



# Serpent STAR

Journal of THE ORDER OF BARDS OVATES & DRUIDS in the SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

SHOBOD  
Assembly 2026

The Turning  
of the FAGUS

Samhain  
Folklore  
*from Ireland*

Introducing  
*The Cailleach*

Kia Ora

*Samhain* 2026

# Acknowledgement of Country

*SerpentSTAR journal acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We would like to acknowledge the contributions and sophistications of First Nations knowledges, and their ongoing spiritual practice and connection to Country.*

Bellingen Dawn © Pingala Walsh

*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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## *A Communication Web . . .*

**SerpentSTAR** came out of the Inaugural Australian Druid Assembly, to help those who could not make it share in the event, . . . *“and hopefully act as the first strands in a communication web for members of OBOD in Australia and New Zealand”.*

*“Members who wish to participate are encouraged to send us articles and information on happenings in their areas, what Druidry means to them and how they practice and express their Druidry in an Australian NZ context”.*

*“The aim of this Newsletter/Notice Board is to inform and draw together members in the peace and light of the Grove, and to support and nourish each other in our quest for strength, understanding, knowledge, justice and love. Let’s work together to achieve this aim. In Light, Carole Nielsen.” 1997.*

It’s important to note that our scope now includes South America and South Africa.

# Editorial

## W elcome to this Samhain edition of *SerpentSTAR*

As we head towards a cooler, darker, time of the year in the Southern Hemisphere, we note this as a time of shedding skins, and as a time of beginnings. Samhain is sometimes considered the Celtic New Year, just as Celtic days are sometimes said to begin at sundown.

This is fitting, as we are beginning this cycle with two new editors for *SerpentStar*. If you haven't already met Pingala and Isabel, we have written our introductions on page 22.

And for Sam, who has been looking after you as editor of *SerpentStar* for ever so long, it is a time of shedding skins. Thanks Sam for all of your creative energy in this space, and for doing such a great, supportive job of handing over the reins. We wish you the very best in your new endeavours.

The beginning of Samhain is like the beginning of a walk into the Labyrinth, subtly portrayed on our front cover. We take the path into the centre, into our centre, deep within. But it is not a direct path. It curves and loops back upon itself. Then, in the depth of winter, we retreat within, in the centre of the Labyrinth. Breathe here a while, before we start the journey out again.

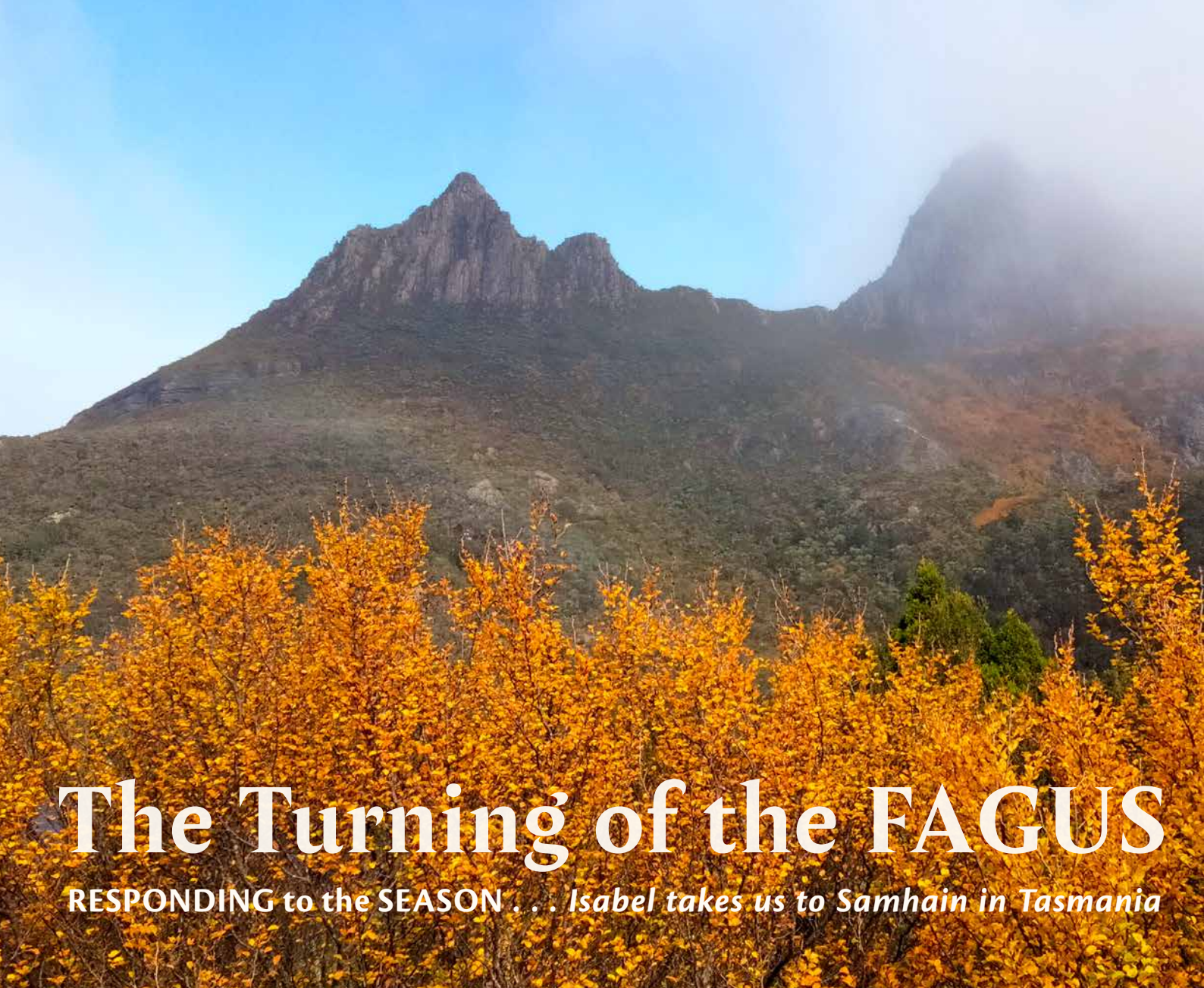
We hope you enjoy this edition of *SerpentStar*. We

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have very much enjoyed pulling it together. We hope the leaves of the Fagus on the front cover inspire you to share what is happening in your part of the world. We hope the reflections of the Tassie Assembly inspire you to come along to the next one in Adelaide. We hope you are inspired to be part of this communication web of OBOD members, and reflect and share what Druidry means to you.





# The Turning of the FAGUS

RESPONDING to the SEASON . . . *Isabel takes us to Samhain in Tasmania*

*Photos, above & clockwise: Nothofagus gunnii at Cradle Mountain, Isabel among the*

**I**t is Samhain in Australia. What marks this season? Here, it can come and go on the calendar without being noticed at all. Perhaps, If you're like me, some posts about Samhain might come up on your Facebook feed. Perhaps someone from a local Pagan group has organised a labyrinth walk to reflect on Samhain. Perhaps your local SHOBOD grove or seed group will get together and do ceremony.

Recently in Australia, at the end of October the shops will promote Halloween. Local kids will organise to go trick or treating, people will put plastic bats and spiderweb and plastic pumpkins carved into faces in their windows. I think, hang on a tick, it's Spring, it's Beltane, not Samhain.

***We've connected to calendar and tradition rather than season and environment and tradition***

Where I live, at the end of October we even have ample hawthorn bushes in glorious white abundant bloom, isn't that a sign of Beltane?

We've connected to calendar and tradition rather than season and environment & tradition.

But wherever we are on this planet, solstices are still solstices, equinoxes are still equal, and the days in between are still the days in between. And here in the Southern Hemisphere OBOD we are looking toward the traditions of ancestors who came from the northern hemisphere to reconnect to the earth. This comes with the need for adjustments, noting the traditions, and looking around us at what is happening in our own en-



*fagus, dragon fagus*

Blueberry season has finished and the apples are coming off the trees and stored in boxes and cool rooms. Sometimes the churches organise harvest festivals. And my recently picked pumpkins line up along the window, whole and not carved into Halloween faces.

Where I live, Samhain will pass by the popular culture. But here in Tasmania we do have something that marks and notices the seasons in a way that is uniquely tied to this place. We have the Turning of the Fagus.

*Nothofagus gunnii*, commonly called the Deciduous Beech (and affectionately called the Fagus), is Australia's only native cold-climate deciduous tree. While there are other native deciduous trees, such as the Red Cedar, they are most common in the northern parts of Australia and shed their leaves in response to the dry season rather than the cold. Winters in northern NSW and Queensland are mild and dry compared to the southern states.

Growing in the highlands of Tasmania, the Deciduous Beech populates World Heritage Wilderness areas. It grows alongside its cousin, *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, commonly known as Tasmanian myrtle, which is evergreen (though I'm sure I have seen the odd golden leaf on a Myrtle, or perhaps it was just brown). Once widespread, the Fagus is now restricted to a small cool climate alpine area. It is of a Gondwanan group which has similar species in New Zealand and South America. The Fagus only occurs in areas that have remained long unburnt.

vironment. How can we celebrate where we are standing now?

I grew up in the summer land of Queensland. Stories of cold snowy winters belonged in fairytale books. We had the storm season, the hot wet season, and in our open timber houses designed to catch every breeze, winter mornings felt cold as we dressed in front of a small bar heater. I now live in Tasmania, and my Celtic blood adapted easily to a different climate, one much more like my ancestors UK home. Where I live hawthorn bushes fill the hedgerows, and yellow gorse and daffodils grow beneath yellow wattle in the spring. European trees turn golden in the autumn in our town parks and gardens.

At this time of year sprinkles and whole swarths of gold, red and orange splash through our beautiful cold climate rainforests, where mosses and colourful fungi dress the ancient rainforest trees in the moist, cool environment. Giant pandani and tree ferns add an atmosphere of ancient mystique, and the only sounds are the scurrying of a little animal through the undergrowth and the occasional bird call. Fresh air enlivens the senses, damp and cold in your nostrils. It is the cleanest air in the world.

It has become a pilgrimage to go to those places that

# Samhain Folklore from Ireland

~ Eimear Burke

*Samhain is the Irish word for the month of November, though Oíche Shamhna (Halloween) is on October 31st*



There are other names for the night also: *Oíche na Sprideanna* (Night of Spirits); and *Oíche an Phúca* (Night of the Pooka). When I was a child we went out on the Pookies on Oíche Shamhna, going from house to house collecting nuts and sweets. In those days, we had to earn the treat by singing or reciting poetry.

The Púca takes many shapes, usually an animal, though most commonly, he appears as a horse with sleek dark fur and golden eyes. Although the Púca has a reputation for terrifying or confusing humans, in many of the stories, he is rather benevolent and has the gift of human speech. There are stories where a human finds him or herself on the back of the Púca who takes them for a wild ride, often far from their home, but no real harm comes to them. There is one story from Lady Wilde's (Oscar Wilde's mother) book "*Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland*", which I like.

One day, Pádraig, a farmer's son was out in the field minding cattle when he felt something rush by him like the wind. He knew it was the Púca on his way to the mill where the Daoine Síde (Good people) meet. The boy called out to the Púca, "Púca, Púca! Show me what you are like, and I'll give you my coat to keep you warm". Then a young bull came rushing towards him. Pádraig threw his coat over the bull and he became calm. He told Pádraig to come to the mill when the moon was up and he

would have good luck. So Pádraig went to the mill that night, but all he saw were sacks of corn all over the floor and the millers all fast asleep. No work was done. Soon Pádraig fell fast asleep and when he woke up the next morning all the corn had been ground. He was amazed by this as the men were still fast asleep. The same thing happened for three nights so Pádraig decided that he needed to keep watch to see what happened.

He found a hiding place in the mill from where he could watch what was happening. At midnight, six little fellows came in each carrying a sack of corn, followed by an old man dressed in rags who told them to turn the mill. This they did until all the corn was ground.

The next morning, Pádraig told his father what he had seen. "Well," said his father, "as this is the work of the Púca, let him continue with his excellent work. I've no need for these idle men." So he dismissed the men. Very quickly the farmer became very rich.

Pádraig very often would go to the mill, hide and watch the Daoine Síde at work. He soon felt sorry for the Púca, who, in his tattered clothes worked so hard to make his father rich. So out of love and gratitude for the Púca, he bought a very fine suit of clothes, laid it out on the floor of the mill. When the Púca saw the magnificent clothes, "Are these for me? I shall be turned into a very fine gentleman indeed." He put on the clothes and walked up and down admiring

## 2027 SHOBOD Assembly will be held in Adelaide South, Australia

**Welkin Wave & Wattle Seed Group** will be hosting with collaboration from **Willow Seed Group**.

We are currently inspecting venues on the South Coast of South Australia.

We are looking at holding the Assembly around Samhain. Dates are most likely April 29th - May 2nd 2027.

*More information coming soon.*

For any questions or enquiries please contact Ange at [welkinwavewattle@gmail.com](mailto:welkinwavewattle@gmail.com) or via Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/share/18HGge3qe1/>

*Looking forward to seeing you all there, Ange*

## *This year's Bardic GORSEDD*

is being held on

**Friday 24th July - Sunday 26th July 2026**

at Noddfa Centre, Conway Old Road, Penmaenmawr, North Wales LL34 6YF

This year's theme is "*The Elements of the Wise*," a study into the elements, where they came from and how we embody them as druids. We have special guest *Ma` McCabe*, the Pendragon of the Order, and *Eimear Burke* will be in a`endance, with the mentor coordinator *Fi Ware*.

himself when he remembered his work and continued to grind the corn. Then suddenly it occurred to him, "No, no more work for me. Fine gentlemen do not grind corn. I'll go out into the world in my fine clothes and see what there is to see." He left the mill, never to be seen again. Pádraig missed the Púca and he would go out into the fields at night and call out to him, "Púca, Púca, come to me and show me your face!" But the Púca never came.

The farmer had made so much money he sold the mill and Pádraig grew up to be a fine and educated gentleman. Years later on his wedding day, as they

were drinking to the bride's health, a golden cup filled with wine suddenly appeared in Pádraig's hand. He knew instantly that it was a gift from the Púca. He and his bride drank the wine without fear. They lived long, happy and prosperous lives and kept the golden cup as a treasure. It is said that their descendants have it in their possession to this very day.

*Siné!*

*Beannachtaí an tséasúr daoibh go léir!*

*Blessings of the season to you all!*

~ *Eimear Burke*, Chosen Chief of OBOD

*Would you like to engage more with fellow Southern Hemisphere OBODies?*

## **CRAFTY Friday**

*is a new monthly event to do just that*

**When and where:** Every 3rd Friday of the month, on Zoom

**How:** In the comfort of your own home, bring your latest crafty project to work on while we talk. We can have a Druidry-related topic each month to explore while we work

**Why:** Given the geographical vastness of the Southern Hemisphere, Crafty Friday is a way to get to know one another and develop our fellowship in our online community

*Six of us from Australia and New Zealand* are championing this initiative. We have been meeting online for two years in an Ovate study group, so know the benefit of regular contact.

**Contact** Jan Knight-Walker  
[knightwalkerjan@gmail.com](mailto:knightwalkerjan@gmail.com)  
for more information if you are interested in joining.



## SHOBOD *Assembly* 2026

*The 23rd Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly was a wonderful gathering, held over four days at the Girl Guides Tasmania Orana Camp. Set on 31 acres of natural bushland at Roches Beach, with easy access to the beautiful beach. It was hosted by the Treesong Forest Seed Group from Tasmania*

**I**t was a spur of the moment decision to hold it in Tasmania as I usually have to fly to the mainland to attend events like this, so I thought it would be great to hold the Assembly here and invite people to share this land I love, rather than always being the one travelling away.

Organising an event of this size was something new for me and there was definitely some anxiety along the way with all the details to keep track of, but the support I received from other Druids who had organised Assemblies before made the Assembly so much easier. Their guidance, reassurance and will-

ingness to share their experience helped me so much and showed that when people take on these roles, they can create something meaningful not just for themselves, but for the whole community.

After all the build-up and moments of high anxiety, seeing everything come together was incredibly rewarding. There was a real sense of relief, but also **happiness** in watching it unfold so well and in witnessing people connecting, learning, celebrating and simply being together in that space.

There are so many people who made this Assembly what it was. Trudy and Sandra offered invaluable help and wise advice throughout the process and I'm very grateful for their support. Mel created the most beautiful crowns for our Harvest Spirits, which added such a special touch, and the Harvest Spirits themselves, who brought such energy and life with their wonderful dance. Everyone who offered such wonderful workshops and the Eisteddfod was an absolute highlight, made all the more fun by Jasper's fantastic coordination and the enthusiasm of everyone who took part.

Charlotte's food was incredible and nourishing in every sense and so many people stepped in wherever

needed, creating that real sense of shared effort and community that makes gatherings like this so special. I truly loved being able to share a place that means so much to me, and to see it filled with learning, spirituality, laughter and connection.

It was also a real honour to serve as Mel's Helper in the Bardic Initiation Ceremony. It felt deeply significant and was quite an emotional experience, one that I'll carry with me for a long time.

Overall, it was a magickal few days and I would like to thank everyone who came and made the Assembly a such a wonderful gathering.

~ *Jan Knight-Walker, Treesong Forest Seed Group*



*Roaches Beach near Hobart, Tasmania*

## SHOBODA 2026

I felt drawn to attend this particular Assembly in Tasmania – my first. Prior to 2026, I had been to several *Grove of the Summer Stars* camps in New Zealand, so knew how stimulating and uplifting these gatherings were. But I was getting a message about the Australian connection. I have some Australian OBOD friends from our online Ovate group but had never met any in person. This was an opportunity to spend in-person time with one of them, and to meet the Australian OBOD community. I was curious to see how

input from this other land might enhance my druidry.

From the first moments of meeting my pick-up group at the airport, I felt at home. I was welcomed and accepted, as were others for whom this was their first Assembly experience. That feeling only grew over the time of the camp. For one who eschews small talk if at all possible, I had such easy and interesting conversations full of connection. And the land! I felt a thrill at feeling grounded on this earth that thrummed with a different energy and that was, I realised, still 'home'. This energy was also different from that of NSW, where I had lived for eight years in the 1970s and 80s.

I also realised at the end of the Assembly that I had been calm and centred the whole time, which was unusual for me. In a group, I usually get uncentred by the excitement, but here, I felt fully myself.

Part of that 'at home' feeling was the beautiful energy everyone brought to the space and the rituals, along with the land's own energy. I would not have thought a girl guide camp could so easily become a sacred space, but it did. The rituals were an important part of that space. Shaped by the land on which we stood, Jan and her team created truly magical energies. I will never forget the Harvest Spirits in the Lughnasadh ritual, embodied by Mel's amazing headdresses, raising a storm as they whirled and chanted around the altar. Our rituals were enhanced by visits from local birds, a bandicoot (so cute) and rabbits. And the weather gods were kind enough to enable us to hold all our rituals outside, despite a biting wind. The initiations of five Bards and two Ovates were also incredibly powerful. I love seeing the new initiates' wonder (and sometimes dazedness) as they emerge from the ritual and the feeling of embracing them into the group.

In between these rituals were the workshops that provided time to dig into different aspects of our druidic philosophies, skills and actions. I was particularly interested in Julie's discussion on the history of Celtic practices and beliefs in England, and Yin and Victoria's discussion on re-indigenising ourselves, because it is something I have been thinking about from before I joined OBOD in 2019. Michael gave a compelling call for us to act in the world – an urgent need in these troubled times. Trudy shared some of her herbal healing wisdom. I missed the workshops held during the Ovate initiation, which I was involved with, but by all accounts they were amazing. We enjoyed the fruits of Isabel's one at the Eisteddfod, in the form of a slightly shambolic but very amusingly enacted story.

That Eisteddfod on the last night was outstanding,

and enormous fun. As the lone New Zealander, I felt an urge to inject some of Aotearoa's cultural energy into the proceedings. I was pleased at the interest in my reflections on Papatuanuku, the Māori Mother Earth. Standout memories are the stories brought to life by talented storytellers, the beautiful poems, the music, particularly Trudy's clearly well-known and well-loved song "I missed the bus" and Jasper's creative scoring of items, which unfairly penalised the Ovates and I'll never get over that! (just kidding).

So enormous thanks to Jan and her small team, who gave us such a wonderful experience. Everything was thought of, including a very competent on-site caterer, who managed all our different dietary needs with alacrity and grace. The programme worked brilliantly, with no rush and time to take a breather if needed. I was also able to give some folks a Biodynamic Cranio-Sacral treatment in gaps in the programme, which created an additional point of connection. Located outside in a womb-like tent a bit apart from the main building, our sessions were accompanied by the sounds of nature.

And finally, on that need to attend – the message I received was to do something to bring Australians and New Zealanders together more so we can develop our uniquely antipodean form of Druidry. One thing I resolved to do is encourage more New Zealanders to attend Assemblies in Australia, and to set a date for hosting another one in New Zealand. Also, when I shared my experiences with my Ovate group, we decided to start a monthly 'Crafty Friday' group held on the third Friday of each month, where people from anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere can come together virtually to work on a craft project and chat about antipodean druidry and other related things. The first, in March, was a small but enthusiastic gathering where we had an incredibly interesting and stimulating discussion that started with our connection with particular trees and moved on to the nature of energy. If you are interested in joining the

*Part of that 'at home' feeling was the beautiful energy everyone brought to the space and the rituals*

group, we will be putting a notice on Facebook in the week before the next event. You can find information about the event in *Southern Hemisphere Order of Bards Ovates and Druids* and on *OBOD Druids New Zealand*, as well as *Ser Hevin* for members of the *Grove of the Summer Stars* in New Zealand. Or email Jan: [knightwalkerjan@gmail.com](mailto:knightwalkerjan@gmail.com)

With love and blessings  
~ *Germana Nicklin*, New Zealand



*Above & clockwise: The Eisteddford with Jasper in front, Jan & Germana, Trudy performing*

## Favourite Memories of the 2026 Assembly

If you were to talk to the twenty seven OBODies who attended the 2026 Southern Hemisphere OBOD Assembly, you would receive twenty seven different perspectives. It is likely that you would receive far more than that, for how is it easy to summarize and share about such a remarkable event, with so many aspects and experiences crammed in over three nights and four days? To answer my rhetorical question: it is not easy at all.

With that in mind, I would like to share some of my favourite memories from this year's Assembly.

Tasmania. The word evokes images of clear air, beautiful bushland, delicious stone-fruit and rich – some-

times confronting – history. During my first trip there, I also learned that Tassie's cultural heritage includes curried scallop pies, "Turbo-Chooks" and beautiful gardens with lots of introduced European trees, which made my Queensland heart sing. On such a magical island was the 2026 Assembly held, a short walk away from the ocean.

An exciting aspect of any Assembly is catching up with long-term, distant friends who you rarely see in person, and meeting new OBODies. There was a delicious chaos to the first few hours, while making new connections and strengthening old ones. A meaningful conversation can certainly make the world a better place. I was also fortunate to travel with four

members of Macadamia Grove, which made our gathering even more special (and likely increased the joyous rambunctiousness by a significant fraction).

The venue had a large hall where we first congregated, and the welcoming atmosphere was enhanced by generous bundles of herbs, local plants and items, which we were encouraged to form into a 'corn dolly' or hand-crafted item. There was also a fireplace, which made things cosy... in comparison to the icy temperatures experienced outside during the Opening Ceremony. Brrrrr.

Throughout the Assembly, we all enjoyed a range of interesting workshops, as well as participating in a range of different rituals. It was very special to welcome our new Bards through an Initiation ritual, and the Lughnasadh ritual was memorable, featuring the most incredible hand-made head-dresses I've seen in an Assembly ritual. The Ovate Initiations were a stand out for me. At the Glenrock Assembly, the sweeping



It's always special to celebrate the formal opening of an Assembly in ritual. Former Assemblies and those OBOD members who couldn't be here with us were acknowledged, and this year's theme of the element of Air was shared. Each attendee received a handmade container of Kunzea lotion, which is famed for anti-inflammatory properties. The lotion also smells amazing – fresh and invigorating. It was also delightful to see bunnies hopping around the grounds, which is not something often seen in south east Queensland.



*Above & facing page: Here we all are . . . and the 'Turbo Chook' waterfowl*

After the ritual, that brings us to the food. The food created by the caterer was bountiful and wholesome, with large servings available for all. These generous and yummy portions continued over the weekend. I still have dreams about how good the Swedish Apple Cake was!

vistas made the setting particularly memorable. But I have never done Ovate Initiations right on the beach. The location was truly amazing and magical and just incredible, with the ocean right beside us and soft sand under our feet.

We also enjoyed sharing our Bardic Arts through an Eisteddfod. This included the most unique scoring system I've ever experienced, and I don't think I will see the like ever again!

Sadly, all good things must come to an end, and it was with fond farewells we said goodbye, and thanked Jan and her helpers for a remarkable Assembly.

But, then, some of us experienced an entertain-

ing encore, similar to what informally happened after an Assembly a few years ago. There we were, seven of us OBODies gathered in the Hobart Airport lounge. Together we reminisced before slowly departing, one by one or in pairs, due to the demanding schedules of plane itineraries or hire cars. Until the next Assembly...

~ Sandra Greenhalgh Macadamia Grove

## Tantalising Tasmania Travels

We were all standing in a circle on the sandy ground, tall costal She-oaks around us, the beach to the East and a strong cool wind blowing in from the South. This was the opening ritual of the Assembly. Then the line was said. *"We have come from East and West, North and South to be here together today"*. I remember thinking to myself, South? I don't think anyone came from Antarctica. Even the locals from Tasmania had mostly come from the North of the island with Jan, I knew, lived to the West from where we were. A chuckle to myself imagining an OBOD member turning up in Arctic exploring gear, remembered that line is symbolic not literal. Then we all joined hands to take three breaths with the Earth, the Sea and the Sky and continued with the opening.

This was my first trip to Australia's southern most state as an adult and I plan to make the most of it. I'd already been down for two weeks before the As-

sembly started, doing a four day hike through the Tasman peninsula, finding amazing fresh local ingredients, cooking and enjoying many natural wonders that the cooler climate has to offer. Managing to stay at 15 different places on the trip. Other members of my local Grove also came down early and we got to catch up and explore Hobart together before the gathering. Wandering the streets of Battery Point finding oak, birch and yew trees that we don't see in subtropical Queensland.

Arriving at the Assembly grounds was like turning up to a family reunion. This was my third SHOBODA so there was a mix of people I had met previously and new faces. The Girl Guide's building was perfectly pleasant, with two dorm wings coming off a main hall with a fireplace that stayed lit the entire time. It was a short walk to the beach but not many people went swimming.

... continued on the next page



The highlights of the Assembly were many. Personally, I love the Bardic initiation ceremony, it's a beautiful way to welcome people the Grove of the Bards. Micheal V doing a talk on the astrological state of the world was definitely one of the highlights, I still think about the protection of the Egg as he described. Various other workshops, Julie talking about English Druidry and Trudy discussing medicinal plants, were some of my favourites. I had the opportunity to hold a workshop for the Bards during the Ovate initiation, choosing to have a lighthearted exploration of the Awen, in its physical form, by drawing or carving and with the sound of Awen playing with different ways of saying and chanting. We went out to the far side of the grounds to a strange structure made of fibreglass that I think was supposed to resemble a gum nut but it did look a bit like an upside down cauldron. The inside was painted with trees around the edges so it felt like a Grove space with the advantage of being out of the wind. The main Lughnasadh ritual was focused on the harvest of the land, with representations of local edible ingredients that Mel had made stunning headpieces for the Harvest Spirits. I got to embody the Tasmanian mountain pepper, a spice I had ac-



tually actively gone looking for and found a farmer who grew it.

No Assembly would be complete without the Eisteddfod and this year I got the privilege of hosting. With 16 people getting up and giving a Bardic offerings, with poems, stories and songs. I did choose to keep score in a very tongue-in-cheek way, three columns were drawn on a whiteboard and points were given to performances into categories of Bards, Ovates and Druids. It wasn't a serious scoring method but did get a lot of audience participation and definitely a few laughs. In the end everyone won.

Leaving an event like that is hard but made slightly easier by knowing there were plans in the works for an Assembly in South Australia next year and I didn't rush home, instead heading up the Midlands of Tasmania to spend a few nights in a unique cabin made by an old wood worker with a triquerta window in one of the rooms. Being surrounded by the wildness sitting by a fire seemed like the perfect way to decompress before returning to the mundane world.

~ *Jasper Mansfield, Macadamia Grove*

## Call out for Contributions

*SerpentSTAR is always on the lookout for contributions from those on the OBOD path*

**O**ur next edition is *Imbolc*. The first signs that Spring is on its way begin to emerge. **The deadline is 18th July**

What does this time of the year look like where you live? What is growing in your garden or nearby wild areas? What herbs are good to harvest now? What are the animals doing? What birds are calling? Does the sun peep over the horizon at a noticeably different time or place?

Does your Grove or Seed group celebrate in any particular way, or do you have a certain solo practice? How does following a Northern Hemisphere tradition

fit with you in your part of the Southern Hemisphere?

Do you have any other news or events, stories or snippets that you think other SHOBODies would be interested in? How is that online craft group going?

A story from your part of the world? Poetry for our Bard's Page? Craft ideas we may like to make? A review of a favourite book, music, website or podcast?

Submissions are welcome as prose, poetry, art, paintings, drawings, images, photos, or however your creativity seeks to express, well, within the limitations of this format. Dance and theatre is great, maybe you could post on a video on our Facebook page?

# BARDS Page ~

*This poem is from the Bribie Assembly last year which but didn't make it into last year's edition.*

*It was a joint contribution of many of the participants of a poetry workshop called the Cauldron of Creativity run by Maria Tobin*

## 2025 SHOBODA Poem

Sacred Yarun, leaves carpet the forest floor.  
Banksia flowers bristle.

A Sacred Place. A Sacred Time.

Breathing together, moving through the  
forest with care.

In all its stillness and glimmering light  
Coming into rhythm with your own self.

Family and homecoming. Strangers known  
and unknown. Loving space.

Spiders weaving, knitting and crafting.

Where is my Awen? Heart opening conversation.

Vulnerability unexpressed. Gratitude and Awe.

Standing on Yarun. Late summer into  
autumn breeze.

Sunshine glowing, cyclone going, crows crowing.

From peace, from elements, from fun, from joy -

Energy, Lightbodies, merged, blended  
and enhanced.

Eclipse cat Nwyfre delighted us all.

The motion of the ocean, the beating of our hearts.

The sharing and the caring of Ovates,

Druids and Bards.

The theatrics and the Awens,

conversations everywhere.

Frolicking with my Dragon sisters, with so  
much love to share.

And Odessa the Compressor: lying flat  
upon the floor!

All that wonderful vibration leaves us  
crying out for more!

Breathing with Sacred Yarun

The Moon feeling jaunty, her solemnness eclipsed.

She washed over my stillness, cleansing my fear.

I was meant to be here tonight, for this.

I asked my question and she answered in light

The Path will reveal itself - walk your own

Myth tonight.

And so, pouring out open hearts to fill  
cups with Love, Tea and Mead.

The breeze blowing, the waves crashing,  
the Bards singing.

Home away from home indeed!



# BOOK Review ~

## *Land of Mist and Magic*

by Philip Parker

British Library 2025

For anyone seeking to connect with the Old Country this could be the very book you have been looking for.

Subtitled the Myths and Legends that shaped Britain, Parker has produced a weighty tome of stories which cleverly plait together the history and the tales of this island.

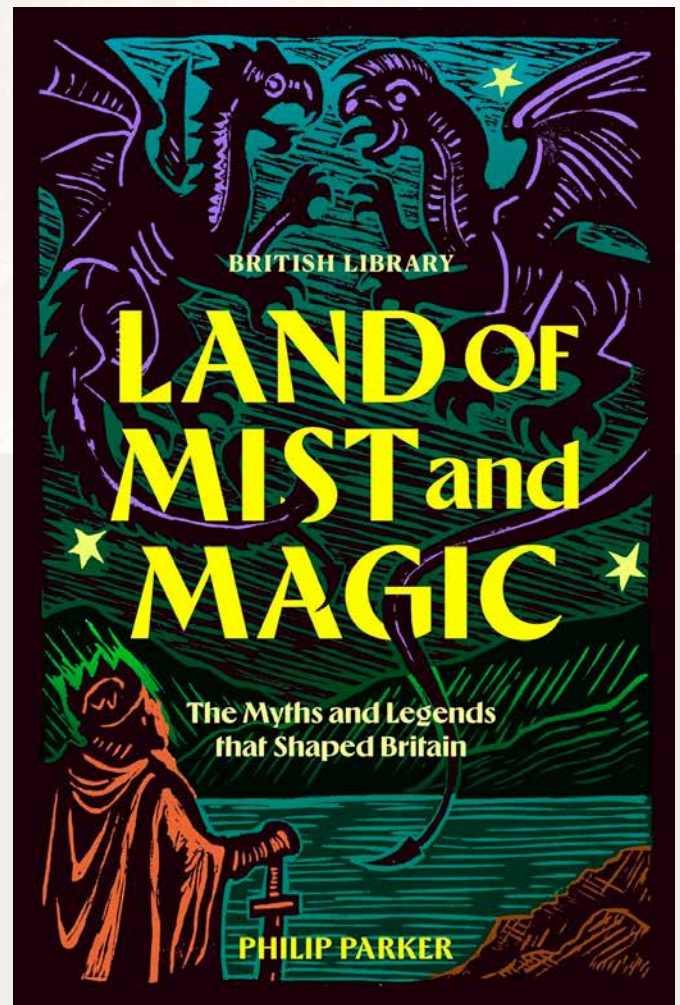
From the tales of the Mabinogion, through the stories of King Arthur, Robin Hood and Hereward The Wake to the spriggans and boggarts who roam these lands, to the Black Dog of Lyme Regis and to dragons and mermaids, Parker has packed a bag full of legends which every storyteller will be keen to dip into.

Some of the legends are well known, like the old versions of the stories of Robin Hood and Lady Godiva. Others are less familiar like Thunor's Leap, a story encompassing figures from Anglo-Saxon history.

From the Cornish giants who created the stone circles and burial mounds to the Scottish mermaids, from Twm Sion Cati, the cunning Welsh thief to Hereward in the Isle of Ely resisting the Norman invasion, Parker has crossed the Realm of Albion with seven league boots, creating a valuable resource for tellers everywhere.

Parker not only retells the stories but anchors them to the shifting landscapes of this island.

Each chapter begins with a brief explanation of the history, setting the scene for the forthcoming story. When King Alfred burned the cakes it was really a metaphor for his lack of understanding of the needs of his lowly peasants during the Viking invasion. The sea creatures of Scotland dwell close to the shore that



is so much part of the dangerous lives of fishing communities. Dragons are guardians of treasure and hunters need to beware of their fire. Collectors of manuscripts also need to be aware of the danger of fire as this nearly destroyed the written account of Beowulf.

As bards we can give our thanks to Philip Parker for the incredible amount of work he has completed to write this wonderful resource. The background to many of the stories will mean that we will see them and tell them with reverence and a new perspective.

Beautifully illustrated with familiar paintings, Land of Mist and Magic follows not only the stories but their journey through history. This is a lovely volume which will help to ensure that the oral storytelling tradition carries on into the digital age.

Many thanks to you, Philip Parker.

~ *Fiona Dowson* lives in the ancient kingdom of the Eastern Angles. Her YouTube channel can be reached via the Storytelling For Bards and Druids Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1410060876178030>



## Kia Ora

All my life I have had an interest in mythology especially New Zealand myths and legends. Stories in NZ often reflect the tribe and region but have a common thread. As Samhuinn is a fire festival I thought I would like to share with you the story of Fire in Maori tradition.

According to Maori tradition, the demigod Maui acquired the gift of fire from his ancestress / grandmother, Mahuika, the goddess of fire. Driven by curiosity, Maui extinguished all the cooking fires in his village, so his mother sent him to Mahuika to ask for fire.

Mahuika welcomed her grandson, Maui, and gave him fire by drawing out a fingernail from which fire gushed forth. Maui, intending to learn fire's secrets, put out the fire and returned to Mahuika for more,

repeating this trick till she only had a one toenail left.

Realizing she had been tricked, a furious Mahuika threw her burning toenail at Maui. The fire missed him as he transformed into Kahu/ Hawk. The fire followed him eventually being extinguished by heavy rain from an ancestor.

Before the fire died, Mahuika placed fire-making elements in some trees; Kaikomako, Totara, Pukatea and Mahoe. Taking branches from these trees, Maui showed the villagers how to make fire using friction. Thus the origin of fire and how Kahu/ native hawk got red-tinged feathers.

~ Tamzin Rae. Many years ago I designed a series of legend paintings, one of which was Maui and Mahuika which I have included in with this story

# *OBOD in the Southern Hemisphere*

## **Groves & Seed Groups**

**T**he following are groups listed on OBOD's official Groves & Seed Groups List and have consented to have their information included in this list. Other groups run by OBOD members are listed in the Advertising section.

### **The Blue Mountains Grove**

The Blue Mountains Grove holds regular public gatherings in Katoomba at the Blue Mountains Organic Community Gardens for the eight seasonal festivals of the wheel of the year. See our Facebook group for more information. This is open to anyone to come along, not just OBOD members. There are also private OBOD members only gatherings, but please come to the public gatherings to get to know the group first.

Email: [thebluemountainsseedgroup@gmail.com](mailto:thebluemountainsseedgroup@gmail.com)  
Facebook: Friends of the Blue Mountains Seed Group

### **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](mailto:southernbreezesfellowship@gmail.com) and you can see our profile on Facebook [www.facebook.com/Southernbreezesfellowship](http://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 two new Bards and one relatively new Bard. 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, and we will be holding out first group Alban. Full moon meditations are conducted for peace and harmony.

Email Debby at [triskel@mweb.co.za](mailto:triskel@mweb.co.za) for details.

### **Druid Pilgrim Grove**

We are a grove of wayfaring and friendly OBODies who are happy to support those seeking to engage with pilgrimage as part of their druid practice. We have members around Australia and NZ. A number of us are happy to meet up with pilgrims as they travel close to us.

Contact [danuta@adruid.com](mailto:danuta@adruid.com)

FB: Druid Pilgrim is a Facebook group that engages with people interested in exploring pilgrimage and druidry. It also acts as a 'Friends of' space for those interested in connecting with Druid Pilgrim Grove.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto:pamela@thewoolshed.com)

### **Macadamia Grove**

Macadamia Grove includes OBOD members from South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales. 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](mailto:macademiagrove@hotmail.com) or join our FB Group 'Friends of OBOD Macadamia Grove'

### **The Melbourne Grove**

Celebrating the seasons in a cycle around Melbourne.

Contact: Elkie: [elkiewhite@gmail.com](mailto:elkiewhite@gmail.com)  
Facebook: Friends of The Melbourne Grove

### **Treesong Forest Seed Group**

Based in Tasmania, formed online during lockdown.  
Contact: [knightwalkerjan@gmail.com](mailto:knightwalkerjan@gmail.com)

### **The Windharp Grove**

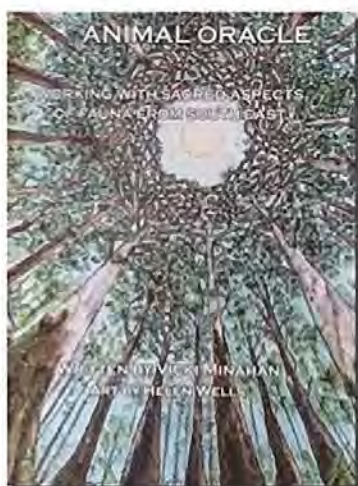
Based in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia and named after the She-oak or Casuarina, also known as a Windharp. She-oaks are known as windharps because of the mystical sound they make when the wind breathes through the knotted leaves - a soft music like that of the Aeolian Harp. We are a learning 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 Sarah or Adrienne:  
[thewindharpgrove@gmail.com](mailto:thewindharpgrove@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](mailto:bonsaidruid@yahoo.com.au)



### **Animal Oracle by Vicki Minahan**

After nearly eight years I am pleased to announce a project close to my heart has arrived with art by Helen Wells. Mountain Ash Animal Oracle is here. I grew up in The Strathbogie Ranges, Victoria, Australia and have been greatly influenced by both the environment and the lifestyle espoused by my parents and extended family. I currently live in Cockatoo, Australia, Victoria

With this book and accompanying cards I have incorporated family stories, autobiographical aspects, my spiritual experiences and scientific information for each animal. My hope is that this will help you to incorporate both the Apparent and Otherworldly aspects to aid you on your journey through life.





## Introducing *The Cailleach*

Last year I travelled to Scotland and stayed on the Isle of Mull, where I was gifted a book of folk tales from the local area. In that book there was a story about the Cailleach. You know the Cailleach, yes? She's associated with Samhain.

In old old Ireland before St Patrick came, the earth was not shaped and created by an old man in the sky with a long white beard. In old Ireland and Scotland, the earth was created and shaped by an old woman, The Cailleach.

She was so old that she personified winter, with white hair and craggy craggy old features on her face, and if you can imagine, in Scotland in particular, winter is not to be messed with. Winter is fierce. Winter doesn't take no prisoners. You've got to take winter seriously, and you've got to take the Cailleach seriously too, she is a force to be reckoned with.

The Cailleach is so old that she remembers where now there is ocean, there was once a great forest, full of life, and trees, and birds.

Sometimes when you see a cliff or a rockface some-

where, and you can see that the rain and the wind and sometimes the salt spray has carved a craggy old face into that rock surface, that's the Cailleach. Like Cailleach Bheara that is down in Kerry in Ireland, who looks out to the Western Isles in the western ocean waiting for her beloved to return. And still people leave their offerings by the base of that rock, because, the Cailleach is sacred, as all earth is sacred.

And the geologists would tell you that those big rocks the size of a car or a small truck that are sort of dumped in the landscape, were dumped there by glaciers many many years ago. But the old stories know different. The old stories, they know that those rocks dropped out of the apron of the Cailleach as she stepped from island to island, as she jumped from hilltop to hilltop, as she leaped from mountain to mountain, dropping the stones from her apron as she went. I got to clamber onto one of those stones that was near where I was staying on the isle of Mull, and from the top of that stone I could feel the elemental power of the Cailleach.

And she said to me ..... she is ..... irrepresible . That's the nature of the Cailleach.

In the book that I was gifted of local folk stories, it says that the isle of Mull is the home of the Cailleach. But I suspect that every little vil-lage and locality that has a Cailleach story all the way from Scotland to the southern tip of Ireland, also would claim to be the home of the Cailleach.

On the isle of Mull, every 100 years this particular Cailleach would wander the few steps from her home and bathe in Loch Ba. It was so refreshing that she would emerge from the lake young and beautiful once again. But there was a catch. She had to do it at a very specific time. It had to be on the first day of spring, before any other lifeform was awake. Before the first birds chirped in the trees, before the first insects made noises in the grasses, before the first earthworms wriggled in the soil, the Cailleach had to be in the lake first.

This particular year she woke up feeling it must be the day. She felt so old. She felt so stiff. Oh she



just wanted to stay lying in bed, it was so warm and comfortable there. But now, the Cailleach got up, and step by ancient craggy step she made her way down the few steps to the shore of Loch Ba.

And there she stood, about to take that last step and immerse herself into the lake....Uh-oh.... Did...she...just...

hear.....There it was again ... oh no ... oooooooh no! ..... It was a dog. .... A dog ... barked. ... A dog, what was that dog doing up, a dog, barked .... before she got into the lake. ... A sheep dog, a farmers sheep dog, way off in the distance, she heard it bark . ....

It barked first ... before she made that final step into Loch Ba ..... and she stood there .... frozen .... and turned ... to stone. And toppled ... onto the shore of Loch Ba ..... And I would hazard a guess, that if you travelled to Scotland, and if you went to the Inner Hebrides, and took the ferry over to the Isle of Mull ... and if you travelled to Loch Ba, and walked along the shore, I would hazard a guess that that stone Cailleach would be lying there still.

*And that's the end of my story.*

*~ Isabel Shapcott, Tasmania*

## The Turning of the FAGUS *continued . . .*

are both easily accessible and showcase the best viewings of the Fagus, places like Cradle Mountain and Mount Field National Parks. It is a pilgrimage that has been promoted by the Tasmanian Tourism Association on their Discover Tasmania website. This seasonal event is being acknowledged and celebrated.

I celebrate the acknowledgement of the Turning of the Fagus as a great achievement of the many people over generations who have fought and worked hard to protect these wild places. While of course great

management is essential, our wilderness areas are a greater asset left to be admired and appreciated for future generations than to be cut for questionable short-term gain. When I took my kids walking on these tracks, I would tell them that these places are still here because some people worked really hard to protect them, and won.

This Samhain, I'll be celebrating with a walk in the rainforest, admiring the Fagus.

*~ Isabel Shapcott, Tasmania*

# From the New EDITORS

Isabel and Pingala would like to introduce ourselves . . .

At the Tassie SHOBODA in February Sandra put out a call for someone to take on SerpentStar. Sam had been doing a fabulous job for years, but it was time to share the load and let her have a well earned break.

My ears pricked up. I had done similar magazines before, for the Tasmanian Greens and for Play-group Tasmania, but it was many years ago and my IT was out of date.

Pingala had lots of experience with graphic design and her IT was great, but she wasn't so interested in taking on the whole project by herself.

Sandra connected us, and \*bing\*, it looked like a match! So here we are giving it a go.

I've enjoyed looking up past editions to get a feel for the magazine, and was happy to find in the very first edition what looked like a mission statement to give us direction. Then I called out to the Groves and Seed groups we had listed to introduce ourselves and encourage contributions. Someone replied saying his group really don't know who we are. So I thought perhaps we could introduce ourselves . . .

**I'm Isabel.** I live in the north of Tasmania in a pretty little village under the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage listed mountains of kooparoonia niara (The Great Western Tiers). I joined OBOD just over 2 years ago, and have attended two Assemblies. I am in the Bardic grade, which I love. It was the in depth look at the story of Cerridwen that drew me into OBOD. It's a story that was close to my heart during my mothering years, as I too would do anything for my sons. (I'm still a mother, but they grew up!). I'm on a bit of my own path as I dive deep into the world of story, and I've enjoyed facilitating a story inspired workshop at both of the Assemblies I've attended, as well as telling stories at both Eisteddfods. I feel at home in the OBOD community and am delighted to be able to contribute through helping with SerpentStar. We protect what



we value, and as we come to value this Earth, may we protect it too.

**And I'm Pingala . . .** I live in the sub-tropical paradise of the Mid North Coast of NSW, in a valley called Thora. Nestled between townships and on the Bellinger River, we are graced with diverse rainforest and stately cedar trees. I live a full life with 2 acres to care for and three generations of family to nurture and enjoy balanced with spiritual, community and creative involvements, though the latter are too often in theory rather than practice! . . . . Life needs take precedent.

My finding of OBOD was many years past, finally joining some six years ago. Given my love of nature; art & design creation; playing music, songwriting & poetry; working with many divination paths; as well as involvement in yogas, spiritual & psychotherapeutic traditions and practices since my teens, I've found Druidry to be the singular tradition that encompasses them all. So becomes my ongoing delight and commitment, and what a bonus to enjoy our community with the feeling of kindred connection, especially at our last Assembly. I have been slow in working through the Bardic grade while always enjoying the return . . . Such has been the path that's led to edit and produce SerpentStar and practise my design skills after some time in the closet. So far, its been a delight, I've enjoyed working with Isabel, other OBODies and your material, expressing what inspirations come in visual form. I hope to nurture more Druid ways though this inspiration and also hope that this inspiration can spread to you.

# The WEAVING ~ A gathering of Druid Magic

*We are planning a large gathering in Europe in July 2027 and hope to welcome many visitors from all over the OBOD. We know it's a long way to travel, but I'm still hoping, of course, to receive registrations from Australia or New Zealand.*



Photo by Juliette Jarvis on Unsplash

Little green cards with a white cauldron, twirling flames and writing on them have been seen at the winter solstice in Glastonbury, speaking of a magical druid gathering in Germany in 2027. Rumours say it's official and people all around have already saved the dates.

*So what's going on?*

The story goes that for years an idea of a large gathering was whispered around OBOD campfire circles. The idea didn't vanish. It spoke of a conference, a confluence, a druid gathering of practices and myths, magic and lore. Of rituals with hundreds and hundreds of colourful, queer, fantastic bards, ovates and druids. You were there, too! It sang of personal, embodied conversations across borders and oceans. Of ancient land practice, tree lore, arts and crafts brought together in days of celebrations, ritual practice and global knowledge exchange. Of creating and deepening kinship around the fireplaces. And in 2024 two German druids were surprised to find themselves called to start making it happen.

So Anna and Birgit, of the German "Welt der Linden" tribe got together and started dreaming, weaving, thinking, conspiring and spreading the word. It came summer 2025 and Eimear was excited. A date was found. Actually everyone who

heard of the idea felt this sweet tingle and promise of something unheard yet known and familiar. Bones awakening. Around Birgit and Anna formed a team, a place was found. By the time you read these words the place and the land where we will meet in 2027 has been visited, greeted and whispered to that we are coming. The place knows.

So save the dates in case you haven't yet. Dream with us of what to sing and bring. In these times of difficult global transformations we call upon the magic of druids to weave their part into the fabric of emerging new realities. How can our Druid Magic consciously contribute to desirable futures for all beings? We want to gather and learn with and from each other, to commune around the sacred fires and open a portal into the worlds we want to live in - a sudden village of druidic practice. Listen from within to the stories and spells yet untold and unwoven.

**From the 22nd to 25th of July 2027 we officially invite OBOD members worldwide to the gathering of Druid Magic in Herbstein, Germany.**

We are so thrilled to have you all!

Yours, from within the sacred dream space.

~ *The Weaving Team*  
weaving@obod.org  
written by Kaa

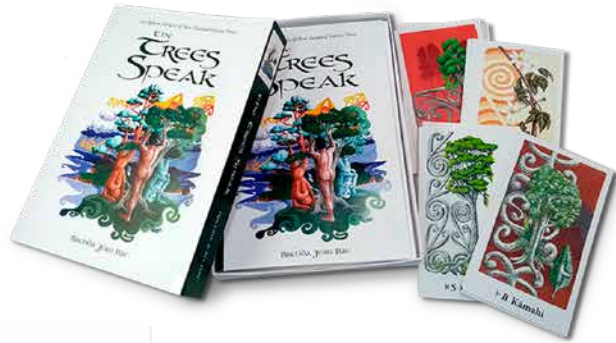


# The TREES SPEAK

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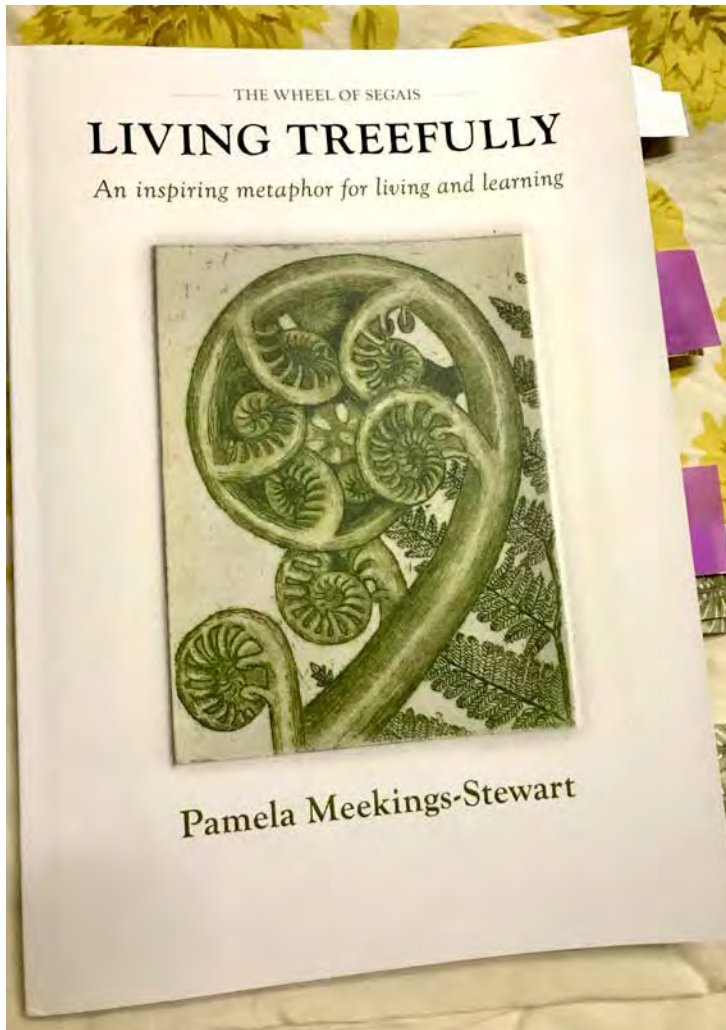


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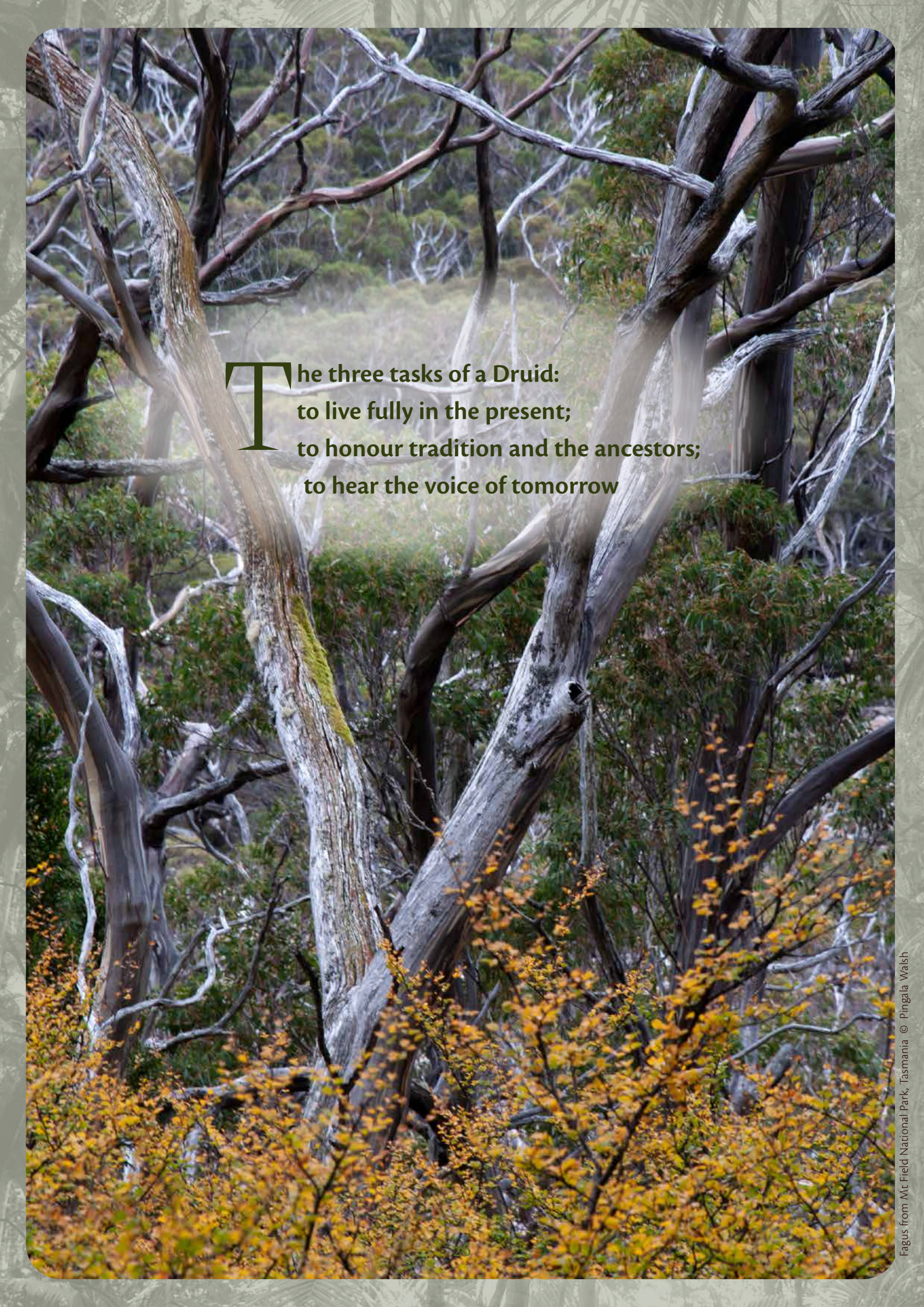
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**T**he three tasks of a Druid:  
to live fully in the present;  
to honour tradition and the ancestors;  
to hear the voice of tomorrow