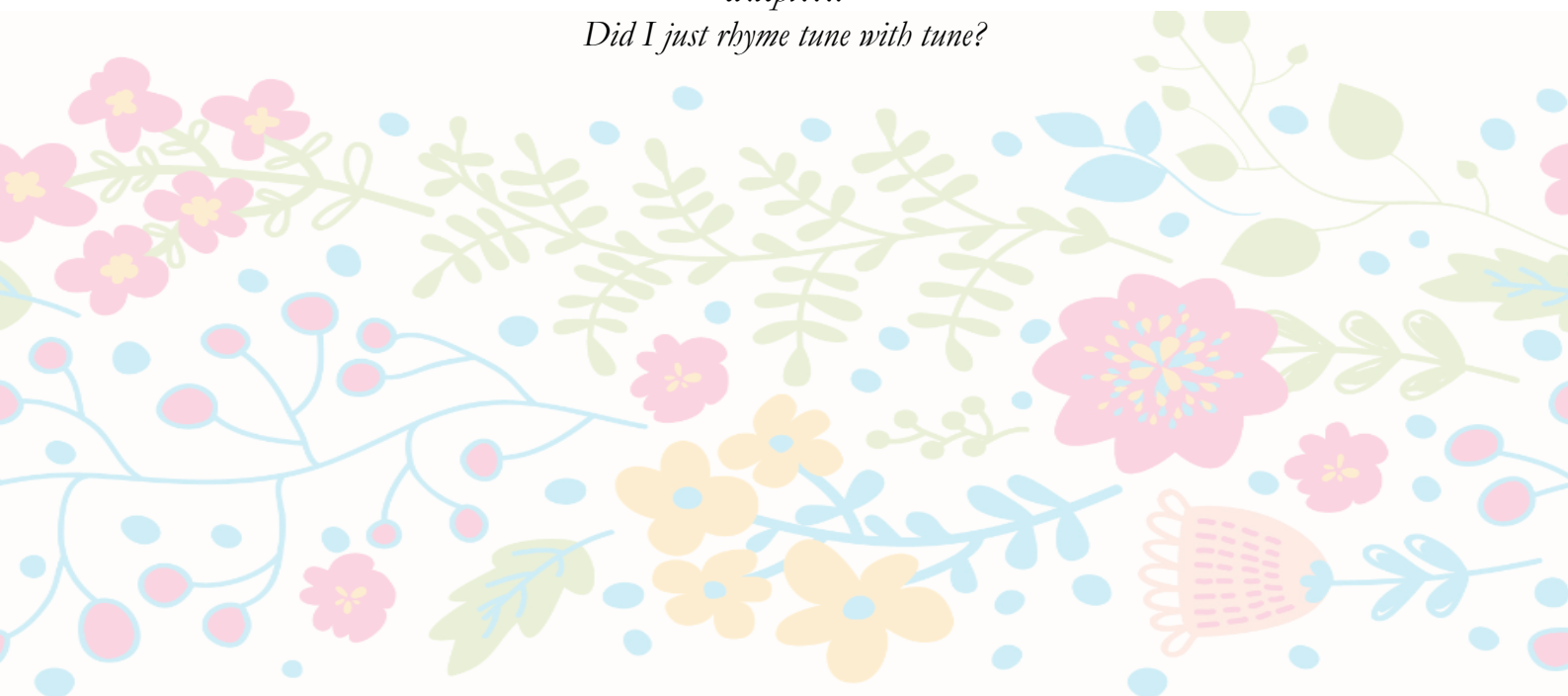
My first OBOD ritual – Alban Eilir
By Peter Brabyn

*Early this morning I re-read the things
my new OBOD friends suggest I should bring,
We'll celebrate the turning of seasons today,
for Spring, once again, is well on its way.*

*Eggs on the stove, dyes to prepare,
only a few hours 'til I should be there,
On with the thinking cap, a song, rhyme or tune,
do re me fah so, oh shit, out of tune.*

*So music is out, a poem it is,
for my new OBOD friends,
except....*

Did I just rhyme tune with tune?



From the underworld to the tree spirits: a creative experience.

By Danuta Raine

What is the role of darkness in the creative process? Why do our bodies work the way they do? What is the point of depression? Why do we descend before we arise? What are the depths to which we plumb, and why do we plumb them? Do we actually procrastinate, or do we compost, ferment and foment? Why are we frightened of our darker moods, as if they ought to be eliminated? For all our attempts to eradicate sadness, depression, grief and inner conflict, we have not done so. So rather than wondering why those feelings are bad, I have been exploring why they are there at all. What do they do? Why do we have them?

The melancholic personality has long been seen as the creative personality. From the poet languishing on a chez lounge to the artist addicted to laudanum or too much wine to the point of self-harm, our history is alive with life stories of creative desperation. Writers block, artistic dry-spells, the loss of muse, the stories of sorrow that drown creative works in winters of discontent and oblivion abound. The times when we walk away from creative tasks are just the times when we should hang in there, but not because we need to be working, but because we can see that the project has gone underground. It has entered the underworld. It has become significant enough to settle, decompose and reform itself.

The American philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, spoke about normal science and the sort of science that shifts the paradigm, that takes us out of one world and manifests another. He said this is like what happened with the move from the Aristotelean to the Copernican model of the Solar System, when the Earth moved from the centre of the universe to a planet revolving around the Sun just like all the other wandering stars. The significance of this shift wasn't about the scientific accuracy of the two models, as much as it was about the way that European thought had to change to make sense of the truth that the Earth is not the centre of all things.

We know the censure, the violence and the chaos that ensued because of this change, but we often forget the way it changed us. It changed the way we look at the sky at night, and how we understand the ground beneath our feet. It changed the way we thought about angels and God and the very matter that made up space. It changed the way we breathed, in a sense, because it led to the loss of the aether and the birth of the air as we now know it. It changed the truths that created the way we interact with those things that exist outside us, and in doing so changed the way we interact with the things that exist within us. Moving the Earth out of its stationary position in space sent profound ripples throughout our entire civilisation and changed everything. We had to write a new narrative of being, readdress our beginnings as a people, and invent ideas like evolution, the Big Bang and rocket fuel.

These changes didn't happen all at once. They took a long time. Nobody imagined that Copernicus' work would result in a complete reconstruction of physics, especially when fifty years after his death there were less than 20 astronomers working with his ideas. At times, it was as if Copernicus never existed, and as though his work composted in archives until people like Johannes Kepler, Giordano Bruno and Galileo Galilei dug them up again.

What has this to do with so called dark emotions as a part of the creative process? It points to the way that all great shifts, all profound work, goes through periods of latency. There is a time when a work needs to be put aside so that it can become what it will be, it has to be laid to rest. If we don't let it rest, we never allow it to fully mature. It isn't about procrastination or depression, it is about allowing the process to complete itself.

I am not saying that procrastination and depression don't exist. Of course, they do. And, of course they can cause great harm. But, is it possible that like many natural human processes that can go out of whack, there are aspects of these emotional and behavioural states that are beneficial to our beings?

When we explore the wheel of the year, the move from Lughnassadh to Imbolc takes us through Samhain, through the gateway of the Cailleach into the depths of Yule. The wheel of the year needs us to walk that transition, and the path of creation needs us to walk that way too. These cycles play across and through our lives, they paint the way of our past through to our future and create a field of possibility in which our present is revealed to us. It is a shared creativity that has its highs and lows, and those who have walked this way long enough become attuned to its rhythms within themselves.

Yet in our society, the dark time of Samhain is a place of nightmares. It is the location of horror stories and demons, of underworld figures that growl and snarl. It is the place that holds us stuck in our tracks, catches us in quicksand, and holds us captive. It is as if our contemporary social narrative has trained us to hide from the darkness and cling only to sunshine, and in doing so lost the wisdom of the underworld. It isn't always something you have to work through, push through, do battle with, lest you are captured, tortured and left to rot. The underworld is absolutely necessary. Without it you cannot become yourself, and the things you create cannot come into existence, because it is the soil that that enables you and your projects to shoot and bloom. And the more significant the project, the more important the soil.



The fear comes because there is always the risk that we will not arise. Sometimes we can get lost in these dark places for months, years and decades. Some spend entire lifetimes wallowing, unable to reach the surface, to see the sun. But is our concern based upon an inappropriate understanding of our own cycles. Some trees just take longer to grow. Some seeds need special conditions, like an excessively hot bushfire, to germinate. Some cycles, and some lifetimes, are just different to others. None are inherently more preferable nor a sign of the goodness of the one walking the path, they are just paths that we have an opportunity to explore.

The pain comes when we pathologise these processes, when one set of experiences become signs of wellness and other sets of experiences are considered fundamentally flawed. Too often we see the need for help as a sign of incapacity, of unworthiness. Unless we are constantly producing, we are somehow not worthy. Yet one of the deep truths of the wheel is that everybody is producing all the time, because the seasons work through us just as we move through them. The signs of madness are not always mad, just as the signs of health are not always healthy. The full wheel requires each of the processes to be explored at appropriate intervals, and the more aware we are of those processes, the more we are able to move through them with grace and wisdom.

Mental health is a real issue in the 21st Century. There are many reasons for that, and some of them do require social and medical support. Yet, I am left thinking about the wonder of our minds and bodies, and of the way that our inheritance synergises with our environments to optimise us. We are constantly being formed in a way that is perfect for our function, for where we live and what we need to do to survive and thrive. I am left asking as we enter the time of Beltane, the period of fertility, just how important that time of darkness and underworld during Samhain has been to the formation of my creative being. Can I step into a fruitful summer without being harvested, ploughed and sowed, without being cast into the night and left fallow?

The Wind Harp Druid Gathering 2019

The Wind Harp Seed Group of South Australia
is excited to announce a 4 day camp with facilitators

Damh the Bard and Cerri Lee from UK
and Kristoffer Hughes from Wales

The camp will be held over the
2019 Easter Long Weekend
(Friday 19th—Monday 22nd April)

The venue will be in the peaceful and picturesque valley
of Stockport an hour north of Adelaide

Cost \$350/person
\$100 Deposit payable at time of registration
Early bird discount of \$20/per person if deposit paid prior to
30th December 2018



*This event
will be
open to
anyone
interested in
Druidry*

Please email windharpseedgroup@gmail.com to request a registration form

Protecting the Environment

By Jenni Westwood

As Druids we're all about nature, and I was surprised to hear Druids happily discussing the plants they'd managed to sneak past the authorities in order to bring that special something back home when I first ventured into Druid company. These discussions had me questioning if I'd really found my people after all, as they didn't seem to care for the land as much as I thought they would. At the time I was too new and too shocked to say anything. Then I realised it wasn't so much that they didn't care, more that they didn't realise the massive impact one little nut, seed, cutting etc may have if the worst did eventuate.

Fast forward to OBOD Southern Hemisphere Assembly 2018.

I was overwhelmed by the attention to detail given in the planning of the handover to New Zealand. There was great thought put into the restrictions of what may or may not be able to cross 'the ditch', and how to represent those things that possibly wouldn't make the grade. It heartened me to see the respect expressed by everyone involved in the process at both ends.

It interests me to wonder why there was such a huge shift in attitudes. Was it just the different people involved or had there been some increased awareness somehow. I mentioned this in passing to Elkie during Assembly and she asked me to write more about it here.

There are rules in place when we cross borders for many reasons. These vary from country to country, state to state and sometimes areas within those too. When it comes to plant and animal material they are there to protect the natural, agricultural and social environment.

Do we really want to be the person that introduces Dutch Elm Disease, Sudden Oak Death, various boring insects, animal diseases or any number of other pests, weeds or diseases? Just so we can have our own Glastonbury thorn, oldest yew or oak from somewhere special to us. Every time someone sneaks something through the border, be it intentionally or not, there is a risk that they could be doing just that.

Knowing what you can and can't take with you, or bring back, before you head off is as important as making sure you've got your passport and visas in order. If in doubt you can check with the various countries or states online, and if you find something while you're away you can always double check before you return.



Pic by Mandy Gibson

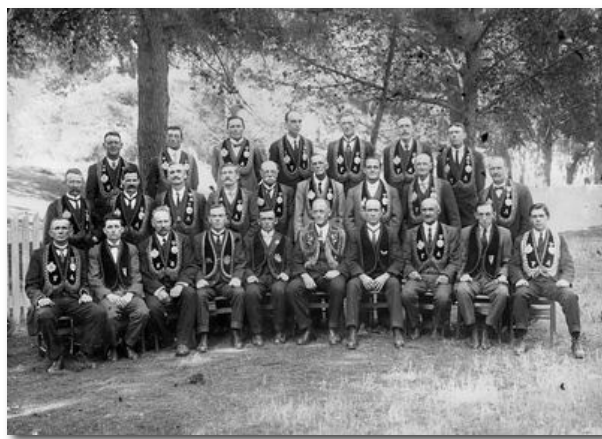


**ASSEMBLY PT 4 -
Nature
Pix by Trudz, Mandy
and William**

Update of the History Project, Spring 2018

The History of Druidry in Australia Project has been running for a year now and is due to wind up in December, but I'm planning on talking to Philip and Stephanie about it in January and so it might run a little bit beyond that.

The idea is to write a history of druidry as a spiritual practice in Australia, which Sandra has offered to collate into a book for us. We are hoping that lots of bards, ovates, and druids will participate so that we can cover the rich diversity of expression that druidry has spawned in Australia. I devised a questionnaire to help the project along and this is still available to anyone who would like to contribute; simply drop me a line at whitelk@bigpond.com



The questionnaire has undergone a few adjustments along the way but at all stages of its evolution was only intended to act as a springboard that people could use as they wished. You are free to ignore it and write your contribution as an essay with photos, poetry, music and musings, as the Awen moves you. You don't need to be an experienced druid to have a crack at the questionnaire or your personal essay.

I'm hoping that as well as the personal accounts of individual druids, we can also include the histories of Australia's various Groves and Seed Groups, Druids Down Under, and Urban Druidry, all of which are vital expressions of druidry in Australia.

At the Golden Wattle Assembly in August, William gave me two items of regalia that his grandmother found in an op shop in South Australia (see photo). These would have been worn by members of the United Ancient Order of Druids (UAOD). According to a similar picture on the internet, this is a photo of an 'Australian Druid Past Arch Collar Regalia UAOD'. The PA on the collar apparently standing for 'Past Arch(druid)'.

The black and white photo shows a group of UAOD members wearing such collars; (photo credit: State Library of South Australia). As you can see, they are not all the same but there are a few PA's. Maybe the one from the op shop used to belong to one of these people!



Obviously, the more contributions we have, the more accurate our story is likely to be; please get your contribution in by January if you have not already done so.

Elkie



The 19th OBOD Assembly – 2020 – Announcement

The Melbourne Grove is delighted to announce that we have found a lovely venue for the 2020 Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly! It's booked already so that you can start planning. It will be held over the Anzac Day weekend, from April 24 to April 28 2020, in Gembrook, east of Melbourne.

Beltaine with Michael Vlasto



Well here we go again(!) with my feelings, and the lens with which I look at life, focusing on the great fire festival of Beltaine. It is the time when the force of chaos loops with the energy of order to create the twined wheel with eight spokes of gold and silver light, sometimes one on top sometimes the other. Meanwhile we search and think, trying to give meaning to it all. Now we look at this time of year, for thousands of years, why have unexplained things happened now? Days are getting longer and warmer. That means change, so first priority is the protection of what has gotten through winter. So, the first branch of Beltaine is give protectin to all the second branch fertility to all - all by the use of fire:

*Jump the fire and you'll have twins,
Jump the fire and you'll have luck,
Victory in war, Many kills in hunting,
All grows well in farming.*

How did they create this? Why, by dancing, singing, playing games, making love, and by tipping all the old attitudes upside down - just for a short time! Then life settled back into 'normal' once more. Beltaine came at a perfect time: in between all the heavy work of ploughing and sewing the crops, and the first hay harvest. So people had time on their hands, the stock animals were all away in summer pasture, and all of nature was in blossom. It was now that village ogham came to the fore, as posies would appear on people's front doors in the villages and on the farms:

*Hawthorn blossom for a maiden,
Blackthorn for a party girl,
Nettles for a sharp tongue,
Thistles and crabapples for a nag,
Rowan blossom for affection,
Briar for a liar,
Plum in bloom for a marriage soon.*

In the earliest written accounts of Beltaine they talk of dancing - in circles around a tree or a pole; which was always decorated with primroses, violets, cowslips, and always a poppet or dolly on it as well. Children in fine clothes with ribbons dancing in the streets, boys in masks with roots and branches coming out of their mouths.

*Jack in the Green,
The King and Queen,
The Lord of Misrule,
and the Cuckoo Prince.*

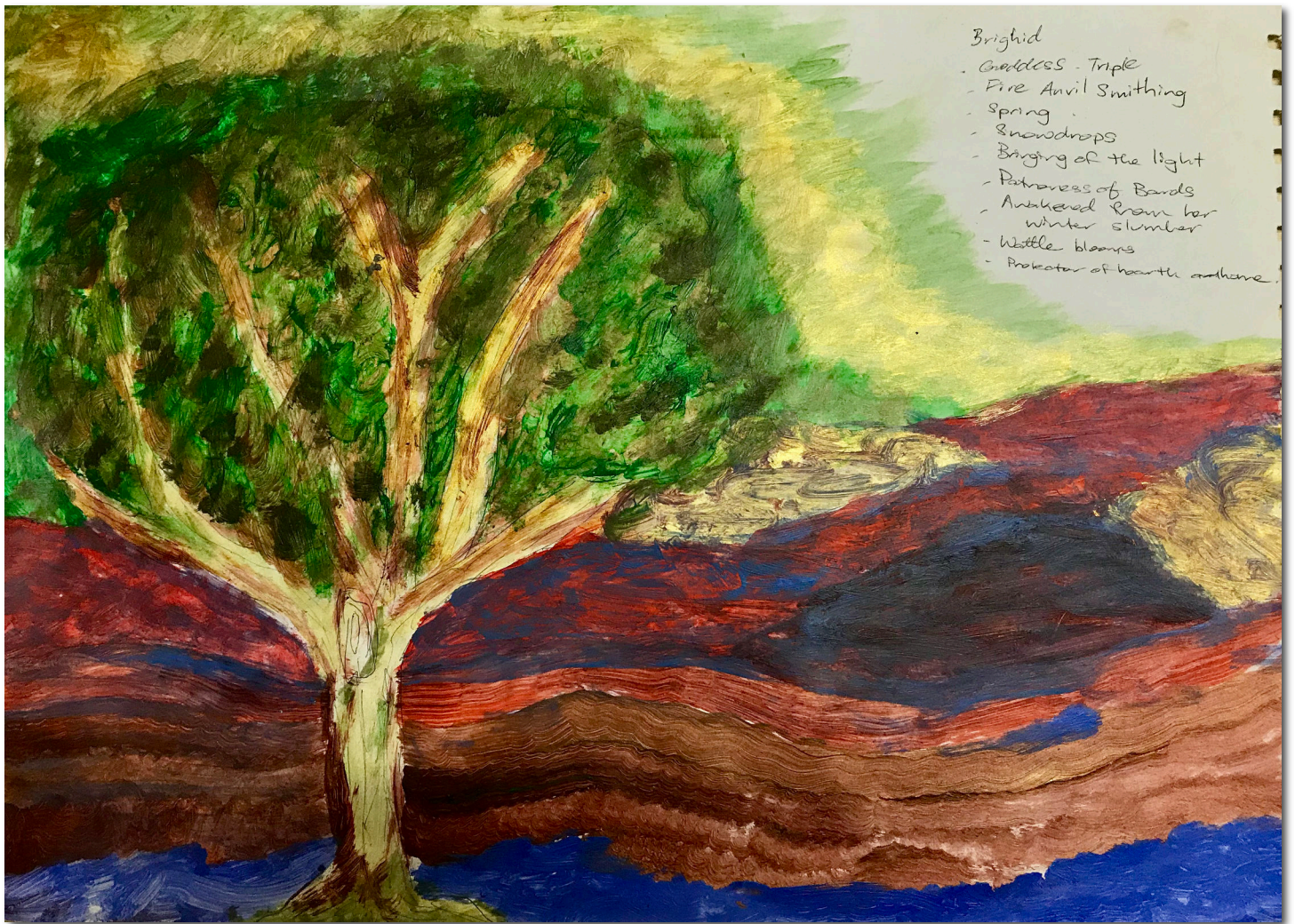
This proclamation was recorded in 1215, when King John was on the throne of England:

"By order of the Grand Captain of Mischief; elected by the wild heads of this town, who has the power to choose 100 lusty guts for his retinue, all must wear green and yellow. These he has the authority to lead into the church and interrupt the service, then to set up his Summer Hall. There will be Morris Dancers, drummers, men in female attire, giants, George and the Dragon, and worthies of Christendom. Robin Hood, Maid Marion, Little John, and Friar Tuck will also be attending. There will be wrestling, skittles, boxing, running races, cock fights, climbing the greasy pole, football and dancing. Women will run for gowns and legs of mutton. Men will wrestle for bats and silver spoons. Boys will climb the greasy pole for the prize on the top. Young men can buy sweets made of almonds and sugar with spices for their sweethearts, and at the end of the day the Old King will be thrown in the pond or on the rubbish dump."

Yet all this declined - what was practiced in every village, town and in the court of the King began to fade. So the Ancient Summer Games became the summer holidays and the local fete. Always the aim to unit the community, with the full spirit of 'Old Summer Feasts and Ales', lives on.

For this is the time when the Sword of the East rises through the Fire of the North to meet the Golden Crown of Spirit, so we unit both with ourselves and with others.

*The Green Man comes a-dancing,
A-prancing all the way,
Giving of the glories,
With the coming of the May.
And what you wish you just might get,
In the coming of the May*



DOES ANYONE RECOGNISE THIS??

This lovely piece of Brigid-inspired Imbolc artwork was left behind on the craft table at this year's Assembly, and is currently being cared for by me. If it's yours and you'd like to claim it please email me at sepentstar.obod@gmail.com with your postal address and I'll send it off to you.

Mandy



Assembly Pt 5 - Community
Pix by Trudz, Sandra and Mandy



Spiral Dance's latest album 'Land and Legend'
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Elen of the Ways	A Piggott
Mallee My Mother	Wyverne Ogma Vyvyan

Featuring:

Damh the Bard on Track 1 & 11
Wyverne Ogma Vyvyan Track 11

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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

TUATHA DEA	CELIA FARRAN
WENDY RULE	BRIAN HENKE
SJ TUCKER	MAMA GINA
BEKAH KELSO	MURPH'S
GINGER DOSS	MIDNIGHT
KELLIANNA	ROUNDERS
DAVE THE BARD	SPIRAL RHYTHM
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Pic by Mandy Gibson

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



Anam Cara Soul Space

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Readings are available in person in Auckland, New Zealand, or from anywhere in the world using Skype or Messenger.

Please visit my website anamcarareadings.com and follow my Facebook www.facebook.com/anamcarareadings





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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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Anne Conroy

REGISTERED CELEBRANT

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

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



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Member of the Order of
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Member Celebrant's
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Creating meaningful ceremonies and lasting memories

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 **Saging** (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

Thewoolshedretreats.co.nz

Tel: ++64-4 2399234



Need some time out from your day to day life?

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**Interested in helping with a permaculture self-sufficiency project
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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...

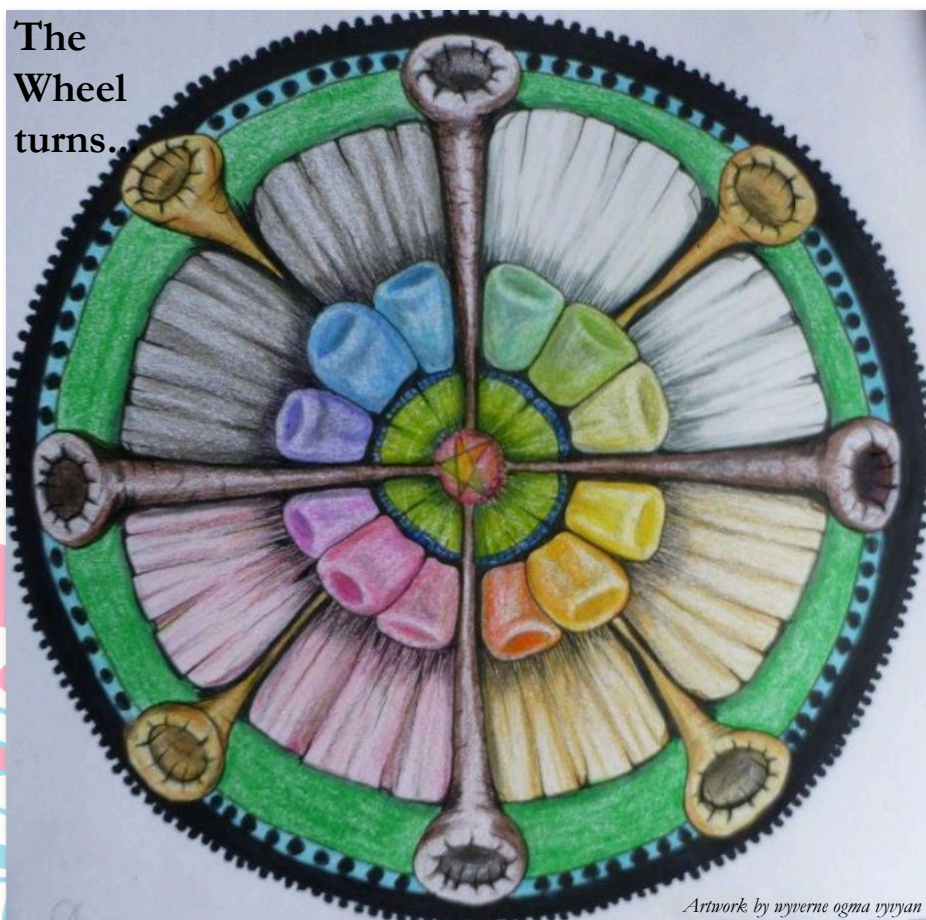


And strangely, we never did find out who she was.... ;)

Pix by Trudz, Julie and Tamzin...



The
Wheel
turns...



Artwork by nyverne ogma vyryan

Beltane...marks the time of our adolescence and early wo/manhood. Spring is in full bloom, and twin fires would be lit at this time, through which would be passed the cattle after their long winter confinement, or over which those hoping for a child or good fortune would jump.

We see traces of the Beltane celebrations on May Day (in the Northern Hemisphere), when dancing round the maypole celebrates the fertility of the land and creates an echo of the ritual circle dances that must have been enacted in stone circles throughout the country.

Text sourced from Druidry.org

The deadline for contributing to the Lughnasadh issue of SerpentStar is 25 January 2019.

The Lughnasadh issue will be released on 1 February 2019.