

The Fairy & Human Relations Congress

By RJ Stewart © 2009

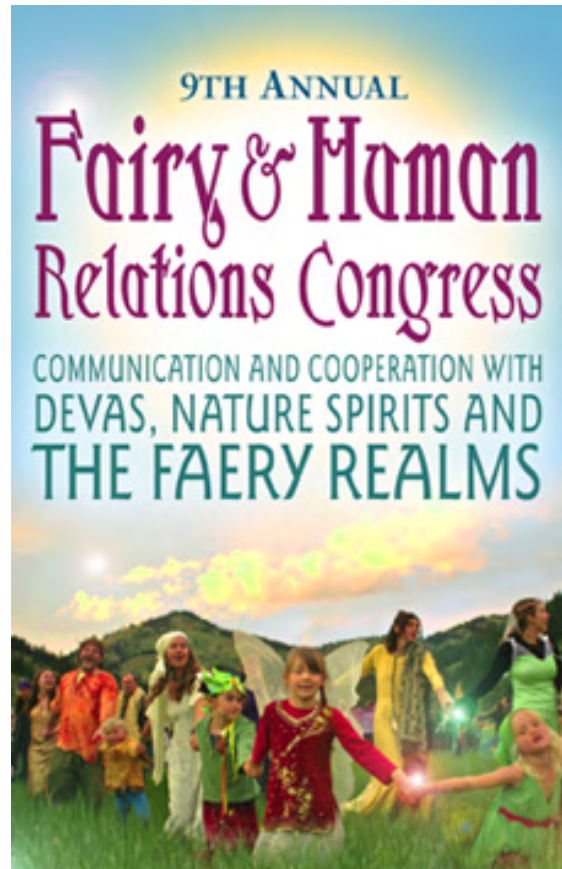
This article originally appeared in the British Fae Magazine, Summer 2009.

www.faemagazine.com



RJ Stewart is a Scottish author and musician, now living in northern California. He is the author of 41 books on Celtic, magical, and faery traditions, and

has performed and recorded music for film, theatre, and television. His websites are www.rjstewart.org and www.rjstewart.net .



Every year, around the summer solstice, a dedicated group of people take a long journey, into a remote inland mountain region of the North Cascades, in Washington State, in the far north-west of the USA, not too far from the Canadian border. There they set up an outdoor village, with a large kitchen, tents, a Sky Lodge (more of that later) and campsite facilities. Around 200 people soon come to join the dedicated team for three days, along with writers, musicians, artists, performers, all for the Fairy and Human Relations Congress...known as Fairy Congress for short. And, most important, Other Beings also come to participate. We could say that it is not a large gathering, as gatherings go...only 200 people. Or we could say it is very large indeed, if we were able to count the spirit beings that gather...the fairy beings, the spirits of the land.

When I say that Fairy Congress is a “long journey” I mean it involves distances that most British people seldom travel unless they take an overseas holiday. From Seattle, the nearest major city, the road trip to Skalitute Retreat Centre (where the Congress has its long-term home) takes up to six hours, the time it would take to drive from the West of England deep into my native

Scotland. When I travel to the Fairy Congress, like other teachers and musicians, I usually have a long flight first, then the five or six hour road trip. Fairy Congress people are committed people, and have been so for more than eight years.

Skalitude Retreat Centre is in a pristine (once glacial) valley, surrounded by steep hills and forest, with a powerful mountain at the far end. When I took part in the first Fairy Congress, with around a hundred people attending, a spirit being awoke from the mountain and communicated with me, as follows: “ How surprising! I did not know that there were so many of you tiny humans!”. I did not wish to explain that there were millions of us polluting the land, only a few hours west, south, north, and east, of the valley. Over the years this guardian mountain spirit has become the friend of everyone attending Fairy Congress, creating an event that spreads the word, the message: “not all humans are destructive greedy and selfish...some love the land and the spirits of the land”.

Fairy Congress has a strong link to Britain, as it was started in Britain years ago by the British seeress Daphne Charters. She was an English woman who saw and talked to fairies, and wrote down what she learned. Last year we published a substantial volume 1 of her writings *Forty Years with the Fairies* (published in the USA and UK simultaneously). Around the year 2000, Michael Pilarski, who had already established contact with the Daphne Charters estate in Britain, decided to start a new Fairy Congress in the mountains in Washington State. While Daphne’s Congress had been one of thousands of spirit beings, and just one human, herself, Michael’s task was to manifest it into the human world, and bring humans from far and wide to commune with our fairy cousins, allies, and co-walkers. Such communion arose through music, dance, song, rituals, workshops, love, compassion, mutual support, and fun.



The Fairy Congress is now run by a creative and hard-working committee, who devote considerable time and energy to enabling this small but significant event every June.

On the site there is a substantial stone circle, designed as a Crossroads with a fire-pit in the center, which I helped to set up, to ritually empower, and attune. Some of it was built communally by Congress members, much of it was built by Will, partner to Lindsey, the owner and founder of [Skalitude](#). Without them...well, I cannot think of the event without them.

The Sky-Lodge (mentioned earlier) is where workshops are held: it is a large canvas structure, somewhat like a huge tepee, but with no sides. It has a roof with a smoke vent, but is open to all Directions. In the center is a fire-pit, and night-time drumming circles blossom and thunder around the fire. Most of the Fairy Congress events are held outdoors, and with the Sky Lodge, even indoors is outdoors.

In the last two years, some very special beings have arrived in the valley, and sometimes they can be heard singing at night. Wolves have returned to the region. For those of us from Britain, who may not be able to imagine wolves around, say, Tunbridge Wells, or Croydon, I should add that the wonderful wolves join the bashful bears, the coy coyotes, the coughing cougars, and the bumptious bobcats. Plus, of course, the raccoons, foxes, eagles, vultures, hawks, owls, rattlesnakes, and other fauna of the North Cascades. At night the stars are crystal clear at Fairy Congress, and you can sing with the wolves. I have!

So, what types of human come to the Fairy Congress? It is a family event, ranging from young children, to grandparents, with every age in between. Over the last eight years, I have seen younger children grow into teenagers...with Fairy Congress as a significant event each year of their lives. Many different types of human attend, from professional Microsoft employees based in Redmond north of Seattle, (Windows is not their fault, honest, they are really good people!) to wild-crafters and herbalists, from Native American musicians to university professors. Story-tellers, film-makers, authors, jugglers, people who are focused, people who drift gently, the Fairy Congress has something for each and every one.

And what kind of spirit beings come to the Fairy Congress? Some of them, like the large being that lives at the end of the valley, are strictly local. The local ones come out of the hills, trees, springs, and stones, rising up from within the wild lands themselves. Others are fairy beings that are especially concerned about relations with the human race, and they tend to come, often with their human allies, from many parts of the USA, Canada, and Britain.

Much of the time at Fairy Congress is dedicated to communion, through circling, dancing, singing, through workshops and meditations, and a colorful costume parade.

What do I do? I teach workshops on material from ancient British faery magical tradition, and offer a concert of songs and music each year. Sometimes I bring special guests, and British author and singer Caitlin Matthews taught and sang there with me two years ago, much to everyone's delight.

OK, I know...the big burning question is "what do people wear?". Some people just wear their ordinary outdoor everyday clothes, such as antlers, big clawed hairy boots, giant butterfly wings, shimmering rainbow robes, garlands of ivy and aromatic herbs. Others wear weird stuff like jeans, sandals, rain-coats, and sundry mass produced garments from clothing outlets...but they are treated kindly, and no one makes comments behind their backs. Tolerance for all is the motto at Fairy Congress.

A few years ago Peter Tompkins, the co-author with Christopher Bird of the famous book *The Secret Life of Plants*, travelled all the way from Italy to speak at Fairy Congress. So while there is fun, laughter, and light-hearted communion, there is also a serious dedication to the environment, and to redeeming the reputation of humans.

It is essential that I tell you that Fairy Congress is not a market place event, and not a New Age forum event. Though there are some delightful vendors, it is not set up primarily to sell clothing, jewelry, arts and crafts, books and CDs, like many other events associated broadly with the idea of "Fairy". Fairy Congress is about Doing, Joining, Sharing, looking to the future. In a collapsing world economy, Fairy Congress gives us an idea of another way of living, another way of thinking. Some of it comes from ancestral wisdom, some from new human visions of departing from the greed of commercial modernism. Fairy Congress is an Idealist event, a Visionary event, and an event buoyant with hope and friendship.

That is why I go, that is why I teach there and perform there. That is why many well known writers and performers have gone in the past...not for an audience of thousands of people, but for a vivid and responsive group of friends, human and fairy alike.

If you want to know more, the Fairy Congress website is www.fairycongress.com. There you can find photographs, program details, speakers and performers. It is now in its 9th consecutive year in the human world, and probably its 9,000th consecutive year in the fairy realm.

For further reading:

Forty Years With the Fairies, Daphne Charters ed. Michael Pilarski 2008

Earth Light and Power Within the Land, R J Stewart 1991 UK, and 1998 USA

The Well of Light, From Faery Healing to Earth Healing, R J Stewart 2003

The Living World of Faery, R J Stewart 1995 UK and 1998 USA

(These books can all be obtained at discount from www.rjstewart.net, or from your local bookstore).