SERPENTSTAR

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



Welcome to the Imbolc issue of SerpentStar!

From my corner of lockdown to yours, warm greetings



We're moving into Imbolc in this altogether weirdest of years, and in Queensland Macadamia Grove gathered today for an in-person ritual, which is a rarity and may continue to be so for some time. It's sobering to know that this crisis is nowhere near ended, and that there is likely to be yet more stillness to come, but it was wonderful to spend some time together in nature. We also had some fun taking our traditional group photo, thanks to a combination of technology, forced perspective and social distancing!

That said, we're hopeful for an eventual easing of restrictions and are continuing to put plans in place for next year's Assembly. The date and venue has been chosen (note we have moved dates to Alban Eilir rather than Imbolc as announced in the last SerpentStar) and there is a 'save-the-date' flyer with preliminary info in this issue.

Also in this issue is a transcript of the farewell address from our former Chosen Chief, Philip Carr-Gomm, as well as a special welcome address from new Chosen Chief Eimear Burke. Members of the Druids Downunder/SHOBODO community held a special handover gratitude ritual for Philip and Eimear, and we have the lyrics of the song shared in the ritual here also, at the request of the attendees.

Julie Brett shares a very timely story, we have a poem from Karen Lewis, the last in a poetry series from Julie, and an article from Danuta Raine to finish off a quiet little SerpentStar in this quiet time.

Love and blessings, as always Mandy / | \



Pic by Samantha Travis

SerpentStar, Imbolc 2020

SerpentStar is a free, volunteer-produced online newsletter for members of the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids in the Southern Hemisphere.

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Enquiries via email: serpentstar.obod@gmail.com

All opinions expressed herein are solely the contributors' own.

A reminder to everyone that SerpentStar now has a YouTube channel, which is hosting the DDUDE talk series from Druids DownUnder. I'd like to see other videos from OBODies on there as well though - they can either be linked to ones already on other channels, or we can arrange for you to send them to me for upload. Get in touch if you have a bardic video or a short doco you'd like to share in SerpentStar.

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. We now have a public facebook page: Friends of The Melbourne Grove. FFI contact: Elkie, elkiewhite@gmail.com

Middle Earth Fellowship Seed Group

Tauranga, NZ. Also Medieval village, Medieval craft camps, Medieval dance and Border Morris dance. Contact Yvonne yjames@balnacoil.xtra.co.nz.

Silvereyes Seed Group

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

Song of the Eastern Sea Seed Group

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

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 windharpseedgroup@gmail.com



Wollemi Seed Group

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

Useful websites for SH OBODies:

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

Druids DownUnder - Facebook group - a group for druids of any path in the Southern Hemisphere, Australia/New Zeland 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.

Contact Penny touchstone@druidry.org

Druid (USA) www.druidmagazine.com (publication ceased 2018, back-issues still available)

Druidenstein (German) www.druidry.info/das-magazin-druidenstein

Dryade (Dutch) www.obod.dds.nl

Il Calderone (Italian) issuu.com/ilcalderone

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

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 *nmm.pagan-transitions.org.uk* and complete the application form. Any suggestions on how the service can be improved are welcome.



Dear members and friends,

On 6th June, I handed over the role of Chosen Chief of the Order of Bards Ovates & Druids to my successor, Eimear Burke. Here is my last speech as leader of the Order, that I gave the day before the hand-over. What an extraordinary experience it has been guiding this very small group we started with thirty-two years ago to the wonderful, creative community of friends and fellow spiritual seekers it has now become, all over the world.



Pic Courtesy OBOD (Facebook,

As I stood, as an eighteen-year-old, on Glastonbury Tor back in 1970, and was initiated as a bard into the Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, I had no idea that eighteen years later I would take on the role of the Order's Chief. But in those eighteen years, between my time of joining and my time of serving in this role, I learned so much about the beauty and the power of this spiritual way inspired by the Druids of old, and yet so finely attuned to the needs of our time.

Over the last three decades the Order has grown beyond all imagining, and thanks to so many gifted souls hearing its inner call, my work as Chief has been a pleasure to perform. On 6th June, Eimear Burke became our new Chosen Chief, and I hope you were able to join us online at 8pm BST for the ceremony of installation. In June next summer we hope we can gather as friends and fellow-members in Glastonbury to celebrate this event too.

I thought I was going to be giving this speech to you in Glastonbury. In fact, ten years ago I travelled to this moment in time. I had been following a series of exercises stipulated in a collection of gwersi – the Welsh term we use for our Order teachings. These were designed for my eyes only, and created by a member who is a specialist in succession planning. I was encouraged to imagine I was in a small spacecraft that had been specially built for time travel. And I was instructed to travel to this moment in the future. Well here I am, and here we all are! And I have to say, that as I got out of my spacecraft, I didn't imagine the situation as it is today – these unexpected circumstances we all find ourselves in.

So it never occurred to me that I would be giving this farewell message over the internet. But on reflection there are advantages to doing it this way: far more of us now have the opportunity to be together in this moment, since distance is no object to everyone's participation in the event.

Over the last 32 years that I have been leading the Order, the most incredible people have joined our merry band, and it has been an absolute joy to work with them to help co-create this community and organisation. So many people have played key roles in this renaissance of Druidry and this growth of the Order, and I want to honour and thank as many of them as I can, and I will do this at the great celebration we have planned for Glastonbury next year. But for now - at this moment - I want the spotlight to be on us - on all of us - as a community.

The Order **is** its membership. It is all of us – this wonderful group of souls who care about the Earth, who want to lead ethical, spiritual lives guided by the wisdom of the ancestors and of Nature Herself.

Having handed on the role of Chosen Chief, it is time for me to say goodbye and yet - unlike Bilbo at his eleventy-first birthday party when he disappears in a puff of smoke - I am not leaving the party. I shall continue to be a member of the Order. And I shall try my hardest not to be a nuisance, or an 'eminence grise', or a back-seat driver, but instead I will be available to our new Chief for counsel, and will happily offer whatever help I can.

And you know, by sticking around, this also solves a problem for me: I don't have to leave a community of friends and fellow spiritual seekers whose company I have grown to love and enjoy so much over the years. I don't need to get out my handkerchief to wipe away the tears - I'm just changing places.

Two years ago, when I announced my decision to hand on the role of Chief to Eimear, at a gathering of several hundred of us in Glastonbury, I wasn't sure what the reaction would be. After my announcement, there was a second – maybe two seconds - of silence, but then there was a spontaneous roar of applause as everyone got to their feet to support the decision and cheer Eimear. At that moment I felt such a sense of rightness, of being completely in the flow of the unfolding life of the Order.

The Chief is someone who needs to make sure they provide a sense of stability and continuity, of direction and support, showing enough leadership to be present, available and visible, and yet knowing how to get out of the way, and knowing that they stand in service to the community of members, of which they are a part. The Chief is not superior, more 'special' or 'elevated' than any individual member, and I believe this style of leadership has served the Order well in these last decades, and will continue to do so under Eimear's direction.

Over the last two years I have shared with Eimear all that I know about the workings of the Order and its history, and now I can take a step back - feeling confident that the Order will continue to blossom and flourish under Eimear's guidance.

Fifty years ago, we numbered just a few dozen souls. Today, we number more than twenty thousand. I believe we have grown so much in these last decades because what these times demand of us is a spiritual way that combines a focus on the nourishment of the soul with a deep love for the world of Nature. Druidry offers an engaged spirituality, an embodied spirituality that places just as much emphasis on the outer world as the inner world. The Order's course of development, its rituals and teachings, help us to foster our inner life, but at the same time they support us in whatever way we feel moved to help protect and restore the environment.

And I feel so proud of the members of the Order and of all that we have achieved - all of us who have taken up this idea, this philosophy - because right now we need people who are serious about Nature and about protecting the planet. From small everyday acts of reverencing and fostering the environment, to much larger projects, we have done amazing things.

Today, far from Druidry seeming like some arcane fringe activity, our preoccupations are now centre-stage: they address the most urgent and important issue of our time: how we galvanize all of our potential – practical, creative, intellectual, and spiritual – to protect and restore the Earth.

They address directly the gaze of Greta Thunberg and her generation - our children and grand-children - to say: "We are committed to our love of Nature to the fullest extent, with all of our being - all looking towards the same horizon: a world in which each human being has enough to lead a happy, healthy and fulfilling life without terrible inequalities between rich and poor, without the destruction of habitats and species, without the pollution of our skies and seas."

Together, and individually in our own unique ways, I hope and believe that we can all fulfil these two most important aspirations of the Druid path: to care for our environment and all life, and to foster wisdom and compassion within ourselves.

Thank you for all the support you have given me over the years. Many many blessings. And – as I'm sure we are all saying to each other right now – I hope to see you again soon!

A Dhaoine Uaisle, A Cháirde, Dear Friends, (Ah ghweeneh oosh-leh, Ah Khawr-je),

Imbolc faoi mhaise daoibh go léir (fwee washe jeeve guh lair) Happy Imbolc to you all. Here in Ireland we are about to celebrate Lúghnasadh.

So much has happened since we were together at SHOBODA in 2019 with Philip & Stephanie when we celebrated Lúghnasadh. We have moved from a world where we had imagined we were in control of everything to realising that we are not and



Pic Courtesy SHOBODO (Facebook)

that we now have to acknowledge life's uncertainty and to learn to live with it. I think the teachings and practices we receive in the Gwersi and the values of Druidry equip us with the tools to live with this uncertainty. Instead of living in fear and terror of the unknown we can embrace the mystery that lies on the path ahead. I'm not suggesting that this is an easy thing to do. Exploring the mystery is often challenging.

As I said in my opening address at my Installation ceremony: "One of the gifts and strengths of the Order which stands out for me is its diversity. I love how we welcome all faiths and none, how it is possible to be a Druid and a Pagan, a Christian, a Buddhist, a Theist, an Animist, an Atheist, etc. The Order allows each one of us to hold our own perspectives and to travel our own paths as we see fit. We are guided without any dogma or fundamentalist notion of what it means to be a Druid. For me the Order is a natural forest where there is a wide range of trees and plants and such diversity supports multiple species of animals, insects, and plants. We have different voices, different perspectives, different worldviews, and we are all united through a love of nature. There is an expression in Irish: "Aontacht in Ilíocht" (Ayn-tockth [as in hay] in Ill-ee-yuckth) which means Unity in Diversity. I look forward to that diversity growing in the years to come."

When I attended SHOBODA in 2019 I was very impressed by how our New Zealand members have connected to their landscape and incorporated Mauri spirits, animals, trees, & traditions in such a respectful way into their ceremonies. The rituals were a beautiful synthesis of New Zealand and the Celtic lands. I was blown away by the Powhiri on our arrival. This is an excellent example of how Druidry can be expressed in keeping with the landscape where Druids are living rather than strictly adhering to a Northern Hemisphere/Irish/British model. Druidry needs to be relevant to time, place and ancestors. This is the diversity I refer to above. I hope to explore this further in the coming years.

I was delighted to be a part of SHOBODO this year. How you managed to pull off such an impressive online event in such a short time amazes me. It was a cauldron of creativity, commitment, dedication, skills, talents, goodwill, hard work and I'm sure at times lots of frustration and stress. Yet while online it seemed to flow seamlessly. One of the advantages of having an online event is that more people could attend. I was delighted to see that there were attendees from South America and South Africa as well as New Zealand and Australia. Well done to you all. I really enjoyed it and felt so welcome and close to you all. I never expected to be grateful for ZOOM. SHOBODO exemplified the Irish proverb: "Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine" (Err skaw a kay-leh ah warren nah deen-eh) Under the shelter of each other, the people survive. You rallied together and created a magical event and from this has grown other online support groups. This working together independently and creatively is one of the things I love about OBOD.



This pandemic has brought about many things that a year ago would have been deemed impossible, for example, lockdowns, no flying, and online events of such high standard as SHOBODO. I could never have foreseen that the Installation ceremony of the Chosen Chief would be held online. It was a very profound and powerful experience for me. Just afterwards I realised that was how it was meant to happen. More people were able to attend than if it had been held on the physical plane. Having said that I hope we get to have our celebration in Glastonbury next June. There is nothing like being together physically, standing in circle in ceremony.

I look forward to our next meetings wherever they may be. Go raibh amhlaidh! (Guh row owley) So it is! Eimear

Light of the Earth, Light of the Sea, Light of the Sky.... Save the Date for Assembly 2021



Come call the light of Alban Eilir with Macadamia Grove

Bribie Island Retreat & Recreation Centre Queensland, Australia

Friday 10 - Tuesday 14 September 2021

Booking details coming soon

Statement re COVID pandemic restrictions:

Due to the ever-changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, a cancellation policy will be published before any deposits are required. The booking form will serve as an 'expression of interest' only, until the deposit is requested and paid. The booking form will be available on DruidryAustralia.org in the coming months - an announcement will be made via the SerpentStar mailing list and Facebook when the form is available.

It is our intention to conduct the activities of Assembly 2021 according to whatever restrictions may be in place at the time of the event. However, should cancellation become our only option, a final decision regarding the staging of the event will be published on or before 10 June 2021.

The following song has become an important tune for the OBOD community...



We have sung it at various events, with different verses written at the time to reflect the essence of each event. It was sung at the Druids Down Under National Gathering (DDUNG) first in 2018 in Sydney at a workshop shared by Adrienne Piggott and Kacey Stephensen.

Pic by Tracy Hamilton-Breed

It was then shared at the 17th OBOD Assembly also in 2018, and again at the 18th in New Zealand for the SHOBODA event in 2019.

Beneath the row spring mean the shoot golden hope to one should trust and the fields are open the rivals to have and hard in shoot to have and hard in shoot to have and hard for shoot to have and in shoot to have and in shoot to have and in shoot to have any and the shoot to have any the shoot the shoot to have any the shoot to have

This new version was created for a ritual for the Change of Chosen Chief performed via Zoom video conference on Sunday 7 June 2020. In the ritual we expressed our gratitude and thanks to Philip Carr-Gomm for his many years of service and commitment to the OBOD community in the role of Chosen Chief, welcomed Eimear Burke into the

role, and wished joy and blessings for the future ahead for all. The lyrics here are based on the Southern Hemisphere elemental directions, and each verse was written by a different contributor and sung by them in the ritual.

We encourage others to create new verses like this, whether for or at future events, or in your own personal practice.

The Awen I Sing

The Awen I sing from the deep I bring it The Awen I sing from the deep I bring it The Awen I sing from the deep I bring it The Awen I sing (repeat ×3)

We call to the East and to the air
The magpie sings to the sunrise there
Spirit of light that the cockatoo wears
The Awen I sing

The red kangaroo stands bold in the North.

From black cockatoos, warm laughter comes forth.

The gumtrees rise high and greet us from source

From the Awen I sing

West water of life it flows within
The earth, bark, scales, fur, feather and skin
Connecting us as loving kin
The Awen I sing

As my feet walk the Earth her heart is beating I breathe in the light and my soul is glowing the light grows stronger and the love is flowing The Awen I sing

The spirit of place weaves our Awen home. The spirit of time's a stream vision flows from. The spirit of life breathes us through the gloam. The Awen I sing.

The Awen I sing from the deep I bring it The Awen I sing from the deep I bring it The Awen I sing from the deep I bring it The Awen I sing (repeat x3)

Chorus - Adrienne K Piggott and Kacey Stephensen
East/Air - Julie Brett (who also provided the info above)
North/Fire - Sandra Circle
West/Water - Tina Merrybard
South/Earth - Trudy Moondancer Richards
Center/Spirit - Danuta E Raine

The "Walking Stick"

by Julie Brett



I stepped over the branch and took a few steps more.

'Wait!' said a voice, 'Come back.'

It was the branch. A sapling really, about a meter and a half long and about 2cm thick at its base, tapering off to thin twigs and branches at the ends. Its leaves had browned and it was laid across the path.

'I want to come with you,' it said. 'Come back. I'll be your walking stick.'

'I'm not really a walking stick person.' I replied. 'And you're a bit small anyway aren't you? You're too thin. If I trimmed you down you wouldn't be long enough for a walking stick.'

'Just come back and have a look. Pick me up would you? Just come and see,' it insisted.

So I bent down and saw that the tree was still attached a little at it's base. It had only recently been snapped there. The wood was still fresh and alive even though the leaves were browned. I pulled it away and it broke ever so easily.

'Which tree are you?' I wonder.

'Scribbly gum.' It replied, with more of a gesture to the other similar trees nearby than with words. 'That's my mother.' It pointed out a large grey barked scribbly gum about four or five meters away.

'Right, maybe you'd like to be ogham for me?' I ask, visualising the set of staves from many different trees I have at home that I lovingly collect and use as a divination tool.

'Oh yes. Of course.' Said the stick rather enthusiastically.

'Lovely,' I say, 'I don't think I have the grey kind of scribbly gum from the mountains yet.' I get my pocket knife from my crane bag and start trimming.

'Yes yes, but I'm more than that.' It explained as I trimmed off the leaves. 'Take me with you.' It was particularly insistent.

I cut a smaller piece from the thinner end and trimmed it to about 15cm long. An ogham stave. I would add it to my collection at home, marking the tree's name on the end. But the stick wouldn't let me put down the larger piece. I put the ogham piece in my crane bag, and held the larger one in my hand as I walked.

Alright, let's go. I said, starting up the track again.

The stick was talkative.

'It's nice to be in the air, moving again,' it said, 'I do like to fly.' It seemed happy.

'Fly?' I asked. 'What do you mean?'

'Well,' said the stick, 'flying is terribly important to us you know. We spend out whole lives as trees talking to moths that grow in our bark. They share with us stories of flying and moving. It's our mythology. We sing the songs and tell the stories of the moths as they grow and then farewell them as we watch them fly out into the sky. Then, when the time comes, our consciousness moves into the seed and we fly too. It is a most wonderful part of our existence and I remember it well.'

'Ok,' I say. 'But isn't that just a moment? Surely you don't go very far?'

'Oh but to us, it is far, and a journey of great detail and wonder. Sometimes the wind will blow us many meters. And our sense of time is very different to yours, human. The seed time feels very long, and is full of wonder for us. It fills us with joy.'

The stick communicated a feeling to me that was like being in love, elated and ecstatic and joyful. Feeling the wind and the movement of the seed through it in incredible detail.

'We feel the sky and the wind as we fly. We sing its songs and tell its stories and speak to the wind of the needs of the trees. We share all of our stories with the wind and it passes them on to others.

Then we fall to the earth and speak to the soil and the sand. We open to it and tell it everything, all the stories and songs, and the needs of trees and it speaks to us of the ways of the earth and we become one another.

'Then the rains come and we speak to the waters telling them of the needs of trees, our stories and songs. You see? This is how we move and now I move again with you.'

As it explained these things I also saw them in my mind's eye, as though I was the seed having the experiences of the wind and the earth and the waters.

'You're very talkative,' I say.

'Yes I can talk to you anytime. I will walk with you and we will speak of the forest together. All of the stories and songs. I will tell you of the needs of trees.'

'I'd like that.' I say.

'You can call me your "walking stick," but maybe you will carry me in your hand? Cut me short, look! Find stones to put onto me. Make me like a wand. You can do this. Find them and they will speak to you, you'll know the right ones. Then you can walk with me like that.'

I look as I walk and find stones. A white quartz for peace, and clearer one for clarity. A pink quartz for nurturing. A triangular shaped stone for direction. Another pointed quartz for protection. And three small stones – for Land, Sea and Sky – or perhaps for the Wind, the Earth and the Waters?

'You must make me into this wand and name me "walking stick".' Said the tree. 'Take me with you when you walk and I will talk to you. Or talk to me at any time – not just walking. I will help you. I will be your guide. We will "walk" this earth together. What do you need help with human?'

'That's kind.' I say and think for awhile as I walk along the path. I think of the sad state the world has found itself in, so much trouble and turmoil.

'The human world is sad, at the moment. We are grieving many losses.'

'You need healing.' Said the stick with confidence.

'Yes, how do we heal?' I ask.

Without hesitation the stick says, 'The tree loves itself. We come into being through love.'

But I don't understand right away.

'We need to love ourselves?' I ask.

'Yes. But not like you think. Humans think love is just two. It is not two. It is all.'

'I'm not sure what you mean.'

In reply I'm given an image of a tree, with all of its parts connected. Each leaf like a human, we too are connected like the tree.

'Humans...' I start, wondering 'are we like trees? Is that what you mean?'

'Yes, humans are one tree walking. All one tree. One tree loves itself to health. Love is all together.'

'All one tree?'

'Yes. You forget. You are all one tree.'

The image becomes clearer, as though there is an invisible tree-like network between all humans, that joins us. We are one tree because of this connection to each other that we all have.

I understand, but reply by seeing in my mind's eye an image of the separateness of humankind – the splitting off into factions and opposing groups, different ideologies causing conflict and pain.

'How do we heal?' I ask.

You have each found yourselves on small branches. You have been there too long only speaking with this one branch. You need to learn to speak to the whole tree. You must not think of love as so small. Love all the tree.' Said the stick.

'What do you mean?' I ask.

'If the branches are sick, send love to the trunk. If the trunk is sick, send love to the roots. Send love human. You are all one tree.'

I ponder on this as my mind is filled with feelings, metaphors and concepts of interconnectedness, universal consciousness, and the human race as a single, united being that is unwell and in need of healing – the healing of love like that elated feeling of the seed flying through the Air, and being nourished into life by the Earth and Water.

The message says loud and clear that we must learn to communicate what is important to each of us, and what has helped us in our lives, not only with those close to us, but in ways that are accessible to "the whole tree", and to do it as an act of love for all.

'Sing the songs, tell the stories. Speak to the Wind, the Earth and the Waters of the needs of your tree. And love the whole tree human. This will heal you.' Said the tree in conclusion.

The stick then demands that I take it home, turn it into a wand, name it "walking stick" and meditate with it often. It tells me it is going to continue to help me.

'I like you, human.' Said the stick.

'I like you too stick.' I reply. And we go home.





Callieach

Where is life shadowed clouds colour your eyes Where is warmth cacooned inside the heart sighs Where is the flower's fragrant scent Summer's grandeur blossoms spent Where is the light that puppets the limbs mind is dulled purpose dims Slumber and in blindness sleep

but always her hand is stirring deep Open your heart and in truth see the bounty of the evergreen tree the beauty of the flowering vine the dew drop cradled enticed to shine And the sun a whispered caress invites critique with tenderness To love winter and embrace the cold

is to invoke the Crone
and witness
her grace unfold
Her beauty comes
from time endured
Wisdom offered
vanity cured
Know her
as the chill takes hold
Tales of snow and ice
untold
She enchants
yet plays to spurn
always with a promise
of spring's return

by Karen Lewis

Pilgrimage and Change by Danuta Raine

Druidry is an embodied spirituality that brings us an awareness of who we are in the worlds. In our lives, we live in many different worlds that intersect like bubbles in a Venn Diagram. We live in the world of our homes and families, in the worlds of our profession and occupation, in the worlds of our different community connections, and in each one we are a slightly different person performing in a slightly different way. Even before we begin to think about the Other worlds or "Not Worlds" of ancient lore, the worlds of the Fae, the Giants and the Dragons, we can begin to understand the shifting sands of self as we look at who we are in the worlds of our own current lives.

There are different ways of being me, and different styles of me depending on the world I am in. I like to think that each relationship that I am in offers a different way of being myself. The connection and communication between the others in that "world" draws out a way of embodying myself for that network of living beings. I don't mean that I am profoundly different, like the difference between being somebody who would buy you a cup of tea at a café or who would be an axe murderer, but I can be different like the difference between a heavy drinker and a teetotaller. As we become more aware of our life paths through whatever spirituality that we engage with, we can become more aware of the subtle differences of who we are in these many worlds and how those different engagements draw out ways of being and knowing that illuminate the greater path that we live in this lifetime.

There are many psychological and sociological frameworks that deal with the changes in the self that are caused by being in different company. Some theories talk about the way that groups require people to play specific roles that can be forced from an individual without their willing participation. The environment created by the dynamics of the group allocates roles and myths that become embodied in the individual. The group, the place, and the time (or the world, if you like) conditions the individual to "incarnate" in a way aligns with the role they have in that group. This is so pronounced in some cases that what a person is like in one situation is profoundly different once they leave that world. Once the individual has had time to recover from the conditioning of that set of community roles, they can manifest as somebody quite different.

For a long time, I have thought about the many worlds I occupy, and the way that could leave me feeling run down and fragmented. This can be noticeably marked in people like me, those who are the children of migrants who are required to engage in different cultures contiguously and continually. Each culture, specifically the original culture of the migrant community and then the dominant or hegemonic culture of the new land, requires the individual to be somebody different to fulfill their social roles. You would think that once migrants move to a new country by choice, they would find a way of belonging in the greater community, but it takes generations for a clan to change. And not only that, but that change is a bit like gravity. Not only does the migrant clan change, but the community which accepts the migrant clan also adapts with their inclusion.

Growing up, I was taught that the land owns you. You do not own the land. The land calls you into being for the roles required by you for this age. To not understand this puts you out of balance with the land itself and the purpose of your existence. From this perspective, as an Australian, I don't believe we can live here without the land assisting in the creation of ourselves. The land itself offers a new way of being, and with a closer relationship with the nemeta of different spaces, we are made aware of the self that we can potentially nurture for the good of our individual paths and the paths of the communities to which we belong.

So, we are left with a bit of a trap. The worlds that we live in and our roles in those worlds have been created through a tapestry of choices, few of which were made while we were consciously aware of the constraints that our communities have placed upon us. Our free will has been corralled by the subliminal wants and needs of the communities that we live in, and the expectations we are allowed to fulfill. There is an old saying that goes, a prophet is not without honour except in her own hometown. This is because in another community, the wisdom of the prophet, seer or witch can stand on its own, but in their home village the people say, "Isn't that Mary, the one with the limp? Wasn't she a bit odd at school? Wasn't her mother a cleaner? What would she know?"

Communities decide who they will listen to, and if that isn't you, well what can you do? But even more devastating is that communities create those they will listen to, and if that person isn't a person of wisdom, what can anybody do?

This is where pilgrimage becomes a path to change. Apart from the many wonderful and spiritual opportunities that visiting a sacred site can bring to somebody, pilgrimage is one of the few ways that somebody might escape the confines of the lives they are required to live. While it is true that you cannot leave yourself at home when you travel, the self who travels with you is more porous and malleable than it is at home. And when the purpose of the pilgrimage is to open access to those spaces in the self, and to strengthen our own will and ability to make choices, the veils of the many selves that we are required to perform can peal away and reveal something far more abundant. While there is probably no singular core self, the illumination of the spirit can be given space to reveal itself when we are set free from the entrenched requirements of daily existence.

When we gather our packs and step through our front doors, anything can happen. This is both true for men and for hobbits. At home, our life might be all about first and second breakfasts, but when we travel, the requirements of the road and the company of fellow travellers reshape our expectations and desires. That is one of the key opportunities of pilgrimage. Often, we can the tell that pilgrimage is done when a particular desire leaves us, or a new desire enters. When our appetites change, a pilgrimage has done a deep and sometimes lasting work. Because, even if things seemingly go back to normal when we return, the mark of that change never leaves us.

And the strange thing is, when the pilgrim returns home, communities are somehow conditioned to look at the person differently. I don't know if it is a remnant of some ancient cultural belief, but to go on pilgrimage almost grants us permission to re-enter our old communities as different creatures.

"Wasn't that Mary who went away. I hear she went to Paris and London. I hear she walked into a cave underneath Tintagel. I hear she met a great elder, a holder of wisdom. I hear ..."

There is a potential for myth to rewrite our opportunities, and communities often accept that the one who has travelled, the pilgrim, will somehow come back with a wisdom they never had before, and knowledge that will help the community as a whole.

While it can be important to be a pilgrim to a sacred site, in truth the most important thing is to allow for pilgrimage while we travel. Pilgrimage is magical. It opens us to seeing what we cannot see because we are immersed in the lives we live. It is a powerful ingredient if we are searching for self-understanding and personal change. It is one of the key tools of the seeker and the one who is called to anything that is outside the expectations of the worlds they live in. Whether your life is coherent and stable, or it is adrift on a sea of chaos, pilgrimage offers a way to step outside yourself and greet some of the possibilities of who you can be.

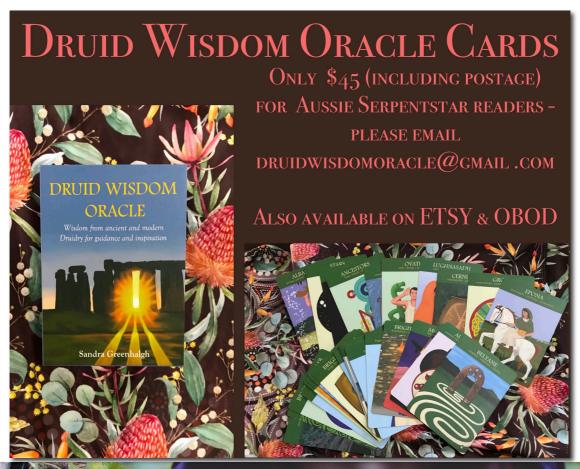
Danuta is an Ovate member of OBOD and has supported the Southern Hemisphere OBOD community through her engagement with SHOBODO Weaving our Worlds online conference and FB group. She also helps facilitate the Druid Pilgrim FB Group. She lives in Lake Macquarie, NSW, and is open to engaging with wayfarers and pilgrims.



Member Businesses, Groups & Retreats in 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.druidryaustralia.org/about





The Wheel of Segais The Wisdom of the Four Seasons as a Divination Tool

A big thank you to all of you for your patience while we did our second production run for the Wheel of Segais Personal Reader Kit. The reprinting took somewhat longer than we had anticipated but the good news is (trumpet sounds)...

The Wheel of Segais Personal Reader Kit is now available again! The printing has been checked, the fabric Wheels, hazelnuts and pens tested, the boxes packed and we are all ready to receive your orders once again.

If the **Wheel of Segais Personal Reader Kit** is unfamiliar to you, there is lots more information on my website - http://www.wheelofsegais.com/ - and you might like to check out this wonderful divination tool by having an online reading with me to get you started.

And if you would like to learn a little more about how this seasonal metaphor and 'thinking like a tree' can be used to understand the cycle of all things, be it a project, an intention, a goal, a life purpose, a relationship, a business etc, you might like to take a look at this live video I did for 'Tea with a Druid' a couple of weeks ago which I call, 'Living Treefully'. It includes a short meditation that you might enjoy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?vesphYwzemtfM

THE WHEEL OF SEGAIS READER TRAINING

The Wheel of Segais Reader Training already has a number of students and Graduates in America, Australia, the UK and New Zealand.

f you are interested in taking the **Wheel of Segais Online Reader Training** you will first need to purchase a Personal Reader Kit.

If you already have a Personal Reader Kit then you can purchase the Reader Training course straight away and start your Reader journey. Videos and more information about the Reader Training and its content can be found at:

https://www.wheelofsegais.com/be-a-reader/

You can sign up for the Training through Global Spiritual Studies – https://globalspiritualstudies.com/product/the-wheel-of-segais/. Prices are in \$USD.

- Download seven recordings to your device: \$279
- Seven recordings stored on a USB flash drive: \$290 (includes postage worldwide)

If you are a New Zealand resident, the good news is that you can save on international currency transfer fees by paying in \$NZD. Email me for \$NZ prices and bank account details – pamela@thewoolshed.com

As the seed is nurtured and the Wheel of Segais unfurls its tendrils around the world, I hope you will consider taking the next step with me to becoming a Wheel of Segais Reader. Let us use the wisdom of Nature to grow our dreams and the dreams of others from Seed to Harvest.

WHEEL OF SEGAIS COURSES

In New Zealand I run one-day facilitated workshops for up to 20 people and also run ongoing monthly courses following the 12 streams that flow from the Well of Segais: Transformation, Openness, Affinity, Passion, Commitment, Alignment, Identity, Discrimination, Ripening, Healing, Harvest and Reflection.

The next one-day (10-4) workshop will be on Sunday 2nd June 2019 here at The Woolshed and from there I will ascertain when is the best time to begin another series of monthly workshops. These will be in addition to the Reader training although they will use much of the same material. I am also exploring the possibility of making these monthly workshops available online for those of you in other countries or out of town.

In the meantime, I will be travelling to Australia in April 2020 and the UK and Europe in May/June 2020 and I am keen to run one-day Wheel of Segais workshops while I'm away. If you would be interested in attending one of these please register your interest. If you would like to organise a one-day workshop for me (promotion, venue, admin, etc) then I would be happy to offer you a place for free.

I look forward to hearing from some of you very soon.

Yours on behalf of the Salmon of Wisdom. Pamela

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.

If you would like a reading or a life coaching session in person, you can contact me at pamela@thewoolshed.com, 0272068876 or 2399234.

Cost: \$40

Out of town or in another country?

Book an online reading or Life Coaching Session through my website – www.wheelofsegais.com



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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



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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 practicising 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.

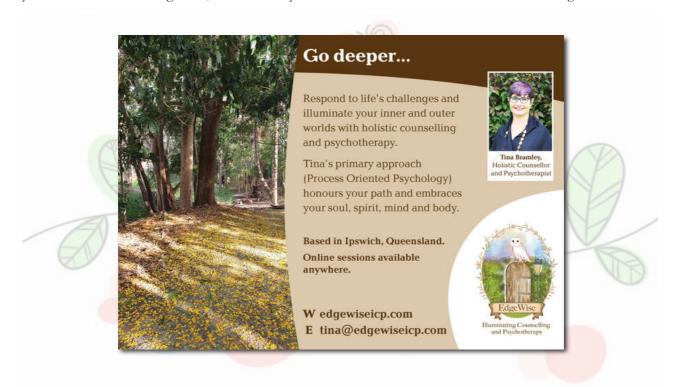
The land of my birth, Aotearoa New Zealand, has provided me with a deep appreciation of the native forest here, and my communion with nature has been further developed through training as a plant essence practitioner. Plant essences contain specific healing properties that shift emotional and traumatic 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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Pamela Meekings-Stewart

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roffer 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 Sageing (men); House Blessings; Blessings and Invocations For Passing Over; Funerals and Burial Blessings



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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...

The Fairy Dance

At the end of the garden Just past the pond There's a place that I wander And look out beyond And look deep within And look down into Tiny worlds of grass, Flowers and mushrooms. Whether by day Or whether by night The worlds that I see Are detailed and bright A small winding path Through grass blade and stem A little rock wall And a small cosy den Each twig is a log Each pebble a boulder Each flower a flag Of a fortress much older Than all of the world I have known in my days Each leaf is a tree

And marks out the ways Of the forests of fairies Deep in the moss The twinkling dew drops The gossamer gloss Of the beetle-shell houses The colourful homes Of pebble and moss And perhaps some old bones. And dancing between them I begin to spy The ones who might live there The ones who don't die They beckon me to them And then I see Just how detailed this world is And all it can be I look deep within And I know that inside There's nothing but magic And nothing to hide I'm full in this world I'm lost in it now In miniature splendour And I'm not sure how

I would ever go back To that place I once knew I'm seeing this world now I have only one view I watch them excited I watch them all dance I watch tiny figures And the way that they prance They twirl with the daisies They caress the rose They swing on the tulips And step on tiptoes They march in tiny valleys They frolic in fun A world full of blossom And colour and fun. I smile to myself As I watch them and say I am so glad I came Down to the garden today I watch and I listen And wonder and smile And feel glad that I chose To stay here for a while.

by Julie Brett



The deadline for contributing to the Beltane issue of SerpentStar is 26 October 2020. The Beltane issue will be released in the week of 31 October 2020.

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

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

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