

# SILVER WHEEL

Newsletter of the Pagan Alliance Inc. (SA)

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# A short history of the Pagan Alliance - an interview with Julia Phillips

**JULIA PHILLIPS IS THE FOUNDER OF THE AUSTRALIAN PAGAN ALLIANCE. SHE NOW LIVES IN THE COTSWOLDS (ENGLAND). WE CAUGHT UP WITH JULIA RECENTLY FOR A SHORT CHAT ABOUT THE HISTORY OF PAGAN ALLIANCE.**

**Silver Wheel:** *Who was involved in starting the Pagan Alliance and what were the main reasons for starting it.*

**Julia:** That one is easy! I founded the Pagan Alliance in 1991. I started it because I discovered that some Pagans actually believed the claims of people like Audrey Harper (Evangelical author of "Dance with the Devil", 1990) who said Pagans and Witches were conducting black masses, child sacrifice, and so on.

I happened to be staying with Wiccan friends in Canberra in 1991, and one of these manipulative people appeared on TV, spreading the usual unsubstantiated hysteria. I was only partly listening (having heard it all before), but my friends were all utterly shocked by what they heard, and started talking about ways to make sure the pagan community could identify 'Satanic abuse' within Australia. When I told them that all these claims were fraudulent and this evangelical Christian was attempting to discredit paganism, they were sceptical and pointed out how much 'evidence' (sic) the woman being interviewed had provided. That alerted me to a very real danger: ignorance about the recent events in England and Scotland meant Australian pagans were not prepared to counter the threat it posed. I knew it was a scam because I'd seen it play out in Britain before I left, but pagans in Australia didn't have access to a good communication network to learn about the truth behind the myth, and reports had limited (if any) exposure in the mainstream Australian media. This was in the days before widespread Bulletin Boards, let alone email, and Australian Pagans were really quite isolated from what was happening elsewhere in the world. So, the Pagan Alliance was established primarily as a networking and information service to Pagans in Australia.

I had been a member of the Pagan Federation in England for many years, which had a section called the Pagan Anti-Defamation League. The president (Vivianne Crowley) was a close friend, and so I spoke with her about setting up a similar organisation in Australia to provide a means to disseminate important information throughout the pagan community.

During the winter of 1991 the basic structure of the Pagan Alliance was drafted, together with its motto, objectives, and logo. It was formally launched at the Australian Wiccan Conference in Spring of that year.

"Strength Through Diversity" was chosen as the motto, to represent our aims to be a strong network inclusive to all pagan paths, and the Pagan Alliance became Australia's first formal networking and information organisation for pagans.

When Vivianne and I both ceased our respective involvements in PF and PA, the formal relationship between the two organisations gradually ceased.

My very idealistic concept of the Pagan Alliance was to have three coordinators in each State/Territory, from three different Pagan traditions. That proved to be impractical (as I'm sure you can imagine), and what actually happened was that I asked people I knew personally in each State if they would take a coordinating role to get it started.

The early members/coordinators were people like Michelin in WA, the Moyses in the ACT, Kira in Victoria, and I handled NSW. QLD was always a problem, we had several people rotating the position and none of them did much with it. I think Trevor Curnow looked after SA, and we didn't have anyone in TAS or NT.

**SW:** *Has the PA always been based in Victoria?*

**Julia:** No – for most of its life it has been in NSW, apart from brief periods when Phil Day (Vic) and Gerald Osgood (WA) had control. When Chel Bardell handed it back to me in 1999 I was living in Melbourne, so I incorporated it in Victoria, with me, Ambriel, Hiraeth, and Kira as the office holders.

**SW:** *Has the Pagan Alliance had a newsletter throughout its life?*

**Julia:** Yes - Pagan Times was launched as the newsletter of the Pagan Alliance when it was founded, and it was provided to members as part of the membership service. Pagan Times had an important role to play in achieving the goals of the organisation, as it was the primary vehicle for

members to communicate with each other, and to read about matters of interest to the pagan community. Pagan Times was one of the key benefits offered to members in those early days, and was at the forefront of a number of initiatives for pagans within Australia.

Over the years a lot of changes have been made to the PA, not least divorcing Pagan Times from the membership and asking people to pay separately for the magazine subscription. I have said over and over again that I thought that was a big mistake, but it wasn't my decision to make. There's nothing wrong in having a subscription only magazine, but it doesn't work if there is nothing to replace it. Just assuming that the States would pick up the slack was never going to work; I think SA is the only State to have consistently been able to publish a magazine, which is a nice pat on the back for Silver Wheel! Sadly though, it meant that PA members in the other States had no regular news about what was happening in the Pagan world, and they just lost interest. The strength of the PA membership in SA compared with the other States says it all!

**SW:** *What are your thoughts on the future of the Pagan Alliance?*

**Julia:** My view is that any organisation has to service the needs of its members, and it must continue to grow and evolve as the needs of the members (and society) change. It must be a reflection of its members otherwise it loses its way, and ceases to provide a useful service.

When I resigned as PA head honcho the first time, a few people told me the PA would die without me to drive it. My response to all of them was "good!" They thought I was mad, but I truly believe that if an organisation is to survive, it must do so because it offers a valuable service, not because a single person has the ability to lead it.

There will always be a problem in getting enough people to volunteer to do the practical committee-type work, but that's just non-profit organisations generally. Even in sport you find the same hard workers wearing 10 different hats and doing everything.

I think the PA functions best as a networking and information service to its members, but that may not be what the members want anymore.

One thing I do know from my marketing studies and also from years of working in non-profit membership organisations is that it is vital to ask the members what they actually want, rather than provide them with services that committee members *think* they want. Committee members, for all their hard work, tend to assume that members want the same things that they do, and that's rarely the case.

Following in the footsteps of the Pagan Alliance, other pagan organisations have been established in Australia in recent years, and the environment now is very different to what it was at the beginning of the 1990s. It has been a privilege to be involved with the PA and the people who have helped to make it such a wonderful organisation, and I am sure it will continue to provide a service to pagans in Australia for many years to come.

The main point of its future evolution in my view would be to find out what members (and prospective members) want, how much they are willing to pay for it, and how best to deliver it.

### **ABOUT JULIA PHILLIPS**

Julia Phillips has been studying the occult since 1971, when she began to attend lectures at the Society of Psychological Research in London. In 1975 she obtained her first tarot deck, and it was through the study of the tarot that she met the High Priestess of the London coven into which she was initiated. She emigrated to Australia in 1988, and lived in Sydney for eight years before moving to Melbourne. She returned to live in her family home in the Cotswolds area of England at the beginning of 2005. Julia is currently co-editor of "The Wiccan", and previously edited and published "Children of Sekhmet" (1986-1990), and "Web of Wyrld" (1990-1993).

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## **MIRROR**

OH THERE'S A MIRROR IN THE MIRROR  
AND THE MIRROR BECOMES A STILL POOL  
AND THE SKY IS ABOVE AND BELOW  
IN REFLECTION I'M DRESSED AS A FOOL  
I'M DISMAYED THAT I KNOW WHAT I KNOW  
ONE SINGLE TEAR FORMS AND THEN FALLS  
AND SHATTERS THE SKY INTO FRAGMENTS  
WHICH DRIFT UP LIKE CURTAINS OF  
FLOWERS  
DRAWN BACK TO GLIMPSE HEAVENS ABOVE  
AND ALSO HEAVENS BELOW

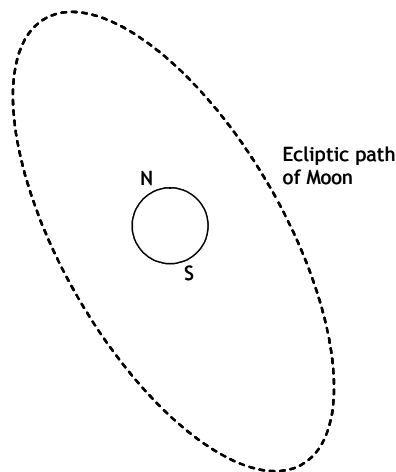
- **Kate Roberts**

# ASTROLOGY WITHOUT TEARS - The North and South Nodes

I was taught that the North and South Nodes are one of the most important points in your Astrological chart – not all Astrologers agree, but I think studying the placement of your Nodes can give you a real insight into what you are meant to achieve in life.

The Nodes are mathematical points that represent where the orbit of the Moon around the Earth crosses the Ecliptic (which is the apparent path of the Sun around the Earth). The Nodes take about 18½ years to revolve around the Sun, spending 18 months in each sign. The North and South Nodes are always in direct opposition to one another – for example, if you have the South Node in Gemini, you will have the North Node in Sagittarius.

**NORTH NODE - closest to the North Pole**



**SOUTH NODE - closest to the South Pole**

In Astrological terms, the North Node (or Caput Draconis, the Dragon's Head) is the highest level you can achieve in your life. It is a quest that you've decided to undertake this time on earth, because in previous lifetimes you never knew how to use this kind of energy. The sign and house the North Node falls in will tell you how you can achieve this.

South Node (or Cauda Draconis, the Dragon's Tail) represents your past tendencies, or past life personality type. The South Node covers talents, memories or knowledge brought into this life from the last one. It can also indicate the path of least resistance, patterns of behaviour that we fall into when we are not analysing situations properly.

## Mid Life Crisis

Astrology has many explanations for the so-called 'mid life crisis', and the attainment of the North Node is one of these. Since the North Node is not usually triggered until after the age of 40, sometimes we panic at the thought that we have not achieved our hopes and dreams by this age.

## Delineations

I have listed below very brief delineations of the North Node in the astrological signs – obviously these will also be influenced by which house they are in, as well as their relationship to other planets / points.

**North Node Aries / South Node Libra:** The highest you can achieve is to be an independent, assertive and confident person, letting go of your need to be reliant on others. In the past, you may have always wanted to 'keep the peace' instead of standing up for what you believe in.

**North Node Taurus / South Node Scorpio:** You will be aiming for stability and security. In the past you have been betrayed, and now you need to learn to trust others. You will need to learn the concept of being powerful within yourself in order to be stable.

**North Node Gemini / South Node Sagittarius:** This placement is the 'wild stallion trying to fight being tamed' – the person who needs to learn to be part of society, to use their intellect and to see both sides of an issue. **North Node Cancer / South Node Capricorn:** In the past you have been the ambitious person striving for success – after the age of 40, you will want to concentrate on creativity and the family life.

**North Node Leo / South Node Aquarius:** You need to develop your strong leadership skills, and you will be forced to stand alone. This placement is very much a 'rags to riches' life, in which the person will blossom after the age of 40.

**North Node Virgo / South Node Pisces:** In the past you have been over-compassionate, falling for every sob-story, not realising that you have been hurting yourself. You need to learn to say NO, and analyse situations before getting involved.

**North Node Libra / South Node Aries:** With this placement, you need to let go of past arrogance and ego, and learn lessons of cooperation and sharing within relationships. To attain peace and harmony within yourself, you need to be assertive without being aggressive.

**North Node Scorpio / South Node Taurus:** Here you will learn lessons of power and transformation. In the past, you have thought that money and material possessions were all-important, but after 40 you will realise that true power comes from within.

**North Node Sagittarius / South Node Gemini:** Your past has been spent by either being a shallow social butterfly, or by burying your head in books. You will be searching for wisdom, truth and spirituality, finding what is real in order to find inner peace.

**North Node Capricorn / South Node Cancer:** 'The major karmic lesson of the Capricorn North Node is to understand true responsibility.' Let go of the past, and realise your true ambitions.

**North Node Aquarius / South Node Leo:** In the past, everything has revolved around yourself and your intense pride and ego. After 40, you will realise that service to mankind is what you are really here for – the concept of the Universal Brother/Sisterhood.

**North Node Pisces / South Node Virgo:** This placement indicates past rigidity, being critical and worrying – this may have caused health problems. Now you need to let go, to learn faith and compassion through spirituality.

The North Node / South Node axis can tell a lot about where a person has come from, and where they are going to. This article only covers a tiny, tiny part – I strongly encourage you to get your astrological chart drawn up so you can discover your true potential!

*text Michelle Riley, illustration Brett Riley, quotes by Val Juncken  
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# Midsommar Stang – the Midsummer Tree

- by Julianne

Midsummer occupies a similar relationship within the solar cycle as Midwinter, and just as Midwinter has been incorporated into the Christian calendar as Christmas, so too has the summer solstice been incorporated as St John's day.

Tantalising glimpses of the original pagan customs can sometimes be found in early Christian festivities, as in the belief in the protective power of the Midsummer fire. Much of the current knowledge on the folklore of the summer solstice comes from the northern countries, as they held it to be the most important festival of the year. Midsummer's Day is the Saturday after the Summer Solstice, and there are many practices connected to the celebrations.

Perhaps the best known Midsummer tradition is the decorating and raising of the Midsummer pole (Midsommar stang). Its origins are uncertain, with some believing the pole to be a remnant from heathen fertility rites and sacrifice feasts. The other opinion is that the Midsummer pole came to the north with Hansa merchants in the Middle Ages and that it is related to the maypoles of the Continent.

Like the maypole in England, people dance around it while singing. In its simplest form, the Midsommar stang has a crosspiece with two rings on it, the symbolism of the vertical pole being a soil fertility celebration.

Midsummer is also a traditional time to honour water, an essential element if life is to flourish with the sun at its height! Water has magical properties at this time. People sprinkle it on each other and their animals. People dress wells and fountains with flowers, candles, and paper festoons. On this day, the ocean waters have the ability to heal skin problems. Latvians bathe on Midsummer in streams that flow towards sunrise, since the water that catches the sunbeams of sunrise brings health and beauty.

In our ritual, a Midsommar stang was created and decorated with herbs and flowers of the season: vervain, wormwood, jasmine, St John's wort, and daisies. The rings represented male and female duality, water and fire, the balance of midsummer and midwinter. The season is one of fire bans, so instead of having a bonfire, the power of the sun at its height was represented by a cluster of yellow, orange, and red helium balloons tied to the central pole.

I used the energy of Midsummer to ameliorate the harshness of the summer currently being experienced. The following wording was used in the ritual to describe the focus of the ritual:

*"As I look around I see dried grass and dying vegetation - the sun has hit hard this year and the softening influence of water has not been enough to balance the fire. The highlands of Victoria are burning and so are areas in Tasmania and elsewhere. In addition to being a fire festival, Midsummer is also a traditional time for honouring water, perhaps because it plays such a vital role in maintaining life while the sun is blazing overhead. So we will invoke the energies of the earth for healing. Let us do magic on the most magical night of the year, and see if we can build on the rain that has fallen recently."*

We then took pieces of clay and each person formed a small ball about the size of a pebble, to represent the merging of the feminine elements of water and earth. While holding these symbols, we circled around, visualising the energies of water and earth pouring into the ball.

In our minds we saw rain cascading down, seeds sprouting, green lush vegetation, creeks and rivers and dams full of water.

The power chant that we used was:

*Earth to draw it  
Air to carry it  
Fire to raise it  
Rain so be it*

One of the clay symbols was tied to the balloons. The aim was to send the feminine spell-ball high into the atmosphere—the spell being carried by air and fire into the sky and towards the sun.

The power of the sun at Midsummer, with all of the energy of the season, lifted the Earth's need for water and rain to the heavens.

## The Goddess

Here is how I saw the Goddess:  
first of all, there was her flowing hair,  
rich and abundant,  
falling onto her sacred neck;  
then I saw the garland on her head,  
woven of all the flowers of creation,  
delicate as dewy morning, light as foam;  
then there was her crown,  
a little circle in the middle of her forehead,  
like a moon shining whitely there,  
and from the moon rose up small serpents,  
and above the moon, ears of corn  
reminding us of all she brings to fruit.

-Apuleius, The Golden Ass

